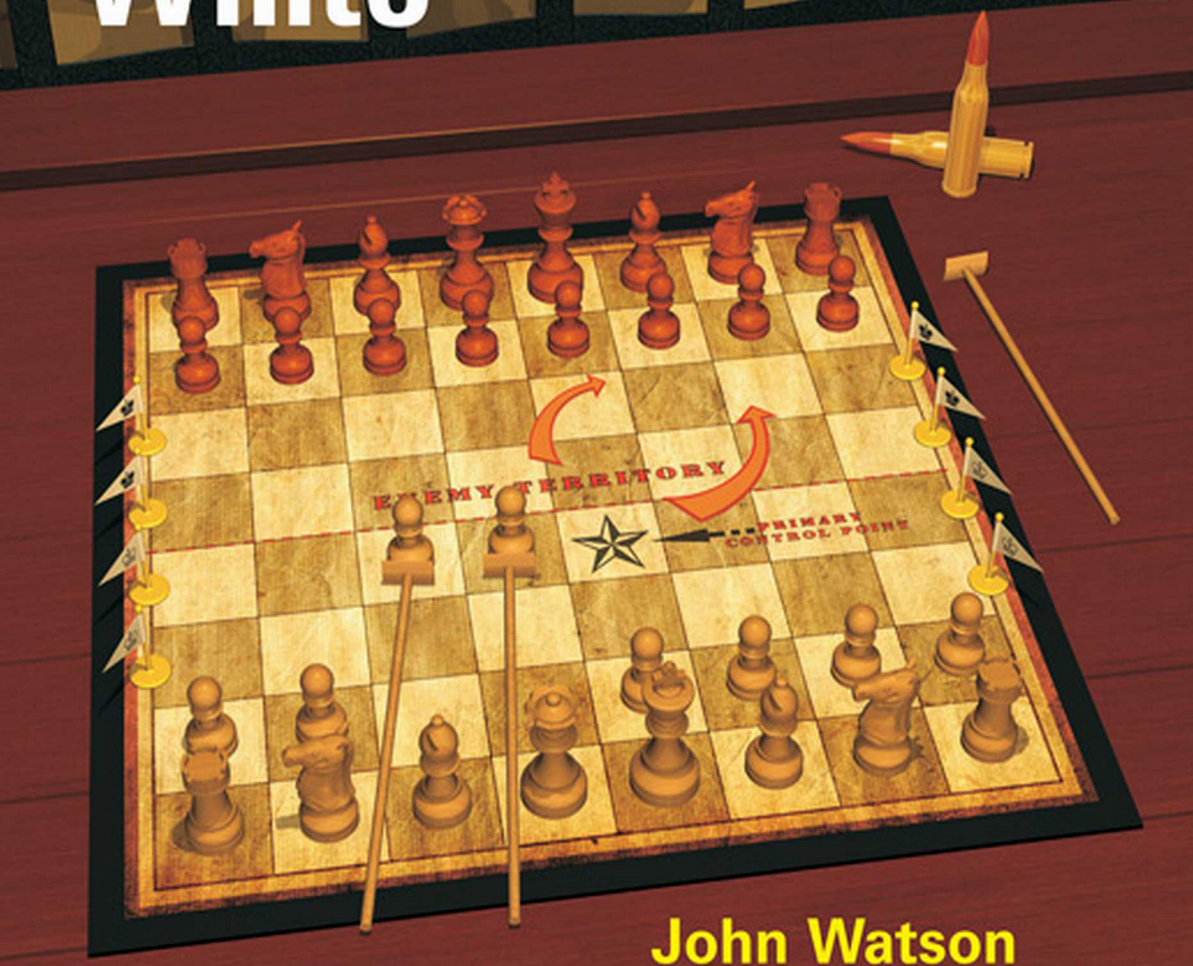
GAMBIT

A Strategic Chess Opening Repertoire for White



John Watson

A complete plan of attack with 1 d4 and 2 c4

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Symbols

x	capture
+	check
++	double check
#	checkmate
!!	brilliant move
!	good move
!?	interesting move
?!	dubious move
?	bad move
??	blunder
+–	White is winning
±	White is much better
±	White is slightly better
=	the game is equal
∓	Black is slightly better
∓	Black is much better
–+	Black is winning
corr.	correspondence game
Ch	championship
1-0	the game ends in a win for White
½-½	the game ends in draw
0-1	the game ends in a win for Black
(*n*)	*n*th match game
(D)	see next diagram

Dedication

To my sisters Sarah, Barbara and Anne
And in memory of my mother (who once called me a 'chess bum' in the newspaper)

Introduction

The book before you presents a set of opening systems beginning with the move 1 d4 and, in almost every case, 2 c4. I call it a 'strategic' opening repertoire to indicate that the proposed variations require an understanding of the overall contours of the positions that arise, as well as the significance of structural transformations and characteristic manoeuvres, to a greater extent than variations which require more tactical and computational skill. Which is not to say that we'll ignore characteristic tactics and local skirmishing, which are simply part of chess; merely that the lines under consideration, unlike many of the better-known modern openings, are less demanding in terms of forcing play and immediate crises. They are also more forgiving of errors, which in this case tend to do no more than modestly change a position's assessment, and less rewarding of one-move inspirations cooked up by either you or your opponent.

Standing back for a moment, let's consider some typical forms that an opening repertoire for White usually takes. First, there is the 'system' repertoire, in which White plays a similar set-up versus as many defensive set-ups as possible. The King's Indian Attack would be an example or, using 1 d4, the Colle or London systems. These don't claim much space, and can be characterized as safe but unambitious. Their primary drawback has less to do with their intrinsic worth than with their narrowness; playing the same moves every game teaches you less about chess as a whole, and often results in dull and uncreative play. In stark contrast, we have the 'Play and Win' attacking repertoires, in which you throw everything at the opponent, offering pawns and pieces, hoping to win games based upon your superior knowledge of tactics, tricks and attacking motifs. The difficulty is that these lines are usually too easy to neutralize, risk leaving White with disadvantages, and can easily become boring.

A handful of other books want you to play offbeat or irregular moves, say, 1 f4, 1 b3 or 1 ♘c3 (or, appallingly, 1 g4). These combine a wish to get off the beaten track and the hope for surprise value. Sadly, you eventually discover why such moves don't attract a grandmaster following, although they may be of use as a secondary weapon. Finally, with the very opposite philosophy, some repertoire books instruct their readers to play 'main lines' because, after all, they consist of the 'best' moves. There are several problems with this, the most obvious being that, as any observer of modern chess knows, what is 'best' changes constantly, as openings and especially particular variations come in and out of fashion (and it is fashion, isn't it?) as rapidly as you can set the pieces up. More importantly, these main lines tend to be dynamic and tactically-dependent, which requires a lot of memorization and then diligent monitoring of the latest developments, only to arrive at equality anyway. The necessity for this effort especially applies to the more enduring main lines; e.g., the Mar del Plata main line of the King's Indian Defence; the Grünfeld Exchange Variation with 7 ♘f3 and 8 ♖b1 or 7 ♗c4 and 8 ♘e2; the 4 ♕c2 Nimzo-Indian Defence, and the 5 ♗g5 or Meran Semi-Slav. Even the professional probably won't want to carry too many of these systems around as White, and certainly the average player won't.

The repertoire variations I'm proposing are not tactically critical, and are designed to be relatively safe, but they are also not simple or unchallenging. With the use of 2 c4, often followed by e4, they all take a good chunk of central space and in doing so, expose White to counterplay. As a teacher, I feel that learning how to play 1 d4 and 2 c4 is of revolutionary importance for someone seeking to understand and play chess, just as for a student starting out, 1 e4 e5 is an essential source of knowledge and a way to get a feel for the game. You will notice that in Chapters 1 and 2 on the Queen's Gambit Declined I recommend traditional systems. They expose White to little risk and are ideal for the strategic player. Against most other defences, I have avoided main lines and chosen

safer but at the same time distinctly unbalanced variations. From the standpoint of the amateur player, many will seem unconventional, but all are well-known to masters and reasonably well-established. Most importantly, they are sound. I generally try to avoid high theory (not always possible), but you can still study most of these systems at as dense a theoretical level as you want to. To that end, I've often gone into considerable technical detail. But even if you've only mastered the basic ideas of a system and learned a few essential variations (which requires some memorization, to be sure), you should be able to handle the resulting positions without getting into too much trouble, i.e., a surprise move probably won't throw you off balance.

The repertoire as a whole is a self-contained system. By featuring 3 ♘c3 in the Queen's Gambit, Slav and Nimzo-Indian, it became easier to incorporate ambitious approaches into the rest of the repertoire. However, I don't view this primarily as a set of openings that you will adopt in its entirety. Rather, most readers will want to pick and choose lines to mix with other systems that they may already play or like. In fact, you may well want to play a few variations that are less complex than these, or even one or two fashionable main lines with massive theory attached to them. In any case, I think that you'll find it easier to fill in the cracks with some of my suggestions.

I've decided not to include a Bibliography because there would simply be a ridiculous number of titles. However, I've always credited analysis and suggestions in the text. If I had to pick out just a few of the many fine authors whose ideas have contributed significantly, they would include Richard Palliser, Boris Avrukh, Valeri Bronznik, Viacheslav Eingorn, David Vigorito and Viktor Moskalenko, with gratitude to the entire community of writers and theoreticians. I should also cite Stefan Bücker's *Kaissiber* magazine and Jeroen Bosch's *Secrets of Opening Surprises*, underappreciated gems in the world of chess theory.

Special thanks to John Hartmann for his assistance with the manuscript. And to Graham Burgess, who has done his usual yeoman's job of editing, and has improved the book at every stage with his advice.

John Watson
Lincoln, Nebraska

1 Queen's Gambit Declined

The Queen's Gambit Declined is one of the great classical openings that graced the early days of modern chess and still thrives today. Almost every World Champion has played the Queen's Gambit Declined ('QGD') extensively, usually with both colours, and it is considered essential to a serious chess education. This chapter deals with the main lines of the Queen's Gambit Declined. In a book for the strategic player, the author has no great problems choosing variations of the Queen's Gambit Declined because it is an essentially strategic opening.

1 d4 d5 2 c4 e6 *(D)*

Unorthodox Queen's Gambit variations such as 2...♗f5 (Baltic), 2...e5 (Albin) and 2...♘c6 (Chigorin) are analysed in Chapter 3.

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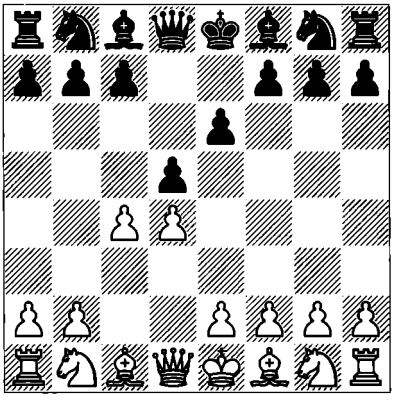

3 ♘c3 *(D)*

This natural move has more implications than might at first be evident. By beginning with 3 ♘c3, our repertoire will be consistent with 1 d4 ♘f6 2 c4 e6 3 ♘c3 (allowing the Nimzo-Indian move 3...♗b4). While many players prefer to play 3 ♘f3 at that point, to avoid the Nimzo-Indian, they may then have to play against 3...d5 and be stuck with a Queen's Gambit Declined in which they are committed to an early ♘f3. This has the drawback that White can't play systems with ♘ge2 should he prefer to. For us, since we are playing ♘f3 later anyway, that's not important. However, after 3 ♘f3 d5, White has to deal with learning many perfectly legitimate sidelines. For example, after 3 ♘f3 d5 4 ♘c3, Black can play 4...dxc4, when 5 e4 ♗b4 is the sharp Vienna Variation, while 4...♗b4 can go in unique directions such as 5 cxd5 exd5 6 ♗g5 ♘bd7 7 e3 0-0 8 ♗d3 c5. 3 ♘c3 saves us this trouble. Furthermore, even the normal-looking sequence 3 ♘f3 d5 4 ♘c3 ♗e7 doesn't ensure that we get to the positions we want to play. The gist of what I'm saying is that an early ♘f3 isn't desirable. See also the note to White's fourth move.

Since we are headed towards an Exchange Variation, that is, 3 ♘c3 ♘f6 4 cxd5 exd5, it's worth pointing out that the immediate 3 cxd5 exd5 fails to transpose because, for example, Black can play 4 ♘c3 c6 5 ♘f3 (5 ♗f4 ♗d6!) 5...♘f6 (5...♗f5) 6 ♗g5 ♗d6 (or 6...♗e7 7 e3 ♗f5), neither allowing White what he wants to do in this system. So you need to play 3 ♘c3 first. It may not be until you get further into this chapter that these distinctions make sense, and they aren't very important until you understand the opening as a whole.

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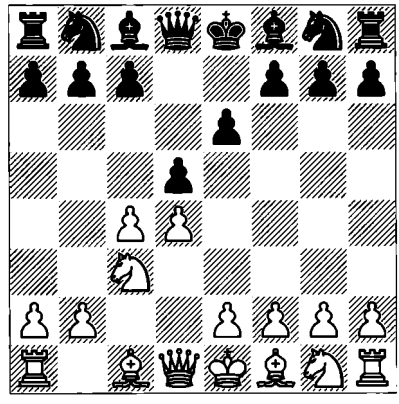

Black now chooses between:

1.1: 3...♘f6 8
1.2: 3...♗e7 22

3...c6 is a form of the Semi-Slav, dealt with in Chapter 5. The Tarrasch Defence, 3...c5, is examined in Chapter 2. For 3...♗b4 and other third moves apart from 3...♘f6 and 3...♗e7, see Chapter 3.

1.1)

3...♘f6 4 cxd5 *(D)*

With 4 cxd5, we are playing the true Exchange Variation. 4 ♘f3 (which is the same as 3 ♘f3 ♘f6 4 ♘c3) can take us away from our intended path after 4...dxc4 or 4...♗b4, as described in the note to 3 ♘c3. But Black can also deviate by 4...c5 (a standard Semi-Tarrasch where we can't use the idea offered in the next note) or 4...♗e7 5 cxd5 exd5 6 ♗g5 c6, to meet 7 e3 with 7...♗f5 (when 8 ♕b3 ♕b6 is satisfactory), or 7 ♕c2 g6 (intending ...♗f5), although in that case 8 e3 ♗f5 9 ♕d2 is still worth playing for White; see Section 1.2 (3...♗e7).

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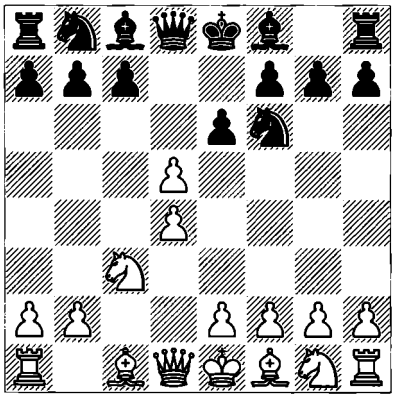

4...exd5

An important alternative at this point is 4...♘xd5 5 e4 (or 5 ♘f3 c5 6 e4) 5...♘xc3 6 bxc3 c5. Now 7 ♘f3 reaches a main line of a classic variation called the Semi-Tarrasch. With this sequence, 5 ♘f3 c5 6 e3 is another Semi-Tarrasch line which is arguably easier for Black to play against than 5 e4. I mention this because if you don't like what follows with e4, you can always play more conservatively with e3 and still get a highly interesting game, generally with the battle revolving around the isolated queen's pawn (IQP) structure. At any rate, the main line after 7 ♘f3 is 7...cxd4 8 cxd4 ♗b4+ 9 ♗d2 ♗xd2+ 10 ♕xd2 0-0; this is certainly full of energy, but requires assimilating loads of concrete theory. To make life easier, White can instead play the preventative move 7 ♖b1!? *(D)*.

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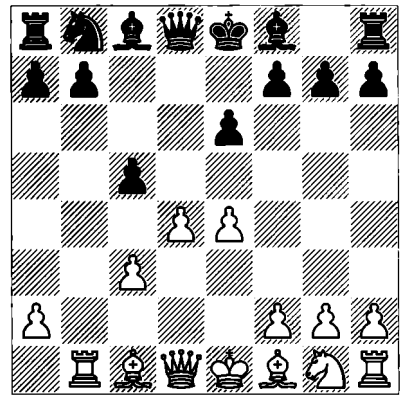

This has the idea of winning the b-file and preventing ...♗b4+ after the exchange of pawns on d4. Here are Black's main options:

a) 7...♕a5?! 8 ♗d2! ♕xa2 9 ♘f3 leaves Black way behind in development and in central influence. ♗d3, 0-0, ♕e2 and d5 or e5 can follow. White has more than enough for a pawn.

b) 7...♘c6?! encourages the advance 8 d5; e.g., 8...exd5 9 exd5 ♕e7+ 10 ♗e3 ♘e5 11 ♗b5+! ♗d7 12 ♕e2 threatening ♗xc5.

c) 7...♗e7 8 ♘f3 0-0 9 ♗c4 ♘c6 10 0-0 ♕c7 *(D)* is a normal-looking set-up. Then White has:

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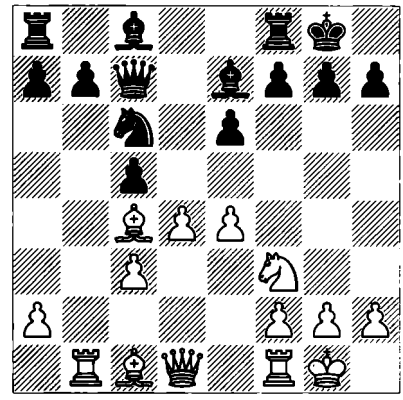

c1) 11 ♕e2 b6 12 ♖d1! ♘a5 13 ♗d3 (or 13 ♗b5 a6 14 ♗d3 ♗b7 15 d5 c4 16 ♗c2 exd5 17 exd5 ♖fe8 18 ♗e3 b5 19 a4 ±) 13...♗b7 14 d5! c4 (14...exd5? 15 exd5 ♗xd5 16 ♗xh7+ ♔xh7

17 ♖xd5 with a strong attack) 15 ♗c2 e5! 16 ♗e3 (or 16 ♘d2 ♗a6 17 ♘f1 ♘b7 18 ♘e3) 16...♗c8 17 h3 (17 ♗a4! ♖d8 18 ♘d2 ±) 17...♖d8 (Polugaevsky-Petrosian, USSR Ch playoff (3), Moscow 1970) and here White can activate his worst piece by 18 ♗a4; for example, 18...♗d7 19 ♗xd7 ♖xd7 20 ♘d2 ♖ad8 21 ♕g4 with more space and the better game.

c2) 11 d5! *(D)* is the thematic advance, with the object of tearing open lines for the attack:

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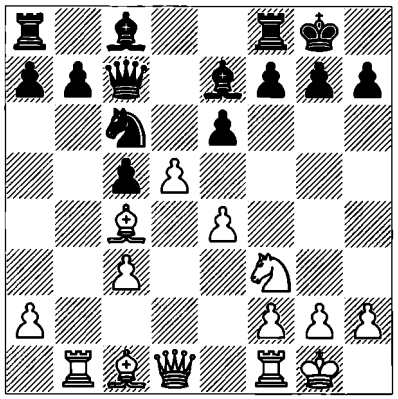

11...exd5 (11...♖d8 12 ♕e2 exd5 13 ♗xd5 ±; 11...♘a5 12 ♗d3 c4 13 ♗c2 ♖d8 14 ♘d4! exd5 15 exd5 ♖xd5 16 ♕f3 ±) 12 exd5!? (or 12 ♗xd5 ±) 12...♘e5 (12...♖d8 13 ♕c2 ♘a5 14 ♗d3 ♖xd5 15 ♗xh7+ ♔h8 16 ♗e4 ♖d8 17 ♘g5! ♗xg5 18 ♗xg5 f6 19 ♗h4 ±) 13 ♘xe5 ♕xe5 14 ♖e1! ♕xc3 15 ♗d3 ♕f6 16 ♗b2 ♕d6 17 ♗e5 ♕d8 18 d6 ♗f6 19 ♕c2 ♗xe5 20 ♖xe5 g6 21 ♕xc5 with good prospects.

d) 7...cxd4 8 cxd4 ♘c6 9 ♗b5 (or 9 ♘f3 ♗b4+ 10 ♗d2) 9...a6 (9...♗d7 10 ♘f3 ♗b4+ 11 ♗d2 ♗xd2+ 12 ♕xd2 0-0 13 0-0 ♖c8, I.Sokolov-Miles, Amsterdam 1988, and now White had 14 d5! exd5 15 exd5 ♘a5 16 ♗d3!) 10 ♗xc6+ bxc6 11 ♘f3 with a nice positional advantage. In I.Sokolov-J.Costa, San Bernardino 1988, there followed 11...c5 12 0-0 cxd4 13 ♗b2!? (13 ♘e5! ±) 13...♗e7 14 ♘xd4 ♗d7 15 ♕g4! ♗f6 16 ♖fd1 ♕c7 17 ♗a3 ±; still better was the tactical shot 17 ♘f5! exf5 18 exf5, threatening ♕e4+.

Interestingly, although I've played 7 ♖b1 and believe in it, I notice that Lars Schandorff recommends 7 a3, with the same point of preventing ...♗b4+, and makes a good case for it, based upon the sequence 7...♗e7 8 ♘f3 0-0 9 ♗d3 cxd4 10 cxd4 ♘c6 11 ♗b2 ♕a5+ 12 ♔f1! ♖d8 13 h4 with an attack. That gives you another option to look into if you need one.

5 ♗g5 *(D)*

5 ♗f4 is not a mistake, but Black can equalize straightaway by 5...♗d6; compare the move ♗f4 in positions occurring later in this chapter.

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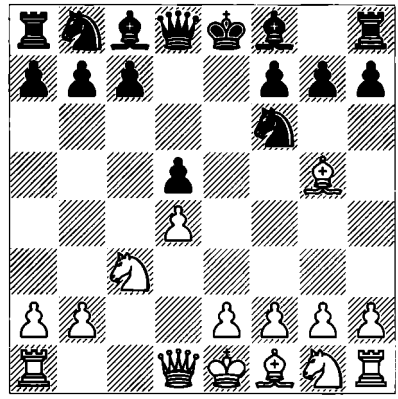

The position after 5 ♗g5 is the starting point of the main line of the Queen's Gambit Exchange Variation. The paradox of this opening is that White voluntarily frees Black's problem bishop on c8. As it turns out, the problem of getting that bishop into play becomes one of the most important features of the position. White will essentially try to deny it the best squares by covering f5 with a bishop and/or queen, and making sure that there are drawbacks to ...♗g4. Why go to so much trouble? For one thing, as long as White keeps the tension (by avoiding exchanging on d5), Black will be able to play the central counter ...c5 in some positions with good effect. After the exchange on d5, Black's ...c5 can often be answered by dxc5, giving him an isolated pawn which happens to be weaker than in many other opening variations. In addition, by playing 4 cxd5, White opens the c-file; he hopes that it will be more valuable to him than the e-file is to Black, in part because it will be easier to break down Black's queenside position (usually held up by a pawn on c6) than it will be for Black to break down White's supporting pawn at e3. There are other considerations, of course, but these might be ones to keep in mind as the chapter proceeds. Now I'm going to split the material into two parts, in order to cover some very distinct systems. As you

can imagine, some of these lines can arise by a number of move-orders.

1.11: 5...♗e7 10
1.12: 5...c6 18

Other moves:

a) 5...♘bd7 will usually transpose into one of the main lines; e.g., 6 e3 (don't fall for one of the best-known traps in chess: 6 ♘xd5?? ♘xd5! 7 ♗xd8 ♗b4+ 8 ♕d2 ♔xd8 and Black wins) 6...c6 7 ♗d3 and now 7...♗e7 8 ♕c2 0-0 9 ♘f3 is Section 1.11. Instead, 7...♕a5 resembles the Cambridge Springs, a variation in which White's knight is committed to f3. But here after 7...♕a5, White has the handy move 8 ♘e2, neutralizing Black's main point in the Cambridge Springs, which is to attack c3 by ...♘e4 and force concessions. After 8 ♘e2, White can build up smoothly with 0-0, f3 and e4.

b) One well-known repertoire book suggests the idea 5...♗f5?!, to get to the position after 5...c6 6 e3 ♗f5 7 ♕f3 ♗g6 8 ♗xf6 ♕xf6 (Section 1.12) without allowing 6 ♕c2 (stopping ...♗f5). However, the author doesn't look at the direct 6 ♗xf6!. Then 6...gxf6 is a very poor version of a doubled-pawn line that we will analyse in Section 1.12, all the more so since in one of those lines, White's queen goes to f3 to force the doubled pawns and then back again to d1! But 6...♕xf6 7 ♘xd5 costs Black material; Black has the bishop-pair, but it hardly compensates for a whole pawn.

c) 5...♗b4 is a playable move which tends to give White only a modest pull, but Black can be stuck with passive defence. Then:

c1) 6 ♕c2 is actually a 4 ♕c2 Nimzo-Indian variation! If you want to save effort and play for a small advantage, meet 6...h6 with 7 ♗xf6 ♕xf6 8 a3 ♗xc3+ 9 ♕xc3 followed by e3 and ♘e2-g3 or ♘f3, as needed.

c2) Another possibility, 6 ♘f3, is a Ragozin Defence, close enough to equal that I don't recommend White go that direction.

c3) The most straightforward line is 6 e3 h6 *(D)* (6...♘bd7 7 ♗d3 c5 8 ♘e2 0-0 9 0-0 c4 10 ♗c2 is considered better for White, and his results have been excellent with the simple plan of f3 and e4; for example, 10...♕a5 11 f3 h6 12 ♗h4 ♖e8 13 ♕d2 b6 14 a3 ♗f8? 15 e4 ± dxe4 16 fxe4 ♗b7 17 ♖f5 ♕a6 18 e5 ♘h7 19 ♖af1 and Black lasted only a handful of moves more in Barbero-Gerber, Swiss Team Ch 1995).

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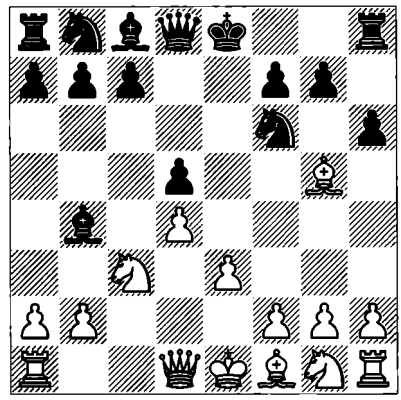

I'll now give two moves, one direct and the other a bit messy:

c31) 7 ♗xf6 ♕xf6 8 ♕b3 ♕d6 9 a3 ♗xc3+ 10 ♕xc3 0-0 11 ♗d3 ♗g4 (Keene-Inkiov, European Team Ch, Skara 1980) and one way to retain a positional edge is 12 ♖c1 c6 13 h3 ♗e6 and then 14 ♘e2 followed by 0-0 and a minority attack (b4-b5); the more assertive 14 f4!? is also promising after 14...♖e8 15 ♘f3 f6 16 0-0 ♘d7 17 ♘h4, exploiting Black's kingside light squares and preparing moves like ♖f3, ♗g6 and ♕d3.

c32) 7 ♗h4 g5 8 ♗g3 ♘e4 9 ♘e2 is solid. White can play f3 and get his central majority moving. Therefore Black sometimes tries to force the pace with 9...h5, leading to 10 h4 ♘xg3 11 ♘xg3 gxh4 12 ♘xh5 ♕g5 13 ♕a4+ ♘c6, Calvo-Ghitescu, Havana Olympiad 1966; now 14 ♘f4! gives White a solid positional advantage and pressure on d5; e.g., 14...♗d7 15 ♕b5! 0-0-0 16 ♘fxd5.

1.11)

5...♗e7 6 e3 *(D)*
6...c6

As you will see, this move is useful in most lines and helps to prepare ...♗f5. The alternatives are instructive:

a) 6...♗f5?! 7 ♗xf6 ♗xf6 8 ♕b3! costs Black a pawn. Hence the preparatory ...c6.

b) 6...0-0 7 ♗d3 h6 (or 6...h6 7 ♗h4 0-0) 8 ♗h4 (8 ♗f4 is a good retreat, as is usual in the Exchange Variation; Black might try 8...c5 9

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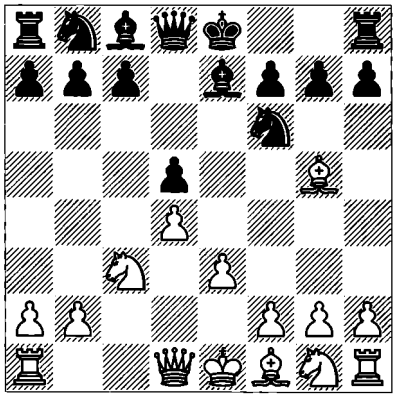

dxc5 ♘bd7 10 ♘f3 ♘xc5, but 11 0-0! ♘xd3 12 ♕xd3 ♗e6 13 ♖fd1 prevents Black's pieces from becoming active and should therefore favour White, who can target the isolated pawn) 8...c5 9 dxc5 ♘bd7 10 ♘ge2!? ♘xc5 11 ♗c2 ♗e6 12 0-0 ♘ce4 13 ♕d3 ♖c8 14 ♗xf6 ♘xf6 15 ♖fd1 ♕b6 16 ♗b3 ± Gulko-Lputian, Tashkent 1984.

c) 6...♘bd7 7 ♗d3 c6 offers Black the idea of meeting 8 ♕c2 with 8...♘h5!? *(D)*.

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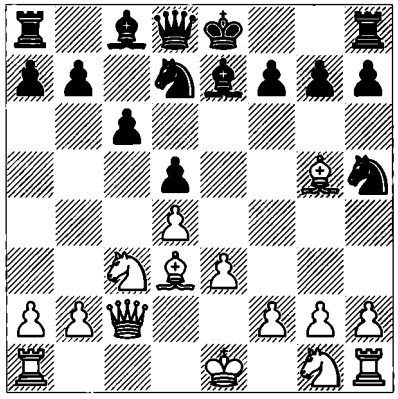


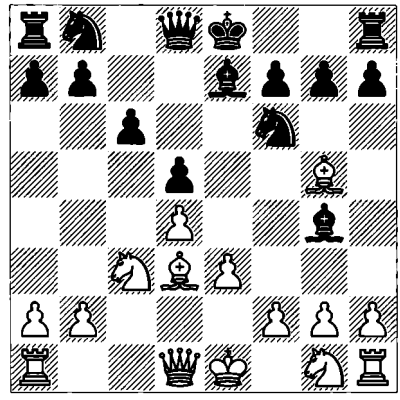
This is a unique defence by which Black tries to save a move by not castling. After 9 ♗xe7 ♕xe7, 10 ♘f3 allows 10...♘f4, which is considered awkward for White, although I should say that 11 ♗f1 0-0 12 0-0-0 ♘e6 13 ♗d3 is a rather more comfortable version of opposite-side castling than White often gets, with little risk. Nevertheless, 10 ♘ge2 is normal, and boatloads of theory follow 10...g6 11 0-0-0 (or White can play systems with 0-0, generally regarded as equal) 11...♘b6 and either h3 and g4 or ♘g3 with ♔b1 follows.

You may want to look into all that, but we don't really need it, since we can also play calmly with 8 ♘f3 (instead of 8 ♕c2), which transposes to our main lines after 8...0-0 9 ♕c2, and to some extent neutralizes 8...♘h5; e.g., 9 ♗xe7 ♕xe7 10 0-0 and there's no ...♘f4. What's more, 10...0-0 can be met by 11 ♕b1! ♘df6 12 b4, with a ready-made minority attack, as in Kramnik-Timman, Belgrade 1995. At the same time, 8 ♘f3 allows 8...♘e4!?. Then I like 9 ♗f4!, but play almost always goes 9 ♗xe7 ♕xe7, when 10 0-0 0-0 11 ♕c2 ♘df6 12 ♖ab1 is one route, or White can try for the immediate 10 ♕c2 ♘df6 11 ♘e5 0-0 12 0-0, having in mind f3. White has a typical edge in such positions.

7 ♗d3 0-0

a) 7...♗g4!? *(D)* is an intriguing move, because Black manages to get his light-squared bishop out, which is arguably the most important issue in the Queen's Gambit Declined.

W



The idea is ...♗h5-g6, to exchange White's key light-squared bishop, and the only problem is that Black's bishop is rather exposed to attack. Here are two recommendations:

a1) 8 ♕c2 and now:

a11) One author analyses 8...♘bd7?!, but neglects simply 9 h3, when 9...♗h5? 10 f4! will cost Black at least a pawn, and 9...♗e6 10 ♘f3 is a good-looking version of our main h3 lines.

a12) 8...♗h5 9 ♘ge2 (I like having the knight on f3 by either 9 ♘f3!? with the idea 9...♗xf3?! 10 gxf3 h6 11 ♗h4; or 9 h3 ♗g6 10 ♗xg6 hxg6 11 ♘f3, which is a bit more comfortable for White, who can turn his attention to a queenside attack) 9...♗g6 10 0-0 ♘bd7 11 f3

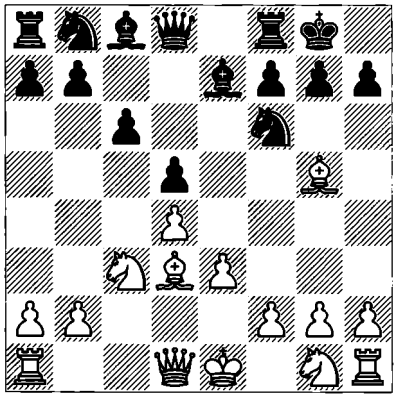
0-0 12 ♗xg6 hxg6 13 ♖ad1 ♖e8 14 ♗h4 ♘b6 15 ♗f2 ♕d7 16 h3, Østenstad-Mastrovasilis, Calvia Olympiad 2004; White is ready for central expansion, but in practice that's double-edged.

a2) The other natural move is 8 ♘ge2, asking Black what his bishop is doing out there on g4. The best line appears to be 8...♗h5 (8...♗xe2 9 ♘xe2!? gives White the bishop-pair and the intention of playing ♘g3; on 9...♘e4, 10 ♗f4!? ♕a5+ 11 ♔f1 0-0 12 f3 ♘d6 13 ♔f2 ± looks nice, having in mind an eventual central advance) 9 0-0 ♗g6 10 ♘g3 0-0 11 ♘f5 ±.

b) I should mention that 7...♘bd7 is sometimes played with the intention of 8 ♕c2 ♘f8, and then ...♘e6, ...g6 and ...♘g7, to exchange bishops with ...♗f5! I think that White has good ideas against that, but probably the easiest thing to do is sidestep it (i.e., save a tempo by foregoing ♕c2) by 8 ♘f3, when 8...♘f8 9 0-0 ♘e6 10 ♗h4 g6 11 b4!? (this can also be prepared more slowly) 11...0-0 (11...♗xb4? 12 ♘xd5! ±) 12 ♖b1 puts White well along in his queenside strategy of playing b4-b5.

We now return to 7...0-0 *(D)*:

W



8 ♘f3

This move distinguishes the variation that I'm recommending. It can be played at various points; for example, with 8 ♕c2 ♘bd7 9 ♘f3. In fact, sometimes White plays ♘f3 on move 4 or 5 and then heads for this position. Fortunately, 4 cxd5 exd5 5 ♗g5 allows us to avoid many difficult lines brought on by too early a ♘f3, as explained in the note to 3 ♘c3 above.

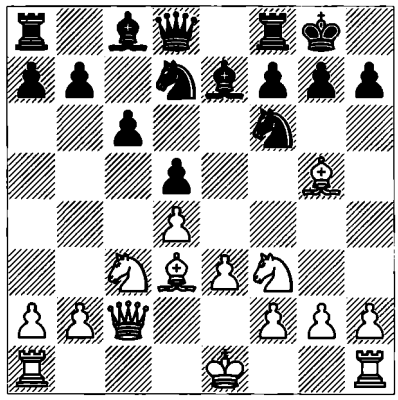
8 ♘ge2!? is the other way White develops (or with 8 ♕c2 first). Then White's main plan is to expand in the centre with f3 and e4, either in conjunction with 0-0 or 0-0-0. Many great wins have resulted from this strategy, but I'm recommending a classical approach with ♘f3, which is equally interesting and less subject to tactical issues and counterattack.

8...♘bd7

This time 8...♗g4 has a different flavour, since White can play 9 ♕b3 ♕b6 (9...♗xf3 10 gxf3 with 0-0-0 and a kingside attack to follow) 10 ♕c2 ♗xf3 (White was threatening ♗xh7+, and neither 10...♘bd7 11 ♘e5 nor 10...h6 11 ♗h4 ♖e8 12 ♘e5 is desirable for Black) 11 gxf3 ♘bd7 12 ♖g1 ♔h8 13 0-0-0 and White can build up on the g-file with a strong attack, meeting ...g6 with f4-f5 if needed. The lesson here is that Black shouldn't let White have the bishop-pair and a central pawn-mass without getting something in return.

9 ♕c2 *(D)*

B



9...♖e8

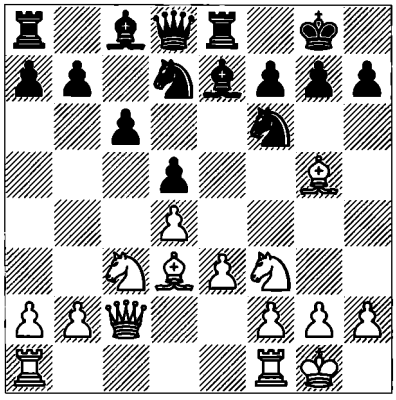
Black nearly always plays this way; he takes over the e-file and prepares ...♘f8 in order to protect h7, thus freeing his f6-knight to move. The knight very often goes to either e6 or g6 later. 9...h6 is weakening after 10 ♗h4, which is the normal retreat. However, White can also consider 10 ♗f4!? ♘h5 11 ♗e5 ♘xe5 (11...f6?! 12 ♗g3 ♘xg3 13 hxg3 opens White's h-file and creates kingside weaknesses which can be exploited by ♘h4) 12 ♘xe5 (12 dxe5!?) 12...♗d6 13 0-0 ♕e7 14 f4 with a nice central position.

10 0-0 *(D)*

10 h3 is another version of the h3 set-up that we will be featuring via 11 h3. One idea of advancing the h-pawn on this move (rather than

after 10 0-0 ♘f8 11 h3) is to keep open options such as 0-0-0 and g4 (which is too risky in conjunction with 0-0). I wouldn't discourage anyone from playing this way; it has been rather successful and adds a new dimension to the play. But in this book I'll be emphasizing a calmer, positionally-based strategy, and 0-0-0 not only invites counterattack via ...c5 or ...b5, but it also makes a minority attack by b4-b5 out of the question. To be clear, 10 h3 ♘f8 11 0-0 transposes to our main line, and there are numerous lines in which 10 h3 is followed by 0-0 anyway (e.g., after 10...♘f8 11 ♗f4 ♗d6 12 ♗xd6 ♕xd6 13 0-0), so any games that you may find with 10 h3 and 0-0 are worthy of study.

B



10...♘f8

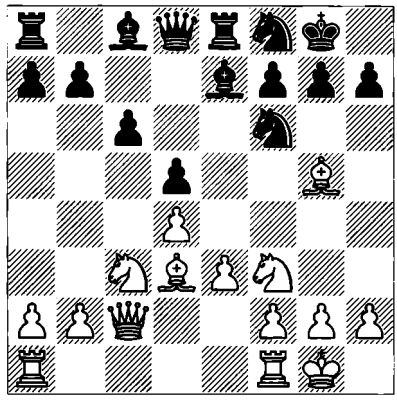
The main move by far, setting up the position described above. Otherwise it's a little difficult to develop the other pieces; e.g.:

a) 10...h6?! 11 ♗f4 just encourages White to put his bishop where it would have liked to go in the first place, had Black not had the opportunity to play ...♗d6 in one jump (from f8). After 11 ♗f4, the only way for Black to make sense of 10...h6 would be to exchange the bishop by 11...♘h5?, but this allows the tactic 12 ♘xd5!, since 12...cxd5? 13 ♗c7 wins the queen. Be aware of this trick – you might be surprised how often it comes up in other positions!

b) 10...g6 has a better idea than 10...h6, namely, to guard h7 so that Black can play ...♘h5, and also so that his other knight can go to b6 and help defend against a minority attack. White can probably gain an advantage, but it's not easy; for example, 11 ♖ab1 ♘h5 12 ♗xe7 (12 ♗h6!? is interesting, to be followed by a central break with e4) 12...♕xe7 13 b4 a6 14 a4 (14 ♘a4!? ♘g7 15 h3 ♘e6 16 ♖fc1 ♘g5 17 ♕e2 ♘xf3+ 18 ♕xf3 ±) 14...♘b6 15 ♖fe1 ♗g4 16 ♘d2 ♖ad8 17 a5 ♘c8 18 f3 ♗e6 19 ♘b3 ♘d6 20 ♘c5 ♗c8 21 ♖bd1 f5! 22 ♕f2 ♖f8 (Sunye-Soppe, São Bernardo 1999) and now 23 ♘3a4 ♘f6 24 ♘b6 ♘d7 25 ♘bxd7! ♗xd7 26 ♕g3 is the sort of position in which White can build up patiently.

We now return to 10...♘f8 *(D)*:

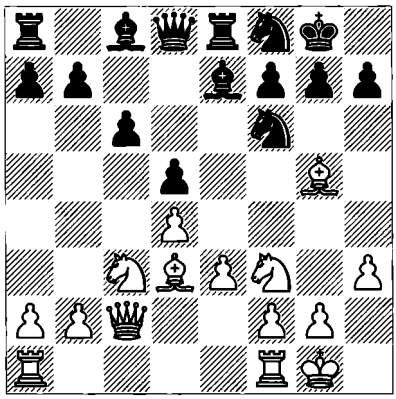
W



The position after 10...♘f8 is fundamental to the Exchange Variation with ♘f3. By putting his knight on f3, White has denied himself the plan of f3 and e4 for the time being (contrast this with ♘ge2 systems). But the knight controls e5 and can go there at the right moment, when there can follow either f3 or the ambitious f4. Another plan involves playing e4, often preceded by a rook move to e1 (then White gets a typical isolated-pawn trade-off of superior activity in return for his weakness on d4). On the queenside, White's best-known strategy is the minority attack by b4-b5 (directed against a pawn on c6). The point is that after White plays b4-b5, often supported by a pawn on a4, he may be able to play bxc6. Then if a pawn recaptures (...bxc6), it becomes a backward pawn on a half-open file. And if a piece recaptures on c6, Black's d-pawn, having lost its natural support, becomes isolated. This and related ideas are best learned by example, because their timing makes all the difference between success and failure.

11 h3 *(D)*

Karpov brought this modest advance to general attention with some nice wins. It is a



quintessential strategic move, which Yermolinsky describes as a "useful waiting" move, noting that it covers g4, provides a retreat on h2 for White's bishop following its common redeployment to f4, and underlines how "Black's 'liberated' c8-bishop suddenly finds itself deprived of activity." The point about covering g4 is particularly important, because not only does Black no longer have the possibility of playing ...♗g4-h5-g6, but he also doesn't have the move ...♘g4, which is a standard response to White's move ♘e5. On top of all this, White retains a flexible choice of plans, including the minority attack, breaking in the centre, and playing ♘e5 followed by f3 or f4. A deep, fascinating position. At this point, we'll examine:

1.111: 11...♘g6 15
1.112: 11...♗e6 17

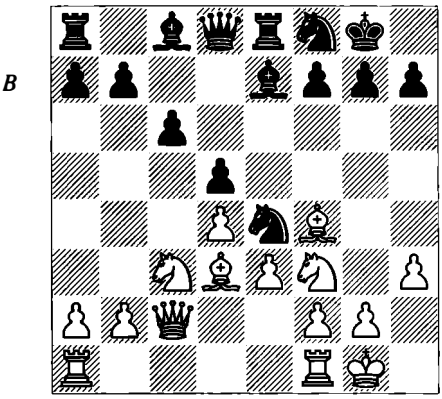
Since this position is key to your entire practice and understanding, a study of the alternatives is strongly urged:

a) 11...♘e4 would be a successful simplification if it weren't for 12 ♗f4! *(D)*.

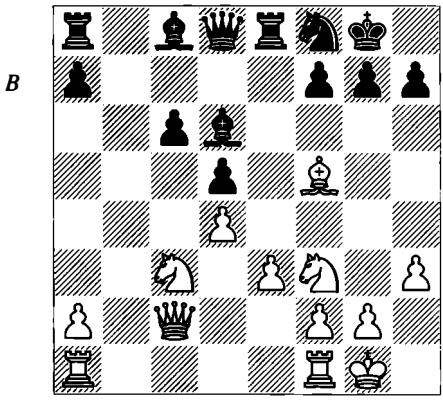
Remember that this is in some sense where the bishop 'wants' to be. Now e4 is attacked three times, so Black has to react:

a1) I.Sokolov-Oll, European Team Ch, Pula 1997 continued 12...f5 13 ♘e5 ♘g6 14 ♘xg6 hxg6 15 f3 ♘f6 16 ♕f2 ♘h5 17 ♗e5 ♗h4 18 ♕d2 ♗g3, and here Sokolov suggests 19 f4 ±. After ♘e2, White will have the possibility of advancing on either wing after preparation.

a2) 12...♘xc3 13 bxc3 is almost always a bad trade for Black, if only because, having strengthened d4, White can attack in the centre with either c4 or e4; for example, 13...♘g6 14 ♖ab1 b6 15 ♖fe1 ♗d6 16 ♗xd6 ♕xd6 17 e4 dxe4 18 ♗xe4 ♗d7 19 c4 ±.



a3) 12...♘g5 13 ♗xg5 (13 ♘xg5 ♗xg5 14 ♗h2 with the idea ♖ab1 and b4 is an option) 13...♗xg5 14 b4 ♗e7 15 b5 (a pure minority attack, as described above) 15...♗d6 (15...c5? 16 dxc5 ♗xc5 17 ♖fd1 ± shows why ...c5 is so often unplayable in the pure Exchange Variation) 16 bxc6 bxc6 17 ♗f5! *(D)*.

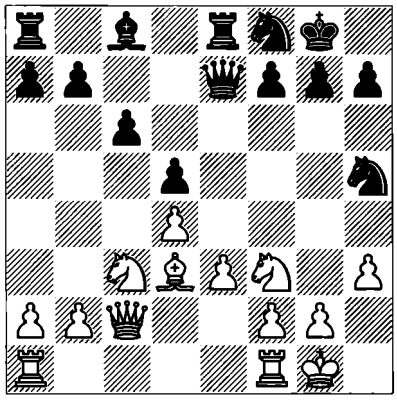


White has two points with this move: he wants to eliminate a piece from Black's potential kingside counterattack, and he wants to trade off a possible defender of the c6-pawn. In the next few moves the theme of exploiting that pawn weakness is illustrated beautifully: 17...♕a5 18 ♗xc8 ♖axc8 19 ♖ab1 ♘e6 (19...c5 20 ♘xd5! cxd4 21 ♕f5! ♕a6 22 ♘g5 f6 23 ♘e4 is quite strong) 20 ♖b7 ♖b8 21 ♖fb1 ♖xb7 22 ♖xb7 ♖b8 23 ♖xb8+ ♗xb8 24 ♘a4 ♕b5 25 ♘c5 g6 (after 25...♘xc5 26 dxc5 g6 27 ♕b3! White forces a highly favourable knight-versus-bishop ending) 26 a4! ♕c4 27 ♕xc4 dxc4 28 ♘xe6

fxe6 29 ♔f1 +– and White won quickly in Djurić-Pfleger, Serbia-Bavaria match 1984.

b) 11...g6 has the idea of ...♘e6-g7 and ...♗f5: 12 ♖ab1 (12 ♗f4 might be worth a look; for example, 12...♘e6 with the ...♘g7/...♗f5 idea can be countered by 13 ♗h2 or 13 ♗e5!? ♘g7 14 ♖ab1 ♗f5 15 b4 ♗xd3 16 ♕xd3 a6 17 ♖fc1 ♘f5 18 ♘a4 ±) 12...♘e6 (12...a5 13 a3 ♘e6 14 ♗h6 ♘g7 15 b4 axb4 16 axb4 ♗f5 17 b5 ♖a3 18 ♖a1 – Ivanchuk) 13 ♗h4 ♘g7 14 b4 a6 15 a4 ♘f5 16 ♗xf6 (16 ♗g5!? is also interesting, because Black needs a plan, and 16...♘e4 17 ♗xe7 ♕xe7 18 b5 yields a small but typical edge for White) 16...♗xf6 17 b5 axb5 18 axb5 ♘d6 (Gelfand-Lobron, Munich 1994) and here simply 19 bxc6 bxc6 20 ♖a1 ♗b7 21 ♘a4 ♗a6 22 ♗xa6 ♖xa6 23 ♘c5 ♖xa1 24 ♖xa1 puts Black on the defensive; e.g., 24...♕c7 25 ♖a4 ♖c8 26 ♕a2 ±.

c) 11...♘h5!? (Yermolinsky suggests that this might be Black's best continuation; however, White has an enormous statistical advantage after it) 12 ♗xe7 ♕xe7 *(D)* (this stops b4 for a move).



c1) The clever 13 ♖fe1 ♕f6?! 14 ♘e5! ♘g6 15 f4! demonstrates a fairly typical plan. Yermolinsky-Hergott, North Bay 1994 saw 15...♘xe5 (it's hard to find a good alternative) 16 fxe5, and White obviously stood better.

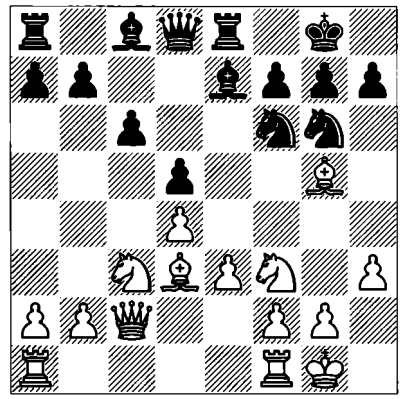
c2) 13 ♖ab1 ♗e6 14 b4 ♖ac8 15 ♖fc1 g6 16 b5 (16 ♘a4 ± is more conservative) 16...c5!? (16...cxb5 17 ♗xb5 ♗f5 18 ♗d3 ♗xd3 19 ♕xd3 ♘f6 20 ♕d1 ♖c7 21 ♘b5 ±) 17 dxc5 ♖xc5 18 ♕a4 ♖ec8 19 ♘e2 ♖xc1+ (Kasimdzhanov-Jonkman, Wijk aan Zee 1999) and now 20 ♖xc1! is straightforward; e.g., 20...♖xc1+ 21 ♘xc1 ♕c7 22 ♘b3 b6 23 ♘bd4 ± with better minor pieces.

d) 11...♗d6 corresponds to the normal plan in several Exchange lines, but here White should keep the advantage with yet another strategy: 12 ♖ae1! ♗d7 (the point is 12...♘g6? 13 e4! dxe4 14 ♘xe4) 13 a3!? (13 e4! dxe4 14 ♘xe4 ♗e7 15 ♘c5!) 13...♘g6 14 e4 dxe4 15 ♘xe4 ♗e7 16 ♘c5 ♗c8 (Scherbakov-Polovodin, Tula 1999) 17 ♗xf6! ♗xf6 18 ♖xe8+ ♕xe8 19 ♖e1 ♕d8 20 ♗c4 and White is extremely active.

1.111)

11...♘g6 *(D)*

Black logically prevents a bishop retreat and covers e5.



12 ♗xf6

Not necessarily best, but proceeding with a clear strategic plan. You really should look at the alternatives:

a) 12 ♖ab1 ♘e4 is the typical freeing move for Black. Then a unique approach is 13 ♗f4!?:

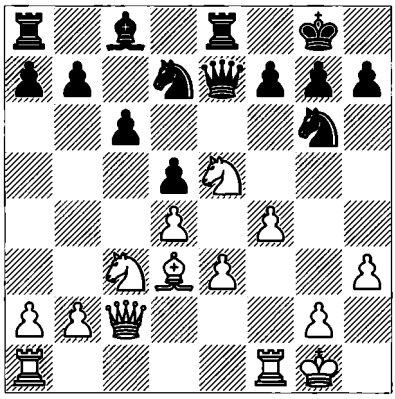
a1) 13...♗d6 14 ♘xe4 ♗xf4 15 exf4 dxe4 16 ♗xe4 ♘xf4 17 ♗xh7+ ♔h8 18 ♗e4 ♕f6 19 ♖fe1 ♗e6 20 a3 g6 21 ♖e3 and White is beginning to consolidate the extra pawn, Dydyshko-Grabarczyk, Lubniewice 2002.

a2) 13...♘xf4 14 exf4 f5 15 ♘e5 ♗d6 16 ♔h2 with the idea f3 yields a small advantage, as does 16 b4. But White can also play with two knights versus two bishops by 16 ♗xe4!? fxe4 17 f3! exf3 18 ♖xf3 ♗e6! 19 ♕f2 ♕f6 20 ♖e1, preparing to advance his kingside majority yet still reserving the right to play b4. The point is that there are all sorts of creative plans and

White isn't limited to a simple queenside advance.

b) 12 ♘e5 has done very well in this position, and is probably the most practical move: 12...♘d7 (the standard reply) 13 ♗xe7 ♕xe7 14 f4 *(D)*.

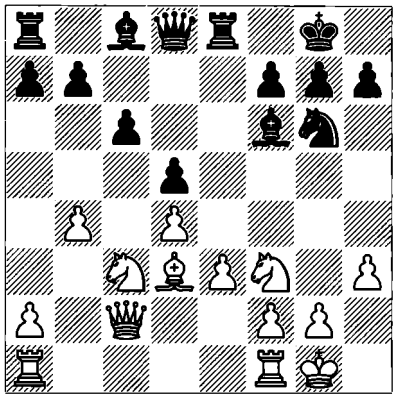
B



It's hard for Black to defend against direct attack; e.g., 14...♘gf8 15 ♖ae1 ♘b6 (White already stands considerably better; after 15...f6 16 ♘f3 ♘b6, both 17 f5! and 17 e4 are strong) 16 f5 f6 17 ♘f3 ♗d7 (after 17...♕c7, 18 e4 dxe4 19 ♕b3+ favours White, or he can play the interesting attack 18 ♕f2 ♗d7 19 g4 ♖ad8 20 g5, as in Maurischat-Wartlick, Willsbach 1997) 18 ♕b3! (threatening e4) 18...♕f7 19 e4 dxe4 20 ♕xf7+ ♔xf7 21 ♘xe4 ± Golod-Jonkman, Tel Aviv 2001.

12...♗xf6 13 b4 *(D)*

B



13...♗e7

Two fundamentally different strategies for White are illustrated by 13...a6:

a) 14 a4 looks natural, but it uses up a square for White's knight. 14...♗e7 15 b5 and then:

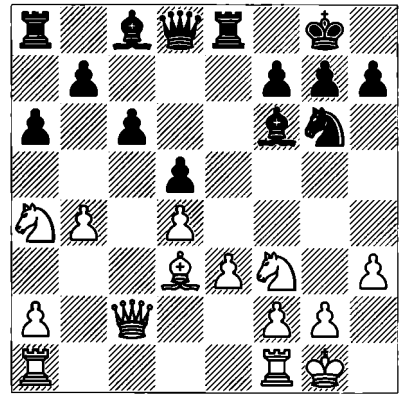
a1) 15...axb5?! not only opens up a file on the queenside, but it also makes ♘a4-c5 possible; e.g., 16 axb5 ♗d7 17 bxc6 bxc6 and now White can play 18 ♘a4 with the idea ♘c5, but he does even better with 18 ♘d2, 19 ♘b3 and then placing a knight on c5.

a2) 15...a5 is a legitimate possibility, when White will need extra time to manoeuvre a knight to c5.

a3) 15...♗d6 16 bxc6 bxc6 17 ♗f5! (a key move which is used time and again to neutralize a potential attack by Black on the kingside) 17...a5! (to stop ♘a4-c5) 18 ♖ab1 ♕f6 19 ♗xc8 ♖axc8 20 ♖b7 with a playable game for Black, although I'd rather be White.

b) In that example, White allowed Black to play ...a5 and delay White's queenside attack. 14 ♘a4! *(D)* is a flexible alternative.

B



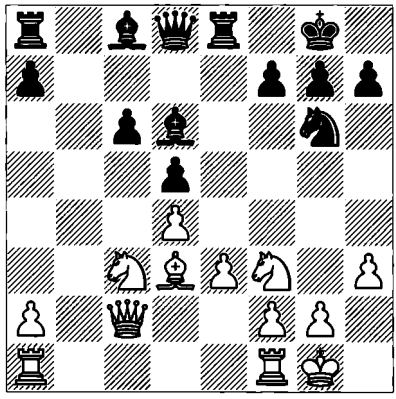
14...♗e7 (Black heads to his favourite post on d6) 15 ♖ab1 (or 15 ♘c5 ♗d6 16 ♗f5!, and now White intends a4 and b5 without ...a5 having a preventative effect) 15...♗d6 16 ♖fc1 ♕f6?! (but 16...♖b8 17 ♗f5 ± fits in with White's plans) 17 ♘b6 ♗xh3! (the point; he can't let this bishop be exchanged without losing all attacking hopes) 18 ♘xa8 ♖xa8 19 ♘e5! ♗e6 20 f4! ♘f8 21 a4 ♕e7 22 b5 cxb5 23 axb5 a5 24 e4 and Black doesn't have enough for the exchange, Ilinčić-Marcetić, Niš 1995.

14 b5 ♗d6 15 bxc6 bxc6 *(D)*

16 ♘b1!

A pretty idea: White unblocks the c-file while rendering ...♕f6 and ...♗xh3 a harmless idea.

16...♕f6 17 ♘bd2 h6



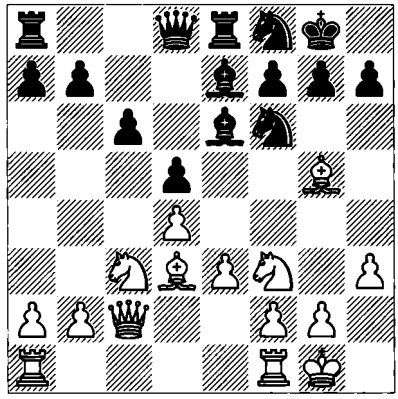
17...♗d7 18 ♖ab1 h5?! 19 ♖fc1 ♖ad8 20 ♖b7 ♗b8 21 ♖cb1, Mangione-Insabato, Palermo 2004.

18 ♖fc1 ♘e7

Yermolinsky-Gild.Garcia, St Martin 1993. Now 19 ♖ab1 is the easiest way to demonstrate White's superiority.

1.112)

11...♗e6 *(D)*



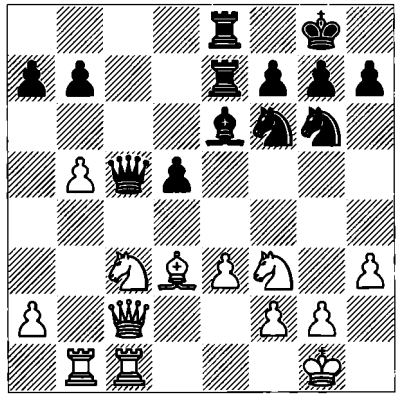
Probably the most popular move, simply developing.

12 ♘e5

White's strategy is straightforward: put a knight on e5 and support it with f4! It's an uncomplicated set-up that causes Black problems, but also not the only path to a conventional advantage. Here are a few alternatives that clarify some issues:

a) 12 ♖ab1 is played with the standard minority attack in mind, and in fact it's one of the fastest ways to get moving. But its theoretical reputation has been perhaps unfairly maligned by the idea that the freeing move 12...♘e4!? equalizes straightaway after 13 ♗xe7 ♖xe7 14 ♘xe4 (14 b4 should give White a small advantage) 14...dxe4 15 ♗xe4 ♗xa2 16 ♖a1 ♗d5. Nevertheless, this is a position in which White can easily cause minor problems; e.g., 17 ♗xd5 ♕xd5 (17...cxd5?! 18 ♖fc1 ♘e6 19 ♕b3 f6 20 ♖c3 a5 21 ♘e1 with the idea ♘d3 is strong) 18 ♖a4 ♘e6 19 ♖fa1 a6 20 ♖a5 ♕d8 21 ♘e5. This isn't much, but if Black's queenside majority is immobilized, then in the long run White's central majority might well prove useful.

b) 12 ♗f4 is very interesting and also promises a slight edge. Van Wely-Yusupov, Frankfurt rapid 2000 went 12...♗d6 13 ♗xd6 (13 ♖ac1 affords good prospects in the case of 13...♗xf4 14 exf4 h6 15 ♖fe1 and now 15...♕d6!? 16 ♘e5 ± or 15...♗d7 16 ♖e5!) 13...♕xd6 14 ♖ab1 ♖e7 (14...a5! is normal, with a very slight edge for White following 15 ♘e5 ♘6d7 16 ♘xd7 ♗xd7 17 ♘a4; e.g., 17...g6 18 ♖bc1 f5 19 ♘c5 ♗c8 20 ♖fe1 ♘d7 21 ♘a4) 15 b4 ♖ae8 16 ♖fc1 ♘g6 17 b5 c5 18 dxc5 ♕xc5 *(D)*.



Scherbakov says: "White should be careful about his kingside – such ideas as ...♗xh3 followed by ...♖xe3 are hovering over the board". Typically, however, White's much better minor pieces protect him against random attacks and here, for example, 19 ♕a4! establishes a plus. And although the idea is not a fundamental feature of the position, 19 ♘e4! is also strong: 19...♘xe4 (19...♕xc2 20 ♘xf6+ gxf6 21 ♗xc2 ± and ♘d4) 20 ♗xe4 (or 20 ♕xc5 ♘xc5 21 ♖xc5 ±) 20...♕b6 21 ♗xg6 hxg6 22

♕c5 followed soon by ♘d4 with an indisputable advantage.

c) Finally, 12 ♖fe1 is subtle and worth considering; White plays prophylactically against future kingside pressure, while also preparing to counter Black's plan to exchange pieces: 12...♘6d7 13 ♗f4! ♘g6 14 ♗h2 ♘df8 15 ♖ad1 (15 ♘a4!? ±) 15...♘h4 16 ♘xh4 ♗xh4 17 e4!? dxe4 18 ♗xe4 with the threat of d5 and a definite advantage, Yermolinsky-Yusupov, Chicago 1996.

12...♘6d7 13 ♗xe7 ♕xe7

13...♖xe7 is a solid recapture, although White got the better of the situation in the game Kramnik-Renet, Clichy 1995 after 14 f4!? (14 ♘f3 keeps White's basic ideas intact, with the initial threat of ♘g5) 14...f6 15 ♘f3 ♘b6 16 ♖ae1!? ♘c8 17 g4 ♘d6 18 ♕g2 (18 f5 ♗f7 19 ♕h2 ± Kramnik) 18...♔h8 19 f5 ♗f7 20 ♔h1 ♕c7?! (Kramnik gives 20...♕e8! 21 ♕g3 ♖d8, but then 22 g5! is effective) 21 ♖g1 g5?! 22 h4 h6 23 ♕h2 ♘e8 24 ♖g3! ♘h7 25 ♔g2 ♗g8 26 hxg5 hxg5 27 ♕h6 ♕b6 28 ♖e2 ♖d8 29 ♖h3 and White had a winning position.

14 f4! f6 15 ♘f3 ♗f7 16 ♖ae1 c5 17 ♕f2 *(D)*

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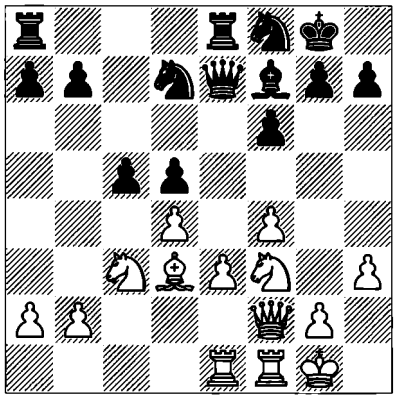


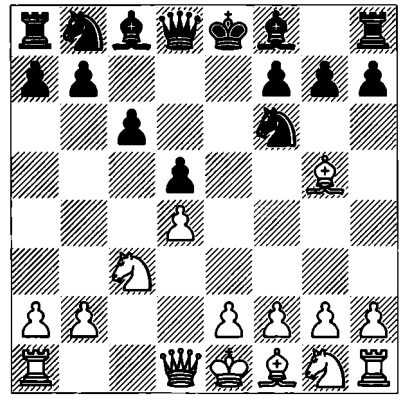
This structure seems to favour White so long as he has enough control over e4. M.Gurevich-Akopian, Barcelona 1992 continued 17...♘b6 18 ♘h4 (18 ♗b5 ♖ed8 19 e4! works out to a modest advantage) 18...cxd4?! 19 exd4 ♕c7 20 ♖c1 ♕d8, and now instead of 21 ♘b5 ♘c4!, White could have kept a meaningful advantage with several moves, including 21 ♕g3 and 21 ♗b5 ♖e6 22 ♘f5.

Probably the early ♘e5 and f4 plan isn't the very best, but it's dynamic and promises complex strategic play. These h3 systems are extremely flexible, so you'll never run out of ways to play them.

1.12)

5...c6 *(D)*

W



6 e3

With this move, White makes an important decision. If you don't like the queenless middlegame we see in our main line below, you can prevent 6...♗f5 with 6 ♕c2; this is probably the best way to go if you absolutely can't afford a draw or want to avoid a long technical struggle. Then play will often transpose to Section 1.11, e.g. by 6...♗e7 7 e3 0-0 8 ♗d3 ♘bd7 9 ♘f3, but you have to be aware of two deviations:

a) 6...♘a6 (intending ...♘b4 and ...♗f5) 7 e3 ♘b4 8 ♕b1!? g6 9 ♕d1! ♗f5 10 ♖c1 and White is doing well.

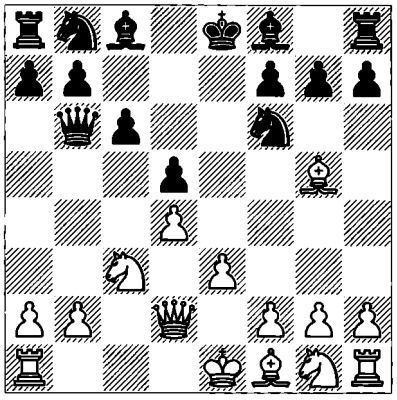
b) 6...♗e7 7 e3 (7 ♘f3 g6!? 8 e3 ♗f5 9 ♗d3 ♗xd3 10 ♕xd3 is roughly equal, but not drawn) 7...♘bd7 and now 8 ♗d3 ♘h5 9 ♗xe7 ♕xe7 10 ♘f3 allows the bothersome 10...♘f4 (see note 'c' to Black's 6th move in Section 1.11). However, 8 ♘f3! is more accurate, or at any rate much easier, if you play ♘f3 in the main lines (which we do). Then 8...♘h5 9 ♗xe7 ♕xe7 10 ♗e2 ± is fine (or even 10 0-0-0!?, when I like White but the position is obviously complicated). On the other hand, 8...♘f8, intending ...♘e6, ...g6, ...♘g7 and ...♗f5 is then slightly more effective than it is without ♕c2.

6...♗f5

a) 6...♘bd7 7 ♗d3 ♗e7 transposes to note 'c' to Black's 6th move in Section 1.11, where we saw that White could sidestep Black's idea of meeting 8 ♕c2 with 8...♘h5 by playing 8 ♘f3.

b) 6...♕b6 7 ♕d2! *(D)* (for the record, I think that is the only effective move; Black can hold the balance versus 7 ♕c2, while 7 ♗xf6 ♕xb2 8 ♕c1 ♕xc1+! 9 ♖xc1 gxf6 10 ♘xd5 ♗a3 ultimately results in approximate equality).

B



7...♘e4 8 ♘xe4 dxe4 9 ♘e2 ♗e6 10 ♘c3 ♗b4 11 ♗e2 ♕a5 12 ♗h4 (12 ♗f4 ♘d7 13 0-0 ±) 12...♘d7 13 0-0 ♘b6 14 ♕c2 (or 14 ♖fc1, when Henrichs gives 14...♘c4'!' 15 ♕c2 ♗xc3, but then follows 16 ♗xc4! ♗xc4 17 ♕xe4+ ♗e6 18 ♖xc3 ±) 14...f5 15 a3 ♗xc3 16 bxc3 (or 16 b4!? ±) 16...♗c4 (16...♘c4 17 ♖fb1) 17 ♖fb1 ♗xe2 (17...♕a6 18 ♗xc4! ♕xc4 19 ♖b4 ♕e6 20 c4 ±) 18 ♕xe2 0-0 (18...♕xc3? is well met by 19 ♕h5+ g6 20 ♕h6 or 19 ♕a2) 19 c4 ♕a6 20 ♖c1 ♖f7 21 ♕c2! c5 22 d5 with a strong passed pawn and a comfortable advantage.

7 ♕f3

This forces an exchanging sequence that is usually regarded as the best way to play the position, and it makes sense. The idea is that Black can't be allowed to develop his c8-bishop and go unpunished. Nevertheless, some players may want to avoid the forthcoming queenless middlegame and might prefer:

a) 7 ♗d3 ♗xd3 8 ♕xd3 is just a chess game. White is better developed and able, for example, to support central action and/or, with considerable care, to pursue a minority attack. Experience shows that Black can get complete equality (White shouldn't be too quick to play b4 and weaken squares like c4 when his bishop is gone), but this sort of position is an option when you're not interested in testing theory.

b) 7 ♘ge2 with the idea ♘g3 is also playable and similar to some lines we'll see below. It, too, is doubtless equal in the abstract, but there are plenty of pieces on the board, which means that you can create a game with fully-fledged chances.

We now return to 7 ♕f3 *(D)*:

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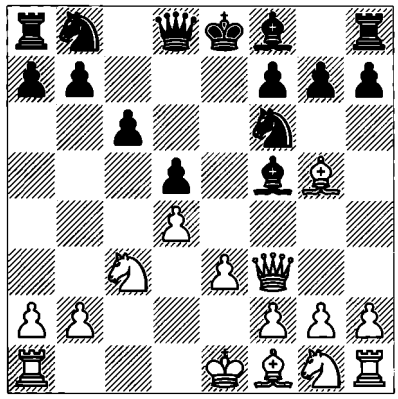


7...♗g6

7...♗e6 doesn't control d3, but that isn't disastrous; for example, 8 ♗xf6 ♕xf6 9 ♕xf6 gxf6 10 ♗d3 ♘d7 11 ♘ge2 ♘b6 12 ♘g3 ♗d6 13 0-0-0!? (13 f3!) 13...0-0-0 14 ♘f5 ♗f8 (14...♗xf5 15 ♗xf5+ would be horribly depressing for Black, since you'd probably be looking at another 70 moves of defending, or of course a loss along the way) 15 g4 ♔c7 16 ♘e2 ♘c8 17 h3 ♘d6 18 ♘fg3 ± A.Aleksandrov-Dokuchaev, Russia Cup, Smolensk 1997.

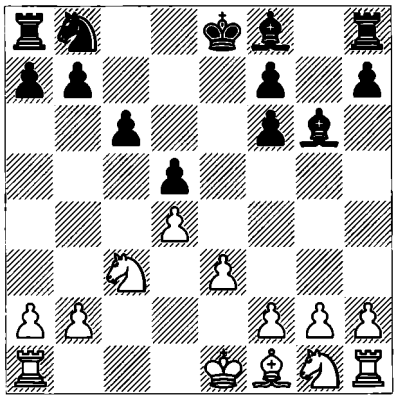
8 ♗xf6 ♕xf6

8...gxf6 should make White happy. I like 9 h4 h5 10 ♘ge2 best, but the well-known game Petrosian-Barcza, Budapest 1955 went 9 ♕d1 (always given an '!'; the idea is that otherwise White would have to answer ...♕b6 with 0-0-0; actually, I doubt that 9...♕b6 is really a problem, but ♕d1 is a fairly useful move anyway) 9...♕b6 10 ♕d2 ♘a6 11 ♘f3 0-0-0 12 a3 ♘c7 13 b4 ♘e8 14 ♗e2 ♘d6 15 ♕a2, and White is supposed to have a clear advantage, which I question; regardless, 8...gxf6 is a poor idea.

9 ♕xf6 gxf6 *(D)*

An awful lot of words have been expended over this position, but essentially they come

W



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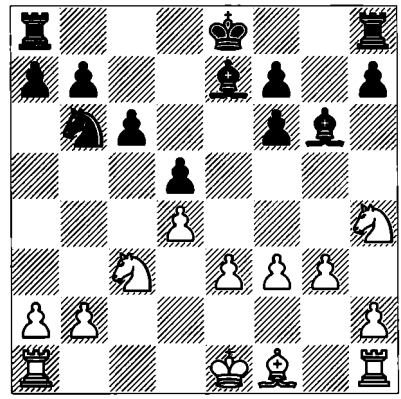


down to the same thing: Black has isolated and doubled f-pawns as well as an isolated h-pawn, but White, having no open file, has a difficult time exploiting these weaknesses. However, he might be able to occupy the traditionally strong outpost on f5 and do damage in that way; for a good example, see the game Aleksandrov-Dokuchaev in the note to 7...♗g6 above. For Black's part, putting a knight on d6 will go a long way towards solving his problems, as that piece watches over f5 and exerts influence on the centre. This position is undoubtedly drawn with best play, and a leading grandmaster will draw the black position a large percentage of the time. On lower levels, however, all the way up to 2500, White has managed to win a reasonable percentage of the time, perhaps 35% on average, and importantly, he almost never loses. In practice, this has led to above-average performance rating leads for White (ironically, that is often the result of a 'drawish' line in chess). Presumably many players will still prefer to play 6 ♕c2 (see above), but this is a handy position to know something about, and I'll show a few sample lines.

10 h4

This move is the most likely to generate chances. In a database of modern games, it scored 18 wins of 44 games, with only 2 losses. The other main move is 10 ♔d2, but I'd like to examine two games with another move that has been disparaged a bit, i.e., 10 ♘f3. Then play has gone 10...♘d7 11 ♘h4 ♗e7 12 g3 ♘b6 13 f3 *(D)* with these ideas:

a) 13...0-0 14 ♔f2 ♖fe8 15 ♖d1 ♘c8 16 ♘g2 ♘d6 17 h4 h5 18 ♘f4 ♗f8 19 ♖e1 ♗h6 20 b3!? ♔g7 (20...♗xf4 21 gxf4 gives White chances with the ideas ♗h3 and ♘e2-g3, for example, although I admit that Black needn't be overly worried) 21 ♗g2 ♖e7 22 ♖e2 ♖ae8. All pretty normal-looking so far, and fully equal, although White missed some opportunities to stir things up. The interesting part is that he still managed to create problems for Black: 23 ♖he1 a5 (it was probably time for 23...♗xf4) 24 e4! dxe4 25 fxe4 ♖d8 26 ♗f3 ♘e8 27 ♖d1 ♖ed7 28 d5! cxd5 29 ♖xd5 ♖xd5 30 ♘cxd5. This has the threat of ♗xh5, so Black played 30...♘d6! 31 e5 fxe5 32 ♖xe5 a4?! (but 32...♖e8 33 ♖xe8 ♘xe8 34 ♗xh5 gives White an extra pawn and an obvious advantage, as does 32...♖c8 33 ♘xh5+ ♗xh5 34 ♗xh5 ♖c2+ 35 ♖e2) 33 bxa4 ♖c8 and now 34 ♗xh5 was advantageous in V.Milov-Pigusov, New York Open 1998, but 34 ♘xh5+ and 34 ♘xg6 fxg6 35 ♖e7+ ♔f8 36 ♖e6 are even stronger.

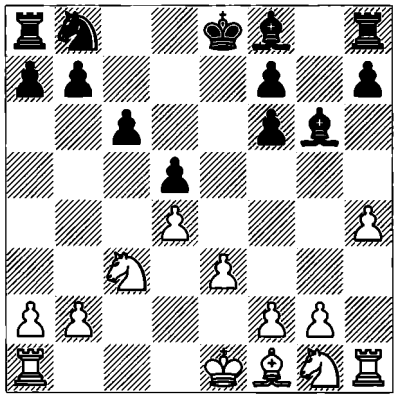
b) Van Wely-Short, Wijk aan Zee 2005 went 13...a5 14 ♔f2 a4 15 ♖c1 ♘c8, and although White ultimately won after 16 ♗e2 ♘d6 17 ♖hd1, Black had some easy improvements, so I'd suggest that White can cause more trouble with 16 ♘g2 ♘d6 (16...♗d6 17 e4 dxe4 18 ♘xe4 ± with the idea 18...♗e7 19 ♘c5) 17 ♘f4. For example, 17...0-0 18 h4 h5 19 ♗d3 ♗xd3 (19...♔h7 20 ♗c2!) 20 ♘xd3 and White is having all the fun.

We now return to 10 h4 *(D)*:

10...♘d7

The best players appear to avoid 10...h5, which may be playable but creates another target for White on h5. Instead, 10...h6 11 h5 ♗f5 is similar to our main line, in that Black wants to get the bishop back to e6 before it can be

B



exchanged and give White an unchallenged outpost on f5.

11 h5 ♗f5 12 f3

12 ♘f3 ♘b6 13 ♘h4 ♗e6 14 ♗d3 0-0-0 "doesn't achieve a great deal for White" (Cox). I find no games with this position, and grant his point, but can imagine that in a practical game White might have some chances; for example, 15 b3 ♔b8 (15...♗b4 16 ♖c1 ♔b8 17 f3 ♘c8 18 ♔f2 ♘d6 19 g4) 16 f3 ♖e8 17 ♔f2 ♗h6 18 ♖ae1 ♘c8 19 ♘e2!? ♘d6 20 ♘g3 ♗f8 21 ♖c1 h6 22 ♘gf5 ♘xf5 23 ♗xf5 with just enough of an edge to bother Black. I don't doubt that Black can draw such variations with accurate play; I'm just not convinced how easy they are.

12...♗e6 13 ♗d3 f5 14 ♘ge2 ♗d6 15 h6!?

Trying to set up the move ♖h5 to put further pressure on e5. White has another possibility in 15 ♘f4 *(D)*; e.g.:

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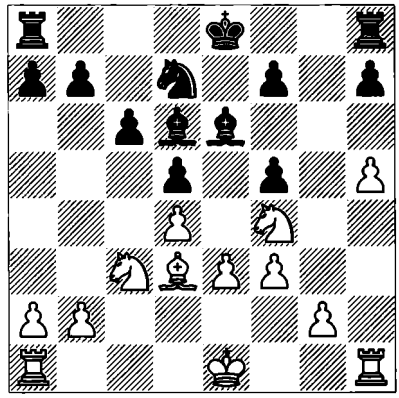

a) 15...♗xf4?! 16 exf4 ♘b6 17 b3 ♔d8 18 ♘d1! ♘c8 19 ♘e3 ♘d6 and now 20 ♔f2 or 20 h6 ♔e7 21 ♖h5 ♔f6 22 ♔f2. when White has a substantial advantage based upon a timely g4 – 22...♖ag8 23 g4 fxg4 24 f5 ♗d7 25 ♘xg4+, for instance.

b) 15...♖g8 16 ♘ce2 0-0-0 17 ♔f2 ♘f6 18 ♖h3 ♗d7 19 ♖g3 h6 20 ♖h1 ♖de8 21 ♖xg8 ♖xg8 22 ♘g3 ♖g5 23 ♘fe2!, intending f4 and ♘xf5.

15...♔e7 16 ♔f2 ♖ag8 *(D)*

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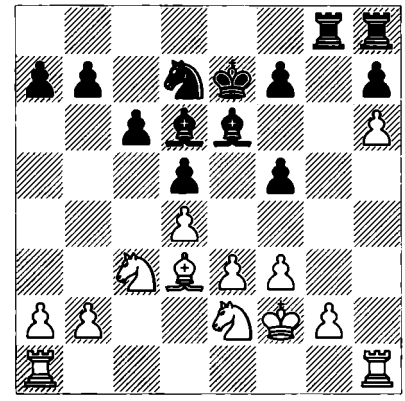

Cox says that it is "already apparent that Black was [is] not at all worse." But I still think that White has what chances there are.

17 ♘f4 ♘f6

We just saw a line resembling 17...♗xf4?! 18 exf4 ♔f6 19 ♘d1 ♘b6 20 b3 ♘c8 21 ♘e3 ♘d6 22 ♖h5 ♗c8 23 ♖e1 ♖e8 24 g4! fxg4 25 fxg4 ♘e4+ 26 ♔f3 ±.

18 ♘h5

Here too White might try 18 ♘ce2; e.g., 18...♖g5 (18...♔d7 19 ♘h5 ♖g6 20 ♘g7 ♖g8 21 ♖ag1 ♖g5 22 g4! fxg4 23 f4) 19 b4!? a6 20 ♖ab1 ♗d7 21 a4 b5 22 ♗c2 and Black is still alright, but will be defending for quite some time, having to keep an eye on the f-pawn and the queenside. He also has a bad bishop, which is a short-term asset defensively, but a potential problem in the long run.

18...♘xh5 19 ♖xh5 ♔f6 20 ♘e2 b6

Now:

a) 21 f4 was played in Bacrot-Short, Albert (1) 2000, which proceeded 21...c5?! (21...♖g4! 22 g3 c5 = is more accurate), when 22 dxc5 would have secured some advantage; for example, 22...♗xc5 (22...bxc5 23 ♘g3 ♖b8 24 b3 c4 25 ♗xf5 cxb3 26 axb3 ♖xb3 and now 27 ♖c1 ± or 27 ♗xe6 fxe6 28 ♖a6 ±) 23 ♖c1 ♖c8 24 ♗a6 ♖cd8 25 ♘d4. Overall, however, I

prefer White's options in several of the notes above.

b) 21 ♗c2 is more flexible; then another strategy for White is shown by 21...c5 22 ♖d1 ♗c7 23 ♗b3 ♖d8 24 f4 ♖hg8 25 ♘g1 cxd4 (25...c4 26 ♗c2 with the idea ♘f3-h4) 26 ♖xd4 with an admittedly small positional edge after 26...b5!, for example.

To be clear: I'm not suggesting that White can get a serious advantage in the main line if Black plays perfectly. But if players of the highest calibre get opportunities for a meaningful advantage, the implication is that there are enough strategic challenges to satisfy most players' needs.

1.2)

3...♗e7 *(D)*

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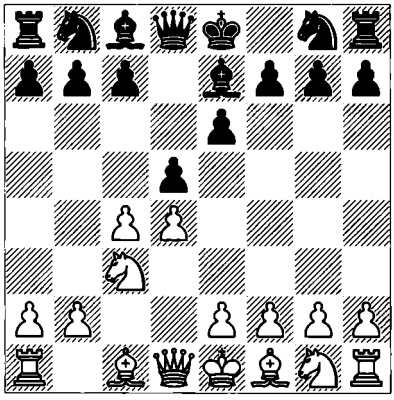

This move is specifically designed to discourage the Exchange Variation, indicating that Black prefers to play classical Orthodox lines (see the next note).

4 cxd5

White plays a sort of Exchange Variation anyway. Black's first point is that after this pawn trade, White can't play the immediate 5 ♗g5 and consequently won't be able to play the main lines of the Exchange Variation, at least those with ♘ge2 instead of ♘f3. But because we are playing the Exchange Variation with ♘f3, I'm going to discuss the issues involved when White tries to reach the main line anyway. To begin with, play can go 4 ♘f3 ♘f6 5 ♗g5 (5 cxd5 exd5 6 ♗g5 is the next note) 5...0-0 (incidentally, 5...h6 6 ♗h4 0-0 7 cxd5 ♘xd5 is similarly equal and has also led to a high percentage of draws among strong players) 6 cxd5 (6 e3 is an Orthodox Queen's Gambit Declined, not what we're after as White), when 6...♘xd5 7 ♗xe7 ♕xe7 has produced many draws over the years, in part because 8 e4 (very seldom played; 8 ♖c1 and 8 e3 are normal) 8...♘xc3 9 bxc3 c5 sets up the idea of ...♘c6 and an early ...♖d8 (...e5 is a theme as well), so Black has full equality. Thus 6 cxd5 was too late for our purposes.

4...exd5 5 ♗f4

It's hardly a loss for White to play his bishop to f4 instead of g5; in fact, ♗f4 is quite a desirable move, but after 3 ♘c3 ♘f6 4 cxd5 exd5 5 ♗f4, Black can challenge the bishop forthwith by 5...♗d6. In the position after the text-move, not only is 5...♗d6? a bad move because of 6 ♘xd5, but even if Black were able to get ...♗d6 in, he'd be wasting a valuable tempo in so doing (...♗e7-d6).

Now I'm going to take some time discussing 5 ♘f3, still attempting to get to our main line versus 3...♘f6. There's no compelling reason you can't take this route. First, Black can proceed normally by 5...♘f6 6 ♗g5 0-0, and then 7 e3 will indeed reach our desired position, since 7...♗f5?! is strongly met by 8 ♕b3 or 8 ♗xf6 ♗xf6 9 ♕b3. Therefore Black can cause the most trouble with 5...c6, intending ...♗f5 (and meeting ♕b3 with ...♕b6, usually a satisfactory resource). So White might want to play 6 ♕c2 *(D)* preventing ...♗f5 and still aiming for a standard set-up with e3, ♗d3 and 0-0.

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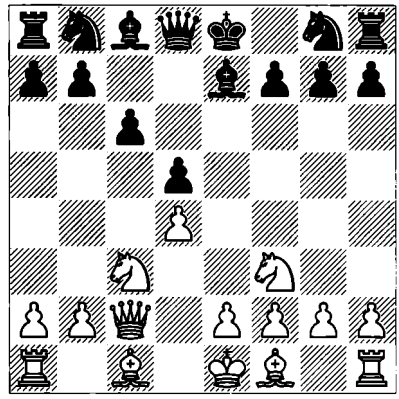


There are two move-orders which Black can use to frustrate this, but if White doesn't mind

getting away from the most-trodden paths and just playing chess, he might want to look into them:

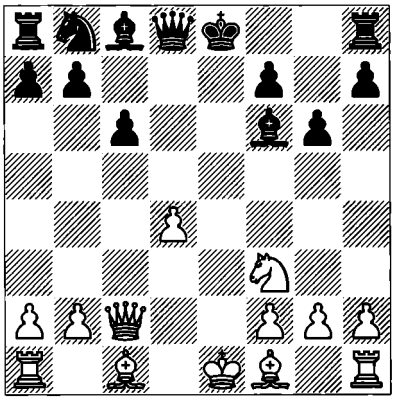
a) 6...g6 is a standard remedy, reintroducing the idea of ...♗f5. Then 7 ♗f4 ♗f5 8 ♕d2 ♘f6 is normal, with equality, but I find the very rare 7 e4!? dxe4 8 ♘xe4 interesting, with pressure based upon better development and Black's kingside dark squares. For example:

a1) 8...♗f5 9 ♗d3 ♗xe4 10 ♗xe4 ♗b4+ 11 ♔f1! and because of Black's weak dark squares and White's various ideas such as ♗g5 and d5, White stands better; e.g., 11...♘f6 (11...♘d7 12 d5!) 12 ♗h6 ♘xe4?! 13 ♕xe4+ ♕e7 14 ♕d3 ± planning a3 and ♖e1.

a2) 8...♗b4+ 9 ♘c3 ♕e7+ (9...♘f6 10 ♗c4 0-0 11 0-0 b5 12 ♗b3 ♗g4 13 ♗h6 ± with the idea 13...♖e8? 14 ♗xf7+) 10 ♗e2 ♗f5 11 ♕d1 ♘f6 12 0-0 0-0 13 ♖e1 ♕c7 14 ♕b3 ♗d6 15 ♗h6 ♖d8 16 ♘e5 with a nagging initiative for White.

a3) 8...♘f6 9 ♘xf6+ (9 ♗h6!?) 9...♗xf6 *(D)* is probably the key position.

W



White can play 10 ♗h6 ♗f5 (10...♕a5+ 11 ♕c3 ♕xc3+ 12 bxc3 ±), and then:

a31) 11 ♗d3 is fascinating; as often happens, simplification – in this case by ...♗xd3 – doesn't help the side playing against the isolated pawn if it costs too much in terms of getting the pieces out. True, White's superiority is limited if Black avoids the exchange by 11...♕e7+!, but he's still on top: 12 ♔f1! ♗e6! 13 ♖e1 ♘d7 14 ♗c4 ♘b6 15 ♗xe6 fxe6 16 ♖e4 intending ♕e2, g3 and ♔g2. Likewise 11...♕a5+ 12 ♗d2 ♗xd3 13 ♕xd3 ♕c7 14 ♗h6!, etc., retains an edge for White.

a32) 11 ♕d2 ♘d7 12 ♗e2 ♘f8 13 0-0 ♘e6 14 ♖ad1 (14 ♗c4!?) 14...♗e4! 15 ♘e5! ♗d5 16 ♗g4. This is at any rate interesting and promising for White, in view of 16...♗xa2 17 ♗xe6 ♗xe6 (17...fxe6 18 ♘g4 ♗d5 19 ♕f4 ♗e7 20 ♗g7 with control over e5, a useful e-file, and the safer king as compensation for a pawn) 18 ♖fe1 (threatening ♘xf7) 18...♕d6 19 ♕f4! (intending ♕xf6 or ♘xg6) 19...♗e7 20 d5! 0-0-0! (20...♗xd5? 21 ♘xc6! ♕xc6 22 ♖c1 and if the queen moves, 23 ♕e5 follows) 21 ♕e3! ♗xd5 22 ♘xf7.

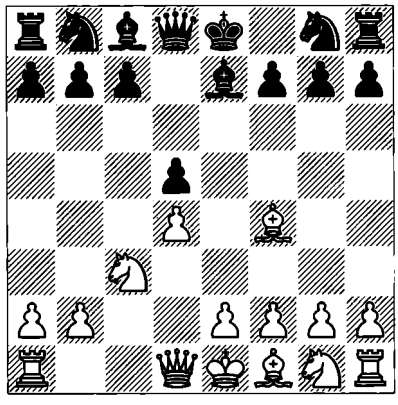
b) 6...♘f6 and now:

b1) 7 ♗g5 gives us a conventional position in which 7...g6 is the best way to avoid transposition into main lines. Then 8 e3 ♗f5 9 ♗d3 ♗xd3 10 ♕xd3 is well-known; the strategic player might not mind the fact that Black is on the verge of equality as long as he has weaknesses to work with and definite plans. Here White can play for positions with ♘e5, for example, and/or use a minority attack beginning with ♖b1 and b4.

b2) Nevertheless, I'd recommend 7 ♗f4 g6 8 e3 ♗f5 9 ♗d3 ♗xd3 10 ♕xd3, which is another, more effective, version of this idea. Again, you can't expect too much, but 10...♗d6 (or 10...0-0 11 0-0 ♘bd7 12 ♖ab1) 11 ♗h6 ♘g4 12 ♗g5 ♗e7 (12...f6 13 ♗h4) 13 ♗f4 isn't problem-free for Black; e.g., 13...♗d6 14 ♗xd6 ♕xd6 15 e4!.

Well, playing this way is a matter of taste. You can always choose the staid and true 5 ♗f4 *(D)*, to which we now return:

B



Black has two logical continuations:

1.21: 5...c6 24
1.22: 5...♘f6 26

1.21)

5...c6

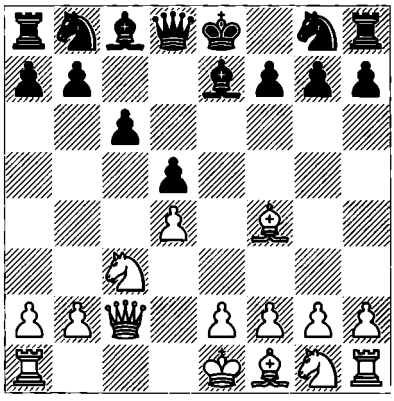
This is the same idea we just saw: Black wants to play an early ...♗f5 and disturb White's natural build-up with e3 and ♗d3.

6 ♕c2 *(D)*

A calm continuation, frequently played but not outrageously theoretical. White simply stops ...♗f5 and makes a typical Exchange Variation move while he's at it.

The most popular move is 6 e3, when the main line goes 6...♗f5 (as usual, Black plays this when he gets the chance; otherwise 5...c6 wouldn't make much sense, since Black has forfeited the option of playing ...c5 in one move) 7 g4!? (7 ♘ge2 is more conservative) 7...♗e6 (7...♗g6 8 h4 has the trick 8...♗xh4? 9 ♕b3 b6 10 ♖xh4! ♕xh4 11 ♘xd5! +–) 8 h4 (the most fun; 8 h3 used to be the main move) 8...♘d7 9 h5 ♘h6!?. This is a rich position, but a rather volatile one, and I'm not sure that White has any advantage when all is said and done.

B



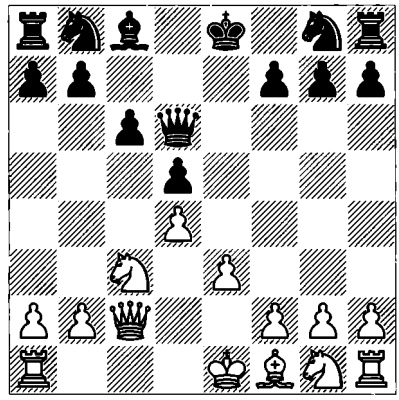
6...g6

This prepares ...♗f5 before White can get e3 and ♗d3 in. There are several alternatives for Black, and theory hasn't yet settled on which is best:

a) 6...♗g4!? looks to play ...♗h5-g6, but takes time; e.g., 7 e3 ♗h5 8 ♗d3 (8 ♘f3 ♘d7 9 h3 ♗g6 10 ♕d2 ± Salov-Portisch, Linares 1990) 8...♗g6 9 ♗xg6 (9 ♘ge2 ♘f6 10 0-0 is also played) 9...hxg6 10 0-0-0 (10 ♘f3 ♘f6 11 0-0 ±) 10...♘f6 11 f3 ♘bd7 12 ♘ge2 b5!? (12...♘h5 13 ♗e5; 12...♘b6 13 e4 ♘c4 might be best) 13 e4 b4 (13...dxe4 14 fxe4 ♘b6 15 d5) 14 ♘a4 dxe4 15 fxe4 ♕a5?! (15...0-0) 16 ♔b1 (or 16 e5 ♘d5 17 ♕xc6 0-0 18 ♕xd7 ♖fd8 19 ♕h3 ♕xa4 20 ♔b1) 16...0-0 17 h4!? ♖fe8 18 e5 ♘d5? (18...♘g4) 19 h5 g5 20 h6! ± Carlsen-Nakamura, Medias 2011.

b) Moving the bishop a second time by 6...♗d6 looks strange, but if White hasn't any pawn-breaks, Black can get away with this luxury. This is an important line to study and understand: 7 ♗xd6 (7 ♗g3 is also played, when 7...♘e7 8 e3 ♗f5 might follow, and now 9 ♗d3 ♗xd3 10 ♕xd3 or 9 ♕b3) 7...♕xd6 8 e3 *(D)* and Black has three possibilities:

B

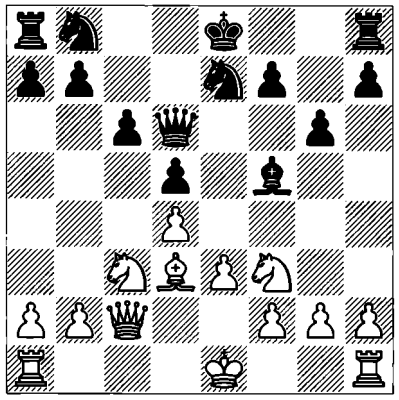


b1) 8...♕g6 9 ♕d2 (9 ♕b3 is a respectable option, and 9 ♕xg6 hxg6 10 b4!? a6 11 f3 ♘d7 12 ♗d3 ♘e7 13 ♘ge2 g5 14 ♔f2 ♘f6 15 g4 ♔d8 16 ♔g3 ♗d7 17 a4 clearly favoured White in the game Nakamura-Ponomariov, Saint Louis (6) 2011; of course, Black can do much better than that) 9...♘e7 (after 9...♘f6, 10 ♘ge2 with the idea ♘f4 is also a good choice) 10 ♘ge2 0-0 (10...♕d6 was met by 11 ♘g3 ♗f5 12 ♘xf5 ♘xf5 13 ♗d3 ♘e7 14 b4!? a6 15 ♘a4 ± in Dreev-Vaganian, Poikovsky 2002, while 11 e4!? is also promising) 11 ♘g3 ♕d6 (11...♘d7 12 ♗d3 ♕h6 13 0-0 ♘f6 14 b4 ± Azmaiparashvili-Gomez Esteban, Toledo 1991) 12 ♗d3 ♗e6 13 0-0 ♘d7 14 ♖ad1 f5!? 15 ♘h5 ♗f7 16 ♘f4 ♘f6 17 f3 g5 18 ♘h3 h6 19 ♗b1 ♖ae8 20 ♘f2 ± Azmaiparashvili-Petrosian, Erevan 1989.

b2) 8...♘f6 9 ♗d3 0-0 10 ♘f3 (the ♘ge2, f3 and e4 plan would be harder to implement with ...♖e8 coming, so White is better served by preparing a minority attack) 10...♘bd7 11

0-0 ♖e8 12 ♖ab1 ±. This is easy to play for White.

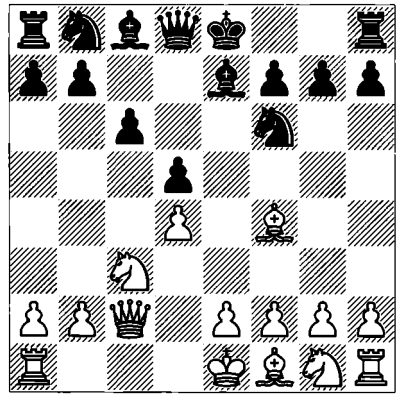
b3) 8...♘e7 prepares ...♗f5 again: 9 ♗d3 g6 10 ♘f3! (after 10 f3, 10...♘d7?! 11 ♘ge2 ♘b6?! 12 e4 ♕f6 13 0-0 0-0 14 ♖ae1 gave White an ideal centre in Onishchuk-Kovacs, European Clubs Cup, Ohrid 2009, but 10...0-0 with the idea ...♗e6, ...♘d7 and ...c5 would have kept Black's disadvantage down) 10...♗f5 *(D)*.



This has been called equal, but White stands better with the forcing sequence 11 ♗xf5! ♘xf5 12 0-0 (even 12 e4 dxe4 13 ♘xe4 ♕b4+ 14 ♕c3 ♕xc3+ 15 bxc3 gives White a minor edge because of his centralized pieces and Black's dark-squared weaknesses) 12...0-0 13 e4! dxe4 14 ♘xe4 ♕d8! (14...♘xd4 15 ♘xd4 ♕xd4 16 ♖ad1 ♕g7 is obviously dangerous for Black; White can build up a great position by 17 ♕b3 b6 18 ♕a3, preventing Black's knight from getting out; e.g., 18...c5 19 ♖d6! ♖c8 20 ♘f6+ ♔h8 21 ♕a4! a5 22 ♖e1 ♘a6 23 ♖e7 c4 24 g3 +–) 15 ♕b3 (or 15 ♖ad1 ♘a6 16 ♖fe1 ±) 15...♕b6 16 ♕a3 ♘d7 17 ♖fe1 ♖ad8 18 ♖ad1 ±; h3 and g4 follows.

c) 6...♘f6 *(D)* is the most obvious move. White has some good options:

c1) 7 e3 ♘h5?! (7...0-0 8 ♗d3 ♘bd7 is also common and leads to positions similar to the 3...♘f6 4 cxd5 exd5 5 ♗g5 main line if White plays ♘f3 and h3) 8 ♗e5 ♘d7 9 ♗e2 ♘xe5 10 dxe5 g6 11 ♗xh5 gxh5 12 0-0-0 f6 (Grishchuk-Aronian, Candidates rapid, Kazan 2011) and now 13 e4! should lead to some advantage; e.g., 13...d4 14 exf6 ♗xf6 15 ♘f3 c5 16 ♘d5 ♗e6 17 ♘f4 ±.

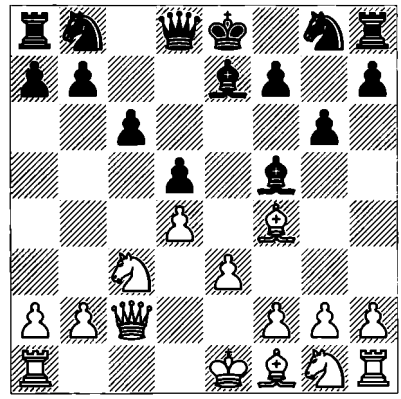


c2) 7 h3!? gives White's bishop an escape-square in response to ...♘h5. Then 7...g6 8 e3 ♗f5 9 ♕d2 (rather than 9 ♗d3) was chosen by Carlsen versus Aronian at Wijk aan Zee 2012. What is interesting is that after 9...h5, White played 10 ♗d3 after all. The point is that Black's 'free' move ...h5 is a weakening one. This is the same thing that happens in our main line.

7 e3

7 f3!? has been used a lot, but I'll stick to this solid approach.

7...♗f5 *(D)*



8 ♕d2!

White was already ahead in development, so he can afford this loss of tempo. The idea is to chase Black's bishop away and seize territory by f3 and g4 or ♘e2-g3 when appropriate. Of course, 8 ♗d3 ♗xd3 9 ♕xd3 ♘f6 is playable, if uninspiring.

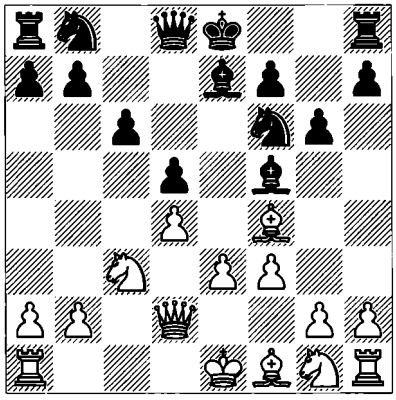
8...♘f6

8...♘d7 9 f3 ♘b6 10 e4 ♗e6 11 e5! h5 12 ♗d3 ♕d7 13 b3 (or 13 ♘ge2) 13...♗h4+ 14

g3 ♗e7 15 ♔f2!? ± favoured White in Karpov-Kasparov, World Ch (7), London/Leningrad 1986.

9 f3 *(D)*

B



9...h5!?

To stop g4, as well as to prevent ♘e2-g3 with the move ...h4. Of course, this is somewhat weakening. Other moves:

a) 9...c5 10 ♗h6!? (White can also play 10 ♘ge2 or 10 ♗b5+ ♘c6 11 ♗h6) 10...cxd4 11 exd4 a6 (11...♘c6 12 ♗b5! ± Kasparov) 12 g4 ♗e6 13 ♘ge2 ♘bd7 (13...♘c6 14 ♗g2 ♗f8 15 0-0 ♗xh6 16 ♕xh6 ♕b6 17 ♕g7 ♔e7 18 ♖ad1 with the idea 18...h6?? 19 ♘f4) 14 ♗g2 ♘b6 15 b3 ♖c8 16 0-0 ♖c6 17 h3 with a bind, Kasparov-Short, Thessaloniki Olympiad 1988.

b) 9...0-0 is probably best, even if it risks walking into h4-h5: 10 g4!? (White gets only the slightest of advantages from 10 ♘ge2 ♖e8 11 ♘g3 ♗e6 12 ♖c1) 10...♗e6 11 ♘ge2 c5?! 12 h4 h5 13 g5 ♘e8 14 dxc5 ♗xc5 15 0-0-0 ♕a5 16 a3 ± Benjamin-Schroer, Internet 2010. But this line is undoubtedly alright for Black.

10 ♗d3

10 ♘ge2 h4 11 g4 is another course.

10...♗xd3 11 ♕xd3 ♘a6

11...♘bd7 12 ♘ge2 0-0 (12...h4 13 h3 0-0 14 0-0 with e4 to come) 13 e4!? (good, but 13 0-0 first is more cautious) 13...dxe4 14 fxe4 ♘c5!? 15 ♕f3 ♘e6 16 0-0-0! ♘xf4 17 ♘xf4 ± M.Gurevich-Geller, Moscow 1987.

12 ♘ge2 ♘c7 13 0-0 ♘e6 14 ♗e5 h4

14...0-0 15 f4!? ('!' Topalov; although 15 ♖ae1 is a good and perhaps preferable preparatory move) 15...♘g7 16 f5 ♘xf5 (16...g5 17 ♗xf6 ♗xf6 18 e4 dxe4 19 ♘xe4 ±) 17 ♖xf5! gxf5 18 ♕xf5 with threats. After 18...♘g4!, 19 ♖f1! ♗g5 (19...♘xe5 20 dxe5 ±) 20 ♗f4 ♗xf4 21 ♕xf4 continues the attack.

15 ♖ae1

Better is 15 ♘f4! with the idea 15...♘xf4 16 exf4! and f5.

15...0-0 16 g4

Given an exclamation point by more than one annotator, which is probably an incorrect assessment. 16 ♘f4 is still possible, when Topalov's 16...♘xf4 17 ♗xf4 ♘h5 18 ♗h6 ♖e8 19 e4 ♗g5! might be improved upon by 18 ♗e5!, but I'm not sure if White has anything meaningful.

16...hxg3?!

Now Black faces some real difficulties. After 16...♘d7!, Topalov gives 17 f4 f6 18 ♕xg6+ (18 e4 fxe5 19 exd5 e4 20 ♕xe4 ♘g7 21 dxc6 is dynamically equal) 18...♘g7 19 ♔h1, but 19...♕e8 should be alright.

17 hxg3 ♘d7 18 ♔g2 ♘xe5

18...♖e8 can be answered with 19 f4!.

19 dxe5

White intends f4-f5. In the game Topalov-Karpov, Wijk aan Zee 1998, White's attack triumphed after 19...♕d7 20 f4 f5 (20...♘c5 21 ♕c2 ♕g4 22 ♘d4 followed by ♖h1 clearly favours White, as does 20...♔g7 21 f5!) 21 g4 ♖f7?! 22 ♖h1 ♗f8 23 gxf5 ♘c5 24 ♕d1 ♕xf5 25 ♘d4 ♕d7 26 ♖eg1 ♖e8. White is winning here. Topalov gives the best move as 27 ♔f2!, with the pretty line 27...♖xe5 28 ♖xg6+ ♗g7 29 ♖xg7+! ♔xg7 30 ♕g1+ ♔f8 31 ♖h8+ ♔e7 32 ♕g8 ♘d3+ 33 ♔g1 ♖xe3 34 ♘f5+! and White wins.

Obviously White can't count upon a substantial advantage in this line, but moves like 15 ♘f4 are an indication that Black is the only one under any stress.

1.22)

5...♘f6

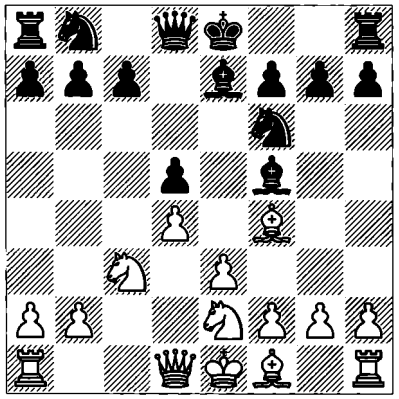
This hasn't been as popular as 5...c6 over the years, but it's a serious option. White plays simply:

6 e3 0-0

6...♗f5!? is yet another attempt to get the light-squared bishop out. Then the obvious 7 ♕b3 is met by the gambit 7...♘c6!?, which after a lot of study I've concluded is satisfactory for Black, and the play is certainly not strategic

in nature. So I'll recommend the simpler 7 ♘ge2 *(D)* (naturally 7 ♘f3 isn't bad, but you'll want to exchange bishops next by ♗d3, which is essentially equal), and now:

B



a) 7...0-0 8 ♖c1 (8 h3!? and 8 ♘g3 have also been played here) 8...c6 9 ♘g3 ♗e6 (9...♗g6 10 h4 h6 11 h5 ♗h7 12 ♗d3 ± favours White; not only does he have space, but he can exchange and put a knight on f5, from where it is very difficult to drive away) 10 ♗d3 ♖e8 (10...♘bd7 11 0-0 a6 12 ♘f5!?) 11 ♕b3 ♕b6 12 ♕c2 (this is beginning to look much more like a Queen's Gambit again!) 12...♘bd7 13 0-0 (13 ♘f5 ♗xf5 14 ♗xf5 g6 15 ♗h3) 13...g6 14 a3 ♕d8 15 h4!? and White has a little extra space on each side of the board to work with.

b) 7...c6 8 ♘g3 ♗e6 9 ♗d3 can transpose, but in Istratescu-Z.Vuković, Bucharest 2000, White decided to forego the usual ♖c1: 9...g6 (to control f5) 10 ♕c2 ♘bd7 11 ♖d1 (in order to discourage ...c5). Then he turned to a strategy of central expansion: 11...♘b6 12 f3 0-0 13 0-0 ♖c8 14 ♔h1 ♘fd7 15 ♘ge2 (versus ...g5) 15...f5 16 ♗h6 ♖e8 17 e4! fxe4 18 fxe4 ♗g5 19 ♗xg5 ♕xg5 20 ♘f4 with a nice advantage. A wonderful demonstration of strategic insight.

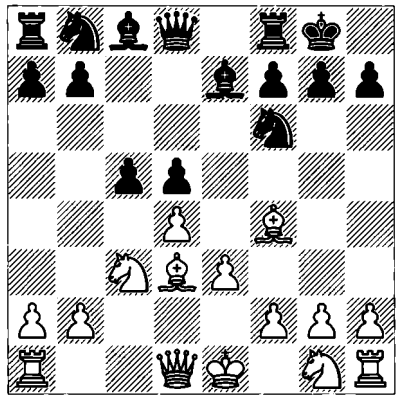
7 ♗d3 c5!? *(D)*

An unusual counterstroke in this line, but perhaps more appropriate since the bishop is already on d3 blocking the d-file in case of dxc5.

a) Instead, 7...c6 8 ♕c2 ♘bd7 9 ♘f3 ♖e8 10 h3! is just like our 3...♘f6 main line with White's bishop already on the desirable square f4.

b) 7...b6 8 ♘f3 c5 9 ♘e5 ♗b7 10 0-0 ♘c6 11 ♕f3 cxd4?! 12 ♘xc6 ♗xc6 13 exd4 results in a bad bishop for Black and a standard positional advantage for White, Bocharov-V.Zaitsev, St Petersburg 2005.

W



8 ♘ge2

As usual, White has various ways to set up, and in fact 8 ♘f3 may appeal to you more. But ♘ge2 has the advantage of not allowing ...♗g4 without getting in the free and useful move f3.

8...♘c6 9 0-0

9 dxc5 ♗xc5 10 0-0 is safe, but it's more ambitious to maintain the tension.

9...cxd4

9...a6 10 dxc5! isolates the d-pawn at an opportune moment: 10...♗xc5 11 ♖c1 (or 11 ♗g5, with the idea 11...♗e6 12 ♘f4 or 11...h6 12 ♗xf6 ♕xf6 13 ♕b3!) 11...♗e6 (11...d4 12 ♘e4 ♘xe4 13 ♗xe4 ♗b6 14 ♗xc6 bxc6 15 ♘xd4 ±; 11...♗e7 12 ♕b3 threatens ♘a4 as well as ♖fd1) 12 ♘a4 ♗d6 13 ♗b1 h6 14 ♕b3!? ♖b8 15 ♖fd1 puts a good deal of pressure on Black's position. At this point the positionally desirable 15...d4 is answered by 16 ♕d3 ♗xf4 17 ♘xf4 with the idea 17...dxe3 18 ♕xe3 ±.

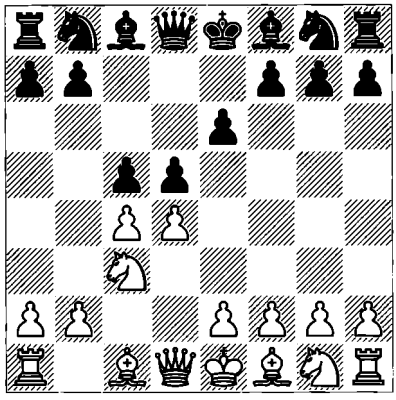
10 ♘xd4 ♘xd4 11 exd4 ♗e6

Now Alatortsev-Stolberg, Kiev 1940 continued 12 ♖c1 ♖c8 13 ♖e1 (or 13 ♕b3 ±) 13...a6 14 ♕b3 b5 15 a4 ±, while 12 ♘b5! looks good because ♘c7 and ♘xe6 can't be prevented.

2 Tarrasch Defence

1 d4 d5 2 c4 e6 3 ♘c3 c5 *(D)*

W



This is the Tarrasch Defence to the Queen's Gambit. Black makes an immediate and radical challenge to White's centre.

4 cxd5

Faced with the threat of 4...cxd4, White decides to resolve some of the tension in the centre. The move 4 e3 introduces a form of Symmetrical Tarrasch which can also transpose to Semi-Tarrasch lines where White has an isolated queen's pawn. This is a perfectly legitimate choice, although most players consider it a bit passive and lacking in ambition.

4...exd5

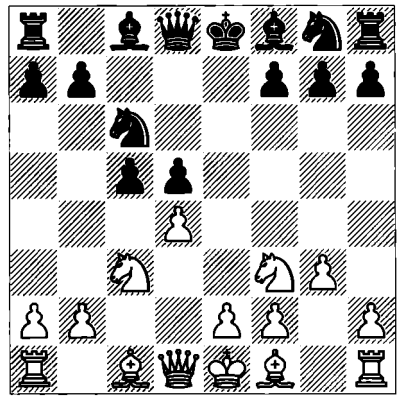
4...cxd4!? is the Hennig-Schara Gambit, which I've included in Chapter 3.

5 ♘f3 ♘c6

Black brings out a piece to bear pressure on d4. 5...♘f6 has tended to be considered weak due to 6 ♗g5, when Black has to make concessions to defend his centre, but White's advantage in the resulting variations may have been overstated. For example, 6...cxd4 (6...♗e7 7 dxc5 ♗e6 8 e3 and after 8...♗xc5 9 ♗xf6 ♕xf6 10 ♗b5+ ♘c6 11 0-0 White threatens ♘xd5 or, upon 11...♖d8, can reply 12 ♕a4) 7 ♘xd4 ♗e7 8 e3 (8 g3 0-0 9 ♗g2 ♘c6 10 0-0 transposes to Section 2.3) 8...0-0 9 ♗e2 ♘c6 10 0-0 h6 11 ♗h4 and White has only a moderate advantage, but the d-pawn will be a target and it's hard for Black to get his pieces into the aggressive positions which normally compensate for his isolated pawn. Of course, White can also ignore Black's move-order, and play simply 6 g3.

6 g3 *(D)*

B



White enters the 'Rubinstein Variation'. In fact, it's hard to find another move which makes a serious try for advantage. In bringing his bishop to g2, White aims at Black's pawn on d5 while indirectly controlling e4 and preparing to castle. By contrast with 4 e3 or 5 e3, he keeps a diagonal open for the development of his dark-squared bishop.

6...♘f6

This is the most natural development. Black can also try to change the central structure or force its resolution by more direct means:

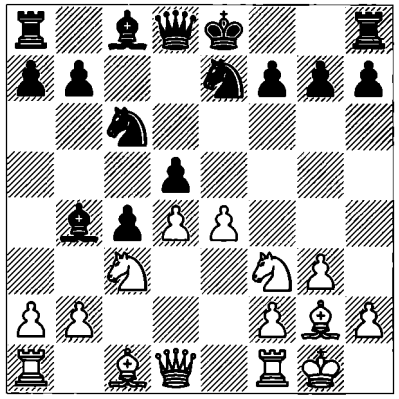
a) 6...♗g4 7 ♗g2 ♗xf3 8 ♗xf3 is premature for Black: 8...cxd4 (8...♘xd4 9 ♗xd5) 9 ♘xd5 ♘ge7 10 ♘f4! g6 11 0-0 ♗g7 12 ♘d3 0-0 13 ♗g5 ± Mikenas.

b) 6...cxd4 7 ♘xd4 ♕b6 8 ♘xc6 ♗c5!? 9 ♘d4 ♗xd4 10 e3 ♗xc3+ 11 bxc3 ♘e7 12 ♗a3 left White significantly better in Hübner-Penrose, Paignton 1970 because of his powerful bishops, and Black still has to get castled.

c) 6...c4 is a traditionally important move called the Swedish Variation. It comes close to

equalizing, but after many years, White found a way to break in the centre at the right moment and assert control over the position: 7 ♗g2 ♗b4 8 0-0 ♘ge7 (8...♘f6 9 ♗g5 ♗e6 10 e4!? dxe4 11 ♘xe4 ♗e7 12 ♗xf6 ♗xf6 13 d5! ♗xd5 14 ♘xf6+ gxf6 15 ♕c1! intends ♖d1 and ♕h6 or ♕f4 with a clear advantage) 9 e4! *(D)* and now:

B



c1) 9...♗xc3 10 bxc3 dxe4 11 ♘d2. White wants to post his knight aggressively on e4 or c4 in conjunction with a passed d-pawn. The position after 11...f5 12 ♘xc4 (12 ♕h5+ g6 13 ♕h6 is rather awkward for Black) 12...♗e6 13 ♘e3 0-0 14 ♖b1 ♕d7 15 ♗a3! illustrates the combination of bishop-pair and centre, since 15...♗xa2?! 16 ♖b2 ♗f7 (16...♗e6 17 c4!) 17 f3! exf3 18 ♕xf3 gives White an abundance of compensation for a pawn.

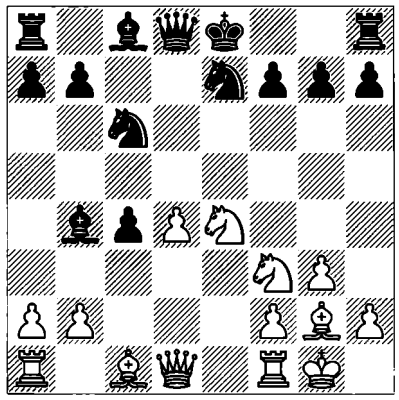
c2) 9...0-0 10 exd5 ♘xd5 offers White two ways to claim an edge:

c21) 11 ♘xd5 ♕xd5 12 ♗e3 ♕b5! (the best move; after 12...♗f5 13 ♘e5 ♗e4 14 ♘xc6 ♕xc6 15 ♗xe4 ♕xe4 16 ♕a4 a5 17 a3 White wins a pawn – Becerra; 12...♗g4 13 ♘e5! ♕xg2+ 14 ♔xg2 ♗xd1 15 ♘xc6 bxc6 16 ♖fxd1 and one of the c-pawns falls) 13 d5 ♘e7 14 ♘d4 ♕a6 15 a3 ♗d6 16 ♖c1 ♗d7 17 ♖e1 ±.

c22) 11 ♗g5 ♕a5 (11...f6 12 ♘xd5 ♕xd5 13 ♘e5! ♕b5 14 a4! ♕a6 15 ♘xc6 bxc6, Tregubov-Moskalenko, Alushta 1994, and now 16 ♗e3! followed by ♕c2 and bringing the rooks to the centre should secure an advantage) 12 ♘xd5 ♕xd5 13 a3!? (13 ♖c1! ±) 13...♗a5 14 ♘e5 ♕b5 15 a4 ♕a6 16 ♘xc6 bxc6 17 ♕c2 ± Timoshchenko-Mi.Tseitlin, Palma de Mallorca 1989.

c3) 9...dxe4 10 ♘xe4 *(D)* gives White the typical active pieces that go with the isolani:

B



c31) 10...♗g4 11 a3 ♗a5 12 ♗f4!? (or 12 d5! ♘xd5 13 ♘c5) 12...0-0 13 ♘d6 ♗c7 14 ♘xb7 ♕b8 15 ♗xc7! and now 15...♕xb7 16 ♗d6 or 15...♕xc7 16 d5! ♕xb7 17 dxc6 ♘xc6 18 ♕a4 ±.

c32) 10...0-0 11 ♕c2 (11 a3 ♗a5 12 ♕a4 ±) 11...♗g4 (11...♕d5!? 12 ♗e3 ±; 11...♗f5 12 ♘h4! ♖c8 13 ♘f6+! ± Lautier-O.Rodriguez, Barcelona 1992) 12 ♕xc4 ♗xf3 13 ♗xf3 ♕xd4 (13...♘xd4 14 ♗g2 ±) 14 ♕b3 ± S.Vuković-Kostić, Yugoslav Ch, Zagreb 1946; White has an active bishop-pair on a wide-open board.

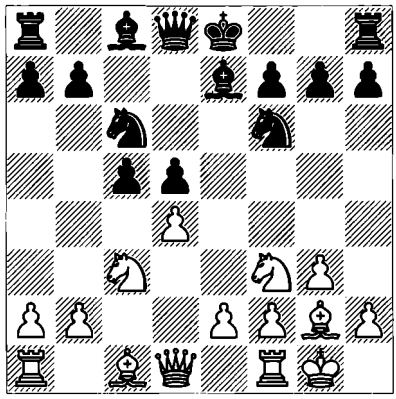
7 ♗g2 ♗e7

Over the years, other moves have fallen by the wayside:

a) 7...♗g4 8 ♗e3 cxd4 (8...c4 9 ♘e5) 9 ♘xd4 ♗b4 10 0-0 0-0 11 ♖c1 ♖e8 (Taimanov-Baumbach, European Team Ch, Kapfenberg 1970) and now a direct path to advantage is 12 h3 ♗h5 13 g4 ♗g6 14 ♕b3 ±.

b) The g3 variation's 'founding game' continued 7...cxd4 8 ♘xd4 ♕b6 9 ♘xc6! (a standard resolution of the pawn-centre which works when White is ahead in development) 9...bxc6 10 0-0 ♗e7 11 ♘a4!? (11 e4! dxe4 12 ♗e3! ± is best, since 12...♕xb2 13 ♗d4 ♕a3 14 ♘xe4 0-0 15 ♘xf6+ ♗xf6 16 ♗xf6 gxf6 17 ♗xc6 leaves Black's pawn-structure in poor standing) 11...♕b5 12 ♗e3 0-0 13 ♖c1 ♗g4 14 f3 (14 ♖e1) 14...♗e6 15 ♗c5 ♖fe8 16 ♖f2 ♘d7 17 ♗xe7 ♖xe7 18 ♕d4 ± Rubinstein-Salwe, Lodz 1908.

8 0-0 *(D)*



8...0-0

a) 8...c4? 9 ♘e5 0-0 10 ♗f4! with the idea 10...♗e6 11 ♘xc4! dxc4 12 d5 ♘xd5 13 ♘xd5 and it's hard for Black to hold on to his pawns without making concessions; e.g., 13...♗xd5 14 ♗xd5 ♘a5?! (14...♗f6 15 ♖c1 ♗xb2 16 ♖xc4 ♖c8 17 e4) 15 e4! ♗f6 16 ♕e2 ±.

b) Once again, 8...cxd4 is premature due to 9 ♘xd4 0-0 10 ♘b3! ♗e6 11 ♗g5 (or 11 ♗e3) 11...♖e8 12 ♖c1 ± (Keilhack).

c) 8...♗g4 9 ♘e5! cxd4 10 ♘xg4 ♘xg4 (10...dxc3 11 ♘xf6+ ♗xf6 12 bxc3 0-0 13 ♖b1 ± Petersons-Abrosimov, Latvian Ch, Riga 1970) 11 ♘xd5 0-0 12 e3 ♘f6 13 ♘xe7+ ♕xe7 14 exd4 ♖fd8 15 ♗e3 ♕d7 16 ♕b3 ± Vogt-Baumbach, East German Ch, Frankfurt Oder 1977.

d) 8...♗e6 commits the bishop before Black has to do so. White can play 9 dxc5, and then:

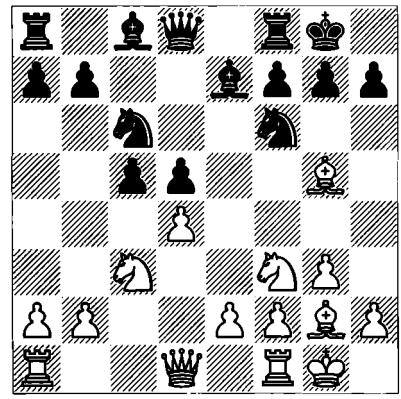
d1) 9...d4 10 ♘b5 (10 ♘a4 0-0 11 b4!) 10...♗xc5 11 b4! a6 (11...♗xb4 12 ♘fxd4 ♘xd4 13 ♘xd4 ± Kasparov) 12 ♘c7+ ♕xc7 13 bxc5 ♖d8 14 ♗f4 ♕a5 15 ♗d6 ± Zhukhovitsky-Pavlenko, Rostov-na-Donu 1969.

d2) 9...♗xc5 10 ♘a4 (after 10 ♗g5, 10...0-0 transposes to Section 2.1, while 10...♗e7 11 ♘d4 is also undesirable for Black) 10...♗e7 11 ♗e3 0-0 12 ♖c1 (12 ♘c5 ♘e4 13 ♘xe6 fxe6 14 ♘d4 ± Alekhine-Muffang, Paris 1923) 12...♘e4 13 ♘d4 ♘xd4 14 ♗xd4 ♕d7 15 f3! ♘f6 16 ♘c5 ♗xc5 17 ♖xc5 ±.

9 ♗g5 *(D)*

The key position of the main-line Tarrasch Defence. Black has three important moves here, leading to very distinct types of positions:

2.1: 9...♗e6 30
2.2: 9...c4 32
2.3: 9...cxd4 36

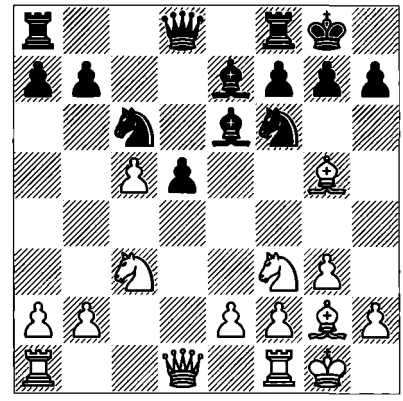


2.1)

9...♗e6

White has to play very accurately to gain any meaningful advantage against this simple developing move.

10 dxc5 *(D)*



10...♗xc5

Black used to play numerous alternatives at this point, but several lose a pawn and others are positional concessions, so I'll just show three:

a) 10...♖c8 postpones recapture until White commits. The most effective answer is 11 ♖c1! h6 (11...♗xc5 12 ♗xf6 ♕xf6 13 ♘xd5 ♗xd5 14 ♕xd5 ±) 12 ♗xf6 ♗xf6 13 ♘e1 (13 ♕a4 b6!?) 13...♕a5 14 ♘d3 ±.

b) 10...h6 11 ♗e3 ♘g4 12 ♗d4 ♘xd4 13 ♘xd4 ♗xc5 14 ♘b3 ♗d6 15 ♘xd5 ♗e5 (Orlov-Mayka, Chicago 1994) 16 ♘c5! ♖b8 17 e4 ♘f6 18 ♕b3 ± (Grivas).

c) 10...d4 11 ♗xf6 ♗xf6 12 ♘e4 ♗e7 13 ♖c1 (13 ♕d2 ♗f5 14 ♘e1! ♗g6 15 ♘d3 gives

White the ideal blockader; in De Jong-Schenkeveld, Hoogeveen 2006, Black got his pawn back after 15...f5 16 ♘d6 ♗xd6 17 cxd6 ♕xd6 18 ♖ac1, but at the cost of weaknesses and superbly-placed enemy pieces) 13...f5 14 ♘ed2 (14 ♘d6 ♗xd6 15 cxd6 ♕xd6 16 ♕a4 ±) 14...♗f6 15 ♘e1 a5 16 ♕a4 ♗g5 17 ♖d1 ± (Grivas).

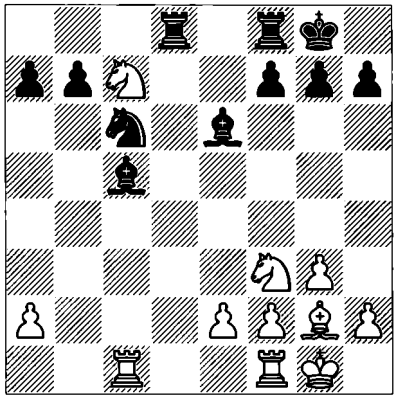
11 ♗xf6!

Beginning a forced sequence which leads to an enduring positional advantage.

11...♕xf6 12 ♘xd5 ♕xb2 13 ♘c7 ♖ad8

13...♖ac8?! 14 ♘xe6 fxe6 15 ♖b1! (15 ♘g5!?) 15...♕xa2 16 ♖xb7 is quite strong.

14 ♕c1! ♕xc1 15 ♖axc1 *(D)*



This is a fascinating ending that has arisen scores of times over the years. After capturing on e6, White will exert pressure upon Black's weak pawns, but whether that translates into a win depends upon the circumstances. Why Black wants to suffer in this way is another matter.

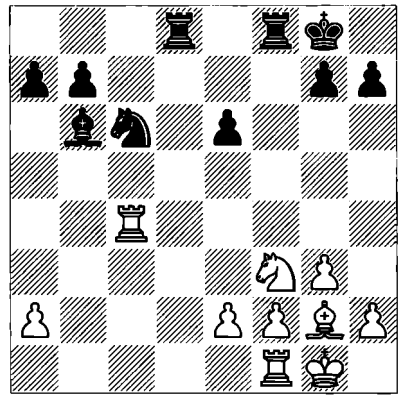
15...♗e7

The alternatives all have similar positional problems; for example:

a) 15...♗b4 16 ♘xe6 fxe6 17 ♖c4 ± (Grivas).

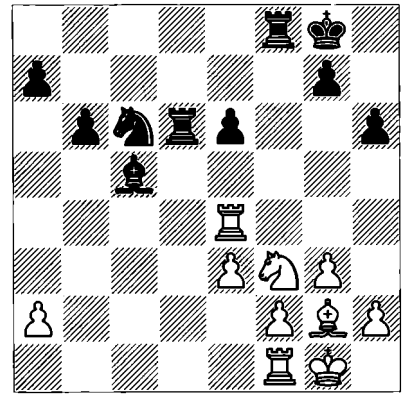
b) 15...♗a3 16 ♘xe6 fxe6 17 ♖c4 (17 ♖c3 ♗b4!? 18 ♖b3 a5 19 a3 a4, Gregorz-Gabbara, Chicago 1995, and White's pieces will outweigh the rooks following 20 ♖xb4 ♘xb4 21 axb4) 17...♖d6. Here Black's pawns are vulnerable; for example, 18 ♘g5!? (18 ♖b1!) 18...h6 19 ♗xc6 ♖xc6 20 ♖xc6 bxc6 21 ♘xe6 (21 ♘e4!?) 21...♖e8 22 ♘d4 ±.

c) 15...♗b6 16 ♘xe6 fxe6 17 ♖c4 *(D)*.



This rook-lift has become routine: White covers d4 and b4 versus knight intrusions, and can transfer the rook to e4 to put pressure on e6. The move also serves to free the f1-rook to double or go to b1. Notice that both bishops are unopposed by a counterpart, so they are more effective attackers. In this case White's bishop has targets on c6 and e6: 17...h6 (17...♖f6 18 ♘g5 h6 19 ♘e4 ♖f5 20 ♗h3 ♖e5 21 e3 ± Banas-Starke, Germany (team event) 1998/9; 17...♖d6 18 ♘g5 ♖f5 19 ♘e4 ±) 18 ♖e4 ♖fe8 19 e3 ♖d6 20 h4 ♗d8 21 ♖b1 b6 22 ♗f1! ± Lein-Farago, USSR-Hungary match, Moscow 1971.

d) 15...b6 16 ♘xe6 fxe6 17 e3!? (this restricts Black's bishop and knight; the alternative is 17 ♗h3 ♖fe8 18 ♖fd1 ± Grivas) 17...h6 18 ♖c4!? ♖d6 19 ♖e4 *(D)*.



Basically, Black is going to be tied to defence regardless of the specifics, so I'll limit the material: 19...♖f5 (19...♖fd8 20 ♗h3 ♔f7 21 ♔g2 g5?! 22 ♗g4 ♔f6 23 ♖h1 ♘b4?! 24 h4 ♖g8 25

hxg5+ hxg5 26 ♖h7 and White wins, V.Milov-Farina, Porto San Giorgio 1996; 19...♘b4 20 ♘e5! ♘xa2 21 ♖a4 ♘c3 22 ♖xa7 ± A.Petrosian-Espig, Erevan 1982) 20 h4 ♔f7. In the game Khuzman-Stripunsky, Simferopol 1990, White slowly gained the upper hand: 21 ♖b1!? ♖fd5?! 22 ♗f1! ♔f6 23 ♔g2 ♖d1 24 ♖xd1 ♖xd1 25 ♗b5 ♖d6 26 h5 ♔e7?! 27 ♘h4! ♔d8 28 ♘g6 ±.

16 ♘xe6 fxe6 17 ♖c4

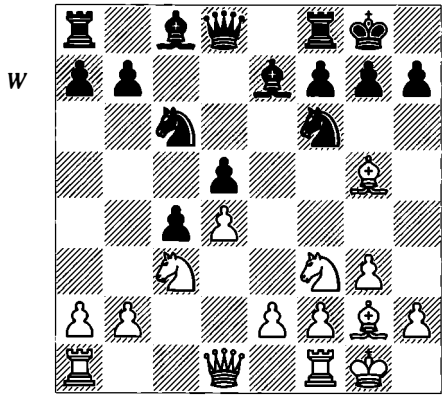
Once again we have the basic imbalance. It's remarkable how often White's minor advantages suffice to win.

17...♗f6

Now 18 ♖b1 has been played many times, while after 18 h4, Raetsky-Sedlacek, Schwäbisch Gmünd 2002 continued 18...♖d5 19 ♖b1 ♖fd8 20 ♔h2 ♖8d7 21 a4 h6 22 e3 ♔f7 23 ♔h3 g6?! (this creates weaknesses) 24 ♖bc1 ♖a5 25 ♖1c2 ♖ad5?! 26 ♘h2! ♖a5 27 ♗xc6! bxc6 28 ♘g4 ±. White threatens ♘xh6+ and ♖f4.

2.2)

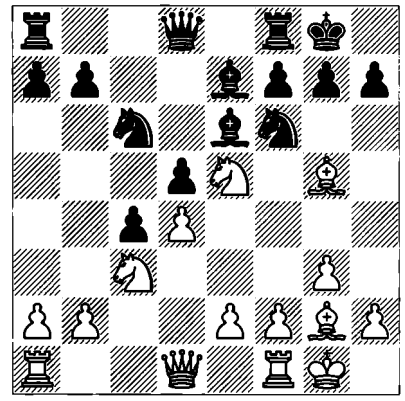
9...c4 *(D)*



This is a respectable move which, however, has traditionally been of secondary importance. Over the past decade or so, the standing of Black's position has steadily improved, and today it is arguably as important as the main lines with 9...cxd4 (although you will see it in your games far less often). Versus good play, White shouldn't expect more than a modest advantage, if indeed any at all, but the positions are full of content and most of the time Black has to tread more carefully than his opponent. To complicate matters, this 9...c4 variation has become quite theoretical and requires me to present some dense technical material. That is something I generally try to avoid in this book. If you simply want to get a feel for the play, I'd start out by trolling around for interesting ideas, and then learn as many specifics as seem necessary to play comfortably.

10 ♘e5 ♗e6 *(D)*

Pretty much forced, to protect d5.



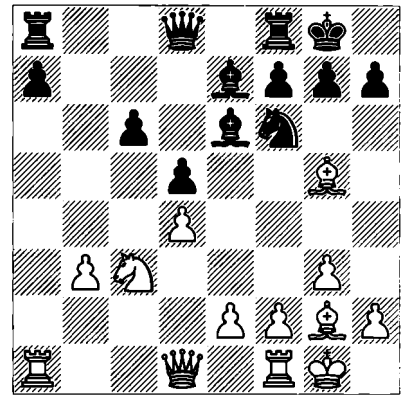
11 b3

I like this move; still, it leads to forced sequences in some lines, so you shouldn't be shy about looking at slower moves, such as 11 e3. 11 ♘xc6 bxc6 12 b3 often transposes, but the immediate 11 b3 bypasses certain branches and issues.

11...♕a5

The alternatives are instructive and will introduce you to some key ideas:

a) 11...cxb3 12 ♘xc6 bxc6 13 axb3 *(D)*.



White aims for simple ideas such as the occupation of c5 by a knight supported by a rook or queen on the c-file. For example:

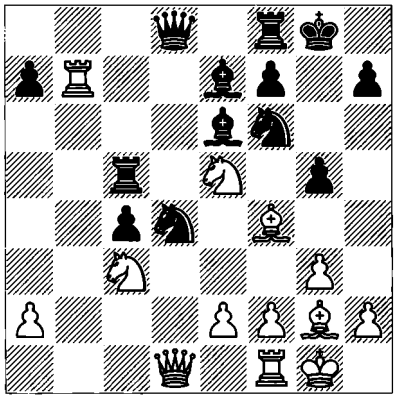
a1) 13...h6 14 ♗xf6 ♗xf6 15 ♘a4 and now 15...♕b8 16 ♘c5 ♗e7?! 17 ♕c2 ♗g4 18 e3 ± Alburt-Vooremaa, USSR Team Ch, Riga 1975, or 15...♗f5 16 ♕d2 ♕d6 17 ♘c5 ± P.H.Nielsen-Rogers, Turin Olympiad 2006.

a2) 13...♗g4 14 ♕c2 ♕b6 15 e3 ♖ab8 16 ♖fb1 ♖fc8 17 ♘a4 ♕d8 18 ♘c5 with a fine game for White, Vilela-Ricardi, Havana 1986.

a3) 13...a5!? 14 ♗xf6!? (14 ♘a4! is slightly better for White) 14...♗xf6 15 ♘a4 ♖b8!? 16 e3 ♗f5 17 ♕c1! ♗d3 (17...♖xb3? 18 ♕xc6 ±) 18 ♖d1 ♗b5 (18...♖xb3 19 ♘c5 ♗c4 20 ♘xb3 ♗xb3 21 ♖d3 ♗c4 22 ♖da3 c5 23 dxc5 ♗xa1 24 ♕xa1 ±) 19 ♘c5 ♗e7 20 ♕c3 ♖a8 21 ♖a3 ♗xc5 22 ♕xc5 ♖e8 23 ♖da1 ♖a6 24 ♕c3 ± J.Watson-Ghokale, Linares 1999.

b) 11...♖c8 is perhaps more interesting than has previously been thought: 12 bxc4 dxc4 13 ♖b1 (13 ♘xc6 bxc6 14 e3 ♕a5 15 ♘e4!?) 13...♘xd4! (theory has always cited 13...♕a5 14 ♘xc6 bxc6 15 ♘e4 ♕d8 16 ♖b7 ±, as played, for instance, in Harika-Halkias, Kavala 2009) 14 ♖xb7 ♖c5! (but computer engines notice things like this) 15 ♗f4 g5 *(D)* and now:

W

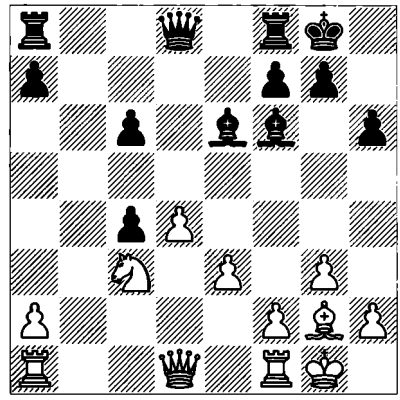


b1) 16 ♗xg5 ♖xe5 17 ♗f4 ♘xe2+ (17...♖h5 18 ♗c7 and the knight on d4 will fall) 18 ♘xe2 ♕xd1 19 ♖xd1 ♖xe2 20 ♖xe7 ♖xa2 21 ♗h6 ♘g4!? (21...♖c8 22 ♖c7 ♖b8 23 ♖c5) 22 ♗xf8 ♔xf8 23 ♖c7 ♘xf2 should be drawn.

b2) 16 ♗e3 is probably a better choice. Then 16...♘xe2+ 17 ♕xe2 ♖xe5 18 f4 gxf4 19 gxf4 ♗g4 20 ♕f2 ♖h5 isn't very clear, but it appears as though 21 h3! ♗f5 22 ♖d1 ♗d3 23 ♗f3 ♖f5 24 ♔h1 with the idea ♖g1+ favours White; this may be the best he can do.

c) As I was nearing the end of this project, a new book by Aagaard and Ntirlis arrived which promotes 9...c4 in the Tarrasch. At this point it recommends 11...h6, to which it devotes 39 small-print pages of analysis! Let me hit upon some of the key issues. Play goes 12 ♘xc6 bxc6 13 ♗xf6 (13 ♗f4 is a sensible alternative; without going into too many details, the most interesting line to me is 13...cxb3 14 axb3 ♕d7 15 ♘a4 ♖fe8 16 ♘b2 ♗f5 17 ♘d3 ♕b7 18 ♕c2 a5 19 ♖fc1 ♖a6 20 ♕d1, which is more or less equal, but less forcing) 13...♗xf6 14 bxc4 dxc4 15 e3 *(D)*, and now:

B



c1) 15...c5?! is too early due to 16 ♘e4 cxd4 17 ♘xf6+ ♕xf6 (17...gxf6 18 exd4 with a positional advantage; e.g., 18...♗d5 19 ♕g4+ ♔h8 20 ♕h5 ♗xg2 21 ♔xg2 ♕xd4 22 ♖fe1 ♖ae8 23 ♖ad1 ♕b6 24 ♕xh6+ ♔g8 25 ♕f4 ±) 18 ♗xa8 ♖xa8 19 ♕xd4 ♕xd4 20 exd4 ♖d8 21 ♖fe1 (21 ♖fd1 ♗f5! and ...♗d3) 21...♖xd4 22 ♖ad1 ♖xd1 23 ♖xd1 c3 24 ♖c1 ♗xa2 25 ♖xc3 and the a-pawn falls.

c2) 15...♕a5 is correct, when even to make a brief recap, I'll need one more division:

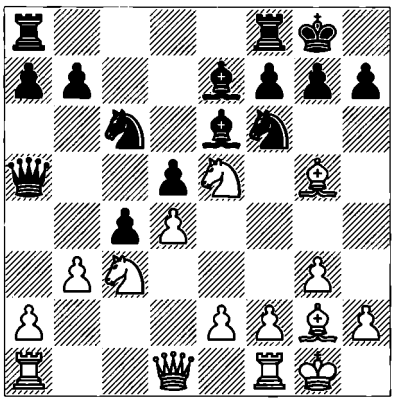
c21) 16 ♕c2 c5! (this is the exchange sacrifice which the authors recognized would save Black; the computer actually recommended 16...c5 instantly, but it seemed to me, wrongly, that White was going to have a permanent nagging advantage, so I analysed 16...♖ac8?!) 17 ♗xa8 cxd4 18 ♘d5 (18 exd4 ♗xd4 19 ♗e4 ♗xc3 20 ♖ab1 ♗f6 21 ♖fd1 c3 is the key to this line, fully equal as long as Black plays accurately) 18...♗xd5 19 ♗xd5 ♕xd5, and a

snippet of their analysis is 20 exd4 ♗xd4 21 ♖ael c3 22 ♕e4 (22 ♖e7 ♖c8 and ...g6) 22...♕c5 23 ♖e2 ♖d8 24 ♔g2 f5! 25 ♕b7 ♕c4, when in the end White can't make progress.

c22) 16 ♖c1 ♖ac8 17 ♕a4 (while it probably doesn't change the assessment, 17 ♕c2 ♗e7 18 ♘e2 might generate more of an imbalance; then 18...c5? is poor due to 19 d5) 17...♕xa4 18 ♘xa4 ♗e7 19 ♘b2 ♗a3 20 ♖c2 ♗xb2 21 ♖xb2 ♖c7 reaches a position to which Aagaard and Ntirlis devote seven pages of analysis! I've gone over a good deal of it with the help of an analytical engine and I'd say the authors have done a thorough and impartial job of arguing for equality. However, the resulting positions require considerable accuracy from Black. He has to make many good decisions to get to one drawish position, including two ridiculously subtle moves (they describe one as "the deepest move in the book", and it was not even discovered by the authors themselves!). The more general difficulties faced by Black are indicated by the only test I've seen of this line, a recent game by Aagaard himself in which Black was slowly outplayed: 22 ♖c1 g5!? 23 ♖d2 ♖d8 24 h3 (or 24 f4 ±) 24...♔g7 25 g4 h5 26 gxh5 ♔h6 27 ♗f3 f5 28 ♔h2 f4!? 29 e4! ♖cd7 30 ♗g4 ♗xg4 31 hxg4 ♖xd4 32 ♖dc2 ± (or 32 ♖xd4 ♖xd4 33 e5!) 32...♖d2? (32...♖xe4 ±) 33 ♖xd2 ♖xd2 34 ♔g2 ♖d4 35 e5 ± A.Rasmussen-Aagaard, Danish Ch, Elsinore 2012. That's only one game, but it's safe to say that, regardless of the ultimate theoretical verdict after 11...h6, you can deviate at many points with alternate moves which will at the very least pose practical difficulties and force Black to think on his own.

We now return to 11...♕a5 *(D)*:

W

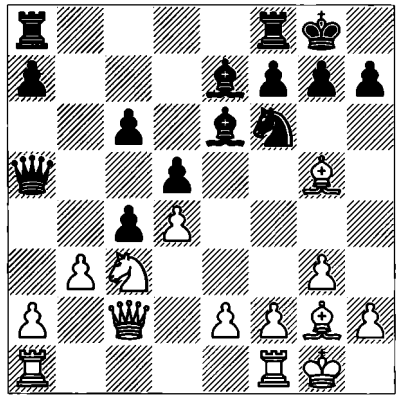


12 ♕d2

The books had been rather kind to Black in this position until recently, when Lars Schandorff advocated the white side in his Queen's Gambit book. Still, 12 ♗d2 is a reasonable alternative; for example, 12...♗b4 (12...♕b6 13 bxc4 ♕xd4 14 cxd5 ±) 13 ♘xc6 bxc6 14 ♕c2 cxb3 15 axb3 ♕b6 16 e3 ± (Scherbakov).

12 ♘xc6 bxc6 is also important. Then 13 ♘a4 is a main line, when 13...♖ab8 14 ♕c2 ♖fc8 is considered equal. And 13 ♕d2 either transposes into or resembles 12 ♕d2 lines. 13 ♕c2! *(D)* is the best follow-up to the knight exchange, and I think produces a small but meaningful advantage.

B



There has been a lot of practical experience from this position, and the following non-exhaustive excerpts illustrate many of the major themes of this variation:

a) 13...h6 14 ♗xf6 ♗xf6 15 e3 ♖ac8 16 bxc4 dxc4 17 ♖ab1 ±.

b) 13...♖ad8 14 ♖ac1 h6 15 ♗xf6 ♗xf6 16 e3 cxb3 17 axb3 ♖b8 18 ♘a4 ±.

c) 13...♖ab8 14 bxc4 dxc4 15 ♘e4 and Black's pawn-structure will be further damaged.

d) 13...♖ac8 14 bxc4 dxc4 15 ♘e4 ♕d8 (Zayats-Kovalevskaya, Russian Women's Ch, Taganrog 2011) and now 16 ♗xf6 ♗xf6 17 e3 looks like the best way to stop counterplay and secure the advantage.

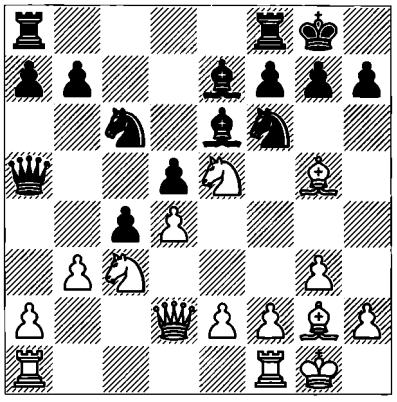
e) 13...♖fd8 is one of the better choices, when 14 ♖fd1 ♖ac8 15 bxc4 dxc4 doesn't seem to give White much. I'd recommend the careful 14 e3 ♖ac8 15 bxc4 dxc4 16 ♘e4 c5 (16...♕f5 17 ♖ab1 has the idea 17...c5 18 ♖b5

with an edge) 17 ♗xf6 gxf6 (17...♗xf6 18 d5 ♗xd5 19 ♘xf6+ gxf6 20 ♗xd5 ♖xd5 21 ♕xc4 ♖cd8 22 ♖ab1 with a modest advantage based upon Black's kingside structure) 18 d5! ♗xd5 19 ♖fd1 ♗e6 20 ♘c3! ♔g7 21 ♘d5 and White is only slightly better, but the position has plenty of content.

f) 13...♗b4 is like the main text, but with no pin: 14 ♗d2!? (or 14 ♖fc1 ♗a3 15 ♖cb1) 14...cxb3 (14...c5 15 a3 cxb3 16 ♕b2 ♗xc3 17 ♗xc3 ♕c7 18 dxc5 ±) 15 axb3 ♕b6 16 e3 ♗xc3 17 ♗xc3 ♖fc8 (Dorfman-Lputian, European Clubs Cup, CSKA-Trud 1986) and here 18 ♖a3 secures a meaningful advantage.

We now return to 12 ♕d2 *(D)*:

B



12...♖ad8

12...♗b4 13 ♗xf6 gxf6 14 ♘xc6 bxc6 is an important position which top players have tested that can also arise via 11 ♘xc6 bxc6 12 b3 ♕a5 13 ♕d2 ♗b4 14 ♗xf6 gxf6. Play can continue 15 ♖fc1, when Black has:

a) 15...♗a3 16 ♖c2 ♗f5 17 e4 with a nice edge, based upon 17...dxe4 18 ♗xe4 ♗xe4 19 ♘xe4 ♕xd2 20 ♘xd2 cxb3 21 axb3 ♗b4 22 ♘e4 ±.

b) 15...♖ac8 16 bxc4 dxc4 17 a3 ♗e7 (after 17...♗xc3, both 18 ♕xc3 and 18 ♖xc3 ♖fd8 19 e3!? c5 20 d5 ♗xd5 21 ♗xd5 ♖xd5 22 ♕c2, as in Kotsur-Namir, Ha Long City 2009, give White a slight advantage) 18 e3, and although Black's position is tough to crack, he does have six isolated pawns, four of them doubled, and I suspect that the great majority of players would take White if given the choice!

c) 15...♖ad8 16 bxc4 (or 16 a3 ♗xc3 17 ♕xc3 ♕xc3 18 ♖xc3 with a small but definite advantage) 16...dxc4 17 e3 c5 18 d5 ♗xc3 19 ♖xc3 (or 19 ♕xc3 ±) 19...♗xd5 20 ♗xd5 ♖xd5 21 ♕c2 ± Gelfand-Grishchuk, Russian Team Ch, Sochi 2004.

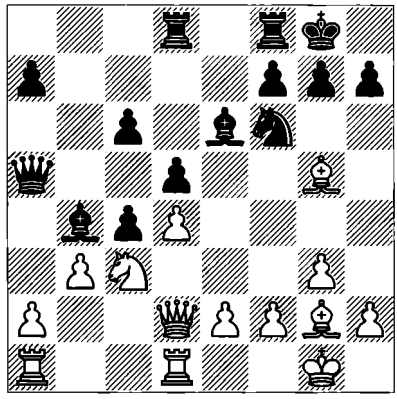
13 ♘xc6

13 bxc4 ♘xd4! is supposed to be good, although 14 cxd5! ♕xc3! 15 ♕xc3 ♘xe2+ 16 ♔h1 ♘xc3 17 dxe6 fxe6 18 ♗xb7 still results in an interesting enough position with the bishop-pair.

13...bxc6 14 ♖fd1 ♗b4 *(D)*

The toughest move. 14...♕a6 15 ♘a4 ± has the nice idea 15...♕b5 16 ♖ac1! cxb3 (16...♖fe8 17 ♘c5) 17 axb3 ♕xb3 18 ♘c5! ♗xc5 19 ♖xc5 and after Black's pawns are doubled on f6, White gets distinctly the better game.

W



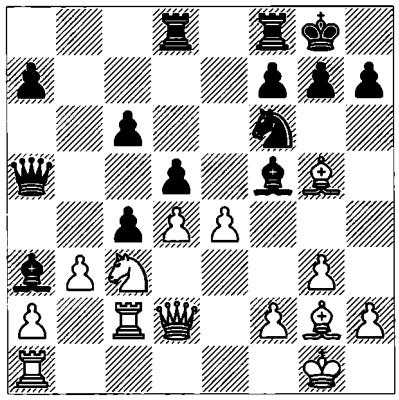
15 ♖dc1

15 ♗xf6 gxf6 16 ♖dc1 ♗a3 17 ♖c2 ♗f5 18 e4 ♗g6 19 bxc4 dxc4 and now 20 ♕e3 gave White a slim advantage in Loginov-Evseev, St Petersburg 2002, but 20 ♖d1! looks more effective; e.g., 20...♗b4 21 ♕e3 ♖fe8 22 ♘b1! f5 23 ♖xc4 fxe4 24 ♘d2 ♕b5 25 ♖dc1 ♗xd2 26 ♕xd2 ±, again because of Black's many weak pawns and mediocre bishop.

15...c5

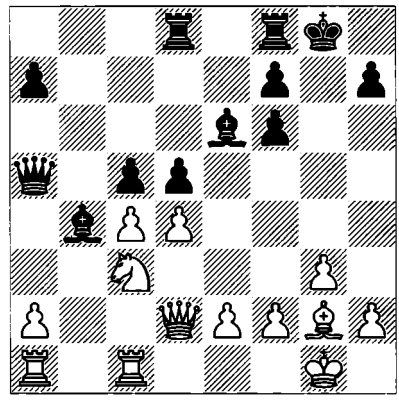
Because of what follows, Schandorff thinks that Black should try 15...♗a3, when he continues 16 ♖c2 ♗f5 17 e4 *(D)*.

He writes, "Black cannot play 17...♗g6 18 ♘xd5! ♕xd2 19 ♘xf6+ gxf6 20 ♗xd2 ♖xd4 21 ♗e3 ±". So it appears that Black must try 17...dxe4 18 ♗xf6 gxf6, when there's way too much to look at, but one line is 19 ♕e3 ♕b6! 20 ♗xe4 ♗xe4?! (20...♗g6 21 ♗xg6!? hxg6 22 ♘e2! ♖fe8 23 ♕f3 ±) 21 ♘xe4 ♕xd4 22 ♖e1!?



cxb3 23 axb3 ♕xe3 24 ♖xe3 ±. The endings in these analyses can easily turn bad for Black if they come down to knight-versus-bishop, with or without rooks, with pawns only on the king-side.

16 ♗xf6 gxf6 17 bxc4 *(D)*



17...dxc4

White keeps a slight advantage regardless of what Black tries; for example, 17...♗xc3 18 ♖xc3 dxc4 19 d5! ♗xd5 20 ♗xd5 ♖xd5 21 ♕c2 ♖fd8 22 ♖xc4, Zhu Chen-Kovalevskaya, Women's Grand Prix, Nalchik 2011. White has play against Black's weak pawns.

18 d5! ♗xd5 19 ♗xd5 ♗xc3 20 ♕xc3

20 ♖xc3 transposes to the previous note.

20...♕xc3 21 ♗xf7+ ♖xf7 22 ♖xc3

This is all based upon excellent analysis by Schandorff, who assesses the final position as ±. I would adjust that down to a small advantage, but it looks like an ending in which even with accurate defence, White is as likely to win as Black is to draw.

My overall impression is that White can achieve the better game by a number of routes after 11...♕a5, although in some cases his advantages are limited. Now you might want to go back and investigate the 11...h6 lines! Even if that achieves theoretical equality, there are various ways to make it a normal game in which the better player that day may prevail.

2.3)

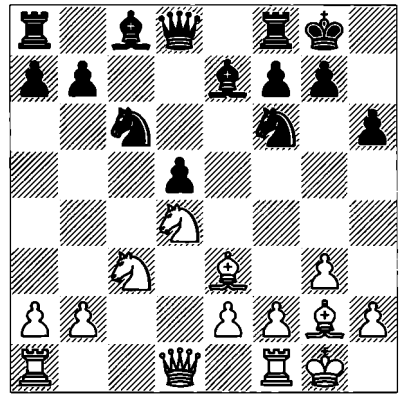
9...cxd4 10 ♘xd4 h6

This move is necessary to activate Black's pieces without constantly having to worry about ♗xf6.

a) For that reason, 10...♖e8 is rarely seen: 11 ♕a4 (11 ♖c1! is natural and correct) 11...♗d7 12 ♖ad1 h6 13 ♗f4?! (13 ♗e3 is one of the Tarrasch main lines) 13...♗c5! 14 ♘xc6 bxc6 15 e4 (Flear-J.Cooper, British Ch, Blackpool 1988) 15...♖c8 is equal.

b) After 10...♗e6, 11 ♖c1 is good, but 11 ♘xe6 fxe6 12 ♕b3 with the idea ♗h3 also gives White some advantage. In general, if Black can simply defend the e-pawn with a rook on e8, this type of position has a better chance of working out for him; otherwise, it will be difficult.

11 ♗e3 *(D)*



11...♖e8

This is the main move, but there is at least one important alternative, and several other instructive ones:

a) 11...♘g4? is met by 12 ♘xd5 ♘xe3 13 ♘xc6 bxc6 14 ♘xe3.

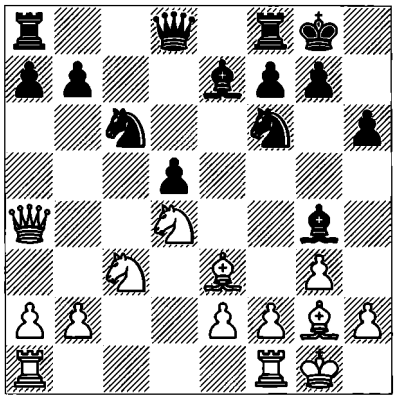
b) 11...♘e5 12 ♕b3! ♘c4 13 ♗f4! (13 ♘xd5 ♘xd5 14 ♕xc4 ♘xe3 15 fxe3 ♗f6 ±)

13...♘a5 14 ♕c2 with a meaningful advantage based upon bringing a rook to d1 and/or ♘f5.

c) 11...♗e6 is playable, but a little passive: 12 ♖c1 ♕d7 (12...♘g4 13 ♗f4 g5 14 ♘xe6 fxe6 15 ♗d2 ♘ce5 16 e3 ± Smejkal-Ljubojević, Milan 1975) 13 ♘xc6 (13 ♘xe6 fxe6 14 ♗h3 ± with the idea ♘b5-d4) 13...bxc6 14 ♘a4. This is actually a subvariant of one of the known Tarrasch lines which is considered to be favourable to White because his control over c5 isn't counteracted by any activity from Black.

d) 11...♗g4 is a very important variation which is considered equal by some and is a close competitor to 11...♖e8. I think that 12 ♕a4 *(D)* is White's most effective continuation.

B



Now the play becomes concrete:

d1) 12...♘a5 13 ♖ad1 ♘c4 14 ♗c1 ♘b6 (14...♕c8 15 ♕b5! ♘b6 16 ♗f4! ♖d8 17 ♖c1 ♕d7 18 ♕xd7 ♖xd7 19 f3 ♗e6, Kasparov-Palatnik, Moscow 1981; White has a significant advantage, and one good course was 20 ♘xe6 fxe6 21 ♗h3 ♔f7 22 ♘b5 with the idea ♘c7 or ♘d4) 15 ♕b3 (I think this is slightly better than 15 ♕b5) 15...♕d7 (15...♖c8 16 ♗f4 ♕d7 17 ♗e5 ♖c5 18 ♘f3 with the idea ♗d4; Black's pieces are awkwardly placed) 16 ♗e3 ♗h3?! (16...♗c5 17 ♘e6! fxe6 18 ♗xc5 ♖fc8 19 ♗d4 ±; 16...♖ac8? 17 ♘db5) 17 ♗xh3 ♕xh3 18 ♘f3 ♕e6 19 ♗xb6 axb6 (19...♕xb6 20 ♕xb6 axb6 21 a3 ♖fd8 22 ♖d3 ±) 20 ♘d4 ♕c8 21 e3 ♗c5 22 ♘de2 ±.

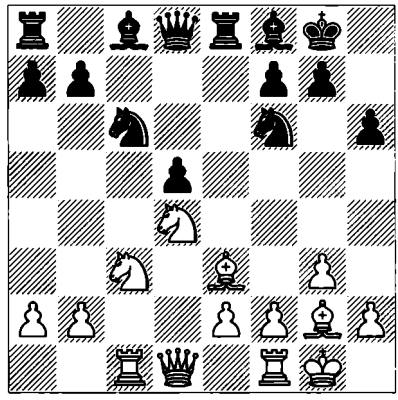
d2) 12...♕d7 13 ♗xd5! (the best capture, for concrete reasons) 13...♘xd4 14 ♕xd4 ♖fd8 (14...♘xd5 15 ♘xd5 might transpose, and White can also play 15 ♕xd5 ±) 15 ♖fd1 ♘xd5 and now:

d21) 16 ♕xd5 ♕c8 has been assessed as unclear. I suspect that White can maintain a decent advantage after 17 ♕e4, a few sample ideas being 17...♖e8 (17...♖xd1+ 18 ♖xd1 ♗f8 19 ♗f4) 18 ♕a4 (18 ♘d5 ±) 18...♗f6 19 ♘e4 ♗e7! (not 19...♗xb2? 20 ♘d6) 20 ♖d2 ♕e6 (20...a6 21 ♕b3 ♗e6 22 ♕c3) 21 ♘c3 with the idea 21...♗f6 22 ♘d5.

d22) 16 ♘xd5 ♗e6 17 ♘xe7+ ♕xe7 18 ♕e4 ♖xd1+ (18...b6 19 b3) 19 ♖xd1 ♖d8 20 ♖c1, Bodiroga-Jovančić, Pančevo 2005. White has a pawn-up ending with opposite-coloured bishops; probably not enough to win against accurate defence, but nevertheless giving chances in a real game.

12 ♖c1 ♗f8 *(D)*

W



This is the traditional main line of the Tarrasch Defence, played in thousands of games. I'm going to propose two little-played ideas, beginning with:

2.31: 13 ♕b3 37
2.32: 13 a3 39

2.31)

13 ♕b3 ♘a5

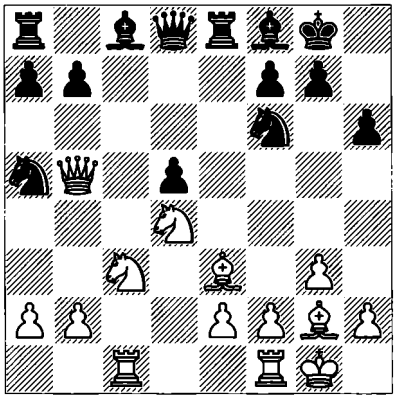
13...♖e5?! defends d5, but it's all held together with string. Play can continue 14 ♖fd1 (14 a3!? is also interesting, with the idea of 14...♘a5 15 ♕a2 followed by ♖fd1 – Black seems to be at a loss for a plan) 14...♘a5 (14...a6 15 ♘c2! ♘a5 16 ♕b6 ±) 15 ♕c2. Black has to meet the threat of ♗f4, and 15...g5 16 ♘db5! ♘c6 (16...a6? 17 ♗d4 ♖e6 18 ♗xf6 ♖xf6 19

♘xd5 axb5 and now 20 ♘c7 wins, or the more exotic 20 ♕c7!) 17 ♕d2! a6 18 ♘d4 ♘g4 (18...♘a5 19 b3 ±) 19 ♘xc6 bxc6 20 ♗d4 ♖e8 21 ♘a4 ♗b7 22 ♕c3 ♗d6 23 e4!; Black's position is crumbling.

14 ♕b5! *(D)*

This is a very unusual idea which, however, has scored six wins versus only two draws and a loss in my database. It's a simple and not too ambitious idea to keep more direct pressure on the d-pawn than the normal 14 ♕c2, as well as staying off the open c-file.

B



14...a6!

White is attacking d5 three times, which limits Black's choices:

a) 14...♘c4? allows the lengthy forcing sequence 15 ♘xd5! ♘xe3 (15...♘xd5 16 ♕xc4 ♘xe3 17 fxe3 ♕e7 18 ♖c3) 16 fxe3 ♖e5 (or 16...♖xe3 17 ♘xe3 ♕xd4 18 ♖c3 a6 19 ♕d3 ♕a7 20 ♖xf6) 17 ♘xf6+ gxf6 18 ♕b3 ♗c5 (18...♕b6?! 19 ♕xb6 axb6 20 ♔f2 ♗g4 21 a3 ±) 19 ♖f4! ♕e7 20 ♖c3 ♗e6 21 ♘xe6 fxe6 22 ♖g4+ ♔f7 23 ♖gc4 ♗b6 24 ♕c2 ♖xe3 25 ♖xe3 ♗xe3+ 26 ♔h1 ±.

b) 14...♗e6 15 b4 ♘c4 16 ♘xe6 fxe6 17 ♗d4 (with the idea e4) 17...♘d6 18 ♕d3 ±.

c) 14...♗d7 15 ♕d3 ♗g4 16 h3 ♗h5 17 g4 ♗g6 18 ♘f5 ♘c4 19 ♘xd5 ♘xd5 20 ♕xd5 ♘xe3 21 ♘xe3 ♕f6 ±.

15 ♕d3 *(D)*

This is the point of 14 ♕b5. Now White has control over f5 and intends straightforward moves such as ♖fd1 and ♘b3.

15...♗e6!

15...b5 16 b3 ♗e6 is rather passive: 17 ♖fd1 ♖c8 18 ♘c2!? (18 ♘xe6! fxe6 19 ♕g6) 18...♖e7 19 ♗d4 ♖d7 20 ♘e3 and the d-pawn soon falls for only minor compensation, Knott-Poulton, British League (4NCL) 2001/2.

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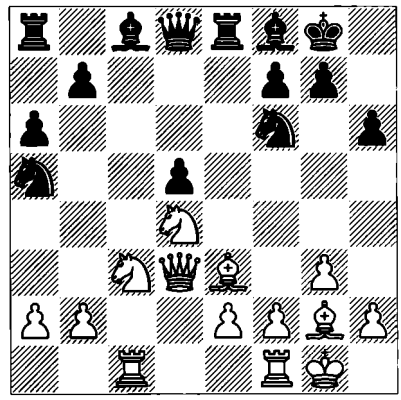


16 ♘xe6!?

This causes Black some problems and wins the bishop-pair. Tarrasch players are generally tolerant of this exchange because they acquire a 2-1 central majority; here it's not so easy.

Other tries:

a) 16 h3 ♘c4 (16...♖c8! is roughly equal) 17 ♘xe6! (17 ♘xd5? ♗xd5 18 ♖xc4 ♗xc4 19 ♕xc4 ♕d7! 20 ♕b3 ♘e4 ∓ K.Wang-A.Marshall, Virginia Beach 2008) 17...fxe6 18 ♗d4 ± with the idea 18...♘xb2 19 ♕f3 e5 20 ♘xd5 exd4 21 ♘xf6+ ♕xf6 22 ♕b3+ ♔h8 23 ♕xb2 ±.

b) 16 b3 ♘g4 17 ♗f4 ♘c6 18 ♘a4 ♘ge5 19 ♕d2 ±.

c) 16 ♗f4 puts stress upon the black position, with ♘a4 and ♖fd1 coming: 16...♗d6 (16...♘c6! is playable although after 17 ♖fd1 or 17 ♘xe6 fxe6 18 ♖fd1 ♖c8 19 ♕g6, White enjoys the better prospects) 17 ♗xd6 ♕xd6 18 ♘xe6 fxe6 19 e4 d4 (19...♘c6 20 exd5 ♖ad8 21 ♖fe1) 20 f4! and White is for choice, particularly in view of 20...e5?! 21 ♘d5!.

16...fxe6 *(D)*

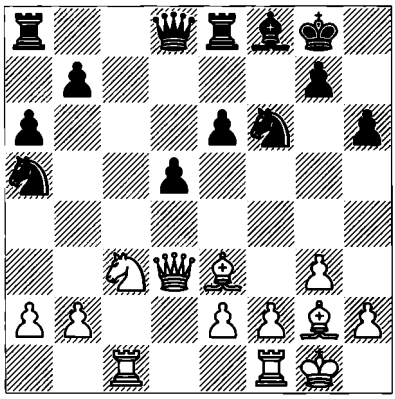
White has nothing concrete, but Black has a few long-term worries because of the bishops. Now:

a) 17 ♕g6 is possible, although Black stands solidly enough after 17...♘c6 18 ♖fd1 ♘e5 19 ♕b1 ±.

b) 17 ♘a4 and then:

b1) 17...♖c8 (probably slightly obliging) 18 ♖xc8 ♕xc8 19 ♖c1 ♕d8 20 ♘c5 (20 f4 ♘c4 21 ♗d4 b5 22 b3) 20...♗xc5 21 ♗xc5 ♘c6 22 f4 ±.

W



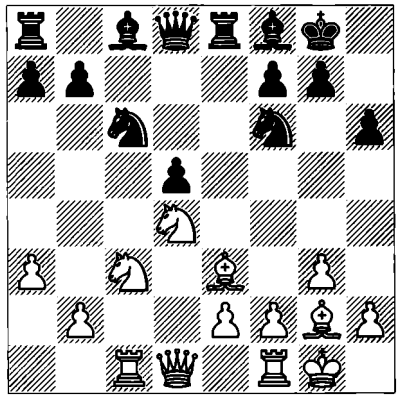
b2) After 17...♘c4!, best play appears to be 18 ♗d4 e5 19 ♗c5 e4 20 ♕d4 b5 21 ♗xf8 bxa4 22 ♗b4 ♕d7 23 ♗c3 ±.

As a whole, White is only able to put Black under a moderate amount of pressure in these lines; on the other hand, he gets the normal 'white' advantage with no risk.

2.32)

13 a3 *(D)*

B



Karpov seems to have introduced this move into tournament play. 13 a3 has never caught on at any level, primarily due to a few games between strong players in which Black didn't have too many problems to cope with. It is one of those high-class waiting moves that appears to do little, but makes a few modest improvements without allowing the opponent anything concrete to latch onto. First, it prevents ...♘b4, a move which appears in several of the main lines and is relevant should White play ♕c2. Next, it creates an escape-hatch, so that if it were White's move, he could play 14 ♕b3! ♘a5 15 ♕a2 and keep attacking the d-pawn, answering 15...♗e6 with 16 ♘cb5, for example. That's a threat which has to be dealt with, but more importantly, White strengthens his grip on the dark squares, which is the issue in so many of the main lines of the Tarrasch. For example, in lines with ♘xc6 bxc6, White can now play b4 to cement control over the c5-square, and the move ...♕a5 doesn't attack the a-pawn as it sometimes does. Even taking those advantages into account, 13 a3 is hardly an intimidating or aggressive move, so in a sense it's a real test of the nature of the Tarrasch Defence. That is to say: what exactly is Black doing in this opening (or in the main line, anyway)? I think you'll find that, like many reputedly active defences, it's White's provocation that permits Black's activity.

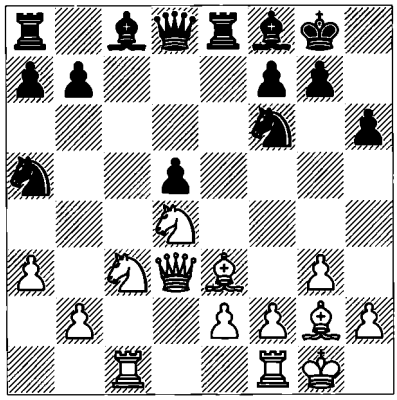
13...♗g4

Played in over 80% of the games, but naturally there are alternatives:

a) 13...♘e5? allows White to pursue the threat I mentioned: 14 ♕b3! ♗e6 15 ♖fd1! ♕d7?! 16 ♘xe6 fxe6 17 ♗d4 and White is already winning; e.g., 17...♘f7 (17...♗d6 18 e4!) 18 ♗xf6!? (18 e4! is even better; e.g., 18...e5 19 ♘xd5 exd4 20 ♖c7 ♕e6 21 ♗h3! ♕xh3 22 ♘xf6+ ♔h8 23 ♕xf7) 18...gxf6 19 e4 d4 20 ♘b5 ♖ec8 (20...♖ac8 21 ♖xc8 ♕xc8 22 ♘xd4 ±) 21 ♖xc8 ♖xc8 22 ♘xd4 ♖d8 23 ♗f3 ♘g5 24 ♗g4 winning, Niessen-Gambaeck, email 1997.

b) 13...♘a5 can be countered by 14 ♕c2 ♘c4 15 ♗f4, but 14 ♕d3 *(D)* is a more direct idea.

B



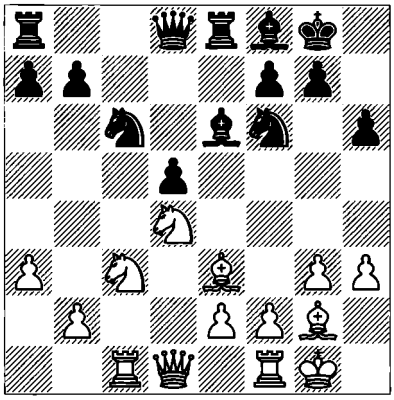
14...a6! (14...♘c4? 15 ♘xd5 ♘xd5 16 ♕xc4 ♘xe3 17 fxe3 is winning for White; 14...♗g4 15 h3 ♗h5 16 ♘f5 ♗g6 17 g4 ♘c4 18 ♗d4! with the idea 18...♘xb2? 19 ♕b5 ± ♗xf5 20 gxf5 ♗xa3 21 ♖c2) 15 b4 ♘c6 16 ♘xc6 bxc6 17 ♘a4 (or 17 ♗d4 ±), and White has excellent queenside pressure; for example, 17...a5 (17...♘g4 18 ♗b6 ♕e7 19 ♕c3) 18 ♘b6 ♗a6 19 ♕d2 ♖b8 (19...♗xe2!? 20 ♖fe1 ♗a6 21 ♘xa8 ♕xa8 22 ♗c5 ±) 20 bxa5 ♘e4 21 ♕d4! intending 21...♗xe2 22 ♖fe1 ♗a6 23 ♖xc6 ♗xa3 24 ♖d1, which threatens, among other things, ♗f4 and ♘xd5.

c) 13...♗e6 is rarely played. It can be argued that without the move h3 in (i.e., the interpolation of ...♗g4 and h3), there are too many lines in which White can capture the d-pawn without having to worry about ...♗xh3. In addition, ...♕d7 won't come with tempo. Of course, h3 is also useful in some ways, but that's chess for you. One example: 14 ♘xc6 (14 ♕a4 ♕d7 15 ♖fd1 is a sound alternative) 14...bxc6 15 ♗d4 (this move is a fundamental idea in the Tarrasch, to prevent ...c5 and ...d4; still, 15 ♘a4 is perfectly good) 15...♘h7 (the popular plan we will see below) 16 e4!? (16 ♘a4! ± is the best continuation; compare the lines below) 16...dxe4 17 ♗xe4 c5! 18 ♗e3 ♖b8 (Genov-Jakovljević, Herceg Novi 2007) and now the best way to go into an ending is 19 ♗c6 ♗b3! 20 ♕xd8 ♖exd8 21 ♘e4, which shouldn't be enough to win, but at least makes Black work.

14 h3 ♗e6 *(D)*

Or 14...♗d7 15 ♕b3! ♘a5 16 ♕a2 ♗c6 17 b4 ♘c4 18 b5! ♘xe3 19 fxe3 ♗d7 20 ♘xd5 ♗e7 21 g4 ±.

W



15 ♘xc6

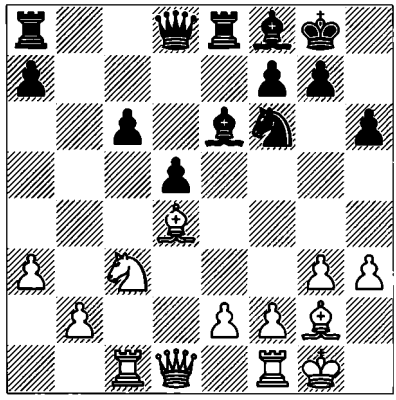
The most thematic and frequently-played move, although I don't think it's quite as good as the following two continuations:

a) 15 ♘xe6! fxe6 16 f4 ± restrains Black's centre and plans a slow build-up with perhaps ♗f2 and e4 to follow, counting upon the bishop-pair. Smyslov played this basic idea, but with ♔h1 and ♗g1.

b) 15 ♘a4 ♘e4!? (15...♕d7 16 ♔h2 ♖ad8 17 ♘c5 ♗xc5 18 ♖xc5 is mildly in White's favour, but very pleasant for him because Black has nothing to undertake; 15...♘xd4 16 ♗xd4 ♘e4 is also solid, though White retains a somewhat favourable IQP position after 17 ♘c3 ♕d7 18 ♔h2 f5 19 e3 ♖ec8 20 f3 ♘d6 21 ♖f2 a6 22 ♖fc2) 16 ♘xe6 (16 ♗xe4 ♘xd4! 17 ♗g2 ♘f5 18 ♗c5 ±, but this isn't much) 16...♖xe6 (16...fxe6? 17 ♗xe4 dxe4 18 ♘c3 ±) 17 ♗xe4 dxe4 18 ♘c3 with the idea ♕b3 or ♕c2. This entire line is certainly playable for Black, but not yet fully equal.

15...bxc6 16 ♗d4 *(D)*

B



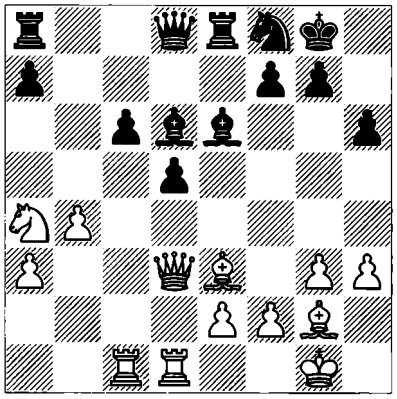
Karpov's idea, which you will sometimes see in other Tarrasch positions. The point is to hold down ...c5.

16...♘h7

This became the quasi-official 'solution' to 13 a3 after its use by Grishchuk. Black threatens ...c5 and avoids the drawbacks of ...♘d7 (which doesn't protect d5); he also retains the possibilities of ...♘g5 or ...♘f8-e6. Nevertheless, White is well-developed and should get his normal advantage by clamping down on the dark squares. In fact, there are several plausible alternatives, among them:

a) 16...♗d7 17 ♕d3 ♘h7 18 ♗e3 (18 f4 ± covers e5 and discourages ...♘g5; e4 will follow) 18...♗d6 (18...♘g5 19 h4 ♘e6 20 b4 ±; 18...a5! is best) 19 ♖fd1 ♗e6 20 b4! ♘f8 (20...♕d7 21 b5 ±) 21 ♘a4 *(D)*.

B



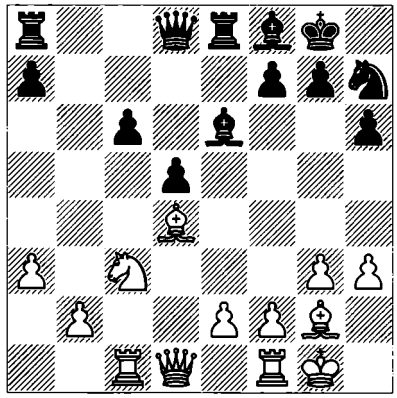
A pretty picture of queenside domination. Black has dawdled too much. 21...♘g6 22 ♕c3! ♗d7 23 ♘c5 ♗xc5 24 ♗xc5! ♖xe2 (what else?) 25 ♗e3 ♕e7 26 ♗f1 ♖xe3 27 ♕xe3 ♕xe3 28 fxe3 ♖e8 29 ♔f2 ♘e5 30 ♖c5 ♖e7 31 e4! and White wins, Karpov-Illescas, Leon 1993.

b) 16...♘d7 17 e4 gives White a structural advantage; e.g., 17...c5 (17...dxe4 18 ♘xe4 ±; 17...♕a5? 18 exd5 cxd5 19 ♘xd5! ♗xd5 20 ♗c3) 18 exd5 ♗f5! 19 ♗e3 ♘e5 20 ♘e4 c4 21 ♘d2 ♘d3 22 ♖c2 and Black lacks compensation.

c) 16...c5! is the move 16 ♗d4 was supposed to discourage, but it can and has been played: 17 ♗xf6 ♕xf6 18 ♘xd5!? (maybe 18 ♗xd5 is a better try: 18...♖ad8 19 ♕a4 ♗xd5 20 ♘xd5 ♕xb2 21 e4 ♖b8 22 ♖c3; this is only very slightly better for White, but at least the contrast in minor-piece activity means there should be a fight to come) 18...♕xb2 19 ♕a4 (this position has been assessed as clearly favourable for White, as has the position after 19 ♘c7 ♖ad8 20 ♕e1 ♖e7 21 ♕a5, but it's not true in either case; Black no problems in the second position after 21...♕b6!) 19...♖ad8 20 ♘f4. Both Seipel-Turicnik, email 2000 and Peto-Blanco, email 1999 reached this position and Black played 20...c4?! instead of 20...♗b3! 21 ♕xa7 ♕f6 with full compensation for the pawn, if not more. White needs to solve the line with 16...c5 if he is to demonstrate an advantage from 15 ♘xc6.

We now return to the position after Black plays 16...♘h7 *(D)*:

W



17 ♘a4

17 e4 has been tried a few times, but 17...dxe4 18 ♘xe4 ♗d5 19 ♘c3 ♗xg2 20 ♔xg2 ♕d7 leaves White with only a nominally better endgame.

17...♕d7 18 h4! ♗f5

Now:

a) After 19 ♖e1, Gelfand-Grishchuk, Biel 2001 went 19...♗e4 20 ♗c5 (20 e3 ±) 20...♗xg2 21 ♔xg2 ♖e4 (White has a smaller edge after 21...♗d6 22 ♗xd6 ♕xd6 23 ♘c5 ♘f6 24 ♕d4) 22 e3 ♕f5?!. Now 23 ♕c2! would threaten both f3 and ♗xf8, so 23...♕c8 24 b4 ♖e6 25 e4! might follow, with significant pressure.

b) 19 e3 ± is a bit more accurate; that move will probably be played anyway, and it discourages 19...♗e4: not only does 20 b4 then establish a bind, but 20 ♗xe4 ♖xe4 21 ♘c3 ♖ee8 22 ♘e2 affords White better prospects.

16...♘h7 isn't the cure-all it's cracked up to be, and I think the notes indicate that White has an instructive plus in these structures, in fact, more than he gets from the traditional main lines of the Tarrasch. But from a theoretical point of view, 16...c5 looks satisfactory, and White's 15th-move options are apparently the way to secure an advantage.

3 Unorthodox Queen's Gambit

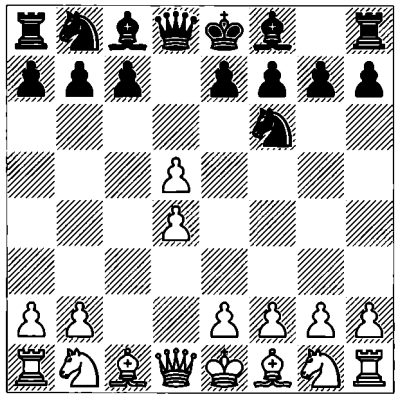
1 d4 d5 2 c4

In this chapter we examine variations of the Queen's Gambit Declined which are out of the mainstream but in some cases quite respectable:

3.1: 2...♗f5 (Baltic) 42
3.2: 2...♘c6 (Chigorin) 46
3.3: 2...e5 (Albin) 54
3.4: 2...e6 3 ♘c3 c5 4 cxd5 cxd4 (Schara) 59
3.5: 2...c5 (Austrian) 64
3.6: 2...e6 3 ♘c3: Irregular Lines 65

The only other plausible 2nd move for Black is 2...♘f6?!, the Marshall Defence, which is considered inferior because it surrenders the centre with tempo after 3 cxd5 *(D)*.

B



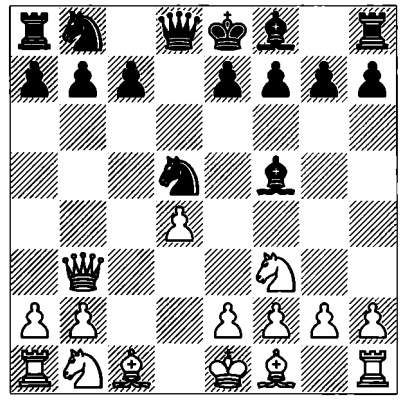
I'll cover this in some detail, as it occurs relatively often in lower-level chess:

a) The attempt to switch to a Grünfeld by 3...g6?! runs into the disruptive check 4 ♕a4+ ♗d7?! 5 ♕b3 b6 6 ♘c3 ♗g7 7 e4 ±.

b) 3...♕xd5?! 4 ♘c3 ♕a5 5 ♘f3 ♘e4 6 ♗d2 ♘xd2 7 ♕xd2; Black has the bishop-pair but no development, and the centre is all White's.

c) 3...♘xd5 4 ♘f3! (this is the only finesse that White needs to know; the natural 4 e4?! gives Black counterplay after 4...♘f6 5 ♘c3 e5! with the idea 6 d5 ♗c5! or 6 dxe5 ♕xd1+ 7 ♔xd1 ♘g4 hitting f2 and e5) 4...♗f5 (4...g6 heads for Grünfeld territory, but after 5 e4, Black can't exchange on c3, and 5...♘b6 6 h3! {preventing ...♗g4} 6...♗g7 7 ♘c3 transposes to note 'b' to Black's 5th move at the start of Chapter 9, which is very pleasant for White) 5 ♕b3! *(D)*.

B



Now Black has these options, all insufficient:

c1) 5...♘c6 6 ♘bd2! ♘b6 7 e4 gives White a clear advantage.

c2) 5...b6 6 ♘bd2 intends e4, and if 6...♘f6, then 7 e4! anyway, with a fun variation going 7...♘xe4 8 ♘e5! e6? 9 ♗b5+ ♔e7 10 ♗d7!! and not only does White threaten ♕f3 but Black can hardly move.

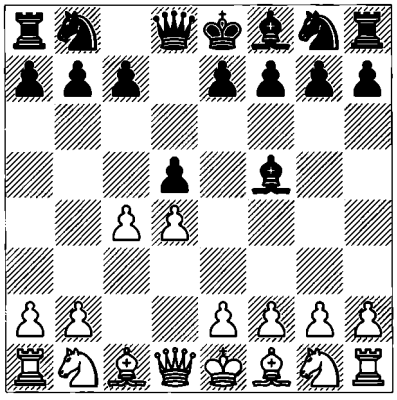
c3) 5...♘b6 6 ♘c3 e6 7 e4 ♗g4 8 ♘e5 with the centre and initiative: 8...♗h5 9 g4! ♗g6 10 ♗e3 ♘8d7? 11 0-0-0! ♗d6 12 f4 with a winning game for White.

3.1)

2...♗f5 *(D)*

This is called the Baltic Defence. Black gets a piece out and if he can play ...e6 with no drawbacks he gets a Queen's Gambit Declined with his bishop in front of the pawn-chain. White can either allow this or immediately change the central situation:

W



3.11: 3 ♘f3 43
3.12: 3 cxd5 45

3.11)

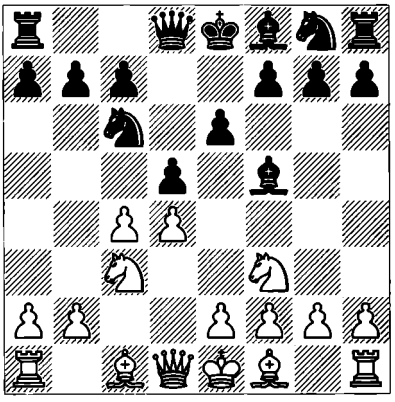
3 ♘f3

The alternative move-order 3 ♘c3 e6 4 ♘f3 transposes.

3...e6 4 ♘c3 c6

4...♘c6!? *(D)*, hoping for a ...♘b4 sortie at some point, needs to be considered.

W



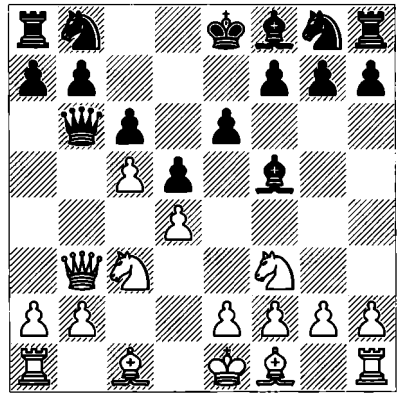
Now:

a) 5 ♗g5 ♗e7 6 cxd5 exd5 7 ♗xe7 ♘gxe7 8 e3 0-0 gives White a choice. Firstly, 9 ♗e2 resembles a Queen's Gambit Declined except that Black's knight on c6 is misplaced. He can also play 9 ♗d3!? ♗xd3 10 ♕xd3, an idea that is harmless in the Queen's Gambit Declined main lines, but also a little irritating for Black with the knight on c6. White can put some pressure on the queenside due to his half-open file and potential minority attack, whereas Black has no counterplay. This is a practical choice without theoretical pretensions.

b) A straightforward answer is 5 ♗f4 ♘f6 6 e3 ♗e7 7 cxd5 ♘xd5 (7...exd5 8 ♗b5 ±; e.g., 8...0-0 9 0-0 ♗d6 10 ♗g5! ♗e6 11 ♗xc6 bxc6 12 ♘e5 c5 13 f4 with excellent attacking chances) 8 ♗g3 0-0 9 ♗e2!? (9 ♗d3 ±) 9...♗b4 10 ♕c1!? ♗d6 11 0-0 ♗xg3 12 hxg3 ♕d6 13 ♘d2! ♗g6 14 ♗f3 (14 ♘ce4 ♕e7 15 ♕c5!?) 14...♘ce7 15 ♖d1 c6 16 ♘c4 ♕c7 17 e4 ♘b6 18 ♘e5 ♖ac8 19 ♕e3 ♖fd8 20 ♖ac1 ♕b8 21 ♗e2 ♘d7 22 f4 ± with ideas of g4 or ♘xg6 and e5 (or 22 ♘d3), Kramnik-Short, Horgen 1995; White is building up a substantial advantage.

5 ♕b3 ♕b6 6 c5! *(D)*

B



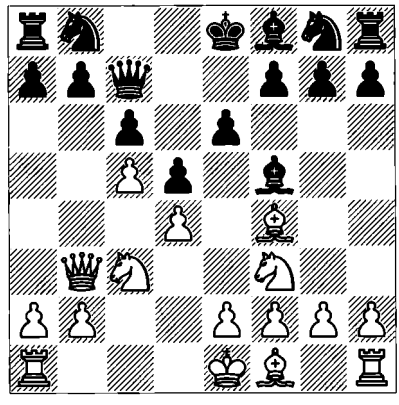
Now Black has:

3.111: 6...♕c7 43
3.112: 6...♕xb3 44

3.111)

6...♕c7 7 ♗f4! *(D)*

B



This is a common time-gaining tactic with this set-up.

7...♕c8

7...♕xf4? 8 ♕xb7 is winning for White, since Black can't even dream of trapping White's queen in the corner.

8 ♘h4

White prefers taking the bishop-pair to 8 e3 h6 9 ♘e5!? ±.

8...♗g6

Maybe 8...♘e7 is better, but 9 ♘xf5 ♘xf5 10 e3 ♘d7 11 ♗d3 ♗e7 12 ♕c2 g6 13 0-0 0-0 14 b4 gave White a very pleasant game in P.Schlosser-Khalifman, Bundesliga 1997/8.

9 ♘xg6 hxg6 10 e4! ♘f6

10...♘d7 11 exd5 exd5 12 ♗d3! ±.

11 exd5

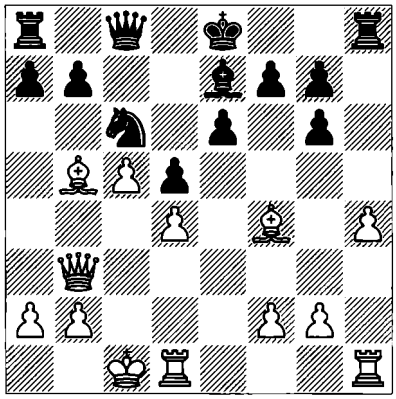
11 ♗d3 dxe4 12 ♘xe4 ♘xe4 13 ♗xe4 ♗e7, as in Kramnik-Short, Dos Hermanas 1997, is optically better for White, but this standard 'restraint structure' is often drawish, and Black had a fairly easy time splitting the point.

11...♘xd5

Not 11...exd5? 12 0-0-0 and ♖e1.

12 ♘xd5 cxd5 13 ♗b5+ ♘c6 14 0-0-0 ♗e7 15 h4! *(D)*

B



This is the simple idea: eventually White will break through with h5.

15...♔f8 16 ♔b1 a6 17 ♗a4 ♘a5 18 ♕f3 b6?!

Hübner prefers 18...♔g8 ±.

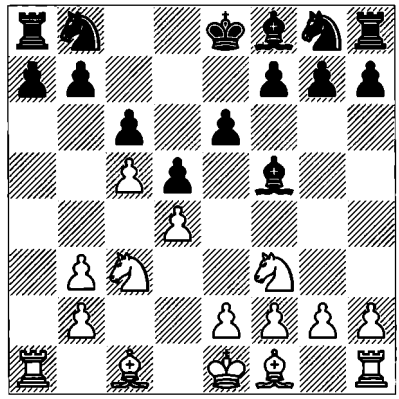
19 cxb6 ♕b7

Here instead of 20 ♖c1, as played in the game Kramnik-Gelfand, Wijk aan Zee 1998, 20 h5! g5 21 h6 is very strong. The idea is 21...gxf4? 22 hxg7+ ♔xg7 23 ♕g4+ ♔f6 24 ♕xf4+ ♔g6 25 ♕g3+ ♗g5 26 f4 ♕e7 27 fxg5, winning. 21...g6? is met by 22 ♗c7 ♖h7 23 ♗d7, and 21...♖xh6? with 22 ♖xh6 gxh6 23 ♕h3. Hübner suggests 21...♕xb6? 22 ♗e5 f6, but then 23 ♖c1! wins; best is 21...♘c4 22 ♗c7 ♘xb6 23 ♗e5 f6 24 ♗b3! ±. Hübner credits *Schachwoche* for this analysis.

3.112)

6...♕xb3 7 axb3 *(D)*

B



White plans b4-b5 to put pressure on Black's queenside.

7...♘a6

A nice variation runs 7...♘f6 8 b4 (after 8 ♗f4!? ♘bd7 9 b4 ± Black can't stop b5) 8...♘a6 9 ♖xa6!? bxa6 10 ♘e5 ± ♖c8 11 e4!, and now 11...♘xe4 12 ♗xa6 ♖c7 13 b5 ♘xc3 14 bxc3 cxb5 15 ♗xb5+ ♔d8 16 ♘c6+ or 11...♗xe4 12 ♗xa6 ♖c7 13 f3 ♗c2 14 b5! ±.

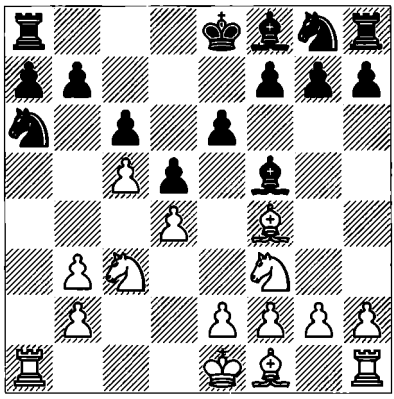
8 ♗f4 *(D)*

8 e4!? has the idea 8...dxe4? 9 ♗xa6 bxa6 10 ♘e5 ♘e7 11 ♖xa6 ±. Instead 8...♘b4! 9 ♖a4 dxe4! 10 ♖xb4 exf3 11 ♖xb7 e5! 12 d5! ends in only a very slight advantage for White.

8...f6!?

8...♘f6 9 e3 (9 ♖xa6!? bxa6 10 e3 should also be favourable for White; compare the note to Black's 7th move above) 9...♘b4 10 ♖a4 ♘d3+!? (10...a5 11 ♗c7) 11 ♗xd3 ♗xd3 12 ♘e5 ♗g6 13 ♖b4 begins a lengthy forcing sequence: 13...0-0-0 14 0-0 ♘h5 15 ♖a1 a6 16 ♘xc6 bxc6 17 ♖b8+ ♔d7 18 ♖b7+ ♔e8 19 ♗c7 ♖c8 20 ♘a4 ♗d3 21 ♘b6 ♖xc7 22 ♖xc7 ♗b5 23 ♖a7 f5 24 ♘a8! ±.

9 e4!?



9 e3 ♘b4 10 ♖a4 ♘d3+ 11 ♗xd3 ♗xd3 12 ♔d2 ♗a6! ±.

9...♘b4

Not 9...dxe4?! 10 ♗xa6 bxa6 11 ♘d2, or 9...♗xe4 10 ♘xe4 dxe4 11 ♗xa6 bxa6 12 ♘d2 with a significant advantage.

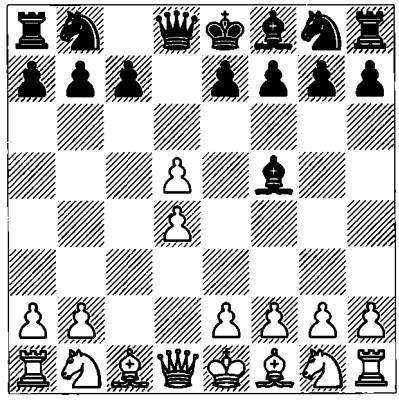
10 ♖a4 ♘c2+ 11 ♔d1 dxe4 12 ♘h4 ♘xd4 13 ♖xd4 ♗xc5 14 ♘xf5 exf5 15 ♖d2

Black has three pawns for the piece but none of them are passed and White's pieces coordinate well; e.g., 15...g5 16 ♗e3 ♗xe3 17 fxe3 ♘h6! 18 ♗e2 ♔e7 19 h4 g4 20 ♔c2 ♖hd8 21 ♖xd8 ♖xd8 22 b4 a6 23 ♖f1 with the idea ♘a4.

3.12)

3 cxd5 *(D)*

An easier line to learn than 3 ♘f3. I'll give it as an option, but with few details.



3...♗xb1

This exchange is positionally forced, as otherwise 3...♕xd5?! 4 ♘c3 allows White to gain time and control the centre. 3...♘f6?! is also poor (compare the Marshall Defence, 2...♘f6?!). Among other ideas White can play 4 ♘c3 (4 ♕a4+!? c6!?) 4...♘xd5 5 ♕b3 (or 5 f3 ♘xc3 6 bxc3 e5!? 7 e4 ♗e6 8 ♖b1!) 5...♘xc3 6 bxc3 ♕c8 (6...b6 7 ♘f3 e6 8 ♘d2 ♗g6 9 g3 ♘d7 10 ♗g2 ♖b8 11 ♕a4 ♗e7 12 ♗c6) 7 ♘f3! c5 8 ♗f4 e6 9 ♘d2! cxd4 10 cxd4 ♗g6 11 e4 with a fine game.

4 ♕a4+

This is nearly always played. Actually, the gambit 4 ♖xb1 ♕xd5 5 e3 ♕xa2 6 ♗d2 is unlikely-looking (Black has no weaknesses!), but has really grown on me; e.g., 6...e6 7 ♘f3 ♘f6 8 ♖c1 (or 8 ♗d3) 8...♕xb2 (8...c6? 9 ♗c4 ♕xb2 10 ♖b1 ♕a3 11 ♖xb7 ♘bd7 12 0-0 ±) 9 ♖b1 ♕a2 10 ♖xb7 ♗d6 11 ♗d3 ♘bd7 12 e4 e5 13 ♘xe5 ♘xe5 14 dxe5 ♗xe5 15 ♗b5+ with far more than enough compensation.

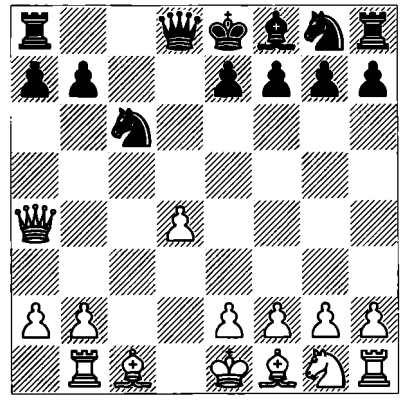
4...c6

After 4...♕d7 5 ♕xd7+ ♘xd7 6 ♖xb1 ♘gf6 Black recovers the pawn, but leaves White with the bishop-pair and an ideal centre.

5 dxc6!?

Rare, but moderately advantageous and extremely safe. 5 ♖xb1 ♕xd5 is normal, when Bronznik makes a strong case that the old line 6 ♘f3 ♘d7 7 b4! is best.

5...♘xc6 6 ♖xb1 *(D)*



6...e5!

Black should be aggressive unless he wants to struggle with a slightly worse position for a long time: after 6...♕xd4 7 ♕xd4 ♘xd4 White can use his bishops, or exchange one to gain time, as in 8 e3 ♘c6 9 ♗b5 ♖c8 10 ♗d2 (or 10 ♘f3 e6 11 0-0 a6 12 ♗xc6+ ♖xc6 13 b4!)

10...e6 11 ♖c1 ♗d6 (11...a6 12 ♗xc6+ ♖xc6 13 ♖xc6 bxc6 14 ♘f3 ♗d6 15 ♔e2 ♘f6 16 ♖c1 ± M.Gomez-Rausis, Bordeaux 1990) 12 ♗xc6+ ♖xc6 13 ♖xc6 bxc6 14 ♘f3 ♘e7 15 ♔e2 ± 0-0 16 ♖c1 ♖b8 17 b3 ♔f8 18 ♖c4 h6 19 ♗c3 ± Dautov-Jürgens, Dortmund 1992.

7 ♗d2

7 a3 has the same idea, and may be more precise. Compare what follows.

7...♕xd4

7...exd4 8 g3 is transparently better for White; e.g., 8...♗c5 9 ♗g2 ♘ge7 10 b4 ♗b6 11 b5 ♘e5 12 ♗xb7.

8 ♕xd4

Now:

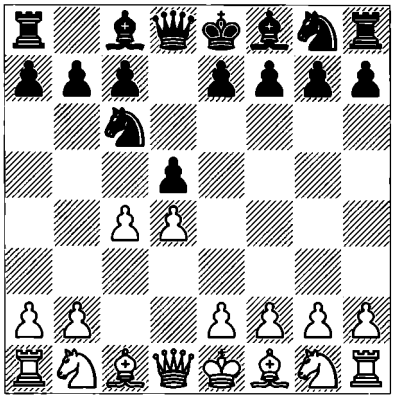
a) 8...exd4?! 9 g3 ♘f6 10 ♗g2 ± ♗e7 11 b4! is no fun for Black. White's score after 9 g3 has been superb.

b) After 8...♘xd4, 9 ♘f3 ♘c6 10 e3 ± is fine, but 9 e3! is better still for White: 9...♘c6 10 ♗b5 ♖c8 (10...♗d6 can be met by 11 ♘f3 or 11 ♗xc6+ bxc6 12 ♘f3 ±) 11 ♘f3 ♗d6 12 ♗c3 f6 13 ♔e2 (or 13 ♘d2 ± Shipov) 13...♘ge7 14 ♖hd1 ♖d8 15 ♘d2! a6 16 ♘e4 ± Shipov-Radmacher, Berlin 1992; upon a bishop retreat, ♗c4 can follow.

3.2)

2...♘c6 *(D)*

W



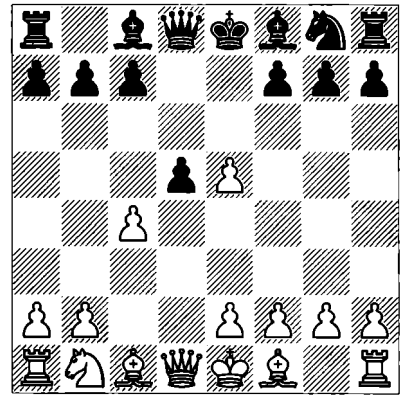
The Chigorin Defence is a very respectable opening which has been played by many strong grandmasters and has numerous books devoted to it. It can also be difficult to play against, as in the main lines, Black is often ahead in development and has attacking chances in return for White's better pawn-structure and bishop-pair. Rather than attempt to refute the Chigorin Defence, we'll explore playable lines which are strategic in nature, cut down on Black's counterplay, and aim for a small but durable advantage. I've chosen two related systems with that in mind; in both cases, White gets his queen's bishop outside his pawn-chain before playing e3. Then the position resembles a traditional Queen's Gambit, but the knight on c6 is not always ideally placed since it prevents Black's freeing move ...c5. Both lines begin with:

3 ♘f3 ♗g4

This is the move that has sustained the Chigorin for well over a century. Other moves are less frequently played:

a) After 3...e5, 4 dxe5 transposes to the Albin (1 d4 d5 2 c4 e5 – Section 3.3) if Black replies 4...d4, but there's also a complicated theoretical line after 4...♗b4+ 5 ♘bd2 dxc4 6 ♕c2 ♗e6 7 e3, which should be somewhat better for White. It might be easier to play 4 ♘xe5 ♘xe5 5 dxe5 *(D)* with these ideas:

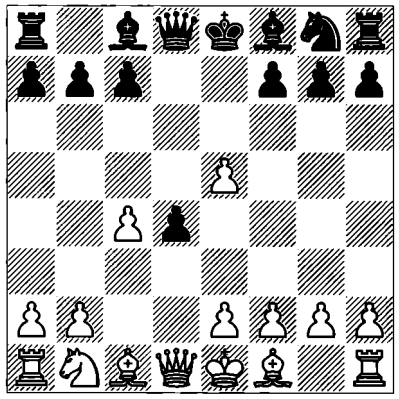
B



a1) 5...dxc4 6 ♕xd8+ ♔xd8 7 e4! ♗e6. This is given as '=' by *NCO* and is approved for Black by Dunnington, but that appears to be wrong, because White has both better development (Black's king position hurts him) and targets of attack; e.g., 8 f4 (or 8 ♘c3 ♗b4 9 f4 g6 10 ♗e3) 8...b5 (8...g6 9 ♗e3; for example, 9...c6 10 ♘c3 ♗b4 11 0-0-0+ ♔c7 12 f5! gxf5 13 exf5 ♗xf5 14 ♗xc4 with a clear advantage, and there are other good ways for White to play it) 9 a4 c6 10 f5 (or 10 ♗e3 ±) 10...♗d7 11 ♗e3 ♗b4+ 12 ♘c3 followed by ♗e2 and 0-0 or in some cases 0-0-0. Black is badly restricted.

a2) 5...d4 *(D)* and then:

W



a21) 6 e4 is the traditional move, a sort of main line going 6...♘e7 (6...c6!? 7 ♗d3 ♕a5+ 8 ♘d2 ♕xe5 9 0-0 with the idea f4 or ♘f3 and a clear advantage) 7 f4 ♘c6 (7...♘g6 8 a3 ±) 8 ♗d3 ♕h4+ 9 g3 ♕h3 10 ♗f1 ♕g4 11 ♘d2, which is a bit better for White, who still has his extra pawn, Maksimenko-Barle, Geneva 1996.

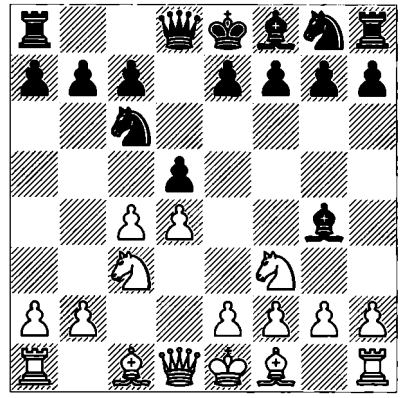
a22) I'm not sure that there's anything wrong with 6 e3. There might follow 6...♗c5 (this seems right; 6...♗b4+ 7 ♗d2 dxe3 8 ♕a4+ ♗d7 9 ♕xb4 exd2+ 10 ♘xd2 ±) 7 ♘a3!? (7 exd4 ♗xd4 8 ♘c3! ♗xc3+ 9 bxc3 ♕xd1+ 10 ♔xd1 ♗f5 11 ♗e3 0-0-0+ 12 ♔c1 ± is worth a look) 7...dxe3 (7...♘e7 8 ♘c2 ±) 8 ♕xd8+ ♔xd8 9 ♗xe3 ♗xe3 10 fxe3 c6 11 c5! ♔c7 12 ♘c4 ±; his e-pawns are suspicious-looking, but I don't think there's any doubt that White gets the nod.

b) 3...♘f6? 4 cxd5 ♘xd5 (after 4...♕xd5 5 ♘c3 White gains time and wins the centre; this is one of the points of 3 ♘f3 – compare 3 cxd5 ♕xd5 4 ♘f3 e5!) 5 e4 ♘f6 6 d5 (or simply 6 ♘c3) 6...♘b8 7 ♘c3 e6 8 ♗g5 ♗e7 9 ♗b5+ c6 10 dxc6 ♘xc6 (10...bxc6 11 ♕xd8+ ♗xd8 12 ♗a4 and Black's position is in tatters) 11 ♕xd8+ ♗xd8 12 e5 (or 12 ♘e5) 12...♘d7 13 ♗xc6 bxc6 14 ♗xd8 ♔xd8 15 0-0-0 ♔c7 16 ♘e4 and White controls the play – Black's dark squares are terribly weak and his c8-bishop is bad.

c) 3...e6 is passive and shuts in the queen's bishop. An uncomplicated response is 4 ♘c3 ♗b4 (4...dxc4?! 5 e4 ♗b4 6 ♗xc4 ♘f6 7 ♕d3 0-0 8 0-0 with an ideal centre and development) 5 ♗g5 (5 e3 also favours White) 5...f6 (5...♘ge7 6 e3 0-0 7 ♕c2 f6 8 ♗h4 ♘f5 9 ♗g3) 6 ♗h4 (compare the main line, in which Black at least has ...♗g4 in) 6...g5 7 ♗g3 h5 8 h3 dxc4 9 e3 ♕d5 (9...b5 10 a4) 10 ♘d2! (10 ♕c2) 10...♗xc3 11 bxc3 e5 12 ♕c2 and Black's weaknesses are hurting him.

4 ♘c3 *(D)*

B

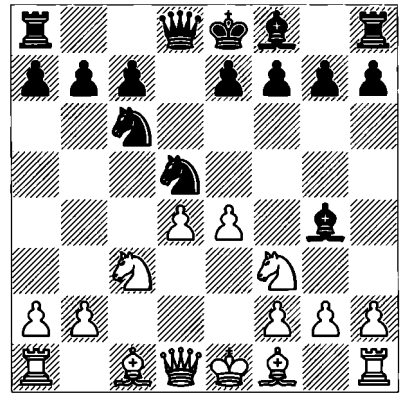


4...e6

Easily the best move. As for the alternatives, the following analysis (from various sources and the author's own input) makes fascinating reading, but as all of it greatly favours White, you may not want to get too enmeshed in the particulars. Still, they're important to document:

a) 4...♘f6?! leads to trouble after 5 cxd5 ♘xd5 6 e4 *(D)*:

B

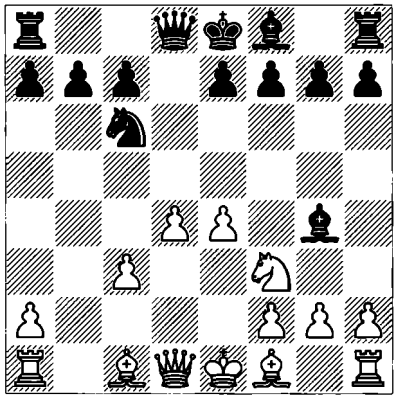


a1) 6...♘b6? 7 d5 ♘e5? (7...♗xf3 8 gxf3 ♘e5 9 f4 ♘ed7 10 a4 ±) 8 ♘xe5! ♗xd1 9 ♗b5+ c6 10 dxc6 and White wins.

a2) 6...♗xf3!? 7 gxf3 ♘xc3 (7...♘b6 8 d5 ♘b8 9 ♗f4 ±) 8 bxc3 e5 9 ♖b1!? (White also

has the better game after 9 d5) 9...♕f6 (9...exd4 10 ♕a4! and the moves ♖xb7 and ♗b5 or ♗h3 will give White a huge advantage) 10 ♖xb7 exd4 11 ♗b5 (or 11 ♕a4) 11...0-0-0 12 ♗a6! ♔d7 13 cxd4 ♕xd4 (13...♘xd4 14 ♕a4+) 14 ♕b3!, winning.

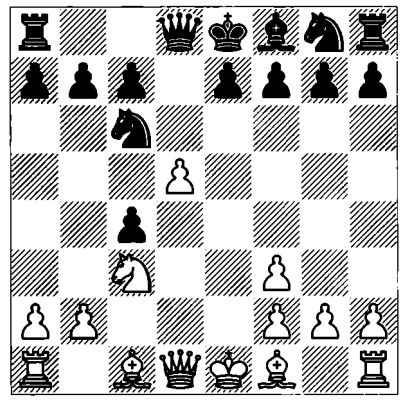
a3) 6...♘xc3 7 bxc3 *(D)* was a topical line for a while in the 1980s.


B

7...e5?! (the only consistent follow-up, but flawed) 8 d5 ♘b8 9 ♕a4+ ♘d7 10 ♘xe5 ♕f6 11 ♗e2! (the move that ruined this variation for Black) 11...b5 (11...c6 12 dxc6 ♕xe5 13 ♗xg4 ♕xc3+ 14 ♔e2 ♕xc6 15 ♕xc6 bxc6 16 ♖d1 ♘f6 17 ♗f3 ♖c8 18 ♗e3 ±; 11...♕xe5 12 ♗xg4! intending 12...♕xc3+ 13 ♗d2 ♕xa1+ 14 ♔e2, winning) 12 ♕xb5 ♖b8 (12...♕xe5 13 ♗xg4 ♕xe4+ 14 ♕e2 ♕xe2+ 15 ♗xe2 ± with an extra pawn and the bishop-pair) 13 ♕a4 ♗b4 14 cxb4 ♕xe5 15 ♗xg4 0-0 16 ♗xd7 ♕c3+ 17 ♗d2 ♕xa1+ 18 ♕d1! ♕xa2 19 0-0 ♕c4 20 ♕f3 1-0 Raedecker-Wittmann, corr. 1983.

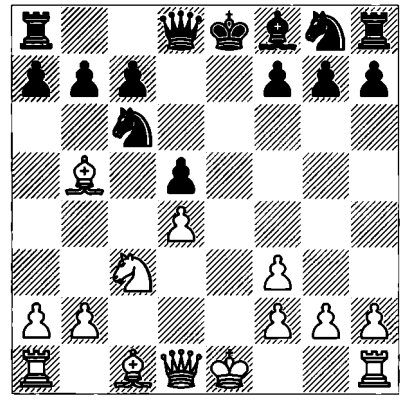
b) 4...dxc4? 5 d5 ♗xf3 (or 5...♘b8 6 ♘e5 ±) and now 6 exf3! *(D)* is very strong, since White's minor pieces develop rapidly.

6...♘e5 7 ♗f4 ♘g6 (7...♘d3+ is also depressing: 8 ♗xd3 cxd3 9 ♘b5 ♖c8 10 ♘xa7 ♖a8 11 ♘b5 ♖c8 and simply 12 ♕xd3 with advantage, or 12 ♖c1 c6 13 0-0!, which gives White a vicious attack) 8 ♗xc4! ♘f6 (not 8...♘xf4? 9 ♗b5+ c6 10 dxc6 ♕xd1+ 11 ♖xd1 with an immediate win) 9 ♗g3 a6 10 0-0 b5?! (but 10...♕d7 11 ♕b3! is awful for Black) 11 ♘xb5! axb5 12 ♗xb5+ ♘d7 13 ♖c1 ♖a7 (versus ♖xc7) 14 ♕d4 ♕b8 15 ♕xa7! ♕xa7 16 ♖xc7 ♕xc7 (16...♕a8 17 ♖xd7) 17 ♗xc7 ♘h4


B

18 ♖c1 ♘f5 19 ♗b6 1-0 Tukmakov-Vincent, Lugano 1986.

c) 4...♗xf3 5 exf3 (5 gxf3 isn't bad either) 5...e6 (5...dxc4? 6 d5 transposes to line 'b'; 5...♘f6 6 ♗g5! dxc4 7 d5 ♘e5 8 ♕d4 ♘d3+ 9 ♗xd3 cxd3 10 0-0-0 c6 11 ♗xf6 gxf6 12 ♕xd3 with a big spatial advantage and ♖he1 or ♕e4 to come) 6 cxd5 exd5 7 ♗b5 *(D)*.


B

This may not look so bad, but White has fast development and the pin on c6 is awkward for Black:

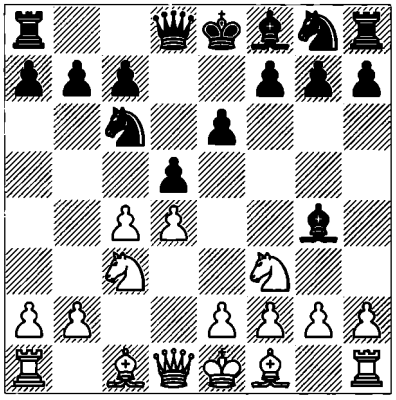
c1) 7...a6 8 ♕e2+ (8 ♗a4 is a calm response, since 8...b5 is weakening after 9 ♗b3 ♗b4 10 a4) 8...♔d7!? (8...♕e7 9 ♘xd5 ♕xe2+ 10 ♔xe2 0-0-0 11 ♗xc6 bxc6 12 ♘c3 ♖xd4 13 ♗e3 ±) 9 ♗xc6+ (9 ♗a4 b5 10 ♗d1 ♘xd4 11 ♕d3 c5 12 ♗e3 ±) 9...♔xc6!? 10 ♕c2!? ♔b6 11 ♕b3+ ♔a7 12 ♘xd5 ±.

c2) 7...♘e7 8 0-0 and Black's king has to go to the queenside, but will find it uncomfortable there as well: 8...♕d6 9 ♖e1 0-0-0 10 ♗g5 f6 11 ♗e3 ♔b8 12 ♖c1 g5?! 13 ♘a4 with

a strong attack, Andersson-Calvo, Palma de Mallorca 1972.

We now return to the position that arises after 4...e6 *(D)*:

W



We consider two related systems:

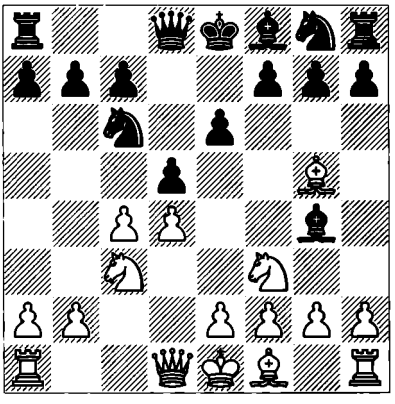
3.21: 5 ♗g5 49
3.22: 5 ♗f4 52

5 cxd5 exd5 6 ♗g5 is also playable, but so as not to clutter things up, I'll only talk about the exchange cxd5 and ...exd5 in conjunction with specific lines below, and in the context of 5 cxd5 exd5 6 ♗f4 in Section 3.22.

3.21)

5 ♗g5 *(D)*

B



This is my main recommendation. White develops with a threat. His goal is to achieve the standard pressure that comes from a d4/c4 structure versus ...d5/...e6. This can be particularly effective because Black's knight on c6 prevents ...c5, his most important freeing move. White can normally prevent the move ...e5 by maintaining pressure on d5, so Black has to do without his two key liberating ideas. All this only ensures a small advantage to White in most lines, but it is the kind of risk-free approach that I like to recommend. Perhaps surprisingly, White can boast of a well-above-average superiority in both results and performance rating when using 5 ♗g5. We come to a further split:

3.211: 5...f6 49
3.212: 5...♗e7 51

Or:

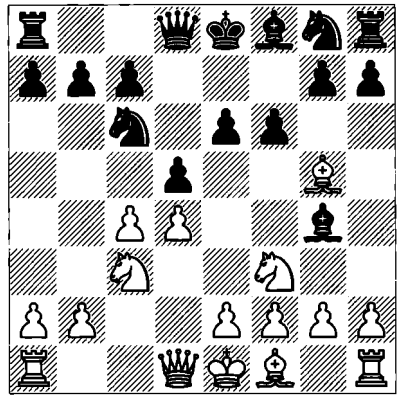
a) 5...♕d7 is a bit odd because it loses time. White can gain the edge by playing the natural 6 cxd5 (or 6 e3) 6...exd5 7 e3 h6 8 ♗f4 ♘f6 9 ♗b5!? (9 h3 ♗xf3 10 ♕xf3 a6 11 ♗d3; e.g., 11...♗d6 12 0-0 ♗xf4 13 ♕xf4 0-0 14 ♗f5 ♕d6 15 ♕xd6 cxd6 16 ♖ac1 g6 17 ♗b1 ♖ac8 18 a3 ± with the idea b4 and in some cases ♗a2) 9...♗b4 10 ♕b3!? (10 ♖c1) 10...♗xf3 11 gxf3 ♘h5 12 ♗xc6 ♗xc3+ 13 ♕xc3 bxc6 14 ♗e5 and White has the better of it due to play down the c-file.

b) 5...♘ge7 is almost never played, perhaps because 6 e3 limits Black's options. Now 6...h6 7 ♗f4 ♘g6 8 ♗g3 doesn't seem to help matters, nor does 6..f6 7 ♗f4; e.g., 7...♘g6 8 ♗g3 ♗b4 9 ♕b3 ♗xf3 10 gxf3 ♗xc3+ 11 ♕xc3 ±, when 11...0-0 is best met by 12 cxd5! exd5 13 h4!.

3.211)

5...f6 *(D)*

W



At the cost of creating a small weakness on e6, Black counters White's threat without losing time.

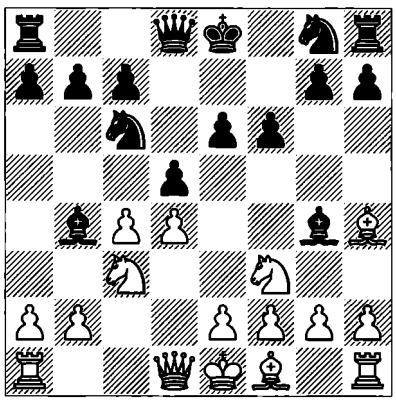
6 cxd5

This is a clear way to proceed, if not necessarily the best one; in general, it's easier for White to play the positions that arise after this central exchange. Another good – but somewhat messier – approach is 6 ♗h4:

a) A variation that might transpose into other lines is 6...♘ge7 7 e3 (or 7 cxd5 with the idea 7...♘xd5 8 e4 ♗xf3 9 gxf3 ± ♘xc3?! 10 bxc3 and the bishops will cause further damage) 7...♘f5 8 ♗g3 ♗b4 9 ♕b3! ♘xg3?! (9...♕d7 10 cxd5 exd5 11 ♖c1 is slightly better for White) 10 hxg3. Black has got rid of White's bishop, but he still has no freeing pawn move in the centre and the h-file is very nice for White; for example, 10...0-0 11 ♗d3 h6 and here 12 ♘d2 and 12 0-0 are both safely in White's favour, but I can't resist showing some fantasy analysis I did in my old book with 12 0-0-0!? ♗xc3 (12...dxc4 13 ♕xc4 ♗xc3 14 ♕xc3 ♗xf3 15 gxf3 ±) 13 ♕xc3 dxc4(?!) 14 ♗xc4 ♔h8?! 15 d5! exd5 16 ♗xd5 ♕d7? 17 ♘h4!, when an attractive line is 17...♗xd1? 18 ♘g6+ ♔h7 19 ♕d3!! f5 20 ♘xf8+ ♖xf8 21 ♗g8+, winning the queen.

b) 6...♗b4 *(D)* and now:

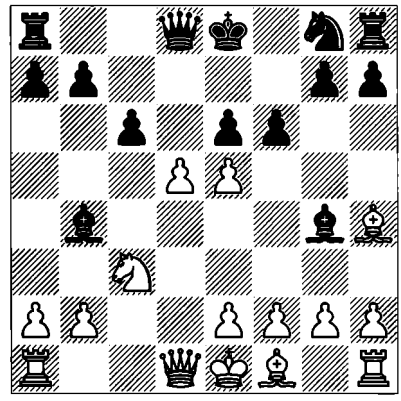
W



b1) 7 e3 is safe and should yield White a small advantage: 7...♘ge7 8 cxd5 exd5 9 h3 ♗e6 (Bronznik prefers 9...♗f5, but I'm not sure if there's a fundamental difference following 10 ♗g3) 10 ♗g3 ♘f5 11 ♗h2 ± intending ♗b5 or ♗d3, as in Kumaran-Miladinović, World Junior Ch, Matinhos 1994.

b2) 7 ♘e5!? (an aggressive move, attacking Black's g4-bishop) 7...♘xe5 (7...♗h5 8 ♘xc6 bxc6 9 ♕a4 ♗xc3+ 10 bxc3 ♘e7 11 e3 0-0 12 ♗d3 gives White a small but effortless edge) 8 dxe5 c6 9 cxd5 *(D)* and now:

B



b21) 9...exd5 10 ♕d4 (hitting both bishops) 10...♕a5 11 f3 is strong for White; for example, 11...♗e6 12 exf6 ♘xf6 13 ♗xf6 gxf6 14 ♕xf6 ♔d7 15 ♕g7+ ♗e7 16 0-0-0 – Onishchuk.

b22) 9...♕a5 10 f3 exd5?! 11 fxg4 ♗xc3+ 12 bxc3 ♕xc3+ 13 ♔f2 ♘h6 14 h3 and in Onishchuk-Morozevich, Alushta 1994, White was much better according to Onishchuk; he went on to win.

b23) 9...♕xd5 10 exf6 ♘xf6 11 f3 ♗h5 12 e4 and whether or not queens are exchanged, White's bishop-pair gives him some advantage: 12...♕e5 (12...♕xd1+ 13 ♖xd1 ♗xc3+ 14 bxc3 0-0 15 ♗c4 ♗f7 16 ♗g3! ♖fd8 17 0-0 and White's bishops are extremely strong) 13 ♕c2 0-0 14 ♗e2 ♖ad8 15 0-0 ♕d4+ 16 ♗f2 ♕d2 17 ♖ac1 ♗g6 (17...♗xc3 18 bxc3 ♕xc2 19 ♖xc2 b6 20 a4! e5 21 a5 c5 22 axb6 axb6 23 ♖b1 ±) 18 ♗c4! ± V.Ivanov-Ulko, Moscow 1995.

These examples are all terribly instructive.

6...exd5

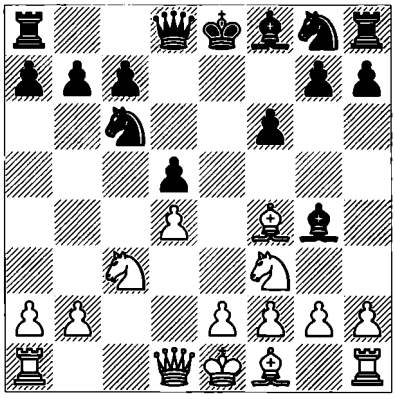
6...fxg5? 7 dxc6 ♗xf3 (to prevent ♘e5) 8 exf3 bxc6 9 ♗c4 (other moves are also good) 9...♕d7 10 ♕b3 ♔f7 11 ♘e4 h6 12 0-0-0 ♘f6 13 ♘xf6 gxf6 14 ♖he1 ♖e8 15 ♖e2 threatening ♗xe6+ and ♖de1.

7 ♗f4 *(D)*

The computer likes 7 ♗d2!?, which is too bizarre for words, although admittedly supportive of White's queenside endeavours.

7...♗b4

B



7...♘ge7 8 e3 g5 9 ♗g3 h5 10 h3 ♗e6 (de Vita-Miladinović, Genoa 2004) 11 ♕b3! ♘a5 (11...♖b8 12 ♗d3) 12 ♕a4+ (12 ♕c2 ♘f5 13 ♗h2 ± ♗d6?! 14 ♗d3!) 12...c6 13 ♘d2 (where's that ♗d2 when we need it?) 13...♘f5 14 ♗h2 is not disastrous for Black, but his position is awkward.

8 e3 ♘ge7 9 ♗e2

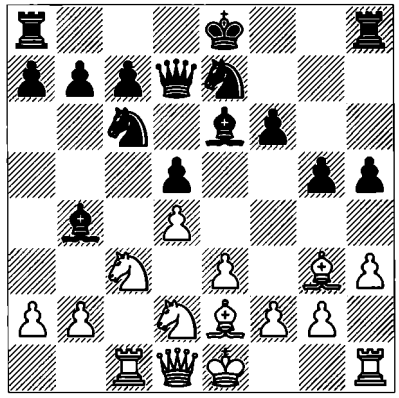
Or 9 ♗d3 with a small advantage, when 9...♕d7 10 0-0 0-0 11 ♖c1 ♖ae8 12 a3 ♗xc3 13 ♖xc3 is a typical position. White has queenside pressure and Black's knight on c6 has no move for the moment.

9...♕d7 10 ♖c1 g5

Black has developed naturally but has weaknesses and few good squares for his pieces. So he lashes out, which is also the computer's recommendation.

11 ♗g3 h5 12 h3 ♗e6 13 ♘d2!? *(D)*

B



This attacks the h-pawn and prepares to swing over to the queenside.

13...♗f7 14 ♗d3

Or 14 ♘b5 ♗a5 15 ♗h2 a6 16 ♘c3 ±.

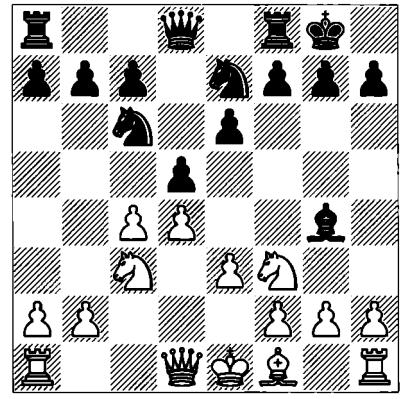
14...h4 15 ♗h2 ♗d6 16 ♗xd6 cxd6!?

Harikrishna-Morozevich, FIDE World Cup, Hyderabad 2002. At this point, 17 ♕a4! would prevent 17...0-0-0??, a move which happened in the game, due to 18 b4 intending 18...♔b8 19 b5 and White wins. Black should of course play otherwise, perhaps with 17...0-0, but White has an edge regardless. Overall, this line looks difficult for Black to handle.

3.212)

5...♗e7 6 ♗xe7 ♘gxe7 7 e3 0-0 *(D)*

W



8 cxd5

8 ♗d3 may also yield the better game:

a) 8...h6 (preventing ♗xh7+) 9 h3 ♗h5 (9...♗xf3 10 ♕xf3 ♘b4 11 ♗b1 dxc4 12 ♕xb7 ± Rogozenko-Bigaliev, Budapest 1995; this has been assessed as clearly better for White, but in fact it's only a modest edge after 12...♘bd5 13 ♕a6 ♕b8! 14 0-0 with the idea 14...♕xb2 15 ♘a4 ♕a3 16 ♕xc4) 10 0-0 dxc4 11 ♗xc4 ♘d5 12 ♘e4!? ♘ce7 13 ♖c1 with a small but definite advantage, Palliser-Keeling, Sheffield 1999.

b) 8...f5!? is possibly the best move, and a rather ingenious idea: set up a Stonewall after your bishop has got out in front of the pawn-chain. On the other hand, the 'bad' bishop behind lines is a valuable defender of the Stonewall pawns. There might follow 9 0-0 ♔h8 (White is for choice after 9...♖f6!? 10 h3 ♗h5 11 ♗e2 ♕d6 12 c5 ♕d7 13 ♘e5!? ♘xe5 14 ♗xh5 ♘f7 15 f4, while 9...f4? fails to 10 ♗xh7+) 10 h3 ♗h5 11 ♗e2 intending ♘g5;

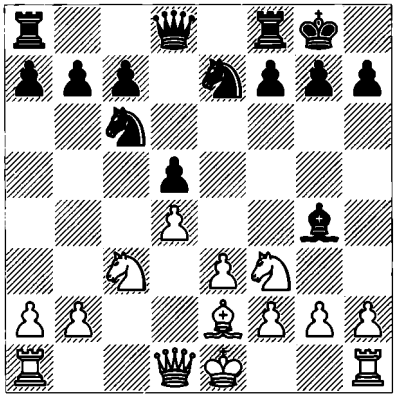
e.g., 11...h6 12 cxd5 exd5 13 ♘e1 ♗xe2 14 ♕xe2 ± with the idea 14...f4?! 15 ♘d3.

8...exd5

8...♘xd5 9 ♗e2 ♘ce7 10 0-0 (or 10 ♖c1 ±) 10...♘g6 11 ♕b3 gave White a persistent queenside edge in K.Hansen-Grabher, Werfen 1998.

9 ♗e2 *(D)*

B



This is a deceptive position. Superficially, White's advantage seems slight indeed, since the problem c6-knight can simply move. But it's worth remembering that without ...c5, Black will tend to be reduced to a Queen's Gambit Declined position in which White has a standard queenside attack. At the same time, without the availability of ...♗d6, it's going to be difficult to scare up prospects on the kingside. For example:

a) 9...♕d6 10 0-0 ♖ad8 11 ♖c1 ♘g6 12 ♘a4! ♘ce7 13 ♘c5 with annoying pressure on the queenside, Lingnau-Haag, Germany (team event) 1996/7.

b) 9...♘c8 10 0-0 ♘b6 11 ♖c1 ♖e8 12 ♘a4 ♘xa4 (12...♖b8 13 ♘c5) 13 ♕xa4 ♕d6 14 ♖c5 ♘e7 15 ♖fc1 c6 16 ♕c2 ♘g6 17 b4 (17 h3 ♗xf3 18 ♗xf3 ±) 17...♗xf3 18 ♗xf3 ♘f8 19 ♕b3 ♘e6 20 ♖5c2 a6 21 a4 with a classic minority attack that gives White the advantage.

3.22)

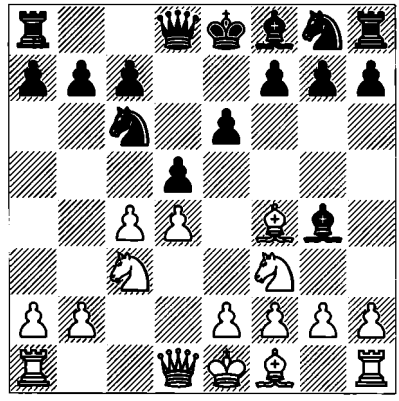
5 ♗f4

I originally wrote this up as a very lengthy section, but that isn't justified due to its similarity to 5 ♗g5. So I'll provide an outline emphasizing examples and lines with unique themes. Like 5 ♗g5, 5 ♗f4 contains the proverbial drop of poison: Kramnik, for example, has used it on several occasions against the world's top players (Carlsen, Ivanchuk, Morozevich and Short), which indicates that this is a safe and strategic variation with good chances of achieving a slight edge.

5 cxd5 exd5 6 ♗f4 is a close variant on this line which Kramnik has tried as well. Overall, I'd rather keep the pawn-structure flexible, but it helps that the d5-pawn becomes vulnerable. A typical continuation is 6...♗d6 7 ♗g3 ♘ge7 8 e3 ♕d7 (8...0-0 9 ♗d3 h6 10 a3 ♗xg3 11 hxg3 ♕d6 12 ♖c1 ♕f6 13 ♗e2 ♖ad8 14 ♘b5 a6 15 ♘c3 ♖fe8 16 ♘a4 ♘f5 17 0-0 a5 18 ♘c5 b6 19 ♘d3 ± Bosboom-Lanchava – Botsari, Greek Team Ch, Ermioni Argolidas 2005; an example of the unhurried style!) 9 a3 0-0 10 ♗d3 a6 11 ♗xd6 ♗xf3 12 ♕xf3 ♕xd6 13 ♕g3 ♖fd8 14 b4 ± Kramnik-Short, Dresden Olympiad 2008.

We now return to the position that arises after 5 ♗f4 *(D)*:

B



Black has many options, but these are most logical:

3.221: 5...♗xf3 53
3.222: 5...♘f6 54

Two of several sensible alternatives, briefly:

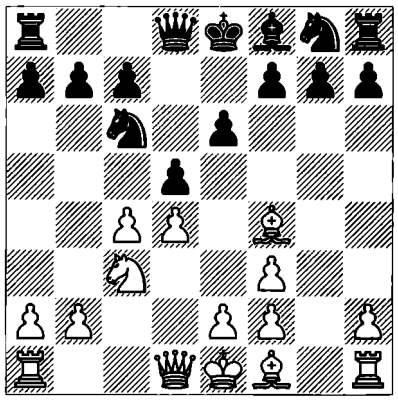
a) 5...♗b4 6 ♘e5! ♘xe5 7 ♗xe5 ♗xc3+ (7...♘f6?? 8 ♕a4+; 7...♔f8 8 ♕b3 ±) 8 bxc3 ♘f6 was played in Aseev-Morozevich, Russian Ch, Elista 1995. A good idea for White is then 9 ♕b3! b6 10 ♗xf6! gxf6 (10...♕xf6 11 ♕b5+ ♔e7 12 cxd5 exd5 13 ♕xd5 ±) 11 cxd5 exd5 12 f3 ♗f5 13 e4! dxe4 14 ♗b5+ ♔f8 15 ♗c6 exf3 16 0-0! with many threats.

b) 5...♗d6 6 ♗g3 (6 ♗xd6 ♕xd6 and now 7 ♘e5!? or simply 7 e3) 6...♘f6 7 e3 0-0 8 a3 ♘e7 9 ♕b3 b6 (Kramnik-Carlsen, London 2010) and now 10 cxd5 exd5 11 ♗h4!? ± keeps the game interesting.

3.221)

5...♗xf3 6 gxf3 *(D)*

B



6...♗d6

Black logically tries to eliminate the bishop-pair, but White also has a space advantage to count upon. Here is an instructive glimpse of the alternatives:

a) 6...♘f6 7 e3 ♘h5!? 8 cxd5 (8 ♗e5 is promising) 8...exd5 9 ♗g3 ♘xg3 (this opens the h-file; the exchange can wait, but without it ...♘h5 doesn't make much sense) 10 hxg3 ♘e7 11 ♕b3 ♖b8 (Baumbach-Thormann, Weimar 1968; not 11...b6? 12 ♗b5+! c6 13 ♘xd5!) and now 12 ♕a4+! ♘c6?! (else White takes on a7) 13 ♗b5 wins material.

b) 6...♘ge7 7 e3 ♘g6 8 cxd5 exd5 9 ♗g3 is better for White, who has nice moves like ♕b3, ♗b5 and/or ♖c1 at his disposal.

c) 6...dxc4 7 e3 ♗d6 (7...♘a5? comes up short after 8 ♕a4+! c6 9 b4 cxb3 10 axb3 ♕b6 11 ♕xa5 ♕xa5 12 ♖xa5 ♗b4 13 ♖c5!) 8 ♗g3 ♘ge7 9 ♗xc4 0-0 10 ♕c2! and White would like to castle queenside and advance in the centre to take advantage of his bishop-pair. Black's freeing move 10...e5!? runs into 11 dxe5 ♘xe5 12 ♗e2! with 0-0-0 to come.

d) 6...♗b4 7 e3 ♘f6 has several replies. A challenging one is 8 ♕b3 0-0 9 ♗g5!? (to prevent ideas involving ...dxc4 and after ♗xc4, ...♗xc3 followed by either ...♘a5 or ...♘d5) 9...dxc4 (9...h6 10 ♗h4) 10 ♗xc4 ♕d6!? (or 10...♕e7 11 ♗b5!) 11 ♗xf6 ♘a5 12 ♖g1! g6 13 ♕c2 ♘xc4 14 a3 ♗xc3+ 15 ♕xc3 ♘b6 16 ♗e5 ♕d7 17 e4 f6 18 ♗f4 with 0-0-0 and White has a bind.

7 ♗g3

7 cxd5 exd5 can also be played, and then, e.g., 8 ♕d2.

7...♘ge7 8 e3 ♕d7

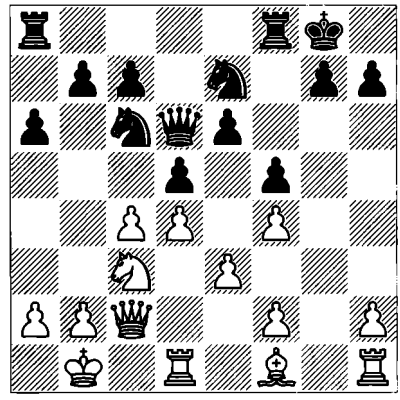
8...f5!? can be met in two ways:

a) 9 ♕b3 f4 (Breutigam) falls short of equality after 10 ♗h4, threatening c5 and preparing 0-0-0 and e4.

b) 9 c5! ♗xg3 10 hxg3 should also favour White, because the only freeing move, 10...e5, is dubious in view of 11 dxe5 ♘xe5 12 ♗g2 and now 12...c6 13 ♕d4 or 12...♘f7 13 e4!.

9 ♕c2 f5 10 ♗xd6 ♕xd6 11 0-0-0 0-0 12 f4 a6 13 ♔b1 *(D)*

B



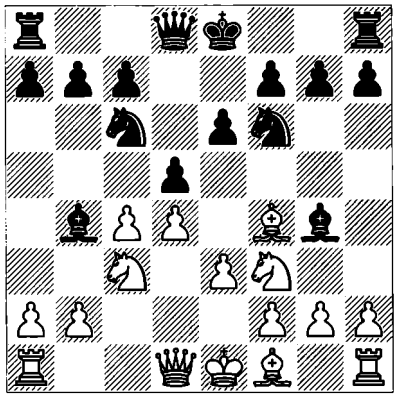
Black's position is in decline. Now:

a) Breutigam's line 13...dxc4 14 ♗xc4 ♘a5 15 ♗e2 c5 16 dxc5 favours White, but 16 ♕a4! ♕c7 17 dxc5 ♕xc5 18 ♕d7 is better still.

b) After 13...♘d8, Kramnik-Morozevich, Frankfurt rapid 2000 continued 14 ♖g1 c6 15 ♘e2 (heading for c5 or e5 via c1, although this was a good time for 15 c5!) 15...♘f7 16 ♘c1 ♘c8 17 ♖g3 ♕e7 18 c5 ♕c7 19 ♗e2 ♔h8 20 ♖dg1 ♖g8 21 ♘d3 ♘e7 22 h4! g6 23 h5 ♖g7 (Black can't free himself: 23...gxh5 24 ♗xh5 ♖xg3 25 ♖xg3 ♖f8 26 ♕d1! ♘h6 27 ♘e5 ♖g8 28 ♖g5! ♕c8 29 ♕h1 and the queen penetrates) 24 hxg6 ♘xg6 25 ♖h1 ♖ag8 26 ♖gh3 and White was winning but lost the thread and eventually had to settle for a draw.

3.222)

5...♘f6 6 e3 ♗b4 *(D)*



White still hopes for his standard queenside play, Black for the take-over of central squares and destruction of White's queenside.

7 ♖c1

7 ♕b3 ♗xf3 8 gxf3 appears to give White a small edge based upon the bishops and central pawns. In any case, a complex positional game will result.

7...0-0

This has been the main move, but 7...♘e4 has been played as well. A direct answer is 8 h3 (or 8 ♗d3) 8...♗h5 (8...♗xf3 9 ♕xf3 ♕e7 10 cxd5 exd5 11 ♗b5 0-0 12 ♕e2 ±) 9 ♗d3 0-0 10 cxd5 ♕xd5 (10...exd5 11 ♗e2!?) 11 ♗xe4 ♕xe4 12 0-0 ♗xc3 13 ♖xc3 ♗xf3 14 ♕xf3 ♕xf3 15 gxf3 ±. White stands better in this kind of endgame.

8 h3 ♗xf3 9 ♕xf3 ♗xc3+

9...♕e7 10 ♗g5 ♗xc3+ 11 ♖xc3 ♕b4 12 ♗xf6 ♕xb2 (12...gxf6 13 ♕e2 leads to a slight advantage for White) 13 ♖b3 ♕c1+ (13...♕xa2? 14 ♕g4 g6 15 ♕d1 ±) 14 ♕d1 ♕xd1+ 15 ♔xd1 dxc4 16 ♖xb7 gxf6 (Kramnik-Ivanchuk, Linares 1998) and here Dolmatov gives 17 ♔c2! with a pleasant advantage (look at Black's pawns); 17 ♔d2 might be even better.

10 bxc3 ♕e7

10...♘e4 11 ♗d3 f5 12 ♕e2 ♘a5 13 cxd5 exd5 14 c4! ± Donchenko-Kahn, Naumburg 2002.

11 ♗e2

This position has been reached many times in the past six or seven years, but two other moves grant White slight advantages: 11 ♗d3 and 11 cxd5 with the idea 11...♘xd5 12 ♗d3.

11...♘e4

a) The worth of the bishops is illustrated after 11...♕a3 12 0-0 ♘e4 13 cxd5 ♘d2 14 ♕g3 ♘xf1 15 ♖xf1 ♘e7 16 dxe6 ♕xa2 17 exf7+ ♖xf7 18 ♗d3 and White is for choice.

b) 11...e5 12 ♗g5 ♕a3 13 0-0 ♘e4 14 cxd5 ♘xg5 15 ♕f5 ♘e7 16 ♕xg5 ♘xd5 17 ♕xe5 ♘xc3 18 ♗f3 affords White the better prospects.

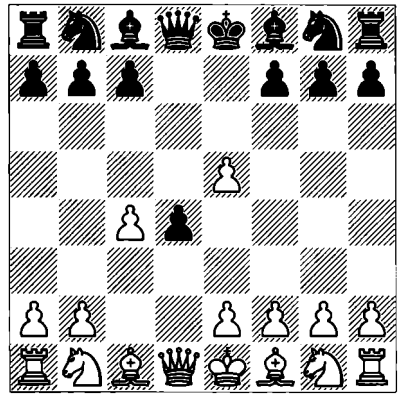
12 cxd5 exd5 13 0-0

White is a little better. Ness-Gronemann, Internet 2009 continued 13...♕a3?! (13...♘a5 14 ♗d3 c6 15 ♕e2! ♖fe8 16 ♕c2 g6 17 f3 ♘d6 18 e4 ±) 14 c4 ♘b4 15 ♖fe1 ♘d2 16 ♕g4 f5 17 ♕h5 dxc4 18 ♗xc4+ ♘xc4 19 ♖xc4 ♖ac8 20 ♖xc7 ♖xc7 21 ♗xc7 ♕xa2 22 ♗d6 ♘d3 23 ♖e2 ♕b1+ 24 ♔h2 g6, when the clearest way to a convincing advantage was 25 ♕f3! ♖f7 26 ♕d5.

3.3)

2...e5 3 dxe5 d4 *(D)*

The Albin Countergambit has received a great deal of attention over the last decade, as the traditional lines with 4 ♘f3 ♘c6 5 g3 have offered Black the opportunity for active and sound play. 5 g3 itself is rather slow, and I want to recommend a line which rapidly puts pressure on the advanced d-pawn.

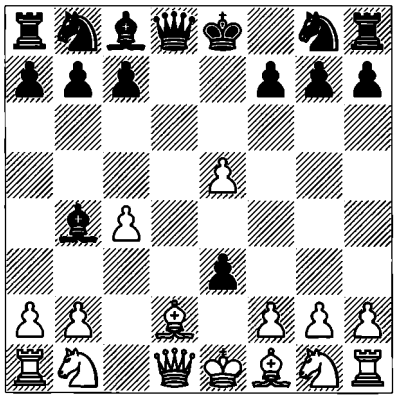


4 ♘f3

Incidentally, be sure not to fall for the trap after 4 e3? ♗b4+ 5 ♗d2 dxe3! *(D)*.

6 ♗xb4?? (6 ♕a4+? ♘c6 7 ♗xb4 doesn't help at all: 7...exf2+ 8 ♔xf2 ♕h4+ 9 g3 ♕d4+;

W



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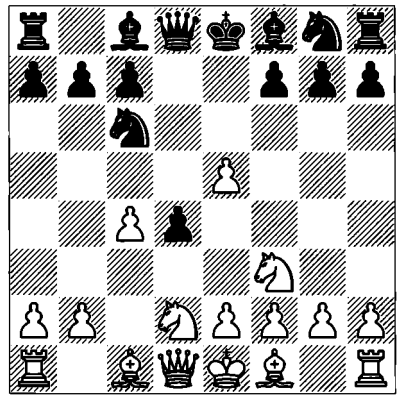


6 fxe3! is best, but then White's e-pawns are both weak and isolated; e.g., play might go 6...♘c6 7 ♘f3 ♘ge7, intending ...♗xd2+ and ...♘g6) 6...exf2+ 7 ♔e2 fxg1♘+! 8 ♔e1 (8 ♖xg1 ♗g4+) 8...♕h4+ and Black wins. Not the sort of thing you want to happen in the first 8 moves!

4...♘c6

This is the only move that gains some compensation for Black's pawn. It develops and attacks the pawn on e5. Otherwise:

a) 4...♗c5?! 5 ♘bd2 ♘c6 6 ♘b3 ♗b4+ 7 ♗d2 ♗e7 8 e3! with the idea 8...d3? 9 ♘bd4!.

b) 4...c5?! 5 e3 ♘c6 6 exd4 cxd4 7 ♗d3! gets White's pieces out quickly and keeps the pawn: 7...♗g4 (7...♘xe5? 8 ♕e2 f6 9 ♗f4 ♗d6 10 c5! ♕a5+ 11 ♘bd2 ♕xc5 12 0-0 is overwhelming) 8 0-0 ♕c7 9 h3 ♗xf3 10 ♕xf3 ♘xe5 11 ♖e1 ♗d6 12 ♗f4 (Black has regained his pawn but is behind in development) 12...♘e7 13 ♗xe5 (or 13 ♕g3!) 13...♗xe5 14 ♘a3 a6 15 c5! ♗f6 16 ♘c4 ♕xc5 17 ♕xb7 0-0 18 ♘b6 ♖ab8 19 ♕e4 ♘g6 20 ♘d7 is winning for White, Grünfeld-Tartakower, Karlsbad 1923.

5 ♘bd2 *(D)*

Avoiding the main lines (which now extend into 20 or more moves of theory). Developing the knight creates its own set of problems for Black and is generally less risky because Black can't simply mechanically proceed by ...♗f5, ...♕d7, ...♗h3 and ...h5-h4 without losing his d-pawn to ♘b3. With 5 ♘bd2, White would also like to expand on the queenside by a3 and b4, or play g3 later, depending upon what Black is doing. Moreover, White will sometimes return the pawn for the initiative or other advantages. After 5 ♘bd2, Black has tried just about everything:

3.31: 5...♗g4 56
3.32: 5...♘ge7 57
3.33: 5...♗f5 58

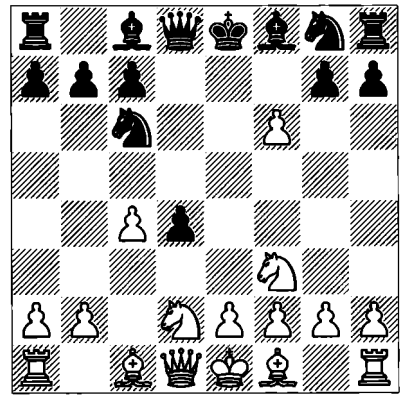
An assortment of alternatives:

a) 5...♗b4 6 a3 ♗xd2+ 7 ♗xd2 (or 7 ♕xd2! ♗g4 8 b4) 7...♗g4 8 ♕b3!? (8 h3 ♗xf3 9 gxf3 ♘xe5 10 f4 ♘c6 11 ♗g2 ±) 8...♖b8 9 ♗g5 ♘ge7 10 0-0-0 0-0 11 e3 ♖e8 (Marshall-Showalter, USA Ch (8), Lexington 1909) and now 12 exd4 ♗xf3 13 ♕xf3 ♘xd4 14 ♕g4 c5 15 ♗f6 g6 16 ♕g5! is virtually winning.

b) 5...♕e7 6 g3 (6 a3 ♘xe5 7 ♘xe5 ♕xe5 8 ♘f3 ♕a5+ 9 ♗d2 ♕b6 10 b4 c5 11 g3 ±) 6...♗g4 7 ♗g2 0-0-0 8 0-0 ± d3?! 9 exd3 ♖xd3 10 ♕e2 ♕d8 11 ♘b3 ± Szigeti-Balogh, Tatatovaros 1935.

c) 5...f6 6 exf6 *(D)* makes it a permanent gambit:

B



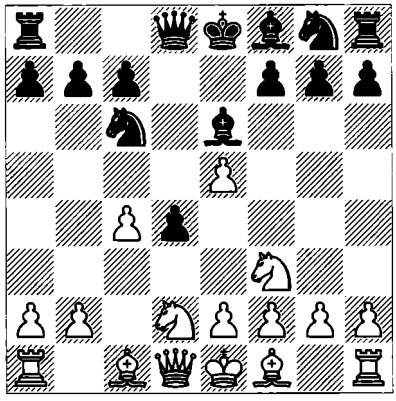
c1) 6...♕xf6 has several good answers; e.g., 7 g3 (or 7 a3, or 7 ♘b3 ♗g4 8 a3, threatening ♗g5) 7...♗g4 8 ♗g2 0-0-0 9 h3 ♗f5 10 0-0 g5

11 ♕a4 h5? (Teichmann-Mieses, Berlin 1910) 12 ♘b3 threatens ♗xg5, but after 12...♗h6 13 ♘c5! intending ♘xg5 White wins on the queenside.

c2) 6...♘xf6 7 a3 a5 (7...♗e6 8 b4) 8 ♘b3 ♗e6 9 ♕d3! (9 e3 ±) 9...♗f7 10 ♘bxd4 ♘xd4 11 ♘xd4 ♗c5?! 12 ♘b3 (12 ♕e3+! ♗e7 13 ♘f5) 12...♗b6 13 ♗e3 0-0 14 ♕xd8 ♖axd8 15 ♗xb6 cxb6 16 e3 and Black had no compensation for the pawns in Burmakin-Halser, Graz 1997.

d) 5...♗e6 *(D)* and White has:

W



d1) 6 a3 ♕d7 (6...♘ge7 transposes to note 'a' to White's 6th move in Section 3.32) 7 b4 ♘ge7 8 b5 ♘a5 9 ♕a4 b6 10 ♗b2 c5 11 bxc6 ♘exc6 12 ♘xd4 ♘xd4 13 ♕xd7+ ♔xd7 14 ♗xd4 ♘xc4 15 ♘xc4 ♗xc4 16 e3 ♗xf1 17 ♖xf1 ± (Raetsky); most of these moves are essentially forced.

d2) 6 ♘b3!? also yields White a slight edge. Skipping a lot of details, a main line is 6...♗xc4 (6...♗b4+ 7 ♗d2 ♕e7 8 ♘bxd4 ♘xd4 9 ♘xd4 0-0-0 10 ♘f3 ± with the idea ♕a4, Isaksson-Muir, corr. 1960) 7 ♘bxd4 ♗c5 (7...♕d7 or 7...♕d5 is countered by 8 ♘xc6 ♕xc6 9 ♗d2!) 8 e3 (8 ♗e3 and 8 ♕a4 are good alternatives) 8...♗xf1 9 ♖xf1! ♕d7?! (9...♗xd4 ±) 10 ♘xc6 ♕xc6 11 ♗d2 ♗b6 (11...a5 is better according to Raetsky, but it's not clear why after 12 ♕c2! and 0-0-0) 12 ♖c1 ♕g6 13 ♕c2 ♕xg2? 14 ♕a4+ ♔f8 15 ♕e4 and White won in Dževlan-Furhoff, Stockholm 1992.

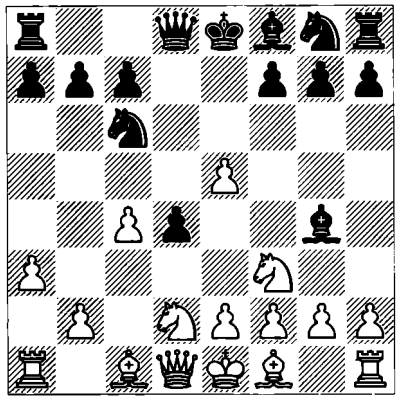
3.31)

5...♗g4

This is Black's most popular move, developing quickly and preparing ...0-0-0 after ...♕e7 or ...♕d7.

6 a3 *(D)*

B



6...♕e7

Or:

a) 6...♘ge7 7 h3 ♗h5 8 b4! ♕d7 9 ♗b2 ±.

b) 6...a5 is a normal move in this variation. Here White can reply with 7 h3 ♗h5 (7...♗xf3 8 ♘xf3 ♗c5 and now 9 g3 ± is one idea, while 9 h4!?, anticipating ...♘ge7-g6, has also been recommended) 8 ♕a4 (a typical move once Black's bishop can't get back to defence of the queenside) 8...♕d7 9 ♕b5! (threatening 10 e6, winning the bishop) 9...♗g6 (Duz Khotimirsky-Marshall, Hamburg 1910) 10 ♘b3! ±.

7 h3

7 b4 0-0-0 8 ♗b2 ♘xe5 9 ♘xe5 (not 9 ♘xd4?? ♘d3# – you wouldn't be the first to fall for this idea!) 9...♕xe5 10 h3 (10 ♘b3 ±) 10...♗h5 11 g4 ♗g6 12 ♗g2 ♘f6 13 ♘f3 ± Gelfand-Radjabov, Almaty blitz 2008.

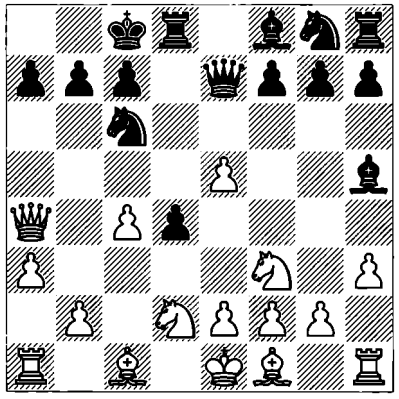
7...♗h5

After 7...♗xf3 8 ♘xf3 0-0-0, White has several good replies, including 9 ♗g5 (9 g3 ♘xe5 10 ♘xe5 ♕xe5 11 ♗g2 ±) 9...f6 10 exf6 gxf6 11 ♗d2! (11 ♗f4 ±) 11...♘h6 12 ♕a4 (12 ♕c2 d3 13 ♕c3 dxe2 14 ♗xe2 ♘f5 15 ♔f1 ± appears risky but this sequence helps White's pieces become active) 12...♔b8 13 0-0-0 with a nice edge; e.g., 13...♘f5 14 ♕c2 ♕e6 15 g3 ♗c5 16 ♘e1! ♘e5 17 ♘d3.

8 ♕a4

8 g4 ♗g6 9 ♗g2 0-0-0 10 b4 ♘xe5 11 ♘xe5 ♕xe5 12 ♘f3 ±.

8...0-0-0 *(D)*



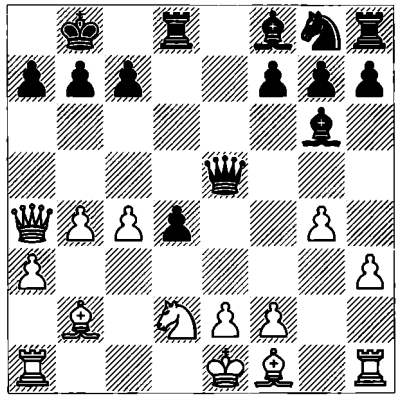
9 b4 ♔b8

9...♘xe5 10 ♘xe5 ♕xe5 11 g4 (Ftačnik) 11...d3 12 ♖a2! dxe2 (Cox) 13 ♗xe2! ♗g6 14 ♘f3 followed by ♕xa7 and Black is lost.

10 g4 ♗g6 11 ♗b2 ♘xe5

11...f6 12 ♗g2 leaves Black without a convenient way to continue since 12...fxe5 loses a piece to 13 b5 while 12...d3 13 exd3 ♖xd3 14 0-0-0 leaves White far better developed and still a pawn ahead.

12 ♘xe5 ♕xe5 *(D)*



13 ♘f3!

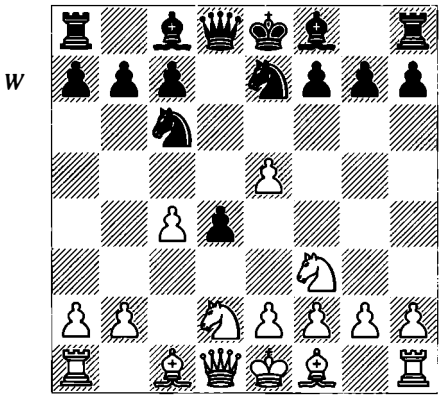
13 ♗g2!? isn't bad either: 13...♕e6 14 0-0 ♘f6 15 ♖fd1 ♗d6 16 ♕b5 ♘e4 17 c5 ♗f4 18 ♗xe4 ♗xe4 19 ♘xe4 ♕xe4 20 ♕d3 ±.

13...♕e4

Now in Goldin-Mengarini, New York 1991, White played 14 ♗xd4? ♖xd4 15 ♘xd4 and Black missed that 15...♘f6! hits both d4 and h1, so 16 ♘f3 ♕xc4 ∓ follows. But White has a strong move in 14 ♗g2!, having in mind 14...d3 15 0-0! dxe2 16 ♘e5!! exf1♕+ 17 ♖xf1 +–.

3.32)

5...♘ge7 *(D)*



This gives White a choice of solid continuations:

6 ♘b3

6 a3 is good and worth knowing, but much more complicated. Briefly:

a) 6...♗e6 7 ♘b3 ♗xc4 8 ♘bxd4 ♘xd4 offers White a choice between 9 ♘xd4, intending ♕a4+, and 9 ♕xd4 ♕xd4 10 ♘xd4 0-0-0 11 e3 ♗d5 12 ♗d2 ±.

b) 6...♘f5 7 ♘e4!? ♘h4 8 ♗g5 (or 8 ♗f4) 8...♗e7 9 ♗xh4 ♗xh4 10 ♕d3 0-0 11 g3 ± (Stoica).

c) 6...♘g6 7 ♘b3 ♘gxe5 (7...♗e7 8 ♘bxd4 ♘cxe5 9 ♘xe5 ♘xe5 10 ♗f4 ♗f6 11 e3 ± 0-0 12 ♕c2 and Black lacks full compensation) 8 ♘xe5 ♘xe5 9 ♕xd4! ♕xd4 10 ♘xd4 ♘xc4 11 e4 ♘e5 12 ♘b5!? (12 f4) 12...♔d8 13 ♗e3 (13 ♗f4 f6 14 ♖d1+ ♗d7 15 ♗e2 ♔c8 16 0-0 a6 17 ♘c3 ±) 13...c6 14 ♖d1+ ♗d7 15 ♘c3 ♔c7 16 f4 ♘g4 17 ♗d4 with a moderate but definite advantage.

6...♘f5

Some people consider this to be Black's best chance versus 5 ♘bd2, perhaps correctly; still, there are two good replies that keep some advantage.

7 e4!

A strange move, allowing doubled isolated pawns on the e-file, but it appears to be quite strong. 7 a3 is the other main line: 7...♗e7! (7...a5 8 e3! dxe3 9 ♕xd8+ ♘xd8 10 fxe3 ♘c6 11 ♗d2 a4 12 ♘bd4 ±) 8 g3 0-0 (8...a5 9 ♗h3!) 9 ♕d3 a5 10 ♗h3 g6 (10...♘h4 has

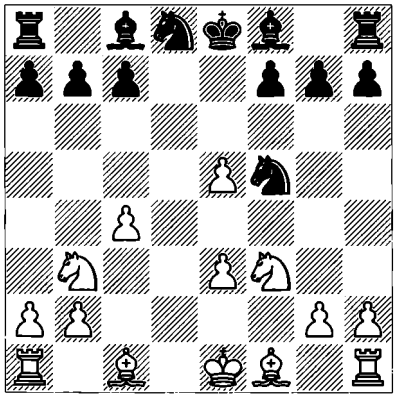
been recommended, but 11 gxh4! ♗xh3 12 ♖g1 ♔h8 13 ♘bxd4 ♘xd4 14 ♘xd4 ♗xh4 15 ♗f4 looks good for White) 11 ♗f4 a4! 12 g4 ♘h4 13 ♘bxd4 ♘xf3+ 14 ♘xf3 ♕xd3 15 exd3 ±. White is two pawns up but it's not easy; in the end, he will probably give back one or even both in exchange for a modest advantage.

7...dxe3 8 ♕xd8+ ♘xd8

Black's king position after 8...♔xd8 9 fxe3 makes it difficult to get his rooks coordinated. One example is 9...♗b4+ 10 ♔f2 ♗e7 11 ♘bd4 ♗d7 12 ♗d3 ♘h4 13 ♗e4 ♘g6 14 ♘xc6+ ♗xc6 15 ♗d5 ± Jojua-Adnani, Manama 2009. Still, strong players have used 8...♔xd8, so it deserves attention.

9 fxe3 *(D)*

B



Cox recommends 7 e4 leading to this position in his repertoire book, and Raetsky also has it as a small advantage for White. I was a bit sceptical until I noticed that in my database games between higher-rated players (on either or both sides of the board), White has a ridiculously strong record: 10 wins and 3 draws before finally running into a loss. Not bad for a risk-free variation. There are a few reasons for this success. White's pawns are exposed, but the e5-pawn cramps Black's game and the e3-pawn anchors pieces on d4. White is also ahead in development, and it turns out that his remaining pieces have good squares; e.g., bishops on c3 and d3 or e4, and rooks on the d- and f-files. Finally, it's a peculiarity of the position that Black has a difficult time targeting the e5-pawn, whose capture is the most important way to get back into the game.

9...♘c6

This is the consistent move, attacking e5 and clearing the way for ...0-0-0.

a) 9...♘e7 10 ♗d2 ♘ec6 11 ♘bd4 ♗d7 is slow; e.g., 12 ♗d3 ♗b4 13 0-0-0 ♗xd2+ 14 ♖xd2 ♘b4 15 ♗b1 ♘e6 16 ♖hd1 ± Maksimenko-Antoniewski, Wysowa 2007.

b) 9...♗b4+ 10 ♔f2 ♗e7 11 ♘bd4 0-0 12 ♗d3 ♘h4 13 ♗c2!? (13 ♗d2! keeps bringing the pieces out; e.g., 13...c5 14 ♘b5 ♘c6 15 ♗c3 and White is in control) 13...c6 (13...c5! 14 ♘b5 ♘c6 is still good for White, but more combative) 14 ♗d2 ♖e8 15 ♗c3 a5 16 a3 (16 ♖ad1! ♘xf3 17 ♘xf3) 16...a4 (16...♘xf3 ±) 17 ♖ad1 g6 18 ♔g3 g5 19 ♘xh4 gxh4+ 20 ♔f2 ♗g4 21 ♖d2 ♗g5 22 h3 ♗h5 23 ♘f5 ± De Jong-Docx, Gent 2006; White has a pawn and the better position.

10 ♗d3

10 ♘bd4 is also good; e.g., 10...♗b4+ 11 ♔f2 ♘fxd4! 12 exd4 ♗g4 13 ♗e3 0-0-0 14 ♖c1 ♗xf3 15 gxf3 ♘xd4 16 ♗h3+ ♔b8 17 ♖hd1 ♘c6 18 a3 ♗e7 19 f4 g5! 20 ♖d5! ±.

10...♗b4+

a) 10...♗e6?! 11 ♗d2 a5 12 ♗e4 ♗b4 13 ♔f2 0-0 14 ♖hd1 gives White a very comfortable game.

b) 10...♘fe7 11 ♘bd4 ♗g4 and now 12 ♗e4 is strong, while 12 h3 ♗xf3 13 ♘xf3 ♘g6 14 ♗xg6 hxg6 15 ♔e2 yielded a smaller advantage in Lehman-Smederevac, Beverwijk 1965.

11 ♔f2!

From this point, Drozdovsky-C.Bauer, Ourense blitz 2009 continued 11...♗e7!? 12 ♗d2 ♘h4 13 ♗c3 ♘g6 14 ♗e4 ♗d7 15 ♖ad1 ±, while 11...0-0 is met by 12 ♘bd4! ♘fxd4 13 exd4 f6 14 exf6 ♖xf6 15 ♗g5 ♖f8 16 a3 ♗d6 17 c5 ♗f4 18 ♗xf4 ♖xf4 19 ♔e3 ±.

3.33)

5...♗f5 6 ♘b3 *(D)*

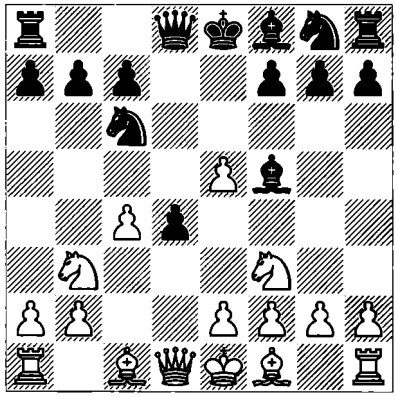
6...♗b4+!

Considered best. There are some weaker alternatives:

a) 6...a5?! 7 a3 and 8 ♘bxd4 follows unless Black ventures upon 7...d3 8 ♗e3 dxe2 9 ♕xd8+ ♖xd8 10 ♗xe2 ±.

b) 6...g6? 7 ♘bxd4 ♘xd4 8 ♘xd4 ♗g7 9 ♘xf5 ♕xd1+ 10 ♔xd1 gxf5 11 f4 0-0-0+ 12 ♔c2 ± Gaier-Heckmann, Ladenburg 1992.

B

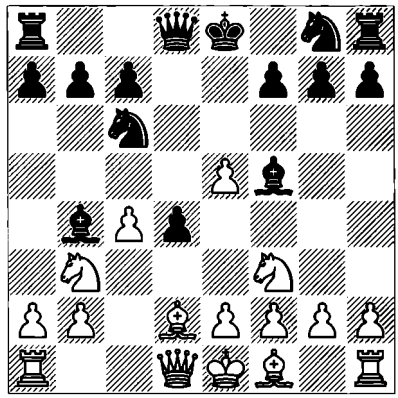


c) 6...f6?! is a recent try for Black, but it looks weak: 7 ♘bxd4! ♗b4+ 8 ♗d2 ♘xd4 9 ♘xd4 ♕xd4 10 ♕a4+! (more effective than 10 ♗xb4? ♕xb2) 10...c6 11 ♕xb4 0-0-0 12 e3 (12 ♗e3 ♕xe5 13 ♗xa7!? with two extra pawns) 12...♕xe5 13 ♗c3 and Black has no compensation.

d) 6...♕d7 is more respectable, but not still impressive: 7 ♘bxd4! 0-0-0 (7...♗b4+ 8 ♗d2 ♘xd4 9 ♘xd4 ♕xd4 10 ♕a4+ c6 11 ♕xb4 ±) 8 e3 ♗c5 9 ♗e2 ♗xd4 (Astrup-D.Eriksson, Oslo 2003) 10 exd4! ♘b4 (10...♘xd4? 11 ♘xd4 ♕xd4 12 ♕xd4 ♖xd4 13 ♗d2 ♘e7 14 ♗c3 with the bishop-pair and a clear extra pawn) 11 0-0 ♘c2 12 ♖b1 ♘xd4 (12...♘b4 13 ♘h4! with the idea 13...♗xb1 14 ♗g4) 13 ♘xd4 ♕xd4 14 ♕xd4 ♖xd4 15 ♗e3 ♖e4 16 ♖be1 ♗e6 (not 16...♖xe5? 17 ♗d4) 17 b3 ♘e7 18 ♗d2 ♘f5 19 ♗f3 ♖xe1 20 ♖xe1 again leaves White a clear pawn ahead.

7 ♗d2 *(D)*

B



7...♕e7

a) 7...♘ge7? 8 ♗xb4 ♘xb4 9 ♘bxd4 0-0 10 a3 ♘bc6 11 e3 gives Black nothing for his pawn.

b) 7...d3? 8 exd3! ♗xd3 9 ♗xb4 ♘xb4 10 ♘bd4 ♗xf1 11 ♕a4+! ±.

8 ♘bxd4

Or 8 a3 ♗xd2+ 9 ♕xd2.

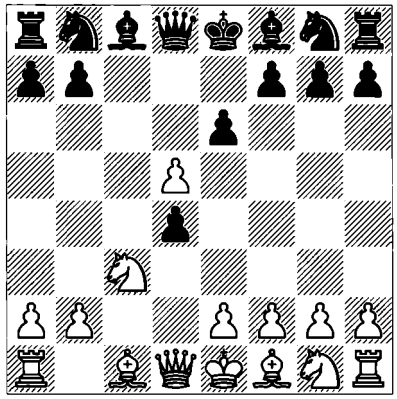
8...♘xe5 9 ♘xe5 ♗xd2+ 10 ♕xd2 ♕xe5 11 ♘xf5 ♕xf5 12 ♖d1 ♘f6 13 ♕e3+ ♔f8 14 g3 ♕a5+ 15 ♕d2 ♕xa2 16 ♕b4+ ♔g8 17 ♗g2

White has a large advantage.

3.4)

2...e6 3 ♘c3 c5 4 cxd5 cxd4 *(D)*

W



The Hennig-Schara Gambit (we'll refer to it as simply the 'Schara', for convenience) is one of the better gambits around, and isn't subject to an easy response, much less a refutation. While it is an offshoot of the Tarrasch Defence, it has little in common strategically with that opening, which is why we cover it separately in this chapter on unorthodox Queen's Gambit lines.

It's an opening about which reams of theory have been written (along with an excellent recent book by Bronznik). That's alright, but makes it nearly impossible to play something calm and unpretentious against it without getting the worse of it or having to play other sharp positions as a consequence. Here I've offered some lines that can lead to dangerous positions, but at least they will avoid the craziest of tactical brawls. To begin with, we have two moves (5 ♕xd4 and 5 ♕a4+) which ultimately aim for the same position (i.e. the one arising after 5 ♕xd4 ♘c6 6 ♕d1 exd5 7 ♕xd5 ♗d7 or 5

♕a4+ ♗d7 6 ♕xd4 exd5 7 ♕xd5 ♘c6 – covered in Section 3.43). I think it's worth treating them separately because of recent discoveries; this will help you choose which direction you want to head in:

3.41: 5 ♕xd4 60
3.42: 5 ♕a4+ 60
3.43: Schara Main Line 61

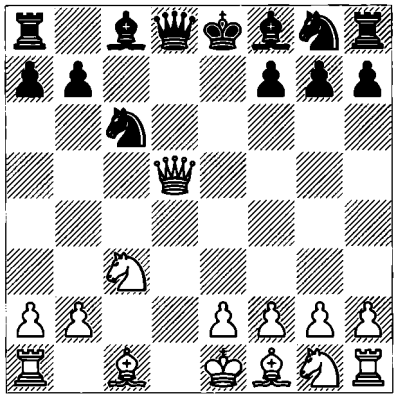
3.41)

5 ♕xd4

The direct approach, frowned upon by theory as complicating matters (by comparison with 5 ♕a4+), but in fact simplifying matters in other ways:

5...♘c6 6 ♕d1 exd5 7 ♕xd5 *(D)*

B



With this move-order, White has sidestepped the dangerous gambit 5 ♕a4+ ♗d7 6 ♕xd4 exd5 7 ♕xd5 ♘f6!?. The downside is that he has to face...

7...♗d6!?

This is far more interesting than the older 7...♗e6?!, which has been under a cloud for some time. The main line, in broad brush, is 8 ♕xd8+ ♖xd8 9 e3 (9 ♗g5! is also good, according to analysis by Bücker and Winds, and in fact renders irrelevant a few questions about the old main line) 9...♘b4 10 ♗b5+ ♔e7 11 ♔f1! ♘f6 (11...a6 12 ♗e2 ♘f6 13 ♘f3 ♗f5 14 ♗d2 ±) 12 ♘f3 ♘c2 13 ♖b1 ♗f5 14 ♗d2 ± Smyslov-Estrin, Leningrad 1951.

7...♗d7 is the standard main line of the Schara, which we cover separately in Section 3.43.

8 ♗g5 ♘ge7 9 ♕d2 h6

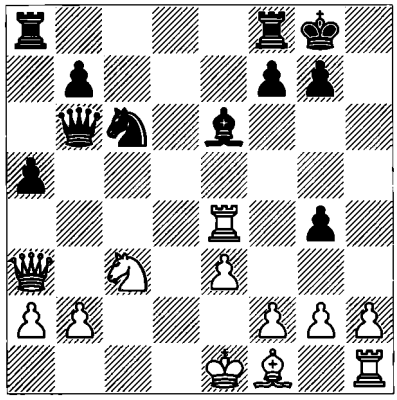
This is Bücker and Winds's new idea. Without going into a lot of detail, one line they give is...

10 ♖d1 hxg5 11 ♕xd6 ♕b6 12 ♕a3 ♗e6 13 e3 0-0 14 ♘f3

14 ♗b5!? preserves a small edge, I think.

14...g4 15 ♘d4 ♘xd4 16 ♖xd4 ♘c6 17 ♖e4 a5 *(D)*

W



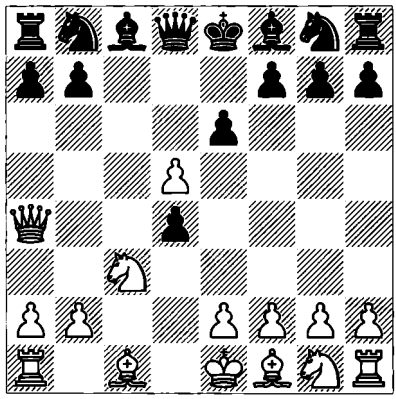
Bücker and Winds call this position 'unclear'. Developing quickly is best: 18 ♗e2 ♘b4 (18...♖ad8 19 0-0 ♖d2 20 ♗xg4 ♗xg4 21 ♖xg4 ♕xb2 22 ♕c5 ♖fd8 23 h3 ♖2d3 24 ♖c4 and Black's compensation seems insufficient; it's not clear what his plan is for increasing the pressure, whereas White has combinations of a4 and ♘e4 or ♖b1 to consolidate) 19 0-0 ♘c2 20 ♕e7 and again Black has definite compensation, but I think he falls short of equality after, say, 20...♖ae8! (20...♕xb2 21 ♖xe6! fxe6 22 ♕xe6+ ♔h8 23 ♕e5 with a serious attack and the forthcoming capture of a second pawn for the exchange) 21 ♕g5 ♕xb2 22 ♘b5! ♘b4 (22...♕xa2? 23 ♘c7 ♖c8 24 ♘xe6 fxe6 25 ♕xg4) 23 ♘d4 ± ♗d7 24 ♖e7! ♖xe7 25 ♕xe7 ♗c8 26 ♕c7 ± (or 26 ♗c4 ±). Obviously the last word hasn't been said here, but you need to face this kind of thing versus the Schara and this should help to get you started.

3.42)

5 ♕a4+ *(D)*

This is the other method of picking up the pawn, which sidesteps some lines (like 5 ♕xd4 ♘c6 6 ♕d1 exd5 7 ♕xd5 ♗d6!?), but also subjects White to another interesting pawn sacrifice.

B



5...♗d7

5...b5?! 6 ♕xd4! hasn't ever panned out for Black:

a) 6...b4 7 ♘b5! ♘f6 (7...a6 8 dxe6!; 7...exd5 8 ♕xd5!) 8 d6 ♘c6 9 ♕c4 and White is already winning.

b) 6...a6 7 ♘f3 b4 8 ♘a4!, again with an enormous advantage.

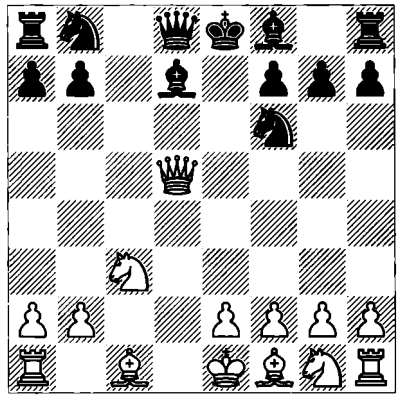
c) 6...♘c6 7 ♕d2 exd5 8 ♕xd5 ♗d7 9 ♗g5 ♘f6 10 ♗xf6 (or 10 ♕d2 ♗e7 11 e3 a6 12 ♘f3 with a slight advantage to White) 10...♕xf6 11 e3 ± (Bareev), when 11...b4?! 12 ♖d1! ♖d8 13 ♕e4+ looks good for White.

6 ♕xd4 exd5 7 ♕xd5

Now 7...♘c6 is the standard move, reaching the main-line position of the Schara, which we examine in Section 3.43. With this move-order, White has to cope with a further pawn sacrifice:

7...♘f6!? *(D)*

W



Then 8 ♕d1 is a more-or-less 'normal' version of the gambit, but White can also take the offered pawn by 8 ♕xb7 (8 ♕d3 ♘a6) 8...♘c6 (8...♗c6 9 ♕b3 ♘bd7 also gives some compensation, but it is two pawns and 10 ♗f4 seems like a good idea; the text-move has the capability of producing more direct threats) 9 ♕b3 (simpler may be 9 ♗f4 ♗b4, when 10 e3 or 10 ♘f3 offers a moderate advantage), and Bücker and Winds like 9...♖b8 10 ♕d1 ♕a5 11 ♘f3 ♗a3! 12 bxa3 ♕xc3+ 13 ♗d2 ♕xa3. Then a possible line is 14 e3 ♘e4 15 ♗e2 0-0 16 0-0 ♖fd8 17 ♕c2 ♗f5 (17...♘xd2 18 ♘xd2 ±) 18 ♕xc6 ♘xd2 19 ♘xd2 ♖xd2 20 ♗c4 ±. Both sides have many options, however.

3.43)

5 ♕a4+

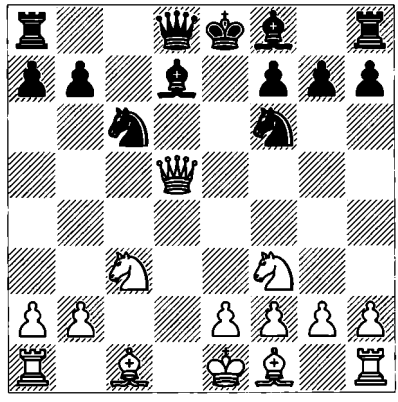
As explained earlier, 5 ♕xd4 ♘c6 6 ♕d1 exd5 7 ♕xd5 ♗d7 is a more or less equally valid path to the same position, just offering different options for Black to deviate.

5...♗d7 6 ♕xd4 exd5 7 ♕xd5 ♘c6 8 ♘f3

Here the move-order can be crucial. Sometimes 8 e3 is played first, when a line such as 8...♘f6 9 ♕b3 doesn't run into 9...♗e6?! (as it would were the knight on f3 and pawn on e2) because 10 ♕xb7 ♘b4 fails to 11 ♗b5+.

8...♘f6 *(D)*

W



Now the path divides depending on where White puts his queen. 9 ♕d1 is the traditional main line, but we shall focus on two alternative locations for the queen:

3.431: 9 ♕b3 62
3.432: 9 ♕d3!? 64

My main recommendation is 9 ♕b3, long the main alternative to 9 ♕d1. 9 ♕d3 is a little-analysed move which I only noticed recently.

Both moves avoid the complex theory that has built up over many years in the lines following 9 ♕d1.

3.431)

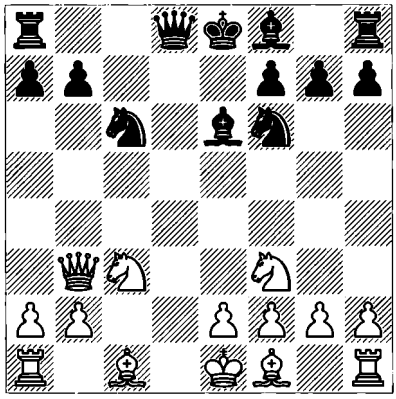
9 ♕b3

This move is somewhat irregular, although well-known to Schara advocates.

9...♗c5

Unfortunately, with the pawn on e2 and knight on f3, 9...♗e6 *(D)* is also possible (compare my comments above on 8 e3 and regarding 9 ♕d3!? in Section 3.432), and that requires some specifics:

W



a) 10 ♕xb7?! ♘b4 leads to a draw after 11 ♕b5+ ♗d7 (11...♕d7 12 ♘d4! ±) 12 ♕e5+ ♗e6! (12...♗e7!? 13 ♘d4! 0-0 14 a3 ♘c6 15 ♘xc6 ♗xc6 16 ♗f4 ±) 13 ♕b5+ ♗d7 14 ♕e5+ ♗e6 (when White must avoid 15 ♘d4?? ♕xd4), etc.

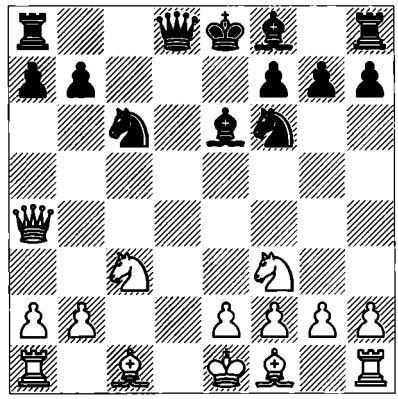
b) 10 ♕c2 seems playable to me (I like preventing ...♗f5), but I can only find two games in my entire database. Here's one: 10...a6!? 11 a3 ♗c5 12 e3 ♕e7 13 ♗e2 g5?! 14 0-0 (Black probably doesn't have much after 14 ♘xg5 either) 14...g4 15 ♘d4 ♗d7 16 b4 ♗xd4 17 exd4 ♘xd4 18 ♕b2 ♖g8!? 19 ♗f4 ± Nenashev-Truta, Groningen 1994. Obviously not very relevant, but I certainly wouldn't dismiss 10 ♕c2 out of hand.

c) 10 ♕a4 *(D)* is the main move.

An overview:

c1) 10...♗e7 is too slow: 11 e4 (or 11 ♘e5) 11...0-0 12 ♗e2 ♕c7 13 0-0 gives White a slight advantage.

B



c2) 10...♘d7 11 ♘d4! ♖c8 (11...♘xd4 12 ♕xd4 ±; 11...♘c5 12 ♘xc6 ♕b6 13 ♕c2 ♕xc6 14 e4 a6 15 ♗e2 ±) 12 ♘xe6 fxe6 13 g3! ♘c5 14 ♕c2 ±.

c3) 10...a6 11 ♘g5 (11 a3 b5 12 ♕c2 ♖c8 =) 11...♗b4 12 ♘xe6 fxe6 13 ♗g5 0-0 14 e3 ♕c7 15 ♗xf6 (15 ♗f4!?) 15...♖xf6 16 ♗e2 ± with the idea 16...♘d4 17 0-0 ♗xc3 18 exd4 ♗xb2 19 ♖ab1 ♕c3 20 ♖fd1 ♖c8 21 ♗f3 ±.

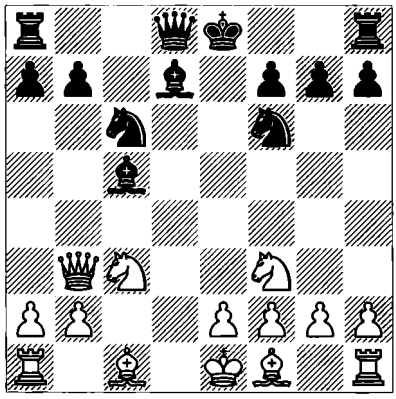
c4) 10...♗c5 is again the most popular continuation: 11 e3 0-0 (11...♕e7 12 ♘e5 0-0 13 ♘xc6 bxc6 14 ♗e2 ± Peralta-Airando, Buenos Aires 1999; 11...a6 12 ♘e5! 0-0 13 ♘xc6 bxc6 14 ♗e2 ±) 12 ♗e2 a6 (12...♕e7 13 0-0 ♖fd8 14 a3 is messy, but White's queen should be relatively safe on c2 or in some cases h4; 12...♕c7 13 0-0 ♖ad8 14 ♗d2 ♘g4 15 ♖fd1 ♗d6 and now 16 h3 is strong, but 16 g3 ♕e7 17 ♗e1 also gave Black almost nothing for the pawn in Karpov-Hector, Haninge 1990) 13 0-0 b5 14 ♕c2 (14 ♕h4 is also promising: 14...♖c8 15 ♖d1 ♕b6, Van der Sterren-Kuijf, Dutch Ch, Hilversum 1987, and here 16 ♘g5 ♗f5 17 ♘ge4 limits Black to inadequate compensation) 14...♖c8 (14...♘b4 15 ♕b1 h6 ± 16 ♗d2 ♘g4 and now 17 ♘e4! is even stronger than 17 ♖d1!? ♕e7 18 a3 ♘c6, when White has untangled and remains a pawn ahead, Hort-Dankert, Porz 1981) 15 ♘g5 ♘b4 16 ♕b1 ♕e7. Hort-Cuartas, Dortmund 1982 now went 17 a3 ♘c6 (17...♘bd5 ±) 18 b4 ♗d6 19 ♗b2 and White was consolidating, though 17 ♘xe6! ♕xe6 18 a4 is more accurate.

We now return to 9...♗c5 *(D)*:

10 ♗g5

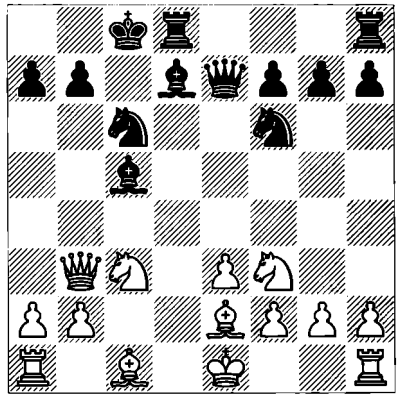
Often this piece is best-placed on d2 for defensive purposes, but here the element of

W



simplification helps White to develop quickly and avoid weaknesses. 10 e3 has a lengthy history and really should be known, because 10 ♗g5 is not yet worked out. I'll go straight to the main line: 10...♕e7 (10...0-0 11 a3 ♗e6 12 ♕c2 ♖c8 13 ♗e2 ♘a5 14 b4) 11 ♗e2 (Bronznik likes the move-order 11 ♗d2 0-0-0 and now 12 ♗e2 or 12 ♖c1 ♔b8 13 ♗e2, because it renders ...g5 plans less effective) 11...0-0-0!? *(D)* (11...g5!? 12 ♗d2 g4 13 ♘h4 ±) and now it's all a matter of specifics:

W



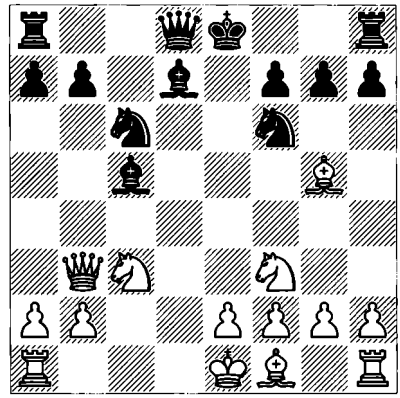
a) 12 ♗d2 ♔b8 13 ♖c1 ♗e6 14 ♕a4 ♖hg8 15 0-0 g5 16 ♖fd1 ♗d7 (16...g4 17 ♘d4! ± Bormida-Sasata, corr. 1997), and here Bronznik likes 17 ♕c2! for White, with the idea 17...g4 18 ♘e1 (18 ♘h4!?) 18...♗b6 19 ♘a4 ♘d4 20 exd4 ♗xa4 21 ♕xa4 ♕xe2 22 ♗e3 ♘d5 23 ♖d2 ♕a6 24 ♕xa6 bxa6 25 ♘d3 ±.

b) 12 0-0 is the normal move. It exposes White to attack by 12...g5, when 13 ♗d2 may be best, because captures on d4 are disadvantageous. Bronznik suggests the amazing attack 13...g4 14 ♘d4 h5! 15 ♖ac1 ♔b8 16 ♖fd1 g3!! 17 hxg3 h4 18 gxh4 ♖xh4 19 ♗f3 ♗xd4 20 exd4 ♗e6. Here instead of 21 ♕a3, I'd propose 21 ♕b5!, and offer the lengthy line 21...♘xd4 22 ♕e5+ ♔a8 23 ♗g5 ♘xf3+ 24 gxf3 ♖g8 25 ♘b5 ♘d7!? 26 ♕g3 ♕xg5 27 ♖c8+ ♖xc8 28 ♕xg5 ♖hh8 29 ♕g3! ♖hg8 30 ♘c7+ ♔b8 31 ♘xe6+ ♖xg3+ 32 fxg3 fxe6 33 ♖xd7, when Black has serious problems due to the passed g-pawn.

There's a lot of analysis in this note, probably flawed in parts, but my overall impression is that Black hasn't fully adequate compensation for the pawn.

We now return to 10 ♗g5 *(D)*:

B



10...♗e6

Or:

a) 10...0-0 11 ♖d1 (11 e3 ♗e6 12 ♕a4 has also been played) 11...♘a5?! 12 ♕c2 ♘g4 13 e3 f6 14 ♗b5! ♖f7 15 ♕d3 is winning for White, Valenzuela Fuentealba-Sommerbauer, Elista Olympiad 1998.

b) 10...h6 11 ♗xf6 (11 ♗h4) 11...♕xf6 and here 12 ♖d1! strikes me as an improvement upon 12 ♘e4 ♕e7 13 ♘xc5 ♕xc5 14 e3 ♖c8! (Bronznik's move).

11 ♕b5

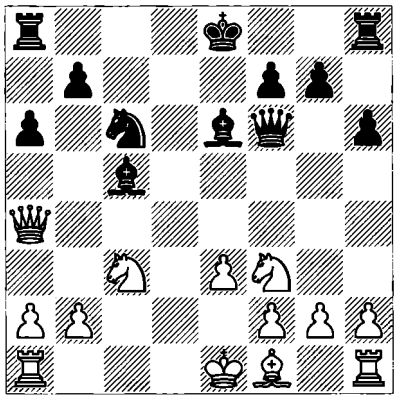
11 ♕xb7!? isn't played for some reason, hopefully not 11...♘b4? (11...♖c8!?) because then 12 ♕b5+ ♗d7?? 13 ♕xc5 ♘c2+ 14 ♔d2 ♘xa1 15 e3 (15 ♘d4) wins.

11...♕e7 12 e3 a6 13 ♕a4 h6 14 ♗xf6 ♕xf6 *(D)*

This position has been reached in several games.

15 ♗c4!

W



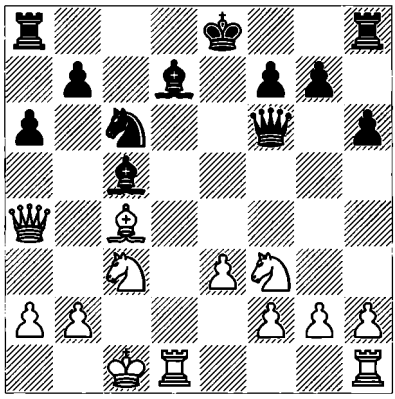
Again with the theme of simplification. 15 ♗e2 and 15 ♗d3 have been less effective.

15...♗d7

15...♗b4 16 ♗xe6! ♗xc3+ 17 bxc3 ♕xc3+ 18 ♔e2 fxe6 19 ♖ab1 ♖d8 20 ♕e4 ± (Ftačnik).

16 0-0-0 *(D)*

B



Now:

a) Ftačnik proposes 16...♖c8(?), but then 17 ♖xd7! ♔xd7 18 ♖d1+ ♔e8 19 ♘e4 ♕e7 20 ♖d5! wins.

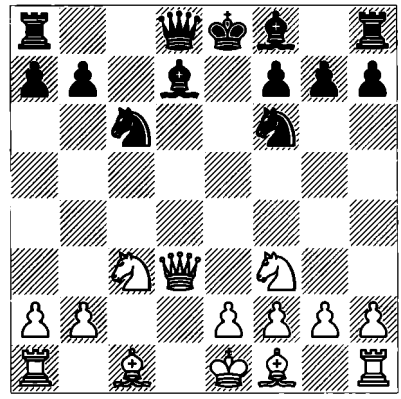
b) 16...♘d4?! 17 ♕a5 b6 18 ♘e4! (18 ♘d5 is also good) 18...bxa5 19 ♘xf6+ gxf6 20 ♘xd4 with a clear advantage for White, Babula-Biolek, Olomouc 2004.

c) 16...♗f5 improves, when there could follow 17 ♘d5 (17 ♗d3 ±) 17...♕d8 18 ♘f4!? with the idea 18...♕e7? (18...♕c8 19 ♗d3 ±) 19 ♖d5! ♗d7 20 ♖hd1.

3.432)

9 ♕d3!? *(D)*

B



The queen covers the b1-h7 diagonal and it can't be attacked by ...♗e6 as in the ♕b3 lines. I find this an attractive option.

9...♗c5

The most aggressive reply. Other moves:

a) 9...♗e7 10 ♗f4 (10 e4!? is possible too; e.g., 10...♘b4 11 ♕b1 or 10...♕c7 11 ♗e2 ♖d8 12 0-0 ±) 10...♘b4 11 ♕b1 ♘bd5 12 ♗e5 ±.

b) 9...♘b4 10 ♕b1 ♗c5 11 a3 ♘c6 12 e3 (12 ♗f4!?) 12...♕e7 13 ♗e2 ♖c8 14 0-0 0-0 15 ♖d1 ♖fd8 16 b4 ♗d6 17 ♗b2 ± Van Beek-Van der Wijk, Dutch Team Ch 2011/12.

10 a3

Or 10 e3 0-0 11 ♗e2 ♕e7 12 0-0 ♖fd8 13 a3 ♗g4 14 ♕c2 ♘e5 15 b4 ♗b6 16 ♗b2 ±.

10...0-0

10...♕b6 11 e3 0-0-0?! 12 b4 ♗e7 13 ♕c2 ♔b8 14 e4!.

11 e3

11 b4 ♗b6 12 ♗g5 h6 13 ♗h4 ±.

11...♕e7 12 ♗e2 ♖fd8 13 0-0 ♘e5

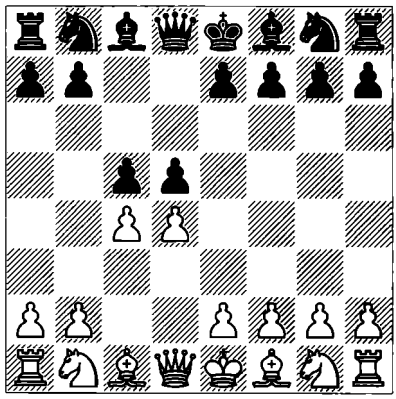
Now in M.Helbig-Kuijf, Germany (team event) 2007/8 White could have played 14 ♘xe5 ♕xe5 15 ♖d1 ♕c7 16 ♕c2 ±. In these positions Black still has compensation and chances to fight for the initiative; I just don't think they're worth a pawn. If you don't feel comfortable defending at all, however, it's going to be hard to play for any advantage against the Schara.

3.5)

2...c5 *(D)*

This symmetrical move is called the Austrian Defence. Although there's no outright refutation, White will get the better of things with natural moves.

W



3 cxd5 ♘f6

a) 3...cxd4 4 ♕xd4 leaves White a pawn ahead: 4...e6 5 e4 ♘c6 6 ♕d1 exd5 7 exd5 ♘b4 8 ♘c3 ♘f6 9 ♗b5+ ♗d7 10 ♕e2+ ♕e7 11 ♗xd7+ ♘xd7 12 ♗e3 ±.

b) 3...♕xd5 4 ♘f3 intends ♘c3, and then 4...cxd4 5 ♘c3! ♕d8 (5...♕a5 6 ♘xd4; for example, 6...e5 7 ♘db5 ♘c6 8 ♗d2 ♕d8 9 ♘d5! ♗d6, Bilobrk-Novak, Varazdin 2004, and now White stands much better after 10 e4! with the idea 10...♘ge7 11 ♗g5!) 6 ♕xd4 ♕xd4 7 ♘xd4 offers White active development; for example, 7...e5 8 ♘db5 ♘a6 9 ♘d5 (or 9 ♗e3 b6 10 ♘d5 ♔d8? 11 ♘xa7!) 9...♔d8 10 ♗d2 ±.

4 e4! *(D)*

White restores material equality, but with a cramping pawn on d5. 4 dxc5 also secures an edge following 4...♕xd5 5 ♕xd5 ♘xd5 6 e4 ♘b4 7 ♘a3 e5 8 ♗d2 ±.

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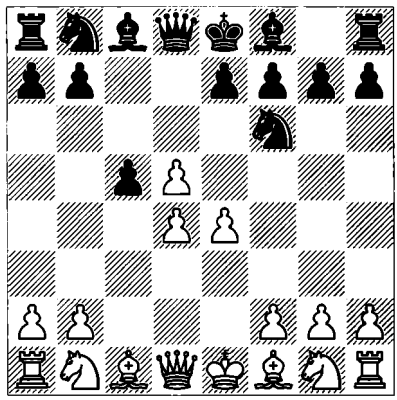


4...♘xe4 5 dxc5 ♘xc5 6 ♘f3 e6 7 ♘c3 exd5 8 ♕xd5

White has aggressive development and a lasting advantage.

8...♕e7+

a) 8...♗e7 9 ♕xd8+ ♗xd8 10 ♗e3 ♘ba6 11 ♗b5+ ♗d7 12 ♗xd7+ ♘xd7 13 0-0-0 ♘dc5 14 ♗xc5! ♘xc5 15 ♖he1+ (every white piece is in play) 15...♘e6 16 ♘d4 0-0 17 ♘xe6 fxe6 18 f3! ± Gleizerov-Berkell, Stockholm 2002. Black has a weak isolated pawn on a half-open file.

b) White brings his pieces out very rapidly after 8...♕xd5 9 ♘xd5 ♘e6 10 ♗e3; e.g., 10...♗d6 11 0-0-0 ♘c6 12 ♗b5 ♗b8 13 ♖he1 0-0 14 ♗xc6 bxc6 15 ♘e7+ ♔h8 16 ♘xc8! ♖xc8 17 ♖d7.

9 ♗e3

Black has problems:

a) After 9...♘c6?, the game Portisch-Bronstein, Monte Carlo 1969 went 10 ♗b5 ♗d7 11 0-0 ♘e6 12 ♘e5 (12 ♖fe1! is even stronger) 12...♘xe5 13 ♕xe5 ♗xb5 14 ♘xb5 a6 15 ♖ad1! ♖d8 16 ♗b6! ♖xd1 17 ♖xd1 f6 18 ♕f5 g6 19 ♘c7+! ♔f7 (19...♘xc7 20 ♕c8+ ♔f7 21 ♖d7) 20 ♕d5 1-0.

b) 9...a6 10 ♘g5 h6 11 0-0-0! ♘bd7 (not 11...hxg5?? 12 ♗xc5) 12 ♗xc5! ♕xg5+ 13 ♗e3 ♕xd5 14 ♘xd5 ♗d6 15 ♘b6! ♘xb6 16 ♖xd6 offers White the bishop-pair and the initiative.

3.6)

2...e6 3 ♘c3

In this section we'll inquire into some rarely-played Queen's Gambit lines.

3...♗b4

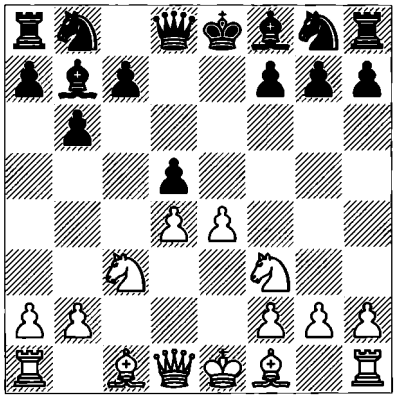
With this move Black is playing a sort of Ragozin/Nimzo-Indian idea without committing his knight to f6. In the end, this offers White the choice of a development that renders Black's increased flexibility moot. But first, let's look at a row of other irregular third moves:

a) 3...b6?! weakens the light squares, and a line that shows this up is 4 ♘f3 ♗b7 5 cxd5 exd5. Here many moves have been played, but 6 e4! *(D)* is very strong:

a1) 6...♘f6 7 e5 ♘e4 8 ♗b5+ (8 ♗d3 ± g6? 9 ♕c2 ♘xc3 10 bxc3 ♘c6 11 0-0 ± E.Cohn-Schlechter, St Petersburg 1909) 8...c6 9 ♗d3 ♘xc3 10 bxc3 ± (Larsen).

a2) 6...♘e7 7 ♕b3! g6 8 exd5 ♗g7 (not 8...♘xd5?? 9 ♗b5+! c6 10 ♘xd5 cxb5 11 ♕xb5+ ♗c6 12 ♕e2+ and White wins due to

B

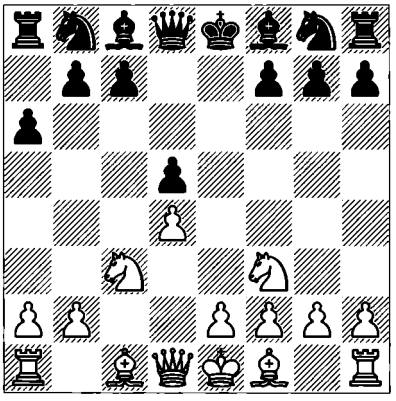


the idea 12...♗e7 13 ♘f6+ ♔f8 14 ♗h6#) 9 ♗c4 0-0 10 0-0 ±.

a3) 6...dxe4 7 ♘e5 ♗d6 8 ♕g4 ♔f8 9 ♗c4 ♗xe5 10 dxe5 ♕d4?! 11 ♗d5! c6 12 ♗xe4! (12 ♕xe4!? ♕xe4+ 13 ♗xe4 ± Larsen) 12...♕xe5? (12...♘d7 13 ♗e3 ♘xe5 14 ♕xg7+ ♔xg7 15 ♗xd4 f6 16 0-0-0 ±) 13 ♗f4 ♘f6 14 ♕h4 (14 ♕f3!) 14...♕e7? 15 0-0-0 ♘e8 16 ♕g3 with a winning advantage for White, Pillsbury-Swiderski, Hanover 1902.

b) 3...a6 4 cxd5 exd5 5 ♘f3 *(D)*.

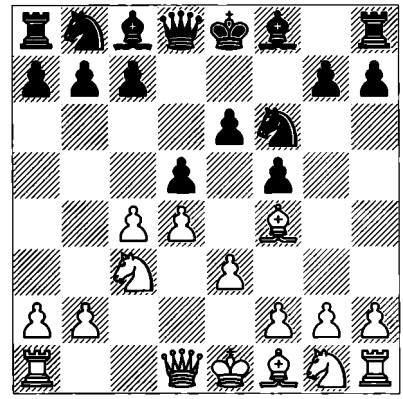
B



This is really just a Queen's Gambit Exchange Variation with the less-than-optimal move ...a6: 5...c6 (5...♗e7 6 ♗f4 ♘f6 7 e3 0-0 8 ♗d3 ±; 5...♘f6 6 ♗g5) 6 ♗f4 (in view of the slow ...a6, I think 6 e4!? should be considered; e.g., 6...dxe4 7 ♘xe4 ♗b4+ 8 ♘c3 ♘f6 9 ♗c4 0-0 10 0-0 c5!? 11 ♗g5!? ♗xc3 12 bxc3 ±) 6...♗d6 and now 7 ♗xd6 ♕xd6 8 e4! is good, but the strategist will prefer simply 7 ♗g3 ♘e7 8 e3 ♗f5 9 ♗d3 ♗xg3 10 hxg3 ♕b6 11 ♕c2 ♗xd3 12 ♕xd3 ♘d7 13 0-0-0 h6 14 e4 ± Averbakh-Antoshin, USSR Team Ch, Moscow 1959.

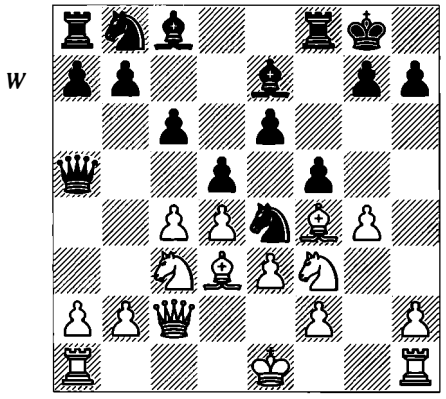
c) 3...f5 is rather artificial. Now 4 e3 c6 would transpose to Section 6.1, but there's no reason to block in the c1-bishop, and 4 ♗f4! is one of several good moves. 4...♘f6 5 e3 *(D)* and now:

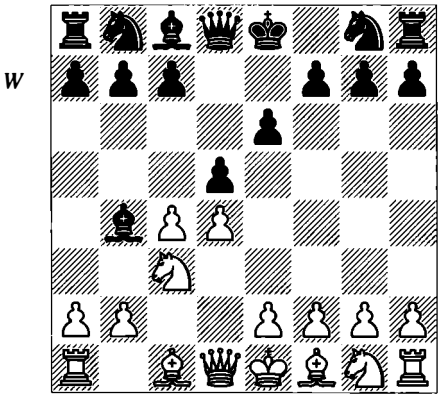
B



c1) 5...c6 6 ♘f3 ♗d6 (it's illogical to let White's powerful bishop go unopposed or unexchanged when Black has weakened so many dark squares) 7 ♗d3 ♗xf4 8 exf4 0-0 9 0-0. Ward says it well: "Taking stock of the situation here, White has a handy half-open e-file and a juicy outpost on e5. He also possesses the significantly superior bishop and is boss on the queenside too." One example is 9...♘e4 10 ♖e1 ♘d7 11 ♖c1 ♔h8 12 g3 ♘df6 13 ♘e5 ♕b6 14 ♗xe4! fxe4 15 ♖c2 ♕d8 16 f3 exf3 17 ♕xf3 ♕d6 18 c5 ♕c7 19 g4 ♘d7 20 ♘d3 ± Shishkin-Ruszczycki, Koszalin 2008.

c2) I don't know why, but Black loves the sequence 5...♗e7 6 ♘f3 c6 7 ♗d3 0-0 8 ♕c2 (now one idea is h3 followed by g4, while even the immediate 8 h3 is quite good, since it also provides an escape-square for the bishop on h2; Chris Ward suggests this in similar positions). By 8...♘e4 Black finally plays this typical Stonewall move, but he is far from getting his pieces out and White proceeds to break open lines: 9 g4! ♕a5 *(D)* (9...♔h8 doesn't help much; in Tan-Hoang Thi Bao, Olongapo City 2010, White simply pursued the attack by 10 ♖g1 ♗f6 11 g5 ♗e7 12 g6!, preparing ♘e5, but 12...♘d7 13 gxh7 opened lines against the king, and 13...♗f6 14 h4! ♕e8 15 cxd5 exd5 16 0-0-0 b5 17 ♘g5! followed).





There have been a simply amazing number of games from this position, including scads from the past three years. Black may be improvising, because he loses nearly every game! In fact, White wins in both the middlegame and endgame. 10 ♔e2! (just about everyone plays this, but 10 gxf5 exf5 11 ♔e2!? ♘xc3+ 12 bxc3 ♗e6 13 ♕b3, as in Rustemov-Schaffarth, Bad Wiessee 1999, is also good) 10...♘a6 (10...♘d7 11 gxf5 ♘xc3+ 12 ♕xc3! ♕xc3 13 bxc3 exf5 14 cxd5 cxd5 15 c4! is another example of how a strong grandmaster isn't afraid of the ending: 15...♘f6 16 ♖hc1 ♗d7 17 ♖ab1 b6 18 c5 bxc5 19 dxc5 with a clear advantage for White, Yermolinsky-Privman, Ledyard 2009) 11 a3 dxc4 12 ♗xc4 b5 13 b4 ♕b6 14 ♗b3 ♘xc3+ 15 ♕xc3 fxg4 16 ♘e5 and White dominates, Poluliakov-Chigvintsev, Russian Team Ch, Smolensk 2000.

Now we return to the position after 3...♗b4 *(D)*:

4 cxd5

Naturally, 4 e3 can't be bad either, with the Nimzo-Indian ideas which we see in Chapter 7. Indeed, 4...♘f6 transposes to Section 7.4.

4...exd5 5 ♗f4 ♘f6

5...♘e7 is playable, but the knight isn't targeting e4 and thereby collaborating with the bishop on b4, so White can develop comfortably: 6 ♘f3 (or 6 e3 0-0 7 ♗d3 ♗f5 8 ♘f3 ±) 6...0-0 7 e3 ♗f5 (7...c5 8 ♗e2 ♘bc6 9 dxc5 ♗xc5 10 0-0 ♗g4 11 ♖c1 ♗b6 12 h3 ♗h5 13 ♘a4 ± Cebalo) 8 ♗d3 ♗xd3 9 ♕xd3 c6 10 0-0 ♗d6 (Touzane-Godena, Mitropa Cup, Portorož 1998) and now 11 ♖fe1!? is very interesting and probably good, waiting to play ♗xd6 until e4 is fully prepared; e.g., 11...♗xf4 12 exf4 ♕d6 13 g3 ♘d7 14 ♖e2 ♘f6 15 ♖ae1 ♖ae8 16 ♘e5 ±.

6 e3 c5

The freeing move. Graf correctly suggests that 6...♘e4 7 ♖c1! is better for White.

7 ♗d3

This stops ...♗f5. 7 dxc5 ♘c6 8 ♖c1 is a reasonable alternative.

7...♘c6 8 ♘e2 cxd4

8...c4 9 ♗c2 0-0 10 0-0 forces Black to devote forces to stopping f3 and e4.

9 exd4 0-0 10 0-0 ♗g4

10...♖e8 11 a3 ± (Hertneck).

11 f3

Alternatively 11 a3 ♗e7 12 ♗c2 ♕d7 13 ♗e5 ♗h5 14 f3 ♖fe8 15 ♔h1 ♗d8 16 ♗xf6 ♗xf6 (Mohota-Gvetadze, World Girls Ch, Erevan 2000) and now 17 ♘f4! ♗g6 18 ♘fxd5 is good, with the idea 18...♗xd4 19 ♗a4! and a slight advantage for White.

11...♗h5

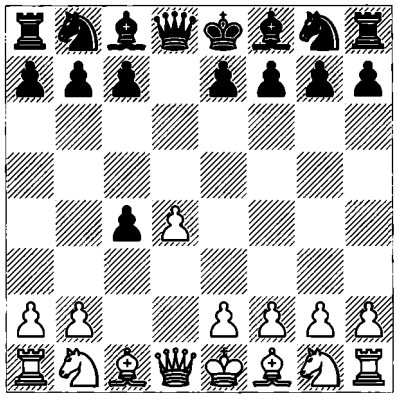
11...♗e6 12 a3 ♗e7 13 b4!? ♘e8!? 14 ♘a4 ♗f6 (Hertneck-Lautier, Munich 1993; 14...♘d6 is consistent, to get to c4 or f5, but then 15 ♘c5 is strong) and now 15 ♘c5! ♘xd4 16 ♗xh7+ ♔xh7 17 ♘xd4 ± keeps White on top.

12 a3 ♗e7 13 ♖c1 ♖c8

Bareev-Lautier, Paris blitz 1991. Here 14 ♗f5! ♖a8 15 ♕b3! ♘a5 16 ♕a2 is promising.

4 Queen's Gambit Accepted

1 d4 d5 2 c4 dxc4 *(D)*



The Queen's Gambit Accepted is a well-respected opening which has been employed by many World Champions. At first 2...dxc4 seems illogical, because Black gives White a 2-1 central majority for free. But in a sense it resembles the Slav Defence in that, by the time White has both set up his pieces and recovered his pawn, Black is ready to strike back in the centre, assisted by the fact that ...dxc4 has opened the d-file with Black's queen already hitting d4.

3 ♘f3

I'm advocating the traditional main line, which is both safe and strategically rich. White brings a piece out, prevents the move ...e5, and prepares 4 e3 and 5 ♗xc4. After that he plans to castle and advance his centre pawns.

At this point 3...♘f6 is the main move by a wide margin, but a few other third moves are important enough to merit their own section:

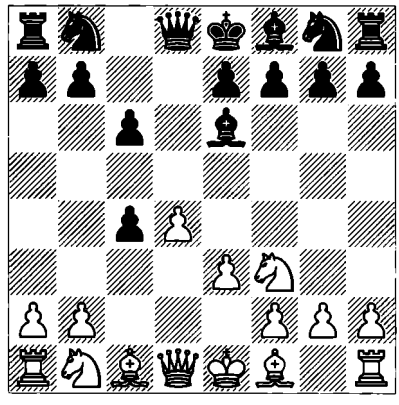
4.1: 3...a6 69
4.2: 3...c5 71
4.3: 3...♘f6 72

In addition, Black has a variety of lesser third moves, most involving tricky attempts to exploit White's delay in recovering the pawn on c4:

a) 3...♗g4?! 4 ♘e5 ♗h5 5 ♘c3 e6?! (5...♘d7 6 ♘xc4 ♘gf6 7 f3 ♘b6 and now 8 ♘a5!? ♖b8 9 e4 ± e6 10 a3 ♘fd7 11 ♗e3 gave White a pleasant central advantage in the game Andersson-Kavalek, Bugojno 1982, while 8 e4 is also good) 6 g4! ♗g6 7 h4 f6 8 ♕a4+ c6 9 ♘xg6 hxg6 10 ♕xc4 ♔f7 11 e4 ± Alekhine-Grünfeld, Semmering 1926. White has two bishops and the centre.

b) 3...b5 4 a4 b4 (4...c6 5 e3 ♕b6 6 axb5 cxb5 7 b3 ♘f6 8 bxc4 bxc4 9 ♗xc4 e6 10 0-0 gives White a clearly better position: he has much better development and has kept his central majority) 5 e3 ♗a6 (5...e6 6 ♗xc4 ♘f6 7 0-0 c5 is an inferior version of the main line, and even 8 ♗b5+ ♘bd7 9 e4! is strong) 6 ♘e5 ♕d5 (versus ♕f3) 7 ♗e2 c6 8 0-0 f6 9 e4! ♕xe4? (9...♕e6 10 ♗g4 ♕d6 and now 11 ♗h5+ g6 12 ♗f4! is very strong; White kept the advantage anyway by 11 ♘f3 in I.Farago-Pidner, Wattens 1997) 10 ♗f3 ♕f5 11 ♗g4 ♕e4 12 ♖e1 ♕d5 13 ♗h5+ g6 14 ♗f3 ♕d6 15 ♗f4 +–.

c) 3...c6 4 e3 ♗e6!? *(D)* has received a fair amount of attention lately.



Two responses suggest themselves:

c1) 5 ♕c2 b5 (after 5...♘f6, both 6 ♘bd2 and 6 ♗xc4 ♗xc4 7 ♕xc4 favour White) 6 b3 ♕a5+ (6...cxb3 7 axb3 gives White obvious compensation in terms of centre, c-file pressure, and free and rapid development; White is

for choice) 7 ♗d2 cxb3 8 ♕b2 ♕c7 9 ♘c3 (or 9 axb3, again with an excess of compensation) 9...bxa2 10 d5! ♗d7 11 dxc6 ♘xc6 12 ♘xb5 ♕b6 13 ♖xa2 (threatening ♘d6+) 13...♖b8 14 ♗c3 ♘f6 15 ♘e5! e6 (15...♘xe5 16 ♗xe5 ♖b7 17 ♗d4 ♕c6 18 ♖xa7 ±) 16 ♗e2 ♗e7 17 ♘xd7 ♘xd7 18 0-0 0-0 19 ♕a1 ±.

c2) 5 ♘c3 b5 (5...♘f6 transposes to Section 4.31) 6 ♗e2!? ♘f6 7 0-0 and Black has to unwind while White begins to operate in the centre; e.g., 7...♗d5 (7...♕c7 8 e4 b4 9 d5! ♗g4 10 e5! bxc3 11 exf6 gxf6 12 ♗xc4) 8 ♕c2 b4 9 ♘xd5 cxd5 10 e4! ♘xe4 (10...e6 11 exd5 exd5 12 ♖e1 ♗e7 13 b3 c3 14 ♗b5+ ♔f8 15 a3 ±) 11 ♗xc4 dxc4 12 ♕xe4 ♘d7 13 ♗d2 a5 (13...e6 14 ♗g5!) 14 a3 bxa3 15 ♖xa3 e6 16 ♖a4 ♗e7 17 ♖xc4 0-0 18 ♖fc1 with a small edge for White based upon activity.

d) 3...♘d7 4 e4 ♘b6 is another way to hold the c-pawn. Then:

d1) 5 ♗xc4 ♘xc4 6 ♕a4+ c6 7 ♕xc4 is probably a bit better for White, in spite of the bishops, due to his ideal centre. After 7...♘f6, 8 ♘bd2 is quite interesting, because White maintains a view of the c-file and both ♘c4 and ♘b3 are possibilities. The main line goes 8 ♘c3 ♗e6 (Flear considers 8...b5?! unsound due to 9 ♕xc6+ ♗d7 and now 10 ♕b7 or 10 ♕c5) 9 ♕d3 g6 10 0-0 ♗g7 11 h3 0-0 12 ♗e3 and naturally White stands a little better.

d2) 5 a4 a5 6 ♘e5 *(D)* and now:

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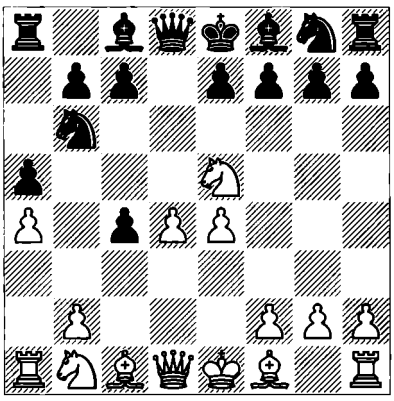
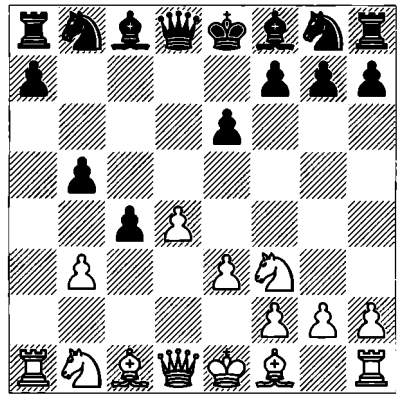


d21) Flear proposes 6...g6, to gain a tempo attacking d4 after 7 ♘xc4 ♘xc4 8 ♗xc4 ♗g7. Actually, 9 ♘c3! ♗xd4 10 ♘b5 is rather good for White, with the idea 10...c5 11 ♗e3 ♗xe3?? 12 ♗xf7+, but in any case 9 ♗e3 keeps an edge.

d22) 6...♘f6 7 ♘c3 ♘fd7 8 ♘xc4 g6 9 ♗f4!? (9 ♘xb6! ♘xb6 10 ♗f4; 9 ♗e3 is also played) 9...c6 10 ♕d2 (10 ♘xb6 ♕xb6! =) 10...♗g7 11 ♗h6 0-0 (Gavrikov-Gulko, USSR Ch, Frunze 1981) and now the most accurate continuation is 12 ♗xg7 ♔xg7 13 ♖d1 with a modest advantage.

e) 3...e6 4 e3 b5 (4...c5 5 ♗xc4 a6 6 0-0 ♘f6 is the main line of this chapter, i.e. Section 4.332) 5 a4 c6 6 axb5 cxb5 7 b3! *(D)*.

B



White is going to recover his pawn with a significant positional advantage:

e1) 7...♗b7 8 bxc4 b4 is called 'equal' in one source, but I like White following 9 c5! with ideas of ♕a4+ and ♗b5, and ♘e5 when called for. That threat can be stopped by 9...♘e7, but then 10 ♘bd2 ♘ec6 (10...♘bc6 11 ♗b5) 11 ♘c4 ♗e7 12 e4 0-0 13 ♗e3 clearly favours White.

e2) 7...♗b4+ 8 ♗d2 ♗xd2+ 9 ♘bxd2 a5 (9...♘f6 10 bxc4 bxc4 11 ♘xc4 0-0 12 ♗d3 with freer development and the better pawn-structure) 10 bxc4 b4 11 ♘e5 (after 11 c5 ♘f6 White can play 12 ♗d3 or 12 ♘c4 0-0 13 ♗d3) 11...♘f6 12 ♕a4+ (12 ♗e2 ± and ♗f3) 12...♗d7 13 ♘xd7 ♘bxd7 14 g3 0-0 15 ♗g2 ♖a6 16 0-0 and White is in control.

4.1)

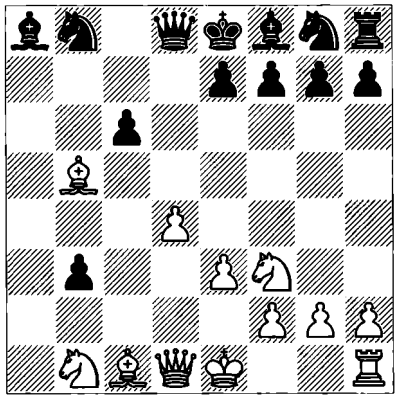
3...a6 4 e3

4 e4 is also good, but messy.

4...♗g4

Black takes a unique tack; mixing ...a6 and ...♗g4 is unusual. Instead, 4...b5 has some strong advocates, but I believe it ultimately

favours White: 5 a4 ♗b7 6 axb5 axb5 7 ♖xa8 ♗xa8 8 b3 cxb3!? (called the Haberditz Variation; instead 8...♘f6 9 bxc4 bxc4 10 ♗xc4 ± is pleasant for White) 9 ♗xb5+ c6 *(D)* and now:



a) 10 ♗c4?! (since the bishop will retreat later, it is better to move it back to d3 or e2) 10...e6 11 0-0 ♘d7 12 ♕xb3 ♗e7 13 ♗a3 ♘gf6 14 ♖c1 (this is Semkov and Sakaev's main line) 14...0-0 (Cox refutes their suggestion 14...♕a5? with 15 ♗xe6! fxe6 16 ♕xe6 ♘g8 17 d5, when White wins) 15 ♗e2 (there's that lost tempo) 15...c5 16 dxc5 ♘e4 and now they give 17 c6, but what about 17 ♕b5 instead? Then 17...♕c7 18 c6 ♘dc5! 19 ♘d4! ♖b8 20 ♕c4 ♗xc6 21 ♘xc6 ♕xc6 22 ♗f3 looks favourable to White, who will probably end up with a superior ending.

b) Given the tempo-loss we have just seen, I recommend 10 ♗e2! to simplify matters (10 ♗d3 is also interesting). Then 10...e6 11 ♕xb3 ♘d7 12 0-0 ♗e7 13 ♗a3 ♘gf6 14 ♖c1 leaves White a full tempo ahead of the line with 10 ♗c4, and anyway, I suspect that with the bishop on e2, playing ♕a4 in conjunction with ♘e5 on moves 12-14 is going to give Black fits. Overall, it appears that Black's positional disadvantages will show in a bad light.

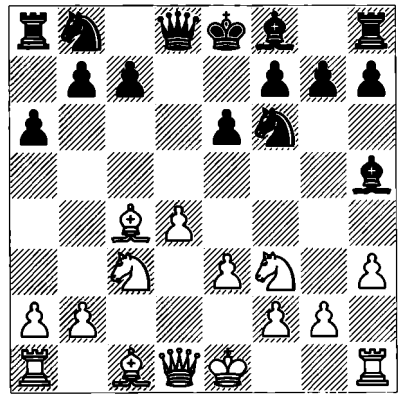
5 ♗xc4 e6 6 h3 ♗h5 7 ♘c3

This position can arise via 3...♘f6 4 e3 ♗g4 5 ♗xc4 e6 6 h3 ♗h5 7 ♘c3 a6, and it should be noted that 7...a6 isn't normally played there.

7...♘f6 *(D)*

8 g4

I like this move, but White doesn't have to pursue the bishop-pair; 8 0-0 is a perfectly acceptable alternative. For example:



a) 8...c5!? 9 dxc5 ♕xd1 10 ♖xd1 ♗xf3 11 gxf3 ♗xc5 has been called equal, but I think Black will suffer against the bishops for a long time after, e.g., 12 b3 ♘c6 13 ♗b2 0-0 14 f4. And of course White isn't forced to capture on c5.

b) 8...♘c6 9 ♗e2 ♗d6 is a standard set-up. Pelletier-Brynell, Istanbul Olympiad 2000 went 10 ♘d2!? ♗xe2 11 ♕xe2 0-0 12 f4!? (12 ♖d1 ±) 12...♘d5 13 ♘b3 f5 14 e4 fxe4?! (14...♘b6) 15 ♕xe4 ±.

8...♗g6 9 ♘e5 ♘bd7

9...c5 has a few answers, including the pawn sacrifice 10 d5!? (10 ♕f3 ♕b6 11 ♗b3 ±) 10...b5 11 ♗e2 ♘xd5 (11...exd5 12 g5 ♘e4 13 ♕xd5 ±) 12 ♘xg6 hxg6 13 ♘xd5! (Raetsky gives only 13 ♗f3 ♖a7 14 ♘xd5 ♖d7! 15 a4 exd5 16 axb5 axb5 17 ♖a8 "when [White] clearly has some play for the pawn, but just how much is not so clear.") 13...♕xd5 (13...exd5 14 ♗f3 ♖a7 15 ♗xd5 ±, when 15...♖d7 16 e4 doesn't really help Black) 14 ♕xd5 exd5 15 ♗f3 ♘d7 16 ♗xd5 ♖d8 17 ♔e2 (17 a4 b4 18 ♗c4 a5 19 e4 ±) 17...♘e5 18 e4 ♘xg4 19 ♗c6+ ♔e7 20 ♗f4 ♘f6 21 ♖ad1! ±.

10 ♘xg6 hxg6 11 ♗f1!? *(D)*

A clever move, the idea of which is that White has the two bishops and now need only consolidate to retain an advantage. On g2, the bishop gains strength whether Black plays the freeing move ...c5 or ...e5.

11...c6

What is apparently the original game with 11 ♗f1 went 11...♗d6 12 ♗g2 ♖b8!? 13 g5!? (13 0-0 and 13 h4!? are alternatives) 13...♘d5 14 ♘e4!? (14 h4!) 14...♗e7 15 h4 c5! 16 dxc5 ♘xc5 17 ♘xc5 ♗xc5 18 ♗d2! ♘b4? (Pytel

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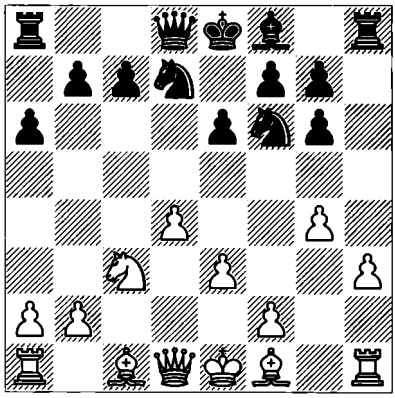

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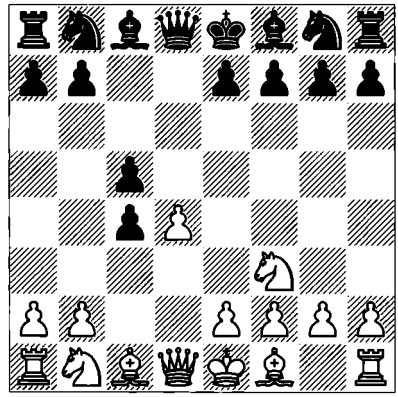


gives "18...♕b6! 19 ♕b3! ±", but 19 ♕a4+ is better) 19 ♗c3! 0-0 20 ♕xd8 ♖fxd8 21 ♔e2 with a significant advantage for White, Pytel-Pokojowczyk, Polish Ch, Poznan 1971.

12 ♗g2 ♕c7

Black preferred 12...♗d6 13 ♕e2 (after 13 0-0 e5?!, as in Elianov-Turov, St Petersburg 2000, White has 14 g5! ♘h5 15 ♘e4 ♗e7 16 d5 ±) 13...♕e7 14 ♗d2 ♘b6 15 0-0-0 ♘bd5 16 ♔b1 ♘xc3+ 17 bxc3 e5! in the game Sakaev-Alekseenko, St Petersburg 2011. Then I think 18 g5 ♘d7 (18...♘d5 19 c4) 19 h4 ± is a good way to establish some space for the bishops, when 19...exd4 20 cxd4 ♘b6 21 ♕d3 watches over the queenside.

13 0-0

Now 13...♘d5 14 ♕f3! ♖d8 15 ♖d1 intends e4 retaining an edge, while 13...♗e7 was played in Kasparov-Petrosian, Tilburg 1981. Then simply 14 e4 keeps a small advantage, since after 14...e5 15 d5, White's bishops can slowly exert influence over the board.

4.2)

3...c5 *(D)*

An important alternative to the 3...♘f6 main line.

4 e3

I recommend White play this way, content to get back to our main lines after 4...♘f6 5 ♗xc4. Black can, and often does, try to avoid this transposition. But before getting to that, a quick word on the traditional replies. First, 4 d5 is the move which directly tries to prove that 3...c5 is wrong. After 4...e6 (or 4...♘f6 5 ♘c3 e6) 5 ♘c3 ♘f6 (the ending following 5...exd5 6 ♕xd5 ♕xd5 7 ♘xd5 ♗d6 has been claimed to be equal, but at any rate White can still play it for a win) 6 e4 exd5 7 e5, there are serious complications including various tactical skirmishes that need to be memorized. What's more, current theory holds that Black stands satisfactorily, so there's not much incentive to recommend this.

4 ♘c3 is a more appropriate option. White aims for an endgame with better development. Nevertheless, 4...cxd4 5 ♕xd4 (5 ♘xd4?! e5!) 5...♕xd4 6 ♘xd4 e5 7 ♘db5 ♘a6 is regarded as equal, and 4...♘f6 5 e4!? (5 e3 cxd4 6 exd4 ♗e6 transposes to the note to White's 5th move below) 5...cxd4 6 ♕xd4 ♕xd4 7 ♘xd4 e5! is also held to be satisfactory, based upon 8 ♘db5 ♔d8! (and much analysis). It's perfectly alright to play this way (with a little study), but it will be difficult to extract any advantage from the opening.

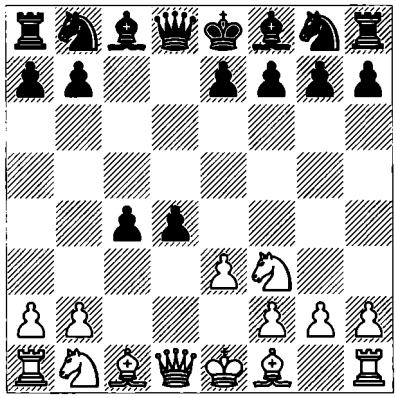
Returning to 4 e3, Black can play uniquely, beginning with...

4...cxd4 *(D)*

After 4...♘f6 5 ♗xc4, the flexible 5...e6 transposes to our main line with 3 ♘f3 ♘f6 4 e3 e6 5 ♗xc4 c5 (Section 4.33). 5...cxd4 6 exd4 e6 gives White extra options, but 7 0-0 is simplest, transposing to Section 4.331.

5 ♗xc4

5 exd4 is relatively unambitious, but still of interest; then 5...♗e6 6 ♘c3 ♘f6 has a good reputation. White can try to stir up some action by 7 ♕a4+ ♕d7 (7...♘c6 8 ♘e5 ♕b6 9 ♗e2 with the idea ♗f3 gives chances for both sides, and of course there are other options) 8 ♘b5! ♘c6 (8...♔d8? 9 ♘e5 ♕c8 10 ♗xc4! ♗xc4 11 ♘xc4 leaves Black's king seriously vulnerable)

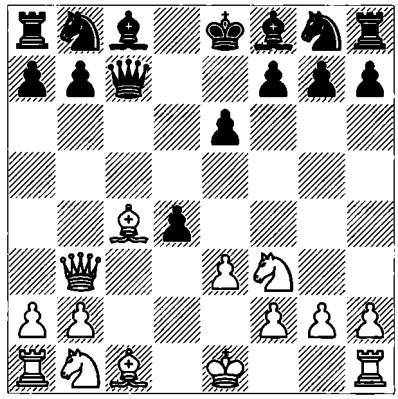


9 ♘e5! ♘xe5 10 ♘c7+ ♔d8 11 ♘xe6+ ♕xe6 12 dxe5 ♕xe5+ 13 ♗e3 with an excellent attack for the two pawns; e.g., 13...e6 14 0-0-0+ ♗d6 15 g3! ♘d5 16 ♗d4 ♕f5 17 ♗g2 with ideas of ♖he1 and ♗xd5, as shown by 17...♖c8 18 ♖he1 c3 19 ♗e4 cxb2++?? 20 ♔xb2 ♕h5 21 ♗xd5 exd5 22 ♗xg7, winning.

5...♕c7!?

By attacking the bishop, Black tries to avoid the main lines introduced by 5...e6. Naturally not 5...dxe3?? 6 ♗xf7+.

6 ♕b3! e6 *(D)*



7 exd4

White can also play the pawn sacrifice 7 0-0, and if Black replies 7...dxe3 8 ♗xe3, White has compensation due to his huge lead in development.

7...♘f6 8 0-0

Piket-Leko, Wijk aan Zee 1996 went 8 ♗g5 ♗e7 9 0-0 ♘c6 10 ♘c3 0-0 11 ♗d3 ♗d7 12 ♖fe1 ♘g4 13 ♗xe7 ♘xe7 ½-½. This may be roughly equal, but with this kind of imbalance there's plenty to play for; one idea is 14 ♕b4, to prevent 14...♗c6?? due to 15 d5, or White can simply play 14 h3 ♘f6 15 ♘e5 ♗c6 16 ♖ac1 with a typical isolated-pawn position.

8...♘c6 9 ♘c3 a6

This seems to be Black's favourite idea. First, it threatens 10...♘a5 without allowing the response 11 ♗b5+; in addition, ...b5 with ...♗b7 is a good way to mobilize. Instead, 9...♗e7 10 d5! exd5 11 ♘xd5 ♘xd5 12 ♗xd5 0-0 13 ♗e3 favours White because of his active development.

10 ♗d3

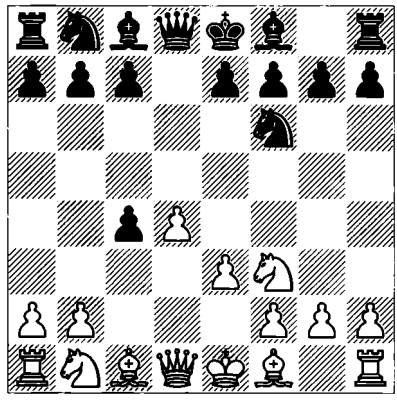
Moving out of the ...♘a5 fork, while also placing the bishop on its best diagonal.

10...♗e7 11 ♗e3 0-0

Now instead of the strange sequence 12 ♖ae1 ♘g4 13 ♘a4? (Pavlović-Stojanović, Serbian Ch, Budva 2003), which could have been met by 13...b5! 14 ♘c5 ♗xc5 15 dxc5 ♘ce5, White can play 12 ♖ac1, when moves like ♘a4 or ♘e4 can follow, as well as a well-timed ♘e5; White has the better prospects.

4.3)

3...♘f6 4 e3 *(D)*



White prepares to recover his pawn. Now the main lines are:

4.31: 4...♗e6 73
4.32: 4...♗g4 74
4.33: 4...e6 75

These other moves shouldn't be ignored:

a) 4...♘bd7 5 ♗xc4 ♘b6 6 ♗b3 (or 6 ♗d3 with a slightly better position for White) 6...c6

7 ♘c3 ♘bd5 (Oll-Bellon, Dos Hermanas 1992) and now 8 ♕c2 or 8 ♕d3 intending an early e4 leaves White comfortably on top.

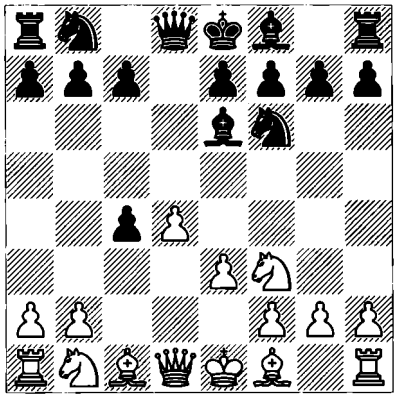
b) 4...g6 can't be too bad, but gives White a free hand in the centre; for example, 5 ♗xc4 ♗g7 6 0-0 0-0 7 ♘c3 ♘fd7!? (7...a6 8 e4 b5 9 ♗d3 ♗b7 10 e5 ♘d5 11 ♘e4 ±) 8 ♕e2 ♘b6 9 ♗b3 ♘c6 10 ♖d1 ± Kramnik-Kamsky, Amber Rapid, Monaco 1996.

c) 4...a6 5 ♗xc4 b5 is an attempt to get around some of the main lines of the Queen's Gambit Accepted. After White's reply 6 ♗d3, however, White is playing the system I'm recommending anyway, and Black has played ...b5 early on, which is generally unfavourable. There can follow 6...♗b7 7 a4! b4 (this surrenders the c4-square) 8 0-0 e6 9 ♘bd2 ♘bd7 (9...c5 can be met by 10 ♘c4 or 10 ♕e2) 10 ♕e2 (now White is ready for e4-e5) 10...c5 11 e4 (the calm 11 ♘c4 gives White a small advantage, if you don't like what follows) 11...cxd4 12 e5 ♘d5 13 ♘b3! ♘c5 14 ♗g5 ♕d7 (14...♗e7?? 15 ♘xc5) 15 ♘fxd4!? (15 ♘xc5 ♗xc5 16 ♖fc1 ±) 15...h6 16 ♘xc5 ♗xc5 17 ♘b3 ♗b6 (17...♗xf2+!?) 18 ♗d2 ♕e7 19 a5 ♗a7 20 ♖ac1 0-0 21 ♕e4 f5 22 exf6 ♖xf6 23 ♕h7+ ♔f7 24 ♖c4 with a powerful attack, Topalov-Narciso Dublan, Barcelona 2000.

4.31)

4...♗e6 *(D)*

W



This move has enjoyed a certain popularity among some strong players. Now 5 ♘a3 is a fairly good move, but I'll focus on two other ideas:

5 ♘c3

This has a large amount of theory attached to it, but is more likely to achieve something substantial than 5 ♘bd2. On the other hand, this more modest knight move is easier to play, and should offer some advantage:

a) 5...♗d5?! 6 ♕c2! e6!? 7 e4 ♗c6 8 ♗xc4 ♗e7 9 0-0 a5 10 ♖e1 with a solid advantage for White, Miles-Larsen, Linares 1983.

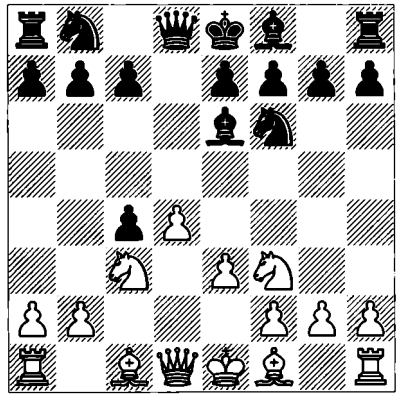
b) After 5...♘c6 6 ♘xc4 g6 7 ♗d3 ♗g7 8 0-0 0-0 9 a3 a5 10 ♕c2, White has a better grip on the centre, although admittedly this isn't anything to shout about.

c) 5...b5 6 a4 c6 7 axb5 cxb5 8 b3 ± establishes a queenside advantage.

d) 5...c5 is thematic, but it gives White time to gain some central control: 6 ♗xc4 (6 dxc5!?) 6...♗xc4 7 ♘xc4 ♘c6 (7...cxd4 8 ♕b3!) 8 ♕b3 (possibly better is 8 ♕a4, or 8 0-0 cxd4 9 exd4 e6 10 ♕b3 ±) 8...♕c7! 9 0-0 e6 10 ♗d2 ♗e7 11 dxc5 ♘e4?! (11...0-0 12 ♘d6) 12 ♕c2 (12 ♗a5 is also strong) 12...♘xc5 (12...f5 13 b4) 13 b4! ♘d7 14 ♖ac1 with a nice pull.

We now return to 5 ♘c3 *(D)*:

B



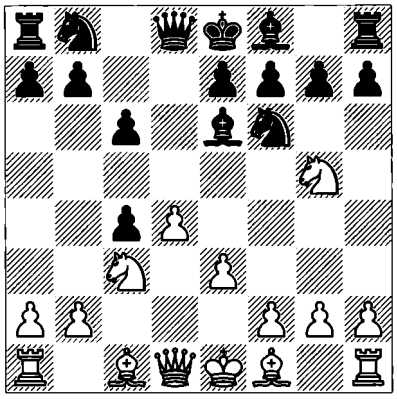
A much-abbreviated overview follows.

5...c6

This is the solid approach. Black can also try 5...h6 6 ♘e5 c5 7 ♕a4+ ♘bd7 8 ♗xc4 (8 ♗e2 may be better; e.g., 8...a6 9 dxc5 ♕c7 10 ♘xc4 ♕xc5 11 0-0! ±) 8...♗xc4 9 ♕xc4 e6 (Swiercz-Navara, Czech Team Ch 2010/11), when 10 0-0 might give White a small advantage; for example, 10...♖c8 (10...♗e7 11 ♘xd7 ♕xd7 12 dxc5) 11 ♖d1 cxd4 12 ♕xd4 ♘xe5 13 ♕xe5 ♕b6 14 ♕g3 ±.

6 ♘g5 *(D)*

This knight advance is the best try. 6 a4 is a Slav Defence position, when one important line goes 6...g6 (6...♗d5 7 ♘d2! – Burgess; 6...h6 7 ♘e5 ♘bd7 8 ♘xc4 ♗f5, Topalov-I.Sokolov, Sarajevo 1999, 9 f3 ± and there's no good way to prevent e4 or disrupt White's centre). After 7 ♘g5!? ♗d5, both 8 f3 h6 and 8 h3 h6 have been tested a lot and are satisfactory for Black, so the calmer 7 ♗e2 ♗g7 8 e4 might be preferred, when it's just a game.



Now (after 6 ♘g5):

a) After 6...♕d7, 7 ♗e2 has had some success, but the simplest course appears to be 7 e4 h6 8 ♘xe6 ♕xe6 9 e5 (Gelfand-Zilberman, Tel Aviv 1999) when Gelfand gives 9...♘bd7 10 ♕e2 ♘d5 11 ♕xc4 ±. Avrukh points out that Flear's 9...♘fd7 10 ♗e2 ♘b6 11 0-0 ♕d7 can be answered with 12 a4! intending 12...a5 13 b3! cxb3? 14 ♕xb3 ♕c7 15 e6.

b) 6...♕c8 can also be met strongly by 7 e4, but this time 7 ♗e2 is another way to exploit the passive queen position and gain the upper hand; e.g., 7...h6 8 ♘xe6 ♕xe6 9 ♕c2 with the idea 9...b5 10 a4 b4 11 ♘b1, or 7...♗d5 8 e4 h6 9 exd5 hxg5 10 dxc6 ♘xc6 11 d5 ♘e5 12 ♗xg5 ±.

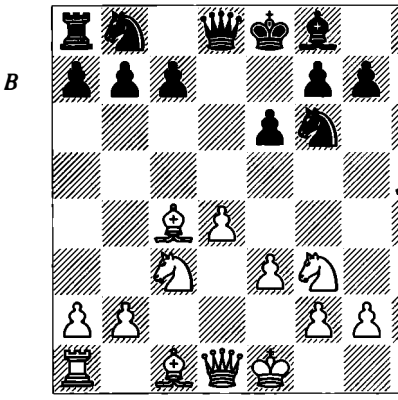
c) 6...♗d5 7 e4 h6 8 exd5 hxg5 9 dxc6 ♘xc6 10 d5 ♘e5 (10...♘a5 11 ♕a4+ ♘d7 12 ♗xg5 "followed by 0-0-0 gives White a fantastic position" – Avrukh) 11 ♕d4 ♘fd7 12 ♗xg5 (Akopian-Kirov, Palma de Mallorca 1989) and now 12...♕b6 may be best, but not equal after 13 ♗e3.

4.32)

4...♗g4 5 ♗xc4 e6 6 h3 ♗h5

Upon 6...♗xf3?! 7 ♕xf3, White has the bishop-pair and a strong centre for essentially nothing. One example is 7...c6 8 0-0 ♗e7 9 ♘c3 0-0 10 ♖d1 ♕c8 11 e4 ♘a6 12 ♗f4 ♖d8 13 ♖ac1 (the classical stereotype of an ideal opening position for White) 13...♖d7, as played in the game Heyken-Schoppmeyer, 2nd Bundesliga 1988/9. Now almost any move is good, but 14 d5! is absolutely killing.

7 ♘c3 *(D)*



We have reached the basic position for the 4...♗g4 line. White will happily develop and advance his centre, so Black needs to disturb things there. He usually aims for ...e5.

7...♘bd7

a) We already saw the continuation 7...a6 under the move-order 3...a6 4 e3 ♗g4 5 ♗xc4 e6 6 h3 ♗h5 7 ♘c3 ♘f6 (Section 4.1); it wasn't very good.

b) 7...♘c6 8 ♗b5 is a standard pin that makes life uncomfortable for Black; for example, 8...♗d6 9 e4 ♘d7 10 ♗e3 0-0 11 ♕e2 (11 e5 ♗e7 12 ♖c1 ±) 11...f5 12 g4! ♗f7 13 gxf5 exf5 14 e5 ♗b4 left White obviously better in W.Rohde-S.Korolev, corr. 2002. Two good continuations are 15 ♖g1 and 15 ♘g5.

8 0-0 ♗d6

Black wants to play ...e5. Otherwise he is seriously short of space after White plays e4.

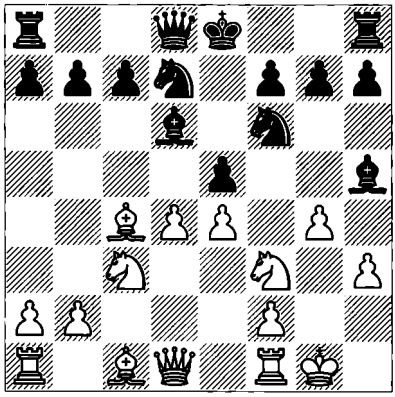
9 e4 e5?

This leads to some forcing play which favours White throughout. So 9...♗xf3 10 ♕xf3 e5 11 d5 ± is probably the best that Black can do.

10 g4! *(D)*

10...♗g6

B



The tactics after 10...exd4? 11 ♘xd4 (11 e5 and 11 ♕xd4 are also good) work out well for White:

a) 11...♘xg4? 12 ♘f5! is winning for White: 12...♗h2+ (12...♘e3 13 ♘xg7+ ♔e7 14 ♕xh5 +–) 13 ♔h1 ♘xf2+ (13...♗e5 14 hxg4 ♗g6 15 ♔g2) 14 ♖xf2 ♗xd1 15 ♘xg7+ ♔e7 16 ♖xf7+ ♔d6 17 ♗e3! and Black will get mated or lose everything, the first major threat being mates beginning with 18 ♘f5+ or 18 ♖xd1+.

b) 11...♗g6 12 f4! ♗c5 13 f5 ♘e5 14 ♗d5 c6 15 ♗f4! ♕e7 16 ♘a4 ♗d6?! 17 ♘xc6! bxc6 18 ♗xc6+ ♘xc6 19 ♗xd6 +–.

11 dxe5 ♘xe5 12 ♘xe5 ♗xe5 13 f4

Forcing the pace; Black is in danger of losing a piece to f5. Now:

a) 13...♗d4+ 14 ♔h2 ♗xc3 15 bxc3 ♕xd1 16 ♖xd1 ♗xe4 17 g5 and the best Black can do is 17...♘d7! 18 ♖e1 f5 19 gxf6 ♘xf6 20 ♗d3 0-0 21 ♖xe4! ♘xe4 22 ♗xe4 c6 23 ♔g3 ±.

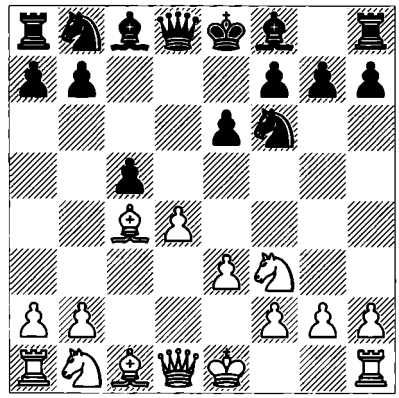
b) After 13...♕d4+, the game Atalik-Meins, Bad Wiessee 2003 continued 14 ♕xd4 ♗xd4+ 15 ♔h2 ♗xc3 16 bxc3 ♗xe4 17 g5 ♗d5 18 ♖e1+ ♔f8 19 ♗b5! a6 (19...c6 20 ♗d3 ♘e8 21 ♗a3+ ♔g8 22 c4 ♗f3 23 ♖e3 ♗h5 24 ♖ae1 f6 25 ♖e7 +–) 20 ♗a4 b5 21 ♗a3+ ♔g8 22 gxf6 bxa4 23 ♖e5! c6? (23...♗e6 24 f5 ±) 24 ♖g1 (or 24 fxg7! ♔xg7 25 ♖g1+ ♔h6 26 c4! ♗xc4 27 f5 f6 28 ♖e4 ♔h5 29 ♖xc4) 24...g6 25 ♖e7 ♖d8? 26 f5 1-0.

4.33)

4...e6 5 ♗xc4 c5 *(D)*

5...a6 doesn't hold much independent significance for us. After 6 0-0 b5 7 ♗d3, 7...c5 directly transposes to note 'b' (7...b5) to Black's 7th move in Section 4.332, while 7...♗b7 8 a4 compromises Black's queenside.

W



This is the main line: Black strikes back in the centre. He has ideas of ...cxd4, when White is likely to reply exd4 with an isolated queen's pawn. Alternatively or in addition, Black will expand on the queenside with ...a6 and ...b5, winning time and placing his bishop on the powerful long diagonal. One drawback to this is that it takes time, and White will end up with a bigger lead in development. Another is that his queenside pawns, sometimes a strength, are also subject to attack (usually by a4). Finally, whether White has a large centre or an isolated pawn, his pieces will naturally have somewhat more freedom than Black's.

6 0-0

Now we have a fork:

4.331: 6...cxd4 76
4.332: 6...a6 79

6...♘bd7 will usually transpose to Section 4.3323 (6...a6 7 ♗d3 ♘bd7), but Black has an obvious alternative in 6...♘c6 *(D)*.

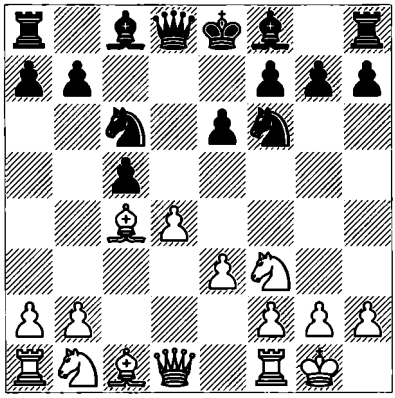
This appears natural but can have drawbacks:

a) 7 ♘c3 creates certain problems for Black:

a1) 7...cxd4 8 exd4 transposes to note 'b' to Black's 7th move in Section 4.331. The fact that Black is committed to ...♘c6 if nothing else discourages lines with ...a6 and ...b5.

a2) 7...♗e7 8 dxc5!? (8 a3 and 8 ♕e2 are good alternatives) 8...♗xc5 (8...♕xd1 9 ♖xd1 ♗xc5 10 a3 0-0 11 b4 ♗e7 12 ♗b2 ±) 9 ♕xd8+ ♘xd8 10 e4 (10 a3 with the idea b4 is also somewhat better for White) 10...♘c6 and now

W



both 11 e5 ♘d7 12 ♗f4 and 11 ♗f4 give White a modest advantage.

a3) After 7...a6, 8 ♗d3 transposes to Section 4.3322. Black also has to be concerned that 8 dxc5 might be a good version of the 6...a6 7 dxc5 line, since Black's queen's knight should almost always go to d7 in that case. A sample line: 8...♕xd1 (8...♗xc5 9 ♕xd8+ ♘xd8 10 a3 or 10 ♗d2 intending ♖ac1) 9 ♖xd1 ♗xc5 10 ♗d2 0-0 11 ♖ac1 ♗e7 12 ♘a4 ♖d8 (12...♖b8 13 ♗xa6) 13 ♘b6 ♖b8 14 ♘d4!? ♘xd4 15 exd4 ♗d6 (15...♖xd4 16 ♗b4!) 16 ♗e2 ± ♘d5 17 ♘c4 ♗e7 18 ♗f3 with a very slight edge; White has ideas of ♗xd5 and/or ♘e3.

b) 7 ♕e2 (with the idea dxc5 and e4-e5) prepares to get ♖d1 and ♘c3 in quickly. This is a conventional strategy in the Queen's Gambit Accepted, given extra bite by the fact that Black has already played ...♘c6, which is not his most respected set-up. After 7...cxd4 8 ♖d1 ♗e7 9 exd4 0-0 10 ♘c3, Avrukh has done considerable analysis to demonstrate White's advantage, one key line beginning 10...♘a5 11 ♗d3 b6 12 ♕e5!? ♗d6 (12...♘c6 13 ♕g3 ±; 12...♗b7 13 ♕g3 g6 14 ♗h6 ♖e8 15 ♘e5 ♘h5 16 ♕e3 ♗f8, Drozdovsky-Bogdanovich, Odessa 2006, 17 ♗xf8 ♖xf8 18 b4! ♖c8 19 ♗e2 ±) 13 ♕g5 ♗b7 14 ♘e5 with a kingside attack.

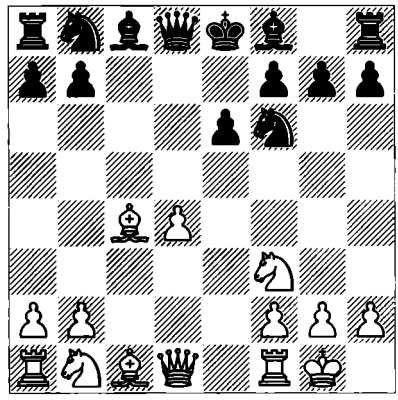
4.331)

6...cxd4

An irrevocable decision. Black isolates the white d-pawn immediately, rather than leave open the possibility of dxc5 (for example, 6...a6 7 dxc5 or 6...♘c6 7 ♘c3 ♗e7 8 dxc5). In return, this liberates White's queen's bishop, and the possibility of a timely ...c4 disappears.

7 exd4 *(D)*

B



7...♗e7

After the important move 7...♘c6, White can develop normally with ♘c3, ♖e1, a3 and/or ♗g5, but he has these options, reminiscent of the choices that presented themselves after 6...♘c6:

a) 8 ♕e2 seeks a transposition to the variation discussed under the move-order 6...♘c6 7 ♕e2 cxd4 8 ♖d1 ♗e7 9 exd4 (note 'b' in Section 4.33). Grabbing the pawn is quite risky: 8...♘xd4!? (8...♗e7 9 ♖d1 is the line just mentioned) 9 ♘xd4 ♕xd4 10 ♖d1 ♕b6 11 ♗b5+ ♗d7 (Pelletier-Arencibia, Ubeda 1995) and now 12 ♗xd7+ ♘xd7 13 ♘c3 ♗e7 14 ♗e3 provides excellent compensation.

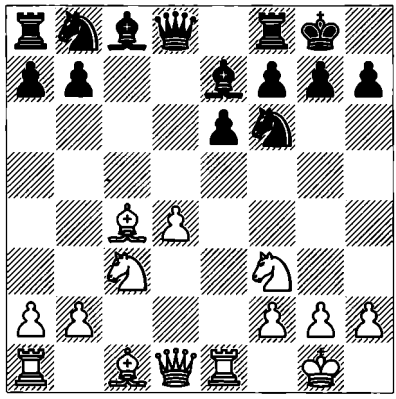
b) When play goes 8 ♘c3 ♗e7 9 ♖e1, it's instructive to see how ...a6 and ...b5 is too slow: 9...a6 10 a3 b5? 11 d5! exd5 12 ♗xd5 ♘xd5 13 ♕xd5 ♗b7 14 ♘d4! ±. Therefore Black should settle for 9...0-0, transposing to our main line.

8 ♘c3 0-0

8...♘c6 transposes to line 'b' of the previous note, where it was best for Black to castle soon in any case.

9 ♖e1 *(D)*

White has been extremely successful from this position. The structure with an isolated queen's pawn (IQP) can also arise from openings such as the Nimzo-Indian Defence, Caro-Kann Panov Attack and the Alapin Sicilian. We shall see many typical themes in the following lines, especially involving ...a6 and ...b5 and White's d5 advance. This central thrust is also



an important idea when Black plays the more modest ...b6, as our main line demonstrates.

9...♘c6

This is a bad position for the move 9...♘bd7, although it is often played, because if the knight goes to b6 it will prevent Black from fianchettoing and put no pressure on d4, giving White a free hand to build up. But if Black plays ...b6 and the knight doesn't move, it has little influence and no place to go without other problems arising. White can play 10 ♗b3 (this is the easiest method, although 10 ♗g5 and 10 a3 are also good) 10...♘b6, with these options:

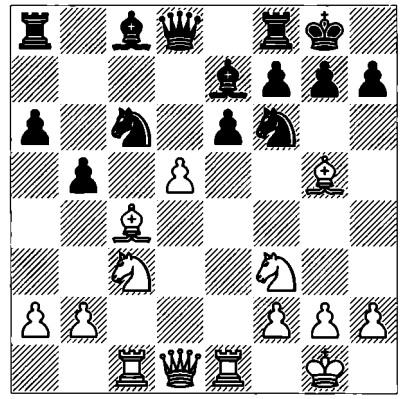
a) 11 ♕d3 ♗d7 12 ♗c2 ♗c6 (12...♘bd5 13 ♘xd5 exd5 14 ♗g5 is a well-known structure favourable to White; then 14...g6 can be met by 15 ♘e5 or 15 ♕b3) 13 ♗g5 g6 14 ♗h6 ♖e8 15 ♘e5 (15 ♖ad1 ♘bd5 16 ♗b3) 15...♘bd5 16 ♗b3 ± Pelletier-Domont, Zurich 2007.

b) 11 ♗g5 ♘fd5 12 ♗xe7 ♘xe7 13 ♕d3 with ideas of ♗c2 and/or ♘g5, combined with h4 and an attack, or simply ♘e5, ♕e4, ♖ad1, etc.

c) 11 ♘e5 ♗d7 12 ♕f3!? ♗c6 (12...♕b8? 13 d5!) 13 ♘xc6 bxc6 14 ♕xc6 ♕xd4 15 ♗e3 ♕b4 16 ♕b5 ± (Raetsky).

10 a3

10 ♗g5 is only slightly advantageous, but very instructive in light of the common tactical idea 10...a6 11 ♖c1 b5 12 d5! *(D)*.



Then:

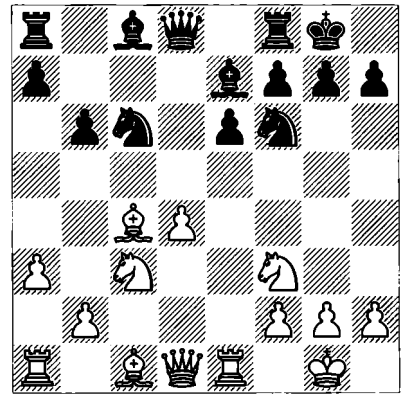
a) 12...♘xd5 13 ♗xd5 exd5 14 ♕xd5 with an edge for White.

b) 12...♘a5 13 ♗d3!! with the idea 13...exd5? 14 ♖xe7! ♕xe7 15 ♘xd5 or 13...♘xd5? 14 ♗xe7 ♘xe7 15 ♗xh7+! ♔xh7 16 ♘g5+ ♔g6 17 ♕g4 f5 18 ♕g3, winning.

c) 12...♘b4 13 ♗b3 ♘bxd5 14 ♘xd5 exd5 15 ♕e2!? (15 ♘d4! ♗d7! 16 ♕f3 ±) 15...♗b4! 16 ♖ed1 (Anand-Adianto, Manila Olympiad 1992) and now 16...♗b7! 17 ♘d4 ♖e8 18 ♕f3 ♖c8 achieves a level position.

10...b6 *(D)*

10...a6 11 ♗a2 ♕d6 (11...b5 12 d5!) 12 ♗e3 (12 g3!? with the idea ♗f4 looks promising, since White will strike before the weakened long diagonal becomes an issue) 12...♖d8 (not 12...b5? 13 d5!) 13 ♕c2 (13 ♖c1 might be better, to discourage 13...b5 due to the tricky 14 d5 exd5 15 ♗b6! ♖d7 16 ♘xd5 ♘xd5 17 ♗c5! and ♗xd5) 13...b5?! (13...g6 14 ♖ad1 ♘d5 ±) 14 ♖ad1 ♘d5 (14...♗b7 15 d5!) 15 ♘e4 ♕c7 16 ♘eg5 ♗xg5 17 ♘xg5 g6 18 ♘e4 ±.

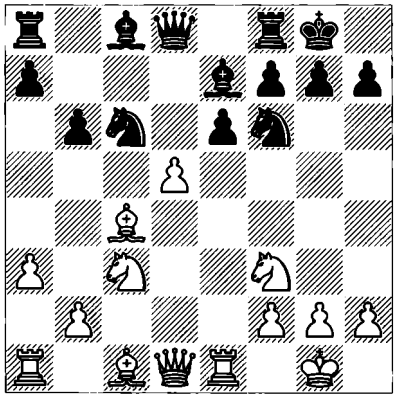


11 d5!?

This is the most direct method, and it secures a moderate advantage by thematically breaking down Black's blockade square and increasing the range of almost all of White's pieces. There are good alternatives in this position, from

which White has been winning games for years. For example, 11 ♗d3 with the idea of ♗c2 and ♕d3 is similar to our 6...a6 7 ♗d3 main line (Section 4.332). But 11 ♕d3! may be objectively the best move, and certainly the most dangerous: 11...♗b7 12 ♗g5 ♘d5 13 ♗xd5! ♗xg5 (13...exd5 14 ♗xe7 ♘xe7 is the classic positional advantage for White) 14 ♗e4 h6 15 ♖ad1 (15 d5! is better still) 15...♗f6 16 d5 exd5 (16...♘a5 17 ♕b1! ♕c8!? 18 dxe6 fxe6 19 ♗xb7 ♘xb7 20 ♘e4! gives White a clear advantage) 17 ♗xd5 ♕c7? (17...♗xc3 18 ♕xc3 ♕c8 19 ♘h4! ♘a5 20 ♕g3 ♗xd5 21 ♖xd5 ♖e8 22 ♖ed1 ± intending ♘f5) 18 ♘b5 ♕b8 19 ♘d6 ♘d8 20 ♗a2, Korneev-C.Graf, Bad Wörishofen 2003. This is essentially resignable, but a fun finish would be 20...♕c7 (20...♗xf3 21 ♕xf3 ♗xb2 22 ♖e7) 21 ♘e5 ♗xe5 22 ♖xe5 ♗c6 23 ♗b1 g6 24 ♘xf7 ♕xf7 25 ♗a2 ♕xa2 26 ♕xg6+ ♔h8 27 ♕xh6+ ♔g8 28 ♕g6+ ♔h8 29 ♖h5#.

We now return to 11 d5!? *(D)*:



11...♘a5 12 ♗a2 exd5?!

It's surprising that after all these years, this inferior move is played most often. Probably Black finds that the better 12...♘xd5 13 ♘xd5 exd5 14 ♕xd5 is too depressing (even 14 ♗xd5 ♗b7 15 ♗xb7 ♘xb7 16 ♗f4 is slightly in White's favour, but not enough to be a deterrent). Play has gone:

a) 14...♗b7?! 15 ♕h5!? (15 ♕f5! ♗xf3 16 ♗b1 g6 17 ♕xf3 ± is strong) 15...♗f6? (15...♗xf3 16 ♕xf3 ♗f6 17 ♗f4!? ♗xb2 18 ♖ad1 ♕f6 19 ♖d6 ♕c3 20 ♖e3 ♕c5 21 ♖e7 ♕xa3 22 ♗xf7+ ♔h8 23 ♕h5 with an attack) 16 ♘g5 ♗xg5 17 ♗xg5 ♕d4 18 ♗e7 g6 19 ♕g5 ♖fe8 20 b4 ♘c6 21 ♗f6 ♖xe1+ 22 ♖xe1 ♕d6 23 h4! 1-0 Korneev-Hanssen, Oslo 1994.

b) 14...♗e6! 15 ♕xd8 ♖fxd8 16 ♗xe6 fxe6 17 ♗g5 ♗xg5 18 ♘xg5 ♖d2!? (18...♘b3 19 ♖ab1 h6 20 ♘xe6 ♖d2 ±) 19 b4 (19 ♖ac1) 19...♘c4 (19...♘b3! 20 ♖ad1 e5 21 ♘f3 ±) 20 ♖xe6 ♘xa3 21 h3 ♘c2? (21...h6 22 ♖xa3 hxg5 23 ♖xb6 ♖xf2! 24 ♖b5! with a slight advantage for White) 22 ♖xa7! and White is winning too much material, Gurchumalidze-Balkhamishvili, Georgian Girls Ch, Tbilisi 2002.

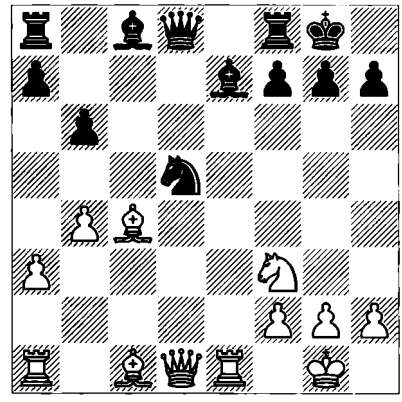
13 b4!

13 ♘xd5 ♘xd5 14 ♗xd5 ♗b7 15 ♗xb7 ♘xb7 16 ♗f4 favours White, but not by very much.

13...♘c4

White is also in charge following 13...♘b7 14 ♗b2, as well as 13...♘c6 14 ♘xd5 ♘xd5 15 ♕xd5 ♗b7 16 b5! ♘a5 17 ♕xd8 ♗xd8 18 ♘e5 ♗f6 19 ♗d2 ♖ac8 20 ♗b4 ♗xe5 21 ♖xe5 ♖fe8 22 ♖xe8+ ♖xe8 23 ♖d1 ±.

14 ♘xd5 ♘xd5 15 ♗xc4 *(D)*



Now:

a) 15...♗e6 is a sacrifice that doesn't work out, since White wins material for insufficient compensation: 16 ♗xd5 ♗xd5 17 ♖xe7 ♕xe7 18 ♕xd5 ♖fd8 19 ♕b3 ♕d6 (Black tried to improve in Riazantsev-Yagupov, Miass (team event) 2007 by 19...♕e2 20 ♗e3 ♖d3, but 21 ♘d4! ♖xb3 22 ♘xe2 ♖d8 23 g3 h6 24 ♘d4 ♖d3 25 ♘c6 ♖8d7 26 a4 is winning) 20 ♗e3 ♖ac8 21 h3 h6 22 b5 ♕d5 23 ♕b2 and White had consolidated in the game Serper-Becerra Rivero, Internet 2006.

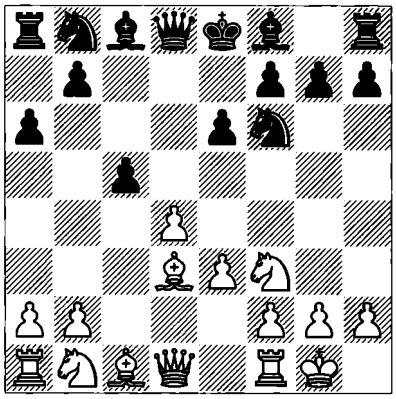
b) 15...♘c7 isn't satisfactory either: 16 ♗f4 ♗g4 (16...♗e6 17 ♗xc7 ♕xc7 18 ♗xe6 fxe6

19 ♖c1) 17 ♕xd8 ♗xd8 18 ♖ad1 ♗xf3 19 gxf3 ♘e6 20 ♗d6 ♖e8 21 ♗b5 +–.

4.332)

6...a6 7 ♗d3 *(D)*

B



This is my recommendation versus 6...a6. Apart from the defensive idea of avoiding ...b5 with tempo, White strengthens his control of e4 and in many lines plans to gain the initiative on the kingside with e4-e5. ♗d3 also discourages Black's thematic move ...b5 as White can reply with a4 and force concessions in Black's queenside structure. Of course, this comes at the cost of a tempo so, not surprisingly, strategically double-edged positions result. After 7 ♗d3, Black has a big decision to make:

4.3321: 7...cxd4 80
4.3322: 7...♘c6 81
4.3323: 7...♘bd7 82

Alternatively:

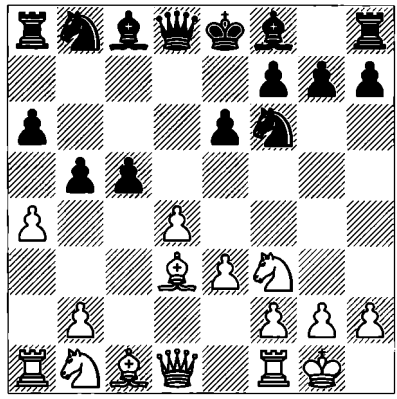
a) 7...b6 allows the interesting 8 dxc5!? (8 e4 is also played, with the idea 8...cxd4 9 e5) 8...♗xc5 9 a3 ♗b7 10 ♕e2 0-0 11 ♘bd2 ♘bd7 12 b4 ♗e7 13 ♗b2 a5 14 bxa5 ♖xa5 15 ♗b5 ♕b8 16 a4 ♖c8 (16...♖a7 17 ♘c4 ± Baburin-Godena, Havana 1999) 17 ♖fc1! ♖a7 18 ♖xc8+ ♕xc8 19 ♖c1 ♕a8 (Kramnik-Kasparov, Moscow rapid 2001) 20 ♘c4! ♗d5 21 ♘fe5 ± (Kasparov). One idea is 21...♘xe5 22 ♘xb6! (22 ♘xe5 ♗xg2?! 23 f3) 22...♕b7 23 ♖c8+ ♗f8 24 ♗xe5 ♕xb6 25 ♗xf6 ±.

b) 7...b5 and now:

b1) It's worth noting that 8 dxc5 is sometimes given an '!'. Then 8...♗b7?! 9 b4 is unattractive for Black, so a main variation is 8...♗xc5 9 e4 with e5 to follow; e.g., 9...♗b7 10 e5 ♘d5 – therefore 8 dxc5 is an option to think about which might simplify White's life.

b2) 8 a4 *(D)* forces a queenside structural concession (this is a major point of playing 7 ♗d3). Then we have:

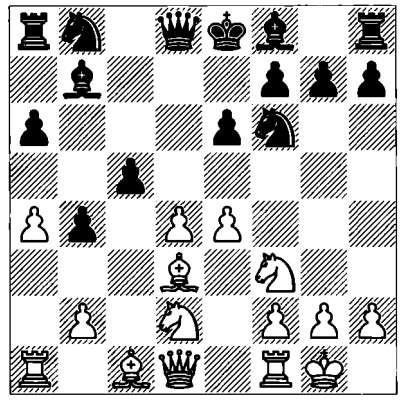
B



b21) 8...bxa4 9 ♘e5! is awkward for Black; e.g., 9...♗e7 (9...cxd4 10 exd4 ♗b7 11 ♕xa4+ ♘bd7 12 ♘c3 ♗d6 13 ♘c4 and now 13...♗c7 14 ♕a3 or 13...♗e7 14 ♘a5! ±) 10 ♕xa4+ ♗d7 (10...♘bd7 11 ♘c6; 10...♘fd7 11 dxc5 ♗xc5 12 ♘d2 with the idea 12...0-0 13 ♗xh7+!) 11 ♘xd7 ♘bxd7 (11...♕xd7? 12 ♗b5) 12 dxc5 ♗xc5 13 ♕c2!? (or 13 ♖d1 with the bishop-pair) 13...0-0 14 ♖xa6 ♖c8 15 ♘c3 and Black is short of compensation for the pawn.

b22) 8...b4 9 e4 (9 ♘bd2 ♗b7 10 ♘c4 is quite a safe way to play which still gives plenty of chances) 9...♗b7 10 ♘bd2 *(D)* (10 e5 ♘d5 11 ♘bd2 may well favour White slightly, but the theory is messy) and here:

B



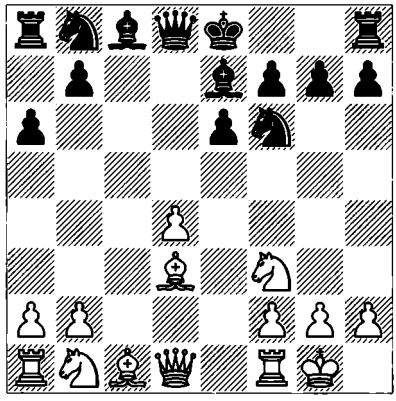
b221) 10...♘c6 11 e5 ♘d7 and now 12 ♗e4 cxd4 13 ♘b3 is the safe course, whereas 12 ♘e4 cxd4!? 13 ♗f4 ♕a5 14 ♖e1 ♗e7 15 ♖c1 ♖d8 16 ♘d6+ ♗xd6 17 exd6 ± ♘f6? 18 ♘e5! ± Krivoshei-Šimaček, Prievidza 2009 is a typical example of mixing it up.

b222) 10...cxd4 11 e5 ♘fd7 12 ♘c4 ♘c6 (12...♘c5 13 ♗g5!? ♗xf3! 14 ♕xf3 ♕d5 15 ♕xd5 exd5 16 ♘b6 ♘xd3 17 ♘xa8 ♔d7 18 ♖fd1 ♘xb2 19 ♖xd4 ± is a confusing line) 13 ♗g5 ♕b8 (13...♕c7 14 ♗f4 ±) 14 ♖e1 b3 15 ♗e4 h6 16 ♗f4 ♗b4 17 ♖e2 (17 ♘d6+! ±) 17...0-0 18 ♘xd4 ♘xd4 19 ♕xd4 with an edge for White, Anand/Koneru-Aronian/Danielian, Moscow (consultation blitz) 2011.

4.3321)

7...cxd4 8 exd4 ♗e7 *(D)*

W



9 ♘c3

Or:

a) A thematic idea is shown by 9 ♗g5 b5 (9...♘c6 10 ♘c3 0-0 transposes to the main line) 10 ♘c3 ♗b7 11 ♖c1 0-0 12 a4 b4 13 ♗xf6 ♗xf6 14 ♘e4 ±. Not forced, but a manoeuvre to remember when c5 is an outpost.

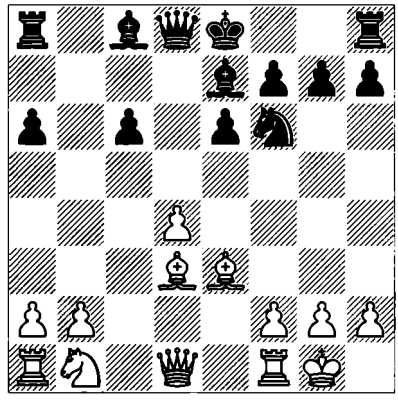
b) 9 ♘e5 is an important alternative that has been successful in some highly-rated games (likewise 9 ♘c3 0-0 10 ♘e5). Apart from the fact that 9...b5?! runs into 10 ♕f3 ♕d5 11 ♕g3 with the initiative, the idea is that after ...♘c6, ♘xc6 weakens Black's pawns. Normally the isolated d4-pawn versus the isolated c6-pawn is an even trade-off, but it appears that in this position, with accurate play, White tends to get pressure on c6 and a solid outpost on c5, whereas both Black's play against d4 and his outpost on d5 are less efficacious. Here are some examples:

b1) 9...♘bd7 10 ♘c3 0-0 11 ♗f4 and White stands better (Khuzman); Black's knight is passive.

b2) 9...0-0 10 ♘c3 ♘c6 11 ♘xc6 bxc6 12 ♘a4 (12 ♗f4 is another approach) 12...♗b7 (12...♖b8 13 b3 ♕d5 14 ♗f4 ♖b4 15 ♗e5 ± c5? 16 ♗c4 ♕c6 17 ♘xc5 ± Malaniuk-Zlochevsky, Münster 1995) 13 ♗f4 (or 13 ♘c5 ±) 13...♕a5 and now 14 ♕c2 gave White a good game in Dreev-Xu Jun, Taiyuan 2004, but better still is 14 ♘c5! with the idea 14...♗xc5!? 15 dxc5 ♕xc5 16 ♗d6!.

b3) 9...♘c6 10 ♘xc6 bxc6 11 ♗e3 *(D)* is a standard sort of position in which White has only a minor edge.

B



This has been contested by some high-level players:

b31) 11...0-0 12 ♕c2 ♕c7 13 ♘d2 h6 14 ♖ac1 ♗b7 15 ♘e4 (given '!' by Gelfand, although 15 ♘b3 looks both better and good) 15...♘d5 (15...♘g4 16 g3 e5! =) 16 ♕e2 ♖fd8 (Gelfand-Anand, Biel 1997) and now 17 ♘c5 gives White a modest edge.

b32) Kramnik-Kasparov, Moscow blitz 2001 continued 11...♘d5 12 ♘c3 (12 ♘d2! 0-0 13 ♘f3 ±) 12...0-0 13 ♖c1 ♘xe3 (Khuzman's move 13...a5!? can be met by 14 ♘xd5 cxd5 15 ♕c2 h6 16 ♗f4 ♗f6 17 ♖fd1 ±) 14 fxe3 c5? (14...h6 15 ♘e4!? e5! 16 ♗c4! exd4 17 exd4 ♗e6! 18 ♗xe6 fxe6 19 ♖xf8+ ♗xf8 20 ♖c4 offers White a minimal edge at most) 15 dxc5 ♗xc5 16 ♗xh7+ ♔xh7 17 ♕h5+ ♔g8 18 ♕xc5 ±.

9...♘c6

Again, 9...b5 allows 10 a4 (10 ♗g5 is a good alternative), weakening Black's pawn-structure; e.g., 10...bxa4?! (10...b4 11 ♘e4 ♗b7 12 ♕e2 0-0 13 ♖d1 was only slightly better for White in Karpov-Short, Linares 1995) 11 ♘e5! 0-0 12 ♕f3 ♖a7 13 ♖xa4 ♗b7 14 ♕g3 leaves White clearly on top.

10 ♗g5 *(D)*

For 10 ♘e5, compare 9 ♘e5.

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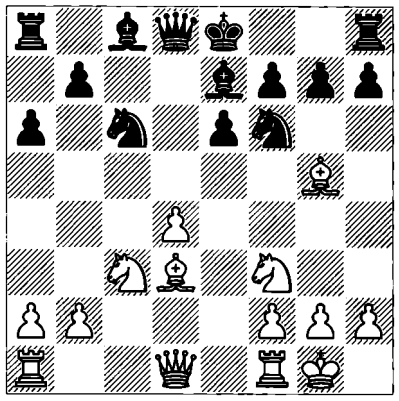


The text-move introduces a standard and highly instructive isolated queen's pawn position, in which White tends to keep the better chances.

10...0-0

10...♘b4 11 ♗b1 0-0 12 ♘e5 (12 a3 ♘bd5 13 ♘e5 ♗d7 14 ♖e1 ♖c8 15 ♕d3 ±) 12...♗d7 (N.Farrell-Shaw, Scottish Ch, Troon 1992) and now simply 13 a3 ♘bd5 (13...♘c6 14 ♕d3 g6 15 ♗h6 ♖e8 16 ♕g3 ± with very active pieces) 14 ♕d3 g6 15 ♗a2 is the stereotyped reorganization that gives White a small but dangerous advantage.

11 ♖c1 ♘b4

This is considered best. 11...♘d5 12 ♘xd5!? (12 ♗xe7! ♘cxe7 13 ♖e1 is another and probably better way to approach the position) and then:

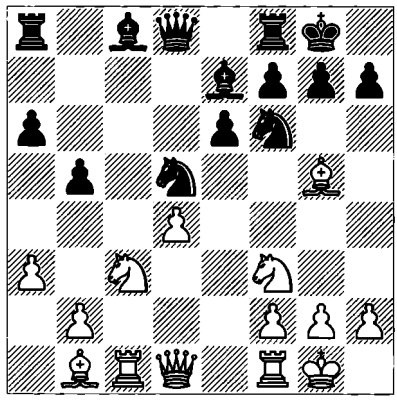
a) Black must avoid 12...♕xd5?? 13 ♖xc6! ♗xg5 14 ♖c5.

b) 12...exd5 13 ♗xe7 ♕xe7 14 ♖e1 ♗e6 15 ♗c2 ± (or 15 ♗f5!?); White doesn't have much.

c) 12...♗xg5 13 ♘xg5 (White can get a little something from 13 ♘e3 ♗f6 14 ♘g4 ♗e7 15 ♖e1 ±) 13...♕xg5 14 ♘b6 ♖b8 15 ♕c2 with a marginal advantage at best (♕c5 might follow), Riazantsev-Kariakin, Biel 2003.

12 ♗b1 b5 13 a3 ♘bd5 *(D)*

W



14 ♕d3

Quite a few games have taken the safe route 14 ♘xd5 ♘xd5 15 ♕d3 (15 ♗xe7 ♕xe7 16 ♗e4 ♗b7 17 ♘e5 ♘f6 = Grishchuk-Dreev, Moscow blitz 2007) 15...g6 16 ♗h6 ♖e8 17 ♘e5 ♗b7 (17...♗g5 18 ♗xg5 ♕xg5 19 ♕f3 and ♗e4 also leaves Black under some pressure) 18 ♕f3 ♗f6 19 ♗e4 ♕e7 20 ♗xd5! (after 20 ♖fe1 ♖ac8, in spite of his nice-looking pieces, White can't claim anything from such a position) 20...♗xd5 21 ♕f4 ♗h8 (21...♗g7 22 ♘g4) 22 ♘g4 f6 (22...e5!? stops ♖c7, when White still gets some chances from 23 dxe5 ♗xe5 24 ♕d2! ♖ad8 25 ♗g5 f6 26 ♖fe1! ♗e6 27 ♖xe5) 23 ♖c7 e5 24 ♕c1 ♕e6 25 h3 exd4?? (25...♖ec8 26 dxe5 ±) 26 ♗f8!! ♖ec8 27 ♕c5 1-0 Giri-Laznička, French Team Ch, Mulhouse 2010.

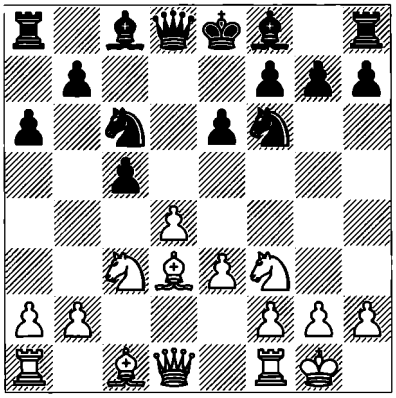
14...♘xc3

Now the game Lev – Har-Zvi, Israeli Team Ch 2002 continued 15 bxc3?! g6! 16 a4 ♗b7 with equal chances. Raetsky proposes 15 ♖xc3 instead, when after 15...g6, I think 16 ♘e5! ♗b7 17 ♕d2 yields the best chance for success, with an impending rook transfer to the kingside or simply probing of the dark squares. Then 17...♖c8 (17...♘e4? 18 ♗xe4 ♗xe4 19 ♗xe7 ♕xe7 20 ♕f4 ♗d5 21 ♖fc1 leads to a clear advantage for White) 18 ♖xc8 ♕xc8 19 ♗h6 ♖d8 20 ♖c1 ♕b8 21 ♕f4 ± is annoying, though hardly something that Black can't hang in there against.

4.3322)

7...♘c6 8 ♘c3 *(D)*

B



8...♕c7

Black doesn't commit to a central exchange. Instead, 8...cxd4 9 exd4 ♗e7 transposes to Section 4.3321.

8...♗e7 is considered dubious by Eingorn. Black has played both ...a6 and ...♗e7, which is a clue that 9 dxc5! will be good: 9...♗xc5 10 a3 (or 10 ♕e2 0-0 11 ♘e4 ♘xe4 12 ♗xe4 with a slight advantage for White) 10...0-0 11 b4 ♗d6 (11...♗e7 12 ♗b2 ♕c7 13 ♖c1 ♗d7 14 ♘e4 with a healthy advantage) 12 ♗b2 ("already 12 ♘e4 would have been good" – Eingorn) 12...♕e7 (12...♘e5 13 ♘xe5 ♗xe5 14 f4 ±) 13 ♘e4 ♘xe4 14 ♗xe4 e5 15 ♖c1 ♗d7 (Eingorn-Dokhoian, Kharkov 1985) and now Eingorn suggests 16 ♕d3 f5 17 ♗d5+ ♔h8 18 e4, with White standing better.

9 a3 b6 *(D)*

9...♗e7? is even worse now because of 10 dxc5 ♗xc5 11 b4! ♗e7 12 ♗b2 0-0 13 ♖c1 ± Polugaevsky-Barlov, Haninge 1988.

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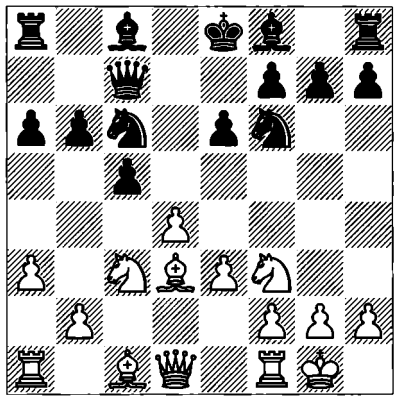

10 ♗d2

Or:

a) 10 ♘e4 is a good choice: 10...♘xe4 11 ♗xe4 ♗b7 12 dxc5 bxc5 (12...♗xc5 13 b4 ♗d6 14 ♗b2 ♖d8 15 ♕e2, threatening ♖ac1, is not what Black wanted when he played ...♕c7!) 13 ♗d2 ±; Black's isolated c-pawn is a target on a half-open file and White is better developed.

b) 10 dxc5 bxc5 11 ♘e4 was the same idea in Kasparov-Karnsky, New York rapid 1994. M.Gurevich's recommendation 11...♗b7 can be met by 12 ♘xf6+! gxf6 13 e4, with a pleasant advantage, while after 12 ♕c2, Black should play 12...♘xe4 13 ♗xe4 ♗d6 14 ♗d2, when White has only a minor edge. After Gurevich's 12...♘e5(?!), 13 ♘xe5 ♕xe5 14 ♘xf6+ gxf6 (14..♕xf6? 15 ♕a4+) 15 e4 leaves White in charge.

10...♗b7 11 ♖c1

11 ♘e4 should again produce a small advantage; e.g., 11...♘xe4 12 ♗xe4 ♗d6 13 ♖c1 0-0 14 b4 or 11...cxd4 12 ♘xf6+ gxf6 13 exd4 ±.

11...cxd4 12 exd4 ♗e7 13 ♘e4

13 d5!? exd5 (13...♘xd5? 14 ♘xd5 exd5 15 ♘d4 leaves Black with too much hanging) 14 ♖e1 0-0 15 ♗g5 ♕d6 16 ♗b1 offers White interesting play for a pawn. For example, 16...♖fe8 17 ♕d3 g6 18 ♗a2 ♖ad8 19 ♖cd1 d4 20 ♗xf6 ♗xf6 21 ♘e4 ♕f4 22 ♕b3 ♗e7 23 ♕xb6, but even this isn't clear.

13...♕d7 14 ♗g5

This is the game M.Gurevich-Speelman, French League 1994. Here, instead of 14...♘d5 (which I think is only nominally worse for Black), Gurevich analyses 14...♖d8 15 ♘xf6+ gxf6 16 ♗e3 ♖g8 17 ♗xh7 (17 g3!?) 17...♖g7 18 ♗e4 f5 19 d5! as 'unclear'. 10 ♘e4 or 11 ♘e4 seems the most straightforward way to achieve something in this variation.

4.3323)

7...♘bd7 *(D)*

Several theoreticians lean towards this as the best line. In some ways, that's a compliment to 7 ♗d3, as White should never stand worse and can achieve a modest advantage in a few different ways.

8 ♖e1

This move is most frequently played by exponents of 7 ♗d3. The idea is to follow up with e4 and e5. Since the knight is rather passively

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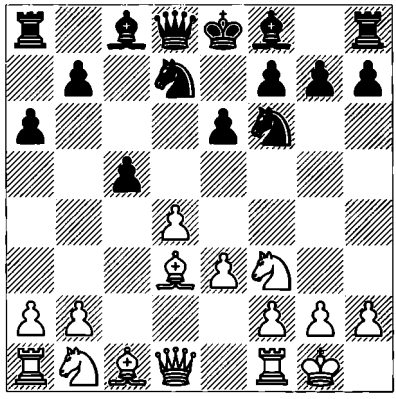


placed on d7, there are always safe moves; e.g., you can get interesting play from 8 a4, preventing ...b5 and avoiding the looseness which results from a e4-e5 plan. 8...b6 9 ♕e2 ♗b7 10 ♖d1 ♕c7 11 h3!? (worried about 11...♘g4, apparently, although that would lose time; e.g., 11 b3 ♘g4 12 h3 ♗xf3? 13 ♕xf3 ♕h2+ 14 ♔f1 wins material) 11...♗e7 12 ♘c3 0-0 13 ♗d2 ♗d6 (maybe h3 was handy, after all) 14 ♖ac1 e5!? and instead of the passive 15 ♗b1 (as played in the game Eingorn-Ehlvest, USSR Ch, Moscow 1988), White might try 15 dxc5 ♘xc5 (15...♗xc5 can be met by 16 e4 with the idea ♗c4, controlling d5, or even 16 b4 with an edge) 16 e4!?. White's idea is 16...♘xd3?! 17 ♕xd3 ♕e7 (the queen has a hard time avoiding attack, and 17...♕b8 18 ♘h4! leaves it far from defence of the kingside) 18 ♘h4 and White gets ♘f5 in, or enjoys 18...g6? 19 ♗g5. Instead, 16...♘b3 17 ♖c2 ♘xd2 18 ♘xd2 ♕e7 19 ♗c4 offers White only a slight advantage, but there are positive plans such as ♘f1-e3.

8...b5

Black's alternatives are playable, but not terribly impressive:

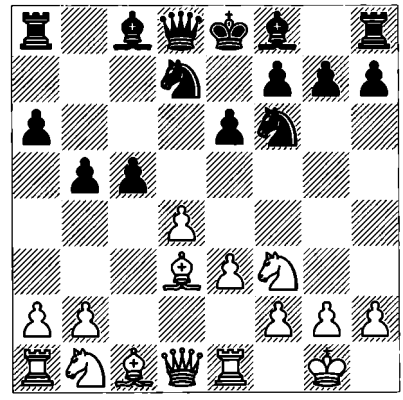
a) 8...♕c7 9 e4 (9 b3!?) 9...cxd4 10 e5 ♘d5 (10...♘g4?! 11 ♗f4) 11 ♗e4 ♘e7?! (11...♗c5 12 ♘bd2 0-0 13 ♘b3 ±; 11...♘c5?! 12 ♗xd5! exd5 13 ♘xd4 with a significant positional advantage; best is 11...♘7b6 12 ♕xd4 ♗c5 13 ♕d3 ±) 12 ♘xd4!? (12 ♕xd4!) 12...♘g6 13 f4 ♘c5 (Piket-Van der Sterren, Dutch Ch, Rotterdam 1998) 14 ♘c3 ♗e7 15 ♗e3 0-0 16 ♖c1 with more space and freer development.

b) 8...b6 is solid but a bit restricted. White gets an edge from 9 e4 cxd4 10 e5 ♘d5 11 ♘xd4 ♘c5! (not 11...♗b7? 12 ♘xe6! fxe6 13 ♕h5+) 12 ♗f1 ♗b7 13 ♘d2 ♗e7 14 ♕g4!? (14 ♘4b3 ± has the idea ♘xc5 followed by ♘e4 or ♘c4, and leaves White with a small structural advantage after 14...♘xb3 15 ♕xb3 0-0 16 ♘e4) 14...0-0 (14...g6 15 ♘2f3 lightly favours White, and more so after 15...♘b4?! 16 ♗h6, as in Filippov-Donchenko, Russia Cup, Smolensk 1997) 15 ♘2f3 ♔h8 and now 16 ♘g5?! gave away any advantage in Kramnik-Kasparov, Linares 2003. 16 a3! a5 17 ♗d2 affords some play, with the idea of b4 or, after 17...a4, 18 ♖ed1 followed by ♖ac1 and possibly ♗g5 or ♗b5, depending upon how Black plays it.

c) 8...♗e7 9 e4 cxd4 10 e5 ♘d5 11 ♗c4 (11 ♘xd4 is normal) 11...♘c5 12 ♘xd4 0-0 13 b3 (13 ♗xd5!? with the idea 13...♕xd5 14 ♘f5! ±) 13...♕d7 14 ♗xd5! ♕xd5 15 ♘c3 ♕d8 16 ♗e3 (here 16 ♖e3!, thinking about ♕g4 and ♗a3, and 16 ♗f4 are minor improvements) 16...♕a5!? (16...♕c7 17 ♖c1 ♕xe5 18 b4 ♘d7 19 ♘c6 bxc6 20 ♗c5 ♕xe1+ 21 ♕xe1 ♘xc5 22 bxc5 ♗xc5 is obscure) was played in Gelfand-Lautier, Belgrade 1995. Then Gelfand recommends 17 b4!? (17 ♕d2 ±) 17...♕xb4 18 ♘f5 ♗d8! 19 ♖b1!, claiming an edge for White. 19...♕xc3 20 ♖c1 ♕xe1+ 21 ♕xe1 ♘d3 22 ♕d1 ♘xc1 23 ♘h6+ gxh6 24 ♗xh6 ♘e2+! 25 ♕xe2 f5 26 ♗xf8 ♔xf8 27 ♕h5 is wild stuff, but I can't see this as being more than equal for White.

We return to 8...b5 *(D)*:

W



At this point there's a big decision and a final split:

4.33231: 9 e4 84
4.33232: 9 a4 85

4.33231)

9 e4 cxd4 10 e5 ♘d5 11 a4

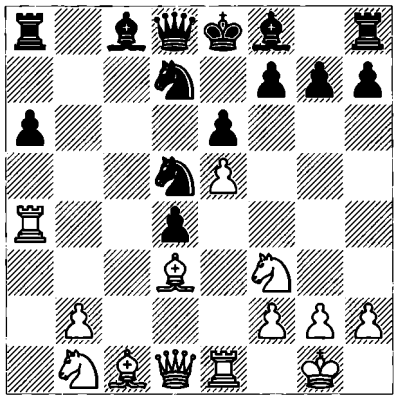
Apart from trying to open the a-file, White wants to win the c4-square for a knight in the case of ...bxa4 or ...b4.

11...bxa4

This looks anti-positional, but isolated a-pawns don't mean much in the middlegame and White's b-pawn becomes vulnerable. Black's goal is to give himself space and not lose time. 11...b4 transposes to the note to White's 10th move in Section 4.33232 (i.e. 9 a4 b4 10 e4 cxd4 11 e5 ♘d5).

12 ♖xa4 *(D)*

B



12...♗b4!?

A good move in that it develops with tempo and swaps off an attacking piece, but of course it also weakens Black's dark squares. 12...♗c5 is an obvious alternative because it makes it difficult for White to recover the d-pawn: 13 ♘bd2 ♘5b6 14 ♖a1 ♗b7 15 ♘e4 0-0 16 ♘fg5! (this attack is more interesting than 16 ♘xc5, even with the small trick 16...♗xf3 17 ♗xh7+! ♔xh7 18 ♕d3+ ♔g8 19 ♘xd7 ♕xd7 20 ♕xf3 ±) 16...h6 (16...g6 17 ♕g4! h5) 17 ♘h7 ♗xe4 (17...♖e8 18 ♘hf6+! ♘xf6 19 ♘xc5) 18 ♗xe4 ♖e8 19 ♗xh6! gxh6 20 ♕g4+ ♔h8 21 ♕h5 ♔g7 22 ♖ed1!!, preparing ♖d3; this pretty move simply wins.

13 ♗d2 ♗xd2

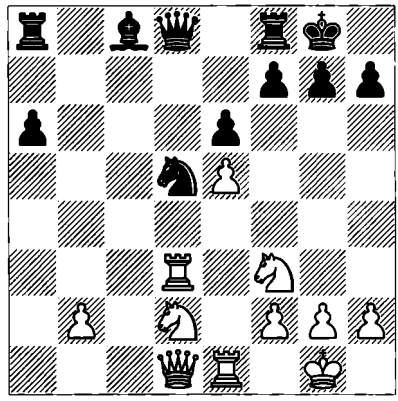
Rizzitano analyses 13...♗c5 14 b4 (14 ♗a5!) 14...♗b6? (Black should continue 14...♗e7 15 ♘xd4 ♕c7, though 16 ♘b5 ♕b8 17 ♘d6+! ♗xd6 18 exd6 ♕xd6 19 ♕g4 is dangerous) 15 ♘a3 ♗b7 16 ♘c4 ♗c7 17 ♘xd4 ♘5b6 18 ♕g4! ♘xa4 19 ♕xg7 ♖f8 20 ♗g5 with a winning attack.

14 ♘bxd2 ♘c5 15 ♖xd4

15 ♗b5+ ♗d7 16 ♗xd7+ ♘xd7 (16...♕xd7 17 ♖xd4 ♕b5 18 ♕b1! 0-0 19 b4 ♘a4 20 ♖h4 gives White a slight advantage) 17 ♖xd4 0-0 18 ♘c4 ♖b8 (Gelfand-Rublevsky, Polanica Zdroj 1997) and there isn't much happening, but after 19 ♕e2, White is the one who wants to play on.

15...♘xd3 16 ♖xd3 0-0 *(D)*

W



17 ♘c4

17 ♘e4(!) is seldom played, but may be better and should be taken seriously. White got the advantage in Lomineishvili-Shumiakina, St Petersburg 2009 after 17...a5 (17...♖b8 is met by 18 ♕d2 or 18 b3 ♗b7 19 ♘fd2!? ± with ideas of ♘c4 and/or swinging the queen and rook to the kingside) 18 ♘d4 ♘f4 (18...♗d7 19 ♖g3 ♖b8 20 ♕d2 ♔h8 21 ♘d6 ±) 19 ♖d2 (or 19 ♖g3!) 19...♕b6 20 ♕f3 ♘g6 21 ♘d6 ♖a7 and here 22 ♕g3! gives every indication of being better for White.

17...a5

With the idea ...♗a6. White's space advantage is apparent in the continuation 17...♖b8 18 ♕d2 ♕e7 (Shariyazdanov and Lysenko's suggestion 18...f6 can be effectively answered by 19 ♘d4! fxe5 20 ♘xe5) 19 ♘d6 ♗b7 20 ♘d4 ♗a8 21 ♖g3 with a serious initiative, Shariyazdanov-Feletar, Pula 2000.

18 ♖a3 ♗a6

Now:

a) 19 ♘xa5 seems to yield a slight advantage following 19...♘b4 20 ♕a4! ♘d3 (20...♕e7!?) 21 ♖ea1 ♕b6 22 ♕d4 ♕xd4 23 ♘xd4 ♘xe5 24

b4 ♗c8 25 ♔f1! with the better ending for White (Rizzitano); the b-pawn is a bother.

b) 19 ♘d6 and then:

b1) After 19...f6!?, 20 ♕d4 ♖b8 21 b3 is assessed by Avrukh as slightly better for White, but is actually equal after Rizzitano's 21...♘b4. But White might try 20 ♘e4 ± instead; e.g., 20...♗b7 (20...fxe5 21 ♘xe5 ±; 20...♘b4 21 exf6 ♕xd1 22 ♖xd1 gxf6 23 ♘c5 ±) 21 ♘c5 ♕e7 22 ♘xb7 ♕xb7 23 exf6 ♖xf6 24 ♖b3 ♕c7 25 ♘g5 ♕f4 26 ♘e4 with a slight but definite positional edge.

b2) 19...♖b8 20 ♕d2 ♖b4 21 ♘g5!? and here:

b21) 21...h6?! 22 ♘ge4 ♕b6 23 ♖g3 and now 23...♔h8?? 24 ♘f6! was winning for White in Avrukh-Rublevsky, European Clubs Cup, Rethymnon 2003. One pretty line is 24...♖xb2 25 ♕xh6+! gxh6 26 ♘xf7+! ♖xf7 27 ♖g8#. Black should play 23...♕d4! 24 ♕xd4 ♖xd4, when, for example, 25 ♖a3 ♖b8 26 ♖xa5 ♗d3 leaves White a pawn up after 27 ♘c5 ♖xb2 28 ♖a8+ ♔h7 29 ♖f8, although this can result in endings that are very hard to win.

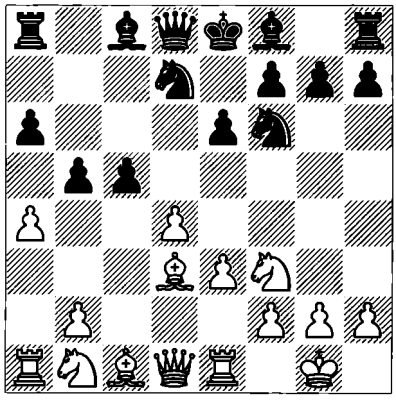
b22) 21...♕b6 22 ♕c2 g6 23 b3 f6! 24 exf6 ♕xd6 25 ♖xe6 ♕f4 26 f7+! ♔g7 27 ♖xg6+! hxg6 28 ♘e6+ ♔xf7 29 ♘xf4 ♘xf4 30 h3 ± Avrukh; Black has good activity, so this may not amount to much.

4.33232)

9 a4 *(D)*

This gets an '!' from Raetsky. Although I like 9 e4, this is less forcing and affords White more choices.

B



9...b4

9...bxa4 would transpose to Section 4.33231 after 10 e4 cxd4 11 e5 ♘d5. However, now that ...bxa4 is in, White can deviate by 10 ♘bd2 (with the idea ♘c4; 10 ♕xa4 ♗b7 11 ♘e5 is also interesting, with the points 11...♗e7 12 ♘c6, 11...♕c7 12 ♗d2! and 11...♗d6 12 ♘d2) 10...cxd4 11 exd4 ♗b7 12 ♕xa4 ♗d6 13 ♘c4 ♗b8 14 ♘fe5 0-0 15 ♘a5!.

10 ♘bd2

This is easier to play than 10 e4 cxd4 11 e5 ♘d5; nevertheless, 12 ♘bd2! ♗b7 13 ♘xd4 ♘c5 14 ♘e4! preserves some advantage; e.g., 14...♘xd3 15 ♕xd3 ♘b6 16 ♗g5 ♕d7 17 ♘d6+ (or 17 a5!, intending 17...♘d5?! 18 ♕g3!) 17...♗xd6 18 exd6 0-0 (18...♕xd6?! 19 ♘xe6 ♕xd3 20 ♘c5+ ±) 19 ♕g3! ♔h8 20 ♘b3 ♘xa4 (20...♖fc8 21 ♘a5) 21 ♗e7 ♖fc8 22 ♖e5!, having both an attack and the move ♖a5 in mind.

10...♗b7

10...♗e7 11 ♘c4 0-0 12 e4! (only now, when developed) 12...cxd4 13 e5 ♘d5 14 ♘xd4 ♗b7 15 ♕g4 and now instead of 15...♖e8?! 16 ♗h6 ♗f8 17 ♖ad1 ± Shariyazdanov-Giertz, Biel 1999, 15...g6 or 15...♘c5 would lose the exchange after 16 ♗h6, for which Black gets some, but not full, compensation.

11 ♘c4 ♗e7 12 e4 cxd4

12...0-0 13 e5 ♘d5 14 ♗c2 (14 ♕e2!? cxd4 15 ♕e4 g6 16 ♕xd4 may be objectively best) 14...♖c8?! (premature; 14...♕c7 15 ♗g5 also gives White a pleasant attacking set-up according to Raetsky, but 14...cxd4 15 ♕xd4!? ♖c8 16 ♕g4 g6 17 ♗h6 ♖e8 18 a5 produces chances for both sides) 15 ♕d3 g6 16 ♗h6 ♖e8 17 a5!? ♕c7 (Sashikiran-Markowski, Moscow 2004) and here 18 ♗a4! ± would avoid a tactical melee.

13 e5 ♘d5 14 ♗g5! 0-0 15 ♘d6! ♗xg5

15...♘c5 16 ♗xe7 ♕xe7 17 ♗xh7+! ♔xh7 18 ♕c2+ ♔g8 19 ♕xc5 ±.

16 ♘xb7

White stands better. Shariyazdanov-Rustemov, Nizhny Novgorod 1998 went 16...♕e7 17 ♗e4! ♗h6 18 ♗xd5! (18 ♕xd4 ♘xe5 19 ♗xd5 exd5 20 ♖xe5 ♕xb7 21 ♖xd5 ±) 18...exd5 19 ♘a5! "and White has maintained his advantage thanks to Black's weak d-pawns and the awkwardly placed bishop on h6" (Scherbakov, whose analysis proved invaluable in this section).

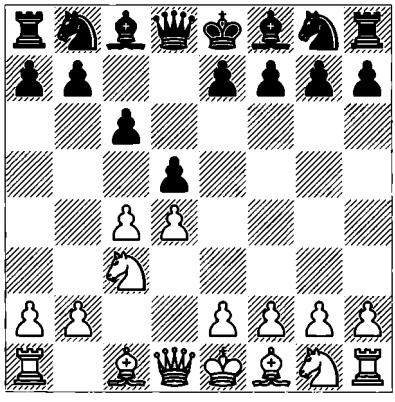
5 Slav Defence

1 d4 d5 2 c4 c6

This is the Slav Defence, one of the most effective d-pawn defences. Black stakes out a direct claim to the centre and secures it in a way that only minimally restricts his development. That is, he leaves a diagonal open for his light-squared bishop, a piece which is the bane of his existence in the Queen's Gambit Declined lines. The price for this is to deny the theoretically ideal square c6 to his knight, but in most lines d7 is not a bad substitute. Perhaps the main drawback of 2...c6 is that in a 1 d4 d5 opening, the ...c5 break is one of Black's best weapons, and here it takes two moves to achieve.

3 ♘c3 *(D)*

B



I'm going to recommend this move in order to reach the desired main lines without running into some very difficult and highly theoretical lines which can stem from 3 ♘f3 (White's most popular move). The goal is to reduce Black's options in the Slav and to meet the Semi-Slav (where Black plays ...e6 on move 3 or 4) with an 'Anti-Meran' system. That is, we are aiming for the position that can arise from either 3 ♘c3 ♘f6 4 e3 e6 5 ♘f3 or 3 ♘c3 e6 4 e3 ♘f6 5 ♘f3. That position won't actually be dealt with until the next chapter, so this chapter will be exploring the many alternatives that Black has to going into the Semi-Slav. For the most part, my designation of this chapter as the 'Slav Defence' indicates that Black doesn't play ...e6 before bringing his queen's bishop out or playing ...dxc4.

Here are the major sections of this chapter:

5.1: 3...dxc4 87
5.2: 3...e5 90
5.3: 3...♘f6 91

Again, 3...e6 enters into the realm of the Semi-Slav and will be treated in the following chapter. As with every opening, Black has other available moves, but most of them don't make much sense. For one thing, White is getting ready to play e4, either immediately or after 4 ♘f3. The most sensible irregular alternative is 3...a6, which fits in well if White plays the Exchange Variation with 4 cxd5 and can easily transpose into the Chebanenko Slav (see Section 5.34 below). Many players answer 3...a6 with 4 ♘f3 or 4 e3, trying to transpose into familiar lines, and in our case the latter would be a sound and conservative way to enter into the basic structure with which we'll be operating. Still, the reason that 3...a6 isn't more popular must be the forthright 4 e4, when after 4...dxe4 5 ♘xe4, strong players have actually used two moves to justify their third-move extravagance:

a) 5...♗f5 6 ♘g3 ♗g6 7 ♘f3 ♘d7 occurred in Hernando Rodrigo-Roos, French Team Ch 2002/3 and several other contests. It seems to me that the normal Caro-Kann sequence 8 h4 h6 9 h5 ♗h7 10 ♗d3 ♗xd3 11 ♕xd3 favours White, because although ...a6 isn't useless here, I think c4 is more valuable.

b) 5...e5?! 6 dxe5 ♕a5+ (6...♕xd1+ 7 ♔xd1 ♗f5 8 ♗d3 gives Black no compensation) offers White a pleasant choice between 7 ♗d2 ♕xe5 8 ♗d3 f5 9 ♘f3! (9 ♗c3?! ♕e6 10 ♕h5+ g6 11 ♕e2 fxe4 12 ♕xe4 ♘f6 was about equal in Ward-Velička, Maidstone 1994) 9...♕e7 10 0-0 fxe4 11 ♗xe4, a piece sacrifice for a massive attack, or 7 ♘c3 ♕xe5+ 8 ♗e2, establishing a comfortable advantage; e.g., 8...♘f6 (8...♗g4 9

♗e3!) 9 ♘f3 ♕d6 10 ♕c2 ♗e7 11 0-0 0-0 12 ♖d1 ♕c7 13 g3 with the idea ♗f4.

5.1)

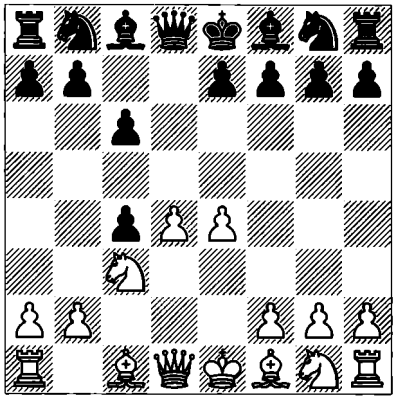
3...dxc4

This seeks to highlight a drawback to 3 ♘c3: Black can grab a pawn, and White has to reorganize at the cost of time to recover it.

4 e4 *(D)*

Seizing the centre is thematic, although some leading players have had considerable success of late with 4 e3 b5 5 a4 b4 6 ♘e4 ♕d5 7 ♘g3, and upon 7...♘f6, 8 ♗e2!. This is worth investigating if you're not satisfied with what follows.

B



4...b5

4...e5 is a reasonable counter in the centre but Black will end up slightly worse in a position where he isn't doing much: 5 ♘f3 exd4 6 ♕xd4 (or 6 ♘xd4 b5 7 ♗e2 ±) with the idea 6...♕xd4 7 ♘xd4. Then:

a) 7...b5 8 a4 (8 ♗f4!? ±) 8...b4 9 ♘d1 ♗a6 10 f3! ♗c5 (10...♘f6 11 ♗e3 ♘fd7 12 ♖c1 ±) 11 ♗e3 ♘e7 12 ♘xc6! ♗xe3 13 ♘xe7 ♗b6 14 ♘d5 with the idea ♘1e3 and ♗xc4.

b) 7...♘f6 8 f3 (the book move, but 8 ♗xc4! with the idea 8...b5 9 ♗e2! may be better; e.g., 9...b4 10 e5! ♘g4 11 ♘e4 ♘xe5 12 ♗f4 f6 13 ♗h5+ ♔d8 14 0-0 ♔c7 15 ♖ac1 ♔b7 16 ♖fd1 and Black is suffering in lines such as 16...a5 17 ♘b5! with the idea 17...cxb5 18 ♗xe5 fxe5 19 ♗f3 ±) 8...♗c5 (8...b5 9 a4 b4 10 ♘d1 ♗a6 is only slightly better for White; e.g., 11 ♗e3 ♘fd7! 12 ♖c1 c5! 13 ♘b5 ♗xb5 14 axb5 ♘b6) 9 ♗e3 ♘bd7 10 ♗xc4 0-0 11 ♔f2 ♘b6 12 ♗b3 ± *ECO*.

5 a4

I think that the obscure 5 e5 is very interesting and much better than most gambits of this type. Without going into the many issues and variations, you will note that one obvious challenge is 5...♗f5, developing the bishop before playing ...e6, to which White should reply 6 a4 (6 g4!? ♗g6 7 ♗g2 is also possible) 6...b4 7 ♘ce2 ♗d3 (7...e6 8 ♘g3 ± and the c4-pawn falls; 7...♕a5 8 ♘g3 ♗e6 9 ♘f3 ♗d5 10 ♗e2 e6 11 ♘d2!? c3 12 ♘c4 ♗xc4 13 ♗xc4 ♘e7 14 bxc3 bxc3 15 ♘e4 ♘d5 16 0-0 ±; 7...♘d7 8 ♘g3 ♗e6 9 ♘f3 ♗d5 10 ♘d2 c3 11 bxc3 bxc3 12 ♘de4 ±) 8 e6! (8 ♘h3 e6 9 ♘hf4 ♗e4 10 ♘g3 ♗d5 11 ♗e2 is worth a pawn but unclear) 8...fxe6 9 ♘f4 ♗xf1 (9...♕xd4 10 ♘xd3 cxd3 11 ♗xd3 ♕d5 12 ♘f3 is also very good for White) 10 ♔xf1; e.g., 10...♕d6 11 ♘f3 intending ♕e2 and White has the better of the situation.

5...b4

Again Black can try 5...e5, but for one thing, I think White can play the nice piece sacrifice 6 axb5! (6 ♘f3 exd4 7 ♕xd4 ♕xd4 8 ♘xd4 transposes to note 'a' to Black's 4th move above) 6...exd4 (6...cxb5? 7 ♘xb5 ±; 6...♕xd4 7 ♘f3! ♕xd1+ 8 ♔xd1 f6 9 ♗xc4 ±) 7 ♗xc4! with the idea 7...dxc3 8 ♗xf7+ ♔e7 9 ♕b3 ♕d3! (9...♘f6 10 e5 ±) 10 bxc3! ♕xe4+ 11 ♘e2 ♘f6 12 ♖a4! ♕e5 13 ♗f4 ♕xb5 14 ♖b4 ±.

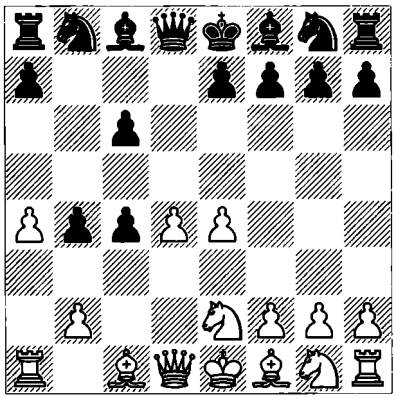
6 ♘ce2 *(D)*

This is the most ambitious move, because White delays getting his pawn back to put his pieces on active squares. In particular, this knight will usually go to g3 to protect the e-pawn, although occasionally it goes to f4 or d4, or even returns to c3! For those who find this move unsatisfactory, you can get your pawn back straightaway with 6 ♘a2 ♘f6 7 e5 ♘d5 8 ♗xc4, when Black is able to equalize with the plan ...a5 and ...♗a6, but there's an interesting game ahead.

6...e6

a) Sometimes 6...♘f6 is played first. There can follow 7 ♘g3 ♗a6 (7...e5!? 8 ♗xc4! ♕xd4 9 ♕b3 ♕d7 10 ♗e3! is quite strong), and apart from 8 ♘f3 e6, transposing into our main line, White can play the dramatic attack 8 e5 ♘d5 9 e6!?. Whether or not that works, Black has no reason to give White the extra option.

B



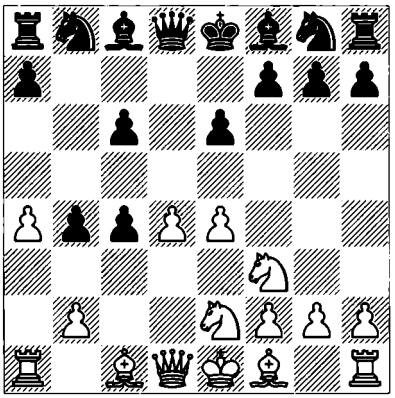
b) 6...e5 7 ♘f3 ♘f6!? 8 ♘g3 (8 ♘xe5 ♘xe4 9 ♘f4 ♘d6 10 ♘xc4 is also good) 8...exd4 9 ♗xc4 and White will win the d-pawn back with advantage, even in the case of 9...♗c5 10 e5 ♘d5 11 ♘e4.

c) 6...♗a6 7 ♘f3 and now 7...e6 transposes to note 'b' to Black's 7th move below, while 7...♘f6 8 ♘g3 e6 brings us back to the main line.

d) 6...a5 7 ♘f3 ♘f6 8 ♘g3 ♗a6 9 ♘e5 ♘bd7 10 ♗xc4!? (or 10 ♘xc4 with a slight advantage for White) 10...♘xe5 11 ♗xa6 ♖xa6 12 ♕e2! ♕c8 (12...♘f3+ 13 ♕xf3 ♕xd4 14 0-0 with ideas of ♖d1 and ♗f4) 13 dxe5 ♘d7 14 e6 (14 0-0 ♘xe5 15 ♗f4 gives White a solid advantage) 14...fxe6 15 e5 g6 16 h4! (preventing ...g5) 16...♗g7 17 f4 h5?! (17...c5) 18 ♕d3 ♔f7 19 ♘e4 ♗h6 20 ♗e3 ♖d8 21 ♖d1 ± Sulskis-Simonet Pons, Khanty-Mansiisk Olympiad 2010.

7 ♘f3 *(D)*

B



7...♘f6

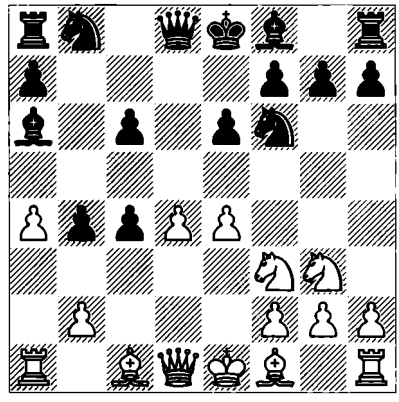
This looks natural, although Black can also delay the development of this piece:

a) 7...c5 8 ♘g3 cxd4 9 ♗xc4 ♗a6 10 ♕d3!? (10 ♗b5+! ♗xb5 11 axb5 ♗c5 12 0-0 ±, with the idea 12...♘e7 13 ♘h5! 0-0? 14 ♗h6! gxh6 15 ♕c1 +–) 10...♕c8 (after 10...♗xc4! 11 ♕xc4 ♘d7, Black's position is only marginally worse) 11 ♗b5+ ♗xb5 12 ♕xb5+ ♘d7 13 ♘xd4 ± Nikolić-Van Wely, Dutch Ch, Rotterdam 1999.

b) 7...♗a6 8 ♘g3 c5 (after 8...♘d7 9 ♗e2 ♘gf6 10 0-0 ♗e7 11 ♕c2 c5, as in Ward-N.Berry, British League (4NCL) 2002/3, I think 12 d5 exd5 13 e5 is good, intending 13...♘g8 14 ♘f5 g6 15 ♘e3!; Black is three pawns up, but after either the c- or d-pawn falls, his position will be a mess) 9 d5!? (but this seems a little crazy! On the other hand, the World Champion is playing White) 9...♗e7?! (9...exd5 10 exd5 ♘f6 11 ♗g5! ♕xd5 12 ♕xd5 ♘xd5 13 0-0-0 h6! is murky; maybe 14 ♖e1+ ♗e7 15 ♗xe7 ♘xe7 16 ♘f5 ♘bc6 17 ♖e4! follows) 10 ♗f4 exd5 11 ♕xd5 (11 exd5 ±) 11...♕xd5 12 exd5 ♘h6 13 0-0-0 0-0 14 ♗xh6 gxh6 15 ♘f5 ♗f6 16 ♘xh6+ ♔g7 17 ♘f5+ ♔g6 18 g4 with a nice advantage for White, Anand-Vallejo Pons, São Paulo/Bilbao 2011.

8 ♘g3 ♗a6 *(D)*

W



9 ♗g5

This is the most popular move. White wants to get his pawn back by ♖c1, but at the same time to exert pressure on the dark squares, e.g. by e5 or ♘h5. Still, other moves may be as good:

a) 9 ♕c2 has been played a fair amount; e.g.:

a1) 9...b3!? 10 ♕c3 ♗d6 11 ♗xc4 ♗xg3 12 hxg3 ♘xe4 13 ♕xb3 ♕a5+ 14 ♗d2 ♗xc4 15

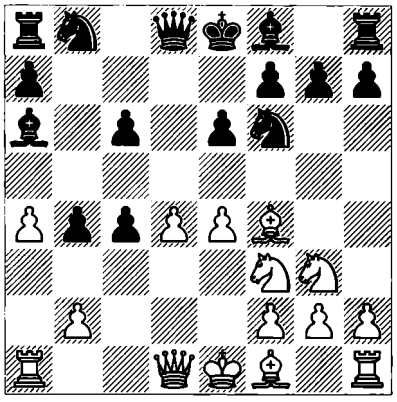
♕xc4 gave White a very slight edge in Zude-S.Haslinger, Palma de Mallorca 2009.

a2) 9...♕a5 10 ♗d2 c3 11 bxc3 ♗xf1 12 ♘xf1 bxc3 13 ♗xc3 ♕a6 and now 14 ♘g3 ½-½ was the finish of Khalifman-Riazantsev, Russian Team Ch, Sochi 2004, but 14 ♘e3 followed by ♘d2-c4 was a thought.

a3) 9...♘bd7 10 ♗xc4 ♗xc4 11 ♕xc4 c5 12 0-0 ♗e7 13 d5! exd5 14 exd5 ♘b6 15 ♕b5+ ♕d7 and now 16 ♘f5 was advantageous in I.Farago-Dorić, Paracin 2011, but 16 d6! would be more so.

b) I like the move 9 ♗f4 *(D)*, which develops, prepares ♖c1, and stays away from simplifications:

B



For example, 9...c3 (9...c5 10 ♖c1 c3 11 ♗xa6 ♘xa6 12 bxc3 bxc3 13 0-0 cxd4 14 ♘xd4 ♖c8 15 ♘b5 ±; 9...♕a5 10 ♗e2 b3+ 11 ♘d2 ±) 10 bxc3 ♗xf1 11 ♔xf1 bxc3 12 ♕b3 a5! 13 ♕xc3 ♗b4 14 ♕c2 0-0 15 h4 ♕b6 16 ♖d1 h6 17 ♖h3 ♘bd7 18 ♔g1 (18 e5 ♘d5 19 ♘h5! ♘xf4 20 ♘xf4 ±) 18...♖fd8 19 e5 ♘d5 20 ♘h5 ♗f8 21 ♖g3 ♔h8 22 ♕c1 ♕b4 23 ♘xg7! ♗xg7 24 ♗xh6 ♖g8 25 ♗d2! ♕e7 26 ♖e1 ♖ab8 27 ♘g5 ♗h6 28 ♕d1 f6 29 exf6 ♘7xf6 30 ♖xe6 ♕d7 31 ♖d6! with three pawns for the piece and an ongoing attack.

9...♕a5 *(D)*

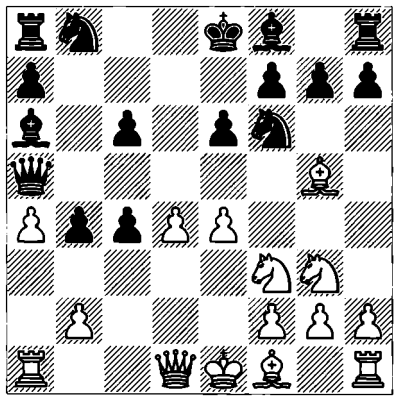
9...♗e7 10 e5 (10 ♗xf6 ♗xf6 11 ♖c1 ±) 10...♘d5 11 ♗xe7 ♕xe7 12 ♘e4 0-0 13 ♘c5! ± (Ward).

10 ♗e2

10 ♖c1 is probably objectively better:

a) 10...c3 (Fridman-Milman, Minneapolis 2005) can be answered by 11 ♗xa6! ♕xa6 (11...cxb2? 12 ♗b7; 11...♘xa6 12 0-0 ±) 12 bxc3 bxc3 13 ♗xf6 gxf6 14 ♘e2 ±; for example, 14...♗a3 15 ♖c2 ♕xa4 16 0-0 ♗b2 17 ♕b1 ♕b5 (17...♕b4 18 ♘e1) 18 d5! (18 ♘xc3 ♗xc3 19 ♖xc3 ♕xb1 20 ♖xb1 ±) 18...exd5 (18...cxd5?? 19 ♘xc3 ♕a5 20 ♘xd5 exd5 21 ♖c8+) 19 ♘fd4 (19 exd5 is another possibility) 19...♕a5 (19...♕b4 20 exd5 ±) 20 ♕e1! ♕c5 21 ♘f5 dxe4 22 ♘eg3 ± and not only is the f5-square monstrous, but capture on e4 looms.

W



b) 10...b3+ wins the a-pawn yet it doesn't appear to equalize: 11 ♗d2 ♕xa4 12 ♖a1! ♕b5 13 ♘e5 ♕b6 14 ♗c3 ♗b4 15 ♗xc4 with a modest but workable advantage.

10...♘bd7

a) 10...b3+ 11 ♗d2 ♗b4 12 0-0 0-0 13 ♖c1 ♕xa4 14 ♗xc4 ± (Ward).

b) 10...c3 11 bxc3 ♗xe2 12 ♕xe2 bxc3 13 0-0 ♘bd7 (Moiseenko-Van Haastert, European Clubs Cup, Plovdiv 2010) and now White has 14 ♖fb1! ♗e7 15 ♗xf6 ♗xf6 16 ♕c4.

11 0-0 h6

11...c3 12 ♗xa6!? cxb2 13 ♗b7 bxa1♕ 14 ♕xa1 ♖d8 15 ♗xc6 h6 16 ♗xf6 gxf6 17 d5 (Ward, citing Gelfand) 17...♗e7 is strongly met by 18 e5!? ♔f8 19 ♗xd7 ♖xd7 20 dxe6 fxe6 21 exf6.

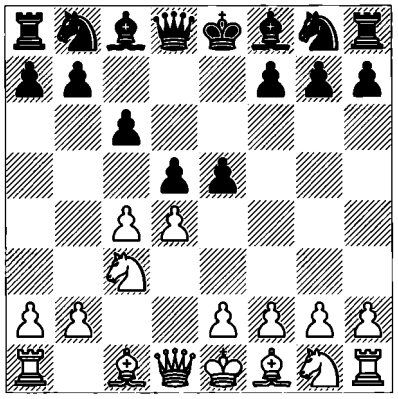
12 ♗xf6 gxf6

At this point, a couple of games continued 13 ♕c1 ♘b6 14 ♘d2 0-0-0 15 ♗xc4 ♘xc4 16 ♘xc4 ♕c7 with obscure play. As we have improvements in this variation for White above, I'll just mention that another way to play this is 13 ♘d2 ♘b6 14 ♖c1!? ♕xa4 15 ♕e1; e.g., 15...b3 16 ♖a1 ♕b5 17 ♕c1 0-0-0 18 ♘xb3 ♗b7 19 ♘a5. But you will probably do better by choosing one of the alternatives on move 9 or 10.

5.2)

3...e5 *(D)*

W



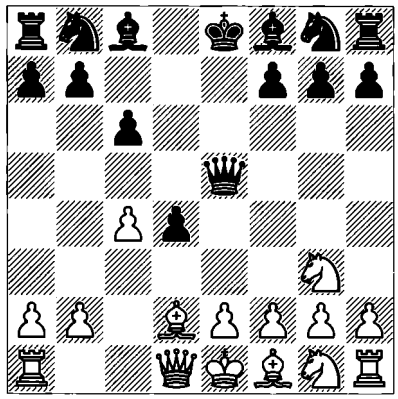
This central advance is known as the Winawer Countergambit. It turns out that Black doesn't give up the pawn for very long, but he can burn up valuable time recovering it.

4 dxe5

A very safe way to play is 4 e3 e4 (4...exd4 5 ♕xd4 ♘f6 6 ♘f3 is a reversed Alapin Sicilian) with a reversed Advance French; e.g., 5 ♗d2 ♘f6 6 ♘h3!? or 5 ♘ge2. If you don't like the main line, 4 cxd5 cxd5 5 dxe5 d4 6 ♘e4 ♕a5+ 7 ♘d2 will also give White a small but sure advantage.

4...d4 5 ♘e4 ♕a5+ 6 ♗d2 ♕xe5 7 ♘g3 *(D)*

B



White is about to gain another free tempo on the queen with ♘f3. Black is counting upon his cramping d4-pawn and the fact that White has little pawn-presence in the centre.

7...♘f6

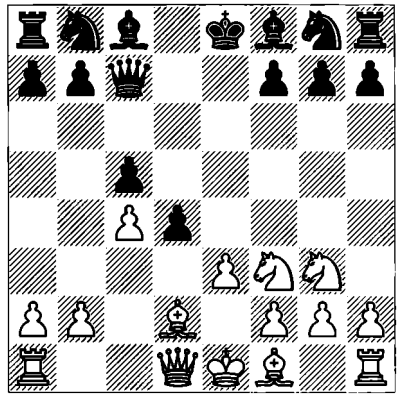
Or:

a) 7...♗c5 8 b4 ♗e7 9 ♘f3 ♕d6 10 c5 ♕d8 11 ♗f4 ± Mozetić-Pajković, Yugoslav Team Ch, Igalo 1994.

b) 7...♗e6 8 ♘f3 ♕c5 9 a3 (after 9 b4 ♕xc4 10 e3 d3, as in Hübner-Hertneck, Bundesliga 1993/4, among other moves, 11 ♖c1! ♕xa2 12 ♗xd3 gives White more than enough compensation for a pawn) 9...♘f6 (9...♗xc4 10 ♖c1 ♕d5 11 ♘xd4!; 9...♕xc4 10 e3 ♕d5 11 ♘xd4 ±) 10 e3 dxe3 11 ♗xe3 ♕d6 12 ♕e2 (12 ♗e2 ♕xd1+ 13 ♖xd1 ±; 12 ♘g5) 12...♘bd7 13 ♖d1 ♕c7 14 ♕d2 0-0-0 15 ♗f4 ♕b6 16 b4 ±.

c) 7...c5 (yet another pawn move) 8 ♘f3 ♕c7 9 e3 *(D)* favours White's development; e.g.:

B



c1) 9...♘c6 10 exd4 cxd4 11 ♗d3 ♗d6 (11...g6 12 0-0 ♗g7 13 ♕c1! ♗g4 14 ♗f4 ♕d7 15 ♖e1+ ♘ge7 16 ♘e5 ± Anton-Grodzensky, corr. 1998) 12 0-0 ♘ge7 13 ♕c2 (13 c5! is stronger, with the idea 13...♗f4 14 ♗xf4 ♕xf4 15 ♘e2 or 13...♗xc5 14 ♖c1 ♗b6?! 15 b4 a6 16 a4 +–) 13...♗g4 14 ♘g5 h6 15 ♘5e4 ± ♗b4? 16 h3 ♗d7 17 c5! ± Agrest-Hector, Malmö 1993.

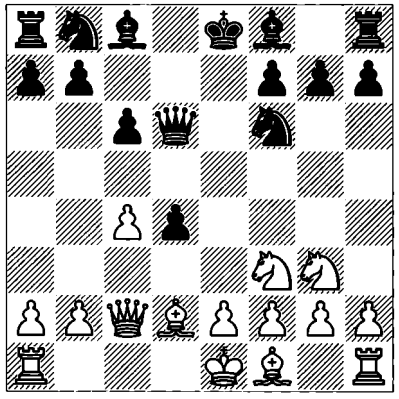
c2) 9...dxe3 10 ♗xe3 (10 ♕e2! is a nice move, with 0-0-0, ♕xe3 and ♗c3 in mind) 10...♘f6 11 ♗d3 ♗e7 12 0-0 0-0 13 ♕d2!? ♘c6 14 ♗f4 ♕b6 15 ♖fe1 ♖d8 (Rustemov-Litvinov, Minsk 1993) 16 ♕c3 ±.

8 ♘f3 ♕d6 9 ♕c2 *(D)*

White is simply going to play 0-0-0, e3 and ♗c3, breaking up the centre and opening lines.

9...♗e7

9...c5 is slow, as in similar positions: 10 e3 (10 0-0-0 ♘c6 11 e3 ♗g4 12 exd4 ± is also



played, with the idea 12...♗xf3? 13 ♖e1+ ♗e7 14 ♘f5) 10...dxe3 11 ♗xe3 ♘c6 12 ♗e2 ♕e6 13 0-0 ♗e7 14 ♖ad1 0-0 15 ♖fe1 with a solid advantage in Burnier-Zindel, Lenzerheide 2010, which only increased after 15...♖d8? 16 ♖xd8+ ♘xd8 17 ♗d3 ♕b6 18 ♗g5.

10 0-0-0 0-0 11 ♗c3

The best move, I think. 11 e3 dxe3 12 ♗c3 (12 ♗xe3 ±) 12...♕c7 13 fxe3 has also been popular, an idea first played by Garry Kasparov, who noticed that for control of Black's only outpost on d4, it might be worth taking on an isolated pawn.

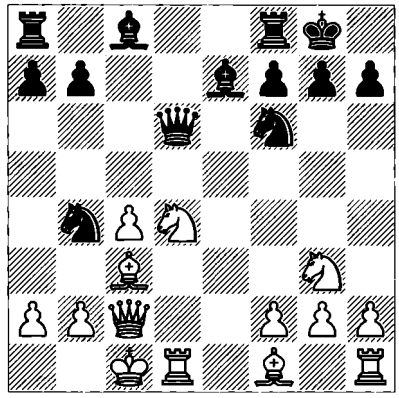
11...c5

After 11...♕f4+ 12 e3! dxe3 13 fxe3 ♕xe3+ (13...♕c7? is the Kasparov position from the previous note, but here it's White's move!) 14 ♔b1, White has sacrificed a pawn for development and an attack. After ♗d3 and ♖he1, every white piece will be active. This is an emergency situation for Black, who must strike back immediately with 14...♘a6! 15 ♘d4 ♘b4 (or 15...♗b4 16 ♘df5 ♗xf5 17 ♘xf5 ♕e6 18 ♗d3 ♗xc3 19 ♕xc3 c5 20 ♖he1 ♕b6 21 ♖e3! ± with a menacing attack, Azmaiparashvili-Eslon, Seville 1994) 16 ♕a4 b5!, and here I like 17 ♕a5 (17 ♕b3 works in most lines, but Black might be alright after 17...♗c5 18 ♗xb4 ♕xb3 19 axb3 ♗xb4 20 ♘xc6 ♗c5!) 17...♘e4 (17...c5 18 ♖e1! ♗d8 19 ♕xb5 ♕h6 20 ♕xc5 ♕g6+ 21 ♔a1 a5 22 ♗e2 with a nice edge) 18 ♗xb4 ♗xb4 (18...c5? 19 ♘c2) 19 ♕xb4 ♘f2 (19...c5 20 ♕b3 ♘d2+ 21 ♖xd2 ♕xd2 22 ♘f3 ±) 20 ♘c2 ♕h6 21 ♗e2 ♗e6 22 ♘d4 ♘xd1 23 ♗xd1 ♗xc4 24 ♗f3 and once White wins one of the pawns back, the two pieces will be clearly superior to the rook; e.g., 24...♖ae8 25 ♘xc6 f5 26 ♖d1 f4 27 ♖d6 ♖e1+?! 28 ♔c2 ♖e6 29 ♘e4 ♖xd6 30 ♕xd6 ±.

12 e3 ♘c6 13 exd4

13 ♔b1 might be more accurate, to get Black to commit.

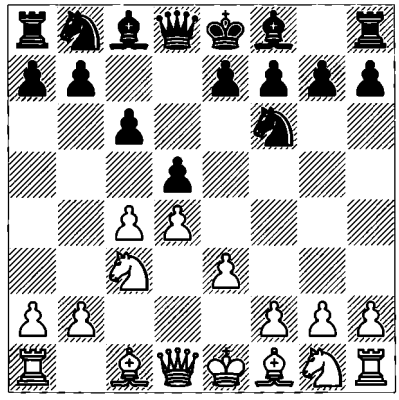
13...cxd4 14 ♘xd4 ♘b4 *(D)*



Arlandi-Ortega, Imperia 1996. Now 15 ♕b3! ♕f4+ 16 ♔b1 a5 (16...♘a6 17 ♕c2 ♖d8 18 ♕d2!) 17 ♗d2 ♕g4 18 ♕f3! ♖d8 19 ♗c3 ♕g6+ 20 ♗d3 ♘xd3 21 ♕xd3 leaves White with an extra pawn for very little compensation.

5.3)

3...♘f6 4 e3 *(D)*



This is our path to the Semi-Slav Anti-Meran Variation, which we will use not only because it's a less complicated way to meet the Slav than other main lines, but also because it lends itself to strategic positional play. In playing this

move, we are consciously avoiding 4 ♘f3 dxc4, the main line of the Slav, and 4 ♘f3 e6 5 ♗g5, a main line of the Semi-Slav whose main lines involve tactics requiring a book or two to describe! Now we examine:

5.31: 4...♗f5 92
5.32: 4...♗g4 93
5.33: 4...g6 94
5.34: 4...a6 97

The move 4...e6 is covered in Chapter 6 (Section 6.2 to be precise).

5.31)

4...♗f5

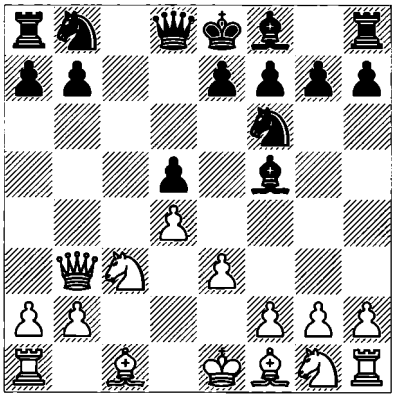
Black's problems would be over if he could successfully develop this bishop. Fortunately for us, the move has a drawback.

5 cxd5 cxd5

5...♘xd5 gives up the centre, so White can play slowly; e.g., 6 ♗d3 (6 f3 ♘xc3 7 bxc3 e5! 8 ♗d3 ♗xd3 9 ♕xd3 ♘d7 10 ♘e2 ±) 6...♗xd3 7 ♕xd3 e6 8 ♘f3 ♗e7 9 e4 ♘xc3 10 bxc3 ±.

6 ♕b3 *(D)*

B



The point. It's not easy to defend b7.

6...♗c8!

This move doesn't really deserve an '!', as it is virtually forced. But it's got more going for it than in most cases where you move a piece twice to return it to its original square. To begin with, once e3 has been played and White's dark-squared bishop is hemmed in, then the pawn exchange by cxd5 cxd5 is something Black welcomes. In addition, White's queen isn't ideally placed on b3. Thus we find pretty strong players using this line. Nevertheless, development has its place in chess and White should come out with a small advantage. At any rate, there aren't other good answers to the threat of 7 ♕xb7:

a) After 6...b6? 7 ♗b5+ ♗d7 8 ♘xd5 ♗xb5 9 ♘xf6+ exf6 10 ♕xb5+ Black loses a pawn for nothing.

b) 6...♕d7?! 7 ♘f3 ♘c6 (7...e6 8 ♗b5! ♘c6 9 ♘e5 ♕c7 10 ♕a4 ♖c8 11 ♕xa7 ± Kožul-Sutković, Bizovac 2001) 8 ♘e5! (8 ♗b5 a6 9 ♘e5 ♕c8 10 ♗xc6+ bxc6 11 ♘a4 ±) 8...♕c8 (8...♕c7 9 ♗b5 e6 10 ♕a4) 9 f3 (9 ♗b5 e6 10 ♕a4) 9...e6 10 g4 ♗g6 11 h4 ±.

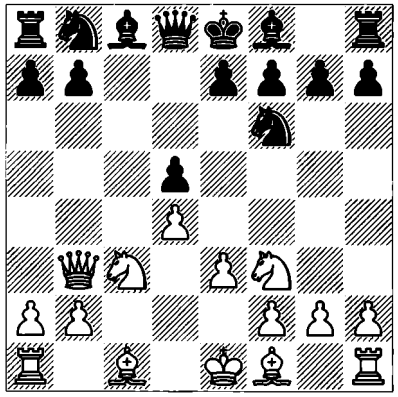
c) 6...♕b6?! is the most challenging line: 7 ♘xd5 ♘xd5 (7...♕xb3 8 ♘xf6+ exf6 9 axb3 ±) 8 ♕xd5 ♕b4+ (8...e6 9 ♕b5+) 9 ♗d2! (Prié likes 9 ♔d1 '!', when after 9...♗d7 10 ♘f3 or 10 ♕c4 White holds the pawn; this gives an advantage but maybe it's not worth leaving your king in the centre if there's an alternative) 9...♕xb2 10 ♖c1 ♗d7 11 ♘f3 (White has won some pretty games with this, and the computer move 11 ♕e4! is also good after 11...f5 12 ♕b1 ♕xb1 13 ♖xb1 b6 14 ♘f3 e6 15 ♗c4) 11...e6 12 ♕c4 ♘a6 13 ♘e5! ♖c8 14 ♕xc8+ ♗xc8 15 ♖xc8+ ♔e7 16 ♗xa6 bxa6, and here Prié finds the nice 17 0-0! (17 ♗a5!? ±) 17...♕xd2 18 ♖c7+ ♔e8 (18...♔d6? 19 ♖d7# is cute!), when I think 19 ♖b1 is a little more accurate than his 19 ♖fc1?! due to 19...♗b4 20 h3 a5 21 ♖bc1 ♗d6 22 ♖7c2, when all Black has are bad choices.

7 ♘f3 *(D)*

White has played various moves here, including 7 f4 and 7 ♗b5+ ♘c6 8 ♘f3 e6 with ♗d2 or ♘e5. Fressinet-Vernay, European Ch, Aix-les-Bains 2011 saw a typical build-up for White with f4 in which he doesn't occupy e5 for a while so that a knight can't be exchanged: 7 ♗d3 e6 8 f4 ♘c6 9 ♘f3 ♗e7 10 0-0 0-0 11 ♗d2 g6 (weakening; it's probably better to protect b7 and play 11...b6 12 ♖ac1 ♗d7, but then 13 ♘e5 gains in effect) 12 ♖ac1 ♗d7 13 ♘e5 (now that his pieces are out and Black has slightly weakened his kingside dark squares) 13...♘a5 14 ♕d1 ♖c8 15 ♕e2 ♘c6 16 ♕f3 ±.

7...♘c6

In Grishchuk-Prié, French Team Ch 2005, one of the world's leading players found a unique plan against an attempt to create a very



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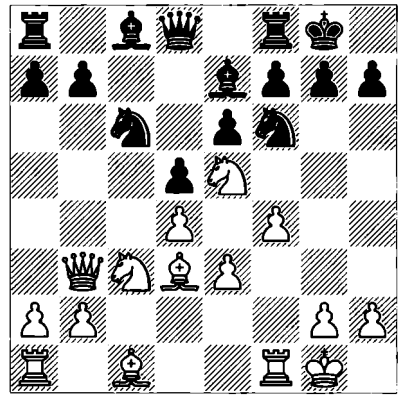


B

solid set-up: 7...e6 8 ♗d3 (8 ♘e5 ♘c6 transposes to the text) 8...♘c6 9 0-0 ♗e7 10 e4!? (I like this, although naturally 10 ♗d2 with the idea ♖ac1 and ♘e5 is playable and not as dull as it might at first appear) 10...dxe4 11 ♘xe4 0-0 12 ♗e3. We have a more-or-less standard isolated-pawn position in which White has at any rate more opportunities than his opponent to undertake positive strategies.

8 ♘e5

The Grishchuk plan might go 8 ♗d3 e6 9 0-0 ♗e7 10 e4 dxe4 11 ♘xe4 0-0 12 ♖d1.

8...e6 9 f4

This Stonewall position is typical and rather better for White.

9...♗e7

9...♘d7 10 ♗d3 ♘dxe5 11 fxe5 ♗e7 12 0-0 f6 13 exf6 ♗xf6 14 ♗d2 ♗d7 15 a3 0-0?! 16 ♖f3 (16 ♘xd5!? exd5 17 ♕xd5+ ♔h8 18 ♕h5 g6 19 ♗xg6 is messy but ultimately nice for White) 16...♗e8 17 ♖af1 ♕e7 18 ♕c2 g6 (Korotylev-Komliakov, Moscow 1999) and now 19 ♗e1! with the idea of ♗g3 activates White's last non-contributing piece.

10 ♗d3 0-0 11 0-0 *(D)*

11...♘d7

11...♘xe5 12 fxe5 ♘d7 13 ♕c2 g6 (13...f5!?) 14 ♗d2 a6 15 ♘e2 ♘b8 16 ♖f3 and after 16...♘c6 17 ♖af1, as played in Volkov-P.Cramling, Stockholm 2004, White first expanded on the queenside and eventually drifted over for a decisive kingside attack. Aagaard says that 16..f5 must be played or the position is strategically lost. That's right in principle, but then White wins with 17 exf6, when 17...♗xf6? loses to 18 ♖af1 followed by a sacrifice on g6 or another tactical sequence, but 17...♗xf6 isn't much better in view of 18 ♖af1 ♖xf3 19 ♖xf3 and again the attack on g6 is too strong because if needed ♘f4 and ♖g3 will chip in to make it succeed.

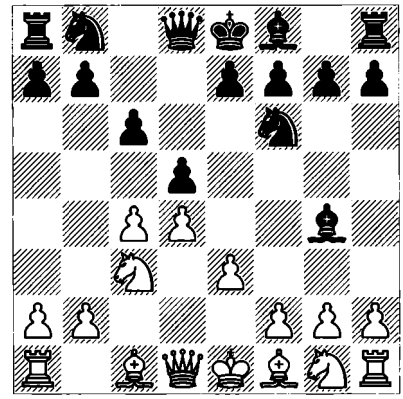
12 ♗d2 ♘dxe5 13 fxe5 ♗d7 14 ♖f3

Sadler-S.Ernst, Oslo 2011. White has more space, which results in Black never being able to equalize: 14...♘b4 15 ♗e2 a5 16 a3 a4 17 ♕d1 ♘c6 18 ♗d3 g6 19 ♕e2 f6? (Black is understandably wary of White's mounting kingside attack after 19...♘a5 20 ♖af1, but that's better than this further weakening of the position) 20 exf6 ♖xf6 21 ♖af1 ♔g7 22 ♗e1! ♖xf3 23 ♕xf3 ♗f6 24 ♗g3 ♘a5?! 25 ♗c7! ♕e7 26 ♗d6 ♕d8 27 ♗c7 ♕e7 28 ♗d6 ♕d8 29 h4! ♘c6 30 h5 ♗e8 31 h6+ 1-0.

5.32)

4...♗g4 *(D)*

With this infrequently-played move, Black again tries to bring his bishop out in front of the pawn-chain he is constructing.



W

5 f3

This is a flexible set-up and both sides have a lot of possibilities. I'll try to cover the most important lines.

5...♗e6

Black can put this piece on a variety of retreat-squares:

a) 5...♗c8 6 ♗d3 e6 7 ♘ge2 c5 8 cxd5 exd5 9 0-0 ♘c6 10 a3 ♗e7 11 dxc5!? ♗xc5 12 b4 ♗b6 13 ♘a4 ♗c7 14 ♗b2 ±; e.g., 14...♕d6 15 f4 0-0 16 ♘d4 with a nice positional advantage: 16...♘xd4 (16...♘g4?! 17 ♕d2; 16...♕e7?! 17 ♘xc6 bxc6 18 ♗d4 ♘e4 19 ♖c1 ±) 17 ♗xd4 ♖e8 (17...b6 18 ♖c1 ±) 18 ♖c1 ±.

b) 5...♗f5 6 ♕b3 (6 g4!?) 6...♕b6?! (6...♗c8 7 cxd5 cxd5 8 ♗d3 e6 can be met by 9 ♘ge2, or 9 f4, transposing to the note to White's 7th move in Section 5.31, where White plays the pawn to f4 directly) 7 cxd5 ♕xb3 8 axb3 ♘xd5 (8...cxd5 9 g4 ♗e6 10 ♘b5 ♔d7 11 ♖xa7) 9 e4 ♘xc3 (9...♘b4? 10 ♖a4!) 10 bxc3 with a large mobile centre and space; 10...♗e6 can even be answered with 11 ♗d3!.

c) 5...♗d7 6 ♗d3 e6 7 ♘ge2 c5 (thematic, but Black is taking his time) 8 cxd5 exd5 9 0-0 ♘c6 10 ♔h1 (10 a3! ♖c8 11 ♗b1 has the idea of ♘f4 and/or ♗a2) 10...♗e7 11 dxc5 ♗xc5 (Kruppa-Shaw, Cappelle la Grande 2005) and now 12 ♘f4 was proposed. 12 ♕b3 ± is a good alternative, because if Black plays 12...♘a5 13 ♕c2, he is less likely to enforce the freeing move ...d4.

We now return to 5...♗e6 *(D)*:

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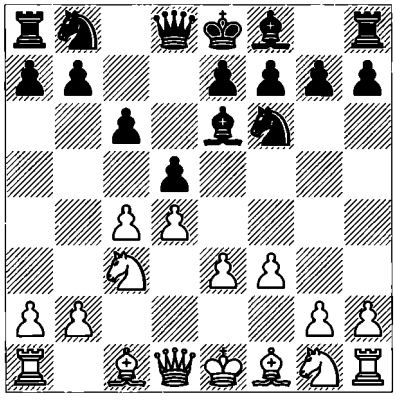


6 ♘ge2! dxc4 7 ♘f4 ♕c8 8 e4 g6 9 g4!?

9 ♘xe6 ♕xe6 10 ♕a4 b5 11 ♕a5 ± is a simple forcing sequence, intending to play a4. The gambit-style 9 b3 cxb3 10 axb3 also looks good; e.g., 10...♗g7 11 ♘a4! ♘bd7 12 ♗e2 b5 13 ♘xe6 fxe6 14 ♘c3 with clear compensation.

9...♗g7 10 h4

Or 10 g5 ♘h5 11 ♘xh5 gxh5 12 ♗e3 0-0 13 f4! ♗g4 14 ♕d2.

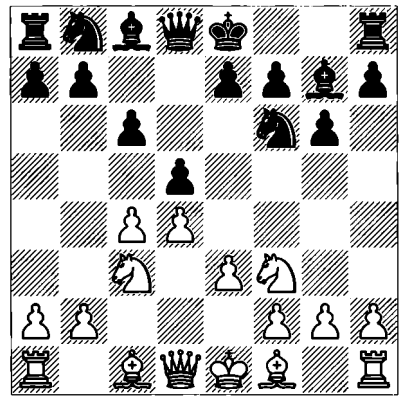
10...h6 11 b3! cxb3 12 axb3 ♘bd7 13 ♘xe6 fxe6 14 e5

White stands well, based upon 14...♘d5! 15 ♘xd5 exd5 16 ♗d3 ♘f8 17 ♕c2 ♕e6 18 ♗e3, when Black is badly cramped.

5.33)

4...g6 5 ♘f3 ♗g7 *(D)*

W



This is called the Schlechter Slav. It is known above all for its solidity, with a light-square structure that can range from h7 to a6.

6 ♗e2

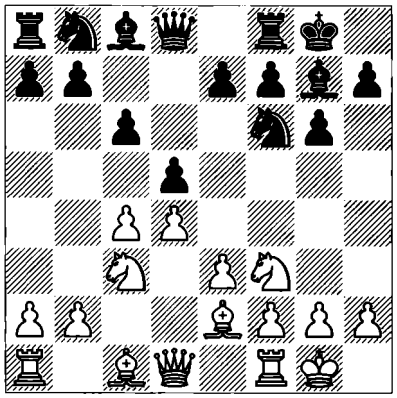
Aronian likes to play 6 h3 here, preventing ...♗g4, and then ♗d3. This strategy resembles that of the Queen's Gambit Exchange Variation in that White takes squares away from Black's light-squared bishop, trying to convert a piece with a fine open diagonal into a liability.

The immediate 6 ♗d3 has some advantages and disadvantages compared to 6 ♗e2, but in any case notice that 6...dxc4 7 ♗xc4 transposes to the main line. Otherwise 6...0-0 7 0-0 ♗g4 8 h3 ♗xf3 9 ♕xf3 is a standard position in which Black stands solidly, even if most players will prefer having the bishop-pair. One example: 9...e6 10 ♖d1 ♘bd7 11 b3 ♖e8 12 ♗b2 ♕e7 13 ♗f1 h5 14 ♖ac1 a6 (pawns on light squares across the board!) 15 ♖c2 b5 16 ♖dc1 ♘b6 17 cxd5 cxd5 18 ♗d3 ♘fd7 19 ♕e2 (19 a4!?)

19...e5 20 dxe5 ♗xe5 21 ♕d2 ♘f6 22 a4 (or 22 f4 ♗d6 23 ♘d1 ♘bd7 24 ♖c6 with some real progress) 22...b4 23 ♘e2 ± Cheremnova-Stojanović, Zurich 2010.

6...0-0 7 0-0 *(D)*

B



7...dxc4

Whether or not this is the most important continuation, it is by far the most forcing one, critical for an assessment of the variation, and a position repeatedly tested at the top levels, so I'll give it top billing. Nevertheless, practice has often tended in other positional directions. Six other moves should be plenty to illustrate most of the strategic themes of this system:

a) 7...e6 is a common move because it fits with so many lines (and temperaments!): 8 b4 (8 ♕c2 is a good alternative; a rook may come to d1, and e4 is in the background) 8...dxc4 (8...♘bd7 9 ♗b2 b6 10 ♕b3 ♗b7 {this actually arose via 7...b6 8 b4 ♗b7 9 ♗b2 e6 10 ♕b3 ♘bd7} 11 ♖fd1 ♖e8 12 ♖ac1 ♕b8 13 h3 a5 14 a3 axb4 15 axb4 ♖c8 16 cxd5 cxd5 17 ♘a4 ± Ponomariov-Danielsen, European Team Ch, Porto Carras 2011; 8...b6 9 a4 ♗b7 10 ♗a3 ♘bd7 11 ♕b3 gave White more-or-less the ideal set-up in Szabo-Czerniak, Moscow Olympiad 1956) 9 ♗xc4 ♘d5 10 ♕b3 ♘xc3 11 ♕xc3 offers White space and a central majority; e.g., 11...♘d7 12 e4 b6 13 ♗g5 ♕c7 14 ♖ac1 ♗b7 15 ♕d2 ♖ae8 16 ♖fd1 ± Khalifman-Deviatkin, Moscow 2011.

b) 7...♗g4 8 cxd5 cxd5 9 ♕b3 b6 (9...♗c8, as in Section 5.31, runs into 10 ♘e5 with the idea f4, which is a little awkward for Black) 10 h3 ♗xf3 (10...♗c8 11 ♘e5 ±) 11 ♗xf3 e6 12 ♗d2 ± (or 12 ♗e2! ± Flear) 12...♘c6 13 ♗e2 a6 14 ♖fc1 ♘a5 15 ♕b4 ♘d7 16 b3!? (16 ♘a4 is also good) 16...♖e8 17 ♘a4 ♘b7 18 ♕c3! b5 19 ♕c7 ± Stohl-Haba, Budapest Zonal 1993.

c) 7...♘bd7 8 b4 a6 9 a4 e6 (again, every black pawn is on a light square; this time White knows what to do) 10 ♗a3 ♖e8 11 ♕b3 (this is the perfect set-up for a queenside advance to undermine the pawn-chain, as follows) 11...♖b8 12 b5! ± ♗f8 13 ♗xf8 ♖xf8 14 cxd5 ♘xd5 15 ♖fc1 ♘xc3 16 ♕xc3 axb5 17 axb5 cxb5 (the black queenside is exposed and his bishop still isn't developed) 18 ♗xb5 ♕e7 19 ♕c7!, Kasparov-Reis, Lisbon simultaneous 1999.

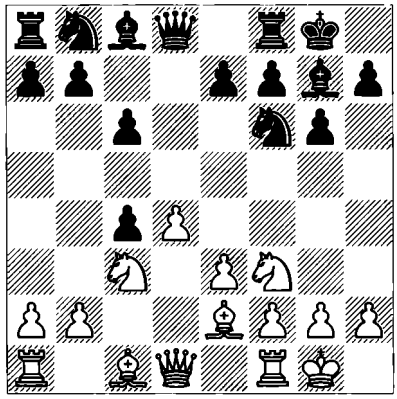
d) 7...a6 8 ♕b3 dxc4 9 ♗xc4 b5 10 ♗e2 ♘bd7 11 e4 (White stands better due to his ideally-placed central majority) 11...♘b6 12 ♗f4 ♗e6 13 ♕c2 ♘h5 14 ♗e3 ♗c4 15 b3 ♗xe2 16 ♘xe2 ♖c8 17 ♖ac1 e6 18 ♖fd1 ♘d7 19 ♘e5! ♘b8 20 ♘d3 with control of the dark squares, S.Mohr-Murey, Palma de Mallorca 1989.

e) 7...♗e6 8 cxd5 cxd5 (8...♗xd5 9 ♕c2 ♗xf3 10 ♗xf3 ±) 9 ♘e5!? (Flear notes the idea 9 ♕b3 ♕b6 10 ♕xb6 axb6, "when the doubled b-pawns are compensated for by the potential activity on the a- and c-files") 9...♘bd7 (9...♘fd7 10 ♘d3 ♘c6 11 ♗f3 ±) 10 ♘d3 ♗f5 11 ♕b3 ♘b6 12 ♘c5 ±; Black is a little cramped and White can think about central expansion.

f) 7...b6 8 b4 ♗b7 9 ♕b3 (9 ♗b2 ♘bd7 10 cxd5 cxd5 11 ♕b3 ♕b8 12 a4 a6 13 b5! a5 14 ♖ac1 ♖c8, Petrosian-Hort, Moscow 1975, and now with 15 ♗a3 White maintains a small but definite advantage; Black is cramped) 9...♘bd7 10 a4 ♕b8 11 ♗b2 e6 (Pinter-Flear, Szirak 1986) and this would be a good time for 12 cxd5 cxd5 13 a5 ±.

We now return to 7...dxc4 *(D)*:

W



8 ♗xc4 ♗g4 9 h3 ♗xf3 10 ♕xf3 ♘bd7

Now ...e5 can't be stopped. Notice that this strategy is too slow if Black plays the solid ...e6 first.

11 ♖d1 e5

11...♕c7 12 e4 e5 13 d5 ♘b6 14 ♗b3 cxd5 15 exd5 gives White the two bishops and a powerful passed pawn. Even an ideal blockade on d6 can't help: 15...♘c8 16 ♗g5 ♘e8 17 ♘e4 ♘cd6 18 ♖ac1 and the queen runs out of room.

12 d5!

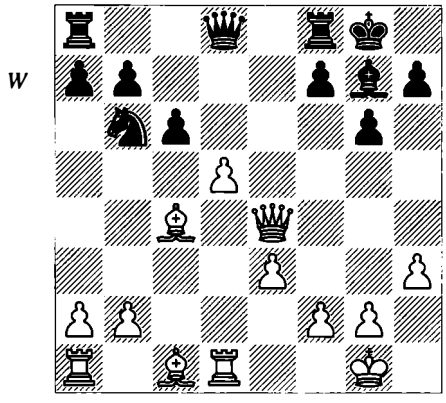
For those not interested in an immediate crisis, 12 ♗b3!? has been recommended, and could be the way to go if you consider yourself a better strategic player than your opponent. A natural continuation is 12...♕e7 (12...exd4 13 exd4 ♘b6 14 ♗g5 ♕d6 15 ♗f4 ♕d8 16 ♗e5 ± Ward), when 13 dxe5 ♘xe5 14 ♕e2 ♖fd8 15 e4 ♖xd1+ 16 ♗xd1 ♖d8 17 ♗c2 ♕b4 is equal, so 13 a3! might be best, developing cautiously in a line such as 13...♖fe8 14 ♗a2 ♖ad8 15 ♗d2 exd4 16 exd4 ♘b6 17 ♖e1 ♕d6 18 ♗g5 h6 19 ♗f4 ♕xd4 20 ♖xe8+ ♖xe8 21 ♖d1 ♕c5 22 ♗xh6! ±.

12...e4!?

A clever pawn sacrifice. But what else is there? 13 dxc6 is threatened, and 13 d6 is potentially disastrous for Black. 12...cxd5?! runs into 13 ♗xd5! ♕b6 (13...♘xd5 14 ♕xd5 ♘b6 15 ♕xb7 ±) 14 e4!? ♖ac8 15 a4 ±.

13 ♘xe4 ♘xe4 14 ♕xe4 ♘b6 *(D)*

The critical point. After 14...♘f6, 15 ♕f3! keeps an eye on the key d1-square.



15 ♖b1!

Regarded as the most accurate, protecting b2. Experience has shown that Black gets sufficient counterplay after 15 ♗b3, although there might still be something to say about that: 15...♘xd5 (after 15...cxd5, 16 ♗xd5 ♘xd5 17 ♖xd5 transposes, but 16 ♕b4 may be worth a try) 16 ♗xd5 (and here 16 ♗d2 would establish a two-bishop advantage except that 16...♗xb2 17 ♖ab1 ♗g7 renders White's advantage minimal) 16...cxd5 17 ♖xd5 ♕b6 18 ♕d3 ♖ad8 was very close to equal in Bareev-Kramnik, Novgorod 1994.

15...♖e8 16 ♕d3!

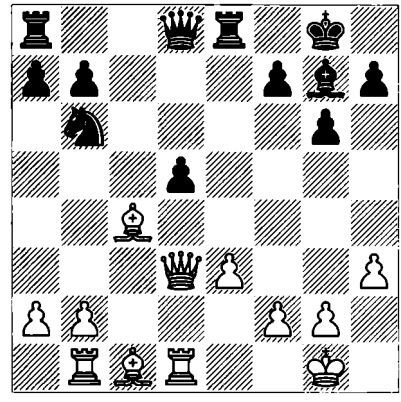
This is more accurate than 16 ♕c2 and has a huge success rate, although Black is still stuck with defence in the latter case; for example, the value of two bishops is demonstrated by 16...cxd5 (16...♕h4 should be compared with the main line) 17 ♗b5 ♖e6 18 ♕b3 (or 18 ♗d2) 18...♕h4 19 ♗d2 d4 20 ♗f1! ♖d8 (20...♖ae8 21 ♖bc1) 21 g3 ♕e7 22 ♗g2 ♕e8 23 exd4 ♗xd4 (Ponomariov-Wang Yue, Medias 2010) and now White has several good moves, such as 24 ♗g5! ♖d7 25 ♗f3 ±.

16...♕h4

It's not certain what's best here:

a) Not 16...♘xd5?, when in Hammer-Zhu Chen, Cap d'Agde rapid 2010 White missed 17 e4! ♘b6 18 ♗xf7+ ♔xf7 19 ♕b3+ ♘d5 20 exd5 ±.

b) 16...cxd5 *(D)* has three sensible answers all giving White an edge which has been adequate to win with in practice, whether or not Black can hold in theory:



b1) 17 ♗xd5 ♕xd5 18 ♕xd5 ♘xd5 19 ♖xd5 ♖ad8 20 ♖d2! ♖xd2 21 ♗xd2 ♖d8 22 ♗e1 is a position reached in both Chatalbashev-Soylu, European Ch, Antalya 2004 and Jakovljević-D.Damjanović, Obrenovac 2005. White, who is

a pawn ahead, has good winning chances, although Black managed a draw in the latter game.

b2) 17 ♗b3!? can also be considered, when Black's knight is not well-placed and White plans ♗d2-c3 and gradual pressure on the isolated d-pawn.

b3) 17 ♗b5 ♖e7 18 ♕b3 ♖c8 19 ♗d2 ♘c4 20 ♗c3 (or 20 ♗e1! with the idea of playing ♗xc4) 20...♗xc3 21 ♗xc4 ♕b6 22 ♕xb6 axb6 23 ♗b3 ♗e5 24 ♖xd5 ± Turov-Ipatov, Nakhchivan 2011. Black has opposite-coloured bishops but weak queenside pawns and indeed he ended up two pawns down and unable to save the game.

17 ♗b3

I think that this is very slightly better than 17 b3 ♖ad8 (17...cxd5?! 18 ♗xd5 ♘xd5 19 ♕xd5 ♖ed8 20 ♕f3 ♖xd1+ 21 ♕xd1 ♖d8 22 ♕e1 ♖d3 23 ♗d2 gives White an extra pawn in return for what seems more like annoyance than full compensation) 18 e4! ♕xe4 (18...♖xe4 19 ♗g5! ♕xg5 20 ♕xe4 cxd5 21 h4 ±) 19 ♕xe4 ♖xe4 20 ♗g5 ♖de8! and although White prevailed after 21 dxc6 in the game Kožul-Nikolić, Slovenian Team Ch, Murska Sobota 2007, only 21 d6! should yield winning chances against accurate play.

Now (after 17 ♗b3):

a) 17...cxd5 18 ♗d2! ± has been played, with the bishop-pair and play against the isolated pawn.

b) 17...♘xd5 18 ♗xd5 cxd5 19 b3! ♖ac8 20 ♗b2 also gives White a pull; this may be drawable, but it will be hard to hold on to the d-pawn in the long run.

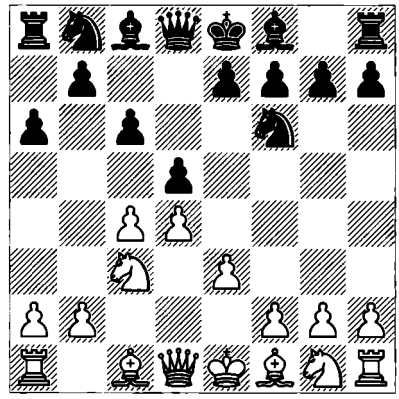
c) After 17...♖ad8, as chosen in Muresan-Semenova, Women's Candidates (3), Bad Kissingen 1983, White should play, as above, 18 e4! ♕xe4 (18...♖xe4 19 ♗g5!) 19 ♕xe4 ♖xe4 20 ♗g5 ±.

This main line is more theoretical and technical than I'd like, but even without knowing the specifics, you can see that Black is under pressure the whole way.

5.34)

4...a6 *(D)*

This is one of the modern ...a6 Slav systems, normally called the Chebanenko Slav. It has



W

attained the status of a main line over the last couple of decades.

5 ♘f3

5 ♕c2 is a good alternative. Briefly:

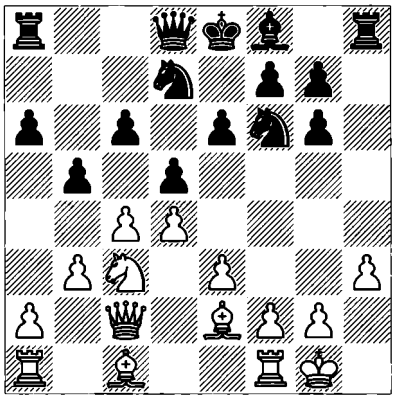
a) 5...e6 mixes the Semi-Slav (...e6) with the Chebanenko move ...a6; in general that's a bit slow without the c8-bishop being developed first, but strong players have tried it: 6 ♘f3 (6 c5 is a logical course for White, who normally follows with b4 and ♗b2, although Black's plan of ...♘bd7, ...g6, ...♗g7 and ...e5 appears sufficient; I think White should also consider setting up with f4, ♘f3, ♗d3 and 0-0 and playing for an attack) 6...c5 (this makes some sense of the ...e6/...a6 combination; Black is trying to exploit the fact that White's queen is not ideally placed on c2) 7 cxd5 exd5 8 ♗e2 ♘c6 9 0-0 (9 ♘e5 has recently been popular and may be even more promising, but I want to emphasize development) 9...♘b4 (9...♗e6 10 ♖d1 ♘b4 11 ♕b1! is a better version of the same line, Mamedyarov-Grishchuk, FIDE Grand Prix, Baku 2008) 10 ♕b1 g6 11 ♗d2 ♗f5 12 ♕d1 c4 13 b3! (13 ♘e5 may also yield a slight advantage) 13...♗c2 14 ♕c1 cxb3 15 ♕b2 ♘d3 16 ♗xd3 ♗xd3 17 ♖fc1 b5?! (17...♗f5 ±) 18 ♘e5 ♗f5 19 ♕xb3 ± Mamedyarov-Kariakin, Baku rapid 2009. Things got even worse after 19...♗d6? 20 e4! ♗e6 21 ♘c6 ♕d7 22 exd5 0-0, when 23 ♗g5! would have won a piece, but White played 23 dxe6?! and Black actually came back to draw.

b) 5...♗g4 6 ♗d3 (or 6 f3, having in mind 6...♗h5 7 ♕b3 b5 8 cxd5 cxd5 9 g4 ♗g6 and continuing 10 h4!? h6 11 ♘h3 e6 12 ♘f4 ♗h7 13 g5; note that the obvious 10 g5 ♘fd7 11 ♕xd5 ♖a7 and ...e6 actually gives Black some

compensation) 6...e6 7 ♘ge2 ♗h5 8 ♗d2 ♘bd7 9 ♘f4 ♗g6 10 ♘xg6 hxg6 11 h3 (11 ♖c1!?) 11...dxc4 12 ♗xc4 b5 13 ♗e2 c5 14 ♗f3 cxd4 15 exd4 ♖c8 16 ♕b3 ± Mamedyarov-Nakamura, Lausanne 2005.

c) 5...b5 6 b3 ♗g4 7 ♘ge2!? ♘bd7 8 h3 ♗h5 (8...♗xe2 9 ♗xe2 e6 10 0-0 ± with two bishops, Mamedyarov-Volkov, Russian Team Ch, Sochi 2006) 9 ♘f4 ♗g6 10 ♘xg6 hxg6 11 ♗e2 ± (11 ♗b2 has also yielded an advantage) 11...e6 12 0-0 *(D)* and now:

B



c1) 12...♖c8?! 13 c5! (13 ♖d1 ± is a less dramatic choice) 13...e5 (thematic, but it leads to trouble; 13...♕c7 is more cautious) 14 b4 e4 (a similar line given by Atalik is 14...♗e7 15 a4! exd4 16 exd4 ♘f8 17 ♗e3 ♘e6 18 axb5 axb5 19 ♖a6) 15 a4 ♗e7 16 axb5 axb5 17 ♖a6 and now instead of 17...♘f8? 18 ♖xc6! ♖xc6 19 ♗xb5, as played in Atalik-Harikrishna, Greek Team Ch, Kallithea 2008, Atalik gives 17...0-0 18 ♗d2 ♘h7 19 ♖fa1 ±.

c2) 12...♗e7 13 ♗b2 0-0 14 ♖ac1 ±.

c3) 12...♗d6 13 ♗f3!? ♖c8 14 ♖e1 0-0 15 e4 dxe4 16 ♘xe4 ♘xe4 17 ♗xe4 established a classic space advantage and modest plus in Mamedyarov-Grishchuk, Moscow 2008.

5...b5

5...e6 is another hybrid system that we cover via a Semi-Slav move-order in the note to Black's 5th move in Section 6.2.

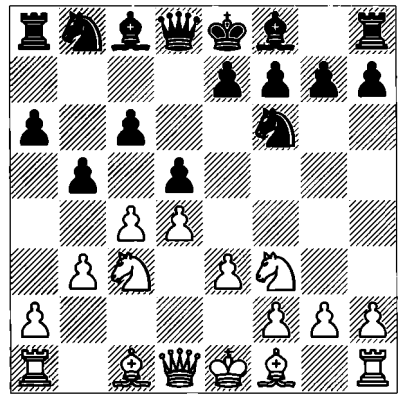
6 b3 *(D)*

This move, maintaining the tension, has been White's most frequent choice.

6...♗g4

a) 6...b4?! releases the tension, and both 7 ♘e2 and 7 ♘a4, working on the c-file, are good.

B



b) Of other moves, 6...♗f5 makes the most sense, bringing the bishop out before ...e6 closes it in. This is one of those times where exchanging White's good bishop by 7 ♗d3 works well, gaining development and central control (7 ♗e2 and 7 ♘e5 are common alternatives); e.g., 7...♗xd3 (7...e6 8 ♗xf5!? exf5 9 0-0 ♗d6 10 ♕c2 g6, Dlugy-Khmelnitsky, Cherry Hill 1991, and now 11 a4! b4 12 ♘e2 with the idea a5 gives a small but nagging edge, since 12...a5 13 ♘e5 will tie Black down) 8 ♕xd3 e6 9 0-0 ♗e7 and now 10 a3 or even 10 e4! b4 11 e5 bxc3 12 exf6 ♗xf6 13 ♗a3!.

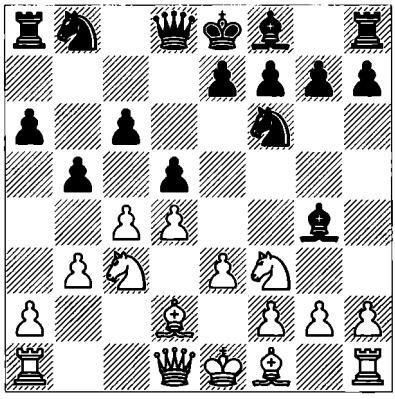
7 ♗d2 *(D)*

White plans to play h3, gaining the bishop-pair. The text-move protects c3 and thus works against tactics based upon the knight's vulnerability, as in the line 7 h3 ♗xf3 8 ♕xf3 e5! with the idea 9 dxe5 ♗b4 10 ♗d2 ♗xc3 11 ♗xc3 ♘e4, which according to extensive practice works out to a draw after many forced moves. 7 ♗d2 may be objectively no better than 7 ♗e2, but it is relatively straightforward and unencumbered by too many variations.

7...e6

This is the most common move. Black can try to enforce ...e5 by 7...♘bd7 8 h3 (8 ♗e2 is more flexible) 8...♗xf3 9 ♕xf3 b4 10 ♘a4 (10 ♘e2 e5 11 ♘g3 may give better long-term chances; moves like ♕d1, ♗d3, 0-0 and ♖c1 follow in one order or another, and White hopes that his bishop-pair eventually expresses itself) 10...e5 and now:

a) 11 ♕d1 led to a positional advantage for White in Kramnik-Kariakin, Amber Rapid, Nice 2009: 11...♘e4 12 ♗d3 ♘xd2 13 ♕xd2 exd4 14 cxd5!? cxd5 15 0-0 ♗d6 16 ♗f5 ♘f6 17 ♕xd4.



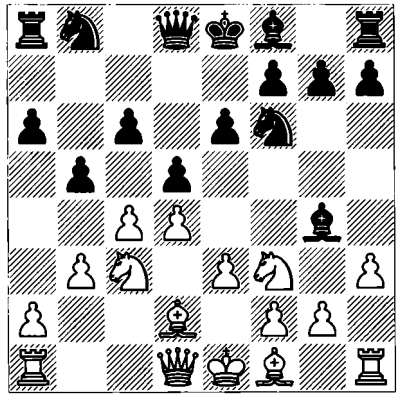
b) 11 ♖c1 has also been played.

c) Lugovoi-Volkov, Russian Ch, Moscow 1999 continued 11 cxd5!? cxd5 12 dxe5!? ♘xe5 13 ♕d1?! (better is 13 ♕f4! ♗d6 14 ♕d4 ±) 13...♗d6?! (13...♗e7! =). Now that the centre has stabilized, White tends to play a redeployment such as 14 ♗c1 0-0 15 ♗b2 with a slight advantage.

This whole line is hardly inspiring, but pretty much the name of the game when 4...a6 and 6...♗g4 is played.

8 h3 *(D)*

Now we'll see White's basic idea of exchanging the bishop.



8...♗xf3

8...♗h5 9 g4 ♗g6 10 ♘e5 ♗d6!? (after 10...♘fd7 11 ♘xg6 hxg6 12 ♕c2 ♘b6 13 c5 ♘6d7 White stood somewhat better with his bishop-pair in Malakhatko-Wirig, Differdange 2007; one way to exploit that is 14 ♗g2 ♗e7 15 e4) 11 h4! ♘e4 (Burmakin-Bryzgalin, Russia Cup, Kstovo 1997) and now 12 h5! is extremely strong: 12...♘xc3 13 ♗xc3 ♗e4 14 f3 f6 15 h6! g6 16 ♘xc6 ♘xc6 17 fxe4 ♗g3+ 18 ♔d2 b4 19 ♗b2 dxe4 20 ♔c2 and Black's e-pawn is vulnerable, among other problems, but 20...0-0 21 ♗g2 f5? 22 gxf5 exf5 23 d5 is killing, and 20...♖f8 21 ♕d2 f5 22 ♕g2 ♗d6 23 gxf5 exf5 24 ♖d1 is also pretty bad for Black.

9 ♕xf3 ♗b4

Black almost always responds in this manner. The slower 9...♗e7 10 ♗d3 0-0 11 0-0 favours White's bishop-pair, and even 11 g4!? is promising.

10 ♗d3

10 ♖c1 ± bypasses what follows because of 10...♕a5 11 ♖c2; that isn't really necessary, but means that the players will be more on their own.

10...♕a5! 11 ♖c1! ♗xc3

11...bxc4 12 bxc4 ♘bd7 13 0-0 0-0 14 a3 ♗xc3 15 ♖xc3 gained a straightforward advantage for White in Riazantsev-Kotanjian, Moscow 2008.

12 ♗xc3 ♕xa2 13 ♕d1

The next few moves are forced to save the black queen:

13...dxc4 14 bxc4 bxc4 15 ♖a1 ♕b3 16 ♕xb3 cxb3 17 ♔e2

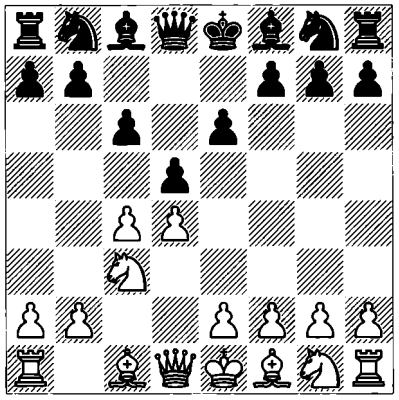
The alternative is 17 ♔d2 0-0 18 ♖hb1 ♘bd7 19 ♖xb3 c5 (Tregubov-Movsesian, Mainz rapid 2010), when White maintains a slight edge with 20 ♖b7 cxd4 21 ♗xd4 intending 21...e5 22 ♗a7!, but this isn't much.

17...♘bd7 18 ♖hb1

An ending arises with two bishops versus two knights. This would normally be difficult for the knights, but the advantage is limited here by the pawn-structure. L'Ami-Laznička, European Union Ch, Liverpool 2008 continued 18...c5 19 ♖xa6!? (19 ♖xb3 cxd4 20 ♗xd4 e5 21 ♗b2 ♘c5 22 ♖ba3 ♘xd3 23 ♖xd3 e4 24 ♖da3 favours White, because in spite of all the pawns being on one side of the board, Black can't stabilize the position; for example, 24...♘d7 25 ♖d1! f6 26 ♖a4 f5 27 g4!) 19...♖xa6 20 ♗xa6 0-0 21 ♖xb3 ♖b8 22 ♖xb8+ ♘xb8 23 ♗d3 cxd4 24 ♗xd4 ♘c6 25 ♗b2 ±, although Black did hold.

6 Semi-Slav Defence

1 d4 d5 2 c4 c6 3 ♘c3 e6 *(D)*



This move-order, known as the Triangle Variation, is one of several that Black can use to reach a Semi-Slav (via 4 ♘f3 ♘f6), though both sides have additional options. 1 d4 d5 2 c4 e6 3 ♘c3 c6 also brings about the same position. This modest-looking opening has led to some of the most exciting chess in the last couple of decades.

4 e3

We choose the same answer that we gave to 3...♘f6 in Chapter 5. This is necessary for a coherent repertoire, since 4 ♘f3 allows 4...dxc4 (as does 3...♘f6 4 ♘f3). In that case, White can play some interesting and possibly underestimated ideas such as 5 g3 and even 5 e4 b5 6 e5!?, but that's another story. With 4 e3 ♘f6, we arrive at the position that could arise from last chapter's 3 ♘c3 ♘f6 4 e3 if Black continues 4...e6.

After 4 e3, we examine:

6.1: 4...f5 100
6.2: 4...♘f6 105

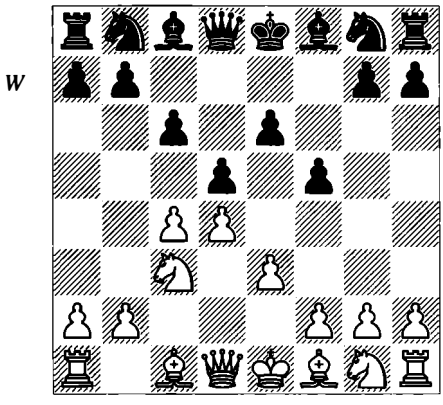
Black can also try to get to a Dutch Defence by 4...♗d6, meeting 5 ♗d3 with 5...f5. This transposes to Section 6.12 (4...f5 5 ♗d3 ♗d6), which offers White several attractive options. 5 ♘f3 is a natural response to 4...♗d6 that you may prefer. Then:

a) After 5...♘f6, 6 b3 may transpose into our preferred line of the Semi-Slav (see Section 6.21), without Black having the ...♗b4 line available, while 6 ♗d3 ♘bd7 can lead to a Meran Variation, but with the bishop already on d6; this has been getting some attention recently, but is generally not considered as good as the main-line Meran for Black.

b) 5...f5 is a type of Stonewall Dutch in which White has played neither g3 nor a combination of ♘ge2 and f3. That may not be so bad, however, since he can try 6 ♘e5!? ♘f6 (6...♗xe5 7 dxe5 ± is hard on Black's dark squares, although playable) 7 f4 (7 ♗e2 0-0 8 0-0 is also possible) 7...0-0 (7...♘e4? 8 ♕h5+) 8 ♗e2 ♘e4 9 ♘xe4!? (9 0-0 ±) 9...fxe4 (9...dxe4 10 ♗d2 c5 11 ♗c3 also feels slightly preferable for White, although that would need to be investigated) 10 0-0 ♘d7 11 ♗d2 ±.

6.1)

4...f5 *(D)*



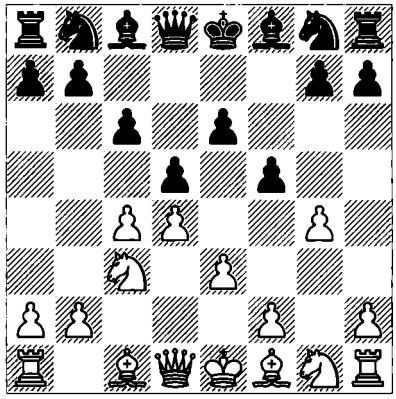
This is a tricky and popular way for Black to get to a Stonewall formation without having to worry about g3 by White, or even development by ♗f4 or ♗g5. However, by playing 3 ♘c3 instead of 3 ♘f3, White gains some options.

In response to 4...f5, White has two promising courses:

6.11: 5 g4 101
6.12: 5 ♗d3 103

6.11)

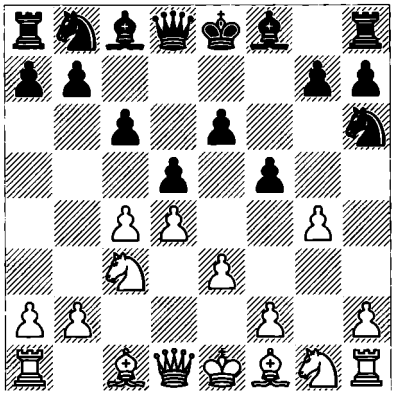
5 g4 *(D)*


B

One of the advantages of 3 ♘c3 is that you still have this move available. It's very loosening and therefore somewhat risky; nevertheless, the play is positionally and strategically based. White is trying to break down Black's centre as directly as possible. Either the f5-pawn disappears by ...fxg4 or White plays gxf5 and after ...exf5 goes after the weakened d5-pawn. The two important moves are:

6.111: 5...fxg4 101
6.112: 5...♘f6 102

After 5...♘h6 *(D)* there are several promising replies:


W

a) 6 g5!? ♕xg5 7 e4 is an interesting gambit: 7...♕f6 (7...♕e7 8 ♗xh6 gxh6 and after 9 ♕h5+ Volkov continues 9...♔d8 10 e5, but 9...♕f7 might simplify and equalize, so perhaps the immediate 9 e5 has more positive potential) 8 exd5 exd5 9 cxd5 ♗d6 10 ♕e2+ ♔d7 (Volkov-Landa, Russia Cup, Perm 1997) and now Volkov gives 11 ♕d3 ♖e8+ 12 ♘ge2, which should favour White.

b) 6 h3 (Volkov's own suggestion, though he ends up on the wrong side!) 6...♗d6 7 ♗d3 e5?! 8 cxd5 0-0 (Ipatov-Volkov, Moscow 2010) and then 9 ♕b3! keeps a nice advantage for White.

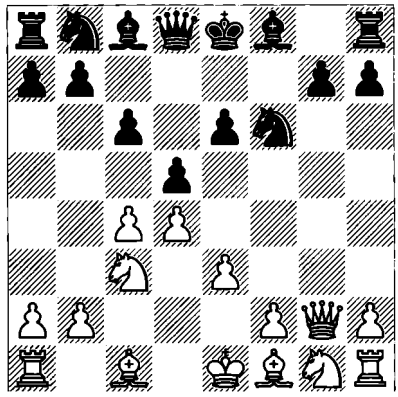
c) 6 gxf5 ♘xf5 7 ♘f3 (7 ♗d3 ♕f6 8 ♘f3 ♗d6 9 e4 ♘xd4 10 ♘xd4 ♕xd4 and here Volkov gave 11 exd5 ♕e5+ =, but 11 ♗e3 is a more ambitious try) 7...♘d7 (7...♗d6 is answered by 8 e4; 7...♗e7 may be best) 8 ♗d3 ♘f6 9 ♕c2 g6?! and now 10 ♗d2 was fine in Bergsma-Koomen, Baarn 1941, but 10 h4! is better, and more fun, threatening 11 cxd5 and upon 11...exd5, 12 h5!.

6.111)

5...fxg4 6 ♕xg4 ♘f6

6...♘h6 7 ♕g2 ♘f5 requires another move to develop and White takes aim with 8 ♗d3. The game Hübner-Adler, Swiss Team Ch 2000 continued a little oddly by 8...♕f6 9 f4!? (9 ♘f3! ♘d7 10 ♗d2 and 0-0-0) 9...♗b4 10 ♘f3 ♘h4 11 ♘xh4 ♕xh4+ 12 ♕g3!, when a trade of queens would have left White with a much better pawn-structure as well as superior development.

7 ♕g2 *(D)*


B

The queen takes aim at d5 and g7, while staying away from further attacks by Black.

7...c5

Probably the most common move, and very thematic, entailing counterattack on White's neglected centre. Other moves:

a) 7...♗b4 led to a pretty game after 8 ♗d2 0-0 9 ♘f3 ♕e7 10 ♖g1 ♘bd7 11 ♗d3 ♗d6 12 0-0-0 ♔h8 13 ♘g5! dxc4 14 ♗xc4 e5 15 ♘ce4 ♗b8 16 ♘e6 ♖g8 17 ♘4g5 ♘d5 18 ♗xd5 cxd5 19 ♕xd5 (Ward points out 19 ♗b4! ♕xb4 20 ♘f7#) 19...h6 20 ♘d8! (an extraordinary combination ends the game) 20...♖xd8 21 ♘f7+ ♔h7 22 ♖xg7+! ♔xg7 23 ♖g1+ ♔f6 (23...♔f8 24 ♗b4! ♕xb4 25 ♘xh6) 24 ♕f3+ ♔e6 25 d5# (1-0) Shaked-Vigh, Schwarzach 1997.

b) 7...♘bd7 8 ♗d2 g6 9 ♘f3 ♗g7 10 ♘g5!? (10 0-0-0) 10...♕e7 11 0-0-0 b5 12 cxb5 c5 13 h4!? ♘b6 14 h5 e5 (14...♘xh5 15 ♘xh7!) 15 hxg6 hxg6 16 ♖xh8+ ♗xh8 17 dxe5 ♕xe5 18 ♘f3 ♕h5 19 ♗d3 ♗g4 (Khenkin-Marcelin, French League 2002) and now the easiest win was 20 ♘h4! ♕xh4 21 ♖h1.

8 ♘f3

8 dxc5 should also keep some advantage.

8...♘c6 9 ♗d2

And here 9 dxc5! ♗xc5 10 ♗d2 with the idea ♖g1 and 0-0-0 gives White an edge.

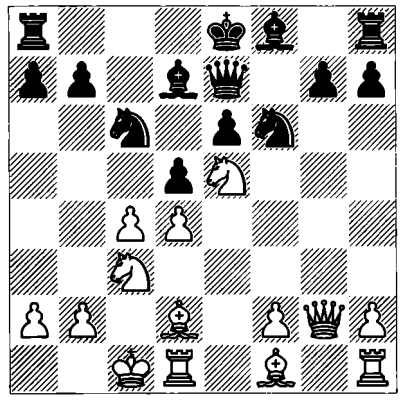
9...♗d7

Seirawan-Yermolinsky, USA Ch, Key West 1994 continued 9...a6 10 0-0-0 ♕c7 11 dxc5 ♗xc5 12 ♖g1 0-0 13 ♘g5 (13 cxd5 exd5 14 ♘xd5 ♘xd5 15 ♗c4 ♘cb4 16 ♗c3!) 13...♔h8 14 ♔b1 ♘e5? 15 ♘a4 ♗a7? 16 ♗b4 ♖g8 (16...♖e8 17 ♗d6!) 17 ♕g3 1-0, since White threatens ♕xe5.

10 0-0-0 ♕e7!?

10...♖c8 11 dxc5 ♗xc5 12 ♖g1 g6 13 ♔b1 0-0 14 h4!?.

11 ♘e5 cxd4 12 exd4 *(D)*



B

12...0-0-0

12...♘xd4? 13 ♗g5! is awfully strong.

13 ♗f4 ♕e8 14 cxd5 exd5 15 ♘xc6 ♗xc6 16 ♕g3

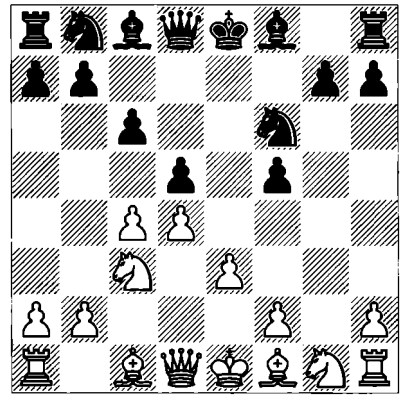
White threatens 17 ♗h3+. Now:

a) 16...b6? 17 ♗a6+ ♗b7 18 ♗d3! ♗c6 19 ♖he1 is hopeless for Black.

b) 16...b5! was played in Dautov-Krasenkow, Essen 2002. Then White could play 17 ♗b8! ♖d7 18 ♗h3 ♔b7 19 ♗xd7 ♕xd7 20 ♗e5 with an advantage, although 20...b4 21 ♘e2 ♗a4 22 b3 ♘e4 23 ♕e3 ♗b5 gives Black some counterchances (Krasenkow).

6.112)

5...♘f6 6 gxf5 exf5 *(D)*



W

White's goal is to attack d5; he also wants to put a knight on the handy outpost square f4, and a piece on e5 could obviously be effective too.

7 ♕b3

This is regarded as best, although White can also try simply 7 ♘f3 or the interesting 7 ♘h3 ♗d6 8 ♕f3! 0-0!? 9 cxd5 cxd5 10 ♘f4!?.

7...dxc4!

This is better than:

a) 7...♕b6?! 8 cxd5 (or 8 ♕xb6 axb6 9 cxd5) 8...♕xb3 9 axb3 ♘xd5 10 ♘xd5 cxd5 11 ♗g2 ♘c6 (11...♗e6 12 ♘e2 and White will win the d-pawn with ♘f4, unless 12...♗d6 13 ♘c3 ♗b4 14 ♔e2 ♗xc3 15 bxc3 is played, when White has better pieces, the centre, etc.)

12 ♘e2 ♘b4 13 0-0 ♗e6 14 ♘f4 ♔f7 15 ♗d2 g5 16 ♘xe6 ♔xe6 17 ♖a5! 1-0 Yakovich-Alibaev, Dubai 2001.

b) 7...♘e4?! 8 cxd5 ♘xc3 9 bxc3 ♕xd5 10 ♕xd5 cxd5 11 ♗g2 and Black has the same problem: falling pawns. Gretarsson-Ragnarsson, Reykjavik 2000 continued 11...♗e6 12 ♘e2 ♗d6 13 c4 ♘a6 14 cxd5 ♗f7 15 ♖b1 0-0 16 ♖xb7 ♘b4 17 ♘c3 ±.

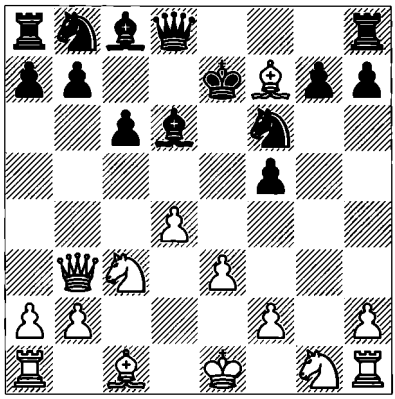
8 ♗xc4 ♗d6!?

a) 8...♕e7 9 ♘h3!? b5 10 ♗d3 g6 11 ♘f4 ♗h6 12 ♘ce2 g5!? 13 ♘g2 ♗e6 14 ♕c2 (Portisch-Haba, Erevan Olympiad 1996) and White has two threats: ♗xf5 and h4.

b) 8...♕b6 9 ♕c2!? ♗d6 10 ♘f3! intending ♘g5 and ♖g1, or simply 0-0.

9 ♗f7+!? ♔e7 *(D)*

W



Now:

a) 10 ♘f3 is the calm way to a slight advantage.

b) After 10 ♗c4, Nickel-Sehner, German corr. Ch 1994 continued 10...b5 11 ♗d3 ♗e6 12 ♕c2 b4 (12...g6 13 ♘h3 ±) 13 ♘ce2 ♕a5 14 b3 ♘bd7 15 ♘h3 g6 16 0-0 ♖ac8 17 ♘ef4 ♗d5 18 f3 (with the idea e4) 18...c5 19 ♘xd5+ ♘xd5 20 ♖e1!? with an attack.

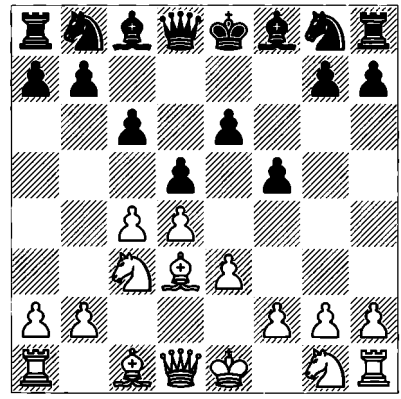
6.12)

5 ♗d3 *(D)*

This is worth seeing in part because it's good to have an alternate repertoire option (although 5 g4 is pretty nice), but also because it's an Anti-Stonewall weapon for anyone not committed to ♘f3 in the opening.

5...♗d6

B



This is a very common move-order. Black doesn't want to block his queen's path to the kingside until he sees how White is deploying his forces. 5...♘f6 tends to come to the same thing, though there are a few independent variations:

a) 6 ♘ge2 ♗d6 transposes to line 'd' of the next note.

b) After 6 ♕c2 both 6...♗d6 and the Stonewall/Chebanenko hybrid 6...a6!? 7 ♘ge2 ♗d6 8 f3 0-0 transpose back to the main line of this section.

c) 6 f4!? is played upon occasion. It can't be bad and even looks slightly irritating to Black; e.g., 6...♗d6 7 ♘f3 0-0 8 0-0 ♘e4 9 ♗d2 ♘d7 (if 9...♘xd2 10 ♕xd2 ♘d7, to bring the other knight to e4 via f6, 11 c5 followed by b4 initiates a promising queenside attack) occurred in Vezzosi-Lputian, Reggio Emilia 1998/9. Then Lputian suggests 10 c5!? ♗c7 11 b4 ±, although 10 ♖c1 and 10 ♗e1 are also reasonable, since c5 and b4 can be played later.

6 ♕c2

Or:

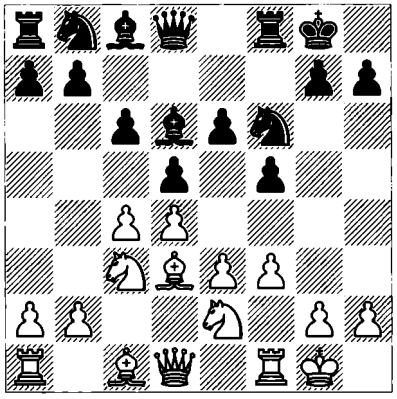
a) 6 g4?! is now inferior due to 6...♘h6! (6...fxg4 7 ♕xg4 ♘f6 8 ♕g2) 7 gxf5 0-0 8 e4 dxe4 9 ♘xe4 ♗b4+ ∓.

b) With Black playing ...♗d6 so early, White might again be tempted to play 6 f4 himself. Not only would Black need two moves to get ...♗b4 in, but when White plays ♘e5 it will be less favourable to capture that knight with one of Black's.

c) 6 ♘f3 ♘f6 7 0-0 0-0 8 b3 (or 8 ♕c2) is obviously playable, probably even slightly advantageous, but letting Black sink a knight into e4 isn't always the best policy.

d) 6 ♘ge2 is obviously OK and may transpose. After 6...♘f6, White can try 7 f3!? (7 ♕c2 transposes to our main line, and in fact it's probably a more logical way to get there, since ♕c2 is a move that might be dispensed with, depending upon the situation) 7...0-0 8 0-0 *(D)*; e.g.:

B



d1) 8...♕c7 9 h3!? dxc4 10 ♗xc4 ♔h8, I.Sokolov-Nikolić, Bled/Rogaška Slatina 1991. I like White prospects in the centre after simply 11 a3 (versus ...b5-b4) 11...b5 12 ♗d3 ♘bd7 13 ♕c2 with the idea ♗d2 and ♖ac1.

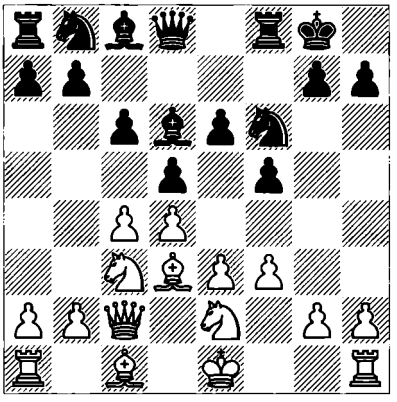
d2) 8...e5 9 cxd5 cxd5 10 dxe5 ♗xe5 11 ♘d4 ♕d6 (Obukhov-Maliutin, Moscow 1991) and now 12 ♘xf5! ♗xh2+ 13 ♔h1 ♗xf5 14 ♗xf5 ♗e5 15 ♘e2 is strong, intending f4 and ♘d4 or ♘c3 depending upon circumstances.

6...♘f6 7 ♘ge2

After 7 cxd5 cxd5 8 ♘b5 ♗b4+ 9 ♗d2 ♗xd2+ 10 ♕xd2 White wins the dark squares, although this appears to be only a small plus.

7...0-0 8 f3 *(D)*

B



Here we have a nice comfortable anti-Stonewall set-up. Black's favourite e4-square isn't available for a knight, and White has possibilities of expansion in the centre and on the queenside.

8...a6

Oddly enough, this is the most popular move among top players. Let's see some alternatives:

a) 8...♕e7 9 0-0 ♔h8 10 cxd5! cxd5?! (or 10...♘xd5 11 a3 ±) 11 ♘b5 ♘c6 12 ♘xd6 ♕xd6 13 a3 (not a position in which to be missing your dark-squared bishop) 13...♗d7 14 b4 ♖ac8 15 ♕d2 a6 16 ♗b2 ♖c7 17 ♗c3 b5 18 ♘c1 e5 19 dxe5 ♘xe5 20 ♘b3 ♗c8 21 ♖ac1 ♖e8 22 ♗xe5! ♕xe5 23 ♖xc7 ♕xc7 24 ♖c1 ♕e5 25 ♗f1 ♘d7 26 ♕d4 ♕d6 27 ♘a5 ♘e5 28 ♗e2 ♖d8 29 ♖c5 ± Lautier-Tregubov, Paris 2004.

b) 8...♘bd7 is one of the better moves, developing quickly and covering e5: 9 ♗d2 (9 b3!?) 9...dxc4! (9...b6? 10 cxd5 cxd5 11 ♘b5 ±) 10 ♗xc4 ♘b6 11 ♗b3 ♔h8 12 a3 e5 13 0-0-0!? (13 0-0) 13...♕e7 14 h3 ♗d7 15 ♔b1 a5 16 g4 (Sashikiran-Krasenkow, Calvia Olympiad 2004; 16 dxe5! ♗xe5 17 g4 ±) and now Scherbakov offers 16...e4 with good counterplay, if not complete equality.

c) 8...♔h8 is a kind of waiting move that comes in handy in the conventional Stonewall. White can play for queenside action or slowly prepare central activity; e.g., 9 ♗d2 c5?! (this is awfully risky; a sound move is 9...♕e7) 10 cxd5 cxd4?! 11 ♘xd4 ♘xd5 12 ♘xd5 exd5 13 0-0 f4? 14 ♘b5 fxe3 15 ♗xe3 ♘a6 16 ♘xd6 ♕xd6 17 ♖ad1 ♕e5? 18 ♖fe1 ♕h5 19 ♗d4 ♖g8 20 ♖e5 ♕h4 21 ♕c3 ♗d7 22 g3 ♕h6 1-0 Hass-Seifert, Polish Team Ch, Mikolajki 1991. An off-day for a strong player.

9 c5!?

This fixes some slight weaknesses and prevents ...dxc4. 9 0-0 is normal; then after 9...♔h8 10 c5 ♗c7 (Akopian-Grishchuk, Ubeda 1999) Grishchuk offers up 11 ♗d2 ♘bd7 12 ♖ae1 ±. 9...b6 10 ♗d2 has been played a few times. For instance, Black successfully solved his problems in Chernin-Grishchuk, European Team Ch, Batumi 1999 by 10...♔h8 11 ♖ad1 ♕c7 12 cxd5 cxd5 13 h3 ♘c6 14 a3 ♗b7 =.

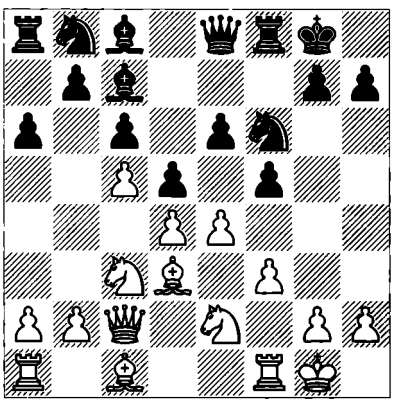
9...♗c7 10 0-0

Now White is set to work in the centre and on the queenside; he has some advantage.

10...♕e8

10...♔h8 11 ♗d2 ♘bd7 12 b4 b6!? 13 ♘a4 and here instead of 13...bxc5?! (as played in Kramnik-Tregubov, French Team Ch 2002) Scherbakov points to 13...b5 as Black's best, when Kramnik gives 14 ♘b2!? g6 (14...a5? 15 a4! ±) 15 a4 ♗b7 16 e4 and White stands better; 16 f4 also deserves attention.

11 e4! *(D)*

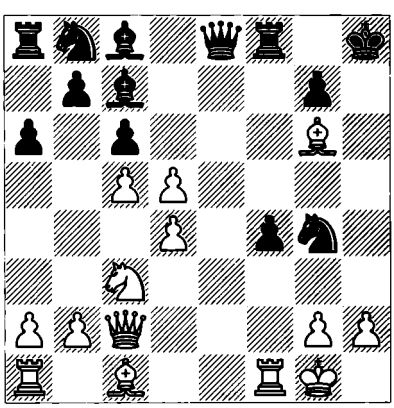


This pawn-break is White's ace-in-the-hole in lines with ♗d3, ♘ge2 and f3.

11...fxe4 12 fxe4 ♘g4 13 ♘f4 e5 14 exd5!

White plays for the attack. 14 h3 isn't bad either.

14...exf4 15 ♗xh7+ ♔h8 16 ♗g6 *(D)*



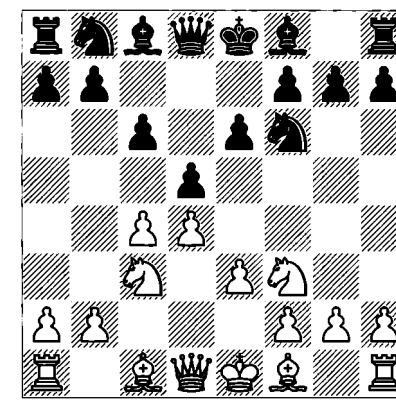
Now:

a) After 16...♘e3, Mamedyarov-D.Schneider, World Under-18 Ch, Iraklion 2002 continued 17 ♕d3 ♗f5 18 ♗xf5 ♘xf5 19 ♗xf4 ♗xf4 20 ♖xf4 ♘h6 21 ♖xf8+ ♕xf8 22 ♖f1 ♕g8 23 g4! (a beautiful move, even if the less romantic 23 ♘e2! with the idea ♘f4 is more decisive) 23...cxd5 (23...♘xg4 24 ♕g3! ♘f6 25 ♕h3+ ♘h7 26 ♘e4 wins for White) 24 g5 and White regained his material with interest due to 24...♘f7 25 ♕h3+.

b) Scherbakov prefers 16...♕e7!?, but it's probably too late: 17 d6 ♗xd6 18 cxd6 ♕xd6 19 h3! ♘h6 20 ♕e4 ±.

6.2)

4...♘f6 5 ♘f3 *(D)*



5...♘bd7

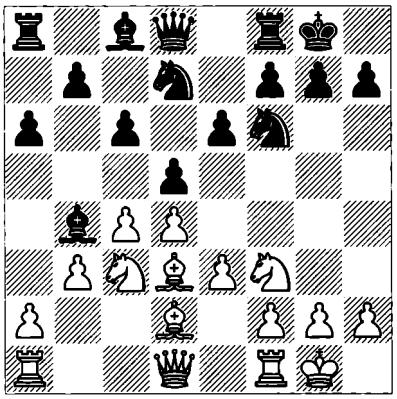
This is one of the main positions of the Semi-Slav, with Black's last move normally a signal that he is willing to play the complex Meran System.

5...a6 (equivalent to 3 ♘c3 ♘f6 4 e3 a6 5 ♘f3 e6) mixes ...e6 and ...a6 systems, which looks slow but has some points; e.g., 6 ♗d3 dxc4 7 ♗xc4 b5 makes use of ...a6 quite nicely, and 6 ♕c2 c5 (see note 'a' to White's 5th move in Section 5.34) makes sense. This has made it popular among grandmasters, but White should nevertheless keep an advantage with 6 b3 (a partial tempo ahead of our main lines, depending upon how you think ...a6 compares with ...♘bd7; 6 c5 is also played) 6...♗b4 7 ♗d2 ♘bd7 8 ♗d3 0-0 9 0-0 *(D)*.

Here are some examples of typical play:

a) Following 9...♕e7, both 10 ♕c2 and 10 ♘e5 are logical, but the nicest move is Aronian's 10 ♕e1!, when 10...♗d6 11 c5 ♗c7 12 e4 ± was I.Sokolov-S.Ivanov, Malmö 2004, and 10...a5 11 a3! ♗xa3 12 e4 gave White the initiative in the game Navara-Erenburg, Bundesliga 2006/7.

B



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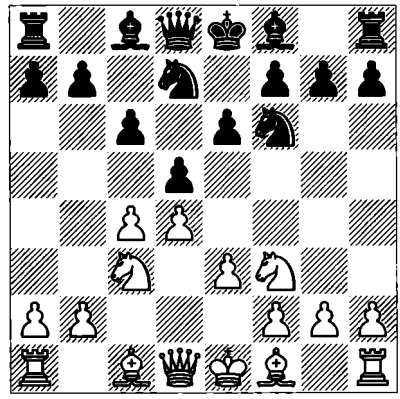


b) 9...♗d6 10 ♕c2 (10 e4!? dxc4 11 bxc4 e5 12 c5 ♗c7 13 ♘a4 is a gambit from Kasparov, very unclear but probably alright for Black; a good alternative is 10 ♖c1 e5 11 cxd5 cxd5 12 dxe5 ♘xe5 13 ♘xe5 ♗xe5 14 ♘e2 ± Dreev-Godena, European Ch, Warsaw 2005) and then:

b1) 10...e5!? 11 cxd5 cxd5 12 e4! and however Black resolves the centre he stands a bit worse. For theory buffs, this is a normal 6 ♕c2 Semi-Slav line with an extra b3 and ♗d2 for White and an extra ...a6 for Black.

b2) Alternatively, 10...♖e8 11 ♖fe1! leaves White better prepared for 11...e5!? 12 cxd5 cxd5 13 e4! ±.

b3) 10...h6 11 ♖ad1 e5 12 cxd5 cxd5 13 e4 dxe4 14 ♘xe4 ♘xe4 15 ♗xe4 exd4 (Ftačnik-M.Gurevich, European Ch, Warsaw 2005) and now Gurevich indicates that 16 ♘xd4 ♘f6 17 ♗f3 ♗xh2+ 18 ♔xh2 ♕xd4 19 ♔g1, threatening ♗xh6, gives White compensation, which is an understatement.

b4) 10...♕e7 11 c5 ♗c7 12 e4 dxe4 13 ♘xe4 ♘xe4 14 ♗xe4 h6 15 ♖fe1 ±.

We now return to 5...♘bd7 *(D)*:

6 b3

This unassuming move has several benefits. It prepares a fianchetto, obviously, which solves the problem of White's worst piece. Equally importantly, it allows recapture with the pawn (bxc4) after ...dxc4. You should be aware that one of the two main lines of the Semi-Slav, the Meran System, goes 6 ♗d3 dxc4 7 ♗xc4 b5. To avoid this, White often plays an 'anti-Meran' line, usually 6 ♕c2. With 6 b3, the capture on c4 followed by harassment of the bishop after ♗xc4 by ...b5 is eliminated. There are other reasons to play 6 b3 instead of 6 ♕c2 (and vice-versa, of course; 6 ♕c2 is much more popular!). It may seem obscure at the moment, but with the queen on c2, Black will often play for the move ...c5 (after ...b6 and ...♗b7, for example, or in lines with ...dxc4, ...a6 and ...c5). Then the queen is situated awkwardly on c2 facing a rook on c8. After 6 b3, although in some variations it will be useful on c2 anyway, White can wait and determine the queen's optimal placement later – it may turn out to be more effective on e2 or even on its home square.

Before moving on to 6 b3, I can't resist presenting an eccentric idea that might be worth a go: 6 ♕c2 ♗d6 7 h3!? (or 7 ♗d2 0-0 8 h3) 7...0-0 (7...e5 8 cxd5 cxd5 9 ♘b5 ♗b8 10 ♗d2 {with the idea ♗b4 and ♖c1} 10...a6 11 ♖c1 ±) 8 ♗d2 (8 ♗e2 ♕e7 9 0-0 dxc4 10 ♗xc4 e5 11 ♗b3!, to avoid ...♘b6 with tempo; most players like White in this kind of position) 8...dxc4 (Black has other moves, of course; 8...♕e7 can be answered by 9 ♗e2 or the useful waiting move 9 ♖d1) 9 ♗xc4 e5 10 0-0. Now we have a reversed Colle with an extra tempo (or two, depending upon the variation). It is widely considered that h3 in conjunction with ♕c2 is the best system for Black in the reversed position (that is, ...h6 and ...♕c7). Something to think about!

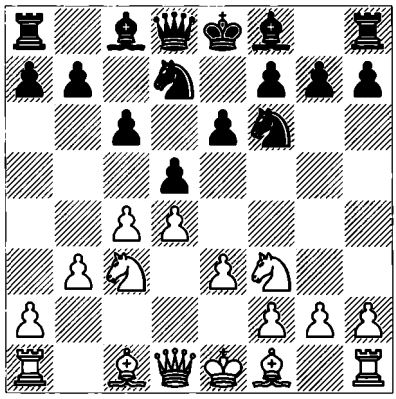
Let's return to 6 b3 *(D)*.

Black's main moves are:

6.21: 6...♗d6 108
6.22: 6...b6 112

White has unique ways to meet these moves, and I will also suggest a transposition to mainstream ♕c2 lines at some points. Other moves

B



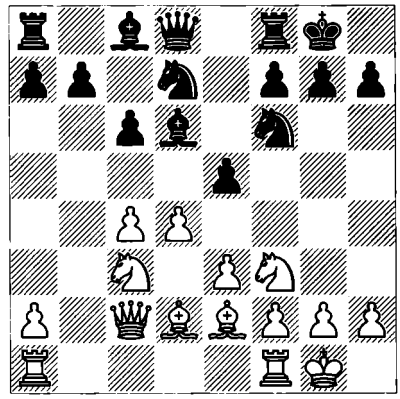
may not be of equivalent worth, but they're playable:

a) 6...♗e7 makes it easier for White to play 0-0 and e4: 7 ♗d3 (the point is that Black can't reply with an early ...e5) 7...0-0 (7...b6 8 ♗b2 ♗b7 transposes to Section 6.22) 8 0-0 b6. Now watch out for the nasty trap 9 e4? ♗b4, when Black wins material! Instead, 9 ♗b2! ♗b7 is 6.22 again.

b) 6...♗b4 7 ♗d2 is less common, but not bad. Black tries to divert White's queen's bishop from the long diagonal. The drawback is that this takes time (the bishop will usually return to d6), and ♗d2 is still a useful move in that it clears the back rank and speeds White's development. Here are some sample lines:

b1) 7...♗d6 8 ♕c2 0-0 9 ♗e2 dxc4 10 bxc4 e5 11 0-0 *(D)* brings us to an interesting position.

B



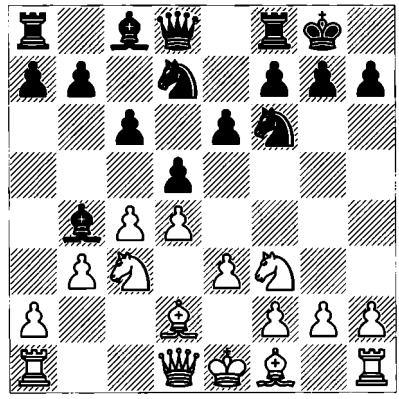
Black has a foothold in the centre, but his pieces are to a considerable extent tied to the e-pawn. For example:

b11) 11...♕e7 12 ♗d3 ♖e8 13 ♘g5! ♘f8 14 f4!? (14 ♖fe1 h6 15 ♘ge4 ♘xe4 16 ♘xe4 ♗c7 and now 17 ♖ab1, intending ♗b4, and 17 ♘g3 g6 18 ♖ab1 are both appealing) 14...exd4 15 exd4 ♕c7 16 c5! ♗e7 17 f5 ♕d8 (17...♖d8 18 ♗c4!) 18 ♖ae1!? (18 ♘f3! ±) and now Black should settle for 18...♕xd4+ 19 ♗e3 ♕xe3+! 20 ♖xe3 ♗xc5 21 ♔h1 ♖xe3 22 ♗c4 ±. Instead 18...♘d5?? was answered by the fairly strong 19 ♗c4 in Halouzka-Pecenka, corr. 1989-90, but 19 ♘xd5! is immediately decisive: 19...cxd5 (19...♕xd5 20 ♗c4) 20 f6 gxf6 21 ♗xh7+ ♔g7 22 ♘xf7 ♔xf7 23 ♗h6! and White wins.

b12) 11...exd4 12 exd4 ♖e8 13 ♖fe1 ♘f8 14 ♗d3 ♖xe1+ 15 ♖xe1 ♗g4 16 ♘e5 (or 16 ♘g5 h6 17 ♘ge4 ♘xe4 18 ♘xe4 ♗c7 19 d5! ±) 16...♗xe5 (Krasenkov gave 16...♘e6 17 ♗e3 c5 18 ♘e4 ♗h5! 19 d5 ♗xe5 20 dxe6 fxe6, but among other moves, 21 ♘g5! ♗xh2+ 22 ♔h1 makes mischief: 22...h6 23 ♘xe6 ♕e7 24 ♗xc5 ♗d6 25 ♗d4 with an attack) 17 dxe5 ♘6d7 18 ♘a4 ♕h4 (Krasenkov-Matlak, Polish Team Ch, Mikolajki 1991) and now 19 f3 ♗h5 20 f4 ± gives White the better prospects.

b2) 7...0-0 *(D)* and now:

W



b21) 8 ♗e2 ♕e7 9 0-0 is unpretentious and safe. If 9...e5, then White can try 10 a3!? ♗d6 11 cxd5, when 11...cxd5 12 ♘b5 or 11...e4 12 ♘g5 cxd5 13 ♘b5 won't please Black, so 11...♘xd5! 12 ♘xd5 cxd5 13 dxe5 ♘xe5 14 ♗c3 ± might follow.

b22) 8 ♗d3!? is not bad, but rather optimistic:

b221) 8...♕e7 9 0-0 e5 10 dxe5 ♘xe5 11 ♘xe5 ♕xe5 12 ♘xd5! ♘xd5 13 cxd5 ♗d6! 14 f4 ♕xd5 15 ♕c2 ♕h5 16 ♗c3 with a slight

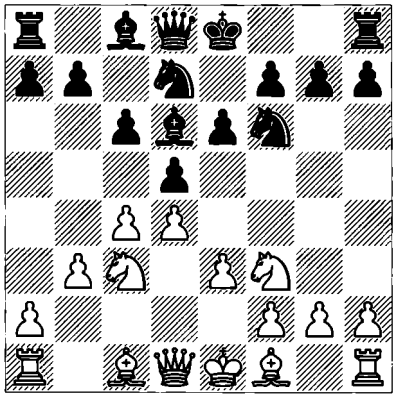
advantage for White, Uhlmann-Starostits, Leutersdorf 2002. Admittedly, this isn't much, but it's a game.

b222) 8...♖e8 9 0-0 ♗f8 (9...e5 10 dxe5 dxc4! 11 bxc4 ♘xe5 12 ♘xe5 ♖xe5 13 ♕c2 g6 14 ♖ad1 ♗d6 15 ♘e2 intending h3 and ♗c3, with a minor edge) 10 ♕c2 g6 11 ♖ad1!? (11 ♖fe1 a6 12 e4 dxc4 13 ♗xc4 b5 14 ♗f1 ±) 11...b6 12 e4 dxe4 13 ♘xe4 ♕c7 (13...♗b7 14 ♗g5 ♗e7 15 ♘c3! ±; 13...♘xe4 14 ♗xe4 ♗b7 15 ♖fe1 ±) 14 ♘xf6+ ♘xf6 15 ♗g5 ♘d7 16 ♖fe1 ♗b7 17 ♗h4!? (17 ♖e2! with the idea 17...e5 18 ♖de1) 17...♗d6 18 ♗g3 ♗xg3 19 hxg3 e5 20 dxe5 ♘xe5 21 c5 with only a very minor advantage and few prospects against accurate play, Kramnik-Marek, Lyons simultaneous 2001.

6.21)

6...♗d6 *(D)*

W



This is the 'normal' move, in that it is played versus 6 ♕c2 and other anti-Meran moves. Black would simply like to get castled, protect his centre, and either continue ...e5 when advantageous, or build up for ...c5 with ...b6 and ...♗b7.

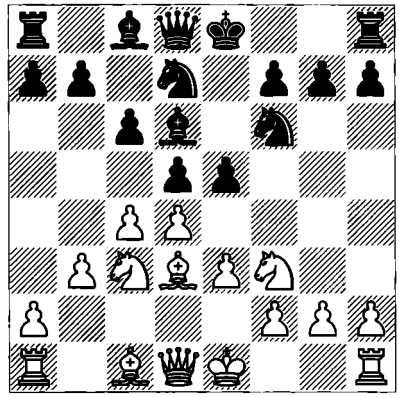
7 ♗e2

There's one bad alternative and one rather good one:

a) The move ♗d3 should only be played when ...e5 isn't effective. Here White has to be aware of the forking move ...e4, and 7 ♗d3? e5! *(D)* illustrates this:

a1) 8 cxd5? ♗b4! (threatening ...e4) 9 ♕c2 e4 10 dxc6 exf3! 11 cxd7+ ♗xd7 ∓ with the idea 12 gxf3? ♘d5 13 ♗d2 ♗xc3 14 ♗xc3 ♖c8 15 ♗c4 ♘xc3 16 ♕xc3 b5, etc.

W

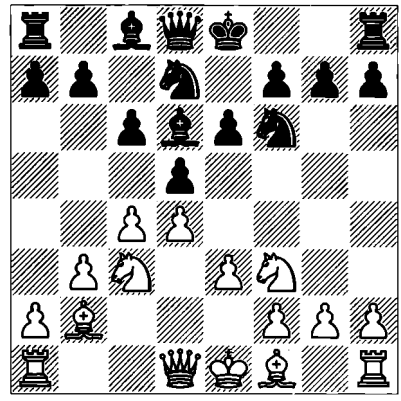


a2) 8 dxe5 ♘xe5 9 cxd5?! ♕a5!; e.g., 10 ♕d2 can be met by 10...♗b4 11 ♗b2 ♘xf3+ 12 gxf3 ♘xd5. Black even gets a little advantage with the cute trick 10...♕xc3!? 11 ♕xc3 ♗b4!, when White has to play 12 ♔d2! ♘xd3 13 ♔xd3 ♗f5+ 14 ♔c4 ♗xc3 15 ♔xc3 ♘e4+ ∓.

a3) Best is 8 ♘xe5 ♘xe5 9 dxe5 ♗xe5 10 ♗b2 dxc4 ∓.

b) It's often better to get ♗e2 and 0-0 in quickly, because otherwise ...e5 can have more effect. However, that's primarily the case if White has also spent a move on 6 ♕c2, and having skipped that move here, it turns out that there's time for 7 ♗b2 *(D)*:

B

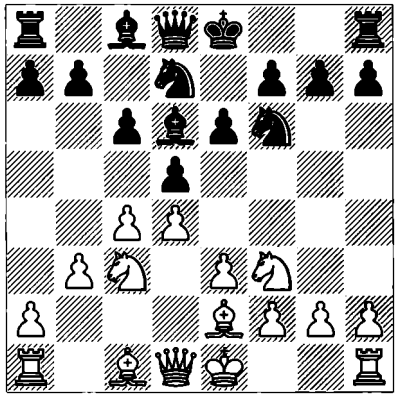


b1) 7...e5 8 cxd5 (8 ♗e2!? e4 9 ♘d2 is quite an interesting possibility, as White intends g4-g5 and 0-0-0; this is very much like a reversed form of variations of the Tarrasch French with 3...♘f6) 8...♘xd5!? (8...cxd5 9 dxe5 ♘xe5 10 ♘xe5 ♗xe5 11 ♗b5+ ♗d7 12 ♗xd7+ ♕xd7 13

0-0 isn't clear, but since Black can't enforce ...d4, White will get a long-term positional edge) 9 ♘xd5 cxd5 10 dxe5 ♕a5+ 11 ♔e2! gives White an extra pawn he can hold on to; for instance, 11...b6 12 ♕d4 ♗a6+ 13 ♔d1 ♗xf1 14 ♖xf1 ♕b5 15 ♖g1 ±.

b2) 7...0-0 8 ♗e2 (8 ♗d3 e5! 9 cxd5 cxd5 10 dxe5 ♘xe5 11 ♘xe5 ♗xe5 12 0-0 ♖e8! = has the dual ideas of ...d4 and ...♗xh2+) 8...e5 (8...dxc4 9 bxc4 e5 10 0-0 ♖e8 11 ♕c2 transposes to Section 6.212) 9 dxe5! ♘xe5 10 cxd5 cxd5 11 0-0 ±. A possible continuation runs 11...♘xf3+ 12 ♗xf3 ♗e5 13 ♕d2 d4?! (but otherwise, in addition to ♖fd1, ♘b5 or ♘e2 is coming) 14 ♘b5 ♗g4 15 ♗xg4 ♘xg4 16 f4 ♗f6 17 e4!, when White will win a pawn for minimal compensation. Compare the next note.

We now return to 7 ♗e2 *(D)*:



B

7...0-0

With the bishop on e2, 7...e5 8 cxd5 cxd5 9 dxe5 ♘xe5 10 0-0 is what White wants to achieve from an isolated-pawn position. After 10...♗e6 (10...♘xf3+ 11 ♗xf3 ♗e5 12 ♗b2 0-0 13 ♕d2 ♗e6 and now 14 ♖fd1 or 14 ♘e2 ±) 11 ♗b2 0-0 12 ♘b5 ♘xf3+ 13 ♗xf3 ♗b8 14 ♖c1 a6 15 ♘d4 ♕d6 16 g3 ♗a7 17 ♘e2!, White threatens ♗xf6 and has a variety of moves such as ♘f4, ♕d3 and ♗d4 at the ready.

8 0-0

Now Black picks a strategy:

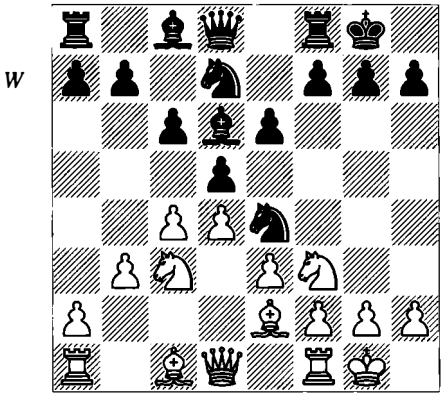
6.211: 8...♘e4 109
6.212: 8...♖e8 110
6.213: 8...b6 111

a) Once more, 8...e5 gives White comfortable play after 9 dxe5 ♘xe5 10 cxd5 ♘xf3+ 11 ♗xf3 ♗e5 12 ♗b2 ♘xd5 13 ♗xd5! cxd5 14 ♕d2 ± ♗e6 (14...d4?! 15 ♘b5) 15 ♘e2, when he has control of the position, although his game is hardly dominant.

b) 8...♕e7 usually transposes to one of our main variations. An unusual line would be 9 ♕c2 (for the paradoxical 9 ♗b2 b6 10 ♗d3!? ♗b7, see Section 6.213) 9...b6 10 cxd5!? (an oddity when not having played ♗b2 yet; 10 ♗b2 is normal) 10...cxd5 (10...exd5 11 ♗d3 ♗b7 12 ♖e1 with the idea e4) 11 ♘b5 ♗a6 12 ♘xd6 ♗xe2 13 ♕xe2 ♕xd6 14 a4 ♖fc8 15 ♗a3 ♕b8 16 ♕a6, and White has a very slight edge because of his influential bishop.

6.211)

8...♘e4 *(D)*



W

Black has in mind establishing a Stonewall structure with ...f5.

9 ♕c2

9 ♘xe4 dxe4 10 ♘d2 is also played; furthermore, 9 ♗b2 f5 10 ♘e1 ♖f6 11 f4 ♖h6 12 ♘xe4 fxe4 13 g3 proved a successful plan in Uhlmann-Lukacs, Austrian Team Ch 2000/1, although right now it's about equal.

9...f5

This is Black's intended set-up, which Vera suggests following up with a kingside attack, using moves like ...♕f6 and/or ...g5, with ...♖f6-h6 as a possibility. That's a logical-sounding plan, but does have the drawback that it will be a long time before the a8-rook and c8-bishop will be able to support the other pieces in this endeavour. Let's take a look.

10 a4

This is the safest counter-strategy, preparing ♗a3 to eliminate the attacker, while also initiating a queenside expansion. The alternative is 10 ♗b2, which can support ♘e5 at the right moment; e.g., 10...♕f6 11 ♖ac1 g5 (11...♕g6 12 ♗d3 with the idea ♘e2 and ♘f4, sometimes preceded by ♘e5) 12 h3 (12 g3 ♕h6 13 ♘xe4 fxe4 14 ♘e5 ±) 12...g4? (12...h5 13 ♘xe4 fxe4 14 ♘e5 ♘xe5 15 dxe5 ♗xe5 16 ♗a3 ±) 13 hxg4 fxg4 14 ♘xe4 dxe4 15 ♘e5 ±.

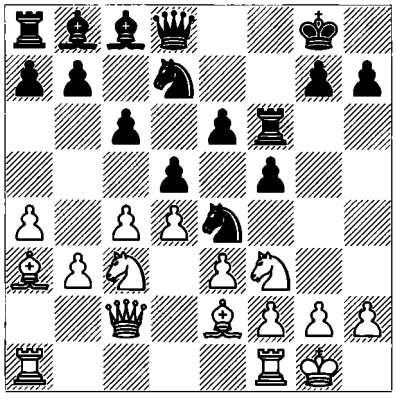
10...♖f6!?

a) 10...♕e7 11 ♗b2 ♖f6 12 a5 ♖h6 is an easy attack to fend off: 13 g3 ♘df6 14 ♘e5 ♗xe5 15 dxe5 ♘xc3 16 ♕xc3 ♘e4 17 ♕d4 and White has a slight advantage.

b) 10...a5 11 ♗a3 ♗xa3 12 ♖xa3 ♕f6 13 ♖aa1 ±.

11 ♗a3 ♗b8 *(D)*

W



12 ♖ad1

I think 12 ♖ac1 should also achieve a moderate advantage; for example, 12...b6 13 cxd5 exd5 14 g3 ♗b7 15 ♘h4 g5!? (15...♗d6 16 ♘xe4 fxe4 17 ♗xd6 ♖xd6 18 f3 exf3 19 ♘xf3 ±) 16 ♘xf5! ♘xc3 17 ♘e7+ ♔h8 18 ♕xc3 c5 19 dxc5 ♗e5 20 ♕d3 ♘xc5 21 ♖xc5 bxc5 22 ♗xc5 ♗d6 23 ♗xd6 ♕xd6 24 ♘f5 ♕e5 25 ♘d4 ±.

12...♖h6 13 g3 ♕e8 14 ♔g2 a5 15 ♖c1 ♘df6 16 ♘e5 g5

Now:

a) 17 ♘xe4 has the ideas 17...fxe4?! 18 f4!, 17...dxe4 18 h3 and 17...♘xe4 18 h3 ±.

b) After 17 h3, Korchnoi-Akopian, Groningen 1996 went 17...♗c7 18 f3 ♘xc3 19 ♕xc3 ♘d7 20 ♖h1 ♘xe5 21 dxe5 ♗d7 22 ♔f2 ♗b6 23 ♗d6 ♕f7 24 ♖cg1 ♔h8 25 c5 ±.

6.212)

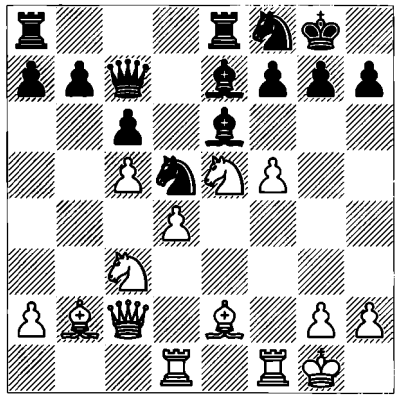
8...♖e8 9 ♕c2

Or, of course, 9 ♗b2, which you should compare with this and other lines.

9...dxc4 10 bxc4 e5 11 ♗b2 ♕e7

The structure after 11...exd4 12 exd4 is very common; White's central pawns are flexible and always threatening to advance. Play can continue 12...♘f8 13 ♖ad1 ♕c7 14 c5 (14 ♖fe1 ♘g6 15 h3 ± ♘f4 16 ♗f1 ♖xe1 17 ♖xe1 ♗e6) 14...♗e7 15 ♘e5 ♗e6 16 f4, when Flear gives 16...♘d5 an '!'. However, while White has given up key squares and entombed his b2-bishop, he's done so for the sake of a direct attack, and 17 f5! *(D)* implements that:

B



a) 17...♘e3 18 ♕d3 ♘xd1 19 ♗xd1 f6 (or 19...♗c8 20 ♗b3 and White is winning) 20 ♘xc6! bxc6 21 fxe6 and ♗b3 gives White an extra powerful passed central pawn for the exchange.

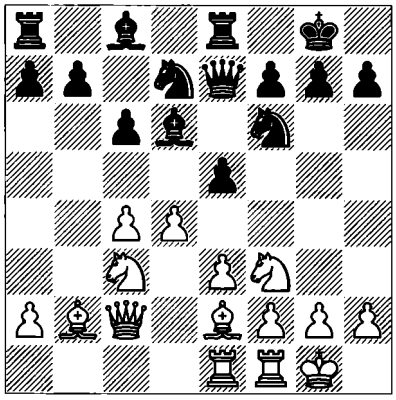
b) 17...♘xc3 is the book move, but after 18 fxe6 ♘xe2+ 19 ♕xe2 f6, White can keep his advantage by 20 ♘d3 (instead of 20 ♕g4?!, as played in Taimanov-Chekhov, Tallinn 1980) 20...♗d8 21 ♘f4, when a long, semi-forced variation is 21...♕e7 22 ♕g4 ♗c7 23 ♘h5 ♘g6 24 d5! ♗e5 (24...♕xc5+ 25 ♔h1 ♕d6 26 ♕h3 +–) 25 ♗xe5 ♘xe5 26 ♕g3 ♕xc5+ 27 ♔h1 ♘g6 28 ♖xf6! gxf6 29 ♘xf6+ ♔g7 30 ♘xe8+ ♖xe8 31 d6 ± ♕h5 32 ♖e1 ♕d5 33 d7 ♖g8! 34 ♕c3+ ♔h6 35 ♕h3+ ♕h5 36 e7 ♕xh3 37 e8♕! and White wins.

12 ♖ae1 *(D)*

This move gives White time to pursue his own ambitions without having to defend the

kingside. The 'other rook' move, 12 ♖fe1?!, has been played a lot, but after 12...e4 13 ♘d2 ♘f8, the line 14 f3 exf3 15 ♗xf3 ♘g4! hasn't treated White well after many tests. Another interesting sequence is 14 a4 ♘g6 15 c5 ♗c7 16 a5; e.g., 16...♘h4 17 a6 b6 18 cxb6 axb6 19 a7 ♕e6 20 g3.

B



Now:

a) 12...e4 13 ♘d2 ♘f8 can be answered by 14 c5 ♗b8 15 ♘c4 with the idea 15...b5 16 ♘e5. In the game Azmaiparashvili-Kaidanov, USSR 1982, White played the odd-looking 14 ♗d1 ♘g6 15 f3! exf3 16 ♘xf3 with the idea 16...♘g4 17 e4 or 16...♗e6 17 ♗e2! ♘g4 18 ♗d3 ±.

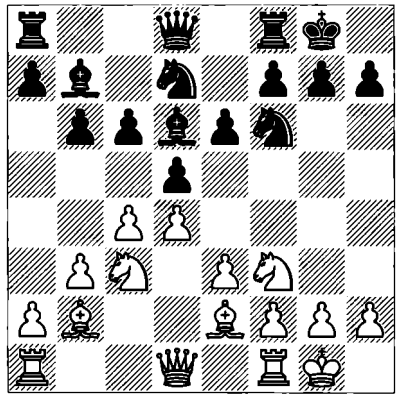
b) 12...♗c7 13 c5!? (a less committal alternative is 13 ♕b3, intending ♗a3 in some lines) 13...h6 14 ♗a3 e4?! 15 ♘d2 ♘f8 16 ♘c4 ± came out nicely for White in G.Kuzmin-Agzamov, USSR Ch, Frunze 1981. This line illustrates the creative leeway that 6 b3 allows.

6.213)

8...b6 9 ♗b2 ♗b7 *(D)*

This is a main line. Now 10 ♕c2 is the most common move (a position that much more often arises when White plays 6 ♕c2). We have years of practice with it, to the extent that many games have been repeated nearly or entirely move-for-move. The general conclusion is that 10 ♕c2 ends in equality, which is not really a problem in itself when you're trying to find an interesting position to play. The difficulty is that White tends to be stuck with the same plan, i.e., playing for e4 either before or after bringing rooks to the

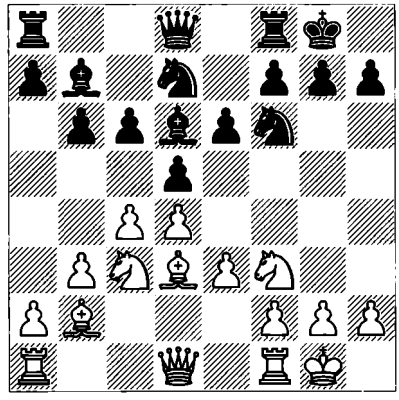
W



centre. Then after some exchanges leaving the queen on e4, Black plays either ...f5 (often followed by ...c5) or ...♘f6, attacking the queen, and equalizes. It's revealing that with the queen on c2, Gelfand and others have upon occasion simply accepted the loss of tempo and played ♗d3, and then ♕e2, either preparing e4 or simply improving the position of the queen while keeping an eye on a6, for example. Then Black tries to play an early ...e5 and equalize. It occurs to me that you could try the same idea here, i.e., play ♗d3 and then save a tempo by playing ♕e2 directly (instead of ♕c2-e2). Let's see how that might work out:

10 ♗d3 *(D)*

B



10...♕e7

I think this is the most appropriate move. In general, White can play the more aggressive ♗d3 in any line in which Black is not poised to play ...e5; otherwise, ♗e2 tends to be preferable, as it is the best square for the bishop should Black take on an isolated queen's pawn. In this

position 10...e5? is inferior due to 11 cxd5 cxd5 12 ♘b5. Here are some other typical moves:

a) 10...♖e8 11 ♕e2 (contemplating e4, of course, but also introducing the idea of cxd5 and ♗a6) can lead to:

a1) 11...e5 always has to be checked: 12 dxe5 ♘xe5 13 cxd5!? ♘xd3 (13...♘xd5 14 ♘xd5 ♘xd3 15 ♕xd3 cxd5 16 ♖ac1 with a favourable isolated-pawn position for White because of the good knight versus bad bishop) 14 ♕xd3 cxd5 15 ♘b5 ♗e7 16 ♖ac1 ♘e4 17 ♕e2 ♗a6 18 a4 ♘c5 19 ♕d1 ± with the idea b4.

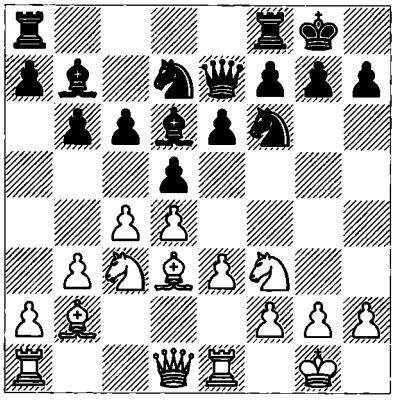
a2) 11...a6 (versus cxd5 and ♗a6) 12 ♖fd1 dxc4 13 bxc4 c5 14 ♘e5 ♕c7 15 f4 with an obscure position; hard to assess, but I'd rather be White.

b) 10...c5 provides opportunities for both sides to complicate and this time there are actually real game examples: 11 ♕e2 (11 cxd5 exd5 is preferable; then White's queen is well placed, so 12 ♖c1!, having in mind dxc5 with ♗f5, or ♘e2-f4, appears to be more accurate than the 12 ♕e2 a6 13 ♖fd1 of Züger-Khenkin, Swiss Team Ch 2010) 11...♖e8 12 ♖fd1 a6, G.Buckley-Wells, London (Lloyds Bank) 1994. The game is essentially equal after 13 dxc5 bxc5 or 13 cxd5 exd5 14 ♖ac1 g6.

11 ♖e1 *(D)*

I should probably be consistent and suggest 11 ♕e2, but it's tempting to get e4 in with the queen a target on e7.

B



11...♖ad8

Accordingly, Black places his own rook where it eyes the white queen.

a) On this occasion, White is particularly ready for 11...e5?!: 12 cxd5 cxd5 (12...e4 13 ♘h4! cxd5 14 ♘f5 ♕e6 15 ♘xd6 ♕xd6 16 ♗e2 ±) 13 e4! and exchanges will favour White.

b) 11...♖fe8 12 e4 (12 cxd5 with the idea e4 might be more accurate, since 12...cxd5 13 ♘b5 looks worthwhile) and then:

b1) 12...dxe4 13 ♘xe4 ♘xe4 14 ♗xe4 ♘f6 15 ♗c2 ♖ad8 16 a3 ± (versus ...♗b4).

b2) 12...dxc4! 13 ♗xc4 b5 14 ♗d3 e5 (14...b4?! 15 e5! bxc3 16 exd6 ♕xd6 17 ♗xc3 gives White a slight advantage) 15 ♘e2 a6 16 ♖c1 ♖ad8 17 ♕d2 with chances for both sides.

12 ♕e2 c5 13 cxd5 cxd4

13...exd5 can be answered by 14 ♗a6 (a side-benefit of the queen on e2).

14 ♘xd4 ♘xd5 15 ♘xd5 ♗xd5 16 ♖ac1 ♘c5 17 ♗c4

The pawn-structure is still symmetrical but White's piece-play can keep the game lively; e.g., 17...♗xc4 (17...♗a8 18 ♕h5 g6 19 ♕h6 e5 20 ♘f3!? ♗xf3 21 gxf3 and White has some genuine attacking and endgame prospects) 18 ♕xc4 ♕b7 19 ♖ed1 ♖c8 20 ♘b5 ♗b8 21 ♕g4.

Well, to be perfectly clear, the analysis above is for illustrative purposes, and you can be sure that with sensible play in the positions after 10 ♗d3, the game is objectively close to equal, just as it is in all the anti-Meran systems. I'm proposing this variation not to guarantee the better game (although in most cases you can get an edge), but to provide an alternative to 15 moves of tactical and largely forced theoretical continuations. This way you have the whole game in front of you in which to try to outplay your opponent.

6.22)

6...b6 *(D)*

Black can play this on any of the next four moves, so a lot of what I'm showing can come from an equivalent transposition.

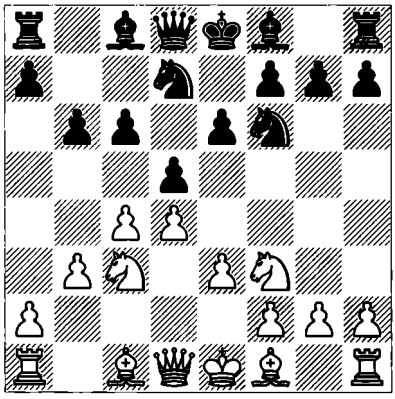
7 ♗b2 ♗b7 8 ♗d3

As explained in the note to White's 9th move, White is secure in this move when Black can't play an early ...e5.

8...♗e7

In this popular set-up, Black plays solidly and doesn't expose himself to some of the attacks to which the bishop on d6 was subject (e.g., ♘b5). Most importantly, he can answer ♘e5 with ...♘xe5 and the bishop won't be

W

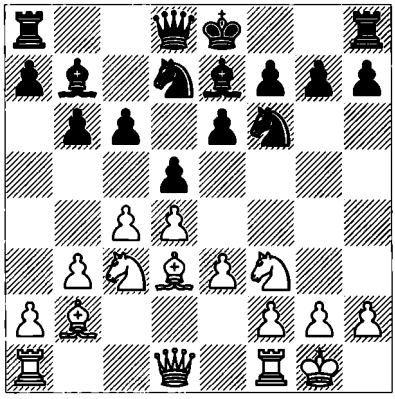


attacked on d6. For lines with ...♗d6, see Section 6.21.

9 0-0 *(D)*

This position can arise by a variety of move-orders; for example, if Black plays 6...♗e7 7 ♗b2 0-0, etc., a set-up which has attracted some good players recently, or even from a radically different move-order such as 3 ♘f3 ♘f6 4 e3 e6 5 b3 ♘bd7 6 ♗b2 b6 7 ♗d3 ♗b7 8 0-0 ♗e7 9 ♘c3.

B



9...0-0 10 ♕c2

Avrukh says of this position: "This seems to me to be quite favourable for White. He has a clear plan of strengthening his position with ♖ad1, ♘e5, f4 and so on, while it is not so easy for Black to create serious counterplay." I would add that simply e4, often preceded by ♖ad1, can be effective at the right moment. As a general comment, I should also repeat that, since ♗d3 is already in, I prefer putting the queen on e2, and 10 ♕e2 indeed has some advantages. This move often works better with e4, since the queen can capture on e4 in some lines, and it also stays out of the way of ...♖c8 and ...c5. Notice that after ...♗e7, Black's own queen can't get to e7 and is itself subject to attack on the c-file if it goes to c7.

In the event, I'll stick with 10 ♕c2 because you may find that there are other move-orders by which you reach this position but are already committed to ♕c2. This in particular gives you flexibility if you don't like the 6 b3 move-order, but do like the b3 set-up. For the record, however, I should say that Kasparov has played the position after 10 ♕e2 twice (albeit in simultaneous displays), as have other strong players.

10...♖c8

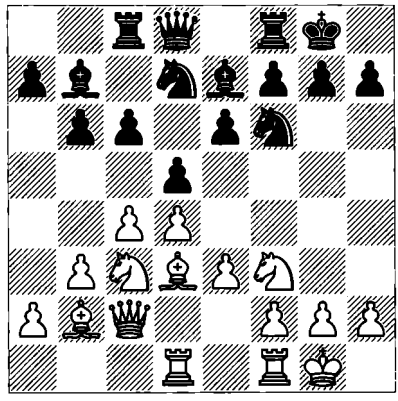
a) 10...♕c7 11 ♘e5 (11 ♖fd1 improves, I think; for example, 11...♖ac8 12 ♖ac1 h6 13 ♕e2) 11...♘xe5? (11...c5 12 f4 ♖ad8 13 ♖ad1 ± Krasenkow, but this isn't much) 12 dxe5 dxc4 13 bxc4 ♘g4 (13...♘d7? 14 ♗xh7+ ♔h8 15 f4) 14 ♗xh7+ ♔h8 15 ♕e2 f5 16 h3 ♔xh7 17 hxg4 ♕xe5?! 18 g5! ♖h8 19 ♘d5 ♕d6 20 ♗e5! ♕d7 21 ♘c7 +– Sargissian-Egiazarian, Erevan 2004; a lovely combination.

b) 10...c5 11 ♖ad1 ♖c8 12 dxc5 ♖xc5 was the actual move-order of Polugaevsky-Comas Fabrego below.

11 ♖ad1 *(D)*

11 ♖fd1 would be better in the line 11...♕c7 12 ♕e2 ♖fe8 13 ♖ac1; of course, this is always a difficult decision, because the most useful squares for the rooks are determined by how the game develops.

B

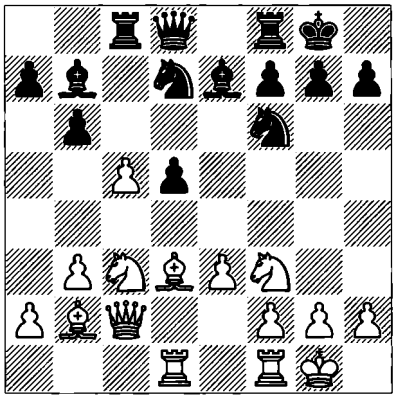


11...♕c7

This is an important juncture with some instructive alternatives:

a) 11...h6 12 e4 (12 ♘e5 ♘xe5 13 dxe5 ♘d7 14 f4 ±) 12...dxe4 13 ♘xe4 ♘xe4 14 ♗xe4 ♘f6 (14...f5?! 15 ♗d3 c5 16 d5!) 15 ♗d3 ♕c7 16 c5!? (I like 16 ♖fe1 ±) 16...♘d5 17 ♘e5 ♘b4 (Kveinys-Hole, Oslo 2007) and now Avrukh recommends 18 ♕c4 ♘xd3 19 ♖xd3 with "a stable advantage due to Black's lazy bishop on b7".

b) 11...c5 (a natural move) 12 cxd5 exd5 (12...cxd4 13 ♘xd4 leaves White clearly better after 13...exd5 14 ♘f5 or 13...♗xd5 14 ♗a6) 13 dxc5 *(D)* (13 ♗f5 ± Kramnik) and now:

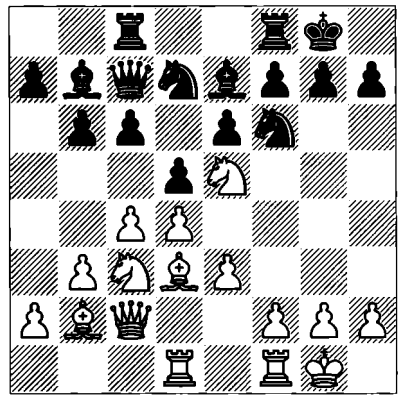

B

b1) 13...♖xc5 14 ♕b1 ♖e8 15 ♘e2 ♖c8 16 ♘f4 ± h6 17 ♗f5 ♖c7? 18 ♘d4 ♗a6?? 19 ♘de6! 1-0 Polugaevsky-Comas Fabrego, Palma de Mallorca 1989, due to 19...fxe6 20 ♗xe6+ ♔h8 21 ♘g6+ ♔h7 22 ♘f8++ ♔h8 23 ♕h7+! ♘xh7 24 ♘g6#.

b2) 13...bxc5 14 ♗f5 g6?! (14...♖e8!? with the idea ...♗f8 – Sokolov) 15 ♗h3 a6 16 ♘e2!? (16 ♘a4 ±) 16...♖c7 17 ♕c3 ♘b6 18 ♕a5 ± I.Sokolov-Khalifman, Pardubice 1994.

c) 11...♖e8 12 ♕e2 (even with the loss of tempo, this is a reasonable move) 12...♕c7 13 e4 dxe4 14 ♘xe4 ♘xe4 15 ♕xe4 ♘f8 (15...♘f6 is the standard response if ...f5 isn't available) 16 ♖fe1 c5 17 d5! exd5 18 cxd5 ♗f6 19 ♕xe8! ♖xe8 20 ♖xe8 ♗xb2 21 d6 ♕c6 22 ♗b5! ♕xb5 23 d7 ♗f6? (23...♗xf3! 24 ♖xf8+ ♔xf8 25 d8♕+ ♕e8 26 gxf3 ±) 24 d8♕ ♗xd8 25 ♖dxd8 g6 26 ♖xf8+ ♔g7 27 ♘g5 is winning for White, Papenin-Shvidun, Ukrainian Team Ch, Alushta 2004.

12 ♘e5 *(D)*


B

12...♖fd8

This is the main theoretical move. Alternatives:

a) 12...♘xe5? 13 dxe5 ♘g4 14 ♗xh7+ ♔h8 15 ♕e2! ± Csom-Metz, Budapest 1995.

b) 12...h6 13 ♕e2 (or Avrukh's suggestion 13 f4! first, to avoid ...♘xe5 on the following move; 13 ♘xd7 ♘xd7 followed by 14 ♕e2 or 14 e4 would serve a similar purpose, but with fewer attacking chances) and here:

b1) 13...♘xe5 14 dxe5 ♘d7 is only slightly better for White; e.g., 15 f4 ♘c5 (15...dxc4?! 16 bxc4 ♘c5 17 ♗b1 ♖fd8 18 ♖d4 ±) 16 ♗b1 dxc4 17 bxc4 ♖fd8 18 ♖d4 ±.

b2) 13...♖fd8 14 f4! c5?! (Kramnik-Van Wely, Wijk aan Zee 2007) and here 15 f5! (Krasenkow) is strong, as is Kramnik's 15 ♘b5 ♕b8 16 f5.

c) 12...g6 13 f4 a6 14 ♕e2 dxc4! 15 bxc4 ♖fd8 keeps Black's disadvantage to a minimum. Then ...c5 is in the air, so 16 ♗c2! is a good move, having in mind both 16...c5? 17 d5 and the fact that the bishop might transfer to b3.

13 f4

Now:

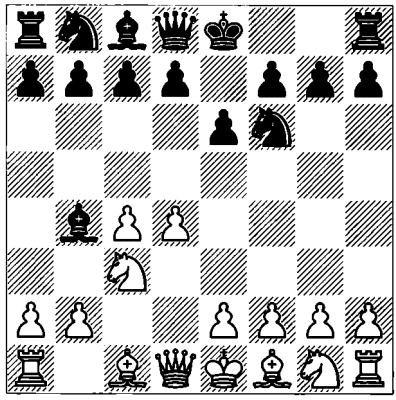
a) 13...c5 can be countered by 14 cxd5! exd5 15 ♕e2 (Avrukh).

b) After 13...♘f8, 14 ♕e2?! c5? (14...dxc4! 15 ♗xc4 ♘d5) 15 f5! gave White a serious attack in Florean-Aliev, Calicut 1998. More accurate is 14 f5!; e.g., 14...♗d6 (14...♗a6 15 fxe6 fxe6 16 ♘e2 ±) 15 fxe6 fxe6 (15...♘xe6? 16 ♖xf6! gxf6 17 ♘g4 ±) 16 cxd5 exd5 (16...cxd5 17 ♕f2! with the idea ♘b5) 17 ♗f5 ♖a8 18 e4! with a significant initiative.

7 Nimzo-Indian Defence

1 d4 ♘f6 2 c4 e6 3 ♘c3 ♗b4 *(D)*

W



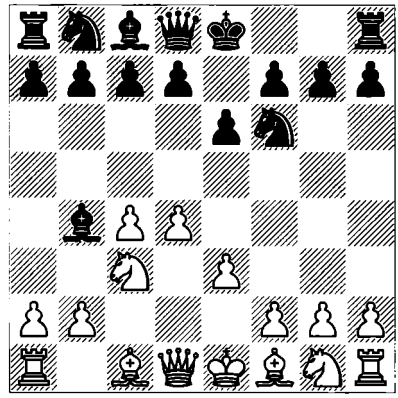
The Nimzo-Indian Defence was for many years a mainstay of nearly every elite player's repertoire. It was said that the reason players used 1 e4 was because after 1 d4 they had to cope with the Nimzo-Indian! The opening is still one of the elite defences versus 1 d4, although now not as feared, and competing in popularity with the Slav, Semi-Slav, Queen's Gambit Declined and (at this moment) the Grünfeld Defence. In our case, we are using 3 ♘c3 because it is consistent with the rest of our repertoire and, in the event that Black plays 3...d5, we have bypassed some troublesome defences which White would allow should he play 3 ♘f3 (an issue I outlined in Chapter 1). Besides, the Nimzo-Indian is one of the greatest strategic openings in all of chess, so it would be a shame to pass it by!

4 e3 *(D)*

This gentle advance of the e-pawn has historically been played more often than any other move against the Nimzo-Indian, and in contemporary chess is played in slightly over a third of the games with 3...♗b4. Nearly every leading player has played 4 e3, some of them regularly.

Despite blocking in the queen's bishop, the move accomplishes a few basic things:

B



1) White prepares to develop his kingside quickly, and retains flexibility as to the placement of his king's knight on f3 or e2.

2) The e4-square can be challenged by ♗d3, while c3 can be covered by ♘ge2, potentially with a later ♘g3 to control e4 further.

3) The d4-pawn is covered, so the typical Nimzo-Indian attack by ...c5 and ...♘c6 has less forcing effect.

These are modest achievements, and the non-forcing nature of 4 e3 gives Black a great deal of latitude as to how to develop. Still, once White develops and castles, he will be threatening to expand with e4, and thus Black's main moves are directed at setting up so as to prevent or anticipate that advance:

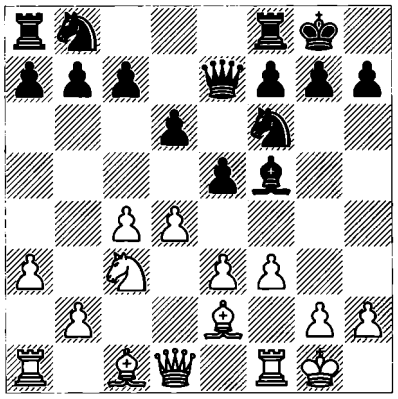
7.1: 4...c5 117
7.2: 4...b6 126
7.3: 4...0-0 139
7.4: 4...d5 143
7.5: 4...♘c6 146

I'm not going to deal with illogical or slow 4th moves – after all, Black can play just about anything – but there are a couple of other moves that are important enough to mention:

a) 4...d6 is sound, intending an early ...e5 as he wishes. White has some leeway in setting up:

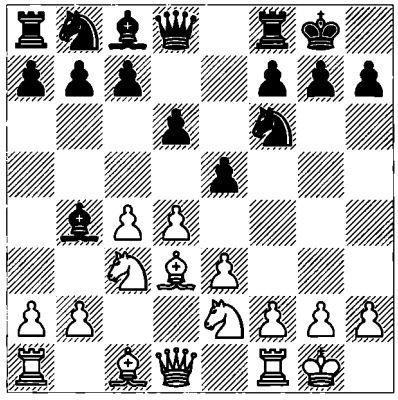
a1) The classic encounter Euwe-Yanofsky, Groningen 1946 continued 5 ♘e2 0-0 6 a3

♗xc3+ 7 ♘xc3 e5 8 ♗e2 ♕e7 9 0-0 ♗f5 10 f3! *(D)*.



10...♘c6 (White has cleverly discouraged 10...e4?! due to 11 fxe4 ♗xe4? 12 ♖xf6! gxf6 13 ♘xe4 ♕xe4 14 ♗f3 and b7 falls) 11 ♘d5! ♘xd5 12 cxd5 ♘b8 13 e4 ♗c8 14 ♗e3 exd4 15 ♕xd4. White has taken over the centre and has the bishop-pair.

a2) 5 ♗d3 0-0 6 ♘e2 is attractive, and now the only consistent move is 6...e5. A few examples after 7 0-0 *(D)*:

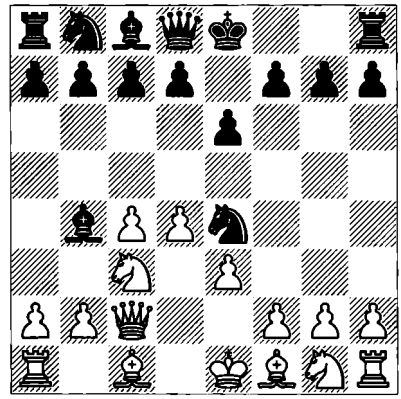


a21) 7...♖e8 8 a3 ♗xc3 9 ♘xc3 ♘bd7 10 ♗c2 (10 f3 h6 11 d5 ♘c5 12 ♗c2 a5 13 e4 ♗d7 14 ♗e3 gives White an edge due to his space and bishops) 10...h6 11 d5 ♘f8 12 f3 ♘g6 13 b3 ♗d7 14 ♗b2 with a solid advantage for White, Chekhov-G.Kuzmin, Leningrad 1991.

a22) 7...c6 8 a3 ♗a5 9 b4 ♗c7 10 ♕c2 ♖e8 11 ♗b2 (or 11 f3 ♘bd7 12 d5 ±) 11...exd4 12 ♘xd4 ♘bd7 13 ♖ad1 ♘e5 14 ♗e2 ♕e7 15 ♖d2 ♗d7 16 ♘f5 ♗xf5 17 ♕xf5 ♖ad8 18 ♖fd1 with a slight advantage for White, Likavsky-Vuković, Zalakaros 2001.

a23) 7...♘c6 8 d5 ♘b8 9 a3 ♗xc3 10 ♘xc3 a5 11 e4 ♘e8 12 ♗e3 ± Botvinnik-Kholmov, Moscow 1947.

b) 4...♘e4 has been connected with a few recent pawn sacrifices. After 5 ♕c2 *(D)* Black has two plausible options:



b1) 5..f5 6 ♗d3 (or 6 ♘e2 b6 7 a3 ♗xc3+ 8 ♘xc3 ♘xc3 9 ♕xc3 ±) 6...0-0!? (6...♗xc3+ 7 bxc3 0-0 8 ♘e2 b6 9 0-0 ♗b7 10 f3 ♘d6 11 ♗a3 ♘c6 – Rogozenko; then White should play 12 c5 bxc5 13 ♗xc5 ♕g5 14 ♘f4 ♕h6 15 ♖ab1 ♖ab8 16 ♕a4 with a distinct advantage) 7 ♘e2 (you don't have to give up your good bishop when the alternative is so natural; it turns out that 7 ♗xe4 fxe4 8 ♕xe4 d5 has quite a bit of analysis attached to it, which may not be worth your time to study) 7...b6 8 0-0 ♗xc3 9 ♘xc3 (9 bxc3!? is a bit more ambitious and looks promising; e.g., 9...♗b7 10 f3 ♘d6 11 ♗a3 ♕g5 12 ♘f4 ♘c6 13 c5 bxc5 14 ♗xc5 ±) 9...♘xc3 10 ♕xc3 ♗b7 11 b4 d6 12 ♗b2 (or 12 c5) with an edge for White because of the bishops – Emms; he nevertheless points out that it's a fairly normal game and you can't expect any quick victories to follow.

b2) 5...♘xc3 6 bxc3 ♗a5 is another relatively new attempt to block the centre with some combination of ...d6, ...c5 and ...e5. A good way for White to set up is 7 ♗d3 d6 8 ♘e2 followed by central and kingside expansion; for example, 8...h6 9 0-0 and now 9...0-0 10 e4 e5 11 f4 ♘d7 12 ♗e3 ♘f6 13 h3 or 9...♘d7 10 e4 c5 11 f4 with a dangerous pawn-mass.

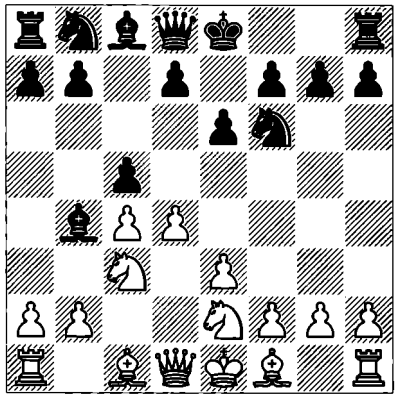
7.1)

4...c5

This is Black's most aggressive continuation; it strikes at d4, usually with the specific intention of ...cxd4 followed by ...d5, to compromise White's centre. It is in some ways the most important move to study, because White has to know tactical specifics and concrete positional moves, as well as the general contours of a variety of types of position. Although the alternative 4...0-0 is now played more often, especially at the elite levels, the resulting play there is slow and easier to understand.

5 ♘e2 *(D)*

B



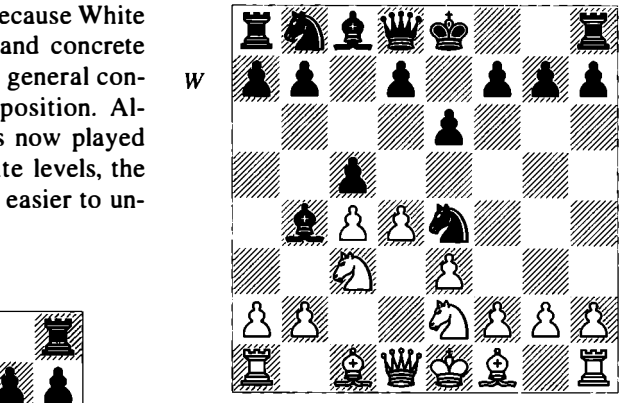
I am recommending playing this way against most defensive set-ups. The knight move develops a kingside piece, prevents Black from doubling White's c-pawns, and prepares a3 to force a favourable resolution of the queenside situation. ♘f4 or ♘g3 may follow, with control over the corresponding central squares. With a knight on e2, it is also possible to play moves like g3 and f3. On the negative side, on e2, the knight blocks the king's bishop and fails to control e5. In the abstract, a knight on f3 is better placed as it covers two central squares and reaches into enemy territory; on the other hand, with a knight on f3, Black can often create doubled c-pawns by capturing on c3, and he can put a piece on e4 without being chased away by f3. These are typical trade-offs in chess, and naturally the consequences are to be found in the particulars of the play.

5...cxd4

a) 5...b6 transposes to Section 7.24 (i.e. 4...b6 5 ♘e2 c5).

b) 5...♘e4 *(D)* is playable, even though it moves a piece twice and reduces Black's control over d5 and e4. White has two logical replies:

W



b1) 6 ♗d2 ♘xd2 7 ♕xd2 gains development in return for the bishops. White also has ideas of d5 and a3. Compare this with Section 7.23 (i.e. 4...b6 5 ♘e2 ♘e4). There can follow 7...cxd4 8 exd4 0-0 (8...d5 9 c5 is the main line of Section 7.121) 9 a3 ♗e7 (now 9...♗xc3 10 ♘xc3 d5 11 c5 falls short of transposing to 7.121 since Black isn't in time to play ...a4 – see the note to Black's 11th move in that section) 10 g3!? (naturally 10 d5 is also playable) 10...d5 11 cxd5 exd5 12 ♗g2 ♗e6 13 0-0 (13 ♘f4 ♗g5! =) 13...♘c6 14 ♖ad1 ♗g5 (versus ♘f4) 15 ♕d3 with balanced play. Knights are often a touch better than bishops in this structure. One idea is ♕f3 and ♘f4 in order to compel ...♗xf4 and leave White with the better bishop.

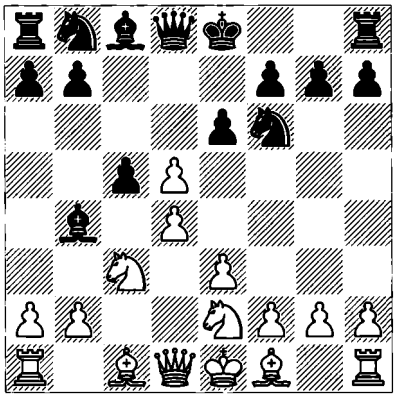
b2) If you can't stand ceding the bishop-pair in the opening, 6 ♕c2 plays for a central advantage: 6...cxd4 7 exd4 d5 8 a3 ♘xc3!? (8...♗xc3+ 9 ♘xc3 and now both 9...♘xc3 10 bxc3 and 9...♘c6 10 ♗e3 ♘xc3 11 bxc3 ± give White the bishop-pair and superior structure) and now:

b21) 9 axb4 ♘xe2 10 ♗xe2 ♘c6! (10...dxc4 11 b5! with the idea 11...♕xd4?! 12 ♗e3) 11 ♕c3 dxc4 12 ♗e3 (12 d5!? ♕xd5 13 0-0 0-0 14 ♗e3 results in pressure for a pawn) 12...0-0 13 0-0 ♘e7 14 ♕xc4 ♗d7 15 b5 ±. This isn't much, but White has the bishops and some queenside pressure.

b22) 9 ♘xc3 ♗d6 and now 10 c5 is perhaps best. Instead, 10 cxd5!? exd5 11 ♗d3 ♘c6 12 ♗e3 ♗e6 13 0-0 leaves White a few moves ahead in a symmetrical position, with a real but limited advantage.

c) 5...d5 is a smart way to get to one of the main lines below by 6 a3 ♗xc3+ 7 ♘xc3 cxd4 8 exd4, which transposes to 5...cxd4 6 exd4 d5 7 a3 ♗xc3+ 8 ♘xc3 (see 7.122), but bypasses White's option of 7 c5 in 7.121. The only drawback is that White can enter the rather sterile but slightly advantageous lines arising from 6 cxd5 *(D)*, which is therefore important to examine briefly:

B



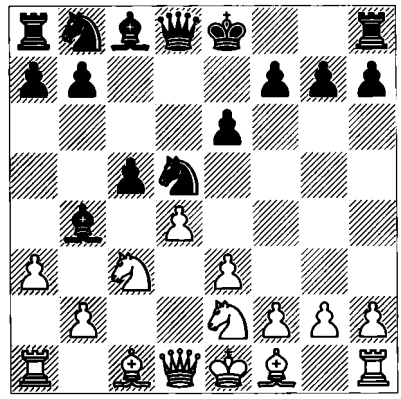
c1) 6...exd5 is sound, but Black lacks positive play after 7 a3 ♗xc3+ 8 ♘xc3 cxd4 9 exd4 0-0 10 ♗e2; for example, 10...♘e4!? 11 ♘xe4 dxe4 12 d5! ♕f6 13 0-0 ♖d8 14 ♗e3 (14 ♕b3 ♘d7 15 ♕g3!) 14...♕e5 15 ♕b3 with some fancy footwork: 15...b6 (15...♕xd5?? 16 ♖ad1; 15...♖xd5? 16 ♗f4!) 16 ♖fd1 ♗a6 17 ♗d4! ♕d6 (17...♕xd5?? 18 ♗e3) 18 ♕e3 ♗xe2 19 ♕xe2 f5 20 ♖ac1 ± Oll-Novikov, Kuldiga 1987, with the idea 20...♘d7 21 ♖c6! ♕xd5 22 ♖d6! ♕f7 23 ♗e5 with ♗f4 and/or ♕d2 next.

c2) 6...♘xd5 has been the main move by some margin. There follows 7 a3 *(D)*:

c21) 7...cxd4?! 8 axb4 (8 ♕xd4!? ±) 8...dxc3 9 bxc3 ♕c7 (9...0-0 10 e4 ♘f6 11 ♕xd8 ♖xd8 12 f3 ± and ♗e3) 10 ♕b3! 0-0 11 c4 ♘f6 and in G.Kramer-Ulvestad, Baltimore 1948 White extracted an edge from 12 ♘d4 but 12 ♘f4 looks better, or 12 ♘c3! b6 13 ♗e2 ♗b7 14 0-0 ±.

c22) 7...♗a5 8 dxc5! ♗xc3+! (8...♘xc3? 9 ♕xd8+ ♔xd8 gives White the extra option of 10 ♗d2! ±) 9 ♘xc3 ♘xc3 10 ♕xd8+ ♔xd8 11 bxc3 ♘d7 (11...♗d7 12 e4 ♗c6 13 f3 ♘d7 14 ♗e3 ±) 12 c6 bxc6, and one course is 13 e4 ♔c7 14 ♗e3 ±. It's not a big advantage, but nobody really wants to play against such bishops.

B



c23) 7...♗xc3+ and now:

c231) 8 bxc3 is called '±' by Babula, perhaps based upon play such as 8...cxd4 9 cxd4 0-0 10 ♘g3 ♘c6 11 ♗d3 with the idea 11...e5 12 dxe5 ♘xe5 13 ♗xh7+ ♔xh7 14 ♕h5+ ♔g8 15 ♕xe5. 8...0-0 probably improves, when 9 g3!? intending 10 e4 and 11 ♗g2 is interesting.

c232) 8 ♘xc3!? cxd4 9 ♕xd4 0-0 10 ♘xd5 exd5 11 ♕f4!? ♘c6 12 ♗d3 d4 13 0-0 dxe3 14 ♕xe3 ♖e8 15 ♕g3 ♘d4 16 ♗g5 ♘f3+ 17 ♕xf3 ♕xg5 18 ♗c4 with just enough mini-threats to be annoying, although it would be hard to make much out of 18...♕f6 19 ♕xf6 gxf6.

c24) 7...♘xc3 8 ♘xc3 ♗a5 (8...♗xc3+?! 9 bxc3 gives Black no compensation for the bishops; likewise with 8...cxd4?! 9 axb4 dxc3 10 ♕xd8+ ♔xd8 11 bxc3 ±) 9 dxc5!? ♕xd1+ (9...♗xc3+ 10 bxc3 ♕a5!? isn't problem-free after 11 ♗e2 ♘d7 and now 12 c6 or just 12 0-0 ♘xc5 13 ♕d6 ♗d7 14 a4! ± intending ♗a3) 10 ♔xd1 ♗xc3 11 bxc3 ♘d7 12 c6 bxc6. This is extremely similar to line 'c22'; e.g., 13 ♔c2 ♘c5 14 a4 ♗a6 15 ♗xa6 (or 15 ♗a3 ♗xf1 16 ♖hxf1 ♘xa4 17 ♗b4 ±) 15...♘xa6 16 ♖d1 ±.

6 exd4 *(D)*

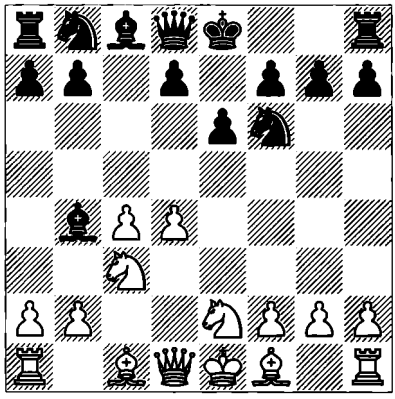
This is the most popular position by far. Now Black has two logical moves:

7.11: 6...0-0 118
7.12: 6...d5 121

7.11)

6...0-0 7 a3

B



For something different, there's Scherbakov's 7 c5!?, preparing ♗f4. Black's main replies are 7...d6 and 7...♘e4, both adequate, but neither able to snuff the content from the position.

Now a last parting of the ways:

7.111: 7...♗xc3+ 119
7.112: 7...♗e7 120

7.111)

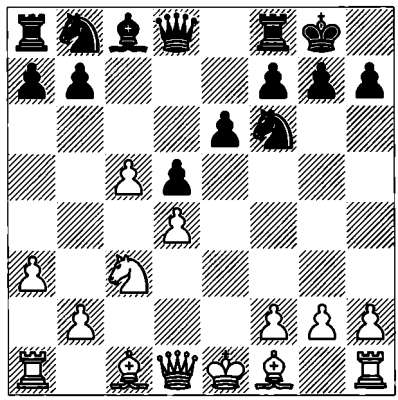
7...♗xc3+ 8 ♘xc3 d5 9 c5 *(D)*

This calm move should favour White; it's instructive to see why.

9 cxd5 ♘xd5 (9...exd5 transposes to note 'c1' to Black's 5th move in Section 7.1) 10 ♗d3 ♘c6 11 0-0 b6 12 ♖e1 ♗b7 leads to a typical position with chances for both sides.

Remarkably, the position after 9 ♗d3 dxc4 10 ♗xc4 ♘c6 11 ♗e3 has been played by strong grandmasters, and hasn't done badly, even though White is a full tempo down on the main line of Section 7.122 – all the more reason to respect that line for White!

B



9...b6

This break and one with ...e5 have to be critical; otherwise White's two bishops and space will give him the better of it:

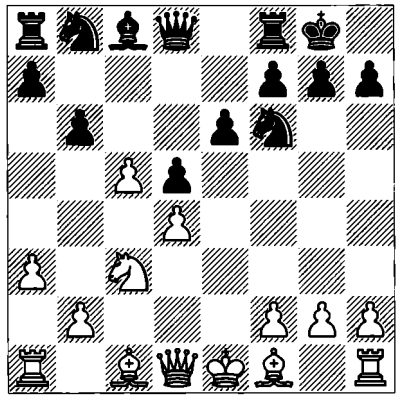
a) 9...♘e4 10 ♘xe4!? (10 ♗d3 ♘xc3 11 bxc3 e5 12 0-0 ♘c6 13 ♗e3 ±) 10...dxe4 11 ♗e3 ♘c6 (11...♗d7 12 b4!? ♗c6 13 ♗e2 ♗d5 14 b5) 12 ♗c4 f5 13 ♕d2 ♕f6 14 g3 ±.

b) 9...♘c6 aims for ...e5. White can play 10 ♗e2 (or 10 ♗f4 ♖e8 11 ♗b5; for example, 11...♗d7 12 0-0 a6 13 ♗e2 ♘e4, Khismatullin-Kravtsiv, Voronezh 2007, and now 14 ♘xe4 dxe4 15 f3! is good) 10...e5 11 dxe5! ♘xe5 12 ♗e3 ♘c4 (12...♘c6 13 ♘b5!) 13 ♗g5!? (or 13 ♗d4 ♘xb2 14 ♕c2 ♘c4 15 0-0 ♗e6 16 ♖ad1 ±) 13...♘xb2 (13...d4 14 ♗xc4 dxc3 15 ♕xd8 ♖xd8 16 bxc3 ±) 14 ♕d4! ♗e6 15 0-0 h6 16 ♗h4 ♘c4 17 f4! ♘a5? (Black should play 17...♘e3!, but White stands better after either 18 ♕xe3 d4 19 ♕g3 dxc3 20 ♖ad1 ♕e7 21 ♖d6! or even 18 f5!? ♘xf5 19 ♖xf5! ♗xf5 20 ♖f1) 18 f5 ♘b3 (18...♘c6 19 ♗xf6! +–) 19 ♕e5! ♘xa1 20 fxe6 fxe6 21 ♕xe6+ ♔h8 22 ♖xa1 +– Sadler-Khalifman, Bundesliga 1999/00.

c) 9...e5!? can and maybe objectively should be met by 10 dxe5, but that gets complicated and an easy way to a small positional advantage is 10 ♗b5!? a6 11 ♗a4 exd4 12 ♕xd4 ♘c6 13 ♗xc6 bxc6 14 0-0 h6 15 ♗f4, again with a modest advantage.

We now return to 9...b6 *(D)*:

W



10 b4 bxc5 11 dxc5

Now:

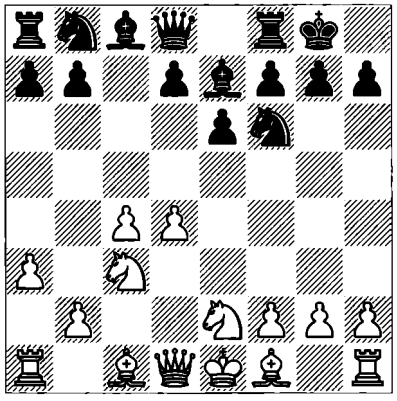
a) 11...e5?! is natural, but loosening. Khismatullin-Harutjunian, Izhevsk 2011 continued

12 ♗g5 ♗b7 13 ♗xf6 (13 ♘b5! ± is better still) 13...♕xf6 (13...gxf6? 14 ♕h5!) 14 ♘xd5 ♗xd5 15 ♕xd5 e4, and here White's best course was 16 ♖c1! ♕b2 17 ♕d2 ♕xa3 18 c6! ♘a6 19 ♗xa6 ♕xa6 20 ♕e2 ♕b6 21 ♕c4 ±.

b) Even after the superior 11...♕c7 12 ♗e2 ♘c6 13 0-0 a6 14 ♗g5 ♘d7 15 ♕d2, White has the upper hand.

7.112)

7...♗e7 *(D)*



8 ♘f4

Again I'll stick to something straightforward which is easy to prepare and offers chances for an advantage. 8 d5 exd5 9 cxd5 is a main line that has undergone many years of practice and analysis. It offers plenty of excitement and strategic challenges, especially in the wild line 9...♖e8 10 d6 ♗f8, where Black plays ...♖e6 and captures the d-pawn, but at a considerable cost in development and piece placement. Even the supposedly complete solution 9...♗c5 gives White chances for a slight advantage. Some years ago I intended to play this from both sides of the board and can tell you that it's still a good choice for White if you want to spend umpteen hours working out what is, alas, only one small part of your repertoire.

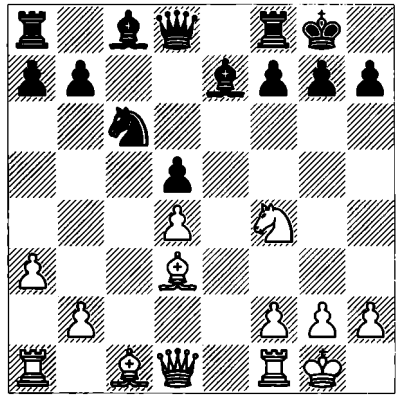
8...d5

8...d6 is sound but a bit slow; for example, 9 ♗e3 ♘bd7 (9...e5 10 dxe5 dxe5 11 ♘fd5 ♘xd5 12 cxd5 ♗g5 13 ♕d2 ♗xe3 14 ♕xe3 ±) 10 ♗e2 ♖e8 (10...e5 11 ♘fd5 ♘xd5 12 ♘xd5 ♘f6 13 ♘xe7+ ♕xe7 14 0-0 ± Lautier-Timman, Dordrecht blitz 2001) 11 0-0 ♘f8 12 b4 (12 ♗f3 – Lautier) 12...♘g6 13 ♘xg6 hxg6 14 ♗f3 with a convincing space advantage, Lautier-Cvitan, European Ch, Ohrid 2001.

9 cxd5 ♘xd5

9...exd5 isn't played much, as Black would like to exchange pieces and win some freedom. There might follow 10 ♗e2!? (or 10 ♗d3 ♘c6 11 0-0) 10...♘c6 11 0-0 ♗f5 12 ♗f3 ♗d6!? 13 ♘fxd5 ♘xd5 14 ♗xd5 with the idea 14...♕h4? (14...♕b6 15 ♗e3 ♕xb2 16 ♘e4 ♖ad8 17 ♕f3! ±) 15 g3! ♕xd4?? 16 ♗xc6.

10 ♘cxd5 exd5 11 ♗d3 ♘c6 12 0-0 *(D)*



12...♗f6

a) 12...♘xd4 13 ♗xh7+ ♔xh7 14 ♕xd4 is obviously easy for White to play.

b) 12...♗g5 13 ♖e1 ♗xf4 14 ♗xf4 ♕f6 15 ♕h5! g6 16 ♕h6 (16 ♗e5!?) 16...♗e6 (not 16...♕xd4?? 17 ♕xf8+!) 17 ♖ac1! threatens ♖xc6!, so play might go 17...♕g7 18 ♕xg7+ ♔xg7 19 ♗a6! ♘a5 (19...♗c8 20 ♗b5! ♗d7 21 ♖c5!) 20 ♖c5!? ♘b3 21 ♖c7 (21 ♗xb7 ♘xc5 22 dxc5 is also promising) 21...bxa6 22 ♖xe6 ♖ac8 23 ♖ee7 ♖xc7 24 ♖xc7 ♖e8 25 ♗e5+ ♔f8 26 g4! with threats such as ♗f6, ♖d7 and ♖xa7.

13 ♗e3 g6

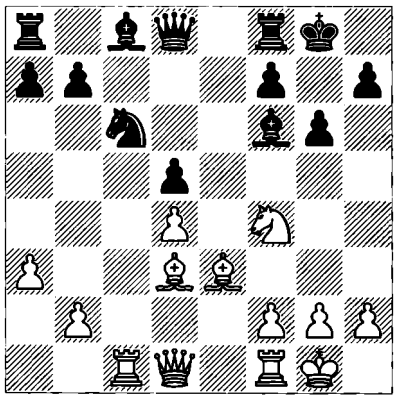
Likewise 13...♘xd4?! 14 ♗xd4 ♗xd4 15 ♗xh7+ ♔xh7 16 ♕xd4; this time the d-pawn is under great pressure.

14 ♖c1! *(D)*

14 ♗c2 is a logical option, protecting d4; after something like 14...♕d6 15 ♕d2 ♖e8 16 ♖fe1, the bishop may go to b3 or a4.

The position after 14 ♖c1 has been reached many times over the years (with rather spectacular success for White, but Black keeps trying).

B



White intends ♖c5 and perhaps ♕b3 or ♕f3; the manoeuvre ♗b1-a2 can also be useful.

14...♕d6

The current favourite. Other moves:

a) 14...♘xd4 15 ♗xd4 ♗xd4 16 ♗xg6 ♗xf2+ 17 ♖xf2 hxg6 18 ♕d4! ♗e6 19 h4! with an attack (or 19 ♖fc2).

b) 14...♗g7 15 ♖c5 (15 ♗b1!?) 15...♘e7 (15...♗e6 gives White various approaches; e.g., 16 ♗b1 with the idea ♕d2 or simply 16 ♘xe6 fxe6 17 ♕g4 ♕f6 18 b4!) 16 ♕b3 b6 17 ♖c3 and now:

b1) 17...♗f5 18 ♗a6! ♕d6 19 ♖fc1 ♗e6 20 ♘e2 (versus ...♗xd4, although 20 g3 is also good) 20...♘f5 21 ♗f4 ♕e7 (I.Sokolov-J.Richardson, Reykjavik 1998) and here in view of the attack on d4 and the idea of ...♕h4, 22 ♕d1! is a good way to keep White's advantage, with ♖c7 next.

b2) 17...♕d6 18 ♖fc1!? (giving up a pawn for two bishops and pressure; 18 ♕b4! is a simpler path to advantage – after 18...♕xb4 19 axb4 ♖d8 20 ♖fc1 ♗f5 21 ♗a6, Black is tied down and hasn't won a pawn) 18...♗xd4! 19 ♗xd4 ♕xf4 20 ♗e3 (20 ♕b4!? ♘f5 21 ♗f6! ♕xb4 22 axb4 ♗d7 23 ♗a6 ± Lautier-Nikolić, Moscow 2001) 20...♕d6 21 ♖c7 d4 22 ♗h6 ♗e6 23 ♕a4 ♖fd8 (Paramos Dominguez-Nava Pereda, Cordoba 1995) and now 24 ♗e4 would finally recover the pawn with a slight advantage. 18 ♕b4 appears to be the way to go; regardless, this whole line is a thankless task for Black.

15 ♗b1

Or 15 ♖c5; e.g., 15...♘e7 16 ♕f3 and Black tried to avoid the passivity of 16...♖d8 17 ♖fc1 by choosing 16...♗g7?! 17 ♘xd5 ♘c6 18 ♗f4 ♕d8 19 ♘c7 ♘xd4 20 ♕g3! ± in Aleksandrov-Dvoirys, St Petersburg 2011.

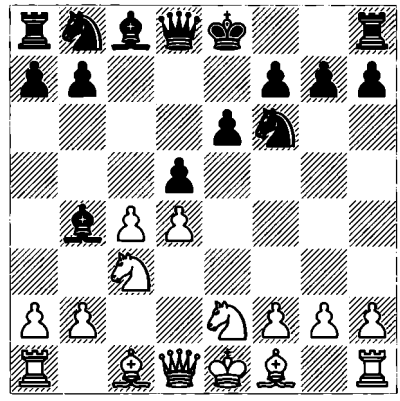
15...♖d8 16 ♕d2

Khrushchov-Gavrilov, Moscow 2008 continued 16...♘e7 17 ♗a2!? ♗d7 18 ♘d3! ♕b6 19 ♘c5 ♗c6 20 ♗f4 ♘f5 21 ♗e5 ♗e7 22 ♖fe1 ♖e8 23 ♗b1. This game demonstrates how White's position can be systematically improved. Now 23...♘d6? could have been answered cleverly by 24 ♘e6! fxe6 25 ♗xg6! hxg6 26 ♕h6.

7.12)

6...d5 *(D)*

W



Now White has two approaches, demonstrating positions which can also transpose from other lines:

7.121: 7 c5 121
7.122: 7 a3 124

7.121)

7 c5

White gives the position a closed nature, although this advance can also buy him time to set up for an attack.

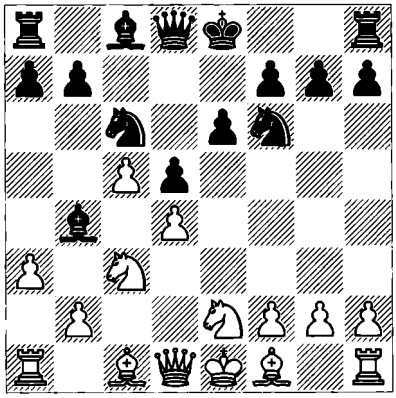
7...♘e4

Black has two main alternatives:

a) 7...♘c6 8 a3 *(D)* can lead to:

a1) 8...♗xc3+ 9 ♘xc3 0-0 (9...♘e4?! 10 ♗d3! ♘xc3 11 bxc3 0-0 12 0-0 b6 13 a4! bxc5 14 ♗a3 ♖e8 15 ♗xc5 ± Shirov-Pinter, French Team Ch 1993) 10 ♗e2 (or 10 ♗b5 e5 11 dxe5 ♘xe5 12 ♗f4 ♘c4 13 0-0 ♘xb2 14 ♕b3 ♘c4 15 ♖ad1 ♘a5 16 ♕b1 ± with the ideas of ♗d6

B



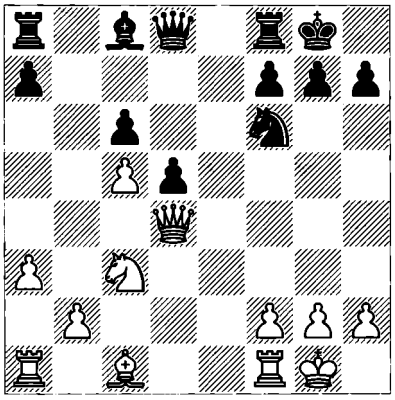
and ♗g5, among others) 10...♘e4 (10...e5!? 11 dxe5 ♘xe5 12 ♗e3 ♘c4 13 ♗d4 ♘xb2 14 ♕c2 ♘c4 15 0-0 ♗e6 16 ♖ad1 gives White more than enough compensation) 11 ♘xe4 dxe4 12 ♗e3 f5 13 ♕d2 ♕f6 14 g3 e5 15 dxe5! ♘xe5 16 0-0-0 ± M.Gurevich-Zaid, USSR 1984.

a2) 8...♗a5 9 b4 ♗c7 10 g3 e5 11 ♗g2 a5 (11...♗g4 12 f3 ♗f5 13 0-0 0-0 14 ♗g5! ±) 12 ♗g5 (or 12 dxe5 ♗xe5 13 b5 ♘e7 14 ♗f4 ±) 12...♗g4 (Gligorić-Spassky, Linares 1981) 13 0-0! (or 13 h3 ♗xe2 14 ♘xe2 axb4 15 axb4 ♖xa1 16 ♕xa1 ♘xb4 17 0-0! ±) 13...♘xd4 14 f3 ♘xe2+ 15 ♕xe2 ♗e6 (15...♗f5? 16 f4!) 16 f4! 0-0 17 f5 axb4 18 axb4 ♖xa1 19 ♖xa1 ♗xf5 20 ♘xd5 ±.

b) 7...e5!? leads to wild complications after 8 dxe5 ♘g4. The patient answer is 8 a3 ♗xc3+ 9 ♘xc3 exd4 10 ♕xd4, when Black has a choice:

b1) 10...♘c6 11 ♗b5 0-0 12 ♗xc6 bxc6 13 0-0 *(D)*.

B

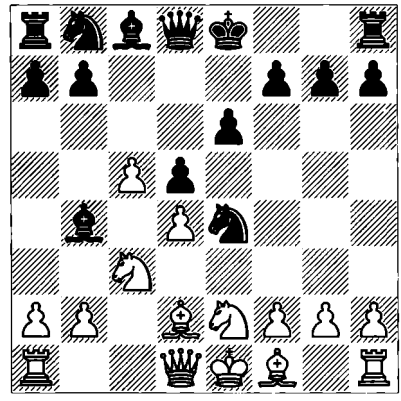


This type of position favours White's superior bishop and central control, even if that advantage is limited. Apart from putting a bishop on e5 or d6, it's worth remembering that even ♗g5xf6 can lead to a large advantage for White if he gets a knight to d4 versus Black's bad bishop.

b2) 10...0-0 11 ♗b5 ♗d7 (11...♘c6 transposes to 'b1') 12 0-0 ♗xb5 13 ♘xb5 ♘c6 14 ♕a4 (or 14 ♕d3 ♘e4 15 ♗e3 ♘e5 16 ♕b3 ±) 14...♘e4 15 ♗e3 d4 (15...a6 16 ♘c3! has been called '±', which is greatly exaggerated, but White's control of the dark squares and b-file after 16...♘xc3 17 bxc3 gives him superior prospects) 16 ♘xd4 ♘xc5 17 ♕c4 ♘xd4 18 ♗xd4 ♘e6 19 ♗c3 ± Krush-Browne, Parsippany (2) 1999.

8 ♗d2! *(D)*

B



8...♘xd2

a) 8...♘c6 9 ♘xe4 dxe4 10 ♗xb4 ♘xb4 11 ♕a4+ ♘c6 12 ♖d1 favours White, who has stopped ...e5 and is ready to develop. Stojanović-Enchev, Belgrade 2009 continued 12...0-0 (12...♕g5 13 g3 e3 14 fxe3 ♕xe3 15 ♗g2 ♗d7 16 ♕c4 0-0 17 ♖d3 ± Koneru-Chiburdanidze, Doha 2011) 13 ♘c3 ♕h4 14 g3 ♕g4 15 ♗g2 e5?! 16 d5! ♘d4 17 ♖xd4! exd4 18 ♕xd4 f5 19 0-0 with a clear advantage for White.

b) 8...♗xc3 9 ♘xc3 0-0 10 ♘xe4 dxe4 11 ♗e3 ♘c6 (11...♘d7 12 ♗c4 ♘f6 13 ♕c2 {versus ...♘d5} 13...♗d7 14 0-0 ♗c6 15 b4 ♗d5 occurred in Muir-Bryson, Scottish Ch, Oban 2005, and now Emms's suggestion 16 ♗e2 ± preserves the bishop-pair and the better game) 12 ♕d2 f5 13 0-0-0 ♘e7 (Volkov-Aseev, Russian Ch, St Petersburg 1998) and here 14 ♗f4 ♘d5 15 ♗e5 is attractive.

9 ♕xd2 a5

This is Black's most popular move, holding down White's queenside expansion. It would be too space-consuming to describe all the alternatives, some insignificantly different, so let me show the most important two, with which Black changes the basic character of the game:

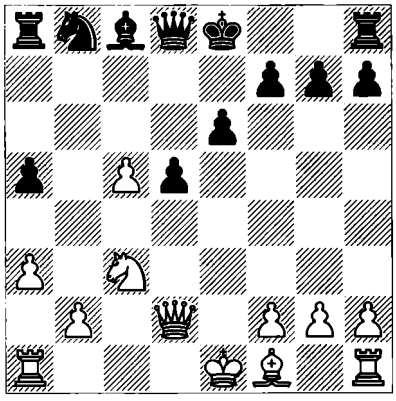
a) 9...♕d7 is a clever move, freeing d8 for the bishop to retreat to (on c7 it can get hit by ♘b5). White will pit his space advantage against the bishops: 10 a3 ♗a5 11 g3 0-0 and now:

a1) 12 ♗g2 ♗d8 13 0-0 b6 14 f4?! (14 b4 is more accurate, to discourage ...♗a6) 14...♘a6?! 15 b4 ♘c7 16 a4 ♗e7 17 ♖fc1 ♗b7 18 ♘d1! ♖fc8 19 ♘f2 b5 20 ♘d3 and White had all the play in the game Sadler-Kosten, British Ch, Hove 1997.

a2) 12 b4 ♗d8 13 ♗g2 b6 14 ♖b1 (14 0-0 ♗a6 15 ♖ab1 ±) 14...♗e7 15 0-0 ♕d8?! 16 ♕e3 ♘c6 17 ♖fd1 ♗d7 was played in Scherbakov-Egiazarian, Kolkata 2002. White has systematically built up, and the most pointed continuation would have been 18 b5 ♘a5 19 c6 ♘c4 20 ♕d3 ♗e8 21 a4 ± (Scherbakov).

b) 9...b6 10 a3 ♗xc3 11 ♘xc3 bxc5 12 dxc5 a5 *(D)* gives Black a big centre, but at the cost of development and potentially dangerous queenside pawns for White. Then:

W



b1) 13 ♗b5+ ♗d7 14 0-0 a4 (14...0-0 15 b4 ♗xb5 16 ♘xb5 ♘a6 17 ♘d6 ♕d7 18 f4! ♖ab8 19 f5!? gave White a powerful attack in Reshevsky-Najdorf, Dallas 1957, based on the idea 19...axb4 20 axb4 ♘xb4 21 f6!) 15 ♗xd7+ ♕xd7 (15...♘xd7 16 c6! ♘b8 17 ♘b5 ♘xc6 18 ♕c3 ±) 16 f4 ♕e7 (Bu Xiangzhi-Shaposhnikov, World Junior Ch, Athens 2001) and now 17 ♕d4! 0-0 18 ♘xa4 favours White.

b2) You might also want to investigate something simpler such as 13 ♘a4 ♘d7 (Gligorić-Ivkov, Yugoslav Team Ch, Pula 1971), when I don't like Black's game after 14 ♗b5 0-0 15 0-0 ♗a6 16 ♗xd7! ♗xf1 17 ♘b6.

10 a3 ♗xc3 11 ♘xc3 a4

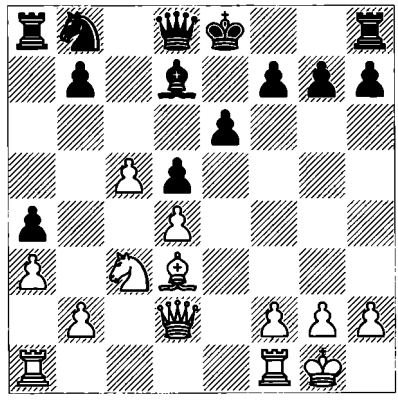
Black's idea is to restrain White's pawns and strengthen his grip on b3 and c4. What's more, 11...0-0 unnecessarily allows 12 ♘a4.

12 ♗d3 ♗d7

Black protects a4 against White's potential attack on it with ♗c2 and ♕d1. The bishop also covers the key b5-square. Sometimes 12...0-0 is played first, but it limits Black's options; e.g., 13 0-0 ♗d7 (13...♘c6?! 14 ♗c2; 13...b6?! 14 ♕c2! hits h7 and a4, when 14...♘c6 15 ♗xh7+ ♔h8 16 ♗d3 ♘xd4 17 ♕d1 threatens both ♕h5+ and ♘xa4 with advantage) 14 ♗c2!? ♗c6 15 ♖fe1 ♘d7 16 ♖e3 ♘f6 17 ♖g3 ♔h8 18 ♖e1 g6 19 ♖h3 ♘g8 20 ♕d1 ♕a5 21 ♖xe6! (J.Watson-P.Smith, Kona 1998) and White was winning in view of 21...fxe6 22 ♖xh7+ ♔xh7 23 ♕h5+.

13 0-0 *(D)*

B



13...b6

This is the best defence, although it requires great care. 13...0-0 14 ♗c2 gives Black the same problems as in the last note. For a few years, Black defended by 13...♘c6 14 ♗c2 ♘e7, watching over the kingside. However, White has superior firepower there anyway and the defence is difficult:

a) One approach is 15 ♕d1 ♕a5 16 ♕g4.

b) After 15 ♖ae1, a trappy line is 15...b6 16 ♕g5 0-0 17 cxb6 ♘g6? 18 ♕xd8 ♖fxd8 19 b7 ♖a7 20 ♗xa4!! ♗xa4 21 ♘xa4 ♖xa4 22 ♖c1.

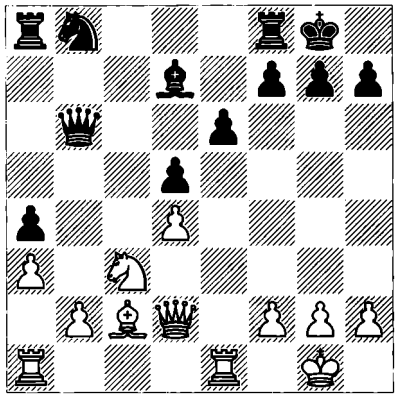
in view of 22...♖c4 23 b3 ♖xc1 24 ♖xc1 ♘e7 25 a4!, when the a-pawn waltzes down to queen.

c) 15 ♖fe1 b6 16 ♕g5! 0-0 17 cxb6 ♘g6? (17...h6 18 ♕h4 ♖e8 ±) 18 ♕xd8 ♖fxd8 (Nenashev-Yudasin, Kemerovo 1995) and here 19 ♗xa4! is strong, with the idea 19...♗xa4 20 b7 and 21 ♘xa4 (Burgess).

14 cxb6 ♕xb6 15 ♖fe1 0-0

15...♕xd4?? 16 ♖xe6+! is pretty.

16 ♗c2 *(D)*



B

White targets a4, protects d4, and in some cases prepares ♕d3. Probably Black can defend here, but in practice it's been downhill:

a) 16...♖c8 gives Black's king room; for example, 17 ♖e3 (17 ♖ad1 ♕d8?! 18 ♖e3 ♕f8 19 h4!, Knaak-Lerner, Lugano 1989) 17...♖a7 (17...♖c4! can be met by 18 ♘e2 or 18 ♗d3!? ♖xd4 19 ♖g3! g6 20 ♘e2, although 20...♘c6 21 ♘xd4 ♘xd4 creates counterplay) 18 ♖g3 g6 (Polak-Biolek, Strmilov 2005) 19 ♖h3 h5 20 ♖e1 with an attack.

b) 16...♖a7 17 ♖ad1 ♕d8?! 18 ♖e3 g6 19 ♖f3 f5 20 ♖e1 and Black is reduced to defence, Scherbakov-Mitenkov, Russian Ch, Elista 1995.

c) After 16...♗c6!, 17 ♖e3 ♘d7 18 ♖g3!? (18 ♖b1) 18...♖fc8 19 h4 is suggested by Speelman, although Black has nearly equal chances.

d) 16...g6!? prepares to shore up the kingside before an attack there begins in earnest. M.Socko-Mkrtchian, Women's World Ch, Elista 2004 continued 17 ♖e3 ♘c6 (17...♖c8!? 18 ♖h3! with the idea ♕h6 won't force mate, but will cause some damage) 18 ♖d1 ♘a5 19 ♖h3 f5!. This is the only defence, to meet ♕h6 with ...♖f7; it creates weaknesses, but they are manageable for the moment. Now, instead of the game's 20 ♗xa4?! ♘c4 21 ♕h6 ♖f7 22 ♗xd7 ♖xd7 =, White had 20 ♘xa4! ♗xa4 21 ♗xa4 ♘c4 22 ♕h6 ♕a7! 23 ♗b5 ♘xb2 24 ♖e1 ±.

7.122)

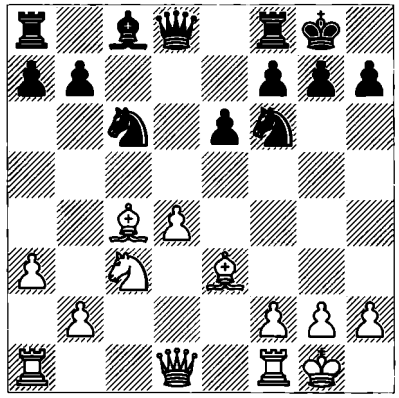
7 a3 ♗xc3+

7...♗e7 transposes after 8 ♘f4 0-0 or 8 cxd5 ♘xd5 9 ♘xd5 exd5 (9...♕xd5!? 10 ♘c3 ♕d7 11 ♗c4 ±) 10 ♘f4 0-0 to Section 7.112 (i.e., 6...0-0 7 a3 ♗e7 8 ♘f4 d5 9 cxd5 ♘xd5 10 ♘cxd5 exd5).

8 ♘xc3 dxc4

8...0-0 transposes to Section 7.111 (i.e. 6...0-0 7 a3 ♗xc3+ 8 ♘xc3 d5), which favours White.

9 ♗xc4 ♘c6 10 ♗e3 0-0 11 0-0 *(D)*



B

This position is important because, for example, it will very often arise from the move-order 4...c5 5 ♘e2 d5 6 a3, etc. We don't quite have the standard isolated queen's pawn, as for one thing, White has the bishop-pair opposing Black's bad bishop; furthermore, one pair of pieces has been exchanged off (so you won't see ♘e5, for example), and White's bishop is rather passive on e3. Overall, White has very good practical chances and can easily work up an attack. Unfortunately, this position has been played and analysed a lot, and I'll have to limit myself to the essential points and exemplary games.

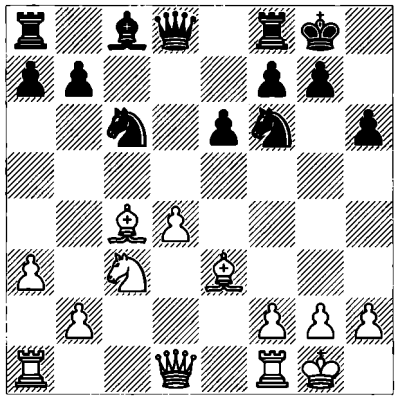
11...b6

The most natural move. Other possibilities:

a) 11...a6 is risky as it weakens the queenside and invites d5: 12 ♗a2 (even 12 d5 exd5 13 ♘xd5 ♘xd5 14 ♗xd5 ± gives White strong bishops and a positional advantage) 12...b5 13

d5! aims for 13...exd5 14 ♘xd5 ♘xd5 (14...♗e6 15 ♗b6 and ♘xf6+) 15 ♗xd5; for example, 15...♗b7 16 b4 ♖c8? 17 ♗c5 ♖e8 18 ♗xf7+! ♔xf7 19 ♕b3+ ♖e6 20 ♖ad1 ♕f6 21 ♖d7+ with a clear advantage for White.

b) 11...h6 *(D)* has been widely used, including by some top grandmasters.



It is designed to prevent ♗g5, so that ...♘e7-d5 can follow. The problem is that Black is then rather stuck and isn't poised for positive action. White therefore has time to build up. Here's a sampling of the many reasonable ways to do so (note that 12 d5 exd5 13 ♘xd5 ♗e6 achieves nothing):

b1) 12 ♗a2 ♘e7 13 ♗f4 (a standard response, heading for e5) 13...♗d7 14 ♗e5 ♗c6 15 ♗xf6 gxf6 16 d5! ♘xd5 17 ♗xd5 exd5 (17...♗xd5 18 ♕h5 and ♖ad1) 18 ♕h5 d4 19 ♖ad1 ♕d6 20 ♕g4+ ♔h7 21 ♖xd4 ♕e5 22 ♕d1 ♖g8 23 g3 with a structural advantage.

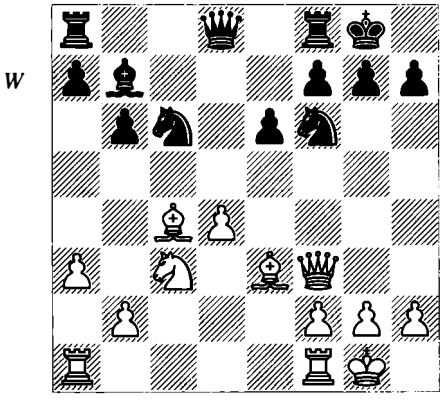
b2) 12 ♖e1 b6!? (12...♘e7 13 ♗f4) 13 d5! ♘a5 (13...exd5 14 ♘xd5 ♗e6 15 ♘xf6+ ♕xf6 16 ♗xe6 fxe6 17 ♕a4 ±) 14 ♗a2 exd5 15 ♘xd5 ♗b7 16 ♘c3! ♕c8 17 ♕a4 ♕f5 18 ♕f4! ♕h5?! (18...♕xf4 19 ♗xf4 ♖fe8 20 b4 ♘c6 21 ♘b5 ♖xe1+ 22 ♖xe1 ♖e8 23 ♖xe8+ ♘xe8 24 f3 and Black faces a tough defence) 19 ♗d4! ♕g6 20 ♕g3 ♕xg3 21 hxg3 with considerable pressure, Dydyshko-Macieja, Lubniewice 2003.

b3) 12 ♖c1 ♘e7 (12...b6 13 d5! ♘e5 14 ♗b3 ±) 13 ♕f3 ♘ed5 14 ♕g3!? ♔h8!? 15 ♘xd5! exd5 (15...♘xd5 16 ♗xd5 ♕xd5 17 ♖c5 ♕e4, Rezan-Hulak, Split 2008, 18 ♖e1! with ideas of ♖c7 and/or ♗d2 – the opposite-coloured bishops will help White's attack) 16 ♗d3 ♗d7 17 ♕d6 ♗c6 18 ♕xd8 ♖fxd8 19 f3 ± Onishchuk-Vekshenkov, Russian Team Ch, Sochi 2004. Black's bad bishop is a liability.

12 ♕f3

12 d5 exd5 13 ♘xd5 ♗e6 14 ♘xf6+ ♕xf6 15 ♗xe6 ♕xe6 is more or less equal. The old move 12 ♕d3 is still valid, a classic game proceeding 12...♗b7 13 ♖ad1 ♘e7!? (13...h6; 13...♖c8 14 ♗g5 ±) 14 ♗g5 ♘g6 15 f4! h6 16 f5! exf5 17 ♗xf6 ♕xf6 18 ♖xf5 ♘f4? (or 18...♕c6 19 ♖d2 ±) 19 ♖xf6 ♘xd3 20 ♖xf7! ♘xb2 21 ♖xf8++ ♔xf8 22 ♖f1+ ♔e8 23 ♗e6 ♖d8 24 d5 ♗c8 25 ♖f7 (the seventh rank serves White well) 25...♗xe6 26 dxe6 ♖d6 27 ♖xg7 ♖xe6 28 ♖xa7 ♘d3 29 h3 ♘f4 30 ♖a4 ♘e2+ 31 ♘xe2 ♖xe2 32 ♖a7!, eventually winning in Botvinnik-Tolush, Moscow-Leningrad match 1965.

12...♗b7 *(D)*



13 ♗d3

White isn't subtle: he wants to target h7 in order to create weaknesses near Black's king.

13 ♕h3 is the other main idea:

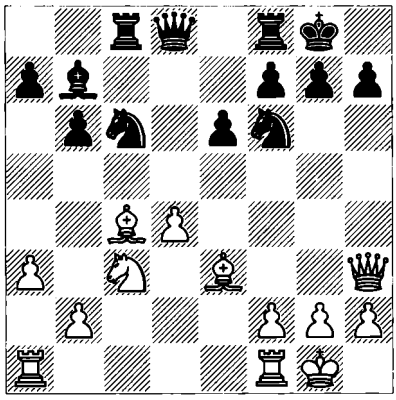
a) 13...♘xd4 14 ♖fd1 e5 15 ♘b5 ± and White regains the pawn with some advantage.

b) After 13...♖c8 *(D)* White has attacking ideas which are typical for the owner of the isolated queen's pawn:

b1) 14 ♗d3!? ♘a5 (14...♘xd4? 15 ♖ad1 e5 16 f4! costs Black material; 14...♘e7 15 ♖ac1 ♘ed5 16 ♗d2) 15 d5! (a typical tactic worth remembering) 15...♗xd5 (15...exd5 16 ♖ad1) 16 ♖ad1 ♘c6 17 ♘xd5 exd5 18 ♗f5 ♖c7 19 ♗f4 ♖b7 20 ♗g5 h6 21 ♗xh6! with the idea 21...gxh6 22 ♖d3 ±.

b2) 14 ♖ad1 ♘a5!? 15 ♗d3 ♘c4 16 ♗g5 h6 17 ♗xh6!? ultimately leads to some advantage

W



for White after 17...♘xb2 18 ♗xg7 ♔xg7 19 ♕g3+ ♘g4! 20 ♕xg4+ ♔f6 (Knoll-Benzoni, corr. 2008), when 21 d5! is best, based upon 21...♖xc3 22 ♕d4+ e5 23 ♕xc3 ♘xd1 24 ♕b4!!.

c) Black's best path is 13...♘e7! 14 ♖ad1, and now 14...♘fd5 or 14...♘g6 15 ♗d3 ♘d5 16 ♕g3 ♕d7 17 h4 (M.Gurevich-Van Beers, Belgian Team Ch 2004/5), when 17...♘xc3 18 bxc3 ♕d5 19 f3 is only marginally better for White.

13...♕d7

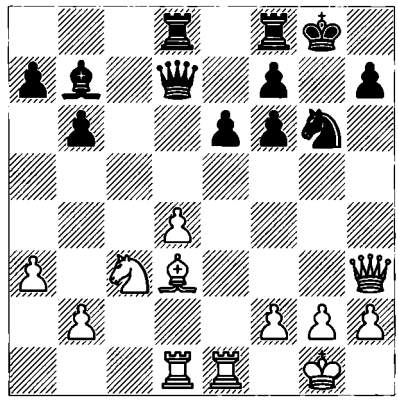
This is the main line, although 13...♖c8 is still played, with themes similar to the previous note.

14 ♕h3 ♘e7 15 ♗g5 ♘g6 16 ♗xf6 gxf6 17 ♖ad1

The little-used 17 d5!? is apparently slightly advantageous; e.g., 17...♗xd5 18 ♖ad1 ♕c7 19 ♘xd5 exd5 20 f4 ± or 17...♖ad8!? 18 ♘e4 ♔g7 19 ♘g3 exd5?! 20 ♘f5+ ♔h8 21 ♕h6 ♖g8 ± Peralta-Ricardi, Buenos Aires 2003.

17...♖ad8 18 ♖fe1 *(D)*

B



18...♔g7

18...♕c7? 19 ♗xg6 hxg6 20 ♕h6! ♕c6 21 ♘e4 ♕xe4 22 ♖xe4 ♗xe4 23 ♕f4 f5 24 ♕c7! ♖a8 25 ♖c1 gave White a winning game in Aleksandrov-Vekshenkov, Russian Team Ch, Sochi 2004, and this sequence was repeated move-for-move in S.Martinović-Sandhu, Pula 2010.

19 ♗e4

This has been played several times and yields a small advantage. The same may be said for 19 d5; for example, 19...♗xd5 20 ♗e4 ♕c6 (Van den Bersselaar-Naumkin, St Vincent 2004) and here 21 ♗xd5! exd5 22 ♖d4 ♖fe8 23 ♖ed1 ± should have been played. Either way, White's advantage is quite modest.

19...♗xe4 20 ♖xe4

Now:

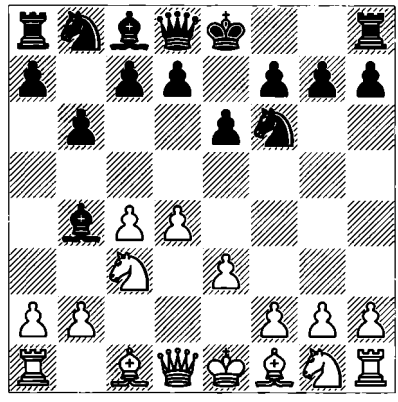
a) Black's position was loose after 20...e5 21 ♕f3 ♕c8 22 d5! f5 23 ♖e3 ♖g8 in the game Monacell-Moura, corr. 2004, when 24 ♕h5 keeps an edge.

b) 20...♖g8 and after 21 ♖eel ♘e7 22 ♖d3 ♔h8 23 d5 ♘xd5 24 ♕f3 ♕c6 (L.Andersen-Dard, email 2005) 25 ♘xd5 exd5 26 g3 White keeps an edge in the endgame which is likely to ensue. Again, 21 ♕h5 looks right, intending d5, and if 21...f5, then 22 ♖e3 ♕c7 23 ♖h3 ♔f8 24 ♖g3 intending d5 next.

7.2)

4...b6 *(D)*

W



At first sight, the philosophy behind this move is simple: to control the d5- and e4-squares and exert pressure on the long diagonal.

That's true. But it can also introduce a general light-square strategy, as you will see from the alternate idea of ...♗a6 and ...d5. Black can also delay the decision about where to put the bishop and seek to exploit other aspects of the position first.

5 ♘e2

Thus we need to examine:

7.21: 5...♗a6 127
7.22: 5...♗b7 133
7.23: 5...♘e4 134
7.24: 5...c5 137

The move-order 5...0-0 is mentioned in Section 7.22, as the follow-up is almost always ...♗b7.

7.21)

5...♗a6

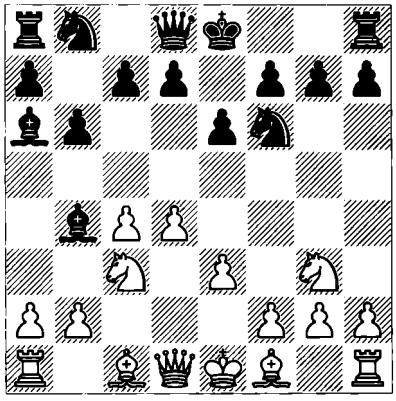
Attacking c4 and preparing ...d5. This time we examine two systems for White, the first with a tactical orientation and the second strategic:

7.211: 6 ♘g3 127
7.212: 6 a3 130

7.211)

6 ♘g3 *(D)*

B



Here White intends to expand with e4 and frees his f1-bishop to develop. This is a much-played and analysed position for which I'll try to propose continuations which aren't ultra-theoretical and time-consuming:

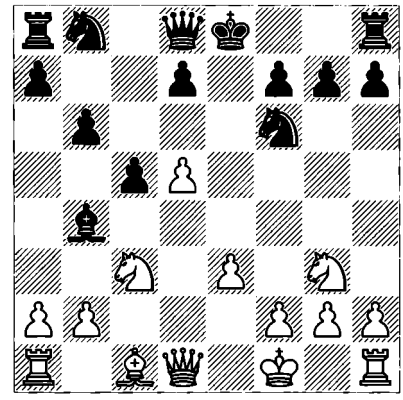
6...♗xc3+

The most famous move, preparing ...d5 to work on the light squares, although the most challenging is probably 6...0-0, because Black can play it with various structural ideas in mind. Here are the alternatives:

a) 6...d5?? 7 ♕a4+ has happened more often than you'd imagine! This is the reason why Black needs to exchange on c3 first if he wishes to make the ...d5 advance.

b) 6...c5 7 d5 exd5 8 cxd5 ♗xf1 9 ♔xf1 *(D)* has traditionally been considered to favour White, who has an advanced and influential centre.

B



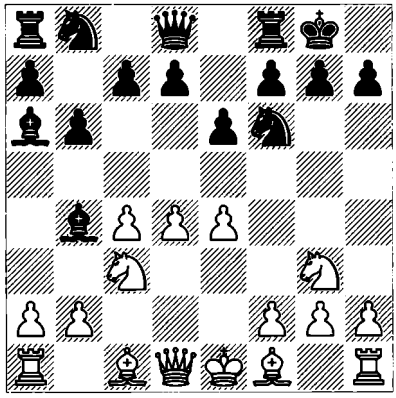
Note, too, that White has got rid of his 'bad' bishop, as defined by his pawn on d5 (and soon, one on e4), in return for Black's 'good' bishop, as defined by his pawn which will soon be on d6. In practice, White would like to gain more space on both wings and not spend too much time resettling his king; for example, 9...0-0 10 e4 ♖e8 11 f3 ♗xc3 (11...g6 12 ♘b5!; 11...d6 12 ♘f5 g6 13 ♘h6+ ♔g7 14 ♗g5 a6 15 ♕c1! ± with the idea h4) 12 bxc3 d6 13 ♗g5 (13 ♘f5! ±) 13...♘bd7 14 h4 h6 15 ♗f4 ♘e5 16 ♖h3 ♕d7 17 h5 ♔h7 18 ♘f5 with space and a continued central advantage, Geller-Matanović, Zagreb 1958.

c) 6...0-0 is flexible. White can play a slow move like 7 ♗d3, but he normally chooses the consistent 7 e4 *(D)*.

Black has these noteworthy replies:

c1) 7...d5 8 cxd5 ♗xf1 9 ♔xf1 exd5 (or 9...♗xc3 10 bxc3 exd5 11 e5 ♘e4 12 ♕d3 f5 13 ♘e2 {with the idea h4 and f3} 13...♘g5 14 ♗xg5! ♕xg5 15 g3 and White holds a substantial advantage with ♘f4 and ♔g2 to come) 10

B



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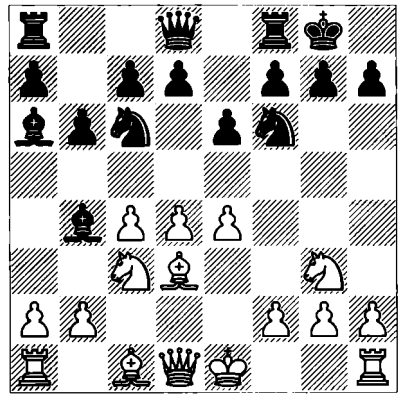


e5 ♘e8 11 ♕g4 (11 ♕f3 ♗xc3 12 bxc3 c5 13 ♘f5 ♔h8 and now, apart from 14 g3, as played in Berezjuk-Cvek, Czech Team Ch 2005/6, White can 'go for it' with 14 c4!? ♘c7 15 ♗b2, peering down the long diagonal) 11...♔h8 12 ♘h5 (12 ♘ce2!? ♗e7 13 h4) 12...c5 13 ♗g5! ± f6 14 exf6 gxf6 15 ♗h6 ♖g8 16 ♕e6 ♗xc3 17 bxc3 ♕d7 18 ♖e1 with a clear advantage for White.

c2) 7...c5 8 d5 d6 (8...exd5 9 cxd5 ♘xe4? 10 ♘gxe4 ♖e8 11 ♗xa6 ♗xc3+ 12 bxc3 ♘xa6 13 ♕a4 ±; 8...♖e8 9 f3 d6 10 ♗e2 transposes) 9 ♗e2 ♖e8 (9...exd5 10 exd5! ♗xc3+ 11 bxc3 ♘bd7 12 0-0 ♖e8 13 ♕a4 gave White a modest edge in the game Portisch-Reshevsky, Santa Monica 1966; Black's pieces won't find permanent posts) 10 f3 exd5 11 cxd5 ♗xe2 12 ♘gxe2 b5 13 0-0 a6 14 a4! ♘bd7? (14...bxa4 15 ♘xa4 ♘bd7 16 ♗g5 ±; 14...♗xc3!? 15 bxc3 ♘bd7) 15 axb5 ♕b6 16 bxa6 ♖xa6 (16...♘e5 17 ♕a4 c4+ 18 ♔h1 ♘d3 19 ♕b5 ± Short) 17 ♖xa6 ♕xa6 (Korchnoi-Short, Madrid 1995) and here Korchnoi proposes 18 ♗g5!, which is certainly promising.

c3) 7...♘c6!? is a unique idea which has had some success over the years. The most promising approach is 8 ♗d3! *(D)*, with interesting, varied and instructive play:

c31) 8...♘xd4?! 9 ♕a4! will win a piece in return for some, but not full, compensation; e.g., 9...♗a5 10 b4 d5! 11 exd5 exd5 12 0-0! dxc4 13 ♗b1 c5 14 bxa5 b5 15 ♕d1 b4 16 ♘ce4 c3 17 ♖e1 ♖e8 18 ♗g5 ♘e2+ 19 ♔h1 ♕xd1 20 ♖xd1 and White still has the better game.

c32) 8...♘a5 9 e5 (9 ♗g5 ♗e7 10 ♕e2 keeps some advantage) 9...♗xc3+ 10 bxc3 ♘e8 11 ♗a3 d6 12 ♕e2 keeps Black tied down; e.g., 12...c5 13 0-0 ♖c8 14 dxc5 dxc5 15 ♖ad1 ♕c7 16 ♗c1 and Black's pieces are cut off from the kingside.

c33) 8...d5 9 cxd5 ♗xd3 10 ♕xd3 exd5 11 e5 ♘e4 12 a3 ♗xc3+ 13 bxc3 f5 (13...♘xg3 14 hxg3 h6? 15 ♗xh6!) 14 ♘e2! ♘a5 15 h4! (threatening 16 f3) 15...♘b3 16 ♖b1 ♘xc1 17 ♖xc1 f4 18 ♕f3 ♕e7 19 c4 c6 20 cxd5 cxd5 21 ♘xf4 ± Portisch-Spassky, Moscow 1967.

c34) 8...e5 is the safest move: 9 d5 ♗xc3+ (9...♘d4? 10 ♕a4 ±) 10 bxc3 ♘e7 (10...♘a5 11 ♕e2 c6 12 ♘f5 ♘e8 13 f4! ± Spassky-Hübner, Munich 1979) 11 ♗g5 ♘e8 12 a4!? (12 0-0 ±) 12...f6!? 13 ♗e3 ♕c8 14 0-0 ♘d6 15 ♕e2 (or 15 c5 bxc5 16 ♗xc5 ±) 15...♘b7 16 f4 d6 17 fxe5 dxe5 18 c5! ♗xd3 19 ♕xd3 bxc5 (19...♖d8 20 ♕c4 – Dunnington) 20 a5 a6 21 ♖ab1 ♖f7 (Sadler-Wahls, Bundesliga 1999/00) and here 22 c4 is simplest, when 22...♘xa5 23 ♗xc5 ♘b7 holds on to the pawn, but at the cost of a mobile central pawn-mass following 24 ♗e3 or 24 ♗xe7 ♖xe7 25 c5.

d) 6...h5 7 h4 ♗b7 8 ♕d3! (8 a3!? ♗d6!? 9 ♖h3 is unclear) 8...d5 (8...♗d6 9 e4 and the queen defends g3 – this is why White chose 8 ♕d3 instead of 8 ♕c2; 8...c5 9 a3 ♗xc3+ 10 ♕xc3 d6 11 dxc5 dxc5 12 b4 ±) 9 cxd5 exd5 10 ♕c2 (or 10 ♗e2) 10...c5 (10...g6 is more solid) 11 a3 cxd4 12 axb4 dxc3 13 bxc3 (or 13 b5!?) 13...♘bd7 14 ♘f5!? 0-0 15 ♗b2 ♘e5 16 c4! (with an attack on the long diagonal) 16...♖e8 17 c5 bxc5 18 bxc5 d4 19 ♘d6!, Knaak-Bronstein, Tallinn 1979.

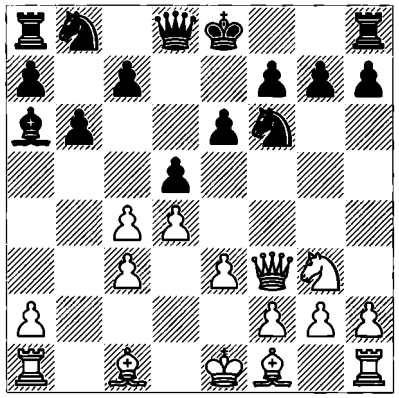
7 bxc3 d5

Here 8 ♗a3 introduces a famous gambit variation which has years and years of theory

and practice attached to it, and is not easy to play. Fortunately, there's a respected alternative which at the very least yields interesting play:

8 ♕f3 *(D)*

B



This simply pins the d5-pawn and thus protects the c4-pawn. The nice thing about ♕f3 is that the queen can slide over to the kingside to help attack in that sector, and can also manoeuvre to control the dark squares no longer defended by an enemy bishop.

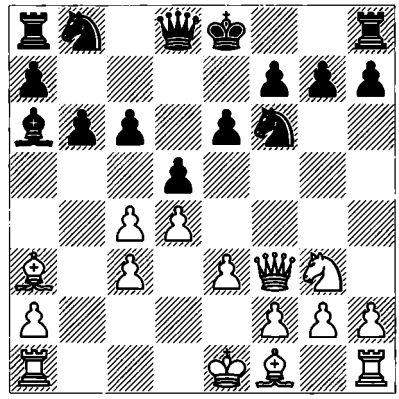
8...0-0

This is almost always played. Two other moves:

a) 8...c5!? 9 cxd5 (9 e4 dxc4 10 ♗g5 h6 11 e5 ♕d5 12 exf6 ♕xf3 13 gxf3 hxg5 14 fxg7 ♖g8 15 ♘h5 ♘d7 =) 9...exd5 10 ♗xa6 ♘xa6 11 ♕e2 (11 0-0 0-0 12 ♕e2 ♘c7 13 dxc5 bxc5 14 c4 d4 15 exd4 ♖e8 16 ♕d3 cxd4 17 ♘f5 ±) 11...♘c7 12 ♗a3 ♘e6 13 0-0 0-0 14 c4 ±.

b) 8...c6 is awfully slow. Apart from the natural 9 e4 with some advantage, White has 9 ♗a3! *(D)*.

B



Now Black may even hesitate to capture the pawn on c4 (his intent in playing ...c6) because White gets so much play following 9...dxc4 (9...♗xc4 10 ♗xc4 dxc4 11 0-0 ♕d5?! 12 e4 ♕a5 13 ♗d6 ±) 10 ♗e2 ♕c7 11 ♘h5! ♘xh5 12 ♕xh5 c5 (12...♘d7 13 ♕g5!) 13 dxc5 b5 14 c6! ♘xc6 15 ♖d1 g6 (15...♕e5?? 16 ♗f3! ♕xc3+ 17 ♔f1 ♖c8 18 ♕c5) 16 ♕h4 ♗b7 17 ♗d6 ♕d8 18 ♕f4, when Black is starting to run out of good ways to get developed.

9 cxd5 ♕xd5

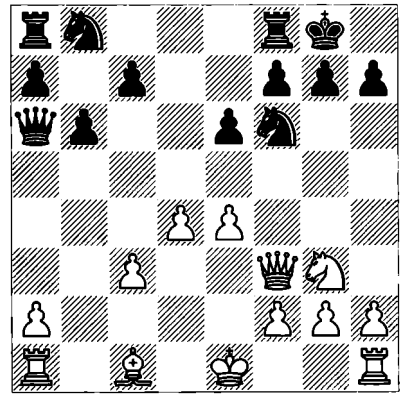
9...♗xf1? 10 dxe6! threatens a8 and f1, compelling 10...♗xg2 11 ♕xg2 ♕d5 12 exf7+ ♖xf7 13 0-0 with an extra centre pawn. The sound alternative is 9...exd5 10 ♗xa6 ♘xa6, when 11 0-0 will lead to a manoeuvring game; e.g., 11...♖e8 12 a4 c5 13 ♗a3 ♕c7 14 ♖fc1. Alternatively, White can play for a big centre by 11 ♕e2, when an f3/e4 expansion often follows; for example, 11...♘b8 12 0-0 c5!? 13 f3!? (13 dxc5! bxc5 14 c4 ±) 13...♘c6 14 ♗b2 ♕d7 (14...♘a5!? 15 e4 ♘c4 16 ♖ad1 ±) 15 e4!, Knaak-Plachetka, Bratislava 1983, with the idea 15...dxe4 16 fxe4 cxd4?? 17 ♖xf6! gxf6 18 ♘h5 ♔h8 19 ♕f2 ♕d6 20 ♘xf6 ♖g8 21 cxd4 and White wins.

10 e4 ♕a5

After 10...♕b7, 11 ♗xa6 ♕xa6 transposes, while White can also try 11 ♗d3.

11 ♗xa6 ♕xa6 *(D)*

W



White has everything going for him here, except that he can't castle.

12 ♗g5

12 ♗h6!? hasn't been tried, as far as I know. It has the idea of e5 and ♕g4; then a sample line

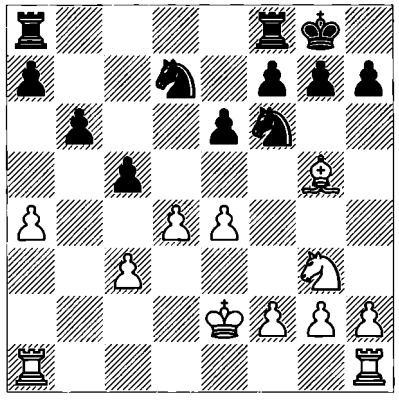
is 12...♕c4! (12...♔h8 13 ♖c1!?; for example, 13...♘bd7 14 ♗f4 c5 15 ♗d6 ♖fd8 16 ♕e2 ♕xe2+ 17 ♔xe2 and White can claim a tiny edge) 13 e5 ♘d5 14 ♘h5! ♕xc3+ 15 ♕xc3 ♘xc3 16 ♗xg7 with obscure prospects; ♗h6, h4 and ♖h3-g3 might follow.

12...♘bd7 13 ♕e2 ♕xe2+

This has been criticized. Knaak suggests 13...♕a3, although White can't be too unhappy with 14 ♖c1 and 0-0, yielding the type of position he's been aiming for. A possibility here is 14...h6 15 ♗f4!? e5!? 16 ♗e3! ±.

14 ♔xe2 c5 15 a4 *(D)*

B



This is the kind of ending that arises from various openings. It should probably be drawn with accurate play, but Black's defence is no fun.

15...♖fc8 16 ♖hc1 ♔f8 17 f3

It makes sense to include this move at some point so as to free the knight and also protect against ...♘g4 if the king strays.

17...♘e8

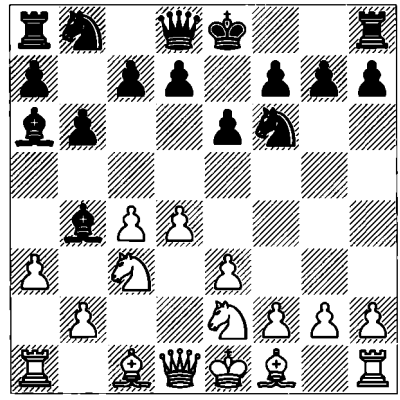
A logical reorganization. The game Knaak-Wahls, Baden-Baden 1992 continued 18 ♗f4 cxd4 (this doesn't seem to help; sitting tight with 18...f6 is possible, but in any case, White has a small but distinct advantage) 19 cxd4 ♔e7 20 ♘f1! ♔d8?! (Knaak suggests 20...♖xc1 21 ♖xc1 ♔d8 with an edge for White) 21 ♖cb1! (Black is getting cramped and a5 is becoming an issue) 21...♖c4 22 ♔d3 ♖ac8 23 a5 ♖c2 24 ♗d2 ♘d6 25 axb6 axb6 26 ♘e3 ♖2c7 27 ♖b4 ♔e8 28 e5!. Here, instead of the game's 28...♘b7?! 29 ♘c4, Knaak gives 28...♘f5 29 ♘xf5 exf5 30 ♔e3 ♖d8 31 f4 as clearly better for White. Black has to give up the b-pawn by 31...♘f8 in order to prevent d5.

7.212)

6 a3 *(D)*

For those who don't like the complexities of 6 ♘g3 and need an alternative that is easier to play, this might suffice, but don't expect too much in the way of advantages.

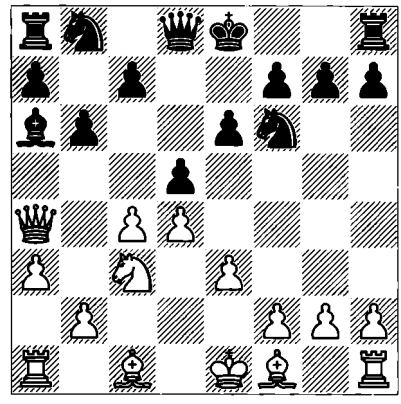
B



6...♗e7

The alternative is 6...♗xc3+ 7 ♘xc3 d5. Now there are many decades of theory on and practice with the main move 8 b3, a line which I can recommend as safe and having enough content to please a technical player. But I'm going to recommend the other cautious move, 8 ♕a4+ *(D)*.

B



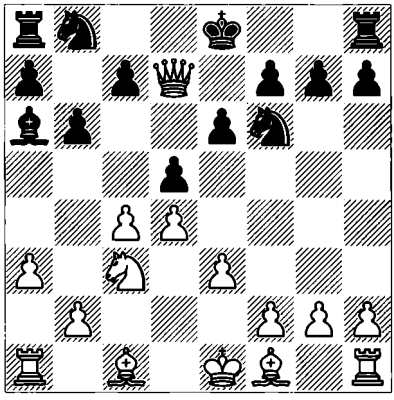
This is appropriate when you want to play with minimal risk and/or are willing to go into a dry position. If your opponent chooses the latter, you will have some opportunities for outplaying him, but you'll have to forget about that brilliancy prize! Black has only two serious replies:

a) 8...c6 and then:

a1) 9 ♕b4 is worth a thought, since 9...♕e7 10 ♕xe7+ ♔xe7 11 b3 yields a bishop-pair ending which you can play to your heart's delight. Naturally, there are many alternatives; e.g., 9...♗b7 10 ♗d3!? c5! 11 ♕a4+ ♗c6 12 ♕d1 dxc4 13 ♗xc4 0-0 14 0-0 with a slim advantage for White at best.

a2) 9 ♗e2 affords more prospects: 9...dxc4 (9...♗xc4 10 ♗xc4 dxc4 11 ♕xc4; after 9...0-0 10 0-0 I don't see a particularly positive plan for Black apart from exchanging, as 10...c5 11 ♖d1 doesn't obviously help) 10 0-0 0-0 11 ♖d1 ♕c7 12 e4 (not a risky gambit; now ♗g5 and e5 followed by ♘e4 become possibilities) 12...b5 and White can play 13 ♕c2 or even the exotic 13 ♕b4!? ♗b7 (13...♘bd7 14 a4) 14 ♕c5 ♘bd7 15 ♕g5.

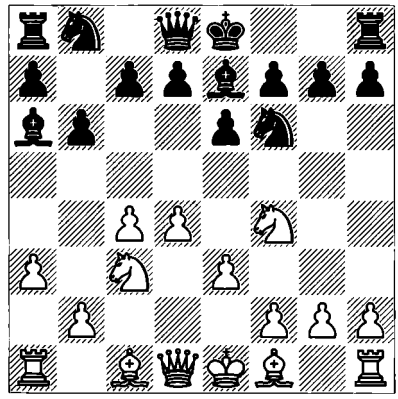
b) 8...♕d7 9 ♕xd7+ *(D)* and Black can choose between:


B

b1) 9...♔xd7 10 cxd5 exd5 11 ♗xa6 (11 f3 and 11 b4 ♗xf1 12 ♖xf1 are also possible) 11...♘xa6 12 f3. It would be too much to claim a significant advantage here, but on the positive side, White can aim to expand slowly in the centre or on the kingside, and this central structure tends to be pretty good at restricting the enemy knights.

b2) 9...♘bxd7 10 ♘b5!? (10 b3 c5 11 a4 0-0 12 ♘b5 is of some interest) 10...♗xb5 (10...♔d8 11 cxd5 exd5 gives White a choice between 12 ♘xc7!? and 12 ♗d2, if he likes endgames) 11 cxb5 e5!? 12 f3 exd4 13 exd4 ♘f8 14 ♗e3 ♘e6 15 ♗d3 with a long-term advantage for White, but again nothing to shout about.

7 ♘f4 *(D)*


B

7...d5

7...0-0 can be met calmly with 8 b4, or more ambitiously by 8 e4 d6 9 ♗e2 ♘bd7 (9...e5) 10 0-0 c6 (10...e5 11 ♘fd5) 11 d5! cxd5 12 cxd5 ♗xe2 13 ♕xe2 e5 14 ♘d3 with a slight advantage for White, Reshevsky-Bisguier, New York (5) 1957.

8 cxd5

Or 8 ♕f3 c6 9 cxd5 exd5 (after 9...cxd5 10 ♗xa6 ♘xa6 11 0-0 0-0 12 ♗d2 ♕d7, as in Janda-Kozak, Dečin 1995, Ca.Hansen recommends simply 13 ♖fc1) 10 ♗xa6 ♘xa6 11 0-0 0-0 12 ♘d3. All this is effectively equal, but it's an available line if the tactics that follow after the text-move don't appeal to you.

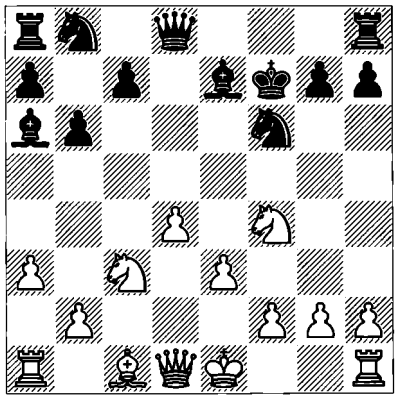
8...♗xf1 9 ♔xf1

This positional move will give White at best a minor edge versus perfect play, but there are numerous ways to keep away from theory and create an original game. Alas, my intention had been to recommend 9 dxe6!?, which works in a multitude of lines, but I couldn't improve upon a couple of completely equal and prospectless variations after 9...♗a6 (9...♗c4? fails to 10 ♕a4+ b5 11 ♘xb5 ♗xb5 12 ♕xb5+ ♔f8 13 ♕b7 g5 14 ♕xa8 gxf4 15 ♕xa7 ±) 10 exf7+ ♔xf7 *(D)*.

For the record, and in case you want to investigate further:

a) 11 ♕b3+ ♔e8 12 e4 (12 ♘e6?! ♕d7 leaves Black safe after 13 ♘xg7+ ♔d8 14 ♘e6+ ♔c8 ∓) 12...♕xd4 13 ♘e6 ♕c4! 14 ♕xc4 ♗xc4 15 ♘xc7+ ♔f7 16 ♘xa8 ♘a6 17 ♘xb6 axb6. White has three pawns and a rook for two pieces, but Black's pieces are very active, and White's prospects of winning aren't good at all; e.g., 18 b4 ♘g4! 19 ♗f4 ♗f6 20

W

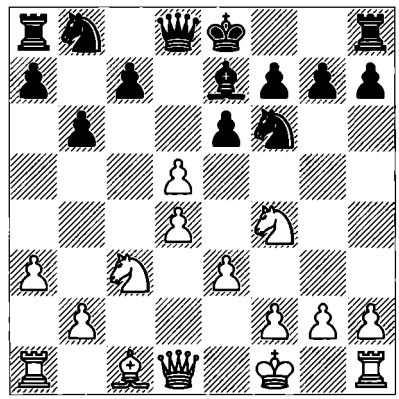


♖c1 b5 and Black is holding the balance (but no more than that).

b) 11 e4 ♗c4! is hard/impossible to crack if Black defends well (there are all kinds of nice wins after 11...c5?! 12 e5): 12 ♗e3 (or 12 e5 ♘c6 13 ♗e3, transposing) 12...♘c6 13 e5 ♖e8! (13...♘d5? 14 e6+ ♔g8 15 ♘cxd5 ♗xd5 16 ♕h5 +−) 14 b3 ♗a6 15 b4 ♗c4 16 ♖c1 ♔g8! 17 ♘ce2! (17 exf6 ♗xf6 18 ♘ce2 b5) 17...b5! 18 ♖xc4!? (18 exf6 ♗xf6 19 0-0 ♕d7 =) 18...bxc4 19 ♕c2 ♔h8! 20 ♕xc4 ♕d7 21 exf6 ♗xf6 22 0-0 ♖ad8 23 d5 (23 ♖d1?! ♘xd4) 23...♘e7 24 ♘e6 ♖c8 25 ♘6f4 ♖cd8 =. I've skipped most of Black's alternatives, but believe they favour White, so if you can find something against this main line, you're in business.

We now return to 9 ♔xf1 *(D)*:

B



9...♘xd5

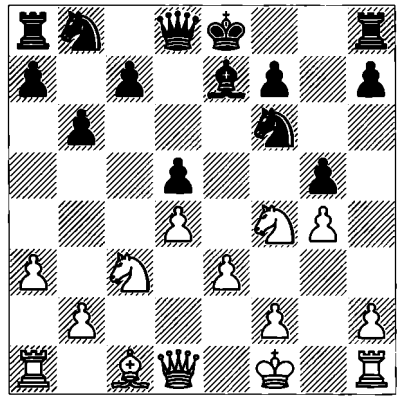
After 9...exd5, Botvinnik's 10 g4 was originally considered favourable (10 h4!? prepares g4, h5 or ♖h3-g3; this might serve as a way to play if you are willing to accept that it's probably only equal), and in any case leads to a fascinating position. We have:

a) 10...h6 11 h4!, intending ♕f3 with an early g5, is promising, even after 11...♕d7?! 12 ♕f3! with the idea 12...♕xg4 13 ♕xg4 ♘xg4 14 ♖g1 h5 15 ♘fxd5.

b) The stem game for the line went 10...c6 11 g5 ♘fd7 12 h4 ♗d6? (12...0-0 is awfully risky due to 13 ♕g4; Kasparov gives a sample line beginning with 13...♘a6 14 e4 dxe4 15 ♘xe4 f5? 16 gxf6 ♘xf6 17 ♕e6+ ♔h8 18 h5!, threatening ♘g6+) 13 e4! dxe4 14 ♘xe4 ♗xf4?! 15 ♗xf4 0-0 16 h5! ♖e8 17 ♘d6 ♖e6 and here 18 d5 led to a sterling victory in Botvinnik-Smyslov, World Ch (2), Moscow 1954, but the computer proves that 18 g6! wins immediately in view of the beautiful sequence 18...fxg6 19 hxg6 h6 20 ♕b3 ♘f8 21 ♖e1 ♕d7 22 ♖xe6 ♕xe6 23 ♘f5!! ♕xb3 24 ♘e7+ ♔h8 25 ♖xh6+ gxh6 26 ♗e5#.

c) 10...g5! *(D)* has proven itself in many contests:

W



c1) Someone should give 11 ♘d3 a try, having in mind ♘e5, especially after 11...♘c6; a strange line is 11...h5! 12 gxh5 ♖xh5 13 ♘e5 with chances for both sides.

c2) 11 ♘h5 (recommended and played by everyone) 11...♘xh5 12 gxh5 c6 (12...♖f8 13 ♕f3 c6 14 e4 dxe4 15 ♕xe4 f5 has also done well, but the untried 16 ♕e5! appears to yield an advantage regardless of Black's reply) 13 ♕f3 ♘a6 (generally favoured over 13...♕d7, which is probably of equivalent worth) 14 e4 (or 14 ♖g1 ♘c7 15 e4) 14...♘c7, and perhaps the seldom-played 15 h4 affords the best prospects;

e.g., 15...h6 16 exd5 ♘xd5 17 hxg5 hxg5 18 ♗d2 ± and ♖e1 next, or 15...f6! 16 exd5 ♘xd5 17 ♗d2, which is more or less equal but nevertheless rather interesting.

10 ♘cxd5

10 ♕f3 c6 11 g3 is an uncommon but sensible way to play; e.g., 11...0-0 12 ♔g2 ♘d7 13 e4 (13 ♖d1 ♕c7!? 14 e4 ♘xc3 15 ♕xc3 ♖ac8 16 ♗e3 ± Ruether-Galje, corr. 1996) 13...♘xc3 14 ♕xc3 c5! 15 d5! ♗f6 16 ♕b3!? exd5 17 ♘xd5 ♗d4 18 ♗e3 ♗xe3 19 ♕xe3 ♘f6 (White has only a nominal edge, although worth playing in practice) 20 ♘c3 (White can try 20 ♖ad1 ♖e8 21 ♕f3, hoping for 21...♘xe4? 22 ♘c3 ♕e7 23 ♖he1) 20...♕e7 21 ♖ad1 ♖ad8 22 f4!? (Budnikov-S.Pavlov, Yuzhny 2010) and here a normal move like 22...♕e6 is satisfactory.

10...exd5 11 ♕h5

This is the standard move. 11 h4 might be worth a try, when 11...c6 12 h5 h6 13 ♗d2 ♗g5 14 ♘d3 0-0 15 ♖c1 a5 16 ♘e5 was Lutsko-S.Pavlov, Khmelnitsky 2008.

11...♗g5 12 ♘e6?!

Played umpteen times, as opposed to none for 12 ♘d3!?. In combination with ♗d2 and ♖c1, this would help to hold down c5. Even the computer seems to think that White has a modest advantage then! Well maybe, maybe not, but surely it's better than getting slightly the worse side of a drawn position (which tends to be the outcome of the text-move)?

12...g6 13 ♕xg5 fxe6 14 ♕e5

Or 14 ♕xd8+ ♔xd8 =.

14...♔d7

White has achieved absolutely nothing here and in fact has both a negative record and performance rating. So you should take a look at the various alternatives along the way.

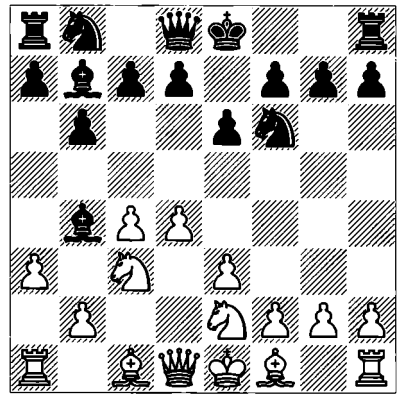
7.22)

5...♗b7

5...0-0 would probably arise more often from 4...0-0 5 ♘e2 b6, but it fits here conceptually because the bishop will go to b7: 6 a3 ♗xc3+ 7 ♘xc3 d5 (7...♗b7 can be met by 8 ♗d3!, when White gains control of e4 unless Black attempts the risky 8...♗xg2?! 9 ♖g1 ♗b7 10 e4; instead, 8 f3 is also good) 8 ♗e2 (the exchange on d5 allows Black to exchange light-squared bishops without losing a tempo: 8 cxd5 exd5 9 ♗d3 c5 10 0-0 ♗a6!?) 8...♗b7 (after 8...♗a6 White has 9 b3) 9 0-0 ♘bd7 10 b4!? (or 10 b3 ±) 10...dxc4 11 ♗xc4 c5 12 ♗b2 a6!? (after 12...cxd4 13 ♕xd4 ♖c8, as in the game Bareev-Timman, Wijk aan Zee 1995, White can play 14 ♘b5!) 13 dxc5 bxc5 14 ♗e2 ♘d5 15 ♘xd5 ♗xd5 16 ♕d2 ± M.Gurevich-Rozentalis, Turin Olympiad 2006; the bishop-pair provides some advantage.

6 a3 *(D)*

B



6...♗e7

Or:

a) 6...♗xc3+ 7 ♘xc3 d5 8 cxd5 doesn't give Black enough counterplay to justify the loss of the bishop-pair; e.g., 8...exd5 (8...♘xd5 has several good replies, including the direct 9 ♘xd5 and 9 ♕f3) 9 ♗d3 (9 b4 is probably more flexible) 9...0-0 10 0-0 c5 (10...♖e8 11 b4 ♘bd7 12 ♕b3 c6 13 f3) 11 b4!? cxd4 12 exd4 ♘e4 13 ♗xe4!? dxe4 14 d5 ♕f6 15 ♗b2 ♘d7 16 ♕g4 ± V.Milov-Korchnoi, Swiss Team Ch 2007.

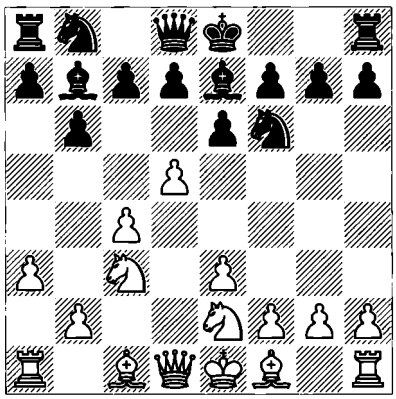
b) 6...♗d6!? is better than it seems. In fact, White might be well advised to play the conservative 7 b4 0-0 8 ♘g3 (the immediate 7 ♘g3 h5 is not so clear). Otherwise, White can go for central expansion by 7 ♕d3!? c5 (against other moves, e4 will follow) 8 e4 cxd4 9 ♘xd4 0-0 10 ♘db5!? ♗e5 11 f4 ♗xc3+ 12 ♘xc3, when Black should hurry to establish himself with 12...d5 13 e5 ♘e4 14 ♘xe4 dxe4 15 ♕xd8 ♖xd8 16 ♗e3 ♘c6 (otherwise the bishops will again be a real force) 17 ♔f2 (17 b4 ♘d4 18 ♖c1) 17...4 xd4!? (it's not clear that White can convert this advantage into victory; the alternative is 18 b4 ♘c2 19 ♖c1 ♘xe3 20 ♔xe3 ±) 18...♖xd4 19 ♔e3 ♖ad8 20 ♗e2 f5 21 exf6

gxf6 22 ♖hd1 ♖xd1 23 ♖xd1 ♖xd1 24 ♗xd1 f5 25 g4, when White has all the chances.

7 d5 *(D)*

7 ♘f4 has also been played, going way back to Rubinstein! I think that White has a small plus to work with; for example, 7...0-0 8 ♗d3 (8 ♗e2 d5 9 cxd5 exd5 10 ♗f3 c6 11 0-0 ♗d6 12 b4, with the idea b5, might squeeze a little something from the position, since ...♗xf4 generally helps White, and especially so when ...c5 isn't effective) 8...d6 (after 8...d5 9 cxd5 exd5 10 0-0 c5, G.Kuzmin suggests 11 ♕f3! with pressure on d5 and the kingside) 9 0-0 ♘bd7 10 b3 (or 10 b4 ±) 10...♖e8 11 ♗b2 ± Kharlov-Liogky, Cappelle la Grande 1999. White has some space advantage and his minor pieces are actively placed.

B



7...0-0

A game which may be known to old-timers went 7...a5 8 e4 e5 9 ♘g3 0-0 10 ♗d3 ♘e8 11 h4 (to avoid the bishop exchange by ...♗g5) 11...♘a6 12 ♘f5 ♘c5 13 ♗c2 ♘d6 14 ♘xd6 (14 ♕g4! ♘xf5 15 exf5 ±) 14...♗xd6 15 ♗e3 ♗e7 16 ♖b1!? (16 ♕g4) 16...♗c8 17 b4 axb4 18 axb4 ♘a6 19 ♘a2 d6 20 b5 ♘b8 (versus ♘b4-c6, but 20...♘c5 may be preferable) 21 ♘b4 f5?! 22 exf5 ♗xf5 23 ♗xf5 ♖xf5 24 g3 ♕e8 25 ♖a1 ♘d7 26 ♖xa8 ♕xa8 27 ♘c6 ♖f7 28 0-0 and White stood clearly better in Lilienthal-Kotov, USSR Ch, Moscow 1945.

8 ♘g3

8 g3 can be met by 8...b5! or 8...a5 9 ♗g2 ♘a6, spoiling White's fun, while 8 e4 ♖e8 9 ♘g3 exd5 10 cxd5 ♗d6 is also satisfactory for Black.

8...d6

8...b5 might be answered by 9 e4!?, but 8...a5 looks best.

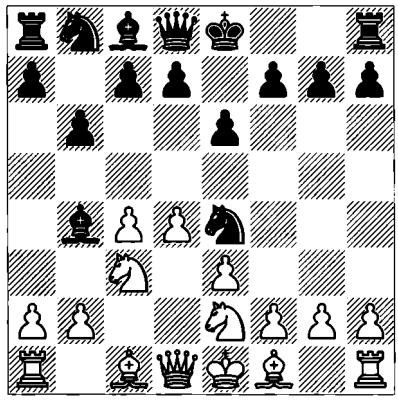
9 e4 ♘bd7 10 ♗e2 ♖e8 11 0-0

Now 11...a6?! 12 ♗f4 ♖c8 13 ♕d2 ♘f8 14 ♖ad1 ♕d7 15 ♗e3 gave White a solid advantage in Levitt-Emms, British Ch, Plymouth 1992. Emms offers 11...c6! ±, when 12 dxe6 fxe6 13 f4 is an interesting course, gaining space and preparing moves such as ♗e3, ♗f3 and b4, depending upon how the play develops.

7.23)

5...♘e4 *(D)*

W



This is an unambitious move which has a high percentage of draws at high levels of play and is supposed to reduce Black's losing prospects. In fact, while the system is undoubtedly solid and objectively adequate, White has several ways to make things interesting.

6 ♗d2

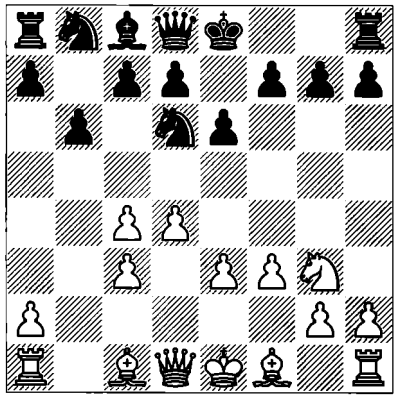
I'll recommend this as the best way to obtain a complex strategic struggle without taking on real risks. 6 ♕c2 is still the 'main line', leading after 6...♗b7 7 a3 ♗xc3+ 8 ♘xc3 ♘xc3 9 ♕xc3 to a position in which the two bishops are compensated for by Black's pressure on the kingside and rapid development.

Other moves:

a) Aside from the text-move, the choice that most appeals to me (and hasn't been seriously investigated) is 6 f3. This can lead to Sämisch-like positions. Those might not be to everyone's taste but they are considerably more exciting than the alternatives. Play can go:

a1) The fascinating position after 6...♗xc3+ 7 bxc3 ♘d6 8 ♘g3 *(D)* tends to turn critical because of the race between White's play in the centre/kingside and Black's queenside counterplay:

B



a11) 8...♗a6 9 ♕a4 ♕h4 10 ♗d3 f5 11 0-0 0-0 12 e4 ♗b7 13 exf5 ♘xf5 (13...exf5 14 c5 bxc5 and now 15 ♗a3 or 15 ♕b3+ c4 16 ♗xc4+ ♘xc4 17 ♕xc4+ d5 18 ♕xc7 ±) 14 ♘xf5 exf5 15 ♗a3 d6 16 c5 with a strong attack.

a12) 8...♘c6 9 e4 (9 ♕a4 0-0 10 ♗d3 ♘a5 11 c5, Flear-Harris, Manchester 1981) 9...♗a6 10 e5 ♘xc4 11 ♗d3 ♘6a5 12 0-0 ♗b7 13 ♕e2 ♗d5 14 ♘h5 ♕h4 15 f4 0-0-0 16 g3 ♕e7 (Fedorowicz-Ward, Cannes 1988) and now 17 f5! with the idea 17...exf5 18 ♘xg7.

a2) 6...♘xc3 7 bxc3 and then:

a21) 7...♗d6 is active; White can develop normally or try to expand by 8 e4:

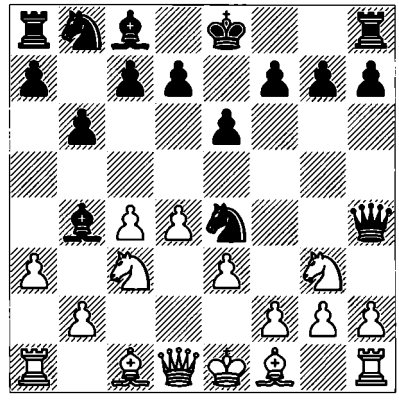
a211) 8...c5 could be countered radically by 9 e5 ♗e7 10 d5 d6 11 ♘g3. Then 11...dxe5 12 ♗d3! threatens both d6 and ♗e4, and 11...0-0 12 ♗d3 exd5 13 cxd5 ♘d7 14 f4!? dxe5 15 0-0 ♗b7 16 c4 exf4 17 ♗xf4 gives White unclear attacking prospects for the pawn.

a212) 8...♘c6 9 e5 ♗e7 10 ♘g3 ♗a6 11 ♗d3 ♘a5 12 f4! ♗xc4 13 f5 ♗xd3 14 ♕xd3 d5 15 ♘h5 (or 15 0-0 with plenty of compensation) 15...♗f8 (15...g6 16 fxe6! gxh5?! 17 exf7+ ♔xf7 18 0-0+ ♔e8 19 e6 ♕d6 20 ♗f4 ♕xe6 21 ♖ae1 is too strong) was played in Bleiman-Bisguier, Netanya 1971. After 16 0-0! ♕d7 17 ♗g5 ±, Black's king is stuck.

a22) 7...♗e7 8 e4 (8 ♘g3 is a legitimate option) 8...♘c6 9 ♘g3 ♗a6 10 ♗d3 ♘a5 (10...e5 11 ♘f5 ♗f6 12 f4 with some advantage for White, L.Karlsson-Stigar, Oslo 1986) 11 ♕e2 d6 12 0-0 ♕d7 (12...h5 13 f4! h4 14 ♘h5 g6 15 ♘g7+ ♔f8 16 ♘xe6+ fxe6 17 f5 gives White a decisive attack – Sokolov) 13 ♖b1 (Sokolov prefers 13 f4 ♕a4 14 f5) 13...h5! 14 ♖e1 h4 15 ♘f1 c5 and instead of 16 ♗e3, as played in I.Sokolov-D.Johansen, Manila Olympiad 1992, 16 f4 is more appropriate.

b) Partly for the record (and since it could be of surprise value), I should note that 6 a3, given a straight '?' in most sources, is playable. The supposed refutation (and best move) is 6...♕h4!, when White should play 7 ♘g3! *(D)* (analysts give the ugly 7 g3 ♕f6 8 f4 here), with the following possibilities:

B



b1) 7...♘xc3?! 8 ♕f3! ♘e4+ 9 axb4 f5 10 ♘xe4!? (10 ♕h5+! ♕xh5 11 ♘xh5 g6 12 f3 gxh5 13 fxe4 fxe4 14 ♗e2 0-0 15 ♗xh5 leaves White with the bishop-pair in a promising context) 10...fxe4 (10...♕xe4?! 11 ♕g3) 11 ♕g3 ♕xg3 12 hxg3 ±. This isn't a great deal, but with space, the bishops, and Black's rather cramped position, White can certainly play for a win.

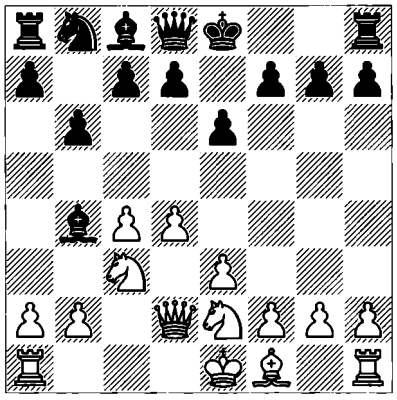
b2) 7...♘xg3?! 8 fxg3 ♗xc3+ 9 bxc3 opens the f-file, which is typical in Nimzo-Indian positions in which White controls the centre. Of course, White's c4-pawn can be harassed (and might want to go to c5 at some point), and if Black stabilizes the centre he can boast of a superior pawn-structure. Nevertheless, I'd give White a limited plus; e.g., 9...♕f6 10 ♖a2 0-0 11 ♖f2 ♕e7 12 ♗d3 ♗b7 13 0-0 ♘c6 14 g4!? (versus ...f5) 14...e5 15 c5 intending 15...bxc5 16 ♕b3!? (16 d5 ♘d8 17 e4) 16...♖ab8?? (16...♘d8) 17 ♖xf7 ♖xf7 18 ♖xf7.

b3) 7...♗xc3+! 8 bxc3 ♗b7 offers chances for both sides; for example, 9 ♕h5!? ♕xh5 10 ♘xh5 g6! 11 ♘g3!? ♘xc3! 12 f3 d5! (12...♘a4 13 ♗d3 ♗c6 14 ♖b1 a5 15 ♗c2 d6 16 ♘e2 ♔e7 17 ♔f2 is slightly better for White) 13 ♗d2!? (13 a4 dxc4 14 ♗xc4 is unclear, though White has compensation) 13...♘a4 14 cxd5 exd5 15 ♗b5+ ♗c6 16 ♗e2 =.

6...♘xd2

The only logical move, gaining the bishop-pair. 6...♗xc3?! 7 ♘xc3 ♘xd2 8 ♕xd2 essentially wastes time compared to other variations (White didn't have to play a3), and White took advantage by 8...♗b7 9 ♗d3! ♗xg2 10 ♖g1 ♗f3 11 ♖xg7, securing an obvious plus, in the game Grandelius-Penalver, Swedish Team Ch 2010/11.

7 ♕xd2 *(D)*



7...0-0

Here there are important and frequently-seen alternatives:

a) 7...♗a6 8 a3 (8 ♘f4 is quite playable) 8...♗e7 (8...♗xc3 9 ♘xc3 d5 can be answered calmly by 10 b3 or even 10 ♗e2 ♗xc4 11 ♗xc4 dxc4 12 ♕e2, or more directly with 10 cxd5 ♗xf1 11 ♔xf1 exd5 12 ♖c1 0-0 13 g3 ♘c6 14 ♔g2 ±) 9 ♘f4 ♗g5! 10 ♘h5!? g6 11 ♘g3 (D.Gurevich-Christiansen, USA Ch, Estes Park 1984) and now 11...0-0! 12 ♗e2 f5 13 0-0!? f4!? 14 ♘ge4 ♗h6 15 d5 ± can follow.

b) 7...♗b7 8 a3 (or 8 d5) 8...♗e7 (8...♗xc3 9 ♘xc3 0-0 10 d5) 9 d5 (for 9 ♘f4 ♗g5 10 ♗d3 0-0, see the main line) 9...0-0 10 g3 c5!? (10...d6 11 ♗g2 e5 12 0-0 ♘d7 13 f4 gave White more space, but nothing special, in Jelen-Grosar, Slovenian Ch, Postojna 1992) 11 ♗h3! e5 12 f4 exf4 13 gxf4 d6 14 0-0-0 ♖e8 15 ♘g3 with good attacking chances for White, Szabo-Botvinnik, European Team Ch, Oberhausen 1961.

c) 7...d5 8 a3 ♗e7 9 cxd5 exd5 10 g3 (10 ♘f4 c6 11 ♗d3) 10...0-0 11 ♗g2 c6 12 0-0 ± M.Gurevich-Enders, Eger 1987.

8 a3 ♗e7

Again, 8...♗xc3 9 ♘xc3 ♗b7 is reasonable (but 9...f5?! less so; e.g., 10 ♗d3 d6 11 0-0 ♘d7 12 f4! ♘f6 13 d5 ♖e8 14 ♖ae1 has the idea of 15 e4, even against 14...e5).

9 ♘f4

This is a flexible option, and perhaps better than 9 d5 in terms of forcing Black to come up with a plan.

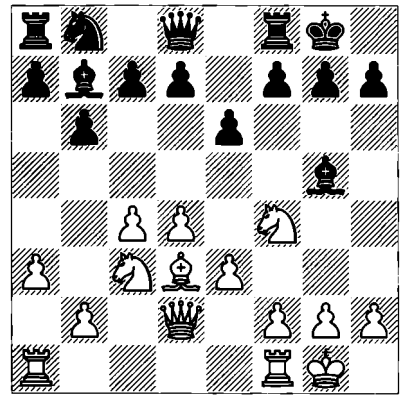
9...♗g5!?

9...d6 10 ♗e2 ♗b7 11 0-0 ♘d7 (Aleksandrov-Ehlvest, Polanica Zdroj 1997) 12 ♖ad1 ♗g5!? 13 ♘d3 a5 14 f4 ♗f6 15 ♗f3 gives White a comfortable game.

10 ♗d3 ♗b7

This is equivalent to 7...♗b7 8 a3 ♗e7 9 ♘f4 ♗g5 10 ♗d3 0-0.

11 0-0 *(D)*



11...♗xf4

It's not clear who profits more from this exchange; I'd say White. Sokolov suggests implementing it in another way: 11...d5 12 cxd5 ♗xf4 13 exf4 exd5, which he calls equal, but I think White can use his superior activity by means of 14 ♖fe1, with ideas of ♖e3 and doubling rooks or attacking on the kingside. Since 14...c5 15 dxc5 bxc5 16 ♖ad1 is very awkward, Black might try 14...♘c6 15 ♗c2 ♕d6 16 b4 ♖ae8 17 ♕d3 g6 18 f5 ♗c8! 19 ♕d2! ±.

12 exf4

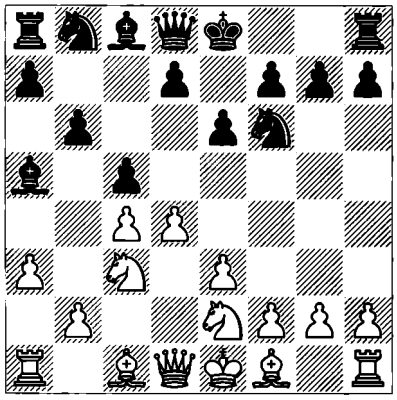
Now 12...c5? 13 dxc5 bxc5 14 ♗e4 is very bad for Black, while after 12...d5 (O.Rodriguez-I.Sokolov, Barcelona 1992) 13 cxd5! exd5 (Black should avoid 13...♗xd5?! 14 ♘xd5 ♕xd5? 15 ♕c2 f5 16 ♗c4 ±) 14 ♖fe1 White has the better of it.

7.24)

5...c5

Notice that this can also arise via 4...c5 5 ♘e2 b6.

6 a3 ♗a5 *(D)*



This variation was brought into prominence by Romanishin and Psakhis, and has retained an excellent reputation since it first came into general notice. Black simply prevents b4 and maintains his pin, while putting some pressure on d4.

7 ♖b1

At this juncture, White has tried a large set of responses but there is no known way to achieve more than a small theoretical advantage. The text-move intends to trap the bishop with b4; the other main move is 7 ♗d2.

7...♘a6

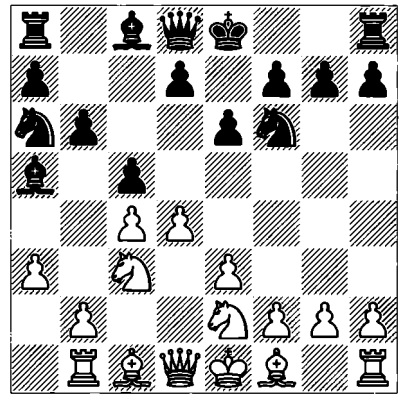
7...♕e7 isn't played much. White has several plausible ways to try for an advantage, including 8 ♗d2. Then:

a) 8...♗a6 9 b4! cxb4 10 axb4 ♗xb4 11 ♖xb4! ♕xb4 12 ♘b5 ♕e7 13 ♘c7+ ♔d8 14 ♘xa8 and Black exploits the trapped knight by 14...♗xc4 but White will get pressure on his position and king; e.g., 15 ♘c3 ♗xf1 16 ♖xf1 d5 17 ♘b5 ♕b7 18 ♕c1! ♘e8 19 ♘ac7 ♘f6 20 ♔e2 a6 21 ♘xa6 ♘xa6 22 ♕a3 ±.

b) White also retains an edge after 8...0-0 9 ♘g3 ♘a6 10 ♗d3 cxd4 11 exd4 ♗xc3 12 ♗xc3 d5 13 ♕e2 dxc4 14 ♗xc4 ♕b7 15 0-0 ♘c7 16 ♗b4 ♖e8 17 ♗d6 ♘cd5 18 ♗e5 ±.

c) 8...♘a6 9 ♘f4 (with the idea of a timely ♘d3, or in some cases supporting the advance d5; or 9 dxc5 bxc5 10 ♘f4) 9...♗b7 10 ♗d3 cxd4 11 exd4 ♗xc3 12 bxc3 ♗e4 13 0-0 0-0 14 ♖e1 ♗xd3 15 ♘xd3 h6 (15...d6 16 ♗g5 h6 17 ♗xf6 ♕xf6 18 ♕a4 ♘c7 19 ♕c6 ♕e7 20 ♘b4 ±) 16 ♕a4 ♘c7 17 c5 with a slight advantage for White.

We now return to 7...♘a6 *(D)*:



8 g3

Now that White has gained a small concession, i.e., Black's knight on the awkward square a6, his centre is secure for the moment and he can develop. 8 ♗d2 is the main line, and 8 ♘f4 is another safe way to play: 8...♘e4! (8...0-0 9 ♗d3 should bring White a small advantage) 9 ♕d3!? ♘xc3 (9...♗b7? 10 b4 ♘xc3 11 ♕xc3; 9...f5 10 b4! cxb4 11 ♘xe4 fxe4 12 ♕xe4 bxa3+ 13 ♔d1 a2 14 ♖a1 ♖b8 15 ♗a3 with prospects of advantage) 10 bxc3 ♗b7 11 ♗e2 (11 d5!?) 11...f5 12 f3 with a complex and balanced position. The text-move is more ambitious.

8...♗b7

8...cxd4 9 exd4 ♗b7 10 d5 (threatening b4) 10...♗xc3+ 11 ♘xc3 ♖c8 12 ♗e2 exd5 13 cxd5 ♘c7 14 0-0 ♘fxd5 (14...♘cxd5 15 ♘b5!) 15 ♘xd5 ♗xd5 16 ♗f4 ♗b7 17 ♗d6 and Black is struggling.

9 d5 b5!?

A bold move, designed to break up the centre straightaway. Other moves grant White some advantage:

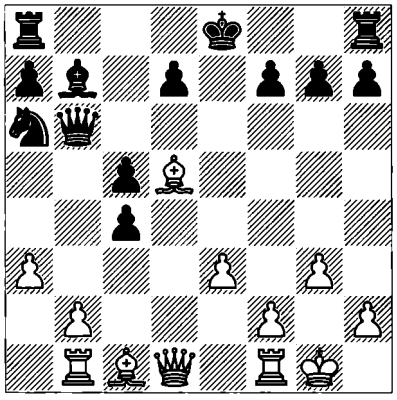
a) 9...exd5 10 ♗g2 gains White some time, reserves the idea of capturing on d5 with a piece, and doesn't really help Black; e.g., 10...b5 11 b4! cxb4 12 axb4 ♘xb4 (12...♗xb4 13 cxb5 ♗xc3+ 14 ♘xc3 ♘c7 15 ♗a3 d6 16 ♕b3 0-0 17 0-0 ♕d7 18 ♖fd1 ±) 13 0-0 bxc4 14 ♗a3 ♕b6 15 ♘a2.

b) 9...♘e4?! 10 ♗g2 ♘xc3 11 ♘xc3 ♗xc3+ 12 bxc3 gives White space and creates potential dark-square problems. Gelfand-Aronian, Leon rapid 2010 continued 12...d6 13 ♕a4+ ♔e7 14 0-0 ♘c7 15 e4 ♖e8? 16 e5! ♔f8 (16...exd5? fails to 17 ♖d1 or 17 ♕c2), and now 17 ♖d1! would have practically won on the spot due to 17...exd5 (17...dxe5 18 d6) 18 exd6 ♕xd6 19 ♗f4 ♕d8 20 cxd5.

10 ♗g2 bxc4 11 0-0 0-0

Dearing gives 11...♗xc3 12 ♘xc3 ♘xd5 13 ♘xd5 exd5 14 ♗xd5 ♕b6 *(D)*.

W



He continues 15 ♗xb7 ♕xb7 16 ♕d6 ♕e4!, when Black is at least equal. White can get a small advantage by other means – nothing out of the ordinary, but enough to worry Black:

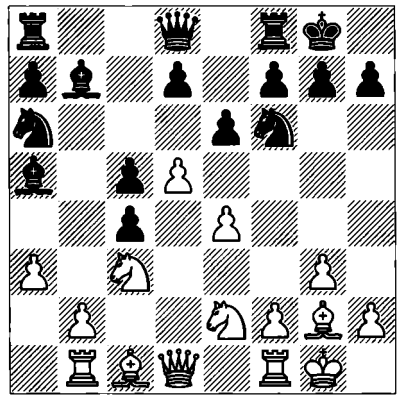
a) 15 ♗xc4 ♘c7 16 ♕c2 d5 17 ♗d3; for example, 17...♘e6 18 b4 c4 19 ♗f5.

b) 15 e4 ♘c7 16 ♗xb7 ♕xb7 17 ♗e3 0-0 (17...♕c6 18 ♖c1 d6 19 ♖xc4 ♘e6 20 f4 ±) 18 ♕xd7 ±.

c) 15 ♕f3 ♗xd5 16 ♕xd5 has been played twice but only gives White a minor advantage following 16...♘c7! (16...♕c6 17 ♕xc6 dxc6 18 ♗d2 intending 19 ♖fc1 – Dearing; 16...0-0 17 ♕xc4) 17 ♕xc4 d5 18 ♕a4+ ♘b5 19 ♕c2 0-0 (Bu Xiangzhi-P.Carlsson, World Junior Ch, Athens 2001) and now 20 ♖d1! ♖fd8 21 b4 c4 22 a4 ♘c7 23 ♗b2 ♘e6 24 ♕f5 ± is best.

12 e4 *(D)*

B



12...d6

Or:

a) 12...♖e8 13 ♗g5 (White also gets the better game from 13 dxe6) 13...h6 14 ♗xf6 ♕xf6 15 ♕a4 and ♖fd1 ±.

b) Perhaps 12...exd5!? improves; for example, 13 e5 (13 ♘xd5 ♘c7! 14 ♘xf6+ ♕xf6 15 ♕xd7 ♖fe8 is equal) 13...♘g4 14 ♗xd5 ♗c6! (14...♗xd5 15 ♕xd5 ♕e7 16 ♕xc4 ♕e6 17 ♕xe6 dxe6 18 f4 ±) 15 ♗f4 ♖e8 16 ♗xc6 dxc6 17 ♕a4 ♘xe5 18 ♗xe5 ♖xe5 19 ♖fd1 ♕b6 20 ♕xc4 with the ideas of ♖d7 and ♘e4. White's advantages in this note are slight, to be sure.

13 ♗g5

13 ♕a4 and 13 dxe6 fxe6 14 ♕a4 ± are about equally good.

13...♘c7

Vaïsser analyses both 13...h6 14 ♗xf6 ♕xf6 15 ♕a4 ♗b6 16 dxe6 ♕xe6 17 e5 ♗xg2 18 ♔xg2 ♘c7 19 exd6 ♕xd6 20 ♖bd1 ± and 13...exd5 14 ♘xd5 ♗xd5 15 ♗xf6 ♕xf6 16 ♕xd5 ±.

14 e5

Vaïsser labels this '!'. I'm not so sure; in any case, White seems able to get a slight advantage by two other moves:

a) 14 ♘f4 exd5 15 ♕a4 ♗xc3 16 bxc3 ♗c8 17 ♕c6; for example, 17...♗d7! (17...dxe4 can be met by 18 ♗xf6 gxf6 19 ♗xe4 ± or 18 ♗xe4) 18 ♕xd6 ♘b5 19 ♗xf6!? (19 ♕xc5) 19...♘xd6 20 ♗xd8 ♖axd8 21 ♘xd5 ±.

b) 14 dxe6 fxe6 15 ♕a4 ♗b6 16 ♖bd1 ±.

14...dxe5 15 d6 ♗xg2 16 ♗xf6! ♕xf6 17 ♔xg2 ♘d5

Or 17...♘e8!? 18 d7 ♘c7 19 ♕a4 ♗b6 20 ♖bd1 ♖fd8 =.

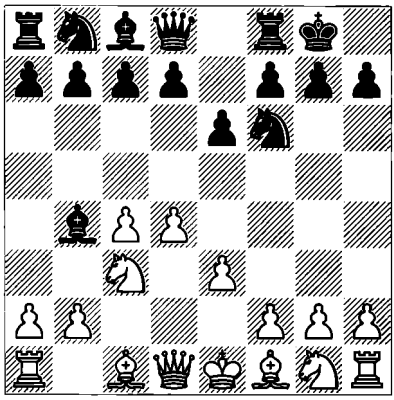
18 ♘xd5 exd5 19 ♕xd5 ♖ad8 20 d7 e4! 21 ♔g1 ♕e7

Vaïsser-Zakhartsov, Aix-les-Bains 2011. Black has equalized, but White's options above afford him good prospects for advantage.

7.3)

4...0-0 *(D)*

W



This is a less dynamic option than 4...c5 or 4...b6, but it is also the most reliable move, and impervious to direct attack. As such, it's not surprising that 4...0-0 is the first choice at the top levels, since a split point as Black is considered more acceptable than in a weekend Swiss. Fortunately, however, White is able to keep things interesting.

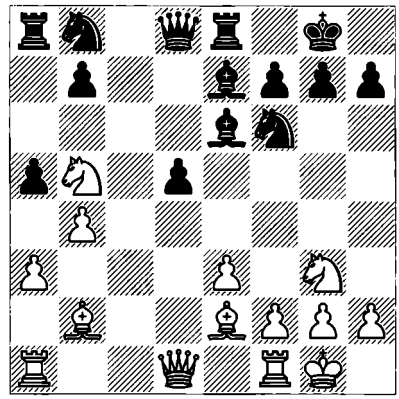
5 ♘e2

A tip: it may be that eventually you'll want to construct an alternative repertoire with 5 ♗d3. It's worth mentioning that because once Black has committed to ...0-0, there are certain move-orders that become easier (e.g., 5...b6 is no longer a problem). One very important difference is that it is much easier to find effective plans against the Hübner System, normally introduced by 4 e3 c5 5 ♗d3 ♘c6 6 ♘f3 ♗xc3+ 7 bxc3 d6, when Black has played 4...0-0 and can't go queenside.

5...d5

A direct and thematic move, staking out central territory. 5...♖e8 is a reasonable alternative, giving the b4-bishop a retreat-square and helping to enforce ...e5, but it's a little slow: 6 a3 ♗f8 7 ♘g3 (I prefer this to the more direct 7 e4; 7 ♘f4 is well met by 7...d6 with the idea ...e5, either on the following move or after ...c6) 7...d5 (7...e5 8 dxe5 ♖xe5 9 ♗e2 g6 10 0-0 ♗g7 11 e4 ±) 8 ♗e2 c5 9 dxc5! (a key idea which gives White good prospects of central superiority) 9...♗xc5 10 b4 (10 0-0 dxc4!? 11 ♕a4 ♗e7 12 ♕xc4 a6 13 ♖d1 ♘bd7 14 ♘ge4! ±) 10...♗e7 (10...♗f8 11 ♗b2 ♘c6 12 0-0 ±) 11 cxd5!? (11 ♗b2) 11...exd5 12 0-0 ♗e6 (12...♘c6 13 ♖a2! ♗e6 14 ♖d2 ±) 13 ♗b2 a5 14 ♘b5! *(D)* and now:

B



a) 14...axb4 15 axb4 ♖xa1 16 ♕xa1 ♗xb4 17 ♗xf6 ♕xf6 18 ♕xf6 gxf6 19 ♖d1 ♘c6 20 ♘h5 ♗e7 21 ♘f4 ♖d8 22 ♘c7 is slightly better for White.

b) 14...♘c6 15 ♘d4 axb4 16 axb4! ♗xb4 17 ♖xa8 ♕xa8 18 ♘df5 (with the ideas ♘xg7 and ♗xf6) 18...♗xf5 19 ♘xf5 ♖e6 (19...♕d8 20 ♕b3) 20 ♕b3 ♗f8 21 ♘d4 ♘xd4 22 ♗xd4 with the bishop-pair and pressure (♖b1 and/or ♖d1) for the pawn.

6 a3 ♗e7

Or:

a) 6...♗xc3+ 7 ♘xc3 b6 8 ♗e2 (8 cxd5 exd5 9 b4 ±) 8...♗b7 (8...♗a6 9 b3) 9 0-0 ♘bd7 10 b4 (10 cxd5 ♘xd5 11 ♘xd5 ♗xd5 12 f3 ±) 10...dxc4 11 ♗xc4 c5 12 ♗b2 ± M.Gurevich-Rozentalis, Turin Olympiad 2006.

b) 6...♗d6 deserves respect, and is certainly better than its relative rarity would suggest:

b1) 7 c5 ♗e7 8 b4 and now:

b11) 8...c6 9 ♘g3 b6 10 ♗d2 bxc5 11 bxc5 e5! 12 ♗e2 g6! (12...♘bd7 13 0-0 ♕c7 14 f4! exd4 15 exd4 ♖e8 16 f5 ±) 13 0-0 h5 and now 14 dxe5!? worked out well in Illescas-Morozevich,

Madrid 1996, but perhaps 14 f3 h4 15 ♘h1, intending ♘f2, is objectively more likely to produce an advantage.

b12) 8...b6 and ...a5 should be satisfactory. Then 9 ♘f4 a5 10 ♗b2 axb4 11 axb4 ♖xa1 12 ♗xa1 ♘e4 13 ♘xe4 dxe4 14 ♗c4 ± c6 15 0-0 ♗a6 16 ♕c2 gave White a nice space advantage in Elianov-Volokitin, Bundesliga 2010/11. Of course, both sides have numerous alternative ideas in this line.

b2) 7 ♘g3 is solid and perhaps objectively best:

b21) 7...c5 is logical, when 8 dxc5 ♗xc5 9 b4 ♗e7 (9...♗b6 10 ♘a4 ♗c7 11 ♗b2 favours White) 10 ♗b2 ♘c6 11 cxd5 (or 11 ♘a4!?) 11...exd5 12 ♘b5 could benefit from more attention.

b22) 7...c6 shores up d5 in anticipation of ...e5, and has been chosen by some strong players. Then:

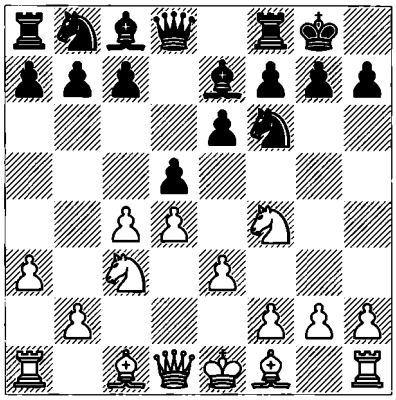
b221) The interesting 8 e4!? has been played in a few games, counting upon the open h-file after the unnecessarily risky 8...♗xg3?! 9 hxg3. Instead, 8...dxe4 9 ♘gxe4 ♘xe4 10 ♘xe4 e5!? 11 ♗e3 ♗c7 12 d5 was double-edged in Ivanisević-Markos, Khanty-Mansiisk Olympiad 2010.

b222) 8 ♗e2 e5 9 cxd5 (9 0-0! may be more accurate, since 9...e4 10 cxd5 cxd5 11 ♕b3 is a nice French-like position) 9...exd4! 10 exd4 cxd5 11 0-0 ♘c6 with approximate equality, Ciciotti-Hudak, corr. 2008.

7 cxd5

7 ♘f4 *(D)* is also popular and may suit the style of some ♘ge2 players. Its goal is more to create problems for Black than to prove any theoretical advantage.

B



Then:

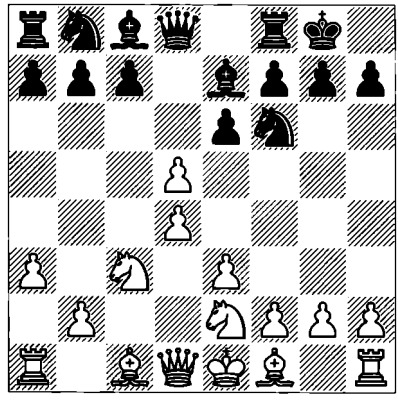
a) 7...c5 8 cxd5 cxd4 9 exd4 transposes to Section 7.112, in which White is slightly better.

b) 7...dxc4 8 ♗xc4 c5 9 0-0 has done very well for White in practice and in my opinion favours him slightly; e.g., 9...cxd4 10 exd4 and now 10...♘bd7 11 ♗e3 ♘b6 12 ♗b3 ± or 10...♘c6 11 ♗e3 ♗d6 12 ♘h5, a position which has arisen many times. 12...♘d5 is probably best, although 13 ♖c1 ♘xc3 14 ♖xc3 gives White excellent activity.

c) Black's main line begins with 7...c6, protecting d5 so as to organize ...e5. White has played numerous moves with mixed success, among them 8 ♗d3 and 8 ♗d2. An irregular move of note is 8 h3!? (covering g4 and usefully protecting the kingside) 8...dxc4!? (8...♘bd7 9 cxd5 exd5 10 ♗d3 is equal but has the potential to become interesting) 9 ♗xc4 ♘bd7 10 ♗a2 e5 11 ♘d3! exd4 12 exd4 ♘b6 (12...♖e8 13 0-0 ♘b6 14 ♘e5 ±) 13 ♘e5 ♘fd5 14 0-0 ♗e6 15 ♖e1 ± and I like White's activity, one primitive idea being ♕d3 and ♗b1, while ♕f3 is also promising.

Nevertheless, our main line is tougher for Black to equalize against than 7 ♘f4. Thus we return to 7 cxd5 *(D)*:

B



Black can choose between:

7.31: 7...♘xd5 140
7.32: 7...exd5 142

7.31)

7...♘xd5 8 ♗d2

White has tried many moves here, but I like this choice because it leaves so much play on

the board. White's idea that after the move 9 e4, 9...♘xc3 will be answered by 10 ♗xc3, which solves a number of problems related to activating White's pieces. In addition, the move ♖c1 can be useful.

8...♘d7

It's difficult for Black to demonstrate equality in this unassuming position.

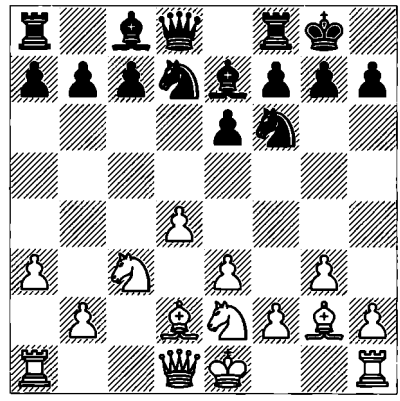
a) 8...c5 9 dxc5 (9 ♘xd5, with the idea 9...♕xd5!? 10 ♘f4 and 11 dxc5, is also promising) 9...♗xc5 10 ♘g3 (or 10 ♕c2 ±) 10...b6?! 11 ♘xd5 ♕xd5 12 ♗c3 ♕xd1+ 13 ♖xd1 ♗b7?! (13...♗e7 14 ♘h5 f6 15 ♗c4 ±) 14 ♘h5! f6 15 ♗c4 with ongoing pressure, Nenashev-Nikolaidis, Aegina 1995.

b) 8...♘xc3 9 ♗xc3 b6 10 ♘g3 (10 ♘f4 ♗b7 11 ♗e2 ♗d6 12 ♗f3 ±) 10...♗b7 11 ♗d3 ♘d7 (11...♗xg2?! 12 ♖g1 is perilous for Black, who must avoid 12...♗b7?? 13 ♗xh7+! ♔xh7 14 ♕h5+ ♔g8 15 d5!, with a winning attack for White; 12...♗d5! is necessary, but White has more than enough compensation following 13 e4 ♗b7 14 ♘h5 g6 15 ♕d2 intending 0-0-0 and/or ♕h6) 12 ♕c2 h6 13 0-0 and White's control of the centre means a little something:

b1) 13...c5?! 14 dxc5 ♗xc5? (14...♘xc5 15 ♗h7+ ♔h8 16 ♖ad1 ♕e8 17 ♘h5 f6 18 ♗g6 ±) 15 ♖fd1 ♕e7 16 ♘h5 ± Sargissian-Tiviakov, FIDE Knockout, Tripoli 2004.

b2) 13...♘f6 14 e4 c5 15 dxc5 bxc5 16 ♗c4 ♘d7 17 f4 (17 ♘h5!? – G.Kuzmin) 17...♘b6 18 ♗e2 ♗f6 19 ♖ad1 ♗d4+ 20 ♗xd4 cxd4 21 ♕d2 ♖c8 22 ♕xd4 ♕xd4+ 23 ♖xd4 ♖c2 24 ♖b1 ♖fc8 and now rather than 25 a4, as played in Aronian-Anand, Calvia Olympiad 2004, 25 ♖b4 covers b2 while preparing a4-a5; e.g., 25...♖d8 (25...♖d2 26 ♔f1 ♖cc2 27 ♔e1 with the idea ♗d1) 26 ♔f1 f6 27 ♖d1!.

c) 8...♘f6 9 g3 (9 ♘g3!?) 9...♘bd7 10 ♗g2 *(D)*.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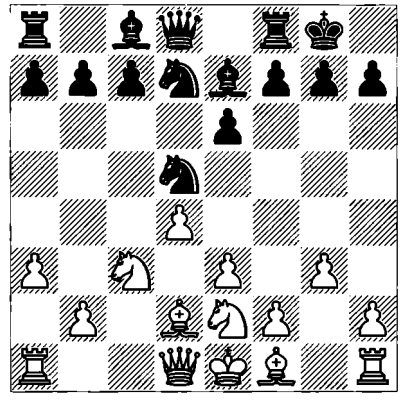
This has been tested at the top levels:

c1) 10...c5 11 0-0 cxd4 12 exd4 (12 ♘xd4!?) 12...♘b6 13 ♕c2 (13 ♗f4 ♘bd5 14 ♗e5 ±) 13...♘fd5 14 ♘xd5 ♘xd5 15 ♘c3 ± (G.Kuzmin).

c2) 10...c6 11 ♕c2 e5 12 ♖d1 exd4 13 ♘xd4 ♘b6 14 h3 (14 0-0 ±; 14 ♘ce2 ±) 14...♘fd5?! 15 0-0 ♗f6 16 ♘ce2! ± followed by e4, Graf-Xu Jun, Bled Olympiad 2002.

c3) 10...e5 11 0-0 exd4 12 ♘xd4 ♘e5 13 ♕c2 c5 14 ♘f5! ♗xf5 15 ♕xf5 ♕xd2 16 ♕xe5 ♗d6 17 ♕f5 ♕xb2 18 ♖fc1 ♖ad8 (Aronian-Gelfand, Spanish Team Ch, Merida 2005) 19 ♖ab1 ♕xa3 and now 20 ♘b5, 20 ♗xb7 and 20 ♕c2 are all somewhat favourable for White.

9 g3 *(D)*


B

9...b6

Gennady Kuzmin thinks that this is Black's best move. Other ideas:

a) 9...♘5f6 transposes to 8...♘f6 9 g3 ♘bd7 (note 'c' to Black's 8th move).

b) 9...♘xc3 10 ♗xc3 c5 11 ♗g2 cxd4 12 ♘xd4 leaves White's minor pieces superior. After 12...♘b6 13 0-0 ♘d5, 14 ♖c1! (instead of 14 ♗e1, chosen in Volkov-Tomashevsky, Russian Team Ch, Sochi 2006) 14...♘xc3 15 ♖xc3 e5 16 ♘b5! keeps a small advantage.

c) After 9...♘5b6, G.Kuzmin prefers 10 ♕c2 e5 11 ♖d1 with a small edge; indeed, the forcing line 11...exd4 12 ♘xd4 ♘e5 13 ♗c1 ♗g4 14 f3 ♗d7 15 f4! ♘g4 16 ♗g2 gives White a nice game.

10 ♗g2

10 ♘xd5 exd5 11 ♗g2 achieves nothing after 11...♘f6 12 0-0 ♗f5 =.

10...♗b7

10...♗a6!? 11 ♘xd5 exd5 12 ♗xd5 ♘c5 13 ♗f3 ♘d3+ 14 ♔f1 ♘xb2 15 ♕c2 ♘c4 16 ♗c3 ♕d7 17 ♔g2 offers White the better chances due to his central majority; e.g., 17...♘xa3 18 ♕c1 ♗xe2 19 ♗xe2 ♘c4! 20 ♗e1 ♘d6 21 ♗f3 ±.

11 0-0 ♘xc3

11...♘7f6 12 ♕c2 ♘xc3 13 ♗xc3 ♗xg2 14 ♔xg2 ♕d5+ 15 f3 ♕b7 16 e4 ±. Admittedly, some of these advantages are slight; the important thing is that there's a healthy imbalance.

12 ♗xc3 ♗xg2 13 ♔xg2 c5 14 d5 ♘f6

On 14...exd5 15 ♕xd5 ♘f6 16 ♕f3 ♕c7 17 ♘f4, White has in mind e4-e5.

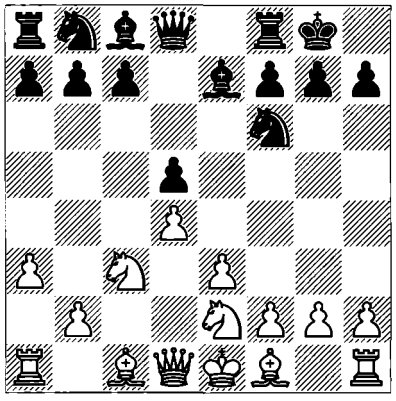
15 dxe6 fxe6 16 ♘f4

White has a slight advantage. The e6-pawn is a little loose and White has the more active minor pieces.

7.32)

7...exd5 *(D)*

W



Another solid move.

8 ♘f4

In my opinion, this is a more promising course for White than 8 g3, although that has a long history and is certainly playable. 8 ♘g3 is a common professional choice; White tends to play b4 next to stop the freeing move ...c5 and tie down the queenside. In that case too, Black has no serious theoretical problems, yet some players might like the manoeuvring game that results. The text-move keeps the knight more centrally posted, and it is still very difficult for Black to arrange ...c5. White reserves the possibility of both central and queenside expansion.

8...c6

This position can also arise via 7 ♘f4 c6 8 cxd5 exd5. Of course, in that case White allows 8...cxd5, and with this move-order (7 cxd5), he allows 7...♘xd5. If Black waits on ...c6 with 8...♖e8, then after 9 ♗d3, either 9...c6 or 9...a5 10 0-0 c6 will probably follow anyway.

9 ♗d3 ♖e8

Or:

a) With 9...a5, Black clamps down on the queenside, which can lead to some fundamentally different strategies after 10 0-0 *(D)*:

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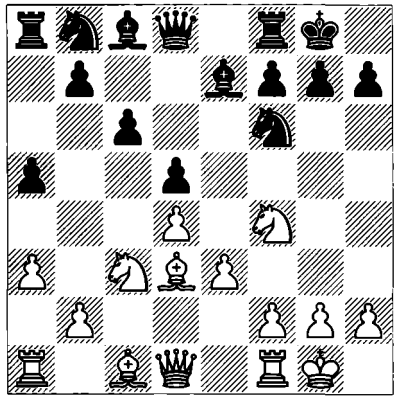

a1) 10...♗d6 11 f3 ♗xf4 ('!' Kotov; although White is generally pretty happy with this exchange, which incidentally has taken four moves of Black's bishop to implement!) 12 exf4 ♘e8. At this point in Ghitescu-Shamkovich, Moscow-Bucharest match 1969, 13 ♗e3 ♘d6 14 ♕c2 g6 15 g4 f5 led to a dynamically balanced game. White stands better in these types of positions if he can free his bishops; in this case he should try 13 ♕c2! h6 (13...g6 14 f5 ♕f6 15 fxg6! ♕xd4+ 16 ♔h1 hxg6 17 ♗g5 ♘c7 18 ♖ae1 with more than enough compensation) 14 f5 ♘d7 15 ♗f4 with the upper hand.

a2) 10...♘a6 introduces not just the idea of ...c5, but also centralization by ...♘c7-e6: 11 ♗c2 *(D)* (11 ♗d2 ♘c7 12 ♖c1 is another idea, as is 11 f3, but probably 11 ♕b3! ♘c7 12 ♘a4! ± is objectively best) and now:

a21) 11...♗d6 12 f3 ♕c7 13 ♕d2 (G.Kuzmin's suggestion 13 ♕d3 has the idea ♘h5;

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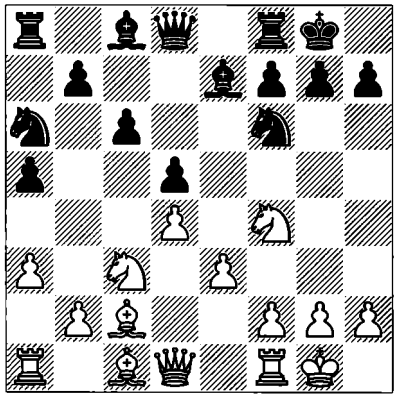

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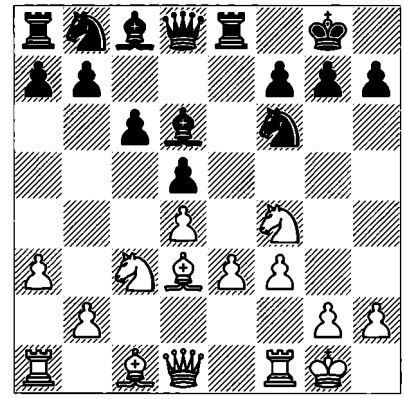


then 13...g6 14 ♕d2! could follow, aiming for 14...g5?! 15 ♘fe2 ♗xh2+?! 16 ♔h1 ± with the threat of f4 and intention of e4) 13...♗xf4?! (usually an ill-advised exchange; 13...♖d8 14 ♕f2!) 14 exf4 ♗d7 15 f5 c5 (Martinović-Kriebel, Chotowa 2010) and now 16 ♕f2! c4 17 ♖e1 with the idea ♗g5 uses the bishops to good effect.

a22) 11...♘c7 12 f3!? ♘e6 (12...c5?! 13 ♘a4! cxd4 14 exd4 ♘b5 15 ♕d3 ♘a7 16 ♘c3 gave White a solid advantage in G.Kuzmin-Korchnoi, Sochi 1970) 13 ♘d3 ♕c7 14 ♘e5, when Kuzmin thinks that the chances are approximately equal; fair enough.

b) 9...♗d6 10 0-0! and now:

b1) 10...♖e8 transposes to the main line.

b2) As already mentioned a few times, exchanging with 10...♗xf4?! is very often – but not always – a mistake. It's important not to lose control of the dark squares, and White gets the bishop-pair. To be sure, White's weakness on d4 can be attacked by ...c5 and ...♘c6, but that's not enough to make genuine progress. After 11 exf4 b6 (11...♖e8 12 f5 ♘bd7 13 ♖e1 ♖xe1+ 14 ♕xe1 c5 15 ♗e3 ±) 12 ♖e1 ♗a6 13 ♗c2 (13 ♗xa6 ♘xa6 14 ♕a4 ±) 13...c5 14 dxc5 bxc5 15 b4!, intending 15...d4 16 ♗e4! ♘xe4 17 ♘xe4 c4 18 f5!, White has the superior pieces.

10 0-0 ♗d6 11 f3 *(D)*

White wants to play e4, but his centre will have to be secured first; in the meantime, this move also defends the kingside and prevents ...♘e4 or ...♘g4.

11...b6

Again, 11...♗xf4 appears to give White more than Black: 12 exf4 ♕b6 (12...b6 13 f5 ♗a6 14 ♗xa6 ♘xa6 15 ♕a4 ♘b8 16 ♗f4 leads to a slight advantage for White, Petrosian-Liberzon, USSR Spartakiad, Moscow 1964) 13 ♗c2 ♗d7 (hoping to play ...c5) 14 b4 a5 15 ♘a4 ♕c7 16 bxa5 ♖xa5 (16...♕xa5 17 ♖b1) 17 ♖e1 ♖xe1+ 18 ♕xe1 ♖a8 19 ♖b1 ±.

12 b4 ♗b7

Black's pieces are logically placed and the position should be close to equal. Now:

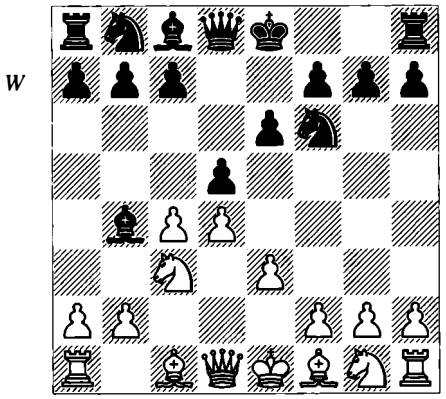
a) I.Sokolov-Vitiugov, Poikovsky 2010 went 13 ♖b1 a5 14 ♘fe2 (an equal position follows 14 bxa5 ♖xa5 15 a4) 14...axb4 15 axb4 ♘a6 with balanced chances. Then 16 e4!? dxe4 17 fxe4 ♘xb4 18 ♗c4 would produce an unclear attack.

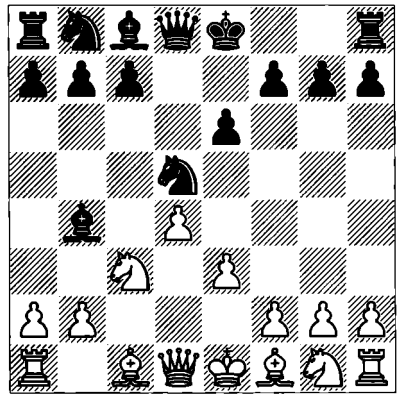
b) I prefer 13 ♗d2, by which White connects his major pieces and covers b4 indirectly against ...a5. In addition, the idea of ♗e1-g3/h4 is a long-term possibility. This may also be approximately equal but White has good potential for central progress. A sample continuation is 13...a5 14 ♘ce2 (or 14 ♕b3) 14...axb4 15 axb4 ♖xa1 (15...♘a6 16 ♕b3) 16 ♕xa1 ♕c7 17 ♕b1! ± (or 17 ♘g3 ±) with the idea 17...♕e7 18 ♘g3. Here 17...g5!? does little good following 18 ♘h3 h6 (18...♗xh2+?! 19 ♔h1 g4? 20 fxg4 ♘e4 21 ♗xe4 dxe4 22 ♘g5) 19 f4 g4 20 ♘f2 h5 21 ♘g3 ±. White has the outpost f5 and play along the c-file.

7.4)

4...d5 *(D)*

This move isn't even mentioned in most books that deal with 4 e3, and barely in others, but it has important implications. It's true that 4...d5 will often transpose to other lines, but that limits your options, and in fact, you can't





get into a ♘ge2 system proper, because after 5 ♘e2 dxc4, it's difficult to get a satisfactory position (recovering the c-pawn takes too much effort and Black achieves a central break). So I'm going to recommend transposing to a line that almost always arises via the move-order 4...0-0 5 ♗d3 d5, that is:

5 cxd5

White will answer 5...exd5 with 6 ♗d3.

I should mention that there are other ways to deal with 4...d5 if you go outside our repertoire. For example, 5 a3 ♗xc3+ 6 bxc3 is a deferred Sämisch Variation, and constitutes a major reason why Black tends to avoid this move-order; that's because ...d5 is not the most popular or trusted response to the Sämisch. Then 6...0-0 7 cxd5 exd5 8 ♗d3 will usually follow, and White plays the classical plan with ♘e2, 0-0, f3 and ♘g3, slowly building up for e4. You can find this in theoretical books, of course, and also in many well-known games by leading masters.

5...exd5

5...♕xd5?! will lose time; e.g., after 6 ♘f3 0-0 7 ♗d3 and 0-0.

The somewhat better 5...♘xd5 *(D)* is rare because it gives up the centre.

Instead of 6 ♘e2 (when 6...c5 transposes to note 'c2' to Black's 5th move in Section 7.1), White has two more ambitious choices:

a) 6 ♕c2 c5 (critical) 7 ♘f3 (or 7 dxc5) 7...cxd4 8 exd4 ♘c6 9 a3 ♗a5 10 ♗d3 is a well-known line from the Caro-Kann Panov Attack, in which 10...♘xc3 11 bxc3 ♘xd4 12 ♘xd4 ♕xd4 is a controversial position, but Black tends to avoid it, because lines like 13 ♗b5+ ♔f8 14 0-0 ♕xc3 15 ♕b1 are hard to defend.

b) 6 ♗d2 0-0 7 ♖c1 (or 7 ♕c2 ±, while 7 ♘f3 gives White an easy game; for example, 7...c5 can be answered by 8 ♘xd5 exd5 9 dxc5 ♗xc5 10 ♗d3 g6 11 ♖c1 with superior development, or simply 8 a3) 7...c5 8 ♘xd5 ♕xd5 (8...♗xd2+ 9 ♕xd2 ±) 9 ♗xb4 cxb4 10 ♕c2!? ♘c6 (10...♕xa2?? 11 ♕xc8) and rather than 11 ♕c4 ♕a5 (Skembris-Djurić, Istanbul 1988), 11 ♘f3 ♕xa2 12 ♗d3 h6 13 0-0 gives White excellent play for the pawn.

6 ♗d3

6 ♕a4+ ♘c6 7 ♗b5 is an old recommendation ('±' in *ECO*, for example), but White has nothing, or even stands worse, after 7...♗d7 8 ♗xc6 ♗xc3+ 9 bxc3 ♗xc6, when his light squares are weak.

6...0-0

This position is usually reached via 4...0-0 5 ♗d3 d5 6 cxd5 exd5.

6...c5 7 ♘e2 (7 a3 ♗xc3+ 8 bxc3 transposes to that Sämisch Variation again, not Black's normal preference; that's a handy line to pick up if you have a few spare hours!) 7...♘c6 8 0-0 0-0 9 a3 (9 ♗d2 would produce a unique position, or 9 dxc5 ♗xc5 10 b3) 9...♗xc3 10 ♘xc3!? (once again, 10 bxc3 is the Sämisch) 10...cxd4!? 11 exd4 ± ♘xd4?! 12 ♗xh7+ and 13 ♕xd4 with a nice positional advantage.

7 ♘e2 *(D)*

Of course, 7 ♘f3 is also playable.

7...♖e8

7...c5 8 0-0 ♘c6 transposes to the note to Black's 6th move above.

One line after 7...♗d6 is 8 a3 a5 9 0-0 (the strategy from our main line is also promising: 9 ♗d2, with the idea ♖c1, may transpose if Black plays ...♖e8; see also note 'c' to Black's 8th

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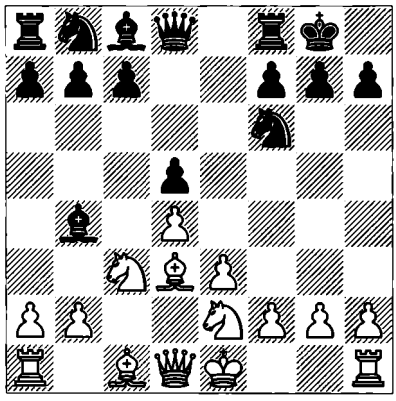

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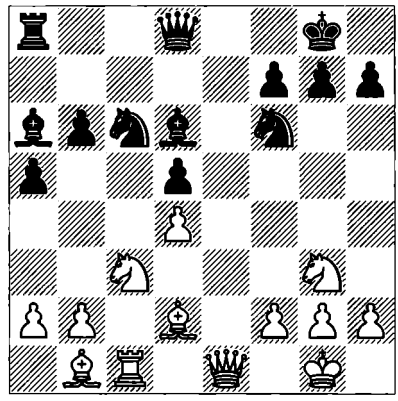


move) 9...♘a6 10 ♘b5 ♗e7 11 f3 c6 12 ♘bc3 c5 13 ♗d2 ♖e8, and here one plan is 14 ♗e1!? with the idea ♕d2, ♗f2 and ♖ae1.

8 ♗d2

This is a subtle way to improve White's position and prepare to meet Black's potential freeing moves. By delaying castling, it also neutralizes lines in which Black plays an early ...♗d6 in order to harass White's kingside. Of course, 8 0-0 has been played for many, many years; one line is Epishin's 8...♗d6 9 h3 intending ♕c2, ♖d1, and ultimately a minority attack with ♖b1 and b4. I feel that 8 ♗d2 is an easier and in some respects more accurate way to play.

8...♗f8

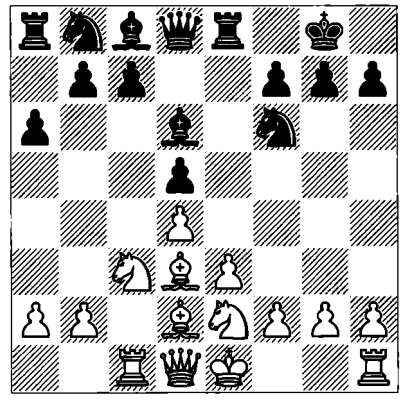
a) The first point of 8 ♗d2 is that Black's standard freeing move 8...c5 is answered by 9 a3 ♗xc3 10 ♗xc3, when White plans dxc5. So Aleksandrov-Malakhatko, European Ch, Batumi 2002 continued 10...c4 11 ♗c2 ♘c6 12 0-0 a5, and Postny suggests 13 b3! b5 14 bxc4 dxc4 (14...bxc4 15 ♘f4 ♕d6 16 ♕d2) 15 ♘f4 ± with the idea 15...♘e4? 16 ♗xe4 ♖xe4 17 d5 ♘e5 18 ♕b1! ♗f5 19 ♕xb5 ±.

b) 8...a5 introduced a strategic battle which ultimately turned into a tactical melee in the game I.Sokolov-Naiditsch, Poikovsky 2010: 9 ♖c1 b6 (a standard idea, to exchange off White's good bishop; in return, White gets a considerable lead in development) 10 0-0 ♗a6 11 ♗b1 ♗d6 12 ♖e1 c5 13 ♘g3 cxd4 14 exd4 ♖xe1+ 15 ♕xe1 (with ideas like ♘f5 and ♗g5) 15...♘c6 *(D)* (it's difficult to find a decent move for Black here).

16 ♘xd5! (16 ♘f5! is also strong) 16...♘xd5 17 ♖xc6 (17 ♕e4 ♗xg3! 18 ♕xh7+ ♔f8) 17...♕d7 18 ♖c1 (18 ♗xh7+!? ♔h8 19 ♖xd6 ♕xd6 20 ♗b1 leaves White an exchange down for a pawn, but he threatens moves such as ♘f5 and ♕e4, which are difficult to defend against) 18...♖e8 19 ♕d1 ♘f4!?, and now 20 ♕f3! ♗b7 21 ♗e4 was the way to preserve a meaningful advantage.

c) 8...♗d6 is popular and important. There can follow 9 ♖c1 (Vera mentions 9 ♕c2 c6!? 10 h3 intending g4; a kingside pawn-storm can be effective as long as White hasn't played 0-0) 9...a6 *(D)* (preventing ♘b5; 9...c6 is natural, but Black would sacrifice his ...c5 freeing move for a while; for example, 10 ♕c2 ♘a6 11 a3 ♘c7 12 f3 ♘e6 13 0-0 c5 14 dxc5 ♗xc5 15 b4 ± Grishchuk-L'Ami, Wijk aan Zee 2011), when I shall present some samples of the play:

W

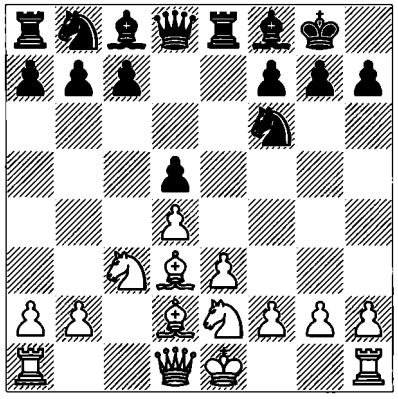


c1) 10 0-0 ♘bd7 (10...b5 11 ♘f4 ♗b7 12 ♕f3 ♘e4 13 ♗e1 ♕g5 14 a4 ± b4?? 15 ♘cxd5! 1-0 I.Sokolov-Khenkin, Belgian Team Ch 2010/11 – Black is lost following 15...♗xd5 16 ♘xd5 ♕xd5 17 ♗c4; the sacrifice 10...♗xh2+? 11 ♔xh2 ♘g4+ fails after 12 ♔g3) 11 ♘g3 b6

(Aleksandrov-Zhang Zhong, Poikovsky 2004) and now I like 12 ♕f3! with the idea 12...♘c5!? (12...♗b7 13 ♘f5 ♗f8 14 ♕h3 ±) 13 dxc5 ♗g4 14 cxd6 ♗xf3 15 dxc7 ♕xc7 16 ♘ce4! ♕e7 17 ♘xf6+ ♕xf6 18 ♗c3! and 19 gxf3 with a strong attacking position.

c2) I.Sokolov-Åkesson, Stockholm 2010 varied with 10 ♕b3 c6 11 f3!? (11 h3 deserves consideration) 11...♘bd7 12 0-0 b5 13 ♗b1 ♘b6 14 e4 b4 (14...♘c4 15 ♗g5 ♗e7 16 e5 ±; 14...c5! 15 e5 cxd4 16 exd6 dxc3 17 ♗xc3 and after 17...♕xd6 White has compensation for the pawn, but hardly more than that; Black should avoid 17...♖xe2?! 18 ♗xf6 ♕xf6 19 ♕d3 ♖xg2+ 20 ♔xg2 ±) 15 ♘d1 dxe4 16 fxe4 ♘xe4 17 ♕xf7+ ♔h8 18 ♗xe4 ♖xe4 19 ♗g5 ♕g8 20 ♖xc6 ♕xf7 21 ♖xf7 ♖xe2? 22 ♖xd6 ±.

We now return to 8...♗f8 *(D)*:



9 ♖c1

Again, a useful and noncommittal move. The obvious 9 0-0 can lead in several directions; e.g., 9...a5 10 ♖c1 ♘a6 11 f3 ♘b4 12 ♗b1 c5 (Rakhmanov-Zakhartsov, Voronezh 2010) and here 13 ♗e1!? ♖xe3 14 ♗f2 is an ambitious continuation; e.g., 14...cxd4! 15 ♕xd4 ♖e8 16 ♖fd1 ♘c6 17 ♕d2, and White has compensation in a roughly equal position.

9...b6

White's basic strategy is shown by 9...c6 10 0-0 ♘a6 11 f3 ♘c7 12 ♔h1 ♗e6 13 ♗e1 ♗d6 14 ♕d2 ♖c8 15 ♗h4 h6 16 e4 ±.

10 ♘f4

Since f3 will now be met by ...c5, White switches course.

10...c5 11 0-0 ♗a6

11...♘c6 is natural and sound. White can try for a pull with 12 ♘h5! ♘e4 (12...♘xh5? 13 ♕xh5 g6 14 ♕xd5) 13 ♘xe4 dxe4 14 ♗b5 ♗b7 (14...♗d7 15 dxc5 ± intending ♗c3 next) 15 dxc5 (15 ♕g4 has in mind ♗c3 and d5) 15...♖e5!? (Krasenkow) 16 ♗xc6! (16 ♘f4 ♖xc5 =) 16...♗xc6 17 cxb6 ±.

12 ♗xa6 ♘xa6 13 ♕f3

Once again this is an effective way to mobilize, putting pressure on d5.

13...cxd4

Now:

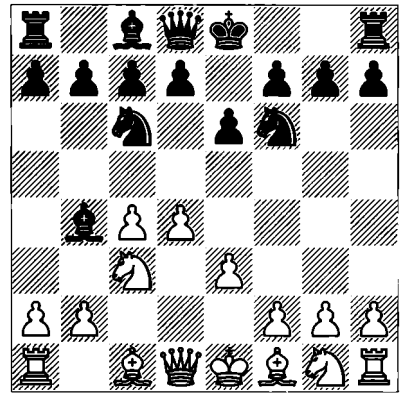
a) After 14 ♘cxd5? ♘e4 15 ♖cd1, as in I.Sokolov-Adams, Khanty-Mansiisk Olympiad 2010, Black could have played 15...g5! and actually gained the advantage.

b) 14 exd4 is better, with a small advantage due to the better-placed knights for this particular pawn-structure; e.g., 14...♘c7 (14...♘e4 15 ♖fd1 ♘xc3 16 ♖xc3 ♗b4 17 ♖e3 ♗xd2 18 ♖xd2 ±) 15 ♖c2 ♘e4 16 ♖fc1.

Of course, this whole line is hardly an existential threat to Black. Indeed, if he plays well, he is on the verge of equality at a few points along the way; nevertheless, it's a practical line in which knowledge of theory is less important than understanding the characteristic ideas.

7.5)

4...♘c6 *(D)*



This is the Taimanov Variation, the most important of the unusual responses to 4 e3. Black develops and reserves the right to play ...d5 or ...e5. The latter idea is the one which distinguishes 4...♘c6 most from other lines.

5 ♗d3

5 ♘f3 is fine, of course, but not the type of position we're used to.

5 ♘e2 is worth a look. For example:

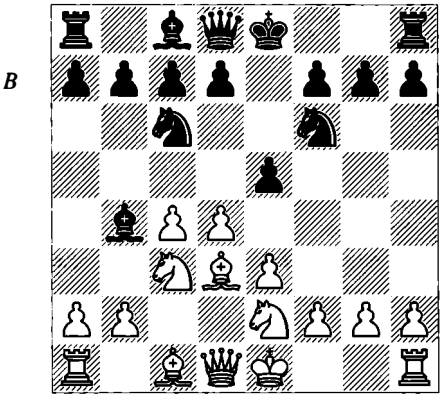
a) 5...d5 6 a3 ♗e7 7 cxd5 exd5 8 ♘f4 0-0 9 ♗e2 ♘a5!? (9...♖e8 10 ♗f3) 10 0-0 (10 b4 ♘c4 and now instead of 11 ♘cxd5?! ♘xd5 12 ♗xc4 ♘xf4 13 exf4 a5 14 b5 ♗g4!, as in Taimanov-Stobik, San Augustin 1990, 11 e4! offers White the better position) 10...c6 11 b4 ♘c4 12 e4! g5!? 13 ♗xc4 dxc4 14 ♘fe2 h6 15 f4 with an attack.

b) 5...e5 6 a3 ♗xc3+ 7 ♘xc3 exd4 8 exd4 d5!? 9 c5!? (9 ♗g5! ±; e.g., 9...dxc4 10 ♕e2+!? ♕e7 11 ♕xe7+ ♘xe7 12 0-0-0 ♗e6 13 ♗xf6 gxf6 14 d5 ♗f5 15 ♗xc4 ±) 9...h6 10 ♗b5 0-0 11 0-0 ♗f5 (Botvinnik-Sokolsky, USSR Ch, Moscow 1944) and now 12 ♗f4 ± still leaves White better.

5...e5!

After 5...d5, 6 ♘e2 e5 transposes, but White has the extra possibility of 6 ♘f3 with a pleasant Queen's Gambit.

6 ♘e2 *(D)*



6...d5

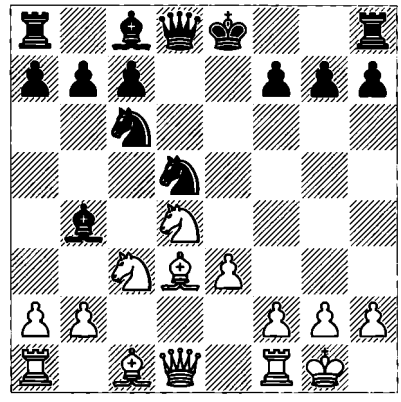
Or:

a) 6...0-0 gives White time to organize: 7 0-0 ♖e8 8 d5 e4!? 9 ♗c2 ♘e5 10 ♘xe4 ♘xe4 11 ♗xe4 ♕h4 (11...♘xc4?! 12 ♕c2 ♕h4 13 ♘g3 ♘d6 14 ♗d3) 12 ♗d3 d6 (12...♘xc4?? 13 g3) 13 a3 ♗c5 14 b4 ♗b6 15 ♕c2 and Black has little compensation for the pawn.

b) 6...exd4 7 exd4 d5 8 c5 (or 8 cxd5 ♘xd5 9 0-0 ±) 8...0-0 9 0-0 ♗xc3 10 bxc3 ± Geller-Taimanov, USSR Ch, Moscow 1966.

7 cxd5 ♘xd5 8 0-0 exd4 9 ♘xd4! *(D)*

This is a nice improvement over 9 exd4, which has been played for many years. Then the game Lerner-Gurgenidze, Kharkov 1985 went 9...0-0 10 ♕c2 h6!? (10...♘f6 11 ♗e3 ♗d6 12 a3 is only slightly better for White) 11 a3 ♗e7 12 ♘xd5 ♕xd5 13 ♗e3 ♗d6. Now both 14 ♖fe1 and 14 ♗e4 are arguably in White's favour, but not to the extent that 9 ♘xd4 is.



I don't see a way for Black to level things in this line:

a) After 9...♘xc3 10 bxc3 ♗xc3? (10...♗d6 11 ♖b1 ±; this is tough for Black, especially since 11...♕h4 12 g3 ♕h3 13 ♗e4! works out badly) 11 ♘xc6 bxc6 12 ♖b1 ♕f6 (12...0-0 13 ♕c2 ♗e5 14 f4 ♗d6 15 ♗xh7+ ♔h8 16 ♗e4 ±) 13 ♗a3 ± Black was stuck in Bhat-Matnadze, Barbera del Valles 2010.

b) Temirov-Kvon, Tashkent 2007 is the only other game with 9 ♘xd4 that I can find, when after 9...♘de7?! 10 ♘xc6 ♘xc6 11 ♕c2 ♗d6 12 ♘e4, White had a definite advantage, and after the further 12...♗g4?! 13 ♗d2 ♗h5?, the move 14 ♗a6! would have won material in addition to keeping the better position.

c) Black will also be unhappy with 9...0-0 10 ♗xh7+! ♔xh7 11 ♕h5+ ♔g8 12 ♘xd5 g6 13 ♕f3 ♘e5 14 ♕e4.

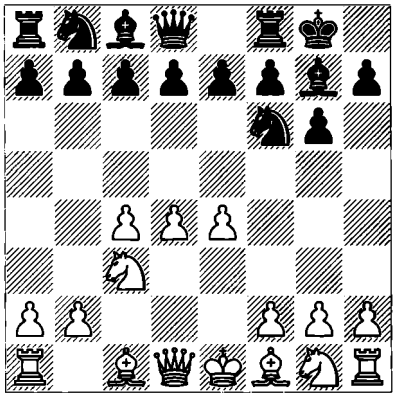
8 King's Indian Defence

1 d4 ♘f6 2 c4 g6 3 ♘c3 ♗g7 4 e4 d6

This is the standard form of the King's Indian Defence, against which we'll be adopting a flexible set-up with h3.

The alternative move-order 4...0-0 *(D)* usually doesn't make any difference but if anything gives White better possibilities in a few lines. For example:

W



a) 5 ♗e3 c5?! (5...d6 6 h3 transposes to Section 8.1, while 5...c6 6 h3 d5 7 e5 ♘e4 8 ♘ge2 is comfortable for White) 6 dxc5 ♕a5 7 f3! keeps White a pawn ahead for insufficient compensation.

b) 5 ♗g5 and now:

b1) 5...d6 allows for some deviations like 6 ♕d2, or White can of course ignore Black's move-order and play 6 h3 (see Section 8.2).

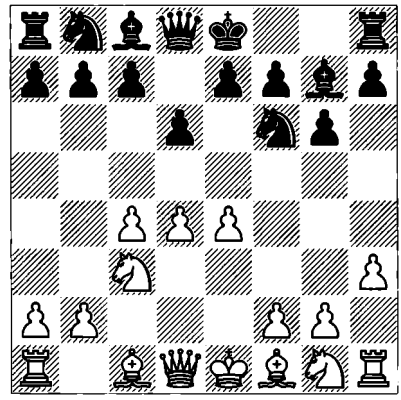
b2) After 5...c6, one promising idea is 6 e5 ♘e8 7 h4!? d6 8 h5, or White can go for a small advantage with 6 ♗d3 d5!? 7 cxd5 cxd5 8 e5 ♘fd7 9 ♘ge2.

b3) 5...c5 6 dxc5 (6 d5 is normal – compare Section 8.23) 6...♕a5 and now 7 ♕d2 may appeal to White; I see no reason for Black to allow this. Note that White should avoid 7 ♗d3?! ♘xe4! 8 ♗xe4 ♗xc3+ 9 bxc3 ♕xc3+ and now 10 ♗d2 ♕e5 or 10 ♔f1 ♕e5 hitting two pieces, and giving Black at least enough for the exchange after 11 ♗h6 ♕xe4 12 ♗xf8 ♕xc4+.

c) After 5 h3, 5...d6 transposes to our main lines. Alternatively, Black can try 5...c5 (for 5...c6 6 ♗e3, see 5 ♗e3 c6 6 h3 in line 'a' above) 6 d5 d6. Then he must be ready for a pure Modern Classical line of the Benoni by 7 ♗d3 (or 7 ♘f3 e6 8 ♗d3) 7...e6 8 ♘f3 exd5 9 cxd5, or else the recapture with the e-pawn, which is our repertoire preference – see Section 8.12 for the consequences of 9 exd5 ♖e8+ 10 ♗e3.

5 h3 *(D)*

B



This unassuming little move is our repertoire choice. 5 h3 introduces two different but related set-ups following 6 ♗g5 or 6 ♗e3. These are both highly strategic variations in which neither side will get a serious attack if the other plays carefully. With 5 h3, White's first and most basic idea is to prevent a black piece from arriving at g4, that is, preventing ...♘g4 to secure a square for his own bishop on e3, and eliminating the pin ...♗g4 once ♘f3 is played. Importantly, 5 h3 supports an advance by g4, which can be used for attacking purposes, but also serves as a strong disincentive to Black's ...f5. When you consider that ...f5 is the foundation of Black's play in many King's Indian variations, you can see how significant its prevention can be.

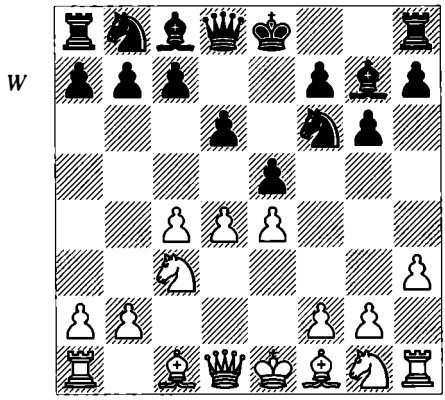
In the process of clamping down on Black's play, White will extend his lead in territory,

which he can do on both wings. Ideally, Black will have to play a manoeuvring game that doesn't always suit the King's Indian player. Consider the main lines of the King's Indian, in which, after you've read a 300-page book and memorized mind-boggling amounts of material, you get a positional breakthrough on the queenside only to find yourself checkmated on the kingside! I'm always hesitant to say that knowing the 'ideas' of a variation is more important than memorizing variations, but in this case I believe that's true, which means that a lot of playing experience will have exceptional value.

Another remarkable characteristic of 5 h3 lines with 6 ♗e3 or 6 ♗g5 is how flexible the play becomes. At practically any early point in the opening, White routinely plays ♗d3 or ♗e2, ♗g5 or ♗e3, ♘f3 or ♘ge2, g4, h4 (or the latter two in combination), and a3 with b4. Black can also set up in a remarkable number of ways and orders, typically using the moves ...e5, ...♘a6 or ...♘bd7, ...♘e8 or ...♘h5, ...c5 or ...c6, ...a6 and/or ...b5, while the odd move ...♕e8 is also commonplace. As a consequence, it is impossible to be ready for every move at every point, all the more so for Black, who has any number of more tactical mainstream King's Indian variations to be prepared for. This is an ideal situation for the strategist.

5...0-0

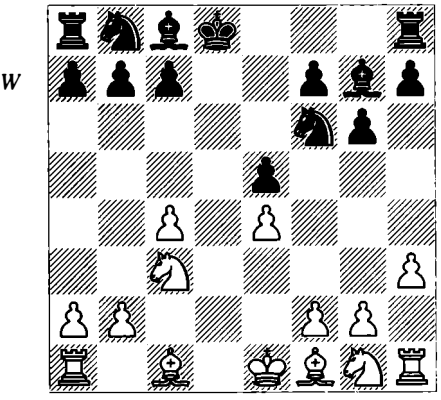
This is the main move, chosen in the vast majority of games. However, Black does have an important option (albeit seldom exercised) to take advantage of the opportunity to dictate a quick response in the centre, which he can do by 5...e5 *(D)*.



This move and the related 5...♘bd7 are potentially significant, because they interfere with White's conventional plan to get a knight to d2 via f3 to protect his e4-pawn (that sentence will become clearer as we go along). That is, both 5...e5 6 d5 ♘bd7 and 5...♘bd7, intending ...e5 and ...♘c5, force White into the same choice of responses: if White plays one of the moves 6 ♗e3, 6 ♗g5 or 6 ♘f3 and Black plays 6...e5, then after 7 d5, 7...♘c5 will attack the e-pawn and force the play into one of the lines below (but still within this note); in other words, White will need another way to protect his e-pawn, which will turn out to be ♕c2. As a side benefit, 5...♘bd7 also avoids the possibility of a dxe5 Exchange Variation. Of course, this comes at the cost of committing the knight early and foregoing options like ...♘c6.

Incidentally, how about the immediate 5...c5? Then 6 dxc5 is possible, but it's easier to play 6 d5 0-0, transposing into one of the 5...0-0 and 6...c5 lines below. It also turns out that playing 5...a6 or 5...c6 has no particular benefit over playing 5...0-0 first and then one of those moves. So finally, let's get to a specific analysis of the move 5...e5:

a) 6 dxe5 dxe5 7 ♕xd8+ ♔xd8 *(D)* doesn't make the heart beat faster, but might be useful if you want to keep things uncomplicated.



For example, 8 ♗e3 and now:

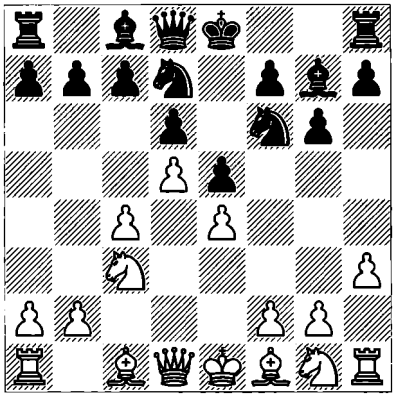
a1) 8...c6 9 ♘f3 ♘bd7 (9...♔c7 10 ♘g5) 10 a3!? ♔e7 (10...a5 11 c5) 11 c5!? ♘f8 12 0-0-0 ♘h5 13 ♘d2 ♘e6 14 ♘c4 ±.

a2) 8...♘bd7 9 0-0-0 c6 10 g4 h5 (10...♔c7 11 f4 b6 12 ♘f3) 11 g5 ♘e8 12 f4 exf4 13 ♗xf4 ♔e7 14 ♘f3 ± (Breutigam).

You can use this 6 dxe5 option if you are eager to avoid theory. To be fair, however, I don't believe that White can actually get a real advantage by force in such endings.

b) 6 d5 is normal, when 6...0-0 transposes to our main lines. Instead, Black can try 6...♘bd7 *(D)* (this is equivalent to 5...♘bd7 followed by 6...e5; also, 6...♘a6 followed by ...♘c5 will also transpose to this note), when White has these options:

W



b1) 7 ♗e3 ♘c5 8 ♕c2 and then:

b11) 8...a5 9 ♘f3 0-0 transposes to Section 8.111 (i.e. 5...0-0 6 ♗e3 e5 7 d5 ♘a6 8 ♘f3 ♘c5 9 ♕c2 a5).

b12) 8...0-0!? can be met by 9 b4 ♘a6 10 a3 ♘h5, when White may continue solidly with 11 ♘f3 or even try 11 c5; e.g., 11...dxc5 12 b5 ♘b8 13 ♗xc5 ♖e8 14 ♘f3 f5 15 ♗c4. That should discourage Black from 8...0-0, and of course White can also hold off on b4 with normal moves such as 9 ♘f3 if he so chooses. To emphasize how wonderfully flexible the 5 h3 systems are, White can also play 9 a3, 9 ♗e2 or 9 g4 instead. The most common and interesting alternative is 9 ♘ge2!? a5 (after 9...♗d7, 10 0-0-0 a5 11 g4 is possible, or White might play 10 g3 a5 11 ♗g2 "with decent chances of finding an advantage" according to Panczyk & Ilczuk) 10 0-0-0 ♘fd7 11 g4 ♘a6!? 12 ♕d2 ♘dc5 13 ♘g3 a4 14 ♗e2 with ideas like h4-h5 and ♘f5. 9 ♘ge2 is a complicated option which you may want to study further on your own.

b2) After 7 ♗g5 h6 8 ♗e3 ♘c5 I recommend 9 ♕c2, after which 9...a5 10 ♘f3 0-0 transposes to Section 8.221, which is a main line of our 6 ♗g5 repertoire. These transpositions sound complicated, but as you study this chapter you'll see that several move-orders lead to the same basic positions, and those positions are what you really need to know. You can also experiment with the riskier 9 f3, which seems very weakening, but is surprisingly playable; for example, 9...♘h5 (9...a5 10 ♘ge2 ♘h7 11 ♕d2 ♗f6 12 0-0-0 ♗g5 13 h4! ♗xe3 14 ♕xe3 ♘f6 15 h5!; 9...0-0 10 ♕d2 a5 11 0-0-0 ♔h7 12 g4) 10 ♘ge2 a5 (10...♕h4+ 11 g3 ♕e7 12 ♗g2) 11 ♕d2 ♗d7 (11...♗f6 12 g3 ♗g5 13 0-0-0 ♗xe3 14 ♕xe3 f5 15 exf5 gxf5 16 f4 ± with the idea 16...e4 17 g4!) 12 0-0-0 a4 13 g4 (or 13 ♔b1), when the pawn sacrifice 13...♘f4 14 ♘xf4 exf4 15 ♗xf4 a3 16 b3 looks a little scary, but ♗e3-d4 is a theme, and 16...♕f6? runs into 17 e5. These are just sample lines, of course, but if White can play even the weakening f3 without problems, it's a good sign for the whole variation.

b3) 7 ♘f3 ♘c5 8 ♕c2 is a flexible move-order by which White waits to decide where his bishops should go. After 8...0-0, 9 b4?! permits the very messy line 9...♘cxe4! 10 ♘xe4 ♘xe4 11 ♕xe4 f5 12 ♕b1! (older theory gave 12 ♕e3?! e4 13 ♘d4 f4 14 ♕c3 c5 15 dxc6 bxc6 ∓) 12...e4 13 ♘d2 e3!? 14 fxe3 f4!, and I'll stop there, but the end result is an opposite-coloured bishop ending that White will have no interest in. Therefore, White does better to replace 9 b4?! with one of the repertoire moves I'll be proposing, i.e. 9 ♗e3 or 9 ♗g5, both of them main-line positions which you'll run into below.

As I say, you can worry about these transpositions later; I just want to point out that the seldom-played moves 5...e5 and 5...♘bd7 cause unique problems.

After the standard move 5...0-0, I'm proposing two replies for White:

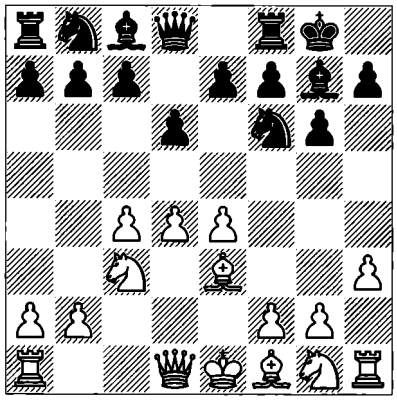
8.1: 6 ♗e3 151
8.2: 6 ♗g5 160

6 ♘f3 has been played and analysed far more than the bishop moves, and a couple of anti-King's Indian repertoires in books have featured it. I'll be including several variations whose theory derives from that move (i.e., transposing from 6 ♗e3 or 6 ♗g5), but I'll also be giving independent methods against each of Black's move-orders. The most important thing

is that, by using the bishop moves, I've avoided some theoretical problems associated with 6 ♘f3 (such as 6...e5 7 d5 ♘h5, for example).

8.1)

6 ♗e3 *(D)*



This move is somewhat less popular in contemporary play than 6 ♗g5, mainly because the latter is supposed to be well-suited for meeting certain difficult set-ups. But 6 ♗e3 is also an effective weapon, and in certain respects more challenging to play against. In some cases it's better to have the bishop on its natural post defending the centre. I've divided the material into only two initial moves:

8.11: 6...e5 152
8.12: 6...c5 159

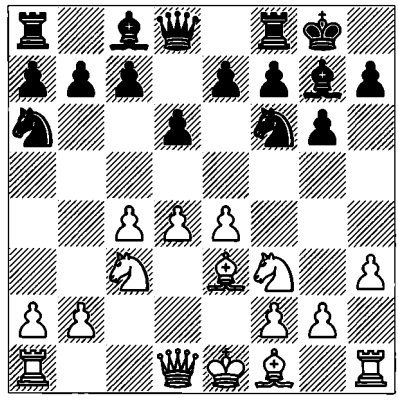
The second section is relatively short, while the first embraces a large number of subvariations and transpositions, since most variations will include ...e5 at some point. I have included numerous alternate suggestions to deviate from main moves you don't like.

Besides 6...e5 and 6...c5, we have these moves to consider:

a) 6...♘a6 is highly transpositional; e.g., 7 ♗d3!? e5 8 d5 transposes to the note to White's 8th move in Section 8.11. The normal sequence is 7 ♘f3 *(D)*. Then:

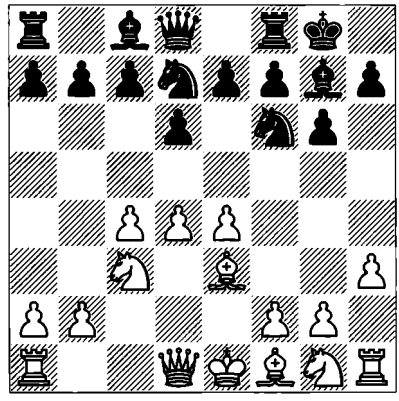
a1) 7...e5 8 d5 is the main-line position of Section 8.11, where play branches into 8...♘h5 and 8...♘c5.

a2) 7...♕e8 can be answered conventionally by 8 ♗e2 or 8 ♗d3, for example. But 8 a3! with



the idea b4 is a particularly effective response, since 8...e5 can be met by 9 dxe5 dxe5 10 b4 ± b6 11 ♗e2 ♗b7 (Piket-Reinderman, Amsterdam 1999), when 12 c5! gives White a pleasant advantage. 9 d5 is of course also possible, when 9...♘h5 transposes to the note to Black's 9th move in Section 8.112, while 9...♘c5 10 ♘d2 favours White; e.g., 10...♗d7 11 ♗e2 a5 and now 12 b4 led to some advantage in Karpov-J.Polgar, Zurich blitz 2006, but 12 b3! would leave Black in need of a plan.

b) 6...♘bd7 *(D)* will also transpose most of the time after ...e5.



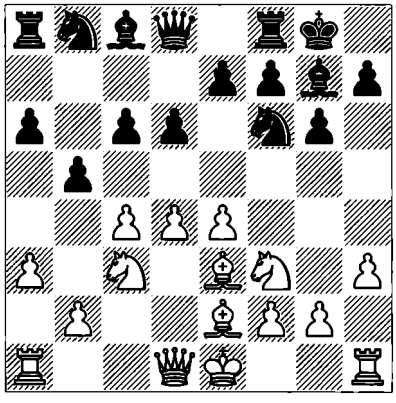
Two exceptional cases:

b1) 7 ♗d3 is interesting: 7...c5!? 8 d5 (8 ♘f3 cxd4 9 ♗xd4!?) 8...♘e5, when White gave up his bishop for development in Izoria-Inarkiev, European Ch playoff, Kusadasi 2006 with 9 ♘f3! ♘xd3+ 10 ♕xd3 a6 11 a4 ♖b8 12 0-0. Now one idea is ♗f4 followed by an early e5. The game went 12...♘e8 13 ♕d2! ♘c7 14 ♗h6 b5 15 ♗xg7 ♔xg7 16 axb5 axb5 17 cxb5

♘xb5 18 b4! with a threat on Black's c-pawn. Following the forced 18...cxb4 19 ♘xb5 ♖xb5 20 ♘d4, White infiltrates on c6 while the b-pawn falls in any case.

b2) 7 ♘f3 a6 8 ♗e2 (or 8 ♗d3) 8...c5 9 e5! ♘e8 10 e6! fxe6 11 dxc5 dxc5 (11...♕a5 12 cxd6 and now 12...exd6 13 ♗d4! or 12...♘xd6 13 0-0! with the idea 13...♗xc3 14 bxc3 ♕xc3 15 ♖c1 ♕a5 16 c5 ♘f5 17 ♕b3! ♘f6 18 ♗d2 ♕c7 19 ♗c4 ±) 12 ♗xc5 b5!? 13 cxb5 axb5 14 0-0 ♗a6 15 ♗b4! ± J.Watson-Gufeld, Las Vegas 1995.

c) 6...c6 can go any which way. One relatively common set-up in the King's Indian is that with ...c6 and ...a6; for example, 7 ♘f3 a6 (equivalent to 6...a6 7 ♘f3 c6) 8 ♗e2 (8 ♗d3 is equally valid, and because it protects the e-pawn, 8...b5 doesn't threaten ...b4, allowing for 9 0-0; instead, Black might try 8...♘bd7 9 0-0 ♕c7 10 ♖c1 ±) 8...b5 (8...♘bd7 9 0-0 b5 10 a3 transposes to line 'c2'). White maintains a space advantage after 9 a3 *(D)* (or 9 cxb5 axb5 10 a3 ♘bd7 11 0-0 ♘b6 12 b3 ±) and now:

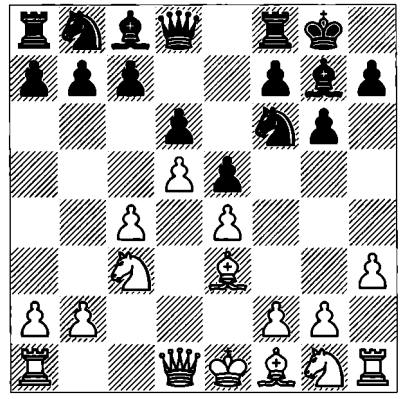


c1) 9...bxc4 10 ♗xc4 d5 (10...♘xe4 11 ♘xe4 d5 12 ♗d3 dxe4 13 ♗xe4 ± Pieterse-Bosboom, Dutch Ch, Eindhoven 1991) 11 ♗d3 dxe4 12 ♘xe4 ♗e6 13 0-0 ♗d5 14 ♘c3 with a slight advantage for White.

c2) 9...♘bd7 10 0-0!? (or 10 e5 ♘e8 11 0-0 ±) 10...bxc4 (10...♘b6 11 b3 ±) 11 ♗xc4 d5 12 exd5 ♘b6 13 ♗a2 (13 ♗d3 ♘bxd5 14 ♘xd5 ♘xd5 15 ♖c1 ±) 13...cxd5!? 14 ♘e5 ♗e6 15 ♕e2 ♘e8 16 ♘d3 ♗c8 17 ♘c5 e6 18 ♖fd1 ♘d6 19 ♗f4 ♘bc4 20 ♗xc4 ♘xc4 21 b3 ♘d6 22 ♗e5 ± J.Watson-Gufeld, Los Angeles 1995.

8.11)

6...e5 7 d5 *(D)*

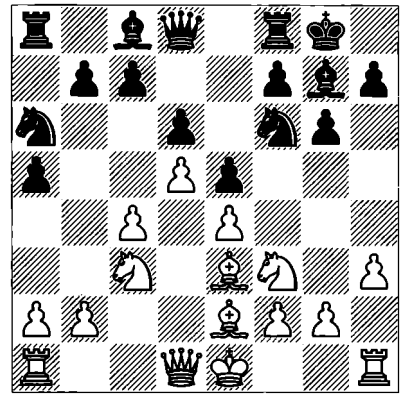


7...♘a6

I'll use this move as the way to reach our two main lines. 7...♘bd7 and 7...a5 often lead to the same positions, but 7...♘a6 produces more unique subvariations than any other move, so it's a good pivot point. Here are some ideas versus the most important alternative lines:

a) 7...a5 sometimes transposes, as mentioned, but has a few independent paths:

a1) 8 ♘f3 ♘a6 9 ♗e2 *(D)* (9 ♘d2!? ♘c5 is the main line in the books, but that gives Black the opportunity for 9...♘e8, which is unclear; for example, 10 h4 doesn't impress after 10...f5 11 exf5 gxf5 12 ♗g5 ♘f6! 13 h5 h6 14 ♗h4 ♕e8!).

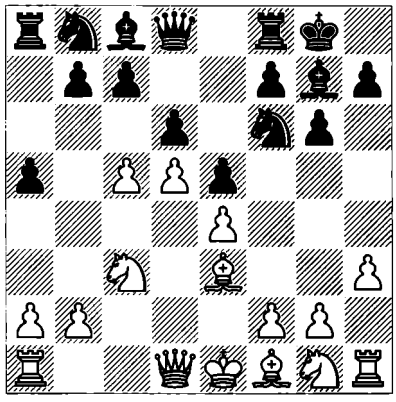


Now, however, 9...♘c5 10 ♘d2 does indeed transpose to a main line. Instead, Black has two ways to deviate:

a11) 9...♘e8 10 g4!? (10 a3! f5 11 b4 ♘f6 12 0-0 also appears to favour White; for example, 12...fxe4 13 ♘d2 ♗f5 14 ♖b1) 10...f5 (10...♘c5 11 ♘d2 ♗d7 12 h4!) 11 gxf5 gxf5 12 exf5 (or 12 ♖g1 f4 13 ♗d2 with the idea 13...♗xh3 14 ♘g5 ♗d7 15 ♗g4 ±) 12...♗xf5 13 ♘g5 ♘c5 (13...♘b4 14 ♘e6!) 14 ♖g1 h6 15 ♗xc5 dxc5 16 ♘e6!? ♗xe6 17 dxe6 ♕f6 18 ♘e4 ♕xe6 19 ♕d3 ♘d6 20 0-0-0 ±.

a12) 9...♘h5 10 g3 f5 11 exf5 gxf5 12 ♖g1!? f4 13 gxf4 ♘xf4 14 ♕d2 intending 0-0-0, ♘g5 and/or ♖g3 with good attacking chances; as you will see repeatedly, the bad bishop on g7 is a positional liability, which adds to Black's problems.

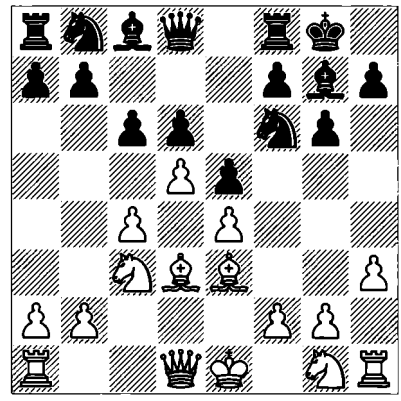
a2) 8 c5 *(D)* might be a good reason to avoid 7...a5. White won't necessarily gain much more than a normal edge, but that's probably not what Black wanted to concede at so early a stage:



a21) 8...♘a6 9 cxd6 cxd6 (9...♕xd6 10 ♘f3 ♗d7 11 ♖c1 ±) 10 ♘f3 (or 10 ♗xa6) 10...b6 11 ♘d2 ♘c5 12 ♗e2 ±.

a22) 8...c6 9 dxc6 ♘xc6 and here 10 ♕xd6 has been analysed to equality, but 10 cxd6! appears to be an improvement; here's some analysis: 10...♘d4 11 ♘f3 ♕xd6 (11...♘xf3+ 12 gxf3 ♗e6 13 ♕d2 ♖c8 14 ♗b5 ♗d7 15 a4) 12 ♘xd4 exd4 13 ♕xd4 ♕xd4 (13...♕e7 14 ♕c5) 14 ♗xd4 ♘xe4 15 ♗xg7 ♔xg7 16 ♘xe4 ♖e8 17 ♗d3 f5 18 ♖c1 fxe4 19 ♖c7+ ♔h6! 20 ♗b5 ♖e5 21 a4 ♗e6 22 0-0 ♗d5 23 ♖d1 ±. Perhaps this line can be drawn by Black, but at a minimum he will have to suffer for some time to come.

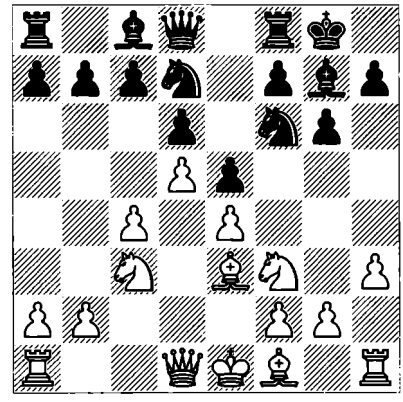
b) 7...c6 is a move that can be played at various points, and 8 ♘f3 would normally follow. But a promising non-transpositional move-order is 8 ♗d3 *(D)*. Then:



b1) 8...cxd5 9 cxd5 a6 10 ♘f3 ♘bd7 11 ♘d2 b5 12 b4! (or 12 a4 b4 13 ♘e2) 12...♘h5 (12...♘b6 13 a4 ♘xa4 14 ♘xa4 bxa4 15 ♖xa4 ♘h5 16 b5 ♘f4 and now 17 ♗f1 or even 17 ♗xf4 exf4 18 0-0 a5 19 ♕f3 ♕g5 20 ♘c4 ±) 13 a4 bxa4 14 ♕xa4 ♘f4 15 ♗f1 f5 16 ♘c4 ±.

b2) 8...b5!? has the idea 9 dxc6 bxc4 10 ♗xc4 ♘xc6, but maybe White should simply develop by 9 ♘f3! with the idea 9...bxc4 10 ♗xc4 ♗b7 11 ♕b3 ±.

c) 7...♘bd7 8 ♘f3 *(D)* gives Black three ways to prepare ...f5:



c1) 8...♘c5 transposes to Section 8.111.

c2) 8...♘e8 can be countered by 9 g4 (9 h4!? is also played); e.g., 9...a5 (9...f5?! 10 gxf5 gxf5 11 exf5 ±) 10 ♕c2!? (this move is our main idea in this section, so I'll use it here; 10 ♘d2 ♘c5 11 ♗e2 is also possible, or 10 ♗d3 ♘c5 11 ♗c2 followed by queenside expansion)

10...♘c5 11 0-0-0 (11 ♖g1 ♔h8 12 0-0-0 ± f5?! 13 gxf5 gxf5 14 h4 gave White a nice advantage in Radjabov-Morozevich, Amber Rapid, Monte Carlo 2007) 11...f5?! (as so often, this move is premature) 12 gxf5 gxf5 13 ♖g1 ♘xe4 14 ♘xe4 fxe4 15 ♘g5 ♘f6 16 ♗e2 ♔h8 17 ♗g4! ±.

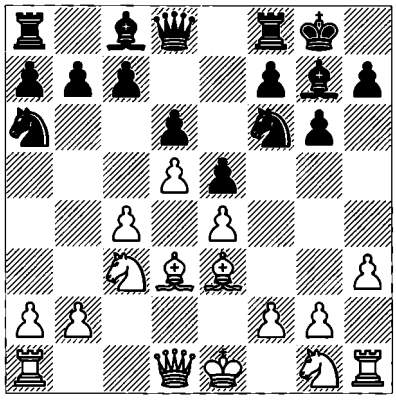
c3) 8...♘h5!? 9 ♘d2 a5 (9...f5? 10 exf5) 10 g3 ♘c5 11 ♗e2 ♘f6 gives White two extra moves over the traditional line without ...♘h5-f6. To be sure, one of them is g3, which is of questionable value. Nevertheless, this affords time for useful moves, including 12 g4 intending h4-h5 and at some point 0-0-0.

d) 7...♘h5 is also a bit out of the ordinary. Then I think that 8 ♗e2, which creates a familiar pattern but in a unique set-up (the knight on d7), is a worthy move: 8...♘f4 9 ♗f3 f5 10 g3 fxe4 11 ♗xe4 ♘h5 looks forced, and now 12 ♗g2!? intends simply to develop by ♘f3 with a comfortable game and a small advantage; here 12...♕e7 contemplating ...♘f4 can be met by 13 ♕e2.

8 ♘f3

8 ♗d3 *(D)* has drawn the attention of some strong players over the years. It's a move that can serve as an alternative to more theoretical lines.

B



Here are three important replies:

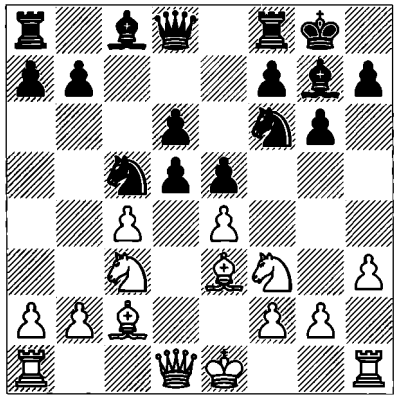
a) 8...♘c5 9 ♗c2 a5 10 ♕d2! (Bologan likes this for White; 10 ♘ge2 is also possible) and then:

a1) 10...c6 11 dxc6!? bxc6 12 ♖d1! ♘b7 13 ♘f3 ♗e6 14 b3 ♕e7 (14...♘h5 15 ♘a4 is very nice for White) 15 ♘g5!? ♖fd8 16 ♘xe6 ♕xe6 17 0-0 ±.

a2) 10...♘h5 11 ♘ge2 (11 ♗d1!? also deserves a look) 11...f5 12 exf5 and now Vigorito's 12...gxf5 can be answered by 13 0-0-0! ♗d7 14 g4! ± with the idea 14...fxg4? 15 hxg4 ♗xg4 16 ♗xc5 dxc5 17 ♖dg1 +–, while after 12...♗xf5, as played in Bets-Fedoseev, Peterhof 2007, Bologan suggests 13 ♗xf5! gxf5 14 g4! fxg4 15 hxg4 ♘f4 16 ♗xc5 dxc5 17 ♘g3 ± (or 17 ♘e4).

b) Vigorito proposes 8...c6. Play might go 9 ♘f3 ♘c5 10 ♗c2 cxd5 *(D)*, and now:

W



b1) 11 cxd5 a5 12 ♗xc5!? dxc5 13 ♘d2! ♘h5 14 g3 ♘f6 15 ♗a4 ± ♘d7 16 ♗b5 (16 h4 f5 17 h5) 16...♘b6 17 h4 h5 18 0-0 ♗h6 19 a4 with some light-square pressure, but not a serious advantage.

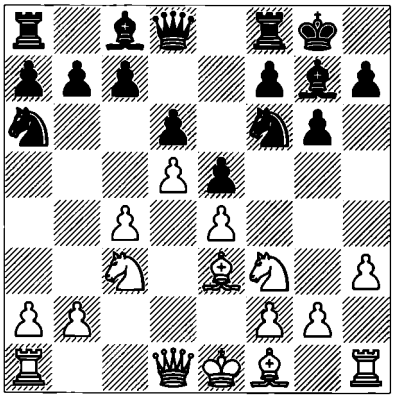
b2) 11 exd5 yields an extremely unbalanced game. You'll see this idea elsewhere; in return for giving Black a central pawn-mass, White gets the opportunity for a queenside attack. For example, 11...a5 (11...e4!? 12 ♘d4!? ♘fd7 13 b4 ♘d3+ 14 ♗xd3 exd3 15 ♕xd3 ♘e5 16 ♕e2 ♕c7 17 c5; 11...♗d7 12 b4 ♘a6 13 a3 ♖c8 14 ♗b3 b5 15 ♘d2 ±) 12 0-0 ♘h5 13 ♗xc5!? (13 ♖e1 b6 14 ♖b1) 13...dxc5 14 ♖e1 f6 15 ♗a4 ♘f4 16 ♘e2 ±.

c) 8...♘h5 9 g3 ♘c5 10 ♗e2 ♘f6 11 ♕c2 a5 12 0-0-0 is pleasant for White, who is ready to launch a kingside attack: 12...a4 (12...♘e8 13 h4 f5 14 h5 f4? 15 gxf4 exf4 16 ♗xc5 dxc5 17 hxg6 hxg6 18 ♘f3 ± Piket) 13 g4 ♘e8 (13...♗d7 14 g5 ♘e8 15 h4) 14 h4 f5 15 gxf5 gxf5 16 ♘f3 (16 h5 is better because ...h6 is weakening – this is a positional nicety to file away) 16...a3 17 b4 (17 b3!) 17...fxe4 (Knaak-Piket, Hamburg 1991) and now 18 ♘g5 ♘d3+ 19 ♗xd3

exd3 20 ♕xd3 ♗f5 21 ♘ge4 ♘f6 22 h5 is not simple, but should be in White's favour.

We now return to the main move, 8 ♘f3 *(D)*:

B



Now Black has:

8.111: 8...♘c5 155
8.112: 8...♘h5 157

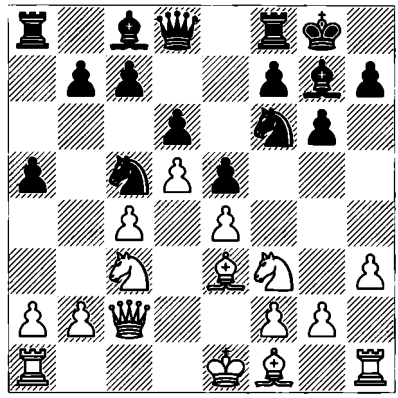
8.111)

8...♘c5 9 ♕c2

I am recommending this unusual move for several reasons. First, and crucially, this position is hard to avoid because it can arise via 5...e5 6 d5 ♘bd7 7 ♗e3 ♘c5 8 ♕c2 a5 9 ♘f3 0-0 (assuming that Black plays 9...a5 in our main line). In fact, it's hard for White to avoid bringing the queen to c2 after 5...e5 or 5...♘bd7, a fact that books treating 5 h3 don't tend to mention, so you will very likely want to know this position anyway. Furthermore, the variations with the main theoretical move 9 ♘d2 are worked out in a depth that is almost prohibitive, and the resulting assessment isn't particularly optimistic for White (although he maintains even chances). On a practical level, the play associated with 9 ♘d2 can easily become tactical and critical; for example, with sacrifices based upon trapping the e3-bishop with ...f4. With 9 ♕c2, there are unavoidably tactical situations, but fewer, and they are not already worked out by theory. Furthermore, the presence of White's knight on f3 often serves to deter Black's ...f5 break (for example, ♘g5 or ♘h4 might follow). Finally, we have a practical advantage: the move 9 ♕c2 doesn't appear in most sources, so it can throw the opponent off balance (to his credit, David Vigorito analyses some of the key positions by transposition, but no one else seems to). In the coverage of 6 ♗g5, we can also arrive at the position with ♘d2 in place of ♕c2, having added the moves ...h6 and ♗e3. I will make some limited comments about the ♘d2 option in that case (see the note to White's 10th move in Section 8.221), but will forego doing so here.

9...a5 *(D)*

W



10 ♗e2

10 ♘d2 is still possible here (equivalent to 9 ♘d2 a5 10 ♕c2) and not a bad move. The idea is to meet 10...♘h5 with 11 g3 followed by ♗e2 and if the knight retreats to f6, advancing with g4. Then 11...f5 12 ♗e2 transposes to the note to White's 12th move below.

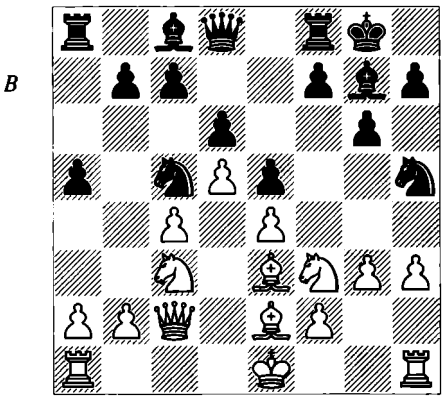
10...♘h5

Arguably the critical move. Black wants to play ...♘f4 and at the same time clears the way for ...f5.

a) Black can also prepare ...f5 by 10...♘e8, when a typical line is 11 g4 f5 12 gxf5 (but 12 exf5! gxf5 13 0-0-0 ± is a good sequence, when Black is rather stuck, especially since 13...e4 14 ♘d2 helps White) 12...gxf5 13 0-0-0 (13 ♖g1!?) 13...fxe4 (13...f4? 14 ♗xc5 dxc5 15 ♘d2 ♘d6 16 ♗g4) 14 ♘g5 ♘d3+! 15 ♗xd3 exd3 16 ♕xd3 ♗f5 17 ♘ce4 ♘f6 (17...h6? 18 ♘e6 ♗xe6 19 dxe6 ♕e7 20 ♖dg1 ♕xe6 21 ♖g4! gives White a strong attack) 18 f3 ♕e7 19 ♖hg1 with compensation for the pawn.

b) 10...c6 11 ♗xc5 (or 11 ♖d1 cxd5 12 ♗xc5 dxc5 13 cxd5) 11...dxc5 12 ♖d1 cxd5 13 cxd5 ±.

11 g3 *(D)*



Stopping ...♘f4 isn't always essential in these lines, but when that move would attack a bishop on e2, the preventive g3 is often best.

11...f5

Naturally there are alternatives, although this was to some extent the point of 10...♘h5, and in view of the positional idea 12 ♘d2, hindering ...f5, it's logical to move quickly. One possibility is 11...♗d7, a straightforward developing move. Then after 12 ♘d2 (12 ♗xc5 dxc5 13 ♔f1 f5 14 ♔g2 is a conservative option) 12...♘f6, 13 g4 brings about a standard position where play might go 13...h6 14 0-0-0 (14 g5 hxg5 15 ♗xg5 c6 16 h4!) 14...c6 (14...♘h7 15 h4 a4) 15 g5 hxg5 16 ♗xg5 a4 17 h4 with a healthy attack. But what's interesting here is that White can also play 13 h4 h5 14 f3 a4 15 0-0! followed soon by a *queenside* attack with b4!

12 ♗xc5

I like this move, which captures the knight before Black can play ...b6 and retake with the b-pawn. Still, it may not be any better than 12 ♘d2 ♘f6 *(D)*, which unlike 12 ♗xc5 has appeared in practice quite a few times. The difference is instructive:

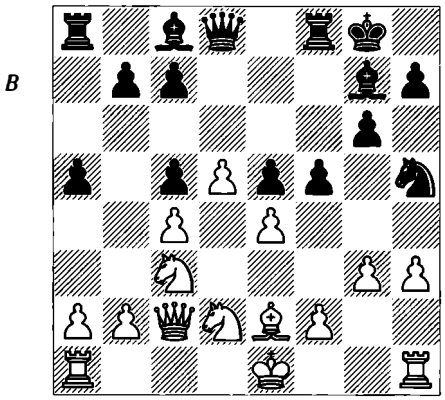
a) 13 0-0-0 b6! (13...fxe4?! allows the continuation 14 ♗xc5 dxc5 15 ♘dxe4; Mikhalevski analyses 13...♘cxe4?! 14 ♘dxe4 ♘xe4 15 ♘xe4 fxe4 16 h4! "with g4 to follow") 14 ♖dg1!? (14 ♔b1 prepares to answer 14...♘fxe4 15 ♘cxe4 fxe4 with 16 h4!) 14...f4?! (14...a4 improves, but the best move is 14...♘fxe4! 15 ♘dxe4 fxe4, since 16 h4?! is strongly met by 16...♘d3+! 17 ♗xd3 exd3 18 ♕xd3 ♗g4 and 16 g4?! allows 16...♕h4!; better is 16 ♗g4!? or 16 ♔b1, with equal chances) 15 ♗xc5 bxc5 16 g4! ♗d7 17 g5 ♘h5 18 ♗g4! gave White a large positional advantage in Vallejo Pons-Radjabov, Spanish Team Ch, Sant Lluis 2005.

b) 13 ♗xc5! dxc5 14 h4 looks best:

b1) 14...♖a6 15 0-0-0 ♗h6 16 ♔b1 ♗xd2 17 ♕xd2 ♘xe4 (17...fxe4?! 18 h5 ♗f5 19 ♔a1 gxh5 20 ♗xh5 ±) 18 ♘xe4 fxe4 19 ♕e3 ± with ideas of 20 ♕xc5 or 20 h5 g5 21 h6!.

b2) 14...f4 15 gxf4 exf4 16 ♖g1 ♕e7 17 0-0-0 ♖a6 18 ♔b1 ♘d7 19 h5 ♘e5 20 hxg6 hxg6 21 ♘f3 ±.

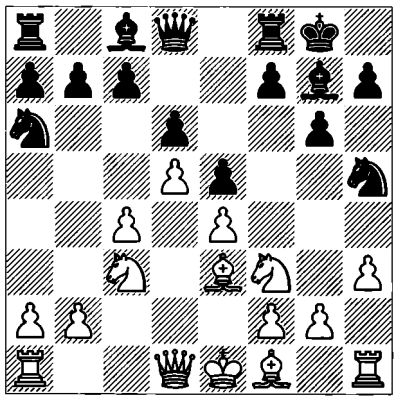
12...dxc5 13 ♘d2 *(D)*



White has some advantage. Now 13...♘f6 is probably best, when 14 h4! intending h5 is a good continuation (as is 14 ♗d3, which denies Black a plan), but 13...f4?! 14 ♗xh5 gxh5 15 g4! is a tactic worth remembering: 15...hxg4 16 hxg4 ♗xg4 17 f3 ♗d7 18 ♘b3 b6 19 ♕h2 h6 20 0-0-0, when not only does White have an attack (the knights can gradually shift over to the kingside and use h4 and g4, for example), but Black's bishop on g7 is very bad.

8.112)

8...♘h5 *(D)*



Kasparov's choice in days gone by. This made the combination of ...♘a6 and ...♘h5 Black's most popular system for many years.

9 a3!

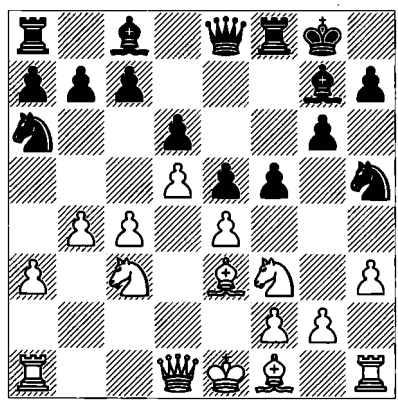
This move has been very underrated, in my opinion. After b4, White will neutralize the knight on a6 and initiate an attack at the same time. I should mention that even in the main line with 9 ♘h2 ♕e8 I'd still rather be White following 10 a3 (instead of the usual 10 ♗e2) 10...f5 11 b4, although of course this is much less clear than 9 a3 (in some lines, the knight will waste two moves with ♘h2-f3 for one thing); e.g., 11...fxe4 (11...♘f6 12 ♗d3) 12 ♘xe4 ♘f4 (12...♘b8 is probably best) 13 ♘f3 ♗f5 14 ♘fd2. You could even play 9 ♘g1 ♕e8 10 a3!. I'm not actually recommending either of these moves (9 a3 is a much better version of the same idea), but it all says something about the effectiveness of restricting the knight to a6.

9...f5

This has to be played soon.

9...♕e8 10 b4 f5 *(D)* is also important, but shouldn't equalize:

a) 11 c5 yields a solid advantage; for example, 11...f4? 12 ♗d2 dxc5 13 ♗xa6 bxa6 14 bxc5 ± or 11...♔h8 12 ♖c1 ♘f6 13 ♗b5 ♕d8 14 0-0 ±, when Black can hardly move, and 14...dxc5 15 exf5! gxf5 16 ♗xa6 bxa6 17 ♘xe5 cxb4 18 axb4 is awful. After 11...h6, as in Bewersdorff-Piket, Ostend 1994, one strong choice is 12 ♗c4! (12 ♖c1) 12...♘f4 13 0-0 ±, when it's hard for Black to find a plan; here is a sample line: 13...fxe4 (13...♘b8 14 ♖c1 ♘d7 15 ♘b5 ♕d8 16 cxd6 cxd6 17 exf5 gxf5 18 ♗xf4 exf4 19 ♘xd6 ♘b6 20 ♘xc8 ♖xc8 21 ♗b3 with an extra pawn and a killing position) 14 ♘d2 b6 15 cxd6 (or 15 c6) 15...cxd6 16 ♘dxe4 ♕e7 17 ♘b5 ♖d8 18 ♗xf4 exf4 19 ♖e1 ♕f8 20 ♘bxd6! ♖xd6 21 ♘xd6 ♕xd6 22 ♖e8+ ♔f7 (22...♔h7 23 ♗xa6) 23 ♖e6! ♗xe6 24 dxe6+ ♔e7 25 ♕xd6+ ♔xd6 26 ♖d1+ ♔e5 27 ♖d7! +–.



b) 11 ♗e2 ♘f4 12 0-0 also looks good, since Black has no apparent way to attack on the kingside: 12...♘xe2+ (12...fxe4 13 ♘g5) 13 ♕xe2 f4 14 ♗d2 c5 15 dxc6 (or 15 ♖ab1) 15...bxc6 16 c5!? dxc5 17 ♘a4 sacrifices a pawn for a large positional gain. Black, whose dark-squared bishop is atrocious, can't seem to get adequate play; e.g., 17...cxb4 18 ♗xb4! ♘xb4 19 axb4 ♖b8 20 ♖fb1 ♗f6 21 ♘c5 ♕f7 (21...♗e7 22 ♕a2+ ♕f7 23 ♕xa7 ±) 22 ♖a5 and White will keep increasing the pressure.

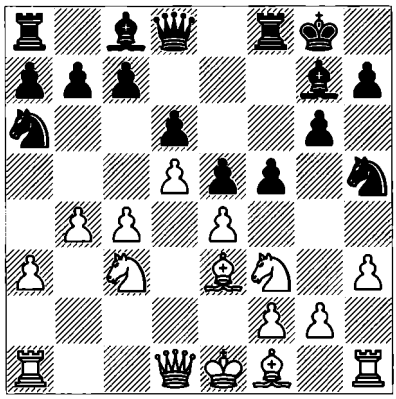
c) 11 ♖c1 f4?! (11...♘f4 12 c5 is at least slightly better for White) 12 ♗d2 c5 13 dxc6 (or 13 ♖b1, because Black has nothing useful to do) 13...bxc6 14 ♗d3 ♔h8 (Bewersdorff-Timoshenko, Mainz 1995) and now the simple 15 0-0 is best; for example, 15...♘c7 16 ♖e1 ♕e7 (16...♘e6 17 c5! dxc5 18 ♘a4 ±) 17 c5! d5 18 exd5 cxd5 19 b5 ♖d8 (19...♖b8 20 b6! axb6 21 cxb6 ♖xb6 22 ♘a4 ♖b8 23 ♘xe5! +–) 20 b6 axb6 21 cxb6 ♘a6 22 ♘xe5 (or 22 ♘a4! e4 23 ♕b3!, threatening ♖xc8 and winning) 22...♗xe5 23 ♘b5 d4 24 ♘a7 +–.

10 b4 *(D)*

10...♔h8

Removing his king from potential checks. I'll pursue this position in some detail because

B



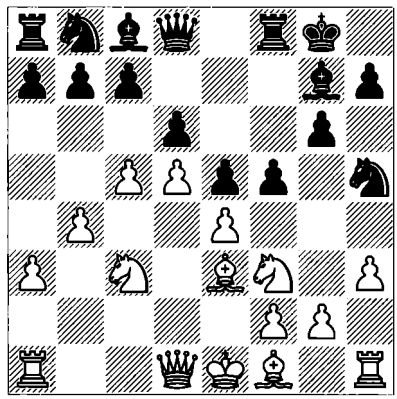
the a3/b4 idea is normal in the h3 systems and I haven't given it close attention anywhere else:

a) 10...♕e8 transposes to the previous note.

b) 10...c5 runs into 11 dxc6 bxc6 12 ♕a4 f4 13 ♗d2 ♗b7 14 c5 ± ♘c7 (14...♘b8 15 cxd6 ♕xd6 16 ♗c4+ ♔h8 17 ♕a5 ±) 15 cxd6 ♕xd6 16 ♖d1 ♕e7 17 ♗c4+ ♔h8 18 0-0. Black has weak pawns and little activity.

c) 10...♘b8! is as good as anything (♗xa6 tends to be good in too many positions), but 11 c5 *(D)* gets a jump start on the attack and maintains an edge (11 ♖c1 isn't bad either); for example:

B



c1) 11...♘f4 12 ♕b3!? (watch out for the trick 12 ♘d2? ♘xg2+! 13 ♗xg2 f4, but 12 ♖c1 fxe4 13 ♘d2! is good, in view of 13...♘d3+ 14 ♗xd3 exd3 15 cxd6 cxd6 16 ♘de4) 12...fxe4! 13 ♘xe4 ♗f5 14 ♘fd2 ♕e7 15 g3 ♘d7 16 ♖c1 ♗xe4 17 ♘xe4 ♘f6 18 ♘xf6+ ♗xf6 19 h4 ♘h5 20 ♗h3 ±.

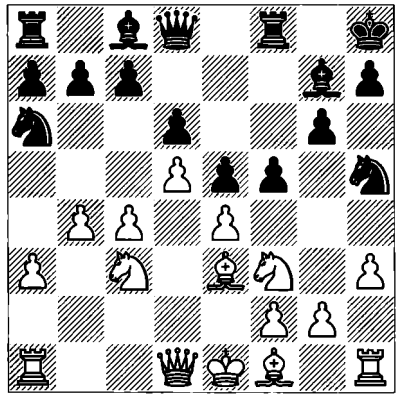
c2) 11...a5 12 b5!? (risky; 12 ♖c1 ± may be best) and now:

c21) 12...f4?! 13 ♗c1 dxc5 14 ♗c4 ♔h8 15 ♗b2 and Black has won a pawn but his pieces are reduced to passivity; for example, 15...♘d7 16 ♘a4 b6 17 0-0 ♕e7 18 ♕d3 h6 (18...♘hf6 19 ♘g5) 19 ♖fd1 ♕d6 (trying to blockade, in view of 19...♘hf6?! 20 d6!) 20 ♗a2 and ♘d2-c4.

c22) Burgess's 12...♘d7 13 c6 ♘df6! appears better; perhaps White keeps a slight advantage by 14 ♘g5 ♘f4! 15 g3 ♘6h5 16 h4 h6 17 ♘e6 ♘xe6 18 dxe6 f4 19 ♗c4, but this is not clear.

We now return to 10...♔h8 *(D)*:

W



11 ♖c1

11 c5!? is attractive: 11...dxc5 (11...♘f4 12 ♖c1) 12 ♗xa6!? (12 b5 f4 13 ♗c1 ♘b8 14 ♗b2 ±) 12...cxb4 13 axb4 fxe4 14 ♘xe4 bxa6 15 0-0 ±; e.g., 15...♘f4 16 ♖a5! ♗b7 17 ♗xf4 exf4 18 ♘fg5 f3 19 g3 ♕e7 20 ♘e6 ♖f5 21 ♖c5 ♗e5 22 ♕d2 ♔g8 23 ♖e1 ±.

11...c5!

Otherwise c5 gives White a definite advantage.

12 dxc6 bxc6 13 exf5!?

13 ♖c2 ± with the idea ♖d2 is safer.

13...gxf5 14 ♗e2

Now:

a) 14...♘f4? fails positionally to 15 ♗xf4! exf4 16 0-0 ±.

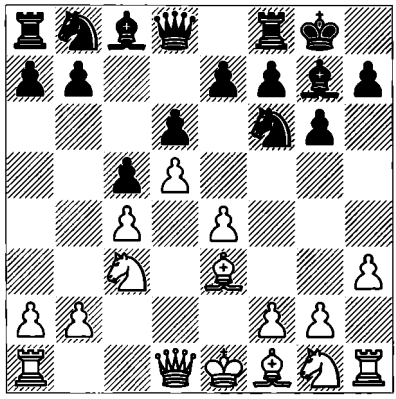
b) White keeps an edge following 14...f4 15 ♗d2 ♘f6 16 ♕a4 ♗b7 17 ♘g5 ±.

c) After 14...♘f6, White has a moderate advantage; e.g., 15 ♕a4 ♘b8 16 ♗g5 ♕e8 17 ♘h4 ♕e6 18 ♕c2 (threatening g4) 18...e4 (18...c5 19 ♘d5!) 19 g4! and Black's central pawns will be targets.

8.12)

6...c5 7 d5 *(D)*

For the record, 7 dxc5 ♕a5 8 ♗d3 dxc5 9 e5 works out fine for Black if he plays simply 9...♘fd7 10 f4 ♖d8, but it's hard to resist the pseudo-sacrifice 9...♘h5!? 10 g4 ♖d8! 11 ♘f3 ♘c6! 12 0-0 ♘xe5 13 ♘xe5 ♗xe5 14 ♘d5 with a complicated and approximately equal game, Fressinet-Golod, Biel 2006.



7...e6

7...b5!? 8 cxb5 a6 9 a4 ♕a5 10 ♗d2 transposes to note 'b' to Black's 7th move in Section 8.23 (there the white bishop reached d2 via g5).

Now, without going into enormous detail, I'm going to present the standard methods against 6...c5 and 7...e6, illustrating why Black is reluctant to play this move-order. You will see something similar after 6 ♗g5 c5 7 d5.

8 ♘f3

Or 8 ♗d3, when 8...exd5 9 exd5 ♖e8 10 ♘f3 transposes. If you want one, 8 dxe6 ♗xe6 9 ♘f3 is a safe alternate line.

8...exd5

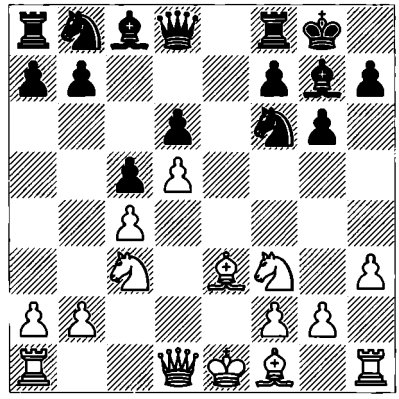
8...♖e8 9 ♗d3 exd5 10 exd5 is simply a different path to our main line.

9 exd5 *(D)*

This (rather than cxd5) is a normal recapture in lines with a delayed ...exd5, seeking to emphasize White's space advantage, and denying Black the dynamic counterchances typical of Modern Benoni positions.

9...♖e8

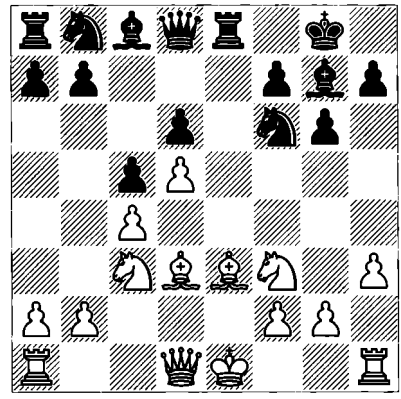
Black has several other moves, of which I'll note two:



a) 9...♗f5 10 ♗d3 ♖e8!? transposes to note 'c' to Black's 10th move below.

b) 9...♘fd7 10 ♗d3 f5 11 0-0 (11 ♕d2! ♘e5 12 ♘xe5 ♗xe5 13 ♗h6 ±) 11...♘e5 (11...f4 12 ♗d2 ♘e5 13 ♘xe5 ♗xe5 looks reasonable for Black) 12 ♘xe5 ♗xe5 13 f4!? (13 ♗h6 ±) 13...♗xc3!? 14 bxc3 ♕f6 15 ♕d2 ♘a6!? 16 a4 ♗d7 (Elianov-Grishchuk, Moscow blitz 2010) and it's difficult for White to make progress, but g4 (supported by a bishop and rook) might be possible if White's king takes a walk to the queenside, or a reorganization to enforce ♗h4. White is certainly for choice.

10 ♗d3 *(D)*



10...♗h6

a) White stands much better after 10...♘h5 11 0-0 ♗xc3 (11...♘d7 12 ♕d2 ♘e5 can be answered by 13 ♗e2 ♘xf3+ 14 ♗xf3 ♘f6 15 ♖ae1 ± or 13 ♘xe5 ♗xe5 14 ♖ae1) 12 bxc3 f5 (12...♘g7 13 ♖e1 ♗f5 14 ♗g5 ♖xe1+ 15 ♕xe1 f6 16 ♗xf5 ±) 13 ♗g5 ♕c7 14 ♖e1 ♗d7 15 ♕d2 ♘a6 (Ristić-Stanković, Yugoslav Ch, Kladovo

1991) and already 16 ♗e7! with the idea ♕g5 would produce a decisive advantage; for example, 16...f4 17 ♗g5 ♖xe1+ 18 ♖xe1 ♖e8 19 ♖xe8+ ♗xe8 20 ♕e1 ♗f7 21 ♘d2 with the idea ♘e4 or simply ♕e7.

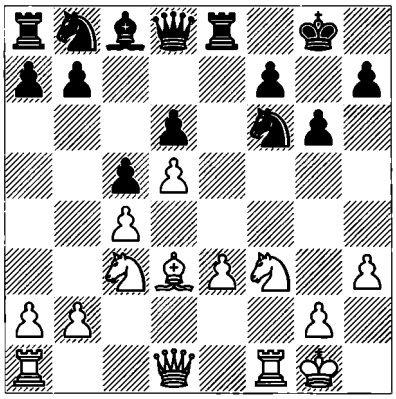
b) 10...b5!? 11 ♘xb5 ♘e4 12 0-0 (12 ♗xe4 ♖xe4 13 ♕b3!? is also good) 12...a6 13 ♘c3 ♘xc3 14 bxc3 ♗xc3 15 ♖c1 ♗g7 16 ♗f4 is slightly better for White, Ulybin-Kuzuev, Russian Ch, St Petersburg 1998.

c) 10...♗f5 and now 11 ♗xf5 gxf5 is a little messy, whereas 11 0-0 ♘e4 12 ♘xe4 ♗xe4 13 ♗xe4 ♖xe4 14 ♕c2 ♖e8 15 ♗f4 secures a modest edge.

11 0-0! ♗xe3

11...♖xe3?! looks interesting at first glance, but 12 fxe3 ♗xe3+ 13 ♔h1 ♘h5 14 ♕e1 is good, with the idea 14...♗f4 15 ♘e2 ± (compare the same sacrifice in the 6 ♗g5 lines).

12 fxe3 *(D)*



12...♕e7

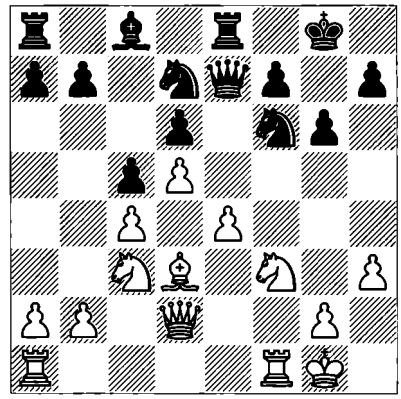
12...♖xe3? 13 ♕d2 is known to be too risky; you can see how White's attack practically plays itself with ♕h6, ♘g5, ♘ce4 and ♖ae1 or doubling rooks.

In spite of an extremely lengthy tradition of analysing only 12...♕e7 (which mistake I have joined in), Jan Markos correctly points out that 12...♘bd7! is more accurate, even if not ultimately equal: 13 ♕d2 ♖f8 14 e4 ♘e8 and now:

a) I like 15 a3 f6 16 ♔h1 ♕e7 17 b4, which was favourable for White in Mi.Tseitlin-Szekely, Pernik 1981. Along with an attack on the kingside, there's a potentially vulnerable queenside, too. That's the advantage of controlling more space.

b) 15 ♗c2!? ♘e5! occurred in Antić-Velimirović, Yugoslav Ch, Subotica 2000. Here Antić analyses 16 ♘xe5 dxe5, continuing with the excellent 17 ♕e3 b6 18 ♗a4 ♗d7 19 ♗xd7 ♕xd7 20 b3 ±. Another way to approach this is 17 ♖f3 ♘d6 18 ♕f2 b6 19 ♖f1 ♕e7, and now the dynamic 20 ♗a4! ♘xc4 21 ♗c6 ♖b8 22 ♖f6 ♗b7 23 b3 ♘d6 24 ♕h4 ♔h8 25 ♘b5! ♘xb5 26 ♗xb5 ♖bd8 27 ♕g5 a6 28 ♗e2 b5 29 h4 with the idea ♖xf7; Black is totally tied down, and after 29...♖d6 30 ♖xg6! ♕xg5 31 ♖xg5 White wins the e-pawn as well.

13 e4 ♘bd7 14 ♕d2 *(D)*



White has an advantage, and in practice it's a very large one.

14...a6

After 14...♔g7, 15 ♘b5! ♖f8 16 ♕c3 ± has the idea 16...♔g8 17 e5! or 16...a6 17 ♘xd6! ♕xd6 18 e5 ±.

15 ♖f2!

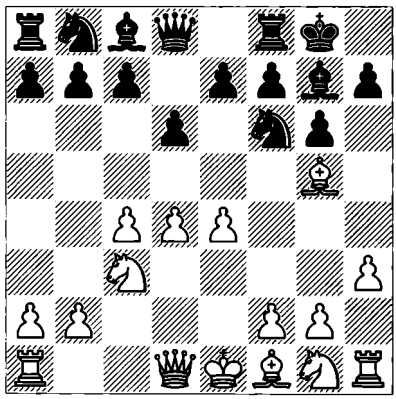
White simply doubles rooks. This position is well-known in Benoni theory and favours White. Again, he need only make natural moves to build up the attack. For example: 15...♔g7 16 ♖af1 ♖f8 17 e5! (alternatively, 17 ♕g5 ♘g8 18 ♕g3 ♘e5?! 19 ♘xe5 ± with the idea ♘a4, Åkesson-Ziegler, Swedish Team Ch 2005/6) 17...dxe5 18 ♗c2! h6 19 ♘h2 ♘h7 20 d6 ♕g5 21 ♕e1 f5 22 ♘d5 with a very large advantage.

8.2)

6 ♗g5 *(D)*

White develops the bishop more aggressively, and provokes ...h6, after which it will settle back to e3. His strategy is sometimes similar to

B



that after 6 ♗e3, but there are positions in which one or the other proves superior. Putting the bishop on g5 rather than e3 has gained enormously in popularity, not only with this move-order, but in practically every line beginning with 6 ♘f3. We examine:

8.21: 6...♘a6 162
8.22: 6...h6 169
8.23: 6...c5 173

There are several other moves which are quite important but go in unique directions that are not particularly related to overarching themes. I'll try to illustrate them separately:

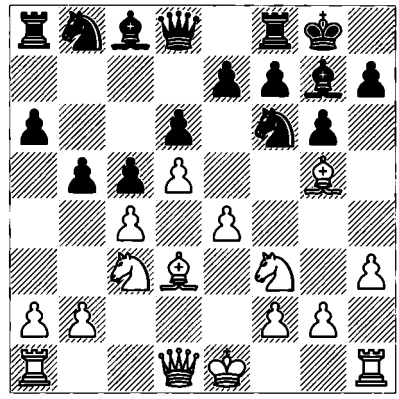
a) Not 6...e5? 7 dxe5 dxe5 8 ♕xd8 ♖xd8 9 ♘d5.

b) 6...♘bd7 7 ♘f3 (7 ♗d3 e5 8 d5 ♘c5 9 ♗c2 a5 10 ♘ge2 is an independent move-order which I won't analyse here) 7...h6 (7...e5 8 d5 h6 9 ♗e3 ♘c5 transposes to 8.22) 8 ♗e3 c5?! (8...e5! 9 d5 ♘c5 again transposes to 8.22) and now simply 9 d5 ♕a5 10 ♗d2 favours White, while 9 e5!? ♘e8 10 e6 fxe6 11 dxc5 is better still.

c) 6...♘c6!? hits d4, and has been rather neglected: 7 ♘f3!? (7 d5 ♘b8 8 ♗d3 ± is modest and somewhat in White's favour) 7...h6 8 ♗e3 e5 9 d5 (9 dxe5 ♘xe5 10 ♘xe5 dxe5 11 ♕c1 ♔h7 12 ♗e2 is also possible) 9...♘d4! (9...♘e7 10 ♕c1 ♔h7 11 ♗d3 ± Chernin-Uhlmann, Austrian Team Ch 1993) 10 ♘xd4 (10 ♗e2!? ♖e8 11 0-0) 10...exd4 11 ♗xd4 (11 ♕xd4!? ♘g4 12 ♕d2 ♘xe3 13 ♕xe3 c5!) 11...♘xe4! 12 ♘xe4 (12 ♗xg7?! ♖e8) 12...♕h4! (12...♖e8?! 13 f3) 13 g4 ♖e8 14 ♗g2 ♗f5! 15 0-0! ♗xe4 16 ♗xg7 ♗xg2 17 ♔xg2 ♔xg7 18 ♕d4+ ♕f6 19 ♕xf6+ ♔xf6 20 ♖ae1 a5 and the game is headed for a draw. Perhaps 7 d5 is the best idea for White.

d) 6...a6 can be used to prepare ...c5 and ...b5: 7 ♘f3 (7 ♗d3 c5 8 d5 b5 9 ♘f3 transposes) 7...c5 (or 7...c6 8 ♗d3 b5 9 a3 ±; compare note 'c' to Black's 6th move in Section 8.1) 8 d5 (8 dxc5 doesn't give much after 8...dxc5 9 ♗e2 ♘c6 10 0-0 or 8...♕a5 9 ♘d2 ♕xc5 10 ♗e3 ♕c7 11 ♗e2, but these are positions with a good deal of content) 8...b5! 9 ♗d3! *(D)* (9 cxb5 axb5 10 ♗xb5? falls for the old tactic 10...♘xe4! 11 ♘xe4 ♕a5+ 12 ♘c3 ♗xc3+ 13 bxc3 ♕xb5 ∓) and now:

B



d1) 9...b4 10 ♘e2 takes the pressure off White's centre.

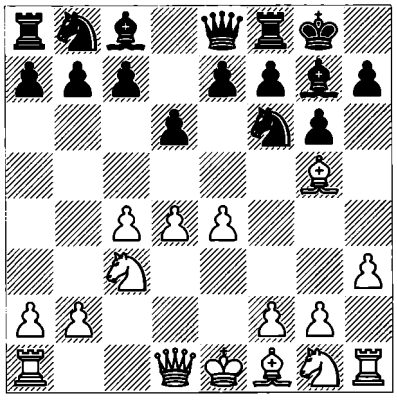
d2) 9...♘bd7 10 0-0 ♘b6?! (10...♖b8 11 ♕e2 ±) 11 cxb5 axb5 12 ♗xb5 ♗a6 13 ♗xa6 ♖xa6 (Grivas-Moutousis, Zouberi Zonal 1993) 14 a4! ♕d7 15 b3 ♖fa8 16 ♖c1 (or 16 ♘d2 ±) 16...♘e8 (16...c4 17 e5! ♘e8 18 e6! fxe6 19 dxe6 ♕xe6 20 ♖e1 ±) 17 ♘b5 c4!? 18 ♗e3! cxb3 19 ♗xb6 ♖xb6 20 ♕xb3 ±.

d3) 9...h6 10 ♗e3 e6 neglects Black's development, and White shouldn't mind the Benoni position after 11 0-0 exd5 (11...bxc4 12 ♗xc4 exd5 13 ♘xd5!? ♘xe4 14 ♘f4! threatens ♕d5 and ♘xg6; the latter should establish a positional edge) 12 cxd5. Black's pawn on h6 slightly weakens his kingside.

d4) 9...bxc4 10 ♗xc4 is Black's best bet from a positional point of view, but White's space and aggressive stance carry a great deal of weight; for example, 10...♘bd7 11 0-0 ♖b8 12 b3!? (12 ♖b1! ±) 12...♘e8 (12...♘g4! 13 hxg4 ♗xc3) 13 ♖c1 ♘c7 14 ♕e2 ♘b6 15 ♖fd1 ♘xc4 16 bxc4! ♗d7 17 ♗h4 (17 e5 f6 ±)

17...f6 (else e5) 18 ♖b1 ♘a8 19 ♖xb8 ♕xb8 20 ♖b1 ♕c7 21 ♕b2 ♕a5 22 ♕b7! and White was well on top in Yermolinsky-Piket, Wijk aan Zee 1997.

e) 6...♕e8 *(D)* is a tricky move.



Now 7 ♗d3 e5 8 ♘f3 can be met by 8...exd4 9 ♘xd4 ♘xe4 followed by ...f5. But White can play 7 ♗e2 (preventing ...♘h5) 7...e5 8 d5 with the idea 8...♘a6 9 ♕c2. Still, 7 ♘f3 is the most natural move. Then:

e1) 7...♘a6 transposes to Section 8.2121.

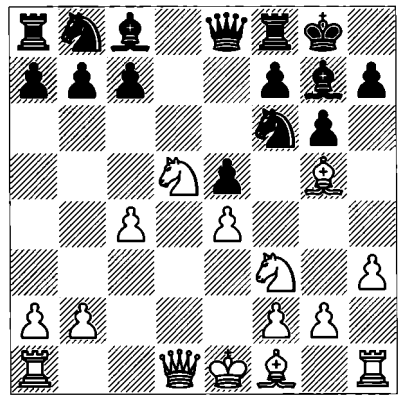
e2) 7...c5 8 d5 (8 ♗e2 cxd4 9 ♘xd4 ♘c6 10 ♗e3 is a sort of Maroczy Bind with Black having a queen on e8 and White a pawn of h3; personally I'd rather be on the white side of this trade-off, but it's not much more than a normal edge for White) 8...e6 9 dxe6 (or 9 ♗e2 exd5 10 exd5 ♘e4 11 ♘xe4 ♕xe4 12 0-0 ±) 9...♕xe6 10 ♗d3 ♘c6 11 0-0 ±.

e3) 7...e5 is critical:

e31) 8 d5 ♘h5!? (this poses unique challenges; 8...♘a6 transposes to Section 8.2122) can be met by 9 a3; e.g., 9...f5 10 exf5 gxf5 11 ♗e2!, intending 11...f4?! 12 ♘d2 ♘f6 13 ♗xf6 ♗xf6 14 ♗h5 and ♘de4.

e32) 8 dxe5!? dxe5 9 ♘d5! *(D)* is one of the few King's Indian Exchange variations that creates real problems for Black. Here are a couple of lines out of many:

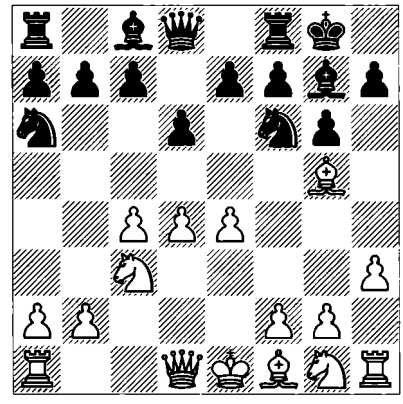
e321) 9...♘xe4?! is enterprising but probably too speculative: after 10 ♘xc7 ♕c6 11 ♘xa8 ♘xg5 12 ♘xg5 h6 13 ♘f3 White will ultimately come out a full exchange ahead. Black gets some counterplay from 13...e4 14 ♘d4 ♕c5!, but 15 ♘b3 ♕e7 16 ♕e2! ♘c6 17 ♖d1 retains the better chances.



e322) 9...♘xd5 10 cxd5 ♘d7 (10...f5 11 ♗e3! with ideas of ♖c1 and ♗c4; e.g., 11...fxe4 12 ♘g5 ♗h6 13 ♗c4 ±) 11 ♖c1 h6 12 ♗e3 ♘f6 13 ♘d2 ♕d8 14 ♕b3 and Black is still having trouble getting developed. His best course appears to be 14...♘h5 15 g3 b6 16 ♗b5 (16 ♗e2 ♘f6 17 h4 ±) 16...♗d7 17 ♗c6 ±.

8.21)

6...♘a6 *(D)*



A critically important move, recommended by several leading King's Indian experts as a good reply to 6 ♗g5, especially in conjunction with 7...♕e8.

I'll examine two moves here:

8.211: 7 ♗d3 162
8.212: 7 ♘f3 164

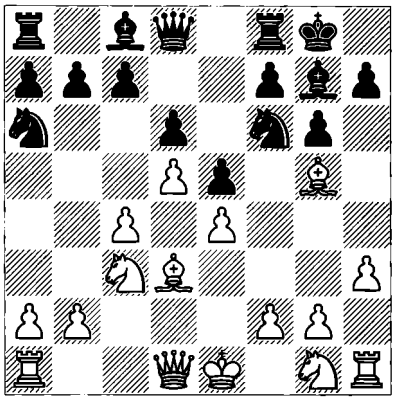
8.211)

7 ♗d3 e5

7...♕e8 can develop in various ways; for example, 8 ♘ge2 (for 8 ♘f3, see Section 8.2121) 8...e5 (8...♘d7 9 f4! e5 10 dxe5 dxe5 11 f5 ± Potapov-Fedorov, Ufa 1993) 9 0-0 (9 d5 is more common) 9...♘d7 (9...♘h5 10 ♗c2! ±; 9...exd4 10 ♘xd4 ♘c5 11 ♖e1 ♘xd3 12 ♕xd3 ± with a dangerous central attack) 10 ♗c2 f5?! (10...exd4 11 ♘xd4 ±) 11 exf5 gxf5 12 ♘d5! threatening ♘e7+, which will at least secure the bishop-pair, Stoček-B.Smith, Philadelphia 2009.

8 d5 *(D)*

B



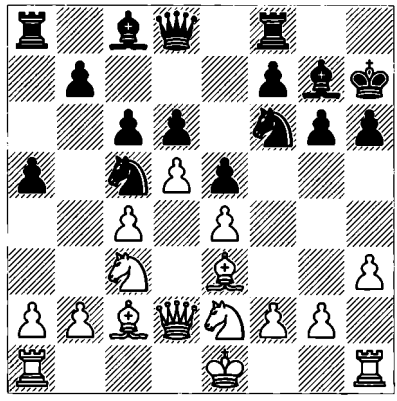
8...♕e8

As mentioned elsewhere, this queen shuffle is one of Black's favourite moves versus ♗g5 systems. It steps out of the pin on the knight while avoiding the weakening ...h6.

a) 8...c6 is an alternative approach: 9 ♘ge2 cxd5 (9...♗d7 10 0-0 h6 11 ♗e3 ♘c5 12 ♗c2 cxd5 13 cxd5 ± with the idea 13...a5 14 ♗xc5!? dxc5 15 ♗a4 ±; 9...♘c5 10 ♗c2 cxd5 11 exd5 transposes) 10 exd5!. This is an original, seemingly anti-positional, way for White to get a real imbalance out of this line, intending queenside expansion; e.g., 10...♘c5 (after 10...♗d7, 11 0-0 ♘c5 12 ♗c2 is normal, but White could also grab space with 11 a3 ♘c5 12 ♗c2 a5 13 b4) 11 ♗c2 a5 (11...♗d7 12 b4 ♘a6 13 a3 ♖c8 14 ♗b3 ±) 12 0-0 (12 ♘b5 ± is also worth a try) 12...♗d7 13 ♖b1 (13 ♘g3 ♕b6 14 ♖b1) 13...♕e8!? 14 ♘g3 h5 (it's hard to find a plan for Black here) 15 ♗e3 b6 16 f4!? (16 ♖e1! with the idea f4) 16...h4 17 ♘ge2 (or 17 fxe5 ♕xe5 18 ♗f4 ♕e7 19 ♖e1 ♕d8 20 ♘f1 and with extra space, White's game is easier to play) 17...exf4 18 ♗xf4 ♘fe4?! (Kazhgaleev-J.Polgar, Calatrava rapid 2007) and now 19 ♖e1 would have been strong.

b) 8...♘c5 9 ♗c2 a5 10 ♘ge2!? is a unique move-order; White might be aiming for g4 and ♘g3 under the right circumstances. After the sequence 10...h6 11 ♗e3 c6 12 ♕d2 ♔h7 *(D)*, White has two very different approaches:

W



b1) 13 0-0! is a promising move, because 13...♘h5?! can be met by 14 dxc6 bxc6 15 ♖ad1 or 14 ♖ad1 cxd5 15 ♕xd5!. So Black might play 13...cxd5, when apart from 14 cxd5, 14 exd5!? looks surprisingly good, as it's hard for Black to undertake a central or kingside advance without overexposing himself.

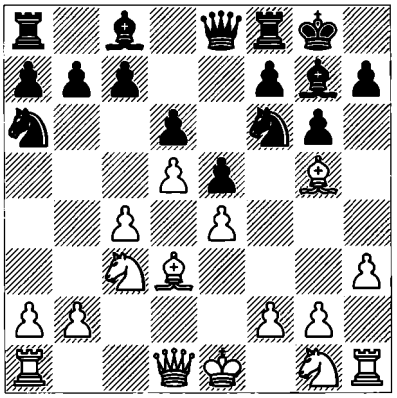
b2) 13 g4 (this position can be reached by various move-orders; White could have played g4 earlier, for example, avoiding some ...♘h5 lines) 13...cxd5, and here two games have gone 14 cxd5 with ultimate success, but 14 exd5!? would be extremely interesting; for example, 14...♗d7 15 0-0-0 (15 ♘g3 ♖c8 16 0-0 is sound, though White can attack directly by 15 g5 hxg5 16 ♗xg5, which is probably just unclear, though a nice line is 16...♔g8?! 17 h4 ♗g4 18 h5! with the idea 18...♗xh5? 19 ♖xh5! gxh5 20 ♘g3) 15...♖c8 16 ♔b1 ♕b6 17 f3 followed by ♘g3 and h4-h5 in some order.

We now return to the position after 8...♕e8 *(D)*:

9 ♘ge2 ♘c5

Two games continued 9...♘d7 10 a3 f5 11 b4 f4 12 f3 ♗f6 13 ♗xf6 ♖xf6, when I think White merely has to play 14 0-0, because Black will struggle to reorganize; e.g., 14...♕e7 15 ♘c1 ♖f7 16 ♘b3 ♘f6 and 17 ♕d2 intending ♕f2 and c5 is natural, but the immediate 17 c5!

W



gets a risk-free advantage following 17...dxc5 18 ♗xa6 cxb4 19 ♘a2! bxa6 20 ♘xb4.

10 ♗c2 a5 11 g4!?

11 0-0! is not a bad move at all and shows that there are various ways to set up in these lines. White simply attacks on the queenside; e.g., 11...♔h8 12 a3!? a4 13 ♘b5 ♕d7 14 ♘ec3 h6 15 ♗e3 b6 16 f3 and 17 ♘xa4.

11...♘fd7!?

11...h5 is well met by 12 ♕d2!, but 11...b6 is a legitimate alternative.

12 ♘g3

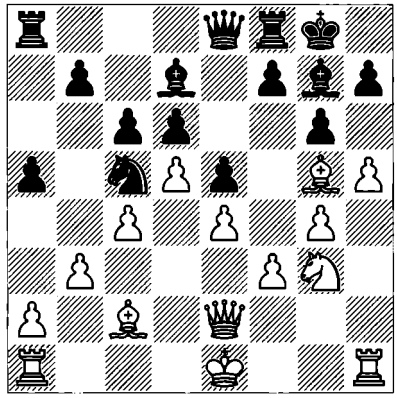
Or 12 ♘b5 ♘a6 13 ♘ec3 ±.

12...♘b6 13 ♕e2 ♗d7 14 h4 ♘ba4!? 15 ♘xa4 ♗xa4 16 b3 ♗d7 17 h5 c6

17...b5 18 f3! has the idea 18...bxc4? 19 ♕h2! f6 20 hxg6 ♕xg6 21 ♗d2 cxb3 22 axb3 with far superior pieces.

18 f3 *(D)*

B



This is a funny position, as both sides have been making natural moves and nothing special seemed to be happening, but now suddenly White has all the prospects and Black needs a strategy. In the game Agrest-V.Milov, Frankfurt rapid 2000, he tried 18...h6?! 19 ♗e3 g5 20 ♔f2. This is an example of the kingside being completely closed without Black having access to f4; generally the pawn-structure d5 versus d6 will ensure that White has some way to make progress on the queenside. The game continued 20...cxd5 21 cxd5 ♗f6 (to activate the bishop, ideally on b6 or a5) 22 a3 ♖c8 23 ♖hc1 ♖c7 24 ♕d2 ♗d8. The players agreed to a draw at this point, but White is far superior on the queenside and can play simply 25 b4 ±; for example, 25...axb4 (25...♘a6 can be answered by 26 ♗d3! or 26 bxa5) 26 axb4 ♘a6 (26...♘a4?? 27 ♗xa4 ♗xa4 28 ♖xc7 ♗xc7 29 ♗xg5 is overwhelming) 27 ♗d3 ♖xc1 28 ♖xc1 ♔h7 29 ♕c3 with the idea ♕a3 or b5; if Black's bishop is diverted and White's knight is allowed into f5, it's over.

8.212)

7 ♘f3

This is more mainstream than 7 ♗d3, and also not easy to play against.

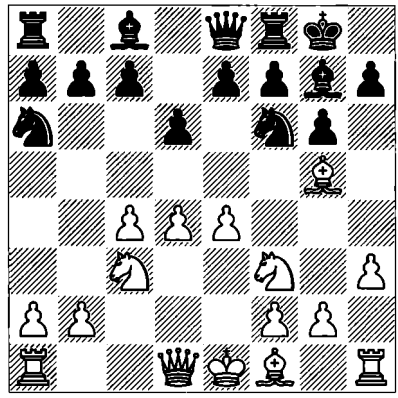
We need one final division here:

8.2121: 7...♕e8 164
8.2122: 7...e5 166

8.2121)

7...♕e8 *(D)*

W



This is a very popular set-up against 6 ♗g5. The primary plan is ...e5, when the queen isn't pinned and Black has avoided the potentially

weakening ...h6. In that case, ...♕e8 also has the subtle point that after ...♘h5 and ...f5, Black's h5-knight will be protected in case of exf5 and ...gxf5. Finally, Black leaves open the possibility of other plans such as ...c5.

8 ♗d3

This bypasses the deep theory surrounding White's best-known move, 8 g4, when apart from 8...e5 9 d5, Black can play 8...c5. The alternative that stays within our repertoire is 8 ♗e2 e5 9 d5, transposing to Section 8.2122 (i.e. 7...e5 8 d5 ♕e8 9 ♗e2).

8...e5

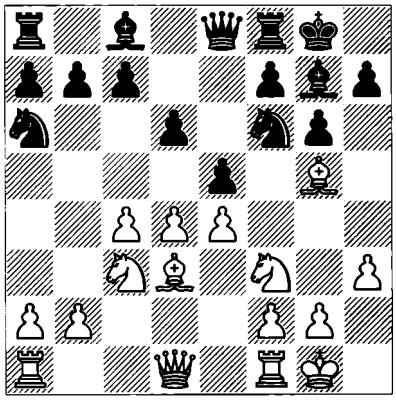
8...c5?! 9 d5 doesn't work well with the queen on e8 in view of 9...e6 10 0-0 exd5 11 exd5; e.g., 11...♘c7 12 ♖e1 ♕d7 13 ♕d2 with the idea ♕f4.

8...c6 is better motivated. Then the game Szilagyi-B.Szabo, Hungarian Team Ch 2008/9 went 9 ♕d2 (9 0-0 e5 transposes to note 'b' to Black's 9th move below) 9...e5 10 0-0 ♘d7 11 d5 f6 12 ♗h4!? ±.

9 0-0 *(D)*

White maintains the tension because 9 d5 gives Black more counterplay after 9...♘c5 (9...♘h5!?) 10 ♗c2 a5.

B



9...exd4

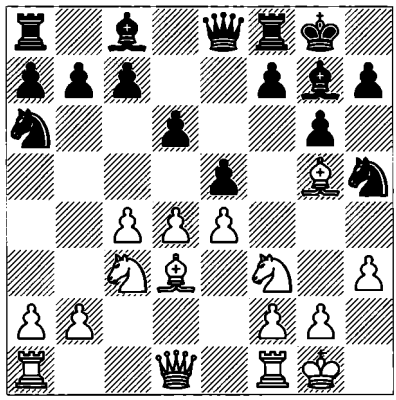
Or:

a) 9...♘d7 10 ♗c2!? h6 (10...♘b6 11 b3 exd4 12 ♘xd4 ♕e5 13 ♗e3) 11 ♗e3 c6 (11...exd4 12 ♘xd4 ♘b4 13 ♗b1 ♘b6 14 b3 ♘c6 15 ♘de2 ±) 12 ♖e1 (12 d5 ±; 12 ♕d2! ♔h7 13 ♖ad1 ±) 12...♕e7 13 ♕d2 ♔h7 (Ehlvest-Ye Jiangchuan, Biel Interzonal 1993) and now was a good moment to play 14 d5!, with a substantial advantage.

b) 9...c6 10 ♖e1 ♘h5 (10...exd4 11 ♘xd4 ♘c5 12 ♗c2 ♘e6 13 ♘xe6 ♕xe6, P.Cramling-Laveryd, Swedish Team Ch 1998/9, and now 14 ♗f4 ♘e8 15 ♕d3 is a simple way to increase the pressure) 11 ♗f1 h6 (11...♘f4 12 ♗xf4 exf4 13 ♕d2) 12 ♗e3 ♘f4 13 c5! (a theme to remember) 13...dxc5 (13...exd4 14 ♗xf4 dxc3 15 ♗xd6 ±) 14 dxe5 ♘e6 15 ♗xa6 bxa6 16 ♘a4 and Black's pawns are too weak.

c) 9...♘h5 *(D)* is logical and consistent with ...♕e8, but doesn't appear to have been analysed.

W



Now 10 ♘d5!? is wild and rather unclear, but White seems able to get a small advantage with calmer moves:

c1) 10 ♕d2 f5? (10...exd4 11 ♘b5 ♗d7 12 ♘bxd4 ♘c5 13 ♖ae1 ±) 11 exf5 gxf5 (Åkesson-Shulman, Stockholm 1998/9) 12 ♖ae1! ± has the idea 12...e4? 13 ♘xe4 fxe4 14 ♗xe4, winning; e.g., 14...♔h8 15 ♗xh7 ♕f7 16 ♖e7.

c2) 10 ♗e3 is probably the best continuation: 10...f5?! (10...♘f4 11 ♗xf4 exf4 12 ♕d2 c5 13 d5 ♗e5 14 ♘e2; 10...exd4 11 ♘xd4 ±) 11 exf5 gxf5 12 c5! e4 13 ♗c4+ ♗e6 14 d5 ♗c8 15 ♘g5! f4 16 ♗d4 ♗xd4 17 ♕xd4 ♘xc5 18 b4 ±.

10 ♘xd4 ♘c5

10...h6 11 ♗e3 ♘c5 12 ♖e1 ♘fd7 13 ♗c2 ♘e5 14 b3 ± Jovanić-Zufić, Rabac 2003.

11 ♖e1! ♘e6

11...♘xd3 12 ♕xd3 with the idea ♘d5 or f4 is difficult for Black to meet; probably 12...h6 13 ♗f4 ♘d7 is best, leading to 14 ♕d2 ♘e5 15 b3 ♔h7 16 ♖ad1 ±.

12 ♗e3 ♘h5?! 13 ♘f5!

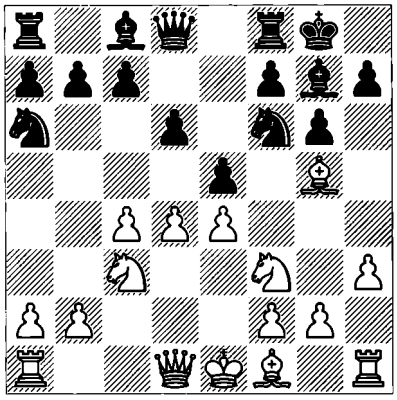
Threatening to exchange the dark-squared bishop. Laketić-Piscopo, Gallipoli 2000 went

13...♗e5 14 ♗h6 ♘hg7 (14...♘ef4 15 ♘d5! ♘xd5 16 exd5), and here 15 ♘d5! ♕d8 16 f4 would have put a lot of pressure on Black.

8.2122)

7...e5 *(D)*

W



8 d5

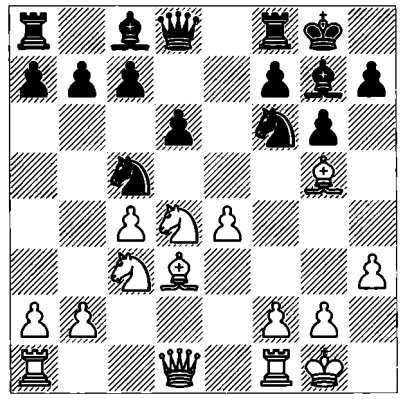
This is an obvious advance, but 8 ♗d3 seems to afford White real chances for a moderate advantage. This has hardly been played at all, yet in most of the few games White has had the better position, and it's easy to improve on the others. Let me go through some possibilities and leave you to take it from there:

a) 8...h6 9 ♗e3 exd4 and now 10 ♘xd4 ♘c5 11 0-0 transposes to line 'c2', but 10 ♗xd4 is an extra idea for Black to deal with.

b) 8...c6 and here 9 d5 ♘c5 10 ♗c2 a5 11 0-0 is a typical ♗d3 position, while 9 0-0 is also possible.

c) 8...exd4 9 ♘xd4 ♘c5 (9...♖e8 10 0-0 ♘c5 11 ♖e1 is the basic idea; if 11...h6, 12 ♗c1! is most interesting) 10 0-0 *(D)* and now Black has these natural moves:

B



c1) 10...♘xd3 11 ♕xd3 is a Maroczy Bind-like clamp with Black having the bishop-pair, a situation familiar from lines in several openings including the Hedgehog. One difference is that White has got rid of his bad bishop, which is less of a drawback. It's difficult for Black to free himself completely; e.g., 11...c6?! (11...h6 can be met by 12 ♗h4 ± or 12 ♗f4, while 11...♖e8 offers White a choice between 12 ♖fe1!, 12 ♖ad1 or even 12 ♘d5!? c6 13 ♘xf6+ ♗xf6 14 ♗xf6 ♕xf6 15 ♖ad1 with an edge) 12 ♖ad1 ♖e8 13 ♗f4 (13 ♘b3; 13 b3 a6 14 ♘de2) 13...♕e7 14 ♖fe1 ♘d7 15 ♕e3 and Black is still tied down.

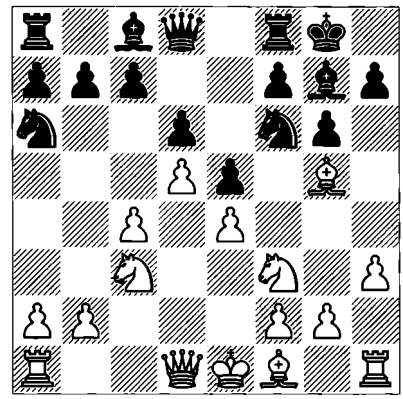
c2) 10...h6 and now 11 ♗e3 ♖e8 (11...♕e8 transposes to the note to Black's 10th move in Section 8.2121) 12 f3 looks strange because of the hole on g3, but here it doesn't hurt White; e.g., 12...♘h5 13 ♕d2 ♘g3 14 ♖fd1 ♗e5 15 ♗c2 h5 16 ♕f2 h4 17 f4 ♗g7 18 e5!; alternately, 11 ♗f4 makes sense.

c3) 10...♖e8 11 ♖e1 h6 12 ♗f4 ♘fd7 (or 12...♘xd3 13 ♕xd3 ♗e6 14 ♖ad1 ♘d7 15 b3) 13 ♗f1 a5 14 ♕d2 ♘f6 (14...♔h7 15 ♘db5) 15 f3 ♔h7 16 ♘db5! ♘h5 17 ♗h2 with the better game for White.

White isn't getting substantial advantages in these lines, but he does exert annoying pressure on Black.

We now return to 8 d5 *(D)*:

B



8...♕e8

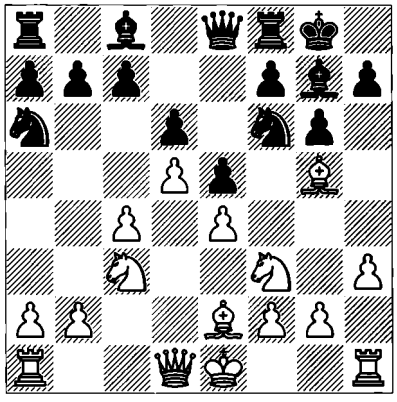
This queen move is the favourite of several important King's Indian players, and this is

currently an important position for h3 theory as a whole. If you face a strong opponent, you can count upon him to know a fair amount about it. Now 9 g4 has been analysed to death; theory shifts back and forth between '±' and '='. The problem is that Black has so many options, some of them very messy. And you may not be fond enough of moves like 8 ♗d3 to let them deter you from more standard structures. Fortunately, there's a promising alternative, namely 9 ♗e2.

Before we get to that, notice that instead of 8...♕e8, 8...h6 9 ♗e3 transposes to 8.22. And 8...♘c5?! loses time to 9 b4 ♘a6 10 a3, which restricts Black's knight to the side of the board *a tempo*. Then 10...c5 is best countered by 11 ♖b1 with the upper hand; e.g., 11...h6 12 ♗e3 ♘h5 13 ♕d2 ♔h7 (13...♘f4 14 g3 ♕f6! 15 ♘g1! b6 16 ♖b3 ±) 14 ♗d3 f5 15 exf5 gxf5 16 g4! e4 17 ♘xe4 fxe4 18 ♗xe4+ ♔g8 19 gxh5 ±.

9 ♗e2 *(D)*

B



9...♘h5

There are various alternatives, but nothing too difficult to cope with:

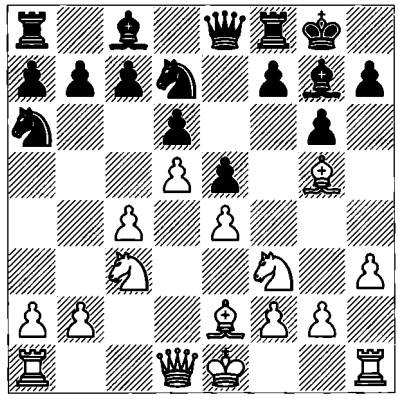
a) 9...♗d7 is often met by 10 g4, but an easier course is 10 ♘d2 h6 11 ♗e3 ♘h7 12 g4 f5 13 gxf5 gxf5 14 exf5 ♗xf5 15 ♗g4 ± (15 ♖g1) 15...♕g6 16 ♗xf5 ♕xf5 17 ♕g4! with control of e4.

b) After 9...♘c5, 10 ♕c2 is a familiar setup, but preventing ...♘h5 by 10 ♘d2 is just as good; e.g., 10...a5 11 0-0 h6 12 ♗e3 ♕e7 and now 13 a3 b6 14 b4 gave White a considerable advantage in Boehme-Krebs, corr. 1992. If the pawn sacrifice 13...a4 bothers you, 13 b3 is sufficient.

c) 9...♔h8 offers White a pleasant choice. 10 ♘d2 is good, while 10 a3 ♘c5 11 ♘d2 may be better still, when 11...a5 (11...♗d7 12 0-0) 12 b4 axb4 13 axb4 ♖xa1 14 ♕xa1 ♘a6 15 ♕a3 favours White. The attempt to block the queenside by 15...c5 can be answered by 16 dxc6 (16 bxc5 ♘xc5 17 0-0 with ♖b1 and ♘b3 or ♘a4 is pretty good too) 16...bxc6 and now 17 0-0 with the idea 17...♘c7 18 b5 is a small improvement on 17 b5 ♘c5!, as played in the game Ivanisević-Vogt, Swiss Team Ch 2007.

d) 9...♘d7 *(D)* is one of Black's most popular approaches, with the idea of ...♘dc5 and ...f5.

W



From White's point of view, the knight's disappearance from the kingside means that there are fewer defenders in that sector, and also that attacking ideas such as ...♘h5 aren't available. Accordingly, the following two suggestions:

d1) 10 g4 should be sufficient for a small advantage simply on the basis of territorial control: 10...♔h8 (10...♘dc5 11 a3 f5 12 ♘d2! h6 13 ♗h4 g5 14 ♗g3 ± with the idea 14...f4 15 ♗h2 ♘d7 16 f3 ♕e7 17 ♗g1 and White's queenside attack proceeds naturally) 11 ♕d2 (11 a3 f5 12 ♘d2 also gives White the better of it; Black has no clear plan) and now:

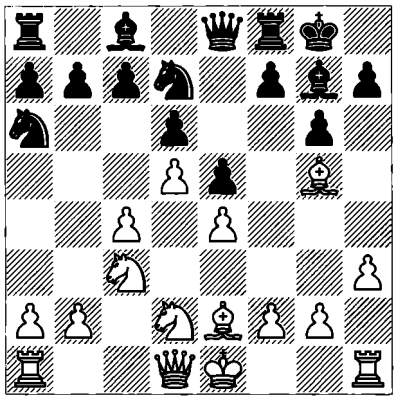
d11) 11...f5 12 gxf5 gxf5 13 ♖g1 f4?! (or 13...fxe4 14 ♗h6 ♖g8 15 ♘xe4 ±) 14 0-0-0 ♘dc5 15 ♔b1 ♖g8 16 ♗h4 ♘b4 17 ♖g2 ± with the idea ♖dg1, when 17...♗xh3 18 ♖h2 just makes things worse.

d12) 11...♘dc5 12 0-0-0 f5 13 gxf5 gxf5 14 ♖dg1 ♖g8! (14...f4?! releases the pressure; White can arrange to move his knight from f3 and play ♗g4, and he can also play directly: 15

♖h2 ♕f7 16 ♖hg2 ♗d7 17 ♕d1! ♖g8 18 ♘d2 ±) 15 exf5 (15 ♗h6 is another approach) 15...♗xf5 16 ♘h4 ♗d7 17 ♖g3 e4 18 ♖hg1 with an attack.

d2) 10 ♘d2 *(D)*, with 0-0 in mind, is a safe alternative (Black has no pieces on the kingside) and provides a slight advantage:

B



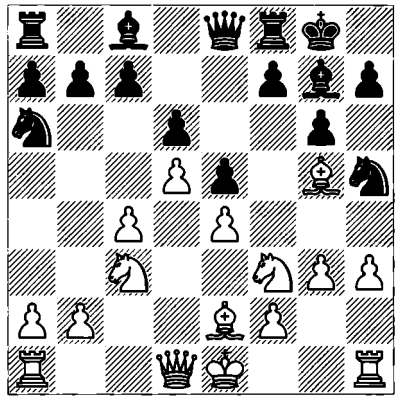
d21) 10...f5 11 exf5 ♘dc5 (11...gxf5? 12 ♗h5! ±) 12 f6! ♗xf6 13 ♗xf6 ♖xf6 14 0-0 e4 (14...♗f5 15 a3) 15 a3 e3 16 ♘f3! exf2+ 17 ♖xf2 ♕e3 18 ♕c1 ♕xc1+ 19 ♖xc1 with a healthy positional advantage for White.

d22) 10...♘dc5 11 0-0 (11 a3 is still a good move) 11...f5 12 a3!? (the standard plan in conjunction with 0-0; b4 cannot be prevented) 12...f4 (12...h6 13 ♗h4 g5 14 ♗g3 f4 15 ♗h2 ±) 13 f3 ♗f6! (before White plays ♗h4-f2) 14 ♗xf6 ♖xf6 15 b4 ♘d7 16 ♖c1 and White has c5, which is the only thing going at the moment.

10 g3! *(D)*

I like this best. White can also play simply 10 0-0 with the idea of a3.

B



10...f5

10...f6!? has been chosen by leading players and is considered more sophisticated; if nothing else, it reduces White's options. I think that White retains a small but definite advantage following 11 ♗e3 (11 ♗d2!? f5 12 ♘h4 is an interesting possibility) 11...f5 12 exf5! gxf5 13 ♘h4 (13 ♘g5!? ♘f6 14 ♕d2 ♘c5 15 ♗xc5 dxc5 16 0-0-0 is double-edged) 13...♘f6 14 ♕d2 ♘c5 (14...f4? can be met by 15 gxf4 exf4 16 ♗d4! with the idea 16...♘e4? 17 ♘xe4 ♕xe4 18 ♖g1 ♖f7 19 0-0-0 +–) 15 0-0-0 (15 ♕c2 and 15 ♗xc5 dxc5 16 ♕g5!? both slightly favour White) 15...♘fe4 16 ♘xe4 ♘xe4 and now 17 ♕c2 is a rather surprising transposition to note 'a' to Black's 13th move below (the position after 16 ♗e3), where White is a little better.

11 exf5!

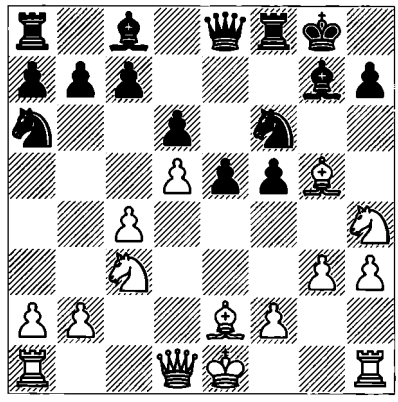
This is a logical way to destabilize Black's position.

11...gxf5

11...e4 12 ♘h4 and now 12...e3?! 13 ♗xh5 exf2++ 14 ♔xf2 gxh5 15 ♖e1 ± F.Schmidt-Klewe, corr. 1990. 12...♘c5 is an improvement, but White still keeps the upper hand with 13 0-0 or 13 ♗e3.

12 ♘h4 ♘f6 *(D)*

W



13 ♕c2

This is the most popular and ambitious move.

13 g4!? should give a very limited advantage; for example, 13...♘e4! (13...f4 14 ♘f5 ♗xf5 15 gxf5 ♕d7 16 ♗xf6 ♖xf6 17 ♘e4 ♕xf5! 18 ♗d3! ±) 14 ♘xe4 fxe4 15 ♕d2 ♘c5 and here 16 0-0 was alright in Zubarev-Bojkov, Greek Team Ch. Kallithea 2008. but 16 ♗e3

favours White slightly because of the weak e-pawn.

13...♘b4

This is the main move, but players have different opinions at this point:

a) 13...♘c5 can be met by 14 ♗e3 with a slight advantage (compare the note to Black's 16th move below). More ambitious is 14 0-0-0 ♘ce4 15 ♘xe4 ♘xe4 16 ♗e3 ± (a position also relevant to the 10...f6!? line cited above) and now:

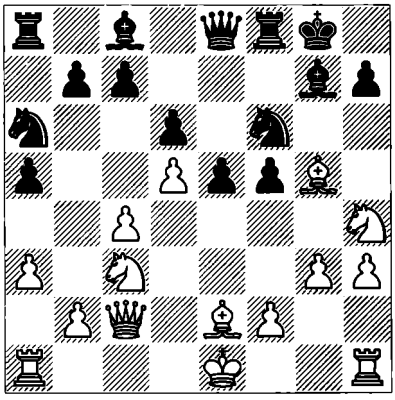
a1) 16...c6?! 17 g4 cxd5 (I.Ivanisević-Hausrath, Biel 2008) 18 ♖xd5! is extremely strong for White due to the line 18...♗e6 19 ♖dd1 d5 20 ♘xf5!.

a2) 16...♕e7! stops g4, but 17 ♗d3 still leaves White with the better game.

b) 13...e4 14 0-0-0 (good, but 14 0-0! with the idea of ♘g2 is simply better for White) 14...♘d7 (14...♘c5 15 ♘b5 ♕f7 and now 16 ♗e3 ♗d7 17 ♘d4! gives White a nice advantage, while he can also choose 16 ♔b1 and 17 ♘d4) 15 ♘g2?! (objectively, 15 ♔b1!, with the idea 15...♘e5 16 ♘g2, is a superior move-order) 15...♘e5 (15...♘b4!) 16 ♗e3 (16 ♘f4 ±) 16...♘c5 17 ♘f4 ♗d7 (17...♘a6?!, Arutinian-G.Gutman, Cappelle la Grande 2007, 18 ♔b1 ♗d7 19 g4!) 18 ♔b1 (or 18 g4 ♘g6! 19 ♘h5 ±) 18...a6 (18...♘a4?! 19 ♘b5! ± Avrukh) 19 ♘h5! ♗h8 20 ♗xc5! dxc5 21 g4 ± gives White an attack that is difficult to counter.

14 ♕b3 a5 15 a3 ♘a6 16 ♕c2 *(D)*

B



16...e4

16...♘c5 is the theoretical move, but White stands better after 17 ♗e3!. None of Black's responses is attractive:

a) 17...♗d7 18 g4! fxg4 19 hxg4 ♘xg4 20 ♗xc5 dxc5 21 ♗xg4 ♗xg4 22 f3 ♗d7 23 0-0-0 with good pieces and some kingside chances.

b) 17...a4 18 0-0-0 ♘b3+ 19 ♔b1 ±.

c) 17...e4 18 ♘g2 a4 19 0-0-0 ♘fd7 20 ♘f4 (20 ♘b5 ♕d8 21 ♔b1 ± and ♘f4) 20...♘e5 21 g4 ♔h8?! (21...♘g6 22 ♘h5 ±) 22 ♔b1 ♘g6 23 ♘h5 ♗e5 24 gxf5 ♗xf5 25 ♘g3 ± Mchedlishvili-Akshat, Ravana 2009.

d) 17...b6 (anticipating ♗xc5) 18 0-0-0 a4 19 ♔b1 and instead of 19...♖b8?! (as played in Kacheishvili-Smirin, Minneapolis 2005, when 20 g4! and other moves are good), Avrukh suggests 19...♘b3. Nevertheless, 20 ♘b5 (or 20 ♖hg1) 20...♕e7 21 ♗g5! e4 22 ♖hg1 is excellent for White.

17 0-0-0!?

Or 17 0-0 intending ♘g2-f4.

17...♗d7 18 ♖hg1 ♘c5 19 ♔b1

19 ♗e3! is a good alternative.

19...♖b8

19...♘a4 is met by 20 ♘b5.

20 g4! fxg4 21 hxg4

White has a clear advantage. Bregadze-Liaskovsky, European Under-16 Ch, Herceg Novi 2008 continued 21...♘d3?! 22 ♖xd3! exd3 23 ♗xd3 ♖f7, when 24 ♘f5 would have been virtually winning, since 24...♗xf5 25 ♗xf5 h6 26 ♗d2 is hopeless for Black.

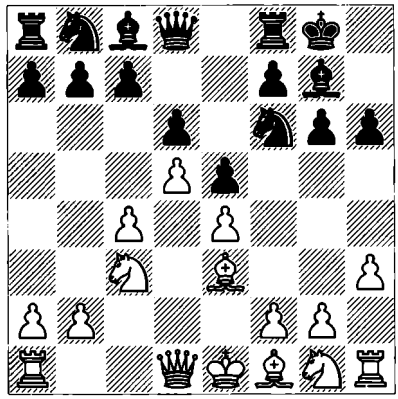
8.22)

6...h6

Black does the most obvious thing and kicks back the bishop. He hopes that ...h6 will be more of an asset than a liability.

7 ♗e3 e5 8 d5 *(D)*

B

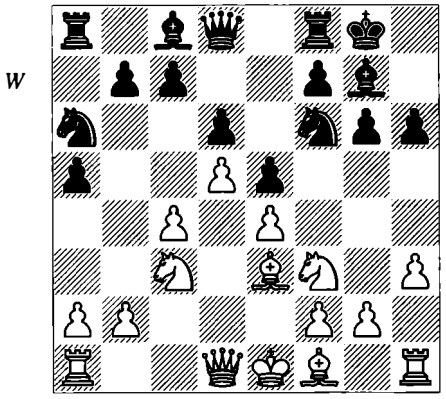


8...♘a6

Or:

a) 8...♘bd7 9 ♘f3 a5 is essentially the same, for our purposes, as line 'b', as after 10 ♗e2 or 10 ♕c2, Black has nothing better than 10...♘c5.

b) 8...a5 9 ♘f3 ♘a6 *(D)* and then:



b1) 10 ♗e2 ♘c5 and here 11 ♘d2 is an old main line, which is worth a glance: 11...♘e8 (11...c6 12 0-0; 11...♘fd7 12 0-0 f5 13 exf5 gxf5 14 ♘b3 b6 =; 11...♘h7 12 ♘b3!?) 12 h4!? (12 0-0 f5 13 exf5 gxf5 14 f4 ♕e7 is about equal) 12...f5 13 h5 ♘a6 14 f3 f4 15 ♗f2 g5 with a mixed outlook. More important with respect to our repertoire is that 11 ♕c2 is a good move (with the idea 11...♘h5 12 g3). This transposes to Section 8.221.

b2) 10 ♕c2 is arguably even more accurate. I'll discuss the position after 10...♘c5 via the move-order 8...♘a6 9 ♘f3 ♘c5 10 ♕c2 a5 in Section 8.221.

9 ♘f3

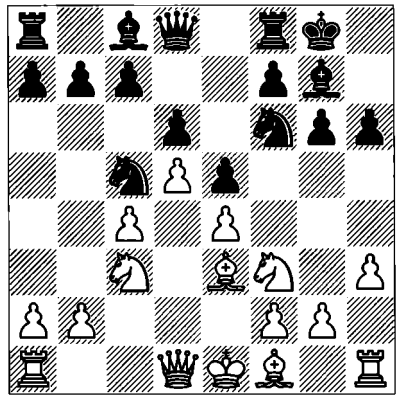
Now the material splits into:

8.221: 9...♘c5 170
8.222: 9...♘h5 172

9...c6 is often played in this and related positions, but generally gives White as many squares to work with as Black; for example, 10 ♘d2 (10 ♗e2 is also fine) 10...♘h7!? (10...♘e8 11 g4!? has the idea 11...f5 12 gxf5 gxf5 13 exf5 ♗xf5 14 ♘de4 ♕h4 15 ♖g1! ±) 11 g4 f5 12 gxf5 gxf5 13 exf5 ♗xf5 14 ♘de4 (14 dxc6 bxc6 15 ♘de4 ± is also good but not as clear) 14...♘f6 (J.Watson-Dzindzichashvili, Philadelphia 1996) and now White had simply 15 ♗g2! with a significant advantage.

8.221)

9...♘c5 *(D)*



10 ♕c2

This is the same rare move that I recommend in the 6 ♗e3 system. Importantly, what follows can also occur via the move-order 5...e5 6 d5 ♘bd7 7 ♗g5 h6 8 ♗e3 ♘c5 9 ♕c2 a5 10 ♘f3 0-0. As playing ♕c2 versus 5...e5 or 5...♘bd7 is hard to avoid anyway, learning this position solves two problems at once. I like 10 ♕c2 for a few other reasons, the same ones as I outlined with 9 ♕c2 in the corresponding 6 ♗e3 section (i.e. 8.111). The variations with the approved move 10 ♘d2 are highly theoretical, and they will probably be at least partially memorized by knowledgeable King's Indian players, so this move may throw your opponent off. As in the 6 ♗e3 lines, 10 ♕c2 either doesn't appear (or barely does so) in most sources, and it provides some much-needed fresh material. With 10 ♕c2, there are also fewer difficult tactical situations to memorize; the knight on f3 delays some of Black's more radical attempts.

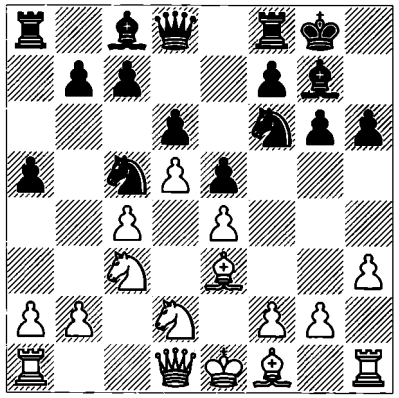
Having said all that, you may find that you don't like something about 10 ♕c2, so I want to make a few brief and incomplete suggestions about 10 ♘d2, after which White also has fair chances for advantage. In any case, these lines are characteristic of 5 h3 as a whole:

a) 10...♗d7 11 b4 ♘a6 12 a3 ± restricts the knight on a6.

b) 10...♘h5 11 b4 ♘a6 12 a3 is more complex, but still to White's liking; e.g., 12...♕e8 13 c5 f5 14 cxd6 cxd6 15 ♘b5 or 15 ♘c4, and there are other ways to proceed.

c) 10...a5 *(D)* is almost always played.

W



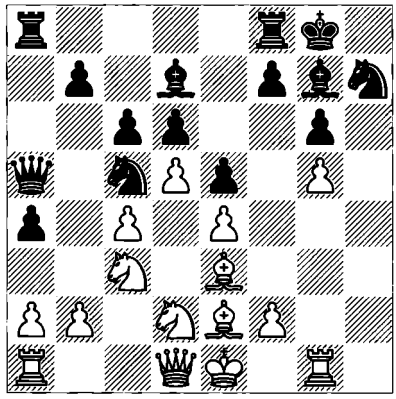
Amidst the crowded traffic of moves and transpositions, I'll cover a few typical lines, to give you a starting point for further investigation. First, 11 ♗e2 transposes to note 'b1' to Black's 8th move in Section 8.22. I should also mention that 11 ♕c2 does pretty well even a move late, with the idea 11...♘h5 12 g3, which implies that 10 ♕c2 a5 11 ♘d2 isn't bad either! See the next note. White has a couple of other ways to continue:

c1) 11 a3 ♘e8 (11...c6 12 b4 axb4 13 axb4 ♖xa1 14 ♕xa1 ♘a6 15 ♕a3 ±; 11...♘fd7!? 12 b4 f5 13 f3, when I suspect that White stands a bit better) 12 b4 axb4 13 axb4 ♖xa1 14 ♕xa1 and now 14...♘a6 15 ♕a3 f5 or 14...♘d7 15 c5 f5 16 c6 ±.

c2) After 11 g4, extremely dense theory exists on half a dozen possibilities. The most-investigated line is undoubtedly 11...c6 (11...♘h7 is well met by 12 h4! b6 13 h5, when 13...g5? 14 f3 gives White all the time in the world to break through on the queenside; this is a typical position that White aims for in the h3 lines, although Black seldom allows it) 12 ♗e2 ♗d7 13 h4 a4 (13...♘h7!? 14 h5 ♘g5) 14 g5 hxg5 15 hxg5 ♘h7 16 ♖g1 ♕a5 *(D)*.

This position has arisen many times, also via the Petrosian System of the King's Indian. For instance, 17 ♖b1! (17 ♕b1 ♖fb8!? 18 f3 ♗f8 19 ♔f2 ♗e7 with chances for both sides) 17...cxd5 (17...♖fb8 18 ♖g3! ♗f8 19 ♔f1 ♗e7 20 ♔g2 ♕d8 21 ♘f3 ±) 18 ♘xd5! ♕d8 (remarkably, 18...♘xe4 19 ♘e7+ ♔h8 20 ♗g4 ♘xd2 21 ♕xd2 favours White) 19 ♖g3! ♖a6 20 ♔f1 ♗c6 21 ♕c2 ♘e6 22 ♘f3 ♘d4 23 ♘xd4! exd4 24

W

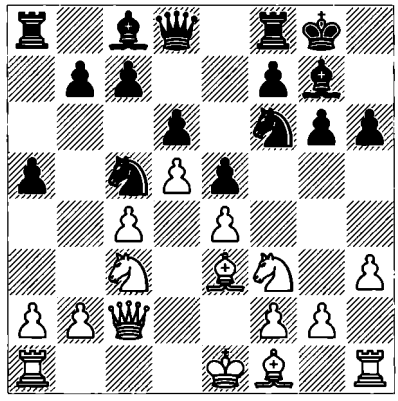


♗d2 ♖a8 25 ♗d3 ♖c8 26 ♕d1 with the powerful idea f4-f5, Poluliakhov-J.Watson, New York 1996.

Let's return to 10 ♕c2:

10...a5 *(D)*

W



11 ♗e2

11 ♘d2 is a position that can arise from 10 ♘d2 a5 11 ♕c2. As mentioned above, it is a perfectly good move with prospects of advantage; e.g., 11...c6 (hoping to work on the c-file to embarrass the white queen; 11...♘h5 12 g3 b6 13 ♗e2 ♘f6 14 g4! ± has the idea g5 or, if the f6-knight moves, h4; compare the main line below) 12 ♗e2 ♗d7 13 0-0 ±, and here Black should avoid the positional trick 13...cxd5?! 14 ♗xc5! dxc5 15 cxd5, when White conquers the queenside light squares.

11...♘h5

In principle, this should be the problem with ♕c2, but ...f5 doesn't prove that dangerous:

12 g3 b6

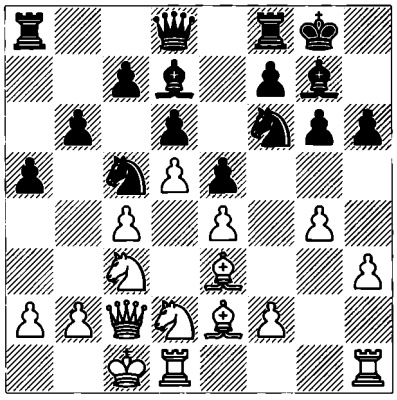
Or 12...f5. and now:

a) 13 ♘h4!? ♘f4 (forced) 14 ♗xc5 dxc5 15 0-0-0 ♘xe2+ 16 ♕xe2 ♖a6 17 ♘f3 doesn't give either side much to do, but White can try to scare something up with ♘e1-d3.

b) 13 ♘d2 maintains an edge: 13...♘a6 (or 13...♘f6 14 ♗xc5 dxc5 15 0-0-0 ± with the idea of exf5 and g4; this isn't much, but Black doesn't have any obvious plan) 14 exf5 ♗xf5 15 ♘de4 ♘f6 16 f3!? b6 17 0-0-0 ♘c5 18 g4 ±.

13 0-0-0 ♗d7 14 ♘d2 ♘f6 15 g4 *(D)*

B



White has achieved the standard position and should have the better chances; e.g., 15...a4 16 g5 hxg5 17 ♗xg5 c6 18 h4 with good attacking prospects. A natural continuation is 18...a3!? (18...cxd5! 19 ♘xd5 ♘e6 20 ♗xf6 ♗xf6 21 h5 ±) 19 b4 ♘a6, but 20 h5! is strong: 20...♕b8 (20...♘xb4?? 21 ♕b3 c5 22 h6 ♗h8 23 h7+) 21 hxg6 ♘xb4 22 ♕b3 c5 23 gxf7+ ♖xf7 24 ♖dg1 ±.

8.222)

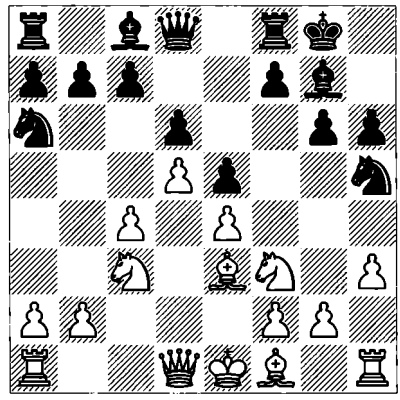
9...♘h5 *(D)*

This is a position that we've seen before in the 6 ♗e3 section without ...h6. It is generally considered favourable for White to have ...h6 included, in part because he can target h6 with tempo by ♕d2, and in part because g6 becomes weak when ..f5 is played.

10 ♕d2

White decides to take direct advantage of the move ...h6. This is straightforward and apparently strong. Nevertheless, there are some promising alternatives, which could be investigated if for some reason 10 ♕d2 fails to please:

W

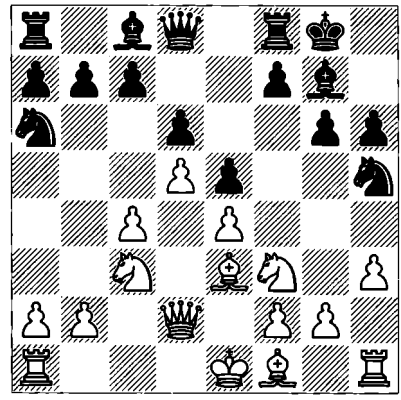


a) 10 a3 is the move I recommended in the analogous section with 6 ♗e3 (i.e. 8.112). It is supposed to be answered by 10...f5 11 b4 c5, but then 12 dxc6 bxc6 13 ♕a4 looks good, with the idea 13...♗b7 14 c5! or 13...f4 14 ♗d2 ♘b8!? 15 c5 dxc5 16 ♕c2! cxb4 17 axb4, when White's compensation is obvious, having ♖a5, ♘a4-c5, ♗c4 and other active moves in store. You can see similar lines in the 6 ♗e3 section.

b) 10 g3 may also yield a small advantage; e.g., 10...♕e8 (10...f5 11 exf5 gxf5 12 ♕d2 f4 13 gxf4 ♘xf4 14 ♖g1) 11 ♗e2 f5? 12 exf5 gxf5 13 ♘h4 ♘f6 14 ♕d2! ±.

We now return to 10 ♕d2 *(D)*:

B



10...♔h7

After 10...♘f4 11 g3 g5!? (11...♘h5 12 ♗xh6), the knight cannot be maintained on f4 indefinitely; for example, 12 h4 (or 12 0-0-0 ♘h5!? 13 ♗e2 ♘f6 14 g4 ♘c5 15 ♗xc5 dxc5 16 ♔b1 b6 17 ♖dg1 ♕e7 18 h4 and Black is in trouble) 12...f6 (12...f5 13 hxg5 hxg5 14 0-0-0 with the idea ♘xg5) 13 ♘h2 ♕e8 14 0-0-0 ♕g6

15 f3 ♘h5 16 ♖g1 ♗d7 17 f4! with a decisive attack for White.

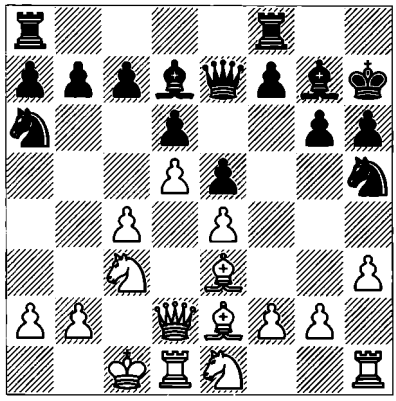
11 0-0-0!

Strangely, 11 g4? has been played in most of the games in this line, although after 11...♘f4!, Black has done well. He will clearly have a lot of compensation if White dares to capture twice on f4.

11...f5?!

This is too loosening. 11...♗d7 is more cautious, when White can kick the h5-knight by 12 ♘e1 ♕e7 13 ♗e2 *(D)*.

B



This position favours White; for example, 13...♘f4 (13...♘f6 14 g4 ♘c5 15 f3 a5 16 h4 ♘a4 17 h5! g5 18 ♔b1 and White should eventually win on the queenside; a major advantage of the h3 systems is that a locked kingside is very often to White's great benefit) 14 ♗f3 f5 15 g3 ♘xh3 (15...fxe4 16 ♘xe4 ♘h5 17 ♗xh5 gxh5 18 ♘g2! ♗f5 19 f3 and ♘h4 follows, with or without a capture on e4) 16 exf5 gxf5 17 ♗g2 f4 18 ♗xh3 fxe3 19 ♕xe3 with a clear positional advantage for White.

12 exf5 gxf5 13 g4!

In the intensely strategic battlefield of these systems, it's a pleasure to see 0-0-0 and a classic sacrificial attack!

13...fxg4

There's nothing better:

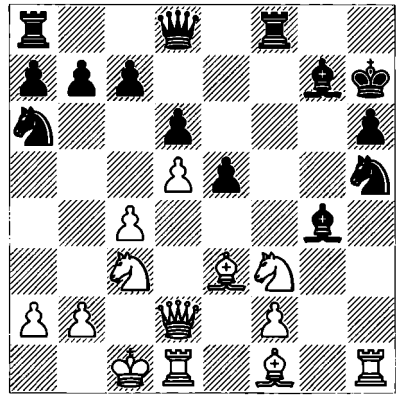
a) 13...♘f4 14 ♗xf4 exf4 15 ♗d3 ♘c5 16 ♗c2 ± J.Costa-Watanabe, Maringa (team event) 1991.

b) 13...f4 14 ♕c2+ ♔h8 15 ♗d2 ±; for example, 15...♘f6 16 ♖g1 (16 g5?! ♘h7 17 h4 ♗g4 18 gxh6 ♗xh6 19 ♘g5 ♗f5 20 ♘ce4 ♘c5 21 ♗d3 offers White just a slight edge) 16...♗d7 17 g5 hxg5 18 ♘xg5 ♕e7 19 h4 ♖g8 20 ♖e1 ♕f8 21 ♗h3 +– with the especially cruel idea 21...♗xh3 22 ♕g6!.

c) 13...♘f6 14 gxf5 ♗xf5 15 ♗d3 ♕d7 16 ♘h4 ♗xd3 17 ♕xd3+ ♔g8 18 ♖dg1 e4 19 ♕e2 ♔h7 20 ♖g6 ♖f7 21 ♗d4 ♖e8 22 ♖hg1 and White's attack crashes through.

14 hxg4 ♗xg4 *(D)*

W



Now White has a very pleasant choice of ways to pursue his attack:

a) 15 ♗e2! is relatively complex, but virtually winning. A couple of rather pretty lines: 15...♗xf3 16 ♗xf3 ♘f4 17 ♖dg1 ♘c5 18 ♗e4+! ♘xe4 19 ♘xe4 ♔h8 20 ♘g5 ♕f6 21 ♘e6 ♖f7 22 ♘xf4! exf4 23 ♗d4! and 15...♖xf3 16 ♖dg1! ♖xe3 17 fxe3 ♗xe2 18 ♕xe2 ♘f6 19 ♕g2 ♕e7 20 ♘e4 ♖f8 21 ♕g6+ ♔h8 22 ♘g5 ♕e8 23 ♖xh6+ ♔g8 24 ♘e6 ♕xg6 25 ♖hxg6 +–.

b) After the simpler 15 ♘g5+, the attack triumphs as follows: 15...hxg5 (15...♔g8 16 ♘e6 ♗xe6 17 dxe6 ♘f4 18 ♘d5! ♘xe6 19 ♗h3 and Black's position has fallen apart) 16 ♗e2! ♖f3 17 ♖dg1 ♕d7 (17...♖xe3 loses immediately to 18 fxe3) 18 ♘e4! ♔g8 19 ♘xg5 ♕f5 20 ♘xf3 ♗xf3 21 ♖g5 ♕f7 22 ♗xf3 ♕xf3 23 ♖hxh5. White has multiple threats and even a material advantage.

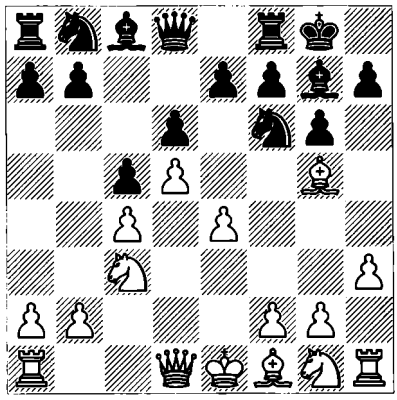
8.23)

6...c5

We saw this against 6 ♗e3, and will pursue a similar approach, although the details differ significantly.

7 d5 *(D)*

B

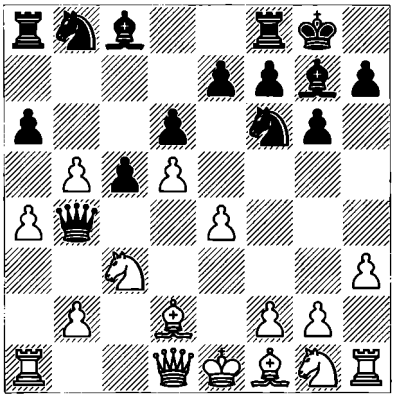


7...e6

a) 7...a6 8 a4 (8 ♘f3 b5 9 ♗d3 is also good) 8...e6 9 ♗d3 exd5 and now 10 exd5 resembles our main line, but the insertion of these a-pawn moves will generally favour White. For 10 cxd5, see Section 10.1 on the Modern Benoni.

b) 7...b5 is a fairly respectable version of the Benko Gambit, although I think White keeps the advantage following 8 cxb5 a6 9 a4 ♕a5 (9...h6 10 ♗e3 ♕a5 11 ♗d2 e6 is a different strategy, but 12 ♗c4!? ♕d8?! 13 dxe6 is very strong in view of 13...fxe6 14 ♘f3, threatening e5, or 13...♗xe6 14 ♗xe6 fxe6 15 ♘f3 d5 16 exd5 exd5 17 0-0 d4 18 ♘e2 with the threat of ♘f4) 10 ♗d2 ♕b4 *(D)* (10...e6 can be met by 11 dxe6 ♗xe6 12 ♘f3 or 11 ♘f3; 10...axb5 11 ♗xb5 and now 11...♗a6 12 ♖a3! or 11...♘a6 12 ♘f3 ♘b4 13 0-0 ±), and then:

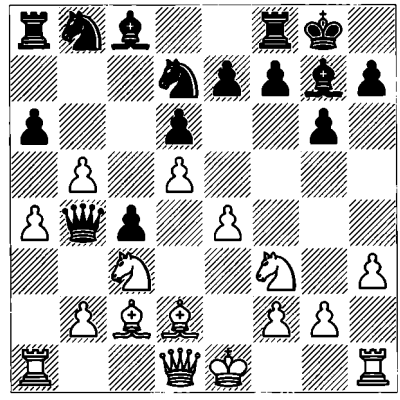
W



b1) The odd-looking 11 ♕b1!? axb5 12 ♗d3!? c4 13 ♘xb5 ♕c5 14 b4 cxb3 15 ♕xb3 might leave Black a bit short on compensation, but only just so.

b2) 11 ♗d3! ♘fd7 (11...c4 12 ♗c2 ♘fd7 can be met by 13 ♖b1 ♕c5 14 ♗e3 ♕b4 15 ♘ge2 or 13 ♘ge2 ♘c5 14 0-0 with the idea 14...♘bd7 15 a5! axb5 16 ♘a4) 12 ♘f3 c4 13 ♗c2 *(D)* and here:

B



b21) 13...♕xb2 14 ♖b1 ♕a3 15 ♘e2 ♘c5 16 0-0 c3 (16...♗b2? 17 ♖xb2! ♕xb2 18 ♗c3 ♕a2 19 ♕d2 with a killing attack; 16...♘d3 17 b6!) 17 ♗e1 axb5 18 axb5 ♘bd7 19 ♘fd4 ±.

b22) 13...♘c5 14 ♘e2! (or 14 0-0 ♕xb2 15 ♖b1 ♕a3 16 ♘e2 c3 17 ♗e3) 14...♕xb2 15 ♖b1 ♕a3 16 0-0 ♘b3 17 ♗xb3 cxb3 18 b6! ♕xa4 19 ♕xb3 ♕xb3 20 ♖xb3 ♗b7 21 ♖c1 with bright prospects for White.

8 ♗d3 exd5

8...♖e8 offers White a choice between 9 ♘f3 exd5 10 cxd5, transposing to Section 10.11 (Modern Benoni), and 9 ♘ge2 exd5 10 exd5, which we cover in Section 8.232.

9 exd5

This is the same method we used after 6 ♗e3 c5. White has space and Black's queen's bishop lacks squares. If you're curious about another approach, you may want to study the Modern Benoni section (10.1) for the position that arises after 9 cxd5.

We now have:

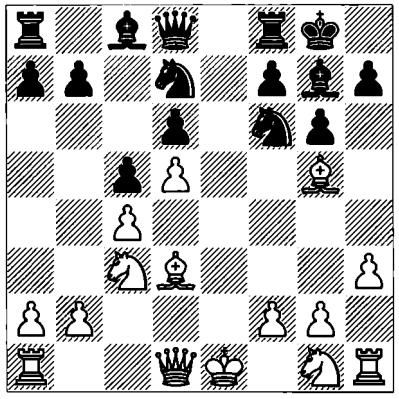
8.231: 9...♘bd7 174
8.232: 9...♖e8+ 176

8.231)

9...♘bd7 *(D)*

Black awaits a decision from White regarding his king, which is probably the best course in the analogous 6 ♗e3 c5 system.

W



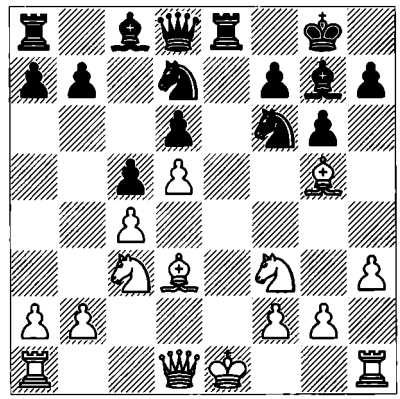
10 ♘f3!?

This is arguably the most interesting move, responding to the 'threat' of ...♘e5. 10 f4 addresses the same issue (...♘e5), having in mind a potential attack with f5, which has occasionally succeeded. This is very loosening, however, and I can't recommend it – notice the weaknesses on e3, g3 and even e4, now that f3 can't be played. After 10 ♘ge2 ♘e5, Black can exchange off the bishop on d3, which should suffice for equality; in return, White has space and good development, so that would be a balanced game.

10...♖e8+ *(D)*

10...♕e8+ unpins the f6-knight, but White retains his space advantage after 11 ♕e2 ♕xe2+ 12 ♔xe2, as shown by several games in this and related positions.

W



11 ♗e3!?

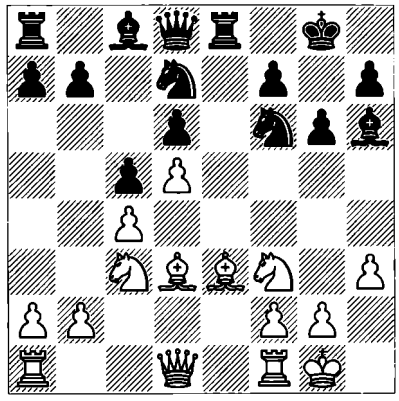
This is a rather absurd-looking move which nevertheless appears reasonably good. White is a full tempo down (the move ...♘bd7, to be precise) on the exact same line in the 6 ♗e3 c5 7 d5 system. Often there are compensations for losing a move; for example, the opponent commits to a move and you can adjust accordingly. Here, however, it's hard to see any advantages that White has gained. On the other hand, maybe it doesn't matter that much who has an extra move, because the fundamentals of the position are the same. And of course, White did very well indeed in the corresponding 6 ♗e3 position.

11 ♔f1 has been played exclusively here, but is apparently only good enough for equality; e.g., 11...a6 12 a4 ♘e5 (12...h6 13 ♗f4!? ♘h5! has the idea 14 ♗xd6?! ♕b6 15 ♗h2 ♕xb2) 13 ♘xe5 ♖xe5 14 ♕d2 ♗d7 15 ♗f4 ♖e8 16 a5 (after 16 ♗xd6!?, both 16...b5!? and 16...♗xa4 are satisfactory for Black) 16...b5! 17 axb6 ♕xb6 18 g4! ♖ab8 19 ♖a2, Suba-Uhlmann, East Berlin 1979. Now simply 19...♗c8 protecting a6 and preparing ...♘d7 would have kept the game level.

11...♘h5

11...♗h6 is the obvious alternative; compare the 6 ♗e3 c5 main line. White plays 12 0-0! *(D)* and Black has two ways to capture on e3:

B

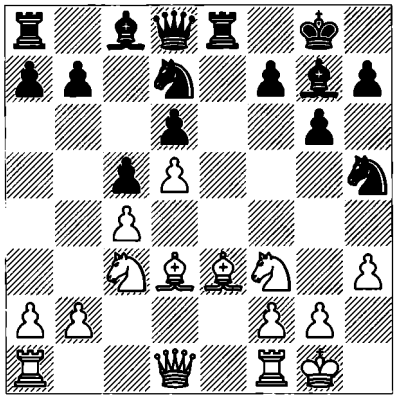


a) 12...♗xe3 13 fxe3 ♕e7 (13...♖xe3 14 ♕d2 is too risky for Black, as shown in the 6 ♗e3 c5 main line) 14 e4 with the idea of ♕d2 and doubling on the f-file. This is a tempo down on the main 6 ♗e3 c5 line, but it appears to favour White anyway due to Black's kingside weaknesses; for example, 14...a6 (14...♘e5 15 ♘xe5 ♕xe5 16 ♕f3 ♔g7 17 ♖f2) 15 ♖f2 ♖b8 16 ♕d2 (16 a4 is also possible) 16...b5 17 ♖af1 b4 18 ♘e2 a5 19 ♘g3 with the idea ♕g5.

b) 12...♖xe3!? 13 fxe3 ♗xe3+ 14 ♔h1 ♕f8! (14...♘h5 15 ♕e1 ♗f4 16 ♘e2 drives Black back) launches a dark-square attack which, however, doesn't seem to have quite enough punch: 15 ♕e1 (15 ♕e2 ♗f4! 16 ♘e4! ♕h6 17 ♘h2 is slightly better for White) 15...♕h6 16 ♘g1 (or 16 ♘h2 ±) 16...♗f4 (16...♘h5 17 ♗e2 with the idea 17...♘f4?! 18 ♕g3) 17 ♕f2! g5 18 g3 ♗e5 19 ♖ae1 ♗d4 20 ♕f3 ♗xg1? (20...♔g7 21 ♘e4) 21 ♖e8+ ♔g7 22 ♔xg1 ♕xh3 23 ♖e7 +– threatening ♘e4.

12 0-0 *(D)*

B



12...♗xc3!?

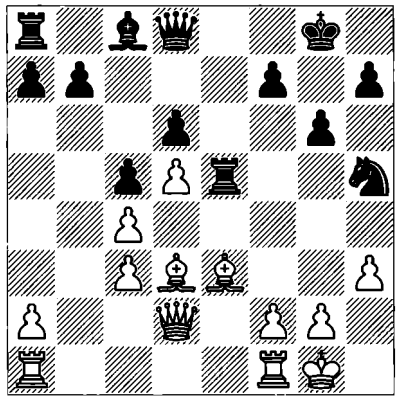
Or 12...♘e5 13 ♘xe5 ♗xe5 14 ♕d2 ±, but not 12...♘g3? 13 ♖e1 ♘f5 14 ♗xf5 gxf5 15 ♕d2 ♘e5 16 ♘xe5 ♗xe5 17 ♗g5 ±.

13 bxc3 ♘e5

13...f5 14 ♗h6 and now 14...f4 15 ♗g5 ♕c7 16 ♖e1 ± or 14...♘e5 15 ♘xe5 dxe5 16 ♖e1 e4?! 17 ♗e2 ♘f6 18 ♕d2 ±; the bishop-pair, dark squares and passed pawn favour White.

14 ♘xe5 ♖xe5 15 ♕d2 *(D)*

B



With the idea of f4-f5 at some point soon.

15...♗f5 16 ♗xf5 ♖xf5?!

Over-optimistic, but White is on top after 16...gxf5 17 ♖fe1 ♕e8 18 g4!? fxg4 19 hxg4 ♘g7 20 f3 ±.

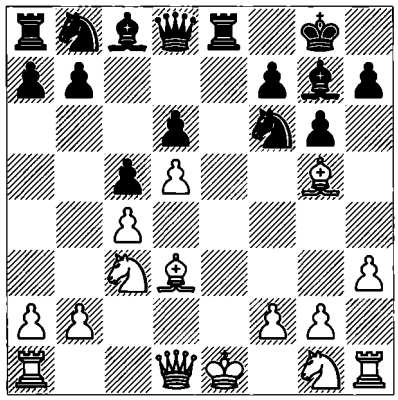
17 g4 ♖f3 18 ♗g5!

White secures a large advantage in view of the continuation 18...f6 19 ♕e2!, with the point 19...♖xc3? (19...fxg5 20 ♕xf3 ♘f4 21 ♖ae1 ♕d7 22 ♖e4 ♖f8 23 ♕e3 ±) 20 ♗d2 ♖xh3 21 ♕e6+ ♔g7 22 gxh5 ♖xh5 23 ♖ae1 ♖e5 24 ♖xe5 fxe5 25 f4 ♕h4 26 fxe5!, when White wins because there is no perpetual.

8.232)

9...♖e8+ *(D)*

W



10 ♘ge2

a) 10 ♔f1 can easily transpose to 9...♘bd7 10 ♘f3 ♖e8+ 11 ♔f1 (note to White's 11th move in Section 8.231), and the themes are often the same; e.g., 10...h6 (or 10...♘bd7 11 ♘f3 a6 12 a4 h6 13 ♗e3 ♘e5 =) 11 ♗f4?! ♘h5 (or 11...♘a6 12 ♘ge2 ♘c7 ∓ with the idea ...b5; White's knight is poorly placed on e2 when the king is on f1) 12 ♗h2 ♘d7 13 ♘f3 ∓.

b) 10 ♗e3?! is weak this time in view of 10...♘h5!, and if 11 ♘f3? (11 ♘ge2 ♘d7 ∓), then 11...♘g3! ∓.

10...h6

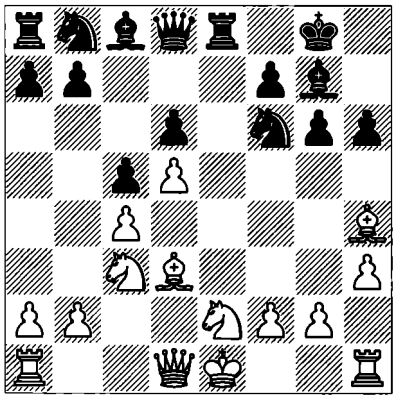
10...♘bd7 11 f4 (11 0-0 ♘e5) 11...h6 12 ♗h4 enters line 'a' of the next note.

11 ♗e3

A crucial juncture: this doesn't seem to give White anything special, and nor does 11 ♗f4?! ♘h5 12 ♗h2 ♘d7! 13 ♗xd6 ♕b6.

But 11 ♗h4! *(D)* appears to offer White superior prospects:

B



a) 11...♘bd7 12 f4 grants White a pleasant edge because Black is tied down; e.g., 12...a6 13 a4 ♖b8 (13...♘f8 14 0-0 ♘8h7 15 ♕c2 ±) 14 0-0 ♕c7 15 ♔h1 ♘f8 16 ♗xf6!? (interesting, if unnecessary; 16 ♕d2 is also good) 16...♗xf6 17 f5 g5!? (17...♕e7 18 fxg6 ♘xg6 19 ♕c2 ♘e5 20 ♗h7+ ♔h8 21 b3 ±) 18 ♘g3 ♘h7 19 ♘ce4 (19 ♕h5! is strong) 19...♕e7 20 ♕h5 ♕f8 21 ♖a2 ♗d7 22 b3 ♖e5 23 ♕d1 ♕e7 24 ♘f2 and now Black blundered the game away with 24...♖e3? (though White was better anyway) 25 ♘h5 ♗g7 26 ♘g4 in Suba-Reyes, Palma de Mallorca 1992.

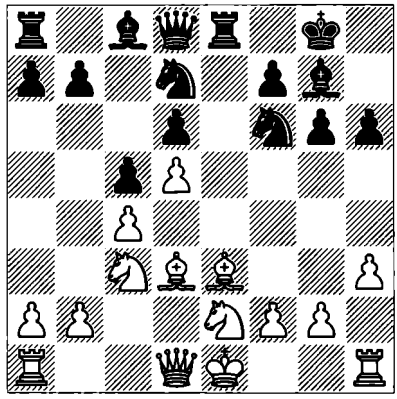
b) 11...♘a6 attempts to get some pieces out: 12 0-0 ♗d7 13 f4!? (I like 13 a3! ±, simply improving White's position with moves such as ♗g3 and ♖b1 to follow) 13...♕b6 (Suba-Uhlmann, Bucharest 1978) and now 14 ♕d2! keeps a slight advantage.

11...♘bd7! *(D)*

12 0-0

This move hasn't yet been played in practice, but I think it's best, ceding the bishop on d3 in return for time to consolidate White's space advantage. 12 b3 ♘e5 13 ♗c2 ♘h5 is unclear, with Black hoping for 14 0-0? ♗xh3!. And 12 ♘g3 ♘e5 13 ♗e2 h5! ∓ is depressing

W



for White, because he doesn't have his usual resource 14 ♗g5 due to 14...♘xc4.

12...♘e5 13 ♘g3 ♘xd3

13...h5 14 ♗g5 ♕b6 15 ♖b1 ♘h7! 16 ♗e3 h4 17 ♘ge4 is complex, although probably slightly in White's favour. Then the greedy 17...f5 18 ♘g5 f4 19 ♗xf4 ♘xd3 20 ♕xd3 ♗f5 21 ♕f3! ♘xg5 22 ♗xg5 ♗xb1 23 ♖xb1 gives White more than enough for the exchange because of Black's weakened kingside.

14 ♕xd3

Now:

a) After 14...a6?!, play might go 15 ♕d2 ♔h7 16 ♗f4! g5 17 ♗e3 ♖b8 18 ♖ab1 (or 18 a4) 18...b5!? 19 b4! bxc4 20 bxc5 ♖xb1 21 ♖xb1 dxc5 22 ♗xc5 with an edge.

b) 14...h5?! is also unimpressive after 15 ♗g5 ♕b6 16 ♕f3 ♘h7 17 ♗f4 ±.

c) However, 14...♘d7! should keep things level, particularly as 15 f4?? allows 15...♖xe3, and 15 b3 ♘e5 16 ♕c2 ♗xh3! 17 gxh3 ♘f3+ 18 ♔g2 ♘h4+ 19 ♔h2 at best repeats (and not 19 ♔h1? ♕f6!).

Overall, I'd assess 11 ♗e3 as equal. However, the continuation with 11 ♗h4! is promising; it may be that Black ultimately has nothing to counterbalance White's space advantage and must accept a small but real inferiority. In any case, there is potential in this line for subtle manoeuvring, and a reward for good strategic play.

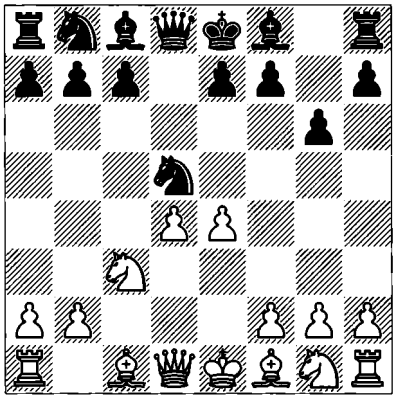
9 Grünfeld Defence

1 d4 ♘f6 2 c4 g6 3 ♘c3 d5

The Grünfeld Defence is one of the leading defences versus 1 d4, used by high-level players everywhere. Today it is at the peak of its popularity and none of the main lines appear to be achieving an advantage against it. That makes it all the more appropriate to propose responses which are not the best known but at the same time challenging and complex enough to be rewarding to the player who understands them well.

4 cxd5 ♘xd5 5 e4 *(D)*

B



The Exchange Variation seems a bit mainstream and committal for this book, but has two things going for it:

1) It limits Black's options and this makes it easier to form a repertoire;

2) It targets the only weakness from which the Grünfeld suffers, i.e., that Black allows White to gain space and control the centre with a potentially mobile central majority.

5...♘xc3

Avoiding the exchange is considered clearly inferior, but you will come across the second of these moves from time to time, especially at club level:

a) 5...♘f6?! is practically never seen; one example is 6 ♘f3 ♗g7 7 h3 (7 ♗e2 0-0 8 0-0 ± is less elaborate) 7...0-0 8 ♗c4 c6 9 a4!? (or 9 0-0!; with White's centre secure, he has the superior position following 9...b5 10 ♗d3) 9...a5 10 0-0 ♘a6 11 ♗e3 ♘b4 12 ♕b3 (12 ♕e2 is possible too) 12...♘e8 (Tolush-Mikenas, USSR Ch, Moscow 1950) and now 13 ♘a2 would get rid of Black's only advanced piece.

b) 5...♘b6?! also escapes notice in some books. It is more serious, covering c4 and keeping the g7-bishop unmasked versus d4. The traditional recommendation is 6 h3 (preventing ...♗g4 and thus denying Black a good square for that bishop, although 6 ♘f3 ♗g4 7 ♗b5+ c6 8 ♗e2 ♗g7 9 ♗e3 0-0 10 0-0 still favours White; after 6 ♗e3 ♗g7, 7 h3 0-0 8 ♘f3 transposes into the main line, while White can also play 7 ♕d2 0-0 8 ♖d1 ± Podgorny-Pachman, Czechoslovak Ch, Prague 1954) 6...♗g7 7 ♘f3 0-0 8 ♗e3 (8 ♗e2 ♘c6 9 ♗e3 f5 10 exf5 ♗xf5 11 ♕b3+ ♔h8 12 d5 ♘e5 13 ♘xe5 ♗xe5 14 ♖d1 ± Christiansen-Castro, Torremolinos 1977) 8...a5 (8...c6 9 ♗e2 ♗e6 10 0-0 ♗c4 11 ♕d2 ♘8d7, Portisch-Szabo, Hungarian Ch, Budapest 1958, and now simply 12 ♖fd1 is the most direct course) 9 ♗e2 a4 10 0-0 (10 ♖c1 a3 11 b3 f5 12 exf5 ♗xf5 13 0-0 ♘c6 14 ♕d2 ± I.Sokolov-Djurić, Novi Sad 1986) 10...a3 11 bxa3 ♖xa3 12 ♕c1 ♖a5 13 ♖d1 c6 14 ♗h6 ♗xh6 15 ♕xh6 f6 16 ♖abl ♗e6 17 d5! ± Petrosian-Smyslov, Garga 1953.

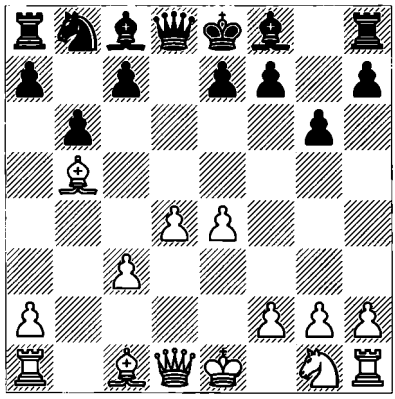
6 bxc3 ♗g7

This is the most natural move. Other possibilities:

a) 6...b6 7 ♗b5+ *(D)*, and then:

a1) According to Botvinnik & Estrin, the continuation 7...♗d7 is best, but then 8 ♗c4 ♗g7 9 ♘f3 0-0 10 0-0 is pleasant for White. Upon 10...c5, 11 ♗e3 is natural and good, while 11 ♗g5!? is unique and consistent with our emphasis on that move in this chapter; for example, 11...♘c6 (11...♗g4? 12 ♗d5) 12 d5 ♘a5 (12...♘e5 13 d6!) 13 d6! ♘xc4 14 dxe7 ♕c7 15 exf8♕+ ♖xf8 16 ♕e2 leaves White the exchange up for less-than-sufficient positional compensation.

B



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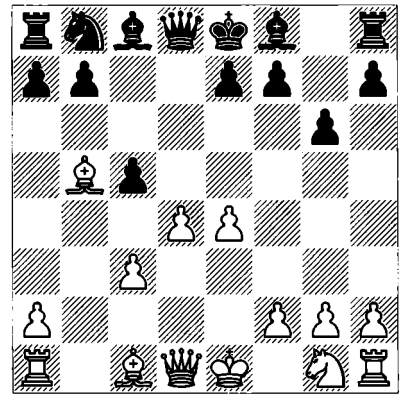


a2) 7...c6 8 ♗c4 b5 9 ♗b3 ♗b7 10 ♘f3 and here:

a21) 10...e6 delays Black's development and is obviously weakening. 11 0-0 ♗g7 12 ♗a3 (± Botvinnik & Estrin) 12...♘a6 13 ♕e2 ♕b6, and now 14 ♖ab1 keeps Black tied down, while 14 ♗d6 c5 15 e5 c4 16 ♗c2 was also very strong in Rashkovsky-Smyslov, USSR Ch, Moscow 1973; ♘g5, ♗e4 and ♕g4 can follow, or a4, as in the game.

a22) 10...♗g7 11 ♗xf7+! ♔xf7 12 ♘g5+ ♔e8 13 ♘e6 ♕a5 (13...♕d6 14 ♘xg7+ ♔f7 15 ♗h6 ♖g8 16 e5 ♕d5 17 e6+ ♔f8 18 ♘h5+ ♔e8 19 ♘f4 ♕e4+ 20 ♔d2! +–) 14 0-0! (14 ♘xg7+ ♔f7 15 ♘f5! ±) 14...♖g8 (14...♗f6 15 e5 ♗c8 16 exf6 ♗xe6 17 ♖e1 ♔d7 18 ♕f3 +–; 14...♗f8 15 ♗f4) 15 ♕b3 ♘a6 16 ♗f4 ±.

b) After 6...c5, 7 ♗g5 will generally transpose to Section 9.1 following 7...♗g7, and 7...♕a5 allows the new possibility 8 ♘f3!? ♕xc3+ 9 ♗d2 with compensation. But White often tries to take advantage of 6...c5 with 7 ♗b5+ *(D)*. This isn't strictly necessary, but avoids odd variations by Black and gains a small advantage.

For example:

b1) 7...♘d7 fails to put any pressure on the centre, and 8 ♘f3 ± gives White a pleasant game.

b2) After 7...♗d7, the move 8 ♖b1 ± isn't mentioned in the books, but looks promising; e.g., 8...♕a5 9 ♕d3 cxd4 10 ♗d2 ♗xb5 11 ♖xb5 with the idea 11...♕xa2 12 ♖xb7 ♘c6 13 ♘f3; instead, 11...♕a6 is a little better but White plays cxd4, ♘f3 and 0-0 and has a small, stable advantage. Upon 8...♗g7, White's centre remains strong after 9 ♘e2 0-0 10 0-0.

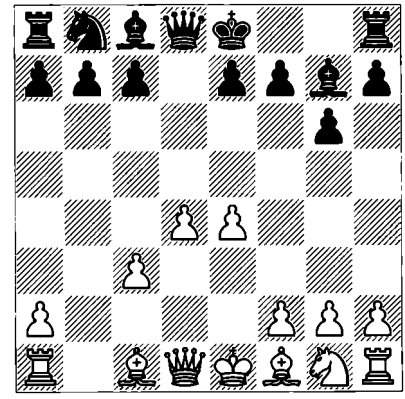
b3) 7...♘c6 8 d5 and now:

b31) 8...♕a5? 9 ♕a4! ♕xc3+ 10 ♔e2 gives Black nothing better than 10...♗g7 11 dxc6 0-0 12 ♖b1! a6 13 ♗d3 b5 14 ♕a3 ± Beliavsky-Mikhalchishin, Terme Zrece 2003, as 10...♗d7? 11 dxc6 bxc6 12 ♗xc6 ♖d8, tempting White to play 13 ♗d2?? ♕xd2+!, is demolished by Nezhmetdinov's 13 ♕b3! ♕xa1 14 ♗b2 ♕b1 15 ♘f3! ♕xh1 16 ♘e5 +–, which has won several games.

b32) 8...a6 9 ♗e2 and White has the better of things; e.g., 9...♘a5 10 ♗e3 e6 11 ♘f3 exd5 12 exd5 b6 13 0-0 ♗g7 14 ♕a4+ ± I.Sokolov-H.Olafsson, Novi Sad Olympiad 1990 (14 ♗g5 f6 15 ♗f4 is also good).

Thus, in my opinion 6...♗g7 *(D)*, to which we now return, is objectively better than 6...c5.

W



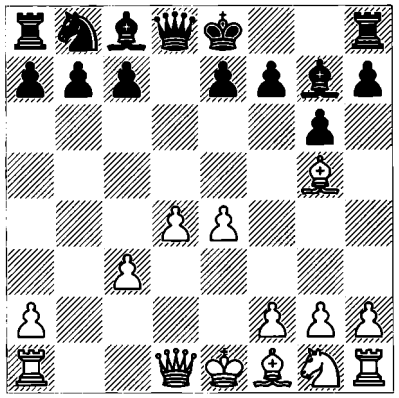
Here the main lines start with 7 ♘f3, 7 ♗c4 or 7 ♗e3. I am proposing these two moves instead:

9.1: 7 ♗g5 180
9.2: 7 ♕a4+ 187

9.1)

7 ♗g5 *(D)*

B



This is a slightly unusual continuation which has recently attracted the attention of strong players. The related 7 ♗e3 has been used by many top players, and Karpov and Kramnik in particular won some famous games with it. 7 ♗g5 is similar in that one of White's main goals is to move his rook from a1 (to c1 in our case) and then, having protected his c-pawn, be ready to make the advance d5. This reduces the need to expend energy defending d4. What's more, both 7 ♗e3 and 7 ♗g5 prepare the idea of ♕d2 and ♗h6. If Black plays passively, this might even be followed by h4-h5, but ♘f3 and early castling is more common. 7 ♗g5 is played with the idea that after ...h6, White retreats to e3 and the h6-pawn will prove a drawback. For example, if Black's g7-bishop takes part in exchanges or captures on d4 or e5, the h-pawn will be hanging. And if White plays ♕d2 (which he very often does in the ♗e3 lines), it will come with a gain of time. When Black doesn't play ...h6, another potential benefit of 7 ♗g5 is that it pins the e7-pawn (so that ...e6 and ...e5 aren't yet possible) and attacks it, so that defenders such as the queen on d8 or knight on c6 can't stray too far without at least considering the consequences of a capture on e7. On the negative side, 7 ♗g5 (like 7 ♗e3) does nothing to prepare castling and commits the queen's bishop at an earlier stage than is usual in most d-pawn openings. Furthermore (unlike 7 ♗e3), the bishop does nothing to protect d4, which is the first point of attack for Black in most lines of the Grünfeld. All told, I think that this is rather a good set of trade-offs for White, especially when you consider that the moves 7 ♗c4, 7 ♘f3 and 7 ♗e3 are covered in massive detail in the literature, and 7 ♗g5 isn't even mentioned in most sources.

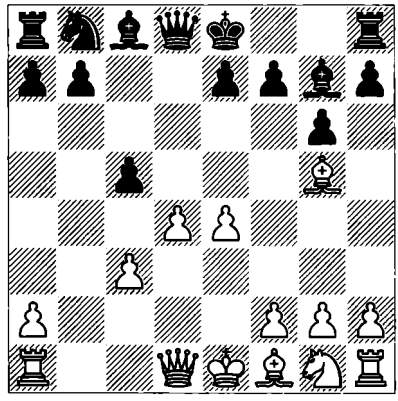
7...c5 *(D)*

Or:

a) 7...0-0 can transpose to Section 9.11 after 8 ♖c1 c5. With this move-order, White gets the opportunity to try other moves, such as 8 ♕d2 c5 9 d5, but I don't know if there's any advantage to be found by doing so.

b) 7...h6 8 ♗e3 and now 8...c5 transposes to note 'b' to Black's 8th move below if White plays 9 ♖c1, while 9 ♘f3 ♕a5 10 ♗d2 leaves Black searching for a way to increase the pressure on White's centre. Instead, 8...0-0 9 ♘f3 c5 10 ♗e2 is pleasant; the h-pawn hangs in several lines and ♕d2 can be a useful tempo-gainer.

W



8 ♖c1

This move has three points:

1) It indirectly protects d4, since multiple captures by Black on that square expose his bishop on c8;

2) It takes White's rook off the a1-h8 diagonal;

3) It protects c3, which will often be a target of attack, and in doing so allows ...♘c6 to be answered with d5.

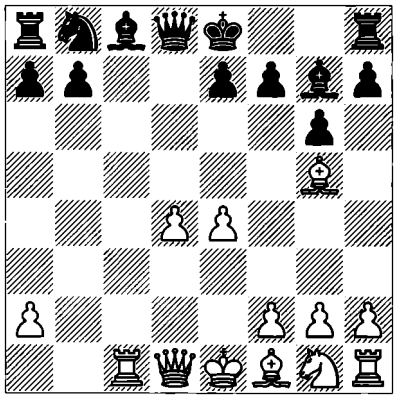
Black's main options are now:

9.11: 8...0-0 182
9.12: 8...♕a5 185

There are several other moves too:

a) 8...cxd4 9 cxd4 *(D)* can lead to a couple of unique positions but they aren't recommended for Black:

B



a1) 9...♘c6?! 10 d5 ♘d4 11 ♕d2 ♗d7 (or 11...0-0 12 ♘e2) 12 ♗d3 0-0 13 ♘e2 ♘xe2 14 ♗xe2 with more space and easy development, Plischki-Kalod, Česka Třebova 2006.

a2) 9...0-0 10 d5!? (this is interesting, although my preference is 10 ♘f3!, transposing to note 'c' to Black's 9th move in Section 9.11, i.e. 8...0-0 9 ♘f3 cxd4 10 cxd4) 10...♕a5+ 11 ♕d2 ♕xd2+ 12 ♗xd2 e6 could be investigated further but in limited experience it is regarded as equal; e.g., 13 ♗b5 (13 ♗c4 exd5 14 ♗xd5 ♘d7) 13...♗d7 (or 13...♘a6) 14 ♗xd7 ♘xd7 15 dxe6 fxe6 16 ♘f3, and Black has played various moves here, but 16...♖fc8 looks satisfactory; e.g., 17 ♔e2 ♘c5 18 e5 (18 ♘g5 ♗f6) 18...♘d7 =.

a3) After 9...♗xd4?! 10 ♖xc8 ♗xf2+ 11 ♔xf2 ♕xc8 12 ♘f3 the minor pieces are worth considerably more than the rook and two pawns, as is often the case when you are still in the middlegame. This is especially true as White has the bishop-pair, and all the more so with Black's kingside dark squares exposed.

b) 8...h6 9 ♗e3 cooperates with White's plan by exposing Black's h-pawn to attack via ♕d2. It's useful to compare the well-established line 7 ♗e3 c5 8 ♖c1, championed by Kramnik; here the pawn on h6 can be a disadvantage. On the other hand, Black gets an escape-square on h7 and can in principle advance with ...g5 in some positions. After 9...♕a5 *(D)*, play can go:

b1) 10 ♕b3!? has the idea 10...cxd4 11 ♕b5+ ♕xb5 12 ♗xb5+, which is admittedly

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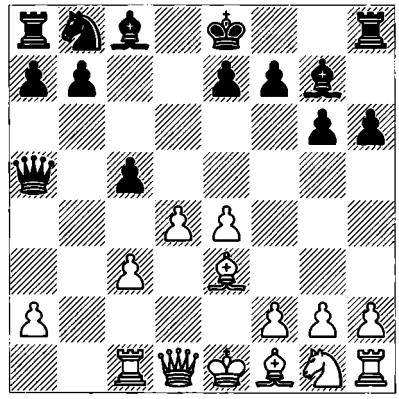
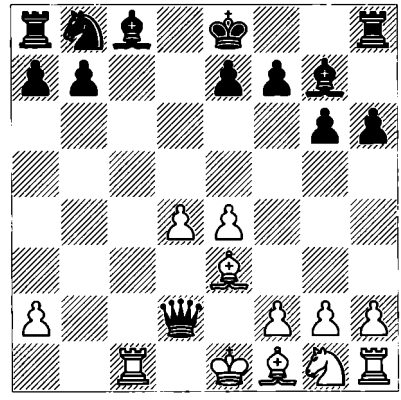


cowardly. Then 12...♗d7 13 ♗xd7+ ♔xd7! 14 cxd4 ♘c6 15 ♘f3 ♖ac8 16 ♔e2 gives White only a nominal edge; historically, however, this kind of centre has helped to win a number of simplified endgames and there's minimal risk; for example, 16...b6 (16...♘a5 17 ♔d3 b5 18 ♘d2 with the idea ♘b3 isn't a lot to go on, but White has some pressure; 16...e6 is another defence to consider) 17 d5 ♘b4 18 ♗d4 ♗xd4 19 ♘xd4 ♘xa2? (19...f5 20 f3 ♔d6 21 ♔e3 ±) 20 ♖a1 ♘c3+ 21 ♔d3 a5?! 22 ♘c6 ♘b5 23 ♖ab1 ±.

b2) 10 ♕d2 is normal:

b21) 10...cxd4 11 cxd4 ♕xd2+ *(D)*.

W



Lysy calls this an "inferior ending", based upon that h6-pawn. That's unclear, and I suspect that with perfect play, Black will always stay close to equality. Nevertheless, many grandmasters have played this type of ending as White with success. White has two recaptures:

b211) 12 ♔xd2 isn't played much, in spite of 12...0-0 13 ♘f3 ♘c6 14 d5 ♖d8 15 ♔e1!?

(15 ♔e2!) 15...♘b4 16 ♗d2 ♘a6 17 ♗xa6 bxa6 18 ♗a5 giving White a modest advantage.

b212) 12 ♗xd2 0-0 13 ♘f3 is a safe choice:

b2121) After 13...e6, 14 ♗c4!? might be worth a try; the normal move is 14 ♗b5 ♗d7! 15 ♗xd7 ♘xd7 with the idea 16 ♖c7 ♘f6 17 e5 ♘d5 18 ♖xb7 ♖fb8. A better try is 16 ♔e2 ♘f6 17 ♔d3; e.g., 17...♘g4 18 ♗e3 ♖ac8 19 h3 ♘xe3 20 fxe3 ♗f6 21 ♖xc8 ♖xc8 22 ♖b1 ♖c7 23 e5 ♗e7 and now 24 ♘d2 ± or 24 e4.

b2122) 13...♖d8 14 ♗c4 (unusual in this type of position, and as far as I know never played here, but it serves a prophylactic role; after 14 ♗b5, 14...♗d7! 15 ♗xd7 ♘xd7 16 ♖c7!? ♘f6! gives up a pawn for sufficient counterplay) 14...♗g4 (14...e6 15 0-0 ♘c6 16 d5 exd5 17 exd5 ♘e7 18 ♖fe1 ±; 14...♘c6?! 15 d5; 14...♗xd4?! 15 ♘xd4 ♖xd4 16 ♗xf7+ ♔xf7 17 ♖xc8 ♖xe4+ 18 ♗e3 ±) 15 ♘e5 (15 d5!?) 15...♗xe5 16 dxe5 ♘c6 17 f3 ♗d7 18 ♗xh6 ♘xe5 19 ♗e2 ♗c6 20 ♖c3 and again White is counting upon the bishop-pair for a small pull.

b22) 10...♘c6 11 d5 ♘e5 12 c4 ♕a3 (Valles-Wirig, Lille 2011) 13 ♗e2! and then:

b221) 13...b6 14 f4!? ♘g4 15 ♗xg4 ♗xg4 16 h3 ♗d7 17 ♘f3 ♕b2 and now one idea is 18 ♖c2!? ♕b1+ 19 ♔f2 ♕xh1 20 ♖c1 ♕xc1 21 ♕xc1, when in spite of White's nominal material disadvantage, his monstrous centre gives him excellent chances. The calmer 18 0-0 ♕xd2 19 ♗xd2 with the idea ♗c3 is also promising.

b222) 13...♘g4 14 ♗xg4 ♗xg4 15 h3 ♗d7 16 ♘e2 (16 ♘f3 ±) 16...b6 17 0-0 ±.

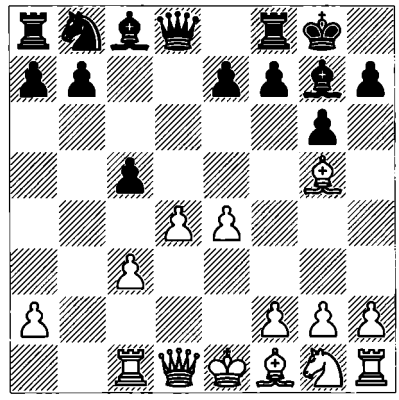
9.11)

8...0-0 *(D)*

9 ♘f3

The advance 9 d5 isn't my first choice but it's a handy alternative that's worth knowing. Leaving out a lot of detail, here are two main lines:

a) Dembo likes 9...♕d6!? "unpinning the e-pawn ... [and intending] to exploit his lead in development to break up White's centre with ...e6 and/or ...f5." She continues 10 ♘f3 e6?! (10...♗g4 transposes to note 'b' to Black's 10th move below; also preferable is 10...♘d7 11 ♗e2 e6 12 0-0 exd5 13 exd5 ♘f6 14 c4



♘e4, limiting White's edge) 11 ♗c4 e5 12 0-0 (or 12 ♘d2) 12...h6, but I don't like this ...e5 idea:

a1) After 13 ♗h4, Dembo says that 13...♘d7 14 ♘d2 ♘b6 "is good for Black, who plans ...♗d7, ...♖ae8 and ...f5"; however, after 15 a4 ♗d7 16 ♗b3 ♖ae8 17 a5 ♘c8 18 ♗a4 ♗xa4 19 ♕xa4 f5 20 f3, White should stand considerably better, since a kingside attack won't work without Black's good bishop.

a2) 13 ♗e3 f5 14 ♗d3 f4 15 ♗d2 g5 16 h3 ♕g6 "leads to a massive King's Indian-style pawn-storm on the kingside." White can play for a typical d5 position by 17 c4 g4 (17...h5 18 ♕e2 with the idea 18...g4 19 ♘h4 ♕g5 20 g3 gxh3 21 ♔h1) 18 hxg4 ♗xg4 19 ♗c3! (19 ♗e2!? ♕xe4 20 ♖e1) 19...♘d7 20 ♗e2 ♗h3 (20...♕xe4?? 21 ♗d3 ♗xf3 22 gxf3) 21 ♘e1 ♘f6 22 ♗f3 ±.

b) 9...f5! (Avrukh's preference) 10 ♗c4 ♔h8 is satisfactory for Black, although not easy. One line: 11 ♘e2 (Avrukh gives 11 exf5 ♖xf5 12 ♘f3 ♘d7 13 ♕e2 ♘e5 14 ♘xe5 ♖xe5 15 ♗e3 e6 with equality; fair enough) 11...fxe4 12 ♘g3 ♘d7 (12...♗f5 13 0-0 ♘d7! 14 d6 ♗f6 15 ♗h6 ♗g7 16 ♗g5 ♗f6 17 ♗h6 ½-½ Polak-Ftačnik, Czech Team Ch 2009/10) 13 ♘xe4 ♘b6 14 ♕e2 ♘xc4 (14...♗f5 is worth considering too) 15 ♕xc4 and now Avrukh claimed that 15...b6(?) leads to double-edged play, but 16 d6! ♗f6 17 0-0 is good, so 15...h6 is preferable, with chances for both sides.

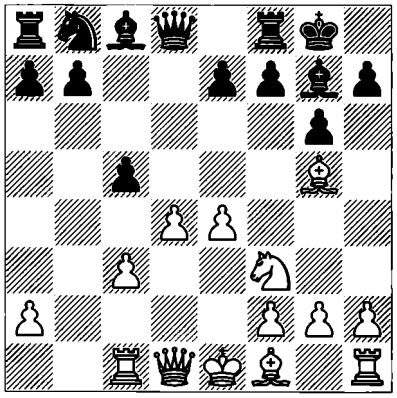
We now return to 9 ♘f3 *(D)*:

9...♗g4

Or:

a) 9...♕a5 10 ♕d2 transposes to Section 9.12 (i.e. 8...♕a5 9 ♕d2 0-0 10 ♘f3).

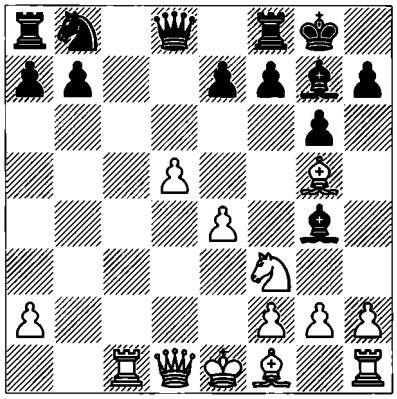
B



b) 9...b6 10 ♗d3 ♗g4 11 0-0! h6 (11...cxd4 12 cxd4 ♗xd4 13 ♗c4) 12 ♗h4 g5 13 ♗g3 cxd4 14 cxd4 ♗xd4 15 e5! ♗c5 16 ♕e2 gives White an attack.

c) The position after 9...cxd4 10 cxd4 ♗g4 has been played by Svidler (twice, unsuccessfully) and other strong players as Black (often via 8...cxd4 9 cxd4 0-0 10 ♘f3 ♗g4), but opening the c-file and eliminating the pawn on c3 helps White's game after 11 d5 *(D)*:

B

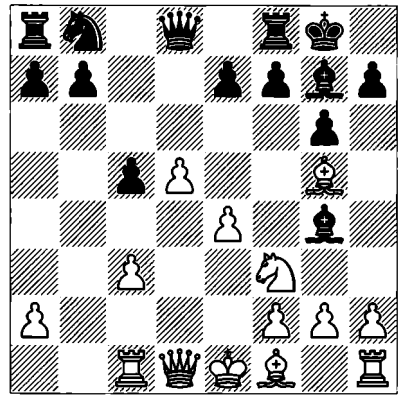


c1) 11...♘d7 12 ♗e2 ♘f6 13 h3 ♗d7 14 ♗d3 h6 (14...♕a5+ 15 ♕d2 ♕a4 16 ♖c4 ± ♕a3 17 0-0 ♖ac8 18 ♖fc1 ♖xc4 19 ♖xc4 ♗b5 20 ♖c3 ♕a5 21 ♗xf6! ♗xf6 22 e5 ♗g7 23 ♗xb5 ♕xb5 24 ♖c7 ± Nybäck-Svidler, FIDE World Cup, Khanty-Mansiisk 2009) 15 ♗f4 (White's advantage is only small, but is of a type that tends to grow in practice) 15...e6?! (15...♕a5+ 16 ♗d2!? ♕xa2 17 ♖a1 ♕b2 18 ♖b1 ♕a3 19 ♗b4 ♕a2 20 0-0 ±) 16 ♗c7 ♕e8 17 d6 ♗c6 18 ♕e2 ♘h5 19 g3 e5 20 0-0 ♕d7 21 ♔h2 ♗f6 (Ponomariov-Svidler, Moscow 2006) and now Emelin suggests 22 ♖c5 ♘g7 23 ♘xe5 ♗xe5 24 ♖xe5 ♘e6 25 ♖xe6! ♕xe6 26 e5 ±, while 22 ♗c4! ♘g7 23 ♖fd1 is also promising.

c2) 11...h6 12 ♗e3 (12 ♗f4 also suffices for some advantage) 12...e6 13 ♗c4 exd5 14 ♗xd5 ♘c6 (14...♕a5+ 15 ♕d2 ♕xd2+ 16 ♗xd2 ± or 16 ♘xd2) 15 h3 ♗xf3 16 ♕xf3 ♘b4 17 0-0 ♘xd5 18 exd5 ♕d7 (V.Milov-Tseshkovsky, Biel 2005) and now 19 d6! ♖ac8 20 ♗f4 is simplest.

10 d5 *(D)*

B



10...f5!?

'Thematic' but at the same time loosening. Other moves:

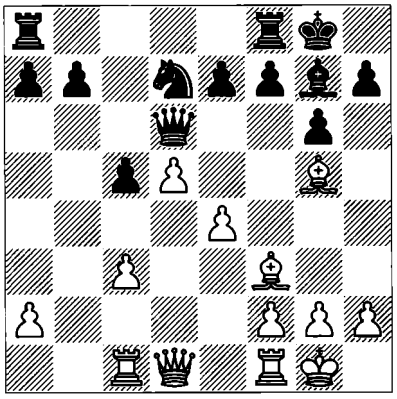
a) Dembo likes 10...♘d7 "when Black is all set to break with ...f5 and White is forced on to the defensive." White should be able to meet that move fairly easily, however:

a1) Simply 11 h3 ♗xf3 12 ♕xf3 is untried as far as I know. Then the only critical move is 12...f5! 13 ♗e2 ♘e5 (13...♘b6 14 0-0 and now 14...f4 15 ♕g4 ♕d6 16 g3 f3 17 ♗d1 favours White, so 14...fxe4 15 ♕xe4 ♕xd5 16 ♕g4 might follow, when the bishops provide ample compensation, even after 16...♕xa2 17 ♗f3) 14 ♕e3 ♘f7 15 ♗f4 fxe4 16 ♕xe4 ♕a5 17 0-0 ♗xc3 18 ♖b1 (18 ♗g4!?) 18...b6 19 ♕c2! ♗f6 20 ♗d2 ♕a3 21 ♗b5! c4 22 ♗xc4 ♕d6 23 ♖be1 ±.

a2) 11 ♗e2 ♕a5 (11...f5?! 12 d6 ♗f6 13 ♗xf6 exf6 14 0-0 ♖e8 15 h3 ♗xf3 16 ♗xf3 fxe4 17 ♗xe4 ± Prohaszka-Shankland, Budapest 2009; 11...c4 should be investigated) 12 ♕d2 e6 (12...♖fe8 is also possible) 13 ♗e7 ♖fe8 14 d6 ♗f6 15 ♗xf6 ♘xf6 (A.Kopylov-Turov, Salekhard 2006) 16 e5 ♘d7 17 ♘g5! ±.

b) 10...♕d6! is Svidler's move, and Avrukh's explicit preference over 10...f5. It is probably Black's best way to keep things level, but there is plenty of play and options on every move. Amongst other ideas, there is 11 ♗e2 ♘d7 12 0-0 ♗xf3! 13 ♗xf3 *(D)*:

B



b1) 13...c4 clears c5, but 14 ♕a4 ♖fc8 15 ♗e3 a6 16 ♗g4 b5 17 ♕c2 with the idea f4 causes a bit of trouble; e.g., 17...♖c7 18 f4 ♘c5 19 e5.

b2) 13...b5! is a called "a very interesting concept" by Avrukh. The fact that ...♗xf3 and ...b5 is the computer's instantaneous and persistent recommendation says a lot about how far they have come. Play might go 14 ♕d2 c4 15 ♕e3 ♗f6! (15...♘c5 16 ♖b1 a6 17 ♗f4 ♕b6 18 e5! is reasonably promising for White) 16 ♗h6 ♗g7 17 ♗xg7 (avoiding repetition) 17...♔xg7 18 ♖cd1 f6! 19 h4 ♘c5 20 ♗e2 (20 h5 g5 21 ♗e2 ♘a4 22 g3 intending ♔g2) 20...♘a4 21 ♖d4 a6 22 h5 with the idea 22...g5? 23 e5! fxe5 24 ♖e4. OK, I'll grant you that any advantage White gets in these lines is minuscule, but they involve complex play in all sectors and should appeal to the strategic player.

11 ♕b3 ♔h8 12 ♘d2!?

Not only defending e4 and potentially transferring to c4, but also stranding Black's bishop on g4.

12...♘d7 *(D)*

Or:

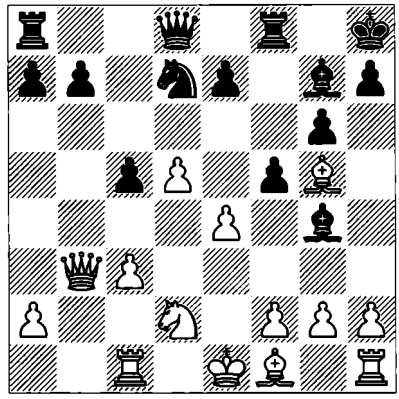
a) 12...h6?! 13 h3 (or 13 ♕xb7 ♘d7 14 h3) 13...♗h5 14 ♗f4 ±.

b) 12...fxe4 and now:

b1) After 13 ♕xb7 ♘d7 14 h3, Avrukh says, "I don't have much faith in Black's position", but remarkably, it appears to hold together: 14...♗f5 15 g4 ♖b8 16 ♕xa7 ♖a8 17 ♕b7 ♖b8 =, based upon 18 ♕c6 e3! 19 fxe3 (19 ♗xe3?! ♗d3!!) 19...♗xc3!! 20 ♖xc3 ♕a5! 21 gxf5 ♕xc3 22 ♕xd7 ♖b2 23 e4 ♕g3+, which soon leads to a draw.

b2) 13 h3! (this is a positional method) 13...♗c8 14 ♘xe4 ♘d7 (14...♕c7 15 ♗e3 ♘d7 16 ♗e2 ± Prohaszka-Csiba, Budapest 2009) 15 ♗e2 (eyeing g4, and perhaps also considering h4-h5) 15...♘f6 16 ♘xf6 exf6 17 ♗e3 b6 18 0-0. White's d-pawn gives him a positional advantage.

W



13 h3!?

13 f3! may be best. After 13...♗h5, Lysy gives 14 ♕xb7 as '±', but 14...fxe4 15 ♘xe4 ♖b8 is very unclear. On the other hand, 14 ♗e2! appears to favour White.

13...♗h5 14 ♕xb7 ♖b8 15 ♕a6 h6 16 ♗f4 *(D)*

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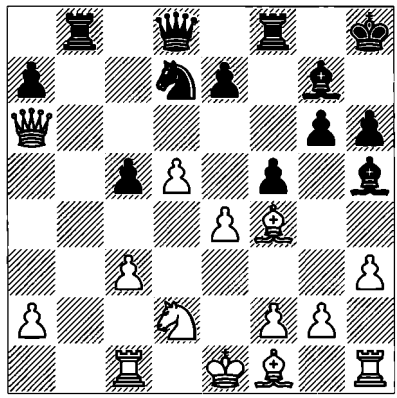


Now:

a) 16...fxe4? (Black loses the thread) 17 ♗xb8 ♕xb8 (17...e3 18 fxe3 ♕xb8 19 g4 ♕g3+ 20 ♔d1 ♘f6 21 ♗c4 +–) 18 g4 ♕b2 (18...♕f4 19 ♕e2 ♘e5 20 ♕e3) 19 ♔d1 ♘b6? (19...♖xf2 20 ♘xe4 ♖f4 21 ♕e2 ±) 20 ♕b5 ♕xa2 21 ♗c4 and White was winning in Sadorra-Kazhgaleev, Subic Bay 2009.

The following are playable, although not ideal for Black:

b) 16...♖b6 17 ♕xa7 e5! 18 dxe6 ♖xe6 19 ♗b5! ♘f6 20 0-0 ±.

c) 16...e5!? 17 dxe6 (17 ♗h2 ♖b2!) 17...♘e5 18 ♗c4 ♖b6 19 ♕a4 ♖xe6! 20 0-0! ♘d3 21 ♗xd3 ♕xd3 22 ♖fe1 g5 23 ♗e3 f4 24 ♗xc5 ♕xd2 25 ♗xf8 ♗xf8 26 ♕d4+ ♕xd4 27 cxd4 affords White the better prospects; his rook and two central pawns count for somewhat more than the bishop-pair.

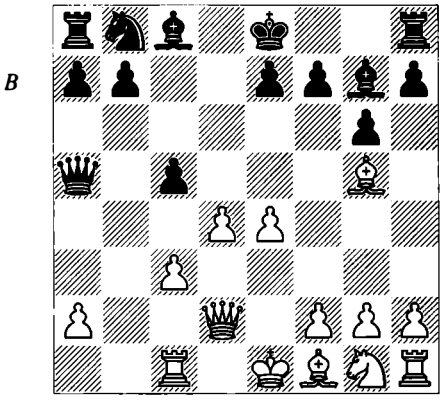
d) 16...♘e5 17 g4!? ♘f3+! (17...fxg4? loses to 18 ♗xe5 ♗xe5 19 hxg4 ♖b6 20 ♕e2) 18 ♘xf3 fxg4 19 ♗xh6 (19 ♗xb8 ♕xb8 leads to equality; 19 ♗e3 g3!?) 19...♗xh6 20 hxg4 ♖b6 21 ♕d3 ♗xc1 22 gxh5 gxh5 23 ♘e5 ♖h6 24 ♗h3 ♕d6 25 ♘d7 ♖d8 26 e5 and after further messiness White will come out with a slight advantage.

9.12)

8...♕a5

Here Black wants to bring White's queen to d2 and maybe exchange queens to divert White's pieces. We'll see other ideas as we go along.

9 ♕d2 *(D)*



9...0-0

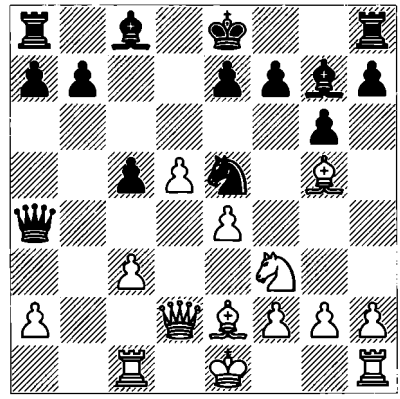
Or:

a) 9...♘d7 10 ♘f3 e5 (Polak-Ftačnik, Prievidza 2009) 11 ♘xe5! (11 d5 =) 11...♘xe5 12 dxe5 0-0 (12...♗xe5? 13 ♗b5+! ♔f8 14 ♗c4 is virtually winning for White) 13 ♗c4 ♗xe5 14 0-0 ♗e6 15 ♗d5 ±.

b) 9...e6 10 ♘f3 0-0 11 ♗e2 b6!? 12 d5!? ♗a6 13 0-0 ♗xe2 14 ♕xe2 exd5 15 exd5 ♘d7 16 d6 ±.

c) 9...cxd4 10 cxd4 ♕xd2+ 11 ♔xd2 0-0 (nothing else makes as much sense; for example, 11...♘d7 12 ♘f3 h6 13 ♗e3 ♘f6 14 ♗b5+ ♔d8 15 ♔d3 with a superiority in space and development) 12 ♘f3 transposes to the main line of this section.

d) 9...♕a4 (this idea, attacking from the side, has been used several times in different positions) 10 ♘f3 (10 ♗e2 ♘c6 11 d5 ♘e5 12 ♘f3 transposes) 10...♘c6 11 d5 ♘e5 12 ♗e2 *(D)* and then:



d1) 12...h6 13 ♗f4 ♕xe4 14 0-0 ♘c4 15 ♗xc4 ♕xc4 16 ♖fe1 gives White excellent compensation – Flear.

d2) 12...f6 13 ♗e3 ♘c4 14 ♕d3 and now rather than 14...♘d6?! 15 ♗xc5 ♕xe4 16 0-0 ♗f5? 17 ♕d2 ± Nybäck-Negi, Wijk aan Zee 2010, 14...♘xe3 15 ♕xe3 0-0 is more obvious, but still favours White's centre and space.

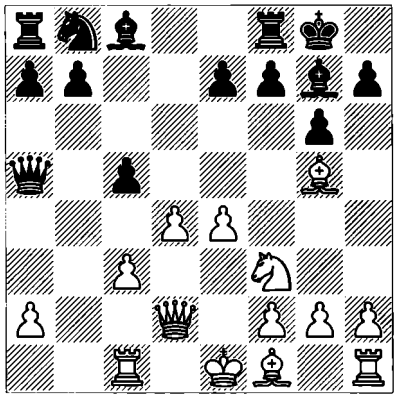
d3) 12...♕xe4 13 0-0 0-0 (13...♗g4?? loses to 14 ♗b5+ ♔f8 15 ♗xe7+ ♔xe7 16 ♘xe5) 14 ♖fe1. This is mainly analysis by Lysy. White has a strong attack for his pawn; he continues 14...♗f6 (14...e6?! 15 ♘xe5 ♕xe5 16 ♗f3) 15 ♖cd1 ♖d8 (15...♕f5 16 ♗xf6 ♕xf6 17 ♕e3 =) 16 ♗xf6 exf6 17 ♘xe5 fxe5 (17...♕xe5 18 d6) 18 ♕g5, when "White will regain the e5-pawn, and he will retain a long-term initiative thanks

to his passed d-pawn." A typical result of many of these 7 ♗g5 lines.

10 ♘f3 *(D)*

10 ♗xe7? is too greedy: 10...♖e8 11 ♗xc5 ♖xe4+ 12 ♗e2 ♘a6! 13 ♗d6 ♗d7 is slightly better for Black.

B



At this point, Black must make an important decision:

10...cxd4

Instead:

a) 10...e6 11 ♗h6 ♘c6 12 h4! cxd4 13 ♗xg7 ♔xg7 14 cxd4 ♖d8 15 ♕xa5 ♘xa5 16 ♔d2 h5 17 ♔e3 leaves White nicely centralized with a small edge. After 17...♗d7 Lysy gives 18 ♗d3, although 18...♖ac8 looks fine. However, 18 ♖c5! b6 19 ♖c1, with the idea of ♗a6, retains some advantage.

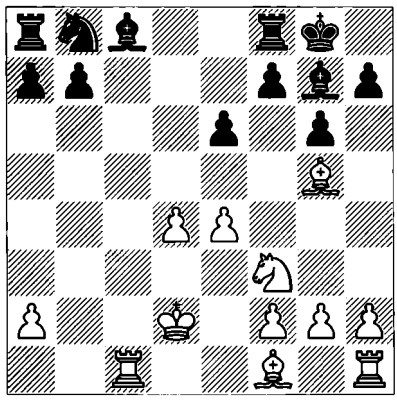
b) 10...♗g4 11 d5 ♖e8!? (preparing counterplay in the centre; White is in control after 11...♘d7 12 ♗e2 ♘f6 13 ♕e3) 12 c4 ♕a3 13 ♗e2 e6 14 h3 ♗xf3 and now instead of 15 gxf3?! (Navara-Laylo, FIDE World Cup, Khanty-Mansiisk 2009), Marin analyses 15 ♗xf3! exd5 16 cxd5 b5! 17 0-0 ♘d7 18 d6 c4, when "the black pawns should not be underestimated". Still, 19 e5! ♕c5 (versus ♗c6; 19...♖ac8? 20 ♗g4) 20 ♗e3 ♕xe5 21 ♗xa8 ♖xa8 22 ♕a5! ♕xd6 23 ♕xb5 ♘e5 24 ♖fd1 leaves Black short of compensation.

11 cxd4 ♕xd2+ 12 ♔xd2 e6 *(D)*

This queenless middlegame is a type of position that we've seen before, but with the moves ...h6 and ♗e3 included. In some ways the difference favours White, since d8 is covered and ...h6 can be met by ♗e7.

13 ♗b5

W

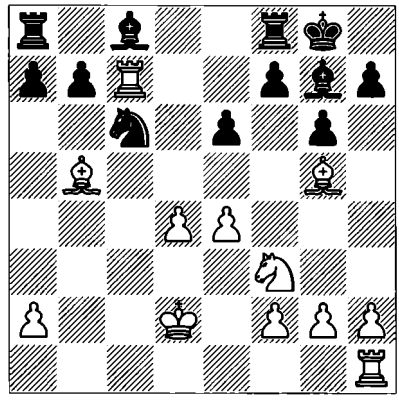


13 ♖c7 is an important alternative. After 13...♘c6 there's a lot to explore:

a) 14 e5!? might be an idea; if 14...h6, 15 ♗f6 looks a little strange, but this piece needs to be put to work, and White can apparently be satisfied with 15...♘b4 (15...♗xf6 16 exf6 ♖d8 17 ♗d3 ♖d7 18 ♖xd7 ♗xd7 19 ♗e4) 16 ♗c4 b5! (16...♘d5?! 17 ♗xd5 exd5 18 ♖hc1) 17 ♗b3 a5 18 a3 ♘a6 19 ♖e7. Similarly, after 14...♘b4 15 ♗c4 White develops quickly. I like the look of this, but it needs testing.

b) 14 ♗b5 *(D)* is conventional and practical, although probably only equal versus accurate play:

B

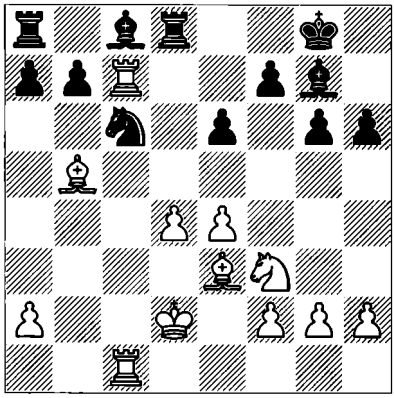


b1) 14...♘xd4 is awfully tempting: 15 ♘xd4 ♗xd4 16 ♗e7 ♗e5 17 ♖c5 (17 ♖c2 a6 18 ♗xf8 ♔xf8 19 ♗d3 '±', according to Predojević, but I'm not sure it's so different after 19...♗d7) 17...♗f4+ 18 ♔e2 a6 19 ♗a4 b6 20 ♖c2 b5 21 ♗xf8 ♔xf8 22 ♗b3 ♗b7 23 f3 (Flear). It wouldn't be too surprising if this were full compensation for the exchange; maybe a quick

pawn-storm in the centre and kingside can get there for White before the mighty bishops coordinate, but I think that would take a lot of time to determine.

b2) 14...h6!? 15 ♗e3 (15 ♗xc6 hxg5 is analysed at great length by Steenbekkers, Van Oirschot and Flear, with perhaps the very tiniest of advantages emerging in some lines, but basically it's just chess, which is not such a bad thing) 15...♖d8 16 ♖c1 *(D)* and now:

B



b21) Flear recommended 16...♗xd4'!' but I'm doubtful. After 17 ♘xd4 ♘xd4, his line continued 18 ♗xd4 ♖xd4+ 19 ♔e3 ♖d8, when Black stands passively but is a pawn up. Flear gives 20 e5 a6 21 ♗d3 b5 as 'unclear'; White may well stand better in that case, but 21...♗d7! with the idea 22 ♖xb7 ♗b5 apparently ruins the fun. However, there's a nice line with 18 ♗d3! ♘c6 19 ♗xh6 which ultimately favours White. Black has two alternatives:

b22) First, 16...g5 is logical. If 17 h3 (not the only move), then 17...♗f8 with the idea ...♗b4+ and/or ...♗d6 makes sense because h6 is shielded, but anything can happen here; for example, 18 ♗xc6 bxc6 19 ♖1xc6 ♗b4+ 20 ♔d1 ♗d6 21 ♖xd6 ♖xd6 22 ♘e5.

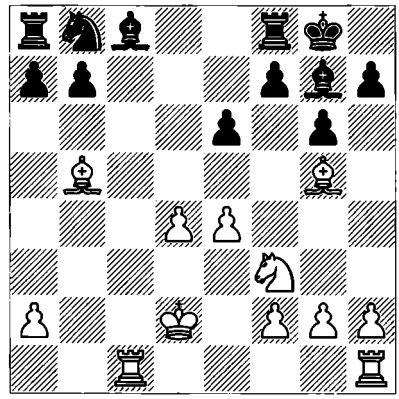
b23) Unfortunately (from our viewpoint), 16...♘xd4! forces a mass-liquidation by 17 ♗xd4 ♗xd4 18 ♘xd4 ♖xd4+; compare line 'b21'. So maybe 13 ♖c7 isn't theoretically advantageous, but there's no definitive assessment.

We now return to 13 ♗b5 *(D)*:

13...a6

13...♘c6!? may be best; e.g., 14 ♗xc6 (14 ♖hd1 h6 15 ♗e3 ♖d8 16 ♗xc6 bxc6 17 ♔e1 ± with ♘e5 in mind; but this is hardly inspiring) 14...bxc6 and now:

B



a) 15 ♗f4 ♗a6 16 ♘e5 g5! 17 ♗g3 f5 is complex.

b) 15 e5!? looks interesting. After 15...♖b8 16 ♖xc6, 16...♖b2+ 17 ♖c2 ♖xc2+ 18 ♔xc2 ♗b7 appears to be enough to draw.

c) 15 ♔e3 f6 16 ♗f4 e5!? 17 dxe5 fxe5 18 ♘xe5 ♖xf4! 19 ♔xf4 g5+ 20 ♔xg5 ♗xe5 21 ♖xc6 was at most slightly better for White in Volokitin-Moor, Mainz rapid 2007, and certainly not '±', Predojević's assessment! The bishops are dangerous; e.g., 21...♗d7 22 ♖c5 h6+! 23 ♔h5! ♗d4 24 ♖d5 ♗e8+ 25 ♔xh6 ♗xf2 26 ♔g5 ♗e3+, etc.

14 ♗a4 b5 15 ♗b3 ♗b7

15...a5 16 ♖c5 a4 and now 17 ♗d1! ± is more accurate than 17 ♗c2?!, as played in Timofeev-Nepomniashchy, Russian Ch, Moscow 2011, since 17...♗d7 18 ♗e2 ♘a6 19 ♖c2 doesn't end in a fork by ...♘b4.

16 d5 exd5

Now:

a) Strange to say, 17 exd5 a5 18 ♖c7, as played in Y.Vovk-Bezemer, Dieren 2009, could have been well met by 18...♗c8! 19 d6 ♘a6 =.

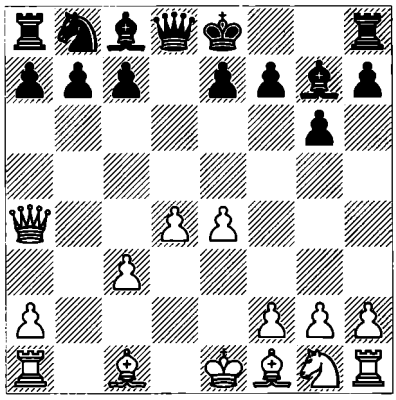
b) White can try 17 ♗xd5 ♗xd5 18 exd5 ♘d7 (18...f6 19 ♗e3 ♖d8 20 ♔e2 =) 19 ♖c6 f6 20 ♗f4 ±.

Overall, this line is pretty balanced, or a sliver better for White at most. But there are interesting nooks and crannies to investigate for fresh ideas.

9.2)

7 ♕a4+ *(D)*

B



This is our second repertoire option, similar to 7 ♗g5 in that it leads to positions of a strategic nature, seldom highly tactical, which is the opposite of so many lines beginning with the main moves 7 ♗c4 and 7 ♘f3. Thus, while you are unlikely to win a smashing miniature or even develop a nasty attack right out of the opening, it's hard to make the kind of mistake that gives you a terrible disadvantage. What's more, in the variations following 7 ♕a4+, the pieces tend to stay on the board and we don't see the type of mass-liquidation that can sometimes occur in the Grünfeld. After 7 ♕a4+, we have:

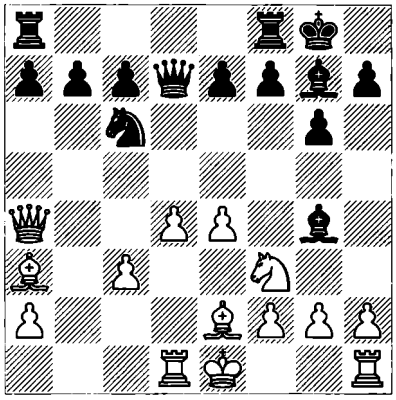
9.21: 7...♗d7 189
9.22: 7...♘d7 189
9.23: 7...♕d7 192

Other moves are rare but not necessarily bad:

a) 7...♘c6 develops, but blocks the c-pawn, and the desirable ...b6 is temporarily hindered. 8 ♘f3 0-0 and now:

a1) 9 ♗a3!? ♗g4 10 ♗e2 ♕d7 11 ♖d1 *(D)*.

B

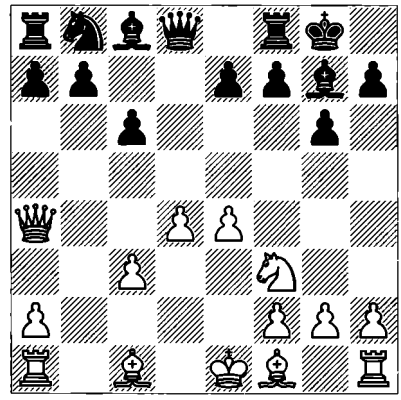


11...♖fd8 (11...♖ab8 12 ♕c2 b5 13 ♗c5 ±) 12 ♕c2 ♘a5 (what else?) 13 0-0 ♗xf3 14 ♗xf3 ♘c4 (14...e5 15 d5 ± ♘c4 16 ♗c1) 15 ♗c1 e5 (15...c5 16 ♗e2 b5 can be met by 17 ♗xc4 bxc4 18 d5 or 17 dxc5, in both cases with an edge) 16 ♗g5 ♖e8 (Gavrilov-Khachian, Moscow 1992) and now White gets a pleasant though limited advantage out of 17 ♗e2! ♕c6 (17...♘b6 18 d5 ♕a4 19 ♖c1 ♕xc2 20 ♖xc2) 18 d5 ♕c5 19 ♗xc4 ♕xc4 20 ♖b1 and ♖b4.

a2) 9 ♗e2 produces good results because Black can't challenge White's centre without a serious compromise. One example is 9...♗d7 10 ♕a3 ♗g4 11 h3 ♗xf3 12 ♗xf3 e5 13 d5 ♘e7 14 c4 b6 15 ♗g5 f6 16 ♗d2, when White's combination of space and the bishop-pair gives him a clear advantage, Kaunas-Bolacky, Frydek Mistek 1996.

b) 7...c6 8 ♘f3 0-0 *(D)* isn't very good for Black, but the ideas are instructive:

W



b1) 9 ♗e2 c5 (Black feels that White's poor queen position justifies his waste of time with ...c6-c5) 10 ♗e3 ♘c6 (10...cxd4 11 cxd4 ♘c6 12 ♖b1 ±) 11 ♖c1 ♗d7 12 ♕a3 ♕a5 (12...cxd4 13 cxd4 e5 14 d5 ♘d4 15 ♗xd4 exd4 16 0-0 ♖e8 17 ♗d3 limits Black's disadvantage) 13 ♕xc5 ♕xa2 14 ♕d5! ♕xd5 15 exd5 ♘a5 16 0-0 ♖fd8 17 ♘d2 ±; this isn't much, but White's centre restricts Black's pieces and will at some point advance.

b2) 9 ♗e3 c5 10 ♖c1! intends to answer 10...♘c6?! by 11 d5, so Black might try 10...a6! 11 ♗e2 ♘d7 12 0-0 b5 13 ♕c2 ♗b7 14 a4 cxd4 15 cxd4 b4 16 d5 ±.

b3) Since Black wants to play ...c5, and since a3 is a desirable place for White's queen, White

might play 9 ♕a3 straightaway. Then it's not clear what Black's plan should be; for example, 9...♘d7 10 ♗d3 ♘b6 11 0-0 ♗e6 12 ♗g5 ± or 9...♗g4!? 10 ♗e2, when 10...e5 is met by 11 ♗g5!, while 10...♗xf3 11 ♗xf3 e5 12 0-0 exd4 13 ♖d1 b5 14 ♗f4 ♕b6 15 e5 dxc3 16 ♕xc3 gives White more than enough compensation for a pawn.

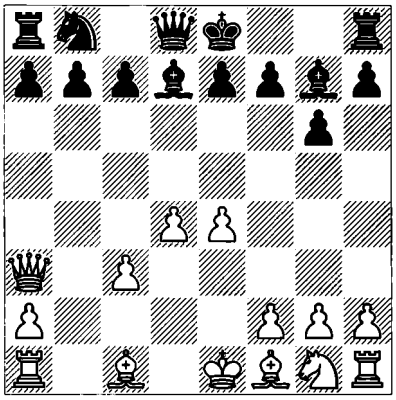
9.21)

7...♗d7

This bishop development is thought to be the worst of Black's three major defensive moves, and is given '?!' by Svidler, who is the world's most prominent Grünfeld expert. However, Black has an array of options and not everything is worked out by any means.

8 ♕a3 *(D)*

B



8...♘c6

There are many alternatives of roughly equal worth:

a) 8...b6 9 ♘f3 c5 10 ♗g5! cxd4 (10...0-0 11 ♖d1 !? h6 12 ♗f4! ± prevents ...♕c7, but naturally White can set up in many ways; for example, c1 tends to be a good spot for the rook) 11 cxd4 ♘c6 (Czakon-Pakleza, Aschach an der Donau 2006) and here I like 12 ♖c1! intending d5, and with the point that 12...♘xd4? (12...h6 13 ♗f4 e6 14 d5 ♘d4 15 ♗a6!) 13 ♘xd4 ♗xd4 14 ♖d1 favours White.

b) 8...e5!? 9 ♗e3!? (9 d5! with a pull – Flear; this looks good, as does 9 ♘f3) 9...exd4 10 ♗xd4!? (10 cxd4 ♘c6 11 ♘f3 ♗g4 12 ♗b5 ±) 10...♗f6 (10...♗xd4 11 cxd4 ♕e7 12 ♕xe7+ ♔xe7 13 ♖c1 ±) 11 ♖d1 (11 ♘f3!?) 11...♘c6 12 ♗c5 ♗e7 13 ♗c4 b6! 14 ♗xe7 ♕xe7 15 ♕xe7+ ♔xe7 16 ♗xf7 ♗g4 17 f3 ♔xf7 18 fxg4 ♖ae8 with equality, M.Gurevich-Manor, Tel Aviv 1989.

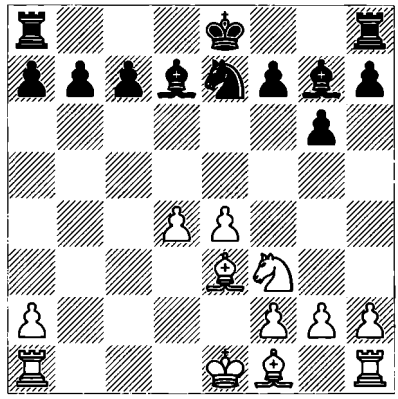
c) 8...0-0 9 ♗g5 f6 (9...♖e8 10 ♘f3 ♗g4 11 ♘d2!) 10 ♗h4 e5 11 ♗c4+ ♔h8 12 ♘e2 exd4 13 cxd4 ± c5 14 0-0 ♕e8?! (Toth-Liptay, Hungarian Team Ch 2011/12) 15 ♗d5! ±.

9 ♘f3 e5 10 ♗e3

10 d5! ♘e7 11 c4 (or 11 ♗d3) may be better still.

10...exd4 11 cxd4 ♕e7 12 ♕xe7+ ♘xe7 *(D)*

W

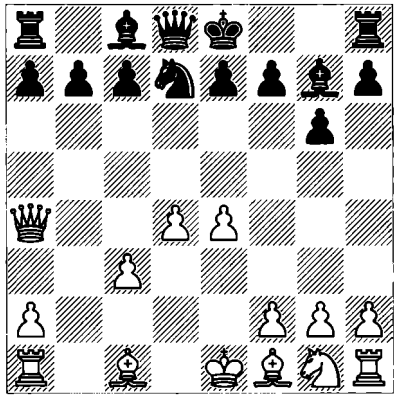


Ponomariov-Svidler, FIDE World Cup, Khanty-Mansiisk 2011. Here Flear offers 13 ♖c1! c6 (after 13...0-0-0 both 14 d5 and 14 ♗f4 favour White) 14 ♗c4 0-0 and now 15 ♔e2 "with a pleasant enduring edge", although 15 ♘e5 looks better, with the same assessment.

9.22)

7...♘d7 *(D)*

W



8 ♘f3

White can also play 8 ♗g5 intending ♖d1, or 8 ♗e3; e.g., 8...0-0 (8...c5 9 ♖c1 0-0 10 ♘f3 ±) 9 ♖c1 ♘f6 10 ♗d3 b6 11 ♘e2 e5?! 12 f3 ± Nakamura-Esserman, Orlando 2011.

8...0-0

8...c5 9 ♗g5 0-0 transposes into Section 9.221.

9 ♗g5

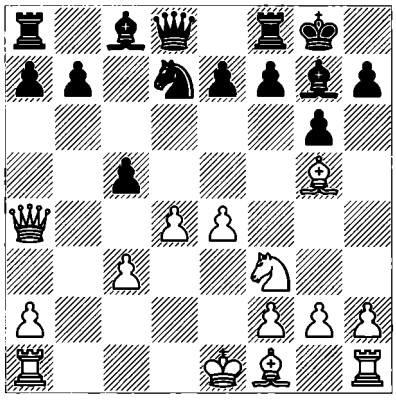
This is the most assertive move, and has some ideas similar to those arising from 7 ♗g5. 9 ♗e3 and 9 ♗e2 c5 are common alternatives. I see no mention of 9 ♖b1 anywhere, and yet in some ways it compares well to 9 ♗g5, because after 9 ♖b1 c5 10 ♗e2 ♘b6 11 ♕a3 cxd4 12 cxd4, the move 12...♕d6, which is the generic antidote with the moves ♗g5, ...h6, and ♗e3 included, is not effective in view of 13 ♕e3! ± with the idea ♗a3 in many lines. Probably 9 ♖b1 is no better or worse than other moves, but this is an area for investigation.

After 9 ♗g5, Black has:

9.221: 9...c5 190
9.222: 9...h6 191

9.221)

9...c5 *(D)*



W

10 ♖c1

10 ♕a3 is more interesting than theory would suggest:

a) 10...h6 11 ♗e3 b6 has been considered fine for Black due to 12 ♗d3 cxd4 13 cxd4 ♘c5! (an important theme for Black in this variation), Varga-Navara, Pula 2003. But given Black's knight on d7 and his slight kingside weakness, White can get a little something from 12 e5! ♗b7 (12...♕c7 13 ♗e2 ♗b7 14 0-0 with a light edge) 13 ♗e2 a6 14 0-0 b5 15 ♕b2! ♖b8 (15...♕c7 16 a4 bxa4 17 ♖xa4 ±) 16 ♕d2 ♔h7 17 h4 cxd4 18 cxd4 ♘b6 19 h5 ♘c4 20 ♕d3 ♗xf3! 21 gxf3 (21 ♗xf3 ♘xe5) 21...♕d7 22 ♔h2 ♖bc8 23 f4 ±.

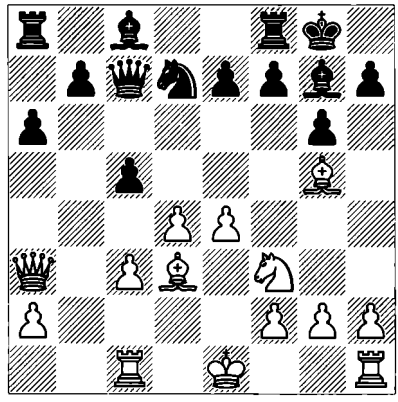
b) 10...♕c7 11 ♗d3!? (or the natural 11 ♖c1; compare our main line) 11...cxd4 12 cxd4 ♘c5 13 0-0 ♘xd3 14 ♕xd3 with development in return for the bishop-pair; e.g., 14...♗g4 15 ♖ac1 ♕d6 16 d5 ♖fc8 17 h3 ♗xf3 18 ♕xf3 with the idea ♕g4 and f4 later. Here it's only fair to emphasize that White's advantage in most of these lines is small and not enough to discourage Black. The real point is that there's interesting unbalanced play on the board.

10...♕c7

10...h6 11 ♗e3 transposes to Section 9.222.

11 ♗d3 a6 12 ♕a3 *(D)*

12 ♗xe7?! ♘b6 13 ♕a5 ♕xe7 14 ♕xb6 ♗g4 gives Black more than adequate counterplay.



B

12...e5

After 12...h6, 13 ♗e3 is still possible, but White can also play 13 ♗xe7 ♘e5 14 ♘xe5 ♕xe7 15 0-0 ♗xe5 16 dxe5 ♕xe5 17 f4 ♕e7 18 ♖ce1 ± with kingside chances; for example, 18...♗e6 19 f5 ♖ad8 20 fxe6! ♖xd3 21 ♖xf7 ♖xf7 22 exf7+ ♔xf7 23 e5 and the combination of White's passed pawn and Black's exposed king gives White a pull. 12...♖e8 13 0-0 b6 is well met by 14 ♗h4 e5 15 ♗c4 ±.

13 0-0 ♖e8!

Mark Tseitlin's excellent plan, which may well equalize, but leaves the position full of interest.

14 ♗c4

This has the idea of occupying d5 as well as capturing twice on e5 and attacking via f4.

14...♘b6 15 ♗b3 c4

15...♗f8?! 16 ♕a5 ±.

16 ♗c2 exd4

After 16...♘d7 (Avrukh), White could play 17 ♗e7! exd4 18 ♗d6 ♗f8 19 ♗xf8 ♘xf8 20 cxd4 b5 21 ♖fe1 ♗b7 22 ♕c3 with the idea of a well-timed d5 and/or ♘e5.

17 cxd4 ♘d7

"The position is very complicated, with mutual chances" – Avrukh. This describes the situation well; e.g., 18 ♕e3 (18 ♗d2 b5 19 ♗a5 ♕f4! 20 ♗d2 ♕c7 =; 18 e5 b5 19 ♗f4 ♗b7 20 ♘g5!?) 18...b5 19 ♗h6 (19 h4!? ♗b7 20 h5 ♘f6 21 ♗xf6 ♗xf6 22 e5) 19...♗b7 20 ♗xg7 ♔xg7 21 d5 with unclear play; obviously both sides have alternative options throughout, White more so than Black.

9.222)

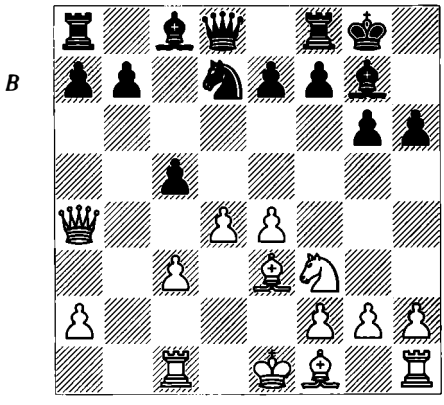
9...h6

In general, I think White profits by having this move in, but it's not always clear.

10 ♗e3 c5

10...b6?! loses the light squares after 11 ♗b5 ♘f6 12 ♘e5 (12 ♗c6 ♗d7 13 ♘e5 ♗xc6 14 ♘xc6 ♕d7 15 f3 a6 16 ♕c4 ±) 12...a6 13 ♗c6 ♖b8 14 f3 ±.

11 ♖c1 *(D)*



Following the same policy as after 9...c5.

11...♕c7

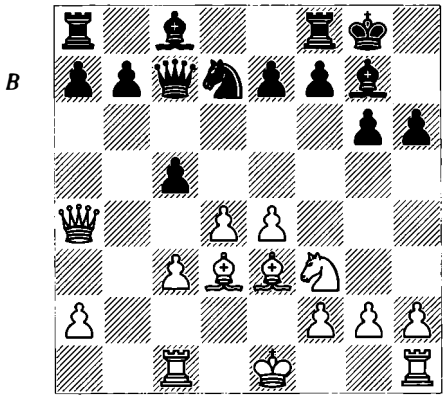
Here Black has the typical set of alternatives (it is useful to compare the lines from Section 9.221, in which the moves ...h6 and ♗e3 are omitted):

a) 11...cxd4 12 cxd4 ♘b6 13 ♕b3! ♗g4 14 ♗e2 ♕d6 (the difference between inserting ...h6 or not shows up in lines like 14...♗xf3 15 ♗xf3 ♗xd4 16 ♗xh6 ± with the idea h4-h5 – Krasenkov) 15 0-0 ♗xf3 16 ♗xf3 ♗xd4!? 17 ♗xh6!? (17 ♖fd1! e5 18 ♗xh6 ♖fc8 19 h4 ±) 17...♖fc8 18 g3 a5 19 ♔g2 ♕b4 (Dzhandzhgava-Krasenkov, Vilnius 1988) and here 20 ♕d3 is enough for a nice advantage.

b) 11...e5 12 d5! (12 ♘xe5 cxd4 13 cxd4 ♘xe5 14 dxe5 ♗d7! is supposed to be equal, although 15 ♗b5 ♗xb5 16 ♕xb5 should result in a modest edge) 12...f5 13 ♗d3 f4 (13...a6 14 c4 ♘f6 15 ♘d2 b6 16 f3 ±) 14 ♗d2 ♘b6 (14...g5 15 h3! precludes a kingside counterattack) 15 ♕b3 ♗g4 16 c4!? (or 16 ♗e2 ±) 16...♗xf3 17 gxf3 ♖f6, and here instead of 18 0-0 (Kroes-Nenciulescu, Internet 2009), White should leave open the ideas of ♗f1-h3 and/or h4-h5 by, say, 18 a4 ♕e7 19 ♖b1.

c) 11...e6 is solid; for example, 12 ♗e2 (or 12 ♗d3 b6 13 0-0 ♗b7 14 ♘d2, thinking about e5 and ♗e4 or ♘e4) 12...b6 13 0-0 ♗b7 14 ♘d2 a6 15 ♕b3 ♕c7 (Belichev-Avrukh, Cappelle la Grande 1999), which Avrukh calls slightly better for White.

12 ♗d3 *(D)*



12...a6

12...e5 13 0-0 b6 14 ♖fe1 ♗b7 15 d5 (15 ♗b5!?); e.g., 15...a6 16 c4 b5!? 17 cxb5 axb5 18 ♕xb5 ♖fb8 19 ♕c4 ♗a6 20 ♕c2 ♗xd3 21 ♕xd3 ♖xa2 22 ♘d2 with a pleasant positional advantage for White.

13 0-0 e6

13...b5 14 ♕d1 ♗b7 15 ♕d2 shows another idea unique to ...h6 lines; for example, 15...♔h7 (15...♘f6 16 ♗f4 ♕d7 17 ♖fe1 ±) 16 a4 c4 17 ♗c2 ±. Lines where the centre stays intact like this tend to be slightly better for White.

14 ♕a3!?

Or 14 ♕d1 b5 15 ♕d2 h5 16 a4.

14...b6

14...b5 15 ♗xb5 axb5 16 ♕xa8 ♗b7 17 ♕a3 ♗xe4 18 ♘d2 gives Black compensation, but it doesn't seem to be quite enough; e.g., 18...♗d5 19 ♕b2 ♕c6 20 f3 ♖a8 21 ♘b3.

15 ♖b1 ♗b7 16 ♕c1

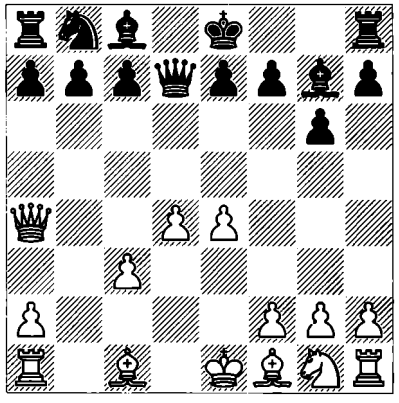
Again this reorganization.

16...♔h7 17 ♖d1 ♖fc8 18 ♗f4

Dreev-Gofman, USSR Junior Team Ch, Kramatorsk 1989. White has a small but definite advantage in this type of position.

9.23)

7...♕d7 *(D)*



This is one of Black's two favourite moves, and is preferred by Dembo in her treatise on the Grünfeld. This is a rather theoretical line, but I found it amenable to new ideas throughout.

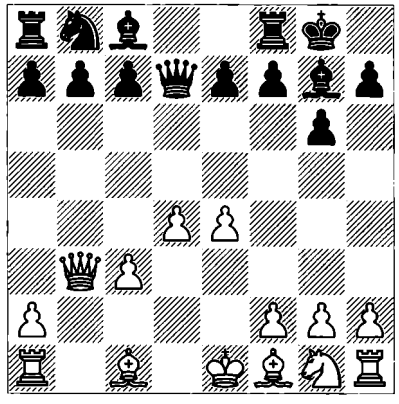
8 ♕b3

Now it's as if White has played 7 ♕b3 and then given Black the move ...♕d7 for free. The former position for White's queen isn't bad, but the latter (...♕d7) gets in the way of the development of Black's c8-bishop and arguably isn't the best square for the queen, which normally goes to a5 or c7. Still, ...♕d7 clears the back rank, maintains the pressure on d4, and keeps an eye on the light squares, which are Black's usual hunting grounds in the Exchange Grünfeld.

8 ♕a3 compiled a hugely positive score a decade ago and then almost disappeared – I am not actually sure why! Dembo cites Sevillano-Yermolinsky, Stratton Mountain 1999, which went 8...0-0 9 ♘f3 b6 10 ♗e3 ♗b7 (10...c5 is probably more accurate; then 11 ♖d1 cxd4 12 cxd4 ♗b7 13 ♗d3 ♕d6! is a familiar manoeuvre for Black – White's chances for advantage after 14 ♕xd6 exd6 15 0-0 look slim, but on the other hand, who would want to be Black here?) 11 ♗d3 c5. Now instead of that game's 12 ♖d1, Szeberenyi-D.Howell, Budapest 2004 went 12 0-0 cxd4 13 cxd4 e6 14 ♖fd1?! (14 ♘e5! is more awkward for Black; if 14...♗xe5 15 dxe5 ♘c6, then 16 ♗b5 and White's centralized rooks will cause trouble) 14...♘c6 15 ♖ac1, with a slight advantage for White; ♗b5 and ♕a4 is one problem. Such positions are manageable for Black, but still not attractive.

8...0-0 *(D)*

8...b6 9 ♘f3 ♗b7 (9...0-0 10 ♗e3 transposes to the main line) 10 ♗b5!? ♗c6 11 ♗d3 ♗a4 12 ♕a3 0-0 13 0-0 c5! 14 ♗e3!? (14 ♖b1 ± discourages Black's main idea ...♗b5, as does 14 ♗g5 ±, threatening ♗xe7) 14...♗b5 15 ♗xb5 ♕xb5 16 dxc5 ♘c6 with compensation, M.Andersen-Kanarek, Krakow 2011.



9 ♗e3

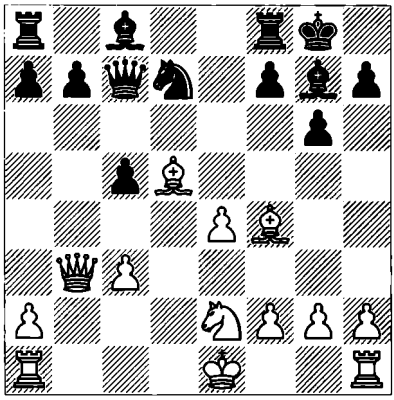
9 ♘f3 is an important move-order. Then after 9...b6, 10 ♗e3 transposes to the main line of this section while 10 ♗b5 c6 11 ♗e2 c5 12 0-0 cxd4! 13 cxd4 ♗b7 14 ♕e3 ♘c6 15 ♗b2 is comfortable for White, but very close to equal.

Alternatively, Black can play 9...c5, when 10 ♗e3 transposes to 9..c5 10 ♘f3 in the next note, but White might play 10 d5. Surprisingly, the latter move hasn't been contested much, but might be a promising move-order for White.

9...b6

9...c5 tries to exert pressure upon White's centre along normal lines; it can be played without ...b6, as seen in the well-known game Kramnik-Giri, Wijk aan Zee 2011: 10 d5!? (10 ♘f3 is the natural move, when 10...cxd4 11 cxd4 ♘c6 12 ♖d1 is unclear; then 12...♕d6 is natural, freeing the c8-bishop and contemplating ...♕b4+) 10...e6 11 ♗c4 exd5 12 ♗xd5 ♕c7 (12...♘a6!?) 13 ♘e2 ♘d7 14 ♗f4! *(D)*.

B



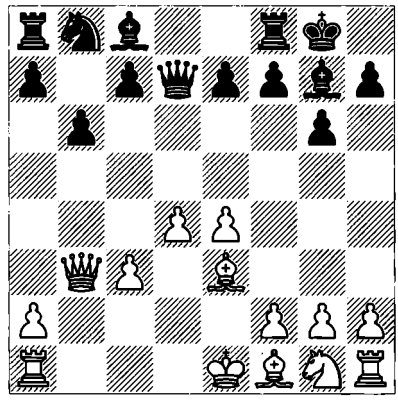
Play continued 14...♘e5 15 0-0 c4 (15...♖b8 16 c4 ♗d7 17 a4 – Flear; this is White's planned set-up once the bishop is on d5, although in general it's best constructed when Black isn't well-placed to occupy d4) 16 ♕b4 ♖e8 (Flear analyses 16...a5, giving 17 ♕b5 ♗g4! as satisfactory for Black, with the idea 18 ♘d4 ♘f3+!; I think that 17 ♕b1! ± is better, when the same trick leads to a difficult endgame following 17...♗g4 18 ♘d4 ♘f3+ 19 gxf3 ♕xf4 20 ♕c1) 17 ♗g3 ♖b8?! (17...♕b6) 18 ♕xc4! ♕xc4 19 ♗xc4 ♗d7 20 ♖fd1 and Black had counterplay but White's extra pawn granted him a small advantage.

We now return to 9...b6 *(D)*:

10 ♘f3 ♗b7

Dembo suggests 10...♘c6!?, intending a reorganization along the lines of ...♘a5, ...c5, ...♕c7 and ...♗g4 or ...♗e6. There is almost no experience with this, and it's not clear which of several options is best for White. For example:

W



a) 11 ♖c1 and then:

a1) 11...♘a5!? 12 ♕c2 c5 13 ♗d3 ♗b7 "and Black, with ideas of ...c4 and ...f5, has assumed the initiative" – Dembo. Perhaps, but after 14 0-0, 14...f5 is loosening; for example, 15 dxc5 bxc5 16 exf5 ♗xf3 17 gxf3 gxf5 18 ♖fd1 ♕c8 19 ♕a4. Also 14...c4 15 ♗e2 f5 16 exf5 gives White a small positional edge; for example, 16...♖xf5 17 ♖ce1 ♖af8 18 ♘h4 ♖5f7 19 f4.

a2) 11...♗b7 12 ♕b1 e5 13 d5 ♘e7 14 c4 c6 and after 15 ♗d3 f5 "Black is in the driving seat" (Dembo). But again, that isn't clear to me, and at any rate, 15 ♖d1 looks pleasant for White; e.g., 15...cxd5 (15...f5? 16 d6 ♘c8 17 c5) 16 cxd5 ♘c8 17 ♗b5 ♕e7 18 0-0 ♘d6 19 ♕b4 ±. None of this is to say, however, that White gets more than a modest edge in these lines.

b) 11 ♗d3 is also natural; e.g., 11...♘a5 12 ♕c2 c5 13 0-0 cxd4 14 cxd4 ♗b7 15 ♕e2 and now 15...♖ac8 16 ♖fd1 or 15...♘c6!? 16 d5 ♘e5 17 ♘xe5 ♗xe5 18 ♖ac1 ±.

c) 11 h4!? with the idea h5 attempts to take advantage of the fact that ...♘c6 not only temporarily releases central pressure and moves away from the kingside, but that it also takes valuable time: 11...♘a5 12 ♕c2 c5 13 dxc5!? ♗b7 14 ♖b1 bxc5 15 h5 ♕e6.

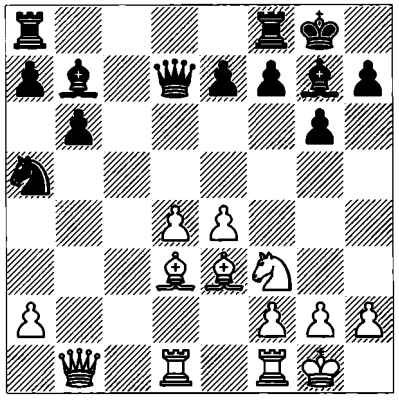
11 ♗d3 ♘c6

11...c5 12 0-0 ♘c6 (12...cxd4 13 cxd4 ♘c6 and now 14 ♖ad1 ♖ac8 15 d5 ♘a5 16 ♕b4 ± was V.Milov-Krasenkow, European Ch, Antalya 2004, but I think 14 ♖fd1 is more accurate) 13 ♖fd1 ♘a5 14 ♕c2 cxd4 15 cxd4 ♖ac8 16 ♕e2 is a typical position with chances for both sides; one new idea is that if Black plays

...e6, White can consider h4-h5 in conjunction with e5. Compare the next note.

12 ♖d1 ♘a5 13 ♕b1 c5 14 0-0 cxd4 15 cxd4 *(D)*

B



15...♖ac8

15...e6 can weaken the dark squares, although that needn't be too serious; for example, 16 h4!? (16 ♗f4 ♖ac8 17 ♗b5 ♕e7 18 ♖fe1 ± has the idea d5, but reserves e5 as well) 16...♖ac8 17 h5 (17 ♖c1 is a calmer approach) 17...gxh5!? (a tough decision, as Black eliminates both hxg6 and h6, but of course weakens his position; 17...♘c4! is natural and probably equal – then an ambitious possibility is 18 ♗g5!? intending 18...h6 19 ♗xc4 ♖xc4 20 ♘e5 ♗xe5 21 dxe5, but this is unclear) 18 d5!? ♘c4 (18...exd5?! 19 exd5! f5 20 ♘h4 with a strong initiative – Flear) 19 ♗d4 f6 (V.Milov-Rowson, French Team Ch, Port Barcares 2005) and here either 20 ♗c3 or 20 ♖fe1 keeps White in front.

16 d5 ♘c4

16...♕d6 can be met by 17 ♖c1, intending 17...e6 18 ♗d2!.

17 ♗d4

Exchanging the bishops makes life a bit more difficult for Black.

17...♗xd4 18 ♘xd4 ♕a4 *(D)*

18...e5 has been assessed as equal, but I disagree:

a) 19 ♘f3 f6 and now 20 h3 (I.Sokolov-Krasenkow, British League (4NCL) 2005/6) may be slightly better than 20 ♗xc4, as played in the game I.Sokolov-Cheparinov, Khanty-Mansiisk Olympiad 2010, but 20 ♖c1 ♘d6 21 ♕b4 looks best.

b) I think White still has a meaningful advantage (based upon space) after 19 ♕b4! ♘d6 20 ♘b5!.

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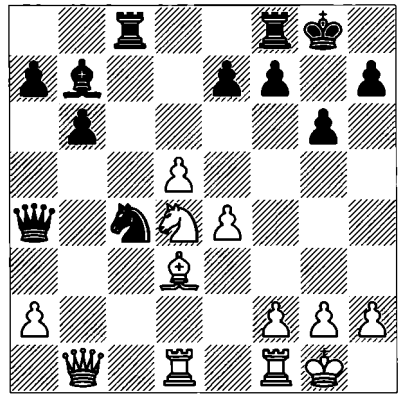


19 ♗e2!?

19 ♖fe1 also presents problems: 19...♖c7 (19...♕a3 20 ♗f1 is slightly better for White; 19...♕a5 20 ♗e2 ♖c7 21 ♕c1! attacking c4 and eyeing h6; 19...♖c5!?) 20 h4 (20 ♕b5! ♕xb5! 21 ♘xb5 ♖c5 22 ♖c1! ♘e5 23 ♗e2 a6 24 ♖xc5 bxc5 25 ♘c3 ±) 20...♕a5 (20...♖fc8 21 h5) 21 ♕c1 ♖fc8 22 ♗xc4 ♖xc4 23 ♕e3 with excellent attacking chances, V.Milov-Krasenkow, European Ch, Warsaw 2005. Upon 23...♕xa2, 24 ♕g5! (Milov) is strong.

19...♘a3

19...♕a5 20 ♕c1 lets White shift to the kingside.

20 ♕b2 ♘c2?!

20...♖c5 21 h4 ♘c2 ± is more accurate.

21 ♗g4! ♖c7??

A blunder. White still gets a dangerous attack after 21...♖c5 22 ♘e6! fxe6 23 ♗xe6+ ♖f7 24 ♕e5!.

22 ♘e6!

White is winning. After 22...fxe6 23 ♗xe6+ ♖f7 24 ♕e5 ♖c8 (Khairullin-Kurnosov, Rogaška Slatina 2011), the easiest course was 25 d6! exd6 26 ♖xd6, with unstoppable threats.

Yes, that was fun. But in conclusion, I can't emphasize enough that the main goal of both the 7 ♗g5 and 7 ♕a4+ variations is not so much to obtain minor theoretical advantages (which is sometimes impossible anyway if Black plays accurately), as to get playable, strategically complex middlegames and endgames, an aim which these variations accomplish better than most.

10 Benoni Systems and Benko Gambit

The common theme in the lines covered in this chapter is that Black plays an early ...c5, provoking White to advance by d5. Black has a wide range of ways to handle the resulting situation, the main ones being to gambit by ...b5, seeking queenside pressure (Benko Gambit), or to play ...e6 and exchange on d5, creating a queenside majority (Modern Benoni). But there are several other options, including lines where Black blocks the centre completely. Therefore I'll hold off on the strategic commentary for now, and discuss themes as and when they become relevant.

The chapter is structured as follows:

10.1: Modern Benoni	195
10.2: Benko Gambit	205
10.3: Other Benoni Systems	214

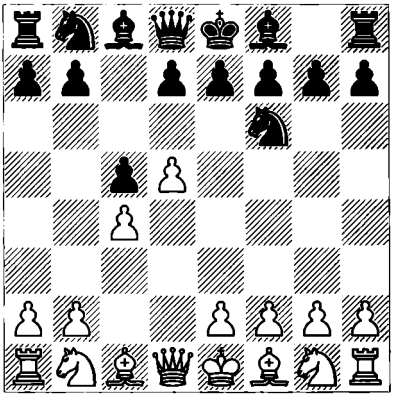
10.1) Modern Benoni

1 d4 ♘f6

For lines after 1...c5 2 d5 where the game does not transpose back to a Modern Benoni, see Section 10.31.

2 c4 c5 3 d5 *(D)*

B



3...e6

This introduces the Modern Benoni. There are several other moves, some which are liable to transpose back to Modern Benoni lines, while providing additional options along the way, while others head off in different directions entirely:

a) The most important of these lines is 3...b5, the Benko Gambit – see Section 10.2.

b) 3...♘e4 is the Vulture – see Section 10.34.

c) 3...d6 4 ♘c3 and now 4...e5 is covered in Section 10.32, while 4...g6 5 e4 ♗g7 6 h3 0-0 will transpose to King's Indian lines: 7 ♗g5 is 8.23 and 7 ♗e3 is 8.12. There you will find analysis of early ...b5 options, for example, in addition to the standard ...e6 lines.

d) 3...e5 is a Czech Benoni; see Section 10.32.

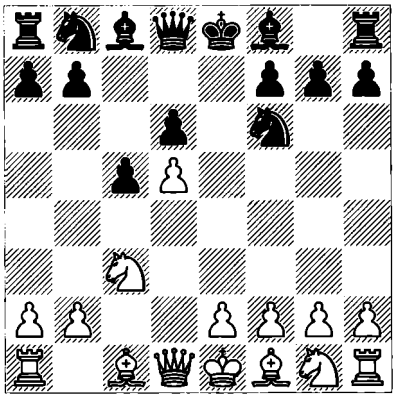
e) 3...a6 is answered with the no-nonsense 4 a4 in a substantial majority of grandmaster games. That fits in with White's plans versus just about every conceivable system, and restricts Black's options later; e.g., he may have wanted to play ...♘a6-c7, and there are lines in which ...b5 is played without the support of ...a6. That doesn't mean that you can't play 4 ♘d2, 4 ♕c2 or 4 f3, for example, or even 4 ♘c3 b5 5 e4!? b4 6 ♘a4 ♘xe4 7 ♗d3 followed by ♘xc5, which appears favourable for White – this is covered in Section 12.55.

f) 3...g6 4 ♘c3 ♗g7 5 e4 0-0 (for 5...d6 on this or the next move, see the King's Indian chapter – Section 8.12 or 8.23) 6 ♗d3 e6!? is a unique move-order. 7 e5 (this apparently yields some advantage, but the more restrained 7 ♘ge2 exd5 8 exd5 can't be bad, and 7 ♗g5 might ultimately transpose to our main line after 7...exd5 8 cxd5 d6 9 h3 or 7...d6 8 h3 exd5 9 cxd5; in these lines exd5 is also a good option, as we saw in the King's Indian chapter) 7...♘e8 8 ♘f3 exd5 9 cxd5 (9 ♗g5!? f6 10 exf6 ♗xf6 11 ♗xf6 ♘xf6 12 cxd5 d6 13 ♗e2 is an alternative) 9...d6 10 ♗g5 f6 (10...♕c7 11 exd6 ♘xd6 12 0-0 ±) 11 exf6 ♗xf6 12 ♗h6 (12 ♕d2 ♗g4) 12...♗g7 13 ♗xg7 ♘xg7 14 h3 ♖e8+ 15 ♗e2 ±.

4 ♘c3 exd5 5 cxd5 d6 *(D)*

The Snake Benoni, 5...♗d6, is covered separately in Section 10.35, as its themes have very little in common with the Modern Benoni.

W



Black has created the imbalance he sought: he has a queenside majority and a half-open e-file. On the other hand, White has a central majority and the d5-pawn provides him with a space advantage.

6 e4 g6 7 ♗d3

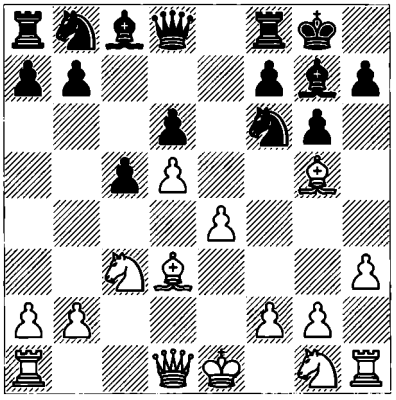
This move introduces a modern set-up that has taken over Benoni practice. I don't think there is any profitable way for Black to deviate if White chooses the move-order 7 h3 ♗g7 8 ♗d3.

7...♗g7

As on move 3, 7...a6 8 a4 doesn't limit White much, since a4 is almost always the main response to ...a6 in the lines below. Black on the other hand has forfeited the possibility of ...♘a6-c7 or playing ...b5 without the preparatory ...a6.

8 h3 0-0 9 ♗g5 *(D)*

B



We have reached our main line. This invites comparison with 9 ♘f3, the 'Modern Classical', which can arise from playing ♘f3 on any of moves 4 through to 9. At first sight, White's ♗g5 seems to be a poor substitute for ♘f3, since it fails to help White get castled. On the other hand, White retains the choice between ♘ge2 and ♘f3 as the position requires. Furthermore, White manages to sidestep some of the problems with 9...b5 that have plagued the 9 ♘f3 version – or at least great complicated and sharpened its theory.

There's a fair amount of history with the ♗g5 system, but it has the advantage of being little-known (books on the Benoni have neglected it to a large degree), and even the Benoni player who is aware of the existence of 9 ♗g5 may nevertheless not have taken it seriously enough to prepare in any depth against it. One reason I've chosen this system is that it is consistent with one of our repertoire options versus the King's Indian Defence, and in fact, if you read that chapter you will see that by playing 9 cxd5 in the main 6 ♗g5 c5 variation, White would actually transpose to this position. Furthermore, in the development of that King's Indian line, we examined many variations which also arise from 1 d4 ♘f6 2 c4 c5 3 d5 d6 4 ♘c3 g6 5 e4 ♗g7, material that you need to know in order to have a complete repertoire.

Let's jump right in. After 9 ♗g5, Black can play:

10.11: 9...♖e8	197
10.12: 9...♘bd7	200
10.13: 9...h6	201
10.14: 9...♗d7	204

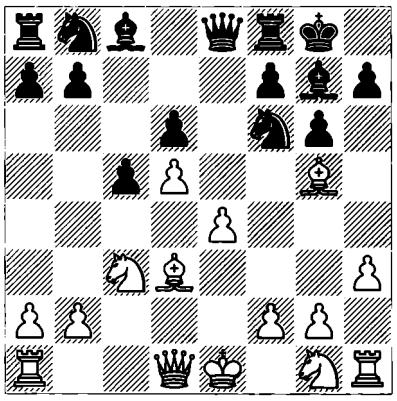
Other moves:

a) In the scheme of move-orders I have chosen, the usual 9...a6 is always transpositional; e.g., after 10 a4, 10...♘bd7 11 ♘f3 and 10...♖e8 11 ♘f3 are dealt with under the move-orders 9...♘bd7 10 ♘f3 a6 11 a4 and 9...♖e8 10 ♘f3 a6 11 a4, respectively.

b) 9...♕e8 *(D)* has the idea of unpinning the knight while hitting e4.

White can parry the attack on e4 in a few ways, but the easiest is 10 ♕e2 ('!' *ECO*; Balashov gives 10 ♘ge2 c4; then 11 ♗c2 b5 12 a3 resembles later lines and offers an edge; White could also win a pawn by 11 ♗xf6 ♗xf6

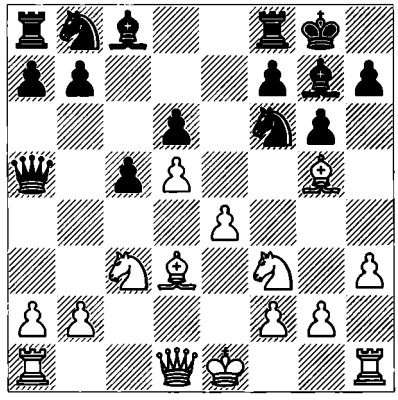
W



12 ♗xc4, but he'd be on the defensive for some time) 10...a6 11 a4 ♘bd7 12 ♘f3 ♘e5 13 0-0 (13 ♘xe5!? ♕xe5 14 ♕d2 ♘h5!? 15 g4 ♘f6 16 a5 ±) 13...♘fd7 (called '?!' by Balashov, who gives 13...♘xf3+ 14 ♕xf3 ♘d7; then a sample line is 15 ♕e2 f5 16 f4 ♘f6 17 e5 ♘h5 18 e6!? ♘g3 19 ♕c2 ♘xf1 20 ♖xf1 with more than enough compensation) 14 ♘d2 ♘xd3 15 ♕xd3 and now, instead of 15...♘e5 16 ♕g3 f5 17 f4 ♘f7 (Spassky-J.Polgar, Budapest (5) 1993), when White stands considerably better after Ftačnik's 18 ♗h4!, 15...h6 16 ♗f4 ♘e5 was suggested. Nevertheless, White still has the advantage after 17 ♕e3 g5 18 ♗xe5 ♗xe5 19 ♘c4 ♗d7 20 a5 ♗b5 21 ♘xe5 ♕xe5 (not 21...♗xf1? 22 ♘g4) 22 f4 gxf4 23 ♖xf4 ♕d4 24 ♕xd4 cxd4 25 ♘xb5 axb5 26 ♖f6 ±.

c) 9...♕a5 10 ♘f3 *(D)* has some interesting consequences:

B



c1) 10...♘xe4?! 11 ♗xe4 ♖e8 12 ♘d2 f5 13 0-0 ♗xc3 (13...fxe4 14 ♘dxe4 ♕b6 15 ♖e1 ♘d7 16 ♕b3! ♕xb3 17 axb3 and d6 falls) 14 bxc3 fxe4 15 f3! e3 16 ♘e4 ♖e5 17 ♗xe3 with a decisive advantage for White.

c2) 10...b5, with these options:

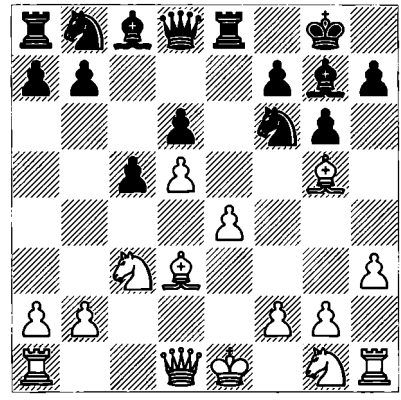
c21) 11 a4 b4 12 ♘b5 ♕d8 (12...c4!? 13 ♗xf6 ♗xf6 14 ♗xc4 ♗xb2 15 ♖b1 ♗g7 16 0-0 ±) 13 0-0 a6 14 ♘xd6 ♕xd6 15 e5 ♕d8 16 ♗c4 ±.

c22) 11 0-0 c4 12 ♗e2 (12 ♗c2!?) 12...b4 13 e5! dxe5 (13...♘fd7 14 ♘e4 ♘xe5 15 ♘xe5 ♗xe5 16 ♗e7 ♖e8 17 ♘xd6 ♖xe7 18 ♘xc4 ♕d8 19 d6) 14 ♗xf6 ♗xf6 15 ♘e4 ♗g7 16 ♗xc4 ±. The d-pawn can be strong and Black has difficulties organizing a counterattack with ...f5.

10.11)

9...♖e8 *(D)*

W



This straightforward move may prove better than playing an early ...h6 and then ...♖e8. Since White isn't castling next move, Black wants to exert pressure on the e-pawn and set up tactics based upon the e-file; e.g., he threatens 10...♘xe4! 11 ♘xe4 (11 ♗xd8 ♘xc3+) 11...♕xg5. In this section I'm not including lines with ...h6, which will be seen in 10.13.

10 ♘f3

White's favourite piece deployment in the Benoni; notice that this protects g5.

However, 10 ♘ge2 is also logical and simpler to master. White wants to block the e-file and also keep open the possibility of f4. Without going into heavy details, the game Goldin-Pigusov, Novosibirsk 1993 continued 10...a6 11 a4 ♘bd7 12 0-0 ♖b8 (12...♘e5 13 ♗c2 is unclear) 13 ♔h1 (a little slow; 13 ♘g3! is

White's best chance for advantage, and 13 a5 b5 14 axb6 ♕xb6 15 ♖a2 is double-edged, with plenty of play for both sides) 13...h6 14 ♗h4 ♘e5 15 f4 ♘xd3 16 ♕xd3, assessed as '±' by *ECO*, but that seems unjustified; it's a position in which anything can happen, and I think that 'dynamically equal' is more accurate.

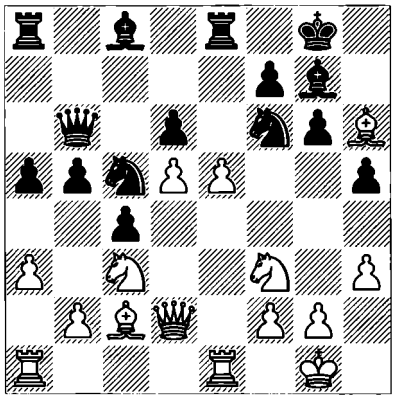
10...c4

Note that lines with the natural move ...h6 will tend to transpose to Section 10.13 (9...h6), but there are also unique instances. Here are other moves of interest:

a) 10...b5? is better played via 9...h6 10 ♗e3 b5, as in Section 10.132, because here 11 ♗xb5 hits the rook on e8.

b) 10...♘a6 is instructive, because it illustrates what happens if Black isn't careful to overprotect e5: 11 0-0 h6 12 ♗f4 (12 ♗e3 c4 13 ♗c2 b5 14 a3 transposes to note 'c' to Black's 13th move in Section 10.131) 12...c4 13 ♗c2 b5 14 a3 ♕b6 15 ♕d2 h5 16 ♖fe1 ♘c5 17 ♗h6 a5 18 e5! *(D)*.

B

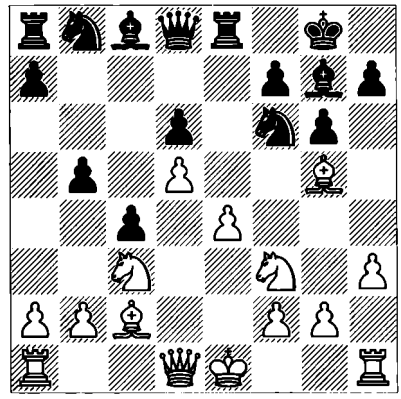


This typical central breakthrough is White's most deadly weapon in these types of position: 18...dxe5 19 ♘xe5 ♗f5? (19...♘b3! 20 ♗xb3 cxb3 21 ♗xg7 ♔xg7 22 ♕f4 ±) 20 ♗xf5 ♘b3 21 ♕f4 ♘xa1 22 ♗xg7 ♔xg7 23 ♖xa1 b4 (23...gxf5 24 ♕g5+ ♔f8 25 ♕h6+ ♔g8 26 ♘c6 is winning for White) 24 ♘a4 ♕b8 25 ♗e6! +– G.Grigore-Florean, Romanian Ch, Bucharest 1998, with the idea 25...fxe6 26 ♕g5.

c) 10...a6 11 a4 and now 11...♘bd7 transposes to Section 10.12. After 11...♕b6?!, 12 0-0 ♕xb2 13 ♖c1 ♘bd7 14 ♘d2 ♕b6 15 ♘c4 ♕c7 16 f4 gave White an attack in the game Beliavsky-Striković, Čačak 1997. Of course, White doesn't have to commit so much, and 12 ♕c2 offers him a safe edge.

11 ♗c2 b5 *(D)*

W



12 a3

To stop ...b4. Obviously bad are 12 ♘xb5? ♕a5+ 13 ♘c3 ♘xe4 and 12 ♕d4? ♘xe4. Nevertheless, White often has a choice and can allow ...b4, counting upon his superior development, by 12 0-0!?. I think this deserves serious attention:

a) 12...b4 13 ♘b5 h6 14 ♗xf6 ♗xf6 15 ♕d2 c3! (15...♗xb2 16 ♕xb4 ♗xa1 17 ♖xa1 a5 18 ♕xd6! ±) 16 bxc3 ♗a6 17 c4! ♗xa1 18 ♖xa1 ♗xb5 19 cxb5 a6! (19...a5 20 e5! dxe5 21 ♕xh6) 20 ♕xh6 ♘d7 21 b6 ♘xb6 22 e5! dxe5 23 ♘g5 ♕f6 24 ♕h7+ ♔f8 25 d6 e4 26 ♖e1 ± offers White a pleasant initiative; ♗b3 and d7 are thematic moves.

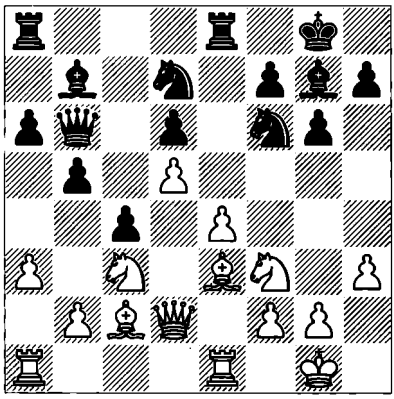
b) 12...h6 13 ♗xf6! ♗xf6 14 ♕d2. The exchange on f6 is normally bad, but White has such a lead in development and central play that it works here; e.g., 14...♗a6 (14...♗g7 15 ♘xb5 ♗xb2?! 16 ♖ab1 ♗g7 17 ♕f4) 15 e5! ♗xe5 16 ♘xe5 ♖xe5 17 ♕xh6 ±.

12...♗d7

This idea will be seen again in 10.14; Black wants to get developed and reserve the possibility of ...a5 and ...b4. Here 12...h6 13 ♗e3 transposes to Section 10.131, while 12...♘bd7 13 0-0 apparently doesn't leave Black with anything better than 13...a6, transposing to line 'a' below. Other moves:

a) 12...a6 13 0-0 ♘bd7 14 ♖e1 ♗b7 15 ♕d2 ♕b6 16 ♗e3 *(D)* pits White's central space and control of d4 versus Black's queenside majority attack and his mostly active pieces.

B



We see this kind of position with the inclusion of ...h6 in 10.13. It is in a sort of dynamic equilibrium, but White's practical chances are probably better, since they are based upon central and kingside action. There are too many directions in which play can go, so I'll give a couple of examples and refer you to that section for more themes:

a1) 16...♕c7 17 ♗d4 (another approach is 17 ♗h6 ♖ac8 18 ♖ad1 ♕b6 19 ♗xg7 ♔xg7 20 ♘d4 ♖e7 21 ♕f4 ±) 17...♖ac8 18 ♘h2!? ♘c5 19 ♖ad1 ♗a8!? 20 f4 ♕b8 and here 21 ♘g4 was complicated and obscure in Yermolinsky-Wedberg, New York 2000, but 21 f5 is an attractive try, since Black's pieces are some distance from the kingside. White will reorganize with ♖f1 and ♖de1, which makes it difficult for Black to shift his pieces and use his e5 outpost. This kind of position is more dependent upon the skill of the players, however, than upon an unstable theoretical assessment.

a2) 16...♘c5 17 ♗d4 ♘fd7 18 ♗xg7 ♔xg7 19 ♖e3 ♔g8 20 ♖ae1 is probably about even, but the weakness of the squares around Black's king makes his defence a bother; e.g., 20...♘e5 21 ♘xe5 ♖xe5 22 f4 ♖e7 23 ♔h2 a5 24 f5! with a promising attack, Bochev-Betker, corr. 2007.

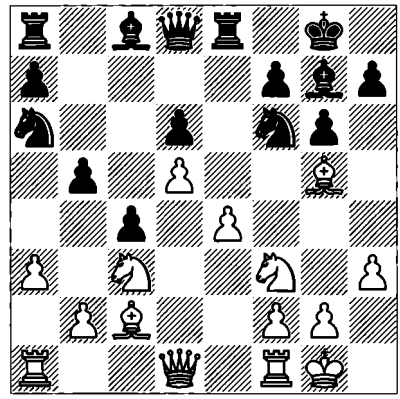
These are just examples, of course; one advantage of this variation is that the positions are relatively unexplored and full of possibilities.

b) 12...♘a6 is an important attempt either to support ...b4 or to get the knight into the action via c5. 13 0-0 *(D)* and now:

b1) 13...b4?! 14 axb4 ♘xb4 15 ♗a4 ♗d7 (15...♖f8 16 ♗b5 ±) 16 ♘d2 ±.

b2) 13...♖b8 14 ♘d4 ♗d7 15 ♘c6 ♗xc6 16 dxc6 ± Chow-Dejmek, Dallas 1996.

B

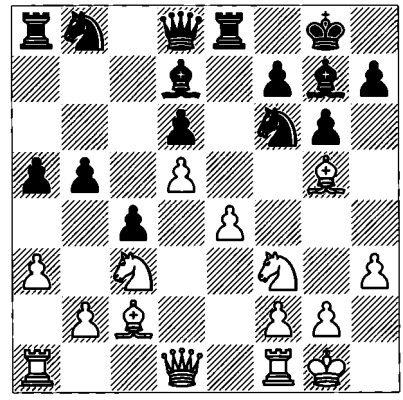


b3) 13...♕b6 14 ♘d2 ♘c5 15 a4 ♗a6 16 axb5 ♗xb5 17 ♕e2 ±.

b4) 13...♘c5 14 ♖e1 (14 ♕d2 has also been played with fair success) 14...h6 (14...♕b6 15 ♕d2 a5 16 e5! dxe5 17 ♘xe5 and here instead of 17...♗f5?, as played in Rogozenko-Marin, Bucharest 1993, Knaak suggests 17...♗b7 18 ♖ad1 ±) 15 ♗f4 ♗b7 and now 16 ♕d2 was very messy in Delemarre-Avrukh, Wijk aan Zee 2000. Avrukh's 16 ♖c1 a5 17 ♘xb5 ♘fxe4 18 ♗xe4 ♘xe4 looks better, as long as you play 19 a4! ±; White's pieces are better overall and Black's d-pawn is in trouble.

13 0-0 a5 *(D)*

W



Now:

a) 14 ♘d4 ♕b6 (14...♘a6 15 ♘dxb5 ♗xb5 16 ♘xb5 ♕b6 17 ♘c3 ♕xb2 18 ♗d2 with a slight advantage for White, Rogozenko-Marin, Odorheiu Secuiesc 1993) and here Rogozenko analyses 15 ♗e3 ♕b7 16 a4! bxa4! (16...b4 17 ♘cb5 ♘xe4 18 ♗xe4 ♖xe4 19 ♘xd6 ♕xd5 20 ♘4b5! ±) 17 ♕d2 ♘a6 18 f3 ♘c5 with the idea

...♘b3. Then 19 ♘xa4 produces a modest plus after 19...♘xd5 (19...♘xa4 20 ♗xa4 ±) 20 exd5 ♖xe3 21 ♕xe3 ♖e8 22 ♕d2.

b) The alternative approach is 14 ♖e1 ♘a6 (14...♕c8 15 ♘d4 ♕b7 16 ♕f3 ± ♘h5 17 ♘f5! ♗xf5 18 exf5 ♖xe1+ 19 ♖xe1 ♗e5 20 g4 ± Dumitrache-Popa, Romanian Team Ch, Baile Tusnad 1997). Now 15 e5!, queried by Hazai, is in fact good provided that White answers 15...dxe5 with 16 d6! h6 (16...♕b6?! 17 ♘xe5 ♘c5 18 ♕f3 ♕xd6 19 ♖ad1 ♕a6 20 ♘d5 ♘xd5 21 ♕xf7+ ♔h8 22 ♕xd5 and White wins) 17 ♗h4 b4 18 axb4 (18 ♘d5 g5 19 ♘e7+ ♖xe7 is more complex) 18...♘xb4 19 ♘xe5 ♖a6 20 ♖c1 ♖e6 21 ♘xd7 ♖xe1+ 22 ♕xe1 ♕xd7 23 ♗g3 ±.

10.12)

9...♘bd7 *(D)*

This tends to transpose to 9...♖e8 or 9...h6 lines.

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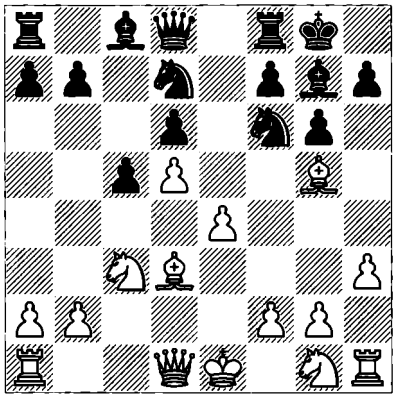

10 ♘f3 a6 11 a4

As usual, 11 0-0 b5 12 a3 (or 12 ♕d2) 12...c4 13 ♗c2 is possible, but this time I'll focus upon queenside restraint.

11...♖e8

11...♕c7 12 ♖c1 ♖b8 13 0-0 c4 14 ♗e2! b5 15 b4! is a typical way to block Black's queenside advance in the Benoni, worth remembering for other situations.

12 0-0 h6

12...♕c7 13 ♖e1 ♖b8 14 ♖c1!? c4 15 ♗f1 b5 16 axb5 axb5 17 ♘d4 ♗a6 18 b4! ± cxb3? 19 ♘cxb5 ♕b6 20 ♖c6 ♕a5 21 ♘xb3 ♕a4 +– Avrukh-Berend, Groningen 1993.

13 ♗e3 g5 14 ♖e1

Or 14 ♕d2, with the standard ideas.

14...g4

14...♘f8?! just asks for 15 e5! dxe5 16 ♗xc5 ±.

15 hxg4 ♘xg4 16 ♗f4 *(D)*

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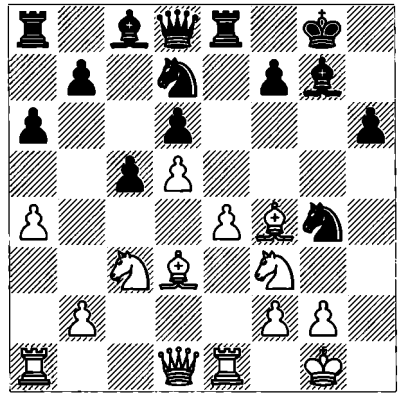
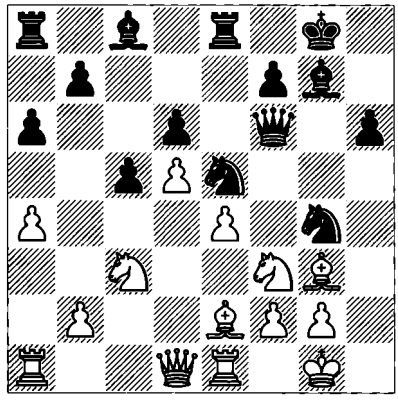


16...♕f6

16...♘f8 could be countered by 17 e5! dxe5 (17...♘xe5 18 ♘xe5 ♗xe5 19 ♗xe5 ♖xe5 20 ♖xe5 dxe5 21 ♕f3! and ♘e4 or ♖e1 next) 18 ♗g3 with great activity; for example, 18...♘g6 19 ♗xg6 fxg6 20 d6, etc.

17 ♗g3 ♘de5 18 ♗e2 *(D)*

B



18...♘xf3+?

18...♘g6 is better, although 19 a5 ± keeps White in control.

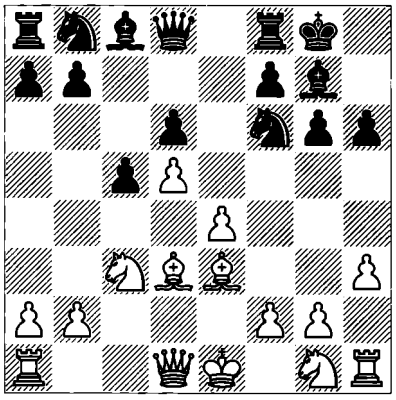
19 gxf3

White has a significant advantage. Yermolinsky-J.Watson, Chicago 2003 went 19...♘e5 20 f4 ♘d7 21 ♗d3 ♕d4? and here 22 a5 was good, but 22 e5! would have been practically decisive.

10.13)

9...h6 10 ♗e3 *(D)*

B



Just about every line above can be played with the interpolation of ...h6 and ♗e3. In general, it's a nice trade-off for White (the bishop is well-placed and the h6-pawn can be vulnerable), but Black is out of the pin and that presents him with some new opportunities. Two lines are the most critical:

10.131: 10...♖e8 201
10.132: 10...b5!? 203

The alternatives often resemble lines from previous sections, but there are some unique features involving ...h6:

a) 10...a6 11 a4 (or 11 ♘f3 b5 12 0-0 ±, as we've seen in other variations) 11...♘bd7 12 ♘f3 ♖b8 13 ♕d2 (13 0-0! with the idea 13...b5 14 axb5 axb5 15 ♘xb5 ♘xe4 16 ♘a7) 13...♔h7 (13...b5!? 14 axb5 axb5 15 ♗xh6 b4 16 ♘e2 ♖e8 – Rogozenko; Black has some compensation, though perhaps not enough for full equality) 14 ♗f4! (14 0-0 b5) 14...♘e8 15 0-0 with a slight advantage for White, Rogozenko-Stefanov, Eforie 1993.

b) 10...♗d7 11 ♘f3 (11 a4 ±) 11...b5 12 ♕d2 (or 12 0-0 ♖e8 13 a3 ±) 12...♖e8 13 ♗xh6 b4 14 ♗xg7 ♔xg7 15 ♘e2 ♘xe4 16 ♗xe4 ♖xe4 17 0-0 ♕f6? (17...♖e8 18 ♘g3 ±) 18 ♘g3 ± ♖f4 19 ♖fe1 ♖xf3 (Yermolinsky-MacIntyre, Philadelphia 2002) and now 20 ♘e4! ♕h4 21 gxf3 wins.

c) 10...♘a6 11 ♕d2 ♔h7 12 ♘ge2!? (I like 12 ♘f3 because one of White's goals after ...♘a6-c7 is to enforce e5) 12...♘c7 13 a4 b6 14 0-0 ♗d7 15 ♖ab1 (15 ♗f4 ♘fe8 16 ♗c4) 15...a5!? (Chernin-Kaminski, Polanica Zdroj 1992; 15...♕e7 16 b4 ±) and now most moves are fine, but Chernin recommends 16 ♗f4!? with an advantage, presumably to be followed by ♘g3.

10.131)

10...♖e8 *(D)*

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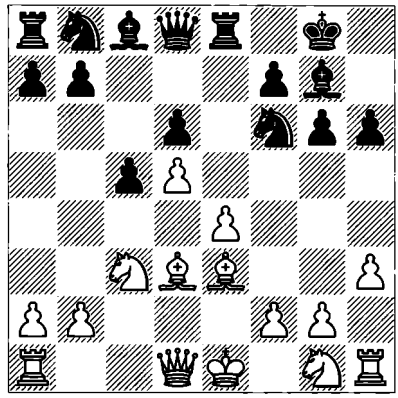


11 ♘f3

11 ♘ge2 is a natural option, even if it doesn't cover e5: 11...♘bd7 12 ♘g3 a6 13 a4 ♘e5 14 ♗e2 ♘h7 15 0-0 ♕h4 ('!' Yermolinsky). Now instead of 16 ♘h1?! (Yermolinsky-Sherzer, USA Ch, Durango 1992) 16...f5, Yermolinsky suggests 16 ♕e1 with the idea 16...f5 17 f4 (I like 17 exf5! ♗xf5 18 ♕d1 ±) 17...♘f7 18 ♗d3. Then 18...fxe4 19 ♘cxe4 gives White a plus, because 19...♗xb2 20 ♖a2 ♗g7 21 ♕b1! ♗d7 22 ♖e2 b5 23 f5! ♗xf5 24 ♘xf5 gxf5 25 ♖xf5 ± yields both attacking chances and a positional advantage.

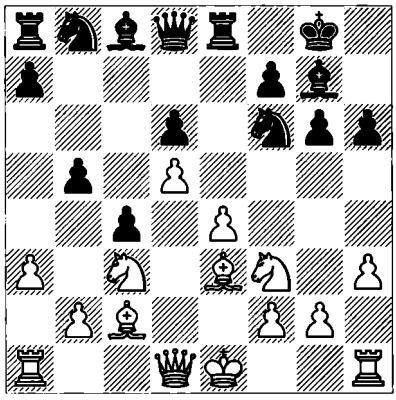
11...c4 12 ♗c2 b5 13 a3 *(D)*

This has been a very popular position with an extraordinary winning percentage for White (19 wins, 8 draws, and 2 losses in my database, with a 400 point performance rating advantage!). Although many of the games are competitive, it appears that giving up d4 is too high a price to pay for a queenside attack that turns out to be ineffective.

13...a5

Black tries to react aggressively before he is squeezed by White's space advantage. This has been a popular move but is rather loosening.

B



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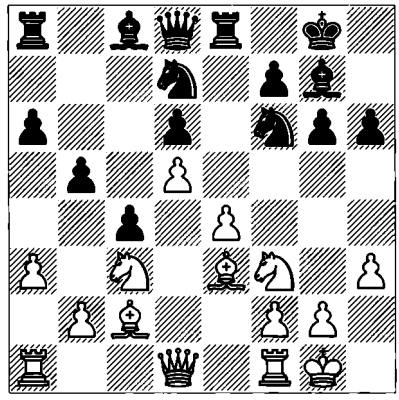


Most other moves lead to positions with a similar set of themes:

a) 13...♗b7 14 0-0 a6 resembles line 'd' below; e.g., 15 ♕d2 ♔h7 16 ♖fe1 ♘bd7 17 ♗d4 ♕c7 18 ♖e2 ♖ad8 19 ♖ae1 ♕b8 20 ♘a2 (20 ♖e3!?) 20...♖e7 (Moldovan-Bartel, Litomysl 2005) and now the consistent 21 ♘b4 or 21 a4 ♖de8 22 axb5 axb5 23 ♘b4 would keep Black under pressure.

b) 13...♗d7 14 0-0 ♘a6 15 ♕d2 ♔h7 16 ♖ae1 ♕c7 17 ♗d4 (or 17 ♗f4! ±) 17...♘c5? 18 e5 dxe5 19 ♘xe5 ♔g8 20 ♘xd7 ♘fxd7 21 ♗xg7 ♔xg7 22 ♕d4+ ♔g8 23 ♘xb5 +– Atalik-Vasilevich, Cappelle la Grande 1997; Black will lose the c-pawn as well.

c) 13...♘a6 14 0-0 b4!? (an aggressive pawn sacrifice for activity) 15 axb4 ♘xb4 and although 16 ♖xa7 ♖xa7 17 ♗xa7 ♗xh3! 18 gxh3 ♘xc2 19 ♕xc2 should have resulted in some advantage for White in Comas Fabrego-Akopian, Ubeda 2001, 16 ♘d2! is better and safer; e.g., 16...♘xc2?! (16...a5 17 ♗a4 ♖e7 18 ♗b5! ±) 17 ♕xc2 ♕e7 18 ♖fe1 ♗b7 19 ♘xc4 with a winning position for White.

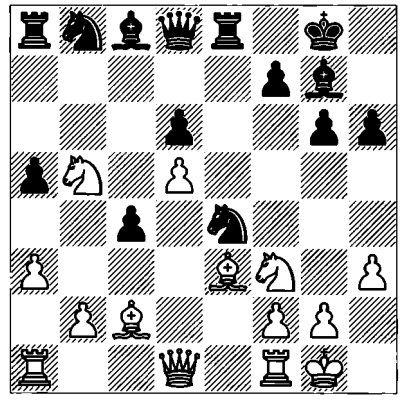
d) The lines after 13...a6 14 0-0 ♘bd7 *(D)* illustrate several of White's key ideas:

d1) Here's a salutary lesson about the power of White's e5 advance: 15 ♖e1 ♕c7 16 ♕d2 h5 17 ♖ad1 ♘c5 18 ♗d4 ± ♗d7? 19 ♕f4 ♘h7 20 ♗xg7 ♔xg7 21 e5 and Black is lost! Flear-Saldaso, Castellar 1996 continued 21...dxe5 22 ♘xe5 ♘f6 23 d6 ♕d8 24 ♘d5 ♖c8 25 ♘e7 ♘e6 26 ♕g3 ♖xe7 27 dxe7 ♕xe7 28 ♗xg6 and White won.

d2) 15 ♕d2 ♔h7 16 ♖ae1 (16 ♖fe1 ♕c7 17 ♖ad1 ♗b7 18 ♗d4; both 16 ♘d4 and 16 ♗d4 are good alternatives) 16...♕c7 17 ♗d4 ♘c5?! (these positions aren't horrible for Black but it takes patience to play them; better is 17...♔g8 18 ♖e2 ♗b7 19 ♖fe1 and White has a slight advantage) 18 e5! dxe5 19 ♗xe5 ♕d8 20 ♗d4 ♖xe1?! (20...♕d6) 21 ♖xe1 ♕d6 (I.Sokolov-M.Nilsson, Swedish Team Ch 2001/2) and now the clearest method is 22 ♘e5! ♔g8 23 ♕e3 ± with the idea 23...♘cd7 24 ♘xf7! ♔xf7 25 ♕e6+ ♕xe6 26 dxe6+ ♔g8 27 ♗xg6!.

14 ♘xb5 ♘xe4 15 0-0 *(D)*

B



15...♗a6

This is the best way to keep things moving. Otherwise:

a) 15...♗xb2 is well met by 16 ♗xh6! ♗h8 (16...♗xa1? 17 ♕xa1 f6 18 ♕d4) 17 ♗xe4 ♖xe4 18 ♖c1 ±.

b) 15...♗d7 16 ♘fd4 (or 16 a4 ±) 16...♘a6 17 ♗xe4 ♖xe4 (17...♗xb5 18 ♗f3! ♖b8 19 ♖b1 ±) 18 ♘xd6 ♖h4 (18...♗g4 19 ♕c2!? ♖xd4 20 ♗xd4 ♗xd4 21 ♘xf7! ♔xf7 22 ♕xc4) was played in the game Gyimesi-J.Horvath, Hungarian Ch, Balatonlelle 2002, when White's best

course would have been 19 ♘xc4! ♗xh3 20 ♘c6! ♕c7 21 f4! ±.

16 ♘fd4 ♗xb5

White also stands better following 16...♘c5 17 ♕d2 ♗xb5 18 ♘xb5 ♕b6 (18...♘ba6 19 ♗xh6 ±) 19 a4 ±.

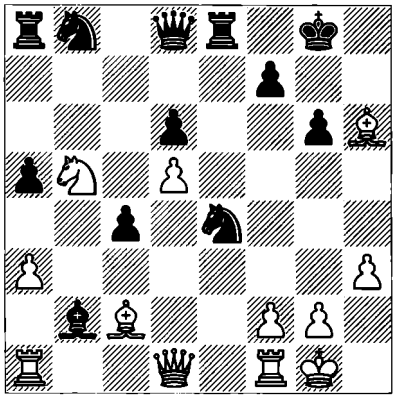
17 ♘xb5 ♗xb2

Now:

a) 18 ♖b1 ♗g7 19 ♕f3 takes the initiative. White will recover the pawn; for instance, 19...♘f6 20 ♕f4! ♖e5 21 ♕xc4 ♘bd7 (not 21...♘xd5? 22 ♗e4 ♘xe3 23 fxe3 d5 24 ♖bd1) 22 ♘xd6 ±.

b) 18 ♗xh6 *(D)* and then:

B



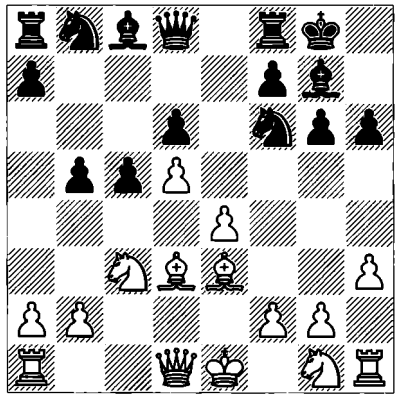
b1) 18...♘c3 19 ♘xc3 ♗xc3 20 ♗a4! ♖e5 21 ♖c1 ♗b2 22 ♖xc4 ± Kizov-Omeri, Venice 2010.

b2) After 18...♕h4, the game I.Ivanisević-Stefanopoulos, Panormo Zonal 1998 continued 19 ♖b1 ♘c3 20 ♘xc3 ♗xc3 21 ♕c1 ♗e5 22 ♗g5 ♕d4 23 ♖d1 ♕a7 24 ♗a4 ♖c8 25 h4. White's bishops have gained excellent range and now he attacked the already weakened kingside: 25...c3 26 ♕c2 ♘a6 27 h5 ♖c4? (after 27...♘c5 28 ♗e3! ♔g7 29 hxg6 fxg6 30 ♗d4 ♕e7 31 ♖e1 ♘xa4 32 ♕xa4 it will be difficult to save the c-pawn; e.g., 32...♖c7 33 ♖b6! c2 34 ♖c6 ♖xc6 35 ♕xc6) 28 ♗c6! ♖b8 29 hxg6 ♖xb1 30 ♖xb1 ♘c5 31 ♗e8 fxg6 32 ♕xg6+ ♗g7 33 ♗f6 ♘a6 34 ♖e1 ♔f8 35 ♗e7+ 1-0. 35...♕xe7 36 ♖xe7 ♔xe7 37 ♕e6+ and mate next move.

10.132)

10...b5!? *(D)*

W



Rarely if ever played, theoreticians and annotators don't take this move seriously, but White needs to play accurately:

11 ♘xb5

11 e5 hasn't been played or mentioned as far as I know, but it deserves consideration: 11...♘fd7! (11...dxe5 12 ♗xc5 b4! 13 ♗xb4 ♖e8 14 ♗b5 ♗d7 15 a4! ±) 12 exd6 (12 e6 ♘e5 13 ♗xb5 c4! 14 ♘f3 ♘d3+ 15 ♔f1 fxe6 16 ♕d2 with a mess; dynamic equality seems a fair assessment) 12...b4 13 ♘b5 a6 14 ♘c7 ♖a7 15 ♕b3 ♕f6 16 ♖d1 ♔h8! (16...♕xd6 17 ♘e6 ±; 16...♕xb2 17 ♕xb2 ♗xb2 18 ♘f3 ♔g7 19 0-0 ±) 17 ♘e6 fxe6 18 dxe6 ♘c6! 19 exd7 ♖xd7 20 ♘e2 ♘d4 21 ♕c4 ♕xd6 22 0-0 ♗b7 23 ♘xd4 ♗xd4 24 ♗xd4+ cxd4 25 ♖de1 and White's advantage is minimal, although it's certainly worth playing out.

11...♘a6!?

Or:

a) 11...♘xe4?! 12 ♗xe4 ♕a5+ 13 ♘c3 ♗xc3+ 14 bxc3 ♕xc3+ 15 ♔f1 ♗a6+ 16 ♘e2 ♗xe2+ 17 ♔xe2 f5 (Atalik-Derieux, Groningen 1999) 18 ♕c2! leaves White a piece ahead for insufficient compensation.

b) 11...♖e8 12 ♘c3 ♕a5 (12...♘xe4?! 13 ♘xe4 f5 is well met by 14 ♘c3! f4 15 ♗xg6 ♖e7 16 ♘ge2! fxe3 17 0-0 ±) 13 ♗d2 ♘bd7! (13...♘a6 14 ♘ge2 ♘b4 15 ♗b1 ♗a6 16 0-0 ♘d3 17 b3 ♘h5 18 a3 ♕d8 19 ♖a2 ±; 13...♗a6 14 ♗c2 ♘bd7 15 ♘ge2 ♘e5 16 0-0 ♘d3 17 b3 ±) 14 ♘ge2 ♘e5 15 ♗c2 ♘c4 16 0-0! ♘xb2 17 ♕c1 ♗a6 (17...♘c4 18 ♗xh6 ±) 18 ♕xb2 ♗xe2 19 ♖fe1 ♗c4 20 ♗a4 ♖ed8 21 ♗c6 ±.

c) 11...c4 12 ♗c2 ♘a6 13 ♘e2 ♖e8 14 ♘bc3 (14 ♘ec3! ±) 14...♖b8 15 ♖b1 ♘b4 16 0-0 ♕e7 17 f3 ♘h5 (Poluliakhov-Chigvintsev,

Krasnodar 1997) 18 ♗a4! offers White a substantial advantage.

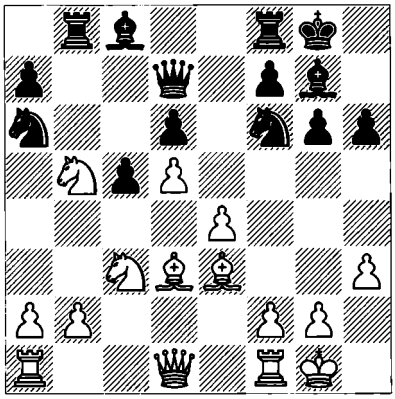
12 ♘e2!

12 a3 ♖e8 13 ♘c3 is an alternative.

12...♖b8 13 0-0 ♕d7 14 ♘ec3! *(D)*

14 ♘bc3 is also better for White, with the idea 14...♖xb2 15 ♕c1.

B



14...♘b4 15 ♗e2! ♖e8 16 a3 a6 17 axb4 cxb4 18 ♘a4 axb5 19 ♘b6 ♕d8 20 ♘xc8 ♕xc8 21 f3 ♘h5

Gulko-Sherzer, USA Ch, Durango 1992. This is called 'unclear' in various sources, but 22 ♕d2! ± wins the b- or h-pawn, and 22...♘g3 23 ♖fe1 ♘xe2+ 24 ♖xe2 g5 25 ♖c1! (25 ♕xb4 ♕c4 26 ♕e1 ±) 25...♕d7 26 ♕xb4 doesn't help matters.

In general, this line affords White a modest advantage if Black plays accurately, and there's a lot of unexplored territory.

10.14)

9...♗d7 *(D)*

This rather eccentric move meets with the approval of some theoreticians, although White appears able to come out with his standard advantage. Black's first idea is ...b5.

10 ♘f3

Some players will prefer to clamp down on ...b5, and that should leave White in good shape as well. 10 a4 ♘a6 11 ♘f3 and now:

a) 11...♕b6!? 12 ♕b1!? (or 12 ♖b1 ♘b4) 12...♘b4 gives White a choice between 13 ♗e2 and 13 0-0 ♘xd3 14 ♕xd3 ♖fe8 15 ♘d2 ± with ♘c4 coming next. White's space and pressure on d6 and e5 mean more than the bishops; e.g.,

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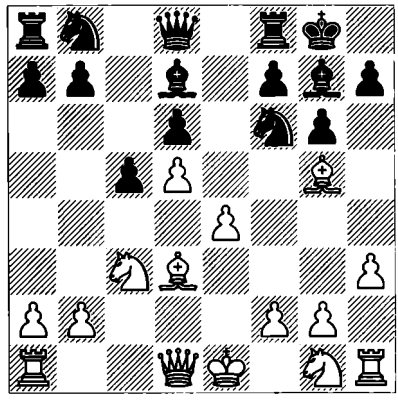


15...♕c7 16 ♘c4 a6 17 ♗xf6! (17 ♗f4 ♗f8 18 a5 ♗b5 19 ♘xb5 axb5 20 ♘b6 gives White a slight edge) 17...♗xf6 18 ♕g3 ♗e5 19 ♘xe5 ♖xe5 20 f4 ♖ee8 21 f5! with kingside threats.

b) 11...♘b4 and here:

b1) 12 0-0 ♘xd3?! 13 ♕xd3 is nice for White, so Black should wait on the exchange, while White can play ♖fe1 and think about e5, as well as ♗c4 or ♗f1.

b2) Another move is 12 ♗e2, when after 12...h6, the best way to play it is 13 ♗h4, so that Black has to create weaknesses if he wants to put the centre under pressure; e.g., 13...♖e8 14 ♘d2 ♕c7 15 0-0 with the idea of ♗g3 and ♘c4, as well as clamping down on the queenside. Black's knight on b4 can sometimes just be out of play.

b3) 12 ♗b1!? (ambitious) 12...♖e8 13 0-0 a6 14 ♕d2 (perfectly good, but 14 ♖e1 ± is more flexible, as tends to be true in all these lines; the queen may end up somewhere else) 14...b5!? (14...b6) 15 ♕f4 ♕e7 16 ♖d1!? ♘h5 17 ♕d2 (17 ♕h2! ± keeps an eye on d6) 17...f6!? (17...♕f8 18 axb5 ♗xb5 19 ♖e1) 18 ♗e3 f5 19 exf5 gxf5 (Potapov-Baryshpolets, Pardubice 2007) and now White can get a clear advantage by 20 axb5 axb5 21 ♖xa8 ♖xa8 22 ♖e1 ♕f8 23 ♘g5!, in view of 23...f4 24 ♗xh7+ ♔h8 25 ♗xc5 dxc5 26 ♗g6.

10...b5 11 a3

11 0-0 c4 12 ♗c2 ♖e8 (12...b4?! 13 ♘e2 ± Müller) 13 a3 transposes to Section 10.11.

11...c4 12 ♗c2 ♘a6 13 0-0 b4 14 axb4 ♘xb4 15 e5 dxe5 16 ♘xe5

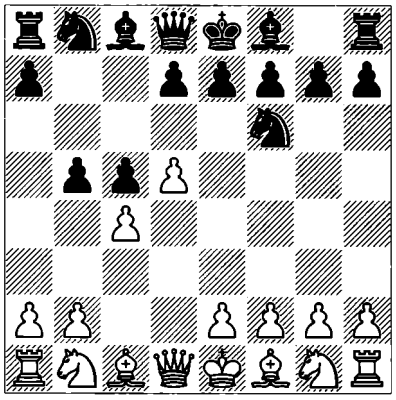
Black has weaknesses on the queenside and the d-pawn is dangerous, though White should only be a little better at this point. The game

P.Varga-Sikora Lerch, Slovakian Team Ch 1998/9 went 16...h6 17 ♗h4 ♘xc2 18 ♕xc2 ♗f5 19 ♕a4 g5?! 20 ♘c6 ♕d7 21 ♗g3 ± ♘e4?! (21...♗d3 22 ♖fe1 ♖fe8 23 ♖xe8+ ♕xe8 24 ♕a6! and ♕b7) 22 ♘xe4 ♗xe4 23 ♕xc4 ♖fe8 24 ♖ad1 ♗xb2 25 ♖fe1 ♗f5. Now 26 d6! is the clearest way to secure White's virtually winning position.

10.2) Benko Gambit

1 d4 ♘f6 2 c4 c5 3 d5 b5 *(D)*

W



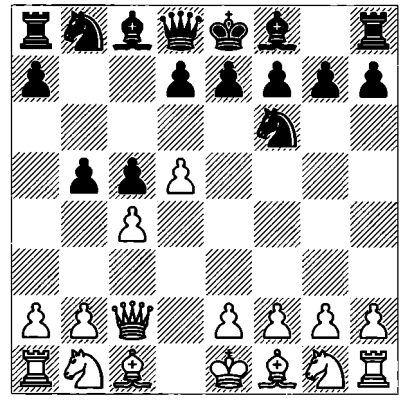
This is the Benko Gambit, which has stood the test of time for the 40 years or so since it really began to take hold. At the moment there are few systems that really threaten to get a meaningful advantage against the Benko. The currently most popular one – accepting the gambit pawn, playing g3, castling, and shoring up the queenside with a variety of subtle ideas – isn't appropriate for this book, both because there are way too many details and deviations to deal with, and also because just recently Black has developed some new approaches that could make the g3 systems only good enough for equality anyway.

What is the point of 3...b5? Black takes aim at the base of White's pawn-structure on c4. Once that breaks down, he can attack the pawn on d5, or at least keep White's pieces tied to its defence. Therefore it is natural for White to try to achieve the move e4, not only gaining space and cramping Black, but also reinforcing the key d5-square. With that in mind, I've chosen a direct approach beginning right on move 4:

4 ♕c2 *(D)*

The idea of this queen move is very simple: to support the advance e4 without making other concessions. For comparison, if White plays 4 ♘c3, he runs into 4...b4; if he plays 4 f3, he uses up f3 for White's knight; and if he plays 4 ♘d2, he blocks off the c1-bishop and forfeits the chance to play ♘c3 later.

B



By playing 4 ♕c2, White avoids these issues, threatens e4, and also controls c4 in lines where the battle for that square will prove important. The obvious drawback to 4 ♕c2 is that it brings the queen out early and doesn't develop a minor piece. In addition, although the move e4 will critically strengthen White's centre, White for the time being reduces his control over d5. It's interesting to see how these tradeoffs play out. I believe that 4 ♕c2 gives White some advantage in every line. We now examine:

10.21: 4...♗b7	207
10.22: 4...e6	208
10.23: 4...♕a5+	209
10.24: 4...bxc4	212

Other moves are not necessarily worse than those four, but have somewhat less independent theory attached to them:

a) 4...b4 5 e4 d6 6 f4 (6 a3 a5 7 f4 e5 8 fxe5 dxe5 9 axb4! cxb4 10 c5 and instead of the desperate 10...♘xd5??, which Black ventured in Vidarte Morales-Adel Lahchaichi, Spanish Team Ch 2011, 10...b3 11 ♕c3 ♘bd7 is playable) 6...♕c7 7 ♘f3 g6 8 ♗d3 ♗g4 9 ♘bd2 ♗xf3 10 ♘xf3 ♘bd7 11 ♕a4! e5 (11...♗g7? 12 e5 and e6) 12 dxe6 fxe6 13 ♘g5 ♔e7 14 0-0 h6 15 ♘f3 e5 16 ♘h4 ♖g8 17 f5! gave White a

nearly winning position in Moskalenko-Mela, Ampolla rapid 2006.

b) 4...g6 and here:

b1) 5 ♘f3 ♗g7 6 cxb5 (6 e4 ±) was played in the game Korchnoi-Topalov, Antwerp 1997. Now 6...♘xd5! is unclear; e.g., 7 e4 ♘b4 8 ♕xc5 a5 or 7 ♕xc5 ♗b7 8 e4♘a6! 9 bxa6 ♖c8.

b2) 5 e4! d6 6 cxb5! ♗g7 7 ♘c3 a6 8 ♘f3 was the move-order of Georgiev-Galburd in line 'c' below, which is favourable for White.

c) 4...d6 5 e4 g6 (5...b4 transposes to line 'a' above) 6 cxb5 ♗g7 7 ♘f3 0-0 8 ♘c3 a6 9 a4 *(D)* and now:

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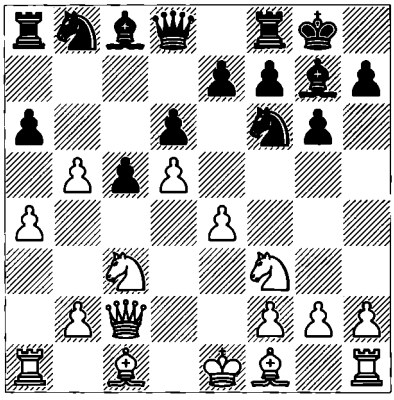


c1) 9...e6 10 dxe6 ♗xe6 11 ♗e2 (11 ♗e3! ♕e7 12 ♖d1 ±) 11...d5 12 exd5 ♘xd5 13 ♘xd5 ♕xd5 14 0-0 axb5 15 ♗xb5 ♘a6 16 ♗e3 ♖fc8 17 ♖ad1 (Yermolinsky-Wheeler, Kings Island 1995) and now Yermolinsky gives 17...♕b3 18 ♕e4!? ♕b4 19 ♘g5 ♕xe4 20 ♘xe4 ♗xb2 21 ♗xa6 (21 ♖d6! ♘c7 22 ♗c6 ♖a5 23 ♖fd1 is also good) 21...♖xa6 22 ♘xc5 ♖a5 ±.

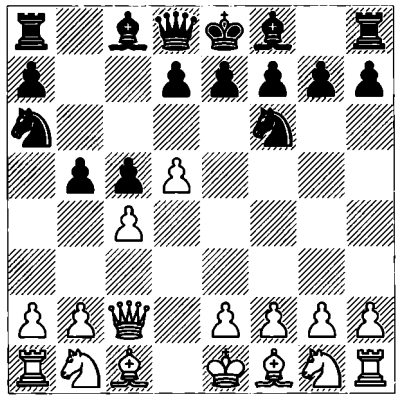
c2) 9...axb5 10 ♗xb5 ♘a6 (10...♗a6 11 0-0 ♗xb5 12 ♘xb5 ♘a6 13 ♗d2 ♕b6 14 ♗c3 ♖fb8 15 ♘d2 ± V.Georgiev-Galburd, Bansko 2010) 11 0-0 ♘b4 (Gurieli-Gaprindashvili, Women's Candidates (2), Tbilisi 1980) and now 12 ♕e2! safely keeps White's pawn.

In general, White just seems a pawn up in these lines for minimal compensation. It is a bad sign in the Benko Gambit when White can get castled and play e4 in one move.

d) 4...♘a6!? *(D)*.

This deserves very careful attention, because recently it has gained advocates who seem to think that it's a good antidote to 4 ♕c2. I'll give two answers:

W



d1) 5 ♘c3!? is Moskalenko's proposal. He points out that Black can't put both a pawn and a knight on b4! Play can go:

d11) 5...♘b4 6 ♕d1 has the idea 6...bxc4 7 a3!, when de Dovitiis analyses 7...♗b7 8 axb4 cxb4 9 ♘a2 ♘xd5 10 e4 ♘b6 and his 11 ♕d4 preserves an advantage but 11 ♘xb4 ♗xe4 12 ♘a2! e6 13 ♘c3 appears easier.

d12) 5...b4 6 ♘e4 ♘xe4 7 ♕xe4 ♗b7 8 ♕c2 ±.

d13) 5...bxc4 6 a3 ± (6 e4? ♘b4) 6...e6 7 e4 exd5 8 exd5! ± (if 8 e5!?, 8...♗b7! will give Black three pawns and sufficient counterplay for the piece).

d2) 5 a3! *(D)* and then:

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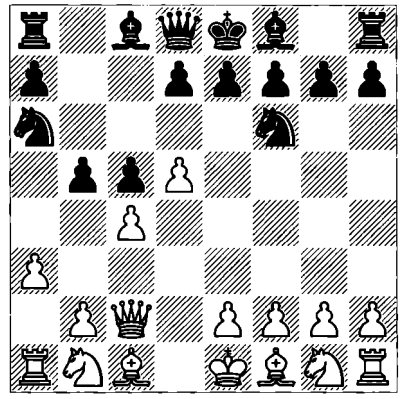
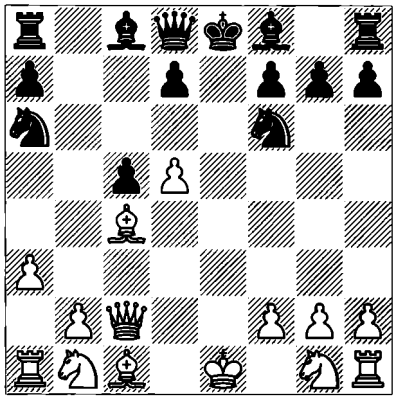


d21) After 5...b4, simply 6 e4 d6 7 ♘f3 with an edge may be best, but the pawn-storm by 6 f4 g6 7 e4 d6 8 e5!? is also interesting; e.g., 8...♘d7 9 ♘f3 ♗h6?! 10 e6 fxe6 11 dxe6 ♘b6 and now 12 ♗d3 produced some advantage in V.Georgiev-Nestorović, Skopje 2011, while 12 f5! ♗xc1 13 ♕xc1 ± is better still.

d22) 5...bxc4 6 e4 e6 (6...♗b7 can be met by 7 ♗xc4 e6 8 ♘c3 exd5 9 exd5 ♘c7 10 ♕d3, while after 6...♘c7, 7 ♗xc4 e6 transposes to the next but one bracket, but 7 ♘f3 is also attractive, in view of 7...e6?! 8 d6! ♘b5 9 e5 ±) 7 ♗xc4! (or 7 dxe6 fxe6 8 e5 ♘d5 9 ♘d2 ±) 7...exd5 (7...♘c7 8 ♘c3 exd5 9 exd5 ±) 8 exd5 *(D)* offers White a slight advantage.

B



Now a key decision presents itself for Black:

d221) 8...d6?? loses to 9 ♕a4+.

d222) 8...♗e7 is passive: 9 ♘f3 (I like this simple move, although the position after 9 ♘c3 0-0 10 ♘ge2 d6 11 0-0 ♘c7 12 b4! has proven favourable for White) 9...0-0 10 ♘c3 d6 11 0-0 ♘c7 12 ♖e1 ±.

d223) 8...♗b7 9 ♕e2+ (9 ♕d3 and 9 ♘c3 also offer White an edge) 9...♗e7 (9...♕e7?! 10 ♗e3 ♘b8 11 ♘c3 ±) 10 d6 ♗xg2 11 ♗xa6 ♗xh1 12 dxe7 (or 12 ♘c3) 12...♕xe7 13 ♗f4 with the bishop-pair and a distinct advantage for White.

d224) 8...♗d6 (Black's most aggressive reply) 9 ♘c3 0-0 10 ♘f3 ♖e8+ 11 ♗e3 ♘g4 and here:

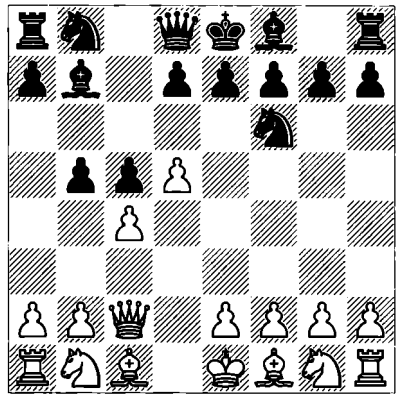
d2241) 12 0-0 yields an advantage. Then 12...♖xe3? 13 fxe3 ♘xe3 14 ♕d3 ♘xf1? 15 ♖xf1 gives White a winning attack, so the best try appears to be 12...♘xh2! 13 ♘xh2 ♗xh2+ 14 ♔xh2 ♕h4+ 15 ♔g1 ♕xc4 16 ♖fe1 d6 17 ♗f4! ♗b7 18 ♕f5 ♘c7 19 ♗xd6 ± with the idea 19...♘xd5?? 20 ♖xe8+ ♖xe8 21 ♕d7.

d2242) 12 ♘e4 ♕e7 (12...♘xe3?! 13 fxe3 ♕e7 14 ♘fg5 with a clear advantage for White) 13 ♘fg5 (or 13 ♘xd6 ♕xd6 14 0-0 ±) 13...g6 14 ♕e2! ♘xe3 15 ♕xe3 ♘c7! 16 0-0 f5 17 ♘xd6 ♕xd6 18 ♕g3! ♕xg3 19 d6+ ♔g7 20 hxg3 ♗a6 21 dxc7 ♗xc4 22 ♖fc1 d5 23 ♖c3 ± intending b3.

10.21)

4...♗b7 *(D)*

W



This is not one of Black's best moves, I think, but it illustrates a direct attempt to break down White's cramping centre, and the basic strengths of White's position.

5 e4

Threatening e5.

5...bxc4

5...d6 6 cxb5 g6 7 ♘c3 ♗g7 8 ♘f3 0-0 9 ♗c4 a6 10 0-0 leaves the bishop passively placed on b7, and Black has nothing serious to compensate for the pawn.

6 ♗xc4

Or 6 ♘c3 d6 (6...e6 7 ♗xc4 transposes to the main line) 7 ♗xc4 ♘bd7 8 ♘f3 g6 (Genovese-Gardon, Palermo 2000) and now the natural moves 9 0-0 ♗g7 10 h3 0-0 11 ♖e1 ± prepare ♗f4, ♖ad1 and an eventual e5.

6...e6

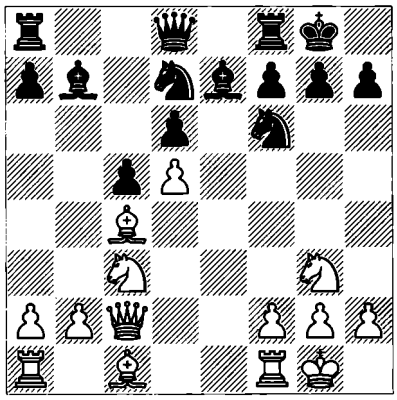
This is really the only point behind ...♗b7; otherwise the bishop belongs on a6.

7 ♘c3 exd5 8 exd5 d6 9 ♘ge2 ♗e7

9...g6 10 0-0 ♗g7 is slow: 11 ♕b3! ♕b6 (11...♕e7 12 ♗f4 0-0 13 ♘g3 ± and ♖fe1) 12 ♗f4 ♘bd7 13 ♘b5 ±.

10 0-0 0-0 11 ♘g3 ♘bd7 *(D)*

11...♘fd7, as chosen in Alonso Roselli-Plaskan, Šibenik 2007, is well answered by 12 ♖e1, when 12...♘e5 is answered by 13 ♘f5, while 12...♗f6?! 13 ♘ce4! ± has the ideas 13...♘b6 14 ♗f4 and 13...♘e5 14 ♘f5.



12 b3

An idea worth remembering: White doesn't mind ceding the bishop-pair if it secures his control over d5; the good bishop and knights are well-placed to exploit his space advantage. Nevertheless, 12 ♘f5! is the most pointed move, when Black is cramped and should probably try 12...g6 13 ♘xe7+ ♕xe7 14 ♗h6 ♖fe8 15 ♕d2 ±.

12...♘b6 13 ♖d1!?

Or 13 ♗b2!?, initiating a typical sacrificial theme that you'll often see in d-pawn openings like the Nimzo- and Queen's Indian Defences: 13...♘fxd5 14 ♘xd5 ♗xd5 (14...♘xd5 15 ♕e4! ♘b6 16 ♕xb7 ♘xc4 17 ♗xg7! ♘a5 18 ♕e4 ± with the idea 18...♔xg7 19 ♘f5+ ♔f6) 15 ♗xg7! ♔xg7 16 ♕c3+ f6 (after 16...♗f6 17 ♘h5+ ♔g6 18 ♕d3+ White retrieves the piece with the better game) 17 ♘f5+ ♔h8 18 ♖fe1 and Black has to return the material.

13...♘e8

13...♘xc4 14 bxc4 ♖e8 15 ♘f5 ♗f8 16 ♗g5 ±.

14 ♗b2 ♘c7 15 ♘f5 ♗c8

15...♗f6? 16 ♘e4 is already winning for White: 16...♘cxd5 (16...♘e8 17 ♘xf6+ ♘xf6 18 ♖e1 +– ♘bd7 19 ♕d2 h6 20 ♖e3) 17 ♗xd5 ♘xd5 18 ♖xd5! ♗xd5 19 ♘xf6+ gxf6, and now the attractive 20 ♕d2 ♗e6 21 ♕g5+ fxg5 22 ♘h6# (de Dovitiis).

16 ♘xe7+ ♕xe7 17 ♖e1 ♕h4 18 ♘e4

Now Black must worry about both d6 and his king; e.g., 18...♖d8 19 ♕c3 ♕h6 20 ♖ad1. After 18...♘cxd5?!, Malakhatko-Simonet Pons, Istanbul Olympiad 2000 continued 19 ♗xd5 ♘xd5 20 ♘xd6 ♘f4 21 ♕e4 ♗e6 22 ♗e5 ♘g6 23 ♕xh4 ♘xh4 24 ♖ec1 ♘f5 25 ♘xf5 ♗xf5 26 ♖xc5 ±. With rooks on the board, the opposite-coloured bishops probably won't save Black.

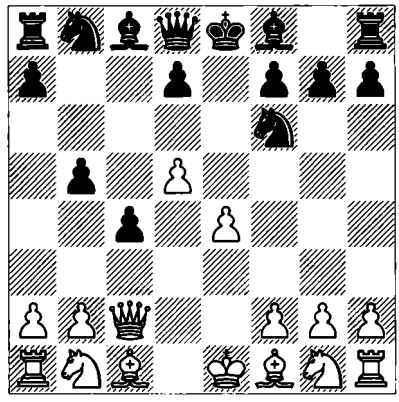
10.22)

4...e6

This is similar to the Blumenfeld Countergambit; the difference is that White's knight is still on g1 instead of f3, and his queen is on c2 instead of d1. Thus White is able to fortify his centre:

5 e4 bxc4

5...exd5 6 cxd5 c4 *(D)* (6...♕e7 7 ♗xb5!? ♕xe4+ 8 ♕xe4+ ♘xe4 9 ♘c3 ♘xc3 10 bxc3 ±) is an attempt to develop rapidly by ...♗c5, ...0-0 and ...♖e8 and take the initiative.



Then:

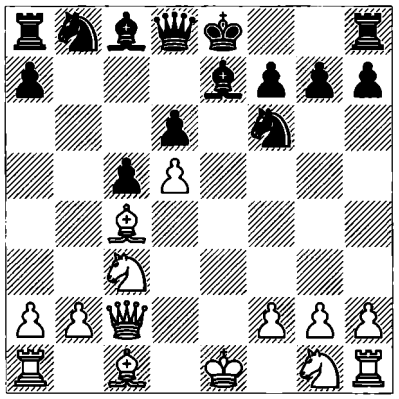
a) 7 a4 should be met by 7...♘a6!, with unclear play, since 7...♗c5?! 8 axb5 ♕b6 9 ♘c3 ♘g4 10 ♘h3 was very much in White's favour in Moskalenko-Randazzo, Barbera del Valles 2005.

b) A good answer is 7 ♘c3 ♗b4 8 ♗e2 (White gets a significant advantage from 8 a4!) 8...0-0 (8...♕e7! 9 f3 ♘a6 10 ♗d2 ±) 9 ♘f3 ♖e8 10 ♗g5! h6 11 ♗xf6 ♕xf6 12 0-0 (suddenly Black has little to do) 12...♗xc3 13 bxc3 ♕g6 14 ♘d4! ♗b7 (14...♕xe4 15 ♕xe4 ♖xe4 can be met by 16 ♖fe1! or even 16 ♗f3 ♖xd4 17 cxd4 d6 18 ♖fb1 a6 19 a4) 15 ♗f3 ♘a6 16 ♖ab1 ♘c5 17 ♖xb5 ♖ac8 18 ♘f5 with a pawn and comfortable play, Nisipeanu-Tate, Gibraltar 2011.

6 ♗xc4 exd5 7 exd5 d6

For the alternative 7...♗b7 8 ♘c3, see Section 10.21 (4...♗b7).

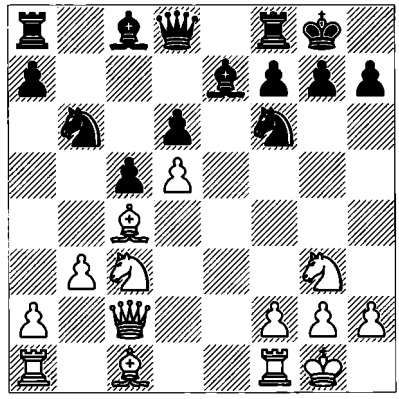
8 ♘c3 ♗e7 *(D)*



9 ♘ge2

I think this may well be the best move, because the knight can prove influential on g3. On the other hand, putting the knight on f3 has the advantage that it can support the c4-bishop by ♘d2. White should be able to get something out of his space advantage after 9 ♘f3. Following 9...0-0 10 0-0 ♘bd7 (10...♗g4 11 ♘d2! ♘bd7 12 h3 ♗h5 13 f4 is dangerous for Black, J.Horvath-K.Rovid, Hungarian League 2003) 11 ♗f4 ♘b6 (Drozdovsky-S.Kasparov, Internet blitz 2006), I like 12 ♘d2 ♘xc4 13 ♘xc4 ♗a6 14 b3, although White's advantage is not so large. In this set-up with ...♗e7, variations including the move ...♘a6 are discussed briefly under the move-order 4...♘a6 (note 'd' to Black's 4th move in Section 10.2).

9...0-0 10 0-0 ♘bd7 11 ♘g3 ♘b6 12 b3 *(D)*



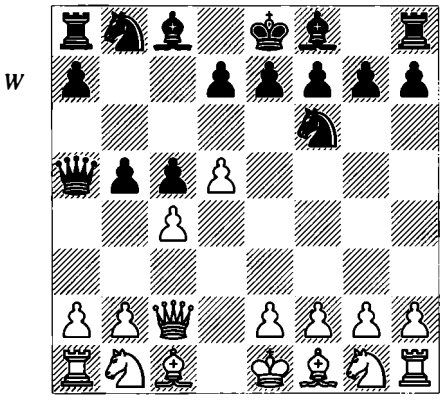
Now:

a) 12...♖b8 13 ♖e1 (13 ♗b2! ♘xc4 14 bxc4 ♘g4 15 ♖ab1 ±) 13...♘xc4 14 bxc4 ♘g4 (the problem is that Black lacks room to manoeuvre, so he embarks on a tactical adventure) 15 ♗f4 ♗f6 (15...♘e5 16 ♗xe5 dxe5 17 ♖ad1! ♗d6 18 ♘b5) 16 h3 ♘xf2! 17 ♔xf2 ♗d4+ 18 ♗e3 ♕f6+ 19 ♔g1 ♗xc3 20 ♘e4 ♗xa1 (20...♕g6 21 ♕xc3 ♕xe4 22 ♗xc5 ±) 21 ♘xf6+ ♗xf6 22 ♖b1 ♖xb1+ 23 ♕xb1 ♗e5 24 ♕c1 ♗f5 25 ♗f4 ± Sedlak-Vučković, Mataruška Banja 2007.

b) 12...♘g4 13 ♗d3!? g6 14 h3 ♘e5 and instead of 15 ♗e2?! f5!, which equalized in Erdos-Bologan, Caleta 2011, White should activate his forces by 15 ♗h6! ♖e8 16 ♗b5 ♗d7 17 ♗xd7 ♘exd7 (17...♘bxd7?? 18 f4) 18 ♖ae1 ±.

10.23)

4...♕a5+ *(D)*



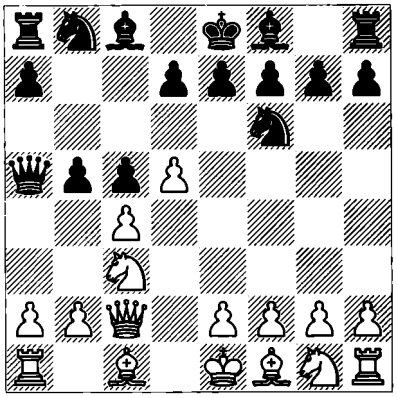
This move has seldom been played, but is the one recommended by Nicolai Pedersen, whose book on the Benko Gambit has changed my opinion of two major variations. That alone is enough to elevate it from the status of a note to a section, in spite of the fact that there's so little over-the-board experience with it (except by transposition; see below). Incidentally, although Pedersen tends to be dismissive of some of the early-move deviations against the Benko, he obviously respects 4 ♕c2, saying not only that 4...♕a5+ is the best move, but also that "Against other moves, I think White has good chances of an edge."

White has two common ways of meeting 4...♕a5+ that have enough content to merit their own section, and since it's not clear which is better, it would do to look at both:

10.231: 5 ♗d2 210
10.232: 5 ♘d2 211

A third reply has almost no history in practice but is quite interesting and I think just as good as the other two: 5 ♘c3 *(D)*.

B



Now:

a) White has good chances after 5...♗b7 6 e4 b4 7 ♘d1 d6 8 ♘f3, when the b7-bishop is locked in.

b) It's also not clear how Black should set up after 5...b4 6 ♘d1 followed by e4. Probably ...d6 and ...g6 is best, because ...e6 followed by ...exd5 only accentuates White's central space superiority. To be sure, White's advantage in any of these positions is a modest one, but I don't think most players would be thrilled about taking Black's side.

c) 5...♘a6 ('!' Pedersen, who is one of the few who have addressed 5 ♘c3) 6 ♗d2! (not mentioned by Pedersen, who correctly notes that after 6 a3 b4 Black is slightly better; one point is 7 ♘d1 b3+ 8 ♕c3 ♘b4!) 6...bxc4 (after 6...b4 7 ♘d1 and e4, it's hard to see what Black has gained by putting the knight on a6 and queen on a5) 7 a3! d6 (7...♖b8 8 ♖b1 ♕b6 9 e4 ♕b3 10 ♕c1 doesn't help Black's cause) 8 ♘f3 g6 (no better is 8...e6 9 ♖d1 followed by e4 and ♗xc4; or 8...♘c7 9 e4 ♗a6 10 e5! ♘d7 11 e6!, and 11...♘f6 is forced, when 12 ♘g5 is strong) 9 ♖b1 (eliminating the idea of ...♘b4; 9 ♘e4 ♕d8 10 ♘xf6+ exf6 11 e3 ♗g7 12 ♗xc4 is also somewhat better for White) 9...♗g7 10 e4 0-0 11 ♗xc4 with a solid advantage in space and potential activity.

10.231)

5 ♗d2

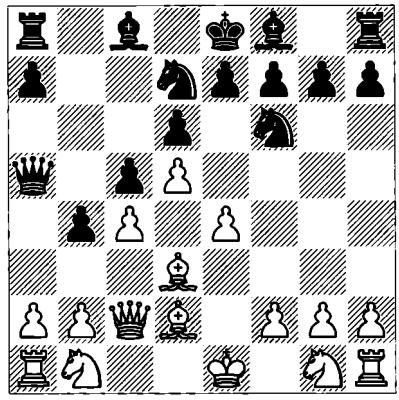
Pedersen says that this is "probably the only serious attempt to get an edge".

5...b4 6 e4 d6 7 ♗d3

If White isn't aiming for a set-up with f4, he might play 7 ♘f3 and 8 h3, delaying a decision as to where to put his king's bishop. See the next note.

7...♘bd7 *(D)*

W



8 f4

I prefer 8 ♘f3, when 8...g6 9 0-0 ♗g7 10 h3 0-0 11 a3 ♗b7 is assessed as "roughly equal" by Pedersen. I don't want to overstate my case, but I think White maintains a definite edge in such positions, albeit nothing of major proportions. Here's a sample line to give some idea of how play might follow if a set of natural structural changes occurs: 12 ♗e3 ♕c7 13 axb4 cxb4 14 ♘d4 (or 14 ♘bd2 ♘c5 15 ♘b3 ♘fd7 16 ♘bd4) 14...♘c5 (14...a6 15 ♘d2 ♘c5 16 ♘2b3 ♘fd7 17 ♘a5 gives White a slight advantage) 15 ♘b5 ♕d7 16 e5! ♘e8 17 exd6 exd6 18 ♖a5! (threatening ♘xd6) 18...♘xd3 19 ♕xd3 a6 (19...♗xb2 20 ♕d2 ♗g7 21 ♕xb4 gives White a pleasant queenside initiative) 20 ♘d4 ♕d8 and now 21 ♖a2 ± or 21 ♖a4 a5 22 ♘d2 ±.

8...g6!

In a rare test of 4...♕a5+ 5 ♗d2, Kutsin-Trifonov, Kiev 1999 continued 8...g5?! 9 fxg5 (9 e5 dxe5 10 fxg5 might be even stronger – Pedersen) 9...♘g4 10 ♘f3 ♗g7 11 0-0 ♘ge5 12 ♗e2 (Pedersen calls this "good for White") 12...♗a6. Then White's clearest course is 13 ♘xe5 ♘xe5 14 ♗e3 ♗c8 15 ♘d2 with the idea a3 and/or ♘f3.

9 ♘f3 ♗g7 10 0-0

10 e5?! dxe5 11 fxe5 ♘g4 12 e6 is a little premature in view of 12...♘de5.

10...0-0 11 h3 ♕c7 12 ♗e3 a5 13 ♘bd2

Preparing simply ♖ae1 and e5.

13...♗b7

13...♖e8 14 ♖ae1 (14 ♖f2!?) 14...e5!? is a thought, when White can try to attack along the f-file by 15 fxe5 ♘xe5 16 ♘xe5 ♖xe5 17 ♖f2. Then Black can use the e5 outpost by ...♘d7; however, it comes at the cost of having to play ...f6. The resulting position almost certainly favours White in a theoretical sense, but is so solid that there's a question whether White can actually get through.

14 ♖ae1 a4!?

It's difficult to prevent e5; even 14...♘e8 invites 15 e5!? (15 ♗f2 a4 16 ♗h4) 15...dxe5 16 fxe5 ♘xe5 17 ♘xe5 ♗xe5 18 ♘e4, when the c5-pawn falls (18...♗d6 19 ♕f2).

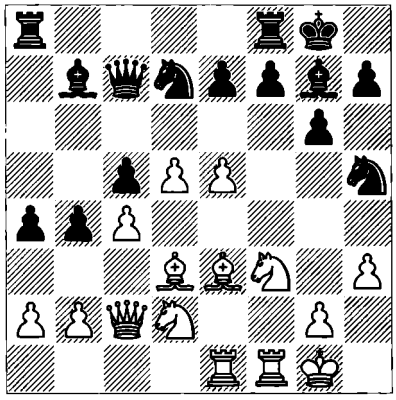
15 e5!

White's dream move in the Benko.

15...dxe5 16 fxe5 ♘h5!? *(D)*

16...♘e8 17 ♗f4 leaves Black terribly passive.

W



17 e6!?

Here 17 g4! ♘g3 18 ♖f2 threatens ♗f4, winning the knight on g3. This compels 18...f5 (18...♘xe5? 19 ♗f4 ♘xf3+ 20 ♖xf3) 19 ♘g5! ♕xe5 20 ♘e6 ±, when the logical 20...♘e4 fails to 21 ♗f4 ♕xb2 22 ♗xe4 fxe4 23 ♕xe4! ♘f6 24 ♕e5! ♕xe5 25 ♗xe5 with a winning game.

17...fxe6 18 ♗xg6! hxg6 19 ♕xg6 ♘df6??

Black blunders fatally. Either 19...♘f4 20 ♗xf4 ♖xf4 21 ♕xe6+ ♔h8 22 ♕xe7 ♗f6 23 ♕e2 or 19...exd5 20 ♕xh5 ♕d6 21 ♘h4 keeps him in the game, although White has an advantage in both cases.

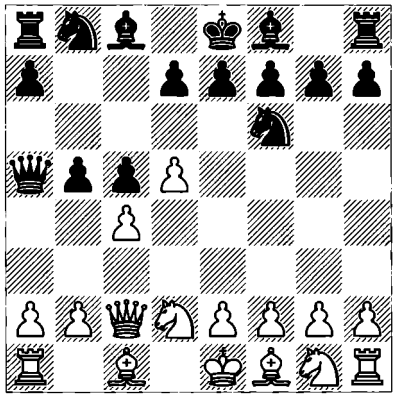
20 ♗h6 exd5 21 ♗xg7 ♘xg7 22 ♘g5

1-0 Moskalenko-R.Gonzalez, Mollet del Valles 2011.

10.232)

5 ♘d2 *(D)*

B



This move hasn't been played with this move-order as far as I can tell. However, it is the position arising from the fairly well-known 4 ♘d2 ♕a5 5 ♕c2, a transposition that is easy to miss. This is quite a legitimate option for White.

5...bxc4

This seems to be the preference of most grandmasters. 5...g6 (5...d6 is similar) 6 e4 ♗g7 looks too passive: 7 ♘f3 (or 7 cxb5) 7...0-0 8 ♗e2 (this retains some advantage, but 8 cxb5! a6 9 a4 is a very nice version of the conventional Benko, since White castles freely and owns c4) 8...bxc4 9 0-0 d6 10 ♘xc4 ♕c7 11 ♗d2 ♘bd7 12 ♗a5 ♘b6 (Arkhipov-Lependin, Novokuznetsk 1999) and here 13 ♖ae1! readies the e5 advance, which is White's real goal.

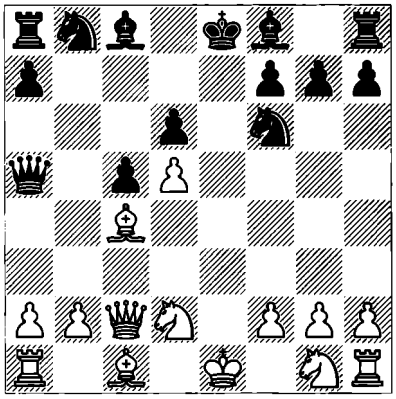
6 e4 ♗a6

This is the most popular move. Now White has to let Black get rid of his problematic queen's bishop, but he still keeps his space and positive prospects. Other moves:

a) 6...g6 7 ♗xc4 d6 (7...♗g7 8 ♘f3 0-0 9 0-0!? ♗a6? 10 e5! ♘e8 11 b3 ♘c7 and now 12 ♘e4! is terribly strong, but 12 ♗b2 e6! 13 d6 ♘d5 14 ♘e4 ± wasn't bad in the game Lamprecht-S.Petrosian, Hamburg 1999) 8 ♘e2 (I like 8 ♘f3 in these positions) 8...♗g7 9 0-0 0-0 10

♘c3 ♘bd7 11 ♗e2 ♕c7 12 h3 ♘b6 13 a4 a5 14 ♖d1 ♗a6 15 ♘b5 ♕d8 16 ♖a3 with a slight advantage for White, Topalov-Mayer, Dornbirn 1990.

b) 6...e6 7 ♗xc4 exd5 (7...♘a6 8 ♘f3 ♘b4 9 ♕c3 exd5 10 exd5 ± ♗d6?? 11 0-0 0-0 12 a3 ♗a6 13 b3 1-0 Beliavsky-Bukal, Nova Gorica 1999; 7...♗b7?! 8 ♘f3 exd5 9 exd5 ♗e7 10 0-0 d6 11 ♖e1 ♕c7 12 ♘h4 g6 13 ♗b5+ ♘bd7 14 ♕c3 and Black's position is a mess) 8 exd5 d6 *(D)* and now:



b1) 9 ♘f3 ♗e7 10 0-0 0-0 11 ♖e1 ♖e8 12 ♘e4! with the idea 12...♘xe4 13 ♕xe4 ♘d7 14 ♗d2 ♕c7 15 ♗c3 ±.

b2) 9 b4!? is a computer-suggested gambit that actually makes a lot of sense. All of White's other pieces will be aggressively-placed, a bishop on b2 makes life difficult for Black, and in any case this doesn't give him time for ...g6. Play might go 9...cxb4 10 ♗b2 ♗e7 11 ♘gf3 0-0 12 0-0 ♘bd7 13 ♖fe1 ♗d8 14 a3 bxa3 15 ♖xa3 ♕c7 16 ♘d4 and the rook swings to the kingside for attacking purposes.

7 ♗xc4 ♗xc4

7...d6 8 b3 g6 9 ♗b2 ♗xc4 10 bxc4! at any rate means that White's centre is there to stay. A convincing example went 10...♗g7 11 ♘f3 0-0 12 ♗c3 ♕a6 13 0-0 ♘bd7 14 ♖fe1 ♘b6 15 a4 ♖ab8 16 e5! ♘e8 17 a5 ♘d7 18 e6 fxe6 19 ♖xe6 ♗f6 20 ♗xf6 exf6 21 ♕a4 ♖f7 22 ♘e4 with a winning game for White, Gulko-Alburt, USA Ch, Long Beach 1989.

8 ♕xc4 d6 9 ♘f3

9 b3 g6 10 ♗b2 ♗g7 11 ♗c3!? ♕a6 12 f4 0-0 13 ♘gf3 ♕xc4 14 bxc4 ± Grachev-Martynov, St Petersburg 2003.

9...♕a6

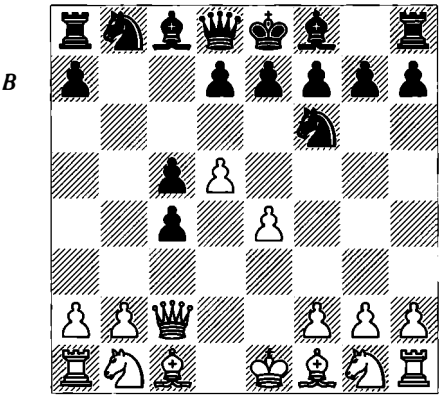
9...♘bd7 10 0-0 g6 11 b3!? ♗g7 12 ♗b2 ± M.Thinius-Heinemann, Bundesliga 1992/3.

10 0-0 ♕xc4 11 ♘xc4

This is a typical advantage for White, particularly with a lead in development and control of c4. Black therefore tried 11...♘xe4 12 ♖e1 f5 in N.Nikolić-Ilić, Sutomore 2004. Then 13 ♘h4 won the f-pawn with a very slight advantage, but 13 ♘fd2! is better, with the idea 13...♘xd2? 14 ♘xd6+ ♔d7 15 ♘f7 ♘f3+ 16 gxf3 ♖g8 17 ♖e6! ±.

10.24)

4...bxc4 5 e4 *(D)*



5...d6

Or:

a) 5...e6 transposes to Section 10.22.

b) 5...♗a6!? 6 ♘f3 d6 7 ♘a3 (White doesn't want to play ♗xc4 yet and have his queen brought to c4, where it will be attacked and lose time) 7...g6 8 ♗xc4 ♗g7 9 0-0 0-0 10 ♖e1 transposes to note 'b' to White's 9th move below.

c) 5...♘a6!? is normally answered with 6 ♗xc4 ♘b4 7 ♕e2 ♕a5 8 ♘c3, but White can also try to make the knight move irrelevant by 6 a3 (transposing into 4...♘a6 5 a3 bxc4 6 e4 – note 'd22' to Black's 4th move in Section 10.2), while 6 ♘c3 transposes to line 'd13' of that same note.

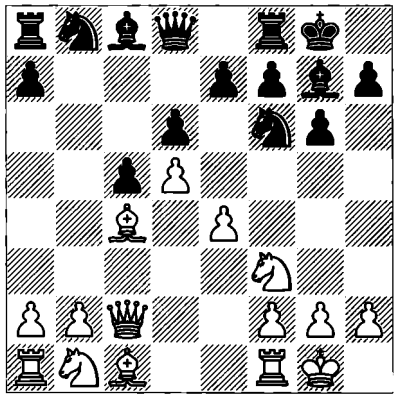
6 ♗xc4 g6 7 ♘f3

Pedersen thinks that White is slightly better after 7 f4 ♗g7 8 ♘f3, which could be true, but it's a bit loosening. Incidentally, don't fall for 7

b3? ♘xe4!, as leading grandmaster Ivan Sokolov once did!

7...♗g7 8 0-0 0-0 *(D)*

W



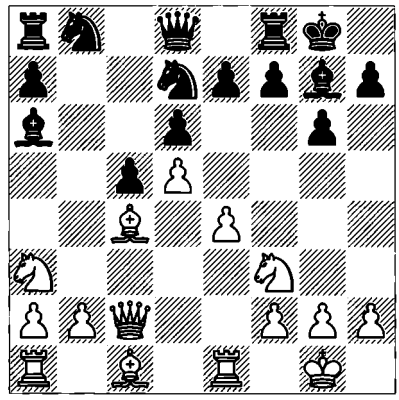
9 h3

This semi-waiting move is played partly to prevent ...♘g4-e5 (and ...♗g4), but also to give a bishop on f4 an escape-square on h2 and reserve the option of bringing a knight to a3. Nevertheless, White may do just as well with common-sense moves, as follows:

a) Moskalenko, perhaps the leading advocate of 4 ♕c2, likes the position after 9 ♘c3, which can arise by various move-orders. Then 9...♗a6 is supposed to be the theoretical problem, but White can play 10 ♘b5! (Moskalenko himself has experimented with 10 ♗xa6 ♘xa6 11 ♗f4, which has consistently led to small advantages) 10...♗xb5 11 ♗xb5 ♕b6 12 ♗e2 ♘bd7 13 ♘d2!? (keeping Black's knight out of g4; 13 ♗d2 ± is possible) 13...♕c7 14 ♖b1 a5 (Moskalenko-Mahailovs, Barbero del Valles 2009) and the easiest path to an advantage is 15 ♘c4 ♘b6 16 ♘a3! ±, when Black lacks a queenside attack and White's bishop-pair gives him the advantage.

b) 9 ♖e1 ♗a6 (9...♘fd7 10 ♗f4 ♘b6 11 ♗e2 ♗g4 12 ♘bd2 a5 13 h3 ♗xf3 14 ♘xf3 ± Summermatter-Bischoff, Leukerbad 1992) 10 ♘a3 also yields a modest positional advantage; e.g., 10...♘fd7 *(D)* and now:

W



b1) 11 ♗f4 ♘b6 12 e5 ♘xc4 (12...dxe5 13 ♗xe5 ♘xd5 14 ♖ad1 ±; e.g., 14...♗xc4 15 ♘xc4 e6 16 ♘e3 ♘xe3 17 ♖xe3 ♕a5 18 ♗xg7 ♔xg7 19 ♘e5! ±) 13 ♘xc4 dxe5 14 ♗xe5 f6 15 ♗xb8 ♖xb8 16 ♖ad1 ± Bender-Pavlović, Zagreb 2007.

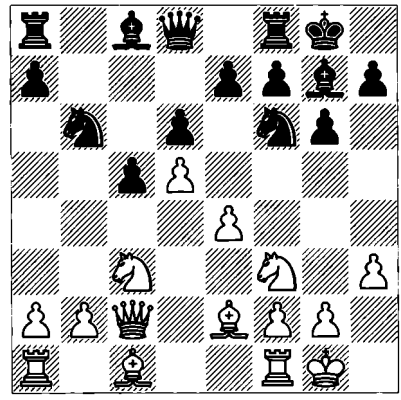
b2) 11 ♗d2 ♘b6 12 ♗c3 ♗xc3 13 ♕xc3 ♘xc4 14 ♘xc4 ♗xc4 15 ♕xc4 ♘d7 16 ♕c3 ± Chuprikov-Aveskulov, Alushta 2005. White is set for an e5 break, which isn't disastrous for Black, but guarantees White an edge.

9...♘bd7

Probably this is the best move. The fact that he has played 9 h3 enables White to answer 9...♗a6 with one knight move or another: 10 ♘bd2 (with the idea ♖b1 and b3; also good is 10 ♘a3 ♕c8 11 ♘b5!; compare line 'a' of the previous note) 10...♘fd7 11 ♖b1 ♘b6 12 b3 ♕c8 (12...♘xc4 13 ♘xc4 ♘d7 14 ♗b2 ±) 13 ♗b2 ♗xb2 14 ♖xb2 ♘8d7 15 ♖e1 threatening e5, Ilinčić-Vajda, Budapest 2005.

10 ♘c3 ♘b6 11 ♗e2 *(D)*

B



11...♘e8

Or:

a) 11...♘bd7?! (changing plans, but it's instructive anyway) 12 ♗f4 ♕b6 13 ♖fe1 ♖b8 14 ♖ab1 ♗a6 15 e5! (almost always the key move, and one you seldom get to make successfully in

the main-line Benko Gambit) 15...dxe5 16 ♘xe5 ♘xe5 17 ♗xe5 ♖bc8 18 ♖bd1 ♗xe2 19 ♖xe2 ♕b7 20 d6! exd6 21 ♖xd6 ♖fd8?? (21...♖c6 22 ♕d3! – Moskalenko) 22 ♖xf6 ♖e8 23 f4 +– Moskalenko-Robles Garcia, Montcada i Reixac 2009.

b) 11...a5 12 a4 ♘e8 13 ♗f4 (13 ♗b5!?) 13...♘c7 14 ♖ad1 ♗a6 15 ♖fe1 f6?! (a real concession; it is better to allow e5 with a small advantage for White after 15...♗xe2 16 ♖xe2 ♘a6 17 e5 ♘b4 18 ♕c1) 16 b3 ♕d7 17 ♘d2 ♗xe2 18 ♖xe2 e5?! (18...♘a6) 19 dxe6 ♘xe6 20 ♗e3 ± Erdos-Van Assendelft, Warsaw 2010.

12 ♗f4 ♘c7 13 ♖ad1 ♗b7

Black wants to hold up e5 by attacking d5, a tactic reminiscent of the Modern Benoni.

14 ♕c1 ♕c8 15 ♗h6 ♗a6 16 ♖fe1 f6

The same conundrum for Black: whether to allow e5 or make this weakening move.

17 ♗f4!?

17 ♘h4 attempts to start a direct attack; e.g., 17...♗xe2 18 ♖xe2 ♖b8 19 ♖d3 ♖f7 20 ♖g3 ♕a6 21 ♗xg7 ♖xg7 22 ♕h6; this is neither forced nor necessary but it hints at one of the problems with ...f6.

17...♖b8 18 b3 ♗xe2 19 ♖xe2

White is slightly better, Sachdev-Meenakshi, Olongapo City (women) 2010.

10.3) Other Benoni Systems

In this section we'll cover other lines besides the Modern Benoni and Benko Gambit which begin with 1...c5 or 2...c5. These are in divided into the following subsections:

10.31: 1 d4 c5 2 d5 Misc. 214
10.32: Czech Benoni (...e5) 217
10.33: Benoni without ...♘f6 219
10.34: The Vulture (3...♘e4) 221
10.35: Snake Benoni (5...♗d6) 222

10.31)

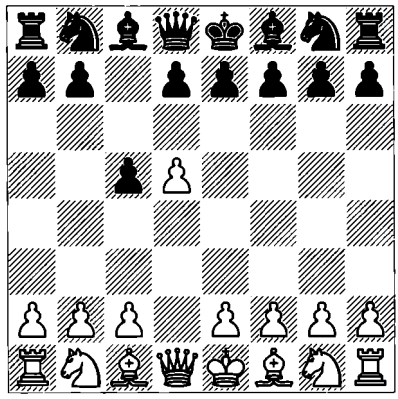
1 d4 c5 2 d5 *(D)*

Now we have another split:

10.311: 2...f5 214
10.312: 2...d6/2...e5 216

Another hypermodern try is 2...b5, when 3 e4 already attacks the pawn on b5, and after 3...a6, 4 c4! is one good solution: 4...bxc4

B

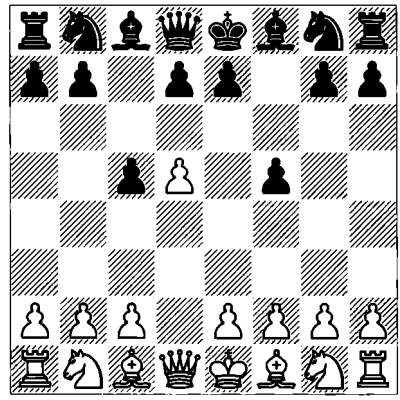


(4...d6 5 cxb5 ♘f6 6 ♘c3 is a poor Benko Gambit, because Black never interfered with White's castling plans) 5 ♗xc4 d6 6 ♘f3 g6 can be answered slowly by 7 0-0 ♗g7 8 ♖e1 ♘f6?! 9 e5 dxe5 10 ♘xe5, or radically with 7 e5!? ♗g7 (7...dxe5 8 ♘xe5 ♗g7 9 ♘xf7! ♔xf7 10 d6+ e6 11 ♕f3+ and ♕xa8) 8 ♘c3 dxe5 9 0-0 ♘f6 10 ♘xe5 0-0 11 ♖e1 ±.

10.311)

2...f5 *(D)*

W



This hybrid of a Dutch and Benoni is sometimes called the 'Clarendon Court', although the name varies by country. It has been subject to a surprising amount of analysis.

3 ♘c3

Another good approach is 3 e4 fxe4 4 ♘c3 ♘f6, and now:

a) 5 f3 exf3!? (other moves transpose to lines in the note to Black's 4th move: 5...e5 6 fxe4 d6 is 'a3'; 5...d6 is 'a', and 5...e6 is 'b1') 6

♘xf3 d6 7 ♘g5! (with the idea ♗b5+) 7...a6 8 ♗d3 g6 9 0-0 ♗g7 10 ♘e2! intending ♘f4.

b) 5 ♘h3!? g6 6 ♘g5 ♗g7 7 ♗c4 0-0 8 0-0 d6 9 ♘gxe4 ♘xe4 10 ♘xe4 and the e6-square is still a problem for Black, although this is playable.

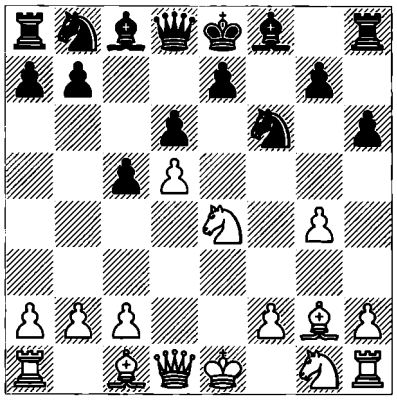
c) 5 g4 is a sort of 'main line':

c1) 5...g6? 6 g5 ♘h5 7 ♗e2 ♘g7 8 h4 ♘f5 9 h5 ♗g7 10 ♘xe4 ♕c7 11 ♘f3 d6 12 h6 ♗f8?! 13 b3 ♘d7 14 ♗b2 ♖g8 15 ♕d2 with domination of the board.

c2) After 5...e6!?, 6 dxe6 yields a small edge, but I like 6 ♘h3!? ♘xd5 7 ♘xd5 exd5 8 ♕xd5 ♘c6 9 ♗g5, when White has the better of it; e.g., 9...♘e7 10 ♕xe4 d5 11 ♕e5 ±.

c3) 5...h6! 6 ♗g2 d6 7 ♘xe4 *(D)* with some edge due to Black's weaknesses.

B



Then upon 7...♘xg4, Avrukh mentions 8 ♕e2!? (this is promising, as is 8 ♘e2! intending ♘f4) 8...♘a6 9 ♗h3 ♘e5 (9...♘f6?? 10 ♘xf6+ gxf6 11 ♕h5#; 9...h5 10 ♘f3 ♘c7?! 11 ♗f4 e5?! 12 dxe6 ♗xe6? 13 0-0-0 gives White a winning position) 10 f4 ♗xh3 11 ♘xh3 ♘f7 12 f5! ♕d7 13 ♘f4! intending 13...♕xf5 14 ♖f1, when Black has two pawns but can hardly move without getting into trouble; e.g., 14...0-0-0 15 ♘e6 ♕xd5? (15...♕g6 16 h4!) 16 ♘c3 ♕e5 17 ♖xf7.

3...♘f6 4 f3 e5

This is recommended by the experts of this opening. Other moves:

a) 4...d6 5 e4 fxe4 6 fxe4 looks good for White:

a1) 6...♘bd7 7 ♘f3 g6 8 ♘g5 ♘e5?! (or 8...♘b6?! 9 ♗b5+) 9 ♗b5+ ♗d7 10 ♘e6 ♕a5 11 ♗xd7+ ♘fxd7 12 0-0 with a huge advantage for White.

a2) 6...a6 7 ♘f3 ±.

a3) 6...e5 7 ♗b5+ (7 ♘f3 favours White slightly) 7...♗d7 8 ♗xd7+ ♕xd7 9 ♘f3 ♘a6 (to meet ♘g5 with ...♘c7) 10 0-0 ♗e7 11 ♘h4!? 0-0 (11...g6 12 ♘f3) 12 ♘f5 ±.

b) 4...e6 5 e4 and now:

b1) 5...fxe4 6 fxe4 exd5?! 7 e5! ♕e7 8 ♘f3 d6 9 ♗b5+ ♗d7 10 0-0 dxe5 11 ♖e1 ±.

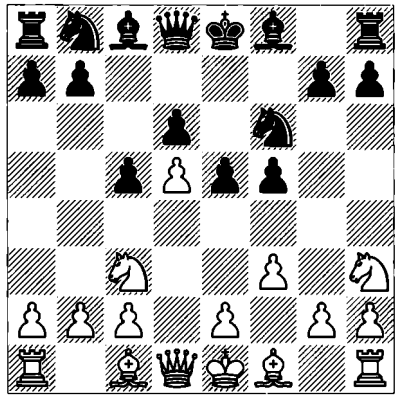
b2) 5...exd5 6 ♘xd5 (6 exd5 ±) 6...♘c6 7 ♗f4 d6 8 ♗c4 ♘e5 9 ♗xe5 dxe5 10 ♘e2 "with the more comfortable position" (Maurits Wind).

5 ♘h3!?

5 e4 f4 6 g3 d6 (6...♘h5 7 d6! – Levitt) 7 ♗h3!? (7 gxf4 ♘h5 8 ♕e2!?) is a nice way to gain a modest advantage while avoiding complications; e.g., 7...♗xh3 (7...♘h5 8 ♗g4; 7...♗d7 8 ♕e2 g5 9 ♗d2 a6 10 0-0-0 b5) 8 ♘xh3 ♘h5 9 ♕e2! with the idea 9...fxg3 10 ♘g5.

5...d6 *(D)*

W



6 ♘g5

6 e4 f4 (6...fxe4 7 ♘g5! exf3 8 ♕xf3 gives White far more than enough compensation, according to Michiel Wind) 7 ♗b5+ (7 g3!?) 7...♘fd7! (7...♗d7 8 ♘g5!) 8 g3 (or 8 ♘f2 a6 9 ♗f1!? b5 10 g3 ♗e7 11 ♗h3) 8...a6 9 ♗e2 ♘f6 10 ♘f2 ± and now Black's best is apparently 10...♘h5 11 g4 ♘f6 12 a4, when White has more space in the centre with potentially more on both wings.

6...h6

After 6...♗e7 7 e4 0-0 8 exf5 ♗xf5 9 ♗d3 ± White wins the light squares.

7 ♘e6 ♗xe6 8 dxe6 ♕c8 9 e4 ♕xe6 10 exf5 ♕xf5 11 ♗d3 ♕d7 12 ♗g6+ ♔d8 13 0-0

Black faces a long defensive task as White activates his bishop-pair.

10.312)

2...d6

2...e5 can transpose after 3 c4 d6, but also tips Black's hand, so that White might forego 3 c4 in favour of 3 ♘c3.

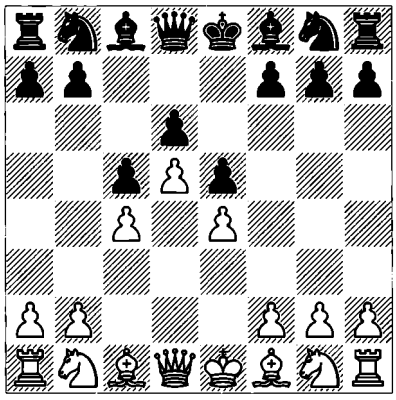
3 c4

In reality, this move-order is relatively rare due to the fact that 3 ♘c3 is particularly effective here, but moving the c-pawn is consistent with the rest of this book, so I'll give it a look.

3...e5

Establishing the structure for the Semi-Benoni and Czech Benoni. Naturally Black can also play 3...e6, when 4 ♘c3 exd5 5 cxd5 g6 6 e4 ♗g7 is a Modern Benoni without ...♘f6. To be consistent with our repertoire, White should play 7 ♗d3, and if Black replies 7...♘e7, then we have reached Section 10.33.

4 e4 *(D)*



This is called a Semi-Benoni, and it can change into a Czech Benoni (see 10.32) if Black plays ...♘f6 soon. I'm not going to cover all the slippery details, but here are a few lines:

4...♗e7

Black would like to swap off his 'bad' bishop with ...♗g5. Alternatively:

a) 4...f5?! 5 exf5 ♗xf5 6 ♘e2 ♘f6 7 ♘g3 ♗g6 8 ♘c3 ♗e7 9 ♗d3 controls e4 and f5, while e6 remains a sore spot.

b) 4...g6 5 ♘c3 ♗g7 6 ♗d3 ♘e7 can be met by 7 h3 0-0 8 g4!?, intending 8...f5 9 gxf5 gxf5 10 ♘f3, or by 7 h4!? h6 8 h5!? (8 ♗e3 also yields a slight advantage) 8...g5, after which 9 ♘ge2 with ♘g3 is customary, although there are other plans. A funny possibility at this point is 9 g4!?, producing a position in which White can slowly but surely build up for a queenside break and try to win on that side alone. That may seem implausible, but with open files and threats of sacrifices on c5, for example, White can exert great pressure. He also has f5 available for a well-timed knight jump, whereas Black's knights have no access to f4.

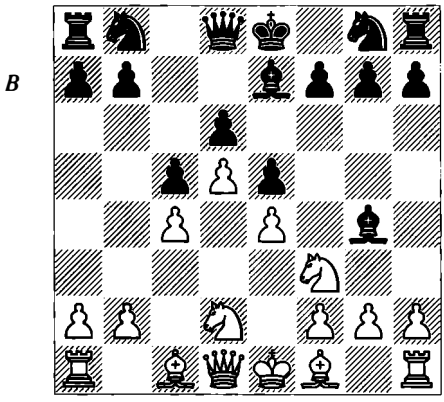
5 ♘f3

You can also argue that the exchange of bishops costs Black time, so that 5 ♘c3 ♗g5 6 ♗xg5 ♕xg5 7 ♘f3 ♕e7 can be followed by almost any normal set-up to White's advantage; e.g., 8 g3 ♘f6 9 ♗g2 0-0 10 0-0, with the idea of a later f4 or b4.

5...♗g4

Renewing the ...♗g5 idea, which White's next move again frustrates.

6 ♘bd2 *(D)*



6...♘a6

6...♗g5 is met by 7 ♕a4+! ♗d7 8 ♕b3 ♗xd2+ 9 ♗xd2 ± (Kasparov). Toth-Hammer, Biel 1981 is a nice example of space exploitation in the opening: 6...♘d7 7 ♗e2 ♘gf6 8 h3 ♗h5 9 ♕c2 0-0 10 g4! ♗g6 11 ♗d3 ♘e8 12 ♘f1! ♘c7 13 ♘g3 ±; later h4-h5 and ♘f5 followed.

7 ♗e2

7 a3!? ♘f6 8 ♗d3 0-0 9 h3 ♗d7 10 g4 ♖b8 11 ♘f1 b5 12 b3 with an initiative for White (Kasparov).

7...♘f6 8 a3 0-0 9 0-0 g6

This is Kasparov-Torre, Baku 1980, which continued 10 ♘e1! ♗d7 11 ♘d3 ♘e8 12 b4 ♖c8 13 ♗b2 ♗f6 (13...f5 14 b5! ♘b8 15 f4 ± Kasparov) 14 ♕b3 b6 15 ♔h1 ♗g7 16 f4 ±.

Space is a mighty asset against the structure with ...c5, ...d6 and ...e5.

10.32) Czech Benoni (...e5)

1 d4 ♘f6

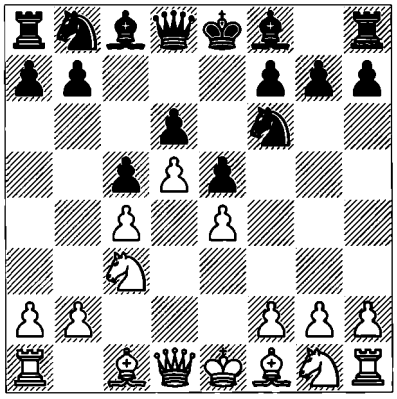
The defining feature of the Czech Benoni is that Black plays ...♘f6, ...c5 and ...e5, leading to a blocked central structure. 1...c5 2 d5 d6 3 c4 e5 4 ♘c3 ♘f6 is one of several other sequences that lead to the same position.

2 c4 c5 3 d5 e5

After 3...d6 4 ♘c3 g6 (4...e5 is a Czech Benoni) 5 e4 ♗g7 6 h3 0-0, 7 ♗g5 and 7 ♗e3 transpose into positions examined in Chapter 8 on the King's Indian, Sections 8.23 and 8.12 respectively.

4 ♘c3 d6 5 e4 *(D)*

B



We have arrived at the Czech Benoni, a relatively mainstream variation which has always had a decent reputation. On the other hand, its passivity is discouraging to some players.

5...♗e7

Black can play any number of moves, of course, but this is the main one by a good margin. If Black decides to fianchetto by 5...♘bd7 6 ♗d3 g6, Avrukh points out that White can play along the lines of 7 ♗g5 ♗g7 8 f3 and "get a favourable version of a Sämisch-type position, as Black lacks counterplay on the queenside." I would say 'very favourable'. One of his examples continues 8...a6 9 ♘ge2 h6 10 ♗e3 h5 11 ♕d2 (versus ...♗h6) 11...h4 (lest White play h4) 12 ♗g5! ♕c7 13 a4 ♘h5 14 g3 h3 (Calvo-Diez del Corral, Montilla 1976) and here he recommends 15 ♘d1 "followed by ♘f2 and, at some point, ♘g1 and ♗f1". Regardless of the details, this is an excellent way to set up. I should also note that if you play 6 h3 g6 7 ♗g5, as in our King's Indian lines, then 7...♗g7 8 ♗d3 0-0 9 ♘f3 is still an excellent position for White, with g4 and perhaps h4 at a later point.

6 ♘f3

Now that Black is no longer fianchettoing his king's bishop, White can play this way without worrying about an early ...f5, and so move-order becomes less important. Another possibility is to play ♗d3 and ♘ge2.

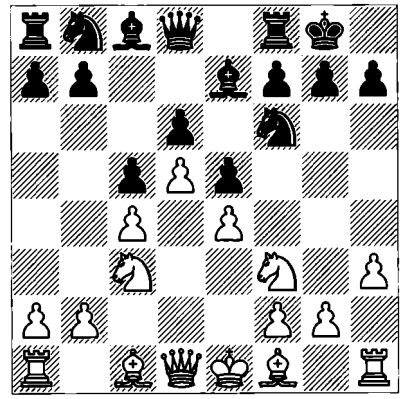
6...0-0

6...♘bd7 7 ♗d3 ♘f8 with the idea ...♘g6 is a typical plan for Black. Then 8 h3 h5 9 g3 ♘g6 10 h4 (stopping ...h4) restricts Black's knight, with some advantage; e.g., 10...♗g4 11 ♗e2 a6 12 a4 b6 13 ♘h2! (Mellano-J.Fernandez, Buenos Aires 1991) and after the correct 13...♗xe2 14 ♕xe2, White simply controls more of the board.

7 h3 *(D)*

I'm going to recommend the set-up with ♘f3, h3 and ♗d3, which can be played against almost any slow system.

B



7...♘e8

Black also has a plan with ...♖e8 and ...♘f8-g6; e.g., 7...♘bd7 8 ♗d3 a6. I'll present a couple of different approaches for White:

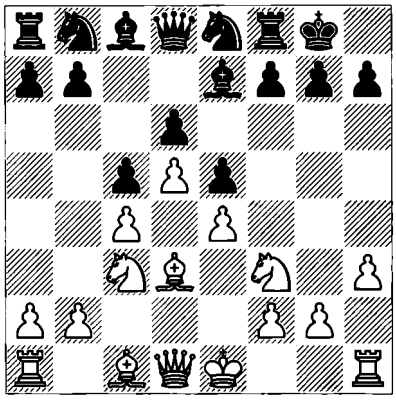
a) 9 a4 (the only potential drawback to this move is that White may want to castle queenside; it might be wise to wait until ...b5 is a threat) 9...♘h5!? 10 ♘e2 (10 g3 is a good alternative, as in so many of our h3 King's Indian positions) 10...g6 11 g4 (11 ♘g3!? ♘xg3 12

fxg3 ± is very interesting, and perhaps even best) 11...♘g7 12 ♘g3 ♔h8 13 ♗e3 ♘f6! 14 ♕c2!? (14 ♗h6!) 14...♘g8 (14...h5! 15 ♗e2! ±) 15 ♔e2 ♗d7 (Lautier-Nisipeanu, French Team Ch, Noyon 2005) and now 16 ♔f1, intending a5 and b4, is good, since White comes out better after 16...f5 17 exf5 gxf5 18 gxf5 ♕c8 19 ♔e2! ♘xf5 20 ♗xf5 ♗xf5 21 ♘xf5 ♕xf5 22 ♕xf5 ♖xf5 23 a5.

b) 9 g4 ♖e8 (again with the idea of ...♘f8-g6) 10 ♖g1 ♘f8 11 g5 ♘h5 12 ♘xe5 g6 13 ♘g4 ♗xg5 14 ♘h6+ ♗xh6 15 ♗xh6 ♕h4 16 ♕d2 was better for White in Reshevsky-Miles, Philadelphia 1987.

8 ♗d3 *(D)*

B



8...g6

Black's idea is to play ...♘g7 and ...f5. When White stops that with ♗h6, he can play ...♘d7-f6, ...♔h8, and ...♘g8. As you can imagine, this isn't terribly practical, and White has an excellent record in this variation. Black can also forego ...g6 with 8...♘d7. Then:

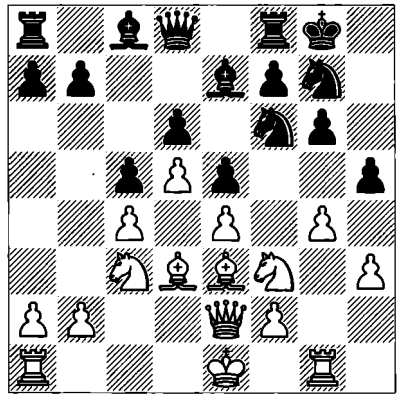
a) After 9 a3 g6 10 ♗h6 ♘g7 11 g4 ♔h8 12 ♕d2 ♘f6 Black has completed a textbook reorganization, but White has space in the centre and on the kingside, where he can soon launch an attack. But in Pytel-A.Smith, Manchester 1981, another opportunity soon appeared: 13 0-0-0 ♗d7 14 ♗c2 a6? 15 ♘xe5! dxe5 16 d6 ♗c6 17 dxe7 ♕xe7 18 ♘d5 ♕e6 19 f3 ♖ab8 20 h4! and White's coming attack with h5 was decisive.

b) 9 g4 a6 10 a4 ♖b8 11 ♖g1! (a good prophylactic move, discouraging ...f5) 11...♘c7 (11...g6 12 ♗h6 ♘g7 13 ♕e2 ± Kasparov; this resembles our main line) 12 b3 (12 a5 ± Razuvaev; then Black will find it difficult to achieve anything on the queenside) 12...♖e8 13 h4! b5 (13...h6 14 h5! ♘f6 15 g5 hxg5 16 ♘xg5 – Kasparov) 14 g5!? (after 14 cxb5 axb5 15 axb5 ♘b6 a sample line is 16 h5 ♗d7 17 g5 ♖a8 18 ♖xa8 ♕xa8 19 ♔e2 ♕a5 20 ♗d2 ♖a8 21 ♖g3 ♕a3 22 ♘h2 ♔f8 23 ♘g4 ±) 14...♘f8 15 h5 ♗d7 (15...bxc4 16 ♗xc4 ±) 16 ♘h2 bxc4 17 ♗xc4! f5 18 exf5!? (18 gxf6! ♗xf6 19 ♕f3 ±) 18...♗xf5 19 ♘f1 ♕d7 20 ♘e3 e4 21 ♗b2 ♗d8 (Kasparov-Miles, Basel (1) 1986) and now Kasparov gives 22 ♕c2! ♕f7 23 0-0-0 ♘d7 24 f4! ±.

9 ♗h6

9 g4 ♘d7 is, by transposition, Ivanchuk-Seirawan, Reykjavik 1990. This game was a lesson in space advantages and appropriate exchanges: 10 ♗e3 ♘g7 11 ♖g1 ♘f6 12 ♕e2 h5 *(D)*.

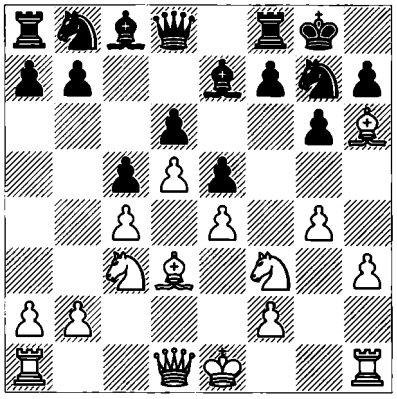
W



This is an important type of position that White has to be ready for. Generally he doesn't want to play g5, after which Black has stopped White's kingside attack and can strike back with ...f6 when it's convenient; this theme arises in many positions. White should arrange either to defend the g4-pawn or to sacrifice it to open the h- and g-files. The game continued 13 ♘d2 ♕d7 14 f3 ♘h7 15 0-0-0 ♗g5 (exchanging dark-squared bishops, but the 'bad' bishop was also a good defender of the dark squares!) 16 ♗xg5 ♘xg5 17 ♕g2 ± ♕e7 (17...h4 18 ♕f2 ♘xh3 19 ♕xh4 ♘xg1 20 ♖xg1 with a crushing attack – Cox) 18 h4 ♘h7 19 ♕g3 a6 20 g5. Now this move is OK, because ...f6 doesn't energize a dark-squared bishop on e7; in the meantime, White prepares f4, and won with the long-term strategy of exploiting his space and Black's

weaknesses: 20...f6 21 gxf6 ♖xf6 22 ♖df1 ♗d7 23 f4 exf4 24 ♖xf4 ♖xf4 25 ♕xf4 ♖f8 26 ♕h6 ♗e8 27 e5! ♕xe5 28 ♗xg6 ♗xg6 29 ♕xg6 ♔h8 30 ♘ce4 ♘f5 31 ♕xh5 ♘d4 32 ♕xe5+ dxe5 33 ♖g6 1-0.

9...♘g7 10 g4 *(D)*



B

This is your basic clampdown on ...f5.

10...♘d7 11 ♕e2

White has many approaches. A cute build-up was 11 ♕d2 ♘f6 12 ♔e2!? (12 0-0-0 ♔h8 13 ♖dg1 is of course fine) 12...♔h8 13 ♖ag1 ♘g8 14 h4 f6 (14...♘xh6 15 ♕xh6 f6 16 ♔d2 ♗d7 17 ♔c2 a6 18 ♔b1 b5? 19 ♘g5! fxg5 20 hxg5 ♔g8 21 ♕xh7+ ♔f7 22 ♖h6 with a killing attack; well, maybe 12 0-0-0 was better after all, but this is a nice line) 15 ♗e3 ♗d7 (Barbero-Partos, Dubai Olympiad 1986) and now Barbero gives 16 ♖g2 with an advantage. Instead, 16 h5 g5 17 ♘e1 ♘h6 18 f3 ♘f7 19 ♘c2 a6 20 ♖b1 is an example of the kind of stabilization of the kingside followed by queenside action that I've mentioned before. In this particular case, White stands extremely well. Note that a white knight can get to f5 at the right moment, whereas Black's knights cannot access f4.

11...a6 12 0-0-0 ♘f6 13 ♖dg1

Now:

a) If Black sits around, he has to be careful about the f4 break; e.g., 13...♔h8 14 ♔b1 ♗d7 15 ♘d2! ♖b8 16 ♗e3 b5 17 f4!.

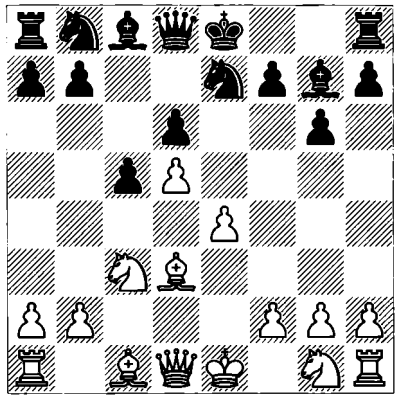
b) 13...♗d7 14 ♘d2 (a noteworthy reorganization) 14...b5 (14...♔h8 15 h4 ♘g8 16 ♗e3 h5 17 g5 ♗e8 18 f4 ± Spassky-Ghitescu, Beverwijk 1967) 15 h4 ♕a5 16 h5 ♖fb8 17 hxg6 fxg6 18 f4! b4 19 ♘d1 exf4 20 e5! +– Enklaar-Šahović, Wijk aan Zee 1972. After 20...dxe5 21 ♗xg7 ♔xg7 22 ♕xe5 White wins a piece and maintains the mating attack.

10.33) Benoni without ...♘f6

1 d4 e6

Here we turn our attention to a modified version of the Modern Benoni where Black plays ...♘e7 instead of ...♘f6. 1...e6 is really the most likely way to get into such a position. If instead Black plays 1...c5 2 d5 e6, many players will choose 3 ♘c3 or 3 e4, rather than 3 c4 exd5 4 cxd5 d6, which reverts to the line under question. Another possible move-order is 1...c5 2 d5 d6, but then there's always the chance that an eventual ...exd5 will be met by exd5. In the end, 1...e6 is the move-order with which White, in playing the repertoire I have recommended, will have the hardest time avoiding a ...♘e7 Benoni.

2 c4 c5 3 d5 exd5 4 cxd5 d6 5 ♘c3 g6 6 e4 ♗g7 7 ♗d3 ♘e7 *(D)*



W

This rare move (instead of the main variation 7...♘f6) makes a certain amount of sense, keeping the g7-bishop's diagonal unmasked and giving Black the opportunity to play ...f5. However, Black no longer gets any pressure on e4, and the e-file is blocked, whereas handy Benoni moves like ...♘g4, ...♘h5 and ...♘fd7 are no longer available. The knight on e7, by contrast with that on f6, lacks good squares to go to. Finally, Black's pawn on d6, which is seldom a problem in the main line (even if more active defences aren't available, ...♘e8 is a handy defensive move to have in reserve), becomes hard to defend in certain cases.

8 ♗f4

A very rare move, but I think it's useful to target d6 right away. Naturally 8 ♘f3 is often played here, as is 8 ♗g5. The important alternative 8 h4! is underanalysed but apparently very effective, now that h5 can't be answered by ...♘xh5; for example, 8...0-0 (8...h6 9 h5! with the idea 9...g5 10 f4!; 8...♘d7 9 h5; 8...h5 9 ♗g5!) 9 h5 f5?! (9...♘d7 10 ♘f3 ±) 10 hxg6 hxg6 11 ♘f3 fxe4 12 ♗xe4 ♘f5 13 ♘g5 ♕e7 14 g4 ♘d4 15 ♗e3 ♖f6 16 ♘h7 ± J.Ivanov-Reinaldo Castineira, Pamplona 2009.

8...a6

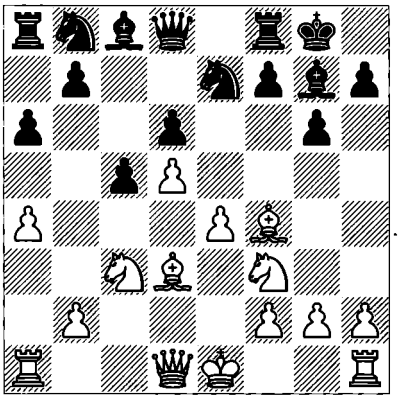
Because of the bishop on f4, 8...♘a6 with the idea ...♘c7 runs into 9 ♘b5 0-0 10 ♕d2 ± threatening ♗xd6 or ♘xd6. 8...0-0 may transpose to the main line; in any case, Black will probably want to play ...a6 soon.

9 a4

9 ♘f3, allowing 9...b5, is also promising, because White develops so rapidly: 10 0-0 (or 10 ♕d2 to cover b2, intending 10...b4 11 ♘d1) 10...0-0 (notice that Black can't play the natural ...♘d7, and 10...b4 11 ♘a4 favours White, in part because c4 will prove a good square for White's pieces; even White's knight on a4 might reroute to that square via b2) 11 h3 ♕c7 12 ♕d2 ±.

9...0-0 10 ♘f3 *(D)*

B



10...♕c7

Preparing ...♘d7. Other moves:

a) 10...♗g4 11 h3 ♗xf3 12 ♕xf3 ♕c7 13 ♕g3 shows up the weakness of d6. Play might continue 13...♘c8 14 a5 b5 15 axb6 ♕xb6 16 ♖a2, with the idea 16...♕b3 17 0-0! ♗xc3? 18 ♗b1 ±.

b) 10...♖e8 11 0-0 ♘d7?! (11...f5? 12 ♕b3! fxe4 13 ♘xe4 ♘f5 14 ♖fe1 ±) 12 ♗xd6 ♕b6 13 e5! ♕xb2 14 ♖c1 ±.

11 ♘d2

A knight on c4 will attack both d6 and b6. For want of games with 8 ♗f4, I'll supply some analysis. Two good alternatives (both aimed against ...♗g4) are 11 h3 ± and 11 ♕b3 ♘d7 12 0-0 ±.

11...♘d7

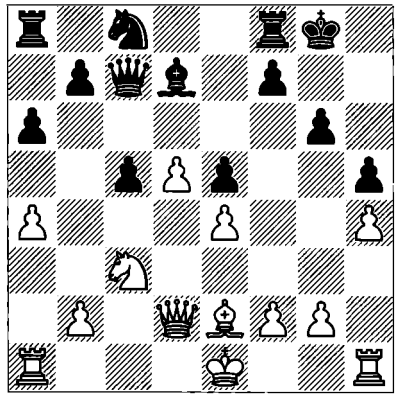
11...♖e8 12 ♗e2! (12 ♘c4 is more complicated, but still to White's advantage following 12...♗xc3+ 13 bxc3 ♘xd5 14 ♗xd6 ♕c6 15 ♕f3 with the idea 15...f5 16 e5!) 12...♗d7 (12...♘d7? is strongly met by 13 ♘c4 intending 13...♘e5 14 ♗xe5 ♗xe5 15 ♘xe5 dxe5 16 d6; 12...f5 13 ♘c4 ♖d8 14 ♕d3 leaves Black at a loss) 13 ♘c4 ♘c8 14 ♕d3 ± f5 15 ♕g3 fxe4 16 h4!, not just winning d6 but going for the kill with h5.

12 ♘c4 ♘e5 13 ♗xe5 ♗xe5 14 ♘xe5 dxe5 15 h4 h5

Black doesn't want to allow h5 when his dark squares are so vulnerable to moves like ♕d2-h6.

16 ♕d2 ♗d7 17 ♗e2 ♘c8 *(D)*

W



In order to blockade on d6.

18 g4!

With Black's dark-square weaknesses on the kingside, a direct attack should work. Naturally White needn't play so radically.

18...♗xg4

18...hxg4 is well met not only by 19 h5, but also 19 d6! ♕d8 (19...♕xd6 20 ♕xd6 ♘xd6 21 ♖d1; 19...♘xd6 20 0-0-0) 20 h5 g5 21 0-0-0 with ideas of ♕d5 or ♕e3, among others.

19 ♗xg4 hxg4 20 h5 ♕e7?

But 20...♘d6 21 ♕h6 is no fun.

21 d6! ♕xd6

21...♘xd6 loses to 22 ♘d5 ♕d8 23 hxg6 fxg6 24 ♕h6.

22 ♘d5 ♘e7

Neither 22...f5 23 ♕g5 nor 22...♔g7 23 ♕g5 saves Black.

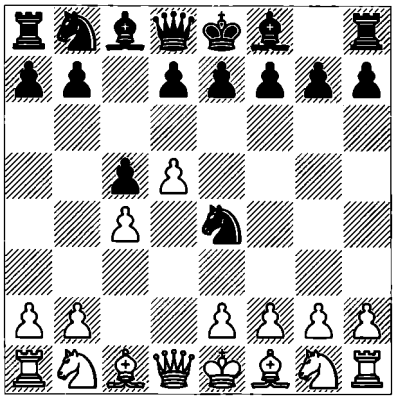
23 ♕h6

White wins.

10.34) The Vulture (3...♘e4)

1 d4 ♘f6 2 c4 c5 3 d5 ♘e4 *(D)*

W



The Vulture is the brainchild of the wonderfully creative Stefan Bücker. It is an opening that is easy to dismiss, but has survived many refutation attempts over the years.

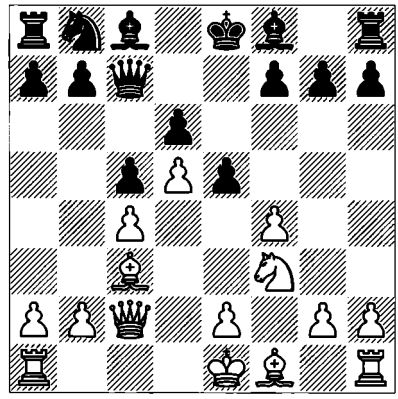
4 ♕c2

This is the most popular and perhaps critical line. 4 ♕d3 is a good alternative if White needs one; the move-order 4 ♘f3 ♕a5+ 5 ♘fd2 with the idea of ♕c2 and/or f3, as in S.Ernst-Van Dorp, Wolvega 2010, is also of interest, because it preserves c3 for the b1-knight. If Black adopts the Czech Benoni structure we'll see below, then ♘f3-d2 and ♘c3 is the same as ♘d2 and ♘e2-c3; compare what follows.

4...♕a5+ 5 ♘d2

It can be difficult to adjust to a surprise system, so try to be familiar with either this line or the challenging continuation 5 ♘c3 ♘xc3 6 ♗d2!. Then 6...♕a4?! 7 ♕xc3 isn't appealing for Black, so he normally sets up a Czech Benoni structure with 6...e5 7 ♗xc3 ♕c7 and ...d6. Then a sort of 'main line' goes 8 f4 d6 9 ♘f3 *(D)*. and now:

B



a) Bücker recommends 9...exf4 with an '!', but this is risky as it opens the long diagonal and strips the king of protection. White should open the e-file, and can even do so immediately by 10 e3! (10 g3!? is another way to open lines); e.g., 10...♕e7 11 ♗d3 fxe3 12 0-0 or 10...fxe3 11 ♗d3 with the idea 0-0 and ♖ae1. This really looks pretty tough for Black.

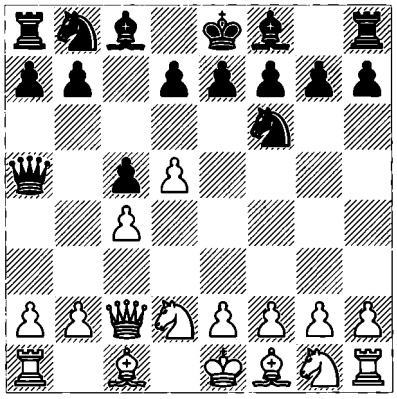
b) 9...♘d7 10 e3 g6 11 h4 ♗g7 12 h5 goes way back to Tatai-Bücker, corr. 1984. 12...♘b6 (what else?) and now:

b1) The game Gahwens-Gallinis, Germany (team event) 1989/90 continued 13 fxe5 dxe5 14 0-0-0 ♗g4, and here 15 d6! ± is particularly hard to meet, since after 15...♕c6 16 ♕f2 both 16...♗xf3 17 ♕h4! and 16...0-0-0 17 ♗e2 leave Black trying to unravel.

b2) 13 ♗d3 is also good, and if Black tries to go queenside with 13...♗g4, 14 h6 ♗f6 15 fxe5 dxe5 16 ♘h2!? looks strong, among others; e.g., 16...♗d7 17 0-0 ♗g5 18 ♘f3 ♗xe3+ 19 ♔h1 0-0 20 ♗xe5 ♕d8 21 ♖ael ♗xh6 22 ♕f2, with most of these moves apparently forced.

5...♘f6! *(D)*

Bücker and others some time ago began to prefer this approach. The original idea was the more provocative 5...♘d6, which is what you'll find covered in most books (if they mention the Vulture at all). Then 6 b3 is a problem, a main line proceeding 6...f5 (6...e5 7 ♗b2 f6 8 e3 ♘f7 9 ♗d3 g6 10 h4 ♖g8 11 h5 f5 12 hxg6 hxg6 13 ♗c3 ♕c7 14 g4 e4? 15 ♗xe4! and Black's position won't hold up) 7 ♗b2 e6 8 ♗c3 ♕b6 (8...♕d8 9 ♘gf3 ♘a6 10 e4!) 9 ♕b2! ♖g8 10 ♘gf3 (or 10 ♘h3 intending ♘f4) 10...♕d8 11 e3 b6 12 ♗d3 ±.



6 e4 d6

Black is setting up a Czech Benoni structure with ...d6 and ...e5; Bücker has also played 6...♕c7 with the same purpose.

7 ♘f3

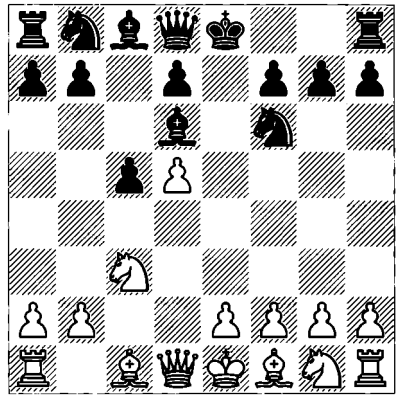
I think White gets a small advantage after 7 ♘e2 e5 8 ♘c3 ♗e7 9 ♗e2 ♘bd7, intending ...♘f8-g6, and now something along the lines of 10 a3 ♕d8 11 ♖b1 ♘f8 12 ♘f1 ♘g6 13 ♘e3 with the idea ♘f5.

7...e5 8 ♗d3 ♗e7 9 a3

Now 9...0-0 can be met by 10 h3 ♘h5 11 g3, and 9...♘bd7 with 10 h3!? ♕d8 (10...♘f8 11 b4! cxb4? 12 ♘b3) 11 ♘f1 ♘h5 (11...0-0 12 ♘g3) 12 ♘e3 ♘f4 13 ♗f1 ± followed by g3. Naturally, both sides can vary in several ways, even to the extent of pursuing entirely different plans. But this is a start.

10.35) Snake Benoni (5...♗d6)

1 d4 ♘f6 2 c4 c5 3 d5 e6 4 ♘c3 exd5 5 cxd5 ♗d6 *(D)*

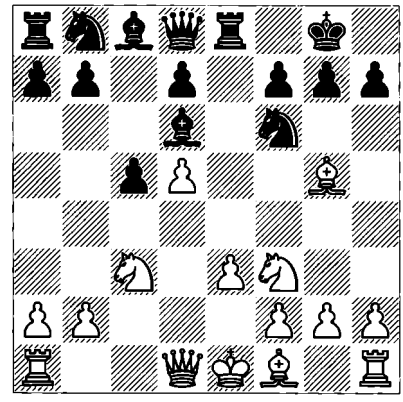


This odd-looking idea has been fairly well-known for a quarter of a century, and has always had its adherents, but I wonder if it's going to survive as a serious system.

If you are looking for an outright refutation of the Snake and don't mind devoting many hours to the effort, you can attack by 6 e4 0-0 7 f4, virtually forcing Black to sacrifice a piece with 7...♘xe4 8 ♘xe4 ♖e8 9 ♕e2 and now 9...♗c7 10 g4 or 9...♗f8 10 g4. Lengthy analysis convinces me that this does ultimately favour White's extra piece, even though at one point he will have to escape with his king to d1 and suffer some discomfort. But that's open to argument and anyway not in the spirit of this book. So I'll recommend a solid approach instead:

6 ♘f3 ♗c7

This is a move Black normally plays sooner or later. He can delay it, but shouldn't leave it too long. 6...0-0 can be met by 7 ♗g5 ♖e8 (7...h6 8 ♗h4 doesn't normally affect things much in these lines; a unique try is Magerramov's 8...b5!?, but simply 9 e3 with the idea 9...b4?? 10 ♘e4 or 9...a6 10 ♗xf6 ♕xf6 11 a4 b4 12 ♘e4 ♕e7 13 ♗d3! favours White) 8 e3 *(D)*, and now:

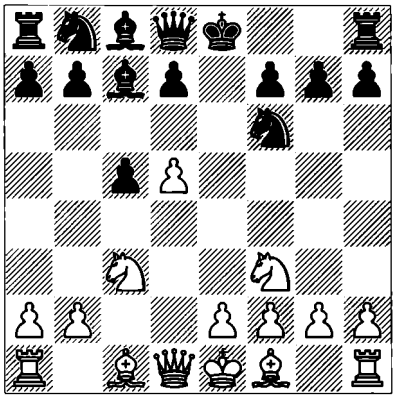


a) 8...h6 9 ♗h4 a6 (9...g5 10 ♗g3 ♗xg3 11 hxg3 ♔g7 12 d6 gives White a clear advantage, Vaganian-Hodgson, Sochi 1986) 10 a4 ♗f8 11 d6! ♖e6 12 ♗c4 ♖xd6 13 ♕b3 and Black is in big trouble: 13...♖e6! (13...g5 14 ♘e5! ♖e6 15 ♗xe6 fxe6 16 ♗g3) 14 ♗xe6 fxe6 15 e4 ♘c6 (G.Georgadze-Lima, Elgoibar 1997) 16 e5! g5 17 ♗g3 ♘h5 18 ♕c2 ♕e8 19 0-0 ±.

b) 8...♗c7 is Black's main idea, to restrain White's centre with ...d6 and, if appropriate, to put pressure on e4 with ...♗a5. It's interesting to compare this with the Leningrad Variation of the Nimzo-Indian (1 d4 ♘f6 2 c4 e6 3 ♘c3 ♗b4 4 ♗g5 c5 5 d5), in which Black's bishop gets to b4 in one move, rather than taking three to get to a5! One nice example is 9 d6! ♗a5 10 ♗c4 ♘c6 11 0-0 (11 ♕b3! forces 11...♗xc3+ 12 ♕xc3 with a solid advantage for White) 11...♗xc3 12 bxc3 ♘e5? 13 ♘xe5 ♖xe5 14 f4! ♖xe3 15 ♕d2 ♖e8 16 ♖ae1 ♖f8 17 ♖e7 ♖b8 18 ♗xf6 gxf6 19 ♕d5 b5 20 ♗d3 c4 21 ♗xh7+ ♔g7 22 ♕h5 ♕b6+ 23 ♔h1 f5 24 ♖xf7+! 1-0 Arbakov-Handke, Stuttgart 1998.

We now return to 6...♗c7 *(D)*, which has its own problems.

W



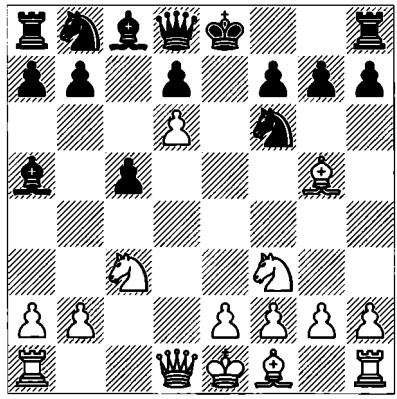
7 d6

Some people believe this forcing method is a virtual refutation of the Snake.

7 ♗g5 is the positional approach: 7...d6 8 e3 0-0 9 ♗e2 (9 ♗d3 is more aggressive, especially with White's lead in development) 9...a6 (9...♗a5 10 ♘d2! ♘bd7 11 0-0 a6 12 ♘c4 ±) 10 a4 ♘bd7 (10...♗a5 11 ♘d2 ♘bd7 12 ♘c4 ♗c7 13 a5 ±) 11 0-0 h6 12 ♗h4 ♖e8 13 ♘d2 ♖b8 14 ♖b1 (preparing to answer ...b5 with axb5 and b4, a standard Benoni plan) 14...♕e7 15 ♕c2 ♕f8 16 ♖fd1 g5 17 ♗g3 ♘e5 18 b4! cxb4 19 ♖xb4 ♗a5 20 ♖bb1 ♗xc3 21 ♕xc3 ♘xd5 22 ♕d4 ♘f6 (Tkachev-S.Savchenko, Cannes rapid 2000) and now 23 ♖b6! ♖e6 24 ♗c4 ♘xc4 25 ♘xc4 ♘e4 26 ♘xd6 ♘xg3 27 fxg3! with the idea ♖f1 is killing.

7...♗a5 8 ♗g5 *(D)*

B



Now we have these examples:

a) 8...h6 9 ♗h4 and then:

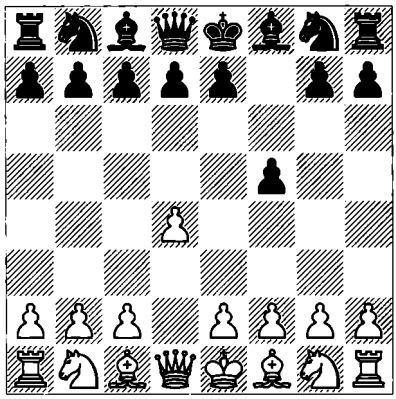
a1) 9...♕b6 10 ♗xf6 ♕xb2 11 ♗xg7 ♖g8 12 ♖b1 ♗xc3+ 13 ♗xc3 ♕xc3+ 14 ♘d2 ♖g6 15 ♖b3 ♕g7 (Arkell-Bezold, French Team Ch 2001) and now 16 ♘f3 ♘c6 17 g3! b6 18 ♘h4 ♖f6 19 ♗g2 ♗b7 20 0-0 gives White much the better pawn-structure and a plan of e4 and ♘f5.

a2) 9...♘c6 10 e3 b6 11 ♗c4 ♗b7 12 0-0 ♗xc3 13 bxc3 0-0 14 ♖e1 ♖e8?! 15 e4! g5 16 ♘xg5! hxg5 17 ♗xg5 ♘e5! 18 ♖e3!! ♔g7 19 ♖g3?! (19 ♗b3! +– and f4 follows – Moskalenko) 19...♗xe4! 20 ♗xf6++ ♔xf6 21 ♗d5! ♗g6? 22 f4 ♘c6 23 f5! ♗xf5 24 ♕h5 +– Moskalenko-Almeida, Banyoles rapid 2006.

b) 8...♕b6 9 ♗xf6 ♕xb2 10 ♗xg7 ♗xc3+! (10...♖g8!? 11 ♖b1 ♗xc3+ 12 ♗xc3 ♕xc3+ 13 ♘d2 ♖g6 14 ♖b3 doesn't improve matters) 11 ♗xc3 ♕xc3+ 12 ♘d2. This favours White, in spite of Black's discovery 12...♕e5! (12...♕d4 13 ♖c1 ♕xd6 14 e3!), to which White should reply 13 e3! ♘c6 14 ♗c4! ♖g8 15 0-0 ♕xd6 16 ♘e4 ♕xd1 17 ♖fxd1 ♔e7 18 ♘xc5 d6 19 ♘e4, when Black has three isolated pawns to deal with, and sensitive squares such as d5 and f5; e.g., 19...♗f5 20 ♘g3 ♗e6 21 ♗d3 might follow.

11 Dutch Defence

1 d4 f5 *(D)*

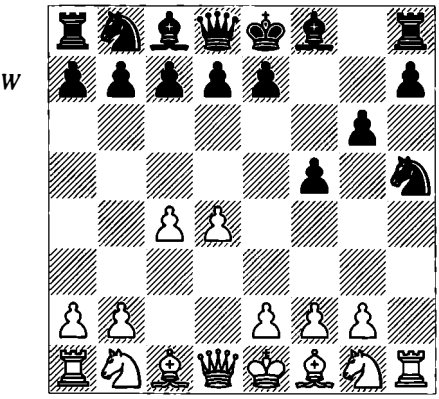


The Dutch Defence isn't a regular choice in elite tournaments nowadays, but is perfectly respectable and has always had a following of experienced grandmasters. Perhaps surprisingly, each of its three main versions – the Leningrad, Classical and Stonewall Variations – has held up theoretically into the present. All of them include ...f5 and ...♘f6 at some point, but then go different directions: the Leningrad is characterized by ...g6, ...♗g7 and ...d6; the Classical by ...e6 and ...d6; and the Stonewall by ...c6, ...d5 and ...e6. On top of that, Black can reach these formations by various move-orders; for example, we saw the Stonewall via 1 d4 d5 2 c4 c6 3 ♘c3 e6 4 e3 f5 in Chapter 5. The main lines we shall examine are:

11.1: 1 d4 f5 225
11.2: 1 d4 e6 2 c4 f5 232

Various forms of the Dutch can arise from first moves other than 1...f5. It might be useful to explain this up front in the context of our repertoire. First, there's simply 1...f5, which I propose to answer with 2 ♘c3. Against other move-orders, I will use 2 c4. In 11.2 I cover 1 d4 e6 2 c4 f5. Notice that immediately below and in my note to 2 ♘c3 in Section 11.1, I discuss 2 c4 in the context of a repertoire and in particular, I examine Black's other first moves that lead to a Dutch by transposition. I've presented it in this way because you might want to use 2 c4 against every Dutch move-order including 1...f5. In this note, I'll discuss two of Black's other attempts to employ the Dutch Defence and how you can respond to them:

a) Versus 1...g6 2 c4 (a move-order that cuts out any Dutch transpositions, 2 e4 ♗g7 3 c4, is covered in Section 12.34) 2...f5, one option is 3 ♘c3 ♘f6, transposing to line 'a' of my note after White's 2nd move in Section 11.1. But there's also a good alternative in 3 h4! ♘f6 4 h5 ♘xh5 *(D)*.



Now:

a1) 5 ♖xh5! gxh5 6 e4. White threatens mate and best play is 6...d6 (6...♗g7 7 ♕xh5+ ♔f8 8 ♕xf5+ ♔g8 9 ♘f3 d6 10 ♕h5) 7 ♕xh5+ ♔d7 8 ♕xf5+ e6 9 ♕h3 with a pawn and excellent attacking chances for the exchange (compare various h4 lines below).

a2) 5 e4! may be even better: 5...♘f6 6 exf5 gxf5 7 ♘f3 d6 8 ♘c3 with development, activity and structural superiority – more than enough positional compensation for a pawn.

b) 1...d6 2 c4 f5 is an unusual move-order that can be answered simply by 3 ♘c3 ♘f6, which is discussed below under the move-order 1...f5 2 c4 ♘f6 3 ♘c3 d6 – see line 'b' of the

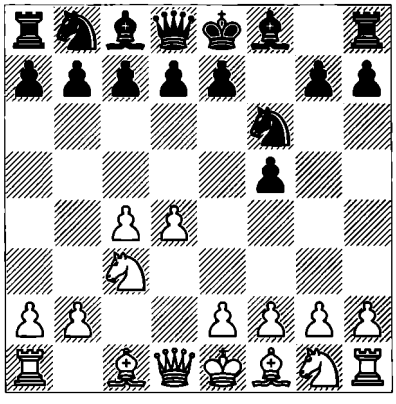
note to White's 2nd move in Section 11.1, where I recommend 4 ♗g5. Alternatively, since ...d6 weakens the light squares, adventurous souls could venture upon 3 g4!? fxg4 4 h3, a gambit that I don't recommend in other contexts, but which has more positional basis here. The idea is to control the e6-square, which has been weakened by ...d6.

11.1)

1 d4 f5 2 ♘c3

This is a relatively uncomplicated and efficient way to cut down on the many move-order challenges that the Dutch Defence presents in, say, lines where White plays g3, not to mention the dense theory associated with those lines. White's initial idea is very straightforward: to develop and play 3 e4, thus gaining a central advantage. As mentioned, 2 c4 is important not only because I am recommending it by transposition versus some Dutch move-orders, but because you may want to construct a complete repertoire around it (which also means you need a recommendation against the Leningrad). The following analysis should prove useful: 2 c4 ♘f6 (2...g6 was discussed above, via the move-order 1...g6 2 c4 f5, where we examined 3 h4!; against other second moves we can play as in the main lines below with ♘c3, e3, ♗d3, etc., and often transpose directly to them) 3 ♘c3 *(D)*.

B



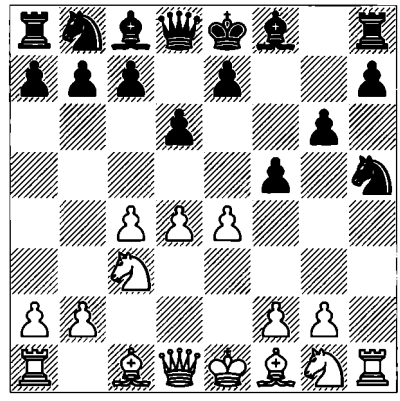
The only problem here is that White's best lines are very tactical and require some memorization, which isn't quite what I'm trying to do with this repertoire. Nevertheless, let me give you a starting point. The two arguably most important moves are:

a) 3...g6 4 h4!. This is a recurring theme against ...g6 lines:

a1) 4...♗g7 5 h5 ♘xh5 6 e4! is known to give White a favourable initiative, but that takes some time to prove, so you might want to check out the books and databases. One important line is 6...♘f6 (6...fxe4 7 g4! ♘f6 8 g5) 7 exf5 gxf5 8 ♗g5 with an attack.

a2) 4...d6 5 h5 ♘xh5 6 e4! *(D)* (this is held to be advantageous in most sources; 6 ♖xh5 gxh5 7 e4 ♕d7! is very complex and dynamically equal).

B



Now:

a21) 6...♘f6 7 ♗d3 fxe4 8 ♘xe4 and now 8...♗e6? 9 ♘xf6+ exf6 10 ♗xg6+ or 8...♗g7 9 ♘xf6+ ♗xf6?! 10 ♖xh7! ♖xh7 11 ♗xg6+ ♖f7 12 ♕h5 ♗e6 13 d5 ±.

a22) 6...fxe4 7 ♘xe4 ♗f5 8 ♘g5 (or 8 ♗d3) 8...♕d7 9 ♗d3 (threatening 10 ♗xf5, winning a piece) 9...♗xd3 10 ♕xd3 ♗h6 11 ♘1f3 with pressure that is worth more than a pawn.

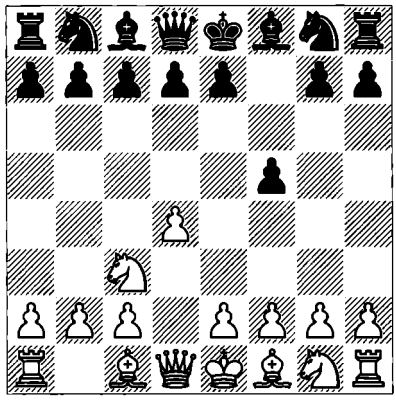
b) In order to avoid that fate, 3...d6 with the idea of playing ...g6 next is recommended by leading Leningrad Dutch experts. I propose 4 ♗g5, when Black must tread carefully:

b1) After 4...e6, the moves 5 e3, 5 ♘h3 and of course 5 ♘f3 are logical and objectively strongest. If you want something very simple that gives you a minor but distinct positional edge, there's 5 e4 fxe4 6 ♘xe4 ♗e7 7 ♗xf6! ♗xf6 8 ♘f3 0-0 and now 9 ♗d3!? ♘c6 10 ♘xf6+ ♕xf6 11 0-0 or 9 ♗e2.

b2) 4...♘bd7 5 ♕c2 (I also like 5 ♘h3 with the idea 5...h6?! 6 ♘f4! ♔f7 7 ♗xf6 ♘xf6 8 h4,

or 5...e5 6 e3 c6 7 ♗e2 ♗e7 8 ♕c2 h6 9 ♗h4 0-0 10 dxe5 ♘xe5 11 0-0 ±) 5...g6 6 e3 ♗g7 7 ♘f3 0-0 8 ♗e2 h6 9 ♗h4 e5 10 dxe5 dxe5 11 ♗g3 ♕e7 12 0-0-0 c6 13 h3 a6 14 ♗h2 b5 15 ♘h4 ♕f7?! 16 g4 ± Salov-Rivas, European Team Ch, Haifa 1989.

We now return to 2 ♘c3 *(D)*:



Black wants to prevent e4, so his normal responses are:

11.11: 2...d5 226
11.12: 2...♘f6 229

You won't see many other moves played with regularity, but these two are important:

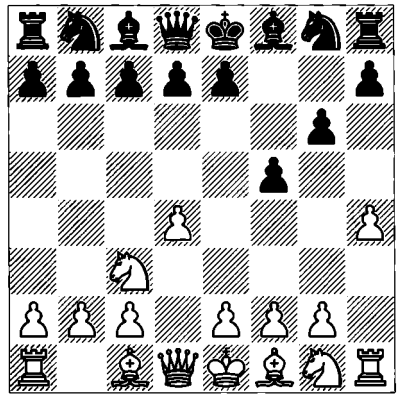
a) 2...e6 gives up the centre. After 3 e4, we have:

a1) 3...fxe4 4 ♘xe4 ♘f6 5 ♘xf6+ (or 5 ♗d3 ±) 5...♕xf6 6 ♘f3 ♘c6 (6...♗e7? 7 ♗g5 ♕f5 8 ♗xe7 ♔xe7 9 ♗d3 ± Korchnoi-Midjord, Siegen Olympiad 1970; 6...♗d6 7 ♗d3 b6 8 ♗e4 ♘c6 9 ♗g5 ♕f7 10 d5 ± Winants-Rej, Germany (Under-18) 1980) 7 ♗d3 ♗e7 8 0-0 0-0 9 c3 ♕f7 10 ♘g5! ♗xg5 11 ♗xg5 ± Drzasga-Weritz, Dortmund 1993.

a2) 3...♗b4 4 exf5 ♗xc3+ 5 bxc3 exf5 6 ♗d3 d6 7 ♘e2 and White is looking at a combination of ♖e1, ♘f4 and d5 to exploit the weakness on e6; e.g., 7...♘f6 8 0-0 0-0 9 ♖e1 c5!? 10 d5 ♕c7 11 c4 ♘xd5? 12 cxd5 c4 13 ♘d4! cxd3 14 ♕xd3 and already Black's position is indefensible, Hrtko-Wimbersky, corr. 1990.

b) If Black heads for a Leningrad set-up with 2...g6, then 3 e4 fxe4 4 ♘xe4 is possible, but the real problem is 3 h4! *(D)*. Then:

b1) 3...♗g7 4 h5 ♘c6 5 ♘f3 d6 (5...d5 6 ♗f4 a6 7 e3 ♘h6 and now apart from 8 hxg6



hxg6 {Debarnot-Larsen, Las Palmas 1976} 9 ♕d2 and 0-0-0 with an advantage, White has the strong move 8 ♘g5! with the idea ♕f3-g3 and 0-0-0) 6 hxg6!? (6 e4! fxe4 7 ♘xe4 followed by ♗d3) 6...hxg6 7 ♖xh8 ♗xh8 8 ♗g5 ± Argandona Riveiro-Perez Aranda, Torrelavega 2002.

b2) 3...♘f6 4 h5 and now:

b21) 4...♘xh5 5 ♖xh5! gxh5 6 e4 launches a terrific attack, with a clear advantage following 6...d6 7 ♕xh5+ ♔d7 8 ♕xf5+ e6 (8...♔e8 9 ♕h5+ ♔d7 10 ♗c4 c6 11 ♗f4 ♔c7 12 ♗e5! and White wins material, even after 12...♗g4! 13 ♕h2) 9 ♕h3 and White already has a pawn for the exchange with moves ahead such as ♗c4, ♘e2-f4, and simply ♗e3 with 0-0-0.

b22) 4...♗g7 5 h6 (5 hxg6 hxg6 6 ♖xh8+ ♗xh8 7 ♕d2! intending ♕h6 is also good, and perhaps clearer) 5...♗f8 6 ♗g5 d5 7 ♕d2 e6 8 0-0-0 ♗b4 9 f3 ± Möhring-Knežević, Hradec Kralove 1977/8.

11.11)

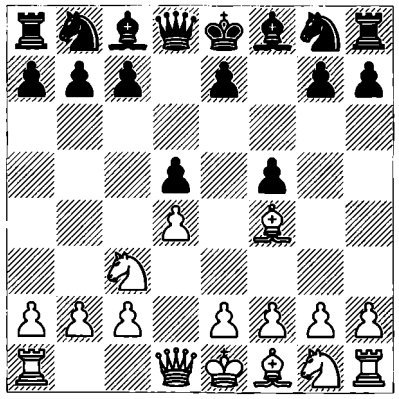
2...d5 3 ♗f4 *(D)*

This natural move brings the bishop in front of the pawn-chain about to be formed with e3, and it introduces the idea of ♘b5.

3...♘f6

a) 3...c6 4 e3 ♘f6 transposes to our main line. Let's note that a potential drawback to an early ...c6 is that a later ...c5 (a critical reply to some of White's strategies) will come at a loss of tempo, so these lines tend to be easy for White to handle with natural moves.

b) 3...e6 4 e3 (or 4 ♘f3) 4...♘f6 transposes to note 'a' to Black's 4th move; White has



particularly many 4th-move alternatives in this case, but I don't think they're necessary.

c) 3...a6 is widely recommended, preventing ♘b5 and intending ...c5 in many lines. Then 4 e3 ♘f6 is covered in note 'b' to Black's 4th move below.

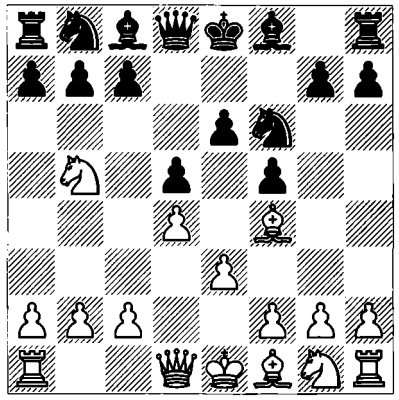
4 e3

4 ♘b5 ♘a6 5 c4 e6 6 e3 transposes to line 'a1' of the next note. If Black intends to play ...a6 or ...c6, he might want do this as early as possible to eliminate this possibility.

4...c6

Or:

a) 4...e6 5 ♘b5 *(D)* forces a commitment:



a1) 5...♘a6 allows White a pleasant edge after 6 c4 ♗b4+ 7 ♘c3 0-0 8 ♘f3 ±.

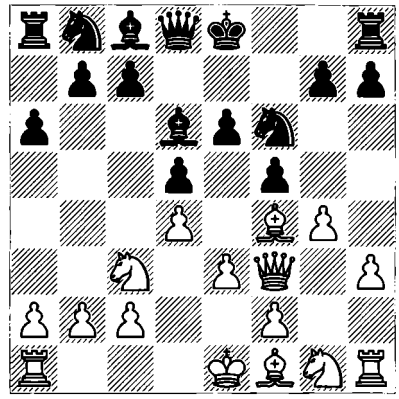
a2) 5...♗d6 is less compromising. Then:

a21) Suetin suggests 6 c4 and says that it's clearly better for White. As you can imagine, the computer is not thrilled with taking on doubled pawns after 6...♗xf4 7 exf4, after which Black has tempting options of ...dxc4, isolating White's d-pawn, or an eventual ...c5. However, with White having traded his bad bishop for Black's good one, in addition to opening the e-file against Black's weakness on e6, the human assessment deserves consideration.

a22) 6 ♘xd6+ cxd6 7 ♘f3 ♘c6 8 ♗e2 0-0 9 0-0 a6 10 b3 (White can play for a normal bishop-pair position by 10 c4!? dxc4 11 ♗xc4 b5 12 ♗e2 with the idea of a4, h3 and potentially ♘d2 and ♗f3) 10...♕e7 (10...♘e4 11 c4 ♘c3 12 ♕d2 ♘xe2+ 13 ♕xe2 ±) 11 c4 dxc4 12 bxc4 e5 13 ♗g5 h6 14 ♗xf6 ♕xf6 15 ♖b1! ± V.Milov-Kindermann, Biel 1995.

b) 4...a6 is logical. Then:

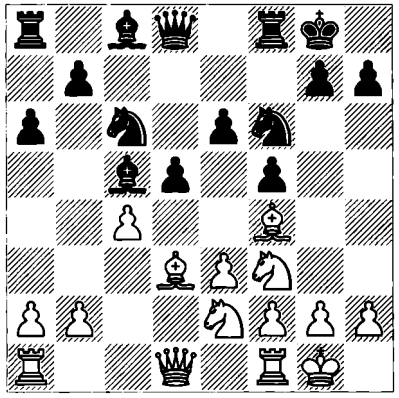
b1) A common strategy for White in these positions is the g4 advance; e.g., 5 h3 e6 6 g4!? ♗d6 7 ♕f3 *(D)*.



7...♘c6 (7...♗xf4 8 ♕xf4 0-0 9 gxf5 exf5 10 ♗d3 ♘e4 11 ♘ge2 followed by ♖g1 and 0-0-0 gives White easy play) 8 gxf5 0-0! (8...e5 9 dxe5 ♘xe5 10 ♕g2 0-0 11 0-0-0 c6 12 ♘f3 ♘xf3 13 ♕xf3 ♗xf4 14 ♕xf4 ♘h5 15 ♕g4 ♖xf5 16 ♗d3 ♖e5 17 ♕d4 ± Epishin) 9 0-0-0 ♗xf4 10 ♕xf4 exf5 11 ♗d3 ♘e4 12 ♘ge2 ♘e7 13 h4 ± Epishin-Malaniuk, Tashkent 1987. After the continuation 13...♕d6 14 ♕xd6 ♘xd6 15 ♘f4 c6 16 ♖dg1, Black is still stuck with his very bad bishop and White has just enough pieces on the kingside to stir up some trouble. If need be, he also has realistic chances on the queenside.

b2) 5 ♗d3 e6 6 ♘f3 c5 7 dxc5 ♗xc5 8 0-0 0-0 9 ♘e2 ♘c6 10 c4 *(D)*.

An unusual position; White is breaking up Black's central majority and wants to exert some pressure in that area by, for example, ♖ac1,



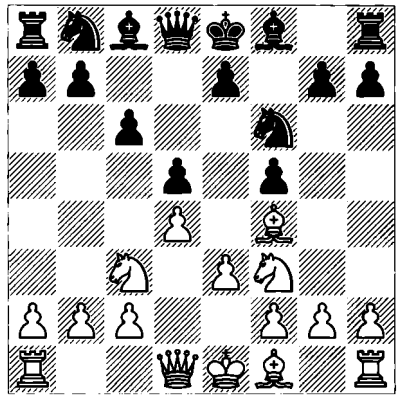
♕b3, ♖fd1 and at the right moment, ♘e5 or ♘ed4. Black has some space and decent central control, but his queen's bishop is bad and his rooks are going to have difficulties finding good squares:

b21) 10...d4 11 exd4 ♘xd4 12 ♘exd4 ♗xd4 13 ♕e2 ♗xb2 14 ♖ad1 ± Svetushkin-M.Grünberg, Bucharest 2003.

b22) 10...♕e7 leaves d5 a little loose. There might follow 11 cxd5 (or 11 ♘ed4 ♗d7 12 ♖c1 ♖ac8 13 cxd5 ♘xd5 14 ♘xf5! exf5 15 ♗c4 ± Beim-Renner, Bad Wiessee 2002) 11...exd5 (11...♘xd5 12 ♗g3 ♗d7 13 a3 ♖fd8 14 ♖c1 ♗a7 15 ♗c4 ♗e8 16 ♗h4 ♘f6 17 ♕b3 ±) 12 ♕b3 ♘a5 13 ♕c2 ♘e4 14 ♖ac1 ±.

b23) 10...♘b4 11 ♘c3 (11 ♘ed4 is another approach) 11...♘xd3 12 ♕xd3 dxc4 13 ♕xc4 ♕e7 14 ♖ac1 ♗d7 15 ♕b3 b5 16 ♘e5 ♖fd8 17 ♘xd7!? (17 ♘e2 ± is more ambitious) 17...♖xd7 18 a4 bxa4 19 ♘xa4 ♗d6 20 ♖c6!? ♗xf4 21 exf4 ♖e8 22 ♘b6 with some pressure; e.g., 22...♖c7 23 ♖fc1.

5 ♘f3 *(D)*

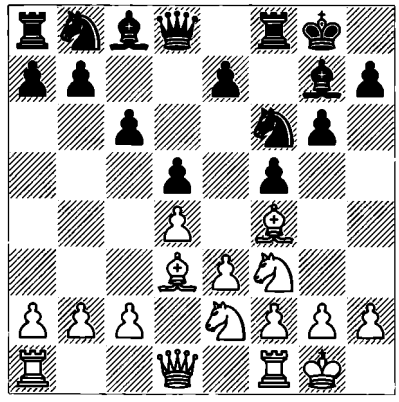


5...g6

a) 5...♗e6 6 ♗d3 g6 7 h4! h6 8 ♘e5 ♖g8 9 f3 (one of a few reasonable courses; Bareev suggests 9 ♘e2, but overall I think 9 ♕d2! and 10 0-0-0 is strongest) 9...♘bd7 10 ♘e2?! (10 ♘xd7 ♕xd7 11 ♕d2! with the idea 0-0-0; Black's pieces don't coordinate and his position is rather fragile; e.g., 11...♘h5 12 ♗h2 ♗g7 13 0-0-0 ♗f6 14 ♕f2) 10...♘h5 11 c3?! (11 ♘xd7 ♗xd7 12 ♗h2 ±) 11...♘xf4 12 exf4 h5 = Bareev-Onishchuk, Elista Olympiad 1998.

b) A pure Stonewall isn't usually the best course versus ♗f4 and ♘f3, but naturally it's playable. 5...e6 6 ♗d3 ♗d6 7 ♘e2!, as in the game Sorokin-Piskov, Minsk 1990, is promising because it prepares an early c4 (after a3) and reinforces f4. Because ...e6 interrupts the communication between the c8-bishop and the g4-square, White can also consider playing h3 and g4 at the right moment, even at the cost of a pawn.

6 ♗d3 ♗g7 7 0-0 0-0 8 ♘e2! *(D)*



A key idea in this line: White prepares c4, but also covers the critical f4-square in case of an attack on the bishop.

8...♘e4

White's control of e5 combined with the c4 advance give him the better game in any case; for example, 8...h6 9 c4 ♗e6 10 cxd5 ♘xd5 and instead of 11 ♗e5, which gave White a very modest advantage in Komarov-Galdunts, Metz 1994, I think he can more profitably retain the bishop by 11 ♗g3; e.g., 11...♘d7 12 ♕d2 (or 12 a3 ♘7f6 13 ♕c2) 12...♔h7 13 ♖ac1 ♘7f6 (13...♗g8 14 e4!) 14 h3 ♘e4 15 ♗xe4! fxe4 16 ♘e5 ±.

9 c4 ♔h8

9...e6 10 ♖c1 ♘d7 11 h3 gives the bishop an escape-square on h2. White can begin an attack on the queenside.

10 ♗e5 e6

Now:

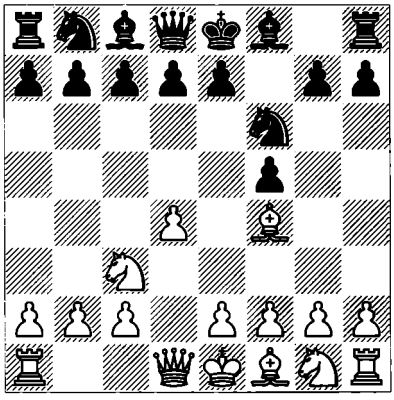
a) 11 ♗xg7+ ♔xg7 12 ♘f4 ♕e7 13 ♖c1 leaves White with the better pieces.

b) 11 b4!? ♘d6 12 ♗xg7+ (12 ♕b3 ♗xe5 13 ♘xe5 ♘d7 ±; 12 cxd5 exd5 13 ♘f4 is another good way to organize) 12...♔xg7 13 ♕b3 ♘d7 14 a4 (14 ♘f4! ♘f6 15 b5) 14...♕f6 15 cxd5! exd5 16 b5 ♘e4 (16...♘b6 17 bxc6 bxc6 18 ♘e5 ±) 17 ♖ac1 ♕d6 18 ♕c2 gave White a hefty advantage in Khalifman-Topalov, Las Palmas 1993.

11.12)

2...♘f6 3 ♗f4 *(D)*

B



This uncommon move was actually assigned a '?' in one source. The argument against putting the bishop on f4 is that it will be kicked away by ...e5 with gain of tempo. But it's not clear that this will ever happen (or should, anyway), and 3 ♗f4 is a logical developing move that a number of strong players have chosen. Instead, 3 ♗g5 is the overwhelming preference in practice, when I feel that Black can equalize, but that's also a strategically rich variation.

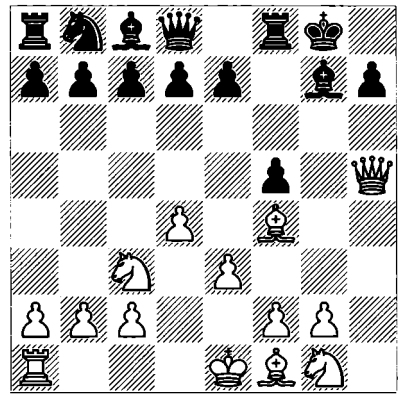
3...d6

Consistent with playing for ...e5, and with the Leningrad (...g6) as well as the Classical (...e6)! Alternatively:

a) 3...♘h5?! 4 ♗g5 (I like 4 ♗e5 d6 5 e3! ±, and even 4 ♘h3 ♘xf4 5 ♘xf4 is attractive) 4...g6 5 e3 ♗g7 6 ♗e2 ♘f6 7 ♘f3 d6 8 0-0 is slightly better for White.

b) 3...g6 has a tendency to transpose to other lines, but has a couple of possible disadvantages at such an early stage. One is that White can play ♕d2 without preliminaries and have the irritating possibility of ♗h6 (possibly in conjunction with 0-0-0 and h4-h5). The more important problem is that, as always, White can attack ...g6 immediately with 4 h4! ♗g7 5 h5 ♘xh5 6 ♖xh5 gxh5 7 e3 0-0 8 ♕xh5 *(D)*, and even though Black has managed to castle, this position is very difficult to defend:

B



The play is fascinating; here is a sample of the analysis:

b1) 8...♕e8 can be answered by 9 ♕xe8! ♖xe8 10 ♘d5 ♘a6 11 ♗xa6 bxa6 12 ♘xc7 ♗b7 13 ♘xe8 ♖xe8 14 ♘f3 ♗xf3 15 gxf3, when Black's pawn-structure is considerably worse than White's. Actually, 9 ♕h4 isn't so bad either.

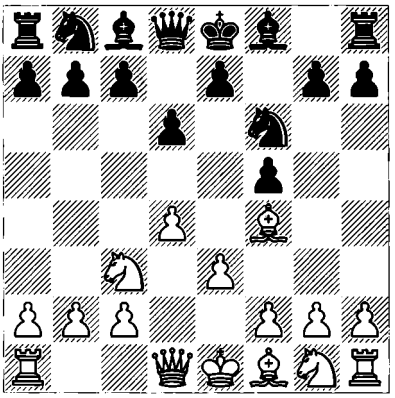
b2) 8...d6 9 ♘f3 c6 10 ♗c4+! d5 11 ♗d3 ♘d7 12 0-0-0 ♘f6 13 ♕h4 and ♖h1.

b3) 8...e6 9 ♘f3 d6 (9...♕e8?! is well met by 10 ♕h2, while 10 ♕xe8 ♖xe8 11 ♘b5 ♘a6 12 ♗xc7 wins so many squares that it must be advantageous too) 10 0-0-0 ♕e8 (finally! 10...♕f6 11 ♗c4 ♕g6 12 ♕h2 ♘c6 runs into 13 g4! and then 13...♕xg4 14 ♘g5! or 13...fxg4 14 ♗d3 ♖f5 15 ♘h4 ♕h5 16 ♘xf5 ♕xh2 17 ♗xh2 exf5 18 ♘d5!) 11 ♕h2 ♘d7! 12 e4 ♘f6 (12...fxe4 13 ♘xe4 ♘f6 14 ♘xf6+ ♖xf6 15 ♗g5) 13 e5 ♘g4 14 ♕h4 threatens exd6 with ongoing pressure; for example, 14...♕d8 15 ♕g3 d5 16 ♘g5! with the idea f3.

4 e3 *(D)*

4 ♘f3 will be played in this set-up anyway to restrain ...e5, and may be more accurate, even if it usually transposes. In that case, White gets a unique option against the Leningrad set-up 4...g6, i.e., 5 ♕d2 with the idea of ♗h6, exchanging Black's valuable bishop. There can follow 5...h6!? (this weakens g6) 6 e3 ♗g7 7 ♗d3 (with the idea e4) 7...♘c6 8 e4!? (8 h3 is more conventional, thinking about g4; for example, 8...g5 9 ♗h2 ♗e6! 10 e4 fxe4 11 ♘xe4 0-0 12 0-0-0 ± intending ♔b1 and ♖he1) 8...g5 9 ♗g3! f4?! (9...♘b4 10 exf5 ♘xd3+ 11 ♕xd3 ♕d7 12 0-0-0 ♕xf5 13 ♕c4 c6 14 ♖he1) 10 ♗xf4 gxf4 11 e5, and White wins the piece back with advantage in view of ♗g6+ and ♕xf4(+).

B



Now Black must choose which system he wants to go into:

11.121: 4...e6 230
11.122: 4...g6 231

11.121)

4...e6

This transposes to a Classical set-up (...♗e7 and ...0-0), when it's not clear whether White is better off with ♘c3 and ♗f4, or c4, ♘c3 and ♗d3, as in our main anti-Classical system.

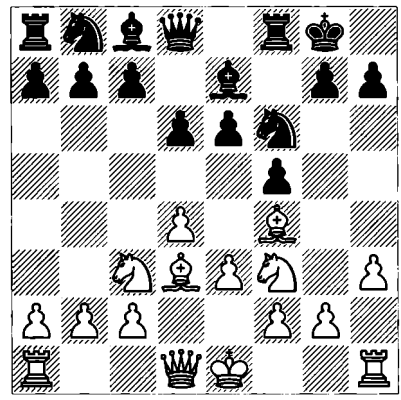
5 h3 ♗e7 6 ♗d3 0-0 7 ♘f3 *(D)*

White's typical mode of development.

7...♕e8?!

In view of the next note, Schipkov proposes 7...♘c6 with idea of ...♘b4 or ...♕e8. This is definitely an improvement, when I think White should play 8 a3 ♕e8 (8...a6 9 0-0 b5 10 ♗h2 ± and 11 e4), and now:

B



a) 9 ♕e2 is not bad in itself, but is unresponsive, and transposes to the main line below.

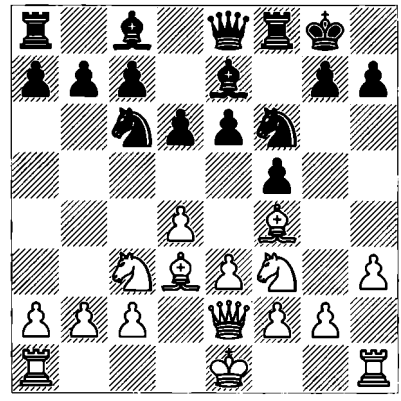
b) 9 0-0! looks better, planning 9...♕g6 10 ♘b5 ♗d8 11 c4 ±.

8 ♕e2?!

This has been played in several games, but Schipkov points out that White also has 8 g4!, when an exchange on f5 or g4 will pry open either the g- or h-file, while White can exercise his option of ♕e2 and g5 followed by e4 in some lines. Black can doubtless stay in the game, but it looks rather depressing for him.

8...♘c6 *(D)*

W



This position is at any rate instructive. In two games White has castled queenside, but since e4 can only be stopped at the price of ceding the e5-square, there's no hurry. Here's an alternative idea:

9 a3

White calmly prevents ...♘b4. Now:

a) 9...a6 10 g4 ♗d8 11 gxf5 exf5 can be met by 12 ♘d2!? ± or 12 0-0-0.

b) 9...♔h8 10 0-0 (not 10 e4? e5!, a motif worth remembering) 10...♗d7 (10...♕g6 11 ♗g3 ♕h5 12 e4) 11 e4 fxe4 (11...e5? 12 dxe5 fxe4 13 ♘xe4 ♘xe4 14 ♕xe4 ♗f5 15 ♕e3 ±) 12 ♘xe4 ♘d5! (12...♕h5 13 ♘g3 ♕f7 14 ♗d2) 13 ♗h2 ♘f4 14 ♗xf4 ♖xf4 15 c3 (or 15 ♖ae1!?) 15...e5 16 d5 ♘d8 17 c4 with a positional advantage. Mere analysis, but in general White seems to be controlling the play.

c) 9...♗d8! 10 0-0 e5 11 dxe5 dxe5 12 ♗c4+ ♔h8 13 ♗h2 reaches a position in which I'm not sure what either side is doing next.

11.122)

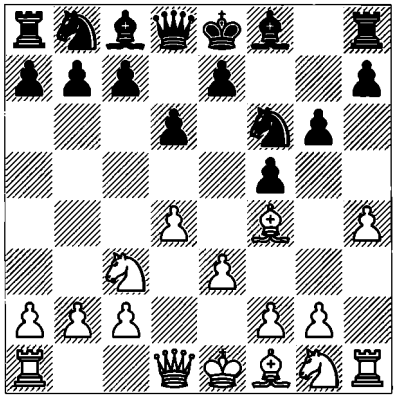
4...g6

Black finally achieves his Leningrad set-up.

5 ♘f3

This doesn't seem necessary, but it's important to look at an example of this basic kind of position. As always, 5 h4! *(D)* is important, and apparently strong (are we surprised?), with these responses:

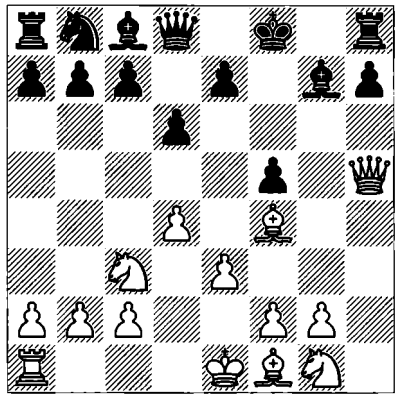
B



a) Vorotnikov-Glek, Russian Ch, St Petersburg 1998 is instructive: 5...h6 (criticized as unnecessary, but see line 'b' for what happens after 5...♗g7) 6 ♗d3 (6 ♗c4 ♗g7 7 ♕f3!) 6...♘c6 7 ♘f3 ♘g4!? (after 7...♗g7, 8 ♕e2 is normal and good; Tyomkin gives 8 e4, but it leads to only a very small plus) 8 d5! ♘ce5 9 ♗xe5 dxe5 (9...♘xe5 10 ♘xe5 dxe5 11 h5 g5 and now Tyomkin offers 12 g4 ±, while 12 e4 and 12 ♗b5+ are also good) 10 e4 e6! (10...c6 11 h5) 11 ♗b5+?! (11 ♕e2! and 0-0-0 gives White an excellent game) 11...♗d7 12 dxe6 ♗xb5 13 ♘xb5 c6 and here White should have played 14 ♘c3, but he has lost most of his advantage.

b) The continuation that supposedly makes the weakening 5...h6 unnecessary is 5...♗g7 6 h5 (queried, as usual, this time by Tyomkin, but unlike so many annotators, at least he considers the move!) 6...♘xh5 7 ♖xh5 gxh5 8 ♕xh5+ ♔f8 *(D)*, when Black has a clear advantage according to Tyomkin. But let's see; White appears to have his usual choice of good moves:

W



b1) 9 0-0-0 ♕e8 10 ♕h3 (10 ♕h2!?) 10...♕f7 11 ♘f3 h6 12 e4 e5 13 dxe5 ♘c6! 14 exf5 (14 ♕g3!?) 14...dxe5 15 ♘xe5! (White can also play 15 ♗e3 ♗xf5 16 ♕g3, intending ♘h4 and/or ♗c5+) 15...♘xe5 16 ♖d8+ ♔e7 17 ♖d5! with the idea 17...♘c6? (17...♗xf5 18 ♕e3!) 18 ♗c4, when White is a rook down but winning.

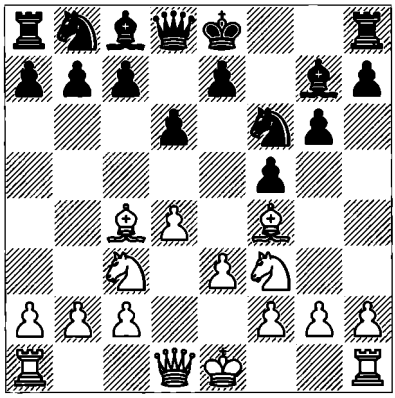
b2) If that looks unclear, 9 ♗e2 is also attractive, and perhaps better, with the possibility of ♗h5 in many lines. For example, 9...♕e8 10 ♕h3 e5 11 ♗h5 and now 11...♕d8 12 dxe5 dxe5 13 ♖d1, 11...♕e6 12 ♕h4! ♗f6 13 ♗h6+ ♔e7 14 ♗g5 c6! 15 dxe5 dxe5?! 16 ♕b4+ ♔d8 17 ♖d1+ ♘d7 18 ♖d6 ± or 11...♕e7 12 ♘d5 ♕d8 13 ♗h2! c6 14 ♘c3, when remarkably, Black still can't consolidate (...f4 is always answered by ♕f3).

5...♗g7 6 ♗c4!? *(D)*

Now:

a) 6...c6 7 0-0 e6 8 ♗d3 (8 ♕e2 ±) 8...0-0 9 ♕e2 ± with the idea e4, Nett-Vinkes, email 2002.

b) 6...e6 and here 7 ♘g5?! wastes time and loses control of the centre. M.Jørgensen-Elka, Copenhagen 2001 went 7...♕e7 8 h4 h6 9 ♘f3



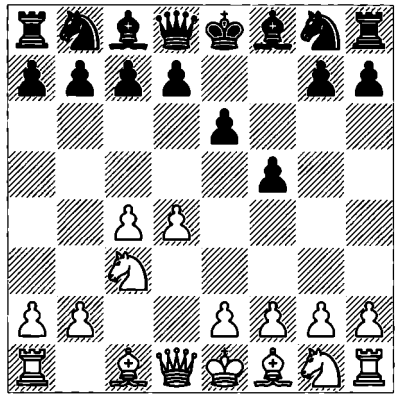
♗d7, and here Tyomkin gives 10 ♕e2 ♘c6 11 0-0-0 e5 12 ♗h2 0-0-0 =; this seems right. Perhaps 7 h3 is best, but 7 ♕e2 should also keep a modest edge; e.g., 7...0-0 (7...♘c6 8 0-0-0 ♕e7 9 ♔b1 ♗d7 – Tyomkin; then 10 d5 exd5 11 ♘xd5 ♘xd5 12 ♗xd5 is slightly better for White) 8 0-0 ♕e7 9 h3 ♘c6 10 a3 ±.

11.2)

1 d4 e6 2 c4 f5

This is a good move-order to avoid 2 ♘c3 lines, although ...e6 doesn't go well with ...g6, so Black is usually headed for Classical or Stonewall lines. White can use a formation with c4, ♘c3, e3 and f3, which is available against most Dutch systems that don't force the pace.

3 ♘c3 *(D)*



3...♘f6

Or:

a) 3...♗b4 is the other natural move, emphasizing the central light-square control begun by ...e6 and ...f5. We consider it in Section 12.42 via the move-order 1 d4 e6 2 c4 ♗b4+ 3 ♘c3 f5.

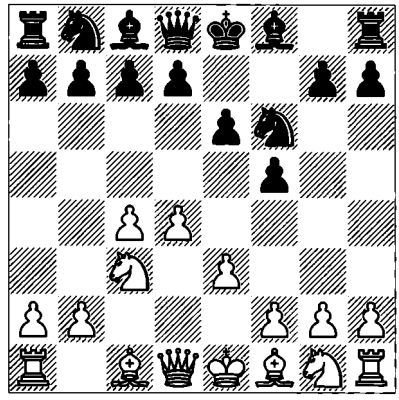
b) Trying to get to a Stonewall by 3...d5 can run into 4 cxd5 exd5 5 ♗f4 (or 5 ♘f3 ♘f6 6 ♗g5 ♗e7 7 e3 ±) 5...♘f6 (5...♗d6?! 6 ♘xd5 ♗e6 7 ♗xd6 ♕xd6 8 ♘c3) 6 e3 ♗d6 7 ♘h3 0-0 8 ♗d3 c6 9 0-0 ♘e4 10 f3 ♘xc3 11 bxc3 ±. If Black wants to play this set-up, then it is safest to do so after White has played a slower move, such as e3, as we see in the next note.

c) 3...c6, again trying for ...d5, fails to equalize following 4 e4! (4 e3 d5 transposes to Section 6.1, where White has the aggressive option of 5 g4 as well as the more methodical 5 ♗d3) 4...fxe4 5 ♘xe4 ♗b4+ 6 ♗d2 ♗xd2+ 7 ♕xd2 d5 8 ♘c3 ♘f6 9 ♘f3 ±.

4 f3

This time there's a twist. This is a slightly eccentric move which, however, is consistent with the normal set-up. White wants to take away e4 from Black's knight, and either develop the c1-bishop or play e3 first, then use the combination of the moves ♗d3, ♘ge2 and ♕c2, or place the knight on h3, from where it can go to f4 or f2. White can slowly expand on any sector of the board, most frequently the centre and queenside.

Nevertheless, 4 e3 *(D)* is the normal and arguably more flexible move, so let's take a look.



If White isn't heading for a position with ♘f3, then he'll usually play f3 later anyway. Here are a few snippets:

a) The Nimzo-type move 4...♗b4 transposes to note 'b2' to White's 4th move in Section 12.42.

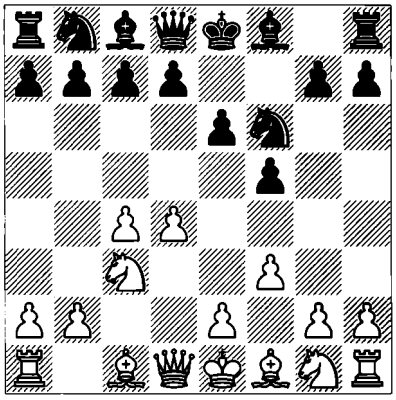
b) 4...d5 5 ♗d3 c6 transposes into the note to Black's 5th move in Section 6.12 (Semi-Slav/Stonewall hybrid).

c) 4...♗e7 5 ♗d3 0-0 6 ♘ge2 d6 7 ♕c2 ♘c6 8 a3 ♗d7 9 ♗d2 ♕c8!? 10 f3 e5 (Seirawan-Short, Tilburg 1990) 11 d5 ♘d8 12 0-0!? ± (Seirawan).

d) 4...b6 5 ♗d3 ♗b7 6 f3 is the conventional formation. Kiselev-Agrest, St Petersburg 1993 continued 6...♘h5!? (after 6...♗e7, a typical plan is 7 ♘ge2 0-0 8 0-0 ♕e8 9 a3, intending to force through b4) 7 ♘h3 ♕h4+ 8 ♘f2 ♘c6 9 g3 (9 d5!? ♘e5 10 ♗e2) 9...♕e7. Here Palliser gives the ingenious line 10 g4!? fxg4 (10...♘f6! 11 gxf5 exf5 12 ♗xf5 0-0-0!? 13 0-0 may be a little better for White, but really isn't clear) 11 fxg4 ♘f6 12 g5 ♘g8 13 ♕h5+ ♔d8 which he calls unclear, but 14 ♖f1 gives White a pleasant advantage; for example, 14...♕e8 15 ♕h3 (even 15 ♕xe8+ ♔xe8 16 ♘g4 followed by ♗d2, 0-0-0 and a kingside pawn advance is annoying) 15...♗e7 16 ♘fe4 and Black needs a plan.

Let's return to 4 f3 *(D)*:

B



4...♗b4

This has been the choice of the majority of titled players. Otherwise:

a) 4...♘c6 is the move Dutch Defence expert Schipkov prefers, with the idea that 5 e4? fxe4 6 fxe4 ♗b4 favours Black. It's surprising that this has only been used a few times over the years. Then 5 e3 introduces our standard plan. Some rather random analysis: 5...b6 6 ♘h3 ♗b4 (6...♗b7 7 ♗e2 and now 7...♗e7 8 0-0 0-0 9 a3 ± intending ♕c2 and b4; this is only marginally better for White, however, and 7...♗d6!? is interesting) 7 ♗d3 (or 7 ♗d2, intending a3, ♕c2, etc.) 7...0-0 8 0-0 ♗b7 9 ♕c2 and I lean towards White, although obviously Black is right in the mix.

b) 4...♗e7 5 e4 (generally this isn't the point of 4 f3, but when Black plays so slowly it seems to work; 5 ♘h3 has been tried as well, and of course there's always 5 e3 0-0 6 ♗d3, etc.) 5...fxe4 6 fxe4 d6 (6...♗b4?! 7 a3 ♗xc3+ 8 bxc3 d5? 9 e5 ♘e4 10 ♕h5+ g6 11 ♕h6 with the idea ♗d3 left Black struggling in Ipinza Carmona-Da Silva, corr. 2003) 7 ♘f3 0-0 and instead of 8 ♗d3?! e5! 9 d5 c6, when Black was at least equal in P.Hoffmann-Lohse, Berlin 2007, 8 ♗e2! c5 (8...e5?! loses a pawn for inadequate compensation) 9 d5 ♘g4 10 0-0 is a little better for White.

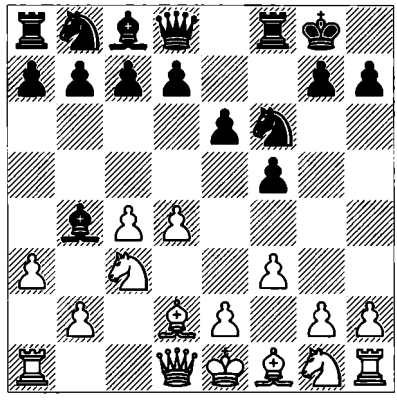
5 ♗d2 0-0

5...b6 is also employed, and in fact was the move-order of Ivanisević-Sedlak below.

6 a3 *(D)*

6 e3 usually transposes, since a3 will follow.

B



6...♗xc3

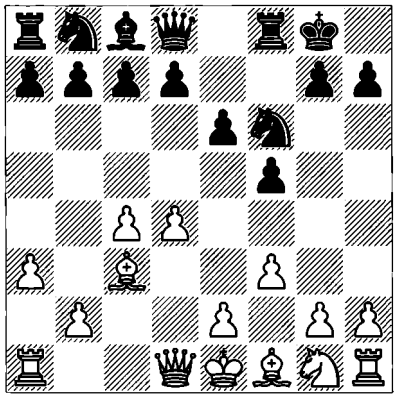
After 6...♗e7, White can choose 7 e3, when he benefits from the extra move ♗d2. In Alexandrova-Manakova, European Women's Ch (blitz), Antalya 2002, White played along the same lines with 7 ♕c2!? (7 e4 is premature because Black can become active by 7...fxe4 8 fxe4 d5 9 e5 ♘e4) 7...d6 8 e3 e5 9 ♗d3 exd4!? (9...g6 doesn't seem much better; e.g., 10 ♘ge2 c6 11 0-0-0!? a5 12 h3 ♘a6 13 g4 with a kingside initiative) 10 exd4 c5 11 d5 g6 12 ♘ge2 ♘bd7 13 f4 (13 ♘f4! ♘e5 14 0-0 ±) 13...♘g4 14 0-0 ♗f6 15 h3 ±.

I think it's fair to say that most of White's advantages in this section are relatively minor

ones, but at the least reflect better practical chances.

7 ♗xc3 *(D)*

B



7...b6

7...d6 8 e3 ♕e8 (8...♕e7 9 ♕c2 c5 10 dxc5 dxc5 11 ♗d3 ♘c6 12 ♘h3 e5, M.Santos-De Toledo, São Paulo 2009, 13 0-0! ±) 9 ♕d2 ♘c6 10 ♗d3 e5 11 ♘e2 ± Kempinski-Gleizerov, Stockholm 2000. White can't claim more than a slight edge here; as Dunnington nicely summarizes, "Black has succeeded in staking a claim for the centre but must be careful not to unleash his opponent's bishops. White's flexibility is such that it is possible to castle on either side."

8 e3

Now:

a) 8...a5 9 ♘h3 ♗b7 10 ♗d3 ♘c6 11 0-0 ♕e7 (Ivanisević-Sedlak, Belgrade 2009) and now White can play for a primitive central advance; e.g., 12 ♕e2 a4? 13 ♖ae1 ♘a5 14 e4 ±, etc.

b) 8...♗b7 9 ♕d2 a5 10 ♘h3 a4 11 ♗d3 ♘c6 12 0-0 ♘a5 13 ♖ae1 is a similar story, although White will lose a tempo. Nevertheless, the game Kempinski-Grabarczyk, Polish Ch, Plock 2000 saw White retain a little advantage after 13...♘b3 14 ♕c2, and then a larger one following 14...c5?! 15 d5! (when you have the two bishops, this resource is often available) 15...exd5 16 cxd5 ♗xd5 (after 16...♘xd5 17 ♗xf5 h6? 18 ♗h7+ ♔h8 19 ♗xg7+! White has a decisive attack) 17 e4!? (Tyomkin correctly gives 17 ♗xf5!, when White clearly stands better) 17...♗c6 (17...♗f7 18 e5 ♘d5 19 ♗xf5 h6 ± improves) 18 ♘f4 b5 19 e5 ♘d5 20 ♘xd5 ♗xd5 21 ♗xf5, when White's attack was hard to counter.

12 Assorted Defences

In this chapter, we deal with options for Black that don't fit into any of the earlier chapters. Many of these are logical and respectable opening lines, while others are tricky and trappy, and a few are verging on the bizarre. As always, I'll be seeking to find ways to put Black under positional pressure and to identify lines that will give us scope to outplay our opponents in a strategic struggle.

The chapter is structured as follows:

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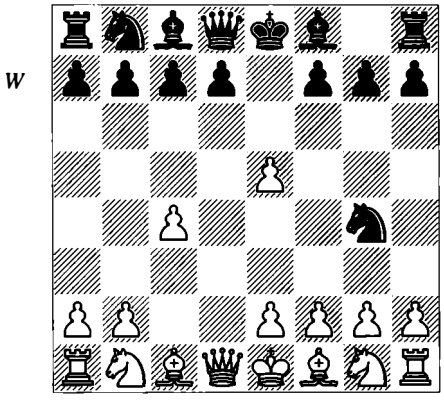
12.1) Budapest Defence

1 d4 ♘f6 2 c4 e5 3 dxe5 ♘g4 *(D)*



This is the Budapest Defence. Despite its outward appearance as an aggressive gambit, it is really a positional opening more than an attacking one. Black breaks up White's centre and intends to win back his pawn on e5 in the next few moves.

4 ♗f4

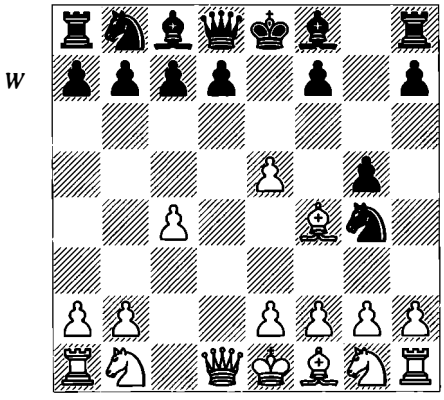
I'm recommending this move, which is almost entirely strategic in nature, and tries for lasting positional advantages, which include the bishop-pair and enemy pawn weaknesses. It has been favoured by many if not most of the world's top players.

4...♗b4+

Black has only one major non-transpositional move at this point. After all, White is threatening h3 to kick the knight away.

a) 4...♘c6 5 ♘f3 ♗c5?! (for 5...♗b4+ 6 ♘bd2, see the main line) 6 e3 ♕e7 (6...f6 7 exf6 ♕xf6 8 ♕d2! and Black has little or nothing for his pawn) 7 ♘c3 ♘gxe5?? (7...♗b4 8 ♕b3 ±) 8 ♘xe5 ♘xe5 9 ♘d5 ♕d6 10 ♕h5! ♗b4+ 11 ♔d1 0-0 12 ♗xe5 ♕c5 13 ♘f6+ 1-0 E.Klein-Martinez Catalan, World Under-14 Ch, Fond du Lac 1990.

b) 4...g5!? *(D)* is an aggressive line which, however, involves Black creating serious weaknesses in the hope that dynamic play will compensate.



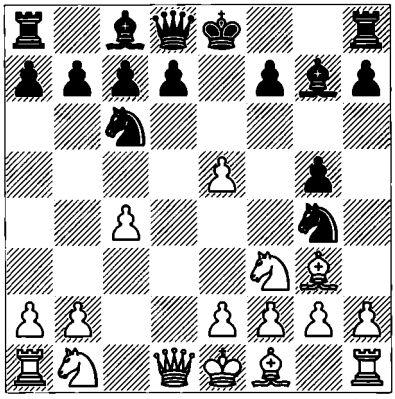
It is not surprising that few grandmasters are willing to make that trade-off, and yet theory indicates nothing approaching a refutation. I'll recommend 5 ♗g3 (5 ♗d2 is a very popular alternative, with the idea ♗c3; I think it also leads to some advantage, but nothing special) 5...♗g7 6 ♘f3 and now:

b1) 6...♕e7? 7 ♘c3 ♘xe5 (after 7...♘c6 8 ♘d5 ♕d8 9 e6! White breaks through to c7: 9...d6 10 exf7+ ♔xf7 11 ♕d2 h6 12 h4 +–) 8

♘d5 ♘xf3+ 9 gxf3 ♗xb2 10 ♖b1 ♗g7 11 ♕d2 ♕c5 12 ♘xc7+ and White wins.

b2) 6...d6? 7 exd6 ♗xb2 8 ♘bd2 ♗xa1?? (8...cxd6 9 ♖b1 ♗g7 10 h4! gxh4 11 ♗xh4 leaves Black in disarray, particularly because 11...♕a5 12 ♗g3! costs him the d-pawn or other material) 9 dxc7 ♕f6 10 cxb8♕ ♖xb8 11 ♗xb8 and White is a piece up.

b3) 6...♘c6 *(D)* is the main continuation, when White has a variety of move-orders, but the idea of playing h4 is attractive in several of them:



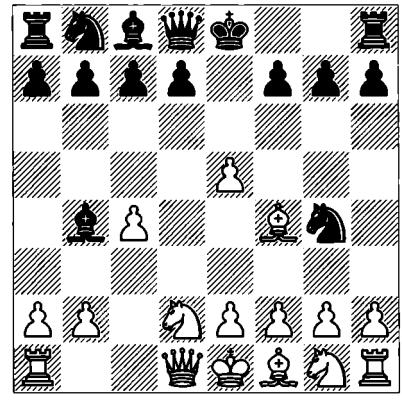
b31) 7 ♘c3 ♘gxe5 8 ♘xe5 ♘xe5 9 e3 d6 10 c5! (a common theme, here and in the rest of our Budapest lines) and now:

b311) 10...♗e6 11 cxd6 (after 11 h4, the queenless middlegames after 11...dxc5 12 hxg5 ♕xd1+ 13 ♖xd1 ♖d8 14 ♖xd8+ ♔xd8 15 ♔d2! ♔e7 16 ♔c2 and 11...g4 12 h5 h6 13 ♕a4+ ♕d7 14 ♕xd7+ ♔xd7 15 0-0-0 slightly favour White) 11...cxd6 12 h4! g4 13 ♕a4+ ♗d7 14 ♕b4 0-0 15 ♖d1 (or 15 h5) 15...♗e6 16 h5 h6 17 ♖xd6 ♕c7 18 ♗e2 ♖ad8 19 ♖xd8 ♖xd8 20 0-0 with an extra pawn.

b312) 10...dxc5 11 ♕xd8+ ♔xd8 12 0-0-0+ ♗d7 (Zakharevich-Zakharov, Novgorod 1995) 13 ♗e2! (with the idea of ♗xe5 followed by ♗g4) 13...f5 (13...h5? 14 ♖d5 ♖e8 15 ♖hd1 ♖e7 16 ♗xh5; 13...♔c8 14 ♖d5 f6 15 ♖hd1 ♗c6 16 ♖xc5 with a nice advantage) 14 ♖d2! ♔e8 15 ♗h5+ ♘g6 16 ♘d5 ♖c8 17 ♘xc7+ ♔e7 18 ♗d6+ ♔f7 19 ♗e2 ♗f6 20 ♗c4+ ♔g7 21 ♖hd1 ±.

b32) Taylor advocates 7 h4, saying, "White stands clearly better here." The most important line is 7...♘gxe5 8 ♘xe5 ♘xe5 9 hxg5 ♘xc4 10 ♘c3 c6! (10...0-0? 11 ♕d3 costs Black a piece, as do 10...d6? 11 ♕a4+ and 10...♘xb2? 11 ♕c1 ♘c4 12 ♘d5) 11 e4 ♘xb2 12 ♕d2! d5! (Moskalenko; 12...♘a4 13 ♘xa4! ♗xa1 14 ♗d6 and now rather than 14...b5? 15 ♘b2! +– Kouatly-Preissmann, Bagneux 1983, 14...♗g7 improves, but White is still in control following 15 e5 h6 16 gxh6 ♗f8 17 ♕e3!) and now Taylor gives 13 exd5 ♕e7+ 14 ♗e2 ♘c4 15 ♕d3 ♗g4, when 16 f3 ♕a3 17 0-0 ♕xc3 18 dxc6 appears to favour White.

5 ♘d2 *(D)*



5...♘c6

Undoubtedly the best move. Other ideas are speculative in nature:

a) 5...f6?! 6 ♘f3 fxe5 7 ♘xe5 ♘xe5 (7...♕f6 8 ♘d3) 8 ♗xe5 0-0 9 e3 d6 10 ♗g3 ♕f6 11 a3 ♗a5 12 b4 ♗b6 13 ♗e2 ± Ig.Jelen-Petek, Bled 1993.

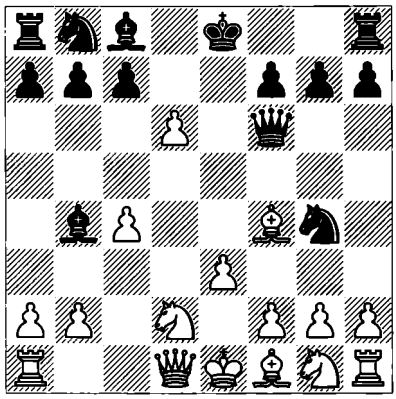
b) 5...d6?! 6 exd6! ♕f6 (6...♗xd6 7 ♗xd6 ♕xd6 8 e3 0-0 9 h3 leaves White a pawn up) 7 e3 *(D)* (Taylor gives 7 ♘h3, which garners a similar plus in the line 7...♘c6 8 dxc7 ♕xb2 9 ♖b1 ♕xa2 10 f3 ±) and now:

b1) 7...♗xd6 8 ♗e2! ♗xf4 9 ♗xg4 ♗xe3 10 ♘e4! with a very large advantage; for example, 10...♗xf2+ 11 ♘xf2 0-0 12 ♗xc8 ♖xc8 13 ♘e2.

b2) 7...♕xb2 8 ♘f3 and now 8...♗xd6 9 ♗xd6 cxd6 10 ♘e4 (or 10 ♗d3) gives White a modest edge, while 8...♗f5? falters before 9 dxc7! ♘c6 10 ♗e2.

b3) 7...♘xf2!? 8 ♔xf2 g5 9 ♘e4! ♕xb2+ 10 ♗e2 gxf4 11 exf4 cxd6 (11...♗xd6 12 ♖b1! ♕xa2 13 ♕d4!; 11...♘c6 12 ♖b1 ♕g7 13 dxc7 ±) 12 ♖b1 ♕a3 13 ♕d4 ♗c5 14 ♘xc5 ♕xc5 15

B

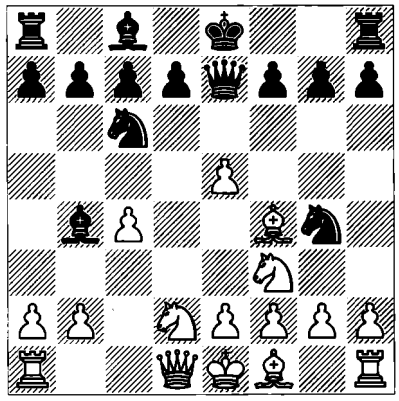


♕xc5 dxc5 16 ♗f3 ± Van der Sterren-G.West, Canberra 1991.

6 ♘f3 ♕e7 *(D)*

6...f6?! 7 exf6 ♕xf6 is an interesting gambit, but I think a strong and direct reply is 8 e3! ♕xb2 9 a3 ♗c3 (9...♗xd2+ 10 ♘xd2 d6 11 ♗e2 ♘f6 12 0-0 0-0 13 c5 ±) 10 ♖b1 ♕xa3 11 ♗xc7 0-0 12 ♗e2 ±.

W



Now White has two effective moves, with ideas that complement one another:

12.11: 7 e3 237
12.12: 7 a3 240

12.11)

7 e3 ♘gxe5 8 ♘xe5 ♘xe5 9 ♗e2

This position has a terrific record for White over the years. Although White's advantage is a moderate one, his position is easier to play. I'm going to cite Tim Taylor's book on the Budapest a lot, because he draws the critical lines of the battle so well.

9...0-0

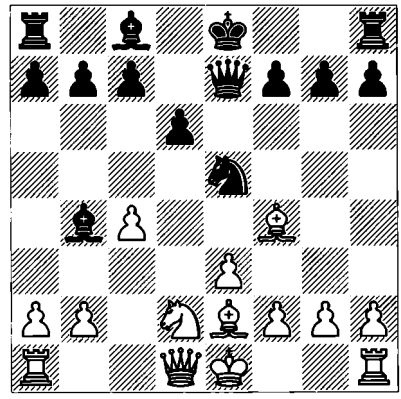
This is the only way to get to Black's most promising defence. Over the years it hasn't always been the favourite. Here's a smattering of alternatives; notice how often White gets the bishop-pair and then, either immediately or slowly, cracks open lines on the queenside. This is why the Budapest player would love to hold on to his dark-squared bishop (or exchange it for its white counterpart) if he can.

a) 9...b6 10 0-0 ♗b7 (10...♗xd2!? 11 ♕xd2 ♗b7 12 c5! threatens ♖ac1 and ♕c3, and the continuation 12...bxc5 13 ♕a5 d6 14 ♗xe5 dxe5 15 ♖fc1 c6 16 ♖xc5 f6 17 ♗c4 left White positionally winning in Solozhenkin-Stiazhkin, Leningrad 1990) 11 ♘f3 ♗xf3 (11...♘g6?! 12 ♗xc7!) 12 ♗xf3 ♖d8 (12...♘xf3+ 13 ♕xf3 0-0 14 ♕b7! with the idea 14...d6?? 15 a3) 13 ♗e2 a5 14 a3 ♗d6 15 ♖b1 ± Epishin-Leuba, San Bernardino 1992.

b) 9...♗xd2+ 10 ♕xd2 d6 11 0-0 ♗d7 12 ♖ac1 ♗c6 13 b4 0-0 14 c5 ± Brglez-Mlacnik, Bled 1992.

c) 9...d6!? *(D)*.

W



At the time I first wrote about this opening (17 years ago), this was the latest finesse, used to avoid White's early queenside action. It commits Black to exchanging his dark-squared bishop, however, which has proved increasingly problematic over the years. After 10 0-0, we have:

c1) 10...♗xd2 11 ♕xd2 b6 12 e4!? (12 b4 ♗b7 13 c5 ±; compare later lines) 12...♗b7 13 f3 0-0 14 ♗g3 f5?! 15 exf5 ♖xf5 16 f4 ♘c6 17 ♖ae1 ♕f6 18 ♗g4 ± Fedorowicz-Shain, New York 1991.

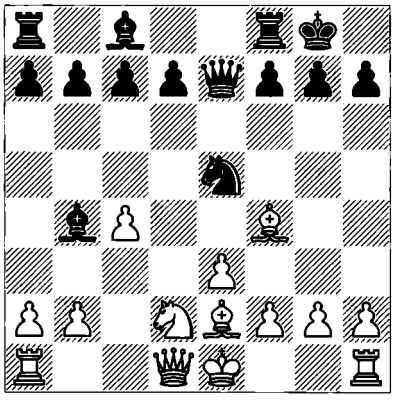
c2) 10...♗d7 (preventing ♕a4+ and preparing to meet ♘b3 with ...♗a4) 11 a3 ♗xd2 12 ♕xd2 and now:

c21) 12...f6!? 13 b4 ♖d8 14 ♗h5+! ♘f7 (Epishin gives both 14...g6 15 ♗e2 ± and 14...♘g6 15 c5 ±) 15 c5 ♗b5 16 ♖fd1 d5 (16...♗a4? 17 ♖dc1 dxc5 18 ♕b2 ± Epishin) 17 e4! (ripping open the position) 17...♗a4 (17...g6?! 18 exd5 gxh5 19 a4! ±; 17...d4 18 e5! ±) 18 exd5 ♗xd1 19 ♖xd1 0-0 20 d6 cxd6 21 cxd6 ♕e6 22 ♗f3 ♔h8 23 d7!? b6 (Ivanchuk-Epishin, Terrassa 1991) and here 24 b5! ♘e5 25 ♗xe5 fxe5 26 ♗c6 ± was best. A lovely exploitation.

c22) 12...♗c6 13 ♖ac1 0-0 14 ♗g3 f5 15 b4 ♔h8?! 16 b5 ♗e8 17 c5! (we shall see this idea again) 17...♖d8 18 cxd6 cxd6 (the weak d6-pawn again, as well as the bishop-pair) 19 ♖fd1 ♗f7 20 ♕d4 b6 21 h4 ♗b3 22 ♖d2 ♘f7 23 h5 ♖d7 24 ♗f3 ♕f6 25 ♕b4 ♗e6 26 ♗c6 ♖dd8? (but White was dominating the game anyway) 27 ♗h4 and White wins, Benko-Ragozin, Budapest-Moscow 1949. A satisfying game.

We now return to the position after 9...0-0 *(D)*:

W



10 0-0

White's idea here, made famous by Karpov, is ♘b3 followed by a3, forcing the bishop back, after which White can open lines, usually by c5. This brings up the question of why White can't play 10 a3 here, which would contrast with our main line where Black can play ...♘g6 in response to a3. After 10...♗c5 11 ♘b3 White gains the bishop-pair (although how you do so can matter), so 10...♗xd2+ 11 ♕xd2 d6 might follow, when 12 0-0 a5 transposes to note 'a22' to Black's 10th move in Section 12.11. White does well there, so perhaps he should consider this move-order, although naturally Black has alternatives.

10...♘g6!

This is a way to deny White the bishop-pair, recommended by Taylor. For years, over many hundreds of games, Black has had trouble in positions in which he trades his b4-bishop for a knight, either directly or in a few moves. Without going into massive depth, let's consider a few examples:

a) 10...a5 can be countered in at least two ways:

a1) 11 ♘b3 is direct; e.g., 11...a4 12 a3 ♗a5 (12...♗c5 13 ♘xc5 ♕xc5 14 ♕d4 ♖a5! 15 ♖fd1 d6 16 ♕xc5 ♖xc5 17 ♖d5 ±) 13 ♘d4 ♗b6 14 ♘b5! ± Flear-Vesin, French Team Ch 1993; the point is 14...d6 15 ♘c3, hitting a4 and preparing ♘d5.

a2) 11 a3 *(D)* and now:

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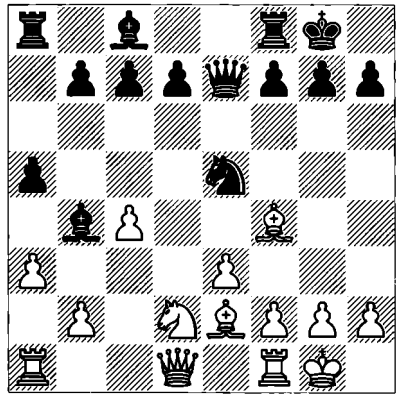


a21) 11...♗c5 leads to a lengthy forcing line: 12 b4! axb4 13 axb4 ♖xa1 14 ♕xa1 ♘g6! 15 ♗h6! gxh6 16 bxc5 ♕xc5 17 ♘e4 ♕e5 18 ♕xe5 ♘xe5 19 f4 ♘g6 20 ♘f6+ ♔g7 21 ♘d5 c6 22 ♘b6 ±.

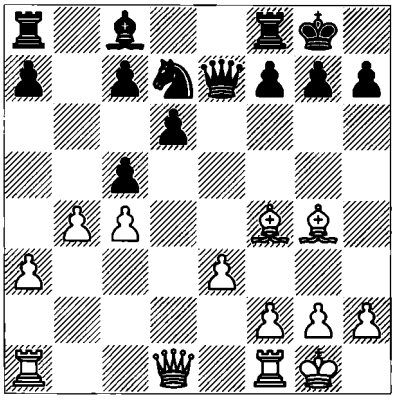
a22) 11...♗xd2 12 ♕xd2 d6 (12...a4 13 c5! is an example of what White is after; at the very least, Black will be saddled with a weak d-pawn: 13...f6 14 ♖ac1 d6 15 cxd6 cxd6 16 ♖fd1 ±) 13 b4 ±, and now White plays for c5, perhaps after ♖ac1 or ♕c3 or both. This position has won numerous games for White.

b) Taylor is devastatingly critical of the exchange 10...♗xd2?! 11 ♕xd2, and rightly so, as in practice, Black is ground down by the bishops a frightening percentage of the time. This is

similar to the examples above, which may be getting tiresome: 11...d6 12 ♖ac1 (12 b4 ♖d8 13 ♕c3 f6 14 ♖fd1 ♗f5 15 ♖d2 ♗g6 16 ♖ad1 ♗f7 17 a3 ♕e6 18 c5, Bluvshtein-Miezis, Calvia Olympiad 2004) 12...♗e6 13 ♖fd1 f6 14 ♕c3 ♕f7 15 ♗g3 (Solozhenkin-Miezis, Gausdal 2001) and now White threatens 16 c5, while 15...b6 16 f4 ♘d7 17 ♗f3 is depressing for Black.

c) 10...d6 11 ♘b3 (11 ♘f3 ± has also been used successfully) 11...b6 12 a3 ♗c5 13 ♘xc5 bxc5 14 b4! ♘d7 15 ♗g4! *(D)*.

B



This position has been established as difficult for Black, the classic example being 15...a5 (15...♖e8 16 ♖c1 a5 17 ♗xd7 ♗xd7 18 bxc5 dxc5 19 ♗xc7!) 16 ♗xd7 ♗xd7 17 bxc5 dxc5 18 ♕d5 (here too, 18 ♗xc7! is the right move-order) 18...♖a6!, Karpov-Short, Candidates (1), Linares 1992. This is one of the stem games for this variation. Karpov won, but here 19 ♕b7! is superior to his 19 ♕e5.

d) 10...♖e8 has its points after 11 ♘b3, but I think White retains a solid plus following 11 ♘f3! d6 12 a3 ♗c5 13 b4 ♘xf3+ 14 ♗xf3 ♗b6 15 ♕c2 ±.

11 ♗g3 ♗d6 12 ♗xd6 ♕xd6 *(D)*

Here Taylor gives various games and analysis to show that Black, having conceded nothing in the way of weakness or minor pieces, stands level. Although I agree that this is the best that Black can do, I think it takes accurate play here to avoid the sort of problems we've seen above, whereas White isn't risking anything. Perhaps this is a matter of taste. In any case, I think his lines themselves indicate that White can play for a win. For example:

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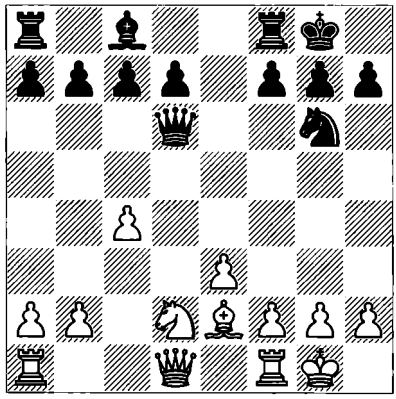
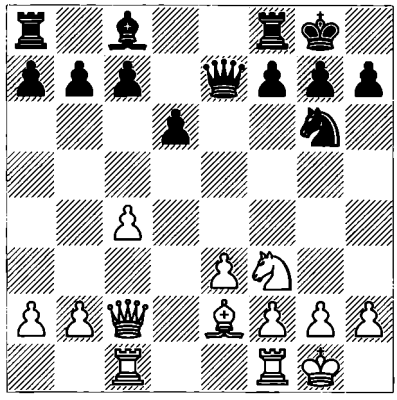


a) Taylor gives 13 ♖c1 ♕e5 (hitting the b-pawn; otherwise 13...♕e7 14 c5 ±) 14 ♕c2 d6 15 ♘f3 ♕e7 *(D)*, and makes it seem like a position that you'd want to play as Black.

W



But White doesn't have to agree to an early draw:

a1) I suggest 16 ♘d4!; for example, 16...♖d8 (16...b6? 17 ♗f3) 17 ♖fd1 (17 ♘b3!? is also complex, with the idea 17...c5 18 ♖cd1 b6 19 ♗f3 ♖b8 20 ♘d2 ♗b7 21 ♗xb7 ♖xb7 22 ♘e4) 17...♘e5 18 ♕e4 g6 19 ♘b5!? a6 20 ♘c3 ±.

a2) There are other interesting possibilities too; for example, the game he cites went 16 ♖fd1 b6 and although White eventually won following 17 b4, Black could have defended adequately. Here I wonder about the simple sequence 17 ♘d4 ♗b7 18 ♗f3 ♗xf3 19 ♘xf3, which holds forth chances because White can double on the d-file and try to break with c5, in conjunction with ♘d4, from where the knight eyes f5 and c6. Even a bind with e4 could appear. The obvious counter is 19...f5, but ...f4

will be answered by e4 or ♖e1; e.g., 20 b4 f4 21 ♖e1 fxe3 22 ♖xe3 ♕d7 23 c5 ±.

a3) Also, Taylor correctly points out that 16 c5 dxc5 17 ♕xc5 ♕xc5 18 ♖xc5 c6 is objectively drawn, but even here do you really want to wait around with nothing to do after 19 ♘d4, when Black's bishop has no particularly good place to go and White can play a minority attack b4-b5 or perhaps expand in the centre?

b) The game Zimmerman-Pavlenko, Moscow 1991 went 13 ♘e4 ♕e7 (Black has to play accurately: 13...♕e5 14 ♘c3 ±; 13...♕xd1 14 ♖fxd1 d6 15 c5 f5 16 cxd6 fxe4 17 d7 ±) 14 ♘c3 d6 15 ♘d5 (White can always vary and at least pose practical problems; for example, 15 ♕d4, when 15...♖e8 16 ♘d5 ♕d8 17 ♖ad1 keeps Black under some pressure) 15...♕d8. At this point Taylor suggests that Black accede to a repetition after the best move 16 ♕b3 with 16...♖b8, and if 17 ♕a3 then 17...♖a8. If White avoids the repetition with 18 ♖ad1, he gives 18...♗e6 "with no problems", but some might find such positions annoying to play; e.g., 19 ♖d2 (19 f4!? is also troublesome) 19...♖e8 20 ♖fd1 b6 21 ♕c3. A lot of this depends upon the level of Black's defensive skill, of course; what seems awkward to some of us might be effortless to a top professional.

12.12)

7 a3

This reaches positions similar to the previous section, but has some handy move-order advantages, useful for White even if plays 7 e3 and transposes at the right moment. I'll skip most of the details to get to the main issue.

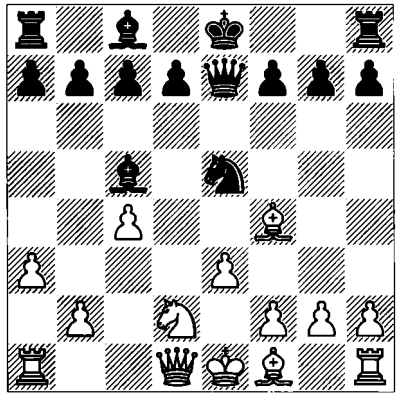
7...♘gxe5 8 ♘xe5

Not, of course, 8 axb4?? ♘d3#!

8...♘xe5 9 e3 ♗c5 *(D)*

Taylor discovered this truly ingenious idea when looking for an alternative to 9...♗xd2+, which has a poor record for the same reasons that move did in Section 12.11. First notice that 9...♗d6? 10 ♘e4 is a positional disaster. And you've seen all the themes associated with 9...♗xd2+ 10 ♕xd2, but here are some lines from this exact position: 10...0-0 (10...d6 11 ♗e2 ♗d7 12 0-0 transposes to note 'c2' to Black's 9th move in Section 12.11) 11 c5! has the idea 11...♕xc5 12 ♖c1 ♕d6 13 ♕xd6 cxd6 14 ♖d1; instead, 11...♖e8 12 ♖c1 d6 13 cxd6 cxd6 gives White a weakness on d6 to target, and of course the bishop-pair.

W



10 ♘b3!

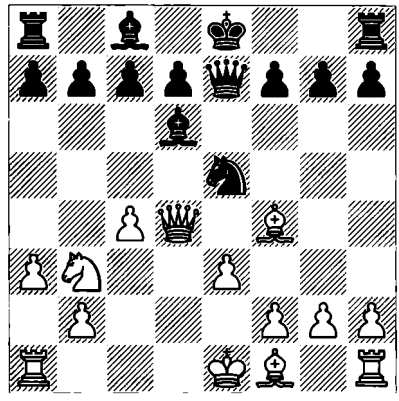
Taylor's idea is that 10 b4 ♗d4 is approximately equal, something that can only be established with some concrete analysis because it depends on several tactical tricks (a timely ...♘g6 is usually the key). But I also wonder about 10 ♗e2, when 11 b4 ♗d4 12 ♖c1 really is a threat, because even on 12...d6, 13 c5 can follow. So play might go 10...d6 (10...a5 11 ♘b3 ♗a7 12 ♕d5! d6 13 c5!; 10...♘g6? 11 ♗xc7 d6 12 ♗a5) 11 0-0 0-0 12 b4 ♗b6 13 ♕c2 (with the idea ♘b3) 13...♗d7 (13...♖e8 14 ♘b3) 14 ♖ac1! (intending c5); for example, 14...♖ad8 15 c5 dxc5 16 bxc5 ♗a5 17 ♘b3 ♗a4 18 ♕b2 ♗xb3 19 ♕xb3 b6 20 cxb6 axb6 21 ♖fd1 ±.

10...♗d6

10...♗b6?! 11 c5 ♗xc5 12 ♘xc5 ♕xc5 13 ♖c1 ±.

11 ♕d4 *(D)*

B



Now 11...f6 is Taylor's suggestion (otherwise 11...b6 12 c5! bxc5 13 ♘xc5 ♗xc5 {13...0-0 14 ♘e4} 14 ♕xe5 ♕xe5 15 ♗xe5 forks two pawns). Then:

a) Taylor gives 12 c5 ♘c6 13 ♕c4 ♗xf4 14 ♕xf4 d6, when I think 15 ♗b5 ♗d7 16 0-0 0-0 17 cxd6 cxd6 18 ♗c4+ ♔h8 19 ♖fd1 ♘e5 20 ♗d5 looks promising.

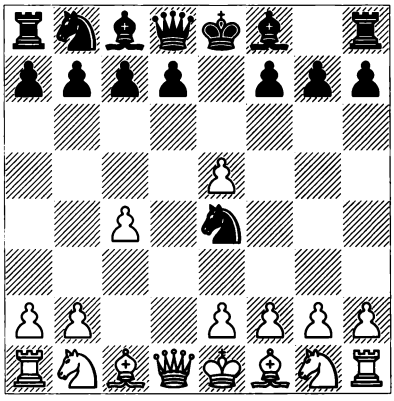
b) Furthermore, what about 12 ♕d2, now that the weakening ..f6 has been played? For example, 12...♘d3+ (12...c6 13 ♘d4 g6 14 ♗g3 ♗c7 15 ♗e2 d6 16 0-0 ±) 13 ♗xd3 ♗xf4 14 0-0 ♗e5 15 ♘d4 d6 16 ♕c2 g6 17 f4 ♗xd4 18 exd4 with an obvious advantage for White.

I think this 4 ♗f4 system will serve you very well.

12.2) Fajarowicz Gambit

1 d4 ♘f6 2 c4 e5 3 dxe5 ♘e4 *(D)*

W



This move defines the Fajarowicz Gambit, a provocative and unrefuted offshoot of the Budapest.

4 a3

Stopping ...♗b4+ and preparing ♕c2, to expel the intrusive knight. The advance b4 will be useful at some point. Black has tried several answers:

12.21: 4...♘c6 241
12.22: 4...♕h4 242
12.23: 4...b6 243
12.24: 4...d6 244

Or:

a) 4...a5 is a move that Black would like to make, but it comes at the cost of a tempo: 5 ♕c2! (after 5 ♘f3 ♘c6, the easiest answer is 6 ♕c2, when 6...♘c5 transposes back to this 4...a5 line; note that this sequence is equivalent to 4...♘c6 5 ♘f3 a5) 5...♘c5 (5...d5 6 exd6 and now 6...♗f5 7 ♘c3! ♘xd6 8 e4 ± or 6...♘xd6 7 ♘c3 ♘c6 8 e4 ±) 6 ♘f3 ♘c6 7 ♘c3 (or 7 ♗f4 ♘e6 8 ♗g3 ♗c5 9 e3 b6 10 ♘c3 ♗b7 11 ♗d3 ±) 7...d6 8 ♗g5 (8 exd6 ♗xd6 9 ♗e3 0-0 10 ♖d1 ±) 8...f6 9 exf6 gxf6 10 ♗h4 ± Hermesmann-Roes, Dortmund 1987.

b) With 4...♘c5, Black acknowledges that the knight will be attacked and so begins the trek back to e6, where it often ends up anyway. Of course there's a thing called development, and another called the centre, so 5 ♘c3 is already clearly better for White; e.g., 5...♘e6 6 ♘f3 g6 7 g3 ♗g7 8 ♗h3 0-0 9 ♗xe6! dxe6 (9...fxe6 10 ♗g5 ♕e8 11 ♘b5 ♘a6 12 ♕d2) 10 ♕xd8 ♖xd8 11 ♗g5 ♖e8 12 ♘b5 ♘a6 13 ♖d1 ±.

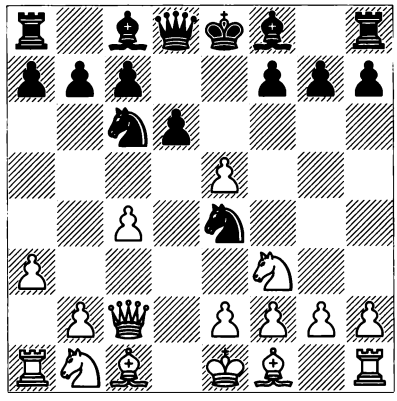
12.21)

4...♘c6 5 ♘f3 d6

Black has never been able to make this move work. After 5...a5 6 ♕c2, 6...♘c5 transposes to note 'a' above (about 4...a5), while 6...d5 7 e3 ♗e6 8 ♘bd2 ♘c5 9 ♗e2 ♗e7 10 0-0 0-0 11 ♖d1 gives White a clear advantage (Avrukh).

6 ♕c2 *(D)*

B



6...d5

a) 6...♗f5?! was essentially refuted over 50 years ago by 7 ♘c3!, when Black is in trouble:

a1) 7...♘g3 8 e4 ♘xh1 (8...♗xe4 9 ♘xe4 ♘xh1 10 ♗g5 ♗e7 11 ♗xe7 ♕xe7 12 exd6 cxd6 13 0-0-0 ± Avrukh; after the knight on h1

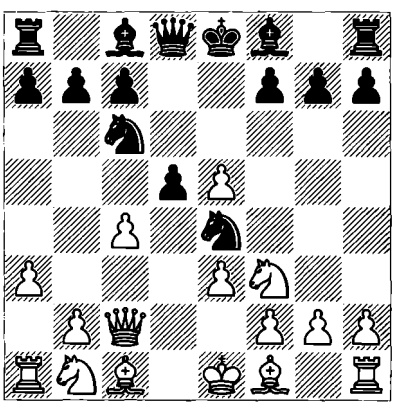
falls, White will have a material advantage as well) 9 exf5 dxe5 (after 9...♘xe5, 10 ♗e2! or 10 ♗e3 is simply much better for White) 10 ♗e3 ♘d4 (10...♗e7 11 ♖d1 ♕c8 12 ♘d5, with the idea ♗d3 or g3 and ♗g2, is virtually winning for White) 11 ♗xd4 (or 11 ♘xd4 exd4 12 ♕e4+) 11...exd4 12 0-0-0. Black's position is already close to hopeless.

a2) 7...♘xc3 8 ♕xf5 ♘a4 9 ♕c2 (9 g3 ♗e7 10 ♕c2 ♘c5 11 b4 ♘e6 12 exd6 cxd6 13 ♗g2 ± Smejkal-Popović, Novi Sad 1976) 9...♘c5 10 b4 ♘e6 11 exd6 ♗xd6 12 ♗b2 0-0 13 e3 (Avrukh) is pretty much winning.

a3) 7...♘xf2 8 ♕xf5 ♘xh1 9 e6!? (even better is simply 9 g3 ±) 9...fxe6 10 ♕xe6+ ♕e7 11 ♕d5 h6 12 g3 g5 13 ♗g2 ♘xg3 14 hxg3 ♗g7 15 ♗h3 ± Reshevsky-Bisguier, New York 1954/5.

b) 6...♘c5 is best, but insufficient after 7 b4 ♘e6 8 exd6 (8 ♗b2 dxe5 9 e3! f6 10 ♗d3 ± was recommended years ago) 8...♗xd6 9 ♗b2 0-0 10 e3 and in Spraggett-Milla de Marco, Madrid 2000, "Black had no compensation" (Avrukh).

7 e3 *(D)*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7...♗e6

a) 7...♗f5 8 ♗d3! ♗g6 (N.Pedersen-Slisser, Dieren 2004) and now 9 0-0 with the idea ♖d1, or 9 ♘bd2 ♘xd2 10 ♗xd2 dxc4 11 ♗xg6 hxg6 12 ♕xc4 (Avrukh).

b) 7...♗g4 8 cxd5 ♕xd5 9 ♗c4 ♕a5+ 10 ♘bd2 (or 10 b4! ♗xb4+ 11 axb4 ♕xa1 12 ♗b2!) 10...♗xf3 11 gxf3 ♘xd2 12 ♗xd2 ♕xe5 13 ♗c3 with a killing position, Fuzishawa-Borwell, corr. 2004.

8 ♗e2

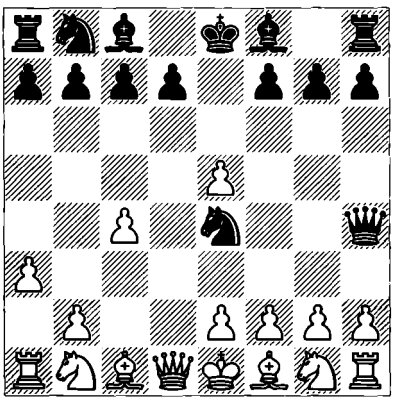
Just as good is 8 ♘bd2 ♘xd2 9 ♗xd2 dxc4 10 ♗xc4 ♗xc4 11 ♕xc4 ± and ♗c3, Fokin-Beltugov, Orsk 2000.

8...♕e7 9 0-0 0-0-0 10 ♖d1 f5

Yrjölä-Hamdouchi, Manila Olympiad 1992. Now 11 cxd5 ♗xd5 12 ♘c3 ♘xc3 13 ♕xc3 ± is straightforward.

12.22)

4...♕h4 *(D)*


W

A strange move which will lose time; it has nonetheless been used by strong players.

5 g3

5 ♗e3!? (Benjamin and Schiller) is also strong; e.g., 5...♘c5 (5...♗c5?! 6 ♗xc5 ♘xc5 7 ♘f3!? ♕xc4 8 ♘c3 ±) 6 ♘c3 ♕xc4 7 ♖c1 ± intending 7...♕b3? 8 ♗xc5.

5...♕h5 6 ♗g2

6 ♕d5! ♘c5 (Naumkin-G.Mohr, Voskresensk 1990) 7 ♘c3! c6 8 ♕d1 ♕xe5 9 ♗f4 ♕f6 10 ♗h3! ±.

6...♕xe5 7 ♘f3 *(D)*

Or 7 ♕c2 (Avrukh).

7...♕e7

Or:

a) 7...♕c5 8 ♘d4 ♘f6 (after 8...♘d6?, as in Effert-Brandics, Kecskemet 1990, 9 ♗d5! "[wins] on the spot" – Avrukh, with the idea b4) 9 ♘c3! c6 10 ♗f4 d6 11 b4 ♕xc4? 12 ♖c1 +–.

b) 7...♕h5 8 ♕c2 ♘f6 9 ♘c3 d6 (Babula-Ramik, Moravian Team Ch 1997/8) and now 10 h3! with the idea 10...♗e7 11 g4 ♕g6 12 ♕a4+ ± ♗d7? 13 ♕b3 ♗c6 14 ♘h4 was easiest.

c) 7...♕a5+ 8 ♘fd2! (after 8 ♘bd2 ♗c5?, as in Pelletier-Flunkert, Orange 1994, Avrukh finds

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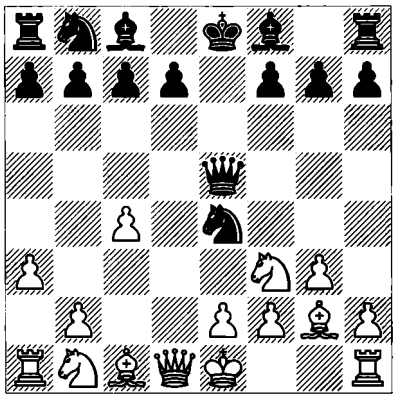


9 b4 ♗xb4 10 axb4 ♕xa1 11 ♘xe4, winning) 8...♘xd2 9 ♗xd2 ♕c5 10 ♘c3 ±. Black will be lucky to get his pieces out.

d) 7...♕f6 8 ♕c2 ♘c5 9 ♘c3 ♘e6 10 0-0 ♘c6 11 ♘d5 ♕d8 12 b4 ♗e7 13 ♗b2 +– Yrjölä-Fossan, Gausdal 1988.

8 0-0 d6 9 ♘d4 c6 10 b4

Or 10 ♕c2!.

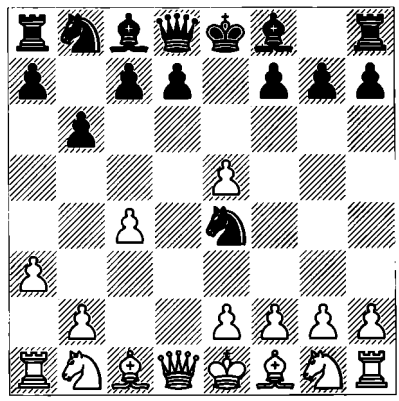
10...g6

Now 11 ♗b2 ♘f6 (11...♗g7? 12 ♘xc6!) 12 ♘c3 ♗g7 13 b5! c5 14 ♘c2 0-0 15 ♘e3 gave White 'only' a pleasant positional advantage in Kutirov-Kurajica, Strumica 1995. 11 ♕d3! ♘f6 12 ♘c3 ± improves.

12.23)

4...b6 *(D)*

W



This indirect move is a more serious try than the previous two lines. Moskalenko thinks that this is Black's best option.

5 ♘d2!

Black's last move wasn't a blunder because the obvious 5 ♕d5?! is met by 5...♘c5, and the queen will be trapped if it takes the rook.

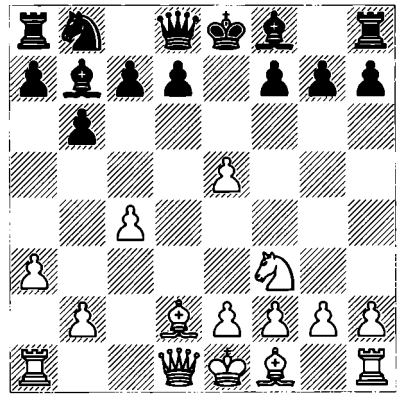
5...♗b7

Or:

a) 5...♘c5 6 ♘gf3 ♗b7 7 b4 ♘e6 has been the fashionable recommendation: 8 ♗b2 d6 (8...a5 can be met by 9 b5 or 9 ♗c3!) and now Avrukh offers the line 9 exd6 ♗xd6 10 g3!? (10 e3 ♘d7 11 ♗d3 seems awfully strong) 10...0-0 11 ♗g2 (I like 11 ♗h3 a5 12 0-0, but there's not much difference) 11...a5. Now he gives 12 b5 ♘d7 13 0-0 ♘dc5 14 ♕c2 with White better, but it seems to me that 12 ♗c3, holding on to c5 a little longer, would be a simpler course. At any rate, a pawn is a pawn.

b) 5...♘xd2 6 ♗xd2 ♗b7 (6...g6?! 7 ♘f3 ♗g7? 8 ♗g5) 7 ♘f3 *(D)* and now:

B



b1) 7...♕e7 8 ♕c2 ♘c6 (8...g6? 9 ♗g5) 9 ♗c3 0-0-0 (not 9...g6? 10 e6 f6 11 exd7+, as the knight isn't on b8 to recapture) 10 0-0-0 ♕e6 11 e3 ♗e7 and after 12 ♗e2, Avrukh rather cruelly remarks: "You would need to be Lev Gutman to believe that Black has anything for the pawn in this position." Well, a little, I think, but at any rate, 12 ♗d3! is stronger, with a clear advantage.

b2) 7...♘c6 8 ♗c3 ♕e7 9 e3 0-0-0 10 ♕c2 f6 11 exf6 gxf6 12 ♗d3 would be similar; then 12...♘e5 13 ♘xe5 fxe5 14 ♗e4 c6 15 ♖d1 ♔b8 16 0-0 gives White a large advantage, because 16...d5 17 cxd5 cxd5 18 ♕b3 ♕e6 19 f4! is very strong.

6 ♕c2

White can also choose 6 ♘gf3 or 6 ♘xe4 ♗xe4 7 ♗f4; e.g., 7...♘c6 8 ♘f3 h6 9 e3 g5 10

♗g3 ♗g7 11 ♗d3 ♗xd3 12 ♕xd3 ♕e7 13 0-0 with an obvious if undramatic advantage, Bellmann-Polzer, corr. 2001.

6...♘xd2

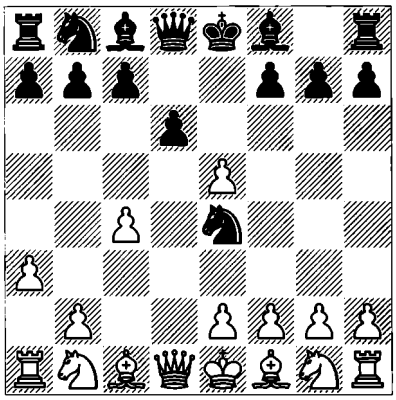
After 6...f5 7 exf6 ♘xf6 8 ♘gf3 a5 9 b3 ♘a6 10 ♗b2 ♘c5 11 g3 Black doesn't have a lot for a pawn.

7 ♗xd2 a5

Timoshchenko-Welling, Ostend 1991. 8 ♘f3 ♗c5 9 ♗c3 leaves White with a solid extra pawn.

12.24)

4...d6 *(D)*



Black plays for activity.

5 ♘f3

5 ♕c2 looks quite good to me too; for example, 5...♗f5? (5...d5 is answered by 6 e3!, while after 5...♘c5 6 b4 ♘e6 7 exd6 ♗xd6 8 ♗b2 c5 9 bxc5 ♗xc5 10 e3 White's pieces will come out very actively) 6 ♘c3 d5 7 cxd5 ♘xc3 8 ♕xf5 ♘xd5 9 e6! f6 10 e4 and already White is winning, M.Röder-Stefanova, Groningen 1996.

5 exd6?! ♗xd6 offers Black very active play for the pawn; note that he threatens 6...♘xf2 7 ♔xf2 ♗g3+.

5...♗f5

White stands simply better after 5...dxe5 6 ♕xd8+ ♔xd8 7 ♘xe5 ♗e6 8 e3 ♗d6 9 ♘f3 (Avrukh).

6 g3

I'll just follow Avrukh with this; he's found a few very accurate moves for White.

6...♘c6

6...h5 7 ♗g2 ♘c6 8 ♘d4 ♘xd4 9 ♕xd4 ♘c5 10 ♕e3 ± F.Levin-Gutman, German Ch, Altenkirchen 2001.

7 ♘h4!

Avrukh's improvement on 7 exd6?! ♗xd6 8 ♗e3 ♕f6, which gives Black good compensation.

7...♗e6

7...♗d7 8 ♗g2 ♘c5 9 b4 ♘e6 10 exd6 ♗xd6 11 ♗b2 0-0 12 ♘f3 ± (Avrukh).

8 ♗g2

Now:

a) Avrukh analyses 8...♘c5 9 b4 ♘d7 10 exd6 ♗xd6 11 ♘d2 (defending the c4-pawn) 11...0-0 12 0-0 a5 (I think 12...♗e5! 13 ♖a2 ♗f6 14 ♘hf3 ♘b6 15 ♕c2 ♖e8 ± is a little better) 13 b5 ♘ce5 14 ♗b2 ♘c5 15 ♕c2 ±.

b) After Gutman's suggestion 8...f5, Avrukh offers up 9 exf6 ♘xf6 10 ♘c3! ♗xc4 11 ♕a4 ♗e6 (11...d5 12 b3 ♗a6 13 0-0 ♕d7 14 ♗g5) 12 ♗xc6+ bxc6 13 ♕xc6+ ♗d7 14 ♕c4 c6 15 e4 "with a clear advantage".

12.3) Systems with ...d6 and/or ...g6

Our largest topic here is the Modern Defence, where Black fianchettoes without playing an early ...♘f6. There is also a variety of lines with ...d6 but without an early ...g6, perhaps most notably 1 d4 d6 2 c4 e5. We divide the section as follows:

12.31: 1...d6 244
12.32: ...d6 and ...♘f6: Irregular Lines 246
12.33: Old Indian Defence 247
12.34: Modern Defence 248

12.31)

1 d4 d6

This is sometimes used as a universal first move. Black is willing to play a Pirc Defence after 2 e4, and can choose a variety of set-ups after 2 ♘f3 and 2 c4.

2 c4 e5 *(D)*

An important move, since in order to be consistent with the rest of the book, White really has to play 3 d5. Alternatively, 2...g6 3 e4 ♗g7 is covered in the Modern Defence section (12.34), and 2...♘f6 is discussed in Sections 12.32 and 12.33. Finally, 2...f5 is a form of the

Dutch Defence – see note 'b' at the start of Chapter 11.

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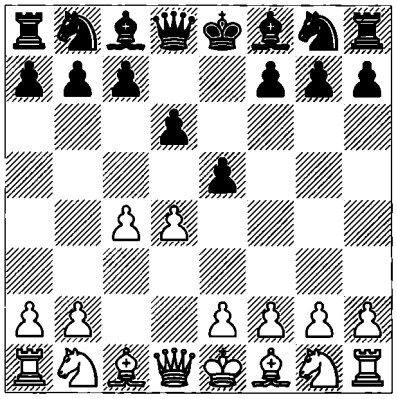

3 d5

It may seem a bit strange to commit to this advance so early, but after 3 ♘c3 exd4 4 ♕xd4, you have entered into an extremely complex English Opening variation with unavoidable tactics (Black's pieces come out very rapidly), and after 3 ♘f3, you have to consider 3...e4, which is heavily analysed and a great favourite of 1...d6 players.

3...f5

A bothersome continuation. Other logical moves tend to transpose elsewhere; for example, 3...♘f6 4 ♘c3 is in the next section (or will transpose to the Old Indian or King's Indian), and 3...g6 can go into a King's Indian or Modern, for example. One unique move-order after 3...g6 is 4 ♘c3 ♗g7 5 e4 f5?!, when White gets the better game by 6 exf5 gxf5 (6...♗xf5 gives up e4 to 7 ♗d3 or 7 ♘ge2 and 8 ♘g3) 7 ♕h5+ ♔f8 8 ♘h3! ♘f6 9 ♕h4 (9 ♕d1, with the idea ♘g5, might be even better) 9...h6 10 f3 ♘bd7 11 ♗d3 ♘c5 12 ♗c2 ♗d7 13 ♗e3 and 0-0-0, Murugan-Koshy, Indian Ch, Muzaffapur 1998.

Although highly unusual from this move-order, 3...c5 4 e4 would transpose to the Semi-Benoni (Section 10.312).

4 e4 *(D)*

This is the most interesting and challenging move. You can of course simply develop by, e.g., 4 ♘f3 ♘f6 5 g3 ♗e7 (5...g6 6 ♗g2 ♗g7 7 0-0 0-0 8 ♘c3) 6 ♗g2 0-0 7 0-0, but White can't claim any meaningful advantage in a position like this.

4...fxe4

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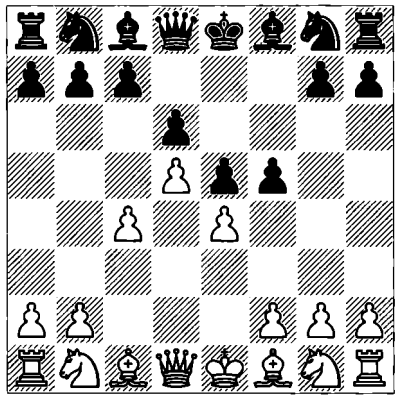


After 4...♘f6 5 exf5 ♗xf5 6 ♘c3, with the idea ♘ge2-g3 and ♗g5, White wins the light squares without having to give up a pawn. An uncomplicated example: 6...♘bd7 7 ♘ge2 ♗e7 (7...♕e7 8 ♘g3 ♗g6 9 ♗d3 e4 10 ♗c2 0-0-0 11 0-0 and ♖e1 next) 8 ♘g3 ♗g6 9 ♗d3 ♗xd3 10 ♕xd3 0-0 11 0-0 ♘c5 12 ♕e2 c6 (12...a5 13 ♗e3 ♘fd7 14 ♘ge4 ±) 13 ♗e3! cxd5 14 ♗xc5! dxc5 15 cxd5 ± Arutinian-Sturm, Dresden 2009. White has a strong passed pawn, while Black has a weakness on e5.

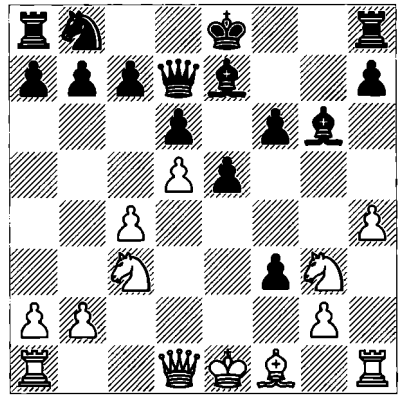
5 ♘c3 ♘f6 6 ♘ge2 ♗f5 7 ♘g3 ♗g6 8 ♗g5 ♗e7 9 ♗xf6 gxf6 10 h4 ♕d7

Covering f5; both Palliser (who likes White) and Lakdawala (who likes Black) give this an '!'. An alternative line might go 10...h5 11 ♗e2 f5 12 ♗xh5 ♗xh5 13 ♘xh5 ♖h7 14 g4! ♗xh4 15 ♘g3! ±.

11 f3 exf3 *(D)*

11...f5 12 h5 ♗f7 13 fxe4 fxe4?! (13...f4 14 ♘f5 is better for White, although not by much) 14 ♘cxe4 ± Mikhalevski-Milos, Cappelle la Grande 2000.

W



12 ♕xf3!?

12 gxf3! is a promising alternative:

a) 12...f5 13 h5 ♗f7 14 ♗d3 e4 (14...f4 15 ♗f5 ♕d8 16 ♘ge4 ♗h4+ 17 ♔e2 should be good for White) 15 fxe4 f4 16 ♘f5. According to Yrjölä and Tella, this is unclear, but White has a great game with his knight on f5.

b) Yrjölä and Tella don't analyse 12...h5!?. Then one idea is 13 ♕b3 (or 13 ♗d3 f5 14 ♕b3 with the point 14...b6?! 15 c5!) 13...b6 (13...c6 14 c5! dxc5 15 0-0-0 with an attack) 14 c5!? (or 14 0-0-0 when I'm not sure how Black untangles; e.g., 14...♘a6 15 ♕a3 ♕c8 16 ♗h3 f5 17 ♖dg1 is awkward) 14...♕c8 15 cxd6 cxd6 16 0-0-0 ♘d7 17 ♗h3 a6 18 ♗f5! and again White stands better.

12...h5 13 ♗d3 ♗xd3 14 ♕xd3 ♕g4 15 ♘ce4

15 ♘f5 ♘a6 (15...♕xg2? 16 0-0-0 is too good for White) 16 0-0 ♘c5 17 ♕c2 (17 ♕f3!?) 17...♕xc4 18 ♖f3 ♔d7 19 b3 ♕b4 20 ♖b1, with the idea a3, is just a mess, but at least Black has two pawns.

15...♘d7 16 ♘f5

16 0-0 is also hard to assess.

16...♖g8 17 ♘eg3 ♘c5 18 ♕c2 a5 19 0-0

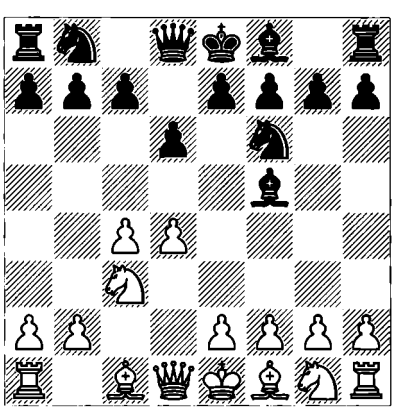
This position is unclear; objectively Black can probably defend, but he has to untangle somehow, and White's compensation, highlighted by the monster on f5 versus the weakling on e7, is clearly worth a pawn.

12.32) ...d6 and ...♘f6: Irregular Lines

1 d4 ♘f6 2 c4 d6 3 ♘c3 e5

3...♗f5 *(D)* is called the Janowski Indian.

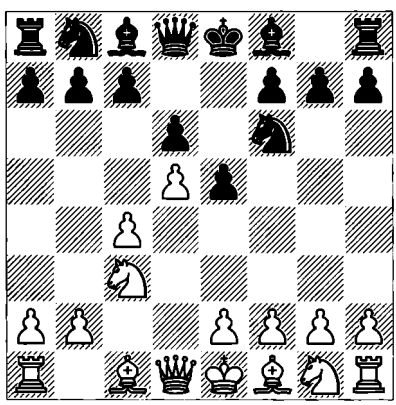
W



Rather than the sharp 4 f3 e5 5 e4 exd4, I'll recommend the calm 4 g3 c6 (4...e5 5 ♗g2 ♘c6 6 ♘f3 ±) 5 ♗g2 e5 6 ♘f3 ♘bd7 7 ♘h4!? (7 0-0 is the main line, also slightly better for White) 7...exd4 8 ♘xf5! (*ECO* queries this and gives 8 ♕xd4 ±; that assessment appears to be correct in view of 8...♗e6 9 0-0 ♗e7 10 ♗f4) 8...dxc3 (D.Gurevich-Gheorghiu, New York 1986) and now 9 0-0 (or 9 ♘xd6+ ♗xd6 10 ♕xd6 cxb2 11 ♗xb2 ♕a5+ 12 ♔f1 ±) 9...♕a5 10 e4 is better for White, who will have all sorts of open lines for a pawn.

4 d5 *(D)*

B



This section covers lines that don't transpose into the Old Indian, that is, we're not concerning ourselves with 4...♘bd7, which is in 12.33.

4...♗f5

4...c5 5 e4 is a Czech Benoni (Section 10.32).

5 g3

I like this approach better than 5 f3 e4 which, again, is very complicated and can become tactical. That might be fine except that I think Black gets equality after the smoke clears.

5...h6

Alternatives:

a) White has met 5...♘e4 with 6 ♘xe4, but I like 6 ♕d3! ♘xf2 (6...♘xc3 7 ♕xf5 ♘a4 8 ♘f3 ±) 7 ♕xf5 ♘xh1 8 ♗g2 g6 9 ♕c2 ♘xg3 10 hxg3 ±.

b) 5...♗e7 6 ♗g2 ♘bd7 7 e4 ♗g6 8 ♕c2!? a5 9 ♘f3 ♘c5 10 ♘h4 ±.

6 ♗g2 e4!? 7 f3

Or 7 ♕c2 ♕e7 8 ♕b3!? c6 9 ♗h3 ♗xh3 10 ♘xh3 g5 11 0-0 ♗g7 12 f4 exf3 13 exf3 ±.

7...♕e7 8 fxe4 ♗xe4

8...♘xe4? 9 ♕d3! ♘xc3 10 ♕xf5.

9 ♘xe4 ♘xe4 10 ♘f3 ♘d7 11 0-0

11 ♘d4! is better still.

11...a5 12 ♘d4 ♘dc5 13 ♘f5 ♕e5 14 ♗e3

White has a large advantage, Hamann-Vizantiadis, Vrnjačka Banja Zonal 1967.

12.33) Old Indian Defence

1 d4 ♘f6

We can get to the same position by 1...d6 2 c4 e5 3 d5 ♘f6 4 ♘c3 ♘bd7 5 e4. For other possibilities with that move-order, see Section 12.31.

2 c4 d6 3 ♘c3 ♘bd7

Other moves were considered in Section 12.32. Note that 3...e5 4 d5 ♘bd7 5 e4 is another route to the Old Indian.

4 e4 e5

This is one of the basic positions of the Old Indian. White can now maintain the tension by 5 ♘f3, but it is also promising, and consistent with our repertoire choices against several related systems, to gain space by...

5 d5 *(D)*

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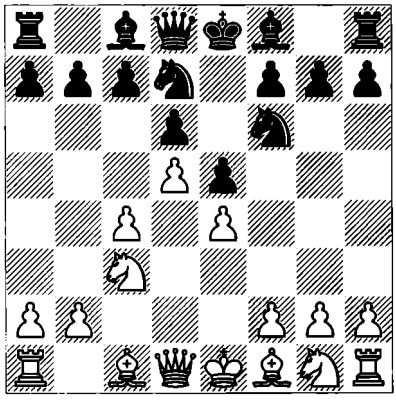

5...♗e7

This is the defining Old Indian Defence move. With this particular move-order, Black can play 5...♘c5 right away, although this knight often wanders to the kingside in the Old Indian. Then 6 ♕c2 is an obvious idea; after 6...a5 7 h3 it could transpose to our King's Indian lines following 7...g6 8 ♗g5 (or 8 ♗e3), while upon 7...♗e7, the set-up with h3, ♗e3 and ♘f3 makes sense. You can also set up a Sämisch structure with 6 f3 a5 7 ♗e3 ♗e7 (7...g6 8 ♕d2 is a poor version of the Sämisch King's Indian for Black) 8 ♕d2 followed by ♘ge2 and in some cases 0-0-0, g4 and ♘g3.

6 ♗d3 0-0 7 h3

This is sort of an all-purpose set-up against systems with ...♘f6, ...d6 and ...e5 and it's had good success in this position. Although some players use it with ♘ge2, I'd rather play ♘f3 and watch over the g5-square.

7...♘e8

This retreat usually has the initial idea of ...♗g5, and perhaps a secondary one of ...g6, ...♘g7 and ...f5, but White's structure is well-suited to meet that. Alternatively:

a) 7...♘c5 8 ♗c2 a5 9 ♘f3 ♘fd7 10 g4 (not a bad move, although normally you only want to play this when all your pieces are out and you have an attacking plan; preventing ...f5 isn't necessary as it can be in the King's Indian) 10...♘b6 11 ♕e2 ♗d7 12 ♗e3 ♘ba4 13 ♘d1!? ♘a6 14 b3 ♘4c5 15 a3 ♗e8 16 ♘c3 ♘d7?! (that's nine knight moves for Black, but this is the first one that really looks wrong!) 17 ♖b1 with a pleasant space advantage for White, Suetin-Sutterer, World Seniors Ch, Bad Wildbad 1993.

b) 7...a5 8 ♗e3 ♘c5 9 ♗c2 ♘fd7 10 ♘f3 ♖e8 11 0-0 ♖b8?! (Black never gets uncramped, but it's hard to do so in this structure; e.g., 11...h6 with the idea ...♗g5 is countered by 12 ♕d2 and 11...♘f8, heading for g6, loses the e-pawn after 12 ♗xc5 dxc5 13 ♘xe5) 12 a3 ♗f8 13 ♕e2 c6 14 b4 ♘a6 15 dxc6!? (or 15 ♖fb1! and ♘a4) 15...bxc6 16 b5 cxb5 17 cxb5 ♘ac5 18 a4 ♗b7 19 ♖ac1 ♖c8 20 ♖fd1 with a slight advantage for White, Anastasian-Alfonsi, Bastia rapid 1999.

8 ♘f3 *(D)*

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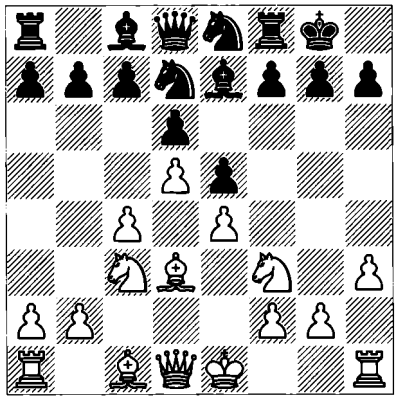

8...g6

8...c5 transposes to a Czech Benoni line – see the note to Black's 8th move in Section 10.32.

9 g4 ♘c5 10 ♗c2 a5 11 ♖g1 ♘g7 12 ♗e3 b6

Now 13 a3 ± ♗d7 14 b4 axb4 15 axb4 ♖xa1 16 ♕xa1 ♘b7 17 ♔e2! ♕c8 18 ♗a4! ♗xa4 19 ♕xa4 gave White a large positional advantage in Pliasunov-Trusheliov, St Petersburg 2000. 13 ♕d2 is another idea.

12.34) Modern Defence

1 d4 g6 2 c4 ♗g7 3 e4 *(D)*

This set-up is the most consistent with the other openings in this book (and avoids 3 ♘c3 c5 4 d5 ♗xc3+, although I believe that's ultimately a poor variation).

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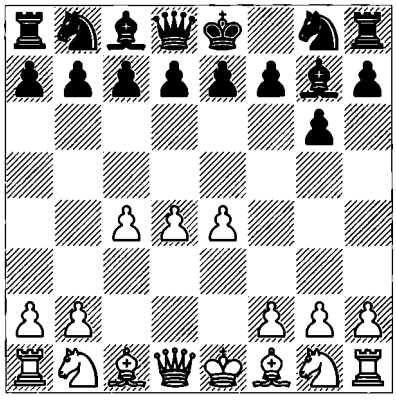
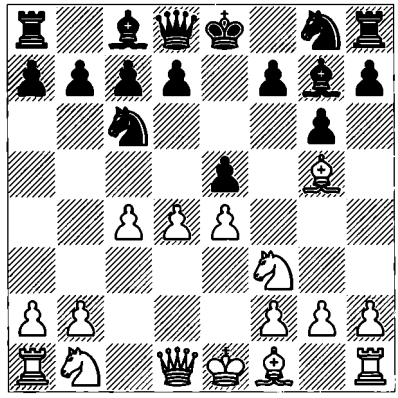


For one thing, if Black plays ...c5 over the next few moves, we've already seen the main set-ups he can employ in Chapter 10 on Benoni Systems. And if Black plays 3...d6 4 ♘c3 ♘f6, we have a King's Indian that's consistent with our repertoire.

3...d6

3...♘c6 is an ambitious idea, trying to economize on the move ...d6 while occupying the centre. One straightforward answer is 4 ♘f3 e5 (4...d6 5 d5 ♘e5 6 ♗e2 ♘xf3+ 7 ♗xf3 ♘f6 8 0-0 0-0 9 ♘c3 c5 10 ♗g5 h6 11 ♗e3 ±) 5 ♗g5!? *(D)* with these ideas:

B

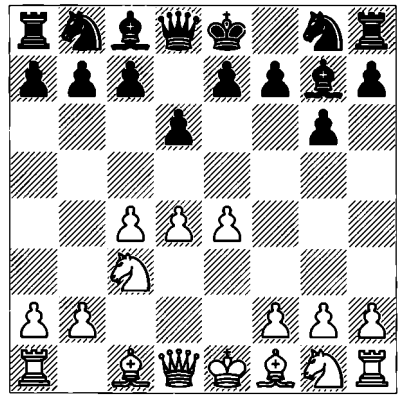


a) 5...f6?! 6 ♗e3 exd4 7 ♘xd4 ♘ge7 8 ♘c3 d6 is passive anyway, but White makes immediate progress by 9 ♗e2 (or 9 c5!? dxc5 10 ♘xc6 ♘xc6 11 ♕a4 ♗d7 12 ♗xc5 ±) 9...0-0 10 c5! dxc5? (10...♘xd4 11 ♕xd4! f5 12 ♕c4+ ♔h8 13 cxd6 cxd6 14 ♗d4 ♘c6 15 ♗xg7+ ♔xg7 16 ♖d1 ±) 11 ♕b3+ ♔h8 12 ♘xc6 ♘xc6 13 ♗xc5 ±.

b) 5...♗f6 6 ♗e3 (or 6 ♗xf6 ♘xf6 7 d5 ♘b8 8 ♘c3 d6) 6...exd4 7 ♘xd4 d6 8 ♘c3 ♘ge7 9 ♗e2 0-0 10 0-0 and White stands better; for example, 10...♘xd4 11 ♗xd4 ♗xd4 12 ♕xd4 ♘c6 13 ♕d2 ♖e8 14 f4! f5 15 exf5 ♗xf5 16 ♘d5 ±.

4 ♘c3 *(D)*

B



Here the material splits into:

12.341: 4...♘c6 249

12.342: 4...♘d7 250

Or:

a) 4...♘f6 is a direct transposition to the King's Indian Defence.

b) 4...e5 is held in some suspicion because of the queenless middlegame 5 dxe5 dxe5 6 ♕xd8+ ♔xd8 7 f4!, which is held to favour White. That's definitely worth investigating. From our point of view, the move 5 d5 is logical,

transposing into a King's Indian after 5...♘f6 6 h3, or Section 12.342 after 5...♘d7 6 h3. Note that we already saw this position in Section 12.31 via 1 d4 d6 2 c4 e5 3 d5 g6 4 ♘c3 ♗g7 5 e4, and we analysed the move 5...f5?! there.

c) 4...f5 5 exf5 ♗xf5 is a rarer option:

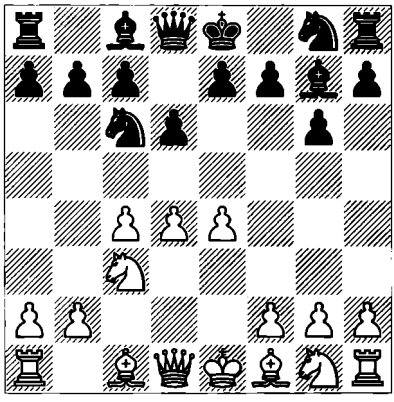
c1) 6 ♗d3!? ♗xd4 7 ♗xf5 ♗xc3+ 8 bxc3 gxf5 9 ♕h5+ ♔d7 10 ♕xf5+ e6 (Portisch-Bilek, Sousse Interzonal 1967) 11 ♕b5+ ♘c6 12 c5! ♕f6 13 ♘e2 d5 14 ♗b2 a6 15 ♕b3 ♖f8 16 0-0 ♔c8 17 ♖ab1 with an attack; for example, 17...♘a5 18 ♕a4 ♘c4 19 c6.

c2) 6 ♘f3 ♘h6 7 ♗e2 (or 7 h3 0-0 8 ♗e3 ♘c6 9 g4 ♗d7 10 ♗g2 ±) 7...0-0 8 0-0 ♘a6 (Polugaevsky-Bilek, Lipetsk 1968) and along with effective moves such as 9 d5 and 9 h3, 9 a3 stops ...♘b4 and prepares ♖e1; e.g., 9...c5 10 ♖e1 ♘f7 11 ♗e3 cxd4 12 ♘xd4 ♗d7 13 ♗f3 ♖b8 14 ♕d2 (or 14 h3) 14...♘e5 15 ♗d5+ ♔h8 16 ♘f3! and Black's centre and queenside are increasingly exposed.

12.341)

4...♘c6 *(D)*

W



5 ♗e3

A straightforward move. 5 d5 ♘d4 6 ♗e3 c5 7 ♘ge2 ♕b6 is regarded as somewhat in White's favour, but we can avoid the complications associated with that line and reach the same modest assessment.

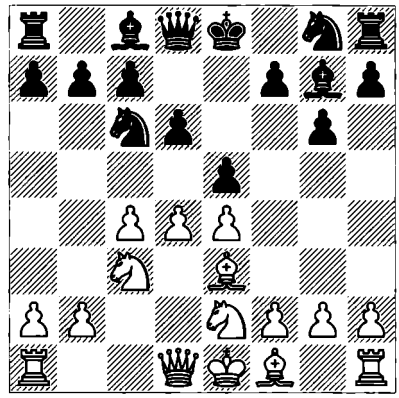
5...e5

5...♘f6 6 d5 ♘e5 7 f4 ♘ed7 8 ♘f3 0-0 9 ♗e2 e6 10 dxe6 fxe6 11 ♘g5 ♕e7 12 0-0 with a nice advantage, Tal-Christiansen, Wijk aan Zee 1982. One idea is 12...h6 13 ♘h3 a6 14 ♕c2, aiming at g6; e.g., 14...♕f7 15 ♖ad1 b6 16 e5! dxe5 17 ♗d3, etc.

6 ♘ge2 *(D)*

The very well-known line 6 d5 ♘ce7 is an alternative if you aren't happy with my main line. Then 7 g4 is one possibility, while I think that 7 c5 f5 8 cxd6 cxd6 9 ♗b5+ ♔f8 10 ♘f3! (instead of the book move 10 f3) is good, but that's another story.

B



6...♘h6

This threatens ...♘g4 and keeps the idea of ...f5 alive. Other moves:

a) 6...f5 7 exf5 ♗xf5 8 d5 ♘ce7 9 ♘g3 ♘f6 10 ♗d3 and White takes over the e4-square with advantage, Larsen-Ganong, St John 1970.

b) 6...♘f6 7 d5 ♘e7 8 f3 is not an ideal Sämisch King's Indian for Black; e.g., 8...0-0 9 ♕d2 c6 (9...♘h5 10 g4; 9...♘d7 10 h4) 10 ♘c1 a6 11 ♗e2 b5 (11...cxd5 12 cxd5 b5 13 0-0 ♘d7 14 ♘d3 f5 15 a4 ±) 12 dxc6 ♘xc6 13 ♘b3 with a positional advantage for White.

7 f3

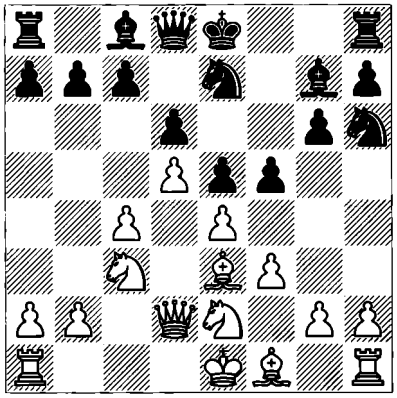
7 d5 also suffices for an edge; for example, 7...♘b8 (7...♘e7 8 h3!? f5 9 g3 ♘f7 10 ♗g2 ♗h6 11 ♗xh6 ♘xh6 12 ♕d2 ♘f7 13 0-0 0-0 14 f4!? slightly favours White, Grigorian-Rukavina, Rijeka 2010) 8 f3 f5 9 ♕d2 ♘f7 10 0-0-0 0-0 11 ♔b1 c5 12 exf5 gxf5 (12...♗xf5+?! 13 ♔a1 a6 14 ♘g3 ± with the idea h4-h5) 13 f4 ♘d7 14 ♘g3 ♘f6 (Damjanović-Kotov, Paris 1968) 15 fxe5! ♘xe5 16 ♗g5 with the better pawn-structure and a healthy advantage.

7...f5 8 d5 ♘e7 9 ♕d2 *(D)*

9...♘f7

Many King's Indian players will be tempted into 9...f4 10 ♗f2 g5, but with White's king

B



missing from the kingside and a ready-made queenside attack, they won't be happy; for example, 11 c5 0-0 12 0-0-0 g4 13 ♔b1 ♘g6 14 ♘c1 ♗d7 15 ♘b3 ♘h4 (Malakhatko-Tiller, Tromsø 2009) and now 16 ♕e1! (or 16 ♖g1 gxf3 17 ♗xh4 ♕xh4 18 gxf3 ±) 16...♘g6 17 ♗c4 ± is quite sufficient for a substantial advantage.

10 ♘c1

10 0-0-0 is an obvious alternative, and 10 c5 is a good option too; for example, 10...f4 11 ♗f2 g5 12 ♘c1 (12 0-0-0 ♘g6 13 ♔b1 ±) 12...♘g6 (Stohl-Seirawan, Manila Interzonal 1990) and now 13 ♗b5+ with the idea 13...♗d7 (13...♔f8 14 ♗e2) 14 ♗xd7+ ♕xd7 15 ♘d3 g4 16 0-0-0 gives White a very comfortable game.

10...c5

Blocking the queenside is a good idea. Other moves:

a) 10...♘g8 11 c5 (11 exf5 gxf5 12 ♗d3 ±) 11...♗h6 12 ♗b5+!? ♗d7 13 ♗xd7+ ♕xd7 14 ♗xh6 ♘gxh6 15 ♘d3 ±.

b) 10...0-0 11 ♘d3 c6 12 ♗e2 cxd5 13 cxd5 ♗d7 14 a4 ± Szabo-Suttles, Hastings 1973/4. Black has little play in these lines.

11 ♘d3

11 a3 0-0 12 b4 b6 13 ♗e2 h5 14 ♘d3 ♔h7 (Åkvist-Böhm, Eksjö 1974) and now 15 ♔d1 with the idea ♔c2 was suggested, while 15 ♖b1 is a sensible move.

11...b6 12 b4 0-0 13 ♗e2 ♔h8 14 a4!

White's attack is faster than in the previous note.

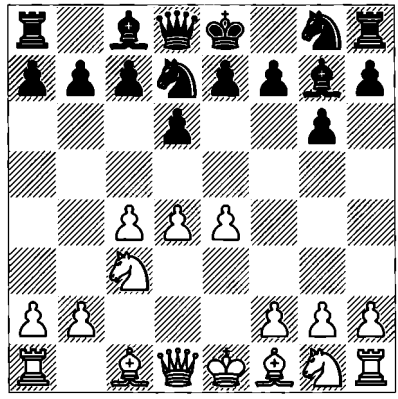
14...a5 15 bxc5 dxc5 16 ♘b5!?

± Foisor-Carlier, European Junior Ch, Groningen 1976/7.

12.342)

4...♘d7 *(D)*

W



This can go every which way.

5 h3

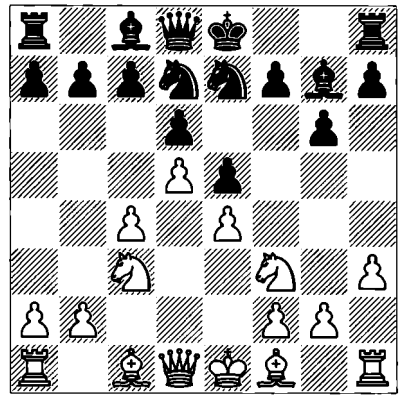
White can play a number of other moves, but in order to be consistent with our repertoire we'll start with this. 5 ♗e3 e5 6 d5 and h3 is another way to do so.

5...e5 6 d5 ♘e7!?

After 6...♘gf6, 7 ♗g5 or 7 ♗e3 enters our King's Indian repertoire. The text-move is quite rare, but has a certain logic, especially as an h-pawn advance will now cost White a tempo, and I'll simply cover some obvious continuations.

7 ♘f3 *(D)*

B



7...0-0

7...f5 8 ♘g5 exerts pressure on the light squares; e.g., 8...♘f6 9 exf5 ♘xf5 (9...gxf5 10 ♗e2 0-0 11 0-0) 10 ♗d3 0-0 11 0-0 ± with the

idea 11...♘d4 12 ♘e2; otherwise Black's position is a little passive.

8 g4!? a5

8...f5?! is dubious because of 9 ♘g5 ♘c5?! 10 gxf5 gxf5 11 ♖g1 h6 12 b4! ±.

9 ♗e3 ♘c5 10 ♘d2

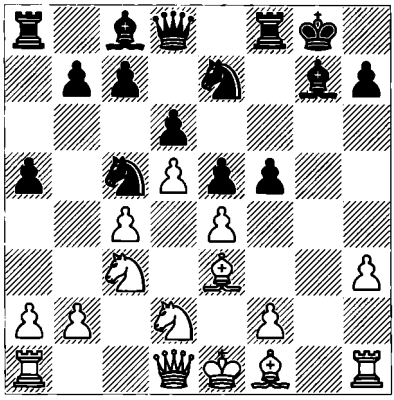
10 ♗e2 is also logical, discouraging 10...f5 due to 11 gxf5 gxf5 12 ♖g1.

10...f5

10...♗d7 can be answered by 11 ♗e2 or 11 ♘b3!?.

11 gxf5 gxf5 *(D)*

W



12 h4

Thinking about ♗xc5 and ♗h3 to control the light squares.

12...♘xe4 13 ♘dxe4 fxe4 14 h5 h6 15 ♕d2 ♘f5 16 ♘xe4 ♘xe3 17 fxe3 ♗f5 18 ♗d3

White has a modest advantage. This coverage is nowhere near comprehensive, of course, and there are many other ways to answer Black's set-up.

12.4) Systems with ...e6 and/or ...b6

In this category we have two major systems and an older and rarer idea:

12.41: English Defence 251
12.42: 1...e6 2 c4 ♗b4+ 254
12.43: 1...♘f6 2 c4 b6 257

The English Defence features ...e6 and ...b6 (without ...♘f6), inviting White to set up a huge centre, which Black will then attack from all angles. We shall choose a move-order that gives Black less to bite on. Section 12.42 is a subtle sequence by which Black may seek a favourable transposition to a number of standard openings, while there arise several independent ideas in the process. My suggestion tends to lead to Nimzo-type positions. 1...♘f6 2 c4 b6 is a line you are more likely to find in games collections by the 'old masters' than in your next tournament, but it has undergone a slight revival among theoreticians and illustrates some important themes of the Indian systems.

The move-order 1 d4 e6 can also be used in another way: 2 c4 c5 heads for Benoni structures; viz. 3 d5 exd5 4 cxd5 d6 5 ♘c3 g6 6 e4 ♗g7 7 ♗d3, when 7...♘f6 transposes to the main line of the Modern Benoni in Section 10.1, and the rarer 7...♘e7 was examined in Section 10.33.

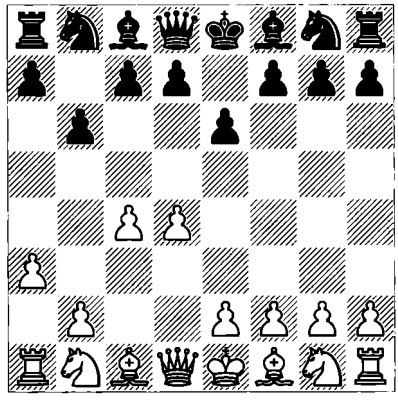
12.41) English Defence

1 d4 e6 2 c4 b6

The English Defence took a huge leap in popularity after Black began to realize that after 3 e4 ♗b7, White's centre could be put under a lot of pressure, assisted by many enjoyable tactical tricks.

3 a3 *(D)*

B



This move, preventing ...♗b4, is the bane of English Defence players. Odessky, a leading English Defence expert, repeatedly bemoans Black's fate for having to play against it and says that the assessment jumps between ± and ±. He himself shows that things aren't so bad, but still, the majority of highly-rated players

employ 3 a3, and this is clearly the choice for a strategically-minded player.

3...♗b7

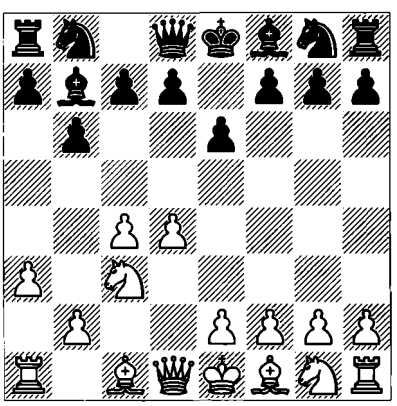
Or:

a) With 3...g6, Black delays the development of his c8-bishop, thinking that it might go to a6 in some lines: 4 ♘c3 ♗g7 5 ♘f3 (5 e4 ♘e7 6 ♘f3 transposes) 5...♘e7 6 e4 0-0 7 ♗e2 ♗b7 8 0-0 ±.

b) 3...f5 4 ♘c3 ♘f6 5 d5 (5 ♘f3 ♗b7 6 g3 is a solid alternative) 5...♗a6 implements that idea: 6 b3 (6 e3 is also feasible) 6...g6 7 ♗b2 ♗g7 8 g3 0-0 9 ♗g2 ♘e4 10 ♖c1 ♘xc3 11 ♗xc3 ♗xc3+ 12 ♖xc3 ± Salov-Short, Madrid 1997.

4 ♘c3 *(D)*

B



4...f5

The most popular move by some margin, but there are respectable alternatives:

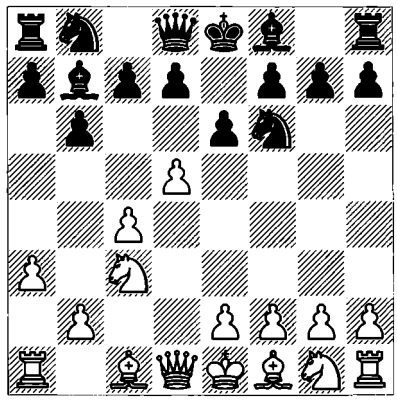
a) The easiest set-up against 4...g6 is 5 e4 ♗g7 6 ♘f3 ♘e7, and while 7 d5!? has worked well in practice, 7 ♗e2 0-0 8 0-0 d6 9 ♗e3 ♘d7 10 ♕d2 ± is more natural.

b) 4...♘f6 is the main alternative. It invites 5 ♘f3, transposing to a main line of the Queen's Indian Defence. This is a perfectly good option for White and probably the main reason English Defence players prefer 4...f5. But 5 d5 *(D)* is thematic, involves ideas which will apply elsewhere and avoids heavy Queen's Indian theory! So here's an overview of that move:

b1) 5...exd5 6 cxd5 and then:

b11) 6...b5 has been played numerous times and still passes muster in the theory books, but I have to admit that I'm sceptical for more than one reason:

B

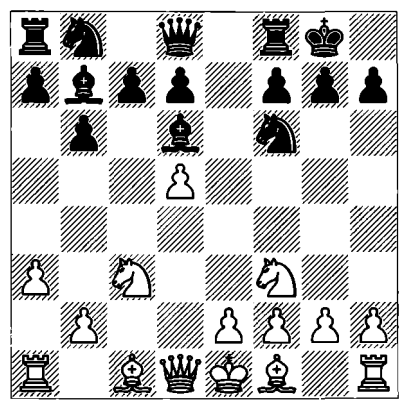


b111) It's unclear why after years and years of games with 6...b5, 7 ♘xb5(!) hasn't been played! To me, 7...♗xd5 8 ♗g5 ♗b7 9 ♗xf6 gxf6 10 e3 certainly looks good for White, and he also comes out better following 7...♘xd5 8 e4 ♘f6; for example, 9 e5 (or 9 ♗f4) 9...♘e4 10 ♕c2 ♗c5! 11 ♗e3!, in view of 11...♗xe3!? 12 ♘xc7+ ♔f8 13 fxe3 ♕h4+ 14 g3 ♘xg3 15 hxg3 ♕xg3+ 16 ♔d2 ♗xh1 17 ♕c5+ ♔g8 18 ♘xa8 ±.

b112) 7 e4 b4 8 axb4 ♗xb4 9 ♗d3 and I think White can be happy; e.g., 9...c6 (9...♕e7 10 ♘f3! ♘xd5 11 0-0 ♘xc3 12 bxc3 ♗xc3 13 ♕b3 ♗b4 14 ♘d4! with multiple threats, beginning with ♘f5) and now 10 dxc6 yielded a small edge in Baburin-Speelman, Copenhagen 1996, but 10 e5! ♘xd5 11 ♕g4 is strong; e.g., 11...g6 12 ♘f3! h5 13 ♕c4 a5 14 0-0 ♗a6 15 ♕e4 ♘xc3 16 bxc3 ♗xc3?! 17 ♗g5 ±.

b12) 6...♗d6 7 ♘f3 0-0 *(D)*.

W



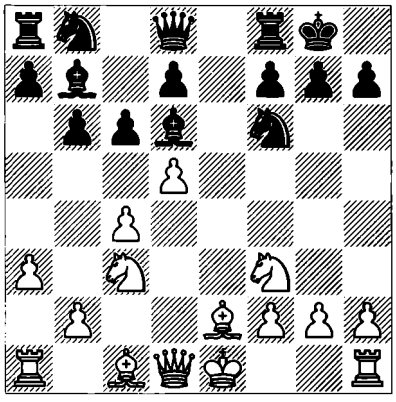
Several moves have been played here, but a sound practical one is 8 ♗g5 ♖e8 (8...h6 9 ♗h4

and now 9...c6?? fails to 10 ♘e4, so 9...a5 10 e3 ♘a6 11 ♗c4 ♘c5 12 ♕d4 ♗e7 13 0-0 a4 14 e4 d6 15 ♖fe1 ± might follow) 9 e3 ♗e7 (9...a5 10 ♗c4 ♘a6 11 0-0 ♘c5 12 ♕d4 ±) 10 ♗c4 h6 11 ♗f4 ♘h5 12 ♗e5 ♗f6 13 ♗d4! ± Karpov-Miles, Las Palmas 1977. White has a space advantage which he converted into victory in grand style.

b13) 6...g6 7 e4 ♗g7 8 ♗d3 0-0 9 ♘f3 (9 ♘ge2 c5 10 0-0 d6 11 h3 ♘bd7, Plachetka-Šahović, Vrnjačka Banja 1985, and now 12 ♘g3 a6 13 a4 ♖e8 14 ♗e3 ♘e5 15 ♗e2 is a pleasant version of a normal Modern Benoni line) 9...d6 10 0-0 ♖e8 11 ♖e1 ♘bd7 12 ♗g5 h6 13 ♗f4 ♘c5 14 ♗c2 a5 15 ♖b1 with a slight advantage for White.

b2) 5...♗d6 (this development may look eccentric, but if Black plays meekly and develops quietly, White will consolidate his space advantage and secure a dominant game) 6 ♘f3 (versus ...♗e5) 6...0-0 (6...c6 7 e4 exd5 8 e5! ± Sethuraman-Mihopoulos, Vrachati 2011) 7 e4 (or 7 g3) 7...exd5 8 exd5 c6 9 ♗e2 *(D)* with this choice:

B



b21) 9...♘a6 10 0-0 ♘c7 11 dxc6 dxc6 12 ♗g5 ±.

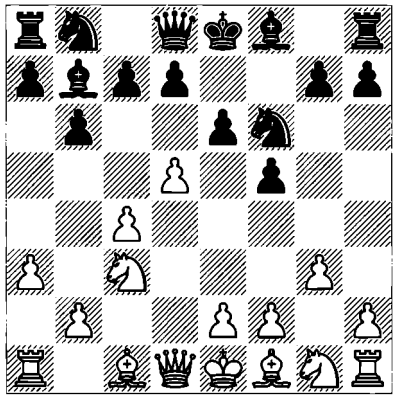
b22) 9...cxd5 10 cxd5 ♘a6 11 0-0 (11 ♘d4 ♗e5) 11...♖e8 12 ♗g5 (12 ♘b5 ♕e7 13 ♖e1 is a messy alternative) 12...h6 13 ♗h4 ♘c5 14 ♘d4 ♘ce4 15 ♘xe4 ♖xe4 16 ♘f5 ♗e5 ½-½ Knaak-Planinc, Polanica Zdroj 1979; here 17 ♕d3! ♗xb2 18 ♖ad1 is good; e.g., 18...♖e8? (18...♖xh4 19 ♘xh4 ♖c8 20 ♘f5 ±) 19 ♖d2 ♗e5 20 f4 ♗c7 21 ♕g3 and Black's position is indefensible.

5 d5 ♘f6

5...♗e7 6 g3 ♗f6 (with the idea ...♗xc3+, and in some cases ...♘e7-c8-d6!) 7 ♕c2 (I like this move; 7 ♗d2 is more common, but the bishop might be better placed on e3, f4 or even b2) 7...♘e7 8 ♗g2 0-0 (8...♘c8 9 ♘f3 ♘d6 10 ♗f4! ±) 9 ♘h3 ♘a6 10 0-0 ♘c5 11 ♘f4 (11 ♗e3 ±) 11...♘g6 12 ♘xg6 hxg6 13 ♗e3 ♗xc3?! (but White stands better in any case) 14 ♕xc3 with an obvious advantage for White, Ibragimov-Kalinichev, Bad Wiessee 1998.

6 g3 *(D)*

B



6...♘a6

With 6...g6, Black reasons that while White's d5 advance has blocked off the b7-bishop, it has also opened the other long diagonal, so he may as well put his bishop on g7. Compared to our main line with ...♗d6-e5, however, Black is never threatening ...♗xc3, so that after 7 ♗g2 ♗g7 8 ♘h3! 0-0 9 0-0 ♘a6, White can play 10 b4!, leaving the a6-knight stuck on the side of the board: 10...♘e4 (10...♘xd5?! 11 ♘xd5 exd5 12 ♗xd5+ ♗xd5 13 ♕xd5+ ♔h8 14 ♗g5 ♕e8 15 ♖ad1 ♖f7 16 ♗f4 c6 17 ♕d3 ± I.Farago-Z.Varga, Pecs 1998) 11 ♘xe4 fxe4 (11...♗xa1 12 ♗g5 ♕e8 13 ♕xa1 fxe4 14 ♗h6 ♖f7 15 ♖d1! has the idea of ♘g5 with a devastating attack) 12 ♖b1 exd5 13 cxd5 ♕e7 14 ♘g5 ♔h8 15 ♘xe4 with an extra pawn and a positional advantage, Piket-Plaskett, Mondariz Zonal 2000.

7 ♗g2 ♘c5 8 ♘h3

The modern preference, although 8 ♘f3 is still unclear.

8...♗d6

Practically the only move Black ever plays, and for good reason; he is badly cramped, but

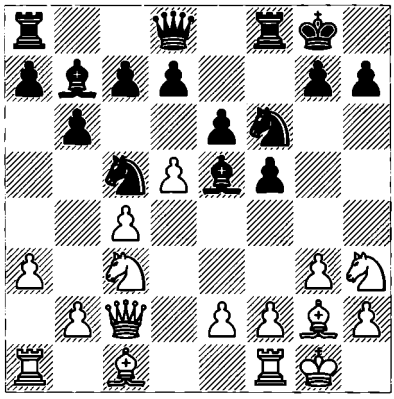
now intends to play ...♗e5 with excellent pressure on White's centre. 8...g6 9 b4 ♘a6?! (9...♘ce4 10 ♗xe4 fxe4 11 dxe6 dxe6 12 0-0 ♗g7 13 ♗f4 ±) 10 0-0 ♗g7? 11 dxe6! (a trick to remember) 11...♗xg2 12 ♔xg2 0-0 (after 12...dxe6 13 ♕a4+ White nets a piece) 13 exd7 ± ♕xd7 14 ♗b2 ♕c6+ 15 ♘d5 ♕xc4 16 ♗xf6 ♗xf6 17 ♖c1 ♕e4+ 18 f3 ♕e8 19 ♕d3! b5, Tkachev-Hamdouchi, Cannes 2001. White stands much better; for example, 20 e4 fxe4? 21 fxe4 ♗e5 22 ♘g5! is simply winning.

9 0-0

Complex and highly strategic positions result from 9 ♗f4 and 9 ♘b5; e.g., in the latter case 9...♗e5 10 f4! (10 ♗f4 d6!) 10...♗d6.

9...♗e5 10 ♕c2 0-0 *(D)*

W



This position has been tested repeatedly over the years. The best and most practical way to handle it is to reinforce d5:

11 ♖d1

11 ♗d2 and 11 ♘f4 are accepted alternatives.

11...♕e7 12 ♘f4!

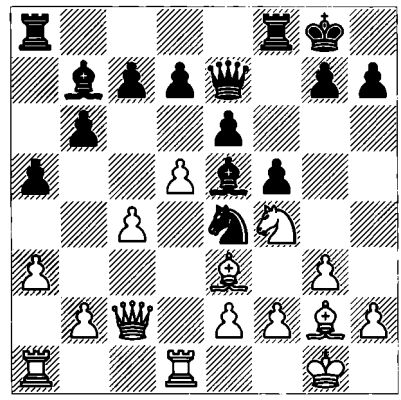
Odessky suggests that this is the most accurate move-order and that Black has "no useful moves"! Similar but perhaps less accurate is 12 ♗e3 (intending ♗d4 at the right moment) 12...♘ce4!? 13 ♘xe4 ♘xe4 14 ♖ac1 c5 with counterplay, Sher-Lempert, Erevan 1996.

After 12 ♘f4, Odessky gives...

12...a5 13 ♗e3 ♘ce4 14 ♘xe4 ♘xe4 *(D)*

Now after 15 ♖abl he says, "the knight is driven away from e4". However, 15...g5 16 ♘d3 ♗f6 17 ♘e1 exd5 18 cxd5 ♖ac8 keeps Black right in the game. And yet there's another issue after 14...♘xe4: White can play 15

W



dxe6 dxe6 16 c5! bxc5 (16...♘xc5?? 17 ♗xc5; 16...♗xf4 17 ♗xf4 bxc5 18 ♖ac1 ±) 17 ♖ac1, and he retains a small but annoying edge following 17...♗d6 18 ♗xe4 ♗xe4 19 ♕c4 ♖fe8 20 f3 ♗b7 21 ♗xc5 ♗a6 22 ♕c3. Overall, that seems the correct assessment of the move 3 a3 in the English Defence.

12.42)

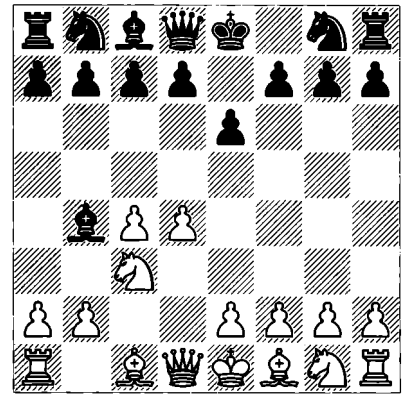
1 d4 e6 2 c4 ♗b4+

This is a kind of hybrid between the Bogo-Indian and English Defences. It is quite a respectable move.

3 ♘c3 *(D)*

Objectively, 3 ♗d2 is probably the most challenging move (although 3...a5 is a bother), but 3 ♘c3 fits in nicely with the rest of our repertoire.

B



3...f5

This leads to Dutch-type positions. There are some important alternatives:

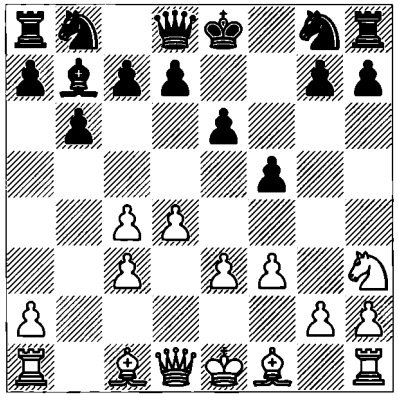
a) 3...♘f6 is the Nimzo-Indian.

b) 3...d5 transposes to 1 d4 d5 2 c4 e6 3 ♘c3 ♗b4 in Section 3.6.

c) 3...b6 4 e3 ♗xc3+ (4...♗b7 5 ♘e2 and now 5...♘f6 transposes to Section 7.22, while 5...f5 6 a3 ♗xc3+ 7 ♘xc3 ♘f6 8 ♗e2 0-0 9 0-0 is a fairly straightforward two-bishops position, with the possible continuation 9...♕e8 10 f3 ♘c6 11 ♗d2 ♕g6 12 ♗e1 ±) 5 bxc3 ♗b7 6 f3!? and now:

c1) 6...♕h4+ 7 g3 ♕h5 8 e4 f5 (8...♘c6 9 ♘h3 ♘ge7 10 ♘f4 ♕a5 11 ♗d2 0-0 12 ♗d3 ±) 9 exf5 ♕xf5 10 ♗d3 ♕f7 (10...♕h5!? 11 ♗f4 d6? 12 ♕e2 ♕f7 13 ♘h3 h6 14 0-0 ± Neiman-Bricard, French Ch, Narbonne 1997) 11 ♗f4 d6 12 ♘h3 h6 (Stohl) 13 0-0 ♘d7 14 c5! bxc5 15 dxc5 ♘xc5 16 ♗b5+ ♔e7 17 ♗e3 with good attacking chances for the pawn.

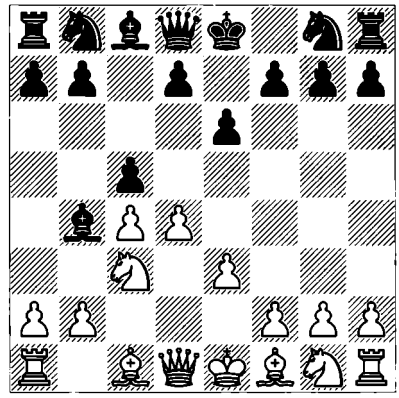
c2) 6...f5 7 ♘h3 *(D)* and then:



c21) I prefer White's bishops in flexible positions like 7...♘f6 8 ♗d3 0-0 9 0-0, but Black's game is certainly playable. Eventually e4 is an issue, or even ♗a3 and c5, so Black should probably prepare ...c5, although the immediate 9...c5?! 10 d5!? exd5 11 cxd5 ♗xd5 12 ♗xf5 favours White.

c22) 7...♕h4+ 8 ♘f2 ♘f6 (8...♘e7 9 ♗d3 0-0 10 0-0 ♘bc6 11 e4 ±) 9 ♗d3 0-0 10 0-0 c5 11 e4 (or 11 ♗e2!?, when 11...♘c6?! is a mistake in view of 12 dxc5 bxc5 13 ♖b1 ♘d8 14 ♗a3 ±) 11...fxe4 12 fxe4 d6 (12...♘xe4? 13 ♗xe4 ♗xe4 14 g3 ♖xf2 15 ♖xf2 ♕e7 16 d5 ±) 13 d5 (or 13 ♘h3) 13...e5 14 g3 ♕h5 15 ♕xh5 ♘xh5 16 ♗e2 ♘f6 17 g4 ♘bd7 18 g5 ♘e8 19 a4 ♘c7 20 ♗d2 ♖f7 21 ♘g4 ♖af8 22 ♖xf7 ♖xf7 23 h4 ±. In this kind of position, White can advance pawns on both wings, but whether it's enough to win versus accurate defence is not clear.

d) 3...c5 4 e3 *(D)* (4 ♘f3 cxd4 5 ♘xd4 can transpose into a line of the g3 Nimzo-Indian after 5...♘f6 6 g3, while 6 g3 or 6 e4 will follow most other moves besides 5...♘f6).



Now 4...♘f6 is a Nimzo-Indian (Section 7.1) and 4...f5 5 ♘e2, intending 6 a3, doesn't accomplish much for Black, but he can try:

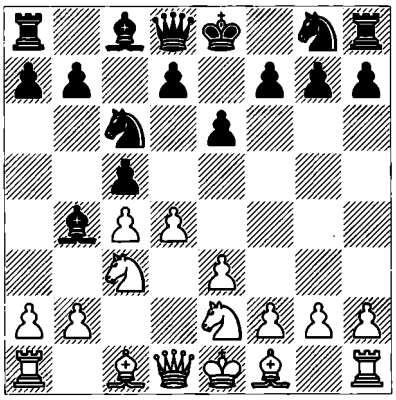
d1) 4...♗xc3+ 5 bxc3 d6!? (the most common move here; 5...♘f6?! 6 ♗d3 with the idea ♘e2, e4, etc., is essentially a Sämisch Variation of the Nimzo-Indian a full tempo down because Black voluntarily played ...♗xc3+ without White playing a3; 5...f5 allows 6 e4! fxe4 7 ♕h5+ g6 8 ♕xc5 ±) 6 ♗d3 (6 ♕g4!?). This can lead in various directions; for example, 6...e5!? (6...♘c6 7 ♘e2 ♘ge7!? 8 0-0 0-0 9 ♕c2 ♘g6 10 f4 f5 11 e4 with good attacking chances) 7 ♕c2 ♘f6 8 ♘e2 ♕e7 9 f3 0-0 10 0-0 ♘c6 11 ♗d2, having in mind ♗e1 and a transfer to the kingside, or in the case of 11...♖e8, 12 ♖ae1 with the idea ♘g3.

d2) 4...♘c6 5 ♘e2 *(D)* (5 d5 ♗xc3+ 6 bxc3 and now 6...♘ce7 is unclear, and better than 6...♘a5?! 7 ♗d3 ♘f6 8 e4 e5 9 f4 d6 10 ♘f3 0-0 11 0-0 ♕c7 12 ♕e1! ±) and here:

d21) 5...cxd4 6 exd4 d5 and then:

d211) 7 a3 ♗xc3+ 8 ♘xc3 dxc4 9 ♗xc4, and now after 9...♘xd4 10 ♗e3 or 9...♕xd4 10 ♕e2 White has very good compensation, so a key line is 9...♘ge7! 10 0-0 0-0 11 ♗g5 h6! 12 ♗xe7 ♘xe7 13 ♖e1; e.g., 13...♕b6 14 d5!? ♕xb2 15 d6 ♘c6 16 ♖e3. Black may be equal but still has some problems to solve; obviously both sides can deviate.

B

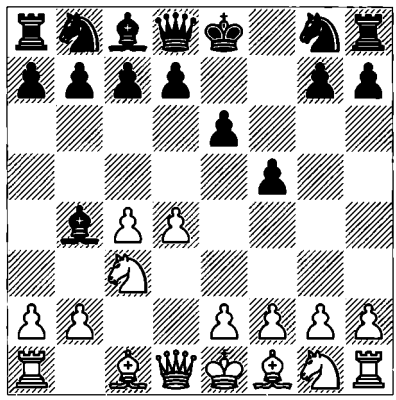


d212) 7 cxd5 exd5 8 a3 ♗a5 9 ♘f4 ♘f6 (Piot-Eingorn, St Quentin 2001) and now White can become active with 10 ♗d3, having in mind that 10...♘xd4!? 11 0-0 ♗xc3 12 bxc3 ♘e6 13 ♘xe6 fxe6 14 c4 0-0 15 ♗b2 leaves White with ample compensation. Black has problems getting his pieces out and White can bring his rooks to the centre and isolate and target Black's d-pawn. 10...0-0! is more solid, with the idea 11 0-0 ♖e8 12 ♗e3 ♗c7, but White is still slightly better after 13 h3 intending ♕f3.

d22) 5...d5 6 cxd5 (6 a3 ♗xc3+ 7 ♘xc3 cxd4 8 exd4 transposes to line 'd211') 6...exd5 7 a3 (7 ♘f4 ♘f6 8 ♗d3 is an alternative) 7...♗xc3+ (7...cxd4? 8 axb4 dxc3 9 b5 gives White a real advantage) 8 ♘xc3 cxd4 9 exd4 ♘ge7! 10 ♗d3 0-0 11 0-0 ♗f5 12 ♗g5 f6 13 ♗e3 ♗xd3 14 ♕xd3 and Black is within a sliver of equality but the position still has play in it.

We now return to 3...f5 *(D)*:

W



4 g3

This discourages ...b6 and covers e4. I shall mention two other natural replies:

a) 4 ♕c2 ♘f6 5 ♗d2 (5 e3 ♘e4 transposes to note 'b1' to Black's 4th move at the start of Chapter 7 – on the Nimzo-Indian) 5...0-0 6 e3 b6 7 a3 ♗xc3 8 ♗xc3 ♗b7 9 f3 a5 10 ♗d3 a4 11 ♘e2 ± Kempinski-Ostrowski, Mistek 1997.

b) White can also play 4 e3, which is consistent with our repertoire versus the Nimzo-Indian. Then:

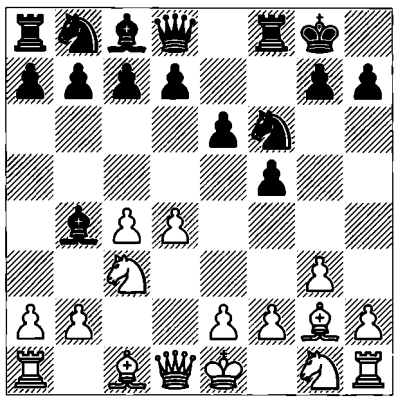
b1) 4...b6 5 ♘e2 ♘f6 6 a3 ♗e7 7 ♘f4 ♗b7 8 ♗e2 0-0 9 0-0 ±.

b2) 4...♘f6 can also be answered by 5 ♘e2 and 6 a3, which is handy. Another approach is 5 ♗d3 0-0 6 ♕c2 b6 (6...d6 7 ♘e2 c5 8 a3 ♗xc3+ 9 ♕xc3!? ♘c6 10 0-0 a5 11 b3 ♕e7 12 ♗b2 with a slight advantage for White, Taimanov-Kärner, USSR Team Ch, Riga 1968) 7 ♘e2 ♗b7 (7...♘e4 is another transposition to note 'b1' to Black's 4th move at the start of Chapter 7) 8 0-0, with a set-up we see in the Dutch Defence chapter; e.g., 8...♘c6 9 a3 ♗d6 (Ligterink-Renet, Budel 1987) and now 10 f3 and 10 e4 both slightly favour White.

b3) 4...♗xc3+ 5 bxc3 ♘f6 6 ♗d3 b6. We've seen this kind of thing before. White sets up with the standard pawn-structure; for example, 7 ♘h3 0-0 8 0-0 ♘c6 9 f3 ♗a6 10 ♕e2 ♘a5!? (10...d5 11 cxd5 ♗xd3 12 ♕xd3 ♕xd5 13 c4 ♕d7 14 ♗b2 ±) 11 e4 d5 12 e5!? (12 ♗g5 dxc4 13 ♗c2 threatens ♘f4 and e5, with ♖ae1 in reserve) 12...dxc4 13 exf6 cxd3 14 ♕xe6+ ♖f7 15 ♘g5 ♕xf6 16 ♕xf7+ ♕xf7 17 ♘xf7 ♔xf7 18 ♗f4 ±.

4...♘f6 5 ♗g2 0-0 *(D)*

W



6 ♕b3

6 ♘h3 is eccentric (literally) but playable; for example:

a) 6...d5 7 0-0 (7 cxd5 exd5 8 ♘f4 c6 9 0-0 ±) 7...c6 8 ♕b3 ♘a6!? 9 ♘f4 ♗d6 10 ♘d3! ♘c7 (Grau-Alekhine, Warsaw Olympiad 1935) and now 11 c5! ♗e7 12 ♗f4 would accentuate White's advantage.

b) 6...d6 7 ♕b3 (7 0-0 is also possible) 7...♘c6 (7...c5!?) 8 d5 (8 0-0 a5 9 d5 exd5 10 cxd5 ♘e5 11 ♗e3 ±) 8...exd5 9 cxd5 ♘d4 10 ♕d1 ♘b5! 11 ♕d3 ♘xc3 12 bxc3 ♗c5 is equal, M.Werner-Weiner, 2nd Bundesliga 1985/6.

6...♕e7 7 a3 ♗xc3+ 8 ♕xc3 d6

8...a5 9 b3 ♘e4 10 ♕c2 ± Andreev-Kozlov, St Petersburg 2008.

9 b4 a5 10 b5 ♘bd7

Now:

a) 11 ♗b2 ♖e8 (11...♘b6! 12 a4 ♘e4 13 ♕c2 e5! =) 12 ♘f3 ♘e4 13 ♕c2 ♘df6 14 0-0 b6 15 ♘e1! ♗d7 (15...♗b7 16 ♘d3 ±) 16 f3 ♘g5 17 ♘d3 ± Landa-Balashov, Taganrog 2011.

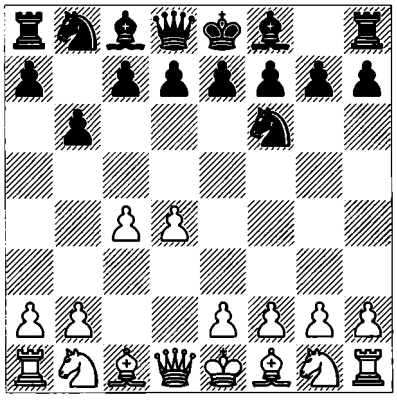
b) 11 ♘h3! improves: 11...♘e4 12 ♕c2 e5 13 ♗b2 exd4 14 ♗xd4 ±.

My suspicion is that most of these lines are objectively equal or close to equal, but that Black must play more accurately than his opponent, and so White is more likely to get the advantage in over-the-board play. 2....♗b4+ as a whole looks like a fully playable variation.

12.43)

1 d4 ♘f6 2 c4 b6 *(D)*

W



3 ♘c3

Avrukh proposes 3 f3, but in the variation 3...♘c6!? (suggested by Kogan) 4 ♘c3 e5 5 d5, he only gives 5...♘e7. However, Black can use his lead in development to play 5...♘a5! 6 e4 (6 e3!? is possible, but 6...c6 at any rate leaves Black with no problems) 6...♗b4 (6...♗d6 is more direct and at least equal) 7 ♗d2 ♘b7 8 a3 ♗d6 9 b4 a5 ∓ (or 9...0-0).

3...♗b7

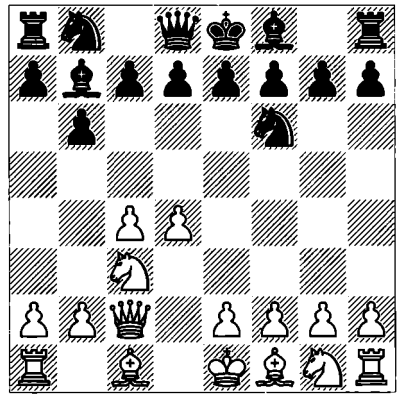
After 3...e6 we saw 4 a3 ♗b7 in note 'b' to Black's 4th move in Section 12.41, on the English Defence. The natural 4 e4 has also scored very well in practice, since with the knight on f6, Black lacks the type of all-out counterplay he gets in the English Defence when White sets up a large pawn-centre.

4 ♕c2 *(D)*

This old method is still valid.

4 f3 d5 5 cxd5 ♘xd5 6 e4 ♘xc3 7 bxc3 e5! is extremely unclear, while 4 d5 e6 5 a3 is the English Defence line referred to in the previous note.

B



4...d5

Other moves don't challenge the centre sufficiently:

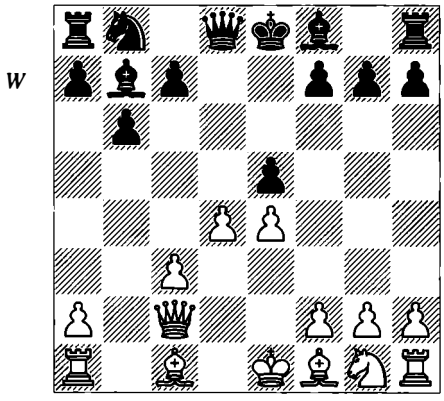
a) 4...e6 5 e4 favours White: 5...d6 (5...♗b4 can be met by 6 ♗d3 or even 6 e5 ♘e4 7 a3; 5...♘c6 6 ♘f3 e5 7 dxe5 ♘g4 8 ♗f4 ♗c5 9 ♗g3 ±) 6 ♘f3 (6 f4!? ±) 6...♗e7 7 ♗d3 ♘bd7 8 0-0 ±.

b) 4...c5 5 d5 g6 6 e4 d6 7 f4! (7 ♘f3 gives White a slight advantage) 7...♘bd7 8 ♘f3 ♕b8!? (8...♗g7 9 e5 dxe5 10 fxe5 ♘g4 11 e6 fxe6 12 ♘g5 ♘f8! 13 ♗e2 ± ♘e5?! 14 0-0!) 9 ♗d3 ♗g7 10 0-0 0-0 11 ♕e2 ♘e8 12 ♗d2 ♘c7 13 ♕f2 e6 14 f5! exf5 15 exf5 ± with ideas of ♕h4, ♖ae1 and ♘g5.

5 cxd5 ♘xd5 6 e4

6 ♘f3 secures a safe edge: 6...e6 (6...g6 7 e4 ♘xc3 8 bxc3 ♗g7 9 ♗b5+ ♘d7 10 0-0 0-0 11 ♗f4 a6 12 ♗d3 is also slightly better for White, Quinteros-Planinc, Ljubljana/Portorož 1973) 7 e4 ♘xc3 8 bxc3 ♗e7 9 ♗b5+ c6 10 ♗d3 c5 11 0-0 cxd4 12 cxd4 0-0 13 ♗b2 ♘c6. Here Avrukh gives 14 a3 and says, "This simply transposes to a position from the Petrosian Variation of the Queen's Indian Defence." While that's true, White also hasn't been demonstrating an advantage in that variation. However, 14 ♕e2 saves White a very valuable tempo on the main line; e.g., 14...♖c8 (14...♘b4 15 ♗c4 ♖c8 16 ♖ac1) 15 ♖ac1 ♕d6 16 ♖fd1 ♘a5 and now White can launch the thematic attack 17 d5! ♖xc1 (17...exd5 18 ♖xc8 ♖xc8 19 exd5 with a dangerous attack and a troublesome d-pawn that seems to survive) 18 ♖xc1 (18 ♗xc1 exd5 19 exd5 g6 20 ♗a6 ±) 18...exd5 19 e5 ♕d7 (19...♕h6 is answered with 20 ♖c7 or 20 ♘d4! ♖c8 21 ♖xc8+ ♗xc8 22 e6!! ±) 20 ♘d4 ♗c5 21 ♘f5 ♕e6 22 ♕g4 g6 23 ♘h6+ ♔g7 24 ♕f4 ♔h8 25 ♘g4 ± with compensation worth well more than a pawn.

6...♘xc3 7 bxc3 e5! *(D)*



White would simply be better if it weren't for this move with the idea ...♕h4.

8 ♘f3 exd4 9 ♗c4! ♘c6

Black can't completely neutralize White's initiative by 9...d3 10 ♗xd3 ♗c5 11 0-0 0-0 because of 12 ♗g5!.

10 0-0 d3

10...dxc3?! is difficult for Black after the simple 11 ♕xc3, or even 11 ♗g5 with the idea 12 ♖d1.

11 ♗xd3 ♗c5 12 e5 h6

Zilberstein-Bronstein, USSR Ch, Baku 1972. Now 13 e6! fxe6 (13...0-0 14 exf7+ ♔h8 15 ♗c4) 14 ♗g6+ ♔f8 15 ♗f4 ± supplies more than enough compensation; Black's king is really in the way.

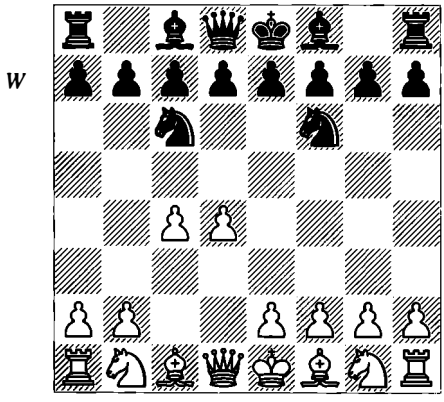
12.5) Assorted Systems

We are close to completing our repertoire, and all that remains is to consider a few of Black's more offbeat ideas, some of which still need to be treated with a little respect. Our main themes here are lines with an early ...♘c6, and ideas with ...a6 and/or ...b5:

12.51: 1 d4 ♘f6 2 c4 ♘c6 258
12.52: 1 d4 ♘c6 262
12.53: 1 d4 b5 2 e4 a6 263
12.54: 1 d4 b5 2 e4 ♗b7?! 264
12.55: 1 d4 ♘f6 2 c4 a6 265
12.56: 1 d4 e5?! 266

12.51)

1 d4 ♘f6 2 c4 ♘c6 *(D)*



This is known as the Black Knights Tango. It is a respectable if still uncommon way of meeting d4 which resembles a mirror-image Alekhine Defence if White continues 3 d5 ♘e5 4 e4 e6 5 f4, etc. If White does chase the knight in that way, it turns out that, unlike the line 1 d4 ♘c6 2 d5 ♘e5 (Section 12.52), Black gets strong counterplay against White's centre. This result is to some extent logical as ...♘f6 is more immediately active than c4, and furthermore, c4 exposes White along the e1-a5 diagonal to ...♗b4(+). So I'll recommend a calmer solution.

3 ♘f3

Now White is threatening 4 d5 for real, and Black has two serious methods of anticipating this:

12.511: 3...d6 259
12.512: 3...e6 260

12.511)

3...d6

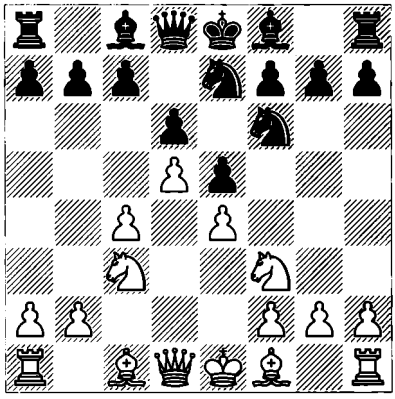
Now after 4 d5, 4...♘e5!? is possible, and has scored rather well (with a lead in performance rating for Black), and even 4...♘b8, intending ...c6 to break up the centre, isn't bad. Instead, White usually plays:

4 ♘c3 e5

The consistent move; anyway, at some point White's d5 advance will become a bother, so Black can't delay this indefinitely.

5 d5 ♘e7 6 e4 *(D)*

B



6...♘g6

This is not an ideal place for the knight, and it prevents Black from fianchettoing, but there isn't a good alternative. At first it looks as though 6...g6 might get Black into a conventional King's Indian, but that dream is shattered by 7 c5!. This is an invaluable break which causes Black more problems than he should want to deal with. In fact, 7 c5! has scored so well that it has almost completely driven 6...g6 from high-level play:

a) 7...♘d7? 8 cxd6 cxd6 9 ♘b5! ♘c5 (not 9...♘b8?? 10 ♕a4) 10 b4 (or 10 ♗e3 a6 11 ♗xc5! ±, hoping for 11...dxc5?? 12 ♕a4!) 10...♘xe4 11 ♕c2, with threats on both c7 and e4.

b) 7...dxc5 8 ♘xe5 ♗g7 9 ♗b5+ ♘d7 and now both 10 ♗f4 and 10 f4 give White the better game.

c) 7...a6 8 ♕a4+ ♗d7 (8...♕d7 9 ♗b5!; 8...♘d7 9 cxd6 cxd6 10 ♘b5 initiates a lengthy forcing sequence: 10...♘g8 11 ♗g5 f6 12 ♖c1 fxg5 13 ♘c7+ ♔f7 14 ♘xa8 ♘c5! 15 ♖xc5 dxc5 16 ♕b3 ♗d6 17 ♘b6 h6 18 ♗d3 ♔g7 19 ♘d2! ♗c7 20 ♘dc4 ±) 9 ♕b3 ♖b8 10 ♗e3 ±, in view of 10...♗g7 11 cxd6 cxd6 12 ♗b6 ♕c8 13 ♕b4.

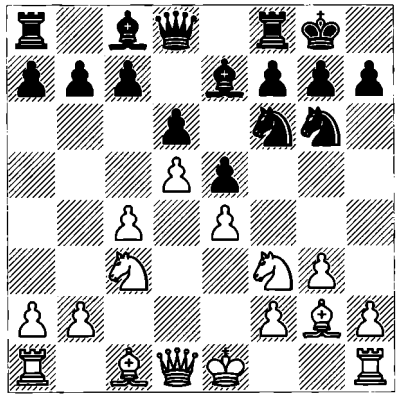
d) 7...♗g7 8 cxd6 (after 8 ♗b5+, 8...♘d7 9 cxd6 cxd6 transposes, while 8...♗d7 9 ♕b3 ± is one good way to play it) 8...cxd6 9 ♗b5+ (9 ♕a4+ is also good) 9...♘d7 10 0-0 (or 10 ♗e3 0-0 11 ♘d2 f5 12 f3) 10...0-0 11 ♗e3 f5 (11...h6 12 ♘d2! f5 13 f3 ♘f6 14 ♗e2 ♗d7 15 ♘c4 ♘c8 16 a4 ± Fyllingen-H.Hagesäther, Norwegian Team Ch 1997) 12 ♘g5 ♘f6 and now 13 ♗e2?! h6 (13...fxe4 14 ♘gxe4 ♘f5 15 ♗g5 ♕b6 16 ♕d2 and White has a modest edge) 14 ♘e6 ♗xe6 15 dxe6 fxe4 16 ♕b3 b6 (16...d5 17 ♗c5) 17 ♖ad1 left White only slightly better in J.Cooper-Trois, Buenos Aires Olympiad 1978, but 13 ♕b3! fxe4 14 ♗c4! ♔h8 15 ♘cxe4 ♘f5 16 ♘xf6 ♗xf6 17 ♘e6 ♗xe6 18 dxe6 ♘xe3 19 fxe3!, planning ♗d5, is much more promising.

7 g3

Several good moves are possible here, but this one is simple, preventing ...♘f4 and getting developed.

7...♗e7 8 ♗g2 0-0 *(D)*

W



9 0-0

I like 9 ♘d2 with the idea ♘f1-e3: 9...♘d7 (9...c6 10 ♘f1 ♗d7 11 ♘e3 ±) 10 ♘f1 (or 10

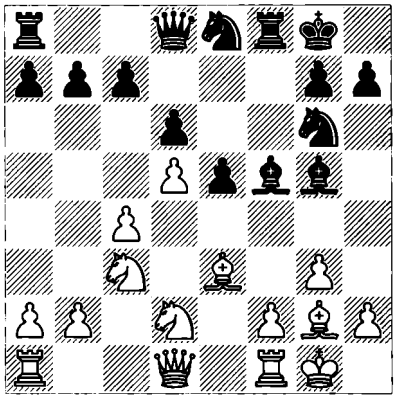
h4! h6 11 h5 ♘h8 12 ♘f3 a5 13 ♗e3 with space and better development) 10...♗g5 11 ♗xg5 (or 11 ♘e3 ±) 11...♕xg5 12 h4 ♕d8 13 ♘e3, Chernin-Blatny, New York 1996.

9...♘e8

9...c6 10 ♕d3 ♕c7 11 ♗e3 ♗d7 (11...♘g4 12 ♗d2 ♗d7 13 h3 ♘f6 14 ♖ac1) 12 ♖ac1 ±.

10 ♗e3 f5 11 exf5 ♗xf5 12 ♘d2 ♗g5 *(D)*

W



13 ♗xg5

Or 13 ♘de4! ♗xe3 14 fxe3.

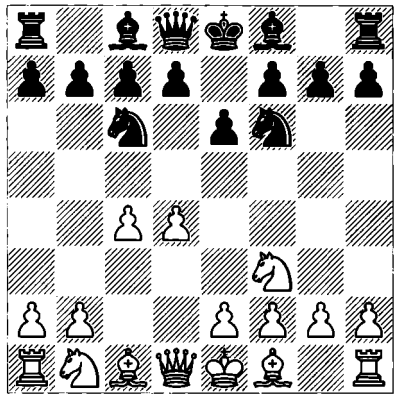
13...♕xg5 14 ♘de4 ♕h6 15 c5

White has a slight advantage, Yermolinsky-I.Nogueira, New York 1997.

12.512)

3...e6 *(D)*

W



With this flexible move, it appears that Black is seeking some kind of Nimzo- or Bogo-Indian (after ...♗b4), or Queen's Gambit Declined (after ...d5).

4 a3

White stops ...♗b4, as we did versus the English Defence. An alternate line for the strategic player is 4 ♘c3 ♗b4 5 ♕c2. On the other hand, 4 d5 exd5 5 cxd5 ♗b4+ 6 ♘c3 ♘e7 leads to a double-edged position in which White is unlikely to do better than equalize.

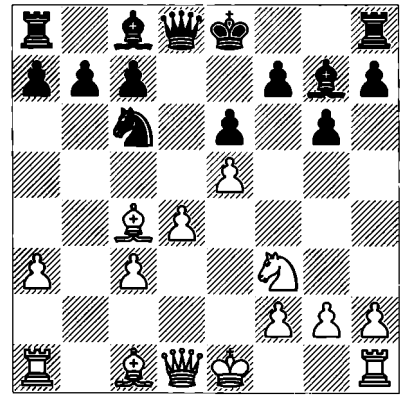
4...d6

This may look a little strange, but Black has in mind ...g6, ...♗g7, ...0-0 and ...e5, reaching a sort of King's Indian, and in this position he feels that the loss of time by ...e6-e5 will tend to be negated by White's slow move a3. Other moves have their own drawbacks:

a) 4...g6 5 ♘c3 ♗g7 6 e4 (6 d5 ♘e7 7 d6!?) and then:

a1) 6...d5?! 7 e5 ♘e4 8 ♗d3 ♘xc3 9 bxc3 dxc4 10 ♗xc4 *(D)*.

B



A nice attacking set-up for White: 10...♘a5 11 ♗d3 c5 12 ♗g5!? (12 0-0 is also good) 12...♕c7 13 ♘d2 (13 h4 h6 14 ♗e3 and 13 0-0 also offer White an edge) 13...0-0 (13...cxd4 14 cxd4 ♕c3? 15 ♗b5+ ♘c6? 16 ♖c1 ♕xd4 17 ♖xc6 +– Bocharov-Vlassov, Russia Cup, Tomsk 2001) 14 0-0 cxd4 15 cxd4 ♕c3 (15...b6 16 ♘e4 ♗b7 17 ♘f6+ ♗xf6 18 ♗xf6 ♕c6 19 ♕g4 with good chances; against 15...♘c6, instead of *ECO*'s 16 ♘f3, 16 ♘e4! ♘xd4 17 ♘f6+ ♔h8 18 ♖e1! is virtually winning – the attack is far too strong) 16 ♘e4! ♕xd4 17 ♘f6+ ♔h8 18 ♖e1 +– Rogozenko-Vlassov, Internet rapid 2001.

a2) 6...d6 7 ♗e2 0-0 8 0-0 ♖e8 9 ♗e3 (or 9 h3 e5 10 dxe5 dxe5 11 ♗e3 ±; for example, 11...♘h5 12 ♕xd8 ♘xd8 13 ♖fd1 ♘f4 14 ♗f1 c6 15 c5) 9...e5 10 d5!? (10 dxe5 ♘xe5 11

♘xe5 ♖xe5 12 f3 ±) 10...♘d4 11 ♖e1 ♘xe2+ 12 ♖xe2 ♘h5 13 ♘e1!? (13 h3 has the idea 13...♘f4 14 ♗xf4 exf4 15 ♕d2 g5 16 ♖ae1! h6 17 e5 ±) 13...♘f4!? 14 ♖c2 f5 15 f3 fxe4 16 ♘xe4 b6 17 ♘d3 ♗h6 18 ♔h1 with a positional edge for White due to the outpost on e4 and prospects of playing c5, Portisch-Wilhelmi, Frankfurt rapid 1997.

b) 4...d5 5 ♘c3 and now:

b1) 5...dxc4 6 e4 ♘a5 7 ♗xc4 ♘xc4 8 ♕a4+ ♘d7 9 ♕xc4 c5 10 ♗e3! with a slight advantage for White, Yakovich-Vlassov, Moscow Ch 1996.

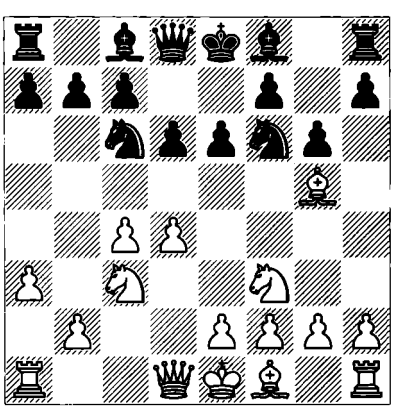
b2) 5...♗e7 can be met with 6 ♗f4 0-0 7 e3 ± or 6 e3 0-0 7 ♗d3; Black's knight is poorly placed on c6.

b3) Orlov's 5...g6 is well answered by 6 ♗f4 a6 7 e3 ♗g7 8 ♖c1 0-0 9 h3 ♗d7 10 ♗d3 ± Silman-Franett, Las Vegas 1992. White has a classic advantage based on Black's cramped pieces.

b4) 5...a6 6 cxd5 exd5 7 ♗g5 ♗e7 8 e3 h6 9 ♗h4 0-0 10 ♗d3 ♗e6 (10...♘e4 11 ♗xe7 ♘xc3 12 ♗xd8 ♘xd1 13 ♖xd1 ♘xd8 14 ♖c1 c6 15 b4 ± Kasparov) 11 0-0 ♘d7 12 ♗g3 ♗d6 (Kasparov-Yermolinsky, Erevan Olympiad 1996) 13 ♕c2 ♗xg3 14 hxg3 ♘e7 15 ♘a4 c6 16 b4 ± Kasparov.

5 ♘c3 g6 6 ♗g5 *(D)*

B



A rather unusual move. White is willing to give up the bishop-pair to consolidate his space advantage. Objectively, White will only get a minor edge against precise play, but he achieves a safe position from which to outplay the opponent.

6...h6

This is the main move. In games without it, White can consider favourable simplification; e.g., 6...♗g7 and then:

a) 7 ♘e4!? h6 8 ♗xf6 ♗xf6 9 ♘xf6+ ♕xf6 10 e4 (space!) 10...e5 11 d5 ♘b8 (11...♘d4!? 12 ♘xd4 exd4 13 ♕d2 c6 14 ♗d3 ♕g7 15 0-0 0-0 16 ♖ac1 c5 17 b4 ±) 12 ♕c1!? ♘d7 13 b4 a5 14 ♗d3 c6 15 dxc6 (15 0-0 c5!? ±) 15...bxc6 16 0-0 ♔f8 17 ♖d1 ♔g7 18 ♗e2 c5!? 19 b5 with a clear advantage for White in Wang Yue-Deepan Chakkravarthy, World Under-16 Ch, Iraklion 2002.

b) 7 e3 and now:

b1) 7...a5, to hold down the queenside, leads to a typical position following 8 ♗d3 0-0 9 0-0 e5 10 d5 ♘e7 11 ♕c2 (11 e4 is an odd King's Indian; White gets a quick b4 in and I suspect he has an edge, but this is hard to assess) 11...h6 12 ♗h4 ♘h5 13 ♗xe7 (not terrible, but a little strange; 13 ♕e2 f5 14 ♘d2 ♘f6 15 f3 keeps things flexible) 13...♕xe7 (Zdebskaya-Toth, Balatonlelle 2003) and now 14 ♘d2 f5 15 f3 slows Black down before White proceeds on the queenside.

b2) 7...0-0 8 ♘e4 ♘b8 9 ♗e2 (9 h4! ♘bd7 10 h5 ±) 9...♘bd7 10 ♘c3!? b6 11 ♕c2 ♗b7 12 ♖d1 (12 h3 creates an escape-square versus ...h6, ...g5 and ...♘h5) 12...♕e7 13 0-0 h6 14 ♗h4 g5 15 ♗g3 ♘h5 16 d5! ♘xg3 17 hxg3 ♘e5 18 ♘xe5 ♗xe5 19 ♗f3 ♖ab8 20 ♘b5 a6 21 ♘d4 ♗xd4 22 exd4!? with a slight advantage for White, Ehlvest-Nakamura, Minneapolis 2005.

7 ♗h4 g5!?

7...♗g7 8 e3 ♘e7!? 9 ♗d3 ♘f5 10 ♗xf6 ♕xf6 11 0-0, as in Pecorelli Garcia-Delgado, Varadero 2000, pits the bishop-pair against White's territorial advantage in the centre and (soon) on the queenside.

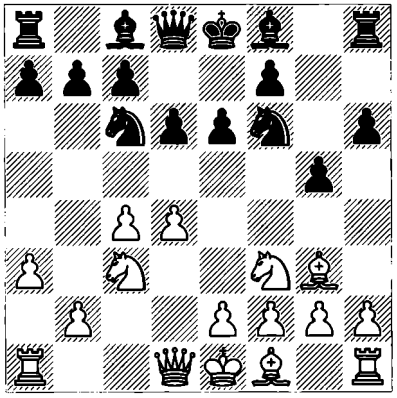
8 ♗g3 *(D)*

8...g4

8...♗g7 9 e3 (9 h3, versus ...g4 and to preserve the bishop on h2, is the kind of position White should like) 9...♕e7 (9...♘h5!) 10 ♕c2 (10 h3 is again possible) 10...b6 11 0-0-0 (11 d5 ♘d8 12 ♘d4 ±) 11...♗b7 12 d5! ♘b8 (Moran Nuque-J.Stone, Dos Hermanas 2004) and now White gets a comfortable advantage with the centralizing 13 ♘d4!, having ♗d3 and even dxe6 in mind.

9 ♘g1

B



9 d5 gxf3 10 dxc6 bxc6 11 gxf3 is also interesting.

9...♘h5 10 e3 ♘xg3 11 hxg3 h5

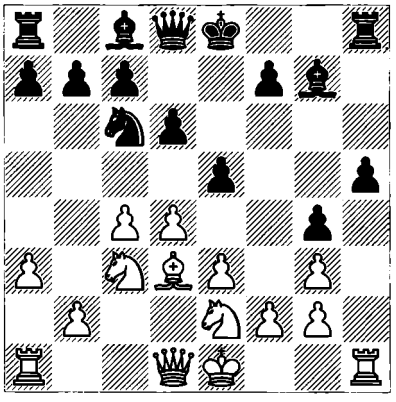
Aficionados of the Smyslov Variation versus the King's Indian will recognize that several of the positions in this section resemble that variation. Usually both players will castle queenside before initiating action.

12 ♗d3

White wants to control f5 in case of ...e5.

12...♗g7 13 ♘ge2 e5 *(D)*

W



This is Sashikiran-Bologan, Linares 1999, which continued 14 dxe5 ♘xe5! (14...dxe5 can be met by 15 ♕c2 or 15 ♗e4) 15 ♕c2 ♗d7 16 0-0-0 ♕g5 17 ♘f4 0-0-0=. I think White should have tried 14 d5; e.g., 14...♘b8 (14...♘e7 15 ♕b3 and now 15...f5 16 e4! or 15...♖h6 16 0-0-0 ♔f8 17 ♖h2, thinking about simply ♖dh1) 15 ♕c2 ♘d7 16 0-0-0 ♕f6 17 ♗f5 (White has been seeking this exchange of light-squared bishops) 17...♘c5 18 ♗xc8 ♖xc8 19 ♖df1 with the moves e4 and f4 or f3 in mind.

12.52)

1 d4 ♘c6

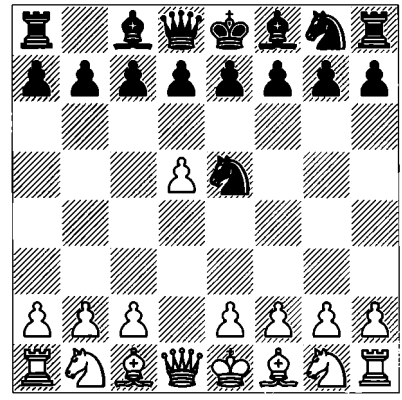
1...♘c6 can be used versus 1 c4, and to a lesser extent against 1 e4, without straying too far from conventional ideas. However, in reply to 1 d4, the knight move may be too provocative.

2 d5

This is the most obvious move, and gives White a pleasant game. 2 c4 can transpose into a Chigorin Defence after 2...d5 or to a Black Knights Tango after 2...♘f6. That would be fine from the point of view of our repertoire, except that Black also has the option of 2...e5, which is quite respectable and leads to unique play.

2...♘e5 *(D)*

W



Black is playing a mirror-image Alekhine Defence. The idea is to tempt White's pawns forward and then break up the centre.

3 f4

This is White's most forcing and ambitious move. 3 e4 yields a small but pleasant advantage after 3...e6:

a) 4 ♘c3 exd5 5 exd5 is good, with the idea 5...♘f6 6 ♕e2 ♕e7 7 d6! cxd6 8 ♗g5 ±.

b) 4 dxe6!? fxe6 (after 4...dxe6 5 ♕xd8+ ♔xd8, one idea is 6 ♗f4 ♗d6 7 ♗d2 ± intending to play ♘c3, f4 and 0-0-0) 5 ♘c3! (this forces Black to make a committal move) 5...b6!? (5...♗c5?? 6 ♕h5+ costs Black a piece; 5...♘f6 6 f4 ♘c6 7 e5 ♘g8 8 ♘f3 ±) 6 ♘f3 (or 6 f4 ♘f7 7 ♘f3 ±) 6...♘f7!? (after 6...♘xf3+ 7 ♕xf3 ♗b7 8 ♕g3! it's hard for Black to develop; e.g., 8...♘f6 9 ♗e2! g6 10 ♗f3 d6 11 e5 ♘h5 12

♕g4 ♗xf3 13 ♕xf3 d5 14 g4 ♘g7 15 ♗h6 planning 0-0-0 and h4) 7 ♗d3 ♗b7 8 0-0 ♘f6 9 ♕e2 ♗e7 10 e5 ♘d5 11 ♘xd5 ♗xd5 12 ♗e4 ♗xe4 13 ♕xe4 ±.

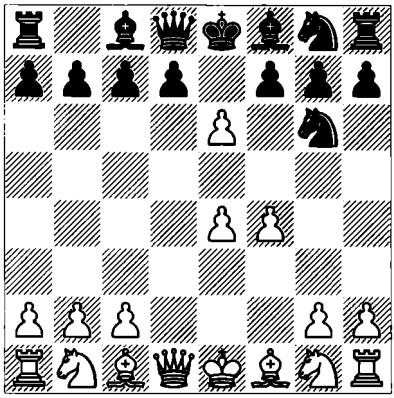
3...♘g6 4 e4 e5

4...e6 5 dxe6! transposes.

5 dxe6! *(D)*

Not 5 f5? ♕h4+ 6 ♔d2 ♘f6! 7 ♕f3 (7 ♘c3 ♗b4 or 7 ♗d3 ♘xe4+ 8 ♗xe4 ♕xe4 9 fxg6 ♕xg2+ 10 ♘e2 ♕xd5+ and Black ends up with four pawns and an attack for the piece) 7...♘xe4+ 8 ♔e2 ♘f4+ 9 ♗xf4 ♕xf4 10 ♕xf4 exf4 11 ♔f3 ♘f6 ∓.

B



5...fxe6

5...dxe6 6 ♕xd8+ ♔xd8 gives White a pull; e.g., 7 ♘f3 ♗c5 8 ♘c3 ♘f6 9 ♗d3 a6 10 h3 ♗d7 11 ♗d2 ± with the idea 0-0-0.

6 ♘f3

6 h4!? is an original idea. White has the better of it after 6...♗c5!? (6...♘xh4 7 ♕g4! ♘g6 8 ♖xh7!) 7 h5 ♘6e7 8 h6 g6 9 ♘f3 d5 10 ♘c3, intending 10...♘f6 11 ♘g5!.

6...♗c5 7 ♘c3 ♘h6

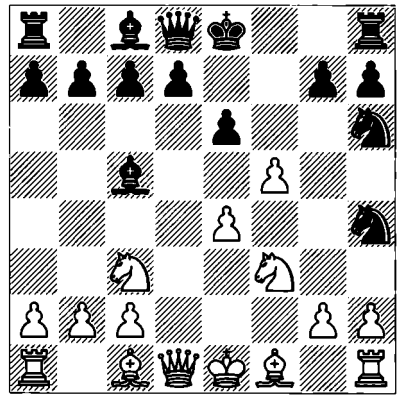
7...d6 8 ♘a4 ♗b6 9 ♘xb6 axb6 10 h4 with an advantage for White – Ruban.

8 f5! ♘h4 *(D)*

8...exf5 9 ♗g5 ♘e7 (9...♗e7 10 ♗xh6 gxh6 11 exf5) 10 ♗xh6 gxh6 11 ♕d2 ± (Minasian & Nadanian).

From the position after 8...♘h4, Ara.Minasian-Teran Alvarez, Ubeda 1999 continued 9 g3?! ♘xf3+ 10 ♕xf3 with only a slight edge. Instead, 9 ♘g5! is practically winning; e.g., 9...exf5 (9...0-0 10 ♕h5 traps the knight on h4, as does 9...g6 10 g3) 10 ♕h5+ ♘g6 11 exf5 ♘xf5 12 ♘ge4!. White attacks two pieces and

W

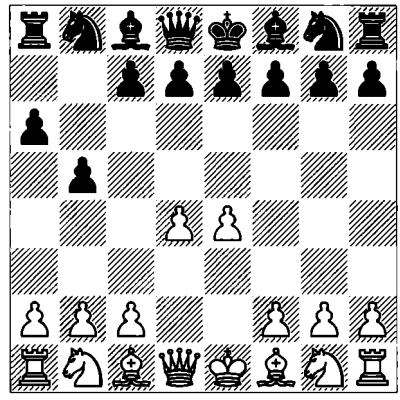


Black can't save them both with 12...d6? (12...d5 13 ♘xc5 0-0 14 ♘d3 ±) because of 13 ♗g5 ♕d7 14 0-0-0 ♗b6 15 ♗b5!.

12.53)

1 d4 b5 2 e4 a6 *(D)*

W



This is called the St George Defence, and is better known via the move-order 1 e4 a6 2 d4 b5.

3 ♘f3 ♗b7 4 ♗d3 ♘f6

4...e6 will usually transpose, although White gets time to play 5 0-0 and ♖e1, for example, or 5 a4. The main point would be to avoid the following note 'b'.

5 ♘bd2

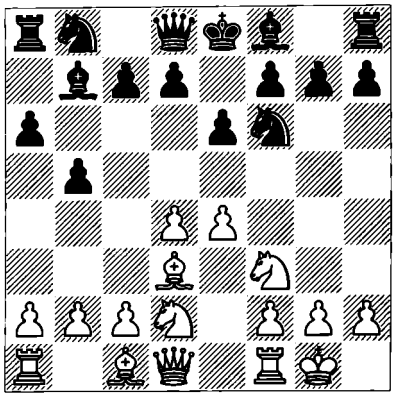
Or:

a) Another effective line is 5 ♕e2 e6 6 a4 c5 (6...♘c6!?) 7 dxc5 ♗xc5 8 ♘bd2 b4 9 e5 ♘d5 10 ♘e4 ♗e7 and now 11 0-0 or 11 ♗g5, but I think the knight move is better, reserving ♕e2 as an option.

b) Avrukh believes that 5 e5 ♘d5 6 ♘g5! gives Black "serious problems". His analysis goes 6...e6 (6...♘b4 7 ♗e4 ♗xe4 8 ♘xe4 gives White much better prospects – Avrukh) 7 ♕f3! f5 (7...♕e7 8 ♘xh7! ♘c6 9 c3 0-0-0 10 ♕e2 f6 11 a4! may not be so clear but is better for White) 8 exf6 (8 ♘c3 ♘b4! 9 ♕xb7 ♘8c6 10 ♘xb5 axb5 11 ♕xb5 ♘xd4 with counterplay) 8...♕xf6 9 ♗xh7! and "White has an extra pawn", Kozhukharov-Vasilev, Sofia 2006. But Black can still cause some difficulties with 9...♕xf3 (or 9...♗d6!?) 10 ♗g6+ ♔d8 11 ♘xf3 ♘e7 followed by ...♗xf3, which at any rate is less than a clear advantage. So maybe the main line with 5 ♘bd2 is just as good or better.

5...e6 6 0-0 *(D)*

B



6...c5

6...♗e7 is more cautious but gives White time to achieve his goals; for example, 7 e5 ♘d5 8 a4 b4 9 ♘e4 0-0 (9...a5 10 c4 bxc3 11 bxc3 with c4 next, Oll-Bogaerts, European Junior Ch, Groningen 1984/5) 10 ♘fg5! (10 c4 bxc3 11 bxc3 ±) 10...h6 (10...g6 11 ♕g4 is getting very dangerous) 11 ♘h7 ♔xh7 12 ♘c5+ ♔g8 13 ♘xb7 ♕c8 14 ♘a5 ±, threatening ♗xh6.

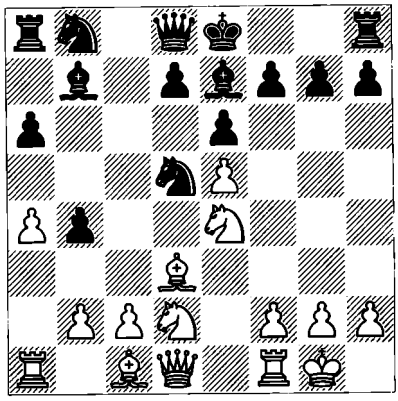
7 dxc5!?

7 c3 is also possible, with a normal edge deriving from superior central control. Then Black has to be careful not to fall a tempo behind our main line by 7...♗e7?! (7...cxd4 8 cxd4 is more precise, when 8...♗e7 follows, but not 8...♘c6?! 9 d5! exd5 10 e5!; e.g., 10...♘h5 11 ♘b3 with the idea g4, leading to 11...g6 12 ♗g5 ♗e7 13 ♗h6 ♗f8 14 ♕d2 ±) 8 dxc5 ♗xc5 9 e5 ♘d5 10 ♘e4 ♗e7 11 ♗g5.

7...♗xc5 8 e5 ♘d5 9 ♘e4 ♗e7 10 a4 b4 11 ♘fd2! *(D)*

11 c4 bxc3 12 bxc3, with the idea ♗a3, is good, but the text-move threatens ♘c4 and is even more convincing.

B



11...0-0

11...♘c6 12 ♘c4 0-0 13 ♕h5 g6 14 ♕h6 f5 and now 15 ♘g5 ♗xg5 16 ♗xg5 ± is sufficient.

12 ♕h5

Or 12 ♘c4 f5 13 exf6 ♘xf6 14 ♘xf6+ ♗xf6 and now 15 ♕h5 yielded some advantage in Khasangatin-Kutuzov, Pardubice 2004, but 15 ♕g4! gives White a significant positional edge and the initiative.

12...g6 13 ♕h6 f5 14 exf6 ♗xf6 15 ♘xf6+ ♘xf6

Now:

a) 16 ♕h4 gives White pleasant dark-square control.

b) 16 ♘c4 and now in the game Leski-Boog, Geneva 1986 Black blundered with 16...♘e4?? (16...♗d5 would limit White's advantage). Then 17 ♗xe4! ♗xe4 18 ♘d6 wins; for example, 18...♗xc2 (18...♗c6 19 ♗g5 ♕c7 20 ♗e7) 19 ♗g5 ♕b6 20 ♘e8! ♖f7 (20...♖xe8 21 ♗f6) 21 ♘f6+ ♔h8 22 ♘xh7!.

12.54)

1 d4 b5 2 e4 ♗b7?!

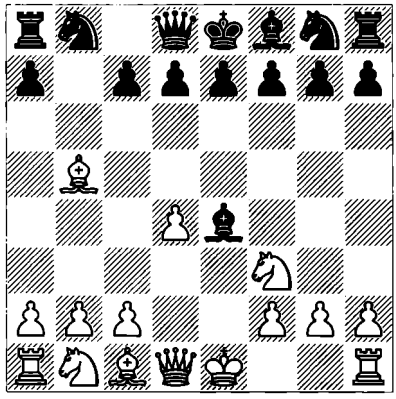
I simply don't believe in this one.

3 ♗xb5!

It's amazing that the majority of players choose 3 ♗d3 or 3 f3 here.

3...♗xe4 4 ♘f3 *(D)*

B



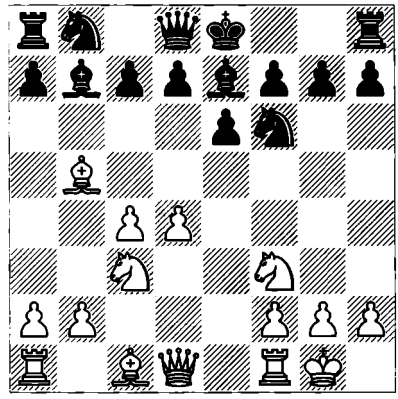
Now White is playing a Sokolsky position a full tempo up, i.e., a reversed version of 1 b4 e5 2 ♗b2 ♗xb4 3 ♗xe5 ♘f6 with the extra move d4. This happens to be a variation in which White (playing 1 b4) struggles even to equalize. Often in a 'reversed' opening, an extra tempo comes with some compensating disadvantages, however slight, but there don't seem to be any here.

4...e6 5 0-0 ♘f6 6 c4

When strong players have reached this position, they have almost always chosen this move, which again is quite effective in the reversed position. White could also play 6 ♖e1, continuing 6...♗e7 7 c4; in this case, Black should avoid 6...c5? 7 ♘c3 ♗b7 8 d5!, when the e-pawn hangs, but 8...♕b6? virtually loses to 9 ♘g5! (or 9 ♘e5 ♗e7 10 ♘c4 ♕d8 11 ♗g5).

6...♗e7 7 ♘c3 ♗b7 *(D)*

W



8 ♗a4

This multi-purpose move is also used to good effect in the reversed position. One point is that a later d5 can't be answered by ...c6, while the bishop will be well-placed for attacking purposes on c2. Instead, the game Kramnik-Carlsen(!), Moscow rapid 2011 continued 8 d5 (also strong) 8...0-0 9 ♗f4 ♘a6 10 ♖e1 ♕c8 11 ♘d4 ♗b4 (11...♗d6!?) 12 ♗g5 ♘e8? 13 ♖e3?! (13 ♕a4! wins) 13...c6 14 ♗xa6 ♗xa6 15 ♕h5 f6 16 ♖h3 fxg5 17 ♕xh7+ ♔f7 18 ♕h5+ (18 dxe6+ dxe6 19 ♘e4) 18...♔g8 19 ♕h7+ ♔f7 20 ♘e4 ±. Probably the last 1...b5 with 2...♗b7?! that we'll see on this level for a long time!

8...0-0 9 d5

Or

a) 9 ♗c2 d6 and now 10 d5 is still good, or 10 ♖e1 ♘bd7 11 ♗f4 ±.

b) 9 ♖e1 d6 10 d5! e5 and although 11 ♗e3 was better for White in Danielsen-J.Fries Nielsen, Klaksvik 2006, he could have achieved the desired 11 c5! for free in view of 11...dxc5 12 ♘xe5 ♘xd5 (12...♗xd5? 13 ♗g5 +– with the idea 13...♗b7 14 ♕b3 or 13...c6 14 ♘xd5 ♕xd5 15 ♗b3! ♕xd1 16 ♖axd1) 13 ♕g4 (13 ♕f3!?) 13...♘xc3 14 bxc3 ±.

9...♘a6 10 a3 ♘c5 11 ♗c2 a5 12 ♗e3 exd5 13 cxd5 g6?! 14 ♖e1 ♘h5 15 ♘e5

Or 15 ♕d2!; White is beginning to take charge.

15...♘g7?! 16 ♗d4

By now Black is really in a bad way; for example, 16...d6 17 ♘c6 ±. Instead 16...a4? was played in the game Wojtkiewicz-Bronstein (yes, that one!), Reykjavik 1994, when 17 ♘g4 with the idea ♖xe7 is practically resignable for Black; the only chance is 17...f6, but 18 ♘b5! ♘a6 19 ♗xa4 gives White a pawn and a huge position.

12.55)

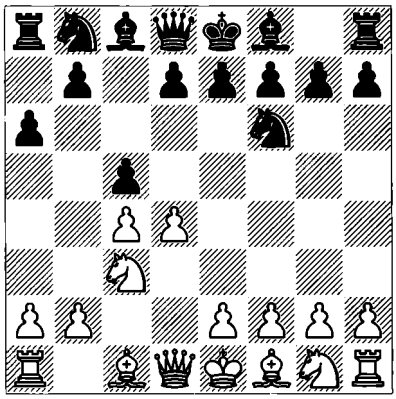
1 d4 ♘f6 2 c4 a6

This move isn't awful, but Black doesn't have time to enjoy such luxuries. The same position could also arise via 1 d4 a6 2 c4 ♘f6, although it's unclear how Black benefits with that move-order.

3 ♘c3 c5 *(D)*

Black's idea is to reach Benko lines while denying White several of his options with respect to declining the pawn or accepting it while leaving the knight on b1. However, the

W



move ...a6 itself may turn out to be not so useful in certain lines.

4 d5

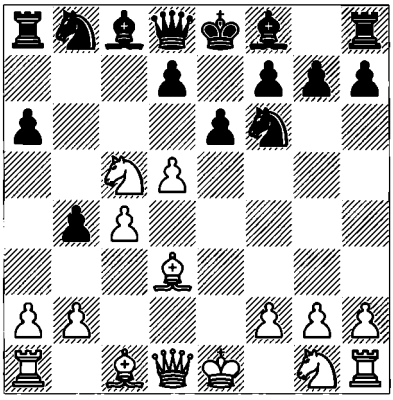
4 dxc5 is a conservative response which gives a small but definite advantage, as the move ...a6 isn't so useful here: 4...e6 5 e4 ♘c6 (5...♕c7?! can be met favourably by 6 b4, while 6 f4 ♗xc5 7 e5 ♘g8 8 ♘e4 may be stronger) 6 ♗e3 ♕a5 7 ♕a4 (7 a3 ♘xe4 8 ♘ge2 ±) 7...♕xa4 8 ♘xa4 ♘xe4 9 f3 ♘f6 10 0-0-0 ±. Kaidanov calls this a clear advantage; Black is certainly cramped.

4...b5 5 e4

5 ♕c2!? is also possible; compare our 4 ♕c2 lines versus the Benko Gambit. Instead 5 cxb5 axb5 6 ♘xb5 ♗a6 7 ♘c3 (both sides have alternatives in this sequence) transposes to a standard Benko Gambit Accepted, an opening we are avoiding in this repertoire.

5...b4 6 ♘a4 ♘xe4 7 ♗d3 ♘f6 8 ♘xc5 e6 *(D)*

W



Now Levitt gives 9 ♘a4?! exd5 10 ♗e3 dxc4, which is at best unclear, but 9 ♘e4! seems to be a big improvement; for example, 9...exd5 10 cxd5 ♗b7 (10...♘xd5?? 11 ♕e2 ♗e7 12 ♗c4 ♘f6 13 ♘d6+ ♔f8 14 ♘xf7) 11 ♗g5 ♗xd5 12 ♕e2 ♗e6 13 f4! d5 14 ♘xf6+ gxf6 15 ♗h4 ±.

12.56)

1 d4 e5?!

Come now.

2 dxe5 ♘c6

The Englund Gambit. The problem is that White has no weaknesses and is equal in development!

2...d6 3 exd6 ♗xd6 was once promoted by Smith & Hall, but 4 ♘f3 (or 4 ♘c3) 4...♘c6 5 ♗g5 with the idea e3 looks like a refutation.

3 ♘f3 ♕e7

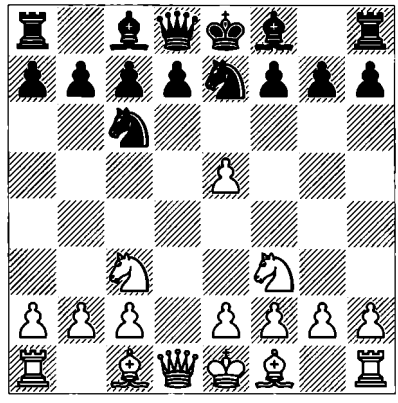
Or:

a) The Hartlaub Gambit, 3...d6, is even worse than 2...d6 due to 4 ♗g5!, recommended by Valeri Bronznik, who quotes 4...♕d7 5 exd6 ♗xd6 6 ♘c3 ♗b4 7 ♕xd7+ ♗xd7 (A.Kolev-Strickler, Lenk 1989) 8 ♗d2! ±.

b) Bronznik says something about Black having slight chances of gaining compensation after 3...♗c5 4 ♘c3 (he likes 4 ♗f4 ±) 4...f6 5 exf6 ♘xf6 6 ♗g5, but I can't imagine it.

c) I'll take Bronznik's word for it and borrow his analysis on 3...♘ge7 4 ♘c3 *(D)*:

B

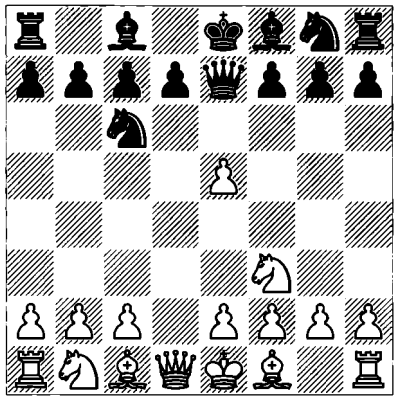


c1) 4...h6 5 e4 (Petri suggests 5 a3 ♘g6 6 ♕d5, based upon 6...♕e7 7 ♘b5 ♔d8, and here White can get a positional advantage from any of 8 ♗d2, Bronznik's 8 ♘bd4, 8 g3 and probably a couple of others) 5...♘g6 6 ♗b5 ♘gxe5 7 ♘xe5 ♘xe5 8 ♕h5!? ♘g6 9 0-0 gives White

terrific development and a meaningful advantage.

c2) 4...♘g6 5 ♗g5 ♗e7 6 ♗xe7 ♕xe7 7 ♘d5 ♕d8 8 ♕d2! (this is Petri's move, based upon 8...♘gxe5?? 9 ♘xe5 ♘xe5 10 ♕c3) 8...h6 (8...0-0 9 ♕g5! ♘ce7 10 ♘xe7+ ♕xe7 11 ♕xe7 ♘xe7 12 e3 ♖e8 13 ♘d4!) 9 0-0-0 0-0 10 ♕c3 ♖e8 11 e3 ♘gxe5 12 ♘xe5 ♖xe5 13 f4 ♖e8 14 g4! d6 15 ♖g1 ± (all analysis by Bronznik).

We now return to 3...♕e7 *(D)*:



4 ♗f4

Probably not the clearest line, but I am including it to challenge some published assessments. Two other good moves:

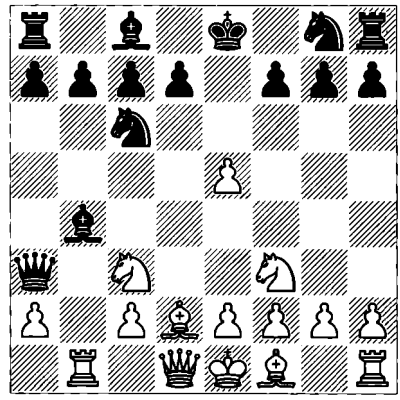
a) 4 ♘bd2 ♘xe5 5 ♘xe5 ♕xe5 6 ♘f3 ♕f6 7 e4 ±. White has space, a central advantage and potential play against Black's exposed queen.

b) 4 ♘c3 ♘xe5 5 ♘d5 (the simple 5 e4 has also scored well in practice) 5...♘xf3+ 6 gxf3 ♕d8 7 ♕d4 (7 ♗f4 d6 8 e4 ±) 7...d6 (San Marco's 7...♘e7!? is best: 8 ♗g5 f6 9 ♗f4 ±) 8 ♗g5 f6 (8...♕d7?? 9 ♗h3 ♕xh3 10 ♘xc7+ and White wins, Korchnoi-E.Koning, Deurne 1978) 9 ♗d2 ♘e7 10 c4 (10 ♖g1 is also possible) 10...♗e6? (10...c6 11 ♘f4 ±) is given by Smith & Hall, but Schiller points out the direct 11 ♘xf6+ gxf6 12 ♕xf6, winning.

4...♕b4+ 5 ♗d2 ♕xb2 6 ♘c3

The classic Englund Gambit trap runs 6 ♗c3?? ♗b4 7 ♕d2 ♗xc3 8 ♕xc3 ♕c1#.

6...♗b4 7 ♖b1 ♕a3 *(D)*



8 ♖b3

8 ♘d5 is also strong but a little complicated, so I'll just show the main variation: 8...♗a5 9 ♖b5 ♗xd2+ 10 ♕xd2 ♔d8 11 e4 (or Avrukh's 11 ♘g5!, which probably simplifies matters) 11...h6 (11...a6 12 ♖b3 ♕xa2 and instead of 13 ♗e2, 13 ♘c3 ♕a1+ 14 ♖b1 ♕a5 15 ♗c4 is simple enough; for example, 15...♘ge7 16 ♘g5 ♘xe5 17 ♗xf7 d6 18 f4) 12 ♗c4 (12 h4 b6 13 ♗c4 ♕f8 was Grob's old analysis, many years before computers, which Benjamin refuted with 14 ♘f4!) 12...♘ge7 (12...g5 13 h3 – Benjamin) 13 0-0 ♘g6 14 ♖b3 ♕a5 15 ♕e3 +–.

8...♕a5 9 a3

9 e4 ♘ge7 10 ♗b5 is also good.

9...♗xc3

The greedy 9...♗xa3? loses to 10 ♖b5 ♕a6 11 e4 (Bücker).

10 ♗xc3 ♕c5 11 e3 ♘ge7 12 ♗d3 ♘g6

12...0-0?, as played in Ullrich-Petri, Darmstadt 1993, can be met by the direct 13 ♗xh7+ ♔xh7 14 ♘g5+ ♔g6 15 ♘e4 with the win of the queen or mate.

13 0-0 ♘gxe5 14 ♘xe5 ♘xe5 15 ♗e2 f6 16 ♗b4 ♕b6 17 f4 ♘f7

Pitkaenen-Nicholls, corr. 2009. Now White would have done well to play 18 ♗c4; e.g., 18...d6 19 ♗e1 ♕c5 20 ♖c3 ♕b6 21 ♕h5 g6 22 ♕h4 0-0 23 ♗f2! ±.

Index of Variations

A: 1 d4 d5
B: 1 d4 ♘f6 2 c4 e6
C: 1 d4 ♘f6 2 c4 g6
D: 1 d4: Other Lines

A)

1 d4 d5
2 c4

Now:

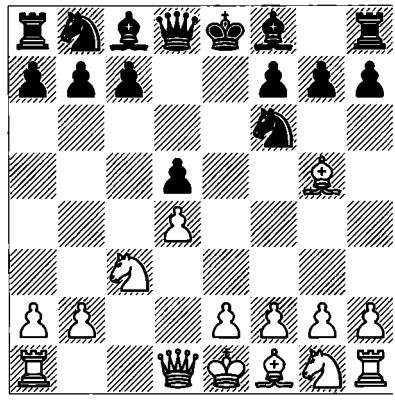
A1: 2...e6
A2: 2...c6
A3: Other Moves

A1)

2 ... e6
3 ♘c3 ♘f6 *8*

3...b6?! *65*
3...f5 *66*
3...a6 *66*
3...♗b4 *65*
3...c6 *100*
3...♗e7 *22* 4 cxd5 exd5 5 ♗f4:
a) 5...♘f6 *26*
b) 5...c6 *24*
3...c5 *28* 4 cxd5:
a) 4...cxd4 *59*
a1) 5 ♕xd4 *60*
a2) 5 ♕a4+ *60* 5...♗d7 6 ♕xd4 exd5 7 ♕xd5 ♘c6 8 ♘f3 ♘f6:
a21) 9 ♕d3!? *64*
a22) 9 ♕b3 *62*
b) 4...exd5 *28* 5 ♘f3 ♘c6 6 g3 ♘f6 7 ♗g2 *29* 7...♗e7 8 0-0 0-0 9 ♗g5:
b1) 9...♗e6 *30*
b2) 9...c4 *32*
b3) 9...cxd4 *36* 10 ♘xd4 h6 11 ♗e3 ♖e8 12 ♖c1 ♗f8:
b31) 13 ♕b3 *37*
b32) 13 a3 *39*

4 cxd5 exd5
4...♘xd5 *8*
5 ♗g5 *9*


B

5 ... ♗e7 *10*
5...c6 *18* 6 e3 ♗f5 7 ♕f3 *19*
6 e3 c6
7 ♗d3 0-0
8 ♘f3 ♘bd7
9 ♕c2 ♖e8
10 0-0 ♘f8
11 h3 *13*

Now:
11...♘g6 *15*
11...♗e6 *17*

A2)

2 ... c6 *86*
3 ♘c3 ♘f6 *91*

3...a6 *86*
3...dxc4 *87*
3...e5 *90*
3...e6 *100* 4 e3:
a) 4...♗d6 *100*
b) 4...♘f6 *105*
c) 4...f5 *100*:
c1) 5 ♗d3 *103*
c2) 5 g4 *101*:
c21) 5...fxg4 *101*
c22) 5...♘f6 *102*

4 e3 e6 *105*
4...♗f5 *92*
4...♗g4 *93*

4...g6 *94*
4...a6 *97*
5 ♘**f3** ♘**bd7**
5...a6 *105*
6 **b3** *106*
6 **...** ♗**d6** *108*
6...b6 *112*
7 ♗**e2** **0-0**
8 **0-0** *109*
Now:
8...♘e4 *109*
8...♖e8 *110*
8...b6 *111*

A3)

2 **...** **dxc4** *68*
2...♘f6?! *42*
2...c5 *64*
2...e5 *54* 3 dxe5 d4 4 ♘f3 ♘c6 5 ♘bd2 *55*:
a) 5...♗g4 *56*
b) 5...♘ge7 *57*
c) 5...♗f5 *58*
2...♗f5 *42*:
a) 3 cxd5 *45*
b) 3 ♘f3 *43* 3...e6 4 ♘c3 c6 5 ♕b3 ♕b6 6 c5!:
b1) 6...♕c7 *43*
b2) 6...♕xb3 *44*
2...♘c6 *46* 3 ♘f3 ♗g4 4 ♘c3 *47* 4...e6:
a) 5 cxd5 *49*
b) 5 ♗f4 *52*:
b1) 5...♗xf3 *53*
b2) 5...♘f6 *54*
c) 5 ♗g5 *49*:
c1) 5...f6 *49*
c2) 5...♗e7 *51*
3 ♘**f3** ♘**f6** *72*
3...a6 *69*
3...c5 *71*
4 **e3** **e6** *75*
4...♗e6 *73*
4...♗g4 *74*
5 ♗**xc4** **c5**
6 **0-0** **a6**
6...cxd4 *76*
7 ♗**d3**
Now:
7...cxd4 *80*
7...♘c6 *81*
7...♘bd7 *82* 8 ♖e1 b5:
a) 9 e4 *84*
b) 9 a4 *85*

B)

1 **d4** ♘**f6**
2 **c4** **e6**
3 ♘**c3** ♗**b4**
3...d5 *8*
4 **e3** **b6** *126*
4...d6 *115*
4...♘e4 *116*
4...♘c6 *146*
4...d5 *143*
4...0-0 *139* 5 ♘e2 d5 6 a3 ♗e7:
a) 7 ♘f4 *140*
b) 7 cxd5:
b1) 7...♘xd5 *140*
b2) 7...exd5 *142*
4...c5 *117* 5 ♘e2:
a) 5...b6 *137*
b) 5...cxd4 *117* 6 exd4:
b1) 6...0-0 *118* 7 a3:
b11) 7...♗xc3+ *119*
b12) 7...♗e7 *120*
b2) 6...d5 *121*:
b21) 7 c5 *121*
b22) 7 a3 *124*
5 ♘**e2** ♗**a6** *127*
5...0-0 *133*
5...♗b7 *133*
5...♘e4 *134*
5...c5 *137*
Now (after 5...♗a6):
6 ♘g3 *127*
6 a3 *130*

C)

1 **d4** ♘**f6**
2 **c4** **g6**
3 ♘**c3**
Now:
C1: 3...d5
C2: 3...♗g7

C1)

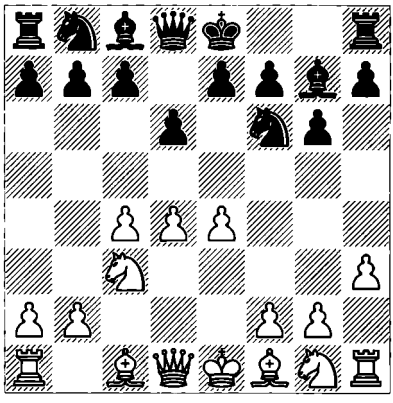
3 **...** **d5** *178*
4 **cxd5** ♘**xd5**
5 **e4** ♘**xc3**

6 bxc3 ♗g7
6...b6 *178*
6...c5 *179*
Now (after 6...♗g7):
7 ♗g5 *180* 7...c5 8 ♖c1:
a) 8...cxd4 *181*
b) 8...h6 *181*
c) 8...0-0 *182*
d) 8...♕a5 *185*
7 ♕a4+ *187*:
a) 7...♘c6 *188*
b) 7...c6 *188*
c) 7...♗d7 *189*
d) 7...♕d7 *192*
e) 7...♘d7 *189* 8 ♘f3 0-0 9 ♗g5:
e1) 9...c5 *190*
e2) 9...h6 *191*

C2)

3 ... ♗g7
4 e4 d6
4...0-0 *148*
5 h3 *148*

B



5 ... 0-0
5...e5 *149*
5...♘bd7 *149*
6 ♗g5 *160*
6 ♗e3 *151*:
a) 6...c6 *152*
b) 6...♘bd7 *151*
c) 6...♘a6 *151*
d) 6...c5 *159*
e) 6...e5 *152* 7 d5 ♘a6:
e1) 8 ♗d3 *154*
e2) 8 ♘f3:
e21) 8...♘c5 *155*
e22) 8...♘h5 *157*
6 ... ♘a6 *162*
6...e5? *161*
6...♘c6 *161*
6...a6 *161*
6...♘bd7 *161*
6...♕e8 *162*
6...h6 *169* 7 ♗e3 e5 8 d5 ♘a6 9 ♘f3:
a) 9...♘c5 *170*
b) 9...♘h5 *172*
6...c5 *173* 7 d5 e6 8 ♗d3 exd5:
a) 9 cxd5 *196*
b) 9 exd5 *174*:
b1) 9...♘bd7 *174*
b2) 9...♖e8+ *176*
7 ♘f3 *164*
7 ♗d3 *162*
Now (after 7 ♘f3):
7...♕e8 *164*
7...e5 *166*

D)

1 d4 ♘f6
1...e5?! *266*
1...b5 2 e4:
a) 2...♗b7?! *264*
b) 2...a6 *265*
1...♘c6 *262*
1...c5 2 d5 *214*:
a) 2...b5 *214*
b) 2...f5 *214*
c) 2...d6 *216*
d) 2...e6 *219*
e) 2...e5 *216*
1..e6 2 c4:
a) 2...c5 *219*
b) 2...b6 *251*
c) 2...f5 *232* 3 ♘c3:
c1) 3...d5 *66*
c2) 3...c6 *232*
c3) 3...♗b4 *254*
c4) 3...♘f6 *232*
d) 2...♗b4+ *254* 3 ♘c3:
d1) 3...♘f6 *115*
d2) 3...d5 *65*
d3) 3...b6 *255*
d4) 3...c5 *255*
d5) 3...f5 *254*
1...f5 *225* 2 ♘c3 (2 c4 *225*):

a) 2...e6 *226*
b) 2...g6 *226*
c) 2...d5 *226*
d) 2...♘f6 *229* 3 ♗f4 d6 4 e3:
d1) 4...e6 *230*
d2) 4...g6 *231*
1...d6 2 c4:
a) 2...f5 *224*
b) 2...g6 3 e4 ♗g7 *248*
c) 2...♘f6 *246*
d) 2...e5 *244*
1...g6 2 c4 (2 e4 ♗g7 3 c4 *248*):
a) 2...f5 *224*
b) 2...♗g7 *248* 3 e4 d6 4 ♘c3:
b1) 4...♘f6 *148*
b2) 4...e5 *248*
b3) 4...f5 *249*
b4) 4...♘c6 *249*
b5) 4...♘d7 *250*

2 c4 c5

2...b6 *257*
2...a6 *265*
2...♘c6 *258* 3 ♘f3:
a) 3...d6 *259*
b) 3...e6 *260*
2...d6 3 ♘c3:
a) 3...♗f5 *246*
b) 3...g6 4 e4 ♗g7 *148*
c) 3...♘bd7 *247*
d) 3...e5 *246*
2...e5 3 dxe5:
a) 3...♘e4 *241* 4 a3:
a1) 4...♘c6 *241*
a2) 4...♕h4 *242*
a3) 4...b6 *243*
a4) 4...d6 *244*
b) 3...♘g4 *235* 4 ♗f4 ♗b4+ 5 ♘d2 ♘c6 6 ♘f3 ♕e7:
b1) 7 a3 *240*
b2) 7 e3 *237*

3 d5 e6

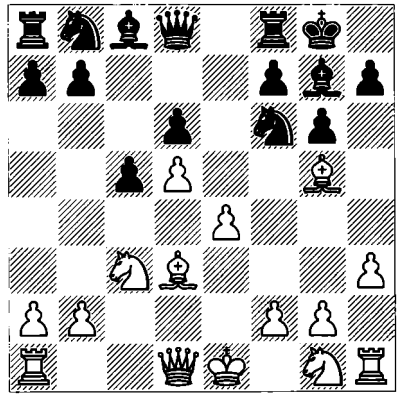
3...♘e4 *221*
3...a6 *195*
3...d6 *195*
3...e5 *217*
3...g6 *195*
3...b5 *205* 4 ♕c2:
a) 4...b4 *205*
b) 4...g6 *206*
c) 4...d6 *206*
d) 4...♘a6!? *206*
e) 4...♗b7 *207*
f) 4...e6 *208*
g) 4...bxc4 *212*
h) 4...♕a5+ *209*:
h1) 5 ♗d2 *210*
h2) 5 ♘c3 *210*
h3) 5 ♘d2 *211*

4 ♘c3 exd5
5 cxd5 d6 *195*

5...♗d6 *222*

6 e4 g6
7 ♗d3 ♗g7
8 h3 0-0
9 ♗g5 *196*

B



Now:
9...a6 *196*
9...♕e8 *196*
9...♕a5 *197*
9...♘bd7 *200*
9...♗d7 *204*
9...♖e8 *197*
9...h6 *201* 10 ♗e3:
a) 10...b5!? *203*
b) 10...♖e8 *201*

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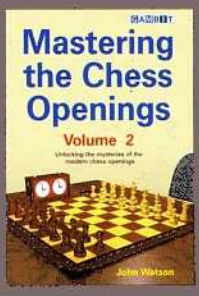

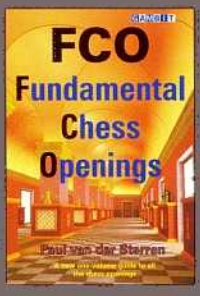

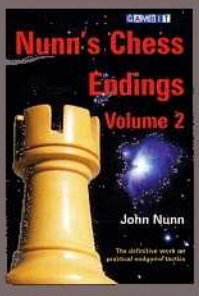

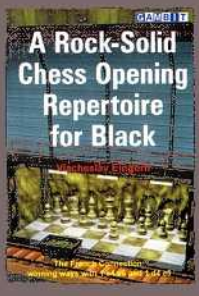

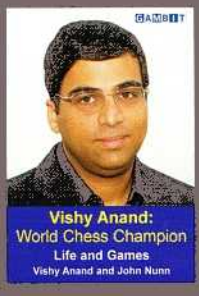

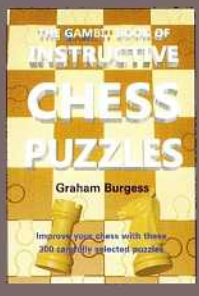

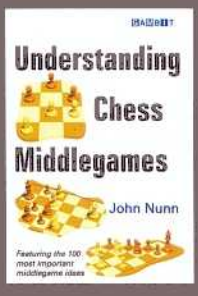

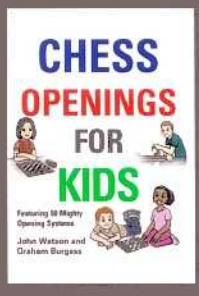

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