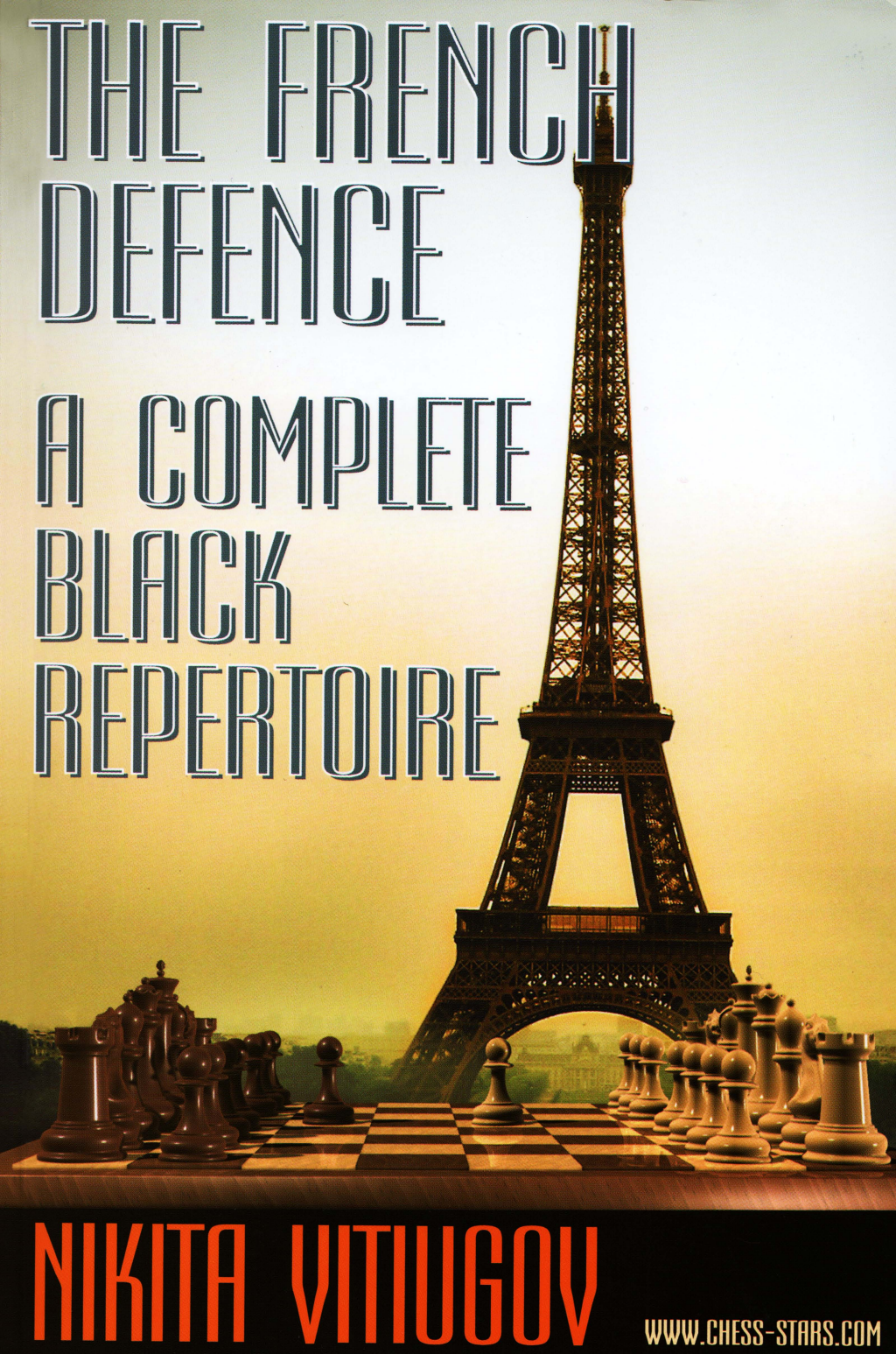


THE FRENCH DEFENCE

A COMPLETE BLACK REPERTOIRE



NIKITA VITIUGOV

WWW.CHESS-STARS.COM



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Nikita Vitiugov

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PREFACE

Black can enter the French defence, as a separate opening, on move one. I believe that seems to be comfortable for him – to have a reliable defence against 1.e4. The point is however, that chess is becoming more popular and universal and you should have various weapons in your opening armour. Still, if you change skilfully your variations inside the French defence, it may serve you faithfully for Black even if it is your only way to counter 1.e4.

According to the generally accepted classification, the French defence is semi-open. I think it can suit the style both of aggressive tactical players, as well as of the adherents to the patient positional maneuvering.

The philosophical justification of the French defence is quite solid. Black complies with the fact that he will fail to compete with White for the dominance of every square on the chessboard, right from the beginning of the game. On the other hand, he fights fiercely for the centre and attacks it with undermining pawn-moves like c7-c5 and f7-f6 and exerts piece-pressure with ♗f8-b4, ♘g8-f6, ♙b8-c6, ♚g8-e7-f5, ♜d8-b6.

The arguments pro and against the correctness of the French defence have begun long ago and continue until now. The main themes are Black's lack of space and the consequence of that – the fate of his light-squared bishop, which is severely restricted right on move one. Meanwhile, all “French” players know quite well the rule that sometimes, at the decisive moment of the game, the same “bad” French bishop inflicts the decisive strike, settling the issue.

In this book you will not find the equivocal answer to principled questions of the type “Can you equalize by playing the French defence?”, or “Can White obtain a convincing advantage after 1...e6?”. Chess is a mini-model of life and the same principles are applicable – there are many questions and no final answers. We have already seen in the French defence striking novelties in variations with perfect reputation, as well as rehabilitation of lines long past and forgotten. Accordingly, I have decided to present to my readers the French defence – the way I see and understand it.

I believe that chess players of all levels can find in this book something new. It will enable some of you to include the French defence in your opening repertoire and for some others to enrich your opening knowledge and sharpen the understanding of its ideas.

The time has long passed when you could have played the opening only according to common sense. Therefore, there are many extensive analyses of concrete positions in the book and new ideas discovered in the process of preparation for games and tournaments.

This book has been written from the point of view of Black, but this should preclude studying it by players who prefer the White side of the French defence. It is always useful to know something thoroughly. It may happen that a player, who loves the White side against the French, might become an ardent fan of it as Black!

Nikita Vitiugov
Saint-Petersburg, April 2010

Part 1

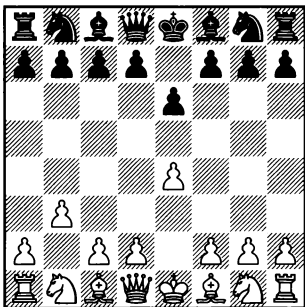
White avoids the main lines 1.e4 e6

In the first chapter of our book we will deal with the different ways in which White tries not to enter the main lines of the French defence. Objectively, he can hardly rely on obtaining an opening advantage with these variations. On the other hand, the players for the White side adhere to a different philosophy in this case. It is far from easy to prove an advantage for White in the main lines anyway, so the idea is to obtain an original, non-standard position, which the opponent has not studied profoundly at home. This last circumstance is becoming more and more important in contemporary competitive chess. Accordingly, Black must be well-prepared to counter this approach and to obtain good positions against the not so principled lines.

At first, we will analyze the exchange variation. No doubt, there are drawish tendencies in it, but in practice it turns out that making a draw is not so easy for either side. It would be enough to remember the famous game Gurevich – Short in the last round of the Interzonal tournament in Manila 1990. White only needed to make a draw to promote to the next round of the competition, but even a super-expert of the French defence for Black like Mikhail Gurevich, failed under pressure to achieve the desired result and lost. Nigel Short qualified to play a match against Garry Kasparov thanks to this same remarkable game! So, we can emphasize the fact that contemporary chess history was greatly influenced by this game. Therefore, I can advise White players to refrain from playing the exchange variation of the French defence, at least to avoid the appearance of new chess-schisms.

I will mention here too something about the closed systems beginning with 2.d3 and 2.♖e2. I am not planning to analyze them extensively, moreover that it is questionable whether they really belong to the French defence. The King's Indian attack for White deserves a separate monograph and I will leave it to other authors and we will see only several exemplary games on this subject.

2.b3



This move can hardly be dangerous for Black. Still, it is being tested periodically by some strong players. The classic of this variation is the legend of Saint-Petersburg's chess Vladimir Ivanovich Karasev.

2...d5

I can recommend to players with wider opening erudition the move 2...c5!?, after which the developments transpose to the Sicilian defence.

3.♗b2

White's plan is based on this semi-gambit move.

3...dxe4

I think, this is Black's most unpleasant response for White.

The alternative is 3...♟f6 4.

exd5 (4.e5 ♟fd7 5.f4 c5 6.♖g4 ♟c6 7.♟f3 a6 8.♗e2 b5 9.0-0∞) 4...exd5 5.♖e2+ ♗e6!? (After 5...♖e7, White's idea is justified: 6.♗xf6 gxf6 7.♖xe7+ ♗xe7 8.♟c3 c6∞) 6.♖b5+ ♟bd7 7.♖xb7 and Black's compensation for the pawn should be sufficient. For example: 7...♗c5!? 8.d4 ♗d6 9.♗d3 0-0 10.♟f3 ♗g4 11.♟bd2 ♖e8+ 12.♟f1 a5∞

4.♟c3 ♟f6

The move 4...f5?! however, may turn out to be really dangerous for Black – 5.f3 ♗d6 6.♟h3 (6.g3!?) 6...exf3 7.♖xf3 ♟f6 8.0-0-0 0-0 9.♗c4 and White's initiative may become crushing.

5.♖e2

It seems too extravagant for him to choose 5.g4?! ♗d7 6.g5 (6.♗g2 ♗c6 7.g5 ♟d5 8.♟xe4 h6 9.h4 ♟f4↑) 6...♟d5 7.♟xe4 ♗c6 and there appears a logical question – was it really worth for White to weaken his position to that extent to only regain the pawn he sacrificed with his move three?

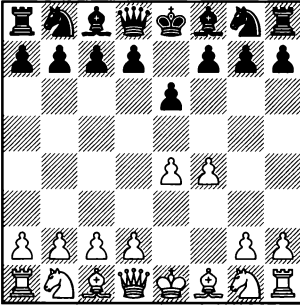
5...♗e7 6.♟xe4

It is imprecise for White to play 6.0-0-0?! ♟c6 7.♟xe4 ♟d4 8.♖d3 ♟xe4 9.♖xe4 ♗f6→10.g4?! ♗d7! 11.♗xd4 ♗c6 12.♗b5 ♗xb5

13. ♖xb7 0-0 → Karasev – S.Ivanov, Leningrad 1991.

6... 0-0 7. ♖f3 (7.0-0-a5!?) 7... a5!? 8. a4 b6 9. 0-0-0 ♖b7 10. d3 ♜bd7 and Black has a very good position.

2.f4



This move looks a bit ugly, but still it is played not so rarely. At top-level, I remember lately the game Zvjaginsev – Zhang Pengsjang, won by White in a brilliant style.

2...d5 3.e5 c5 4. ♖f3 ♜c6 5.c3

This is the idea of his set-up. It seems White is playing like in the Advance variation with 3.e5, except that he can choose the right moment to push d2-d4.

5... ♜h6 6. ♖a3

The move 6.d4?! is still clearly premature – 6... ♗b6 7. ♖d3 ♖d7 8. ♖c2 cxd4 9. cxd4 ♜b4 and Black seizes the initiative.

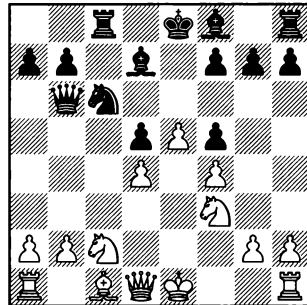
6... ♗b6 7. ♖c2

After 7.d4?! cxd4 8. cxd4 ♖xa3 9. bxa3 ♜f5, Black wins a pawn.

7... ♖d7 8. d4

It would be too melancholic for White to continue with 8. ♜e3?! f6! and he will have to play 9. exf6 (It is too risky for him to choose 9.d4? cxd4 10. cxd4 fxe5 11. fxe5 ♖b4+ 12. ♜f2 0-0 ♠ and White's position is close to being hopeless.) 9... gxf6 10. d3 0-0-0 11. ♖e2 ♖d6 and Black had a clear advantage in the game Komliakov – Rustemov, Moscow 1998.

8... ♗c8. This is a useful preparatory move. 9. ♖d3 cxd4. Black demonstrates a concrete approach to solving problems. (It is also possible for him to opt for 9... ♖e7!?) 10. cxd4 (he can counter 10. ♜cxd4 with ♖c5 ♠) 10... ♜f5 11. ♖xf5 exf5

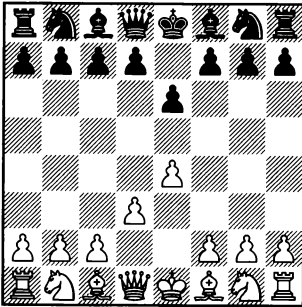


In the variation with 3.e5 (2.d4 d5), pawn-structures of this type are considered worse for Black in view of the transfer of White's knight to the f4-square. Now, his own pawn impedes the knight from occupying this square, so Black's position is quite acceptable. 12. 0-0 ♖e7 13. ♜e3 ♖e6 14. b3 0-0 15. ♖b2 f6! ♠

Chapter 2

1.e4 e6 Closed Systems

2.d3



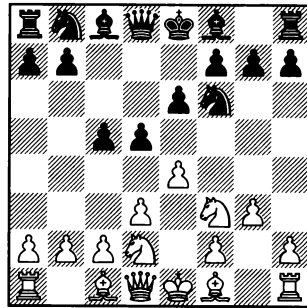
This move is definitely a bit slow and White usually wishes with it to concentrate on a fierce fight in the middle game. It is also possible that he was just a bit lazy to study the basic theoretical lines at home and tries to play safely and reliably early in the game.

2...d5

The wide erudition in the opening is one of the most important features of the strong chess player nowadays. For example, now it seems very reasonable for Black to transpose to the closed Sicilian defence with 2...c5 3.♟f3 ♞c6 4.g3 g6 5.♙g2 ♙g7 6.c3 ♞ge7 7.0-0 0-0 (It is maybe a bit more

precise to choose 7...e5!?) 8.♞e1 (8.d4!?) 8...e5 9.♞a3 d6 10.♙e3 b6 11.♞d2 and here Topalov tried the interesting idea to exchange his light-squared bishop with 11...♙g4!? 12.h3 ♙xf3 13.♙xf3 ♞d7 14.♙g2 f5 15.exf5 gxf5 16.f4 ♞ad8 17.♞e2?! ♞e6! Black seized the initiative and won the game later. Bruzon Bautista – Topalov, Wijk aan Zee 2005.

3.♞d2 c5 4.♞gf3 ♟f6 5.g3



5...g6

This set-up is only seldom played and its idea is not only to surprise the opponent, but to enter a complicated position with counter chances for Black. The classical scheme in this situation

looks to me a bit passive – 5...♟c6 6.♙g2 ♙e7 7.0–0 b6 8.♞e1 ♙b7. I have played many games in it, not without considerable success, but I think White’s play is easier, since he makes the important decisions.

6.♙g2 ♙g7 7.0–0

He can try to seize the initiative with 7.exd5, but Black can counter that with 7...♟xd5 (But not 7...exd5?! and he will have problems after 8.♞e2+ ♙e6 9.♟g5±; the endgame arising after 8...♞e7 9.♞xe7+ ♟xe7 10.♟b3† is not good for Black at all.) 8.♟b3!? (White cannot harm his opponent with 8.♟e4 ♟c6 9.0–0 b6 10.♙g5 f6 11.♙d2 0–0 and the position is double-edged.) 8...♟c6 (It seems weaker for Black to choose 8...0–0 9.0–0 ♟d7 10.♞e1 and he will have problems with the development of his light-squared bishop. For example: 10...b6?! 11.♙g5 f6 (11...♙f6 12.♙xf6 ♞xf6 11.♞e1 cxd4 (But not 11...c4?! 12.♟bd2 c3 13.♟e4 cxb2 14.♙xb2 0–0 15.♙a3 ♟ce7 16.♟e5 with initiative for White.) 12.♟bxd4 ♟xd4 13.♟xd4 0–0 14.♟c6 (He cannot obtain an advantage with 14.c3 ♞c8 15.♞a4 ♙c4 16.♟c6 b5 17.♞xc4 bxc4 18.♟xd8 ♞fxd8, Savchenko – Vitiugov, Serpukhov 2008.) 14...♞d7 15.♙xd5 exd5 16.♟e7+ ♟h8 17.♞xd5 ♞xd5 18.♟xd5 ♙b7 and Black has a full compensation for the sacrificed pawn.

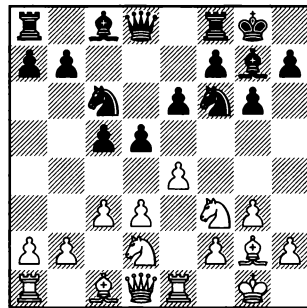
7...0–0

He can also choose 7...♟c6,

because he should not be afraid of 8.exd5 ♟xd5 9.♟b3 (After 9.♟e4 b6, it is far from clear how White can increase his pressure. 10.♙g5 (After 10.c4 ♟de7 11.♙g5 ♙b7 12.♟f6+ ♟f8, his pieces will have to retreat, coming under attack with tempi, while the weakness of the d4-square will be terminal.) 10...f6 11.♙d2 0–0 12.♞e1 e5 and White’s set-up seems absolutely ridiculous for a King’s Indian scheme.) 9...b6 10.c4 ♟de7 11.d4 ♙a6! Black has a good position.

8.♞e1 ♟c6 9.c3

White has completed his “programme”, concerning his King’s Indian attack. We will try to go a bit deeper in the intricacies of this position.



9...♞e8

It has become clear that after Black has chosen his set-up, the most principled plan for White will be connected with e4-e5 and d3-d4. Black will have to undermine White’s centre with f7-f6. He should be well-prepared to do that successfully, though...

It is possible for Black to play 9...b6!? – the so-called “double fianchetto”. He will develop his bishop keeping the elasticity of his pawn centre intact. 10.e5 (Waiting moves for White of the type 10.a3 would not change much – 10...♙b7.) 10...♞d7 11.d4 f6 12.♙h3!? This is the only way for White to obtain some advantage. (He should not give up the centre with 12.exf6, since his opponent will have no problems after 12...♞xf6 13.♞e2 ♙b7 14.♞xe6+ ♞xe6 15.♙xe6 cxd4, or 13.♞b3 c4 14.♞bd2 ♙b7 15.b3 cxb3 16.axb3 e5! and in both cases Black obtains an excellent position.) 12...♙e8 13.exf6 ♞xf6 14.♞f1 ♙b7 15.♙f4 (15.♙g5?! ♞f7 16.♙f4 h6 17.♞e3 e5 18.♙xd7 ♞xd7 19.♞xe5 ♞xe5 20.♙xe5 ♙xe5 21.dxe5 ♙xe5) 15...cxd4 16.cxd4 ♙ac8. There has arisen on the board a complicated position with mutual chances.

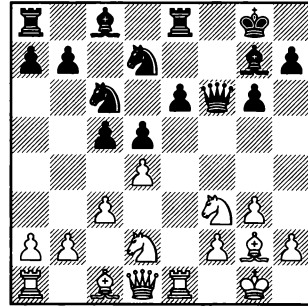
It is weaker for Black to play 9...e5?!, because he will enter a position of the King’s Indian defence with colours reversed, being two tempi behind and this should be an important factor. 10.exd5 ♞xd5 11.♞c4 f6 12.♞b3 and White’s initiative is tremendously powerful.

10.e5

He decides to make a solid preparatory move without forcing the game. Under calm circumstances, Black’s plan is simple – b6, ♙b7, ♞c7, ♙ad8 etc., typical central strategy. Therefore, we

will study his attempts to sharpen the game.

10...♞d7 11.d4 f6 12.exf6 ♞xf6

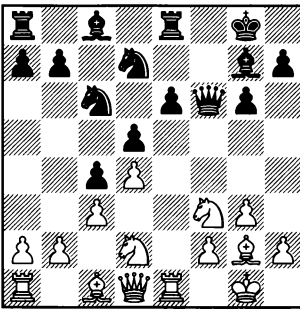


13.♞b3

13.dxc5!? This is a flexible move. White is ready to give up his centre in order to gain some tempi for the development of his pieces. 13...♞xc5 14.♞b3 ♞e4 15.♙f4 (He fails to question the placement of Black’s knight – 15.c4 ♙d8.) 15...♞d8. Strangely enough, sometimes coming back with the queen to its initial square may be an unexpected, but very strong decision. 16.♞bd4! (preventing e6-e5) 16...♙f8. Black is eyeing the f2-pawn! (It is bad for him to play 16...♞b6?! 17.♞b3 ♞xb3 18.axb3 e5 19.♞xc6 bxc6 20.♙xe5 ♙xe5 21.♞xe5 ♙xe5 22.f3 ♙f5 23.fxg4 ♙xe4 24.b4±). There may arise the following developments: 17. ♞b3 ♞a5 18.♞c2 ♞c4 19.♙ad1 e5 20.♞xe5 ♙xe5 21.♙xe4 ♙xf4 22. ♞b3 ♞b6 23.gxf4 with an equal position.

13...c4 14.♞bd2

After 14. ♗g5 ♜f7 15. ♖bd2 e5 16. dxe5 ♜dxe5 17. ♜xe5 ♜xe5, Black has an excellent position, Nepomniachtchi – Moiseenko, Kazan 2003. White cannot obtain any advantage with the forced variation – 18. f4!? ♗g4 19. ♞xe5 ♗xd1 20. ♗xd5 ♗xe5 21. ♗xf7+ ♜xf7 22. ♞xd1 ♗f6 23. ♜xc4 ♞ad8 24. ♜d6+ ♜e6 25. ♗xf6 ♞xd6 26. ♗d4 ♜f5=

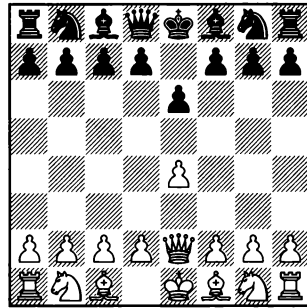


The chronic weakness of the e5-square may hurt Black in the future. Accordingly, it is interesting for him to try the pawn-sacrifice –

14...e5 15. ♜xe5 ♜dxe5 16. ♗xd5+ ♜h8 17. dxe5 ♜xe5. He has obtained some compensation indeed, but he still remains a pawn down. For example: 18. ♗xc4 (It would be too risky for White to try 18. ♜xc4 ♗g4 19. ♜d2 ♜f3+ 20. ♗xf3 ♗xf3 and despite the fact that Black is already two pawns down, his light-squared bishop compensates them with interest. 18...♞f8! (18...♗g4?! 19. ♗e2!) 19. f3 ♗f5. Black has obtained

an excellent game for the sacrificed material. His counterplay is rich and easy – all in the centre. He can also try 19...♗h3!? 20. ♗f1 ♗d7.

2. ♖e2



This move was invented by Mikhail Ivanovich Chigorin. Its idea is quite simple. White wishes to build a set-up typical for the King's Indian attack. Meanwhile, he is trying to prevent the thematic move for Black d7-d5, since after the exchange, he will have to recapture with his queen and not with the pawn. That is not a part of his plan at all. On the other hand, this early development of the queen has some drawbacks as well.

2...c5

I believe this is the most reasonable reaction for Black. He postpones the move d5 for a while, occupying and controlling the centre in the process.

He plays sometimes the amusing move 2...e5. The position is

rather unusual after that and if you see it for the first time, you might think that after 1.e4 e5, White has played 2.♖e2?! In fact, with his second move, Black wishes to emphasize that White's early queen-sortie is completely harmless for the opponent. Still, this is a tempo gained. It seems reasonable for White to choose a plan including f2-f4 and a transfer of the queen to f2. For example: 3.c3 ♖c6 4.f4 d6 5.♗f3 g6 6.♞f2 ♙g7 7.♙c4 ♗f6 8.d3 0-0 9.0-0 exf4 10.♙xf4 ♗g4 11.♞g3 ♗e5 12.♗bd2 ♗xc4 13.♗xc4 ♙e6 14.♗e3 ♗e5 15.♗xe5 dxe5 16.♙xe5 ♙xe5 17.♞xe5 ♞xd3 18.♙f3 ♞e2 19.c4! and White won that game later, Zvjaginsev – Ni Hua, Ergun 2006.

Black plays also 2...♙e7, with the idea to eliminate the x-ray along the e-file. He loses thus his possibility to fianchetto his dark-squared bishop.

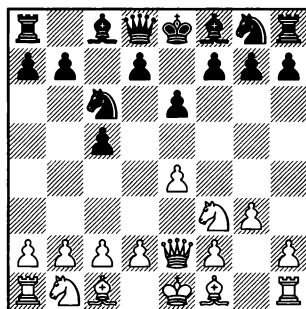
Even 2...d5 is played sometimes successfully by Black. No doubt, after that the move with White's queen is justified, because following 3.exd5, Black must play 3...♞xd5. There arises a strange version of the Scandinavian defence (with the inclusion of the moves ♞d1-e2 and e7-e6) and it has not been evaluated by the theoreticians yet.

3.♗f3

There is a multitude of possibilities and move-orders in this position. I believe, I must acquaint you with the most logical plan for

White; otherwise, we might go too far analyzing this situation, which is so rich in resources. The move 3.f4 must be countered by Black with 3...d5.

3...♖c6 4.g3



4...g6

This is a principled moment. Maybe not all French defence players would like the development of the bishop to the g7-square, but I am very much inclined to deploy it just there.

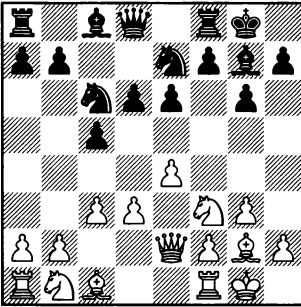
5.♙g2 ♙g7 6.0-0 ♗ge7

Black fails to develop this knight to a more active position 6...♗f6 7.c3! d5 (It is hardly preferable for him to opt for 7...0-0 8.d4 d5 9.e5 ♗d7 10.♙g5 and White obtains a clear advantage.) 8.e5 ♗d7 9.d4 f6 10.exf6 ♞xf6 11.♗g5 and Black is in a great trouble.

7.c3 0-0 8.d3 d6

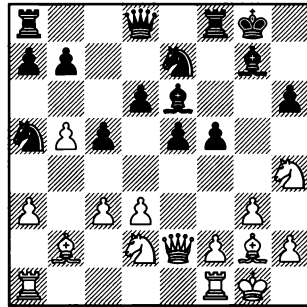
He has two possible plans in this position – playing on the queenside, connected with advancing b7-b5-b4, or natural central strategy of the type – e6-e5 and f7-f5.

1.e4 e6 2.♞e2 c5 3.♟f3 ♘c6 4.g3 g6



keep the knight on the c6-square with 11...a6!?

12.b5 ♘a5 13.♙b2 f5 14. exf5 gxf5 15.♟h4, Smyslov – Cramling, Prague 1995,



9.♟bd2

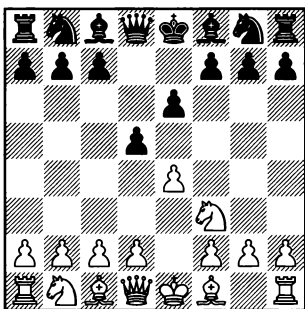
The alternative for White is – 9.♙e3 b6 10.♘a3 ♙a6 11.♞fd1 ♜c8 12.♞c2 b5 13.c4 ♘d4 (13... b4!) 14.♞d2 bxc4 15.dxc4 ♘ec6± 16.♞ac1? ♘xf3+ 17.♙xf3 ♞f6± Ja-sim – Radjabov, Dubai 2002.

9...e5 10.a3 h6 11.b4 ♙e6

I like much more the idea to

and here after

15...c4!, Black could have obtained an excellent position.



We will analyze a) 3.♘c3 and b) 3.e5.

a) 3.♘c3

This is one of the ways for White to avoid the main lines of the French defence. He chooses sometimes a similar system of development against the Caro-Kann defence and there it seems more reasonable.

3...d4

This is, of course, a much more principled move than 3...♘f6. White allows his opponent to occupy additional space and it would be a sin not to make use of that.

4.♗e2

White has played 4.♗b5? too. Fortunately, this book is not an opening encyclopaedia and I do not feel obliged to analyze moves like this...

4...c5

The move 4...♗c6?! does not adhere to the opening principles according to Philidor – at first pawns and then pieces... 5.c3 e5 6.cxd4 exd4 7.♖a4 ♗c5 8.b4↑ and Black has problems.

5.c3

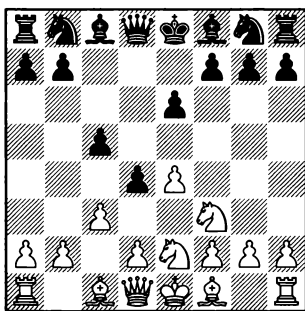
This is the most concrete decision for White. He wishes to destroy immediately Black's pawn-centre, which has just appeared on the board.

5.♗g3 a6! (After 5...♗c6, White can play simply 6.♗b5 ♗d7 7.♗xc6 ♗xc6 8.♗e5 ♖c7 9.♗xc6 ♖xc6 10.d3 and he has some prospects for an active kingside play.) 6.a4 (6.♗e2 ♗c6 7.0–0 e5 (Black can also try here 7...h5!?, as well as 7...♗d6.) 8.d3 g6 and it is not quite evident what White is supposed to do, while Black's plan is crystal clear – ♗g7, ♗ge7, 0–0, h6, ♗e6, b5 etc.) and now 6...♗c6.

2. ♖f3 d5 3. ♗c3 d4 4. ♗e2 c5 5. c3

There may arise the following developments: 7. ♗c4 ♗d6 (7... ♗e7!? 8. 0–0 h5) 8. d3 ♗ge7 9. 0–0 0–0 10. ♗e1 ♖b8 11. f4 b5 12. axb5 axb5 13. ♗b3 ♗b7 with a complicated position.

After 5. d3, there arise positions with a King's Indian pawn-structure, but with colours reversed. Black can only dream about opening results of this type. 5... ♗c6 6. g3 e5 7. ♗g2 ♗e7 8. 0–0 g5 (8... h5!?) 9. ♗d2 h5!? and White already has problems (9... ♗e6 10. f4 f6 11. ♗f3 h6 12. c4∞ Bachin – Korchnoi, Togliatti 2003).



5... ♗f6

This is the strongest move and it is based on simple tactics.

Black cannot hold on to his d4-pawn 5... ♗c6?! 6. cxd4 cxd4 7. ♖a4 ♗c5 8. b4 ♗xb4 9. ♗exd4 ♖a5 (Or 9... ♗ge7 10. ♗b5 ♖a5 11. ♖b1 and he fails to solve the problems in the opening.) 10. ♗b5 (The alternative for White is 10. ♖xa5 ♗xa5 11. ♗b5 ♗f6 12. ♗d6+ ♗e7 13. e5 ♗d5 14. ♖b1 and Black is again in trouble.) 10... ♗d7 11. ♖b1 (In

the endgame after 11. ♗xc6 bxc6 12. ♖xa5 ♗xa5, Black must worry about his pawn-structure.) 11... ♖xa4 12. ♗xa4 ♗xd4 13. ♖xb4 (White cannot achieve much with 13. ♗xd4 ♗c5 14. ♗xd7+ ♗xd7 15. ♗f3 b6 16. ♗b2 ♗f6.) 13... ♗xf3+ 14. gxf3 ♗xa4 15. ♖xa4 and he has a slight advantage in this endgame even if Black defends it correctly.

6. cxd4

I think it is weaker for White to play 6. e5 ♗fd7 7. cxd4 cxd4 8. ♗exd4 ♗xe5! He has already problems, both in static and dynamical aspects. He has not blundered anything yet, so he may succeed in holding the balance, though. 9. ♗b5+ ♗ec6. Black is not afraid of worsening of his pawn-structure (It is less principled for him to play 9... ♗ed7, because then White can develop his pieces to acceptable squares.) 10. ♗xc6 (10. 0–0 ♗d7 11. ♗b3 ♗b4 12. ♗c4 ♗c6 and he obtains a comfortable game, Janturin – Lysyj, Pardubice 2005; It is also possible for Black to opt for 10... ♗e7.) 10... ♗xc6 11. ♗xc6+ bxc6. Black's bishop-pair is a very powerful argument, compensating the defects of his pawn-structure. 12. ♖a4 ♖d5 13. 0–0 ♗e7 14. b3 ♖b5 15. ♖f4 0–0 16. ♗b2 f6 17. ♖fc1 ♗d7∞ Guseinov – Huzman, Warsaw 2005.

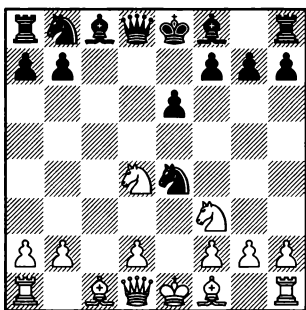
I cannot recommend to White the move 6. ♗g3, which can be countered by Black with 6... a6!? (after the usual reply 6... ♗c6, White's game is much easier – he

can develop actively his bishop with 7.♖b5). For example, the game Guseinov – Bartel, Kusadasi 2006 continued in the following fashion: 7.♗e5 h5 8.d3 h4 9.♗e2 ♗fd7 10.♗xd7 ♖xd7 11.f4 ♗c6 12.♗g1. It is becoming more and more difficult to guess the moves of either side, so we will stop here. The position is tremendously complicated. It is an enigmatic strategical fight with mutual chances.

6...cxd4

Black does not need to be too tricky with moves like 6...♗xe4.

7.♗exd4 ♗xe4



8.♗xe6

It looks like White has caught his opponent into a trap.

The check on b5 would not achieve anything much – 8.♖b5+ ♗d7 and then what....?

8...♗xe6 9.♖a4+ ♗c6 10.♖xe4 ♗c5

It turns out however, that Black has obtained an excellent

compensation for the sacrificed material and White must play accurately not to be worse.

11.♗c4

The extravagant move 11.♗d3 changes nothing important – 11...g6 12.♗c4 0–0 13.0–0 ♖e8 14.♗xe6 ♖xe6 15.♖c4 ♗b6 and the presence of the pawn on g6 is not a minus for Black's position.

11...0–0 12.0–0

He can counter 12.♗xe6 with the obvious developing move 12...♖e8 and then 13.0–0 ♖e6 14.♖c4 ♗d4! 15.♗xd4 (15.♖xc5?? ♗xf3+ 16.gxf3 ♖g6+ 17.♗h1 ♖d3–+) 15...♗xd4 with an advantage and an easy game for Black.

12...♖e8 13.d3

White creates the unpleasant threat ♗g5 in the process and Black must defend immediately against it.

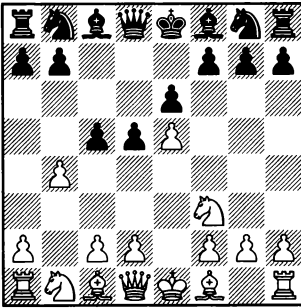
13...h6 14.♗xe6

In case of 14.♗d2, it is very strong for Black to play 14...♗d4! 15.♖ae1 ♗xc4 16.♖xe8+ ♖xe8 17.♖xe8+ ♖xe8 18.dxc4 ♗xf3+ 19.gxf3 ♗d4= Myagmarsuren – Adamski, Polanica Zdroj 1972.

It may be interesting for White to opt for 14.♗f4!? ♗d4 15.♗xd4 ♗xc4 16.♖f5, but Black has a concrete argument against that – 16...♖xd4 17.dxc4 ♗b6! =

14...♖xe6 15.♖c4 ♖b6 16.♗d2 ♗d4 17.♗xd4 ♗xd4 18.♗c3 ♖d8= Vorobiov – Vitiugov, Moscow 2007.

b) 3.e5 c5 4.b4



This is an interesting gambit-line. White sacrifices a flank pawn with the idea to create a solid centre and to organize an offensive along the dark squares. Still, his compensation for the pawn is insufficient.

I will mention that a similar position may arise in the Sicilian defence after 1.e4 c5 2.♘f3 e6 3.b4!?

4...cxb4

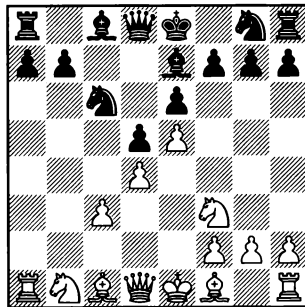
The most principled reaction for Black is no doubt – accepting the sacrifice. The arising positions are not so well analyzed yet and this is easily understandable. There are not so many players with White, who would be willing to sacrifice a pawn for such obscure compensation. I will not analyze this position extensively and I will only show you the correct moves at the beginning. They are not obligatory at all, but just some of the possibilities.

Black's attempt to maintain the tension with 4...b6, can be

countered by White with 5.c3 ♗d7 6.a3 ♙a6 7.♙xa6 ♘xa6 8.d4 and there arises a version of the variation with 3.e5. The maneuvering game in that case may not be to everybody's liking.

It deserves attention for Black to occupy the centre with 4...d4 5.bxc5 ♙xc5 6.♙a3 and here he must choose between two acceptable retreats of his bishop. In both cases, the position remains rather unclear 6...♙b6 (6...♗a5?! 7.♙xc5 ♗xc5 8.c3 ♘c6 9.cxd4 ♘xd4 10.♗a4+↑; 6...♙e7!?).

5.a3 ♘c6 6.axb4 ♙xb4 7.c3 ♙e7 8.d4



So, White has achieved what he wanted. Black has his counter chances, though...

8...♙d7

The character of the position has been defined early, so he should not be in a hurry to complete the development of his king-side.

It is obvious that White will develop his initiative there, so Black should better leave his king

Chapter 3

in the centre for a while.

I do not like the move 8...♘h6 so much, because White has a target to attack and that is the knight on h6 (f5). 9.♙d3 ♘f5 10.h4!? and his pawn-offensive on the king-side would not be so pleasant for Black. He can try however, the super-solid move 10...h5∞

9.♙d3 a6

It would be interesting for him to opt for the aggressive move 9...b5!? with the idea to follow with b4.

10.h4

After 10.0-0 ♜c8, White can hardly prove that his compensation for the pawn is sufficient.

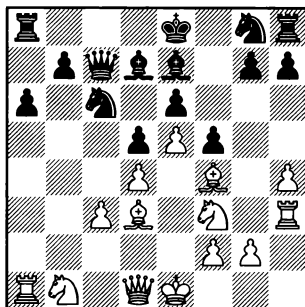
10...♞c7

Black is preparing the undermining move f7-f6.

11.♞h3

He can counter 11.h5 with the preparatory move 11...♞c8 and after 12.♞h3 – 12...f6↗

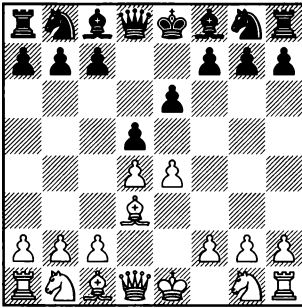
11...f6 12.♙f4 f5



Now, it has become evident that the f4-square is not perfect for White's bishop in this pawn-structure and he would need to change his set-up.

13.♞g3 ♙f8∞ The position is complicated.

Of course, it is not possible to analyze it to exhaustion. It is however obvious that White's pawn-sacrifice on move four is hardly correct. Still, Black should not try to refute it outright. It is advisable for him to play simply French defence, but with an extra pawn.



This is a very seldom played variation. Its idea is to maintain the tension in the centre without defining the position of the queen's knight. Its drawbacks are evident too. White's bishop comes to the centre prematurely and it can be attacked with tempi.

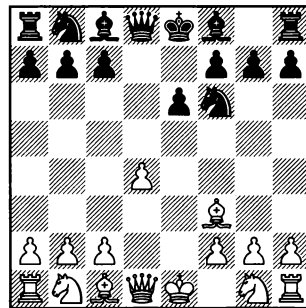
3...dxe4

It would have been interesting for Black to play 3...c5, but White has the attractive tactical possibility 4.exd5 (After 4.c3 cxd4 5.cxd4 dxe4 6.♗xe4 ♖f6 7.♗f3, it is unclear why White's bishop on f3 has occupied the place of the knight; 4.dxc5? and White must begin to fight for equality. 4...dxe4 5.♗b5+ ♗d7; 5.♗xe4 ♜xd1+ 6.♔xd1 ♗xc5 7.♔e2 ♜f6 8.♗d3 b6; 8.♗f3 ♜bd7) 4...♝xd5 (The move

4...exd5 leads to a version of the exchange variation.) 5.♔c3! and now Black will have to reply to this with 5...♝xd4, so White obtains excellent attacking chances, because after 5...♝xg2, Black's queen is suddenly trapped – 6.♗e4!. 6.♜b5 (6.♜f3 ♝d8 7.♗f4.) 6...♝d8 7.♗f4 ♜a6 8.♝e2 ♜f6 9.0–0–0 with a very powerful attack for White.

4.♗xe4 ♜f6 5.♗f3

This is the only way for him to justify his third move, because after 5.♗d3 c5, Black has no problems whatsoever.



5...c5

I do not think that Black has anything to worry about after for example: 5...♗e7 6.♜e2 0–0 7.0–0

♘bd7 8.♘bc3 (8.♙f4 c5) 8...e5
9.♘g3 exd4 10.♗xd4 ♙c5 11.♗c4
♙d6, but the move 5...c5 seems
more active and up to the point.

6.♘e2 ♘c6

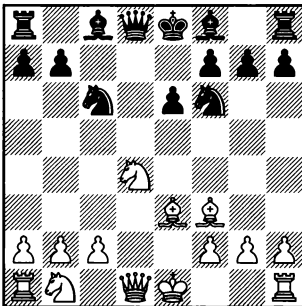
Black continues in the same
fashion, exerting maximal pressure
against his opponent's centre.

7.♙e3 cxd4

His alternatives seem worse.
7...e5?! Black's attempt to play
analogously to the variation 3.
♘c3 ♙b4 4.♙d3 is not so applica-
ble here – 8.♙xc6+ bxc6 9.dxe5
♗xd1+ 10.♘xd1 ♘g4 11.♘d2 ♙a6
12.♙e1± and White has a clear ad-
vantage in this endgame, thanks
to his extra pawn and Black's ter-
rible queenside pawn-structure.

It would not work for him to
play 7...♘d5?! 8.♙xd5 ♗xd5 9.
♘bc3! The quick development
takes precedence over everything
else! 9...♗xg2 10.♙g1 ♗xh2 11.♙f4
♗h5 12.♘b5 and Black is in a great
trouble. It would be sufficient to
say that the best move for him in
this position, according to Fritz is
12...♘d8.

8.♘xd4



8...♘e5

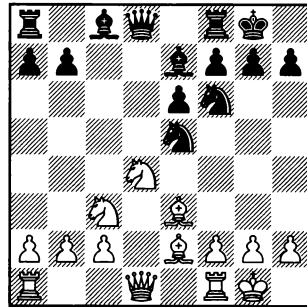
This move is simple and
strong.

Black is attacking White's
bishop and he can exchange it at
any opportune moment.

9.0-0

For example, in case of 9.♗e2,
Black simply captures 9...♘xf3+
and begins fighting for the advan-
tage.

9...♙e7 10.♘c3 0-0 11.♙e2



11...♗c7!?

This is an active move, creat-
ing the threat ♘c4. We can evalu-
ate the position after the opening
as at least equal for Black.

It is also acceptable for him to
try 11...♙d7 12.f4 ♘c6 and there
arises a version of the Schevenin-
gen variation of the Sicilian de-
fence, in which he has nothing to
worry about.

12.♘cb5

12.f4?! ♘c4

**12...♗b8 13.f4 ♘g6 14.♙d3
♘d5 15.♗d2 ♙c5** and White
must play very accurately to the
rest of the game.

Chapter 5

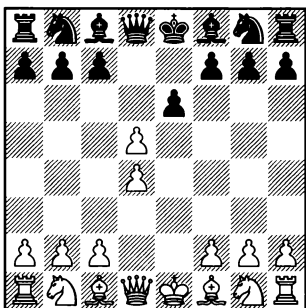
1.e4 e6

The Exchange Variation

2.d4

There do not arise original positions after 2.c4, since Black can enter the main lines of the exchange variation without any problems. 2...d5 (I can recommend to players who wish to play more complicated positions the move 2...c5, which leads to a good version of the Sicilian defence.) 3.exd5 exd5 4.d4 (White would not achieve anything much with 4.cxd5 ♖f6 5.♗b5+ ♖bd7 6.♖c3 ♗e7 7.♖f3 0-0 8.0-0 ♖b6 with easy equality for Black.)

2...d5 3.exd5



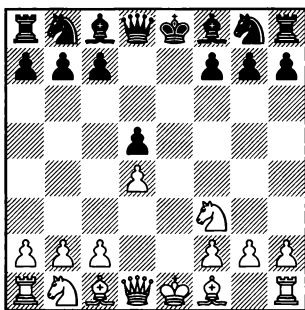
What can we say about the exchange variation in general?

It was played actively for a while by Garry Kasparov himself, but it cannot be dangerous for Black. It is obvious that White can create considerably more problems for his opponent only with the moves 3.♖c3, 3.♖d2 and 3.e5. Still, Black must play accurately. For those chess-fans who wish to play always only for a win, I would like to tell you that according to the professional players – there are two positive results in chess – a win and a draw...

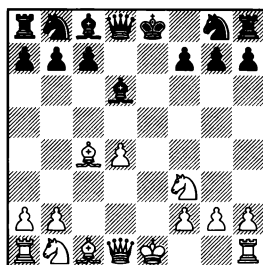
3...exd5 4.♖f3

This is the most solid and flexible move for White. It is also possible for him to play 4.c4, but in general it is not so advantageous for him to clarify his plan so early in the game. Black has at his disposal a very harmonious set-up – 4...♖f6 5.♖f3 (He can counter 5.♖c3 with 5...♗b4.) 5...♗b4+ 6.♖c3 0-0 7.♗e2 dxc4. Now, White has numerous alternatives, but they all have certain drawbacks. If Black so wishes, he can ignore his additional possibilities and stick to the same plan. 8.0-0 (After 8.♗xc4, it is reason-

able for him to trade immediately the light-squared bishops with 8...♞e8+ 9.♙e3 ♙e6 10.♙xe6 ♞xe6 11.0-0 ♘c6 12.♙g5 ♙xc3 13.bxc3 ♚d5 14.♙xf6 ♞xf6, although White still maintains some pressure with 15.♚b3.) 8...♙g4 (The alternative for Black is – 8...♙e6!?) 9.♙xc4 ♘c6 10.♙e3. White is more or less forced to enter that position after 4.c4. Having in mind that he has recaptured on c4 in two moves, Black should not have problems after the opening. For example: 10...♚d7 11.h3 ♙h5 12.♙e2 ♞fe8= and the prospects of both sides are approximately equal.



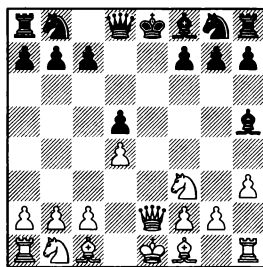
After 4.♘f3, Black has several possibilities. I will concentrate on the move 4...♙d6, because of two reasons. At first, the situation after 5.c4 dxc4 6.♙c4, may arise in the Queen's gambit accepted and it is always useful to know about similar transpositions between different openings. I have in mind the variation 1.d4 d5 2.c4 dxc4 3.e3 e5 4.♙c4 exd4 5.exd4 ♙d6 6.♘f3.



Secondly, I think this same move combines reliability and positional justification and avoids complete symmetry enabling Black to think about winning the game after all...

4...♙d6

The move 4...♙g4 was popular during the 90ies of the past century, but after Kasparov found the idea 5.h3 ♙h5 6.♚e2+!, it became evident that Black would have problems in this variation.



6...♚e7 7.♙e3 ♘c6 8.♘c3 0-0-0 9.0-0-0± Kasparov – Short, Tilburg 1991.

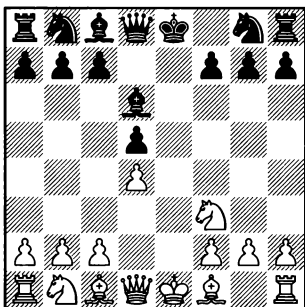
Black tries sometimes to provoke complications with the move 4...♘c6, but he may have difficulties in the well-known variation after 5.♙b5 ♙d6 6.c4 dxc4 7.d5 a6 8.♙a4 b5 9.dxc6 bxa4 10.0-0 ♘e7

2.d4 d5 3.exd5 exd5 4.♟f3 ♘d6 5.c4

11.♟xa4. White does not risk anything, while Black must still make several very accurate moves. Of course, his most reliable resource here is the symmetrical move – 4...♟f6.

♘d3 ♘xd3 14.♟xd3 ♟d7 15.♘d2 ♟ce7 16.♟fe1 ♟f5 17.♟xf5 ♟xf5 18.g3 f6 19.♟e2 ♟fe8 20.♟ae1 ♟xe2 21.♟xe2 ♟f7 22.♟g2 h5 ♣ Gorbatov – Rychagov, Moscow 2008.

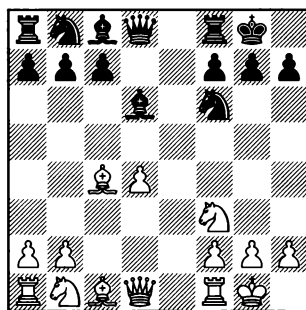
5...dxc4 6.♘xc4 ♟f6 7.0–0 0–0



5.c4

The famous principle of asymmetry in the Exchange variation can be illustrated here with the move – 5.♘d3.

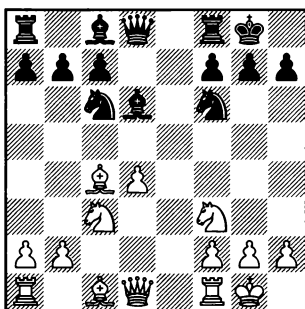
I should inform my readers that according to this principle Black should not be in a hurry to develop his king's knight early, since if his counterpart goes to f3, then Black should better deploy his knight to e7 and vice versa...Of course, you should not accept all these paradoxical principles so seriously after all, but still to have them in mind will always be useful. For example, in the next game Black followed all these rules and he managed to outplay gradually his opponent and to prevail in the endgame. 5...♟e7 6.0–0 ♟bc6 7. h3 ♟b4 8.♘e2 ♘f5 9.♟a3 a6 10.b3 0–0 11.c3 ♟bc6 12.♟c2 ♟g6 13.



8.♟e3

It is interesting for White to try to seize the initiative immediately with 8.♟e5!? Black must react very precisely: 8...♟c6! This is the right move! (It is weaker for him to opt for 8...♟bd7?! 9.♘f4 ♟b6 10.♘b3 ♟fd5 11.♘g3 ♘e6 12.♟d2 ♟e8 13.♟e4 ♟e7 14.♟c1± and White obtained an advantage in the game Tregubov – Vitiugov, Sochi, 2009.) 9.♟xc6 (Now, he cannot play 9.♘f4, because of the routine reply 9...♘xe5 10.dxe5 ♟g4 and White cannot protect his pawn.) 9...bxc6. Black's pawn-structure has been compromised a bit, but he is not worse. For example: 10.♟c3 ♟e8 11.♟f3 ♟b8 12.h3 ♘e6±, and the dynamical factors are in his favour.

8...♖c6

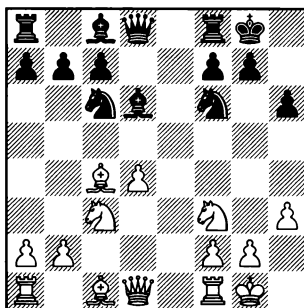


Starting at that moment, the opening has many things in common with the Chigorin defence. It is obvious that in this rather original and complicated opening, Black's situation is considered as acceptable, but things are not so simple.

9.h3

The seemingly active move 9.♗g5, strangely enough, is not dangerous for Black at all. 9...h6 (It is not so precise for him to play 9...♗g4, since White can counter that with 10.♘d5, obtaining the two bishop advantage. 10...♗e7 11.♘xe7+ ♜xe7 12.h3 ♗xf3 13.♝xf3 ♜e4 14.♝xe4 ♘xe4 15.♗e3 ♘d6 16.b3 with some edge for him, Lputian – Romanishin, Manila 1992.) 10.♗h4 ♗g4. It looks like White's best here is the forced draw after 11.h3 ♗xf3 12.♝xf3 ♘xd4 13.♝xb7 ♖b8 14.♝xa7 ♖a8 15.♝b7 ♖b8, Gurevich – Azmaiparashvili, Saint Vincent 2003.

9...h6



10.♗e1

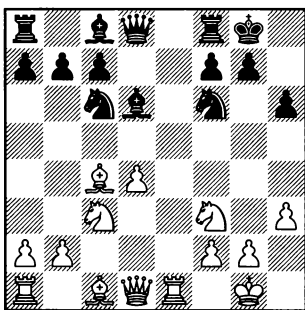
It is difficult to say, which is White's most useful move here. He has tried many different ideas, but Black has good counter chances everywhere. In principle, all that is quite logical. Both sides play solidly in the centre and neither side should have problems.

White cannot harm his opponent with 10.a3 ♗f5 11.b4 ♘e4! 12.♗b2 ♘xc3 13.♗xc3 ♝f6=

It would be too academic for him to opt for 10. ♗e3 a6 11.a4 ♗f5 12.♘h4 ♗h7 13.♗d3 ♗xd3 14.♝xd3 ♘b4 15.♝d1 ♗e8 16.♝f3 ♗f8 17.♝ad1 ♘bd5 18.♘f5 ♘h7 19.♗f4 c6 20.♗e5 ♗e6 ♞ Balashov – Morozevich, Samara 1998.

White has an interesting possibility here – 10.♝c2, with the idea to prevent the natural development of his opponent's light-squared bishop. Black can react cleverly against that with 10...a6!?, or he can play simpler – 10...♘b4 11.♝b1 c6!?. (White obtains some targets to attack after 11...♗e6 12.♗xe6 fxe6 13.♖e1 ♝d7 14.♗d2 ♘bd5 15.♝d3 ♖ad8 16.♖e2 ♝f7

17.♟ae1 ♜fe8 18.♞e4± Tkachiev – Sulava, Gonfreville 2006.) with the idea after 12.♟e1, to respond with 12...♞bd5. It also deserves attention for Black to try 10...♞a5 11.♙d3 ♙e6. 11.a3 b5 12.♙d3 ♙b7 with a good counterplay.



10...♟e8

This is the most natural response for him. He has alternatives too. The move 10...♙f5 was tested in a game against a computer by the famous expert of the French defence Alexander Morozevich. 11.d5 ♞e7 12.♙e3 a6 13.♙d4 ♞g6 14.a4 ♟e8 15.♟b3 b6 16.♟xe8+ ♞xe8 17.♟e1 ♞f6∞ Fritz – Morozevich, Frankfurt 2000. Two other acknowledged giants in this opening tested in whose favour the inclusion of the moves 10...a6 and 11.a3 was? 11...♟e8 12.♟xe8+ ♟xe8 13.♟d3 ♟f8 14.♙e3 ♙d7 (It was also interesting for Black to continue with 14...b5 15.♙a2 ♙b7, developing the bishop to a more

active position.) Now, White exerts some positional pressure. 15.♞h4 ♞h8 16.♞f5 ♟e8 17.♞xd6 (17.b4!?) 17...♟xd6 18.♟d1 (He cannot play 18.♙xf7, in view of 18...♞e5!) 18...♙e6 19.♙xe6 ♟xe6 20.d5 ♞e5 21.♟d4 ♟e8 22.♙f4 (22.♟a7!?) 22...c5 23.dxc6 ♟xd4 24.♟xd4 ♞xc6=. The opponents agreed to a draw, Korchnoi – Ivanchuk, Frankfurt 1998.

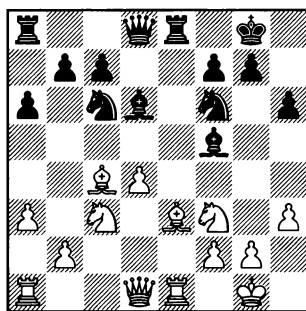
11.♙e3

The eventual consequences of the exchange of the rooks were analyzed in our previous notes. I will only mention that after 11.♟xe8+ ♟xe8, White cannot prevent the development of Black's bishop to f5 – 12.♟d3? ♞b4!

11...♙f5

Black can also begin with the move 11...a6!?

12.a3 a6



13.♞h4 ♙h7 14.♟f3 ♟d7∞ with a very complicated position, Short – Bareev, Pula 1997.

Part 2

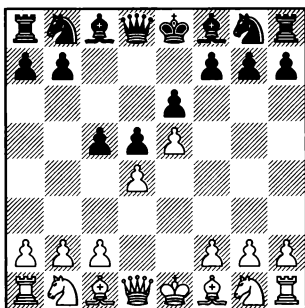
The Advance Variation 1.e4 e6 2.d4 d5 3.e5

In the second part of our book, we will analyze the Advance variation of the French defence, which arises after 3.e5. This is in fact White's most ambitious reply against the French set-ups. He starts powerful pressing all over the entire board right at the beginning of the game, trying to restrict maximally his opponent's space. Black must play immediately very actively; otherwise, his pieces will be squeezed due to the lack of operational space.

White's strategy has a drawback too. It may turn out that he is not so well-prepared for tasks of this scope. Black obtains outright objects to attack and mostly – his opponent's d4-pawn. There are numerous variations in which White's king is endangered and sometimes his pieces will have to occupy rather awkward squares in order to protect and preserve his pawn-chain d4-e5.

I believe it would be useful to repeat the well-famous axiomatic rule, familiar from the times of Aaron Nimzowitsch, who was an ardent exponent of the Advance variation of the French defence, that the d4 and e5-squares were absolutely crucial in this variation. Will White succeed in protecting reliably his central pawns? How effective Black's attempts to undermine them with c7-c5 and f7-f6 will be? It all depends on the right answer of these questions what the outcome of the opening battle is going to be and possibly of the entire game.

I will add that besides Nimzowitsch, the Advance variation has been actively played and popularized by Evgenij Ellinovich Sveshnikov. There have been played numerous valuable games by Alexander Grischuk, Peter Svidler, Alexey Shirov, Alexander Motylev and many other strong masters, who use periodically this interesting variation, leading to complicated and fighting positions.



Black should play immediately this undermining thematic move, without any delay.

4.c3

This is a necessary response and nowadays it is absolutely automatic.

There were times when there were serious discussions about the possibility 4.dxc5, after which there arose an acceptable for Black variation of the Caro-Kann defence and even with an extra tempo for him. 4...dxc6 (White can counter 4...dxc5 with 5.g4.) 5.dxf3 dxc5 6.d3 f6 7.e2 fxe5 8.dxe5 dxf6 9.0-0 dxe5 10.e2xe5 0-0 11.c4 b6 12.e2 d7 13.d2 ac8 14.h1 h8 with a complicated position, Makropoulos – Hug, Nice 1974.

White had tried before 4.dxf3 cxd4 5.d3 dxc6 6.0-0 dge7 7.f4 dg6 8.g3 e7 9.a3 0-0 10.e1 f5 11.h3 d7 12.b4 a5 13.b5 da7 14.a4 b4 15.e2 f4 16.h2 dh4 17.dbd2 c3 18.a2 dxf3+ 19.dxf3 e8 with a considerable advantage for Black, Hodgson – Short, Gouda 1996.

4...b6 5.df3

5.e3!? In case Black wishes to avoid this interesting possibility, favoured once by Victor Kupreichik, he can simply begin with 4...b6, instead of 4...dxc6.

5...dxc6

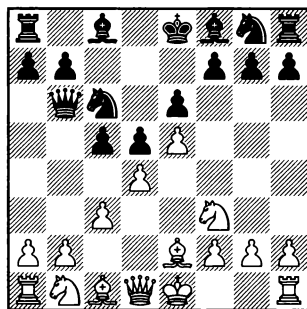
The first critical moment of the variation is right here.

6.e2

This is by far not the most dangerous move for Black. White develops his bishop to a very modest position. Black obtains a very comfortable game in this line.

The developments are a bit similar after the seldom played, but very interesting move 6.da3. I believe that our readers will be hardly surprised that Vadim Zvjaginsev is one of the classics of this variation. 6...cxd4 7.cxd4 b4+.

This is a principled move. Black is trying to exploit the early development of his opponent's knight. (It is weaker for him to opt for 7... ♖h6 8. ♘c2 ♗f5 9. ♙d3 ♚e7 10. 0–0 ♙d7 and White has the powerful resource 11.g4!?) It is also interesting for him to continue with 11.b4, as it was played in the game A.Zhigalko – Vitiugov, Warsaw 2008.) 8. ♙d2 ♘d7 (It is rather dubious for Black to choose 8... ♙xa3 9.bxa3 ♘xd4 10. ♗a4+ ♘c6 11. ♙d3 ♗ge7 12. ♗b1 ♗c7 13. 0–0 and White has an excellent compensation for the pawn.) 9. ♘c2. I think this is the only way for White to fight for the opening advantage. (He would not achieve anything much with 9. ♙xb4 ♘xb4 – after 9... ♗xb4+ 10. ♗d2, he may consolidate his position – 10. ♘c2. Without this move White's knight on a3 may be isolated from the actions for long. 10... ♘xc2+ 11. ♗xc2 ♗e7 12. ♗d2 0–0 with equal chances. It would be harmless for Black if White tries 12. ♙e2 ♗c8 13. ♗d2 ♙b5=) 9... ♙xd2+ 10. ♗xd2 ♗xb2. Accepting this sacrifice is obligatory. 11. ♙d3 ♗ge7 (It is a bit slow for Black, but purposeful enough to opt for 11... h6 12. 0–0 ♗b6 13. ♗ab1 ♗c7 14. ♗e3 ♗ge7 15. ♗fc1 and he will have problems castling, because of the threat ♗g4-h6.) 12. 0–0 ♗b6 13. ♗g5 ♗g6. I think the most objective evaluation of this position is – White has compensation, Black has an extra pawn.



6...cxd4

It is essential for Black to follow as always the right move-order.

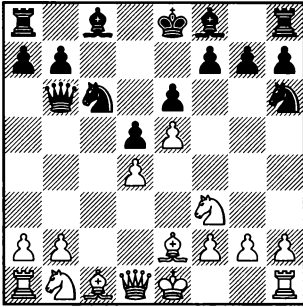
It may seem that he reduces the tension in the centre in this fashion, but this assumption is wrong. He only avoids some rather unfavourable variations for him.

It is inferior for Black to play 6... ♖h6, since White can counter that with 7. ♙xh6! gxf6 (Black loses now after 7... ♗xb2?, in view of 8. ♙e3 ♗xa1 9. ♗c2 cxd4 10. ♘xd4! and this is the difference between the immediate 6... ♖h6 and the intermediate exchange 6...cxd4. 10... ♙a3 11. ♗b5+-; 10... ♙d7 11. 0–0 ♗c8 12. ♘xc6 ♗xc6 13. ♙b5+-) 8. ♗d2 ♙g7 9. 0–0 0–0 10. ♗a3 cxd4 11. cxd4 ♙d7 12. ♘c2 f6 13. exf6 ♗xf6 14. b4 ♗af8 15. b5 ♗e7 16. ♗e5 ♙e8 17. g3 and White obtained an advantage in the game Topalov – Bareev, Novgorod 1997.

7.cxd4 ♗h6

He has again a choice, but Black should not be afraid of that. White has only two acceptable moves in this position.

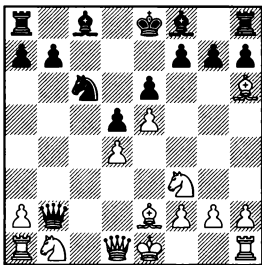
3.e5 c5 4.c3 ♖b6 5.♟f3 ♜c6 6.♙e2



8.♟c3

This is the most natural. He develops his knight on b1 to its most active position. The point is however, that in this pawn-structure the c3-square is hardly the optimal for this knight.

After the inclusion of 6...cxd4, capturing – 8.♙xh6 is not so good for White any more and Black not only can, but he should capture the sacrificed pawn – 8...♜xb2



and now:

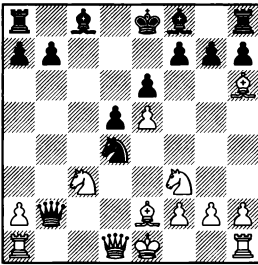
it is very bad for White to play 9.♙e3? ♜xa1 10.♜b3 ♙b4+ and he fails to trap his opponent's queen;

it is possible for him to follow with 9.♜bd2 gxh6 10. 0–0 (It would be too optimistic for White

to opt for 10.♜b1 ♜xa2 11.0–0 and Black should try here ♜b4!?). I think he should take as much material as possible although that might seem risky at first sight. 10...♜xd4 (It is also possible for Black to choose 10...♙g7 11.♜b3 ♜a3 with an unclear position. It is essential for him to be on the alert – 11...0–0 12.a3! and Black's queen is in danger!) 11.♜b1 ♜xe2+ 12.♜xe2 ♜c3 13.♜fc1 ♜a5 14.♜d4. It looks like White has activated maximally his forces and he will soon crush his opponent, but this is an illusion. Black can withstand the initial assault with an accurate defence and there may never be a second wave. 14...a6 15.♜2b3 ♜d8 16.♜e3 ♙g8 17.g3. The arising position is quite reliable for Black. White's knights are not so dangerous and they have no threatening maneuvers. White has some compensation indeed, but it is hardly sufficient for two missing pawns.

9.♟c3!?! This is a very original solution to the problem – he puts en pris another piece, defending his rook on a1 in the process. It may sound a bit ridiculous, but Black must make an important choice in this situation. He can enter a position with an extra pawn, but with compensation for the opponent, or ... he can finish the game with a perpetual check. 9...♜xd4!?! This is a paradoxical beginning if playing for a draw. (There arise fighting positions after 9...♜xc3+ 10.♙d2 ♜a3 11.0–0

♙e7 12. ♖c2, as it was played in the game Mantovani – Yemelin, Kalithea 2008. Black had to continue here with 12...0–0!? and after 13. ♖ab1 the position would have been very complicated.). This is the beginning of a long forced variation ending with a perpetual check.



10. ♖xd4 (White can provoke a tense fight, but it would hardly be advantageous for him. 10. ♖c1 ♖xa1! 11. ♗xd4 – He will not change anything much with 11. ♖xa1 ♗c2+ 12. ♗d2 ♗xa1 13. ♙e3 a6 14. ♖xa1 b5 with a good position for Black – 11... ♖xc1+ 12. ♙xc1 a6. His chances in this situation seem to be even preferable. White must play very precisely in order not to end up quickly in a very difficult position. For example: 13. ♗a4?! b5 14. ♗b6 ♖b8 15. ♗xc8 ♖xc8 with an easy game for Black.) 10... ♖xa1+ 11. ♙d1 gxf6 12. 0–0 ♖b2 13. ♙a4+ ♗d8 (He cannot play – 13... ♙d7? 14. ♖b1+–) 14. ♖b1 ♖a3 15. ♗xd5 exd5 16. ♖xd5+ ♗c7. All this happened in the game Maslik – Turcan, Slovakia 2001 and the opponents agreed to a draw.

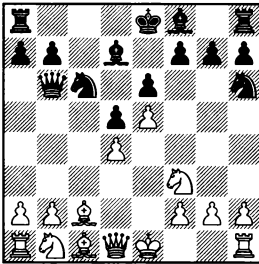
We will continue the variation a bit: 17. ♖xb7+ ♙xb7 18. ♖d7+ ♗b6 19. ♖b5+ ♗c7 20. ♖d7+ ♗b8 21. ♖e8+ ♙c8 22. ♖b5=

8. ♗a3?! This logical move is good in principle in this pawn-structure, but not at the moment... 8... ♙xa3. This is the most radical solution for Black. 9. bxa3 ♗f5 10. ♙e3 ♖a5+ 11. ♖d2 ♖xa3 (I do not think Black should have problems after 11... ♗xe3 12. fxe3 ♙d7!?=) 12. 0–0 ♗xe3 13. fxe3 0–0. White must play very energetically in this position in order to obtain compensation. 14. ♖fc1!? (It would be too slow for him to opt for 14. ♖ab1 b6.) 14... ♙d7 (14... ♖e7 15. ♖ab1) 15. ♖ab1 and White's pressure may be enough for a draw, but not more.... For example: 15... b6 (15... ♖ab8 16. ♖c5 b6 17. ♖c3 ♖e7 18. ♖bc1) 16. ♖c3 ♖e7 17. ♖bc1 ♖ac8 18. ♙a6 ♖c7 19. ♙b5 ♖fc8 20. ♙a6=

He cannot get an edge after 8. b3?! ♙b4+ 9. ♗f1 ♗f5 10. ♙b2 ♙e7. Black plays quite reasonably. He has deprived his opponent's king of castling rights and retreats his bishop to its habitual place. 11. ♗c3 (Or 11. h4 f6!?!; 11. ♙d3 0–0 12. h4 f6 13. ♙xf5 exf5 with initiative for Black.) 11... 0–0 12. ♗a4 ♖d8 13. g3 f6 14. exf6 ♙xf6 15. ♗g2 ♖d6 16. ♖e1 b6 with an excellent position for him, Kupreichik – Piskov, Germany 1998.

8. ♙d3!? It is only this interesting move, besides 8. ♗c3, which may cause some troubles

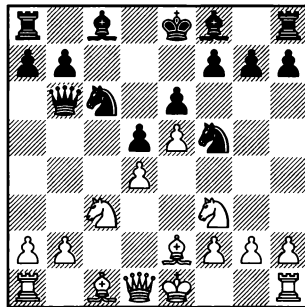
for Black. The first impression is that White has just touched his bishop by chance, deciding to make a move one square forward along the same diagonal. In fact, things are far from being that simple... 8...♙d7 9.♙c2 (But not 9.♟c3?! ♟xd4 10.0-0 ♙c5 11.a4 ♖b3 12.♗d2 ♟xf3+ 13.gxf3, Movsesian – Ivanov, Chalkidiki 2002, and here, after the simple move 13...0-0!?, Black obtains an overwhelming advantage).



Strangely enough, it looks like Black has nothing better than complying with the fact that he cannot punish immediately his opponent for the bishop-maneuver. Instead, he should continue the game in a calmer fashion. 9...♟f5. (Black has some interesting alternatives, but he fails to equalize after them: 9...g6!? 10.♟c3 ♟f5 11.♙xf5 gxf5 12.0-0 ♖g8 13.h3 ♙e7 14.♖b1 with an edge for White. Black can hardly make a good use of his domination along the g-file; 9...f6?! 10.exf6 – 10.♙xh6?! gxh6 11.exf6 ♖xb2 12.♟bd2 ♟xd4 13.♟xd4 ♖xd4 and he has a good position – 10...gxf6 11.♟c3 ♟f7

12.0-0 ♙d6 13.a3. Black's unstable centre will be a telling factor in the future. It is possible for him to opt for 9...♙e7, but White is better even then after 10.0-0 f6 11.♟c3 fxe5 12.♟xe5 ♟xe5 and unfortunately, it would not work for Black to continue with 12...♖xd4 13.♖h5+ ♟d8 14.♟xd7 ♟xd7 15.♙d1 ♖g4 16.♖xg4 ♟xg4 17.♟xd5! – 13.dxe5 ♟f7 14.♙e3 ♖xb2 15.♙d4 ♖a3 16.♖b1 b6 17.♙e1 with a very powerful initiative for White.) 10.♙xf5 exf5 11.♟c3 ♙e6. It turns out now that White has lost a tempo for the maneuver ♙d3-c2, while Black for ♙d7-e6. 12.0-0 ♙e7 13.♟e2 (White cannot harm his opponent with 13.♟a4 ♖d8=) 13...h6 14.h4 ♖c8 (Black should better avoid 14...♟d7?!, as it was played in the game Harikrishna – Meier, Merida 2007.) 15.h5 0-0 16.♟f4 ♖c7 with a very interesting position.

8...♟f5



9.♟a4

White has just managed to develop his knight and now he is

forced to place it at the edge of the board.

It is easy to be convinced that the alternatives are even worse for him. 9.♗b5 ♕d7 10.♙xc6 ♙xc6 and White has no compensation for his missing light-squared bishop.

The awkward move 9.♔f1?! postpones just for a move the unavoidable 9...♕d7 10.♘a4 (White loses a pawn after 10.g4? ♜fxd4 11.♘a4 (11.♙e3 ♖xb2+) 11...♗a5!) 10...♗d8 11.g4 ♜h4 12.♙g5 ♙e7 13.♙xh4 ♙xh4 14.♘c5 ♙e7 and on top of all problems, his king cannot castle.

9...♗a5+ 10.♕d2

This is a natural and reasonable move. It would be futile for White to play too enterprisingly – 10.♔f1 b5 (It is also interesting for Black to choose 10...♕d7!? 11.♕d2 ♗d8.) 11.♘c5 (11.♘c3 b4 with some pressure for Black.) 11...♙xc5 12.dxc5 b4 13.g4 ♜fe7 14.♙e3 h5 and he seizes the initiative.

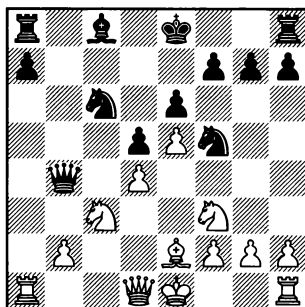
10...♙b4 11.♙c3

White can sacrifice a pawn indeed, but why? 11.♘c3 ♜fxd4 12.♘xd4 ♘xd4 13.a3 ♜xe2 14.axb4 ♘xc3 15.♙xc3 ♗b5.

11...b5

This is the simplest reaction for Black. He should not be too greedy 11...♙xc3+ 12.♘xc3 ♗b6 13.♙b5 0–0 14.♙xc6 ♗xb2 15.♘a4 ♗b4+ 16.♗d2 ♗xd2+ 17.♔xd2 bxc6 18.♘c5 with an inferior position for him.

12.a3 ♙xc3+ 13.♘xc3 b4 14.axb4 ♗xb4



15.♗a4

This seems to me to be White's most solid move.

The ambitious attempt 15.♙b5 may boomerang back to him after 15...♕d7 16.♗a4 ♗xb2 17.♙a3 0–0 (17...♗c1+? 18.♘d1±) 18.0–0 a6 19.♙b1 ♗xa3 20.♗xa3 axb5 21.♗b2 ♙fb8. Black has an excellent compensation for the queen.

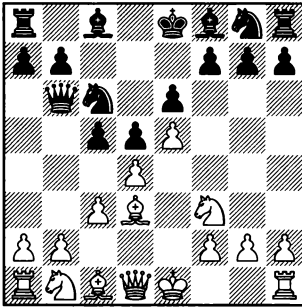
It is possible for White to play here 15.0–0, but even then Black has a pleasant choice. For example: 15...♜fxd4 (15...0–0!?) 16.♘xd4 ♗xd4 (Or 16...♘xd4 17.♙d3 and White has some initiative.) 17.♙b5! ♗b6. Now, it looks like White must force a draw in a tactical fashion: 18.♘xd5 exd5 19.♗xd5 ♙b7 20.♙a6 ♙xa6 21.♙xc6+ ♔f8 22.♗d6+ ♔g8 23.e6 (The evaluation is the same after 23.♙d1 ♙c8 24.e6 h6 25.♗e7 ♗xc6 26.♗xf7+ ♔h7 27.♗f5=) 23...♙xf1 24.exf7+ ♔xf7 25.♙d5+ ♔e8 26.♙c6+ ♔f7=

15...♕d7 16.♗xb4 ♘xb4=.

The prospects are equal in this endgame.

Chapter 7

1.e4 e6 2.d4 d5 3.e5 c5 4.c3 ♖b6
5.♟f3 ♟c6 6.♞d3



White develops his bishop to d3 and ignores the protection of his d4-pawn, solving in that fashion one of the main problems for him in this variation. His compensation will be the rapid development and the numerous moves of Black's queen. Still, his central pawn is too valuable. It would be quite objective to admit that the popularity of this gambit belongs to the past. There are players however, who wish to enter dire straits even nowadays.

6...cxd4

The move 6...♞d7 presents White with the additional possibility 7.dxc5!? ♞xc5 8.0-0.

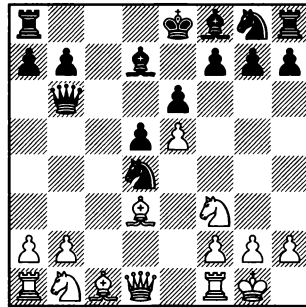
7.cxd4 ♞d7 8.0-0

This is the idea behind the en-

tire operation. Now, Black is practically forced to accept the sacrifice. It would be too faint-hearted for White to continue with 8.♞e2?! ♟ge7 9.♟c3 ♟f5 10.♟a4 ♖a5+ 11.♟c3z

He cannot obtain an edge with 8.♞c2 ♟b4=

8...♟xd4



9.♟xd4

It is very attractive to maim Black's queen to the centre of the board.

The alternative for White is 9.♟bd2!? ♟e7 (After 9...♟c6, Black may have problems following 10.♟b3 ♟ge7 11.♞e3 ♖c7 12.♞c1 ♟g6 13.♟c5, Leon Hoyos – Meier, Merida 2008.) 10.♟xd4

♖xd4 11.♟f3 ♖b6 12.♙e3 ♗c7
13.♟c1 ♟c6, with a solid position
for him, Haba – Goloshapov, Cap-
pelle la Grande 1998.

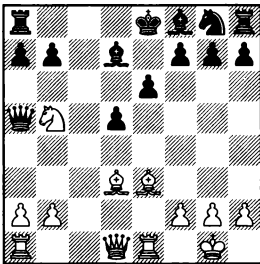
9...♖xd4 10.♟c3

It would not be in a gambit
style for White to continue with
10.♖e2 ♟e7 11.♟c3 ♟c6.

10...a6

This is a solid move. Black
takes the important b5-square
under control.

I have failed to find more than
a draw for White in the variation
10...♖xe5!? 11.♟e1 ♖d6 (It would
be rather unclear if Black chooses
11...♖b8?! 12.♟xd5 ♙d6 13.♖g4
♟f8 14.♙d2 f5 – 14...h5 15.♖h3
with a good compensation for
White – 15.♙xf5 exf5 16.♖d4 and
his attack may become crushing.)
12.♟b5 (Black neutralizes the
attack of his opponent after 12.♖f3
♟f6 13.♟b5 ♖b6 14.♙e3 ♖a5, or
13.♙f4 ♖b4 14.a3 ♖b3 15.♙e5
♙e7 16.♙ad1 and White has some
compensation, but not more.)
12...♖b6 (It is just weak for Black
to follow with 12...♖b8? 13.♖f3
♙d6 14.♖xd5 ♙xh2+ 15.♟h1 ♟f6
16.♖g5 0–0 17.f4 and he is in
great trouble.) 13.♙e3 ♖a5.



Strangely enough, the best that
White has is a draw by repetition:
14.♙d2 ♖b6=;

The inclusion of the moves
14.a4 a6 can hardly be in favour of
White – 15.♟d4 ♙e7 (But not 15...
♟f6 16.♟f5! g6 17.♙g5 and Black
is in danger.) 16.♖g4 g6 and his
attack has reached its dead end;

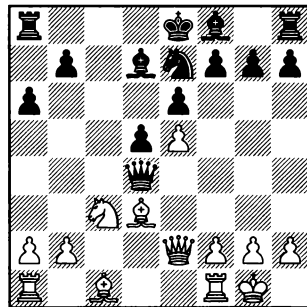
14.♟d4 ♙e7;

14.♖b3 a6 15.♙d2 ♖b6 16.♙e3
♖a5 – Here, White should better
comply with the draw, because
he would not be happy with the
consequences of 17.♟c3 (17.♟d4
♙b4!) 17...♖b4 18.♖c2 ♟f6 and
Black ends up with extra material.
Of course, not everyone would be
happy to play only with his queen
at the beginning of the game.

11.♖e2

White can also play 11.♟e1, but
his compensation after 11...♟e7
12.♙e3 ♖xe5 13.♟c1 ♟c8 can hard-
ly be proved.

11...♟e7



12.♟h1

This prophylactic is forced.
The endgame is inferior for

White after 12.♞d1 ♜c6 13.♙xa6 ♖xe5 14.♙xb7 ♖xe2 15.♜xe2 ♖b8 16.♙xc6 ♙xc6.

12...♜c6 13.f4 ♙c5!?

Black is a hurry to place his bishop on a7, before he has evacuated his queen away from the centre.

It is possible for him to play more actively 13...♜b4 14.♞d1 ♙c5!? (It is obvious that White has some initiative after capturing on d3 – 14...♜xd3 15.♞xd3 ♖b6 (It is weaker for Black to opt for 15...♖c4?! 16.b3 ♖c7 17.♙b2 ♙c6 18.♞c1 with good compensation for the pawn for White, Sveshnikov – Razuvaev, Belgrade 1993.) 16.♙e3 ♙c5 17.♙xc5 ♖xc5 18.f5. Now, after the precise move 18...d4!?, Black has good chances of obtaining a satisfactory position 19.b4 ♖c7 20.♞ad1 0–0–0 21.♞xd4 (21.♜e4 ♙b5) 21...♙c6 22.fxe6 ♞xd4 23.♞xd4 fxe6=) 15.♙xa6 ♖f2 16.♖xf2 ♙xf2 17.♙b5 ♙c6 and the endgame is very pleasant for Black, Smirnov

– Smikovski, Omsk 1996.

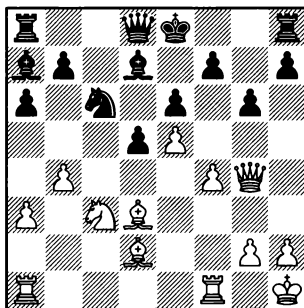
14.a3

White cannot exploit effectively the awkward position of his opponent's queen 14.♞d1 ♖f2 15.♖g4 0–0–0! and Black is better.

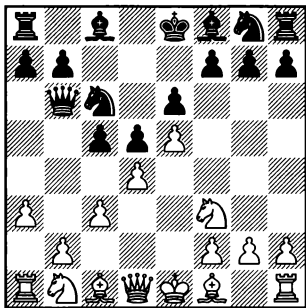
14...♙a7 15.♙d2

He can counter the ugly move 15.♜d1, for example with 15...♖a4.

15...♖b6 16.♖g4 g6 17.b4 ♖d8



The position has been stabilized. White is a pawn down and he has hardly any meaningful compensation.



White is trying to occupy additional space on the queenside and forces his opponent to clarify the situation in the centre.

6...♟h6

This move requires profound knowledge of theory from both sides.

We will say a few words about Black's other possibilities in the next chapter.

As it often happens, the inclusion of the moves a3 – a5 (or a6 – a4 with colours reversed) is advantageous for the side, which has advanced his pawn only one square forward. 6...a5?! 7.♟d3 cxd4 8.cxd4 ♟d7 9.♟c2 and Black does not have the resource ♜b4 (It is also possible for White to

play the risky move 9.0–0!?, entering a favourable version of a variation, which we have analyzed in the previous chapter: 9...♟xd4 10.♟xd4 ♖xd4 11.♟c3).

7.b4 cxd4 8.cxd4

It is possible for White to choose the intermediate exchange 8.♟xh6 gxh6 9.cxd4, but then his pawns, placed on dark squares become potentially defenseless. 9...♟d7 10.♟e2 (It would be a mistake for White to play 10.♟c3?, because of the standard tactical strike 10...♟xb4.) 10...♞c8 (It seems very interesting for Black to try 10...♞g8!? 11.0–0 ♞g4 12.h3 ♞f4 13.g3 ♞xf3 14.♟xf3 ♖xd4 15.♖xd4 ♟xd4 16.♟h5 a5 17.bxa5 ♜b3 18.♞a2 ♜xa5 19.♟d2 b5 with a good compensation for the exchange.) 11.0–0 ♟g7 12.b5. White is reluctant to play this, but he must. (His set-up will be quite awkward after 12.♖d2 0–0 13.♞a2 and just like before he cannot play 13.♟c3? ♟xd4 14.♟xd4 ♟xe5 15.♞ad1 ♖xd4 16.♟xd5! ♖xd2 17.♞xd2 and the endgame is preferable for Black – 13...f6 14.b5 ♜e7 15.exf6 ♟xf6 with a good game for him.) 12...

3.e5 c5 4.c3 ♖b6 5.♟f3 ♜c6 6.a3 ♜h6 7.b4 cxd4 8.cxd4 ♟f5 9.♙e3

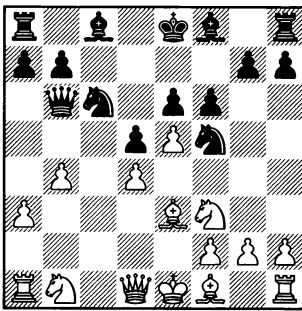
♟a5 (After 12...♟e7 White can accomplish what he wants and he develops his pieces to their optimal places. 13.♖d3 0–0 14.♜bd2 f6 with a complicated position.) 13.a4 (It is worse for White to play here 13.♖d3, because of the possibility 13...♗c7 14.♗e3 ♗c2 15.♙d3 ♜c4!) 13...0–0 14.♜bd2 f6 and the future developments will be quite interesting.

8...♟f5 9.♙e3

White is ready to part with his dark-squared bishop. Black must exploit this possibility cleverly, though...

9...f6

I remember here an old cliché – “You must inflict a strike against your opponent’s centre from the flank!”



10.exf6

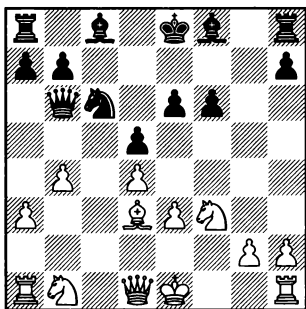
There arises a well-familiar draw after 10.b5 ♜xe5 11.dxe5 ♜xe3 12.fxe3 ♗xe3+ 13.♗e2 ♗c1+ 14.♗d1 ♗e3+ (It does not look like Black has serious arguments to continue the fight here. He can still try, though... 14...

♖b2 15.♜bd2 fxe5 16.♗b1 ♗xa3 17.♜xe5 ♗e3+ 18.♗e2 ♗c3, but I would prefer White’s position at the end.) 15.♗e2= Romanishin – Lputian, Yerevan 1988.

10.♙d3 – This is a very interesting move and it creates complex problems for Black. 10...♜xe3 11.fxe3 fxe5 12.b5 ♜xd4! This is a key counter strike and Black’s defence is based on it. 13.exd4 e4 14.♙xe4 dxe4 15.♜e5 ♙d7. The best thing in a situation like this is to continue calmly your development. (Black can also enter an approximately equal endgame with 15...♗a5+ 16.♖d2 – 16.♜d2?! ♗c3 17.♗c1 ♗e3+ 18.♗e2 ♗xe2+ 19.♜xe2 ♙xa3 and he will remain with an extra pawn – 16...♗xd2+ 17.♜xd2 ♙d7 18.♜xd7 ♜xd7 19.♜xe4=; 18.a4 a6 19.b6 ♙d6 20.♜xe4 ♙xe5 21.dxe5 0–0 22.♜d6 ♙c6, but Black may have some problems at the end of this line. It seems rather artificial for him to choose 15...g6? 16.0–0 ♙g7 17.♜h1 ♙xe5 18.dxe5 ♗xb5 19.♜d2→) 16.0–0 (White cannot create any difficulties for his opponent with the simple line: 16.♜xd7 ♜xd7 17.0–0 – 17.♜d2? ♗xd4 18.♜xe4 ♗xd1+ 19.♗xd1+ ♜e8 – 17...♗d8 18.♜c3 ♜c8 and although Black has wasted three moves for castling, instead of one, he is still better.) 16...0–0–0 17.♜c3 ♙e8! (The brave move 17...♙c5 was tested in the game Potkin – Filippov, Togliatti 2003.). White must find new objects for attack; otherwise,

Black's bishop-pair and his extra pawn may quickly become the decisive factors. 18.♖e2 ♘b8 19.♖b1 ♗d5 20.♖c4 ♗c7. In the book of E.Sveshnikov "Win against the French Defence" (Moscow, 2005) this position was evaluated as +/- . I disagree categorically with this opinion! 21.♖c1 ♗xb5 22.♖e3 ♗d7 23.♖xd5 exd5 and in this position, with imbalanced material ratio, I would even prefer Black.

10...gxf6 11.♗d3 ♖xe3
12.fxex3



His pawn-structure is a bit brittle, but this is compensated by his two powerful bishops. His dark-squared bishop has no opponent and may become a monster.

12...♗h6 13.♗e2

White should better avoid coming under the "x-ray" – 13.♗d2 a5 14.b5 ♖e7 15.♖c3 e5 and his centre is about to crumble altogether.

13...♗d7 14.♖c3

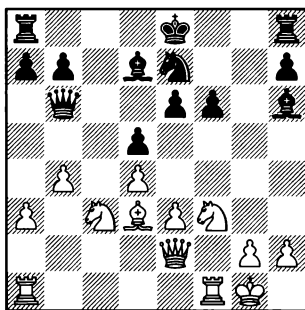
In case White has already read this book and he tries to change

cleverly the move-order – you should not panic. 14.0–0 0–0–0 (The routine move 14...♖e7 can be countered by White with the rather unpleasant response 15.♖fd2.) 15.b5 ♖a5!??. This is the fine point – Black's knight is not forced now to retreat to the a7-square.

14...♖e7 15.0–0

This is again quite logical. White mobilizes his forces in the most natural fashion. The tricky move 15.♖d2 is harmless for Black. For example: 15...0–0–0 16.0–0 e5 17.♖b3 ♖hg8 18.♗h1 e4 19.♗b5 ♗g4??

If White insists on preventing his opponent from castling long, Black can castle short. 15.♖c1 0–0 16.0–0 e5! This is an important moment. This pawn-break is even stronger now, when White's rook is on c1. 17.♗b1 e4 18.♖d2 (18.♖h4 ♖ac8) 18...♗a6 19.♖f1 ♗xe2 20.♖xe2 ♖fc8 with a very complicated and double-edged end-game.



15...0–0–0!?

3.e5 c5 4.c3 ♖b6 5.♟f3 ♜c6 6.a3 ♜h6 7.b4 cxd4 8.cxd4 ♟f5 9.♙e3

Black does not wish to solve the problem with the safety of his king on its usual flank and he evacuates his monarch to the queenside.

Still, it seems more natural for him to play 15...0-0 16.♟h1 ♜ac8 with mutual chances, Morozevich – Bareev, Monaco 2002.

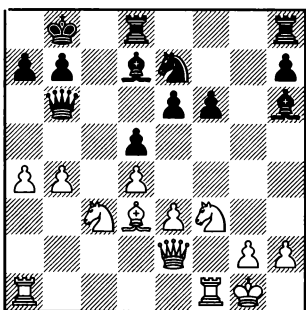
16.a4

There is no more resolute reaction for White than a direct pawn-assault.

He may try something different too – 16.b5 ♟b8 17.♟a4 ♖d6 18.♟c5 ♙c8 with a complicated position (or 18...e5!? 19.♟xd7+ ♜xd7 20.dxe5 fxe5 21.e4 d4).

16...♟b8

Black should better avoid accepting gifts – 16...♖xb4?! 17.♜fb1 ♖d6 18.♟b5 ♙xb5 19.axb5 ♟b8 20.b6 axb6 21.♖a2 and White has a wonderful compensation for the sacrificed pawns.



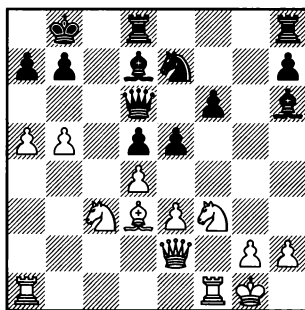
17.b5

He has no time for preparatory moves any more.

For example: 17.♜ab1 e5 18.a5 ♖c7! I believe Black has an excellent position even without his last precise move. Still, he must exploit this wonderful possibility. 19.♜fc1 ♖d6 and surprisingly, it turns out that White's rook on c1 is much rather a liability in his position than strength. The game may develop later in the following fashion: 20.♟b5 ♙xb5 21.♙xb5 ♟f5 22.♜c3 ♜c8 23.♜cb3 ♜hg8 24.a6 e4 25.♟e1 ♙f4!!-+

Black can counter the move 17.♟b5, which was played in the game Yagupov – Lastin, Orel 1992, with the quite effective counter strike 17...♟f5!

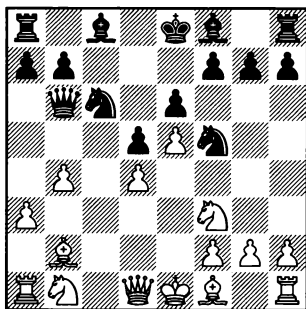
17...♖d6 18.a5 e5



There will be a fierce fight ahead and the chances of both sides are about equal.

Chapter 9

1.e4 e6 2.d4 d5 3.e5 c5 4.c3 ♖b6 5.♠f3
 ♜c6 6.a3 ♜h6 7.b4 cxd4 8.cxd4 ♠f5
 9.♙b2



This is no doubt a much more natural development of this bishop than on the e3-square. It has its drawbacks though and one of them is the existing “x-ray” with the enemy queen along the b-file.

9...♙d7 10.g4

This is more or less forced.

White has an alternative and that is 10.h4, but Black will have no problems after 10...h5 11.g3 ♜c8 12.♙h3 a5 (It deserves attention for him to try here 12...g6.) 13.0-0 axb4 14.axb4 ♙e7! (It is weaker for Black to play 14...♜h6?!, which was tested in the game Yemelin – Gorovyykh, St Petersburg 2007, but he can choose instead 14...♙xb4.) 15.♙xf5 exf5 16.♜c3 ♜xb4 – this is the idea

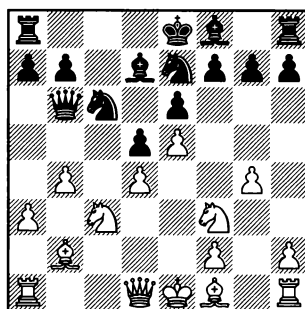
behind Black’s modest looking move 14, to capture on b4 with the knight. It looks like he has a good position.

10...♠fe7

Now, his knight is headed for another route. The targets are the vulnerable f4 and h4-squares.

It is less principled for Black, but still quite playable, to continue with 10...♜h6 11.h3 (It would be worse for White to leave his king in the centre with 11.♙g1 f6 12.exf6 gxf6 13.♜c3 ♠f7 14.♜a4 ♖c7 15.♙c1 ♖f4 and Black has obtained good counter chances, Short – Lputian, Batumi 1999.) 11...f6 12.exf6 gxf6 13.♜c3 ♠f7 Shirov – Berg, Tallinn 2006.

11.♜c3



3.e5 c5 4.c3 ♖b6 5.♟f3 ♘c6 6.a3 ♘h6 7.b4 cxd4 8.cxd4 ♟f5 9.♙b2

11...♟a5!

This key-maneuver is an essential part of his strategy.

It is positionally justified, but rather passive for Black to opt for 11...h5 12.♟a4 ♖d8 13.♟c5 ♙c8 14.g5 and his lack of space will hurt him.

12.♟d2

White cannot allow his opponent's knight to come to c4.

He achieves nothing with the more natural line: 12.♖c2 ♟c4 13.♙xc4 dxc4 14.♟d2 ♖c6 15.♟ce4 and here Black can choose between a forced draw and playing a position without a pawn, but with excellent prospects. 15...c3!? (15...♟c8 16.♟xc4 b5!?) 16.♟d6+ (After 16.♖xc3 ♟d5, the missing pawn is practically immaterial.) 16...♙d8 17.♟xf7+ ♙e8 18.♟d6+ ♙d8= Sveshnikov – Radjabov, Tallinn 2004.

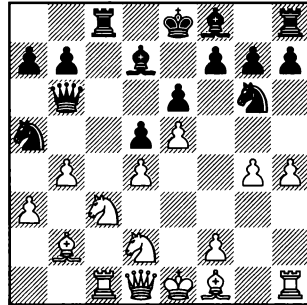
12...♞c8 13.♞c1 ♟g6

Black's plan has been corrected a bit. Now, it has become evident that his attack against the d4-pawn has failed, but White has so many vulnerable squares in his camp that Black can be an optimist for the future.

14.h4

Alexander Motylev tried here a queen-maneuver, which seems a bit slow – 14. ♖e2 ♙e7 15. ♖e3 0–0 (15...♟h4!?) 16.h4 f6 17.h5 ♟h8 18.♞c2 ♟c6 19.♟a4 ♖d8 20.exf6 ♙xf6 21.♟c5 e5 and White's king came under attack, Motylev – Ponomariov, Khanty-Mansiysk 2005.

It would be too straightforward for him to opt for 14.♙a1?! ♟c4 15.♟xc4 dxc4 16.♟e4 a5 with powerful pressure for Black.



14...♙e7

It deserves some attention for him to try the blocking idea 14...h5!? 15.gxh5 ♟f4 (After 15...♟e7?! 16.♙d3 – Black has neither a pawn, nor compensation, since it would be bad for him to continue with 16...♖xd4 17.♟b5!) 16.♖f3 (In case of 16.♞c2, Black has the resource 16...♟c4 17.♟xc4 ♞xc4! 18.♞d2 (Or 18.♙xc4 dxc4 with a good game for the sacrificed exchange.) 18...♞c8 with counterplay.) 16...♟xh5 17.♙d3 (It is also possible for White to try the more forced line: 17.♞c2 ♟c6 18.♟a4 ♖d8 19.♟c5 ♙xc5 20.bxc5 ♖a5 entering a position, which has not been analyzed extensively yet.) 17...g6 18.♞c2 ♟c6 19.♟a4 ♖d8 20.♟c5 ♙xc5 21.dxc5. It looks like White can still hope to obtain some edge, but Black has his counter chances.

15.g5

He blocks successfully his opponent's pawns after 15.h5 ♖f4 16.♟f3 ♙g5.

15...0-0

Black has tried in practice 15...h5 16.gxh6 ♜xh6 17.h5 ♖h4?! (It seems that the computer recommendation is stronger here – 17...♙g5 18.♞c2 (White has an interesting alternative – 18.♙g1, but Black is likely to hold the position after 18...♙xd2+ 19.♟xd2 ♖b3 20.♟d1 ♖xc1 21.hxg6 ♜xg6 22.♜xg6 fxg6 23.♟xc1 ♟xd4 24.♟e3 ♟xe3+ 25.fxe3 ♗e7 with a complicated endgame.) 18...♙xd2+ 19.♞xd2 ♖c4 20.♙xc4 ♜xc4 21.♙g1 ♖f4 22.♜xg7 ♜xh5 23.♟f3 and the fearless computer programme Rybka considers that in the complications after 23...♜xd4 24.♖xd5 ♜xd5 25.♜xd5 ♟c6, Black makes a draw by a perpetual.) 18.♟g4 ♖f5 19.♙d3 ♙f8 and White had a powerful initiative in the game Grischuk – Radjabov, Wijk an Zee 2003.

16.♟g4

White exerts positional pressing all over the entire board and he forces his opponent to part temporarily with some material. It would not be in the spirit of the position for him to opt for 16.♖e2?! ♟fd8 17.h5 ♖f8 and Black's position is quite acceptable, Shirov – Gurevich, Khanty-Mansiysk 2005.

16...♙xb4

This is the only move for him, because he should not enter the

position arising after 16...♟fd8 17.h5 ♖f8.

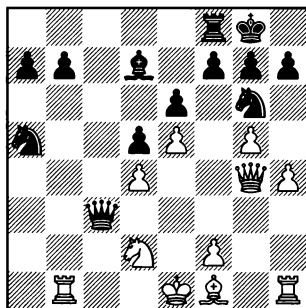
17.axb4 ♟xb4 18.♞b1

It is only a transposition of moves following 18.♙a1 ♟a3 (I do not think it is worth trying here for Black 18...♖xe5 19.♟g3 ♟a3 20.♞b1 ♖ec4 21.♙xc4 ♖xc4 22.♖xc4 ♜xc4 23.0-0; 23.h5!?) 19.♞b1 (19.♟d1?? ♙a4--+) 19...♜xc3 20.♙xc3 ♟xc3.

18...♜xc3

It is again bad for him to opt for 18...♖xe5? 19.♟g3 ♖ec4 20.♙c1 ♟e7 21.♙xc4 dxc4 22.♖ce4!

19.♙xc3 ♟xc3



Black can be happy, concerning the material ratio, but White's kingside offensive seems very dangerous.

20.♞h3

He should better not be in a hurry 20.h5 ♖e7 21.h6? ♖f5!

White should not play passively – 20.♙e2? ♖c4 21.♙xc4 dxc4 22.h5 ♖e7 23.♞h3 ♟a5 24.♜xb7 ♙c6 25.♜xe7 c3 26.♟d1 ♟a3! 27.♜xc3 ♟xc3 with an advantage for Black.

20...♟c7 21.♙d3

3.e5 c5 4.c3 ♖b6 5.♟f3 ♞c6 6.a3 ♞h6 7.b4 cxd4 8.cxd4 ♟f5 9.♙b2

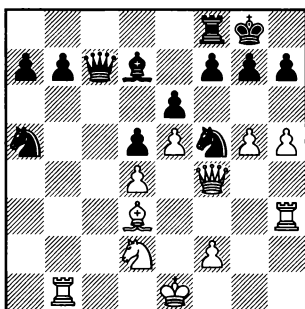
White can hardly continue the game without this move. He can try indeed, but this will only present Black with additional possibilities. 21.h5 ♞e7 22.h6 g6 23. ♖f3 ♟f5 24.♙d3 ♙a4!? 25.♟f1 ♙c2 26.♙xc2 ♖xc2 27.♖d3 (It is more ambitious for White to play 27. ♖c3 ♖xc3 28.♙xc3 ♞xd4 29.♙c7 a6, but Black has three extra pawns after all...) 27...♖c7 and the situation is again completely unclear.

21...♞e7 22.h5

In reply to 22.♖f4, as it was played in the game Solodovnikhenko – Del Rio Angelis, Spain 2006, Black must continue with 22...f5!? 23.gxf6 ♙xf6 24.♖g5 (Or 24.♖g4 ♟f7 25.♙f3 ♟f5 with counter chances for him.) 24...♟f7 25. h5 h6 26.♖g4 ♞ac6 with a very interesting developments to follow.

22...♟f5 23.♖f4

We have already analyzed the position, arising after 23.h6!? g6 24.♖f3 ♙a4!



23...♞c6

There are some other moves possible for Black, but they are very risky.

For example, it seems very dangerous for him to choose 23...♞c4?! 24.♙xf5 exf5 25.h6 g6 26.♞xc4 dxc4 27.d5 and despite the fact that Black wins a pawn after 27...♙e8, the endgame, arising soon, will be tremendously difficult for him. For example: 28.♖d4 (28.♙e3? ♖a5+) 28...♖xe5+ 29. ♖xe5 ♙xe5+ 30.♙e3 ♙xe3+ 31.fxe3 b6 32.♟d2 f6 33.gxf6 ♟f7 34.♙c1 ♙b5 35.♙a1 a6 36.e4 ♟xf6 37.exf5 gxf5 38.♟c3±

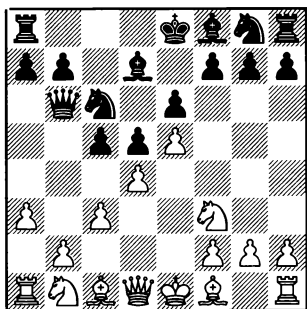
It deserves attention for Black to continue with 23...b5 (23... ♙c8!?) 24.♙xf5 exf5 25.g6!? and here after the cold-blooded response 25...h6, he maintains the material balance (It would be too risky for him to try instead 25... fxf6?! 26.hxg6 hxg6 27.♖h2 ♙c8 28.♙a1 and Black's hanging knight on a5 spells serious trouble for him. It is hardly good for him too to opt for 25...♞c4 26.♞xc4 bxc4 27.gxf7+ ♙xf7 28. ♙a3 and White has the initiative.)

24.♙xf5 exf5 25.g6 fxf6 26.hxg6 h6 27.♟f3 ♞d8 – Black obtained a good position and he prevailed later in the game Fluvia Poyatos – Gonzales Garcia, Badalona 2005.

Chapter 10 **1.e4 e6 2.d4 d5 3.e5 c5 4.c3 ♖b6**
5.♟f3 ♜c6 6.a3 ♞d7

I believe it is always useful to have the so-called “reserve air-field”, if not in all the variations, but at least in the main line. I suggest to you below that you had a look at some other possibilities for Black in reply to the system with 6. a3.

1.e4 e6 2.d4 d5 3.e5 c5 4.c3 ♖b6 5.♟f3 ♜c6 6.a3 ♞d7



This is a universally useful move in the closed French defence. It is nearly impossible to choose a line in which the d7-square would not be reasonable for Black’s bishop. The development of the fight is entirely different after 6...c4! There arise closed positions, which are not to

everybody’s liking, but that move has its logic, in its chess aspects as well as in purely competitive sense. Black reduces the tension in the centre, but he occupies space on the queenside, fixing the weak b3-square in the process. The game develops much rather according to schemes and plans and not so much depending on concrete variations. It becomes essential to maneuver skilfully, to prevent your opponent’s ideas and to accomplish your plans. The games we quote below are simply the most typical illustrations of the play in this pawn-structure and not some axiomatic rules about how to act.

My own **conclusions**, concerning this variation in short are the following:

1. Black should better avoid exchanging light pieces, with the exception of the light-squared bishops.
2. The exchange of queens however, is favourable for him, because then he can advance his queenside pawns much more comfortably.

3. Black must try to combine his play on the queenside with counterplay on the kingside as well, since he may be squeezed if he does not do that. 7.♟bd2 ♚a5 (7...♟ge7? 8.♙xc4! dxc4 9.♟xc4±; 7...♙d7?! 8.b3 cxb3 9.♟xb3 ♚a5 10.♟xa5 ♖xa5 11.♙d2 ♚e7 12.♙d3 ♖c7 13.0-0 h6 14.♟h4 with initiative for White, Motylev – Hort, Essent 2003.) and here:

8.h4 ♙d7 9.h5 f5 10.♖b1 ♟h6 11.♙e2 ♙e7 12.0-0 ♖c8 13.♖e1 ♟f7 14.♖c2 ♖c7 15.♟h2 g5 16.♟hf1 g4 17.♟e3 ♟g5 and Black realized his enormous space advantage, Shabalov – Akobian, Philadelphia 2004;

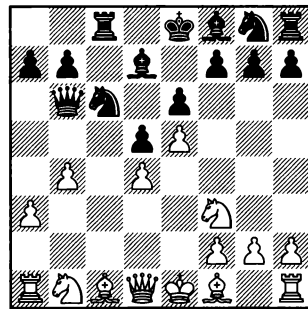
8.♙e2 ♙d7 9.0-0 ♚e7 10.♖e1 (10.♖b1 ♖c7 11.♖e1 ♜c8 12.♟f1 ♚b6 13.♙f4 ♚b3 14.♟3d2 ♚a5 15.♟g3 ♙a4 16.♖c1 0-0-0 17.♟h5 ♚b8 18.♟f3 ♙b3 19.♟d2 ♙a4= Ni Hua – Bareev, Beijing 2003.) 10...f5 11.exf6 gxf6 12.♖b1 0-0-0 13.b4 cxb3 14.♟xb3 ♙a4 15.♟fd2 ♙h6 with a good position for Black, Klimov – Vysochin, St Petersburg 2008;

8.g3 ♙d7 9.h4 ♙e7 (9...0-0-0 10.h5 ♟h6 11.♙h3 f6 12.♖e2 ♟f7 13.0-0 f5 14.♟h2 g6 15.f4 ♙e7 16.g4 g5 17.♙g2 gxf4 18.gxf5 exf5 19.♙xd5 ♖hg8+ 20.♟h1 ♙e6 21.♙xe6+ ♖xe6 22.♟df3 ♚b3 23.♖b1 ♟xc1 24.♖bxc1 ♖c6 25. ♖g1 ♟g5 26.♖g2 ♚e4 27.♟g1 ♖d5 28. ♟f1 ♖xg2+ 29.♟xg2 ♖g8+ 30. ♟h1 ♙h4 31.♟h2 ♙f2 32.♖c2 ♖f7 33.♟3d2 ♙g1+ 0-1 Maslak – As-

rian, Moscow 2007.) 10.♙h3 f5 11.exf6 gxf6 12.0-0 h5 13.♖e1 ♟h6 14.♟h2 0-0-0 15.♖xh5 ♖dg8 16.♖e2 f5 17.♟df3 ♚b3 18.♙hx6 (Or 18.♖b1 ♟xc1 19.♖bxc1 f4 20. g4 ♟f5 and Black's initiative compensates the sacrificed pawn with interest.) 18...♖xh6 19.♖ad1 ♙hx4 20.♟hx4 ♖xh4 21.♙g2 ♖h7 22.♟f3 ♚a5 23.♖d2 ♖d6 24.♟e5 ♙a4 25. ♖b1 ♜c6 with approximate equality, Grischuk – Korchnoi, Biel 2001.

7.b4 cxd4 8.cxd4 ♖c8

Black has delayed maximally the development of his knight on g8, acting only on the queenside.



9.♙b2

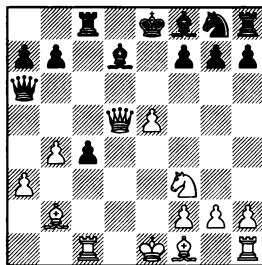
It seems to me that in this case White must consider the possibility to develop his bishop to a more active position – 9.♙e3 ♟h6 10.♙d3 ♟g4 11.0-0 ♙e7 12.♟bd2 ♟xe3 (It is weaker for Black to play 12...0-0?! 13.♟b3 ♟xe3 14. fxe3 ♖d8 15.♜c5 b6 16.♟xd7 ♖xd7 17.♖c1 with pressure for White.) 13.fxe3 ♚b8 14.♖e2 ♙a4 15.♖ac1

♖xc1 16.♗xc1 0–0 with equality, Areshchenko – Paehtz, Gibraltar 2008.

We have already seen numerous times that the development of White's bishop on e2 would not bring him any dividends: 9.♗e2 ♘ge7 (9...a5!? 10.b5 ♘xd4 11.♘xd4 ♖xc1 12.♗xc1 ♗xd4 A. Nikitin) 10.0–0 ♖f5 11.♗b2 ♗e7 12.♗d2 0–0 13.♗d1 f6 14.♘c3 fxe5 15.dxe5 ♗e8 16.♖ac1 ♗h5 17.♘a4 ♗d8 18.♘c5 ♗xc5 19.♖xc5 ♘h4 and Black's prospects are not worse, Sveshnikov – Lputian, Podolsk 1990.

9...♘h6

9...♘a5!? This is a very aggressive move. It looks like Black has forgotten about the existence of his kingside. White cannot punish him so easily for this, though...10. ♘bd2 ♘c4 11.♘xc4 (Or 11.♗xc4?! dxc4 12.♖c1 ♗a6 13.♘e4 ♗c6 14.♘fd2 ♗d5 15.0–0 ♘h6 16.♗e2 ♘f5 17.g4 ♘h4 18.f4 h5 19.gxh5 ♘f5 with excellent counterplay on the light squares for Black, Atutobo – Fishbein, New York 1995.) 11...dxc4 12.♖c1 ♗a6 13.d5 This is the correct reaction. White must open the position in order to exploit the lag of development of Black's pieces. (It would be too risky for White to choose 13.♘d2?! b5 14.♘e4 ♗c6 15.♗g4 ♘h6 16.♘d6+ ♗d7 17.♗h5 ♗xd6 18.exd6 ♗d5 and he ended up a pawn down, Sveshnikov – Szymanski, Warsaw 2005.) 13...exd5 14.♗xd5



and now:

it seems too academic for Black to opt for 14...b5 15.♗e2 ♘e7 16.♗d2 ♗g6?!, he plays too optimistically. (He should better try here 16...♗d8!?) 17.0–0 ♗c6 and after the simple move 18.♗fd1!? Black will have great problems. For example, after 18...♘f5, White has the resource 19.♗xc4! bxc4 20.♖xc4 ♗e7 21.b5±. The game continued with 18.♗fe1?! ♘f5 19. ♗f4?! (19.g3!?) 19...♗e7 20.♗d1 ♘h4 and White was even worse at the end, Sepp – Yemelin, Tallinn 2009. It is amazing, but after the more active move 15.♗d1, White cannot obtain an advantage after an adequate defence by Black 15...♗c6 (He can also try 15...♗e6 with the following exemplary developments: 16.♗e4 ♘e7 17.♗e2 ♗c6 18.♗xc6+ ♘xc6 19.♘g5 and Black may have only minimal difficulties in this endgame.) 16.♗d4 (It is worse for White to continue with 16.♗d2 ♗e7 17.e6 ♗xf3!) 16... ♘h6 17.♗e2 ♗e7 18.e6 f6 19.0–0 0–0 and the position is very difficult to evaluate;

14...♘e7 – I believe Black must react in this fashion. It is a sin not

to use this tempo to develop his knight. 15.♗e4. This is the most popular reply. (Black's position is quite acceptable after 15.♗d4 ♙e6 16.♙e2 g6 17.♗f4 ♙g7 18.0-0 0-0. White's initiative ebbs gradually away in case of 15.♗d2 ♙e6 16.♙e2 ♟d8 17.♗g5 b5 18.0-0 h6 and the knight will open the way for the bishop on f8 with tempo. It would be too clever for White to choose 15.♗d6 ♘c6 16.♗d2 b5 17.♘g5 ♙f5 and Black ends up with a very solid position.) 15...b5 16.♙e2 (Or 16.♘d4 c3!? 17.♟xc3 ♟xc3 18.♙xc3 ♖xa3 19.♘d2 ♖a2+ 20.♘c1 g6 21.♘xb5 ♙h6+ 22.f4 0-0 and Black has a good compensation.) 16...♗g6 17.♗e3 ♙c6 with counterplay for him.

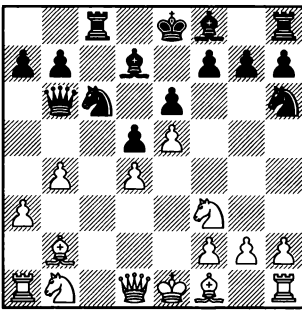
Now, it does not work for White to play 11.♘d2 ♘f5 12.♘a4 ♖c6 and the best that he has is the repetition of moves after 13.♘c3 (he would be even worse after 13.♘c5 ♘c4).

11...♖c6 12.♟c1

He relies on the quickest possible mobilization of forces.

It is too slow for White to continue with 12.♘c5 ♘c4 13.♙xc3 (13. ♙xc4 dxc4 14.0-0 ♗d5 15.♗e2 ♙c6 16.♟fe1 ♙e7 17.♟ac1 0-0 and Black is better, Korchnoi – Iruzubieta, Oviedo 1992.) 13...b6 14.♘xd7 ♖xd7 15.♙d3 ♘f5 16.0-0 and the opponents agreed to a draw, Predojevic – Vojinovic, Neum 2005.

12...♘c4 13.♙xc4 dxc4 14.♘c3



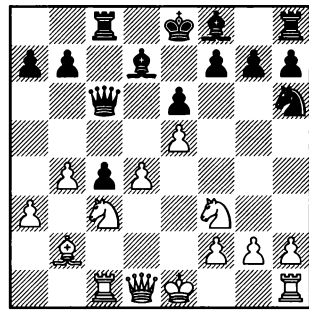
10.♘c3

It would be a banal loss of a tempo for White if he plays 10.♙d3 ♘a5 11.0-0 ♘c4 12.♙xc4 ♟xc4=

10...♘a5

We are already familiar with this motif.

11.♘a4



It is obvious that Black has statically an excellent position, so his main task is to complete the development of his forces without losing material if possible.

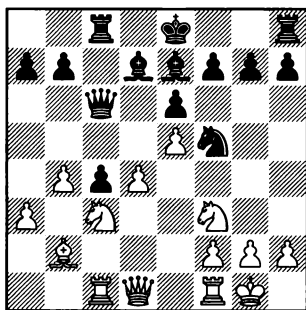
14...♘f5

He has a good alternative here – 14...♙e7!? 15.0-0 0-0 16.d5

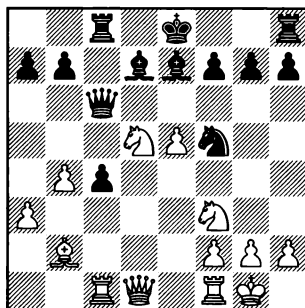
exd5 17. ♖d4 ♖g6 18. ♗xd5 ♘d8 with an interesting game to follow.

15.0-0 ♘e7

There may arise amusing developments after 15...b5!? 16. ♖d2 (White cannot change anything much with 16. ♖e2 ♘e7 17. ♗fd1 0-0 18.d5 exd5 19. ♗xd5 ♘d8 and the position is with mutual chances.) 16...♘e7 17.d5 (It would not make much sense for White to postpone d4-d5 – 17. ♗fd1 0-0 18. ♖f4 ♘d8=) 17...exd5 18. ♗xd5 ♘d8 19. ♗fd1 ♘e6 20. ♗e3 0-0 and Black obtains a very good position.



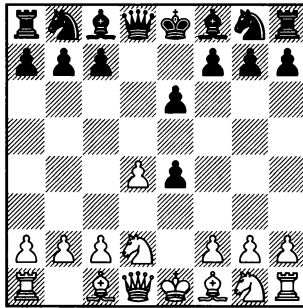
16.d5 exd5 17. ♗xd5 and in the game Khairullin – Dyachkov, Dagomys 2008, the opponents agreed to a draw.



We would like to continue this variation a bit: **17...♘d8!?** (It is weaker for Black to choose 17...♘e6?! 18. ♗xe7 ♗xe7 19. ♗d4 ♗xd4 20. ♖xd4 and White's initiative may be even enhanced by the presence of bishops of opposite colours on the board.) **18. ♖d2** (He cannot harm his opponent at all with the line: 18.g4 ♗h4 19. ♗xh4 ♘xh4 20. ♗e3 b5.) **18...0-0 19. ♗fd1 ♘e6** and Black has a good position.

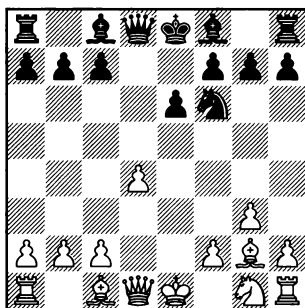
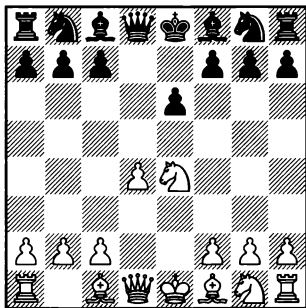
Part 3

The Rubinstein Variation 1.e4 e6 2.d4 d5 3.♘d2 dxe4



The Rubinstein variation takes a very special place in the theory of the French defence. At first, this is because it can arise both after 3.♘d2, as well as 3.♘c3. Secondly, there will be neither pawn-chains, so typical for the French defence, nor intricate pawn-structures. Black is playing simply to equalize and he reduces the tension in the centre beginning on move three. His plan may look primitive and it is quite simple, but maybe this is the reason it is also strong. The name of the great maestro, who began playing like this long ago, so the variation was named after him, was a recommendation even more eloquent than numerous grandmaster games.

Presently, chess players of various levels should have an opening repertoire including sharp schemes as well as some quite reliable and safe, despite being sometimes even a bit passive. The Rubinstein variation belongs definitely to the second group.



4...♘d7

Black plays sometimes 4...♘d7, but I consider this line to be too passive and slow. He cannot equalize for sure acting in that fashion. It may be possible for him to obtain only a bit worse, but very solid position difficult to crack. This approach is applicable in practical games, but in my analytical endeavour I have chosen another more classical line.

5.g3

At the beginning of the 21st century, this slightly unnatural move was very fashionable for a while, but then Black found a way to counter it successfully and its popularity gradually ebbed away.

5...♘gf6 6.♘xf6+ ♘xf6 7.♗g2

7...e5!

White's control over the centre is not so firm at the moment and Black exploits this equalizing out-right.

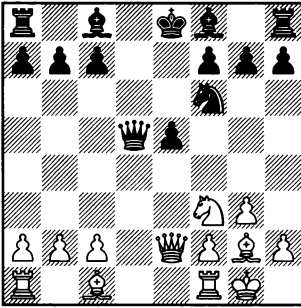
8.♖e2

He has no problems after 8.♘f3 exd4 9.0-0 ♗e7 10.♞e1 0-0 11.♞xd4 c6 12.♗f4 ♞xd4 13.♘xd4 ♞e8=, or even 8...e4!? 9.♘e5 ♗d6 10.0-0 0-0 11.♗f4 c5∞ with an unclear position.

8...♞xd4 9.♘f3 ♞d5

In reply to the rather artificial move 9...♞e4, White has the resource 10.♞xe4 ♘xe4 11.♘xe5 ♘c5 12.0-0 f6 13.♘c6! and Black must still prove that he has equalized.

10.0-0

**10...e4!**

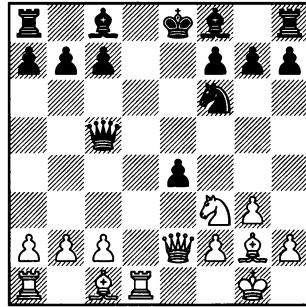
This is the principled and precise move for him.

He has also tried in practice 10...♗d6 11.♞e1 ♗g4 12.c4 (Black equalizes easily after 12.h3?! ♗xf3 13.♗xf3 e4=) 12...♝c6 13.♝d3 e4 14.♘g5 0-0-0 15.♝b3 ♗e6 16.♘xe4 (White cannot obtain any advantage in case of 16.♘xe6 fxe6 17.♗g5 ♗c5.) 16...♗xc4 17.♘xf6 ♗xb3 18.♗xc6 ♗e6 19.♘h5 bxc6 20.♘xg7 ♗d7, Black's bishop-pair compensates fully his disrupted pawn-structure.

It would be interesting for White to opt for 11.♘xe5!? ♝xe5 12.♝xe5+ ♗xe5 13.♞e1 ♘g4 (It is weaker for Black to continue with 13...♗e6 14.♗xb7?! ♞b8 15.♗c6+ ♗e7 16.♞xe5 ♘d6! 17.♞xe6+ fxe6=; 14.♞xe5! 0-0-0 15.♗f4 and White has obtained the two-bishop advantage for nothing.) 14. f4 ♗e6 15.fxe5 0-0-0 16.h3 ♘h6 17.♗g5 ♞d7 18.g4. This position looks very difficult for Black, but still, things are not so bad after all. 18...♘g8 19.♞ad1 h5 with some pressure for White.

11.♞d1

Black can hold successfully after 11.♘g5 ♗g4 12.♝e3 ♗f5 13.♞e1 ♗d6=

11...♝c5**12.h3!?**

This is a quiet purposeful move.

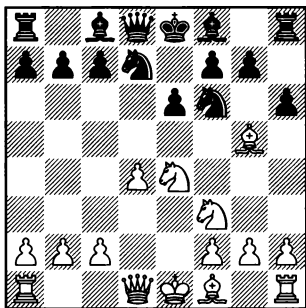
White's attempt to break his opponent's position outright would not work after: 12.♗g5 ♗e6 13.♗xf6 exf3 14.♝xf3 gxf6 15.♝xb7 ♞c8 16.♞e1 ♘d8. Black has an extra piece and a quite defensible position.

It would be a banal blunder for White to play 12.♗e3? exf3 13.♗xf3 ♝e5+.

The position will be devoid of resources after 12.♞e1 ♗g4 13.h3 ♗xf3 14.♗xf3 0-0-0 15.♗xe4 ♘xe4 16.♝xe4 ♝d5! =

12...♗d6 13.♘g5 0-0 14.♘xe4 ♘xe4 15.♝xe4 ♗f5! 16.♗e3 ♗xe4 17.♗xc5. Now, the only real problem for Black is to choose in what fashion to equalize. **17...♗xc5** (17...♗xg2 18.♗xd6 ♗f3 19.♞d3 ♞fd8 20.♗xc7 ♞xd3 21.cxd3=) **18.♗xe4 ♞ae8=**

Chapter 12 **1.e4 e6 2.d4 d5 3.♘d2 dxe4 4.♗xe4
♘d7 5.♗f3 ♘gf6 6.♙g5 h6**

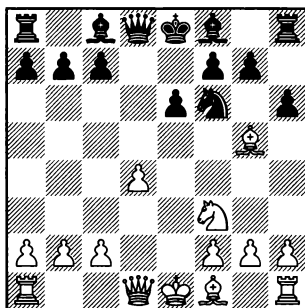


7.♗xf6+

7.♙h4!? This is an interesting possibility for White. He postpones the exchange on f6, with the idea to exploit the fact that Black's knight on d7 stands in the way of his other pieces. 7...♙e7 (White can counter 7...c5, with 8.c3 ♖a5 (After 8...cxd4, he replies with the simple move 9.♗xd4.) 9.♗xf6+ ♗xf6 10.♙xf6 gxf6 11.d5 ♙d7 12.dxe6 fxe6 13.♙c4 0-0-0 14.♗e2 ♗b6 15.0-0-0 ♙d6 16.♗b1 ♗b8 17.♖he1 ♖he8 18.♗e3 ♙f8 19.♗h4 ♙c8 20.♗g6 and Black will have problems protecting all his weaknesses, Gashimov – Illescas Cordoba, Lugo 2009.) 8.♗xf6+ ♙xf6. Without the inclusion of the moves h6-♙h4, White would have the

move h4, which is considered to be the most aggressive and dangerous for Black in this position. Now, the situation is more favourable for him. 9.♙xf6 ♗xf6 (9...♗xf6!? 10.♙d3 0-0 11.♗e2 c5 12.0-0-0 cxd4 13.♗e5 ♙d7 14.♗xd4 ♖c8 15.f3 ♗c7= Leko – Anand, Monte Carlo 2001.) 10.♗e2 0-0 11. 0-0-0 ♙d8 12.♗e4 ♗e7 13.♗e5 c5 (After 13...♗f6 14.♗f3 a5 15.♙c4 ♗d5 16.h4 ♗f6 17.♗e2 b6 18.♗g4 ♗f4+ 19.♗b1 ♙b7 20.g3 ♗d6, Black was slightly worse in the game Kurnosov – Lysyj, Rijeka 2010.) 14.♙c4 ♗f6 15.♗e3 cxd4 16.♗xd4 ♖xd4 17.♗xd4 ♙d7 18.♙d1 ♙e8 19.g4 ♖c8 20.h4 ♗c5= Kurnosov – Grachev, Rijeka 2010.

7...♗xf6



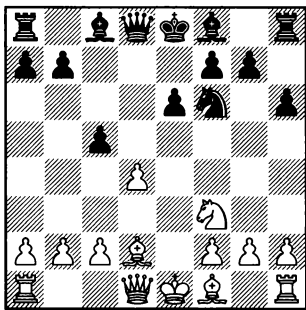
4. ♖xe4 ♜d7 5. ♜f3 ♜gf6 6. ♙g5 h6

Before we deal with White's principled response 8. ♙h4, we will analyze: a) 8. ♙d2, b) 8. ♙xf6 and c) 8. ♙e3.

a) 8. ♙d2

White plans to attack the target on h6. This is not so dangerous for Black, though...

8...c5



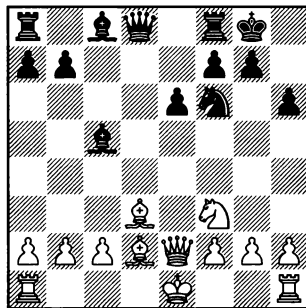
9. dxc5

It is weaker for White to opt for 9. ♙d3 cxd4 10. ♖e2 a6 (10... ♙e7!? 11. 0-0-0 0-0 and he is forced to play 12. ♙f4, which is indicative enough.) 11. 0-0-0 ♙c5 12. ♜e5 ♖c7 13. f4 ♜d5 14. ♞df1 ♜e3 15. ♞f3 b5 16. ♞g3 g5 17. ♞h5 ♞f8 18. ♙xe3 dxe3 19. ♞f1 e2 20. ♙xe2 ♙b7 21. ♜d3 ♙d6 22. ♞xh6 ♞c8 with wild complications, Dworakowska – Zhukova, New Delhi 2000.

Black obtains a good position after 9...a6 10. ♖e2 b5 11. dxc5 ♙xc5 12. 0-0-0 ♖c7 13. ♙c3 ♙b7 14. ♙e5 ♖b6 15. ♙xf6 gxf6 16. ♙e4 ♞d8 17. ♙xb7 ♖xb7 18. ♞xd8+ ♜xd8 19. ♞d1+ ♜e7 20. ♜e1 ♞d8

21. ♜d3 ♙b6 22. f4= Bologan – Komarov, Reggio Emilia 1997.

9... ♙xc5 10. ♙d3 0-0 11. ♖e2



11...e5!

This is a standard resource for Black. This pawn goes forward as a spearhead in order to free the way for the rest of his pieces.

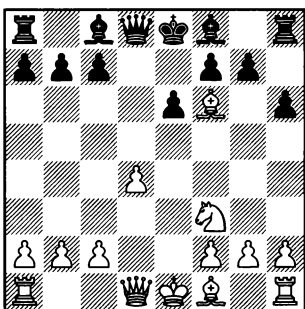
It is hardly advisable for him to opt for 11... ♖d5 12. c4 ♖c6 13. ♙c3 e5 14. ♜xe5 ♖xg2 15. 0-0-0 ♞e8 16. ♞df1 ♙h3 17. ♞hg1 ♖xh2 18. ♖f3 and White had the advantage in the game Khalifman – Dreev, Yalta 1995.

12. 0-0-0 ♞e8 13. ♙c3

After 13. ♙b5 ♙d7 14. ♙xd7 ♖xd7 15. ♙e3 ♙xe3+ 16. ♖xe3 ♖a4 17. ♜b1 ♞ac8 18. ♖b3 ♖xb3 19. axb3 ♜g4 20. ♞d2 e4 ♣ Black's position is preferable, Bologan – Dokhoian, Germany 1993.

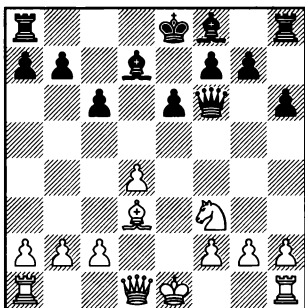
13... ♖b6! 14. ♜xe5 ♙e6 15. f4 ♙e3+ 16. ♙d2 ♙d4 17. c3 ♙g4 18. ♜xg4 ♞xe2 19. ♜xf6+ ♙xf6 20. ♙xe2 ♖e6! with an advantage for Black, A. Fedorov – Supatashvili, Ekaterinburg 1997.

b) 8. ♟xf6



This variation is a bit similar to the Moscow variation (1.d4 d5 2.c4 c6 3.♘c3 ♘f6 4.♘f3 e6 5.♙g5 h6 6.♟xf6), but its popularity is diminishing lately. Its idea is simple and easily understandable. White is ready to give up his dark-squared bishop for the sake of the quickest possible development.

8... ♞xf6 9. ♙b5+ c6 10. ♙d3 ♙d7



11. $\text{♞e5!?$

This is the most unpleasant move for Black.

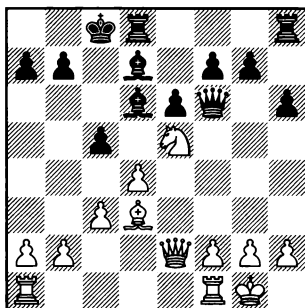
The position is swiftly simplified after 11.0-0 c5! 12.c3 cxd4

13.cxd4 ♙c6 14. ♞e5 ♙d6 15. ♞xc6 bxc6 16. ♞a4 0-0 17. ♞xc6 ♞xd4 18. ♞ad1 = Amonatov – Vorobiov, Moscow 2006.

White has also tried the tricky move 11.c3, but Black obtains an acceptable position in that case as well. 11... ♙d6 (The complications after 11...0-0-0 12.0-0 c5 13. ♞b3 ♙c6 14. ♞e5 ♙d5 15.c4 ♙xg2 16. ♞xg2 ♞xd4 are unclear and Black does not need to enter them, although his prospects there are not bad at all. 17.f4 ♙d6 18. ♞ae1 ♞xf4 19. ♞xf4 ♞xf4 ∞ Amonatov – Maslak, Moscow 2006.) 12. ♞e2 c5 13.0-0 cxd4 14.cxd4 ♞e7 15. ♞e5 ♙xe5 16.dxe5 ♙c6 17. ♙e4 ♙xe4 18. ♞xe4 0-0= Anand – Ivanchuk, Monte Carlo 2004.

It is a bit too solid for White to continue with 11. ♞e2 0-0-0 12.0-0-0 ♙d6 (12...c5!?) 13. ♞b1 ♞b8 14.a3 ♙c8 15. ♙e4 e5 16.dxe5 ♙xe5 17. ♞xe5 ♞xe5 18. ♙f3 ♞f6 19. ♞xd8 ♞xd8 20. ♙d1 = Vallejo Pons – Ivanchuk, Monte Carlo 2007.

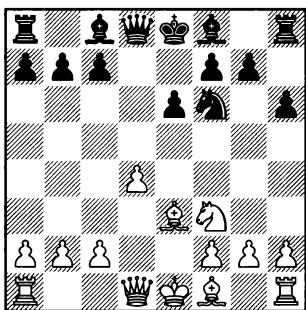
11... ♙d6 12. ♞e2 0-0-0 13.0-0 c5 14.c3



4. ♖xe4 ♘d7 5. ♘f3 ♘gf6 6. ♗g5 h6

14...♔b8. Black should not be in a hurry to trade the c-pawns. 15. ♖e3 ♗c8 16. ♖fd1 ♗c7 17. ♗e2 ♖d5 18. ♘g4 ♖g5 19. dxc5 ♖xc5 20. g3 h5 21. h4 ♖e7 22. b4 ♖f5 23. ♗d3 ♖d5 24. ♘h2 g5↑ and he had the initiative in the game Hracek – Lobron, Bad Wiessee 1999.

c) 8. ♗e3



The variation, which we are analyzing below can be reached with a black pawn on h7 as well. This should not influence the evaluation of the position so much, but we will deal with that possibility too – see 6. ♘xf6 ♘xf6 7. ♗e3.

8...♘d5 9. ♗d3

White relies on quick development. This strategical resource is quite popular and you can encounter it in numerous openings. One of the sides is ready to sacrifice some so-called static factors in the opening for the sake of quick development. It is crucial at the beginning of the game. He would be surely reluctant to do

that in the middle game, or the endgame.

Black achieves quickly the desired result after 9. ♖d2 ♗b4! This is an exquisite maneuver and its idea will become clear a bit later. 10. c3 ♗d6 11. ♗d3 (11.0–0–0 ♖e7 12. ♘e5 ♗xe5!? 13. dxe5 ♗d7 14. ♖d4 ♘xe3 15. ♖xe3 ♗c6 16. ♗d3 b6 17. ♗c2 ♖d8 18. ♖xd8+ ♖xd8 19. f4 ♖d5= Najer – A. Rychagov, Moscow 2008.) 11...♖e7 12.0–0–0 ♗d7 13. ♘e5 ♗a4! This is the point of Black's move nine. White's rook on d1 is very uncomfortable. 14. ♗c2, draw, Amonatov – Vitiugov, Krasnoyarsk 2007.

9. ♗d2 c5 and it is more or less similar to the developments after the immediate move 7. ♗e3 (Chapter 14, variation d). For example: 10. dxc5 ♗xc5 11. ♗d3 ♖c7 12. ♖e2 0–0 13.0–0–0 b5!? with a very complicated position.

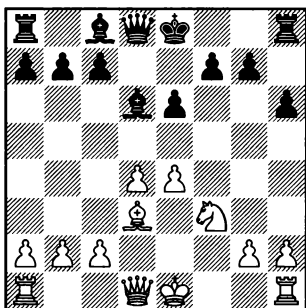
9...♘xe3 10. fxe3 ♗d6 11. e4

The tentative move 11. ♖e2 does not combine well with the loss of the dark-squared bishop on the previous move. 11...♖e7 12.0–0–0 e5 13. ♗c4 0–0 14. ♖f2 ♗g4 (Or 14...e4!? 15. ♘d2 c6, with an excellent game for Black.) 15. ♖hf1 ♖ae8 16. h3 ♗xf3 17. ♖xf3 exd4 18. exd4 ♖e3+ 19. ♖xe3 ♖xe3= Jenni – Pelletier, Zurich 2006.

(diagram)

11...c5!?

That is a rarely played move. Still, I believe that it will become much more popular in the forthcoming years.



Black will have to fight long and hard for a draw after 11...e5 12.dxe5 ♙c5 13.♙b5+ (But not 13.♙c4? ♜e7 14.♜d2 0–0 15. 0–0–0 c6 16.♞hf1 b5 17.♙b3 a5 18.a3 a4 19.♙a2 b4 20.axb4 a3 21.b3 ♙xb4 22.c3 ♙a5 23.b4 ♙c7 24.♞d4 ♜xe5 25.♞xc6 ♜e8 26. ♞d4 ♙g4 27.♞de1 ♙e5 and Black had a powerful attack in the game Nakamura – Akobian, San Francisco 2002.) 13...c6 14.♜xd8+ ♔xd8 15.♙c4 ♔e7 16.c3 (Or 16.a4 ♙e6 17.♙xe6 ♔xe6 18.♞d1 ♞hd8 19.♔e2 ♙b6 20.♞d3 ♞xd3 21.cxd3 ♞d8 22.♞c1 ♙d4 23.a5 a6 24.♞c4 ♙xe5 25.♞xe5 ♔xe5 and White failed to break Black's defence in the rook and pawn ending, Naiditsch – Akobian, Moscow 2009.) 16...♙e6 (After 16...♞d8 17.a4 a6 18.♔e2 ♙e6 19.♙xe6 ♔xe6 20. ♞hf1 ♞d7 21.♞ad1 ♞xd1 22.♞xd1 a5 23.♞e1 ♙g1 24.g3 ♙b6 25.♞d3 ♔e7 26.g4 ♞d8 27.♞f1 ♙c7 28.h4 ♞e8 29.h5 ♔f8 30.♞f5, White realized his advantage, Gashimov – Akobian, Caleta 2009.) 17.♙xe6 ♔xe6 18.♔e2 ♙b6 19.♞hf1 ♞hf8 20.♞ad1 ♞ad8 21.♞xd8 ♙xd8 22.

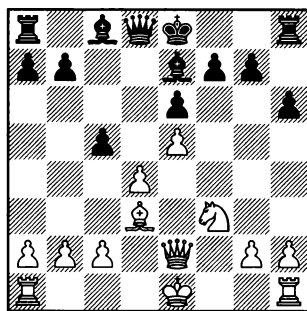
♞d1 ♙c7= Leko – Ivanchuk, Morelia/Linares 2007.

12.e5

Black should not be afraid of 12.d5 exd5 13.♙b5+ ♔e7! (It is also acceptable for him to follow with 13...♙d7 14.♙xd7+ ♜xd7 15.♜xd5 0–0–0 16.0–0 ♞he8=) 14.♜e2 (Or 14.0–0 a6! 15.♜xd5 axb5 16.♞e5 ♙xe5 17.♜xf7+ ♔d6 18.♜d5+ ♔c7 19.♜xc5+ ♔b8 20. ♜xe5+ ♜c7 and White's attack reaches its dead end.) 14...♜a5+ 15.♔f2 a6 16.exd5+ ♔d8 17.♙d3 c4! 18.♙xc4 ♜c5+ 19.♔f1 ♞e8 20. ♜d3 ♙f5! with a powerful initiative for Black.

12...♙e7 13.♜d2

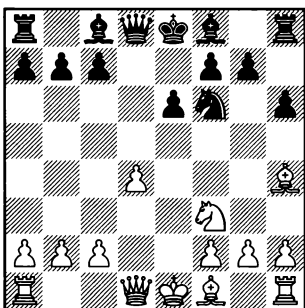
The situation remains more or less the same after 13.c3 ♙d7!?, or 13...cxd4 14.♞xd4 ♜d5!?



13...♙d7 (Black could have tried here 13...cxd4 as well.) 14. 0–0–0 ♙c6 15.♔b1 ♞c8 16. dxc5 ♙xc5 17.♜f4 ♜b6 18.♙e4 0–0 19.♙xc6 ♜xc6 and Black obtained an excellent position in the game Yu Shaoteng – Wang Hao, Cebu City 2007.

Chapter 13

1.e4 e6 2.d4 d5 3.♘d2 dxe4 4.♗xe4
 ♗d7 5.♗f3 ♗gf6 6.♙g5 h6 7.♗xf6+
 ♗xf6 8.♙h4



This retreat is much more principled than 8.♙e3. White keeps his opponent's knight on f6 pinned and he plans to preserve his kingside initiative.

8...c5

This is an energetic reply. White can counter it in about ten different ways, so Black must be prepared against all of them.

The alternative for him is – 8...♙e7. This move is more reliable, but it is a bit passive.

Here, White can choose between: **a) 9.dxc5**, **b) 9.♙c4**, **c) 9.♗e5**, **d) 9.♙b5**, **e) 9.c3**, **f) 9.♙e2** and **9.♙d3**.

It is hardly sensible for him to opt for 9.♙xf6 gxf6 10.♙e2

cx d4 11.♗xd4 ♙c5 12.♗b3 ♗xd1+
 13.♗xd1 ♙b6 14.♙f3 ♗b8 15.0–0
 ♙d7 16.♗d4 0–0 17.♗d2 ♗fd8
 18.♗fd1 ♙a4 19.b3 ♙e8= Huebner
 – Rivas Pastor, Manila 1992.

a) 9.dxc5!?

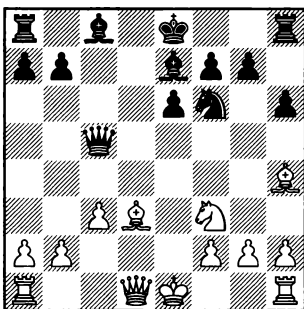
White solves the problems with one move.

9...♗a5+

Unfortunately, it is worse for Black to continue with 9...♗xd1+ 10.♗xd1 ♙xc5 11.♗e5 (It would be just a loss of time for White to play 11.♙b5+ ♗e7 12.♗e5 g5 13.♙g3 ♗e4 and Black equalizes. For example: 14.♙e2 ♙d6 15.♗xf7 ♙xg3 16.♗xh8 ♙xf2+ 17.♗f1 ♙b6 18.♙h5 ♗f2 19.♗e2 ♗xh1 20.♗xh1 ♙d7 21.♗g6+ ♗d6 22.♗d1+ ♗c7 23.♗e5 ♗d8=) 11...0–0 12.♙e2 ♗d5 13.♙f3 ♙b4+ 14.♗f1 f5 15.c4 ♗e7 16.♙xe7 ♙xe7 17.♗g6 ♗f7 18.♗xe7+ ♗xe7 19.♗d8+ ♗f7 20.♗e2 ♗c7 21.b3± Sivokho – Serov, St Petersburg 2008.

10.c3 ♗xc5 11.♙d3 ♙e7

The same position may arise after 8...♙e7 9.♙d3 c5 10. dxc5 ♗a5+ 11.c3 ♗xc5.



12.0-0

This is the classical set-up for White.

It would be more aggressive for him to opt for 12.♖e2 0-0 and then:

after 13.0-0-0, Black has the possibility to place his light-squared bishop on an active position. 13...♗d7 14.♘e5 ♗a4! (It is possible for him, but I believe more passive to try 14...♗c6.) 15.♗d2, Morozevich – Zvjaginsev, Moscow 2005 (do not think that Black has blundered his bishop – 15.♗xf6 ♗xf6 16.♖e4 ♗fc8! =) 15...♗fd8 16.f4 b5 17.g4 ♗ac8 with a very complicated and double-edged fight ahead.

13.♘e5 b6 (Black can also try 13...♗d6!?, for example: 14.♗g3 b6 15.0-0-0 ♗b7 16.♘d7 ♖g5+!, or 14.♘c4 ♗e7, freeing the d7-square for the bishop.) 14.0-0-0 ♗b7 15.♗xf6. This is obviously the only way for White to achieve something in the opening. (The quieter move 15.♗b1 leads to a complicated struggle: 15...♗ad8 16.f4 ♘d5?) 15...♗xf6 16.♘d7 ♖g5+ 17.♗c2

(17.♗b1!?) 17...♗fd8 18.♗e4 ♗d5!?

This interesting decision enables Black to equalize. 19.♘xf6+ and the opponents agreed to a draw in the game Sutovsky – Dolmatov, Moscow 2003.

12...0-0 13.♖e2 ♗d8 14.♗f1 b6 15.♘e5

The move 15.♗a6?! looks like a silent offer of a draw: 15...♘d5 16.♗xe7 ♘xe7 17.♗ad1 ♗xa6 18.♖xa6 ♘c6 19.♖e2 ♗ac8 20.h3= Leko – Bareev, Monte Carlo 2002.

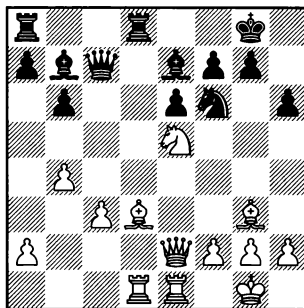
15...♗b7 16.♗ad1

Tactical strikes of the type 16.♘xf7 do not work, because of 16...♗xf7 17.♖xe6+ ♗f8 and White has nothing else to do to harm his opponent.

16...♗d6 17.b4

The alternative for him is 17.♗g3 ♗ad8 18.b4? ♖xc3 19.♗c1 ♖xb4 20.♗c7 ♗e4 21.♗xe4 ♘xe4 22.♗f1 ♘c3 23.♖c2 ♘d5 24.♘c6 ♗xc6 25.♗xc6 ♗c5, but Black obtains a serious advantage.

17...♖c7 18.♗g3 ♗dd8

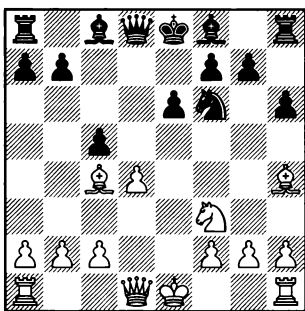


Now, the key-move for the correct evaluation of the position is

4. ♖xe4 ♖d7 5. ♗f3 ♗gf6 6. ♕g5 h6 7. ♖xf6+ ♖xf6 8. ♕h4 c5

19. ♖xf7!?! (White played in the game 19. ♖c1?! and he was even worse, although his opponent failed to punish him. 19... ♕d6 20. a3 a5 21. ♖ed1 ♖ac8, Fressinet – Degraeve, Val d'Isere 2004.) 19... ♖c6 20. ♖xh6+ gxf6 21. f3 ♖f7. White has sacrificed a knight and he has two pawns for it, while Black's king is bare. Still, it is difficult to say whether his initiative will be sufficient to compensate the piece.

b) 9. ♕c4



It seems to me that the bishop does not belong to this square. White will be hardly willing to sacrifice his bishop on e6. Meanwhile, numerous strong players have played that move.

9... cxd4

It seems purposeful for Black to play 9... a6, but after 10. 0-0 (But not 10. ♖e2?! b5 11. ♕d3 g5 12. ♕g3 c4 13. ♕e4 ♖xe4 14. ♖xe4 ♖d5 and his idea will be perfectly justified: 15. ♖xd5 exd5 16. h4 ♖g8 17. hxg5 hxg5 18. 0-0-0 f6 19. ♖h7

♕g7 20. ♖e1+ ♖f7 21. ♕d6 ♕f5 22. ♖hh1 ♖ae8, with an excellent position for him, Svidler – Bareev, Haifa 2000.) 10... b5 11. ♕e2 ♕b7 and White has the destructive resource – 12. c4! and Black is in trouble: 12... ♖b6 13. ♖b3 cxd4 14. cxb5 ♕d6 15. bxa6 ♖xb3 16. axb3 ♕xf3 17. ♕xf3 ♖a7 18. b4 ♕xb4 19. ♖a4 ♕d6 20. b4 ♖e7 21. b5 ♖b8 22. ♕c6+- Leko – Vallejo Pons, Monte Carlo 2004.

10. 0-0 ♕e7 11. ♖e2

It is obvious that the move 11. ♖xd4 does not combine well with the development of the bishop to c4. 11... 0-0 12. ♖e1 ♖b6 13. ♕b3 a5!?! 14. a4 ♖d8 15. c3 ♖d5 16. ♕g3 ♕f6 17. ♖e2 ♖e7 18. ♖d2 ♕d7 19. ♕c4 ♖ac8 20. ♖b5 ♕xb5 21. ♕xb5 ♖f5 and Black risks nothing, Ponomarev – Bareev, Moscow 2001.

11... 0-0 12. ♖ad1 ♖b6

He is forced to play aggressively.

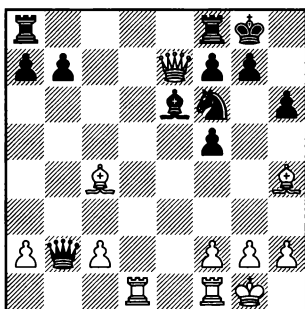
13. ♖xd4

White cannot obtain an edge with the modest looking move 13. ♕b3?!: 13... ♖d8 14. ♖d3 a5 15. a4 ♕d7 16. ♖fd1 ♕c6 17. ♖xd4 ♕e4 18. ♖3d2 ♕g6 19. ♖f3 ♕h5 20. ♕g3 ♖xd2 21. ♖xd2 ♖b4 and despite Black's strange bishop-maneuver, his position is quite acceptable, E. Romanov – Zhou Weiqi, Moscow 2006.

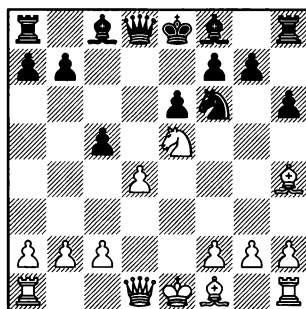
13... ♖xb2 14. ♖f5!

The game is simplified after this move, but White cannot develop his initiative in another fashion.

14...exf5 15.♖xe7 ♕e6!



c) 9.♘e5



16.♗xe6

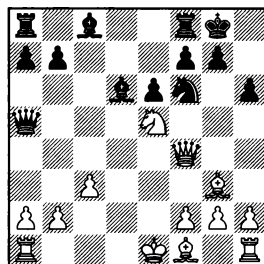
After 16.♖b1, I recommend to Black to try the novelty – 16...♖xc2!? (After 16...♖e5 17.♖b5 ♖e4 18.♗xe6 ♖xe6 19.♗xf6 ♖xf6 20.♖xf6 gxf6 21.♖xb7, theory promises for Black the possibility to defend a worse rook and pawn ending, but he may as well lose it. 21...♖fc8 22.♖c1 ♖c4 23.♗f1 ♖ac8 24.♖xa7 ♖xc2 25.♖xc2 ♖xc2 26.a4 ♖a2 and Black succeeded in saving this endgame mostly thanks to being a very classy player, Al Modiahki – Huzman, Biel 2002.) 17.♗xe6 ♖ae8 18.♗xf5 ♖xf5 19.♖xb7 ♘e4! Black must be able to equalize after this important move. 20.♗e7 ♖xe7 21.♖xe7 ♘d2=

16...fxe6 17.♖xe6+ ♔h8 18.♖xf5 ♖xa2 19.♖d6 ♘g8 20.♖e4 ♖f7 21.♗g3 ♖ad8 22.♖xd8 ♖xd8=. I evaluate this position as equal, although the computer programme does not agree with me..., Shirov – Radjabov, Leon 2004.

White is trying to exploit the fact that Black's last move was a bit too active.

9...a6

The developments are quite different after 9...♖a5+ 10.c3 cxd4 11.♖xd4 ♗c5 12.♖f4 (There arises an equal endgame after 12.♘c4 ♗xd4 13.♘xa5 ♗b6 14.♘c4 ♗c7 15.♗e2 ♗d7 16.♗g3 ♗xg3 17.hxg3 ♔e7 18.♗f3 ♖ac8 19.♘e5 ♖c7 20.0-0-0 ♖d8 21.♖h4 ♗e8 22.♖xd8 ♔xd8 23.♖b4 b6= Topalov – Milov, Ajaccio 2004.) 12...♗d6 13.♗g3 0-0



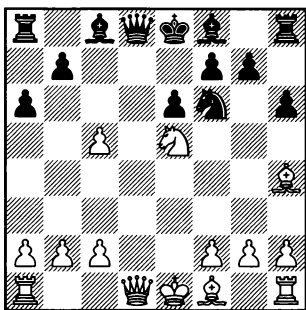
14.♗e2. This is an important intermediate move. (White cannot create problems for his oppo-

4. ♖xe4 ♘d7 5. ♖f3 ♖gf6 6. ♙g5 h6 7. ♖xf6+ ♘xf6 8. ♙h4 c5

ment with the immediate 14. ♖c4 and then: 14... ♙xf4 15. ♖xa5 ♙xg3 16. hxg3 b6 17. ♖c4 ♙b7 18. f3 ♙fd8 19. ♙e2 ♙ac8 20. ♖e3 ♖f8 21. ♙h4 ♘d5 22. ♖xd5 ♙xd5 23. ♙d1 ♖e7 24. ♙hd4= Gashimov – Vysochin, Cappelle la Grande 2006.) 14... ♙c7 15. ♙c4 (15. ♙d4!?) 15... ♙xc4 16. ♖xc4 ♙xg3 17. hxg3 ♙d8 18. 0–0 ♙d7 19. ♖e5 ♙e8 20. ♙fd1 ♖f8 21. ♙f3 ♙xd1+ 22. ♙xd1 ♙b8. White's position is possibly slightly preferable, but this seems to be insufficient for a win, Jakovenko – Zhang Pengxiang, Poikovsky 2007.

10. dxc5

The correct way for Black to equalize after 10.c3, was demonstrated by a true classic of the French defence: 10... ♙xd4 11. ♙a4+ ♙d7 12. ♙xd4 ♙b5! 13. ♙xb5+ axb5 14. ♙e3 ♙d5 15. 0–0 ♙e4! 16. ♙xe4 ♖xe4 17. ♙fe1 ♘d6 18. a3 ♙e7 19. ♙ad1 ♙d8 20. ♙g3 0–0= Short – Korchnoi, Reykjavik 2000.

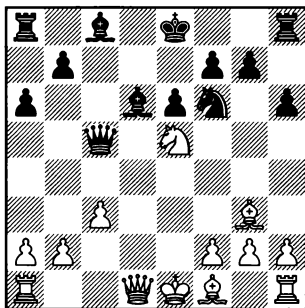


10... ♙a5+

He should test in practice the line: 10... ♙c7!? 11. ♖c4 (After

11. ♙g3 ♙xc5 12. ♙d3 ♙d6 13. ♙e2 ♙b4+!? 14. ♖f1 ♙d6, the maneuvers of Black's bishop look like showing disrespect for the opponent, but they seem purposeful enough.) 11... ♙xc5 12. ♙g3 ♙c6 13. ♙e2 0–0 14. 0–0 ♖e4=

11.c3 ♙xc5 12. ♙g3 ♙d6



13. ♖g4

This is the only way for White to challenge Black's intention to equalize.

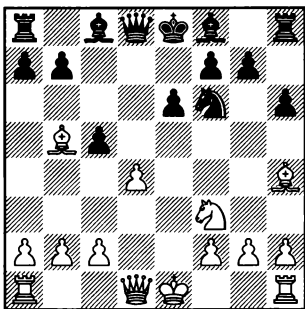
13... ♙e7

It is amazing, but after 13... ♙xg3 14. ♖xf6+ gxf6 15. hxg3, Black's pawn-structure has been disrupted and White's rook on h1 enters the actions comfortably. This provides White with a slight advantage and the ex-world champion succeeded in winning this position after 15... ♙d7 16. ♙h4 ♙d8 17. ♙d4 ♙xd4 18. ♙xd4 ♙c6 19. ♙ad1 ♙xd4 20. ♙xd4 ♖e7 21. ♙e2± Ponomarev – Bareev, Cap d'Agde 2003.

14. ♖xf6+ ♙xf6 15. ♙e2 (It is only White who may have problems after 15. ♙d6 ♙c6 16. ♙d3

e5 17.0-0-0 ♖e6 and his bishop on d6 is in trouble.) 15...♗d7 16.0-0 ♖c6=

d) 9.♗b5+



This move only reduces the tension and it creates no problems for Black.

9...♗d7 10.♗xd7+ ♖xd7 11.♖e2

It is even a bit melancholic for White to continue with 11.0-0 cxd4 12.♗xf6 gxf6 13.♖xd4 ♖xd4 14.♗xd4 0-0-0 15.♗fd1 ♗c5 16.♗e2 ♗c7 17.g3 ♗c6 and Black equalizes easily, Leko – Shirov, Linares 2001.

11...♗e7 12.0-0-0

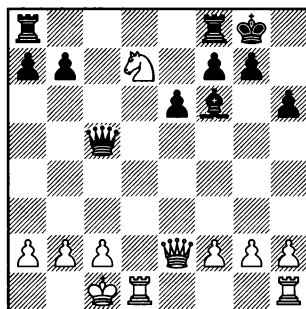
Or 12.dxc5 0-0 13.0-0 ♗xc5 14.♗ad1 ♖c7 15.♗xf6 gxf6 16.♗d3 ♗fd8 17.♗fd1 ♗xd3 18.♗xd3 ♗d8 19.♗e1 ♗xd3 20.♗xd3 ♗d6= Gashimov – Ivanchuk, Dagomys 2008.

12...0-0 13.dxc5

In reply to the risky move 13.g4, I like very much the reaction of an experienced classic of the French defence – 13...♗d5 (Or

13...g5?! 14.♗g3 ♖d5 15.c4 ♖e4 16.♖xe4 ♗xe4 17.d5 ♗ad8 18.♗he1 ♗xg3 19.hxg3 and White had some pressure in the game Amonatov – Roiz, Dagomys 2008.) 14.♗xe7 ♖xe7 15.♗b1 b5 16.dxc5 ♖xc5 17.♗e5 ♗ad8 18.♗d3 ♖c4 and Black obtained an excellent position, Chandler – Vaganian, Germany 1996.

13...♖c6 14.♗e5 ♖xc5 15.♗xf6 ♗xf6 16.♗d7



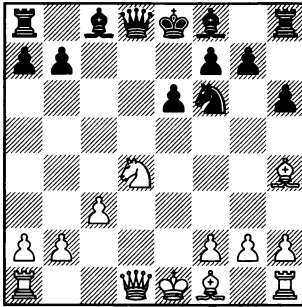
16...♗xb2+

This is a contemporary practical approach in action – Black is ready to draw. (By the way, he will hardly have any serious problems after 16...♖g5+!? 17.♗b1 ♗fd8.) 17.♗xb2 ♖b4+ 18.♗c1 ♖a3+. White will not be happy with his position, if he avoids the repetition of moves. For example: 19.♗d2 ♗fd8 20.♗e1 ♖a4! His knight is in trouble. (Things are not so clear after 20...♗ac8 21.♗d3 ♖xa2 22.c4 ♖b1+ 23.♖d1 ♖b4+ 24.♖d2 ♖b1=; 21.f3 ♖e7 22.♗e5 ♗xd1+ 23.♗xd1 – 23.♖xd1 ♖g5! – 23...♖b4 24.♖d2 and White

4. ♖xe4 ♘d7 5. ♘f3 ♘gf6 6. ♗g5 h6 7. ♘xf6+ ♘xf6 8. ♗h4 c5

will consolidate gradually his position, remaining with an extra piece.) 21. ♖d3 ♖ac8 22. ♗d2 ♖h8. Now, he is forced to repeat moves, because of the threat of his knight being trapped. 23. ♖b3 ♖e4+ 24. ♖e3 ♖b4 25. ♖b3 ♖e4+ 26. ♖e3=

e) 9. c3 cxd4 10. ♘xd4



10... ♗c5!

Black is trying to equalize immediately with this move. This is an ambitious approach!

11. ♗b5+ ♗d7 12. ♗xf6

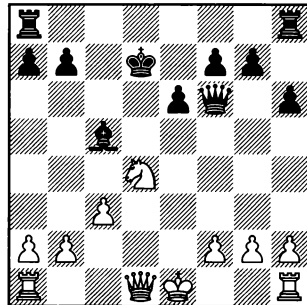
It is also interesting for White to test the new move here 12. ♖e2!? a6 (His idea is to counter 12... ♗xd4 with 13. 0-0-0!) 13. ♗xd7+ (It would not work for White to play 13. ♘xe6 ♗xb5 14. ♘xd8+ ♗xe2 15. ♘xb7 ♖b8 16. ♘xc5 ♖xb2 17. ♗xf6 gxf6 18. f3 ♖e7 and Black has a tremendous compensation for the pawn. Naturally, it would have been a disaster for him to opt for 13...fxe6? 14. ♗xd7+ ♖xd7 15. ♗xf6 ♗xf2+ 16. ♖xf2 ♖f8 - 16...0-0?? 17. ♖d4+- - 17.0-0

♖xf6 18. ♖h4+; 15...0-0 16. ♗h4+ and White preserved the extra pawn.) 13... ♖xd7 14. 0-0-0 ♘d5 (It looks like he cannot exploit the temporary stranding of Black's king in the centre.) 15. f4 (Or 15. ♘f5 0-0 16. ♘g7 ♖xg7 17. c4 ♖a4! 18. ♗xd5 exd5 19. ♖g4+ ♖h7 20. ♖f5+ ♖g8 21. ♖g4=) 15...0-0 16. f5 ♖ae8, Black's powerful centralized knight on d5 keeps him out of trouble.

12... ♖xf6

Or 12...gxf6? 13. ♘xe6! ♗xf2+ 14. ♖xf2 fxe6 15. ♖h5+ ♖f8 16. ♗xd7 ♖xd7 17. ♖hd1 ♖e7 18. ♖g1 ♖h7 19. ♗d3± K. Szabo - Galyas, Budapest 2004.

13. ♗xd7+ ♖xd7



It looks like White is about to punish his opponent, but things are far from simple.

14. 0-0

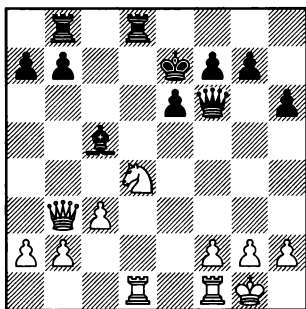
He would not achieve anything with 14. ♖h5 ♗xd4 15. 0-0-0 ♖g5=

14... ♖e7

I believe there will be not many players willing to defend Black's

position after 14...♖hd8? 15. ♖xe6+! ♗xe6 16. ♖e1+ ♗f5 17. ♗h5+ g5 18. b4 ♖b6 19. c4! ♖d4 20. c5 ♗c7 21. g3 and White's powerful initiative will act on the nerves of the opponent, despite the absence of direct threats.

15. ♗b3 ♖ab8 16. ♖ad1 ♖hd8



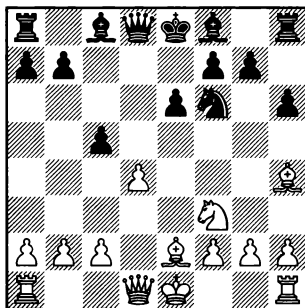
17. ♗b5

He has tried several times 17. ♖d3, but without any success. 17...♗xd4 18. ♗a3+ ♗e8 19. cxd4 ♗e7 and in the game Almasi – Erdos, Kazincbarcika 2005, the opponents agreed to a draw. We can continue this variation a bit, but the evaluation would remain the same: 20. ♗xa7 ♖a8 21. ♗b6 ♖xa2 22. d5 ♖a6 23. ♗b5+ ♗f8=

17...♗xd4 18. ♗b4+ ♗e8 19. ♖xd4 ♖xd4 20. cxd4 ♖d8 21. ♖d1 ♗e7 22. ♗a4+ ♗f8 23. ♗xa7. White has won some material, but he will not manage to convert it into a full point. **23...♗b4 24. b3 ♗g8.** In general, Black can survive by doing nothing, thanks to White's isolated queen on the a7-square. If he wishes however, he

can force the issue. **25. h3 (25. g3 e5=) 25...b6 26. ♖c1 ♗xd4=**

f) 9. ♗e2!?

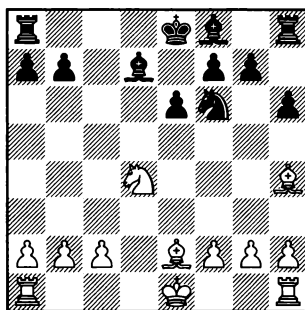


This is a clever move. White's bishop is eyeing the f3-square.

9...cxd4 10. ♗xd4

10. ♖xd4 ♗e7 (10...♗c5!? 11. ♖b3 ♗d6 12. 0-0 ♗c7=) 11. 0-0 0-0 12. c3 e5 13. ♖f3 ♗c7 14. ♖e1 ♖d8 15. ♗c2 e4 16. ♗xf6 ♗xf6 17. ♗xe4 and White ended up with an extra pawn in the game Fressinet – Moreno Carnero, Sanxenxo 2004.

10...♗xd4 11. ♖xd4 ♗d7



12. ♖b5

4. ♖xe4 ♖d7 5. ♗f3 ♖gf6 6. ♗g5 h6 7. ♖xf6+ ♖xf6 8. ♗h4 c5

White can check with this move whether he has the edge, or not.

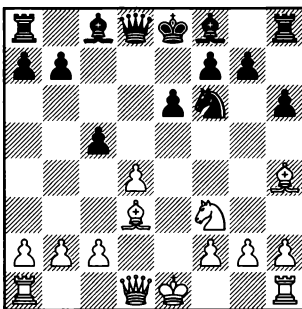
If he plays routinely, he can hardly obtain any advantage: 12.0-0-0 ♗c5 13. ♖d3 (13. ♗f3 0-0-0=) 13... ♖d5 14. ♗f3 ♖f4 15. ♖d2 g5 16. ♗g3 0-0-0=

12... ♖c8 13. 0-0-0 a6

This move is imprecise and he could have tried instead the more flexible line: 13... ♗c5!? 14. ♖d6+ ♗xd6 15. ♖xd6 g5 16. ♗g3 ♖e4=

14. ♖d6+ ♗xd6 15. ♖xd6 g5 16. ♗g3 ♖e4 17. ♖d4 (Thanks to Black's move 13, White could have opted for the possibility 17. ♖b6!? Black probably equalizes anyway, but he would have to solve more problems then.) **17... ♖xg3 18. hxg3 ♖e7 19. ♗f3 ♖c7 20. a4 e5 21. ♖b4 a5 22. ♖xb7 ♖xb7 23. ♗xb7 ♗xa4 24. g4=** A.Galkin – Bareev, Tomsk 2001.

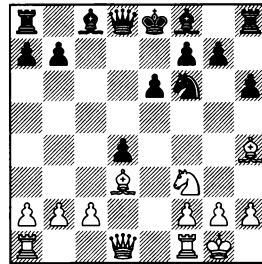
g) 9. ♗d3



It seems to me that if White wishes to provoke a long and tough fight, he should better prefer this move.

9...cxd4 10. ♖xd4

10.0-0!? This is an interesting order of moves, which is used regularly by GM Emil Sutovsky. White wishes to avoid the variation with 10... ♗c5, which arises if he captures the pawn immediately.

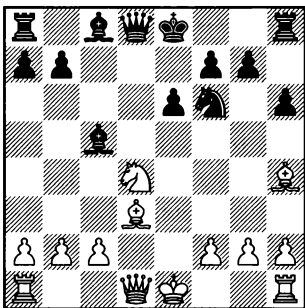


Naturally, Black can counter this with a trick of his own – 10... ♗d7!? This is an interesting, although a bit strange move. (The attempt to hold on to the pawn would be too risky for Black: 10... ♗c5 11. ♖e2 0-0 12. ♖e5 and obviously, he would have to part with the extra material in order to avoid the worst. 12... ♗e7 13. ♗g3 ♖b6 14. ♖xd4 ♖xd4 15. ♖xd4 with a slight edge for White. It would be worse for him to choose 14. ♖xd4, because of 14... ♖d7!? 15. ♖e4 (15. ♖e3 ♗g5!) 15... ♖f6=. Black can also transpose to the variation with ♗e7 – 10... ♗e7!? 11. ♖xd4 0-0 12. c3 ♖b6 13. ♖e2 ♗d7 14. ♖ad1 ♖fd8 15. ♗b1 ♗a4 16. ♖d3 ♖d5 17. ♖e3 ♗b5 18. ♖xb5 ♖xb5 19. b3 ♖d5= Amonatov – Najer, Zvenigorod 2008.) 11. ♖xd4 (The somewhat romantic play of

the type 11.♘e5 ♕d6 12.♖e2 ♖c6 13.f4 0–0, would not yield any dividends to White. Black can counter 11.♖e2 with 11...♕c6.) 11...♗b6!? (He can also try here 11...♕c5 12.♘f3 ♕d6 with similar ideas.) 12.c3 (After 12.♘f3 ♕d6, Black obtains an excellent position.) 12...♕c5 (It is rather passive for him to choose 12...♕d6 13.♞e1 0–0–0 14.♗f3↑ and White seizes the initiative.) 13.♘f3 ♕d6 14.♗d2 ♖c7 and Black has sufficient counter chances.

10...♕c5

He has a good alternative here – 10...♕e7!?



11.♘b3

White is fighting for a tempo.

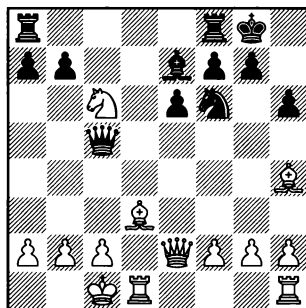
It looks more natural for him, but too slow, to opt for 11.♘f3 0–0 12.♖d2 b6 13.0–0–0 ♕b7 14.♘e5 (Or 14.♞he1 ♕e7 15.♘e5 ♘d5 16.♕xe7 ♖xe7 17.a3 ♞ad8 18.f4 ♘f6 19.c4 ♖c7= Morozevich – Pelletier, Biel 2006.) 14...♕e7 15.a3 ♘d5 16.♕xe7 ♖xe7 17.f4 ♞ac8 18.♞hf1 ♖c7 19.g4 g5! This is an important resource. 20.h4

♘xf4 21.hxg5 ♖xe5 22.♞xf4 ♖xg5 and Black ends up with an extra pawn, but he will hardly manage to realize it, Nepomniachtchi – Erdos, Dresden 2007.

11...♕e7 12.♖e2 ♕d7

He should better refrain from experimenting with 12...♖d5?! 13.f3 ♕d7 14.0–0–0 ♖c6 15.♘b1 ♖a4 16.c4 ♞c8 17.♞d2 b5 18.♕xf6 ♕xf6 19.cxb5 ♘e7 20.♞hd1 ♞hd8 21.♞c2 ♞xc2 22.♖xc2 ♕e5 23.♕e2 ♕xh2 24.♞d4 and suddenly Black's queen was trapped in the game Huebner – Korchnoi, Switzerland 1998.

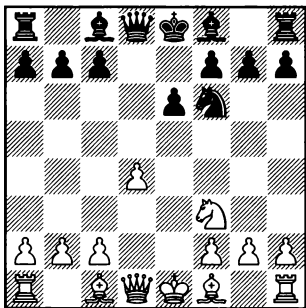
13.0–0–0 ♖b6 14.♘d2 0–0 15.♘c4 ♖c5 16.♘e5 ♖c6 17.♘xc6



17...♖xc6!

This is a very smart decision. After White has castled long, that pawn-structure is in favour of Black, because he has the open b-file and an excellent centralized knight on d5. **18.c3 ♞fd8 19.♕c2 ♘d5 20.♕xe7 ♖xe7** and he has a wonderful position, Jakovenko – M.Gurevich, Batumi 2002.

Chapter 14 **1.e4 e6 2.d4 d5 3.♘d2 dxe4 4.♗xe4
♗d7 5.♗f3 ♗gf6 6.♗xf6+ ♗xf6**



Now, we will analyze White's four possibilities to avoid the main line: **a) 7.g3**, **b) 7.♗d3**, **c) 7.♗e2** and **d) 7.♗e3**.

About 7.♗g5 h6 – see 6.♗g5 h6 7.♗xf6 ♗xf6.

In case of 7.♗c4, Black's simplest reaction is 7...♗e7 (It is riskier for him to choose 7...c5 8.♗e3 cxd4 9.♗xd4 ♖c7 10.♖e2 ♗c5 11.♗e5 ♗b4+ 12.c3 ♗d6 13.♗b5+ ♗d7 14.0-0-0 ♗xe5 15.♗xe5 0-0-0 16.♗c4! and White had powerful pressure in the game Milos – Vitiugov, Khanty-Mansiysk 2009.) 8.0-0 0-0 9.♖e2 b6 10.♗d1 ♗b7 11.c3 ♖c8 12.♗g5 c5 13.♗e5 ♗d8 14.f4 ♗d5 15.♗d3 ♖c7= Bindrich – Meier, Moscow 2008.

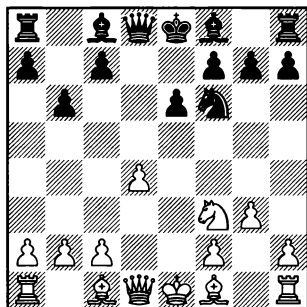
a) 7.g3

This move is becoming popular lately, but Black has found the adequate response.

7...b6

This is his strongest and most natural reply.

Or 7...c5 8.♗g2 cxd4 9.♖xd4 ♖xd4 10.♗xd4 a6 11.♗f4 ♗d5 12.♗d2 b5 13.a4 b4 14.♗c6 a5 15.c4 bxc3 16.bxc3 ♗b7 17.♗d4 ♗a6 18.♗b5 with some pressure for White, Alekseev – Pridorozhni, Khanty-Mansiysk 2009.



8.♗b5+

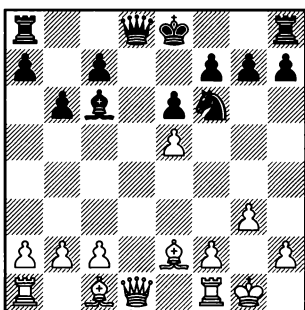
This is a very unpleasant surprise for Black! It turns out that White was just waiting for this weakening of his opponent's position.

After the routine move 8.♔g2, Black can equalize in an interesting fashion: 8...♙b7 9.0-0 ♖e7 10.c4 0-0 11.b3 a5! 12.♙b2 a4 13.♚e2 ♖a6 14.♜fd1 ♖e8 15.♙c3 ♘e4 16.♙e1 axb3 17.axb3 ♖xa1 18.♖xa1 ♙f6 19.♖d1 ♚a8= Shirov – Anand, Mainz 2004.

8...♙d7 9.♙e2 ♙c6 10.0-0 ♙d6

After 10...♙b7?! 11.♘e5 a6 12.c4 ♙d6 13.♙f3 (13.♚a4+!?) 13...♚c8 14.♙c6+ ♙xc6 15.♘xc6 0-0 16.♚f3 ♖e8 17.♙g5 ♘d7 18.♜fe1 f6 19.♙e3, Black failed to obtain an acceptable position in the game Timofeev – Riazantsev, Ulan Ude 2009.

11.♘e5 ♙xe5 12.dxe5



Now, in most of the variations, there arises gradually an end-game in which White has only a symbolic edge.

Black exchanges the heavy pieces along the d-file and builds a fortress.

12...♚xd1

Or 12...♚d5 13.♚xd5 ♘xd5 14.♙d2 a5 15.f3 0-0-0 16.♜fd1

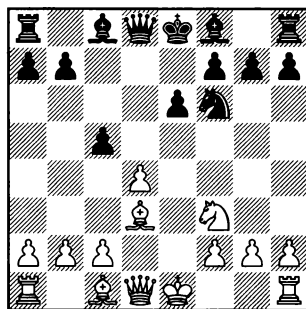
h6 17.a3 ♘e7 18.♙f2 ♖d5 19.f4 h5 20.b3 ♜hd8 21.♙e1 ♖xd1 22.♖xd1 ♖xd1 23.♙xd1 g6 24.c4 ♘f5 25.h3 ♙e4 26.g4 hxg4 27.hxg4 ♘e7 28.♙e3 ♙h1 29.♙h4 ♘d7= Bologan – Laznicka, Khanty-Mansiysk 2009.

13.♖xd1 ♘d7 14.f4 0-0-0 15.♙e3 ♘b8 16.♖xd8+

16.♙d3 ♙f3 17.♖d2 ♙g4 18.c3 h5 19.♙f1 ♖xd2 20.♙xd2 ♖d8 21.♙e3 ♘c6 22.h3 ♖d1 23.♖xd1 ♙xd1 24.♙b5 ♘b7 25.♙f2 a6 26.♙f1 ♘e7 27.♙g2+ ♘c8 28.♙e1 ♙c2 29.♙f3 g6 30.♙e2 a5 31.c4 c5= Vachier Lagrave – Meier, Khanty-Mansiysk 2009.

16...♖xd8 17.♖d1 ♙e4 18.♖xd8+ ♘xd8 19.c3 ♘c6 20.h4 g6 21.g4 ♘e7 22.b4 ♘d5 23.♙d2 f5 24.c4 ♘e7 25.g5 ♘d7= Vachier Lagrave – Meier, Khanty-Mansiysk 2009.

b) 7.♙d3 c5



8.♙e3!?

This is a sharp move. If White wishes to provoke a sharper fight

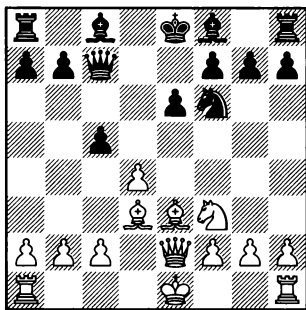
4. ♖xe4 ♘d7 5. ♘f3 ♘gf6 6. ♖xf6+ ♘xf6 7. ♗d3 c5

in this position, this is how he should act.

It would be too tentative for him to continue with 8.0-0 cxd4 9. ♖xd4 ♗c5 10. ♘f3 (It is hardly any better for him to try 10. ♗e3 ♗b6 11. c3 e5 – 11...0-0!? – 12. ♘c2 0-0 13. ♗g5 h6 14. ♗h4 ♗g4 15. ♖xf6 ♗xd1 16. ♗xd8 ♗xc2 17. ♗xc2 ♖axd8= Korneev – Morozovich, Elista 1997.) 10...0-0 11. ♖e2 b6 12. ♗g5 ♗b7 13. ♖ad1 ♖c7 14. ♖xf6 gxf6 15. ♗e4 ♖fd8 16. c3 ♖ac8 17. a3 a6 18. ♖xb7 ♖xb7 19. ♖d3 ♖xd3 20. ♖xd3 ♗e7 21. ♖d1 ♖d8 22. ♖e2 ♖xd1+ 23. ♖xd1 ♖e4= Acs – Khalifman, Dubai 2002.

White would not achieve much after 8. dxc5 ♗xc5 9. 0-0 0-0 10. ♗g5 b6 11. ♖e2 ♗b7 12. ♖ad1 ♖c7 13. ♖xf6 gxf6 14. ♗e4 ♖fd8 15. ♖xb7 ♖xb7 16. c3 ♖c7 17. g3 ♖xd1 18. ♖xd1 ♖d8 19. ♘e1 ♖xd1 20. ♖xd1 ♗e7 21. ♘g2, and the opponents agreed to a draw, Anand – Gelfand, Monte Carlo 2007.

8... ♖c7 9. ♖e2



9... ♗e7

It seems too risky for Black to

play 9...a6, although in the following game he obtained a good position after 10.0-0-0 b5 11.dxc5 ♗xc5 12. ♗g5 ♗b7 13. ♘e5 ♗d6 14.f4 ♘d5 15. ♖hf1 0-0 Shirov – Drozdovskij, Mainz 2007.

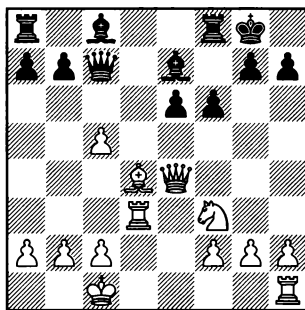
10.0-0-0 0-0 11.dxc5 ♘d5!

He should better avoid 11... ♗xc5 12. ♗xc5 ♖xc5 13. ♘e5 ♖e7 14.f4 b6 15.g4 ♗b7 16. ♖hf1 ♖ad8 17.g5 ♘d7. White crowned his strategy with a crushing king-side attack – 18. ♖xh7+! ♘xh7 19. ♖h5+ ♘g8 20.g6 fxg6 21. ♘xg6 ♖f6 22.f5! exf5 23. ♖xf5+- Spraggett – Pogorelov, Andorra 2006.

12. ♗d4 ♘f4 13. ♖e4

Black has counterplay too after 13. ♖e5 ♖xe5 14. ♖xe5 f6 15. ♘c4 ♖d8 16. ♗f1. White must act in this awkward fashion if he wishes to keep the extra material. 16...e5 17. ♗e3 ♖xd1+ 18. ♘xd1 ♗e6 19. ♘a5 b6!±

13... ♘xd3+ 14. ♖xd3 f6



Black has sacrificed temporarily a pawn and he has obtained a bishop-pair. The pawn wedge “f6-e5” looks very purposeful and

White's pieces are restricted in their movements, so Black may even obtain an advantage.

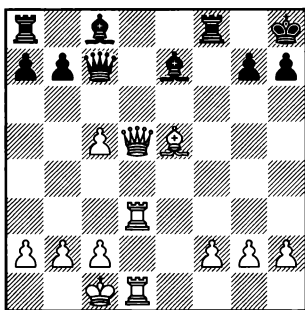
15. ♖hd1

White has also tried in practice 15. ♖e1 ♖e8?! (It is not so easy to understand why Black did not play the natural move 15...e5!?) 16. ♘b1 ♙f8 17. ♗d2 ♜f7? 18. f4 ♖b8 19. ♗c4 e5 20. ♗d6 ♙xd6 21. cxd6 g6 22. ♖g3? White overlooks an elegant tactical strike. (He could have practically finished the game following 22. fxe5! ♙f5 23. ♜e3 fxe5 24. ♙xa7±) 22...♙f5 23. ♜xf5 exf4! 24. ♖h1 fxg3 25. ♜xf6 ♜xf6 26. ♙xf6 gxh2 27. ♘c1 ♖e6 28. ♙e7 ♖e8 29. ♖xh2 ♖8xe7 30. dxe7 ♖xe7= and after some wild complications the game ended in a draw, Sulskis – Roiz, Port Erin 2007.

15...e5 16. ♜d5+

Black's task is simpler after 16. ♙e3 ♙e6 17. ♖3d2 ♜c8 18. h3 b6 19. c6 and the opponents agreed to a draw in this rather complicated position, Volokitin – Roiz, Beer-sheba 2005.

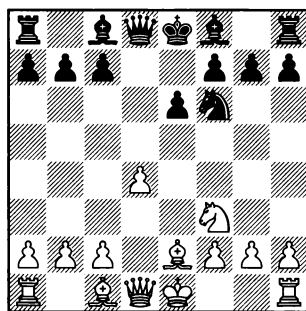
16...♘h8 17. ♗xe5 fxe5 18. ♙xe5



White has sacrificed a piece and it looks like his initiative is very powerful. Black however, can neutralize it with a series of precise moves.

18...♜c6 19. ♖g3 ♜h6+ 20. ♗d2 ♙e6 21. ♜xb7 ♙f6 22. ♙xf6 ♜xf6 23. ♜f3 ♜xf3 24. ♖xf3 ♖xf3 25. gxf3 ♗g8 26. a4 a5 and only Black can play for a win in this position, Volokitin – Lysyj, Moscow 2007.

c) 7. ♙e2



This is a quiet move. White avoids critical theoretical discussions, but he still cherishes hopes of obtaining an opening advantage.

7...c5 8. 0–0 cxd4

Artem Timofeev played another move here, which was not so well analyzed at the time: 8...a6!? 9. a3 ♜c7 10. c4 ♙d7 11. dxc5 a5! 12. g3 ♙xc5 13. ♙f4 ♜c8 14. ♗e5 0–0 15. ♙f3 ♖a6 16. b4 axb4 17. axb4 ♙xb4 18. ♖b1 ♖b6 19. ♙e3 ♗d6 20. ♜c2 ♙c5= and Black equalized,

4. ♖xe4 ♘d7 5. ♘f3 ♘gf6 6. ♘xf6+ ♘xf6 7. ♗e2 c5

Lastin – Timofeev, Novokuznetsk 2008.

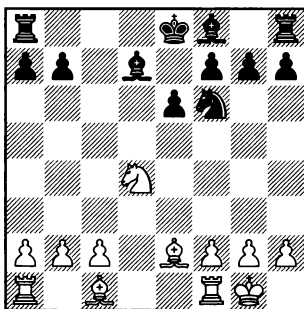
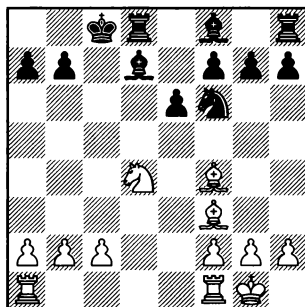
9. ♖xd4

Strangely enough, but the idea of White's set-up is connected with this particular capture. He hopes to prevail in the endgame.

He should better refrain from 9. ♘xd4 ♗e7 10. ♗f3 0–0 11. ♗e1 ♖c7 and Black has a good game.

9... ♖xd4 10. ♘xd4 ♗d7

11. ♗f3 0–0–0 12. ♗f4



The same position may arise, except that with Black to move, in the Tarrasch variation with 3...c5 (see Chapter 24). We are obliged to analyze thoroughly this possibility, because the extra tempo may be very important.

He might encounter some problems in this seemingly harmless variation and they can be best illustrated by the following game: 10... ♗c5 11. ♘b3 ♗d6 12. ♗f3 0–0 13. ♘a5 ♖b8 14. ♗e3 ♘d7 15. ♘c4 ♗c5 16. ♗f4 ♖a8 17. ♖fd1 ♘b6 18. ♘a5 ♘d5 19. ♗g3 ♗b4 20. ♘b3 a5 21. c4↑ with a powerful queenside initiative for White, Volokitin – Lysyj, Sochi 2007.

12... ♗a4!

This standard maneuver is very powerful here and it was recommended in the notes of F. Bindrich.

It would be too passive for Black to opt for 12... ♘e8 13. c4 ♗d6 14. ♗e3 ♘c7 15. ♖ac1 ♗e5 16. b4 ♘b8 17. b5 ♗c8 18. ♘b3 ♘e8 19. ♖fe1 f6 20. a4 and White maintained the advantage in the game Vescovi – Seirawan, Istanbul 2000.

13. ♖ad1

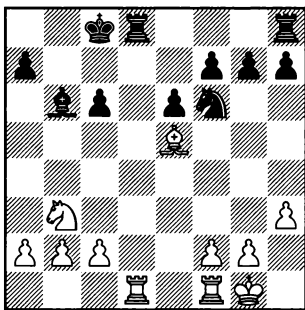
In response to 13. ♘b3, Black should react simply with 13... ♗e7. It is worse for him to play 13... ♗d6?! 14. ♗xd6 ♖xd6 15. ♗xb7+ ♘xb7 16. ♘c5+ ♘c6 17. ♘xa4 and he can hardly prove that his compensation for the pawn is sufficient. He cannot equalize after the somewhat strange transfer of the knight – 13... ♘d5 14. ♗g3 ♘b4 15. c3 ♘c6 16. ♖fe1 – Black's bishop on a4 does not beautify his position.

13... ♗c5 14. ♘b3 ♗b6 15. ♗e5 ♗c6!?

He solves his problems in a radical fashion, reducing White's queenside pressure by worsening a bit his own pawn-structure. Black will have the dynamic factors on his side, though...

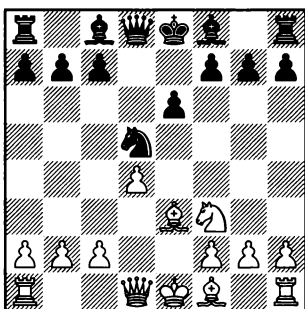
16. ♟xc6 bxc6 17. h3

17.c4? ♟xf2+! and White ends up a pawn down.



17... ♟d5 and Black has a good position. It is also interesting for him to play the sharper line: 17... ♟xd1!? 18. ♟xd1 ♖e4 19. ♖f1 ♗xf2 20. ♟d6 ♗e4 21. ♟xc6+ ♖d7 22. ♟c4 ♗d6 with rather unclear consequences.

d) 7. ♟e3 ♗d5



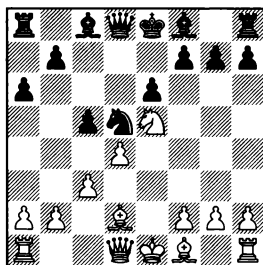
8. ♟d2

Or 8. ♟d2 ♟b4! and the development will be analogous to the notes to White's move nine in the variation 6. ♟g5 h6 7. ♗xf6 ♗xf6 8. ♟e3.

It would be interesting for him to test here 8. ♟d3!? ♗xe3 9. fxe3 ♟d6 (This is a new possibility, which has become possible thanks to the absence of Black's pawn on h6: 9...g6!? 10. ♟e2 ♟g7 11. 0-0-0 ♟d7 12. ♟e4 ♟e7 13. ♗e5 ♟xe5 14. dxe5 ♟c5 15. ♟f3 ♟xe5 16. ♟xb7 ♟d8 17. ♟xd7 ♖xd7 18. ♟xf7+ ♖d6 19. ♟d1+ ♖c5 20. ♟e7+ ♖b6 21. ♟xd8 ♟xd8= Aroshidze – Rozen-talis, Kavala 2006.) 10.e4 c5!? (10...e5?! 11.dxe5 ♟c5 12. ♟b5+ c6 13. ♟xd8+ ♖xd8 14. ♟c4 ♖e7 15.c3 and the endgame will be difficult for Black without the pawn on h6), playing analogously to variation c (see page 59).

8...c5 9. ♟b5+

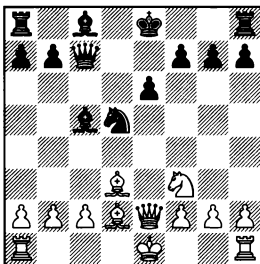
9. ♗e5!? – White can try this aggressive move. 9...a6 (Black should better avoid 9...♟d6 10. ♟b5+ ♖f8 11. ♟f3 f6 12.c3 cxd4 13.cxd4 and he is clearly worse.) 10.c3



4. ♖xe4 ♖d7 5. ♗f3 ♗gf6 6. ♖xf6+ ♖xf6 7. ♗e3 ♖d5

10...♗d6 (It is weaker for him to opt for 10...cxd4?! 11. ♖a4+ ♗d7 12. ♖xd4 ♗b5 13. c4 ♖b4 14. ♖c3! and he has obvious difficulties, while in case of 10...b5, White has the resource – 11.a4.) 11. ♖a4+ ♖e7 (11...♔f8!?) 12. ♖d1 cxd4 13. cxd4 ♗xe5 (It deserves a serious attention for Black to play 13...f6!?) 14. ♖c4 ♗c7 and his position is quite acceptable with the pawn-fence on the sixth rank.) 14.dxe5 ♖b6 15. ♗c4 ♗d7 16. 0–0 ♗b5 17. b3 ♗hc8 18. ♖g4 ♔f8 19. ♗xd5 ♗xf1 20. ♖b4+ ♖xb4 21. ♗xb4+ ♔e8 22. ♗xb7 ♗b5 23. ♗xa8 ♗xa8 24. ♗c1± and White ends up with a solid extra pawn in the endgame, Adams – Meier, Liverpool 2008.

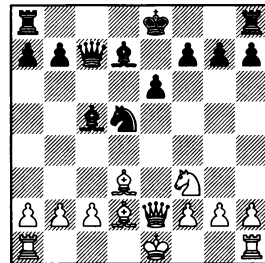
9.dxc5. At first sight, this move looks like a result of a bad home preparation, or even a complete absence of any. Still, things are far from clear. 9...♗xc5 10. ♗d3 ♖c7 11. ♖e2



11...0–0!? 12. 0–0 b6?! 13. c4 ♖f6 14. ♗c3 ♗b7 15. ♗ad1 ♗ad8 16. ♖e5 with some pressure for White; 12...♖f4 13. ♗xf4 ♖xf4 and he will hardly

manage to obtain an advantage without his dark-squared bishop.) 12...♖f4 (I believe that Black should consider here 12...a5!?, or even the more desperate move – 12...b5.) 13. ♗xf4 ♖xf4+ 14. ♔b1 f6 15. ♗c4 ♔h8 16. ♗xe6 ♗xe6 17. ♖xe6 ♗xf2 18. ♗hf1 ♗ad8 19. ♗d7 ♗fe8 20. ♖e7+ – Nijboer – Dambacher, Hilversum 2007.

Black plays much more often here 11...♗d7.



It would be imprecise for White to reply with 12. 0–0, because of 12...♗d6 13. c4 ♖f4 14. ♗xf4 ♗xf4 15. g3 ♗d6 16. ♗fd1 ♗d8 17. ♗ac1 ♗c6 18. ♗e4 0–0 19. c5= Quezada Perez – Nogueiras Santiago, Havana 2008, or even the somewhat insolent line: 12...♖f4 13. ♗xf4 ♖xf4 14. g3 ♖c7 15. ♖e5 ♗c6 16. ♖xc6 bxc6 17. ♗e4 ♗e7 18. ♖c4 ♗c8 19. ♗ad1 0–0 20. ♗d3 ♗fd8 21. ♗fd1 g6 22. b4 ♗xd3 23. ♗xd3 c5 24. b5 ♗d8= N.Guliyev – Meier, Germany 2007.

The move 12. 0–0–0 enables Black to equalize immediately with the simple line: 12...♖f4 13. ♗xf4 ♖xf4+ 14. ♗d2 0–0–0 15. ♗e4 ♔b8 16. g3 ♖c7 17. ♗hd1 ♗c8 18. ♗xd8

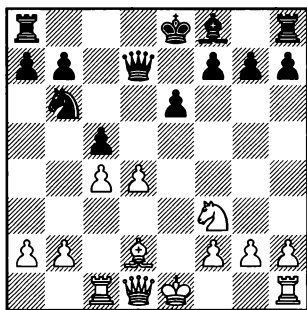
♞xd8 19.♞xd8 ♞xd8= Stellwagen – Meier, Yerevan 2007.

Or 12.♘e5 0–0 13.0–0 ♞ad8 (But not 13...♗d4?? 14.♞e4 and Black had to resign, Fressinet – N.Guliyev, Ajaccio 2007.) 14.♞ad1 (It would be a mistake for White to try to obtain a bishop-pair in this particular case: 14.♘d7 ♞xd7 15.g3 ♞b6 16.♞ab1 ♞fd8=. Black's powerful centralized pieces guarantee that he will have no problems at all.) 14...♗c8 and he must equalize gradually.

9...♗d7 10.♗xd7+

In case of 10.♞e2, White practically gives up the idea of obtaining the advantage – 10...cxd4 11.♘e5 ♘f6 12.0–0–0 a6 13.♗xd7+ ♘xd7 14.♞he1 (14.♗f4 ♘f6 15.♘f3 ♞d5 16.♘b1 ♞e4=) 14...♘xe5 15.♞xe5 ♞d6 16.♗f4 ♞d8 17.♞xd6 ♗xd6 18.♞xd4 ♗xf4+ 19.♞xf4= Adams – Mamedyarov, Baku 2008.

10...♞xd7 11.c4 ♘b6 12.♞c1



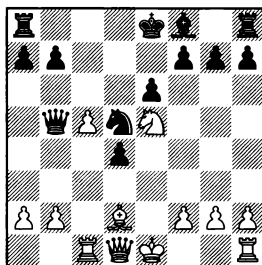
12...♞c8

Black puts up a fight for every square in the opening.

It is even more solid for him

and possibly stronger to choose 12...♗e7 13.dxc5 ♗xc5 14.b4 ♗e7 15.c5 ♘d5 16.♘e5 ♞c7 17.♞a4+ ♘f8 18.♘f3 h5! This move is an important part of Black's plan – he wishes to activate his king's rook. 19.0–0 (White can prevent the march of his opponent's rook-pawn, but obviously he should better not do it. 19.h4 g6 20.0–0 ♘g7 and Black's position is acceptable.) 19...h4 20.h3 ♞h5 21.♞fe1 a6 22.♞e4 ♞c8 23.♞d1 ♞d8 24.♞e2 ♘g8 25.♞cc4 g6 26.♗c1 a5 27.a3 axb4 28.axb4 ♞a8 29.♗b2 ♞a2 30.♞c2 ♞xb2!= Jakovenko – Ionov, Dagomys 2009.

It would be tremendously risky for Black to play 12...cxd4?! 13.c5 ♘d5 14.♘e5 ♞b5



15.♞f3 (The position remains quite unclear after 15.b4 ♘xb4 16.♞f3?! 0–0–0 17.a4 ♞xa4 18.0–0; 16...f6 17.a4 ♞a6 18.♗xb4 fxe5 19.♞h5+ g6 20.♞xe5 ♞g8=; 16.♞b3 a5 17.a3 ♗xc5 18.f4 0–0 19.axb4 ♗xb4 20.♘f2 and White has an extra piece indeed, but Black's four pawns seem to be sufficient compensation for it. White achieves nothing much af-

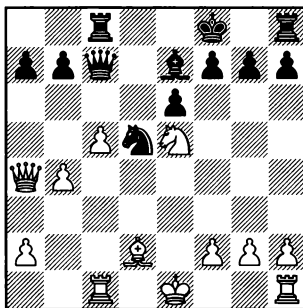
4. ♖xe4 ♜d7 5. ♜f3 ♜gf6 6. ♜xf6+ ♜xf6 7. ♙e3 ♜d5

ter 15.a4 ♖xb2 16.0-0 ♙e7 17.♞b1 ♞a3 18.♞g4 ♙f6 19.♞xd4 b6! and Black is not worse at all.) 15...f5 16.a4! This powerful move guarantees for White a long-lasting initiative. (The game will be much sharper after 16.♞h5+ g6 17.♜xg6 hxg6 18.♞xh8 ♜b4 19.♙xb4 ♞xb4+ 20.♜f1 ♞b5+ 21.♜g1 ♞xb2 22.♞e1 0-0-0) ♞

13.dxc5

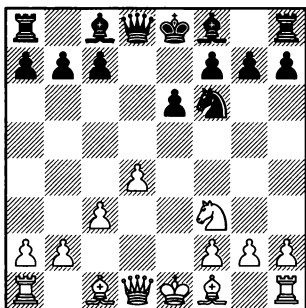
Black can withstand his opponent's pressing after 13.0-0 cxd4 14.♜e5 ♞d8 (It would be more accurate for him to opt for 14...♞c7!? 15.♞e1 ♜d7 16.♙f4 ♙d6 17.♞xd4 ♙xe5 18.♙xe5 ♜xe5=, while in case of 15.♙f4, he has the resource 15...♞d8.) 15.♞b3 (White has a powerful alternative here – 15.♞h5 ♞f6 16.♞fe1 ♙e7 17.c5 ♜d5 18.♞e2! and he wins material.) 15...♜d7 16.♜f3 ♙c5 17.♞xb7 ♞b8 18.♞c6 ♞b6 19.♞a4 ♞xb2 20.♙a5 ♞c8 with an excellent position for Black, Jakovenko – Mamedyarov, Dagomys 2008.

13...♙xc5 14.b4 ♙e7 15.c5 ♜d5 16.♜e5 ♞c7 17.♞a4+ ♜f8



18.♜c4 (In a later game against Naier, in an analogous position, but with a black pawn on h6, Motylev chose here 18.♜d3. Evgenij reacted in the most concrete fashion with 18...♙g5 and later he obtained an advantage.) 18...a6 19.0-0 h5 20.♞fe1 h4 21.h3 ♞h5 22.♞d1 g6 23.♞e2 ♞d8 – Black ended up with a quite satisfactory position after the opening, Motylev – Ding, Jiangsu Wuxi 2008.

Chapter 15 **1.e4 e6 2.d4 d5 3.♘d2 dxe4 4.♘xe4
♘d7 5.♘f3 ♘gf6 6.♘xf6+ ♘xf6 7.c3**



This is a solid and reliable move and it is the beginning of a very aggressive plan, which includes castling long for White.

Black is faced with a difficult choice – the immediate move **a) 7...c5** presents White with a long-lasting initiative, although it is more principled, and the more trustworthy **b) 7...♗e7**, will probably turn out to be a loss of a tempo later, since Black can hardly ever play the Rubinstein variation without the pawn-advance c7-c5.

a) 7...c5

It often happens, when a certain player has a choice, that he not only evaluates objectively what is happening on the board,

but there appears some personal element in the grasping of the situation. This is the case now – the White player should decide what line he should prefer in this particular position.

Naturally, this is the most logical move for Black, but maintaining chess-logic often leads to terrible consequences.

8.♘e5 a6

The variation with 7.c3, no doubt owes its popularity to the game below. It was played in a very principled encounter between “The Great” and “The Terrible”, so it acquired a label of quality and the inspired play of Garry Kimovich contributed greatly to its coming to fashion. 8...♘d7?! 9.♗b5 ♗d6 10.♞g4 ♘f8 11.0-0 ♘xe5 12.dxe5 ♗xe5 13.♗g5 ♗f6 14.♞ad1 ♞c7 15.♞h4 ♗xg5 16.♞xg5 f6 17. ♞h5 g6 18.♞h6+ ♘f7 19.♞d3 a6 20.♞h3 ♞e7 21.♗d3 f5 22.g4! and White prevailed in the subsequent fight, Kasparov – Ponomarev, Linares 2002.

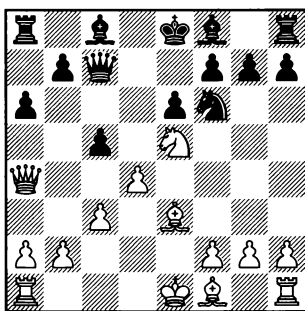
9.♗e3

9.♗e3 – This move transposes to another variation. 9...cxd4

10. ♖a4+ ♗d7 11. ♖xd4 ♗b5! This idea belongs to Victor Lvovich Korchnoi and he used it with the inclusion of the moves h6 and ♗h4. It works perfectly here as well!

9... ♖c7 10. ♖a4+

This is just one of the ideas behind White's move seven.



10... ♗d7

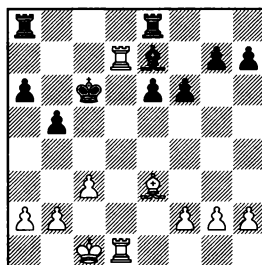
Black continues in a principled fashion.

He would be clearly worse after 10... ♗d7 11. ♗xd7 ♖xd7 (Or 11... ♗xd7 12. g3 0-0-0 13. ♗g2 ♗b6 14. ♖b3 ♗d5 15. ♗g5 ♗e7 16. ♗xe7 ♗xe7 17. 0-0 cxd4 18. cxd4 ♖xd4 19. ♖a1 ♗c6 20. ♗xc6 bxc6 21. ♖c3 ♖hd8 22. ♖c2 ♖8d6 23. ♖xh7± Svidler – Vaissier, Asnieres sur Seine 2006.) 12. ♖xd7+ ♗xd7 13. 0-0-0 cxd4 14. ♗xd4 0-0-0 15. ♗c2 ♗b8 16. ♗e2 ♗c6 17. ♗b6 ♖d6 18. ♖xd6 ♗xd6 19. h4 h5 20. b4 ♗c7 21. ♗c5 g6 22. a4 a5 23. b5 ♗e5 24. ♗d4 ♖d8 25. b6 ♗d6 26. ♖b1 ♗c6 27. ♗e3 ♗d7 28. ♗b5 ♖c8 29. ♖d1 ♗e7 30. ♗g5± A. Sokolov – Vaissier, Pau 2008.

11. 0-0-0

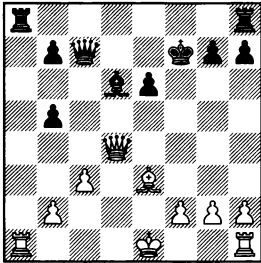
This is the most aggressive move for White.

He has a reliable alternative, though... – 11. ♗b5 cxd4 12. ♗xd7+ ♗xd7 13. ♖xd4 ♗b5! Black solves his problems in a concrete fashion. (It would be more conservative for him to opt for 13... f6 14. ♗xd7 ♖xd7 15. ♖xd7+ ♗xd7 16. 0-0-0+ ♗c6 17. ♖d4 b5 18. ♖hd1 ♗e7 19. ♖d7 ♖he8



You can study this position if you follow the games Dominguez – Nogueiras, which were played in the Capablanca Memorial Tournaments. Judge by yourselves – the quite principled Cuban player defended it thrice and only on the third time White managed to break his opponent's defence! 20. b3 h5 21. h3 e5 22. ♗c2 a5 23. a4 bxa4 24. bxa4 ♗f8 25. g4 hxg4 26. hxg4 ♖eb8 27. ♖f7 ♖b7 28. ♖xb7 ♗xb7 29. ♖b1+ ♗c6 30. ♖b6+ ♗d7 31. ♗d3 and later White conquered Black's defensive fortress, L. Dominguez – Nogueiras Santiago, Havana 2008.) 14. a4 ♗d6 15. ♗xf7!? (The alternative here is – 15. axb5 ♗xe5 16. ♖a4 0-0 17. b6 ♖e7 18. 0-0 ♖fd8 19. ♖fd1 g6 20. g3

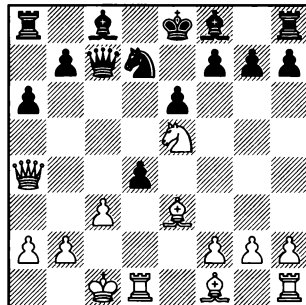
♖ac8 21.♗xd8+ ♗xd8 22.♗d1 h5 23.h4 ♗xd1+ and the opponents agreed to a draw, D.Mastrovasilis – Meier, Kallithea 2008. Meanwhile, the pawn on b6 guarantees that White will not risk much if he had continued his fight to win the game.) 15...♗xf7 16.axb5 axb5.



17.♗e2! White must centralize his king most of all! (Black can counter 17.♗d1 with the automatic reply 17...♗hd8.) 17...♗hd8 (In the following encounter between two classics of this variation White prevailed. 17...♗c6. This is obviously a loss of time. Black should have considered the idea ♗c4+, which would be more important than the pressure against the g2-pawn. 18.♗hd1 ♗xa1 19.♗xa1 b4 20.♗d1 ♗d8 21.♗h4 ♗e7 22.♗f4+ ♗g8 23.♗xd8+ ♗xd8 24.♗xb4 ♗xg2 25.♗b5! This endgame only looks equal, while in fact it is rather troublesome for Black. The game only confirmed this evaluation. 25...♗c6 26.♗xc6 bxc6 27.b4 ♗f7 28.♗f3 ♗f6 29.c4 g6 30.♗e4 ♗g7 31.b5 cxb5 32.cxb5+- and to hold this ending in a practical game is nearly impossible,

L.Dominguez – Meier, Havana 2009. It was worth trying for Black the move 25...♗f8!?, so that after 26.♗h5, White would have a passed c-pawn, instead of a b-pawn, after the exchange of queens.) 18.♗xa8 ♗xa8 (It looks like Black has lost a tempo, but that assumption is wrong.) 19.♗d1 ♗a6 20.b3 (White is forced to play this move; otherwise, Black will simply enter a drawish endgame.) 20...♗e7 21.♗g4 ♗xc3 22.♗h5+ ♗f8 23.♗xh7 ♗xb3 24.♗h8+ ♗f7 25.♗h5+ ♗g8 26.♗d8+ ♗xd8 27.♗e8+ ♗h7 and White failed to make more than a draw in the game Vachier Lagrave – Grachev, Dagomys 2009. Still, one recent game, played at the European Championship, demonstrated once again that the position is dangerous for Black after all...– 21.♗b6 ♗c4+ 22.♗e1 ♗c7 23.♗xb7 ♗xd1+ 24.♗xd1 bxc3 25.b3 ♗d5+ 26.♗xd5 exd5 27.♗d4 ♗xh2 28.g3! ♗g1 29.♗e2 c2 30.♗e3 d4 31.♗c1 ♗e6 32.♗f1 ♗h2 33.♗g2+- Ragger – Meier, Rijeka 2010.

11...cxd4



12. ♜xd7

White will lose his advantage if he continues with 12. ♜xd4?! ♜d6 13. ♜xd7 ♜xd7 14. ♖c4 ♖xc4 15. ♜xc4 ♖c8 16. ♜b3 ♜c6 17.f3 0-0= Nepomniachtchi – Vituogov, Serpukhov 2008.

12... ♜xd7

If White plays precisely, he will manage to prove his advantage after 12... ♖xd7 13. ♖c2 ♜c5 14. ♜xd4 ♜xd4 15. ♖xd4 ♖c7 (Black has also tried 15... ♖c6 16.f4 – White would maintain a powerful initiative after 16. ♜d3! – 16...b5 17. ♜d3 ♜b7 18. ♜e4 ♖c7 19. ♜b1 ♖d8 20. ♖xd8+ ♜xd8 21. ♜xb7 ♖xb7 22. ♖d1+ ♜e7 23. ♖d3 ♖c6 24. ♖g3 h6!= L.Dominguez – Dreev, Tripoli 2004.) 16. ♜d3 ♜d7 17.g3 h6 18. ♖d1 0-0-0 19. ♖c4 ♜c6 20. ♜e4 ♖xd1+ 21. ♖xd1 ♖d8 22. ♖f3 ♖d6 23.h4! ♜b8 24. ♜xc6 ♖xc6 25. ♖xc6 bxc6 26.h5! and the queen and pawn endgame was clearly preferable for White, who won it convincingly, Adams – Anand, Linares 2002.

13. ♖xd4 ♜c6

The ending is worse for Black following 13...e5 14. ♖b6 ♖xb6 15. ♜xb6 ♖c8 16. ♜e2 ♜c5 17. ♜xc5 ♖xc5 18. ♜f3 ♖c7 19. ♖d6 ♜e7 20. ♖b6 ♖b8 21. ♖e1 f6 22. ♖e4 ♖c6 23. ♖eb4 ♖xb6 24. ♖xb6 ♜c8 25.a4± Gashimov – Sumets, Cappelle la Grande 2007.

14. ♜c4

In case Black succeeds in developing his kingside, he will not be worse at all, but he has pres-

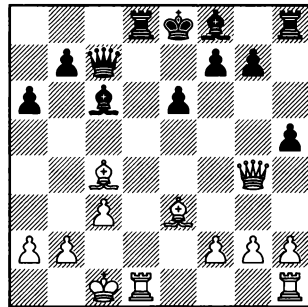
ently obvious problems to accomplish that.

14... ♖d8

He practically loses the game after 14...b5?! 15. ♜b3 ♜xg2? 16. ♖he1 ♜f3 17. ♜g5! ♜xd1 18. ♜xe6 fxe6 19. ♖xe6+ ♜e7 20. ♖xe7+ ♖xe7 21. ♜xe7 ♜xe7 22. ♖xg7+ ♜e6 23. ♜xd1+- Baklan – Tratar, Trieste 2007.

15. ♖g4 h5

It would be a disaster for Black to opt for 15... ♜d7? 16. ♜b3 ♖a5 17. ♜g5 ♖c8 18. ♖he1 h5 19. ♜xe6!+- Karjakin – Rychagov, Sochi 2007.



16. ♖g5!

White continues to exert pressure against his opponent's position.

Black's defence is much easier after 16. ♖xd8+ ♖xd8 17. ♖g3 ♖d6 18.f4 h4 19. ♖g4 ♜e4 20. ♖d1 ♖c6 21. ♜b3 ♜f5 22. ♖f3 ♜e4 23. ♖f2 ♖h5 24.g4 hxg3 25.hxg3 and White offered a draw, which was accepted, Anand – Bareev, Monte Carlo 2004.

16... ♖xd1+ 17. ♖xd1 g6 18. ♖f6

He loses his edge after 18. ♖f4? ♜xf4+! 19. ♞xf4 ♙h6=

18... ♜h7 19.g3 ♚e7 20. ♞d4 ♙f3

Black's play provokes admiration. It is evident that Georg Meier has studied and analyzed profoundly this variation.

But not 20...h4 21. ♙f4 ♞a5 22. ♞a7 ♜f8 23.g4 with initiative for White.

21. ♙f4

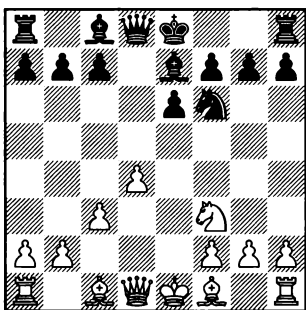
It is possible that White had better prefer here 21. ♞d2 h4 22. ♞a7 ♞c8 23. ♙b3 ♜h5 with good chances of equalizing for Black.

21... ♞c6

Or 21... ♞c5!? 22. ♞d7+ ♜f8 23. ♞d4 b5 24. b4 (24. ♙xe6 fxe6 25. ♙d6 ♙xd6 26. ♞d8+ ♜g7 27. ♞xd6 ♜h6 28. ♞f8+ ♞g7 29. ♞h8+ ♜h7 30. ♞f8=) 24... ♞c6 25. ♞xc6 ♙xc6 26. ♙b3 h4 27. g4 g5=

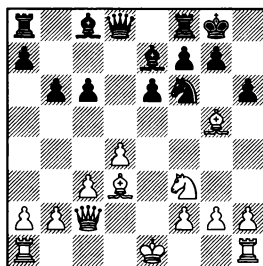
22. ♞d2 h4 23. ♞e5?! ♜f8 24. ♞b8+ ♜g7 25. ♙e5+ f6 26. ♞c7 ♜f7 27. ♞xc6 ♙xc6 and Black was even better in this endgame, Navara – Meier, Budva 2009.

b) 7... ♙e7



8. ♙d3

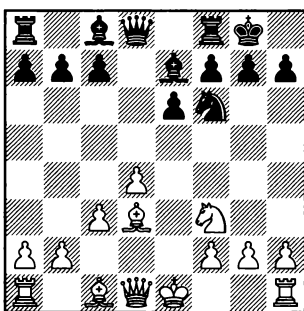
The somewhat strange move 8. ♞a4+ implies that chess has developed a lot. Still, I believe that White only reduces his own possibilities with it 8...c6 9. ♙d3 0–0 10. ♞c2 b6 11. ♙g5 h6



12. h4 ♙b7 13. ♜h3 c5. White's risky play has led to a situation, in which he must attack ignoring the possible material losses. 14. ♙xh6!? This is the beginning of a series of forced moves. 14...c4! (It is bad for Black to continue with 14... ♙xf3? 15. ♞xf3?! gxf6 16. ♞g3+ ♜h8 17. ♞d2 ♜g8 18. ♞xg8+ ♜xg8 19. ♞xh6 f5 20. ♙c4 ♜f6 21. ♙xe6+ ♞xe6+ 22. ♞xe6+ with an advantage for White, Degraeve – Vaissier, Gonfreville 2006. It is even better for him to choose 15. gxf3! gxf6 16. ♞g3+ ♜h8 17. ♞d2 ♜g8 18. ♞xg8+ ♜xg8 19. ♞xh6 f5 20. ♞g6+ ♜h8 21. ♜e2+- and the game is over thanks to the open g-file.) 15. ♙xg7 (White cannot be happy with the line: 15. ♙xc4 gxf6 16. ♞g3+ ♜h8 17. ♞d2 ♜g8 18. ♙d3 f5 19. ♜e5 ♙d6! and his pressure has been neutralized, while Black has remained with extra mate-

rial.) 15...cxd3 16. ♖d2 ♗xg7 (His only alternative here is 16...♖d5!? 17. ♗xf8 ♗xf8 18. ♖xd3 ♗h5 with a good piece play. Still, Black must have in mind that his opponent has a material advantage and quite serious at that.) 17. ♖g3+ ♗g4 18. ♖xg4+ ♗h7 19. ♗g5+ (It is hardly preferable for White to opt for 19. ♖xd3+ f5 20. ♗g5+ ♗xg5 21. ♖xg5 ♖g8 22. ♖h5+ ♗g6 23. g4 ♖d5 with a very sharp game.) 19... ♗xg5 20. ♖xg5 ♗e4! This is Black's only possible reply, but it is sufficient. (But not 20...♖h8? 21. ♖xd3+ f5 22. ♖g3 ♗h6 23. ♖g6+ ♗h5 24. ♖g5+ ♗h6 25. ♖g7 and Black resigned, Motylev – Roiz, Khanty-Mansiysk 2005.) 21. ♖h5+ (21. ♖f4 ♗g6 22. h5 ♗f5+) 21... ♗g8 22. ♖h6 f6 23. f3 ♗f5 24. g4 ♖d6! This is the ultimate fine point. 25. gxf5 ♖g3+ 26. ♗d2 ♖f2+ 27. ♗xd3 ♖xf3=

8...0-0



9. ♖c2

The overly academic move 9.0-0 would not provide for White any advantage: 9...b6

10. ♖e2 ♗b7 11. ♗f4 c5 12. dxc5 bxc5 13. ♖fd1 ♖b6 14. ♗e5 ♖ad8 15. ♗g3 ♗a8 16. ♗g4 ♖c6 17. f3 ♗d5 18. ♗e5= A. Sokolov – Dorfman, France 2002.

He would not change much with 9. ♗g5 h6 (9...b6!?) 10. ♗xf6 (10. h4!?) 10... ♗xf6 11. ♖e2 ♖d5! Even Vladimir Kramnik failed to obtain any edge with White in this position: 12. h4 ♗d7 13. ♗e4 ♖h5 14. 0-0-0 ♗c6 15. ♗b1 ♗xe4+ 16. ♖xe4 ♖d5 17. ♖he1 ♖xe4+ 18. ♖xe4= Kramnik – Bareev, Cap d'Agde 2003.

Maybe White can try to develop his queen to a more ambitious square, but that is not going to change radically the evaluation of the position. 9. ♖e2 b6 10. ♗g5 (It is interesting to deploy this bishop to f4: 10. ♗f4 ♗b7 11. 0-0-0 ♖c8 – and here I would like to recommend the advance of Black's rook-pawn. 11...a5!? – 12. h4 c5 13. h5 cxd4 14. ♗xd4 ♖d8 15. ♗b1 ♖d5 16. ♖h3 ♗d6 17. ♗xd6 ♖xd6 18. g4 ♖d5 19. f4 h6 20. ♖g1 ♖c5 21. ♖e3 with a comfortable position for White, Timoschenko – Kholmov, Stary Smokovec 1996.) 10... ♗b7 11. 0-0-0 ♖d5! This is a standard maneuver of Black's queen in this variation. 12. ♗b1 c5 13. ♗c2 (Or 13. c4 ♖d6 14. h4 cxd4 15. ♗e5?! ♗d7 16. ♗f4 ♗f6 17. ♗xd7 ♖xd7 18. ♗g5 ♖e7 19. f4 ♖fe8 20. ♗e4 ♗xe4+ 21. ♖xe4 ♖ad8 22. ♖he1 h6 23. ♗xf6 ♖xf6 and Black ended up with an extra pawn, Ibrayev – Rychagov, St Petersburg 2006.) 13... ♖fd8

14.h4 h6 15.c4 ♖d6 16.♗e3 cxd4
17.♗xd4 ♖c7 18.♗hd1 e5 19.♗xd8+
♗xd8 20.♗xd8+ ♗xd8 21.♗c1 e4
22.♗d2 e3 23.fxe3 ♖g3 24.♗f3
♖g4 25.♗d2 ♗e4 26.♗e1 ♗f6=

with an excellent compensation for the pawn, Shirov – Bareev, Monte Carlo 2004.

9...b6 10.♗g5 h6 11.h4!?

White maintains his initiative.

There was a recent game continuing 11.♗xf6 ♗xf6 12.♗e4 (White would not change much if he includes the check – 12.♗h7+ ♗h8 13.♗e4 ♖b8 14.0–0–0 ♗b7 15.♗xb7 ♖xb7 16.♖e4 ♖d5 17.♖xd5 exd5 18.♗he1 c6 19.♗c2 ♗g8 20.♗e5 ♖c8= Berelovich – Totsky, Bucharest 1998.) 12... ♖b8 13.0–0–0 ♗b7 14.♗xb7 ♖xb7 15.♖e4 ♖d5 16.♖xd5 exd5 17.♗he1 c6 18.♗e5 ♖c8 19.♗c2 ♗f8 20.♗d3 ♖e7 21.♗xe7 ♗xe7 22.♖e1 ♗d6= Ovetchkin – Mihajlovskij, St Petersburg 2006.

11...♗b7 12.0–0–0

In case of 12.♖h3 c5, there arises a transposition to the game Motylev – Roiz, Khanty-Mansiysk 2005, which we have analyzed in our notes to White's move eight.

12...♖d5! 13.♖h3

This is a bit too risky.

It seems more natural for White to play 13.♗b1 c5 with mutual chances.

13...♖fd8

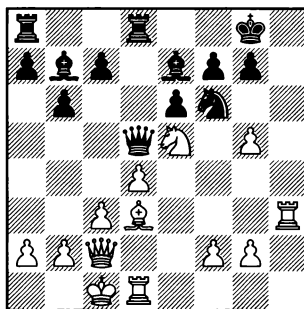
It is preferable for Black to opt for 13...♖xa2 14.♗xh6 ♖a1+ 15.♗d2 ♖a5 16.♗e3 c5 with a very

sharp game.

14.♗e5

White continues with the same aggressive approach. Meanwhile, following 14.♗xh6! gxh6 15.♖d2 (After 15.♗e5 ♗f8! it is only a draw.) Black must be very careful not to lose outright. For example: 15...♗d6 16.♗e5!? ♗f8 17.♖xh6+ ♗e7 18. ♖e1; 18.♗g6!?, or 15... ♖h5 16.♗e5 ♗d6 17.♗e2 ♖f5 18. ♖xh6 ♗e4 19.f3 ♗f8 20.♖e3 ♗d6 21.h5↑

14...hxg5 15.hxg5



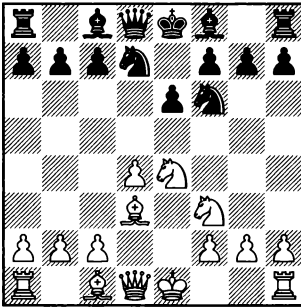
15...♖xg2

There is no forced win for Black after 15...♗d7!? It looks like the least of evils for White is to enter an endgame without a pawn. 16.♗b1 ♗xg5 17.♗c4 ♖xg2 18.♖g3 ♖e4 19.♖xg5 ♖xc2+ 20.♗xc2 ♗xe5 21.♖xe5+

16.♖g3 ♖h2 17.gxf6 ♗xf6 18.♖e2 ♖h6+ 19.♗b1 c5 20.♖e1 ♗d6 21.♖g4 ♖h4 22.♖e2?! and Black prevailed in the subsequent fight, Vachier Lagrave – Tratar, Heraklio 2007.

Chapter 16

1.e4 e6 2.d4 d5 3.♘d2 dxe4 4.♗xe4
 ♘d7 5.♗f3 ♘gf6 6.♙d3



This is the most dynamic and aggressive approach. White is developing a new piece with his every move. Now Black must choose between: a) 6...♗xe4 and b) 6...c5.

a) 6...♗xe4

This is more fashionable than 6...c5.

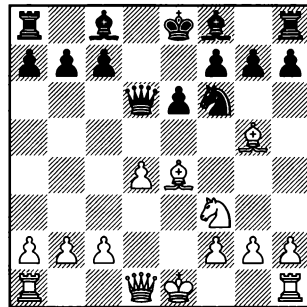
7.♙xe4 ♗f6 8.♙g5

We will analyze the routine move 8.♙d3?! a bit later.

8...♗d6

Black may be totally squeezed after 8...♙e7?! 9.♙xf6 ♙xf6 10.♗d3! c6 11.0-0-0 ♙d7 12.♗e5 g6 13.f4± ♗e7 14.♗e3 0-0-0 15.♙d3 ♙e8 16.c4 ♗c7 17.♙hd1 c5 18.dxc5 ♙xd3 19.♗xd3 ♙c6 20.♙xc6 ♗xc6

21.♗e5 ♗xg2 22.c6!+- b6 23.♗a3 ♙xe5 24.♗a6+ Galkin – Galavics, Oberwart 1999.



We will analyze now: a1) 9.♙d3 and a2) 9.♙xf6.

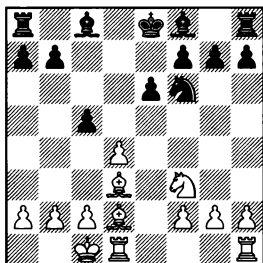
a1) 9.♙d3

This move involves much more risk for both sides.

9...♗b4+ 10.♙d2

White can hardly obtain any advantage after 10.♗d2 ♗xd2+ (But not 10...♗xb2?, because White will develop in addition his queen with tempo with disastrous consequences for his opponent. 11.0-0 ♙e7 12.♗f4 ♗b6 13.♗g3 c5 14.♙ab1 ♗d8 15.dxc5 ♙xc5 16.♙fd1

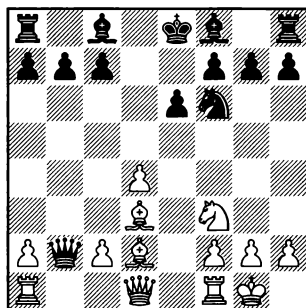
♖e7 17.♙b5+ ♘f8 18.♘e5+- h6
 19.♞d7 ♙xd7 20.♙xf6 ♙xf2+ 21.
 ♚xf2 gxf6 22.♘xd7+ ♔g7 23.
 ♚b3 ♞hd8 24.♞g3+ ♔h8 25.♚f4
 and Black terminated his resistance,
 Alekseev – Ismagambetov,
 Khanty-Mansiysk 2007.) 11.♙xd2
 c5 12.0-0-0



12...♙d7?! 13.dxc5 ♙xc5 14.
 ♘e5! White obtains an edge with
 this strong move. 14...a6 (Maybe
 Black had better gobble a pawn,
 since after the move in the game
 he had to suffer for nothing in re-
 turn. 14...♙xf2!? 15.♞hf1 ♙c5 16.
 ♙c3 and White has a tremendous
 compensation, while Black has
 almost no useful moves.) 15.f4
 ♙c8 16.a4 b5 17.a5 ♘d5 18.♙e4
 ♙b7 19.♞he1 ♙d6 20.h4 ♚b8 21.h5
 ♙xe5 22.fxe5 0-0 23.h6!± Ru-
 blevsky – Kosic, Budva 2002.

It is stronger for Black to go for
 some concrete actions. 12...cxd4!
 13.♘xd4 ♙c5 14.♙f4 (It is not pref-
 erable for White to continue with
 14.♙e3 ♙d7 15.♞he1 ♘g4, because
 Black obtains at least an equal
 position.) 14...♘d5 15.♙b5+ ♙d7
 16.♙xd7+ ♔xd7=

10...♚xb2 11.0-0

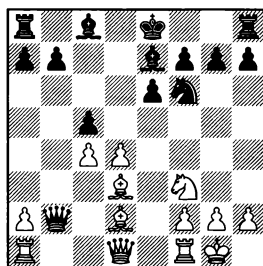


This position needs an addi-
 tional practical testing. It is obvi-
 ous that White has an excellent
 compensation, but it is not easy to
 tell whether it would be sufficient
 to claim an advantage. The game,
 we quote below, is presently the
 only practical example.

11...♚a3

Black evacuates immediately
 his queen.

11...♙e7 12.c4 c5



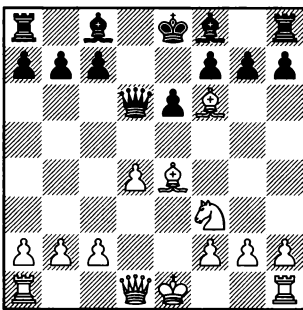
13.d5! This is a standard re-
 source for White. It is evident
 that Black will not capture this
 pawn on d5 and it is going to
 cramp his position considerably.
 13...0-0 14.♞e1 ♙d7 15.♙f4 ♞fe8
 16.d6 ♙d8 17.♘e5 (It would be
 even stronger for White to play

4. ♖xe4 ♘d7 5. ♘f3 ♘gf6 6. ♗d3

simply 17. ♖b1! ♗xa2 18. ♖xb7 ♗c6 19. ♖b1+) 17... ♗d4 18. ♗d2 ♘h5 19. ♗e4!± ♗a4 20. ♗xb7 ♖b8 21. ♗c6 ♗xd2 22. ♗xd2 ♗xc6 23. ♘xc6 ♖b7 24. ♗e3+- ♗d7 25. ♗xc5 ♗b6 26. ♗a3 ♘h8 27. c5 ♗c8 28. ♘e5 1-0 Volokitin – Levin, Dagomys 2009.

12. ♘e5 ♗d6 13. ♗e3 ♗e7 14. c4 c5 15. ♗c2 0-0 16. ♗d3 g6 17. ♖ad1 ♗c7 18. ♗c3 b6 19. dxc5 bxc5 20. ♗f4! (White overlooked that possibility in the game, but later he won anyway. 20. ♗h6 ♗d8 21. ♖xd8+ ♗xd8 22. ♗d1 ♗b7 23. ♘g4 with a wonderful compensation for the sacrificed pawn, Kasparov – Anand, Kopavogur 2000.) 20... ♗b6 21. ♖b1 ♗d8 22. ♘c6+- and the issue has been settled.

a2) 9. ♗xf6



White continues to rely on the quickest development.

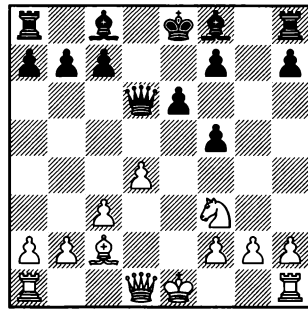
9... gxf6 10. c3

It is weaker for him to opt for 10. ♗e2 ♗d7 11. 0-0-0 (11. ♗xb7?? ♗b4-+) 11... 0-0-0 12. ♘b1 ♗g7

13. c3 f5 14. ♗c2 ♗c6 and Black solved all his problems in the opening, Can – Maslak, Peterhof 2006.

10... f5 11. ♗c2

It is possible that White should consider seriously – 11. ♗d3. The following game illustrates this convincingly. 11... ♗d7 12. ♘e5 ♗g7 13. ♘xd7 ♗xd7 14. ♗e2 0-0-0 15. 0-0 c5 16. ♗b5 ♗c7 17. dxc5 ♗xc5 18. a4 ♗d6 19. ♗h5 ♗c7 20. a5 a6 21. ♗e2 ♘b8 22. ♖a4 and he had some initiative from the practical point of view, A. Timofeev – A. Rychagov, Krasnoyarsk 2007.



11... ♗d7

It is essential for Black not to transpose moves: 11... ♗g7? 12. ♗e2! and he is in trouble. 12... ♗d7 (After 12... 0-0 13. 0-0-0, White's attack against the enemy king will be decisive.) 13. ♗xf5± 0-0-0 14. ♗c2 h5 15. 0-0-0 ♗c6 16. ♗e4 ♗f4+ 17. ♘d2 ♗d5 18. ♘b1 e5 19. ♗e3 ♗f6 20. dxe5 ♗xe5 21. ♗f3 ♗e6? 22. ♗xb7+ ♘b8 23. ♗a6+- Alekseev – Ismagambetov, Khanty-Mansiysk 2007.

12. ♖e2

12. ♖e5 ♗g7 13. f4. His wish to avoid entering a position with bishops of opposite colours is understandable, but now Black equalizes easily. 13... ♗xe5 14. fxe5 ♖d5 15. ♖f3 ♗c6 16. ♖xd5 ♗xd5 17. 0-0 ♖e7 18. ♗b3 ♗e4= Macieja – Anastasian, Stepanakert 2004.

12... 0-0-0 13. ♖e5

White exploits the possibility to force the enemy bishop to occupy a passive position. This is only temporary, though...

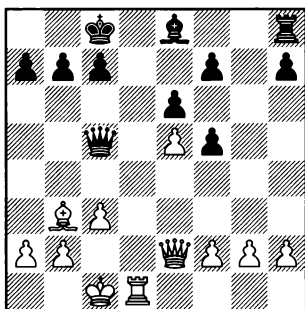
13... ♗e8 14. ♗b3

It is very important that Black can counter 14.0-0-0 with the double-attack 14... ♖d5!, winning a pawn.

14... ♗g7 15. 0-0-0

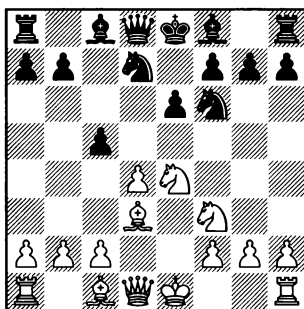
White would not achieve much with the line: 15. f4 ♗xe5 16. fxe5 ♖e7 17. 0-0-0 ♗c6= Gaponenko – Alexandrova, Germany 2009.

15... ♗xe5 16. dxe5 ♖c5 17. ♖xd8+ ♖xd8 18. ♖d1+ ♖c8



White's pieces seem to be very active, but the position is equal.

b) 6...c5



Black accomplishes the main ideas of the Rubinstein variation one after the other.

As always in cases like this, it is essential to do things in the right order. He undermines his opponent's centre before exchanging a couple of knights...

7. 0-0

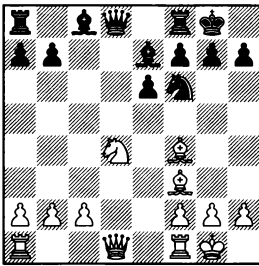
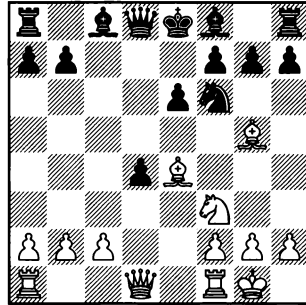
White should not go too far in his desire to develop all his pieces immediately. 7. ♗g5 cxd4 8. ♖xd4 ♖a5+ (I think that the routine move 8... ♗e7 is weaker in this particular case: 9. ♖e2 ♖xe4 10. ♗xe7 ♖xe7 11. ♗xe4 0-0 12. 0-0-0 ♖c5 13. f4 ♗d7 14. ♗f3 ♖fd8 15. ♖d2 ♖a4 16. ♖hd1 ♖b4 17. c3 ♖dc8 18. ♖c6! ♗xc6 19. ♖d8+- Navara – Luther, Deizisau 2005.) 9. ♗d2 (White would not achieve anything with 9. ♖d2?! ♖e5! 10. ♖f3 ♖xe4 11. ♖xe5 ♖xd2 12. ♖xd7 ♖f3+! 13. gxf3 ♗xd7.) 9... ♖e5 10. ♖f3 ♖xb2 11. 0-0 ♗e7 12. ♖xf6+ ♖xf6 with a complicated game. This position resembles a bit the game Kasparov – Anand, Kopavogur 2000,

4. ♖xe4 ♘d7 5. ♘f3 ♘gf6 6. ♗d3

which we have already analyzed. The difference being that Black has already exchanged the d4-pawn and this will facilitate considerably his defence.

7... ♖xe4

Black should not help his opponent in the accomplishment of his plans: 7...cxd4? 8. ♘xd4 ♖xe4 9. ♗xe4 ♘f6 10. ♗f3 ♗e7 11. ♗f4 0-0



12.c3. He has some serious problems already. 12...a6 13. ♗e1 ♗a7 14.a4 ♗d7 15. ♖b3 ♖c8 16.a5 ♗c5 17. ♗ad1 ♗xd4 18. ♗xd4 ♗c6 19. ♖b6!± with a great advantage for White, Alekseev – Mamedyarov, Moscow 2008.

8. ♗xe4 ♘f6 9. ♗g5

This is again the right move. If he retreats the bishop, his hopes to obtain an advantage will evaporate.

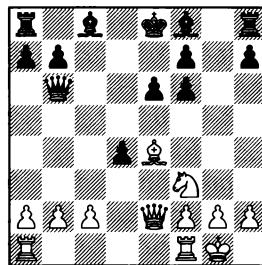
9...cxd4

(diagram)

10. ♘xd4

White can also try here the semi-gambit move 10. ♖e2 and Black should counter this in an aggressive and even greedy fashion. 10... ♖b6! (His problem is that

playing in a classical fashion would not work here: 10... ♗e7?! 11. ♗ad1 ♖xe4 12. ♗xd4 ♖xg5 13. ♗xd8+ ♗xd8 14. ♘xg5 ♗xg5 15. ♖b5+-, or 12... ♖xd4 13. ♘xd4 ♖xg5 14.h4±) 11. ♗f6 (White has also tried 11. ♗fd1 ♗c5?! 12. ♗xf6 gxf6 13.b4 ♖xb4 14. ♗ab1 ♖a4 15. ♖d2 ♖d7 16.c3 d3 17. ♖h6 ♗e7 18. ♗xd3 ♖c7 19. ♗bd1 with a decisive attack, Rublevsky – Kacheishvili, Ohrid 2001. Black had to defend with 11... ♖xe4 12. ♖xe4 f6! 13. ♗f4 ♗e7 14. ♘xd4 e5 15. ♗xe5 fxe5 16. ♖xe5 ♗d7 and White's attack would have been over before it had even started.) 11... gxf6



12. ♗ad1 ♗g7 (It would be too risky for Black to play 12... ♗c5,

because of 13.♞d3!, with a combined attack against the pawns on b7 and d4.) 13.♟xd4 0–0 14.c3 f5 15.♙b1 ♞d8 16.♞d3 ♟d7 17.♞fd1 ♙c6, Black neutralizes gradually his opponent's lead in development and equalizes, Saric – Meier, Szeged 2007.

White's attempts to play in a sophisticated fashion – 12.♞fd1 would not guarantee for him an edge: 12...♟g7 (About 12...♙c5?! 13.b4 see the game Rublevsky – Kacheishvili, Ohrid 2001.) 13.♟xd4 0–0 14.c3 f5! (14...♟d7?! – This move is a bit slow and White exerts some pressure after it. 15.a4 a6 16.a5 ♖c7 17.♗h5 h6 18.♞d3 f5 19.♙f3 ♞ad8 20.♞ad1 with an advantage for him, Shirov – Gelfand, Monte Carlo 2002.) 15.♟d3 (It can only be dangerous for White if he tries 15.♙f3?! e5 16.♟b5 e4 17.♙h5 ♟e6.) 15...♟d7 16.a4 ♞fd8 with counterplay for Black.

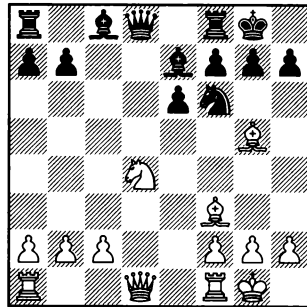
10...♙e7

It looks rather dubious for him to opt for 10...h6?! 11.♙xf6 ♖xf6 12.♗d3 a6 13.♞ad1 ♙e7 14.♟c6! e5 15.♟xe7 ♖xe7 16.f4 exf4?? 17.♙xb7 and White won, Svidler – Bareev, Wijk aan Zee 2004.

11.♙f3 0–0

(diagram)

This position resembles very much the game Alekseev – Mamedyarov, see our notes to Black's move seven. There is only one difference, but it is tremendously



important. White had to develop his bishop to g5 and not to the f4-square, where it was much more functional.

He has numerous alternatives here.

12.♞e1

This is his main line.

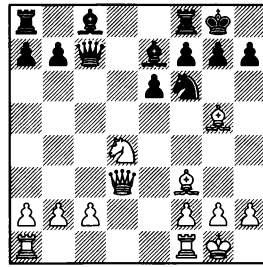
It would be too ambitious for White to opt for 12.c4 ♖c7 13.♖c1 (The move 13.♖e2 can be countered by Black with the typical resource 13...♟g4!) 13...a6 14.♞e1 e5 15.♟c2 ♖xc4 16.♞xe5 ♙e6= 17.♟e3 ♖xc1+ 18.♞xc1 ♞ac8 19.♞xc8 ♞xc8 20.♙xb7 ♞b8 21.♙xa6 ♞xb2 22.a4 h6 23.♙h4 ♞b4 24.♙g3 and the opponents agreed to a draw after having exhausted all the resources of the position, Morozevich – Pelletier, Biel 2004.

White tries sometimes 12.c3 and it seems to me that Black should better reply to it with the active and not yet tested move – 12...e5! (Or 12...♖c7!/? 13.♞e1 ♞d8 14.♖e2 ♟d5 15.♙xe7 ♟xe7 16.♞ad1 ♟d7 17.♖e4 ♞ab8 18.g3 h6 19.h4 ♟d5 20.♖c2 ♟f6 21.♙g2 ♙e8 22.

♗e2 ♖b6 23. ♗d2 ♗d6 24. ♗ed1
 ♗bd8= Womacka – Drozdovskij,
 playchess.com 2006.) 13. ♘b5
 (This is the only way for White to
 create some problems for his op-
 ponent.) 13... ♗e6 14. ♖xd8 ♗axd8
 15. ♗fd1 (Black should fear neither
 15. ♘c7 ♗c4 16. ♗fd1 b6 17. b3 ♗xd1+
 18. ♗xd1 ♗c8! 19. ♗xf6 ♗xf6 20. ♗d7
 ♗d8=; nor 15. ♗fe1 h6! 16. ♗h4 ♗d2
 with good counter chances.) 15...
 h6 16. ♗h4 g5 17. ♗g3 ♗c4 18. ♗e1!
 White has played quite concretely
 and it seems he has obtained an
 edge, but Black has a wonder-
 ful resource up his sleeve – 18...
 e4 19. ♘d4 ♗fe8 20. ♗xe4 ♗a3!
 21. bxa3 ♘xe4=

Kramnik tested here the inter-
 esting line: 12. a4!? a6 13. ♗e1 ♖c7
 14. c3 ♗e8 15. ♖b3 ♗b8 16. g3 ♗d7
 17. a5 ♗c5 18. ♗ad1 ♖xa5 19. ♗f4
 ♗xd4 20. ♗xb8 ♗xf2+ 21. ♖xf2
 ♗xb8 22. ♗d4 and White prevailed
 in the game Kramnik – Bareev,
 Monte Carlo 2005. It looks bet-
 ter for Black to play actively
 14... ♗d8!? 15. ♖d2! (15. g3 ♘d5
 16. ♗xe7 ♘xe7 17. ♖e2 ♗d7=) 15...
 ♗d7 16. ♗f4 (White can capture his
 opponent's bishop with 16. ♘f5,
 but this will not provide him with
 an advantage: 16... ♗c6 17. ♘xe7+
 ♖xe7 18. ♖f4 ♗xf3 19. ♖xf3 h6!
 Black repels his opponent's bish-
 op from its wonderful square.
 20. ♗h4 ♗d2!; 20. ♗e3 ♗d5=) 16...
 ♗d6 17. ♗xd6 ♖xd6 with an ap-
 proximately equal position.

It is interesting for White to
 continue with 12. ♖d3 ♖c7



and then:

the active sortie 13. ♘b5 would
 not yield any dividends to him
 13... ♖e5 14. ♗e3 ♗d7 15. a4 ♗c6=

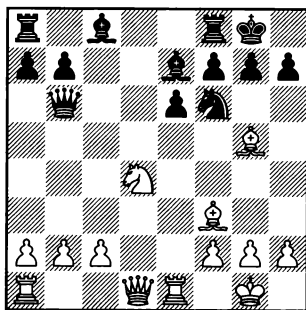
The move 13. ♗h4 was test-
 ed recently by a young Russian
 grandmaster. His opponent was
 one of the main experts of the
 entire Rubinstein variation and
 he found a worthy response: 13...
 ♘g4! 14. ♗g3 ♘e5 15. ♗xe5 ♖xe5.
 White's pieces are active and it
 looks like he has the initiative, but
 Black has a bishop-pair and no
 weaknesses at all in his camp, so
 the prospects are equal. 16. ♗ad1
 a6 17. ♖c4 ♗b8 18. ♗fe1 ♖a5 (18...
 ♖c5!?) 19. ♘b3 ♖b6 20. a4 ♗d6
 21. g3 ♖c7 22. ♖xc7 ♗xc7= Timo-
 feev – Meier, Havana 2009.

13. ♗fd1 ♗d8? This is a weak
 move (It is much better for him to
 play 13... a6.). 14. c4 (After 14. ♘b5!
 ♖a5 15. ♖xd8+ ♗xd8 16. b4 ♖b6
 17. ♗e3+-; it looks like the least
 of evils for Black is 15... ♖xd8
 16. ♗xd8+ ♗xd8 17. ♗d1 ♗b6, al-
 though this ending must be also
 lost for him.) 14... a6 15. ♖c2 ♗d7
 16. g3 ♗ac8 17. ♗ac1 ♖b8 (17... h6!?
 18. ♗e3 ♗c5=) 18. ♖e2 e5 19. ♘c2
 ♗e6 20. ♘e3 ♗xd1+ 21. ♗xd1 b5

22.♙xf6 ♘xf6 23.♙d5 and White had the advantage, Najer – Lysyj, Ulan Ude 2009.

After 13.♙fe1 ♘d8 14.♙ad1 a6 15.c3 ♙d7 16.♙e2 ♙d6 (16... ♘g4! 17.♙xg4 ♙xg5=) 17.g3 ♙ab8 18.♙g2 ♙e8 19.♙d3, Black failed to equalize to the end of the game, Najer – Relange, Ohrid 2009.

12...♙b6



13.♘b3

White is understandably reluctant to retreat from the centre, but in this case this is forced.

The ultra-aggressive move 13. ♘f5 led to a quick exhaustion of the resources after 13...exf5 14. ♙xe7 ♘e4!= 15.♙xe4 fxe4 16.♙d5 ♙xb2 17.♙c1 ♙e6 18.♙xe4 ♙xa2 19. ♙xb7 ♙ac8 20.♙xa7 ♙xc2 and the opponents agreed to a draw, Cheparinov – Perez Garcia, Seville 2004.

13...♙d8 14.♙e2 ♙d7

Black plays this with the nearly banal idea of trading the light-squared bishops.

It would be too risky for him to opt for 14...a5 15.♙ad1! (It is less precise for White to choose 15.♙e3

♙c7 16.c4 ♙d7 17.♙d4 a4 18.♙e5 ♙d6 19.♙xd6 ♙xd6 20.♙ad1 ♙b6 21.♘d4 ♙e8 with an excellent game for Black, Shomoev – Bಾರೆev, playchess.com 2004.) 15... ♙d7 (After 15...a4 16.♙e3 ♙c7 17. ♙xd8+ ♙xd8 18.♘d4 ♙d7 19.a3 – Black’s queenside is much rather weakened by the advance of his a-pawn.) 16.♙e3 (It is stronger for White to play 16.♙e3! ♙xe3 17.♙xe3 ♙c6 18.♙xc6 bxc6 19.♙xd8+ ♙xd8 and he obtains a long-lasting advantage thanks to Black’s destroyed queenside.) 16...♙c7 17.♘d4 ♙c5 18.g3 ♙e8 19.c3 h6 20.♘b5 ♙xb5 21.♙xd8+ ♙xd8 22.♙xb5 ♙xe3 23.♙xe3 b6= Robson – Meier, ICC 2008.

15.♙d2

That is the right way for White to create problems for his opponent.

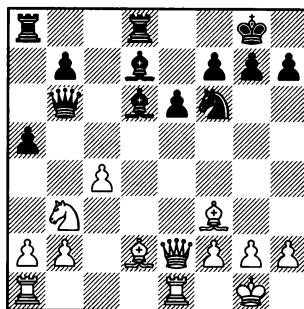
15...♙b4

It is premature for Black to play 15...a5, because of 16. ♙e5! and he will have problems.

16.c3

16.♙e3?! ♙c7 17.c3 ♙d6=

16...♙d6 17.c4 a5

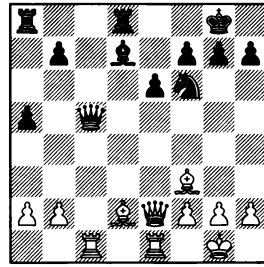


18. ♗ed1!?

This is with the idea to place the rooks on c1 and d1 and not on d1 and e1.

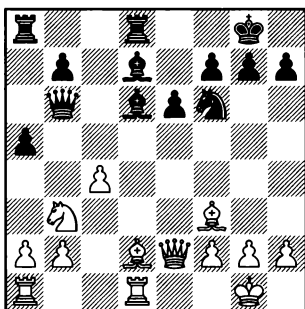
White can provoke wild complications with 18. ♗ac1, but he may end on the wrong side of the bargain. 18...a4 19.c5 ♗xh2+ 20.♘h1 (Black obtains an excellent position in case of 20.♘xh2 ♗c7+ 21.g3 axb3 22.♗f4 ♗c8 23. axb3 ♗c6.) 20...♗c7 21.♘a5 (It would be a disaster for White to opt for 21.♘d4? ♗f4 22.♗xf4 ♗xf4 23.♗xb7 ♗ab8 – 23...♗xd4? 24.♗c4! – 24.c6 ♗xd4 25.c7 ♗h4+! 26.♘g1 ♘g4–+) 21...♗b5! 22.♗xb5 ♗xd2 23.♘c4 ♗xf2 24.♗xb7. Black had better place his rook here on a defensive position: 24... ♗a7!? (In the game after 24...♗b8 25.♗xc7 ♗xc7 26.♘g1 ♗g3 27.c6 ♘e8 28.♗ed1?! a3 29.bxa3 ♗xa2, he freed his rook and had a clear advantage, Ju.Polgar – van Wely, Hooageveen 2001. The Dutch GM could have encountered difficulties after 28.♗e3!) 25.♗xc7 ♗xc7 26.♘g1 ♗g3 with a very interesting fight ahead.

It looks very attractive for White to play 18.c5!?, but fortunately for Black, he just manages to neutralize White's assault. 18... ♗xc5 19.♘xc5 ♗xc5 20.♗ac1 (Naturally, the move 20.♗xb7?! was not the reason White had sacrificed a pawn: 20...♗ab8 21.♗ec1 ♗a7 22.♗f3 ♗xb2 23.♗e1 a4 and he will manage to draw.)



20...♗f5 (It would be tremendously risky for Black to play 20...♗e7?! 21.♗e5! – 21.♗c7?! ♗d6 22.♗xb7 ♗c6= – 21...♗c6 22.♗xa5 ♗dc8 23.♗xc6 bxc6. His position is strategically hopeless. Of course, he can still rely on some tricks, but that is a personal problem of the player.) 21.♗xb7 ♗ab8 22.♗c7 ♗b5 23.♗e3 ♗d3! (Black cannot stop in the middle of the road, since that may lead to his swift demise.) 24.♗f4 (24.♗a7 ♗xb7!–+) 24...♘e8 25. ♗e4 (25.♗e7 ♗xd2! 26.♗xd2 ♗f6 and his position is even a bit more active after 27.♗xe8+ ♗xe8 28.♗f3 ♗xb2 29.♗xa5 ♗d4.) 25... ♗xf4 26.♗xf4 ♘xc7 27.♗xc7 ♗dd8=

The straightforward move 18. ♗ad1 enables Black to simplify the position after 18...♗c6 19.♗xc6 bxc6 20.♗c3 ♗b4 (20...a4!? 21.♘d2 ♗b4 22.♗xb4 ♗xb4 23.♘f3 with approximate equality, or 21.♗xd6 ♗xd6 22.c5 ♗d8 23.cxd6 axb3 and Black is not worse at all.) 21.c5!? ♗a7 22.♗xd8+ ♗xd8 23.♗xf6 gxf6 24.♗c1 ♗d5=



18...♙c6!?

It would be worse for Black to play 18...♙b4, because besides what happened in the game – 19.♙e3 ♖c7 20.♖ac1 ♙c6 21.♘d4 ♙xf3 22.♗xf3 e5 23.♘f5 e4 24.♗g3 ♗xg3 25.♘xg3 ♖d3 26.♙f1 ♖c8 27.♙e2 ♖xd1 28.♖xd1 h5 29.b3± Rublevsky – Voinov, Krasnoyarsk 2007, White would have the interesting possibility 19.♗e3!? ♖c7 20.♙xb4 axb4 21.♗c5 and Black would lose a part of his queenside.

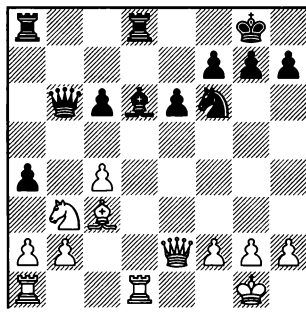
19.♙xc6 bxc6 20.♙c3

He can counter 20.♗e1 with 20...♙b4.

The move 20.♙g5 can be parried by Black with 20...a4 21.♙xf6

gxf6 22.♖xd6 ♖xd6 23.c5 ♗d8 24.cxd6 axb3 with equality.

20...a4



21.♖xd6!?

White will only reach a weaker version of the variation, which we have analyzed in our notes to his move 18, after 21.♘d2 ♙b4=

21...♖xd6 22.c5 ♗d8 23. cxd6 axb3 24.♗c4 bxa2 25. ♗xc6

Or 25.♖xa2 ♖xa2 26.♗xa2 ♘e8 27.♙e5 ♘xd6 28.♙xd6 ♗xd6 29.♗a8+ ♗f8 30.♗xc6=

25...♘d5! and Black's powerful knight on d5, together with the missing white pawn on a2, guarantees him against any troubles.

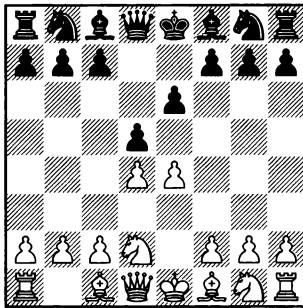
In order to conclude the results of the analyses in the third part of the book, I would like to mention the following – the Rubinstein variation is in fact a separate opening. It is much different from the main lines of the French defence. It has the reputation of a super-solid and even drawish opening, but this should not be overestimated. We must remember that Black reduces the tension in the centre a bit prematurely and his bishop is restricted in its movements by the pawn on e6 just like always. On the other hand, we have been convinced, on the basis of concrete variations, that if White wishes to create problems in the opening for a well-prepared opponent with Black, he must have done a thorough analytical work.

I would like to recommend to the fans of the French defence to include this variation in their opening repertoire, but not to have it as a main weapon. You may get used then to playing rather simple positions and you will have problems in the other variations of the French defence. They are all so complicated with pawn-chains and tension and numerous non-standard tactical motives.

Parts 4 and 5

The Tarrasch Variation

1.e4 e6 2.d4 d5 3.♘d2



The first thing that comes to my mind, concerning the Tarrasch variation, is that it is reliable, flexible and elastic. The situations arising after 3.♘d2 do not depend so much on pawn-structure and maneuvers, like after 3.e5, but on the other hand they are not so irrational and sharp as these arising after 3.♘c3. If your opponent prefers playing calm positions, then most probably he would be willing to include this variation in his armour. White does not risk much and the possible setups after the opening are not so various and can be easily studied. You can witness only very seldom weak squares, or pawn-defects in White's position.

On the other hand, the more straightforward the tactics your opponent adheres to, the easier it will be to prepare against it. If White wishes to avoid sharp theoretical discussions, then it would be simple enough for Black to implement his own plans in the absence of pressing from the opponent.

It is considered that after 3.♘d2, Black has two basic possibilities at his disposal – 3...c5 and 3...♘f6. Lately however, a variation, which used to be regarded as a sideline – 3...♗e7 became very popular. I recommend to the readers, who are willing to take a risk, both in strategical and tactical aspects, to pay attention to this particular variation.

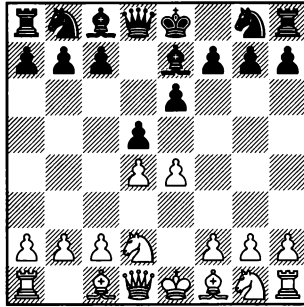
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Later, for the players who prefer “classics”, we will analyze 3...c5 as well. The system with 3...d6, was no doubt a quite reliable weapon for Black during many years and it deserved attention too. Still, I do not like it very much, because Black can hardly reach really complicated positions in that fashion. There are so many weak squares in his camp, that he is likely to fail to equalize.

Part 4

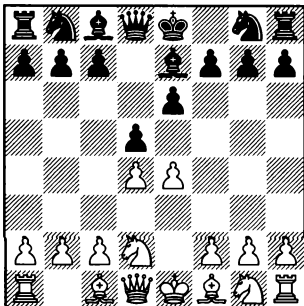
The Morozevich Variation

1.e4 e6 2.d4 d5 3.♘d2 ♕e7



It should not even come to your mind that Black is making this mysterious move with the bishop because of flimsy fingers. The point is that White cannot create any real threats in the next few moves (This should not be surprising, since the game is just beginning...) and Black develops his bishop to a reliable, although not necessary permanent, position. He is simply willing to see his opponent's next move.

This approach is quite reasonable if you wish to complicate matters against a less experienced opponent, or the tournament situation forces you to opt for an asymmetrical position fighting to win. It seems to me that Black should not be able to equalize, playing in this fashion. But on the other hand, the conservative academic approach should not stand in the way of creative endeavour. Black has wonderful possibilities to invent in this variation!



4.c3

This is a solid move. It is even a bit too solid to enable White to fight for the opening advantage.

It is absolutely senseless for him to enter the exchange variation – 4.exd5 exd5=

He has tried too 4.g3, but White can hardly create any serious problems for his opponent, by playing in that exotic fashion. After 4...♗f6 5.♗g2 dxe4 6.♗xe4 ♗xe4 7.♗xe4 c5=, Black has a comfortable game.

4...c5

White's idea is perfectly justified after 4...♗f6?! 5.e5 ♗fd7 6.♗d3 c5 7.♗e2 and he solves the problem of deployment of his knights in an optimal way.

One of the classics of the French defence and in particular

of the variation with 3...♗e7 – Alexander Morozevich used to play 4...dxe4 5.♗xe4 ♗d7, reaching a favourable version of the Rubinstein variation.

5.dxc5

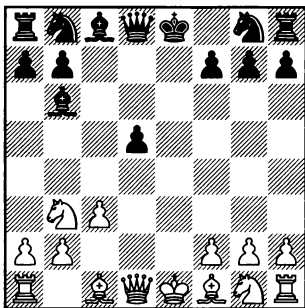
The move 5.exd5 may lead to a rather banal transposition of moves. On the other hand it presents Black with an additional possibility – 5...♞xd5 (5...exd5!? 6.dxc5 ♗xc5) 6.♗gf3 (6. dxc5 ♞xc5 7.♗e4 ♞c6 8.♗d3 ♗d7 9.♗f3 ♗gf6 10.♞e2 ♗xe4 11.♗xe4 ♞c7 12.0–0 0–0 13.a4 ♗f6 14.♗c2 b6 15.♗g5 ♗b7= Dvoiryys – Morozevich, Samara 1998.) 6...cxd4 7.♗c4 ♞h5 8.♗xd4 ♞xd1+ 9.♗xd1 a6 10.♞e1 ♗f6 11.a4 b6 12.♗e2 ♗b7 13.♗f3 ♗xf3+ 14.♗2xf3 0–0 15.♗c2 ♗bd7 16.♗c6 ♗c5 17.♗e3 ♞fc8 18.♗xc5 ♞xc6 19.♗d4 ♗d5 20.g3 ♞ac8= Khamrakulov – Caruana, Dos Hermanas 2006.

5...♗xc5 6.♗b3

White does not create any problems for his opponent with 6.♗gf3 ♗f6 7.e5 (It would be completely harmless for Black if White chooses 7.♗d3 dxe4 8.♗xe4 ♗xe4 9.♞a4+ ♗d7 10.♞xe4 ♗c6 11.♞e2 ♗d7= Svidler – Shipov, Moscow 2006.) 7...♞b6! Black obtains dy-

namic counter chances after this small tactical trick. (7...d7?!? 8.d3 b6 9.dbd4 c6 10.b5 c7 11.0-0 cxe5 12.f4 xf3+ 13.fxf3 d8 14.d6 f6 15.g3 a6 16.a4 g6 17.fh3 fh6 18.g3 g6 19.fh3 fh6 20.g3 g6= Vajda – Mkrtchian, Bled 2002) 8.d4 d7 9.g4 0-0 (9...g6?! 10.d2b3! dxex5 11.g5) 10.d2f3 c6 11. h6 g6 12.0-0-0 dxex5 13.f4 f6 14.fxf8 fxf8. Morozevich lost that game indeed, but he had a very good position for the sacrificed exchange. 15.fxf6 dg4 16.fh4 e5 17.dg5 h5 18.d2f3 f5 19.fxd5 db4 20.fcx4 c7 21.fhd1 dx5 22.fxd5 fc8 23.d2ex5 fe7 24.f3 d3 fxf2 25.d2e6+ c6h6 and Black decided not to wait for White's obvious response 26.dg4 and he resigned, Onischuk – Morozevich, Germany 1999.

6...b6 7.exd5 exd5



The pawn-structure has been clarified. White will try to prove that the isolated pawn is a weakness, while Black will maintain that it is powerful.

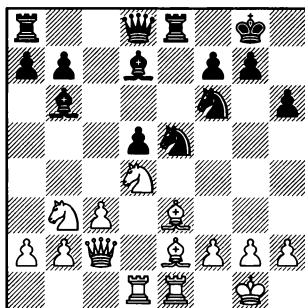
8.d3

The tricky move 8.f2+ does not promise White any advantage at all. 8...d7 9.f3 f3 10.fxe3 0-0 11.d2 (11.f2 d5 12.d2 e8 13.d3 f7 14.0-0?? fxe2 15.fef1 fb5 16.fxd5 fd7-+; 14.dfd4 dx4 15.d4d4 c6 16.dxc6 bxc6 17.0-0= Zatonskih – Shulman, Lindsborg Kansas 2002.) 11...d2bc 12.f2 d6 13.d3 f6 14.0-0 d4 15.fef1 fg4 16.f3d1 ffe8 17.f3h5 18.g3 fxe3 19.fxe3 de6 20.c2 d8 21.dfd4 dcd4 22.d4d4 dx4 23.fxd4= Borisek – Caruana, Brno 2006.

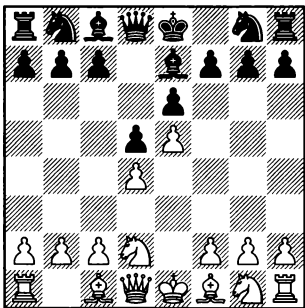
8...d3 9.f2

White can only lose tempi later if he opts for 9.f2+ d6 10.0-0 11.f5 a6 12.f2 e8 13.d3 h6 14.f4 g5 15.f3 d4 16.dfd4 f5 17.fh5 fe7 18.h3 f4 19.f2 d2e5 Mezentsev – Atalik, Reno 2005.

9...0-0 10.0-0 d6 11.dfd4 e8 12.f3 d5 13.f1 h6 14.fc2 fd7 15.fad1



15...c7 with an excellent position for Black, Tiviakov – Kasimdzhanov, Kemer 2007.



This is the most principled reaction by White. He is trying to prevent in that fashion the completion of the development of the kingside by his opponent.

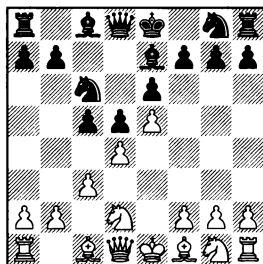
Meanwhile, things are far from being clear. White's knight on d2 may impede his development as well. He is likely to fail to preserve his rather ambitiously deployed pawn-centre.

4...c5 5.♖g4

There begin complications involving risky decisions from both players. Black attacks fiercely his opponent's centre, but he will have to pay for that with the rather unsafe position of his king. This may look anti-positional and risky, but in this variation he

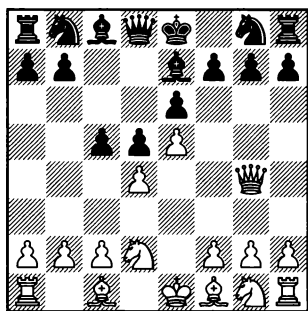
will need to advance his kingside pawns anyway. His king will be in a perilous situation then, but White's pieces are not harmoniously placed either, so this would be Black's compensation.

It may deserve attention for White to consider the calmer possibility 5.c3!? ♘c6 (It seems inferior for Black to play 5... cxd4?! 6.cxd4 ♘c6 7.♘df3 ♗b4+ 8.♗d2 ♖a5 9.♘e2 ♗xd2+ 10.♗xd2 ♖xd2+ 11.♔xd2 f6 12.exf6 gxf6 13.♘f4 ♘ge7 14.♗e1 ♔f7 15.♗d3 ♗d7 16.g4 ♘xd4 17.♘xd4 e5 18. ♘xd5 and in the game Korchnoi – Short, Wijk aan Zee 2000, the opponents agreed to a draw.)



6.♘df3 (It would not work for White to play 6.♘gf3 cxd4 7.cxd4 ♖b6 8.♗b3 a5 9.a4 ♗b4+ 10.♗d2

♙xd2+ and he must reply 11.♗xd2, after which he may not even dream about an advantage, Coratella – Glek, Porto San Giorgio 2001; it looks more reasonable for him to opt for 6.♘e2!?, but Black's immediate attack of the e5-square thwarts White's plans: 6...f6 7.♘f3 fxe5 8.dxe5 ♖c7 9.♙f4 ♘h6, with a complicated position.) The Polish GM Mateush Bartel played in a very original fashion in this position and he equalized: 6...♗a5!? 7.dxc5 (7.♙d2 ♗b6!) 7...♗c7 8.♙e3 f6 (8...♘h6!?) 9.exf6 ♘xf6 10.♘d4 e5 11.♘b5 ♗d8 12.♙e2 0-0 13.♘f3 a6 14.♘d6 ♙xd6 15.cxd6 ♗xd6 16.h3 ♙e6 17.0-0 ♙ad8, with an easy game for Black, Ni Hua – Bartel, Beijing 2008.



5...♙f8

It seems masochistically patient for Black to opt for 5...♙f8, but in fact that move is quite sensible. 6.dxc5 ♗c7 7.♘gf3 ♘d7 (It is weaker for him to choose 7...♘c6 8.♙b5 f6 9.♘b3!±, or 9.0-0 ♙xc5 10.c4 fxe5 11.♗h5+ g6 12.♗xe5 ♗xe5 13.♘xe5 ♘ge7 14.♘df3 0-0

15.♙xc6 ♘xc6 16.♘xc6 bxc6 17.♙h6 ♙f5 18.cxd5 cxd5 19.♙ac1 ♙b6 20.♙e3 ♙xe3 21.fxe3 and the endgame is preferable for White, Nevednichy – Antic, Herceg Novi 2001.) 8.♘b3 (White can hardly obtain an advantage with the line: 8.♙b5 ♗xc5 9.c4 a6 10.♘b3 ♗c7 11.♙xd7+ ♗xd7 12.0-0 dxc4 13.♗xc4 ♘e7 14.♘c5 ♗d5 15.♗c2 ♘c6 16.♙e3 ♘xe5 17.♘xe5 ♗xe5 18.♙ad1 ♙e7 19.♙d4 ♗g5 20.♘e4 ♗g6 21.♙fe1 0-0 and his compensation for the pawn is insufficient, Khamrakov – Lopez Martinez, Ayamonte 2007.) 8...♘xe5 9.♘xe5 ♗xe5+ 10.♙e3 ♘f6 11.♙b5+ ♙d7 12.♙xd7+ ♘xd7 13.0-0-0 ♙e7 14.h4 0-0 15.♙d4 f5 16.♗f3 ♗e4 17.♗g3 e5 18.f3 f4 19.♗h3 ♗f5 20.♗xf5 ♙xf5 21.♙f2 d4 22.c3= Todorovic – Drasko, Subotica 2008.

White should counter the rather insolent move 5...g5, with the elegant reaction 6.♗h5! (He lost a very instructive game after 6.dxc5 h5 7.♙b5+ ♙d7 8.♗e2 ♗c7 9.♘b3 ♙xb5 10.♗xb5+ ♘c6 11.f4 0-0-0 12.♘f3 g4 13.♘fd4 ♘xd4 14.♘xd4 ♙xc5 15.♙e3 ♙xd4 16.♙xd4 ♘b8 17.♙c5 ♘a8 18.♙d6 ♗xc2 19.0-0 ♙c8 20.f5 ♘h6 21.♙f2 ♗e4 22.fxe6 fxe6 23.♙af1 h4 24.♗d7 ♗d4 25.g3 hxg3 26.hxg3 ♘f5 27.♗xe6 ♘xg3 0-1 Adams – Morozevich, Frankfurt 1999.) 6...♘c6 7.♘df3 cxd4 8.♘h3! ♗c7 9.♘hxg5 ♘xe5 10.♙b5+ ♙f8 11.♘xh7+ ♙xh7 12.♗xh7 ♘xf3+ 13.gxf3 ♗e5+ 14.♙f1 ♗g7 15.♗h5 ♘f6 16.♗h6 ♘g8 17.♗h3 e5 18.♙d7

♗xd7 19. ♖xd7 ♖d8 20. ♗f5, with an advantage for White, Kurnosov – Mesropov, Serpukhov 2002.

6.dxc5

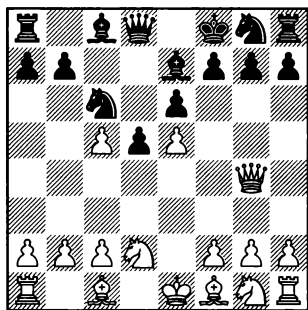
White is forced to give up the centre.

6.c3?! ♖c6 and it would be even harder to hold his centre against Black's pressure.

It is possible that the rather slow move 6. ♖b3 may become more popular in the nearest future. I believe that Black should counter that with 6...c4 7. ♖d2 ♖c6 8.c3 ♖h6, with a very complicated position. It looks like White has lost several important tempi in the opening trying to keep the position closed.

It is bad for him to continue with 6. ♖g3?! h5 7. ♗g3 (He would not fare any better after the awkward line: 7. ♗h3 ♖c6 8.dxc5 ♗c7 and White will lose his e5-pawn; 8...g5?! 9.g4 ♗c7.) 7...h4 8. ♗h3 ♖c6.

6...♖c6



Now, he is faced with a choice. The position is very sharp and it

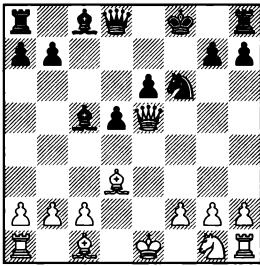
requires a very precise treatment from both sides. The forthcoming moves may involve intricate tactical decisions.

7. ♖g3

This is the most natural move for White and probably the strongest.

It seems rather artificial for him to opt for 7. ♖df3. The move is sensible indeed – it looks attractive to develop the bishop on c1 as soon as possible. White's other knight however, seems to be a sorry sight. 7...f6 8. ♗g3 (In response to 8. ♗f4?! Black has an interesting maneuver – 8...♗a5+! 9.c3 ♗a4. This placement of the queen justifies the check on the previous move. 10. ♗g3 ♗c2 and White has great problems to cope with his opponent's queen on c2. Meanwhile, Black has also tried in practice 8...♗xc5 9. ♗d3 ♗a5+ 10.c3 ♗b6 11. ♖h3 ♗xb2 12.0–0 ♗xc3 13. ♗fd1 fxe5 14. ♗ac1 ♗b4 15. ♖fg5 ♖f6 16. ♖xe6+ ♗xe6 17. ♗xe6 ♗e8 18. ♗f5 ♖d4 19. ♗g5 exf4 and the game is over, Feher – Farago, Hungary 2006. White tried to solve radically all his problems in the following game, but he did not fare well at all. 9.0–0–0?! ♗xf2 10.h4 f5 11. ♗h3 ♗a5 12.a3 ♗d7 13. ♗d3 b5 14.g4 b4 15.a4 b3 16.cxb3 ♖b4 17.gxf5 ♗c8+ 18. ♖b1 ♗xa4 19. ♖g5 ♗d7 20. ♗c4 ♗a2+ 21. ♖c1 ♗a1+ and he resigned in anticipation of the checkmate on the next move, Balogh – Cvek, Germany 2007.) 8...

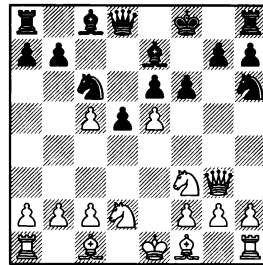
♙xc5 9.♙d3 (White should better avoid 9.♘h3 fxe5 10.♘xe5 ♘xe5 11.♙xe5 ♙d6 and Black has an excellent position.) 9...fxe5 10.♘xe5 ♘xe5 11.♙xe5 ♘f6



Just for comparison, I would like to tell you – that position is theoretical, except that with a white knight on d2 and not on g1. Naturally, it is considered to be preferable for White. 12.♘f3 ♙xf2+! This is an important fine point; otherwise, White would obtain an advantage. 13.♙d1 ♙c5 14.♙f1. No doubt, he has some compensation, but Black has an extra pawn and nothing to worry about. 14...♙g8!? (He has an alternative – 14...♙d6 and it was tested in the game Akopian – Pelletier, Aubervilliers 2002).

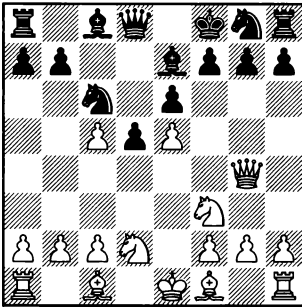
Finally, the third possibility for White in this position is 7.♙g3 f6!? (I think this is stronger than 7...♘h6 8.♙d3 ♙h4 9.♙f4 ♙g5 10.♙g3 ♙h4 11.♙f4 ♙g5 12.♙a4 ♘xe5 13.♘gf3 ♘xd3+ 14.cxd3 ♙e7 15.b4 f6 16.0–0 ♘f5 17.♙b2 h5 18.♙ac1 ♙d7 19.♙b3 ♙c8 20.♘d4 ♘xd4 21.♙xd4 h4 22.h3 ♙e8 23. f4 ♙g6 24.♙h1 ♙h5 25.♘f3 and in the

subsequent complicated fight, White outplayed his young adversary, Svidler – Nepomniachtchi, Moscow 2006.) 8.♘gf3 ♘h6 (Naturally, Black should not reduce prematurely the tension with 8...fxe5?! 9.♘xe5 ♘xe5 10.♙xe5 ♙xc5 11.♙d3 – 11.♘e4!? – 11...♘f6 12.0–0 ♙d6 13.♙e2 ♙c7 14.f4 ♙xf4 15.♘f3 ♙d6 16.c4 ♙d7 17.♙g5 ♙e8 18.♙ac1 ♙b8 19.♙f2 ♙e7 20. ♙h4 and White had a powerful initiative in the game Lastin – Kacheishvili, Ohrid 2001.)



9.♙d3 (It seems inferior for him to play 9.exf6 ♙xf6 10.♘b3. Black's position may not be so fearsome as it may seem, but still it is at least quite satisfactory. 10...♘f5 11.♙h3 e5 12.g4 ♘fe7 with a sharp game. It is very bad for White to continue with 9.♘b3? ♘f5 10.♙f4 g5 11.♙a4 ♘xe5 12.♘xe5 fxe5 and Black ends up with a very powerful centre and an extra pawn.) 9... ♘f7 10.exf6 gxf6 11.0–0 (White fails to destroy Black's excellent pawn-formation: 11.c4 ♙g8 12.♙h4 ♙xg2 13.♘b3 f5 14.♙hx7 ♙f6 with a double edged game.) 11...e5 12.♘h4 (White should pos-

sibly start thinking about maintaining the equality, but Black would not mind that. 12. ♖e1 e4 13. ♗e2 ♖d4 14. ♗d1 ♗xc5 and White's pieces have ended up on the first two ranks.) 12...e4 13. ♖xe4. This is the most principled reaction. 13...dxe4 14. ♗xe4 ♗xc5! GM Pelletier recommended this move quite deservedly in his notes to the next game (14... ♖d4?! 15. ♗d3= Nevednichy – Pelletier, Gothenburg 2005). 15. ♖f5 (15. ♗e3 ♖d4 16. ♗ael ♗g8 17. ♗xd4 ♗xd4 18. ♗b3 ♖g5 and Black is already counter attacking.) 15... ♗xf5 16. ♗xf5 ♗d5



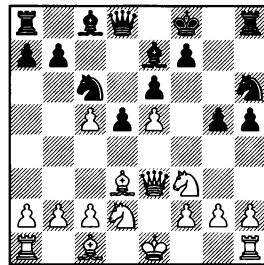
7...h5

The author of this book has tried successfully in practice 7... ♖h6, but in general that move can only be considered as experimental. 8. ♗h5 f6 9. ♗b5 ♖f7 10. ♗xc6?! bxc6 11. ♖b3?! g6 12. ♗g4 fxe5 13. h4 e4 14. ♖g5 e5 15. ♗g3 ♗f6 16. ♗d2 a5 17. a4 ♗f5 18. 0–0–0 h6 19. ♖xf7 ♖xf7 20. f3 exf3 21. gxf3 d4 22. f4 ♗d5 23. fxe5 ♗xe5 24. ♗f2 ♗c4 25. ♗e1 ♗f4+ 26. ♖b1 ♗xb3

27. ♗xd4 ♗e3 28. ♗d7+ ♖e8 0-1 Papin – Vitiugov, Saratov 2007.

8. ♗g3

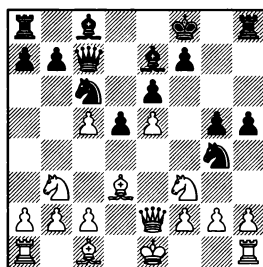
It seems rather provocative for White to play 8. ♗f4?! g5 9. ♗e3 ♖h6 (Black has an interesting alternative here – 9...d4!? 10. ♗e2 g4 11. ♖g1 ♗d5 12. f4 ♗h4+ 13. ♖d1 ♖h6 with a quite acceptable position for him, Kapnisis – Skaperdas, Athens 2000, or 10. ♗e4 g4 11. ♖g1 f5! This is a key-move for Black. 12. ♗e2 – He has absolutely nothing to worry about after 12. exf6 ♖xf6 13. ♗d3 ♖g7 – 12... ♗d5 and White has great problems developing his pieces to active squares.) 10. ♗d3 (In case of 10.h3, I can recommend the following exemplary variation 10... ♖f5 11. ♗c3 ♖g7 12. ♖b3 d4 13. ♗d2 a5 14. a4 ♗d5 15. ♖xg5 ♖xe5. The move 10. ♖b3 would just lose a pawn for White after 10... ♖f5 11. ♗d2 g4 12. ♖fd4 ♖fxd4 13. ♖xd4 ♖xe5.)



10... ♖g4 (It is too slow for Black to opt for 10... ♗c7?! 11. ♖b3 ♖g4 12. ♗e2 ♖gxe5 13. ♖xg5, because his vulnerable king will soon come under a dangerous at-

tack. It looks attractive for him, but futile to choose 10...d4?! 11. ♖e4 g4 12. ♜g1±. Black has lost the elasticity of his pawn-mass and he fails to exploit White's temporary lag in development.) 11. ♖e2 ♖c7 (He cannot equalize after 11... ♙xc5?! 12.0–0 ♜xf2. Black's attack has reached its dead end and he must play enterprisingly. Now, it is bad for White to continue with 13. ♜b3?! ♜xd3+ 14. ♜xc5 ♜xc1, but not 14... ♜xc5? 15. ♜xg5, with a powerful attack for White – 15. ♙axc1 g4 16. ♜d2 ♖g5 and Black is even slightly better. But after 13. ♙xf2! g4 14. b4!, things are not so clear following 14. ♜e1 ♖b6 15. ♜b3 ♙xf2+ 16. ♖xf2 ♖xf2+ 17. ♜xf2 ♜xe5 and in this complicated asymmetrical endgame the prospects are approximately equal – 14... ♜xb4 15. ♙a3, White has neutralized his opponent's initial pressure and he obtains a clear advantage. It is even worse for Black to choose 14... ♙xf2+? 15. ♖xf2 gxf3 16. ♜xf3 and White's initiative on the dark squares is overwhelming. I would like to mention that it would be much weaker for White to continue with the rather often played line: 12. ♜b3?! ♙xf2+ 13. ♜d1 ♙b6?! 14. ♖f1 and the evaluation changes. White is already attacking. Still after 13... ♖b6! 14. ♙xg5 ♙g8!? – in case Black tries to simplify with 14... ♙e3, White has chances of seizing the initiative – 15. ♙xe3 ♖xe3 16. ♖xe3 ♜xe3+ 17. ♜d2 ♜xg2 18.

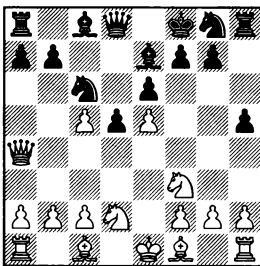
♙af1± – 15. h3 ♜e3+ 16. ♜c1 ♜xg2. Black has played riskily, but White's king is so vulnerable that similar strategy is quite justified, for example: 17. h4 ♙xg5! 18. hxg5 ♜f4 19. ♖f1 ♖e3+ 20. ♜bd2 ♜b4 and although the situation on the board is totally chaotic, Black's prospects are not worse at all, or 17. ♜b1 ♙xg5 18. ♜xg5 ♜f4 19. ♖f3 ♖e3 20. ♖xe3 ♙xe3 21. ♜f3 ♜xd3 22. cxd3 b6 with an excellent game for him.) 12. ♜b3 (White must refrain from 12. b4? ♜gxe5 13. ♙b2 ♙f6 and Black is clearly better.)



12... ♜gxe5. He provokes a crisis. (The time for tentative decisions has long passed. It would not be in the spirit of the position for Black to continue with 12... ♙g8?! 13. h4! gxh4 14. ♙f4 b6 15. cxb6 axb6 16. c3!±. It would be rather faint-hearted for White to choose 16. ♙b5?! ♜a7 17. ♙d3 ♜c6 18. ♙b5 ♜a7 19. ♙d3 and the opponents agreed to a draw in the game Vajda – Asrian, Bled 2002.) 13. ♜xg5 a5! This is another fine point. 14. a4 (White should refrain from 14. ♙e3?! a4 15. ♜d2? d4–+; 15. ♜c1 ♜g4 and he will have great

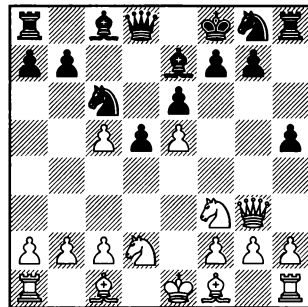
difficulties. It would be dynamic for White, but rather risky to continue with 14.f4 ♖xd3+ 15.♗xd3 a4 16.♗d4 ♖xd4 17.♗xd4 f6 18.♗e3 ♖g8 – Black has a tricky resource here – 18...♖a5!?! – 19.0–0 fxg5 20.fxg5+ ♗e8 and White's compensation for the pawn seems insufficient.) 14...♖xd3+ 15.cxd3 b6 and Black complicates the position even further. For example: 16.♗e3 bxc5 17.0–0 (17.♗xc5 ♗xc5 18.♖xc5 ♖d4–+; 17.♖xc5 d4–+) 17...f6 18.♖f3 d4 19.♗c1 ♗f7 and he has an excellent position.

White has also tried in practice the somewhat paradoxical move 8.♗a4!?! and Black must counter this with a rather precise reaction; otherwise, he may end in a difficult position.



8...♗c7 – I believe this is the best for Black. (It would not be so purposeful for him to opt for 8...♗xc5 9.♖b3 ♗e7 10.♗f4 ♖h6 11.♗d3 ♖f5 12.♗xf5 exf5 13.♗e3 ♗e6 14.0–0–0 ♖c8 15.♗b1 ♗c7 16.♖he1 ♖a5 17.♖bd4 h4 18.♖g5 ♗d7 and White had a clear advantage in the game Ivanchuk – Mkrtychian, Yerevan 2004. Black will not

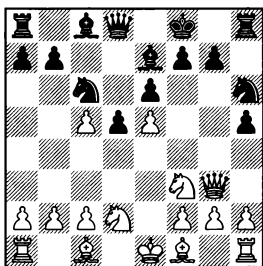
equalize with 8...♗d7 9.♗b5 ♗xc5 10.♖b3 ♗e7 11.♗e3±) 9.♗f4 f6 (This is a very important motive.) 10.♗b5 (Black should better counter White's activity after 10.♖h4 with the calm response 10...♗f7, although he has tried in practice 10...♗xe5+ 11.♗xe5 ♖xe5 12.f4 g5 13.fxe5 gxh4 14.♖f3 ♗xc5 15.♖hx4 ♗g7 16.♗f4 ♗d4 17.♖f3 ♗xb2 18.♖b1 ♗c3+ 19.♗d1 fxe5 20.♖xe5 ♗f6 21.♖f3 e5 with a good position, Liss – Botvinnik, Ramat Aviv 2000.) 10...g5!?! This is an original decision. (Black can also play simpler – 10...♖xe5, but then, in the endgame after 11.♖xe5 ♗xe5+ 12.♗xe5 fxe5 13.♖f3 ♗f6 14.0–0, he risks facing difficulties developing his queenside.) 11.♖xg5 (White should not step back – 11.♗e3?! g4 12.♖h4 ♗g7 13.exf6+ ♗xf6 14. g3 ♖b4 15.♗d3 ♖xd3+ 16.cxd3 ♖e7 and the game is rather complicated.) 12...♗xf6 13.♖g1 ♖ge7 and Black has a very active position, or 12.exf6 ♗xe5+ 12.♗xe5 ♖xe5 13.♖h3 ♗xc5 14.♖f4 ♖e7 and the endgame is double edged.



8...h4

This is an aggressive decision.

The move 8...♖h6!? has almost never been tested in practice, but I believe it is a quite reasonable way for Black to avoid the well-trodden theoretical paths.



For example:

In case of White's natural reaction 9.♗d3, Black can continue with his pawn-offensive 9...h4 10.♞f4 (Or 10.♞h3? f6 and White is in trouble.) 10...g5 11.♞e3 ♖g4 (It is also interesting for Black to play the already tested line: 11...♗f5 12.♗xf5 exf5 13.♖b3 f4 14.♞c3 h3 15.g3 d4 16.♗fxd4 ♞d5 17.♞f3 ♞xe5+ 18.♗e2 ♗f5 19.gxf4 ♞e6 20.♗g1 g4 21.♞e3 ♞d5 22.♗d2 ♗e8 and he had a powerful initiative in the game Zhang Zhong – Shipov, Internet 2007.) 12.♞e2 ♗xc5. The attentive readers should have noticed by now that we have already analyzed a similar position in our notes to White's previous move, studying the consequences of the move 8. ♞f4. The difference being that Black's pawn is already on h4 and this will be very important in the nearest future. 13.♗f1 (Now,

it is not so attractive for White to continue with 13.0–0 ♗xf2 14.♗xf2 g4 15.b4? ♗xb4 16.♗a3 g3–+; 15.♗h1 ♗xf2 16.♞xf2 gxf3 17.♗xf3 h3 and the position is unclear, but still quite acceptable for Black.) 13...♞c7 14.♖b3 ♗e7 15.♗xg5 ♗xg5 16.♗xg5 ♞xe5 and he is at least equal.

9.♖b3 ♗f5 (Black has tried, but rather unsuccessfully, to play the standard and logical line: 9...a5 10.c3 a4 11.♖bd4 ♗xc5 12.♗d3 ♞b6 13.0–0 ♗d7 14.♗e3 ♗xd4 15.cxd4 ♗e7 16.♗g5 ♗xg5 17.♞xg5± Kobalia – Ivanov, Togliatti 2003.) 10.♞f4 (10.♞h3?! a5 11.a4 b6! We know already this motif and it is again working perfectly for Black. 12.cxb6 ♖b4 13.♗d3 ♗xd3+ 14.cxd3 ♞xb6 and White is worse; 12.c3 bxc5 13.♗b5 ♞b6 with an excellent game for Black.) 10...f6. White is forced to defend in a rather exotic fashion in order to cope with the threat g5. 11.h3 (Or 11.h4?! ♗f7 and his pawn on h4 will fall in the nearest future.) 11...g5 12.♞h2. You can hardly ever witness White's queen ending up on that particular square! 12...♗g7 (It would be premature for Black to choose 12...♗xe5?! 13.♗xe5 fxe5 14.♞xe5 ♗f6 15.♗xg5 ♗xe5 16.♗xd8 ♗xb2 17.♗b1 ♗c3+ 18.♗d1 and White is better in this endgame.) 13.♗d3 b6. The situation resembles an ancient battle. Black has sacrificed a small regiment of soldiers, but he has deflected his enemy's main forces

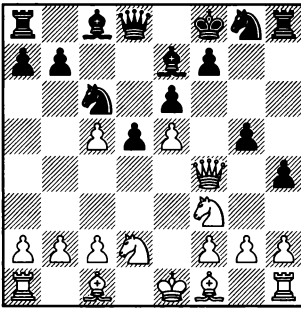
away from the centre of the battlefield. How all this is going to end is not so easy to predict and it requires a thorough practical test.

9. ♗f4

The following possibility does not need any additional comments 9. ♗g4? ♗c7.

9...g5

Black must test all this the hard way...



10. ♗a4

It is just very bad for White to opt for 10. ♗g4?! ♘h6 11. ♗h5 f5!

It is hardly any better for him to continue with 10. ♗e3 ♘h6 11. h3 ♘f5 12. ♗c3 f6 13. ♙b5 ♘xe5 14. ♘xe5 ♗xe5 15. ♗xe5 ♙f6 16. ♗h2 and the placement of White's queen is in sharp contrast of that of its counterpart.

10...♙d7

Black can also try 10... ♗c7, but after 11. ♘b3 ♙d7 12. ♙b5 ♘xe5 13. ♘xe5 ♗xe5+ 14. ♙e3 ♙xb5 15. ♗xb5, White is better.

11. ♙b5 a6

This may not be so good for

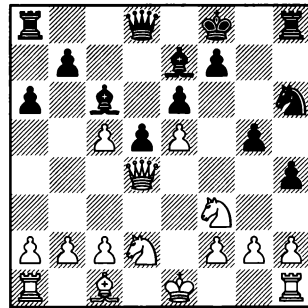
Black, but it is at least his most principled line.

It would not work for him to try to be too tricky – 11... ♘h6 12. ♘b3 a6 13. ♙xc6 ♙xc6 14. ♗b4 and White's blockade is functioning perfectly.

12. ♙xc6 ♙xc6 13. ♗d4 ♘h6

Black's wish to open the long diagonal is understandable, but it would be too hard to accomplish that.

13...h3 14.g4! and his knight on g8 will not go anywhere.



14.h3!

This is a very important improvement for White. Unfortunately, it is becoming clear that in this variation Black should look for an improvement somewhere earlier.

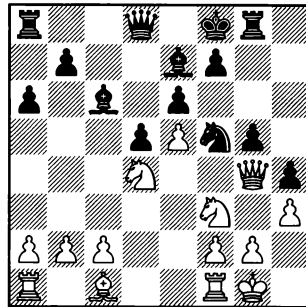
It is much weaker for White to play 14. ♘b3?! ♘f5 15. ♗d3 d4 (or 15... ♙b5!? 16. ♗c3 ♗c8) 16. ♗g1 ♗c7 17. ♘fxd4 ♗xe5+ 18. ♙e3 ♗xh2 19. 0-0-0 ♘xd4 20. ♗xd4 ♗h6 21. ♗g4 ♗e5 22. ♘d4 ♙f6 23. c3 ♗e4 and Black had an excellent position in the game Adams – Moro-

zevich, Sarajevo 1999.

14... ♖f5

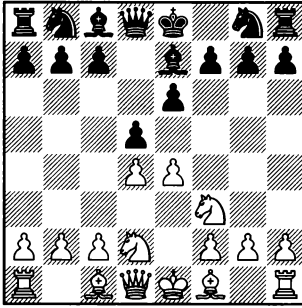
He has an interesting resource at his disposal, but it backfires after 14...b6 15.cxb6 ♖f5 16.♖g4 ♗h6 17.♗h5! ♘g7 18.♗b3±

15.♖g4 ♗xc5 (Black fails to achieve the desired result after 15...♗h6 16.♖b4!) 16.♗b3 ♗e7 17.0-0 ♗g8 18.♗bd4±



It is high time we made a conclusion about the results of the opening battle. White has used an important improvement on his move 14 and has obtained a slight but stable edge. It is rather unpleasant for Black, but he could and even had to avoid entering that line earlier. In that case, there would have arisen very sharp and lively complications.

Chapter 19 1.e4 e6 2.d4 d5 3.♘d2 ♙e7 4.♘gf3

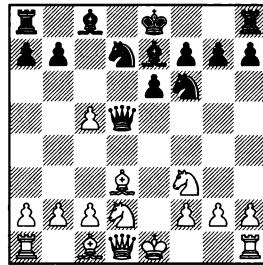


This is an interesting line, which is often used by very aggressive players, since White will almost always have to sacrifice material in order to fight for the advantage.

4...♗f6 5.e5

He would not achieve much with the more reliable line: 5.♗d3 c5 6.exd5 (There will remain only a few pieces on the board in case of 6.dxc5 dxe4 7.♗xe4 ♗xe4 8.♗xe4 ♗xd1+ 9.♗xd1 ♗xc5 10.♗e2 ♗d7 11.♗d1 – 11.♗e3?! ♗xe3 12.♗xe3 ♗c5 and only Black may think about an advantage – 11...♗e7 12.c4 ♗f6 13.♗c2 b6 14.b3 ♗b7 15.♗b2 ♗hd8 16.♗e5 h5 17.f3 and in the game Akopian – Korchnoi, Calcutta 2000, the opponents

agreed to a draw.) 6...♗xd5 7.dxc5 ♗bd7! After this good move it becomes clear that Black has solved all his problems in the opening.



White has tried in practice here:

8.♗b3 ♗xc5 9.♗xc5 ♗xc5 10.0–0 0–0 11.♗e3 ♗h5 12.♗e1 b6 13.♗d4 ♗xd1 14.♗axd1 ♗b7 15.c3 and the position is equal, Howell – Shulman, Philadelphia 2007.

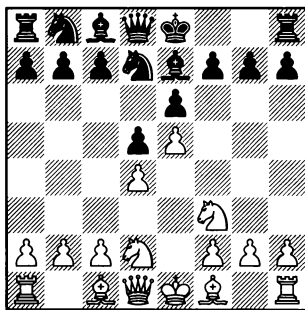
8.0–0 ♗xc5 9.♗c4 ♗d6 (It would be more ambitious, but riskier for Black too if he chooses 9...♗h5!?) 10.♗e1 ♗cd7 11. b3 0–0 12.♗b2 b5 13.♗e2 ♗c5 – 13...♗b7!? – 14.c4 b4 15.♗d3 ♗b7 16.♗e4 ♗c7 17.♗c2 h6 18.♗ad1 ♗ad8 19.♗xf6+ ♗xf6 20.♗xf6 ♗xf6 21.♗e5 ♗c5 22.♗e2 ♗d6 23.♗c2 ♗fd8 24.♗xd6 ♗xd6 25.♗d3 ♗g5 26.f3

♠d7 27.♟e3= Svidler – Shabalov, Odessa 2008.) 10.♟e2 0–0 11.♘b3 ♘a4 12.♞d1 ♟c7 13.♙b5 ♘b6 14.♘e5 a6 15.♙d3 ♘bd5 16.♙d2 ♙d6 17.♞e1 ♘b4 18.♙xb4 ♙xb4 19.c3 ♙d6= Gufeld – Lputian, Las Vegas 2001.

White's attempt to hold on to the extra pawn fails after 8.b4 a5 9.♙c4 ♟h5 10.c3 ♘d5 11.♙xd5. Naturally, he is reluctant to give up this bishop, but he has to. (Black can counter 11.♟b3 with the powerful resource 11...♘xc3!; White would not achieve anything with 11.♘e4 axb4 12.cxb4 ♘xb4 13.♘d6+ ♙xd6 14.cxd6 ♟c5 15.♙b3 ♟b5! and Black has the initiative.) 11...♟xd5 12.♟b3 (12.♙b2 axb4 13.cxb4 ♞xa2 14.♞xa2 ♟xa2 15.♟a1 ♟xa1+ 16.♙xa1 ♘f6 17.0–0 ♘d5 18.♙xg7 ♞g8 19.♙d4 ♘xb4 and Black is better, Turov – Shulman, St. Petersburg 1998.) 12...axb4 (It is also possible for him to maintain the tension with 12...♙f6 13.♞b1 ♘e5 14.0–0 ♘d3 15.a3 – 15.♙a3?! – 15...0–0 16.♞d1 ♘f4 17.♙b2 ♟f5 18.c4 e5 19.♟e3 ♟g6 20.g3 ♙f5 and Black outplayed his opponent in the subsequent fight, Kholmov – Morozovich, Russia 1998.) 13.cxb4 (But not 13.♟xd5?! exd5 14.cxb4 ♙f6 15.♞b1 ♞xa2 16.0–0 0–0 and only White will have problems in this position.) 13...♟xb3 14.♘xb3 ♙f6 15.♘fd4 ♞a4 16.a3 ♘xc5! 17.♘xc5 (After 17.bxc5 ♙xd4 18.♘xd4 ♞xd4, Black is even slightly better.) 17...♙xd4 18.♘xa4 ♙xa1 19.♘b6 ♙d7

20.♘d7 ♘xd7 with comfortable equality for him.

5...♘d7



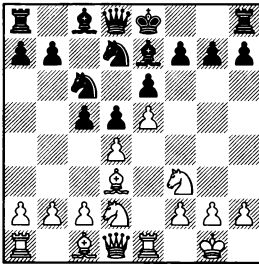
6.♙d3

White plays sometimes 6.c4 and I will recommend against that 6...0–0. (It is also possible for Black to opt for 6...dxc4 7.♘xc4 ♘b6 8.a3 ♘xc4 9.♙xc4 ♘d7 10.0–0 ♘b6 11.♙d3 ♙d7 12.♙e4 ♘d5 13.♙xd5 exd5 14.♟b3 ♙c6 15.♙d2 a5 16.♞fc1 0–0 17.♞c3 ♞e8 18.♞ac1 ♞a6 19.♟c2 ♙d7 20.♟b3 ♙c6 21.♟c2 ♙d7 and the opponents repeated moves in the game Antoniewski – Bosiocic, Austria 2008.) This is a theoretical position, but with a white pawn on a3. It arises in the Bogoljubow defence. White's main idea there is connected with the pawn-advance b2-b4. Now, he does not have this resource, so I think Black's position is quite acceptable. For example: 7.cxd5 exd5 8.♙d3 c5 9.0–0 ♘c6 10.♞e1 ♟b6 11.a3 c4 12.♘xc4 dxc4 13.♙xc4 ♞d8 14.e6 fxe6 15.♞xe6 ♘h8 16.♘g5 ♙xg5 17.♙xg5 ♞f8 18.♙e7 ♞f5 19.g4 ♘f6

20. ♗c5 ♗xc5 21. dxc5 ♖xc5 and White is lost, Zhou Weiqi – Sadorra, Kuala Lumpur 2007.

6...c5 7.c3

Liviu-Diter Nisipeanu has played several times the seemingly unpretentious move 7.0–0!? This fact makes us pay a serious attention to this plan. 7...♖c6 8. ♗e1



The ultra-aggressive approach – 8...g5 can be countered by White with 9.h3 h5 10.c4! It is not good for Black either to play 8...c4 9. ♗e2 g5 10.h3 h5 11. ♖f1 and White has the advantage.

8...cxd4 9. ♖b3 ♖b6 10.a4. White has lost a pawn and although that is not so important yet, but he must play very actively. (He would not achieve much with 10. ♗f4 ♖c5 11. ♖fxd4 ♖xd4 12. ♖xd4 ♗d7=) 10...a6 (It is not so good for Black to opt for 10...a5 11. ♗b5 0–0 12. ♗f4 and White has a promising compensation.) 11.a5 ♖c7 12. ♖bxd4 ♖xd4 (It would be too risky for Black to be tempted by the rook pawn – 12...♖xa5 13. ♗g5!?) and White has good attacking prospects.) 13. ♖xd4 ♖xe5

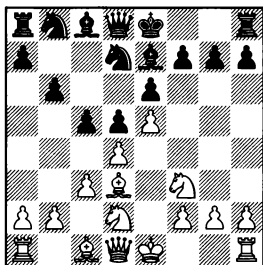
14. ♗f4 ♗d6 15. ♖h5 (It is considerably weaker for him to opt for 15. ♖e2? ♖xd3 16. ♗xd6 ♖xd6 17. ♖f5 ♖f4 18. ♖xg7+ ♖f8 19. ♖h5 ♖xf2+! and he has no compensation for the pawn in this endgame. It is bad for Black to continue with 15...♖g6? 16. ♗xd6 ♖xd6 17. ♖f5 ♖f8 18. ♖g4?! – 18. ♖e3!± – 18...f6 19. ♖g3 e5 and the opponents agreed to a draw in this position, Nisipeanu – Itkis, Sovata 2000.) 15...♖f3+. Here, in the game Czarnota – Socko, Poznan 2005, a draw was agreed as well. We can already see that the variation is suitable for the players who do not like to ponder over the board for long! Leaving the humour aside, we would like to continue this variation a bit. 16. ♖xf3 (White has also tried the rather original line: 16.gxf3!? ♗xf4 17. ♖xe6 ♗xh2+! Black gobbles another pawn before he retreats his bishop. 18. ♖g2 ♗xe6 19. ♗xe6+ ♖f8 20. ♗b6 ♗e5!; 20. ♗e2 ♗d6 with an approximately equal position.) 16... ♗xf4 17.g3 (It is only a transposition of moves after 17. ♖xd5 0–0.) 17...g6. This trick is not forced, but it is attractive. 18. ♖xd5 0–0 19. ♖d4 ♗h6= and Black's bishop-pair compensates White's piece activity.

7...♖c6

After 7...b6!?, there arises a strategical maneuvering game.

(diagram)

White can try to create problems for his opponent by pre-



venting the trade of the light-squared bishops, but he fails to do that at the end anyway. 8. ♖e2 a5 9. a4!? (9.0–0 ♖a6 10. c4 ♖c6 11. cxd5 ♖xd3 12. ♗xd3 exd5 13. ♖e1 0–0 14. ♗f5 cxd4 15. ♖b3 ♖c5 16. ♖bxd4 ♗c8 17. ♖xc6 ♗xc6 18. ♖d4 ♗d7 19. ♗xd7 ♖xd7 20. e6 ♖c5 21. exf7+ ♖xf7 22. ♖e3 ♖f6= and Black has an excellent position, Jones – Grigorian, Yerevan 2007. White did not obtain any edge after 13. dxc5 ♖xc5 14. ♗b5 ♗d7 15. a4 0–0 16. ♖d1 ♗c7 17. ♖f1 ♖xe5 18. ♖xe5 ♗xe5 19. ♖e3 ♖fd8 20. ♖d4 ♗e6 and his compensation for the pawn was insufficient in the game Adams – Yemelin, Ohrid 2009.) 9... ♖a6 10. ♖b5 ♗c8 11. c4 ♖b7 (11...0–0!?) 12. dxc5 0–0?! Black is excessively generous. (He had better play calmly 12... bxc5 13. cxd5 ♖xd5.) 13. cxb6 ♖xb6 14. b3 and White ended up with a solid extra pawn, Fedorchuk – Burlai, Evpatoria 2007.

It is interesting for him to play in a tactical fashion 8. ♖e4!? h6?! This move is both a loss of a tempo and weakening of the position. (Black may have problems

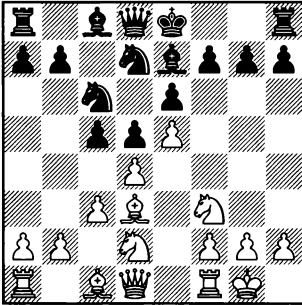
too after 8... ♖a6 9. ♖xa6 ♖xa6 10. ♖d6+ ♖xd6 11. exd6 and suddenly his d6-pawn will be worrying him a lot in the nearest future. The line 8... ♗c7!? 9. ♖g3 ♖a6 can be recommended to him, but it requires practical testing.) 9. ♖g3 ♖a6 10. ♖h5 ♖xd3 11. ♗xd3 ♖f8 12. 0–0 ♖c6 13. ♖e3 g6 14. ♖f4 ♖g7 15. c4 cxd4 16. cxd5 ♖c5 17. ♗e2 ♖b4 18. ♖xd4 ♖xd5 19. ♖fd1 ♖xf4 20. ♖xf4 ♗e8 21. ♖b5 ♖d8 22. ♖d6± Gopal – Drasko, Banja Luka 2008.

8.0–0 ♖a6 9. ♖xa6 ♖xa6 10. ♖e1 b5 11. a4 (White did not achieve much after 11. ♗e2 c4 12. a3 ♖c7 13. ♖f1 ♖b6 14. g3 h6 15. h4 ♖d7 16. ♖3h2 ♗g8! This is a typical Botvinnik maneuver! 17. ♖d2 ♗h7 and Black is better, Andriasian – Nepomniachtchi, Kirishi 2007.) 11... b4 12. c4 ♖c7 13. b3 0–0 14. ♖b2 dxc4 15. ♖xc4 ♖d5 16. ♖c1 ♖c8 17. ♗e2 ♗c7 18. ♖ed1 ♖fd8 19. ♗e4 ♗b8= Andriasian – Socko, Polanica Zdroj 2007.

8.0–0

This is something like a *tabia* of this variation. Black has several interesting possibilities. All of them are connected with an attack against White's key d4-pawn. Black must always keep in mind that if White manages to preserve his centre in the next few moves, he will maintain an advantage throughout the entire game. The reason for this will be Black's misplaced knight on d7 and the excellent route – f1–g3–h5 for its white

counterpart on d2. Meanwhile, the unfortunate “French” bishop on c8 will remain a sorry sight. Therefore, all means are justified at the moment for Black to complete what he has started.



We will analyze now: a) 8...a5, b) 8...h5 and c) 8...g5.

a) 8...a5

This is an interesting move, although a bit mysterious. It will be useful for Black in about 50% of the games, but in the rest of the cases it may be useless and even harmful. Sometimes the pawn-advance a5-a4 may be very good for Black and strangely enough the factor of “having made a move” may turn out to be quite purposeful. The idea g7-g5 is still on the agenda for him, but he wishes to implement it at the best possible moment.

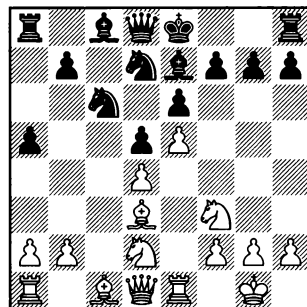
9. ♗e1

It is weaker for White to play 9.b3?!, because after it Black's previous move is perfectly justified. 9...a4! 10.bxa4 c4 11.♗c2 ♖a5

12.♖b1 h6! 13.♗a3 ♖b6 14.h4 ♗d7 15.h5 ♖xa4 16.♗xe7 ♖xe7 17.♗xa4 ♖xa4 18.♖e2 ♖c6 19.♖bd2 ♖a3 20.♖e3 b5 and he has the initiative, Sulskis – Lputian, Las Vegas 2001.

I cannot evaluate the consequences of the move 9.a4!? Maybe Black can rely on the power of the b4-square and try to continue in a positional fashion with 9...cxd4 (Or 9...g5?! 10.dxc5 and in all the variations White's bishop on b5 will be quite comfortable with its reliable protection.) 10.cxd4 ♖b4, but still I would prefer White's position. 11.♗b5 (11.♗b1 b6 12.♖e1 ♗a6 13.♖f1 ♖c8 14.♖g3 ♖c6 15.♖d2 ♖c7 16.♖f4 ♖d3 17.♗xd3 ♗xd3 and Black is slightly better, Kosteniuk – Matveeva, Elista 1997.) 11...0-0 12.♖b3 ♖b8 13.♗d2 ♖8c6 14.♖e2 ♖a7 15.♗xb4 ♗xb4 16.♗d3 ♗e7 and the opponents agreed to a draw after Black offered it, Dervishi – Jacimovic, Elista 1998.

9...cxd4 10.cxd4



10...g5

It looks sensible, but a bit risky

for Black to opt for 10...♖b6 11. ♖b1! ♖xd4 12. ♖xd4 ♗xd4 13. ♖c3. The gaping weakness on the b5-square spells a lot of trouble for him. 13...♖b6 (It would be too provocative for Black to choose 13...♗c5?! 14. ♖b5 ♗xf2+ 15. ♖h1 0-0 16. ♗g5 ♗b4 17. ♗f1 ♗xb2 18. a3 ♗c5 19. ♗f4 ♖xe5 20. ♗xh7+ ♖xh7 21. ♗h5+ ♖g8 22. ♗xe5 ♗xb5 23. ♗xg7!+- Sutovsky – Vavrak, Plovdiv 2008.) 14. ♗g4 0-0 (He will not live calmly after 14...g6 15. ♗h6 ♖c5 16. ♗b5+ ♗d7 17. a4 ♗c6 18. ♗ac1 0-0-0 19. ♗e3 ♗c7 20. ♖e2 ♗xb5 21. axb5 b6 22. ♖d4 ♗xe5 23. ♖c6 ♗c7 24. b4 axb4 25. ♗a1 b3 26. ♗a7 ♖b7 27. ♖xe7+ ♗xe7 28. ♗c1+ ♖b8 29. ♗a4 ♖c5 30. ♗a8+ ♖c7 31. ♗a7+ ♖d6 32. ♗f4+ 1-0 Caruana – Vavrak, Rogaska Slatina 2009.) 15. ♗h6 g6. Black's positional exchange-sacrifice is at first good enough to parry White's attack fervour and secondly, it presents Black with a bishop-pair and control over the dark squares. 16. ♗xf8 (He had an excellent position after 16. ♖b5 ♖c5 17. ♗d4 ♗d7. Notice that Black is not retreating his rook and makes a demonstration out of that! 18. ♗xf8 ♗xf8 19. a4 f6 20. exf6 ♗xf6 21. ♗e3 ♗xb2 22. ♗a2 ♗f6 23. ♗c1 d4 24. ♗g3 ♖xd3 25. ♗xd3 ♗c6 and the position was very sharp in the game Rublevsky – Lputian, New Delhi 2000.) 16... ♗xf8 17. ♗b5! This is a very good decision. (White played much weaker in the following game: 17.

♖a4 ♗a7 18. ♗b5 b6 19. ♗xd7 ♗xd7 20. ♗d4 ♗b4 21. ♗ec1 ♗xa4 22. a3 ♗c5 23. ♗xa4 ♗xf2+! and Black had a clear advantage, Mkrтчian – Matveeva, Istanbul 2003.) 17... ♖c5 18. a4 (White has fixed his opponent's bishop on b5 and obtained an edge.) 18...♗e7 19. ♗ad1 ♗c7 20. h4 h5 21. ♗f4 ♗d7 22. ♗e3 ♗c6 23. ♗e2 ♖d7 24. ♖b5 ♗d8 25. ♗xh5 ♗xb5 26. axb5 ♗xh4 27. ♗h3 ♗g5 28. ♗h2 ♖f8 29. f4 ♗e7 30. ♗f3 with a powerful pressure for White, Nedev – Bauer, Bled 2002.

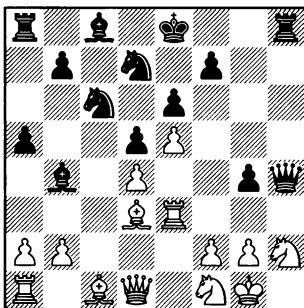
11.h3

It would be weaker for him to opt for 11.g4?! h5 12. h3 ♖b6 13. ♗a4 (The sacrifice of the central pawn is obviously not in the spirit of the position – 13. ♖f1?! hxg4 14. hxg4 ♖xd4 15. ♖g3 ♖xf3+ 16. ♗xf3 ♗d4 17. ♗b5 and here after 17...♗h4!? Black could have won a second pawn. Meanwhile, he maintained his advantage in the game as well after 17...♖b4 18. ♗e2 ♗h4 19. f3 ♖f8 20. ♖g2 ♖c5 21. ♗e3 ♗d7 22. ♗xd7 ♖xd7, Shirov – Kasimdzhanov, Moscow 2007.) 13...hxg4 14. hxg4 ♖db8. This is an absolute paradox. (The natural move 14...♖f8 is not so good for Black, because after 15. ♖f1 ♗d7 16. ♗e3 ♖b4 17. ♗d1 ♖xd3 18. ♗xd3, his knight on f8 has no good prospects.) 15. ♖f1 ♗d7 16. ♗e3 ♖b4 17. ♗d1 ♖xd3 18. ♗xd3 ♗b5 19. ♗c3 ♖c6 20. a3 0-0-0 and in the oncoming sharp fight, the chances of both sides are approximately equal.

11...h5 12. ♗f1 g4 13.hxg4
hxg4 14. ♖3h2 ♙b4

Black would not change the character of the fight with 14... ♗xd4 15. ♗xg4 (15. ♗xg4!?) 15... ♙c5, White is better, since his king is much safer.

15. ♙e3 ♗h4



16. ♙g3!

In fact, only this original rook-manuever enables him to maintain an advantage in all the variations.

The endgame is good for Black after 16. ♗xg4?! ♗xg4 17. ♗xg4 ♗xd4 18. ♗fh2 b6 19. ♗f3 ♙c5 20. ♙d2 ♙g8 21. ♗fh2, with a complicated position, Hracek – Kekki, Saint Vincent 2005.

16...f5 17. exf6 ♗xf6

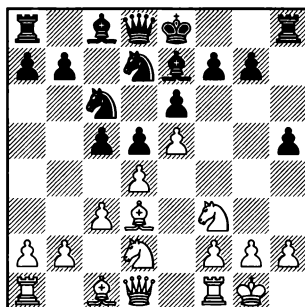
White must act very resolutely after 17...♙d6 18. ♗xg4! ♙xg3 19. ♗g6+ ♗d8 20. ♗xg3 and besides the sufficient material equivalent for the exchange, he has a powerful initiative.

18. ♙f4!

Naturally, the game is not over yet, but White's pieces are placed

much more harmoniously. Black has so many weaknesses in his position that I would refrain from further comments...

b) 8...h5!?



This is Morozevich's last invention in this line. Black prepares thus the unavoidable pawn-advance g5, but he does not weaken so much his kingside. Of course, you can confuse your opponent in this fashion, but not more...

9. ♙e1

His idea is perfectly justified after 9.dxc5?! ♗dxe5 10. ♗xe5 ♗xe5 11. ♗b3 ♗xd3 12. ♗xd3 h4 13. ♙e1 h3 14.g3 a5 15. ♙f4 0-0 16. ♗d4 ♙xc5 17. ♙e5 f6 18. ♙xe6 ♙xe6 19. ♗xe6 ♗b6 20. ♗xf8 ♙xf2+ 21. ♗f1 ♗xf8 and Black was fighting for the advantage in the game Hracek – Morozevich, Rethymnon 2003.

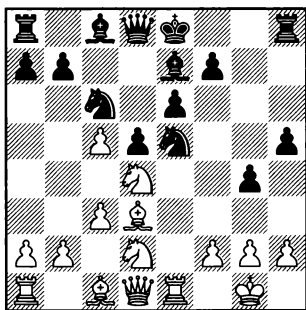
9. ♗e2!? g5 (It is a matter of tempi, but his idea would not work after 9...cxd4 10.cxd4 g5 11. ♗b3 a5 12. ♙e3 a4 13. ♗bd2 g4 14. ♗e1 – White has parried his opponent's

initial pressure and he is ready to begin a counter attack. Black can win a pawn, but it would be an insufficient compensation for him after 14...♟b6 15.♞c2 ♟xb2.) 10.dxc5 ♞xc5 (It would be too ambitious for him to opt for 10...g4 11.♞d4 ♞dxe5 12.♞xc6 ♞xc6 13.♞b3 e5 and Black's lag in development would be a telling factor in the future.) 11.♞b5 (11.♞c2 ♞d7!) 11...a6 12.♞xc6+ bxc6 13.b4 ♞d7 14.♞d4 ♟c7 15.♞e1. His position would have been acceptable if we ignore his kingside pawns, since the purpose of their advance has remained a mystery.

9...g5

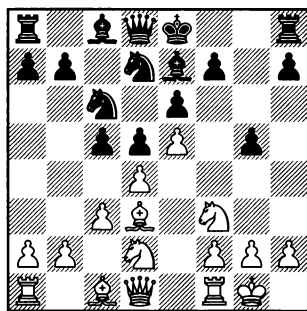
It is weaker for Black to play 9...cxd4?! 10.cxd4 g5 11.♞b3 g4 12.♞fd2 a5 13.a4 ♞b6 14.♞b1 ♞c4 15.♞c3 ♟b6 16.♞xc4 dxc4 17.♞d2 ♞b4 18.♞xc4 ♟c6 19.b3± Smirin – Cheparinov, Mallorca 2004.

10.dxc5 g4 11.♞d4 ♞dxe5



White has an additional resource in this position. **12.♞b3!** (He could have transposed to the main line here with 12.♞b5.)

c) 8...g5



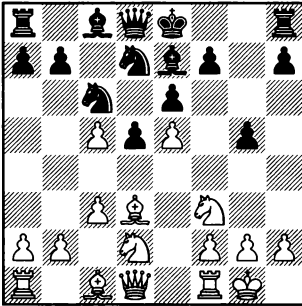
This is the most aggressive move for Black and it creates maximal problems for the opponent.

9.dxc5

His position is quite acceptable after 9.a3 g4 (But not 9...h5?! 10.b4 g4 11.b5! and White's idea is perfectly justified: 11...♞xd4 12.cxd4 gxf3 13.♞xf3 c4 14.♞c2 a6 15.♞b1 axb5 16.♞xb5 ♞xa3 17.♞g5 ♞xc1 18.♟xc1 ♞b8 19.♞h7 ♞d7 20.♞f6+ ♞c7 21.♞e4! with an overwhelming attack for him, Nisipeanu – Volkov, Saint Vincent 2003.) 10.♞e1 cxd4 11.cxd4 ♟b6! 12.♞c2 (Black has no problems after 12.♟xg4 ♟xd4 13.♟xd4 ♞xd4 14.♞ef3 ♞c5!) 12...♞xd4 13.♟xg4 ♞xc2 14.♞xc2 ♟c7 15.♞a4 ♟xe5 16.♞f3 h5! Black should be reluctant to give back the extra material, but he must neutralize White's initiative at the very beginning. 17.♞xe5 hxg4 18.♞xg4 a6 – with mutual chances.

It would be interesting for White to try 9.b4!? cxd4 10.cxd4

♖xb4 11. ♗e2, with the idea, having preserved the pawn-centre, to try to exploit the weakness on g5. The position is very complicated. It requires extensive practical testing at the highest possible level.



9...g4

Was that the reason Black made his previous anti-positional move?

The alternatives for him are less principled and routinely weaker.

It is absolutely not in the spirit of the position if he continues with 9...♖xc5?! 10. ♗b5 ♖b6 11. ♖d4 a6 12. ♗xc6+ bxc6 13. b4 ♖d7 14. ♖h5 ♖xe5 15. ♖2f3 ♖g6 16. ♗xg5± Arizmendi Martinez – Her-raiz Hidalgo, Sant Lluís 2005.

9...♖dx5?! 10. ♖xe5 (The massive presence of pieces on the board is absolutely not in favour of White in this case. 10. ♗b5?! ♗d7 11. ♖e2 ♖c7 12. ♖e1 ♖g6 13. ♖b3 g4 14. ♖fd4 e5 15. ♖c2 a6 16. ♗a4 h5 17. ♖d1 0–0–0 18. ♖xd5 ♖d4 19. ♗xd7+ ♖xd7 20. cxd4

♖xd5 21. ♖b4 ♖dd8 22. d5 a5 23. d6 ♗xd6 24. cxd6 ♖xd6± Rublevsky – Volkov, Ohrid 2001.) 10...♖xe5 11. ♖b3!?! The tempo of the development of the initiative is much more important than the light-squared bishop. (Or 11. ♗b5+ ♗d7 12. ♗xd7+ ♖xd7 13. ♖f3 ♖xf3+ 14. ♖xf3 e5 15. ♗e3 ♖e6 16. c4 d4 17. ♗xd4 exd4 18. ♖xb7 ♖c8 19. ♖e4 ♖b8 20. ♖fe1 ♖xc5 21. b4 ♖c7 22. a3 ♖d8 23. ♖ad1 ♖f8 24. ♖xd4 ♖g7 25. ♖xd8 ♖xd8± Meier – Socko, Bastia 2005. It would be worse for Black to choose the slightly awkward line: 12...♖xd7 13. b4 b6 14. c4 dxc4 15. ♖xc4 bxc5 16. ♖d6+ ♗xd6 17. ♖xd6 ♖b6 18. ♖g3 cxb4 19. ♖xg5 ♖c5 20. ♖g3 and his position is difficult, Rublevsky – Morozevich, Togliatti 2003.) 11... ♖xd3 (Preparatory moves of the type 11...♗d7 would not change much. White's plan is simple and effective. 12. f4 ♖xd3 13. ♖xd3 h6 14. ♗e3 ♖c7 15. ♗d4 ♖f8 16. fxc5 hxc5 17. ♖ae1 0–0–0 18. ♖h7 ♗e8 19. ♖f2 a5 20. ♗e5 ♖d7 21. ♗g7 a4 22. ♗xf8 ♗xf8 23. ♖g8± Hracek – Stellwagen, Germany 2005. 11...♖c7?! 12. f4!? ♗xc5+ 13. ♖xc5 ♖xc5+ 14. ♖f2 ♖xd3 15. ♖xd3 g4 16. b3 ♗d7 17. ♗e3 ♖b5 18. ♖d4 ♖g8 19. f5 exf5 20. ♖e5+ ♗e6 21. ♖xf5 0–0–0 22. ♖f2 a6 23. ♗f4 ♖c6 24. ♖d1 b5 25. c4 ♖b7 26. cxb5 ♖xb5 27. a4± Iordachescu – Volkov, Moscow 2007.) 12. ♖xd3 e5 13. ♖e2 ♖c7 14. ♖e1 e4 15. c4 ♗e6 and although Black has managed to defend somehow, the evalua-

tion of the position is quite clear. White's initiative is tremendously powerful. 16.♖d4 ♕xc5 17.cxd5 ♕xd5 18.♖b5+ ♔f8 19.♗e3 a6 20.♖a4 b5 21.♖d1 ♖d7 22.♗xg5 ♖g8 23.♗h6+ ♔e8 24.♗e3 ♖d8 25.♖h5 ♕xd4 26.♗xd4 ♖g4= Pavasovic – Bartel, Portoroz 2005.

10.♖d4 ♖dxе5

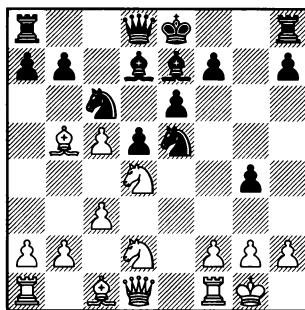
It is weaker for Black to opt for 10...♖cxе5?! 11.♗b5 a6 12.♗xd7+ ♕xd7 13.f4 and White proceeds with his standard attack.

11.♗b5

Black's strategy will be justified after 11.♖2b3?! ♖xd3 12.♖xd3 e5 13.♖xc6 bxc6 14.♗h6 f6. White's set-up looks positionally dubious, therefore he is forced to seek tactical decisions. All this has not ended well for him until now. 15.f4 gxf3 16.♖xf3 ♖g8 17.♖h5+ ♖g6 18.♗e3 (18.♗f4 ♖d7 19.♗g3 ♗a6 20.♖f2 0–0–0 21.♖xh7 ♖d8 22.♔h1 ♗d3 23.♖h5 ♖g8 24.♖d1 ♗e4+ Korbut – Matveeva, Samara 2005.) 18...♖d7 19.h3 ♗d8 20.♖ae1 ♖f7 21.♔h1 ♗e6 22.♗f4 ♖g7 23.♖e2 ♖g6 24.♖d4 ♗d7 25.♗h2 ♗e7 26.♖b3 a5 27.♗g1 ♗f5 28.♖d2 ♗e4 29.♖f2 a4 30.♖c1 ♕xc5–+ Gasanov – Izoria, Baku 2002.

11...♗d7

Black should not be too greedy: 11...♕xc5?! 12.f4 gxf3 13.♖2xf3 ♗d7 14.♕xc6 ♖xc6 15.♖g5 ♖f8 16.♖xh7 ♖h4 17.♖f6+ ♔e7 18.♗e3 ♖xd4 19.♗xd4 ♖ac8 20.♖d2 ♖h8 21.h3± Carlsson – Berg, Gothenburg 2005.



12.♖2b3

This is the most reasonable move for White. He develops his knight, protects his pawn and opens the diagonal for his dark-squared bishop. Despite all that, he has tested some other moves in practice. 12.f4?! This enables Black to simplify favourably the position. 12...♖xd4 13.♗xd7+ ♖xd7 14.cxd4 ♖c6 15.♖xg4 ♗f6 16.♖f3 ♖xd4 17.♖e5 ♖c7 18.♗d2 h5 19.♖d1 ♕xe5 20.fxe5 ♖f5 21.♖c1 ♖c6 22. b4 d4 23.♖f3 a6 24.a4 ♖g8, with an excellent position for him, Smirin – Radjabov, Sarajevo 2002.

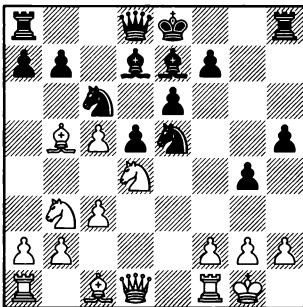
It would be illogical for White to fortify his opponent's centre. Still, it might be an interesting idea for him to try 12.♕xc6 bxc6 13.f4 ♖d3 14.b4 a5 15.♖2b3 ♖xc1 16.♖xc1 axb4 17.cxb4 ♖a4! 18.f5 0–0 19.♖f4 e5 (19...exf5!?) 20.♖xe5 ♗f6 21.♖e1 ♖e8 22.♖c3 ♖e4 and Black has a good compensation for the pawn, Smirin – Akobian, Philadelphia 2004.

The following line resembles a bit the Botvinnik variation of the Semi-Slav defence: 12.b4 a5!?

(12...h5 13.♖e1 ♖xd4 14.♗xd7+ ♗xd7 15.♖xe5 ♖c6 16.♖e1 ♗f6 17. b5 ♖e5 18.♖b3 ♗xb5 19.♖d4 ♗xc5 20.♖b1 b6 21.♗f4 ♖g6 22.♗a4+ ♖e7 23.♖f5+ ♖d8 24.♗e3 ♗c7 25.♗xb6± Timofeev – Bartel, playchess.com 2004.) 13.f4 ♖xd4 14.♗xd7+ ♗xd7 15.fxe5 ♖f5! 16. ♗xg4 ♖e3 17.♗g7 0–0–0 and Black's initiative is very powerful.

12...h5

It is weaker for him to play 12... ♖g8, because he loses the possibility to castle short, no matter how ridiculous that might seem at the moment. 13.♖e1 ♖c4 14.♗f4 ♖xd4 15.♖xd4 ♖c8 16.♖xe6! and the issue has been already settled. (16. b3 ♖a3 17.♗d3 ♖xc5 18.♗xh7 ♖g7 19.♗d3 ♖xc3 20.♗e5 ♗f6 21.♗d2 ♗xe5 22.♖xe5 ♗c7 23.♖h5 ♖g8 24.♖h7 e5 25.♖f5 e4 26.♗g5+- Smirin – Akobian, Minneapolis 2005.) 16...fxe6 (16...♗xb5? 17.♖e1 ♗a6 18.♖f5+-; 17...♗d7 18.♗d6+-; 17...♖xb2 18.♗b3 ♗d3 19.♗d6+-) 17.♖xe6 ♗xb5 18.♖xd8 ♖xd8 19.♗e2± Black's pieces are so discoordinated that they are incapable of protecting his king.



13.♖e1

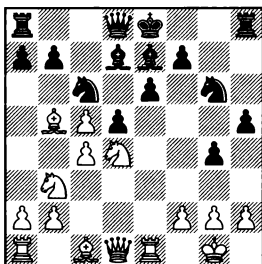
He can counter 13.♗f4 with 13...♖g6.

The move 13.♗e2 was played twice quite successfully by Sergey Erenburg. I believe Black must reply to this with 13...a6!? (13... ♖xd4?! 14.♗xe5 ♗f6 15.♗xd7+ ♖f8 16.♗d6+ ♗e7 17.♗e5 ♗f6 18. ♗d6+ ♗e7 19.♗g5 ♗xd6 20.♗xd8 ♖xb3 21.♗f6 ♖xc5 22.♗xh8 ♖xd7 23. ♗d4 and the result of the game will depend on whether White will realize his extra exchange or not, Erenburg – Peek, Port Erin 2005. 13...♖g8?! 14.♗xc6 ♖xc6 15.♗f4 ♖xd4 16.cxd4 ♗c6 17.♖fe1 ♗g5 18. ♗xg5 ♖xg5 19.♗d2 ♗f6 20.♖e3 h4 21.♖ae1 – 21.♖a5!? – 21...♖e7 22. ♖c1 ♖ag8 23.♖e2 ♖f8 24.g3 ♖f5 25. ♖f4 ♖xf4 26.gxf4 ♗xf4 27.♖d3 ♗f6 28.♖e5 ♗g6 29.♗e3 g3 30.fxg3 hxg3 31.hxg3± Erenburg – Heberla, Warsaw 2005. The move 13... ♗c7? is just bad and after 14.♗f4 Black cannot play 14...♖f3+? 15. ♗xf3!) 14.♗xc6 (White can also try to preserve the bishop 14.♖xc6 ♖xc6 15.♗d3, but I think that after 15... e5, Black has sufficient counter chances. In case of 14.♗a4, he can play 14...♗c7 15.♗f4 ♖f3+ 16.♗xf3 gxf3 17.♗xc7 ♖xd4!, regaining the piece.) 14...♖xc6 15.♖e1 ♗c7 and the position is acceptable for Black (It is weaker for him to opt for 15...♖xd4?! 16.♖xd4 ♗xc5 17. ♗e5!; 16...♖c8 17.b4 and White managed to get rid of one of his knights, since it was doubling the functions of the other one).

13...♟xd4

This move forces the issue to a maximal extent.

I can recommend to players who are after more complicated situations, the line: 13...♟g6!? 14.c4 (Black should better counter the simplifying move 14.♟xc6 with 14...♟xc6 15.♙d3 ♖g8 and he obtains good counterplay. It is worse for him to continue with 14...bxc6 15.♙d3 ♖g8 16.c4±, because his centre is rather unstable and his pieces are evidently very passive.)



and now:

Black has tried 14...a6 15.♟xc6 bxc6 (It would be stronger for him to continue with 15...♟xc6!? 16.♟xc6 bxc6 and he has managed to trade his bishop, which is usually very passive in this pawn-structure.) 16.♙d2 e5 17.♙a5 ♗b8 18.cxd5 cxd5 19.c6 ♙c8 20.c7 ♗b7 21.♖c1 ♙d7 22.♟c5 ♟xc5 23.♖xc5 0-0 24.♗b3 ♗xb3 25.♟xb3 ♙e6 26.♖c6 ♖fe8 27.♟c5± Timofeev – Arencibia Rodriguez, Cappelle la Grande 2004.

It seems attractive for Black to choose 14...dxc4 15.♟xc4 ♟xd4,

but unfortunately White has a very powerful argument against that: 16.♟xd4 (In case of 16.♗xd4 ♙f6, his queen does not have a comfortable square to retreat to: 17.♗d3 ♟e5; 17.♗d1 ♗c7 with an excellent position for Black.) 16...♟xc5 (It is not consistent for him to play 16...0-0?! 17.♗c2!; while the move 16...♗c7 is just very risky, because of 17.b4 0-0-0 18.♙b2.) 17.♟xe6 fxe6 (White obtains an advantage in a problem-like fashion after 17...♟xe6 18.♗a4+! ♗d7 19.♟xe6 fxe6 20.♗c2!) 18.♗c2 ♗e7 (Black loses after 18...♟xd4 19.♗xg6+ ♟f8 20.♖e4 e5 21.♖xd4!! exd4 22.♙f4+-) 19.♗xg6+ ♗f7 20.♗e4 0-0 21.♙e3, White's advantage is quite obvious, despite being not so great after all...

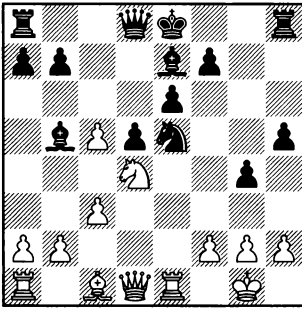
14...♟xd4 15.♟xd4 (Or 15.♗xd4?! ♟xb5 16.cxb5 ♙f6 and Black's position is acceptable.) 15...♟xc5 16.cxd5 ♟xb5 17.♟xb5 ♗b6! His position looks perilous, but in fact it is quite satisfactory. 18.♗e2 (Or 18.dxe6? ♟xf2+ 19.♟h1 ♗xb5 20.exf7+ ♟f8 21.♖f1 ♙d4! and Black neutralizes White's attack.) 18...0-0 19.♙h6 ♖fe8 with counterplay for him.

14.♟xd4

White's activation of the queen – 14.♗xd4 is harmless for Black after 14...♟xb5 15.♖xe5 (15.♗xe5 ♙f6 16.♗f4 ♗e7) 15...♗d7 (It is essential for him not to overlook the trick – 15...♙f6 16.♙g5!) 16.♖xd5 ♗xd5 17.♗xh8+ ♟d7 18.♗d4 ♙c6 19.♙f4 ♖d8 and Black will have

an excellent compensation in the forthcoming endgame.

14... ♙xb5



15. ♖xb5!?

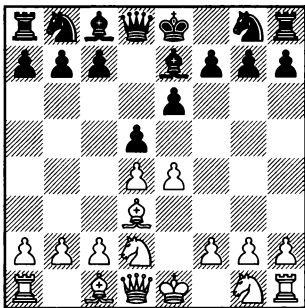
This is a new invention and it has not been tested in practice yet.

The move 15. ♙xe5 has been played in two games, but it cannot create any serious problems for Black. 15... ♗c7 (He can also try 15... ♖d7 16. b4 ♙f6 17. ♙e1 ♗c7 and the opponents agreed to a draw in this complicated position, Emms – Lalic, Southend 2001.) 16. ♙f4 (The computer programme recommends here 16. ♙e1 ♗xc5 – 16... ♖d7!? – 17. ♙e3 ♗c4 18. b3 ♗d3 19. ♖xb5 ♗xb5 and then the really insolent move – 20. ♙xa7!) 16... ♗xc5 17. ♙e3 ♗c4 18. b3 ♗d3 19. ♖xb5 ♗xb5 20. ♖d4 ♗d7

21. ♗d3 h4 22. f4 gxf3 23. ♗xf3 f6 24. ♙h5 0–0–0, with an advantage for Black, Kolar – Boukal, Czech Republic 2004.

15... ♖g6 16. c4 (in case of 16. ♗a4, Black should reply 16... 0–0! without any reserve) 16... ♙xc5 17. ♗c2! 0–0 (It would be too risky for him to opt for 17... ♙c8 18. ♙xe6+ fxe6 19. ♗xg6+ ♖d7 20. cxd5 with a long-lasting initiative for White.) 18. ♙h6 (In case of 18. ♙xe6, Black has the powerful argument – 18... ♗d7!) 18... ♙e8 (He is worse following 18... ♗b6 19. ♙xf8 ♖xf8 20. ♖c3 dxc4 21. ♖a4 ♗c6 22. ♖xc5 ♗xc5 23. ♙ad1 and the position is open, so White's rooks are very powerful.) 19. cxd5 ♗b6 (Black must play sharply and precisely in order to obtain a good position.) 20. ♖c3 (In case of 20. dxe6, his has the response 20... ♖h7! 21. exf7 ♙xe1+ 22. ♙xe1 ♖xh6 23. ♗d2+ ♖g7 24. ♙e8 ♗xb5 25. ♙xa8 ♗c6! and he can easily coordinate his pieces after having taken control over the important d5-square.) 20... ♖d4 21. ♙e3 exd5 22. ♖xd5 ♗xb2 23. ♗xb2 ♙xb2 24. ♙ab1 ♙e5 25. ♙xb7 ♙eb8 and Black has sufficient counter chances with his far-advanced kingside pawns.

To conclude our analysis of the line with 4. ♖gf3, I must say that both sides need thorough theoretical knowledge and if possible some novelties up the sleeve. The arising positions are tremendously sharp and there are plenty of intricate tactical possibilities. All that can be both advantageous, or disadvantageous for Black. Still, in general, I believe that he must be able to obtain a very good position.



I consider this to be the most flexible move for White.

He counters the rather abstract move 3...♙e7 with a non-forcing development – 4.♙d3. This is a quite reasonable approach, because in the other lines the game is very tense and it involves risky lines for White. Naturally, it would not be easy for him to acquire in that fashion a great advantage after the opening, but he can surely create problems for a not so well-prepared opponent and his chances of obtaining a small edge are considerable.

4...c5

Black has no chances of organizing a meaningful counterplay without this move not only in this

variation, but in the entire French defence in general.

5.dxc5

This move does not seem to be principled for White, but this assumption is wrong.

Instead, it would be senseless for him to play 5.exd5?!, because after 5...♗xd5 6. ♖gf3 cxd4 7.0–0 ♗f6 8.♙c4 ♗d6 9.♗b3 ♖c6, there arises a well-familiar position from the variation 3.♘d2 c5, except that Black has an extra tempo.

It is only slightly better for White to opt for 5.♖gf3, after which Black can choose between 5...cxd4 and 5...♗f6.

In case of 5.c3 cxd4 6.cxd4 dxe4 7.♗xe4 ♗f6 8.♗f3 ♖c6, the game transposes to situations analyzed in the part of the book dealing with 3.♘d2 c5.

5...♗f6

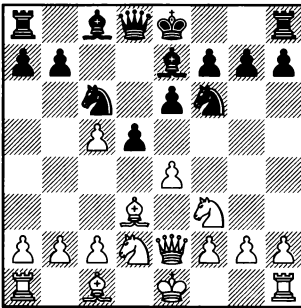
It would be too passive for Black to play 5...♘d7, after which White maintains a slight advantage by simple means 6.exd5 exd5 7.♗b3 ♗xc5 8.♗xc5 ♙xc5 9.♗f3 ♗f6 10.♗e2+ ♗e7 11.♗xe7+ ♗xe7 12.0–0 ♗e8 13.♙g5 h6 14.♗fe1+

♗e6 15. ♗e3 ♗xe3 16. ♗xe3 ♖d6
17. ♖d4± Meier – Bartel, Germany
2008.

6. ♗e2

We will analyze now a) 6...
♖c6 and b) 6... 0–0.

a) 6... ♖c6 7. ♖gf3



7... ♖b4!?

This time-consuming maneuver to capture White's bishop brought good results to Morozevich in several games.

It seems more natural for Black to play 7... ♗xc5, but this is in fact a loss of time. 8.0–0 ♗c7 9.a3!? This is a rather tricky move. (White fails to obtain an advantage with the concrete line: 9.exd5 ♖xd5 10. ♖e4 ♗e7 11.g3! e5! 12. ♖eg5 – 12.c4? ♖db4 13. ♗b1 ♗g4 and Black has an excellent position – 12...h6 13. ♗c4 hxg5 14. ♗xd5 ♗h3 15. ♗d1 f6, with mutual chances, but it deserves attention for him to choose 9.e5!? ♖d7 10. ♖b3 ♗e7 11. ♗e1 b6 12.c3 ♖c5 13. ♗c2 ♗a6 14. ♗d1 ♖d7 15. ♖bd4

0–0–0 16. ♖xc6 ♗xc6 17.a4 ♖b7 18.a5 ♗c7 19. ♗e3± Vysochin – Socko, Polanica Zdroj 2000.) 9... ♗d7 10.e5 ♖g4 11.b4 ♖d4 12. ♗d1 ♗b6 13. ♗b2 ♖xf3+ 14. ♖xf3 ♗a4 15. ♗e2 0–0–0 16. ♗ac1 ♖b8 17.h3 ♖h6 18. ♖d4 ♗c8 19. ♗h5 ♗d7 20. ♗g5± Kotronias – Barsov, Patras 2001. Naturally, Black could have defended much better, but this variation can hardly promise him an acceptable position.

8.0–0

White relies on quick development. He is ready to part with his light-squared bishop and will hope to compensate it with rapid mobilization of forces, so important at the beginning of the game.

Meanwhile, he could have tried to win a pawn and keep it with the greedy line: 8. ♖b3 ♖xd3+ 9.cxd3 a5 10. ♗g5 (It is weaker for him to opt for 10.a4?! dxe4 11.dxe4 0–0 12.0–0 b6 13. ♗d1 ♗c7 14. ♗g5 bxc5 15. ♗ac1 ♗a6 16. ♗c2 ♗fc8 17. ♗h4 and the opponents agreed to a draw in the game Rublevsky – Radjabov, Hyderabad 2002. Black has also tried the move 10...b6, but this presents White with additional possibilities: 11.e5 ♖d7 12. c6 ♖c5 13. ♖bd4 ♗a6 14. ♖b5 ♖b3 15. ♗b1 ♗b4+ 16. ♖f1 0–0 17.d4 f6 18. ♗e3 ♗xb5+ 19.axb5 a4 20.g3 ♗e8 21. ♗d3 ♖xc1 22. ♗xc1 a3 23. b3 a2 24. ♖g2 ♗g6 25. ♗xg6 hxg6, with wild complications, Adams – Morozevich, Wijk aan Zee 2000.) 10...a4 11. ♖bd2 h6 12. ♗xf6 (It is also possible for White to continue

with 12.♔h4!? ♣a5 13.exd5 ♣xc5 14.dxe6 ♔xe6 15.0-0 ♔d8 16.♗e4 ♣d5 17.♔fd1 g5 18.♙g3 g4 19.♗e5 ♣d4 20.♗g6 fxc6 21.♗xf6+ ♔xf6 22.♣xe6± Navara – Libiszewski, Pula 2003, while the move 12.♙e3 will hardly achieve anything after 12...♣a5 13.0-0 ♔xc5 14.♔xc5 ♣xc5 15.♔fc1 ♣b6 16.e5 ♗g8 17.♣e3 ♣xe3 18.fxe3 ♗e7 19.♗d4 ♔d7 20.♔c7 ♔b8 21. b4 f6 22.♗2f3 ♗g6 23.exf6 gxf6 24.♔ac1 ♗d8 25.♗f2 ♗e7 26.♔7c5 b6 27.♔5c3 ♔c8 28.♔xc8+ ♗xc8 29.♗h4 ♗e7 30.♗hf3 e5 31.♗e2 ♔b5 and Black has a good position, Navara – Duppel, Pardubice 2000.) 12... ♔xf6 13.exd5 (In case of 13.e5, Black obtains a long-lasting compensation for the pawn with his bishop-pair and the possibility to undermine his opponent's pawn-centre. 13...♔e7 14.♔c1 ♣a5 15.♣e3 ♔d7 16.0-0 0-0 17.♔c2 ♔fc8 18.♔fc1 ♔c7 19.♣d4 ♔ac8 20.b4 axb3 21.♗xb3 ♣a6 22.♗e1 f6 23. exf6 ♔xf6 24.♣b4 e5 25.d4 e4 26. ♣b6 ♣a4 27.♣d6 ♔c6 28.♔d1 ♔f7 29.♣g3 ♔e8± Pogonina – Tairova, Moscow 2007, or 15...b6 16.cxb6 ♔d8 17.♣c5 ♣xc5 18.♔xc5 ♔xb6 19.♔c2 0-0 20.♗f1 ♔a6 21. ♗e2 ♔b5 22.♗e3 f5 23.♔hc1 ♔ab8 24.a3 g5 25.h3 ♗g7 26.♔b1 ♗g6 27.♔cc1 h5± Godena – Morozevich, Istanbul 2000.) 13...♣xd5 (It seems to me that the move 13...0-0?! is too gambit-like, but in the following game Black was quite successful. 14.♗e4 exd5 15.♗xf6+ ♣xf6 16.0-0 b6

17.♔ac1 bxc5 18.♔xc5 ♔g4 19.♣e5 ♣b6 20.♔xd5 ♔xf3 21.gxf3 ♔ab8 22.♔b1 a3 23.b4 ♔fe8 24.♣d4 ♔e2 25.♣xb6 ♔xb6 26.♔a5 ♔xa2 and the opponents agreed to a draw, Rozentalis – Pert, Dublin 2007. It looks attractive for Black, but rather risky to continue with 13... a3?! 14.♗e4 ♣xd5 15.♗xf6+ gxf6 16.b4 ♔d7 17.♣e4 ♔c6 18.♣xd5 ♔xd5 19.♗d4 ♔a4 20.♗c2 ♔g8 21.♔g1 b6 22.cxb6 ♗d7 23.♗d2 ♗c6 24.g3 ♗xb6 25.♗e3 ♔d8 26. ♗xd5+ ♔xd5 27.♔ab1± Vachier Lagrave – Marzolo, Chartres 2005.) 14.♗e4 ♔d7 15.0-0 ♔c6 16.♔ac1 ♔d8 17. ♗d6+ ♗f8 18.b4 axb3 19.axb3 ♣xb3 20.♗e5 ♔xe5 21.♣xe5 ♣xd3 22.f4?? ♣d2 and White was so disappointed that he resigned, Kotronias – Nepomniachtchi, Moscow 2007.

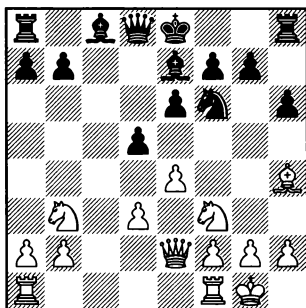
8...♗xd3 9.cxd3 ♔xc5 10. ♗b3 ♔e7 11.♔g5

It deserves attention for him to choose 11.e5!? ♗d7 12. ♗fd4 0-0 13.♔f4 ♗c5 14.♣g4 ♗h8 15.♗xc5 ♔xc5 16.♗f3 ♔e7 17.♔fe1 ♔d7 18. ♣h5 f6 19.♔ac1 ♔e8 20.♣h3 f5 21.♔e3 ♔d7 22.♔c5 ♔c8 23.♔d6 ♔c6 24.d4 ♔e8 25.♔xc6 ♔xc6 26. ♣g3 h6 27.h4, with an advantage for White, Svidler – Radjabov, Moscow 2002.

11...h6 12.♔h4
(diagram)

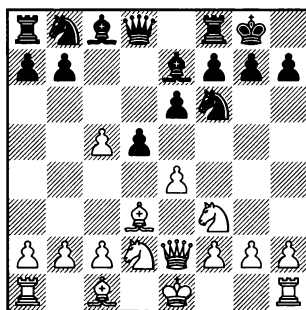
12...♣b6!?

This is the most fashionable move for Black in this variation. Do not try to justify it logically, simply accept that as a fact.

**13.e5 ♖g8 14.♗g3**

White should better avoid 14.♗xe7?! ♖xe7 15.♗fd4 ♗d7 16.♖ac1 0-0 17.♙d2 ♖fc8 18.♙a5 ♙xa5 19.♗xa5 b6 20.♗ab3 g5 21.♖ce1 ♖g6 22.g3 a5, with a good position for Black, Leko – Morozevich, Sarajevo 1999.

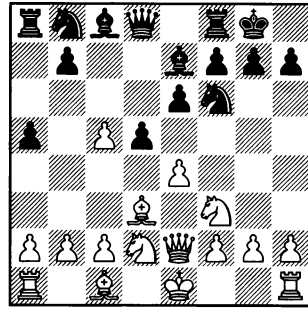
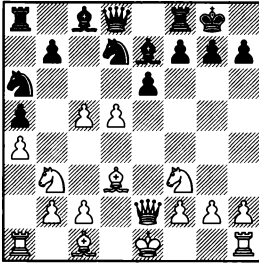
14...♗d7 15.♗f4 ♙a6 16.a4 ♖c8 17.♗bd4 ♗c5 18.♗d2 ♙b6 19.♗e3 ♙d8 20.♖fc1 ♗b6 21.♖xc8 ♙xc8 22.♗d2 ♖e7 23.♗b4 ♙d8 24.a5 ♗c7 25.♙c2 ♗b8 with an obvious advantage for White, Anisimov – Nepomniachtchi, Krasnoyarsk 2007.

b) 6...0-0 7.♗gf3**7...a5**

I am not a fan of similar voluntary chronic weakening of the position, but if Black wishes to capture on c5 with his knight on b8 – this is the only way for him to do it.

It is bad for him to play 7...♖bd7? in view of 8.e5±

The seemingly paradoxical move 7...♗d7 however, deserves a very serious attention for Black. 8.♗b3 (Or 8.b4?! a5 9.c3 axb4 10.cxb4 ♖c6 and he regains the pawn after all. 9.b5 ♖xc5 – It is far from clear what White has achieved by advancing his pawn all the way up to b5. 8.exd5 ♖xc5. Meanwhile, Black could have easily avoided sacrificing 8...exd5!? – 9.dxe6 ♖xd3+ 10.♙xd3 ♗xe6 11.♙xd8 ♖xd8 with an excellent compensation for the pawn thanks to his bishop-pair and superior development. He has a good position too in case of 10.cxd3 ♗xe6 11.0-0 ♖c6 12.♗e4 h6) 8...a5 9.a4 (The alternative for White is 9.exd5 exd5 10.0-0 a4 11.♗bd4 ♖xc5 12.♗f4 ♖xd3 – 12...♖c6!? – 13.cxd3 ♖c6 and Black obtains an acceptable position, or 10.a4?! ♖xc5 and White cannot exchange comfortably 11.0-0 ♖xb3 12.cxb3 ♖c6=; 11.♖xc5 ♗xc5 12.0-0 ♖e8=) 9...♗a6 10.exd5. This is the most precise reaction for him. (10.♗xa6 ♖xa6 11.0-0 dxe4 12. ♙xe4 ♖xc5 13.♖xc5 ♗xc5 14.♗g5 f5 15.♙e2 h6 16.♗f3 f4 with an unclear position.)



10...dxc5. Black is forced to inflict this counter strike. (The routine move 10...exd5?! leads to an inferior position for him after 11.♙xa6 ♖xa6 12.♙e3 ♜c7 13.♜b5! and White preserves his c5-pawn.) 11.dxe6 ♗xd3+ 12.♜xd3 ♙xe6 13.♜xd8 ♜fxd8 14.♗bd4 ♗b4 15.♙d2 (He can also try here 15.0-0, but then Black obtains a good position after 15...♙c4 16.♞e1 ♙f6) 15...♙d5 16.0-0-0 ♙f6 with a sufficient compensation for the pawn. he solves his problems as well after 11.♗xc5 ♗xc5 12.♙b5 exd5 13.♗d4 (White was obviously reluctant to play the natural move 13.0-0, because of the possible pin – 13...♙g4.) 13...♙f6 14.♙e3 ♗e6! This is a concrete variation and Black obtains a good game with it. 15.♞d1 (His position is quite acceptable too after 15.0-0-0 ♗xd4 16.♙xd4 ♙f5) 15...♙xd4 16.♙xd4 ♜g5 17.0-0 ♗f4 18.♜f3 ♙g4 19.♜g3 ♗h5 20.♜e5 ♜xe5 21.♙xe5 ♙xd1 22.♞xd1 and Black won this ending in the game Milos – Vitiugov, Khanty-Mansiysk 2009.

(diagram)

8.0-0

The symmetrical response 8.a4 is not satisfactory for White at all after 8...♗a6 9.e5 ♗d7 10.♗d4 ♗dxc5 (10...♗b4!?) 11.♙xa6 ♖xa6 12.♗2f3 ♙d7!? (It seems to me that Black played even more straightforwardly in the following game 12...♗e4 13.0-0 f6 14.c4 ♜c7 15.cxd5 exd5 16.♙f4 ♜c4 17.♜d1 ♙d7 18.♞c1 ♜xa4 19.♞c7 ♜xd1 20.♞xd1 fxe5 21.♙xe5 ♗c5, with a complicated position, Navara – Pelletier, Plovdiv 2003.) 13.b3 ♗e4 14.0-0 ♜b6 with an excellent game for Black.

White did not achieve much with the risky line: 8.c4 ♗a6 9.cxd5 ♗xc5 10.0-0 exd5 11.e5 ♗fd7 (Or 11...♗xd3!? 12.♜xd3 ♗d7 13.♜xd5 ♗c5 14.♜xd8 ♞xd8 and Black has a good compensation for the sacrificed pawn.) 12.♙c2 f6 13.e6 ♗e5 14.♗xe5 fxe5 15.♜xe5 ♙f6 16.♜e2 ♞a6! This is an original decision. 17.♗b3 ♞xe6 18.♙xh7+ ♗xh7 19.♜h5+ ♗g8 20.♗xc5 ♞e5 21.♜d1 ♜d6 22.♗d3 ♞e4 23.♙e3 d4 and he seized the initiative in the game Sjugirov – Bajarani, Rijeka 2010.

White plays only seldom here 8.c3 ♖a6!? (8... ♗fd7 9.exd5 ♗xc5 10. ♘b5 exd5 11.0-0 ♗c6 12. ♗d4 ♘d7 13. ♗2f3 ♘f6 14. ♘e3 ♖e8 15. ♖fd1 ♗e4 16.a4 ♗c7 17. h3 ♖ad8= Almasi – Radjabov, Pamplona 2001. He was not successful either after 9.0-0 ♗xc5 10. ♘c2 b6 11. ♖d1 ♘a6 12. ♗e3 ♖a7 13.exd5 and the opponents agreed to a draw, Yemelin – Vitiugov, St Petersburg 2006.) 9.e5 ♗d7 10. ♘xa6 ♖xa6 11.b4 ♖a8 (Unfortunately, it would not work for Black to play sharply 11...f6 12.exf6 ♘xf6 13.b5 ♖a8. It is now bad for White to continue with 14. ♗xe6+?! ♗h8 15. ♗xd5 ♗e7+ 16. ♗d1 ♘xc3 17. ♖e1 ♗xc5 18. ♗xc5 ♗xc5 19. ♖b1 ♘f5-+; 19. ♘a3 ♘g4!! 20. ♘xc5 ♖fd8-+; 16. ♗f1 ♘xc3 17. ♖b1 ♗xc5 18. ♘a3 ♘b4 19. ♘xb4 axb4 with an advantage for Black. He won the game too after 17... ♖e8 18. ♘a3 ♗e2+ 19. ♗g1 ♗f6 20. ♗c4 ♘f5 21. ♖e1 ♗xe1+ 22. ♗xe1 ♖xe1+ 23. ♗f1 ♖d8 24.h3 ♘e5 25.f4 ♘d3 26. ♗a4 ♖xf1+ 27. ♗h2 ♘xf4+ 28.g3 ♖f2+ 29. ♗g1 ♘e3 0-1 Nekrasov – Vavrak, Edmonton 2006. Still, after 14. ♘a3 ♖e8 – but not 14... ♘xc3? 15. ♖c1 d4 16.0-0 ♗f6 17. ♖fd1± Kudrin – Shulman, Philadelphia 2008 – 15.0-0 ♘xc3 16. ♖ac1, White maintains some edge. The situation is rather unclear after 15. ♗e3?! e5 16.0-0 e4 17. ♖ae1 ♗e7 18. ♗d4 ♗e5 19.f3 ♗d3 20. ♖e2 ♘g5 21.f4 ♘f6 and Black has some compensation.) 12. ♘b2 ♗c7 13.0-0 b6 14. cxb6 ♗xb6 15.b5 and he must

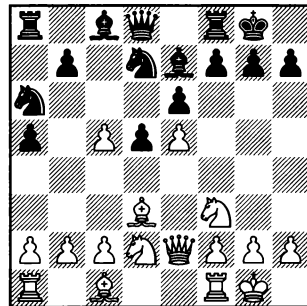
choose in what fashion to seek compensation for the sacrificed pawn 15...a4!? (or 15... ♖a4 16. ♖ab1).

8... ♖a6 9.e5

I believe White must try to obtain an advantage in this particular way.

Many famous experts for White preferred in this position the line: 9.exd5 exd5 10. ♗b3 (10. ♖e1 ♖e8 11. ♗b3 ♗xc5 12. ♘b5 ♘d7 13. ♘e3 a4 14. ♘xd7 ♗xd7 15. ♘xc5 axb3 – 15... ♘xc5!?) 16. ♗xc5 ♗c6= – 16. ♘xe7 ♖xa2 17. ♖ac1 ♖a4 18. ♗e5 ♖e4 19. ♘xf6 ♖xe1+ 20. ♗xe1 ♖xe5 21. ♘xe5± Naiditsch – De la Riva Aguado, Pamplona 2004.) 10...a4 11. ♗bd4 ♗xc5 12. ♘b5 ♘d7 (12... ♗ce4!?) 13. ♘f4 ♖e8 14. ♘xd7 ♗xd7 15. ♗b5 ♗xb5 16. ♗xb5 ♗e6 17. ♘e5 ♖ec8 18. ♖ac1 ♖a5 19. ♗bd4 ♗d7 20. ♗f5 ♘f8 21. ♘d4, White won that endgame indeed, but only thanks to his exquisite technique, Malakhov – Del Rio Angelis, Chalkidiki 2002.

9... ♗d7



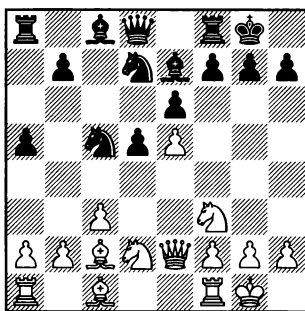
10.c3

White must play in this principled fashion, implementing his plan step by step, in order to obtain an edge.

The other possible treatment of this position is 10. ♖d4 ♜dxc5 11.f4!? (It would be too positional for him to opt for 11. ♖2f3 ♜xd3 12.cxd3 ♙d7 13. ♙e3 a4 14.a3 ♜c5 15. ♖ac1 ♖c8 16. ♖c3 b6 17. ♙f4 f5 18.h3 h6 19. ♖fc1 ♜e8 with a good game for Black, Ki.Georgiev – Kornev, Warsaw 2005.) 11... ♗b6 12. ♖2f3 ♙d7 13.a3 ♜xd3 (Black should better refrain from 13... ♖e4 14. ♖a2 ♜ac5 15. ♙e3 a4 16. ♖h1 f6 17.exf6 ♙xf6 18. ♜e1 ♜xd3 19.cxd3 ♜c5 20. ♖e2 ♙b5 21. ♗b4 ♖fc8 22. ♖ed4+- Kotronias – Barsov, Montreal 2002.) 14.cxd3 ♜c5 15. ♙e3 ♜a6 and the position remain rather unclear.

White does not need to increase the tension in the centre with 10.c4 ♜axc5 11. ♙c2 b6 12.b3 ♙b7 13. ♙b2 ♜b8 (Black must not risk too much with a line like: 13...f5 14. ♖d4 ♜b8 15. ♖ad1 ♜xe5 16. ♜xe5 ♜xe5 17. ♖xf5 exf5 18. ♙xe5 ♖ac8 19. ♖fe1 g6 20.cxd5 ♙xd5 21. ♖c4 ♙xc4 22.bxc4 ♙f6 23. ♙f4 ♖fd8 24. ♙d5 ♖f7 25. ♙e3 ♙e7 26. ♖b1 ♖b8 27. ♖xd8± Vachier Lagrave – Sprenger, Germany 2008; 13... ♜c7!?) 14. ♖ad1 ♖c8 15. ♖fe1 ♖f8 16. ♙b1 a4 17. ♜e3 axb3 18.axb3 ♖g6 19.h4 h6 20.h5 ♖f8 21. ♖h2 ♙g5 22.f4 ♙h4 and the position remained very sharp in the game Kaplan – Rodshtein, Biel 2007.

10... ♜axc5 11. ♙c2



11...b6

I believe there will be some adherents to the possibility 11...b5!?, although Black failed to equalize in the following game 12.a3 ♜c7 13. ♖e1 ♙b7 14. ♖d4 b4 15.axb4 axb4 16. ♖xa8 ♖xa8 17.cxb4 ♖a6 18.b5 ♖b4 19. ♙b1 ♖a2 20. ♖2b3 ♜xc1 21. ♖xc1 ♜b6 22. ♜c2 g6 23. ♜c7± Parligras – Jackelen, Germany 2007.

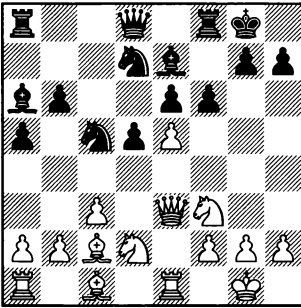
It would be premature for Black to continue with 11...f6?! 12.exf6 ♙xf6 13. ♖b3 b6 14. ♜xc5 ♜xc5 15. ♙d1 ♙a6 16. ♜e3 ♜e8 17. ♖g5 ♙g5 18. ♜xg5 ♖e4 19. ♜h4 with an obvious advantage for White, Kotronias – Ni Hua, Khanty-Mansiysk 2005.

12. ♖e1 ♙a6

One of the experts of this variation for Black Yuri Shulman tried an interesting novelty here in a recent game – 12...f6!? 13.exf6 (Its idea can be best illustrated in the variation 13.b4 axb4 14.cxb4 ♖a6!) 13... ♙xf6 14. ♖b3 ♙a6, but White can counter it in an appro-

priate fashion too. he has the resource 15. ♖d1 ♙b7 (Black cannot equalize with 15... ♗e7 16. ♘xc5 bxc5 17. ♙f5±; 16... ♘xc5 17. ♘e5, since White's pieces on the e5-outpost would spell trouble for Black for a long time.) 16. ♘xc5 ♘xc5 17. ♙e3 ♘e4 18. ♙xe4 dxe4 19. ♗xd8 ♖fxd8 20. ♘d4 ♙xd4 21. ♙xd4 b5 22. ♖ed1 ♙d5 23. ♙e3 a4 24. ♖d4 ♖dc8 25. ♖c1 and White offered a draw, which was accepted by Black, Kryvoruchko – Shulman, Reykjavik 2009.

13. ♗e3 f6



It looks like Black's position is acceptable, but that assumption is wrong.

Still, in order to refute his strategy, White must play resourcefully.

14. b4!

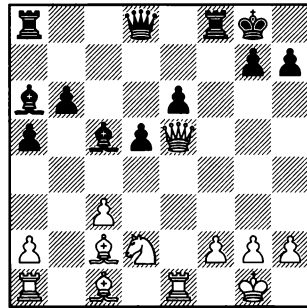
He would not achieve anything with the tentative approach – 14. exf6, because of 14... ♙xf6 15. ♘b3 e5 16. ♘xc5 (16. ♖d2 ♙b7 17. ♘xc5 bxc5 18. ♘g5 ♙xg5 19. ♗xg5 ♗b6±) 16... bxc5 17. ♘g5 ♙xg5 18. ♗xg5 ♗e8 19. ♙e3 ♗f7 20. ♗h4 h6 21.

♖ad1 ♖ab8 and I even prefer Black's position, Kudrin – Perelshteyn, Tulsa 2008.

14... ♙xe5

Black should better not try to be too tricky 14... axb4?! 15. cxb4 ♙xe5 16. bxc5 ♙xc5 17. ♗b3!

15. ♘xe5 ♘xe5 16. bxc5 ♙xc5 17. ♗xe5



This is the key-position of this variation. After having analyzed it extensively, I can conclude that Black is worse and objectively he should better seek an improvement in the main line somewhere earlier.

17... ♖xf2

The reasonable alternative for him here is 17... ♙xf2+!? 18. ♘h1 ♙xe1 19. ♗xe6+. I think White should not be greedy here. (It would be stronger for him to continue with 19. ♗xe1 ♖d6 20. a4! ♖fe8 21. ♘f3 e5 and his prospects in the oncoming complicated fight are slightly preferable.) 19... ♘h8 20. ♗xe1 d4 21. ♙b2 (21. ♘f3!? d3 22. ♙d1, White wishes to transfer his bishop to a functioning diago-

nal.) 21...d3 22.♔d1 ♖g5 23.♘f3 ♜a8 24.♗f2 d2 25.♙a4 ♞e2 26. ♗g1 ♗e7 27.c4 ♙b7 28.♞f1 ♞e1 29.♔d1 ♞xf3 30.gxf3 ♞xd1 0-1 Kristjansson – Caruana, Reykjavik 2008.

18.♙h1

Once again, White should better refrain from gobbling pawns. 18.♗xe6+? ♙h8 (The computer programme recommends here the paradoxical move 18...♙f8!?, with the following exemplary variation 19.♙h1 ♗g5 20.♗h3 ♞e8 21.♞g1 – 21.♞xe8+!? ♙xe8 22.♙a4+ b5 23. ♙b3 – 21...♙c8 22.♘b3 ♗xc1 23. ♞gxc1 ♙xh3 24.♘xc5 bxc5 25. gxf3 ♞ee2 26.♙a4 ♞xh2+ 27. ♙g1=) 19.♙h1 ♗h4 20.♘f3 (Black loses after 20.♗xd5? ♞af8 21.♗e4 ♙f1!–+, as well as following 20.♙b2? ♞af8 21.♗xd5 ♙b7 22. ♗xb7 ♙d6–+) 20...♞xf3 21.gxf3 ♗f2 and here White must find two very important moves 22.♗e8+! (He lost in a really childish fashion after 22.♙e3?? ♗xf3+ 23.♙g1 ♙f1!–+ Durarbeyli – Yemelin, Budva 2009.) 22...♙f8 23.♗e3

♗xc2 24.♙a3! d4 (24...♗f5 25. ♙xf8 ♞xf8 26.♞ab1 ♙b7 27.♗d4! and Black's bishop will remain isolated.) 25.cxd4 ♙b7 with some compensation for him.

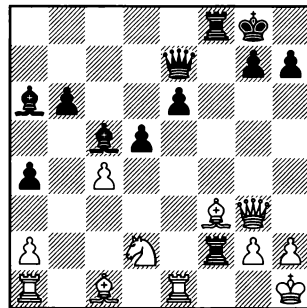
18...♗e7

White can counter 18...♗h4 with the same maneuver 19.♔d1!

19.♔d1 ♞af8 20.♙f3

It looks like Black's pawn on e6 is untouchable in this variation: 20.♙g4 ♞f6 21.♙xe6+? ♙h8–+

20...♞f6 21.♗b8+ ♞f8 22. ♗g3 a4 23.c4!±

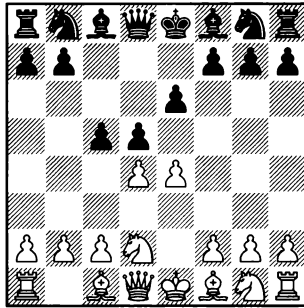


White has freed his pieces and has obtained an overwhelming advantage.

Concluding out survey of the move 4. ♔d3, we must say that Black should better be ready to play some calm and solid lines and he has a wide choice. His attempts to sharpen and complicate the game will be countered by White with venom. Meanwhile, all this does not mean anything conclusive from the practical point of view. The element of surprise. or finding White unprepared, may change dramatically the outcome of the opening battle.

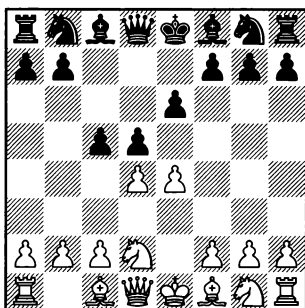
Part 5

The Tarrasch Variation with 3...c5 1.e4 e6 2.d4 d5 3.♘d2 c5



The philosophical justification of this system is tremendously simple. White only maintains the tension in the centre with his previous move and is not attacking it. The placement of his knight on d2, instead of on c3, is preferable from the point of view of building of pawn-chains, so Black must undermine his opponent's centre before it has been formed.

I believe – this is the right way for him to fight for equality in all the systems of the Tarrasch variation. The arising positions are not so typical for the French defence. There will be neither pawn-chains, nor chronically weak squares, or badly placed pieces. Naturally, things are far from simple and Black must play very precisely, but the overall correctness of the entire system is beyond any doubt.



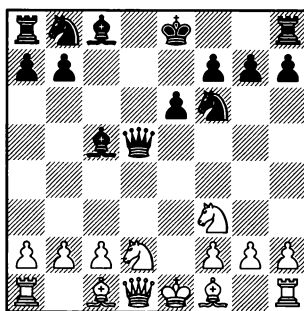
4.exd5

4.c3 – This is a rather second-rate move from the point of view of fighting for the advantage. 4... ♘c6 5.♘gf3 cxd4 6.cxd4 dxe4 7. ♘xe4 ♘f6 8.♘xf6+ (It would be much more interesting for White to test 8.♗d3 ♗e7 9.0–0 0–0 10. ♗e3 ♘b4 11.♘xf6+ ♗xf6 12.♗e4 ♘d5 13.♞d3 g6 14.♞b3 b6 15.♗h6 ♗e8 16.♘e5 ♗b7 17.♞f3 ♞e7 18. ♗fe1 ♗ac8 19.♗ad1 ♗g7, but Black had no problems in the game Khairullin – Dolmatov, Moscow 2004.) 8... ♞xf6 9.♗d3 ♗b4+ 10. ♗d2 ♗d7 11.♗e4 ♞f4 12.♗xc6 ♗xd2+ 13.♞xd2 ♞xd2+ 14.♘xd2 ♗xc6 15.♘e3 f6 16.♗hc1 ♘e7 and the endgame was better for Black, Bertholee – Dvoretzky, Wijk aan Zee 1999.

4...♞xd5 5.dxc5

On the one hand, giving up the centre can hardly be good for White, but Black is forced to place in the centre pieces, which will soon come under attack.

5...♗xc5 6.♘gf3 ♘f6



7.♗c4

This move has become very popular lately. White avoids taking any risks and creates some practical difficulties for his opponent.

He used to play before 7.♗d3 0–0 8.♞e2 (It would be harmless for Black if White tries 8.0–0 b6 9.♘b3 ♘bd7 10.♗g5 ♗b7 11.♞e2 h6 12.c4 ♞c6 13.♗d2 ♗ad8 14.♗c2 ♗fe8 15.♗ad1 e5 and Black seized the initiative in the game Con-

quest – Budnikov, Neuwied 1993.) 8... ♖bd7 9. ♖e4 (White has tried in practice too 9.b3, for example: 9... ♖g4!?) 10. 0–0 ♖de5 11. ♙e4 ♖xf3+ 12. ♖xf3 ♗h5 13. ♙f4 ♗f6 14. ♙ad1 ♗g4 15. ♗c4 ♖xe4 16. ♗xe4 f6 17. h3 ♗g6= Rublevsky – Ivanov, St Petersburg 1998, or 9... a5 10. ♙b2 b6 11. 0–0–0 ♙b7 12. ♗he1 a4 13. ♖e4 ♗h5 14. ♖fg5 ♗h6 15. ♖b1 axb3 16. axb3 ♙a3 with mutual chances. Meanwhile, White was not forced to be checkmated in a few moves anyway...: 17. ♖xf6+ ♖xf6 18. ♙xf6 ♗xf6 19. ♙xh7+ ♖h8 20. ♗h5 ♗b2# Rublevsky – Beliavsky, Novosibirsk 1995.) 9... b6 10. ♖xc5 ♗xc5 11. ♙e3 ♗c7 12. ♙d4 ♙b7 13. 0–0–0 ♖c5 14. ♙e5 ♖xd3+ 15. ♙xd3 ♗c4 16. ♖d4 ♙e4! and Black prevailed in the complications, Kasparov – Anand, Reggio Emilia 1992. As it often happens, this spectacular victory influenced greatly the development of the entire variation, but presently the whole line has faded into oblivion.

7... ♗c6

Black has tried in practice numerous retreats of his queen, but it has become clear that the last move is his optimal decision.

He can also play 7... ♗d6 8. 0–0 ♗c7 9. ♗e2 ♖c6 10. ♖e4 ♙e7 11. c3?! White's last fortifying move is absolutely senseless. (He could have maintained the initiative in the opening with 11. ♙g5!?). 11... b6 12. ♙g5 ♙b7 13. ♙ad1 0–0 14. ♖xf6+ ♙xf6 15. ♙xf6

gxf6 16. ♙d3 ♖h8 17. ♙xh7 ♖xh7 18. ♗e4+ ♖h6 19. ♗h4+ ♖g7 20. ♗g4+ ♖h6 21. ♗h4+ and the game Pogonina – Xu Yuhua, Krasnoturinsk 2008, ended in a draw by a perpetual.

It is rather dubious for Black to opt for 7... ♗h5?! 8. ♗e2 a6 9. ♖f1 ♙d6 10. ♙g5 h6 11. 0–0–0 hxg5 12. ♙xd6 g4 13. ♗d2 ♖c6 14. ♖g5 ♙d7 15. ♖g3 ♗h6 16. ♗e3 ♖e7 17. h3± Carlsson – Braun, Wijk aan Zee 2008.

8. ♗e2 0–0

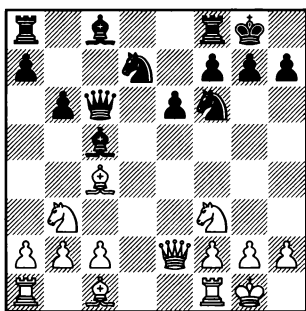
Or 8... a6!? 9. b3 b5 10. ♙d3 ♙b7 11. a4 b4 12. ♖c4 ♗c7 13. ♙b2 ♖bd7 14. 0–0–0 0–0 15. ♖fe5 ♖d5 16. ♖xd7 ♗xd7 17. ♖a5 ♗fe8 18. ♖xb7 ♗xb7 19. ♙e4 with a complicated game, Svidler – Grischuk, Almaty 2008.

After 8... ♖bd7!? 9. ♖b3 a6 10. a4 ♙d6 11. 0–0 ♗c7 12. a5 0–0 13. ♗e1 e5 14. ♖bd2 h6 15. b3 ♗e8 16. ♖e4 ♖xe4 17. ♗xe4 ♖c5 18. ♗h4 ♙e6 19. ♖d2 ♙ad8, Black is not worse, Adams – Bareev, Chalkidiki 2002. The readers should have noticed by now that Black has no problems after an accurate play and he simply needs to choose one of the possible lines.

9. 0–0 ♖bd7

It is interesting for him to opt for the prophylactic line: 9... ♙d6 10. ♙d3 ♙c7 11. ♖c4 ♖bd7 12. ♙d1 b5 13. ♖c5 ♖xe5 14. ♖xe5 ♗c5 15. ♖g4 ♖xg4 16. ♗xg4 ♙b7 17. ♗h4 g6 18. ♙g5 ♙d8 19. ♙xd8 ♗fxd8= Adams – Speelman, London/Crowthorne 2006.

10. ♖b3 b6



11. ♖xc5

White obtains the two-bishop advantage. This hardly provides him with anything real, though...

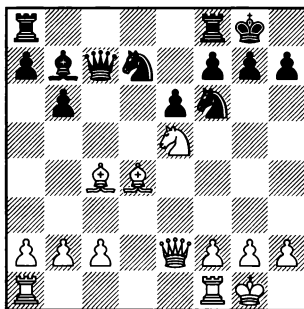
He tried an entirely new idea in a recent game – 11. ♖fd4!? ♙xd4 12. ♖xd4 ♜c5 13. ♝d1 ♙b7 14. a4 ♘e5 15. ♙b3 ♘g6 16. ♙e3 ♜e5 17. f3 ♞ad8 18. ♜e1 ♜h5 19. ♜g3 h6 20. ♘e2 ♘d5 21. ♙d2 ♜f5 22. c4 ♜d3 23. ♘c1 ♜d4+ 24. ♜f2 ♘df4 25. ♜xd4 ♞xd4 26. ♙e3 ♞xd1+ 27. ♙xd1 and the endgame was about equal, Naiditsch – Hou Yifan, Moscow 2010.

11... ♜xc5 12. ♙e3 ♜c7 13. ♙d4

Sergey Tiviakov is a master of positions with minimal advantage and he chose here 13. ♞ad1 ♙b7 14. ♝d4 ♞ac8 15. ♙b3 ♘e5 16. ♘xe5 ♜xe5 17. c4 ♞fd8 18. ♞fd1 ♞xd4 19. ♞xd4 h6. Black failed to anticipate the forthcoming danger and reacted rather carelessly, so he was soon in trouble. 20. ♙c2 ♜c7 21. b3 ♞d8 22. f3 ♞xd4 23. ♙xd4

♜f4 24. ♜d3 ♜d6 25. ♜c3 ♘h5 26. c5± Tiviakov – Malakhatko, Ajaccio 2008.

13... ♙b7 14. ♘e5

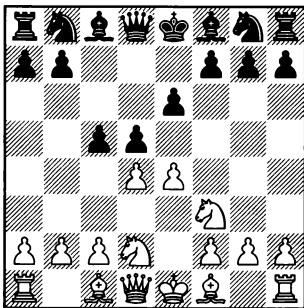


14... ♞ad8

In the following game, the young Dutch GM used a much more forceful approach – 14... ♞ac8 15. b3 ♘xe5 16. ♜xe5 ♜xe5 17. ♙xe5 ♙d5 18. ♙xd5 exd5 19. ♞ac1 ♞fe8 20. ♙xf6 gxf6 21. f3 ♞c3 22. ♞fd1 ♞e2 23. ♞xd5 ♞xc2 24. ♞xc2 ♞xc2 and the opponents agreed to a draw, Godena – Stellwagen, Novi Sad 2009.

15. ♞ad1 ♘xe5 16. ♙xe5 ♜c6 17. f3 ♜c5+ 18. ♘h1 ♘e4 19. ♞xd8 ♞xd8 20. ♙f4 ♘f6 The position is approximately equal and Black even managed to win the game, Kornev – Zvjaginsev, Krasnoyarsk 2003. In general, we will have to admit that he must be capable of defending skilfully and patiently slightly inferior positions in order to have success in this variation. The forced lines in this system are immaterial.

Chapter 22 1.e4 e6 2.d4 d5 3.♘d2 c5 4.♗gf3



This is a very flexible decision. After Black's next move, depending on White's wish, the game may transpose to the main theoretical lines, or it can develop in an original fashion.

4...cxd4

There are some other acceptable moves for Black, but since in case of 4.exd5, I advise him to continue with 4...♝xd5, so it would be logical for Black to opt for this particular move.

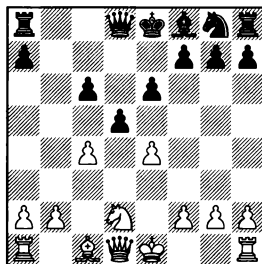
5.♗xd4

After 5.exd5 ♝xd5, there arises a transposition to the basic theoretical lines and we will analyze them later.

5...♗f6

Black has a good alternative

here – 5...♗c6 6.♖b5 ♗d7. For example: 7.♗xc6 (This is the only way for White to create some problems for his opponent.) 7... ♗xc6 (Or 7...bxc6 8.♗d3 and Black's bishop is placed on d7 possibly worse than on its initial position. Meanwhile, this position has not been analyzed well yet and it would be too early to make final evaluations. For example: 8...♗d6 9.♞e2 ♞c7 10.♗f3 dxe4 11.♞xe4 ♗f6 12.♞h4 h6 13.0-0 c5 14.♗g5 ♗d5 15.♗e4 ♞b8 16.c4 ♗f4 and Black had a good position in the game Guseinov – So, Khanty Mansiysk 2009.) 8.♗xc6+ bxc6 9.c4. Still, I do not believe that White can create serious difficulties for his opponent playing in that fashion.



The most recent games in this variation show however that Black has not demonstrated yet a convincing way to obtain equality.

It will not be good for him to choose 9...dxe4? 10.♖xe4 (White does not need to enter the complications after 10.♟a4? f5 11.♟xc6+ ♜f7 12.0–0 ♚f6 13.♚b3 ♙d6 14.h3 ♞c8 15.♟b7+ ♟c7 and Black is better, Erenburg – Hug, Gothenburg 2005.) 10...♟xd1+ 11.♜xd1 ♚f6 12.♚xf6+ gxf6 13.♙e3 (It is not so precise for White to follow with 13.♜c2?! ♞g8 14.g3 ♙c5! 15.♙e3 ♙xe3 16.fxe3 ♞g4 17.b3 ♜e7 18.♞ad1 c5 and Black equalized in the game Vachier Lagrave – Yu Shaoteng, Khanty-Mansiysk 2009.) 13...♞g8 14.g3 c5 15.♜c2 ♜d7 16.a3! This is a new and very effective plan and White obtains an advantage after that. It seems to me that even if Black plays very precisely, he would hardly avoid having serious problems. (After 16.♞ad1+ ♜c6 17.♞d3 ♙e7 18.♞hd1 ♞gd8 19.g4 ♞xd3 20.♞xd3 ♙d6 21.h3 ♙e5 22.♞a3 a5 23.♞b3 a4 24.♞b5 ♙d6, Black equalized, Delchev – De la Riva Aguado, Andorra 2006.) 16...h5 (He is in trouble after 16...♜c6 17.b4! cxb4 18.axb4 ♙xb4 19.♞a6+ ♜c7 20.♞ha1 ♞gb8 21.♙f4+!? This is an exquisite decision for White. 21...e5 22.♙e3 ♞b7 23.g4 ♜d7 24.♜d3± and Black's position was a sorry sight in the game Efimenko – Hou Yifan, Moscow 2010.) 17.♞hd1+ ♜c7 18.♙d2 a5 19.♙c3

♙e7 20.b3 ♜c6 21.♞d3 f5 22.♙e5 ♞gd8 23.♞xd8 ♞xd8 24.♙c3 ♞a8 25.b4! This is the key-idea of the entire plan. 25...axb4 26.axb4 ♞xa1 27.b5+ ♜b6 28.♙xa1 – Black managed somehow to defend this seemingly lost endgame, but it cannot be recommended to him at all, Rublevsky – Kotic, Kragujevac 2009.

It is interesting for him to opt for 9...♙d6 10.cxd5 cxd5 11.exd5 exd5 12.0–0 ♚e7 13.♚f3 0–0 14.♟d3 ♟d7 15.♞d1 ♞fd8 16.♙e3 a5 17.g3 h6 and Black almost equalized in the game Topalov – Kamsky, Sofia 2009. By the way, this evaluation is applicable to the most of the arising positions in this variation.

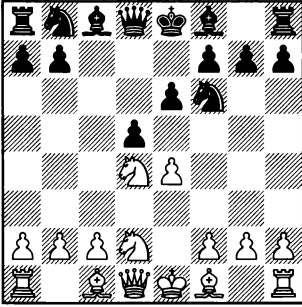
9...♚f6 10.♟a4 ♟c7 11.cxd5 exd5 12.0–0 ♙e7 13.exd5 ♚xd5 14.♚c4 (Or 14.♚f3 0–0 15.♙d2 ♙f6 16.♞ac1 ♙xb2 17.♞xc6 ♟d7 and the opponent agreed to a draw, Smirin – Ni Hua, Kallithea 2008.) 14...0–0 15.♙d2 ♙f6 16.♞ac1 and White has a long lasting pressure, Sebag – Xu Yuhua, Nanjing 2009. No doubt, Black should cope with his difficulties after a tenacious defence, but the character of the fight spells trouble for him.

(diagram)

6.exd5

It is possible for White, but hardly reasonable to continue with 6.e5 ♚fd7 7.♚2f3 (or 7.f4? ♚xe5! and Black wins a pawn) 7...♚c6 8.♙f4 (He has absolutely nothing to worry about after 8.♚xc6 bxc6

3. ♖d2 c5 4. ♜gf3 cxd4 5. ♜xd4 ♜f6

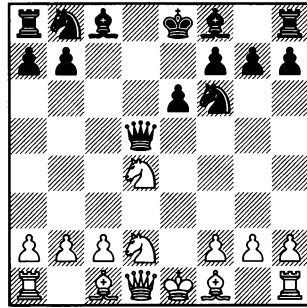


9. ♙d3 ♙a6 10. 0-0 ♙xd3 11. ♗xd3 ♙e7 12. c4 0-0 13. ♗c2 a5 14. ♙d1 a4 15. ♙f4 ♜b6 16. b3 c5 17. ♙ac1 h6 18. ♙e3 ♗b8 19. h4 ♗b7 with a very complicated position, Svidler – Dreev, Rostov on Don 1993.) 8... ♗b6 9. ♙b1 g6!? (Or 9... ♙e7?! 10. c3 0-0 11. ♙d3 ♜c5 12. ♙c2 ♙d7 13. 0-0 a5 14. ♗e2 a4 15. ♗e3 a3 16. bxa3 ♗d8 17. ♜b5 b6 18. ♜fd4 ♜a5 19. ♗g3 g6 20. ♜d6 ♜c4 21. ♜xc4 dxc4 22. ♙c1 ♗c7 23. ♙d1 ♙a4 24. ♙xa4 ♙xa4 25. ♜b5 ♗c6 26. ♙d4 ♜d3 27. ♙h6 ♙d8 28. ♜d6± Kryvoruchko – Grigorian, Yerevan 2006. It would be interesting for Black to test the more active line: 9... ♙c5!? 10. c3 0-0) 10. ♜xc6 bxc6 11. ♙d3 ♙g7 12. 0-0 ♙a6 13. ♗d2 0-0 14. ♙fel ♙ab8 15. h4 ♙xd3 16. cxd3 ♗b4 17. ♗e3 h5 18. ♙e2 ♗b6 19. ♗d2 ♗b4 20. ♗e3 ♗b6 21. ♗c1 ♗a6 22. ♙d2 c5 and he obtained a good position in the game Howell – Grigorian, Yerevan 2007.

6... ♗xd5

If Black has made up his mind to capture on d5 with his queen, then he should better do it in

every particular case if reasonably possible!



7. ♜b5

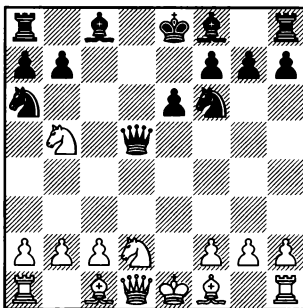
This is how White can try to create problems for his opponent.

There is a calmer possibility for him – 7. ♜2f3 a6 8. ♙d3 ♜bd7 9. 0-0 ♙c5 10. c4 ♗d6 11. ♜b3 ♙a7 12. ♗e2 0-0 13. ♙g5 ♗c7 14. ♙h4 ♙e8 15. ♙fel ♙b8. This is an original maneuver. Meanwhile, the player with Black Igor Lysyj is one of the outstanding experts of the French defence in general, as well as of this particular variation, so we should better trust his moves, no matter how wild they may seem at first sight. 16. ♙ad1 b6 17. ♙g3 ♗a7 18. ♜e5 ♜xe5 19. ♙xe5 ♙xe5 20. ♗xe5 ♗b8 and the opponents agreed to a draw, Vysochin – Lysyj, St Petersburg 2009. It is weaker for Black to play 7... ♜c6 8. ♜xc6 ♗xc6 (It is possible that his idea may be justified after the strategically risky line: 8... ♗xd1+ 9. ♜xd1 bxc6 with a very complicated endgame.) 9. ♙d3 ♗c7!? (9...

a6?! 10.0-0 ♖d6 11.b3 b5 12.a4 b4? 13.♙b5! axb5 14.axb5 ♙xh2+ 15.♘h2 ♚b7 16.♞xa8 ♝xa8 17.♞d6 ♘d5 18.♞g3 g6 19.♘g4 h5 20.♙b2 0-0 21.♘f6+ ♘xf6 22.♞e5!+- Efimenko – Ivanov, Dagomys, 2009) 10.0-0 ♖d6 11.♙g5 ♖d7 12.♞e2 ♘d5 13.c4 ♘f4 14.♙xf4 ♙xf4 15.g3 ♖d6 16.♞fd1 ♞d8 17.♞ac1 b6 and Black had a slight edge, McShane – Shimanov, Stockholm 2009. Naturally, White was not forced to play so indifferently, but there was a feeling that after 7.♘2f3, Black should not have any problems whatsoever.

7...♘a6

He was hardly so eager to develop his knight to this square, but had no other choice at the moment.

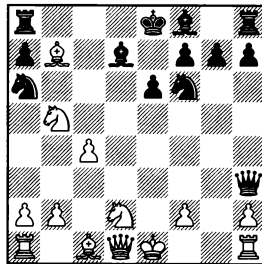


8.c4

This is the only move for White, which combines aggression and correctness.

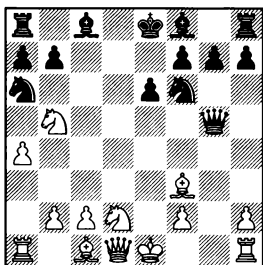
There arise interesting developments after the gambit line: 8.♙e2 ♖d7 9.c4 (White tried even

a “double gambit” line in the following blitz game. He was not successful, though...: 9.0-0 ♙xb5 10.c4 ♙xc4 11.♙xc4 ♚c6 12.♞e2 ♘c7 13.♘f3 ♖d6 14.♙g5 0-0 15.♞ac1 ♚b6 16.♙xf6 gxf6 17.♞e4 ♙e7 18.♞h4 ♞ad8 and the position was very complicated, Svidler – Grischuk, Moscow 2008.) 9...♞xg2 10.♙f3 ♚h3 11.♙xb7



11...♘b4 (It is evident that Black refrained from the more forced line with 11...♘c5, because of 12.♞f3 ♚xf3 13.♙xf3 ♞b8 14.♘xa7 ♘d3+ 15.♙e2 with an unclear position. White would not achieve much with 12.♙xa8 ♘d3+ 13.♙e2 ♘f4=) 12.♘e4 This is a brave move indeed, but I cannot recommend it, since it is too risky. (12.♙xa8 ♘d3+ 13.♙e2 ♘f4=) 12...♘d3+ (Or 12...♘xe4!? 13.♙xe4 ♞c8 and Black seizes the initiative. White will remain a pawn down and that might not be the worst for him in this situation.) 13.♙e2 ♘xe4 14.♙xe4 ♘xc1+ 15.♞xc1 ♞b8 16.b3 ♙c5 17.♘c7+ ♙e7 18.♘a6 ♞b6 19.♘xc5 ♞h5+ 20.f3 ♞xc5 and in the subsequent fight White won this position, Ni Hua –

Lysyj, Dagomys 2008. Black survived in only two games played in this variation. It is amazing, but the opponents in both games were the same! 8... ♗xcg2 9. ♖f3 ♗g5 10.a4



10... ♗h4. This improvement for Black was obviously the result of a home preparation. (There was a game played before and it continued with 10... ♗e5+ 11. ♖f1 ♗d5 12. ♗c4 ♗b8 13. ♖g5 h6 14. ♖h4 ♗f4 15. ♗cd6+ ♖xd6 16. ♖g3 ♗c4+ 17. ♖e2 ♗c6 18. ♗xd6+ ♖f8 19. ♖g1 ♗ac7 20. ♖a3 and White had an overwhelming advantage, Yemelin – S.Ivanov, St Petersburg 1994.) 11. ♖g1 ♖c5 12. ♗e2 0–0 13. b3 ♗b4 14. ♗c4 a6 15. ♖g5 ♗xh2 16. ♖h1 ♖xf2+ 17. ♖f1 ♗g3 18. ♖xf6 gxf6 19. ♗xf2 ♗xf2+ 20. ♖xf2 axb5 21. ♖ag1+ ♖h8 22. ♖h4 bxc4 23. ♖gh1 and after this wild fight, the game ended in a draw by a perpetual, Yemelin – S.Ivanov, St Petersburg 1996. Still, I believe that the position has not been exhausted yet and there are numerous possibilities to be tested.

It would be too optimistic for White to play 8. ♗c4 ♗xd1+

9. ♖xd1 ♖c5 10. f3 (Or 10. ♗bd6+?! ♖e7 11. ♗xc8+ ♖xc8 12. f3 ♖hd8+ 13. ♖d2 ♗d5 14. ♖d3 ♗ab4 15. ♖e2 b5 16. ♗a3 ♗xd3 17. cxd3 ♖xa3 18. bxa3 ♖c2 and the endgame is lost for him, Mannion – Hmadi, Yerevan 1996.) 10... 0–0 11. c3 ♖d8+ 12. ♖c2 ♗d5 13. b4 ♖e7 14. ♖d2 ♖d7 15. a4 ♖e8 16. ♖e2 ♗ac7 17. ♗xc7 ♗xc7 18. ♖hd1 ♖ac8 19. g3 ♗d5 20. ♖b3 ♖f6 21. f4 b5, Black's position is totally dominant, Vorobiov – Volkov, Krasnoyarsk 2003.

8. ♗c3!? White is planning a long fight with this move. 8... ♗d8 (It is interesting for Black to try here 8... ♗e5+ 9. ♖e2 ♖b4!? with a rather unclear position.) 9.a3 ♖e7 10. ♖c4 0–0 (Or 10... ♗c7 11. 0–0 0–0 12. ♗f3 ♗fd5 13. ♗de4 f5 14. ♗g3 ♗xc3 15. ♗xc3 ♗d5 16. ♗f3 b5. GM Emil Sutovsky usually treats the French defence as something between the Gruenfeld defence and the Najdorf variation in the Sicilian... 17. ♖xb5 ♗c7 18. c4 Black will hardly obtain any compensation for his wild sacrifices, Ni Hua – Sutovsky, Wijk aan Zee 2010.) 11. 0–0 (White did not achieve any advantage with the line: 11. ♗e2 ♗c5 12. 0–0 a6 13. b4 ♗cd7 14. ♖b2 a5 15. bxa5 ♗xa5 16. ♗b5 ♗b6 17. ♖c3 ♗a4 18. ♖b3 ♗h4 19. ♗c7 ♖xa3= Timofeev – Ni Hua, Taiyuan 2006. It would be rather indifferent for him to opt for 14. ♗b3?! ♗c7 15. ♖b2 ♗e5 16. ♖d3 ♗xd3 17. cxd3 ♖d7 18. ♗e4 ♗xe4 19. dxe4 ♖fc8 20. ♗g4 e5

21.♖g3 f6 and Black had the advantage in the game Handke – Lysyj, Stockholm 2009.) 11... ♠b8 12.♠de4 ♖c7 13.♙d3 ♠bd7 14.♙e1 b6 15.♠b5 ♖c6 16.♠bd6!? ♠c5 17.♠xc8 ♙axc8 18.♠xc5 ♙xc5 19.♖e2 ♙fd8 20.♙f4 ♙d6 21.♙d2, Lastin – Alekseev, Moscow 2008. It seems to me that White's prospects are superior in this situation. His advantage however, may not be so easy to realize.

8...♖c6

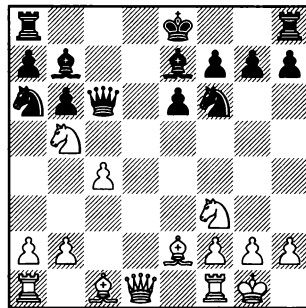
It looks quite sensible for Black to try 8...♖f5 9.♙e2 ♙e7 10.0–0 (10.♠f3 0–0 11.♠d6 ♖a5+ 12.♙d2 ♖b6 13.♠xc8 ♙axc8 14.♖c2 ♠b4 15.♖b1 ♙c5 16.0–0 ♠c6 17.♙c3 ♙fd8 18.♖c2 ♠b4 19.♖b1 ♠c6 20.♖c2 ♠d4 and he tried to seize the initiative, but failed to win the game, Godena – Ni Hua, Reggio Emilia 2008.) 10...0–0 11.♠d4 ♖c5 12.♠b3 ♖e5 13.♙f3 ♖c7 14.♖e2 ♙d7 15.♙e3 ♙ac8 16.♙ac1 ♠c5 17.♙fd1. If Black manages to trade queens he would equalize for sure, Howell – Ni Hua, Dresden 2008.

9.♠f3

Over complicated positional solutions of the type of he move – 9.a3 are not inherent to the style of the competitive grandmasters. I do not quite understand its idea either. 9...♙e7 10.b4 0–0 11.♖f3. This is another strange looking move. (It looks positionally more sensible for White to choose: 11. ♙b2 ♙d8 12.♖f3 ♠b8 13.♖c3? a5 14.♠d4 ♖d7 15.b5 ♖d6 16.♙e2

♠bd7 17.♠4b3 a4 18.♠e4 ♖f4 19. ♠bd2 ♠c5 20.f3 b6 21.g3 ♖h6 22.♠f2 ♙b7 23.♙d1 ♙d7 24.♠f1 ♙ad8 with an overwhelming advantage for Black, Grekh – Vysochin, Lipetsk 2008.) 11...♠b8 12. ♙b1 a5 13.bxa5 ♖xf3 14.♠xf3 ♙xa5. I think Black should have a quite acceptable position in this ending. He failed to equalize in the game, but won it at the end... 15.♙e2 ♠bd7 16.0–0 b6 17.♙d2 ♙a4 18. ♙b4 ♠c5 19.♙fd1 ♙b7 20.♠e5 ♙a8 21.f3 ♙b8 22.♙d2 ♠e8 23.♠d7 ♙b7 24.♙bd1 g5 25.♠xc5 bxc5 26.♙c3 ♙b8 27.♙e5 ♙c8 28.♙d7 with positional pressure for White, McShane – Ni Hua, London 2009.

9...b6 10.♙e2 ♙b7 11.0–0 ♙e7



12.♠bd4

White's wish to destroy his opponent's battery on the long diagonal is understandable.

It would be interesting for him to try another line and we are already familiar with its ideas: 12.a3 0–0 (12...♠c5!?) 13.♠bd4 ♖c8 14.b4 ♙d8 15.♖b3 e5 16.♠c2 e4

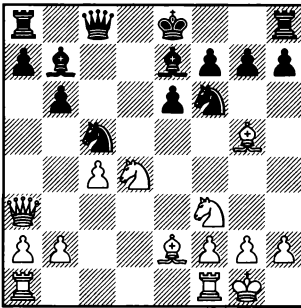
3. ♖d2 c5 4. ♜g3 cxd4 5. ♜xd4 ♜f6

17. ♜fd4 ♜b8 18. ♙b2 ♜c6 19. ♞ad1 ♜xd4 20. ♜xd4 and White is better, Howell – Istratescu, Hastings 2010.

12... ♞c8 13. ♞a4+ ♜d7 14. ♙g5

This is the beginning of a forced play. White considers quite correctly that Black's pawn-structure is solid and he is trying to create concrete problems for his opponent based on the circumstance that he has not castled yet.

14... ♜ac5 15. ♞a3 ♜f6



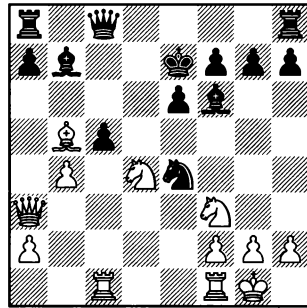
16.b4

White tried to obtain an advantage with much calmer methods in the following game, but he did not achieve much: 16. ♞ad1 0–0 17. ♜e5 ♞e8 18. ♞e3 ♜ce4 19. ♙f4 ♞d8 20. f3 ♜d6 21. ♙g3 ♜d7 22. ♜xd7 ♞xd7 23. b3 ♞c5 and only Black may think about an advantage, Rublevsky – Matlakov, Moscow 2010.

16... ♜ce4 17. ♙xf6 ♙xf6 18.c5!?

This is an interesting way of playing for White, but it is very risky.

18... ♝xc5 19. ♙b5+ ♜e7 20. ♞ac1

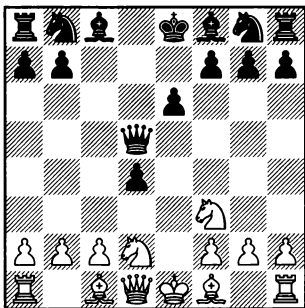


20... ♜xd4!

Naturally, Black must respond to a strike with a counter strike!

21. ♞xc8 ♞hxc8 22. ♙a6 ♞c3!? I believe this move is much more interesting than what happened in the game played before that 22... ♞ab8 23. b5+ ♜d6 24. ♙xb7 ♞xb7 25. ♞d1 ♞c3 26. ♞a6 ♞xb5 27. ♞xa7+ ♞b7 28. ♞a6 ♞bc7 29. h3 ♞7c6 30. ♞a7+ ♞c7 31. ♞a6 ♞7c6 32. ♞a7+ and the opponents agreed to draw, Vachier Lagrave – Ivanchuk, Biel 2009. 23. ♞a5 ♙d5 24. ♞d1 ♜f8 25. ♜xd4 ♙d8 26. ♞a4 ♙b6 with a very complicated position, in which Black's prospects are not worse at all.

Chapter 23 **1.e4 e6 2.d4 d5 3.♘d2 c5 4.♗gf3 cxd4
5.exd5 ♖xd5**

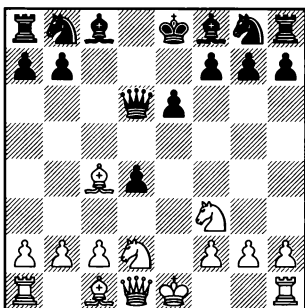


The readers should know – this position can be reached via another move-order – 4.exd5 ♖xd5 5.♗gf3 cxd4. In case Black insists on capturing on d5 with his queen, the move-order is irrelevant for him. He can choose another plan and capture on d5 with a pawn and then play with an isolated pawn. Still, I believe he should not compromise his pawn-structure without necessity. Naturally, his queen comes to the centre of the board a bit prematurely and it can be attacked. Black however, can hope to neutralize White's activity in the opening and he will have a bright future. There are neither pawn-weaknesses in his position, nor any vulnerable squares.

6.♙c4 ♗d6

He plays sometimes 6...♗d8 as well. This move is regularly used by Igor Lysyj. This is possibly the result of serious analytical work. It is a bit passive, but quite reliable. I will quote for you several exemplary games. 7.0–0 (7.♗b3 ♙b4+ 8.♙d2 ♙xd2+ 9.♖xd2 ♗f6 10.♗bxd4 0–0 11.0–0–0 ♖c7 12.♙b3 ♗c6 13.♙he1 and the opponents agreed to a draw, Popovic – Kotic, Niksic 1997.) 7...a6 8.♗b3 ♗c6 9.♗bxd4 (9.♖e2 b5 10.♙d3 ♗f6 11.♙g5 ♙b7 12.a4 b4 13.♙e4 ♙d6 14.♙ad1 0–0 15.♗bxd4 ♗xd4 16.♙xd4 ♙xe4 17.♙xe4 h6 18.♙h4 g5 19.♙d4 ♖b6 20.♙g3 ♙xg3 21.hxg3 ♙ad8 22.♙fd1 ♙xd4 23.♙xd4 ♙c8 and Black had some pressure, Sjugirov – Riazantsev, Moscow 2009.) 9...♗xd4 10.♗xd4 ♙d6 11.♖d3 (11.♖g4 ♗f6 12.♖h4 0–0 13.♙d3 h6 14.♙e1 ♗d5 15.♖xd8 ♙xd8 16.c3 ♙c7 and the opponents agreed to a draw, Navara – Lysyj, Dagomys 2008.) 11...♖c7 12.h3 ♗f6 13.♙d1 0–0 14.♗f3 ♙e7 15.♙b3 b6 16.♙g5 ♙b7 17.c3 ♙fd8 18.♖e2 h6 19.♙e3 ♙c5, draw, Deviatkin – Lysyj, Voronezh 2009.

3. ♖d2 c5 4. ♘g3 cxd4 5. exd5 ♜xd5 6. ♙c4 ♞d6 7. ♚e2



7. ♚e2

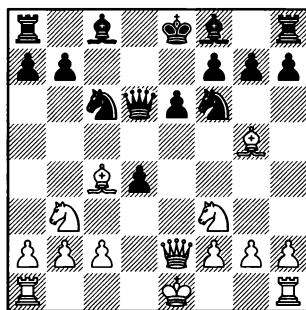
This is White's most aggressive plan although it is not the most popular. He is trying to refute his opponent's opening strategy in a radical fashion. He must take some risks however, if he is after such an ambitious task.

The justification of the placement of his queen to this somewhat strange square is that if he plays naively 7. ♘b3 ♜b4+! and he will need to go back with his knight: 8. ♘bd2.

White's attempts to avoid the main line with moves like 7. ♙b3, would not achieve anything for him. It can only rely on the element of surprise for the opponent and White's chances of obtaining an advantage after this move are minimal. 7... ♘c6 8. ♘c4 (8. ♘e4 ♜d8 9. 0-0 ♙e7 10. ♚e2 ♘f6 11. ♖d1 0-0 12. c3 e5 13. h3. Black has an extra pawn and no problems whatsoever. 13... ♙f5 14. ♘g3 d3 15. ♚e1 ♜d7 16. ♘xe5 ♘xe5 17. ♚xe5 ♙g6 18. ♙e3 ♖fe8 and White must think about equality. Black

played weaker in the game, but he still won this rather complicated ending after 18... ♙d8 19. ♙c4 ♙c7 20. ♚b5 ♚xb5 21. ♙xb5 Hansen – Akopian, Turin 2006.) 8... ♚d8 9. 0-0 ♘f6 10. ♚e2 d3! The Chinese player treats that position in a very original fashion. White's pieces are really awkwardly placed from the point of view of the fight against the isolated pawn. 11. cxd3 ♙e7 12. d4 0-0 13. ♘ce5 ♘xd4 14. ♘xd4 ♜xd4 15. ♙g5 ♘d5 16. ♖fd1 ♚b4 17. ♙xe7 ♘xe7 18. ♖ac1 ♘c6 19. ♘xc6 bxc6 20. ♖xc6 ♙b7= Timofeev – Ding, Sochi 2009.

7... ♘f6 8. ♘b3 ♘c6 9. ♙g5



9...a6

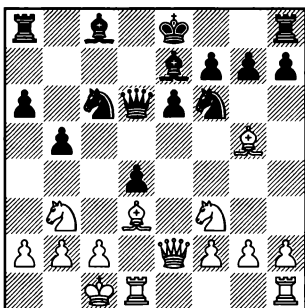
I recommend to Black to follow the most principled path.

He plays sometimes 9... ♙e7, or even 9... ♚b4+ 10. ♙d2 ♚b6.

10. 0-0-0 b5 11. ♙d3 ♙e7

Both sides have practically completed the mobilization of their forces.

White can choose here between several possibilities.

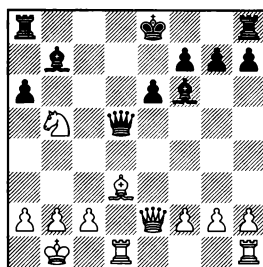


12. ♖he1

This move is not so well analyzed, but I think it is the most promising for him. This is quite typical for contemporary chess. You can hardly win a game at any level without demonstrating something new...

It would be a mistake for White to opt for 12. ♙e4? ♜xe4 13. ♗xe4 ♙b7 14. ♜bxd4 ♗c7 and Black is even better.

The logical move 12. ♜bxd4 will be countered by Black in a forceful fashion with 12... ♜xd4 13. ♜xd4 ♗d5! 14. ♙xf6 ♙xf6 15. ♜b1. It looks like White has created some difficulties for his opponent, but that assumption is wrong. 15... ♙b7! This novelty solves all the problems for Black. (He used to play before 15... ♗c5 16. ♙e4 ♖a7 17. ♙c6+ ♜f8 18. ♗e3 ♜g8 19. ♗d2 ♗c7 20. ♖hd1 h5 21. ♙a8 g6 and his position was acceptable, Solak – Wang Hao, Dubai 2005. Naturally, not every player would like to play with such a stalemated rook.) 16. ♜xb5

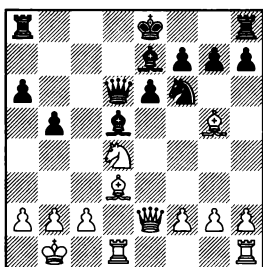


16... ♜e7! This is another very good decision for Black. 17. ♜c7 ♗c5 18. ♜xa8 ♙xg2. Suddenly, it has become clear that White has an extra rook indeed, but he must think about equalizing. 19. ♗e3 (Or 19. ♖hg1? ♖b8 20. c3 ♗xc3 21. ♗d2 ♙f3! 22. ♗c1 ♗xc1+ 23. ♜xc1 ♙xe2 24. ♖xe2 ♖xa8 and Black has an overwhelming advantage in this endgame.) 19... ♗xe3 20. fxex3 ♙xh1 21. ♖xh1 (It is very risky for White to opt for 21. ♜c7 ♙c6 22. ♜xa6 g5 and Black's pawns, supported by his bishops, may promote rather quickly.) 21... ♖xa8 Black can continue playing for a win in this position. It is possible that White should try 14.f4, but Black's position is excellent after that too: 14... ♗xa2 15. c3 ♙d7 16. f5 (It is weaker for him to choose 16. ♙b1? ♗a5 17. ♗e5 0–0 18. ♜b3 ♗a4 and the opponents agreed to a draw in a better position for Black, Akopian – Roiz, Sochi 2006. 17... ♗c8! and White has no compensation for the pawn.) 16... ♗c8 17. ♙b1 (He may become the victim of a beautiful forced variation

3. ♖d2 c5 4. ♗g3 cxd4 5. exd5 ♖xd5 6. ♕c4 ♗d6 7. ♖e2

if he exchanges pawns prematurely: 17. fxe6 fxe6 18. ♕b1 ♖xc3+ 19. ♗c2 ♖c4 20. ♗d2 ♕c6! 21. ♖xc3 ♗e4!!-+) 17... ♖xc3+ 18. ♗c2 ♖c4 19. ♗d2 ♖xc2+ (It would not work for Black to play here 19... ♕c6? 20. bxc3 ♗e4 21. ♗d8+ and he gets checkmated.) 20. ♕xc2 ♕c6 21. ♖he1 ♕d5 and Black has an excellent compensation for the exchange.

White obtains no advantage even if he plays 12. ♖b1, since Black counters that with 12... ♕b7 13. ♗bxd4 ♗xd4 14. ♗xd4 ♕d5

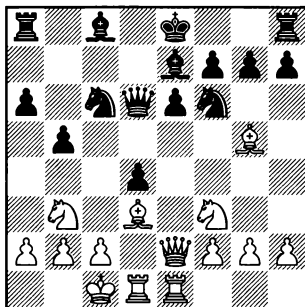


15. ♗f3 (Or 15. ♖he1?! ♕xa2+ 16. ♖xa2 ♖xd4 and suddenly Black won a pawn, because White's king had come under a potential deadly check, Dovliatov – Malakhatko, Baku 2008.) 15... 0–0 16. ♗e5 b4 17. h4 a5 18. ♖h3 ♖fd8 19. ♖g3 a4 20. f4 a3 with a complicated position, Kim – S.Ivanov, St Petersburg 2004. Naturally, the play of both sides can be corrected and improved, but the overall picture is quite favourable for Black.

(diagram)

12...h6

This is a new move and it is



based on an interesting tactical trick.

Black had played before 12... ♕b7 13. ♗fxd4 ♗xd4 14. ♗xd4 ♗d5? (He can also try the line: 14... ♕d5!? 15. ♖e3 ♖c7 16. ♖b1 with a complicated fight ahead.) 15. ♗f5! ♖xa2 16. ♖e5 (16. c3!±) 16... ♖a1+ 17. ♗d2 ♖a5+ 18. c3 ♗e4+? 19. ♕xe4 ♕xg5+ 20. ♖e2 ♕xe4 21. ♗xg7+- Ganguly – Petrik, Dresden 2008.

Black can develop his bishop in another fashion – 12... ♕d7, but it seems to me that it would be misplaced there. 13. ♖b1 (White would not obtain an advantage with the line: 13. ♕e4 ♖c8 14. ♗bxd4 ♖c7 15. ♗xc6 ♕xc6 16. ♕xc6+ ♖xc6 17. ♖b1 0–0 18. ♗e5 ♖c7 19. ♕xf6 ♕xf6 20. ♗d7 ♕xb2! =; 19. ♗d7 ♖fd8 20. ♗xf6+ ♕xf6 21. ♕xf6 gxf6 =) 13... ♖d8 14. h3 (It deserves attention for White to test here 14. ♕h4!?) 14... ♗d5 15. ♕xe7 ♖xe7 16. ♗fxd4 ♗xd4 17. ♗xd4 ♖b4 18. ♗b3 0–0 19. ♕e4 ♗f6 20. ♖d4 ♖e7 21. ♕d3 ♕c6 and Black has an excellent position, Lie – Avrukh, Heraklio 2007.

13. ♕h4

After 13.♙xf6?! ♗xf6 14.♙e4 ♗b7 15.♗bxd4 ♗xd4 16.♗xd4 ♙xe4 17.♚xe4 0–0, Black can be quite happy.

13...0–0

It seems attractive for him, but not working well, if he tries 13...♙b7 14.♗bxd4 ♗xd4 15.♗xd4 ♚f4+? 16.♗b1 ♚xh4 17.♗xe6!+–

14.♙g3

14.♗bxd4? ♗xd4 15.♗xd4 ♚f4+–

The preliminary move 14.♗b1 only presents Black with additional possibilities. For example: 14...♙b7 15.♙g3 ♚d8 16.♗fxd4 ♗xd4 17.♗xd4 ♙d5!?

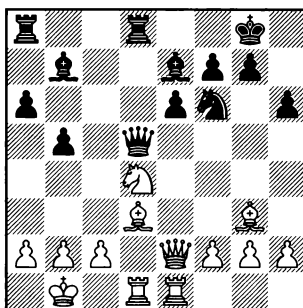
14...♚d5 15.♗b1 ♙b7 16.♗fxd4 ♗xd4

But not 16...♗b4?! 17.f3 ♗xd3 18.♙xd3 and White seizes the initiative.

17.♗xd4 ♙fd8

(diagram)

The position is approximately equal. Let us see some exemplary variations.



18.♙e5

White would not achieve much with the risky line: 18.♗f5 ♙f8 19.♗e3 ♚c5.

Black's position remains solid after 18.♗f3 ♚c5 19.♗e5 ♙d5.

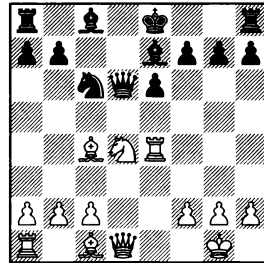
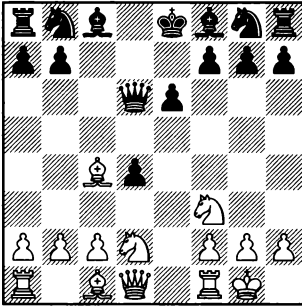
18...♙ac8 with a very complicated position.

It is worse for him to play 18...♗d7?! 19.♙c7! and Black's pieces will be rather disorganized.

The plan with 7.♚e2 is becoming less and less popular lately. White must try to find an improvement in this variation!

Chapter 24

1.e4 e6 2.d4 d5 3.♘d2 c5 4.♗gf3 cxd4
5.exd5 ♖xd5 6.♙c4 ♗d6 7.0-0



This is the main line for White. He plays solidly, relying on obtaining an advantage with a simple central strategy.

7...♗f6 8.♗b3

8.♞e1 – This is a risky plan and Black must react aggressively against it. 8...♗c6 9.♗e4 ♗xe4 10.♞xe4 ♙e7 11.♗xd4 (He can solve successfully his opening problems after 11.♙f4?! ♖c5 12.♙d3 ♙f6 13.a3 a5!?) and White can hardly develop any initiative. It is weaker for Black to play 13...0-0, since White can then realize an interesting idea: 14.b4 ♖h5 15.b5 ♗e7 16.♙e5 ♗d5 17.♙xd4 ♙xd4 18.♞xd4 ♗f6 19.♖d2 with some pressure, Hracek – Kelly, Rethymnon 2003.)

11...e5! This is the beginning of a forced line, which leads to a very complicated endgame. (It is not so principled for Black to play 11...0-0?! 12.♙f4 ♖c5 13.♗xc6 ♖xc6 14.♙d3 b5 15.a4 a6 16.♞e3 ♙b7 17.♙e4 ♖xe4 18.♞xe4 ♙xe4 19.♖e2 ♙d5 20.h4 ♞ac8 21.axb5 axb5 22.♙g5 ♙d6 23.♞a6 ♙b8 24.♙e7 ♞fe8 25.♙d6 ♞ed8 26.♙xb8 ♞xb8 and White succeeded in winning this position, Kasparov – Gelfand, Astana 2001.) 12.♙f4! exf4 13.♗xc6 ♖xd1+ 14.♞xd1 bxc6 15.♞de1 ♗f8 16.♞xe7 ♙e6! Black's defence is based on this possibility. He wins the exchange and although White will have an excellent compensation for it, it will hardly be sufficient for victory. 17.♞1xe6 fxe6 18.♞c7 h5! This is the right fashion to develop Black's king's

rook. (It would be weaker for him to opt for 18...g5? 19.♖f1 ♜e8 20. ♪xa7 ♜e7 21.♠a6 ♜c7 22.♠a5 h6 23.♠e5 ♜e7 24.♠c5 ♜c7 25.a4 ♖e7 26.♠e5 ♖d6 27.♠xe6+ ♖c5 28.b3 and White won at the end, Hracek – Borovikov, Pardubice 2002.) 19.♖f1 ♠h6 20.♠xc6 ♠d8 (The following game ended in a quick draw after 20...♠e8 21.♠c7 ♜e7 22.♠c8+ ♠e8 23.♠c7 ♜e7 24.♠c8+ Kurnosov – Najer, Kazan 2005.) 21.♠d3 ♖e7 22.♠a6 ♠d7 23.♠a5 h4 24.h3 g6 25.♠a6 g5 26.♖e2 ♖f6 27.b3 ♠h8 28.♠c4 ♜e7 29.♠c6 ♠b8 with a very complicated endgame in which Black's prospects are preferable, Oral – Wang Hao, Mallorca 2004.

8...♖c6 9.♖bxd4 ♖xd4 10. ♖xd4

The endgame is absolutely harmless for Black after 10.♝xd4 ♝xd4 11.♜xd4 ♠d7 12.♠f4 ♠c8 13.♠b3 ♠c5 14.♠ad1 0–0 15.♜f3 ♠fd8 16.♜e5 ♠b5 17.c4 ♠e8 18. ♠xd8 ♠xd8 19.♠d1 ♠c8 20.♖f1 a5 and his position was even preferable in the game Pavasovic – Roiz, Valjevo 2007.

10...a6

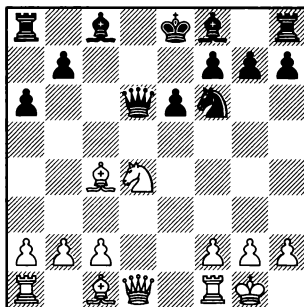
This is the most reasonable move. Black has also tried here 10...♠d7, or 10...♠e7.

White has to make a choice between numerous possibilities.

(diagram)

11.♠e1

This is his basic and most aggressive move. Now, Black is faced with concrete problems and



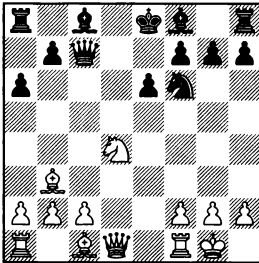
he must react very precisely.

It would be weaker for him to opt for 11.a4 ♝c7 12.b3 (12.♝e2 ♠d6 13.h3 0–0 14.c3 h6 15.♠e1 b6 16.♠d3 ♠b7 17.♠d2 ♠fd8 18.♠ad1 ♠c5= Short – Ivanchuk, Montreal 2007.) 12...♠d6 13.h3 0–0 14.♠b2 e5 15.♜f3 e4 16.♜d4 ♠d7 17.♝e2 ♠ae8 18.♠c1 ♝a5 19.♠d1 ♝e5 with an initiative for Black, Tiviakov – Dreev, Podolsk 1992.

It is hardly interesting for White to opt for 11.♠d3 ♠d7 12.♜f3 ♝c7 13.♠e1 ♠d6 14.♝e2 ♜d5 15.a3 ♜f4 (Black has a reasonable alternative here 15...0–0 16.♜e5= Azarov – Akopian, Plovdiv 2008.) 16.♠xf4 ♠xf4 17.g3 ♠d6 18.♠ad1 ♠d8= Ponomariov – Huebner, Istanbul 2000.

Black must solve some problems if White plays in a prophylactic fashion – 11.♠b3 ♝c7 (It is also quite principled for Black to play 11...♠d7, preventing the early activation of White's queen. 12.c3 ♝c7 13.♠g5 ♠d6?! 14.♠xf6 gxf6 15. ♝h5 ♝c5 16.♝f3 ♝e5 17.g3 0–0–0 18.♠fe1 ♝g5 19.♠c4 ♝c5 20.♠f1 f5 21.b4 and White seized the initia-

tive in the game, Ye Jiangchuan – Wang Hao, Jinan 2005; 13... 0-0-0 14. ♙xf6 gxf6 15. ♖h5 ♙e8 16. ♗ad1 ♖b8 and despite the fact that Black must still solve some problems in this position, he has scored excellent practical results until now. 17. ♗fe1 ♖c8 18. ♖h4 ♙e7 19. g3? h5! 20. ♖f4 ♖xf4 21. gxf4 ♗g8+ 22. ♖f1 f5, with brilliant prospects for him, Rublevsky – Vitiugov, Moscow 2006; 17. ♗d2 ♖c8 18. ♗fd1 ♗g8 19. ♖xh7 ♗g6 20. g3 f5 21. ♖h5 f4 22. ♖f3 ♙c5 23. ♖f1 ♗h6 24. ♖xf4 ♖xf4 25. gxf4 ♗xh2 26. ♗f3 and the opponents agreed to a draw, Tiviakov – Stellwagen, Hilversum 2008.)



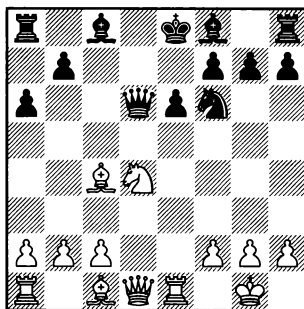
12. ♖f3. This is the idea behind White's play. He wishes to save a tempo for the move ♗e1. (It would not work for him to play 12. ♙g5 ♙d6 13. ♙xf6 gxf6 14. ♖h5 ♖c5! Black solves all his problems after 12. c3 ♙d6 13. ♖h1 0-0 14. ♙g5 ♗e4 15. ♙h4 e5 16. ♗c2 ♗c5 17. ♙d5 ♙f5 18. ♗e3 ♙g6 19. ♗c4 ♗d3 20. ♖b3 ♙e7= Rublevsky – Khalifman, Neum 2000.) 12... ♙d6 13. h3 (The ultra-cautious move 13. ♖h1 would not change anything much after

13... 0-0 14. ♙g5 ♗d7 15. c3 ♗e5 16. ♖h5 ♗g6 17. ♙c2 h6 18. ♙e3 ♗f4 19. ♖f3 ♗d5 20. ♙d2 b5 21. ♖e4 f5 22. ♖e2 ♗f6 23. ♙b3 ♖c5 24. ♗ad1 ♖h8 25. ♙c1 ♙d7 26. ♙xd5 exd5 27. ♖f3 f4 with a rather complicated position, Potkin – Rodriguez Guerrero, Linares 2002. 17... b6!? 18. ♗ae1 ♙b7 19. ♖e3 ♖c5 20. ♖g4 ♗ae8 and Black's position is acceptable. 20... ♙e7?? 21. ♗xe6! fx6 22. ♖xe6+ ♗f7 23. ♙xg6 hxg6 24. ♙xe7 ♖b5 25. c4 ♖xb2 26. ♖d7+- Rublevsky – Morovic Fernandez, Poikovsky 2001.) 13... 0-0 14. ♙g5 ♗d7 15. c3 ♗e5 16. ♖h5 ♗g6 17. ♙c2 b6 18. ♙e3 ♙b7 19. ♗f3 h6 20. ♗fd1 ♗f4 21. ♙xf4 ♙xf4, Black is slightly better, but it is quite obvious that White could have played better, Tiviakov – Ionov, Ohrid 2001.

He used to continue before with 11. b3, but Black found a way to obtain a good game. 11... ♖c7 12. ♙b2 ♙d6 13. ♗f3 (Or 13. h3?! 0-0 14. ♗f3 b5 15. ♙d3 ♙b7 16. ♗e1 ♗fd8 17. ♗e5 ♗e4 18. ♙xe4 ♙xe4 19. ♖d4 ♙xc2 20. ♗ac1 ♙a3 21. ♗d7 ♙xb2 22. ♖xb2 ♗ac8 and he ended up with an extra pawn in the game Postny – Filippov, Moscow 2004.) 13... b5 14. ♙d3 ♙b7 15. c4 (It is hardly preferable for White to play 15. ♗e1 0-0 16. ♗e5 ♗ad8 17. ♖e2 ♗d5 18. ♖g4 f5 19. ♖h4 ♗b4 20. ♗e2 ♗xd3 21. ♗xd3 ♙e4 and Black even won later, Tiviakov – Psakhis, Rostov on Don 1993.) 15... ♗g4 16. h3 ♙h2+ 17. ♖h1 ♙g1 18. ♙e5 ♗xe5 19. ♗xe5 ♖xe5 and

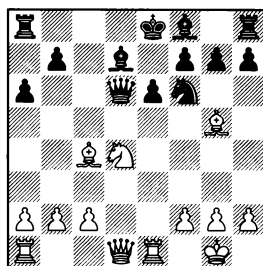
here, the opponents agreed to a draw, Tiviakov – Prusikin, Dresden 2007. Two different opponents continued the fight in this same position, but the result was the same at the end: 20.♖xg1 ♠d8 21.♗e2 ♗xe2 22.♙xe2 ♠d2 23.♗fe1 bxc4 24.♙xc4 ♖e7 25.♗e2 ♠hd8 26.♗ae1 a5 27.f4 ♗xe2 28.♗xe2 ♙d5 29.♙xd5 ♗xd5 30.♖f2 ♖d6, draw, Womacka – Luther, Chemnitz 2009. This is probably the sign of a classy player – to anticipate the inevitability of a certain result long before it has become really obvious...

It looks purposeful, but rather slow if White plays 11.c3 ♗c7 12.♙b3 (He cannot create any real problems for his opponent with the line: 12.♗e2 ♙d6 13.h3 0–0 14.♙g5 ♖e4 15.♙e3 b5 16.♙d3 ♙b7 17.♗c2 ♖f6 18.♙g5 h6 19.♙xf6 gxf6 20.♙e4 ♙xe4 21.♗xe4 f5 22.♗f3 ♠ac8 23.♠ad1 ♙e5 24.♠d3 ♠fd8 25.♠fd1 ♙g7 and Black equalized easily, Bagirov – Djurasevic, Oberhausen 1961; 12.♙d3 ♙d6 13.h3 ♙d7 14.♗f3 0–0 15.♙g5 ♙h2+ 16.♖h1 ♙e5 17.♗ae1 ♙xd4 18.cxd4 ♖d5 19.♗e4 f5 20.♗e2 ♗b6 21.♠d1 ♙b5 with an excellent position for him, Tiviakov – Kramnik, Kherson 1991.) 12...♙d6 13.h3 0–0 14.♙g5 ♖e4 15.♙e3 ♙h2+ 16.♖h1 ♙f4 17.♗f3 ♙xe3 18.♗xe3 ♖f6 19.f4 b5 20.♗ae1 ♠e8 21.♗e5 ♗xe5 22.♗xe5 ♙b7 23.f5 exf5 24.♗exf5 ♠ad8 25.♖h2 ♙d5 26.♙xd5 ♗xd5 27.♗xd5 ♖xd5= Tiviakov – Huebner, Venlo 2000.



11...♗c7

Black has a very attractive alternative here – 11...♙d7 12.♙g5 (It is probably quite reasonable for White to try some not so forced lines like: 12.c3!? ♗c7 13.♗e2 ♙d6 14.h3 0–0 15.♙g5 ♙h2+ 16.♖h1 ♙f4 17.♙xf6 gxf6 18.♙d3 f5 19.♗h5 ♖h8 20.♖xf5 exf5 21.♠e7 ♗c6 22.♗xd7!± Yemelin – Filippov, Panormo 2001.)



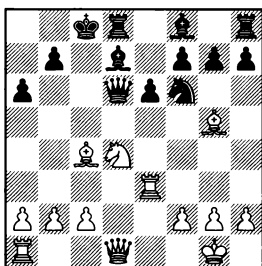
and here:

It is bad for Black to play 12...♗c5? 13.♙xe6 fxe6 14.♙xf6 gxf6 15.♖xe6 ♙xe6 16.♗xe6+ ♙e7 17.b4 ♗c3 18.♠e3 ♗c7 19.♗h5+ ♖f8 20.♗ae1 and White has a decisive attack, Adams – Nisipeanu, Sofia 2007;

3. ♘d2 c5 4. ♘g3 cxd4 5. exd5 ♖xd5 6. ♙c4 ♗d6 7. 0-0

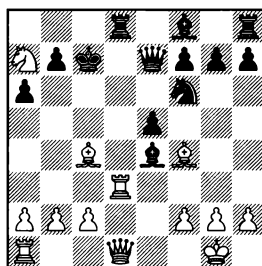
as well as to follow with 12... ♖c7? 13. ♙xe6 ♙xe6 14. ♙xf6 gxf6 15. ♘e6 fxe6 16. ♖xe6+ ♘f7 17. ♗d5 ♘g7 18. ♗f5 ♗f7 (18... ♙e7 19. ♖ae1 ♖he8 20. ♗e4 ♘f8 21. ♗xh7 ♖ad8 22. h4 ♗c5 23. h5 1-0 Shytaj – Malakhatko, Tromsøe 2009.) 19. ♖d1 ♙e7 20. ♖d7 ♖he8 21. g3 ♖ab8 22. h4 h5 23. c4 b6 24. b4 ♖bc8 25. ♖xe7 ♖xe7 26. ♖xe7 ♗xe7 27. ♗xc8+- Andriasian – Rodshtein, Yerevan 2006;

12... 0-0-0 13. ♖e3



This position was considered to be difficult for Black, because of the possible transfer of White's rook along the third rank. The famous master of original and spectacular ideas Emil Sutovsky managed to refute that evaluation. 13... ♙c6! (In case of the indifferent move 13... ♘b8, Black will have great problems: 14. ♖b3 ♖c8 15. ♗f3 ♙c6 16. ♘xc6+ ♗xc6 17. ♙xf6 gxf6 18. ♗xf6 ♖g8 19. ♙f1 ♖g6 20. ♗xf7 ♙c5 21. ♗f3 e5 22. ♗xc6 ♖gxc6 23. ♖e1+ Asrian – Wang Hao, Taiyuan 2006.) 14. ♖d3 ♙e4 15. ♘b5 (White achieves nothing with 15. ♖d2 ♗b6 16. c3 ♙d6=; he should better avoid 15. ♘f5 ♗c7 16. ♖xd8+ ♗xd8

17. ♗xd8+ ♘xd8 18. ♖d1+ ♘c8 19. ♘d6+ ♙xd6 20. ♖xd6 ♙d5=) 15... ♗e7 16. ♘a7+ ♘c7 17. ♙f4+ (White may try to create some problems for his opponent with 17. ♖xd8 ♗xd8 18. ♗e1 ♙d6 19. ♙xf6 ♗xf6 20. ♗xe4 ♙c5 21. ♘c6 bxc6 22. ♖f1 ♖d8, although the first impression is that Black should be able to hold. After 18... ♘b8 however, he is clearly worse: 19. ♗xe4 ♘xe4 20. ♙xd8 ♘xa7 21. ♙a5 ♙c5 22. ♙e1. Naturally, if Black defends well, White's advantage will be hardly sufficient to win the game, but under the present fast time-controls it would be very difficult for Black to defend similar positions in competitive chess.) 17... e5

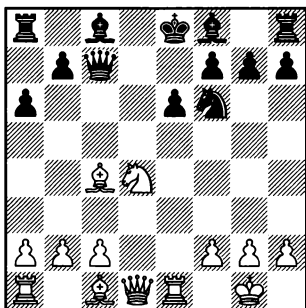


18. ♙xe5+? ♗xe5 19. ♖xd8 ♙d6 20. ♖xh8 ♗xh2+ 21. ♘f1 ♙xg2+ 22. ♘e2 ♗e5+ 23. ♘d3 b5+-

The only game played on this theme continued with 18. ♙e3 ♙xd3 19. cxd3 ♘b8 20. ♖c1 ♗d6 (I cannot understand why Black did not play 20... ♖d4!? 21. ♙xd4 exd4 22. ♘c6+ bxc6 23. ♙xa6 ♗e6 24. ♗a4 ♙c5, with an extra piece for him?) 21. ♙xf7 ♙e7 22. ♗b3 ♗b4 23. ♗c2 ♗d6 24. h3 ♘d7 and

the game ended in a draw: 25.♖b3 ♖b4 26.♖e6 ♖d6 27.♖b3 ♖b4 28.♖e6 ♖d6 Shirov – Sutovsky, Poikovsky 2009.

18.♞xd8 ♖xd8 19.♖xd8+ ♖xd8 20.♞d1+ ♞d7 21.♙e3 (The game might end in an amusing draw after 21.♙xf7 exf4 22.♙e6 ♖c7 23.♞xd7+ ♖b8 24.f3 ♙c5+ 25.♖f1 ♙xc2 26.♙d5 ♙d3+ 27.♖e1 ♞e8+ 28.♖d2 ♞e7 29.♞xe7 ♙xe7 30.♖xd3 ♖xa7=) 21...♖c7 22.♙xf7 ♙f5, it seems that White can hardly play this endgame for a win, for example: 23.a4 b6 24.♙d5 ♞f6 25.c4 ♙d7 and the knight on a7 remains a sorry sight as before.

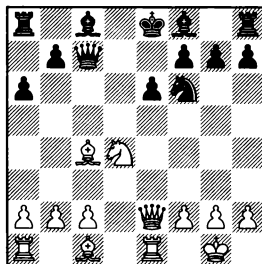


12.♙b3

The move 12.♙d3 is considered to be bad by theory, probably because of 12...♙d6 13.♞f5?! ♙xh2+ 14.♖h1 ♖f8 15.g3 exf5 16.♖xh2 h5 17.♙f4 ♖b6 18.♖g2 ♙e6 19.c4 h4 20.f3 hxg3 21.♙xg3 f4 22.♙f2 ♞h2+ 0-1 Smagin – Akopian, Yerevan 1988.

12.♖e2!? This is an interesting resource for White. He keeps his bishop on c4, with the idea to

retreat it later to d3 if necessary. Black will have to solve some problems.



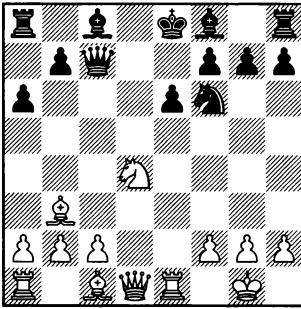
It would be a step in the wrong direction for him to try 12...♙d7? 13.♙g5 0-0-0 14.h3! This is the precise reaction for White. He avoids the attack against that pawn in advance. 14...♙b4 15.c3 ♙d6 16.a4 h6 17.♙e3 e5 18.♞c2 ♙f5 19.♞b4 a5 20.♞d5 ♞xd5 21.♙xd5 e4 22.♖b5 ♙d7 23.♖b3± Lastin – Shimanov, Ulan Ude 2009.

12...♙c5 13.c3 b5 (Or 13...0-0?! 14.♙g5 ♞d5 15.♞ad1 ♙e7 16.♙xe7 ♞xe7 17.♙xe6! ♙xe6 18.♞xe6 fxe6 19.♖xe6+ ♖f7 20.♞d7 ♖f4 21.♞xe7 ♖xf2+ 22.♖h1 ♞af8 23.h3± Emms – Kelly, Birmingham 2005.) 14.♙b3 0-0 15.♙g5 ♙b7 16.♙xf6 gxf6 17.♖h5 ♖h8 18.♖h6 ♞g8 19.♖xf6+ ♞g7 20.g3 ♙e7 21.♖e5 ♙d6 22.♖f6 ♙e7 23.♖e5 ♙d6 24.♖f6 ♙e7 25.♖e5 ♙d6 26.♖f6 and White had to comply with a draw, Emms – Levitt, Plymouth 1989.

It is maybe worth considering for Black to apply the more tentative approach – 12...♙d6 13.♙g5 0-0 14.♙xf6 gxf6 15.♙d3. The only chance for White to cre-

3. ♖d2 c5 4. ♗g3 cxd4 5. exd5 ♜xd5 6. ♙c4 ♞d6 7. 0-0

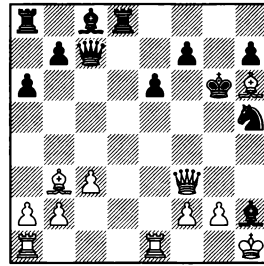
ate real difficulties for Black is to play maximally aggressively. 15... ♙h2+ 16. ♗f1 ♙f4 17. g3 ♞d8! 18. ♞e4! (18. c3?! ♙h6 19. ♞h5 ♙g7 20. ♙xh7+ ♗f8 21. ♞ad1 ♙d7 22. ♗g1 ♞ac8, Black's position is acceptable, but rather passive, Giri – Wiedenkeller, Ohrid 2009.) 18... f5 19. ♗xf5 exf5 20. ♞xf4 ♞xf4 21. gxf4 ♗g7 and the endgame is worse for him, but still defensible.



12... ♙d7!?

Some ten years ago, it was very popular for Black to defend with 12... ♙d6 and although White failed to prove any advantage in the gambit, which was arising in the main line, Black stopped playing that line for reasons I did not quite understand. This is quite typical for the trend of fashion in chess. It is changing and completely unpredictable. 13. ♗f5 ♙xh2+ 14. ♗h1 0-0 15. ♗xg7. I believe it is not necessary to put exclamation marks to well-familiar moves, therefore I will simply show you here what theory has

approved and time has tested. 15... ♞d8 16. ♞f3 ♗xg7 17. ♙h6+ (17. g3?! b5 18. ♗xh2 ♙b7 19. ♞f4 ♞c6 20. ♞g1 ♞d1 21. ♙e3 ♞xa1 22. ♞g5+ ♗f8 23. ♞c5+ ♗e8 24. ♞xc6+ ♙xc6 25. ♞xa1 ♗g4+ with an advantage for Black, Wolff – Gulko, Durango 1992.) 17... ♗g6 18. c3 (18. ♞ad1? ♞xd1 19. ♞xd1 e5! This is a very important novelty at the moment. 20. ♗xh2 ♗g4+ 21. ♗g1 ♗xh6 and White had to resign, Zaw – Khalifman, Bali 2000.) 18... ♗h5 (18... ♗d5? 19. ♞ad1 ♗xh6 20. ♞xd5!+-)



19. ♙e4 ♗xh6 20. ♞h4 ♞e5 21. ♞xf7 (After 21. ♞xh2? f6 22. g4 ♙d7, Black can fight for the advantage.) 21... ♞f5 22. ♞xh5+ ♞xh5 23. ♞f6+ ♞g6 24. ♞h4+ ♞h5 25. ♞f6= Geenen – Barsov, France 2007.

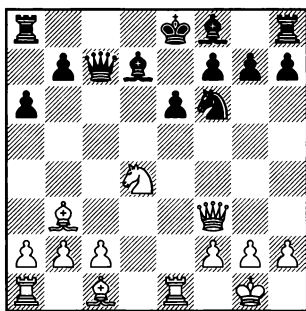
19. ♙e3 f5 20. g4 ♗f6 21. gxf5+ exf5 22. ♞g2+ ♗g4 23. f3 b5 24. ♙d4 ♗g5 25. ♙e6 ♙g3 26. ♙xc8 ♞axc8 27. fxc4 ♙xe1 28. ♞xe1 ♞c6 29. gxf5+ ♞xg2+ 30. ♗xg2 ♗xf5 and the position should be technically winning for Black, Sarakauskas – Dochev, Tanta 2001.

19. ♙c1 ♙f4 20. g4 ♗g3+ 21. fxc3 ♙xc1 22. ♞axc1 b6. This move ensures both the development of

Black's bishop on the long diagonal and also the c5-square for the queen. (There is nothing wrong if he tries the not so exquisite 22... ♔d7!? 23. ♕c2+ ♖g7 24. ♗e3 ♕c6+ 25. ♖h2 h6=) 23. ♕c2+ (After 23. ♗e3, a game of one of the most famous experts of this line Sergey Ivanov proves that Black has no problems whatsoever: 23... ♗b7+ 24. ♖h2 ♗c5 25. ♗f4 ♗g5 26. ♕c2+ ♖h6 27. ♖cd1 ♗xf4 28. gxf4 ♕f3 29. ♖xd8 ♖xd8 30. ♖g3 ♖d2= So-
 lovjov – S.Ivanov, St Petersburg 2005.) 23... ♖g7 24. ♕e4 ♖a7 25. ♖c2 ♕b7 26. ♖h2 ♕xe4 27. ♗xe4 ♗b7 28. ♖xh7+ ♖g8 29. ♗xb7 ♖xb7 30. ♖h2 ♖d3 31. ♖g2 ♖d2+ 32. ♖h3 ♖xh2+ 33. ♖xh2 ♖d7 34. ♖e2 ♖g7 35. ♖h3 b5 36. b3 ♖c7 37. ♖e3 ♖f6 38. ♖f3+ ♖g5= Brodsky – Glek, Wijk aan Zee 1999.

13. ♗f3

White achieves nothing much with 13. ♗e2 0–0–0 14. ♕e3 ♕d6 15. h3 ♖b8 16. a4 ♕h2+ 17. ♖h1 ♕f4 18. ♖ad1 h5 19. ♕xf4 ♗xf4 20. ♖g1 h4 21. ♗e3 ♗xe3 22. ♖xe3= Pava-
 sovic – Akopian, Heraklio 2007.



13... ♕d6

This is the right reaction for Black. He must occupy the b8-h2 diagonal before his opponent does.

The author of this book made a terrible mistake in the move-order in one of the morning rounds of the Bundesliga. This led to six hours of hard and laborious defence, but at the end it ended successfully by a miracle. 13... 0–0–0? 14. ♕f4 ♕d6 15. ♕xd6 ♗xd6 16. ♖ad1 ♗c7 17. ♖e3 ♖b8 18. ♖c3 ♗e5 19. ♕c4 ♖a7 20. ♖a3! ♗e4 (20... ♗c5 21. ♗e3!) 21. ♗c3 (Black would have even greater problems to solve after 21. ♗g3! ♖c8 22. f3 ♗g6 23. ♕xa6! ♗xg3 24. ♕d3+ ♖b8 25. hxg3±) 21... ♖c8 22. ♗b4 ♗e5 23. ♕e2 ♗c5 24. ♗xc5+ ♖xc5 25. b4 ♖cc8 26. c4 ♖hd8 27. f4 with a very powerful pressure for White, Efimenko – Vitiugov, Hamburg 2009.

14. h3

It would not work for White to continue with 14. ♖f5? ♕xh2+ 15. ♖h1 0–0–0 16. ♖e7+ (Or 16. ♖xg7 ♕e5 and his knight on g7 seems to be doing nothing.) 16... ♖b8 17. g3 ♗c5! and Black ends up with an extra pawn and a superior position.

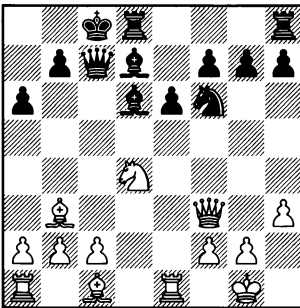
There arises a well-familiar draw after 14. ♕xe6 fxe6 15. ♖xe6 ♕xe6 16. ♖xe6+ ♖f7 17. ♗b3 ♕xh2+! This is an important intermediate move; otherwise, Black will simply lose that bishop on d6, 18. ♖h1 ♖g6 19. ♗d3+ ♖f7 20. ♗b3 ♖g6=

3. ♖d2 c5 4. ♘gf3 cxd4 5. exd5 ♜xd5 6. ♙c4 ♜d6 7. 0-0

21.g3?! This is a very risky decision for White and it cannot end well for him. 21...♙xg3 22.fxg3 ♜ac8 23.♙f4 ♜xc2 24.♜xb7 ♜he8 25.♜xa6 ♜xe6 26.♜xe6 ♜e8 27. ♜h3 ♜e2 28.♜c1 ♜e4+ 29.♔g1 h5 30.♜f1 ♘g4 31.♜d1 ♜h2 32.♜d6+ ♔h7 and he resigned in view of the unavoidable checkmate, Belikov – Danielian, Jurmala 1991.

14...0-0-0

Black cannot stop at the threshold: 14...0-0?! 15.♙g5 ♙e5 16.♜e3 and White obtains an advantage.



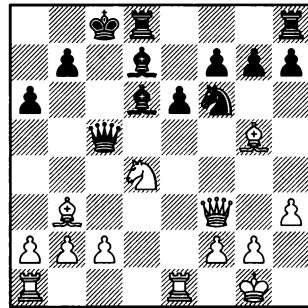
15.♙g5

Black solves easily his problems after the more modest line: 15.♙e3 ♔b8 16.c4 e5 17.c5 ♙xc5 18.♜ac1 (18.♜ec1 ♜b6 19.♜xc5 ♜xc5 20.♘e6 ♜c6 21.♜xc6 ♙xc6 22.♘xd8 ♜xd8 23.♙xf7 ♘d5=) 18... ♜b6 19.♘f5 ♙xe3 20.♜xe3 ♙xf5 21.♜xf5 e4 22.♙xf7 ♜hf8 23.♙b3 ♜d2 24.♜f4+ ♜d6 25.♜xd6+ ♜xd6 with an equal endgame, Pavasovic – Sakalauskas, Plovdiv 2003.

15...♜c5

The other plan for Black would

not work after: 15...♙h2+ 16.♔h1 ♙e5 17.♜ad1 h6 18.♙e3 g5 19.♜d3. It is quite obvious that if White can maneuver his rook along the third rank in this variation, this will cause plenty of problems for his opponent. 19...♔b8 20.♜c3 ♜d6 21.♜d1 ♜e7 22.♙c4 with a powerful initiative for White.



16.♙e3

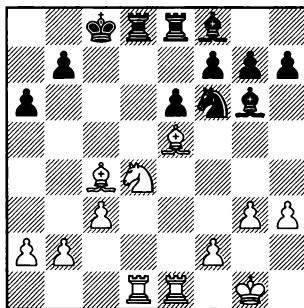
It would be too risky for White to gobble the gambit pawn with: 16.♙xf6 gxf6 17.♜xf6 ♜hg8 18. ♜ad1 ♜g6! 19.♜xf7?! (The line: 19. ♜f3 ♜dg8 20.g4 h5 will hardly be satisfactory for him. For example: 21.♜xf7 hxg4 22.♙xe6 gxh3+ 23. ♔h1 ♙xe6 24.♜xe6 ♜d5+ 25.f3 ♜g1+ 26.♜xg1 ♜xg1+ 27.♔xg1 ♜xd4+ 28.♔f1 ♜c4+ with a perpetual check. This is not the worst result for him after all...) 19...♜f8 20.♜xh7 ♜g5 21.g3 ♙xg3 22. ♜xd7+ ♔xd7 23.♘xe6+ ♔c6 24. ♘xg5 ♙xf2+ 25.♔h2 ♙xe1 26.♜xe1 ♜xg5 and only White can lose this position.

16...♜e5 17.g3 ♜e4 18.♜ad1 ♙c6 19.♜xe4 ♙xe4 20.♙g5

He may create more problems for his opponent with the line: 20.f3 ♖g6 21.♗e2 h6 22.♖g2 (White did not achieve anything much after 22.♖f2 ♖h7 23.a3 ♗e5 24.c3 ♜xd1 25.♞xd1 ♞d8 26.♞xd8+ ♖xd8 27.g4 h5 28.♗f4 hxg4 29.hxg4 ♗d7 30.♗h5 ♖g6 31.♖e2= Sermek – Harikrishna, Istanbul 2000.) 22...♗c7 23.c4 ♞xd1 24.♞xd1 ♞d8 25.♞xd8+ ♖xd8. As you can see, White had some success in several games after a very precise play, but I think Black should not panic. 26.♗d4 e5 27.♗e3 ♗a5 (He had better consider here the possibility to activate his bishop with: 27...♗f5!?) 28.c5 ♗d7 29.a3 ♗b8 30.♗d5 ♗c6 31.b4 ♗c7 32.g4 h5 33.♗g3 hxg4 34.fxg4 ♖c8 35.♗f5+- Almasi –

Kindermann, Germany 2000.

20...♗g6 21.c3 ♗c5 22.♗f4 ♞he8 23.♗e5 ♗f8 24.♗c4

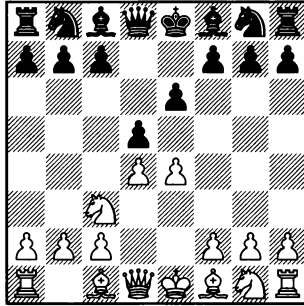


Here, even a master of positions of this type like Sergey Tiviakov understood that he had no chances of winning and offered a draw, Tiviakov – Kramnik, Moscow 1991.

Parts 6 and 7

The Classical System

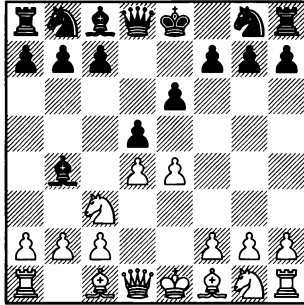
1.e4 e6 2.d4 d5 3.♘c3



The last two parts of our book will be devoted to the analysis of the most popular and I believe also the most dangerous move for Black – 3.♘c3. White maintains the tension in the centre and develops his knight to a more active position in comparison to the variation with 3.♘d2. Now, the game may develop according to two basic scripts – 3...♘f6 and 3...♗b4. The positions arising after them are entirely different and what they have in common is that it becomes essential what to do in the different pawn-structures and the tremendous importance of concrete variations in the accomplishment of the different plans. Accordingly, the play involves great risk for both sides.

Part 6

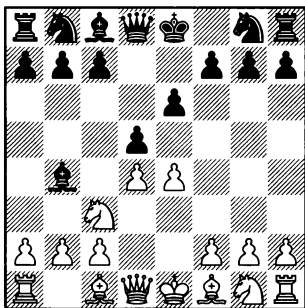
The Winawer Variation 1.e4 e6 2.d4 d5 3.♘c3 ♗b4



We will begin with 3...♗b4. This principled and double-edged variation requires precise and energetic play from both sides and the arising pawn-structures are so various that they will satisfy both the tactics, who long for dynamic play, as well as the positional players who love long maneuvering battles.

I think that White can create greatest problems for his opponent by playing 4.e5. After that, Black will most probably have to give up his dark-squared bishop for White's knight on c3 and then you should simply forget about symmetry till the next game...I am not going to mention all the strategical resources, typical for this variation, since they are so many that their systematizing is hardly possible at all. Sometimes Black castles long and sometimes short. There are attacks against White's monarch and many times Black comes under attack himself. There may be games with slow and patient fight for squares and outposts and there may be games with wild tactical complications, in which the value of every tempo will be tremendously important. It is quite clear that whenever you play a game in the Winawer variation, you will most probably enjoy the process of playing by itself, particularly if you are well-prepared and you understand profoundly the arising positions.

Chapter 25 1.e4 e6 2.d4 d5 3.♖c3 ♗b4



In case White wishes to avoid the main lines, he has numerous alternatives. The point is however, that he would have to rely most often on the element of surprise and not so much on the objective value of all these sidelines.

Now, we will deal with: a) 4.♞d3, b) 4.♗d2, c) 4.♞g4, d) 4.exd5, e) 4.♗d3, f) 4.a3 and g) 4.♗e2.

a) 4.♞d3

This move looks a bit awkward.

4...♗e7

White would love the game to continue with 4...dxe4 5.♞xe4 ♗f6 6.♞h4 c5 7.dxc5 ♗d5 8.♞xd8+ ♗xd8 9.♗ge2 ♗d7 10.♗d2 ♗5f6

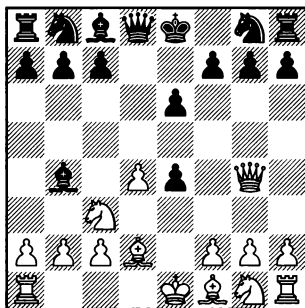
11.c6! This is an important move with which he maintains the advantage. 11...bxc6 12.a3 ♗e7 13.0-0-0 ♗c7 14.♗d4 ♗b7 15.♗e2 ♗ae8 16.♗b3 ♗d5 17.♗e4± Anand – Van der Wiel, Wijk aan Zee 1990.

5.♗d2 b6 6.♗e2 0-0 7.a3 ♗xc3 8.♗xc3 a5 9.♗f3 ♗d7 10.exd5 exd5 11.0-0 ♗f6 12.♞d1 ♗e4 13.♗d2 ♗e8 14.♗e1 ♗g6 15.♗e3 a4 16.♗d2 ♗d6 17.♗f3 ♗e6 18.♗f1 ♗h4 with an excellent game for Black, Anand – Short, Wijk aan Zee 1990.

b) 4.♗d2

This move reminds me of the good old one-move traps.

4...dxe4 5.♞g4



White continues in the same style. He is not trying to check-mate his opponent outright, but something similar...

5...♗f6 6.♖xg7 ♜g8 7.♖h6 ♖xd4 8.0-0-0

Black has no problems at all after 8.♗ge2 ♖e5 9.0-0-0 ♜g6♘, or 9.♗f4 ♖f5 10.♗g3 ♖g6 11.♖xg6 ♜xg6.

8...♗f8

He can also try 8...♜g6!? 9.♖h4 (It is weaker for White to play 9.♖f4?! ♗d6 10.♗ge2 ♗xf4 11.♗xd4 ♗e5 and he ends up a pawn down in an endgame.) 9...♜g4 10.♖h3 ♖xf2 11.♗e2 ♜g6 with some compensation for Black.

9.♖h4

But not 9.♖f4?! ♗d6.

9...♜g4 10.♖h3 ♖xf2 11.♗e2 ♜h4

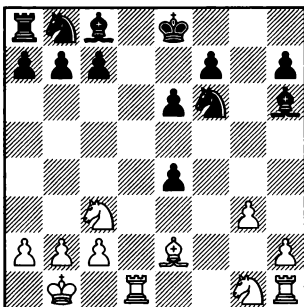
It looks like Black wins immediately, but this is not so.

11...♜g6!?

12.♖xh4 ♖xh4 13.g3!

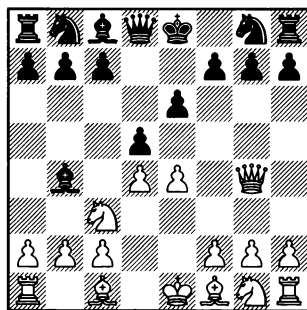
Now, Black's queen is trapped!

13...♖h6 14.♗xh6 ♗xh6+ 15.♖b1



The arising endgame is with a non-balanced material ratio and I believe it is better for Black. The following game is an instructive example: **15...a6!? 16.h4 b5 17.♗h3 b4 18.♗df1 bxc3 19.♗xf6 ♗g7 20.♗ff1 f5 21.♗h5+ ♖e7** with an advantage for him, Korepanov – Skomorokhin, Podolsk 1993.

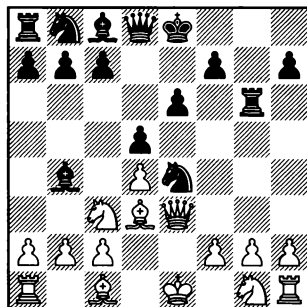
c) 4.♖g4



This equestrian sortie of White's queen does not create any problems for Black.

4...♗f6 5.♖xg7 ♜g8 6.♖h6 ♜g6 7.♖e3 ♗xe4 8.♗d3

It seems interesting for him to check here the greedy move –



8... ♖xg2!?

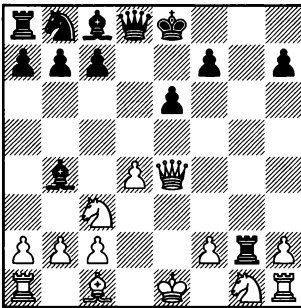
which leads to a forced game in a way.

In an encounter between two World champions, the future President of FIDE played too schematically and he was punished for that: 8...f5 9. ♖ge2 c5 10. ♙xe4 fxe4 11. ♖h3 ♘c6 12. ♖xh7 ♖f6 13. ♘f4 cxd4 14. ♘xg6 dxc3 15. b3 ♘e7 16. ♘xe7 ♙xe7 17. h4± and later White prevailed, Alekhine – Euwe, Netherlands 1935.

There arises a very unclear situation after 8...♘c6 9. ♖ge2 ♖xg2 10. ♙xe4 dxe4 11. ♖xe4 ♖d5 12. ♙xh7!? ♖f3 13. ♙e3 ♖xf2 14. ♙xf2 ♖xh1+ 15. ♙g1. It looks like the most reasonable thing for Black to do is sacrifice a pawn for the sake of quickest possible development – 15...♙d7 16. 0–0–0 0–0–0 17. ♖xf7 with a slight edge for White.

9. ♙xe4

This is the only move for him.

9... dxe4 10. ♖xe4**10... ♖g6**

Black must play accurately:

10... ♖d5? 11. ♖xd5 exd5 12. ♙f1! and he is already a pawn down.

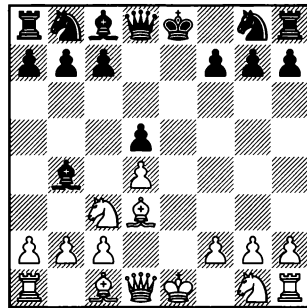
11. ♖ge2

He equalizes in the most primitive fashion after 11. ♙d2 ♙xc3 12. ♙xc3 ♖d5=

11... ♘d7 12. ♙d2

Black has an excellent position after 12. ♙f4 ♘f6 13. ♖d3 ♙d7 14. 0–0–0 ♙c6.

12... ♘f6 13. ♖h4 b6 14. 0–0–0 ♙b7 15. ♖hg1 ♙e7 – with an acceptable game, because he can counter the immediate offensive – 16. d5 with the quite adequate resource: 16... ♘xd5 17. ♖xh7 ♖xg1 18. ♖xg1 ♖d6!

d) 4. exd5 exd5 5. ♙d3

This is a popular move. White does not enter theoretical discussions and Black still has some problems to worry about.

5... c6

This is a seldom played move, which seems to me quite reasonable under the circumstances. Black should not be disappointed that he has failed to enter the

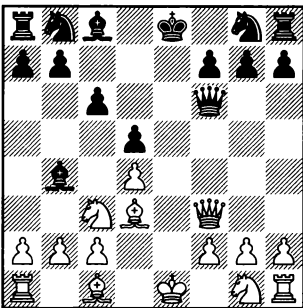
complicated positions after 4.e5. Instead of that, he should simply try to equalize with an accurate play.

The fans of sharp positions play here 5...dxc6!? 6.a3 dxc3+ 7.bxc3 dge7 and later the development of the game becomes totally unpredictable. It seems to me that Black is only looking for trouble in that fashion. For example: 8.♖h5 e6 9.♗b1 b6 10.♘f3 ♖d7 11.♘g5 0-0-0 12.♗xe6 ♗xe6+ 13.♗e3 g6 14.♗f3 ♘f5 15.0-0 ♘xe3 16.♗fe1 ♖d6 17.fxex3 f5 18.c4 dxc4 19.♗xc4 and his king cannot be safe at all, Glek – Chenaux, Saint Vincent 1999.

6. ♗f3

Black equalizes easily after 6.♘ge2 ♘e7 7.0-0 e5 8.♘g3 dxd3 9.♗xd3 0-0 10.♘ce2 ♘a6 11.c3 e6 12.e4 ♘c7 13.♗ae1 ♘e6= Oll – Short, Parnu 1996.

6... ♗f6



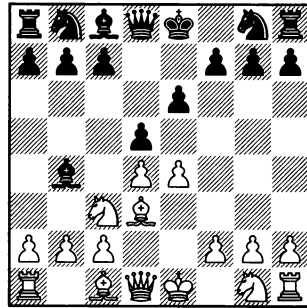
7. ♗xf6

White cannot obtain any advantage after 7.e4 ♘e7 8.♗g3 ♘d7 9.♘ge2 0-0 10.0-0-0 ♘g6

11.♗g5 ♖d6 12.♗xd6 e6 13.h4 h6 14.e2 ♘f6 15.h5 ♘e7 16.f3 e5= Moreno Carnero – Ivanchuk, Mallorca 2004.

7...dxf6 8.♘ge2 ♘bd7 9.a3 e7 10.f3 h5 11.h4 ♘f8 12.♘f4 e7 13.♗f2 0-0-0 14.♘ce2 ♘e8 15.e2 e6 16.e4 g6 17.♗ae1 ♘g7 18.c3 e5= with some chances for Black of seizing the initiative, Alekseev – Ivanchuk, Biel 2009.

e) 4. e3



White wishes to maintain the tension in the centre. The idea is excellent, but the way of achieving that is questionable.

4... dxe4 5. e4 ♘f6 6. e3

This move seems purposeful, but as it often happens, this rather artificial idea may only work if the opponent cooperates.

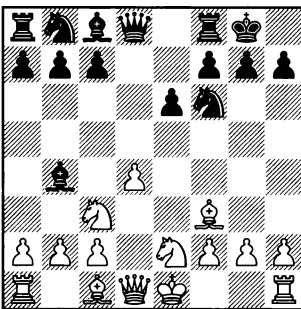
It is not so sensible for White to opt for 6.e3 c5 7.♘f3 (There arise completely different developments after 7.a3 dxc3+ 8.bxc3 ♗c7! 9.♘f3 c4 10.e2 ♘d5 11.♗d2 ♘d7 12.a4 ♘7f6. Black has seized

the initiative with a series of strong moves and he won the game later, not without some mistakes by his opponent. 13. ♖g5 0–0 14. ♖h4 ♜xc3 15. ♝a3 ♜xe2 16. ♜xe2 c3 17. ♝d1 b6 18. ♜f1 ♙a6+ 19. ♜g1 ♙e2 20. ♝e1 ♙xf3 21. ♙xf3 ♜d5–+ V. Shcherbakov – Petrosian, Moscow 1955.) 7...cxd4 8. ♜xd4 e5 9. ♜de2 ♙g4 10. f3 ♙e6 11. a3 ♙e7 12. ♙e3 0–0 13. 0–0 ♜bd7 14. ♜g3 ♙c5 15. ♙f2 ♙xf2+ 16. ♝xf2 ♖b6 and Black had a slight edge in the game Renet – Ivanchuk, Izmir 2004.

6...0–0

He has a worthy alternative here: 6...c5!? 7. ♜ge2 ♜c6 8. a3 ♙xc3+ 9. bxc3 e5! 10. ♙xc6+ bxc6 11. 0–0 exd4 12. cxd4 0–0 13. ♝e1 ♙a6= 14. ♜g3 cxd4 15. ♜f5 ♝e8 16. ♙g5 ♖a5 17. ♜h6+ ♜f8 18. ♝xe8+ ♝xe8 19. ♙xf6 gxf6 20. h4 ♝e4 21. f3 ♝xh4 22. ♜g4 f5 23. ♖xd4 fxd4 24. ♝b1 ♙c8 0–1 M. Tseitlin – Jussupow, Moscow 1983.

7. ♜ge2



7...e5!

Black obtains an excellent

position, playing in an energetic fashion.

8. 0–0

This is the most solid reaction by White.

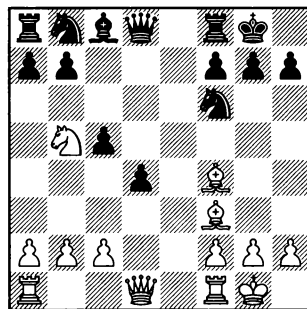
Greediness of the type – 8. dxe5 would not bring him any advantage at all. 8... ♖xd1+ 9. ♜xd1 ♜g4 10. ♙xg4 ♙xg4 11. f3 ♙f5 12. ♙d2 ♜c6 13. f4 ♝ad8 14. ♜c1 f6 15. a3 ♙xc3 16. ♙xc3 ♙g4 17. ♜g3 fxe5 18. fxe5 ♝f2 and Black was clearly better, Muromtsev – Lysyj, Sochi 2006.

The endgame is worse for White after 8. ♙g5?! h6 9. ♙h4 exd4 10. ♖xd4 ♖xd4 11. ♜xd4 ♝e8+ 12. ♜f1 ♙xc3 13. bxc3 ♜e4 14. ♙xe4 ♝xe4 15. ♙g3 ♜a6 16. ♝d1 ♙e6 17. f3 ♙c4+ 18. ♜f2 ♝ee8, Movsesian – Shirov, Sochi 2006.

8...♙xc3 9. ♜xc3 exd4

White sacrifices a pawn and seizes temporarily the initiative.

10. ♜b5 c5 11. ♙f4



11... ♜e8!?

The more tentative move 11... a6 presents White with a slight advantage after 12. ♜d6 ♜c6 13. c3

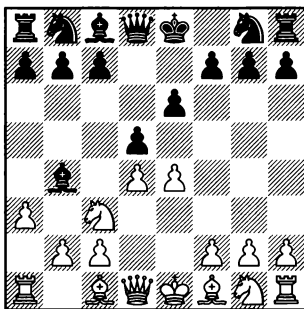
♙e6 14. ♗xc6 bxc6 15. cxd4 cxd4 16. ♖xd4 and here in the game Jovanovic – Vaganian, Dresden 2007, the opponents agreed to a draw.

12.c3

White did not achieve anything much after 12. ♖e1 ♘c6 13. c3 a6 14. ♖xe8 ♖xe8 15. ♘c7 ♗f6 16. ♗d2 ♙d7 17. ♗d1 ♖ac8 18. ♘xe8 ♖xe8 with a solid extra pawn for Black, Sariego – Diaz, Bayamo 1991.

12...a6 13. ♘a3 ♘c6 14. ♖c1 ♙e6 – White has some compensation for the pawn indeed, but not more...

f) 4.a3



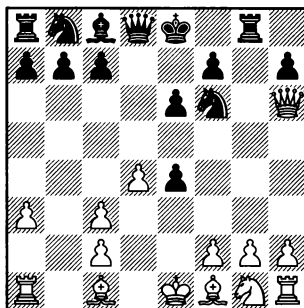
This is a very sharp move, leading to forced lines and it belonged to the opening armour of Robert James Fischer.

4...♙xc3+ 5.bxc3 dxe4 6. ♖g4 ♘f6 7. ♖xg7 ♖g8 8. ♖h6

Now, Black has a choice.
(diagram)

8...♘bd7

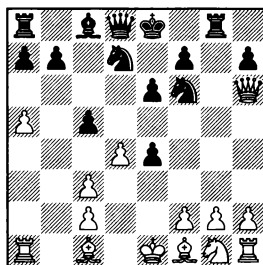
He has also tried in practice 8...♖g6, or 8...c5 9. ♘e2 cxd4 10. cxd4 ♘c6 11. ♙b2 ♙d7 12. 0–0–0?!



♘g4 13. ♖f4 ♖g5 14. ♖e1 ♘xf2 15. ♖g1 ♘g4 16. h3 ♘h2 17. ♖h1 ♘xf1 18. ♖hx1 ♘e7 19. g4 f5 with a solid extra pawn for Black, Jobava – Sutovsky, Novi Sad 2009.

9.♘e2

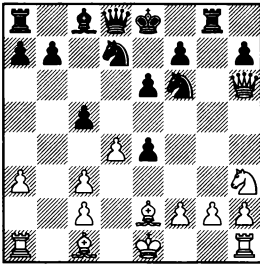
I can recommend to the fans of wild irrational positions the rather creative line: 9.a4 c5 10.a5. The Serbian GM Igor Miladinovic plays regularly like this with White and he is a very original player.



I do not think that White can seize the initiative in that fashion, but he can really force his opponent to solve problems over the board. I like here a new and interesting plan in this situation – 10...♘d5!? 11. ♖d2 ♘f7 12. ♘h3 e3 13. ♖d3 exf2+ 14. ♘xf2 ♙d7 and

Black obtains a very promising position.

He may have some problems however, after 9. ♖h3 c5 10. ♗e2. White plays very sharply and he eyes the f7-square with all his forces.



10... ♖xg2? 11. ♖g5 ♗a5 12. ♗f1!+–

10... ♗a5 11. ♗d2 ♖xg2 12. ♖g5 cxd4 13. ♗g7! (We will analyze 13.cxd4?! ♗f5! a bit later.) 13... ♖xg5 14. ♗xg5 ♗xg5 15. ♗xg5 dxc3 16. 0–0–0. It looks like Black's knight and three pawns should be sufficient to compensate the missing rook, but in this open position White's long-range pieces become very powerful. 16...a6 17. ♖hg1 b5 18. ♖g3 ♖d5 19. ♖h3 f6 20. ♗e3 ♖xe3 21. fxex3 ♖f8 22. ♗h5+ ♗e7 23. ♖g3 ♗d7 24. ♖g7+ and Black resigned, since he would lose his rook on the next move, Ljubojevic – Korchnoi, Tilburg 1986.

It is interesting for him to try 10...cxd4!? 11. cxd4 (White can continue in a gambit fashion, but Black can defend successfully: 11.0–0 dxc3 12. ♗g5 ♖g6 13. ♗h4 ♗a5 14. ♗xf6 ♖xf6 15. ♖f4 ♖g5

16. ♖h3 ♖g6=) 11... ♖xg2 12. ♖g5 ♗a5+ 13. ♗f1 (After 13. ♗d2, Black reacts with 13... ♗f5 14.0–0–0 and now, it looks very attractive for him to play the paradoxical line: 14... ♖d5 15. ♗h5 ♗e7 16. ♖xf7 ♖7f6 17. ♗g5 ♗h3! It is quite unclear, which king is safer, for example: 18.f3 ♗d7 19.c4 ♖c8 20. ♖e5 ♖xg5 21. ♗xg5 ♗xh5 22. ♗g7+ ♗d6 23. fxex4 ♖g8 24. ♗f7 ♗g5+ 25. ♗d2 ♖c3 and Black has an excellent position.) 13... ♖g4 14. ♗xg4 ♖xg4 15.h3 ♗b5+ 16. ♗e1 ♖g2. Surprisingly, the rook on g2 is perfectly placed. It is attacking and defending at the same time. 17. ♗e3 (17. ♖xe4 ♗c6 18. ♗xh7 ♖f8 19. ♖f6+ ♗e7 20. ♗h4 ♖g6 21. ♖d5+ ♗e8 22. ♖f6+ ♗e7=) 17...b6 18. ♗g7 ♗f5 – Now, the game may end in an amusing repetition of moves: 19. ♗f1 ♖g3 20. ♗e1 ♖g2=

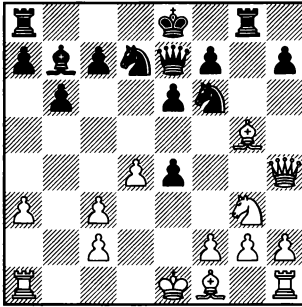
9...b6

Or 9...c5!? 10.g3 b6 11. ♗g2 ♗a6 12. ♗d2 ♗c7 13.0–0 0–0–0 with mutual chances; 13...cxd4?! 14.cxd4 ♖c8 15.c3 ♗xe2 16. ♗xe2 ♗xc3 and here, in the game Hennis – Gdanski, Cappelle la Grande 1994, White could have obtained an acceptable compensation for the pawn with 17. ♗e3, or 17. ♗f4!?

10. ♗g5

After 10. ♖g3 ♗b7 11. ♗e2 ♗e7 12. 0–0 0–0–0 13.f3 ♖g6 14. ♗h4 exf3 15. ♗xf3 ♗xf3 16. ♖xf3 ♖dg8 17.a4 h5 18. ♗a3 ♗d8 19. ♖f2 ♖g4 20. ♗h3 a5 21. ♗e1 h4, Black's initiative is becoming stronger, Ker – Berkes, Mallorca 2004.

10...♖e7 11.♗h4 ♘b7 12.♔g3



12...h6!

That is an important fine point.

13.♙d2 ♖g4

Black has a good alternative here – 13...0-0-0 14.♙e2 e3 15.fxe3 ♙xg2 16.♖g1 ♙e4!?

14.♗xh6

In case of 14.♗h3 ♖g6 15.♙e2 0-0-0, the queen on h3 seems misplaced.

14...0-0-0 15.c4 ♔g8 16.♗e3 f5 17.♔h5 e5 18.dxe5 ♔xe5 19.0-0-0

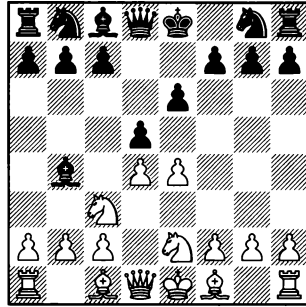
Following 19.♔f4 ♖xd2 20.♔xd2 ♗d6+ 21.♔c3 ♔c6 22.♙e2 ♖xf4 23.g3 ♖g4 24.♙xg4 fxg4, Black's prospects are preferable in this position with a non-standard material ratio.

19...♔d3!+- His attack is decisive, Romero Holmes – Mata-moros Franco, Elgoibar 1997.

g) 4.♔ge2

(diagram)

This is a very popular move. White wishes to avoid doubling



of his pawns on the c-file. He must sacrifice a pawn to do that, though...

4...dxe4

Black has a serious alternative at this moment. For example: 4...♔c6 5.a3 ♙a5!? 6.b4 (6.♗d3!?, 6.e5!?) 6...♙b6 7.♔a4 dxe4 8.♙b2 ♔f6 9.c4 a6 10.g3 0-0 11.♙g2 ♙a7 12.0-0 ♗e7 13.♖a2 ♖d8 14.♗a1 b5 and his chances in this complicated position are not worse, Gu-seinov – Bauer, Heraklio 2007.

5.a3 ♙xc3+

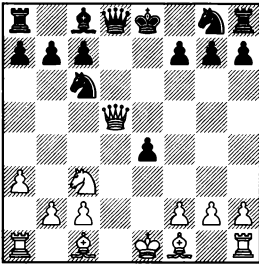
He plays 5...♙e7 sometimes too, but the move in the text is sharper.

6.♔xc3 ♔c6 7.♙b5

It is weaker for White to play 7.♙e3?! ♔f6 8.♗d2 ♙d7 9.0-0-0 ♔e7 10.♙g5 ♙c6 11.♙c4 ♗d6 12.♖he1 0-0-0 13.g3 ♔ed5 14.♔xe4 ♔xe4 15.♖xe4 ♔b6 16.d5 ♔xc4 17.♖xc4 ♗xd5 and Black has a solid extra pawn, Van Mil – Korchnoi, Netherlands 1993.

White's most reasonable alternative to the main line is – 7.d5. He is trying to regain his pawn and then he can obtain an advan-

tage thanks to his bishop-pair. 7...
exd5 8. ♗xd5



8... ♘ge7!? This is an original move. 9. ♗xd8+ ♘xd8 10. ♘xe4 ♗f5 11. ♗d3 ♘e6. No doubt, if White manages to consolidate his position, he would have the advantage. Black should play energetically and he equalizes. 12. ♗d2 0-0-0 13. 0-0-0 ♘d4 14. ♗b1 (14. ♗e3 ♘ec6 15. f3 ♗g6 16. ♗he1 ♘e5 17. ♗f1 ♘dxf3!? 18. gxf3 ♘xf3 19. ♗h3+ ♗b8 20. ♖c5 ♘xe1 21. ♗xe1 ♗he8 with counter chances for him, Ragger – Seifert, Austria 2004.) 14... ♘ec6 15. f4 ♗he8 16. ♗de1 ♗e7 17. ♗e3 ♗de8 18. ♗he1 ♗g6= Zelcic – Psakhis, Batumi 1999.

It looks more natural for Black to play 8... ♗e6 9. ♗xe4 ♘f6 10. ♗h4 ♗f5 (It will be a mistake for him to continue with the ambitious move 10... ♗d4, because of 11. ♗g5! ♗e5+ 12. ♗e2 ♘d4 13. 0-0-0! ♘xe2+ 14. ♘xe2 ♗xe2 15. ♗xf6 gxf6 16. ♗he1 ♗a6 17. ♗xf6 ♗g8 and here White could have won immediately with 18. ♗e3!, because after 18... ♗f8, he has the simple resource 19. ♗d8+-). Meanwhile, what he played in the game

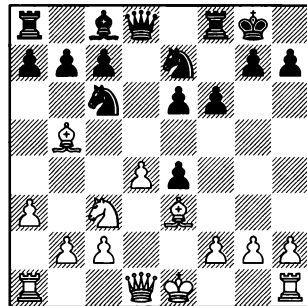
proved to be sufficient for a victory as well: 18. ♗d3 ♗f8 19. ♗ed1 ♗e8 20. ♗d8 ♗d7 21. ♗xa6 bxa6 22. ♗1xd7 ♗xg2 23. ♗xe8+ ♗xe8 24. ♗xc7± Zaitsev – Kosyrev, Moscow 1996.) 11. ♗b5 0-0 12. ♗xc6 (12.0-0 ♘e4!? 13. ♗xd8 ♗axd8 14. ♗xc6 bxc6 15. ♘xe4 ♗xe4 and maybe only Michael Adams is capable of pressing this advantage home.) 12... bxc6 13.0-0 ♗xc2 (Black could equalize with 13... ♘d5!? 14. ♗c4 ♗d6, since White's bishop can hardly be developed to a good square, so that balances the defects of Black's pawn-structure.) 14. ♗g5 h6 15. ♗xf6 ♗xf6 16. ♗xf6 gxf6 17. ♗fc1 ♗d3 18. ♘a4 ♗fe8 19. ♘c5 and the endgame was better for White, Bojkov – Gesing, Chambery 2007.

7... ♘ge7 8. ♗g5

Black can counter 8. ♘xe4 with 8... ♗d5!

White plays sometimes simply 8. ♗e3, after which the game may transpose to the line: 8...0-0 9. ♗d2 f5 10.0-0-0 etc., which we analyze below.

8... f6 9. ♗e3 0-0



10. ♖d2

White should better not try to regain his pawn: 10. ♖xe4? f5 11. ♖g5 f4 12. ♔d2 ♖d5! 13. ♔xc6 ♖xc6 14. ♖f3 ♖xd4 15. ♖xd4 ♖xd4 16. ♔c3 ♖e4+ 17. ♖e2 ♖xe2+ 18. ♖xe2 e5 and he has no compensation, Thorhallsson – Moskalenko, Copenhagen 1995.

10...f5

In case Black tries to play more reliably, then 10...a6!? is the right move. 11. ♔xc6 ♖xc6 12. 0-0-0 b6 13. ♖xe4 ♔b7 14. f3 ♖d7 15. ♖he1 ♖ad8 16. ♖e2 ♖fe8 17. ♖b1 ♖f7 18. ♔d2 ♖e7 19. ♔ed1 ♔ed7= Ben-tivegna – Drasko, Cutro 2005.

11. 0-0-0

Black can counter the hasty move 11.f3 with 11...f4!? 12. ♔xf4 ♖xd4 13. fxe4 e5 14. ♔e3 ♖xd2+ 15. ♔xd2 ♖d4 16. ♔d3 ♔g4= Solo-dovnichenko – Feygin, Germany 2003.

11...a6

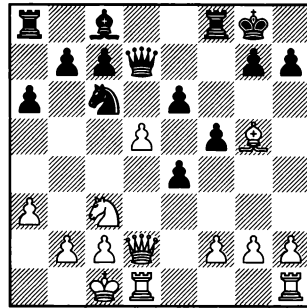
He can even support his extra pawn with 11...♖d5, but that would be hardly satisfactory. 12. ♖xd5 exd5 13. ♔xc6 bxc6 14. ♔g5 ♖e8 15. ♔f4 ♖f7 16. h4 ♔e6 17. ♖a5 ♖b8 18. ♖h3 ♖b5 19. ♖d2 with an excellent compensation for White, Hec-tor – Furhoff, Stockholm 1993.

12. ♔xc6 ♖xc6 13. ♔g5!?

Black has considerably less problems after 13.f3 exf3 14. gxf3 e5 15. d5 ♖e7 16. ♔g5 (He can react to 16. ♔c5 with 16...♖f7 17. ♖e3 b6! 18. d6 bxc5 19. dxe7 ♖xe7 20. ♖d5 ♖d6 21. ♖he1 ♔b7 and he ends up with extra material.)

16...♖d6 (16...♖e8?! 17. ♖he1 ♖g6 18. h4 ♖h8 19. ♖h2 ♖f7 20. ♔f4± Jovanovic – Medic, Sibenik 2007.) 17. ♖hg1 ♔d7 18. h4 ♖h8 19. h5 h6 and Black is even slightly bet-ter.

13...♖d7 14. d5



14...♖e5!?

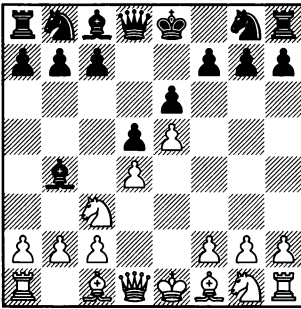
This is an aggressive move.

It would be fair to say that White maintains some initiative in case Black plays calmer lines. 14...exd5 15. ♖xd5 ♖f7 16. ♔f4 ♔e6 (It was maybe worth for him to sac-rifice the exchange with 16...♔d8 17. ♔xc7 ♔e6 18. ♔xd8 ♔xd8 19. c4 ♔xd5 20. cxd5 ♖e5, but not eve-rybody would be happy to go for a sacrifice of this type.) 17. ♖xc7 ♖ac8 18. ♖xe6 ♖xe6 19. ♖d7 ♖a2 20. ♖d5+ ♖xd5 21. ♔xd5 ♖e7 22. ♔d7 ♖g6 23. ♔e3 ♖f7 24. ♖hd1 and White still has some pressure in this endgame.

15. f3 ♖c4

15...exf3? 16. ♖he1↑

16. ♖e2 b5 17. fxe4 ♔b7 18. exf5 exd5±, with a double-edged play.



This is White's most ambitious move. Now, Black's knight will have no access to the f6-square and White will have excellent chances of developing his king-side initiative. Meanwhile, chess is not such a straightforward game, since even the most principled decisions have drawbacks.

4...c5

After this move both sides must play very precisely.

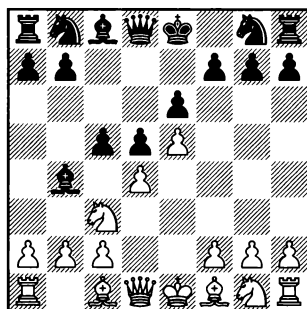
The developments are entirely different after 4...b6. Black is trying to encircle White's centre and his strategy is based on the exchange of the light-squared bishops. I advise you to play here 4...c5, but I will supply you with some basic theoretical variations

after 4...b6. 5.a3 ♗xc3+ (It looks a bit exotic, but still sensible for Black to try 5...♗f8 6.♘f3 (Or 6.♗b5+ c6 7.♗a4 ♗a6 8.♘ce2 ♗b5 9.♗b3 c5 10.c3 ♘c6 11.♘f3 ♘ge7 12.♗c2 ♘f5 13.♗xf5 exf5 14.0-0 cxd4 15.cxd4 ♗e7 16.♗e1 ♗xe2 17.♗xe2 h6 18.♗d3 ♗d7 19.♗c2 ♗c8 and the game is equal, Dinesh Kumar – Hamdouchi, Sort 2007.) 6...♘e7 7.h4 (Or 7.b4 c6 8.a4 ♘f5 9.♗b1 ♘d7 10.♗d3 a5 11.bxa5 ♗xa5 12.♗e2 g6 13.h4 h6 14.h5 g5 15.g4 ♘e7 16.♗a3 ♗b7 17.0-0 ♘c8 18.♗xf8 ♗xf8 19.♘d2 c5 20.♘b3 ♗a8 21.♘xc5 bxc5 22.♗xb7 and White prevailed later, Najer – Hort, Fuegen 2006.) 7...h6 8.h5 a5 9.♗b5+ c6 10.♗a4 ♘d7 11.♘e2 b5 12.♗b3 c5 13.c3 ♘c6 14.0-0 ♗c7 15.♗e1 c4 16.♗c2 ♘b6 17.♗f4 ♗e7 18.♗g3 ♗b8 and Black has his typical "French" counter chances, Kasparov – Ivanchuk, Horgen 1995.) 6.bxc3 ♘e7 (I think it is riskier for Black to play 6...♗d7 7.♗g4 f5 8.♗g3 ♗a6 9.♗xa6 ♘xa6 10.♘e2 ♘b8?! 11.♘f4 ♘c6? 12.♘xe6 ♗xe6 13.♗xg7 0-0-0 14.♗xh8 ♗g6 15.0-0 ♗d7 16.♗e1 ♘b7 17.♗f4 ♗g7 18.g3 ♘ge7 19.

♟f8+- Zhigalko – Mihajlovskij, Minsk 2006; 11. c4!? dxc4 12.d5 exd5 13.♘d4 ♘a6 14.0-0 0-0-0 15.e6 ♟d6 16.♙f4 ♟c5 17.♟xg7 ♘e7 18.c3 and White had an excellent compensation in the game Grischuk – Dizdar, Mainz 2006; 10...♙f7 11.a4!? c5 12.♟d3 ♟c8 13.♙a3 ♘e7 14.h4 ♘c6 15.♟f3 ♟f8 16.h5 ♘g8 17.0-0 ♟f7 18.h6 g6 19.c4 dxc4 20.d5 ♘xe5 21.♟c3 ♘g4 22.♙b2 e5 23.♙a1 ♘b4 24.f3 ♘f6 25.♟xc4 ♟a6 26.♟xa6 ♘xa6 27.♙xe5 and White realized his edge in this endgame, Vitiugov – Ulibin, Biel 2007; 11.h4 c5 12. h5 ♟c8 13.h6 g6 14.♟h4 cxd4 15.cxd4 ♟xc2 16.♟h3 ♟b5 17.♘c3 ♟c4 18.♙d2 ♘b8 19.♟b1 ♘c6 20. ♘b5 ♟a2 21.♘d6+ ♙f8 22.♟d1 ♟b2 23.♟d3 ♟xd2 24.♟3xd2 ♟xa3 25.♟c2 1-0 Motylev – Ulibin, Moscow 2010. White won a very good game. He sacrificed a pawn for initiative and increased gradually his pressure, while Black's kingside remained static.) 7.♟g4 ♘g6 8.h4 h5 9.♟g3 (White plays sometimes the original line: 9.♟f3 ♟d7 10.a4 c5 11.♙b5 ♘c6 12.a5 ♟c7 13.♘e2 ♙d7 14.axb6 ♟xb6 15.♙xc6 ♟xc6 16.♙a3 cxd4 17.♘xd4 ♘xe5 18.♟g3 ♟c4 19.♙d2 ♟c7 with a very complicated position, Kurnosov – Ponkratov, Moscow 2009; 9.♟d1 ♟d7 10.♘e2 ♟c6 11.♙d2 ♙a6 12.♘g3 ♙xf1 13.♙xf1 ♘d7 14. ♘xh5 0-0-0 15.♟f3 f6 16.exf6 gxf6 17.g3 e5 18.♘g7 ♟dg8 19.♘f5 ♟e6 20.♘e3 ♘e7 21.c4 e4 22.♟e2 f5 with a good compensation for

Black, Karjakin – Grischuk, Odesa 2008.) 9...♙a6 10.♙xa6 ♘xa6 11.♙g5 ♟d7 12.a4 c5 13.♟d3 ♘b8 14.♘e2 ♘c6 15.0-0 ♟c8 16.♘g3 ♘ce7 17.♟d1 cxd4 18.cxd4 ♟c4 19.a5 b5 20.♙a3 ♟c6 21.♘xh5 ♘f5 with mutual chances, Kosintseva – Riazantsev, Biel 2009.

I think that the move 4...♟d7 only reduces Black's possibilities, because he will have to play b7-b6 anyway. Is d7 the right square for his queen remains unclear. 5.a3 and in both cases the game transposes to 4...b6 5...♙xc3+ (5...♙f8 6.♘f3 b6) 6.bxc3



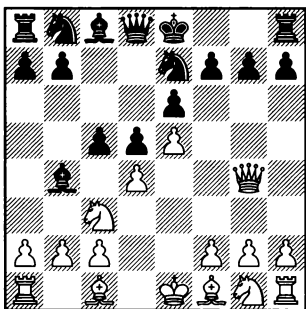
In this chapter, we will analyze White's attempts to avoid the main line (5.a3): **a) 5.♟g4, b) 5.dxc5 and c) 5.♙d2.**

The move 5.♘f3 does not lead to original positions, because after 5...♘e7 the game transposes either to 6.dxc5, or to 6.a3 ♙xc3+ 7.bxc3.

a) 5.♟g4?!

This move cannot be recommended to White.

5... ♖e7



6.a3

About 6.dxc5, see 5.dxc5.

After 6. ♙d2? cxd4 7. ♖xd4 ♖bc6, Black is better.

6. ♖f3?! cxd4 7. ♖xd4 ♖c7!? 8. ♙b5+ ♙d7 9. 0-0 ♙xc3 10. ♙xd7+ ♖xd7 11. ♖b5 ♖b6 12. ♖xc3 0-0 13. ♖e1 ♖f8 14. a4 ♖c4 15. ♖h3 ♖ac8 16. ♖b5 ♖f5 17. g4 ♖xc2 18. ♖f1 ♖d4 19. ♙e3 ♖e2+ 20. ♖h1 d4 0-1 Friedel – Mamedyarov, Chalkidiki 2003.

6. ♖xg7 ♖g8 7. ♖h6 (It would be a disaster for White to opt for 7. ♖xh7? cxd4 8.a3 ♖a5 9. ♖f3 dxc3 10. b3 ♖bc6 11. ♖g5 ♖xe5 12. f4 ♖xg5 13. fxg5 ♙d6-- Manik – Jusupow, Warsaw 2005.) 7...cxd4 8.a3 dxc3 (The game is rather unclear after 8... ♖a5 9.axb4 ♖xa1 10. ♖b5 and the position is double-edged.) 9.axb4 ♖c7 10. ♖f3 cxb2 11. ♙xb2 ♖xc2 12. ♙d4 ♖bc6 13. ♙b5 ♖e4+ 14. ♖f1 ♖f5 15. ♙xc6+ bxc6 16. ♖d2 a5 17. b5 c5 18. ♙e3 ♙d7 19. ♖xa5 ♖b1+ 20. ♖e1 ♖xa5 21. ♖xa5 ♖xb5-- Pogosian – Vysochin, St Petersburg 2009.

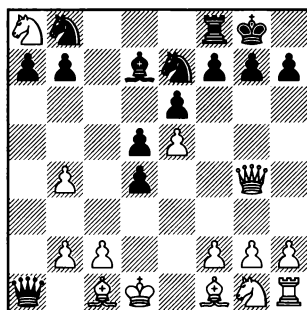
6... ♖a5! 7.axb4

7. ♙d2 cxd4 8. axb4 ♖xa1+ 9. ♖d1 0-0 10. ♖f3 f5 11. exf6 ♖xf6 12. ♙g5 e5 13. ♖h5 g6 14. ♖h4 ♖xf3 15. ♙xe7 ♖f4 16. ♖g3 ♖c6 with an absolutely hopeless position for White, Grischuk – Shipov, chessassistantclub.com 2004.

7... ♖xa1 8. ♖d1 cxd4 9. ♖b5 0-0 10. ♖c7

It is absolutely senseless for White to continue with 10. ♖f3 ♖bc6 11. ♙d3 ♖g6 12. ♖e1 ♖xb4 13. ♖a3 ♖xd3 14. cxd3 ♙d7 15. ♖xd4 ♖ac8-- Jansa – Korchnoi, Luhacovice 1969.

10... ♙d7 11. ♖xa8

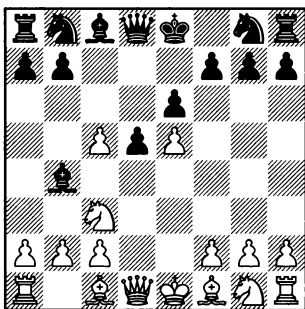


11... ♖a6!

This precise move was recommended by Korchnoi in the notes to his game. Black can also play here 11... ♖bc6 12. b5 ♖b4 13. ♖xd4, as it happened in the game Cuijpers – Jusupow, Netherlands 2009 and his simplest reaction would be 13... ♖a2 14. ♖d2 ♖xa8 with an overwhelming advantage.

12. ♖xd4 ♖c6 13. ♖c3 ♖cxb4 – White's position is hopeless.

b) 5.dxc5



This move has much more venom than it seems at first sight.

5...dxe7 6.dxf3

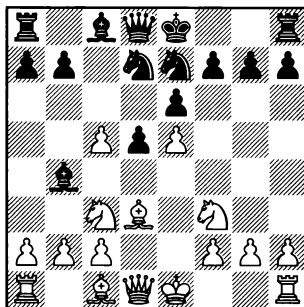
6.♖g4 dxc6 7.♗b5 (About 7.♗d2 – see 5.♗d2; 7.♖xg7 ♖g8 8.♖xh7 d4 9.a3 ♖a5 10.♗b1 dxc3 11.♗e3 ♗d7 and it is sufficient to calculate the number of developed pieces of both sides in order to evaluate the position correctly.) 7...♖a5 8.♗xc6+ bxc6 9.♗d2 dxf5 10.dge2 h5 11.♖f4 ♖xc5 12.0–0 ♗a6 13.♖fe1 ♖c4 with a superior endgame for Black, Yudasin – Lputian, Simferopol 1988.

6...d7

It is not so good for Black to play 6...dxc6 7.♗d3 dxc6 (He should better avoid 7...d4 8.a3 ♗a5 9.b4 dxc6 10.axb4 ♗xb4 11.0–0 ♗xc3 12.♗b1 dxc6 13.dg5 dxe5 14.♖h5 g6 15.♖h6 dxc6 16.♗b5+ ♗d7 17.♗xd7+ ♖xd7 18.♖g7 0–0 19.dxf7 ♖c7 20.♗f4 ♖xf4 21.d6+ ♗xd6 22.♖xb7+– Zelicic – Barsov, France 2003.) 8.0–0 (8.♗xg6!? fxc6 9.♗e3 0–0 10.0–0 b6 11.cxb6 axb6 12.dxc5 ♗e7 13.dxc6 dxc5

14.♗e1 ♗d7 15.b3 g5 16.h3± Yurtaev – Dolmatov, Frunze 1983) 8... dxc6 9.dxc5 dxc5 10.♗f4 ♗xc3 (10...d7 11.dxc5! exd5 12.♗d6 and White has an overwhelming initiative.) 11.bxc3 dxc3 12.cxd3 0–0 13.♗e1 ♖a5 14.♗d6 ♖e8 15.d4 ♗d8 16.♖e3± Damaso – Bartel, Evora 2006.

7.♗d3

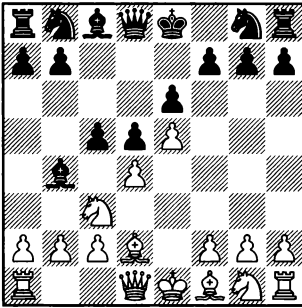


7...dxc5

It is less sensible for Black to choose 7...♖c7 8.0–0 ♗xc3 9.bxc3 dxc5 and he cannot capture on e5 anyway, therefore he had better delay the development of his queen. 10.c4 ♗d7 11.♗a3 h6 12.♗e1 0–0 13.♗b1 b6 14.♖e2 ♖fe8 15.cxd5 dxc5 16.♗xc5 dxc3 17.♖e3 ♖xc5 18.♖xc5 bxc5 19.♗b3 d5 with an equal endgame, Zelicic – Berg, Kusadasi 2006.

8.0–0 ♗xc3 9.bxc3 ♗d7 10.♗e3 ♖c8 11.♖b1 b6 12.♖b4 dxc6 13.a4 0–0 14.a5 ♖c7 15.axb6 axb6 16.♗xg6 fxc6 17.c4 dxc4 18.♖xc4 ♗c6, and the opponents agreed to a draw, Zelicic – Drasko, Bosnjaci 2005.

c) 5. ♗d2



In case White wishes to avoid doubling of his pawns at any cost, I would recommend this move.

Now, it depends on Black what development he would prefer.

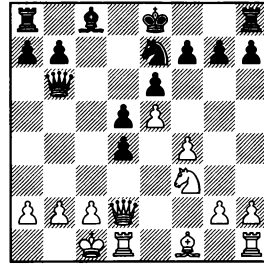
5... ♗e7

This is his most popular choice and it leads to very interesting positions in which all three results become possible.

The game is a bit quieter after 5... ♗c6 6. ♗b5 ♗xd2+ 7. ♗xd2 ♗xd4 8. ♗xd4 cxd4 9.f4 (It is weaker for White to opt for 9. ♗f3 ♗e7 10. ♗xd4 ♗c6 11. ♗e3 ♗a5+ 12.c3 d4 13. ♗xd4 ♗xe5 14. ♗xe5 ♗xe5= Frolov – S.Ivanov, Sochi 2004; 11. ♗g4 0–0 12. ♗d3 f5 13. ♗f4 ♗b6 14.0–0?! ♗xf2 15. ♗b1 ♗d7 16.c3 ♗e8 17. ♗d2 ♗b6 and he has no compensation for the sacrificed pawn, Meister – Ionov, Sochi 2004.) 9... ♗b6 10.0–0–0 ♗e7 11. ♗f3

(diagram)

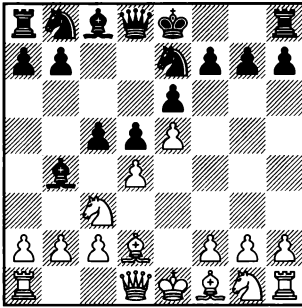
In case of 11... ♗c6, White can try Sergey Movsesian's patent: 12.h4 h5 13. ♗h3 g6 14. ♗b1



♗d7 15. ♗g5 a6 16. ♗b3 ♗a7 17.a4 ♗b8 18. ♗f3 ♗c5 19. ♗xd4 ♗xd4 20. ♗xd4 ♗xd4 21. ♗xd4 a5 22. ♗b6 ♗c6 23. b4 axb4 24. ♗dxb4 ♗d7 25. ♗b5 ♗c7 26.a5 ♗hc8 27. ♗c1 ♗d7 28. ♗xc6+ ♗xc6 29. ♗xb7+ with a winning endgame for White, Movsesian – Hochgraefe, Hamburg 1997; or 13... ♗d7 14. ♗b1 a6 15. ♗e2 g6 16. ♗h2?! 0–0–0 17. ♗b3 ♗c5 18. ♗f3 ♗a5 19. ♗d3 ♗c4 20. ♗e1 ♗e3 21. ♗c1 ♗xg2 22. ♗f2 ♗e3 23.c3 and he seized the initiative in the game Movsesian – Koutsin, Frydek Mistek 1995.

11... ♗d7 12.h4 ♗c8 13. ♗xd4 ♗c6 14.h5 ♗xd4!? 15. ♗xd4 ♗xd4 16. ♗xd4 h6 17. ♗h3. The Slovak grandmaster enjoyed a victory in that ending as well. Still, I think Black's situation is not so bad. He can make a draw in this endgame after an accurate defence, but this task is beyond the capabilities of an amateur. 17... ♗c7 18.g4 f6 19. ♗e3 fxe5 20. ♗xe5 0–0 21. ♗d3 ♗f6 22. ♗d2 ♗f8 23. ♗e3 a5 24.a4 ♗c8 25.g5 hxg5 26.fxg5 ♗ff7 27.h6 gxh6 28.gxh6 ♗g8 29. ♗g4+ ♗h8 30. ♗eg5 ♗f8 31.h7 d4+ 32. ♗e2+–

Movsesian – Guedon, Bourbon Lancy 1997.



6. ♖b5

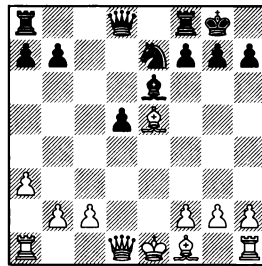
This is the most purposeful move for White.

It would be too provocative for him to play 6.f4?! ♜f5 7. ♜f3 cxd4 8. ♜b5 ♙c5 9.b4 ♙e7 (The complications are quite unclear after 9...♙b6 10.♙d3 ♙d7 11.g4 ♜e3 12.♜d6+ ♜e7 13.♙e2 ♙c7 14.♙c1 ♜c4 15.♜xc4 dxc4 16.♙xc4 ♙c6 17.♙d3 h5 18.0-0 hxg4 19.♜g5 ♜d7 20.♙xg4 ♙af8 21.♜e4 ♜d8 22.♜d6 g5 with a rather messy situation, Watson – Lputian, Belgrade 1988.) 10. ♜bxd4 ♜xd4 11. ♜xd4 ♜c6 12. ♜xc6 bxc6 13. ♙d3 ♙b6 and White should be happy if he manages to equalize, De la Villa Garcia – Arizmendi Martinez, Palma de Mallorca 2009.

It is too slow and hardly advisable for White to opt for 6. ♜f3 cxd4 7. ♜b5 ♙xd2+ (Black can try to continue in an original fashion with 7...♙c5 8.b4 a6 9.bxc5 axb5, but this will only justify White's strategy.) 8. ♙xd2 0-0 9. ♜bxd4

♜bc6 10. ♜xc6 bxc6 11. ♙d3 ♙b6 12. b3 ♙a6 13.0-0 ♙xd3 14. ♙xd3 ♜g6 and Black has no problems whatsoever, Miles – Menvielle Lacourrelle, Gran Canaria 1996.

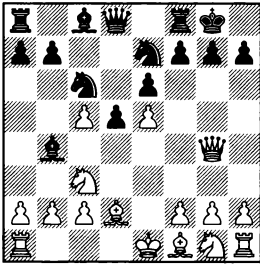
It looks interesting for White to opt for 6.a3 ♙xc3 7. ♙xc3. He has preserved his dark-squared bishop and his pawn-structure is intact. The point is that the opponent would not always allow you to play so academically in the opening. 7...♜bc6 8. ♜f3 cxd4 9. ♜xd4 (9. ♙xd4 ♜xd4 10. ♙xd4 ♜c6 11. ♙g4 0-0 12. ♙d3 f6 13. ♙h4 h6 14. exf6 ♙xf6 15. ♙xf6 gxf6 16.0-0-0 e5= Balashov – Lputian, Kiev 1986.) 9...♜xe5 10. ♜xe6 ♙xe6 11. ♙xe5 0-0



This situation could have been better for White, if we could ignore the dynamic factors, which were so important at the beginning of the game. 12. ♙d3 ♜c6 13. ♙g3 ♙f6 14. ♙b1 ♙f5 15.0-0 ♙fe8 16. ♙xf5 ♙xf5 17. ♙d2 ♙e6 18. ♙fe1 ♙ae8 19. ♙xe6 ♙xe6 20. ♙d1 d4 21.a4 (21. ♙e1 h6 22.f3 ♙xe1+ 23. ♙xe1 ♙b5 24.b3 ♙c5 25.b4 ♙c4 26. ♙g3 b5 and Black's position is preferable, Okkes – Berelovich, Netherlands

2007.) 21...h5 22.f3 ♖c5 23. ♗f2 ♖c4 24.b3 ♖c5 25.h4 ♖e7 26. ♗f1 a6 27. ♖g5 ♖xg5 28.hxg5 ♗h7 29. ♗xd4 ♗d6 30.c3 ♗g6= Hector – Rowson, York 1999.

It is sharper for White to choose 6.dxc5 ♗bc6 7. ♖g4 0–0.



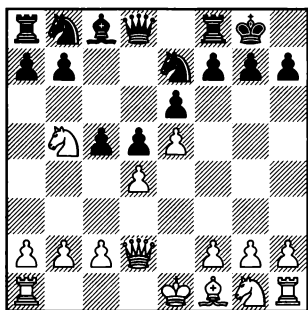
8. ♖f3 (He plays sometimes 8.0–0–0 f5 9.exf6 ♖xf6 10. ♗d3 h6 11. ♖h5 ♗d7 12. ♖f3 ♖f8 13. ♖e2 ♗e8 14. ♖h4 ♖g6 15. ♖g3 ♖xc5 16. ♗xh6? gxh6 17. ♖f4 ♗d6 18. ♖h5 ♖f8 19. ♖g4 ♖ce7 and Black won easily, Bengtsson – Renman, Linköping 1984. It looks very attractive for him to opt for 8...d4!? 9. ♖e4 ♗xd2+ 10. ♖xd2 ♖xe5 11. ♖g3 ♖g6 – 11... ♖5g6!? – 12.f4 ♖c6 13. ♗c4 ♖a5 14. ♗d3 ♖d5 15. ♗b1 f5 16. ♖g5 ♖xc5 17. ♖f3 ♖f6 18.h4 h6 19. ♖h3 ♖c6 20. ♖hd1 ♗d7 and although White won that game, the position was rather unclear, Robson – Sevillano, Saint Louis 2009. Black can also try 8... ♗xc5 9. ♖f3 ♖g6 10. ♖h5 ♗d7 11. ♗b1 ♖e8!? 12.h4 – 12. ♗d3!? – 12... ♖c8 13. ♖g5 h6 14. ♖f3 f5 15. exf6 ♖xf6 16. ♖g4 ♗xf2 17.h5 ♖f4 18.g3 e5 19. ♖h4 ♖xh5 20. ♖xd5 ♖xf3 with an overwhelming ad-

vantage for him, Movsesian – Bukal, Medulin 1997.) 8...f5 (The author played several times in this position – 8... ♖g6 9. ♗d3 – 9.0–0–0!? – 9...f5 10.exf6 ♖xf6 11.0–0 ♖f4 12. ♗xh7+ ♗xh7 13. ♖g5+ ♗g8 14. ♗xf4 ♗xc3 15.bxc3 ♖xf4 16. ♖h5 ♖f5 17. ♖e8+ ♖f8 18. ♖h5 ♖f5 19. ♖e8+ and the game ended in a draw, Savchenko – Vitiugov, Sochi 2006.) 9.exf6 (It is weaker for White to choose 9. ♖g3?! ♖g6 10. ♗d3 d4 11. ♖b5 ♗xd2+ 12. ♗xd2 a6 13. ♖d6 ♖a5+ 14. ♗d1 ♖xc5 with an excellent position for Black, Polzin – Timman, Germany 1997.) 9... ♖xf6 10.0–0–0 e5 11. ♖h5 ♖f5 (Black plays often the more popular line: 11... ♗f5 12.a3 ♗xc3 13. ♗xc3 d4 14. ♗c4+ ♗h8 15. ♖g5 ♗g6 16. ♖e2 ♖f8 17. ♗e1 ♖g8 18.h4 h6 19. ♗d3 ♗d8 20.f3± Borgo – Huebner, Baden 1999; 12... ♖a5!? 13.axb4 ♖xb4 14. ♗g5 ♖a1+ 15. ♗d2 ♖xb2 16. ♖c1 ♗xc2 17. ♖d1 ♗xd1+ 18. ♗xd1 ♖f7 19. ♗d2 ♖f5 20. ♖h4 ♖ec6 with a powerful attack.) 12. ♖h4 ♖f8. This is an interesting concept – Black makes several preparatory moves before advancing his centre. 13. ♖g3 (Or 13. ♖xd5? ♖xd5 14. ♗c4 ♗e6 15. ♖g5 ♗xd2+ 16. ♖xd2 ♖xg5 17. ♖xg5 ♖xc5 18. ♗b3 ♖e8 with an advantage for him, 13. ♗b1 ♗xc3 14. ♗xc3 ♖f4!–+; 14. bxc3 b6 15.c4 ♖xf3 16.gxf3 ♗f5 with an acceptable compensation for the exchange.) 13... ♗h8! It becomes evident that White is nearly helpless against Black's power-

ful central pawns. 14.♔g5 e4 15. ♖d4 ♖xd4 16.♞xd4. He can make a choice between two excellent possibilities: 16...♙xc3!? 17.♙xe7 ♞xe7 18.♞xc3 ♞xf2 19.♞xd5 ♙e6 with a very good game, or 16...♙xc5 17.♙xe7 ♙xe7 18.♞xd5 ♞f4 and Black's bishop-pair compensates fully the sacrificed pawn in this open position.

6...♙xd2+ 7.♞xd2 0-0

Black should not ignore the possibility to castle.



8.f4

This is an academic move.

Black has no problems after the greedy line: 8.dxc5 ♖d7 9.f4 (9.♞c3 f6 10.exf6 ♖xf6 11.♙d3 ♙d7 12.♖d4 e5 13.♖b3 ♞c7 14.f3 a5 15.a4 ♙e6 16.♙b5 ♖h8 17.♞d3 d4 18.♙c4 ♙f5 19.♞e2 ♖ed5 with an excellent position, Jurcik – Chytlek, Olomouc 2005; 10.♖f3 ♖xe5 11.♖xe5 fxe5 12.♞xe5 ♙d7. This is an ambitious approach. Black is trying to exploit maximally his lead in development. It looks like he has no problems at all. See this logical variation:

13.0-0-0 ♞a5 14.♖c7 ♖c6 15. ♞d6 ♞xa2 16.♞xd7 ♞xf2 17.♞xe6+ ♖h8 18.♙e2 ♞a1+ 19.♖d2 ♞a5+ 20.♖c1 ♞a1=) 9...♖xc5 10.♖d4 ♞b6 11.0-0-0 ♙d7. Considering tempi, it is obvious that Black has a good position. The following game illustrates the possible developments: 12.♖gf3 ♞fc8 13.♞e3 ♞c7 14.♖b1 ♞ac8 15.♞c1 a6 16.g4 ♖c6 17.h4 ♖e4 18.♞h2 ♖a5 19.♙d3 ♖c5 20.c3 ♖a4 21.♖a1 ♙b5 22. ♙b1 ♖c4 23.♞e1 ♖cxb2! and Black was better in the game Karpov – Nogueiras, Rotterdam 1989.

The fortifying move 8.c3 has an evident drawback. White's knight on b5 is isolated. 8...♖bc6 9.f4 a6 10.♖d6 f6 11.♖f3 cxd4 12.cxd4 ♖g6 13.♙d3 (13.♖xc8 fxe5 14.dxe5 ♞xc8 15.g3 ♞b6 16.♙h3 ♖h8 17.a3 ♖a5?! 18.♞d4 ♞b5 19.a4 ♞d7 20.♞b6± Timman – Agdestein, Taxco 1985; 17...♖cxe5! This is an important improvement for Black. 18.♖xe5 ♖xe5 19.fxe5 ♞c4. His attack with heavy pieces is victorious, for example: 20.♙g2 ♞f5 21.♞c1 ♞xe5+ 22.♖f1 ♞f5+ 23.♖e1 ♞f2+! 24.♞xf2 ♞xc1+ 25.♖d2 ♞xf2+ 26.♖xc1 ♞xg2 and the rook and pawn ending is winning for Black.) 13...fxe5 14.fxe5 (It is hardly any better for White to opt for 14.♙xg6 ♞xd6 15.dxe5? ♞b4! and he ends up a pawn down. 15.fxe5 ♞b4. Black can exploit the open file and his opponent's d4-pawn is weak, so the endgame is at least equal for him. 16.♙b1 a5 17.♞xb4 axb4 18.b3 ♙d7 19.♖e2

♖a3 20.♖d1 ♘a7 21.♙d3 ♖a8 22. ♘e3 ♘c6 23.♖d2 ♖xb3 24.axb3 ♖xa1, Royset – Haug, Kautokeino 1997.) 14...♖xf3! This is a typical resource for the French defence. After the exchange-sacrifice, White will lose both his d4 and e5-pawns. 15.gxf3 ♘xd4 16.♙e4 ♘xe5 17.♖xd4 ♖xd6 18.0–0 ♘c6 19.♖d2 ♙d7 and Black has an excellent compensation for the exchange.

8...♙d7!?

This is a seldom played move, but after it White has rather non-typical problems for this variation to worry about.

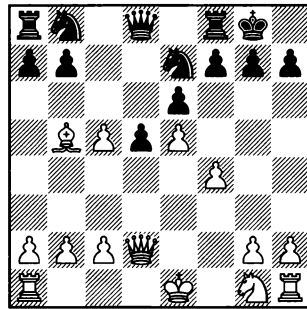
Black should better avoid 8... a6 9.♘d6 cxd4 10.♘f3 ♘bc6 11. ♙d3 f6 12.0–0 fxe5 13.fxe5 ♖xf3 14.♖xf3 ♘xe5 15.♖f4 ♘xf3+ 16. gxf3 ♘c6 17.♖f7+ ♘h8 18.♘h1 g6 19.♙xg6 ♖e7 20.♖f4+- Perelshteyn – Berg, Southampton 2003.

He cannot solve his problems after 8...♘bc6 9.♘f3 a6 10.♘d6 ♘xd4 11.♘xd4 cxd4 12.♙d3 ♖b6 13.0–0-0 ♙d7 14.g4 (white's game is much easier) 14...♘c8 15.♘xc8 ♖axc8 16.f5 ♙b5 17.♙xb5 ♖xb5 18.f6 d3 19.c3 ♖a4 20.♘b1 ♖c2+ 21.♖xc2 dxc2+ 22.♘xc2 and he has the edge in this end-game, thanks to his far-advanced kingside, Landa – Marzolo, Paris 2006.

9.dxc5

After 9.♘d6 cxd4 10.♘f3 ♘bc6, Black has a good game. For example, he can counter 11.b4 with the interesting resource – 11...♖c7 12.b5 ♘xe5! 13.fxe5 f6 14.b6 axb6 15.exf6 ♖xf6 16.♘b5 ♙xb5 17.♙xb5 e5 18.0–0 ♘f5 and his powerful central pawn-mass more than compensates the sacrificed piece.

9...♙xb5 10.♙xb5



10...a6

This is a new plan for Black in this position.

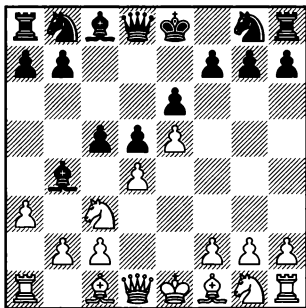
Or 10...b6!? 11.♖f2 bxc5 12. ♖xc5 ♘d7 13.♖a3 ♖b8 14.♙xd7 ♖xd7 15.♘f3 ♖fc8 16.0–0-0 a5 and he has a good game along the open files, Westermeier – Z.Medvegy, Austria 2005.

11.♙d3 ♘d7

It is obvious that if Black regains his pawn, he will have an excellent position.

12.b4 a5 13.c3 axb4 14.cxb4 b6 15.cxb6 ♖xb6 16.♘f3 ♖a3!? – White has difficulties.

Chapter 27 **1.e4 e6 2.d4 d5 3.♘c3 ♙b4 4.e5 c5**
5.a3



This is the strongest move for White and logically the main line

5...♙xc3+

He plays only rarely now 5... ♙a5!?, which has been named “The Armenian variation”, mostly because of its great exponents Rafael Vaganian and Smbat Lputian. Black’s position would have been acceptable, except for 6.b4! cxd4 (Accepting the sacrifice 6... cxb4 would be deadly for Black, because after 7.♘b5 White’s initiative is crushing.) 7.♙g4 ♘e7 8.bxa5 dxc3 9.♙xg7 ♙g8 10.♙xh7 ♘bc6 11.♘f3 ♙c7. This position was at the focus of attention at different levels, but then Andrey Volokitin demonstrated an analysis, which proved to be very

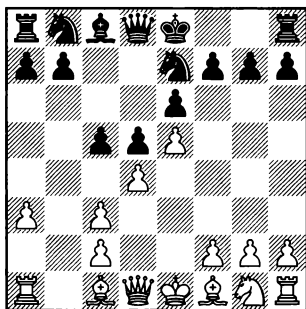
unpleasant for Black. 12.♙f4 ♙d7 13.a6! 0–0–0 (He can try here 13...b6, but that would hardly be a remedy.) 14.axb7+ (White postponed this capturing in the following game and he was almost punished for that – 14.♙d3 ♙g4 15.♙g3 ♙e4+ 16.♘d1 ♙c4 17.♙h7 ♙e4!?) with rather unclear consequences, Vallejo Pons – S.Volkov, Kallithea 2008.) 14...♘b8 15.♙d3 ♙g4 16.g3 ♘g6 17.♙xc3 ♘xf4 18.h3! ♘xh3 19.♙xh3 ♘xe5 20.♙xc7+ ♘c7 21.♘xe5 ♙e4+ 22.♘d2 ♙xe5 23.♙d3± Volokitin – Lputian, Mallorca 2004. I believe that if theory ends with this really unpleasant endgame for Black, the variation with 5...♙a5 cannot be recommended at all.

6.bxc3 ♘e7

He has popular alternatives here – 6...♙a5 7.♙d2 ♙a4 and there may arise very interesting developments, as well as 6... ♙c7 7.♙g4 f6 (7...f5 8.♙g3 cxd4 9.cxd4 ♘e7 10.♙d2 0–0 11. ♙d3 b6 12.♘e2 ♙a6 13.♘f4 ♙d7 14.h4 ♙xd3 15.♙xd3 ♘bc6 16.♙h3 ♙ac8 17.♙g3 ♙f7 18.h5 ♘d8 19.c3 ♙f8 20.♘f1 ♙c4 21.♘g1 and White has

a clear-cut plan for actions, Kasparov – Short, Novgorod 1997.)
 8. ♗b5+ ♘f8 9. ♘f3 ♗a5 10. ♖b1 a6
 11. ♗e2 ♗xc3+ 12. ♗d2 ♗xc2 13. ♖c1
 ♗e4 14. ♗g3 ♘d7 15. exf6 gxf6 16.
 ♗d6+ ♘e7 17. 0–0 ♖g8 18. ♖fe1
 ♗g6 19. ♘h4 ♗f7 20. ♗h6+ ♘e8
 21. ♗h5+– Vitiugov – Dyachkov,
 Dagomys 2008.

I will repeat – I recommend to
 Black another basic line.



Now, White has numerous moves, but in fact they can be divided into two groups – 7. ♗g4 and the rest: **a) 7. ♗d3**, **b) 7.h4**, **c) 7.a4** and **d) 7. ♘f3**. We will deal with the queen-sortie in the next chapter, while now we will analyze White’s possible positional moves. I think it will be more useful and reasonable, if we concentrate more on the typical plans, ideas and maneuvers and not so much on concrete variations (They are no so many, though...).

a) 7. ♗d3

Black has no serious problems after this quiet move.

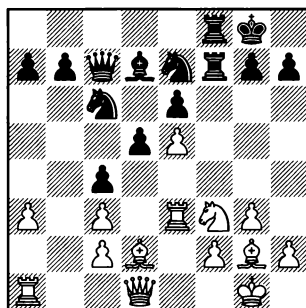
7... ♘bc6 8. ♘f3

Or 8. ♗g4 ♗a5 9. ♗d2 c4 10. ♗e2
 0–0 11. h4 f6 12. f4 ♗a4 13. ♗d1 ♗b5
 14. ♗c1 ♗a5 15. ♗d2 ♗b5 16. ♗c1
 ♗a5 17. ♗d2 and the opponents
 agreed to a draw, Short – Shulman,
 Dhaka 1999.

8... ♗a5

After 8...c4!? 9. ♗e2 0–0 10.
 0–0 f6 11. exf6 ♖xf6 12. ♘e5 ♘xe5
 13. dxe5 ♖f8 14. ♗g5 ♗e8 15. ♗xe7
 ♗xe7 16. ♗d4 ♗d7 17. f4 ♗e8 18. ♖f2
 ♗g6 19. ♗g4 ♗e4, Black obtained
 an excellent position in the game
 Ju. Polgar – Sutovsky, Natanya
 2009.

**9. ♗d2 c4 10. ♗e2 ♗d7 11.
 0–0 f6 12. ♖e1 fxe5 13. dxe5
 0–0 14. ♗f1 ♖f5 15. g3 ♖af8
 16. ♖e3 ♖5f7 17. ♗g2 ♗c7**



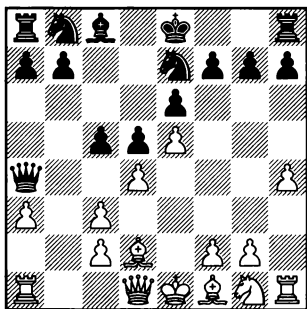
Black’s position is slightly preferable, De Firmian – Gulko,
 Malmo 2001.

b) 7.h4!?

This is an active move, connected with a pawn-sacrifice.

7... ♗a5 8. ♗d2 ♗a4

Or 8... $\text{d}bc6!$? 9. $\text{d}f3$ $\text{d}d7$ 10.h5 0-0-0 11. $\text{d}d3$ f6 12.0-0 c4 13. $\text{d}e2$ fxe5 14. $\text{d}xe5$ $\text{d}xe5$ 15.dxe5 $\text{E}df8$ 16. $\text{d}g4$ $\text{E}f7$ 17. $\text{E}e2$ $\text{c}b8$ 18. $\text{c}h2$ $\text{c}a8$ 19.f4 g6 20. $\text{d}h3$ $\text{d}f5$ 21.g4 $\text{d}e7$ 22.h6 with a complicated position, Alekseev – Grischuk, Moscow 2008.



9. $\text{d}f3$

It is hardly advisable for White to try the risky line: 9.h5 h6 (9...b6!? 10. $\text{d}f3$ $\text{d}a6$ 11. $\text{E}h4$ $\text{d}xf1$ 12. $\text{c}xf1$ $\text{d}f5$ 13. $\text{E}f4$ $\text{d}c6$ 14. $\text{c}g1$ cxd4 15.g4 $\text{d}fe7$ 16.cxd4 h6 17. $\text{d}h4$ $\text{E}c8$ 18.c3 $\text{E}xd1+$ 19. $\text{E}xd1$ $\text{d}a5$ and the endgame is excellent for Black, Sasikiran – Sutovsky, Antwerp 2009.) 10. $\text{E}h4$ $\text{d}f5$ 11. $\text{E}g4$ cxd4 12.cxd4 b6 13. $\text{d}d3$ $\text{d}a6$ 14. $\text{d}xf5$ exf5 15. $\text{E}xg7$ $\text{E}xd4$ 16. $\text{E}g3$ f4 (Here, after 16... $\text{E}e4+$!, Black could have obtained a considerable advantage.) 17. $\text{E}f3$ $\text{E}xe5+$?! (17... $\text{E}e4+$!?) 18. $\text{d}e2$ $\text{E}xh5$ 19. $\text{d}c3$. White seized the initiative and won later, Vitiugov – Lysyj, Serpukhov 2008.

The developments are entirely different after 9. $\text{E}b1$ c4 10.h5 h6

11. $\text{d}e2$ $\text{d}bc6$ 12.g4 $\text{d}d7$ 13. $\text{d}g2$ 0-0-0 14. $\text{d}e3$ f6 15.f4 f5 16.g5 g6 and the opponents agreed to a draw, Motylev – Rustemov, Tomsk 2001.

9... $\text{d}bc6$ 10.h5 cxd4

This move leads to somewhat forced developments.

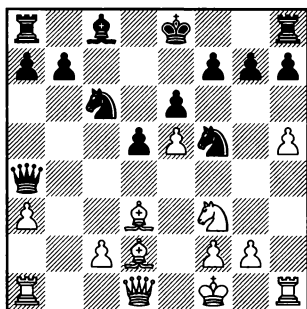
It is also possible for Black to opt for 10...h6 11. $\text{E}h4$ $\text{d}f5$ 12. $\text{E}g4$ cxd4?! (12...b6!?) 13.cxd4 b6 14.c4! and White obtains an edge.

11.cxd4 $\text{d}xd4$ 12. $\text{d}d3$ $\text{d}ec6$

Or 12...h6!? 13. $\text{d}b4$ $\text{d}dc6$ (13... $\text{d}xf3+$? 14. $\text{E}xf3$ $\text{d}c6$ 15. $\text{E}b1$ $\text{d}xb4$ 16. $\text{E}xb4$ $\text{E}a5$ 17. $\text{d}b5+$ $\text{c}f8$ 18.0-0 \pm) 14. $\text{E}h4$ $\text{d}xb4$ 15.axb4 $\text{E}c6$ 16. $\text{E}d2$ 0-0. Naturally, White has active pieces and some attacking chances for the sacrificed pawn, but Black's position is quite solid and his passed a-pawn might become very dangerous in the future.

13. $\text{c}f1$ $\text{d}f5$

After 13... $\text{d}xf3$?! 14. $\text{E}xf3$ $\text{E}d4$ 15. $\text{E}e1$ $\text{d}xe5$ 16. $\text{E}g3$ $\text{d}xd3$ 17.cxd3 0-0 18. $\text{E}h4$ $\text{E}f6$ 19. $\text{d}f4$, White develops a powerful initiative on the dark squares.

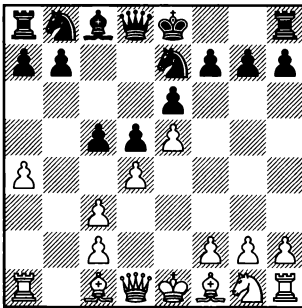


14. ♗xf5

Or 14. ♘g1?! ♖g4 15. ♗e2 f6 16. h6 fxe5 17. hxc7 ♖g8 18. ♗hx7 e4 19. ♘g5 ♗xe2 20. ♗xe2 ♖xg7 21. ♗h8+ ♘e7 and Black is better, Fedorov – Gulko, Las Vegas 1999.

14...exf5 15. h6 ♖g8 16. ♗g5 ♗e6 17. ♗h4 ♗a6+ 18. ♘gl gxh6 19. ♗f6 ♖g4 20. ♗b1 ♗xh4 21. ♗xh4 ♖c8 and the opponents agreed to a draw, Hellers – Gulko, Biel 1993.

c) 7. a4



This is an interesting move, but in order to understand its idea, you must be familiar with some fine points of this variation. White achieves some pluses with his last move, but he wastes valuable time in the opening. His a4-pawn may be strong later, but it may become a liability as well. The b4-square can be used by a black knight after an eventual exchange of pawns on d4.

7... ♗c7!?

The essence of White's idea

can be best seen in the line: 7...b6 8. ♗b5+ ♗d7 9. ♗d3. After a typical maneuver, he did not let his opponent's bishop to the a4-square, where it would have been excellently placed. 9...♗bc6 10. ♘f3 h6 11. 0–0 ♗c7 12. ♗e1 0–0 with a complicated position, Hernandez – Ivanov, Balaguer 1997.

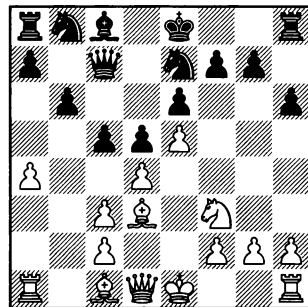
8. ♘f3 h6!?

This is a very interesting moment. Black is not in a hurry and he makes a useful prophylactic move.

9. ♗d3

After 9. h4 b6 10. ♗b5+ ♗d7 11. ♗d3 ♗bc6 12. ♗d2 c4 13. ♗e2 f6 14. ♗f4 0–0 15. ♗d2 ♘g6 16. ♗hx6 fxe5 17. ♗g5 ♗e8 18. h5 ♘f4 19. ♗g4 exd4 20. cxd4 e5 21. dxe5 ♘xe5 22. ♗xf4 ♗xf4 23. ♗e6+ ♘f7 24. h6 ♗e4 25. ♗f5 ♗d7 26. ♗xd7 ♗xd7, the endgame is preferable for Black, Konguvel – Rustemov, Biel 2004.

9...b6!



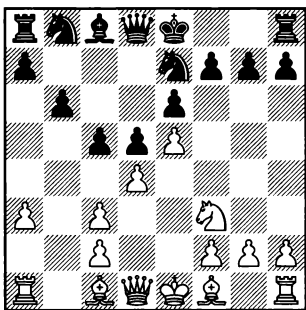
This is the point! Now, the check on b5 would be a waste of tempo for White.

10.a5

After 10.0-0 ♖a6 11.a5 ♙xd3 12.axb6 axb6 13.♞xa8 ♙xf1 14.♞xf1 0-0 15.♞d3 ♘ec6 16.♞b5 ♞c8 17.dxc5 bxc5 18.♞xc5 ♘d7 19.♞d6 ♞b7 20.♞xc8+ ♞xc8 21.♙e3 ♘a5, Black has an excellent compensation for the pawn, De Firmian – Ibragimov, New York 2005.

10...bxa5 11.0-0 c4 12.♙e2 0-0 13.♞e1 ♘bc6 14.♙f1 f6 15.♙a3 fxe5 16.♙xe7? ♞xe7 17.♘xe5 ♘xe5 18.♞xe5 ♞c7 19.g3 ♙d7 20.♙h3 ♞f6 21.♞c1 a4 22.♞a3 ♞b8 with a great advantage for Black, Topalov – Bareev, Wijk aan Zee 2004.

d) 7.♘f3 b6



Black's idea is more than obvious – he wishes to exchange the light-squared bishops.

8.♙b5+

We know already this maneuver.

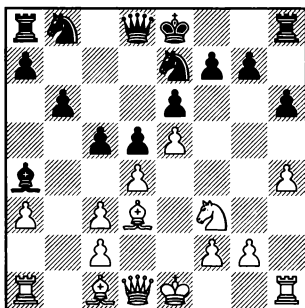
It is not so principled for White to follow with 8.a4 ♙a6 9.♙xa6 (Black has nothing to worry about after 9.♙b5+ ♙xb5 10.axb5

♞d7 11.♞b1 a6 12.dxc5 bxc5 13.♙a3 axb5 14.♙xc5 0-0 15.♞d3 ♞c8 16.♙xe7 ♞xe7 17.0-0 ♘d7 18.♞xb5 ♘c5 19.♞e3 ♘e4 20.♞b3 ♞c7 with a good game for him, Varavin – Bareev, Elista 1996.) 9...♘xa6 10.0-0 ♘b8 11.dxc5 bxc5 12.c4 0-0 13.cxd5 ♘xd5 14.♞d3 h6 15.c4 ♘e7 16.♞e4 ♘d7 17.♞b1 ♞a5 18.♙d1 ♙d8 19.♞c2 ♘xe5! 20.♘xe5 ♞c3 21.♞e2 ♞xe5 and Black won that game later, A.Sokolov – Jussupow, Riga 1986. I have to mention that Artur Jussupow is one of the greatest specialists in this line and I plan to illustrate most of the fine points and intricacies of this variation analyzing his very games.

8...♙d7 9.♙d3 ♙a4

This is an important moment. Black's bishop will exert pressure against White's c2-pawn from this square and secondly, White's bishop is prevented from occupying the a3-f8 diagonal.

10.h4 h6

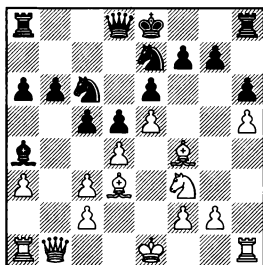


11.h5

The next game is very instruc-

3. ♖c3 ♗b4 4.e5 c5 5.a3 ♗xc3+ 6.bxc3 ♖e7 7. ♖f3

tive for the possible developments in this variation. 11. ♗f4 ♖bc6 12.h5 a6. Black has decided to trade the light-squared bishops after all, but in this rather original fashion. 13. ♗b1.

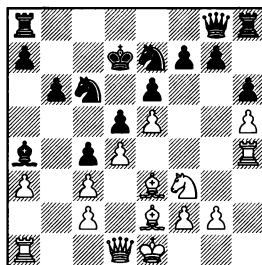


This is a purposeful reaction. White leaves his rook on a1 in order to protect his a3-pawn, in case the a-file is opened. 13... ♗c7 14.0-0 ♖a5 15. ♗a2 ♗b8 16. ♗e1 ♖d7. Black's play in this part of the game is not so impressive and the methodical value of this encounter is much rather in White's manner of playing. 17. ♗b2 c4. Black closes the centre in order to avoid the worst. Now, the readers should pay attention to how Inarkiev plays. His maneuvers are very impressive indeed! 18. ♗e2 ♖ac6 19. ♗c1 b5?! Black closes his bishop deliberately. It was maybe worth for him to do what he did, but at least without this last move... 20. ♖h2! a5 21. ♗a2 ♗d8 22. ♗g4 ♗g8. This is another maneuver worth noticing. 23. ♖f1 ♖c7 24. ♖e3 ♖b7 25. ♗h3 ♖c8 26. ♗g3 ♖b6. White's play until this moment was excellent.

This is how his pieces should be deployed in this pawn-structure – the knight on e3, the light-squared bishop eyeing the e6-square. He had to make one more important move and Black's position would have been very difficult... 27.f4?! (It was much stronger for him to play 27. ♖h2!, protecting the bishop on g3 and his opponent would have been in great trouble.) 27... f5! Black exploits the fact that the bishop on g3 is hanging and facilitates his defence a bit. 28. ♗d1 ♖e7 29. ♗f1?! (It was again worth for White to play 29. ♖h2 with the same idea – to protect the bishop.) 29...g5 30.hxg6 ♖xg6 31. ♗xf5?! White has already parted with his positional advantage and now he enters complications (It is essential that he cannot play 31. ♗h5, because of 31... ♖xe5!). 31...exf5 32. ♖xf5 ♖a6 33. ♗f3 h5 34. ♖e3 h4 35. ♗h2 h3 and Black prevailed in the time-trouble scramble, Inarkiev – Vitiugov, Moscow 2008.

11...c4

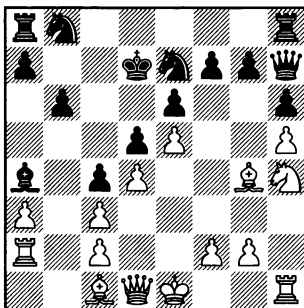
Jussupow tried another set-up in his match against A.Sokolov: 11... ♖bc6 12. ♗h4 c4 13. ♗e2 ♖d7 14. ♗e3 ♗g8



Black's queen is quite functional on the g8-square. It lets the rook on a8 closer to the actions, prepares the attack against the c2-square from h7 and of course will support the advance of the f and g-pawns in the future. 15. ♖d2 ♗h7 16. ♙c1 ♖c7 17. ♗f4 ♗af8 18. ♖h4 ♖d8. This is another multifunctional maneuver – Black's knight is not attacking anything from the c6-square, so it provides additional defence of the key "French" pawn on e6. 19. ♔g4 ♖b7 20. ♗f3 ♔e8 21. ♗h3 g5. This move seems to contradict some rigid positional rules, but that is exactly how Black can activate his pieces a bit. 22. hxg6 fxg6 23. ♖f3 g5 24. ♖h2 ♗g7 25. ♗e2 ♔g6 and he had an excellent position in the game A.Sokolov – Jussupow, Riga 1986.

12. ♔e2 ♖d7 13. ♖h4 ♗g8
14. ♔g4 ♗h7 15. ♗a2

It is difficult to tell where this rook belongs to – the a2, or the c1-square.



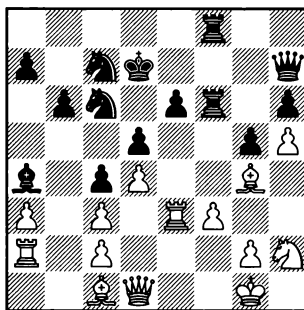
15... ♖a6!?

We have already dealt with all the previous maneuvers. It is evident that the knight will ensure additional protection of the e6-pawn, but already from another square. It can be activated later, for example to b5.

16. ♗h3 ♖c7 17. ♖f1 ♗af8
18. ♖g1 g5

Nothing new under the sun. Black's set-up has withstood the test of time.

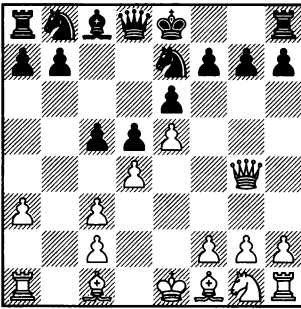
19. ♖f3 ♖c6 20. ♖h2 f5 21. exf6 ♗xf6 22. ♗e3 ♗hf8 23. f3



23... ♗f7 with a very good position for Black, Ki.Georgiev – Jussupow, Las Palmas 1993. It is obvious that the situation is so complicated that an exhausting analysis is practically impossible. It would be essential for you to understand the main ideas, which are typical for this quite original and non-standard pawn-structure.

Chapter 28

1.e4 e6 2.d4 d5 3.♘c3 ♙b4 4.e5 c5
5.a3 ♙xc3+ 6.bxc3 ♘e7 7.♚g4



This is White's most aggressive move. Black has immediately concrete problems with the protection of his g7-pawn.

7...cxd4!?

He solves them in a radical fashion! Offence is the best defence.

I think I need to clarify for you the character of the arising positions. They are totally irrational. In principle, maybe only the Botvinnik variation of the Semi-Slav defence can be compared with them. Black sacrifices his kingside with the idea to obtain a lead in development and to keep his opponent's king stranded in the centre for long. His compensation is temporary and it is pre-

dominantly of a dynamic type. He should be reluctant to enter an endgame, because his opponent's passed pawns and in particular the h-pawn, supported perfectly by the rook in its initial square, can become very dangerous. White's king however, may remain endangered to the end of the game, because even if Black's first attacking wave fails, there may follow another one.

You cannot say anything definite about how easy the play will be for both sides. In fact, the position will be difficult for White, due to the necessity to defend early in the game, as well as for Black, since he risks a lot. The concrete theory of this variation is tremendously complex and these non-balanced positions are a problem for analysis even for the powerful contemporary computers. Therefore, despite the fact that everything seems forced, there remains plenty of scope for creative endeavour. It seems to me that after you have read all that, it would be sensible for me to describe for you Black's basic plans, ideas and re-

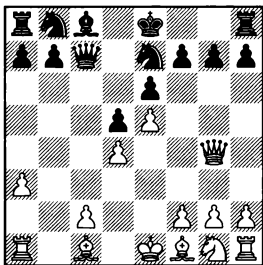
sources in this variation.

First of all, it is not so precise for him to begin with 7...♞c7, because then White has the additional possibility 8.♔d3!? cxd4 9.♗e2 dxc3 10.♞xg7 ♠g8 11.♞xh7 ♞xe5 12.♔f4 ♞f6 13.♞h6 ♗g6 14.♔g5 ♠h8 15.♔xf6 ♠xh6 16.♔xc3 with an advantage in the endgame, Carlsen – Sanchez Alarcos Galian, Madrid 2008.

There arise entirely different positions after 7...0–0, but that might be the subject of another book.

8. ♞xg7

It is not so good for White to play 8.cxd4?! ♞c7



and then:

it would be too artificial for him to opt for 9.♠a2 ♗f5 10. ♗f3 ♗c6 11.♗d1 h5 12. ♞g5 ♔d7 13. ♞f4 f6 14.exf6 ♞xf4 15.♔xf4 gxf6 16.c3 ♠c8 17.♔d3 ♗a5 18. a4 ♠g8 19.♠e1 ♗f7 20.♔xf5 exf5 21.♔d6 ♠ce8 22.♠xe8 ♔xe8 23. ♗e1 ♗c4 24.♔f4 ♠xg2 25.♔g3 f4 26.♔xf4 ♔d7 and Black is better, So – Li Shilong, Manila 2008.

It looks too provocative for White to choose 9.♗d1 h5 (Black

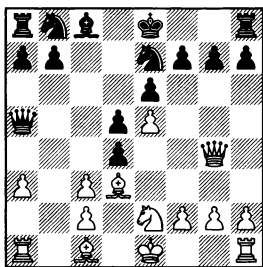
plays sometimes 9...0–0 10.♔d3 f5 11.exf6 ♠xf6 12.♞h5 h6 13.g4 e5 14.g5 hxg5 15.h4 e4 16.hxg5 ♠g6 – 16...♠xf2! – 17.♔b5 ♗bc6 18.♗e2 ♞b6 19.a4 ♗f7 20.♔a3? – 20.♔e3!± – 20...♗xd4 21.♠b1 ♔d7 22.a5 ♔xb5 23.♠xb5 ♞xb5 24.♗xd4 ♞a4–+ Shirov – Zhukova, Gibraltar 2006; it is also interesting to try the move 14...g6!? impeding White's attack.) 10. ♞f4 (Or 10. ♞xg7 ♠g8 11. ♞h6 ♞c3 12. ♠b1 ♞xd4+ 13. ♔d2 ♞xe5, White's king is vulnerable and he is a pawn down.) 10...b6 11. ♔b5+. This is a new version of an old story. This annoying check is haunting Black in the entire Winawer variation. 11...♔d7 (11...♗bc6!? 12. ♗f3 a5 13. ♠b1 ♔a6 14. ♔xa6 ♠xa6 15. ♠e1 a4 16. h3 ♠a8 17. ♔d2 ♠c8 18. ♞e3 ♗a5 19. ♞d3 ♗c4 with an advantage for Black, Savchenko – Shulman, Khanty-Mansiysk 2009.) 12. ♔d3 ♗g6 13. ♞e3 ♗c6 14. ♗h3 ♗ce7 15. ♗g5 ♗h4 16. ♞h3 ♗hf5 17. ♔b2 f6 18. ♗f3 0–0–0 19. ♠e1 g5, White's situation is catastrophic, Savchenko – Kamsky, Baku 2009.

9.♔d2 ♞xc2 10.♠c1 (10. ♞xg7 ♠g8 11. ♞h6 ♗bc6 12. ♗e2 ♔d7 13. ♔c3 ♗f5 14. ♞d2 ♞a4 15.g3 f6? 16.exf6 e5 17.f7+ ♗xf7 18.♔g2 ♗cxd4 19.0–0 ♗xe2+ 20. ♞xe2 d4 21.♔d2± Kokarev – Andreev, Vladimir 2008; 12...♗xd4!? 13. ♗xd4 ♞b2 14. ♔b5+ ♔d7 15.0–0 ♞xd4 16.♔xd7+ ♗xd7 17. ♠fel ♞g4 18.g3 ♗f5 19. ♞f4 ♞xf4 20.♔xf4 ♗d4–+ Srinivasan – Roller, To-

5.a3 ♖xc3+ 6.bxc3 ♜e7 7.♖g4 cxd4 8.♗xg7 ♖g8 9.♗xh7 ♗c7

ronto 2003) 10...♗e4+ 11.♗xe4 dxe4. Black has entered an endgame. He will have to part with the extra pawn soon, but his position remains very good anyway. 12.♜e2 0-0 13.g4 ♙d7 14.♙g2 ♙c6 15.♙e3 ♜d7 16.♜c3 f5 17.exf6 ♜xf6 18.g5 ♜fd5 19.♙xe4 ♜xc3 20.♙xc6 ♜xc6 21.♙xc3 ♙ad8. I failed to win this position, but still Black must be quite eager to enter it again, Kobalia – Vitiugov, Tomsk 2006.

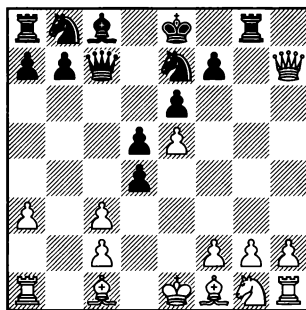
White can also try the clever move-order 8.♙d3 ♗a5 9.♜e2



9...0-0 (It is obviously too dangerous for Black to choose 9... ♜g6 10.♙d2 dxc3 11.♜xc3 ♗c7 12.f4 a6 13.h4 h5 14.♗g3 ♜c6 15.0-0 ♜ce7 16.♜e2 ♜f5 17.♙xf5 exf5 18.♜d4 ♗c5 19.♙e3 ♗e7 20.♙f2 ♙e6 21.♙ab1 b5 22.a4 with a rather unpleasant position for him, Al Modiahki – Grischuk, Sochi 2008.) 10.♙g5 ♜g6 11.f4 ♜d7 12.♙xg6 (It would be tremendously risky for White to continue with 12.h4?! f5 13.♗g3 ♖f7 14.h5 ♜gf8 15.♗h4 ♜c5 16.♙e7 dxc3 17.♖h3 ♙d7 18.♜d4 ♖c8 and he obtains no compensation for the several missing pawns, Short – Shulman,

Ohrid 2001.) 12...fxg6 13.♗xe6+ ♖f7 14.♗e8+ ♖f8 15.♗e6+ ♖f7 16.0-0 ♜b6 17.♗e8+ ♖f8 18.♗e7 dxc3 19.♙f6 ♖f7 20.♗e8+ ♖f8 21.♗e7 ♖f7 and the opponents did not avoid the triple repetition of the position, Svidler – Grischuk, Nalchik 2009.

8...♙g8 9.♗xh7 ♗c7

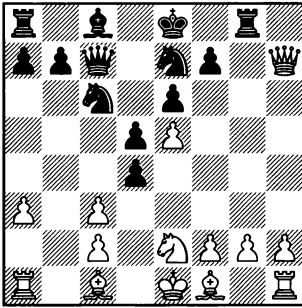


10.♜e2

The following line is long out of fashion: 10. ♜d1 dxc3 11.♜f3 ♜bc6 12.♜g5 ♗xe5!? (There were theoretical discussions in the past, concerning 12...♜xe5 13.f4 ♖xg5 14.fxg5.) 13.♗xf7+ ♜d7 14.♙f4 ♗d4+ 15.♜e1 e5 16.♙e3 ♗g4 17.♙e2 ♗f5 18.g4 ♗xc2 19.♜h7 ♜c7 20.♜f6 ♖d8 21.♙f3 d4+ Busquets – Ivanov, Irvine 1997. It is not so good for Black to play 10... ♜bc6 11.♜f3 and here 11...♜xe5 (11...dxc3!?) presents White with a clear road to seizing the initiative: 12.♙f4 ♗xc3 13.♜xe5 ♗xa1+ 14.♙c1 ♖f8 (Black should better avoid 14...d3 15.♗xf7+ ♜d8 16.♗f6 – 16.♗f4!? – 16...dxc2+ 17.♜d2 ♗d4+ 18.♙d3 ♗c5 19.♜e2 ♙d7

20.♔e3 and White's game is much easier, Stein – Beliavsky, London 1985.) 15.♙d3 ♘d7 16.♖e2 ♘c6 17.♘xf7 ♗xf7 18.♗g8+ ♖f8 19.♙g6+ ♖e7 20.♗g7+ ♖d6 21.♙f4+ ♗xf4 22.♗xa1 ♖af8 23.f3± Matulovic – Camilleri, Halle 1967.

10...♘bc6

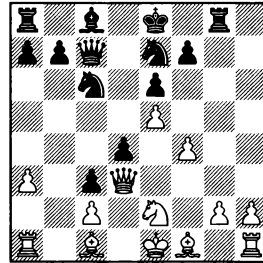


11.f4

White won easily the following game after 11.♙f4, but that was due to the overwhelming difference in the class of playing and not so much to the strength of White's move. 11...dxc3 12.♗d3 ♗g4 (12...♙d7!? 13.♗xc3 0-0-0 14.♘d4 ♘xd4 15.♗xd4 ♘f5 16.♗d2 ♙c6 17.♖b1 d4 with an excellent game for Black, Lehmann – Martinovic, Sibenik 2007. Black can enter an endgame if he so wishes – 12...♘xe5 13.♗xc3 ♗xc3+ 14.♘xc3 f6 with mutual chances.) 13.♗f3 ♖h4 14.g3 ♖h8 15.♗xc3 ♘g6 16.♘d4 ♘xf4 17.♘b5 ♗b6 18.gxf4 ♙d7 19.a4 d4 20.♗a3 ♗a5+ 21.♖d1 0-0-0 22.♘d6+ ♖b8 23.♖b1+- Tal – Grefe, San Francisco 1991.

11...♙d7

He can also try another approach – 11...dxc3 12.♗d3 (White's queen will have to return to his camp anyway.) 12...d4. Now, he is forced to enter a forced play.

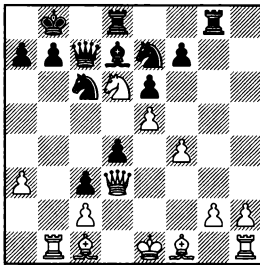


It would be difficult to believe that White will obtain an advantage, while Black powerful pawn-tandem d4-c3 is present on the board.

There appeared an interesting idea by a young Spanish grandmaster: 13.h4 ♙d7 (I think, I can recommend to Black the move 13...b6!? with the idea to save at least several tempi. In the game he developed at first his bishop to d7 and then he transferred it to b7, for example: 14.h5 ♙b7 15.h6 0-0-0 16.h7 ♖h8 17.♖b1 ♖b8 with a complicated game, or 14.♘xd4 ♘xd4 15.♗xd4 ♘f5 16.♙b5+ ♙d7 17.♗xd7+ ♗xd7 18.♙xd7+ ♖xd7 19.♖f2 ♗g4 20. ♔e3 ♖ag8 21.♖ag1 ♘xh4 22.g3 ♘f5 with a better endgame for Black, Bologan – Kamsky, Reggio Emilia 2010.) 14.h5 0-0-0 15.h6 ♖b8 16.h7 ♖h8 17.♖b1 ♙c8 18.g4 (In addition, White succeeds in deploying his bishop on g2.) 18...b6 19.♙g2 ♙b7 20.♖f2

♘a5 21.♗h3 ♖xg2 22.♗xg2 ♘ec6 23.a4 ♗e7 24.♗e4 with an advantage for him, Salgado Lopez – Alekseev, Novi Sad 2009.

White maneuvers sometimes his knight all the way up to the d6-square: 13.♘g3 ♗d7 14.♘e4 (It is not so consistent for him to play 14.♗e2 0–0–0 15.0–0 ♗b6 16.♘e4 ♘d5 17.♗b5? ♗xb5 18.♖xb5 ♘c7 19.♗b1 a6 20.♗d3 b5 21.a4 ♘cb4 and he is in trouble, Khachiyan – Shulman, Saint Louis 2009; 17.♘d6+ ♘b8 18.♘xf7 ♗df8 19.♘d6 ♘ce7 20.♖f3 ♖c6 21.a4 ♘b4 22.a5 ♗c5 with an excellent game for Black, Karjakin – Kamsky, Nalchik 2009.) 14... 0–0–0 15.♘d6+ ♘b8 16.♗b1

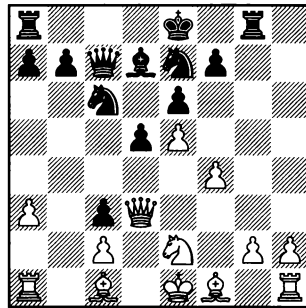


16...b6!? This idea of this move will become clear a bit later. (The main line in this position is considered to be: 16...♗c8 17.♘xf7 ♗df8 18.♘d6 ♘g6 19.♗e4 ♘h4 20.g3 ♘f5 21.♗g2 ♘a8 22.♘xf5 exf5 23.♗d3, but Black’s compensation for the pawn is insufficient, Neelotpal – Sengupta, Mumbai 2003.) 17.♘xf7 ♗df8 18.♘d6 ♘f5 19.♘xf5 ♗xf5. Now, if White plays 20.g3, Black has the resource 20...

♘xe5!? 21.fxe5 ♖c6! 22.♗g1 ♗e4 23.♗xe4 ♗xe5 24.♗e2 ♗xe2+ 25.♗xe2 e5 with a very sharp position.

13.♘xd4 ♘xd4 14.♗xd4 ♗d7 15.♗g1 (About the main line – 15.♗b1 – see variation c.) 15...♘f5 16.♗f2 ♗c6 17.♗d3 ♗d5 18.♗e3 (In principle, Black should not be afraid of 18.♖xf5 exf5 19.♗e3 0–0–0 20.♗d1 ♗c4 21.♖xa7 ♖c6 22.♗d4 ♗a2 23.♗e2 ♗xa3 24.♗xd8+ ♗xd8–+ Spitz – Debray, Evry 2005.) 18...♘xe3 19.♗xe3 ♗xg2 20.♗xg2 ♗xg2 21.♗e4 ♗xh2 22.0–0–0 ♖c6! (22...♗d8 23.♘b1 ♗a4 24.♗xd8+ ♘xd8 25.♗xa7 ♗d7 26.♗a5+ ♘e8 27.♗xc3 ♗xf4 28.♖xb7± Robson – Shankland, Milwaukee 2009) 23.♘b1 ♗xe4 24.♗xe4 ♗f2=

12.♗d3 dxc3



This is in fact the key-position of the entire variation. Now, White is faced with an important choice: a) 13.♗g1, b) 13.♗xc3, c) 13.♗b1, or d) 13.♘c3.

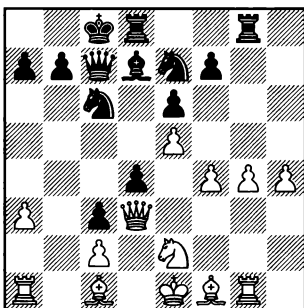
Meanwhile, it is far from clear what can be considered as best for him at the moment.

a) 13.♠g1

This move has become popular just recently.

13...0-0-0 14.g4 d4 15.h4

It seems to me that it is illogical for White to advance his h-pawn after it has been deprived of the support of the rook behind it. Alexey Shirov however, is so good in this type of positions that we should better trust his choice.



15...♗e8

It may be interesting for Black to play 15...♝b6!? with the idea to prevent the activation of White's rook on a1 to a more active position, different from the b1-square.

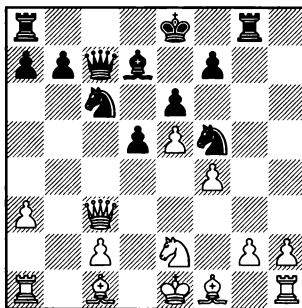
16.h5 f6 17.exf6 ♖d5 18.♗h3 ♜b8 19.g5 ♗xh5 20.♗xe6 ♗xe2 21.♜xe2 ♗ge8 22.f5 ♝e5+ (Black could have won here with the surprising line: 22...♝h2+ 23.♜f1 ♖e3+ 24.♗xe3 ♝h3+-) **23.♜f3 ♝h2 24.♝f1 ♖e3 25.♗xe3 dxe3 26.♗d1 e2 27.♝xe2 ♖e5+ 28.♜e3 ♝h3+ 29.♜f4 ♖c6 30.♝g4 ♝h2+ 31.♝g3+-** and White's king is quite comfort-

able behind its pawn-fence, Shirov – Shulman, Khanty-Mansiysk 2007.

b) 13.♝xc3

This move leads to very complicated positions.

13...♖f5



14.♗b1

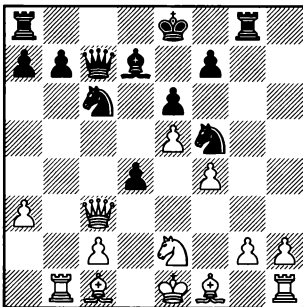
Or 14.♗g1 ♝b6! It is because of this powerful maneuver that White usually begins with 14.♗b1 (Black did not solve the problems in the opening after 14...♗c8 15.♗b1 d4 16.♝d3 ♖ce7 17.g4 ♝xc2 18.♝xc2 ♗xc2 19.♗d2 ♖h4 20.♖xd4± Karjakin – Harikrishna, Bilbao 2007.) 15.g4?! (I am afraid to recommend to you 15.♝b2 ♝c5 16.c3, but the computer programmes like that very much.) 15...♖fd4 16.♗g3 ♗c8 17.♝d3 ♖b4 18.axb4 ♖xc2+ 19.♜d2 ♖xa1 20.♖d4 ♗a4 21.♜e2 ♗xc1. White resigned. That was a very impressive blitzkrieg! A.Vlasov – Ponkratov, Samara 2004.

White has at his disposal a paradoxical exchanging maneu-

ver: 14.♚g3 ♚xg3 (14...0-0-0!?) 15.♚xf5 exf5 16.h4 d4 17.♞d3 f6 18.exf6 ♞d6 and Black has compensation.) 15.hxg3 ♞c8 16.♞b1 (16.a4 ♞b6 17.a5 ♞d4 18.♚d2 ♚b4 19.♞xd4 ♚xc2+ 20.♚f2 ♚xd4 21.♞a2 a6 22.g4 ♚b5 23.g5 with approximate equality, Frolov – Baklanova, St Petersburg 1994; 16...a5!?) 16...♚e7!?) 17.♞xc7 ♞xc7 18.♚d2 ♚a4 19.♚d3 ♚f5 and Black must be able to hold this endgame.

White sacrifices a pawn sometimes in order to simplify the position a bit. Naturally, he does not obtain any advantage doing that. 14.g4 ♞xg4 15.♚h3 ♞h4!?) 16.♚xf5 exf5 17.♚e3 0-0-0 18.0-0-0 with a double-edged game. 14.g3 d4 15.♞d3 0-0-0 16.♚g2 ♚ce7 17.0-0 ♚c6 18.♚xc6 ♞xc6 19.♚d2 ♚b8 20.♞f2 ♚d5? Black has some compensation for the pawn, but he continues sacrificing needlessly (20...♞b6!?) ; 20...♞d7!?). 21.♚xd4 ♞b6 22.c3 ♚xc3 23.♚xc3 ♚xd4 24.♞e3± Fogarasi – DeGraeve, Arnhem 1989.

14...d4



15.♞d3

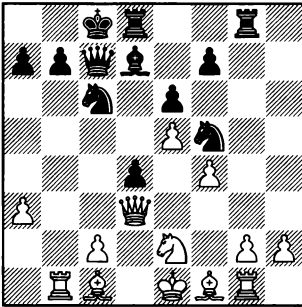
White will only help his opponent if he chooses 15.♞c5 b6 16.♞c4 ♞c8!?) (16...♞b7 17.♞g1 ♞d8 18.♞d3 ♚ce7 19.g4 ♚h4 20.♚xd4 ♚c6 21.♞g3 ♞xg4 22.♞xg4 ♞xd4 23.♞h3 ♚hf5 24.♚d3+– Brkic – Sengupta, Belfort 2005) 17.♚d2 ♞b7 18.♞d3 ♚ce7 with a good compensation for Black.

15.♞c4 ♞a5+ (He failed to prove any compensation after 15...0-0-0 16.♚d2 ♚ce7 17.♞xc7+ ♚xc7 18.♞g1 ♚c6 19.♞b3 ♞h8 20.g4 ♚e3 21.♚xe3 dxe3 22.h3 ♞d2 23.♞g3 ♚d5 24.c4 ♞a2 25.♞b1 ♚b6 26.♚c3 ♞xa3 27.♞xe3 ♞a5 28.♚b5+ ♚xb5 29.♞xb5± Lukulus – Tatar, playchess.com 2007.) 16. ♚d2 ♞xa3 17.♞xb7 ♚e3 18.♚xe3 dxe3 19.♞c3 (After 19.♞b3, Black can transpose effortlessly to the line with 19.♞c3 ♞a5+ 20.♞c3 ♞xc3+ 21.♚xc3.) 19...♞xc3+ 20.♚xc3 ♚d4 21.♚e4 ♚c6 22.♚d6+ ♚d8 23.♚xf7+ and the opponents agreed to draw, Adochio – Krueger, Germany 1988. We can continue the variation – 23...♚e8 24.♚d6+ ♚d8 25.c3 e2 26.cxd4 exf1♞+ 27.♞xf1 ♚xb7 28.♚xb7+ ♚e7 29.♞f2 ♞ab8 30.♚c5 ♞b1+ 31.♚e2 ♞b2+ 32.♚f3 ♞xf2+ 33.♚xf2 a5 with an approximately equal endgame. White's extra material is balanced by Black's outside passed pawn.

15...0-0-0 16.♞g1

(diagram)

16...♚a5

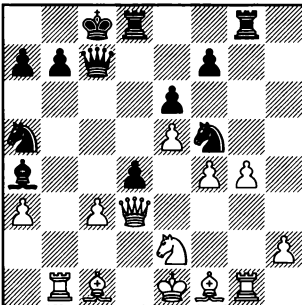


I think this is the best move for Black, but he plays sometimes 16...f6, or 16...e8.

17.g4

17.♞b4 a6 18.g4 ♘h4 (18... ♘e3 19.♙e3 ♙b5 20.♞d2 dxe3 21.♞xe3 ♞xc2 22.♘d4 ♞xd4 23. ♞xd4 ♘b3 24.♞d1 ♙xf1 25.♞xf1 ♞xg4 26.♞d3+- Sharma - Riedel, Bad Wiessee 2009) 19.a4 f6 20.exf6 e5 21.f7 ♞g8 22.♞g3 ♞xf7 23.♞h3 ♙c6 24.♞a3 (White should better avoid the tricky double attack after: 24.♞xh4 ♞e7!) 24... exf4 25.♙f2 ♞e8 26.♞xd4 f3 27. ♘f4 ♘g2 28.♞xf3 ♙xf3 29.♞xf3 ♞xc2+ Steflitsch - Poldauf, Chalkidiki 2002.

17...♙a4 18.c3

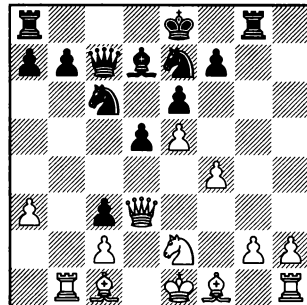


18...♙c2!

This is the fine point, Black's strategy is based on. Now, the rest of his pieces become tremendously active at the price of this bishop.

19.♞xc2 d3 20.♞a2 ♞c5 21. ♞g2 ♘e3 22.♘g3 ♞xg4 23. ♞f2 ♘ac4 24.♞b3 b6 25.♞a4 ♘c2+ 26.♞xc2 dxc2 27.♞xc2 ♘e3 28.♞e4 ♞d1+ 29.♙e2 ♘d5! 30.♙d2 ♞xb1 (Or 30...♞xd2+!? 31.♙xd2 ♞xc3+ 32.♙d1 ♙b8 33. ♞d3 ♞xd3+ 34.♙xd3 ♘c3+ 35. ♙d2 ♘xb1+ 36.♙xb1 ♞xf4 and the endgame is worse for White.) 31.♞xb1 ♞xf4 32.♞d3 ♞f2+ 33.♙d1 ♞xa3 and Black prevailed in the subsequent complicated fight, Volokitin - Ganguly, Moscow 2007. Naturally, the sharpest variation with 13.♞c3 requires an urgent repair by White "move by move", but I think that on the pages of this book, it would be sufficient for me to give you an idea about the outlines of the arising positions and schemes.

c) 13.♞b1



After this useful inclusion of White's rook, Black has an interesting possibility:

13...d4

Now, in case of 13...0-0-0 14.♜xc3, Black cannot play 14...a6, because of 15.♞xa6!

14.♜xd4

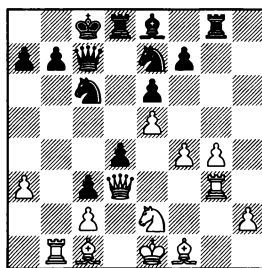
This is no doubt White's most logical reaction.

He can hardly obtain an advantage with 14.g3 0-0-0 15.♙g2 ♜a5 16.0-0 ♙c6 17.♙xc6 ♜axc6 18.♞e4 ♞a5 19.♞d1 ♞c5 20.♞d3 ♜d5 and Black dominates, Dominguez Perez – Grischuk, Almaty 2008.

White plays sometimes 14.♜g3 0-0-0 15.♙e2 (Black can counter 15.♜e4 with the powerful positional sacrifice – 15...♜xe5! 16.fxe5 16...♞xe5 17.♞e2 ♙c6 18.♜g3 ♞h8 – 18...♞d5!? – 19.♞f2 ♞g6 20.♙d3 ♞f6 21.♞e2 ♞d5 22.♜e4 ♞ff5 23.♜d1 ♜g6 24.g3 ♞fe5 25.♞g4 f5 26.♞xg6 fxe4+ Smirin – Short, Tilburg 1992; White cannot be successful if he avoids the forced lines: 16.♞xd4 ♙c6 17.♞b4 a5 18.♞xc3 ♙xe4 19.♞xc7+ ♜xc7 20.fxe5 ♙xc2 21.♞a1 ♞d1+ 22.♜f2 ♜f5 23.g3 ♙e4 24.♞g1 ♜d4 25.♙b2 ♞d2+ – Hou – Nepeina Leconte, Paris 2006.) 15...♜f5 16.♜f2 ♜ce7 17.♜e4 ♙c6 18.g4 ♜h4 19.♞d1 ♜b8 (19...♙xe4!? 20.♞xe4 ♜c6 21.a4 ♜g6 with mutual chances.) 20.♞b4 ♙xe4 21.♞xe4 ♜c6 22.♞b1 ♜a8 23.a4 a6 24.♙a3 ♞d5 25.♞h7! – Black overlooked this simple tactical strike and the game was

soon over, Polgar – Schmidt, Warsaw 2002.

White plays here too 14.♞g1 0-0-0 15.g4 (It is not so consistent for him, but still playable to opt for 15.♜xd4 ♜xd4 16.♞xd4 ♙b5 17.♞xa7 ♙xf1 18.♜xf1 ♞c6 19.♙e3 ♜f5 20.♜f2 ♞e4 21.♞c5+ ♜b8 22.♞a7+ ♜c8 23.♞a8+ Aseev – Eingorn, Odessa 1989; 18...♞c4+!? 19.♜f2 ♞e4 20.♞c5+ ♜b8 21.♞xc3 ♞c8 22.♞b4 ♞h7 23.♞c4 ♞xc4 24.♞xc4 ♞c8 25.♞d4 ♞xc2+ 26.♙d2 ♞h4+ 27.g3 ♞xh2+ 28.♞g2 ♞h1 29.♞d8+ ♜a7 30.♞a5=) 15...♙e8 (It seems to me that Black cannot equalize with 15...♜d5 16.♜xd4 ♜xd4 17.♞xd4 ♜b8 18.♞g3?! ♙c6 19.♞c5 f6 20.exf6 ♜xf6 21.♞e5 ♜xg4 and his position is acceptable, Dominguez Perez – Grischuk, Linares 2009; it is stronger for White to play 18.h4!? ♙c6 19.h5 ♜f6 20.♞xc3 ♜xg4 21.♙e2 ♜h6 22.♞xg8 ♞xg8 23.♙e3 with an extra pawn for him. I can recommend to Black the multi-purpose move – 15...♜b8!?) 16.♞g3

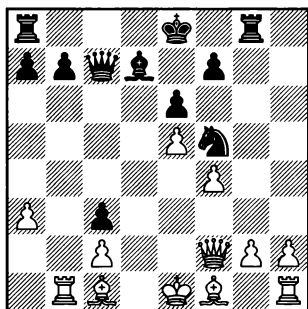


16...f6 17.exf6 ♜d5 18.♞c4 (The best for White is 18.♜xd4!

♖xf6 19.♘b5 ♜xd3 20.♘xc7 ♜xg3 21.♘xe8 ♜xe8 22.hxg3 and Black has great problems.) 18...e5 19.g5 ♙f7 20.♚d3 ♙g6 21.f5 ♙h5 22.♚e4 ♜ge8 23.♙f2 ♙f7 24.♙g2 ♘b6 25.g6 ♙d5 26.♚g4 e4 27.f7± Svidler – Berg, Heraklio 2007.

Instead of 16...f6, it looks very good to me for Black to continue with 16...♘a5!? 17.♙f2 (After 17.♙g2 ♚c5 18.♚b4 ♘ec6 19.♚b5 ♚e7 20.♚h7 ♚f8, White suddenly sacrificed a piece. His position was rather suspicious anyway. 21.♘xc3 dxc3 22.♜xc3 ♜xg4 23.♚h3 ♚g7 24.♙f2 ♘b8 25.♙e3 ♙d7 26.♚f3 ♜g8 27.♙h1 ♚h4 28.♙f1 ♜xh2 0-1 Schachinger – Martinovic, Rogaska Slatina 2009.) 17...a6 (Black is planning – ♙b5.) 18.♘xd4?! ♘ac6 19.♙e3 ♘xd4 20.♙xd4 ♘c6 21.♚b4 ♘xb4 22.axb4 ♙b5 23.♚xc3 ♜xd4! with a better game for him.

14...♘xd4 15.♚xd4 ♘f5 16.♚f2



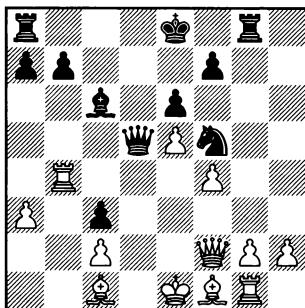
16...♚c6

Black has gained several tempi for the development of his initia-

tive at the price of a pawn.

It would be too risky for him to play a line, which used to be considered as his main – 16...♙c6 17.♚g1 0–0–0 18.♚xa7 ♘d4 19.♙d3 (Or 19.♙f2 f6 20.♙e3?! fxe5 21.♙c4 ♚h7 with an overwhelming initiative for him, Nijboer – Stellwagen, Hilversum 2007.) 19...♙xg2 and here White should continue with the brave move 20.♙f2 (It is only a draw after 20.♚a8+ ♘d7 21.♚a4+ ♘c8 22.♚a8+ ♘d7 23.♚a4= Riff – Cornette, Le Port Marly 2009.) 20...♚c6 21.♚b4 ♚f3+ 22.♙e1 ♚d5 (22...♚h5 23.♜c4+ ♙c6 24.♜xg8 ♘f3+ 25.♙f2 ♚h4+ 26.♜g3 ♚xh2+ 27.♙e3 ♘xe5 28.♚a8+ ♘c7 29.♚a5+ ♘c8 30.♜xc6+ ♘xc6 31.♚g5+-) 23.♜c4+ (It is even simpler for White to play 23.♚xd4! ♚xd4 24.♜xd4 ♜xd4 25.♙f2+-) 23...♚xc4 24.♙xc4 ♘f3+ 25.♙f2 ♘xg1 26.♙xg1 ♙c6+ 27.♙f1+- Berescu – Vargic, Djakovo 2005.

17.♚b4 ♚d5 18.♚g1 ♙c6



So, Black has deployed perfectly his pieces.

After 19.♙d3 0–0–0, White must choose between two possibilities: 20.g4 and 20.♞c4 – see 19.g4, or 19.♞c4.

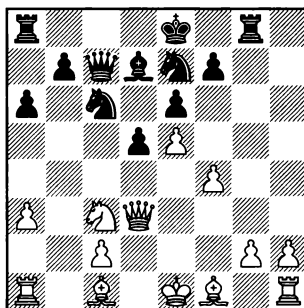
The move 19.♙e2 is sensible only in connection with 19...0–0–0 20.♙f3, but Black obtains a good position: 20...♞d7 21.♞c5 ♜h4 with counterplay.

Or 19.g4 0–0–0 20.♙d3 (20.♙e2 ♞a2!?) 20...♜d4 21.♞xd4 ♞xd4 22.♞xd4 ♞xd4 23.♙e3 ♞a4 (Black can also choose the more modest approach – 23...♞xd3!? 24.cxd3 ♞h8, recapturing the h-pawn.) 24.h4 ♙e4 (If he is playing for a win, he should better opt for: 24...♞xa3 25.♜f2 ♞a2 26.h5 ♙a4 with rather unclear consequences.) 25.♙xe4 ♞xe4 26.♜e2 ♞a4 27.♙c1 ♞d4 28.h5 b5 29.g5 a5 30.♙e3 ♞d5 31.♜f3± Mitkov – Lamoureux, Paris 1993.

19.♞c4 0–0–0. The game continued reasonably and ended in a draw and it was obvious that White should look for an improvement somewhere. 20.♙d3 ♜b8 21.♞xc3 ♞a2 22.♙e3 (22.♞xc6 bxc6 23.♞c5 ♞xd3 24.cxd3 ♞xg2=) 22...♜xe3 23.♞xe3 ♞xg2 24.♞xg2 ♙xg2 25.♜f2 ♙c6 26.♙e4 ♙xe4 27.♞xe4 ♞b1 28.♞e3 ♞c8 29.♞e2 ♞h8 30.♞g2 ♞c1 31.♞g3 ♞h1 32.♜e3 a6 33.♞d2 ♞c1 34.♜e2 ♞h1 35.♜e3 ♞c1 36.♜e2 ♞h1 and the opponents agreed to a draw, Mamedyarov – Alekseev, Ohrid 2009.

d) 13.♜xc3 a6

White was threatening to penetrate to the d6-square with his knight.



Now, we will analyze in details **d1) 14.♜e2** and **d2) 14.♞b1**.

The move 14.h4 only presents Black with some additional interesting possibilities: 14...♜f5 15.♞h3 0–0–0 (Or 15...♞c8 16.♙d2 ♜xe5!? 17.fxg5 ♙b5 18.♞f3 ♞xe5+ 19.♜d1 ♙xf1 20.♞xf1 d4 21.♜e2 d3 22.♜c3 ♞xc3 23. ♙xc3 ♞xc3 24.♞c1 ♖g4 with excellent compensation; 18.♜xb5 ♞xe5+ 19.♜f2 ♞xa1 20.♜c3 ♖g4 21.h5 ♞xa3 leading to a complicated position with a non-balanced material ratio.) 16.h5 ♞a5!?

White plays sometimes 14.♙d2, but I think this move will lead to original positions only if White starts looking for trouble; otherwise, after 14.♞b1, or 14.♜e2 there arise transpositions to other variations: 14...♜f5 (In case of 14...♜a5 15.h4 ♜f5 16.♞h3 ♜c4 17.♞a2 0–0–0 18.h5 ♙c6 19.♜e2 ♜b8 20.♜d4 ♞b6 21.♜b3 ♙b5, Black was better in the game

Morzywolek – Grzesik, Wroclaw 2005.) 15.g4 ♖xg4 16.♔h3 ♜xe5! 17.fxg4 ♜xe5+ 18.♗d1 (Or 18.♗f2 ♗d4 19.♜e2 ♜f6 20.♔xf5 ♖xd2 21.♜xd2 ♜xf5+ 22.♗e1 ♜e5= 23.♗d1?! ♖c8 with better prospects for him.) 18...♗d4 19.♜e2 ♗e4 20.♜f2 ♜e3+! (20...♖c8 21.♔xf5 exf5 22.♜f3 ♖cc4 23.♖b1 ♔a4 24.♖b4+- Frackowiak – Herrmann, Germany 2002) 21.♗c1 ♖c8 and Black's attack is decisive.

14.g3 ♜a5 15.♜e2 (After 15.♔g2 ♖c8 16.♔d2 ♜c4 his position is quite acceptable.) 15...♜f5 (Or 15...♔b5!? 16.♜d2 ♖c8 with a complicated game.) 16.♔h3 ♖c8 17.♔xf5 ♔b5 18.♜c3 ♔xe2 19.♜xc7 ♖xc7 20.♗xe2 exf5 21.♗d3 ♗d7 22.♔d2 ♜c4 23.♔c3 ♖gc8 24.h4± Spassky – Doroshkievich, Sochi 1964.

d1) 14.♜e2

White's knight retreats...

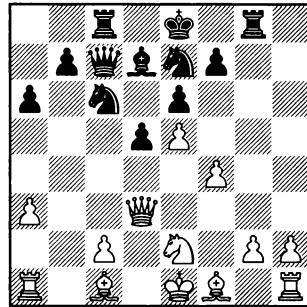
14...♖c8

The magician from Lviv tried here 14...0-0-0 15.g3 d4 16.♜c4 ♜f5 17.♔g2 ♜a5 18.♜xc7+ ♗xc7 19.♖b1 ♔c6 20.♔xc6 ♗xc6 21.♗f2 d3 22.cxd3 ♖xd3 23.♖g1 ♖h8 24.h4 ♜c4 25.a4 b6 26.♖a1 ♗d5 and he had a good compensation on the light squares in this endgame, Anand – Ivanchuk, Nice 2009.

(diagram)

15.♔d2

In case of 15.♖b1, Black must play inventively: 15...♜a7 (15...♜f5?! 16.h3 ♜c7 17.g4 ♜h4 18.♜d4 ♜c6 19.♜xc6 ♜xc6 20.♖h2



♖h8 21.♗d1 ♜c7 22.♜b3 ♜c5 23.♜b6 ♜xb6 24.♖xb6± Chandler – Timman, Linares 1988; he should also consider 15...♜a5!? with the idea to counter 16.♜d4 with 16...♜ac6.) 16.♔e3 (Or 16.♜d4 ♜b5 17.♔d2 ♜c5 18.♜xb5 ♔xb5 19.♖xb5 axb5 20.♜xb5+ ♜xb5 21.♔xb5+ ♗f8 22.g3 ♖xc2 and the endgame is winning for Black, Oliveira – Leitao, Campinas 2009; 17...♜xd4!? 18.♜xd4 ♜f5 with excellent position for him.) 16...♜b5 17.♜g3 ♜c3 18.♔b6 ♜c6 19.♖b4 ♜e4 20.♜h5 ♖g6 21.♗d1 ♜f5 22.♜f6+ ♖xf6 23.exf6 d4 24.♗e1 ♜xc2 25.♜xc2 ♖xc2 26.♖b1 ♜c3 27.♖a1 ♔c6 28.♔d3 ♖xg2 29.♖f1 ♔e4 and White resigned, Vescovi – De Toledo, Americana 1997.

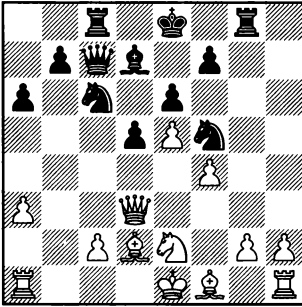
15...♜f5

(diagram)

16.♖g1

This move is a bit dangerous for Black.

16.♖b1 ♜a7 (He should follow the same idea, but with the stronger move 16...♜c6! 17.h3?! ♔a4 18.c3 d4 19.♜xd4 ♖d8 20.h4 ♖g3 21.♜e4 ♜xd4 22.



cxd4 ♖c6 23. ♞c2 ♞xd4 24. ♞b4 ♞d8 25. ♞xd4 ♞xd4 26. ♞h3 ♞xh3 27. gxh3 ♜f5 and he was better, Maslak – Averell, playchess.com 2007; 17. ♞c3 ♞xc3 18. ♖xc3 ♖b5!; 18. ♜xc3 ♖c6 19. ♜e2 d4 20. ♞g1 ♖e4 with an excellent compensation.) 17. ♜d4 ♜xd4 18. ♞xd4 ♜b5 19. ♞d3 ♞xc2 20. ♞xc2 ♞xc2 21. a4 ♜c3 22. ♞xb7 ♜xa4 23. g3 ♖c8 24. ♞b8 ♜d7 25. ♖d3 ♞b2 26. ♞b4 ♞xb4 27. ♖xb4± Khalifman – Shulman, Khanty-Mansiysk 2005.

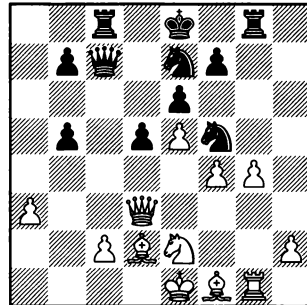
16.h3 ♜a5 (This is a calm and reasonable decision. Black should not provoke complications without urgent necessity.) 17.g4 ♖b5 18. ♖xa5 ♞xa5+ 19. ♞d2 ♞a4 20.gxf5 ♖xe2 21. ♖xe2 ♞xc2 22. ♞e3 ♞g2 23. ♖d3 d4 24. ♞f3 ♞a5+ 25. ♜f1 ♞cf2+ 26. ♞xf2 ♞xf2+ 27. ♜xf2 ♞d2+ 28. ♖e2 d3=

16... ♜ce7

16... ♞b6!? 17.c3 ♜a5 18. ♞b1 ♞c5 (18... ♖b5!? 19.g4 ♞xg1! 20. ♞xb5 ♞xg4 21. ♞xa5 ♞h4+ 22. ♜d1 ♞xh2 and Black has a good compensation for the sacrificed material thanks to the totally misplaced white rook.) 19.g4

♖b5 20. ♞xb5 axb5 21.gxf5 ♞xg1 22. ♜xg1 ♞xg1 23. ♞xb5+ ♜c6 24. ♞xb7+- Anand – Baer, Frankfurt 1994. After 17.g4, he must reply with 17... ♜fd4 18. ♞g3 ♜xe2 19. ♖xe2 ♜d4 (19... ♞h8!? 20. ♞h3 ♞xh3 21. ♞xh3 ♜d4 and it is unclear whether White has anything better than a perpetual check following 22. ♞h8+ ♜e7 23. ♞f6+.) 20. ♖d1 ♞h8 21.h3 ♖c4 with a good piece-play for Black (in the endgame after 21... ♖b5 22. ♞e3 ♜xc2+ 23. ♖xc2 ♞xe3+ 24. ♖xe3 ♞xc2 25. ♞c1 ♞xc1+ 26. ♖xc1, he might have some difficulties).

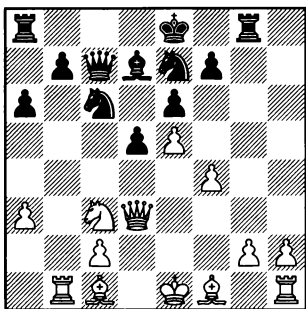
17. ♞b1 ♖b5 18. ♞xb5! axb5 19.g4



White exerts positional pressing against his opponent with energetic play.

19... ♜h4? Black reacts in a very mediocre fashion. (He had to play boldly – 19... ♞b6 20.gxf5 ♞xg1 21. ♜xg1 ♞xg1 22. ♞xb5+ ♜f8 23.f6 ♜f5 24. ♞xb7 ♞e8=) **20. ♜d4 ♞c4 21. ♜f2 ♞xd3 22. ♖xd3 ♜d7 23. ♜xb5±** Saric – Vitiugov, Warsaw 2008.

d2) 14. ♖b1



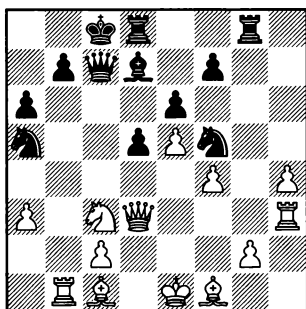
14... ♗a5

It would be a blunder for him to opt for 14... 0-0-0 15. ♜xa6!

15.h4

It is too slow for White to continue with 15. ♗d2?! ♗c4 16. ♗e2 ♗f5 17.h3 ♜c5 (It is even stronger for Black to choose here 17... ♗b5 18.g4 ♜e7!) 18.g4 ♗xa3 19. ♖b2 ♗c4 20. ♖xb7 ♗fe3 21. ♗xe3 ♗xe3 22. ♖b3 ♗xc2+ 23. ♗d2 ♖c8 24. ♜c3? ♜a7 25. ♜b2 ♗a4 26. ♖c3 ♖xc3 27. ♜xc3 ♗d7-+ and White's position is hopeless, Karjakin – Ni Hua, Moscow 2005.

15... ♗f5 16. ♖h3 0-0-0



17.h5

Black's situation is acceptable after 17. ♖b4 d4 (Or 17... ♗c4 18.h5 ♜c5?! 19. ♗e4 ♜g1 20. ♗g5 ♗b5 21. ♜e2 ♜c5 22. ♜f2 ♜c7 23.h6 ♖xg5 24.h7!± Alekseev – Vitiugov, Kallithea 2008; he had to transpose to the theoretical positions after 18... ♗c6.) 18. ♗e4 ♗b5 19. ♖xb5 (19.c4 dxc3 20. ♜c2 ♗c6 21. ♖xc3 ♗b8∞) 19... axb5 20. ♗f6 ♖h8 21.h5 ♗c4 22.g4 ♗fe3 23. ♗e2 and White has compensation for the exchange, but not more.

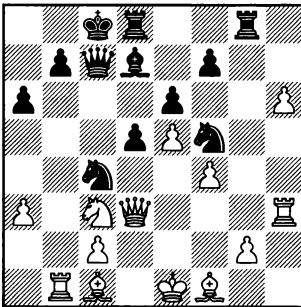
It would be premature for him to follow with 17. ♗d2 ♗c4 18. ♗e2 d4!, preventing White's knight from coming to the d4-outpost (After 18... ♗b5?! 19.a4 ♗xa4 20. ♗d4 ♗xd4 21. ♜xd4 ♗xc2 22. ♖c1 ♗a4 23.h5 ♗c6 24.h6, White obtained a good compensation, Klimov – Ivanov, St Petersburg 2005.) 19.h5 (In case of 19. ♗xd4 ♗b5 20. ♗xb5 axb5-+; 20. ♗xf5 ♖xd3 21.cxd3 ♗xd2 22. ♗d6+ ♗b8 23. ♗xd2 ♜c5, White is noticeably worse.) 19... ♗b5 with an excellent game for Black.

17... ♗c4 18.h6

White has a reasonable alternative here – 18. ♖b4 ♗c6 19. ♗e2 (Or 19.h6 ♖g6 20.h7 ♖h8 21. ♗d1 ♖g7 22.g4 ♗e7 23. ♗d3 ♗g6 24. ♗xc4 dxc4 25. ♗e3 ♖gxh7 26. ♖h5 f6! and Black has the initiative, Chigvintsev – Pokrasenko, Novosibirsk 2002.) 19... ♗b5 20.a4 (It is more logical for White to continue with 20. ♗d4! ♗xe5 21. ♜c3 ♗c4 22.h6

5.a3 ♙xc3+ 6.bxc3 ♜e7 7.♞g4 cxd4 8.♞xg7 ♜g8 9.♞xh7 ♞c7

♜xd4 23.♞xd4 f5 24.♞bb3 and he maintains the advantage; 21... ♜xd4 22.♞xc7+ ♜xc7 23.♞xd4 ♙xf1 24.♜xf1 ♜c4 with a complicated endgame; 21...♜c6!? 22. ♜xb5 axb5 23.♞xb5 ♜d6 with some initiative for Black.) 20...♞c5 21.♞c3 (21.♙a3 ♙c6 22.♞c3 ♜g4 23.h6 ♞h8 24.h7 ♜g7 25.♞b3 ♞a7 26.♙c1 ♙xa4 27.♞b4 b5 28.♞h5 a5 29.♞c3 ♜gxh7, White's position was hopeless in the game Becerra Rivero – Shulman, Tulsa 2008.) 21...d4 22.♞b3 ♜a5 23.♞xb5 ♜xb3 24.♞xc5+ ♜xc5 25.♜g1 ♜g3 26.♙a3 d3 27.♞xg3 ♜xg3 28.cxd3 ♜xa4 29.♜e2 ♜xh5 30.g4 ♞xd3 31.gxh5 ♞xa3–+ Cheparinov – Grischuk, Baku 2008.



18...♞g6

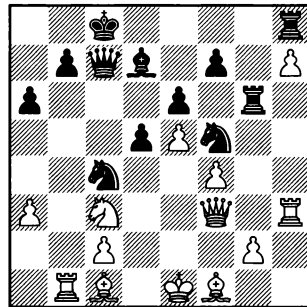
This is one of the most important resources for Black in this variation. He leaves the active rook on the g-file and blocks the passed pawn with his other rook.

19.h7 ♞h8 20.♞f3

White fared terribly after 20.♜e2 ♙b5 21.♜d4 ♜xe5 22.♞d1

♙xf1 23.♜xf1 ♞c4+ 24.♜e2 ♞e4 25.♞bb3 ♞xg2+ 26.♜e1 ♜c4–+ Karjakin – Grischuk, Moscow 2008.

It all ends in a forced draw following 20.♜e4 dxe4 21.♞xc4 ♞xc4 22.♙xc4 ♞xg2 23.♙xa6 bxa6 24.♞c3+ ♙c6 25.♞xc6+ ♜d7 26. ♞xa6 ♞xh7 27.♞a7+ ♜c8 28.♞a8+ ♜c7 29.♞a7+ ♜c8 30.♞a8+ Becerra Rivero – Bhat, ICC 2008.



20...♜ce3!

Or 20...♞g7 21.g4 ♜e7 22.♙d3 ♜g6 23.♞h1 ♜cxe5 24.fxe5 ♞xc3+ 25.♜d1 ♞d4 with an unclear position, Kulaots – Ivanov, Sweden 2006.

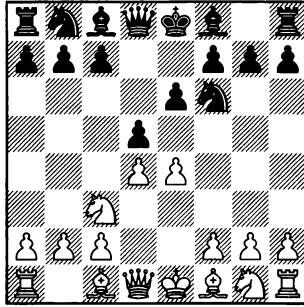
21.♙xe3 ♞xc3+ 22.♙d2 ♞xf3 23.♞xf3

After 23.gxf3 ♞g7, the endgame is superior for Black.

23...♞xh7 and he has a promising position, because in case of 24.♙xa6? he has the not so obvious tactical resource 24...bxa6 25.♞c3+ ♙c6! (but not 25... ♜d8?? 26.♞b8+ ♜e7 27.♞c7+–) 26.♞xc6+ ♜d7–+

Part 7

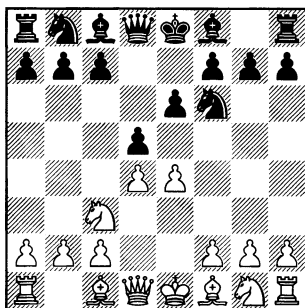
The Steinitz Variation 1.e4 e6 2.d4 d5 3.♘c3 ♘f6



The character of the fight now depends on White's further actions. I will repeat that after 4.♗g5, I recommend to Black to enter a favourable version of the Rubinstein variation with 4...dxe4 5.♘xe4 ♖bd7.

After 4.e5, there arises the Steinitz variation and the play develops usually into a complex positional fight, which was so beloved to the World champion number one! Nowadays, the tabia of the variation arises after 4...♘fd7 5.f4 c5 6.♘f3 ♘c6 7.♗e3. All the typical features of the French defence are perfectly illustrated in it – the passive bishop on c8 and the undermining pawn-moves against White's centre, starting from the banal f6 and c5, up to the more classical b4 and the super-modern – g5. White's plan is based often on the control over the d4-outpost. His knight there is very powerful as a rule. His active actions are usually connected with a pawn-offensive on the kingside (particularly in positions with opposite sides castling), or with the combination of piece-pressure and the pawn-break f4-f5. Black players are attracted to play this line, because it is reliable and they can play it actively and sharply. I believe, this is a very important variation of the French defence at present.

Chapter 29 1.e4 e6 2.d4 d5 3.♘c3 ♘f6



We will analyze now **a) 4.♗d3** and **b) 4.e5**.

a) 4.♗d3

Sometimes, White maintains the tension in the centre in this fashion.

He enters an inferior version of the Exchange variation after 4.exd5 exd5 5.♗g5 ♗e7 6.♗d3 ♘c6 7.♘ge2 ♘b4 8.♘g3 ♘e4 9.♗xe7 ♘xc3 10.♗xd8 ♘xd1 11.♗xd1 ♘xd8 12.c3 ♘xd3+ 13. ♗xd3 a5 14.♗e3 ♗a6= Short – Morozevich, Sarajevo 2000.

4...c5

This is the best move for Black. He continues to undermine his opponent's centre.

5.exd5

I think it is a bit artificial for

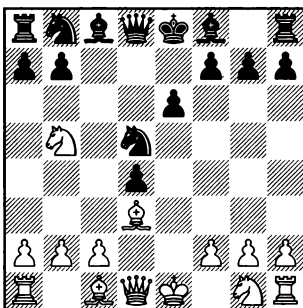
White to play 5.♘f3 cxd4 6.♘xd4 e5 (He can counter 6...♘c6 with 7.♗b5!?) 7.♘f3 d4 (It is worse for Black to choose 7...dxe4 8.♗b5+ ♗d7 9.♘xe5 ♗b4 10. ♘xd7 ♘bxd7 11.0–0 ♗xc3 12.bxc3 0–0 13.♗a3 ♗e8 14.♗b1 and White has the initiative.) 8.♘e2 ♗g4. This is a good move. Black exploits the fact that his e5-pawn is untouchable. 9.♘g3 (He obtains an excellent position following 9.c3 ♗xf3 10.gxf3 dxc3 11.♘xc3 ♘c6 12.f4 ♗d6 13.fxe5 ♗xe5 14.f4 ♗d4 15.♗f3 0–0 16.♗d2 ♘b4 17. ♗b1 ♗e8 18.♘f1 ♗c8 with a considerable advantage for Black, Montell Lorenzo – Comas Fabrego, Linares 1998.) 9... ♗b4+ (This is a typical resource. In pawn-structures of this type, which are absolutely non-typical for the French defence, it is advantageous for Black to trade the dark-squared bishops and this is how he can achieve that.) 10.♗d2 ♘c6 11.♗xb4 ♘xb4 12.0–0 0–0 13.a3 ♘xd3 14.cxd3 ♗b6 15.h3 ♗xf3 16.♗xf3 g6 and his position is preferable.

5...cxd4 6.♘b5

White plays often here 6.♗b5+ ♗d7, for example: 7.♗xd4 ♗xb5

8.♖xb5 ♖xd5 9.♗e2 ♖c6 10.♞a4 a6 (After 10...♙c5!? Black has chances of seizing the initiative.) 11.♗bd4 ♖b6 12.♗xc6 ♖xa4 13.♗xd8 ♞xd8 14.0-0 ♙e7 15.b3 ♙f6 16.♞b1 ♖c3 17.♗xc3 ♙xc3= Steinitz – Blackburne, Vienna 1873, or 7.♙xd7+ 7...♞xd7 8.♞xd4 ♖c6! 9.♞d1 exd5 10.♗f3 d4 (It would be too risky for Black to opt for 10...0-0-0?! 11.0-0 ♗e4 12.♙e3 f5 13.♗b5 a6 14.♗bd4 ♙d6 15.♗xc6 bxc6 16.♞d3 ♞b7 17.c4 d4 18.♙g5 ♞d7 19.♞ab1 h6 20.♙d2 ♙b8 21.b4 g5 22.a4 ♞g8 23.c5 and White's attack seems very dangerous, Von Bardeleben – Blackburne, Frankfurt 1887. The attentive readers might have noticed – this variation was very popular during the 19th century. It is positionally solid indeed, but the game is not so concrete and tactical and that was typical for the schemes, which were played at that time.) 11.♗e2 ♙b4+ 12.♙d2 d3 13.cxd3 ♞xd3 14.0-0 ♙xd2 and the opponents agreed to a draw, Khalikian – Stezko, Yerevan 1980.

6...♗xd5



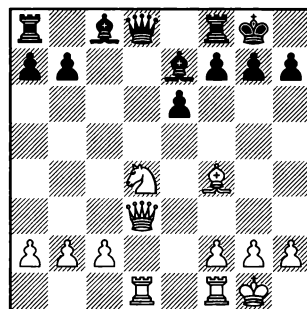
7.♗f3

7.♗xd4 e5! This sharp move enables Black to obtain an excellent position. (In case of 7...♙b4+ 8.♙d2 ♞g5 9.♙xb4 ♖xb4 10.♗gf3 ♖xd3+ 11.♞xd3 ♞a5+ 12.c3 ♖c6 13.♗xc6 bxc6 14.♞d6 ♙b7 15.0-0-0 ♞d8 16.♞xd8+ ♞xd8 17.♞xd8+ ♗xd8, he may have problems in this endgame, Ljubojevic – Padevsky, Amsterdam 1972.) 8.♞e2 (8.♗df3 ♖b4 9.♙c4 ♞xd1+ 10.♗xd1 f6 and only Black can think about an advantage.) 8...♙b4+ 9.c3 0-0 10.♗b3 ♗xc3 (10...e4!?) 11.bxc3 ♙xc3+ 12.♙d2 ♙xa1 13.♗xa1 ♖c6, Black has some initiative in a position with equal material.

7...♖c6

Or 7...♙b4+!? 8.♙d2 0-0 9.0-0 ♞b6 10.♙xb4 ♖xb4 11.♗bxd4 ♖8c6 12.♗xc6 bxc6 with approximate equality.

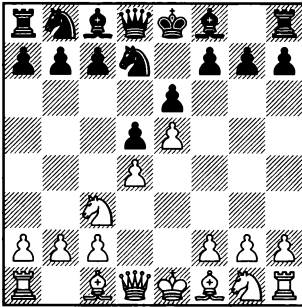
8.♗bxd4 ♖xd4 9.♗xd4 ♖b4 10.0-0 ♖xd3 11.♞xd3 ♙e7 12.♙f4 0-0 13.♞ad1



13...♞b6 (Black could have tried here 13...♙f6!? 14.♗b5 ♞xd3

15. ♗xd3 e5 with a good game.)
14. ♗b3 a5 15. ♖g3 a4 16. ♗c7
♗b5 17. ♗d4 ♖c5 18. ♗fe1 b5
19. ♗d3 b4 20. c3 ♖a6 21. ♗f4
♗f6 – His position is preferable,
 Ljubojevic – Bednarski, Bath
 1973.

b) 4.e5 ♗fd7



Naturally, White's main line here is – 5.f4 and in this chapter we will deal with **b1) 5. ♗f3** and **b2) 5. ♗ce2**.

b1) 5. ♗f3!?

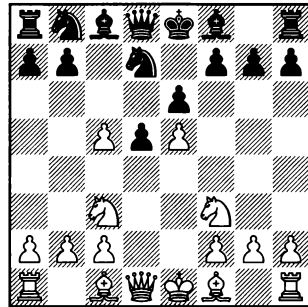
He prefers sometimes to forfeit his centre with pieces.

5...c5 6.dxc5

White chooses here once in a while even 6. ♗b5, but I believe Black can solve all his problems and in a different fashion at that. See just one of his possibilities: 6...a6 7. ♗xd7+ ♗xd7 8.0–0 ♗c6 9. ♗e1 ♖c7 10. ♗e3 cxd4 11. ♗xd4 ♗e7 12. ♗e2 0–0 13. ♖d2 ♗fc8 14. ♖ac1 b5 15. ♗g3 ♗xd4 16. ♗xd4 ♖c4 17. b3 ♖c3 18. ♖xc3 ♗xc3 with

a considerable edge for him, Buckley – Riazantsev, Cannes 1997.

White has tested also 6. ♗e3?! ♗c6 7. ♗b5 cxd4 8. ♗xd4 ♖c7 (It deserves attention for Black to opt for 8... ♗dxe5 9.f4 a6 10.fxe5 axb5 11.0–0 ♗c5 12. ♗cxb5 0–0 13. ♗h1 ♗e7 14. ♗f3 ♖a4!?) and his position is preferable.) 9.f4 ♗c5 10. ♖d2 a6 11. ♗e2 0–0. There arose a position from the Classical variation, except that White had lost a tempo. 12.0–0–0 b5 13. ♗xc6 ♖xc6 14. ♗xc5 ♗xc5 15. ♗f3 ♗b7 16.f5 b4 17.f6 gxf6 18. ♖h6 fxe5 19. ♖g5+ ♗h8 20. ♖f6+ ♗g8 21. ♖g5+ ♗h8 22. ♖f6+ ♗g8 23. ♖g5+, draw, Rausis – Bricard, Paris 1995.



6...♗c6

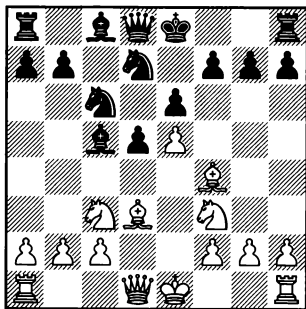
The move-order is important.

It is less precise for Black to play 6... ♗xc5, since White has the possibility to leave his bishop temporarily on f1: 7. ♗d3 ♗c6 8. ♖e2. It is highly probable that he will have to deploy his bishop on f4 anyway, but Black should better force him to do that.

7. ♗f4 ♗xc5

He can also continue with 7... ♖xc5. For example, Ian Nepomniachtchi is an avid adherent of the following line for White: 8.h4 a6 9.a3 b5 10.h5 h6 11.♞h4 ♙b7 12.♙g3 ♞b6 13.b4 ♘d7 14. ♞d2. It is hardly worth trying to obtain an advantage with such wild play, but you can confuse your opponent in that fashion for sure. Black's next move is quite indicative in that aspect – 14...♞d8 15. ♞e3 ♘b6 16. ♘d1 ♘e7 17.♘d4 ♘c4 18.♙xc4 bxc4 19.♞g4 ♞d7 20.♙h4 ♘c6 21.♘c2 ♘xd4 22.♘xd4± Nepomniachtchi – Lintchevski, Dagomys 2009.

8.♙d3



8...f6

This is the most concrete reaction by Black.

The play is much more complex after 8...a6 9.♞d2 b5 10.h4 ♞b6 11.♙f1 f6 12.exf6 ♘xf6 13.♞e1 0–0 14.h5 ♞a7 15.♞h4 ♞e7 16.h6 g6 17.a3 ♘h5 18.♞xh5 gxh5, but despite the fact that White won that game, his compensation for the exchange was insufficient,

Nepomniachtchi – Volkov, Novokuznetsk 2008.

8...0–0?? 9.♙xh7+ ♙xh7 10. ♘g5+ ♙g6 11.♞d3+ f5 12.♞g3 ♘dx5 13.♘xe6+ ♘g4 14.♘xd8 ♙xf2+ 15.♞xf2 ♘xf2 16.♘xc6 ♘xh1 17.♘e5+–

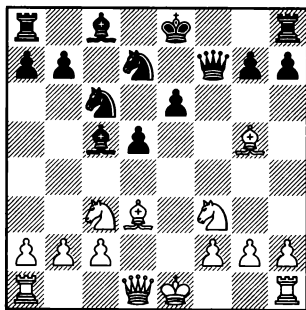
9.exf6 ♞xf6

This is an interesting resource for Black and it is not so well-analyzed as 9...♘f6.

10.♙g5

White plays sometimes 10. ♙g3 0–0 11.0–0 ♘d4 12.♘xd4 ♙xd4 13.♞e2 (13.♞d2 ♘c5 14.♞ae1 ♘xd3 15.cxd3 ♙d7 16.♘e2 ♙b6 17.♙h1 ♞ae8 18.♘g1 ♙b5 19.♙d6 ♞f7 20.f4 ♙d4 21.♘e2 ♞d8 22.♙a3 ♙b6 23. ♘c3 ♙c6= Lein – Dvoretzky, Moscow 1973.) 13...♘c5 14. ♘b5 ♙xb2 15.♞ab1 ♙d7 16.♘c7 ♞ac8 17.♙d6 ♞f7 (17...♙d4!? 18. ♙xf8 ♞xf8 19.♘b5 ♙xb5 20.♞xb5 a6 21.♞bb1 b5 and Black has an excellent compensation for the exchange.) 18.♙xc5 ♞xc7 19.♙xa7 ♞f8 with an acceptable game for him, Guseinov – Stellwagen, Baku 2002.

10...♞f7



11. ♖e2

White plays only seldom 11. ♗h4 ♗de5 (Meanwhile, it remained quite unclear what he wanted to achieve after 11...h6 12.0-0 0-0 13.♗g3 ♗f6 14.♗e5 ♗xe5 15.♗xe5 ♗d7 16.♗h1 ♗c6 17.f4 ♗e4 18.♖e2 ♗d6 19.♗b5 ♗xb5 20.♗xb5 ♗f5 21.c3 ♗e3 22.♖f3 ♗g4 23.h3 ♗xe5 24.♖xe5= in the game Tsigelnitskiy – Leniart, Moscow 2006.) 12.♗xe5 ♗xe5 13.♗g3 (13.♗b5+ ♗d7 14.♖e2 ♗g6 15.♗g3 0-0 16.0-0 ♗c6 17.♖ad1 ♖ad8 18.♗xc6 bxc6 19. ♗a4 ♗d6 20.c4 ♗f4 21.♗xf4 ♗xf4= Rogers – Gurevich, Batumi 2001) 13...0-0 14.0-0 ♗c6 15.♖d2 a6 16.a3 ♖f6 17.♗h1 ♗d4 18.f4 ♗d7 19.♖ae1 g6?! This is a rather strange move. Why is Black weakening voluntarily his king? (Or 19...♖ae8!? with mutual chances.) 20.♗d1 ♗xb2 21.♗xb2 ♖xb2 22. ♖b1 with initiative for White, Kosintseva – Xu Yuhua, Krasnoturinsk 2005.

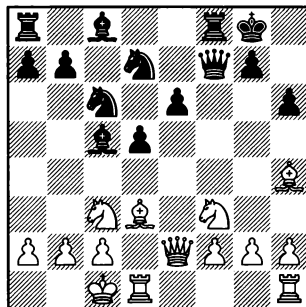
After 11.0-0-0 12.♗h4 ♖h5!? 13.♗g3 a6 14.♖e2 ♗f6 15.♖ad1 ♗d7 16.♗a4 ♗a7 17.c4 ♗b4 18.♗c3 ♗xd3 19.♖xd3 ♖ac8 20.cxd5 exd5 21.♗xd5 ♖xd5 22.♖xd5+ ♗xd5 23.♖xd5 ♗e6 24.♗d2 ♗xa2, White ended up in an inferior endgame, Sengupta – Gurevich, Gibraltar 2007.

11...0-0 12.0-0-0 h6 13. ♗h4

(diagram)

13...a6

Black has a reasonable alter-

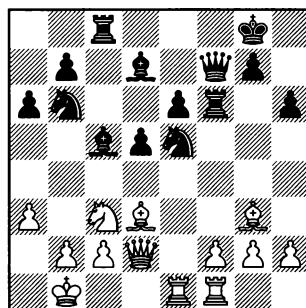


native here – 13...♗b4!?, since it would not work for White to continue with 14.♗b5 (Or 14.♖e3 ♗xc3 15.bxc3 e5 with an excellent game for Black.) 14...a6 15.♗c7 ♖f4+ 16.♗b1 ♖xc7 17.♖xe6+ ♖f7 18.♗h7+ (18.♗g6 ♗b6!) 18... ♗f8 19.♖xd5 ♗f6 20.♗xf6 gxf6 and White's attack has reached its dead end, while Black has remained with an extra piece.

14.♗g3 ♗b6 15.♗b1 ♗d7 16. ♖hf1 ♖h5 17.a3 ♖ac8 18. ♖de1 ♖f6 19.♖d2 ♖f7

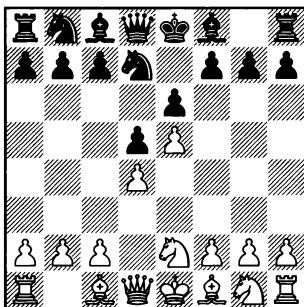
Black has deployed his pieces in a rather unusual fashion, but he still has a good and solid position.

20. ♗e5 ♗xe5



21.♙xe5. This is an overly optimistic move. 21.♙xe5!?! **21...♞xf2 22.♞d1 ♖e7 23.♞xf2 ♙xf2 24.♞f1 ♙c5 25.♞h5 ♞f8 26.♞e1 ♞g5 27.♞xg5 hxg5** and Black realized his extra pawn, Morozevich – Bareev, Sarajevo 1999.

b2) 5.♘c2

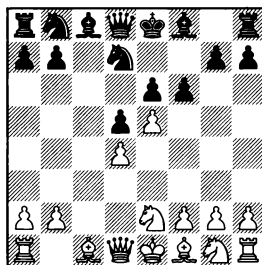


This move is practically White's only alternative to the Classical system with 5.f4. He wishes to play the Advance variation with a bit strangely developed knights. Black's knight on d7 is not perfectly placed, but White's knight on e2 is impeding the moves of all his pieces at the moment. I think this variation has lost its popularity, because White is trying for too much and only one imprecise move may bring him very close to disaster. Playing in that fashion is not to everybody's liking at all.

5...c5 6.f4

It is amazing, but if he plays 6.c3, Black has more possibilities. For example, he can opt for 6...

...cxd4!?! 7.cxd4 f6, attacking immediately White's centre.



He cannot harm his opponent with 8.exf6?! ♘xf6 9.♘f3 ♘c6 10. ♘c3 ♙d6 11.g3 (After 11.♙d3 0–0 12.0–0, there arises a favourable version for Black of the variation with 3.♘d2 ♘f6, for example: 12...♙d7 13.♙e3 ♙e8 14.♘g5 ♖e7 15.f4 h6 16.♘h3 ♙h5 17.♙e2 ♙xe2 18.♞xe2 ♞f7 19.♞ad1 ♞ae8 20.♙h1 ♘e7 and he has a very good game, Sevillano – Akobian, Los Angeles 2003.) 11...0–0 12.♙g2 ♙d7 13.0–0 ♞b6 14.a3 ♞ae8 15.b4 ♞e7 16.♘a4 ♞c7 17.♘c5 ♙e8 18. ♙b2 ♙h5 19.♞d2 b6 20.♘d3 ♘e4 21.♞e3 ♞ef7 22.♘fe5 ♙xe5 23.♘xe5 ♘xe5 24.dxe5 ♙f3 0-1 Okkes – M.Gurevich, Hoogeveen 2004.

In case of 8.♘f4, Black should try to simplify the position with 8...♙b4+ 9.♙d2 ♞b6 10.♙xb4 ♞xb4+ 11.♞d2 ♞xd2+ 12.♙xd2 ♙e7 13.exf6+ gxf6 14.♞e1 ♘b6 15.♘f3 ♙d6. This is an important fine point. (It is less precise for Black to continue with 15... ♘c6 16.♙b5 ♙d7 17.♙xc6 bxc6 18.♞e2 ♞ae8 19.♞he1 ♙f7 20.♙c1

6...♟c6

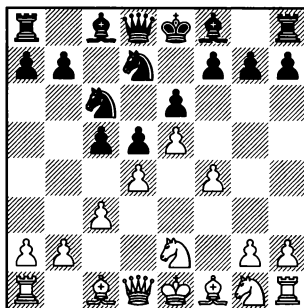
In answer to 6...b5, the most precise line for White seems to be 7.c3 b4 (If 7...♟c6, then he plays 8.a3!, impeding Black's pawn-advance b5-b4. 8...cxd4 9.♞xd4 ♞xd4 10.cxd4 b4 11.a4 ♞a5 12.♙d2 ♙e7 13.♟f3 0-0 14.♙b5 ♟b6 15.b3 ♙a6 16.♙xa6 ♞xa6 17.a5 ♞d7 18.♞e2 ♟b8 19.♟f2 ♞xe2+ 20.♟xe2 ♟c6 21.♞hc1 ♞fc8 22.♙a2 ♙c7 23.♙ac2 ♙ac8 24.a6 and White won that endgame, Anand – Shirov, Leon 2000.) 8.cxb4 cxb4 9.♟f3 ♙e7 10.f5 exf5 11.♞f4 0-0 12.♞xd5 ♟b6 13.♞xe7+ ♞xe7 14.♙d3 ♙e6 15.0-0 ♟c6 16.♙e3 ♞d5 17.♞d2 ♞xe3 18.♞xe3 ♙ad8 19.♙ac1 ♞b7 20.♙c5. He obtained some pressure indeed, but it is obvious that Black should be capable of finding an improvement, Sax – Gulko, Aruba 1992.

7.c3

After 7.♞f3, it would be quite purposeful for Black to play 7...b5, followed by the standard pawn-offensive on the queenside and the development of the bishop to a6. (Of course, the natural move 7...♙e7 is quite playable too.). 8.a3 ♞b8 9.g3 ♞b6 10.c3 a5 11.♙g2 b4 12.axb4 axb4 13.0-0 ♙a6 14.♙f2 cxd4 15.♞exd4 ♙c5 16.♟h1 0-0 17.♙e3 bxc3 18.bxc3 ♙c4 and Black's position is slightly preferable, Tiviakov – Navara, Sibenik 2009.

In this pawn-structure, Black has several typical resources and plans. He can also prepare a classic knight-sacrifice on e5 after

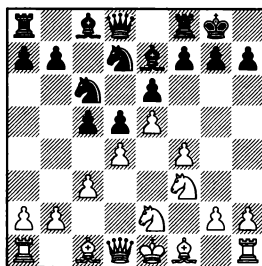
some preparation with f6, ♙e7, ♞b6 and 0-0.



7...♞b6

Meanwhile, he has tried some other ideas. For example: 7... ♞a5!? 8.♟f3 b5 9.♙d2 ♞b6 10.f5 ♙e7 11.♞f4 0-0 12.♙d3 cxd4 13.cxd4 ♞xd4 14.f6 ♞xf6 15.exf6 ♙xf6 16.♞xd4 ♙xd4 17.♞e2 ♙b7 18.♙c3 ♙xc3+ 19.bxc3 e5 and Black's pawn-mass turned out to be stronger than White's extra piece, Hamdouchi – Gurevich, Belfort 2003.

It would be very interesting for Black to opt for 7...♙e7 8.♟f3 0-0



9.g3 f6 (It is also possible for him to choose the not so forced

line: 9...cxd4 10.cxd4 ♗b6 11.♗g2 a5 12.0-0 a4 13.g4 a3 14.bxa3 ♗c4 15.♖b1 ♗xa3 16.♖b3 ♗xc1 17. ♗xc1 b6 18.♗c2 f6 19.♗f2 fxe5 20.fxe5 ♗d7 21.♗d1 ♗e7 with a good game for Black, Socko – Gurevich, Venaco (2005.) 10.♗h3 cxd4 11.♗exd4 ♗xd4 12.cxd4 ♗a5+ 13. ♗d2 ♗b6 14.♗b3 ♗xb3 15.axb3 ♗b8 16.exf6 gxf6 17.0-0 ♗c6 18.♖ae1 ♗f7 19.♖f2 ♗d7 20. ♗c3 f5 and the endgame is about equal, Palliser – Speelman, West Bromwich 2003.

White can try another plan for the development of his pieces (instead of 9.g3), but it looks too risky for him: 9.a3 a5 10.h4 f6 11. ♗eg1 cxd4 12.cxd4 ♗b6 13.♗d3 fxe5 14.fxe5 ♗dxe5!? 15.dxe5 ♗xe5 16.♗c2 ♗d7 17.♗e2 ♖ac8!! This is a genial move! 18.♗xh7+ (The essence of Black's idea can be best illustrated in the line: 18.♗xe5 ♗xh4+ – this is another typical tactical strike for this variation – 19.♗d1 ♗a4!! 20.♗xa4 ♗d4+ with a quick checkmate.) 18...♗xh7 19.♗xe5 ♗d6 20.♗e3 ♗b3 21.♗d2 ♖f1! – Macieja – Ivanchuk, Moscow 2001.

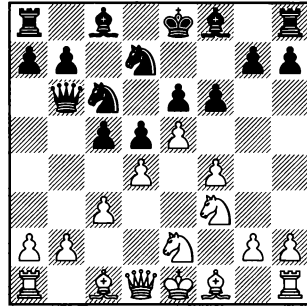
8. ♗f3 f6

(diagram)

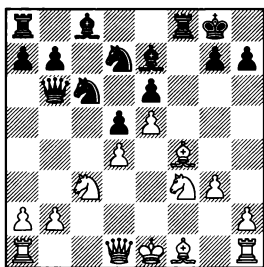
9.a3

This is a standard move for similar positions – White prevents the possible check from the b4-square and prepares the pawn-advance b2-b4, occupying additional space.

He has a more reliable plan



here – 9.g3 cxd4 10.cxd4 (White would not achieve much with 10.♗exd4 ♗xd4 11.cxd4 fxe5 12.fxe5 ♗b4+; 11.♗xd4 ♗c5 and Black has a good position; 10... fxe5!? 11.♗xe6 e4 12.♗g5 ♗f6 13.♗b3 – this situation needs an additional practical testing.) 10... fxe5 (It would be quite reasonable for Black to speed up the trade of the bishops with 10... ♗b4+!? 11.♗c3 0-0 12.a3 ♗e7 13.♗h3 ♗h8 14.♗a4 ♗a6 15.♗f1 b5 16.♗c3 fxe5 17.♗xb5 ♗b6 18. ♗xc6 ♗xc6 19.fxe5 ♗a6 20.♗f4 ♖ab8 with an excellent game for him, Sznapiak – Knaak, Bratislava 1983.) 11.fxe5 ♗b4+ 12.♗c3 (Or 12.♗d2? 0-0 13.♗g2 ♗dxe5 14.dxe5 ♗xe5 15.♗xb4 ♗xb4+ 16. ♗f2 ♗e4 17.♗c3 ♗d3+ 18.♗f1 ♗c4! with a dangerous attack for Black; 17...♗g4+ 18.♗f1 ♗e3+ – 18...♗e3!? – 19.♗e2 ♗xd1+ 20.♗xe4 dxe4 21.♖hxd1 exf3+ 22.♗xf3=) 12...0-0 13.♗f4 ♗e7 (He should better refrain from 13...♗a5 14.♗c2 ♗c5 15.dxc5 d4 16.0-0-0 dxc3 17.♗g5 ♖f5 18.♗c4 and he is in a great trouble.)



14.a3. White maintains his centre in this paradoxical fashion and together with that the opening advantage as well. (It is weaker for him to opt for 14.♟d2? g5! 15.♙xg5 ♗xg5 16.♙xg5 ♘xd4 17.♙g2 ♘xe5 18.0-0 ♖f2 19.♟xf2 ♘b3+ 20.axb3 ♟xf2 21.♞d2 ♟f5 22.♙h6 ♘d3+ 23.♙b1 ♘f2+ 0-1 Dolmatov – Bareev, Elista 1997. White should avoid 14.♙h3? ♟xb2 15.♟c1 – 15.♙xe6+? ♙h8 16.♘a4 ♟g2!-+ – 15...♟xc1+ 16.♙xc1 ♘b6 17.♘b5 ♘d8 18.♘c7 ♙b8 19.0-0 h6 20.♙d2 ♘c4 21.♙c3 b5 and he lost that endgame with a pawn down, Anand – Sisiniega, Philadelphia 1987.) 14... ♖f7 15.♘a4 ♟d8 16.h4 ♘f8 (16... ♘b6!?) 17.♙d3 ♙d7 18.b4 b6 19.♘c3 a5 20.b5 ♘a7 21.♘g5 ♙xg5 22.♙xg5 ♟e8 23.♟e2 ♙c8 24.♙d2 ♙c7 25.♟f1 ♙xf1+ 26.♙xf1± Dubinin – Alatortsev, Leningrad 1947.

9...♙e7

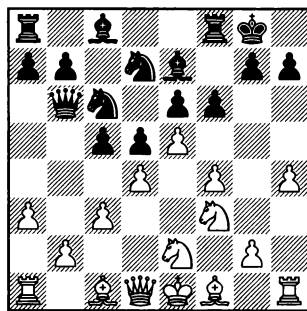
After 9...a5? 10.g3, Black cannot base his counterplay on any checks. 10...♙e7 11.♙h3 ♘f8 12.0-0 a4 13.exf6 gxf6 14.f5 cxd4 15.cxd4 e5 16.♘c3 ♙a5 17.♙h1 e4 18.♘h4 ♟xd4 19.♟h5+ ♙d8

20.♞d1+- Vasiukov – Kaminik, Bad Wildbad 1993.

10.h4

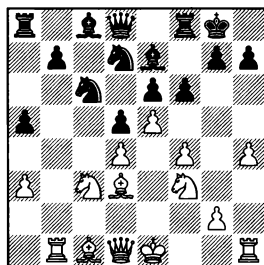
In case of 10.b4, there usually arise transpositions to what we will analyze below. 10...cxd4 11.♘exd4 ♘xd4 12.cxd4 0-0 13.♙d3 ♙xe5 14.dxe5 a5 15.b5 a4 16.h4 h6 17.♙f1 ♘c5 18.♙e3 ♙d7 19.♙b1 and Black agreed to a draw in a position with an overwhelming advantage, Morozevich – Zhukova, Mainz 2004.

10...0-0



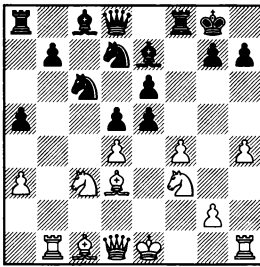
11.♙h3

The situation clarifies considerably after 11.b4 cxd4 12.cxd4 a5 13.b5! This is an important and quite natural fine point. 13...♟xb5 14.♘c3 ♟b6 15.♙b1 ♟d8 16.♙d3



3. ♖c3 ♗f6 4.e5 ♗fd7 5. ♖c2

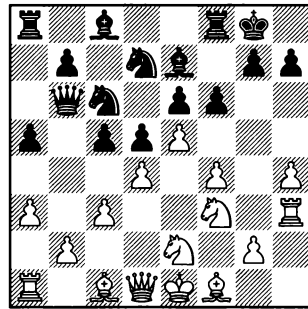
Black's extra pawn is completely immaterial in this position. He has other pluses, though...16... fxe5 (Or 16...h6 17. ♖c2 b6 18. ♗d3 f5 19.g4 ♖a6 20. ♖b5 ♗a7 21.a4 ♖c6 22. ♖d2 ♖b4 23. ♖xb4 ♖xb4+ 24. ♖d1 ♖c8 25. ♖b3 ♖xb5 26. axb5 ♗e7 with a great advantage for him, Firman – Podolchenko, Minsk 2006; 17. ♖b5 f5 18. ♗c2 ♖b6 19.g4 ♖c4 20. ♗g2 fxg4 21. ♗xg4 ♖f5 22. ♖g1 ♖f8 23.h5 ♗e7 24. ♖h4 ♖a6 25.a4 ♖d7 and the position is very complicated from a strategical point of view, Bauer – Carlsson, Kemer 2007.)



17.dxe5 (In reply to 17. ♖g5?, the computer suggests a radical decision – 17...exd4 18. ♖xh7+ ♖h8 and “says” that Black’s position is acceptable...It looks like this is true. I still prefer the “human” solution of the problem: 17...e4 18. ♖xe6 ♗e8 19. ♖xf8 exd3 20. ♖xd7 ♖b4+ and Black seizes the initiative. He can counter 17.fxe5 with 17...♖xd4 18. ♖xd4 ♖xe5 19. ♖g5 h6 20. ♖xe7 ♗xe7 and obtains a sufficient compensation for the knight. He can also try here 17...♖xf3 18.gxf3 ♖xd4

19. ♖xh7+ ♖xh7 20. ♗xd4 and the position is unclear.) 17... ♖c5 18. ♖b5 ♖xd3+ (The position is so rich that both sides can choose between numerous alternatives on practically every move: 18... h6!? 19. ♖c2 ♗e4 and I think Black has nothing to worry about; 19... b6!?) 19. ♗xd3 h6 20. ♗g6 ♖d7 21. ♖g5 ♖xg5 22. hxg5 ♗e7 23. ♗d3 ♖xb5 24. ♖xb5 ♗c7 25. ♖d2 hxg5 26. ♗h7+ ♖f7 27. ♖h6 ♖f5 28. ♖f6+ ♖e7 and he prevailed in the subsequent mind-boggling fight, Bologan – Bauer, Belfort 2002.

11...a5



12.b3

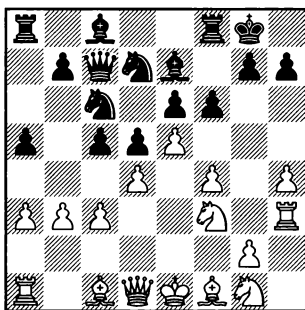
The play of both sides might be rather enigmatic for the non-specialists of this variation.

12...♗c7

It is a bit passive for Black to opt for 12... ♗d8 13. ♖g3 ♖b6 14. ♖d3 f5 15. ♖c2 ♖d7 16. ♖e3 cxd4 17. cxd4 a4 18.b4 ♗a7 19. ♖h5 ♖e8 20. ♖g5 ♗c8 21. ♖c1 ♖c4 22. ♖g3 ♖g6, but he was still better, Smirin – Psakhis, Las Vegas 1999.

13. ♖eg1

White loses immediately after 13.♘g3?? cxd4 (There was only one game played in this line and Black decided to trust his opponent and played only to equalize: 13...b6 14.♙d3 f5 15.♘g5 ♙xg5 16.hxg5 g6 17.♙e3 ♙a6 18.♔f2 ♙xd3 19.♖xd3 ♖f7 20.♖hh1 ♖c8 21.♖hc1 cxd4 22.cxd4 ♖b7 23.♘e2 ♖ff8 24.♘c3 and the opponents agreed to a draw, Klimov – Danin, Smolensk 2005.) 14.cxd4 fxe5 15.fxe5 ♘dxe5–+



13...a4

Anand recommended 13...b6!? in his comments to the game and that move provided Black with an excellent position. 14.♙e3 ♙a6 15.♙xa6 ♖xa6. Now, White's attacking potential is diminished considerably and it becomes unclear why he has deployed his kingside pieces in that awkward fashion. 16.♖d3 b5! 17.♖a2 c4 18.

bxc4 bxc4 19.♖c2 ♖b8 20.a4 ♖ab6 and Black is clearly better, Netzer – Picard, Mulhouse 2006.

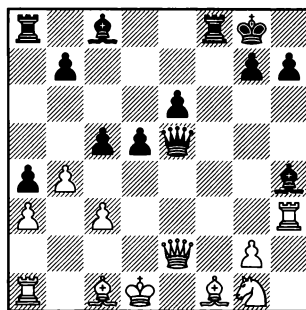
14.b4 fxe5 15.fxe5 ♘dxe5

This is a risky decision in the style of Alexey Shirov.

16.dxe5 ♘xe5 17.♘xe5 ♖xe5+ 18.♖e2 ♙xh4+?

Anand recommended here the move 18...♖c7, followed by the advance of his central pawns. Still, White is slightly better.

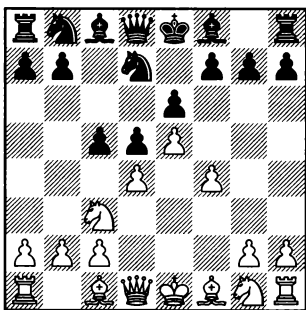
19.♔d1



19...♖f6?

Black had to continue here with 19...♖xe2+, but that was not the reason he had created that mess on the board after all...

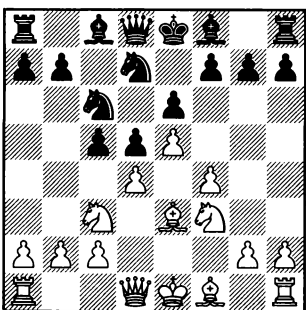
20.♘f3 ♖xc3 21.♙b2 ♖b3+ 22.♔c1 e5 23.♖xh4 ♙f5 24.♖d1 e4 25.♖xb3 axb3 26.♘d2 e3 27.♘f3 and White realized his several extra pieces, Anand – Shirov, New Delhi/Teheran 2000.



6.♘f3

It would be a bit funny for White to play 6.dxc5 ♘c6 (He can counter 6...♗xc5 with 7.♖g4!?) 7.a3 ♗xc5 8.♖g4 0-0 9.♘f3. It would be interesting for Black to test here 9...♖b6!? 10.♗d3 ♗f2+ 11.♔e2 f5 12.♖h3 ♘c5 with a good position for him.

6...♘c6 7.♗e3

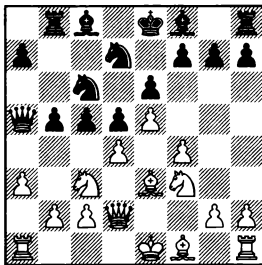


This is key-position of the Steinitz variation. The contemporary tendencies require from the players to have numerous ideas and resources in their armour, so that they can vary their lines in the different games. I would like to recommend two possibilities for Black: **a) 7...♖b6** and **b) 7...a6**.

7...♗e7 has become very popular lately. Even Magnus Carlsen played this seemingly harmless move in this position. I will not go deeply into the intricacies of this situation, but it seems to me that after 7...a6, Black has more advantageous possibilities. 8.♖d2 0-0 9.♗e2 a6 10.0-0 b5 11.♔h1 ♖c7 12.a3 ♗b7 13.♗ad1 ♗ac8 14.♖e1 cxd4 15.♘xd4 ♘xd4 16.♗xd4 ♗c5 17.♖h4 ♗xd4 18.♗xd4 f6 19.♗d3 h6 20.exf6 ♗xf6 21.f5 ♗cf8 22.♗g1 ♘c5 23.fxe6 ♘xe6 24.♗g4 ♘f4 25.♖g3 ♖e7 and White soon resigned, Karjakin – Carlsen, Wijk aan Zee 2010.

Black plays sometimes even more extravagantly, although with the same ideas as in variation **b**: 7...♗b8 8.♖d2 (The world-famous exponent of the French defence Victor Lvovich Korchnoi treated

this position in a very original fashion: 8.♙e2 cxd4 9.♗xd4 ♙c5 10.♖d2 0–0 11.♗d1 ♖h4+ 12.♙f2 ♗e7 13.0–0 ♗b6 14.♗cb5 ♙d7 15.♗e3 ♗xd4 16.♗xd4 ♖bc8 17.♗h3 f5 18.c3 ♗e8 19.♙h5 g6 20.♙e2 ♗xd4 21.♗xd4 ♙b5 and Black equalized, Landa – Korchnoi, Reggio Emilia 2007) 8...♗a5 9.a3 b5



10.♗a2. This paradoxical maneuver has become lately an integral part of White's strategy in the Steinitz variation. White defends against b4 and leaves his rook on the a-file in case it is opened. 10...c4 11.f5 ♙e7 12.fxe6 fxe6 13.g3 0–0 14.♙g2 ♗b6 15.0–0 ♗a4 16.♗e2 ♗xd2 17.♙xd2 ♗b6 18.♙h3 ♗a8 19.♙g4 ♗c7 20.h4 a5 21.c3 ♙d7 22.♗f4 ♗d8 23.♗aa1 ♗f7 24.♙h3 ♗a8 25.g4 ♗d8 26.g5 ♗c6 27.♗h5 ♗h8 28.♗f6! and he prevailed in the subsequent fight, Bologan – Korchnoi, Gibraltar 2006.

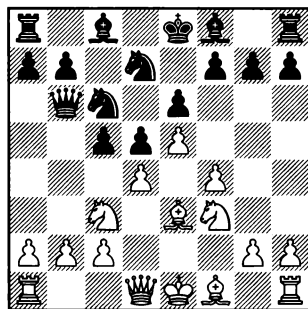
If he does not prevent Black's pawn-offensive on the queen-side, White can hardly obtain an advantage: 9.♙e2 (instead of 9.a3) 9...b5 10.0–0 b4 11.♗d1 ♙a6 12.♙xa6 ♗xa6 13.♗f2 ♙e7 14.♗d3 c4 15.♗f2 c3!?! The way of play-

ing of Vadim Zvjaginsev may be beyond the logical understanding of mortal human players and you should better accept that as it is. (Now, for example, he could have considered calmer moves of the type of 15...♙d8!?) 16.bxc3 ♗c4 17.cxb4 ♙xb4 18.♗d3 ♗b6 19.♗ab1 ♗xd3 20.cxd3 ♗d7 and Black survived in this endgame, Jakovenko – Zvjaginsev, Moscow 2005.

Naturally, the move 7...cxd4 is tremendously popular for Black, but it leads to very non-typical developments. The middle game is extremely complicated with castling on opposite sides, while in this book I would like to emphasize on the most typical pawn-structures in the French defence and the possible resources, plans and maneuvers of both sides.

a) 7...♗b6

It seems to me – you should have this move as a part of your opening armour.



8.♗a4

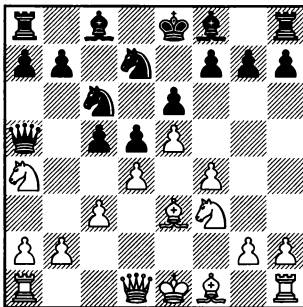
It would not be correct for

3. ♖c3 ♘f6 4.e5 ♘fd7 5.f4 c5 6. ♘f3 ♖c6 7. ♕e3 ♖b6

White to choose 8. ♖d2?! ♖xb2 9. ♖b1 ♖a3 10. ♘b5 ♖xa2 11. ♖c1 ♖b8 12. ♕e2 cxd4 13. ♘fxd4 ♕b4 14. c3 ♖xd2+ 15. ♘xd2 ♕c5 and he has no compensation for the two sacrificed pawns at all, Ragger – Andreikin, Gaziantep 2008.

It is too slow for him to opt for 8.a3?! cxd4 9. ♘xd4 ♕c5 10. ♘a4 ♖a5+ 11. c3 ♕xd4 12. ♕xd4 ♘xd4 13. ♖xd4 b6 14. ♕e2 (White should better not go into an endgame here, because his knight on a4 can hardly enter the actions any time soon – 14. ♖b4 ♖xb4 15. axb4 ♘e7 16. ♕b5 ♕b7 17. 0–0 ♖hd8 18. ♘f2 f6 19. ♕xd7 ♖xd7 20. ♘e3 ♖f8 21. b3 ♕c6 22. ♘b2 ♕b5 23. ♖f3 ♘d8 24. ♖d1 ♘e7 25. ♖a1 ♖c7 26. ♘d4 ♕e8 27. ♖e1 ♕g6 with an advantage for Black, Nunn – Ehlvest, Reykjavik 1988.) 14... ♕a6 15. ♕d1 ♖b5 16. b4 ♖c8 17. ♘b2 ♖c6 18. ♖c1 0–0 19. a4 ♕c4 20. ♕g4 ♕b3 21. 0–0 ♕xa4 22. f5 ♕b5 23. ♖fe1 ♖fe8 24. ♖e3 f6! and the young Philippine player prevailed with Black over his very experienced opponent, Kamsky – So, Khanty-Mansiysk 2009.

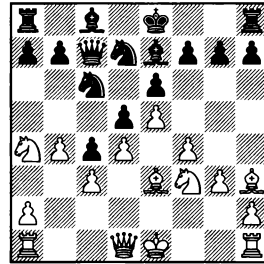
8... ♖a5+ 9.c3



9...cxd4

This is an aggressive move connected with a piece-sacrifice. By the way, Black is not obliged to play so riskily. He has alternatives leading to a calm positional fight.

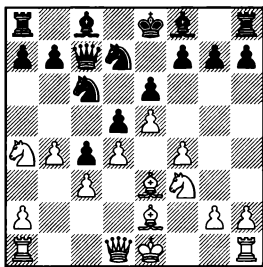
9...c4 10.b4 ♖c7 11.g3 ♕e7 12. ♕h3



12... ♘f8 (One of the important for him in this position is not to allow his opponent to activate the knight on a4, which resembles a bit the knight on a5 in the Ruy Lopez. 12...b5?! 13. ♘c5 a5 14.a3 axb4 15.axb4 ♖xa1 16. ♖xa1 ♘xc5 17.dxc5 0–0 18. ♘d4 ♘xd4 19. ♕xd4 ♕b7 20. 0–0 and White enjoys a comfortable advantage, Svidler – Bareev, Elista 1997.) 13. 0–0 b6 14. ♕g2 ♕d8 15. ♘b2 ♘e7. Pay attention to Black's play. It looks like his maneuvers are absolutely chaotic and not connected with any reasonable idea. This assumption is entirely wrong, however... 16.a4 a6 17. ♘d2 ♖a7 18. ♖e2 b5 19. ♕f2 ♕d7 20.g4 (Having seen what happened later, it could be recommended to White to have played here – 20.a5.) 20...h5 21.gxh5 a5! 22.axb5 ♕xb5

23.bxa5 ♖xa5 24.♟f1 ♘f5 25.♘d1 g6! 26.hxg6 ♘xg6 27.♙g3 ♘xd4 28.cxd4 c3 29.♟f2 c2 30.♘b3 ♖a2! After the opening of the game, Black's play was very impressive and he soon obtained a decisive advantage in the game Bologan – Volkov, Sochi 2006.

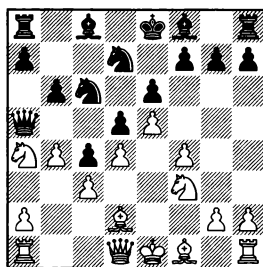
The other plan for White begins with the move – 11.♙e2.



Here, the true master of similar positions Sergey Volkov has tried in practice different moves. 11...♙e7 (He can place another piece on the e7-square: 11...♘e7 12.0–0 ♘b8. It might look that Black arranges his pieces to begin the next game, but you need to have a very specific understanding of these positions in order to play them successfully. 13.♘h4 ♘g6 14.♘xg6 hxg6 15.♙g4 ♘c6 16.♟b1 b6 17.♟f3 ♙d7 18.♟h3 ♟xh3 19.♙xh3 ♟b8 20.♙g4 a5 21.bxa5 ♘xa5 22.♘b2 b5 – Salem – Volkov, Dubai 2002.) 12.0–0 ♘f8 13.♘b2 ♙d7 14.a4. It seems that White has ensured the safety of his queenside and he will soon begin his kingside offensive. The situation on the board however, changes dramatically fast.

14...♘g6 15.♟e1 f5 16.♘g5 0–0 17.♟g3 a6 18.♟f3 b5 19.a5 ♘xb4! White's attack never even started and Black's pawn-mass settled the issue, Shomoev – Volkov, Tomsk 2006.

He can also try here a very smart move-order – 9...b6 10.♙d2 c4 11.b4

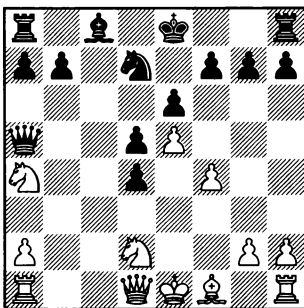


11...♟a6. The drawback of this move is that Black's queen is misplaced. (He can sacrifice a piece here, but only with the idea of building a fortress – 11...♘xb4 12.cxb4 ♙xb4 13.♙xb4 ♟xb4+ 14.♘f2 b5 15.♘c5 ♘xc5 16.dxc5 ♟xc5+ 17.♟d4 ♟xd4+ 18.♘xd4 ♙d7 19.♙e2 ♘e7 20.a3 a5 21.♟h1 ♟hb8 22.♘e3 ♟b6 23.♙d1 f6?! This pawn-advance is from another opera...Black only had to make one more useful move – 23...♟ab8!?) and then he could just do nothing and wait. 24.♙c2 h6 25.h4 ♟ab8 26.g4 ♟f8 27.♟h1 fx5 28.fx5 ♟bb8 29.g5. The position has been opened in favour of White, Karjakin – Ernst, Wijk aan Zee 2005.) 12.a3 ♙e7 13.g3 f5 14.exf6. The active Finnish player obviously disliked a closed pawn-

3. ♖c3 ♗f6 4.e5 ♗fd7 5.f4 c5 6. ♗f3 ♖c6 7. ♕e3 ♖b6

structure. 14...gxf6 15.f5 e5 16. ♕h3 ♕b7 17.0-0 0-0-0. His queen is a sorry sight, but things were not so tragic after all... 18. ♖b1 b5 19. ♗c5 ♗xc5 20.bxc5 ♖he8 21. ♖e1 ♗f8 22. ♖c1 ♗a5 23. ♖b2 ♗b3 24. ♕e3 ♗xc5! 25.dxc5 d4 and Black seized the initiative, Nyback – Volkov, Plovdiv 2008.

10. b4 ♗xb4 11.cxb4 ♕xb4+ 12. ♕d2 ♕xd2+ 13. ♗xd2



White's pieces seem to be misplaced at the moment. Can Black exploit this and if yes – how?

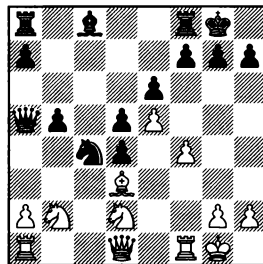
In fact, nowadays theory considers White's prospects as superior...

13...b6

It has been proved that the move 13...g5 would not provide Black with an acceptable position. 14. ♖b1 gxf4 (White won beautifully after 14...a6 15. ♕d3 gxf4 16.0-0 ♗xe5 17. ♗b6 ♖b8 18. ♗xc8 – 18. ♗f3!? – 18...♖xc8 19. ♖xb7 ♗xd3 20. ♖h5 0-0 21. ♗e4 ♖c1 22. ♖xc1 ♗xc1 23. ♗f6+ ♗g7 24. ♗e8+ ♗h8 25. ♖e5+ f6 26. ♖xh7+ Kalegin – Okotchik, Russia 1992.) 15. ♕b5

♖b8 16. ♗c5 ♖c3 17. ♗d3 a6 18. ♖c1 ♖a3 19. ♖b3 ♖a5 20. ♕xd7+ ♕xd7 21. ♗xf4± Short – Timman, Amsterdam 1994.

It is possible for Black to try here 13...0-0!? 14. ♕d3 b5 15. ♗b2 ♗b6 16.0-0 (It is weaker for White to play the tentative move 16. ♖c2 ♗c4 17. ♕xh7+ ♗h8 18. ♕d3 ♕d7 19. ♗e2 ♖ac8 20. ♗f3 f6 21. ♕xc4 bxc4 22. ♗xd4 fxe5 23.fxe5 ♖f4 and he will fail to hold the blockade because Black's position is good enough. He has no problems either after 18. ♗bxc4 bxc4 19.0-0 d3 20. ♕xd3 cxd3 21. ♖xd3 ♕a6 22. ♖h3+ ♗g8 23. ♖f2 ♖ac8.) 16... ♗c4



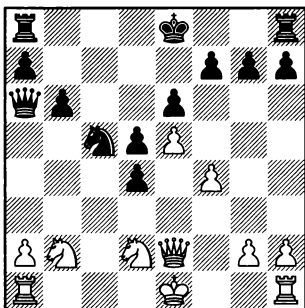
17. ♕xh7+! This is a key moment of the variation – White has a very powerful attack. (He should not change the order of moves 17. ♗f3?! ♗xb2 18. ♕xh7+ ♗h8!) 17... ♗xh7 18. ♖h5+ ♗g8 19. ♗f3 g6 20. ♖h6 ♖c7. Black's position is so dubious that I am not sure that he can hold it, so it cannot be recommended. 21. ♗h4 (21. ♗d3!?) 21... f6 (21... ♗xb2 22. ♖f3+-) 22. ♗xg6 ♖g7 23. ♖h5 ♖f7 24. ♗xc4 dxc4 25. ♖f3 ♖h7 26. ♖g4 ♖g7 27. ♖g3

♖b8 28.h4 f5 29.♖g5 ♜xg6 and the game ended in a draw by a perpetual, Quezada Perez – Cordova, Havana 2009.

14.♙d3 ♖a6

Black plays calmly, relying on his three pawns and White's dis-coordinated pieces.

15.♟b2 ♘c5 16.♙xa6 ♖xa6
17.♖e2



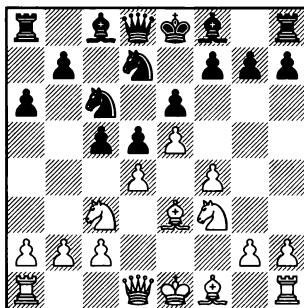
17...♖a3

Black would not achieve much with 17...d3 18.♖e3 ♖a3 19.♖d4 0-0 20.0-0 ♜ac8 21.♘d1 ♜fd8 22.♘f2 ♘e4!? This is an interesting decision. He gives up one of his pawns with the idea to create a powerful passed pawn, supported by his rooks. 23.♘fxe4 dxe4 24.♖e3 ♜c2 25.♘xe4 ♖b2 26.♖f3 d2 27.♜ad1 ♜d5 28.h3 h6 29.♙h2 ♜c1 30.♖e3 ♜xd1 31.♜xd1 ♖xa2 32.♜xd2. Black saved the game indeed, but he was on the verge of losing throughout, Psakhis – Dizdar, Portoroz 1987.

18.♖b5+ ♙e7 19.0-0. White's knights are rather misplaced, but Black can hardly exploit this. 19...

♖e3+ 20.♜f2 ♜hc8 21.♜d1 g6 22.♘f1 ♖a3 23.♜xd4 ♖xa2 24.♘g3 ♖b3 25.♖e2 – White's prospects in the oncoming fight are better, Chandler – M.Gurevich, Leningrad 1987.

b) 7...a6



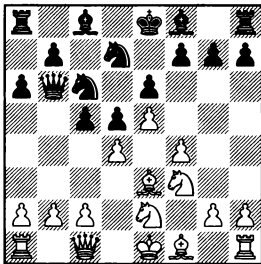
This is a very logical move. Black's plan is tremendously simple – he will advance his queen-side pawns as far as the opponent permits.

8.♖d2

8.♘e2!? This is an original and fashionable move. White is trying to emphasize that Black's last move is useless, with the idea to transpose to situations more typical for the variation with 5.♙c2. The point is however, that his extra tempo – the move ♙e3 might turn out to be even harmful for him. Black has some active, concrete possibilities up his sleeve. 8...♖b6 (He has a reasonable alternative here: 8...♙e7 9.c3 0-0 10.a3 f6 11.♘g3 cxd4 12.cxd4 ♖b6 13.♖d2 ♘a5 14.♜d1 ♖b3!

3. ♖c3 ♗f6 4.e5 ♗fd7 5.f4 c5 6. ♗f3 ♗c6 7. ♕e3 a6

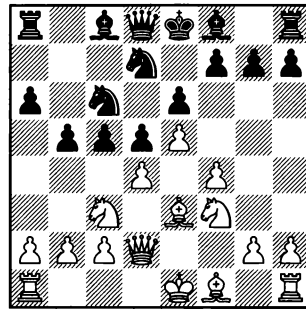
15. ♖c1 ♗b6 16. ♖c3 ♖a2 17. ♕d3 ♗bc4 18. ♖c2 f5 19. ♕c1 b5 20. 0-0 b4 21. axb4 ♕xb4 ♖ Svidler – Vitiugov, Moscow 2009; 10.dxc5!? ♗xc5 11. ♗ed4 ♗xd4 12. ♗xd4 ♕d7 13. ♕e2 with relatively calm developments.) 9. ♖c1



9...g5! This is a standard way of undermining White's centre. 10.c3 (It was maybe worth for White to consider 10.fgx5 cxd4 11. ♗exd4 ♗dxe5? 12. ♗xc6! ♗xf3+ 13.gxf3 ♖xc6 14. ♕d4 ♖g8 15. ♕d3 and Black will have problems; 11... ♗cxe5 12. ♗xe5 ♗xe5 13.c3 ♗g4!; 13. ♕e2 ♕c5 14.c3 ♗c6 15. ♖d2 e5 16. ♗xc6 bxc6 17. ♕xc5 ♖xc5 – His centre should compensate the vulnerability of his king. It would be interesting for Black to continue with: 13...h6!? 14.gxh6 ♕xh6 15. ♕xh6 ♖xd4 16. ♖f4 ♖xf4 17. ♕xf4 ♗c6 with a very complicated endgame.) 10...cxd4 11.cxd4 ♕b4+ 12. ♗f2 f6 13.g3 g4! Morozevich improves on his own previous game. (Or 13...♖f8? 14. ♗g2 g4 15. ♗h4 ♖g8 16.h3 h5 17.hxg4 hxg4 18. ♗c3 fxe5 19.fxe5 ♗cxe5 20.dxe5 d4 21. ♗a4 ♖a5 22. ♖c4 ♗xe5 23. ♖xd4 ♗f3 24. ♗xf3 gxf3+

25. ♗f2 ♖xa4 26. ♕d3± Topalov – Morozevich, Morelia/Linares 2007.) 14. ♗h4 fxe5 15. fxe5 ♗dxe5 16.dxe5 d4 17. ♕f4 ♖f8 18. ♗g2 ♕d7 19.h3 d3 20.hxg4 dxe2 21. ♕xe2 ♗d4, White's king is in a more perilous situation than its counterpart, Predojevic – Morozevich, Sarajevo 2008.

8...b5

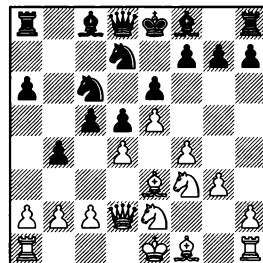


9.a3

This is the most fashionable move in this position. White impedes temporarily the advance of his opponent's pawns.

He has also tried in practice numerous alternatives, since there are so many reasonable moves in this position.

9.g3 b4 10. ♗e2

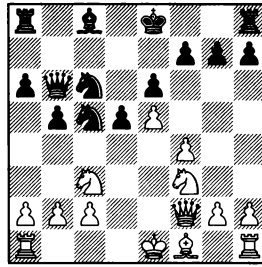


10...g6. This is an important prophylactic move. (I had a game in which I played routinely and carelessly and I was punished for that. 10...a5?! 11.f5! cxd4 12.♖exd4 ♗xd4 13.♗xd4 ♗xe5 14.0-0-0 ♗d7 15.♗f4 ♗c4 16.♞e2? – 16.♗xc4! dxc4 17.♞e2 and Black's position was practically hopeless – 16...♞f6 17.♗g2 ♗e7? (17...♗c5!) 18.♞h1 g5 19.fxe6 ♗xe6 20.b3 gxf4 21.bxc4+– Inarkiev – Vi-tiugov, Dagomys 2008.) 11.♗g2 a5 12.0-0 ♗a6 13.♞f2 h5 14.h3 ♞b6 15.♞d1 ♞c8 16.g4 hxg4 17.hxg4 ♗xe2 18.♞xe2 cxd4 19.♗xd4 ♗xd4 20.♗xd4 ♞xd4+ 21.♞xd4 ♗c5 and he has good prospects in the oncoming endgame, Richards – Kiriakov, West Bromwich 2005.

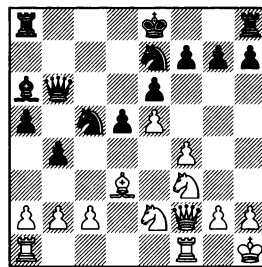
White used to play for a long time here 9.dxc5 ♗xc5 10.♗xc5 (10. ♗e2 ♞b6 11.♗xc5 ♗xc5 12.♗ed4 ♗d7 13.♗xc6 ♗xc6 14.♗d4 0-0 15.♗d3 f6 16.exf6 ♞xf6 17.0-0-0 ♗e8 18.♞hf1 ♞c8 19.g4 ♞d6 20. ♗b1 ♗xd3 21.cxd3 ♗d7 22.♗e2 ♞cf8 23.♞g1 d4 24.h4 ♗c6 25.♞df1 b4 and Black was better, Inarkiev – Lysyj, Rijeka 2010.) 10...♗xc5 11.♞f2 (The hyper-modern move 11.b4 is interesting only because it is very provocative: 11...♗xb4 12.♗xb5 0-0 13.♞xb4 ♞b6 14.a4 axb5 15.a5 ♞a7 16.♞d4 ♗d7 17.♗d3 ♗a4 18.0-0 ♞f8 19.♞xa7 ♞xa7 20.♞f1 ♞xa5, Safarli – Lintchev-ski, Kirishi 2006) 11...♞b6

(diagram)

12.♗d3 (White fails if he tries to play tactically: 12.b4?! ♗xb4



13.♞b1 d4! This is a nice counter-strike. White's idea can be best illustrated in the variation 13...♗c6 14. ♗xb5! – 14.♗xd4 ♞a5 15.♞d2 ♗xa2 16.♗d1 ♞xd2+ 17.♗xd2 ♗e4+ 18.♗d3 ♗b7 19.♞b2 ♗d5 20. ♗e3 ♗ac3 and Black ends up with an extra pawn in this endgame, Heberla – Carlsson, Fuegen 2006. White would not achieve much with 15.♗dxb5 ♗e4 16.♞f3 ♗xa2 17.♗c7+ ♗e7 18.♞xe4 ♞a7 19.♗xa6 ♗xa6 – 19...♞xc3+!? 20.♗f2 ♞d8 – 20.♗xa6 ♞d8 21.0-0 ♗xc3 22.♞b7+ ♗f8 23.♞xh7 ♞xb7 24.♗xb7 ♞b6+ 25.♗h1 ♞xb7 with an extra piece for Black, Fogarasi – Bhat, Budapest 2001.) 12... b4 13.♗e2 a5 14.0-0 ♗a6 15.♗h1 ♗e7



We can formulate a very spe-

3. ♖c3 ♜f6 4.e5 ♜fd7 5.f4 c5 6. ♜f3 ♜c6 7. ♗e3 a6

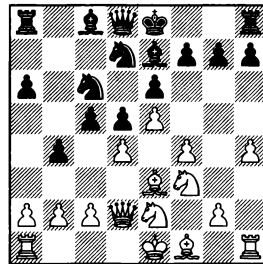
cific rule for Black in this position. If White places his f-rook on d1 – then, following the transfer into an endgame after ♜a4, he will open the queenside in his favour with a3. So, in that case, Black must play h6 and castle. If White places his a-rook on d1 – then the endgame is harmless for Black. 16. ♗ad1 (Or 16. ♗fd1 h6 17. ♜ed4 0–0 18. ♞h4 ♗a7 19.g4 ♜g6 20. ♗xg6 fxxg6 21.f5 ♗af7 22.g5 ♗xf5! with a good game for Black, Mainka – Glek, Recklinghausen 1995; 16.b3 h6 17. ♗ad1 ♗b8 18. ♗xa6 ♜xa6 19. ♜fd4 ♜c5 20.f5 ♜e4 21. ♞f3 0–0 22. ♜f4 ♜c6 23. ♜xc6 ♞xc6 24.fxe6 fxe6 25. ♞g4 ♞xc2 26. ♞xe6+ ♜h7 27. ♞g6+ ♜h8 28. ♞g4 ♜f2= Berndt – Glek, Germany 2003.) 16... ♜a4 17. ♞xb6 ♜xb6 18.g3 ♜d7 19. ♗xa6 ♗xa6 20.a3 bxa3 21. ♗a1 ♜b8 22. ♗xa3 ♜bc6 23. ♜c1 0–0 24. ♜d3 ♗b6 and the opponents agreed to a draw, Dominguez Perez – Nogueiras Santiago, Merida 2002.

It is also quite solid for White to play 9. ♗d3, but then Black has his hands free to realize all his ideas. 9...b4 10. ♜d1 ♞b6 11. ♞f2 a5 12. 0–0 ♗a6 13. ♗xa6 ♗xa6 14.c3 ♗e7. He has accomplished what he wanted and the only thing White can and should do is sharpen the position. 15.f5 exf5 16. ♗f4 cxd4 17.cxd4 0–0 18. ♜h1 ♗d8 19. ♜e3 ♜e7 20. ♗ad1 h6 21.g4 fxxg4 22. ♜xg4 ♜f5 23. ♗g1 ♜h8 24. ♗g2 ♗g8 25. ♗dg1 ♜f8 26. ♞d2 ♞e6 and he has no compensation for the

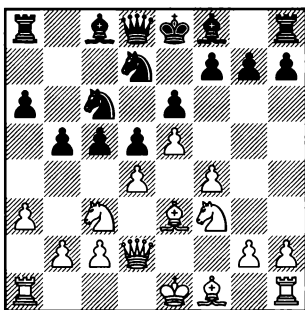
pawn, Shaposhnikov – Volkov, Samara 2000.

White plays sometimes more carefully: 9. ♗e2 ♞b6 10. ♜d1 b4 11. 0–0 a5 12.c3 ♗a6 13. ♗xa6 ♞xa6, but the character of the position remains practically the same. 14.f5 bxc3 15.bxc3 exf5 16. ♜g5 ♜e7 17.dxc5 h6 18. ♜f3 g5 19. ♗d4 ♗g8 20. ♜e3 ♞e6 21.a4 f4 22. ♜c2 ♜f5 23. ♜a3 ♗c8, after some non-standard actions, Black obtained a good position, Riazantsev – Michna, Hamburg 2005.

White tries sometimes the hyper-active line: 9.h4 b4 10. ♜e2 ♗e7



11.dxc5 (Or 11.g3?! 0–0 12. ♗h3 a5 13.dxc5 ♜xc5 14. ♜ed4 ♜e4 15. ♞g2 ♞b6 16. 0–0 ♗c5 17. ♗fd1 a4 18. ♜h2 a3 19.b3 ♜c3 20. ♗d2 f6 with an overwhelming advantage for Black, Fedorov – Volkov, Samara 1998.) 11... ♜xc5 12. ♜g3 h5 (12... 0–0!?) 13. ♗e2 g6 14. 0–0 ♜a4 15.c3 bxc3 16.bxc3 ♞a5 17. ♗ac1 ♗d7 18. ♗c2 ♜a7 19. ♜g5 ♜b5 20.f5! with a rather unclear position, which Black managed to win later, Anand – Morozevich, Monte Carlo 2004.



9...♖b6

This is just one of the possibilities for him. It seems to me very logical and principled. Black continues with his queenside actions, increasing the pressure against the d4-square in the process.

The fans of really sharps developments may try here the line: 9...g5!? 10.fxg5 cxd4 11.♖xd4 ♜cxe5 12.♙e2 ♙b7 13.0-0 ♙g7 14.♙ae1 0-0 15.♜d1 ♜c4 16.♙xc4 dxc4 17.♜f2 ♜e5 18.♗e2 c3 19.bxc3 ♝c8 20.♞d1 ♞d5 21.♜g4 ♜xg4 22.♗xg4 ♝xc3 23.♜e2 ♝c4 24.♗g3 ♗e5 with a better position for Black, Karjakin – Morozevich, Nice 2008. Or 9...♙b7 10.♙d3 g5!? 11. fxg5 cxd4 12.♖xd4 ♜dxe5 13.0-0 ♙g7 14.♜xc6 ♙xc6 15.♙c5 ♗c7 16.a4 ♜c4 17.♗f2 b4 18.♙xb4 ♜xb2 19.♙ab1 ♜xd3 20.cxd3 ♙e5 21.♙bc1 and White was better in the game Jakovenko – Vitiugov, Moscow 2008. He must be very well prepared in order to cope with these sharp and forced positions. I think this approach is very risky and not so practical, but of course it is quite possible.

10.♜e2

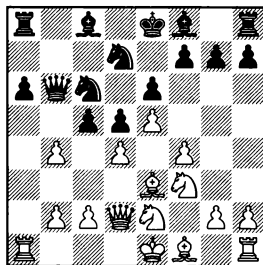
This move is forced.

Black equalizes easily after 10.♙e2 ♙b7 11.0-0 cxd4 12.♖xd4 ♙c5 13.♙ad1 ♝c8 14.♗f3 ♜xd4 15.♙xd4 ♙xd4+ 16.♗xd4 ♜e7 17.♙g3 ♙hg8 18.♗xb6 ♜xb6 19.♞d4 and the opponents agreed to a draw, Najer – Vitiugov, Dagomys 2009.

It would be interesting for White to opt for 10.g3 cxd4 11. ♜xd4 ♖xd4 12.♙xd4 ♙c5 13.♜e2 ♙xd4 14.♗xd4 ♙b7 15.♗xb6 ♜xb6 16.♜d4 ♜e7 17.♙h3 g6 18.♙f1 ♜c4 19.b3 ♜a5 20.♜d2 ♜c6 21.♜e3 ♜xd4 22.♜xd4 ♙c6 and his position is passive, but very solid in this endgame. 23.♙e2 h5 24.♙hf1 ♙d7 25.♗f3 ♝ac8 26.♙c1 ♙hg8! That is an important maneuver. Black is maybe threatening g5, maybe not, but White must consider this possibility. 27.h4. I think he cannot break Black's defence after this move, Nepomniachtchi – Grachev, Moscow 2010.

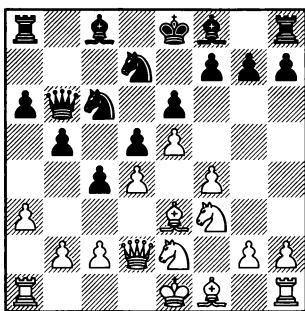
10...c4

The author managed once to demonstrate a very interesting idea in this position – 10...b4!? 11.axb4



3. ♖c3 ♗f6 4. e5 ♗fd7 5. f4 c5 6. ♗f3 ♗c6 7. ♕e3 a6

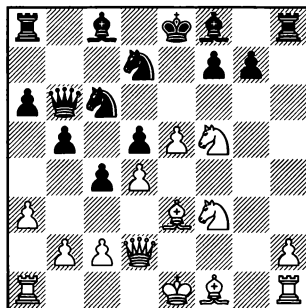
11... ♖xb4 (This is the point.)
 12. c3 ♖b7 13. ♗c1?! White's knight
 is totally misplaced here. 13... ♕e7
 14. ♕d3 c4 15. ♕b1 ♖b8 16. ♖a2 ♗b4
 17. ♖a1 ♗c6 18. ♖a2 and a draw
 was agreed, Karjakin – Vitiugov,
 Khanty-Mansiysk 2009. Some
 practical test is required for the
 endgame arising after 12. ♖xb4
 ♗xb4 13. ♗d2 and now, Black has
 plenty of possibilities on practi-
 cally every move. 13... c4 (13...
 ♗b6!?, 13... ♗c6!?) 14. g4 h5 (14...
 ♗b6!?) 15. gxh5 ♖xh5 with a very
 complicated position.



11.g4

White must play aggressively;
 otherwise, Black will continue
 with his offensive on the queen-
 side.

11... h5 12. gxh5 ♖xh5 13. ♗g3
 ♖h8 14. f5 exf5 15. ♗xf5



15... ♗f6! 16. ♗g3 ♗g4 17.
 ♕f4 ♕e6 18. c3

White failed to achieve any-
 thing in the line: 18. ♕g2 0–0–0
 19. c3 ♗e7 20. h3 ♗h6 21. ♗g5 ♕d7
 22. 0–0 f6 23. exf6 gxf6 24. ♗f3
 ♗g6 with superior prospects for
 Black, Kurnosov – Looshnikov,
 Satka 2008.

18... ♕e7 19. ♗g5 0–0–0
 19... ♗a5!?

20. ♗xe6 fxe6 21. ♕e2
 ♗gxe5!? 22. ♖e3. Black obtains a
 good compensation after 22. ♕xe5
 ♗xe5 23. dxe5 ♕c5 and White's
 king will remain stranded in the
 centre for long (23... ♖c7!?). 22...
 ♗d7 23. ♖xe6 ♕h4 24. ♖g4 g5
 25. ♕d2 ♖de8 26. 0–0–0 ♗a5
 and Black seized the initiative and
 prevailed in the subsequent fight,
 Kasparov – Radjabov, Linares
 2003.

AFTERWORD

At the end, I would like to tell you that the dynamics of the development of contemporary chess theory is making us consider practically every book as anything but a dogma. Everything in this world undergoes evolution and chess makes no exception. The evaluation of certain positions changes dramatically and sometimes entire openings are being refuted. New variations and novelties appear and fade into oblivion every day. Therefore, I have tried in my book to show you some general principles, typical maneuvers, exchanges, plans and tactical resources, which are inherent to the French defence and all that based on concrete analyses. I believe that a book of this type will be always useful.

Nikita Vitiugov is a world champion with the Russian team in 2010. He won the Russian cup in 2008, the Russian higher league in 2007, the bronze medal in the Russian Superfinal in 2009. Vitiugov is the winner of many international tournaments. His current rating is 2710.



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