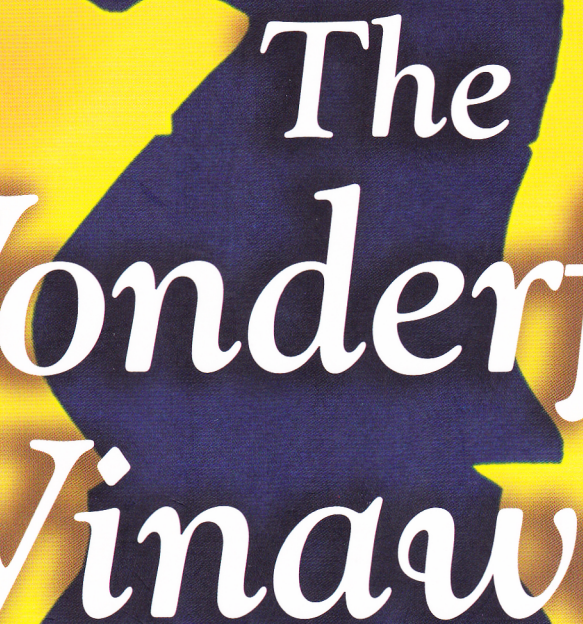


Viktor Moskalenko

With an introduction by
**Viktor
Kortchnoi**

by the author of
**The
Flexible
French**



The
Wonderful
Winawer

*Strategic Ideas & Surprise Weapons for
Dynamic Chess Players*

Viktor Moskalenko

The Wonderful Winawer

Strategic Ideas & Surprise Weapons
for Dynamic Chess Players

New In Chess 2010

Acknowledgements

This book is dedicated to my wife Tatiana, since her character is far more complex than the whole Winawer System!

But I would also like to dedicate it to all 'Francophiles' in the chess world – as basically this is a repertoire book for the black side.

Many thanks to the friendly grandmaster Viktor Kortchnoi, who wrote sympathetically about my two French books in his foreword. Kortchnoi has been walking through the French labyrinths for many years – all on his own and never in need of a map.

My gratitude goes out to Lluís Delgado for his help with the translation. And, of course, to the editing team of New In Chess.

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New In Chess Code System

White stands slightly better	±
Black stands slightly better	∓
White stands better	⊕
Black stands better	⊖
White has a decisive advantage	+−
Black has a decisive advantage	−+
balanced position	=
unclear position	∞
compensation for the material	∞
strong (sufficient)	>
weak (insufficient)	<
better is	⊃
weaker is	⊂
good move	!
excellent move	!!
bad move	?
blunder	??
interesting move	!?
dubious move	?!
only move	□
with the idea	△
attack	→
initiative	↑
lead in development	↑↑
counterplay	↔
correspondence	corr.

Foreword by Viktor Kortchnoi

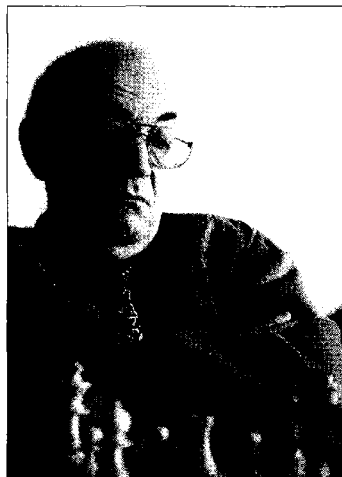
Statistics show that about one million people on this earth are interested in chess, amateurs and professionals all together. Not a bad number. At their service are many different professional publishers, producing magazines and other sources of information, using the internet and other innovations, which have speeded up the pace at which information spreads, as well as the pace of chess life itself.

Chess books occupy a separate role. Leading chess masters write about major tournaments, and share their experience. But books about particular openings are a different matter – they belong more to the realm of textbooks. The author, usually a high-class practitioner of the opening, explains the ideas, hidden behind the forest of variations, and gives a logical explanation of the character of the battle, which results from the chosen opening.

Chess is acknowledged^④ to be a logical game, with a psychological sub-text. Consequently, the author should explain in the clearest possible way the direction of the two players' thoughts, then the logical thoughts as they are crystallized on the board, and finally account for the psychological nuances of what is going on. So it is that the author, besides a primitive listing of variations, also has to think of his future reader who will be studying the book eagerly.

Therefore we can conclude that the author should have experience and with every book he develops his ability to explain his thoughts. Not all authors sufficiently understand the importance of explaining the ideas of the opening, but Viktor Moskalenko, the young author of the present book on the French Defence, has not lost sight of his responsibilities.

In 2008 a book appeared with the rather unusual title *The Flexible French*. We all know that the French is an opening, with hundreds of years of history behind it, but what is meant by 'flexible'? Here there are several possible explanations. We know that there are groups of openings: so-called open games, semi-open games and closed games. Sometimes, at the player's wish, it is possible to transform a position from a semi-open to an open character. Is this how we should understand the phrase 'flexible French'? Or another explanation: every opening has its own special structure or appearance. But the analyst will point out: 'The French was played, but on the board we have a Sicilian structure'. This is also an interesting characteristic of this opening that might explain the title. However this may be, the author sets out the logical and psychological aspects of the opening and its drawbacks admirably.



And now, two years later, a new book by Moskalenko on the French appears, and I can see the serious thought he has put into setting out the different variations. He has even come up with his own classification. I have read a great deal about the French Defence, but this classification is something new for me.

The present book deals with the Winawer Variation. But the main line thereof only arises after the moves 1.e4 e6 2.d4 d5 3.♘c3 ♙b4 4.e5 c5 5.a3 ♗xc3+ 6.bxc3. The positions after 4.a3, 4.♗g4, 4.♙d2 and 4.♘ge2 he calls the 'open Winawer', whilst the positions after 5.♙d2 or 5.♗g4 are 'semi-Winawers'. It is an interesting, but rather complicated system. Fortunately, this author forgets neither the weak nor the strong among his readers and explains everything clearly.

I will point out several details. Like in most opening books, the present author makes liberal use of his own games, but not, I think, for the purpose of self-aggrandisement. It is simply that one understands and can analyse one's own games more easily than those of other players. Moskalenko could not be accused of over-promoting himself since alongside his own games he also gives those of many of the acknowledged giants of the chess world.

I also note that our author very much likes to analyse the games of the greats – the world champions and their principal rivals. Well, firstly these games have been analysed many times. Secondly, though, the general class of such games is very high, and it is clear that the author enjoys looking at them again. Finally, he never fails to remind himself and his readers how a great player, in this position, played exactly this particular move! I should point out that the public always react sharply to great names, the fame of an author, his achievements and awards, and also his recent results in tournaments.

The majority of those who buy the book will look very carefully at the publisher's blurb about the author and his approach. Moskalenko does not strike me as a particularly dry, classical author. His tales about the magic of the French Defence, his joyous commentaries on the dance of the black queen, his attempts to present somewhat dubious sidelines as perfectly sound means of avoiding the main lines, all point to his love of the fantastic, both at the board and away from it. Consequently, I am more interested in reading his account of new attempts to play the opening than in reading about main lines established for up to 200 years. And familiarizing oneself with Moskalenko's new ideas can only have a beneficial effect on the play of any reader, from amateur to professional. In this approach I can see many connections between this second book and the earlier, 'flexible' volume, which proves that the two are in spirit actually one publication.

It is pleasant for me to be able to say that this author, unlike many of his colleagues, writes with soul. He believes passionately in every word he has written, and wants everyone who reads the book to share his belief. The highest form in which the reader can show his belief is by playing the lines recommended by the author!

Viktor Kortchnoi
September 2010

Introduction



Welcome to the Wonderful Winawer!

The French Defence is the only classical opening which has not yet been analysed out for twenty-odd moves in our days. The reason is probably that the positions the French are so specific and the 'theoretical' possibilities so boundless, that in many cases a proper understanding of the French rules can be more practical than the study of concrete variations and the help of a computer's engine.

A typical example is the dogma prevalent with many less educated players: the c8 bishop in the French is 'bad'! In fact, the French bishop can be a much more helpful piece, in defence as well as attack, than its counterpart on f1, or even a rook. The ultimate success in the use of these pieces chiefly depends on the strategy implemented by both sides. As a long-time French Defence fan (at least spread across two centuries!) I can say that there is no bad French bishop – there are only players who don't know how to use this wonderful piece!

In this book, my second one dedicated to the French Defence, we examine the highly complex Winawer Variation. It is characterized by the moves:

1.e4 e6 2.d4 d5 3.♗c3 ♘b4

Since the days of Aaron Nimzowitsch (1886-1935) and Mikhail Botvinnik (1911-1995), who were the first pioneers of the French Defence, the Winawer System emerged as a result of the historical and theoretical development of the French, and therefore this variation includes all typical French resources – but it also has its own particular aspects, both strategic and tactical.

In the middle of the 20th century, the French Defence (and mainly the line 3...♘b4) was tested at the highest level in the World Championship matches Smyslov-Botvinnik (1954 and 1957) and Tal-Botvinnik (1960 and 1961). Soon enough, great experts in the French Defence appeared, such as Tigran Petrosian, Viktor Kortchnoi, Wolfgang Uhlmann, Rafael Vaganian and a whole army of ‘Francophiles’. Thanks to their ‘modern-classical’ games, the French Defence has become one of the most popular and complex openings today. It is amazing to see how many important and exciting games are played with the French Defence every month.

Directions

The main ideas of the 3...♘b4 pin are quite simple: attacking the centre and not wasting any tempi (as in the Classical Variation 3...♗f6 4.e5). The king’s knight stays on its most flexible square: g8. In the event of ...♘b4x♗c3 bxc3 Black will obtain a favourable pawn structure. The other bishop can be exchanged after ...b6 and ...♗a6, or activated by manoeuvres such as ...♗d7-a4 or ...♗d7-e8-g6.

Meanwhile, White must take profit from his space advantage, the weakness created on g7 (through ♖g4!), the mobility of his minor pieces, and also the attacking resources offered by the h-pawn with h2-h4.

(The Flexible French, page 212, by the same author)

White has four main methods to develop his opening play:

- 1) **Anti-Winawer**: avoiding the advance e4-e5.
- 2) **Semi-Winawer**: playing 4.e5, but without including the key move 5.a3.

These first two methods can be found in **Part I – The Open Game** (Chapters 1-2).

- 3) **Sub-Winawer**: after 5.a3 ♗xc3 White plays classically slow, developing and trying to make progress on all parts of the board. Otherwise, White can try a sharp flank attack with the h-pawn (h2-h4). See **Part II – Evolution** (Chapters 4-8) and **Part III – The Ultimate Winawer** (Chapter 11).
- 4) Massive **pressure on the kingside** – this always starts with the white move ♖g4. This method can be found throughout the book, and especially in Chapters 7-11.

Of course, White can combine the different methods.

Along the way, Black also has a number of deviations:

- 1) The **Barricading** method – playing without the direct ...c7-c5 (seen in Chapter 3).
- 2) The **Armenian Variation** – keeping the king’s bishop: after 5.a3, 5...♗a5 (Chapter 6).
- 3) The **Black Queen Blues Variation**: 6...♗a5 and 7...♗a4 (Chapter 11).

Many other main lines and sub-lines will be examined throughout this book.



Statistics

Statistics are relative and should not be given all the credit since many games are between players with very different ratings – in most of them White had a higher Elo. Therefore, sometimes it is interesting to check the results among high-rated players who are known for their deep theoretical preparation.

In fact, when the author places the symbol (=) at the end of a line in this book, it does not mean that the game is a draw! There is still plenty of play in such positions. Moreover, we should not forget that computer programs do not understand French lines too well and here they are less helpful than in other sharp opening positions.

In all aspects and at all levels the Winawer System offers creative play for both sides. White can test almost all lines offered in this book and even try to make them critical, but on the other side, almost all Black's counter-ideas are playable and sound.

The book's structure allows the reader to study both the theoretical and the historical development of the main lines in the Winawer System, while enjoying the games of the great stars of the French Defence. There are 35 heavily commented model games. Each game in this book is an article with many stories, so each chapter is full of interesting issues.

There is much to learn in The Wonderful Winawer!

My best wishes to all Francophiles,

Viktor Moskalenko

Barcelona, August 2010



Szymon Winawer

Part I – The Open Game: White and Black Deviations

French Magic works from the very first moves. After 1.e4 e6 2.d4 d5 White must spend an important tempo on defending, sacrificing, exchanging or advancing his e4 pawn. Therefore the game can very soon become quite complicated.

(The Flexible French, page 149)



Alekhine used to opt for an 'open game' against the Winawer. Here he plays Max Euwe at the World Championship, 1935.

A bit of History – The Botvinnik Era

Part I contains the history of some players and the theoretical development of many anti-Winawer lines. Since deviations are a typical phenomenon in any major system, we need to check all of them carefully.

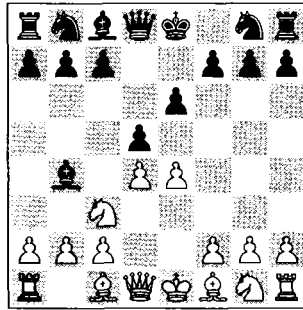
The 'open game' against the Winawer Variation was tried out in praxis by the fourth World Champion Alexander Alekhine (1892-1946), in full accordance with his fantastically active style. As an anti-Winawer weapon it was also popular during the era of the Patriarch – and great Francophile –, the sixth World Champion Mikhail Moiseyevich Botvinnik (1911-1995). Therefore this method was developed during the formation of the Soviet chess school.

Many strong grandmasters, true 'murderers of the French', have been searching for sharp refutations of the Winawer Defence. We have to consider the games played by such fine players as Paul Keres and the World Champions Vasily Smyslov, Boris Spassky and Bobby Fischer.

In spite of all this, history and statistics reveal another significant direction: in that era, the romantic style was still predominant among the best players in the world, but nowadays these attractive variations are only appealing to amateur chess fans – not professionals!

Why is it that both theory and practice of the deviations have almost come to a standstill? Was it because Black found the best defences or because White found new attacking methods that are even more effective? Or was it because the new generation changed their style completely? Perhaps it was a mixture of all these factors.

Directions – 1.e4 e6 2.d4 d5 3.♘c3 ♗b4

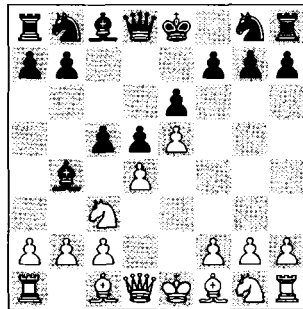


Chapter 1 – The Anti-Winawer

White does not advance the e-pawn:

- A) 4.a3, 4.♖g4, 4.♙d2, 4.♘e2
- B) 4.♙d3 or 4.♖d3
- C) 4.exd5

Chapter 2 – The Semi-Winawer (4.e5)



After 4.e5 c5, White does not immediately play 5.a3:

- A) 5.♖g4, 5.♘f3 and 5.dxc5
- B) 5.♙d2

Chapter 3 – Black Magic

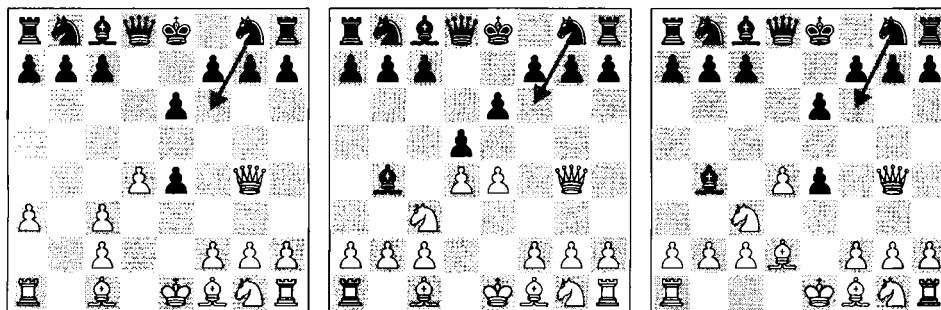
After 4.e5 Black does not play his classical break ...c7-c5 immediately, but first plays 4...♘e7!?, proposing to play a closed game.

An Introduction to the Open Game

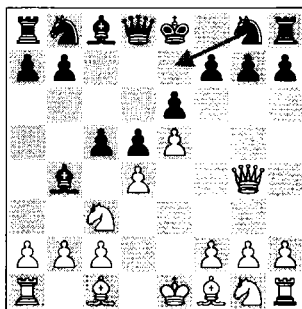
In the main deviations White tries to keep the centre semi-open. The game becomes quite forced and dynamic from the very first moves.

Tactical Schemes – A) Sacrificing the Centre

A good tactical scheme is the early queen sortie 4. ♕g4 in the anti-Winawer, where White immediately attacks Black's weakest point: the pawn on g7. However, with either a black or a white pawn on e4 this attack can be met with ... ♖f6! (see Games 1-3).



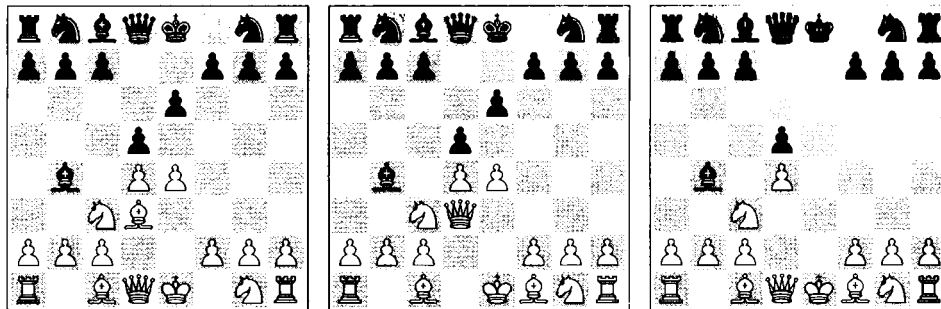
In the Semi-Winawer, after 4. e5 c5, the move 5. ♕g4 introduces another sharp line, which was a popular attacking weapon in the era of Boris Spassky:



Here the best defence is 5... ♖e7, a move which leads to attractive complications (Game 7).

Black can also try to avoid the sharpest lines of the Semi-Winawer by playing first 4... ♖e7 instead of 4... c5 (Game 9).

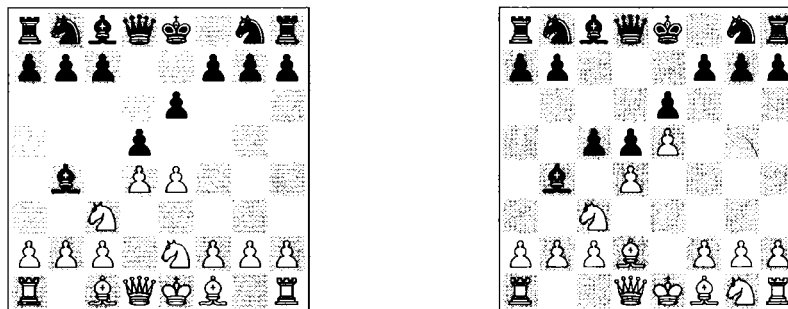
Tactical Schemes – B) Defending the Centre; C) Exchanging



The ideas behind 4.♙d3 and 4.♚d3 are obvious enough. Both moves aim to defend the e4 pawn, maintaining the tension in the centre while trying to force Black to give up the centre by playing ...dxe4 (Game 5).

The resulting structures are symmetrical and hardly attractive after 4.exd5 exd5 (diagram right). This situation is especially bothering for genuine French players, who prefer to close the game and to play positions with a closed centre. However, here the game is very balanced, and I will present to you my own anti-method (see Game 6).

Semi-Strategic Schemes



In the Anti-Winawer, after 4.♘e2 (diagram left), White prepares a2-a3 with the main, fundamental idea of achieving the favourable trade ♙x♘ (Game 4).

In the Semi-Winawer 4.e5 c5 and now 5.♙d2 (instead of the main move 5.a3) White prevents the doubling of the c-pawns, keeping a classical French structure (Game 8).

A Statistics Report for two World Champions

Alexander Alekhine as White versus the Winawer Variation

Alekhine never closed the centre against 3...♟b4; he preferred an open game.



Anti-Winawer

4.♞e2: 7 games=5,5 points

4.exd5: 4=2,5

4.♟d3: 3=3

4.a3, 4.♞g4 and 4.♟d2: 3=3.

Here Alekhine won three attacking games: two against the 5th World Champion Max Euwe, playing 4.a3 and 4.♞g4, and one against the strong grandmaster Salo Flohr with 4.♟d2. His opponents did not make use of all the available opening resources to compensate for the weak position of their king (see the notes to Games 1-3).



Semi-Winawer

4.e5: 2=2.

In his game against Aaron Nimzowitsch (San Remo 1930) Alekhine used even another deviation: 4...c5 5.♟d2.

Mikhail Botvinnik as Black versus White's Deviations



Anti-Winawer

4.a3: 6 games=3,5 points.

The two first victories were in early games against Ragozin and Romanovsky. But, significantly enough, Botvinnik suffered one defeat and only made three draws against Vasily Smyslov during the 20th and 21st World Championship matches.

4.exd5: 5=4 (a good result, but obtained from bad opening positions!)

4.♞e2 dxe4: 2=1,5

4.♟d3 dxe4: 2=1,5

4.♟d2 dxe4 5.♞g4: 1-0.

Botvinnik lost a spectacular game against Paul Keres – see Game 3.



Semi-Winawer

In total 3=1; he lost against 5.♞g4 and 5.dxc5 and won after 5.♟d2.

As we can see, Botvinnik scored quite poor results when facing rarer systems. Could it have been this that impelled his opponents to make this kind of choices in the Winawer against Botvinnik – and even that those results may have had an influence on the popularity of these deviations? Nobody knows today.

Keep in Mind

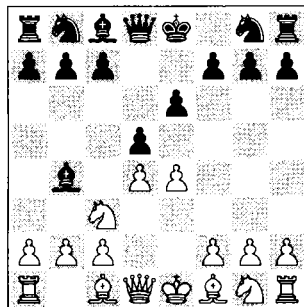
The labyrinths of the deviations can be tricky and dangerous, but only if you are not well prepared.

Chapter 1 – The Anti-Winawer



Against Smyslov, Botvinnik only scored 1½-2½ in their World Championship matches.

Directions – 1.e4 e6 2.d4 d5 3.♘c3 ♙b4 (lines without an immediate 4.e5)



In the anti-Winawer White does not advance his e-pawn, maintaining the tension in the centre and using his turn to achieve three possible aims:

- A) Sacrificing the e4 pawn temporarily or even permanently: 4.a3 (Game 1), 4.♙g4 (Game 2), 4.♙d2 (Game 3) and 4.♘e2 (Game 4). These are dangerous surprising weapons, recommended for tactical players. Black must be well prepared.
- B) Defending the pawn on e4: 4.♙d3 or 4.♙d3 (Game 5)
- C) Exchanging, simplifying the pawn structure and the game: 4.exd5 (Game 6)

B and C are quite modest lines with low winning chances.

A) Sacrificing the Centre – Games 1-4

GAME 1 – Following a famous game: 4.a3 (1845 Mega games=51.1%)

The ambitious move 4.a3 gained its first popularity thanks to Alekhine's vic against Euwe (World Championship Match 1935, round 3), and also after some cessful games by the 7th World Champion Vasily Smyslov, mainly against Botvni and Uhlmann. Later the legendary Bobby Fischer tried it in 6 games (4,5 poi but usually against the Winawer/3...♙b4 he preferred the main pawn advance 4.e

In modern chess this variation is quite rarely seen at the highest level. How we have to check some old games by Ukrainian grandmaster Gennady Kuzmin expert of 4.a3, and some fresh ideas by Serbian grandmasters Miladinovic Ivanisevic, who still manage to find new attractive paths, helping White's cause.

In this book I could not leave out the following famous game, as a fine example

□ **Robert Fischer**

■ **Vlatko Kovacevic**

Rovinj/Zagreb 1970 (8)

1.e4 e6 2.d4 d5 3.♘c3

The most popular move in recent years.

3...♙b4 4.a3



White spends a tempo to force the exchange ♙x♘.

4...♙xc3+

The retreat 4...♙a5 must be weaker. White has a pleasant choice between 5.b4 and the exchange 5.exd5, which is more favourable in this line.

5.bxc3 dxe4!

Accepting the consequences is the right way. A solid try is 5...♘e7, but as Psakhis has correctly commented, Black has difficulty obtaining full equality after, for instance, 6.♙d3 c5 7.exd5 exd5



Vlatko Kovacevic: an open game with Bobby Fischer.

(7...♘xd5 8.♖g4↑) 8.dxc5!±

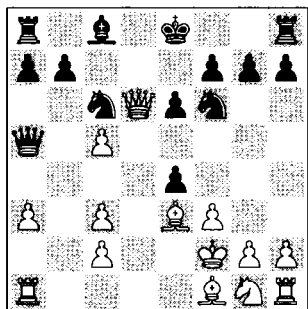
G.Kuzmin-Chernin, USSR Cup 19 Black faces a tough struggle for the d6 **6.♖g4!**

This manoeuvre is generally considered to be the most dangerous resource against the Winawer Variation. Black has to face it in many lines.



WEAPON: *The Winckelmann Riemer Gambit 6.f3 can be used with the straightforward 6...c5! (6...e5:*

probably a good alternative; 6...♘d7 is given by Watson) 7.♙c3 ♖a5! 8.dxc5 (in the game Simon-De Francesco, Balatonbereny 1995, White tried 8.fxe4 ♖xc3+ 9.♙d2 ♖xd4 10.♘f3 ♖xe4+♠, but with three extra pawns you can never lose! 8...♘c6 (8...♘f6!?) 9.♙f2 ♘f6 10.♖d6, as in Velicka-Babula, Czech tt 1994/95.



analysis diagram

Here, instead of 10...exf3 I recommend 10...♘d5!, playing for the initiative (also 10...♘e7!?): 11.♞e1 ♘xe3 12.♞xe3 e5!♠. Black intends simply ...♙e6 and ...♞d8, for instance: 13.♙c4 ♙e6! 14.♙xe6 ♞d8!, winning the queen.

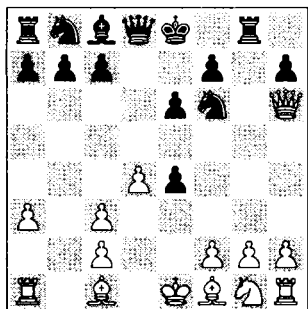
6...♘f6!

The best defence versus ♖g4 here.

7.♖xg7

Remember the opening rule: Beware of taking pawns with the queen; they might be poisoned.

7...♞g8 8.♖h6



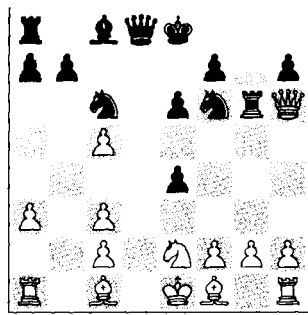
We have reached the key position of the 4.a3 variation: White has two bishops and he would like to open up the game, but the pawn structure favours Black (and the pawn on e4 is still a strong soldier which, by the way, will decide this game).

Black has a few typical alternatives here. Some of them follow the same concept, and it is advisable to consider them all: 8...♘bd7, 8...c5, 8...♞g6 and 8...b6.

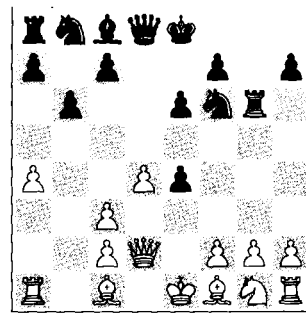
8...♘bd7

Perhaps the most flexible move, and mainly good if connected to the thematic fianchetto: ...b6 and ...♙b7.

A) Botvinnik's favourite defence was the energetic break **8...c5!?** **9.♘e2** Forced; ≤ 9.dxc5 ♘bd7 10.♙g5?! ♞g6 11.♙xf6 ♘xf6 12.♖e3 ♖a5 13.♖d4 ♙d7 14.♖b4 ♖c7 15.♞b1 0-0-0♠ with a huge lead in development for Black in Agamalian-Petrosian, Tbilisi 1944; 9.♙b2?! ♙d7!?!⇒ Psakhis. **9...♘c6** The defensive resource 9...♞g6 may be premature in some cases – see below. I think that saving this move for later is more useful: 10.♖d2 ♘bd7 (10...♖a5!?! Banas-Knaak, Trnava 1981) 11.g3! (11.♙b2 b6 12.h3?! ♙b7 13.♞g1 ♖c7 14.0-0-0 0-0-0 15.♖f4= Smyslov-Botvinnik, Moscow Wch m-21 1954) 11...b6 12.♙g2 ♙b7 13.0-0 ♖c7 14.a4!? 0-0-0 15.a5! ♘e5 16.axb6 axb6 17.♖f4 ♘f3+ 18.♙xf3 exf3 19.♖xc7+ ♙xc7 20.♘f4 ♞gg8 21.dxc5 bxc5 22.♘d3↑ G.Kuzmin-Dolmatov, Moscow 1981. **10.dxc5!?** Finally White tries to open the game and force matters. 10.♙g5 is a standard attack, but it does not seem dangerous here: 10...♞g6 (10...♘g4!?) 11.♖h4 cxd4⇒ is good for Black in every case, a line which was originally played in Romanovsky-Botvinnik, Leningrad 1938. **10...♞g6!**



analysis diagram



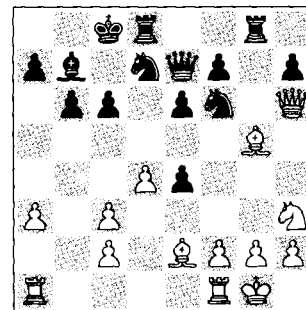
analysis diagram

11. ♖d2 ♜a5!? ≤ 11... ♙d7 12. ♞b1 ♜c7
 13. ♜d6± Smyslov-Botvinnik, Moscow
 Wch m-19 1954. 12. ♘d4 ♜xc5 12...a6?
 13. ♘xc6 bxc6 14. ♜d4± Ziatdinov-
 Rozentalis, Moscow 1983. 13.a4!?
 13. ♘b5 ♘f8! 14.a4 ♘g8⇒ 13...a6
 14. ♙a3 ♜d5 15. ♞b1 ♙d7 16. ♘b3
 Miladinovic-Halkias, Athens 1999. Now
 after: 16...b5!⇒ Black has a very good po-
 sition – but the game has just begun!;

B) The most popular defence is
 8... ♞g6!? with a quite balanced game:
 9. ♜d2 9. ♜e3 ♘c6!? and the knight
 heads to e7-f5/d5 (or 9...c5!? 10. ♘e2
 ♘c6 11.dxc5 (after 11. ♙d2 Black has
 many interesting moves; for instance, I
 like 11...cxd4 12.cxd4 b6⇒) 11... ♜a5!?
 (Botvinnik's famous motif was 11... ♘g4
 12. ♜xe4 ♜d1+! 13. ♘xd1 ♘xf2+
 14. ♘e1 ♘xe4 15. ♘f4 ♞g8 16. ♙d3
 ♘xc5 17. ♙xh7 ♞h8 18. ♙d3±
 Smyslov-Botvinnik, Moscow Wch m-7
 1954) 12. ♙d2 Boleslavsky-Uhlmann,
 Krynica 1956. Now: 12...e5=) 10. ♙b2
 (10. ♘e2 ♘e7 11. ♘g3∞ Kosteniuk-
 Hoang Thanh Trang, Dresden ol 2008)
 10...b6 (10... ♘e7!?) 11.0-0-0 ♙b7=
 Fischer-Uhlmann, Herceg Novi blitz
 1970) 9...b6 10.a4!? As we will see in
 other lines, this is a modern Serbian
 weapon (10. ♙b2 ♙b7 11.0-0-0 ♜d6
 12.c4 ♘c6 13.f3 0-0-0 14. ♜e1 ♘a5⇒
 Smyslov-Uhlmann, Moscow 1960).

10... ♘c6! 11. ♘e2 ♙b7 12.c4 ♜d7!
 12... ♘h5?! Miladinovic-B.Kovacevic,
 Murska Sobota tt 2008. Now: 13.a5!
 13. ♙b2 0-0-0 ♞ Black is better prepared
 for direct action, Fries Nielsen-
 Sawadkuhi, Hamburg 2005;

C) Finally, 8...b6 is also playable, and
 quite similar to our main line 8... ♘bd7.
 At least I have not found any extra at-
 tacking resources for White: 9. ♘h3!?
 9. ♙g5 ♞g6!? (9... ♘bd7) 10. ♜h4 ♙b7
 11. ♘e2 (11. ♙b5+ ♘bd7 12. ♘e2=
 Knaak) 11...h6 12. ♙xh6 ♞g4 13. ♜h3
 ♘c6!?!∞; 9.g3 ♙b7 10. ♙g2 ♞g6
 11. ♜d2 S.Ivanov-Nevanlinna, Jyväskylä
 2003, and now 11... ♜d5!. 9... ♙b7
 10. ♙b5+ c6 10... ♘bd7! = 11. ♙xd7+?!
 ♘xd7 ♞. 11. ♙e2! ♘bd7 11... ♞xg2?
 12. ♘g5! c5 13. ♙f1 e3 14. ♙xe3±;
 11...c5?! 12.dxc5!↑ because of the open
 position. 12. ♙g5 12.0-0 ♜e7 13.a4 c5.
 12... ♜e7 13.0-0-0-0-0 ⇒




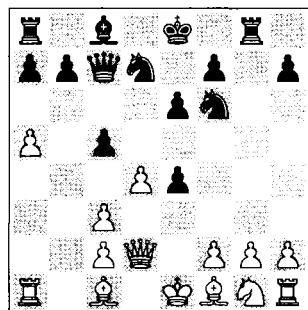
analysis diagram

The game is quite balanced, but the position is promising for Black right after the opening. For instance: 14.f3 ♖g6! (now this resource works perfectly) 15.♗h4 ♕dg8! 16.♖h1 h6 (here 16...exf3!? or 16...c5!? 17.fxe4 ♕xg5! are other weapons for Black) 17.♕xf6 ♗xf6 18.♗xf6 ♘xf6 and Black's position is not worse here at the very least, Hector-Brynell, Tastrup 1990.

9.♘e2

The most popular move and at least it is not worse than the alternatives:


 A) *The Serbian WEAPON* 9.a4!? is a modern and dynamic idea, played in many lines (with 4.a3) by Ivanisevic and Miladinovic. White opens up the game to the maximum, harassing the black king who has castled queenside. The queen's bishop may be activated along the diagonal a3-f8: 9...c5 9...♘b6!? may be an antidote for Black: 10.a5 ♘bd5 11.♘e2 ♗d6!? ⇒ preparing ...♕d7 and 0-0-0; or 9...b6 10.a5 ♕b7 ⇒ – no games with this line. 10.a5 ♗c7 11.♗d2.

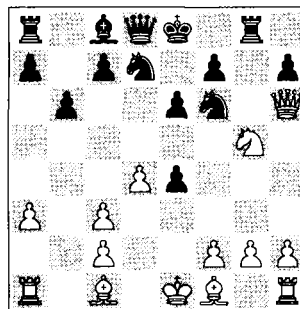


analysis diagram

It looks as if White is wasting lots of tempi, but the situation is highly unclear. The problem is the unsafe position of the black king.

11...b6!? 11...♕b8 12.♘e2± Ivanisevic-Psakhis, Internet blitz 2006. 12.♘e2 12.axb6 ♗xb6 13.♘e2 ♕a6⇒. 12...♕b7 13.♗f4 Miladinovic-Franic, Zadar 2007. Here, after 13...♗c8! Black's position is strong enough;


 B) *Ljubojevic's WEAPON* 9.♘h3!? was a success for White in its time. White prepares ♕g5 or ♘g5 while leaving the bishop on f1, with free development. However, after 9...b6! Black can go back to the line 8...b6 (9...c5 is very unclear here: 10.♕e2 ♗a5 11.♕d2 ♕xg2?! 12.♘g5 cxd4 13.♗g7 ♕xg5! 14.♗xg5 ♗xg5 15.♕xg5 dxc3 16.0-0 and White's chances are better in the resulting ending, Ljubojevic-Kortchnoi, Tilburg 1986): 10.♘g5



analysis diagram

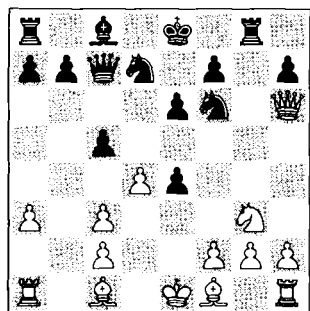
This possibility is one of the differences in comparison with ♘e2, but it doesn't matter!

10...♕g6! 11.♗h4 ♕b7 12.♘xh7 ♘xh7 13.♗xh7 ♗f6! and Black has obtained fantastic compensation for a pawn – apart from a certain psychological advantage! 14.♗h3 After 14.h4 0-0-0! 15.♕g5 ♕h8! Black is OK. 14...0-0-0 15.♗e3 ♗e7 16.♕b2?! f5 17.0-0-0 ♘f6⇒ with an excellent positional game for Black: 18.c4 ♕f8 18...♘g4!?. 19.f3 f4!↑, Rombaldoni-Rahal, Verona 2007;

 C) An amateur WEAPON:
 Black is better after 9.f3?! c5!
 10.♘e2 (≤ 10.♙b2 cxd4! 11.cxd4 ♖a5+♞
 Watson) 10...b6♞.

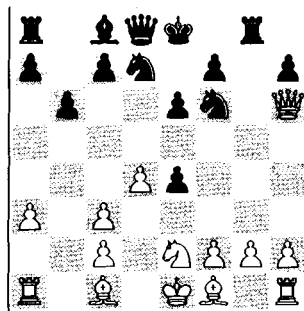
9...b6!

Recommended by Vukovic in *Sahovski Glasnik* in 1935. The idea of the fianchetto with ...♙b7 is a key concept for Black! (see also 8...b6) The sharpest option 9...c5 can lead to many transpositions related with line A, 8...c5: 10.♘g3 ♖c7!= A significant improvement on the following classical game: 10...♙g6?! After this loss of time Black's game becomes very difficult (Alekhine) ... the position of the rook on g6 provides White with a motif for a number of dangerous tactical blows (Kotov) 11.♖e3 ♘d5? 12.♖xe4 ♘xc3 13.♖d3♞ and White is much better because of the open position, Alekhine-Euwe, The Netherlands Wch m-3 1935; ≤ 10...♖a5 11.♙d2 b6 12.a4 cxd4 13.cxd4 ♖d5 14.♖e3± Ndlhovu-Hook, Novi Sad ol 1990.



analysis diagram

11.♙b5 11.♖e3 (Fischer-Byrne, New York ch-USA 1966) and now 11...b6!⇌. 11...♙g6 12.♖d2 12.♖e3 cxd4!. 12...a6 12...h5!?. 13.♙e2 b6! The fianchetto at last. 14.0-0 ♙b7⇌ Bloch-Huss, Siegen ol 1970.



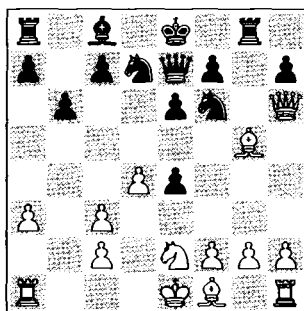
10.♙g5?!

This pseudo-active move leads to disaster for the 11th World Champion. 10.♘g3 is suggested by Smyslov, but Black has very positive results in this line. For instance: 10...♙g6 (10...♙b7!?) is similar) 11.♖d2 ♙b7 12.♙b2 ♖e7 13.0-0-0 0-0-0 14.c4 ♘g4! 15.h3? ♘xf2!♞ Leiros Vila-Garcia Gonzales, Pontevedra 1986.


Or 10.a4 ♙a6!⇌ 11.♙a3?! (H.Nielsen-Rosell, Denmark tt 1975/76) and now 11...c5!♞.


10...♖e7!

Casting doubt over White's 10th move. The key move! White must meet the threat of 11...♘g4 – (Kovacevic)



11.♖h4□

 TRICK: 11.♘g3?? ♘g4! 12.♙xe7 ♘xh6 13.♙h4 ♙g4-+;

 TRICK: 11.♘f4?! ♘g4! 12.♙xe7 ♘xh6 13.♙h4 ♘f5♞.

11...♙b7

Kovacevic gives credit to Alatorsev for the moves up to this point.


12. ♖g3!

12. ♖f4 h6 (12...0-0-0!? 13. ♖h5 ♖g6⇒
14. ♖f4 ♖xg5!? 15. ♖xg5 ♖g8 16. ♖b5
e5!≠ C.Garcia-Crotti, Posadas 2005)
13. ♖xh6 0-0-0 14. ♖h4 Estevez Mo-
rales-Vilela, Cienfuegos 1991. Here, af-
ter 14...♖h8!? 15. ♖h5 ♖f8 16. ♖xf6
♖xf6 17. ♖xf6 ♖xh5≠ Black has a clear
initiative for the pawn.

12...h6!

The deviation theme. Black will be the first to get his desired position.

13. ♖d2

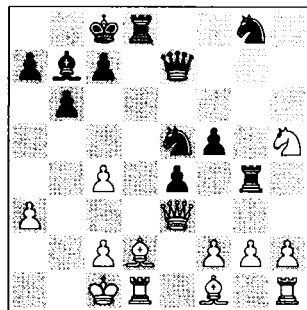
 *TRICK: 13. ♖xh6? loses the bishop after 13...♖g4 14. ♖xe7 ♖xh6 15. ♖h4 ♖g4—+.*

13. ♖xh6 ♖g4 14. ♖h3 0-0-0 15. ♖e2 ♖gg8 (15...♖g6!?) 16. ♖h4 ♖h8↑.

13...0-0-0!

This strong and logical move exposes the disadvantages of White's position: a delay in development, a bad pawn structure and a lack of coordination between the pieces.

However, the energetic **13...♖g4!?** is a modern alternative: **14. ♖xh6 14. ♖h3!?**∞ deserves some – computer – attention. **14...0-0-0 15.c4** To prevent ...♖d5, but: **15...♖g8!?** **16. ♖e3 f5!** Pushing the pawns – on the attack! **17. ♖h5 e5 18.dxe5 ♖xe5 19.0-0-0?**

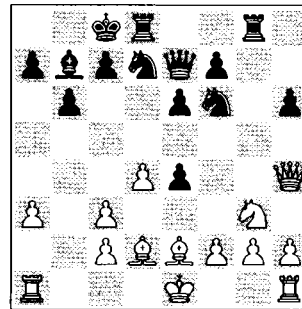


analysis diagram

Missing a nice reply.

19...♖d3+! Destroying White's position. **20.cxd3 ♖xa3+ 21.♖c2 exd3+ 22.♖xd3 ♖a2+ 23.♖c3 ♖xd3+! 24.♖xd3 ♖a3+ 25.♖c2 ♖e4 0-1** Romero Holmes-Matamoros Franco, Elgoibar 1997.

14. ♖e2



Here Kovacevic introduced his famous knight tango:

14...♖f8!?

I like this manoeuvre, which serves to improve Black's 'worst' piece. **14...♖d6?!** (Krasenkow-Stewart, Moscow 1990) seems a waste of time. The computer's line is: **14...e3!?** **15.fxe3 ♖xg2 16. ♖g1 ♖e4⇒.**

15.0-0?!

After this 'natural' move White faces serious difficulties. **15. ♖h5!?** (McDonald/Watson) leads to some complications after **15...♖xg2!?** (15...♖8d7=) **16. ♖xf6 ♖xf6 17. ♖xf6 ♖g6 18. ♖g4 e3 19. ♖xe3 ♖xh1 20.f3 ♖d7=**, but this seems alright for Black.

15...♖g6! 16. ♖xh6

16. ♖h3 ♖d5↑.

16...♖h8 17. ♖g5 ♖dg8!

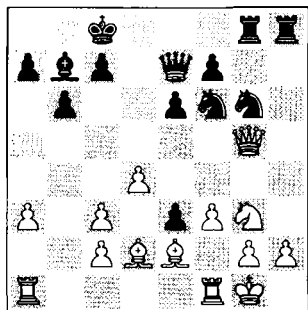
Reaching the desired position – the 'French' army is ready to attack.

18.f3!?

A tactical trick in a difficult situation. After **18.c4 ♖h4 19. ♖e3 ♖f3+! 20.gxf3**

♟d5! 21. ♖xe4 ♜c3! (Psakhis) Black's attack is irresistible.

18...e3!!



Rona Petrosian! According to an anecdote told by Viktor Kortchnoi in his book *Memuary Shakhmatista*, 2006 in the Russian language, it was Petrosian's wife who helped Kovacevic to find this strong reply. I don't think it was – Vlatko Kovacevic simply played a brilliant game!



TRICK: 18...♟h4? 19.fxe4!

19.♟xe3

19. ♖xe3 is not better, since after 19...♟d5 White's position is hopeless: 20. ♖g5 (20. ♖e4 ♖f6–+) 20...f6 21. ♖g4 f5! 22. ♖g5 ♖h7–+ wins in the attack.

19...♟f8!

In accordance with the 'tango' steps, after five moves the knight heads back to f8. This is stronger than the obvious 19...♟h4 20. ♖f2!? ♖xg5 21. ♟xg5 ♟f5 22. ♟e4 and White has some compensation for the queen.

20. ♖b5 ♟d5!

Now the game is over in view of ... ♖h4.

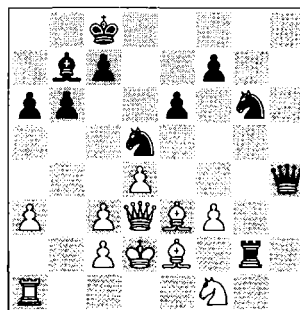
21. ♟f2

21. ♟d2 c6! 22. ♖d3 ♖h4–+.

21...a6 22. ♖d3 ♖xh2 23. ♖h1 ♖h4

24. ♖xh2 ♖xh2 25. ♟f1 ♖xg2+ 26. ♟e1

♖h4+ 27. ♟d2 ♟g6!



Another tango step – and one more piece joins in the attack.

28. ♖e1 ♟gf4 29. ♟xf4 ♟xf4 30. ♖e3 ♖f2 **0-1**

A superb game, particularly when you consider who was playing the White side – Psakhis.

Summary 4.a3

- Objectively, I think that this variation is playable for White, even in modern chess!
- Both sides have a hard time trying to judge (and play) the positions that appear after each line correctly.
- There are still lots of ideas and deviations hidden in all lines.
- Anyway, Botvinnik's 8...c5, the most popular 8...♖g6 and the fundamental 8...b6 are strong alternatives for 8...♟bd7.
- Black can combine all the knowledge given in the analysis of this game.
- Personally, I like the solid positions arising after the fianchetto with ...♟b7, even without the h-pawn.

GAME 2 – A Risky Queen Sortie: 4. ♖g4 (315 games=55.2%)

1-0 in Alekhine-Euwe, Round 9, 16th World Championship, 1935.

John Watson: *The 'Blitz Variation'*. White tries to save a tempo on 4.a3 by bringing his queen out immediately. The problem is that he hasn't strengthened his centre (as bxc3 did above), and Black can therefore counterattack more quickly in that sector. Although the debate about 4. ♖g4 is still raging, I think that an accurate play by Black makes it difficult for White even to equalise.

In fact, in this line Black has more active pieces and pawns, that is, a better development, and therefore he has more tempi and more opportunities for intermediate moves. The immediate central counterattack compensates for the central position of his king and the rest of his weaknesses.

□ Klaus Birk

■ Richard Ludwig

Germany tt 1995

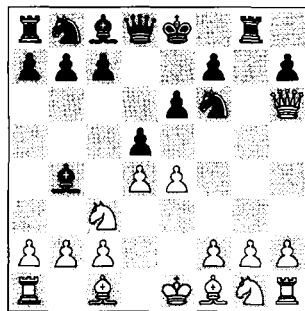
1.e4 e6 2.d4 d5 3. ♘c3 ♙b4 4. ♖g4

A risky continuation leading to sharp play with mutual chances.

4... ♗f6! 5. ♖xg7

Remember Tarrasch's axiom: *Any capture of a pawn with the queen in the opening is a mistake.*

5... ♖g8 6. ♖h6



6...c5!

The typical French break, and logical in this situation. Black's pieces are ready for action. There are two alternatives:

A) 6... ♖g6!? The main idea of this intermediate move is to taking on e4 with the knight. 7. ♖e3 and now:

A1) 7...c5! is still interesting here (some lines transpose to 6... c5): 8. ♙d2 For 8.a3!? ♙a5! see the analysis below, after 6...c5 7.a3; 8. ♗e2 cxd4 9. ♗xd4

♗xe4 ♖. 8... ♗c6!? 8...cxd4!? 9. ♖xd4 ♗c6 10. ♙b5 ♙xc3! 11. ♙xc3 ♗xe4 ♖; 8... ♗g4!? 9. ♖d3 ♗c6 ♖. 9. ♙b5 □



TRICK: 9. ♗f3? (the same applies to

9. ♗ge2?) 9...cxd4 10. ♗xd4 ♗g4!

11. ♖d3 ♙c5! 12. ♗xc6 ♙xf2+ 13. ♗d1 bxc6 14. ♗c1 ♙b6 ♖ Yilmaz-Morovic Fernandez, Dubai ol 1986.

9... ♙d7 10. ♙xc6 10. ♗ge2 ♖b6!

11. ♙xc6 ♙xc6 ♖. 10... ♙xc6 11. ♗ge2

11.0-0-0 dxe4 ♖. 11...dxe4 11... ♗g4!?

12. dxc5 ♗g4 12... ♖xg2! ♖. 13. ♖d4 ♖

Planinc-Byrne, Moscow 1975. Here the

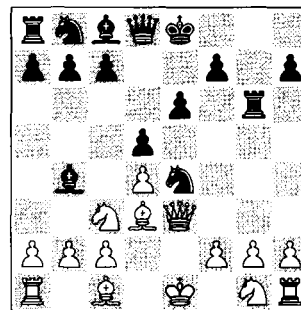
best continuation is 13...e3! 14. ♙xe3

(14.fxe3 ♙xc3! ♖) 14... ♖xd4! 15. ♗xd4

♗xe3 16.fxe3 ♙xg2 with a better game

for Black due to the bishop pair;

A2) 7... ♗xe4 8. ♙d3



analysis diagram


The key position of the 6... ♖g6 line. In the historic battle Alekhine-Euwe, The

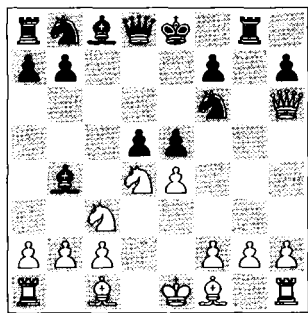
Netherlands Wch m-16 1935, Black played: **8...f5!** The Dutch-Stonewall according to Euwe. However, the knight on e4 does not need such help, so this move only weakens the king's position. **8...♖c6!?±**; **8...♖xg2** **9.♙xe4 dxe4** **10.♚xe4 ♗xc3+** **11.bxc3 ♚d5=**. **9.♗e2 c5** Now this break is not so attractive, as time is lost. **9...♖xg2!?∞**. **10.♙xe4** **10.0-0!†**. **10...fxe4∞** with an unbalanced position, precisely what Alekhine wanted in a game;

B) The move **6...dxc4** leads to simplifications: **7.♙g5** (**7.♙d2** transposes to the next game) **7...♖g6** **8.♙xf6 ♚xf6** **9.♚e3 ♗c6** **10.♗e2=** Schwab-Reim, Tirschenreuth 1982. Now, **10...♙xc3+** **11.bxc3 e5** gives Black enough counterplay.

7.e5

Here is some more good news:

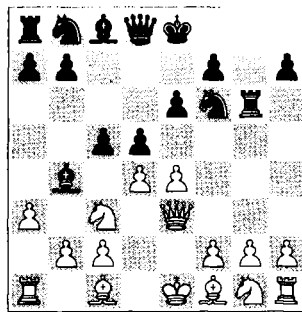
 A) TRICK: **7.♗e2?** loses almost by force: **7...cxd4** **8.♗xd4 e5!**



analysis diagram

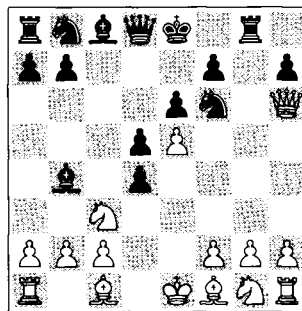
9.♙b5+ ♙d7 **10.♙xd7+ ♗bxd7** **11.♗f5 d4-+** and now **12.♗g7+** (**12.a3 ♙f8!**) **12...♖xg7** **13.♚xg7 dxc3** and Black is absolutely winning, Bartel-Szelag, Brzeg Dolny ch-POL jr 2001.

B) Miladinovic's weapon **7.a3** is probably the best try for White, trying to go back to the 4.a3 line, but Black will not allow him to do so: **7...♖g6!** **8.♚e3**



analysis diagram

8...♙a5! **8...cxd4!?** **9.♚xd4 ♗c6±**. **9.♙d2 ♗c6!** Black is ahead in development, so **10.♙b5** (Miladinovic-Calandri, Assisi 2003) and now **10...cxd4!** **11.♚xd4 ♙d7†** Black dominates the game from a dynamic point of view. **7...cxd4!**



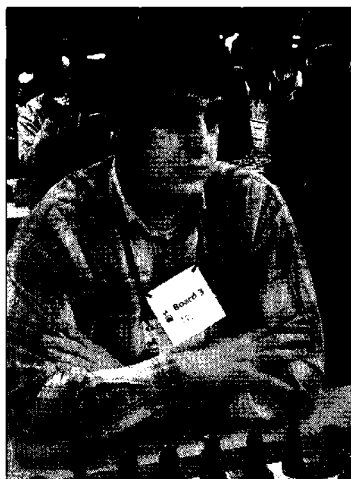
White is giving up his centre.

8.a3 ♙f8!

8...dxc3?! is a mistake which leads to a better ending for White: **9.axb4 cxb2** **10.♙xb2 ♚b6** (Ninov-Dragiev, Sofia ch-BUL 1995) and now: **11.b5** (**11.♚e3!?±**) **11...♚xf2+** **12.♗xf2 ♗g4+** **13.♗f3 ♗hx6** **14.♙d3±**.

9.♚xf6 ♚xf6 **10.exf6 dxc3** **11.♗e2**

It's obvious that White is the one who has to be careful if he wants to keep the balance. **11.bxc3 ♗d7** **12.♙b2 ♗xf6** **13.c4 ♙g7** **14.♖b1 dxc4** (**14...b6!†**) **15.♙xc4 b6** **16.♗f3 ♗d7†**, Penas



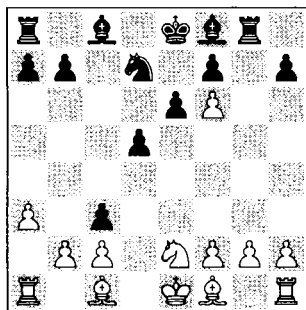
Igor Miladinovic: a modern killer of the French.

Hernandez-Bjerke, Oropesa del Mar jr 1999.

11...cxb2

The most ambitious and freshest option.

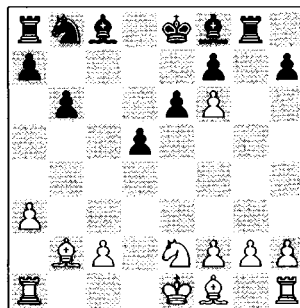
11...d7!?= is a radical solution, which is easy to play.



analysis diagram

For instance, **12.xc3 a6** Black won two games using this modest move which serves to avoid the threat **b5**. **12...d6!?** is similar: **13.g3 xf6 14.g2 d7 15.0-0 0-0-0** etc. Antoniewski-Shaked, Zagan Wch-jr 1997. **13.e3** Or **13.g3 xf6 14.g2 d7 15.0-0 c6 16.e3 0-0-0 17.ad1 d6 18.fe1 b8 19.a2**

xc8 Bojkov-Esen, Gothenburg Ech-tt 2005. **13...xf6 14.a4 d7 15.0-0-0 b5 16.b6 Bb8!?** Inviting White to trade his knight for the bishop. **17.xc8?!** Rejecting Black's offer and trading the knight was safer. **17...xc8 18.f4?! c5 19.c5 xc5** Campora-Rustemov, Dos Hermanas 2003. **12.xb2 b6**



Black has a superior pawn structure and he will try to exploit this.

13.g3

Creating a sarcophagus in order to defend against the menacing rook on g8. Or **13.d4 a6!**

13...a6

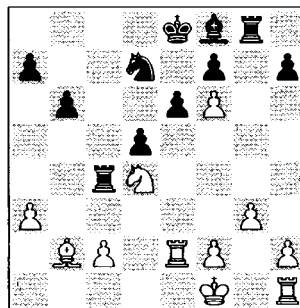
Assigning a task to the 'bad' French bishop. **13...d7!?** **14.d4 a6!**

14.d4?

14.f4 d7

14...xf1 15.xf1 d7 16.e1 c8

17.e2 c4



A desirable position for any Francophile.

18.♗f5 ♕d8! 19.♗e3 ♖a4 20.c4 dxc4
 21.♕g2 ♜g6
 ≥ 21...♕c7 ≠.
 22.♞d1 ♕c7 23.f4 ♗xf6 24.f5 ♜h6
 25.♙e5+ ♕c6 26.♙f4 ♜h5 27.g4

♗xg4 28.♗xg4 ♜xf5 29.♗e5+ ♕b5
 30.♜b2+ ♕a6 31.♞d7 c3 32.♜b3
 ♜axf4 33.♗c6 ♜f2+ 34.♕g3 ♜5f3+
 35.♕g4 b5 36.a4 ♕b6 37.♗d8 a6
 38.axb5 f5+ 39.♕g5 c2 0-1

Summary of the variation 4.♖g4

This variation is suspicious. White falls behind in development in order to capture the pawn on g7. Black has good counterattacking chances, mainly in the centre.

GAME 3 – Sharing the Concept, or a Classic Game: 4.♙d2 (1380 games=49.5%)



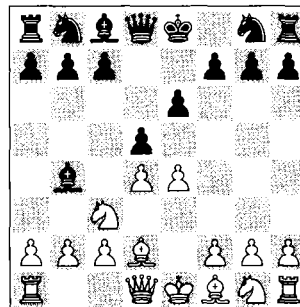
Famous Soviet/Estonian grandmaster Paul Keres (1916-1975) finally beat Botvinnik in their 13th game. Keres was an expert of the classical open game with many important victories against the strongest opposition.

- Paul Keres
- Mikhail Botvinnik

The Hague/Moscow Wch 1948 (25)

Prior to this game, Keres had a truly wretched score against Botvinnik: 6 draws and 6 losses in 12 encounters. So this victory must have been extremely sweet.

1.e4 e6 2.d4 d5 3.♗c3 ♙b4 4.♙d2



Once again, White's idea is ♖g4. The main difference is that White develops more rapidly here at the cost of a pawn.

4...dxe4!

On the ChessPublishing website, the amiable IM Goh Wei Ming wrote: *This is the principled move and the mainline of this variation which leads to some wild complications in the later stages.*

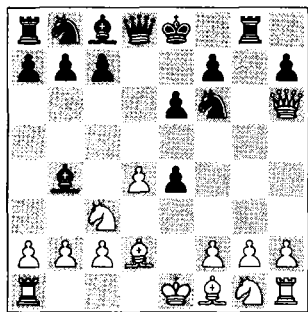
The flexible move 4...♗e7 can transpose to sub-lines of the Semi-Winawer (see Chapter 3, Game 9). Here is a game from my own experience with it:

5.♖g4 0-0 6.e5 f5!?⇒ (the strategic 6...b6!? transposes to Game 9) 7.♖g3 c5 8.0-0-0 cxd4 9.♗b5 ♕c5 10.♗f3 ♗bc6 11.♖g5 ♖b6 12.♕xe7 ♕xe7 13.♗bxd4 ♕d7♣ and Black has better chances on the queenside, Gamundi Salamanca-Moskalenko, Mallorca 2003.

5.♖g4

According to the same concept as in the two previous games.

5...♗f6! 6.♖xg7 ♖g8 7.♖h6



In my opinion, Black has two good options here.

7...♗c6

The Patriarch, the father of pragmatic chess, plays a natural developing move.

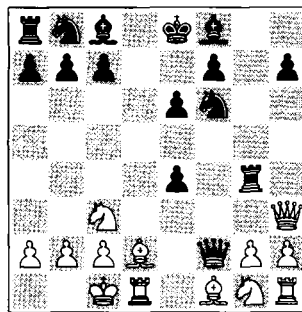
A) Accepting the central pawn with 7...♖xd4!? is more ambitious and looks more promising. Probably Botvinnik was afraid to enter this position without

any previous analytical work. Here the most popular continuation is 8.0-0-0?! (see A2), but this line is clearly worse for White than:

A1) 8.♗ge2!, the best move order before castling queenside. The arising position is quite equal, for instance:

A11) 8...♖e5 9.0-0-0! ♖g6 10.♖f4=, Werner-Wagner, Germany tt 1993/94. White compensates for the pawn deficit with better development and active pieces, but Black's fortress is also very solid;


A12) 8...♕f8! was also analysed by Goh Wei Ming. Black's perspectives are better: 9.♖h4 This is the main try. 9.♖h3? is considered dubious for many reasons, for instance: 9...♖xf2! 10.♗ge2 ♕d7! 11.g4 (11.♗g3 e3 12.♕e1 ♖f4 13.♕d3 ♖h6!-+) 11...♖xg4 12.♗g3 e3 13.♕e1 ♖f4 14.♕g2 ♖h6! 15.♖xh6 ♕xh6 16.♕xb7 ♕c6 17.♕xa8 ♕xa8 and Black is winning, Bezgodov-Kornev, Krasnoyarsk ch-RUS 2003. 9...♖g4! 10.♖h3 ♖xf2



analysis diagram

It seems that White hasn't got serious compensation for the two pawns: 11.♕e2 11.♕e3 ♖h4 12.♖xh4 ♖xh4 13.g3 ♖h5 14.♕e2 ♕h6! 15.♕xh6 ♖xh6♣ Cabanas Jimenez-Moreno Ruiz, Mostoles 2008. 11...♖h4! 11...♖g6 al-

lows some tactical complications after 12.g4!?. 12.♖xh4 ♖xh4 13.g3 and now, according to theory and practice, both 13...♗h6!± and John Watson's 13...e3 give Black excellent play;

 A13) TRICK: 8...♗g4 9.♗h4 and now there is a wonderful mate after 9...♗xf2?? (≥ 9...♗e7 10.♗xh7 ♗f6=; 9...♗d7 10.♗h3∞) 10.♗d8+!! ♗xd8 11.♗g5+ ♖e8 12.♖d8#.

B) As in many 'Sacrificing the Centre' lines, including 7...♖g6?! could be premature: 8.♗e3! (the best try to fight for an advantage) 8...♗c6 9.♗ge2 ♗xc3!? 10.♗xc3! (10.♗xc3 ♗e7 11.♗f4 ♗ed5 12.♗xd5 ♗xd5 13.♗f4 ♗d6= Gelbmann-Ziger, Werfen 1995) 10...♗d7 11.♗e3!? ♗e7 12.h3 0-0-0 13.0-0-0±. I think that this position is desirable for the white player who likes to practice open games.

8.0-0-0

The key moment, Black must find a way to move forward.

After 8.♗ge2 ♗e7 the position is balanced, for example: 9.0-0-0 ♗g4 10.♗xh7 ♗f6=.

But 8...♗xd4!?. is more complicated: 9.♗xd4 ♗xd4 10.0-0-0∞ Budimir-Simonyi, Senta 2007.



8...♖g6!

In this position this move is correct. It defends the knight on f6. From now on,

taking the d4 pawn is too dangerous: 8...♗xd4? 9.♗g5! ♖g6 10.♗h4!±. The same goes for 8...♗xd4? 9.♗b5 ♗xd2+ 10.♖xd2 ♗e5 11.f4!±.

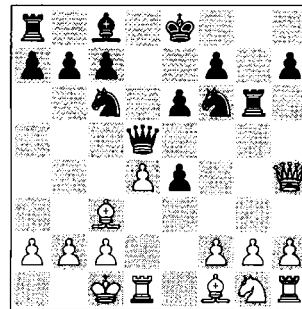
9.♗h4

9.♗e3?! ♗xd4 10.♗e1 ♗xc3!? 11.♗xc3 ♗c5±.

9...♗xc3!?

Looking to unbalance the game and start creative play. Black could offer a draw by playing 9...♖g4 10.♗h3 ♖g6 11.♗h4 ♖g4=.

10.♗xc3 ♗d5=



The position is equal, but of course there is a lot of play on the board. Strategically, Botvinnik wants make to use of the light squares and Keres will play on the opposite ones.

11.b3 ♗e7!?

A central set-up is appropriate for Botvinnik. 11...a5 was a flank attempt.

12.f3

Continuing the concept of 'playing an open game'. 12.♗e2!± was an alternative option: after 12...♗d6 things are unclear.

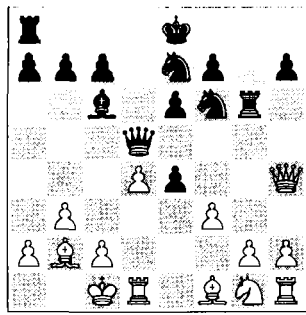
12...♗d7!∞

The golden rule is: develop before taking action.

13.♗b2

Preparing c2-c4. 13.fxe4 ♗xe4! 14.♗f3 ♗c6±.

13...♗c6!



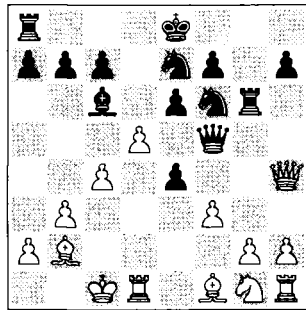
Time to draw up a balance. Finally the black army is also well prepared. Therefore White cannot wait anymore and must start some active play.

14.c4! ♖f5

The safest and most logical queen move. The ending is better for White: **14...♗h5?! 15.♗xh5 ♘xh5 16.♞e1±**. But **14...♗d6!?** deserved attention: **15.d5 exd5 16.♘e2 0-0-0∞**.

Finally, **14...♗a5** seems too risky, but after the forced variation **15.d5 exd5 16.♙xf6 ♘f5 17.♗f4 (17.♗e1 ♗xe1 18.♞xe1 ♞xf6 19.cxd5 ♙xd5 20.fxe4 ♞e6=)** **17...♞xf6 18.♗e5+ ♞e6 19.♗xf5 ♗xa2** chances are equal. The white king is exposed.

15.d5!



The opening phase is concluded and the real battle begins. However, White still has undeveloped kingside pieces and this factor neutralizes his own attack.

15...exd5 □ 16.fxe4?

An inaccurate move. **16.♘h3!?** could be a more critical try: **16...dxc4! 17.♙xc4 b5!±**; or **16.♘e2 dxc4 17.♘g3 ♗c5±** and the position is dynamically balanced.

16...dxe4

Botvinnik aims for a strong e-pawn. **16...♘xe4!?** brings the pieces into play: **17.♘f3 ♞g4 18.♗e1 □ dxc4 (after 18...0-0-0!?) ♞ Black is very solid) 19.♙xc4 ♞xg2 20.♞f1 ♘d6** with complications, but also with two extra pawns.

17.♘h3 ♘g4

17...♘d7! 18.♗xh7 0-0-0±.

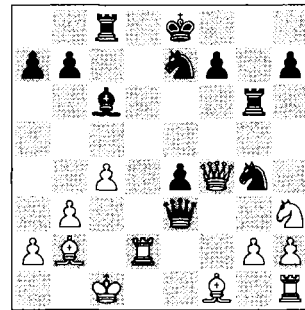
18.♗g3

18.♗xh7 ♞g8 19.♗h4 ♘e3±.

18...♗c5

18...♗a5!?

19.♗xc7 ♞c8 20.♗f4 ♗e3+ 21.♞d2



The most tense moment of this classic game.

21...♗xf4?!

21...♗e1+ 22.♞d1 ♗e3+ was a correct draw.

22.♘xf4 e3 23.♞c2?!

Probably both players were a little tired in this World Championship tournament game, which was played in Round 25! Consequently they lost their way course at the most critical moments during time-trouble... **23.♞d4!±.**

23...♞g5= 24.♙e2 ♘f2?

24...♙e4! was the only move; 25.♖c3 ♜f5=.

25.♗e1± ♖d8

It is too late to play 25...♙e4 26.♙f3! ♙xc2 27.♜xc2±.

26.g3?

26.♙f1!±.

26...♖f5?

26...♙e4! 27.♖c3 ♜f5=.

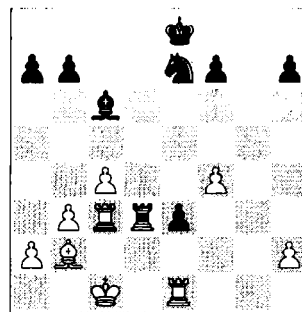
27.♙f1 ♖xf4?

The losing move. 27...♙f3!? was the only chance to complicate the game.

28.gxf4 ♜d3+ 29.♙xd3 ♖xd3

30.♖c3!+-

This simplification leads to a technical win.



30...♖xc3+ 31.♙xc3 ♜f5 32.♙d2! ♜d7

33.♙xe3 b6 34.♙f2 f6 35.♜d2 h5

36.♜d3 ♜h6 37.♙h4 f5 38.♖e7+ ♜d6

39.h3!

Black resigned.

Summary

4.♙d2 is a quite solid line, but this is not enough in an open game. The arising positions are at least not worse for the black side.

GAME 4 – The Two Knights: 4.♜e2 (4247 games=55.3%)

The variation 4.♜e2 was analysed for both sides in *The Flexible French* (Game 73). My general summary has not changed yet: the Two Knights Variation with 4.♜e2 is one of many Anti-Winawer lines, which is quite fashionable these days. It offers an escape from the main lines and interesting play. Objectively it gives an equal game (after 4...dxe4 5.a3 ♙xc3 6.♜xc3 ♜c6, White must play 7.d5=). However, the final outcome usually depends on both players' knowledge of the line.

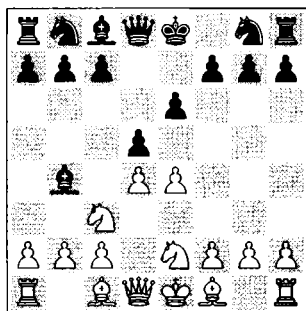
Here is an update on the most combative line for the black side.

□ Jorge De la Riva Aguado

■ Viktor Moskalenko

Sitges 2006 (3)

1.e4 e6 2.d4 d5 3.♜c3 ♙b4 4.♜e2



White prepares a2-a3 with an idea based on the fundamental chess concepts: achieving the favourable ♙x♜ trade. However, Black can reply in vintage French style with:

4...♜f6!?

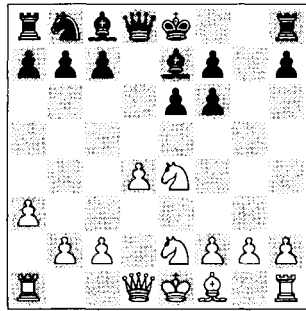
And the opening discussion (the fight for the e4-point) continues. The text move looks very logical: Black develops and puts pressure on the centre. But we are not in a genuine French here! The most straightforward way to equalize is 4...dxe4!?, see the notes to Game 73 in my book *The Flexible French*.

5.e5

Closing the centre is not common in the anti-Winawer, but what to do?

A) The gambit **5.a3** can be accepted with pleasure: **5...♙xc3+ 5...♙e7!?** is more complex: **6.e5 ♟fd7 7.f4** – see below after **6.f4. 6.♟xc3 ♟xe4 7.♟xe4 dx4 8.♚g4 8.♙e3 0-0♚. 8...♚xd4 9.c3 ♚f6 10.♚xe4 ♟c6 11.♙e3 e5 12.♙d3 ♙e6♚** Holzhäuer-Renner, Germany Bundesliga B 2000/01;

B) Another popular motif is **5.♙g5!?** counter-pinning in MacCutcheon fashion: **5...dx4 6.a3 ♙e7! 7.♙xf6 7.♚d2 ♟bd7 8.♟g3 h6 9.♙xf6 ♟xf6 10.♟gx4 ♟xe4 11.♟xe4=** Gipslis-Matlak, Ostrava 1992. **7...gxf6 8.♟xe4**



analysis diagram

This position is also important for the theory of **4.♟e2**.

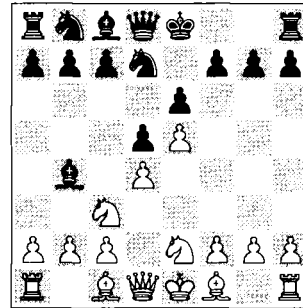
B1) It is not so clear which is the best move order for Black. The most popular idea is playing **8...b6!?** first. Many times it leads to the same position, but it also allows some deviations for both sides: **9.♚d2 ♙b7 10.♟4c3 c6!?** (blocking the d5-square) **11.g3 ♟d7 12.♙g2 ♚c7 13.♚h6 0-0-0 14.♚h5 ♚df8 15.0-0 f5 16.♟f4 ♟f6 17.♚f3 ♚d8 18.♚ad1 h5♚** and Black was better in T.Willemze-Nepomniachtchi, Wijk aan Zee C 2007;

B2) **8...f5 9.♟4c3** If **9.♟4g3?! ♟d7!?** **10.♚d3 ♟f6 11.0-0-0 ♟g4! 12.d5**

♚xd5!♚. 9...♟d7!? A solid set up, but there are neither many games, nor theory. Now **9...b6!?** is a worse option due to the fragile pawn chain **e6-f7-f5: 10.♟g3!?** (**10.♟f4 ♙b7 11.d5 ♚d6 12.g3∞** Alvarez Ibarra-Moskalenko, Renedo 2009) **10...♙b7 11.d5! (11.♙b5+?! c6♚, Del Valle Cirera-Moskalenko, Sitges 2009) 11...♙f6 12.♙c4!↑. 10.g3 ♟f6 11.♙g2** and here the improvement is **11...♚d6!** instead of **11...c6±** (Novak-Nepeina Leconte, Bled ol 2002): **12.♚d2 ♙d7! 13.0-0-0 13.♙xb7 ♚b8 14.♙g2 ♚xb2⇒. 13...0-0-0=** Both armies are ready for action.

5...♟fd7!?

Transposing to structures similar to those of the Classical French. The alternative move **5...♟e4**, imitating the MacCutcheon Variation, was deeply analysed in *The Flexible French*, Game 73.



6.♚d3

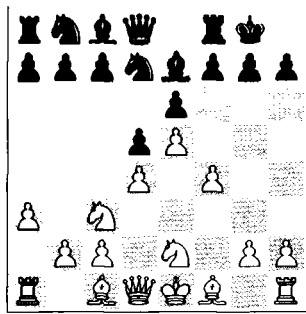
A sharp line. White prepares queenside castling.

6.a3 ♙e7!;

6.♟f4 c5! 7.a3 (7.♚g4 0-0!♚)

7...♙a5!? **8.♚g4 0-0 9.♟h5 g6⇒;**

After **6.f4 0-0 6...b6!?** **7.a3 ♙e7? 8.f5!±** Kalod-Moskalenko, Catalunya tt 2007; **6...c5?! 7.a3±. 7.a3 ♙e7!** we have achieved a hybrid of the Classical French (**3.♟c3 ♟f6**) and the 'Pawn Wedge Tarrasch' (**3.♟d2**), also analysed in *The Flexible French*.



analysis diagram

8.g3 c5 9.♙e3 ♘c6 10.♙g2 b6! 11.0-0 ♘a6⇒. In the game Asis-Moskalenko, Montcada 2006, White continued 12.♞f2 ♞c8 13.f5!? and here 13...♙g5! 14.♙f4 ♙xf4 15.gxf4 ♞h4⇒ was good for Black.

6...0-0! 7.a3

7.♞g3 f6!⇒.


7...♙e7!

The Winawer bishop has become Classical. 7...♙xc3+?! 8.♞xc3±.

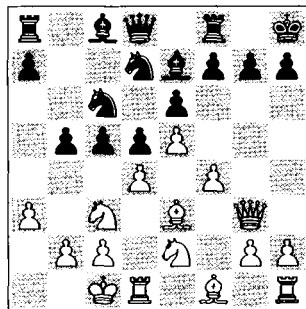
8.♞g3 ♙h8!

Defending against ♙c1-h6.

8...c5? 9.♙h6±.


 **WEAPON:** 8...♙h4 is a tricky tactical option: 9.♞g4 f5! 10.♞h5!? (10.exf6 ♞xf6 11.♙f4 ♘b6⇒; 10.♞h3 c5 11.♘f4 ♞e8 12.♘b5 ♘c6⇒) 10...c5 11.♘f4 cxd4 12.♘xe6 g6 with an extremely unbalanced position.

9.♙e3 c5 10.0-0-0 ♘c6 11.f4 b5!



Beginning the counterattack – time is the prevalent rule! You can learn about the Five Touchstones in my book *Revolutionize your Chess*, New In Chess 2009.

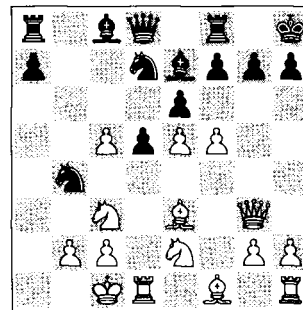
12.dxc5

 **WEAPON:** Accepting the gift with 12.♘xb5?! can lead to a quick catastrophe, which was confirmed in the following game: 12...♞b8 13.♘ec3 c4! 14.♙e2 f5!? (14...♞b6! was even stronger, with the idea of 15...a6) 15.♞f2 (15.exf6 ♘xf6) 15...♞a5 16.♘d6 ♙a6 17.♞e1 ♙xd6 18.exd6 ♘f6 19.♙f3 ♞b6 0-1 R.Perez-Rustemov, Villa de Albox 2002.

12...b4!

The trick of the Black Magic is to open the game on the right side.

13.axb4 ♘xb4 14.f5!?



White is behind on the other side, so he decides to provoke some complications.

14...♙xc5?!

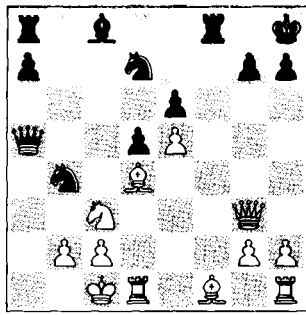
A logical move, but it costs time. 14...♞a5! was more in the attacking spirit: 15.f6 (15.♙b1 exf5 16.c6 ♘c5!) 15...gxf6 16.exf6 ♙xf6 17.♙b1 ♙a6→.

15.fxe6 fxe6 16.♘d4 ♙xd4! 17.♙xd4?

The bishop on d4 is not like the knight on the same spot!

17.♞xd4! was the last chance to fight for the initiative.

17...♞a5→



The end of the drama is near.

18. ♖e2 ♗a6

18... ♜a1+!?

19. ♘g4 ♜a1+ 20. ♖b1

20. ♗d2 ♜xb2 21. ♞c1 ♞ac8 22. ♗xe6
♗c5 23. ♗xc8 ♗b3+-+

20... ♞ac8 21. c3 ♗a2+ 22. ♗c2 ♞b8

23. b4 ♗xb4+ 24. cxb4 ♞fc8+ 25. ♗c5
♜a2+ 0-1

Summary

The line 4. ♗e2 ♗f6!? leads to a creative semi-open game, where the final outcome depends on the skills of both players.

B) Defending the Centre

GAME 5 – Two Modest Lines: 4. ♗d3 (1660 games=54.8%) and 4. ♜d3 (619 games=58.2%)

White defends his pawn on e4 and keeps the options open in the centre. However, Black gets a nice range of possibilities and extra tempi to complete his development.

□ **Martin Lorenzini**

■ **Viktor Moskalenko**

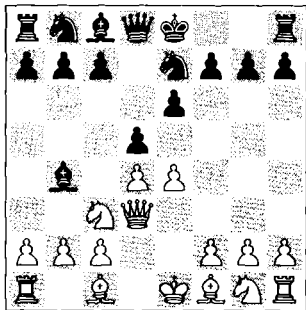
Alicante 2000 (9)

1.e4 e6 2.d4 d5 3. ♗c3 ♗b4 4. ♗d3

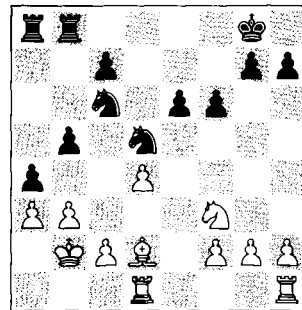
Watson: This lacks punch and is seldom seen at the top levels any more.

Another modest line is 4. ♜d3. *Watson: White covers e4 and would like to transfer the queen to pressure the kingside. In addition, he can prepare 0-0-0 by say, ♗d2 ... but generally, the queen is not well placed on d3. 4... ♗e7!?*

This is more flexible than 4... ♗f6 or 4... dxe4 and it enables Black to save some tempi. 5. ♗d2 0-0 6. a3 6. ♗f3 b6! 7. a3 ♗a6! 8. ♜e3 ♗xc3± transposes, Roca Calaf-Moskalenko, Sant Boi 2001. 6... ♗xc3!? 7. ♗xc3 b6! Typical counterplay. 8. 0-0-0 ♗a6 9. ♜e3 ♗xf1 10. ♞xf1 a5! The bishop on c3 is now useless. 11. ♗f3 ♗bc6 12. ♗d2 b5 13. ♜d3 dxe4 14. ♜xc4 ♜d5 15. ♜xd5 ♗xd5 16. ♞d1 ♞fb8 17. b3 a4! The white pieces are out of play. 18. ♗b2 f6!±



analysis diagram



analysis diagram

With a comfortable endgame, which allowed Black to win easily: 19. ♖he1 ♕f7 20. ♖e2 ♖a6 21. g4 b4! 22. axb4 axb3 23. c3 ♖a2+ 24. ♕xb3 ♖xc3! —+ Jerez Perez-Moskalenko, Barbera 1999.

4...dxe4!

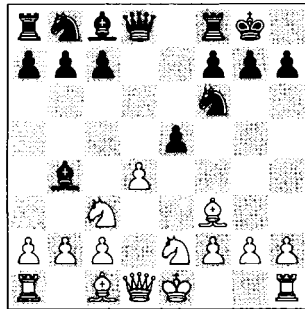
Taking advantage of the over-developed bishop on e4. 4... ♖f6? 5. e5±.

5. ♖xe4 ♖f6

5...c5 is similar.

6. ♖g5

A) 6. ♖f3 is more popular, although this move seems harmless: 6...0-0 Or 6...c5!? 7. ♖e2 (7.a3 ♖xc3+!? 8.bxc3 0 0 9. ♖e2 e5!±) 7...0-0 8.0-0 cxd4 9. ♖xd4 e5= Levski501-CapNemo, playchess.com 2009) 7. ♖e2 e5!



analysis diagram

Probably the most forcing way to obtain an equal game.

TRICK: in case of 8.dxe5?! ♖xd1+ 9. ♕xd1 ♖g4! White is the one who has to be careful: 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 ♖ Muromtsev-Lysyj, Sochi tt-2 2006;

8.0-0 ♖xc3!? 9. ♖xc3 9.bxc3?? e4—+. 9...exd4 10. ♖b5 c5 11. ♖f4 a6 A primitive but safe route; 11... ♖e8!? 12.c3 a6 13. ♖a3 ♖c6= Lejlic-Grover, Dubai 2009. 12. ♖d6 ♖c6 13.c3 ♖e6!?

14. ♖xc6 14. ♖xb7 ♖b6 15. ♖d6 ♖ad8±. 14...bxc6 15.cxd4 cxd4 16. ♖xd4 ♖e8= and the draw is obvious here, Kalod-Moskalenko, Badalona 2005;

B) 6. ♖d3 is grandmaster Djuric's specialty: 6...c5! 7. ♖e2 cxd4 8. ♖xd4 0-0 9.0-0 e5! 10. ♖de2 ♖c6 11.a3 ♖e7= Djuric-Moskalenko, Calpe rapid 2000.

6...c5

6...h6?! 7. ♖xf6 ♖xf6 8. ♖f3±.

7. ♖f3



The key moment.

7...cxd4!?

This is the positional refutation of White's strategy.

The tactical path is less clear: 7... ♖xc3+ 8.bxc3 ♖a5 9. ♖xf6 ♖xc3+ 10. ♖d2 gxf6∞.

8. ♖xd4 ♖bd7!N

Comfortably preparing ...h7-h6.

9. ♖e2 h6!? 10. ♖d2

10. ♖xf6 ♖ is a psychologically impossible exchange.

10...0-0 11.0-0 ♖e7!

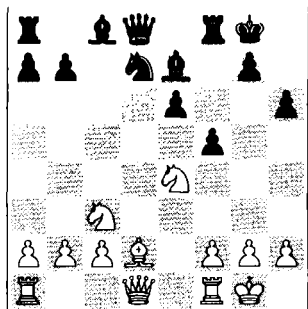
A useful manoeuvre prior to the capture of the bishop on e4.

11... ♖e5!±.

12. ♖g3 ♖xe4

Eliminating the strongest white piece — or was it the weakest?

13. ♖gxe4 f5!



18. ♖e3 ♜e8!

Bringing the queen to the kingside.

18... ♜c7!?

19. ♘d6 ♙xd6 20. ♜xd6 ♙d7

20... ♘h4!? 21. ♘e4 b6→.

21.f3 ♙c6—+

The punishment starts.

14. ♘g3 f4 15. ♘ge4 f3!±

Nasty harassment. 15... ♘e5 is also good.

16. gxf3

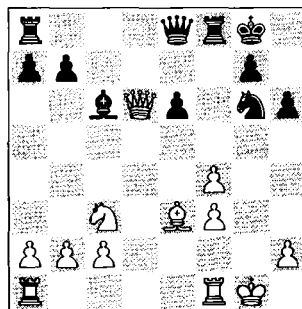
16.g3 ♜e8→.

16... ♘e5→

White's fortress has some glaring holes.

17.f4 ♘g6

≤ 17... ♘c4?! 18. ♙e3.



My opponent decided to avoid the torture by the great French bishop and resigned.

C) The Exchange

GAME 6 – Simplification versus Symmetry: 4.exd5 (4157 games=53,4%)

This method was first World Champion Wilhelm Steinitz's main weapon against the Winawer Variation. The popularity of the exchange of central pawns has continued from the classical period up to the modern era (just like the Exchange Variation 3.exd5), until Black found several easy paths to follow. The truth is that defending here is not hard at all for Black: the most important thing to keep in mind is not to be too ambitious and to patiently keep simplifying the game.


Nowadays this line is rarely used by strong players. I'll try to show the road Black has to follow to get a balanced game. The examples are mainly from my own practice.

□ Lluís Maria Perpinya Rofes

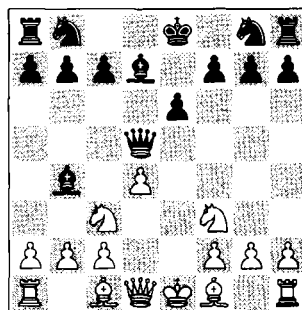
■ Viktor Moskalenko

Badalona 2007 (7)

1.e4 e6 2.d4 d5 3.♘c3 ♙b4 4.exd5
exd5

 WEAPON: 4... ♜xd5 is playable for players who desire to unbalance the game.

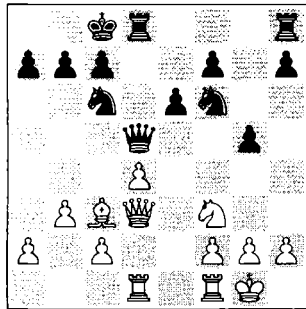
I have tried an interesting plan on the Internet: 5. ♘f3 ♙d7.



analysis diagram

The idea is to prepare ...♙b5!?, and continue with ...♘c6 followed by castling queenside. For example:

6.♙d2 (6.♙d3 ♖b5 7.0-0 ♙xc3 8.bxc3 ♙xd3 9.cxd3 ♘c6 10.c4 ♚d7 11.♞b1 0 0-0)∞ Sattar-CapNemo, playchess.com 2006) 6...♙xc3 7.♙xc3 7.bxc3 ♖b5 (7...♘f6 8.♙d3 ♖b5 9.0-0 ♙xd3 10.♚xd3 ♘c6 11.♞ad1 0-0-0 12.b3 g5!



analysis diagram

The desired position for Black.

13.♚e3 g4 14.♘e5 ♘xe5 15.♚xe5 ♘e4 16.♖b2 ♚xe5 17.dxe5 ♘d2 18.♞fe1 ♞d7 19.♙c1 ♞hd8± Sulashvili-CapNemo, playchess.com 2006.

5.♙d3

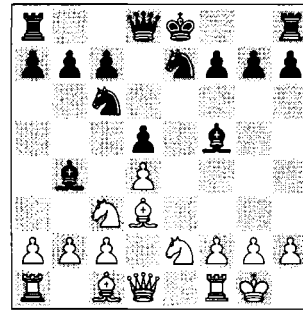
After 5.♚f3?! Black gets an excellent game with the most precise move: 5...♚e7+!

5...♘f6!?

A logical and good move. Right now, this is my favourite defensive method. My opponents have tried various ways of fighting for the initiative, but with no great success.

Alternatively, 5...♘c6 can be played. This has been the most popular continuation in the past few years: 6.♘e2 6.a3 ♙xc3+ 7.bxc3 ♙e6 (7...♚f6 8.♞b1 ♘ge7 9.♚f3 ½-½ Wemmers-Khuzman, Ohrid tt 2009) 8.♞b1 b6 9.♚f3 ♚d7 10.♘e2 ♘ge7 11.a4 ♙f5= Hernandez

Gallardo-Arizmendi Martinez, Palma de Mallorca ch-ESP 2009. 6...♘ge7 7.0-0 ♙f5=



analysis diagram

Capablanca-Alekhine, Buenos Aires Wch m-1 1927. Alekhine even won this famous game in 43 moves. This game brought about the era of the Winawer since the feared exchange line had been shown to be innocuous. (Taulbut, CBM)

6.♘e2

The most flexible continuation.

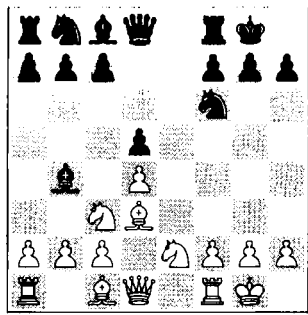
A) 6.a3 ♙d6! 6...♙xc3+ 7.bxc3 0-0 is equal in my opinion. 7.♘b5 ♙e7 8.♙f4 ♘a6 9.♘e2 c6 10.♘bc3 ♘c7 11.h3 ♘e6 12.♙e5 ♘d7 13.♙h2 0-0 14.f4?! ♙f6 15.♙g1 ♞e8± Nataf-Tu Hoang Thong, Montreal 2007;

B) 6.♙g5?! A pseudo-active move: 6...h6 7.♙h4 0-0 8.♘e2



TRICK: 8.♚f3?? is another rare manoeuvre that almost loses the game: 8...g5! 9.♙g3 ♙g4 10.♚e3 c5!-+, winning in Ferron Garcia-Moskalenko, Villa Salou 1999.

8...♞e8 9.0-0 c6 Zugzwang! 10.f4 ♙g4! 10...♘bd7=. 11.h3 ♙xe2 12.♘xe2 ♘bd7 Black now has at least an equal game, Perpinya Rofes-Moskalenko, Catalunya-ch 2002. 6...0-0 7.0-0



7...c6

7...♖e8 is a similar move order: 8.♙g5 (8.♘g3 ♘bd7 9.♘ce2 ♙f8 ½-½ Cornette-Moskalenko, Open Medes 2006/07) 8...c6 9.♗d2 h6! 10.♙xf6 ♗xf6 11.♞ae1 ♘d7 12.♘g3 ♞xe1 13.♞xe1 ♗d8 14.♘f5 ♘f6 15.♗e3 ♙xf5! 16.♙xf5 ♗a5 ♞= Joan Fluvia Poyatos-Moskalenko, Open Medes 2006/07.

8.a3

For 8.♙g5?! see 6.♙g5.

With 8.♘g3 White wants to regroup his cavalry: 8...♞e8 9.♘ce2 ♙f8 10.c3 ♘bd7 11.♙f4 ♘b6 12.♗c2 ♙d6 13.♞ae1 h6 14.b3 ♗c7 15.♗d2 ♙xf4 16.♗xf4 ½-½ O.De la Riva Aguado-Moskalenko, Catalunya tt 2007.

8...♙d6 9.♙f4 ♙g4!? 10.♗d2

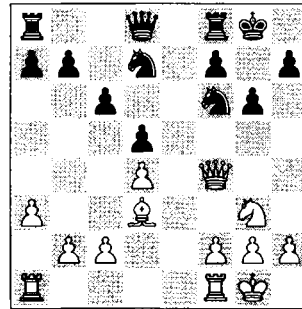
In case of 10.f3 ♙h5 11.♗d2 ♙g6 12.♞ae1 ♙xd3 13.♗xd3 ♙xf4 14.♘xf4 ♗d6 15.♗d2 ♘bd7 16.♘d3 ♞fe8= the game is too balanced.

10...♙xe2!

Keep in Mind:

A ♘ can be more helpful than a ♙ in such pawn structures (7=7).

11.♘xe2 ♙xf4 12.♗xf4 ♘bd7 13.♘g3 g6=



Simplifications in this symmetrical pawn structure are welcome!

14.♞fe1 ♞e8 15.h4 ♘f8! 16.c3

16.♞xe8 ♘xe8=.

16...♘e6 17.♗f3 ♘d7!? 18.♗g4 ♗c7

19.♘e2 ♘f6 20.♗f3 ♘g7 21.g3 ♞e7

22.♘f4 ♞ae8

22...♘xf4 23.♞xe7=.

23.♘xe6+ ♞xe6 24.♞xe6 ♞xe6

25.♘g2 ♗b6

25...♘e4!? was another chance for Black, for example: 26.♙xe4 (26.♗d1?? ♘xg3! 27.fxg3 ♞e3 ♞) 26...♞xe4 ♞.

26.♞b1 ♗c7 27.♞c1 ♗e7 28.♞c2 ♘e4

29.♞e2 h6 30.♗f4 a5 31.f3 ♘f6

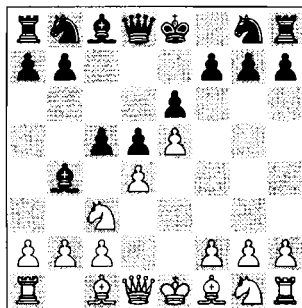
32.♞xe6 ♗xe6 33.♗e5 ♗xe5 ½-½

Conclusion Chapter 1, The Anti-Winawer

- Many lines are (too forced and) over-analysed and are basically useful as a 'surprise weapon', but generally speaking they do not offer White any advantage – the resources are still quite limited – since both armies are underdeveloped.
- Therefore, in modern chess, the strongest players prefer to advance their pawn: 4.e5 is the main move against the Winawer, and this is the move we will be facing from Chapter 2 and right until the end of the book.

Chapter 2 – The Semi-Winawer

Directions - 1.e4 e6 2.d4 d5 3.♘c3 ♙b4 4.e5 c5



Lines without an immediate 5.a3

I have named these lines the 'Semi-Winawer' because here White does not try to trade off the Winawer bishop immediately. Instead he tries:

- A) Tactics with 5.♚g4, 5.♘f3 or 5.dxc5 (Game 7), or:
- B) 5.♙d2 (a strategic concept, Game 8)

A) Tactics

GAME 7 – Spassky's Queen Attack: 5.♚g4 (773 games=56,4%), 5.♘f3 (357 games=42%) and 5.dxc5 (316 games=56,7%)

5.dxc5 usually transposes to the first two lines.

□ **Parimarjan Negi**

■ **Petr Kostenko**

New Delhi 2009 (7)

**1.e4 e6 2.d4 d5 3.♘c3 ♙b4 4.e5 c5
5.♚g4!?**

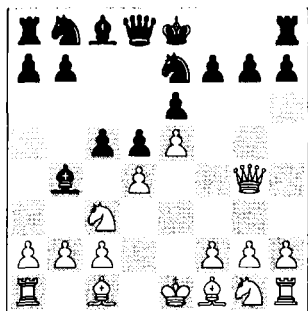
This attack is an independent line against the Winawer. White does not respect the rule according to which a flank attack only works if the centre is fixed. This concept can be useful as a guide to the labyrinths of the Semi-Winawer and also to this recent game.

Another variation with an unbalanced centre is **5.♘f3 cxd4!?** This is also analysed by Watson in *Play the French*

(2003). Of course, 5...♘c6 or 5...♘e7 are the most natural moves, when the line can transpose into the main Sub-Winawer after 6.a3 ♙xc3+ 7.bxc3: the lines without the move ♚g4, which are absolutely harmless for Black, see Part II. **6.♚xd4 ♘c6 7.♚g4 7.♙b5 ♚a5!±. 7...♘ge7! 8.♚xg7 ♘g6** and Black has at least a draw after the subsequent ...♙e7. **5...♘e7!**

The best defence against 5.♚g4. The pawn on g7 is poisoned now.

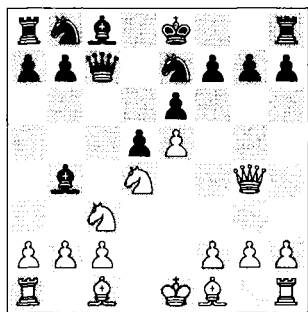
♜ **TRICK: 5...cxd4? 6.♚xg7 dxc3 7.b3+— and Black loses his h8 rook (15 games in the Mega Database).**



6.dxc5

A) **6.♖xg7** is dangerous for White, because the Winawer bishop on b4 is still alive: **6...♜g8 7.♖h6** After **7.♖xh7?! cxd4 8.a3 ♖a5!** Black wins some material: **9.axb4 ♖xa1 10.♞ce2 ♞bc6** and there is no real compensation. **7...cxd4 8.a3** and now almost all natural moves give Black a slight advantage. I like for example, the tricky variation **8...♙a5!?** **9.b4 ♙c7 10.♞b5 a6!?**

B) **6.♞f3** develops too late. Black gets his counterplay in first: **6...cxd4! 7.♞xd4 ♖c7!?**



analysis diagram

8.♙b5+ A forced check, in order to gain some tempi for development. **8.♖g3?! 0-0**. **8...♞d7!** The most accurate defence. **8...♞bc6** leads to a famous ultra-classic game: **9.0-0 ♙xc3 (9...0-0!?) 10.bxc3** Spassky-Uhlmann, Manila izt 1976. **9.0-0 ♙xc3 10.bxc3 0-0 11.♙xd7 ♙xd7 12.♙a3**

♜fe8 13.♞ab1 b6 and Black has a better pawn structure, as in Ashton Cox, England tt 2005/06.

6...♞bc6

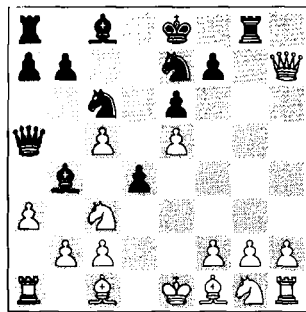
Dynamic development, defending the Winawer bishop and attacking the e5 pawn. The static concept is, as always, based on the pawn structure: after **6...♙xc3+!?** **7.bxc3** the arising positions are quite equal: **7...♞g6 8.♞f3 ♞d7 8...♖c7!?** **9.♙e3 ♞d7 10.♙b5 0-0 11.♙xd7 ♙xd7=** Gallagher-Romero Holmes, El Corte Ingles Open 1990. **9.♙e3 9.♙b5 0-0 10.♙xd7 ♙xd7=** Dückstein-Uhlmann, Vienna 1959. **9...0-0** For **9...♖c7!?** see the Romero game. **10.♙d3 ♞dx5 10...♖a5? 11.0-0 ♞xc5 12.♙xc5 ♖xc5 13.♞g5 ♖xc3 14.♞ae1 ♖c7 15.f4!** Spassky-Mititelu, Leningrad tt 1960. **11.♞xe5 ♞xe5 12.♙xh7+ ♞xh7 13.♖h5+ ♞g8 14.♖xe5 f6=** White has an extra pawn at the cost of a wonderful tripling on the c-file, Trapl-Fichtl, Jablonec ch-CSR 1962. **7.♙d2**



10th World Champion Boris Spassky won three easy games with **5.♖g4**, even though this was mainly due to his opponents' poor play in the opening.

Defending against ...d5 d4.

A) The g7 pawn is still poisoned:
7. ♖xg7 ♜g8 8. ♜xh7 d4 9. a3 ♜a5!



analysis diagram

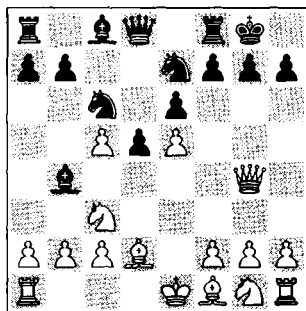
10. ♜b1 dxc3 11. ♙e3 ♘d7! ♚ Black is ahead in development. **12. ♜e4? 12. ♘e2 ♘xc5 13. b4 ♙xb4 14. axb4 ♘xb4 ♚. 12... ♘d5**—+ Ivekovic-Pourramezanali, Vung Tau jr 2008;

B) **7. ♘f3 d4!? 8. ♙b5 (8. a3 ♜a5 9. axb4 ♜xa1 10. ♘e2 ♘xb4 ♚) 8... ♜a5 9. ♙xc6+ bxc6 10. ♜xd4 ♘f5!** Banas-Prandstetter, Marianske Lazne ch-CSR 1978.

7... ♘g6!?

Defending g7 and getting ready to unleash many counteractions.

A) Of course **7... 0-0** is also correct:

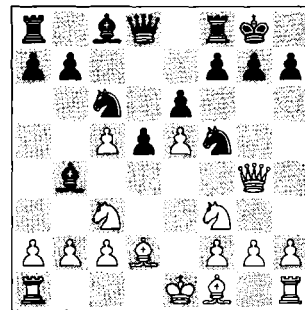


analysis diagram

8. 0-0-0 8. ♙d3 ♙xc3!? 9. ♙xc3 d4 ♚ Van der Veen-Wempe, Hoogeveen 2004; **8. ♘f3 ♘g6 9. ♙d3 ♙xc5!? 10. ♜h5 ♘b4!**= 14 Mega games.

WEAPON: 8...b6 (8... ♙xc5!? 9. f4 f6! ♚) 9. cxb6 ♜xb6 10. a3 ♙xa3!? N 11. bxa3 ♜b8 12. ♙e3 ♜a5 was seen in a quite fresh correspondence game, Niewiadomski-A. Burger, cr ICCF 2006;

B) In my own games I have used another strong set-up: **7... ♘f5!?** This universal idea can also be applied in Black's Deviation line **4... ♘e7 5. ♜g4**, see Game 9 below. **8. ♘f3 0-0! N**



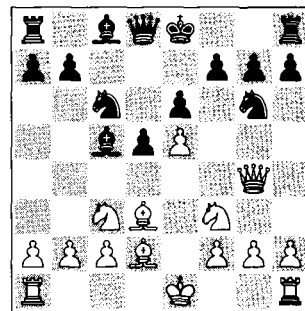
analysis diagram

Now **9. ♙d3 f6! 10. 0-0-0 ♙xc5!?** **10... fxe5 11. ♘xe5 ♙xc5 12. f4=** Jerez Perez-Moskalenko, Castellar 2004. **11. ♜h3? ≥ 11. exf6 ♜xf6 ♚ 12. ♙g5 ♜f7 13. ♜h3? e5! ♚** Steinhardt-Scholz, Berlin 2000. **11... ♘xe5 12. ♘xe5 fxe5 13. g4 ♜h4 ♚** Mitkov-Moskalenko, Barbera 2000.

8. ♘f3 ♙xc5

8... 0-0=.

9. ♙d3



9... ♜c7

Provoking **10. ♘b5**, but this does not seem dangerous. First **9... a6!?** is similar;

9...♗h4 10.0-0 (10.♙xg6! hxg6 11.0-0-0±) 10...♗xd3 11.cxd3 ♙d7= Spassky-Mednis, Reykjavik tt 1957.

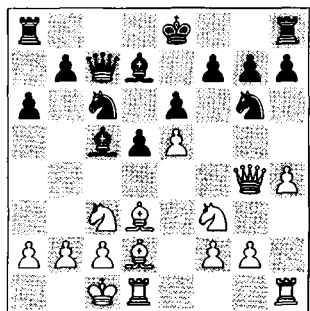
10.0-0-0

Choosing the most aggressive set-up.

10.0-0-0 ♙d7 11.♞fe1 0-0-0 (11...0-0!? 12.♙xg6 fxg6!⇒) 12.♞g3 ♗d4 13.♗xd4 ♙xd4⇒, Strenzwilk-Morin, Philadelphia 1990;

Let's check **10.♗b5** ♞b8 and now 11.0-0-0 a6! 12.♗c3 ♙d7, with almost the same position as in the main game, Wittke-F.Graf, Willingen jr 2005.

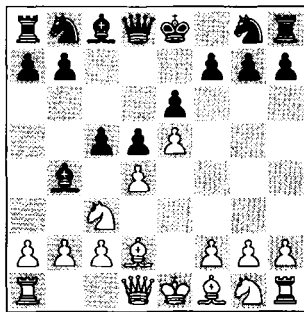
10...a6 11.h4 ♙d7!



Summary of 5.♞g4

In this model game we have found many options to face the Queen Attack. This tactical line was still popular in the time of Russian World Champion Boris Spassky, but nowadays this weapon can only frighten weak players or kids!

B) Strategy



A problematic move in the Winawer, 5.♙d2 is not especially strong (compared to 5.a3), but since it prevents the doubling of pawns on c3 it tends to lead to positions

Just in time, and reaching an interesting position.

12.♙xg6

The main attacking move 12.h5 only creates further problems for White: 12...♗xe5 13.♗xe5 ♗xe5 14.♞xg7 0-0-0 (14...♗xd3+ 15.cxd3 0-0-0⇒) 15.♙h7 ♗c4!⇒ and Black's pieces are more active.

12...hxg6 13.♞f4

Again, after 13.h5 gxh5 14.♞xh5 (14.♞xg7 0-0-0⇒ is good) 14...♞xh5 15.♞xh5 0-0-0! Black is OK.

13...f6

13...0-0-0! is probably the best move order: 14.♞xf7 (14.♙e3 ♙xe3+ 15.fxe3 f6⇒) 14...♗xe5 15.♗xe5 ♞xe5±.

14.♗xd5!?

14.♞g3 0-0-0 15.♙f4 ♞a5∞.

14...exd5 15.e6 0-0-0

Now the position is equal. The rest of the notation was completely confused. Black won on move 53.

with a slight advantage for White without any risk. The statistics are very reasonable for White (3123 games=58,7%).

After this move Black has experienced some problems trying to unbalance the game in order to fight for the initiative in the opening. In *The Flexible French*, I proposed a surprising bishop retreat after: 5...cxd4!? 6.♖b5 ♘c5! which was not very well known. But recently it has become Black's most common practical counterplan. I recommend you to examine Game 74 in *The Flexible French* for more details on this line.

For this book I have prepared another interesting but still undeveloped set-up: 5...♗h6!?. Many young Spanish players play it on both sides, thanks to the analyses and games of the prominent coach, grandmaster Jesus De La Villa Garcia.

GAME 8 – A Spanish Sword: 5...♗d2 ♖h6 (167 games=52,7%)

There is no doubt that the dynamic counterattacking manoeuvre 5...♗h6 has certain bonuses compared to the usual defence 5...♗e7. Standing on h6, the knight can jump to three more dynamic squares (g4-f5-f7). However, there are some problems. For instance, White can play the exchange ♘x♗h6. Let's see an example.

□ Roy Chowdhury Saptarshi

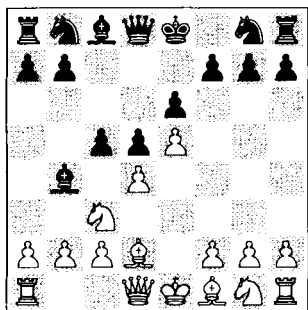
■ Jesus De La Villa Garcia

Andorra 2006 (9)

1.e4 e6 2.d4 d5 3.♗c3 ♘b4 4.e5 c5
5...♗d2!?

A problematic move in the Winawer. After this Black has experienced some problems in unbalancing the game and fighting for the initiative in the opening.

(The Flexible French, page 263).



5...♗h6!?

Our new line begins with this move. The most common option is still 5...♗e7. OK, maybe I'll try it for the next book :-)

6.♗f3

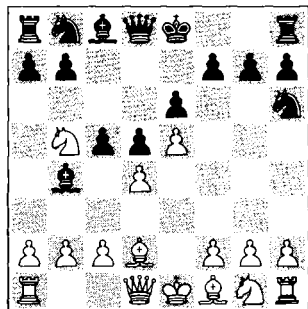
Probably the best continuation for White. Of course, the most natural and popular alternatives must be investigated.



Spanish grandmaster Jesus De La Villa Garcia: a great expert in offbeat variations in all kinds of openings.

A little controversy

A) The main idea of the variation is to play **6.♖b5**. However, this procedure always holds back the general development of the white army.



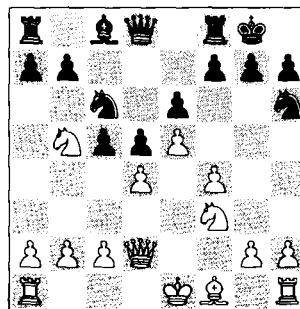
analysis diagram

6...♖xd2+ 7.♔xd2 0-0 8.f4 Strengthening the pawn wedge. **8.dxc5** is dangerous due to the mentioned factor (development): **8...f6** (**8...♖c6!?** will be studied later by transpositions; **8...♖d7!?**, Vasilevich-I.Rajlich, Chisinau Ech 2005) **9.exf6 ♖xf6! 10.♖d4 ♖e7 11.♗f3 ♗c6 12.♖c3 e5↑** Blot-Thomas, Montigny le Bretonneux 2008.

Here is an interesting contribution by Watson on the ChessPublishing Forum, combined with my own analysis and some improvements:

A) **8...♗c6 9.♗f3** John Watson: (comparing this position to the one after **5...♗e7**): *A knight on h6 defends against the tactics involving ♖xh7+ as well as the move ...♗f7 (...). Furthermore, Black's knight can help attack the centre from f7 after he plays ...f6, and ...♗h6 also leaves Black's queen in contact with the kingside. Finally, the knight can (and does) go to g4 with great effect when a pawn on d4 anchors e3 for occupation via ...♗e3 and/or when Black's queen on b6 supports that move. A knight on e7, on the other hand, has its own advantages in that it can go to c6 (often with tempo), or*

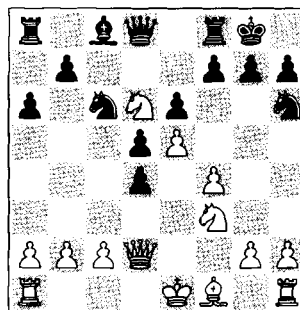
to g6, or c8 (from which square it can challenge a knight on d6).



analysis diagram

A1) **9...f6!?** **10.c3 ♖d7 10...fxe5 11.dxe5 ♗f7 12.0-0 a6 13.♗a3 b5↑** Magem Badals-Romero Holmes, Terrassa 1990. **11.♗d6 cxd4 12.cxd4 ♖b6 13.0-0 fxe5 14.fxe5 ♖e8 14...♗f7!?. 15.♗xe8 ♖axe8=** draw on move 31 in Leko-De La Villa Garcia, Leon 1994;

A2) **9...a6!** TN. Watson: *... is also good for Black* – see Watson's (and Moskalenko's) analysis. The position after **10.♗d6** occurs by transposition in some other games. **10.♗d6 cxd4!**

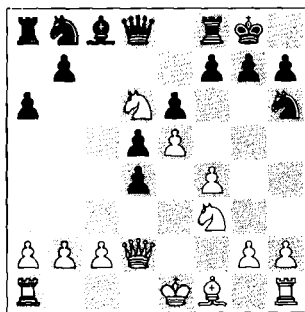


analysis diagram

and now for the more common move: **11.♗xd4 11...♖d3?! f6!** (♞ according to De La Villa Garcia in ECO) **12.0-0** (Cubas-Fier, Sao Paulo 2007) and now **12...♗g4!** is bad for White as indicated by Watson. **11...f6 12.♗xc6 bxc6**

13.0-0-0 fxe5 14.fxe5 ♘g4 15.♖e1
 ♜b8! 16.h3 ♜b6 17.c3 ♜f2! (Watson)
 is very promising for Black.

B) 8...a6! 9.♗d6 cxd4 10.♗f3



analysis diagram

10...f6! 10...♗c6 is the more common move – see the variation below.
 11.♗xd4 11.♗xc8 fxe5!; 11.♗e2 fxe5 12.fxe5 ♗c6 13.0-0 ♗g4 14.♗xd4 ♗gxe5±; 11.♗d3 also fails to 11...♗c6 12.0-0 ♗g4!± when White is in some difficulty materially.
 11...fxe5 12.fxe5 ♗g4! 13.♗e2 ♗xe5± and White has scant compensation for the pawn.

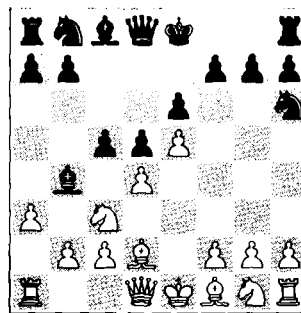
General conclusion on 6.♗b5 ♗xd2+ 7.♜xd2 0-0 8.f4 (Moskalenko):

Starting with pawn play by 8...a6!? 9.♗d6 cxd4 10.♗f3 f6! seems to be the most dynamic possibility for Black. However, the normal, 'static' continuation 8...♗c6 is also promising. Anyway, the main problem for White after the move ♗b5 is his lag in development – which allows the central Pawn Wedge to be destroyed definitively!

A little theory

OK, now let's relax and then continue by checking other lines:

B) 6.a3!? I think that this move is potentially stronger than the premature knight attack – at least it is more solid.



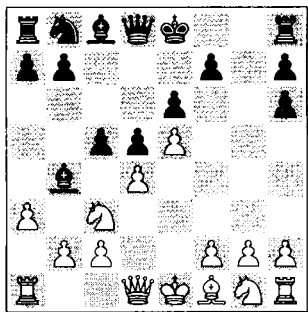
analysis diagram

6...♗xc3 7.♗xc3 7.bxc3!? imitates the main Winawer lines, but one tempo is already lost: 7...♗c6 8.♗f3 ♗f5 9.♗d3 ♜c7 10.0-0! c4 11.♗e2 ♗d7 12.♗e1 0-0-0 13.g3 f6 14.f4 ♜df8 15.♗g2 h6⇒ Lobron-Hug, Beer-Sheva zt 1985.
 7...b6! A mix of set-ups! 7...♗c6? is not good: 8.dxc5!? d4 9.♗d2 ♜d5 10.♗xh6!± (Gharamian-Laurent, Charleroi 2007). This is the disadvantage of ...♗h6; not 7...cxd4?! 8.♜xd4 ♗f5 9.♜f4± 7 Mega games. 8.♗b5+!? Preventing ...♗a6. After 8.b4 ♜c7 9.dxc5 bxc5 10.♗f3 cxb4 11.♗xb4 a5! 12.♗d2 ♗g4± the e5 pawn is weak, A.Martin-Shaked, Schwarzach 1997. 8...♗d7! There is no need to worry. 9.♗d3 ♗c6 Development. 10.♗f3 cxd4 11.♗xd4 ♗xd4 12.♗xd4 f6! Attack in the centre. 13.♜h5+ ♗f7 14.♗b5, Melia-Bensdorp, Kusadasi Ech 2006; after 14...g6! 15.♗d6+ ♗e7 Black is OK;

C) 6.♗d3?! is not a great idea: 6...♗c6 7.♗f3 ♗xd4! and Black can obtain some 'static' advantage after 8.♗xd4 cxd4 9.♗b5 ♗xd2+ 10.♜xd2 0-0 11.0-0 f6! 12.f4 ♜b6 13.a4 a5! 14.♖a1 ♗d7±, Friedrich-Hindermann, Switzerland tt 2002;

D) The ♗x♗ exchange with 6.♗xh6 is also a principled option, recommended by grandmaster Roman Dzindzichashvili (Dzindzi) as giving a

small advantage to White. However, after 6...gxh6 7.a3 Black has a clear path to equality:



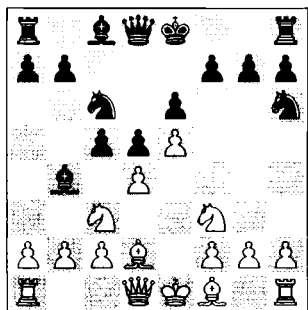
analysis diagram

7...♙a5!? 8.dxc5 d4 9.b4 dxc3 10.bxa5 ♖xa5 11.♘e2 ♗xc5 12.♗d6 ♘d7 13.♗xc5 ♘xc5 14.♘xc3 ♙d7= Leniart-B.Socko, Tromsø 2009;

E) 6.f4?! is a suspicious option: 6...cxd4 7.♘b5 ♙c5! (a well-know motif against ♘b5, also highlighted in *The Flexible French*) 8.b4 a6 9.bxc5 axb5 10.♙xb5+ ♘c6 11.♘f3 ♘f5 ♞ Papp-Farago, Zalakaros 2003;

F) Finally, White achieved nothing after 6.♘ce2 ♙xd2+ 7.♗xd2 ♘c6 8.f4 0-0 9.♘f3 f6! 10.exf6 ♗xf6 11.g3 cxd4 12.♘exd4 (12.0-0-0?! Recuero Guerra-Santana Montero, Linares jr 2007 12...d3!↑) 12...e5! 13.♘xc6 bxc6 14.♘xe5 ♘g4=.

6...♘c6



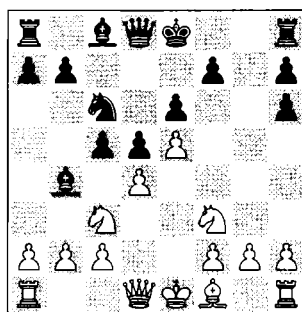
7.♙xh6

Following Dzindzi's concept.

A) White can again try his main idea 7.♘b5, but now he is doing this without a pawn wedge: 7...♙xd2+ 8.♗xd2 0-0 The safest option. The sharpest is 8...cxd4!? 9.♘d6+ ♔f8 10.♗f4 (10.♘b5 ♘g4= wins the pawn on e5) 10...♗a5+ 11.♘d1 ♘f5= 9.dxc5! b6! = Taking profit of his better development. 10.cxb6 Or 10.♗c3 ♙d7 11.♙e2 bxc5 12.♗xc5 ♘g4 13.0-0 ♘gx5 14.♘xe5 ♘xe5= 15.f4? ♞c8! ♞ Gutenev-Recuero Guerra, Herceg Novi jr 2006. 10...♗xb6 11.♙d3 11.0-0-0?! ♘g4 12.♘bd4 ♘gx5 13.♘xc6 ♘xc6 14.c3 ♞b8→ 15.♘d4?? (Hunt-S.Williams, Witley 1999) and now 15...♘xd4! 16.cxd4 e5!-+ wins. 11...♘g4 12.♗e2 ♗b8 13.0-0 ♘cxe5 14.♘xe5 ♘xe5 ♞, Jerez Perez-Recuero Guerra, Pamplona 2005;

B) 7.dxc5 0-0! (7...♘g4?! 8.♙b5!) 8.♙d3 f6! 9.exf6 ♗xf6 10.0-0 ♙xc5= and the position is equal.

7...gxh6



8.♙b5

A typical blocking move in this kind of variation. White hopes to control the centre. 8.a3 is similar to 6.♙xh6. The best continuation is: 8...♙a5!? 9.dxc5 d4 10.b4 dxc3 11.bxa5 ♗xa5= and

White cannot play 12. ♖d6? on account of 12... ♕d7!† threatening the white queen after ...0-0-0.

8... ♖b6N

The standard French move, exerting pressure on d4.

A) 8... ♕d7!? is my recommendation, but it has to be investigated further;

B) 8... cxd4 9. ♖xd4 ♖a5 10.0-0 is unclear, Landa-Dgebuadze, Belgium tt 2005/06;

(*) 8... ♖a5?! 9. ♖d2 ♕xc3 10. ♕xc6+ bxc6 11. ♖xc3 ♖xc3+ 12. bxc3±. White won two games from this position.

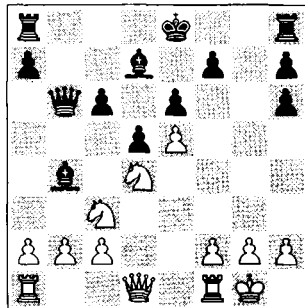
9.0-0 cxd4 10. ♗xd4 ♕d7

The key moment after the opening phase.

11. ♕xc6

An excessively ambitious exchange (♕♕ vs. ♗♗). Surely the static option was more interesting for White: 11. ♗xc6!?, after which I have analysed: 11... bxc6 12. ♕d3 ♖d4 13. ♖h5 ♖f4 14. g3 ♖g5 15. ♖e2 h5⇒ and in my opinion this position is playable for both sides.

11... bxc6⇒



How to understand this position? Black has the pair of bishops, a strong centre and the open g-file. However, his kingside pawns are weak, so the black king will have to take a walk...



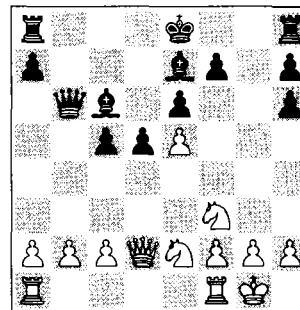
Germany-based Russian grandmaster Konstantin Landa uses 4. ♕d2 as a 'killing' anti-Winawer weapon.

12. ♗ce2

Attacking is not easy for White, but he cannot play passively.

After the most aggressive continuation 12. ♖g4!? I would recommend the following set-up: 12... ♕e7!? 13. b3 ♖f8 14. ♖ad1 ♖g8 15. ♖h3 ♖g7!? (15... ♖g6∞) 16. ♖d3 ♖h8! 17. ♖xh6 ♖g6 18. ♖h3 ♖ag8 19. g3 ♖b7!⇒ and Black achieves an excellent position, getting ready for a central attack with the pawns: ...c5-d4.

12... ♕e7 13. ♖d2 c5! 14. ♗f3 ♕c6!



After a few more moves, Black suddenly dominates the whole board.

15.a4?

You cannot play chess as if it were football!

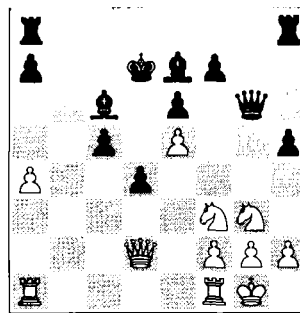
15...d4! 16.♘g3 ♖xb2 17.♗xh6 ♗xc2

18.♗g7 ♔d7

18...♗g6! would have been a technical win: 19.♗xh8+ ♔d7 20.♗xa8 ♘xa8--+

19.♗h6 ♗g6 20.♗d2 h5!→

White's situation is dramatic. Speaking in football terminology, the two knights are poor goalkeepers.



21.♘xd4 cxd4 22.♗xd4+ ♘d5 23.f4

♜hc8 24.♞ac1 ♞c2 25.♔h1 ♞xg2

26.f5 ♗g4 0-1

Summary of the set-up 5.♙d2 ♘h6

In my opinion this is a useful weapon against the early 6.♘b5?! sortie, but the lines 6.a3 or 6.♘f3 ♘c6, and now the 'Dzindzi' exchange 7.♙xh6, are still playable for White. A black player needs to apply some accuracy here.

However, Black has one more magic trick to avoid annoying Semi-Winawer lines, as we will see in the next game.

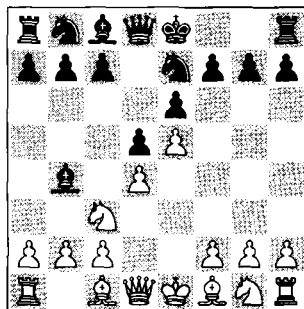
Chapter 3 – Black Magic

Grandmaster Leonid Kritz wrote in his article in ChessBase Magazine 131: *The French Defence is one of the least explored openings in modern opening theory. Apart from the classical main lines there is a host of rarely played variations which constitute a great danger for the player with White if he does not know exactly how to achieve an opening advantage.*

We shall treat one such variation in this chapter.

A deviating weapon for Black can be a strategic set-up without an immediate ...c7-c5, enjoying the closed structure.

Directions 1.e4 e6 2.d4 d5 3.♘c3 ♘b4 4.e5 ♘e7!?



Playing this way Black can avoid getting involved into too many complications and he can also avoid a lot of theoretical lines of both the Semi- and the Main Winawer, although he will be restricted to certain variations (where Black does not play an early ...♘e7). For instance, after 5.a3 ♘xc3 6.bxc3 he can neither play the Black Queen Blues with 6...♚a5, nor Botvinnik's old Winawer with 6...♚c7 7.♚g4 f5.

As we already know, White can continue in two ways:

- A) Typical Semi-Winawer moves (without 5.a3) – Game 9
- B) Finally play 5.a3, trying to get into Main Winawer lines – Game 10

GAME 9 – Avoiding the Semi-Winawer: 5.♘d2 and 5.♚g4

There are no clear statistics on these lines due to the excessive transpositions that lead to them.

□ **Vugar Gashimov**

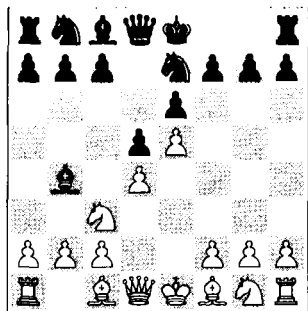
■ **Tomas Petrik**

Dresden Ech 2007 (5)

**1.e4 e6 2.d4 d5 3.♘c3 ♘b4 4.e5
♘e7!?**

Deviations vs. Deviations. This flexible move allows Black to change his usual

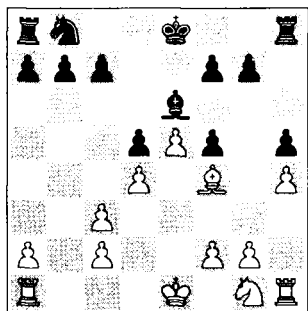
course, both in the Semi-Winawer and in the Winawer main lines. As the present game shows, this move almost neutralizes the strategic idea of ♘d2 (since ...c7-c5 has not been played, ♘b5 is not possible). Black comfortably prepares his alternative plan ...b6 and ...♘a6.



In the closed structures that arise from here, the black knight can be more effective than the white queen's bishop (♗ vs. ♗). However, if White castles queenside, the position of His Majesty becomes less safe.

5.♗d2

Against 5.♖g4 the deviation move is 5...♘f5!?. Black's main concept here is trading the queens (of course you can always choose to play 5...c5!, as in Game 7). 6.♗d3 6.♘f3 c5 also leads to Game 7. 6...h5 7.♖f4 ♗h4! There are only 10 Megabase games with this move. 8.♗xf5 8.♘f3 ♗xf4 9.♗xf4 ♘c6! (also 9...b6 10.♗d2 ♗xc3 11.♗xc3= Lamoureux-Moskalenko, France tt 2001) 10.♗xf5 ♗xc3+!? 11.bxc3 exf5= Makropoulou-Sa.Martinovic, Rijeka 2009. 8...♗xf4 9.♗xf4 ♗xc3+! 10.bxc3 exf5 11.h4 ♗e6=



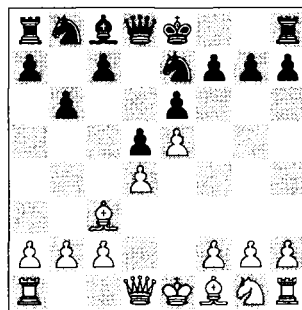
analysis diagram

The position is equal, but still contains some play. Both players have some advantage on opposite sides. 12.♘h3 ♘c6 13.♗e3 ♘a5 14.f3 ♘c4 15.♗f2 ♘a3 16.♖d2 a5 17.♘f4 ♖a6!?! 18.♖hg1 g6 19.g4? fxg4 20.fxg4 ♘c4+ 21.♖d3 hxg4 22.♘xe6 ♖xe6 (♘ vs. ♗) Kosteniuk-Efimenko, Biel 2004.

5...b6!

Instead of playing his usual break 5...c5 (and going back to the Semi-Winawer), Black prepares the French bishop sortie ...♗a6, solving one of the most important (and dogmatic) problems for Black in the French Defence: the positioning of his light-squared bishop.

5...♗xc3!? This early exchange leads to similar consequences after 6.♗xc3 b6! This is another basic position for our line.



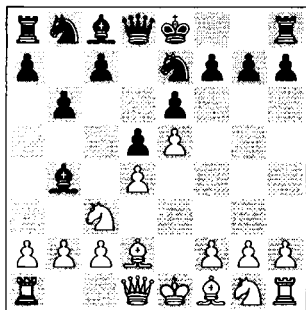
analysis diagram

7.♖g4 7.♗b5+!? c6 8.♗a4 a5 9.a3 0-0 10.♗d2 ♗a6= Hajnal-Macsik, Zalakaros 1999. Now:

A) After 7...0-0!? Black has won several nice positional games: 8.h4 Or else, for instance, 8.♘f3 ♗a6 9.♗xa6 ♘xa6 10.h4 c5 11.h5 h6 12.0-0-0 ♖c8 13.♗d2 ♖h7 14.♖f4 ♖c7 15.♖b1 cxd4 16.♘xd4 ♘c6 17.♘xc6 ♖xc6 (♘ vs. ♗) N.Pedersen-Sorensen, Aarhus 1996. 8...♗a6

9.♖c2 c5!⇒ 10.h5 h6 11.♗d2 ♕h7
 12.0-0-0 ♜bc6 13.dxc5? bxc5 14.♞a4
 ♞h6→ Hebden-Botterill, Southport
 ch GBR 1983.

B) In my own games I preferred the
 safer move 7...♗g6 8.h4 (8.b4 c5!⇒
 was seen in Mitkov-Moskalenko,
 Barbera 1999) 8...h5 9.♞g3 ♗a6
 10.0-0-0 ♗xf1 11.♞xf1 ♗c6 12.♗e2
 ♜cc7 13.♞d3 ♗f5 14.g3 ♞d7 15.♗d2
 c5!↑ Minguez-Moskalenko, Canovelles
 2000.



6.♞g4

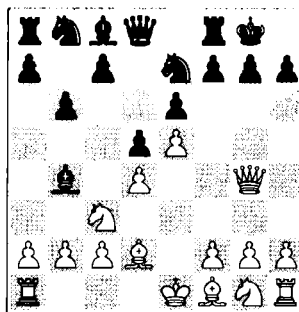
**Keep in mind the following opening
 rule:**

In almost all lines of the Winawer Varia-
 tion, White needs to play aggressively on
 the kingside... therefore, natural con-
 tinuations like 6.♗f3 do not make much
 sense. For instance, 6...♗xc3!? 7.♗xc3
 ♗a6 8.♗xa6 ♗xa6 9.♞e2 ♞c8 10.0-0
 c5 11.♞fd1 ♗b8 12.a4 ♗bc6 13.dxc5
 bxc5 14.♞b5 c4 15.♞c5 0-0♞ (♗ vs.
 ♗) Novichkov-Moskalenko, Moscow
 1996.

6...0-0!

Castling here is probably better than in
 the main Winawer! (to compare the dif-
 ferences, see Part III).

6...♗f5 is an alternative in order to
 equalize: 7.♗d3 (7.♗f3 ♗xc3 8.♗xc3
 ♗a6⇒ Bakhmatov-Moskalenko, Minsk
 1996) 7...h5!? 8.♞f4 ♞h4= etc.



7.0-0-0

This seems a logical continuation. Alter-
 natives are:

A) 7.♗f3 ♗a6 8.♗xa6 ♗xa6 9.♞d1
 ♗xc3!? 10.bxc3 ♞d7⇒ Timman-
 Hübner, Linares 1985;

B) 7.♗d3?! is apparently the least rea-
 sonable move in view of 7...♗a6 8.♗f3
 (8.♗h6? ♗g6♞ J.Diaz-Pecorelli Garcia,
 Cienfuegos 1996) 8...♗xd3 9.cxd3
 ♗f5♞ due to the better pawn structure,
 in Pietruszewski-Jussupow, Warsaw
 rapid 2007.

7...♗xc3

The main trick in this line and the main
 theme in closed French structures
 (♗x♗). 7...c5!? is a novelty that des-
 serves some investigation; 7...♗a6!? is
 also a correct option: 8.♗f3?! (8.♗xa6
 ♗xa6 is the main line) 8...♗xf1
 9.♞hxf1 ♗xc3! 10.♗xc3 c5!♞ with the
 typically better pawn structure in the
 centre, Mrdja-B. Kovacevic, Zagreb
 2009.

8.♗xc3

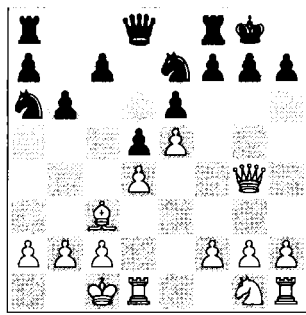
Of course, White cannot play the
 Winawer recapture 8.bxc3 here.

8...♗a6

8...c5!? 9.♗f3 ♗a6 10.h4?! ♗xf1
 11.♞dxf1 ♗bc6♞, U.Nielsen-Rodgaard,
 Denmark 1991.

9.♗xa6! ♗xa6

We have arrived at the climax of this
 strategic variation (4...♗e7 5.♗d2).



10.h4

White may have made all the correct moves, but miraculously, he has no advantage at all! The opposite-castled kings might even favour Black.

10...c5! 11.♔d2 cxd4 12.h5 ♘f5 13.♖e2 d3!?

The dynamic option, winning some tempi. 13...♘c5!? 14.h6 g6∞ is more complex.

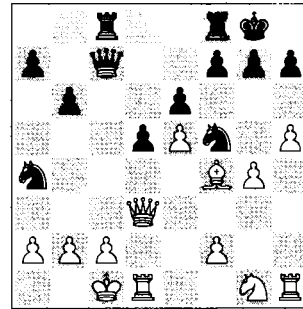
14.♗xd3 ♘c5 15.♗f3 ♖c7 16.♔f4 ♜ac8∞

Black's counterplay is obvious.

17.g4 ♘a4

17...♘e7!?

18.♗d3



The key moment of the game.

18...♖c4?!

After the correct 18...♘d4! 19.c3 ♘c6∞ Black has better attacking prospects on the queenside.

19.♗xc4 ♜xc4 20.♘e2 ♘e7

Now the position is equal

21.♞d2 ♞c7=

And after some mysterious play by both sides, the endgame dramatically finished in a draw on move 74.

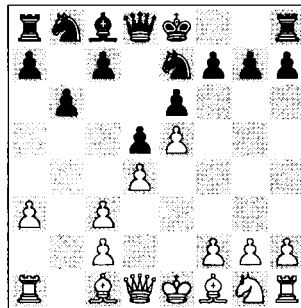
GAME 10 – Avoiding the Main Winawer: 4...♘e7 5.a3 ♘xc3+ 6.bxc3 b6!?

(731 games=54,5%)



My own statistics with the black pieces:

25 games: 16 wins, 7 draws, 2 losses, performance=2584.



Kritz: A continuation which is full of ideas. Black wishes to solve right at the start the greatest problem of the French Defence, namely the exchange of his white-squared bishop. Praxis in recent years has shown that it is not so simple for White to demonstrate his superiority.

You can find another interesting set-up in *The Flexible French*, Part Four, Chapter 8 (after 4.e5 b6 5.♖g4 or 5.a3: 5...♙f8!?, Games 56-58).

Some concepts explained in *The Flexible French* are also useful here:

This is a typical plan in the Winawer, with a couple of strategic ideas: it is based on trying to exchange the light-squared bishops by ...♙a6, thereby reducing White's initiative. In many cases the position remains quite closed. Black always has the option of playing the typical French advance ...c7-c5. Then, after dxc5 bxc5, a wonderful pawn centre is created for him: c5-d5. There is very little theory on these lines!

Please note that basically, the endgame is problem-free for Black.

□ Peter Leko

■ Viktor Moskalenko

Copenhagen 1995 (5)

1.e4 e6 2.d4 d5 3.♘c3 ♙b4 4.e5 ♘e7 5.a3!?

Finally, White offers his opponent the chance to reach the main Winawer structure (after ♙x♘c3).

5...♙xc3+ 6.bxc3 b6!?

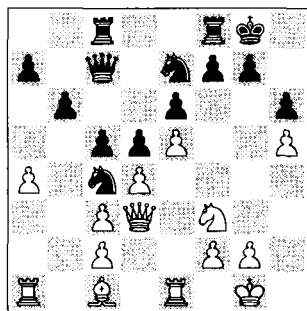
However, in the flexible French Defence we can always make changes! Here is the deviation. For the main move 6...c5, see Parts II and III.

7.♖g4!

Leonid Kritz: *The only ambitious continuation in this variation. All other attempts bring him no advantage (...)* Black has at least equalised; he may perhaps even be a little better.

Let's check if this is true:

A) **7.h4 ♙a6 8.♙xa6 8...♙d3 c5 9.h5 h6 10.a4 ♙xd3 11.♖xd3 ♘bc6 12.♙a3 0-0 13.♘f3 ♖c7 14.0-0 ♘a5 15.♞fe1 ♘c4 16.♙c1 ♞ac8** ♚



analysis diagram



Grandmaster Rafael Vaganian: one of the world's greatest experts of the French Defence and of closed Winawer Structures.

with the desired position for Black in this variation, Levchenkov-Moskalenko, Lubniewice tt 1994. **8...♘xa6 9.h5 9...♘h3 ♖d7 10.♘f4 0-0-0 11.♘h5 ♞hg8 12.♞h3 ♘b8 13.a4 ♘bc6 14.♙f1 ♘a5 1/2-1/2** Inarkiev-Potkin, Goa Wch-jr 2002. **9...h6 10.♖g4 ♞g8 11.♖e2 ♘b8 12.♘f3 ♘bc6 13.g4 ♖d7 14.♘h4 1/2-1/2** Spassky-Petrosian, Tilburg 1981;

B) **7.a4 ♙a6 8.♙xa6 ♘xa6 9.a5 ♖c8 (9...b5!? 10.♙a3 c5!♞) 10.♙a3 c5! 11.♘e2 0-0 12.0-0=** Hossain-Rocha, Calvia ol 2004;

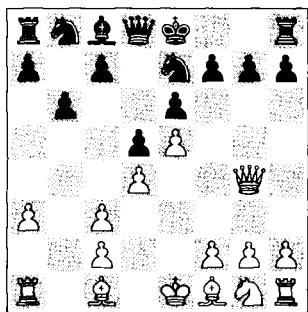
C) **7.♙b5+ c6 8.♙d3** (in case of 8.♙a4?! the white bishop is too passive; 8...♙a6 ♚ Loskutov-Moskalenko, Moscow 1995) **8...♙a6 9.♘h3 c5 10.♙xa6**

7.♖xa6 11.0-0 ♚c8! 12.a4?! cxd4!
13.cxd4 ♜b4≠ Romanishin-Vaganian,
Minsk ch-URS 1979;

D) 7.♖f3 ♘a6 8.♙xa6 ♜xa6 9.0-0
♚d7 10.a4 ♜b8 10...c5!? Kritz: 'Noth-
ing is achieved by 11.a5?! ♜bc6
12.axb6 cxb6≠ White has only im-
proved Black's position; Black now has a
distant passed pawn and the open c-file'.
11.♙a3 ♜bc6 and ...♜a5-♜c4,
Markidis-Moskalenko, Iraklion 1997; or
11.♚d3 ♜bc6= Naer-Schukin, St Pe-
tersburg 2000;

E) 7.♜e2 ♘a6 8.♜f4 ♙xf1 9.♙xf1
♜g6 10.♜h5 ♚g8 (10...0-0!? 11.h4
c5∞) 11.h4 ♜d7 12.g3 f6 ½-½ Khalif-
man-L.B.Hansen, Groningen 1989;

F) 7.♜h3!? ♜g6!? (preventing
♜f4-♜h5) 8.a4 ♙a6 9.♙xa6 ♜xa6
10.♜f4 ♜xf4 11.♙xf4 ♜b8
(11...♚h4!?) 12.♚g4 ♚g8 13.h4 ♜c6
14.h5 ♜a5 15.♚h3 ♜d7! 16.♙f1 ½-½
Spassky-Vaganian, Baden 1980.



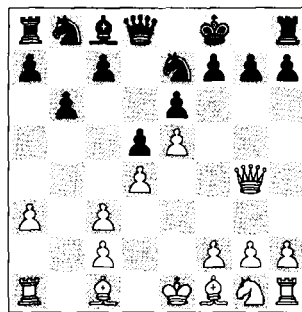
7...♜g6

Probably the best defence.

A) Castling with 7...0-0? is a mistake
here, since after 8.♙g5!→ it is hard to
recommend anything for Black: White is
threatening 9.♙f6!;

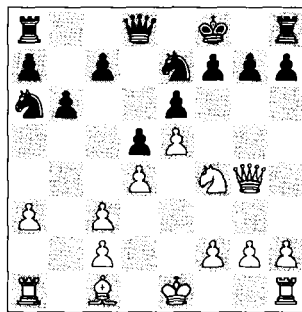
B) Now the alternative 7...♜f5?! is
significantly weaker: 8.♙b5+! c6
9.♙d3 h5 10.♚h3 ♚d7 11.g4 ♜e7
12.♜e2 ♙a6 13.♜g3±, Kurajica-
Vaganian, Skopje 1976;

C) However, the defence with the
king, 7...♙f8!? is playable. I have used
this method many times.



analysis diagram

The position is close to equal, but with
the king on f8, Black does not have too
many active counterplans: 8.♜h3! The
most flexible square for the knight in
combination with ♚g4. 8.♜f3 is not
dangerous: 8...h6 9.a4 ♙a6 10.♙d3
♙xd3 11.cxd3 ♜d7 12.0-0 c5 13.♙a3
♚c8 14.a5 ♜g8 15.axb6 axb6 16.dxc5
bxc5= Dominguez Perez-Moskalenko,
Sant Pedro rapid 2001; nor is 8.h4 ♙a6
9.♙xa6 ♜xa6 10.h5 h6 11.♜e2 c5
12.0-0 ♚c8≠ Hernandez Guerrero-
Moskalenko, Granada 2001. 8...♙a6
9.♙xa6 ♜xa6 10.♜f4



analysis diagram

And here the best continuation is
10...c5!? 10...♜g6?! 11.♜h5♠, Santo
Roman-Bauer, Chambéry ch-FRA 1994.
11.♜h5 ♜f5! 12.♚e2 ♚c8 13.g4 ♜e7

14.0 0 cxd4 15.cxd4 ♖c4! 16.♗d2 ♚c8≠ and Black is OK, as in H.Hernandez-Nogueiras, Santa Clara ch CUB 2005.

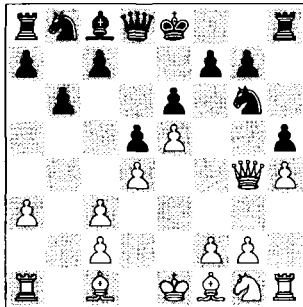
8.h4!

This is the main path for White if he is looking for a straightforward refutation of Black's set-up.

A) 8.♙g5?! ♗d7 9.h4 h6 10.♙d2 h5! and Black wins several important tempi in comparison to the main line, as in Fischer-Ivkov, Santiago 1959.

B) 8.a4 ♙a6 (8...c5!?) 9.♙xa6 ♘xa6 10.h4 h5 11.♗e2 ♘b8 12.♙g5 ♗d7 (better is 12...♗c8!?) with the idea 13...♗a6!) 13.a5 ♘ac6 14.axb6 cxb6 15.♗f3 (Kamsky-Morovic Fernandez, Khanty-Mansiysk ol 2010). Here Black should regroup with 15...♘ce7! 16.♘e2 ♘f5 17.c4 ♚c8! =.

8...h5



The key moment for White.

9.♗g3

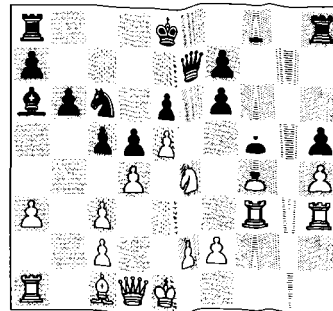
Kritz: *One of the important decisions required in this variation is whether to post the queen on g3 or take it back to d1. In my opinion, the queen is best placed on g3.*

The idea behind the alternative queen move 9.♗d1 is to attack the h5 pawn by ♘e2-♘g3. However, Black has sufficient ways to combat it: 9...♗d7! A very important improvement. The immediate 9...♙a6 is probably worse: 10.♙xa6 ♘xa6 11.♙g5! (the anti-Winawer



Bobby Fischer achieved poor results against closed French lines.

bishop becomes quite powerful here) 11...♗d7 (11...f6? 12.♗c3 ♘f7 13.♘h3!± Caruana-Bellin, Gibraltar 2007; 11...♗c8 12.♘e2 c5 ♚ 13.0-0!) 12.♘e2± 53 games in Megabase. White is better on the kingside: the pawn on h5 is weak and Black has problems castling. 10.♘e2 There are also two possible moves with the king's bishop: 10.♙d3 ♙a6 11.♙xg6 ♗xg6 1 2.♘h3 c5 13.♘f4 ♗f7 14.♚h3 ♘c6

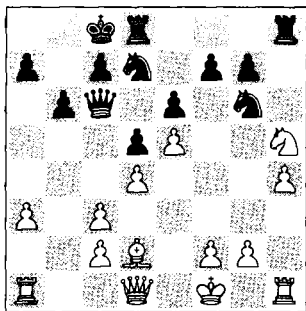


analysis diagram

TRICK: 15.♚f3 0-0 16.♘e2 ♗xh5 ♗c7 17.♘f4 ♘xe5!!

15.♚g3 ♘e7≠ R.Chowdhury Sa2 Saptarshi-Moskalenko, Andorra 2006; 10.♙e2 ♙a6 11.♙xh5 ♗b5 12.♙e2 ♗a5 13.♙d2 ♚xh4 14.♚h4 ♘e2 ♘xh4≠.

10...♖c6 11.♙d2 ♘a6 12.♘g3 ♙xf1
13.♙xf1 ♘d7 13...♖c4+!? 14.♙g1
c5≠. 14.♘xh5 0-0-0!



analysis diagram

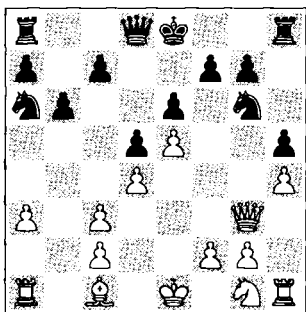
15.♘g7 ♘xh4 16.♙h5 16.♙g5? ♘f5!
16...♖c4+ 17.♙g1 ♘f5≠ and ...c7-c5!;
TRICK: 15.♖f3 f6! 16.exf6 gxf6
17.g3 (17.♘xf6? ♗df8 18.♙g5 ♘xf6
19.♙xf6 ♘xh4-+) 17...e5 Black had very
good compensation for the pawn in
Karjakin-Grischuk, Odessa rapid 2008.

9...♙a6!

The only move in view of 9...♖d7??
10.♙d3. White attacks the knight on g6
and thus wins a pawn, Wernbacher-
Sla.Marjanovic, Feffernitz 2001.

10.♙e2

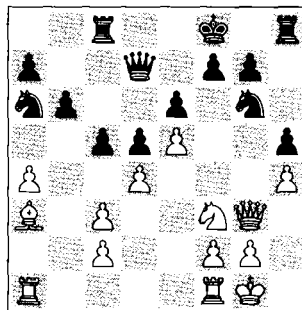
According to Kritz, this is the strongest
continuation for White. After the natural
exchange 10.♙xa6 ♘xa6 Black gets a
level game:



analysis diagram

A) 11.♙f3 – the knight is not very ef-
fective on f3. The original idea was to

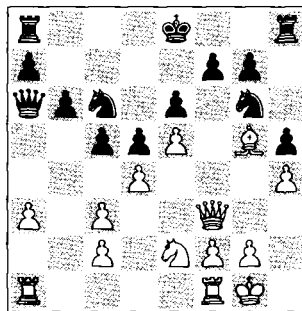
bring the knight via e2 to g3 in order to
attack the h5 pawn. 11...c5 Equivalent is
11...♖d7 12.a4 ♖c6 13.♘g5 ♘e7
14.a5 ♖c4 15.♙a3 c5!≠ Naiditsch-
Rodshtein, Dresden Ech 2007. 12.0-0
♖d7 13.a4 ♗c8 14.♙a3 ♙f8!! and
Black has nothing to fear, because the
white pieces are not cooperating well:



analysis diagram

15.♙g5 ♙g8 16.f4 ♙e7! 17.♖d3 c4!
18.♖h3 ♘f5 19.♙c1 f6!≠ 'closed game',
Skrobek-Moskalenko, Swidnica 1997;

B) 11.♖d3 ♘b8 12.♙g5 12.♘f3?!
♘c6 13.a4 ♖d7 14.♙g5 ♘a5 15.g3 ♗c8
16.♘d2 c5!≠ Prasad-Lputian, Port Erin
2003. 12...♖c8!? 12...♖d7!? 13.♙e2
c5!≠ – only four games. 13.♙e2 ♖a6
14.♖f3 14.0-0?! ♖xd3 15.cxd3 ♘d7≠
and ...f7-f6. 14...c5! 14...♘d7?! 15.0-0
f6 16.exf6 gxf6 17.♙f4! ♘xf4 18.♙xf4
0-0-0 19.a4! Shirov-Kristjansson, Izmir
2004. 15.0-0 ♘c6



analysis diagram

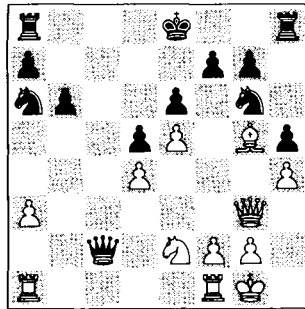
And Black gets full counterplay:
16. ♖fd1 ♜c4 16...♞c8!?. **17. ♞d2 ♜ge7!?** **18. ♞ad1 ♜f5** **19. ♜g3 ♜xg3** **20. fxg3 ♞c8!** **21. ♜h2 ♞c7** Korneev-Rivas Pastor, Benasque 2005)

C) **11. ♜e2!?** c5 11...♞d7=!?
 12. ♜f4 ♜xf4 13. ♙xf4 ♜f8!?

14. a4 ♜b8 15. ♞f3 ♜c6 16. ♙g5 ♜e7 ⇒ Velikhanli-Moskalenko, Halkida 1996.

12. ♙g5 12. ♜f4 ♜xf4 13. ♙xf4 ♜f8 14. ♞d1 cxd4 15. cxd4 ♞c8 16. ♞d2 ♞c4 ⇒ Bedny-Potkin, St Petersburg 2001. **12... ♞c8** ⇒ Activating the queen as soon as possible. Alternatively, 12...♞d7!?

13. 0-0 ♜b8 is interesting, but not the only move: 14. f4 ♜c6 15. f5 exf5 ∞ Hvorostinin-Moskalenko, Yalta 1996. **13. 0-0 cxd4** **14. cxd4 ♞xc2!** and we are back in an 'open game':



analysis diagram

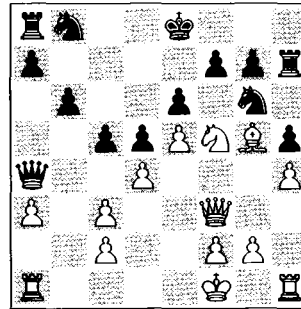
15. ♞f3 ♞e4 **16. ♞xe4 dxe4** **17. ♜c3 ♜c7!** **18. ♜xe4 0-0=** and Black is at least not worse: 19. f4 ♜d5 20. f5 exf5 21. ♞xf5 ♞ac8 22. ♞af1 ♞c4! 23. ♜d6 ♞xd4 24. ♞xf7? ♞xf7 25. ♞xf7 ♞d1+! 26. ♜f2?? ♜xe5 27. ♞xa7 ♜g4+ 28. ♜f3 ♜c3! 0-1 Retinsky-Moskalenko, Alushta 1995.

10... ♜f8

In order to defend f8.

A) With **10...c5!?** there are no games available.

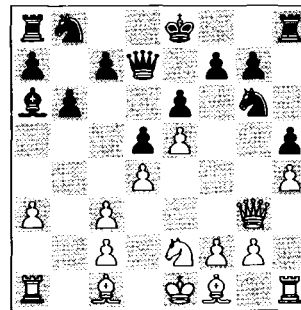
B) **10... ♞h7?!** The rook is quite passively placed on h7. **11. ♙g5 ♞d7** **12. ♞f3 ♞a4** **13. ♜g3 ♙xf1** **14. ♜xf1 c5? ≥** **14... ♞xc2** **15. ♜xh5 ♜c6** **16. g4!** **15. ♜f5!!**



analysis diagram

A spectacular refutation of Black's 'sarcophagus play' is: **15... ♞c4+** **16. ♙g1 exf5** **17. ♞xf5 ♜d7** **18. e6 ♜f6** **19. ♞e1** → Shirov-Atalik, Plovdiv Ech-tt 2003;

C) A plausible alternative may be **10... ♞d7!?**



analysis diagram

which is tactically correct in view of **11. a4** **11. ♜f4 ♜xf4** **12. ♙xf4 ♜f8** **13. ♙xa6 ♜xa6=** leads to equality, 8 games; **11. ♞f3?!** is offered by Kritz as a novelty, but in the variation **11... ♞a4!** **12. ♜g3 ♙xf1** **13. ♜xf1 c5!** (a counter-novelty – Moskalenko) **14. ♜xh5 ♞c4+** **15. ♙g1 ♞xh5!** (the key

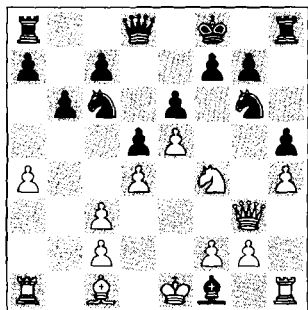
exchange sacrifice) 16. ♖xh5 ♜xc3
 17. ♜a2 ♜xd4 ♠ Black is better.
 11... ♖c6 12. ♖f4 ♕xf1 13. ♖xg6 ♕xg2!
 14. ♖xh8 ♕xh1 15. ♜xg7 0-0-0
 16. ♖xf7 ♜e8 17. ♕h6 ♕e4= Black has
 good compensation for the pawn
 (Kritz).

11.a4 ♖c6!?

Also worth considering is 11... ♖g8!?
 12. ♖f4 ♕xf1! 13. ♖xg6 fxg6 14. ♖xf1
 ♖h7 15. ♜d3 c5! =.

11... ♖e7?! is too passive. White devel-
 oped a very strong initiative after
 12. ♜g5 ♖bc6 13. ♖f4 ♕xf1 14. ♖xh5!,
 in Sax-Hari, Ljubljana 2002.

12. ♖f4 ♕xf1!



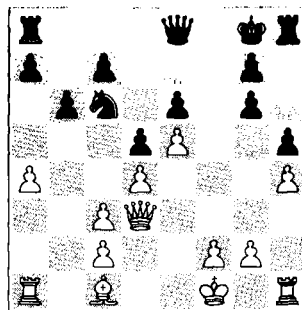
13. ♖xg6+

White must avoid the exchange of
 queens, because in the endgame he
 would no longer be able to mount a de-
 cent attack on the few weaknesses in the
 black camp. 13. ♜xg6 looks very nice,
 but does not achieve the desired result:
 13... fxg6! 14. ♖xe6+ ♖g8 15. ♖xd8
 ♕xg2 16. ♜g1 and now 16... ♜xd8!
 (16... ♖xd8? 17. ♜xg2 ♠ Van der Weide-
 Nguyen Chi Minh, Bethune 2005)
 17. ♜xg2 ♖h7 18. ♕e3 ♖a5 19. ♖e2
 ♜de8 20. ♜ag1 ♜e6= with a completely
 blocked position.

13... fxg6 14. ♖xf1

14. ♜xg6? ♖e7! 15. ♜xe6 ♕xg2
 16. ♜g1 ♕f3! ♠ and ... ♕g4 next.

14... ♖e8 15. ♜d3 ♖g8



Another key moment.

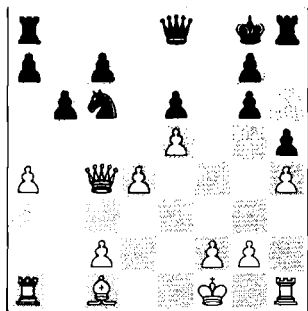
16.c4?

This was a blunder by Leko.

A) **16. ♜h3!** is the only move to fight
 against such a blockade: 16... ♖h7
 16... ♖e7!? 17. c4 c6!? ∞ **17. ♕a3!**? An
 innovation by Kritz is the move 17.c4,
 but I don't see anything special for
 White after the natural continuation
 17... ♜d8! 18. c3 dxc4 19. ♜xc4 ♖a5=,
 followed by 19... c5 and Black can
 achieve dangerous counterplay, or even
 19... ♜c6 and 20... ♜c4 with a very nice
 endgame for Black. 17... ♖e7 After
 17... ♖a5!?! = 18. ♜g3 ♖c4 19. ♜g5
 White can win the pawn on h5, but the
 resulting position is far from clear.
18. ♕xe7! ♜xe7 19. ♜g3 ♜f7 20.c4
 20. ♜g5, threatening the breakthrough
 on h5: 20... ♖h6 21. f3 ♜hf8=.
20... ♜hf8 21. ♜f3 ♜d7 22. cxd5 ♜xd5
23. ♜g3 ♜f5 24. c4 ♜d7 25. a5 ♜d8
26. axb6 axb6 27. ♜d1 ½-½
 Riemersma-Blees, Netherlands tt
 1995/96;

B) **16. ♕g5!?** has also been played. Af-
 ter 16... ♖a5 17. ♜h3 ♖h7 Black
 managed to fend off all of White's
 threats: 18. g4 hxg4 19. ♜g3 ♜f7
 20. ♜xg4 ♜af8 ♠ Panjwani-Ho,
 Kitchener 2006.

16... dxc4 17. ♜xc4



Your move?

17...♖d8?!

Summary 4...♗e7

This remains a popular alternative to 4...c5. Practicing these variations (i.e. closed structures) will imply saving a lot of study, and it gives black players the chance to apply a universal, strong and solid defensive method – you can even use it as your main Winawer weapon!

An Epilogue to Part I (White and Black Deviations)

- In fact, there are so many off-beat lines in the French Defence that one could probably write an entire book on the subject.
- However, using only the ideas of Part I of this book, you will be able to play some French Winawer lines successfully – even on both sides!

TRICK: 17...♗xd4! ♖ was a surprising blow. The knight is taboo on account of 18.♗xd4? ♖d8–+ followed by ...♗d1+.

18.c3

Now the position is equal.

18...♖h7

18...♗xe5?! 19.♗xc7±.

19.♖h3 ♖f8 20.♗g5 ♗d5 21.♖g1

♗a5±

Preparing ...♗d7 and ...c7-c5.

22.♗a6

1/2-1/2

Part II – The Sub-Winawer and the Old Winawer

The Nimzowitsch/Winawer System enjoys great popularity with both colours and shows a high percentage of decided games – Wolfgang Uhlmann

A bit of History

The hero of the 'French evolution', the legendary German grandmaster Wolfgang Uhlmann, has developed and improved many ideas in the French Defence, often in accordance with the Patriarch Botvinnik's. Historically, Uhlmann is also one of the best players defending the black side in the Winawer System. Uhlmann won many excellent games against super-grandmasters, and in the 1960's he obtained a favourable score against Bobby Fischer: 1½-½ (facing 1.41f3). In this book we will encounter many universal ideas in his games.

However, as we all know, worldwide chess evolution made a giant step when it went from static to dynamic play (after all we are playing 21st century chess today), and this change has led to a decline in certain 'universal' set-ups in the French. The dynamic progress on the white side, helped by the computer, also put an end to the successes of various old Winawer lines. In order to maintain the balance in such a great opening as the French Defence, black players need to collect older and newer ideas and combine them, as in fact the author I did in his first book *The Flexible French* – heralding a new French revolution.

Uhlmann knows the French Opening inside out. In his famous book *Winning with the French* he annotated a collection of his own best games. The games are great to play through and there is a lot that can be learned from them.

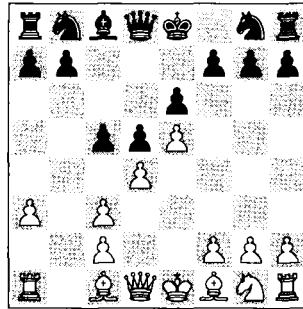
Uhlmann's style is basically aggressive, but he is more than just another Francophile – his deep understanding of the opening is apparent in both his play and his analysis.



Wolfgang Uhlmann

Times of Change

After 1.e4 e6 2.d4 d5 3.♘c3 ♘b4 4.e5, the most popular continuation is 4...c5 5.a3 ♘xc3+ 6.bxc3



GM Psakhis:

The fate of the entire French Defence largely depends on the assessment of the resulting position. The beginnings of the coming conflict are visible to the naked eye. Black has succeeded in weakening his opponent's queenside pawn structure – though perhaps this assertion is controversial! – at the considerable cost of exchanging off his dark-squared bishop and thus leaving his kingside exposed to attack.

However, Black has plenty of options here, from the old-main set-ups to the recently popular Poisoned Pawn and Black Queen Blues Variations, as well as what is today called the Modern Winawer – see Part III of this book.

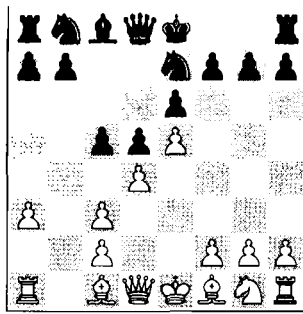
In this second part of the book, we will try to develop the study of many important – and sometimes exciting – opening plans filed under the names 'Sub-Winawer' and 'Old Main Winawer'. After an initial period, when the Winawer was usually encountered with 'open play', these variations were especially popular from the 1960-70's until the early 2000's. Therefore, they are over-analysed in the well-known main books as, for instance, those by Lev Psakhis and John Watson.

Also, due to the fact that we are in the modern (computer) era now, many deviations both for White and for Black that have been almost forgotten, may experience a comeback as reloaded weapons!

So my general purpose for this book is certainly not for it to be encyclopaedic – nevertheless it remains ambitious: to update and improve the typical ideas of the Sub-Winawer and Old main Winawer, offering a compact and creative repertoire for the black player, as well as looking for refutations of suspicious lines here and there.

Directions in Part II

After 6...♗e7, White has several attacking methods and as many typical Winawer set-ups (see next page):



Chapters 4 and 5 – The Sub-Winawer

White's pressure on the kingside always starts with an attack by the queen: ♕g4. If White does not play 7. ♕g4 he has the following alternatives, examined in this chapter:

- A) Classical (i.e. central) development of pieces and slow progress on all parts of the board: 7. ♘f3 (Chapter 4, Game 11).
- B) Preventing Black's planned manoeuvres ...b6-♙a6 or ...♗d7-♗a4 with the 'anti-dynamic' advance 7.a4 (Chapter 4, Game 12).
- C) The attacking move h2-h4 in the main-line Winawer: 7.h4 (Chapter 5, Games 13-15, and h2-h4 throughout the book).

On the other hand, as in any complex system Black can apply his own deviations as well as other important defensive set-ups, which are examined in Part III.

Chapters 6-8 – The Old Main Winawer (Black Deviations vs. ♕g4)

This is a method which was very much appreciated by Mikhail Botvinnik (for instance, 6... ♖c7 7. ♕g4 f5, analysed in *The Flexible French*, Game 75), and was later used successfully by Tigran Petrosian, Viktor Kortchnoi, Wolfgang Uhlmann and many other French experts. As I wrote in *The Flexible French*, this 'old Winawer' contains many resources – and it is always possible to revert to the modern lines.

In this section we examine:

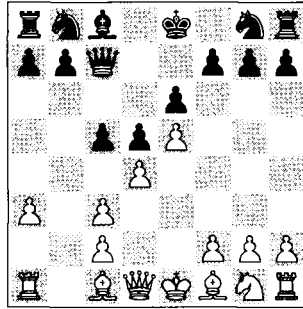
- A) The **Armenian Variation**: the set-up with ...♗a5 instead of the capture on c3. The early deviation arises after 5.a3 ♗a5 (Chapter 6, Games 16 and 17).

There are two interesting sidelines versus White's most dangerous attacking move 7. ♕g4! which deserve separate study:

- B) The **Knight System**: a defensive set-up often employed by Tigran Petrosian, Viktor Kortchnoi and recently by grandmaster Yannick Pelletier: 7. ♕g4 ♘f5!? (Chapter 7, Games 18 and 19).
- C) The **Eingorn Variation**: after 7. ♕g4 Black defends g7 with the king: 7... ♖f8!? (Chapter 8, Games 20-22).

Keep in Mind

- For any player, White or Black, the most important thing in the Winawer System is to learn how to combine attacking and defensive methods.
- If Black wants to play Botvinnik's Old Winawer (see *The Flexible French*, Game 75), or the Poisoned Pawn Variation (see Part III), I recommend to him to start with the 'geometric' move 6...♔c7!?



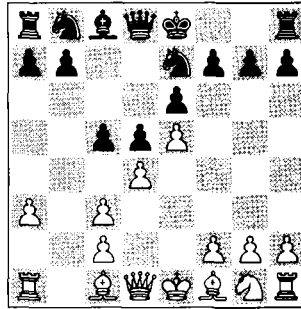
... in order to avoid the sub-lines 7.a4 and 7.h4, as then 7...cxd4 is tactically interesting. Also, with the knight still on g8, Black is more flexible and he can consider an advance of the f-pawn.

- Many times, when the position is more or less equal but still complex, I will use the symbol (=) at the end of a line. However, this does not mean that a draw result is guaranteed for any side, at least not in this book!

Chapter 4 – The Sub-Winawer: the Classical 7.♘f3 and the Anti-Dynamic 7.a4

*The extreme flexibility of both sides' strategies has produced fascinating strategic battles over many years – John Watson in his book *Play the French**

Directions – 1.e4 e6 2.d4 d5 3.♘c3 ♘b4 4.e5 c5 5.a3 ♘xc3+ 6.bxc3 ♘e7



- The main problem for White in this line is that after spending one developing tempo, he loses almost all dynamic options!
- Black's problem is how to achieve active counterplay. A positional solution is Jussupow's 'sarcophagus set-up' with 7...b6!?.
- But other great French players like Botvinnik, Uhlmann and Kortchnoi preferred more universal defensive methods. They will be studied in these two chapters.

With the Sub-Winawer I mean lines where White does not play the immediate 7.♙g4:

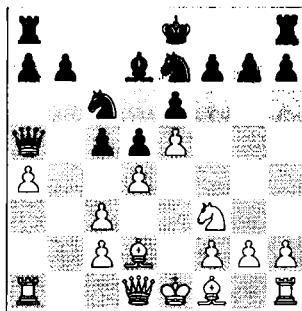
- A) Classical development with 7.♘f3.
- B) An 'anti-dynamic' move: 7.a4.
- C) The sharp flank attack 7.h4.

The options A and B will be dealt with in this chapter (Games 11 and 12). Option C, deserves a separate chapter and will therefore be treated in Chapter 5.

- The moves 7.a4 and 7.h4 still keep the option of playing ♙g4 at a later stage.
- Personally, as an aficionado of the old Winawer (6...♙c7) and the 'Black Queen Blues Variation' (6...♙a5 and 7...♙a4 – see *The Flexible French* and Part III in this book), I have played very few games against White's Sub-Winawer lines. For this reason, I have chosen some well-known old games in order to highlight the most important concepts. I have also added some new analysis.

Keep in Mind

- Against 7.♘f3 or 7.a4, Black can choose the universal set-up 7...♙a5! 8.♘d2 ♘c6, and now after 8.a4/8.♘f3, 8...♘d7. Note that the move order is variable.



For many Sub-Winawer experts this is the most important opening position of both lines. Here, after any move by White's king's bishop:

- GM Uhlmann always combined Botvinnik's strategic blocking move ...c5-c4 with the dynamic French break ...f7-f6;
- Some modern players, like Pelletier, use the sharper option of an early ...f7-f6.
- Another set-up is ...♖c7 and ...b6, strengthening the pawn formation a7-c5.

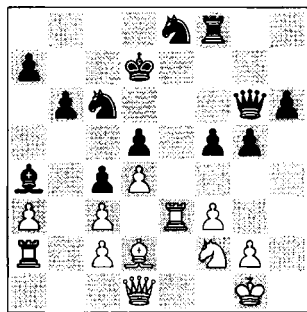
New Rules

- On the other hand, against the attacking move 7.h4 (see Games 13-15 in Chapter 5, and the games with h2-h4 in Chapter 4), Black can even broaden his repertoire with lines similar to the 'Black Queen Blues', playing ...♗a5-♗a4 (also examined in Part III and *The Flexible French*).
- Remarkably, in Sub-Winawer lines I get the impression that White's bishop is not well placed on d3. Black can at least win a tempo with ...c5-c4.
- Black's kingside castling in this chapter can be named the New Winawer!

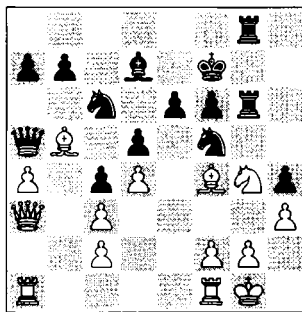


Workshop – Middlegame themes

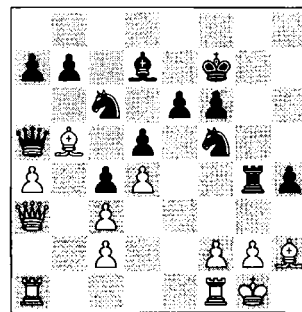
In this new feature in each chapter we will highlight some important middlegame resources from the games that are analysed further on. In this chapter we have the themes of the classical 'French' exchange sacrifice (1,2) and the 'Blues Queen' (3):



The knight is clearly stronger than the rook; Game 11, after move 28.



Game 12: Black to move.



Game 12: How to improve Black's position?

GAME 11 – Classical development: 7.♘f3 (4124 games=53.6%) and 7.♙d3?! (219 games=47.3%)

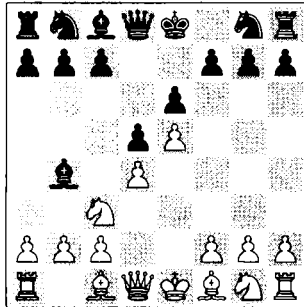
□ Kiril Georgiev

■ Artur Jussupow

Las Palmas 1993 (7)

1.♞e4 e6 2.d4 d5 3.♗c3 ♙b4 4.e5

We are in the first position where Black gets to choose his system in the Winawer.

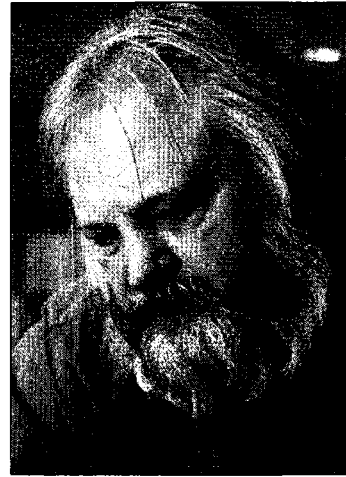


4...♗e7

This order is also common in main lines. However, the most flexible approach is 4...c5 5.a3 ♙xc3+ 6.bxc3. This is another key moment. Here, for instance, Black can use the Old Winawer weapon 6...♗c7!?. This manoeuvre with the black queen is ‘multi-geometric’, since it protects the seventh rank against 7.♗g4 with 7...f5 (see *The Flexible French*, Game 75). Here, the main line is 7...♗e7 (see Chapter 6, The Poisoned Pawn). And after the most conventional move 7.♗f3 Black can use the strategic set-up with 7...b6!? – see Game 13.

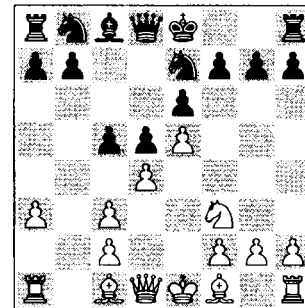
5.a3 ♙xc3+ 6.bxc3 c5 7.♗f3

This natural move allows Black to successfully employ a strategic set-up with ...b7-b6. The well-known options 7.a4, 7.h4 and 7.♗g4 are considered to be more dynamic and aggressive. To develop the bishop first with 7.♙d3 is a less valid idea. Black can win a tempo,



Grandmaster Artur Jussupow has scored a number of memorable victories with the positional ‘sarcophagus’ system ...b7-b6 against the Sub-Winawer. Its key move ...♗d7 we might call the King Arthur!

for instance 7...♗c7 (or 7...♗d7; 8.♙d2 c4!? 9.♙e2 ♗a4 – the Qu Blues line) 8.♗f3 b6!? 9.0-0 ♙a6=.



7...b6!?

Here is the positional solution: Black aims to exchange the light-square bishops. This is grandmaster Artur Jussupow’s main weapon in this line. However, Black has several ‘universal alternatives which are also very help

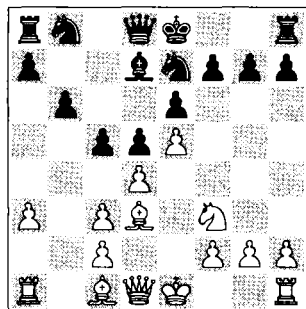
A.Sokolov Jussupow. Riga m-13 1986 and Nunn-Hertneck, Munich 1991, but it is too risky and unclear if Black is going to take the pawn on c2. 11.♔d3 ♖g7 12.♟f3 ♘a6 13.dxc5 ♙xd3 14.cxd3 bxc5 15.0-0 ♟d7 16.♞b1 ♞b8 17.♙d2 ♞b6 18.♚h4 ♟c6 ½-½ Nunn-P.Nikolic, Skelleftea 1989;

C) 8.h4 This advance is much more dangerous and effective on move 7, before ♟f3, see Games 13-15. 8...♙a6 9.♙xa6 ♟xa6 10.h5 h6 11.♚d3 ♟b8 12.dxc5 bxc5 13.c4 ♟bc6 14.0-0 0-0= Benjamin-Gulko, Saint John 1988;

D) TRICK: 8.♞b1?! ♙a6! 8...♚c7 9.♙b5+ ♙d7 10.♙d3 ♙a4= Ljubojevic-Vaganian, Rotterdam 1989. 9.dxc5 ♙xf1! 10.cxb6 axb6 10...♙xg2!?. 11.♟xf1 ♟d7⇒ with nice positional compensation for the pawn. By the way, such a pawn sac would be a good idea in similar structures of any Winawer line.

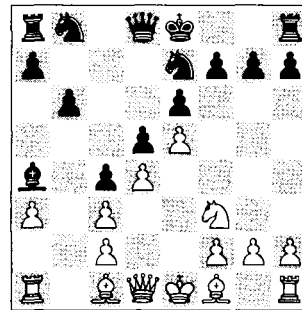
8...♙d7 9...♙d3

We are in the key position of this strategic set-up. The main idea here is to block the queenside, using the wonderful 'French' bishop and the c-pawn. In case of 9.a4 the most solid set-up for Black was showed by Mark Dvoretzky: 9...♙xb5 10.axb5 ♟d7 11.0-0 0-0 12.♚e2 ♚c7= Glimbrant-Dvoretzky, Barbera 1996.



9...♙a4!


However, this move order may be mistaken. If Black is going to block the position, then the best chance is to close the 'sarcophagus' immediately with 9...c4!. This is an important strategic decision, avoiding the lines with 10.dxc5!?. This order is more popular recently – it was also reloaded by Jussupow. 10.♙f1!? ♙a4! leads to the desired position, with lots of typical games:

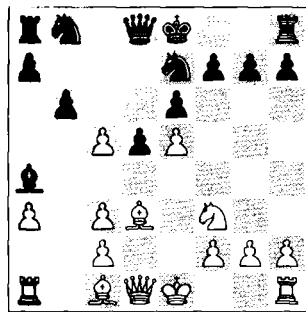


analysis diagram

11.g3 11.h4 ♟bc6 12.h5 h6 13.g3 ♟d7 (13...♚d7!? 14.♙f4 0-0-0= Gavrikov-Chernin, Jurmala 1983) 14.♙h3 ♚g8 15.0-0 ♚h7⇒ with similar ideas to the main game. 11...h6!? 11...♟bc6!?. 12.♙g2 ♚d7 13.0-0 0-0-0 14.h4 f5 15.exf6 gxf6 16.♞e1 ♞de8 17.♙h3 ♟f5 18.♙f4 ♞hg8⇒ Anand-S.Lalic, London 1987. 12.♙h3 12.h4 ♟d7!? 13.♙h3 ♚g8 14.0-0 ♚h7 15.♞a2 ♟a6 16.h5 ♟c7 17.♙f4 ♞af8 18.♚d2 g5⇒ Khruschiov-Arslanov, Moscow 2009. 12...♟d7!?. The King Artur! 13.0-0 ♚g8 14.♟e1 ♟c7 15.♟g2 ♟d7 16.f4 g6 17.♟e3 h5 18.♙g2 b5= Black was afraid of the threat ♟xc4, but after this move the bishop cannot go back home. 19.h3 f5 20.exf6 ♟xf6 21.♚e2 ♟d7 22.♞e1 ♟f5 23.♟f1 ♞e8 ½-½ Jenni-Jussupow, Germany Bundesliga 2002/03. 10.h4

Now this is more of a waiting move than an attacking idea.

 WEAPON: 10.dxc5! is a dangerous weapon:

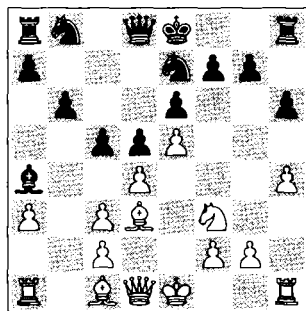


analysis diagram

10...bxc5 11.♘g5! ā (11.0-0 c4! 12.♙e2 ♘b6⇒) 11...h6 12.♚h5 g6 (12...0-0? 13.♘h7 ♚a5 14.0-0!→) 13.♚h4 c4 (13...♚a5□) 14.♘xf7! ♚a5? (14...♘f7□ 15.♚f6+ ♘g8 16.♚xe6+ ♘g7 17.♚f6+ ♘g8 18.♙xg6↑) 15.♙d2 ♚f8 16.♘d6+ ♘d7 17.♚b1→ with a winning position, mainly due to the poor position of the black king, in Vacek-Vavra, Czech tt 1994.

10...h6!?

To prevent ♘g5 definitively.



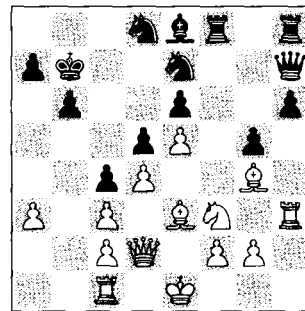
11.h5 c4!

Finally, Black chooses the blocking method. Another model game by Jussupow went 11...♘bc6! 12.♚h4 (12.0-0 c4!?!; 12.g3 ♚c7!?) 12...c4 13.♙e2 ♘d7!?


Artur's king) 14.♙e3 ♚g8 (14...♘f5!?) 15.♚d2 ♚h7 16.♚c1 ♘c7 17.♚f4 ♚af8 18.♘h4 ♘d8!?

19.♙g4 ♘b7 20.♚f3 ♙e8!?

21.♚h3 g5! 22.hxg6 fxg6 23.♘f3 g5!↑ and Black was better in A.Sokolov-Jussupow, Riga m-1 1986.



analysis diagram

 TRICK: 24.♘xg5? ♚g8♠ winning a piece.


12.♙e2

Sometimes a game may finish without any action. For instance, in Shirov-Jussupow, Moscow ol 1994, 12.♙f1 ♘d7!?

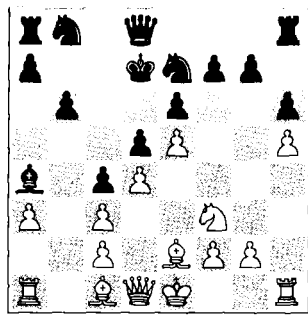
13.g3 ♚g8 14.♙f4 ♚h7 15.♚c1 ♘bc6 16.♙g2 a5 17.♘h2 b5 18.♚d2 ♘f5 19.0-0 ♘fe7= after the development of both armies had been completed, there was no way to make progress without moving the pawns. Therefore, a draw was agreed later, on move 28.

12...♘d7!?

A fashionable set-up, with the idea to activate the queen immediately by means of ...♚g8-♚h7. But it is not forced.

 WEAPON: Black can simply prepare queenside castling by

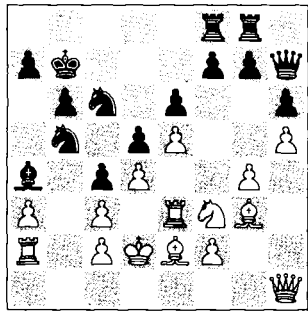
12...♘bc6!?. I also like the idea of manoeuvring with ...♘a6-♘c7-♘b5, because there are more countering possibilities. 13.♙f4 ♚d7 14.♚d2 0-0= etc., see for a nice example of this line Game 13.



13. ♖h4

Similar is 13.0-0 ♖g8 14.g3 ♖h7
 15.♖a2 ♘a6 16.♘h4 ♘c7 17.♙g4 ♖af8
 18.♙d2 ♘c8 (18...g5!?⇒) 19.♖b2
 ♘b7= Dolmatov-L.B.Hansen, Polanica
 Zdroj 1993.

A recent game between high-rated play-
 ers hardly changed the value of the posi-
 tion: 13.♙f4 ♖g8 14.♘d2 (preparing
 g2-g4, but this plan also fails) 14...♖h7
 15.♖a2 ♘a6!? 16.g4 ♘c7 17.♖h3 ♖af8
 18.♖e3 ♘c8 19.♙g3 ♘c6 20.♘f3
 ♖hg8 21.♘d2 ♘b7 22.♖h1 ♘b5!
 Bologan-Vitiugov, Sochi tt 2010.



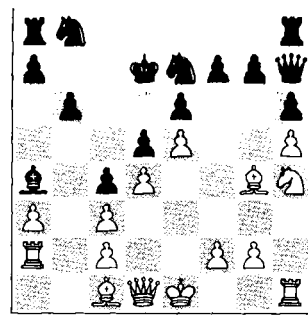
analysis diagram

Black's position is really wonderful: his
 minor pieces dominate the queenside
 and the artillery is well prepared for
 breaks with the f/g-pawns.

13... ♖g8 14. ♙g4

White can play 14.♙e3 ♖h7 15.♖c1,
 but there is no real difference.

14... ♖h7 15. ♖a2



I believe that this strange position is
 equal. However, at some moment, one
 player may be able to unbalance the
 game, using a pawn break, as we have al-
 ready seen in previous lines.

15... ♘a6!?

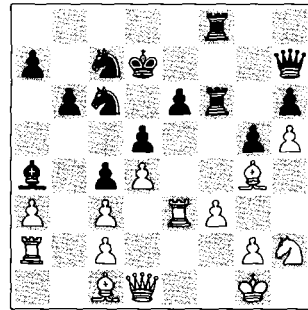
On c7 this knight will be most effective
 and flexible.

16. ♖h3 ♘c7 17. ♘f1 ♖af8 18. ♘g1 g5!?

19. ♘f3

19. hxc6 20. ♘h2 f5!?

21. exf6 ♖xf6
 22. ♖e3 ♖hf8 23. f3?!
 Probably White's first mistake. 23. ♖e2=;
 23. ♙f3 ♘c8 24. ♘g4 ♖6f7=.



23... ♖f7!

Eyeing the pawn on h5.

24. ♙d2

Trying to improve the passive bishop.

24... ♘e8! 25. ♙h3?

The second bad move.

25... ♖xh5! 26. ♘g4 ♖f5

Preparing an exchange sacrifice. After
 simply 26... ♖6f7!? Black is better.

27.♖f2

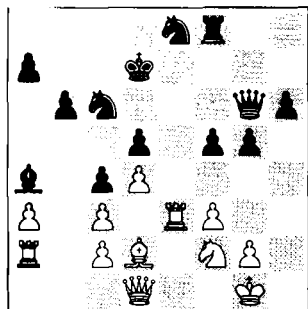
11.?? ♖e5+ ♜xc5! 28.dxe5 ♜g6↑.

27...♜g6!

The rook does not matter, but also after

??...♜5f6!? 28.♝g4 ♜6f7! Black is better.

28.♙xf5 exf5±

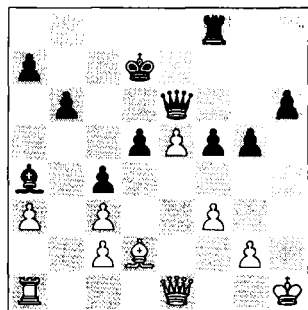


In this kind of positions the knight is clearly stronger than the rook (see for more material on the properties of pieces my book *Revolutionize Your Chess*).

29.♜e2 ♝f6 30.♜e1 ♝h5 31.♜a1 ♝g3

32.♜e5 ♜d6! 33.♝h1 ♝xh1 34.♙xh1

♝xe5 35.dxe5 ♜e6—+



36.♙e3 ♜xe5 37.♜d2 ♜e8 38.♙f2 f4

39.♜d1 ♝d6 40.♜e1 ♜f5 41.♜xe8

♙xe8 42.♙d4 ♙a4 43.♜e1 ♝d7!

44.♜b1 h5! 45.♜b4 ♙c6 46.♜b1 g4

47.fxg4 hxg4 48.♜e1 ♙a4

White resigned.

Summary of the line 7.♝f3:

The defensive system with 7...b6 is flexible enough, it is not so forced and it is good for positional players. On the other hand, Black can use the universal weapons A-B-C (the moves 7...♜a5!, 7...♝c6 and 7...♙d7!?) in the fight against all White's sub-Winawer lines.

The study of this game will be useful for the understanding of the entire chapter.

GAME 12 – The ‘Anti-dynamic’ 7.a4 (1286 games=54.4%)

Of course this move cannot be the best option for White, but the concept behind a3-a4 is easy to understand: White wants to bring his bishop to the a3-f8 diagonal and makes sure that Black does not fix the queenside with ...♜a5-♜a4 (Queen Blues) or ...♙d7-♙a4 (Sarcophagus). It certainly prevents all of Black's strategic counter set-ups, including Jussupow's plan with 7...b6.

However, many ideas here are similar to those in the line with 7.♝f3. At some point in the opening, the second player should choose between a closed centre with ...c5-c4 (the main Botvinnik/Uhlmann set-up), or more dynamic positions with semi-open structures.

For a better understanding of this system – and indeed of the whole Winawer system – I recommend the reader to first enjoy the full game by ‘French magister’ Wolfgang Uhlmann, and only then return to the study of all the options given in the notes. Until the move 9.♝f3, I haven't used the original move order from that game because I wanted to show the intermediate possibilities in the entire line.

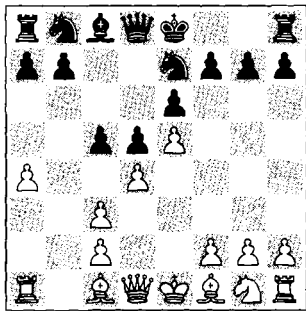
□ Laszlo Hazai

■ Wolfgang Uhlmann

Halle 1981 (4)

1.e4 e6 2.d4 d5 3.♘c3 ♘b4 4.e5 c5
5.a3 ♘xc3+ 6.bxc3 ♘e7 7.a4

Preventing the set-ups with ...b6-♘a6,
...♘d7-♘a4 and ...♗a5-♗a4, and try-
ing to activate the queen's bishop via
♘a3.



7...♗a5!


This is a major defensive move with multiple ideas. This option is also analysed in John Watson's *Play the French* (3rd edition).


Now the strategic set-up with 7...b6 is less interesting: 8.♘b5+!? ♘d7 (8...♗f8?! 9.♘h3!?! is advantageous for White as well, with the idea ♘f4-♘h5, for example) 9.♘d3 and White has traditionally been thought to have some advantage.

Starting with the natural move 7...♘bc6 is similar to Uhlmann's set-up, but with this move Black misses some important intermediate ideas (see below).

8.♘d2

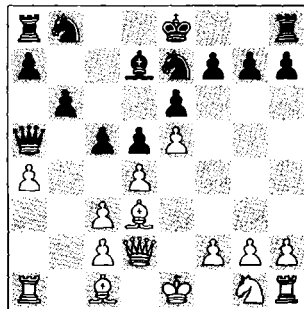
This move is quite forced for White if he is looking for an advantage.

 *WEAPON: After 8.♗d2, trying to stick to the idea ♘a3, 8...b6! just leads back to the model strategic set-up. Watson also suggested 8...♘bc6 9.♘f3 ♘d7 10.♘e2 ♗c8! – see also Weapon C given in the previous game. 9.♘b5+*

 *TRICK: 9.♘a3 ♘ab 10.♘b4? cxb4 11.cxb4 ♘xf1 12.bxa5 ♘xg2?*

If 9.♘f3 ♘a6 10.♘xa6 ♗xa6⇒, as originally played in Pelitov-Uhlmann, Szombathely 1966.

9...♘d7 10.♘d3




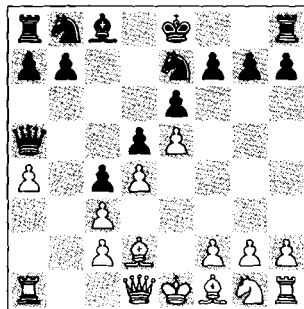
analysis diagram

The key position of this line.

10...♘bc6 10...♘xa4!? – no games.
11.♘f3 f6 11...h6!?, 11...cxd4!?,
11...♗c8!?. 12.0-0 12.exf6!? gxf6
13.0-0∞. 12...fxe5 13.dxe5 0-0
14.♗e1 h6 15.♘h4 ♗ad8 and Black has
the better chances, Borkowski-Drasko,
Polanica Zdroj 1988.

8...♘bc6

 *WEAPON: An important, classical strategic alternative is 8...c4!?*




analysis diagram

Black uses the important factor time: the white queen's bishop cannot go immediately to a3. 9.♗g4 Otherwise Black

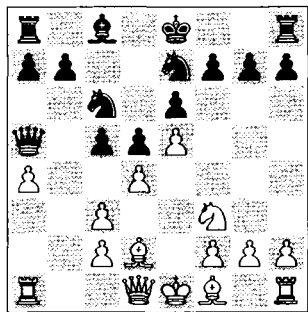
can attack and win the a pawn, for instance: 9.♘h3! 0 0 10.♙e2 ♘d7!? 11 0 0 ♘b6⇒ Gipslis-Spassky, Riga ch URS 1958; or 9.♘f3 ♘d7!? 10.♙e2 ♘b6⇒ Tolush-Botvinnik, Moscow ch URS 1945. **9...0-0!** This was the birth of the New Winawer! **10.♙e2** 10.♘h3 f6! 11.exf6 ♗xf6⇒; 10.h4 f6!⇒. **10...♘bc6** **11.♘f3 f6!**⇒ Playing for the centre; 11...b5 is unclear. **12.0-0** 12.exf6 ♗xf6⇒. **12...fxe5** **13.♘xe5** 14.dxe5 ♘g6⇒. **13...♘xe5** **14.dxe5** ♘d7 **15.♙g5** ♘f5 **16.♖h3** ♖c7 **17.♗fe1** ♗xe5 **18.♙xc4** ♖c7 **19.♙d3** e5!↑ was favourable for Black in Robatsch-Uhlmann, Moscow ol 1956.

9.♘f3

This position is still new for us – in this book, I mean. But play is very similar to the A-B-C lines given in the first game.

 WEAPON: 9.♖g4 This move is always interesting, even though


White has already spent several important tempi in the opening: 9...0-0 10.♙d3 (10.♘f3 f5!? 11.♖h5 ♗b6⇒) 10...f5!? (10...c4!? 11.♙e2 f6⇒) 11.exf6 (11.♖g3 c4 12.♙e2 b5⇒) 11...♗xf6 12.♖h5 ♘f5 13.♘f3 (13.g4? c4!) 13...c4 14.♙xf5 (14.♙e2? ♘d6!⚡) 14...♗xf5 and Black has at least equal chances.

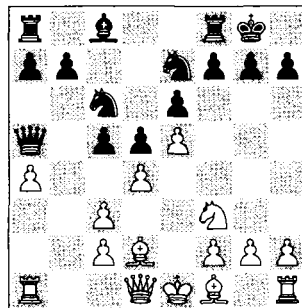


9...♙d7

An automatic move. Many times this position arises by transposition. 9...c4 was originally played in Smyslov-Botvinnik,

Moscow ch-URS 1944. But here Black cannot use the manoeuvre ...♘d7-♘b6. After the correct 10.g3!± there is no effective counterplay for Black. So later, in 1945, Botvinnik corrected this lapse (see 8...c4! above).

 WEAPON: But here Black can continue in New-Winawer fashion with 9...0-0!?. With this move you can avoid having to study many lines:

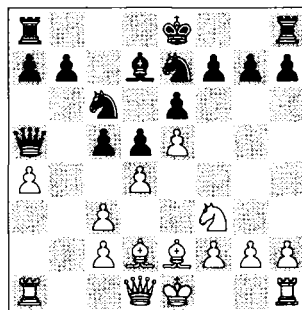


analysis diagram


10.♙d3 h6! 11.♘h4 (11.0-0 c4! is an interesting transposition for Black) 11...c4⇒ was played in Auvinen-Karttunen, Kuopio 1990, but also interesting are 11...♖c7!? and 11...♘f5!?

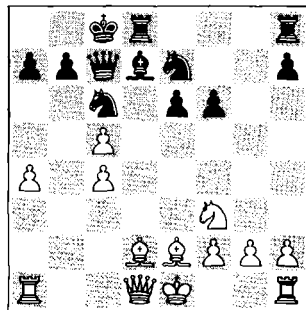
10.♙b5

The most popular move. However, it is really difficult to understand why. Natural development with **10.♙e2!**? is the second option for White:




analysis diagram

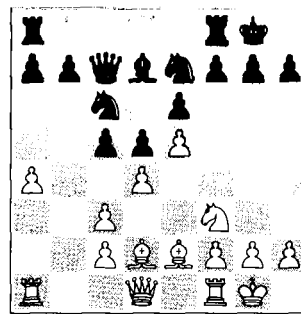
 **A) WEAPON:** For Kortchnoi's dynamic break 10...f6!? I recommend the reader to study Watson's analysis in 'Play the French' (2003) and recently featured on 'ChessPublishing'. This is without any doubt an interesting option, but things are highly unclear after 11.c4!? ♖c7 12.cxd5 ♗xd5 13.c4 ♘de7 14.exf6 gxf6 15.dxc5 0-0-0 and it is difficult to evaluate this position, which occurred for the first time in Timman-Kortchnoi, Leeuwarden ch-NED 1976.



analysis diagram


Black has a nice pawn structure and his pieces are solidly placed, but all computer modules give an advantage for White (perhaps for the extra pawn). Of course, in human play nobody is safe here! Maybe the black side is even easier to play, for instance, 16.♗c3?! (16.a5!? a6!?∞) 16...e5 17.♖d6 ♗f5 18.♖xc7+ ♗xc7♞ was a favourable endgame for Kortchnoi, which was eventually reflected in the result.

 **B) WEAPON:** The new-Winawer; 10...0-0! This is a perfectly normal move in chess, however it is not always useful in the Winawer system! 11.0-0 ♖c7!? A queen is faster than a bishop! (see my chapter on piece properties in 'Revolutionize Your Chess').



analysis diagram

12.♗e1 h6 12...b6!? 13.♗d3 h6 14.♗xh6?! (≥ 14.♖c1 c4 15.♗e2 f6!⇒ Byrne-Kortchnoi, Nice ol 1974) 14...gxh6 15.♖d2 ♗g7 16.♖f4 ♘g8♞ was in Black's favour in Kurajica-Diez del Corral, L'Hospitalet de Llobre 1973. 13.♗c1 Finally revealing the opening idea of a3-a4, but Black is already well prepared: 13...b6! Reinforcing the queenside structure. 14.h4 14.♗a3 ♗a5⇒.

 **TRICK:** After 14.♗d3 Black has gained a tempo compared to the theory position.

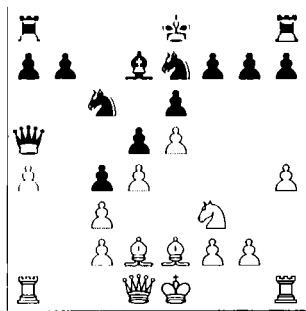
14...f6!? 15.♗d3 15.exf6 ♗xf6 16.♗a3 ♗a5=. 15...fxe5 16.♗xe5 ♗xe5 17.dxe5 c4!⇒ Cunningham-Botterill, Cardiff ch-WLS 1980.

C) Here the strategic concept 10...c4!? is also good and solid:

C1) 11.♗g5 h6 12.♗h3 0-0! =; ≤ 12...0-0-0 13.♗f4!? Uhlmann;

C2) 11.0-0 Castling is White's most common choice here. 11...f6!? (11...0-0-0; 11...0-0) 12.exf6 gxf6 and Black's position is strong enough. The main line continues: 13.♗h4 0-0-0 14.♗h5 ♗hg8 15.g3 (15.♗e1 ♗g6!?) 15...e5 (15...♗g6!? 16.♗f3 e5⇒) 16.f4 e4!⇒ M.Becker-Uhlmann, Halle 1982;

C3) With 11.h4 there are only two classical games, but their ideas are helpful in the preparation for the next game:



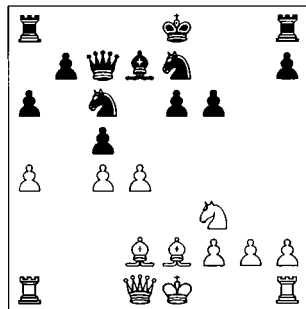
analysis diagram

11...f6! 12.h5 fxe5 13.h6 gxh6
 14.fxe5 dxe5 15.dxe5 0-0-0 16.fxh6
 Rdf8 16...d6! 17.fg5?! ♖xc3+
 18.fxf1 Rdf8 19.f6 fxf6! 20.exf6
 ♗xf6 Fischer-Padevsky, Varna ol 1962.
 17.fg4 d6g6 18.f1 ♖b6 19.♖e1
 fxe5 20.f3 ♖d6 Black had an extra
 pawn and a better position in Garcia
 Martinez-Uhlmann, Havana 1964.

10...c4!?

According to Uhlmann this is *the logical
 reply to the bishop's trip to b5.*

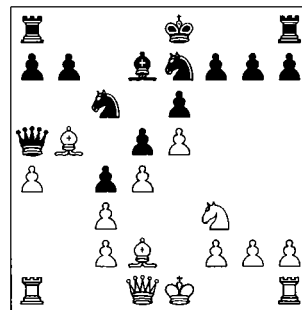
☞ A) WEAPON: Of course, there
 are some alternatives where Black
 does not close the centre: 10...a6!? 11.f2
 11.fxc6 fxc6 12.0-0 h6 13.♖c1 c4
 14.♖a3 ♖c7= Suetin-Misiano, Biel 1997.
 11...f6!? Here I prefer this most dynamic at-
 tempt advocated by Kortchnoi and Watson.
 11...c4!? is the Botvinnik/Uhlmann move.
 12.c4 ♖c7 13.cxd5 dxd5 14.c4 dde7
 15.exf6 gxf6



analysis diagram

This is the critical position of this line.
 16.dxc5 In case of 16.d5 exd5 17.cxd5
 dxd5 Black seems OK, Safarli-Ganguly,
 Paks 2009. 16...0-0-0 17.f3c3 After
 17.0-0 e5 the black pawn on a6 makes
 a favourable difference for Black, in
 comparison to the line 10.f2 f6.
 17...e5 18.♖d6 f5 18...d5!?
 19.♖xc7+ dxc7 ⇒ Zhang Zhong-
 Berkes, Calvia ol 2004. 19.♖xc7+
 19.♖xf6 Rhf8 20.♖h6 d6g6 21.0-0
 d4. 19...dxc7 20.f1c1 d6g6 21.g3
 d8!↑ and Black achieved a very prom-
 ising position in Short-Pelletier, Leon
 Ech-tt 2001;

B) Wrong line: 10...♖c7 has the same
 idea as in the line with 10.f2, i.e. pre-
 paring ...b7-b6, but White has some
 pressure after 11.0-0 0-0 12.f1e1!?
 12.f1c1 b6 13.f1a3 d5a5 ⇒ Black is
 problem-free here, Nunn-Jussupow,
 Belgrade 1991. 12...b6 13.dxc5 bxc5
 14.f3c3 c4 15.f3c5↑ Zhang Zhong-
 Lputian, Beer-Sheva Wch-tt 2005.



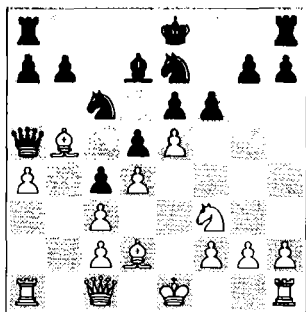
11.♖c1

11.f1c1!? (no games) 11...d8b8
 (11...dxe5 12.dxe5 fxb5) 12.f1d7+
 dxd7=;

11.0-0 h6 12.f1e1 a6 13.f1xc6 fxc6
 and ½-½, Anand-Oll, Rome 1990.

11...f6!

The main resource, introducing Black's
 set-up.



12.exf6

After 12.0-0 fxe5 13.dxe5 (13.♙g5!? ♖g6!) 13...0-0 Black's position cannot be worse at least.

12...gxf6 13.0-0 ♖g8!

From now on the white king will not have a comfortable life.

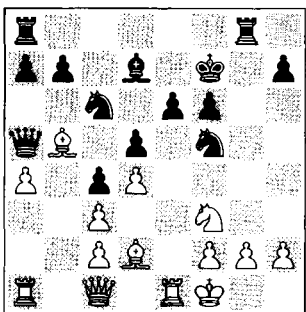
14.♞e1 ♔f7!

A quite revolutionary move for the 1980's! *Since the bishop is locked out on b5, there is no danger along the light squares anymore. Therefore, the king can protect the e6-pawn in this unconventional way. At the same time, it allows the connection of the rooks and Black can get ready to double them along the g-file – Uhlmann.*

15.♕f1

Preparing the manoeuvre ♙f4.

15...♗f5!



Without wasting time playing ...a7-a6, Black prepares a massive attack on the kingside. The result of the opening can

be summarized as not favourable for White.

16.♙f4 h5! 17.h3 ♞g6! 18.♚a3

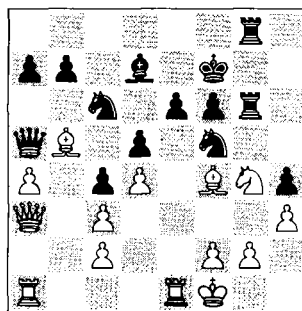
Curiously, White hasn't got any clear counterplay here – he is the passive side!

18...h4!

An optimistic advance, preventing g2-g3 and preparing an exchange sacrifice which is typical in closed structures, like in the previous game by Jussupov. After 18...♞ag8 19.g3∞ and it is not easy to make progress.

19.♖h2 ♞ag8 20.♗g4

Black to move!



20...♞xg4!

Here is the point. *This subtle strategic exchange sacrifice will have long-term effects. The queen will be transferred via d8 to g8 in order to help in the attack. The h-pawn threatens to advance at the right time, aiming to create some penetration squares. White does not have any counterplay since his rooks and bishop pair lack any targets in the black camp – Uhlmann.*

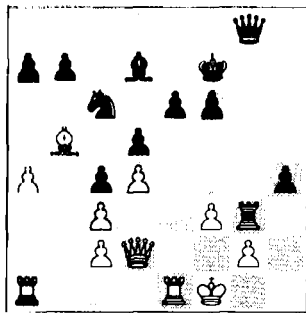
21.hxg4 ♞xg4 22.♙h2 ♚d8!

Black improves his position, using the great skills of the 'Blues Queen'. Now play is much easier for the black side.

23.f3 ♞g6 24.♚c1 ♚g8!

Finally Black has enough activated pieces and pawns to start the attack.

25.♚d2 ♖g3+ 26.♙xg3 ♞xg3→



An extremely dangerous position for White. His major pieces are out of play and cannot make use of their properties.

27. ♖xc6!

The bishop is also useless on b5, so the best defence is systematic simplification.

27... bxc6

Keeping the bishop on the diagonal d7-h3. 27... ♗xc6 28. ♖f4! ⇌.

28. ♖e2 h3! 29. ♖b1!

White is still in time to escape.

29... h2

This pawn advance might be too hurried, but in the game the idea worked nicely.

TRICK: 29... ♖g6!? 30. ♔g1 (30. ♖b8 e5!) 30... ♖xf3 31. ♖b7?? ♖f1+ 32. ♔h2 (32. ♔xf1 h2-+) 32... hxg2 and Black is winning.

30. ♖h6 ♖xf3+ 31. ♖f2?

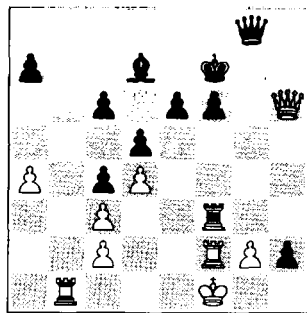
A decisive mistake. Not 31. gxh3?? ♖g1#, but 31. ♔e1!, a defence that was difficult to find. After 31... ♖g3+ (31... ♖xc3? 32. ♖xh2↑) 32. ♔d2 would have led to a draw after a number of forced moves.

Summary 7.a4:

After losing the dynamic advantage (White uses one tempo to improve his position, but not for the attack), Black has enough useful plans. Please check my analysis again and you will discover new ideas in the comments to the first two games.

However, we must remember that Uhlmann's main set-up with ...c5-c4 and ...f7-f6 still agrees with Botvinnik's original ideas!

I hope the study of this chapter will be useful for meeting the flank attack in the next.

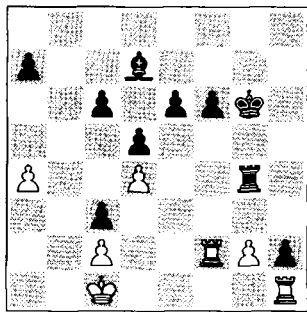


31... ♖g6!!

This quiet intermediate move is full of venom and can be completely overlooked – Uhlmann.

32. ♖xg6+ ♔xg6 33. ♔e2 ♖xc3+

34. ♔d2 ♖g3! 35. ♖h1 c3+ 36. ♔c1 ♖g4!



This move finally yields a decisive advantage. The mass of black pawns cannot be stopped any longer. My bishop is also alive and kicking – Uhlmann.

37. ♖xh2 ♖xd4 38. ♖f3 e5! 39. ♖xc3

♖xa4 40. ♖g3+ ♔g4! 41. ♖c3 e4

42. ♖h8 ♖a1+ 43. ♔b2 ♖g1 44. g3 ♔f3!

45. ♖d8 ♖d1 46. ♖xc6 e3 47. ♖f8 ♔e4!

48. ♖xf6+ ♔g5 49. ♖f7 ♔g4! 50. ♖f4+

♔h3! 51. ♖h4+ ♔g2 52. ♖hf4 ♖d2 0-1

Chapter 5 – The Sharp Flank Attack 7.h4

GAMES 13-15 – 7.h4 (1083 games=58.6%; the best statistics for White!)

After losing two important games in the Winawer system (one of them against 7.h4, Short-Kortchnoi, Wijk aan Zee 1987), I decided to change and play the Classical system with 3.♘c3 ♘f6 – Viktor Kortchnoi.

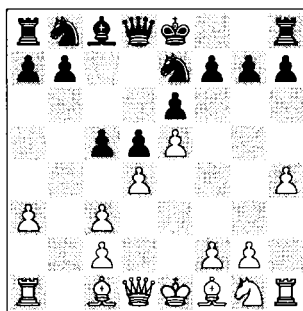
Working on this system, I found an interesting resource for Kortchnoi in that memorable game – see the Weapon 9...cxd4 in Game 14.

By the way, the second important game lost by Kortchnoi was probably in the Armenian Variation 5.a3 ♘a5 – see the next chapter.

Now we have to deal with a much more dynamic move than the two previous ones – 7.h4 is a typical modern, aggressive resource in the Winawer system.



Viktor Kortchnoi.



Curt Hansen in *ChessBase Magazine (CBM)*: *If one does not know the opening theory of this line this move may at first sight be a surprise. However it is in fact quite logical. White has a space advantage on the king-side and furthermore black has exchanged his main defender of g7 – the blacksquared bishop. White's intention is now to weaken the black squares further with h4-h5-h6 or put g7 under pressure with h4-h5 and ♖h3-♗g3.*

John Watson on *ChessPublishing*: *This advance has always produced tactical and double-edged play and retained an appeal for those who like to mix it up directly. Kasparov, Morozevich and Short (very often!) have played it, as well as ambitious players such as Fedorov and Ljubojevic.*

- White goes right after the dark squares, intending h5-h6.
- Even if Black plays ...h6, his kingside will be more vulnerable to attack.

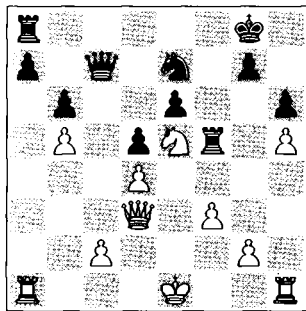
- By delaying $\text{c}3$, White reserves the possibility of $\text{g}4$, and his king's rook can jump into action via $\text{h}4$ or $\text{h}3$.
 - The downside is that Black gains time for development and attack upon White's centre, so the first player will often sacrifice the d -pawn to keep things going.
- There's plenty of life left in the variations with $\text{h}2$ - $\text{h}4$.

Keep in Mind (author's note about 7.h4)

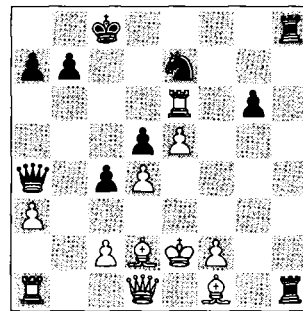
- This creative option has become popular recently. It allows White to avoid the highly theoretical lines following $7.\text{g}4 \text{c}7$ or $7...0-0$. White first increases his resources on the kingside. Therefore, when facing the $\text{h}2$ - $\text{h}4$ variation, Black's opening moves and ideas should be determined by new considerations!
- In the following three games (13-15), my purpose will be to open the search in three lines: $7...\text{c}7!$? (Game 13), $7...\text{c}6$ (Game 14) and $7...\text{a}5!$ (Game 15).



Workshop – Middlegame Themes



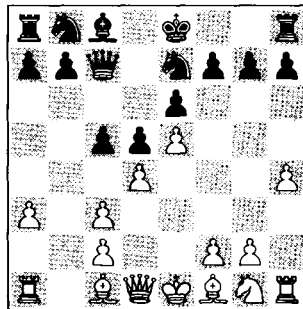
Game 13: Black to move.



Game 15: Black to move.

GAME 13 – Classical defence with the queen: $7...\text{c}7$ (288 games=47%)

This ultra-short queen move is in accordance with a solid defensive set-up, but it is always less dynamic than the long move $...\text{a}5$.



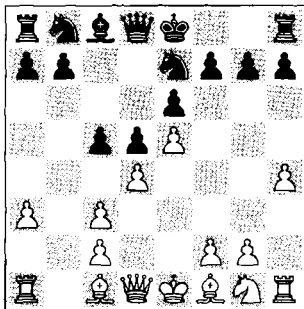
Black temporarily prevents $\text{d}1$ - $\text{g}4$ ($8.\text{g}4? \text{cxd}4!$), and prepares the fundamental 'sarcophagus' scheme $...\text{b}6$ - $\text{a}6$.

Ljubomir Ljubojevic Nigel Short

terdam 1989 (1)

6 2.d4 d5 3.♘c3 ♙b4 4.e5 c5
♙xc3+ 6.bxc3 ♘e7

on ChessPublishing: If 6...♙c7
automatically avoids 7.h4 and 7.a4
of 7...cxd4! – I'm not so sure!, VM)
7.a4 cxd4 8.cxd4 ♙c3+ 9.♙d2 ♙xd4
♙e4+ 11.♙e2(=) 7...cxd4 8.cxd4
9.♙d2 ♙xd4 10.♘f3 ♙e4+ 11.♙e3
2.♙d3, in both cases with good com-
on for the sacrificed pawn.



move may look strange – why isn't
developing pieces? The idea of

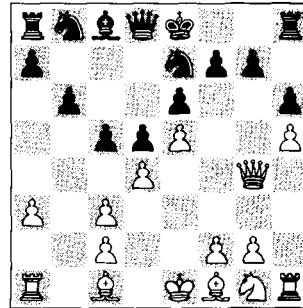


Short
Nigel Short often played the double-edged
h4. When he faced it with black he always
ed the classical, ultra-short 7...♙c7!?

h2-h4 is to gain space on the kingside
this is the area where White is stronger
(thanks to the e5 pawn), and this is
where he normally should play.

7...♙c7!?

This option is very good for solid
French players. Straightaway 7...b6?! is
premature: 8.h5 h6 9.♙g4!



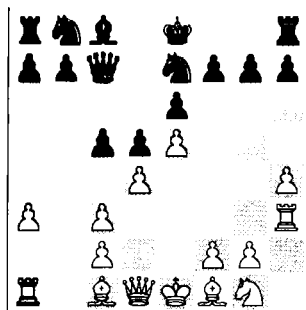
analysis diagram

Black's position is too passive and he
scores badly here, for instance, after the
typical Winawer defence 9...♙f8 Black
cannot allow the position to be opened
(see also Chapter 13, line 7.♙g4 ♙f8).
10.♘f3 (a nice miniature followed after
10.a4!? ♙c7 11.♖h3!? ♙a6 12.♖f3!
♙g8 13.♙f4 ♘ec6 14.♙b5! ♖h7
15.♘e2 ♘a5? 16.♙e8! 1-0 Nepomni-
achtchi-Shimanov, St Petersburg 2009)
10...♙a6 11.♙xa6 ♘xa6 12.0-0±
♘b8? 13.dxc5! bxc5 14.♖b1 ♘d7
15.c4! and White had a dangerous ini-
tiative in Morozevich-Shipov, Moscow
Superblitz 2006. But if 9...♘f5 10.♙d3
0-0 11.♙h3! White will attack with
g4-g5.

8.♘f3

This quiet response leads us back to old
classical lines. Let's check two modern
options:

WEAPON A: 8.♖h3?! This lift is
too ambitious here. Black has
many nice counterplay ideas:



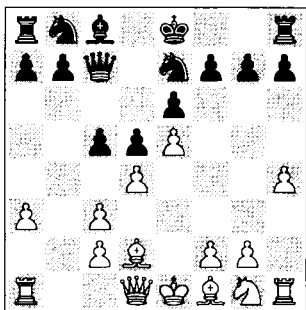
analysis diagram

h...b6 8...♖bc6!? also scores nicely for Black: 9.h5 h6 10.♖g4 ♘f5 11.♖f4 cxd4 (11...f6!? Steinbacher-Short, Germany Bundesliga 1990/91) 12.g4 ♘fe7 13.cxd4 ♙d7!? (13...f6!?) 14.♙d2 f6!± 15.exf6 ♖xf4 16.♙xf4 gxf6↑ 17.0-0-0?? (17.♘f3 e5!?) 17...e5! 0-1 Delaney-Dgebuadze, Roux 2009. **9.h5 h6** 10.♖g4 10.♘f3?! ♙a6 11.♙xa6 ♘xa6 12.♘h4 ♖c8↑ Sulskis-Dizdarevic, Novi Sad Ech-tt 2009. **10...♘f5!** 10...♖g8!? is the safest defence: 11.♙d2 (11.♙d3 cxd4!± Saulin-Janturin, Moscow 1999) 11...♙a6 12.♙xa6 ♘xa6 and chances are equal, Tischbierek-Casper, Stralsund ch-DDR 1988. **11.♙d2**

TRICK: 11.♙d3? cxd4 12.♙xf5 ♖xe5+!

11...♙a6 12.♙xa6 ♘xa6 13.♖e2 ♘b8 14.g4 ♘e7 with a strategic plus for Black, Vocaturro-Sedina, Antalya 2009.

WEAPON B: 8.♙d2!?

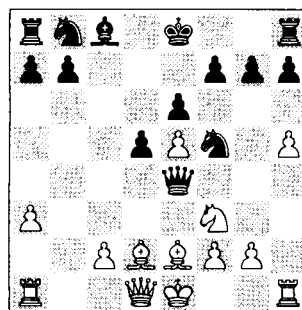


analysis diagram

Recently a popular move. **8...b6!?** **9.h5 h6** 10.♖g4 ♘f5! White scores well after the passive 10...♖f8 11.♖h3!? ♙a6 12.♖f3: =4:1. **11.♙d3 0-0!** One more step towards the New Winawer. Now after 12.♖h3 (12.♖f4 f6!?) the best plan is 12...cxd4 13.cxd4 ♙a6! with the idea 14.♙xf5 exf5 15.♖xf5 ♙c8!± and Black is somewhat better.

WEAPON C: (tactics) after the attacking screw 8.h5 Black has two

main possibilities: **8...cxd4** Rustemov's sharp line is interesting and highly unclear. For the solid option 8...h6!? 9.♘f3 b6, see the main game. **9.cxd4 ♖c3+** 10.♙d2 ♖xd4 11.♘f3 ♖e4+ 12.♙e2 ♘f5!



analysis diagram

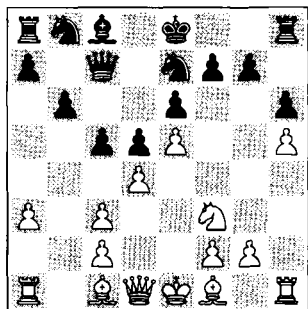
By transposition this is also a possible sub-line in Game 15. **13.♘f1 b6!** **14.♙b5+** ♙d7 **15.♙d3 ♖g4** **16.h6 gxh6** 17.♙xh6 17.♙xf5? ♖xf5± Naer-Rustemov, Moscow 1995. **17...♘c6** 17...♙a4!?. **18.♙g5 ♖c8** **19.♙f6 ♖g8** In a complex position Black's chances are slightly better, Aseev-Rustemov, St Petersburg 1994.

8...b6 9.h5

WEAPON: 9.♙b5+ (we already know this resource for White: it avoids ...♙a6) 9...♙d7 10.♙d3 ♙a4! 11.h5 cxd4! (11...c4= is the main blockading idea, seen in the first game of this chapter and also below) 12.cxd4 (12.♘f1?! as in Shirov-

Casper, Germany Bundesliga 1994/95, is suspicious) 12...♖c3+ 13.♙d2 ♗xd3! 14.cxd3 ♙xd1♞ and then ...h7-h6!

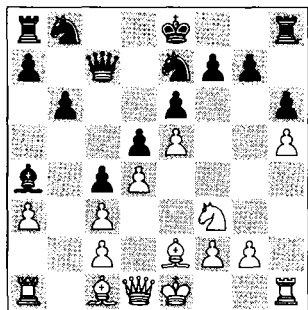
9...h6



Having built his fortress, Black has reached a balanced position. White should play his final attacking card.

10.a4

WEAPON: Again, 10.♙b5+ ♙d7 11.♙d3 (11.♙e2 ♙a4 12.dxc5 bxc5 13.♞h4 c4♞ Rowson-Psakhis, Port Erin 1999) 11...c4 12.♙e2 (12.♙f1 ♙a4=) 12...♙a4=.



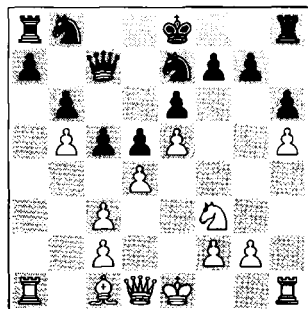
analysis diagram

The following 'sarcophagus' set-up is a nice alternative to Jussupow's ...♗d7-♗g8-♗h7: 13.♗h4 ♗bc6 14.0-0 0-0-0 15.♙g4 ♗d7 16.♙h3 ♞dg8 17.♞a2 g5! 18.hxg6 fxg6→ Hoolt-Kononenko, Germany Bundesliga (Women) 2009/10.

10...♙a6 11.♙b5+

A slightly annoying check. 11.♙xa6 ♗xa6=.

11...♙xb5 12.axb5



Chances are equal.

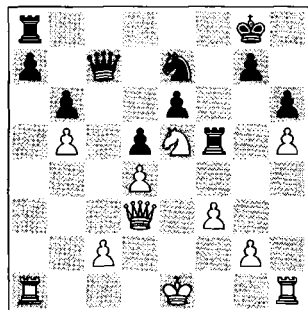
12...♗d7

12...cxd4!? 13.cxd4 ♗c3+ 14.♙d2 ♗c4⇒ Firat-Sa.Martinovic, Rijeka Ech 2010.

13.♗d3 0-0 14.♙d2 f6

14...♞fc8!? 15.0-0 cxd4 16.cxd4 ♗c4 17.♗xc4 dxc4⇒.

15.♙f4 fxe5 16.♙xe5 ♗xe5 17.♗xe5 ♞f5 18.f3 cxd4 19.cxd4



This is the last key moment.

19...♞xe5+!?

Forcing a draw, making use of some tactics against White's exposed king

20.dxe5 ♗xe5+ 21.♙f2 ♗f5 22.♞he1 ♗d6 23.♙g1 ♗c5+ 24.♙h2

24.♙h1 ♗g3+ 25.♙h2 ♗d6⇒.

24...♗d6+ 25.♙g1

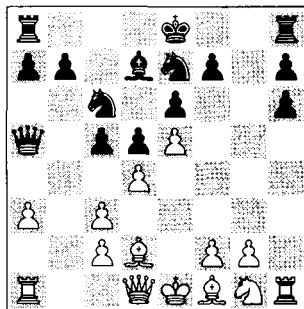
1/2-1/2

Summary 7.h4 ♖c7:

Defending with this classical scheme, you will never lose.

GAME 14 – 7...♖c6 (424 games=34.6%; really bad statistics – be careful!)

Vocaturo's dynamic set-up versus Uhlmann's universal system: 8.h5 ♖a5 9.♗d2 ♗d7?! 10.h6! gxh6



After many successes, it turned out that Uhlmann's universal set-up with ...♖c6-♖a5-♗d7 and ...0-0-0 doesn't work perfectly against 7.h4!. This old line was revolutionized for the white side:

- Young Italian talent Daniele Vocaturo came up with a dynamic idea in the above position: 11.♖b1!, which was later taken up by Morozevich.
- Also, grandmaster Neil McDonald's knight manoeuvre 11.♗e2!? 0-0-0 12.♗c1! turns out to be trustworthy.
- Even with the natural old move 11.♗f3 White is playing for the initiative.

The biggest problem in this line is Black's damaged pawn structure on the kingside. In many lines, Uhlmann's main resource was to return with the knight ...♗e7-♗g8, preparing ...f7-f6, but in modern chess this is probably not enough.

Black Options

After 7...♖c6 8.h5 Black has some intermediate options instead of the old 8...♗d7?!, and he has at least three weapons on the key move (i.e. move 9). For instance, after 8...♖a5 9.♗d2, it is not too late to transpose to the Black Queen Blues variation with 9...♖a4!?

So, focus on your favourite line, after enjoying the next brilliant game!



Young Italian talent Daniele Vocaturo.

□ Daniele Vocaturo
 ■ Tiger Hillarp Persson

Reykjavik 2009 (3)

For many years Italy hosted lots of good chess tournaments, but somehow that did not translate into having strong players. Things have begun to change – now the Italian team has a very strong leader in Fabiano Caruana and a group of very talented young players. One of them played this brilliant game recently.


**1.e4 e6 2.d4 d5 3.♘c3 ♗b4 4.e5 c5
 5.a3 ♗xc3+ 6.bxc3 ♘e7 7.h4 ♘bc6**



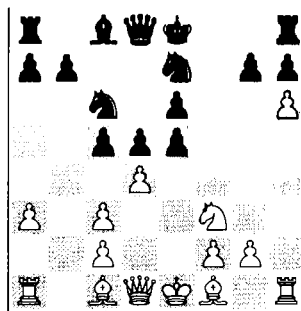
Black also accumulates his resources, combining a bit of development and a kind of a stand-by mode, just before his opponent's next move. However, I have the impression that time is running out for the white side.

8.h5

Advancing the attacking pawn is a main idea for White in this line.

 **WEAPON:** If now 8.♘f3, Black has many strong lines at his disposal. After 8...♗a5! 9.♗d2, for instance, 9...♗d7!? would be a fine order to reach Uhlmann's universal set-up, and the other two options: 9... cxd4!? and the 'Queen Blues' move 9...♗a4!?, are also analysed below.

8...f6!? is also suggested by Watson as an unusual solution: **9.h5 fxe5 10.h6**



analysis diagram

10...g6!? 10...g6 was seen in Jenni-Caruana, Brno 2006, 11.♘xe5!?∞. **11.dxe5 0-0** with a creative game, where I prefer Black.

8...♗a5!

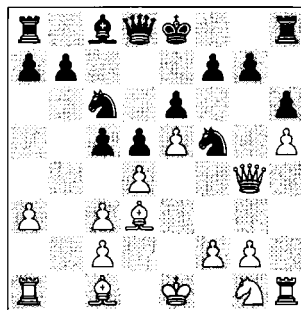
It's never too late to use the queen's properties against a flank attack. Let's check some alternatives:



A) **TRICK:** 8...cxd4? Too late! Curiously, it was played in 16 games, even by guys like Ivanchuk and Shulman. 9.h6! (only one game!! Everybody takes on d4 automatically) 9...g6 (9...dxc3 10.hxg7 ♖g8 11.♙xh7↑; 9...gxh6 10.cxd4±) 10.cxd4! with a substantial advantage. Of course not 10.♘f3? as in Speckner-Hertneck, Germany tt 1991.



B) **WEAPON:** 8...h6!? (this natural blockading move is often played, but I will not try to improve this line) 9.♗g4 (for 9.♘f3 ♗a5 10.♗d2 ♗a4 see the next game) 9...♘f5! 10.♗d3

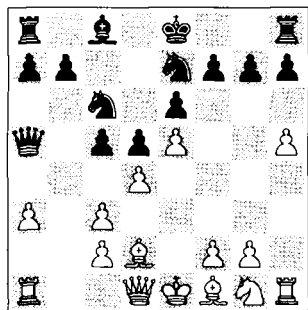


analysis diagram

10...0-0! Remember that Black's kingside castling is revolutionary in this variation and can be named the New Winawer. As I already pointed out in the previous game, the defence 10...♖f8 sometimes fails, at least in sub-Winawer lines: 11.♗e2!? ♖a5 12.♘d2 (12.dxc5!?) 12...c4 13.♙xf5 exf5 14.♗f3 ♙e6 15.♗f4 (15.a4!?) 15...♗g8 16.♖g1 ♖f8 17.g4!→ Kosten-McDonald, Hastings 1987/88. 11.♙xf5 11.♗f3 ♖a5 12.♘d2 ♖a4⇒ P.Knijpers-Milnes, Guernsey 2002. 11...exf5 12.♖g3 ♗h8 13.♗e2 ♖e8 13...♖a5! 14.0-0 b6↑; 13...b6!?. **14.0-0 h6**⇒ Zontakh-Paulic, Belgrade 1993.

9...♘d2

forced.



9...♘d7

Hansen (CBM): *With this move black questions not so much the white setup on the kingside but whether the weakening of the dark squares is worth the use of three tempi since black will place his king on the queenside anyway. However it is worth mentioning that the text move was played by the French-specialist Wolfgang Uhlmann as early as 1969, and has been played by the German grand-master several times since then.*

Here I would like to offer three additional options for black players to be well prepared against 'panacea' moves like h2-h4.

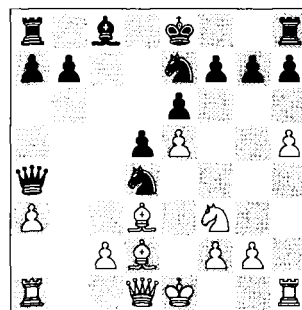


WEAPON A: 9...cxd4 This continuation is in full agreement with the rule: central action vs. flank attack. However, in most lines it is unclear who is better prepared for an open game. This line is highly recommended for tactical players! **10.cxd4 ♖a4** Attacking d4.

Here are some examples of how play can develop:

A1) White could sacrifice a pawn: **11.h6 ♖xd4** leads to less defined positions. 11...gxf6? 12.c3±; 11...♗xd4 was played in a tense game B.Savchenko-Shulman, Khanty-Mansiysk 2009: 12.hxg7 ♖g8 13.♙c3!? ♗ec6? 14.♖xh7 ♖xc2 15.♗d3!±, also commented by John Watson on *ChessPublishing*. **12.♗f3 ♖e4+ 13.♙e2 gxh6!?** This is a balanced line. 13...♗xe5 14.♙c3! f6! is highly unclear, as in Miton-Shabalov, Stratton Mountain 1999. **14.♖h4 ♖g6 15.g4 f5!⇒** Kasperk-W.Schmidt, Zakopane tt 2000.

A2) **11.♗f3** was first played by Garry Kasparov. **11...♗xd4 12.♙d3** leads to a tactically important position in this line, also reached by transposition from the Queen Blues variation and commented on in *The Flexible French*, Game 67.



analysis diagram

12...h6! 12...♗ec6 13.♗f1 ♗xf3 14.♖xf3 with good compensation for

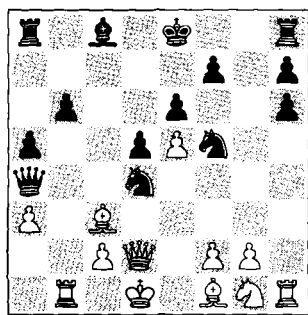
the pawn, Kasparov-Anand, Linares 1992. 13. ♖f1 13. ♗b4!? ♜dc6∞. 13... ♜xf3 14. ♗xf3 b6! ≠ Black's score is fantastic in this line: 0-5. See all continuations in the recent success game Nakamura-Shulman in the last chapter of this book.

A3) Defending the d4 pawn with 11. c3 ♗xd1+ 12. ♜xd1 h6! is correctly considered to be equal, Van Riemsdijk-Vilela, Cienfuegos B 1991.

A4) 11. ♗c3!? b6

♜ TRICK: 11... h6?! 12. ♖b1! ± ♗xa3? 13. ♖h3! ±.

12. h6! gxh6 13. ♗d3 a5! 13... ♜f5?! 14. ♗b5! ♗xb5 15. ♗xb5 ♗d7 16. ♗xc6! ♗xc6 17. g4 ±, Wegener-B.Schmidt, Germany Bundesliga 1992/93. 14. ♗d2 ♜f5! 14... ♗a6?! 15. ♗xa6 ♖xa6 16. ♜e2 ↑, Zhang Pengxiang-Naumkin, Cappelle la Grande 2005. 15. ♖b1 15. ♜f3 ♖g8! is about equal. 15... ♜cxd4 16. ♜d1

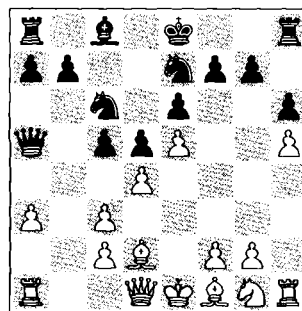


analysis diagram

♜ TRICK: 16... ♗d7! ≠ (the idea missed by Kortchnoi and probably one of the reasons why he changed from the Winawer to the Classical! Previous practice saw 16... ♖g8 17. ♖xb6 ♗d7 18. ♗xd4 ♗xd4 19. ♗xd4 ♜xd4 20. ♖xh6 with an edge for White, Short-Kortchnoi, Wijk aan Zee 1987) 17. g4 ♜xc2!! 18. ♗xc2 □ (18. gxf5?? ♜xa3+) 18... ♗xg4+ 19. ♗e2 ♗g2 20. ♗f3 ♗f1+

21. ♗e1 ♜d4 with great compensation (and four pawns!) for the piece.

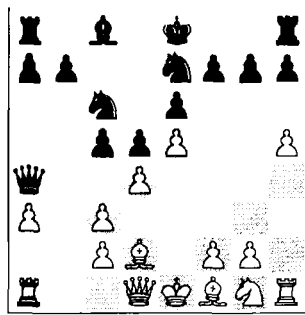
♜ WEAPON B: It is still possible to stop the advance of the white h-pawn with 9... h6!?. This is a good choice for positional players, with similar ideas as after 8... h6.



analysis diagram

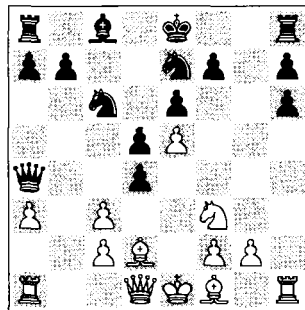
10. ♗g4 There are two different options. After 10. ♜f3 ♗a4!? we have one of the starting positions of the 'Queen Blues' line – see next game; 10... ♗d7!? would lead to the 'universal' set-up. The same goes for 10. ♖h4 ♗a4!? which leads to the 'blues' line. And in this case 10... ♗d7 introduces the 'universal' set-up, Morozevich-Pelletier, Biel 2003. 10... cxd4 10... ♜f5! 11. ♗d3 0-0! ≠ no games yet in the New Winawer. 10... ♗d7 leads to a 'poisoned gambit': 11. ♗xg7 0-0-0∞. 11. cxd4 ♗a4 12. c3 ♖g8 13. ♗f4 b6 14. ♖h3 ♗a6 = is fine for Black, as in Rogers-Farago, Wijk aan Zee B 1987.

♜ WEAPON C: Finally, instead of capturing on d4, Black can play the most dynamic 'blues' line 9... ♗a4!?. If you open my book 'The Flexible French' on pages 242-244, you will find this possibility fully commented on in Game 68. Nothing has changed since then:



analysis diagram

10.h6 10.♘f3 h6!? avoids Kasparov's gambit. An important line is 10.♚b1 a6! 11.♘f3, Erturan-Bakalarz, Warsaw Ech 2005, and now: 11...cxd4! 12.♞h4 f6!⇒. **10...gxh6** 11.♘f3 cxd4!⇒ 'From now on the game becomes very dynamic – like Chinese ping-pong!', as I wrote in *The Flexible French*.



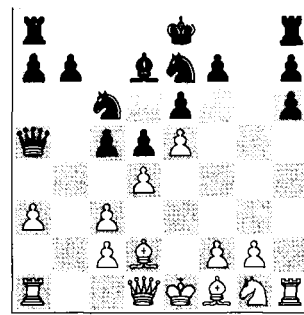
Analysis diagram

12.cxd4 ♘xd4 13.♙d3 ♙d7 14.♙b4 ♘dc6 14...♘df5!?. 15.♞h4? ♘g6! 16.♙xg6 hxg6 17.♙d2 ♚a6 18.♙g5 ♞c8 19.♙f6 ♞g8 19...g5!?. 20.♞xh6 ♘a5 21.♘g5 ♚c4 22.♚d2? ♙b5 23.♞h7 ♚f1#, Volokitin-Zhang Pengxiang, Fügen tt 2006.

Now back to the main problem of the universal move 9...♙d7.

10.h6! gxh6


A big decision for a French player.




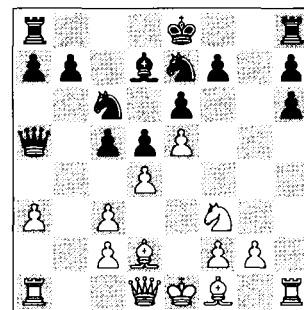
Black's pawn structure on the kingside is completely ruined, and the game has not yet begun. This must have been Uhlmann's original idea.

11.♚b1!

Vocaturo has used this dynamic move in four games against different opponents, with a 4-0 result. So I decided to dedicate some time to analysing this option more deeply.

 **WEAPON:** *The revolutionary invention according to Neil McDonald is the original manoeuvre 11.♘e2!? 0-0-0 12.♘c1! and the ball is in Black's court – I mean, Black has more problems to find out how to continue.*

 **WEAPON:** *The old move is 11.♘f3.*



analysis diagram

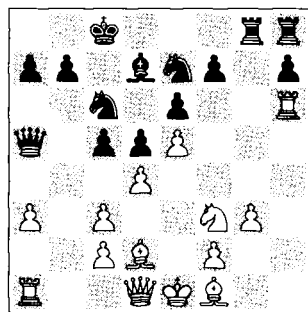
This position is interesting. White has achieved something on the kingside but Black keeps good chances of counterplay. **11...0-0-0!** Some important games have

been played here by Uhlmann. Basically, he has a superior sense in such positions compared to his opponents, and lots of creative ideas. Grandmaster Lputian's novelty 11...♖g8, which was also a famous idea of Uhlmann, can be met à la Vocaturo by 12.♞b1!?. However, in the following game White played very aggressively, trying to punish Black for his opening strategy: 12.c4 ♖c7 13.cxd5 exd5 14.dxc5 (14.c3!?: 14.♙f4!?) 14...0-0-0 15.♙e2 and the situation was unclear, Short-Lputian, Taiyuan 2004.

A) 12.♞b1 allows 12...c4! 13.♞xh6 ♖g8!? 14.♞h1 f6⇌, Wegener-Malek, Germany Bundesliga B 2003/04;

B) 12.♙d3?! As we have already seen in this chapter, in the sub-Winawer lines this is not a very useful place for the light-squared bishop: 12...c4! Winning an important tempo! 13.♙e2 ♖g8!? Uhlmann's main resource and patent. 14.♙f1 f6!⇌, Tischbierek-Uhlmann, Baden-Baden B 1992;

C) 12.♞xh6! is the best line for White: 12...♙dg8 12...♖g8!? 13.♞h4 f6 14.♖e2!?: slightly favours White, Klovans-Lipok, Schwarzach 2005. 13.g3



analysis diagram

After some quite natural opening moves, White is already slightly better on both flanks, so after the 'bluesy' move 13...♖a4

♙ TRICK: 13...♖f5!? 14.♞f6 ♖c7 15.♞xf7 cxd4∞.

14.♖b1!? a6? He has never played the blues! 14...c4! was the best option! 15.♖g5 ♞g7 with a still playable position for Black. 15.♖b6! c4 16.♞b1± White has the initiative, Fedorov-Shulman, Moscow 1995.

Summary of Uhlmann's old set-up!

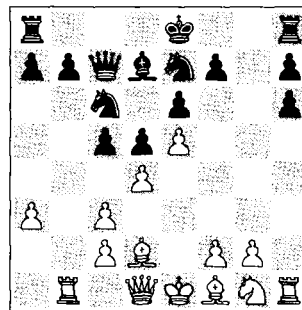
Objectively, after 10.h6! Black's position is worse in many lines. The main game with 11. ♞b1! confirms this. So it is much better for Black to enter the 'Queen Blues' variation before 7...♙d7?! and ...0-0-0 – see the next game.

11...0-0-0

White has dominated in all 7 games played with 11.♞b1.

♙ A) TRICK: 11...♖xa3 12.♞b3! ♖a4 13.♖c1! (intending 14.♞a3) 13...♖d8 14.♞a3 ♖c6 15.♖f3↑.

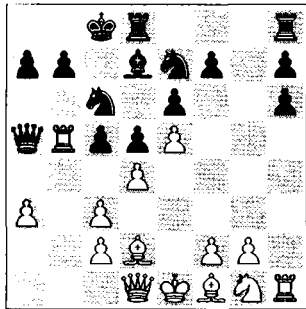
B) The queen retreat 11...♖c7 seems a bit passive:



analysis diagram

12.♖f3 0-0-0 12...♖g8 was seen in Couso-J.Akesson, Stockholm ch-SWE B 2007. Now at least 13.dxc5!?: ♖xe5 14.♖xe5 ♖xe5+ 15.♖e2 gives White an advantage, thanks to the pair of bishops. 13.♞xh6± cxd4? 14.cxd4 ♖f5 15.♙g5± Vocaturo-Stromboli, Bratto ch-ITA jr 2006.

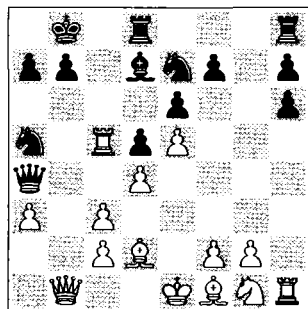
(c) The blocking idea **11...c4?** must be a worse option: **12.♞xb7 0-0-0 13.♞b1 ♞xa3 14.♞b2±**, Vocaturò-Di Paolo, Arvier tt 2010.
12.♞b5



12...♞xa3

This leads to catastrophe for Tiger. Probably a better option is **12...♞a4!?**, which was previously played in Morozovich-Lputian. However, White has more possibilities on the following moves. The game went **13.♞b1! ♫a5**

TRICK: **13...♫xd4 14.cxd4 ♫xb5 15.♞xb5 ♞xd4** picking up some extra pawns and a rook for the bishop pair... **16.♫e2! ♞a1+ 17.♫c1↑...** but the middlegame rules still prevail here!
14.♞xc5+ ♫b8



analysis diagram

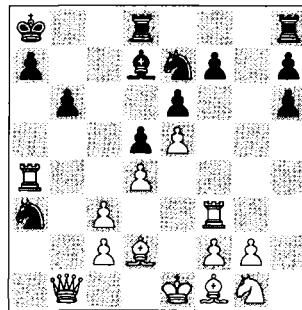
The key moment after the opening.

TRICK: **15.♞b4 ♞xc2! 16.♞xa5 ♫c6 17.♞d6+ ♫a8 18.♞b5 ♫xd4⇌;**

WEAPON: **15.♫xh6!?** this line could also be critical **15...b6 16.♫g5 ♞de8** and here, for example **17.♫f6!?** seems to give White better chances;
15.♞h3 b6 16.♞f3

WEAPON: The immediate **16.♞b5!?** ♫c4 17.♞b4 is possibly a better move order than the one in the game.

16...♫a8 Now **16...♫f5!?**∞ was probably the best defence, in view of **17.g4? ♞dg8! 17.♞b5 ♫c4 17...♫f5!?. 18.♞b4 ♫xa3 19.♞xa4!**



analysis diagram

Transposing to a classical endgame which is always favourable for White.

19...♫xb1 20.♞a1 ♫xd2 21.♫xd2± From here on we can enjoy Moro's great technique: **21...♞df8 22.♫d3 ♞hg8 23.g3 h5 24.♫e2 h4 25.♞h1 hxg3 26.♫xg3 ♞h8 27.♫h5 ♫g8 28.♞g1 f5 29.♞g7 ♫c8 30.♫f4 ♫h6 31.c4 dxc4 32.♫xc4 ♞d8 33.c3 ♫g4 34.♫e2 ♞he8 35.♞h3 ♞d7 36.♞xd7 ♫xd7 37.♞xh7 b5 38.♫b3 ♫c8 39.f3 a5 40.fxg4 1-0** Morozovich-Lputian, Sochi tt 2007.

13.♞xc5 a6 14.♞b1 ♫c7

Black is about to trap the enemy rook with ...b6, but the fight is only just starting

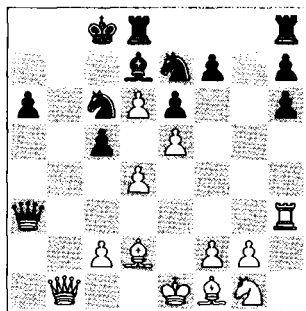
15.c4! b6 16.cxd5!!

The key answer.

16...bxc5

Forced: **16...♫xd5 17.♞h3!**

17.d6+ ♫c8 18.♞h3!→



White's pawns mass in the centre is very impressive!

21...♖de7 22.♗e2!

Simply keeping in mind the development rule. However, White had a pleasant choice between this move and 22.dxe7+- or 22.♖b2+-.

22...♖xc4 23.♗c3 ♖xc5 24.♗e4 ♖xe5 25.dxe7 ♗xe7

A fine example of all the pluses of the h2-h4 advance: White is a rook down, but the enemy king is weak and one piece can be regained right away. Black's extra rook isn't in play yet, so despite some of his pieces still sitting in their original positions, White is winning!

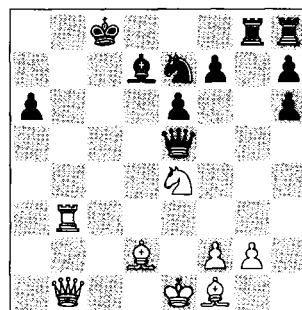
18...♖a4 19.♖b3

I like this move too, but 19.♖c3!→ was an even easier solution.

19...♗d5

19...c4 20.♖c3! ♖b5 21.♖a1±.

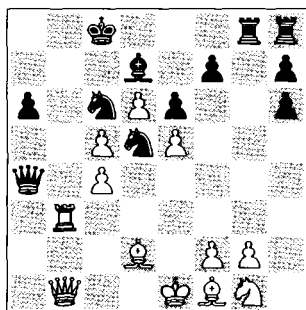
20.dxc5 ♖dg8 21.c4!+-



All four white pawns, which looked so menacing a few moves ago, are gone – but they did not perish in vain as White now has a checkmate in 10!

26.♖b8+!! ♖xb8 27.♗xa6+ ♖c7 28.♗a5+ ♖c6 29.♖c2+ ♖d5 30.♖d3+ ♖e5 31.♗c3+ ♖f5 32.♗d6+ ♖g5 33.♖g3+ ♖h5 34.♗e2+ ♖g4 35.♖xg4# 1-0

An amazing game.

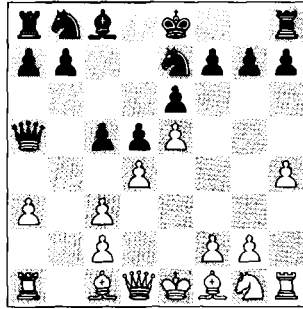


Summary 7.h4 ♗bc6 and the resulting set-ups:

Choosing the right defence is a hard task here. The positions that arise in Uhlmann's set-up (...♗d7 and ...0-0-0) are mainly double-edged, but White has recently improved his attacking ideas and is winning more games. Undoubtedly, the most controllable (and most comfortable) play can be found in the 'Black Queen Blues' lines. We will also be able to check this argument in the next game, where after ...♖a5-♖a4 Black has two options: closing the position with the blockading moves ...h7-h6 and ...c2-c4, or winning the d4 pawn with a sharp open game.

GAME 15 – 7...♖a5! (233 games=45.5%)

Queen Blues vs. Sharp Flank Attack



To conclude this Part, let's play in pure blues style with WGM Monica Socko.

Keep in Mind

Many lines in this game have been analysed in *The Flexible French*, so it is advisable to use both books alongside each other here. In view of the many transpositions, it is very interesting to study this variation in direct connection with one of the 'Black Queen Blues' lines. See also Part III, Chapter 11 of this book.

□ **Kateryna Lahno**

■ **Monika Socko**

Baku 2007 (8)

1.e4 e6 2.d4 d5 3.♗c3 ♘b4 4.e5 c5
5.a3 ♗xc3+ 6.bxc3 ♜e7

Please note: if he now plays the immediate 6...♖a5 7.♘d2 ♖a4, against the flank attack 8.h4 Black even has a few alternatives to ...♜e7. For instance, the response 8...♜c6!? – see Game 68 in *The Flexible French*, and one of the French games in my other book *Revolutionize Your Chess*, Chapter 2.

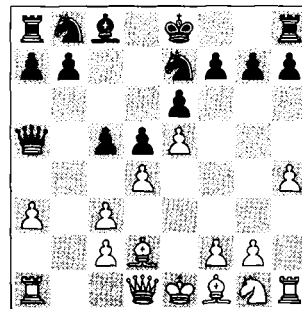
7.h4 ♖a5!

Black's ultra-dynamic move in the main Winawer.

8.♘d2





A wonderful 'Queen Blues' game with WGM Monica Socko.



In comparison with the previous game (7...♘bc6), here Black has two (and a half) more possibilities.


8...♖a4!?

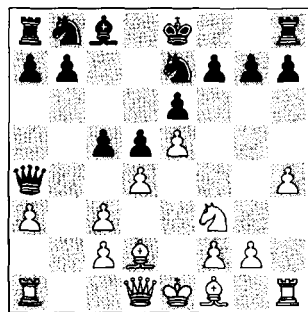
 WEAPON: 8...0-0!?N Welcome to the new Winawer!

 WEAPON: 8...cxd4 transposes to Rustemov's line, which is also given in Game 13 and is still interesting, so I will repeat the analysis here: 9.cxd4 ♖a4 10.h5 (10.♘f3 b6!?) 10...♗xd4 11.♘f3 ♖e4+ 12.♙e2 ♘f5! 13.♙f1 b6! 14.♙b5+ ♙d7 15.♙d3 ♗g4 16.h6 gxh6 17.♙xh6 (17.♙xf5? ♗xf5, Naer-Rustemov, Moscow 1995) 17...♘c6 (17...♙a4!?) 18.♙g5 ♖c8 19.♙f6 ♖g8 and in this complex position I consider Black's chances somewhat better, Aseev-Rustemov, St Petersburg 1994.

9.h5


A logical move after the advance h2-h4.

 WEAPON: After 9.♘f3 we have again a slightly different position compared to the previous game.



analysis diagram

9...♘bc6 Once more attacking d4. An alternative is the blocking option 9...c4!?, here, which was not possible in the previous game: 10.h5 h6= 11.♘h4 ♘bc6 12.♖h3 ♙d7 13.♖g3 ♖g8 14.♗c1 0-0-0 15.♖b1 ♖df8 16.♗b2 b6 17.f4 f6!?, Suarez Prendes-Recuero Guerra, Ortigueira 2004. **10.h5**

 TRICK: On 10.♗b1, 10...a6!? now seems a good idea (10...c4 is the usual move), for if 11.♗b3 ♗xb3 12.cxb3 ♘a5 13.♖b1 c4 14.b4 ♘b3= Sadvakasov-Holt, Chicago 2009.

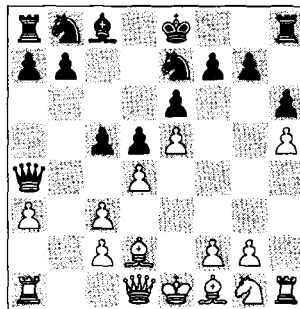
10...h6!? 10...cxd4 11.cxd4 leads to the previous game – Kasparov's line. **11.♗b1** 11.♖b1 c4! 12.♗c1 b6 13.♙e2 ♙d7 14.♖h3 0-0-0= Ganguly-Kamble, Nagpur 2008. **11...c4=**



analysis diagram

One of the popular opening positions in this line. 12.g3 (12.g4 ♙d7 13.♘h4 0-0-0 14.♗b2 ♖dg8 15.♙h3 g6 16.hxg6 fxg6 17.0-0-0 g5 18.♘g2 ♙e8! 19.f4 ♙g6, Yurtaev-P.Nikolic, Elista ol 1998) 12...♙d7 13.♙h3 0-0-0 14.0-0 ♖df8 15.♘h4 g5! The Black Jet vs. h2-h4. The black army is ready to counterattack. See *The Flexible French*, commented Game 67, Sadvakasov-Pogorelov, Moscow 2002.


9...h6!?




With this typical block Black stabilizes the pawn structure and still keeps three ideas in mind: ...♗c6, ...b7-b6, or ...c5 c4. You can find some more dynamic responses in the previous game: see the three options given on move 9.

10.♖h4!?

Recently the most popular attacking method.

 **WEAPON:** An important line is 10.♗g4!?

 **TRICK:** The set-up I proposed in 'The Flexible French', Game 68, was 10...♗f5 11.♗d3 and now 11...0-0?!, is too dangerous: 12.♗f4 c4? 13.g4! ♗e7. Here I found 14.g5!! (14.♗e2 f6!⇒ Sutoovsky-Psakhis, Internet blitz 2006) 14...cxd3 15.gxh6 ♗f5 16.hxg7 ♗xg7 17.♗f3→.

10...♗f8! This defence by the king is the best option. This position also can arise from the Eingorn Variation (7.♗g4 ♗f8 8.h4 ♗a5), see Game 21. **11.♖h3 ♗bc6** Threatening ...♗xe5, ...cxd4 and ...♗xc2 (11...c4!N). **12.♗f4**



analysis diagram

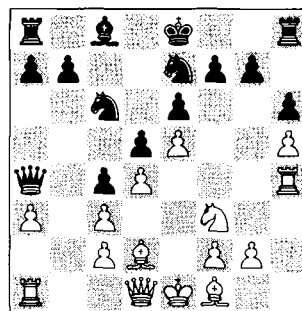
Psakhis in *ChessBase Magazine 107: The future of this variation depends upon the evaluation of this position.* Let's have a look:

12...♗d7 12...c4!? is an unexplored option. Or, why not take the pawn with 12...♗xc2!? 13.♗d3 ♗a4 14.♖f3 ♗d8 15.dxc5 (15.♗g6? ♗f5!) 15...♗xf4 16.♖xf4 ♗d7 17.♗f3 ♖c8 18.♗e3

♗f5!? and such endgames are never dangerous for Black. **13.♖b1** 13.♗d3? c4! 14.♗g6 ♗e8 15.♖f3 ♗d8 was 0-1 in Pena Gomez-Moskalenko, Ca'n Picafort 2008 – see the annotated game in *Revolutionize Your Chess*, Chapter 2. Or 13.dxc5!? ♗xf4 14.♗xf4 ♖c8∞ which was also 0-1 in Macieja-B.Socko, Poznan ch-POL 2005. **13...b6!?** **14.♖f3 ♗e8** **15.dxc5 ♗xf4** **16.♖xf4 bxc5** **17.♗f3 g5!** **18.♖g4** 18.hxg6 ♗xg6⇒ winning the pawn on e5. **18...♗f5** 18...c4! **19.a4??** f6–+ threatening White's rook by ...♗xh5, and soon 0-1 in Zeziulkin-B.Socko, Warsaw rapid 2003.


10...c4!

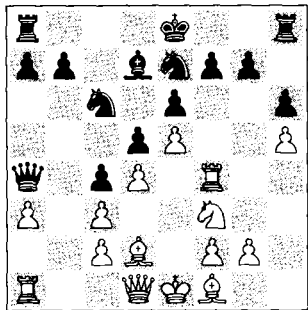
Black closes the game. The same line appears after **10...♗bc6!?** **11.♗f3 c4.**



analysis diagram

Now we check: **12.♖g4** For 12.♖f4 see the main game. **12...♖g8!** The most flexible defence of the g7-pawn. 12...♗f5!? is possible too: 13.♖f4 (13.♗h4 ♗xh4 14.♖xh4 ♗e7 15.♖f4 ♗d7 16.♖a2 ♖f8= Russian_Vodka-CapNemo, playchess.com 2006) 13...♗d7 14.g4 ♗fe7 15.♗h4 ♖f8 16.♖a2 0-0-0 17.♗f3 ♗e8= Bobo77-CapNemo, playchess.com 2009. **13.g3 ♗d7** **14.♖f4 0-0-0!** **15.♖xf7 ♗e8** **16.♖f4 ♗xh5** **17.♗h3 ♗d7** **18.♖h4 ♗g6** **19.♖a2 ♖df8** and Black obtained a clear positional advantage in Fontaine-Psakhis, Andorra 1998.


 **WEAPON:** An interesting open game arises after 10...♟f5 11.♞g4 cxd4 12.cxd4 b6!? 13.♙d3 ♙a6 14.♙xf5? (14.c4 ♜xd1+ 15.♞xd1∞ with a complex ending) 14...exf5 15.♞xg7 ♜xd4♠, Vitiugov-Lysyj, Serpukhov 2008.
11.♞f4 ♟bc6 12.♟f3 ♙d7

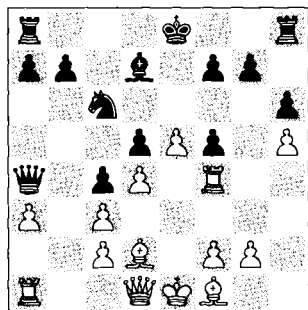


The critical moment. Compared to Black's other set-ups this position is quite stable, but creativity is still possible.

13.g4


Allowing Black to comfortably castle queenside.

 **WEAPON:** 13.♟h4!? (also analysed in 'The Flexible French', Games 66 and 68) 13...♟f5! (an improvement on the premature 13...g5 14.hxg6 fxg6 15.♞f6∞ Stripunsky-Gavriushin, Moscow 1995. 13...♞f8 is also unclear after 14.♞a2 0-0-0 15.♜g4 f5!?, Becerra Rivero-Sevillano, Los Angeles 2003) 14.♟xf5 exf5




analysis diagram

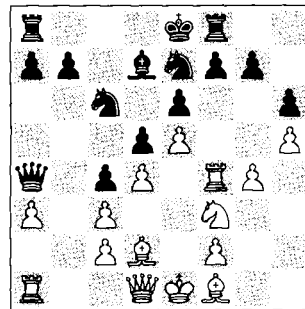
This gives equal chances, as in Khalifman-Shulman, Khanty Mansiysk 2005.

 **WEAPON:** In the next round Khalifman tried 13.♙c3 ♞f8 14.♙d2 0-0-0 (14...f6!?) 15.♟h4 ♟f5 16.♟xf5 exf5= 17.g4? fxg4 (now 17...f6!↑ was the best option) 18.♞xg4 with a complicated game, Khalifman-Shulman, Khanty-Mansiysk 2005.

13...g5

Shooting the 'black jet' immediately.

 **WEAPON:** By many transpositions, we have reached a recent game of mine. I prefer 13...♞f8!?, preparing queenside castling first.



analysis diagram

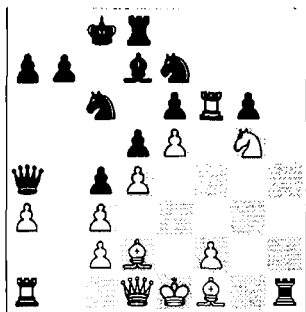
14.♙h3 0-0-0= 15.g5? (this white jet is too aggressive here, since Black is better prepared for action) 15...hxg5 16.♟xg5 ♟f5!♠ 17.♙xf5 exf5 18.h6 f6! (18...gxf6 19.♟h7 ♞g8↑) 19.exf6 (19.hxg7 fxg5 20.gxf8♜ ♞xf8-+; 19.♞h4 fxg5 20.♙xg5 gxf6 21.♙xd8 ♟xd8♠) 19...gxf6 20.♟h3 ♞xf6 and Black is nearly winning, Canal Oliveras-Moskalenko, Barbera del Valles 2009.

14.hxg6 fxg6 15.♞f6 0-0-0

15...g5!♠ was a more precise move, with guaranteed counterplay.

16.g5! hxg5 17.♟xg5 ♞h1

The critical moment.



18. ♗xe6

Taking the 'French' pawn on e6 will cost young star Kateryna Lahno dearly.

18. ♗f7!? ♖g8 19. ♖f3∞.

18... ♜dh8 19. ♕e2??

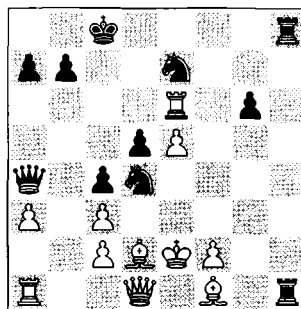
The decisive mistake, due to wrong calculation. White was probably afraid of the tactics after 19. ♗c5! ♜xf1+!? (19... ♖b5∞; 19... ♖a5∞) 20. ♕xf1

♜h1+ 21. ♕c2 ♜xd1 22. ♕xd1 ♖b5

23. ♕c1! b6! still with complications.

19... ♗xe6 20. ♜xe6 ♗xd4+!!-+

Harsh punishment.



21. cxd4 ♖d7!

The black queen is ready to sing.

22. ♜f6 ♖g4+ 23. ♜f3 ♗f5 24. ♗f4 ♗h4

25. ♕e3 ♜xf1!

0-1

Summary h2-h4:

Despite all the positive analysis for Black presented in this chapter, if one day I face the Winawer with the white pieces I will doubtlessly go on the attack with 7.h4!.

Conclusion Chapters 4 and 5 – The Sub-Winawer

- By playing 6... ♖c7 Black can try to avoid the lines 7.a4 and 7.h4, but this is not at all necessary as we have seen, because in the Winawer system following a solid idea is more important than winning or losing tempi.
- Nowadays, the Sub-Winawer lines are not as popular as 7. ♖g4, but they remain an important part of the system. I hope that after studying these chapters you will be better able to find your way in their labyrinths.

Chapters 6, 7 and 8 – The Old Main Winawer: Black Deviations versus ♖g4

7.♖g4 remains the main move, when Black can choose between 7...♗c7, 7...0-0, 7...cxd4 (7...♗f8 and 7...♘f5 in this part) and some other (!) line – Alexander Baburin in ChessToday.

Putting up the Barricades

Undoubtedly, the most dangerous resource for White is massive pressure on the kingside, always starting with 7.♖g4.

Black, however, can choose his defence after this typical attack with the queen.

In this chapter we shall deal with variations that used to be very popular, but which are less frequently played nowadays.

Directions – 1.e4 e6 2.d4 d5 3.♘c3 ♗b4 4.e5 c5

Black's deviations in the main Winawer are:

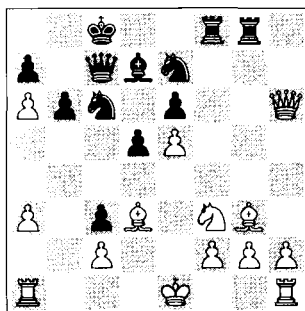
- A) The Armenian Variation – 5.a3 ♗a5 (Games 16 and 17)
- B) The Knight System – 5.a3 ♗xc3+! 6.bxc3 ♘e7 7.♖g4 ♘f5!? (Games 18 and 19).
- C) The weapon 7.♖g4 ♘g6 (Game 18)
- D) The Eingorn Variation – 7.♖g4 ♗f8!? (Games 20-22)



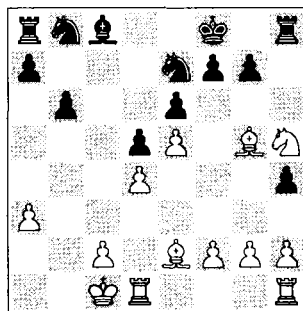
9th World Champion Tigran Vartanovich Petrosian (1929-1984) liked to attack from behind the barricades.



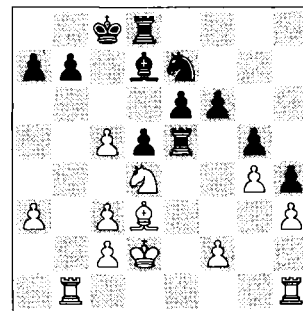
Workshop – Middlegame themes



Black to move: See Game 17, the Armenian Variation.



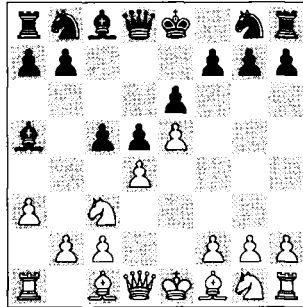
Here an improvement in the Knight System is 16...♞xh5!, see the weapon 9...♞h4!? in Game 19.



Black to move. See Game 19.

Chapter 6 – The Armenian Variation

GAMES 16 and 17 – 1.e4 e6 2.d4 d5 3.♘c3 ♙b4 4.e5 c5 5.a3 ♘a5
(2726 games=46.3%)



The foundations for the variation with 5...♘a5 were laid in the Soviet Union in the 1940s and '50s, when especially a few games by Mikhail Botvinnik drew attention towards it, including three games from his World Championship match against Smyslov in 1954 (+1=1-1).

Later on, the bishop move became an Armenian specialty, when Rafael Vaganian and Smbat Lputian obtained some excellent results with it.

In 2000 it was Alexander Khalifman who employed the variation at the highest level and he achieved good results with 5...♘a5, including a draw against Garry Kasparov.

Difficult Times – the opinion of Alexander Nikitin in his Survey in Yearbook 74

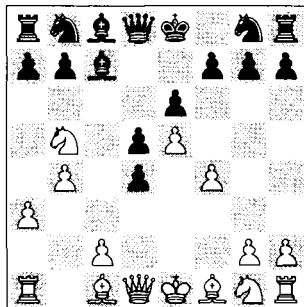
It seems to me that the Armenian Variation is experiencing a recurrent crisis, when there are more questions facing Black than answers to them. It is hard to give advice to those who are coming to the end of their chess careers – all the same they will not listen, and it is too late for them to relearn. But to young players I would recommend that they memorise the main variations that give White an opening advantage and understand their subtleties, but that with Black they should study and employ other schemes that are more active and are strategically less risky.

Keep in Mind

While avoiding the exchange of his Winawer bishop for the knight on c3, Black creates direct threats against the centre (...cxd4). The white pawn wedge is still fragile, and such a conflict complicates matters very soon and forces White to adopt extraordinary decisions!

GAMR 16 – 6.b4 cxd4 7.♗b5!? ♕c7 8.f4! (952 games=58.3%), also 6.♕d2!? (285 games=60%) and 6.dxc5?! (81 games=58.6% – a bad move, but good results)

The Positional Line



If White does not opt for ♗g4 either on move 6 or on move 7, then the main line leads to the diagram above. White has a slight positional advantage, which can most probably be neutralized by correct play on Black's part: see the variation 8...♕d7!.

However, the solid 6.♕d2!? could be another weapon for White – one which does not require lots of preparation.

□ **Ketevan Arakhmia Grant**

■ **Michael Tscharotschkin**

Gibraltar 2010 (1)

1.e4 e6 2.d4 d5 3.♗c3 ♕b4 4.e5 c5
5.a3 ♕a5



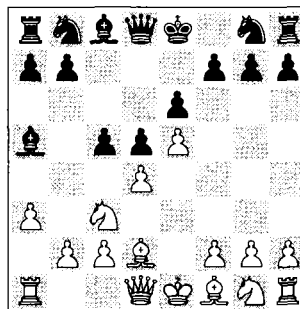
WGM Ketevan Arakhmia Grant has played many games against the Armenian Variation, with good results (5-1, only two draws).

The starting point of the Armenian variation, from which we set out to investigate the most important alternatives. Normally Black captures on c3.

6.b4!


This advanced has been played in almost 2000 games.

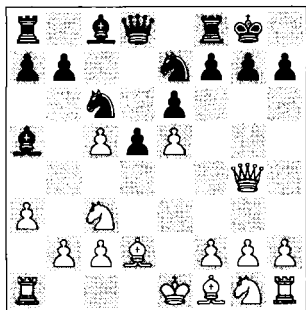
♗ A) *WEAPON: The second most popular is another 'positional' move: 6.♕d2!?*



analysis diagram

With similar ideas as in the semi-Winawer (with 5...d2), but the inclusion of 5.a3 a5 favours White. 6...c6 6...h6? was our main defence against d2 in Chapter 5 (Game 8), but here there would follow 7.dxc5± and the Armenian bishop on a5 is way too far removed from the action. White's chances are also better after 6...cxd4 7.b5 c7 (or 7...xd2+? 8.xd2 c6 9.f4± Sax-Kortchnoi, Lugano 1986) 8.f4 e7 (8...c6 9.g4!↑) 9.f3±.

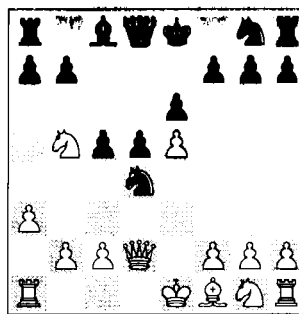
 A1) TRICK: 7.g4, Kasparov's old line, is not dangerous nowadays: 7...ge7! 7...f8?! 8.dxc5! xe5 9.g3± Kasparov-Khalifman, Linares 2000. 8.dxc5 8.ngx7? g8 9.f6 cxd4 10.b5 xd2+ 11.xd2 f5. 8...0!



analysis diagram

And Black gets active play, thanks to his development advantage: 9.f4 If 9.f3 g6 10.fh5 d4 11.e4 d5!±, Jerozkij-V.Alexeev, Minsk 2000. 9...xc3! 9...d4!? 10.e4 xd2+ 11.xd2 b6!± Spraggett-Tscharotschkin, Gibraltar 2007. 10.xc3 b6! 11.cxb6 fxb6↑, Henris-Vandevoort, Belgium ch 1992;

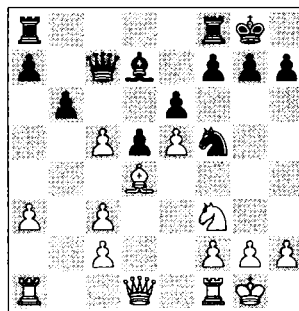
A2) 7.f5! The most logical and best continuation. 7...xd2+ 7...cxd4 8.xa5 xa5+ 9.b4 fb6 10.f4↑. 8.xd2 xd4 Here White has two plans:



analysis diagram

One is the obvious 9.xd4 cxd4 10.fxd4 e7 11.f3 0-0 12.d3 and White is traditionally slightly better, as in A.Sokolov-Vaganian, Minsk Candidates m-2 1986 (1-0, 65 moves); the second is the slightly more long-term oriented 9.f6+!± f8 10.0-0↑ with nice attacking chances.

B) A worse idea is the sub-line 6.dxc5?!. By capturing on c5 White destroys his own centre. 6...xc3+! Despite the loss of a tempo Black has excellent targets in White's broken pawn structure. 7.bxc3 fc7 8.f3 d7 9.f5 With this pin White tries to retain his material advantage and to compensate for his bad pawn structure. 9.c4 e7 10.cxd5 exd5 11.d3 xc5 12.0-0 0-0= Felgaer-Valerga, San Luis ch-ARG 2006. 9...e7 10.0-0 0-0 11.xd7 xd7 12.e3 f5 13.d4 b6! This is how Black can take the initiative, Maciejja-Atalik, Kallithea tt 2003.



7...cxd4

It is difficult to find a reasonable alternative: White gets a strong initiative after 6...cxb4?! 7...b5 b3+ (7...bxa3+? 8.c3 ♖c7 9.♖g4 g6 10.♙xa3± Sarenac-Datojic, Belgrade 2008; 7...♘c6? is also quite bad: 8.axb4 ♙xb4+ 9.c3 ♙e7 10.♙a3† and Black's extra pawn is not helpful, Chirila-Volovici, Tusnad (t 2005) 8.♙d2!? (8.c3!?±) 8...bxc2 ♖♗xc2 and White has excellent compensation, Schärer-Gähler, Zurich 2009.

7...b5

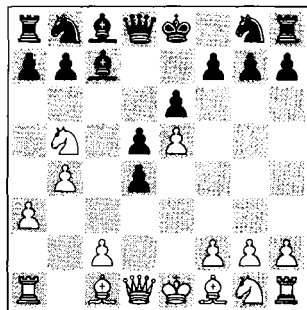
Let's check the best of the latest examples in the main 'positional line'.

A) For 7.♖g4!? see the next game;

B) TRICK: 7.bxa5?! dxc3 8.♖g4 g6! ♞ Meissner-Lputian, Cappelle la Grande 1991;

C) TRICK: 7.♖xd4?! leads to a puzzling line: 7...♙c7 8.♘f3 ♘c6 9.♙b5 ♘e7 10.♙g5 ♙d7 11.♙xc6 ♘xc6!? (11...♙xc6=) 12.♙xd8 ♘xd4 13.♙xc7 ♘xf3+ 14.gxf3 ♞c8♞.

7...♙c7



This Armenian 'Snake bishop' (...♙b4-a5-c7) now defends the d6-square and at the same time attacks the pawn on e5.

8.f4!

The immediate capture of the Armenian bishop 8.♘xc7+?! in fact reduces the possibilities for White: 8...♖xc7 9.f4 f6!?⇒.

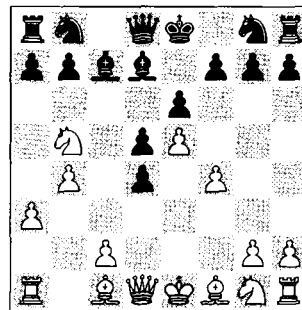
Nor does 8.♘f3?! ♘c6⇒ give White any advantage, because the pawn on e5 is not well enough defended now.

Now Black has several possibilities.

8...a5

Black does not choose the best continuation. The German chess coach Michael Tscharotschkin is a great supporter of the Armenian line. In two recent games he played this advance against strong players, but failed.

 A) WEAPON: 8...♙d7!!



analysis diagram

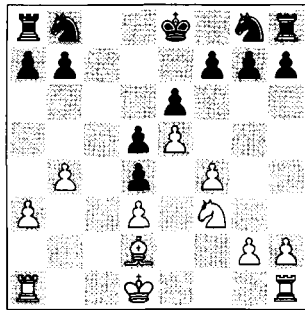
This is clearly the strongest set-up for Black. The French bishop has to help his Armenian brother!

A1) 9.♘f3 allows some simplifications, 9...♙xb5! being the main idea of the previous move: 10.♙xb5+ ♘c6 11.0-0 ♘e7 12.♙d3 ♙b6= From here, best for Black is to continue with ...a7-a6, ... h7-h6 and later ...0-0, but not the immediate ...♘f5, because of ♙xf5!;

A2) 9.♖g4!? g6∞ Benjamin-Djurhuus, Thessaloniki ol 1988;

A3) 9.♘xc7+!? ♖xc7 10.♘f3 ♙a4! The second step after the early ...♙d7. 11.♙d3 ♘e7 This move and 11...♘c6!? are both perfect. The alternative 11...♖c3+ leads to a slightly better ending for White: 12.♙d2 ♖xd3 (this is another, though weaker, idea behind the

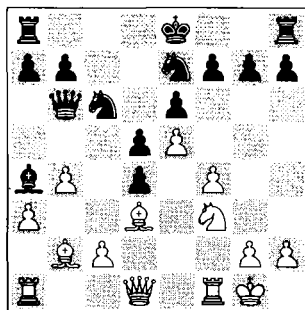
rapid development of the French bishop) 13.cxd3 ♖xd1 14.♗xd1±.



analysis diagram

Kritz (*ChessBase Magazine* 132): *It is very important not to let the knight out on to c6.* This means that White should play b4-b5 at some moment. Anyway, White must play this position very accurately in order to achieve an advantage.

12.♖b2 ♖bc6 13.0-0 13.♗e2 ♗b6
14.♖b1 a6!± and ...♖b5. 13...♗b6



analysis diagram

The black queen protects the pawn on d4 and prepares simplifications with ...♖b5. The game is equal: 14.♗h1 ♖b5 ½-½ Voitsekhovskiy-Gorovykh, Sochi tt-2 2008.

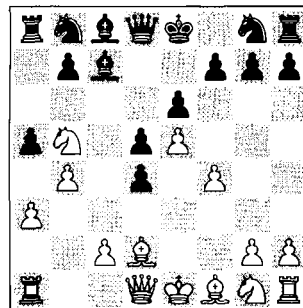
It is important to note that normal developing moves lead to an advantage for White in this variation. For instance:

B) 8...♖c6 9.♖f3 ♖b8?! Retreating the Armenian bishop does not make

much sense. 10.♖d3 a5 11.bxa5 ♖ge7 12.0-0 and White should be better in this position, Kalegin-Bashkov, Minsk B 1993;

C) Or 8...♖e7 9.♖d3 9.♖f3 ♖bc6 10.♖d3 a6 11.♖xc7+ ♗xc7 12.♖b2 with a very sound advantage for White, as in Arakhamia Grant-Rouleau, Philadelphia 2004. 9...♖f5 10.♖f3 ♖d7 11.♖xc7+! Now the best option is trading ♖x♖. 11...♗xc7 12.♖b2 ♖c6 12...♖e3 13.♗e2±. 13.♖xf5 exf5 14.0-0 0-0 15.♖xd4 White keeps some advantage, thanks to his better bishop and his superior pawn structure, Arakhamia Grant-Sigurjonsson, Reykjavik 2008.

9.♖d2!



What follows is a beautiful example of how to play this variation as White. In this game Arakhamia once again found the best set-up against the Armenian twist.

9...♖e7

Or, 9...♖c6 10.♖f3 ♖ge7 11.♖xc7+! ♗xc7 12.b5 ♖b8 13.♖xd4±, Areschenko-Tscharotschkin, Gibraltar 2007.

10.♖f3 ♖f5 11.♖d3 ♖d7

11...0-0 12.♖xf5 (12.0-0!±) 12...exf5±, A.Minasian-Lputian, Philadelphia 1994.

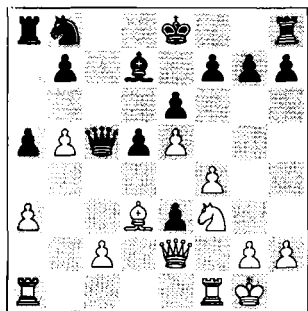
12.♖xc7+!

Getting rid of the Armenian bishop – finally exchanging ♖x♗ without the weak Winawer c-pawns.

12...♖xc7 13.b5!

Blocking Black's piece play on the queenside.

13...♗e3 14.♗xe3 dxe3 15.0-0 ♖c5
16.♖e2



White has achieved a stable advantage, based on the activity of her pieces (and pawns).

16...f5



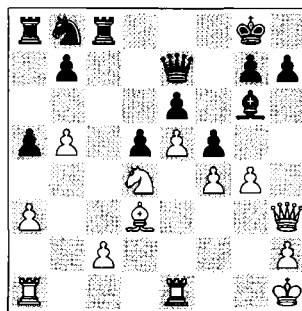
TRICK: 16...0-0?? 17.♗xh7+! ♖xh7
18.♗g5+ ♖g8 (18...♖g6

19.♖g4+-) 19.♖h5 e2+ 20.♗h1!! ♖xc2
21.f5! exf1♖+ 22.♗xf1 with a winning attack (or mate in 8 according to the engine).

17.♗fe1

There is no reason to hurry in this position: 17.exf6!? gxf6 18.c3±.

17...0-0 18.♖xe3 ♗c8 19.♗d4 ♖e7
20.♗h1 ♗e8 21.♖h3! ♗g6 22.g4!→



The French bishop is sad without his Armenian brother.

22...fxg4 23.♖xg4 ♗xd3 24.cxd3 ♗e8

25.f5+- ♗d7 26.♗xe6 ♗h8 27.d4

♗ac8 28.♗f4 ♗b6 29.♗g6+! hxg6

30.fxg6 1-0

Summary of the 'positional lines':

White is not risking much with 6.♗d2!?, or 6.b4 and 7.♗b5, and can sometimes count on a slight advantage. However, there is great danger of a draw and therefore ambitious players prefer 6/7.♖g4!? – see the next game.

GAME 17 – 7.♖g4! (511 games=54.1%). The Anti-Armenian weapon 6.♖g4!?
(228 games=48% bad results, but I found it to be dangerous)

Ambitious Line

The Winawer 'Armenian Variation' is thought to be in theoretical trouble, but there are still some new ideas in the crazy main line – Watson on ChessPublishing.

7.♖g4! is a sharper continuation than 7.♗b5 and recently it has become more popular at the highest level. White captures the black pawns on the kingside, allowing Black to get in return a certain advantage in development and the possibility of seizing the initiative.


□ **Andrey Volokitin**

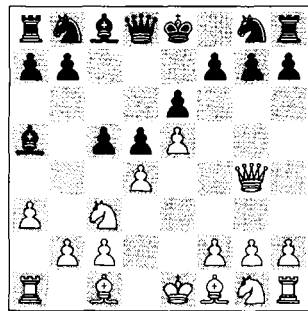
■ **Smbat Lputian**

Calvia ol 2004 (9)

The Armenian 'Francophile' grandmaster Smbat Lputian successfully used the Armenian set-up right until the beginning of the 2000s. However, in 2004 he lost two important games in this 'ambitious line' and then abandoned the variation. Right now, he is looking for a new way, combining the Modern Winawer and the Classical variation (3...♘f6).


1.e4 e6 2.d4 d5 3.♘c3 ♘b4 4.e5 c5 5.a3 ♘a5 6.b4

 **WEAPON: 6.♖g4!?** I have left aside this option on move 6 for the second game. This is my surprising 'anti-Armenian' weapon.



analysis diagram

6...♗e7 7.dxc5 7.b4?! cxb4 8.♗b5?? b3+ 9.c3 ♗f5 is bad, Timman-Vaganian, Horgen 1995.

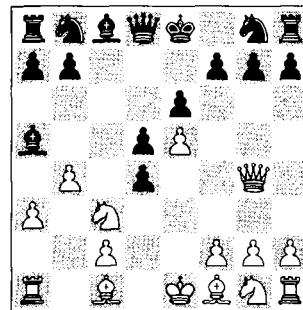
 **A) TRICK: 7...d4? 8.♖xg7!!** (a laptop novelty!) 8...♖g8 9.♖xh7 dxc3 10.b4 (the key. White switches to attacking mode) 10...♘c7 11.♗f3 a5 (11...♗d7 12.♘b5!+-; 11...♗bc6 12.♘f4±) 12.♘e2! ♗d7 13.♗g5 ♗xe5 14.0-0!→;

B) 7...♘c3+! The only valid move. **8.bxc3 ♖a5 8...♗g6!?** 9.♗f3 ♗d7 10.h4! h5 11.♖d4± Pietrow-Barsov, Utrecht 1999; 8...0-0 9.♘d3 ♗d7



The Armenian 'Francophile' grandmaster Smbat Lputian.


10.♗f3 f5 11.exf6± King-Lputian, Dortmund 1988. **9.♘d2 ♗g6 10.♗f3** 10.h4! h5 11.♖g5 ♗d7 12.c4↑ Short-Lputian, Manila izt 1990. **10...♗d7 11.c4 ♖c7 12.cxd5 0-0 13.d6!** 13.♖d4!? exd5 14.♖xd5± Shirov-Atalik, Jahorina tt 2003. **13...♖xc5 14.♖e4 ♗gxe5 15.♗xe5 ♖xe5 16.♖xe5 ♗xe5** was played in Dominguez Perez-Lputian, Bled ol 2002, and now after **17.♘c3±** White has a pleasant endgame. **6...cxd4 7.♖g4!**



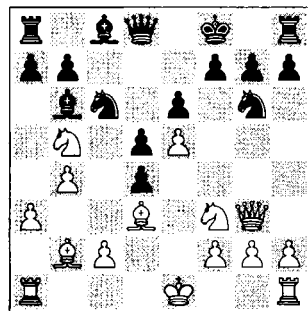
The dynamic move in the Winawer. How should Black try to survive this speculative attack? That is not clear...

but the arising positions are very complicated, and at any rate it is a difficult task for both sides to find their way over the board!

7...♗e7

 **WEAPON:** 7...♗f8 This defence was severely criticized by Leonid Kritz in 'ChessBase Magazine' 133: 'White has a good advantage because the black king can no longer castle and the dark squares in the black camp have been weakened'.


However, some important games (and of course, my laptop) are not in full agreement with the German grandmaster. Let's check: **8.♖b5!** White can try to achieve an advantage with this move; or with 8.♙xd4 ♘b6 9.♗f4 ♗e7 10.♗f3 ♗g6 11.♗g3 ♗c6 12.♘b2 ♗d4!⇒ Del Rio Angelis-Duncanson, Gibraltar 2005. But never with 8.bxa5?! dxc3 9.a4 ♗c6 10.♙a3+ ♗ge7 11.♗f3 ♗g8!⇒ Gaponenko-Mirzoev, San Sebastian 2009. **8...♙b6!** Finally the Armenian bishop becomes a useful piece. 8...♙c7? 9.♙xd4!± Kritz. **9.♗f3 ♗c6 10.♙b2 ♗ge7** White is happy after the immediate 10...f6? 11.♖bxd4 ♗xe5 12.♗xe5 fxe5 13.♗xe6+ ♙xe6 14.♗xe6 ♗f6 15.♗xf6+ ♗xf6, Firman-Lputian, Sochi tt 2005, and now 16.0-0-0!±. **11.♙d3 ♗g6 12.♗g3**

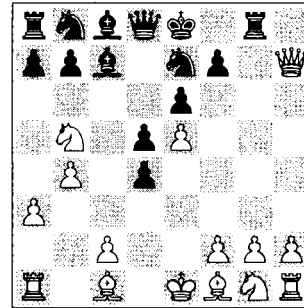


Up until this point we have followed the game Doring-Vanek, Czechia 2008.

Now, after the French break 12...f6! the position is still full of life!

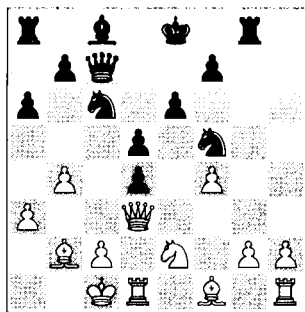
8.bxa5!

 **WEAPON:** Another possible sub-line is 8.♖b5!?. White fights for the initiative, giving all his centre pawns: 8...♙c7 9.♗xg7 ♗g8 10.♗xh7



analysis diagram

However, Black's defence appears to hold after **10...a6!**. 10...♙xe5 leads to a crazy variation after the rook sacrifice 11.♗f3 ♗h8 12.♗d3 ♙f6!? 13.♙f4 ♗g6 14.♗c7+ ♗f8 15.♙g3 e5 16.♗xa8 ♗c6 17.♗b5!. Black dominates with the centre pawns, but White is a rook up (1-0 in 46 moves), NezhmetdinovAramanovich, Tbilisi 1949. **11.♗xc7+ ♗xc7 12.♗e2** This move order was recommended by Nikitin as the best, but there does not seem to be much difference: 12.♙b2 ♗xe5+ 13.♗e2 ♗f6! (for 13...♗c7!? see below) 14.♗d3 e5! 15.f4 ♙f5 16.♗d2 ♗h4+! 17.g3 ♗h7⇒ Cabrilov-Vaganian, Manila izt 1990. **12...♗xe5 13.♗d3 ♗c7! 14.f4 ♗bc6 14...♗f5!? 15.♗xd4 ♗xd4 16.♗xd4 ♗xc2∞** Degerman-Karlsson, Lindesberg ch-SWE 1993; or 14...f6!? 15.♗xd4 e5⇒ Orlov-Kruppa, St Petersburg 2000. **15.♙b2 15.♗xd4 ♗xd4 16.♗xd4 ♗xc2** with equal chances, Kan-Botvinnik, Moscow training game 1953. **15...♗f5! 16.0-0-0**

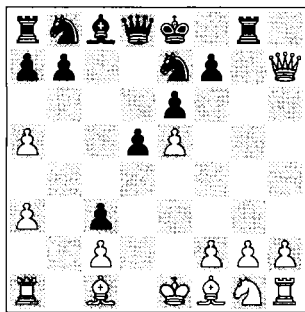


analysis diagram

TRICK: 16...♗e3! (novelty! ≤ 16...♙d7 17.♞e1 ♞c8 18.♝b1 ♗ce7 19.♗xd4 ♗xd4 20.♙xd4 ♞xf4 21.g3±, Nunn-Kinsman, London 1993) 17.♞e1 (17.♞d2 ♙d7⇒) 17...♗xc2!! 18.♞h7!/? (18.♞xc2 d3⇒) 18...♗xe1 19.♞xg8+ ♝d7! 20.♝d2 ♗e7 21.♞h7 d3! 22.♗d4 ♗xg2! 23.♙xg2 ♞xf4+ 24.♝xd3 ♞f2 25.♙f3 ♞xb2 and the engine evaluation is = here.

8...dxc3

TRICK: 8...♞xa5?? 9.♞xd4+-.
9.♞xg7 ♞g8 10.♞xh7



10...♗bc6

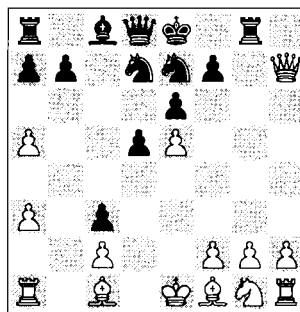
This is by far the most played move.

A) White gets an advantage after the immediate **10...♞xa5 11.♗f3** ≤ 11.f4 ♗bc6 12.♗f3 ♙d7 13.♗g5 ♞xg5 14.fxg5 0-0-0 15.♞xf7 ♗f5∞ Martin Gonzalez-Comas Fabrego, Spain 1993. **11...♗bc6** 11...♞c7 12.h4!/? ♗bc6 13.♙g5! ♙d7 14.♙f6!↑. **12.♗g5!** Only this way! 12.♞b1 ♞c7 13.♙f4 ♙d7 is

unclear. **12...♞f8** 12...♗xc5 13.f4 f6 14.fxg5 fxg5 15.♙c3!↑; also 15.♞h5+ and grandmaster Volokitin gives the radical symbols (!, +-) here. **13.♙e2!N** 13.f4 was played in a few games, when my proposal is 13...b6!/?⇒. **13...♗xe5** 13...♞c7 14.f4±; 13...♙d7?? 14.♗xf7!. **14.0-0!** For his pawn White will enjoy a dangerous initiative;

B) **10...♞c7** is not a good move either. After **11.f4! ♗bc6 12.♗f3 ♗xa5** 12...♙d7 13.a6! b6 14.g3 0-0-0 15.♞d3±, Galkin-Cacho Reigadas, Rotterdam 1998. **13.♗g5! ♞xg5 14.fxg5 ♞xe5+ 15.♝f2** and White has already an almost winning position;

WEAPON: But Botvinnik's defence 10...♗d7!/? is interesting and full of resources, as usual:



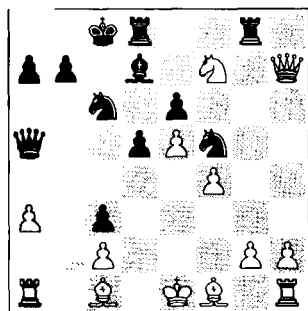
analysis diagram

11.♗f3 ♞c7! (11...♗f8?! 12.♞d3 ♞xa5 13.h4↑ Smyslov-Botvinnik, Moscow Wch m-9 1954; 11...♞xa5?! 12.h4↑) 12.♙f4 (12.♙b5!/? a6 13.♙xd7+ ♙xd7 14.0-0 d4!⇒ P.Roth-Whiteley, Groningen Ech-jr 1966/67) 12...♗f8! 13.♙b5+ (13.♞h5 ♙d7∞) 13...♙d7 14.♙xd7+ ♞xd7 15.♞d3 ♞g4! 16.g3 ♗fg6 17.♙e3 ♗c6⇒ Ragozin-Botvinnik, Moscow m 1951.

11.♗f3!

The push **11.f4** is best against 10...♞c7. Here White is behind in piece development: **11...♞xa5** The a5 pawn must be

eliminated. 11...♞d4?! is worse because of 12.♞h3! ♜xa5 13.♞g5 ♜f8 14.♟d3 ♞d7 15.0-0±. 12.♞f3 ♟d7 13.♞g5!? 14.g3 0-0 14.♜d3 ♞f5∞. 13...0-0-0 14.♞xf7 ♞f5!



analysis diagram

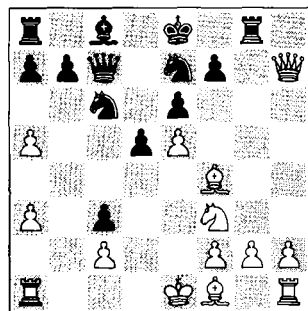
Black has good counterplay. A fine example is 15.♞xd8 ♜xd8 16.♜h3 ♞cd4! 17.♜xc3+ ♞b8 18.g3 ♜b6 19.♟d3 ♜c8 20.♜b4 ♟b5! 21.♞b1?? (21.♟xf5□=) 21...♞xc2+! 22.♟xc2 ♜xc2 23.♟d2 ♜e3+! 24.♞d1 ♜d3 0-1, Van der Weide-Werle, Groningen 2001.

11...♜c7

What else?! Now 11...♜xa5 leads to a position which was already under discussion in the line with 10... ♜xa5. Remember: 12.♞g5! ♜f8 13.♟e2! etc.

12.♟f4!

This move is obvious here. 12.♟b5?! ♟d7 13.0-0 ♞xe5! 14.♞xe5 ♜xe5 15.♟xd7+ ♞xd7⇌ is fine for Black, Chandler-Vaganian, Naestved 1985.

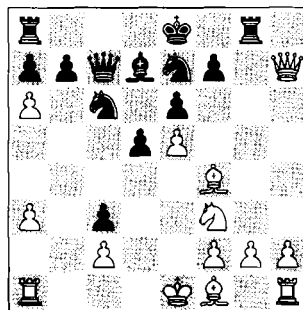


12...♟d7

This is good enough. 12...♜xa5?, the original idea, capturing on a5 with loss of tempo, leads to problems since the bishop is not worse on f4 than on c1: 13.♞b1! On the other hand, with the e5 pawn defended, White can comfortably develop a very dangerous initiative. This idea of Lputian's works more or less after 13.♞g5 ♜f8□ (13...♞xe5? loses on the spot: 14.h4! d4 15.♞e4 ♞d8 16.♞d1+- Rijnaarts-Kurstjens, Netherlands tt 2009/10) 14.♟d3 ♞b4⇌. 13...♟d7? 13...♜xa3 is a more principled continuation: 14.♞g5! ♞xe5 (14...♜f8 15.♟b5!↑) 15.♟xe5 ♜xg5 16.♟f6!±. 14.♞g5! ♞xe5 14...♜f8 15.♟d3± with the threats ♜g7 and ♞h7. 15.h4! ♜c7 16.♞h3!±, Fressinet-Lputian, Petrosian Memorial Internet 2004.

13.a6!

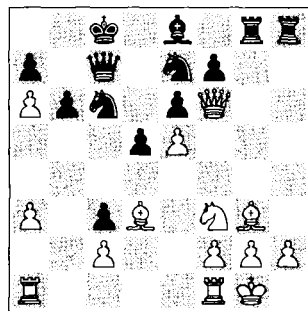
A very annoying move! At least it serves to weaken the future position of the black king. 13.♟d3?! is an inferior option: 13...0-0-0 14.♟g3 (14.a6 f5!, see below) 14...♜xa5! 15.0-0 ♞f5!⇌ 16.♟xf5 exf5 17.♜xf7 ♜df8 18.♜h7 f4! 19.♟xf4 ♟f5↑, Grischuk-Vaganian, Calvia ol 2004.



13...0-0-0!?

Although this reply has become quite popular, its value remains suspicious.

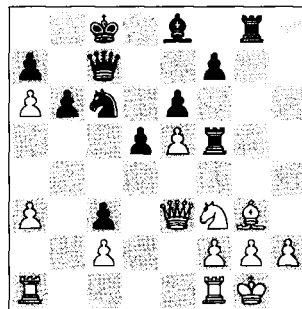
The alternative **13...b6** looks logical and. However, White achieves a clear advantage in many lines: **14.♔g3 0-0-0 15.♔d3 ♖h8!** Black must play energetically. Defending the f7 pawn is a wrong idea – White cannot take it anyway. 15...♘g6 was played in Psakhis-Eingorn, Minsk ch-URS 1987, but I found 16.♖h5!? ♜b8 17.♖g5 ♘ge7 18.♖f4±. **16.♖g7!** White's only hope for an advantage. After 16.♖xf7?! ♜df8 17.♖g7 ♜hg8 18.♖h6 (18.♖h7 ♜h8 leads to a draw by repetition) 18...♜xf3! (a standard exchange sacrifice) 19.gxf3 ♘d4 20.♖f4 (20.f4 ♘ef5☹) 20...♘ef5 21.♜d1 ♖c5 22.♔xf5 ♘xf5 Black has excellent compensation, Sutovsky-Berry, England tt 2005/06. **16...♜dg8 16...d4 17.♖g5!?. 17.♖f6!** The queen is very well placed on f6. **17...♔e8 17...d4 18.♔e4±. 18.0-0**



analysis diagram

White keeps his extra pawn and enjoys a positional advantage. Black does have open files on the kingside, but he cannot draw any specific benefit from them, because the bishop on g3 blunts the effectiveness of the black rooks: **18...♜h5!?** A new resource: Black wants to play ...♘f5 or ...♜g4 in order to put the white queen in danger. For that reason the safest thing for White is simply to retreat. **19.♖f4! ♘f5** Also after 19...♘g6 20.♔xg6 (20.♖e3!? ♘gx6 21.♔e2±)

20...♜xg6 21.♖e3 ♘a5 22.♘d4 White is clearly better. **20.♔xf5!** White must hang on to the dark-squared bishop. **20...♜xf5 21.♖e3**



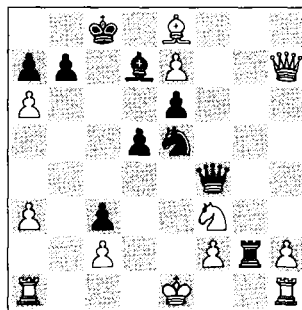
analysis diagram

The bishop on g3 neutralizes the pressure of the black rooks on the kingside. The extra pawn and the weakness of the c3 pawn guarantee White a pleasant game: 21...♜xf3 22.♖xf3 ♘d4 23.♖d3 ♖c5 24.a4! ♜g4 25.♜f1!± Black's situation is very difficult, Stellwagen-Bartel, Germany Bundesliga 2006/07 (1-0 in 61 moves).

14.axb7+!

This b/a/b-pawn plays quite an important role in the game.

♝ TRICK: 14.♔d3 f5! 15.exf6 (this answer gives Black enough counterplay. 15.axb7+!? may be a more critical line) 15...♖xf4 16.fxe7 ♜de8 17.♔g6 ♘e5 (17...♜h8!? 18.♔xe8 ♜xg2!)



analysis diagram

An amazing variation! 19. ♖xd7+ ♔c7!
20. c8♙! ♕b8 21. ♖f1 ♜xf2+! 22. ♖xf2
♜xf3! with perpetual check, Dolmatov-
S.Ionov, Kazan tt 1995.

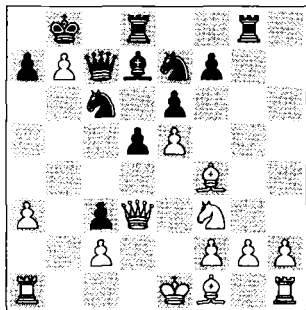
14... ♗b8

Of course not 14... ♖xb7 15. ♜b1+ ♔a8
16. ♖a6 ♖c8 17. ♖d3! ♜h8 (17... ♜xg2
18. ♖g3± and the rook is trapped)
18. ♜g7!±.

14... ♜xb7? is also bad, as seen in
Bryson-Wagener, Leon Ech-tt 2001:
15. ♜d3 (15. ♖g5!?) 15... ♜b2 16. ♜d1!
Maybe White has some problems with
his development, but the Black monarch
is too weak. Therefore, 1-0 in 33 moves.

15. ♜d3!

Here the white queen plays the blues!
(i.e. long moves). On 15. ♖d3?!,
15... f5!? was still strong.

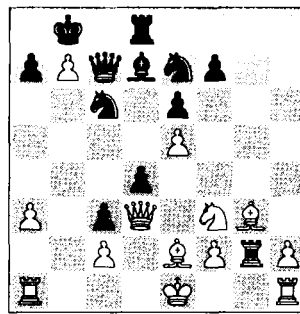


15... ♜g4

This looks like the best option, but there
are lots of paths to explore:

A) Gaining the e5 pawn with
15... ♖g6?! is not enough: 16. ♖g3
♖cxе5 17. ♖xe5 ♖xe5 18. ♜d4 f6
19. ♜b1± Matulovic-Osmanagic,
Sarajevo 1965;

B) After 15... d4 16. ♖e2 Black holds
the opening... with the help of his much
higher-rated opponent. 16. ♜b1!;
16. ♖g3!? would be another strong op-
tion: 16... ♖f5 17. ♜b1! – including this
move is interesting in all lines.
16... ♜xg2 17. ♖g3!±



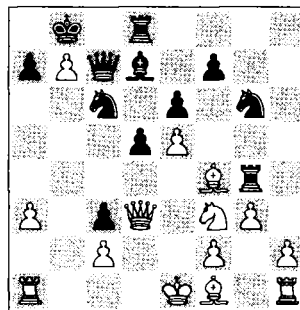
Trapping the rook in an amazing
game, Amonatov-Gorovykh, Moscow
2010. See the full comments by John
Watson on *ChessPublishing: The com-
puter is still crazy about White's position,
but there's more to the position than meets
the eye*. My personal eye sees that
White is better.

16.g3!

A fianchetto versus the Armenian! In
fact it is one more only move for White
in the crazy line with 7. ♜g4. The natu-
ral 16. ♖g3?! is much worse due to the
annoying check 16... ♜e4+! 17. ♖e2
(17. ♖d1 is unnatural; 17... ♖a5!?⇒)
17... ♖f5 and Black got good compensa-
tion in a recent game Elkin-Cioara,
Rijeka Ech 2010.

16... ♖g6

Also the best move for Black. From now
on the variation is forced.



17. ♜xc3 ♖xf4 18.h3!

A great idea, casting doubt over Black's plan. 18.gxf4? xf4f.

18...hx3

18...g2+!? was one more amazing idea: 19.gxg2 c4 20.c2 dxe5 21.d4!± and it seems that White is quite lucky also in this line.

19.xh3!

19.gxh3? c4 20.c2 b2 d4!f.

19...xe5

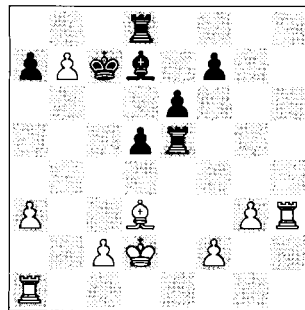
After this option, despite numerous exchanges, White maintains an edge.

A) **19...d4** 20.c5 dxe5 21.c7+! (21.c5? e4+! 22.c4 c3+ with a draw) 21...xc7 22.e2! dxf3+ 23.f3±;

B) **19...a4** 20.e2 d4 21.c5 a5 22.d6± Ruch-Barnsley, ICCF Email 2000;

C) **19...e4+** 20.e2!± e8?! 21.b1 dxe5 22.c7+ xc7 23.dxe5 xe5 24.b8+! 1-0 Pletanek-Kohout, corr 1998.

20.c7+ xc7 21.dxe5 e4+ 22.d2 xe5 23.d3!



The source of Black's problems is the rook on e5! Now White obtains a winning position almost by force.

23...g5

23...xb7 24.f4+-.

23...d4 24.b1 b8 25.h7 e8 26.g6!+-.

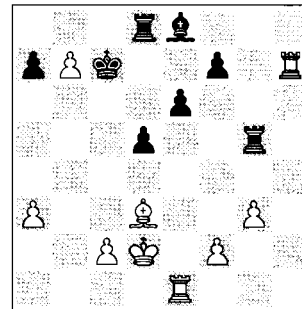
24.h7! e8

After 24...f8 25.b1± White retains the b7 pawn and threatens xf7!.

24...xb7 25.f7±.

25.e1!

A wonderful resource!



25...e5

25...xb7 26.xe6+-; 25...b8 26.h8+-.

26.f4! exf4

26...xg3 27.fxe5!? b8 (27...xb7 28.e6+-) 28.h8 xb7 29.b5+-.

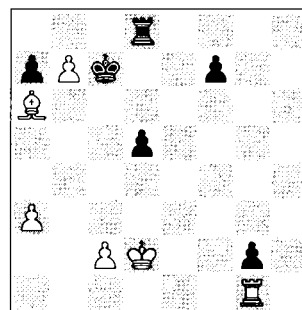
27.h8! fxg3 28.a6! g2

28...c6 29.e7+!.

29.hxe8 g8

29...g1 30.xg1+-.

30.xd8 xd8 31.g1+-



White's positional and material advantage is decisive.

31...g8 32.e2 b6 33.d3 xb7

34.f3 b6 35.xg2 xg2 36.xg2 a5 37.f3 a4 38.e3 xa3

39.d4 b4 40.xd5 1-0

In my opinion, the 7. ♖g4 variation is a very solid choice against the black setup with 5... ♗a5 and gives Black some major problems. It can even be speculated that it is responsible for 5... ♗a5 becoming far less popular; at the same time the variation is quite a straight line one, i.e. Black has practically no alternatives which offer any prospect – Leonid Kritz (*ChessBase Magazine* 133).

However, the German grandmaster mostly investigated only what he considers to be the optimal continuation for White.

Keep in Mind

Just like a knight in a corner of the board is poorly placed according to the classical rules, so is the Armenian bishop on a5!

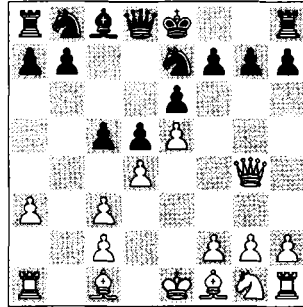
Conclusion on the Armenian Variation (5.a3 ♗a5)

- Times are still hard for this line – and it's too risky to play on the highest level. So it should be recommended chiefly as a surprise weapon.
- Any black player who desires to avoid the exchange of the bishop for the knight would be well advised to play 'Barricade' lines like ...b7-b6 and ...♗f8. Or even to employ the Classical System with 3. ♗c3 ♗f6!? (this is, by the way, part of Kortchnoi's main repertoire). Both lines can be found in *The Flexible French*.

Chapter 7 – The Knight System

1.e4 e6 2.d4 d5 3.♘c3 ♙b4 4.e5 c5 5.a3 ♗xc3+ 6.bxc3 ♘e7 7.♚g4

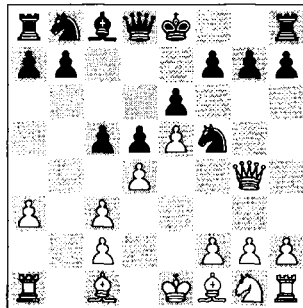
We have arrived at the unavoidable part of this book where we will have to face the attack 7.♚g4 in the main Winawer for the first time.



- The white queen attacks the kingside and the key weak point on g7.
- From here on, Black's defence can be either very concrete (7...♘f5), flexible (7...♖f8), natural (7...0-0), or else indirect or dynamic, as in the case of the 'poisoned pawn' lines (7...♚c7).

GAMES 18 and 19 – 7.♚g4 ♘f5!? (285 games=39% – be careful!)

This is an interesting sideline which has always intrigued me ever since someone used it repeatedly to beat me convincingly on Playchess.com a few years ago. I was surprised that there is no known refutation of this move and it is easy for White to go wrong very quickly in this line – Goh Wei Ming on ChessPublishing.



Actually, this curious variation originated in the era of Botvinnik, Petrosian, Kortchnoi and Uhlmann, and quite surprisingly it ends with the young Swiss grandmaster Yannick Pelletier (after his game in 2005). Most of the modern experts in the French have used the defence 7...♘f5 only on a few occasions.

Why is this old main idea in the Winawer so much less popular today? In this chapter we will try to find the right answers to the arising problems.

Keep in Mind

- In the Knight System Black defends g7 tactically with the key moves ...♘f5 and ...h5, diverting the white queen.
- However, a sharp advance such as ...h7-h5 is double-edged and can weaken your own kingside.
- In this battle of barricades Black balances static and dynamic chess!

**GAME 18 – 7...♘f5 8...♙d3 h5 9.♖h3 (72 games=61.8%). A barricading weapon:
7.♖g4 ♘g6 (87 games=29% only!)**

The Old Weapon

After Petrosian lost against Tal with 7...♘f5 (Moscow ch-URS 1957), later I decided to play this line against him. I noticed that Tal always repeated the same variation since it was working well in practice, without any further checking or deep analysis. So I prepared an improvement for our new game in 1958 – Viktor Kortchnoi.



Mikhail Tal vs. Viktor Kortchnoi. Viktor had something of an 'Indian sign' over Tal. His great logic and psychological skills match those of the legendary Sherlock Holmes.


- Mikhail Tal
- Viktor Kortchnoi

Riga ch-URS 1958 (9)

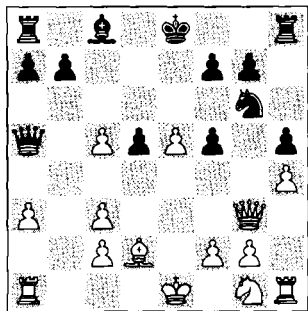
Here is this game between the two giants: the dynamic Mikhail Tal (22 years old) vs. the quite 'static' Viktor Kortchnoi (here 27 years old).

**1.e4 e6 2.d4 d5 3.♘c3 ♙b4 4.e5 c5
5.a3 ♙xc3+ 6.bxc3 ♘e7 7.♖g4 ♘f5!?**

An old weapon of many famous 'Francophiles'. The black knight defends the kingside from the barricades.

 **WEAPON:** Another defence by the knight, 7...♘g6, was one of several 'barricade' methods à la Petrosian. I don't know if it is playable, but a clear refuta-


tion is yet to be found: 8.h4!? h5! 9.♖g3 ♗a5!? (unfortunately the idea 9...b6? is not playable because of 10.♙d3!) 10.♙d2 ♘c6 11.♙d3 ♘ce7 12.dxc5! (12.♘f3 c4!)=) 12...♘f5!N (≤ 12...♗xc5 13.♘f3± was seen in Liberzon-Petrosian, Moscow 1964) 13.♙xf5! exf5.

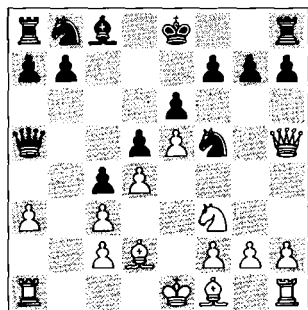


This could be the new key position of this line. Black is still very solid here.

8.♙d3

Attacking the defending knight is a must.

 WEAPON: 8.♘f3!? would be an interesting option for attacking players, since it avoids the trading of the queens. 8...♗a5 I think that the best continuation is 8...h5! 9.♗f4, which leads to some of the main lines in the next game. However, here Black does not have the option ...♗h4. 9.♙d2 c4 10.♗h5!↑



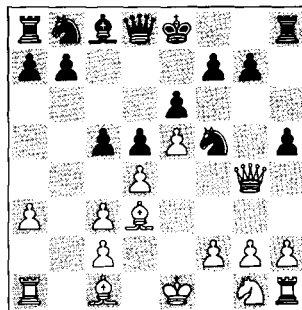
analysis diagram

10...♙d7 10...0-0? would not be good either: 11.g4 ♘e7 12.♘g5 h6 13.♘h3!?

♗a4 14.♞c1 ♘d7 15.f4→. 11.g4 ♘e7 12.♘g5 ♘g6 13.f4!→ and White should be happy with this position, Karjakin-Arizmendi Martinez, Biel 2003.

8...h5!

The key to the black defence. White would have a strong attack after 8...0-0? 9.♙g5 ♗a5 10.♘e2 ♗h8 11.0-0 ♘c6 12.♗h3! c4 13.♙xf5 exf5 14.♘f4 ♙e6 15.♞fe1 ♗c7 16.♗h4 ♞fe8 17.♞e3!+- Klovans-Grants, Riga ch-LAT 1965.



9.♗h3

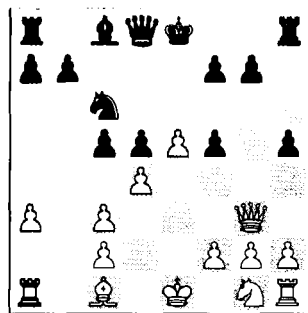
Looking for an immediate refutation. The main idea of this manoeuvre hides some tricks: 9...♗h4?? 10.♙xf5, winning the knight. White also threatens to advance g2-g4. However, Black has enough time at his disposal to guarantee satisfactory counterplay.

The most popular move here is 9.♗f4!?, which will be analysed in the next game.

Black is doing fine after 9.♗d1. I would recommend the following set-up: 9...cxd4 (9...♘c6!?) 10.♙xf5 exf5 11.cxd4 b6⇒ and now, for instance, 12.♘e2 ♙a6 13.0-0 ♘c6 14.♞e1 ♙xe2! 15.♞xe2 0-0 with equal chances.

9...cxd4

Here is the famous Kortchnoi adage: take material (i.e. pawns) at any cost. Another possibility would be to increase the pressure on d4: 9...♘c6!? 10.♙xf5 10.g4?! ♘h4 or 10...♘fe7 is good for Black. 10...exf5 11.♗g3!



analysis diagram

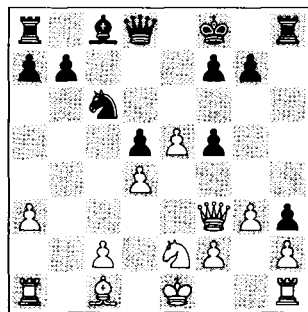
11...♖a5 Remember Uhlmann's universal dynamic plan: preparing queenside castling. However, the most solid continuation would be 11...♖f8!? and then ...h5-h4, and if 12.♙g5 ♖a5⇌. 12.♘e2 ♙e6 13.0-0 0-0-0∞ Black is ready to launch a pawn jet with ...h4, ...g5. 14.dxc5 h4! 15.♖e3 g5 16.f4 gxf4 17.♗xf4 ♗dg8 18.♞b1 ♞h7 19.♘d4 ♞hg7 20.♞f2 f4 21.♖xf4 ♖xc3→ and Black is the one who attacks, as in Teschner-Uhlmann, Wageningen 1957.

10.♘f3

And this is the dynamic Mikhail Tal in action.

A) **10.cxd4 ♘xd4!** (Kortchnoi);

B) The best option for White might be to simplify the position by **10.♙xf5!** exf5 11.♖g3!? ♖f8□ 12.cxd4 ♘c6 13.♘e2 h4! 14.♖f3 h3 15.g3



analysis diagram

and this position is balanced, e.g. 15...b6!?⇌;

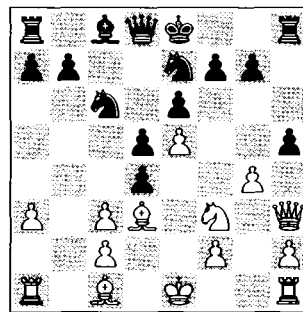
C) The advance **10.g4** is still a bad idea: **10...♘e7** Including 10...♖a5!? is interesting, e.g. 11.♘e2 ♘e7∞ Sidorov-Furman, Gorky 1950. 11.cxd4 ♖c7 12.♘e2 ♘bc6 13.0-0 ♙d7 14.gxh5 0-0-0!⇌ with typically barricaded play in Dubinin-Petrosian, Gorky 1950.

10...♖c7!

Here is the surprise prepared by Kortchnoi! This move order is correct for Black.

A) However, **10...dxc3!?** also looks good, for instance 11.g4?! ♘e7 12.gxh5 ♖c7 13.♖g3 ♘d7! is fine for Black;

B) In the previous victorious game by Tal the line chosen was **10...♘c6**, but in that historic game nerves played an important role and there were lots of tactical lapses: **11.g4 11.cxd4!?. 11...♘fe7**



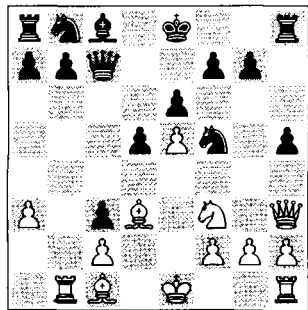
analysis diagram

12.gxh5 After 12.cxd4 Black's queenside castling will strengthen the barricades and safeguard his king: 12...♖c7 (or 12...♖a5+!⇌, Mitkov-Rozentalis, Schellenberg 1991) 13.♙d2 ♙d7 14.♞b1 0-0-0 15.gxh5 f6!⇌, Dorawa-Uhlmann, Schkopau ch-DDR 1958. 12...♖c7 12...♖a5!?. 13.♙f4 13.cxd4? ♘xd4!. 13...♘g6 13...dxc3!?. 14.♖g4 ♘xf4 14...♘gxe5!?. 15.♖xf4

dx3 15...**hx5?**! 16.cxd4±. 16.**Wg5**
 (16.**g1** f6!) 16...**we7** 17.**Wxg7** **Wf8**
 17...**hx5!**±. 18.**Wg5** **Wh6** 19.**Ag1**∞
Wxg5?! 19...**Wxh5?** 20.**Wf6!**. 20.**Wxg5**
ed7 21.**de2?** 21.h6!±. 21...**de7**
 22.**de3** **Af8** 23.**Ag1** **de8** 24.**d4**
f5?? 24...f6=. 25.**dxc6+**! **exc6?**
ed4± reaching a winning endgame
 at last, Tal-Petrosian, Moscow ch-URS
 1957.

Statistic note: objectively speaking,
 Petrosian was not very lucky in the
 7...**d5** variation. He lost 1½-½ against
 Tal and 1-0 to Leonid Stein (see next
 game), and only won one single game.

11.b1 dxc3!




Pawns are the soul of chess – keep them
 safe!

12.g4?

Back then this advance, reinforced by
 Tal's hypnotic eyes, used to scare many
 Francophiles. But not a great psycholo-
 gist like Viktor Kortchnoi.

12...de7 13.gxh5 **dxc6**

 **WEAPON:** The computer likes
 13...b6!? 14.**Wg4** **d7**±.

14.ed4

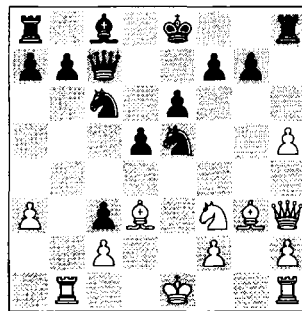
If 14.**Wg3** **hx5** 15.**Wxg7?** **dxe5**
 16.**dg5** **dxd3+** 17.cxd3 **dg6**± –
 Kortchnoi.

14...dg6!

This puzzling position is similar to that
 of Tal-Petrosian, but here Black has

gained an important tempo with the in-
 clusion of the moves 11. **b1 dxc3**.

15.ed3 **dxe5**±



Black has won the opening battle. How-
 ever, the sharp struggle continues.

16.dxe5

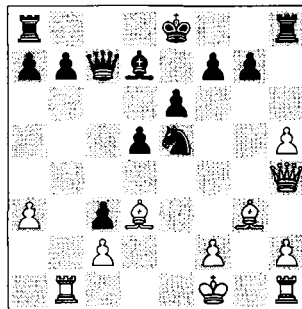
White incorrectly restricts his own possibi-
 lities. The critical continuation was to move
 the king without exchanging knights:
 16.**ef1** – Kortchnoi. However, even after
 the best move 16.**ef1** Black's position is
 much better: 16...**ed7** (also 16...f6!?
 17.**eb5** **ed7** 18.**exc6** **Wxc6** 19.**ex5**
d4!±) 17.**eb5** (17.**ee1!**? f6□ 18.**eg6+**
ed8!±) 17...**Wa5!** 18.**dxe5** **dxe5**
 19.**ex5** **exb5+** 20.**ee1** **Wa4!**–+.

16...dxe5 17.**ef1**

17.**ed1??** **dxd3!**.

17...ed7! 18.**Wh4**

This move, made with the aim of activating
 his queen, is a serious mistake, which should
 have led to a difficult position for White –
 Kortchnoi. 18.**ee1** f6 19.**eg6+** **ef8!**±.



18...f6?

Overlooking White's counterplay possibilities. The dynamic solution was 18...♗f3!-+; the static option was 18...♙c6-.

19.♙xe5! ♖xe5

This leads to a dynamic balance. Maybe Black should have tried 19...fxe5!?

20.♙g6+ ♔f8 21.♖b4+ ♔g8
 22.♗xb7! (22.♗e7?? ♙b5+)
 22...♙c8-.

20.♙xb7 ♙b8! 21.♙xb8+ ♖xb8

22.♗g4!

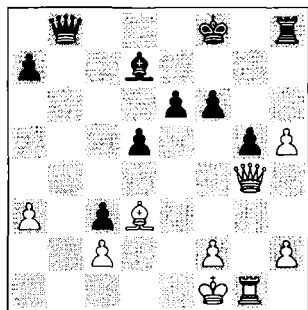
22.♙g1? g5!.

22...♗f8 23.♙g1

Now White has obtained dangerous compensation for the pawn. So,

23...g5!

The only defence, but a sufficient one. Black returns the last of his extra pawns, but his king finds a safe refuge at g7 – Kortchnoi.

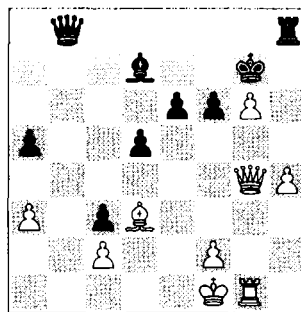


24.hxg6

24.h4? is a mistake: 24...♗f4! 25.hxg5 ♖xg4 26.♙xg4 e5! 27.♙b4 ♙xh5 28.♙b8+ ♔e7 29.♙b7 ♔d6 30.gxf6 e4!- – Kortchnoi/Moskalenko.

24...♗g7 25.h4 a5

A useful prophylactic move, preventing the possible intrusion of the white queen into Black's position via b4. Now Black must be constantly on the watch to safeguard his position against penetration by the white queen – Kortchnoi.



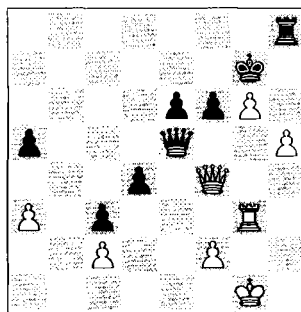
26.♙g3 ♖b1+ 27.♔g2 ♖b7 28.h5 d4+ 29.♙e4!

29.f3 is more complicated: 29...♗d5 (29...e5 30.♙f5=) 30.♙h3! e5 31.♙f5 ♙xf5 32.♗xf5 d3! 33.cxd3 c2 34.♙h1=.

29...♙c6=

29...f5 30.♗g5! with a draw after 30...♗xe4+ 31.♔h2 ♙c6 32.♗e7+ ♔h6=. 29...♖b5 30.♙h3 ♖g5, given by both Tal and Kortchnoi, is wrong in view of 31.♗xg5 fxg5 32.♙h1!±, preparing the decisive manoeuvre ♙b1.

30.♙xc6 ♖xc6+ 31.♔g1 ♖d5 32.♗f4 ♗e5



Here young Misha surprisingly played:

33.h6+??

A mysterious mistake, probably due to time trouble, which loses on the spot. 33.♗f3 ♖d5=.

33...♙xh6 34.♗xh6+ ♔xh6 35.g7 ♗xg3+! 0-1

By no means faultless, but a very sharp game, and also interesting from the theoretical point of view – Kortchnoi.

The history of the old Knight System continues. Much later, in 1983 in the Soviet Championship in Moscow, Petrosian again chose 7...♘f5 against Tal (!), but the latter chose the main line with 9.♙f4 instead of his old weapon 9.♙h3. Let's look at all the ideas in the next modern game.

GAME 19 – 9.♙f4 (127 games=63.7%)

A New Francophile! Swiss grandmaster Yannick Pelletier is a French specialist and I've noticed that he has scored well with slightly off-beat variations. Here we analyse his four games with 7...♘f5!? in the Winawer, where he scored a 1-3 result with black (without losses) against strong grandmasters.

□ **Nigel Short**

■ **Yannick Pelletier**

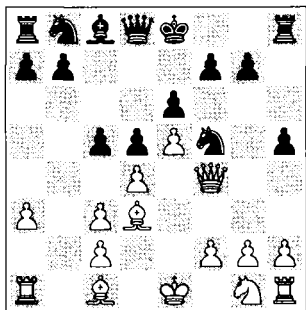
Zurich 2001 (3)

**1.e4 e6 2.d4 d5 3.♘c3 ♙b4 4.e5 ♘e7
5.a3 ♙xc3+ 6.bxc3 c5 7.♙g4 ♘f5!?
8.♙d3 h5!**

Goh Wei Ming: *This move, misplacing White's Queen at the expense of weakening Black's Kingside is the cornerstone of Black's concept. Due to Black's early pressure on d4, White's reply is forced.*

9.♙f4!?

This move might be the answer to our question why 7...♘f5 has never been a popular theoretical line at grandmaster level.



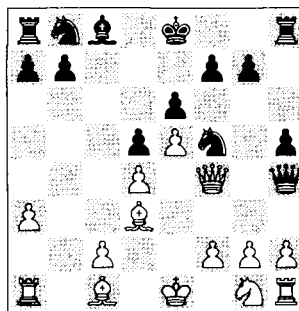
9...♙c7!

This typical Winawer manoeuvre is currently Black's main hope in the Knight System. Black is not playing for a draw (as in the lines given below), and his su-

perior pawn structure will compensate for White's advantage of the bishop pair.

One of the original ideas of the Knight System was an early queen exchange, but unfortunately it fails nowadays:


A) **9...♙xd4?! 10.cxd4 10...♙xf5 exf5 11.cxd4 ♘c6 12.♘e2 h4!⇒** Karaklajic-Foguelman, Belgrade 1962. **10...♙h4**

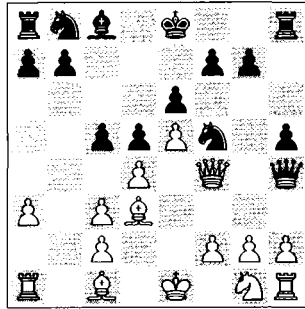


analysis diagram


Now the critical line is **11.♙xh4!?**. After 11.♘f3 Black gets a nice endgame: 11...♙xf4 12.♙xf4 ♘c6 13.c3 ♙d7 14.h3 ♖c8 15.♙e2 ♘a5 16.g4 ♘e7 17.♙d2 ♘c4⇒ and Black managed to win this desired position in 45 moves, Bogoljubow-Flohr, Nottingham 1936. **11...♘xh4 12.♙g5!** and now, after **12...♘xg2+** (if 12...♘f5 13.♘e2! ♘c6 14.c3 ♘a5 15.♘f4 ♘e7 16.♙e2↑ White is playing for a win without any risk, Yanofsky-Uhlmann, Stockholm izt 1962)

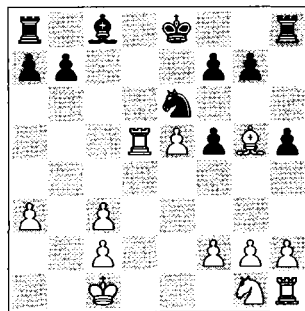
13.♟f1 13.♟d2!?. 13...f6 14.exf6 gxf6
 15.♟xf6 ♖f8 16.♟g7! ♖g8 17.♟e5↑
 White achieves a clear advantage.

 B) WEAPON: Only the direct move 9...♞h4!? can be a drawing weapon:

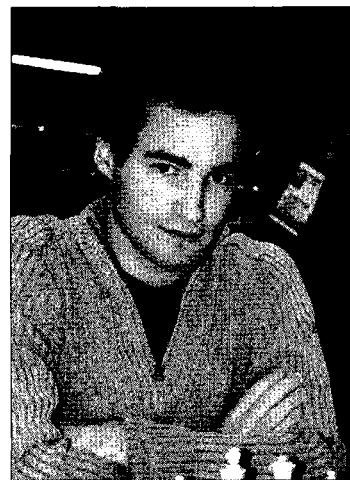


analysis diagram

 B1) TRICK: Now 10.♞xh4 is not critical, since Black takes profit of the advantage of not having played ...cxd4: 10...♟xh4 11.♟g5! ♟f5! (the alternative 11...♟g2+?! is still bad and leads to an advantage for White after the same line: 12.♟f1 f6□ 13.exf6 gxf6 14.♟xf6 ♖f8 15.♟g7! ♖g8 16.♟e5↑) 12.dxc5 (it is important to note that 12.♟e2 doesn't work because of 12...♟e7! 13.♟f4 ♟bc6!⇒ and now White cannot play c2-c3) 12...♟d7 13.♟xf5 exf5 14.0-0-0 ♟xc5 15.♖xd5 ♟e6☞



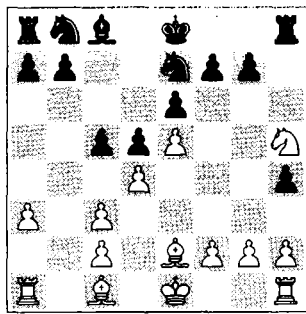
analysis diagram



With the support of old Francophiles, young grandmaster Pelletier investigated the Knight System and achieved great successes with it.

Black was a pawn down and behind on development, but his pawn structure was far superior to White's. Thus, Black would have no problems once he managed to activate his rooks. Goh Wei Ming on ChessPublishing, writing about the game Radulski-Drozdzovsky, Tromsø 2009.

B2) 10.♟e2!?. The continuation preferred by Khalifman in *Opening for White According to Anand Volume 7*, threatening to win a pawn. However, Black's barricades are strong and they hold in many lines. 10...♞xf4 There is nothing better. 11.♟xf4 ♟e7! This might be the best square for the knight. After 11...♟h4!?. Khalifman analysed 12.♟e2 cxd4 13.cxd4 g6 14.0-0 ♟f5 15.♟b2 ♟c6 16.♖fd1± and even though this must be slightly better for White, it is certainly going to be tough to convert this position into a win. 12.♟e2!?. 12.dxc5 ♟bc6⇒. 12...h4 13.♟h5 This position was the older Petrosian's hope vs. the mature Tal, in 1983. And this time Petrosian defended the barricades more stubbornly:



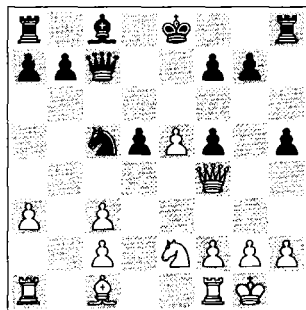
analysis diagram

13...♖f8!? 13...♗h7 14.g4!∞. 14.♙g5 cxd4 14...♘bc6!? 15.♗d1 ♘f5 16.g4! ♗xh5!∞ – back to the workshop!
 15.cxd4 b6! 16.0-0-0 ♙a6 17.♙xa6 ♘xa6 18.g4= and drawn in 28 moves, Tal-Petrosian, Moscow ch-URS 1983.

10.♘e2

The most flexible development of the knight. However, Pelletier found an appropriate reply.

A) Uhlmann writes twice in his book: *The reply 7...♘f5 has not been credited*, and he gives the following game Svidler-Pelletier as an example, something which generally only diminishes the reputation of the Knight System. However, I could not find a clear advantage for White here and I even found some improvements. Let's see: 10.dxc5 ♘a6! 11.♙xf5 is a quite forced exchange if White wants to get some advantage. 11...exf5 12.♘e2 ♘xc5 13.0-0



analysis diagram

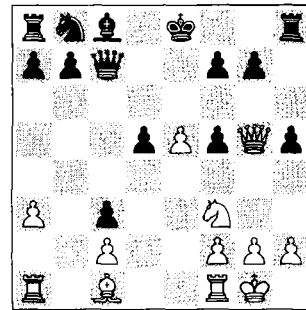
In my opinion this position is equal. Both armies have weaknesses: 13...0-0 13...b6!?, 13...♙e6!?. 14.♘g3 ♗e8 14...♘e4!?, 14...h4!?. 15.♙e3 15.♘xh5 ♗xe5=. 15...♘e6 16.♗xf5 h4 17.♘h5



WEAPON: Here Black has a tactical defence with 17...♘d4!?, possibly with the inclusion of 17...h3!?

Instead, 17...♗xc3? was a mistake: 18.♗ad1!↑ Svidler-Pelletier, Biel 2001. After 18.♗g5 ♘e2+ 19.♖h1 ♗xe5 20.♗xh4 ♗e4 21.♗g5 ♗e5 the position is equal;

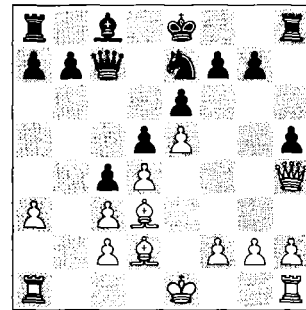
B) Black is fine in the gambit line 10.♘f3 cxd4! 11.0-0 dxc3 12.♙xf5 exf5 13.♗g5, played in Volokitin-Pelletier, ACP blitz 2004.



analysis diagram

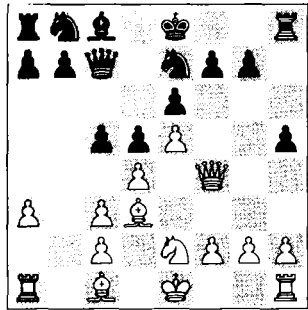
Here the best defence was 13...♖f8! = keeping a healthy structure with f7-g7;

C) Also after the solid 10.♙d2 ♘c6 11.♘f3 ♘ce7 12.♘h4 ♘xh4 13.♗xh4 c4! Black balances the game:



analysis diagram

14. ♖c2 ♘f5 15. ♗h3 ♙d7 15... ♗e7!?
 15... ♗a5!?. 16. g4 ♘e7 17. gxh5 0-0-0
 in Sydlor J. Franz, Warsaw tt 1959.
 10... ♘e7!



This knight step is a simple and strong option. Black loses a tempo, but threatens to win the bishop on d3 by means of ...c5-c4, which is the disadvantage of White's ♘e2.

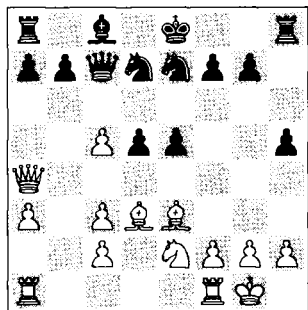
11. dxc5

♠ forced move.

11... ♘d7 12. ♗g3

A provocative idea by Short. Four years later, the young Magnus Carlsen, visiting Switzerland, tried to improve White's play, but he was not very successful:

12.0-0!? ♗xe5 12... ♘xc5!?. 13. ♗a4
 13... ♙b5!? ♗xf4 14. ♙xf4 a6 15. ♙a4
 ♘d8!=. 13... ♗c7 14. ♙e3 e5!



analysis diagram


A curious position: the two black knights and the centre pawns are more

useful than White's two bishops and his tripled c-pawns.

15. ♘g3! 0-0! 16. ♗h4 ♘xc5 17. ♘xh5
 ♘xd3 18. ♗g5 ♘g6 19. cxd3 ♗xc3
 (19... ♗e7!?! was a good try for a win)
 20. d4! exd4= 21. ♖ac1 ♗b2 22. ♖b1
 ♗c3 23. ♖bc1 ½-½ Carlsen-Pelletier,
 Biel 2005.

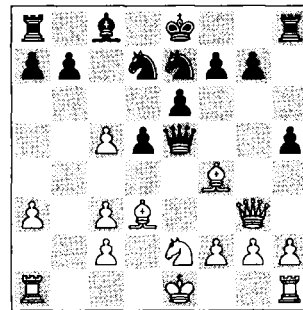
12... ♗xe5

Black accepts the consequences. However, 12... ♘xc5!?! was an option.

 WEAPON: And of course the sharp variation 12...h4!?

13. ♗xg7 ♖g8 14. ♗h7 ♘xe5∞ also fully deserves attention.

13. ♙f4



13...h4!

This is a very helpful pawn in this system. White is better after 13... ♗f6?!
 14. ♙g5 ♗e5 15. f4↑.


14. ♗g4 ♗h5

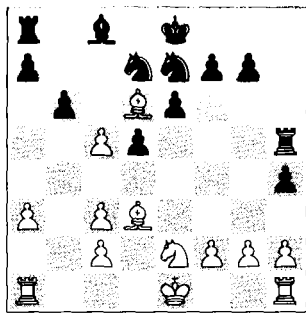
After Black has forced the queen exchange the position is balanced. However, we will reach the famous 'French endgame' with the Winawer pawn structure, which usually favours Black.

15. ♗xh5

15. ♗xg7?! ♖g8 16. ♗h6 ♗xh6
 17. ♙xh6 e5!↑.

15... ♖xh5 16. ♙d6 ♘e5

 WEAPON: Here the best solution was the break 16...b6!



analysis diagram

17.cxb6 (17.♙b5 bxc5) 17...axb6 18.0-0 ♙a6 with a very promising endgame for Black.

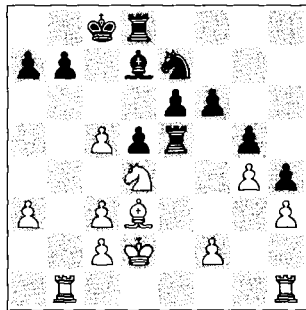
17.♙xe5

White cannot avoid the exchange of one of his wonderful bishops. For example, 17.♘d4 ♘xd3+ 18.cxd3 ♘f5 (18...♙d7!?) 19.♗b5 ♘xd6 20.♘xd6+ ♙e7=.

17...♞xe5 18.g4 g5

18...♞g5!? 19.h3 e5=.


19.♙d2 ♙d7 20.♘d4 f6 21.♞ab1 0-0-0 22.h3



The position is still equal.

22...♙e8?!

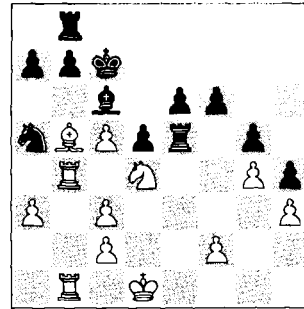
The wrong direction.

 WEAPON: 22...♞e4! was a creative 'workshop' idea: 23.♙xe4 dxe4 24.♙c1 ♘d5 with great compensation for the exchange.

23.♞b2

23.♞hf1!?

23...♘c6! 24.♞hb1 ♘e5 25.♙d1 ♙c7 26.♞b4 ♙c6! 27.♙b5 ♞b8! =



I will give the rest of this complex endgame with brief comments:

28.f3 b6 29.cxb6+ axb6 30.♙xc6 ♘xc6 31.♘xc6 ♙xc6 32.♙d2 f5 33.a4 f4 34.a5??

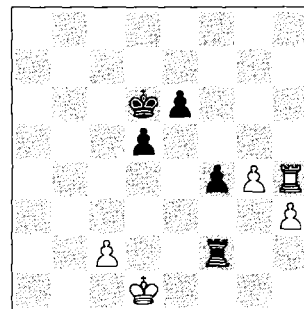
34.c4=.

34...b5 35.a6 ♞a8 36.♞xb5 ♞xa6

37.♞b8 ♞e3 38.♞f1 ♞a3! 39.♞g8 ♙d6

40.♞g5 ♞axc3 41.♞h5 ♞xf3 42.♞xf3

♞xf3 43.♞xh4 ♞f2+ 44.♙d1



44...♞g2

44...e5! should also win easily.

45.♙e1 ♙e5 46.c3 ♙e4 47.♞h6 e5

48.♞e6 ♞g3 49.♙f2 ♞xh3 50.g5 ♞f3+

51.♙e2 ♞xc3 52.g6 ♞c2+ 53.♙d1

♞g2 54.♞f6 ♙d3 55.♙e1 ♙e3 56.♙f1

f3 57.♞f5 e4 58.♞xd5 ♞xg6 0-1

It was a nice 'French year' for grandmaster Pelletier, who scored some important points with the Knight System against very strong opponents.

Summary of 9...♖f4:

Both the dynamic defence 9...♖c7! and the 'passive' drawing weapon 9...♖h4! are playable for Black.

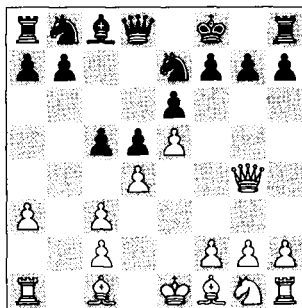
Conclusion on 7...♘f5

In our modern chess times, the defensive old Knight System is another possibility to surprise your opponent and save some studying time. However, a set-up with moves like ...♘f5 and ...h7-h5 creates quite a lot of weaknesses on the black kingside, and it is risky from a strategic point of view. Basically, Black's position is slightly passive.

Speaking in all honesty, during my study I could not find any refutation of this system, but the arising positions are somewhat dry and with few attractive possibilities... this might be the reason why this variation hardly appears in modern high-level games.

Chapter 8 – The Eingorn Variation

GAMES 20-22: 1.e4 e6 2.d4 d5 3.♘c3 ♗b4 4.e5 c5 5.a3 ♗xc3+ 6.bxc3 ♘e7
7.♖g4 ♘f8!? (745 games=50.3% – a positive score!)



- *With a bad king position, the position cannot be equal!* – Viktor Kortchnoi
- *Risky, but an interesting move that became very popular in the end of the 80's. It is still not clear how White can get a real advantage, and Black could be satisfied with his results in practical games* – Lev Psakhis (in ChessBase Magazine 73)
- *In many games, after 7...0-0 Black gets checkmated very soon. And not everybody likes the gambit line after 7...♖c7* – Viktor Moskalenko
- *White won a lot of the early games against this move, but as time passed, it has been looking like one of Black's safest options* – John Watson

Grandmaster Eingorn in Yearbook 27 (1992):

- *The move 7...♘f8 in the main line of the French Winawer is more or less a successful attempt to avoid well-known theoretical paths.*
- *After 8.♘f3 Black usually solves his problem by playing 8...♖a5 9.♗d2 ♖a4. The move 8.♖d1 prevents such counterplay, but only at the cost of time.*
- *In my opinion, the consistent move for White is 8.a4, after which 8...b6 requires accurate defending on Black's part. Because of this, 8...♖c7 9.♘f3 cxd4 should be preferred.*
- *Finally, the attempt at a straightforward attack with 8.h4, followed by ♗h3-♗g3, does not seem too dangerous for Black.*
- *The number of games in which 'my move' 7...♘f8 has been played so far is rather limited, so all possibilities need further practical tests.*



Seasoned Ukrainian grandmaster Vereslav Eingorn (1956), an exponent of another generation of experts in the genuine French. For a long time now his 'irregular' king move (7...♘f8) has been part of official opening theory.

Practical Tests

- Nowadays, 7...♖f8 is the third most popular option against 7.♖g4 in Black's repertoire. There are lots of interesting high-level games with this typical and paradoxical king move.
- With 7...♖f8, Black is playing a slow positional system compared to other main Winawer lines.
- According to the common idea of economy in defence, the king alone is used to defend the g7 weakness. Black can exploit this economical solution for a queenside counterattack, usually along the c-file.
- During the opening stage Black cannot open the game too much, because his king's placement is not yet secure and his rooks lack connection.
- In order to make the defence 7...♖f8 more flexible, Black has to use some well-known ideas from different Winawer set-ups: there are many possible alternatives and transpositions.

Main Recommendations

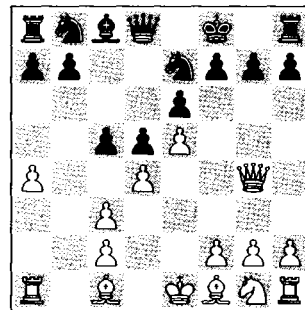
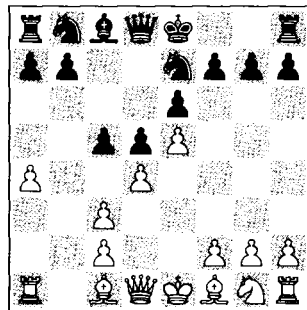
- The best reaction against the move 8.a4 is the 'geometric manoeuvre' 8...♖c7! (Game 20).
- After the rare and modern continuation 8.♗d2, Black has to choose a standard positional plan with 8...b6 or first 8...♖c7.
- Weapons vs. 8.♗d2: 8...♖e8!? and 8...♗d7!? (see Game 22).
- But in case of 8.h4, 8.♘f3 and ♗d3 and 8.♖d1, the set-up with ...b7-b6 and ...♗a6 is too slow. So the 'Blues motif' 8...♖a5 followed by ...♖a4 becomes an attractive option again (Game 21).

In the following three games (20-22), we will see how Eingorn's system works in modern times, ensuring that this terrific 'mysterious' king move remains of interest.

GAME 20 – Using Well-known Concepts: 8.a4 (136 games=53.7%)

This game illustrates the most important options with 8...♖c7! and 8...b6?!. Although Black emerges out of the opening in good shape, there are several points where I think he could have gained some advantage.

For those who previously studied well Chapter 4 with 7.a4...



... now understanding and capturing the best ideas will be easier.

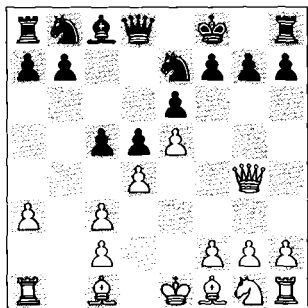
□ Alexander Areschenko

■ Yury Drozdovsky

Evpatoria tt-jr 2001

1.e4 e6 2.d4 d5 3.♘c3 ♘b4 4.e5 c5
5.a3 ♘xc3+ 6.bxc3 ♘e7 7.♚g4 ♔f8!?

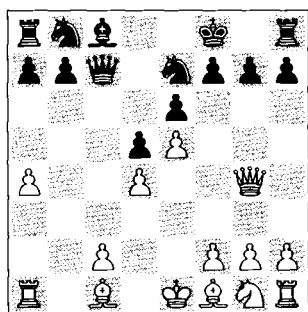
The darkest French move! *White has to try and demonstrate (not in words, but with deeds) that the opponent's voluntary rejection of castling has a substantial significance* – Eingorn.



8.a4!?

A quite logical and popular continuation, preparing to meet 8...♚a5 by 9.♙d2. Also, with the black king on f8, the move ♙a3 can work more effectively than in Chapter 9.

8...♚c7!



analysis diagram

Clearly, this short geometrical queen move is the most dynamic and appropriate practical option here.

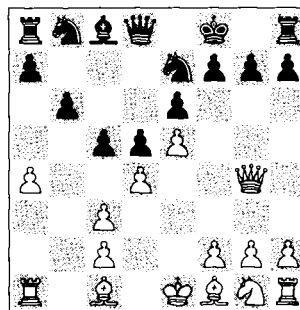
☛ A) WEAPON: *However, why not first 8...cxd4!?N 9.cxd4 and*



The still young grandmaster Yury Drozdovsky (26) was a pupil of both Eingorn and the author. This may be one of the reasons why he plays the French Defence successfully today. 7...♔f8 is his favourite.

now 9...♚c7, with an unexplored position? The discussion is opened in this book!

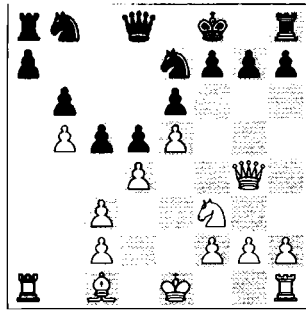
B) Problem number one for Eingorn (!) was that he always had to defend this line in the old fashion with 8...b6?!. But this does not work in modern times.



analysis diagram

Here is an example how White can get an advantage: 9.♘f3! ♙a6 There are two old Eingorn games with 9...h6 10.♙a3 ♚c7 11.♙d3 (nobody found the idea 11.♙b5!±) 11...♙a6 12.0-0 and Black's position was too passive, so 1-0 in 39 moves in Arnason-Eingorn, Reykjavik 1989, with a long game that ended in a

WAW in Hellers Eingorn, Debrecen
 h h tt 1992. 10.♠b5! ♠xb5 10...h6
 11.dxc5!±. 11.axb5



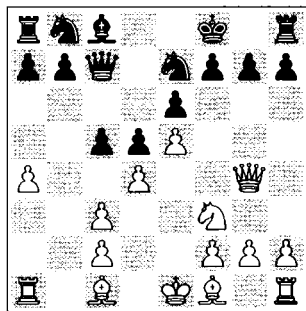
analysis diagram

Due to the ♖ being on f8, White retains a solid initiative. The main threat is c3 c4.

11...cxd4?! 12.♞xd4 (12.♞xd4!?)
 12...♞d7 13.♠a3 ♖g8 14.c4! ♞f5
 15.♞f4 ♞c7 16.0-0 dxc4 17.♞e4 ♞c8
 18.g4! ♞h6 19.♞fd1 f5 20.exf6 ♞xf6
 21.♞xe6+ ♞f7 22.♠d6 1-0 Areschenko-Kristjansson, Fügen tt 2006.

Summary of 8...b6?: This slow plan was Eingorn's main weapon for many years, and therefore the main reason why he twice wrote that 'White's 8.a4 is the more consistent continuation'. See his conclusion at the end of this chapter.

9.♞f3!



Another key moment.

9...cxd4

Black plays this move almost automatically. Remember – the standard 9...b6? is too late: 10.♠d3 ♠a6 11.0-0 cxd4? 12.♞xd4! ♠xd3 13.cxd3 ♞bc6 14.♠a3 ♖g8 15.♞xe6!±, Frolyanov-Drozovsky, Differdange 2008.

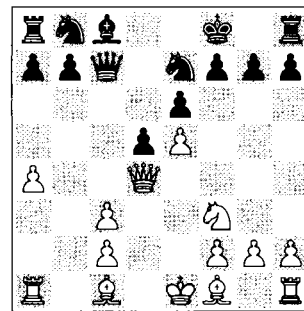
WEAPON: An interesting solution to the whole 8.a4 problem could be the transposition to the previous chapter by 9...h5!?, using motifs from the Knight System! 10.♞f4 cxd4 11.♞xd4 ♞f5!N with excellent counterplay for Black, for instance:

A) TRICK: 12.♞b4+ ♖g8 13.♠d3 ♞c6 14.♞f4 ♞cd4!±;

B) 12.♠a3+ ♖g8 13.♞c5 ♞xc5 14.♠xc5 b6 15.♠d6 ♞c6± and chances in the arising endgame are equal.

10.♞xd4

Forced.



10...♞bc6

Now the idea 10...♞f5!? is less attractive (without ...h7-h5), but still good enough to equalize: 11.♠a3+ ♖g8 12.♞c5 ♞xc5 13.♠xc5 b6! 14.♠d6 ♞c6=.


11.♞c5!

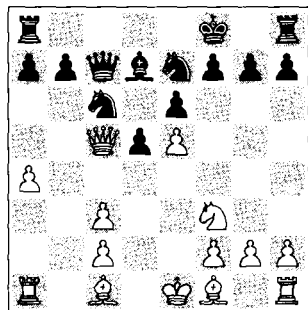
This is the only way for White to fight for an advantage. However, it leads to a very unclear position! 11.♞e3 ♞f5! 12.♞f4 ♞ce7± 12...h6!?, preparing ...g7-g5. 13.♞d2 ♞g6! Winning an extra pawn. 14.♠e2 ♞xe5 15.♞xe5 ♞xe5 16.♠a3+ ♖g8 17.0-0 ♠d7! and Black's

position is strong enough, Areschenko-B.Socko, Warsaw Ech 2005.

11...f6!?

Black tries to get rid of the e5 pawn.

 **WEAPON:** The alternative is to continue closed combat with 11...♗d7!?



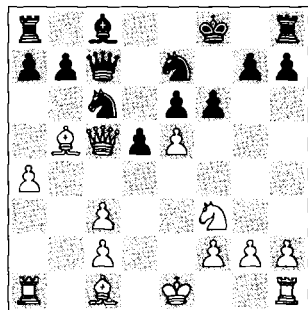
12.♗d3!? (≤ 12.♗b5 ♖c8!⇒ Hedman-Sengupta, Paleohora 2009) 12...b6!? 13.♖d6 (13.♖e3 ♘a5!?)⇒ 13...♖xd6 14.exd6 ♘g6 15.0-0 f6 with a complex endgame.

12.exf6!?

Opening up the game is a logical concept against the ♔ on f8, but it will also improve Black's central pawn formation. White has used two blocking ideas versus the Socko family:

A) 12.♗f4 ♖a5! 13.♖a3 13.♖xa5 ♘xa5=. 13...♗f7= Jakubowski-B.Socko, Czestochowa 1998;

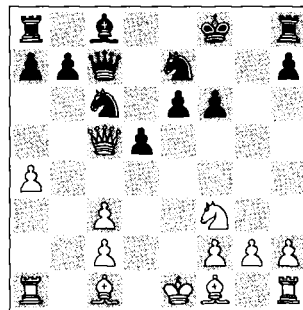
B) 12.♗b5!?



analysis diagram

12...♗f7 An improvement could be 12...fxe5!N when White will have to show his cards. 13.0-0 a6 13...fxe5!? Lahno-M.Socko, Heraklio 2007. 14.♗xc6 ♖xc6! ≤ 14...♗xc6 15.exf6 gxf6 16.c4!↑ A.Muzychuk-B.Socko, Warsaw rapid 2009. 15.♖d4 ♗d7 16.♖b1 b5 17.♖e1 ♖c4 18.♖d2 ♖ac8 19.axb5 axb5 20.♖b3 ♘g6 with equality, Belov-B.Socko, Hastings 2004/05.


12...gxf6

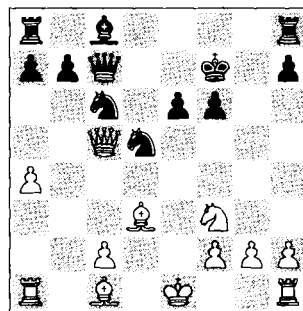


Black won four games from this position (½-4½). Therefore, White has to prove something here.

13.♗e2

A) 13.♗h6+ seems premature: 13...♗f7 14.♗d3 e5! 15.♘h4 ♖a5! 16.♖a3 ♖g8 (16...♘g6!?) 17.♗e2 ♗g4 18.f3 ♘d4!↑ and 0-1 in 37 moves, Rodriguez Talavera-Zlotnik, Ceuta 1992;

 **TRICK:** B) 13.c4 ♗f7 14.cxd5 ♘xd5 15.♗d3 ½-½ (19), Zaragatski-Drozdosky, Peniscola jr 2002.



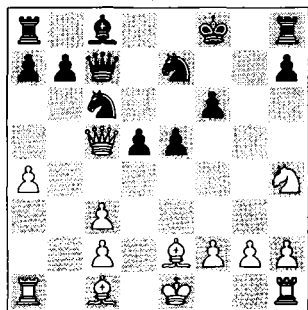
analysis diagram

Here Black missed some interesting tactics: 15...b6! 16. ♖c4 ♘a6!? (16...♗cb4 should be a safer option: 17. ♖xc7+ ♗xc7 18. ♙e4 ♘d7!⇒) 17. ♖xa6 ♗cb4 18. ♖c4 ♖xc4 19. ♙xc4 ♗xc2+ 20. ♗d2 ♗xa1. According to the engine the position is equal, but in practice Black has a material advantage.

13...e5

The most active option, but with the king in the middle it looks too risky. Interesting is 13...♖g8 and then ...♗g7-h8. Or simplifying with 13...♖a5!? 14. ♖e3 ♗f7 (14...♗f5!?) 15.0-0 ♗f5 16. ♖d2 e5 17. ♙a3 ♖g8 18. ♖ab1=, which was tried in M.Muzychuk-B.Socko, Warsaw rapid 2008. Here the best move was the simple 18...♖b8!.

14.♗h4!



Black must be careful in such positions.

14...♙e6?

A better idea was to improve the king: 14...♗g7! 15. ♖e3 (15.0-0 ♖g8!) 15...♖f8 16. ♖h6+ ♗g8 17.0-0 ♗f5 18. ♗xf5 ♙xf5 and now the game is balanced.

Summary:

After 8.a4 ♖c7!, in the main line Black can balance the game. However, keep your eye on new possibilities that arise with the use of the old Knight System set-up: 9...h5!? and 10...♗f5!?

15.0-0

I would be very nervous about Black's king position, but young players are optimists!

15...b6

15...♖g8 16.f4 e4 17.f5! ♙f7 18. ♙h6+ ♗e8 19.a5↑, Nijboer-PNikolic, Wijk aan Zee 2005.

16.♖e3 ♗g6∞



The rest of this complicated game is full of inexplicable errors.

17.♖f3

17. ♖h6+!?

17...♖f7?

17...♗g7□.

18.♗f5 h5 19.♗d6 ♖g7 20.♙b5 ♗ce7

21.♙g5 ♗g8 22.c4! ♗6e7 23.♙d2 a6

24.a5 axb5 25.axb6 ♖b8 26.cxb5

♖g6 27.♙b4?

27.b7+—.

27...♗g7 28.♖c3 h4 29.♖a3?

29.f4±.

29...h3 30.g3 ♖xb6 31.♖a7 d4 32.♖f3

♖h7 33.♗e4?? ♗h8—+

And White soon resigned, just after the time-control (40).

GAME 21 – Kasparov’s Weapon: 8.h4 (143 games=51%), 8.gf3 (141 games =43.3%), 8.d3 (102 games=40.3%) and 8.Wd1 (37 games=63.5%)

After these moves the game can transpose to ‘Queen Blues’ set-ups, by means of the response 8...Wa5!

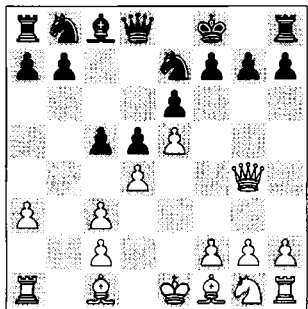
It is a true pleasure to present the following great game to you. GM Nikolic is one of the main authorities of the 7...cf8 line, but in this game it was severely tested.

□ Garry Kasparov

■ Predrag Nikolic

Horgen 1994 (7)

1.e4 e6 2.d4 d5 3.c3 b4 4.e5 c5
5.a3 xc3+ 6.bxc3 e7 7.Wg4 cf8



Nikolic’s specialty. He has played this move against the strongest opponents, with reasonable results.

8.h4

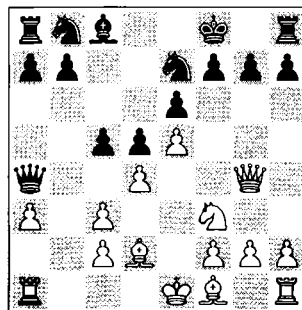
This immediate attack is also Kasparov’s main weapon in the Winawer, and he has made it dangerous for Black. However, we have already experienced this sort of attack in Chapter 5, Games 13, 14 and, mainly, 15.

For your convenience, here I offer three other important continuations in three mini-games:

1) 8.gf3 This natural move may be not the best for White. 8...Wa5! Once again using Black’s most important motif in the Winawer system. As I already explained in the previous game, 8...b6? is too slow: 9.a4! a6 10.b5!↑ etc. 9.d2 Wa4



Grandmaster Predrag Nikolic played 7...cf8 against the strongest opponents, with reasonable results.



analysis diagram

Compared to the Queen Blues line with 6...Wa5 7.d2 Wa4 8.Wg4, there the move 8...cf8 was met by 9.Wd1, but this is not possible here.

10.a2! Recent and also earlier practice has seen four other moves for White:

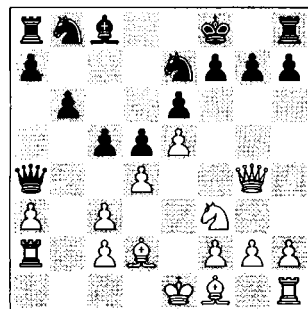
A) 10.♔d3?! c4! 11.♕e2 ♖xc2∞ with a 1-5 result in Black's favour;

B) 10.♕c2 b6 11.♘g5 h6 12.♗h5 ♘g6! and Black stands better, ½-½ in Dominguez Perez-Nogueiras, Las Tunas ch CUB 2001;

C) Also 10.♖c1 ♘bc6 11.♕e2 b6 12.0-0 ♕a6 13.♕xa6 ♗xa6 14.♘g5 h6 15.♗h5 ♘d8 16.dxc5 bxc5 was fine for Black in Naiditsch-Drozdosky, Odessa rapid 2009;

D) Finally, 10.c4!? was played in Baklan-Drozdosky, Alushta tt 2001: 10...♗xc2 11.dxc5 ♘bc6 12.♕e2 and now after 12...h6! and then ...♗e4 Black will be OK.

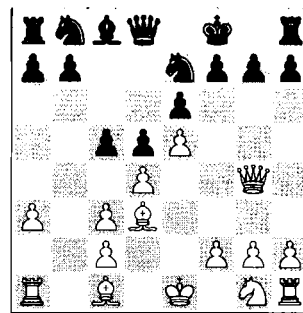
10...b6! =



analysis diagram

This is the desired position for Black (and so it would have been for Eingorn in his early games). Only after the queen is activated is this plan helpful. Black has a small but static-strategic advantage, therefore White is the one who should now consider his future actions: 11.♕d3 11.♗f4!? h6 12.dxc5 ♗xf4 13.♕xf4 bxc5 = T.Ernst-Eingorn, Tallinn 1989. 11...♕a6 12.0-0 ♕xd3 13.cxd3 c4! 14.♘g5 h6 15.♗h5 g6 16.♗h4 ♘d7 17.dxc4 ♗xc4 Black is better in the strategic battle, Balashov-Eingorn, Minsk 1983.

2) **8.♕d3**

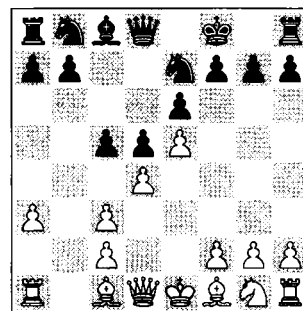


analysis diagram

This pseudo-active bishop placement is quite wrong in many sub-Winawer lines. I have also criticized, and strategically refuted, White's move ♕d3 in the Advance Variation, in *The Flexible French*. Such arguments confirm my 'anti-orthodox theory' that the bishop on c8 is the most powerful piece in the French!

8...♗a5! 9.♕d2 ♗a4 9...c4!? 10.♕e2 ♗a4 – no games. 10.c4 Trying to open up the game. For 10.♗d1 b6!? see the next line below; 10.♘d1?! b6!; 10.♖a2 b6!?. 10...dxc4 11.dxc5 ♕d7 12.♕e2?! White does not worry too much about the pawns. ≥ 12.♗xc4 ♗xc4 13.♕xc4 ♕c6 and ...♘d7. 12...♕c6! and Black won in 31 moves, J.Polgar-P.Nikolic, Hilversum tt 1993. Later, in 1997 in a game between the same players, White opted for 8.♕d2!? – see next game.

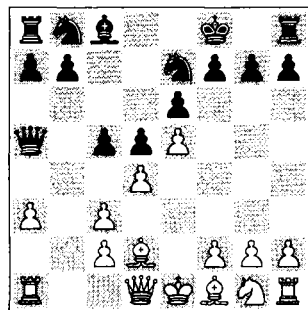
3) **8.♗d1**



analysis diagram

This looks like a quite modest retreat. But White is interested in reverting to sub-Winawer lines now that the black king cannot castle either side. This move is slightly comparable with Kasparov's unusual plan in the main game.

8...♖a5!? Probably the best option on move 8 in all the lines of the second game in our chapter. In contrast with the first game, here 8...♖c7?! makes little sense, since after 9.♟f3± there are at the moment no attractive set-ups for Black. But the 'slow' 8...b6! is now playable: 9.♟f3 ♟a6 (or 9...h6!? 10.a4 ♟a6 11.♟xa6 ♟xa6 12.0-0 ♟g8!, Kasimdzhanov-Ivanchuk, Tripoli Wch 2004) 10.♟xa6 ♟xa6 11.0-0 cxd4 12.cxd4 ♟c8±, Rogers-Chernin, London 1989. 9.♟d2



analysis diagram

This is an interesting position. **9...♖a4!?** In the 'Queen Blues' line, Black usually plays ...b7-b6 instead of ...♟e7, but this does not change the general evaluation.

WEAPON: However, Black can take advantage of the differences and play 9...cxd4!? 10.cxd4 ♖a4± (this is also a nice touch) 11.♟f3 b6! and Black was happy in Ziatdinov-Levitt, Dublin 1991.

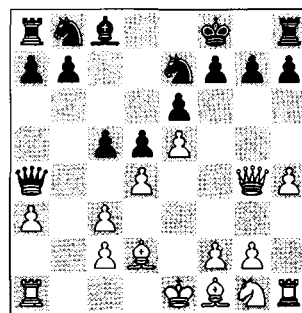
10.♟f3 10.♖b1 a6!? (10...c4=) 11.♖b3 ♖xb3 12.cxb3 ♟bc6 13.♟f3 (13.dxc5 ♟xe5±) 13...♟a5 14.♟b1

c4±. 10...b6 10...c4!?. 11.♟d3 Or 11.dxc5 bxc5 12.♟b1 ♟a6±. The advance 11.c4 leads to Michielsen-Moskalenko, Banyoles 2006, analysed in *The Flexible French* and in the Forum Section of Yearbook 93. 11...♟a6 12.dxc5 bxc5 13.0-0 ♟d7 14.♟e1 ≥ 14.♟b1 h6!, B.Savchenko-Shipov, Moscow blitz 2006. 14...♟b8! 15.♟b1 ♟b6 16.♟e3 h6! 17.♟d2 ♟xd3 18.cxd3 ♖xd1 19.♟exd1 ♟f5± and White had to work hard to save the endgame, Beliavsky-PNikolic, Tilburg 1993.

Back to our main game.

8...♖c7!?

Finally, both queen moves are useful here. So the analysis of this old game will enlarge your knowledge of Black's options against 8.h4. For **8...♖a5! 9.♟d2 ♖a4** please check again Game 15 in Chapter 10, where we have studied deeply the attacking option 10.♟h3.



analysis diagram

Here are two other moves:

A) **10.h5** h6! 11.♟d1? b6! 12.♟f3 ♟a6 13.♟xa6 ♟xa6 14.♖f4 ♟c8↑ with a dramatic 0,5-6,5 score in Black's favour;

B) **10.♖d1 ♟bc6** with pressure on d4 (10...b6!? 11.h5 h6 12.♟f3 ♟a6= Svidler-B.Socko, playchess.com 2004). **11.♟f3 cxd4** 11...c4!? 12.h5 h6= would lead to blocked granite struc-

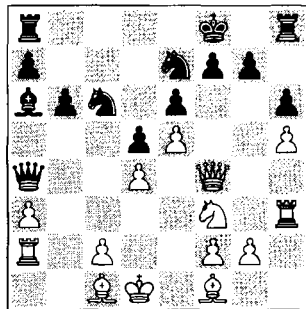
tures. 12.cxd4 ♘xd4 13.♙d3 ♘ec6 14...b6!?. 14.h5 ♘xf3+ 15.♚xf3 ♘xe5 16.♚g3 f6! Black has gained two extra pawns, however the position is still complicated, Neelotpal-B.Socko, Moscow 2004.

0.♚d1

To me Kasparov's plan looks quite curious. After the aggressive moves ♚g4 and h2-h4, White just plays a provocative move which can never be called an attacking move!

Still, objectively speaking: what else could White do?

A) 9.♖a2 defends the c-pawn but does nothing to support the march of the h-pawn: 9...♘bc6 10.h5 h6 11.♖h3?! ♚a5! 12.♙d1 12...♙d2 cxd4 13.cxd4 ♚a4⇒ 12...cxd4 13.cxd4 ♚a4 14.♘f3 b6 15.♚f4 ♙a6↑



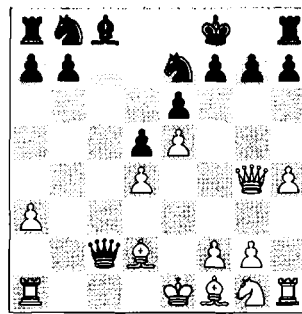
analysis diagram

Black has a nice positional advantage, while White's king isn't brilliantly placed – Watson, writing about the recent game Macieja-B.Socko, Warsaw 2009;

B) The idea 9.♙d2 is better on the 8th move (see next game), since here Black has the following options:

B1) TRICK: 9...♘d7!? 10.♙d3?! cxd4 11.cxd4 ♘xe5!, winning material, Przybylski-Bartel, Warsaw 2009;

B2) 9...cxd4! 10.cxd4 ♚xc2



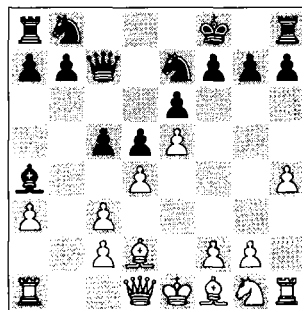
analysis diagram

This position is also unclear: 11.♖c1 11.♖h3 ♘bc6 12.♖d3 ♚a4 13.♘f3 b6 14.♚f4 h6 15.g4 ♙a6↑ Gordon-Kononenko, Kiev ch-UKR jr 1998. 11...♚e4+ 11...♚a4!?. 12.♚xe4 dxex4 13.♘e2 ♙d7 13...♘bc6!?. 14.♖c7 ♙c6 15.♙b4 ♘d7↑ 16.d5 exd5 17.♘d4 ♘e8! 18.♙b5 ♘d8 19.♙d6 ♖c8 20.♖xc8+ ♘xc8 and after all these tactical tricks Black is standing better, Lopez Colon-Adla, Zaragoza 1994.

9...cxd4

Black agrees to enter a risky line, hunting for pawns. The following complications are dangerous, especially when you play against someone rated over 2800.


A) WEAPON: 9...♙d7!? would be a nice, calmer alternative: 10.♙d2 (10.a4 cxd4!; 10.♘f3 ♙a4! 11.♖a2 ♘d7!?⇒ Sande Edreira-Adla, La Coruna 1995) 10...♙a4!?

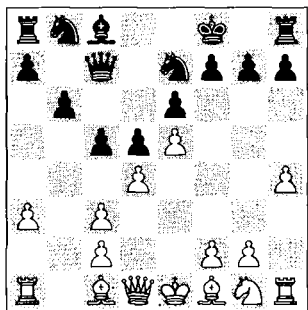


analysis diagram

Remember the 'sarcophagus'!

11.♔d3 ♖bc6 12.♗f3 c4!? 13.♙e2 ♜e8! 14.h5 h6= (Illescas) 15.♗h4 ♜d7 16.f4 ♞ag8! (preparing the typical jet move) 17.♙g4 g5!⇒, Leko-Illescas Cordoba, Ubeda 1997;

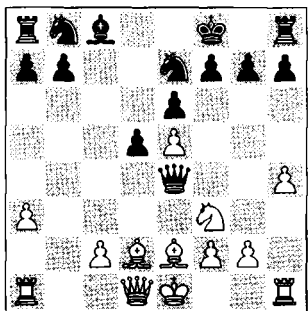
 B) WEAPON: With time and age, Nikolic restyled his play: 9...b6!?



analysis diagram

Similarly to the line with 8.♞d1, this plan should work also here: 10.♗f3 ♙a6 11.♙xa6 ♗xa6 12.h5 h6= 13.♞d3 ♗b8 (13...cxd4!? 14.cxd4 ♜c8!⇒) 14.0-0 ♗bc6 15.♗h4 ♜c8 16.f4 cxd4 17.cxd4 ♗d8! 18.♞f2 ♞c3! 19.♞xc3 ♞xc3♞ with a strategically better endgame, N.Djukic-P.Nikolic, Dresden ol 2008.

10.cxd4 ♞c3+ 11.♙d2 ♞xd4 12.♗f3 ♞e4+ 13.♙e2∞

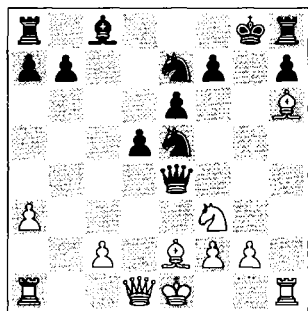


This position was the main challenge in the Kasparov-Nikolic rapid match in

1994. White won 2-0, but I disagree with the result of one of the games!

13...b6!

Black needs to exchange one of the bishops immediately. In the later blitz version the inaccurate 13...♗bc6? was played. After 14.h5! White had a dangerous long-term initiative: 14...♗xe5 14...h6? 15.♞h4!. 15.h6! gxf6 16.♙xh6+ ♜g8

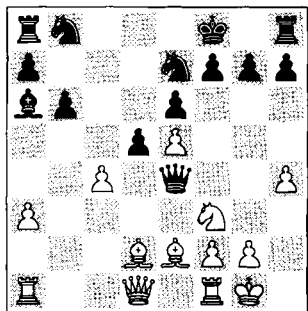


analysis diagram

From this point onwards, all of Kasparov's moves are either ! or !!.

17.♞b1 ♗g6 18.♞b4 ♗xf3+ 19.gxf3 ♞e5 20.f4 ♞c3+ 21.♜f1 f5 22.♞b3 ♞f6 23.c4 (23.♞hh3!? b6 24.♞bc3→) 23...b6 24.cxd5 ♙b7 25.♞d3 ♞e8 26.♞g1 b5 27.dxe6 ♞xe6 28.♞d8+ ♜f7 29.♞d7+ ♞e7 30.♞xb7 – terrific! 1-0 Kasparov-P.Nikolic, Paris rapid 1994.

14.0-0 ♙a6 15.c4!



Of course Kasparov does not want simplifications. The critical moment has

arrived: White is going to attack with everything he has.

15...♟bc6!

Black needs to develop in order to survive.

15...♟xc4? 16.♞g5!→;

15...♞xc4!? leads to a fantastic variation: 16.♞xc4 ♞xc4□ 17.♞g5 ♞d3 (17...♞d5 18.♞h5→; 17...♞c6 18.♞b4 ♞d7) 18.♞h5 ♞g6! 19.♞f3 ♞d5 20.♞b4+ ♞g8 21.♞xe6! ♞c6!∞ and currently there are no holes in the black fortress!

16.♞g5!

No more words, but deeds. Black has to take more pawns. Which one would you prefer to eat?

16...♞xe5

The alternative was 16...♞xh4!? 17.cxd5 ♞xe2 18.♞xe2 ♞d4!? (18...exd5∞) 19.♞d3 ♞xd5 with a complex position.

17.♞e1 ♞f6∞



From here on the game gets out of control. However, one of the two players may still have been following their own analysis. I wouldn't know who – would you?

18.♞h5 g6

18...♞xc4? 19.♞xf7 g6 20.♞xh8 gxh5 21.♞g5! ♞xh8 22.♞xe6→.

19.cxd5

19.♞g4!? ♞c8□.

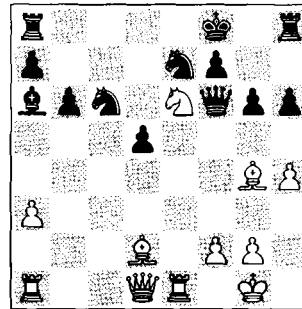
19...exd5

19...♞xd5!? 20.♞g4 (20.♞c1 ♞e5∞) 20...♞e5 21.♞xe6+! fxe6 22.♞g5 ♞xg4 23.♞xf6 ♞gxf6 24.♞xe6∞ with unbalanced material (♞ vs. ♞♞♞).

20.♞g4 h6

Another provocative move. 20...♞c8! was safer, in view of what happened in the game. If 20...♞d8? 21.♞xf7!→.

21.♞e6+!



Quite amazing! But there are many defensive resources, so Black is still alive.

21...fxe6

21...♞g8 22.♞c7±.

22.♞xe6 ♞f7 23.♞a4

23.♞c1!? was an attacking option suggested by Kasparov.

23...♞c4!

23...♞b7 24.♞ae1→.

23...♞c8 24.♞xc6 ♞xc6 25.♞d4↑.

24.♞xc6

24.♞ae1 b5!.

24...♞xc6 25.♞xc6 ♞e8 26.♞d7!



The climax of this tense struggle. Nobody could breathe easily here.

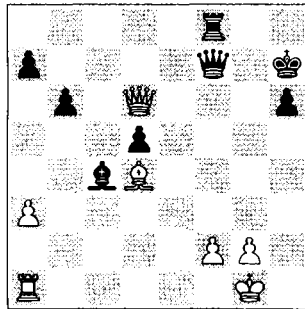
26...♣g7□

The dynamic defence 26...♞d8 fails to 27.♙e6! ♙b5! 28.♚c3 d4 29.♚b3 ♚f6 30.♞e1 ♙d7 (30...♙e8 31.♚g3!±) 31.h5!→ and White is much better.

27.♙c3+ ♣h7 28.h5! ♞hf8

I understand this move: Black wants to secure his king as soon as possible. Not 28...gxh5 29.♙f5+! ♚xf5 30.♚c7+ ♣g6 31.♚g7 mate; but 28...♞e7!? 29.♙xh8 (29.♙b4 ♞he8) 29...♣xh8 30.hxg6 ♚f4= would hold the game.

29.hxg6+ ♚xg6 30.♙xe8 ♚xe8 31.♚d6 ♚f7 32.♙d4!



With the opposite coloured bishops, White keeps some pressure on the kingside.

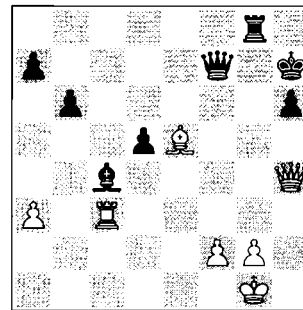
32...♞e8 33.♞c1!

Here is the classical resource: trying to lift the rook via ♞c3-g3.

33...♞e4?!

This move was not necessary, but I suppose that Nikolic was in time trouble. With 33...♞e6= Black could save this position.

34.♙e5 ♞g4? 35.♞c3! ♞g6 36.♚d8!→ ♞g8 37.♚h4



37...♞g5?

Black is tired from a prolonged defence, that's why his rook goes crazy.

38.f4 ♞h5? 39.♚d8

1-0

Summary of the lines 8.h4, 8.♘f3, 8.♙d3 and 8.♚d1:


- Black can apply the 'Blues' set-up with 8...♚a5 in all cases.
- Against 8.h4 the defence 8...♚c7 is OK. But in the opening phase you should never open up the game voluntarily with black – especially not if the great Garry K provokes you!

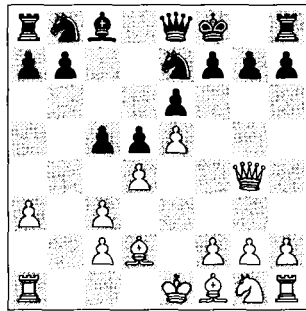
GAME 22 – A Strong Prophylactic Move: 8.♙d2 (121 games=55% – a dangerous modern weapon!)

Seventeen years later Eingorn wrote in Yearbook 90 (2009):

One of the best replies is considered to be the prophylactic 8.♙d2, which is directed against the standard manoeuvre ...♚d8-a5-a4 and at the same time does not allow the complications which are possible after 8.a4 ♚c7 9.♘f3 cxd4.

We will give the answer below in our summary.

 A) WEAPON: 8...♖e8!? with the idea to go to a4 with another triangular manoeuvre.





analysis diagram

A1) 9.dxc5 ♘d7 10.♘f3 ♘xc5⇌ and Black is going to play ... ♘e4 or ... ♖a4, or even ... ♗d7-b5.

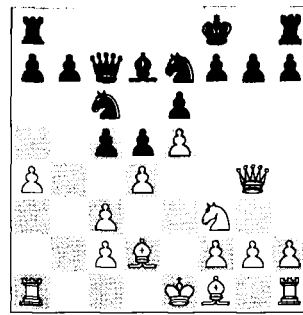
White's natural moves here may all transpose to lines from the previous game:

- A2) 9.h4 ♖a4;
- A3) 9.♘f3 ♖a4;
- A4) 9.♗d3 ♖a4;
- A5) 9.♖d1 ♖a4 etc.

 A6) TRICK: 9.a4 ♗d7! 10.a5 (10.dxc5 h5!?⇌; 10.♖b1?! ♗xa4 11.♖xb7 ♘bc6↑) 10...♗a4 (10...♗b5!) 11.♖d1 ♗b5= and Black exchanges the bishops, S.Nilsson-Hedman, Stockholm ch-SWE B 2007;

 B) WEAPON: 8...♗d7!? might be even more flexible, as a4 is also a fine square for the French bishop: 9.a4 (9.h4 ♗a4!? 10.h5 h6 11.♖c1 c4!?, setting up a blockade across the entire board) 9...♘bc6 (9...h5!? 10.♖f4 ♘g6 11.♖e3 c4 and the position is far from clear!) 10.♘f3 ♖c7!?

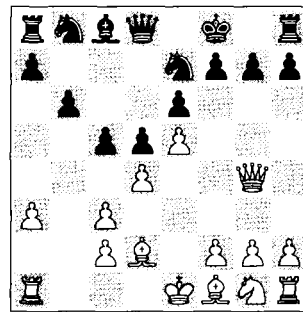
Here Black can mix Uhlmann's universal set-up with motifs of the Knight System. Only few games have been played with this idea.



analysis diagram

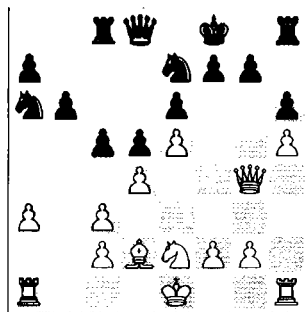
11.♗d3 c4! 12.♗e2 h5!? (building up a blockade. The most common plan in this 'king system' is 12...h6!? 13.0-0 ♖g8 etc., with a quite balanced game, Colovic-S.Petrov, Struga tt 2009) 13.♖h3 ♖g8 14.0-0 ♘f5!= (the kingside is frozen!) 15.♖fb1 ♘ce7 16.♖b4 ♘g6 17.g3 f6!? 18.exf6 gxf6 19.♖f1 ♘d6!↑ and Black won on move 37, Gypser-Thieme Garmann, Germany tt 2007/08;

C) Positional play: 8...b6!? This plan was considered 'almost obligatory' by Eingorn in Yearbook 90: Black simply has no other plan. By contrast, in the diagram position White has several active possibilities.

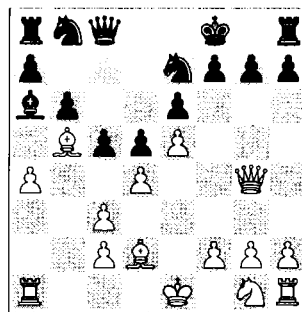


analysis diagram

C1) Worthy of considering is 9.h4 with the possible continuation 9...♗a6 10.h5! h6 11.♗xa6! ≤ 11.♘e2 ♘bc6 12.♖h3 cxd4 13.cxd4 ♘f5 14.♗c3 ♖g5!⇌ Karjakin-Efimenko, Kramatorsk 2001. 11...♘xa6 12.♘e2 ♖c8



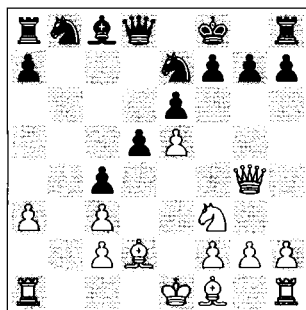
analysis diagram



analysis diagram

This position has occurred twice:
13. ♖f3!? cxd4 Or **13... ♖b8!?**, improving the knight: **14. g4 ♖d7 15. g5 hxg5 16. ♕xg5 ♗f5 17. h6∞** Dworakowska-Kononenko, Varna Ech 2002. **14. cxd4 ♖e8 15. ♜h4!? ♜xc2? 16. ♗c3 ♖c8 17. ♖d3 ♜b2 18. ♗d1!±** Chandler-Pert, London 2000;

C2) **9. dxc5** Trying to open up the position for his bishops. **9... bxc5 9... ♗d7!?⇒. 10. ♗f3 c4!?**



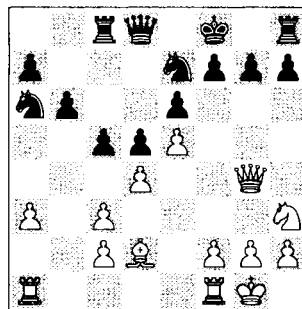
analysis diagram

After this blocking move both light-squared bishops are temporarily out of the game. **11. ♗d4 ♗bc6 12. ♗xc6 ♗xc6 13. ♖g3 ♖b6∞** and ½-½ (25), Stefansson-Ivanchuk, Leon Ech-tt 2001;

C3) The advance **9. a4!?** is still an option, with the idea **9... ♕a6 10. ♕b5!? ♖c8!N**. This move enables Black to improve the b-knight with ...♗bc6, before exchanging ...♕xb5.

11. ♗e2 11. ♗f3!?. 11... ♗bc6 12. 0-0 ♕xb5! 13. axb5 ♗a5, securing the c4-square for the knight. Now the chances are equal, Golubev-Drozdosky, Odessa rapid 2005;

C4) **9. ♗h3!?** A familiar plan: **♗f4-h5. 9... ♕a6 10. ♕xa6 ♗xa6 11. 0-0 ♜c8**

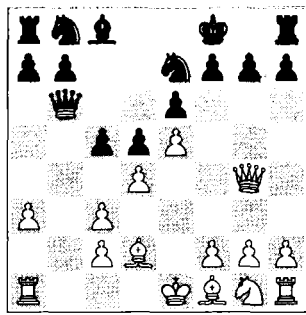


analysis diagram

A quite typical position after **8... b6**. White keeps slightly better chances due to the poor position of Black's king on f8: **12. ♗f4 12... ♕g5!?** Psakhis. **12... cxd4 13. cxd4 ♗f5 13... ♜xc2∞. 14. c3!↑**, Hracek-Kristjansson, Selfoss 2002;

D) Indeed the variation **8... ♖a5?! 9. a4!** is now not very attractive for Black: **9... ♗bc6 10. ♗f3 ♖b6 11. dxc5 ♖xc5 12. ♕d3!↑** and White controls the game, Short-P.Nikolic, London rapid 1994;

E) Pawn hunting with **8... ♖b6?!**. I don't have much faith in this option.



analysis diagram

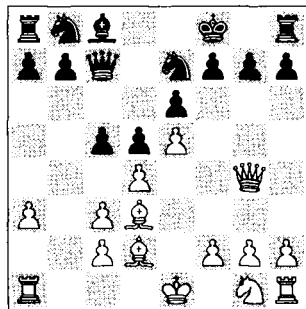
9.dxc5! ♖c7 9...♗b2 10.♗d1 ♘d7
 11.♘f3 ♘xc5 12.c4!↑ V.Orlov-Kar-
 peshov, Elista ch-RUS 1994. 10.♘f3 ♘d7
 11.♙e2!? ♘xe5 12.♘xe5 ♗xe5 13.0-0
 h5 14.♗f3 ♗e4 15.♗d3!? ♘c6
 16.♞fe1 h4 17.h3 f6 18.♞ab1±,
 Kamsky-Ljubojevic, Monaco blind 1995;

F) Pawn hunting with 8...♘bc6?! is

hardly playable in the Eingorn system:
 9.♘f3 ♗b6 10.dxc5! ♗b2 11.♞c1 ♗xa3
 12.♙d3 ♗xc5 13.0-0↑ with a long-term
 initiative in Spassky-Legky, France tt 2002.

9.♙d3

The most popular response in view of
 the threat to the c2 pawn (see the line
 9.♙d2 cxd4 10.cxd4 ♗xc2 in the previ-
 ous game). White has also tried 9.♞c1!?
 ♗a5 10.h4 (10.dxc5!?) 10...♗xa3
 11.h5 h6 12.♞h3 (12.♗d1!? Psakhis)
 12...c4∞ and it is not so clear how
 White can punish Black's pawn hunting,
 J.Polgar-P.Nikolic, Linares 1997.



9...b6

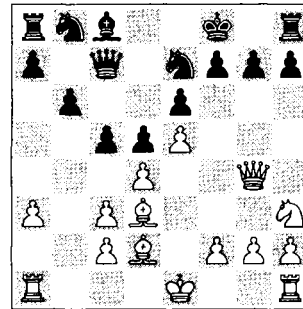
What else? Pawn hunting: 9...c4!? Re-
 member: with the king on f8 blocking
 structures are also feasible. 10.♙e2
 10.♙f1!? ♙d7 11.♘h3 ♙a4∞ Korneev-
 Kristjansson, Reykjavik 2002. 10...♗b6
 11.♘f3 11.♘h3!? ♗b2 12.♞c1 ♗xa3∞.
 11...♗b2 12.♞c1 h6 13.h4 ♗xa3 14.h5
 ♗b2 15.♗f4 a5!∞ in Cao Sang-
 Kristjansson, Ohrid Ech 2001.

10.♘f3

My impression about this opening is that
 White has decent chances to gain a small ad-
 vantage in various ways between moves 10
 and 13... – John Watson.



WEAPON: A strong alternative
 for White is 10.♘h3!?



analysis diagram

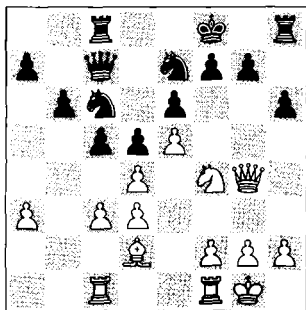
After ♘f4-h5, if Black plays ...g7-g6, the
 dark squares on the kingside will be
 very weak:

A) Black can fix the central pawn
 structure with 10...cxd4?!, but opening
 the c-file after ...♗c7 will also be prob-
 lematic: 11.cxd4 ♙a6 12.♘f4 ♙xd3
 13.cxd3 ♘bc6 13...♗d7 14.♘h5 ♞g8
 and Black had lots of problems in
 Short-Levitt, Torquay ch-GBR 1998, for
 instance: 15.♙b4! 14.♘h5!? 14.♗xe6?
 ♘xd4. 14...♘f5 was played recently in
 Kargin-B.Socko, Rijeka Ech 2010, and
 now after 15.♞c1!↑ White has a danger-
 ous initiative;

10...♖a6 11.♗f4!? ♕xd3 12.cxd3 ♜bc6 The defence 12...♗g6 also favoured White in the following attacking game: 13.♗h5 ♜c6 14.0-0 ♜cc7 15.♗g3 ♖d7 16.h4!? ♗a4? (16...h5!?) 17.♞fe1 ♜c6 18.h5! ♗gxe5 19.♗f4 ♕xd3 20.♖d6+ ♜g8 21.♞xe6! ♞e6 22.♗xe6+ ♜f8 23.h6+- was loko P.Nikolic, Bastia rapid 2001. And now:

TRICK: 13.♗xe6?! cxd4 14.0-0 ♗xe5=;

13.0-0 ♞c8 14.♞ac1! 14.dxc5!? Nyysti-Ostenstad, Rethymnon tt 2003.
14...h6

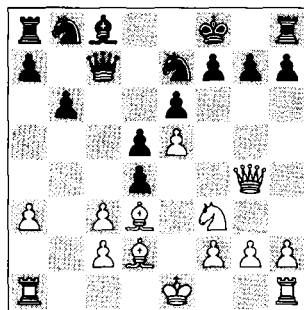


analysis diagram

The key moment in the game Cheparinov-Dizdarevic, Novi Sad Ech-tt 2009. White should look into **15.♗h5!** (15.♜h1? was played in the game, which continued 15...♗a5! 16.♖e3 c4!⇒) with the following ideas: **15...g6 15...♗g6 16.f4!** (enforcing f4-f5) 16...♗ce7 17.♗f3!±; 15...♗f5 leaves Black looking for a way to reorganize after 16.dxc5!? bxc5 17.f4 ♗a5 18.♖d1 c4 19.g4 ♗e7 20.d4↑, which looks better for White. **16.♗f6 ♗g8 16...♗a5!?** may be Black's best defence, aiming for ...c5-c4!. **17.h4!↑** and White dominates the game.

10...♖a6

10...cxd4 is a recent improvement, but as I already commented, after Black has played ...♗c7 this is a less reasonable option:



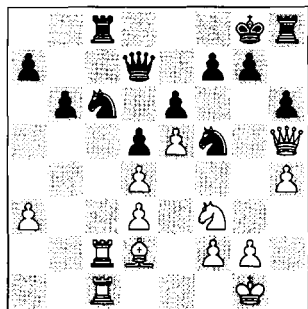
analysis diagram

11.cxd4 ♖a6 12.0-0 With 12.♖b4!? there are two games: 12...♕xd3 13.cxd3 ♜c6 14.♕d6 ♖d7 15.0-0 ♜g8 16.a4 h6 17.♗f4 ♗g6 18.♗g4 (18.♗e3 ♜h7 19.♗d2 ♞hc8∞ H.Rudolf-B.Socko, Polanica Zdroj 2000) 18...♜h7 19.h4 ♞hc8 20.h5 ♗ge7∞ with mutual chances, Szelag-B.Socko, Glogow tt 2001. **12...♕xd3 13.cxd3 ♜bc6**



Grandmaster Bartosz Socko, one of the best Francophiles of the modern generation and a great champion of 7...♜f8.

14.♖fc1 ♗d7 15.♘a2 h6 16.♙ac2 ♘g8
17.h4 ♚c8 18.♗h5 ♜f5! and Black was
OK in Boros-B.Socko, Austria tt
2009/10.



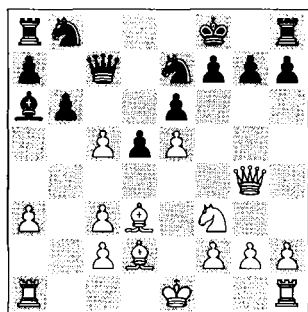
analysis diagram

TRICK: White loses his queen after
19.g4?? g6.

11.dxc5!?

A logical option: after developing with
♜f3, White is interested in playing in
the centre.

11.0-0!? ♘xd3 12.cxd3 ♜d7
(12...c4!?) 13.a4 h6 14.a5↑,
A.Sokolov-Crut, St Chely d'Aubrac 2004.

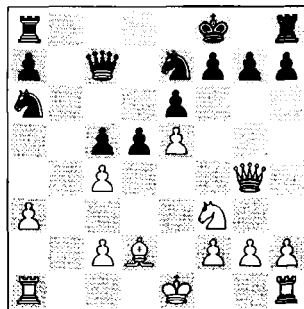


11...♗xc5!?

A novelty by Ivanchuk: after this move
there are no weaknesses in Black's pawn
structure. Therefore White has to attack!

11...bxc5 used to be the main move, but
White can open up the game with
12.♙xa6. White should also be able to
maintain a small edge with 12.0-0

♘xd3 13.cxd3 ♜d7, Grigoriantz-
Pakhomov, St Petersburg 2009, and now
the best order is: 14.♙ab1 h6 15.c4↑.
12...♙xa6 13.c4!



analysis diagram

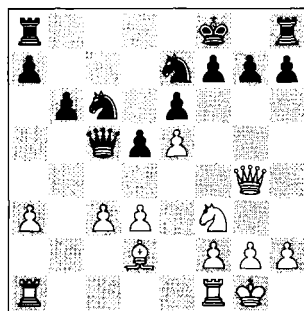
A typical advance in this type of posi-
tion. The precarious situation of Black's
king and the temporary disconnection
of his forces give White the advantage.

13...♜g6 13...♗c6 14.cxd5 exd5
15.0-0↑ with an advantage for White,
Timman-P.Nikolic, Pula 1997; or
13...♜b8 14.cxd5 ♜xd5 15.♗e4 ♗c6
16.♙b1 ♜d7 17.0-0 ♚c8 18.c4 ♜5b6
19.♗d3± with maximum pressure, in
Aveskulov-Drozdosky, Lvov ch-UKR jr
2003. **14.0-0 h5**

TRICK: 14...♜xe5?! 15.♜xe5 ♗xe5
16.cxd5↑.

15.♗g5 and White may stand much
better, Sigfusson-Ostenstad, Rethymnon
tt 2003.


12.0-0 ♘xd3 13.cxd3 ♜bc6



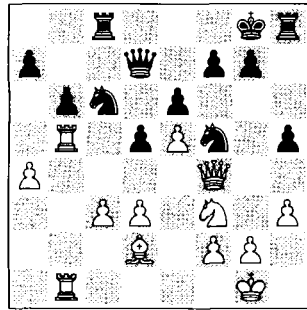
It's the same story: strategically the position would be very good for Black if not for one static disadvantage: the king on f8. So:

14.♁4f1 h5 15.♖g5 ♘f5 16.♞fb1!

A solid concept.

 **TRICK:** 16.♞c1 is a trick suggested by Eingorn which has worked perfectly in practice: 16...♖xc3? loses immediately ($\geq 16...♗g8$ 17.♞a3 ♖a5 and then ...♞h6-g6!?∞) to 17.♞a3+ ♘ce7 18.♞fc1+- ♖xd3 19.♘h4 ♗e8 20.♘xf5 ♘xf5 21.♞c7 and 1-0 in R. Bagirov-Nagibin, Moscow 2009.

16...♗g8 17.♞b5 ♖e7 18.♖f4! ♗d7 19.♞ab1 ♞c8 20.h3



We have reached the climax of this high-level game. Kamsky has already done a good job on Ivanchuk's set-up.

20...♞h6?!

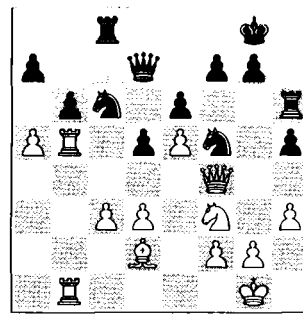
Activating the h8 rook is an attractive idea, but it fails tactically. White will open up the position on the other side. 20...♖d8!? is an improvement suggested by Eingorn, but it does not change the general assessment of the position: 21.♞c1!? and if 21...♞h6 then 22.c4↑.

21.a5!


The punishment starts.

Summary of 8.♞d2!:

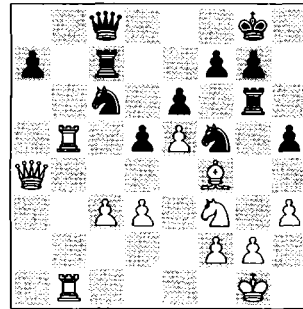
- In answer to Watson's question which of Black's options is better, 8...♖c7 or 8...b6 is better: after analysing both main moves, to me it is obvious that White



21...bxa5

 **TRICK:** The point of the combination is 21...♘xa5 22.♖a4!, winning material with a double threat: 22...♖c6 (22...♞g6?? 23.♞xa5) 23.♞xh6 ♘xh6 24.♞c1±.

22.♖a4 ♞g6 23.♞xa5! ♞c7 24.♞ab5 ♖c8 25.♞f4±



A puzzling, paradoxical position: despite the fact that all Black's pieces and pawns are perfectly placed, his army suffers from total zugzwang!

25...♗h8 26.♗h2 ♗g8 27.♗h1 ♗h8 28.♞c5 ♗g8 29.d4

29.c4!?

29...♖d7 30.♖b5 ♖c8 31.♞a1 ♗h7 32.♞a6+- ♘ce7 33.♘g5+ ♞xg5 34.♞xg5 ♞xc5 35.dxc5 ♘g6 36.c6 ♘xe5 37.♖b7 ♘d6 38.♖xc8 ♘xc8 39.♞e3 ♗g6 40.c7 1-0

has more attacking possibilities in the line with 8...♖c7 followed by 9...b6. Therefore the immediate 8...b6 is a preferable set-up. As Eingorn already wrote in Yearbook 90: *the development of White's initiative by h2-h4-h5 or ♘g1-h3-f4-h5 also requires an expenditure of time.*

- To ambitious players, and true fans of the variation with 7...♗f8, I recommend trying to manipulate with two weapons: 8...♖e8 and 8...♙d7.

Conclusion by Eingorn in Yearbook 90:

- *Although the move 7...♗f8 after 7.♖g4 is obviously not to everybody's taste, Winawer players still have some room here for further investigation.*
- *Looking at it from White's point of view, the variation 8.♙d2 poses certain opening problems for Black but (just as in my old 1993 Survey) I am still of the opinion that 8.a4 is the more consistent continuation.*

General Conclusion on 7...♗f8

- I think the theoretical value of this line is: a good defensive system for positional players, as for example grandmaster Nikolic and Eingorn himself.
- Rather inactive pieces and certain weaknesses on the dark squares are the main disadvantages, but Black feels well as long as the game is not opened.
- In the long term, Black can seek a safe place for his king: going to h7 after the move ...h6, going to the queenside, or staying in the centre.

An Epilogue to Part II

The Sub-Winawer and the Old Main Winawer still hide many resources – and it is always possible to revert to the modern lines.

Part III – The Ultimate Winawer

Personalities

Recently on the ChessPublishing website, a user called 'Poll' posted a philosophical question: *Who are the top Ten French Players of all time?*

In my opinion this question should be narrowed down further, since we have a whole army of Francophiles to choose from. Some of them developed this defence by studying new systems and set-ups (the best examples being Nimzowitsch, Botvinnik, Petrosian, Portisch, Uhlmann and Morozevich), while others were successful users of the French Defence, practicing all the variations without significantly improving the theoretical level (typical examples: Kortchnoi, Vaganian and a number of strong European and Chinese players).

In the next post, another member, called 'saubhikr', asked: *Who are the current French heroes from the black side?*

This question cannot be answered satisfactorily either. We might say that recent games can be rather dull, since elite players like to keep the draw in hand when playing Black. Well, the ambitious Alexander Morozevich might be a good candidate, but lately he has played the Winawer system on the Black side in one game only: he beat Jakovenko in 2003 with the Queen Blues Variation 6...♖a5.

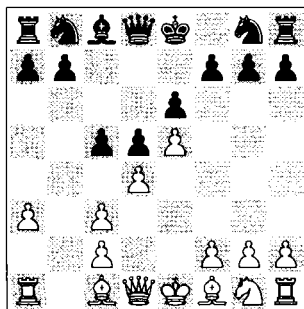
It was funny to read lots of different opinions on the best players of the French, and I even found some notes about myself. The member 'nightmare' wrote: *Though he's no top-GM I regularly check Moskalenko's games with the French. You'll get the impression that 'French Defence' is the wrong name, and it should be called 'French counter attack'.*

Anyway, we have arrived at what is undoubtedly the most attractive section of this book, since it shows crucial innovations in Winawer set-ups and at the same time covers selected games by all-time leading players.

Directions in Modern and New Lines

In the basic position of the French Winawer, Black first of all has to solve an important question – how to effectively deploy his forces, carefully judge the concessions he has to make in the process and keep his chances for effective counterplay intact – Igor Stohl (in CBM 119)

1.e4 e6 2.d4 d5 3.♘c3 ♘b4 4.e5 c5 5.a3 ♘xc3+ 6.bxc3



Chapter 9 – Warsaw Variation

The main defensive set-up. Finally, we see Black castling kingside: **6...♗e7 7.♖g4 0-0** (Games 23-26).

Chapter 10 – Poisoned Pawn Variation

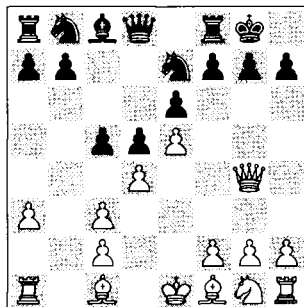
The main dynamic set-up: after **7.♖g4** Black allows **♗xg7** (Games 27-30).

Chapter 11 – Black Queen Blues

The most flexible and popular modern set-up: the Black Queen Blues Variation begins with **6...♗a5** (Games 31-35).

Chapter 9 – Warsaw Variation

Stefan Kindermann's statistics in 7.♖g4 0-0: 8 wins, 8 draws and only one loss. The games were usually against quite strong opposition.



A bit of History

In 2001 Stefan Kindermann in collaboration with Ulrich Dirr published an authoritative and complete Monograph *Französisch Winawer Volume 1* (Chessgate), dedicated exclusively to 7.♖g4 0-0. This fantastic manual contains a large section about the entire history of the line starting with 7...0-0, which was first seen at the Warsaw Olympiad in 1935. This is why Kindermann and Dirr call 7...0-0 the Warsaw Variation. If you are interested in this line, I think it is a must to check this great book.

Later that same year, New In Chess also published an excellent Survey on the subject, by René Olthof and Yury Shulman in Yearbook 60. There is also a review of the Germans' wonderful book on page 224. There are two other important sources: John Watson's *Play the French* (2003) and a Survey in Yearbook 84 written by Istvan Almasi.

For simplicity's sake, I will designate some of the authors' analyses as (Watson 2003), (Almasi), and others as (K&D: Kindermann and Dirr).



Stefan Kindermann, German grandmaster and co-author of *Französisch Winawer Volume 1*.

GAMES 23-26: 7.♖g4 0-0 (2778 games=45.4%)

Personal Touch

*I have never used kingside castling in this Winawer 'pseudo-main' line, since White has many possibilities of launching pretty mating attacks. But 7...♗f8!? (see Chapter 8) is possibly more suitable – the author in *The Flexible French*.*

Normally, for security reasons, Black avoids castling kingside in most Winawer lines. Therefore, on a few occasions in Part II I have called the move ...0-0 the 'New Winawer'. Many Winawer players refuse to play 7...0-0 for three main reasons:

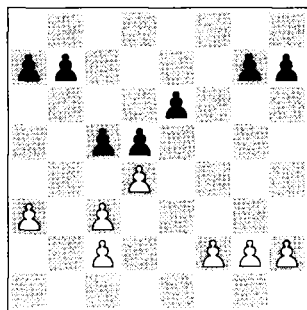
1. They do not like forced or over-analysed lines.
2. They do not like to move their king to a potentially dangerous corner. In the Winawer system, Black's king position must remain flexible.
3. They do not see how Black can get real strategic counterplay. In some lines the arising positions are fundamentally passive.

However, as a professional player and a 'systematic worker' I like to trust in my own findings. I believe that the value of some key positions analysed in existing monographs may change with time. So after a period of extensive study on the subject using many sources and my 'optimistic skills', I became an expert on 7. ♖g4 0-0!

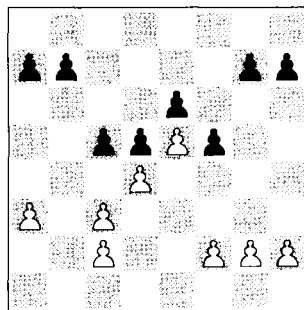
This chapter allows those who do not have enough time to work through massive volumes to prepare a repertoire with 7...0-0 fairly quickly by picking out one system versus 8. ♟f3 and one versus 8. ♟d3.

Three Pawn Structures

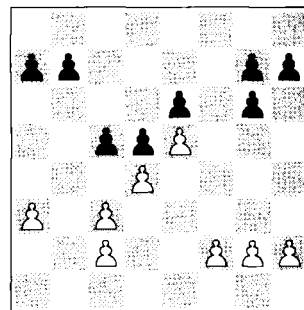
Regardless of the colour of their pieces, a Warsaw player has to learn how to play with three main pawn structures:



The modern dynamic structure, typical for many Winawer lines, named the 'Polonaise' in this chapter.



Stonewall blocked structure – similar to certain old Winawer lines.

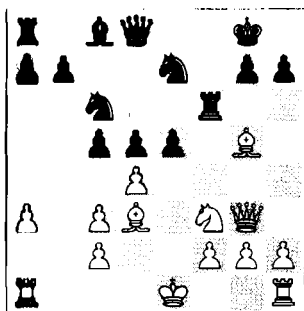


Warsaw static structure – mostly appropriate for the Warsaw Variation.

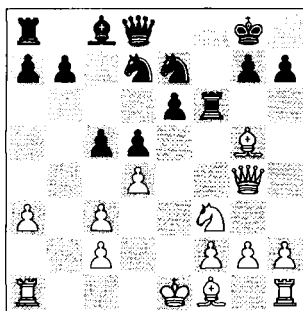
Indeed, a good knowledge of these pawn structures is the first secret of the Winawer system – as it is in the entire French Defence and generally in chess.



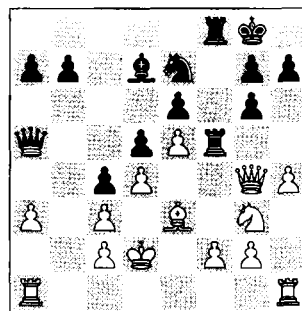
Workshop – Middlegame themes in Warsaw structures



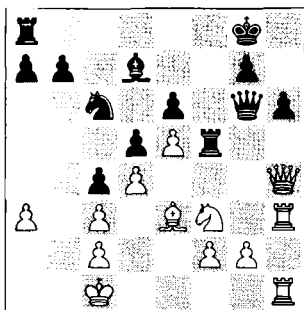
Black to move. Portisch's original line, see Game 23.



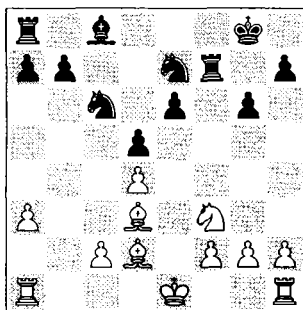
Can White take the rook on f6? See the weapon 8...f5!? in Game 23, after the move 10...♘d7.



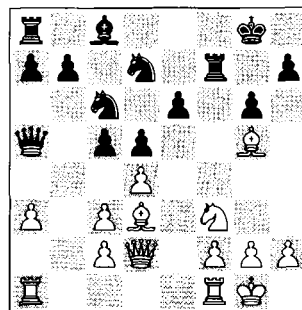
Black to move. The positional sacrifice on f5 builds a blockade on the light squares. See notes to Game 24.



Black to move. Find a mating net using the light squares as a motif. See line 8...c4 in Game 25.



Black to move. This endgame is not 'dry' if you choose the right option. See the weapon 12...♙a5 in Game 25.



Black has 15...cxd4 or 15...♞xf3. Which one was played in Leko-Ivanchuk, Monaco 2002?

GAME 23 – Lajos Portisch's Polonoise: 8.♘f3 (477 games=49%)

Nowadays, the line 8.♘f3 is already thought to be satisfactory for Black. However, not everybody knows that this fact is historically connected to a famous resource by the legendary Francophile grandmaster Lajos Portisch.

Sometimes transpositions are possible between ♘f3/♙d3. Therefore the following game is useful for learning the structures 'à la Polonoise'.

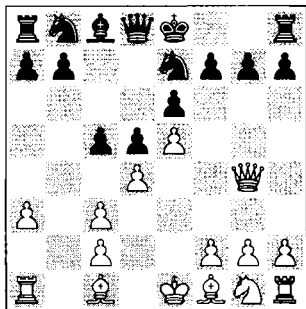


GM Lajos Portisch, a great Francophile and inventor of many set-ups in the French.

□ Karoly Honfi
 ■ Lajos Portisch

Budapest ch-HUN 1958 (17)

1.e4 e6 2.d4 d5 3.♘c3 ♘b4 4.e5 c5
 5.a3 ♘xc3+ 6.bxc3 ♘e7 7.♖g4



White attacks on the kingside, trying to exploit Black's weaknesses there. *The strongest move. But playing this, White has to remember a lot of theory* – Vitiugov.

7...0-0

Of course, castling is a most fundamental move in chess – but never in the Winawer system!

8.♘f3

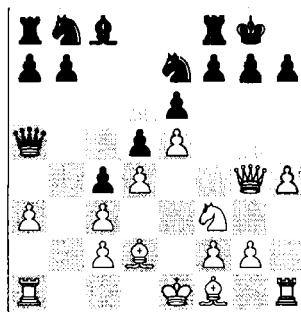
White correctly plans to attack with the pieces. However, this move order could be too slow and it allows several adequate solutions for Black.

WEAPON: the immediate pawn attack 8.h4?! is a remarkably slower option, for instance 8...f5!? (with 8...♖c7!? Black can look for the most effective counter, Pangritz-Weiss, Württemberg 1993) 9.exf6 (9.♖g3 f4!?⇒) 9...♗xf6 10.♘g5 ♖a5!↑ – no games.

8...♘bc6!

Using a development tempo.

A) The queen sortie **8...♖a5?!** does not bring Black any significant counterplay in this version: **9.♘d2 c4** ≤ **9...♖a4 10.♘d3 c4 11.♘h7+ ♘xh7 12.♖h4+ ♘g8 13.♖xe7↑. 10.h4!**

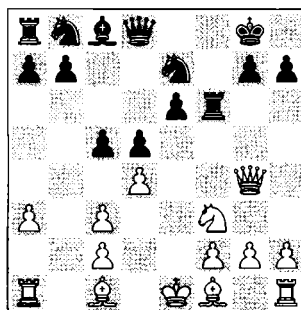


analysis diagram

10...f5 10...♘bc6 11.h5→. 11.♖h3!?

Also after **11.♖g3** I prefer White. **11...♘bc6 12.h5 h6** and here White can develop a dangerous attack with the set-up **♘h4, ♘e2, ♗g1!?** and **g2-g4!**;

WEAPON: However, the immediate blocking move 8...f5 is still playable: 9.exf6 9.♖g3 cxd4!? 10.cxd4 ♖c7⇒. 9...♗xf6



analysis diagram

10.♘g5 10.♘e5 ♖a5!? **11.♘d2 ♘bc6⇒** and now:

TRICK: 10...♖a5!? Now this move leads to sharp play, and most probably to a forced draw: **11.♘xf6 (11.♘d2 ♖a4⇒) 11...♖xc3+ 12.♘d1 (12.♘e2!?) 12...♖xa1+ 13.♘d2 ♘g6! 14.♘d3! (14.h4 c4 15.h5 c3+ is unclear) 14...♖xh1 15.♘xg6 gxf6 16.♖h4 hxg6 17.♖xf6=;**

B) 10...♟d7!? The key to Black's defence here is the exchange sacrifice (see the workshop). Now:

♟ B21) TRICK: The point of the combination is 11.♙xf6? ♞xf6 12.♚f4 ♜a5!♞ winning the c3 pawn;

B22) If 11.dxc5 then 11...♞f7⇒;

B23) 11.♙d3!? (Kindermann)

11...c4! 12.♙e2 ♞f5 (12...♚a5!? 13.0-0 ♞c6⇒) 13.0-0 ♞f6 14.♙xf6 ♞xf6 15.♞e5 ♞g6! = with an equal position.

9.♙d3 f5!

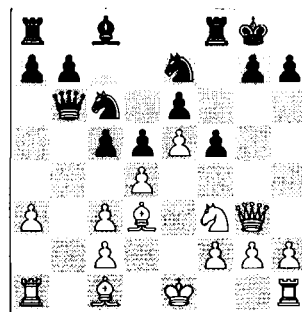
A standard pawn advance, blocking the kingside: in this system this is a quite useful defensive resource against ♚g4, and against the powerful bishop on d3. We will try it also in the next games, where White plays 8.♙d3.



10.exf6

In an open game Black will be fine. Alternatively, after ...f7-f5 White can opt for a closed struggle; the following two weapons are also useful to study in the line with 8.♙d3 f5, see Game 25.

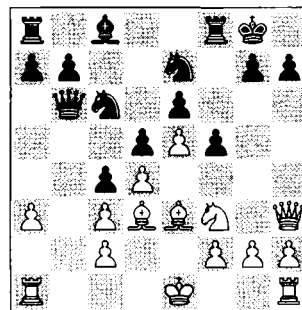
♞ A) WEAPON: 10.♚g3 with the idea of pushing h2-h4, but there is not much time to implement this plan: 10...♚b6! (10...♚a5 11.♙d2 b6 12.h4!? is less clear, Olivier-Farago, Le Touquet 2003) The text is a logical counter to attack White's weak Winawer structure in the centre.



analysis diagram

11.dxc5 ♚xc5 12.♙d2 ♞a5 13.0-0 ♞c4 14.♙c1 ♙d7 15.♞e1 ♞ac8 16.h4 ♜h8!? 17.h5 h6 18.♚h4 ♞f7 19.a4 b6♞ and Black is well prepared for the counterattack, Tatai-Del Rio Angelis, Bratto 2003

♞ B) WEAPON: 10.♚h3 Preparing g2-g4 against the Stonewall structure. 10...♚b6!? with the same aim as in the previous line: 11.♙e3 (11.♞g1? cxd4 12.g4 ♚c7!? 13.gxf5 ♞xe5♞ Meszaros--Mamedyarov, Peniscola jr 2002; 11.dxc5 ♚xc5 12.♙d2 ♞g6♞) 11...c4!




analysis diagram

12.♙e2 ♚b2 13.♜d2 (13.0-0 ♚xc2 14.♙d2 f4!♞ Melero Morales-Gonzalez Menendez, Oviedo rapid 2003) 13...♚b6 14.♞hb1 ♚a5⇒ Black has achieved good prospects against two closed-in bishops and a weak king, Kilpatrick-Dgebuaдзе, Blackpool 2008.

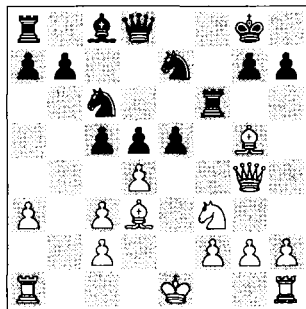
10...xf6 11.g5

The critical move, judging by its popularity.

 WEAPON: 11. Wh5 is also an important line: 11...h6! 12.0-0 12.dxe5 cxe5 (or 12...c4!? 13.e2 f5 14.cxc6 cxc6 15.Wg6 Wa5!?) 13.dxe5 f8 14.0-0 c4? Vitolins-Zlotnik, Naberezhnie Chelni 1988. 12...c4 (12...d7!? Watson) 13.e2 Wa5!? 14.d2 d7 15.dxe5 e8 16.Wg4 c5 17.cxc6 bxc6!? and the white pawn structure has more weaknesses.

11...e5!

The Polonaise begins! This is a great idea employed in 1958 by the legendary Lajos Portisch, which received complete justification later in practice: 157 games=64%. The main alternative 11...f7?! is a far less attractive line: 12.e7 xe7 13.Wh4.



12.Wg3?!

This 'natural' retreat allows a famous exchange sacrifice. Some other possible tactics are:

A) 12.dxh7+?! c7xh7 13.Wh5+ c8g8 14.dxf6 gxf6 15.dxe5 Wf8! 16.0-0-0 (Hübner-Kindermann, Munich 1990). Here Black is better after 16...Wf7!?; 16...fxe5 was played in the game, but is less clear after 17.fxd5!;

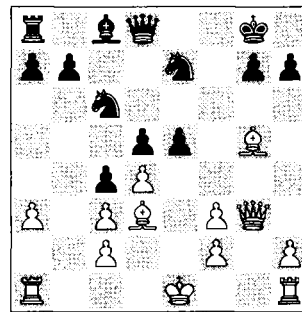
B) Probably the best line is 12.Wh4 e4! 13.dxf6 gxf6 14.Wxf6 exd3 The

option 14...Wf8 is interesting but less clear: 15.Wxf8+ cxf8 16.dxc5 exf3 17.gxf3∞ Quilter-Berry, Edinburgh 2002. 15.cxd3 cxd4 16.cxd4 cxd4 17.Wxd4 and this position is considered equal since Psakhis-Dokhoian, Klaipeda 1988

12...xf3!

This has been played in 66 games already!

13.gxf3 c4!



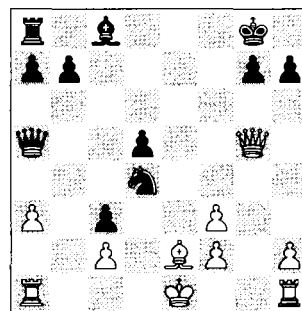
Black stands much better.

14.dxh7+

A) 14.dxf6 Wf8;

B) 14.dxe7? Wxe7 15.e2 exd4 16.c7f1 e5+ Abramovic-Dokhoian, Belgrade 1988;

C) After 14.dxe7 the best reaction is 14...Wa5! (14...exd4!? 15.dxf6 Wf8 - 12 games) 15.d2 c5! -> 16.Wg5 exd4 17.cxd4 c3 18.e3 cxd4! 19.dxd4 cxd4 and now:



analysis diagram

A) On 20. ♖e5 ♜c5!? is enough, Włodarczyk S. Berger, Germany Bundesliga B 2006/07;

B) 20... ♘xc2+ 21. ♕d1 ♖a4 22. ♗xd5+ ♙e6!-+ is winning according to Rybka 4;

C) 20. ♖g1 g6 21. ♖e5 ♜c5 22. ♖e8+ ♗f8 23. ♗xf8+ ♕xf8 24. ♕d1 ♙f5 25. ♖c1 ♙e8-+ and White is close to being in total zugzwang, P. Roth-Kindermann, Vienna 1996.

14... ♕xh7 15. ♖g1

15. dxe5 ♙f5 (15... ♖a5!?) 16. ♖g1 ♖a5 (16... ♗f8!?) 17. ♙d2 g6 18. h4 d4!±.

15... ♗f8! 16. ♖h4+ ♕g8 17. ♙f6 ♕f5

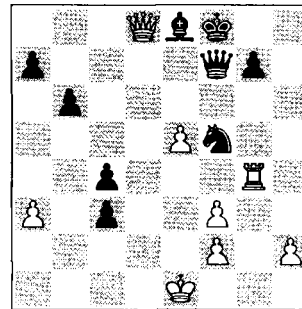


White has very little attacking resources, so Black is winning thanks to his material advantage.

18. ♗g5 exd4 19. ♕f1 ♙d7 20. ♖b1 b6 21. cxd4 ♙e8

21... ♗f7!? 22. ♙e1 ♗f8-+

22. ♙e1 ♗xe1+ 23. ♕xe1 ♖f7 24. c3 ♕f8 25. ♙e5 ♕xe5 26. dxe5 d4 27. ♖g4 dxc3 28. ♗d8+ ♙e8!



The game is over.

29. ♙e4 ♖e6 30. ♕d1 b5 31. ♕c2 ♗d7

31... ♖a6!; 31... ♕g8!?

32. ♗xd7 ♙xd7 33. ♕xc3 ♕e7 34. ♖g4 ♙e8 35. f4 ♕e6 36. ♖g1 ♕d5 37. ♖d1+ ♕c5 38. ♖d8 ♙c6 39. ♖f8 g6 40. ♖f6 a5 41. ♖xg6 b4+ 42. axb4+ axb4+ 43. ♕d2 c3+ 0-1

Summary of 8... ♘f3:

Portisch's counterplan 8... ♘c6 in combination with 9... f5 is strong enough. If White opens the game with 10. exf6, the 'Polonaise' structure arises. Black may fight for the initiative using his advantage in development.

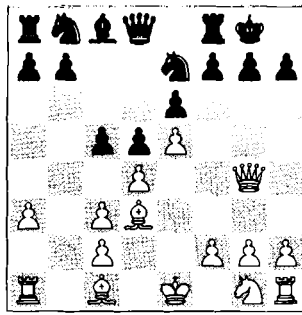
So instead, White has to move the queen, but this is not in good harmony with the knight's placement on f3. Now, in the closed game that ensues after 10. ♖g3 or 10. ♖h3, 10... ♖b6!? is a most dynamic reaction for Black.

See for a continuation on the dynamic 'Polonaise' structure and alternative pawn advances Games 25 (the main line 8... f5 9. exf6) and 26.

GAMES 24-26 – 8... ♙d3! (2176 games=57%: a very dangerous set-up)

Directions

The following three model games will feature the modern and theoretically more important move 8... ♙d3.



This dynamic set-up puts pressure on the main defect of Black's position— his king. At least it allows White to keep many attractive alternatives in store:

- Queen: ♖h5-h4-h3-g3-d1
- Dark-squared bishop: ♗g5-h6-d2-a3
- Pawn: also the main anti-Warsaw resource h2-h4!
- Knight: a flexible development: ♞e2-f3-h3.

From now on, time will never be on Black's side!

Still, the real point is that Black has a number of sounder resources versus 8...♗d3.

- Game 24: two possible moves by the b8 knight: 8...♞c6 or 8...♞d7
- Game 25: the pawn advances 8...f5 or 8...c4
- Game 26: the queen sortie 8...♕a5.

GAME 24 – The German Light-Squared Orchestra: 8...♞c6 (910 games=43.3%) and 8...♞d7 (77 games=35.7%)

This interesting game is mainly about grandmaster Hertneck's favourite set-up 8...♞c6 9.♖h5 ♗g6 10.♞f3 ♕c7. However, there are a great number of intermediate ideas for the defence and the attack featured in the analysis. The typical light-squared pawn structures are fundamental study material here.

□ Etienne Bacrot

■ Bartosz Socko

Dresden ol 2008 (6)

1.e4 e6 2.d4 d5 3.♞c3 ♗b4 4.e5 c5
5.a3 ♗xc3+ 6.bxc3 ♞e7 7.♖g4 0-0

I've never played this move, out of respect for general rules. But I might be wrong.

8.♗d3!?

White is trying to seize the initiative at an early stage.

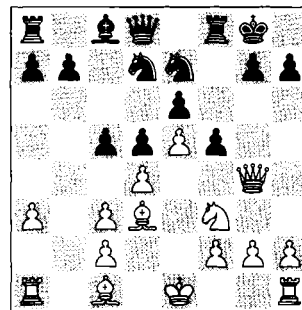
8...♞bc6!?

In contrast to the previous game, after this move White has new possibilities.

🔪 WEAPON: Another possible set-up for the b8 knight is 8...♞d7.

The idea is to use two new squares. However, on c6 the knight is more naturally placed.

9.♞f3 f5

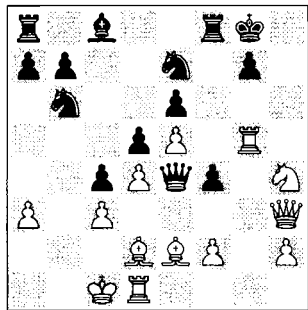


analysis diagram

♞ A) TRICK: 10. xf6? fxf6 (the first key square for the knight) 11. Wh4 c4! 12. e2 f5! Semina-Dittmar, Dortmund 1991;

B) 10. Wh3!? White is going to break open the kingside with g2-g4 .

B1) Now to the second square: 10... b6 11. Bg1 With the obvious idea g2-g4 . However, 11.0-0!? is also possible, playing à la Kindermann: 11... c4 12. e2 d4 13. d2 and then ch1 , Bg1 and g2-g4 . 11... c4 11... c7 12. d2 d4 13. g4 dx2 14. exd2 and White's pieces are more active, J.Polgar-Sinkovics, Hungary 1990. 12. e2 e8 12... d4 13. g4 f4 (13... fxg4 ∞ (Watson) 14. d5! h6 15. d3 e8 16. g5 ± and White's attack was too strong, Fogarasi-F.Portisch, Zalakaros 1991. 13. d5! A quite useful manoeuvre, which provokes weaknesses in Black's structure. 13... h6 14. d3 g6 15. d4 h4 Wh7 16. g4 f4 17. g5! hxg5 18. Bxg5 xc2 19. d2 e4 20.0-0-0!!



analysis diagram

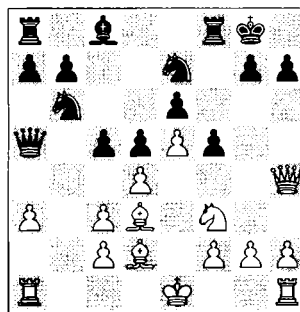
20... xe2 21. Bdg1 f7 22. d6 22. Bg2! may be even stronger. 22... d6 23. Bxg6 xf2 24. Bg2 ± was played in Hueriga Leache-Mirzoev, Elgoibar 2009.

B2) An important alternative is 10... a5 , but White's initiative looks dangerous: 11. d2 b6 Or 11... c4



In our times, the French top player Etienne Bacrot is a dangerous anti-Francophile mator. The notes to this brilliant game feature some more scalps from his collection.

12. e2 b6 13.0-0 (remember, this is Kindermann's set-up for White) 13... a4 14. Ba2 e8 15. ch1 h6 16. Bg1 g6 17. g4 → Kindermann-LB.Hansen, Munich 1989. 12. $\text{Wh4!?$




analysis diagram

♞ B21) TRICK: 12... d6 does not work: 13. Wh5 f4 14. xf4 xc3+ 15. e2 c4 16. d2! cxd3+ 17. cxd3! Gallagher-Farago, Hastings 1989/90;

B22) 12... c6 13. g4 d4 14. gxf5 dx2 15. exd2 exf5 16. Bhg1 → cxd4 17. Bxg7+!+- Pimp! 17... exg7 18. Bg1+ winning in all lines, Nijboer-Dittmar, Leeuwarden 1994)

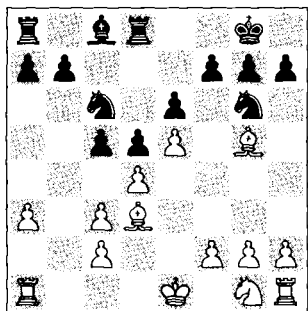
9. ♖h5!

The most popular continuation, with attacking intentions. Remember: 9. ♘f3?! f5!.

 A) WEAPON: White can offer a liquidation into an endgame, playing 9. ♖h4!? and now:

A1) The tactical defence 9...f5?! is suspect: 10. exf6 ♘f5 11. f7+ 11. ♙xf5!?. 11...♙xf7 11...♞xf7!?. 12. ♖xd8 ♞xd8 13. dxc5!± The key idea. Now: 13...e5 14. ♘e2 ♙e6 15. ♞b1 ♞d7 16. f4!? e4 17. ♙b5 h5 18. ♙f2 ♞c7 19. ♙xc6 bxc6 20. ♙e3 and White stands much better, Areschenko-Sanchez Jimenez, Santa Cruz de Tenerife 2006;

A2) 9...♘g6 10. ♖xd8 ♞xd8 11. ♙g5!?




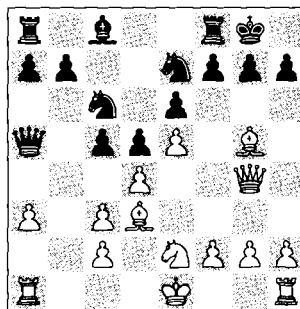
analysis diagram

The key move in this line, the bishop prevents ...f7-f6.

11...♞f8 12. ♘f3 c4! The immediate break 12...f6?! (Watson 2003) is worse: 13. exf6 gxf6 14. ♙h6 ♞e8 Mitkov-Gongora Montes, Merida 2002. Here of course, after 15. dxc5! e5 16. ♙e2± White has a pawn and two bishops. 13. ♙e2 f6! After 13...h6?! 14. ♙c1 f6 15. exf6 ♞xf6 16. a4 ♙d7 17. 0-0 ♘f4 18. ♙d1± Black has no counterchances, Sutovsky-Psakhis, Israel tt 2003. 14. exf6 gxf6 15. ♙h6 ♞f7 16. 0-0-0 was played in Sutovsky-Drasko, St Vincent 2002.

Now the best plan for both Black and White is to push their flank pawns: 16...b5! 17. h4 a5≠ with an interesting endgame ahead.


 B) WEAPON: White can start an uncompromising attack, ignoring Black's counterplay in the centre: 9. ♙g5! I really like this move. The result (97 games=67%) is fantastic for white-playing matadors! Here is an update on Istvan Almasi's big Survey in Yearbook 84: 9...♖a5□ 10. ♘e2! By transposition this leads to the sharpest line of the Rustemov Variation, see Game 26.



analysis diagram

B1) 10...c4? is bad on account of 11. ♙xh7+ ♙xh7 12. ♖h4+ ♙g8 13. ♙xe7± with a structural advantage for White;

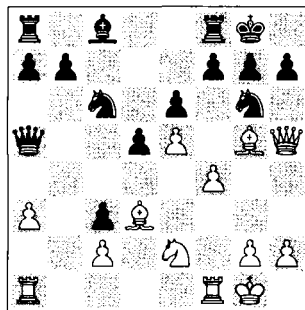
B2) 10...♘g6 may be the safest line for Black:

 B21) TRICK: 11. h4? allows 11...♘xd4! 12. ♖g3 ♘xe2 13. ♙xe2 ♖c7 14. f4 ♘e7≠ Wallace-P.H.Nielsen, Gausdal 1996;

B22) 11. 0-0 ♖a4!? The immediate 11...c4 is better for White: 12. ♙xg6 fxc6 13. a4! ♖c7 14. ♙c1!↑ Nataf-Drasko, Vrnjacka Banja tt 2005. 12. ♖g3! The most flexible set-up. If 12. f4 c4!? 13. ♙xg6 fxc6 14. ♞a2 ♙d7 15. h4∞ Shaposhnikov-S.Ivanov, St Petersburg ch-city 2000.

12...c4! 12...cxd4 is always too dangerous in view of 13.f4 (see also the next line below) 13...♟h8? 14.h4!→ I.Popov-A.Grigorian, Yerevan 2007. 13.♟xg6 fxf6 with the same Warsaw structures as in the main game: 14.♞fc1 ♟d7 15.h4! White prepares a massive kingside attack, but he still needs more resources, Bologan-Kosyrev, Moscow 2004;

B3) 10...cxd4 The sharpest line. White has won many games from this position: 11.f4! dxc3 12.0-0→ ♟g6 12...b6 13.♞f3!. 13.♞h5!?



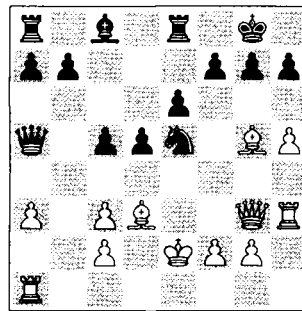
analysis diagram

Do you like this position for Black? If so, then you must be a great optimist!

13...♞c5+ 13...♟d7? leads to disaster: 14.♞f3 ♟b4 15.♞h3 h6 16.axb4! ♞xa1+ 17.♟f2 ♟h7 18.♟xh6 ♞h8 19.♟xg6+! fxf6 20.♞g5+- with a mating attack, Lau-Ulibin, Leeuwarden 1993. 14.♟h1 ♟ce7 15.♞f3! f6 15...h6? 16.♞h3+- Mrdja-Sedina, Marostica 1995. 16.exf6 gxf6 17.♞h3 17.♟h4!?. 17...♞f7 18.♟xf6 ♞xf6 19.♞xh7+ ♟f8 20.♞g3 ♞f2 21.♟g1! 21.h4 (Hertneck-Uhlmann, Germany Bundesliga 1992/93) 21...e5□∞. 21...♞xf4 21...♟d7? was seen in D.Petrosian-Mkrtchian, Yerevan tt 2006; now the best move for White is 22.♟f3!+-, 22.♞f1 22.♟xg6!?. 22...♞xf1 23.♟xf1 ♞xf1 24.h4!↑ Black

is very passive and needs a precise defence to save this position, Shaposhnikov-Riazantsev, Moscow tt 2000.

B4) 10...♞e8 is a fresh idea which does not drastically change the picture of the game: 11.h4! ♟xd4 Now 11...c4 could be met by the direct attack 12.♟f6 ♟g6 13.h5→. 12.♞h3 ♟xe2 12...♟ef5!? was worth considering according to Psakhis. After 13.♟f6!→ the position is complex and needs a lot of analysis. 13.♟xe2 ♟g6 Again 13...c4 is no good: 14.♟xh7+ ♟xh7 15.♟xe7 ♞xe7 16.♞g3+- wins. 14.h5 ♟xe5 15.♞g3→



analysis diagram

I'm sorry, but Black's position looks very dangerous here.

15...♟xd3? This loses on the spot. But after the counter-sacrifice 15...♟g4 16.♞xg4 e5 17.♟f5 White is also better. 16.♟f6! ♟f4+ 16...g6 17.hxg6 fxf6 18.♞xh7! and checkmate. 17.♟d2! The thematic motif of ignoring material considerations. Of course not 17.♞xf4? e5 followed by 18...♞a6+! and 19...♞xf6. 17...♟g6 18.hxg6 fxf6 18...hxg6 19.♞ah1 and mate. 19.♞xh7! The final point – Black's stronghold is ripped apart. 1-0 Bologan-Vaganian, Fügen tt 2006.

Let's go back to the main game:

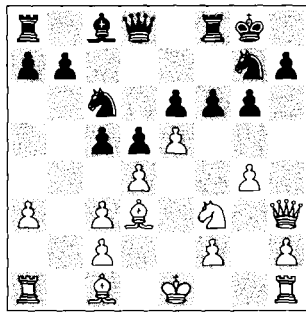
9...♟g6

This is practically the only defence (507 games=40%).



Grandmaster Viorel Bologan, another mator in the French and the inventor of a dangerous new set-up after 9...g5!

A) More speculative play ensues after 9...g5 (28 games=38%) 10.f3 10.g4 ♖h4!?. 10...f6 10...c4!? 11.gxf5 exf5 12.g5 ♗a5 13.d2 d7∞ Bäumer-Maly, Hamburg jr 1989. 11.g4 g6 11...c4!?. 12.♗h3 g7



analysis diagram

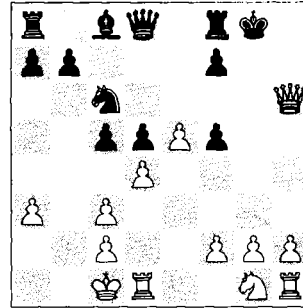
I think Black would prefer to have a bishop on g7 instead of a knight.

13.♗h6! 13.0-0!?±. 13...g8 'with unclear play' according to (K&D). However, after the natural 14.h4! fxe5 15.g5 ♗e7 16.h5→ the position looks miserable for Black;



B) TRICK: 9...h6?? is a very bad move. In 1989 a cruel punishment

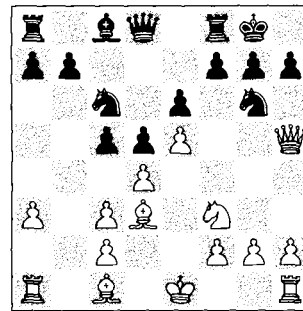
was found: 10.gxh6! gxh6 11.♗h6 g5 12.gxf5 exf5 13.0-0!→



analysis diagram

White's attack is thematic and unstoppable: 13...f4 (13...d7 14.f3 f4 15.g3+! g6 16.d2 fxg3 17.hxg3+-) 14.h3 d7 15.g5 g5 16.g4! e4 (16...g6 17.f3!) 17.♗e1 ♗b6 18.e6 g6 19.f3 20.fxf3 f6 21.f3 A total knockout! 1-0, L.Szabo-Sinkovics, Bad Orb 1989.

10.f3



In this basic position the German grandmasters suggested a more sophisticated move order.

10...c7!?

... which is long considered safely equal for Black (K&D).

Rainer Knaak (CBM): Von Hertneck hiermit in die Praxis eingeführt.



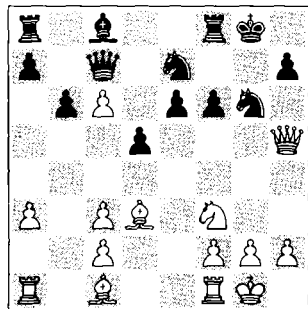
WEAPON: The alternative 10...ce7 is a quite fresh new defence:



German grandmaster Gerald Hertneck.

A) The pawn attack **11.h4** can lead to Warsaw structures, but then the white knight would be better placed on e2: **11...♖a5 12.♙d2 c4 13.♙xg6 fxg6 14.♗g4 ♖a4 15.♘d1 h6 16.h5 ♗e8!**= B.Savchenko-E.Levin, Sochi tt 2010;

B) But I think White has the initiative after **11.dxc5!?**. A logical move, trying to open up the position for his two bishops. **11...b6 11...♖a5 12.♙d2 ♗xc5 13.0-0 ♙d7 14.♞ab1 ♖c7 15.♞b4↑ Jordi Fluvia-Vilar Lopez, Banyoles 2007. 12.c6!?** **12.cxb6 axb6 13.0-0 ♙a6 14.♙d2± Oll-Wilken, The Hague 1993. 12...♗c7 13.0-0 f5? 13...♗xc6 14.♞e1 ♗xc3 15.♙d2 ♖c7∞. 14.exf6 gxf6** was played in a few important games.



analysis diagram

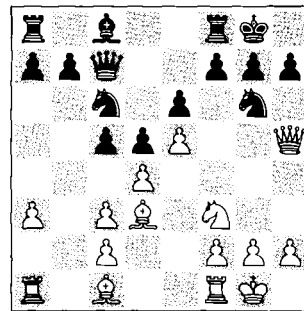
Here I have found an improvement: **15.♘h4!** Not **15.c4 dxc4 16.♙xc4 ♗xc6 17.♙b3 ♘h8!∞** Volokitin-Pelletier, Merida 2005. **15...f5 15...♗e5 16.♗h6↑. 16.♙h6 ♞f7 17.♘f3** and White is clearly better.

11.♙e3!

We have to take a closer look at this modern approach. White is threatening **12.♘g5**.

♟️ A) *TRICK: The immediate* **11.♘g5 h6 12.♘xf7 ♗xf7 13.♗xg6 ♗xg6** (not **13...♗xf2+?? 14.♘d1+—**) **14.♙xg6 cxd4 15.cxd4 ♘xd4=** looks fine for Black, *Novosadova-Dgebuadze, Teplice 2010;*

B) With the modest **11.0-0?!** White loses his attacking potential (♞h1) and cannot play for the initiative on either side of the board:




11...c4! 12.♙e2 12.♙xg6 fxg6 13.♗g4 ♗a5!? **14.♙d2 ♙d7=.** **12...f6! 13.exf6 ♞xf6 14.g3 ♙d7 15.♙e3 ♞af8↑**

♟️ *TRICK: 16.♙g5? was played in the original game J.Polgar-Hertneck, Cologne TV 1991, but after 16...♙e8! 17.♗g4 h5!♣ Black is almost winning.*

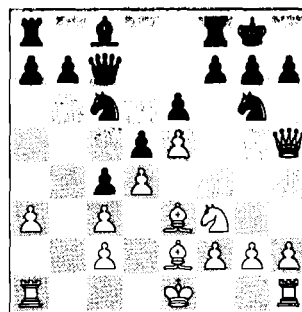
11...c4!?

A quite provocative blockading move. Black aims to fix the pawn structure.

♟️ *WEAPON: Here is an example of a more open game: 11...♘ce7 and now:*

 A) TRICK: 12.dxc5 b6! ⇒ 13.c6 ♖xc6 14.0-0 ♕a6!? 15.♕xa6 b5 16.♕xb5 ♖xb5 = Peli-Silva, corr 2006;

B) 12.h4 ♘f5 12...♕d7 13.♖g4! f5 14.♖h3↑ f4? 15.♕d2± Nataf-Pelletier, Cap d'Agde B 2002. 13.♕d2 13.0-0!?. 13...f6 13...c4 14.♕e2!? f6 15.♖g4! fxe5 16.h5↑ Gongora Reyes-Fernandez Romero, Santa Clara B 2005. 14.♘g5 This leads to a dangerous complications; 14.♖g4!?. 14...fxg5 15.hxg5



analysis diagram


A1) After the immediate 12...f6 in Munguntuul-Mkrtchian, Nalchik 2010, the new move 13.0-0! was played, with the idea 13...fxe5?! 14.♘g5↑;

A2) 12...♖a5! is the best move order.


A21) After 13.♕d2? ♘f4! Black had an obvious advantage in Dolzhikova-Goncharov, Kiev 2006;

A22) 13.♖d2? is also wrong: 13...f6!↑;

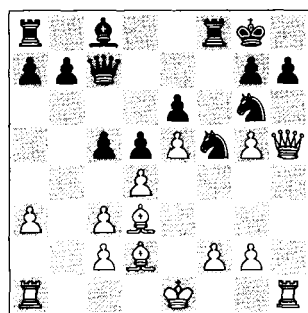
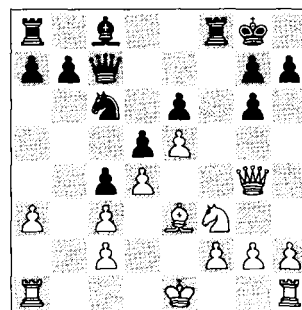
A23) 13.♖a2! is the only correct response, and now:

 A23a) TRICK: 13...♖xc3+?? 14.♕d2+- winning the queen;

A23b) ≥ 13...♕d7 14.0-0 f6!?! ⇒ with equal chances. Still Black has to be careful, since White's bishops should mean something.

 B) TRICK: Again, the immediate 12.♘g5? is only a 'pseudo-attack': 12...h6 13.♘xf7 cxd3 14.♘h6+ gxh6 15.♖xg6+ ♖g7 with an extra piece for Black.

12...fxg6 13.♖g4




analysis diagram

I've never liked to play such positions on the black side. And I hope you don't either.

15...cxd4? Black could survive with 15...♘gh4□ 16.♕xf5 ♘xf5 17.♖xh7+ ♖f7 18.g4 cxd4! 19.gxf5 ♖xe5+ 20.♖d1 ♖xf5=. 16.♖xh7+ ♖f7 17.cxd4! ♘xe5 17...♖h8?? 18.♖xg6+! ♖xg6 19.♖xh8±. 18.♕e2 ♘c6 19.♕h5+ ♖e7 20.g4! ♘cxd4 21.gxf5 ♖e5+? This loses on the spot; 21...♖d8□. 22.♖f1 ♖d8 22...♘xf5 23.♖e1+- 23.f6 ♘f5 24.♖e1 ♖d4 25.♕b4 A terrifying game! 1-0 Volokitin-Barsov, Turin ol 2006.

12.♕xg6!

Accepting the structural consequences.

 A) WEAPON: White retains his bishop pair with 12.♕e2!?! but there is very little experience with this move (7 games).

This type of pawn structure is characteristic for the Warsaw Variation. If you like it, you will have to prepare an attractive counterplan and of course you must be ready to face the following White attack: the advance of the h-g- and f-pawns.

13...♙d7!?

Although the position is static, I prefer this move (82 games=33.4%), keeping the queen on c7 for the moment and first making another useful move.

The most popular defence starts with **13...♚f7** (128 games=38%), but I feel that only White can play for a win here.

14.♘g5! This knight is the key attacking piece. Strategically speaking, White is going to develop an initiative on the kingside whereas Black's French bishop on c8 remains out of action.



analysis diagram

A) TRICK: 14...♚f5?! 15.♚e2! The point is to win the black queen with g2-g4. 15...♖d8 16.g4 ♚f8 17.h4 h6 18.♘h3 b5 19.h5 gxh5 20.g5! → Van Delft-Monsma, Dieren 2010.

B) 14...♚e8 15.h4! Let's follow the typical play in this variation: **15...h6** Or 15...♘e7 16.♚e2!? ♘f5 17.g4!? (a quite natural option, White doesn't care about his bishop) 17...♘xe3 18.♚xe3 h6 19.♘h3 ♚e7 20.♚g3 ♙d7 21.f4 ♙e8 22.♙d2 b5 23.f5! gxf5

24.g5 and White dominates, with strong positional pressure, Nijboer-Harikrishna, Wijk aan Zee B 2001. **16.♘h3! ♙d7 17.♚e2** Preparing to push the pawns.

An interesting attacking set-up is 17.♘f4 ♘e7 (17...♙h7?! 18.h5♠ Macieja-Nguyen, Warsaw rapid 2008) 18.h5 g5 19.♘h3 ♘f5?! and now:

WEAPON: 19...♚f7! should be Black's best defence: 20.f4?! ♚f5! ⇒.

20.♙d2 b5 21.f4 gxf4 22.♘xf4 and White stands better, Banikas-A.Grigorian, Internet 2009.

17...b5 18.g4 a5 19.h5 gxh5



analysis diagram

The future of this variation depends upon the correct evaluation of this position, Psakhis wrote in 2003 (CBM-97).

20.g5! A standard breakthrough in this structure, with which White has scored 6½-1½. **20...hxxg5 21.♘xxg5 g6** and now:

B1) After the old hit **22.0-0-0 ♚e7! 23.♖dg1 ♚xa3+ 24.♙d2 b4?** (24...♖f5□ 25.♘e4∞) an improvement was found by Psakhis in the same year: **25.♘e4!** → Bacrot-Vaisser, Aix les Bains ch-FRA 2003;

B2) WEAPON: White can try other moves: **22.♘h3 ♖f5 23.♖g1!?** with good attacking possibilities;

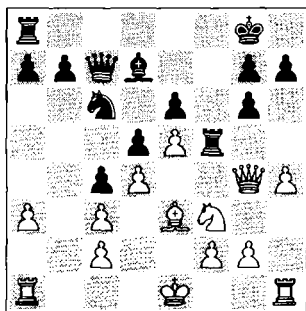
B3) 22. ♖f1!? A new idea, to activate the queen first. Now:

♜ B31) WEAPON: Black can try 22... ♖e7 23. ♖g2 ♖f5 ∞ Sulypa-Apicella, Bois Colombes 2004;

B32) 22...b4 23. ♖g2 ♖e7 ∞ Zeberski-W.Schmidt, Legnica 2006;

B33) 22... ♖f5 23. ♖g2 ♖e7 24. ♖e2 24. ♖f3!? may be more precise. 24... ♖h8 24...b4!?. 25. ♖f3 ♖f7 26. ♖h4↑ The situation is critical for Black, Karjakin-Papa, Biel 2003.

14.h4! ♖f5

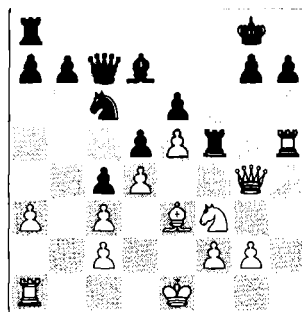


We are in the main position of this line. Sometimes Black can sacrifice the exchange and block the position in order to play for a draw.

15. ♖g1!?

Ftacnik (CBM 128): *In the classical variation of the French Defence White does not have a viable alternative to the attempt at a kingside attack. The knight retreats to g1 in order to start the manoeuvre to a more promising spot. Due to the closed character of the position the loss of time does not play an important role.*

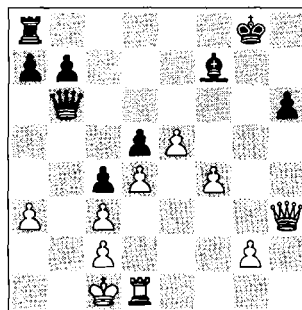
♜ A) WEAPON: 15.h5!? A logical advance and still the most popular method (46 games=71.7%), which was analysed from a very optimistic Black-oriented perspective in Watson's 2003 book. However, White's chances are better in the two main lines after 15...gxf5 16. ♖xh5.



analysis diagram

Now Black can choose between:

A1) Simplifications with 16... ♖xh5 17. ♖xh5 ♖e8!? 18. ♖h3 ♖d8! 19. ♖g5 h6 20. ♖xe6 ♖a5!? 21. ♖xh6 ♖xe6 22. ♖xe6+ ♖f7 23. ♖h3! 23. ♖g4?? Watson 2003. 23...gxf6 24.f4 ♖b6 25.0-0-0±

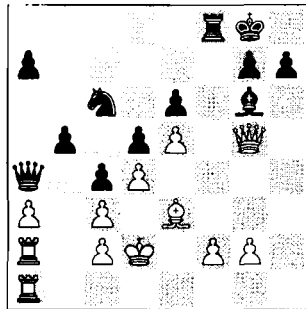


analysis diagram

The French-bishop is worse here than the e- and f-pawns, but the game is still complex, Michiels-Brittner, Differdange 2007;

A2) Or complications after 16... ♖af8 17. ♖h3 17. ♖g5!? is an even trickier line: 17... ♖a5 18. ♖d2 ♖f4 19. ♖h3 h6 (19... ♖xf2? 20. ♖f3± Kovchan-A.Nilsson, Copenhagen 2010) 20. ♖xh6!?. Of course, this is not the only option here, but after 20...gxf6 21. ♖xh6→ (Bromberger-Yeke, St Vincent tt 2005) at a deep computer level, Black's only defence begins with

17...♖c8 17...♗a5
 18.♗d2 ♖c8 19.♞h6! with the idea
 19.♗g6 20.♞xg6!→. 18.♗g5 ♗a5
 19.♗d2 ♞xg5 20.♗xg5 ♖g6
 21.♞hh1!! The key idea: 21...♗a4
 22.♞a2 b5 23.♞ha1!



analysis diagram

I am afraid this position is difficult for Black. The queen on a4 is busy blocking a3-a4, but White is going to advance his f-g pawns. Originally played in T.Ernst-Rylander, Umea ch-SWE 2003.

B) WEAPON: 15.♗g5?! is another aggressive plan (18 games=47.2%), but with this move order the knight is not very helpful on g5. Black has enough time to strengthen his fortress adequately: 15...♞af8 and now:

B1) TRICK: 16.h5? ♗a5! 17.♖d2 h6! 18.♗f3 g5⚡ and ...♞f4! comes, Karjakin-Psakhis, ACP blitz 2004;

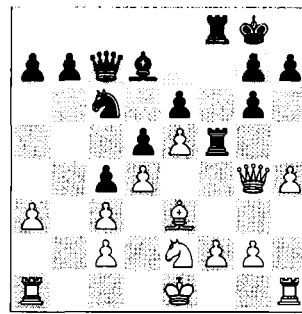
B2) 16.♗e2 h6 17.♗h3 b5 18.f3 a5⚡ and Black has counterplay, Kasimdzhanov-Caruana, Vlissingen 2007.

15...♞af8

If 15...♗b6 16.♗d1!?

And if 15...♖e8 16.♗e2 ♗e7 17.a4! h6 18.♖c1 ♗h7 19.♗h3↑ and g2-g4, Malisauskas-Goh Wei Ming, Turin ol 2006.

16.♗e2



I think Black should hold this position with precise play.

16...♗e7

Here is an example of a possible block with an exchange sacrifice: 16...b5 17.♗g3 ♗a5 18.♗d2 ♖e8!? (see the workshop) 19.f3 (19.♗xf5!? gxf5 20.♗f4± and everything depends on the evaluation of this position) 19...♗e7 20.♖g5 ♗c6 21.♖e3 ½-½ Landa-Timman, Netherlands tt 2005/06.

17.♗g3

17.♗f4!? would be an alternative plan.

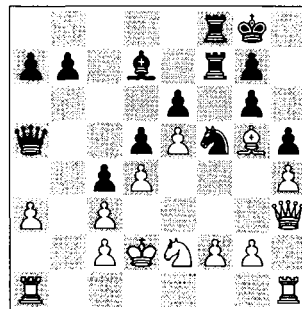
17...♗a5!? 18.♗d2 h5!?

18...♞xf2+?! is a wrong idea: 19.♖xf2 ♞xf2+ 20.♗e2 ♗f5 21.♞af1 ♞xf1 22.♞xf1 ♗xa3 23.♗g5↑ Bacrot-Apicella, Belfort 2004.

19.♗h3 ♞5f7!

Preparing to set up a block with ...♗f5. ≤ 19...♗c6 20.♗e2 (20.♗xf5!? gxf5 21.♖g5!) 20...♗c7 21.g4∞ Landa-Apicella, Paris ch-city 2004.

20.♗e2 ♗f5 21.♖g5



21...♟e7?!

Ftacnik: *Socko has not mastered his defensive tasks well. It seems that the original knight move to h6 would solve all the problems.*

21...♟h6! 22.♙xh6 gxh6 23.f4 ♖h7
24.♞hg1 ♜f5 25.g4 hxg4 26.♚xg4
♙e8 and it seems that White cannot make progress on the kingside.

22.f4 ♟f5 23.g4 hxg4?

Ftacnik: *The second mistake will be painful for Black. Opening the files in front of one's own king does not make for a clever plan.*

23...♟e7 24.♙xe7 ♞xe7 25.gxh5 gxh5
26.♞hg1 was still unclear.

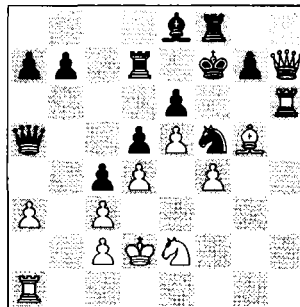
24.♚xg4 ♙e8 25.h5 gxh5?

Ftacnik: *The last inaccuracy probably does not really spoil things, since White has already managed to gain a lot in the attack.*

25...♞d7 26.hxg6 ♙xg6 27.♞ag1! ♙h7
28.♚h5 g6 29.♙f6 ♞g7 30.♚g5+-

26.♚xh5 ♞d7 27.♚h7+ ♔f7 28.♞h6!

Ftacnik: *The exchange sacrifice decides matters on the spot; the white pieces are approaching with the speed of light.*



28...♟xh6 29.♙xh6 ♞g8 30.f5!

Ftacnik: *Black's defenders on light squares are unable to help at all.*

30...♟f8 31.fxe6

Black resigned.

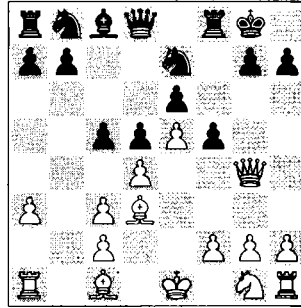
Summary:

After 8.♙d3 ♟c6 (or 8...♟d7), Black spends another tempo to develop the b8 knight and his position is solid enough. However, the two main problems for Black are still to be solved: the weak kingside and a lack of real counterplay, since there is no clear plan for Black in the blocked 'Warsaw' structures (i.e. with black pawns on g7-g6-h7 and c4).

Therefore, White can choose between a dynamic or a static attacking approach on the kingside:

- A) In general, I agree with Hertneck and K&D's theoretical conclusion that 8...♟c6 9.♚h5 ♟g6 9.♟f3 ♚c7!? is the safest line in the Warsaw Variation. These positions may be defensible even against top players. However, one has to be careful using any static defensive set-up against the French-killers!
- B) Finally, the sharp intermediate option 9.♙g5!? is a dangerous attacking approach. After the forced moves 9...♚a5 10.♟e2, I suggest 10...♟g6 as the safest defence, which again can lead to static Warsaw structures. This line will be further investigated in Game 26, the Rustemov Variation.

**GAME 25 – Trying to Stay Alive: 8...f5 (860 games=44.5%) and 8...c4?!
(72 games=28.5%)**



With the early advance of the f-pawn (similarly to the Dutch Stonewall), Black wants to solve his problems on the kingside and to find some counterplay in the centre.

8...f5 is also Kindermann's main resource in the Warsaw Variation, which by the way will be easier to study after you have survived the previous game!

After the common response 8.exf6, the dynamic 'Polonaise' structure arises.

□ **Farrukh Amonatov**
 ■ **Nikolay Zhadanov**

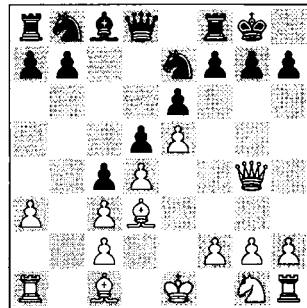
Moscow ch-city 2010 (1)

In the following recent game, the youngest player (who was also 300 ELO points behind his opponent: 2318 vs. 2626) showed the best play for the black side.

**1.e4 e6 2.d4 d5 3.♘c3 ♙b4 4.e5 c5
 5.a3 ♙xc3+ 6.bxc3 ♘e7 7.♖g4 0-0
 8.♙d3 f5!**


This Dutch-like 'Stonewall' pawn advance is undoubtedly the most dynamic reaction to White's aggressive set-up.

 **WEAPON: 8...c4?!**

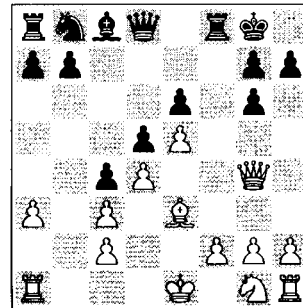


analysis diagram

After this blocking Black's position is quite passive and statistics are very bad (72=28.5%). However, some immortal games have been seen with it. Enjoy:

 **A) TRICK: 9.♙e2** makes for a slow game (34 games=63.2%): 9...♘bc6 10.h4?! There is no time to advance the h-pawn. 10...f6! 11.f4 ♖a5 12.♙d2 ♘f5! 13.h5?? A typical 'simul' move, losing immediately. 13...fxe5 14.fxe5 ♘e3! 0-1 Short-Abela, Ajelat simul 2003.

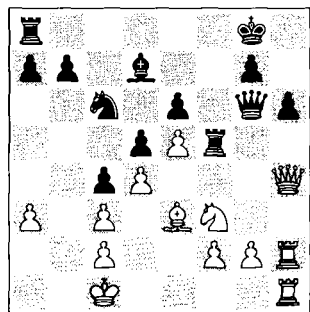
B) 9.♙h6! is the dynamic option (33 games=75.8%). 9...♘g6 10.♙xg6 fxg6 11.♙e3±



analysis diagram

We already know this Warsaw structure from the previous game, but here White has several extra tempi since he has not moved the ♖g1.

11...♖c6 Or 11...♗e8 12.h4 h6 13.h5 g5 14.♖h3 ♗f7 15.f4 gxf4 16.♖xf4± Mortensen-Dely, Hungary tt 1988.
12.h4! ♗e8 **13.h5 gxh5** 14.♗xh5 ♖e7
 15.♖f3 ♗f5 16.♗h2 16.♗h3!?.
 16...♗g6 17.♗h4 ♖c6 18.0-0-0 ♗d7
 19.♗dh1 h6



analysis diagram

White has a strong initiative on the kingside, but now he continues inaccurately:

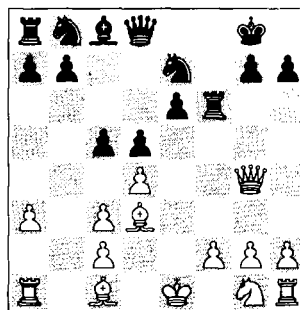
20.♗h3?? Missing a strong counter. Correct was the prophylactic move 20.♖b1! and only then ♗h3, preparing an attack with g2-g4. **20...♗xf3!!** See the workshop. **21.♗xf3** 21.gxf3 ♖b4! etc. amounts to the same, Timmer-Apicella, Paris 1988. **21...♖b4!** and ...♗a4 next, with mate in 7, 0-1 Mortensen-Karlsson, Esbjerg 1988.

9.exf6

In this move order this is an almost automatic response (796 games=55.6%), which leads to dynamic 'Polonaise' structures (remember the first game of the chapter). There are also two 'static' alternatives with the queen: 9.♗h3 and 9.♗g3, but Black can do the same as in the first game of the chapter by playing

9...♖c6 10.♖f3 ♗h6! (see the two weapons in the comments on move 10).


9...♗xf6



The first key position of this line.


10.♗g5!

(677 games=56.4%)

 *WEAPON: An important alternative is 10.♗h5!? (100 games=52%). Now:*

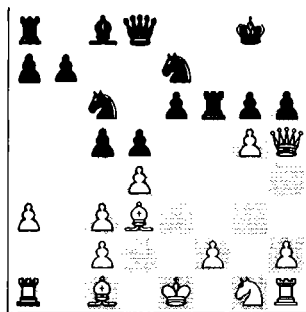
A) **10...g6?!** does not work out satisfactorily, since it weakens the dark squares. After the precise move 11.♗h4! White has a clear initiative, for instance 11...♗f7 12.♖f3 ♗a5 13.0-0! c4 14.♖e5!↑, Atkinson-Sequera Paolini, Mamaia Wch-jr 1991;

B) According to many sources the best defence is **10...h6!**, e.g.:

 B1) *TRICK: The move 11.h4?! has been played twice: 11...c4! (11...♖bc6 12.♗g5 ♗f8 13.♖f3 c4 14.♗g6 ♗a5!± Short-Kindermann, Garmisch Partenkirchen rapid 1994) 12.♗e2 (12.♗f1? was seen in Grabert-Kindermann, Dortmund 1993) 12...e5! 13.♗xe5 ♗a5 14.♗d2 ♖bc6 15.♗h2 ♗f5↑;*

B2) By transposition, **11.♖f3 ♖bc6** repeats our sub-line from the first game of this chapter (after 11.♗h5), where Black is traditionally OK;

B3) **11.g4!** Now there are two possible lines for Black: **11...♖bc6!?** Maybe safer is 11...c4!? 12.g5 g6 13.♗d1 ♗f8=Knaak (CBM 20). **12.g5! g6**□



analysis diagram


And now:

B31) After **13. ♖h4** Black can fight for the initiative with **13... ♟f5! 14. ♖h3 ♜f8 15. gxh6 e5!** ⇒ Aseev-Vladimirov, Leningrad 1989;

B32) **13. ♖xh6 ♜f7** **14. ♙xg6 ♜g7 15. ♙d3 e5!?** 15...c4 leads to a draw by repetition: **16. ♙e2 ♜h7 17. ♖f6 ♜f7** = etc. **16. dxe5 ♟xe5** and Black had great compensation for the two pawns in David-Kindermann, Frankfurt rapid 1998.

10... ♜f7

Without White's knight on f3 this move works perfectly well.

 **WEAPON: 10...e5** Portisch's resource is less effective here, but let's give it a try: **11. ♖h4 e4 12. ♙xf6 gxf6**



analysis diagram

Here White has tested three options:


A) **13. ♖xf6 exd3 14. ♖g5+ ♟h8 15. ♖f6+ ♟g8** ½-½ Bacrot-Ponomariov, Biel 2004;

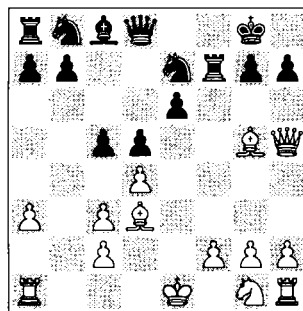
B) **13. ♙f1 ♟f5 14. ♖g4+ ♟h8** Rodriguez Lopez-Gallardo Garcia, Spain tt 1994;

C) **13. ♙e2! ♖a5!?** ≤ **13... ♟f5 14. ♖h3!** Rodriguez Guerrero-Serna Lara, Albacete 2005. **14. ♖g3+ ♟h8 15. ♜d1 ♟bc6 16. ♖d6! ♖xc3+ 17. ♟f1** ∞ The viability of the entire sub-line with 10...e5 depends on the evaluation of this position, Karjakin-Del Rio Angelis, Dos Hermanas 2004.

11. ♖h5!?


The most ambitious continuation for White (416 games=60%).

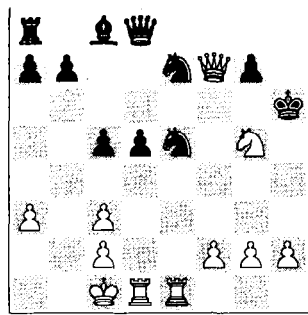
 **TRICK:** The move **11. ♖h4** (149 games=49.3%) allows some tricks: **11...h6! 12. ♙xe7 ♜xe7 13. ♟f3 e5! 14. dxe5 ♜xe5+ 15. ♟d2 ♖xh4 16. ♟xh4 ♟c6** and this endgame is considered to be equal (Ady-McDonald, Scotland ch 1988).



11...g6!

Clearly the safest defence.

 **WEAPON:** Now after **11...h6?!** Aagaard's following attacking line seems to be critical: **12. ♟f3! ♟bc6 (12...hxg5? 13. ♖h7+ ♟f8 14. ♖h8+ ♟g8 15. ♙h7± 13. ♙h7+!?** (13. ♙g6 ♜f8 14.0-0 ♖c7 15. ♙xe7 ♖xe7 16. ♜fe1 ♖f6 17. ♜ad1 ♙d7= Palac-Iotti, Reggio Emilia 2002/03) **13... ♟xh7 (13... ♟f8 14. ♙xe7+!?** ♖xe7 15.0-0±) **14. ♖xf7 hxg5 15. ♟xg5+!** (≤ **15.h4 g4 16. ♖h5+ ♟g8 17. ♟g5=** ½-½ Lopez Martinez-Fernandez Romero, Ayamonte 2006) **15... ♟h6 16.0-0-0! e5 17. dxe5 ♟xe5 18. ♜he1** →

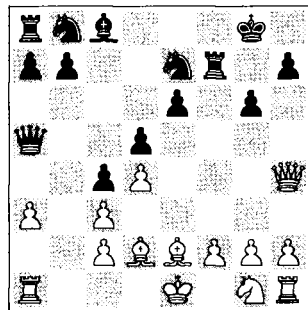


analysis diagram

18...♖g6 19.f4 ♖f6□ 19...♗c4??
 20.♗xd5+- ♖b6 21.♗e6! winning.
 Aagaard-Brynell, Copenhagen 2006.
 20.♖xf6 gxf6 21.fxe5 fxe5 21...♗xg5
 22.exf6 ♗xf6 23.♗xd5±. 22.e6! ♗e7
 23.c4! d4 24.c3↑ and the arising end-
 game is still very dangerous for Black.
 12.♖d1!

The best square for the queen's retreat.

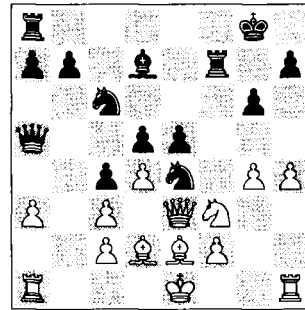
♗ WEAPON: There is no time for
 12.♖h4 ♖a5! in contrast with
 the line 10.♖h5 g6? 11.♖h4! ♗f7 12.♗f3
 ♖a5 13.0-0!. As White cannot castle here,
 Black has a dynamic advantage: 13.♗d2
 13.♗e2?! ♗bc6 14.dxc5 e5! 15.f3 ♖xc5↑
 Bierwisch-Uhlmann, Bad Liebenzell
 Wch-sen 1996. 13...c4 14.♗e2



analysis diagram

14...♗f5! 14...♗bc6 15.g4!? e5!?
 16.dxe5?! (16.♗f3!) 16...d4!↑ Ninov-
 Dochev, Pazardzik ch-BUL 1991. 15.♖g5
 ♗c6 16.♗f3 16.g4?! ♗d6 17.f3 ♗e7!

18.h4 e5±. 16...♗d7 17.g4 ♗d6
 18.h4?! This flank attack comes too late;
 18.♖e3 ♗af8 19.♗g5 ♗e7 20.f4 h6 21.♗h3
 ♗e4⇒ Novak-Varini, Portoroz 1997.
 18...♗e4 19.♖e3 e5! 19...♗af8?!
 20.h5∞.



analysis diagram

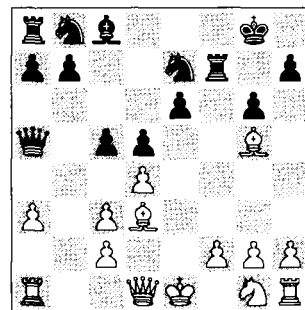
This typical 'Polonaise' break was an
 improvement on the old game
 Ljubojevic-Kortchnoi, Linares 1985.

20.h5 exd4!? 21.♗xd4 g5! Blocking
 the kingside; 21...♗e8 22.hxg6 hxg6
 23.♗h6∞ T.Ernst-L.B.Hansen, Öster-
 sund zt 1992. 22.f3 ♗g3 23.♗xc6
 ♗xc6! and Black is the only side attack-
 ing here.

12...♗bc6

This old, natural move is perfectly cor-
 rect.

♗ WEAPON: However, Black can
 also use Kindermann's and Wat-
 son's favourite queen move 12...♖a5!?



analysis diagram

This move order (the most precise in the many wonderful Winawer lines!) allows Black some additional options:

13. ♖d2 As you will see, **13. ♕d2 ♜bc6** **14. ♜f3** simply leads to the main game.

A) For the usual **13... ♜bc6** **14. ♜f3** see the analysis below.


B) I found a new weapon in the game Stojanovski-Potkin, Oropesa del Mar jr 1999: **13... cxd4!?** **14. cxd4 ♖xd2+** **15. ♕xd2 ♜bc6** **16. ♜f3** and now not **16... ♕d7** as in that game, but instead our 'workshop' idea **16... ♜xf3! ⇐;**

C) Kindermann analyses **13... c4**, but as the following recent game shows White stands better: **14. ♕e2 ♜f5** **15. ♕f4 ♜c6** **16. g3! ♕d7** **17. ♜f3 ♜af8** **18. ♜e5 ♜xe5** **19. ♕xe5 ± ♖d8** **20. h4! ↑** Brkic-B.Kovacevic, Bihac tt 2010;

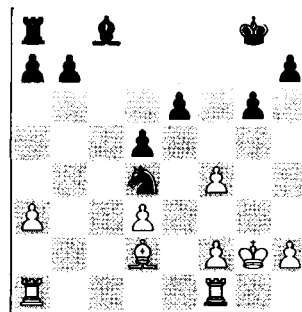
D) **13... ♜ec6!?** A new and paradoxical idea, writes Watson. **14. ♜f3 ♜d7!** Of course, Black insists upon enforcing ...e6-e5, but he does not use this concept alone:

C1) If **15. h4 e5** **16. ♜xe5 ♜dxe5** **17. dxe5 ♜xe5** **18. h5 ♜xd3+** **19. cxd3 ♕f5=** Bracker-Baldauf, Germany tt-jr 2006;

C2) **15. ♕e2**, preventing ...e5, can be met by **15... cxd4!?** **16. cxd4 ♖xd2+** **17. ♜xd2 e5 ⇐)**

 C3) **15.0-0** WORKSHOP: **15... ♜xf3!?** An amazing, typically French idea. On **15... cxd4!?** **16. ♜xd4! ±** is an accurate response which was missed in the rapid game Leko-Ivanchuk, Monaco 2002. **16. gxf3 cxd4** **17. cxd4 ♖xd2** **18. ♕xd2 ♜xd4** **19. ♜g2 ♜e5** **20. f4 ♜xd3** **21. cxd3**

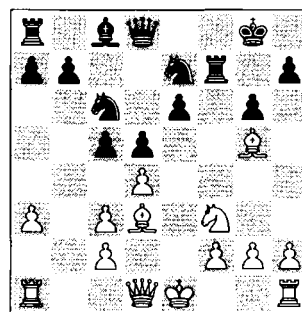
With a balanced, typically French end-game, for instance:



analysis diagram

21... ♕d7 (**21... b6!?**) **22. ♕c3 ♜e2** **23. ♕e5 ♜f8** **24. ♜ab1 ♕c6** **25. ♜fe1 ♜xf4+** **26. ♕xf4 ♜xf4** **27. ♜xe6 ♜a4! ⇐.**


By the way, the immediate advance **12... e5?!** is dubious: **13. dxe5 ♜bc6** **14. ♕f6 ♖c7** **15. f4! ±** Baklan-Orzechowski, Wroclaw 2010 **13. ♜f3**

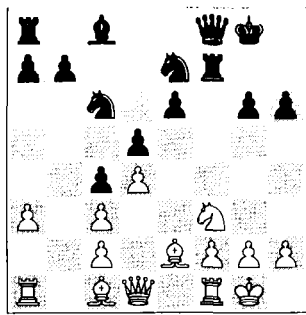


We have arrived at the next important stage of the variation with **8... f5**. Here Black has three main ideas.

The modern 'Kindermann' set-up begins with

13... ♖a5!?

 A) WEAPON: The most popular alternative is the old plan with **13... ♖f8**, but I think White can keep some pressure: **14.0-0** (**14. ♖d2? ♜xf3!** would be a good addition to our workshop) **14... c4** **15. ♕e2 h6** **16. ♕c1!?**



analysis diagram

A logical continuation. White is preparing the set-up a4-♙a3, reserving the diagonal f8-a3 for his bishop, but not only this. White's main weapon is a combination of ♖b1 and a4-a5! Let's see:

A1) 16...♙g7 17.♙d2!? 17.a4!? g5 18.h3!? ♘g6 19.♘h2!↑ was played in the recent game Khusnutdinov-Praveen Kumar, Mumbai 2010 17...♙h7 17...g5 can be effectively met by 18.h4!. 18.a4! ♙d7 19.♖b1! Now 19.♙a3 is premature. The best set-up for Black is 19...g5 20.♙d6 ♘f5 21.♙e5 ♙g6⇌ with the threats 21...g4 or 21...♘h4. Therefore, ½-½ in Sutovsky-Kindermann, Bad Homburg 1997. 19...b6 20.a5!↑ This is currently the main modern resource against Black's set-up with 13..♙f8 and ...h7-h6;

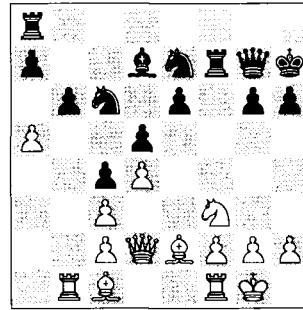
A2) 16...♙h7 This is a new try. 17.a4! Vacating the a3-f8 diagonal for the bishop. 17...♙d7 18.♙a3 For the idea 18.♖b1!?, see below. 18...♙b8 Black doesn't like the sight of the white bishop on d6. 19.♙d2 ♘f5 20.♖ab1 b6 21.a5!↑ Although the position is more or less balanced, it looks as if White has the easier play. Shirov-Timman, Wijk aan Zee 2003;

A3) 16...♙d7 17.a4! ♙g7 18.♖b1! b6 19.a5↑ occurred in the game Sawatzki-Bäumler, Verden 2007; 16...g5 17.h3 ♙g7 18.♘h2 ♘g6 19.♙h5 ♙d7

20.♖b1 b6 21.h4!↑ Veli Bach Serrano Bouzada, Palma de Mallorca ch-ESP 2009.



B) WEAPON: The immediate 13...c4 seems to be even less attractive.



analysis diagram

This is mainly due to Black's dark-square problems: 14.♙e2 ♙d7 15.h4!? ♙a5 16.♙d2 ♘f5 17.♘e5 (17.h5!?) 17...♘xe5 18.dxe5 d4 19.♙f6! dxc3 20.♙f4↑ and Black's position looks very dangerous, Komarov-Naumkin, Porto San Giorgio 1996.

14.♙d2

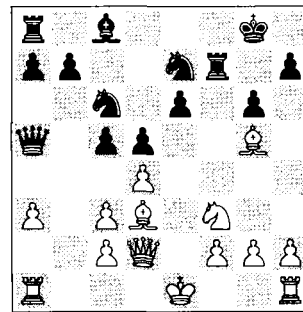
This is White's main option (28 games=64.5%).



A) TRICK: After 14.0-0?! c4 15.♙e2 ♙xc3 16.♙d2 ♙b2 Black keeps an extra pawn;



B) WEAPON: A positional approach is 14.♙d2!?.



analysis diagram

B1) Unfortunately, after the 'Kindermann block' 14...c4 I have not

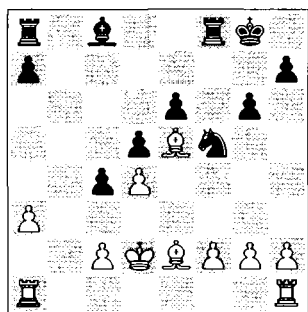
been able to find an easy path to equality for Black: 15.♙e2 ♘f5 16.♘e5! (16.0-0?! ♘d6!) 16...♚f8 17.♘xc6 bxc6 18.♙f4!↑ c5 19.♙e5 (19.g4! ♘h4 20.0-0↑) 19...cxd4 20.cxd4 ♚xd2+ 21.♙xd2±. Despite the fact that players signed the draw after a few more moves, the endgame is still better for White, T.Ernst-Giddins, Gausdal 1995.

The same happens after:

B2) 14...♙d7 15.h4! ♘f5 16.h5 cxd4 17.hxg6 hxg6 18.♚f4!? (18.cxd4±) 18...♚g7 19.♚h2!→ P.Smirnov-Potkin, Kazan ch-RUS jr 2001, and:

B3) 14...♘f5!? 15.♘e5! ♘xe5 16.dxe5 ♙d7 17.♚b1 ♙c6 18.0-0 c4 19.♙xf5 ♚xf5 20.♙f6 ♚xa3 21.♚d4 ♚f8 22.f4↑ Lopez Martinez-Kononenko, Balaguer 2007

B4) However, a possible solution may be to play the endgame after 14...cxd4 15.cxd4 ♚xd2+ 16.♙xd2 16.♙xd2 ♚xf3!? – WORKSHOP. 16...♘f5 17.c3 ♘d6⇒ and Black has some light-square counterplay, whereas without the queens the attack with h2-h4 does not seem dangerous.

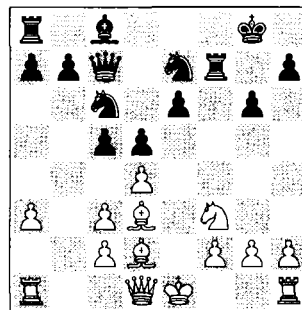


14...c4

The blockade is the correct method after White's retreating moves ♚d1 and ♙d2 (24 games=50%).

🔪 A) WEAPON: Kindermann's/Watson's dynamic alternative is

14...♚c7!? (57 games=43%) preparing ...e6-e5.



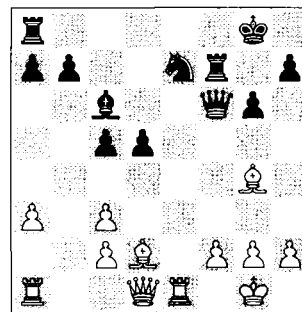
analysis diagram

Let's update this line:

A1) Watson concentrated on the solid line 15.0-0!?! e5 and now:

A11) 16.♘g5 ♚f8 17.c4 cxd4! Watson awards the inferior option 17...exd4 with a '!'. It was already played in the game Hracek-Kindermann, Bad Homburg 1997. But here White missed the simple 18.♚e2!?! 18.cxd5 ♘xd5 19.♙c4 ♘e7 20.♚e2 h6⇒ Cheparinov-Del Rio Angelis, Dos Hermanas 2004;

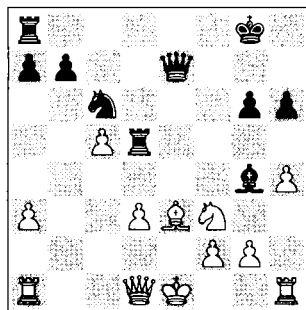
A12) 16.dxe5!?! ♘xe5 17.♙e2!?! 17.♘xe5 ♚xe5 18.c4 ♙f5!?! 19.♚e1 ♚f6 20.♚f3 ♙xd3 21.♚xf6 ♚xf6 22.cxd3 ♘f5= Lutz-Kindermann, Germany tt 1997. 17...♙d7 18.♚e1 ♙c6 18...♚e8 19.♙g5!↑. 19.♘xe5 ♚xe5 20.♙g4 ♚f6 and it all depends upon the evaluation of this position, Georgiadis-Kanakaris, Katakolo 2009.



analysis diagram

For example: 21. ♖c6!?

A2) 15.dxc5 This variation is quite forced. 15...e5 16. ♘g5!? 16. ♙e2 ♙g4!? 17.0-0 ♙xf3 18. ♙xf3 e4 19. ♙g4 ♘f5⇌ Atlas-Kindermann, Austria tt 2005/06. 16...♗f8 17.c4! e4! 18.cxd5! 18. ♙e2 ♚e5! 19.f4 exf3!? 20. ♘xf3 ♗xf3!⇌ E.Berg-Rodshtein, Stockholm 2005/06. 18...exd3 19.d6 ♚d7 20.dxe7 ♚xe7+ 21. ♙e3 ♗f5!?! (Kindermann) 22.h4! ≤ 22. ♘f3 dxc2! 23. ♚xc2 ♙e6⇌ Korneev-Pogorelov, Villa Salou 2005. 22...h6 23. ♘f3 ♗d5!?! 23...♙e6 (Watson 2003) 24. ♚xd3!?! ♗d8 25. ♚c3± ♙d5? 26.0-0-0± Vehi Bach-Marzolo, Dresden Ech 2007. 24.cxd3 ♙g4☞

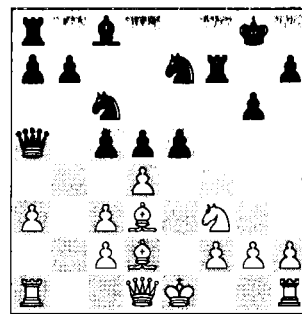


analysis diagram

Until here everything was more or less forced. Now the game can continue with:

25. ♚b3 25. ♚a4!?! ♙xf3 26.gxf3☞ Hall-Bokar, corr 2006. 25...♙xf3 26.gxf3 ♚f7 27.♗g1 ♗ad8!?! 28.♗b1 28.f4!?. 28...♘e5 29.♗g3 ♗8d7 30.♘f1 P.Smirnov-Diachkov, Sochi tt 2005. Despite White's two extra pawns the position is close to equal. But in a practical game I would prefer White.

☞ B) WEAPON: The 'recently' discovered gambit move 14...e5!?! deserves great attention:

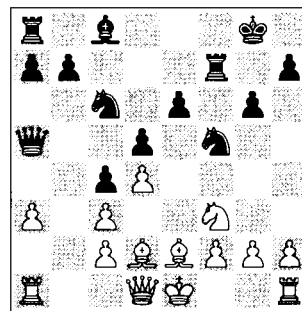


analysis diagram

15. ♘xe5 ♘xe5 16.dxe5 c4 17. ♙e2 ♘c6 18.0-0 This leads to a balanced game. But after 18.f4 ♚c5 19. ♙f3 ♙f5 20. ♚c1 d4☞ Black's initiative looks dangerous. 18...♘xe5 19.♗e1 ♙f5= with a draw in 48 moves, Litvinenko-Siewert, ICCF 2007.

15. ♙e2 ♘f5!

An important manoeuvre in this line (and always with this pawn structure): the knight is going to e4 via d6.

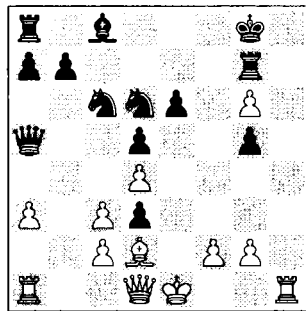


16.0-0

After White's castling the position is balanced.

☞ WEAPON: Naturally, the critical line is 16.h4!?. White has two bishops and he can try to exploit the weakened dark squares on the kingside: 16...♘d6!?! 16...♙d7 is less clear: 17.h5 ♗e8!?! 18.♘g5, Siewert-Thieme Garmann, Ludwigshafen 2007, and now 18...♗g7☞. 17.♘g5 17.h5 ♘e4! 18.hxg6 hxg6 19.♘f1 e5!⇌. 17...♗g7 A good weapon for Black in

this line may be 17...♖f5!? 18.g4 ♖f8♞. 18.h5?! A super-aggressive option. White is ready for a two-piece sacrifice, but this combination is tactically flawed. 18.0-0!? was preferable. 18...h6! 19.hxg6 19.♗f3 g5♞. 19...hxg5 20.♙d3 cxd3!



analysis diagram

The refutation of a sacrifice is to accept it!

21.♖h5 ♗f8 22.♖xg5 ♖e8 23.♞h8+? ≥ 23.♖f6!? ♜g8□ 24.♞h8 ♞xh8 25.♖xh8+ ♗d7 26.g7 ♗e7♞ and Black seems to be OK. 23...♗d7 24.♞h7 ♗e8 25.♖h6 ♞e7!♞ T.Ernst-Giddins, Gausdal AC 1994. Now Black is almost winning. 16...♙d7!

There is no hurry: ≤ 16...♗d6 17.♞e1 ♙d7 18.♗g5! ♞e7 19.♙g4 ♞ae8 20.h4! e5? 21.♙xd7 ♞xd7 22.h5↑ Hübner-Hammes, Altenkirchen ch-GER 2001.

17.♞e1

White can try the advance f2-f4 after 17.♗g5 ♞e7 18.f4 ♞f8.

🔪 WEAPON: Here 18...b5! gives Black more counterchances: ...♗d6 and ...♖b6.

19.a4 h6 20.♗h3 and this position is balanced, Kukk-Myers, cr Wch-22 2007.

17...♞e8! 18.♙f1

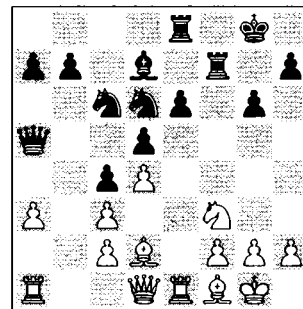
🔪 WEAPON: The idea f2-f4 was used in another correspondence game: 18.♗g5 ♞fe7 19.f4 ♖a4?!



Steve Giddins: editor of *British Chess Magazine* and a 100% Francophile, who played three Warsaw games with 8...f5 against Swedish grandmaster Thomas Ernst, with the successful result of 1-2.

Also here I prefer the plan with 19...b5!?!⇒. The direct 19...♗d6!?!= was played in the computer game *Spaghetti Chess-Tatar*, playchess.com 2008. 20.♖c1 h6 21.♗f3 ♗h7 22.♗e5± and White has achieved something, J.Bücker-Myers, cr Wch-22 2007.

18...♗d6=



The conclusion after the opening is that Black has more space and is well centralized, so his prospects are good.

19.♗e5

19.h4 ♖f5 (19...♗ef8!?) 20.♖b1 ♕c8=.

19...♗xe5 20.♖xe5

20.dxe5? ♗e4≠.

20...♗e4

20...♖f5!?

21.f3 ♗xd2 22.♖xd2 ♖f5 23.♗e3 ♖f6

23...♗ef8!?=.

24.g3 ♖b6 25.f4 ♖b2 26.♗ee1 ♕a4

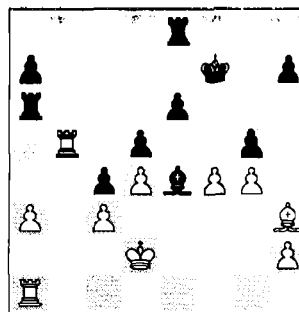
27.♖ab1 ♖xc2 28.♖xc2 ♕xc2

29.♖xb7 ♖f7 30.♖b5 ♖d7 31.♕h3 ♗f7

32.♗f2 ♖d6 33.♗e3 ♖a6 34.♗d2 ♕f5

35.g4?! ♕e4 36.♖a1 g5!†

Now Black even obtains the better chances.



37.fxg5 ♗g6 38.♕f1 ♖f8 39.h4 ♖f2+

40.♗e3 ♖f3+ 41.♗d2 ♖f2+

41...♖g3!≠.

42.♗e3 ♖c2 43.♗f4

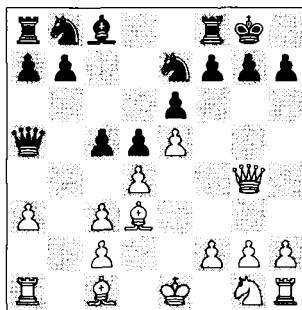
1/2-1/2

Summary of the 8.♕d3 f5 variation:

This line remains playable for Warsaw fans. On move 14, Black has an important choice between the solid but static blockading move 14...c4 or Kindermann's dynamic option of 14...♖c7 and ... e6-e5.

GAME 26 – Rustemov Revisited: 8.♕d3 ♖a5 (213 games=46% best score against 8.♕d3)

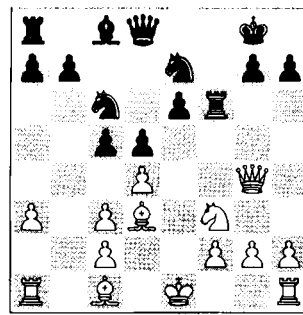
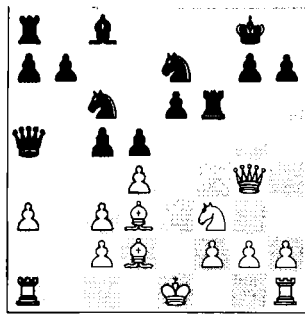
Ever since it was taken up by Alexander Rustemov in 1997, 8...♖a5 has been regarded as the sharpest and most critical line.



In his 2004 review on the *Französisch Winawer* John Watson wrote: *The most recent try championed by Rustemov, is unresolved but holding up according to K&D. They suggest that moves previously considered weak might not be, e.g., 9.♗e2 cxd4!?, and find several new moves in the main 9.♗e2 ♗bc6 and 9.♕d2 ♗bc6 lines.*

Keep in Mind

In order to establish the theoretical evaluation of the variation I have to add an important note: in the main line after 9.♕d2 ♗c6 10.♗f3, the only valid continuation is the 'Stonewall' resource 10...f5, 11.exf6! ♖xf6 (see first diagram next page).



Now please compare both diagrams. White to move: which position do you prefer as Black? We have the same picture with the dynamic 'Polonoise' structures, but with a different placement of Black's queen (a5-d8) and White's bishop (d2-c1).

The second diagram is from Portisch's first game of this chapter (Game 23): here against 11. ♖h5, Black has the reply 11...h6! In contrast, in the first diagram after 12. ♖h5!, now 12...h6? loses to simple tactics: 13. ♖e8+ ♜f8 14. ♙h7+. So, again the only valid defence is 12...♗f5, but as recent games and analysis show, White has a number of attacking ideas where Black's position remains dangerous.

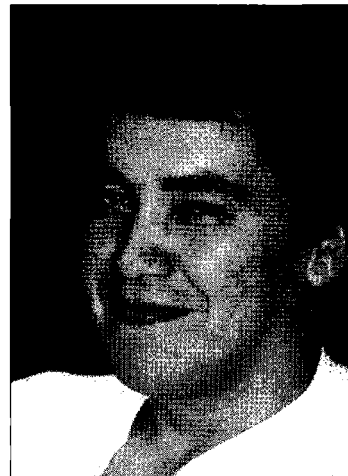
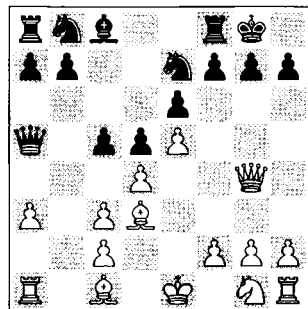
I think that this difference (♖a5 instead of ♖d8) is one of the main defects and problems of Rustemov's provocative line.

□ **Leinier Dominguez Perez**

■ **Alexey Barsov**

Calvia ol 2004 (6)

1.e4 e6 2.d4 d5 3.♘c3 ♙b4 4.e5 c5
5.a3 ♙xc3+ 6.bxc3 ♘e7 7.♖g4 0-0
8.♙d3 ♖a5




Russian grandmaster Alexander Rustemov was the first investigator of the sharp, provocative queen sortie 8... ♖a5. We have thoroughly revised his variation for this book.

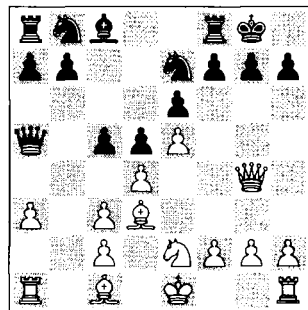
This line became very popular mostly thanks to the efforts of Russian GM Alexander Rustemov, who managed to win many good and instructive games

using this queen sortie. However, the black king will miss his queen soon! The main continuation is doubtlessly:

9.♟d2!

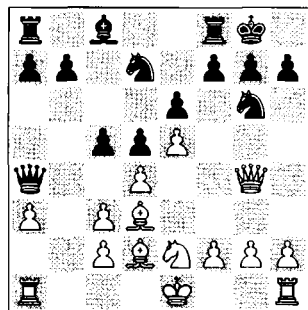
White does not hurry with the attack (197 games=55.7%).

 A) WEAPON: A forced line is 9.♟e2 (31 games= 46.8%). This aggressive approach initially yielded White some quick wins, but recently the antidote was found.



analysis diagram

A1) If we include the moves 9...♟bc6?! 10.♞g5! this leads to Bologan's weapon in Game 24, which is very dangerous for Black. But developing the knight to d7; 9...♞d7!?! is a solid defence: 10.♞h6!?! 10.♞xh7+?! ♜xh7 11.♞h4+ ♜g8 12.♞xe7 cxd4⇒ Cadman-Shulman, Chicago 2003; 10.♞d2 f5!?!⇒; 10.h4?! f5!; 10.0-0 f5! 10...♞g6 11.♞d2!?! 11.h4!?!∞; 11.♞xg6? Balinov-Farago, Seefeld 2003, now of course: 11...hxg6□♞. 11...♞a4!?! Threatening 12...♞xe5.



analysis diagram

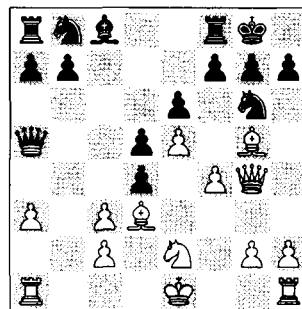
12.♞g5 with an unclear position. This variation may be Black's antidote drawing weapon in the main line.

A2) 9...cxd4!?! is the most principled response. Now:

A21) 10.♞d2 is not very logical: 10...dxc3 11.♞xc3 ♞c7 12.h4?! ≥ 12.0-0 ♟bc6 13.♞h5∞ Maciejaja-Vysochin, Warsaw 2010. 12...♟bc6 13.♞h3 ♟f5 13...♞xe5!?. 14.♞f4 d4 15.♞b4 ♟xb4 15...♞d8!?. 16.axb4 ♞d7 17.g4 ♟e7 18.♞xd4 ♞fd8 19.♞e4 ♟g6⇒ and Black has better perspectives in this open position, Gabrielsen-Djurhuus, Asker ch-NOR 2000;

A22) 10.♞h6 is interesting but maybe a bit premature: 10...♞g6 11.h4!?! 11.♞d2 ♟xe5!?. 11...♟c6 11...gxh6!?! 12.h5∞. 12.♞xg7□ ♜xg7 13.h5 ♟xe5 14.♞xd4 ♞b6 14...♜g8!?! 15.hxg6 ♟xg6∞. 15.hxg6 ♞xd4 16.♞xh7+ ♜f6 17.cxd4 ♟xd3+ 18.cxd3 ♜xg6 19.♞h3 ♞d7♞ and Black at least is not worse, Cabrera-E.Berg, Petra 2007;

A23) 10.♞g5 is the main attacking continuation. 10...♞g6 11.f4 The key position of the line: Black has to use this tempo properly:



analysis diagram

11...♞d7! A strong defensive idea first applied by Rustemov, which practically neutralized the sharp line with 9.♟e2.

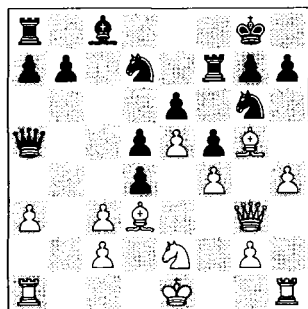
Now it is repeated every now and then. Again, 11...♟c6?! would transpose to the analysis in Game 24.

A231) The only alternative to the capture on g6, **12.h4**, can hardly be recommended: 'the line spells trouble for White only', predicted K&D. **12...f5!** and now:

A231a) **13.♞h3?! h6!** (13...♞f7? 14.h5∞ l'Ami-Seifert, Budva jr 2003) 14.h5 ♟gxe5! 15.fxe5 hxg5 16.h6 g6⌘;

A231b) **13.exf6?** ♟xf6↑ and after ♞g3-h3, ...e6-e5!;

A231c) **13.♞g3 ♞f7!**



analysis diagram

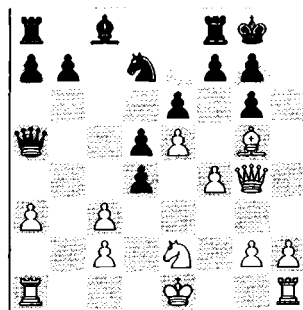
As practice and analysis show, Black stands very well here (1-3):

14.h5 ♟gf8 14...♟e7!?. **15.h6** 15.♞h4? ♟c5 16.♟e7 dxc3⌘ Short-Shulman, Ohrid Ech 2001. Psakhis writes (CBM 84): 'Results of opening are really sad for White – he lost (sacrifice?) two pawns and hasn't any compensation for material deficit.' **15...g6** 15...♟c5!?. **16.0-0 dxc3** **17.♞fb1 a6** 17...♟c5!?⌘. **18.♞h4 ♞c5+** **19.♞h2 b5** **20.♟d8 ♟b7** **21.♟a5 d4⌘** (½-½,32) Areschenko-Seifert, Germany Bundesliga 2008/09;

A232) **12.♟xg6!?** Normally with this exchange White is 'silently' offering a draw.



A232a) **TRICK:** A gross mistake would be 12...hxg6??



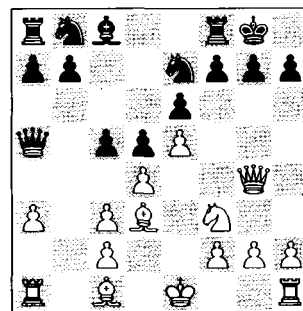
analysis diagram

13.h4!→ f5? (13...♞e8, suggested by Goh Wei Ming, also loses: 14.h5 b6 15.hxg6 fxg6 16.♟f6! (the bishop enters with decisive effect! Also, 16.♟h6) 16...♞f7 17.♟xg7+–) 14.♞h3 ♟c5 15.h5 gxh5 16.♞xh5 ♟e4 17.♟e7 ♟d7 18.♞g6 (18.♟f6!) 18...♞b5 19.♞h7 ♞f7 20.♟f6 1-0 Shabalov-Rustemov, Bad Wiessee 1999;

A232b) **12...fxg6** The only move. **13.♞xe6+ ♞f7** 13...♞h8? 14.♞e7. **14.♞e8+** The simplest way. White is not better after 14.0-0 ♟b6 (14...dxc3!? 15.♞d6 ♟c5 16.♞xd5 ♟e6⌘ Friedel-Shulman, St Louis ch-USA 2009) 15.♞e8+ ♞f8 16.♞e7 dxc3 17.♟f6 ½-½ Svidler-Grischuk, Nalchik 2009. **14...♞f8** 14...♟f8? 15.e6+– wins. **15.♞e6+ ♞f7** and the entire line (9.♟e2) ends in a draw by perpetual check, ½-½ Wach-Kindermann, Austria tt 2000/01.




B) **TRICK:** The tricky 9.♟f3?...

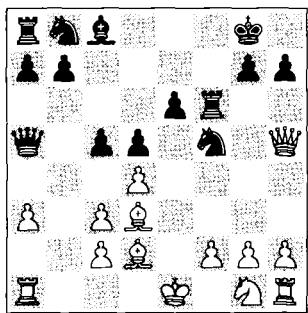


analysis diagram

... is attractive but incorrect: 9...♖xc3+ 10.♙d2 (10.♙e2 ♘f5! 11.♙d2 ♘xd4+ 12.♘xd4 ♖xd4±; 10.♙d1 ♖xa1 11.♙xh7+ ♙xh7 12.♖h5+ ♙g8 13.♘g5 ♖xd4+ 14.♙d2 ♖e4!-+) 10...♖xa1+ 11.♙e2 ♖b2! (not 11...♖xh1? 12.♙xh7+ which should be a draw) 12.♙c1 (the defensive nuance is 12.♙xh7+ ♙xh7 13.♖h5+ ♙g8 14.♘g5 ♖xc2-+) 12...♖a2-+ 13.♙d1 (13.♖h5 ♘g6 Breustedt-Golz, Leipzig ch-DDR 1959) 13...♘f5 and Black keeps an extra rook, L.Guliev-A.Guseinov, Azerbaijan ch 1999.


9...♘bc6

 A) WEAPON: After the immediate 'Stonewall' advance 9...f5 only White has new possibilities: 10.exf6! ♗xf6 11.♖h5!? Or, to continue the line 11.♘f3!? ♘f5?! (11...♘bc6 leads to the main game) 12.c4!↑ Zhukova-Dolzhevikova, Odessa ch-UKR 2006. 11...♘f5□




analysis diagram

12.dxc5! 12.g4?! c4 is in Black's favour. 12...g6! A provocative move, but also the best defence. 12...♘d7? 13.g4 g6 14.♖h3! ♘e7 15.♘f3 ♖xc5 16.♘g5!↑ was an excellent resource in Sakaev-Rustemov, St Petersburg 1997. 13.♖g5 13.♖h3!∞ similarly to Sakaev's plan: g4-♘f3-♘g5. 13...♘d7⇌ and now:


 A1) TRICK: 14.♘f3 e5 15.c4 ♖a4⇌ with the idea 16.cxd5?? h6 winning the queen;

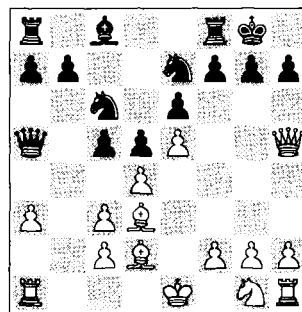
A2) 14.♙xf5? ♗xf5 15.♖e7 ♖xc5! 16.♖xe6+?? ♗f7 and White is simply lost, Filipenko-Kosikov, Smolensk 1991;

 B) TRICK: The bluesy 9...♖a4? is obviously doubtful here: 10.♖h5! ♘g6□ (on 10...h6 11.♙xh6!→ wins in the attack) 11.♘f3→ c4 12.♘g5 h6 13.♘xf7!+- Saric-Ivekovic, Bjelolasica ch-CRO jr 2008.

10.♘f3!

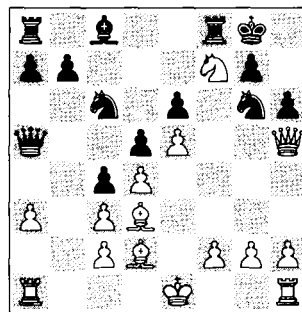
White is ready for ♙xh7+.

 WEAPON: 10.♖h5!? This line has now lost its sting; however, it is necessary for Black to show great care.



analysis diagram

A) The defence 10...♘g6?! is similar to Hertneck's line from Game 24, but the black queen is not on c7, so after 11.♘f3 c4 White can take advantage of the difference by playing 12.♘g5! 12.♙xg6!? fxg6 13.♖g4 leads to 'Warsaw' structures, see also Game 24. 12...h6 13.♘xf7!.



analysis diagram

Here is an interesting analysis: **13...♟f4** 13...♟h8 14.♟xh8 cxd3 15.♟g6 ♖f5 16.♚d1 dxc2 17.♚xc2±. **14.♟xh6+! gxh6** **15.♚g4+ ♚h8** **16.♟f1!** 16.0-0!?. **16...♟h7** **17.g3** ♟g6 **18.♚h5**→ White obtains three pawns and a strong attack for a piece;

B) **10...h6!?** and now:

B1) **11.♟f3 c4** **12.♟e2 f6** **13.exf6** ♖xf6 **14.♟e5** Black's chances are better after 14.g4 ♟g6 15.g5 ♟f4 16.♚g4 e5!±. **14...♟xe5** **15.♚xe5** ♟c6 **16.♚e3** ♚a4 **17.♚a2** ♟d7 **18.0-0** ♖af8 with equal chances, Pedzich-Rustemov, Swidnica 1999;

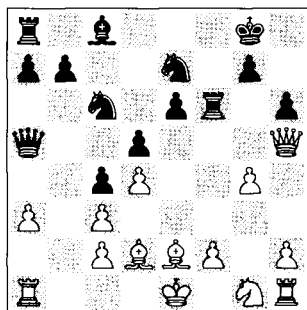
B2) **11.dxc5** b6! **12.cxb6** ♟a6 **13.♚e2** ♟xd3 **14.cxd3** axb6 **15.♟f3** ♚c5 **16.0-0** ♖xa3= Shaposhnikov-Rustemov, St Petersburg 1998;

B3) **11.g4** An attempt to launch an attack, but as the game shows, Black has nothing to fear here.

♟ B31) *TRICK: 11...cxd4* **12.cxd4** ♚a4 **13.c3** ♟xd4! **14.♟xh6!** seems to lead to a forced draw after **14...gxh6** **15.♚xh6** ♟g6 **16.♟xg6** fxg6±;

♟ B32) *TRICK: 11...b6!?* **12.g5?** g6! The key point being **13.♚xh6** ♟a6±;

B33) **11...c4!?** **12.♟e2 f6** **13.exf6** 13.f4?! ♟d7 **14.♟f3** ♟e8!±. **13...♖xf6** The dynamic 'Polonaise' structure.

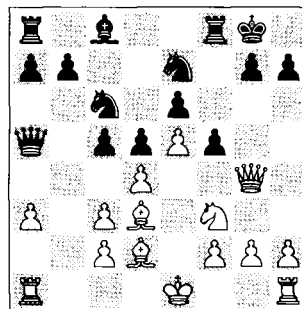


analysis diagram

14.g5! **g6!** **15.♚h4** Black has great compensation for the pawn in case of **15.♚xh6?!** ♖f7 **16.♚h4** ♟f5 **17.♚h3** e5! **18.dxe5** ♟xe5↑. **15...♟f5!** Black correctly avoids the line **15...hxg5** **16.♚xg5** ♖f5 **17.♚g3** e5 **18.h4!**→. **16.♚f4 e5!** **17.dxe5** ♖e6 **18.gxh6** **18.♟f3** h5! **19.♟d4** ♖e7!±. **18...♟xe5** with huge and unclear complications, Karjakin-Barsov, Hastings 2002/03. By the way, here **19.♟h3!?** deserved attention.

10...f5

The 'Stonewall' move is the only defence now. **10...♟g6!?** has never been played at grandmaster level, but after **11.a4!** it must be a worse version of the Warsaw structures that occurred in Game 24.



11.exf6!

Until now, this line was always crucial (107 games=55.6%).

♟ WEAPON: **11.♚h3!?** *Playing with the 'Stonewall' structure is much less popular but also possible: 11...♚a4*

A) Now the best continuation for White is **12.dxc5!** ♟g6 **13.♚g3** ♚g4 **14.0-0** ♚xg3 **15.hxg3** ♟gxe5 **16.♟xe5** ♟xe5 **17.♟f4** ♟xd3 **18.cxd3**± White has a slight and stable plus, but at a technical level it is difficult to win such an endgame, Eraschenkov-Goh Wei Ming, playchess.com 2005.

The other options lead to unclear consequences:

B) 12.♖g1 e4 13.♗e2 ♜xc2∞ originally played in Velimirovic-Drasko, Niksic tt 1996;

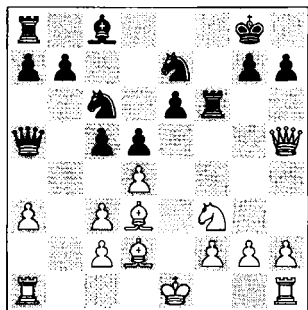
C) White can also play 12.♔d1 ♗d7 13.g4∞ Ginzburg-Robledo, Buenos Aires 1992;

D) Or even 12.0-0 cxd4 13.cxd4 ♘xd4 14.♗b4 ♘xf3+ 15.♜xf3 ♚f7∞ Wirig-Apicella, Bois Colombes 2003.

11...♜xf6

We are again in the dynamic 'Polonoise' structures: which means that time is the prevalent factor here. So:


12.♜h5!



From now on Black has to wage a tough defence against the ferocious attack on the kingside.


12...♘f5

Virtually forced. 12...g6?! 13.♜g5 ♜f7 14.h4→ Geo. Timoshenko-W.Schmidt, Koszalin 1999.

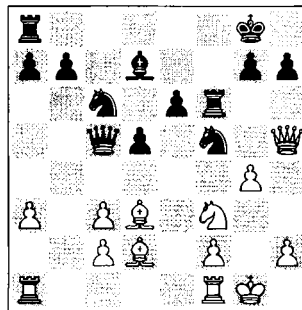
 **TRICK:** As I already mentioned before the game, 12...h6? loses to 13.♜e8+ ♜f8 14.♗h7+.

13.g4!?

The sharpest approach, but not the only way for White.


 **A) WEAPON:** 13.dxc5! This is possibly the safest move order for White, before playing g2-g4. 13...♜xc5 13...e5? 14.♘xe5!± Reinaldo Castineira-Romon Poves, Zaragoza 2001. 14.0-0! Only one game has been played with this line.

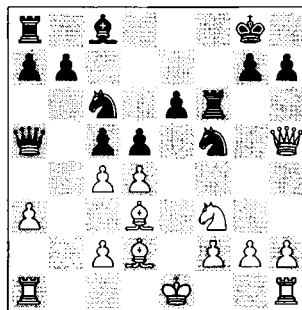
14.g4?! would be too hurried: 14...♗h6 15.g5 g6! 16.♜h3 e5 17.♜g2 ♜xf3 18.♜xf3 e4 19.♜e3 ♜xe3+ 20.♗xe3 exd3 21.gxh6 dxc2 22.♔d2 ♗f5± Korneev-Rodriguez Guerrero, Seville 2002. 14...♗d7? This natural developing move leads to a clear advantage for White, but after each other move Black will simply be the passive side. 15.g4↑



analysis diagram

It is hard to find a good defence for Black. After 15...♘h6 (15...♜g6 16.♘g5!) 16.g5! (16.♘g5!?) 16...g6 (16...♜f5 17.♘h4!) 17.♜h3, 17...♜xf3 is a forced sacrifice, but not strong enough for our workshop: 18.♜xf3 ♘f7 19.♜e3± and Black has no serious compensation for the exchange, K.Szabo-Galyas, Budapest 2003;

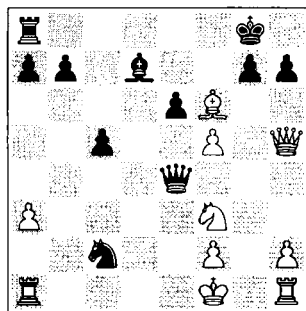
 **B) WEAPON:** On the other hand, Black should also worry a bit about the advance 13.c4!



analysis diagram

13...♖a4 13...♗d8 has been suggested by Almasi as a more or less playable alternative, but White is clearly better after 14.dxc5! dxc4 15.♙xc4↑ ♗fd4 (15...♗cd4? 16.0-0-0!± V.Rajlich-Galyas, Budapest 2001) 16.0-0-0!? ♗xf3 17.♙c3! ♗fd4 18.♙xd4 ♗xd4 19.♗e5±. **14.g4!** 14.cxd5 is not enough for an advantage, thanks to Rustemov's precise anti set-up: 14...♗cxd4 15.♗g5 h6 16.♗e4 ♖f8 17.0-0 b6! 18.♗c3 ♗e8! 19.♗xe8 ♖xe8 20.a4 ♙d7= and drawn in 34 moves, A.Sokolov-Rustemov, Germany Bundesliga 2002/03. **14...dxc4 15.♙e4 ♗cxd4** 16.gxf5 ♗xc2+ 17.♗f1! c3! 17...♗xa1? 18.♙c3 e5 19.♗g5+-.

18.♙xc3 ♗xe4!? 18...♗c4+ 19.♗g2 ♗xc3 20.♖ac1±. **19.♙xf6 ♙d7**

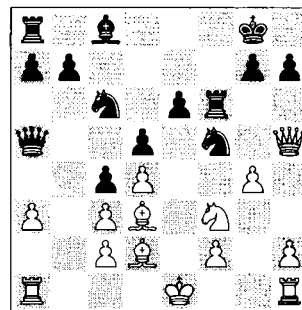


analysis diagram

Here the best idea for White is **20.♖g1!** 20.♗xh7+?! Luther-Szelag, Cappelle la Grande 2006; Almasi gave the forced line 20.♗g5, but he made a mistake in the evaluation of the final position, since the arising endgame is at least not better for White: 20...♗xh1+ 21.♗e2 ♙b5+ 22.♗d2 ♖d8+ 23.♙xd8 ♗d5+ 24.♗c1! ♗xf5 25.♗f3 (25.♖a2 ♗f4+ is a draw by perpetual check) 25...♗xa1 26.♗xf5 exf5 27.♗b2 h6 28.♗f3 ♗f7± Black has three pawns for a piece, and excellent counterchances)

20...♙b5+ 21.♗g2 ♖f8 21...gxf6 22.♗h1+ 22.♖ad1 ♙c6 23.♗g3+- and White is winning.

13...c4



The game scenario is clear now. However, it is not so easy to assess this position correctly.

14.gxf5

14.♙e2? ♗d6 15.♗e5 ♗e4! 16.♗xc6 bxc6 17.f3 ♗xd2 18.♗xd2 c5!↑ Videki-Farago, Hungary tt 1999/00.

14...cxd3 15.♖g1! ♙d7

TRICK: 15...dxc2?? loses on the spot due to a funny combination: 16.♗e8+ ♖f8 17.♖xg7+! ♗xg7 18.♙h6+ ♗xh6 19.♗xf8+, forcing mate in 8 moves.

16.♗g5!?

A very aggressive plan.

The alternative is 16.c4 ♗c7! 17.♙h6 ♙e8 18.♗h4 ♖xh6! 19.♗xh6 dxc4 20.cxd3 which is considered unclear (Sax-Goloschapov, Montecatini Terme 1999).

16...♖f7 17.f6!

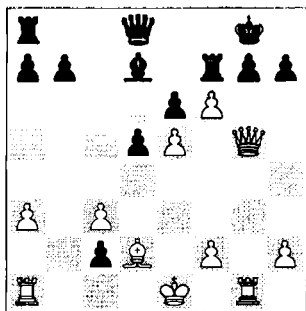
17.cxd3? exf5± Vehi Bach-Garcia Martinez, Barbera del Valles 2003.

17...♗d8

Finally the 'Rustemov queen' returns. Black has to find only moves all the time!

TRICK: 17...dxc2?? 18.♗h6 g6 19.♖xg6+ hxg6 20.♗xg6+ ♗f8 21.♙h6+ 1-0 Krivoborodov-Jüttner, Schwäbisch Gmünd 2005.

18.♗e5 ♗xe5 19.dxe5 dxc2



A critical position, since it is the end of a series of more or less forced moves. Black has a small material advantage, but White retains many interesting tactical opportunities on the kingside.

20...♙e3!?

White is preparing a killing set-up with ♖d2-♙d4-♙e3 and h4-h5-f4-f5. Nobody really knows what to do with black...

20...♖c8

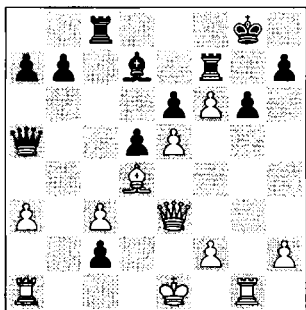
Here are some alternatives:

A) 20...♖h8 21.♗d2 (21...♙d4!?) 21...d4?! 22.♙xd4 ♙c6 23.fxg7+ ♖g8 24.♙xd8+ ♖xd8 25.♖xc2± Zhigalko-Llobel Cortell, Izmir tt 2004;

B) 20...♙f8 21.♙d4 ♙e8 22.♗d2 ♖c7 23.♙g4† Bobras-Vysochin, Bad Wiessee 2004;

C) 20...♙c7 21.♗d2 ♙b5 22.♙d4 ♙c4 23.♙e3 b6 24.♖ac1→ ready for f4-h4, VOnischuk-Leniart, Sibenik jr 2007;

D) 20...♙a5 21.♙d4 ♖c8 22.♙h6! (22.♗d2!?, see game) 22...g6 23.♙e3→



analysis diagram

It is not clear how Black can avoid h4 h5! 23...♖c4 24.♗d2 (24.h4!) 24...♙e8 25.h4 ♖fc7 26.h5 ♖xd4+ 27.♙xd4 ♖c4 28.♙d3 ♙c5 29.♖g2 ♖f4 30.hxg6 ♖xf2+ 31.♖xf2 ♙xf2+ 32.♙e2± Svensson-Gdanski, Sweden tt 2005/06.

21.♗d2

Starting with the mentioned set-up.

21...♙a5



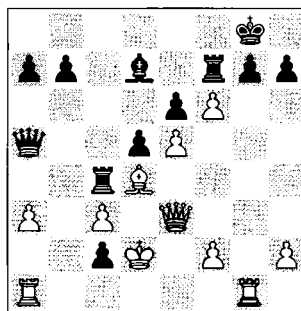
Two more games for the WORKSHOP:

A) 21...♙a4 22.♙d4! ♖h8 23.h4 ♙f8 24.f4! a5 25.h5 (25.f5!) 25...b5 26.f5 ♙e8 27.♙g4! ♖c6 28.♖g3!? ♙c8? 29.h6 g6 30.fxg6 hxg6 31.♙xg6 ♖c7 32.♖h1 ♖h7 33.♙g7+! ♖cxg7 34.hxg7+ ♖g8 35.♖xh7 ♖xh7 36.f7 1-0 Krivoborodov-Heinz, Bad Wiessee 2009;

B) 21...♙a4 22.♙d4! ♖c4 23.♙e3 ♖h8 24.♖g4 ♙f8 25.h4! b6 26.h5 ♙b3 27.f4 ♖a4 28.f5! winning, Geo. Timoshenko-Farago, Nagykanizsa 2003.

22.♙d4! ♖c4 23.♙e3!

White is ready to push the pawns f4-f5 and h4-h5.



23...♙e8?!

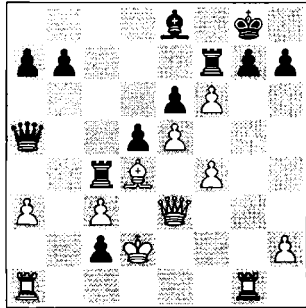
A) 23...♙b5!? is suggested by Psakhis (CBM 104) as the best chance: 24.f4! (24.♖c1!?) 24...♙b2 25.♖ac1 ♙xa3 26.f5∞;



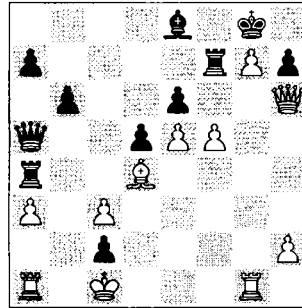
B) TRICK: 23...c1♙+!? trying to open up the white king, may be the best chance for an escape: 24.♖gxc1

24...c1 ♖+□; 24...♞a4? 25.f5 ♕d7
 26.♞g4!→.
25.♕c1!b6?
 25...♞a6 26.♞h3 (26.♕xc2!?) 26...♕g8
 27.f5 exf5 28.♞xf5 ♕d7 29.♞f3↑.
26.f5!
 White brings more pawns into attack, making Black's survival impossible – Psakhis.
26...♞a4
 Black is too late with his counterplay.
27.fxg7+ ♕g8 28.♞h6! **1-0**

24.f4!
 Dominguez plays very aggressively, hoping, that this is the *precisest* way to punish Black for his opening strategy – Psakhis (CBM 104).



24...♕f8?



The threat of 29.♞xh7+ wins.

Summary 8.♕d3 ♞a5:

After the provocative queen sortie, Black does not have much time to create real counterplay on the queenside. In the main line, with the simple moves ♖f3 and ♞h5, White immediately starts a tremendous attack on the kingside, but the main question is: how dangerous is it? In my opinion, the answer lies in the hands of the white players.

Conclusion Warsaw Variation – 7.♞g4 0-0

Play this variation with white or black; it is essential to know how to use pawn structures such as the ‘Polonaise’, the ‘Stonewall’ and the ‘Warsaw’. The key set-ups for the pieces are simple enough for both sides.

From a theoretical point of view, after the best move for White, 8.♕d3, the three most important defensive systems remain playable: 8...♖c6, 8...f5 and 8...♞a5. However, Kindermann’s favourite resource 8...f5 (Game 25 – a solid weapon against players of any level), offers Black the best chances to control and balance the game.

Strategically speaking, after kingside castling the black king is still not safe, and sometimes Black lacks resources to get attractive counterplay.

To be honest, sometimes the arising Warsaw positions are quite boring for my aggressive style... In fact I do not understand why so many strong grandmasters continue using this variation all through their lives.

Fortunately, there are still dynamic and static structures in the Winawer!

Chapter 10 – The Poisoned Pawn versus 7. ♖g4

A ChessPublishing fan: *Don't choose the Winawer Poisoned Pawn. That one needs a lot of preparation or you will get crushed.*

In comparison with other variations of the Winawer, the game is rather forced here. To be successful with the Poisoned Pawn Variation, chess professionals must use their analytical skills and playing skills well, while chess fans need the computer's module and a lot of adrenalin in their blood!

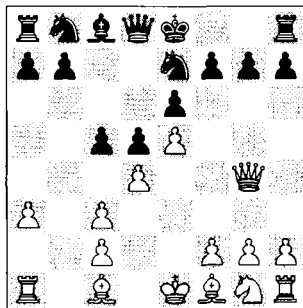
Black has to keep a highly dynamic spiritual rhythm in this line, and he must be a superb balancing artist, rather like Vincent Cassel as The Night Fox with his Laser Dance in the museum scene in the movie *Ocean's Twelve*.



Vincent Cassel as The Night Fox in the movie *Ocean's Twelve*.

A Skeleton of the Poisoned Pawn Repertoire

1.e4 e6 2.d4 d5 3.♘c3 ♙b4 4.e5 c5 5.a3
♙xc3+ 6.bxc3 ♗e7 7.♖g4



We have the great pleasure to present to you the extremely popular Poisoned Pawn Variation' (PPV), which traditionally starts after Black's moves 7... ♗c7 and/or 7... cxd4!?

There is no doubt that this is one of the sharper continuations in the Winawer system. White captures two pawns (g7-h7) on the kingside, allowing Black to get in return a certain advance in development and the possibility to seize the initiative on any part of the board. A similar concept was analysed in one of the Armenian lines, but here Black has not lost a tempo with ... ♙a5.

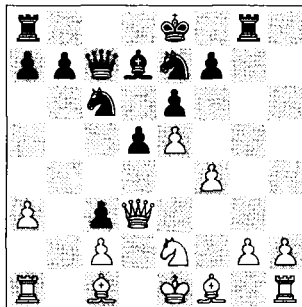
Studying the latest theory in this variation I have tried to create a 'skeleton repertoire' for Black.

I have updated a lot of material from the following recent sources:

- John Watson and Goh Wei Ming (ChessPublishing.com).
- Knut Neven (ChessBaseMagazine 129).
- Nikita Vitiugov, (*French Defence*, 2010).

Directions (Games 27-30)

- Game 27 analyses the possibilities for both sides between moves 7-12.
- In Games 28-30 we take an in-depth look at White's options in the main PPV on moves 13-15: 7...♖c7/cxd4 8.♗xg7 ♖g8 9.♗xh7 cxd4/♖c7 10.♘e2 ♘bc6 11.f4 ♘d7 12.♗d3 dxc3



- Game 28 – 13.♘xc3
- Game 29 – 13.♗xc3
- Game 30 – 13.♖b1, and five other white options on move 13, without (or postponing) the recapture on c3.

Keep in Mind

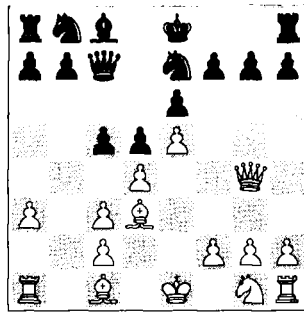
The difficulty of studying such a variation is that after each move the transpositions are multiplying, which, on the other hand, offers great flexibility for the player, who can choose his lines.

The difficulty of playing such lines is that both opponents may go wrong almost immediately!

GAME 27 – Dance or Song: The Move Order on Moves 7-12

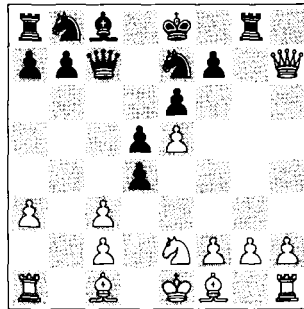
The following game features the wildest lines in the Poisoned Pawn Variation. It is not only a theoretically important game, but it also illustrates some must-know concepts and as you will see it also provides plenty of entertainment!

- After 7.♗g4, the main PPV line begins with 7...cxd4!? rather than 7...♖c7, since the latter allows 8.♘d3!?. We will check if this is really dangerous for Black (see diagram next page).



- After 7...cxd4 White can try to avoid the transposition 8. ♖xg7 ♗g8 9. ♖xh7 ♖c7 by various means, for example with 8.cxd4 or 8. ♕d3. Still, if White plays something other than 8. ♖xg7, I think Black should welcome this. Sometimes it can lead to favourable lines from the previous chapters.

Black's 10th move options after 10. ♘e2



First of all we will look at the early 10...dxc3, which has become so popular lately:

- an original set-up by David Bronstein: 11... ♕d7, preparing ... ♘f5-♘a6!?
- the early move 12... ♘f5?!;
- and mainly, the ambitious advance 12...d4!?. This resource is important for the whole PPV;
- also a recent and somewhat surprising move for White: the early 12. ♘xc3.

And many others – all this in just one model game!

Keep in Mind

The different orders on moves 10-12 can either lead to or avoid many Poisoned Pawn lines. For example, by playing first 10...dxc3 11.f4 ♕d7 and then 12. ♖d3 ♘bc6 Black can avoid White's early deviation 12. ♘xc3. But now he obviously cannot continue with the main line 10...dxc3 11.f4 ♘bc6 (instead of 11... ♕d7), and now 12. ♖d3 d4!?.

□ Sergey Karjakin

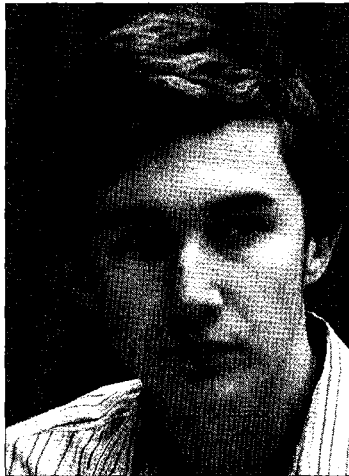
■ Gata Kamsky

Nalchik 2009 (7)

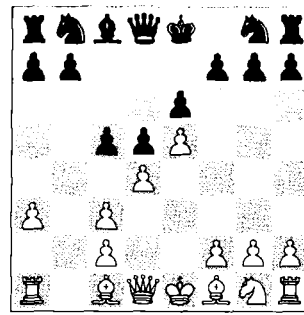
Apparently Kamsky had prepared the Poisoned Pawn for his match with Topalov in February 2009. However, the Bulgarian super-grandmaster preferred to avoid a theoretical discussion in this sharp variation (I guess it hadn't yet been plugged into Blue Gene!). But now we get a chance to see what exactly Kamsky's team had been working on.

**1.e4 e6 2.d4 d5 3.♘c3 ♙b4 4.e5 c5
5.a3 ♙xc3+ 6.bxc3**

Again we have reached the most paradoxical and hardest-to-understand position in chess. The radical Bobby Fischer once said: *Evidently, White must be won in the main Winawer system – with the strong c1-bishop vs. knight and weak black kingside – but still, I do not know how to use that advantage properly!*

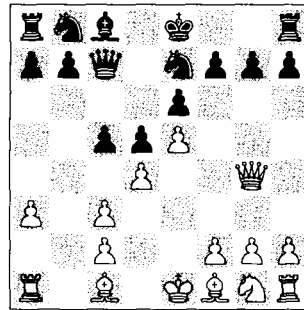


Young star Sergey Karjakin 'Poisoned' Gata Kamsky in 2009, and later, in 2010, the latter's coach and second Emil Sutovsky. Surprisingly, in both games after the opening phase he reached completely losing positions.



6...♗e7 7.♙g4 cxd4!?

There are only about 450 games with this move; however, according to many professional sources, this is the best way to play the Poisoned Pawn! I don't really believe in it, the normal and most popular move order must be absolutely valid: **7...♙c7!** (3060 games!).



analysis diagram

8.♙d3 This is White's intention, with a simple idea: to gain a developing tempo after ♙d3-♗e2 (8.♙xg7 is the main line and will transpose to the game).

Here I offer three lines for Black which yield at least equality:

A) **8...c4!?** 9.♙e2 ♗f5 10.♗h3 ♗c6 11.♗f4 ♙d7 12.♗h5 0-0-0 13.0-0 ♖hg8 14.♙f4 ♙a5 15.♙d2 ♖df8⇌ Amonatov-Gabrielian, Moscow 2010. Black will follow up with 16...f6!;

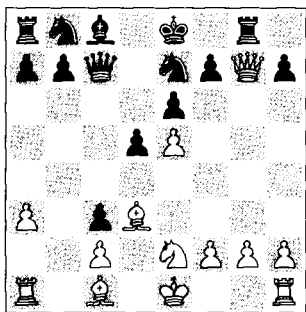
B) **8...♗bc6!?** 9.♙xg7 ♖g8 10.♙xh7 If 10.♙f6 cxd4 11.♗f3 ♗g6! 12.cxd4 ♗xd4 13.♗xd4 ♙c3+ 14.♙e2 ♙xd4⇌

Engsner-Nyström, Sweden tt 1993/94.
10...cxd4 11.♟e2 ♘xe5 Or
 11...♚xe5!? 12.♙f4 ♚f6⇒ Konings-De
 Groot, Utrecht 1999. **12.cxd4** ♘xd3+
13.♚xd3 ♚xg2 **14.♘g3** e5↑ Silingardi-
 Astengo, Corsico 1992;

♞ C) WEAPON: **8...cxd4** 9.♟e2
 dxc3!

♞ TRICK: 9...♚xe5?! is tactically not
 so good: **10.cxd4** h5 **11.♚h4** ♘f5
 12.♚xh5!±.

10.♚xg7 ♚g8

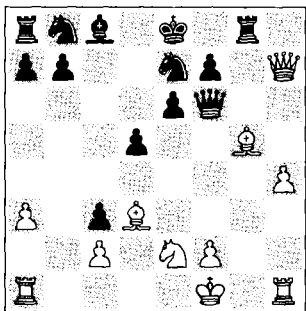


analysis diagram

11.♚xh7

♞ TRICK: **11.♚h6** ♚xe5! **12.♙f4**
 (12.♙xh7?! ♚xg2 **13.♙f4** ♚g7
14.♘g3 ♚xh6! **15.♙xh6** e5⌘) **12...♚h8!**?
13.♙xh7 ♚g4!⌘ (or **13...♚xg2!**?)
 Sevillano-Watson, San Francisco 1995.

11...♚xe5 **12.♙f4** ♚f6 **13.h4** ♚xg2
14.♙f1 ♘g3? e5! **15.♙f1** ♚xg3
16.♘g3 ♘bc6↑. **14...♚g8** **15.♙g5**



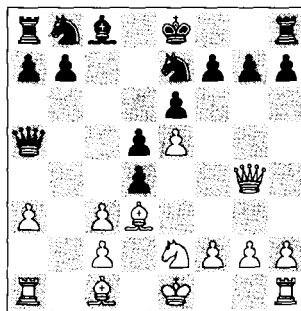
analysis diagram

Now the correct continuation is
15...♚h8! **16.♚xh8** ♚xh8 **17.♙f6** ♚g8
18.h5 **18.♙xc3** ♘d7!?. **18...♘d7**⇒
 with a balanced endgame.

8.♚xg7!

This is the principled and most spirited
 answer. Deviations do not offer much:

♞ A) WEAPON: **8.♙d3** ♚a5!
 9.♟e2



analysis diagram

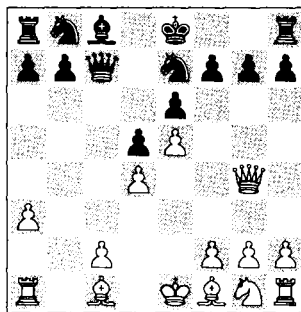
9...♘g6!? (!) Bronstein, (!) Vitiugov.

Keep in Mind:

9...0-0! leads to sublimes of the Warsaw
 Variation which are not dangerous for
 Black, see Game 26 in Chapter 9.

10.h4 **10.♙d2** dxc3 **11.♘xc3** ♚c7
 (11...0-0!?) **12.f4**∞ is complex, Al
 Modiahki-Grischuk, Sochi 2008.
10...♘c6 **11.h5** ♘xe5 **12.♚xd4** ♘xd3+
13.cxd3 e5! **14.♚e3** d4! **15.♚g3** ♘e7
16.♚xg7 ♚g8 **17.♚f6** dxc3 **18.0-0**
 ♚c7⌘ Tal-Bronstein, Kiev ch-URS 1964;

♞ B) WEAPON: **8.cxd4!** ♚c7!



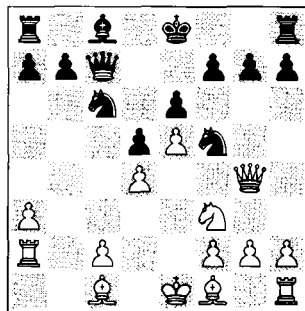
analysis diagram

Here Black has been fighting for the initiative since the times of Ragozin-Botvinnik, Moscow 1935:

B1) **9.♟d2** (50 games=36%). This pawn sacrifice is quite suspicious: **9...♞xc2 10.♞f3 10.♞xg7 ♜g8 11.♞h6 ♞bc6 12.♞e2 ♞xd4! 13.♞xd4 ♞b2** Zufic-A.Grigrorian, Rijeka Ech 2010; **10.♞c1 ♞e4+ 11.♞xe4 dxe4 12.♞e2 ♟d7 13.♞g3 ♟c6**. **10...0-0 11.♟e2 ♞bc6** According to Watson: *White never had a chance in this game*, Golubev-Andreev, Odessa 2008. But White's life is not sweet in other lines either:

B2) Against the obscure king move **9.♞d1** (25 games=54%) the most recent counter-idea is **9...h5!?** **9...♞f5!?**; **9...0-0** from Spassky-Kortchnoi, Belgrade m-12 1977, to Shirov-Zhukova, Gibraltar 2006. **10.♞f4 b6 11.♟b5+ ♞bc6!?** Or **11...♟d7 12.♟d3 ♞g6 13.♞e3 ♞c6** B.Savchenko-Kamsky, Baku 2009. **12.♞f3 a5 13.♞b1 ♟a6** B. Savchenko-Shulman, Khanty-Mansiysk 2009;

B3) Finally, the anti-positional approach with the rook: **9.♞a2** (30 games=40%) leads to serious problems to hold the d4 pawn: **9...♞f5! 10.♞f3 ♞c6**

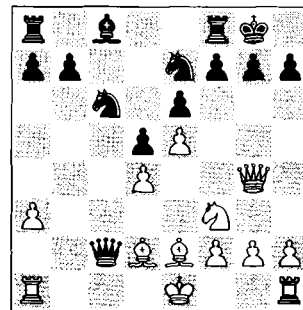


analysis diagram

Now the threat is **...♞xd4!**. **11.♟d3 11.♟d2? ♞b6!** Hjartarson-P.Nikolic,

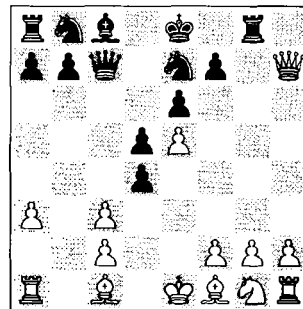
Reykjavik 1991; **11.♟b2?! ♞a5+ 12.c3 b6!**, with the idea **...♟a6** or **...♞ce7**, which is very pleasant for Black (Watson on ChessPublishing). **11...h5! 12.♞g5 ♞cxd4 13.♞xd4 ♞c3+ 14.♟d2 ♞xd4 15.0-0 ♞g4** was slightly better for Black in Vogt-Kosten, Austria tt 2004/05.

Summary of White's Deviations on move 8: It is surprising that well-known theoreticians such as grandmasters Golubev, B.Savchenko, Amonatov and even super-grandmaster Shirov end up in such bad positions after just a few opening moves with white!




8...♞g8 9.♞xh7 ♞c7!

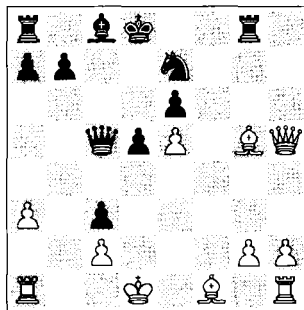
The counterattack begins – it is easy to spot the threats **...♞xc3+** and **...♞xe5+**. **9...♞a5?!** is not playable in view of **10.♞b1! ♞xc3+ 11.♟d2 ♞c7 12.f4±** Alexander-Botvinnik, ENG-URS radio 1946.



10.♞e2

Defending c3 is logical – of course the price is that the ♕f1 is closed in.

 WEAPON: As on move 8, 10.♖d1?! (246 games=50%) is a return to an old idea that almost nobody uses today. The last important games were: 10...dxc3 10...♗d7!? was Uhlmann's option. 11.♗f3 ♗bc6 12.♗g5 ♗xe5! After 12...♗d8?! 13.f4 White should be better, Short-Neelotpal, Dhaka 1999. After the text, in the coming middlegame Black has scored well in practice, because White's dark squares and king remain even more vulnerable compared to the modern 10.♗e2 lines. 13.f4 f6!⇒ 13...♗xcg5!? 14.fxg5 ♗5g6 15.♗e2 e5☞ Matulovic-Tatai, Venice 1969. 14.fxe5 fxg5 15.♖h5+ ♗d8 16.♗xg5 ♖c5!




analysis diagram

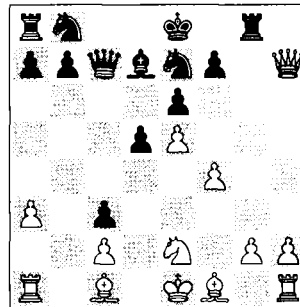
And now if 17.♖h4 or 17.♖g4 (17.♗d3?! allows Black to coordinate his position with 17...♗c7 and ...♗d7, Sisniega-Agdestein, Taxco izt 1985), Black has to be prepared for the exchange sacrifice 17...♗xcg5! (or 17...♗d7 18.♗d3 ♗xcg5!), a good idea for the 'workshop': 18.♖xcg5 ♗d7 19.♗d3 ♗c7 20.♖f4 d4☞ Pareja Perez-Matamoros Franco, Ceuta B 1993. 10...♗bc6

The most natural move order.

A) 10...♖xe5? would not be in the spirit of the line. Indeed, it is a grave error: 11.cxd4 ♖c7 12.♗f4±;


 B) WEAPON: 10...dxc3!?

Mostly this just amounts to transposition, but it can also lead to the following line: 11.f4! ♗d7!? (84 games=41%).



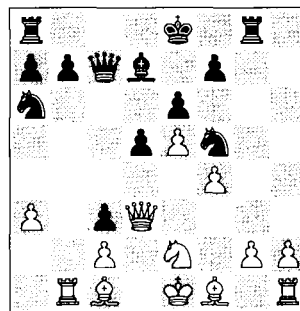
analysis diagram

A relatively obscure variation: Black is going to develop the queen's knight to a6 instead of c6. The idea was originally played by Bronstein in 1964. Now:

 B1) TRICK: 12.h4 ♗b5! was suggested by GM Neil McDonald;

B2) Or 12.♗d4 a6 13.♖d3 ♗bc6 14.♖xc3 ♗c8⇒;

B3) 12.♖d3 ♗f5 (once more, 12...♗bc6 leads to the main PPV position). The c3 pawn cannot be defended. 13.♗b1 There are lots of alternatives here: 13.♗xc3 ♗c6!?: 13.g4 ♗xcg4 14.♗h3 ♗g6 15.♗xf5 exf5 16.♗e3 ♗c6⇒; 13.♗g3!? ♗xcg3 14.hxg3 ♗c6 15.♖xc3 ♗c8 16.♗d3 ♖b6☞. 13...♗a6!

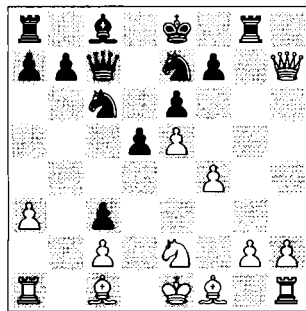


analysis diagram

This is the point: Black threatens to play ... c5-c4 . **14. g1** $14. \text{xc3}$ xc3+ $15. \text{xc3}$ c5 . **14... a4** $14... \text{c5}!$? looks good: **15. xc3** $0-0-0$. **15. g4** c5 **16. $\text{wd1}!$** White missed Black's very strong reply. **16. xc3** is natural: $16... \text{d4}!$? $17. \text{xd4}$ xd4 **18. xd4** xc2 **19. b5** b6 . **16... $\text{wd8}!$** and Black's pieces are ready for the attack (... wh4+), Sangma-Bhat, New Delhi 2009.

11.f4! dxc3!?

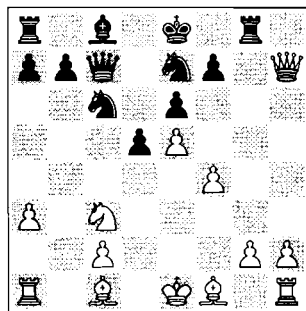
Again, this early move gives Black new possibilities – but White too. The usual $11... \text{d7}$ transposes to the main line.



12. wd3

Another key moment in the opening phase, for the entire Poisoned Pawn system. *White should not omit this standard retreat in these lines, since the queen might find herself stranded hopelessly on the kingside after Black plays ... $0-0-0$ and ... c5* – Knut Neven.

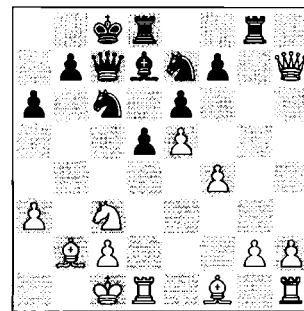
A) **12. $\text{xc3}!$**



analysis diagram

A1) The 'principled' reply **12... $\text{xe5}?$** favours White: **13. b5** wb8 **14. $\text{e2}!$** ($14. \text{xe5}$ xe5+ , Guimard-Frydman, Buenos Aires 1941, is tactically balanced) with a big advantage that applies above all to the difference in development: **14... g6** $14... \text{a6}$ $15. 0-0!$?; $14... \text{c4}$ $15. 0-0\pm$; $14... \text{g4}$ $15. 0-0!$. – **15. $0-0$** d7 **16. $\text{d3}!$** ? **16. b1** was T.Kosintseva-Hou Yifan, Nalchik 2010. **16... a6** **17. $\text{xcg6}!$** $17. \text{d4}!$? **17... xcg6** On $17... \text{fxg6}$ $18. \text{a4}!$ threatens $19. \text{a3}$. **18. $\text{f5}!$** xf5 **19. $\text{cf4}\pm$** Kokarev-Turutin, Voronezh 2010;

A2) The standard way to cover the b5-square is **12... $\text{a6}!$** ? It appears to be a good alternative. **13. $\text{b2}!$** ? **13. wd3** d7 **14. b1** or $14. \text{e2}$ transposes to the main lines. See next Game 28. **13... d7** $13... \text{wb6}!$? is a novelty. **14. $0-0-0-0-0$**

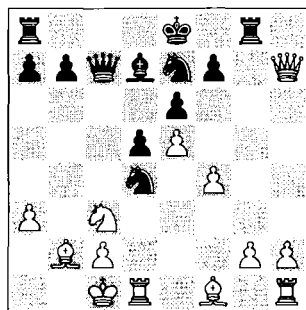


analysis diagram

Black seems to be OK, thanks to the centralization of his whole army. **15. wh4** $15. \text{wd3}$ a5 $16. \text{g3}$ wb8 Shirov-Dvirnyy, Italia tt 2010. **15... wb8** **16. wb1** c8 **17. wf2** a5 Thavandiran-Dvirnyy, Chotowa Wch-jr 2010, and Magem Badals-Stellwagen, Khanty-Mansiysk ol 2010;

A3) **12... $\text{d4}!$** ? Black does not take the pawn back, preferring piece activity. The vulnerable position of White's king may promise him good compen-

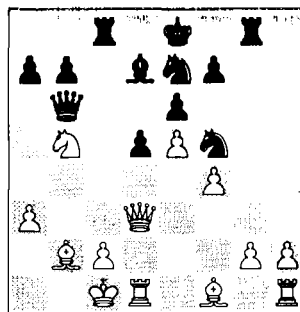
sation. **13.♖b2!** is probably the best move to continue. **13.♗d3** allows Black to activate his second knight: **13...♘ef5**±; **13.♘b5?! ♘xb5** (**13...♗xc2!?**) **14.♙xb5+ ♙d7** **15.♙xd7+ ♘xd7!**± with at least equality. **13...♙d7** For **13...♘df5!?** see below **14...♘f5!**. An idea for the future is **13...♗b6!?** **14.0-0-0 ♘df5!**☞. **14.0-0-0**



analysis diagram

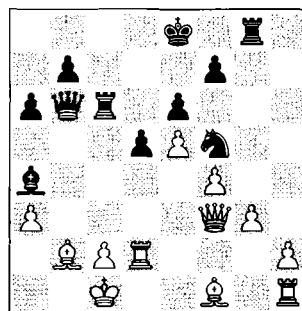
White simply completes his development and attacks the d4 knight.

14...♗b6 Transposing into a recent game, and also to an older one. Instead, Black can try **14...♘df5!?**, temporarily closing in the white queen on the kingside. It is also suggested by John Watson: *...is unclear and apparently balanced, Black's superior pawn structure and positional advantages compensating for the extra pawn and bishop pair, e.g.* **15.♘b5 ♗b6 16.♘d4 0-0-0 17.♗h3 ♘b8**☞. **15.♗d3!?** **15.♘xd5 ♘b3+**! **16.cxb3 exd5**±; **15.♘e4 ♘b3+**±. **15...♘df5 16.♘b5 16.♘e4!?**. **16...♞c8!** An improvement. It makes more sense to occupy the c-file with the rook rather than castle queenside. Black keeps the king in the closed centre, where it is quite safe. (**16...0-0-0?! 17.g3**± Nijboer-Wirschell, Antwerp 1996)



analysis diagram

17.g3 17.♗b3 (!) Watson; **17.♘d4?!** is met by **17...♙a4!** and **17.♙d4?!** by **17...♗a5!**. **17...a6!** It is necessary to attack the annoying knight. After the inaccurate **17...♞c4?** White could have got an advantage by playing **18.♘d4!** but against Sutovsky, Poikovsky 2010, Karjakin played **18.♘d6+?** instead, with a quite irrational position after **18...♘xd6 19.exd6 ♘f5!**. **18.♘d4 ♙a4 19.♞d2 ♞c4** Keeping the initiative. **20.♘xf5 ♘xf5 21.♗f3 ♞c6**☞



analysis diagram

The position is still sharp. However, a strong centre, extremely active pieces and some of White's weaknesses promise Black long-term compensation for the 'poisoned pawn'.

B) **12.h4**. It is quite popular now to move the h-pawn, but this new game is important in neutralizing White's plan! Black plays quite precisely: **12...♙d7**



Grandmaster Emil Sutovsky, Kamsky's second, is well known as a singer, but he is not such a good laser dancer.

13.h5 0-0-0 14.♖d3 ♘f5 15.♗xc3 d4
16.♗d3 ♘ce7 17.h6 ♕a4 18.h7 ♖h8
19.♞a2 ♕c6 20.♞b2 ½-½ Vallejo
Pons-Arizmendi Martinez, El Sauzal
ch-ESP 2010.

Now for our main idea in this model
game:

12...d4!?

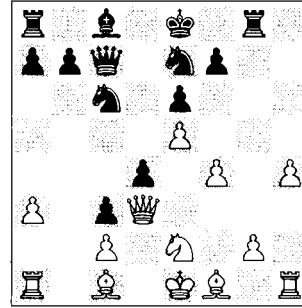
(138 games=44.2%) This is a very en-
ergetic advance, which can also trans-
pose to Game 30 after the inclusion of
the moves 13.♞b1 ♕d7. After 12...♕d7
the main position of the PPV arises, see
Games 28-30.

12...♘f5?! could be an interesting idea,
but it delays the development of the
queenside: 13.♗xc3! 13.♞g1 ♗b6!?∞
Luther-Pert, Liverpool 2006. 13...d4
14.♗d3 b6 15.♞g1! ♕b7 16.g4 ♘h4
17.♞g3!± Vitiugov-Pert, Dresden Ech
2007.

13.♘g3

A logical reply to Black's action. Thus
White starts a standard knight manoeuvre
to the desired square: ♘e4-d6/f6.

☞ A) WEAPON: White can imme-
diately push the famous passed
h-pawn: 13.h4!?. This advance is popular
lately, thanks to the victory of young Spanish
star Salgado Lopez against heavyweight
(2725) Russian GM Alexeev in an important
team game.



analysis diagram

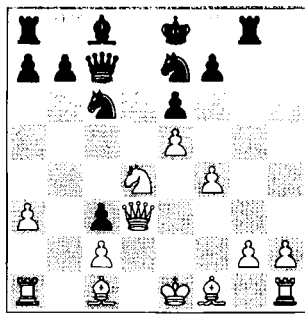
A1) 13...♕d7?! is too slow – Black has
caught on well. 14.h5! 0-0-0 15.h6!
♗b8 15...♕e8 16.h7 ♖h8 (Navara-
Petrik, Hustopece rapid 2010)
17.g4!±. 16.h7 ♖h8 17.♞b1! ♕c8
18.g4! and White held the initiative un-
til the end of the game, Salgado Lopez-
Alexeev, Novi Sad Ech-tt 2009;

A2) The best counterplan is 13...b6!.
'With the idea to save at least several
tempi', as rightly commented by
Vitiugov in 2010. 14.♘d4?! Critical is
14.h5! ♕b7 15.h6 0-0-0 16.h7 ♖h8∞
with a complicated game.

☞ TRICK: 14.♘g3 ♕b7 (14...♕a6!?)
15.♘e4 0-0-0 16.♘d6+ ♖b8
17.♘xf7 ♞d5!±.

14...♘d4 15.♗xd4 ♘f5 16.♕b5+
♕d7 17.♗xd7+ ♗xd7 18.♕xd7+
♗xd7± with a strategically better end-
game for Black (♘ vs ♕), Bologan-
Kamsky, Reggio Emilia 2009/10;

☞ B) WEAPON: More common is
13.♘d4!?



analysis diagram

Another critical attempt in this sharp position. 13...♖d4 14.♗xd4 ♕d7! and now:

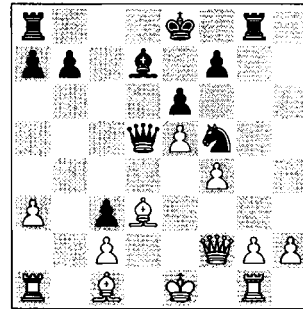
B1) 15.♞b1 may again lead to a sub-line of Game 30: 15...♗f5 16.♗f2 ♗c6!? The more ambitious set-up 16...♕c6 was analysed by Goh Wei Ming and John Watson on *Chess-Publishing* – in great detail, with many attractive and forced lines. After 17.♞g1!∞ Black can try many moves, but I very much like 17...♗d7 18.♕e3 (18.♕d3!?) 18...0-0-0 as in A.Muzychuk-Zhukova, Sochi tt 2009. 17.♞b4 The key point is 17.♞g1 ♗e4+ 18.♗e2 ♗d4=. 17...♗d5 18.♞g1 18.♗f3 ♗xf3 19.gxf3 ♕c6∞ Singer-Liebold, Kaufbeuren 1998. 18...♕c6= Matanovic-Rolland, Le Havre 1966 and Mamedyarov-Alexeev, Ohrid tt 2009;

B2) TRICK: 15.♕e3?! ♗f5 16.♗c5 ♗c6!⇒ Moreno Carnero-Matamoros Franco, *Suances* 1997;

B3) 15.♞g1!? This move, recommended by Khalifman, thematically prepares g2-g4 and a future ♞g3. 15...♗f5! An interesting idea. 15...♞h8!? was recently played by an expert of the PPV: 16.h3 ♗f5 17.♗f2 ♕c6!? 18.g4 ♗h4 19.♞g3 ♗a5⇒ Ortiz Suarez-Nogueiras, Havana 2010. 16.♗f2♠ ♗c6!?! with the following set-up: ...♗d5 and ...♕c6 (after 16...♕c6 17.g4 White is happy).

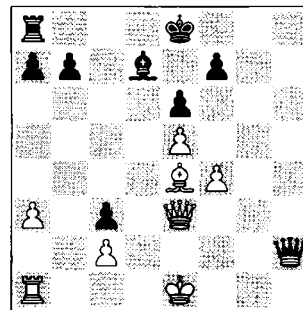
B31) TRICK: 17.g4 is White's most direct try for an advantage: 17...♗e4+ 18.♗e2 ♗d5!? A novelty – the game is balanced after 19.♕g2 ♗c5 20.♗f2 ♗d4! 21.♕e4♠ 0-0-0 22.♕e3 ♕c6!⇒;

B32) 17.♕d3!?! ♗d5 and now:



analysis diagram

B321) 18.♕e3! A novelty by young grandmaster Ray Robson. A number of moves have been tried here but this appears to be best: 18...♗xe3 19.♗xe3 ♞xg2 20.♞xg2 ♗xg2 21.♕e4 ♗xh2

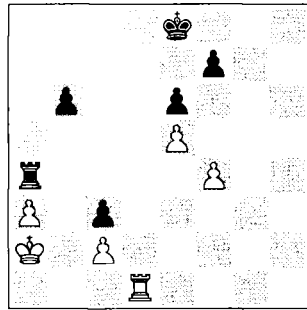


analysis diagram

22.0-0-0! Goh Wei Ming: *The position might look easy but Black actually had to tread very carefully to escape unscathed.* 22...♕c6! This could be the saving move – suggested by Vitiugov (2010).

TRICK: 22...♞d8? (Robson-Shankland, Milwaukee ch-USA jr 2009) 23.♗d4! ♗xf4+ 24.♗b1± threatening ♞h1.

23.♟b1 23.♙xc6+ bxc6=. 23...♙xe4
 24.♞xe4 ♞f2 with an equal rook ending
 after 25.♞xb7 ♞b6+ 26.♞xb6
 axb6 27.♟a2 ♞a4=.



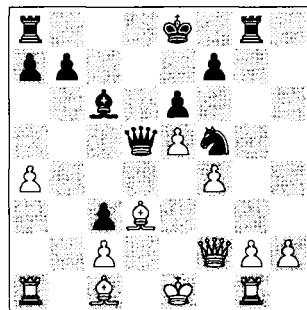
analysis diagram

It may end up in a theoretically drawn
 endgame of white a- and c-pawns vs.
 black e-pawn, or even double e-pawns.

B322) 18.♙xf5 exf5 19.♙e3
 0-0-0!?⇒ is OK for Black, Spitz-Debray,
 Evry 2005; 18.g3 ♘d4 (18...♙b5!?)
 19.♞f1 ♙c6 20.♙e3 ♘f3+ 21.♟e2
 ♞a5∞ Semina-Ludwig, Germany
 Bundesliga B 2000/01;

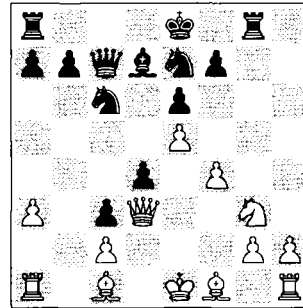
B323) 18.♞b1 is most commonly
 played. This may also transpose to the
 ♞b1 lines mentioned in line B1:
 18...♙c6 19.♞b3 0-0-0 20.♞xc3 ♟b8∞
 and Black has enough counterplay for
 the two-pawn deficit, Zivkovic-
 Kutuzovic, Sibenik tt 2008;

B324) 18.a4 ♙c6



analysis diagram

19.♞a3!? A recent tournament novelty.
 19.♟f1 0-0-0 20.g4?! ♘d4† Talla-Cech,
 Pardubice jr 1991. 19...♞h8
 19...0-0-0!? 20.♞xc3 ♟b8∞. 20.h3
 ♞a5 21.♙xf5 exf5 22.♞d4 ♞d8
 23.♞xc3 ♞d5∞ Svetushkin-Grover,
 Kavala 2010.
 13...♙d7




The key moment for this line. White has
 two options.


Keep in Mind:

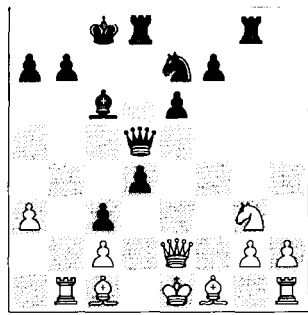
Importantly, this position can arise from
 the main line of the Poisoned Pawn
 Variation, after 13.♘g3 d4!. See the
 notes to move 13 in the last model game
 of the chapter.

14.♙e2

White delays ♘e4, preferring to castle
 first.

 WEAPON: Surprisingly, against
 the natural 14.♘e4!? the score is
 15 games=53.3% in Black's favour! Al-
 though objectively the game is fairly bal-
 anced. 14...0-0-0 and now:

 A) TRICK: Here 15.♞b1 may also
 transpose to some ♞b1 lines, see
 Game 30. 15...♘xe5! A fine thematic piece
 sacrifice by GM Eingorn. Black obtains a
 powerful initiative and a strong pawn centre:
 16.fxe5 ♞xe5 17.♞e2 ♙c6 18.♘g3 ♞d5
 (18...♞xe2+!? would be my two cents'
 worth).



analysis diagram

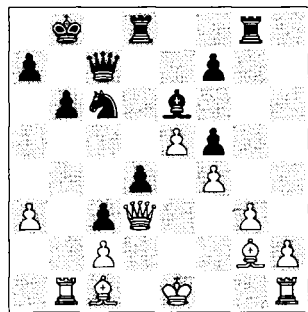
White's position looks dangerous and difficult to play, but the computer still assesses it as balanced, Oll-Eingorn, Odessa ch-URS 1989;

B) 15.♘d6+ ♖b8 16.♞b1 b6! An obvious improvement on 16...♙c8?! 17.♘xf7 ♞df8 18.♘d6 ♘f5 19.♘xf5 ♞xf5 20.g3± and White's position is stable, Schramm-Liebold, Fürth 1999. Now:

B1) 17.♘b5 ♜b7 18.♘d6 draws;

B2) 17.♘xf7 ♞df8 18.♘d6 18.♘g5!? ♞xg5! 19.fxg5 ♙e8!±. 18...♘f5 19.♘xf5 ♞xf5∞ Black should be fine in this position. Now the natural 20.g3 allows 20...♘xe5! 21.fxg5 ♙c6 22.♞g1 ♙e4! 23.♜xe4 ♞xe5 24.♜e2 with an interesting material imbalance – Goh Wei Ming;

B3) 17.g3? White does not have much time to stabilize his kingside and develop an attack on the opposite side. 17...♘f5! Exchanging the annoying d6 knight. 18.♘xf5 exf5 19.♙g2 ♙e6↑



analysis diagram

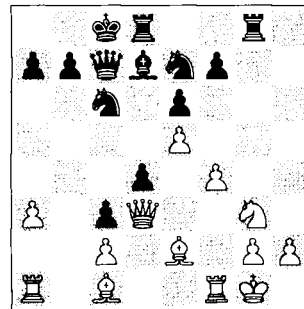
20.a4?? Now White loses the fight for the light squares. 20.0 0 ♘a5↑. 20...♙a2! 21.♞a1 ♘b4 22.♜xf5 ♙e6 23.♜e4 ♙d5 and Black wins as he likes (Reinhart-Carpentier, France tt 2009).

14...0-0-0

Later, GM Shulman, another second of Kamsky, changed the order, playing 14...♜b6 first. Perhaps he wanted to avoid White's useful move 15.♞b1 (see that game below).

♝ TRICK: The immediate 14...♘f5 also gives fine counterplay: 15.♘e4? (15.♘xf5 exf5 16.♙f3 was safer in Matanovic-Ivkov, Beverwijk 1963) 15...♞xg2 16.♙f3 ♞g6↑ Vökler-Eingorn, Cuxhaven 1993.

15.0-0



The key position after the opening phase. It is very complex and both sides have their advantages, which more or less balance out the game.

15...♜b6

15...♘f5!? 16.♘xf5 exf5∞ Borgen-Celorio, Chicago 1973.

16.♘e4 ♘d5

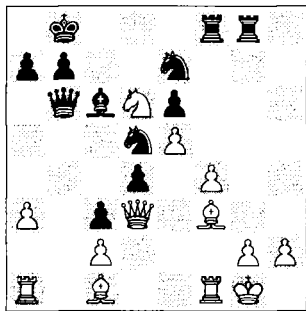
Gata Kamsky was evidently in a fighting mood. He sacrifices the f7 pawn. Unfortunately, later on he loses the rhythm. 16...♖b8!?

17.♘d6+

In an even more recent game from the US Championships, White offered the

exchange of queens with 17. ♖b5 but Black obtained healthy counterplay anyway: 17... ♗xb5 18. ♙xb5 ♖c7 18... ♗ce7!? 19. ♘d6+ ♖b8 20. ♙xd7 ♗xd7 21. ♘xf7 ♗f5∞. 19. ♗b1 a6 20. ♙d3 b5⇌ 20... ♗g7!?. 21.a4?? ♗cb4! and Black is already winning, Khachiyan-Shulman, St Louis ch-USA 2009.

17... ♖b8 18. ♘xf7 ♗df8 19. ♘d6 ♗ce7 20. ♙f3 ♙c6

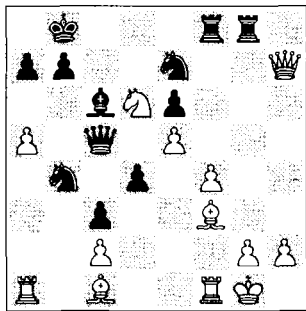


Black attacks the important f4 pawn.

21.a4?

This mistake allows Black an initiative through the centre. 21.g3 was critical: 21... ♘xf4 21... ♗f5!?. 22. ♙xf4 ♗xf4 23. ♙xc6 After 23... ♙g2 ♗xf1+ 24. ♗xf1 ♗g6!? there remains plenty of play. 23... ♗xf1+ 24. ♗xf1 ♗xc6 25. ♗h7 d3+ with active counterplay for Black: 26. ♖g2 ♗d8! 27. ♗f7 ♗a6 28. ♗xb7+ ♖a8 29. ♗b3 ♗xe5! etc.

21... ♗b4! 22.a5 ♗c5 23. ♗h7



We are approaching the climax of the game.

23...d3+?!

The check is obvious, but it is premature! 23... ♗f5! was quite forcing: 24. ♘xf5 exf5 25. ♙a3 (the only way to prevent ... ♗xc2) 25... ♙xf3 26. ♗xf3 d3+ 27. ♖h1 dxc2 offering Black excellent chances.

24. ♖h1 d2

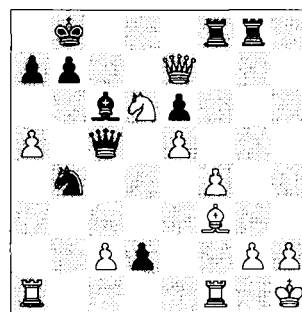
This looks dangerous, however White has hidden resources in this complex position.

25. ♙xd2?!

There were two other continuations. The losing one is 25. ♗xe7? ♗xf4! 26. ♙xd2 cxd2 27. c4∞ ♗gf8 28. ♗ad1 ♗d3 29. ♗xd2 ♗xe5∞.

And the saving idea was 25. ♙a3! ♙xf3 25... ♗ed5 26. ♗xb7!! ♙xb7 27. ♙xb4⇌. 26.gxf3 26. ♗xf3?? ♗d5! 27. ♗d1 ♗xf4-+. 26... ♗e3! 27. ♗xe7 27. ♙xb4? ♗e2 28. ♗h3 ♗d5. 27... ♗g1+ 28. ♗xg1 ♗xf3+ 29. ♗g2 d1♗+ 30. ♗xd1 ♗xd1+ 31. ♗g1 ♗f3+ and draw!

25...cxd2 26. ♗xe7



26... ♗xf4!?

Black is very close to clinching the point. 26... ♗d5! 27. ♗h7 (27. ♗xe6 ♗xf4∞) 27... ♗h8 28. ♗g7 ♗e3 was winning.

27. ♗ab1?

This should have been a decisive mistake.

27...♖g8?

27...♖xc2! would have decided the game: 28.♗xc6 ♖xc6 29.♖g1 a6!?—+ zugzwang!

28.c4?

Goh Wei Ming: *It's no wonder that even the very best players get lost in such a position.* White should have played 28.h3 or 28.♖g7.

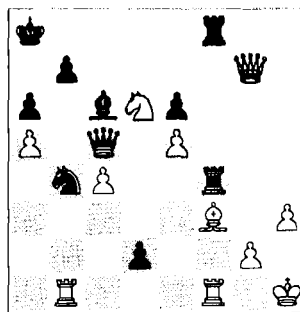
28...a6?

One more lapse in time-trouble. Correct was another prophylactic move: 28...♗a8!! and there are no reasonable answers for White: 29.♖xe6 The quiet 29.h3 can be met with the paradoxical 29...♗a6!—+ and next ...♖xf3; or 29.♖bd1 ♗a6!—+. 29...♗d3! and Black appears to be winning.

29.h3?

Nor is Sergey Karjakin playing immaculately here. 29.♖g7□.

29...♗a8 30.♖g7



And now for the dramatic finish.

30...♖e3??

Instead of winning Kamsky makes a decisive mistake. After the correct 30...♗d3! 31.♗xb7 (31.♖xb7 d1♖—+) 31...♖xe5! Black wins.

31.♗h2!+—

Now the threat to b7 is real.

31...d1♖?

Losing instantly: 31...♖b8 was necessary: 32.♗xc6 bxc6 33.♗e8! ♖xe8 34.♖xb4 ♖a7 35.♖xa7+ ♗xa7 36.♖d1 ♖d8 37.♖b2±.

32.♖bxd1

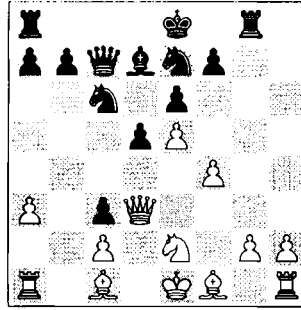
1-0

Summary of the whole idea of 12...d4:

- Surely black players can score many points with this sharp continuation.
 - Defending the strong c3 pawn is reasonable and healthy (the black pawn chain c3-d4 is powerful enough).
 - Sacrificing the d4 pawn (♗xd4) leads to dynamic play, thanks to the opened d-file and the diagonal a8-h1.
- A) In the line 13.♗g3 with the idea ♗e4-d6, I completely agree with the following nice conclusion by Goh Wei Ming: *...is very natural but I have not found anything for White that promises more than equality. If anything, Black obtains dangerous attacking play on the kingside and I reckon if a 2700+ player like Karjakin was confused from the madness that occurred on the board, lesser mortals would surely go wrong as well.*
- B) After 13.h4, 13...b6! gives Black great counterplay.
- C) Therefore, 13.♗xd4 continues to be the critical move, but it ends in a forced draw in Robson's modern line and leads to an original game in most other lines.

See Game 30 for more material on ...d5-d4.

GAMES 28-30 – Move order complications on moves 13-15 – White's 13th move:



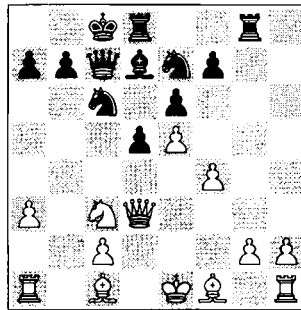
For a long time this was considered to be the key position of the dynamic Poisoned Pawn Variation. White's most popular continuations in modern tournament practice are 13. ♖xc3 and 13. ♕xc3 as well as the highly transpositional 13. ♗b1.

Keep in Mind

Sometimes a 'naked' glance at the position does not match reality – there are hidden resources and tricks!

GAME 28 – Slower Treatment: 13. ♖xc3 (825 games=55.1%)

- The capture on c3 with the knight is a much slower treatment than the capture with the queen, and allows Black to derive some temporal advantage from the opponent's delay in development – in the PPV this means a lack of piece coordination.
- It is important for both players to understand the difference between the knight capture as played with or without the insertion of ♗b1.
- White is going to play ♗b1, ♘e2, h3-g4 or h4-♗h3-h5, pushing forward his passed pawn.
- Helpful moves for Black are ...♗c8, ...♘f5, and the well-known (multi-purpose!) manoeuvre ...♘a5-c4 or ...♘a7, which also allows ...♙b5/♙c6.
- However, Black's first and possibly foremost solution against 13. ♖xc3 may be the paradoxical weapon 13...0-0-0!



With the idea 14. ♘b5 ♘xe5!.

- Anyway, the main line with 13.♞xc3 a6 followed by 14.♞b1 or 14.♞e2 deserves further attention, i.e. some more analytical work.

The following game is a real dance show, and many of Black's options after move 13 are fascinating!

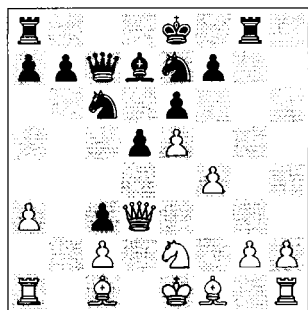
□ Ivan Cheparinov
 ■ Alexander Grischuk

Baku 2008 (1)

1.e4 e6 2.d4 d5 3.♞c3 ♞b4 4.e5 c5
 5.a3 ♞xc3+ 6.bxc3 ♞e7 7.♞g4
 cxd4!? 8.♞xg7!

Transposing to the main line is undoubtedly the best option.

8...♞g8 9.♞xh7 ♞c7 10.♞e2 ♞bc6
 11.f4 ♞d7 12.♞d3 dxc3



After a dozen moves we have reached the main position of the entire Poisoned Pawn system in the French Winawer.

13.♞xc3

White takes on c3 with the knight (as happens in most of the PPV games) and threatens ♞b5-d6 with check.

13...a6

This is a mental reflex against ♞b5, but also the most natural and most popular move (690 games=45,6% for Black). However if, for some reason, Black does not want to test White's theoretical preparation in the main line, he can try one of the following three options:

A) After 13...♞a5 (26 games=38.5% for Black) 14.♞b5 ♞xb5 15.♞xb5+



Russian super-grandmaster Alexander Grischuk is a Poisoned Pawn expert and the best champion of the black side.


♞ac6 (15...♞ec6?! 16.♞e3 = 3:0 for White; 15...♞f8!? can be recommended exclusively for GM Eingorn!) White has one extra poisoned pawn and his position looks solid, but in real life no man has won a short or easy game here.


Note that after queenside castling, Black threatens ...♞xe5 or ...♞d4.

B) A move with another knight, 13...♞f5?!, has a positive score: 71 games=53.5% for Black. But it seems there is a refutation: 14.♞b5!

TRICK: 14.g4 ♞xg4 15.♞h3 ♞xe5!↑
 14...♞b8□ 14...♞d8?! is old theory, but after 15.♞b1! a6 (or 15...♞a5 16.g3±) 16.♞d6+ ♞xd6 17.exd6 the queen is worse on d8; White is clearly better. 15.♞b1! a6 16.♞d6+ ♞xd6 17.exd6 b5? ≥ 17...♞xd6 18.♞xb7 ♞e7 19.♞d2!↑ with an open game. 18.♞h7 ♞f8

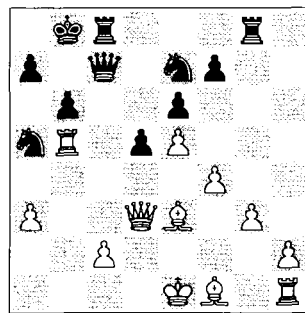
19.♙d3 ♜xd6 20.0 0± and Black's position is dubious, Lindberg-Olsen, Stockholm 1993;

 C) WEAPON: But why not castle queenside immediately? 13...0-0! This possibility is a real treasure in the line 13.♗xc3 and Black can certainly use it as a main weapon:

 C1) TRICK: 14.♗b5?! ♗xe5! is the tactical point: 15.♗xc7 ♗xd3+ 16.♙xd3 ♖xc7=;

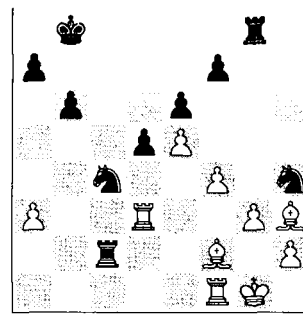
C2) If now 14.♗e2! Black wins a full tempo compared with 13...a6 14.♗e2;

C3) 14.♞b1 ♗a5! Importantly, this position can also arise after 13.♞b1 0-0-0. 15.♗b5 See for more of White's alternatives the last model game of this chapter. 15...♙xb5 16.♞xb5 Even less promising for White is 16.♜xb5 ♗f5± or 16...♜xc2!?±. 16...♗b8! 16...♗c4!? is an alternative. 17.g3 ♞c8! 18.♙e3 18.♙d2 ♗c4±. 18...b6! Instead of the natural 18...♗c4!? 19.♙f2 ♜c6 20.♞c5 ♜a6∞ when Black maintained a dynamic balance in Areschenko-S.Williams, Coventry 2005.



analysis diagram


This is the strategic improvement in this line. 19.♙c5 ♗f5 20.♙h3 20.♜xf5 ♗b7!; 20.♙e2 ♗c4±. 20...♗b7! The conclusion of a successful opening strategy. Now White loses his c2 pawn. 21.♙f2 ♜xc2 22.♜xc2 ♞xc2 23.0-0 ♗h4 24.♞b3 ♗a5 25.♞d3 ♗c4±.

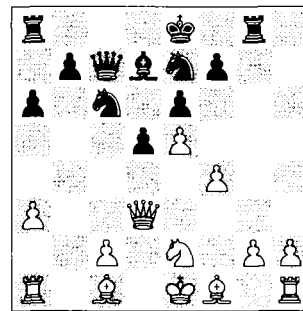


Both opponents have played very inventively, but Black's position is preferable (♗♗ vs. ♙♙ in a blocked structure), Dominguez Perez-Shulman, Buenos Aires 2005.

14.♞b1

Usually the line begins with this common move (388 games=55%).

 A) WEAPON: The main alternative is 14.♗e2!? (160 games=60.6%).

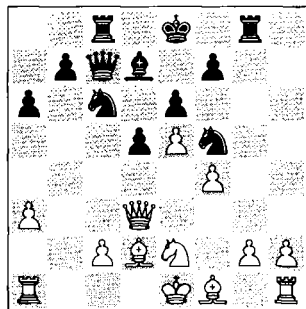


analysis diagram

Spassky's knight manoeuvre has received more attention because of its flexibility. White's idea consists in re-establishing control over d4, and then preparing the kingside advance g2-g4.

A1) 14...♞c8!? Black keeps his king in the middle, with counterplay down the c- and g-files. 15.♙d2!? 15.♞b1 is also a common reaction, when 15...♗a5!? is probably the best set-up (15...♗a7!? 16.♙e3 ♙a4 17.c3 ♗b5± is interesting): 16.♗d4 ♙a4! 17.♙d2 ♗ac6!

18.c3 b5!?. Below we will see more lines, transposing to ♖b1. 15...♟f5



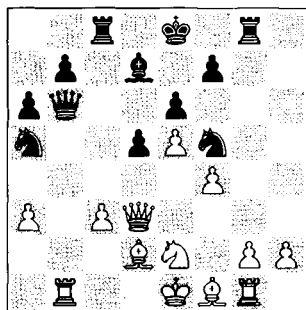
analysis diagram

♟ A11) TRICK: 16.h3?! ♟xe5! 17.fxe5 ♟b5 18.♖c3 ♖d8 19.♖b4 ♜c4 20.♖b2 ♜e4! Zarezenko-Bobarykin, Novosibirsk 1998;

A12) On 16.♜g1 Vitiugov cites a few lines leading to satisfactory results, for instance:

A121) 16...♟ce7!? 17.♜b1 ♟b5! 18.♜xb5 axb5 19.g4, and instead of his own move 19...♟h4, Vitiugov gives 19...♖b6 20.gxf5 ♜xg1 21.♟xg1 ♖xg1 22.♖xb5+ ♟f8 23.f6 ♟f5 24.♖xb7 ♜e8=;

A122) 16...♖b6! tries to exploit the omission of ♜b1 by White: 17.c3 ♟a5 18.♜b1



analysis diagram

and now instead of 18...♖c5 from an old Anand-Baer game, he correctly sug-

gests 18...♟b5 19.g4 (19.a4 ♖xg1) 19...♖xg1! 20.♜xb5 ♖xg4 21.♜xa5 ♖h4+ 22.♟d1 ♖xh2↑ with good compensation (Vitiugov). That is certainly the case, but it is only natural that White has problems with his entire army totally misplaced!

A2) The move 14...♟f5!? is also often played and seems fine for Black, it can also transpose to 14...♜c8.

After the rook move we have:

A21) It seems White does not have time for 15.♜b1 in view of:

A211) 15...♟a5! 16.♟d2 16.♖c3 ♖d8!?. 16...♟c4⇒ 17.h3?! and now:

♟ A211a) TRICK: Here, Knut Neven has found an excellent reply: 17...♖d8!↑ with the idea ...♖h4+;

A211b) The move 17...♟b5!? is suggested by Vitiugov;

A211c) With 17...♖c5 18.g4 ♟xa3 19.♜b2 ♟c4⇒ Black was successful in Karjakin-Ni Hua, Moscow 2005.

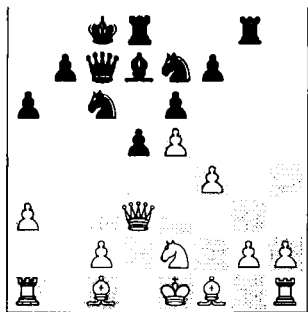
A212) Or also 15...♟a7!?, with a 0-3 score for Black: 16.♖c3 ♟c6! Ehlvest-P.Nikolic, Reykjavik 1991.

Instead of 15.♜b1 White has:

A22) 15.♜g1 ♟a5!? 16.♜b1?! ♟a4 17.c3 ♟b5 ½-½ Spassky-Nogueiras, Reggio Emilia 1986/87.

A23) 15.h3!? White supports the advance of his g-pawn. 15...♟a5!? 15...0-0-0 16.g4 ♟h4∞. 16.a4!? To prevent ...♟b5; 16.g4 ♟b5 17.♖c3 ♖xc3+ 18.♟xc3 ♟xf1 19.♜xf1 ♟d4⇒ Timman-Short, Rotterdam 1989. 16...♖d8! 17.h4!∞ Grandelius-Arslanov, Olomouc 2009. Now Ivanchuk's queenside castling (see below) is delayed.

A3) After 14...0-0-0?! White remains with a plus in most natural lines:




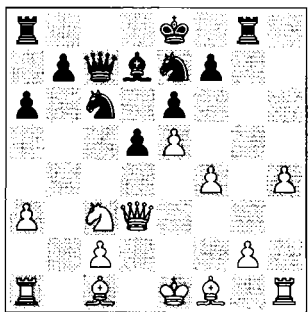
analysis diagram

A31) 15.g3 d4 (15...♟f5!?) 16.♞c4±
Anand-Ivanchuk, Nice rapid 2009;

A32) Khalifman prefers the standard method 15.♞b1!?, for instance 15...♟a5 might be met by 16.♟d4 (16.♞c3!?) 16...♟c4 (or 16...♟ec6 17.c3!?)±) 17.g3 ♟c6 18.♞e2± Zadruzny-Kasyan, Acir jr 2006;

A33) 15.♞d2!?! ♟f5 (15...♟a5 16.♟d4 ♟c4 17.g3±) 16.h3! ♟ce7 17.g4 ♞b5 18.♞c3± Chandler-Knott, London 1988.

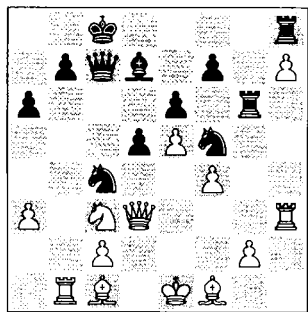
 B) WEAPON: The standard advance 14.h4 is another option, which always deserves some attention in the main PPV, and is highly transpositional between many lines.



analysis diagram

14...♟f5! A logical reaction to exploit the weak g3-square. 14...0-0-0! is similar; 14...♞c8?! 15.♞h3± Kasimdzhanov. 15.♞h3 0-0-0 16.h5 16.♞b1 trans-


poses to the previous line. 16...♟a5 17.♞b1 and again, we are back in one of the main lines connected with ♞b1: 17...♟c4! 18.h6 ♞g6 19.h7 ♞h8



This position is considered to be equal, since the h7 pawn does not have much of a future! Black even has a better score here: 22 games=59%.

14...♟a5!

This typical regrouping is the best set-up against 14.♞b1 – Black has to be careful!

 A) TRICK: 14...0-0-0?? 15.♞xa6;


B) TRICK: After the inaccurate 14...♟f5?! White has the tactically justified advance 15.g4!?. For 15.♟e2 see the previous line ♟e2.

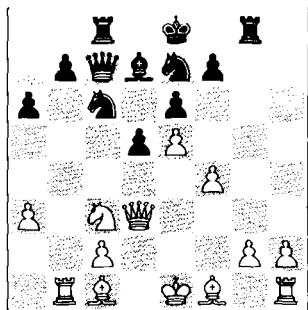
B1) The point is 15...♟h4 16.♞g1 or 16.h3. Note that 16.♞h7! ♟e7 actually saves the piece for Black;

B2) Or 15...♞xg4? 16.♞h3, the point being 16...♟xe5 17.fxex5 ♞xe5+ 18.♟e2! Olthof-Luyks, Nijmegen 1978;

B3) The knight sacrifice 15...♟xe5 has also been played several times, but is hardly correct.

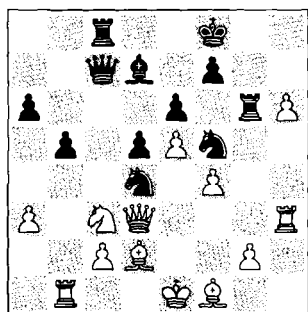
15...♟fe7 16.♞e2! ♞c8 Remember: 16...0-0-0?? 17.♞xa6 bums! Svoboda-Huba, Slovakia tt 1999/00. Now White has the strong 17.h4! ♟a5 18.♞h3!±;

 C) WEAPON: 14...♞c8!? This plan is similar to 13.♟e2 ♞c8, but there is GM Shulman's extra idea...♟f8!.



analysis diagram

15.h4 15.♖e2 was seen previously – remember all the transpositions to ♖b1.
15...♗f5 **16.♞h3** ♖cd4!? **17.♙d2**
 17.h5!? ♜f8! 18.a4 ♞g4∞; 17.♞b2 b5!
 18.h5 ♝c5⇒. **17...b5** This pawn advance frees the black queen, but the direct 17...♜f8!? might be more accurate.
18.h5 ♜f8! Shulman's novelty. Black's king can block White's pawns and yet it is safe on the kingside! **19.h6** 19.♞b2!?.
19...♞g6! The rook is able to remain on the g-file.



analysis diagram

Now White quickly lost track: 20.a4 ♜g8 21.axb5 axb5 22.♙d1 ♝c5!†
 23.h7+ ♜h8 24.♗e2 ♗xc2 25.♞c1 b4!
 26.♝b3 ♝a7 (26...♝f2!) 27.♞xc2 ♞xc2 28.♝xc2 ♙a4 29.♞b3 ♝f2 0-1
 Sarkar-Shulman, Oak Brook 2007.

15.h4!?

Topalov's favourite second Ivan Cheparinov prefers the main continua-

tion (122 games=51.2%). White prepares a thematic rook lift to the third rank: ♞h3, followed by the dangerous pawn advance h5-h6-h7 etc.

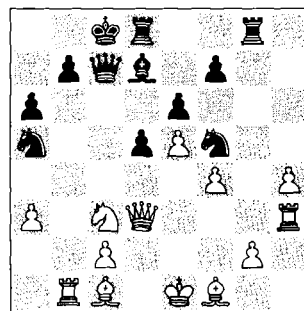
Other continuations are too slow and transpose to the lines with ♞b1 analysed before, which, of course, are good for Black:

15.h3 ♞c8!; 15.g3 ♞c8!.



TRICK: 15.♙d2 ♗c4 (15...♞c8!? also gives Black sufficient counterplay) 16.♗e4 (16.♗e2 leads to Karjakin-Ni Hua, Moscow 2005) 16...dxe4! (16...0-0-0?! Jahrsdörfer-Wasl, Germany tt 2006/07) 17.♝xc4 ♝xc4 18.♙xc4 ♞xg2= 19.♞xb7?? ♙c6 20.♞c7 ♞xd2!-+ and *Black wins material.*

15...♗f5 **16.♞h3** **0-0-0!**



This is Uhlmann's favourite set-up – at all times and throughout the Winawer! Here, Black connects his rooks in order to defend against White's kingside pawns, and in turn builds up his own counterplay over the board.

The position is very complicated and dynamic, giving definite compensation to Black for the sacrificed pawn. The main question is whether White will be able to parry Black's threats and keep his extra pawn... – Postny in CBM 124.

17.h5!

The pawn must move on.

17.♖b4 is a transposition, see Alexeev-Vitiugov in the notes to Black's 18th move below;

♜ TRICK: 17.♙d2?! ♘c4! 18.h5 (18.♘e2 d4! (18...♙b5!?) 19.h5 (19.♘xd4? ♙b5⚡) 19...♙b5 'with an excellent game for Black' – Vitiugov) 18...♙c6 (18...♘xa3!? 19.♖b3 ♘c4 also looks safe enough, Robson-Song, Heraklio jr 2004) 19.h6 ♖g6 20.h7 ♗h8 and the position is balanced, Volokitin-Tillmann, Biel 2000.

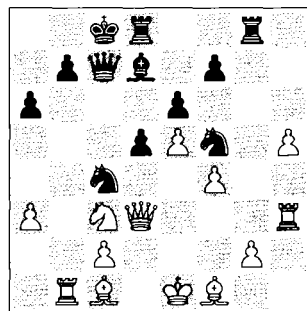
17...♘c4!

We have already seen transpositions to several well-known games, and both players still have a number of ways to go wrong here:

♜ A) TRICK: Such as 17...♖g4? 18.♗f3! ♖g8 (18...♘h6? 19.f5!) 19.h6!± Fuentes-C.Moreno, Lima ch-PER 1999;

♜ B) TRICK: Or 17...d4? 18.♘e4 ♙b5 19.♗xb5 axb5 20.♘f6± Teloudis-Eitel, Germany tt 1990;

♜ C) TRICK: Or for instance 17...♗c5?! 18.♗e2! (18.h6!?) 18...♘c6 19.g4!? ♘cd4 (19...♘fd4? 20.♗xa6!) 20.♗d1 ♘h6 21.g5 etc., which is clearly in White's favour.



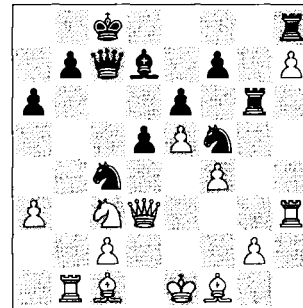
18.♖b4!?

(29 games=56.9%)

♜ WEAPON: The principled alternative is 18.h6 (24 games=37.5%). But here White usually

wins no more than a donut hole! 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" – Vitiugov.

19.h7 ♗h8



analysis diagram

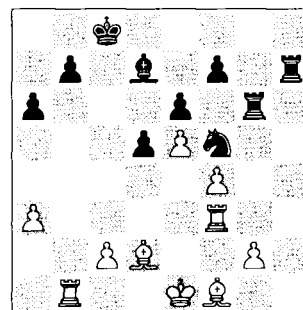
The key position of this 'donut' line.

♜ A) TRICK: 20.♘e2 ♙b5 (20...♖g7!?) 21.♘d4 ♘xe5! 22.♗d1?? ♙xf1 Black wins, Karjakin-Grischuk, Moscow blitz 2008;

B) 20.♘e4 dxe4 21.♗xc4 ♗xc4 22.♙xc4= Becerra Rivero-Bhat, United States tt 2008;

C) 20.♗f3 and now:

C1) 20...♘ce3! leads to a pleasant endgame for Black: 21.♙xe3! ♗xc3+ 22.♙d2 ♗xf3 23.♗xf3 After 23.gxf3 ♖g7⚡ Black looks fine, Horata-Rosenberger, Lampertheim 2002. 23...♗xh7



analysis diagram

24.♟xa6?? led to total confusion in Skripchenko-Nepeina Leconte, France tt 2003. After the correct reply 24...bxa6! 25.♖c3+ ♚c6! Black wins. In Kastner-Maxwell, New York 1970, White played 24.♖c3+ ♚c6 25.♙f2 and won quickly after 25...d4? 26.♖xc6+! bxc6 27.♟xa6+ ♚d7 28.♖b7+ ♙e8 29.♖b8+ ♚d7 30.♟a5! Correct is 25...♙c7 or 25...♙d7.

♟ C2) TRICK: More tactical is 20...♖g7!? 21.g4 (21.♟d3? ♞xa3!) 21...♞e7 22.♟d3 ♞g6 (22...♞xe5!?) 23.♖h1 ♞cxe5! 24.fxe5 ♖xc3+ 25.♙d1∞ Külaots-S.Ivanov, Sweden tt 2005/06.

18...♟c6!?

This is Black's main set-up.

♟ A) TRICK: 18...b5?! is a worse option: 19.♞e2! d4 (19...♖c5 20.h6!) 20.♞xd4 (20.g4!?!; 20.h6±) 20...♟c6 21.♖xc4! bxc4 22.♞xc6±;

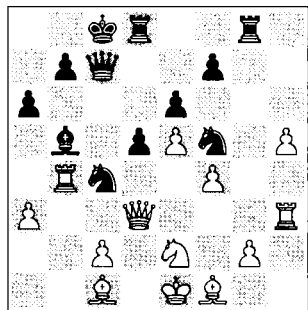
♟ B) TRICK: 18...♖c5?! 'An active, but wrong move' – Vitiugov. 19.♞e4! ♖g1 20.♞g5 and White was better in Alexeev-Vitiugov, Kallithea tt 2008, after 20...♟b5 21.♖f3!±.

19.♞e2

Keep in Mind:

It seems that White's knight manoeuvre is inevitable in this line – therefore ♖b1 and ♞xc3-♞e2 must be studied together. After 19.h6 ♖g6 20.h7 ♖h8 the h7 pawn is likely to be captured.

19...♟b5



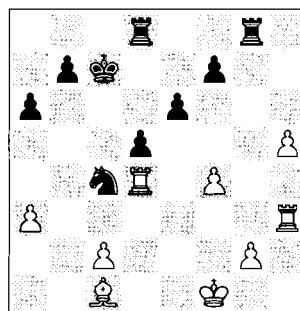
The bishop is out of the knight's range now and carries on with its 'laser dance' on the queenside.

20.a4

The best option, even for strong players.

♟ A) TRICK: 20.♖f3?! d4!↑ 21.g4! ♞ce3! 22.gxf5 ♟c6!±;

♟ B) WEAPON: 20.♞d4!?! A novelty which could make a good weapon for White in the future – who knows. 20...♞xe5! 21.♖c3!?! (to my knowledge this promising move isn't mentioned anywhere) 21...♞xd4!?! 22.♖xc7+ ♙xc7 23.♖xd4 ♟xf1 24.♙xf1 ♞c4!?



analysis diagram

With a rather unbalanced endgame.

20...♖c5!

♟ TRICK: 20...♞xe5? 21.♖c3 ♟xe2 22.fxe5 ♟xf1 23.♖xc7+ (or 23.♙xf1± Balog-Dlauchy, Harkany 2004) 23...♙xc7 24.♙xf1 Hort-Uhlmann, Hastings 1970/71.

21.♖c3?

This seemingly logical move is the source of White's future troubles.

Here is an interesting report by GM Postny in CBM 124, which may shed more light on the subject:

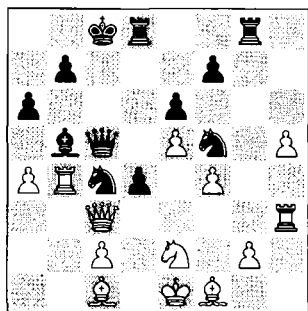
According to the ChessBase website, Cheparinov said after the game that he forgot the right move 21.♟a3 which was analysed at home. Had this position been totally unknown and not investigated, I don't think that he would reveal in public which move is

the right one. However, the explanation to Cheparinov's candour is simple: this position already appeared in practice 20 years ago in an encounter between renowned grandmasters! It is also curious that the wrong move executed by the Bulgarian GM is not new as well. In modern chess it's really hard to create even a bad novelty!

TRICK: After 21. ♖a3! ♙c6 (21... ♗xe5?? 22. ♖c3!+-) 22. ♖c3 (22. ♖b3? ♗ce3±; 22.h6 ♖g6 23.h7 ♖h8∞) 22... ♖a7 (22... ♖g4!? Becerra Rivero-Shulman, Tulsa ch-USA 2008) 23.a5 the position is still balanced, Hort-Nogueiras, Biel 1988.

21...d4!↑

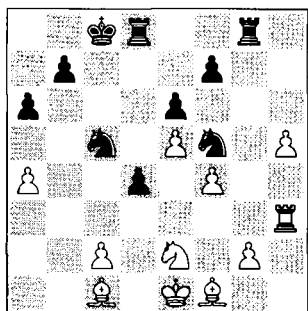
Grischuk immediately starts the punishment with this thematic thrust.



22. ♖b3 ♗a5 23. ♖xb5

This does not really make White's life easier. 23. ♖a3 ♙xe2!; 23. ♖b2 was objectively better, though extremely dangerous for White after 23... ♙c6!↑.

23... ♗xb3 24. ♖xc5+ ♗xc5±



Black has transported his advantage to the technique phase.

25. ♗g1

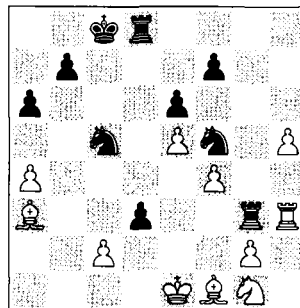
25.c3 d3 26. ♗d4 ♗xd4 (26... ♗g3!?)

27.cxd4 ♖xd4 28. ♙e3 d2+!±.

25... ♖g3!

Nimzowitsch fans will be happy with this concept.

26. ♙a3 d3!



The rest is a wonderful realization by a player of 2700+ calibre – let's enjoy it!

27. ♖xg3 ♗xg3 28.cxd3 ♗xa4 29. ♗e2

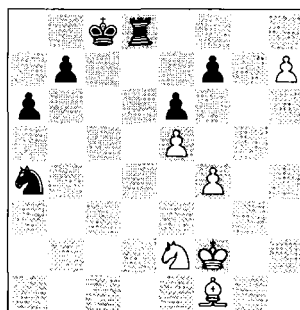
♗xh5 30.g4 ♖xd3!

Well calculated.

31.gxh5 ♖xa3 32.h6 ♖a1+!

TRICK: The last trap was 32... ♖d3?! 33. ♗c3! ♖d8□ 34. ♗xa4 ♖h8±.

33. ♖f2 ♖d1 34.h7 ♖d8



The rook is just in time to stop the h-pawn. Therefore the game is over.

35. ♗d4 ♗c5 36. ♗f3 ♖d7 37.f5 exf5

38. ♙h3 ♖e7 39. ♙xf5 a5 40. ♙b1 a4

41. ♗d4 ♖h8 42. ♗f5+ ♖f8 0-1

Summary 13.♟xc3:

It seems to me that Black can always hold the balance or, in some lines, at least complicate the game. There is a choice between early queenside castling (13...0-0-0!?) or playing pure theory, using the key signals and analysis on moves 13-15. Good luck!

GAME 29 – Rhythm and Timing: 13.♞xc3 (511 games=58.7%)

- The capture on c3 with the queen seems more logical, as in the previous line White sometimes played ♟xc3-♟e2, and after that ♞c3, losing many tempi.
- White hopes to compensate for his deficit in development by retaining control over the d4-square and by the flexibility of his knight – the idea ♟g3!?
- To be well prepared against 13.♞xc3, Black must apply a resource which is new for the PPV but known in the French: ...f7-f6!?, leading to very complicated play.
- However, a good strategic alternative is the universal manoeuvre ...♟a5!?
- Black's main answers to 13.♞xc3 are 13...0-0-0 and 13...♟f5!?. But some care must be taken! These moves can transpose to the same line, except after White's deviation weapon (after 13...0-0-0) 14.♟g3!.

Here is an exciting Poisoned Pawn Winawer in traditional attacking style – unfortunately, carried out by the white player!

□ Alexei Shirov

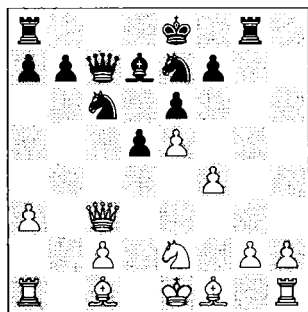
■ Surya Shekhar Ganguly

Edmonton 2009 (7)

1.e4 e6 2.d4 d5 3.♟c3 ♟b4 4.e5 c5
5.a3 ♟xc3+ 6.bxc3 ♟e7 7.♞g4 ♞c7

With this highly popular move Black generally transposes to the Poisoned Pawn.

8.♞xg7 ♜g8 9.♞xh7 cxd4 10.♟e2
♟bc6 11.f4 ♟d7 12.♞d3 dxc3
13.♞xc3!?



The fourth queen move in the opening:
♞g4-♞xg7-♞xh7-♞xc3. With three

of them White has eaten black pawns! Really, the white queen is the best piece in the PPV, which combines attack and defence.



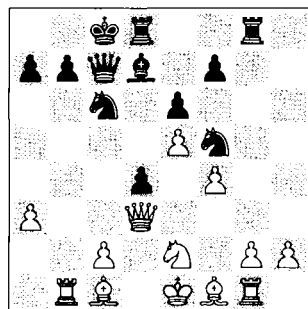
Highly professional preparation followed by a fantastic realization by Alexei Shirov. We should put more trust in his choices, even in the Poisoned Pawn Variation.

13...0-0-0

Black should really connect his rooks. This is the right plan, but not an accurate move order.

Keep in Mind:

13...♟f5! more likely transposes to the same line of the main game after 14.♞b1 14.♞g1?! allows 14...♞b6!. 14...d4 Or 14...0-0-0. 15.♞d3 0-0-0 16.♞g1 etc. But using this move order Black can avoid White's annoying deviations between moves 14-16 given below.




analysis diagram

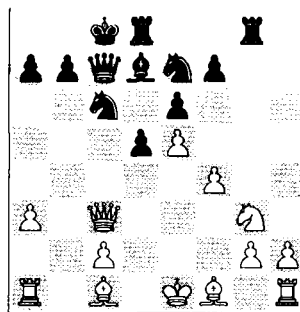
Keep in Mind:

Unfortunately, against 13.♞xc3, 13...♞c8?! is almost refuted by the continuation 14.♟g3!?. The knight is flexible: 14...♞b6 15.♞b2! ♟d4 16.♞xb6 ♟xc2+ 17.♟f2 axb6 18.♞b1± and Black is forced to defend a rather sorry endgame, Rasmussen-Gozzi, Copenhagen 1999.

14.♞b1

It is common to include this move in the entire PPV – of course also here (148 games=58%).

 A) WEAPON: However, White can make use of a dynamic tempo and fight for the advantage with 14.♟g3! (10 games=65%).

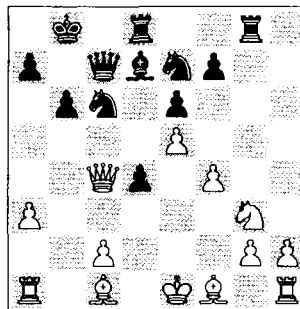


analysis diagram

A1) Now the delayed move 14...♟f5 looks ugly: 15.♟xf5 exf5 16.g3!?. White should be better in this position – there are not many resources;


A2) After 14...♞h8?!, 15.♞b1! is an improvement on an old game (15.♟d2 ♞dg8⇒ Spassky-Nogueiras, Montpellier ct 1985): 15...♞dg8 16.♟e2 ♟xc5?! Here this tactical idea does not work: 17.♞xc7+ ♟xc7 18.♟b2±;

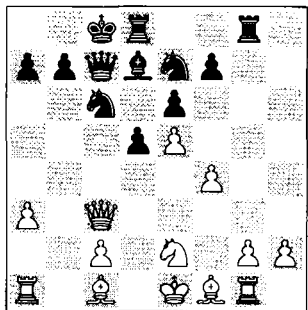
A3) Perhaps the best counter-set-up is 14...d4!? 15.♞c5 b6!? 15...♟f5 16.♟f2± Alexisco-Jimliev, playchess.com 2007. 16.♞c4 ♟b8!?



analysis diagram

Before starting any action in the centre, Black can first arrange a thematic re-configuration of his pieces. 17.♟d3 ♟c8 18.0-0 ♟b7± In comparison with common positions in this line, White manages to complete his development, but there is still a lot of play ahead;

 B) WEAPON: 14.♖g1!? leads to interesting play:

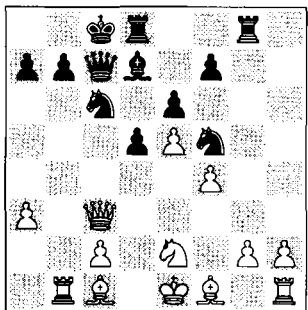


analysis diagram

14...d4 Or 14...♖b8!? 15.g4 d4!⇒
 Caldeira-B.Gonzalez, Brasilia 2000.
 15.♞c5 ♖b8! ≤15...♙e8 16.g4 ♘d5
 17.♞g3! J.Polgar-Motwani, Isle of Lewis
 rapid 1995. 16.g4 ♞h8 17.h3 ♙c8!?
 18.♞g3 b6 19.♞c4 ♞d5! 20.♙g2 ♞c5
 21.♞d3 ♙b7∞ The position is unclear,
 but still full of life!

Now Black can make use of his turn:

14...♘f5!





Finally, the best move. It is not so easy
 for White to coordinate his develop-
 ment; meanwhile Black is ready to break
 in the centre. Still, there is also the ad-
 vance 14...d4; or 14...♖b8 as after
 15.♘g3 Black has gained a tempo as
 ♞b1 is less useful now.

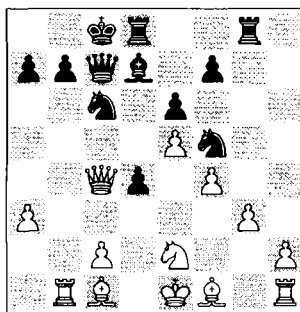
15.♞g1!

(155 games=62.6%)

With this set up (♞b1 and ♞g1) we
 transpose into the main line of
 13.♞xc3. White is going to advance
 g2-g4, attacking the wonderful f5
 knight.


 A) TRICK: 15.♙c3?! d4! 16.♘xd4
 ♘fxd4 17.♙xd4 ♘xd4 18.♞xd4
 ♞xc2! 19.♙d3 ♞c7↑;

 B) WEAPON: 15.g3 d4!
 (15...b6!? would be a novelty)
 16.♞c4



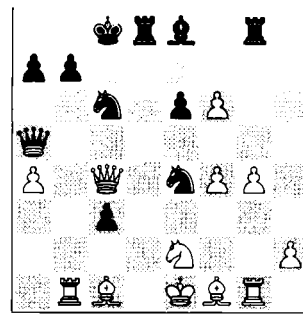
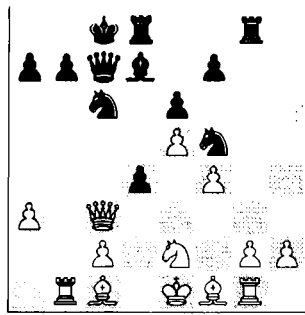
analysis diagram

Now the typical thrust 16...f6!? usually
 leads to great complications (the alternative
 16...♘a5!? is good for positional players:
 17.♞xc7+ ♖xc7 18.♙g2 ♙c6∞): 17.exf6
 ♘d6 18.♞b3 (18.♞a4!? ♘f5∞) 18...♘a5
 19.♞d3? ♙c6 20.♞g1 ♙e4↑ Findlay-
 Milicevic, Toronto ch-city 1995;

 C) WEAPON: 15.♙d2 d4!
 16.♞c4 (16.♞d3 ♘ce7! 17.♞g1
 ♙a4∞ Lobron-Gunawan, Thessaloniki ol
 1984). Now 16...♘ce7!∞ is the strategic
 option, whereas 16...f6 is highly complex:
 17.exf6 ♘d6 (17...e5 18.f7 ♞gf8∞ Glek)
 18.♞b3 (18.♞d3!?) 18...♘e4 19.♞d3
 ♘xd2 20.♞xd2 e5 21.fxe5? ♞xe5∞ with a
 strong initiative for Black, Lanc-Enders,
 Poznan 1985.

15...d4!

We have arrived at the critical and the
 most popular position in the line
 13.♞xc3.




analysis diagram

From now on both players have to be very cautious for the next dozen or so moves!

16. ♖d3

White chooses the most popular reply.

 **WEAPON:** *Slightly unusual is 16. ♖c5!?* (21 games=73.8%).

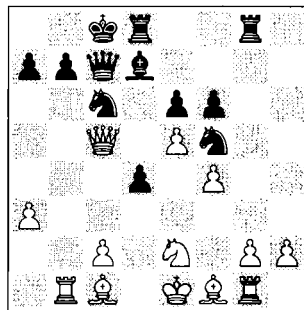
Analysts' opinions are mixed about this move. However for them I have prepared a 'fresh salad' with 16...f6!?. Among many other options, this resource is still 'green' in this position. The good news is that White has to find 4 to 6 only moves!

The game is still unclear – let's continue:

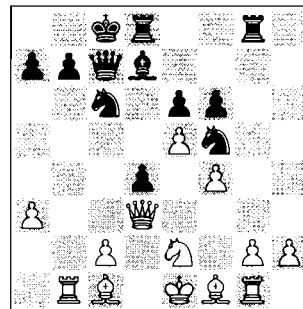
22. ♖xe6+ 22. ♖xe4?! c2+ 22... ♔d7
23. ♖xc4 c2+ 24. ♔d2 ♚ cxb1 ♖+
25. ♖xb1 Here, after 25... ♖d5!?∞, given enough time to think, the computer gives a slight advantage to White, but I know that this is because it also likes an unbalanced struggle!

16... ♘a5!?


A typical, very sound yet poisonous set-up (37 games=50%). At the moment, the main move in this variation is the well-known break **16...f6** (70 games=36%). Most fans think this is playable, devoting more and more new analysis to it, and hoping for a miracle! But in my opinion ...f7-f6 is too risky in this move order, although refuting it over the board is a complicated task.




analysis diagram




analysis diagram

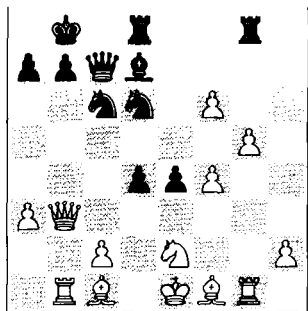
 A) **TRICK:** *The tactical point is 17.g4?! b6! 18. ♖c4 ♘h4 19. ♔g3 fxe5 20.fxe5 ♚df8!↑;*

B) **17.exf6 ♔e8 18.g4 ♘d6** Threatening the queen with ...b7-b6:

 B1) **TRICK:** 19.g5?? b6-+;

B2) **19.a4 ♚ e4! 20. ♖c4 ♖ a5+ 21.c3 dxc3**

 A) **TRICK:** *The immediate 17.exf6!?* is already critical: **17...e5! 18.g4 ♘d6!?** 19.g5 e4 20. ♖b3 ♘b8



analysis diagram


Take your time!

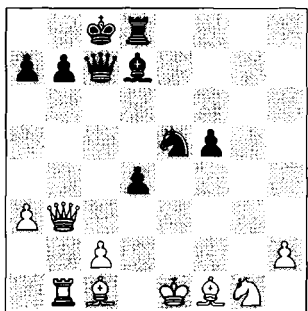
21.f7? 21.♖g3!? is a must in such positions. 21...♗g7 22.h4? ♜xf7 23.h5 d3 24.cxd3 exd3 25.♘g3? ♜a5+ 26.♙d2 ♜e7+ 27.♙e2 ♜c5-+ Brenke-Farago, Lippstadt 1994.

B) 17.g4 White obtains an awesome chain of passed pawns on the kingside:

B1) 17...♘e3?! 18.♙xe3 dxe3 19.exf6 e5 20.♜xe3± D.Pedersen-Christensen, Copenhagen 2009;

B2) 17...♘h6?! 18.exf6 ♜xg4 19.♜xg4 ♘xg4 20.f7! e5 21.♙g2± and a 4-0 score for White;

 B3) WEAPON: My favourite line in this 'forest' is undoubtedly 17...fxe5!? 18.gxf5 ♜xg1 19.♘g1 exf5 20.fxe5 ♘xe5 21.♜b3.

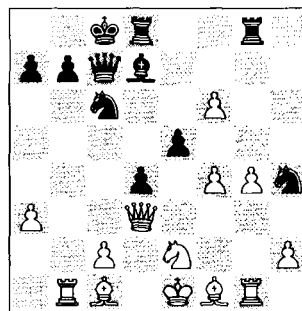


analysis diagram

Black's compensation for the piece is obvious: 21...♜e8 21...♙c6!?±. 22.♘e2 d3 23.cxd3 ♙c6± 24.♙b2?! 24.♙f4





♘xd3+ 25.♜xd3 ♜xf4 likely draws as White's army will soon be without pawns. 24...♘f3+ 25.♙d1 ♜xh2 26.♜c4 ♜f2 27.♙c2 ♜xe2+ 28.♙xe2 ♜xe2+ with an equal position, Swinkels-Klomp, Tilburg 2008;

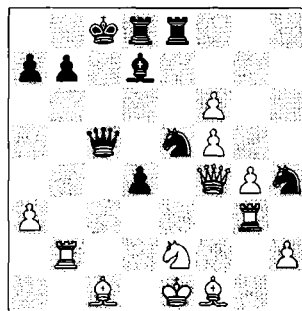
B4) 17...♘h4 Logical, isn't it? 18.exf6 e5



analysis diagram

This advance produces a plethora of entertaining variations, where the pace of play will be ultra-dynamic:

-  B41) TRICK: 19.g5?! e4!;
-  B42) TRICK: 19.h3?! ♙e6! routes the bishop to d5;
-  B43) TRICK: 19.♙h3 ♜ge8!± 20.♜g3? d3!↑ has been pointed out by Neven;
-  B44) TRICK: 19.f5?! e4! 20.♜xe4 ♜ge8 21.♜f4 ♘e5! 22.♜g3 ♜xc2 23.♜b2 ♜c5!

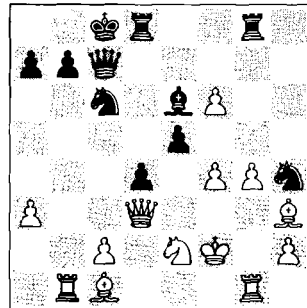


analysis diagram

24.♙f2 ♖c6! Termeulen-Ahlers, Wijk aan Zee 4B 2005;

♙ B45) TRICK: 19.f7 ♖g7! with great compensation: 20.f5 ♖xf7 21.♙g5 ♜h8 22.♙d1 ♘xf5! 23.gxf5 ♙xf5☞ Gvbigke-Cruceli, Bern 1996;

B46) 19.♙f2! seems to be the best move, improving the king and the coordination of his pieces: 19...♙e6!? 20.♙h3!



analysis diagram

White seems better, threatening g4-g5, but the position remains complicated:

B461) 20...e4? 21.♙xe4+- Lüthgens-Thiemonds, Germany Bundesliga B 1996/97;

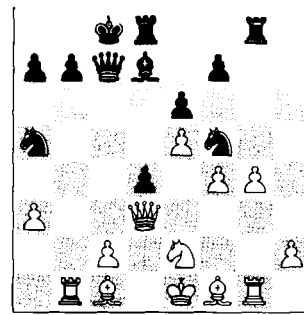
B462) 20...♙b8!? is tactically the best chance, avoiding check on the h3-c8 diagonal;

B463) 20...♖h8 21.c3 (21.g5!?) 21...♙f7 22.cxd4 exd4 23.g5+-, Kurnosov-Vitiugov, Ramenskoe 2006. Vitiugov lost this game, and that may have been the reason why in his 2010 book he condemned the sharpest line 16...f6, preferring to analyse 16...♘a5!? exclusively.

17.♖b4!

Shirov professionally selects the move which is the most flexible in many aspects.

♙ WEAPON: 17.g4 is obviously premature:



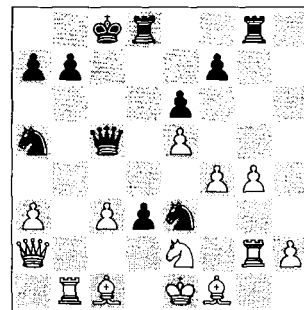
analysis diagram

17...♙a4! and now, more fascinating tactics:

A) TRICK: The natural defence of c2 with

♙ 18.♖b2? loses to 18...♘e3! 19.♙xe3? (≥ 19.♘xd4 ♘xc2+ 20.♖xc2 ♙xc2 21.♙xc2 ♖xd4 22.♙xc7+ ♙xc7) 19...dxe3 20.♙c3 ♘c4! → Delorme-Adrian, France tt 2003;

B) 18.c3 ♙c2!? A well-known PPV theme, leading to some crazy games, but the opening looks dynamically balanced. There are two more attractive options: 18...♙c5!? is tactically interesting; or 18...♘b3!? 19.gxf5 ♖xg1 20.♘xg1? (an automatic move, but bad; 20.cxd4☐∞) 20...dxc3. 19.♙xc2 d3 20.♙a2 ♙c5! 21.♖g2 ♘e3!



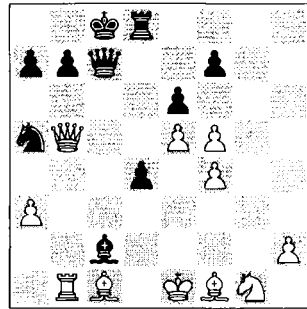
analysis diagram

Take some time to study this key position.

22.♘g3☐ On 22.♙xe3?! ♙xe3 23.♖g3? d2+ wins, Hjartarson-Nogueiras, Belfort 1988 22...♖xg4 23.♖f2 ♘ac4!☞ Black had a dangerous

initiative for the piece in Volokitin Ganguly, Moscow 2007;

C) 18.gxf5 ♖xc2 19.♖b5 ♜xg1
20.♗xg1



analysis diagram

Now try and find the right dynamic rhythm in this position.

C1) 20...a6 21.♖b6 ♖xb1 22.♖xb1 ♗b3 23.♗d1 P.Smironov-Arslanov, Sochi tt 2009. After correct move 23...♗c5!∞ keeping more pieces for the attack – the game remains complex;

C2) 20...♗xf5! 21.♗d2 (the only move) 21...♗xb1. The position is unbalanced, but looks fine for Black, Spiritus Ludens-Jimliew, playchess.com 2006;


C3) 20...♗xb1 is similar to the main line 21.♖xb1 ♗b3⇒.

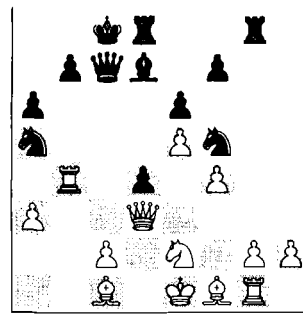
17...♗c6

Black is somewhat confused by Shirov's quite powerful surprise.


A) After 17...♗c6?! 18.g4 ♗h4 19.♞g3± White had a stable plus in P.Smironov-Kazakov, Tomsk 2002;

 B) WEAPON: Black should investigate 17...♗b8!? 18.g4 ♗e7 with an unclear position. Of course White can win another pawn on d4, but that's what it takes to play the PPV!;

 C) WEAPON: An excellent alternative played by German IM Dirk Poldauf is 17...a6!. Threatening 18...♗b5 seems logical.



analysis diagram

 C1) TRICK: 18.a4 ♗c6!?!⇒ 19.g4?? ♖e7!± attacking b4 and threatening ...♖h4+;

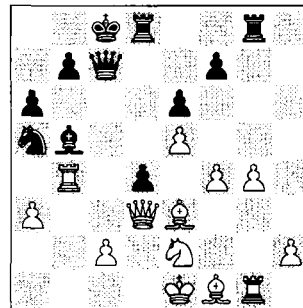
C2) 18.g4 and now:

C21) 18...♗h4 19.a4! Covering the b5-square. 19...f6?! 20.exf6 e5 Steflitsch-Poldauf, Halkidiki tt 2002. Now, after simply 21.fxe5 White should be better;

C22) 18...♗e3! A definite improvement by the young Italian star Daniyyl Dvirnyy.

C221) After 19.♗xd4 Watson gives a fine solution for Black: 19...♗xg4 19...♗xf1!?, VM. 20.♖e2 defending the threats to h2 and e5. 20.♞g2 f6!?, VM. 20...♖c3+! 21.♖d2 21.♗d2? ♖a1+ 22.♖d1 ♖xd1+ 23.♗xd1 ♗f2+ wins material by force. 21...♖xd2+ 22.♗xd2 ♗xh2 23.♞xg8 ♞xg8 with an equal position – Watson.

C222) 19.♗xe3!?! ♗b5!



analysis diagram

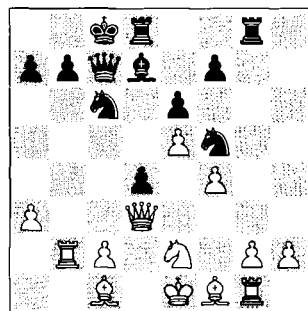
Sometimes you have to take your time.

C222a) TRICK: 20. ♖xb5!? dxe3
 ♜21. ♖xb7! (21. ♜xe3 axb5) 21... ♜xb7
 (21... ♜xb7??) 22. ♜xe3 ♜c4
 23. ♜e4+ ♜a7 24. ♜g3± 22. ♜xe3 (22. ♜d4
 ♜h8! 23. h3 ♜d5) 22... ♜xc2 23. ♜c3
 ♜xh2 24. ♜xa6 ♜c2 with balanced but still
 very open play – Black will have to switch his
 rooks.

C222b) 20. ♜d2 dxe3 21. ♜xe3
 ♜xc2 21... ♜c6!? with sufficient com-
 pensation for two pawns. 22. ♜d4 And
 now 22... ♜xh2! instead of 22... ♜xd4?
 23. ♜xd4+- Sharma-Riedel, Bad
 Wiessee 2009. 23. ♜xb5 23. ♜xb5
 axb5 is complicated, but about equal.
 23... axb5 24. ♜xb5 ♜d3! = seems an
 'easy' draw!

18. ♜c4!

A more aggressive move than the mod-
 est 18. ♜b2!?

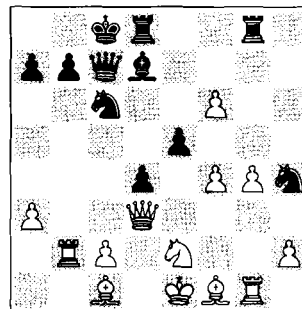


analysis diagram

TRICK: The manoeuvre 18... ♜a5!?
 may have new tactical implications:
 19.g4 ♜e3 20. ♜xe3 dxe3, in view of
 21. ♜xe3? ♜c4!, attacking queen and
 rook.

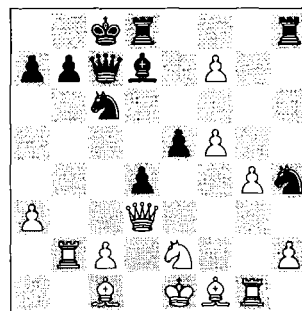
However, after 18... f6!? the reader and
 the author will both urgently have to
 check again the line 16... f6, taking the
 different rook positions into account:
 ♜b1 or ♜b2. Don't forget to use two
 computers!

19.g4 From this point on all (Black and
 White) options previously analysed are
 valid. But in practice we have only one
 game. See line B4 two moves earlier:
 18. exf6 e5 etc. 19... ♜h4 20. exf6 e5



analysis diagram

21.f7 21. ♜f2!? is similar to the game
 Kurnosov-Vitiugov. 21... ♜h8 The move
 21... ♜g7 leads to previous analysis in
 the line 19.f7 ♜g7!, with great com-
 pensation (see Gebigke-Cruceli, Bern
 1996). But here, after 22.f5 ♜xf7
 23. ♜g5 ♜h8 24. ♜d1 ♜xf5 25. gxf5
 ♜xf5 the difference (♜b2 defending c2)
 is in White's favour. 22.f5



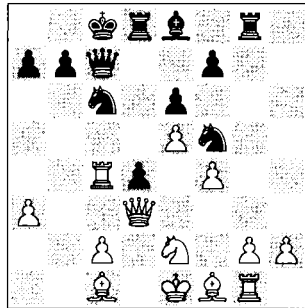
analysis diagram

With many options: 22... e4 22... ♜a5!?
 is another. 23. ♜xe4 ♜e5 23... d3!?.
 24. ♜xd4 ♜xf7 25. ♜g3? After this inac-
 curacy Black's initiative grows to dan-
 gerous proportions: 25... ♜he8 26. ♜e6
 ♜xe6 27. fxe6 ♜e5 28. ♜h3 ♜d4!

29. ♖e2 ♜c6 with great compensation for only three pawns, P.Smirnov-Kornev, Sochi tt 2006.

18... ♙e8

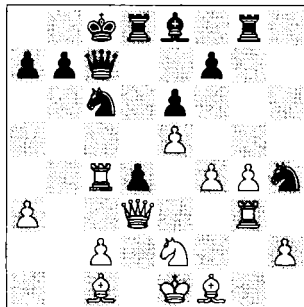
No theory any more, but probably this is the best continuation.



19.g4 ♘h4?

A typical attacking move in the PPV, however it is not suitable here. The knight will be out of place on h4. Watson gives the saving option 19... ♘fe7!? with the following sample line: 20. ♖f2 ♘b8 (Black must sacrifice the d4-pawn but he has other tricks at his disposal to mess up the position.) 21. ♘xd4 ♘d5! 22. ♙d2 ♜b6 23. ♙e2 (23.a4!?, VM) 23... ♞h8! 24. ♞g2 ♘a5! 25. ♙xa5 ♜xa5. Black has done well to exchange one of his knights for the dark square bishop. White has a number of squares to worry about from this position – John Watson on ChessPublishing.

20. ♞g3!±

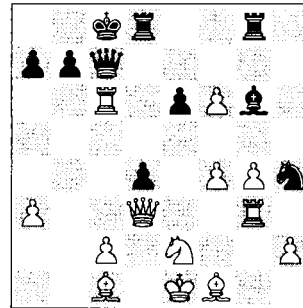


This is a very useful move in the PPV, which also makes the h4 knight useless. White completes the set-up of his major pieces, and has reached his desired position first.

20...f6?!

Too late.

21.exf6 ♙g6 22. ♞xc6!!



A brilliant exchange sacrifice with multiple threats, which also stops all Black's counterplay. As always, Shirov has everything well sorted out.

22... ♜xc6

On 22...bxc6 23. ♜a6+ ♜b7 24. ♜c4 is winning for White.

23. ♘xd4 ♜h1

This loses quickly, but alternatives were not better: 23... ♜d7 24. ♜c4+ ♘b8 25. ♙e3+-; 23... ♜b6 24. ♜c3+ ♘b8 25. ♘b5! ♞c8 26. ♜e5+ ♘a8 27. ♙e3+-.

24.f5 exf5 25. ♙f4! ♙e8

25... ♜e4+ leads to a cute mate: 26. ♜xe4 fxe4 27. ♞c3+ ♘d7 28. ♙b5#.

26. ♜c4+ ♙c6 27. ♜e6+ ♙d7 28. ♞c3+ 1-0

Game conclusion by John Watson (ChessPublishing): Shirov certainly dealt this popular variation of the PP a serious blow but I don't think this is the end of the theoretical debate as yet. Specifically, Black can consider 17...a6 or 19... ♘fe7 which I've highlighted as potential improvements.

Summary 13. ♖xc3:

The pawn recapture with the queen has clearly established itself as one of the main lines.

I think Black has good possibilities with both 16... ♖a5 and 16... f6, which I have covered quite thoroughly in the 'skeleton' annotations. The tactical break 16... f6 is actually too risky (as is any ...f7-f6 in this entire line), but it is a great practical option – at least to confuse the opponent and generate some real winning chances!

However, after studying this game I like more and more the idea of the early advance 12... d4, analysed in Game 27.

GAME 30 – Poker with Transpositions: the transpositional 13. ♖b1 (419 games = 64.2%) and five white deviations on move 13, most of which defer the capture on c3.

- Basically, the universal move ♖b1 connects well with almost all lines of the main Poisoned Pawn, but there are some own ideas.

René Olthof: *I used to be an expert on the French Poisoned Pawn when my pet line was 13. ♖b1 ♗f5 14. h3, 13... d4 14. ♗xd4 ♗xd4 15. ♖xd4 ♗f5 or 13... 0-0-0 14. h3 planning g4, ♖g1-g3. I have very good results with this line (13. ♖b1) but theoretically speaking it remains unclear and offers chances for both sides.*

- White's other deviations on move 13 are not so dangerous. Actually Black has some interesting tactical resources – see the Weapons.
- Anyway, the knowledge obtained in the three previous model games will be very helpful here.

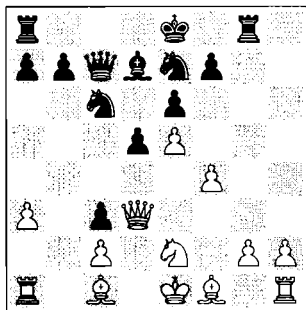
In the main game, Leinier Dominguez tries some theoretical poker play against Alexander Grischuk (a Poisoned Pawn as well as a poker expert). The result was a draw, but as always in Poisoned Pawn lines, the possibilities are endless.

□ Leinier Dominguez Perez

■ Alexander Grischuk

Linares 2009 (1)

1. e4 e6 2. d4 d5 3. ♗c3 ♖b4 4. e5 c5
5. ♖b1 ♗xc3+ 6. bxc3 ♗e7 7. ♖g4
cxd4!? 8. ♖xg7 ♖g8 9. ♖xh7 ♖c7
10. ♗e2 ♗bc6 11. f4 ♗d7 12. ♖d3 dxc3



The aim of White's deviations from the main lines (13. ♗xc3 or 13. ♖xc3) is that White defers the pawn capture on c3 above piece development, or else, a quick advance of his kingside pawn majority. We will examine a range of these alternatives in the notes to White's next move.

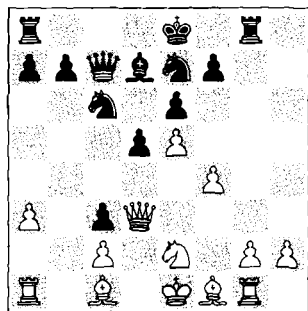
13. ♖b1

This useful move is included in many games with the main PPV. But, as a chess rule, after spending a tempo on improvements White may have lost his dynamic advantage.

Five Deviations on move 13:

♗ WEAPON 1: 13. ♖g1 (14 games = 42.9%) is a modern alternative,

explored by Svidler and Shirov in several recent games. Once again this is highly transpositional.



analysis diagram

13...0-0-0 14.g4 d4 and now:

A) After 15.♞b1 we have already returned to the main game;

B) 15.♟xd4?! ♟xd4 16.♞xd4 ♟b5⇐ is fine for Black;

C) 15.h4?! is a really provocative advance – White is underdeveloped. 15...♟g6!?!⇐ This curious poker-style manoeuvre may be a nice tactical refutation of White's strategy. A more fundamental concept is 15...♞b6!?, as an improvement by the same player (15...♟e8!?! was seen in Shirov-Shulman, Khanty-Mansiysk 2007), e.g. 16.h5 ♟e8 (16...♟d5!?) 17.♞g3 ♟a5⇐ Liu-Shulman, Philadelphia 2009. 16.♟xd4 seems to be the principled answer, chosen by the best engines... 16.♞g3 ♞b6⇐; 16...♞a5!?.

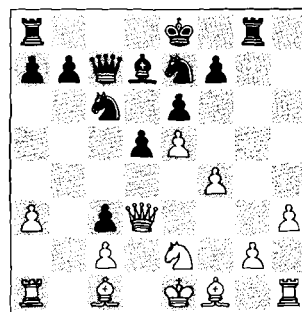
♟ TRICK: 16.h5? ♟gxe5! 17.fxe5 ♟xe5→.

16...♟xd4 17.♞xd4 ♟xh4 18.♞f2 ♞h8↑ and Black is better.

♟ WEAPON 2: 13.h3 (22 games=65.9%) A modest-looking but tricky half-move, preparing g2-g4 and preventing ...♟f5.



For this important game against Grischuk Leinier Dominguez had prepared a Banana Daiquiri cocktail – with a little poison.



analysis diagram

Black should respond with a dynamic counter-attack in the centre: 13...d4! 13...0-0-0 is similar. 14.g4 Or 14.♞b1 0-0-0 etc. 14...0-0-0 and now:

A) 15.♟g2 ♞b6!?.

♟ B) TRICK: 15.♟g3?! ♟xe5! 16.fxe5 ♞xe5+ 17.♟e2f5↑;

C) It is important that after 15.♞b1!?! according to René Olthof and John Watson, the line transposes to an extremely important line for the whole PPV! (as in the line 13.♞b1 0-0-0/d4 14.h3). Now Black has many alternatives, for instance 15...♟g6; 15...♟a5; 15...♟e8 and

15...♗d5, but these are the main three:

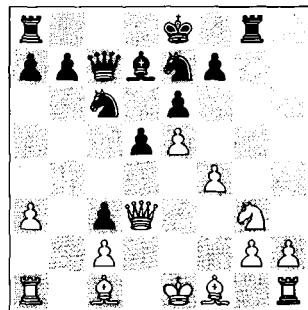
(1) The early sacrifice 15...♗xe5? seems to be a mistake: 16.fxe5 ♖c6 (16...♗g6 17.♖g2! ♗xe5 18.♗xd4 and compensation for the extra bishop is absent) 17.♖g1 ♗g6 18.♗g3± Boll-Duchene, Dieren 1980, a huge improvement over 18.♖f4 as in Byrne-Uhlmann, Monte Carlo 1968;

(2) TRICK: 15...♖b8 is Watson's favourite set-up, but it is a bit slow. And I even found a hole in his 'armoured defence': 16.♖g2 ♖c8 17.0-0 b6 18.a4! (preparing ♖a3. An actual game went 18.♗g3 ♖b7 19.♗e4 ♗a5⇒ Sanz Alonso-Barsov, La Laguna 2007) 18...♖b7 19.♖a3!. White already has an advantage, and if 19...♗f5!? 20.♖f2 ♗e3 then 21.a5!± is a brutal break;

(3) 15...a6!? is the most effective counter-idea, based on the standard PPV set-up: ♗a5 and ♖c6/♖b5. 16.♖g2 ♗a5! 17.♗xd4 17.♗xd4?! ♖c6 18.♖e4 ♖d7↑. 17...♖c6 18.♗f2 ♖xg2 19.♗xg2 ♗d5☞ with excellent chances.

Summary h2-h3: Therefore, Black can use the same universal set-up with 13.♖b1 0-0-0/d4 14.h3 etc.

WEAPON 3: *There is no reason to be scared of the old line 13.♗g3 (45 games=52.2%) – but only if you know how to avoid the tricky transpositions.*



analysis diagram

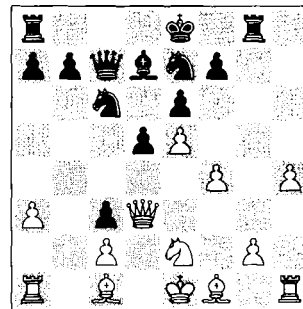
A) After the correct 13...d4! we directly arrive at the key position of the first model game in this chapter;

B) TRICK: *The most popular response here, 13...0-0-0?!, is very possibly a mistake. 14.♗xc3! leads to White's Weapon on move 14 given in the previous model game.*

Keep in Mind:

This example shows the importance of exploring all the Poisoned Pawn lines as a labyrinth (see all four model games) in order to avoid having to play a poker game with transpositions.

WEAPON 4: 13.h4!? (45 games=51.1%)




analysis diagram

Another tricky option. White omits the recapture on c3 and advances with his h-pawn as quickly as possible. In the first game of this chapter we recommended an antidote: ...b7-b6 and ...♖b7, but here, the bishop is already developed on d7.


A) TRICK: *White's idea is to transpose to the line 13...d4?! 14.h5± and h6-h7!, which worked successfully in Salgado Lopez-Alexeev, Novi Sad Ech-tt 2009;*


B) 13...♗f5!? 14.h5 0-0-0 The best anti-set-up against the advance of the h-pawn.

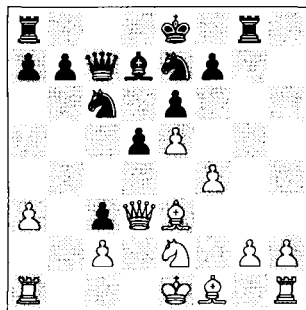
 B1) TRICK: 15.♟xc3♟xe5!
 B2) TRICK: 15.♞xc3!? ♞g4!?
 16.h6?! ♞h8⇒ Stemmler-Chin, Willingen jr
 2005;

B3) The move order 15.♞b1 d4
 16.♞g1 can lead to the so-called Tait
 Variation, see below in a sub-line of
 move 14 in the main game;

B4) 15.h6 ♞g6! A typical PPV de-
 fence: preparing ...♞h8. 16.h7 ♞h8
 17.♞xc3 ♞g7 18.♞d3 ♞d8!⇒ And
 Black has a fantastic position.


 TRICK: Only not after
 18...♞hxh??? 19.♞xh7 ♞xh7
 20.g4+-, losing material, Seijbel-Van den
 Berg, Haarlem 1994.


 WEAPON 5: In the old days white
 players often responded classically
 with 13.♙e3 (77 games=51.3%), trying to
 block d4.



analysis diagram

My 'poisoned' proposal would be
 13...0-0-0!? 13...♟f5 14.♙f2! d4!
 is the main line, when 15.h3! is an an-
 noying move. Now:

 A) TRICK: 14.♟xc3? d4! 15.♙xd4
 (15.♟b5? ♟xe5!) 15...♟xd4
 16.♞xd4♟f5 17.♞c4 ♙c6↑;

 B) TRICK: 14.♟d4?! ♟xd4
 15.♙xd4♟f5 16.♞b1 ♙b8 (Black's
 resources are ...♙a4 and ...f7-f6) 17.♞b3?!
 ♙a4! 18.♞xc3 ♞a5↑;

C) 14.♙f2 d4! 15.g3 ♟f5 Black's po-
 sition has more potential: 16.♙g2 ♟ce7
 17.♙e4 ♙c6 18.h3 ♞b6 19.♙xc6
 ♞xc6 20.♞g1 ♙b8! 21.♟c1? ♟e3!
 22.♙e2 ♟xc2!+- winning soon,
 Bronstein-W.Schmidt, Copenhagen
 1991.

Summary Five Deviations on move 13:

As we noted, in some cases we transpose
 into the main lines – be careful and
 choose the correct directions! In the
 other lines it seems that White only
 loses time and therefore Black will have
 a great chance of picking up a valuable
 point.

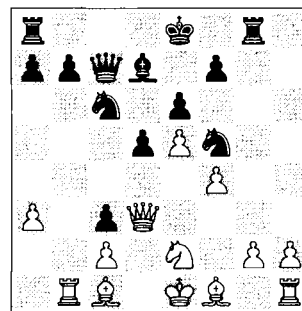
13...d4!

I like this concept (...d5-d4) because it
 either creates a powerful central pawn
 chain (c3-d4) or opens the d-file in
 case of White's ♟xd4. The situation is
 very similar to the first model game,
 with a small difference: the two moves
 ♞b1 vs. ...♙d7 have been included.
 Which one is more useful? Let's play
 some poker.

Keep in Mind:

One of the advantages of 13.♞b1 is to
 provoke Black into choosing wrong op-
 tions:

A) 13...♟f5?!



analysis diagram

This is an inaccurate move order. Black
 will lose several tempi after the best an-

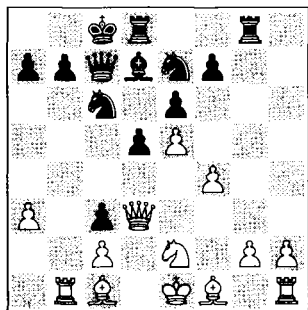
swer: **14.h3!** This line has the most amazing record in MegaBase: +41 White, 3 draw and +4 Black – now I understand why it is a pet line of René! **14.♖xc3!** can lead to the previous model game after **14...0-0-0**.

♜ A1) TRICK: **14...♞c8? 15.g4 ♘h4? 16.♗h7!** 1-0 *Carlsson-Ivarson, Hallsberg 1993;*

♜ A2) TRICK: *In many of these games Black also chose 14...d4?! 15.g4 ♘h4 16.♗h7! attacking the rook and knight and forcing 16...♙f3+ 17.♚f2 0-0-0 18.♚xf3 (14:0 for White; 18.♙g2!? is also advantageous).* This was also analysed on *ChessPublishing* – Black’s counterattack does not exist. The most famous game is an old one: **18...♘xe5+ 19.fxe5 ♙c6+ 20.♚f2 ♙xh1 21.♞b4!?**± and White won in *Jo.Horvath-Uhlmann, Szirak 1985;*

A3) **14...0-0-0 15.g4 ♘h4 16.♖xc3!** After **16.♘xc3 ♘a5!?** Black has some compensation, since White has no obvious plan. **16...d4 17.♗c5 b6 18.♘g3!** is simply better for White.

♜ B) WEAPON: *A possible alternative to ...d5-d4 is 13...0-0-0.*



analysis diagram

This can take us back to one of the main lines after **14.♖xc3** (see the previous model game) or **14.h3 d4!** (see again Black’s weapon vs. **13.h3**).

Finally, **14.♘xc3 ♘a5!** (of course this time **14...a6?** runs into **15.♗xa6!**) leads to the ‘Weapon’ on move 13 in the second model game, where we considered **15.♘b5** to be a little premature (*Dominguez Perez-Shulman, Buenos Aires 2005*).

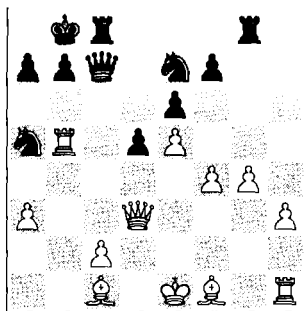
But here we can try other alternatives for White:

B1) Black was in charge after the slow **15.♘e2** This is a ‘pet manoeuvre’ similar to **14.♘e2** in Game 28, and also favoured by Khalifman in his book *Opening According to Anand Volume 7*. Only here Black has an extra tempo as he has not played **...a7-a6** yet. **15...♘f5 15...♙a4!?** **16.h3 16.♞g1 ♙a4!** *Mitkov-De La Villa Garcia, Elgoibar 1995. 16...♙a4 17.♞b2 d4!* *Egger-Pupo, Santiago Wch-jr 1990;*

B2) **15.♞g1** This seems to be another mix of set-ups for White: **♘xc3-♞b1-♞g1. 15...♚b8!?** **16.g4 ♞c8 17.♞g3 ♞h8!?** Preventing **h2-h4. 18.h3 ♘c4** and Black has solid compensation – also based on the fact that White has no obvious plan;

B3) A rather slow set-up is **15.♙e3?! ♚b8!?** **16.♗d4 16.♘b5 ♙xb5 17.♞xb5 ♘f5.** **16...b6 17.♗c5 ♙c6!?** **18.♗xa5 d4 19.♙f2 dxc3 20.♖xc3 ♘d5 21.♗f3** draw agreed in *Khachiyani-Sevillano, Los Angeles 2009*. But after **21...f6!** White would have had many problems;

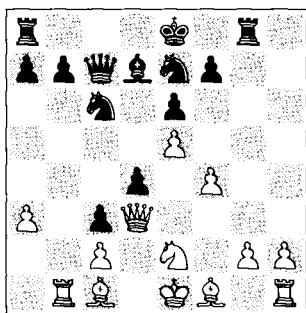
B4) **15.h3** This pet move still exists, but without an attack on the knight on **f5** it has a minimum effect: **15...♚b8!?** Black is combining ideas like **...♞c8** and **...♘c4** with satisfactory play. **16.g4** A forced advance after **h2-h3. 16...♞c8 17.♘b5 17.♙d2 ♘c4!** *Schlesinger-Nothnagel, Germany 1989. 17...♙xb5 18.♞xb5*



analysis diagram

The game is still complex, as always in the Poisoned Pawn Variation, but the position is balanced: 18...a6 I like Shulman's strategic 'patch' 18...b6! better. 19.♖b1 ♘c4 20.♙c3 And here 20...♙c6! with solid compensation for a pawn, instead of the faulty, impulsive 20...d4? 21.♙xd4 ♖gd8 22.♙xc4± Dominguez Perez-Stellwagen, Wijk aan Zee 2009.

Let's concentrate on the main game and the idea behind ...d5-d4.



14.♖g1!?

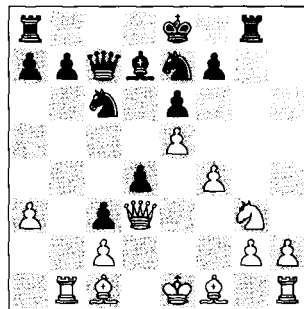
Combining White's set-up of the two rooks with the advance of the g-pawn.

Keep in Mind:

A) 14.♘xd4 transposes to a sub-line in the first model game of this chapter – see page 198. There I also called ♘xd4 a critical option, but here Black has a favourable inclusion of the moves ♖b1 ♙d7. Now, after 14...♘xd4 15.♙xd4


♘f5 16.♙f2 Black has two creative options: 16...♙c6 and 16...♙c6!? see Mamedyarov-Alexeev and other games.

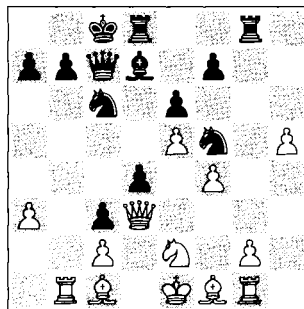
B) Keep in Mind: 14.♘g3



analysis diagram

This concept could be similar to the main line of Game 27, but the tempo White has used on ♖b1 gives Black a dynamic plus and leads to the following sub-line: 14...0-0-0 15.♘e4 ♘xe5! See Eingorn's tricks: 16.fxe5 ♙xe5 17.♙e2 ♙c6 18.♘g3 ♙d5± (or 18...♙xe2+!?) Oll-Eingorn, Odessa ch-URS 1989;

 C) WEAPON: Again, the advance of the passed pawn 14.h4!? is an option, with some new transpositions, but there is also a speedy and smashing attack: 14...♘f5 15.h5 0-0-0 16.♖g1



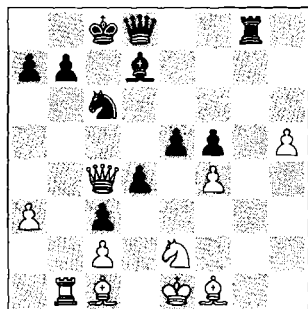
analysis diagram

This is the renowned 'Tait Variation', named after Jonathan Tait, who published an article in *Correspondence Chess*

In 1995, John Watson (*ChessPublishing*, August 2010) gives an attractive updating survey on it, giving the legendary break **16...f6!** as Black's main resource. Here are some sample lines with updates by the author:

C1) TRICK: 17.exf6 e5 18.g4 ♘d6 19.g5 (19.fxe5? ♘xe5!) 19...e4 20.♚d1 d3 (20...♙e6!? Watson) 21.cxd3 (21.♘xc3? ♘d4?) 21...♘e5!⇌;

C2) 17.g4 fxe5!! The game gets completely out of hand – the black centre pawns start fighting against the opponent's entire army! **18.gxf5 exf5! 19.♞xg8!?** Simplifying; 19.♞g5 e4! 20.♚c4 ♞xg5 21.fxg5 e3!↑, threatening ...♚h2. **19...♞xg8 20.♚c4 20.h6!?** ♚d8!?. **20...♚d8**

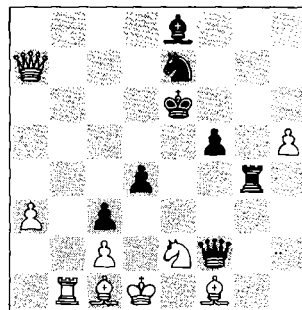


analysis diagram

With forcing play that probably leads to a draw after the best moves on both sides:

21.fxe5?? It's unbelievable, but this is the losing move – there is no time for taking pawns. 21.♚d1!? ♞g4! 22.♚d5 (22.fxe5?? ♚h4!, see below) 22...♚h4 (22...e4!?!∞) 23.♞xb7□ (otherwise 23...♚f2) 23...♚xb7 24.♚xd7+ ♚b6 25.a4 (or 25.♘xc3 ♚h1!)=) 25...♚f2 (25...♚h1=) 26.a5+□ White gives a perpetual in the nick of time: ½-½ Bergmann-Neven, WC IECG 2006. **21...♚h4+**

22.♚d1 ♞g4! The best square for the rook – with the winning idea ...♚f2. 22...♞g7= would lead to a kind of repetition. **23.e6 ♙e8 24.♚b5 ♚f2! 25.♚xb7+ ♚d8 26.e7+ ♘xe7 27.♚a8+ ♚d7 28.♚xa7+ ♚e6-+**



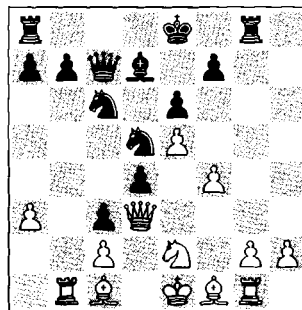
analysis diagram

The black king escapes from the checks: **29.♚a6+ ♚f7 30.♙h3** After 30.♘f4 ♞xf4 31.♙xf4 ♚xf4 32.♚e2 ♘d5-+ Black obtains a winning attack. **30...♚f3! 31.♚c4+ ♚g7 32.♙d2 ♚xh3 33.♙xc3 dxc3 34.♚xc3+ ♚xc3 35.♘xc3 ♞g1+** An amazing line, even at correspondence level (0-1 Harding-Arounopoulos, corr ICCF 1997).

14...0-0-0

This is the last key position of this chapter. The game is balanced.

WEAPON: By playing first **14...♘d5!?** Black can apply more ideas:



analysis diagram


15.♟xd4 ♞xd4 16.♞xd4 ♟c6 17.a4
 And now the dynamic break 17...f6!
 which seems to work every time! (By
 the way, 17...a6∞ may be safer for
 Black, as in Khachiyan-Sevillano,
 Los Angeles 2009.) 18.exf6 The
 other answers are too modest.
 18...♞h7! Attacking h2 and c2.
 19.♞e5 19.♟d3 ♞xh2 looks
 attractive. 19...0-0-0! 20.♞xc6+ ♟b8
 21.♞xc6 ♜ge8+ 22.♟e2 ♜xe2+
 23.♟xe2 ♞xc2+ 24.♟f3= Black
 has guaranteed at least a draw.

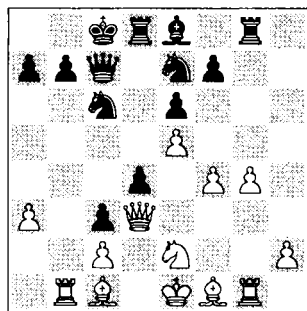
15.g4!?

A recent novelty, avoiding the
 drawish line 15.♟xd4 ♞xd4
 16.♞xd4 ♟b5 (16...♟b8!?!
 Koch-Morris, Haifa Ech-tt 1989)
 17.♞xa7 ♟xf1 18.♟xf1 ♞c4+
 19.♟f2 ♞e4= ½-½ Luther-Gdanski,
 Aegina 1993.

15...♟d5

Grischuk has been playing in a
 pretty relaxed style, since in Linares
 a draw is usually a good result with
 any colour.

 WEAPON: For open tournaments
 15...♟e8!?! is a more ambitious
 option, defending the d4 pawn:




analysis diagram

16.♞g3 ♟a5!?! A recent improvement
 on Black's play. Another good weapon
 may be 16...♞f8!?! 17.h4 f6! etc.
 16...♟d5 is also an interesting option
 offered by Watson/McDonald on
ChessPublishing. 17.♟g2 In order to play

17.♟xd4∞ one should be able to calcu-
 late like Deep Blue. 17...♞c5 18.♞b4
 ♟ec6 19.♞b5 ♞e7 20.♞h7 ♞f8! Both
 sides have hidden threats,
 Schachinger-Sa.Martinovic, Rogaska
 Slatina 2009.

16.♟xd4!

 WEAPON: The typical rook lift
 16.♞g3 can lead to the Watson/
 McDonald line given above after 16...♟e8,
 but I found an improvement. After 16...f6!?
 (16...♞h8!?) 17.exf5, I propose 17...e5!
 (instead of 17...♟xf6 (as in Wagman-Tamai,
 Caorle 1988) 18.♟xd4!) 18.fxe5 ♞xg4,
 with attractive counterplay for Black.

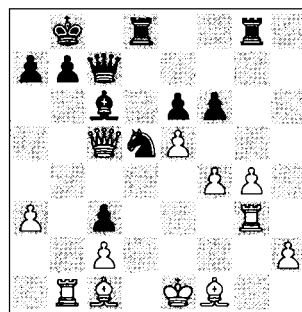
16...♟xd4 17.♞xd4 ♟b8

All of these moves are typical for the
 Poisoned Pawn Variation.

18.♞g3

White plays only with his rooks and
 queen. 18.♟e3!?! was posted by Postny;
 18.h4!?.


18...♟c6 19.♞c5 f6!



Forcing the play with the favourite PPV
 move.

20.exf6 ♟xf6 21.♞e5

White seems a little scared.

 TRICK: 21.♟g2 ♞d1+!?!∞.

21...♟xg4 22.♞xc7+ ♟xc7↑

Thus Black gets a slightly better ending
 after all. But this is not the end of the
 story.

23.f5?

Probably in time trouble White launches a faulty combination.

23...exf5 24.gf4+ ♔c8 25.fxc3 ♕f6!
26.fxc4 ♕d5?!

Probably Black was in time trouble as well. 26...fde8+!→ was a good chance to gain a full point.

27.fxd1 ♕xf4 28.fxd8+ ♔xd8 29.fxf4
g4 30.gd3 1/2-1/2

Summary 13.fb1:

This can be recommended as a good poker move because of the great number of possible transpositions. Black's 13...0-0-0! and 13...d4! are valuable weapons here.

After queenside castling around move 16, the break ...f7-f6 seems powerful in many cases, and therefore you should always consider this possibility in the back of your head.

Conclusions on the Poisoned Pawn Variation

The entire Poisoned Pawn Variation is extremely exciting and produces some fantastically dangerous possibilities for any player – just try it one day!

In my opinion, 7...fxc7 or 7...cxd4 are currently in best shape theoretically: I found the line 13.fxc3! to be the most dangerous for Black, and I found the early advance 12...d4! to be an intriguing option.

An important thing to notice is that in the PPV Black's most important resource ...f7-f6 has almost never been played.

I hope this 'skeleton repertoire' chapter will be helpful for the reader. Again, if you are not well prepared or are in bad chess form 'you will get crushed' – even super-grandmasters have fallen victim to this dangerous variation.

Chapter 11 – Black Queen Blues (Portisch/Hook Variation)

The Queen sortie was Bill Hook's specialty. Black wants to assume control of the light squares, playing ...b7-b6 and exchanging the bishops with ...♗c8-a6 – GM Lubomir Kavalek in *Huffington Post* (May 26, 2010).

Dedicated to Bill Hook (1925–2010)

27.05.2010 – He was a wonderful artist and the kindest of men. Bill Hook played th top board for the British Virgin Islands team at 17 Chess Olympiads. In 1970 in Siegen, Germany, he used his beloved queen manoeuvre against Bobby Fischer and easily equalized the game. Bill Hook died on May 10, in his home in Silver Spring, Maryland. He would have turned 85 tomorrow. Eulogy by GM Lubomir Kavalek (*Chessbase.com*).



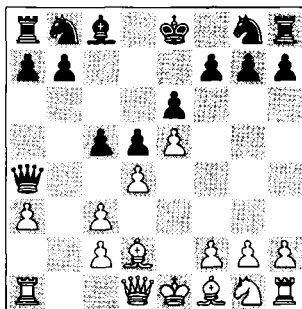
The 'Blues Hook' 12...♗a6 after 10.c4 was developed by the number one player from the British Virgin Islands, William Hook, against none other than Bobby Fischer.

Directions

1.e4 e6 2.d4 d5 3.♗c3 ♗b4 4.e5 c5 5.a3 ♗xc3 6.bxc3 ♖a5 7.♗d2 ♗a4 (1067 games=44.5%)

And the modest sub-line 7.♗d2 (64 games=57.8%, see Game 31)

Our last chapter is an elaborated update of the recently very popular modern set-up 'The Black Queen Blues', described as follows in my book *The Flexible French: The black queen manoeuvre* 6...♗a5/7...♗a4 undoubtedly offers a game full of creativity, with positions rich in resources and difficult to understand because of their complexity.



Black creates imbalances and winning chances in many lines.

The arising positions are of a more strategic nature, so a proper understanding of the typical plans will be more practical than the help of an engine.

For Winawer fans this can be an important alternative to the usual move 6...♗e7, where often the continuation 7.♖g4!, gives White a long-term initiative, as we have seen in Chapters 6-10.



The author's statistics with black in the period 2006-2010 are:
total 20 games=14 wins, 4 draws and 2 losses. Performance=2671.

Games 31-35

- Anti-Blues – 8.♖b1: Games 31 and 32.
- Super Blues – 8.♖g4 g6: Game 33 and 8.♖g4 ♗f8: Game 34.
- The attacking move 8/9.h4: Game 35.

Three Plans

Basically, in the opening phase Black has three main ideas. Any 'blues player' must know them and know how to combine them:

- 1) Exchanging the light-squared bishops, using the strategic set-up with ...b7-b6 and ...♗a6 – see examples in Games 33-35.
- 2) Pressure on the centre, attacking the d4 pawn. White can sacrifice this pawn, looking for initiative, as in the main Game 35.

Keep in Mind:

This aggressive concept is also connected to Kasparov's gambit in Game 14 (Winawer with 7.h4), and Game 21 (7.♖g4 ♗f8). However, the flexible Blues Variation allows Black to use a favourable move order, playing ...♗c6 instead of ...♗e7, or some other move.

To avoid any complications, there is the following plan for strategic players:

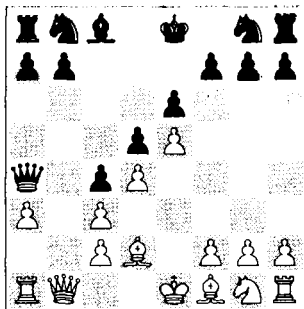
- 3) The most attractive and universal plan for Black is to prepare queenside castling, which is possible only after the centre-blocking move ...c5-c4. Black follows up with ...♗c6, ...♗d7 and ...0-0-0. Then he starts a counterattack on the kingside with his pawns (...f6-h6-g5) – the white king will be a target!

During the early opening phase it is better to keep the g8 knight on its original square: both to protect the dark squares and to be able to counterattack with ...f7-f6, exf6 ♗xf6!?.

GAMES 31 and 32 – Anti-Blues

- 8.♖b1 (571 games=58.8%. In the year 2008 the result was 292 games=59.4%)
- The sub-line 8.♖b1 (see Game 31)

The threat of 9.♗b5+ prevents the classical plan with ...b6 and ...♗a6. In this case Black blocks the centre with 8...c4, forcing the white queen to lose time getting re-activated.



It is clear that the closed positions created with ...c5-c4 offer White a space advantage. But the downside is that it will cost him time to bring his pieces into play. The middlegame is very rich in possibilities for both sides.

To be successful, just follow plan number 3!

GAME 31 – Queen Rock on the Atlantic: Lines 9. ♖e2/♗h3/♗f3

Both armies continue their development, preparing actions on the kingside.

The following rapid game was commented in my book *Revolutionize Your Chess* to show the chances offered when Black uses all 5 Touchstones (Material, Development, Placement of Pieces and Pawns, King Position, and Time) in the French Defence. Below is a theoretical update of this line, where Black makes good use of all the dynamic factors of this set-up.



Potkin-Moskalenko, Tenerife 2008

□ Vladimir Potkin

■ Viktor Moskalenko

Tenerife rapid 2008 (6)

1.e4 e6 2.d4 d5 3.♗c3 ♗b4 4.e5 c5
5.a3 ♗xc3+ 6.bxc3 ♖a5!

If this move is useful in many lines of the main Winawer, why not play it now?

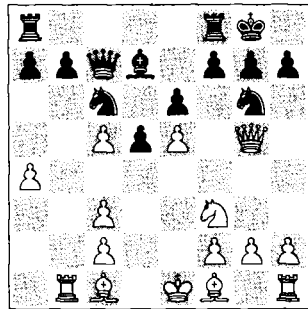
Keep in Mind:

The old Winawer move 6...♖c7 has many resources! After 7.♖g4, 7...f5! is

the key defence of the g7 pawn. See Game 75 in *The Flexible French*.

7.♙d2

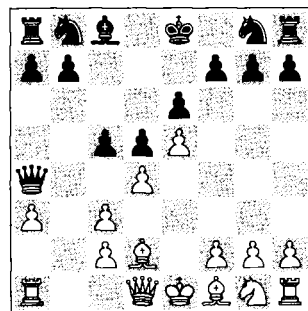
7.♙d2?! is the only other reasonable way to defend the c3 pawn, but such a move is too passive: 7...♘c6 8.♘f3 ♘ge7 9.a4 ♙d7 10.dxc5 ♚c7 11.♚g5 ♘g6 12.♞b1 0-0



analysis diagram

Goh Wei Ming comments on *Chess-Publishing*: With simple developing moves, Moskalenko has built a powerful position that was ideal to play for the win. The way he created play so quickly on the queenside for the rest of the game is highly instructive. 13.♘d4?! b6! 14.♙a3 ♘b5 ♚xe5+ 15.♚xe5 ♘cxe5 ♞. 14...bxc5 15.♙xc5 ♞fb8! ♞ Massoni-Moskalenko, Barbera del Valles 2009.

7...♚a4



We are in the Black Queen Blues variation. In this modern line, Black uses the

great power of his queen. In this position the most popular continuation is:

8.♚b1

With this manoeuvre, White threatens ♙b5+ and practically forces Black to close the position.



WEAPON: 8.♞b1 is a quite similar concept (36 games=58.3%): 8...c4 9.♚c1 ♘c6 Here are some possible schemes. Black must choose between close combat or the immediate ...f7-f6:

A) 10.♘f3 ♘ge7 11.g3 b6 12.♙g2 ♙d7 13.0-0 h6 14.♞e1 0-0-0 15.♞e2 ♘f5 16.h4 ♞dg8= De Firmian-Rustemov, Copenhagen 2001;

B) 10.♙e2 f6 11.♘f3 b6 (11...fxe5!?) 12.♙f4 ♙d7 13.h4 0-0-0 14.h5 ♞f8 15.♘f1 ♙e8 16.♞h3 ♘ge7 17.♙g1 ♞hg8= Ivanchuk-B.Socko, Heraklio Ech-tt 2007;

C) 10.♘e2 f6!? 11.exf6 ♘xf6 12.♘g3 0-0 13.♙e2 b6 14.0-0 ♙d7 15.♞e1 ½-½ Moreno Carnero-Pogorelov, Dos Hermanas B 2003;

D) 10.h4 b6 11.h5 ♙d7!? (11...h6!) 12.♘f3 (12.h6 ♘xh6 13.♙xh6 gxh6 14.♞xh6 0-0-0=) 12...0-0-0 13.♙e2 h6 14.♘f1 ♞f8 15.♞h3 ♘ge7= T.Kosintseva-I.Rajlich, Heraklio Ech-tt 2007.

8...c4!

The two white bishops are temporarily out of play. This is how typical games in this line begin.

9.♘e2!?

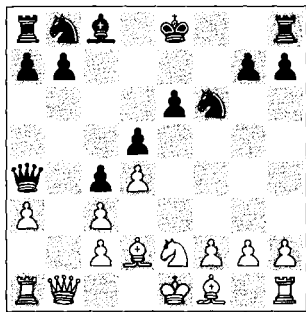
A flexible move – White will take the knight to f4 and h5, provoking Black to weaken his structure with ...g7-g6. 9.♘h3 has the same idea and usually transposes.

9.♘f3 is obviously a worse placement for the knight: 9...♘c6 10.g3 10.h4 is similar to the next game, where the best continuation is 10...♙d7 11.h5 h6 etc. 10...♙d7 11.♙g2 11.♙h3 0-0-0 12.0-0

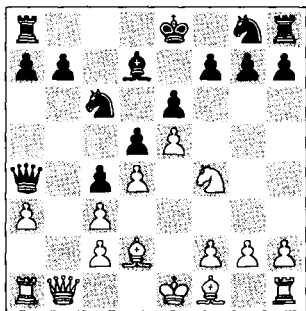
h6 13.♘h4 g5 14.♘g2 f5
Deszczynski-M.Socko, Grodzisk Mazo-
wiecki 2007. 11...0-0-0 11...h6!?,
avoiding ♘g5. 12.♘g5 ♖f8 13.0-0 h6
14.♘h3 g5 15.f3 f6! with excellent
counterplay, as in the game Timman-
Vaganian, Bazna 2007.

9...♘c6!

In recent years this has seemed the best
set-up to me. The alternative is the classic
French break 9...f6 10.exf6 ♘xf6.



Do you remember the modern structure
from the Warsaw lines? Here Black can
achieve a solid position, but it is difficult
for him to get active counterplay: 11.g3
♘c6 11...♖d7!? to improve the queen
first: 12.♙g2 ♘c6 13.0-0 0-0= Vehi
Bach-Moskalenko, Estartit Open 2007.
12.♙g2 b6 13.0-0 ♙d7 14.♖b2 0-0
15.♗ae1 ♗ae8= Yakovenko-Moroze-
vich, Krasnoyarsk ch-RUS 2003.
10.♘f4 ♙d7!



Preparing queenside castling, followed
by ...f7-f6, which will start actions in
the centre and on the kingside.

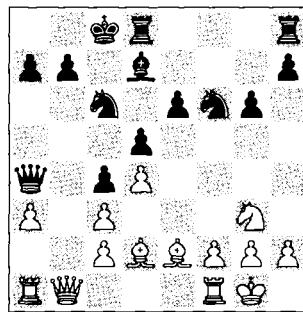
11.g3

White opts for the fianchetto.

A) 11.♖xb7 is not dangerous, viz.:
11...♗b8 12.♖c7 ♖xc2! 13.♗c1 ♗b1↑;

B) As I wrote in *The Flexible French*, af-
ter 11.♘h5 g6 the knight must go back.
And if we compare this with the main
game, Black gains a few extra tempi:

B1) 12.♘g3 This is possibly dubious
as on g3 the knight has limited scope:
12...0-0-0 13.♙e2 f6 14.exf6 ♘xf6
15.0-0

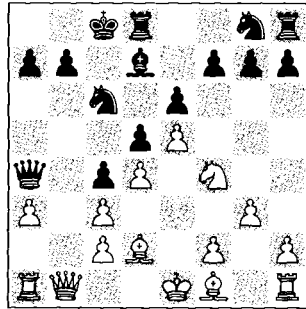


Surely, after he has castled queenside
Black has more winning chances in this
'blues line' than in the Warsaw Varia-
tion. 15...h5!? 16.h4 ♖a5 Another plan
is to prepare the advance ...e6-e5 with
16...♗de8!? 17.♙f4 ♖a5 18.♖b2 e5
19.dxe5 ♘xe5 20.♗fe1 ♖c7!??.
17.♙g5 ♗df8 18.♖b2 ♘h7 18...♗f7!?.
19.♙h6 ♗f7 20.♗ab1 ♖c7♞ Obviously
Black has a better idea of what to do in
this position... 21.f4?! b6 22.♗be1 ♘f6
23.♙g5 ♘h7 24.♙h6 ♖d8!♞ Yako-
venko-Zhang Pengxiang, Taiyuan 2006;

B2) But the retreat 12.♘f4 blocks the
dark-squared bishop: 12...0-0-0 13.g3
f6! 14.exf6 ♘xf6 15.♙g2 e5! and Black
obtained promising piece play in
Solleveld-P.Nikolic, Netherlands tt 2009
– 15...♘e4!↑ was also a good idea;

B3) After 12.♟f6+ ♟xf6 13.exf6 0 0-0! 14.♞c2 e5! 15.dxe5 Black's position is very solid, Nijboer-Visser, Hilversum ch-NED 2008. The simplest is 15...♞xe5 followed by ...♞he8 and ...♞f5;

B4) TRICK: 12.♞g7+? loses the knight: 12...♞f8 13.♞xb7 ♞d8-+. 11...0-0-0



Black has completed his opening set-up and his army is ready for action on the kingside. This is a typical position for many 'Blues' lines (not dependent upon White's set-up).

12.♞g2

The most natural development. There are two interesting recently-played alternatives:

A) The dynamic 12.h4!? f6! 13.♞h3 ♞e8 14.exf6 ♟xf6 15.0-0 ♞a5 15...e5!? 16.♞xd7+ ♟xd7 17.♟xd5 exd4. 16.♞d1 ♞e7! 16...e5!?⇒ Felgaer-Moskalenko, Benidorm Masters 2008. 17.♞e1 ♞he8↑ and Black is ready for ...e6-e5!;

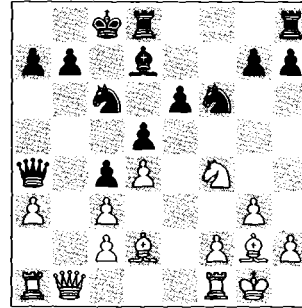
B) The more static 12..♞h3 g6 Or 12...h5!? 13.0-0 ♟ge7 14.♞b2 h4 15.♞g4 ♞h7 16.♞g2 ♞dh8 17.♞h1 ♟d8 18.♞ae1 f5 19.exf6 gxf6 20.h3 hxg3 21.fxg3 e5! Cuadras AvellanaMoskalenko, Figueres 2009. 13.0-0 h6!? 14.♞c1 ♞f8 15.♞g2 g5!? 16.♟h5 f5! 17.exf6 ♟xf6 18.♟xf6 ♞xf6 19.f4 g4 20.f5!? exf5

21.♞xd5 ♟e7 22.♞g2 ♞c6= Veli Bach Moskalenko, Estartit 2008/09.

12...f6!

The typical French breakthrough, attacking the centre and helping Black to obtain counterplay.

13.exf6 ♟xf6! 14.0-0



We are in the modern Winawer pawn structure – explained in Chapter 9 on the Warsaw Variation. But the black king is now very safe on the queenside. So let's make use of this difference:

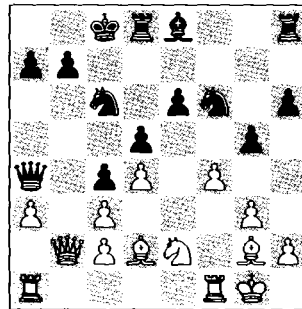
14...g5! 15.♞e2 h6 16.♞b2 ♞e8

Aiming to activate the bishop with ...♞g6. 16...♟e7 was also interesting: 17.♞ab1 ♞c6. Or the straightforward 16...♟e4!?

17.f4

A signal for black to attack. With this advance, the strategic plans are concluded and dynamic play starts, with some great tactics. The fight begins!

Inserting 17.♞ab1 was possible: 17...b6 18.f4 ♟e4!⇒ is similar to the game.



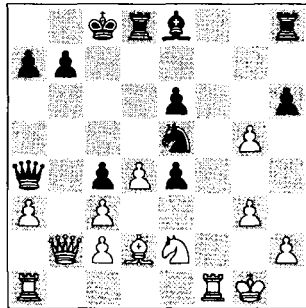
17...♟e4!

There is no time for passive moves:
17...g4? 18.f5!↑.

18.♙xe4

A very risky trade from a strategic point of view, weakening the light squares on the kingside. However, White decided not to lose tempi for his own attack. If 18.♙e3 ♘h5 19.♞ae1 ♚a5 or 19...♞hg8 with satisfactory counter play.

18...♞xe4 19.fxg5 ♘e5!↑



Another knight enters the play. This is an unexpected and remarkable manoeuvre that changes the course of the game.

20.♘f4

20.dxe5 ♞xd2 21.♘d4 hxg5→.

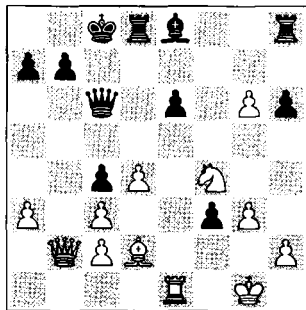
20...♚c6!

First improving the queen. 20...♘f3+!?

21.g6

If 21.gxh6 ♞xh6, with attack.

21...♘f3+ 22.♞xf3 exf3 23.♞e1



The position is highly unbalanced, but Black can use the time factor as a dynamic advantage. So I played:

23...♟e5!

A new resource in my counterattack, with the idea to divert the white rook and to sacrifice two pawns. I did not like 23...♞d6∞ because it loses speed for the attack.

24.♞xe5 f2+! 25.♚xf2 ♚h1!

This does not look like 'Queen Blues' – more like 'Queen Rock'! Remarkably, quite recently the queen was still inactive on a4. Now it is greatly improved: the queen's position on h1 ensures the success of Black's petite combinaison. The white king is defenceless.

26.♙e1 ♙c6 27.♚b4!

Trying to activate his own queen, but it is too late.

27...♞he8!→

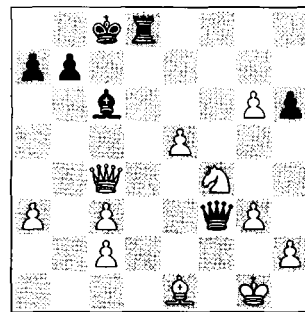
Mobilizing all the pieces. 27...♚f3+!?

28.♚g1 ♞hf8! 29.d5 (only move)

29...♞xf4! 30.gxf4 ♞xd5 31.♞xd5

♙xd5 32.♚f8+ ♘d7!–+ is the solution of the engine.

28.♚xc4 ♞xe5 29.dxe5 ♚f3+ 30.♚g1

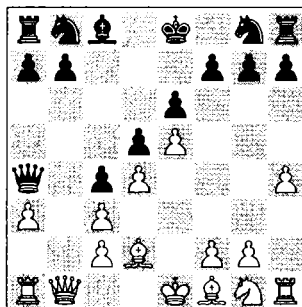


The decisive moment of the game has arrived... but I played

30...♚h1+

and agreed a draw here since I had only one minute left – the usual problem with rapid games. A pity, since after 30...♞d1! the only 'defence' is 31.♚e2 (31.♚f1 ♚e3+) 31...♚xe2 32.♘xe2 ♞xe1+ 33.♚f2 ♞d1 34.♘d4 ♙e4 35.g7 ♙h7–+. I should have won quite easily.

GAME 32 – Quick Catastrophe (Sarcophagus Blues): the line 9.h4
 (86 games= 57.6%) and the sub-line 9.f4 (22 games=54.5%)



With the popular advance h2-h4 White is going to attack on the kingside, first using his pawns. Curiously enough, after Black's queenside castling White's plan can lead to quick catastrophe!

On the way several dogmas may be dismantled:

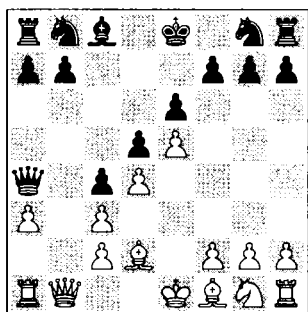
- the direct break 9...f6?! is an out-of-date, mistaken idea here;
- after White's advance 10.h5 the block with 10...h6 is OK, but not forced!
- the g8 knight can wait with development, keeping the possibility ...f7-f6, exf6 ♖xf6.

□ **Kutwal Shashikant**

■ **Thomas Luther**

Mumbai 2010 (7)


1.e4 e6 2.d4 d5 3.♖c3 ♘b4 4.e5 c5
 5.a3 ♙xc3+ 6.bxc3 ♚a5 7.♙d2 ♚a4
 8.♞b1 c4



A popular position in the Blues Variation. I feel that the game is balanced.

9.h4

The most direct approach: using the motif of the closed centre White starts a flank attack. Just as in the previous game, there are two main counterplans for Black.

 **WEAPON:** 9.f4 (this move somehow limits the activity of White's dark-squared bishop) 9...♗e7 (Black can also keep the knight on g8 and play 9...♗c6!?, with the idea 10.♗f3 ♙d7 11.g3 f5!? 12.exf6 and now 12...♗xf6!? 13.♙h3 ♗e4 14.0-0 0-0-0 15.♞b2 h6 ♞ preparing ...g7-g5, Escobar Forero-Narciso Dublan, Badalona 2005) 10.♗f3 ♗bc6 11.g3 ♙d7 12.♙h3 0-0-0 13.0-0 f5!? 14.exf6 gxf6 15.f5 ♗xf5 16.♙xf5 exf5 17.♗h4 ♞he8 18.♞d1 ♗e7 19.♙h6 f4!↑ and Black's pieces are more active, Przybylski-Moskalenko, Banyoles 2007.

TRICK: 20. ♖xf4? ♜g8! 21. ♙g7 ♜c3±.

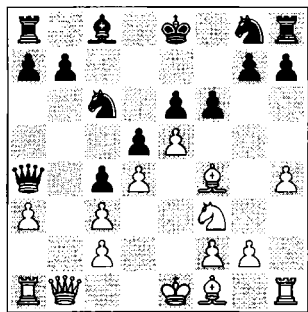
9... ♖c6!?

A natural reply, preparing standard plan number 3: queenside castling.

The second counterplan is the premature break 9...f6?! This was my old dogmatic concept, adhering to the classical rule of starting a central action versus a flank attack. Unfortunately, it is an important strategic mistake here. The position will remain static, which is in White's favour:

A) Continuing the advance with **10.h5?!** is a really bad idea now: **10...fxe5 11.h6? ♜xh6 12. ♙xh6 g3h6 13.dxe5 13. ♖c1? ♖c6±** Corrales Jimenez--Moskalenko, Sitges 2007. **13... ♖c6± 14. ♖f3 ♖a5↑** and Black is clearly better, Picanol Alamany-Moskalenko, Catalunya Team Championship 2009;

B) But **10. ♖f3! ♖c6 11. ♙f4!** is a very strong counter-argument, definitively improving White's worst piece.



analysis diagram

11... ♖a5!? Trying some tactics against the opponent's strategic pressure: **12. ♖b2 fxe5 13. ♖xe5!**

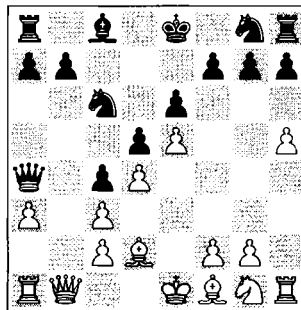
TRICK: My main counter-idea was 13... ♖xd4?! but it does not work well due to 14. ♙xc4! ♖e7 (14...dxc4? 15. ♖xc4+–) 15.0-0± and Black is too passive.

B2) 13... ♖ge7 14. ♖xc6 ♖xc6 15. ♙d6!? We are again in the modern Winawer structure. White has a mini-advantage, but he can conserve it for a long time, improving on and on for the next 100 moves – so Black is losing, Corrales Jimenez-Moskalenko, Sants 2007.

Keep in Mind:

Therefore we can say that White's early advance 9.h4 is a tricky option, which provokes the premature break 9...f6?!

10.h5



The next key moment: the block.

10...h6!?

This leads to the well-known 'sarcophagus' structure – where in my opinion the queen on a4 is a better blocker than the bishop! Curiously, this is not the only move.


Weapon: Black can allow the push h5-h6 and play **10... ♙d7!?**, aiming for an advantage in development:

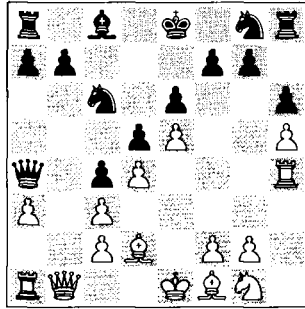
A) **TRICK:** After 11.h6?! ♖xh6! forces White to exchange his powerful bishop: 12. ♙xh6 g3h6± 13. ♖xh6? ♖a5 14. ♖b2 ♖xd4±;

B) **11. ♖f3 0-0-0!?** 11...h6 leads to the main game. 12. ♙e2 12.g3 f6! is OK, for example: 13. ♙h3 ♖f8± Sutovsky-Vaganian, Kemer tt 2007. **12... ♖f8 13. ♙f4 f6! 14. ♖b2 ♖ge7 15. ♖b1 b6=** Flyingfatman-Rajlich, Playchess.com 2007.

11. ♖e2


White makes a neutral developing move. There are several creative alternatives:

 A) WEAPON: An obvious, popular alternative is the rook lift 11. ♖h4. White wants to probe the kingside. This idea also features in Game 35, and was already analysed in lines with h2-h4 in previous chapters.



analysis diagram

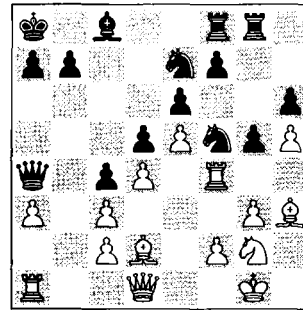
11... ♗ge7! Now it's best to move the g8 knight. 12. ♖g4 ♖g8 12... ♗f5 is natural. Perhaps White's best idea then is 13. ♗f3 ♗d7 14. ♖f4, intending g4. 13. ♖f4 ♗d7 14. ♗f3 0-0-0! Actually the f-pawn needs no defence. 14... ♖f8 15.g3 0-0-0 is also strong, Hamdouchi-Housieaux, Guingamp 2010.

 A1) TRICK: 15. ♖xf7?! ♗e8 16. ♖f4 ♗xh5 merely activates Black's bishop;

A2) 15.g3 ♖df8 16. ♗h3 ♖b8 17. ♖d1 ♗c8 18. ♗f1 ♗a8 19. ♗g1 ♗f5 20. ♗h4 ♗ce7 These positions tend to be very solid and White is obviously running out of ideas. His next move gives Black the opportunity that he has been waiting for: 21. ♗g2?! 21. ♗xf5 ♗xf5 22. ♗xf5= might have been a wiser option. 21...g5!


Goh Wei Ming wrote on *ChessPublishing* about this game: *With all of Black's pieces optimally placed, this pawn thrust carries quite a bit of punch. In general, Black should*

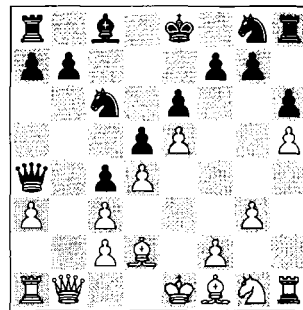
be playing for this particular idea whenever White plays h2-h4-h5.



analysis diagram

22.hxg6 fxg6 23.g4 g5 24. ♖f3 h5!↑ Al Modiahki-Toufighi, Subic Bay 2009: a great game by Toufighi against a very strong opponent. It served as a good advertisement for the system. I think I have shown that Black is completely fine against White's plan of 8. ♖b1 and 9.h4. The Iranian IM is a young fighter. He is also a huge French Defence fan and has many different lines in his repertoire. He made Al Modiahki face some stubborn resistance.

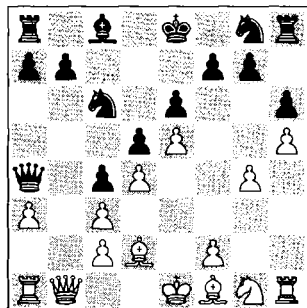
 B) WEAPON: 11.g3



11... ♗d7 12. ♗h3 ♗ge7 12...f6!?. 13. ♖b2 0-0-0 14.f4 g6! I like 14...f6!? 15. ♗f3 ♖b8 16.0-0 f5!? followed by ... ♗e8, attacking the h5 pawn. 15. ♗f3?! 15.hxg6 fxg6 16. ♗f3 ♖dg8⇒ with complex play, but I don't think Black is

worse here. **15...gxh5!** This is logical and effective. **15...wb8** is equal, Riff-Berry, Cappelle la Grande 2009. **16.cf2** **fdg8** White can never touch the h5 pawn because if the h3 bishop retreats, Black has ...df5!;


 C) WEAPON: **11.g4**



analysis diagram

Another advance which looks aggressive but is hardly dangerous for Black.

11...d7 **12.gh3 0-0-0** **13.e2 ge7** **13...f6!?** **14.e3** **14.0-0!** **fdg8** Klimov-Gorovykh, St Petersburg ch-city 2009. I prefer the direct **14...f6!?**. **14...df8** **15.cd2** Intended to find a safe place for the white king, but we are not in Warsaw structures here: **15...f6!** **16.f4 f5!?** **17.wg1 fxg4** **18.oxg4** **fhg8** **19.dg3 g6!** with dangerous counterplay, Bacrot-Eingorn, France tt 2007;

 D) WEAPON: **11.df3** The universal move.



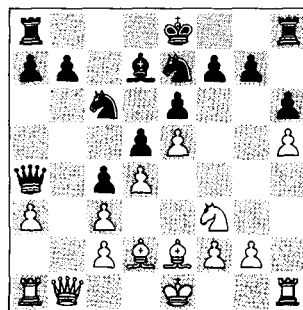
analysis diagram

11...ge7 The alternative is **11...d7!?** (I prefer to keep the knight on g8) with the following set-up: **12.g3 0-0-0** **13.dg2 f6!?** **14.exf6** **xf6** **15.de5** **xe5** **16.dxe5** **de4!** **17.oxe4** **dxe4** **18.ee3** **ec6** **19.0-0** **wa5!** Colovic-Moskalenko, Figueres 2009. **12.g3** White's plan is **gh3/dh4/f4-f5**. **12...d7** **13.gh3 0-0-0** **14.wc1** **df8** **15.dh4** **wa5** **16.0-0 g5!** **17.dg2!?** (\geq **17.hxg6** **fxg6) was seen in Svetushkin-T.Willemze, Sarajevo 2010. And now **17...f5!** forces White to respond: **18.exf6** **g8!** Black is better, even if he loses the e6 pawn.**

11...ge7


Perhaps I would prefer the direct **11...d7!?**, keeping the possibility of ...f6-exf6 **xf6**.

12.df3 d7



13.0-0!

Kingside castling is not logical after advancing the h-pawn. But we have already seen most of the other attempts!

 WEAPON: Here is my third 'blues' game against Cuban GM Corrales (the final result being 1-2 in my favour): **13.g3 0-0-0** **14.cf1** **cb8** The **14...f6!?** break is now OK for Black, but I was shocked by the previous game! - **15.ef4** **g5!** **15.cg2** **ca8** **16.wb2** **fb8** **17.fh4** **b5** **18.g1** **wa5** **19.cf1** **wb6** **20.g4** **a5** **21.fh2** **fbf8** **22.wc1**

♙b7 23.g5 hxg5 24.♖xg5 ♘f5
 25.♘h4 ♘ce7 26.♘xf5 ♘xf5 27.♚b2
 f6!↑ Corrales Jimenez-Moskalenko,
 Sabadell 2008.

13...0-0!

Ready to advance the kingside pawns.

14.♘h4 g5!

A Black Jet in blues fashion – how nice!

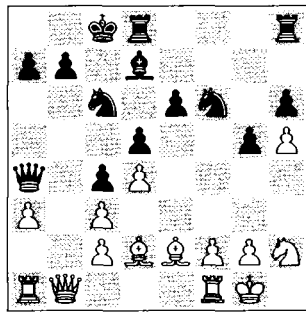
15.♘f3 ♘g8!

Uhlmann's amazing old manoeuvre in the Winawer: preparing the break with the f-pawn.

16.♘h2 f5!

A bit of a Stonewall thrown in. 16...f6
 17.f4 is less clear.

17.exf6 ♘xf6



A desired position for the true Blues player.

Summary of 8.♚b1 c4:

With many examples given in these two model games we have showed how Black avails of almost all Winawer resources in this line – reinforced by the dynamic possibilities of the Blues line.

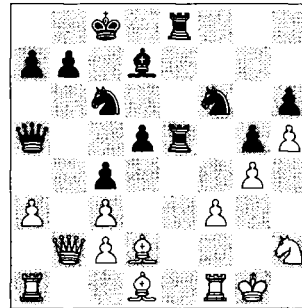
Remember that against any White set-up, first castling queenside is much more flexible than the immediate break ...f7-f6.

18.g4?

White defends his beautiful h5 pawn, but at the price of definitely weakening his king! 18.♚b2 ♙e8 19.♖ab1 b6.

18...♖he8 19.f3 e5! 20.dxe5 ♖xe5

21.♙d1 ♖de8 22.♚b2 ♚a5!



Using the Blues Queen's great properties Black prepares an effective punishment on the kingside.

23.a4 ♘d8

23...♚c7!?

24.♚b4 ♚c7 25.f4 ♖5e7 26.fxg5 ♚g3+

Reaching the desired square in just three moves.

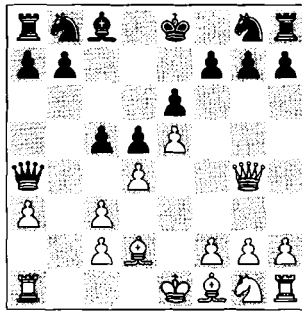
27.♘h1 ♖e2!

0-1

Mate follows.

GAMES 33 and 34 – Super Blues: 8.♖g4 (410 games=54.8% – a remarkable improvement; in 2008 the result was 228=49.3%)

This is the most aggressive move in all the variations of the French Defence, provoking weaknesses in Black's position.



The pawn on g4 is under attack and there are two ways of defending it:

- Game 33: 8...g6 is the classical 'Winawer-Nimzowitsch' defence, with a sharp fight between the queens.
- Game 34: 8...♔f8 is a modern idea in the French Defence; the king defends the dark squares!

GAME 33 – A Gambit versus the Queen Blues: the line 8...g6 (206 games=55.3% in White's favour)

In *The Flexible French* I wrote that the early sortie of the black queen takes the sting out of White's play, since after 8...♔f8 or 8...g6 the queen has to move back: 9.♕d1. This sequence promises Black a creative game in all lines (realizing Plans 1-3 as well) – see the game move 9...b6 and the weapon 9...♘c6!?

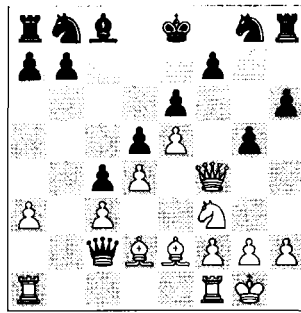
Quite recently, starting in 2007, a young generation of players like Karjakin and Dominguez Perez popularized the gambit idea, which has become extremely important at all levels – see sub-lines 9.♘f3 or 9.♗f4!?

In Yearbook 92, GM Alexis Cabrera discusses this interesting weapon against the Blues Variation. But, as I pointed in the Forum of Yearbook 93, his analysis was not complete (see 'A French Blues Controversy'). In my view, Cabrera does not suggest the best options for both sides in the main lines 8...g6 and 8...♔f8.

However, there are only few games with the new gambit line, and no serious analytical work has been done for the black side. This is the normal crisis situation which occurs after a surprising weapon in any opening. So, my first recommendation would be: do not take the c2-pawn immediately!

To be successful Black should combine several possible ideas.

- an early ...♗xc2: this is good after 9.♗f4 (not after 9.♘f3). Black follows up with ...♗e4 or ...c5-c4.
- or taking the c2 pawn later on, after the preliminary pawn moves ...c5-c4 and ...h7-h6. Black waits until White castles kingside, and then first plays 12...g5!



And then ... ♖xc2! (see the line with 9. ♖f4).

- in case White defends the c2 pawn with ♖a2 or ♗d1, Black should employ Plan 3: ... ♗c6-♗d7, ... h6-♖h7 and ... 0-0-0.

□ Ilmars Starostits

■ Viktor Moskalenko

Renedo 2008 (9)

1.e4 e6 2.d4 d5 3.♗c3 ♗b4 4.e5 c5
5.a3 ♗xc3+ 6.bxc3 ♖a5 7.♗d2 ♖a4

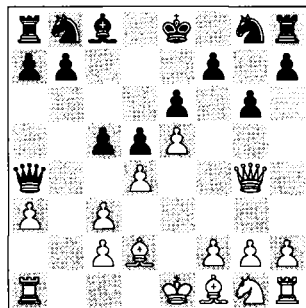
What I like most about the Black Queen Blues Variation is that it prevents White from playing a number of variations. Instead of worrying about 7. ♖g4 yourself, you can force White to worry about 7... ♖a4. However, after

8. ♖g4!?

both queens play the super-blues!

8...g6

Black is weakened on the dark squares, but he keeps the king's queenside castling rights. For Hook's defence 8... ♗f8!? see the next game.



9. ♖d1

This move is almost exclusively played, but once White realizes that the c2 pawn need not be protected...

WEAPON: This gambit idea can be realized with two possible moves:

A) 9. ♗f3 is the oldest. Now:

A1) TRICK: After the immediate

9... ♖xc2?! White seems better: 10.dxc5! (or 10. ♖c1!?) 10... ♗c6 11. ♗b5 f5 12. ♖g5 ♖e4+ 13. ♗e3 ♗e7 14.0-0 h6 15. ♖f6 ♖f8 16. ♗xh6! (16. ♖g7± Escobar Dominguez-Pomes Marcet, Sevilla 2004) 16... ♖xf6 17.exf6+-;

A2) But Black can continue 9... ♗c6!? 10. ♖f4 and now:

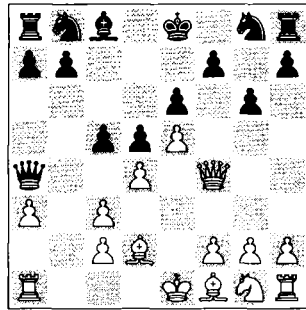
A21) 10... ♖xc2 11.dxc5 ♖e4+ with the idea 12. ♖xe4 dxe4 13. ♗g5 f5 14.exf6 ♗xf6 and the arising ending is about equal;

A22) However, I prefer a closed set-up here, playing 10...c4!? first – see the next line 9. ♖f4;

A23) TRICK: 10...h6?! 11.dxc5! ♖xc2 12. ♗d4↑ Karjakin-Zhang Pengxiang, Khanty-Mansiysk 2007.

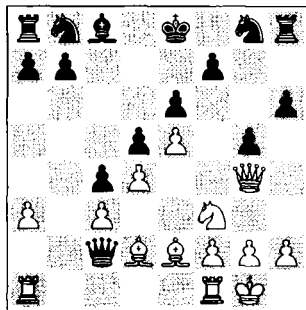
B) WEAPON: 9. ♖f4!? is the latest line, which has become critical. White wants to open up the position with

10.dxc5. Black has at least two attractive options:



analysis diagram

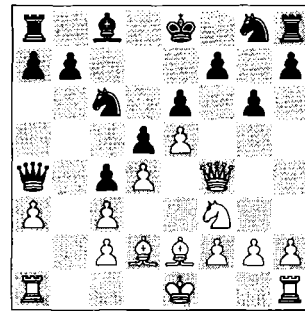
B1) **9...♖xc2!?** For balancing purposes it is no problem to eat the c2 pawn after White spends a tempo on ♖f4. **10.♘f3** **10.dxc5** ♘d7!. **10...c4!?** **10...♗e4+!?** **11.♖xe4** dxe4 **12.♙b5+** (12.♘g5 f5!) **12...♗c6** **13.♘g5** f5! **14.exf6** ♘xf6 looks balanced; **10...b6?** **11.dxc5!** bxc5 **12.♞c1!**↑ Dominguez Perez-Vaganian, Barcelona 2007. **11.♙e2** h6 **12.0-0** g5! Better include this jet now, when the c2-h7 diagonal is available for the queen. **12...♗c6** is worse: **13.♙d1!** ♖b2 (13...♗e4!?) **14.♙a4** ♖b6 **15.h4** ♙d7 **16.♘h2** with some compensation for the pawn, Cabrera-Pomes Marcet, La Roda 2009. **13.♗g4**



I think this position is favourable for Black; apart from having an extra pawn in a closed position, Black has hidden

possibilities. For instance: **13...♗c6** **13...♗f5!?**; **13...♗c7!?** **14.h4** ♙d7 and now **15.hxg5?** If **15.♗h5** gxh4!; or **15.♙d1** ♖h7! **16.♞c1** 0-0-0 **17.♙c2** f5!. **15...hxg5** **16.♖xc2!** ♖h7! with a nice chance to give mate on h1! After the white queen's retreat, Black can combine Plans 1-3;

B2) I like **9...c4!?**, following Plan 3 with one exception: Black plays **...♖xc2!?** at some favourable moment: **10.♘f3** ♗c6 For example, **10...h6!?** **11.♙e2** ♖xc2! transposes to the main line with **9...♖xc2**. **11.♙e2**



analysis diagram

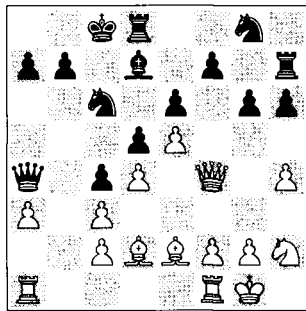
This position is quite typical for the Black Queen Blues Variation. An interesting and natural counterplan for Black, which deserves to be investigated further, is **11...h6!?**, preventing ♘g5 and preparing to counter h4-h5 with **...g6-g5** (by the way, **11...♖xc2** is still possible). Now:

B21) TRICK: **12.0-0?! leads to** Cabrera-Pomes Marcet, where **12...g5!** and **13...♖xc2** are fine for Black, see below;

B22) In case White defends c2 by **12.♞a2**, Black can just follow Plan 3;

B23) 12.h4 ♙d7 **12...♖xc2!?** **13.0-0** Or, for instance, **13.♙d1!?**, stopping **...♖xc2** once and for all: **13...♞h7** **14.♘h2** 0-0-0! **15.♘g4** ♖a5 (15...♗ce7!?) **16.♘f6** ♘xf6 **17.♖xf6**

♘g8 18. ♖f3 ♜f8⇒ 16. ♘f6 ♘xf6
 17. ♗xf6 (17. exf6 ♜c8⇒ 18. 0-0? g5!
 19. ♗h2 ♜eh8↑) 17... ♜g8 was balanced
 but Black won in the rapid game Alsina
 Leal-Moskalenko, Barcelona 2010.
 13... ♗h7!? 13... ♗xc2!?. 14. ♘h2
 0-0-0! (14... ♗xc2!?)



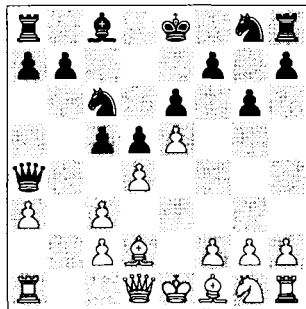
analysis diagram

Black has caught up in development and
 continues to threaten the c2 pawn:
15. ♜a2 ♜f8 16. ♘g4 ♗a5 17. ♜e1 ♗d8
18. ♘f6 g5!?⇒ Fighting for the initia-
 tive. 18... ♘xf6!? 19. ♗xf6 ♗xf6 20. exf6
 ♘b8!⇒. **19. hxg5 hxg5 20. ♗xg5 ♘xf6**
21. ♗xf6 ♗a5!? (less good is 21... ♗b6)
 with dangerous counterplay for Black.
 After a tense fight, the recent game
 A.Muzychuk-I.Rajlich, Ohrid tt 2009,
 ended in a draw.

9...b6

With the strategic idea ... ♗a6.

WEAPON: Alternatively, after
 the development of his knight:
 9... ♘c6!?



10. ♘f3 (or 10. ♜b1), Black can employ the
 universal blocking set-up **10...c4**, as in the
 first two games – Plan 3!

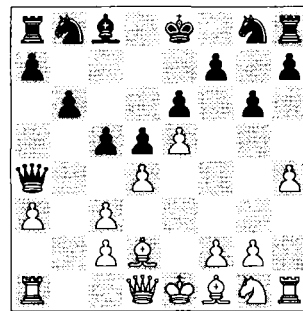
TRICK: Plan number 2, the attack on
 the d4 pawn, is also possible:
 10... cxd4!? 11. cxd4 ♘xd4∞ – but, as al-
 ways, more risky.

11. h4 h6 12. ♘h2 12. ♗c1 ♗d7 13. ♗e2
 0-0-0⇒ Hermansson-Kruppa, Bucharest
 2006. **12...f6!? 13. f4 h5 14. g4 ♗d7**
15. ♗e2 hxg4 16. ♘xg4 0-0-0! is a
 dream position for Black in this variation,
 Volokitin-Ward, Copenhagen 2002.

10.c4

Trying to unlock the centre. This aggres-
 sive break is also played in the variation
 with 8... ♘f8 – see next game.

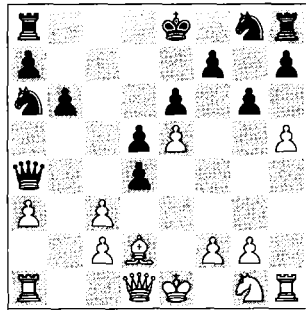
A) WEAPON: The main line
10.h4 is also logical. White hopes
 that the weakening of the dark squares will
 improve his chances.



analysis diagram

10... ♗a6! An idea of grandmaster Lev
 Psakhis. Black allows the advance h4-h5.
 10... ♘c6!? is Plan 2. **11. ♗xa6 ♘xa6!**
 11... ♗xa6 is possible: 12. h5 ♘c6!
 13. hxg6 fxg6 14. ♗g4 ♘d7! 15. ♘f3
 and now the surprising 15...h5!, sacri-
 ficing a pawn, appears to give Black ex-
 cellent play: 16. ♗xg6 ♘ge7 17. ♗d3
 ♗xd3 18. cxd3 cxd4 19. cxd4 ♘f5∞
 Apicella-Jacimovic, Fügen tt 2006.
12.h5 White continues according to
 plan. 12. ♘e2 (Sznepik-I.Rajlich, War-

saw 2010) 12...h6!; for 12.♟f3 see the next line. **12...cxd4!**



analysis diagram

Definitely a key position for Black.

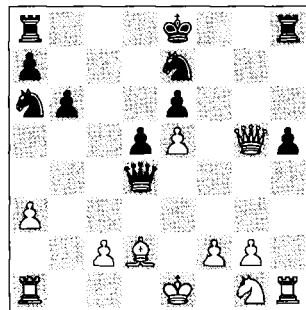
13.hxg6 fxg6 and now:

A1) TRICK: 14.♞g4 ♘e7! In this way Black retains dangerous counterplay; 14...♙d7!? 15.cxd4 h5⇒. **15.cxd4** The first nuance is that 15.♞xe6?? loses to 15...♘c5! 16.♞g4 ♞xc2 with powerful threats: 17.♞xd4 0-0-+; the second is 15.♘f3 h5!↑. **15...h5!** This pawn thrust is a nice way to get rid of the h7 weakness once and for all. Now:

A11) TRICK: 16.♞xe6? ♞xd4 17.♞d1 ♞e4+! 18.♘e2 ♘c5 19.♞h3 0-0! and Black is better;

A12) TRICK: 16.♘e2?? certainly does not work: 16...hxg4 17.♞xh8+ ♙d7 18.♞xa8 ♘c8♠ Al Sayed-B.Socko, Port Erin 2006;

A13) 16.♞h4!? g5 16...♞xc2!? looks fine. **17.♞xg5 ♞xd4⇒**

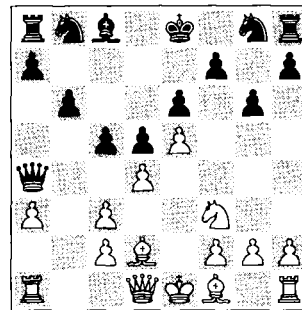


analysis diagram

Black seems OK after this pawn capture: 18.c3? ♞e4+ 19.♘e2 ♘c5♠ and now 20.♞h4 occurred in M.Andersen-Johannesson, Reykjavik 2009, when 20...♞xe5! would have been an unpleasant surprise;

A2) 14.♞h4 ♘e7 14...♘c5!↑. 15.♘f3 15.cxd4 ♘c5!↑. 15...♘c5! An improvement on 15...♘f5 16.♞f4 h5!? Sulskis--Bruno, Tromsø 2009. **16.♞xd4 16.♘d4 0-0!. 16...♞d7! 17.c4 ♘c6 18.♞h4 0-0♠** and Black is the first to reach the desired position.

B) WEAPON: 10.♘f3 is also a natural continuation:



10...♘a6 11.♞xa6 ♘xa6 Interestingly, taking with the queen 11...♞xa6!?, preventing White's castling; and after 12.h4 h6!? seems quite playable. **12.h4 h5 12...h6!?. 13.0-0 0-0-0 14.♘g5 ♞d7 15.♞b1 ♘e7 ½-½** N.Kosintseva-Hoang Thanh Trang, Dresden Ech 2007
10...♘a6!?

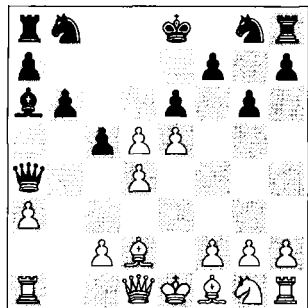
During the game I preferred to continue following the original plan. **10...♘e7!?** was a strong move.

10...♘c6 is not a bad idea either: 11.dxc5 bxc5 (11...dxc4!?) 12.c3 ♞xd1+ 13.♞xd1 ♘ge7=+, but not 13...d4? 14.♘f3± Greet-S.Lalic, England tt 2008/09.

Also, **10...dxc4!?** was another great option: 11.dxc5 ♘e7! (11...♘d7!?) 12.♘f3 ♘a6!?

11.cxd5!

White must open up the game.

**11...♙xf1**

11...♙xd4!?

12.♚xf1 exd5!

Despite its obviousness, this move appears to be a novelty. 12...♙xd4 is a bit worse: 13.dxe6 ♖c4+ 14.♖e2!± Frolov-Totsky, St Petersburg 1998; 12...♖c4+ 13.♗e2 (13.♖e2!±) 13...exd5 14.dxc5 bxc5 15.h4 ♗e7 16.♙g5↑ Vovk-Polivanov, Lvov jr 2003.

13.dxc5 bxc5

The arising position is balanced, but there is still plenty of play.

14.♙g5 ♖c4+ 15.♖e2

15.♗e2 ♗c6⇒.

15...♗d7

Trying to take profit of his development advantage. 15...♖xe2+ 16.♗xe2 h6 (16...f6!? 17.exf6 ♗d7=) 17.♙h4 d4=.

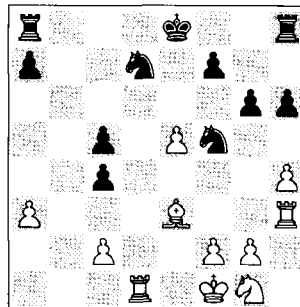
Summary:

As we have seen the main game was pretty quiet. White preferred to avoid the most risky lines. But this fairly recent game is not present in any database, and with it I wanted to update all the possibilities of the variation 8.♖g4 g6, for both sides.

If for some reason the black player is not satisfied with 8...g6, or still afraid of the gambit idea, he can try the Hook defence – see next game.

16.♙xc4 dxc4 17.h4 h6 18.♙e3 ♗e7**19.♖d1 ♗f5**

19...♖b8!?

20.♖h3

The ending is equal.

20...0-0-0!?

20...♙e7=.

21.g4 ♗g7!? 22.f4 h5! 23.gxh5□

♖xh5 24.♗e2 ♖dh8 25.♙f2 ♗e6

26.♙g2

26.♖c3 ♗b6.

26...g5!?

A last try to complicate the position. However, my opponent was sufficiently alert and solid in this game.

27.fxg5 ♗xg5 28.♖e3 ♗e6 29.♙g3

♗df8 30.♖f1 ♗g6 31.♖e4

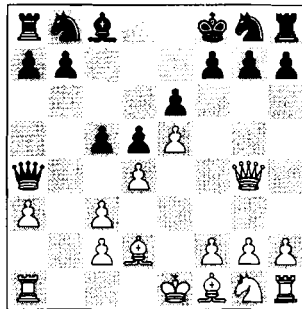
31.♖xf7 ♗xh4+ 32.♙xh4 ♖xh4=.

31...♗xh4+ 32.♖xh4 ♖xh4 33.♙xh4

♖xh4 34.♖xf7

There is very little material left on the board, so a draw.

GAME 34 – Hook's Defence (A Dark-Square Symphony): 8...♙f8
 (82 games=48.2% White is losing here!)



This is a modern move, defending g7 with the king without weakening the dark squares. But now Black cannot castle queenside any more. This line was deeply analysed in *The Flexible French*, see Michielsen-Moskalenko, Game 64.

After 9.♙d1 b6!? 10.c4/h4/dxc5 White tries to become active in the centre and/or to attack on the kingside – see my update in the sub-line with 9...b6.

For this book, in our main game we concentrate on the universal Plan 3 – since miraculously, here queenside castling is still an option for the black king!

Keep in Mind:

Remarkably, the results of some important games in this 8...♙f8 line (Black losing against stronger opposition, as happened, for example, in Fischer-Hook) do not reflect the assessment of the positions in the opening and the middlegame. It means that those Black players urgently need to improve their concepts (except Hook).

□ Daniel Alsina Leal

■ Viktor Moskalenko

Barcelona tt 2010 (7)

Interestingly, a week earlier I had played the same Blues Variation against the same opponent (see the previous game, the gambit line 9.♙f4). I guess he had had enough time to prepare something amazing, so for this new game I decided to change directions.

**1.e4 e6 2.d4 d5 3.♘c3 ♙b4 4.e5 c5
 5.a3 ♙xc3+ 6.bxc3 ♚a5 7.♙d2 ♚a4
 8.♙g4**


White ignores his own weaknesses in order to attack g7. As some would say in the (distant) past, the dark-square symphony begins.

8...♙f8!?

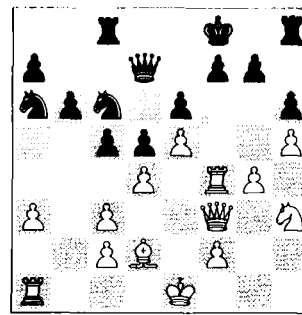
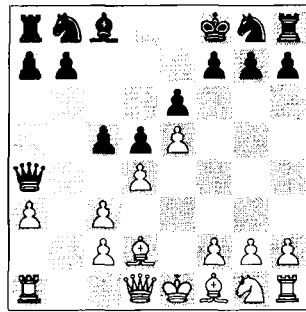
For some reason (and despite favourable statistics for Black!) in the Blues Variation this is a less popular option than 8...g6.

9.♙d1

The accepted solution – the queen must go back to protect the weak pawn on c2. If now Black plays 9...♘e7, this position can also arise from the Eingorn Variation (see Game 21). But there are two better ideas:

 A) WEAPON: After Cabrera's gambit 9.♘f3 Black has enough resources: 9...♙xc2 (9...c4!?) 10.♚c1 ♙g6 (10...♙a4!? 11.c4 ♘c6∞) 11.♙xg6 hxg6 12.c4 ♘e7!? 13.dxc5 ♘bc6 (13...dxc4!?)


14. ♖xc4 ♗d7 15. 0 0 ♖c6 16. ♗d4 ♗f5! ⇌
 14. ♗d3 ♜h5! 15. ♗f4 ♗a5 16. cxd5 ♗xd5 ⇌
 Cabrera-Scavo, Burguillos 2009.

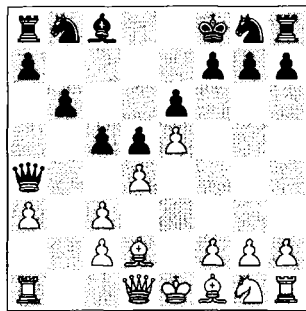


analysis diagram

9... ♗c6

This will be our main treatment for this book.

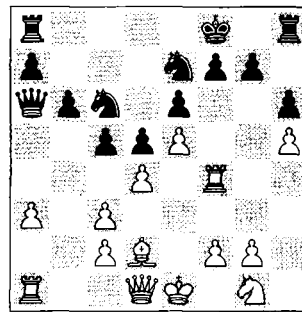
 **WEAPON:** A strong alternative is 9...b6!?, preparing ...♗a6 (Plan 1).



analysis diagram

A2) 10... ♗a6!? 11. ♗xa6 11.h5 ♗xf1
 12. ♗xf1 h6 13. ♜h4!? ♗e7 (13... ♗a6+
 14. ♗e2 ♗c6 15. ♗g1 ♗ge7 16. ♜f4
 ♗g8 17. ♗g3 ♜c8 18. ♗f3 ♗d8 ⇌ Ethan
 Hunt-CapNemo, playchess.com 2007)
 14. ♜f4 ♗bc6 15. ♗f3 ♗a5 16. ♗g1
 ♗c4 ⇌ 17. ♗e1?! ♜c8 ⇌ Konguvel-Vilela,
 Balagüer 2006. Now:

A21) 11... ♗xa6!? This reply allows
 the knight to develop towards the centre:
 ... ♗c6: 12.h5 h6 13. ♜h4 ♗e7
 14. ♜f4 ♗bc6



analysis diagram


A) 10.h4!? Introducing White's typical plans: Δ h5, h6, ♜h4, ♜f4 etc.

A1) The stem game saw 10... ♗e7
 11.h5 h6 12. ♜h4 ♗a6 13. ♗xa6 ♗xa6
 13... ♗xa6 is the main game. 14. ♜f4
 ♗d7 15. ♗f3 ♗c6 16. ♗h3 ♜c8
 17.g4∞.

Hook had a playable game. However, he spoiled it later and allowed Fischer to win in 28 moves, Fischer-Hook, Siegen of 1970.

It looks as if the position is equal. The attacking and defensive resources on both sides balance each other out: 15.a4 ♜c8 16.a5 cxd4 17.cxd4 bxa5!
 (17... ♗c4 18.axb6 axb6 19.c3∞ Castellanos-Vilela, Balagüer 2006)
 18. ♗f3 ♗g8 19. ♗e2 ♜f8 and hidden in this 'sarcophagus' Black cannot lose!

A22) The alternative is **11...♠xa6**, in order to activate the a8 rook and play on the c-file, although on a6 the knight will be out of play: **12.h5 h6 13.♞h4 ♞c8 14.♞f4 cxd4 15.cxd4 ♗e7**

 **TRICK:** **15...♞xc2?** is bad due to **16.♗c3! ♞b3 17.♞f3 ♗e7**. Here the game Konguvel-Moskalenko, Badalona 2006, was drawn, but **18.♗e2!** gives White a clear advantage.

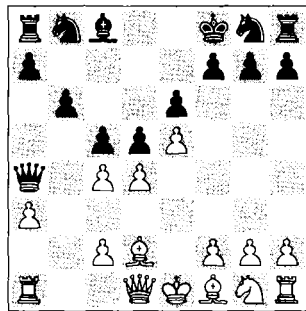
16.♞f3 ♗e8 17.c3 ♞f8 18.♗h3 ♗b8 19.♞g4 ♞g8 20.♞f3 ½-½ Cheparinov-P.Nikolic, Wijk aan Zee B 2005.

Other 10th moves for White are:

B) **10.♗f3 ♗a6 11.♗d3 ♗xd3 12.cxd3 ♞xd1+ 13.♗xd1 cxd4 14.♗xd4 ♗e7 15.f4 ♗bc6** Ashwin-Luther, Kuala Lumpur 2010;

C) **10.dxc5** does not look particularly dangerous for Black: **10...bxc5 (10...♞e4+!?) 11.♗f3 ♗e7 12.♗d3 ♗bc6!?** (12...♗a6= Kurnosov-Ustinov, Cheliabinsk tt 2005) with the ambitious idea to meet 13.0-0 with **13...c4 14.♗e2 ♗g6!?**, winning the e5 pawn;

D) **10.c4!?**



analysis diagram

Normally with this advance White starts action in the centre. Here **10...♗e7!** was recommended in *The Flexible French* and it is certainly playable:

D1) **11.cxd5 ♞xd4!?** **12.dxe6 ♞xe5+ 13.♗e2** and here **13...♗xc6** (or

13...♞xc6!? **14.♗f3 ♗a6 15.♗e3 ♗d5**; **13...♗b7 14.♗f4** (½ ½, 17) Grischuk-Shulman, Khanty Mansiysk 2005) **14.♗f3 ♞d5** is a reasonable way to play for the win;

D2) **11.dxc5** and now:

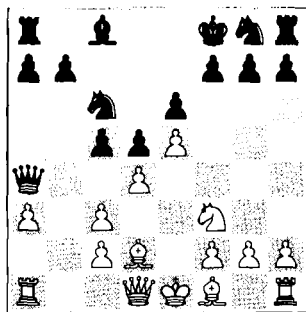
D21) So far only **11...bxc5** has been played, with a key game continuing **12.c3 12.♗f3 dxc4= 12...♞xd1+ 13.♞xd1 ♗a6 13...♗d7= 14.♗g5?! 14.♗f3 ♗d7± 14...♗bc6 15.♗f3 ♗xc4 16.♗xc4 dxc4 17.♗e3 ♗d5 18.♗xc5+ ♗e8** with comfortable equality, Gharamian-Rojas, Cappelle la Grande 2008;

D22) **11...dxc4!?** may be an improvement coming from Goh Wei Ming on the ChessPublishing site: **12.♗e2 12.♗f3 ♗b7± 12...♗b7 13.♗c3 ♞c6 14.cxb6 axb6 15.♗f4 ♗d7 16.♞d6 ♞xd6 17.exd6 ♗f5!±** This line certainly deserves practical testing.

D3) **11.♗f3 ♗a6! 11...♗bc6!?** **12.dxc5 dxc4 13.h4 ♗a6!±** Konguvel-Sengupta, Atul ch-IND 2006; **11...dxc4!?** **12.dxc5 ♗b7± 12.cxd5 12.dxc5 ♗xc4! 12...♗xf1!** The exchange of the light-squared bishops reduces White's initiative. **13.♗xf1** An intermediate move like **13.d6?!** is not much use: **13...♗a6! 14.dxe7+ ♗xe7 15.♗g5+ f6!± 13...♗xd5 14.dxc5 bxc5 15.g3** Fianchettoing his king. **15...♗d7 15...♗c6!?. 16.♗g2 h6! 17.h4 ♗e7!** Preparing an exit: **...♞h8-d8** and **...♗f8 18.h5 ♞hd8±** with a good position for Black, Michielsen-Moskalenko, Banyoles 2006.

10.♗f3

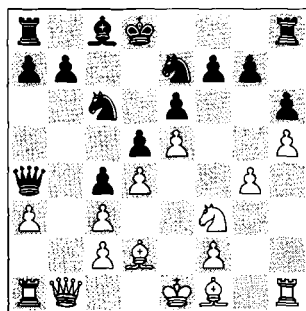
The key move of the natural line. **10.♞b1 c4** returns to the Anti-Blues line.



10...c4

This block is logical after ♖f3, and I trust this option. However, it may be a bit premature here.

WEAPON: In the FORUM section of Yearbook 93 we already analysed a similar set-up. After 10...♘ge7!? I found some important improvements and concepts: 11.♚b1 According to Cabrera the best way is to consolidate the centre. I think the best way is to open the centre, but 11.dxc5!? is unclear: 11...♚e4+!? (11...♘g6∞) 12.♙e2 ♘xe5 13.0-0 ♘xf3+ 14.♙xf3 ♚c4∞. 11...c4! Now the block works perfectly. 12.h4 ♘e8! This concept is consistent with our Plan 3 (...♘d8-c7 etc.), only here the king manoeuvre is a little slower. 13.h5 h6! 14.g4!? If 14.♙h4 ♙d7 15.♙f4 ♙f8 and ...♘d8-c7. 14...♘d8!



analysis diagram

Another key moment. White must do something, otherwise Black will counterattack on the kingside!

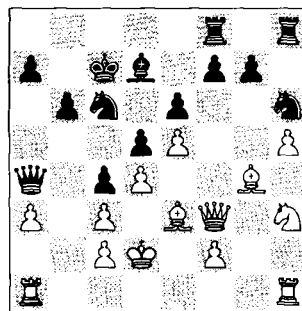
A) Cabrera gives 15.♙g2 ♘c7 16.♘h4 ♙d7 17.f4 as a favourable line for White. But in my opinion, after 17...♙af8 and 17...f6 or 17...g6 the position is complex and I prefer Black in the long run – at least his king is more safe;

B) 15.g5!? hxg5 16.♘xg5 ♘e8! The king is multi-purpose and self-supporting in this variation. 17.♙e2 b6 18.♙g4



B1) TRICK: The immediate break 18...f6! favours Black tactically: 19.exf6 gxf6 20.♘h3 (20.♘xe6? ♘f7! is the point) 20...e5↑ and no one will need to 'touch a stone' to know who is boss here;

B2) 18...♙d7 19.♚d1 ♘g8 20.♙e3 ♘h6 21.♘d2 ♘d8! 22.♚f3 ♘c7! 23.♘h3 ♙af8 Karjakin-P.Nikolic, Wijk aan Zee 2005.



analysis diagram

Psakhis once wrote about this line (CBM 105): Black has a very solid position, but it's quite difficult for him to get active counterplay. Anyway, from here until the end of the game Black missed many opportunities:


24.♙xh6 ♙xh6 25.♚e3. For instance, after the correct French break 25...f6! Black should be better here.

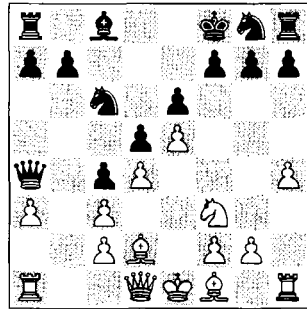
Keep in Mind:

If Black does not fear the line 10...♘e7 11.dxc5, he can use this move order.

11.g3

The young GM surprised me with this fianchetto.

 **WEAPON:** *I rather expected 11.h4!?, since there is no way to make faster progress!*



A) As we recommended previously, it may be better to wait a bit with 11...♟g7?! until we see the enemy's plans: 12.h5 h6 13.g4! Similar to Karjakin's attack. 13...♟e8 It seems that in this move order Black is not able to complete Plan 3 in time: 13...♟d7 14.♟g1!?. 14.♟h3 ♟d7 15.♟g1 ♟d8 16.g5! ♟c7 16...hxg5 17.♟xg5↑. 17.gxh6 gxh6 and Black is somewhat passive although the position is pretty solid, Cheparinov-Pilaj, Gothenburg Ech-tt 2005;

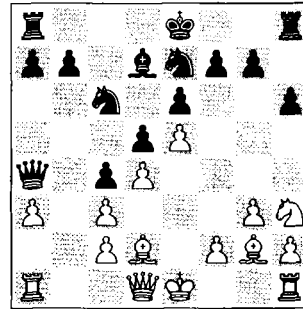
B) 11...♟d7 12.h5 h6 13.g4! To the rook lift 13.♟h4 ♟ge7 14.♟f4 the best reply is 14...♟g8! and then ...♟f8, which is a more than sufficient defence. Now an interesting way to castle is 13...♟e8!? intending ...♟e7-d8! 14.♟g1 ♟e7! 14...♟ge7 15.♟h4!?. 15.g5 15.♟h4 ♟d8!. 15...♟d8 16.gxh6 gxh6 17.♟g7 ♟f8 18.♟h4 ♟ge7 and Black is ready for the ...f7-f6 break.

11...♟d7 12.♟g2 ♟ge7

12...h6!? in order to avoid White's next manoeuvre.

13.♟g5 h6 14.♟h3 ♟e8!?

Realizing Plan number 3. In this game Black and White mix many ideas, but until a certain point the position remains balanced. Of course, 14...♟g8 is an option to equalize.



15.♟f4! g6!?

Preventing 16.♟h5.

16.♟a2 ♟d8 17.0-0 ♟c7 18.♟e2 ♟ag8 19.♟b1 b6 20.♟d1!?

Preparing an attack along the diagonal c1-h6 with ♟c1.

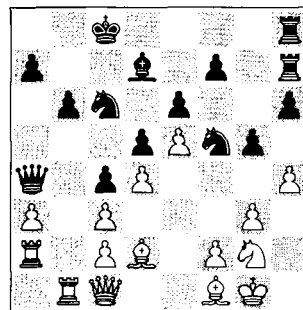
20...♟h7! 21.♟c1 ♟gh8!

Defending h6. Now White needs more material for the attack.

22.♟f1 ♟c8 23.♟g2 ♟f5! 24.h4?

My opponent does not feel the danger – basically, this advance is best performed in the opening. 24.♟e2=; 24.♟e3 ♟xe3=.

24...g5!↑



This attractive 'blues jet' allows Black to activate his rooks.

25.h5 f6!

Now White's position collapses.

**26.exf6 ♖f8 27.♗e3 ♗xe3 28.♙xe3
♜xf6 29.♙g2 ♗e7!?**

A typical knight manoeuvre with this pawn structure: ...♗f5-d6-e4.

30.♜b4 ♜c6 31.a4

White is too slow on this wing.

**31...♗f5 32.♙d2 ♜hf7 33.a5 b5 34.a6
♗d6 35.♙e1?**

35.♙e3 ♜c7.

35...♗e4 36.f3 ♜xf3!

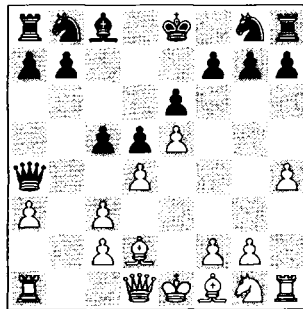
An obvious sacrifice – no need to work on this in the workshop since the fight is already over. Black won after

**37.♙xf3 ♜xf3 38.♜d1 ♜f7 39.♜a5
♜b6 40.♜a1 e5 41.♗g2 ♜e6 0-1**

Hook's defence to 8.♜g4, 8...♗f8, will always be a good alternative. Black is still OK – and the Blues won't go away.

GAME 35 – On the Attack!: 8/9.h4/♗f3

White combines the attacking move h2-h4 with ♗f3, or he plays 8.h4 and 9.♜g4, leading to an even more creative game.



For producing the game of the tournament in grand style, Shulman took home the \$1000 best game prize donated by chess.com. All sorts of standard French and Winawer themes occur in this game, and it is instructive to study.

As in Chapter 5 (7.h4), instead of completing the development of his minor pieces, White uses an aggressive resource against the Winawer. However, in this variation Black has the familiar Blues Plans 1-3 available:

- Plan 1: 8.♗f3 b6! works perfectly fine for Black, while 8.h4 b6 is also playable, but we have to check three obscure attacking options for White: 9.h5, 9.♜g4 and 9.dxc5 – see the sub-lines.
- Plan 2: 8.♗f3/h4 ♗c6! can lead to the main game and to Kasparov's gambit.
- Plan 3: the blockade ...c5-c4 is a universal reply against 8.♗f3, but after 8.h4 Black has to wait a little, first playing the useful move 8...♗c6!.

The main game is a recent hit, which was commented in many sources as surprising, amazing and arguably the most important game in the U.S. Championship of 2010, where the reigning champion was eliminated. It is also theoretically connected to some very important lines in the Winawer, and therefore included in this book.

□ Hikaru Nakamura

■ Yury Shulman

St Louis ch-USA 2010 (9)

1.e4

According to the ChessBase website, Nakamura played the opening quickly, while Shulman played in classical 'French' style.

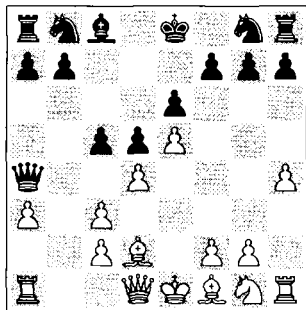
1...e6

The French Defence creates imbalances and winning chances in many lines thanks to its better pawn structure and the closed character of the game. The key is a counter-attacking mindset and the patience needed to absorb White's aggression – it's like Japanese Aikido. You invite your opponent to start his aggression and then unbalance him – the author in Revolutionize Your Chess.

2.d4 d5 3.♘c3 ♙b4 4.e5 c5 5.a3
♙xc3+ 6.bxc3 ♖a5 7.♙d2 ♗a4 8.♙f3
(245 games=49.8%)

This simple (but quite transpositional) move ranks well behind 8.♗b1 and 8.♗g4 among White's preferences.

WEAPON: 8.h4!? (52
games=65.4%)



analysis diagram

The first sign of White's dynamic intentions. The h-pawn begins its action on the kingside and allows the activation of the h1 rook (♖h3).

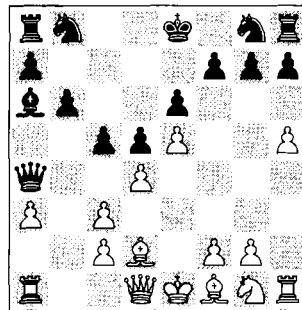
A) 8...♗e7 returns to the main game 15, Lahno-Socko, from Chapter 5;



American grandmaster Yury Shulman is another great Francophile from modern times, who crushed a 2700+ attacking player with the Blues Variation.

B) 8...cxd4?! is premature due to 9.♗g4↑;

C) TRICK: 8...b6!? is an interesting and provocative alternative: 9.h5 Against 9.♗g4, 9...♙f8! enters a 'Hook' in the good move order; 9.dxc5 does not seem dangerous: 9...bxc5 10.c4 ♗e7 11.h5 ♙a6! ⇒ 9...♙a6!?



analysis diagram

And now it is not easy for White to find an advantage: 10.♗g4 10.h6 ♗xh6!. 10...♙f8 11.h6 11.♙xa6 ♗xa6 12.♖c1 h6 13.♗e2 ♗e7= with a typical position after ...b6/♙a6, Iordachescu-Agdestein, Port Erin 2003. 11...♗xh6!

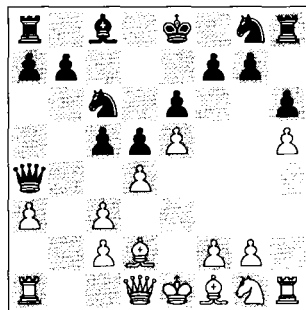
Unbelievably, Black gets the better chances here: **12. ♖xh6** 12. ♖xh6 gxf6
 13. ♖xh6+ ♔e7 14. ♖g7 ♖e8. **12...gxf6** 13. ♖d1 White definitely loses the initiative after 13. ♖xh6 ♖xc2!
13...cxd4 14. cxd4 ♖a5+! 15. ♖d2 ♖xd2+ 15... ♖xf1!? 16. ♖xd2 ♖xf1 17. ♖xf1 ♖c6 18. ♖d3 ♖a5 19. a4 ♖c4 20. ♖b1 ♖c8 21. ♖e2 ♖g8 22. g3 f6! Macieja-Sengupta, Mumbai 2008;

D) **8...♖c6!**? Development is required.

D1) For **9.♖f3** see the main game;

D2) **TRICK:** Importantly, after **9. ♖g4?! ♖f8!** (≤ 9...g6?! 10.h5↑) the move h2-h4 is quite unhelpful since Black has a more favourable set-up than in the Eingorn Variation (...♖c6 instead of ...♖e7), and in Hook's defence;

D3) **9.h5 h6!** This blockade is a natural and very human move. White seems better after 9...cxd4?! 10. ♖g4 ♖f8 11.h6!↑. But the brave 9...♖ge7! 10.h6 gxf6 leads to the famous game Volokitin-Zhang Pengxiang, Fügen tt 2006.

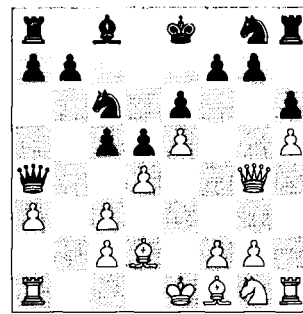


analysis diagram

D31) **10. ♖b1** returns to the blockading line after **10...c4**;

D32) **TRICK:** 10. ♖h4 ♖xe5! Kalygnos-CapNemo, playchess.com 2009;

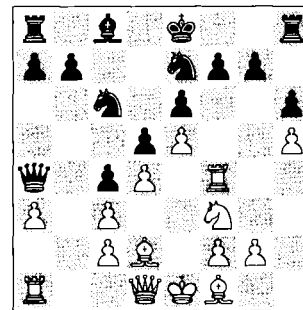
D33) **TRICK:** 10. ♖g4



analysis diagram

10...♖h7!? this curious move allows Black to continue Plan 2 and 3, but it only works thanks to tactics. **10...♖f8!**? is a common defence in the French, analysed in Chapter 10 as a sub-line, see Pena Gomez-Moskalenko, Ca'n Picafort 2008. Now Black threatens to win material in three different ways: **11...♖xc2**, **11...cxd4** or **11...♖xe5!**. For instance, **11. ♖d3? ♖xe5!**;

D34) **10. ♖f3 ♖ge7** 10...c4!? is similar to Plan 3. **11. ♖h4** A standard move for this variation. Now White threatens to take on c5, forcing Black to close the centre: **11...c4** **12. ♖f4**



analysis diagram

See Game 15 of this book, the notes to 13...g5. Here my favourite line is without a doubt **12...♖d7** **13.g4 ♖f8** **14. ♖h3** 0-0-0 **15.g5 hxg5** **16. ♖xg5 ♖f5** Canal Oliveras-Moskalenko, Barbera del Valles 2009.

8...♖c6

Developing and looking for ways to exert pressure in the centre, still keeping all three plans in hand. In my view, here Black has an obvious advantage in comparison with the Blues Variation and the classical early 6...♟e7.

Other plans are:

A) **8...c4!?** This concept is quite logical since White does not waste time on 8.♞b1 c4 9.♞d1, but the 'stupid' move ♟f3 now compensates Black for such complaints;

B) **8...b6!?** with the idea ...♟a6, reducing White's initiative, has become Black's main way of dealing with such positions;

C) **8...♟e7!?**

All these are options given in short and long excerpts previously throughout this book and throughout *The Flexible French*.

9.h4

Attacking players just love to advance this pawn! Nakamura has in mind a pawn sacrifice invented by Garry Kasparov. 9.dxc5! may be a reason to opt for the other black moves in the previous note.



9...cxd4!?

Transposing to the Kasparov gambit. The other three options were still available. Shulman's previous experience with 9.h4 had been an unhappy end-

ing, but there his position was fine most of the way: two games 1½-½, Khalifman-Shulman, Khanty-Mansiysk 2005.

For 9...♟e7 see Game 15, Canal-Moskalenko, again.

10.cxd4 ♟ge7

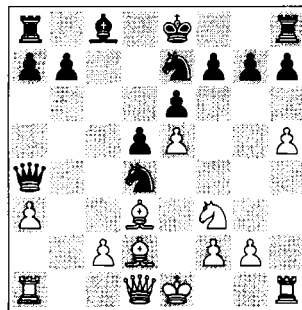
10...b6!?!; 10...♟xd4 11.♟d3 (11.♟b4!?) 11...b6 12.h5 h6 13.♟b4↑ J.Willemze-De Blecourt, Hengelo jr 1994.

11.h5 ♟xd4!?

Accepting the gambit. 11...h6 can transpose after 12.♟d3 ♟xd4.

12.♟d3

Nakamura has reached a position that was pioneered by Kasparov in the early nineties. Those games generally appear from a different move order involving 6...♟e7 7.h4!?, as in Chapter 5.



12...h6!

White's advance has to be stopped. However, this natural blocking move has been seen in only very few games.

A) Most of the old games continued **12...♟ec6**. In the game Kasparov-Anand, Linares 1992, Black's kingside was shattered after **13.♞f1 ♟xf3 14.♞xf3 b6 14...♞d4 15.♞e1 ♟xe5 16.♞g3** ♞. **15.h6! ♟a6 16.hxg7 ♞g8 17.♟xa6 ♞xa6+ 18.♞g1 ♞xg7 19.♞f6 ♞g8 20.♞xh7 ♞b7** and now instead of 15.♟g5, White could have played 21.c4! with decisive pressure;

B) 12...♘ef5 and 12...♘df5 are defensive systems suggested by John Watson in the latest editions of *Play the French* and they have held up in limited tests and analysis;

C) The game Nolsoe-Naumkin, Copenhagen 1992, was also critical: 12...♘xf3+ 13.♚xf3 ♚d4 14.0-0 ♚xe5 15.h6 and here Black can play a curious move: 15...♚f6!? instead of 15...♘d7∞.

13.♙f1

Without this preliminary move White cannot play ♖h4.

♙ TRICK: 13.♖h4?? ♘xf3+.

13.♖b1!? looks like an interesting alternative, which has been discussed on *ChessPublishing*.

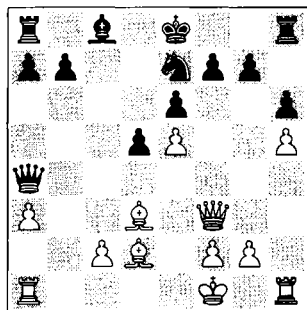
13...♘xf3

♙ TRICK: Instead, on 13...♘ec6??

14.♖h4! wins a piece, A.Larsen-H.Andersen, Hedehusene 1994.

After 13...♘df5!? and the forced sequence 14.♖b1 ♘c6 15.♘b5 ♚g4 16.♖b4 d4 Black simply achieved a better position in the recent game Semenova-Mkrtchian, Rijeka Ech 2010.

14.♚xf3



A key position.

14...b6!

A very healthy strategy, preparing to gain quick access to the light squares. 14...♘d7 15.♖b1! (15.♚g3 ♘b5! is

similar to the game) 15...♚d4 (15...♘c6? 16.♚g3↑ Anka-Totsky, Harkany 1993) 16.♖h3 is hardly unclear.

15.♚g3

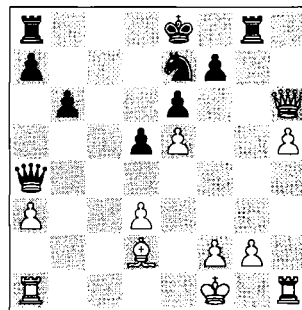
This is the only way to make use of Kasparov's original idea: attacking g7 and supporting ♖h4. 15.♚e2!? is a backward move that would not agree with Nakamura's plans.

15...♘a6!

By sacrificing his two pawns g7-h6, Black is beginning to dominate the game – at least on a psychological level! White would have a powerful initiative against the passive defence 15...♖g8? 16.♖h4!

16.♚xg7 ♘xd3+ 17.cxd3 ♖g8

18.♚xh6



White obtains a potentially lethal passed pawn. But don't forget that Yuri Shulman is a well-known expert on the Poisoned Pawn!

18...♚d4!

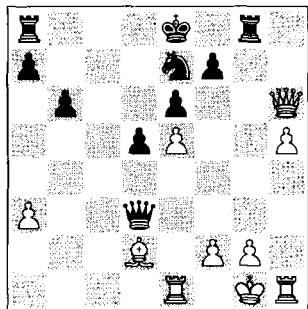
It is a true pleasure to observe how the 'Blues Queen' enters the game. In fact, Black has enough counterplay to keep the h-pawn from moving.

19.♖e1

A new move, protecting the e-pawn. I found two obscure games by the same black player from this position: 19.♖c1 (in order to prevent ...♖c8)

19...♖xd3+ (19...♖xe5? 20.♖f4±)
 20.♗g1 ♖e4 (20...d4!; 20...♗f5?!
 21.♖f4 favoured White in Manhardt-
 Petrik, Guarapuava jr 1995) 21.g3
 ♖xe5 22.♖f4! ♖xf4 23.♗xf4 f6!? (≤
 23...♖c8 Vlcek-Petrik, Slovakia tt-2
 1998/99) 24.♖c7 e5 25.♗d2 ♗f7
 with an equal ending.

19...♖xd3+ 20.♗g1



Another tricky moment. Strategically
 Black is happy, but how to exploit this
 advantage?

20...♖c8

A natural and active move, Black needs
 to bring on all his resources.

TRICK: 20...♗f5!? was tactically in-
 teresting: 21.♖f4□ (21.♖h7??
 ♖xg2+ 22.♗xg2 ♗e3+) 21...♗d4 22.♗h2□
 ♖c8 23.♖e3 ♗f3+!? (23...♖f5 24.♖xd4
 ♖c4 25.♖e3 ♖cg4 26.g3 ♖e4 27.♖c3 ♖c4
 28.♖e3 with a draw by repetition) 24.gxf3
 (24.♖xf3 ♖xd2 25.♖d1 ♖g5↑) 24...♖f5
 25.f4 ♖c2! 26.♖c1□ ♖xh5+ 27.♖h3 ♖e2
 28.♖e3 and this seems to be only a draw,
 even after the amazing combination
 28...♖g4 29.♖h3 ♖xf4+!∞.

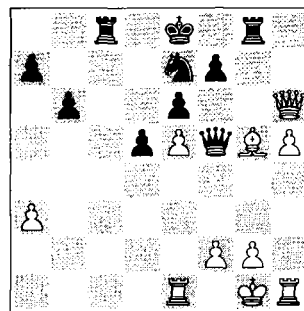
21.♗g5?!

Hikaru Nakamura is one of the most op-
 timistic players in the world, but objec-
 tively it is hard to find the right direc-
 tion in such a position. White's best
 chance was to offer a queen exchange:
 of course, 21.♖e3! is not an attractive

move, but perhaps it was best. After
 21...♖h7 the game is quite balanced,
 but the white king is safer now. In case
 of 21...♖xe3 22.♗xe3 Black should
 play precisely, since White's h-pawn is
 still a threat.

21...♖f5!

This move shows how uncomfortable
 White's position is here – his pieces
 don't coordinate especially well, and the
 pressure along the g-file and soon from
 the c-file can become very dangerous.
 21...♗f5?? 22.♖f6.



22.f4

Nakamura continues his ambitious plan;
 defending the bishop and closing the
 g-file. However, with hindsight, after
 this dangerous advance the white queen
 is fatally locked away on the kingside
 and the white king will be exposed
 soon. Anyway, trying to simplify with
 22.♗xe7?! ♗xe7♠ would leave Black
 with an obvious advantage.

22...♖c2! 23.♖h2??

Losing in a spectacular way. White could
 still bail out into a playable ending with
 23.♖f6 (the only move) 23...♖xf6
 24.exf6 ♗f5, but perhaps Black is
 slightly better here.

23...♖d3!→

White's king becomes vulnerable on the
 first rank.

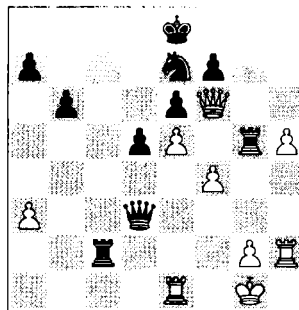
24.♖f6

Too late – unfortunately White will not have time to enjoy his own attacking machine. After 24. ♖xe7 ♜d2! Black mates.

24... ♖xg5!

An enrichment to the virtual ‘collection’ of our workshop. Shulman’s blow is forcing, aesthetic, and human.

Here Hikaru Nakamura shook his head several times, imitating Garry Kasparov’s mimicks in his match game with Karpov, but for Nakamura this was not very productive. Actually, 24... ♘c6 produces more or less the same finish.



25. ♜xg5

Or 25. fxg5 ♘f5, winning.

25... ♜d4+ 26. ♚h1 ♜e3!

0-1

A dramatic final. Any sensible reply will be met by 27... ♜c1.

Summary 8/9. h4/♘f3

Playing an early h2-h4 White fights for the advantage, but that can change at any given moment. As soon as the game really starts Black has more playing resources, and therefore this sharp but risky advance is hardly relevant.



Update Blues Statistics 7... ♜a4

In the past two years Black’s statistics have been going slightly down: total 1067 games=55.5% in White’s favour, compared to the year 2008: about 800 games=53% (note that there are probably more games, as some of the positions arise by transposition).

However, this worse result is not the moral of our story, since Black achieves excellent counterplay in most of the lines – and often against stronger rivals. In fact, it is White who has a lot of work ahead of him if he wants to establish any theoretical advantage after 6... ♜a5 and 7... ♜a4.

An Epilogue to Part III

My favourite line is the Blues Variation, which offers much more flexible play (for both sides) than the static Warsaw Variation or the dynamic Poisoned Pawn Variation.

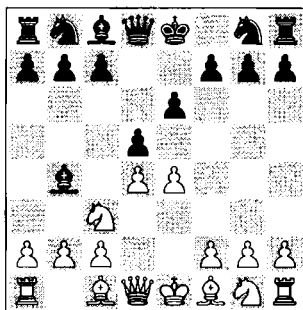
Still, I really enjoyed exploring all the lines in this Part.

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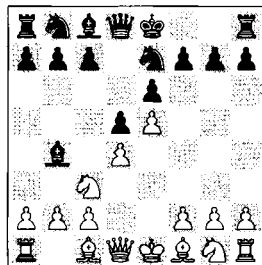
Winawer Variation 1.e4 e6 2.d4 d5 3.♘c3 ♙b4



Anti-Winawer (without 4.e5)

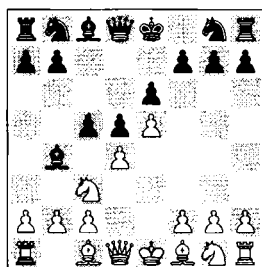
- 4.a3	19
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(Games 1-6)	

Semi-Winawer 4.e5 Black deviations (4...♘e7)



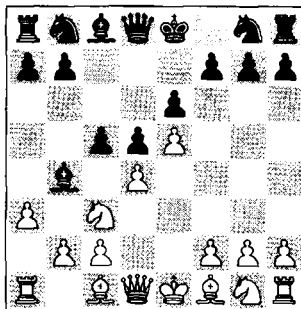
- without 5.a3 (5.♙d2; 5.♙g4)	51
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4.e5 c5 White deviations



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- 5.♘f3	41
- 5.dxc5	41
- 5.♙d2	45
(Games 7-8)	

Old Main Winawer 4...c5 5.a3

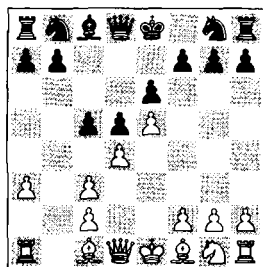


Armenian Variation: 5...♙a5

- 6.b4 cxd4 7.♘b5	103
- 6.♙d2	103
- 6.dxc5	104
- 6.♚g4	108
- 6.b4 cxd4 7.♚g4	108

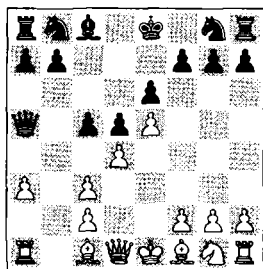
(Games 16-17)

5...♙xc3+ 6.bxc3



6...♚c7	69, 232
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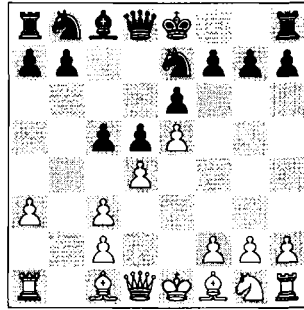
Black Queen Blues 6...♚a5



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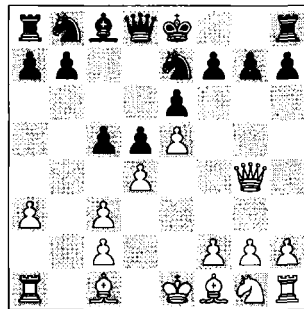
6...♞e7



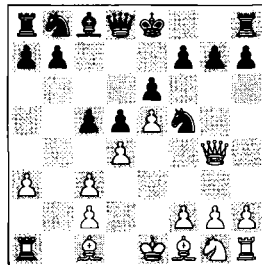
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7.♞g4

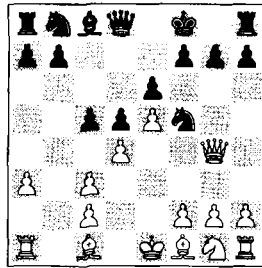


7...♞f5 Knight System



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- 9.♞h3	118
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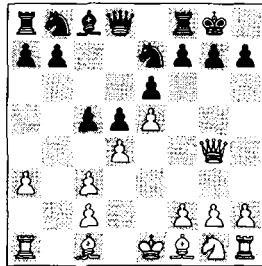
7...♟f8 Eingorn Variation



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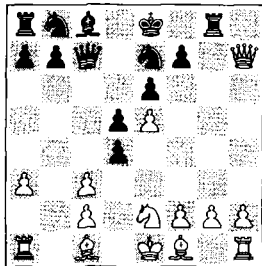
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