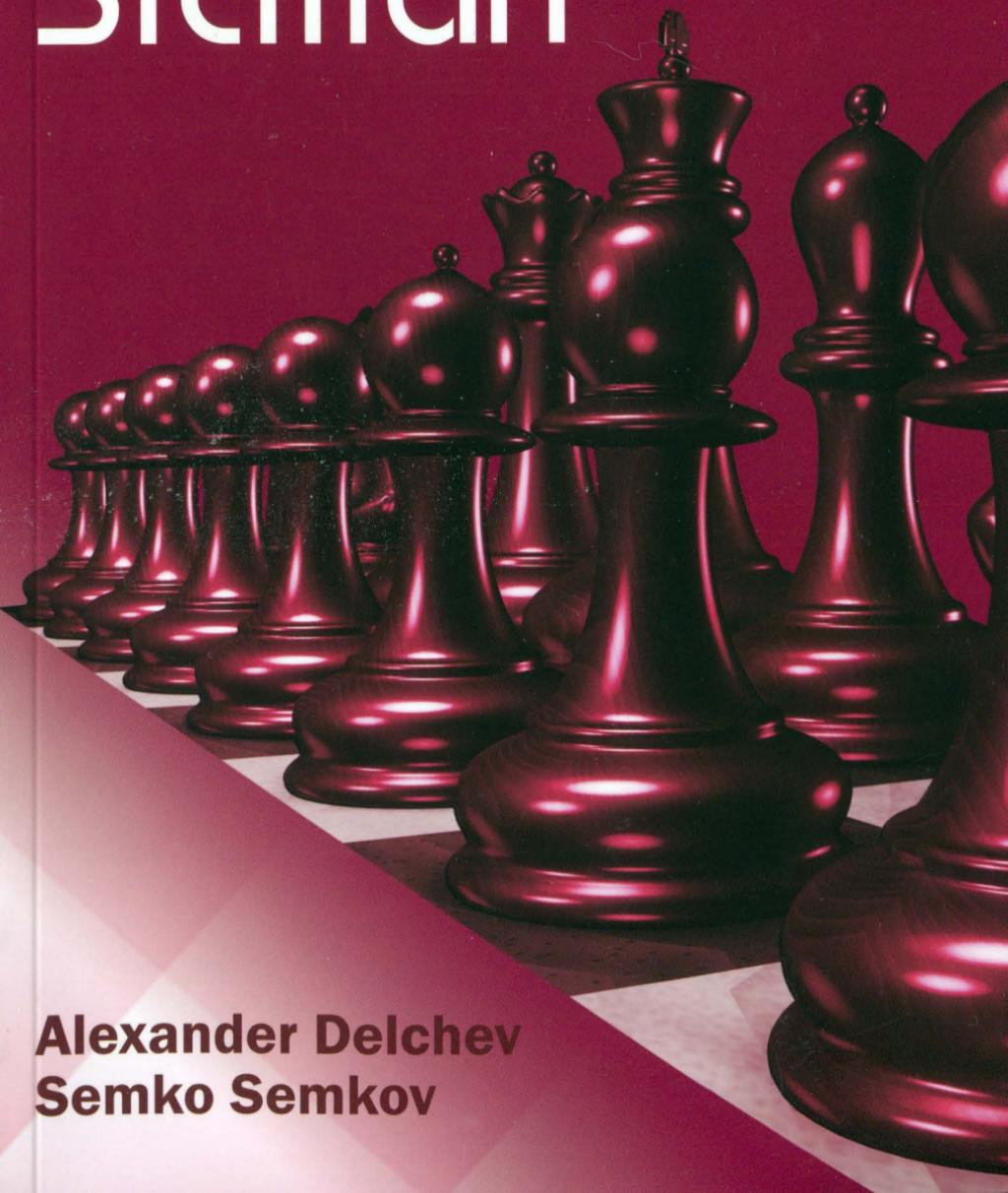


THE MOST FLEXIBLE Sicilian



**Alexander Delchev
Semko Semkov**



The Most Flexible Sicilian

A Black Repertoire with 1.e4 c5 2.♘f3 e6

Alexander Delchev
Semko Semkov

Chess Stars Publishing
Current Theory and Practice Series

The Most Flexible Sicilian

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Foreword

This book offers a double repertoire for Black based on the moves 1.e4 c5 2. $\mathbb{Q}f3$ e6!. It is divided in several parts: playing against $\mathbb{Q}e2$; against f4; g3; the third rank set-up $\mathbb{Q}e3+\mathbb{Q}d3$; the English Attack; the hedgehog structures.

After 3.d4 cxd4 4. $\mathbb{Q}xd4$, I analyse in separate chapters the Taimanov move order with 4... $\mathbb{Q}c6$, and the Kan with 4...a6. Every part begins with a chapter “Main Ideas” which discusses the pros and cons of the two approaches and offers advice which one works better against White’s particular set-up. The next chapters, called “Taimanov – Step by Step” and “Kan – Step by Step”, present detailed theory. Finally, a “Complete Games” chapter offers additional annotations.

This structure should allow you to better understand the typical ideas which are similar in many aspects:

Black’s pawn often remains on d7 allowing an early activation of the dark-squared bishop through b4, c5 or even d6 in some lines, the ...d5 break is without loss of tempo on ...d6;

The pressure on the e4-pawn with ...b5, ... $\mathbb{Q}b7$, ... $\mathbb{Q}f6$ is common for both systems;

The queen goes early to c7 to control the central dark squares and support the bishop when it goes to b4 or d6;

We often change the pawn structure by recapturing ...dxc6 followed by ...e6-e5.

The hedgehog structures share the same main plan – to achieve the break ...d5.

The concluding parts present a repertoire against the Anti-Sicilians like the Alapin with c3, the King’s Indian Reversed with d3, and the modern fianchetto with 3.g3.

It is difficult to make a repertoire which would satisfy every taste. I would recommend the Kan to readers who: understand positional play and prophylaxis; are not theoreticians; defend calmly and unabashedly.

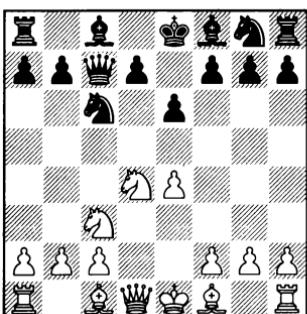
If you like early clashes and sharp theoretical disputes (and have good memory!), the Taimanov is the better choice.

The ultimate goal should be to master both systems. Then you’ll be really unpredictable to your opponents!

Alexander Delchev
April 2014

Introduction

The Taimanov System which arises after the moves 1.e4 c5 2. $\mathbb{Q}f3$ e6! 3.d4 cxd4 4. $\mathbb{Q}xd4$ $\mathbb{Q}c6$ 5. $\mathbb{Q}c3$ $\mathbb{B}c7$ was my main weapon against 1.e4 until 2008.



It suits well my style and it brought me good practical results. Another cause of my successes was that my opponents lacked clear models to follow since the variation was not popular at top level. I was able to play my own schemes and I only had to make minor improvements on my previous games. It was sufficient to keep in store a few alternatives which aimed to escape home preparation and assured me of the psychological edge. I had always the feeling that the battle was fought on my land. However, the second edition of *The safest*

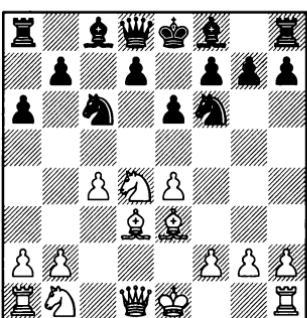
Sicilian brought about a burst of popularity of my pet system. The first players developed many new plans, the engines also improved dramatically. Some of my back-up alternatives were refuted. There was no more ground for retreat and I had to accept deep theoretical disputes in every game. It became practically unrewarding to keep my repertoire in full swing all the time.

So I decided to reserve the Taimanov for rapid games where there is no time for targeted home preparation and good understanding is often more important than the objective evaluation of the position. Thus I was able to experiment with new ideas without spending too much time on them.

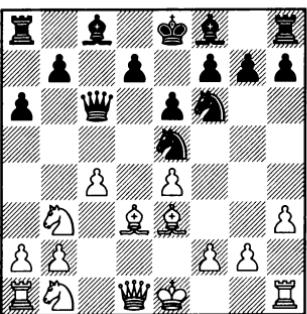
At the same time I began my migration toward the Kan. I was extremely impressed by its flexibility and the variety of plans it offers. The move order 1.e4 c5 2. $\mathbb{Q}f3$ e6! 3.d4 cxd4 4. $\mathbb{Q}xd4$ a6 is outwardly so modest and unobtrusive that White could choose virtually any developing scheme at his liking. The play is not forced and both sides have tons of options on every move. This greatly reduces the chance of being caught on a home preparation.

Introduction

The wide choice also means an ample ground for strategic mistakes. Even good grandmasters often mix up the move order and allow an easy equalisation. Look at the following variation: 1.e4 c5 2.♘f3 e6 3.d4 cxd4 4.♘xd4 a6 5.c4 ♘f6 6.♘d3 ♘c6 7.♗e3?!



White played a natural developing move, but Black suddenly leaps forward: 7...♘e5! 8.h3 – another natural move which occurred in 5 games (8.♘c3 ♘fg4; 8.0-0 ♘fg4 9.♘f4 g5!) 8...♗b6! and Black already has an initiative – 9.♘b3 (9.a3 ♗xb2 10.♘b3 ♘xd3+ 11.♗xd3 ♗e5 12.♘d2 ♗c7; 9.♘b5 ♘c5+) 9...♗c6! (9...♗b4+ 10.♘c3 ♗d6 11.♘d4 ♘xd3+ 12.♗xd3 e5 13.0-0-0!)



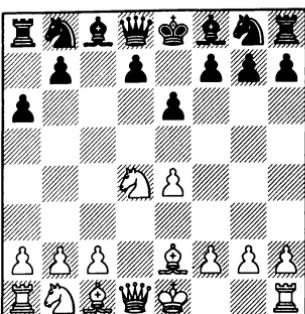
White must give up the c4-pawn with a dubious compensation.

The best way to exploit the weaknesses of your opponents' repertoires is to master the whole range of systems with 2...e6. That would allow you to choose the most unpleasant set-up against any particular opponent. For instance, if the White player is narrowly specialised in the English Attack, you may choose to delay ...♘c6. This approach effectively discourages White's set-up with ♘e3. It is also very good against the fans of an early f4, the fianchetto with g3 and the Classical system with ♘e2. On the contrary, if your opponent is a practical player who avoids main lines, then the Taimanov move order would be more unpleasant as it narrows White's safe paths in the opening.

I would choose the Kan against any player who treats it with 5.♘c3, and the Taimanov against fans of the Maróczy Bind. The Kan may also be the better option if your opponent tried to outwit you by the move order 1.e4 c5 2.♘f3 e6 3.♘c3. The knight is committed to c3 so 3...a6!? would be an excellent choice.

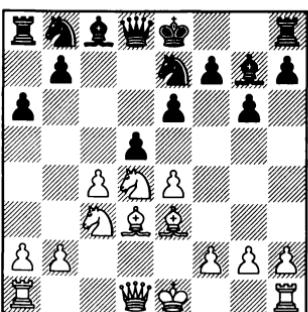
Keep in mind that the Taimanov is a self-sufficient system while in some Kan lines it is best to develop the knight on c6 switching over to the Taimanov. One such example is 1.e4 c5 2.♘f3 e6 3.d4 cxd4 4.♘xd4 a6 5.♘e2?!

Introduction



Perhaps the best option here is 5... $\mathbb{W}c7$ (or 5... $\mathbb{Q}f6$ first) 6.0-0 $\mathbb{Q}f6$ 7. $\mathbb{Q}c3$ $\mathbb{Q}c6$.

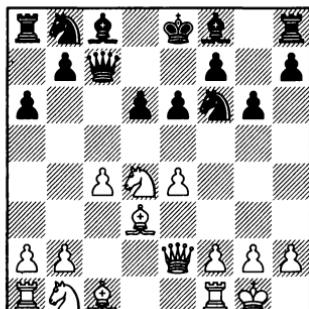
Undoubtedly, the move order with 5. $\mathbb{Q}d3$ is the most challenging system against the Kan. White hopes to build up the Maróczy Bind with c4 and keep a firm grip on the centre. A partial consolation for Black is that he is spared of direct attacks against his king. I offer two anti-dotes. If you hate long manoeuvring in hedgehog pawn structures, you can play 5...g6!? followed by ... $\mathbb{Q}e7$ and ...d7-d5.



Thus you will be able to eliminate the centre and gradually neutralise White's lead in development. This line is not popular among top

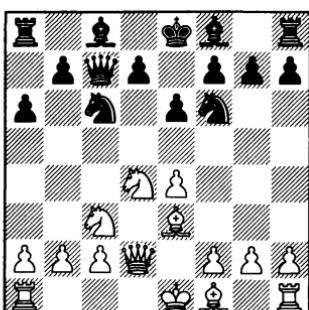
players. That means your opponents will lack a model game to follow and will have to play over the board with their own capacity.

A more complex approach is 5... $\mathbb{Q}f6$ 6.0-0 $\mathbb{W}c7$ 7. $\mathbb{W}e2$ d6 8.c4. Again, I propose 8...g6.



Ivanchuk often plays it with the fresh positional idea of ... $\mathbb{Q}h5$, ... $\mathbb{Q}g7xc3$ followed up by a blockade on the dark squares.

The most dangerous plan against the Taimanov has always been the English Attack – 1.e4 c5 2. $\mathbb{Q}f3$ e6 3.d4 cxd4 4. $\mathbb{Q}xd4$ $\mathbb{Q}c6$ 5. $\mathbb{Q}c3$ $\mathbb{W}c7$ 6. $\mathbb{Q}e3$ a6 7. $\mathbb{W}d2$ $\mathbb{Q}f6$



In 2013, Black has developed a new way of meeting it – 8.0-0-0

Introduction

$\text{g}e7!$ 9.f3 b5 10.g4 Qxd4! 11. Qxd4 b7 which brings terrific results. White even began to avoid it and switched over to 8.f4, but we are well prepared against it, too.

In conclusion, the Sicilian development with 2...e6 has never been in a better theoretical state. It has become extremely popular among the elite so we'll be seeing it very often in the years to come.

I wrote this book in first person, but it is a collaborative work.

Every line has been checked and discussed by both authors. I play these systems with both colours while Semko Semkov defends exclusively Black's side – first as a practical player, then as a theoretician.

We tried to answer for you all the questions we thought important.

*Alexander Delchev
April 2014*

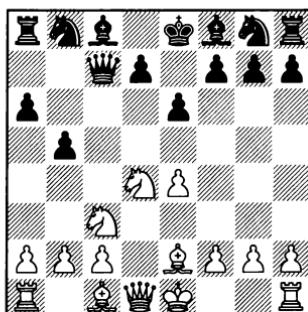
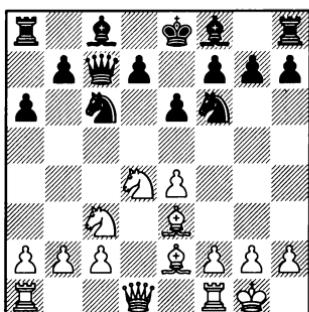
Part 1

The Classical System with ♘e2

In this part, I consider the always popular system with ♘e2 and short castling. This is my favourite plan when I defend White's side. No matter what is currently in vogue, this positional system will always be one of the most testing set-ups against Taimanov/Kan structures. It stakes on natural development and firm control of the centre, which allows White to choose between a wide range of plans on both flanks.

While some typical Black's set-ups with White's pawn wedge on e5 look outwardly cramped, this very pawn could also be White's biggest weakness. A lot of games witness a sudden turn of events caused by the undermining move f7-f6.

The secret of Black's vitality on so little space is the excellent efficiency of his long-range pieces. His bishops often operate on the important diagonals g1-a7 and h1-a8.



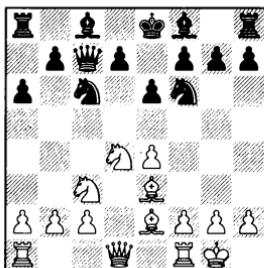
Part 1. The Classical System with ♜e2

Main Ideas

In the Taimanov, White aims for the position on the following diagram:

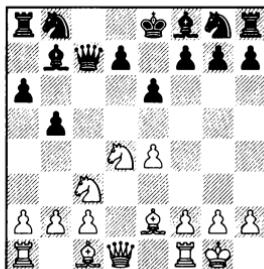
**1.e4 c5 2.♘f3 e6 3.d4 cxd4
4.♗xd4 ♜c6 5.♗c3 ♜c7 6.♗e2 a6
7.0-0 ♜f6 8.♗e3**

Taimanov 1



This is the favourite approach of players who love the Scheveningen with White. Sometimes they use the refined move order 6.♗e3 a6 7.♗e2, aiming to avoid the Scheveningen without ...a6 which might arise after 6.♗e2 ♜f6 7.0-0 ♜e7. However, it also has a counter-strategy – Black can refrain from ...a6 by 6.♗e3 ♜f6, inviting the opponent to a theoretical duel in the sharp line 7.f4 ♜b4 which is, however, dubious – see Part 2.

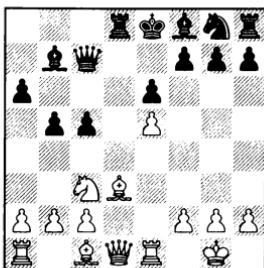
Our main line in the Kan arises after **1.e4 c5 2.♘f3 e6 3.d4 cxd4
4.♗xd4 a6 5.♗c3 ♜c7 6.♗e2 b5
7.0-0 ♜b7**



Black will also play here ...♜c6 but first he'll gain an important tempo by hitting the e4-pawn. Now 8.♗f3 is not very impressive: 8...♜c6! 9.♗xc6 dxc6 10.♗e2 ♜d6!? 11.g3 ♜f6 or 10.e5 ♜xe5 11.♗e1 ♜c7 ♜h5 ♜e7 13.♗xe6 g6. Thus the only way to stay in the battle for the opening advantage is:

**8.♗e1 ♜c6 9.♗xc6 dxc6 10.e5
♝d8 11.♗d3 c5**

Kan 1

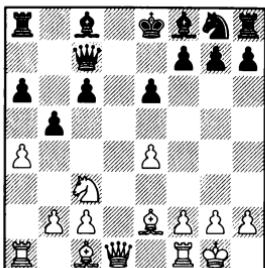


The current status of this position is roughly equal. Black's rook

The Classical System with ♜e2

is very active on the d-file, the e5-pawn is a double-edged asset as it needs protection.

Let's see what happens if we try to employ the same development in the Taimanov. In line 1, Black can play 7...b5?! 8.♘xc6 dxc6 9.a4!

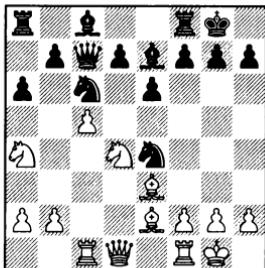


It turns out that we missed one tempo for ...♝d8 so 9...♞b7? loses owing to the knight's sac on b5. The only way to keep the queenside closed is 9...b4, but then White obtains long-term pressure on the weak c- and a-pawns by occupying c5: 10.♗b1 ♔f6 11.♗d2 ♜c5 12.♗d3 e5 13.♗b3 ♜a7 14.h3 a5 15.♕e2 0-0 16.♗e3.

A plus for the Kan: the plan with ...b5 works better.

In Taimanov 1, Black should opt for the Scheveningen, or for 8...♝b4 when White's most challenging idea is to thrust his knight toward b6 by 9.♘a4 ♜e7

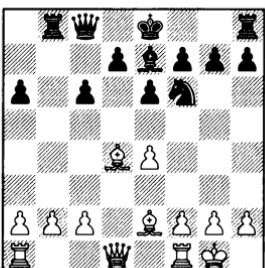
Here, the pawn sacrifice 10.c4 ♜xe4 11.c5 0-0 12.♗c1 has faded out of fashion since Black successfully frees himself with ...d6, for instance:



12...♝b8! 13.g3 ♔f6 14.♗f3 g6!
15.♗b6 e5 (or 15...♝d8)

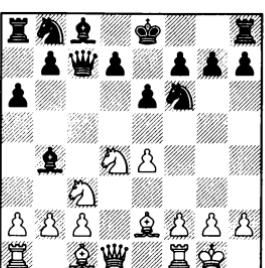
The most topical line is 10.♘xc6
bxс6 11.♗b6 ♜b8 12.♘xc8 ♜xc8
13.♗d4

Taimanov 2



Currently, 13...c5 looks a bit more accurate than 13...♜c7. White still preserves an initiative, but practice has shown that Black does not experience serious problems.

Do not try 6...♝f6 7.0-0 ♜b4 in the Kan!



Part 1

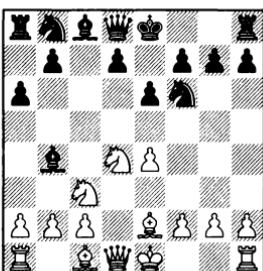
It may look that Black has a favourable version compared to the Taimanov, because he directly threatens to win a pawn. In my opinion, the opposite is true because White has not committed his bishop to e3 yet. Thus 8... $\mathbb{Q}g5!$ $\mathbb{Q}xc3?$! (8... $\mathbb{Q}e7!$ is a wiser decision, but if Black wanted to play the Scheveningen, he could have done it anyway) 9. $\mathbb{Q}xf6$ gxf6 10.bxc3 $\mathbb{W}xc3$ 11. $\mathbb{B}b1$ is dubious for Black since his king will never find a safe haven.

A plus for the Taimanov: the plan with ... $\mathbb{Q}b4$ is more solid.

It seems that many White players prefer to avoid the Kan with $\mathbb{Q}c3$. That can explain the burst of popularity of the tricky move order 5. $\mathbb{Q}e2?$! (instead of 5. $\mathbb{Q}c3$). Then 5...b5 6.a4! is unpleasant for Black so he should play 5... $\mathbb{Q}f6?$! 6. $\mathbb{Q}c3$, when objectively best is the Sche-

veningen or the transition to the Taimanov with 6... $\mathbb{W}c7$ 7.0-0 $\mathbb{Q}c6$.

The only way for Black to refrain from ... $\mathbb{Q}c6$ is 6... $\mathbb{Q}b4$



7.e5! 7... $\mathbb{Q}d5$ (7... $\mathbb{Q}e4$ 8.0-0) 8.0-0 $\mathbb{Q}xc3$ 9.bxc3 $\mathbb{W}xc3$ 10. $\mathbb{Q}a3$ $\mathbb{W}a5$ (10... $\mathbb{W}b6$ 11. $\mathbb{Q}f3$ $\mathbb{W}a5$ 12. $\mathbb{W}d6$ $\mathbb{Q}c6$, but 13. $\mathbb{Q}ab1$ $\mathbb{Q}xe5$ 14. $\mathbb{Q}xe5$ $\mathbb{W}xe5$ 15. $\mathbb{W}d2$ gives White a very unpleasant initiative) 11. $\mathbb{Q}d6$ $\mathbb{Q}c6$ 12. $\mathbb{Q}xc6$ dxc6 13. $\mathbb{W}d3$!.

The move order with 5. $\mathbb{Q}e2$ shows why Black should have in his repertoire not only the Kan, but also the Taimanov or the Scheveningen.

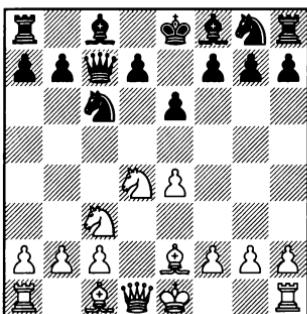
Weapon of Choice

I tend to prefer the Kan (compare positions Kan 1 to Taimanov 2). It can be learned virtually in 2 hours and Black's play is fairly simple and straightforward. On the other hand, the same is true for White, too! The pawn structure is symmetric and it is relatively easy to exchange everything and make a draw. The Taimanov's strategically unbalanced game should offer more chances against much weaker opponents.

Part 1. The Classical System with ♜e2

Taimanov – Step by Step

1.e4 c5 2.♘f3 e6 3.d4 cxd4
4.♗xd4 ♜c6 5.♗c3 ♜c7 6.♗e2



6.♗e3 a6 7.♗e2 is the better move order unless White is planning 8.a3 or 8.♗h1. After 6.♗e2, Black may choose the Scheveningen without ...a6, e.g. 6...♗f6 7.0-0 ♜e7 which is a worthy alternative to the Taimanov. If Black tries to reach the same position after 6.♗e3 ♘f6, he must reckon with 7.♗db5 ♜b8 8.f4 or 7.f4. Most experts avoid these possibilities in favour of 6.♗e3 a6, when 7.♗e2 leads to our main line.

6...a6 7.0-0

7.f4 b5 is considered in Part 4 while 7...♗xd4 8.♗xd4 b5 is possible as well.

White can also play 7.♗e3 ♘f6 8.a3 having in mind to attack 8...♗e7

by 9.g4 or 9.f4 d6 10.g4. This prophylactic move is certainly not dangerous for players who have a good command of the whole Taimanov/Kan arsenal. For instance, we'll see below that 7.0-0 b5 is best met by 8.♗xc6 dxc6 9.a4!. So the most natural retort to 8.a3 is:

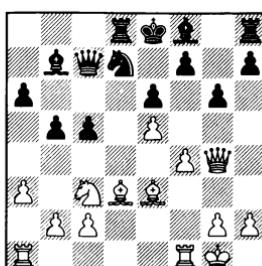
8...b5

The only flaw of this move is perhaps the possible draw after:

9.♗xc6 dxc6 10.f4

10.0-0 ♜b7 11.f4 ♜e7 12.e5 ♜d8 13.♗e1 ♘d7 leads to the same structure: 14.♗g3 0-0 15.♗ae1 c5 16.♗f3 ♘xf3 17.♗xf3 ♜c6=, Baramidze-Ribli, Austria 2006.

10...♗b7 11.e5 ♜d8 12.♗d3 ♘d7 (12...♗d5 13.♗xd5 cxd5 14.♗d4 ♜c5 15.c3 0-0 16.♗e2) 13.♗g4 c5 14.0-0 g6

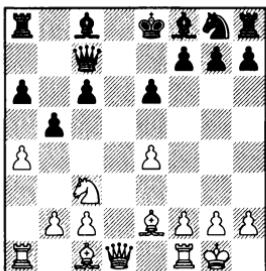


Part 1

15. $\mathbb{W}h3$ (or Black will advance his queenside pawns) 15... $\mathbb{Q}e7$ 16. $\mathbb{W}h6$ $\mathbb{Q}f8$ 17. $\mathbb{W}h3$.

7... $\mathbb{Q}f6$

7... $b5$ is an attempt to get a position from the Kan. However, White has a straightforward way of obtaining the initiative: 8. $\mathbb{Q}xc6!$ $dxc6$ 9. $a4!$



The only way to avoid serious trouble now is to keep the play closed with:

9... $b4$

9... $\mathbb{Q}b7?$ loses owing to the knight's sac on $b5$.

9... $\mathbb{B}b8$ 10. $e5!$ is also awkward. Against I.Sokolov, I replied 10... $\mathbb{Q}e7$ and went on to draw after 11. $\mathbb{Q}f4$ f5 12. $\mathbb{Q}xf6$ $\mathbb{W}xf4$, but 11. $axb5!$ is very unpleasant. White opens the a-file and the endgame after 11... $axb5$ 12. $\mathbb{W}d6!$ is difficult. 12... $\mathbb{W}b7$ 13. $\mathbb{W}d3$ $\mathbb{Q}g6$ 14. $\mathbb{Q}e4!$ is even lost.

The other recapture 11... $cxb5$ does not save the day either: 12. $\mathbb{Q}e4$ $\mathbb{Q}d5$ 13. $\mathbb{W}d4$ with domination in the centre.

10. $\mathbb{Q}b1$ $\mathbb{Q}f6$ 11. $\mathbb{Q}d2$ $\mathbb{Q}c5$

White carries on the same plan after 11... $a5$, e.g. 12. $\mathbb{Q}d3$ $\mathbb{Q}e7$ 13. $\mathbb{W}e2$.

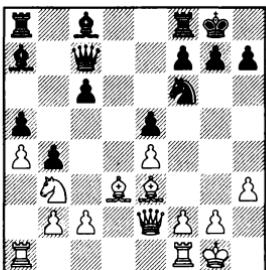
12. $\mathbb{Q}d3$ $e5$

Alternatively:

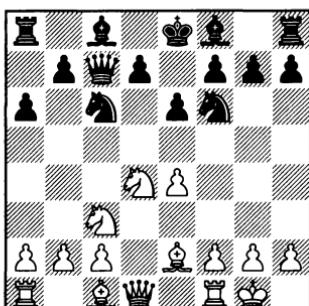
12... 0-0 13. $\mathbb{W}e2$ $e5$ 14. $\mathbb{Q}b3$ $\mathbb{Q}g4$ 15. $\mathbb{W}e1$ $\mathbb{Q}e7$ 16. $\mathbb{Q}c4$ c5 17. $f3\pm$, Heberla-Zhigalko, Istanbul 2005.

12... $h5$ 13. $\mathbb{W}e2$ $\mathbb{Q}g4$ 14. $\mathbb{Q}f3$ $\mathbb{Q}d6$ 15. $h3\pm$, Abu Sufian-Hossain, Dhaka 2013.

13. $\mathbb{Q}b3$ $\mathbb{Q}a7$ 14. $h3$ a5 15. $\mathbb{W}e2$ 0-0 16. $\mathbb{Q}e3$



This set-up promises White lasting pressure because Black's queenside pawns will be a permanent cause of concern. The game Heberla-Firman, Warsaw 2006, went 16... $\mathbb{Q}e6$ 17. $\mathbb{Q}xa7$ $\mathbb{W}xa7$ 18. $\mathbb{Q}c4$ $\mathbb{Q}fe8$ (18... $\mathbb{Q}h5$ 19. $\mathbb{Q}xe6$ $\mathbb{Q}f4$ 20. $\mathbb{W}c4$) 19. $\mathbb{Q}xe6$ $\mathbb{Q}xe6$ 20. $\mathbb{Q}ad1\pm$.



The Classical System with ♖e2

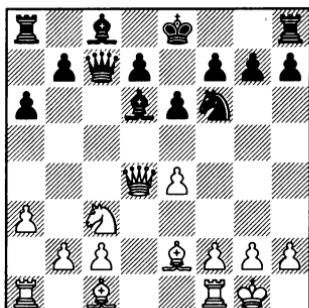
After 7...♝f6, White has three main continuations: A. 8.a3; B. 8.♗h1; C. 8.♖e3

8.♗g5 is inconsistent. Apart from 8...♜e7, Black can equalise with typical Taimanov means: 8...♝d6 9.♗h1 ♗xd4 10.♗xd4 ♜e5 11.♗d3 b5 12.f4 ♗xc3 13.bxc3 ♜b7 or the minimalist 8...♝xd4 9.♗xd4 ♜c5 10.♗d2 b5 11.♗f4 e5 12.♗d5 ♗xd5 13.♗xd5 ♜b7 14.♗xe5+ ♜xe5 15.♗xe5 0-0, Brkic-Smirin, Rijeka 2010.

A. 8.a3

Sometimes White opts for this move in order to avoid 8.♖e3 ♜b4. Of course, this is a meager reason for playing second rate variations. Any system against 8.♗h1 is even better against 8.a3. In many Taimanov set-ups, a3 could prove to be a superfluous move. Also in the Scheveningen, Black faces more problems when defending against a4 instead of a3.

8...♝xd4 9.♗xd4 ♜d6



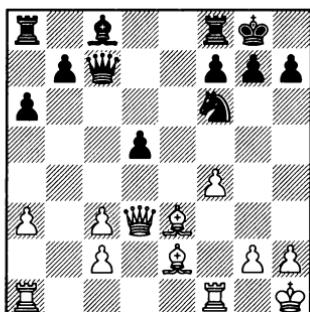
10.♗h1

10.g3 could be attacked later with h5, for instance, 10...b5 11.♗f3 ♜b7 12.♗d3 ♜c8 13.♗e1 ♜e5 14.♗d2 h5=, Alexandridis-Miladinovic, Kavala 2001.

10...♜e5 11.♗d3 0-0! 12.f4 ♜xc3 13.bxc3 d5 14.exd5

Stein-Suetin, Moscow 1964 saw 14.e5 ♜e4 15.c4 ♜xc4 16.♗xc4 dxc4 17.♗xc4 ♜d7=. Black could aspire to an edge with 15...b5!? 16.cxd5 exd5 17.♗xd5 ♜f5=.

14...exd5 15.♗e3



Black has the initiative. All his pieces have good prospects. Perhaps best is 15...♜e8! 16.♗d4 ♜e4 while G. Kuzmin-Andreikin, Alushata 2004, saw 15...♜d7 16.♗d4 ♜e4 17.c4 ♜f5 18.♗e3 ♜fe8 19.cxd5 ♜c2=.

B. 8.♗h1 ♗xd4

Black can transpose to the Scheveningen by 8...♜e7 9.f4 d6, having won a small opening victory. The point is that by having commit-

Part 1

ted his king to h1, White deprived himself of one the most dangerous system against the Scheveningen which is based on the quick manoeuvre $\mathbb{W}d1-e1-g3$ and $\mathbb{B}ae1$ while the king remains on g1.

I suggest to stay in the Taimanov waters. Our first task will be to find an active occupation to the dark-squared bishop. Besides the text, we often see 8... $\mathbb{B}b4$. Then 9. $\mathbb{W}d3$ $\mathbb{W}d6$ 10. $\mathbb{Q}xc6$ $\mathbb{W}xd3$ 11.cxd3 dxc6 leads to an equal endgame, but 9. $\mathbb{B}g5!$ is more testing. Then 9... $\mathbb{W}d6$ 10. $\mathbb{Q}xc6$ $\mathbb{W}xd1$ 11. $\mathbb{Q}xd1$ dxc6 12.e5 $\mathbb{Q}d7$ 13.f4 as in Smislov-Razuvaev, USSR 1975, leaves Black in a cramped albeit solid position.

9. $\mathbb{W}xd4$ $\mathbb{B}c5$ 10. $\mathbb{W}d3$

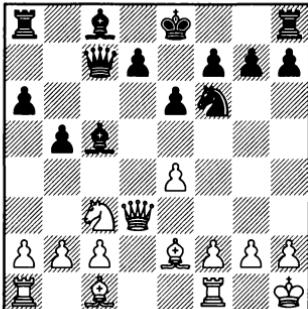
Alternatives:

10. $\mathbb{B}f4$ $\mathbb{B}xd4$ 11. $\mathbb{B}xc7$ $\mathbb{B}xc3$
12.bxc3 $\mathbb{Q}xe4$ 13.c4 d5=.

10. $\mathbb{W}d2$ 0-0 (Black should not provide the opponent with a lever for an attack with 10...h6) 11. $\mathbb{W}g5$ d6 (11... $\mathbb{B}d4$ 12. $\mathbb{Q}d3$ $\mathbb{B}xc3$!?) 13.bxc3 d6 14.f4 d5 is more ambitious, but risky.) 12. $\mathbb{B}d3$ $\mathbb{Q}d7$ (12...b5 13. $\mathbb{W}g3$ $\mathbb{B}b7$ 14. $\mathbb{B}h6$ $\mathbb{Q}e8$ =, Jakovenko-Lautier, France 2007) 13.f4 (13. $\mathbb{W}g3$ b5 14. $\mathbb{Q}e2$ $\mathbb{Q}e5$ 15.f4 $\mathbb{Q}xd3$ 16.cxd3 f5) 13... $\mathbb{B}d4$ =, Van Oosterom-Giri, Enschede 2009.

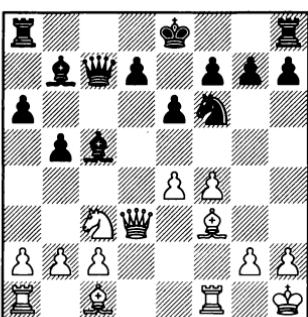
10...b5

10...h5 is too committing. You could opt for such plans if you desperately needed a win.



B1. 11.f4; B2. 11.Bg5!?

B1. 11.f4 Bb7 12.Qf3



12...h5

This move enables ... $\mathbb{Q}g4$ and builds up tension.

12...0-0! is simple and solid: 13.e5 $\mathbb{Q}e8$ 14. $\mathbb{B}b7$ (14. $\mathbb{Q}e4$ $\mathbb{B}e7$ 15. $\mathbb{Q}e3$ f5 16. $\mathbb{Q}d2$ $\mathbb{B}c8$ =, Oleksiensko-Shaposhnikov, Minsk 2006) 14... $\mathbb{W}b7$ 15.a4 (15.f5 f6=) 15...b4 16. $\mathbb{Q}e4$ $\mathbb{B}e7$ 17. $\mathbb{Q}e3$ $\mathbb{W}c6$ temporarily gains space, but White is unable to keep his achievement: 18.c4 bxc3 19.bxc3 d5 20. $\mathbb{Q}d2$ $\mathbb{Q}c7$ =, Ye Jiangchuan-J. Polgar, Prague 2002, or 18. $\mathbb{Q}g5$ g6 (18...f5=) 19. $\mathbb{B}ad1$ d6 20. $\mathbb{Q}d4$ dx5 21. $\mathbb{Q}xe5$ $\mathbb{Q}f6$ 22. $\mathbb{W}h3$ h5=, Grischuk-J. Polgar, Linares 2001.

13.♖e5

13.♖d2 ♗g4 14.♗e2 d6! restricts White's activity in the centre.

13.♖e3!? ♖e3 14.♗e3 aims to weaken Black's dark squares (d6, c5, b6). Therefore, 14...d6! is called for. (14...b4?! 15.♘a4 d6 16.c3) 15.♗ad1 (or 15.a3 ♜c5! 16.♗d2 h4 17.♗ad1 0-0-0!) 15...b4! 16.♘a4 (16.♘e2 0-0) 16...0-0 17.♗d4 (17.c3 ♜c6) 17...a5! 18.♗fe1 ♜fd8!= (Gross).

13...♗g4 14.♗b7

White does not get an advantage by 14.♘e4 ♖xe4 (14...♖e7 15.♗d6+; 14...♗b8!?) 15.♗xe4 ♗c8 16.♗e2 ♜h6 17.a4 ♘f5 18.axb5 axb5 19.♗d2 h4 20.♗g4 ♜c6=.

14...♗b7 15.♗e4

In several games White scored well with 15.a4!? b4 16.♗e4 ♗c8 17.c4. After fixing the queenside, he could turn his attention to Black's king. I suppose that the best answer is 15...0-0-0! 16.♗e4 ♖e7 17.h3 ♜h6=, maintaining tension all over the board.

15...♗c8!?

Black recognises 16.♗e3 as the main positional threat of the opponent. Database statistics show 61% in Black's favour after 15...♗c8!?

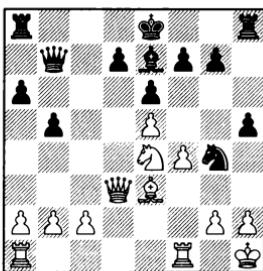
Let's ponder over the frequently seen 15...♖e7.

White has two reasonable plans: to break through the queenside by

pushing b3-c4, or to blockade it by c3-b4, trying to organise an attack on the other wing. The latter is rather annoying for Black.

16.♗e3

16.b3 is well met by 16...♗c8! (Black is trying to dissuade the opponent from pushing 17.c4. In that event 17...0-0 would find White undeveloped for active play.) 17.♗b2 ♜h6 18.♗f3 ♜b8 19.♗f2 ♜f5. Black accomplished the thematic knight's manoeuvre—see **game 1** Lutz-Grabliauskas, Pula 1997.



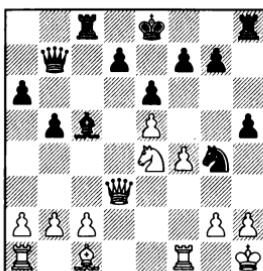
16...♗c8 17.♗d4!

In the majority of games White chooses 17.c3. Then the march of the h-pawn is very efficient: 17...h4! 18.h3 (18.♗d4?! h3! 19.g3 f5! 20.exf6 ♘xf6! 21.♗xf6 gxf6!) 18...♗h6 19.♗ad1 ♘f5 20.♗f2 0-0. White's pawn chain on the kingside is paralysed for good and could be attacked, e.g. 21.♗f3 ♗c7 22.♗d3 f6!

17...♗h6 (17...h4 18.♗f3 ♗c6 19.♗g4 ♗e4 20.c3!±) 18.c3! h4 (18...♗f5 19.♗f3! ♗c6 20.♗ad1±) 19.♗f3±. White can follow up by b4, ♘c5.

Now that White cannot play 16.♗e3, he probably should continue with:

Part 1



16.♖d2

16.a4 is inconsistent. When the queenside is opened, Black can safely castle, because he can easily organise counterplay should the opponent attempt to assault his king. I propose 16...♜e7?! 17.axb5 axb5 18.♜a5 (or 18.h3 ♜h6 19.♜e3 0-0 20.♜g3 ♜c6=, Tirard-Delchev, Cappelle la Grande 2006) 18...b4 19.♜d2 ♜c7 20.♜fa1 ♜c6!=. f4-f5 is no longer a threat.

16...♜e7! 17.♜ae1

Alternatively: 17.a3 ♜c6! 18.♜b4 f5=, Delchev-De la Riva, Benasque 1997; 17.b3 ♜d5.

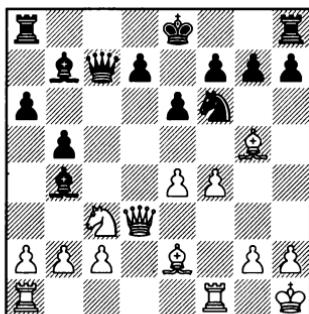
17...0-0∞.

According to my analysis, Black holds firmly in this position. The biggest danger for him is 18.f5, but 18...♜xe5 19.♜g3 f6 20.♜c3 ♜c4 neutralises the pressure.

Black has successfully tested in practice 17...♜c6?!? 18.♜f3 f5!=, Yu Shaoteng-Ye Jiangchuan, Yongchuan 2003. Other options after 17...♜c6?! are:

18.♜c3 ♜h6! 19.f5 ♜f5 20.♜xf5 exf5 21.♜d6 ♜xd6 22.exd6 ♜f8 23.♜e7 ♜h6 24.♜f5 f6 25.♜xd7 (25.♜xd7 ♜g6) 25...♜xd7 26.♜xd7 ♜xc3 27.bxc3 f5!=;
18.c3 ♜h6 19.♜e3 ♜f5 20.♜d4 h4 21.♜f3 0-0 22.♜d1 ♜fd8.

B2. 11.♗g5 ♜b7 12.f4 ♜b4!



White gets an edge after 12...b4?! 13.e5 ♜d5 14.♜xd5 ♜xd5 15.♜f3 ♜xf3 16.♜xf3 d6 17.♜af1±, as in Berg-Brynell, Gothenburg 2006.

13.♗f3

13.♜xf6 defines White's plans too early. In Dolezal-El Debs, Sao Jose do Rio Preto 2007, Black put his rook to g8 and stood well: 13...gxsf6 14.a4 ♜xc3 15.bxc3 ♜g8 16.g3 f5 17.♗f3 fxe4 18.♗xe4 ♜xe4 19.♜xe4 ♜c6=.

13...♜xc3 14.bxc3 ♜c8 15.♜xf6

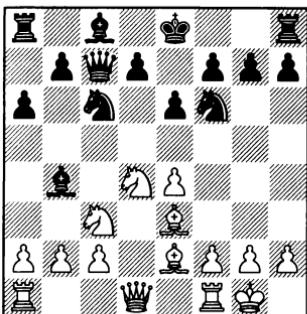
15.a4?! ♜xc3 16.axb5 ♜d3 17.cxd3 axb5 18.♗fb1 ♜c6 was good for Black in Zezulkin-Tregubov, Krasnodar 1998.

The Classical System with ♜e2

15...gx f 6 16.♗ad1=.

Black can gain space on the kingside by 16...h5 and hope to use White's split pawn structure on the other wing.

C. 8.♗e3 ♜b4



Black attacks the e4-pawn. If White defends it, he loses the initiative and could become worse:

a) 9.♗f3?! ♜e5 10.♗f4 ♜xc3 11.bxc3 d6=.

b) 9.♗d3?! ♜e5 leads to positions from Part 3 with an extra tempo for Black. After 10.♗de2, he can try to punish immediately the opponent by 10...♗fg4 (10...♜xc3 11.bxc3 d5=) 11.♗f4 g5 12.♗g3 h5∞, but probably the best way is to continue development by 10...0-0-0! 11.h3 d6.

c) 9.f3?! Black carries on ...d7-d5 with excellent play. This plan could be executed in different settings: 9...♜xc3 10.bxc3 d5 or 9...d5 10.exd5 exd5. Most players prefer 9...0-0 as more flexible. Depending on White's response, Black will choose whether to give firstly his

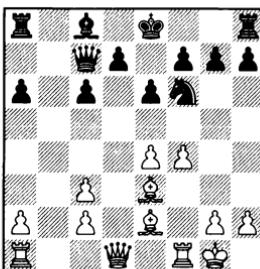
bishop for the c3-knight or push d7-d5 and retreat to d6 in future.

Obviously White should ignore the threat to e4 and counter-attack, but how?

The straightforward approach:

d) 9.f4 ♜xc3 10.bxc3 ♜xe4 11.♗d3 proves to be insufficient after 11...d5! (11...♝f6 12.♗e1 is not so clear). Black's knight on e4 is a good defender.

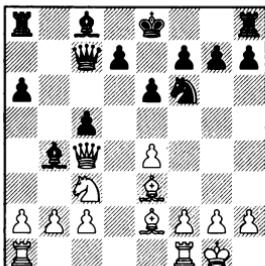
e) 9.♗xc6 bxc6 10.f4 ♜xc3 11.bxc3 is more testing.



Now after 11...♜xe4 (In Rantanen-P. Cramling, Helsinki 1991, Black chose the modest: 11...c5 12.e5 ♜d5 13.♗d2 c4 14.♗b1 0-0-0=.) 12.♗f3 [12.♗d3 ♜f6 13.♗f3 (13.♗d4 c5 14.♗xf6 gx f 6 15.f5 e5=) 13...d6 14.♗d4 ♜b8 15.♗g3 ♜f8 16.c4 c5 17.♗c3 ♜e8 18.♗ael f5∞, Oleksienko-Swapnil, Kolkata 2012], Black is forced to cover the critical diagonal a3-f8 by 12...♗d6 (12...♗f6 13.♗c5 d5 14.♗d4∞). The game Pulkkinen -Suetin, Espoo 1989, went 13.♗b1 ♜b8 14.♗xb8 ♜xb8 15.♗c5 ♜b7, when White's initiative is bound to evaporate: 16.♗d4 (16.♗b1 ♜c7 17.♗b6 ♜d6) 16...♜xc5 17.♗xc5 ♜b5 18.♗d6 f6!.

Part 1

f) 9. $\mathbb{Q}xc6$ bxc6 10. $\mathbb{W}d4$ (10. $\mathbb{W}d3$ d5 11. exd5 cxd5=; 10. $\mathbb{Q}d3$ d5=) 10... c5 11. $\mathbb{W}c4$ has always been a sideline.



That accounts for the fact that Black has not established yet his best defence.

I faced it in Delgado Crespo-Delchev, Sort 2008 and chose the natural 11... $\mathbb{Q}b7$?! 12.a3 (12. $\mathbb{Q}f3$ $\mathbb{W}e5$ = or 12... e5=) 12... d5

12... $\mathbb{Q}xc3$ is more popular, but I'm afraid that the position after 13. $\mathbb{W}xc3$ is in White's favour. The renowned Taimanov expert Pia Cramling chooses here 13... 0-0 which is quite safe, but leaves the opponent with a small edge after 14. f3 $\mathbb{E}fc8$ 15. $\mathbb{Q}g5$ $\mathbb{Q}e8$ 16. $\mathbb{E}fe1$ (16. e5 d5) 16... $\mathbb{W}c6$ 17. $\mathbb{E}ad1$ d5 18. exd5 exd5=, De la Villa-Cramling Cordoba 1995. Taking on e4 is outright dubious: 13... $\mathbb{Q}xe4$ (13... $\mathbb{Q}xe4$ 14. $\mathbb{W}xg7$ 0-0-0 15. f3 $\mathbb{E}hg8$ 16. $\mathbb{W}xf7$ $\mathbb{E}df8$ 17. $\mathbb{W}e7$ ±) 14. f3 $\mathbb{Q}g6$ 15. $\mathbb{W}xc5$ $\mathbb{W}xc5$ 16. $\mathbb{Q}xc5$ $\mathbb{Q}xc2$ 17. $\mathbb{E}ac1$ $\mathbb{Q}a4$ 18. $\mathbb{Q}d6$ $\mathbb{Q}d8$ 19. $\mathbb{E}c5$ $\mathbb{Q}e8$ 20. $\mathbb{Q}g3$ $\mathbb{Q}c6$ 21. $\mathbb{E}a5$, Shtyrenkov-Eljanov, Novi Sad 1989.

13. exd5 exd5 14. $\mathbb{W}f4$

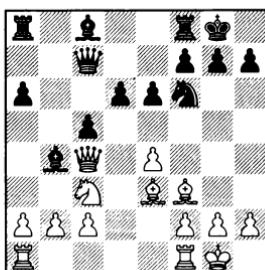
Black's pawn centre is dangerous with queens: 14. $\mathbb{W}h4$ $\mathbb{Q}xc3$ 15. bxc3

0-0 16. $\mathbb{Q}d3$ (16. $\mathbb{E}ab1$ $\mathbb{E}fe8$ 17. $\mathbb{Q}d3$ $\mathbb{W}c6$ 18. $\mathbb{Q}xc5$ $\mathbb{W}xc5$ =, Cawdery-Gretarsson, Reykjavik 2014; 17... c4?!) 16... $\mathbb{W}c6$ 17. f3, Garbisu-G. Hernandez, Villalba 1993, 17... c4=.

14... $\mathbb{W}xf4$ 15. $\mathbb{Q}xf4$ $\mathbb{Q}xc3$ 16. bxc3 0-0. Here my opponent chose the straightforward 17. $\mathbb{E}ab1$ $\mathbb{Q}c6$ 18. $\mathbb{E}b6$ $\mathbb{Q}b5$ 19. $\mathbb{Q}xb5$ axb5 20. $\mathbb{E}xb5$ $\mathbb{Q}e4$ =. However, 17.c4! would have given White somewhat preferable chances because of the weakness of the c5-pawn.

I think that Black should look for improvements earlier:

11... 0-0! 12. $\mathbb{Q}f3$ d6



Black is behind in development so it is logical to keep the centre closed. He had no problems in Nakar-Roiz, Acre 2013, which went 13. a3 $\mathbb{Q}a5$ (13... $\mathbb{Q}xc3$ 14. $\mathbb{W}xc3$ $\mathbb{Q}b7$ =) 14. b4 (14. e5 d5 15. $\mathbb{W}xc5$ $\mathbb{Q}d7$) 14... cxb4 15. $\mathbb{W}xc7$ $\mathbb{Q}xc7$ 16. axb4 $\mathbb{Q}b7$ =.

9. $\mathbb{Q}a4$

White discovers the sore point in Black's position-b6, and the central dark squares in general. Note that the move order 9. $\mathbb{Q}xc6$ bxc6 10. $\mathbb{Q}a4$ is probably inaccurate, because it offers Black additional op-

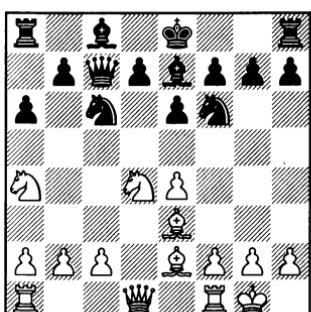
The Classical System with ♖e2

tions as 10...0-0 (10...♖d6 11.♕b6 ♜b8 12.g3! looks better for White) 11.♕b6 ♜b8 12.♕xc8 ♜fxc8 13.♕xa6 ♜d8 14.♕d3 ♜d6. This line was popular in the 70s, then it has faded out of fashion. It is considered satisfactory for Black, e.g. 15.f4 e5 16.b3 exf4 17.♕d4 f3 18.e5 ♜xe5.

9...♜e7!

White was threatening c4-c5. Unfortunately, 9...b5 runs into 10.♕xc6 dxc6 11.♕c5!± ♜xc5 (11...bxa4 12.♕b4 c5 13.♕a3! ♜xe4 14.♕f3 ♜b7 15.♕e1 ♜d6 16.♕e5±) 12.♕xc5±.

The old move 9...0-0?! gives White a terrible initiative after 10.c4! ♜xe4 (10...♖d6 11.g3 ♜xe4 12.♕f3 f5 13.c5 ♜e5 14.♕b6 ♜b8 15.♕c1∞) 11.c5 d5 (11...d6 12.♕c6 ♜c6 13.cxd6 ♜xd6 14.♕c2 f5 15.♕fd1 ♜e7 16.♕b6 ♜b8 17.♕ac1±) 12.♕xc6 ♜xc6 13.♕b6 ♜b8 14.♕c1 ♜a5 (14...♖d7 15.♕xd7 ♜xd7 16.♕c4±) 15.♕f4±.



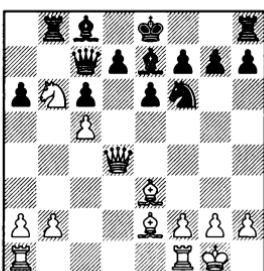
C1. 10.c4; C2. 10.♕xc6

10.♕b6 should be answered by 10...♜b8. Then White can try to surprise us with the tricky move

order: 11.♕xc6 bc6 12.♕xc8 ♜c8 13.c4 ♜xe4 14.♕d4 ♜f6 15.c5, but this position is good for Black. For instance, he can prepare ...♜b8-b4 by 15...a5 16.♕c4 ♜d5 17.♕g7 ♜f6 18.♕g3 ♜b4.

C1. 10.c4 ♜xe4 11.c5

11.♕xc6 bxc6 12.♕d4 ♜f6 13.♕b6 ♜b8 14.c5 is a decent alternative.



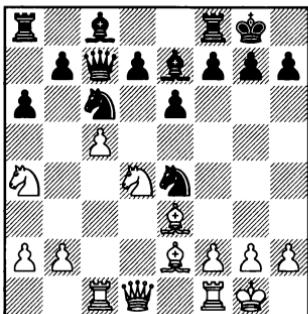
Black must free himself immediately because after 14...e5 15.♕c4 0-0 16.♕fd1, White has a bind – 16...♜d5 (16...d5 17.cxd6 ♜xd6 18.♕ac1±) 17.♕xd5 cxd5 18.♕xd5 ♜xb2 19.♕c4 ♜h8 20.♕b3 f5 21.♕d3±. So he follows up with:

14...d6 15.cxd6 ♜xd6 16.♕c4 ♜xh2+ 17.♕h1 c5 18.♕xc5 ♜xc5 19.♕xc5 ♜c7 (19...♜f4 is more risky and materially unbalanced after 20.♕f3 ♜b7 21.♕d6 ♜xf3 22.♕xb8 ♜xg2+ 23.♕xg2 ♜xb8 24.♕ac1 ♜f4 25.♕c3 ♜e7∞) 20.♕ac1 ♜e4 and White cannot extract much from the a3-f8 diagonal, e.g. 21.♕a3 ♜b7 22.♕g1 f5 23.♕fd1 ♜d8=.

11...0-0 12.♕c1

12.♕f3 is countered by 12...♜g5!

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12...Bb8! 13.g3 (preparing a retreat square in the event of $\mathbb{Q}g5$) **13...Qf6 14.Qf3 g6!**

Black aims for ...e6-e5 so he takes f5 under control. White has been unable to find gaps in Black's armour. His compensation is only sufficient for equality.

15.Qb6

Alternatively:

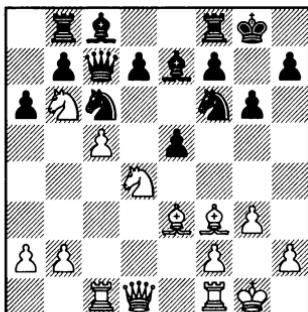
15.Qe1 (15.Qb3 e5!; 15.Qd3 $\mathbb{E}d8=$) **15...e5 16.Qb3 d6 17.cxd6 Qd6 18.Qa7 Ba8 19.Qb6 We7 20.Qc6 bc6 21.Qc6 Qb4 22.Qc5 Qc5 23.Qbc5 $\mathbb{E}d8$ 24.Qb3 Qh3** with active play;

15.Qg5 Ed8 16.Qb6 h6!? **17.Qxh6 d5 18.Qe1 e5 19.Qxc6 bxc6 20.Qe2 Qd7 21.Qxd5 Qxc5 22.Qxc8 Exd5 23.Qxe7+ We7 24.Qed1**, Brenjo-Sarenac, Belgrade 2009, 24...e4!=.

15...e5

Karpov introduced 15...Bd8!? when 16.Qg5 h6 is the above-mentioned game Brenjo-Sarenac. **16.Qa4 e5 17.Qb3 d5 18.cxd6 Ed6 19.Qa5 Qh3 20.Qfe1 e4** is also fine.

The text move is more straightforward.

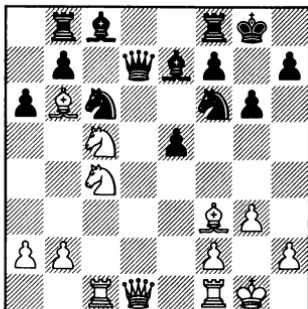


16.Qb3 d6 17.cxd6 Qxd6 18.Qc4

White attempted to improve with 18.Qxc6 bxc6 19.Qf3 in Kamsky-Nisipeanu, Sofia 2007, whereas John Emms suggests 19...Qd8!? 20.Qxc8 e4.

18...Qe7 19.Qb6 Qd7 20.Qc5

It is dangerous for White to keep on queening with 20.Qe2 e4 21.Qxe4 Qxe4 22.Qe4 Qh3=, Polzin-Heissler, Germany 1999.

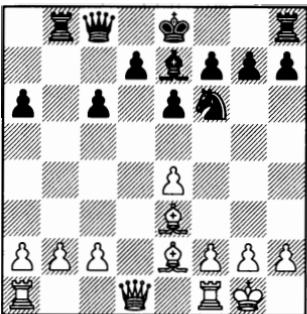


The play is balanced. Black can trade queens or aim for complica-

The Classical System with ♖e2

tions with 20...♘h3 21.♗g2 ♘h6 22.♖e1 ♘g4.

C2. 10.♕xc6 bxc6 11.♗b6 ♘b8 12.♗c8 ♘c8



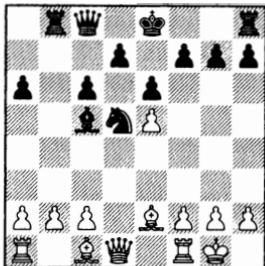
The position is very unbalanced strategically. Black has more pawns in the centre and the semi-open b-file for his rook. He only needs a couple of moves to consolidate (...0-0, ...♘c7, ...d5) and his pieces will be perfectly co-ordinated. White bases his hopes on a kingside attack. For the moment, he has some spatial advantage and the initiative, so he must play actively.

13.♗d4

a) 13.e5 is less popular because after 13...♗d5 the bishop has to retreat to its initial place:

14.♗c1 (the difference with the main line is that after 14.♗d4 c5 White has not the e5-square for the bishop and has to play 15.c4 cxd4 16.cxd5 ♘c5! 17.♗f3 ♗g5! 18.♗b1 exd5!= or 17.d6 ♗f8!.

14...♗c5!



15.c4

15.♗d3 is best met by 15...♘c7! (avoiding 15...0-0 16.♗g3) 16.♗e4 (16.♗g3 ♗d4!), when 16...0-0 17.♗xa6 f5 18.exf6 ♗xf6 19.♗e2 ♗d5 20.g3 ♗xf2 21.♗xf2 ♗f8 22.♗f4 ♗xf2+ 23.♗xf2 e5 is playable, but it is better to keep more tension by 16...a5 17.a3 0-0 18.♗d3 f5, e.g. 19.♗c4 ♘a7 20.c3 ♗e7 21.♗c2 ♗g6 22.♗e2 a4 23.♗h1 f4↑, Corrales-Quesada, Las Tunas 2009.

15...♗e7 16.♗h1

16.b3 ♘c7 17.♗b2 faces Black with a choice. He can challenge the opponent to enter unbalanced positions with 17...d6 18.ed6 ♗xd6 (19.h3 ♗h2 20.♗h1 ♗e5) 19.♗d4 c5 (19...♗f5 20.♗e4 ♗xh2+ 21.♗h1 c5 22.g4 ♗d4 23.♗xd4 cxd4 24.f4 ♗g3 25.♗g2 ♗h4 26.♗ad1 ♗e7=) 20.♗xg7 ♗xh2+ 21.♗h1 ♗g8 or 19.♗xg7 ♗g8 20.♗c3 ♗xh2+ 21.♗h1 ♗e5 22.♗xe5 ♘xe5. A more restrained approach is to castle and try to provoke f2-f4 before breaking in the centre with ...d6, for example, 17...♗g6!? 18.♗h1 0-0 19.f4 or 17...0-0.

16...♘c7 17.f4 0-0 18.b3. I played here 18...a5, but this move is not necessary. It would be natural to

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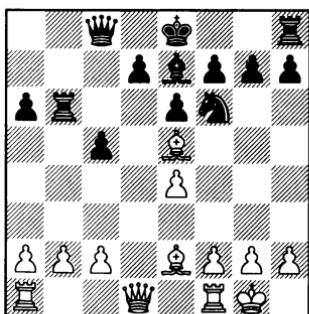
open the centre by 18... $\mathbb{E}fd8$ 19. $\mathbb{Q}b2$ $\mathbb{Q}f5$ (or 19...d6 20. $\mathbb{Q}d3$ dxe5 21. $\mathbb{Q}xe5$ $\mathbb{Q}d6$ 22. $\mathbb{Q}c2$ $\mathbb{Q}g6!=$) 20. $\mathbb{E}f3$ d5!↑.

b) 13. $\mathbb{W}d4$ is rarely seen. I answered it with 13... $\mathbb{W}c7?$! 14.e5 $\mathbb{Q}d5$ 15.b3, Asrian-Delchev, Evry 2008, when 15...c5! would have seized the initiative.

13...c5

13... $\mathbb{W}c7$ is Miladinovic's pet line. This variation is very flexible, but with accurate play White can get a small, but lasting edge due to his better pawn structure. See **game 2** Adams-Banikas, Porto Carras 2011 for more details.

14. $\mathbb{Q}e5$ $\mathbb{E}b6$

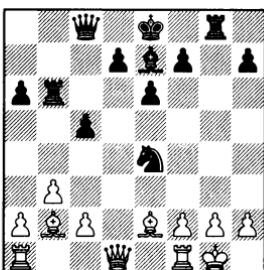


15. $\mathbb{W}d3$

Alternatively, 15.b3 $\mathbb{Q}xe4$ (White is slightly better after 15...0-0 16. $\mathbb{W}d3$ d6 17. $\mathbb{Q}b2$.) 16. $\mathbb{Q}xg7$ $\mathbb{E}g8$ 17. $\mathbb{Q}b2$

17. $\mathbb{Q}e5$ $\mathbb{Q}d6!$ 18. $\mathbb{Q}g3$ $\mathbb{Q}xg3$ 19.fxg3 $\mathbb{Q}e5$ is equal. The game Radjabov-Cori, Tromso 2013, went 20. $\mathbb{E}b1$ (20. $\mathbb{Q}h5$ $\mathbb{E}g7$ 21.c3 $\mathbb{Q}e7=$) 20... $\mathbb{Q}e7$

21. $\mathbb{Q}d3$ $\mathbb{E}g5$ 22. $\mathbb{W}f3$ $\mathbb{W}g8$ 23. $\mathbb{Q}be1$ $\mathbb{W}g7$ 24. $\mathbb{Q}h1$ a5 25. $\mathbb{Q}e3$ f6=.



17... $\mathbb{Q}f6$!?

17... $\mathbb{Q}d6$ 18. $\mathbb{Q}d3$ c4 19.bc4 $\mathbb{W}c6$ 20.g3 $\mathbb{Q}g5$ stumbles into 21.f3 h5 22. $\mathbb{Q}h1$!. Instead, a member of the chesspublishing.com forum proposed to play 17...c4! immediately. Capturing on c4 is bad, due to 18. $\mathbb{Q}xc4?$ $\mathbb{W}c6$ 19.g3 $\mathbb{Q}c5$ 20. $\mathbb{Q}d4$ $\mathbb{Q}g5$; 18. $\mathbb{Q}f3$ $\mathbb{Q}g5$; 18. $\mathbb{Q}d4?$ $\mathbb{E}d6$, 18. $\mathbb{Q}h5$ $\mathbb{W}c6$ 19. $\mathbb{W}f3$ $\mathbb{Q}f6$ 20. $\mathbb{W}c6$ $\mathbb{E}c6$ 21. $\mathbb{Q}f3$ d5 are not dangerous either. However, White should be slightly better with a sound central strategy: 18. $\mathbb{W}d4$ c3 19. $\mathbb{Q}c1$ $\mathbb{W}c6$ (19... $\mathbb{E}b4$ 20. $\mathbb{W}d3$ $\mathbb{Q}c5$ 21. $\mathbb{W}h3$ $\mathbb{W}c6$ 22.a3 $\mathbb{E}d4$ 23.b4 $\mathbb{Q}b6$ 24. $\mathbb{Q}e3$ $\mathbb{Q}d2$ 25. $\mathbb{Q}xd4$ $\mathbb{Q}xd4$ 26.g3±) 20. $\mathbb{Q}f3$ d5 21. $\mathbb{Q}e3$ $\mathbb{E}b4$ 22. $\mathbb{W}d3$ $\mathbb{Q}g5$ 23. $\mathbb{Q}e2$.

It is safer to abandon the attacking plans and opt for the good positional idea of exchanging the dark-squared bishops:

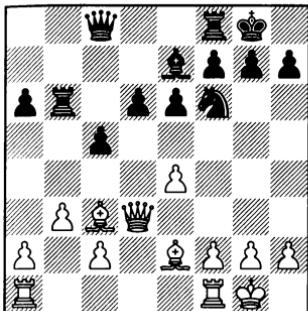
18. $\mathbb{Q}xf6$ $\mathbb{Q}xf6$ as in **game 3** Balinov-Sommerbauer, Tweng 2007.

15...d6 16. $\mathbb{Q}c3$ 0-0 17.b3

Sadvakasov played against me 17. $\mathbb{W}g3$. It was a novelty in 2004. I answered 17... $\mathbb{W}c6$ 18. $\mathbb{Q}fe1$?! $\mathbb{W}xe4$!

The Classical System with ♖e2

and won. Ribli suggested 18.♖f3 e5 19.♕fe1 c4=. Later games featured 17...d5 18.exd5 exd5 19.b3 ♕e6=.



17...♗c6!?

This move keeps more tension than:

17...d5 18.ed5

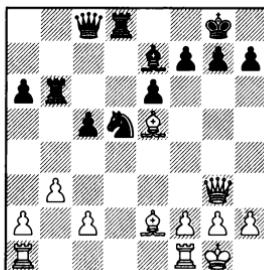
Or 18.e5 ♜d7 19.f4 c4 20.bxc4 ♜c6 21.♕h3 ♜b6 22.♖d3 g6 23.♖f3 (23.f5 exf5 24.♖xf5 ♜xc4 25.e6 fxe6 is a desperate attack without serious chances to succeed.) 23...♜e8∞. Black can be optimistic about his position, Nisipeanu-Delchev, Benidorm 2005.

18...♝xd5 19.♖e5

19.♖d2 ♜b4 20.♗c4 ♜d6 (or 20...♞d8=) is equal: 21.♖c3 (21.♖xb4 cxb4 22.♗xb4 ♜xc2 23.♖xa6 ♜xa6 24.♗xe7 ♜xa2 25.♗xa2 ♜xa2, draw, Kasparov-Anand, Frankfurt 2000) 21...♜fd8 22.♖fc1, Arizmendi-De la Riva, Seville 2004, when Black should either activate his passive dark-squared bishop with 22...♝g5 or bar the long diagonal with 22...♝c6 23.♖d3 ♜d4.

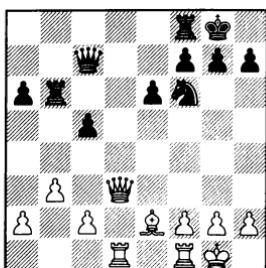
19...♝f6

19...♜d8 does not solve all the problems: 20.♗g3 (Black is intending to double his rooks on the d-file so White must hinder this plan. 20.♖ad1 leads to simplification following 20...f6 21.♗g3 ♜f4 22.♗f3 ♜xe2+ 23.♗xe2 c4=; 20.♗h3 loses control over d6 – 20...♞f6 21.♗xf6 ♜xf6 22.♖ad1 ♜bd6=)



White is slightly better after either 20...♞f6 21.♗xf6! ♜xf6 22.♖ad1 or 20...f6 21.♗b2 ♜d6 22.♗f3 ♜c7 23.g3 ♜e5 24.♗e5 ♜e5 25.♖c4+, Barua-Muhren, Arnhem 2007.

20.♗xf6 ♜xf6 21.♖ad1 ♜c7



This position occurred in several games. White commonly tripled his heavy pieces on the d-file and Black kept the balance by exchanging one of his weak queenside pawns with ...a6-a5-a4 or ...c5-c4. However, in one of my games as

Part 1

White I carried on the manoeuvre 22. $\mathbb{W}d2!$ $h6$ 23. $\mathbb{W}a5!$ which maintains some pull.

18. $\mathbb{A}f3$

The endgames after 18.e5 $\mathbb{Q}d5$ 19.exd6 $\mathbb{Q}xd6$ 20. $\mathbb{A}f3$ $\mathbb{W}b5$ 21. $\mathbb{E}ad1$ $\mathbb{W}xd3$ 22. $\mathbb{E}xd3$ $\mathbb{Q}b4$ 23. $\mathbb{E}xb4$ cxb4 or 19. $\mathbb{A}f3$ $\mathbb{W}b5$ 20. $\mathbb{W}xb5$ axb5 21. $\mathbb{Q}b2$ $\mathbb{Q}b4$ 22.exd6 $\mathbb{E}xd6$ 23. $\mathbb{A}d1$ $\mathbb{Q}f6$ are equal.

18... $\mathbb{Q}d7$

18...c4 is also interesting. Then 19.bxc4 $\mathbb{Q}d7$ 20.e5 $\mathbb{W}a4$ 21. $\mathbb{A}e4$ g6 22.exd6 $\mathbb{E}xd6$ 23. $\mathbb{W}e2$ $\mathbb{Q}f6$ 24. $\mathbb{Q}xf6$ $\mathbb{Q}xf6$ 25. $\mathbb{A}d3$ $\mathbb{Q}d7$ gives Black good counterplay so White should probably try 19. $\mathbb{W}e3$ e5 with sufficient counterplay on the queenside.

19. $\mathbb{E}ad1$

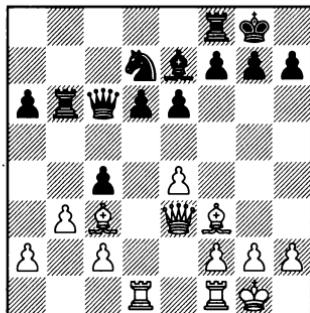
19. $\mathbb{W}e3$ leads to similar positions after 19... $\mathbb{E}c8$ 20. $\mathbb{E}ad1$ (20. $\mathbb{A}e2$ $\mathbb{Q}f6$) 20...c4 21. $\mathbb{Q}d4$ (21.b4 $\mathbb{W}a4=$) 21... $\mathbb{E}b7$ 22. $\mathbb{A}e2$ cxb3 23.cxb3 $\mathbb{E}bc7=$. Black can also keep the queenside closed with 19...h6 20. $\mathbb{E}ad1$ $\mathbb{Q}g5$ 21. $\mathbb{W}e2$ $\mathbb{Q}e5$.

19...c4

Or 19... $\mathbb{E}c8$ 20. $\mathbb{W}e3$ c4 21.b4 (21. $\mathbb{A}e2$ cxb3 22.cxb3 $\mathbb{W}b7$ 23. $\mathbb{Q}c4$ $\mathbb{E}bc6$

24. $\mathbb{W}g3$ g6 25. $\mathbb{A}a1$ $\mathbb{Q}b6$ 26. $\mathbb{A}d3$ $\mathbb{Q}d7=)$ 21... $\mathbb{W}a4!$.

20. $\mathbb{W}e3$



20... $\mathbb{C}xb3$

20... $\mathbb{E}c8$ 21. $\mathbb{Q}d4$ $\mathbb{E}b7$ 22. $\mathbb{A}e2$ cxb3 23.cxb3 $\mathbb{E}bc7=$.

21. $\mathbb{C}xb3$ $\mathbb{W}b7$

Black has no serious problems here as long as he keeps control over the c-file. His play is not based on forced variations so you can choose other moves, too. For example: 21... $\mathbb{Q}g5$ 22. $\mathbb{W}xg5$ $\mathbb{W}xc3$ 23. $\mathbb{E}c1$ $\mathbb{W}b4$ 24. $\mathbb{W}e3$ $\mathbb{W}a5$ 25. $\mathbb{E}c2$ $\mathbb{Q}e5$ 26. $\mathbb{W}e2$ $\mathbb{E}c6$ 27. $\mathbb{E}xc6$ $\mathbb{Q}xc6$ 28. $\mathbb{E}d1$ $\mathbb{E}d8=$.

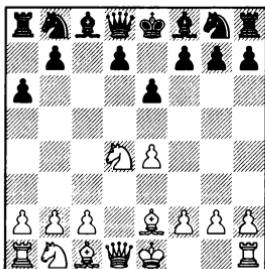
After the text, the game may continue with either 22. $\mathbb{A}b2$ $\mathbb{E}c8$ 23. $\mathbb{E}c1$ $\mathbb{E}bc6$ 24. $\mathbb{E}xc6$ $\mathbb{E}xc6$ 25. $\mathbb{E}c1$ $\mathbb{E}xc1+$ 26. $\mathbb{E}xc1=$ (26. $\mathbb{W}xc1$ $\mathbb{Q}e5$), or 22. $\mathbb{W}d4$ $\mathbb{Q}e5$ 23. $\mathbb{A}e2$ $\mathbb{Q}f6$ 24. $\mathbb{W}e3$ $\mathbb{E}c6$ 25. $\mathbb{A}a1$ $\mathbb{W}c7$ 26. $\mathbb{E}c1$ $\mathbb{E}c8$ 27. $\mathbb{E}xc6$ $\mathbb{W}xc6$ 28.f4 $\mathbb{Q}d7$ 29.e5 $\mathbb{Q}d8=$.

Part 1. The Classical System with ♜e2

Kan – Step by Step

**1.e4 c5 2.♘f3 e6 3.d4 cxd4
4.♗xd4 a6 5.♘c3 ♖c7 6.♗e2**

If White aims to get the Scheveningen or the Taimanov, he should use the move order with 5.♗e2!?.



Black's normal options here are 5...♖c7 6.0-0 ♘f6 7.♘c3 d6 or 7...♘c6 – see the Taimanov chapter. A more sophisticated version of the Scheveningen – without ...♖c7, may be reached after 5...♘f6 6.♘c3 d6. White can try to be original with 6.♗f3, but Black can benefit here from having saved ...d6, e.g. 6...♖c7 7.0-0 ♘e7 8.♘c3 0-0 9.g4 ♘c6 10.g5 ♘e8 11.♗g2 f6!. It is nice to have e6 defended.

Black can remain in Kan waters with 5...♘f6, but let's also consider:

a) 5...b5?! 6.a4!

The point of White's tricky move order. His queen's knight will reach d2 in one move (compare it to variations with ♘b1-c3-b1-d2!). Thus he will be able to save ♘f3 which is not too active.

The mundane 6.0-0 is less challenging:

6...♗b7 7.♗f3 (7.♗d3 ♖c7 8.f4 ♘f6 9.♗f3 ♘c6 10.♘xc6 dxc6 11.e5 ♘d8 12.♗e2 ♘d5=, A.Sokolov-Ivan-chuk, Asnieres sur Seine 2006) 7...♘c6

It is already late for 7...d6 due to 8.a4! b4 9.♗d2, when 9...d5 loses to 10.♗d1 dxe4 11.♗xe6 ♖xd2 12.♘c7+ ♘d7 13.♗xd2. However, 7...♖c7 is a good alternative: 8.a4 (8.♗e1 ♘c6! 9.♘xc6 dxc6 10.e5 ♘d8 11.♗e2 ♘e7 12.♘d2 c5=) 8...b4 9.♗e1 ♘e7 10.e5 ♘bc6.

8.♗e1 (after 8.a4 b4, White has to exchange the knights with an equal game after 9.♘xc6 ♘xc6 10.♘d2 ♘f6) 8...♗ge7 9.♘c3 ♘xd4 10.♗xd4 ♘c6 11.♗e3 ♘e5=, Tosic-Goldin, Vrnjacka Banja 1998.

6...b4 7.0-0!

7.e5 ♖c7 8.♗f4 ♗b7 9.♗f3 ♘c6 equalises: 10.♘xc6 ♘xc6 11.0-0 ♘e7 12.♘d2 ♘c8 13.♘xc6 ♖xc6 14.♗e1 ♘g6 15.♗g3 ♘e7 16.♘e4

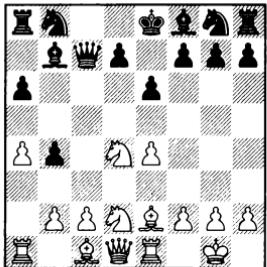
Part 1

$\mathbb{W}xc2$ 17. $\mathbb{Q}d6+$ $\mathbb{Q}xd6$ 18. $\mathbb{W}xd6$ a5, Petrik-Oral, Czechia 2006; 7. $\mathbb{Q}f3$ $\mathbb{W}c7$ 8.0-0 $\mathbb{Q}b7$ 9. $\mathbb{E}e1$ $\mathbb{Q}e7!$ gives Black his typical play, Volokitin-Markowski, Moscow 2004.

7... $\mathbb{Q}b7$ 8. $\mathbb{Q}d2$ $\mathbb{W}c7$

Or 8... $\mathbb{Q}e7$ 9. $\mathbb{Q}c4!$; 8... d6 9. c3 bxc3 10. $\mathbb{W}b3$ $\mathbb{W}c7$ 11. $\mathbb{W}xc3$ $\mathbb{W}xc3$ 12. bxc3. White's big lead in development secures him an advantage: 12... $\mathbb{Q}d7$ 13. $\mathbb{E}b1$ $\mathbb{Q}c5$ 14. f3 $\mathbb{Q}f6$ 15. $\mathbb{Q}a3$ $\mathbb{Q}fd7$ 16. $\mathbb{Q}c4\pm$.

9. $\mathbb{E}e1$



I cannot find a good way of defending the b4-pawn. White's main positional threat is to play $\mathbb{Q}d2$ -b3, $\mathbb{Q}d2$. Eventually, he may open up the queenside with c2-c3. I have analysed:

9... d6 10. $\mathbb{Q}f3$ $\mathbb{Q}d7$

Or: 10... $\mathbb{Q}f6$ 11. $\mathbb{Q}2b3$ $\mathbb{Q}e7$ 12. $\mathbb{Q}d2$ a5 13. c3; the same plan works well after 10... $\mathbb{Q}e7$ 11. $\mathbb{Q}2b3$ $\mathbb{Q}bc6$ 12. $\mathbb{Q}d2$ g6 13. $\mathbb{Q}xc6$ $\mathbb{Q}xc6$ 14. c3± $\mathbb{Q}g7$ 15. $\mathbb{Q}xb4$ $\mathbb{Q}xb2$ 16. $\mathbb{E}b1$ $\mathbb{Q}g7$ 17. $\mathbb{E}c1$ $\mathbb{W}e7$ (17... $\mathbb{W}d8$ 18. $\mathbb{Q}c3$ 0-0 19. $\mathbb{Q}xg7$ $\mathbb{Q}xg7$ 20. e5±) 18. b5 axb5 19. axb5 $\mathbb{Q}e5$ 20. b6±.

11. $\mathbb{Q}2b3$ $\mathbb{Q}gf6$ 12. $\mathbb{Q}d2$ $\mathbb{Q}c5$ 13. $\mathbb{Q}xb4$ $\mathbb{Q}cxe4$ 14. $\mathbb{Q}a5$ $\mathbb{W}d7$ 15. c4

$\mathbb{Q}e7$ 16. $\mathbb{W}c2$ $\mathbb{Q}c5$ 17. $\mathbb{Q}xc5$ $\mathbb{Q}xc5$ 18. $\mathbb{W}b3$ $\mathbb{Q}xf3$ 19. $\mathbb{Q}xf3$ 0-0 20. $\mathbb{Q}e5$ with domination;

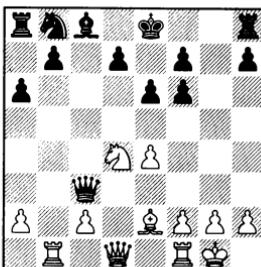
9... $\mathbb{Q}e7$ 10. $\mathbb{Q}c4$ d5 11. exd5 $\mathbb{Q}xd5$ 12. b3±.

b) 5... $\mathbb{Q}f6$!? 6. $\mathbb{Q}c3$ $\mathbb{Q}b4$?

This attack is rather risky. You should be ready to defend a very passive position after 7.e5!.

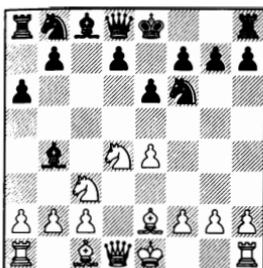
The Scheveningen after 6... d6 is a sound and more complex approach. Another decent option is 6... $\mathbb{W}c7$ 7.0-0 $\mathbb{Q}c6$ (Caruana bet Anand with 7... $\mathbb{Q}c5$ 8. $\mathbb{Q}g5$ $\mathbb{Q}c6$ 9. $\mathbb{Q}xc6$ bxc6 in a rapid game, Zurich 2014.) which transposes to the Taimanov while 7... $\mathbb{Q}b4$ (7... b5 8. $\mathbb{Q}f3\pm$) may amazingly lead to ... the Scheveningen after 8. $\mathbb{Q}g5$!. Now Black has nothing better but return to e7: 8... $\mathbb{Q}e7$!, when the paradoxical 9. $\mathbb{Q}e3$!? looks best.

Note that the popular line 8... $\mathbb{Q}xc3$ 9. $\mathbb{Q}xf6$ $\mathbb{Q}xf6$ 10. bxc3 $\mathbb{W}xc3$ 11. $\mathbb{E}b1$ is rather dubious for Black:



11... $\mathbb{Q}c6$ 12. $\mathbb{Q}xc6$ $\mathbb{Q}xc6$ 13. $\mathbb{E}b3$ $\mathbb{W}e5$ 14. f4 $\mathbb{W}c5$ + 15. $\mathbb{Q}h1\infty$. Black is running out of useful moves: 15... h5 16. $\mathbb{W}d2$ h4 17. h3 a5 18. $\mathbb{E}c3$ $\mathbb{W}b4$ 19. a3 $\mathbb{W}e7$ 20. $\mathbb{E}b1$.

The Classical System with ♖e2



7.e5!

Alternatively:

b1) 7.♗d3 may transpose to the Taimanov after 7...♝c7 8.0-0 ♖c6 9.♖h1 ♖xd4 10.♖xd4 ♖c5. I like more:

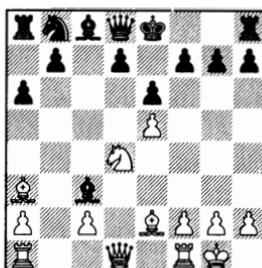
7...d6 8.0-0 0-0 which is considered below. 8...♝bd7 9.♗b3 ♖e5 is also possible.

b2) 7.0-0 d6! [7...♖xc3?! 8.bxc3 ♖xe4 9.♖f3!± d5 10.♖xe4 dxe4 11.♖a3 is difficult to defend, for instance: 11...e5 12.♗e2 f5 (12...exd4 13.♗xe4+ ♖e6 14.♗xb7 ♖d7 15.cxd4±) 13.f3→] 8.♗d3 0-0 9.♗d1

The attack on g7 is harmless: 9.♗g3 ♖bd7 10.♗h6 ♖e8 11.♗fd1 (11.♗g5 ♖df6) 11...♖xc3 12.bxc3 ♖c7 13.c4 ♖c5=. Other options are: 9.♗g5 ♖bd7 10.♗b3 ♖xc3 11.bxc3 ♖c7 12.♗ad1 b5=; 9.♗d2 e5 10.♗b3 ♖e6 11.a3 ♖xc3 12.♖xc3 ♖c6=.

9...♝bd7 10.♗b3 ♖e5 11.♗d4 (11.♗e3 b5 12.a4 ♖c4) 11...♖c6 12.♗e3 ♖c7 13.♗d2 d5↑, Fedorchuk-Hillarp Persson, Budva 2009.

7...♖d5 (7...♖e4 8.0-0) 8.0-0 (8.♗d2 ♖xc3 9.bxc3 ♖e7 10.0-0 ♖c7 11.f4 d6) 8...♖xc3 9.bxc3 ♖xc3 10.♗a3



10...♝a5

Hellsten recommends 10...♝b6 11.♗f3 ♘a5 12.♗d6 ♖c6, but 13.♗ab1 ♖xe5 14.♗xe5 ♘xe5 15.♗d2 gives White a very unpleasant initiative.

11.♗d6 ♖c6 12.♗xc6 dxc6 13.♗d3!

The stem game Giri-Vitiugov, Reggio Emilia 2012, went 13.f4 ♖xa1 13...♝d5!? 14.♗b1 ♘xd1 15.♗fxd1 a5 looks enough for a draw: 16.a4 (16.a3 a4 17.♗f2 ♖a5 18.c4 ♖d8 19.c5 ♖e7 20.♗b4 ♘f8=) 16...♗b4=, Ramnath Bhuvanesh-Arutinian, Dubai 2012.

14.♗xa1 ♘d2 15.♗d3 ♘e3+ 16.♗h1 ♖d7 17.♗b2 b5 18.a4 ♘c8 19.f5, when Stohl suggests 19...h5 intending ...♝h6, exf5.

13...♖xe5 14.♗ad1 ♖f6 15.♗e3 ♖e7 16.♗xe7 ♖xe7 17.♗d3 ♘e8 18.♗e4

White has full compensation for the two missing pawns.

6...b5 7.0-0

7.f4 ♖b7 8.♗f3 is considered in Part 4.

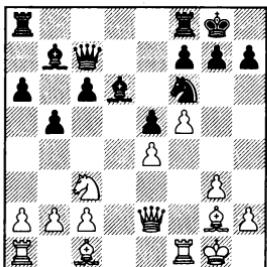
7...♝b7 8.♗e1

Part 1

8.♗f3 could be justified only if White is planning to sac a pawn after 8...♝c6 9.♝xc6 dxc6 10.e5

10.♗e2 offers Black a pleasant choice. At the Olympiad 2012 against Martinez Reyez, I decided to play solidly and opted for a symmetric position with 10...e5 11.a4 ♘f6 12.♗d1 (It is better to exchange on b5 immediately 12.axb5 cxb5 although the position after 13.♗g5 ♘e7 14.♗xf6 ♘xf6 15.♗d5 ♘xd5 16.exd5 ♘d6 17.c4 bxc4 18.♗fc1 0-0 19.♗xc4 a5 should be impossible to crack.) 12...♘e7 13.♗e3 (13.axb5 cxb5 is already totally equal) 13...0-0 14.g3 ♘ad8 15.♗g2, when 15...♗c8 or 15...b4 16.♗a2 a5 is fine for Black.

Much more interesting is 10.♗e2 ♘d6?! 11.g3 ♘f6 (or 11...♝e7 12.♗g2 c5 13.f4∞) 12.♗g2 0-0 13.f4 e5 14.f5

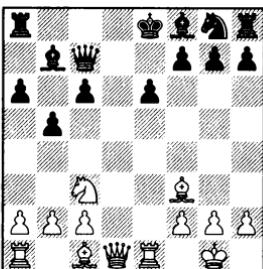


White hopes for a kingside pawn storm, but Black is the first to start active actions: 14...a5 15.♗f3 b4 16.♗d1 ♘c5+ 17.♗e3 ♘xe3+ 18.♗xe3 ♘a6 19.♗e1 ♘fd8 20.♗f2 c5 21.♗ed1 h6+, Hecht-Ravikumar, La Valetta 1980.

10...♗xe5 11.♗e1 ♘c7

This variation had its five minutes of glory when 15-years old

Kasparov crushed Polugaevsky at the Soviet championship in 1978:



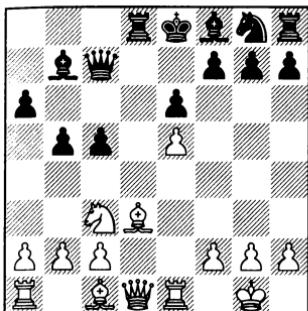
12.♗h5 ♘e7 13.♗xe6 g6 14.♗e1 ♘d8? 15.♗f3 c5 16.♗f4 ♘b6 17.♗g3 gxh5 18.♗c7. However, two years later Wojtkiewicz took the piece 14...gxh5! and won. The latest attempt to revive this line was Navara-Movsesian, Czechia 2010, but it turned out that Navara had nothing new to show: 12.a4 ♘f6 13.axb5 axb5 14.♗xb5 cxb5 15.♗xa8+ ♘xa8 16.♗xa8 ♘d6 17.g3 0-0 18.♗g2 b4. Black is fine and that was known from a previous game.

8...♝c6 9.♝xc6 dxc6 10.e5

Compared to the Taimanov with an early ...b5, Black has inserted here 7...♝b7 8.♗e1. That takes the sting of 10.a4 due to 10...♝d8 (10...♝d6 11.g3 ♘e5 12.♗d3 ♘f6 13.♗e3 0-0 14.♗c5 ♘fd8 15.f4, Asrian-Milov, Groningen 1998, 15...♝xc3 16.bxc3 ♘d7 17.♗e3 c5∞) 11.♗d3 ♘e7! (White gets a strong attack after 11...♝d6? 12.e5 ♘xe5 13.♗h5 ♘xc3 14.bxc3 ♘e7 15.♗b1 ♘d5 16.♗h3) 12.e5 ♘g6 13.♗e4 ♘d5.

10...♗d8 11.♗d3 c5

The Classical System with ♜e2



In this position, White usually transfers the queen to the kingside:

- A. 12.♕h5; B. 12.♕g4

12.♕e2 is a minor option: 12...♜e7 13.a4 (13.♗g5 h6 14.♕h5 ♜d4 15.♗e3 ♜d7 16.♗f4 c4 17.♗e4 b4! 18.♘d1 ♜d5, V.Dimitrov-Vyzmanavin, Burgas 1993) 13...b4 14.♗e4 ♜c6 15.b3 (15.♕h5 ♜g6 16.♗f1 ♜d4 17.f3 ♜d5) 15...♜g6 (15...♜f5 16.♗g5 ♜d5 17.♗ad1 h6! 18.♗f4 ♜e7 is also possible, but I want to provoke f4 in order to limit White's dark-squared bishop's scope) 16.f4 ♜e7 17.♗e3 ♜h4. It is unclear how White should improve his position from here. For instance, the attack on c5 by 18.♗f2 is neutralised with 18...♜d5.

A. 12.♕h5 g6

12...c4 13.♗e4 ♜e7 14.♗xb7 ♜xb7 15.♗g5 ♜d4 16.♗ad1 ♜xd1 17.♗xd1 h6 18.♗h4, S.J.Solomon-Miezis, Melbourne 2013, is pleasant for White.

13.♗h3

T.Horvath chose against me in Varna 2012 13.♗g5 with the obvious idea to provoke further weakening of my castling position. However, the inclusion of 13...h6 is in Black's favour. After 14.♗g3, I could have expanded on the kingside by 14...c4 15.♗e4 ♜e7 16.♗f3 ♜c6 17.♗f4 g5 18.♗g3 ♜d4 19.♗e3 ♜b4 20.♗ed1 ♜xe4 21.♗xe4 ♜xc3 22.bxc3 ♜f5 with complex play. I opted for the common 14...♗g7. This is not a bad move, of course, but it gives White more options, for instance, 15.f4 ♜e7 16.♗f2 ♜f5 (16...0-0 17.♗e3) 17.♗e4 b4 18.♗xb7 bxc3 19.♗e4 cxb2 20.♗xb2 0-0=. My opponent erred with 15.♗f4? ♜e7 16.a4 and was lost after 16...c4 17.♗e4 b4 18.♗xb7 bxc3 19.♗xa6 cxb2 20.♗b5+ ♜f8. Whenever White's bishop leaves c1, the idea with ...c4, followed by ...b4 becomes effective.

13.♗e2 ♜g7 is rarely seen. Then 14.f4 ♜e7 15.♗e4 ♜d5, and 14.♗g5 ♜e7 15.a4 b4 16.♗b1 ♜d7 17.♗d2 0-0 are roughly equal. The most principled continuation is 14.a4 b4 15.♗e4, but 15...♗xe5! 16.g3 ♜f6 equalises.

13...♗g7 14.♗g5

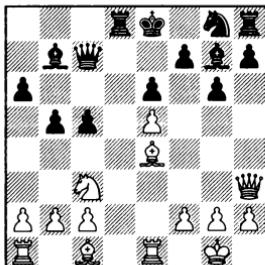
Sacrificing the central pawn by 14.a4 b4 15.♗e4 is a mistake (15...♗xe5 16.♗g5 ♜d7), but White has two decent alternatives to the main line:

a) 14.♗f4? is a solid and unpleasant approach. Black has not anything better but to hold the oppo-

Part 1

nent to a draw in the line 14... $\mathbb{Q}e7$ (14... $h6$?! preserves more pieces on the board, but 15.a4 b4 16. $\mathbb{Q}e4$ $\mathbb{Q}xe4$ 17. $\mathbb{Q}xe4$ a5 18. $\mathbb{Q}d1$ $\mathbb{Q}f8$ 19. $\mathbb{W}f3$ $\mathbb{Q}e7$ 20. $\mathbb{Q}ee1$ $\mathbb{Q}g8$ 21. $h4$ is obviously better for White.) 15.a4 b4 (Hellsten's recommendation 15...c4? 16. $\mathbb{Q}f1$ b4 17. $\mathbb{Q}e4$ $\mathbb{Q}f5$ loses the c4-pawn after 18.c3! bxc3 19.bxc3 0-0 20.g4 $\mathbb{Q}xe4$ 21. $\mathbb{Q}xe4$ $\mathbb{Q}e7$ 22. $\mathbb{Q}xc4\pm$) 16. $\mathbb{Q}e4$ $\mathbb{Q}xe4$ 17. $\mathbb{Q}xe4$ $\mathbb{W}c6$ 18. $\mathbb{Q}g5$ $\mathbb{Q}d7$ 19. $\mathbb{Q}xe7$ $\mathbb{Q}xe7$.

b) 14. $\mathbb{Q}e4$ creates the strong positional threat of taking full control over the dark squares, for example, after 14... $\mathbb{Q}e7$? (Hellsten) 15. $\mathbb{Q}xb7$ $\mathbb{W}xb7$ 16. $\mathbb{Q}h6$!. It is clear that Black should hinder this plan. I see two sensible ways:



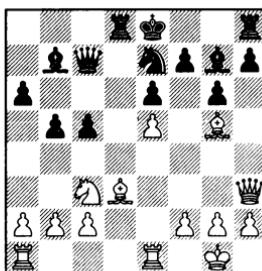
14... $\mathbb{Q}xe4$ 15. $\mathbb{Q}xe4$ $\mathbb{Q}xe5$ 16. $\mathbb{Q}g5$ $\mathbb{Q}d7$ 17. $\mathbb{Q}ad1$ $h6$ 18. $\mathbb{Q}xd7$ $\mathbb{W}xd7$ 19. $\mathbb{Q}xc5$ $\mathbb{W}d6$ 20. $\mathbb{Q}e3$ $\mathbb{Q}e7$ 21. $\mathbb{Q}d3$ $\mathbb{Q}d4$ 22. $\mathbb{Q}d1$ $\mathbb{Q}xe3$ 23. $\mathbb{W}xe3$ $\mathbb{Q}d5$;

14...b4 15. $\mathbb{Q}xb7$ $\mathbb{W}xb7$ 16. $\mathbb{Q}a4$ (16. $\mathbb{Q}e4$?? $\mathbb{W}xe4$!; 16. $\mathbb{Q}g5$ $\mathbb{Q}d4$ 17. $\mathbb{Q}a4$ $\mathbb{W}c6$ 18. $\mathbb{Q}e3$ $\mathbb{Q}d5$ 19. $\mathbb{Q}xc5$ $\mathbb{Q}xc5$ 20. $\mathbb{Q}xc5$ $\mathbb{W}xc5$ leads to very unbalanced position where Black's chances should not be worse, in my opinion: 21.a3 $\mathbb{Q}e7$ 22.axb4 $\mathbb{W}xb4$ 23. $\mathbb{W}a3$ $\mathbb{W}xa3$ 24. $\mathbb{Q}xa3$ 0-0 25. $\mathbb{Q}xa6$

$\mathbb{Q}b8$ 26.b3 $\mathbb{Q}c8$ 27.c4 $\mathbb{Q}b8\infty$) 16... $\mathbb{Q}e7$ 17. $\mathbb{Q}xc5$ $\mathbb{W}c7$ 18. $\mathbb{Q}d3$ $h6$ 19. $\mathbb{W}f3$ 0-0. Black has compensation for the pawn, for example, 20. $\mathbb{W}d1$ $\mathbb{Q}c6$ 21. $\mathbb{Q}d2$ $\mathbb{Q}xe5$ 22. $\mathbb{Q}xe5$ $\mathbb{Q}xe5$ 23. $\mathbb{W}c1$ g5 24.h3 $\mathbb{Q}d4\uparrow$ or 20. $\mathbb{Q}e3$ b3 21.axb3 $\mathbb{W}xc2$ 22. $\mathbb{Q}b4$ $\mathbb{W}xb3$ 23. $\mathbb{Q}c5$ $\mathbb{W}xf3$ 24.gxf3 $\mathbb{Q}d7$ 25. $\mathbb{Q}xa6$ $\mathbb{Q}c8$ 26. $\mathbb{Q}xe7$ $\mathbb{Q}xe7\infty$.

14... $\mathbb{Q}d7$?

This move is less explored than 14... $\mathbb{Q}e7$ which has a good reputation, too:



a) 15. $\mathbb{Q}f6$ 0-0 equalises easily: 16.a4 (16. $\mathbb{Q}e4$ $\mathbb{Q}xe4$ 17. $\mathbb{Q}xe4$ $\mathbb{Q}d4$) 16...b4 17. $\mathbb{Q}e4$ $\mathbb{Q}xe4$ 18. $\mathbb{Q}xe4$ $\mathbb{Q}xf6$ 19.exf6 $\mathbb{Q}d5$ 20. $\mathbb{Q}xa6$ $\mathbb{Q}xf6$.

b) 15.a4 b4 16. $\mathbb{Q}e4$ $\mathbb{Q}xe4$ 17. $\mathbb{Q}xe4$ $\mathbb{Q}xe5$ 18. $\mathbb{Q}xa6$ $\mathbb{Q}xb2$ =.

c) 15. $\mathbb{Q}xb5+$ axb5 16. $\mathbb{Q}xb5$ $\mathbb{W}b6$ 17. $\mathbb{Q}d6+$ $\mathbb{Q}xd6$ 18.exd6 $\mathbb{W}xd6$ 19. $\mathbb{Q}ad1$ $\mathbb{W}c6$ 20. $\mathbb{W}g3$ $h6$ 21. $\mathbb{W}b8+$ $\mathbb{W}c8$ 22. $\mathbb{W}xc8+$ $\mathbb{Q}xc8$ 23. $\mathbb{Q}e3$ $\mathbb{Q}xb2$ 24. $\mathbb{Q}xc5$ f5 25.a4 at first sight looks promising for White, but Black can set up coordination of his pieces and take over the initiative, e.g. 25... $\mathbb{Q}f7$ 26. $\mathbb{Q}d6$ $\mathbb{Q}e8$ 27.c4 $\mathbb{Q}c3$ 28. $\mathbb{Q}ed1$ e5 29. $\mathbb{Q}c1$ $\mathbb{Q}a5$ 30. $\mathbb{Q}b6$ $\mathbb{Q}b4$ 31.c5

The Classical System with ♜e2

32.a5 ♜a8 33.♕a1 ♜c3??.

d) 15.♗e4 ♜d4 16.♗xb7

16.♗ad1?! ♜xd1 17.♗xd1 ♜xe5 18.♗xb7 ♜xb7 19.♗e3 ♜d4 20.♗e4 ♜xe4 21.♗xe4 f5 gives Black a slight initiative; 16.♗e3 ♜d5=.

16...♜xb7 17.f3 h6

Hellsten suggests as an alternative 17...♝d5?! 18.♗e4 ♜xe5.

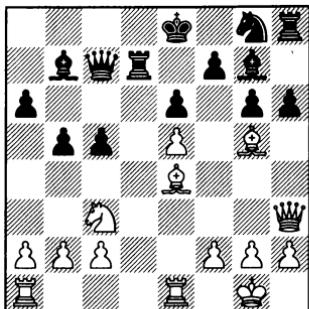
18.♗e3 ♜c4 19.♗e4 ♜xe5 20.c3 ♜d5. This position was reached in the game Rosito-Hellsten, Mendoza 2005. White chose here 21.b3? ♜xc3 22.♗xc3 ♜xc3 23.♗xc5 ♜xa1 24.♗xa1 ♜c7?. Hellsten gives as best 21.♗ad1 ♜c6 22.b3 ♜xc3! 23.♗xc3 ♜xc3 24.♗d2 ♜d4+ 25.♗h1 h5, followed by ...0-0 and ‘Black has no problems’.

15.♗e4

a) 15.a4 b4 16.♗e4 ♜xe5.

b) 15.f4 c4 16.♗e4 b4 17.♗xb7 does not work (17.♗d1 is the only move) due to 17...bx_c3??.

15...h6



16.♗f4

16.♗h4 ♜xe4 17.♗xe4 ♜xe5 18.♗ad1 is not dangerous. Black only has to avoid Hellsten’s recommendation 18...g5? which stumbles into 19.♗xd7! ♜xd7 20.♗g3 ♜d5 21.♗xe5 ♜xe5 22.♗a3±. Instead, he can opt for a drawish endgame after 18...f5 19.♗xd7 ♜xd7 20.♗d2 ♜f6 21.♗e3 ♜g4 22.♗d3+ ♜d6 23.h3 ♜xd3 24.cxd3 ♜xb2 25.hxg4 ♜c3 26.♗e2 ♜xd2 27.♗xd2 fxg4 or for attractive complications after 18...♗xd1?! 19.♗xd1 ♜f8 20.♗d8 (20.♗a3 b4) 20...♜c6 21.♗e3 ♜d4 22.♗e1 f5∞.

16...b4 17.♗xb7 bxc3 18.♗xa6 ♜a5 19.♗c4 cxb2 20.♗ab1 ♜e7 (20...g5? 21.♗b3) 21.♗b3 0-0

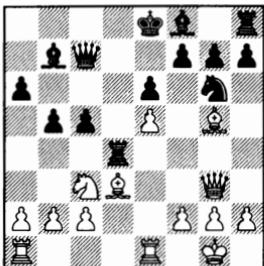
Black has finally castled and his pieces are very active, for instance, 22.♗b5 ♜c7 23.♗xb2 g5 24.♗g3 ♜f5 25.f4 ♜fd8 26.♗d3 ♜xg3 27.hxg3 gx_f4 28.gxf4 c4∞.

B. 12.♗g4?! ♜d4

Black should resist the temptation to harass the queen by 12...h5 because this move seriously weakens his kingside. White has the better chances after 13.♗e2! [13.♗h3 ♜e7 14.b3 (14.♗f4 g5 15.♗c1 b4 16.♗e4 ♜xe5) 14...♗f8 15.a4 c4 16.bxc4 bxc4 17.♗f1 ♜h6∞] 13...c4 (13...♗e7 14.♗g5) 14.♗e4 ♜xe4 15.♗xe4 ♜c5 16.♗g5 ♜e7 17.a3±.

12...♝e7, on the contrary, is a fair alternative to our main line. 13.♗g5 ♜d4 14.♗g3 ♜g6

Part 1



15. $\mathbb{Q}ad1$

15. $\mathbb{Q}e2$ $\mathbb{B}d7$ 16. $\mathbb{Q}ad1$ does not change the structure. Black may grab space on the queenside by 16... $c4$ [16... $h6$ 17. $\mathbb{Q}e3$ $\mathbb{Q}e7$ 18. $c4!$ $bxc4$ 19. $\mathbb{Q}c2$ $g6$ 20. $\mathbb{Q}c3$ (20. $\mathbb{Q}xd7$ $\mathbb{Q}xd7$ 21. $\mathbb{Q}xf4$ $\mathbb{Q}f5$) 20... $\mathbb{Q}f5$ 21. $\mathbb{Q}xd7$ $\mathbb{Q}xd7$ 22. $\mathbb{Q}xf5$. $gxf5$ leads to an interesting position where Black's king is perfectly safe on the queenside.] 17. $\mathbb{Q}xg6$ $hxg6$ 18. $\mathbb{Q}xd7$ $\mathbb{W}xd7$ 19. $\mathbb{Q}c3$, Danin-Bocharov, Taganrog 2011, 19... $b4$! 20. $\mathbb{Q}d1$ $\mathbb{W}c7$ 21. $\mathbb{Q}a4$ $\mathbb{Q}d5$ 22. $b3$ $\mathbb{Q}e7$ 23. $\mathbb{Q}xe7$ $\mathbb{Q}xe7$ 24. $\mathbb{W}e3$ $\mathbb{Q}b8$ 25. $h3$ $\mathbb{Q}b5$ =.

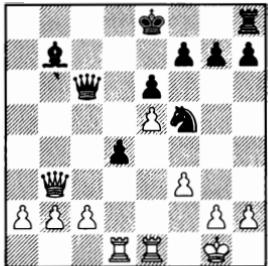
15... $\mathbb{Q}e7$ 16. $\mathbb{Q}xb5$!

The critical variation. Alternatively:

16. $\mathbb{Q}e2$ $\mathbb{B}d8$ 17. $\mathbb{Q}xg6$ $hxg6$ =, Zelcic-Lanka, Graz 2009.

16. $\mathbb{Q}xe7$ $\mathbb{W}xe7$ 17. $\mathbb{Q}e4$ $\mathbb{Q}xe4$ 18. $\mathbb{Q}xe4$ $\mathbb{Q}d5$ was balanced in Efimenko-Svidler, Fuegen 2006.

16... $axb5$ 17. $\mathbb{Q}xb5$, Polivanov-Zakhartsov, Lviv 2012, 17... $\mathbb{W}b6$ 18. $\mathbb{Q}xd4$ $cxd4$ 19. $\mathbb{Q}xe7$ $\mathbb{Q}xe7$ 20. $\mathbb{W}b3$ $\mathbb{W}c6$ 21. $f3$ $\mathbb{Q}f5$. In *Chess Informant* 116, Zakhartsov assesses this position as equal. I would say, it is unclear. The game might continue:



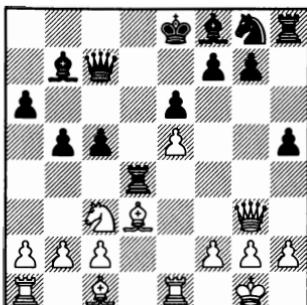
22. $c3$ $dxc3$ 23. $\mathbb{W}b4$ $c2$ 24. $\mathbb{Q}c1$ $\mathbb{Q}e7$ 25. $\mathbb{Q}e2$ $\mathbb{Q}d5$ 26. $\mathbb{W}d4$ 0-0 27. $\mathbb{Q}exc2$ $\mathbb{W}a6$ or 22. $\mathbb{W}b4$ $\mathbb{Q}e3$ (22... $g5$!?) 23. $\mathbb{Q}xe3$ $dxe3$ 24. $\mathbb{Q}d6$ $\mathbb{W}c7$ 25. $\mathbb{W}b5+$ $\mathbb{Q}e7$ 26. $\mathbb{W}b4$ $\mathbb{Q}e8$ =.

13. $\mathbb{W}g3$

White has an alternative:

13. $\mathbb{Q}e4$ $\mathbb{Q}xe4$ 14. $\mathbb{Q}xe4$ $\mathbb{W}xe5$ 15. $c3$ $\mathbb{Q}d3$ [Hellsten suggests 15... $\mathbb{Q}a4$, but the endgame after 16. $\mathbb{Q}e2$ (16. $b3$ $\mathbb{Q}f6$ 17. $\mathbb{Q}xf6+$ $gxf6$ 18. $\mathbb{Q}d1$ $\mathbb{Q}e4$ 19. $\mathbb{Q}xe4$ $\mathbb{W}xe4$ 20. $a4$ $\mathbb{Q}g7$ 21. $\mathbb{Q}e3$ 0-0=) 16... $\mathbb{Q}f6$ 17. $\mathbb{Q}xf6+$ $gxf6$ 18. $\mathbb{W}xe5$ $fxe5$ 19. $\mathbb{Q}xe5$ is slightly better for White since the $h7$ -and $c5$ -pawns are weak.] 16. $\mathbb{Q}f4$ $\mathbb{Q}f6$ 17. $\mathbb{Q}xf6+$ $\mathbb{W}xf6$ 18. $a4$ (18. $\mathbb{Q}g5$ $\mathbb{W}g6$ 19. $\mathbb{Q}ad1$ $c4$ 20. $\mathbb{Q}xd3$ $cxd3$ 21. $\mathbb{W}g3$ $f6$ =) 18... $\mathbb{Q}e7$ 19. $AXB5$ $AXB5$ 20. $\mathbb{Q}a8+$ $\mathbb{Q}d8$ 21. $\mathbb{Q}e5$ $\mathbb{W}g5$ 22. $\mathbb{W}xg5$ = with mass elimination.

13... $h5$!?



The Classical System with ♜e2

I criticized this advance on the previous turn, but here it has attacking purpose and allows Black to seize the initiative:

14.h3

Or 14.f3 h4 15.♗f2 h3 16.g3 ♜e7 17.♕e4 ♜c6; 14.♗e4 ♜e7 15.♗e3 ♜c6; 14.f4 h4 15.♗f2 ♜h6 16.♗e4

h3 17.♗f3 ♜xe4 18.♗xe4 ♜f5.

**14...h4 15.♗e3 ♜e7 16.b3 ♜c6
17.♗b2 ♜d7 18.♗ad1 ♜e7 19.♗e2
♗d4 20.♗g4 0-0**

The game might continue 21.♗c1

♗f5 22.♗xf5 ♜xd1 23.♗xd1 exf5
24.♗xf5 ♜c8 25.♗f4 ♜d8 26.♗c3
♗e6≈ 27.a3 b4 28.♗e4 ♜d5.

Part 1. The Classical System with ♜e2

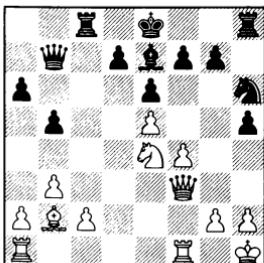
Complete Games

1. Lutz-Grabliauskas Pula 1997

1.e4 c5 2.♘f3 e6 3.d4 cxd4 4.♗xd4 ♗c6 5.♗c3 ♖c7 6.♗e2 a6 7.0-0 ♘f6 8.♗h1 ♘xd4 9.♗xd4 ♗c5 10.♗d3 b5 11.f4 ♘b7 12.♗f3 h5 13.e5 ♗g4 14.♗xb7 ♖xb7 15.♗e4 ♘e7

I recommend 15...♝c8 in order to avoid 15...♞e7 16.♗e3. Anyway, 15...♝c8 16.b3 ♘e7 would have transposed to the game.

16.b3 ♘c8 17.♗b2 ♖h6 18.♗f3



18...♖b8!

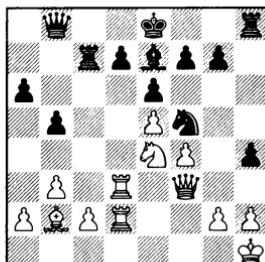
White was threatening to win the queen, so we must retreat. In

my opinion, 18...♖b6, which has been designed as an improvement on 18...♖b8, is not so good in view of 19.♖xh5±. The other option 18...♖c6 puts the queen on a file which is going to be opened soon. That gives White the initiative, 19.♖ac1 0-0 20.♖fe1 h4 21.g4 hg3 22.hg3 ♖c7 23.c4, Tischbierek-Michaelsen, 1996.

19.♗f2 ♘f5 20.♗d1 h4

The opening stage is over. Black regrouped successfully and leveled the game. His aim is to organise some play on the queenside after which he will castle.

21.♗d3 ♘c7 22.♗fd2



22...b4?!

The Classical System with ♖e2

Ribli assesses positively this move, but Black is still not ready for it. 22...♗b7 (or 22...♗a7) 23.a3 a5= would have been better.

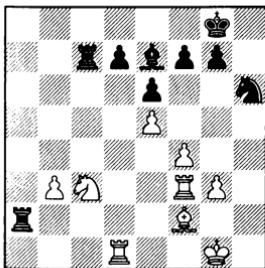
23.♕g1?

Now White misses his chance for 23.c4! bxc3 24.♖xc3± and Black's pawn is unable to reach a4.

**23...♗a7 24.♗f2 ♗b7 25.♗f3
a5 26.c4 bxc3 27.♖xc3 a4? 28.♖d1?!**

With this humble move, White acquiesces in being worse. 28.b4! was better, when 28...♖xb4 leads to a draw by perpetual after 29.♖b2 ♗a7 30.♗f2 ♗a6 31.♖xb4 ♗xd3 32.♖b8+ ♕e7 33.♖xh8 ♕xc3 (33...♗xe4?? 34.♗b6) 34.♖xc3 ♗xc3= 35.h3 ♗c1 36.♗h2 ♗g3 37.♗h4 ♗f1.

**28...0-0 29.♔e1 (29.bxa4 ♗a7)
29...axb3 30.axb3 ♗a8 31.♔f2
♗a2 32.g4 hxg3 33.hxg3 ♔h6
34.♔c3 ♗xf3 35.♔xf3**



35...♗b2

After this move, Black's advantage dissipates and White gradual-

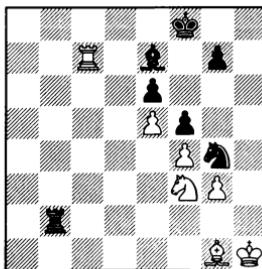
ly seizes the initiative. 35...♗c2?! 36.♔e4 ♗g4 37.♔d4 f6 would have kept the active rook alive.

**36.♔a4 ♗e2 37.♔e3 ♗a2
38.♗c3 ♗xc3 39.♔c3 ♗b2 40.♗d7
♗b3 41.♔e4! ♗a3 42.♗g5**

Despite the limited material and pawns on one wing, Black still has some difficulties because his pieces are cramped.

**42...♗b8 43.♔a7 ♗e8 44.♗g2
♗e7 45.♔e4 ♗g4 46.♗h3 f5!?
47.♗xf6 draw.**

At this moment the opponents signed the draw. White had chances for torturing the opponent for many moves ahead. He should aim for a position like that:



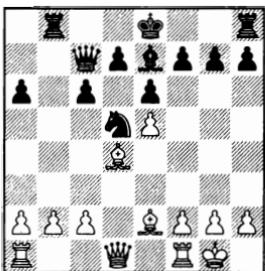
For instance after 47.♗d2± ♗f8 48.♗d4 ♗e7 49.♗f3 ♗f8 50.♗c7 ♗b8 51.♗g1 ♗b1 52.♗g2 ♗b2 53.♗h1.

The vulnerability of the e6-pawn makes the difference.

The play could continue with 53...♗a2 54.♗d4 ♗a6 55.♗c6 ♗a3 56.♗g2 ♗e8 57.♗b8 and Black is still struggling.

**2 Adams-Banikas
Porto Carras 04.11.2011**

1.e4 c5 2.¤f3 e6 3.d4 cxd4 4.¤xd4 ¤c6 5.¤c3 ¤c7 6.¤e2 a6 7.0-0 ¤f6 8.¤e3 ¤b4 9.¤a4 ¤e7 10.¤xc6 bxc6 11.¤b6 ¤b8 12.¤xc8 ¤xc8 13.¤d4 ¤c7 14.e5 ¤d5



15.c4!

This looks stronger than 15.b3 a5!

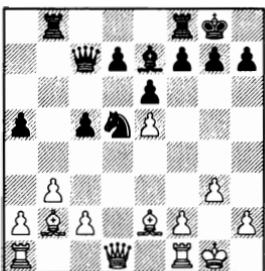
It is better to delay ...c6-c5. In some variations Black can use the c5-square for a piece. Another argument in favour of 15...a5 is seen in the line 16.¤d3 0-0 17.¤h5 g6 18.¤h6 f5, when 19.c4 ¤b4 is equal, due to the threat of ¤c2, while 19.ef6 ¤f6 20.¤g6? fails to 20...d6!.

16.g3

If White takes the f4-square under control with 16.¤d2?! 0-0 (after 16...¤b4?! 17.¤g5 0-0 18.c4 ¤e7 19.¤d3 ¤g6 20.¤e3 a4, Moreno Carretero-Raijmakers, ICCF email 2009, White could not prove any substantial advantage) 17.c4, the *zwischenzug* 17...¤b4? stumbles

into 18.¤c1!, but 17...¤b4 18.¤c3 c5 19.¤f3 (19.f4 d6) 19...d6 (19...d5!?) 20.exd6 (20.¤e2 dxe5) 20...¤xd6 21.g3 ¤e5 22.¤fd1 ¤xc3 23.¤xc3 a4 equalised in Moreno Carnero-Valles Moreno, Madrid 2009.

16...c5 17.¤b2 0-0



The play is balanced. It would be interesting to try 18.a4 ¤fd8, but my game Magem-Delchev, France 2009, finished here in a draw. In *The Safest Sicilian* I analysed in detail:

18.¤d2 a4! 19.¤f3 ¤b4 20.¤fd1 ¤fd8 21.¤e2=. White attempted to improve by 20.¤fe1 axb3 21.axb3 c4 22.¤ed1 cxb3 23.cxb3 ¤fd8 24.¤e2 ¤c6 25.¤d3 ¤b4 26.¤c3 ¤c6=, Garcia Corada-Van Unen, ICCF email 2009.

15...¤f4 16.g3

16.¤f3 is more popular. Black meets it by 16...0-0! 17.¤e1

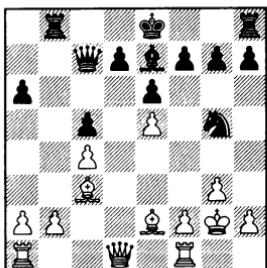
17.g3 ¤g6 18.¤e2 (18.¤e4 ¤xe5! 19.¤xh7+ ¤xh7 20.¤h5+ ¤g8 21.¤xe5 ¤a5 22.¤e2 d6 23.¤c3 ¤f5=) 18...f6 19.exf6 ¤xf6 20.¤xf6 ¤xf6 21.b3 a5=, Duda-M.Andersen, Chotowa 2010.

17...¤g6! 18.c5. (18.g3 ¤b4=)

The Classical System with ♖e2

This position first occurred (after a different move order) in the game Kasparov-Anand, Linares 2002. 18...f6 19.ef6 ♖f6 20.♖e4 and here I proposed the novelty 20...♗xd4?!? 21.♗xd4 ♖f4 22.♗ad1 ♖d5 with mutual chances. The play may continue with 23.♗d3 (23.a3 a5 24.g3 ♗d8 25.♗d3 ♗f6 26.♗e5 g5=) 23...♗xb2 24.♗xh7 ♖h8 25.♗g6 ♗f4 26.♗e2 ♗xe2 27.♗xe2 ♗g5 28.♗h5 ♗xh5 29.♗xh5 ♗b8+=.

16...c5! 17.♗c3 (17.gxf4 cxd4 18.♗xd4 0-0) 17...♘h3! 18.♗g2 ♗g5



Black's knight is heading for f7. It is the ideal place for it. The knight will control from there the critical squares e5 and d6, protecting at the same time Black's castling position.

19.b3!

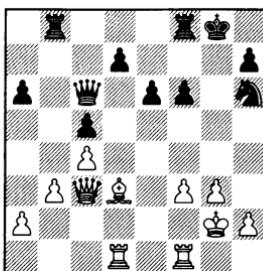
This novelty of Adams allows White to consolidate while retaining the better pawn structure. 19.♗d3 ♗c6+ 20.f3 f6 21.♗ad1 ♖f7 22.exf6 ♖xf6 23.♗xf6 gxf6 24.♗c3 ♗e7 25.♗d2 h5, Mastrovasilis-Miladinovic, Valjevo 2011, or 19.f3 f6 20.exf6 ♖xf6 21.♗d2 ♗xc3 22.♗xc3 e5 lead to complex play. After the text, 19...f6 is dubious

owing to 20.♗h5+.

19...♗c6+ 20.f3 f6 21.exf6 ♖xf6 22.♗d3 ♖f7 23.♗ad1 ♖h6

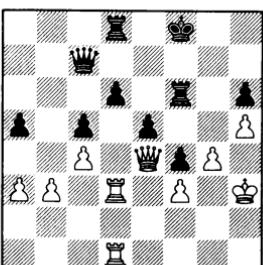
Black can take on c3 on move 22 or 23, but I do not like his position.

24.♗xf6 gxf6 25.♗c3 0-0
26.♗d3±



White's rooks are much more active while the bishop restricts Black's knight and is ready to eat it should it reach f5 or c6. Black will have to struggle for the draw.

26...♗c7 27.♗f2 ♗bd8 28.♗fd2 f5 29.♗e2 f4 30.♗d3 d6 31.♗e4 ♖f5 32.♗xf5 ♖xf5 33.g4 ♗f7 34.♗d3 ♖f8 35.h4 ♖e7 36.h5?! ♖f6 37.a3 a5 38.♗e1 (38.b4!?) 38...h6 39.♗h3 e5 40.♗e4 ♖f8



Black has not any counterplay.

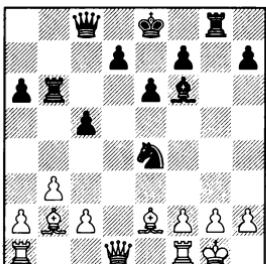
Part 1

It looks incredible that he could hold this position.

41.♗d5 ♜b8 42.♗d3 ♜g7
43.♗c3 ♜e8 44.♗5d2 ♜h8 45.b4
axb4 46.axb4 cxb4 47.♗xb4
♜c6 (47...♜a7!?) 48.♗d5 ♜g8
49.♗b3 ♜h8 50.♗c3 ♜a6 51.c5
♜e2 52.♗5d2 ♜e3 53.♗xe3 fxe3
54.♗xd6 ♜xf3+ 55.♗h4? ♜h7
56.♗e1? ♜g8 57.c6 ♜f4 58.♗g6
♜xg6 59.hxg6+ ♜xg6 60.♗xe3
draw.

3. Balinov-Sommerbauer Tweng 2007

1.e4 c5 2.♘f3 e6 3.d4 cxd4
4.♗xd4 ♜c6 5.♘c3 a6 6.♗e2
♜c7 7.0-0 ♜f6 8.♗e3 ♜b4 9.♘a4
♗e7 10.♘xc6 bxc6 11.♘b6 ♜b8
12.♘xc8 ♜xc8 13.♗d4 c5 14.♗e5
♜b6 15.b3 ♜xe4 16.♗xg7 ♜g8
17.♗b2 ♜f6!?



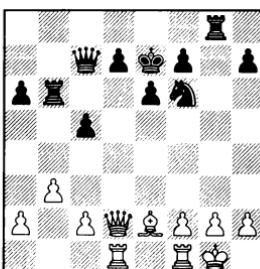
This might be Black's best option. It seems appealing to attack on the g-file, but apparently White has adequate defence even against 17...c4!?. By exchanging the dark-squared bishops, Black ensures the safety of his king in the centre. It is

extremely difficult for White to find a target, because the central pawn cluster keeps his pieces at a bay. Black has plenty of dark squares to manoeuvre on them. It is important first to exchange a pair of rooks to reduce White's attacking resources.

18.♗xf6 ♜xf6 19.♗f3

This allows the manoeuvre ...♗g5-e5 which removes the only flaw of Black's set-up – unconnected rooks. I have investigated the more challenging move:

19.♗d2! ♜e7 20.♗ad1
20.♗fe1 ♜d6 21.♗e3 ♜c7 22.♗ad1
♜xd1 23.♗xd1 d5 24.g3 a5.
20...♜c7



White has no weaknesses and his pieces are much more compact. Nevertheless, Black's game is very easy! It is a widely known fact that ♜+♘ often dominate ♜+♗. If he can trade one or both pairs of rooks, he would become clearly better. The a6-pawn will move out of the bishop's range to a5, and the knight will be seeking to land on a central dark square.

The Classical System with ♖e2

21.♖h1

Alternatives are:

21.♗e3 ♘d6 22.♗xd6 ♗xd6
23.♗d1 ♗c7 24.c4 (24.♗xa6 ♗a8);
21.c4 ♘d6 22.♗e3 ♘xd1 23.♗xd1
h5;

21.♗f3 ♘d6 22.♗f4 ♘c8 23.♗a4
♗xd1 24.♗xd1 a5 25.c4 h5 26.h3 h4
27.♗a3 ♘b8 28.♗c1 a4 29.♗e3 axb3
30.axb3 ♗a5 31.♗g5 ♘xb3 32.♗xh4
♗b4 33.♗h2 ♘b2 34.♗g3 ♘d2†;

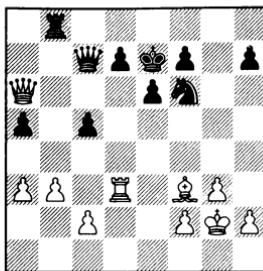
21...♗d6 (or 21...♗e5 22.♗fe1
♗g5) 22.♗e3

Or 22.♗f4 ♗c6 23.f3 ♘xd1
24.♗xd1 d5 25.♗d3 ♗d6 26.♗h4
♗e5 27.♗a4 (27.♗e1 ♘d4) 27...♗h5
28.♗xa6 ♗f4 29.♗f1 ♗e3.

22...♗d4 23.♗f3 (23.c3 ♗d5;
23.♗xd4 cxd4 24.♗xd4 ♗xc2) 23...
♗g4 24.♗xg4 ♘gxg4 25.c3 ♘de4
26.♗d2 ♘e5 27.f3 (27.f4 ♘d5) 27...
♘h4 28.h3 d5 29.♗f2 ♘f4?.

19...♗g5 20.♗e1 ♗c7 21.♗d2

♗e5 22.♗c3 ♘xe1+ 23.♗xe1 ♗e7
24.a3 ♘b8 25.g3 a5 26.♗d1 ♘c8
27.♗c4 ♗e5 28.♗a6 ♗c7 29.♗g2
♗b8 30.♗d3



30...d5

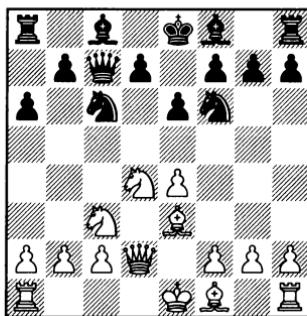
Sommerbauer has shown that he could simply stay and wait. Now he demonstrates that Black is able to shift forward his defence line.

31.♗d2 ♗b6 32.♗e2 ♘d8
33.♗e5 ♘d6 34.♗c3 ♗b6 35.♗e5
♗d6 36.♗c3 ♗b6 37.♗e2 ♗c7
38.♗g1 ♗b6 39.♗e1 ♗c7 40.♗e2
♗b6 41.♗e1 draw.

Part 2

The English Attack

This part is devoted to the Taimanov move order **1.e4 c5 2.♘f3 e6 3.d4 cxd4 4.♘xd4 ♘c6 5.♘c3 ♜c7 6.♗e3 a6 7.♗d2 ♘f6**



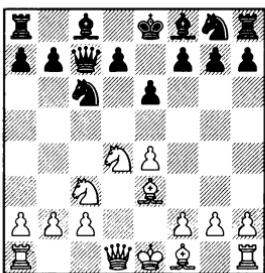
I allocated only one page to the Kan since 1.e4 c5 2.♘f3 e6 3.d4 cxd4 4.♘xd4 a6 5.♘c3 ♜c7 6.♗e3?! is simply dubious due to 6...♘f6!

White is living through a crisis in the English Attack with f3. I expect to see the focus of investigations shifting toward set-ups with an early f4.

Part 2. The English Attack

Main Ideas

1.e4 c5 2. $\mathbb{Q}f3$ e6 3.d4 cxd4
4. $\mathbb{Q}xd4$ $\mathbb{Q}c6$ 5. $\mathbb{Q}c3$ $\mathbb{W}c7$ 6. $\mathbb{Q}e3$



6...a6! 7. $\mathbb{W}d2$

This set-up has no analogue in the Kan because after 4...a6 5. $\mathbb{Q}c3$ $\mathbb{W}c7$ 6. $\mathbb{Q}e3$ $\mathbb{Q}f6$ 7.f3 $\mathbb{Q}b4!$ 8. $\mathbb{W}d2$ d5 gives Black an initiative.

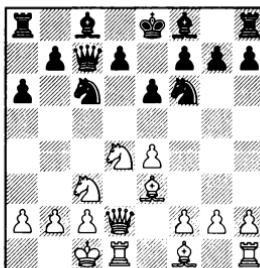
Thus the whole chapter deals exclusively with the Taimanov move order.

The plan with 0-0-0, f3, g2-g4 used to be White's main weapon against the Taimanov, but in the last 2 years White is struggling to get break-even. His latest attempt is 7. $\mathbb{W}f3$ and I'm sure we'll be seeing more of it in the coming months. Do not miss to look at **game 5** Vallejo-Spraggett, Catalunya 2013 where I suggest 7... $\mathbb{Q}f6!$ 8.0-0-0 $\mathbb{Q}e7$ 9. $\mathbb{Q}e2$ 0-0.

7... $\mathbb{Q}f6$ 8.0-0-0

Black has greater choice against 8.f3. Perhaps the most practical re-tort is to transpose to the main line with 8...b5 9.g4 $\mathbb{Q}b7$ 10.g5 $\mathbb{Q}xd4!$.

8.f4!? $\mathbb{Q}b4$ 9. $\mathbb{Q}d3$ 0-0 10.a3 $\mathbb{Q}e7$ leads to complex play with mutual chances.

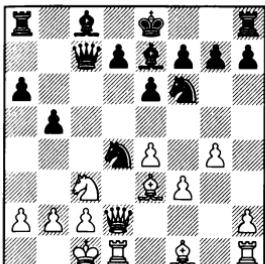


8... $\mathbb{Q}e7!$

8.. $\mathbb{Q}b4$ had been the main move for a decade. It is not refuted, but White has found several variations where he could play slightly better endgames without any risk. Only in 2013 did the second players devised a totally new approach. It is bringing amazing results so far. White still cannot recover from the shock and seems unable to generate any sensible ideas. Let's investigate the position after

The English Attack

9.f3 b5 10.g4 (10. $\mathbb{Q}b1$ 0-0!
11.g4 $\mathbb{Q}xd4$ 12. $\mathbb{Q}xd4$ $\mathbb{Q}b7$) **10...**
 $\mathbb{Q}xd4!$



The point of Black's new plan. He intends to attack the centre with ... $\mathbb{Q}b7$ and ...d5 or ...e5 followed up by ...d5.

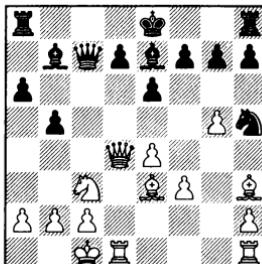
The trick is to trade knights before castling!

Before, Black played 10...0-0 11.g5 $\mathbb{Q}h5$, when 12. $\mathbb{Q}ce2$ $\mathbb{Q}xd4$ 13. $\mathbb{W}xd4$ $\mathbb{Q}b7?$ would drop the d7-pawn. That forced Black to opt for flank counterplay with 13...f5, but White is somewhat better after 14. $\mathbb{Q}g3$ $\mathbb{Q}f4$ 15.exf5 $\mathbb{Q}xg5$ 16. $\mathbb{Q}e4$ c5 17. $\mathbb{W}d6\pm$, Shirov-Munoz Santana, Istanbul 2012. Of course, Black could try to enable ...d5 by 12... $\mathbb{Q}d8$, but this tempo gives White the initiative. He may choose, for example, 13. $\mathbb{Q}g3$ $\mathbb{Q}xd4$ 14. $\mathbb{Q}xh5$ $\mathbb{Q}xf3$ 15. $\mathbb{W}f2$ $\mathbb{Q}e5$ 16. $\mathbb{Q}b6$, although his extra exchange does not automatically guarantee him an advantage.

The timely exchange on d4, followed by ... $\mathbb{Q}b7$, keeps the d7-pawn protected and enables fast development of the queenside with ... $\mathbb{Q}c8$,

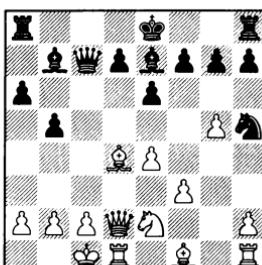
...d5. We castle only when we are forced to do it or if White gives us a tempo by playing some quite move like $\mathbb{Q}b1$. Next, I will show the main scenarios from the diagram position.

1. 11. $\mathbb{W}xd4$ $\mathbb{Q}b7$ 12.g5 $\mathbb{Q}h5$
13. $\mathbb{Q}h3$



13... $\mathbb{Q}c8!$ 14. $\mathbb{Q}g4$ b4 15. $\mathbb{Q}xh5$
 $\mathbb{B}xc3$ 16. $\mathbb{W}xg7$ $\mathbb{C}xb2+$ 17. $\mathbb{Q}xb2$
 $\mathbb{Q}f8=$. See game 8 Demetrio-Schiendorfer, ICCF email 2009.

2. 11. $\mathbb{Q}xd4$ $\mathbb{Q}b7$ 12.g5 $\mathbb{Q}h5$
13. $\mathbb{Q}e2$ (Taking f4 and g3 under control. 13. $\mathbb{Q}e5$ $\mathbb{W}xe5=$; 13.h4 $\mathbb{Q}g3!$)



13... $\mathbb{Q}c8$ (threatening 14... $\mathbb{Q}xg5!$) **14. $\mathbb{Q}g1$ 0-0 15. $\mathbb{Q}h3$ g6** (or 15...d5 16.e5 g6) **16. $\mathbb{Q}b1$ d5 17.e5** $\mathbb{Q}g7$. Black has a good game. He will push his pawns to a4 and b4.

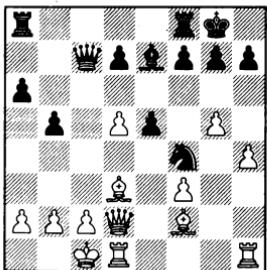
Part 2

We see that White's most straightforward plans, which are typical for the English Attack, do not set serious problems. White may also turn to natural development and central play with:

3. 11. $\mathbb{Q}xd4$ $\mathbb{B}b7$ 12. $\mathbb{Q}d3$

Then the play is not forced and Black has various decent options. I analyse the most consistent one – to limit the bishop's scope with:

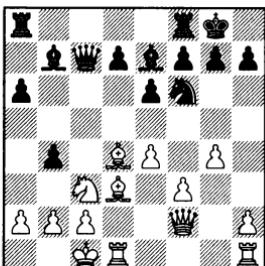
12...e5 13. $\mathbb{Q}f2$ 0-0 14. g5 $\mathbb{Q}h5!$
15. $\mathbb{Q}d5$ (stopping ...d5) 15... $\mathbb{Q}xd5$
16. exd5 $\mathbb{Q}f4$ 17. h4 (17. $\mathbb{Q}xh7!$
 $\mathbb{Q}xh7$ 18. d6 $\mathbb{Q}xd6$ 19. $\mathbb{Q}xd6$ $\mathbb{E}ac8$ is
roughly equal)



17...f5!, when 18. gxf6? $\mathbb{Q}xd3+$ would be in Black's favour.

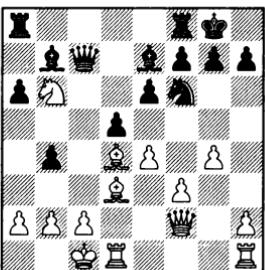
Latest games show that White is disappointed from the above-mentioned courses and looks for more flexible move orders with $\mathbb{Q}b1$, waiting for Black to define his plans first. The ensuing play is not forced and offers both sides rich possibilities of playing chess. I suggest to meet $\mathbb{Q}b1$ with ...0-0 and then ... $\mathbb{E}c8$ or ...d5.

Here are some examples of the break ...d5.

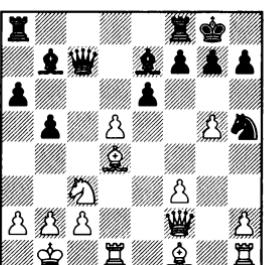


14. $\mathbb{Q}e2$ d5

Watch out if White played 14. $\mathbb{Q}a4$ d5 15. $\mathbb{Q}b6$.



We must meet this by 15...dxe4!
– never allow e4-e5 when White's knight is on b6. This pawn structure would be pleasant for White in the event of 15... $\mathbb{E}ab8$?! 16. e5 $\mathbb{Q}d7$ 17. $\mathbb{Q}xd7$. We need the knight for counterplay from c5.

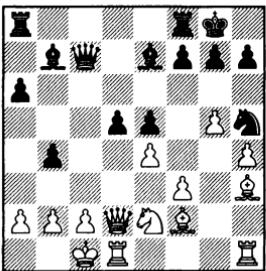


The English Attack

If White has already played g5, we can boldly trade our light-squared bishop for the enemy knight since the possession of the f4-square fully balances White's bishop pair: 15...b4 16.♗a4 ♖xd5 17.♗b6 ♖ad8.

If we delay too much the break, trying to combine it with ...e5 first, White may get additional options:

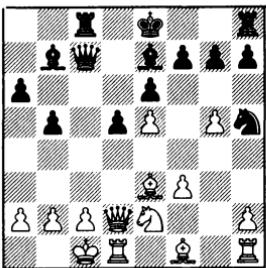
Analysis



17.♗g4 ♗f4 18.♗xf4 exf4 19.e5! ♖xe5 20.♗d4↑.

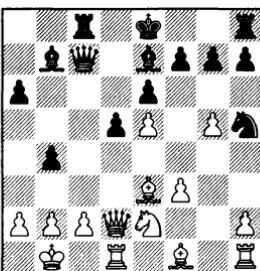
OK, we have achieved ...d5. what's next? The short answer is: we aim for ...d4!.

Bauer-Lopez Martinez Linares 2013



15...d4! 16.♗xd4 0-0 17.♗d3 ♕fd8 18.♗b1 g6 19.♗hf1 ♖xe5.

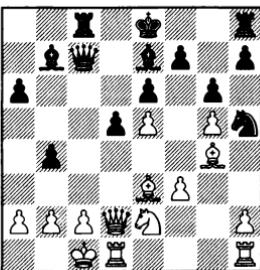
Game 6 Volokitin-Najer Muelheim 2013



16...d4! 17.♗xd4 0-0 18.♗e2 ♕fd8 19.♗c1 g6 20.♗he1 ♖xe5.

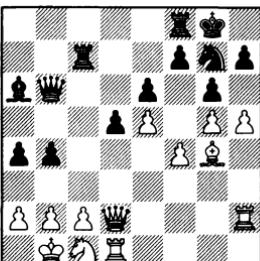
A more sophisticated example:

Analysis



17...d4! 18.♗xd4 0-0 19.♗xh5 gxh5 20.♗he1 ♕fd8 21.♗f2 (21.f4 ♘f3). White's king lacks defenders so we can even ignore the e5-pawn: 21...a5! (21...♖xe5 22.♗b1=) 22.♗b1 a4→.

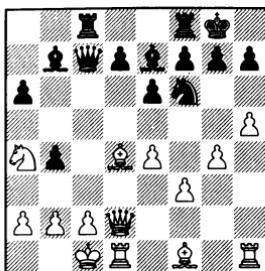
Analysis



Part 2

Even if we cannot activate our bishop, White has not any attack. We easily defend the 7th rank: 26.hxg6 fxg6 27.♗dh1 ♗f5.

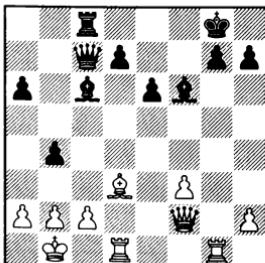
Keep in mind the following typical trap White often overlooks:



15.g5? ♗xe4! 16.fxe4 ♗xg5!, winning the queen because of the mate on c2.; it also works after 15.♗b6 ♗xe4! 16.fxe4 ♗g5!.

Going deeper into the middle-game, I would like to bring your attention to the possibility of sacrificing the exchange for a pawn. This is a good way to neutralise the enemy attack.

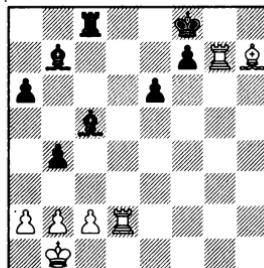
Analysis



Black will be threatening to build up a ♗+♜ battery on the main diagonal. Moreover, the f3 and h2-pawns are weak.

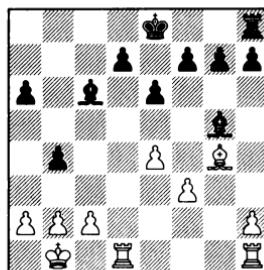
Even without queens, Black's bishop pair and an active rook commonly balance the game:

Analysis



The position is unclear.

Game 7 Robson-Wang, Yue rapid, Ningbo 2013

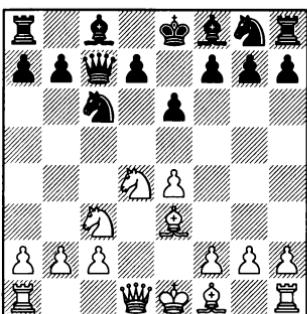


22...♝f4. Black is better due to his domination on the dark squares.

Part 2. The English Attack

Taimanov – Step by Step

1.e4 c5 2. $\mathbb{Q}f3$ e6 3.d4 $\mathbb{Q}xd4$
4. $\mathbb{Q}c6$ 5. $\mathbb{Q}c3$ $\mathbb{W}c7$ 6. $\mathbb{A}e3$

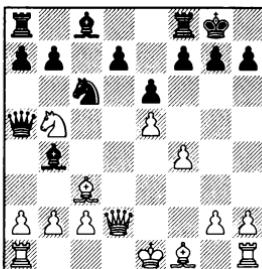


6...a6

6... $\mathbb{Q}f6$ practically eliminates the English attack as a choice for White, but why to jump out of the frying pan into the fire?! The arising unexplored positions bring White much better results than the English attack itself! Although there is a vast field for improvements and investigation, I do not see any reason to deviate from the main lines.

Let me note two important games after 6... $\mathbb{Q}f6$.

Giri-Bauer, Leon 2012: 7.f4 $\mathbb{Q}b4$ 8. $\mathbb{Q}db5$ $\mathbb{W}a5$ 9.e5 $\mathbb{Q}d5$ 10. $\mathbb{Q}d2$ $\mathbb{Q}xc3$ 11. $\mathbb{Q}xc3$ 0-0 12. $\mathbb{W}d2$



12...f6 (12... $\mathbb{Q}xc3$ 13. $\mathbb{Q}xc3$ f6 14.exf6 $\mathbb{Q}xf6$ 15.0-0-0 d5 16.g3, Motylev-Shimanov, Aix-les-Bains 2011) 13.exf6 $\mathbb{Q}xf6$ 14.g3 d5 15. $\mathbb{Q}xb4$ $\mathbb{Q}xb4$ 16. $\mathbb{Q}d4$ $\mathbb{W}b6$ 17.c3 $\mathbb{Q}c6$ 18.0-0-0. White has a stable positional edge.

Another possible argument in favour of 6... $\mathbb{Q}f6$ would be to avoid the 7. $\mathbb{Q}d3$ main line with 7...b6 or 7... $\mathbb{Q}xd4$ 8. $\mathbb{Q}xd4$ $\mathbb{Q}c5$ 9. $\mathbb{Q}xc5$ $\mathbb{W}xc5$ 10. $\mathbb{W}e2$. Again, I doubt the soundness of these deviations.

Summing up, by delaying ...a6 Black hardly improves his chances in the main lines while the additional options of White, especially 7.f4, look really unpleasant.

7. $\mathbb{W}d2$

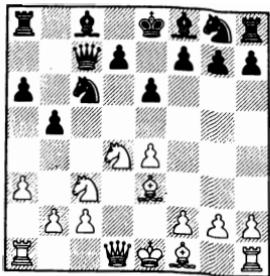
7. $\mathbb{Q}e2$, 7. $\mathbb{Q}d3$ and 7.f4 are subject

Part 2

of other parts of the book, I will consider here two rare alternatives:

a) 7.a3 is a particular move order, which throws us out of our repertoire. Black's biggest problem is his enormous choice. Virtually all conceivable plans are playable, but I understand that such a statement has no practical value. Scheveningen fans will be especially happy to face this innocuous move. I propose to adopt a typical Taimanov set-up for consistency sake:

7...b5



8.♘xc6

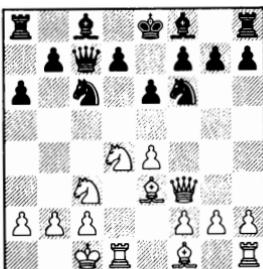
Or 8.♕e2 ♜b7 9.f4 ♘xd4 10.♗xd4 ♜c8 11.♗f3 (Anticipating 11...♘f6. 11.♗d1 ♘f6 12.e5 ♘d5 would be OK for Black) 11...h5 12.h3 h4 13.0-0 ♘f6∞.

8...♗xc6 9.♕e2

9.♗d4 ♜b7 10.♕e2 ♜c8 11.♗d1 ♘f6 12.e5 should be met by 12...♘d5!. The trick is that 13.♗f3 is not dangerous in view of 13...♘xe3 14.♗xe3 ♜c7 15.♗xb7 ♜xb7 16.0-0 b4 17.axb4 ♜xb4 18.♘e4 ♜xc2 19.♗d6 ♜c6.

9...♜b7 10.♗f3 ♜c7 11.0-0 ♜d6 12.g3 ♘f6 13.♗d3 ♜e5 with complex play.

b) 7.♗f3 ♘f6! (7...b5 8.♗g3; 8.♘xc6 ♜xc6 9.♗d3 ♜b7 10.♗g3; 7...♜b4 8.0-0-0 ♘ge7 9.♗g3, Cheparinov-Swiercz, Yerevan 2014, are pleasant for White) 8.0-0-0 is trendy.



The Scheveningen approach 8...♘e7 (8...d6 is less accurate as it allows 9.♘xc6?! bx_c6 10.g4) 9.♕e2 (9.♘xc6 bx_c6 10.g4 is already unimpressive due to 10...d5) 9...0-0 10.♗g3 [10.g4 ♘xd4 11.♗xd4 (11.♗xd4 b5 12.g5 ♘e8 13.♗hg1 ♜b7 14.♗b1 ♜c8 15.♗d3 f5 16.gxf6 ♜xf6 17.♗xf6 ♘xf6 18.♗g2 ♜f7) 11...d5 12.exd5 ♘xd5] 10...d6! seems the most logical retort to White's set-up, because his queen hampers the march of the g-pawn. After 11.f4, Black will complete development with ...♘d7-e8 keeping the tension in the centre. See more details in the annotations to **game 5** Vallejo-Spraggett, Catalunya 2013.

7...♘f6

7...b5 contradicts the spirit of this book and my own understanding of the Taimanov. I think that Black should seek active piece play and the knight on c6 has an impor-

The English Attack

tant role in that design. So I have a good reason to avoid 7...b5 8.♘xc6.

8.0-0-0

In the early days of the English Attack, White used to play:

a) 8.f3

It was aimed against 8...♗g4, but it is already clear that the knight jump after 8.0-0-0 is bad due to 9.♘f4 ♗ge5 (9...e5?! is even worse, 10.♘d5 ♖d8 11.h3!±) 10.♗g3 ♖xd4 11.♖xd4 f6 12.f4 ♖c5 13.♖d2 ♖f7 14.e5↑, Grischuk-Needleman, Khanty Mansyisk 2005.

8...b5 9.g4

9.♘xc6 dxc6 is similar to 10.♘xc6; 9.0-0-0 transposes to the main line.

9...♗b7

9...h6 10.♘xc6! [10.0-0-0 ♘e5 (intending ...d5) 11.h4 b4 12.♘a4 d5 13.♘e2 counts on the trick 13...dxe4 14.♘b6 ♖xb6 15.♘c6 (15.♘xe6 ♖a5 16.♘xf8 ♖b7). However, Black has the counter-blow 15...♘d3+ 16.♘xd3 ♖c7 17.♘f4 e3!] sets some problems since 10...dxc6 might be slightly better for White because ...h6 has provided him with a lever on the kingside. Perhaps Black should try 10...♗xc6 and follow up by ...♗b7, ♖c7, ♖e7, d5.

10.g5 ♖xd4! transposing to the main line. (In the event of 10...♗h5 11.♘xc6, our knight would be misplaced on h5.)

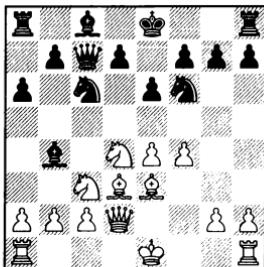
b) 8.f4!?

This line enjoys a burst of popularity. However, it might be short-lived if White does not find something substantial against the rather forced endgame which arises after:

8...♗b4!

Karjakin-Svidler, 2014, saw 8...b5, but I believe that it is important to provoke a3 in order to have a lever for our attack on the queenside. The game went 9.e5 ♘g4 10.♗g1 ♖b7 11.0-0-0 ♖xd4 12.♘xd4 ♖e7 13.♘d3 f5 14.h3 ♘h6 15.♗hg1 0-0 16.♖e3 (16.♗g4 g6 17.♘b1 ♖c6 18.♘e2 ♖d5 19.g5 ♖f7 20.h4 is better for White) 16...♖ac8 17.♘b1 ♖c6 18.♘e2 ♖d5 19.g4 g6 20.b3 ♖b7 21.♗df1 a5 22.♘g3 ♖c4 23.♘e4 ♖d5 24.♘d3 draw.

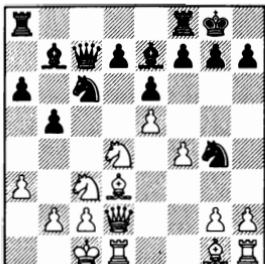
9.♘d3



9...♗a5

This is a critical line for White's eighth move, but I prefer the double-edged: 9...0-0!. Now 10.♘xc6 bxc6 11.e5 ♘g4 12.♗g1 d5 cannot be of any concern to us. The only principled retort is 10.a3 ♖e7! 11.0-0-0 b5 12.e5 ♘g4 13.♗g1 ♖b7 with complex play.

Part 2

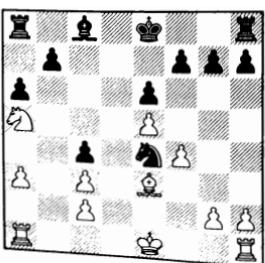


We can undermine the enemy centre with ...f6 or push ...b4. For instance, 14.♘b3 b4 15.axb4 ♘xb4, or 14.♗e2 ♘h6. Unfortunately, I do not know of any practical example yet.

10.a3

In the event of 10.♘de2 ♘c4 11.♗xc4 ♗xc4 12.e5 ♘e4 13.♗d3, Black completes development with either 13...b5 or 13...d5.

10...♗xc3 11.♗xc3 ♗xc3+ 12.bxc3 d5 (In Shomoev-Grigoriants, Taganrog 2014, Black tested 12...d6, but 13.♘b3 is pleasant for White who has pressure on the queenside with ♘d2, a4, ♘b1.) 13.e5! (13.exd5 ♘xd5 14.♘d2 ♘b6 15.0-0 ♘bc4=, Ziaulkina-Zhigalko, Minsk 2014) 13...♘e4 14.♘b3! ♘c4 15.♘xc6 dxc4 16.♘a5



16...♗d7!

16...b5?! 17.♘d4 f5 18.exf6 gxf6 19.0-0, Edouard-Javakhishvili, Caltea 2014, may be defendable, but I see no fun for Black.

17.♘d4 ♘c8 18.♗xb7 ♘c6 19.♗a5 ♘d5 20.♗b1 f5!. White's knight might remain stranded on a5, his doubled extra pawn is not worth much. White also has to worry about possible ...♗g8, ...g5. 21.♗b6 is not a threat due to 21...♗d7. Perhaps best is 21.♗b7 g5= with counterplay.

8...♗e7

8...b5 is less accurate due to 9.♘f4 ♘b6 when 10.♘b3! ♘g4 11.♗e2! ♘ge5 12.♗e3 assures White of the edge. 10.♘xc6 ♗xc6 11.f3 also deserves attention.

9.f3

9.f4 forces the play so it demands memorisation: 9...b5! (9...d6 10.♗e2 0-0 is a sharp Scheveningen position) 10.e5

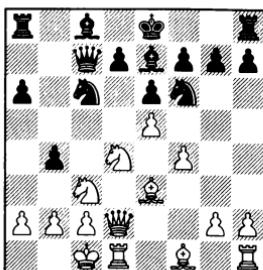
10.♘d3 gives Black time to repel the c3-knight: 10...b4 11.♘a4 ♘b8.

The game Gashimov-Movsessian, Reggio Emilia 2010, went further 12.♘b1 d6! 13.b3 (13.e5 dxe5 14.♘xc6 ♗xc6 15.fxe5 ♘d5) 13...0-0 14.♘xc6 ♗xc6 15.♗he1 ♘c7 16.♗e2 ♘d7 with mutual chances.

10...b4!

This move provokes the following interesting sacrifice:

The English Attack



11.♗cb5

11.exf6 bxc3 12.♗xc3 ♘xf6 13.g4 h6 14.h4 (14.♗g2 ♘b7 15.♗hg1 ♖c8 16.♗b1 ♗xd4 17.♗xc7 ♖xc7 18.♗xd4 is at least equal if not slightly better for Black, Hracek-Akesson, Pardubice 2013) 14...♗b7 15.♗h2 ♖c8 16.♗d2. Black has a wide choice here. Perhaps safest is 16...♗xd4 17.♗xd4 ♗xd4 18.♗xd4 0-0 19.g5 h5 20.♗f2 d5!=, Guseinov-Macieja, Istanbul 2012. In Wijk aan Zee 2014, Saric tried to contest this assessment against Yu Yangyi. Instead of attacking on the kingside, he tried to exploit Black's "bad" bishop with 21.♗e1 g6 22.♗e3 a5 23.♗b3. However, the Chinese GM found a good way to obtain counterplay with the pawn sac 23...a4! 24.♗xa4 ♖c5 25.♗g2 (25.♗bf3 d4 26.♗a3 d3) 25...♘a8 26.♗b4 ♖xb4 27.♗xb4 ♖xa2. Black has no problems in this endgame.

11...axb5 12.♗xb5 ♖a5

12...♗b8 might be the only way to play for a win, but it is risky as White has good compensation for the pawn after 13.exf6 gxf6 14.♗d6+ (14.♗b1 d5 15.♗f2 ♘a6 16.♗b6 ♗xb5 17.♗xb5 ♖b7 18.f5 ♖b8) 14...♗xd6

15.♗xd6 ♖xd6 16.♗xd6 ♖xa2 17.♗b1 ♖a5 18.♗e2.

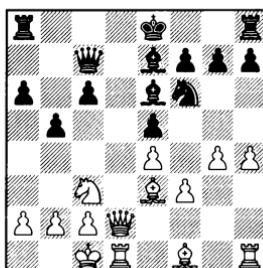
13.exf6 gxf6. White has a forced way to equality, see **game 4** Wei Yi-Stukopin, Kocaeli 2013.

9...b5 10.g4

a) 10.♗xc6 dxc6 brings about a symmetric pawn structure where the chances are roughly equal.

10...♖xc6 11.g4 d6 is often seen in the Scheveningen, but I believe that White is better prepared for an attack.

11.g4 e5 12.h4 ♘e6



White may claim some space advantage on the kingside, but he has no real threats. For instance, after:

13.g5, Black can exchange a pair of rooks with 13...♖d8, or he can preserve more pieces with 13...♗d7 followed up by 0-0-0. 13...♗h5!? is good, too. At the same time, White's king's bishop lacks prospects. Therefore,

13.♗h3 looks consistent. Motylev-Fominyh, Ubeda 2001, went 13...♖d8 14.♗h2 ♖xd1+ 15.♗xd1 0-0?! 16.g5 ♘h5 17.♗xe6 fxe6 18.♗h3±, but 13...♗d7 evens the chances.

Part 2

Then 14.g5 would not make much sense in view of 14... $\mathbb{Q}xh3$ 15. $\mathbb{Q}xh3$ 0-0-0=, but 14. $\mathbb{Q}d5$ cxd5 15.exd5 $\mathbb{Q}xd5$ 16. $\mathbb{W}xd5$ $\mathbb{Q}d8$ 17. $\mathbb{W}d3$ $\mathbb{Q}b6$ is also fine for Black.

White may wait to see where the black king castles:

13. $\mathbb{Q}b1$. Perhaps castling is not necessary at all. 13... $\mathbb{Q}d8$ 14. $\mathbb{W}h2$ $\mathbb{Q}xd1+$ 15. $\mathbb{Q}xd1$ h6 16. $\mathbb{Q}h3$ $\mathbb{Q}a5$ 17.b3 $\mathbb{Q}d7$ gives counterplay on the dark squares.

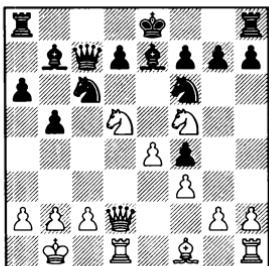
Eliseev chose twice 13. $\mathbb{W}f2$. Potkin answered 13...a5 (I do not understand this move) 14. $\mathbb{Q}c5$ 0-0 15.h5 $\mathbb{Q}xc5$ 16. $\mathbb{W}xc5$ $\mathbb{Q}d7$ 17. $\mathbb{W}d6$ $\mathbb{W}xd6$ 18. $\mathbb{Q}xd6$ $\mathbb{Q}fc8=$. Dragun opted for 13... $\mathbb{Q}b4$, but after 14.a3, he suddenly changed his mind with 14... $\mathbb{Q}e7?$. I would rather try to trade a pair of rooks with 13... $\mathbb{Q}d8$ (13... $\mathbb{Q}d7$ is probably less accurate due to 14. $\mathbb{Q}d5$) and decide later whether to castle at all.

b) 10. $\mathbb{Q}b1!$? is a tricky waiting move which is not deprived of venom. My recommendation is to transpose to line A2 with 10...0-0! 11.g4 $\mathbb{Q}xd4$ 12. $\mathbb{Q}xd4$ $\mathbb{Q}b7$.

Black would be nastily surprised if he tried to transpose to the main line with 10... $\mathbb{Q}d4$?! 11. $\mathbb{Q}d4$ $\mathbb{Q}b7$ (11...b4 12. $\mathbb{Q}a4$ $\mathbb{Q}b8$ 13. $\mathbb{W}f2$) 12. $\mathbb{W}g5!$ when 12...0-0 loses to 13.e5+-. In the blitz game Ivanchuk-Wang Yue, Beijing 2013, Black played 12...b4 13. $\mathbb{Q}a4$ 0-0 14. $\mathbb{Q}b6$ $\mathbb{Q}ae8$ 15. $\mathbb{W}g3$ d6 16. $\mathbb{Q}c4$ e5 17. $\mathbb{Q}b6\pm$ when 17... $\mathbb{W}b8$ would have hold on, but I do

not like such static positions with a clear plan for White.

The other obvious alternative is 10... $\mathbb{Q}b7$ hoping for 11.g4 $\mathbb{Q}xd4$. Instead, White can set serious practical problems with the still untested 11. $\mathbb{Q}f4$?! e5 12. $\mathbb{Q}f5$ exf4 13. $\mathbb{Q}d5$.



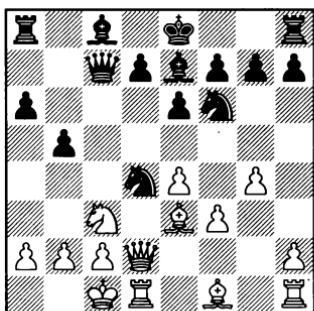
Without the inclusion of 10. $\mathbb{Q}b1$ $\mathbb{Q}b7$, Black would have 13... $\mathbb{W}e5$!, but now the b7-bishop is hanging. 13... $\mathbb{W}b8$?! keeps the extra piece, but 14. $\mathbb{Q}xg7+$ $\mathbb{Q}f8$ 15. $\mathbb{Q}f5$ is a mess. Still, I would take White without any hesitation. Look at the variation 15... $\mathbb{Q}d8$ 16. $\mathbb{Q}xf4$ h5 17.g3!. It is unclear how to get rid of the dominating knight on f5. To be sure, 17... $\mathbb{Q}e7$ fails to 18. $\mathbb{Q}d6$ $\mathbb{Q}c7$ 19.e5±. It is better to eliminate to a nearly equal endgame with 13... $\mathbb{Q}xd5$! 14.exd5 $\mathbb{Q}b4$ 15.d6 $\mathbb{W}xc2+$ 16. $\mathbb{W}xc2$ $\mathbb{Q}xc2$ 17. $\mathbb{Q}xg7+$ $\mathbb{Q}f8$ 18.dxe7+ $\mathbb{Q}xg7$ 19. $\mathbb{Q}xc2$ $\mathbb{Q}ac8+$ 20. $\mathbb{Q}b1$ $\mathbb{Q}c6$ 21. $\mathbb{Q}d4$ $\mathbb{Q}he8$ 22. $\mathbb{Q}xf4$ $\mathbb{Q}xe7$ 23. $\mathbb{Q}d3$ h6. Black will be staying with his rooks on the e-file, avoiding exchanges.

10... $\mathbb{Q}e5$ returns to the older treatment of the Taimanov. Perhaps Black should check the position after 11.g4 (11. $\mathbb{Q}b3$ $\mathbb{Q}b8$ 12. $\mathbb{W}f2$ $\mathbb{Q}c4$ 13. $\mathbb{Q}xc4$ bxc4 is fine for Black) 11...0-0 12.g5 $\mathbb{Q}h5$ 13.f4 $\mathbb{Q}g4$ 14.e5

The English Attack

b4 15.♘e4 ♘b7 16.♗g2 d6 17.♗f6+ ♖xf6 18.♗xb7 ♗xb7∞, but so far White has won both games where it was tested.

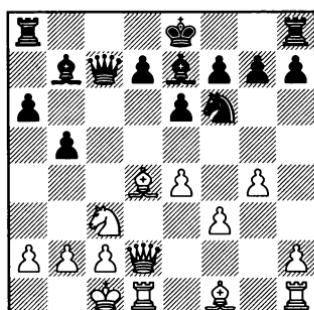
10...♝xd4!



A. 11.♗xd4; B. 11.♗xd4

A. 11.♗xd4 ♘b7

The immediate attack in the centre with 11...b4 12.♘a4 ♘b8, planning ...d5, seems a plausible alternative. This branch is still unexplored, maybe because Black obtains more than satisfactory results in the main line. A possible continuation is 13.♗b1 0-0 14.♗f2 d5 15.g5 ♖h5 16.exd5 exd5 17.h4 ♘e8.



An important juncture. White should decide whether to continue his initial plan, or focus on the centre:

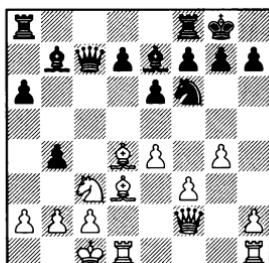
A1. 12.g5; A2. 12.♗b1; A3. 12.♗d3

Minor alternatives are:

a) 12.h4. White aims to play h5 first, but this idea is too slow and does not hamper the break 12...d5 since 13.g5 ♖h5 14.exd5 is met by 14...b4 15.♘e4 ♘xd5. White's knight stands well on e4, but we can always exchange it. The game Dambrauskas-Schiendorfer, ICCF email 2010, went 16.♗e3 ♘c8 17.♗d2 ♘xe4 18.fxe4 0-0 19.♗hh2 e5 20.♗b6 ♘c6 21.♗d5 ♖f4 22.♗a5 h6! with an initiative on the kingside.

b) 12.♗f2 0-0 13.♗d3 (13.♗b6 ♘c6! 14.g5 ♖h5) 13...b4?

Topalov chose against Karjakin in Beijing 2013 the more flexible 13...♗ac8 14.♗e2 d6 15.♗g3 ♖d7 16.♗he1 ♖c5 17.♗b1 ♘fd8 18.b3 e5 19.♗b2 ♖h4! 20.♗g1 g6, with the better game.



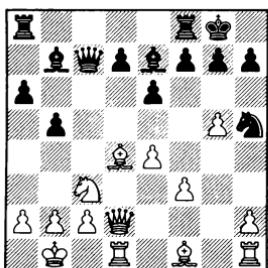
14.♗e2 (14.♗a4 d5 15.g5 ♖d7; 15.♗b6 dxe4! – never allow e4-e5 when White's knight is on b6 and

Part 2

can take ours on d7. We need the knight for counterplay from c5.) 14...d5 15.e5 ♜d7 16.f4 a5 17.♗b1 (17.f5 ♜xe5) 17...a4↑.

A1. 12.g5 ♜h5 13.♗e2

a) 13.♗b1 gives a tempo for castling: 13...0-0



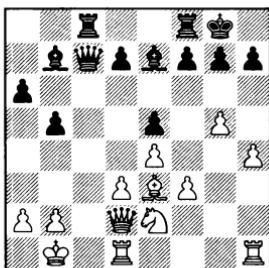
a1) 14.♗e2 f5 15.gxf6 ♜xf6 16.♗xf6 ♜xf6 17.h4 with a balanced game. Black's pressure down the f-file neutralises the open g-file. The email game Salvador Marques-Schiendorfer 2010 went 17...♝f7 (17...♝ac8 18.♝g1 ♜h5) 18.♝g1 ♜h2 19.♛e3 ♜c8 20.a3 ♜h5 21.♝g4 ♜c7 22.♝d2 ♜c5 23.♝d4 e5 24.♝b3 ♜cf8 25.♝g5 g6 26.♝f5 ♜h8 27.♝e2 gxf5 28.♝xh5 fxe4 draw.

a2) 14.♛e3 does not hamper 14...d5. After 15.exd5 b4 16.♝a4 ♜xd5 17.♝b6 ♜ad8 18.♝xd5 ♜xd5 19.♝c1 ♜xd1 20.♝xd1 ♜f4, Black seized the initiative, Bauer-Ganguly Linares 2013.

a3) 14.♝g1 takes control of g3 and prepares h4, ♜h3. It seems that 14...d5 is bad due to 15.exd5 b4? 16.♝e4 ♜xd5 17.♝f6+, but in fact the the-

matic break is still possible. Only instead of 15...b4, Black should play 15...♝f4!, recovering the pawn with a satisfactory position. However, White has no immediate threats so why not keep the tension for a while with 14...♝ac8. White has not anything better than 15.♝e3 (15.♝g4 g6; 15.♜h3 ♜f4), when 15...d5 16.exd5 b4 is already possible.

a4) 14.♝d3 ♜f4 (14...e5!? 15.♝f2 ♜f4, intending to capture the g5-pawn on 16.♝e2, may be stronger) 15.h4 ♜ac8 16.♝e2 ♜xd3 17.cxd3 e5 18.♝e3



Here 18...d5 19.♝g3 d4 20.♝f2 g6 21.♝c1 ♜d7 22.♝e2= (or 22.f4!?) might be dangerous so Morozevich opted for the forced line 18...♝b4! 19.♝xb4 ♜c2+ 20.♝a1 ♜xe2=.

b) 13.♝e5 leads to a sharp end-game after:

13...♛xe5!

It is dangerous to avoid simplification by 13...♝c6 since 14.a3 will retain White's grip on the centre:

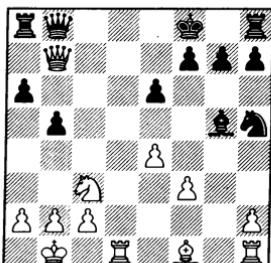
14...0-0 15.♜h3 f5 16.♝he1 ♜ae8 17.exf5 exf5 18.♝g2±;

14...♝d8 15.♝b1 (15.♜h3 ♜c5 16.f4 h6) 15...0-0 16.♝e2 or 16.♜h3

The English Attack

whereas Black's queen does not control the critical square f4.

14. $\mathbb{W}xd7+$ $\mathbb{Q}f8$ 15. $\mathbb{W}xb7$ $\mathbb{Q}xg5+$
16. $\mathbb{Q}b1$ $\mathbb{W}b8$



17. $\mathbb{Q}d7$

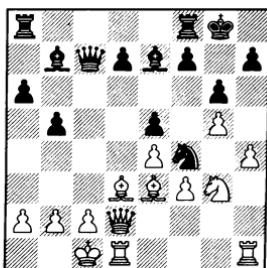
17. $\mathbb{W}c6$ $g6!$? would be double-edged while 17... $\mathbb{W}c8$ 18. $\mathbb{W}xc8+$ (18. $\mathbb{W}b6$ $\mathbb{Q}f6$ 19. $\mathbb{Q}e2$ $\mathbb{Q}e5$ 20. $\mathbb{E}g1$ $g6$) does not change this assessment.

17... $\mathbb{W}xb7$ 18. $\mathbb{E}xb7$ $\mathbb{Q}f6$ 19. $a4$ (19. $\mathbb{Q}e2$ $g5$) 19... $\mathbb{Q}xc3$ 20. $bxcc3$ $bxa4$ 21. $\mathbb{Q}xa6$ $g5$ 22. $\mathbb{Q}b5$ $\mathbb{Q}g7$ 23. $\mathbb{Q}d1$, Ter Sahakyan-J.Polgar, Yerevan 2014. Black must keep both rooks here or White's c-pawn will run forward quickly. Perhaps safest is 23... $\mathbb{Q}f4$ 24. $c4$ $\mathbb{E}ac8$!, since 24... $\mathbb{Q}g6$!? 25. $c5$ $\mathbb{Q}e5$ 26. $c6$ $\mathbb{Q}xf3$ 27. $c7$ $\mathbb{Q}xh2$ is rather unclear.

c) 13. $h4$!? counts on the trick 13... 0-0-0! 14. $\mathbb{Q}h3$ $\mathbb{Q}f4$ (14... $b4$ 15. $\mathbb{Q}e2$ $e5$ 16. $\mathbb{Q}f2$ $d5$ 17. $\mathbb{Q}g4$ $\mathbb{Q}f4$ 18. $\mathbb{Q}xf4$ $exf4$ 19. $e5\uparrow$) 15. $\mathbb{Q}e3!$ $\mathbb{Q}xh3$ 16. $\mathbb{W}xd7\pm$, Muzychuk-Galjan, Belgrade 2013. Black should kill the $\mathbb{Q}f1$ with 13... $\mathbb{Q}g3!$ 14. $\mathbb{E}g1$ $\mathbb{Q}xf1$ 15. $\mathbb{E}gxf1$ 0-0, killing two birds with one shot – he has solved the problem of his knight at the edge of the board removing a dangerous attacking piece

at the same time. The game might continue 16. $\mathbb{Q}b1$ $b4$ 17. $\mathbb{Q}a4$ (17. $\mathbb{Q}e2$ $e5$ 18. $\mathbb{Q}f2$ $d5$ 19. $\mathbb{Q}g3$ $\mathbb{E}fd8$) 17... $d5$ (or 17... $\mathbb{Q}c6$ 18. $\mathbb{Q}c5$ $a5$ 19. $\mathbb{Q}d3$ $d5$ 20. $\mathbb{W}e3$ $a4\infty$) 18. $exd5$ (18. $e5$ $a5$ 19. $\mathbb{W}f2$ $\mathbb{Q}c6$ 20. $\mathbb{Q}c5$ $a4\uparrow$) 18... $\mathbb{Q}xd5$ 19. $\mathbb{Q}b6$ $\mathbb{E}ad8$ 20. $\mathbb{Q}xd5$ $\mathbb{E}xd5\mp$.

d) 13. $\mathbb{Q}d3$ is an arguable idea, because Black can always equalise by trading the bishop after ... $\mathbb{Q}h5-f4xd3$. 13... 0-0 14. $\mathbb{Q}e2$ $e5$ 15. $\mathbb{Q}e3$ $g6$ (15... $\mathbb{Q}c5$ 16. $\mathbb{Q}xc5$ $\mathbb{W}xc5$ 17. $\mathbb{Q}b1$ $\mathbb{E}ac8$ 18. $\mathbb{E}hf1=$) 16. $\mathbb{Q}g3$ $\mathbb{Q}f4$ 17. $h4$



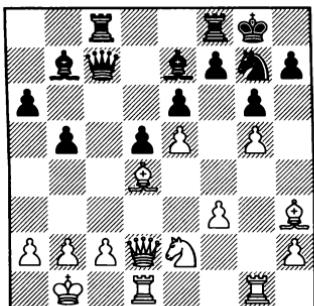
17... $\mathbb{E}ac8$ (17... $\mathbb{Q}xd3+$ 18. $\mathbb{W}xd3$ $\mathbb{E}ad8=$) 18. $\mathbb{Q}xf4$ $exf4$ 19. $\mathbb{Q}e2$ $d5$ 20. $\mathbb{W}xf4$ (20. $\mathbb{Q}xf4$ $\mathbb{Q}d6$ 21. $\mathbb{Q}e2$ $\mathbb{E}fe8$!) 20... $\mathbb{Q}d6$ 21. $e5$ (21. $\mathbb{W}g4$ $dxe4$ 22. $fxe4$ $\mathbb{Q}e5\infty$) 21... $\mathbb{Q}xe5$ 22. $\mathbb{W}d2$ $\mathbb{Q}g7$ 23. $f4$ $\mathbb{E}f8$ 24. $\mathbb{Q}b1$. Dominguez-Potkin, Havana 2012 saw here 24... $\mathbb{E}e4?$ 25. $\mathbb{Q}xe4\pm$. Instead, 24... $d4$ 25. $\mathbb{Q}h2$ $\mathbb{E}e3\mp$ would have given Black an initiative.

13... $\mathbb{E}c8$ 14. $\mathbb{E}g1$

14. $h4$ might prove superfluous if Black defended with ... $f6$ or ... $f5$. For instance: 14... 0-0 15. $\mathbb{Q}h3$ $f5$ 16. $gxf6$ (16. $exf5$ $\mathbb{Q}xf3$ 17. $fxe6$ $d5$ winning the exchange) 16... $\mathbb{Q}xf6$.

Part 2

14...0-0 15.♘h3 g6 (or 15...d5 16.e5 g6) 16.♗b1 d5 17.e5 ♘g7



Black has a good game. He will push his pawns to a4 and b4 keeping the tension. White's only plan is h2-h4-h5xg6, but then Black recaptures by ...fxg6 and easily defends the h7-pawn along the seventh rank with ...♞f5. This suggests that Black should leave his rook on f8 in order to ensure the possibility of taking ...♝xf5 after ♘xf5. Almasi-Movsesian, Warsaw 2013, went further 18.f4 b4 19.♕g4 a5 20.♘c1 (or 20.h4 a4 21.♗g3 ♜c5) 20...♝a6 21.♗g2 a4 22.h4 ♜c5 (clearing the 7th rank) 23.♖xc5 ♜xc5 24.♗h2 ♜c7 (24...a3 25.b3 ♜c3) 25.h5. Here 25...♝b6 26.hxg6 fxg6 27.♗dh1 ♘f5= would have been promising.

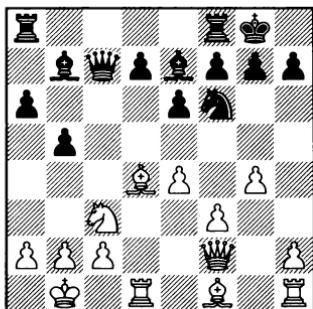
A2. 12.♗b1 0-0 13.♗f2

13.♗e3 does not prevent 13...b4 14.♘e2 d5;

13.h4 ♜ac8 14.♘d3 turned out badly for White after 14...e5 15.♗e3 ♜b4=, Kurayan-Stukopin, Kocaeli 2013.

13.♘d3 b4 14.♘e2 e5 15.g5 exd4 was pleasant for Black in Yu-Nepomniachtchi, St. Petersburg 2012. Amonatov-Saiyn, Moscow 2014, showed that even if White achieved everything he wanted, Black would still be fine – 13...♝ac8 14.♗f2 d6 15.h4 ♜d7 16.g5 b4 17.♘e2 d5 18.exd5 ♜xd5.

The text move deserves attention if for no other reason than because it was played at highest level.



13...d5!

I suppose that this novelty is the best retort to White's tricky last move.

Alternatively:

13...♝ac8 14.♗g1 ♜c6 (14...b4 15.g5 ♜h5 16.♘a4) 15.♘d3 b4∞ occurred in **game 9** Caruana-Svidler, Rhodes 2013;

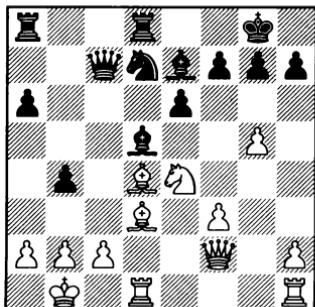
13...b4 14.♘a4! (14.g5 ♜h5 15.♘a4 d5 16.exd5 ♜xd5 17.♘b6 ♜ad8=) 14...d5 is positionally dubious since White trades his awkward knight for an important black piece. 15.♘b6 ♜ad8 16.e5 ♜d7 17.♘xd7. Black has no counterplay here.

The English Attack

14.g5 ♖d7 15.exd5 b4 16.♗e4

16.dxe6 fxe6 17.♗e2 e5 is roughly equal: 18.♕c4+ ♜xc4 19.♗xc4+ ♖h8 20.♗d5 ♜xg5 21.♗f2=.

16...♗xd5 17.♗d3 ♜fd8



White's pieces look daunting, but Black can quickly trade a couple of minor pieces, for instance, ...♗xe4 followed up by ...♗c5.

18.♗hg1 e5 defends everything. Then Black can thrust forward his own a-pawn.

18.♗h4 g6 19.♗f2 ♜ac8 20.h4 ♗c5 also neutralises the attack because 21.♗f6+? loses to 21...♗xf6 22.♗xf6 ♜xa2+! 23.♗xa2 b3+ while 21.♗xc5 ♜xc5 22.♗f6+ ♗g7 23.♗e2 ♜e7 (or 23...♗f4) is roughly balanced.

Remains 18.h4 ♜ac8 19.h5, but this drops the g5-pawn after 19...♗xe4! 20.♗xe4 ♜xg5.

A3. 12.♗d3 e5

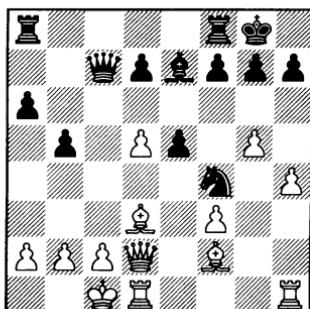
It is positionally sound to restrict the d3-bishop. Of course, 12...0-0 cannot be bad either, for

instance, 13.h4 b4 14.♗e2 e5 15.♗f2 d5; 13.♗e2 d5 14.e5 ♗e4 15.♗e3 ♗c5.

13.♗f2 0-0 14.g5 ♗h5!

Svetushkin-Negi, Linares 2013, saw 14...b4?! 15.♗a4 ♗h5 16.♗b6 ♜ab8 17.♗c4 ♗c6 18.♗d5 ♜xd5 19.♗xd5 a5, but White's bishop is at least theoretically better than Black's one.

15.♗d5 ♜xd5 16.exd5 ♗f4 17.h4 (17.♗xh7! ♜xh7 18.d6 ♜xd6 19.♗xd6 ♜ac8 is roughly equal)



17...f5!

This move assures Black of a good game since 18.gxf6? ♗xd3+ would give him pressure down the f-file.

B. 11.♗xd4 ♗b7 12.g5

12.♗b1 ♜c8 13.♗d2 fails to 13...b4 14.♗a4 ♗xe4 15.fxe4 ♗xe4 16.♗xa6 ♜xc2+.

12.♗g1 ♜c8 13.♗g2 (13.g5 will transpose to the main line) makes some sense, but White abandons

Part 2

the dangerous manoeuvre $\mathbb{Q}f1-h3-g4$. Black should not worry about this attack anymore so he can prepare short castling with 13... $\mathbb{Q}c6$ (but not 13... $b4?!$ 14. $\mathbb{Q}a4$ $\mathbb{Q}c6$ 15. $\mathbb{Q}b6$ $\mathbb{Q}b8$ 16. $g5$ $\mathbb{Q}h5$ 17. $\mathbb{Q}gd2?$ $e5$ 18. $\mathbb{W}c4$ $\mathbb{Q}xb6$ 19. $\mathbb{Q}xd7!!$, Pruijssers-Zwirs, Dieren 2013) 14. $g5$ $\mathbb{Q}h5$ 15. $\mathbb{Q}f2$ 0-0. Now 16. $f4?!$ $f6$ or 16. $\mathbb{Q}h3$ $\mathbb{Q}f4$ 17. $\mathbb{Q}g4$ $\mathbb{Q}xg5$ are clearly better for Black, so White should probably continue with 16. $e5$, but then the simplest 16... $\mathbb{Q}fd8$ 17. $\mathbb{Q}e4$ $\mathbb{Q}xe4$ 18. $\mathbb{W}xe4$ $d6$ 19. $exd6$ $\mathbb{Q}xd6$ equalises.

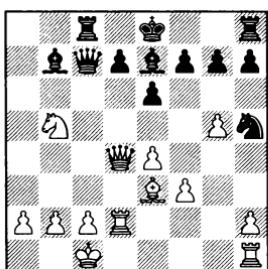
12... $\mathbb{Q}h5$ 13. $\mathbb{Q}h3$

This is the only way to prevent the freeing ... $d7-d5$. Alternatively:

a) 13. $\mathbb{Q}d2$ $\mathbb{Q}c8$ 14. $\mathbb{Q}xb5$ is only good for a draw.

14. $\mathbb{Q}g1$ is innocuous due to 14... $e5$ (or 14... $\mathbb{Q}c5$ 15. $\mathbb{W}xc5$ $\mathbb{W}xc5$ 16. $\mathbb{Q}xc5$ $\mathbb{Q}xc5=$ 17. $a4$ $b4$ 18. $\mathbb{Q}a2$ $a5$ 19. $\mathbb{Q}b5$ $\mathbb{Q}c6$ 20. $\mathbb{Q}xc6$ $\mathbb{Q}xc6)$ 15. $\mathbb{W}d3$ (15. $\mathbb{W}a7$ $\mathbb{Q}f4$ 16. $\mathbb{Q}b6$ $\mathbb{Q}c6$ 17. $\mathbb{Q}d5$ $\mathbb{Q}d6$ 18. $\mathbb{Q}f2$ $\mathbb{Q}xd5=$) 15... $\mathbb{Q}b4$.

14... $axb5$ 15. $\mathbb{Q}xb5$



15... $\mathbb{W}c6$ (15... $\mathbb{W}d8$ does not lose, but White's heavy pieces are better after 16. $\mathbb{Q}a7$ 0-0 17. $\mathbb{W}xb7$ $\mathbb{Q}xg5$

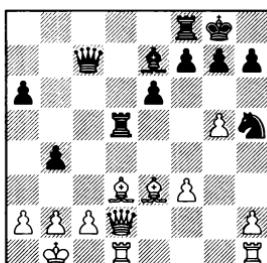
18. $\mathbb{Q}xg5$ $\mathbb{W}xg5$ 19. $\mathbb{Q}c3!$ $\mathbb{W}e3$ 20. $\mathbb{W}b4$ $\mathbb{W}xf3$ 21. $\mathbb{Q}g1\pm$) 16. $\mathbb{Q}a7$ $\mathbb{W}c7$ (some commentators claim that 16... $e5?!$ 17. $\mathbb{W}xe5$ $\mathbb{W}c7$ is unclear, but in my opinion, the endgame is obviously pleasant for White, e.g. 18. $\mathbb{W}d4$ $\mathbb{Q}d8$ 19. $\mathbb{Q}b5$ $\mathbb{W}c6$ 20. $\mathbb{Q}d6+$ $\mathbb{Q}xd6$ 21. $\mathbb{W}xd6$ $\mathbb{W}xd6$ 22. $\mathbb{Q}xd6$ 0-0 23. $b4$ $f5$ 24. $gxf6$ $\mathbb{Q}xf6$ 25. $\mathbb{Q}c5$ $\mathbb{Q}c6$ 26. $c4\pm$) 17. $\mathbb{Q}b5=$, Dominguez-Caruana, Paris 2013.

b) 13. $\mathbb{Q}b1$ $\mathbb{Q}c8$ puts the question to White: what is he going to do with his queen?

14. $\mathbb{W}d3$ is unaesthetic. To be sure, 14... $b4$ 15. $\mathbb{Q}a4$ $d5$ 16. $exd5$ $\mathbb{Q}xd5$ 17. $\mathbb{Q}b6$ $\mathbb{Q}f4$ (the thematic 17... $\mathbb{Q}d8$ fails here to 18. $\mathbb{W}xa6$) 18. $\mathbb{Q}xd5$ $\mathbb{Q}xd5$ 19. $\mathbb{Q}c1$ would be pleasant for him, but the immediate 14... $d5!$ 15. $exd5$ $\mathbb{Q}d8$ solves all the problems.

14. $\mathbb{W}d2$ admits that capturing on $d4$ by queen was pointless. That does not mean it is a bad move, but it is certainly not the most principled opening idea. We have the usual choice between ... $\mathbb{Q}c6$, ...0-0 or the ... $d5$ -break. For consistency with the previous examples, let's check the most straightforward plan: 14... $b4$ 15. $\mathbb{Q}e2$

15. $\mathbb{Q}a4$ $d5$ 16. $exd5$ $\mathbb{Q}xd5$ 17. $\mathbb{Q}b6$ $\mathbb{Q}d8$ 18. $\mathbb{Q}xd5$ $\mathbb{Q}xd5$ 19. $\mathbb{Q}d3$ 0-0



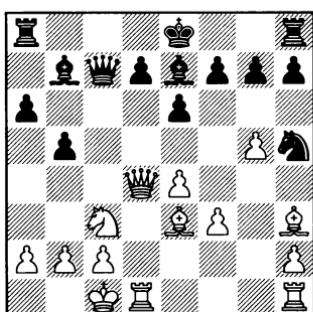
The English Attack

leads to a typical position with comfortable play for Black. The bishop pair is inefficient due to the weakness of f4. Black will be trying to trade dark-squared bishops in order to bring his knight into play.

15...d5 16.e5 d4!. After this deep counter-sac Black seized the initiative in **game 6** Volokitin-Najer, Muelheim 2013.

c) 13.a3 $\mathbb{E}c8$ 14. $\mathbb{Q}b1$ prevents the ...d5 break, but gives Black time to castle and undermine the centre with ...f5: 14... $\mathbb{Q}c5$ 15. $\mathbb{W}d2$ $\mathbb{Q}xe3$ 16. $\mathbb{W}xe3$ 0-0 17. $\mathbb{E}d2$ (17. $\mathbb{E}g1$ $\mathbb{Q}f4$ 18.h4 $\mathbb{E}fd8$ revives the plan with ...d5, e.g. 19. $\mathbb{E}d2$ d5! 20.e5? d4! 21. $\mathbb{E}xd4$ $\mathbb{Q}d5$) 17...f5!. The pressure down the f-file assures Black of the initiative.

d) 13. $\mathbb{Q}e2$ $\mathbb{E}c8$ 14. $\mathbb{W}d2$ (14. $\mathbb{E}d2$?!, d5 was tested in Inarkiev-Schlosser, Yerevan 2014 – 15.exd5 $\mathbb{Q}xd5$ 16. $\mathbb{Q}f4$ $\mathbb{Q}xf4$ 17. $\mathbb{Q}xf4$ $\mathbb{W}a5$ 18. $\mathbb{W}xg7$ $\mathbb{E}f8$ 19. $\mathbb{E}xd5$ $\mathbb{W}a4$ 20. $\mathbb{E}d2$ $\mathbb{W}xf4=$ 21.h4? $\mathbb{E}d8$ 22. $\mathbb{Q}d3$ $\mathbb{Q}b4$ 23. $\mathbb{E}hd1$ when 23... $\mathbb{Q}xd2+$ 24. $\mathbb{E}xd2$ $\mathbb{Q}e7$ would have been difficult for White) 14...d5 15.e5 d4! is considered in the annotations to **game 6**. The play is very similar to line b.



13... $\mathbb{E}c8$!

13...f6 is inconsistent since our main plan is to break in the centre with ...d5. White can maintain the tension on the kingside with 14. $\mathbb{Q}g4$ (14. $\mathbb{Q}b1$ fxg5 15. $\mathbb{Q}g4$ $\mathbb{Q}f6=$) 14... $\mathbb{Q}f4$ 15. $\mathbb{W}d2$ or 15.h4!?.

13...b4? 14. $\mathbb{Q}a4$ d5 fails to 15. $\mathbb{Q}g4$.

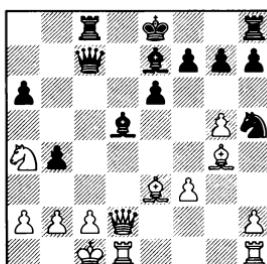
The rook's move gains a crucial tempo because besides targeting c2, it also enables ... $\mathbb{Q}c5$. The trade of dark-squared bishops becomes Black's primary strategic goal when his knight reaches h5. Thus, 14. $\mathbb{E}d2$?!, $\mathbb{Q}c5$! would be excellent for him.

14. $\mathbb{Q}g4$

The only way to protect c2 while evading ... $\mathbb{Q}c5$ is 14. $\mathbb{W}d2$?!, but this retreat completely takes the sting of $\mathbb{Q}g4$ since Black can answer it with ...g6. So he can already push:

14...b4 15. $\mathbb{Q}e2$

15. $\mathbb{Q}a4$?!, d5! (15... $\mathbb{Q}c6$ is also good – see **game 7** Robson-Wang Yue, Ningbo 2013) 16.exd5? (16. $\mathbb{Q}b1$ dxе4 17. $\mathbb{Q}g4$ h6! 18.f4 hxg5 19.fxg5 g6!) 16... $\mathbb{Q}xd5$ 17. $\mathbb{Q}g4$



Part 2

15... $\mathbb{Q}xa2!!$ 18. $\mathbb{Q}b6$ (18. $\mathbb{Q}xh5$ 0-0+) 18...0-0 19. $\mathbb{Q}xc8$ $\mathbb{Q}xc8$. It turns out that White has no defence against 20... $\mathbb{Q}b3-$ -.

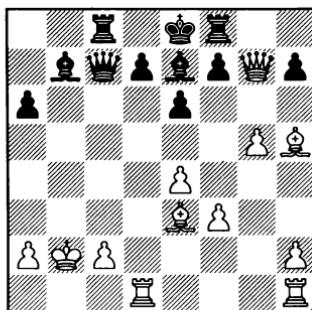
15...d5 16. $\mathbb{Q}g4$ g6 17.e5 d4!. Do not allow the opponent to blockade the centre! 18. $\mathbb{Q}xd4$ 0-0 19. $\mathbb{Q}xh5$ gxh5 20. $\mathbb{Q}he1$ (White did not last long after 20. $\mathbb{Q}hg1$ $\mathbb{Q}fd8$ 21. $\mathbb{Q}f2$ a5 22. $\mathbb{Q}d2$ a4 23.g6 hxg6 24. $\mathbb{Q}xe6$ $\mathbb{Q}xd2$ 25. $\mathbb{Q}xd2$ $\mathbb{Q}xe5-$ +, Espinosa-Hevia, Merida 2013) 20... $\mathbb{Q}fd8$ 21. $\mathbb{Q}f2$ (21.f4 $\mathbb{Q}f3$) 21...a5! (21... $\mathbb{Q}xe5$ 22. $\mathbb{Q}b1=$) 22. $\mathbb{Q}b1$ a4→.

14...b4 15. $\mathbb{Q}xh5$ bxc3 16. $\mathbb{Q}xg7$

Browne-Van Kampen, Reykjavik 2014, introduced the novelty 16.b3?!. I guess it was an improvisation since 16...0-0 would be strong.

Then 17. $\mathbb{Q}xd7?$ fails to 17... $\mathbb{Q}c5!$ and White's dark squares around his king gape wide.

16...cxb2+ 17. $\mathbb{Q}xb2$ $\mathbb{Q}f8$

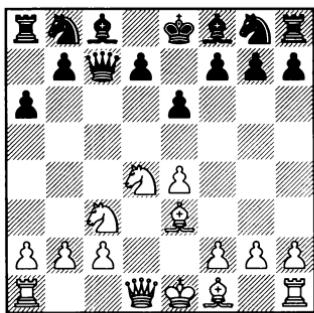


White is better co-ordinated, but his unsheltered king allows Black to maintain the balance. See **game 8** Demetrio-Schiendorfer, ICCF email 2009.

Part 2. The English Attack

Kan – Step by Step

1.e4 c5 2.♘f3 e6 3.d4 cxd4
4.♗xd4 a6 5.♗c3 ♜c7 6.♗e3



This set-up is only a faint attempt to reach the English Attack since Black attacks first with ...♗b4 and seizes the initiative. He only has to start with:

6...♗f6!

Hellsten recommends 6...♗b4 7.♗de2 ♗f6 8.a3 ♗a5 (8..♗e7 9.♗a4!?) 9.b4 ♗b6, but instead of 10.♗xb6, White can gain space by 10.♗f4!± ♜d8 11.e5.

7.♗d3

7.f3 does not hold the centre due to 7...♗b4 8.♗d2 (or 8.f3) 8...d5.

7.a3 b5 8.♗d3 ♗b7 9.0-0 ♗c6 is a dream Sicilian.

After the text, Black has a wide, but pleasant choice:

A. 7...♗b4 8.♗de2

8.0-0?! ♗xc3 9.bxc3 d6! (9...d5? 10.exd5 ♗xd5 11.♗d2 0-0 12.♗h5 g6 13.♗h4±) 10.♗f3 e5 11.♗f5 ♗xf5 12.exf5 ♗bd7 13.♗ab1 d5.

8...d6

8...d5 9.a3! is not too clear.

9.0-0 ♗g4=.

B. 7...♗c5 8.♗e2

Or 8.0-0 d6 9.♗e2 ♗bd7

8...d6 9.0-0-0 0-0.

C. 8...b5 9.0-0 ♗b7 10.a3 ♗e7

Miladinovic played 10...h5?! 11.h3 ♗c6.

11.f4 h5 ↘.

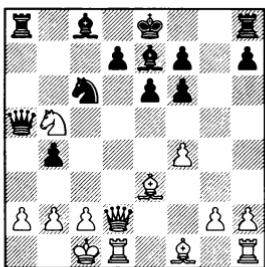
Part 2. The English Attack

Complete Games

4. Wei,Yi-Stukopin

Wch U20 Kocaeli 22.09.2013

1.e4 c5 2.♘f3 e6 3.d4 cxd4
4.♗xd4 ♘c6 5.♘c3 ♗c7 6.♗e3 a6
7.♗d2 ♘f6 8.0-0-0 ♔e7 9.f4 b5
10.e5 b4 11.♘cb5 axb5 12.♘xb5
♗a5 13.exf6 gxf6



14.♘d6+

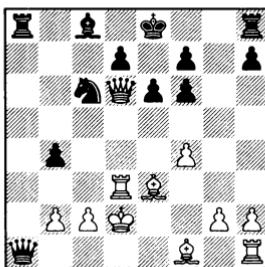
White's king is the more vulnerable one after 14.c4 bxc3 15.♘xc3 0-0.

14...♗xd6 15.♗xd6 ♗xa2
16.♗d3 (16.♗b5 ♗a1+ 17.♗d2
♗xb2) 16...♗a1+

It is better to play for attack. The passive defence 16...f5 17.♗c5 ♗a1+

18.♗d2 ♗xb2 19.♗e2 ♗f6? 20.♗f3 would be a terrible mistake.

17.♗d2



17...♗a2!

17...♗xb2?! 18.♗b3 is in White's favour: 18...♗a1 19.♗c5!± or 18...♗a2 19.♗b5.

18.♗b3 ♗xb2

This move lets the white bishop to b5. It would be simpler to keep White passive by 18...♗b1! 19.♗g1 ♗xb2. The difference is obvious after 20.♗d3 ♗a2 21.♗xb2 ♗xb2. This position is unclear, with mutual chances: 22.♗c5 (22.♗c5 ♗b7) 22...♗c3+ 23.♗e2 b3 (23...f5 24.♗e1 f6

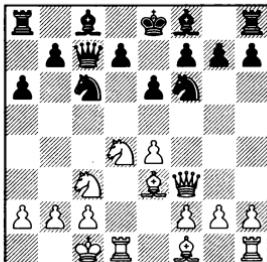
The English Attack

25.♗f2 ♗f7 26.♕e3 ♘d2+ 27.♔e2=)
24.cxb3 ♘xb3 25.♗b1=.

8.0-0-0

19.♗b5 ♘a2?!

Perhaps Black did not notice that he had perpetual check after
19...♘xh1 20.♗xc6 dxc6 21.♗xc6+
♗f8 22.♗d4 ♘xh2 23.♗xc8+ ♗g7
24.♗xf6+ ♗xf6 25.♗xh8+ ♗e7
26.♗xb2 ♘xg2=.



20.♗xb2 ♘xb2 21.♗c5?!

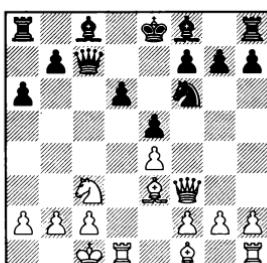
White misses the strong redeployment 21.♗c1! ♘c3+ 22.♗e2 ♘g8
23.g3 e5 24.♗f2 h5 25.♗d1, with an initiative, e.g. 25...h4 26.♗a4 hxg3+
27.hxg3 e4 28.♗d5. After the text,
the game is balanced.

**21...♘c3+ 22.♗d1 ♘a6
23.♗xa6 (23.♗xc6 ♘a1+ 24.♗d2
♘c3+=) 23...♘a1+ 24.♗d2 ♘xa6
25.♗d4 ♘g8 26.g3 ♘b7 27.♗c5
♘b8 28.♗xb8+ ♘xb8 29.♗a1
♗c6 30.♗a8+ ♘d8 31.f5 exf5
32.♗xb4 f4 33.gxf4 draw.**

8...d6

In my opinion, 8...♗e7! is the better move order, having in mind
9.♗xc6 bxc6 10.g4 d5. Let's consider other alternatives:

- a) 8...♗b4?! 9.♗xc6 ♘xc6 (9...
♘xc3 10.♗d4 ♘b4 11.♗f4) 10.♗d4
♘xc3 11.♗xc3 ♘xe4 12.♗xe4±.
- b) 8...b5 9.♗xc6 ♘xc6 10.e5±.
- c) The central approach 8...
♗xd4 9.♗xd4 e5 10.♗e3 d6



5. Vallejo Pons-Spraggett Catalunya 02.02.2013

**1.e4 c5 2.♗f3 e6 3.d4 cxd4
4.♗xd4 ♘c6 5.♗c3 ♘c7 6.♗e3
♗f6 7.♗f3 a6**

I have also analysed the new move 7...♗a3?!. It leads to crazy complications, but White's initiative is rather dangerous after 8.0-0-0 or 8.♗db5.

looks reasonable, but White has a clear plan: he pushes his pawns to g5 and h5 and gains space with
♗d5 followed by exd5. Black lacks counterplay. For instance:

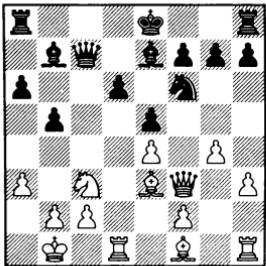
11.h3!

11.♗e2 ♘g4 12.♗d5 ♘xd5

Part 2

13.♗xg4 ♜c8 14.♗d2 h5 15.♗h3 ♜c3
16.♗b6 ♗xe2+ 17.♗xe2 ♜d7=.

11...b5 12.a3! (12.♗d3 ♗e7 13.g4 b4 14.♗d5 ♗xd5 15.exd5 a5 is unclear) 12...♗b7 13.g4 ♗e7 14.♗b1! (14.g5 ♗xe4 15.♗xe4 d5 16.♗d3 ♜c8=)



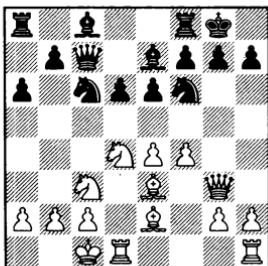
Now 14...♗xe4 15.♗xe4 d5 16.♗c3 d4 17.♗d5 ♗xd5 18.♗xd5 ♗d8 leaves Black a pawn down after either 19.♗xb5+ axb5 20.♗xb5+ ♗d7 21.♗c1 0-0 22.♗he1±, or 19.♗e4 dxе3 20.♗xd8+ ♗xd8 21.fxe3 0-0 22.♗d3 g6 23.♗xe5.

The queenside attack with 14...♗d7 15.h4 ♗b8 16.h5 0-0 17.g5 ♗c6 is not too efficient due to 18.♗d5! ♗xd5 19.exd5 b4 20.a4 b3 21.c3 and White's threats are much more tangible, e.g. 21..f5 22.gxf6 ♗xf6 23.♗f5→.

9.♗e2 ♗e7

9...h5?! 10.h3 ♗e5 turned out well for Black in Shankland-Wang Chen, Las Vegas 2013. However, after 10.♗xc6! bxc6 11.♗b1, White's pieces stand more harmoniously.

10.♗g3 0-0 11.f4



11...♗h8

The first critical moment of the game. Black should decide how to finish his development. The engines propose 11...d5 12.exd5 ♗xd5 13.♗xd5 exd5 14.♗f3 ♗d8 15.♗he1 ♗f6, but it is difficult to defend such a position over the board. White has a lasting pull, for instance: 16.c3 h6 (16...g6 17.f5 ♗xg3 18.hxg3 ♗xd4 19.♗xd4 ♗xf5 20.♗b6 ♗e8 21.♗xd5 ♗g4 22.♗f1) 17.♗b1.

Still, I do not approve of Black's last move either. This prophylaxis was not obligatory at all. Perhaps Spragget did not like 11...♗d7! in view of 12.e5, but then 12...♗e8 13.♗b1 (13.♗hf1 ♗c8 14.♗d3 ♗b4 15.♗b1 ♗xd3 16.♗xd3, Wang Jue-Lei Tingjie, Xinghua 2014, 16...b5) 13...♗c8 is quite solid. The play may continue with 14.♗d3 b5 15.a3 b4 16.axb4 (16.♗xc6 ♗xc6 17.axb4 ♗b8) 16...♗xb4 17.♗e2 ♗b8 or 14.♗he1 b5 15.♗d3 (15.a3 b4) 15...g6. White's space advantage remains, but he has not a pawn lever on the kingside to use.

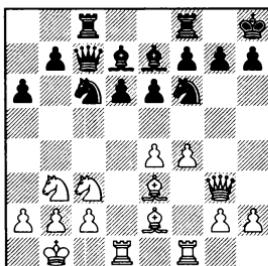
12.♗hf1

The English Attack

I doubt that White's rook's best place is on f1. It might be more useful from e1 or even from its current stand. A waiting approach like 12. $\mathbb{Q}b1$ $\mathbb{Q}d7$ (12...b5 13. $\mathbb{Q}xc6$ $\mathbb{W}xc6$ 14. $\mathbb{Q}f3$) 13. $\mathbb{Q}f3$ looks more unpleasant. Note that the plan with e4-e5 is risky, because it releases Black's pieces: 13. $\mathbb{Q}f3$ $\mathbb{E}ac8$ (13...e5 14.fxe5 $\mathbb{Q}xe5$ 15. $\mathbb{Q}d4$ b5 16. $\mathbb{Q}g5$ $\mathbb{Q}e6$ 17. $\mathbb{Q}f5$ $\mathbb{Q}xe4$ 18. $\mathbb{Q}xe4$ $\mathbb{Q}xf5$ 19. $\mathbb{Q}xe7$ $\mathbb{W}xe7$ 20. $\mathbb{Q}xd6$ $\mathbb{Q}g6$ 21. $\mathbb{Q}d2$ f6 22. $\mathbb{Q}hd1$) 14.e5 $\mathbb{Q}d5$ 15. $\mathbb{Q}xd5$ exd5 16.c3 b5 17. $\mathbb{Q}xd5$ dxe5 18.fxe5 $\mathbb{Q}e6\uparrow$.

12... $\mathbb{Q}d7$ 13.e5

Vallejo should have kept the tension with 13. $\mathbb{Q}b1$ $\mathbb{E}ac8$ 14. $\mathbb{Q}b3$. [14. $\mathbb{Q}f3$ $\mathbb{Q}b4$ 15. $\mathbb{Q}d2$ (15. $\mathbb{Q}d2$ $\mathbb{W}a5$) 15... $\mathbb{Q}a4$ 16. $\mathbb{Q}c1$ $\mathbb{W}a5$ 17.a3 $\mathbb{E}xc3$ 18.bxc3 $\mathbb{Q}c6\infty$]



White is threatening e4-e5, e.g. 14...b5 15.e5. It is tempting to stop it with 14...e5, but this pawn structure is dangerous with opposite castles. White answers 15. $\mathbb{W}f2$ b5 16.f5 b4 17. $\mathbb{Q}d5$ $\mathbb{Q}xd5$ 18.exd5 $\mathbb{Q}a5$ 19. $\mathbb{Q}xa5$ $\mathbb{W}xa5$ 20.g4 and he is way ahead in the race, e.g. 20...f6 21.h4 $\mathbb{Q}b5$ 22.g5 $\mathbb{W}c7$ 23. $\mathbb{Q}d2$ $\mathbb{Q}xe2$ 24. $\mathbb{Q}xe2$ $\mathbb{W}d7$ 25.g6.

It is preferable to avoid direct clashes in dynamic positions when you are lagging behind in development. I would vacate the d7-square with:

14... $\mathbb{Q}e8\?!$. Then White will need to redeploy his pieces which will give Black time to launch his own attack: 15. $\mathbb{Q}f3$ b5 16.a3 (16. $\mathbb{W}f2$ b4 17. $\mathbb{Q}a4$ $\mathbb{Q}d4$ 18. $\mathbb{Q}xd4$ $\mathbb{Q}xa4\rightarrow$ 19.e5 $\mathbb{Q}d7$) 16... $\mathbb{Q}b8$ 17. $\mathbb{W}f2$ a5 with mutual chances.

**13...dxe5 14.fxe5 $\mathbb{W}xe5$
15. $\mathbb{Q}f4$ $\mathbb{W}c5$ 16. $\mathbb{Q}b3$**

It was better to play for a repetition with 16. $\mathbb{Q}e3$ $\mathbb{W}e5$ (16... $\mathbb{Q}xd4$ 17. $\mathbb{Q}xd4$ $\mathbb{W}c6\infty$). Now White has not full compensation for the pawn.

**16... $\mathbb{W}a7$ 17. $\mathbb{Q}e3$ b6 18. $\mathbb{W}f2$
 $\mathbb{E}ab8$ 19.g4 $\mathbb{Q}e8$ (19... $\mathbb{Q}b4\?!$)
20.g5 $\mathbb{Q}d7$ 21.h4 f5 22. $\mathbb{Q}b1$ f4
23. $\mathbb{Q}c1$ e5 24.h5 $\mathbb{Q}c5$ 25.h6
 $\mathbb{Q}g6$ 26.hxg7+ $\mathbb{Q}xg7$ 27. $\mathbb{Q}f3$
 $\mathbb{Q}b4$ 28. $\mathbb{Q}a1$ $\mathbb{Q}xg5$ 29. $\mathbb{Q}g1$ h6
30.a3 a5 31. $\mathbb{W}e1$ $\mathbb{E}fe8$ 32. $\mathbb{Q}b5$
 $\mathbb{W}e7$ 33.axb4 axb4 34. $\mathbb{W}xb4$ e4
35. $\mathbb{Q}e2$ $\mathbb{E}a8$ 36. $\mathbb{Q}d6$ $\mathbb{W}e5$ 37. $\mathbb{Q}d2$
 $\mathbb{E}a4$ 38. $\mathbb{W}c3$ $\mathbb{W}xc3$ 39. $\mathbb{Q}xc3$ e3
40. $\mathbb{Q}xa4$ exd2 41. $\mathbb{Q}c3$ Draw.**

6. Volokitin-Najer Muelheim 23.11.2013

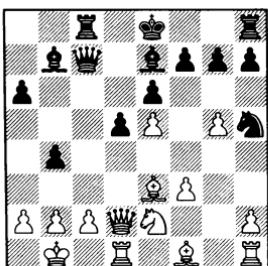
**1.e4 c5 2. $\mathbb{Q}f3$ e6 3.d4 $\mathbb{Q}xd4$
4. $\mathbb{Q}xd4$ $\mathbb{Q}c6$ 5. $\mathbb{Q}c3$ $\mathbb{W}c7$ 6. $\mathbb{Q}e3$
a6 7. $\mathbb{Q}d2$ $\mathbb{Q}f6$ 8.0-0-0 $\mathbb{Q}e7$ 9.f3
b5 10.g4 $\mathbb{Q}xd4$ 11. $\mathbb{W}xd4$ $\mathbb{Q}b7$**

Part 2

12.g5 ♜h5 13.♗b1 ♜c8 14.♗d2 b4 15.♗e2

Or 15.♘a4 d5 16.exd5 ♜xd5

15...d5 16.e5

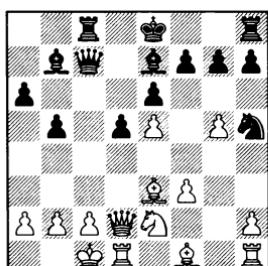


16...d4!

Life is brighter for Black with an active light-squared bishop!

16...♝xe5? 17.♗g3 ♜xg3 18.hxg3 ♜c7 19.♗h2 opens lines to White's long-range pieces.

The idea for the counter-sacrifice was not new to Najar. For instance, in September, Lopez Martinez introduced it against Bauer in a slightly different setting: 13.♗e2 ♜c8 14.♗d2 d5 15.e5

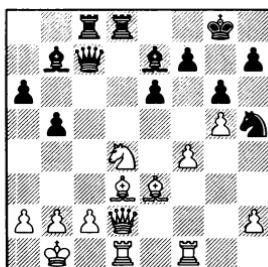


15...d4!. White's king is still on c1 here. This gives Black a tempo in some lines where he attacks the a2-

pawn with ...♗d5 or ...♝c4. 16.♗xd4 0-0 17.♗d3 ♜fd8

It looks tempting to leave the rook on f8 and open the f-file with 17...♗d5!? 18.♗b1 g6 19.♗hf1 ♜xe5 20.f4 ♜c7 21.♗b3 f6!?. However, this decision is risky from a practical standpoint as it weakens the castling position. White can sac a piece, for instance: 22.gxf6 ♜xf6 23.f5 exf5 24.♗xf5 ♜xf5 25.♗xf5 ♜xb3 26.axb3 gxf5 27.♗d5+ ♜h8 28.♗xf5 ♜g7 29.♗d4= whereas Black is unable to untie his pieces.

The source game Bauer-Lopez Martinez went 18.♗b1 g6 19.♗hf1 ♜xe5 20.f4 ♜c7



21.♗f2 ♜f8 22.♗b3 ♜d5 23.♗b6 ♜d6=.

Kurmann-Berkes, Bad Wiessee 2013, did not improve anything: 17.♗g2 ♜fd8 18.f4 ♜xg2 19.♗xg2 ♜c4! 20.♗b1 ♜xf4 21.♗xf4 ♜xd4 22.♗xd4 ♜xd4=. Black's combination became possible due to the hit on a2 so we must recheck White's idea with the insertion of ♘b1 b4.

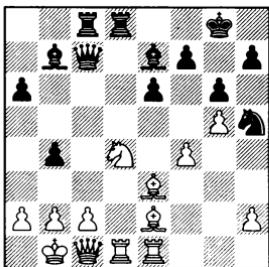
17.♗xd4 0-0 18.♗e2

Analysis confirms that 18.♗g2 ♜c5 20.♗hg1 ♜fd8 20.♗f2 does not

The English Attack

leave White a pawn up (although even then the game is even, since the $\mathbb{W}+\mathbb{Q}$ is at least a match to a queen+bad bishop), due to 20... $\mathbb{W}b6$ 21.f4 $\mathbb{Q}xg2$ 22. $\mathbb{Q}xg2$ $\mathbb{B}d5$ 23.f5 $\mathbb{B}cd8$ 24.fxe6 fxe6 25. $\mathbb{Q}g4$ $\mathbb{Q}xe5$.

18... $\mathbb{E}fd8$ 19. $\mathbb{W}c1$ g6 20. $\mathbb{E}he1$ $\mathbb{W}xe5$ 21.f4 $\mathbb{W}c7$



22.f5!?

Black came out of the opening with the better pawn structure so White must attempt to alter it. 22. $\mathbb{Q}xh5$ gxh5 would leave the b7-bishop without an opponent on the light squares so Volokitin's decision is understandable. His other option was really grim: 22. $\mathbb{Q}b3$ $\mathbb{Q}g7$ 23. $\mathbb{E}xd8+$ $\mathbb{E}xd8$ 24. $\mathbb{Q}d4$ $\mathbb{Q}c5$.

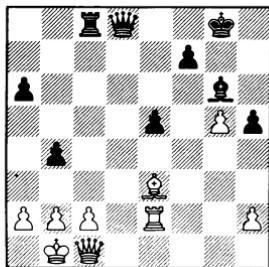
22...e5 23.fxg6

23.f6 $\mathbb{Q}f8$ 24. $\mathbb{Q}b3$ $\mathbb{Q}f4$ 25. $\mathbb{Q}g4$ $\mathbb{B}a8$ 26. $\mathbb{Q}xf4$ exf4 27. $\mathbb{E}f1$ $\mathbb{E}xd1$ 28. $\mathbb{W}xd1$ $\mathbb{E}d8$ 29. $\mathbb{W}c1$ $\mathbb{Q}d6$ gives Black a passed pawn up and the bishop pair.

23...hxg6 24. $\mathbb{Q}xh5$ $\mathbb{G}xh5$ 25. $\mathbb{Q}f5$ $\mathbb{Q}e4$

25... $\mathbb{E}xd1$ 26. $\mathbb{E}xd1$ $\mathbb{Q}e4$ 27. $\mathbb{Q}xe7$ $\mathbb{W}xe7$ 28. $\mathbb{E}d2$ a5 is probably slightly more accurate. In the game Black also achieves an opposite-coloured bishops attack. White's defence is quite difficult.

26. $\mathbb{Q}xe7+$ $\mathbb{W}xe7$ 27. $\mathbb{E}xd8+$ $\mathbb{W}xd8$ 28. $\mathbb{E}e2$ $\mathbb{Q}g6$



White failed to hold this extremely unpleasant position.

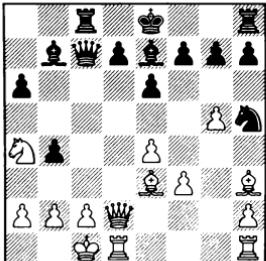
29.b3 a5 30. $\mathbb{Q}f2$ $\mathbb{W}d5$ 31. $\mathbb{Q}g3$ $\mathbb{a}4$ (31...h4! 32. $\mathbb{Q}xh4$ a4—+) 32. $\mathbb{E}d2$ $\mathbb{W}f3$ 33.bxa4 b3 34.axb3 $\mathbb{W}xb3+$ 35. $\mathbb{W}b2$ $\mathbb{W}xa4$ 36. $\mathbb{Q}xe5$ $\mathbb{Q}h7$ 37. $\mathbb{Q}c1$ $\mathbb{W}e4$ 38. $\mathbb{Q}f6$ $\mathbb{W}e1+$ 39. $\mathbb{E}d1$ $\mathbb{W}e3+$ 40. $\mathbb{E}d2$ $\mathbb{W}g1+$ 41. $\mathbb{E}d1$ $\mathbb{W}xh2$ 42. $\mathbb{E}d2$ $\mathbb{W}g1+$ 43. $\mathbb{E}d1$ $\mathbb{W}e3+$ 44. $\mathbb{E}d2$ $\mathbb{E}xc2+$ 45. $\mathbb{W}xc2$ $\mathbb{Q}xc2$ 46. $\mathbb{Q}xc2$ h4 47. $\mathbb{E}d3$ $\mathbb{W}e4$ 48. $\mathbb{Q}d2$ $\mathbb{W}g2+$ 49. $\mathbb{Q}e3$ $\mathbb{Q}g6$ 50. $\mathbb{Q}f4$ $\mathbb{W}f2+$ 51. $\mathbb{E}f3$ $\mathbb{W}h2+$ 52. $\mathbb{Q}e4$ h3 53. $\mathbb{Q}e5$ $\mathbb{W}e2+$ 54. $\mathbb{E}e3$ $\mathbb{W}g2+$ 55. $\mathbb{E}f3$ h2 56. $\mathbb{Q}xh2$ $\mathbb{W}e2+$ 57. $\mathbb{E}e3$ $\mathbb{W}xh2$ 0-1

**7. Robson-Wang,Yue
Rapid Ningbo (1.1), 25.07.2013**

1.e4 c5 2. $\mathbb{Q}f3$ e6 3.d4 $\mathbb{C}xd4$ 4. $\mathbb{Q}xd4$ $\mathbb{Q}c6$ 5. $\mathbb{Q}c3$ $\mathbb{W}c7$ 6. $\mathbb{Q}e3$

Part 2

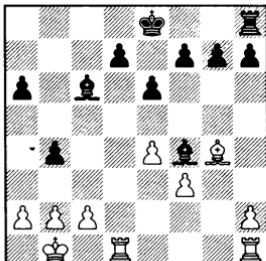
a6 7.♗d2 ♗f6 8.0-0-0 ♜e7 9.f3
b5 10.g4 ♖xd4 11.♗xd4 ♜b7
12.g5 ♖h5 13.♖h3 ♜c8 14.♗d2
b4 15.♘a4



15...♜c6!?

This game is not too important for the opening theory since Black has yet another good option in his possession – 15...d5. However, it sets a milestone in the understanding of the Taimanov pawn structures.

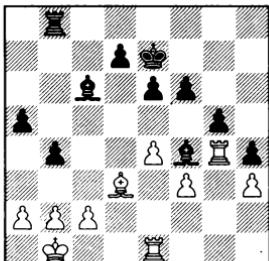
**16.♘b6 ♜b8 17.♗g4 ♜xb6!!
18.♗xb6 ♜xb6 19.♗xh5 ♜a5
20.♗b1 ♜xg5 21.♗xg5 ♜xg5
22.♗g4 ♜f4**



It turns out that White has to struggle for the draw despite being an exchange up. His kingside pawns are vulnerable and the rooks

are passive. The subsequent play is so logical and straightforward that it does not need comments.

**23.♖h3 ♜e7 24.♗f1 a5 25.♗d3
h5 26.h3 h4 27.♗hg1 g5 28.♗de1
♗b8 29.♗g4 f6**



30.♗eg1

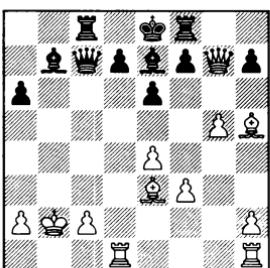
White is looking for a way to return the exchange. 30.♗gg1 is also murky due to the possible raid of Black's king to f4 (after ...♗g3) followed up by ...d5. White will be unable to defend both the h3- and f3-pawns.

**30...♗e3 31.♗e1 ♜f2 32.♗f1
♗g3 33.♗c1 ♜d6 34.♗d2 ♜e5
35.♗g1 d5 36.♗e2 d4 37.♗g2 ♜h8
38.♗g1 ♜h5 39.♗g2 f5+ 40.♗xf5
♗xf5 41.♗4xg3 hxg3 42.♗xg3
♗f4 43.♗f2 ♜d5 44.b3 ♜h8
45.♗e2 ♜e8 46.♗g1 ♜c8 47.♗d3
♗xf3 48.♗xf5 ♜xf5 49.♗xf3
♗xc2 50.♗g4 ♜c3+ 51.♗f2
♗xh3 52.♗xd4 ♜h2+ 53.♗f3
♗e5 54.♗e4+ ♜d5 55.♗g4 ♜h5
56.♗g2 ♜d4 57.♗g4 ♜h8 58.♗c2
♗e8 59.♗xg5 ♜e5+ 60.♗f4
♗d3 61.♗h2 ♜e2 62.♗h3+ ♜d4
63.♗h8 ♜f2+ 0-1**

The English Attack

8. Demetrio-Schiendorfer ICCF email, 10.09.2009

1.e4 c5 2.♘f3 e6 3.d4 cxd4 4.♗xd4 ♘c6 5.♗c3 ♖c7 6.♗e3 a6 7.♗d2 ♘f6 8.0-0-0 ♘e7 9.f3 b5 10.g4 ♘xd4 11.♗xd4 ♘b7 12.g5 ♘h5 13.♗h3 ♖c8 14.♗g4 b4 15.♗xh5 bxc3 16.♖xg7 cxb2+ 17.♗xb2 ♖f8

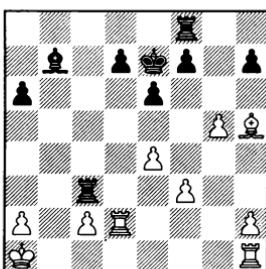


This forced line is critical for Black's set-up. At first sight it looks rather messy, but in fact the game is completely balanced and it is even White who should find a couple of accurate moves. Black has only one tangible target – the f7-pawn and his pieces are more compact. This is clearly seen in the line 18.♗d4 ♘c5= (McDonald-Brunello, London 2013 saw 18...d5 when 19.♗a1! would have been equal) 19.♖xc5 ♖xc5 20.♗xc5 ♖xc5 21.h4 h6=, Rasik-Miton, Slovakia 2014.

18.c3 seemingly defends the c-pawn, but 18...♗d6 (18...d5 19.♗d4 ♗d6 20.♗f6 ♘e7= is a repetition of moves) would force 19.♗xd6 since 19.♗d4? e5 cuts the g7-queen off from its king.

18.♗a1 d5?!

18...♖xc2?! would give White tempi for ♕b1 and ♜hc1, but 18...♗b4! 19.♗d4 ♖c3+ 20.♗xc3 ♖xc3+ 21.♖xc3 ♖xc3 is a decent alternative.



OTB, I would choose this end-game because I would have a lasting initiative without any risk. White's extra pawn would be irrelevant as Black's rooks are very active. He can play later ...f5 or ...h6 gxh6 ♜h8.

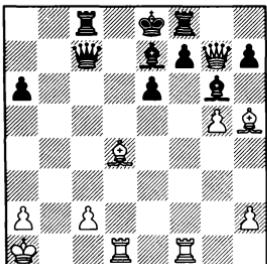
In a correspondence game, however, Black can boldly aim for more tangled play. His idea to take on e4 is double edged as it opens the f-file and weakens the e8-king. This might tell if White succeeded in shifting his queen to the queenside. For instance, he has the interesting counter-strike 19.c4 ♖xc4 (19...dxe4 20.fxe4 ♘xe4 21.♗hf1 ♘g6 22.♗xg6 fxg6=) 20.♗c1 ♖d3 21.♗xc8+ ♖xc8 22.♗f4 dxe4 23.♗c1 ♘b7 24.♗e5 with an initiative, although 24...♖d5 defends everything. Demetrio opts for the most solid continuation:

19.♗d4!

Part 2

19.c4 dxe4 20.fxe4 ♜xe4 21.♖hf1
♜g6 22.♗xg6 fxg6 is equal.

**19...dxe4 20.fxe4 ♜xe4
21.♖hf1 ♜g6**



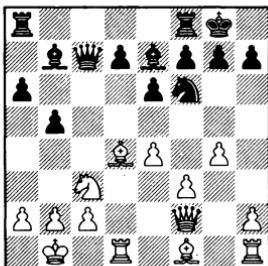
22.♗e2

This move obstructs the second rank. 22.♗f3! is more unpleasant. The reason behind it is the manoeuvre 22...♝a5 23.c3 ♛xg5 24.♗f2, aiming for the b-file. White's activity would be very unpleasant. Instead, he assumes a passive stand which costs him the initiative.

**22...♝a5 23.♗b2 ♜c7 24.h4
♝xc2 25.♗h5! ♜xd1 26.♗xf7+
♞d8 27.♗xd1+ ♜d7 28.♗c1 ♛d2
29.♛e5 ♜d6 30.♛f6+ ♜e7 31.♛f3
♝xc1+ draw.**

**9. Caruana-Svidler
Rhodes 26.10.2013**

**1.e4 c5 2.♗f3 e6 3.d4 cxd4
4.♗xd4 ♜c6 5.♗c3 ♛c7 6.♗e3 a6
7.♗d2 ♜f6 8.0-0-0 ♜e7 9.f3 b5
10.g4 ♜xd4 11.♗xd4 ♜b7 12.♗b1
0-0 13.♗f2**



13...♜ac8

Caruana's last move was obviously aimed against Black's thematic idea 13...b4 14.♗a4 d5 when 15.♗b6! ♜ad8 (the exchange sacrifice 15...dxe4 is in White's favour) 16.e5 ♜d7 17.♗xd7 would face Black with unpleasant position without counterplay. However, 13...d5! right away is possible – 14.g5 ♜d7 15.exd5 b4.

**14.♗hg1 ♜c6 15.♗d3 b4
16.♗e2**

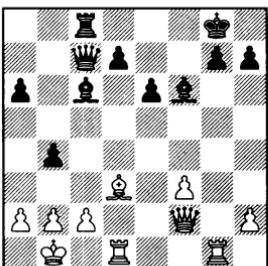
16.e5 would be well met by 16...♝e8!.

The knight is very important for the defence as I already mentioned in the previous note. 16...♞d5 17.♗xd5 ♜xd5 18.f4 d6 19.g5 dxe5 20.♗xe5 ♛c6 21.f5 offers White the initiative, although Black's position is quite resilient. After the knight's retreat, the manoeuvre ♜e2-g3 is slow. Black will trade the active d3-bishop with 17...♝b5 and then ...d6 will neutralise the opponent's spatial advantage. Obviously White should seek a quick conclusion:

17.♗e4 f6 18.exf6 ♜xf6 19.♗xf6

The English Attack

$\mathbb{Q}xf6$ 20.g5 $\mathbb{Q}e5$ 21. $\mathbb{Q}f6+$, but 21... $\mathbb{Q}xf6!$ 22.gxf6 $\mathbb{Q}xf6$ offers us another example where Black's bishop + pawn hold their own against a rook.

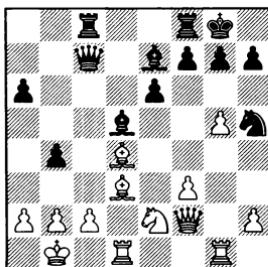


Black will always be threatening to build up a $\mathbb{W}+\mathbb{Q}$ battery on the main diagonal. Moreover, the f3 and h2-pawns are weak.

16...d5 17.g5

The pawn structure after 17.e5 is good for White only if his knight is on b6. Otherwise the d7-knight has good prospects from c5: 17... $\mathbb{Q}d7$ 18.f4 $\mathbb{Q}a4$ 19. $\mathbb{Q}d2$ $\mathbb{Q}c5$ 20. $\mathbb{Q}c1$ a5 setting up the trap 21.f5? $\mathbb{Q}g5$ 22. $\mathbb{Q}e2$ $\mathbb{Q}xd3$ 23. $\mathbb{Q}xd3$ $\mathbb{Q}h4!$ with an initiative, for example, 24. $\mathbb{W}g2$ $\mathbb{W}c4$ 25. $\mathbb{Q}c5$ $\mathbb{Q}xc5$ 26.b3 $\mathbb{W}c3$ 27. $\mathbb{Q}xc5$ $\mathbb{Q}b5$ 28. $\mathbb{Q}d3$ a4!.

17... $\mathbb{Q}h5$ 18.exd5 $\mathbb{Q}xd5$

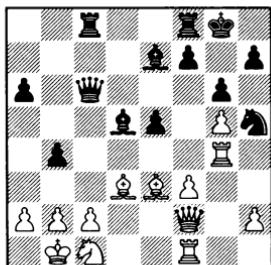


This position illustrates Black's strategic aim in the English Attack. If White has not anything forced, he is even slightly worse. Black has an open file against the enemy king and an extra pawn in the centre. the pawn storm ...a5-a4, ...b4-b3 is not easy to stop. An important factor in Black's favour is that queens trade would underline the weakness of White's kingside pawns. For instance, 19.f4 $\mathbb{Q}c5$ 20.f5 g6 21. $\mathbb{Q}xc5$ $\mathbb{W}xc5$. Caruana attempts to take f4 under control.

19. $\mathbb{E}g4?$! e5! 20. $\mathbb{Q}e3$ $\mathbb{W}c6$

20...g6! was more cunning. White has not an active continuation as 21. $\mathbb{Q}g3$ could be met by 21...f5 or 21... $\mathbb{Q}f4$. The text does not actually threaten f3 and it wastes time. White could exploit it with 21. $\mathbb{Q}g3$ when 21... $\mathbb{Q}xf3?$ fails to 22. $\mathbb{Q}f5$ $\mathbb{E}ce8$ 23. $\mathbb{E}c4$.

21. $\mathbb{E}f1$ g6 22. $\mathbb{Q}c1$



22...f5

A good move, but Black may have technical problems to convert his advantage due to his weak-

Part 2

ened king. He had more solid options: 22... $\mathbb{Q}d6$! 23. $\mathbb{Q}e4$ $\mathbb{Q}f4$ 24. $\mathbb{Q}xf4$ $\mathbb{Q}xe4$ 25.fxe4 exf4. Then 26.e5 $\mathbb{Q}xe5$ 27. $\mathbb{Q}d3$ $\mathbb{Q}d6$ 28. $\mathbb{Q}xf4$ does not help owing to 28...f5! 29. $\mathbb{Q}h4$ $\mathbb{Q}e7$ 30. $\mathbb{Q}d3$ a5 with domination.

23.gxf6 $\mathbb{Q}xf6$ 24. $\mathbb{Q}gg1$ $\mathbb{Q}h5$ 25. $\mathbb{Q}d2$ $\mathbb{Q}xf3$ 26. $\mathbb{Q}b3$

Black has won a pawn, but White set up co-ordination between his pieces. Eventually, Svidler failed to bring the point home.

26... $\mathbb{Q}fd8$ 27. $\mathbb{Q}f2$ $\mathbb{Q}f8$ 28. $\mathbb{Q}h6$ $\mathbb{Q}f7$ 29. $\mathbb{Q}e3$ e4 30. $\mathbb{Q}d4$ $\mathbb{Q}d5$

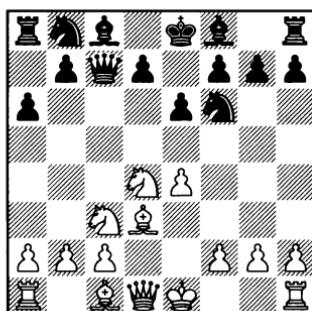
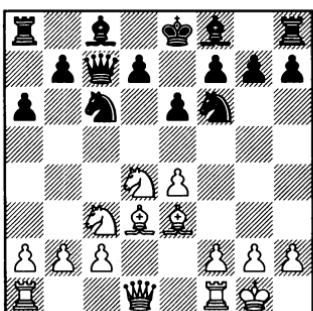
31. $\mathbb{Q}xf3$ $\mathbb{Q}xd3$ 32. $\mathbb{Q}xd3$ $\mathbb{Q}xd3$ 33.cxd3 $\mathbb{Q}f8$ 34. $\mathbb{Q}d2$ $\mathbb{Q}d6$ 35. $\mathbb{Q}g5$ $\mathbb{Q}xf1+$ 36. $\mathbb{Q}xf1$ $\mathbb{Q}xh2$ 37. $\mathbb{Q}xb4$ $\mathbb{Q}e5$ 38. $\mathbb{Q}e6$ $\mathbb{Q}g7$ 39. $\mathbb{Q}e1$ $\mathbb{Q}g3$ 40. $\mathbb{Q}e4$ $\mathbb{Q}e8$ 41. $\mathbb{Q}c5$ h5 42. $\mathbb{Q}c3$ $\mathbb{Q}xe4$ 43. $\mathbb{Q}xe4$ $\mathbb{Q}f4$ 44. $\mathbb{Q}c2$ $\mathbb{Q}f5$ 45. $\mathbb{Q}d1$ $\mathbb{Q}f7$ 46. $\mathbb{Q}d2$ $\mathbb{Q}e5$ 47.b4 $\mathbb{Q}e6$ 48.a4 $\mathbb{Q}g3$ 49. $\mathbb{Q}xg3$ $\mathbb{Q}xg3$ 50.b5 axb5 51.axb5 $\mathbb{Q}d5$ 52. $\mathbb{Q}e3$ $\mathbb{Q}d6$ 53. $\mathbb{Q}e2$ $\mathbb{Q}c5$ 54. $\mathbb{Q}g5$ $\mathbb{Q}b6$ 55. $\mathbb{Q}f3$ $\mathbb{Q}c5$ 56. $\mathbb{Q}e4$ $\mathbb{Q}c7$ 57.d4+ $\mathbb{Q}xb5$ 58. $\mathbb{Q}d5$ $\mathbb{Q}g3$ 59. $\mathbb{Q}e3$ $\mathbb{Q}b4$ 60. $\mathbb{Q}e6$ h4 61.d5 $\mathbb{Q}c4$ 62.d6 $\mathbb{Q}xd6$ 63. $\mathbb{Q}xd6$ $\mathbb{Q}d3$ 64. $\mathbb{Q}g1$ $\mathbb{Q}e4$ 65. $\mathbb{Q}e6$ g5 66. $\mathbb{Q}f6$ $\mathbb{Q}f4$ 67. $\mathbb{Q}h2+$ $\mathbb{Q}g4$ 68. $\mathbb{Q}g6$ $\mathbb{Q}h3$ 69. $\mathbb{Q}xg5$ $\mathbb{Q}xh2$ 70. $\mathbb{Q}xh4$ draw.

Part 3

The Third Rank Set-Up

I consider here set-ups with $\mathbb{Q}c3$, $\mathbb{Q}d3$, 0-0. White often follows up with $\mathbb{Q}e3$, f4, $\mathbb{W}f3$, but I also analyse $\mathbb{We}2+\mathbb{Q}d2$ in the Kan. Plans with f4 and long castling are covered in Part 4.

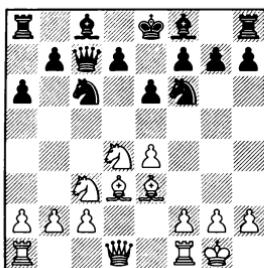
The big flaw of White's set-up is that $\mathbb{Q}d3$ cuts the queen's support for the d4-knight and leaves the g4-square without control. The Taimanov way to exploit that is a direct attack with ... $\mathbb{Q}b8-c6-e5-g4$ while the bishop goes to c5. The Kan fans prefer the flexible development ... $\mathbb{Q}b8-d7-c5$ planning to swap the d3-bishop.



Part 3. The Third Rank Set-Up

Main Ideas

1.e4 c5 2.♘f3 e6 3.d4 cxd4 4.♗xd4 ♜c6 5.♗c3 ♜c7 6.♗e3 a6 7.♗d3 ♗f6 (7...b5 is dubious due to 8.♗xc6) **8.0-0**



White is playing “by the book”. He leads out the knights first, then the bishops. That ensures him a lead in development which could easily grow into a crushing kingside attack. For instance, the Scheveningen set-ups with 8...d6 are very risky, so Black should better look for concrete play on the central dark squares.

A plus for the Taimanov: in order to develop the bishop on d3, White has to play first ♘e3 which rules out set-ups with ♘d2.

You may have noted that I did not even mention possible long castling. It is rarely seen since Black obtains a good game after 8.♗e2 ♜d6!? 9.0-0-0 ♜e5 10.♗xc6 bxc6.

A plus for the Taimanov: Black avoids plans with ♜e2, 0-0-0.

In the diagram position, Black can choose 8...♗xd4 9.♗xd4 ♜c5, followed up by ...d6, ...e5, ...♗e6. This is a solid plan where White enjoys a temporary initiative. However, I think that Black should exploit the biggest flaw of the opponent’s set-up – the g4-square:

8...♗e5! 9.h3

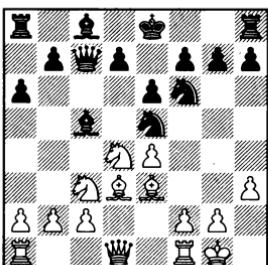
9.♗f3 ♜fg4 10.♗xe5 ♜xe3 11.♗h5! is analysed up to a draw endgame. I’d like to recommend 9...♗eg4!? 10.♗d2 d6 with a solid position and mutual chances.

9...♗c5

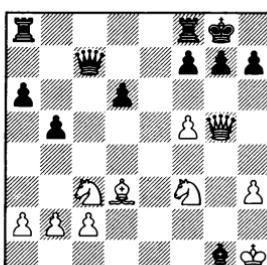
At this point, White must decide the further pace of the game.

The Third Rank Set-Up

Taimanov 1

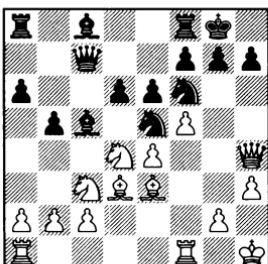


Taimanov 2



The oldest approach is to push $e4-e5$: 10. $\mathbb{W}e2$ $d6$ 11. $f4$ $\mathbb{Q}g6$ 12. $\mathbb{Q}b3$ $\mathbb{Q}xe3$ 13. $\mathbb{W}xe3$ 0-0 14. $\mathbb{Q}ae1$ $b5$ 15. $e5$ $dxe5$ 16. $\mathbb{Q}xg6$ $hxg6$ 17. $fxe5$ $\mathbb{Q}d7$ 18. $\mathbb{Q}d4$ $\mathbb{Q}b7$, but practice has proved that Black is fine. White's hopes for reviving this line have been connected lately with the extremely sharp line:

10. $\mathbb{Q}h1$ $d6$ 11. $f4$ $\mathbb{Q}g6$ 12. $\mathbb{W}e1$
0-0!? 13. $f5$ $\mathbb{Q}e5$ 14. $\mathbb{W}h4$ $b5$



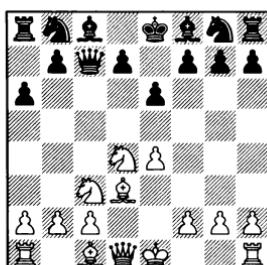
15. $\mathbb{Q}f3$ $exf5$ 16. $exf5$ $\mathbb{Q}xf3$
17. $gxf3$ $\mathbb{Q}b7$ 18. $\mathbb{Q}g1$ $\mathbb{Q}xf3$ 19. $\mathbb{Q}xf3$ $\mathbb{Q}e3$ 20. $\mathbb{W}f6$ $\mathbb{Q}xg1$ 21. $\mathbb{W}g5$

Practical experience has seen Black gradually improving his defence in this position. The second players also learned how to counter-attack.

The current state of theory is in Black's favour.

In the Kan, Black refrains from ... $\mathbb{Q}c6$ in favour of ... $\mathbb{Q}bd7$:

1. $e4$ $c5$ 2. $\mathbb{Q}f3$ $e6$ 3. $d4$ $cxd4$
4. $\mathbb{Q}xd4$ $a6$ 5. $\mathbb{Q}c3$ $\mathbb{W}c7$ 6. $\mathbb{Q}d3$



Black has sidestepped the allegedly dangerous English Attack so he might be tempted to enter the Taimanov now. However, 6... $\mathbb{Q}c6$ can be met by 7. $\mathbb{Q}xc6$ $\mathbb{W}xc6$!?!? 8. 0-0 which looks balanced, but it is a leap in the unknown.

6... $\mathbb{Q}f6$ 7. 0-0 (7. $\mathbb{W}e2$ $\mathbb{Q}d6$!?) 7... $d6$

Black's next moves are 8... $\mathbb{Q}bd7$, 9... $\mathbb{Q}e7$ (only to 8. a4 he plays 8... $b6$)

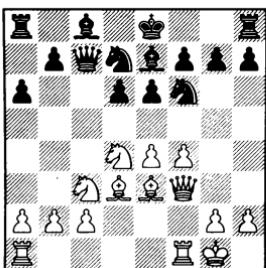
Part 3

first) waiting for White to define his plan. Delay ...b5 in order to rule out queenside activity with a2-a4, c2-c3.

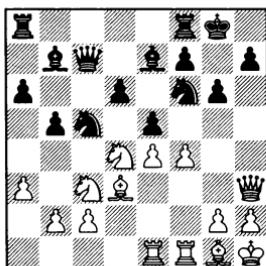
A plus for the Kan: Black's set-up is very flexible. It offers the opponent a wide choice and an ample ground for positional mistakes.

White has 4 main set-ups:

1. 8.f4 $\mathbb{Q}bd7$ 9. $\mathbb{W}f3$ $\mathbb{Q}e7$ 10. $\mathbb{Q}e3$

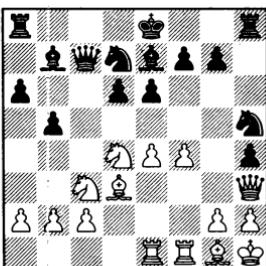


The third rank set-up is inefficient against ... $\mathbb{Q}bd7$. It is only dangerous if Black submits himself to an attack with 10...0-0?!. Instead, we should fianchetto the bishop to b7 and restrict the opponent's pawn advance by ...g6, aiming for this position:



or for ...h7-h5-h4 as in the following example:

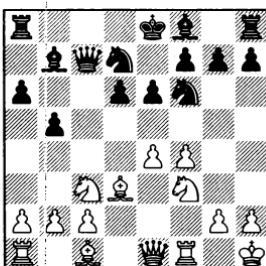
Kan 1



See game 18 Kerekes-A.Kovacs, Hungary 2007.

2. 8.f4 $\mathbb{Q}bd7$ 9. $\mathbb{Q}f3$ b5! 10. $\mathbb{Q}h1$
(10. $\mathbb{W}e1$ $\mathbb{Q}b7$ 11. $\mathbb{Q}d2$ $\mathbb{Q}e7$) 10... $\mathbb{Q}b7$
11. $\mathbb{W}e1$

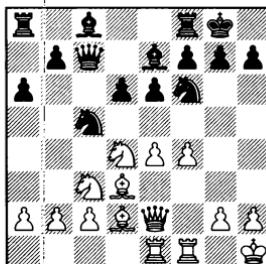
Kan 2



A good option here is 11...b4
12. $\mathbb{Q}d1$ d5 or 12... $\mathbb{Q}c5$ 13. $\mathbb{Q}f2$ d5.

3. 8. $\mathbb{W}e2$ $\mathbb{Q}bd7$ 9. $\mathbb{Q}h1$ $\mathbb{Q}e7$
10. $\mathbb{Q}d2!?$ 0-0 11.f4 $\mathbb{Q}c5$ 12. $\mathbb{R}ae1$

Kan 3



The Third Rank Set-Up

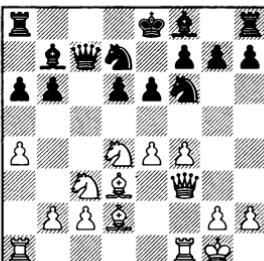
Objectively best here is 12...b5 which, however, assumes a draw in the variation 13.e5 $\mathbb{Q}fd7$ 14. $\mathbb{Q}xh7+$ $\mathbb{Q}xh7$ 15. $\mathbb{W}h5+$ $\mathbb{Q}g8$ 16. $\mathbb{E}f3$ $dxe5$ 17. $\mathbb{E}h3$ $f5$ 18. $\mathbb{W}h7+$.

12... $\mathbb{Q}xd3$ 13.cxd3 b5 is passive, but at least Black will be playing for all three results.

**4. 8.a4 b6 9.f4 $\mathbb{Q}b7$ 10. $\mathbb{W}f3$
 $\mathbb{Q}bd7$ 11. $\mathbb{Q}d2$**

A plus for the Kan: There is little theory and the play is not forced. You do not have to constantly watch for new developments.

Kan 4



11... $\mathbb{Q}e7$ (11...g6!? 12. $\mathbb{W}h3$ $\mathbb{Q}g7)$
12. $\mathbb{E}ae1$ 0-0

Black is waiting for White to play 13. $\mathbb{W}h3$ before putting in 13... $\mathbb{Q}c5$. See **game 16** Cubas-Hellsten, Buenos Aires 2006.

Weapon of Choice

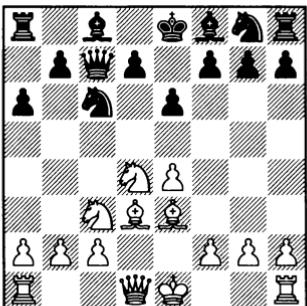
If you feel confident in your home preparation and regularly check modern practice for new developments in position Taimanov 2, then the Taimanov should be your weapon of choice. It leads to very sharp play with a lot of calculations and offers Black considerable winning chances. If you started with the Kan move order, you should try to steer the game into the Taimanov with 6... $\mathbb{Q}c6$. The only sensible White deviation would be 7. $\mathbb{Q}xc6$ $\mathbb{W}xc6$!?.

If you are much stronger than your opponent, you may want to choose the Kan. It allows many different move orders and the cost of every move in the opening is much lower than in the Taimanov. You could always outplay your opponent in the middlegame. It would be enough to kill his d3-bishop with ... $\mathbb{Q}d7$ -c5xd3 in order to secure your king, and patiently wait for an opportunity to open the main diagonal for you b7-bishop.

Part 3. The Third Rank Set-Up

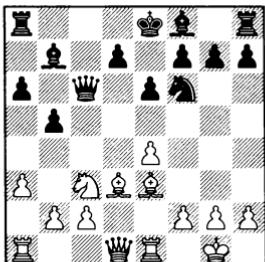
Taimanov – Step by Step

1.e4 c5 2. $\mathbb{Q}f3$ e6 3.d4 cxd4
4. $\mathbb{Q}xd4$ $\mathbb{Q}c6$ 5. $\mathbb{Q}c3$ $\mathbb{W}c7$ 6. $\mathbb{Q}e3$
a6 7. $\mathbb{Q}d3$



7... $\mathbb{Q}f6$

The other popular move is 7...b5. It scores well and Emms recommends it in his repertoire book, but I definitely do not like the position after 8. $\mathbb{Q}xc6!$ $\mathbb{W}xc6$ 9.0-0 $\mathbb{Q}b7$ 10.a3 $\mathbb{Q}f6$ 11. $\mathbb{Q}e1!$



Black lacks a sensible plan. The common 11... $\mathbb{Q}e7$ 12. $\mathbb{W}f3$ d6 13. $\mathbb{Q}ad1$ $\mathbb{W}c7$ (13...0-0 14. $\mathbb{W}h3$) 14. $\mathbb{W}h3!$ 0-0 15. $\mathbb{Q}g5$ h6 (15... $\mathbb{Q}fd8$ 16. $\mathbb{Q}e3$ $\mathbb{W}c5$ 17. $\mathbb{Q}d5\rightarrow$) 16. $\mathbb{Q}xh6!$ $\mathbb{G}xh6$ 17.e5! is gloom.

Emms and Ribli advocate 11... $\mathbb{Q}d6$ 12. $\mathbb{Q}d4$ e5 13. $\mathbb{Q}e3$ $\mathbb{Q}c5$. Then 14. $\mathbb{W}f3$ $\mathbb{Q}xe3$ 15. $\mathbb{Q}xe3$ $\mathbb{W}c5$ 16. $\mathbb{W}f5!$ $\mathbb{Q}f8$ (16...0-0 17. $\mathbb{Q}d5$) 17. $\mathbb{Q}d1$ $\mathbb{W}e7$ 18. $\mathbb{Q}f3$ $\mathbb{Q}g8$ 19.h4 h6 20. $\mathbb{Q}d5$ $\mathbb{Q}xd5$ 21.exd5 d6 22.c4 is by no means fun for Black, but 14.a4! b4 15. $\mathbb{Q}d5$ $\mathbb{Q}xd5$ 16.exd5 $\mathbb{W}xd5$ 17. $\mathbb{Q}g4$ is a real disaster: 17...0-0-0 18. $\mathbb{Q}xc5$ $\mathbb{W}xc5$ 19. $\mathbb{Q}e4\rightarrow$ (or 19.c3).

8.0-0

Castling is by far the most fashionable continuation nowadays, but White has also tried:

a) 8. $\mathbb{Q}b3$. This retreat is aimed against 8.0-0 $\mathbb{Q}xd4$ 9. $\mathbb{Q}xd4$ $\mathbb{Q}c5$ which is quite safe for Black. White's idea is to organise a Scheveningen-style attack with 0-0, f4, $\mathbb{W}f3$. Still, wasting a tempo in a sharp position (even two tempi, since White needs his knight for the attack and often brings it back to d4 *en route* to f3), reduces his chances of get-

The Third Rank Set-Up

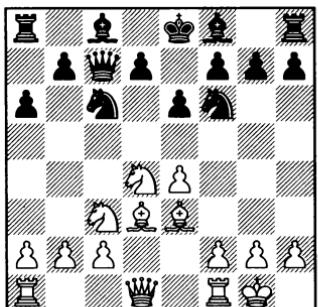
ting an edge.

Black should develop by 8...b5 9.f4 d6 10.♗f3 ♜b7 and trade his c6-knight for the d3-bishop.

b) 8.♗e2, intending to castle long, is seldom seen lately. Black's most testing answer is 8...♞d6!? 9.0-0-0 (9.g3 ♜e5 10.♝b3 d5!) 9...♜e5, when after 10.♝xc6 both captures are fine for him:

10...dxc6 11.♝a4 ♜d7 12.♗d2 ♜d6 (12...♜f6!? – Miladinovic) 13.f4 e5 14.♗c4 ♜e7 15.♗f2!=, Sax-Miladinovic, Ano Liosia 1999;

10...bxc6!? 11.♝a4 ♜b8 12.b3 (12.c3!?) 12...d5 13.♗c5 ♜d6!, Rodin-Hasangatin, Voronezh 2003.



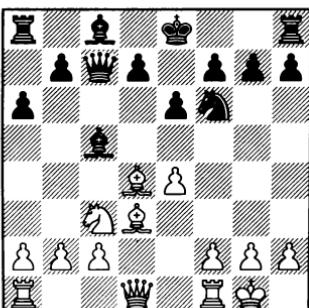
Black has a number of alternatives here. Note that the Scheveningen set-up with 8...d6 is very risky against 7.♘d3. White often obtains a crushing attack with simple developing moves like f4, ♜f3-h3, ♜ae1.

A. 8...♝xd4; B. 8...♝e5

8...♞d6?! is an inferior alternative because White quickly launches a kingside attack – 9.♝xc6!

bx_c6 (9...dxc6 10.f4 e5 11.f5 b5 12.a4!) 10.f4 e5 11.f5! ♜e7 12.♗f3 ♜b7 (12...0-0 13.g4 h6 14.h4 ♜h7 15.g5!+–) 13.♗g3 0-0 14.♗h6.

A. 8...♝xd4!? 9.♝xd4 ♜c5



Black's strategy is simple and straightforward. He wants to complete development and play in the centre. Black's next steps are: ...d6, ...e5, ...♞e6 and castling when possible.

Remember! We refrain from ...b5 in the opening. Thus we gain time for development and deprive the opponent of a target on the queenside.

White has three main plans from this point:

1. He doubles or triples on the d-file. Then we move our king to e7.

2. White splits our kingside pawns by: 10.♗xf6 gf6 11.♗g4 ♜f8. We can leave our pawn on d7 in order to have ...♞d6 or defend it by ...♞c6. There is nothing to worry about as we gradually connect our

Part 3

rooks and display activity on the kingside.

3. White plays f4. We answer it by ...e5, ... \mathbb{Q} e6, exf4 before castling.

A1. 10.♗e2!?; A2. 10.♗xf6; A3. 10.♗xc5

A1. 10. ♘e2!?

This position occurred in the very first game played in this variation. At the Black side was the God-father Taimanov. White hopes to use the weakness of d6.

10...d6

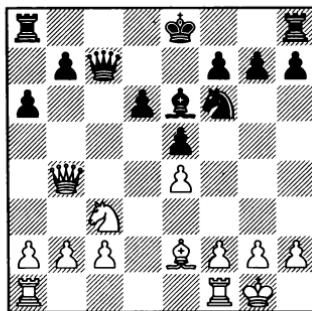
Many strong players prefer 10... $e5$, but I have strong doubts about the soundness of this choice. After 11.♗xc5 ♘xc5 12.♗d3 b5 (12...d6 13.♗ad1 ♖e7 14.♗g3±), the novelty 13.♗fb1! assures White of a lasting edge. For example: 13...♗b7 14.b4 ♘c6 (14...♘c7 15.a4 ♜c8 16.axb5±) 15.a4 bxa4 16.♗d1 0-0 17.♗d5 ♗xd5 18.exd5.

11.wd3

White scores poorly after 11.♕xf6!? , but this is his most principled continuation. The comparison with line A2 is in White's favour here because of the weak d6-pawn. Black must defend very accurately: 11...gxsf6 12.♗d2 ♕d7 13.♗ad1 ♜g8 14.♗h6 [14.♗f4 ♜e7 15.♗d3 ♜c6 16.a3 (16.♕h5 ♜af8 17.♗fd1 ♜g5)]

16... $\mathbb{E}g5$ 17.g3 a5!] 14... $\mathbb{E}e7$ 15. $\mathbb{E}h5$
 $\mathbb{E}af8$ 16. $\mathbb{E}h1$ $\mathbb{W}b6$.

11... $\mathbb{Q}xd4$ 12. $\mathbb{W}xd4$ e5 13. $\mathbb{W}b4$
 $\mathbb{Q}e6$



14.gad1

White might need his rook on the queenside so 14.¤fd1 is a logical alternative. Black can answer with either 14...¤e7!? when 15.f4 is not dangerous in view of 15...a5 16.¤b5 (16.¤a3 ¤b6+ 17.¤f1 ¤b4 18.fxe5 dxe5) 16...¤hc8, or 14...¤c5 15.a3 ¤xb4 16.axb4 ¤e7 17.¤a5 ¤hc8 18.f3 ¤c4=, Dembo-V.Schneider, Plovdiv 2008.

14... $\mathbb{W}c5$ (14... $\mathbb{W}e7$) 15.a3

15. $\mathbb{W}xb7$ 0-0 16. a3 $\mathbb{E}fb8$ 17. $\mathbb{W}e7$ $\mathbb{E}d8=$ (threatening $\mathbb{E}d7-$) leads to a repetition.

15...0-0-0!?

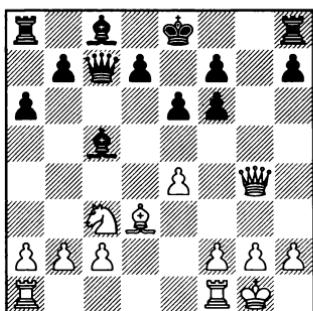
Hector-Haba, Hamburg 2004,
 saw 15... $\mathbb{W}b4$ 16.ab4 $\mathbb{A}e7$ 17. $\mathbb{E}d2$
 $\mathbb{E}hc8$ 18.f3 $\mathbb{A}c4=$. I decided to face
 the opponent with more complex
 problems.

The Third Rank Set-Up

16.♗d2 ♖b4 17.ab4 d5=.

Black has even some slight initiative, Mamedov-Delchev, Benasque 2005.

A2. 10.♗xf6 gxf6 11.♗g4!



This is more precise than 11.♗h1 h5 and Black follows the scheme ...b5, ...♗b7, ...♗e7, ...♗ag8, ...f5 like in the game Morozevic-Poluljahov, Orel 1992.

The text is an attempt to drag Black's king to f8 instead of the better place e7.

11...♗f8

This is not obligatory at all. Black has perfect compensation for the pawn after 11...♗e5 12.♗g7 (perhaps 12.♗h1 is more solid, 12...♗g5 13.♗e2 h5 14.f4 ♗g4∞) 12...♗f8 13.♗h1 ♗g5 14.♗h7 ♗g8 15.♗h3 b5 16.f4 ♗g7 17.♗f3 ♗h8 18.♗g3 ♗f8 19.♗g4 ♗b7. If White plays h3, ♗h2, Black can shift his dark-squared bishop to the h2-b8 diagonal.

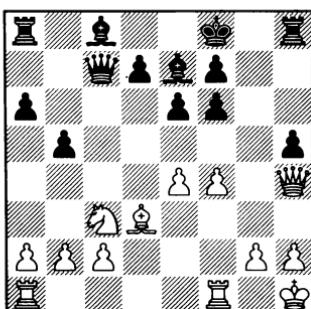
12.♗h1

Or 12.♗h4 ♗e5 13.♗h6 ♗g8 14.♗h1 ♗g5 15.♗h3 h5=.

12...h5 13.♗h4

13.♗h3 ♗f4 14.♗e2 b5 15.♗ad1 should be met by 15...d6!∞. (15...♗e7? lost a pawn after 16.♗d5 d6 17.♗h5, Balashov-Tregubov, Katowice 1992.)

13...♗e7 14.f4 b5



Black's game is easy. He wants to complete development and play ...♗g7, ...♗ag8, ...♗f8. White cannot wait.

15.f5!

In Tzeitlin-Soffer, Tel Aviv 1994, White delayed this thrust – 15.♗ae1 and Black achieved the redeployment following 15...♗b7 16.f5 ♗e5! 17.a4 ♗c6!

The pawn structure in the centre is identical with The Poisoned pawn variation in the Najdorf. Black should keep control of c4 to avoid the manoeuvre ♗d1-e3-c4. In Fedorov-Miezis, Istanbul 2000, White

Part 3

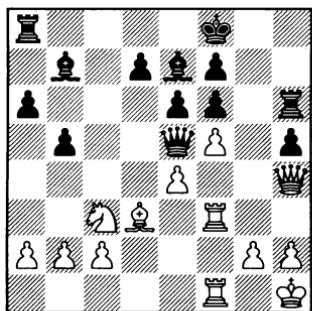
chose 17.♕d1 at once, but could not even equalise after 17...♗g7 18.♕f3 ♜ag8 19.c3 ♘f8 20.♕e3 ♜g5 21.♕e2 ♜hg8 22.♕c2 ♜c5 23.♕f1 d5.

18.a5 ♜e8 19.♕d1 ♜d8 20.c3 ♘g7 21.b4 ♜eg8†.

15...♛e5 16.♕f3

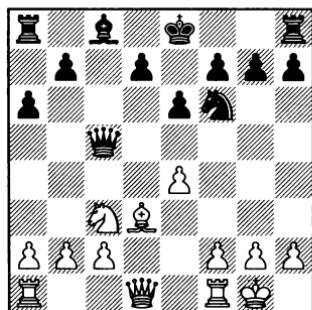
16.♕ab1 ♜b7 17.♕e2 ♜d6 18.♕g3 ♘e7.

16...♝b7 17.♕af1 ♜h6!?



White seems unable to improve his position. We can continue with ...♞d6, ...♝e7, or ...♝g7-h8.

A3. 10.♘xc5 ♜xc5

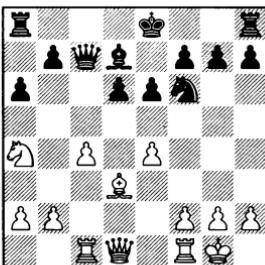


11.♗h1

The plan with f4 is currently acknowledged to be the only real danger for Black. Other options are:

a) 11.a4 White prevents b7-b5, but we were not too eager to play it anyway! 11...d6 12.a5 0-0 13.♕d2 ♜d7 14.♕fe1 ♜ac8 15.♕a4 ♜xa4 16.♕xa4 ♘g4 17.c3 ♜fd8 18.♕f1 ♘e5= Mitkov-Zapata, Mexico City 2007.

b) 11.♕a4 ♜c7 12.c4 d6 13.♕c1 ♜d7



Now the typical hedgehog formation after 14.♕c3 0-0= is fine for Black since two minor pieces have been exchanged and he has plenty of room for manoeuvring. White can open the centre with:

14.c5 0-0 15.cxd6 ♜xd6 16.♕c5 ♜c6 17.♕e2 ♜ac8!=. See **game 12** Zaragatski-Delchev, Bad Wiessee 2005.

c) 11.♕d2 d6

You should remember to refrain from ...b7-b5 before castling safely. Although the variation 11...b5 12.♕e1 ♘g4 13.e5 ♘xe5 14.♕e4 ♜c7

The Third Rank Set-Up

15.♗b4 d5 16.♘d6+ ♖d7 17.♗xe5 ♖xd6 18.♗d4 ♖b7 19.a4 bxa4 20.♗e3 is not clear, in a practical game White's game is much easier.

12.♖ad1

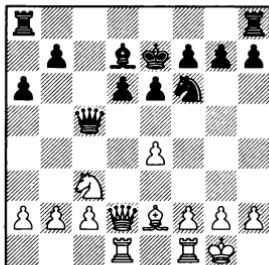
Solak's rook lift 12.♖ae1 (having in mind ♔e3-f3xf6) sets concrete problems. For instance, 12...0-0 13.♗e3 e5 14.♗f3 ♖h8 15.♗xf6 gxf6 16.♗h6 ♖g8 17.♘d5, Solak-Safarli, Baku 2013, gives White an initiative: 17...♗g7 (17...♗g6 18.♗f8+ ♖g8 19.♗xf7) 18.♗xf6 ♖e6 19.♗e1 ♖b4 20.♗e3 ♖d2 21.h3, when Black is deprived of any counterplay. I think that it would be wiser to refrain from castling: 12...e5! 13.♗e3 ♖e6 14.♗f3 h6!? 15.♔e2 ♖e7 16.♗g3 g5 17.♗d3 ♖hd8. White stays pretty, but I do not see any threat to Black in near future.

12.♗fe1 is inconsistent. Besides 12...♘d7, Black gets time to castle: 12...0-0 13.♗ad1 e5 14.♗e3 (14.♗f1 ♖d8=) 14...♔e6 15.♗e2 ♖fd8 16.♗d3 ♖e8 17.♘d5 (17.♗g3 ♖h8) 17...b5!= (preventing any ideas with c2-c4). White can switch over to plans with f4, for example: 12.♗h1 e5! 13.♗ae1 0-0 14.f4 ♖h8?! anticipating 15.♘d5 ♘d5 16.ed5 ♖d5= as in Kotronias-Pelletier, Athens 2005.

12...♘d7

White would get a slight pull in the endgame in the event of 12...0-0 13.♗e2 ♖d8 14.♗d4 ♖xd4 15.♗xd4 e5 16.♗b4

13.♗e2 ♖e7 Black is just in time to regroup successfully:



14.♗fe1 ♖hd8 15.♗f3 ♖c6 16.♗e3 ♖d7=.

11...d6!

11...b5 is often seen, but it is connected with a wrong plan.

Black obtains a good game with a central strategy.

1. His first aim is to prevent e4-e5. It is best achieved by ...e6-e5.
2. Then he should castle.
3. He must evade some tactical tricks, connected with a sacrifice on f6. Moves like ...♔h8 or ...♖e5 serve well this cause.

4. The next stage is to organise counterplay in the centre by exchanging on f4 and activate the rooks – to e8 and c8.

12.f4

Berg advocated 12.f3, but I do not see any reason behind this move. After 12...0-0 13.♗e1 e5, he did not find anything better than 14.f4 (14.♗h4 ♖e6) 14...exf4 15.♗xf4 ♖e6 16.♗d2 ♖g5=, Berg-Pelletier, Crete 2007.

12.♗e1 e5 13.♘a4 ♖c6 14.♗b4 is a provocation to 14...b5?! when

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15. $\mathbb{Q}c3$ followed up by $a4$ will be in White's favour. Instead, 14... $\mathbb{Q}e6$ is equal.

12... $\mathbb{e}5!$ 13. $\mathbb{W}e1$

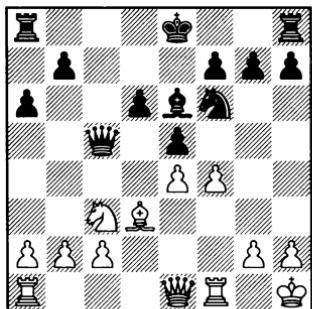
13. $\mathbb{W}e2 \mathbb{Q}g4!$ 14. $\mathbb{W}e1 \mathbb{Q}e6$ is similar to the main line.

13. $\mathbb{Q}d5 \mathbb{Q}xd5$ 14. $exd5$ deserves attention.

Now safest is 14... 0-0 = 15. $fxe5$ (15. $\mathbb{W}d2$ $f5$ 16. $\mathbb{Q}e2$ $a5!$ 17. $\mathbb{Q}f3$ $\mathbb{Q}d7$) 15... $dxe5$, when 16. $\mathbb{W}h5?$! $f5$ 17. $\mathbb{Q}xf5$ $\mathbb{Q}xf5$ 18. $\mathbb{Q}xf5$ $\mathbb{W}xd5$ 19. $\mathbb{Q}xe5$ walks into 19... $\mathbb{W}a2\#$.

14... $\mathbb{W}xd5$ is risky because after 15. $\mathbb{W}h5$ Black will have to castle long: 15... $\mathbb{Q}e6?$! 16. $\mathbb{Q}ae1$ 0-0-0, but this line is also more challenging.

13... $\mathbb{Q}e6$



Black is ready to take on $f4$ so White should do something about it. Waiting moves like 14. $a3$ do not work: 14... $exf4$ 15. $\mathbb{Q}xf4$ $\mathbb{W}e5$ 16. $\mathbb{Q}f3$ $\mathbb{Q}g4\#$.

It would be logical to close the centre by 14. $f5$ $\mathbb{Q}d7$ 15. $\mathbb{W}g3$, (or 15. $\mathbb{W}h4$ $\mathbb{Q}c6$ 16. $\mathbb{Q}f3$ $h6$ 17. $\mathbb{Q}g3$ $\mathbb{Q}f8$ 18. $a3$ $b5$ 19. $\mathbb{Q}f1$ $b4$ 20. $\mathbb{Q}b1$ $\mathbb{Q}b8\#$, Kotronias-Filip, Eforie Nord 2008)

but then Black's king would feel fine in the middle: 15... $\mathbb{Q}g8!$ 16. $a4$ $\mathbb{Q}c6$ 17. $\mathbb{Q}ad1$ $\mathbb{W}b4\#$.

14. $\mathbb{Q}d1$ $exf4$ 15. $\mathbb{Q}d5$

White must cut Black's queen from $e5$. He would be struggling after 15. $\mathbb{Q}xf4$ $\mathbb{W}e5$ 16. $\mathbb{W}d2$ 0-0 17. $\mathbb{Q}df1$ $\mathbb{Q}ac8$.

15... $\mathbb{Q}xd5$ 16. $exd5$ $\mathbb{W}xd5$ 17. $\mathbb{Q}xf4$ $\mathbb{W}g5$ 18. $\mathbb{Q}d4$ 0-0 19. $\mathbb{Q}xd6$ $\mathbb{Q}ad8=$.

B. 8... $\mathbb{Q}e5$

Black's knight strives to reach $g4$, for example, 9. $f4$ $\mathbb{Q}eg4$ 10. $\mathbb{Q}d2$ $\mathbb{Q}c5$ 11. $\mathbb{Q}ce2$ $e5$ (11... $d6$ 12. $h3$ $e5$ is also possible) 12. $fxe5$ $d5!!$ (only move!) 13. $\mathbb{Q}f4$ $\mathbb{Q}xe5$ 14. $exd5$ $\mathbb{Q}xd5=$, SPIKE-HIARCS, IPCCC, Paderborn 2007.

Our general plan is to carry on a dark-squared strategy by ... $\mathbb{Q}c5$, ... $d6$, ... $\mathbb{Q}g6$ and possibly ... $e5$. In contrast to line A, Black keeps both knights. That makes play more tangled and double-edged.

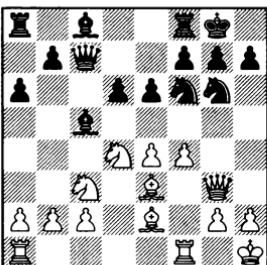
Now our main line branches to:

B1. 9. $\mathbb{Q}f3$; B2. 9. $h3$

Sometimes White tries to surprise the opponent with 9. $\mathbb{Q}e2$. I propose you to follow the usual plan:

9... $\mathbb{Q}c5$ 10. $f4$ $d6$ 11. $\mathbb{Q}h1$ 0-0 12. $\mathbb{W}e1$ $\mathbb{Q}g6$ (12... $\mathbb{Q}eg4?$ has been successfully tested in practice) 13. $\mathbb{W}g3$

The Third Rank Set-Up



Black has two interesting possibilities:

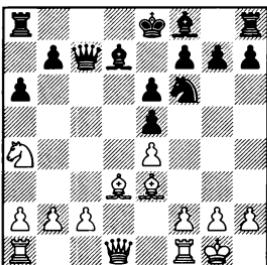
a) 13... $\mathbb{Q}a3$ 14.e5 (14. $\mathbb{Q}d1$ $\mathbb{Q}c5=$) 14...dxe5 15.bxa3 $\mathbb{W}c3$ 16.fxe5 $\mathbb{Q}d7\#$;

b) 13... $\mathbb{Q}b4!$ with complications that look to be in his favour: 14.f5 (or 14. $\mathbb{Q}d3$ $\mathbb{Q}xc3$ 15.bxc3 e5 16.f5 exd4 17.cxd4 $\mathbb{Q}e7$ 18. $\mathbb{Q}h6$ $\mathbb{Q}h5$ 19. $\mathbb{W}g5$ f6 20. $\mathbb{W}xh5$ gxh6 21. $\mathbb{W}xh6$ $\mathbb{W}xc3$ 22. $\mathbb{Q}ad1$ $\mathbb{Q}d7$ 23. $\mathbb{Q}f3$ $\mathbb{Q}h8\#$) 14... $\mathbb{Q}xc3$ 15.fxg6 $\mathbb{Q}xb2$ 16.gxh7 $\mathbb{Q}h8$ 17. $\mathbb{Q}ab1$ $\mathbb{Q}xe4!$ 18. $\mathbb{W}h4$ $\mathbb{Q}xd4$ 19. $\mathbb{Q}xd4$ f5#.

B1. 9. $\mathbb{Q}f3$ $\mathbb{Q}eg4!?$

The text is a more complex version of the natural set-up with:

a) 9...d6!? 10. $\mathbb{Q}xe5$ dxe5=. Even here, the possession of the b6-square does not give White a substantial advantage: 11. $\mathbb{Q}a4$ $\mathbb{Q}d7$



12.c4

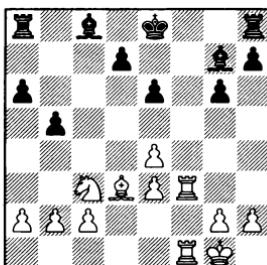
The position is rather closed so Black's lag in development cannot be punished by 12. $\mathbb{Q}b6$ $\mathbb{Q}b8$ 13.a4 $\mathbb{Q}c5$ 14. $\mathbb{Q}xd7$ $\mathbb{Q}xd7$ 15. $\mathbb{W}g4$ $\mathbb{Q}f8!$. The king can make an artificial castling after 16. $\mathbb{Q}d2$ h6 17.a5 $\mathbb{Q}g8$ 18. $\mathbb{Q}h1$ $\mathbb{Q}f6$ 19. $\mathbb{W}h4$ $\mathbb{Q}d8=$.

12... $\mathbb{Q}c6$ 13. $\mathbb{W}c2$ $\mathbb{W}a5$

The most straightforward way to swap the dark-squared bishops. In Zaragatski-Perunovic, Balatonlelle 2001, Black successfully realised the idea of obtaining a strong knight against a bad bishop after 13... $\mathbb{Q}d7$ 14.a3?! $\mathbb{Q}xa4$ 15. $\mathbb{W}xa4$ $\mathbb{Q}c5$ 16. $\mathbb{Q}xc5$ $\mathbb{W}xc5$ 17.b4 $\mathbb{W}c7$ 18.c5 0-0 19. $\mathbb{Q}fd1$ $\mathbb{Q}b8!$ 20. $\mathbb{W}b3$ $\mathbb{Q}c6$ 21.a4 $\mathbb{Q}d4$, with an initiative. However, White could prevent it by 14. $\mathbb{Q}fd1!$ $\mathbb{Q}xa4$ (14... $\mathbb{Q}d8$ 15. $\mathbb{Q}c3$ $\mathbb{Q}c5$ 16. $\mathbb{Q}xc5$ $\mathbb{Q}xc5$ 17. $\mathbb{Q}f1$) 15. $\mathbb{W}xa4$ $\mathbb{Q}e7$ 16.c5.

14. $\mathbb{Q}c3$ $\mathbb{Q}c5=$, Siewert-Capuano, ICCF 2007.

b) 9... $\mathbb{Q}fg4$ has been the main line. It's status is still OK, but Black has no chances to win the endgame after 10. $\mathbb{Q}xe5$ $\mathbb{Q}xe3$ 11. $\mathbb{W}h5$ g6 12. $\mathbb{W}f3$ $\mathbb{W}xe5$ 13.fxe3 f6 14. $\mathbb{W}xf6$ $\mathbb{W}xf6$ 15. $\mathbb{Q}xf6$ $\mathbb{Q}g7$ 16. $\mathbb{Q}f3$ b5 17. $\mathbb{Q}af1$



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White's idea is to meet 17... $\mathbb{E}f8(?)$ with 18. $\mathbb{E}h3$.

17... $\mathbb{E}b7$ 18. $\mathbb{E}f7$

If White retreats his knight to a passive square, Black can already swap one pair of rooks: 18. $\mathbb{Q}d1$ $\mathbb{E}f8$ 19. $\mathbb{E}h3$ $\mathbb{E}xf1+$ 20. $\mathbb{Q}xf1$ h6 21. $\mathbb{E}g3$ $\mathbb{Q}f7$ 22. $\mathbb{E}f3$ $\mathbb{Q}e7$ 23. $\mathbb{Q}e2$ $\mathbb{Q}e5\uparrow$, Li Shilong-Wen,Yang, Shandong zt 2007. The fine point is that White is left without a plan, whereas we can proceed with a typical Sicilian queenside attack.

18... $\mathbb{Q}e5$ 19. $\mathbb{Q}e2$

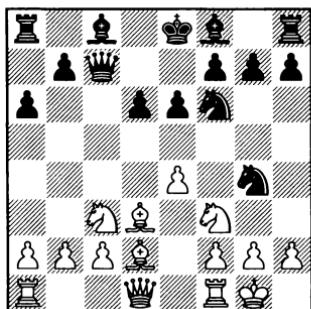
Or 19. $\mathbb{Q}d1$ $\mathbb{Q}c6$ 20.c3 a5, Kotrotsos-Mastrovasilis, Kavala 2007. Only Black can play for a win in this position.

19... $\mathbb{Q}xb2$ 20. $\mathbb{Q}d4$ 0-0-0 21.c4

21. $\mathbb{E}g7$ $\mathbb{E}dg8$ was good for Black in Pilgaard-Bui Vinh, Budapest 2007.

21... $\mathbb{B}xc4$ 22. $\mathbb{Q}xc4$ $\mathbb{Q}xd4$ 23. $\mathbb{E}xd4$ $\mathbb{Q}xe4$ 24. $\mathbb{E}c1$ $\mathbb{Q}b8$ 25. $\mathbb{Q}xa6$ h5=, Persson-Coleman, ICCF 2007.

10. $\mathbb{Q}d2$ d6



11.a4

White has never tried the seemingly most consistent continuation 11.h3 $\mathbb{Q}e5$ 12. $\mathbb{Q}xe5$ $dxe5$ 13.f4 $\mathbb{Q}c5+$ 14. $\mathbb{Q}h1$ $\mathbb{Q}d4$ 15.f5. I suppose that he does not like the possibility for long castling, e.g. 15... $\mathbb{E}xf5$ 16. $\mathbb{E}xf5$ $\mathbb{Q}d7$ 17. $\mathbb{Q}e4$ $\mathbb{Q}c6$ 18. $\mathbb{W}e1$ 0-0-0 \uparrow .

The first top-level game in this line, Carlsen-Ivanchuk, Skanderborg 2005, saw 11. $\mathbb{Q}e2$ $\mathbb{Q}e7$ 12.c4 (White's knight has no business on the kingside: 12.h3 $\mathbb{Q}e5$ 13. $\mathbb{Q}xe5$ $dxe5$ 14. $\mathbb{Q}g3$ 0-0 15. $\mathbb{Q}h5$ $\mathbb{Q}e8!$? 16. $\mathbb{W}e2$ b6 17. $\mathbb{E}ac1$ $\mathbb{Q}b7$ 18.c4 $\mathbb{E}d8$ 19. $\mathbb{E}fd1$ f5 \uparrow , Möller-Petukhov, ICCF 2010) 12...0-0 13. $\mathbb{E}c1$ b6 14. $\mathbb{Q}c3$ $\mathbb{Q}b7$ 15. $\mathbb{W}e2$ $\mathbb{Q}d7=$.

11...b6

The game Sanner-Tosi, ICCF 2009, suggests that Black can allow a4-a5 – 11... $\mathbb{Q}e7!$? This move may be even more accurate since it discourages 12.h3 $\mathbb{Q}e5$ 13. $\mathbb{Q}xe5$ $dxe5$ 14.f4 due to 14... $\mathbb{E}xf4!$? 15. $\mathbb{Q}xf4$ e5 16. $\mathbb{Q}g5$ $\mathbb{Q}e6=$. Sanner chose 12.a5 $\mathbb{Q}d7$ 13.h3 $\mathbb{Q}e5$ 14. $\mathbb{Q}xe5$ $dxe5$ 15. $\mathbb{W}f3$ 0-0 16. $\mathbb{E}fd1$ $\mathbb{Q}c6$ 17. $\mathbb{Q}a4$ $\mathbb{E}ad8$ with a comfortable game for Black.

12. $\mathbb{W}e2$ $\mathbb{Q}e7$ 13.h3 $\mathbb{Q}e5$ 14. $\mathbb{Q}xe5$

14. $\mathbb{Q}d4$ 0-0 15.f4 $\mathbb{Q}g6$ is similar to line B2. Instead, 15... $\mathbb{Q}xd3$ 16.cxd3 e5 17. $\mathbb{Q}c2$ left White with a slight pull after 17... $\mathbb{Q}e6$ 18. $\mathbb{E}ac1$ $\mathbb{E}xf4$ 19. $\mathbb{Q}xf4$ $\mathbb{W}b7$ 20. $\mathbb{Q}d4$ $\mathbb{E}ac8$ 21. $\mathbb{Q}g5$, Mueller-Ribli, Germany 2007.

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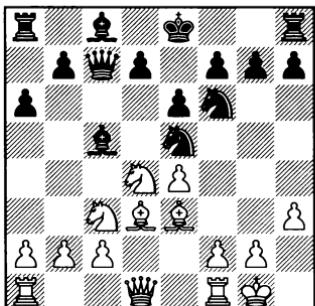
14...dxe5 15.f4 0-0 16.uae1

The game is balanced. It is possible to meet f4-f5 by ...exf5, for instance, 16...uc5+!?, 17.uh1 ud4 18.f5 exf5 19.exf5 ub7 20.ug5 ux3 21.bxc3 ue8 22.uxf6 gxf6=.

In Dembo-Delchev, Cappelle la Grande 2006, I refrained from this exchange: 16...ub7 17.f5 ue8 18.fxe6 fxe6 19.ug5 ud7 20.uxe7 ue7 21.uc4, but the e6-pawn is a permanent weakness.

B2. 9. h3 uc5

Taimanov's pet line 9...b5 has faded out of fashion. The famous game Fischer-Petrosian, Santa Monica 1966, went 10.f4 uc4 11.uc4 uc4 12.ud3 d5 13.e5 ud7 14.uxc4 dxc4 15.f5 ux5 16.fxe6 fxe6 17.uae1 with a pull in the endgame, e.g. 17...ud7 18.a4 b4 19.ud5.

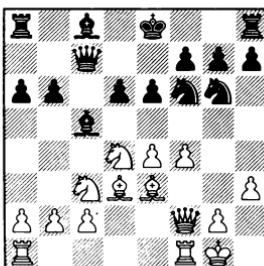


Main branches here are:

B21. 10.ua4; B22. 10.ue2; B23.
10.uh1

10.f4 d6 transposes to other lines.

10.ud2 d6 11.f4 ug6 12.ue2 sets the positional trap 12...0-0 13.e5 dxe5 14.uxe6 (which is far from clear after 14...ue6 15.uxc5 ux4 16.uxf8 ux8). Perhaps Black should neutralise it by 12...b6 and it is unclear what plan White actually had in mind.



Womacka-Zakhartsov, Guben 2011, went further 13.uce2 0-0 14.c3 e5 15.ub3 (15.f5 exd4 16.cxd4 ue5) 15...uxe3 16.uxe3 exf4 with an excellent game for Black.

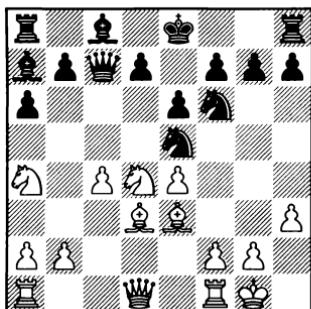
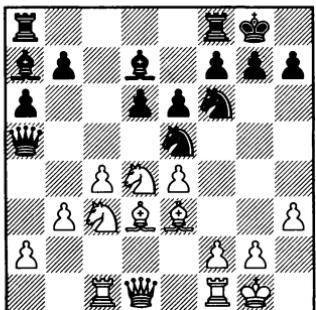
In my game Eggleston-Delchev, Bad Wiessee 2013, White imitated activity by 13.g4?!, but 13...e5! 14.ud2 (14.fxe5 dxe5 15.ude2 ue6 16.uxc5 bxc5 17.b3 0-0 18.uc4 uc4 19.bxc4 wa5 20.uf3 ub8 21.ud5 ub2 22.uxf6+ gxf6 23.uxf6 wd2) 14...exf4 15.uxf4 ux4 16.uxf4 ue6 17.uae1 0-0 18.ud5 xd5 19.exd5 ud7! gave me a typical Sicilian structure with a better knight and a safer king.

B21. 10.ua4 ua7 11.c4

According to Taimanov, the whole variation with 9...uc5 gives Black a restrained position due

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to the possibility of 11.c4. This understanding ensues from the old passive treatment of the hedgehog structures by Black. If the second player aimlessly manoeuvred on the last two ranks, he undoubtedly would risks to get under a kingside attack. On the contrary, active play on the dark squares with the breakthrough b7-b5 in mind, ensures him a comfortable game.



Here, 11...0-0 12. $\mathbb{E}c1$ $\mathbb{E}d8$ seems the most concrete continuation. It counts on luring the opponent into c4-c5. Then Black would obtain excellent counterplay by ...d6. However, White can calmly pursue his main plan for consolidation, when the rook move to d8 could prove to be inaccurate since ... $\mathbb{E}fc8$ or ... $\mathbb{E}fe8$ could be better. Even more important consideration is that Black may be able to carry out ...b7-b5 or ...e5 without moving his rook at all.

**11...d6 12. $\mathbb{E}c1$ $\mathbb{Q}d7$ 13. $\mathbb{Q}c3$ 0-0
14. $b3$ $\mathbb{W}a5!?$**

The queen is eying the knight on c3, making $\mathbb{Q}c2$ impossible.

15. $\mathbb{W}e2$

15.a4 only weakens the b3-pawn. Black continues with 15... $\mathbb{Q}c5$ intending to meet 16. $\mathbb{W}e2$ or 16. $\mathbb{Q}e2$ by ... $\mathbb{W}b6$.

In the game Astaneh-Vl. Dimitrov, Vila de Marin 2005, White chose 15. $\mathbb{Q}e2$. This move has at least two drawbacks. The bishop is too passive there because it is not aimed at the enemy king, and it is hindering the protection of the e3-bishop by $\mathbb{E}e1$ or $\mathbb{W}e2$. Black followed up with 15... $\mathbb{Q}c5$ 16.a4 $\mathbb{E}fc8$ 17.f4 $\mathbb{Q}g6$ (17... $\mathbb{Q}c6!?$) 18. $\mathbb{W}d2$, when 18... $e5!?$ 19. $fe5$ $de5=$ would have seized the initiative. Dark-squared strategy was also good, e.g. 16... $\mathbb{W}b6$ 17. $\mathbb{E}e1$ $\mathbb{Q}c6=$.

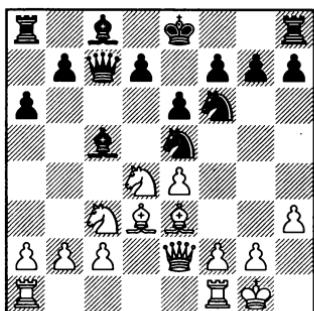
15... $\mathbb{E}fe8$

Black's rook stands up in opposition to the enemy queen. It is clear that White is unable to generate any threat, see **game 13** Varga-Almasi, Budapest 2004.

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B22. 10.♗e2

This is the oldest set-up. It was tested at highest level in the World title match Spassky-Petrosian, Moscow 1969.



The reason behind the text move is to protect the bishop on e3 and expand in the centre without further prophylaxis. White's next moves are f4, ♘b3 and a quick e5. The exchange of the dark-squared bishops exposes two critical points in Black's position – d6 and c5, but the biggest danger usually comes from the kingside and the f6-square.

With time, Black has learnt to neutralise the enemy's threats. All he needs to know is a couple of accurate moves in order to finish development.

10...d6

10...♘g6 has no positive sides after 11.♘b3. However, White could try to exploit the unnecessary retreat by 11.♘a4 followed by c4.

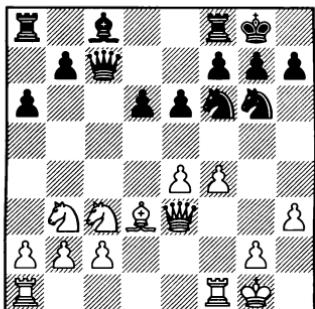
11.f4

White can prevent ...b5, but Black has good places for his pieces anyway: 11.a4 b6 12.♘b3 ♕xe3 13.♕xe3 0-0 14.♖ae1 ♖b7 15.f4 ♘g6 16.♘d2 ♘d7 17.♘c4 ♕ad8 18.♕f2 d5!, Cuenca Jimenez-Zakhartsov, Benasque 2010.

11...♘g6

The game Spassky-Petrosian, showed that 11...♘d7 leaves Black's castling position shaky under the impact of the d3-bishop. Capturing on d3 is sad, because we would have to struggle without counterplay against a possible queenside activity of the opponent.

12.♘b3 ♕xe3 13.♕xe3 0-0



Black can also choose 13...b5 since the only attempt to punish this move order would be 14.a4, but then 14...b4 15.♘ce2 0-0 16.a5 ♕b8 (preventing ♕b6) would be fine for him. 13...b5 also provokes 14.e5 dx5 15.♘xg6 hxg6 16.fxe5 ♘d7 17.♕xf7? which loses after 17...♗xf7 18.♕f3+ ♘f6! 19.♕xa8 ♕b6+ 20.♔f1 ♘h5!.

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14. $\mathbb{E}ae1$

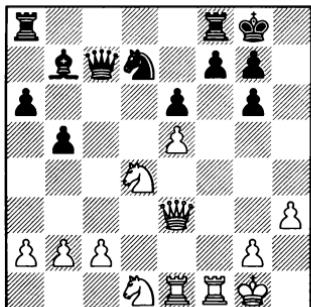
14. $\mathbb{E}ad1$ b5 15. e5 dxe5 16. $\mathbb{Q}xg6$ is not dangerous due to 16...hxg6 17. fxe5 $\mathbb{Q}d7$ 18. $\mathbb{Q}d6$ b4, equalising.

14. $\mathbb{Q}h1$ b5 15. a4 b4 16. $\mathbb{Q}e2$ e5=.

14... b5 15. e5

15. a3 loses momentum. Black was fine in the game Exizoglou-Vl. Dimitrov, Thessaloniki 2004: 15... $\mathbb{Q}b7$ 16. $\mathbb{Q}d4$ $\mathbb{E}ae8$ 17. $\mathbb{W}f2$ e5 18. $\mathbb{Q}de2$ (18. fxe5 $\mathbb{E}xe5$) 18... ef4 19. $\mathbb{Q}f4$ $\mathbb{Q}f4$ 20. $\mathbb{W}f4$ $\mathbb{E}e5=$.

15... dxe5 16. $\mathbb{Q}xg6$ hxg6
17. fxe5 $\mathbb{Q}d7$ 18. $\mathbb{Q}d4$ $\mathbb{Q}b7$ 19. $\mathbb{Q}d1$



19... $\mathbb{E}ad8!$

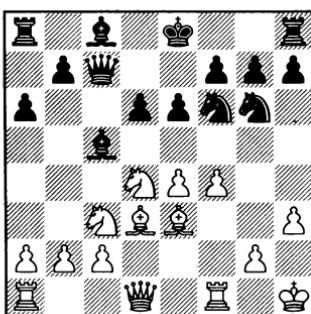
With this final touch, Black solves the opening problems. He is threatening ... $\mathbb{Q}xe5$! In Radulov-Suetin, Budapest 1970, White answered 20. c3 $\mathbb{Q}b6$ 21. $\mathbb{Q}f2$ $\mathbb{Q}c4$ and Black already had an edge.

B23. 10. $\mathbb{Q}h1$

This is another straightforward plan. In distinction to B22 which

is a positional line aimed basically at obtaining a spatial advantage by e4-e5, here White is trying to preserve his dark-squared bishop for a kingside attack. Black's counterplay is directed toward the knight on d4. He should also open the e-file. Practice has seen long castling too, but that is really playing with fire.

10... d6 11. f4 $\mathbb{Q}g6$



12. $\mathbb{W}e1$

A multi-purpose move. The queen defends the e3-bishop, enabling the plan with $\mathbb{Q}b3$. At the same time it is eying the square h4 which is its ideal attacking position. Black is at a critical juncture and I will examine his options in detail, but let us also see some other White's options:

a) 12. $\mathbb{W}d2$ 0-0 13. $\mathbb{E}ae1$ (13. $\mathbb{W}f2$ $\mathbb{E}e8$) 13... b5 14. a3 $\mathbb{E}e8$. Black got precious time for development and stands well, see **game 14** Onischuk-Salov, Elista 1998.

b) 12. $\mathbb{W}f3$ leads to similar positions after 12... 0-0 (12... b5!?)

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13. $\mathbb{Q}ae1$ b5. 13... $\mathbb{Q}d7$ is also playable, but be sure to avoid the typical mistake, seen in the game Reinaldo Castineira-Comas Fabrego, Andorra 2001: 14. $\mathbb{Q}b3$ $\mathbb{Q}xe3$ 15. $\mathbb{W}xe3$ e5?! (15... $\mathbb{Q}c6$ is essential!) 16. fxe5 dxe5 17. $\mathbb{Q}xf6!$ gxf6, when 18. $\mathbb{Q}d5!$ $\mathbb{W}d6$ (18... $\mathbb{W}d8$ 19. $\mathbb{Q}f1$ f5 20. exf5 $\mathbb{Q}xf5$ 21. $\mathbb{Q}xf5$ $\mathbb{W}d5$ 22. $\mathbb{Q}h6$ $\mathbb{Q}fc8$ 23. $\mathbb{Q}d2\pm$) 19. $\mathbb{Q}a5!$ $\mathbb{Q}c6$ 20. $\mathbb{Q}c4$ $\mathbb{W}d8$ 21. $\mathbb{Q}cb6$ $\mathbb{Q}xd5$ 22. exd5 \pm would have been unpleasant for Black.

c) 12. f5 $\mathbb{Q}e5$ 13. $\mathbb{Q}ce2$ (13. $\mathbb{W}e1$ is well met by 13... $\mathbb{Q}d7$) 13... exf5 14. exf5 0-0 15. $\mathbb{Q}g5$ $\mathbb{Q}ed7$.

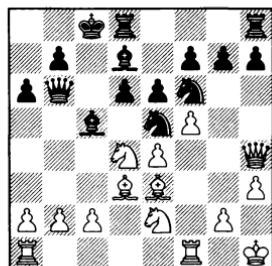
It seems that Black is safe in this position. White is unable to break through his defence until he is holding the critical squares f6 and h6. At the same time, the open e-file and the weak square e4 ensure sufficient counterplay. See **game 15** Kotronias-De la Riva, Bled 2002.

12...0-0!?

12... $\mathbb{Q}d7$ is a decent alternative.

Then 13. f5 (13. $\mathbb{Q}b3$ $\mathbb{Q}xe3+$ 14. $\mathbb{W}xe3$ 0-0 15. $\mathbb{Q}ad1$ $\mathbb{Q}ad8$ is a calm, typical Sicilian game.) 13... $\mathbb{Q}e5$ 14. $\mathbb{W}h4$ 0-0 15. $\mathbb{Q}f3$ exf5 16. exf5 $\mathbb{Q}xf3$ 17. gxf3 $\mathbb{Q}c6$ is a better version of the main line, because Black's queenside has not weaknesses, see **game 10** Vatter-Zakhartsov, Bad Wiessee 2011.

In this line, Black can also castle long: 14... $\mathbb{W}b6$ 15. $\mathbb{Q}ce2$ 0-0-0. White has failed to meet it adequately so far:



16. $\mathbb{Q}g1$ exf5 17. b4 $\mathbb{W}xb4$ 18. $\mathbb{Q}ab1$ $\mathbb{W}a4$ 19. exf5 $\mathbb{Q}he8\mp$, Haznedaroglu-Ribli, Saint Vincent 2005, or 16. b4 $\mathbb{W}xb4$ 17. $\mathbb{Q}ab1$ $\mathbb{W}a4$ 18. $\mathbb{Q}b3$ $\mathbb{Q}xd3$ 19. cxd3 e5 20. $\mathbb{Q}c3$ $\mathbb{W}a5$ 21. $\mathbb{Q}c2$ $\mathbb{Q}c6\mp$, Stoumbos-Javakhishvili, Linares 2005.

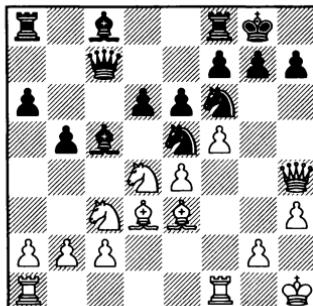
Perhaps after 13. f5 $\mathbb{Q}e5$, White should opt for the more restrained:

14. $\mathbb{Q}ce2$ $\mathbb{W}b6$ (14... exf5 15. exf5 0-0-0 16. b4 $\mathbb{Q}he8$ is unclear) 15. $\mathbb{W}g3$ 0-0 16. b4 $\mathbb{W}xb4$ 17. c3! $\mathbb{W}b6$ 18. $\mathbb{Q}h6$ $\mathbb{Q}fg4\infty$.

13. f5 $\mathbb{Q}e5$ 14. $\mathbb{W}h4$

14. $\mathbb{W}g3$ is harmless in view of 14... b5 or 14... $\mathbb{Q}h8$. Or 14. g4? d5!

14... b5



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15.¤f3

I'm still unsure what sign to tack onto this move but it is undoubtedly the most challenging continuation. Macedonian GM Mitkov's idea (it was first employed against the set-up with ...b5 by Nedev) is truly amazing and it faces Black with considerable practical problems. Computers think that the exchange sacrifice is not entirely correct, but over the board humans do not cope very well with the heavy calculations that are vital to survive the attack.

Lately White began to try other moves, too:

15.¤ce2 exf5

Houdini 4 suggests 15...¤a7 (Hector-Rasmussen, team ch. DEN 2008, saw 15...¤b6?! 16.b4! ¤xb4, when 17.fxe6 fxe6 18.¤xe6 ¤xe3 19.¤xf8 ¤xf8 20.¤xf6+ gxf6 21.¤f4! would have torn Black apart) preparing to meet 16.b4 by 16...¤b6, but I do not like to distract my strongest piece from the king-side in such a crucial moment of the game. White might get a somewhat better version of the main line with 16.¤f3 exf5 17.exf5 ¤xf3 18.gxf3 ¤e7 19.¤h6 ¤b7 20.¤g1 ¤xf3+ 21.¤xf3.

16.exf5 ¤e8! (Belov-Volkov, Moscow 2009 saw 16...¤b7 and here 17.¤h6 keeps the initiative) 17.¤h6 ¤e7 18.¤g5 ¤f8 19.¤xf6 gxf6 20.¤xf8 ¤xf8=.

15...exf5

15...¤xf3 16.gxf3 ¤e8 is little explored. Perhaps Black fears the closed centre which facilitates the opponent's attack. A possible line is 17.¤g1 g6 18.¤g4 ¤b7 19.¤h6 ¤a7! 20.b4= ¤xb4 21.¤h4 f6 22.fgx6 ¤g7 23.¤c6 ¤c7 24.gxh7+ ¤h8 25.¤xb4 ¤xc3 26.¤g4 ¤xh6 27.¤xh6 ¤f7 28.¤d2 ¤xd3 29.cxd3 ¤xh7.

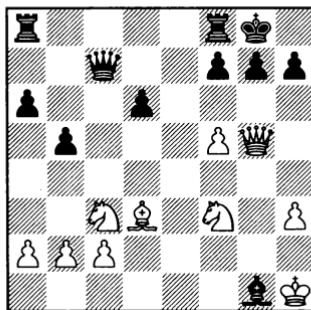
16.exf5 ¤xf3 17.gxf3 ¤b7

Adla and Glavina suggest 17...d5? which offers White an edge after 18.¤g1 ¤e5 19.¤d1 ¤d7 20.c3±.

18.¤g1 ¤xf3 19.¤xf3

19.¤h2 loses to 19...¤e7 20.¤g3 ¤e5 21.¤f4 ¤g4+.

19...¤e3 20.¤f6 ¤xg1 21.¤g5



This crazy position first arose in Stojanovski-Jovanic, Sarajevo 2006, but it gained popularity after the **game 11** Carlsen-Vachier Lagrave, Cap d'Agde 2006. It went 21...¤c6 22.¤e4 f6 23.¤xg1. In *The Safest Sicilian* I proposed the novelty 23...¤d5!. It was tested in the

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game Hamilton-Foulds, ICCF 2010. Apparently, Black is only slightly better after it. Perhaps he should try to play for a win by:

21... $\mathbb{W}c5$ 22. $\mathbb{Q}xg1$

22. $\mathbb{W}xg1$ $\mathbb{W}xg1+$ 23. $\mathbb{Q}xg1$ $\mathbb{E}fc8$ should be in Black's favour because White's knights have not access to the e6-square. Besides, Black can also play 22... $\mathbb{E}fe8$ or 22... $\mathbb{Q}h8$ as shown below.

22... $\mathbb{E}ae8!?$

I borrowed this set-up from **game 10** Vatter-Zakhartsov, Bad

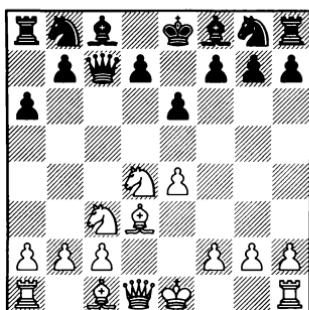
Wiessee 2011 (where the pawn is on b7). Its idea is to refrain from ...f6 as long as possible. Instead, Evans-Veen, ICCF 2007, went 22...f6 23. $\mathbb{W}g4$ d5 24. $\mathbb{Q}f3$ $\mathbb{E}fe8$ 25. $\mathbb{Q}g2$ $\mathbb{E}ad8$ 26.a3 $\mathbb{E}d7$ 27. $\mathbb{Q}d4$ $\mathbb{E}e5$ 28. $\mathbb{Q}e6$ $\mathbb{W}e3$ 29. $\mathbb{Q}d1$ $\mathbb{W}e1$ 30. $\mathbb{Q}f2$ $\mathbb{E}e7$ 31.h4 $\mathbb{E}5xe6$, draw.

After the text, Black has more chances to convert his material advantage. His plan is to give up a rook for a knight and play with a rook+2 pawns vs. 2 minor pieces in an open position, for example: 23. $\mathbb{W}h4$ (23. $\mathbb{Q}e4$ $\mathbb{W}d5$) 23... $\mathbb{E}e5$ 24. $\mathbb{Q}f3$ $\mathbb{E}xf5$ 25. $\mathbb{W}g4$ $\mathbb{E}h5+$.

Part 3. The Third Rank Set-Up

Kan – Step by Step

1.e4 c5 2. $\mathbb{Q}f3$ e6 3.d4 cxd4
4. $\mathbb{Q}xd4$ a6 5. $\mathbb{Q}c3$ $\mathbb{W}c7$ 6. $\mathbb{Q}d3$



6... $\mathbb{Q}f6$

White has defined his set-up and we should make our choice right now. The Taimanov is a tempting option against $\mathbb{Q}d3$ so we can answer:

a) 6... $\mathbb{Q}c6$. White's only reasonable deviation is 7. $\mathbb{Q}xc6$, when all three recaptures are possible.

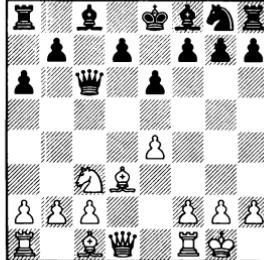
7...dxc6 8.0-0 e5 9.f4 $\mathbb{Q}f6$ 10. $\mathbb{Q}h1$ $\mathbb{Q}d6$ 11.f5 is a bit cramped for my taste.

7...bxc6 8.0-0 $\mathbb{Q}f6$ 9. $\mathbb{W}e2$ d5 is a popular set-up. White's game is too straightforward and easy. Moreover, Black has practically lost a tempo on ...a6, compared to the pure

Taimanov move order with 4... $\mathbb{Q}c6$ 5. $\mathbb{Q}c3$ $\mathbb{W}c7$ 6. $\mathbb{Q}xc6$. Thus my vote goes for the unexplored and flexible continuation:

7... $\mathbb{W}xc6$!?

8.0-0



8...b5

Grischuk tried in a blitz game 8... $\mathbb{Q}e7$!? 9. $\mathbb{Q}e1$ $\mathbb{Q}g6$ 10.e5 $\mathbb{W}c7$ 11. $\mathbb{W}h5$ b5 with mutual chances.

9. $\mathbb{W}e2$ $\mathbb{W}c7$!?

(9... $\mathbb{Q}b7$ 10.a4 b4 11. $\mathbb{Q}d5$ $\mathbb{Q}f6$ 12. $\mathbb{Q}xf6+$ gxf6 should be slightly better for White) After the text, $\mathbb{Q}d5$ is no longer a threat. Both opponents are on their own – I do not know of any practical example.

b) 6...b5 is beyond the scope of our repertoire. I advocate to delay the fianchetto in favour of ...d6, ... $\mathbb{Q}d7$.

The Third Rank Set-Up

A. 7.♗e2; B. 7.0-0; C. 7.f4

7.f4 b5! is considered in Part 4.

7.♗e3?! is totally innocuous here. Black leads out his bishop to b4 or c5 and obtains a good game:

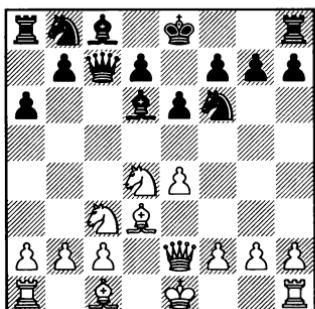
7...♗b4 8.0-0 ♗xc3 9.bxc3 d6! (9...d5? 10.exd5 ♘xd5 11.♗d2 0-0 12.♗h5 g6 13.♗h4±) 10.♗f3 e5 11.♘f5 ♗xf5 12.exf5 ♘bd7 13.♗ab1 d5;

7...♗c5 8.♗e2 (8.0-0 d6 9.♗e2 ♘bd7) 8...d6 9.0-0-0 0-0.

7...b5 is also possible, but the play is very sharp after 8.f4 ♗b7 (8...b4? stumbles into a very interesting new idea: 9.♘a4 ♗b7 10.♗f3 d6 11.0-0 ♘bd7 12.a3! bx a3 13.♗xa3! e5 14.fxe5 dx e5 15.♘f5 with a strong attack) 9.♗f3 ♘c6 10.0-0-0 b4 11.♘ce2 h5.

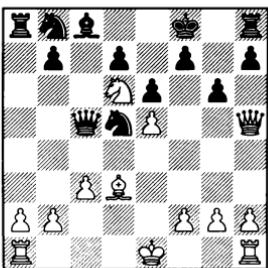
A. 7.♗e2 ♘d6!

7...d6 offers White very sharp Scheveningen type options as 8.f4 or 8.g4. The text is familiar to the Taimanov players. It significantly narrows the opponent's choice.



8.♗d2

a) Fortunately, 8.♗db5? axb5 9.♗xb5 is not winning. In fact, Black is better after 9...♗a5+ 10.♗d2 ♗b4 11.♗xb4 ♗xb4+ 12.c3 ♗c5 13.e5 ♘d5 14.♗d6+ ♖f8 15.♗h5 (15.♗f3 f5 16.♗xf5 ♘f6 17.0-0 ♗xe5) 15...g6



Somehow Black's king escapes and White has not even a draw:

16.♗h6+

Or 16.♗xg6 fxg6 17.♗f3+ ♖e7 18.♗f7+ ♖d8 19.♗g7 ♕e8 20.♗f7 ♘c6!! 21.♗xe8+ ♖c7 22.0-0 (22.♗h8 ♘f4 23.0-0 ♘xe5 24.♗e4 ♗d5 25.f3 b6+) 22...♗xe5 23.♗e4 ♗c6+

16...♗g8 17.h4 (Black's minor pieces are very strong following 17.♗e4 ♕a6 18.♗g5 ♕xd6 19.exd6 b5, e.g. 20.♗xd5 ♗b7 21.♗d8+ ♗g7 22.♗xh8+ ♗xh8 23.♗xb7 ♗e5+↑) 17...♘c6 18.h5 ♘xe5 and White resigned in the blitz game Kasimdzhanov-Rublevsky, Moscow 2007.

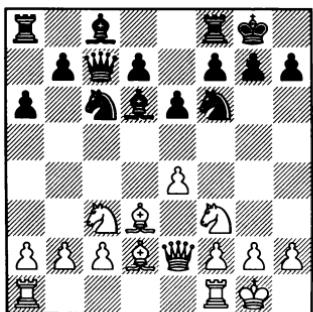
Alternatively:

b) 8.♗f3 ♘c6 9.0-0 0-0 10.h3 ♘e5 11.♗xe5 ♘xe5=.

c) 8.h3 ♘c6 9.♗xc6 (9.♗f3 b6 10.0-0 ♗b7 11.♗d2 ♘e5) 9...dxc6 10.0-0 0-0 11.f4 e5.

Part 3

**8... $\mathbb{Q}c6$ 9. $\mathbb{Q}f3$ (9. $\mathbb{Q}xc6$ $dxc6$
10. $g3$ b5) 9...0-0 10.0-0**



**10...b5 11. $\mathbb{Q}ae1$ $\mathbb{Q}g4$ 12. $h3$ $\mathbb{Q}ge5$ 13. $\mathbb{Q}xe5$ $\mathbb{Q}xe5$ 14. $f4$ $\mathbb{Q}xd3$
15. $cxd3$ f5!**

There is no reason to allow 15... $b4$ 16. $\mathbb{Q}a4$. The text addresses Black's main problem – the passive light-squared bishop. The play might continue 16. $\mathbb{Q}c1$ $\mathbb{Q}b7$ 17. $\mathbb{Q}e3$ $\mathbb{Q}d8=$.

B. 7.0-0 d6

The majority of players prefer:
a) 7... $\mathbb{Q}c6$, but then 8. $\mathbb{Q}xc6$ $bx6$ or 8... $dxc6$ are too easy to play with White. There is nothing wrong with these lines, but I would like to put the opponent in a situation where he would have tougher decisions to make.

I would like to forewarn you about the popular line:

b) 7... $\mathbb{Q}c5$?! 8. $\mathbb{Q}b3$ $\mathbb{Q}e7$. Hellsten devotes a whole chapter on it in his book, but I believe that White's attack is very strong after:

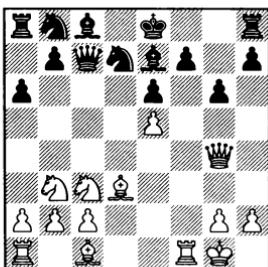
9. $f4$ $d6$ 10. $e5$!?

$dxe5$
10... $\mathbb{Q}fd7$ 11. $exd6$ $\mathbb{Q}xd6$ 12. $\mathbb{Q}e4$
(Topalov beat Svidler with 12. $\mathbb{Q}e3$?)
12... $\mathbb{Q}b6+$ 13. $\mathbb{Q}h1$ $\mathbb{Q}f6$ 14. $\mathbb{Q}f3$ $\mathbb{Q}bd7$
15. $\mathbb{Q}e3\uparrow$.

11. $fxe5$ $\mathbb{Q}fd7$

11... $\mathbb{Q}xe5$ 12. $\mathbb{Q}f4$ $\mathbb{Q}h5$ 13. $\mathbb{Q}e2$
 $\mathbb{Q}g6$ (13... $\mathbb{Q}h4$ was refuted in the game Kryvoruchko-Smirin, Plovdiv 2008, which went 14. $g3$ $\mathbb{Q}h3$ 15. $\mathbb{Q}e4$ $e5$ 16. $\mathbb{Q}d6+$!) 14. $h4$ (Stohl suggests 14. $\mathbb{Q}f3$) 14... $h5$ 15. $\mathbb{Q}g5$ and Black is helpless against the threat of $\mathbb{Q}d3$, for example: 15... $\mathbb{Q}g4$ 16. $\mathbb{Q}xe7$ $\mathbb{Q}xe7$ 17. $\mathbb{Q}d4\pm$ or 15... $\mathbb{Q}g8$ 16. $\mathbb{Q}d3$ $f5$ 17. $\mathbb{Q}e2$ $\mathbb{Q}c6$ 18. $\mathbb{Q}a4\pm$, Paragua-Bilguun, Jakarta 2013.

12. $\mathbb{Q}g4$ $g6$



13. $\mathbb{Q}h6!$ $\mathbb{Q}xe5$ 14. $\mathbb{Q}g3$ $\mathbb{Q}bd7$

White also has full domination in the event of 14... $\mathbb{Q}bc6$ 15. $\mathbb{Q}e4$ $\mathbb{Q}d8$ 16. $\mathbb{Q}f4$ $f6$ 17. $\mathbb{Q}xc6+$ $bx6$ 18. $\mathbb{Q}e4$ 0-0 19. $\mathbb{Q}h1$, e.g. 19... $\mathbb{Q}g7$ 20. $\mathbb{Q}xe5$ $fxe5$ 21. $\mathbb{Q}xf8+$ $\mathbb{Q}xf8$ 22. $\mathbb{Q}d3$ $\mathbb{Q}b8$ 23. $\mathbb{Q}f1$ $\mathbb{Q}e7$ 24. $\mathbb{Q}d2\pm$.

15. $\mathbb{Q}ae1$ $\mathbb{Q}f8$ 16. $\mathbb{Q}xf8$ $\mathbb{Q}xf8$
17. $\mathbb{Q}h1$ $\mathbb{Q}g7$ 18. $\mathbb{Q}e4$ $\mathbb{Q}f8$ 19. $\mathbb{Q}g5$ $\mathbb{Q}d6$
20. $\mathbb{Q}d4\pm$, Zinchenko-Filip, Paleochora 2010.

The Third Rank Set-Up

Main branches now are:

B1. 8.a4, B2. 8.♗e2, and B3. 8.f4 followed up by ♗f3 or ♖f3.

B1. 8.a4 b6 9.f4

9.♗f3 ♖bd7 10.♕d2 ♕b7 11.♗g3 g6 12.♗fe1 counts on the trap 12... ♕g7?! 13.♖db5 axb5 14.♖xb5 ♘b8 15.♖xd6+ ♖f8 16.♕b4 ♕g8 17.♕b5= Black can parry the threat with 12... ♖h5!. A more sophisticated version of the same idea is 11.♗fe1. Then after 11...g6, White can put his queen on h3, followed up by ♔h6. Kozul answered this move order with 11... ♖e5!? 12.♔h3 (12.♗g3 h5!?) 12... h5 (12...♔e7!?=) and quickly seized the initiative after 13.♗b3 (13.a5! ♔e7 14.axb6 ♘xb6 15.♗b3 ♖fg4 16.♕e3 ♖xe3 17.♗xe3 ♘xe3 18.♗xe3 ♖xd3=) 13...♔e7 14.f4 ♖eg4 15.♗e2 d5. You should remember to ignore a4-a5 since ...b5?! provokes dangerous sacrifices.

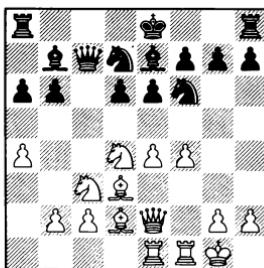
9...♔b7 10.♗f3

a) 10.f5 e5 11.♗b3 demands precision from Black. He must anticipate the pawn storm with g4-g5 which would be possible after 11...♔e7 12.♔e3 ♖bd7 13.♗f3 0-0 14.♗ad1 [14.g4? d5 15.♖xd5 (15. exd5 h6 16.h4 e4) 15...♖xd5 16.exd5 ♖f6] 14...♔c6?! 15.g4 h6 16.h4 ♖h7 17.g5! hxg5 18.hxg5 ♘xg5 19.♘xg5 ♘xg5 20.♗g3 ♖h7 21.♗f2↑.

Since this is the only serious threat of White, it would be wise to neutralise it in advance by 14...h6!.

Then 15.h4 will be met by 15...h5 while 15.♗f2 ♘c6 16.g4 could be answered with 16...♖h7 17.♗g3 ♘d8. In a blitz game, Ivanchuk even denied g2-g4 altogether by playing h7-h5 himself, but this plan abandons short castling and involves more difficult decisions from Black in future.

b) 10.♗e2 ♖bd7 11.♕d2 ♔e7 12.♗ae1 is somewhat underestimated.



Now it is rather risky to castle under the fire of all White's pieces: 12...0-0 13.e5 dxe5 [13...♖d5?! 14.♖xd5! (14.♗xe6 fxe6 15.♔h5 g6 16.♕xg6 ♖f7f6 17.exf6 ♖xf6 18.♗h6 hxg6 19.♗xg6+ ♖h8 is roughly equal: 20.♗e4 ♘xe4 21.♗xe4 ♖xe4=, or 20.♗xe6 ♗g8 21.♗h6+ ♖h7 22.♗f2 ♘f8∞) 14...♔xd5 15.c4 ♘b7 16.f5↑] 14.fxe5 ♘c5 15.♗f4 g6 16.♗h4 ♖h5 17.♔h1 ♘g7 18.♔h6 ♔e7 19.♗h3. Black can unload the tension with 19...♗xe5 20.♗xe5 ♖xe5 21.♗xe5 ♖f6 22.♗f4 ♘xe5 23.♗xe5 f6 24.♔c7 b5 25.♖b3±, but the two minor pieces might soon take control of the board.

I suppose that it would be safer to kill the d3-bishop:

Part 3

12... $\mathbb{Q}c5$ 13.b4 $\mathbb{Q}xd3$ 14.cxd3 0-0 15. $\mathbb{B}c1$ $\mathbb{W}d7$. I discuss this pawn structure in the annotations to **game 16** Cubas-Hellsten. The difference is that White's queen is on e2 here. This is perhaps in White's favour as his queen is not under the X-ray of the b7-bishop, and the d4-knight has a retreat square on f3. In result, Black lacks the counterplay with ... $\mathbb{Q}e7-f6xd4$, followed up by ...f7-f5. However, White also has not a clear plan. For instance, 16.g4 $\mathbb{Q}e8$ (threatening with 17...d5) 17. $\mathbb{B}b1$ $\mathbb{Q}f6$. If White opts for a waiting game with 16. $\mathbb{Q}h1$ $\mathbb{E}fc8$ 17. $\mathbb{Q}e3$, we can adopt the same set-up I recommend against 10. $\mathbb{W}f3$: 17... $\mathbb{Q}e8$ (planning ... $\mathbb{W}d7$, ... $\mathbb{Q}f6$) 18.f5 e5 19. $\mathbb{Q}f3$ b5 20.axb5 axb5 21. $\mathbb{E}fd1$ $\mathbb{Q}f6=$.

10... $\mathbb{Q}bd7$ 11. $\mathbb{Q}d2$

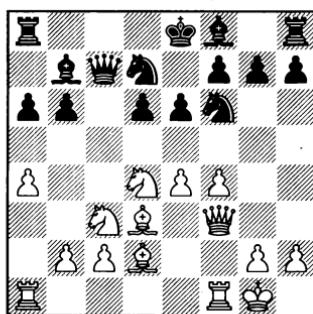
a) 11. $\mathbb{Q}e3$ has no advantages over 11. $\mathbb{Q}d2$. The bishop only hampers the break e4-e5 and it does not defend the c3-knight in the event of b2-b4. Black should follow the same plan as in the main line:

11... $\mathbb{Q}e7$ 12. $\mathbb{E}ae1$ 0-0 13. $\mathbb{W}h3$ (13.g4 $\mathbb{Q}c5$ 14.g5 $\mathbb{Q}fd7$) 13... $\mathbb{Q}c5$ 14. $\mathbb{Q}f2$ (14.e5? fails to 14...dxe5 15.fxe5 $\mathbb{W}xe5$) 14... $\mathbb{E}fe8$ 15. $\mathbb{Q}h1$. The play is balanced. Black has several ways of manoeuvring further.

One straightforward plan is to swap the d3-bishop. For instance: 15... $\mathbb{W}d7$ 16. $\mathbb{Q}b3$ $\mathbb{Q}xd3$ 17.cxd3 e5= 18. $\mathbb{Q}xb6$ $\mathbb{W}xh3$ 19.gxh3 $\mathbb{Q}c8$ 20.f5 $\mathbb{E}b8$ 21.a5 $\mathbb{Q}d8$.

b) 11. $\mathbb{Q}h1$ is a bit slow. Black can follow the main plan with 11... $\mathbb{Q}e7$ 12. $\mathbb{Q}d2$ 0-0 13. $\mathbb{W}h3$ $\mathbb{Q}c5$ 14.b4 $\mathbb{Q}xd3$ (14... $\mathbb{Q}xe4$ 15. $\mathbb{Q}xe6$ is slightly better for White) 15.cxd3 $\mathbb{E}fc8$.

11...g6!? is also possible. Quesada-Arencibia, Santa Clara 2007, continued 12. $\mathbb{Q}d2$ $\mathbb{Q}g7$ 13. $\mathbb{E}ae1$ 0-0 14. $\mathbb{W}h3$ $\mathbb{E}ae8$ 15. $\mathbb{Q}f3$ $\mathbb{Q}c5$ with mutual chances.



11... $\mathbb{Q}e7$

Black has another, much sharper set-up which was tested only in the game Antal-Wallner, Austria 2003:

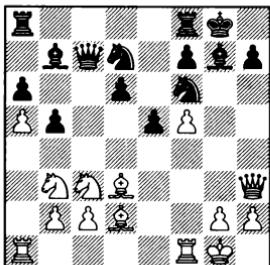
11...g6!? 12. $\mathbb{W}h3$ $\mathbb{Q}g7$ 13.a5

Black's main idea is seen in the variations 13.f5 gxf5! 14.exf5 e5 followed up by long castling, or 13. $\mathbb{Q}f3$ 0-0 14.f5 gxf5!? 15.exf5 e5 16. $\mathbb{W}g3$ $\mathbb{Q}h8$ where the open g-file might be in Black's favour. The text conceals a trap – 13...b5? 14. $\mathbb{Q}xb5$! so we castle:

13...0-0, and if 14.axb6 $\mathbb{W}xb6$! 15. $\mathbb{Q}e3$ $\mathbb{Q}g4=$. Critical is:

14.f5 gxf5 (14...exf5 15.exf5 $\mathbb{Q}e5$) 15.exf5 e5 17. $\mathbb{Q}b3$ b5

The Third Rank Set-Up



17.g4 b4 18.♗d1 e4 19.♕e2 ♗d5 20.g5 ♘e5! (20...♗h8 21.f6 ♘7xf6 22.gxf6 ♘xf6 23.♗xf6 ♘g8+ 24.♔f2 ♘xf6 25.♗e3±). Black has an initiative, e.g. 21.c4 bxc3 22.♗xc3 e3.

12.♖ae1 0-0

12...♗c5 13.b4 ♗xd3 is also playable, but the text is more ambitious. Black waits for White to play 13.♗h3 before putting 13...♗c5. I explain the subtleties of this position in the annotations to **game 16** Cubas-Hellsten, Buenos Aires 2006.

B2. 8.♗e2 ♗bd7

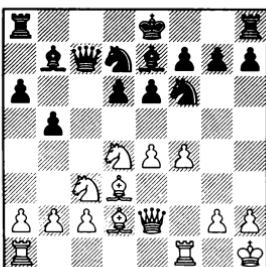
8...b5?! is a mistake before White has committed himself with f4. After 9.a4! b4 10.♗a2, followed up by c2-c3, White opens up the queenside to his favour.

9.♘h1!?

9.f4 ♘b6?! is a tough nut to crack. The complications after 10.♗e3 ♘xb2 11.♗db5 axb5 12.♗xb5 ♘a5 13.♗fb1 ♘xb5 14.♗xb2 ♘xb2∞ might lead to a drawish position follow-

ing 15.♗d2 ♘c5 16.♗d4 ♘b6 17.♗a5 ♘fd7 18.♗xc5 dxc5 19.♗b5 ♘xb5 20.♗xb5 ♘d6 21.e5 ♘c7 22.h4. It is true that Black cannot disentangle his minor pieces, but on the other hand, White also is unable to break the fortress.

The other alternative to the main line with ...♗e7 is the set-up with 9...b5?! 10.♗d2 ♘b7 11.♘h1 (11.♗ae1 ♘e7 12.♘h1! b4!) 11...♗e7



White gets an edge with 12.b4! 0-0 13.a4 bxa4 14.♗xa4 ♘b6 15.♗aa1, when 15...d5 16.e5 ♘e4 17.♗xe4 dxe4 18.♗xe4 ♘xe4 19.♗xe4 ♘c4 20.c3 retains a healthy extra pawn.

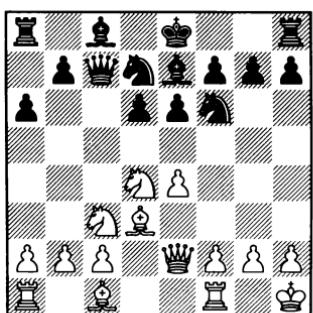
The delay of f2-f4 aims to discourage both ...b5 and ...♗b6. 9.♗d2 achieves the same effect, for instance: 9...b5?! 10.b4 ♘b7 11.a4. However, the set-up with 9...g6 is quite possible since the bishop would be passive on d2.

9...♗e7

9...b5 (9...♗e7 10.♗d2 transposes to the main line) 10.a4 b4 11.♗a2 ♘b7 12.♗d2 a5 13.c3 bxc3 14.♗xc3 ♘c5 15.♗b5+±.

Part 3

9...g6 10.f4 $\mathbb{Q}g7$ 11.f5 $\mathbb{Q}e5$ 12. $\mathbb{Q}f3$ is slightly better for White who has a clear plan on the dark squares, for example, 12... $\mathbb{Q}c6$ 13. $\mathbb{W}f2$ $\mathbb{Q}d7$ 14. $\mathbb{W}h4\uparrow$ or 12... $\mathbb{Q}h5$ 13. $\mathbb{W}f2$ $\mathbb{Q}xf3$ 14. $\mathbb{W}xf3$ $\mathbb{Q}e5$ 15. $\mathbb{Q}h6\uparrow$.

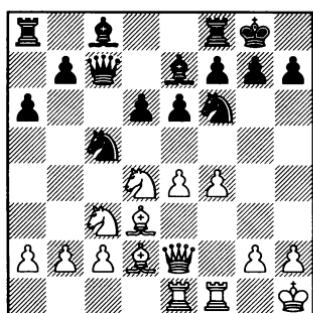


10. $\mathbb{Q}d2\text{!?}$ 0-0

10... $\mathbb{Q}c5$ 11.f4 b5? loses to 12.e5. See **game 17** Delchev-Castellanos Rodriguez, Leon 2012.

11.f4 $\mathbb{Q}c5$ 12. $\mathbb{Q}ae1$

Or 12.e5 $\mathbb{Q}fd7$ 13. $\mathbb{Q}ae1$ $\mathbb{Q}xd3$ 14.cxd3 dxe5 15.fxe5 $\mathbb{Q}h4\uparrow$!



Black is at a crossroads. Perhaps his strongest move is:

a) 12...b5 which, however, accepts a draw in the variation 13.e5 $\mathbb{Q}fd7$ 14. $\mathbb{Q}xh7\uparrow$ (14. $\mathbb{Q}f3$ $\mathbb{Q}xd3$ 15.cxd3 dxe5! 16.fxe5 $\mathbb{Q}h4$) 14... $\mathbb{Q}xh7$ 15. $\mathbb{W}h5\uparrow$ $\mathbb{Q}g8$ 16. $\mathbb{Q}f3$ dxe5 17. $\mathbb{Q}h3$ f5 18. $\mathbb{W}h7\uparrow$.

Instead, 13.b4 $\mathbb{Q}xd3$ 14.cxd3 $\mathbb{Q}b7$ 15. $\mathbb{Q}c1$ $\mathbb{W}d7$ is fine for Black. See **game 19** Moen-Topalov, ECC Rhodes 2013, about this structure.

b) 12... $\mathbb{Q}xd3$ is passive, but at least Black will be playing for all three results.

13.cxd3 b5

The life-long Kan player, GM Veliyev, chose 13... $\mathbb{W}d8$ 14.g4 h6, but this is really too provocative. White has a serious initiative after 15.g5 hxg5 16.fxg5 $\mathbb{Q}d7$ (16... $\mathbb{Q}h7$) 17.h4.

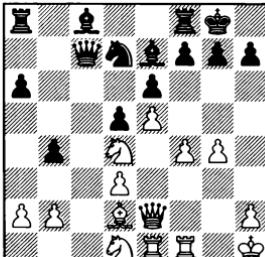
14.g4

Alternatives are:

14.e5 dxe5 15.fxe5 $\mathbb{Q}d7$ 16. $\mathbb{Q}c1$ $\mathbb{W}b6$ 17. $\mathbb{Q}e3$ $\mathbb{Q}b7$ 18. $\mathbb{Q}f5$ $\mathbb{W}d8=$;
14. $\mathbb{W}f2$ b4 15. $\mathbb{Q}ce2$ a5 16. $\mathbb{Q}c1$ (16. $\mathbb{Q}g1$ e5 17. $\mathbb{Q}f5$ $\mathbb{Q}xf5$ 18.exf5 $\mathbb{W}c2\mp$)
16... $\mathbb{W}d7$ 17. $\mathbb{Q}c6$ $\mathbb{Q}b7$ 18. $\mathbb{Q}xe7+$
 $\mathbb{W}xe7=$;

14. $\mathbb{Q}c1$ $\mathbb{W}d7$ 15.a3 $\mathbb{Q}b7$.

14...b4 15. $\mathbb{Q}d1$ d5 16.e5 $\mathbb{Q}d7$



The Third Rank Set-Up

The continuation of White's attack is not trivial. Our defence is based on the potential power of the b7-bishop: 17.f5 ♜b7 18.♗f3 (18.g5 exf5 19.♘xf5 d4+ 20.♔g1 ♜c5) 18...♝h4 19.♘f2 ♜b6 20.♗e3 ♜e7.

The same defensive set-up could be employed against 14.a3 ♜b7 15.g4 (15.b4 ♜fc8 16.g4? d5 17.e5 ♜b6!) 15...d5 16.e5 ♜d7 17.b4 (17.♗c1 ♜ac8) 17...♜b6 18.♗e3 f6??.

Note that Black's counterplay is often based on ...♜b6 when White cannot find a decent way to protect his knight on d4. Shift the queen to f3, and the same structure would be better for White due to the possibility of b4, ♜c3-e2. Black would risk to remain without any plan.

B3. 8.f4

This move is not too flexible as White commits himself on the kingside. That rules out plans on the other wing so Black can safely answer with 8...b5. We saw in line B2 that the early fianchetto was dubious due to a4, but after f4 this break is no longer effective. However, I recommend to follow the same move order as in line B2 for consistency sake.

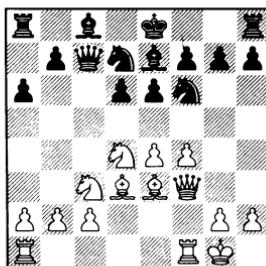
8...♝bd7 9.♗h1

The most popular follow up although White should not worry about ...♜b6. Thus he could play:

a) 9.♗f3, when 9...♜b6 10.♗e3

♝xb2 is dubious: 11.♘cb5 axb5 12.♘xb5 ♜b4 (12...♜a5 13.♗ab1 ♜xb5 14.♘xb5 ♜c3 15.♗b3 ♜c7 16.♘d4+) 13.♘c7+ ♜d8 14.♘xa8 ♜a5 15.♗ad1 ♜xa8 16.e5 ♜d5 17.♘d4+. Instead, Black follows his main plan:

9...♜e7 10.♗e3 (...♜b6 was already an option: 10.♗g3 ♜b6 11.♗e3 ♜xb2 12.♗de2 ♜a3 13.♗xg7 ♜g8 14.♗h6 b5∞; 10.g4 ♜b6 11.♗e3 ♜xb2 12.♗ce2 ♜c5)



10...b5!

Do not castle under attack in this set-up! The queen on f3 and the bishop on e3 do not generate any threats in the centre, but they are well set for 10...0-0?! 11.g4. Therefore, we should complete development and safeguard the kingside before moving our king there.

11.a3

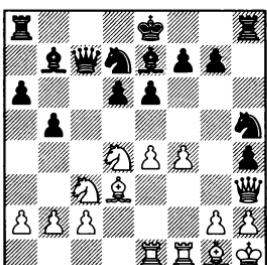
11.g4? is neutralised by 11...h6. The same defence works well in the event of 11.♗ae1 ♜b7 12.g4? (or 12.f5 e5 13.♗b3 h5) 12...h6.

More interesting is 12.♗h1, when 12...g6 13.a3 ♜c5 transposes to 11.a3.

Another very interesting plan is to push ...h5-h4, for instance:

Part 3

12...h5!? 13.♗g1 h4 14.♘h3 ♗h5

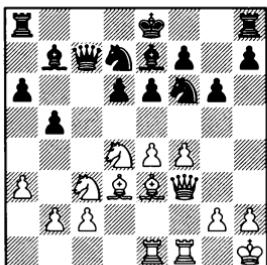


It is unclear how White could display activity here while Black has plenty of useful moves as ...♝c8/d8, ...♝f8, ...g6 or ...♝h6. See **game 18** Kerekes-A.Kovacs, Hungary 2007.

11...♝b7 12.♝ae1 g6

Simple and good. Now f5 is impossible, 13.g4 is still bad due to 13...h6, so White has nothing better than wait.

13.♔h1



13...♝c5

The combination of ...g6 + ...h5 is not perfect, but it is playable: 13...h5 14.♗g1 h4 15.h3 ♗h5 16.♗de2, Saltaev-Ilinicic, Elista 1998. At this point 16...♝c8 (instead of 17...e5? 18.♗d5±) 17.♗d4 0-0 would have been unclear.

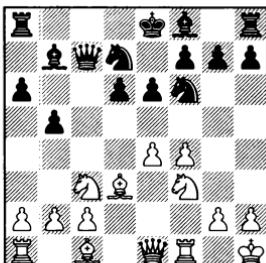
14.♗g1 0-0

Black's king is absolutely safe and nothing can stop the break ...e5, e.g. 15.♗g3 e5; 15.♗h3 e5. Suess-Spassky, Dortmund 1973 went:

15.♗e2 e5 16.♗b3 (16.fxe5 dxe5 17.♗b3 ♗e6) 16...♗xb3 (16...exf4!? 17.♗xf4 ♘ae8) 17.cxb3 exf4 18.♗xf4 ♗d7=.

b) 9.♗f3 has been out of fashion for quite a while. It was designed to provoke ...e5?! and use the opened f-file to sac the exchange on f6, e.g. 9...♝e7 10.♗e1 e5?! 11.♗h1 0-0 12.fxe5 ♗xe5 13.♗xe5 dxe5 14.♗g5 ♗e6 15.♗h4 ♘fe8 16.♗xf6 ♘xf6 17.♗xf6 gxsf6 18.♗f1. Although 18...♗d8! would tame the first attacking wave, White keeps an initiative. I think that Black has various promising plans provided he refrains from ...e5. I would also avoid an early ...♝c5 since Black's position after b4 ♗xd3 is solid, but passive. The most straightforward retort to White's scheme is:

9...b5! 10.♗h1 (10.♗e1 ♗b7 11.♗d2 ♘e7) 10...♝b7 11.♗e1



11...b4 12.♗d1 d5 or 12...♝c5 13.♗f2 d5 14.e5 ♗fe4 15.♗e3 ♘e7

The Third Rank Set-Up

16. $\mathbb{Q}d4$ 0-0 17. $\mathbb{W}e3$, Arnason-Pliester, New York 1989, 17... $\mathbb{E}ac8=.$

Black can also keep the centre fluid by 11... $\mathbb{Q}e7$ 12. $\mathbb{Q}d2$

12. e5 dxe5 13. fxe5 $\mathbb{Q}g4$ is good for Black: 14. $\mathbb{W}g3$ h5 15. h3 $\mathbb{Q}gxe5$ 16. $\mathbb{Q}e4$ (16. $\mathbb{W}xg7$ 0-0-0) 16... h4 17. $\mathbb{W}xg7$ 0-0-0 or 14. $\mathbb{Q}e4$ $\mathbb{Q}gxe5$ 15. $\mathbb{W}g3$ f5 16. $\mathbb{W}xg7$ 0-0-0 17. $\mathbb{W}xe7$ fxe4 18. $\mathbb{Q}xe5$ exd3=.

12... 0-0 (12... $\mathbb{Q}c5$ 13. b4 $\mathbb{Q}xd3$ 14. cxd3 0-0 15. $\mathbb{Q}c1$ $\mathbb{W}d7$ 16. a3 $\mathbb{W}fc8=$) 13. b4 (13. $\mathbb{Q}d1$ $\mathbb{Q}c5$ 14. $\mathbb{Q}f2$ $\mathbb{E}ac8$; 13. e5 dxe5 14. fxe5 $\mathbb{Q}g4$ 15. $\mathbb{W}g3$ f5+) 13... $\mathbb{Q}b6$ followed up by ... $\mathbb{Q}c4$.

9... $\mathbb{Q}e7$ 10. $\mathbb{W}f3$

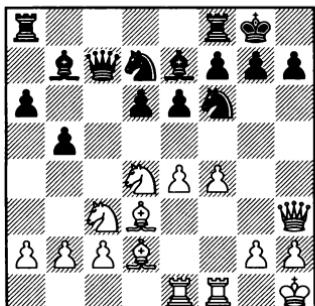
10. $\mathbb{W}e2$ 0-0 11. $\mathbb{Q}d2$ $\mathbb{Q}c5$ is considered in line B2.

10... b5 11. $\mathbb{Q}d2$ $\mathbb{Q}b7$ 12. $\mathbb{E}ae1$

Black has counterplay after 12. b4 0-0 13. a4 bxa4 14. $\mathbb{E}xa4$ $\mathbb{W}fc8$ 15. $\mathbb{Q}aa1$ $\mathbb{Q}b6$ 16. $\mathbb{W}h3$ $\mathbb{Q}c4$.

If White retreats his knight to b3 now, or on the next move, we follow the main scheme with ...0-0, ... $\mathbb{E}e8$.

12... 0-0



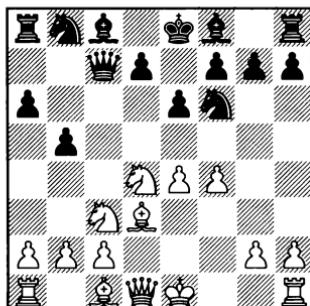
13. $\mathbb{W}h3$

In Thipsay-Lomineishvili, Kishinev 1995, White chose 13. b4 $\mathbb{E}fe8$ 14. $\mathbb{W}h3$, when the thematic 14... e5 15. $\mathbb{Q}f5$ $\mathbb{Q}f8$ solved the opening problems.

After the text, 13... $\mathbb{Q}c5$ 14. b4 $\mathbb{Q}xd3$ 15. cxd3 $\mathbb{E}fc8$ is a solid, but passive approach. A more straightforward attempt is 13... b4 14. $\mathbb{Q}a4$ (14. $\mathbb{Q}d1$ $\mathbb{Q}c5$) 14... d5 15. e5 $\mathbb{Q}e4$, but White retains some pull with 16. c4 g6 17. $\mathbb{Q}xe4$ dxe4 18. b3.

I like the flexible 13... $\mathbb{E}fe8!?$. It prepares ...e5 so White should anticipate it with 14. e5 dxe5 15. fxe5 $\mathbb{Q}xe5$ 16. $\mathbb{Q}f4$ $\mathbb{Q}d6$ 17. $\mathbb{Q}dxb5$ axb5 18. $\mathbb{Q}xb5$ $\mathbb{Q}xd3$ 19. $\mathbb{Q}xc7$ $\mathbb{Q}xf4$ 20. $\mathbb{Q}xe8$ $\mathbb{Q}xh3$ 21. $\mathbb{Q}xd6$ $\mathbb{Q}c6$ 22. $\mathbb{Q}e3$ $\mathbb{Q}g5$ 23. $\mathbb{Q}c3$ $\mathbb{Q}a6$ 24. b4 $\mathbb{Q}d7$. The long forced sequence is over. In such sharp unbalanced positions, it is easier to play with the two minor pieces.

C. 7. f4 b5



7... d6 might turn into a loss of tempo if Black later plays ...b4 followed up by ...d6-d5. It also rules

Part 3

out the active development ... $\mathbb{Q}c5$. The only drawback of 7... $b5$ is that it allows e4-e5, but we'll see that the arising positions are entirely acceptable.

8.e5

Alternatives may lead to the Taimanov:

a) 8. $\mathbb{W}f3$ $\mathbb{Q}b7$ 9. $\mathbb{Q}e3$ $\mathbb{Q}c6$ transposes to the Taimanov with f4 – see Part 4.

Only 9.g4 is of independent significance. The game may continue 9... $\mathbb{Q}c6!$ (9... $b4$ 10. $\mathbb{Q}ce2$ $d5$ 11.e5 $\mathbb{Q}e4$ 12.f5!) is rather unclear: 12... $exf5$ 13.e6 $\mathbb{Q}d6$) 10. $\mathbb{Q}e3$ (10. $\mathbb{Q}xc6$ $\mathbb{W}xc6$ 11.g5 $\mathbb{Q}b4$ 12. $\mathbb{Q}d2$ $\mathbb{Q}xc3$ 13. $\mathbb{Q}xc3$ $\mathbb{Q}xe4$ 14. $\mathbb{Q}xg7$ $\mathbb{E}g8$ 15. $\mathbb{Q}d4$ $\mathbb{Q}xg5$) 10... $h5$ which is again a Taimanov side line.

b) for 8. $\mathbb{W}e2$ $\mathbb{Q}b7$, see Part 4, **game 26** An.Martin-Delchev, Benasque 2013.

8... $b4$ 9. $\mathbb{Q}a4!?$

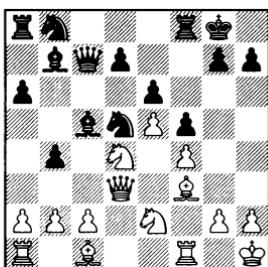
a) 9. $\mathbb{Q}ce2$ $\mathbb{Q}d5$ 10. $\mathbb{Q}e4$ $\mathbb{Q}b7$ is not popular.

At first White tried 11. $\mathbb{W}d3$, but maybe Iordachescu's suggestion 11... $d6$ (11... $\mathbb{Q}e7$? 12.0-0 $\mathbb{Q}c6=$) 12.exd6 $\mathbb{Q}xd6$ 13.f5 $\mathbb{Q}d7$ 14.fxe6 $\mathbb{Q}c5$ 15. $\mathbb{W}f3$ 0-0-0! scared him. Indeed, Black has serious initiative. Lately, White tested:

11.0-0 which is aimed against 11... $d6$, e.g. 12.exd6 $\mathbb{Q}xd6$ 13.f5 e5 14. $\mathbb{Q}b3\pm$. Instead, Black may experiment with 11... $a5$ 12. $\mathbb{Q}h1$ $\mathbb{Q}a6$

13. $\mathbb{Q}g3$ $\mathbb{Q}c5$ 14. $\mathbb{Q}f3$ $g6$ 15.a3 $h5$, intending to meet 16.f5 by 16... $h4$ 17.fgx6 $hxg3$ (17... $fxg6$ 18. $\mathbb{Q}ge2\infty$) 18.gxf7+ $\mathbb{Q}d8$ 19. $\mathbb{W}e1$ $\mathbb{E}xh2+$ 20. $\mathbb{Q}g1$ $\mathbb{E}h8$ 21. $\mathbb{W}xg3\infty$. However, it is more natural to complete development with:

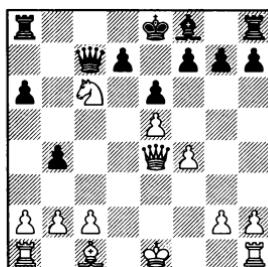
11... $\mathbb{Q}c5$ 12. $\mathbb{Q}h1$ 0-0 13. $\mathbb{W}d3$ f5 14. $\mathbb{Q}f3$ with mutual chances.



In the game Edouard-Iturriaga, Benasque 2009, Black even intercepted the initiative after 14... $g6$ 15.a3 $\mathbb{E}c8$ 16. $\mathbb{Q}d2$ $bx a3$ 17.bxa3 $\mathbb{Q}b6$ 18. $\mathbb{Q}xb7$ $\mathbb{W}xb7$, but 14... $a5$ 15. $\mathbb{E}b1$ $\mathbb{Q}a6$ also deserves attention.

b) 9. $\mathbb{Q}cb5$ $axb5$ 10. $exf6$ $gxf6$ 11. $\mathbb{Q}xb5$ (11. $\mathbb{W}e2$ $\mathbb{Q}c5$) 11... $\mathbb{W}b6$ 12. $\mathbb{W}f3$ $\mathbb{Q}b7$!? (12... $\mathbb{E}a5$ 13. $\mathbb{Q}e3$ $\mathbb{Q}c5=$) 13. $\mathbb{Q}e3$ $\mathbb{W}xb5$.

c) 9. $\mathbb{Q}e4$ $\mathbb{Q}xe4$ 10. $\mathbb{Q}xe4$ $\mathbb{Q}b7$ 11. $\mathbb{W}f3$ $\mathbb{Q}xe4$ 12. $\mathbb{W}xe4$ $\mathbb{Q}c6$ 13. $\mathbb{Q}xc6$



The Third Rank Set-Up

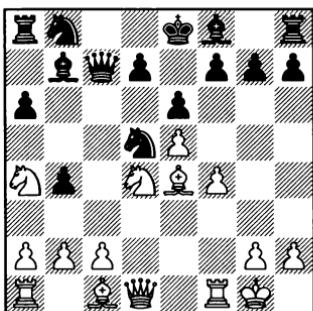
This position is equal:

13... $\mathbb{W}b7$ (hoping to keep an asymmetric pawn structure with ... $\mathbb{E}c8$)
14. $\mathbb{Q}e3$ (14. $\mathbb{W}f3$ $dxc6$ 15. $\mathbb{Q}e3$ $\mathbb{Q}e7$ 16.0-0=; 14.c4 $bxcc3$ 15. $bxcc3$ $\mathbb{Q}c5$ 16. $\mathbb{E}b1$ $\mathbb{W}xc6$ 17. $\mathbb{W}xc6$ $dxcc6$ 18. $\mathbb{Q}e2$ 0-0-0=) $\mathbb{E}c8$ 15.0-0-0 $\mathbb{W}xc6$ 16. $\mathbb{W}xc6$ $\mathbb{E}xc6$ 17. $\mathbb{E}d3$ $\mathbb{Q}e7$ 18. $\mathbb{E}hd1$ $\mathbb{E}c7$ 19. $\mathbb{Q}d4$ f6 with typical counterplay;

13... $\mathbb{W}xc6$ 14. $\mathbb{W}xc6$ $dxcc6$ 15. $\mathbb{Q}e2$ 0-0-0=;

13... $dxcc6$ 14. $\mathbb{Q}e3$ $\mathbb{Q}e7$ 15.0-0-0
0-0 16. $\mathbb{W}c4$ c5 17. $\mathbb{E}d2$ $\mathbb{W}c6$ 18. $\mathbb{E}hd1$ $\mathbb{E}fe8$ =. Black has counterplay on the queenside.

9... $\mathbb{Q}d5$ 10. $\mathbb{Q}e4$ $\mathbb{Q}b7$ 11.0-0



11... $\mathbb{Q}c3$!

In practice, Black has been struggling so far. He has tried 11... $\mathbb{Q}e7$? 12. $\mathbb{Q}f5\pm$ and:

11...g6

This is *Houdini's* first line at depth 23. Rublevsky also put his fate in it against Bologan. In my opinion, such a development is too slow. I tried to refute it by opening

the queenside wit 12.c4, but Black holds on after 12... $\mathbb{W}xc4$ 13.b3 $\mathbb{W}c7$ 14. $\mathbb{W}f3$ $\mathbb{Q}c6$ 15. $\mathbb{Q}b2$ $\mathbb{E}c8$ 16. $\mathbb{Q}xd5$ $\mathbb{Q}xd4$ 17. $\mathbb{Q}xd4$ $\mathbb{Q}xd5$ 18. $\mathbb{W}f2$ $\mathbb{W}c6$ 19. $\mathbb{Q}b6$ $\mathbb{E}c7$ 20. $\mathbb{Q}e3$ $\mathbb{W}b7$ =. The most unpleasant retort is probably:

12. $\mathbb{E}f2$! (preparing to occupy the c-file by c4, $\mathbb{E}c2$) 12... $\mathbb{Q}e7$ 13. $\mathbb{Q}xd5$ $\mathbb{Q}xd5$ 14.c4 $bxcc3$ 15. $\mathbb{Q}xc3$ $\mathbb{Q}b7$ 16. $\mathbb{Q}e3$ $\mathbb{Q}c6$ 17. $\mathbb{E}c1$ $\mathbb{Q}xd4$ 18. $\mathbb{W}xd4$. White has lasting pressure on the queenside, for example: 18... $\mathbb{Q}c6$ 19. $\mathbb{Q}a4$ 0-0 20. $\mathbb{Q}b6$ $\mathbb{E}ab8$ 21. $\mathbb{E}fc2$ $\mathbb{W}d8$ 22. $\mathbb{E}d2$ $\mathbb{E}b7$ 23.b3.

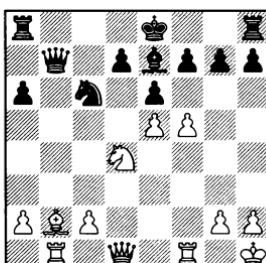
It is better to trade quickly White's active pieces:

12. $\mathbb{Q}xc3$

Or 12. $bxcc3$ $\mathbb{Q}xe4$ 13. $cxb4$ $\mathbb{Q}c6$ 14.c3 $\mathbb{Q}xd4$ 15. $\mathbb{W}xd4$ $\mathbb{Q}xg2$ 16. $\mathbb{Q}xg2$ $\mathbb{W}c6+$ 17. $\mathbb{E}f3$ $\mathbb{W}xa4\infty$.

12... $bxcc3$ 13. $\mathbb{W}f3$

13. $\mathbb{Q}xb7$ $cxb2$ 14. $\mathbb{Q}xb2$ (14. $\mathbb{E}b1$ $bxcc1\mathbb{W}$ 15. $\mathbb{W}xc1$ $\mathbb{E}a7$ 16. $\mathbb{Q}f3$ $\mathbb{Q}c5$ 17. $\mathbb{E}d1$ 0-0=) 14... $\mathbb{W}xb7$ 15. $\mathbb{E}b1$ $\mathbb{Q}c6$ 16. $\mathbb{Q}h1$ (16. $\mathbb{E}f3$ $\mathbb{Q}e7$ 17. $\mathbb{E}b3$ $\mathbb{W}c7$ 18. $\mathbb{Q}xc6$ $\mathbb{W}xc6$ 19. $\mathbb{Q}d4$ 0-0=) 16... $\mathbb{Q}e7$ 17.f5 (17. $\mathbb{Q}a3$ $\mathbb{W}c7$) looks dangerous, but Black has sufficient defense:



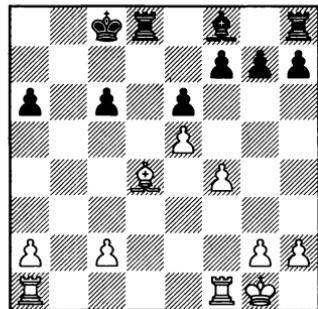
Part 3

17... $\mathbb{Q}xd4$ 18. $\mathbb{Q}xd4$ $\mathbb{W}e4$ 19. $\mathbb{W}d3$
(19.f6 gxf6 20.exf6 $\mathbb{E}g8$ 21. $\mathbb{W}d2$
 $\mathbb{Q}d8\infty$) 19... $\mathbb{W}xd3$ 20.cxd3 with
equal endgame:

20...h5 21.g3 $\mathbb{E}c8$ 22. $\mathbb{E}b6$ 0-0
23. $\mathbb{E}xa6$ $\mathbb{E}a8$ 24. $\mathbb{E}xa8$ $\mathbb{E}xa8=$
25.fxe6 dxe6 26. $\mathbb{E}a1$ $\mathbb{E}a3$ 27. $\mathbb{Q}b2?$
 $\mathbb{E}xd3$ 28.a4 $\mathbb{Q}b4$;

20...exf5 21. $\mathbb{E}xf5$ 0-0 22. $\mathbb{E}b7$
 $\mathbb{E}fd8$ 23. $\mathbb{E}f1$ $\mathbb{Q}f8=$.

**13... $\mathbb{Q}xe4$ 14. $\mathbb{W}xe4$ cxb2
15. $\mathbb{Q}xb2$ $\mathbb{Q}c6$ 16. $\mathbb{Q}xc6$ $\mathbb{W}xc6$
17. $\mathbb{W}xc6$ dxc6 18. $\mathbb{Q}d4$ 0-0-0**



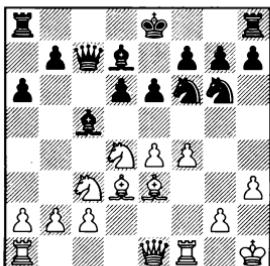
Black has no problems here:
19. $\mathbb{Q}e3$ $\mathbb{E}d5$ 20.c4 (20. $\mathbb{E}fb1$ $\mathbb{Q}c5=$)
20... $\mathbb{E}d3$ 21. $\mathbb{Q}f2$ $\mathbb{Q}e7$ 22. $\mathbb{E}fb1$ $\mathbb{E}hd8$
23. $\mathbb{E}b3$ $\mathbb{E}xb3$ 24.axb3 $\mathbb{E}d3=$.

Part 3. The Third Rank Set-Up

Complete Games

10. Vatter-Zakhartsov Bad Wiessee, 04.11.2011

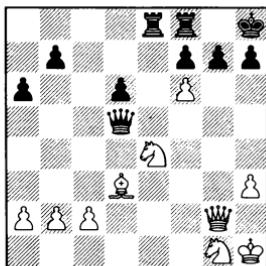
1.e4 c5 2.♘f3 e6 3.d4 cxd4
4.♗xd4 ♗c6 5.♘c3 ♖c7 6.♗e3 a6
7.♗d3 ♗f6 8.0-0 ♗e5 9.h3 ♗c5
10.♗h1 d6 11.f4 ♗g6 12.♗e1 ♗d7



13.f5 ♗e5 14.♗h4 0-0 15.♗f3
exf5 16.exf5 ♗xf3 17.gxf3 ♗c6
18.♗g1 ♗xf3+ 19.♗xf3 ♗xe3
20.♗xf6 ♗xg1 21.♗g5 ♗c5
22.♗xg1 ♗ae8

This is the same position from my main line, only the pawn is on b7 instead of b5.

23.♗e4 ♗d5 24.♗g2 ♗h8
25.f6



25...♗g8

It is logical to open the g-file for the rooks instead of playing 25...g6, but why not take on f6 with the same goal. The endgame after 25...gxf6?! 26.♗xf6 ♗xg2+ is difficult for White since his knights have not any stable outposts. In this line the pawn is probably better on b7 than on b5 – Black has no weaknesses.

26.♗f3?

26.♗g5 was the only move. Then 26...♗e5 27.fxg7+ ♗xg7 28.♗d8+ ♗g8 29.♗f6+ is a draw so Black should play 26...♗xg5 27.♗xg5 gxf6 28.♗xf7+ ♗g7 29.♗xd6 ♗e1. Without the d-pawn, Black can hardly

Part 3

win this endgame though.

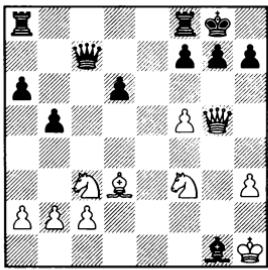
**26... $\mathbb{E}e6$ 27. $f\times g7+$ $\mathbb{E}\times g7$
28. $\mathbb{Q}e2$**

This position is won for Black. Strongest is 28... $\mathbb{W}xa2$, but Zakhartsov's decision to leave the queen in the centre is more practical.

**28... $\mathbb{W}e5$ 29. $\mathbb{W}f4$ $\mathbb{W}xb2$
30. $\mathbb{Q}h2$ $\mathbb{W}xa2$ 31. $\mathbb{Q}xd6$ $\mathbb{W}d5$
32. $\mathbb{Q}xf7+?$ $\mathbb{E}xf7$ 0-1**

11. Carlsen-Vachier Lagrave Cap d'Agde 2006

1.e4 c5 2. $\mathbb{Q}f3$ e6 3. $\mathbb{Q}c3$ $\mathbb{Q}c6$
4.d4 cxd4 5. $\mathbb{Q}xd4$ $\mathbb{W}c7$ 6. $\mathbb{Q}e3$ a6
7. $\mathbb{Q}d3$ $\mathbb{Q}f6$ 8.0-0 $\mathbb{Q}e5$ 9.h3 $\mathbb{Q}c5$
10. $\mathbb{Q}h1$ d6 11.f4 $\mathbb{Q}g6$ 12. $\mathbb{Q}e1$ 0-0
13.f5 $\mathbb{Q}e5$ 14. $\mathbb{W}h4$ b5 15. $\mathbb{Q}f3$ exf5
16.exf5 $\mathbb{Q}xf3$ 17.gxf3 $\mathbb{Q}b7$ 18. $\mathbb{E}g1$
 $\mathbb{Q}xf3+$ 19. $\mathbb{Q}xf3$ $\mathbb{Q}xe3$ 20. $\mathbb{W}xf6$
 $\mathbb{W}xg1$ 21. $\mathbb{W}g5$



This was one of the first games that reached this crazy position. I mention it since it gives an excellent idea of White's possibilities. Later Black found improvements, as 21...

$\mathbb{W}c5$, but Carlsen's play is nonetheless impressive.

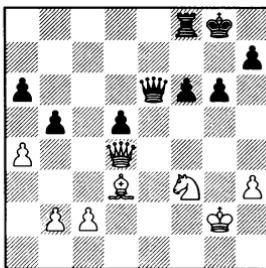
21... $\mathbb{W}c6$ 22. $\mathbb{Q}e4$

22. $\mathbb{Q}e4$ $\mathbb{W}c5$ 23. $\mathbb{Q}a8$ fails to 23...
 $\mathbb{Q}e3$.

22... $f6$ 23. $\mathbb{W}xg1$ $\mathbb{E}ae8?$

In *The Safest Sicilian*, I proposed to centralise the queen with 23... $\mathbb{W}d5$! White should defend the f5-pawn with 24. $\mathbb{Q}d4$ $\mathbb{E}f7$ 25. $\mathbb{Q}e6$ $\mathbb{E}e8$ 26. $\mathbb{W}g2$ $\mathbb{Q}h8$ and Black is somewhat better. The modern understanding is that Black should not weaken the e6-square.

**24. $\mathbb{W}d4$ d5 25. $\mathbb{Q}c5$ $\mathbb{E}e7$
26. $\mathbb{Q}g2$ g6 27. $\mathbb{Q}e6$ $\mathbb{E}xe6$ 28.fxe6
 $\mathbb{W}xe6$ 29.a4!**



Black's queenside pawns are weak, his queen is passive. Still, nothing terrible has happened yet.

**29... $b\times a4$ 30. $\mathbb{W}xa4$ $\mathbb{E}b8$ 31.b3
 $\mathbb{E}b6$ 32. $\mathbb{W}a5$ $\mathbb{Q}g7$ 33. $\mathbb{Q}d4$ $\mathbb{W}d6$
34.c3 h5?**

This natural move turns out to be dubious. 34... $\mathbb{Q}f7$ 35.b4 f5 was a better set-up. White stands im-

The Third Rank Set-Up

pressively, but everything in Black's camp is protected.

35.h4 ♜h6 36.b4 ♜b8?

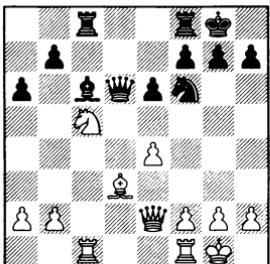
Humans hate to stay passively and too often lose because they strive to force events instead of miserably repeating aimless moves. Now 36...♜g7 was holding the position, but Vachier-Lagrave had a counter-attack in mind.

37.♛a6 ♜f4? 38.♝f5!

A beautiful mating combination out of the blue. Black resigned.

12. Zaragatski-Delchev Bad Wiessee 2005

1.e4 c5 2.♝f3 e6 3.d4 cxd4
4.♞xd4 ♜c6 5.♞c3 ♜c7 6.♝e3 a6
7.♝d3 ♜f6 8.0-0 ♜xd4 9.♝xd4
♝c5 10.♝xc5 ♜xc5 11.♞a4 ♜c7
12.c4 d6 13.♝c1 0-0 14.c5 ♜d7
15.cxd6 ♜xd6 16.♞c5 ♜c6
17.♛e2 ♜ac8



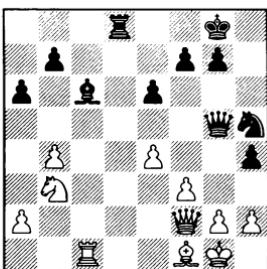
Black holds the position thanks to the tactical trick 18.e5 ♜d5 19.f4

♝d4 20.♛f2 ♜xf2 21.♝xf2=, J. Moreno-Tregubov, France 2000. This endgame might be White's best option though. Zaragatski relies on the symmetric structure and avoids taking any committing decisions, but this is always a dubious approach.

**18.♝fd1 ♜e5 19.f3 ♜fd8
20.♛f2 h5!**

In such pawn structures, Black has two major plans. One is to push g5. This is a good defensive set-up. I chose to gain space on the kingside by ...h5-h4. White should have prevented it by playing h4 himself.

**21.♝f1 ♜g5 22.b4?! h4 23.♝d8
♝d8 24.♝b3 ♜h5**



It is amazing how quickly one can get into trouble in a seemingly simple and safe position. White would not have had problems without rooks, but he cannot exchange them.

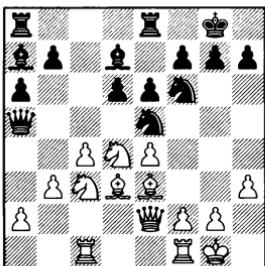
**25.♝c5 e5 26.♝d4 ♜f4 27.♝h1
♝a4 28.♝f5 ♜d1 29.g3 ♜d3
30.♝c8+ ♜h7 31.♛e2 ♜c1 32.♝f2
♝b5 33.♝e3 ♜d3 34.♛g1 ♜e1**

Part 3

35.a4 ♜xa4 36.f4 exf4 37.♗g2
♝a1 38.gxf4 ♜xf4 39.♝c5 ♜g4
40.♝xf4 ♜f3+ 0-1

13. Varga-Almasi Budapest 2004

1.e4 c5 2.♘f3 ♜c6 3.d4 cxd4
4.♘xd4 ♜c7 5.♘c3 e6 6.♗e3 ♜f6
7.♗d3 a6 8.0-0 ♜e5 9.h3 ♜c5
10.♘a4 ♜a7 11.c4 d6 12.♗c1 ♜d7
13.♘c3 0-0 14.b3 ♜a5 15.♗e2
♝fe8=



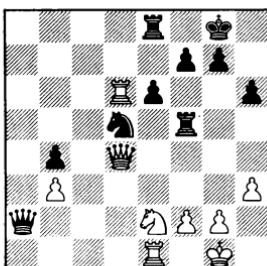
16.♘f3 ♜xe3 17.♗xe3 ♜xf3+
18.♗xf3 b5?

A good idea at a wrong time. Black is still slightly unco-ordinated, so 18...♝ad8?! would have been better.

19.cxb5?

White misses his tactical chance 19.e5! dxе5 20.♗e4 with a very annoying initiative. The c-pawn suddenly becomes dreadful. Neither 20...♝d8 21.c5±, nor 20...♝e4 21.♗e4 g6 22.♗e5 ♜a2 23.♗e4 ♜ac8 24.♗xb7 ♜b8 25.♗c7 bxc4 26.bxc4± suits Black.

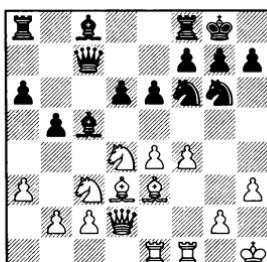
19...axb5† 20.♝c2 b4 21.♗e2
♝b6! 22.♗d1? (The rook is better on the open file: 22.♗fc1†.) 22...
♝a5! 23.♗cd2 ♜c6 24.♗b1 ♜f5†
25.♗g3 ♜e4 26.♗d6 ♜a5 27.♗e3
♜xb1 28.♗xb1 ♜d5 29.♗d4 ♜xa2
30.♗e1 h6



Black could have taken another pawn: 30...♜xb3! since 31.♗g3
♝g5 32.♗e4 ♜xg2! 33.♗xg2 ♜f4+
34.♗g1 ♜f3 35.♗f6 gxf6 36.♗e4
♝h3 37.♗h2 ♜g5 38.♗e3 ♜c8+– loses at once. It is incredible, but Black went on to lose from the diagram position. 1:0 on move 76.

14. Onischuk-Salov Elista 1998

1.e4 c5 2.♘f3 e6 3.d4 cxd4
4.♘xd4 ♜c6 5.♘c3 ♜c7 6.♗e3 a6
7.♗d3 ♜f6 8.0-0 ♜e5 9.h3 ♜c5
10.♗h1 d6 11.f4 ♜g6 12.♗d2 0-0
13.♗ae1 b5 14.a3



The Third Rank Set-Up

14... $\mathbb{E}e8$

$\mathbb{Q}e7$ 31. $\mathbb{Q}d6$ $\mathbb{Q}c6$ 32. $\mathbb{Q}d4$ $\mathbb{Q}d5$

14...e5 15.fxe5 dxe5 16. $\mathbb{Q}f5$ $\mathbb{Q}xe3$ 17. $\mathbb{Q}xe3$ is slightly better for White.

14... $\mathbb{Q}b7$ fails to 15.f5 so Black defends the e-pawn.

14... $\mathbb{W}b6!$? is a good alternative: 15.e5 $\mathbb{Q}h5$ 16. $\mathbb{W}f2$ $\mathbb{Q}hf4$ 17.b4 $\mathbb{Q}xd4$ 18. $\mathbb{Q}xd4$ $\mathbb{Q}xd3$ 19.cxd3 $\mathbb{Q}c6$ 20.ed6∞.

15. $\mathbb{Q}b3$ $\mathbb{Q}xe3$ 16. $\mathbb{W}xe3$ $\mathbb{Q}b7$
17.e5

This is the main plan. 17.f5 exf5 18. $\mathbb{Q}f5$ d5 or 17. $\mathbb{Q}e2$ e5 18.f5 $\mathbb{Q}e7$ transform the centre in Black's favour.

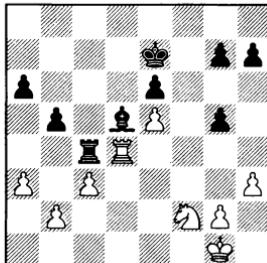
17...dxe5 18.fxe5 $\mathbb{Q}d7$
19. $\mathbb{Q}xg6$ fxe6 20. $\mathbb{Q}e2!$

A flexible move which makes way for the other rook to d1.

20... $\mathbb{Q}b6$

A critical moment of the game. Salov plays very well endgames so he gladly allows the trade of queens. I think that 20... $\mathbb{E}ac8$ maintains a dynamic balance without much risk, because Black's pawn structure on the kingside is nearly unassailable: 21. $\mathbb{Q}d4$ (21. $\mathbb{Q}d1$ $\mathbb{Q}b6$ =; 21. $\mathbb{W}d4$ $\mathbb{Q}b6$ 22. $\mathbb{Q}d2$ $\mathbb{E}cd8=$) 21... $\mathbb{Q}b6$ 22. $\mathbb{Q}d1=$.

21. $\mathbb{W}c5$ $\mathbb{E}ac8$ 22. $\mathbb{W}xc7$ $\mathbb{E}xc7$
23. $\mathbb{Q}a5$ $\mathbb{Q}a8$ 24. $\mathbb{Q}g1$ $\mathbb{E}d8$ 25. $\mathbb{Q}d1$
 $\mathbb{E}xd1+$ 26. $\mathbb{Q}xd1$ $\mathbb{Q}f7$ 27. $\mathbb{Q}f2$ $\mathbb{Q}c4$
28. $\mathbb{Q}xc4$ $\mathbb{E}xc4$ 29.c3 g5 30. $\mathbb{Q}d2$



33. $\mathbb{Q}d3$

Sooner or later White should swap the rooks and the arising endgame should be drawn: 33. $\mathbb{Q}xc4$ $\mathbb{B}xc4$ 34. $\mathbb{Q}d1$ $\mathbb{Q}d7$ 35. $\mathbb{Q}e3$ $\mathbb{Q}c6$ 36. $\mathbb{Q}f2$ $\mathbb{Q}c5$ =. In the game, White has been stubbornly avoiding this decision until it became too late.

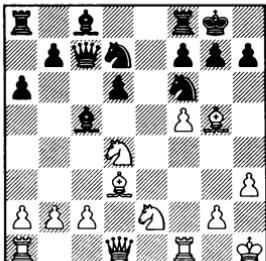
33...a5 34. $\mathbb{Q}f2$ $\mathbb{Q}d7$ 35. $\mathbb{Q}e1$ $\mathbb{Q}c6$ 36. $\mathbb{Q}e3$ h6 37.g3 $\mathbb{Q}b6$
38. $\mathbb{Q}d3$ $\mathbb{E}c8$ 39.a4 $\mathbb{E}f8$ 40.axb5
 $\mathbb{Q}xb5$ 41. $\mathbb{Q}e2$ $\mathbb{E}f5$ 42.g4 $\mathbb{E}f7$
43. $\mathbb{Q}e1$ $\mathbb{E}f4$ 44. $\mathbb{Q}e3$ $\mathbb{E}f1$ 45. $\mathbb{Q}c2$
 $\mathbb{E}f3$ + 46. $\mathbb{Q}d2$ $\mathbb{Q}b3$ 47. $\mathbb{E}b4+$ axb4
48. $\mathbb{Q}d4+$ $\mathbb{Q}c4$ 49. $\mathbb{Q}xf3$ $\mathbb{B}xc3$ +
50. $\mathbb{B}xc3$ $\mathbb{Q}d5$ 51. $\mathbb{Q}e3$ $\mathbb{Q}c4$ 52.h4
 $\mathbb{G}xh4$ 53. $\mathbb{Q}xh4$ $\mathbb{Q}xe5$ 54. $\mathbb{Q}f3+$
 $\mathbb{Q}d5$ 55. $\mathbb{Q}d2$ $\mathbb{Q}b5$ 56. $\mathbb{Q}f3$ $\mathbb{Q}a4$
57.g5 h5 58. $\mathbb{Q}f4$ $\mathbb{Q}c2$ 59. $\mathbb{Q}e5$ $\mathbb{Q}f5$
60. $\mathbb{Q}f3$ $\mathbb{Q}c4$ 61. $\mathbb{Q}h4$ $\mathbb{Q}g4$ 62.g6
 $\mathbb{Q}xc3$ 63. $\mathbb{Q}e5$ $\mathbb{Q}d3$ 64. $\mathbb{Q}d6$ $\mathbb{Q}e4$
65. $\mathbb{Q}e7$ $\mathbb{Q}f4$ 0-1

15. Kotronias-De la Riva
Bled ol 2002

1.e4 c5 2. $\mathbb{Q}f3$ $\mathbb{Q}c6$ 3.d4 cxd4
4. $\mathbb{Q}xd4$ e6 5. $\mathbb{Q}c3$ $\mathbb{W}c7$ 6. $\mathbb{Q}e3$ a6

Part 3

7.♗d3 ♗f6 8.0-0 ♗e5 9.h3 ♗c5
 10.♗h1 d6 11.f4 ♗g6 12.f5 ♗e5
 13.♗ce2 exf5 14.exf5 0-0 15.♗g5
 ♗ed7



16.♗e1

Or 16.c3 d5!, in order to keep the bishop on the f8-a3 diagonal in the event of b4.

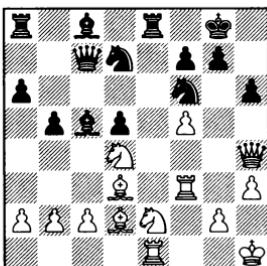
16...h6 17.♗d2 d5 18.♗h4

White stakes all on the kingside attack. A more positional approach is to trade dark-squared bishops, trying to underline the awkward stand of the bishop on c8. Still, he has enough weaknesses on the queenside to worry about: 18.♗f4 ♗d6 (18...♗e5 19.♗h4 ♗e7 20.♗ae1) 19.♗g3 ♗xf4 20.♗xf4 ♗b6 21.♗b3 ♗e8 22.♗ae1 ♗e5 23.♗ed4 ♗xd3 24.♗xe8 ♗xe8 25.cxd3 ♗d7=.

18...♗e8 19.♗ae1 b5

Black must be very careful about his king. e.g. 19...♗e7 20.♗c3 ♗c5 is likely to lose to 21.♗xh6 gxh6 22.♗xh6 ♗xd3 23.cxd3→. Instead, Black has an interesting way to regroup with 19...♗e4?! 20.♗f4 ♗b6, for example 21.♗xe4 ♗xe4 22.♗b3=.

20.♗f3



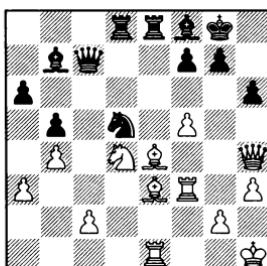
20...♗f8?!

Black anticipates ♗g3 – 20...♗b7? 21.♗g3 ♗d6 (21...♗h5 22.♗h5 ♗d4 23.♗g4 ♗b2 24.c3→) 22.♗g7! ♗g7 23.♗h6 ♗h8 24.♗f3 with a crushing attack.

21.♗f4 ♗b6 22.♗e3 (22.♗g3 ♗h8) **22...♗c7 23.♗f4?!** (23.♗f4 looks more realistic.) **23...♗c5 24.b4? ♗ce4**

Black is aiming to prevent at any cost an attack against his king. He could have tried to seize the initiative by 24...♗xd3 25.cxd3 (25.♗xd3 ♗e4 26.♗g4 ♗c3 27.♗e2 a5) 25...♗c3 26.♗de2 ♗xb4 27.♗d4 ♗h7 28.♗d5 ♗d2↑.

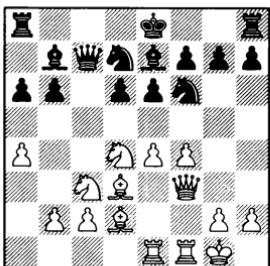
25.♗d5 ♗d5 26.♗e4 ♗b7 27.a3 ♗ad8 draw.



Kan Games

**16. Cubas-Hellsten
Buenos Aires (7), 09.10.2006**

1.e4 c5 2.♘f3 e6 3.d4 cxd4
4.♗xd4 a6 5.♘c3 ♜c7 6.♗d3
♗f6 7.0-0 d6 8.a4 b6 9.f4 ♘b7
10.♗f3 ♘bd7 11.♘d2 ♘e7 12.♘ae1

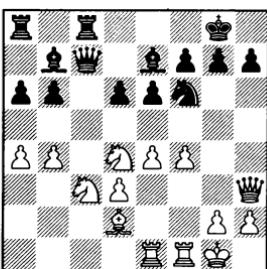


12...♘c5

The idea of killing the most dangerous white piece, the d3-bishop, cannot be wrong. I believe that the ensuing position, where Black has the bishop pair and no apparent weaknesses, is roughly equal. Still, 12...0-0 13.♗h3 ♘c5 is perhaps the more accurate move order. Black has made an obligatory move while in the symmetric pawn structure after ...♘xd3 the queen is in no way better placed on h3 than on f3. It even hampers a possible plan with g2-g4-g5, h2-h4. Black only has to watch out for sacrifices on e6. The critical question is: can Black exchange the d3-bishop at all? Let's check 14.e5 ♘xd3 15.exf6 ♘xe1 16.fxe7 ♘xg2 17.exf8+ ♘xf8 18.♗g3 ♘xf1 19.♘xe1 ♘c4 20.b3

♗d5 21.♗xd5 exd5 22.♗f5 f6=. At a second glance, 14...dxe5! 15.fxe5 ♘xd3 16.exf6 ♘xe1 17.fxe7 ♜xe7 18.♘xe1∞ may be even more attractive. So let's focus on:

14.b4 ♘xd3 15.cxd3 ♘fc8



Black's b7-bishop is currently without prospects. On the other hand, the c3-knight is also not particularly impressive. The evaluation of this position depends on White's ability to gain space on the kingside. If he achieves g4-g5, he would get some initiative. However, 16.g4 would let in the blow 16...d5 17.e5 ♘xb4. The inclusion of 16.♘h1 ♘d7 does not enable 17.g4 d5 18.e5 due to 18...♗e4!. We see that the control of b4 is vital for White's setup. Therefore, the most logical move is:

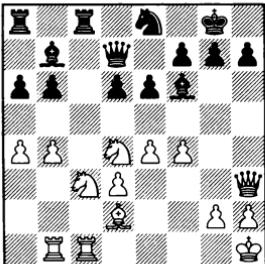
16.♗b1 ♘d7

This is the ideal place for Black's queen in this structure – it is eyeing the a4-pawn while protecting e6 and c6. Again, 17.g4 ♘e8 18.g5 is well met by 18...d5! 19.e5 g6 and White cannot generate any active idea. On contrast, Black has plenty of play. For instance, 20.♗fc1 ♘c6, when White is unable to keep the queenside closed anymore because of the hanging pawns on the fourth

Part 3

rank. 20. $\mathbb{E}b3$ $\mathfrak{Q}g7$ 21. $\mathbb{E}a1$ is useless due to 21... $\mathfrak{Q}f5!$ 22. $\mathfrak{Q}xf5$ $exf5$ 23. $d4$ $\mathbb{E}c4$ 24. $\mathfrak{Q}e2$ $\mathfrak{Q}c6$ – the dozing bishop enters the play with a great effect. Obviously, White should postpone active plans:

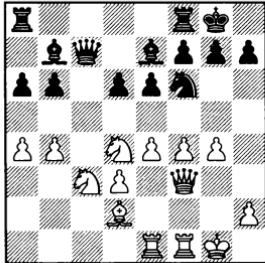
17. $\mathbb{E}fc1$ $\mathfrak{Q}e8$ 18. $\mathfrak{Q}h1$ $\mathbb{E}f6$



We see a reliable set-up for Black. After 19. $\mathfrak{Q}e3$ $b5!$ 20. $a5$ (20. $axb5$ $AXB5$ 21. $\mathfrak{Q}dxb5?$ $\mathfrak{Q}a6$), he can activate the $b7$ -bishop by 20... $\mathfrak{Q}xd4$ 21. $\mathfrak{Q}xd4$ $f5$, or delay this plan in favour of doubling on the c -file first.

To take stock, 12...0-0 looks fine for Black.

**13. $b4$ $\mathfrak{Q}xd3$ 14. $cxd3$ 0-0
15. $g4$**



15... $\mathfrak{Q}d7$

In my explanations to move 12, I recommended the set-up with

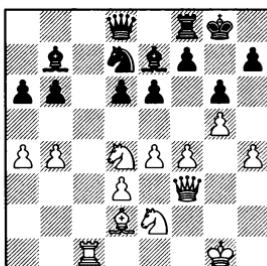
... $\mathbb{W}d7$, ... $\mathfrak{Q}e8$. It is quite good here, too, despite the rook being still on $f8$: 15... $\mathfrak{Q}e8!?$, when 16. $g5?$ would be a mistake due to 16... $d5$. After 16. $\mathbb{E}c1$ $\mathbb{W}d7$, White also lacks a good continuation. Perhaps White should defend the $b4$ -pawn: 16. $\mathbb{E}b1$ $\mathfrak{Q}f6$ 17. $\mathfrak{Q}ce2$ $\mathbb{W}d7$ with sufficient counterplay.

Black can even unbalance the position by the interesting queen sacrifice: 15... $d5!?$ 16. $e5$ $\mathbb{Q}xb4$ 17. $\mathfrak{Q}cb5$ $\mathbb{W}c5$ 18. $\mathbb{E}c1$ $AXB5$ 19. $\mathbb{E}xc5$ $\mathfrak{Q}xc5$ 20. $\mathfrak{Q}e3$ $\mathfrak{Q}d7$ 21. $AXB5$ $\mathbb{E}a3$ 22. $\mathbb{E}d1$ $\mathbb{E}fa8\infty$.

16. $\mathbb{E}c1$ $\mathbb{W}d8$ 17. $\mathfrak{Q}ce2$ $\mathbb{E}c8?!$

Hellsten is constantly avoiding concrete decisions. 17... $a5$ 18. $b5$ $\mathfrak{Q}c5$ 19. $\mathfrak{Q}c6$ $\mathfrak{Q}xc6$ 20. $bxcc6$ $\mathfrak{Q}xa4$ 21. $d4$ $b5$ would have been much more enterprising.

18. $g5$ $\mathbb{E}xc1$ 19. $\mathbb{E}xc1$ $g6$ 20. $h4$



20... $e5?!$

Despite his mundane play so far, Black still has a good game. He had to secure the $c5$ -square for his knight by 20... $a5!.$ After 21. $b5!?$ $\mathfrak{Q}c5$ 22. $\mathfrak{Q}c3$ $f6$, White would have

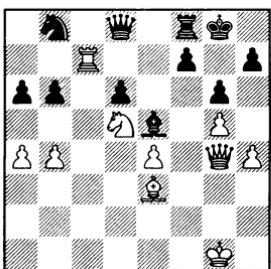
The Third Rank Set-Up

too many pawns hanging. Instead, Black hands the opponent the d5-square for his knight.

**21.♘c6 ♜xc6 22.♗xc6 exf4
23.d4 ♜e8?!**

It is amazing how passively Hellsten treats this position. He had to seek counterplay with 23...f6. After the text, White is already much better and he went on to win (not without mistakes though).

**24.♘xf4 ♜b8 25.♗c1 ♜f8
26.♘d5 ♜g7 27.♗c7 ♜f8 28.♗f4
♗xd4+ 29.♗e3 ♜e5 30.♗g4+-**

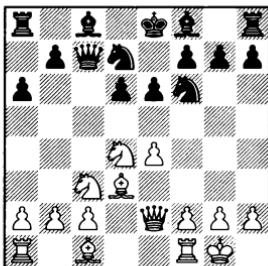


30...b5 31.a5 (31.axb5 axb5 32.h5+-) **31...♗e8 32.♘e7+ ♜h8 33.♗f4 ♜d4+ 34.♗g2 ♜d8 35.♘d5 ♜g7 36.♘d2?** (36.h5!) **36...f5??** (36...♗e8) 37.gxf6 ♜xf6 38.♘h6 ♜g8 39.♗e6 ♜e5 40.♗f7 ♜g7 41.♗xg7+

1-0

17 Delchev-Castellanos Rodriguez
Leon 06.11.2012

**1.e4 c5 2.♘f3 e6 3.d4 cxd4
4.♗xd4 a6 5.♘c3 ♜c7 6.♘d3 ♜f6
7.0-0 d6 8.♗e2 ♘bd7**



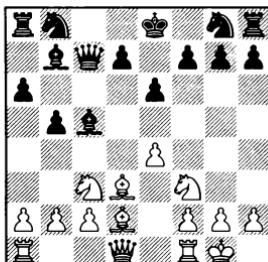
9.♘d2

By delaying f4, I discourage an early ...b5 which I would attack by a4. However, an ever more sophisticated move order is probably 9.♘h1 which is also aimed against 9...g6.

9...♗e7 10.♗h1! ♘c5 11.f4 b5?

This move should be played after ♜ae1, e.g. 11...0-0 12.♗ae1 b5. Now I could have achieved a decisive attack with 12.e5 ♘fd7 (12...dxe5 13.fxe5 ♘fd7 14.♗xf7 ♘xf7 15.♗h5+ g6 16.♗xg6+ hxg6 17.♗xh8 ♘f8 18.♗f1+ ♜e8 19.♗g7 ♜d7 20.♗g5 ♜b7 21.♗f7) 13.♘d5!!, but I was following the general principle which assumes that ...b5 should be exploited by a break on the queenside. Here is another example from my practice:

Delchev-Rasulov
Edirne 2013



Part 3

10.b4! ♜e7 11.a4 bxa4 12.♗xa4± ♜c8 13.♘e5 ♜c7 14.♘c4 d6 15.♘a5 ♜c8 16.♗a3 ♜f6 17.♘a4 ♜fd7 18.♗c3 ♜d8 19.♗e3 ♜f6 20.♗c4 0-0 21.f4 ♜e7 22.♗e1 e5 23.f5 ♜g5 24.♗f2 ♜d8 25.♗f1. Black is totally strangled and he cannot prevent 26.♗d5.

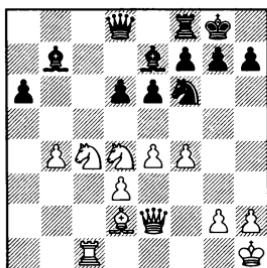
**12.b4 ♜xd3 13.cxd3 ♜b7
14.♗fc1!**

I seize the initiative. Black should be able to hold on, but he must endure a lasting pull.

**14...♝d8 15.a4! bxa4 16.♘xa4
♜c8 17.♗xc8 ♜xc8 18.♗c1 ♜d7**

18...♝b8! 19.♗e3 0-0 20.♗b6
♜e8 was preferable.

19.♘b6 ♜d8 20.♘c4 0-0



21.♘a5

Perhaps 21.♗e3 was more unpleasant. Black cannot find good places for his pieces.

21...♝d7 22.♘xb7?!

In this pawn structure, Black's only concern is his light-squared

bishop which has not bright prospects. I decided to exchange it in order to gain full control over the c-file, but it does not bring substantial dividends. Instead, I should have produced a second weakness in the opponent's camp by 22.f5!, when 22...e5 23.♗xb7 ♜xb7 24.♘c6 d5 25.♗g5 would give me a clear positional edge.

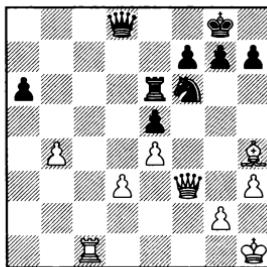
**22...♜xb7 23.♘c6 ♜e8 24.♗e1
♞d8?!**

24...♝f8! 25.♗c2 d5! 26.e5 ♜g4 would have equalised. After the text, Black cannot easily unpin his knight:

25.♗h4! e5 26.fxе5

It was better to play 26.♗f3 immediately. The f4-pawn is important since it prevents ...h6, ...g5

**26...dxе5 27.♗f3 ♜d7 28.h3
♞e6?! (28...h6!) 29.♘xd8 ♜xd8**



30.d4!!

It turns out that 30...exd4 31.e5
♜xe5 32.♗xf6 gxsf6 33.♗g4+ ♜g5
34.♗c8 wins a rook.

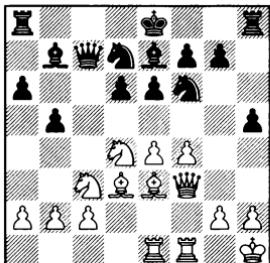
The Third Rank Set-Up

30... $\mathbb{W}d7$ 31.d5 $\mathbb{E}b6$ 32. $\mathbb{W}c3$
 $\mathbb{W}e8$ 33. $\mathbb{Q}xf6$ $\mathbb{E}xf6$ 34. $\mathbb{W}c7$ h5
35.d6 1-0

$\mathbb{W}xc2$ 23. $\mathbb{Q}xd6+$ $\mathbb{Q}c7$ 24. $\mathbb{Q}b5+$ with a perpetual (24... $\mathbb{Q}b8?$ 25. $\mathbb{W}d4$). It is easy to understand White's wish to kill the h5-knight.

18. Kerekes-A.Kovacs Hungary, 09.12.2007

1.e4 c5 2. $\mathbb{Q}f3$ e6 3.d4 cxd4
4. $\mathbb{Q}xd4$ a6 5. $\mathbb{Q}d3$ $\mathbb{Q}f6$ 6.0-0 d6
7. $\mathbb{Q}e3$ $\mathbb{Q}bd7$ 8. $\mathbb{Q}c3$ $\mathbb{W}c7$ 9. $\mathbb{Q}h1$
 $\mathbb{Q}e7$ 10.f4 b5 11. $\mathbb{W}f3$ $\mathbb{Q}b7$ 12. $\mathbb{Q}ae1$
h5

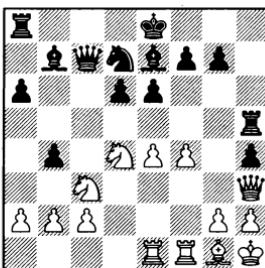


White's set-up is entirely g4-g5 oriented. Now he has to revise his strategy and think up a way to exploit the weakness of the h-pawn.

13. $\mathbb{Q}g1$ h4 14. $\mathbb{W}h3$ $\mathbb{Q}h5$ 15. $\mathbb{Q}e2$

This is a difficult position for both sides. Black has some temporary initiative, but he must play concrete chess to keep it. For instance, 15.a3 0-0-0 is very interesting (of course, 15... $\mathbb{E}c8$ is also possible, but the fact that it does not threaten anything worries me). After 16. $\mathbb{Q}de2$ $\mathbb{Q}g3+$ 17. $\mathbb{Q}xg3$ hxg3 18. $\mathbb{W}xg3$ $\mathbb{Q}h4$ 19. $\mathbb{W}xg7$ $\mathbb{Q}xe1$ 20. $\mathbb{Q}xe1$ f5, White is lucky to find 21. $\mathbb{Q}xb5!$ axb5 22. $\mathbb{Q}xb5$

15...b4 16. $\mathbb{Q}xh5$ $\mathbb{E}xh5$

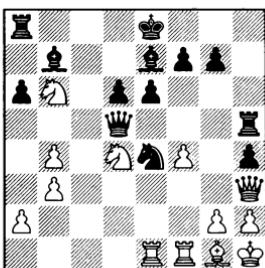


Black has active pieces. After 17. $\mathbb{Q}b1$, he could evacuate the king from the centre by 17... $\mathbb{Q}f8$ and follow up by ...g6 or ... $\mathbb{E}h6$.

17. $\mathbb{Q}a4$ $\mathbb{Q}f6$ 18.c3 $\mathbb{W}a5?$

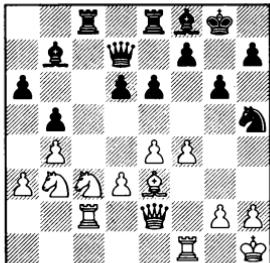
This mistake mars the nice game. The simple 18... $\mathbb{Q}xe4$ would have ensured a solid edge thanks to the threat of ... $\mathbb{E}h6$, ... $\mathbb{Q}g3+$. White could have now levelled the chances with 19. $\mathbb{Q}b6!$ $\mathbb{E}b8$ 20.cxb4.

19.b3 $\mathbb{Q}xe4$ 20.cxb4 $\mathbb{W}d5$
21. $\mathbb{Q}b6$



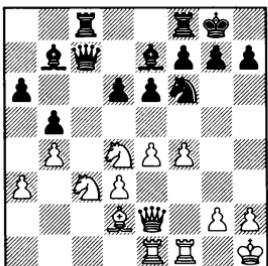
Part 3

21...Bg3+ 22.hxg3 (22.Wxg3 hxg3+) **22...Wxg2+** **23.Wxg2** **hxg3+** **24.Qh2** **Qxh2+** **25.Qg1** **Qxg2+** **26.Qh1** **Qh2+** **27.Qg1** **Qh1# 0-1**



19. Moen-Topalov ECC Rhodes 20.10.2013

1.e4 c5 2.Qf3 e6 3.d4 cxd4
4.Qxd4 a6 5.Qc3 Wc7 6.Qd3
Qc5 7.Qb3 Qe7 8.f4 b5 9.a3 Qb7
10.0-0 d6 11.Qh1 Qd7 12.Qd2
Qgf6 13.We2 0-0 14.Qd4 Qac8
15.Qae1 Qc5 16.b4 Qxd3 17.cxd3



17...Wd7 18.Qc1 Qfe8 19.Qb3
g6

The engines like 19...e5, but I suppose that Topalov did not like 20.fxe5 when the b7-bishop would be biting on granite until the rest of its days. The plans with ...f5 or ...d5-d4 are more flexible.

20.Qe3 Qf8 21.Qc2 Qh5

22...f5 is already a threat. 22.g4 Qg7 would only add oil into the fire as ...f5 would gain in strength.

Moen decides to trade a couple of rooks along the c-file, but his move weakens the f4-pawn and enables another break in the centre:

22.Qfc1 d5 (22...f5 was also possible) **23.exd5** (23.e5 d4) **23...exd5 24.Wf2 d4**

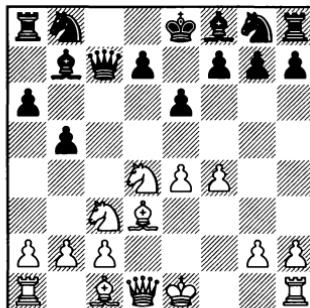
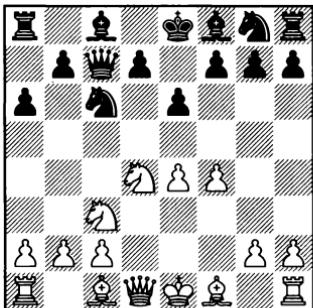
A typical sacrifice on general considerations which unleashes all Black's pieces. Concrete calculation shows that 24...Wf5! 25.d4 Wd3 26.Qd2 Qg7 was very strong. The knight arrives in the centre with a decisive effect. Anyway, Moen opts for the wrong capture on d4 and his position goes down quickly.

25.Qxd4? Qcd8 26.Qe4 Qxe4
27.dxe4 Qxe4 28.Qb3 We6
29.Qc3 Qe8 30.Qd2 Qxf4 31.Qd4
Qxd4 32.Qxf4 Qxf4 33.Qxf4 Qh6
34.Qxh6?? (34.Wf1 Qxc1 35.Qxc1 We3 36.Qa1 Wc3 37.Qc1 Wxc1+ 38.Qxc1 Qe3+) **34...Wf1+ 35.Qxe1**
Qxe1# 0-1

Part 4

The f4 System

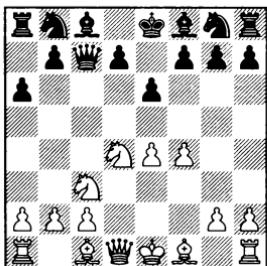
The early f4 is coming into fashion in the Taimanov. White then takes on c6, castles long and tries to maintain a firm grip on the centre by a3, $\mathbb{E}he1$. Against the Kan, this plan is ineffective and it is rarely seen.



Part 4. The f4 System

Main Ideas

**1.e4 c5 2.Qf3 e6 3.d4 cxd4
4.Qxd4 a6 5.Qc3 Qc7 6.f4**



White's last move did not develop a piece so Black can spend time on a pawn move, too:

6...b5 7.Qd3

The absence of a knight on c6 narrows White's safe path because of the threat of ...b4.

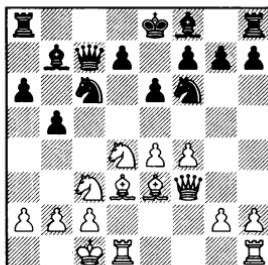
A plus for the Kan: easy to learn.

7...Qb7 8.Qf3

8.Qe2 Qf6 is fine for Black, see **game 26** An.Martin-Delchev, Benasque 2013. White commonly puts his queen on e2 in order to support e4-e5. That has no sense here since

the f4-pawn ensures this advance at any time. However, it is effective only in connection with an attack on h7. Therefore, the queen would be best placed on h3. Another drawback of Qe2 is that the queen takes the natural retreat square of the Qc3 in the event of ...b4.

**8...Qf6 9.Qe3 (9.g4?! Qc6!
10.Qe3 h5) 9...Qc6 10.0-0-0 (10.
g4 h5!)**



The play has transposed to a minor line of the Taimanov. Thus Black side-stepped the most unpleasant positions with Qxc6 Qxc6 where Black should practically lose a tempo on retreating to c7 later.

A plus for the Kan: Black plays an improved Taimanov.

The f4 System

In the diagram position, Black can simplify with 10... $\mathbb{Q}xd4$ 11. $\mathbb{Q}xd4$ $\mathbb{Q}c5$ or maintain the tension with:

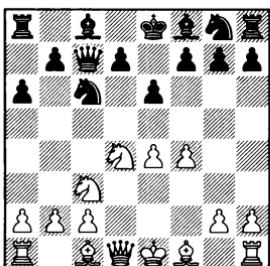
10...**b4** 11. $\mathbb{Q}ce2$ $\mathbb{Q}a5$ 12.**g4 d5**
13.**e5** $\mathbb{Q}d7$ 14. $\mathbb{Q}b1$ $\mathbb{Q}c4$ 15. $\mathbb{Q}cl$
 $\mathbb{Q}b6$ 16. $\mathbb{Q}hf1$ $\mathbb{Q}c5$

Black has good counterplay on the queenside thanks to ...a5, ... $\mathbb{Q}a6$.

The Taimanov theory is much more complex. White can get rid of his hanging knight on d4 by taking on c6, and then comfortably develop the rest of his pieces.

White's main set-ups are:

1.e4 c5 2. $\mathbb{Q}f3$ e6 3.d4 $\mathbb{Q}xd4$
4. $\mathbb{Q}xd4$ $\mathbb{Q}c6$ 5. $\mathbb{Q}c3$ $\mathbb{Q}c7$ 6.f4 a6

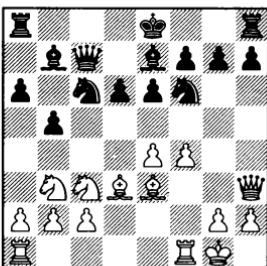


A. 7. $\mathbb{Q}f3$ $\mathbb{Q}c5$ 8. $\mathbb{Q}d3$ b5 9.e5 d5 (9...f5!?).

B. 7. $\mathbb{Q}e3$ b5 8. $\mathbb{Q}d3$ $\mathbb{Q}b7$ 9. $\mathbb{Q}b3$ $\mathbb{Q}f6$

9... $\mathbb{Q}a5$! now or on the next move is easier to play, but it gives the enemy a free hand in the centre.

10.0-0 d6 11. $\mathbb{Q}f3$ $\mathbb{Q}e7$ 12. $\mathbb{Q}h3$



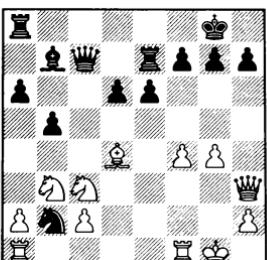
We are familiar with this structure from the previous chapter. Commonly, Black swaps his knight for the d3-bishop with 12... $\mathbb{Q}b4$ and gets a safe albeit passive position. I advocate a sharper way which may also lead to the same knight's manoeuvre, but after White has committed himself with g4.

12...0-0 13.g4

If White refrains from the pawn storm (13. $\mathbb{Q}h1$), Black redeploys his forces with ... $\mathbb{Q}d7$, ... $\mathbb{Q}f6$. See **game 22** Belikov-Zakhartsov, Alushta 2005.

13... $\mathbb{Q}b4$!? 14.g5

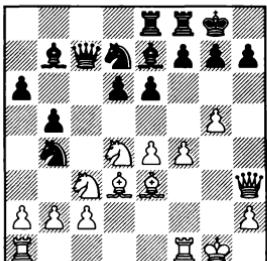
A critical position arises after 14.e5 $\mathbb{Q}xd3$ 15.exf6 $\mathbb{Q}xb2$ 16.fxe7 $\mathbb{Q}fe8$! 17. $\mathbb{Q}d4$ $\mathbb{Q}xe7$



Part 4

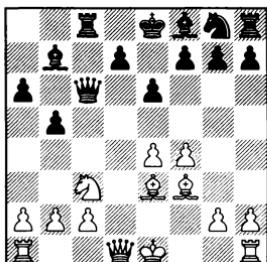
In my opinion, Black has good practical chances here.

14...♝d7 15.♝d4 ♜ae8!?



Planning a counter-attack with ...♝d8, ...f6. The play is double-edged.

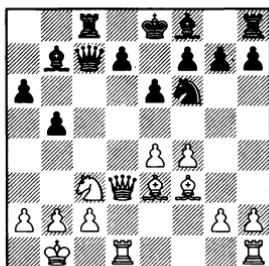
**C. 7.♗e2 b5 8.♗xc6 ♜xc6
9.♘f3 ♜b7 10.♗e3 (10.e5 ♜c7
11.♗e4 ♜h6) 10...♜c8**



My suggestion is to keep the queens by retreating to c7 (although ...♜c4 is by all means playable) and lead out our dark-squared bishop to b4 or c5. Plans with ...d6 are passive.

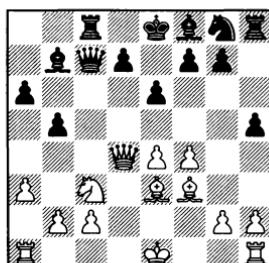
11.a3

An illustration of my previous note is the variation 11.♗d3 ♜c7!? 12.0-0-0 ♜f6 13.♗b1 (13.g4 b4 14.♗e2 ♜c4)



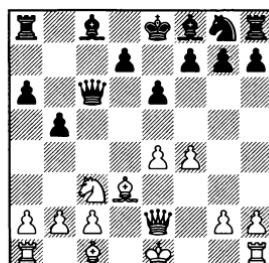
13...♝b4!? 14.♗d4 0-0∞ 15.♗xf6 gxf6 16.♗e2 ♜fd8 17.c3 ♜c5 with double-edged game.

11...♜c7!? 12.♗d4 h5



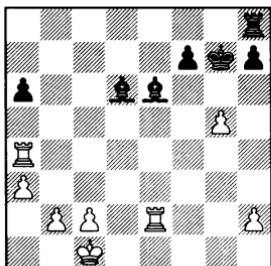
This is meant to enable 13...♝f6. If White answers 13.h3, then we can vacate the h5-square by 13...h4 14.0-0-0 ♜f6, see **game 24** Gofshstein-Tregubov, Montpellier 1998.

**D. 7.♗xc6 ♜xc6 8.♗d3 b5
9.♗e2**



The f4 System

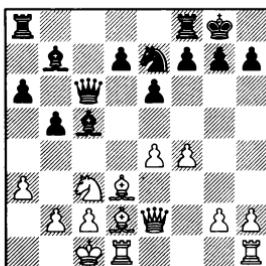
This has been the main line in the Taimanov with f4 lately. The question where to develop the knight is still open. It is tempting to put it on the more active square f6, but then White will have e5. So Black should play a few waiting moves first, like 9... $\mathbb{Q}b7$?! 10. $\mathbb{Q}d2$ $\mathbb{E}c8$ 11.a3 $\mathbb{Q}e7$ 12.0-0-0 $\mathbb{Q}f6$. Now critical is 13.g4! d5 14.exd5 $\mathbb{Q}xd5$ 15. $\mathbb{E}hf1$ $\mathbb{Q}xc3$ 16. $\mathbb{Q}xc3$ 0-0 17.g5 $\mathbb{E}fe8$! 18. $\mathbb{Q}xg7$ $\mathbb{Q}xg7$ 19. $\mathbb{W}h5$ $\mathbb{E}h8$ 20.f5 exf5 21. $\mathbb{E}xf5$ $\mathbb{W}g6$ 22. $\mathbb{W}g4$ $\mathbb{W}d6$ 23. $\mathbb{Q}xb5$ $\mathbb{W}e6$ 24. $\mathbb{W}d4+$ $\mathbb{Q}g8$ 25. $\mathbb{Q}d7$ $\mathbb{W}c4$ 26. $\mathbb{Q}xc8$ $\mathbb{W}xd4$ 27. $\mathbb{E}xd4$ $\mathbb{Q}xc8$ 28. $\mathbb{E}e5$ $\mathbb{Q}e6$ 29. $\mathbb{E}a4$ $\mathbb{Q}d6$ 30. $\mathbb{E}e2$ $\mathbb{Q}g7$



I think that Black has good chances here, but it is difficult to judge without practical tests.

The plan with ... $\mathbb{Q}e7$ is not so demanding, but it offers White a temporary initiative:

9... $\mathbb{Q}c5$ 10. $\mathbb{Q}d2$ $\mathbb{Q}b7$ 11.0-0-0
 $\mathbb{Q}e7$ 12.a3! 0-0



A topical position. I analyse it in detail in the annotations to **game 21** Nepomniachtchi-Vitiugov, Nizhny Novgorod 2013. I do not see compelling reasons to avoid it with Black.

Weapon of choice

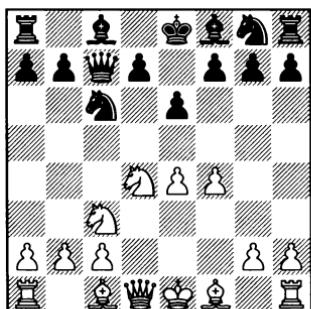
The answer is very easy, because we have an unconditional winner – the Kan move order is definitely preferable.

The f4-Kan theory is a subset of the Taimanov. Black plays ... $\mathbb{Q}c6$ only after ...b5, ... $\mathbb{Q}b7$. Thus he can recapture on c6 by the bishop, avoiding the loss of tempo after ... $\mathbb{W}c7xc6-c7$. White's choice is narrowed to plans with queenside castling and double-edged positions.

Part 4. The f4 System

Taimanov – Step by Step

1.e4 c5 2.♘f3 e6 3.d4 exd4
4.♘xd4 ♘c6 5.♘c3 ♗c7 6.f4



6...a6!

6...♘xd4 has come into fashion lately. I do not like too much this option because it allows White to castle long and obtain some initiative, for instance, 7.♗xd4 a6 8.♕e3 b5 9.0-0-0 ♜b7 10.♘d3 ♜c8 11.♗b1!. See **game 20** Yemelin-Rodshtein, Skopje 2013.

Commonly, White trades knights himself, but then we take by queen, putting pressure on e4.

A. 7.♘f3; B. 7.♗e3; C. 7.♗e2; D.
7.♘xc6

7.♘b3 b5 8.♗e3 transposes to line B.

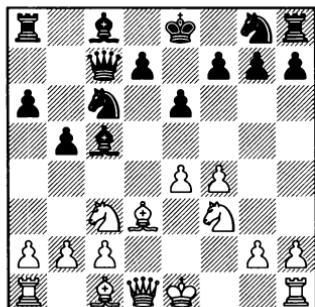
A. 7.♘f3 ♘c5

7...b5 first is also possible, since 8.♗e3 ♜b7 9.♘d3 ♜a5 suits Black, for instance, 10.0-0-0 ♘c4 11.♘d4 ♜xb2 12.♘xb5 axb5 13.♘xb2 ♘f6.

8.♘d3

8.e5 gives Black good counterplay after 8...f5 (8...d5!?) 9.♘d3 b5 10.♗e2 ♜a7, Hector-Zvjaginsev, Berlin 1993.

8...b5



The f4 System

9.e5

9.♗e2 ♜d4! 10.♗xd4 ♜xd4 provides Black with time for completing development: 11.♗d1 (or 11.♗d2 ♜b7 12.e5 f5!) 11...♝f6 12.c3 ♜c5 13.e5 ♜d5 14.♗f2 ♜b7 (14...f5?) 15.♗e4 0-0 16.♗xc5 ♜xc5 17.♗d2 ♜ac8 18.♗f2 ♜xf2+ 19.♗xf2 f6↑, Dvoiryts-Tregubov, Rostov 1993.

9...d5

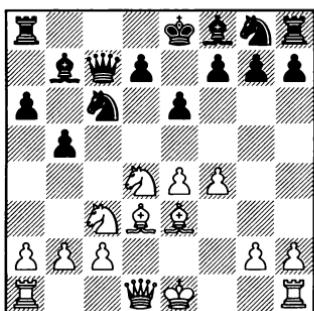
9...f5 is positionally more unbalanced, but it brings excellent results after 10.g4 ♜ge7 or 10.♗e2 ♜a7.

10.exd6

10.♗e2 ♜a7 underlines the weakness of the diagonal g1-a7.

10...♜xd6 11.0-0 ♜f6 12.♗e4 ♜xe4 13.♗xe4 ♜b7 14.♗e1 0-0-∞.

B. 7.♗e3 b5 8.♗d3 ♜b7



9.♗b3

This retreat looks like a second-rate move which defies the principle

of quick development. Why do I pay attention on it?

Actually, this set-up conceals a lot of venom. White avoids the pin from c5 which would be strong after 0-0. He also escapes the trade of dark-squared bishops after ...♜xd4 followed up by ...♜c5. This exchange is commonly good for Black in the Taimanov/Kan since after ...d6, ...e5, the remaining ♜b7 is obviously more active than its white counterpart on d3. Another argument in favour of the exchange on d4 is that it reduces White's attacking forces.

At first this system brought White good results as it deprived Black of his thematic Taimanov plans and put him in a Scheveningen structure. With time, the second players have learned to handle this set-up, but we can still face it in practice. Occasionally, White chooses it in order to avoid long theoretical lines and keep more dynamic in the position.

9.♗f3 ♜f6 is the main line of our Kan chapter.

9...♝f6!

9...♝a5!? is easier to play, but this is true for both sides.

White commonly answers with 10.♗xa5

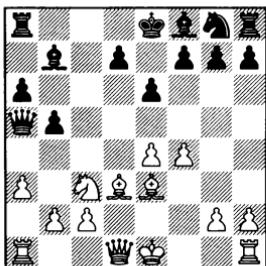
10.0-0-0!?! ♜c4 11.♗d4 ♜b2 12.♗b5 ab5 13.♗b2 ♜f6 14.♗e2 b4 15.♗h1 ♜e7 16.e5 ♜d5 17.f5 g6∞

10...♜xa5 11.a3!

Securing the position of the c3-knight. On g3 it would be harassed

Part 4

by the h-pawn: 11.0-0 b4 12. $\mathbb{Q}e2$ $\mathbb{Q}c5$ 13. $\mathbb{Q}xc5$ $\mathbb{W}xc5+$ 14. $\mathbb{Q}h1$ $\mathbb{Q}f6$ 15. $\mathbb{Q}g3$ h5! (One move later this move would be impossible: 15...d6? 16. $\mathbb{W}e2!$ h5 17.e5± h4 18. $\mathbb{Q}f5$. Castling short under the fire of all White's pieces is hopeless: 16...0-0 17.e5 dxe5 18.fxe5 $\mathbb{Q}d7$ 19. $\mathbb{Q}ae1\rightarrow.$) 16. $\mathbb{W}f3$ (Here 16.e5 fails to 16...h4+) 16...h4 17. $\mathbb{Q}e2$ $\mathbb{Q}b8?$! (protecting the bishop which is hanging in the variation 17...h3 18.g4 d5 19.e5 and there is no 19...d4) 18. $\mathbb{Q}ad1$ h3 19.g4 d5 20. $\mathbb{Q}g3$ dxe4 21. $\mathbb{Q}xe4$ $\mathbb{Q}xe4$ 22. $\mathbb{Q}xe4$ $\mathbb{Q}xe4$ 23. $\mathbb{W}xe4$ $\mathbb{Q}c8\mp$.



11... $\mathbb{W}c7$ 12.0-0 $\mathbb{Q}c5$ 13. $\mathbb{Q}c5$ $\mathbb{W}c5$ 14. $\mathbb{Q}h1$ $\mathbb{Q}h6$ 15.e5 0-0! 16. $\mathbb{Q}e4$ $\mathbb{W}b6$ 17. $\mathbb{W}d3$ $\mathbb{Q}xe4$ 18. $\mathbb{Q}xe4$ $\mathbb{Q}f5$ 19. $\mathbb{Q}f3$ $\mathbb{Q}fb8$ 20. $\mathbb{Q}d1$ b4 21.a4 $\mathbb{Q}a7=$. White does have a space advantage in this line, but it should not bring him dividends.

10.0-0

We see the result of 9... $\mathbb{Q}f6$ – White is forced to renounce plans with queenside castling as 10. $\mathbb{W}f3$ allows 10...d5! 11.exd5 (Or 11.e5 d4 12.exf6 dc3+, Venci Popov-Miladinovic, Korinthos 1999) 11. $\mathbb{Q}b4$ 12.0-0 $\mathbb{Q}bx5$ 13. $\mathbb{Q}xd5$ $\mathbb{Q}xd5$

14. $\mathbb{W}g3$ h5!?. Black can play h4 and castle short, but he could also develop the bishop to d6 and hide the king to the other flank in the event of $\mathbb{W}xg7$.

10.e5 has been tested in only one game: 10...b4 11. $\mathbb{Q}b5?$! (11. $\mathbb{Q}e4$ $\mathbb{Q}xe4$ 12. $\mathbb{Q}xe4$ d5 13.exd6 $\mathbb{Q}xd6$ 14.0-0 0-0 is about equal, e.g. 15. $\mathbb{Q}c5$ $\mathbb{Q}xc5$ 16. $\mathbb{Q}xc5$ $\mathbb{Q}e7=$.) 11...axb5 12.exf6 gxf6 13.0-0 $\mathbb{Q}e7!$ heading for f5, Hector-Lindberg, Orebro 2013.

10...d6

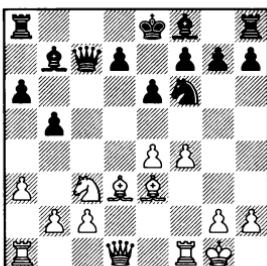
Again, 10... $\mathbb{Q}a5?$ is a viable option. It leads the game into a typical Taimanov track: 11. $\mathbb{Q}xa5$

Or 11.e5 b4! 12. $\mathbb{Q}b5$ axb5 13.exf6 $\mathbb{Q}c4$ 14. $\mathbb{Q}d4$ gxf6 with counterplay on the g-file.

11... $\mathbb{W}a5$ 12.a3!

12.e5 is again premature due to 12...b4 13.exf6 bxc3 14.fg7 $\mathbb{Q}xg7$ 15.b4 $\mathbb{W}d5$ 16. $\mathbb{Q}f2$ $\mathbb{Q}g8$ 17. $\mathbb{Q}xh7$ $\mathbb{Q}d4!$ 18. $\mathbb{Q}xg8$ $\mathbb{Q}xe3$ 19. $\mathbb{W}d5$ $\mathbb{Q}d5$ 20. $\mathbb{Q}h7$ f5.

12... $\mathbb{W}c7!$



We know already this manoeuvre

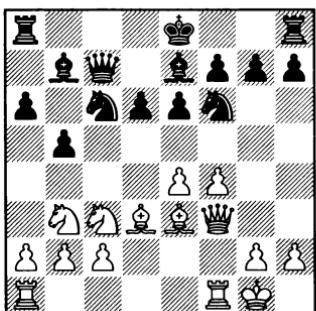
The f4 System

from the comments to move 9. Black keeps all his options open. He can switch over to Sheveningen structures with ...d6, or trade his dark-squared bishop through c5. Even ...b5-b4 is worth considering.

In the event of 13.♗h1 h5!? (aiming for ...h4-h3) 14.♘f3 ♗g4 15.♗d4 ♖c5, Black has some initiative.

13.e5 ♗d5 14.♗xd5 ♗xd5 15.a4 (15.b4 ♜e7 16.♗d2 0-0 17.a4 ♜fc8) 15...♖c5 16.♗e2 0-0! is also fine for him.

11.♘f3 ♜e7



12.♗h3

12.g4?! runs into 12...h5!

12.a3 is a consistent move. However, it slows down the attack. Black should play immediately 12...b4 13.axb4 ♗xb4 in order to keep an eye on the d3-bishop: 14.♗h3 (14.♗a5 0-0=) when 14...0-0?! allows 15.e5!. Therefore, it is better to prevent it by 14...e5 or 14...♗b8!? (vacating a retreat square on a8 in the event of ♗a5).

12...0-0

Most players prefer to attack immediately the enemy bishop on d3 with 12...♗b4. You should keep in mind this move as a backup line in your repertoire. Its downside is that White's b3-knight gets an excellent place on d4 from where it supports White's play on both flanks. The critical position arises some moves later (on the next diagram).

13.♗ac1 0-0

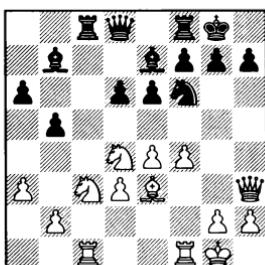
In my game against Baklan at the Olympiad in Istanbul 2000, I underestimated the importance of the c-file and chose 13...♗d7?! 14.a3 ♗xd3 15.cxd3 ♘d8 16.f5 e5, when 17.♗d5! ♗xd5 18.exd5± underlined the weakness of the c6-square.

13...♗ac8 is a worthy alternative which often transposes to the main line.

14.a3 ♗d3 15.cd3 ♘d8

15...♗d7 deprives the f6-knight from its best retreat square, but it is playable.

16.♗d4 ♗c8



This position is roughly equal, but it is difficult to win it as Black. White is very solid in the centre and he can manoeuvre without risking

Part 4

to get worse. For instance, he can double the rooks on the c-file or play $\mathbb{W}g3$, $\mathbb{Q}h1$. I prefer to avoid it if possible. I will consider below the advance of the g-pawn:

17.g4

In Nedev-Lautier, Chalkidiki 2002, was 17. $\mathbb{Q}f3$ d5 18.e5 d4? 19. $\mathbb{Q}xd4$ $\mathbb{Q}d5$ 20. $\mathbb{Q}xd5$ $\mathbb{W}xd5$ 21. $\mathbb{W}f3$ $\mathbb{W}d7\infty$.

17... $\mathbb{Q}d7$ 18.g5

The game Negi-Mamedov, Dubai 2004, saw 18.b4 $\mathbb{Q}f6$ 19. $\mathbb{Q}ce2$ $\mathbb{E}xc1$ 20. $\mathbb{E}xc1$ e5? 21. $\mathbb{Q}f5$ exf4 22. $\mathbb{Q}xf4\pm$. A possible improvement is 21.. $\mathbb{W}b8$, planning ... $\mathbb{E}c8$, ... $\mathbb{Q}d8-b6$.

18... $\mathbb{Q}c5$ 19. $\mathbb{E}cd1$ $\mathbb{E}e8!$?

Black should not admit the enemy knight to f5. The game Baklan-Tregubov, France 2003, saw 19...e5?! 20. $\mathbb{Q}f5$ $\mathbb{Q}e6$ 21. $\mathbb{Q}xe7+$, when a draw was signed. Instead, 21. $\mathbb{W}g3$! would have been unpleasant.

Let me add that the popular lately 12...h5 is not all roses. After 13. $\mathbb{Q}h1$, I'm at a loss to offer a good move: 13... $\mathbb{Q}g4$ 14. $\mathbb{Q}g1$ g6 (14...g5 15. $\mathbb{Q}e2\pm$; 14... $\mathbb{Q}b4$ 15. $\mathbb{Q}e2$) 15. $\mathbb{Q}e2$; 13...g6 14.a3!?, $\mathbb{Q}g4$ (14... $\mathbb{E}c8$ 15.f5 $\mathbb{Q}xf5$ 16.exf5 e5 17. $\mathbb{Q}g5$) 15. $\mathbb{Q}g1$ $\mathbb{Q}f6$ 16. $\mathbb{Q}ad1\pm$.

13.g4

If White refrains from the pawn storm (13. $\mathbb{Q}h1$), Black redeploys his

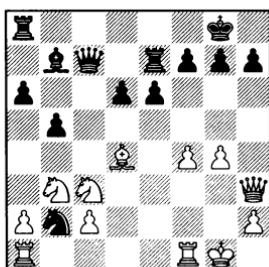
forces with ... $\mathbb{Q}d7$, ... $\mathbb{Q}f6$. See **game 22** Belikov-Zakhartsov, Alushta 2005.

13... $\mathbb{Q}b4$!?

The stem game Kozakov-Atalik, Lvov 2000, saw another move order: 13... $\mathbb{Q}d7$. It allows Black to avoid the piece sacrifice after 13... $\mathbb{Q}b4$ 14.e5, but offers the enemy the option of 14.f5!? exf5 15. $\mathbb{Q}d5$ $\mathbb{W}d8$ 16.gxf5 $\mathbb{Q}ce5$ with unclear play according to Atalik. I think that unless practical tests prove 13... $\mathbb{Q}b4$ 14.e5 to be dubious, Black should delay the manoeuvre $\mathbb{Q}f6-d7$.

14.g5

The crucial question here is how to evaluate the position after 14.e5 $\mathbb{Q}xd3$ 15.exf6 $\mathbb{Q}xb2$ 16.fxe7 $\mathbb{E}fe8!$ 17. $\mathbb{Q}d4$ $\mathbb{E}xe7$



In my opinion, Black has good practical chances here. The gaping main diagonal and the semi-open c-file will be a constant source of concern to White. Black will soon play ...e5 to open the position. Add to that your opponent's surprise. He may have read annotations stating

The f4 System

that 14.e5 was winning, but instead finds himself faced with serious tactical problems. Summing up, an interesting struggle is ahead: 18.♗ae1 ♗c4 19.♗e4 e5 20.f5 ♗xe5!∞.

14...♗d7

It is time to take stock. On move 12, I recommended 12...0-0 instead of 12...♗b4. That could cost us even a piece should the opponent braced himself for 14.e5. However, only two moves later the situation seems nearly the same as in the comments to move 12. What has Black gained by his risky move order?

Let us examine White's options:

15.a3 is outright bad due to 15...♗xd3 16.cxd3 ♗c5 17.♗xc5 dc5†.

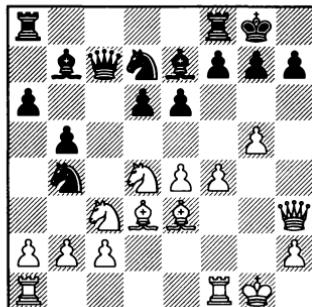
After 15.♗ac1, instead of transposing to the game Baklan-Tregubov by 15...♗ac8 16.a3, we have 15...♗c5! 16.f5 (16.♗xc5 dxc5 17.♗e2 ♘ad8 18.f5 ef5 19.ef5 c4?) 16...exf5 17.exf5 ♗bx3 18.cxd3 ♗d7†, Bjerring-Plachetka, Copenhagen 1990.

In my unfortunate game against Baklan I had something like this in mind, but the untimely ...♗d7 allowed White to attack with the f-pawn, leaving the g-pawn on its initial square.

Another plus is that we have provoked the weakening advance g2-g4.

Another critical moment for Black's plan is:

15.♗d4



15...♗ae8!?

Atalik's recommendation.

15...♗c5 might finish with a repetition of moves after 16.f5 exf5 17.♗xf5 (17.exf5 ♗bx3 18.cxd3 ♗d7†) 17...♗bx3 18.cxd3 ♗xd3 19.♗d4

19.♗xg7 is dubious since Black gets a terrible initiative after 19...♗xg7 20.g6 hxg6 21.♗h6 ♗g8 22.♗xf8 ♗c5+ 23.♗h1 ♗xf8 24.♗xd3 ♗g7.

19...♗e5 20.♗ac1 ♗d8 21.♗cd1 ♗c7 (21...f6?! 22.♗g2†) 22.♗c1.

16.f5

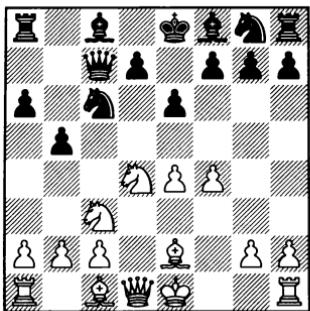
Or 16.♗f3 ♗d8 17.♗h5 g6 18.♗h6 f5! 19.gxf6 ♗xf6∞.

16...exf5 17.♗xf5 (17.exf5?! ♗xd3 18.cxd3 ♗e5†) **17...♗e5∞.**

C. 7.♗e2 b5

If White wants to take on c6, he should do it before Black played ♗b7.

Part 4



8.Qxc6

An alternative is 8.Qe3 Qb7 9.0-0 (9.Qf3 Qa5! 10.0-0 Qc4 11.Qc1 Qe7 12.Qh1 Qg6, Hou,Yfan-Movsesian, Khanty-Mansiysk 2011), but 9...Qc5 solves all the problems: 10.Qf3

Or 10.Qf5 Qxe3+ (10...Qce7 11.Qxc5 Qxc5+ 12.Qd4 Qxd4+ 13.Qxd4 b4 14.Qa4 Qxe4 15.Qc5 Qf6 16.Qxa6 Qed5 17.a3 Qe7 18.Qxb4 Qxb4 19.axb4 Qd5 20.g3, draw, Nisipeanu-Grabliauskas, Berlin 1997) 11.Qxe3 Qb6 12.Qd2 d6=.

10...d6 11.Qh1 Qb6 12.Qce2 (12.e5?! Qxd4 13.Qxd4 Qxd4 14.Qxb7 Qd8 15.Qe4 f5 16.Qd3 dx5 17.fxe5 Qh6=) 12...Qf6 13.c3 0-0 14.b4 Qxd4 15.cxd4 (or 15.Qxd4 Qc7 16.Qc1 Qxd4 17.cxd4 Qe7 18.Qd3 Qac8=) Shabalov-Rohde, Philadelphia 1996, when 15...Qb4!? 16.Qb3 a5 would have faced the opponent with the task of finding compensation for the pawn.

8...Qxc6 9.Qf3 Qb7 10.Qe3

10.e5 Qc7 11.Qe4 is typically met by 11...Qh6 12.Qe3 Qf5 13.Qf2 Qd8

with 14...d6 coming (even to 15.g4).

10...Qc8

10...Qc4 is a fair alternative. It commonly leads to a minimal edge for White in the endgame after 11.Qd3 Qc8 12.a3

12.0-0-0 Qf6 13.e5 is parried by 13...Qxf3 14.gxf3 Qxd3 15.Qxd3 b4!=, e.g. 16.Qa4 Qd5 17.Qb6 Qxb6 18.Qxb6 Qb8 19.Qc7 Qb7 20.Qd6 a5, Balogh-Vitiugov, Plovdiv 2012.

12...Qf6 13.Qd4! Qxd3 (Svidler-Hracek, Yerevan 1996, saw 13...d5? when 14.Qxc4! dxc4 15.e5 Qd5 16.Qf2 would have been pleasant for White.) 14.cxd3 Qc5 15.Qxc5 Qxc5 and Black should gradually equalise.

11.a3

This is the most popular move, but this prophylaxis is in no way obligatory. White also chooses:

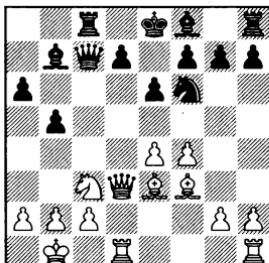
a) 11.Qd4 Qc7 (This plan is consistent with the main line.) 12.0-0 h5 (enabling ...Qf6) 13.Qad1 Qf6 14.h3 h4 15.Qf2 Qc5 16.Qxc5 Qxc5 17.Qxc5 Qxc5=.

b) 11.Qd3 Qc4 is solid, but passive, as seen in the comments to 10...Qc4. I would like to advocate for:

11...Qc7!?. It leads to sharp play where White might easily overestimate his chances. Independent variations arise after:

The f4 System

12.0-0-0 $\mathbb{Q}f6$ 13. $\mathbb{Q}b1$ (13.g4 b4
14. $\mathbb{Q}e2$ $\mathbb{W}c4$)



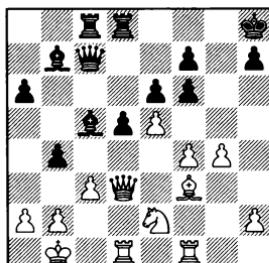
13... $\mathbb{Q}b4!$?

Zapata successfully tried 13...d6, but it cuts the scope of the dark-squared bishop.

14. $\mathbb{Q}d4$ 0-0∞ 15. $\mathbb{Q}xf6$ gxf6
16. $\mathbb{Q}e2$ $\mathbb{Q}fd8$ 17.c3 $\mathbb{Q}c5$ (17... $\mathbb{Q}e7$)
18. $\mathbb{Q}hf1$ $\mathbb{Q}h8$ 19.g4

How to evaluate this position? If we ask *Houdini*, it tends to prefer White's side. In my opinion, Black has full-fledged counterplay with his bishop pair.

19...b4 (19...d5 20.exd5 $\mathbb{Q}xd5$
21. $\mathbb{Q}xd5$ $\mathbb{Q}xd5$ 22. $\mathbb{W}f3$ $\mathbb{Q}xd1+$ 23. $\mathbb{Q}xd1$
a5 24.f5 e5=) 20.e5 (20.cxb4 $\mathbb{Q}xb4$
21. $\mathbb{W}d4$ $\mathbb{Q}e7$ 22. $\mathbb{Q}c1$ $\mathbb{W}d6$) 20...d5!



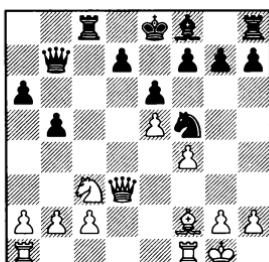
Black sacrifices a pawn in order to keep the enemy pieces passive. I have analysed from this point:

21.exf6 bxc3 22. $\mathbb{W}xc3$ a5. An important resource. The pawn is heading for a3, the b7-bishop obtains an active place on a6. Over the board, it is easier to play with Black. 23. $\mathbb{Q}c1$ $\mathbb{W}b6$ 24. $\mathbb{Q}e2$ $\mathbb{Q}e3$ 25. $\mathbb{W}e1$ a4 26. $\mathbb{Q}d3$ $\mathbb{Q}xc1$ 27. $\mathbb{Q}xc1$ a3 28. $\mathbb{W}d2$ axb2
29. $\mathbb{Q}xc8$ $\mathbb{Q}xc8$ 30. $\mathbb{W}xb2$ $\mathbb{W}e3$ 31. $\mathbb{Q}e2$ $\mathbb{W}e4+$ 32. $\mathbb{Q}a1$ d4=;

21.cxb4 $\mathbb{Q}xb4$ 22.exf6 a5 23. $\mathbb{Q}d4$
(23.g5 $\mathbb{Q}d6$ 24. $\mathbb{Q}c1$ $\mathbb{Q}a6$) 23... $\mathbb{Q}c5$
24. $\mathbb{Q}b3$ $\mathbb{W}xf4\infty$
24... $\mathbb{Q}d6$ 25. $\mathbb{Q}c1$ $\mathbb{W}b6$ 26. $\mathbb{Q}xc8$
 $\mathbb{Q}xc8$ 27. $\mathbb{Q}e2$ a4 forcedly leads to a draw endgame with opposite coloured bishops: 28. $\mathbb{W}d4$ $\mathbb{W}c7$ 29. $\mathbb{Q}c1$ $\mathbb{Q}c6$ 30. $\mathbb{Q}b5$ axb3 31. $\mathbb{Q}xc6$ bxa2+
32. $\mathbb{Q}a1$ $\mathbb{W}b8$ 33. $\mathbb{Q}xc8+$ $\mathbb{W}xc8$ 34.f5
 $\mathbb{W}b8$ 35. $\mathbb{W}d3$ $\mathbb{Q}e5$ 36.fxe6 fxe6 37.g5
 $\mathbb{W}a7=.$

25. $\mathbb{Q}xa5$ $\mathbb{W}b4$ 26. $\mathbb{Q}xb7$ $\mathbb{W}xb7$
27. $\mathbb{Q}e4$ $\mathbb{Q}b8$ 28.b3 $\mathbb{W}a7$ 29. $\mathbb{Q}xh7$
 $\mathbb{Q}xb3+$ 30. $\mathbb{W}xb3$ $\mathbb{Q}b8$ 31. $\mathbb{Q}c2$ $\mathbb{Q}xb3+$
32. $\mathbb{Q}xb3$ $\mathbb{W}b6$ 33.g5 $\mathbb{W}b4=.$

c) Once again, 11.e5 misses the goal – 11... $\mathbb{W}c7$ 12.0-0 (12. $\mathbb{Q}e4$
 $\mathbb{Q}h6$ 13.0-0 $\mathbb{Q}e7$ 14.a4 bxa4 15. $\mathbb{Q}xa4$
0-0=) 12... $\mathbb{Q}e7$ (12... $\mathbb{Q}h6$ 13. $\mathbb{Q}e4$
 $\mathbb{Q}e7$ 14.c3 0-0 15. $\mathbb{W}e1$ $\mathbb{Q}d5$ 16. $\mathbb{Q}g3$
 $\mathbb{Q}f3$ 17. $\mathbb{Q}f3$ d6=, Milos-G. Hernandez, Bogota 1992) 13. $\mathbb{Q}xb7$ (13. $\mathbb{Q}e4$
 $\mathbb{Q}d5$) 13... $\mathbb{W}xb7$ 14. $\mathbb{W}d3$ $\mathbb{Q}f5$ 15. $\mathbb{Q}f2$



Part 4

15...h5 (15...d5!? may be simpler.) 16.♕e4 ♕e7 17.♖ad1 0-0! (it is better to avoid dark-squared blockade after 17...♘c6 18.c3 0-0 19.b4!) 18.♗f3 (18.c3 ♘fd8=) 18...♗c6 (mind the check!) 19.♗d2 d6 20.exd6 ♘xd6 21.♘xd6 ♘xd6=, Plachetka-Doda, Novy Smokovec 1971.

d) 11.0-0 ♖c5 12.♗e1 (12.♗d3 b4 13.♘e2 ♘f6! 14.♘d4 ♗b6∞) 12...♗b6 (12...♘e7) 13.♘xc5 ♗xc5+ 14.♔h1 ♘e7=.

11...♗c7?!

The queen's retreat anticipates e4-e5 and maintains the tension.

12.♗d4

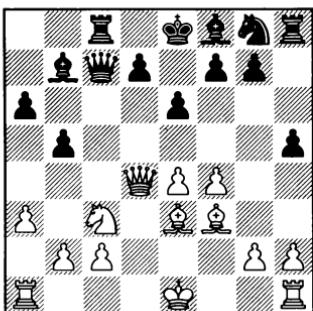
After 12.0-0 ♖c5 (12...♘e7 might transpose, but it offers White additional options: 13.♗d2! ♘g6 14.♖ad1 ♖c5 15.♘xc5 ♗xc5+ 16.♔h1 0-0!). It turns out that Black has good compensation for the pawn following 17.♗xd7 ♗b6.), Black completes development unimpeded: 13.♘xc5 ♗xc5+ 14.♔h1 ♘e7 15.♗d2 when 15...♘g6 16.♖ad1 0-0 was mentioned above, but Black also has the natural 15...♗c7=.

12...h5

12...♘e7? is worth testing, too: 13.0-0-0 (or 13.0-0 ♘f6 14.♖ad1 0-0 15.e5 ♘xf3 16.gxf3 ♘h5 17.♗d7 ♖c5∞, Ghizdau-Matera, USA 1976) 13...♘f6 14.♗d2 (14.e5? ♘f3 15.gxf3 ♘d5) 14...d6!∞ (In the source game

Lukin-Novgorodskij, St. Petersburg 1996 there was 14...0-0?! 15.e5 ♘xf3 16.gxf3 ♘e8, when 17.♗xd7! would have been clearly better for White). 15.g4 (15.♔b1 0-0) 15...♘d7 16.♖hd1 e5 17.♗d3 exf4 18.♗xf4 ♘e5 with chances for both sides.

Black's main problem in the f4-line is how to develop his king's knight. Its most active stand is f6, but the enemy could attack it with e4-e5. That's why Black should prepare for the knight a square where it could jump from f6. The text move enables ♘g8-f6-g4.



13.h3

This prophylaxis is positionally risky since the weakness of the g3-square often turns to be fatal for White. At the same time, it is the most testing continuation. Now Black must waste a tempo on h4 in order to find another place for his knight – on h5. Besides, on h4 the pawn is an easy target. The other attempts are not too convincing:

a) 13.0-0 ♘f6 14.♔h1 ♖c5 15.♗xc5 ♗xc5 16.♗xc5 ♗xc5=.

The f4 System

b) 13.0-0-0 $\mathbb{Q}f6$ 14. $\mathbb{Q}d2$ (14. $\mathbb{Q}e5$?! $\mathbb{Q}g4$ 15. $\mathbb{Q}d3$ $\mathbb{Q}xf3$ 16. $\mathbb{Q}xf3$ $\mathbb{Q}xe3$ 17. $\mathbb{Q}xe3$ d5 is obviously better for Black.) 14... $\mathbb{Q}g4$! (In Brajovic-Rajkovic, Herceg Novi 2002, was 14... $\mathbb{Q}a3$? 15.e5 $\mathbb{Q}xc3$, when 16. $\mathbb{Q}xc3$! $\mathbb{Q}xc3$ 17. $\mathbb{Q}xb7$ $\mathbb{Q}xe3$ 18. $\mathbb{Q}xf6$ $\mathbb{Q}c5$ 19. $\mathbb{Q}xg7$ $\mathbb{Q}g8$ 20. $\mathbb{Q}xa6$ $\mathbb{Q}e4$ 21. $\mathbb{Q}b1$ would have earned White a small edge.) 15. $\mathbb{Q}g1$ e5 16. $\mathbb{Q}xe5$ $\mathbb{Q}xe5$ 17. $\mathbb{Q}d5$ $\mathbb{Q}b8\#$.

13...h4 14.0-0 $\mathbb{Q}f6$

Black has good prospects. For 15.e5 (15. $\mathbb{Q}ad1$ is altogether dubious due to 15... $\mathbb{Q}xa3$ 16. $\mathbb{Q}xb5$ $\mathbb{Q}xb5$ 17. $\mathbb{Q}xa3$ 0-0.) 15... $\mathbb{Q}h5$, see **game 24** Gofshtein-Tregubov, Montpellier 1998.

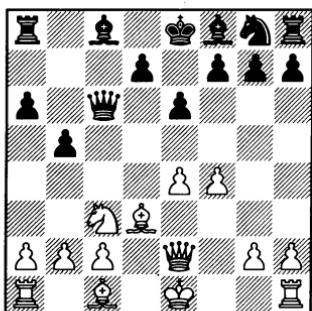
D. 7. $\mathbb{Q}xc6$ $\mathbb{Q}xc6$ 8. $\mathbb{Q}d3$ b5

8... $\mathbb{Q}c5$ is Taimanov's pet move. It often leads to the same positions as 8...b5. You can choose it in order to avoid variations with short castling for White. However, they look pretty harmless as you'll see in the comments on the next move. At the same time, Black should reckon with the more dangerous answer 9. $\mathbb{Q}g4$ g6 10. $\mathbb{Q}d2$ (10.e5 f5 11. $\mathbb{Q}xf6$ $\mathbb{Q}xf6$ 12. $\mathbb{Q}g6$ $\mathbb{Q}d8$! 13. $\mathbb{Q}g5$ $\mathbb{Q}e7\#$) 10...d5! 11. $\mathbb{Q}xd5$ $\mathbb{Q}xd5$ 12. $\mathbb{Q}g5$ $\mathbb{Q}e7$ 13.0-0-0 ∞ .

9. $\mathbb{Q}e2$

9. $\mathbb{Q}e3$ (9.0-0 $\mathbb{Q}c5$?) 9... $\mathbb{Q}b7$ 10.0-0 $\mathbb{Q}f6$ leads to unclear play with mutual chances: 11.a3 $\mathbb{Q}c5$

12. $\mathbb{Q}xc5$ (12. $\mathbb{Q}e2$ $\mathbb{Q}xe3$ 13. $\mathbb{Q}xe3$ d5 14. $\mathbb{Q}xd5$ $\mathbb{Q}xd5$ 15. $\mathbb{Q}xd5$ $\mathbb{Q}xd5$ 16. $\mathbb{Q}f2$ 0-0=) 12... $\mathbb{Q}xc5$ 13. $\mathbb{Q}h1$ d6 14. $\mathbb{Q}e2$ e5 15. $\mathbb{Q}d5$ $\mathbb{Q}xd5$ 16. $\mathbb{Q}xd5$ 0-0 17. $\mathbb{Q}xe5$ $\mathbb{Q}xe5$ 18. $\mathbb{Q}xe5$ draw, Ni Hua-Ye Jiangchuan, Yongchuan 2003.



Black can develop his king's knight on e7 or f6:

D1. 9... $\mathbb{Q}c5$; D2. 9... $\mathbb{Q}b7$

D1. 9... $\mathbb{Q}c5$ 10. $\mathbb{Q}d2$

9. $\mathbb{Q}e3$ $\mathbb{Q}b7$ 10.0-0 b4= (10... $\mathbb{Q}f6$ 11. $\mathbb{Q}xc5$ $\mathbb{Q}xc5$ 12. $\mathbb{Q}h1$ b4 reaches a well known position where both knight's retreats, to b1 or d1, lead to equality.), see **game 23** Stuerzenbaum-Taimanov, Bad Zwischenahn 2003.

10... $\mathbb{Q}b7$

10... $\mathbb{Q}e7$ allows 11.e5 $\mathbb{Q}b7$ 12. $\mathbb{Q}e4\pm$.

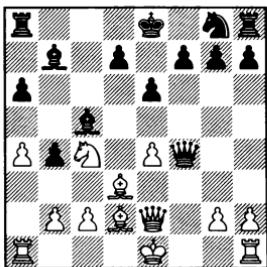
11.0-0-0

The rare 11.a4 scores extremely well. Black's task is not easy at all. If you are not prepared for a principled fight after 11...b4 12. $\mathbb{Q}d5$,

Part 4

you may try to surprise your opponent with 11... $\mathbb{Q}f6$!? 12.axb5 axb5 13. $\mathbb{Q}xa8+$ $\mathbb{Q}xa8$ 14. $\mathbb{Q}xb5$ (14.e5 $\mathbb{W}xg2$) 14... $\mathbb{W}b7$. Black does not win a pawn here, but his pieces are excellently placed.

Let's return to 11...b4 12. $\mathbb{Q}d5$ $\mathbb{W}d6$ 13. $\mathbb{Q}e3$ $\mathbb{W}xf4$ 14. $\mathbb{Q}c4$



White has a certain compensation for the pawn. 14... $\mathbb{W}h4$ 15.g3 $\mathbb{W}e7$ 16. $\mathbb{Q}a5$ is messy. More ambitious is:

14... $\mathbb{W}c7$ 15. $\mathbb{W}g4$ d5!?

15... $\mathbb{Q}f8$ 16. $\mathbb{Q}f4$ is unclear.

16.exd5 f5 17. $\mathbb{W}e2$ $\mathbb{Q}xd5$ 18. $\mathbb{Q}e3$ $\mathbb{Q}xe3$ 19. $\mathbb{W}xe3$. This position was reached in Wang Li-Sadorra, Subic Bay 2009. Black would have had a comfortable game after 19... $\mathbb{Q}f6$ 20. $\mathbb{Q}xb4$ $\mathbb{B}b8$ 21. $\mathbb{Q}c3$ $\mathbb{Q}e4$.

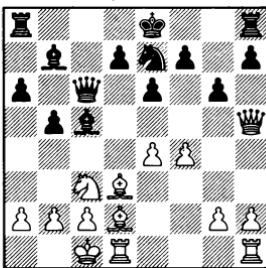
11... $\mathbb{Q}e7$ 12.a3!

The most topical continuation. White prevents ...b4 and waits to see his opponent's plan.

12. $\mathbb{W}h5$ is the older approach. Black may transpose to the main line by 12...0-0 when 13.a3 seems obligatory (Papp-Szabo, Budapest 2008, saw 13.g4 b4 14. $\mathbb{Q}e2$ a5

15. $\mathbb{Q}b1$ a4 and Black is ahead in the pawn race). However, he may also choose long castling, using the awkward position of the enemy queen:

12...g6!?



13. $\mathbb{W}g5$

From here, the queen is eying the bishop on c5 thus making 13...b4? impossible due to 15. $\mathbb{Q}a4$ ±. In contrast, 13. $\mathbb{W}h4$ allows 13...b4 when White has two possibilities:

14. $\mathbb{W}f6$ 0-0-0 15. $\mathbb{Q}e2$ d5 16. $\mathbb{Q}g3$ (16.e5 stumbles into 16...d4!) 16... $\mathbb{W}a4$!? 17. $\mathbb{Q}b1$ dxе4 18.b3 $\mathbb{W}d7$ 19. $\mathbb{Q}e4$ $\mathbb{Q}d4$ 20. $\mathbb{W}h4$ $\mathbb{Q}xe4$ ±;

14. $\mathbb{Q}e2$ f5 15. $\mathbb{Q}g3$ 0-0-0 16. $\mathbb{Q}he1$ $\mathbb{W}b6$ 17. $\mathbb{Q}b1$ $\mathbb{Q}b8$ 18. $\mathbb{Q}e2$ $\mathbb{Q}c8$ ±.

13...0-0-0!?

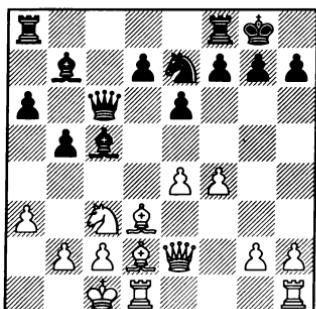
13...f5 is a worthy alternative. The game Rublevsky-Papin, Taganrog 2011, went on 14.exf5 gxf5 15. $\mathbb{W}h5$ + $\mathbb{Q}d8$ 16.g4 b4 17.gxf5 exf5 18. $\mathbb{Q}e2$? $\mathbb{W}g6$ ±. Instead, 18. $\mathbb{Q}he1$ was the only move, when simplest is 18... $\mathbb{Q}c7$ 19. $\mathbb{Q}e2$ $\mathbb{W}g6$ =.

14. $\mathbb{Q}he1$ f5 15. $\mathbb{Q}e3$ $\mathbb{Q}de8$ 16. $\mathbb{Q}xc5$ $\mathbb{W}xc5$ 17.exf5 h6 18. $\mathbb{W}h4$ gxf5 19.g4 fxg4 with mutual chances, Rublevsky-Alekseev, Irkutsk 2010.

The f4 System

12...0-0

12...0-0-0 does not promise Black adequate counterplay. After 13. $\mathbb{Q}b1$ g6 14. $\mathbb{E}he1$ f5 15.g3, White's pieces are extremely well co-ordinated in the centre.



I suppose that this sharp position will be extensively tested in the following years. I analyse it in detail in the annotations to **game 21** Nepomniachtchi-Vitiugov, Nizhny Novgorod 2013.

D2. 9... $\mathbb{Q}b7$!? 10. $\mathbb{Q}d2$

White could try to use the possibility of castling short, but practice is favourable for Black: 10.0-0 $\mathbb{Q}f6$ 11.a3 (11.e5 b4 12.exf6 bxc3?) 11... $\mathbb{Q}c5$ 12. $\mathbb{Q}h1$ $\mathbb{Q}d4$! 13. $\mathbb{Q}a2$ d6 14.a4 bxa4 15. $\mathbb{Q}b4$ $\mathbb{W}b6$ 16. $\mathbb{E}xa4$ a5! (improving on Hector-Plachetka, Gausdal, 1989, which saw 16...0-0) 17. $\mathbb{Q}b5$ (17.c3 $\mathbb{Q}c5$ 18. $\mathbb{Q}b5$ $\mathbb{Q}e7$) 17... $\mathbb{Q}f8$! 18.c3 axb4 19. $\mathbb{E}xa8$ $\mathbb{Q}xa8$ 20.cxd4 $\mathbb{Q}e4$??.

10.a3 $\mathbb{Q}e7$ 11. $\mathbb{Q}e3$ is another rare alternative: 11... $\mathbb{E}c8$ 12.0-0 $\mathbb{Q}f6$

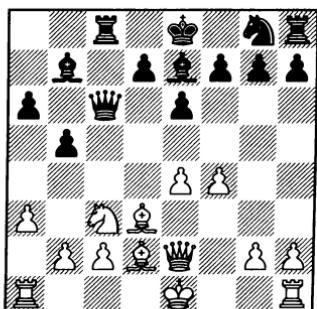
13.e5 $\mathbb{Q}d5$ 14. $\mathbb{Q}xd5$ $\mathbb{W}xd5$ =. The game Lanin-Vitiugov, St. Petersburg 2007, soon ended in a draw after 15.a4 $\mathbb{Q}c5$ 16. $\mathbb{Q}xc5$ $\mathbb{W}xc5$ 17. $\mathbb{Q}f2$ $\mathbb{W}xf2$ + 18. $\mathbb{E}xf2$ $\mathbb{Q}c6$ 19.axb5 axb5 20. $\mathbb{Q}a5$ b4! 21. $\mathbb{Q}d2$ $\mathbb{Q}e7$ 22. $\mathbb{Q}f2$ $\mathbb{E}a8$ draw.

10... $\mathbb{Q}e7$!? 11.a3

Or 11.0-0 b4 12. $\mathbb{Q}d1$ $\mathbb{Q}f6$ 13. $\mathbb{Q}f2$ 0-0↑.

11... $\mathbb{E}c8$

It is good to make a useful move before leading out the knight. After 11... $\mathbb{Q}f6$ 12.e5 $\mathbb{Q}d5$ 13. $\mathbb{Q}e4$ b4 14.axb4 $\mathbb{Q}b4$ 15. $\mathbb{Q}xd5$ $\mathbb{Q}xd2$ 16. $\mathbb{W}xd2$ exd5 17. $\mathbb{Q}f3$, White is a pawn up albeit in a sharp position.



12.0-0-0

12.0-0 $\mathbb{Q}f6$ is equal: 13. $\mathbb{Q}h1$ 0-0 14. $\mathbb{E}f3$ d5 15.exd5 $\mathbb{Q}xd5$ 16. $\mathbb{Q}xh7$ + (16. $\mathbb{Q}xd5$ $\mathbb{W}xd5$ 17. $\mathbb{Q}h3$ g6) 16... $\mathbb{Q}xh7$ 17. $\mathbb{Q}h3$ $\mathbb{Q}g8$ 18. $\mathbb{W}h5$ f6= or 13.e5 $\mathbb{Q}d5$ 14. $\mathbb{Q}e4$ f5=.

12... $\mathbb{Q}f6$ 13.g4!

Part 4

White has a number of other options. Black always meet them with ...b4:

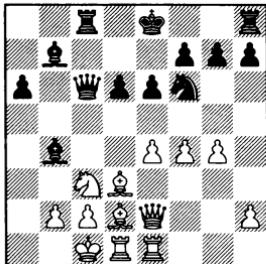
a) 13.♗b1

This is aimed against the thematic 13...b4 14.ab4 ♜b4, when 15.♗d5 ♜d2 is without check. Naiditsch-Grigoriants, Moscow 2008, went 16.♗f6 gf6 17.♗d2 ♜a4 18.♗e3 ♜b4 19.♗hd1 ♜c5 and here 20.♗g3!, eyeing b8, would have been quite unpleasant. We can answer with the no less cunning:

13...♝b6! which in its turn neutralises White's main idea of 14.g4 owing to 14...b4 15.axb4 ♜xb4 16.g5 ♜xc3 17.♗xc3 ♜xc3 18.gxf6 gxf6∞.

b) 13.♗hf1 b4 14.axb4 ♜xb4 15.g4 0-0 (15...d6 leads to more complex play) 16.g5 ♜xc3 17.♗xc3 ♜xe4 18.♗xe4 ♜xe4 19.♗xe4 ♜xe4 20.♗xd7 ♜fd8. This endgame should be a draw due to the opposite coloured bishops.

c) 13.♗he1!? b4 14.axb4 ♜xb4 15.g4 d6



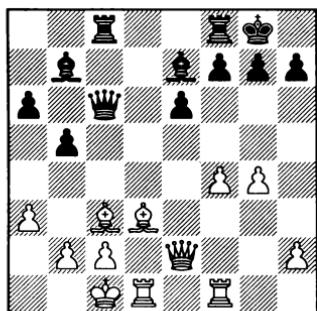
Jovanovic-Timofeev, Budva 2009, saw further 16.e5 dx5 17.g5 ♜d7 18.♗e4 ♜c7 19.♗xb7 ♜xb7

20.♗e4 ♜e7 21.♗c3 0-0=. Perhaps critical is 16.♗b1 which is yet to be tested.

13....d5

13...b4 14.axb4 ♜xb4 15.g5 ♜xc3 16.♗xc3 ♜xe4 17.♗xg7 ♜g8 18.♗e5 was better for White in M.Leon Hoyos-Y.Hernandez Guerrero, Toluca 2009.

**14.exd5 (14.e5 ♜d7) 14...♗xd5
15.♗hf1 ♜xc3 16.♗xc3 0-0**



Black has completed development, but there is a fair chance that White is winning by force. The good news is that the most consistent continuation of White's play, 17.f5, is not dangerous due to 17...♜g5+ (An only move. 17...♝fe8? 18.f6 ♜xa3 is very dubious as White gets a terrible attack with 19.♗e5 ♜c5 20.b4 ♜xb4 21.fxg7.) 18.♗d2 (18.♗b1 e5 is balanced: 19.h4 ♜xh4 20.♗h2 ♜f6∞ or 19.f6 e4 20.fxg7 ♜fe8 21.♗f2 ♜g6 22.♗e2 e3 23.♗g3 ♜e4 24.♗d6 ♜e6 25.♗d7 ♜f6=) 18...♜xd2+ 19.♗xd2 exf5 20.♗xf5 ♜c7.

Critical is:

The f4 System

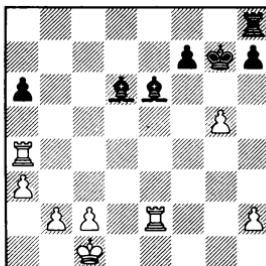
17.g5 ♖fe8!

Emms' suggestion 18...♗b6? loses at once to 18.♗d4 ♗c5 19.♗xg7.

**18.♗xg7 ♗xg7 19.♗h5 ♗h8
20.f5 exf5 21.♗xf5 ♗g6 22.♗g4
♗d6**

I think that Black has decent play here, but it all depends on the evaluation of the following hazy ending: 23.♗xb5 (23.♗e4 ♗b6 24.♗xf7+ is a perpetual check after 24...♔xf7 25.♗f5+ ♔g8 26.♗d5+ ♗xd5 27.♗xd5+=) 23...♗e6 24.♗d4+ ♔g8 25.♗d7 ♗c4 26.♗xc8 ♗xd4

27.♗xd4 ♗xc8 28.♗e5 ♗e6 29.♗a4 ♗d6 30.♗e2 ♗g7

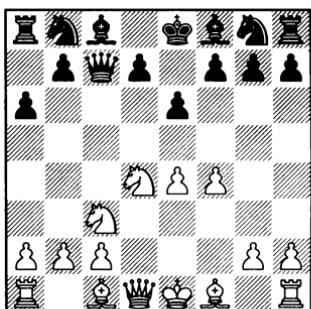


Next, Black will play 31...♗a8 and then he will attack the enemy kingside pawns with his king and bishop pair. I believe that over the board, Black's game is easier.

Part 4. The f4 System

Kan – Step by Step

1.e4 c5 2.♘f3 e6 3.d4 exd4
4.♘xd4 a6 5.♘c3 ♜c7 6.f4



This move is seldom seen, because it offers Black a wide choice of good plans. It is better to await ...♘f6 first as in the variation 6.♗d3 ♘f6 7.f4. In the diagram position, Black can transpose to the Taimanov with 6...♘c6, but that would not be the best decision. It is more logical to fianchetto the bishop to b7 first. Then he could recapture on c6 by ...♗xc6. As for the g8-knight, it can go to e7 in some lines.

6...b5 7.♗d3

The only reasonable alternative to this development is 7.♗e2

(7.a3 ♜b7 8.♗d3 transposes) 7...♗b7 8.♗f3. The simplest retort is 8...b4 (8...♘c6 is also good: 9.♘xc6 ♜xc6; 9.♗e3 ♜a5 10.0-0 ♜c4 11.♗c1 ♜c5 12.♗h1 ♜e7 13.♗d3 ♜b6 14.♗ce2 0-0 15.b3 ♜d6 16.♗b2 f6=, Rojo Huerta-Rajkovic, Madrid 1994) 9.♗a4 ♜f6 10.♗e2 ♜c6 11.♗b3 ♜a5! 12.0-0 ♜e7.

7...♗b7 8.♗f3

a) 8.♗e2 ♜f6 is fine for Black, see **game 26** An.Martin-Delchev, Benasque 2013. Of course, 8...♘c6 9.♘xc6 ♜xc6, transposing to the Taimanov, is also possible, but it is hardly the sternest test of White's set-up.

b) 8.0-0?! ♜c5 pins the d4-knight: 9.♗e3 ♜c6! (there is no reason to give White an initiative after 9...♗b6 10.♗ce2 ♜f6 11.c3! ♜xe4 12.b4 ♜f8 13.a4) 10.♗ce2 (10.♗g4 ♜xd4 11.♗xg7 ♜xc2 12.♗xc2 ♜xe3+ 13.♗h1 b4 14.♗d1 ♜b6 15.♗d3 ♜f6, when 16.♗xh8+? loses to 16...♗e7 17.♗g7 ♜g8 18.♗h6 ♜xe4–+) 10...♗f6 11.c3 ♗g4 12.♗c1 0-0 13.♗h1 e5=, Skage-Macieja, Tromso 2007.

The f4 System

8... $\mathbb{Q}f6$ 9. $\mathbb{Q}e3$

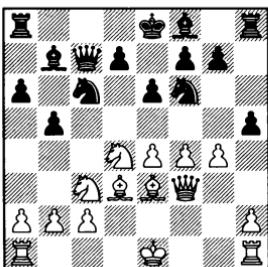
9.g4?! is premature.

Even the most straightforward retort 9...b4 10. $\mathbb{Q}ce2$ d5 11.e5 $\mathbb{Q}e4$ gives Black counterplay: 12. $\mathbb{Q}g3$ $\mathbb{Q}c5$ (12... $\mathbb{Q}c6$ 13. $\mathbb{Q}e3$ $\mathbb{Q}c5$ 14. $\mathbb{Q}b3!$ $\mathbb{Q}xe3$ 15. $\mathbb{W}xe3$ $\mathbb{Q}xg3$ 16.hxg3 d4 17. $\mathbb{W}g1$ $\mathbb{Q}xe5$ 18.fxe5 $\mathbb{W}xe5+$ 19. $\mathbb{Q}d1$ $\mathbb{Q}xh1$ 20. $\mathbb{W}xh1$ $\mathbb{Q}b8$ 21.a3 bxa3 22. $\mathbb{Q}xa3$ $\mathbb{W}xg3$ is a total mess) 13.0-0 $\mathbb{Q}xd3$ 14.cxd3 $\mathbb{Q}c5$ 15. $\mathbb{Q}e3$ $\mathbb{W}b6$ 16. $\mathbb{W}f2$ $\mathbb{Q}c6$ 17. $\mathbb{Q}ge2$ 0-0=. After a swap of rooks on the c-file, the d3-pawn will become quite sensitive, e.g. 18. $\mathbb{Q}ac1$ $\mathbb{Q}fc8$ 19. $\mathbb{Q}c2$ a5 20. $\mathbb{Q}fc1$ $\mathbb{Q}xd4$ 21. $\mathbb{Q}xd4$ $\mathbb{Q}xd4$ 22. $\mathbb{Q}xd4$ $\mathbb{Q}xc2$ 23. $\mathbb{Q}xc2$ $\mathbb{W}b5$.

However, I think that Black can aspire to the edge with 9... $\mathbb{Q}c6!$ 10. $\mathbb{Q}e3$ (10. $\mathbb{Q}xc6$ $\mathbb{W}xc6$ 11.g5 $\mathbb{Q}b4$) 10...h5, transposing to 10.g4.

9... $\mathbb{Q}c6$ 10.0-0-0

a) It is still early for 10.g4 due to 10...h5!



11.g5

Andriasian beat Potkin in Belgorod 2010 with 11.gxh5?! $\mathbb{Q}xh5$ 12. $\mathbb{Q}xc6$ $\mathbb{W}xc6$ 13.f5 $\mathbb{Q}f6$ (13... $\mathbb{Q}a3$!?)

14. $\mathbb{Q}d1$ $\mathbb{Q}xb2$ 15. $\mathbb{Q}xb2$ $\mathbb{W}c3+$ 16. $\mathbb{Q}d2$ $\mathbb{W}xb2$ 17.0-0 $\mathbb{Q}f6$ 14. $\mathbb{Q}d4$ b4 15. $\mathbb{Q}xf6$ gxf6 16. $\mathbb{Q}e2$, when 16...d5! 17. $\mathbb{Q}g3$ $\mathbb{Q}h4$ 18.fxe6 $\mathbb{W}xe6$ would have gained the edge.

11... $\mathbb{Q}g4$ 12. $\mathbb{Q}g1$ $\mathbb{Q}xd4$ 13. $\mathbb{Q}xd4$ $\mathbb{Q}c5$?

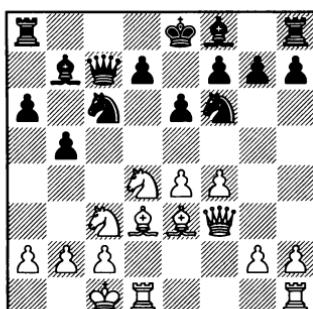
13...e5 14.fxe5 $\mathbb{Q}c5$ 15. $\mathbb{Q}xc5$ $\mathbb{W}xc5$ 16.0-0-0 0-0 is unclear.

14. $\mathbb{Q}xc5$ (14. $\mathbb{Q}xg7$ $\mathbb{Q}h7$ 15. $\mathbb{Q}f6$ $\mathbb{Q}xf6$ 16.gxf6 $\mathbb{Q}d4$) 14... $\mathbb{W}xc5$ 15. $\mathbb{Q}e2$ f5

It turns out that 16.h3? loses to 16...b4 17. $\mathbb{Q}d1$ (17. $\mathbb{Q}a4$ $\mathbb{W}d4$) 17...fxe4 18. $\mathbb{Q}xe4$ $\mathbb{W}c4+$, but 16.gxf6 $\mathbb{Q}xf6$ 17.a3 0-0-0 also looks very pleasant for Black.

b) 10. $\mathbb{Q}b3$ is well met by 10...d5! 11.exd5 (11.e5 d4!) 11... $\mathbb{Q}b4$ 12. $\mathbb{Q}d4$ $\mathbb{Q}xd3+$ 13. $\mathbb{W}xd3$ $\mathbb{Q}xd5$ with the bishop pair. The play may continue 14. $\mathbb{Q}e5$ $\mathbb{W}c8$ or 14. $\mathbb{Q}xd5$ $\mathbb{Q}xd5$ 15.0-0 $\mathbb{Q}d6$.

c) 10.0-0 $\mathbb{Q}xd4$ 11. $\mathbb{Q}xd4$ $\mathbb{Q}c5$ 12. $\mathbb{Q}xc5$ $\mathbb{W}xc5+$ 13. $\mathbb{Q}h1$ b4! offers Black easy play on the central dark squares by ...d6, ...e5.



10...b4

Part 4

This leads to more complex play than 10... $\mathbb{Q}xd4$ 11. $\mathbb{Q}xd4$ $\mathbb{Q}c5$. At this point, 12. $\mathbb{Q}xc5$ $\mathbb{W}xc5$ 13. $\mathbb{W}g3$ (13.a3 b4!) 13... $\mathbb{Q}h5$ 14. $\mathbb{W}g4$ (14. $\mathbb{W}f3$ $\mathbb{Q}f6$) 14...g6 15.f5 b4 16. $\mathbb{Q}a4$ $\mathbb{W}e3+$ 17. $\mathbb{Q}b1$ $\mathbb{Q}c6$ is balanced.

The problem line is 12. $\mathbb{Q}e5$ $\mathbb{W}b6$ 13. $\mathbb{Q}xf6$ gxf6 14.f5. Perhaps Black should answer 14...e5 followed up by ...h5, ...0-0-0. This Rauzer structure is too static. It may be solid, but the potential appearance of opposite coloured bishops is a herald of a draw.

**11. $\mathbb{Q}ce2$ $\mathbb{Q}a5$ 12.g4 d5 13.e5
 $\mathbb{Q}d7$ 14. $\mathbb{Q}b1$ $\mathbb{Q}c4$ 15. $\mathbb{Q}c1$ $\mathbb{W}b6$
16. $\mathbb{Q}hf1$ $\mathbb{Q}c5$**

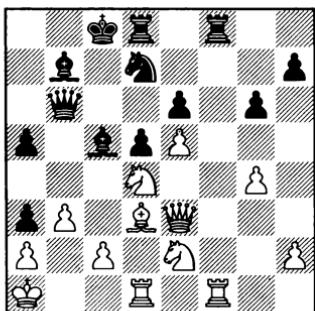
Black has good counterplay on the queenside thanks to ...a5, ... $\mathbb{Q}a6$ activating the passive bishop. The play may continue:

17. $\mathbb{W}f2$

Or 17. $\mathbb{Q}b3$ a5 18. $\mathbb{Q}xc5$ $\mathbb{Q}xc5$

19. $\mathbb{W}f2$ $\mathbb{Q}a6$ 20.b3 $\mathbb{Q}b8$ 21. $\mathbb{Q}xc4$ dxc4 22. $\mathbb{Q}e3$ cxb3 23.cxb3 $\mathbb{W}c6=$.

**17...a5 18.b3 $\mathbb{Q}a3+$ 19. $\mathbb{Q}xa3$
 $\mathbb{Q}xa3$ 20.f5 0-0-0 21. $\mathbb{W}e3$ g6
22.fxe6 fxe6 23. $\mathbb{Q}a1$ $\mathbb{Q}hf8$**



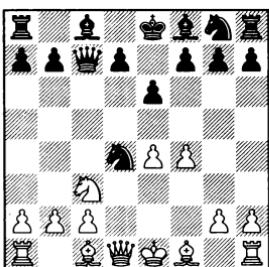
Both sides have fulfilled their plans and the position is balanced. White's first rank is permanently weak so he lacks a clear plan. A possible continuation is 24.c3 $\mathbb{Q}b8$ 25. $\mathbb{Q}f4$ (25.h4 $\mathbb{Q}xf1$ 26. $\mathbb{Q}xf1$ $\mathbb{Q}a6$ 27.h5 $\mathbb{Q}c8$ 28.hxg6 hxg6 29. $\mathbb{Q}xa6$ $\mathbb{W}xa6$ 30. $\mathbb{Q}b1$ $\mathbb{Q}f8$ 31. $\mathbb{Q}d1$ $\mathbb{Q}a8$ 32. $\mathbb{Q}f4$ $\mathbb{Q}xd4$ 33.cxd4 g5=) 25... $\mathbb{Q}c8\infty$.

Part 4. The f4 System

Complete Games

20. Yemelin-Rodshtein Skopje 14.03.2013

1.e4 c5 2.♘f3 e6 3.d4 cxd4
4.♗xd4 ♘c6 5.♗c3 ♖c7 6.f4
♗xd4

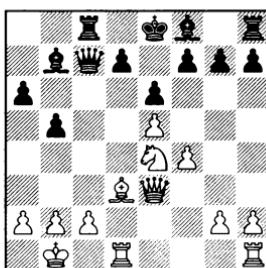


This is an attempt to remedy Black's basic problem in the main line 6...a6 7.♗xc6 ♖xc6 when the queen often has to return to c7. The text effectively discourages plans with ♘e2-f3 and leaves White a very narrow path to follow. Thus you can prepare a decent repertoire against the f4-system virtually for a few minutes (by reading the annotations to this game). The flip side is that White's task is even easier. He can reach a pleasant position by making the most natural developing moves.

7.♗xd4 a6 8.♗e3 b5 9.0-0-0
♗b7 10.♗d3 ♜c8 11.♗b1 ♗f6

Some good players opt for 11...♖c5 12.♗he1 ♖xd4 13.♗xd4 ♘e7, but this endgame is slightly better for White after 14.a4 ♘c6 15.♗f2 bxa4 16.♗xa4 ♘b4 17.♗b6 ♘xd3 18.♗xd3 ♜c7 19.f5, Shabalov-El Debs, Sao Paulo 2009.

12.e5 ♘d5 13.♗e4 ♘xe3 14.♗xe3



14...♘d5

14...♘e7 should not change the course of the game as 15.♗hf1 ♘d5 16.♗e1 transposes. Instead, Andriasian-A.Horvath, Cappelle la Grande 2012, saw 15.♗g3 g6 16.h4 h5 17.♗he1 (17.♗d6+ ♘xd6 18.exd6 ♖xd6 19.♗xb5 ♘d5∞) 17...♘d5 (17...

Part 4

Qxe4 18. Qxe4 Qf8=) 18. Qf6+ Qxf6 19. exf6 , when 19... Qd8! would have been unclear.

The text is threatening 15... Wa5 .

15. We1 Qe7 16. Ef1 b4 17. We2 a5 18. c4!

This way White neutralises the enemy pawn storm on the queenside, but the weak second rank will be a constant cause for concern. Still, it is the best option. 18. Qa6 Bb8 19. Qd6+ Qxd6 20. Qxd5 Qc5 21. Qdd1 0-0 22. g4 d6 would have been completely balanced.

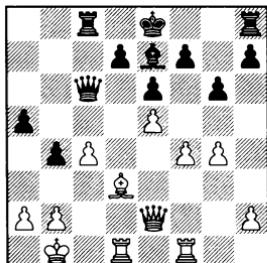
18... Qxe4

A difficult decision. Rodshtein acknowledges the fact that he is slightly worse and should struggle for the draw.

After 18... Qxc4 19. Ec1 Qxd3+ 20. Wxd3 Wb7 21. Qxc8+ Wxc8 22. Ec1 Wb7 23. Qd6+ Qxd6 24. Wxd6 Qd8 25. Wc5 Wa8 26. Qa1\pm Black would be without useful moves.

18... bxcc3 19. Qxc3 Qc6 20. f5 Bb8 (20... Qb4 21. Qb5 Wb6 22. Ef4\pm) 21. Qb5 Wb7 22. a4\uparrow is also boring to defend.

19. Wxe4 g6 20. g4 Wc6 21. We2



21... $\text{Wc5?!$

Black's counterplay is based on ...a4-a3 when any open file would be in Black's favour. The correct move order was 21... a4! 22. f5 a3 23. b3 Eg8 as in the game.

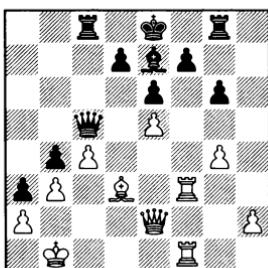
22. f5 a4 23. $\text{Ef3?!$

White misses the opportunity to activate his bishop with 23. Qc2! , e.g. 23... Wc6 24. Wf3\pm .

23... a3 24. b3 $\text{Eg8!?$ 25. fxg6

25. f6 Qd8 26. Wd2 should be a draw after 26... Wxe5 27. Qxg6 Ec7 28. Ee1 Wb2+ 29. Wxb2 axb2 30. Qh5 Eg5 31. Qxb2 h6 . The opposite coloured bishops become a strong levelling factor without queens.

25... hxg6 26. Edf1



26... Wd4

Black is right to give up the f7-pawn, but he should have done it by 26... Qd8! 27. Qxf7 Qc7 with excellent counterplay. White's extra pawn is not worth much. On the contrary, Black will use the open

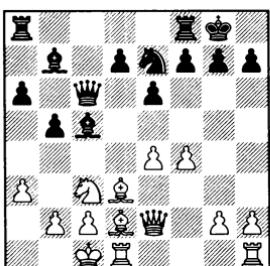
The f4 System

f-file to his benefit. After the text, White retains some fine edge in the endgame which, however, should be drawn.

27. $\mathbb{E}f4$ $\mathbb{W}c3$ 28. $\mathbb{E}4f3$ $\mathbb{W}d4$
29. $\mathbb{E}f4$ $\mathbb{W}c3$ 30. $\mathbb{E}c1$ $\mathbb{W}b2+$
31. $\mathbb{W}xb2$ $\mathbb{A}xb2$ 32. $\mathbb{E}cf1$ $\mathbb{E}c5$ (32... $\mathbb{E}h8=$) 33. $\mathbb{E}xf7$ $\mathbb{E}xe5$ 34. $\mathbb{E}h7$ $\mathbb{E}e3$
35. $\mathbb{Q}xg6+$ $\mathbb{Q}d8$ 36. $\mathbb{E}ff7$ $\mathbb{E}xg6$
37. $\mathbb{E}xe7$ $\mathbb{E}d3$ 38. $\mathbb{E}eg7$ $\mathbb{E}xg7$
39. $\mathbb{E}xg7$ $\mathbb{E}h3?$ (39... $\mathbb{E}d1+!=$)
40. $\mathbb{Q}xb2$ (40. $\mathbb{E}g5!$ $\mathbb{E}xh2$ 41. $\mathbb{E}b5$
 $\mathbb{E}h1+$ 42. $\mathbb{Q}xb2$ $\mathbb{E}h2+$ 43. $\mathbb{Q}b1$
 $\mathbb{E}h1+$ 44. $\mathbb{Q}c2$ $\mathbb{E}h2+$ 45. $\mathbb{Q}d3$ $\mathbb{E}xa2$
46. $\mathbb{Q}e4\pm$) 40... $\mathbb{E}xh2+$ 41. $\mathbb{Q}b1$
 $\mathbb{Q}c7$ 42. $\mathbb{E}g5$ $\mathbb{E}h1+$ 43. $\mathbb{Q}c2$ $\mathbb{E}h2+$
44. $\mathbb{Q}d3$ $\mathbb{E}xa2$ 45. $\mathbb{E}c5$ $d5$ 46. $\mathbb{C}xd6+$
 $\mathbb{Q}xd6$ 47. $\mathbb{E}b5$ $\mathbb{E}g2$ 48. $\mathbb{E}xb4$ $\mathbb{E}g3+$
49. $\mathbb{Q}e2$ $\mathbb{Q}e5$ 50. $\mathbb{Q}f2$ $\mathbb{E}c3$ 51. $\mathbb{Q}g2$
 $\mathbb{E}d3$ 52. $\mathbb{Q}h2$ $\mathbb{E}c3$ 53. $\mathbb{Q}g2$ $\mathbb{E}d3$
54. $\mathbb{Q}h2$ $\mathbb{E}c3$ 55. $\mathbb{E}b5+$ $\mathbb{Q}f4$ 56. $\mathbb{G}5$
 $e5$ 57. $\mathbb{G}6$ $\mathbb{E}c6$ 58. $\mathbb{G}7$ draw.

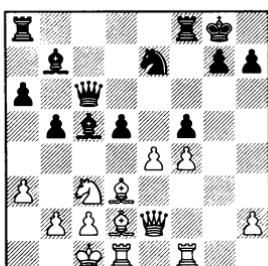
21. Nepomniachtchi-Vitiugov
Nizhny Novgorod 11.10.2013

1. $\mathbb{E}e4$ $c5$ 2. $\mathbb{Q}f3$ $e6$ 3. $\mathbb{D}d4$ $\mathbb{C}xd4$
4. $\mathbb{Q}xd4$ $\mathbb{Q}c6$ 5. $\mathbb{Q}c3$ $\mathbb{W}c7$ 6. $\mathbb{F}4$ $a6$
7. $\mathbb{Q}xc6$ $\mathbb{W}xc6$ 8. $\mathbb{Q}d3$ $b5$ 9. $\mathbb{W}e2$
 $\mathbb{Q}b7$ 10. $\mathbb{Q}d2$ $\mathbb{Q}c5$ 11. $0-0-0$ $\mathbb{Q}e7$
12. $a3$ $0-0$



The opposite castles give Black more chances to fight for a win than 12... $0-0-0$. Although both White's bishops point to the kingside, it is not easy to mount an attack. For instance, 13. $g4$ may face a counter-attack in the centre with 13... $d5$. Then 14. $e5$ $\mathbb{W}c7$ (enabling ... $\mathbb{Q}c6$, ... $b4$) 15. $f5?$ $\mathbb{Q}c6$ would favour Black.

In practice White had tried 13. $\mathbb{E}hf1$ $f5$ 14. $g4$, when in both games Black replied with the mundane 14... $\mathbb{E}ae8?$! and only after 15. $\mathbb{Q}b1$, did he push 15... $d5$. [15... $\mathbb{Q}d4$ 16. $\mathbb{G}xf5$ $\mathbb{E}xf5$ 17. $e5$ $d6$ 18. $a4$ looks nice for White: 18... $\mathbb{B}xa4$ 19. $\mathbb{Q}c4+$ $\mathbb{Q}h8$ 20. $\mathbb{E}xd6$ $\mathbb{Q}c8$ 21. $\mathbb{W}d3$ $\mathbb{W}xd6$ (21... $\mathbb{Q}b6$ 22. $\mathbb{W}xd4$ $\mathbb{Q}xc4$ 23. $\mathbb{E}g1$ $\mathbb{E}f7$ 24. $\mathbb{E}ge1$ $\mathbb{E}xe1$ 25. $\mathbb{E}xe1\pm$ $h6$) 22. $\mathbb{Q}xa4$ $\mathbb{Q}e4$ 23. $\mathbb{W}b3$ $\mathbb{W}f6$ 24. $\mathbb{Q}c3$ $\mathbb{Q}xc3$ 25. $\mathbb{W}xc3\pm$] Smirin continued against Soffer, Plovdiv 2012, 16. $\mathbb{G}xf5$ $\mathbb{E}xf5$ 17. $e5$ $d4$ 18. $\mathbb{Q}a2$ $\mathbb{Q}d5$ 19. $\mathbb{Q}b4$ with a positional edge. The rook is misplaced on e8. Moreover, it may be needed on a8 to support an attack with ... $a5$, ... $b4$. Thus I reached to the conclusion that Black should immediately define the centre by 14... $d5$! 15. $\mathbb{G}xf5$ $\mathbb{E}xf5$ (15... $d4$!?) may transpose to 15... $\mathbb{E}xf5$.



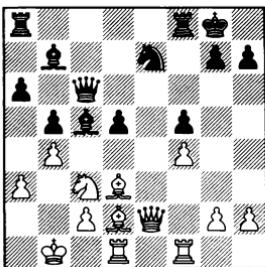
Now 16. $e5$ $d4$ 17. $\mathbb{Q}a2$ is ineffective due to 17... $\mathbb{W}h6$, anticipating $\mathbb{Q}b4$ and preventing $\mathbb{W}h5$. The dif-

Part 4

ference is seen in variations like 18.♗c4+ ♖h8 19.♗b3 ♕fc8, intending ...a5.

16.exd5 ♗xd5 17.♗xd5 ♘xd5 18.♗c3 ♜fe8 19.♗e5 ♘f7 is roughly balanced.

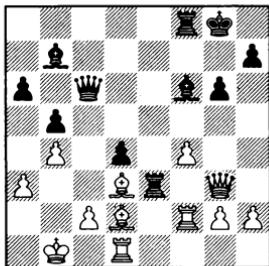
This analysis led me to the insidious move 14.♗b1 (instead of 14.g4). Then 14...♜ae8?! 15.g4 would transpose to Smirin-Soffer so we should play 14...d5! 15.exf5 exf5 when the only way to set Black problems is 16.b4



16...♝d6?! 17.♘f2 (with ♘c3-e2-d4 in mind) 17...♝c7 18.♗e2 ♘b6 19.♗e3 ♘xe3 20.♘xe3± is strategically grim despite White's weakened castling position.

Fortunately, Black can employ Kasparov's favourite method of defence – a positional pawn sacrifice: 16...♝d4! 17.♘xe7 ♜ae8 18.♗g5 ♘xc3 19.♗xf5 ♘f6 20.♗g3 d4 with excellent compensation. Here are some illustrative variations: 21.♗f2 (21.♗b3+ ♘c4; 21...♞d5 22.♗xd5+ ♘xd5 23.g3 ♜e2 24.h4 ♜h2 25.♗d3 ♘c4) 21...g6 22.♗d3 ♜e3!

This rook splits White's position in two. I do not see how he could improve:



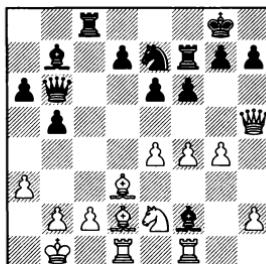
23.♗g4 ♘c8 24.f5 ♘d5 25.♗c1 ♘g7 26.♗df1 ♘f7 (26...♝xd3 27.cxd3 ♘b3+ 28.♗a1 ♘xd3 29.♗d1 ♘xd1 30.♗xd1 ♘xf5=) 27.h3 ♘d7 28.♗f4 (28.♗b2 gxf5 29.♗xf5 ♘xf5 30.♗xf5 ♘xf5 31.♗xf5 ♘e1+ 32.♗c1 ♘e6=) 28...♝xd3 29.cxd3 ♘b3+ 30.♗a1 ♘xd3 31.♗b2 ♘xf5 32.♗f3 ♘xf3 33.♗xf3 ♘e7 34.g4 ♘c2 35.h4 h6=.

Nepomniachtchi tries to improve White's play by discouraging ...f5.

13.♘h5 f6

13...f5?! is really bad after 14.g4 g6 15.♗g5 d5 16.♗he1 ♘f7 17.gxf5 exf5 18.exd5+, but 13...b4?! 14.axb4 ♘xb4 15.♗he1 is unclear. Instead, Vitiugov chooses to remain passive on the kingside.

14.g4 ♘ac8 15.♗he1 ♘b6 16.♗b1 ♘d4 17.♗e2 ♘f2 18.♗f1 ♘f7



The f4 System

Black's set-up is very resilient. Nepomniachtchi admits that further pawn advances are not promising and starts a redeployment of his pieces.

19.♗h3 ♜g6 20.♗c1 ♜c5?

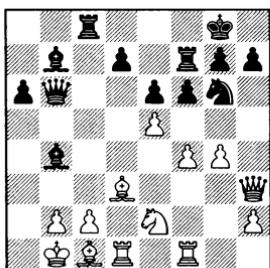
The critical moment of the game. The f2-bishop must have stayed on its place in order to bar the f-file. A possible follow up was 20...a5 21.♗c3 b4 22.♗b5 b3 23.cxb3 (23. c3 ♜ff8 24.a4 ♜cd8) 23...♜xc1+!? 24.♜xc1 ♜xf4 with fair compensation. Here is an illustrative line: 25.♗f3 ♜e3 26.♗cd1 f5 27.♗c2 fxe4 28.♗xe4 d5 29.♗d3 d4 30.♗g3 ♜a6 31.a4 ♜xd3 32.♗xf7 ♜xf7 33.♗xd3 ♜xb5 34.axb5 ♜xb5=.

If White shifted his bishop to b2, Black should plug the main diagonal by ...e5, e.g. 21.b3 ♜c5 22.♗b2 e5= 23.♗g2 ♜e3 24.fxe5 ♜xe5.

21.e5! b4

It turns out that 21...fxe5 22.fxe5 ♜xf1 23.♗xf1 ♜f8 fails to 24.♗f4. The game is practically over now.

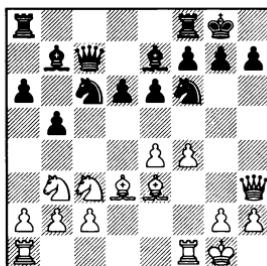
22.axb4 ♜xb4



**23.f5! exf5 24.♗xf5 ♜f8
25.exf6 g6 26.♗d3 ♜xf6 27.b3
♜xf1 28.♗xf1 ♜e6 29.♗b2 ♜f8
30.♗d1 ♜f3 31.♗h4 ♜c6 32.♗c4
♗b5 33.♗d4 ♜f7 34.♗xe6 ♜xc4
35.♗g5 ♜e7 36.♗h3 ♜e2 37.♗g2
♜e8 38.♗d5+ 1-0**

22. Belikov-Zakhartsov Alushta 2005

**1.e4 c5 2.♗c3 e6 3.♗f3 ♜c6
4.d4 cxd4 5.♗xd4 ♜c7 6.♗b3
a6 7.♗d3 ♜f6 8.0-0 b5 9.f4 d6
10.♗f3 ♜b7 11.♗e3 ♜e7 12.♗h3
0-0**



13.♗h1?!

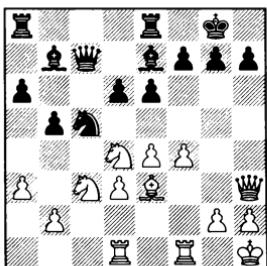
Playing on the basis of general considerations in a sharp position often implies losing the initiative. Besides, I am not sure at all that the king is better off on h1. Critical is 13.g4 ♜b4!? which is considered in "Step by Step". This game illustrates Black's possibilities when White is waiting without committing himself with pawn moves.

13...♜fe8 14.♗ae1 ♜b4 15.a3

Part 4

**15...d3 16.cxd3 d7 17.Qd4 Qc5
18.Ed1**

Black has consolidated his defence and could think about some activity on the queenside. The most consistent move in that sense is:



19.f5! xe7 20.Qf3

20.fxe6 fxe6 21.Qce2! maintains the tension. White chooses a wrong setup for his knights and gradually loses ground.

20...Bac8 21.Qxc5 Bxc5 22.d4 Bc4 23.fxe6 fxe6 24.Bfe1 b4 25.axb4 Bxb4 26.Be2 g6 27.Wg3Bg7= 28.We1 Bc4 29.Wd2 Bf8 30.Wd3 Bcc8 31.d5 e5 32.Qa2Bf7 33.We3 Wf8 34.Wb3 Wh6+ 35.Bf2 Qh8 36.Wd3 Wd8 37.Wb3Wc7 38.Qc3 Wc5 39.Wff1 Bcf8 40.Qa4 Wc7 41.Wc3 a5!

Finally Black finds the decisive improvement of his position. The dozing bishop on b7 comes into play.

42.Ba1 Qa6 43.Bfe1 Bb8 44.h3 Bb4?

White is so passive, that Zakhar-tsov loses vigilance for a moment. Now 45.Qc5!! could have turned the tables, when already Black should be careful – 45...Bc8 (45...Wc5 46.Qe5 Bg8 47.Wxc5 dxcc5 48.Qf7 Qf7 49.Qa5±) 46.Qe6 Wxc3 47.bxc3 Bc4 48.Qa5 Qxe6 49.dxe6 Bc7 50.Qd1 Bxe6 51.Qa8 Bg7 52.Qa7 Bg8=. All that could have been prevented by the simple 44...Bg8=.

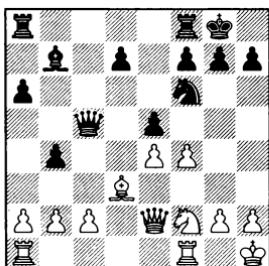
45.Wc6? Bb5 46.Wxc7 Bxc7 47.Qc3 Bxb2 48.Qd1 Be2 49.Bg1 a4 50.Qa3 Bec2 51.Qe3 B2c3 52.Bxc3 Bxc3 53.Qg4 Bc1 54.Qg5 Bxg5 0-1

The f4 System

23. Stuerzenbaum-Taimanov Bad Zwischenahn 2003

1.e4 c5 2.♘f3 e6 3.d4 cxd4 4.♗xd4 ♗c6 5.♗c3 ♖c7 6.f4 a6 7.♗xc6 ♖xc6 8.♗d3 ♗c5 9.♗e2 b5 10.♗e3 ♗b7 11.0-0 b4 12.♗d1

12.♗b1 is slow. Black can attack immediately the centre – 12...f5 13.♗d2 (13.♗xc5 ♖xc5 14.♗h1 fxe4 15.♗xe4 ♗xe4 16.♗xe4 17.♗xe4=). 12...♗f6 13.♗xc5 ♖xc5+ 14.♗f2 0-0 15.♗h1 e5

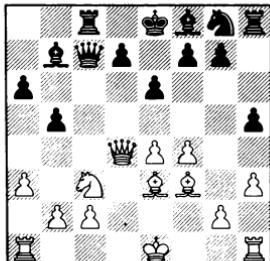


A typical move for the Taimanov, performed by the guru himself! Black fixes a target on e4. Now 16.fxe5 ♖xe5 17.♗g4 ♗xg4 18.♗xg4 ♗ae8 19.♗d7 ♗xe4= (20.♗ae1 f5) would have been the lesser evil.

16.♗g4?! ♗xg4 17.♗xg4 f5 18.♗e2 (18.exf5 e4+) 18...fxe4 19.♗xe4 d5+ 20.♗f3 e4 21.♗g4 ♗f6 22.♗d7 ♗d6 23.♗a4 ♗xf4 24.♗xf4 ♗xf4 25.♗f1 ♗d6 26.♗b3 ♗f8 27.♗d1 ♗e5 28.h3 e3 29.c3 bxc3 30.bxc3 ♗f2 31.♗d3 ♗f8 32.♗e1 ♗g5 33.♗f1 d4 0-1

24. Gofshtein-Tregubov Montpellier 1998

1.e4 c5 2.♘f3 e6 3.d4 cxd4 4.♗xd4 ♗c6 5.♗c3 ♖c7 6.f4 7.♗xd4 7.♗xd4 a6 8.♗e3 b5 9.♗e2 ♗b7 10.a3 ♗c8 11.♗f3 h5 12.h3



White anticipates ...♗f6 which would be attacked by e4-e5. Black must seek another retreat square for the knight.

12...h4 13.0-0 ♗f6 14.e5

After 14.♗ad1 ♗e7 15.♗f2 d6 16.♗fd2, Black can calmly castle.

14...♗h5 15.♗b7

The enemy knight will be cramping White's kingside from g3 so Anand preferred to kill it on the spot: 15.♗h5 ♗h5 16.♗ad1 ♗c5 17.♗d3 ♗xe3 18.♗xe3 ♗c5 19.♗d4. Black had good play after 19...f6, Anand-P. Cramling, Lugano 1988.

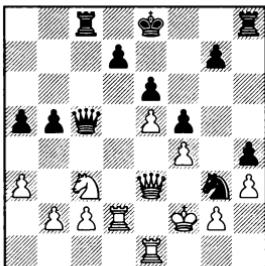
15...♗b7 16.♗d3 ♗g3 17.♗fe1 ♗c6 18.♗f2 ♗c5

Black's bishop has more prospects than its White counterpart, so

Part 4

it would be good to keep it. Tregubov recommends 18... $\mathbb{Q}f5$ 19. $\mathbb{E}e2$ $\mathbb{W}c4$ 20. $\mathbb{W}f3$ (20. $\mathbb{W}xc4$ $\mathbb{E}xc4$ 21. $\mathbb{Q}e4$ d5=) 20...d5=.

19. $\mathbb{E}ad1$ $\mathbb{Q}xf2$ 20. $\mathbb{Q}xf2$ $\mathbb{W}c5+$ 21. $\mathbb{W}e3$ a5 22. $\mathbb{E}d2$ f5!



Black is consistently paralysing the kingside. Now White had to simplify to four rooks endgame with 23.exf6 gxf6 24. $\mathbb{W}xc5$ $\mathbb{E}xc5$ 25. $\mathbb{Q}e4$ $\mathbb{Q}xe4$ =, but apparently he underestimated the dangers to his own king.

**23. $\mathbb{E}d4?$ $\mathbb{Q}e7$ 24. $\mathbb{Q}g1$ b4
25.axb4 axb4 26. $\mathbb{Q}a4$ $\mathbb{W}xc2$
27. $\mathbb{E}xb4$ $\mathbb{E}c4$**

The fewer heavy pieces on board, the more difficult is the defence of the first rank. Therefore, 27... $\mathbb{E}b8=$ would have been more consistent.

**28. $\mathbb{E}xc4$ $\mathbb{W}xc4$ 29. $\mathbb{Q}b6$ $\mathbb{W}b4$
30. $\mathbb{E}d1$ $\mathbb{E}b8$**

The safe haven of Black's king makes the difference in this position. 30... $\mathbb{Q}f7$ 31. $\mathbb{E}d7$ $\mathbb{Q}g6=$ would have underlined his advantage. The pawns are unimportant.

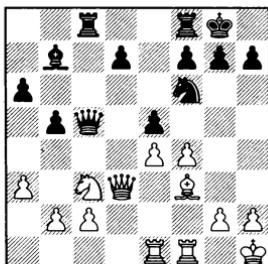
31. $\mathbb{Q}d7$ $\mathbb{E}b5$ 32. $\mathbb{Q}h2?$

White misses the chance to trade queens by 32. $\mathbb{W}a7$ $\mathbb{E}b7$ 33. $\mathbb{W}c5$ $\mathbb{Q}f7$ 34. $\mathbb{W}b4$. The ensuing endgame could be saved: 34... $\mathbb{E}b4$ 35. $\mathbb{Q}c5$ $\mathbb{Q}e2$ 36. $\mathbb{Q}f1$ $\mathbb{Q}f4$ 37.b3=. Now all is over.

**32... $\mathbb{E}d5!-$ 33. $\mathbb{W}a7$ $\mathbb{E}d1$
34. $\mathbb{Q}f6$ $\mathbb{Q}d8$ 35. $\mathbb{W}a8$ $\mathbb{Q}e7$ 36. $\mathbb{W}a7$
 $\mathbb{Q}d8$ 37. $\mathbb{W}a8$ $\mathbb{Q}c7$ 38. $\mathbb{W}a7$ $\mathbb{Q}c6$
39. $\mathbb{W}a6$ $\mathbb{Q}c5$ 40. $\mathbb{W}c8$ $\mathbb{Q}b5$ 0-1**

25. Kosanovic-Banikas Korinthos 1999

**1.e4 c5 2. $\mathbb{Q}f3$ $\mathbb{Q}c6$ 3.d4 cxd4
4. $\mathbb{Q}xd4$ $\mathbb{W}c7$ 5. $\mathbb{Q}c3$ e6 6. $\mathbb{Q}e2$ a6
7.f4 b5 8. $\mathbb{Q}xc6$ $\mathbb{W}xc6$ 9. $\mathbb{Q}f3$ $\mathbb{Q}b7$
10. $\mathbb{Q}e3$ $\mathbb{E}c8$ 11.a3 $\mathbb{W}c4$ 12. $\mathbb{W}d3$
 $\mathbb{Q}f6$ 13.0-0 $\mathbb{Q}c5$ 14. $\mathbb{Q}xc5$ $\mathbb{W}xc5$
15. $\mathbb{Q}h1$ e5 16. $\mathbb{Q}ae1$ (16.g4 h5!?)
16...0-0**

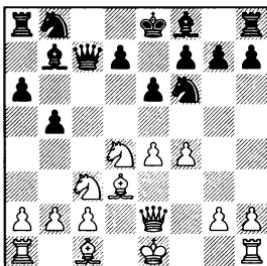


**17.g4 $\mathbb{Q}e8!$ 18.f5 $\mathbb{Q}d6!$ 19. $\mathbb{E}e2$
 $\mathbb{Q}c4$ 20. $\mathbb{Q}d1$ $\mathbb{E}fd8$ 21. $\mathbb{Q}g2$ d5-+
22.g5 dxе4 23. $\mathbb{W}h3$ $\mathbb{Q}d2$ 24.g6
fxg6 25.fxg6 h6 26. $\mathbb{Q}f7$ $\mathbb{Q}f3$ 27. $\mathbb{Q}e3$
 $\mathbb{E}c6$ 28. $\mathbb{E}d7$ $\mathbb{W}b6$ 29. $\mathbb{E}xd8$ $\mathbb{W}xd8$
30. $\mathbb{W}g4$ $\mathbb{E}d6$ 31. $\mathbb{E}f2$ $\mathbb{W}b6$ 0-1**

Kan Games

26. Martin Gonzalez-Delchev
Benesque 06.07.2013

1.e4 c5 2.♘f3 e6 3.d4 cxd4
4.♗xd4 a6 5.♗c3 ♜c7 6.f4 b5
7.♗d3 ♜b7 8.♕e2 ♘f6



9.a3

White prevents ...b4 followed by ...d5 which is possible after 9.♗d2. For instance, 9...b4 (9...♗c5 10.♗b3 ♜e7 11.e5 ♘d5 12.♗e4 ♘c6 is also possible, 13.c3 0-0 14.0-0 g6, planning ...f5. However, White retains some space advantage.) 10.♗d1 [10.♗a4 d5 (or 10...♗c6!? 11.♗f3 d5 12.e5 ♘e4=) 11.e5 ♘e4 12.♗e3 ♘d7 13.0-0 ♘dc5 14.♗xc5 ♜xc5 15.♗b3 ♜e7=, Bologan-Rublevsky, Dortmund 2004] 10...♗c6 11.♗xc6 ♜xc6 12.♗f2 ♜c5 13.♗e3 0-0 14.g4 ♜xe3 15.♗xe3 d5 16.e5 ♘e4=, Cuartas-Kogan, Catalonia 2013.

Critical should be 9.e5 b4 10.exf6?! [10.♗e4 ♘xe4 11.♗xe4 ♜xe4 (11...♗c6!) 12.♗xe4 ♘c6= is known from the ♜f3 set-up.] 10...bxc3 11.fxg7 ♜xg7 12.♗f5 ♜f6 13.b3

♗c6 14.♗a3 ♘d4! 15.♗d6+ ♜xd6 16.♗xd6 ♜xe2 17.♗xe2 ♜g8 with a pleasant endgame.

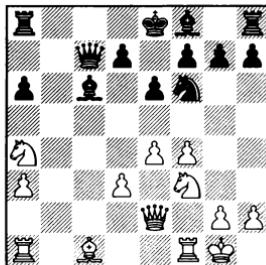
9...♗c6 10.♗f3

White's play looks normal, but in fact this move puts him on the defensive. 10.♗e3 b4 11.axb4 ♜xb4 12.0-0 ♜e7 and 10.♗xc6 ♜xc6 are balanced.

10...b4! 11.♗a4 bxa3 12.0-0 ♜b4

The computer will defend successfully after 12...axb2! 13.♗xb2 ♜e7 14.e5 ♘d5, but against an opponent with a lower rating than mine, I prefer the most solid approach.

13.bxa3 ♜xd3 14.cxd3 ♜c6



15.♗c2

15.♗c3 ♜e7 16.♗d2 0-0 17.♗fc1 (17.d4 d5) 17...♗fc8 and 15.♗b2 ♜c5+ 16.♗e3 ♜xe3+ 17.♗xe3 ♜b8 maintained equality.

The queen is misplaced on the open c-file and I could try to exploit it with 15...♗d6!? 16.e5 ♜xf3 17.♗xc7 ♜xc7 18.♗xf3 ♘d5 19.♗d2

Part 4

0-0. White has weak pawns in the centre.

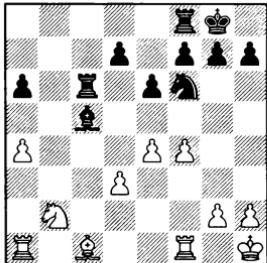
15... $\mathbb{E}c8$ 16. $\mathfrak{Q}e5?$

White neglects development. 16. $\mathbb{Q}e3$ $\mathbb{Q}d6$ 17.e5 $\mathbb{Q}xf3$ was only marginally better for Black. Now I'm in complete command.

16... $\mathbb{Q}b5$ 17. $\mathbb{W}xc7$ $\mathbb{E}xc7$ 18. $\mathfrak{Q}b2$ $\mathbb{Q}c5+$ 19. $\mathbb{Q}h1$ 0-0

Following the same lazy approach of avoiding concrete decisions. 19... $\mathbb{Q}xe4$ 20.a4 $\mathbb{Q}f2+$ 21. $\mathbb{E}xf2$ $\mathbb{Q}xf2$ 22.axb5 axb5 brings about a serious edge because my rooks have invasion squares. My quiet move is very unpleasant for White, too.

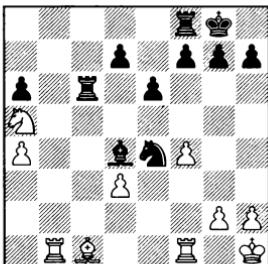
20.a4 $\mathbb{Q}c6$ 21. $\mathfrak{Q}xc6$ $\mathbb{E}xc6$



Amazingly, White is practically lost here. The only way to keep the material even would be 22. $\mathfrak{Q}d1$, but then 22...d5 23.e5 $\mathbb{Q}d7$ or 22... $\mathbb{E}b8$ would assure me of a total domina-

tion. My opponent decided to part with a pawn right away. The rest of the game is irrelevant to the opening.

22. $\mathfrak{Q}c4$ $\mathbb{Q}d4$ 23. $\mathbb{E}b1$ $\mathbb{Q}xe4$ 24. $\mathfrak{Q}a5$



Test your self!

24... $\mathbb{Q}g3+!$ 25.hxg3 $\mathbb{E}c5$ produces a rare mating threat in a simple endgame. My continuation is no less effective though.

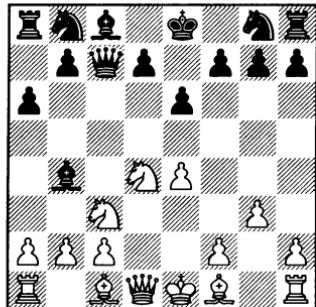
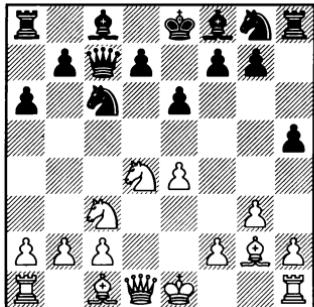
24... $\mathbb{Q}f2+$ 25. $\mathbb{E}xf2$ $\mathbb{E}xc1+$ 26. $\mathbb{E}xc1$ $\mathbb{Q}xf2$ 27.g3 $\mathbb{E}b8$ 28. $\mathfrak{Q}g2$ $\mathbb{Q}e3$ 29. $\mathbb{E}c7$ $\mathbb{Q}b6$ 30. $\mathbb{E}b7$ $\mathbb{E}xb7$ 31. $\mathfrak{Q}xb7$ $\mathbb{Q}f8$ 32. $\mathfrak{Q}d6$ $\mathbb{Q}c5$ 33. $\mathfrak{Q}c4$ $\mathbb{Q}e7$ 34. $\mathfrak{Q}d2$ $\mathbb{Q}b4$ 35. $\mathfrak{Q}b3$ $\mathbb{Q}d6$ 36.g4 f5 37.gxf5 exf5 38. $\mathfrak{Q}d4$ g6 39. $\mathfrak{Q}b3$ $\mathbb{Q}d5$ 40. $\mathfrak{Q}f3$ $\mathbb{Q}d6$ 41.h3 h6 42. $\mathfrak{Q}e3$ g5 43.fxg5 hxg5 44. $\mathfrak{Q}f3$ $\mathbb{Q}b4$ 45. $\mathfrak{Q}g3$ d6 46. $\mathfrak{Q}f3$ $\mathbb{Q}e5$ 47. $\mathfrak{Q}g3$ $\mathbb{Q}e1+$ 48. $\mathfrak{Q}f3$ $\mathbb{Q}h4$ 49. $\mathfrak{Q}e3$ g4 50.hxg4 fxg4 51. $\mathfrak{Q}e2$ $\mathbb{Q}d8$ 52. $\mathfrak{Q}e3$ $\mathbb{Q}b6+$ 53. $\mathfrak{Q}e2$ $\mathbb{Q}f4$ 54. $\mathfrak{Q}d2$ d5 55. $\mathfrak{Q}b3$ g3 56.d4 $\mathbb{Q}e4$ 57.a5 $\mathbb{Q}xd4$ 0-1

Part 5

The Fianchetto

I offer a choice in the Taimanov: 1.e4 c5 2. \mathbb{Q} f3 e6 3.d4 cxd4 4. \mathbb{Q} xd4 a6 5. \mathbb{Q} c3 \mathbb{Q} c7 6.g3 a6 7. \mathbb{Q} g2 d6, which is well tested and solid, and the more enterprising flank attack 7...h5 – see the diagram. I propose a lot of new ideas and correct some wrong suggestions of other authors.

The fianchetto has no venom against the Kan – Black can fight for the initiative.



Part 5. The Fianchetto

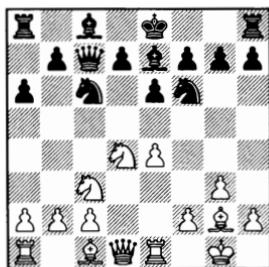
Main Ideas

The fianchetto system is perhaps the most universal weapon of White against the Sicilian. It is very solid, but at the same time flexible. By planting the bishop on the main diagonal, White significantly restricts Black's counterplay. The good control of the centre allows him to choose between a large number of plans ranging from calm positional play on the queenside with a4-a5 to a pawn storm on the opposite flank. Unexperienced players underestimate the 6.g3 system because White's wins are rarely quick and spectacular. However, the opposite is even more true. Black should be very accurate with his move order. Moreover, memorising the first 12-15 moves does not help much since decisive clashes in this system usually occur deeply in the middlegame. So second players should know typical plans of counterplay, which are illustrated with practical examples in the "Complete Games" chapter.

The first problem of Black is how to complete development.

The straightforward approach does not work:

1.e4 c5 2. $\mathbb{Q}f3$ e6 3.d4 cxd4
4. $\mathbb{Q}xd4$ $\mathbb{Q}c6$ 5. $\mathbb{Q}c3$ $\mathbb{W}c7$ 6.g3 a6
7. $\mathbb{Q}g2$ $\mathbb{Q}f6$ 8.0-0 $\mathbb{Q}e7$ 9. $\mathbb{E}e1$



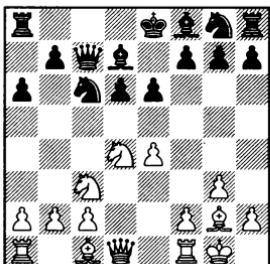
My advice is to avoid this position.

White is better after 9...0-0 10. $\mathbb{Q}xc6$ dxc6 11.e5 or 9...d6 10. $\mathbb{Q}xc6$ bc6 11.e5! dxе5 12. $\mathbb{E}xe5$.

So we cannot comfortably develop with ... $\mathbb{Q}f6$, ... $\mathbb{Q}e7$ and ...d6. I offer two thoroughly different solutions in the Taimanov:

The Fianchetto

A. 7...d6 8.0-0 ♕d7

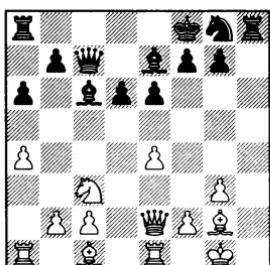


Looking at the diagram position you may ask: "OK, we have defended c6, but how do we castle?"

9.♘e1 ♕e7 10.♗xc6 ♘xc6 11.♗g4
(line A61)

We simply do not castle at all!

11...h5! 12.♗e2 h4 13.a4 hg3
14.hg3 ♖f8!



Black has a good game. His only concern is how to transfer the queen to the kingside. The open h-file will be a constant source of threats against White's king. Keep in mind the manoeuvres ...♘c7-d7-e8-♗g8-h7(after g6 and ♔g7) and ...♘c7-d7-g4(e6) after a preliminary ...e6-e5.

15.a5 ♘c8 16.♗e3 ♘f6∞.

See **game 28** Fressinet-Delchev, Calvia ol. 2004.

Now I'll try to arm you against the dangerous plan of a kingside pawn storm. It has been topical lately. White's concept is to retreat the knight from d4 to e2 or b3 and push f4, g4, g5. The key moment is that the f6-knight is deprived of its natural square d7 while on e8 it would be rather clumsy. Attempts of reviving it by f6 or f5 would only aggravate Black's situation. My advice is to hinder White's attack with ...h6. Then the blockade on the dark squares could be reinforced by ...♗h7 and even g5 or e5. The play is very sharp and interesting:

7...d6 8.0-0 ♕d7 9.♗b3 b5
10.a3 ♘f6 11.♗h1

Alternatives are 11.♗e3 ♘e5 or 11.g4 h5!? 12.g5 ♘g4.

11...♗e7 12.f4



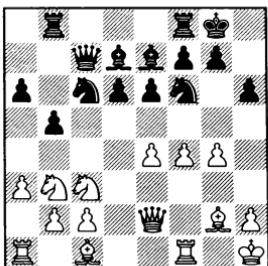
In short, here is the general scenario against White's knight retreats:

We answer 9...b5, then develop our kingside and put our rook on b8

Part 5

or c8 before castling. If White plays $\mathbb{A}e3$, we attack it with ... $\mathbb{A}e5-c4$. Else, we play ...h6 and only then can we castle, having in mind to meet g4 by ... $\mathbb{A}h7$. The break ...d5 may work in some variations, but if White's bishop is on e3, refrain from it! See **game31** Ponomariov-Dubov and **game 30** Guseinov-Vasovski.

A possible continuation is 12... $\mathbb{B}b8$ 13. $\mathbb{W}e2$ 0-0 14.g4 h6



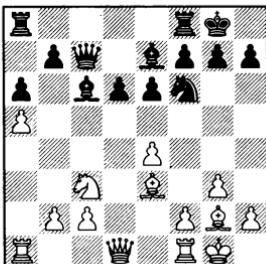
Now 15. $\mathbb{A}e3$ $\mathbb{A}h7$ will restrain White's attack while 15.h4 d5 16.g5 (16.e5 $\mathbb{A}e8$) 16... $\mathbb{A}xe4$! (do not open up the h-file!) 17. $\mathbb{A}xe4$ dxе4 18. $\mathbb{A}xe4$ f5 19. $\mathbb{A}g2$ $\mathbb{A}f7$! 20. $\mathbb{A}e3$ $\mathbb{B}h8$ gives good counterplay.

This should be enough to feel confident against 6.g3. Should the opponent surprise you with other plans like b3, or $\mathbb{A}ce2$ etc., just remember that you are playing the Sicilian! Typical counterplay on the queenside by ...b5, ... $\mathbb{B}c8$ even before castling should be at least a playable option.

Yet, the picture would be incomplete without mentioning the very dry positional line A62 where the

draw looks the most probable result:

7... $\mathbb{d}6$ 8.0-0 $\mathbb{A}d7$ 9. $\mathbb{A}xc6$ $\mathbb{A}xc6$
10.a4 $\mathbb{A}f6$ 11.a5 $\mathbb{A}e7$ 12. $\mathbb{A}e3$ 0-0

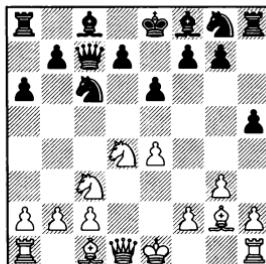


Black has not serious problems if he plays patiently for equalisation.

13. $\mathbb{A}b6$ (13. $\mathbb{B}e1$ $\mathbb{A}d7$ 14. $\mathbb{A}a4$ $\mathbb{A}ae8$! 15. $\mathbb{A}b6$ f5 provides counterplay.) 13... $\mathbb{W}b8$ 14. $\mathbb{B}e1$ $\mathbb{A}d7$ 15. $\mathbb{A}d4$ $\mathbb{A}f6$ =.

If you want to force your opponent to think on his own from the very beginning, I recommend you to pay attention to the following daring variation:

B. 7...h5!?



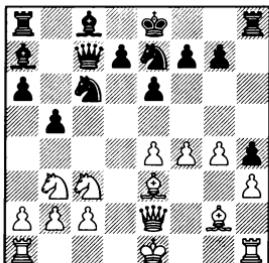
The early pawn raid faces White with concrete problems and seizes

The Fianchetto

the psychological initiative. If White hoped for a solid position where he could play on the queenside without any risk, he would be drastically thrown out of his zone of comfort. To be sure, an early counter-attack with Black is double-edged, but current practice is encouraging. This variation is still at an experimental stage and it offers a vast ground for innovations.

Main continuations are:

- a) 8.h3 h4 9.g4 $\mathbb{Q}c5!$ 10. $\mathbb{Q}b3$ $\mathbb{Q}a7$
11. $\mathbb{Q}e2$ $\mathbb{Q}ge7$ 12.f4 b5 13. $\mathbb{Q}e3$



13...g5!?

Black gains control over the dark squares.

- b) 8.0-0 h4 9. $\mathbb{Q}e1$ hxg3 10.hxg3 d6 11. $\mathbb{Q}xc6$ bxc6

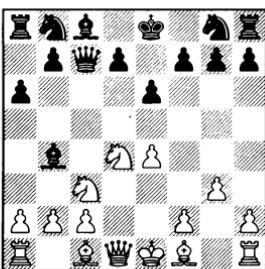


We have seen a similar position (line A61), but Black had a bish-

op on c6. Here, the bishop can go to b7 while the king will feel quite safe on the queenside. The play is double-edged.

The Kan is much easier to play because Black solves the queenside development problem with:

- 1.e4 c5 2. $\mathbb{Q}f3$ e6 3.d4 cxd4
4. $\mathbb{Q}xd4$ a6 5. $\mathbb{Q}c3$ $\mathbb{Q}c7$ 6.g3 $\mathbb{Q}b4!$



A plus for the Kan:
an easy queenside development.

A glance in the database reveals that White is quite far below the 50% which is certainly unusual for a modern opening. Of course, Black can confidently transpose to the Taimanov by 6... $\mathbb{Q}c6$, but objectively, the bishop sortie is the better choice. We can then put the queen's knight on d7 and push ...e5. This set-up is known from the Najdorf, but here our dark-squared bishop is not on e7 which is undoubtedly in our favour. For instance:

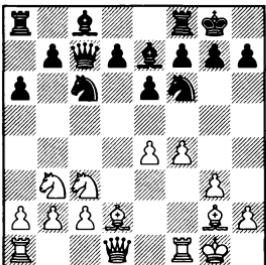
7. $\mathbb{Q}de2$

7. $\mathbb{Q}d2$ $\mathbb{Q}f6$ 8. $\mathbb{Q}g2$ $\mathbb{Q}c6$ 9. $\mathbb{Q}b3$ gives Black a pleasant choice between 9...0-0!? 10.0-0 d6 11.f4 $\mathbb{Q}xc3$

Part 5

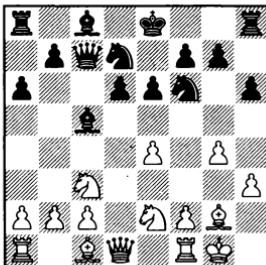
12.♗xc3 e5 and 9...♝e7 10.0-0 0-0!

11.f4 (11.g4 d5 12.exd5 exd5)



11...d5! 12.exd5 ♘b4 with an initiative.

7...♞f6 8.♗g2 d6 9.0-0 ♘bd7
10.h3 ♜c5! 11.g4 h6



This is the point of 9...♘bd7. By not castling, Black forestalls the enemy attack on the kingside. Thus he gains time to complete his queenside development and prepare a break in the centre or a counter-attack against the enemy king.

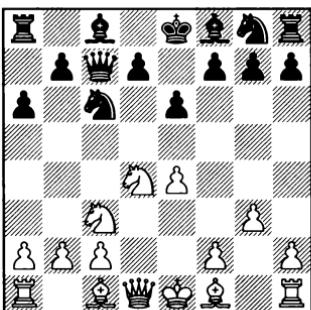
Weapon of choice

The Kan should be the weapon of choice against fianchetto fans. Without a knight on c6, Black is more flexible. By attacking the c3-knight with 6...♝b4, he practically forces the enemy to retreat his active knight from d4. As a result, White is deprived of the unpleasant option of ♘d4xc6 which is a cause of constant concern in the Taimanov.

Part 5. The Fianchetto

Taimanov – Step by Step

1.e4 c5 2.♘f3 e6 3.d4 cxd4
4.♘xd4 ♘c6 5.♘c3 ♜c7 6.g3 a6



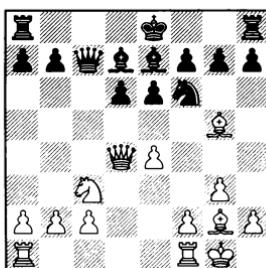
This move is not obligatory, but it is more flexible than the alternative 6...d6 which allows 7.♘db5 ♘b8 8.a4. This position is practically unexplored. The game Romero Holmes-Wolff, Palma de Mallorca 1989, continued 8...♗e7 9.♗g2 ♗f6 10.0-0 0-0 11.♗e2 ♞d8?! 12.♗e3 a6 13.♘a3 d5? 14.♗b6 ♞d6 15.a5+.

Black could improve with 11...
 a6 12. $\mathbb{Q}a3$ b6 13. $\mathbb{K}e3$ $\mathbb{W}c7$, when
 14.g4!? ∞ starts the typical attack
 on the kingside, but in an original
 set-up with a knight on a3. (White
 should not delay this advance since
 Black would be ready with ...d5!
 -14.f4 $\mathbb{B}b8$ 15. $\mathbb{Q}ad1$ $\mathbb{E}e8$ 16.g4 d5!

or 14.f4 $\mathbb{B}b8$ 15.g4 d5 16.exd5 $\mathbb{Q}xd5$ 17. $\mathbb{Q}xd5$ exd5 18. $\mathbb{Q}xd5$ $\mathbb{E}e8\mathbb{Q}$).

There is one more question that still has not a definitive answer: what does Black benefit from delaying ...a6. Let's check 7.♕g2 ♜xd4 8.♗xd4 ♕d7 9.0-0 ♛f6 10.♕g5 ♜e7

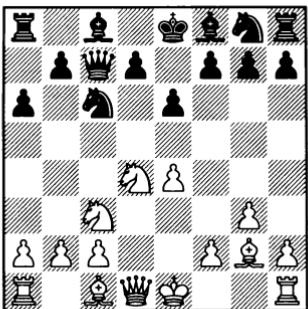
The trade of knights gave White some spatial advantage in the centre. The main battlefield will be the left wing so the queen's rook should stay on a1 while the other one goes to d1:



11. $\mathbb{E}fd1!$? a6 12. $\mathbb{E}f6$ gf6 13. $\mathbb{W}d2$ h5 14. h4 $\mathbb{E}c8$ 15. $\mathbb{E}ac1\infty$, Kaidanov-J. Horvath, Calcutta 2000. Black has active rooks, but his pawn chain is damaged. The h5-pawn would be a tangible weakness in an endgame. In my opinion, White's game is somewhat easier.

Part 5

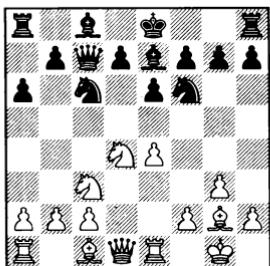
7.♗g2



Black has at least four different set-ups against the fianchetto. In line A. 7...d6, I offer you a well tested and flexible approach, based on the Scheveningen pawn structure. Line B. 7...h5!? introduces a rare attack which is nearly unexplored. It will face your opponent with a difficult choice. Statistics confirm that White's defence is not trivial. He scores only 41% although the sample of only 61 games is too small to be representative.

I rejected 7...♗f6 8.0-0 ♜xd4 9.♗xd4 ♜c5 10.♗f4 d6, because this is one of the most drawish variation in the opening theory! Black practically has not won a single game at a higher level. A typical position arises after 11.♗d2 h6 12.♗ad1 e5 13.♗e3 ♜e6 14.♗xc5 dxc5. White will then play ♜d5 (or f4 first), recapture on d5 by the e-pawn, and occasionally will convert his tiny advantage.

7...♗f6 8.0-0 ♜e7 is a playable, but passive alternative. Black's problem is that after 9.♗e1!,



he cannot complete development without considerable concessions in space since 9...d6 runs into 10.♗xc6 bxc6 11.e5! dxе5 12.♗xe5. This position was topical 40 years ago. Exhaustive testing proved that Black is unable to compensate for the split queenside pawns.

A. 7...d6 8.0-0

8.♗xc6 bxc6 9.0-0 ♜b8 10.♗a4 ♜e7 11.c4 c5 12.♗e2 ♜f6 13.♗e3 ♜d7 (13...♗e7?! 14.f4 ♜b4 15.♗c3 ♜d4) 14.♗c3 ♜e7 15.f4 ♜d4 16.♗xd4 cxd4 17.♗d1 0-0 18.b3 a5=, Smirin-Janigava, Vilnius 1988.

8...♗d7

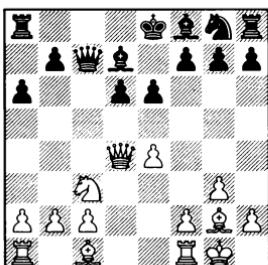
The only downside of this move is that the bishop occupies a square which might be useful to the king's knight. We'll discuss that issue later – see the line 8...♗d7 9.♗de2 ♜f6 10.h3 ♜e7 11.g4. However, the alternatives have major drawbacks.

a) 8...♗f6 9.♗e1 ♜d7 10.♗xc6, when the options are: 10...♗xc6 11.♗d5 ♜xd5 12.exd5 e5 13.f4 ♜e7 14.♗e2±; 10...bxc6 11.♗a4±, fol-

The Fianchetto

lowed by c4, and the bishop is misplaced on d7. Both evaluations are not final. They just reflect the current state of theory, but the play is quite tangled.

b) 8... $\mathbb{Q}xd4$. Black wants to exchange the d4-knight before it ran away! 9. $\mathbb{W}xd4$ $\mathbb{Q}d7$

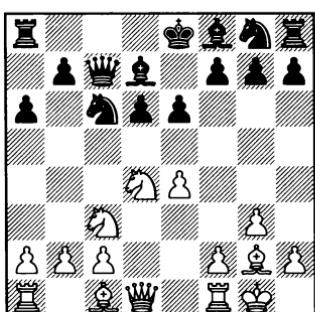


10. $\mathbb{E}d1$

10. $\mathbb{Q}f4$ leads to unclear consequences after 10... $\mathbb{Q}c6$ 11. $\mathbb{Q}d5$ $exd5$ 12. $exd5$ $\mathbb{Q}d7$ 13. $\mathbb{E}fe1$ $\mathbb{Q}e7$ 14. $\mathbb{E}e3$ f6 15. $\mathbb{E}c3$ $\mathbb{W}d8\infty$.

10... $\mathbb{Q}f6$ (perhaps Black could delay the knight move with 10... $\mathbb{Q}c6!?$) 11. $\mathbb{Q}g5$ $\mathbb{Q}e7$ 12. $\mathbb{Q}xf6\infty$.

The early exchange on d4 leads to a practically new branch of theory which is waiting to be explored. However, I think that White's play is natural and easy.

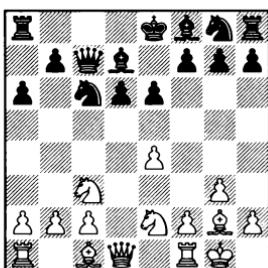


In the diagram position, White has tried nearly all possible moves and plans. I'll examine the most reasonable of them:

A1. 9. $\mathbb{Q}de2$; A2. 9. $\mathbb{Q}b3$; A3. 9. $\mathbb{Q}e3$; A4. 9. $\mathbb{Q}e1$; A5. 9.a4; A6. 9. $\mathbb{Q}xc6$

9. $\mathbb{Q}ce2$ is totally harmless in view of 9... $\mathbb{Q}f6$ 10.b3 (10.c4 $\mathbb{Q}xd4$ 11. $\mathbb{W}xd4$ $\mathbb{Q}e7$ and Black easily achieves ...b5 later) 10...b5 with good play.

A1. 9. $\mathbb{Q}de2$

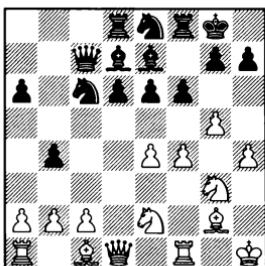


White saves his knight from exchange and transfers it to g3 after a preliminary h3, g4. Practical results are quite alarming for Black. Commonly the second players do not pay due attention to White's threats and quickly fall under attack, like in the following game:

Inkiov-Tsorbatzoglou, Chania 1994

1.e4 c5 2. $\mathbb{Q}f3$ e6 3.d4 $cxd4$ 4. $\mathbb{Q}xd4$ $\mathbb{Q}f6$ 5. $\mathbb{Q}c3$ $\mathbb{Q}c6$ 6.g3 d6 7. $\mathbb{Q}g2$ $\mathbb{Q}d7$ 8.0-0 $\mathbb{Q}e7$ 9. $\mathbb{Q}de2$ 0-0 10.h3 a6 11.g4 $\mathbb{W}c7$ 12. $\mathbb{Q}g3$ b5 13.g5 $\mathbb{Q}e8$ 14.f4 $\mathbb{Q}d8$ 15. $\mathbb{Q}h1$ b4 16. $\mathbb{Q}ce2$ f6 17.h4±

Part 5



17...fxg5 18.hxg5 ♖h8 19.f5 ♖e5
20.♘f4 d5 21.♗h5→.

In my opinion, the whole set-up with the knight residing on e8 is very passive and leaves the opponent a free hand on the kingside. The other typical approach is to meet g4 with h6 and g5. That is a double-edged plan, but Black's king in the centre is considerably more vulnerable than his White counterpart.

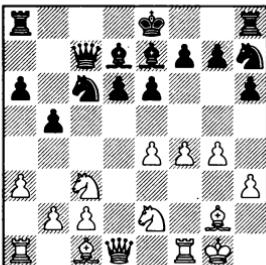
I think that Black should employ a defensive design which is frequently seen in the hedgehog system (the plan with f4, g4). He prevents g4-g5 with h6 and when White plays f4, the f6 knight goes to h7! Then Black could safely castle and expand on the opposite wing. I only hesitate about the early b7-b5. It is risky, but enterprising. You must be sure to push it before White played g4, in order to force the answer a3. Otherwise the c3-knight will replace its teammate on e2.

Let's substantiate these reflections with concrete variations:

9...b5!? 10.a3 ♘f6 11.h3 ♖e7
12.g4 h6 13.f4

13.♗g3 0-0 14.f4 ♘h7 leads to the same position.

13...♘h7?!



Black sets a flexible defence line on the kingside.

13...0-0 14.♗e3 ♕fd8 15.g5 hxg5
16.fxg5 ♘h7 17.h4∞ gives White the initiative in view of the threat of ...♘f4 followed by ...g6.

After the text, it is unclear how White could expand further. The only way is apparently h3-h4, but Black is able to hinder it. For instance:

14.♗e1 0-0 15.h4 leaves c2 unguarded after 15...b4. Following 16.♘d1, Black could take an edge with 16...bxa3 17.g5 (17.bxa3 g5!) 17...axb2 18.♗xb2 hxg5 19.fxg5 ♘e5.

The quiet 14.♗e3 0-0 15.♗g3 (15.♗e1 ♕d8 16.♘d1 ♕c8) 15...♕fd8 also looks appealing to Black who could combine his counterplay with the manoeuvre ♘h7-f8-g6.

A2. 9.♘b3!?

This has been the most topical line lately. White's concept is similar to line A1, but the knight on b3

The Fianchetto

is a bit distant from the kingside. On the other hand, White does not need h3 in order to push g4. White could also play a4-a5 to restrict queenside counterplay. So I propose to start with:

9...b5

I consider similar positions without the insertion of 9...b5 10.a3 in the annotations to **game 31** Ponomariov-Dubov, Tromso 2013.

10.a3

10.f4 b4 11.Qe2 Qf6 12.a3 e5 should be fine. The early ...b4 is not so good against a developing move as 10.Qe3, since White could open the c-file in his favour with c2-c3. However, Qe3 also has drawbacks. It provokes 10...Qe5?!, when 11.Qd2 Qf6 12.h3 Qc8 13.f4 Qg6 looks quite safe. 10...Qf6 11.f4 Qc8 is also possible and White will probably transpose to the main line with 12.a3 because 12.g4? could be put to the test with 12...h5! 13.h3 hxg4 14.hxg4 b4 15.Qa4 e5.

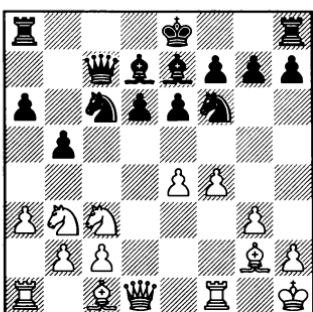
10...Qf6 11.Qh1

White does not seem to have more useful moves since 11.Qe3 will face again 11...Qe5. 11.g4 is committing as Black has not castled yet. The standard retort would be 11...h6 12.f4 Qe7 13.Qe2 Qb8, but 11...h5?! looks also very tempting: 12.g5 Qg4 13.Qh1 g6 14.f4 Qa7.

11.f4 Qe7 12.Qe3 Qc8 (I'm not sure about this move. In many

variations the rook stands better on b8.) might transpose to the main line after 13.Qh1. An independent variation is 13.Qe2 b4 14.axb4 Qxb4, when 15.h3 0-0 16.g4? stumbled into 16...d5 in Beshukov-Tregubov, Krasnodar 1998. As a rule, we should always contemplate ...d5 against g4, even when it is a real pawn sacrifice.

11...Qe7 12.f4



12...Rb8

From this square, the rook supports the b-pawn. It also prevents possible Qb6 if White set the battery Qe3-Qf2, and indirectly hits the b3-knight (with the threat of ...b4, ...Qxb4, ...Qxc2).

12...Qc8 is a good alternative. See **game 31** Ponomariov-Dubov.

Another legitimate option is immediate castling. After 12...0-0 13.g4 h6 14.h4 (14.Qe3 Qh7!) 14...d5 15.g5 (15.e5 Qe8 16.Qe3 Qb8 17.Qf3 f6 18.exf6 Qxf6, with counterplay) 15...hxg5 16.hxg5 Qxe4 17.Qxe4 dx4 18.Qh5 is not dangerous as White is behind in development:

Part 5

18...g6 19. $\mathbb{W}h4$ f6 20. $\mathbb{B}f2$ fxg5 21. $\mathbb{W}h6$ $\mathbb{Q}f6$ 22. $\mathbb{B}h2$ $\mathbb{Q}c8$ 23. $\mathbb{Q}xe4$ $\mathbb{W}g7$ 24. $\mathbb{Q}xf6+$ $\mathbb{B}xf6=.$

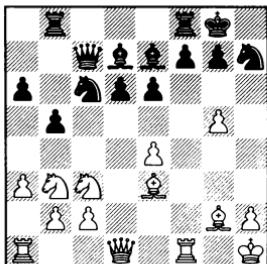
13. $\mathbb{W}e2$

After 13. $\mathbb{Q}e3$, the most practical approach is to forestall possible g4 and h4 with 13...h6!. Then we can already castle since we would have ... $\mathbb{Q}h7$ to g4.

13...0-0 14.g4 h6 is more risky:

a) 15.h4 $\mathbb{Q}h7!$ (15...d5? fails to 16.g5! hxg5 17.hxg5 $\mathbb{Q}xe4$ 18. $\mathbb{Q}xe4$ dxе4 19. $\mathbb{W}h5$, with attack) 16.g5 hxg5 17.hxg5 g6∞.

b) 15.g5 hxg5 16.fxg5 $\mathbb{Q}h7$



is considered in **game 30** Guseinov-Vasovski, Struga 2009. In this pawn structure, we push ...g6, possibly ... $\mathbb{Q}h8$, and seek counterplay with ...gxh5. It is important to leave our kingside pieces as they are – eyeing g5. We can even win the g5-pawn at some point with ... $\mathbb{W}d8$. It would be a mistake to redeploy them in a passive defensive stand.

13...0-0

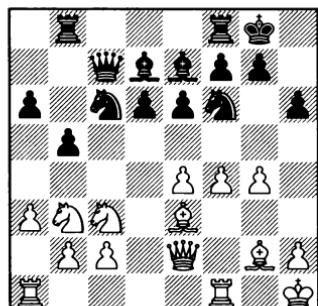
I do not see what we could gain

by delaying castling any longer as White has plenty of useful moves. For example, 13... $\mathbb{Q}c8$ 14.g4 h6 15. $\mathbb{Q}e3$ $\mathbb{Q}d7$ 16. $\mathbb{W}f2$ $\mathbb{Q}b6$ 17. $\mathbb{Q}d4$ $\mathbb{Q}xd4$ 18. $\mathbb{Q}xd4$ 0-0 19. $\mathbb{W}g3$ with active pieces.

Of course, in the above line Black can refrain from ...h6, allowing the thematic plan g5, $\mathbb{W}h5$. However, I like too much to play it on the white side so I cannot recommend it for Black.

14.g4 h6 15. $\mathbb{Q}e3$

15.h4 can be attacked with 15...d5?! 16.g5 (16.e5 $\mathbb{Q}e8$), when it is extremely important to avoid opening the h-file by 16...hxg5?! 17.hxg5, because White's game is a little better after 17... $\mathbb{Q}xe4$ 18. $\mathbb{Q}xe4$ dxе4 19. $\mathbb{Q}xe4$ f5 20. $\mathbb{Q}g2$ g6 21. $\mathbb{Q}f3$!, e.g. 21... $\mathbb{Q}f7$ 22. $\mathbb{Q}h3$ $\mathbb{Q}h7$ 23. $\mathbb{Q}xh7$ $\mathbb{Q}xh7$ 24. $\mathbb{Q}d2$ $\mathbb{Q}h8$ 25. $\mathbb{Q}g1$ $\mathbb{Q}g8$ 26. $\mathbb{Q}e1$ e5 27.fxe5 $\mathbb{Q}e6$ 28. $\mathbb{W}f2$. Instead, Black should continue 16... $\mathbb{Q}xe4$! 17. $\mathbb{Q}xe4$ (17. $\mathbb{Q}xe4$ dxе4 18.gxh6 f5 19. $\mathbb{Q}g1$ $\mathbb{Q}f6$ 20. $\mathbb{W}g2$ g6) 17...dxе4 18. $\mathbb{Q}xe4$ f5 19. $\mathbb{Q}g2$ $\mathbb{Q}f7$! 20. $\mathbb{Q}e3$ $\mathbb{Q}h8$, with counterplay.



Amazingly, I have not any prac-

The Fianchetto

tical example with this particular position in my database. Black has two radically different approaches here. The first one is to carry on ...d5 and play in the centre:

15...b4 16.axb4 ♜xb4 17.♘d4 d5 18.e5 (18.g5 hxg5 19.fxg5 ♜xe4 20.♘xe4 dxe4 21.♘xe4 g6) 18... ♜h7 19.♗f2 f6. This may be not the most exact move, but it gives us immediate counterplay. 20.exf6 ♜xf6 21.h3 e5 22.fxe5 ♜e4 23.♗e1 ♜xf1+ 24.♘xf1 ♜xe5 25.♘xe4 dxe4 26.♗g1 ♜d6 27.♗d1 ♜c7 28.♗g2 ♜d5 29.♗xe4 ♜xe4 30.♗xe4 ♜f6=.

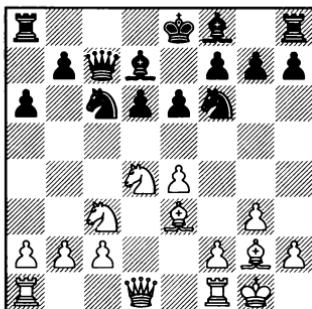
The other alternative is more interesting: 15...♝h7!?. I analyse the same position (only the rook is not on b8, but on c8) in the comments to **game 31** Ponomariov-Dubov. In our case, the game may continue 16.♗f2 a5 17.h4 b4 (17...g5!?) 18.hxg5 hxg5 19.e5 d5 20.♘c5 ♜c8 21.♘d3∞) 18.axb4 axb4 19.♘e2 e5 20.g5 exf4 (After 20...hxg5 21.fxg5 g6, we reach the same pawn structure as in **game 30** Guseinov-Vassovski.) 21.♘xf4 hxg5 22.♘d5 ♜d8 23.hxg5 ♜e6 with a complex, balanced game.

A3. 9.♝e3

A normal developing move which keeps all the options open. However, it is too tentative for a sharp opening as the Open Sicilian. Black gets time for development. Another downside of the text is seen in the variation 9...♝f6 10.f4

♝e7 11.♘b3 b5 12.g4 h5 13.g5, when 13...♝g4 is with tempo.

9...♝f6



10.♗e2

10.f4 ♜e7 11.♘b3 b5 and 10.♘b3 are considered in line A2.

10.♘xc6 transposes to line A62.

10...♜e7 11.f4

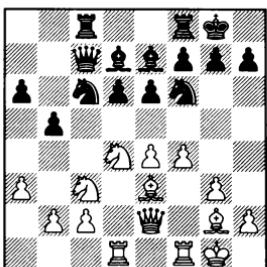
From the other options, only 11.a4 0-0 12.♖ad1 is of independent significance. Black equalises with typical Sicilian methods: 12...♞xd4 13.♞xd4 e5 14.♞e3 b5 15.axb5 axb5 16.♗g5 ♜fc8 17.♗d3 ♜e6 18.♗xb5 ♜xc2 19.♗d6 ♜xd3 20.♗xd3 ♜cb8=.

11...♜c8!

If you read line A2 carefully, you should have noted that we prefer to develop the queenside before castling. Do not forget that White can always retreat the knight. For instance, 12.♘b3 b5 13.a3, when simplest is 13...h6 14.♗h1 0-0 15.g4 ♜h7.

12.♖ad1 b5 13.a3 0-0

Part 5



A devoted Sicilian player could only dream about such position. Black is all set up for expanding on the queenside. 14.f5 $\mathbb{Q}xd4$ 15. $\mathbb{Q}xd4$ e5 16. $\mathbb{Q}e3$ a5 17. $\mathbb{Q}g5$ $\mathbb{Q}c6$ would be roughly equal. White can play $\mathbb{Q}b3$ or allow ... $\mathbb{Q}xd4$, for example:

**14. $\mathbb{Q}h1$ $\mathbb{Q}xd4$ 15. $\mathbb{Q}xd4$ e5
16. $\mathbb{Q}e3$ $\mathbb{Q}e6$**

The chances are even. Medina-Tal, Palma de Mallorca 1966, went 17. $\mathbb{Q}fe1$ $\mathbb{Q}c4$ 18. $\mathbb{Q}d2$ a5.

A4. 9. $\mathbb{Q}e1$

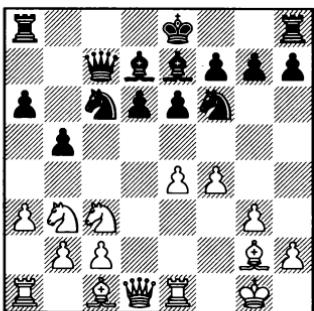
The play usually transposes to other lines. I examine here some specific variations.

9... $\mathbb{Q}e7$ 10. $\mathbb{Q}b3$ b5!?

I recommended the same active approach against the 9. $\mathbb{Q}b3$ -line. The current position hides a slight nuance – instead of a bishop on e3 White has the rook on e1. The latter supports the threat of e5, but also makes Black's counterplay with ...h5 more efficient because in that case the rook is needed on f1.

Most of the games feature 10... $\mathbb{Q}f6$, when 11.a4 follows the idea of the previous retreat. White wants to bind the left wing by a5. If now Black answers 11...b6 12.f4 0-0 13.g4 (13. $\mathbb{Q}h1$ enables another set-up: 13... $\mathbb{Q}fd8$ 14.g4 $\mathbb{Q}e8$ 15.g5 $\mathbb{Q}d7$) 13... $\mathbb{Q}c8$ 14.g5 $\mathbb{Q}d7$, we'll have a typical Schenningen position. However, a4-a5 is not so dreadful: 11...0-0 12.a5 $\mathbb{Q}e5$ 13.h3 $\mathbb{Q}ac8$ 14.g4 h6 with excellent play. White is unable to break through the dark-square blockade on the kingside.

11.a3 (11.f4 fails to 11...b4 12. $\mathbb{Q}e2$ $\mathbb{Q}f6$) **11... $\mathbb{Q}f6$ 12.f4**



White's strategy is a failure. Black can choose between 12... $\mathbb{Q}d8$ and the more enterprising, but risky 12... $\mathbb{Q}c8$. In both lines 13.e5 does not work. 13.g4 is not much better due to 13...h5 14.g5 (14.h3 $\mathbb{Q}xg4$ 15. $\mathbb{Q}xg4$ g5!?) 16.fg5 $\mathbb{Q}h7$. This variation would have been bad against the $\mathbb{Q}e3$ - $\mathbb{Q}f1$ setup!) 14... $\mathbb{Q}g4$.

The big difference between the two rook moves is seen in the variation 13. $\mathbb{Q}e3$. White renews the threat of g4. With the rook on d8,

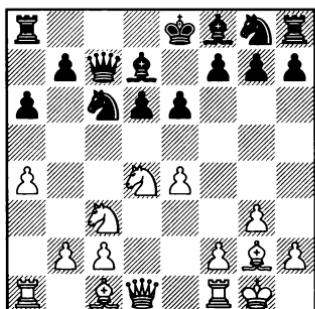
The Fianchetto

Black could castle 13...0-0 since 14.g4 is met by 14... $\mathbb{Q}c8$ 15.g5 $\mathbb{Q}d7$.

12... $\mathbb{E}c8$ 13. $\mathbb{Q}e3$ practically forces Black to adopt the defence with 13...h6 14.g4 $\mathbb{Q}h7$ 15. $\mathbb{W}d2$ (15. $\mathbb{Q}f2$ $\mathbb{Q}f8$) 15...g5 ∞ with very sharp play.

In **game 27** Hoogendoorn-Lautier, Algarve 1999 Black realised a dubious mix of both plans.

A5. 9.a4



9... $\mathbb{Q}f6$

I have noted before that the exchange 9... $\mathbb{Q}xd4$ 10. $\mathbb{W}xd4$ $\mathbb{Q}f6$ 11. $\mathbb{Q}e3$ (11. $\mathbb{Q}g5$ $\mathbb{Q}e7$ 12. $\mathbb{Q}fd1$ $\mathbb{E}c8=$) $\mathbb{Q}e7$ 12.a5 leaves Black without much counterplay.

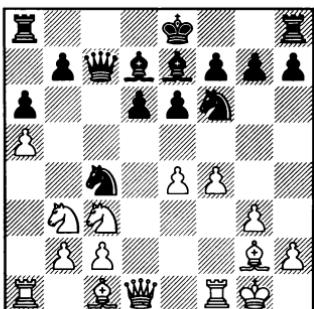
10. $\mathbb{Q}b3$

The bad news now is that 10... $b6$?! 11.f4 $\mathbb{Q}e7$ 12. $\mathbb{Q}e3$ followed by g4 leads to a known variation from the Scheveningen with a clear extra tempo for White who commonly spends time on $\mathbb{Q}e2-f3-g2$.

Black is in a similar tempo-down situation after 10... $\mathbb{Q}a5$?! 11. $\mathbb{Q}a5$ $\mathbb{W}a5$ 12. $\mathbb{Q}d2$ $\mathbb{W}c7$ 13.a5.

Now, here is the good news: Black can ignore the threat of a4-a5!

10... $\mathbb{Q}e7$ 11.a5 (11.f4 $\mathbb{Q}a5$)
11... $\mathbb{Q}e5!$ 12.f4 $\mathbb{Q}c4$



13. $\mathbb{W}e2$

13.g4 is risky when Black's king is still on e8. After 13...h6 14. $\mathbb{W}e2$ (14.h4 b5) 14... $\mathbb{E}c8$ 15. $\mathbb{Q}h1$ g5, Black could try to gain the initiative counting on the excellent position of his knight on c4 (15... $\mathbb{Q}h7$ is worth consideration too, e.g. 16. $\mathbb{W}f2$ 0-0 17.h4 g5 ∞). Serper-Epishin, Tashkent 1987, saw further 16.fxg5?!! (16.h3 gf4 17. $\mathbb{Q}f4$ $\mathbb{Q}h7$) 16...hxg5 17. $\mathbb{Q}xg5$ $\mathbb{Q}b2$ 18.e5 $\mathbb{W}c3$??

After the text move, Black should decide how to face White's pawn storm on the kingside. I think it is good to raise a pawn barrage on the dark squares:

13...e5!?

Remember that castling and retreating the knight to e8 is clearly in White's favour. More interesting is the old suggestion of GM Ceballos to sacrifice a pawn with ...d5. His

Part 5

analysis in *Informator* 33/312 examines (by transposition): 13...0-0 14.g4 d5! 15.e5 (15.exd5 $\mathbb{Q}fe8!$) 15... $\mathbb{Q}e4$ 16. $\mathbb{Q}xe4$ dxe4 17. $\mathbb{Q}xe4$ $\mathbb{Q}b5$ 18. $\mathbb{Q}d3$ $\mathbb{Q}ad8\text{--}$. However, no one has tested it for more than twenty years already.

14.f5 $\mathbb{Q}c8$

14...h6 is also possible, intending to meet 15.g4 by 15...b5 16.axb6 $\mathbb{Q}xb6$ 17. $\mathbb{Q}h1$ $\mathbb{Q}c8$.

15.g4 h6

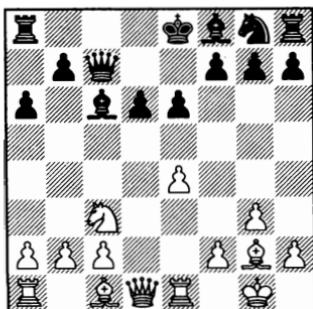
I like Black's position. In the game Trichkov-Peschardt, Lyngby 1991, White attempted to fulfil his main strategic goal with 16.h4 $\mathbb{Q}d8\text{--}$ 17.g5 hxg5 18.hxg5 $\mathbb{Q}h5$ 19. $\mathbb{Q}g4$ $\mathbb{Q}f4$ 20.g6, when 20... $\mathbb{Q}h4!\text{--}$ would have been sobering.

A6. 9. $\mathbb{Q}xc6$

White often resorts to this exchange after 9. $\mathbb{Q}e1$ $\mathbb{Q}e7$. Perhaps such a move order is more accurate, because it enables an interesting positional sacrifice against 10. $\mathbb{Q}xc6$ bxc6. White could follow up with 11.e5!? dxе5 12. $\mathbb{Q}e2$ or 11. $\mathbb{Q}a4$ $\mathbb{Q}b8$ (11... $\mathbb{Q}d8$ 12. $\mathbb{Q}e2$ $\mathbb{Q}c8$ 13.e5 d5 14.c4± Timman-Marjanovic, Zagreb 1985) 12.e5 dxе5 13.b3 $\mathbb{Q}f6$ 14. $\mathbb{Q}b2\pm$.

9... $\mathbb{Q}xc6$

9...bxc6 is probably underrated. It leads to complex play.



A61. 10. $\mathbb{Q}e1$; A62. 10.a4

We have reached the key position of the g3-system. Perhaps White players like it so much because one does not need any home analysis in order to reach and play it. White has some spatial advantage, better development and no weaknesses. This is one of the safest line in the Open Sicilian! Still, Black keeps refining his defence and currently has no considerable theoretical problems.

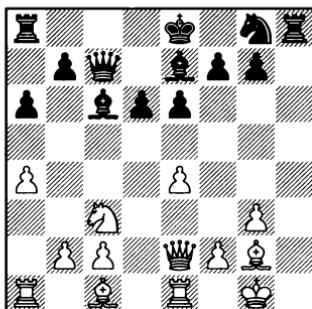
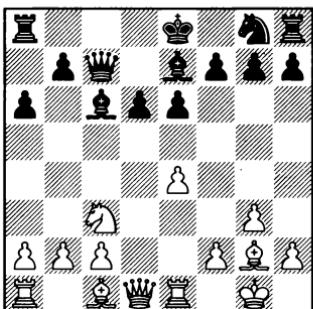
A61. 10. $\mathbb{Q}e1$

White does not renounce the a4-a5 plan. On the contrary, most of the games transpose to line A62 in the next moves. However, the text move requires from Black concrete knowledge of some sharp variations which I examine in the next lines.

10... $\mathbb{Q}e7!$

10... $\mathbb{Q}f6$ 11. $\mathbb{Q}d5$ $\mathbb{Q}xd5$ 12.exd5 e5 13.f4 $\mathbb{Q}e7$ 14. $\mathbb{Q}e2$ with some pull.

The Fianchetto



Now 11.a4 leads to A62.

11. $\mathbb{Q}f4$ is an overt proposition of a draw: 11... $\mathbb{Q}f6$ (you can keep some tension at your own risk by 11...e5 12. $\mathbb{Q}e3$ $\mathbb{Q}f6$ 13. $\mathbb{Q}g5$ $\mathbb{Q}g8$ 14. $\mathbb{W}d2$ h6 15. $\mathbb{Q}e7$ $\mathbb{Q}e7$) 12.e5 dxe5 13. $\mathbb{Q}xe5$ $\mathbb{W}b6$ 14. $\mathbb{Q}d4$ $\mathbb{W}c7$ 15. $\mathbb{Q}e5$. Then 15... $\mathbb{W}c8$ 16. $\mathbb{Q}xf6$ $\mathbb{Q}xf6$ 17. $\mathbb{Q}e4$ $\mathbb{Q}xe4=$ looks like a dead draw, Shevelev-Lerner, Israel 2003.

White's only hope to punish the opponent for his particular move order is:

11. $\mathbb{W}g4$ h5! 12. $\mathbb{W}e2$ h4

12...b5?! is a serious mistake. In this system, White's main plan is based on a queenside expansion. Black's pseudo-activity goes half way the opponent's intention. White will easily break-through by a4 with an edge.

13.a4 hxg3 14.hxg3

A fashionable position. I play it with both sides! White is going to push a5 and introduce a minor piece on b6. Then he will try to advance the c- and b-pawns.

Black's counterplay is not evident. In all events he will display activity on the opposite wing. Firstly he should decide where to evacuate the king. Currently ... $\mathbb{Q}f8$, intending ...g6 and ... $\mathbb{Q}g7$, looks preferable to castling.

The activation of Black's queen is another urgent matter. On the left wing it is constantly harassed by the enemy's bishop, rook and knight, so it has to find a way to the other half of the board. You can see in my game against Fressinet the manoeuvre ... $\mathbb{W}c7-d7-e8$ having in mind ... $\mathbb{Q}g8-h7$ after ...g6 and ... $\mathbb{Q}g7$. Another route for the queen is ... $\mathbb{W}c7-d7-g4$ (e6) after a preliminary ...e6-e5.

As a whole, Black has fair chances. See the annotated **games 28** and **29** in the "Complete Games" section in order to better understand the options of both sides. I'll confine myself here only to the problem of the best move order in the diagram position.

14... $\mathbb{Q}f8!$

14... $\mathbb{Q}f6$ is a normal, frequent-

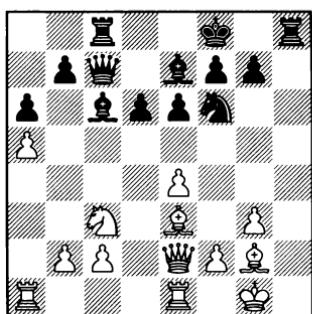
Part 5

ly seen move. Its downside is that White could answer 15.♗f4 e5 16.♗g5 ♖d7 17.♗xf6 ♗xf6. Black may hold this position, but his winning prospects are null, for instance after 18.♗e1 (18.b4! is better) 18...♗d8 19.a5.

15.a5 ♗c8

Black should evade the trap 15...g6 16.♗e3 ♗f6 17.♗b6 ♖c8 18.♗ad1 ♗g7 19.♗d5! which is based on the hanging state of the e7-bishop. Against Berescu, I answered 19...♗xd5 20.exd5 e5 21.c4 ♗d8, when 22.b4! ♗xb6 23.axb6 a5 24.c5 would have given White an initiative. 20...♗xd5 21.♗xd5 ♗f6 22.♗f3 ♖d7 23.♗d4 ♗xd4 24.♗xd4 does not solve the problems either. This example explains the reason behind the otherwise awkward continuation 15...♗e8!? 16.♗e3 ♗f6. I discuss it in **game 29** Timman-V. Milić, Biel 1995.

16.♗e3 ♗f6∞.



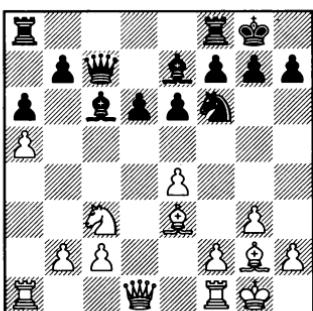
This rich double-edged position occurred in **game 28** Fressinet-

Delchev, Calvia ol 2004. See the "Complete Games" chapter.

A62. 10.a4 ♗f6 11.a5 ♗e7 12.♗e3 0-0

12...♗d7 gives White a tempo for c4 as in Leko-Zvjaginsev, Wijk aan Zee 1995, which went on:

13.♗a4 0-0 14.♗b6 ♗ae8 15.c4!
The text move keeps the hit on e4, so White must include ♗e1 before heading with the knight for b6.



13.♗b6

I have not seen any new ideas in this variation lately. White is very solid, but Black has no weaknesses. A popular alternative is:

13.♗e1 ♗d7 14.♗a4 ♗ae8!. This is Black's only active plan. It is enough for obtaining sufficient counterplay:

15.♗b6 f5 16.♗xd7

Alternatives are:

- 16.exf5 ♗xg2 17.♗xg2 ♗xf5;
- 16.♗d4, when 16...f4!? looks

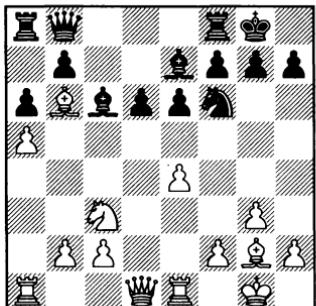
The Fianchetto

best. 16...e5 is not bad, but it offers White the d5-square – 17.♗e3 f4 18.♗d5 ♜xd5 19.♗xd5 ♜h8 20.♗d2 b5! (White develops a very strong initiative after 20...fxg3 21.hxg3 ♜xc2?! 22.♗ec1 ♜xb2 23.♗ab1 ♜d4 24.♗e3!±) 21.axb6 ♜xb6 22.♗b3 and White even has an initiative after 22...fxg3 23.♗xb6 gxh2+ 24.♗xh2 ♜xb6 25.♗g3 ♜c8 26.♗e3 ♜c4 27.♗c1 ♜c6=.

16...♜xd7 17.♗d3 (17.♗b6?! f4!↑) 17...fxe4 18.♗xe4 ♜xe4 19.♗xe4 d5=. Also equal is 19...♗f6 20.♗b4 d5 21.c3 ♜c8 22.♗ad1=.

13...♝b8 14.♗e1

14.♗e2 is similar: 14...♝d7 15.♝d4 ♜c7 16.♗fd1 ♜ac8 17.b3 ♜f6=, Sharafiev-Zakhartsov, Kazan 2010.



14...♝d7

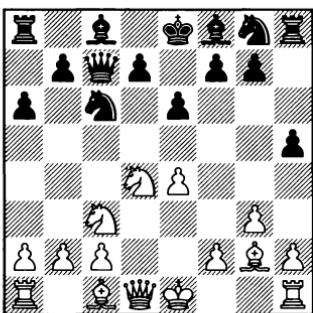
One way or another, Black will exchange a couple of minor pieces and hold the ensuing positions.

15.♝d4 ♜f6

Black's position is somewhat cramped so exchanges should relieve his defence.

**16.♝xf6 ♜xf6 17.♗a4 ♜d7
18.♗d4 ♜xa4=.**

B. 7...h5!?



Black aims to create tension on the kingside and hinder the enemy plan of castling short and then advancing the g-pawn. Lately, ...h5 has become very popular in the Najdorf, but in that opening it has only restrictive functions. In our case, this advance pursues much more active goals: we hope to open the h-file and use it for an attack. We may castle long or leave the king in the centre (f8 seems a safe place). Should White answer 8.h3 h4 9.g4, we'll base our play on the weakness of the squares f4 and g3.

Jeroen Bosch recommends this attack in his electronic book *SOS File 2: Sicilian Taimanov*, but with a totally wrong argumentation.

Main branches now are:

B1. 8.h4?!; B2. 8.h3; B3. 8.0-0

Part 5

8. $\mathbb{Q}f3$ and 8. $\mathbb{Q}b3$ lack any sense.

8. $\mathbb{Q}g5$ counts only on 8... $\mathbb{Q}e7?$

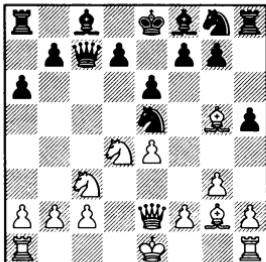
which is a positional mistake before White has castled short since he can exchange on e7 and follow up with $\mathbb{W}d2$, 0-0-0.

However, White's bishop on g5 will give us a valuable tempo for ...f6 at some point. Reasonable options are:

8... $\mathbb{Q}ge7$ intending 9. $\mathbb{W}d2$ $\mathbb{Q}xd4$
10. $\mathbb{W}xd4$ $\mathbb{Q}c6$;

8... f6 9. $\mathbb{Q}f4$ e5 10. $\mathbb{Q}c6$ dc6 11. $\mathbb{Q}e3$ $\mathbb{Q}g4$ 12. $\mathbb{Q}f3$ $\mathbb{Q}d8$ 13. $\mathbb{W}e2$ $\mathbb{Q}h6=$;

8... $\mathbb{Q}e5$ 9. $\mathbb{W}e2$



The most principled continuation now is 9... $\mathbb{Q}a3$ 10. $\mathbb{Q}d1$ $\mathbb{Q}b2$ 11. $\mathbb{Q}b2$ $\mathbb{W}c3$ 12. $\mathbb{W}d2$ $\mathbb{W}xb2$. Let the opponent prove his compensation for the pawn. 13.0-0 $\mathbb{Q}c4$ 14. $\mathbb{W}d3$ $\mathbb{Q}e5$ 15. $\mathbb{W}d1$ f6 16. $\mathbb{Q}e3$ (16. $\mathbb{Q}f4$ h4 17. $\mathbb{Q}f3$ $\mathbb{Q}f7\infty$) 16... h4. In the diagram position Black can also try 9... h4?.

B1. 8.h4?! $\mathbb{Q}f6$

We'll try to prove that the insertion of h4-h5 favours Black. Let's compare some of the main lines without these moves:

7... $\mathbb{Q}f6$ 8.0-0 $\mathbb{Q}c5$ 9. $\mathbb{Q}xc6$ $\mathbb{d}xc6$

10. $\mathbb{Q}a4$ $\mathbb{Q}a7$ 11. c4 and:

7... h5 8. h4 $\mathbb{Q}f6$ 9.0-0 $\mathbb{Q}c5$

10. $\mathbb{Q}xc6$ $\mathbb{d}xc6$ 11. $\mathbb{Q}a4$ $\mathbb{Q}a7$ 12. c4?

$\mathbb{W}xg3!$ – the g3-square is weak.

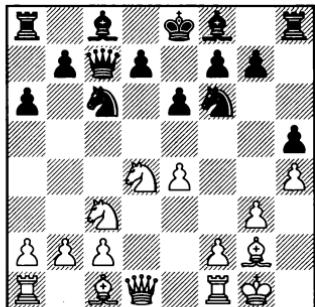
Or 7... $\mathbb{Q}c5$ 8. $\mathbb{Q}b3$ $\mathbb{Q}a7$ 9. $\mathbb{W}g4$ $\mathbb{Q}f8$

– White has not $\mathbb{W}g4$ at all. Another argument is that White's play is mostly based on f4, when the g4-square will become a gaping hole. Therefore, I advocate:

8... $\mathbb{Q}f6$

I do not like 8... $\mathbb{Q}c5$ 9. $\mathbb{Q}b3$ $\mathbb{Q}a7$ 10. $\mathbb{Q}f4$ $\mathbb{Q}e5$ in view of 11. $\mathbb{Q}xe5$ $\mathbb{W}xe5$ 12. f4 $\mathbb{W}c7$ 13. $\mathbb{W}e2$ d6 14.0-0-0± where d6 is very weak. We need to improve this idea.

9.0-0



9... $\mathbb{Q}c5$ 10. $\mathbb{Q}xc6$

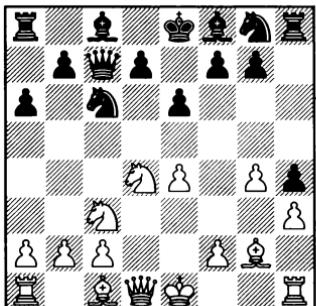
10. $\mathbb{Q}b3$ $\mathbb{Q}a7$ 11. $\mathbb{Q}f4$ $\mathbb{Q}e5$ is already fine for Black. 10. $\mathbb{Q}e3$ is also innocuous due to 10... $\mathbb{Q}e5$. 10. $\mathbb{Q}f4?$ presents another example of the dividends Black can reap from the insertion of h4-h5: 10... e5 11. $\mathbb{Q}b3$ $\mathbb{W}xf4$ 12. $\mathbb{Q}xc5$ $\mathbb{W}xg3$.

The Fianchetto

10...dxc6 11.♗d3 ♗g4 12.♘a4
♗a7 13.c4 b5

I prefer Black here.

B2. 8.h3 h4 9.g4

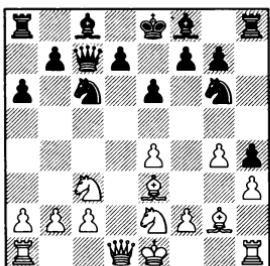


9...♗c5!

White's kingside dark squares are weakened. Jeroen Bosch considers only:

9...♘ge7?!. It looks consistent to put a knight to g6, but this development is a bit slow, and, moreover, passive. White castles long and takes the initiative:

10.♘de2! ♗g6 11.♗e3!



Bosch completely missed this idea. 11.f4 b5 (11...♗c5 12.e5 d5

13.exd6 ♗xd6 14.♘e4) 12.♗e3 ♗a5 13.b3 ♗b7 14.♗d2 ♗c8 15.0-0-0 ♗c6! is double-edged.

I have analysed in the diagram position:

a) 11...♗a5 12.b3 b5 13.♗d2 ♗b7 (13...♗a3 14.0-0 0-0 15.♗ad1) 14.a4! (14.0-0-0 ♗c8 15.f4 ♗c6!) 14...b4 15.♘a2 ♗c6 16.0-0-0 ♗e7 17.f4. I do not see clear counterplay for Black in this position.

b) 11...♗ce5 12.b3 ♗a3 13.f4 ♗c6 is rather extravagant. Black is too generously presenting tempi. White can calmly develop, or open the centre with 14.e5 d5 15.exd6 ♗xd6 16.♘e4 ♗e7 17.0-0, intending f4-f5.

As a whole, White achieves in these lines comfortable and harmonious development. His bishop stays excellently on e3.

9...♗c5 addresses exactly this issue since 10.♗e3 ♗b6 would be positionally fine for Black after 11.♘a4 ♗a5+ 12.c3 ♗xd4 13.♗xd4 ♗xd4 14.♗xd4 e5 or 11.♘ce2 ♗xd4 (11...♗xb2 12.♗xe6 ♗b4+ 13.c3 dx6 14.cxb4 ♗xb4+ 15.♗d2∞) 12.♗xd4 ♗xd4 13.♗xd4 ♗xd4 14.♗xd4 ♗e7 15.0-0-0 ♗g6 16.♘e2 ♗e7 17.f4 d6. In both lines White remains with a "bad" light-squared bishop and kingside pawns fixed on the same colour.

10.♘b3

If White's knight has to retreat, it is better to do it with tempo. 10.♘de2 b5 11.0-0 ♗b7 12.♗f4 d6

Part 5

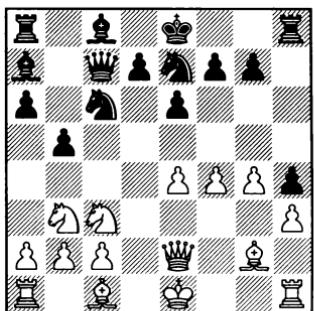
13.♗d2 ♗ge7 14.♗ad1 ♗e5 is even slightly better for Black.

10...♔a7 11.♗e2 ♗ge7 12.f4

12.♗e3 ♗g6 13.♗xa7 ♘xa7 would make a horrible hole on f4.

12...b5

12...♗d4 13.♗xd4 ♗xd4 14.♗d2 d6 15.0-0-0 ♗d7 is also possible, but I prefer to complete development.



13.♗e3

13.e5 ♗b7 14.♗e4 0-0 leads to a curious position where White is overextended and should be worried about possible ...f6. 15.♗d6 does not help in view of 15...♗d4 and 15.c3 b4 apparently passes Black the initiative.

13...g5!?

This is by no means the only move, but I chose it since it best illustrates Black's strategic goal in the 7...h5 variation. Now the e5-square is under his full control. The weak-

ness of g3 is also essential. The play may continue 14.♗f1 ♗xe3 15.♗xe3 gxf4 16.♗xf4 ♗g6 17.♗f2 ♗g3, or 14.♗xa7 ♘xa7 15.fxg5 ♗g3+ 16.♗f2 ♗xf2+ 17.♗xf2 ♗g8=.

B3. 8.0-0 h4 9.♗e1

9.♗xc6 dxc6 (9...bxc6 10.♗a4 d6 is also an option) 10.♗e3 hxg3 11.hxg3 ♗f6 12.♗a4 ♗d7 13.c4 b5 14.♗c3 bxc4 gives Black counterplay on the queenside.

9...hxg3 10.hxg3 d6

I would like to lead out the bishop, but 10...♗c5? (Bosch's recommendation!) 11.♗xc6! bxc6 (11...dxc6 12.e5) 12.e5! is horrible for Black. He is positionally lost here.

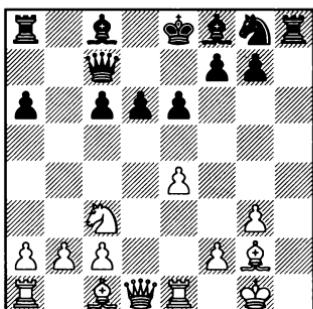
11.♗xc6!

If White misses the opportunity to trade knights, he might not have a second chance. For instance, after 11.♗g5 (as Radulski played against Ivanisevic), Black has 11...♗e5 or even 11...♗e7 12.♗xe7 ♗cxe7!?

The same applies to 11.a4 ♗e5, although 11...♗f6 is also possible. Then the thematic 12.♗xc6 bxc6 13.e5 dxe5 14.♗xe5 can be attacked by 14...♗xe5! 15.♗xc6+ ♗d7 16.♗xa8 ♗g4 17.♗f4 ♗h5 where the open h-file is a nice asset – 18.♗f3 is only move as 18.♗d2 ♗c5 19.♗d1 e5 20.♗e3 ♗h7!! is rather unpleasant.

11...bxc6

The Fianchetto



12.e5

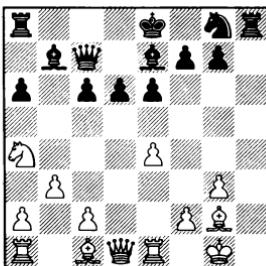
It is very interesting to compare this position with the one which arises after 7... $\mathbb{Q}f6$ 8.0-0 $\mathbb{Q}e7$ 9. $\mathbb{Q}e1$ d6 10. $\mathbb{Q}xc6$ bxc6 11.e5!±. If we counted the developed pieces, it might struck us that Black appears to be clear two tempi down! In fact, the absence of the knight from f6 takes the sting of White's pawn thrust since Black is not obliged to capture. If we delve deeper, we'll notice that the raid of the h-pawn was not just a waste of time. It developed a heavy piece – which is now pointed at the enemy king! In most variations Black will castle long or leave his king on f8. Only future will tell how substantial Black's counterplay is.

Let's investigate what happens if White refrains from 12.e5:

a) 12. $\mathbb{Q}a4$ $\mathbb{Q}b7$ 13.b3 (13.c4 c5 14.e5? does not work against the open h-file!) 13... $\mathbb{Q}e7$?

Perhaps this is the most accurate move order because after 13... $\mathbb{Q}f6$ White may contemplate 14. $\mathbb{Q}g5$. Note that the knight's development

to f6 has no alternative. The typical manoeuvre ... $\mathbb{Q}g8-e7-c6$ leads to a passive position: 13... $\mathbb{Q}e7$ 14. $\mathbb{Q}b2$ c5 15. $\mathbb{W}d2$ $\mathbb{Q}c6$ 16. $\mathbb{Q}ad1$ 0-0-0 (16...f6 17. $\mathbb{Q}c3$ a5 18. $\mathbb{Q}b2$, heading for c4) 17.c4±. White then carries out b4.



14.c4 c5 15. $\mathbb{Q}b2$ (if White delays this move, hoping to meet ... $\mathbb{Q}f6$ by $\mathbb{Q}g5$, then we'll occupy the main diagonal with 15. $\mathbb{W}e2$ $\mathbb{Q}c6$ 16. $\mathbb{Q}c3$ $\mathbb{Q}f6$ =, e.g. 17. $\mathbb{Q}b2$ $\mathbb{Q}f8$ 18. $\mathbb{Q}d1$ $\mathbb{Q}xb2$ 19. $\mathbb{Q}xb2$ e5) 15... $\mathbb{Q}f6$ 16. $\mathbb{W}e2$ $\mathbb{Q}c6$!? 17. $\mathbb{Q}c3$ $\mathbb{Q}f8$.

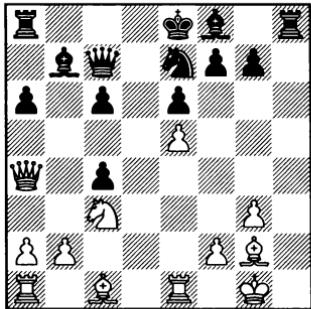
b) Another version of the same set-up was tested in the blitz game Malakhov-Grischuk, Moscow 2013: 12. $\mathbb{Q}e3$ $\mathbb{Q}f6$ [Black may also cover the b6-square with 12... $\mathbb{Q}b7$ 13. $\mathbb{Q}a4$ c5 (13... $\mathbb{Q}e7$? 14. $\mathbb{Q}b6$ $\mathbb{W}b8$ 15.e5), but then White can refrain from c4 and swing the a4-knight to that square, starting with 14.b3.] 13. $\mathbb{Q}a4$ $\mathbb{W}b8$ 14.c4 c5. It might seem that White has won a tempo (by having provoked ... $\mathbb{W}b8$), but the bishop is misplaced on e3 and he will probably have to redeploy it. 15.b3 $\mathbb{Q}e7$ 16. $\mathbb{W}e2$ $\mathbb{Q}b7$ 17. $\mathbb{Q}c3$ $\mathbb{Q}d7$ 18. $\mathbb{Q}ad1$ $\mathbb{Q}d8$ (18... $\mathbb{Q}f8$) 19. $\mathbb{Q}c1$ $\mathbb{Q}e5$ (19... $\mathbb{Q}f6$) 20. $\mathbb{Q}b2$ $\mathbb{Q}c6$ 21. $\mathbb{Q}b1$ $\mathbb{Q}f6$ 22. $\mathbb{Q}xf6$ gxf6=.

Part 5

12...d5 13.Qa4 Bb7

We must prepare to take on c4 or we would risk to remain without any counterplay: 13...Qe7 14.c4 Qf5 15.Qg5 Bb8 16.Bc1 Wa7 17.a3±.

**14.c4 dxc4! 15.Qc3 Qe7
16.Wa4**



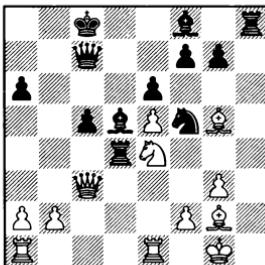
16...0-0-0!

16...Bd8 17.Wxc4? Qf5 was fine for Black in Musakaev-Malakhatkko, Pavlodar 2012: 18.Qe3 [It is understandable that White does not wish to let Black's rook to d4: 18.Qg5 Bd4 19.We2 c5 20.Bad1 (20.Qe4 Be7 21.Qxe7 Qxe7 22.Bac1 Qxe4 23.Qxe4 Wxe5 24.Wxa6=) 20...Be7 21.Qxe7 Qxe7 22.Bxb7 Wxb7 23.Qe4 Bd5, with a firm grip of the centre.] 18...Qxe3 19.Bxe3 Be7 20.Bd1 Bxd1+ (20...0-0) 21.Qxd1 0-0 22.Bb3 a5 23.Qe3 Ba8 24.Qg4, draw.

However, 17.Qg5! Bd7 (17...Bd4 18.Qe3) 18.Wxc4 is better for White: 18...Qd5 19.Bac1! or 18...Qg6 19.Bad1! Bxd1 20.Qxd1 Bh5 21.Wg4 Bh8 22.Wf3± when 22...Qxe5?? 23.Bxe5 Wxe5 24.Wxc6+ is a very economic mate.

17.Wxc4 c5 18.Qe4 Qf5 19.Qe3

I have also analysed 19.Qg5 Bd4 20.Wc3 Qd5!



A curious position where Black cannot move his dark-squared bishop, but White cannot make progress either:

21.Bad1 Wc6 22.Bxd4 Qxd4 23.Wa5 (23.b3 Bh5) 23...Bb8 24.b3 Wb7∞;

21.Bac1 Wc6 22.Wf3 Bb8 23.b3 Wb7 24.Wg4 Ba7 25.Bcd1 Wb5.

19...Qxe3 20.Bxe3 Wxe5!?

The most principled continuation. Sprenger-Avrukh, Sibenik 2012, went 20...Bd4 21.Wc2 c4 22.Bd1 Wxe5 23.Bxd4 Wxd4. Here 24.Qg5 Bxg2 25.Qxg2 Bd5+ 26.Qf3 Bb7 27.Bc3 Qc5 28.Bxc4 Bb6 may be equal, according to the computer, but perhaps it is easier to play with White whose king is more safe.

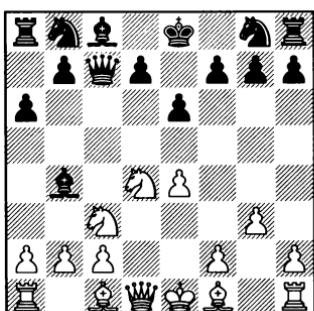
21.Bb3 Bd4 22.Qd6+ Qxd6 23.Bxb7+ Bd7 24.Wxa6 Be7 25.Qc6 g6=

The king returns home via the dark squares.

Part 5. The Fianchetto

Kan – Step by Step

1.e4 c5 2.♘f3 e6 3.d4 cxd4
4.♗xd4 a6 5.♘c3 ♖c7 6.g3 ♘b4!



The possibility for this active development makes the Kan a perfect weapon against the fianchetto fans. White has not displayed any new ideas for a long time. We can simply look at a couple of Smyslov's 40-years-old games to set us ready for the battle.

In the diagram position, White can defend the c3-knight with:

A. 7.♘de2 or B. 7.♘d2

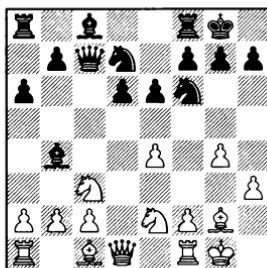
A. 7.♘de2 ♘f6 8.♗g2 d6 9.0-0

9.♗f4 e5 10.♗g5 provokes 10...♗bd7, but Black had exactly this set-up in mind anyway! Van Riemsdijk-Smyslov, Buenos Aires 1990, went further 11.0-0 h6 12.♘d2 ♘c5

13.♘a4 ♘a7 14.♘b4 ♘c5 15.♘xc5 when 15...♘xc5 16.♘xc5 ♖xc5 17.♘c3 ♘e6 18.♘d5 ♘xd5 would have offered Black the better prospects. In this typical pawn structure, the knight is more mobile than the bishop.

9...♗bd7

I advocate to delay castling in order to leave White without a clear plan. However, 9...0-0 is a viable option: 10.h3 ♘bd7 11.g4



After this advance, Black's main task becomes to prepare ...d5. He may use his king's rook (...♖d8) or leave it on f8 to support a pawn break by the f-pawn as in Antonov-Donchev, Sofia 1984, which saw 11.a3 ♘a5 12.♔h1 ♖b8 13.g4 b5 14.f4 ♘b7 15.g5 ♘e8 16.♔f3 (16.f5 exf5) 16...♖d8 17.♔g3 ♖b8 18.b3 d5 and Black intercepted the initiative.

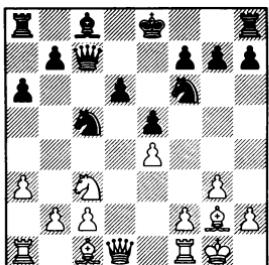
Part 5

In Ree-Darga, Las Palmas 1973, Black played 11... $\mathbb{E}d8$ immediately. The game continued 12.g5 $\mathbb{Q}e8$ 13.f4 b5 14.h4 $\mathbb{Q}b7$ 15.a3 $\mathbb{Q}c5+$ 16. $\mathbb{Q}h1$, when 16...d5!= would have made clear who was in command.

10.h3

White may try to harass our bishop with:

- a) 10. $\mathbb{Q}a4$ e5 11.a3 $\mathbb{Q}c5$ 12. $\mathbb{Q}xc5$ $\mathbb{Q}xc5$ 13. $\mathbb{Q}c3$

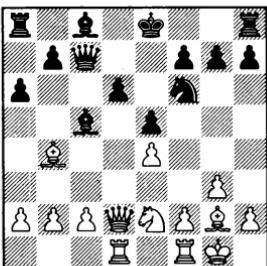


Similar positions arise in the Najdorf when White plays $\mathbb{Q}c3-d5xe7$. They are known to be fine for Black – all his pieces are active and he has the better control of the centre. The game Katalymov-Karasev, Naumburg 2002, went 13... $\mathbb{Q}e6$ (13...h6!?) 14. $\mathbb{Q}g5$ $\mathbb{Q}cd7$ 15. $\mathbb{W}d2$ h6 16. $\mathbb{Q}e3$ $\mathbb{Q}b6$ 17.b3 $\mathbb{E}c8=$.

- b) 10. $\mathbb{Q}d2$ $\mathbb{Q}c5!$ (mind the trap 10...0-0? 11. $\mathbb{Q}b5$) 11. $\mathbb{Q}a4$

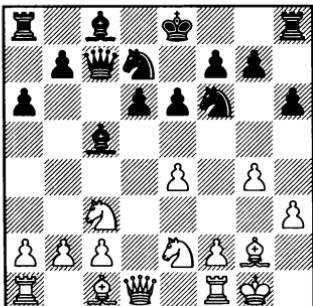
After 11. $\mathbb{Q}f4$ 0-0 12. $\mathbb{W}e2$ $\mathbb{Q}e5$ 13. $\mathbb{E}ad1$ b5 14. $\mathbb{Q}h5$ $\mathbb{Q}xh5$ 15. $\mathbb{W}xh5$ $\mathbb{Q}b7$, Black owns the initiative, Medina-Smyslov, Las Palmas 1972.

- 11... $\mathbb{Q}a7$ 12. $\mathbb{Q}b4$ $\mathbb{Q}c5$ 13. $\mathbb{Q}xc5$ $\mathbb{Q}xc5$ 14. $\mathbb{W}d2$ e5 15. $\mathbb{E}ad1$



Here, 15... $\mathbb{Q}e6$ 16. $\mathbb{Q}xc5$ $\mathbb{Q}xc5$ 17. $\mathbb{Q}c3$ $\mathbb{E}d8$ 18. $\mathbb{Q}d5$ $\mathbb{Q}xd5$ 19. $\mathbb{W}exd5$ $\mathbb{Q}d6$ was equal in Filippov-Stellwagen, Yerevan 2006: 20. $\mathbb{E}fe1$ 0-0 21.c4 $\mathbb{Q}d7$ 22.f4 $\mathbb{E}de8$ 23.fxe5 $\mathbb{E}xe5$ 24. $\mathbb{Q}h3$ f5=. A simpler solution is 15... $\mathbb{Q}g4$ 16. $\mathbb{Q}xc5$ $\mathbb{W}xc5$ 17.h3 $\mathbb{Q}xe2$ 18. $\mathbb{W}xe2$ 0-0=.

10... $\mathbb{Q}c5!$ 11.g4 h6



This is the point of 9... $\mathbb{Q}bd7$. By not castling, Black forestalls the enemy attack on the kingside. Thus he gains time to complete his queenside development and prepare a break in the centre or a counter-attack against the enemy king. White's task in the diagram position is not trivial. His main idea of pushing g5 is no longer enticing

The Fianchetto

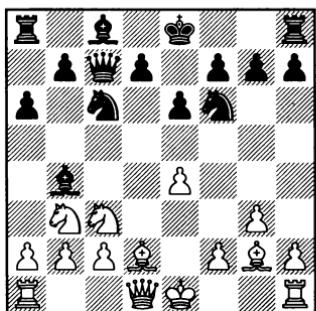
while the advance of the f-pawn is at least double-edged: 12. $\mathbb{Q}h1$ $\mathbb{B}b8$ 13.f4 b5 14.a3 $\mathbb{Q}b7$ 15.f5 exf5 16. $\mathbb{Q}xf5$ h5!? 17.g5 $\mathbb{Q}g4$.

The stem game Micheli-Smyslov, Venice 1974, went instead:

12.a4 $\mathbb{Q}e5$ 13. $\mathbb{Q}h2$ $\mathbb{W}e7$ (13... $\mathbb{Q}g6$!?) 14. $\mathbb{Q}g3$ g5

Black's dark-squared strategy has triumphed.

B. 7. $\mathbb{Q}d2$ $\mathbb{Q}f6$ 8. $\mathbb{Q}g2$ $\mathbb{Q}c6$ 9. $\mathbb{Q}b3$



B1. 9...0-0-0!?; B2. 9... $\mathbb{Q}e7$

Miezis' pet line 9...h5 10.f4 d6 11.a3 $\mathbb{Q}xc3$ 12. $\mathbb{Q}xc3$ e5 is an inferior version of line B1. White's bishop pair is restricted, the kingside pawn storm is stalled. Still, I do not like this set-up. It is too passive – Black's pieces have mostly defensive functions. The game Garnelis-Miezis, Kaunas 2009, showed a good, active approach for White: 13. $\mathbb{W}d2!$ a5 14.0-0-0 a4 15.fxe5 dx5 16. $\mathbb{Q}c5$ 0-0 17.h3 $\mathbb{Q}a5$ (17... $\mathbb{Q}d8$ 18. $\mathbb{W}g5$ $\mathbb{Q}d4$ 19. $\mathbb{Q}xd4$ exd4 20. $\mathbb{Q}d3$

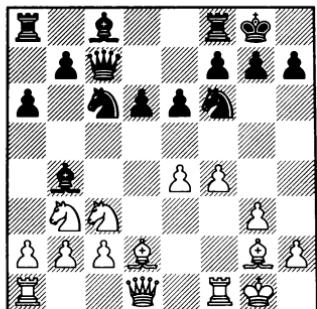
$\mathbb{Q}e6$ 21. $\mathbb{W}f4$ $\mathbb{W}c4$ 22. $\mathbb{Q}b4\pm$) 18. $\mathbb{Q}d3$ $\mathbb{Q}c4$ 19. $\mathbb{W}g5$. White is slightly ahead with his attack.

B1. 9...0-0-0!?

This move is consistent with line A. We do not waste any tempo on retreating the bishop to e7, but opt for a sound positional idea – to build up a pawn barricade on the central dark squares. Our lead in development practically rules out any White's plan with early pawn advances since both 10.g4 or 10.f4 will be strongly met by 10...d5! 11.exd5 exd5.

10. $\mathbb{W}e2$ or 10.a3, besides 10... $\mathbb{Q}xc3$ 11. $\mathbb{Q}xc3$ e5, could also face 10... $\mathbb{Q}e7$?, transposing to sidelines of line B2.

10.0-0 d6 11.f4



11... $\mathbb{Q}xc3$

Black may not need 11...b5 at all. Guseinov-Ghaem Maghami, Fujairah City 2012, went 12.g4 $\mathbb{Q}d7$ 13.g5 and Black returned to the advance of the a-pawn: 13...a5 14.a3

Part 5

$\mathbb{Q}xc3$ 15.bxc3 (15. $\mathbb{Q}xc3$ $\mathbb{Q}b7$ 16. $\mathbb{E}f3$ b4 17. $\mathbb{Q}e1\infty$). Here 15...e5 16.f5 a4 17. $\mathbb{Q}c1$ $\mathbb{Q}a5$ would have been the sternest test of White's attacking potential.

12. $\mathbb{Q}xc3$ e5 13.f5 a5

It is against common sense to make weaknesses on the flank your opponent will attack. Still, 13...h6 is an interesting option. The game Kudrin-Dobrov, Moscow 2004, went 14. $\mathbb{Q}d2$ a5 15.a4 b5 (15... $\mathbb{E}d8?$! 16.g4 $\mathbb{Q}b4!$ intending 17...d5) 16.axb5 $\mathbb{W}b6+$ 17. $\mathbb{Q}h1$ $\mathbb{W}xb5$ 18.g4 $\mathbb{Q}b7$ (18...a4?!) 19.g5 hxg5 20. $\mathbb{Q}xg5$ $\mathbb{Q}h7$ 21. $\mathbb{Q}h4$ $\mathbb{Q}d7$ 22. $\mathbb{Q}d2$ $\mathbb{W}xb2$ 23. $\mathbb{Q}c4$ $\mathbb{W}d4\mp$) 19.g5 hxg5 20. $\mathbb{Q}xg5\infty$. Perhaps White should try something more energetic as 14.g4 a5 15.h4 a4 16.g5 $\mathbb{Q}h7$ 17. $\mathbb{Q}d2$ hxg5 18.hxg5 $\mathbb{Q}xg5$ 19. $\mathbb{W}h5$ f6 20. $\mathbb{Q}f3$ although White's attack is not too impressive.

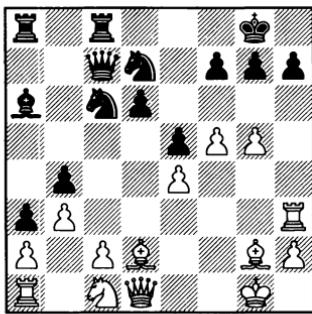
Instead, I consider an immediate counter-attack with the a-pawn. Black can also start with ...13...b5. The following variations are far from being encompassing. I only aimed to show the defensive stand against White's most direct attacking plan.

14.g4

14.a3 gives a tempo for a break in the centre: 14... $\mathbb{E}d8$ 15.g4 h6 16.h4?!, a4 17. $\mathbb{Q}d2$ d5 18.exd5 $\mathbb{Q}xd5$ 19. $\mathbb{Q}xd5$ $\mathbb{E}xd5$ 20.g5 $\mathbb{Q}d4\mp$.

14...a4 15.g5 $\mathbb{Q}d7$ 16. $\mathbb{Q}c1$ a3

17.b3 b5 18. $\mathbb{E}f3$ b4 19. $\mathbb{Q}d2$ $\mathbb{Q}a6$ 20. $\mathbb{E}h3$ $\mathbb{E}fc8$



White has achieved everything he was aiming for. And still he cannot break through!

21. $\mathbb{W}h5$

Or 21.f6 g6 22. $\mathbb{W}e1$ $\mathbb{Q}d4$ 23. $\mathbb{W}h4$ h5+.

21... $\mathbb{Q}f8$ 22. $\mathbb{Q}d3$

22.f6 $\mathbb{Q}d8$ 23.fxg7 $\mathbb{Q}xg7\mp$ or 22.g6 fxg6 23.fxg6 $\mathbb{Q}d4-$ favour Black.

22... $\mathbb{Q}xd3$ 23. $\mathbb{E}xd3$ $\mathbb{Q}d4$ 24.c3 bxc3 25. $\mathbb{Q}xc3$ $\mathbb{Q}b5$ 26. $\mathbb{Q}e1$ $\mathbb{W}b7!$

Black's chances are preferable, e.g. 27.f6 $\mathbb{E}c2$ 28. $\mathbb{Q}d2$ $\mathbb{E}ac8$ 29.fxg7 $\mathbb{Q}xg7$ 30. $\mathbb{Q}h3$ $\mathbb{E}e8$.

B2. 9... $\mathbb{Q}e7$

At first sight Black has lost a tempo with the bishop manoeuvre.

The Fianchetto

In fact, we'll see later that he might have even gained one, as in the variations where he plays ... $\mathbb{Q}c6-e5-c4$ and White retreats his bishop to c1. A more important argument in favour of the inclusion of ... $\mathbb{Q}b4$ is that White has no longer the option of capturing on c6, followed by e4-e5. We know that this threat is the crux of the opening battle in the Taimanov. Without it, Black has green light for developing the queenside pieces while delaying his castle. In more general terms, White has one piece less in the centre and that allows more aggressive play from Black.

10.0-0

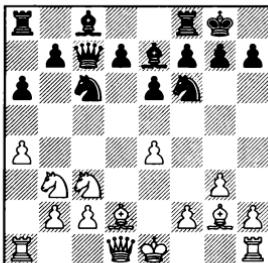
White often connects the placement of his knight on b3 with the advance of his a-pawn:

a) 10.a4. In practice Black automatically answers 10...b6, ... $\mathbb{Q}b7$, ...d6, ... $\mathbb{Q}d7$ and then defines the future of his king. If White has weakened his kingside, ...0-0-0 becomes a plausible option. I consider in detail this setup in **game 33** Forcen-Korneev, La Roda 2012.

However, I would like also to offer you as a surprise weapon a new idea, which tries to exploit the concrete move order:

10...0-0-0!?

Now 11.f4 will be strongly met by 11...d5 12.exd5 $\mathbb{Q}b4$. We often meet this sacrifice in this chapter. So White should carry on his plan:

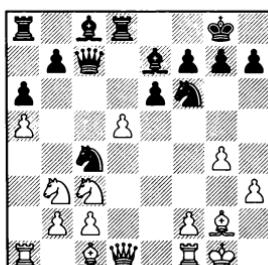


11.a5 $\mathbb{Q}e5$ 12.0-0 (12. $\mathbb{Q}a4$ $\mathbb{Q}c4$)
12... $\mathbb{Q}c4$ 13. $\mathbb{Q}c1$ d6 14.g4

14. $\mathbb{W}e2$ looks pointless due to 14... $\mathbb{Q}d7$, when 15.g4 (15.f4 $\mathbb{Q}b5$) could be met by 15...d5 16.exd5 $\mathbb{Q}fe8$ 17.g5 (17.dxe6?! $\mathbb{Q}xe6$ 18.h3 $\mathbb{Q}ad8\infty$) 17... $\mathbb{Q}xd5$ 18. $\mathbb{Q}xd5$ exd5 19. $\mathbb{Q}xd5$, when 19... $\mathbb{W}xh2+$ 20. $\mathbb{Q}xh2$ $\mathbb{Q}d6+$ 21. $\mathbb{Q}f4$ $\mathbb{Q}xe2$ 22. $\mathbb{Q}xd6$ $\mathbb{Q}xd6$ 23. $\mathbb{Q}b6$ $\mathbb{Q}d8$ is roughly equal since 24. $\mathbb{Q}xd7$ $\mathbb{Q}xd7$ 25. $\mathbb{Q}ad1$ $\mathbb{Q}xc2$ 26. $\mathbb{Q}d3$ $\mathbb{Q}f8$ would be even pleasant for Black.

14.f4 leads to a position from the Taimanov where it is White to move! We can borrow the set-up from the game Bartel-Akopian, Port Erin 2006: 11... $\mathbb{Q}d8$ 12. $\mathbb{W}e2$ $\mathbb{Q}b8$ (12...d5 13.e5 $\mathbb{Q}d7$ 14. $\mathbb{Q}xd5$ $\mathbb{Q}dxe5$ is possible, but why not await g4 while preparing typical counterplay with ...b5). 13.g4 d5!

14.g4 d5 15.exd5 $\mathbb{Q}d8$ 16.h3



Part 5

I think that Black has decent counterplay here. For instance, 16...b5!? 17.axb6 ♜xb6 18.♗d2 ♜fxd5 19.♘xd5 ♜xd5 20.♕a5 ♜b6 21.♕xa8 (21.♔e2 ♜b7 22.♕e3 ♜d6∞) 21...♜xd1 22.♖fxd1 h5 23.♗d3 hxg4 24.hxg4 ♜b8 25.♗f3 ♜b7∞. The queen is powerful against the unprotected king.

b) 10.f4 0-0

10...d6 is also a good move which, however, transposes to my alternative suggestion in the annotations to **game 33** Forcen-Korneev after 11.a4 b6 or **game 32** Radulski-Filev after 11.0-0.

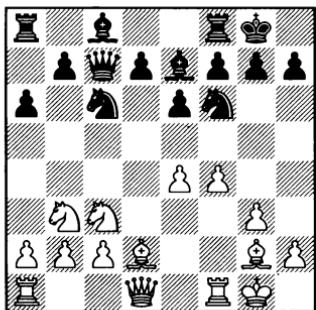
Instead, 11.g4 commits White on the kingside too early. Black has several attractive retorts. He only should not castle, for instance: 11...h6 12.h4 b5 13.g5 ♜d7 14.♕e2 b4 15.♗a4 a5 16.♗e3 ♜a6↑ when the ♜a4 is a cause of concern to White, Sutovsky-Podzielny, Essen 1999, or 11...b5 12.g5 ♜d7 13.♗f3 (13.♗h5 g6 14.♗h3 ♜b6 15.♗d1 ♜d7 16.0-0 0-0-0; 13.0-0 ♜b6 14.f5 ♜c4 15.♗c1 ♜d7∞) 13...b4 14.♗a4 a5 15.♗e3 ♜a6.

10...0-0!

Black commonly delays castling with 10...d6. Then he finishes his queenside development, prepares to carry on the break ...d5, and only at that point does he define the position of his king. See **game 32** Radulski-Filev, Plovdiv 2012, for details. This game is also interesting with the French pawn structure which arose after 14...d5 15.e5. You

should know what to do in it since you may get it in several different ways. My suggestion is more simple and straightforward.

11.f4 (11.g4 d5 12.exd5 exd5)



11...d5!

Amazingly, this sacrifice has not been tried in this particular position. However, the same idea is known as deserving attention in several other settings. Now 12.e5 ♜d7 leads to a pawn structure which is unanimously assessed as fine for Black. For instance, 13.♗e2 ♜b6 14.♗bd4 ♜c4 15.♗c1 ♜d7 16.c3 (16.b3 ♜xd4 17.♗xd4 ♜a3) 16...♝ac8↑.

12.exd5 ♜b4 13.dxe6

I suspect that the unassuming move 13.♗c1 is a wiser option: 13...♜bx d5 14.♗xd5 exd5=.

13...♝xe6 14.♗h1 ♜ad8 15.f5 ♜c4 16.♗e1 b6

Black has full compensation for the pawn, e.g. 17.♗f4 ♜d6 18.♗xd6 ♜xd6 19.♗c1 ♜fd8.

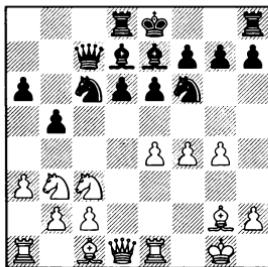
Part 5. The Fianchetto

Complete Games

27. Hoogendoorn-Lautier Algarve 1999

1.e4 c5 2.♘f3 ♘c6 3.d4 exd4 4.♘xd4 ♖c7 5.♘c3 e6 6.g3 a6 7.♗g2 d6 8.0-0 ♘d7 9.♗e1 ♘e7 10.♘b3 b5 11.a3 ♘f6 12.f4 ♘d8 (12...♗c8 13.♗e3 h6 14.g4 ♘h7 15.♗d2 g5∞) 13.g4?!

Too optimistic. 13.♗e3 is more prudent. Now Black can choose between 13...h5! 14.h3 hxg4 15.hxg4 g5∞ or the more restrained 13...♗c8. Instead, he mixes up ideas with:



13...h6 14.h3 ♗c8 15.♗e3 ♘d7 16.♗d2 ♘b6?!

Black overlooks a tactical blow. It was time for 16...0-0 17.♗f2 ♘f6 18.♗d1∞.

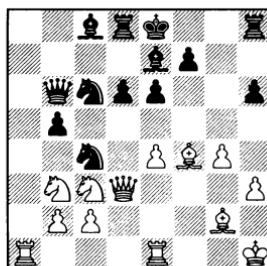
17.♗d3?!

White misses the opportunity for 17.♘d5! exd5 18.exd5 ♘c4 (18...♗b8 19.♗d4+– is a double-attack!) 19.♗c3 0-0 20.dxc6±.

17...♘c4 18.♗c1 g5?!

Apparently Lautier overestimated the e5-square. 18...♗b6 19.♗h1 ♗b7 20.a4 ♘b4↑ was safer and better.

19.a4! gxf4 20.axb5 ♖b6 21.♗h1 axb5 22.♗f4



22...♗f6

The weakness of b5 does not let Black enjoy the e5-outpost. 22...♗a6 23.♗g3 b4 24.♗f1 h5 25.♗a4 ♖b7 26.g5 e5 27.♗c1± is double-

edged, but White's king is relatively safer.

**23.♘d2 ♘e5 24.♘xc4 bxc4
25.♗d2 ♗g7 26.♗e3 ♖c6 27.♗a5
h5 28.gxh5 ♗xh5 29.♗e2
♗h8 30.♗ea1 ♗b7 31.♗b5 ♗a8
32.♗xa8+ ♗xa8 33.♗b6 ♖d7
34.♗b5±**

White has won the first battle. His rook is extremely mobile. However, he gradually begins losing ground in the next moves.

**34...♗c6 35.♗a3 (35.♗d4 ♗b7
36.♗d2±) 35...c3 36.♗b8+?**

This is a double mistake. White exchanges his best piece instead of pushing his passed pawn: 36.b4±.

**36...♗e7 37.♗xh8 ♗xh8
38.bxc3?**

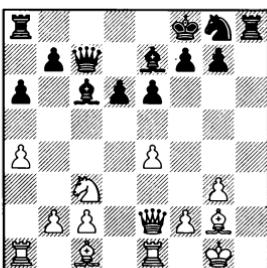
The turning point of the game. 38.b4 ♖b7 39.b5± would have retained some edge.

**38...♖b7 39.♗g5+ ♗d7 40.♗c1
♗f6 41.♗e3 ♗d8 42.♗e2 ♗e7
43.c4 ♗g6 44.♗b5 ♗h4 45.♗d4
♗b1 46.♗f1? (46.♗d2 ♗a8 47.c5
♗g2 48.c6 ♗c6 49.♗c6 ♗h4+)
46...♗b7 47.♗e3 ♖xf1+ 48.♗xf1
♗xe4+ 49.♗g1 e5 50.♗b5 ♗xc2
51.♗f2 f5 52.♗a7 f4 53.♗e2 ♗c6
54.♗c3 ♗b7 55.♗d5 ♗d8 56.c5
♗xa7 0-1**

The moral of this game is that one good square (e5) does not compensate for bad piece co-ordination.

28. Fressinet-Delchev Calvia ol 2004

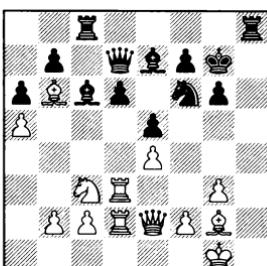
**1.e4 c5 2.♘f3 e6 3.♗c3 ♗c6
4.d4 cxd4 5.♗xd4 ♖c7 6.g3 a6
7.♗g2 d6 8.0-0 ♗d7 9.♗c6 ♗c6
10.♗e1 ♗e7 11.♗g4 h5 12.♗e2 h4
13.a4 hxg3 14.hxg3 ♗f8!**



15.a5 ♗c8 16.♗e3 ♗f6 17.♗b6

White's main problem is that he does not have a clear plan. In fact, he must wait for Black to push ...e5. Only then can he aim for ♗d5 followed by a pawn storm on the queenside. Meanwhile he is risking to lose the initiative, for instance:

17.♗ed1 e5 18.♗b6 ♖d7 19.♗d3
g6 20.♗ad1 ♗g7 21.♗1d2 (21.b3
♖e8 22.♗d5 ♗xd5 23.exd5 ♗d8±;
21.f4 ♖g4 22.♗1d2 ♖e2 23.♗e2 ♗d7
24.♗f2 ♗d8 25.b4 ♗e7 26.♗ed2 ♗f6
27.♗f3 ♗d7±)



The Fianchetto

21... $\mathbb{W}e8$! Remember this manoeuvre! The queen is heading for h7. The play might proceed with:

22.b3 Preparing $\mathbb{Q}d5$ and c4. 22.f4 only helps Black's plan – 22... $\mathbb{W}g8$ 23. $\mathbb{B}d6$ $\mathbb{Q}d6$ 24. $\mathbb{B}d6$ $\mathbb{Q}d7$ 25. $\mathbb{Q}e3$ $\mathbb{W}h7$ 26. $\mathbb{Q}f2$ $\mathbb{W}h2$.

22... $\mathbb{W}g8$ 23.f4 $\mathbb{W}h7\rightarrow$ 24.f5 (24. $\mathbb{Q}f3$ $\mathbb{Q}d7$ 25. $\mathbb{Q}e3$ $\mathbb{Q}c5=$) 24...de5 25. $\mathbb{W}f3$ (25. $\mathbb{Q}d5$ $\mathbb{Q}xd5$ 26.exd5 $\mathbb{Q}b4$ 27. $\mathbb{B}d1$ $\mathbb{W}h2$ 28. $\mathbb{Q}f1$ $\mathbb{E}h5$ 29. $\mathbb{B}f3$ e4) 25... $\mathbb{Q}e4$! 26. $\mathbb{Q}xe4$ f5 27. $\mathbb{W}e3$ $\mathbb{W}h2$ 28. $\mathbb{Q}f1$ fxe4 29. $\mathbb{Q}e4$ $\mathbb{W}h3\mp$.

These variations illustrate Black's hidden possibilities.

17.f4 is more dubious than it is enterprising. We blockade the centre with 17...e5 18. $\mathbb{Q}b6$ $\mathbb{W}d7$ (18... $\mathbb{W}b8$ 19. $\mathbb{E}ad1$ exf4 20.gxf4 $\mathbb{Q}d8$ 21. $\mathbb{Q}xd8$ $\mathbb{E}xd8$ 22.e5 $\mathbb{Q}xg2$ 23. $\mathbb{Q}xg2$ $\mathbb{W}c8\mp$ is also good) 19. $\mathbb{E}ad1$ and here 19... $\mathbb{W}g4$ 20. $\mathbb{W}xg4$ is roughly equal, but the engines find a concrete way for Black to intercept the initiative: 19...exf4! 20.gxf4 $\mathbb{E}h4$.

17... $\mathbb{W}d7$!

Black had played previously only 17... $\mathbb{W}b8$ which is a rather deplorable fate for the strongest piece! I have better prospects for it.

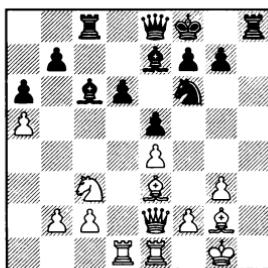
18. $\mathbb{E}ad1$ $\mathbb{W}e8$! 19. $\mathbb{Q}d4$

Inkiov played here 19.f4 when 19...e5 is again the best retort. Then if White continue 20.f5, we can change plans with 20... $\mathbb{Q}d7$ 21. $\mathbb{Q}e3$ $\mathbb{W}d8$ 22. $\mathbb{E}a1$ (22.b4 $\mathbb{Q}f6$) 22... $\mathbb{Q}g5$.

White's queenside will be vulnerable.

19...e5 20. $\mathbb{Q}e3$

Black's bishop is hardly better on b6: 20. $\mathbb{Q}b6$ g6 21.f4 (21. $\mathbb{Q}d5$ $\mathbb{Q}xd5$ 22.exd5 $\mathbb{Q}d8$ 23. $\mathbb{Q}d8$ $\mathbb{W}d8=$) 21... $\mathbb{Q}d7$ 22. $\mathbb{Q}e3$ $\mathbb{W}d8$! 23.b4 $\mathbb{Q}g7$ 24. $\mathbb{Q}d5$ (24. $\mathbb{Q}f1$ $\mathbb{W}g8$! 25. $\mathbb{Q}d5$ $\mathbb{Q}xd5$ 26. $\mathbb{E}xd5$ $\mathbb{W}h7$ 27.fxe5 $\mathbb{Q}xe5$ 28. $\mathbb{Q}d4$ $\mathbb{W}h2$ 29. $\mathbb{Q}f2$ $\mathbb{E}h3$) 24... $\mathbb{Q}xd5$ 25. $\mathbb{E}xd5$ $\mathbb{W}c7$ 26. $\mathbb{Q}d2$ $\mathbb{Q}f6\rightarrow$. As you see, Black can shift the direction of his attack, combining threats along the h-file and against the weak a5-pawn.



20...g6

A consistent move, but the manoeuvre 20... $\mathbb{Q}d7$! is stronger. The point is that 21. $\mathbb{Q}g5$ $\mathbb{Q}e6$ 22. $\mathbb{Q}xf6$ $\mathbb{Q}xf6$ 23. $\mathbb{E}xd6$ fails to 23... $\mathbb{Q}e7$ 24. $\mathbb{Q}d2$ $\mathbb{Q}b4$ so Black keeps more pieces on the board.

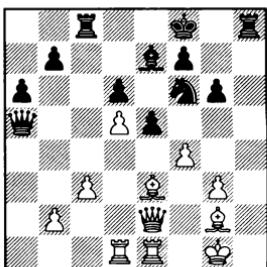
After the text, White can reach a drawish position with 21. $\mathbb{Q}g5$ $\mathbb{Q}g7$ 22. $\mathbb{E}d3$ $\mathbb{E}h5$ 23. $\mathbb{Q}xf6+$ $\mathbb{Q}xf6$ 24. $\mathbb{Q}d5+$. The aggressive 21.f4?! $\mathbb{Q}g7$ 22. $\mathbb{Q}f1$ would allow the thematic manoeuvre 22... $\mathbb{W}g8$! with counter-attack.

21. $\mathbb{Q}d5$ $\mathbb{Q}xd5$ 22.exd5 $\mathbb{W}a4$!

Part 5

Black's queen is extremely agile! Instead of going to h7, it hits targets on the other wing. As long as 23... $\mathbb{Q}a1$ $\mathbb{W}xc2$ 24... $\mathbb{B}ac1$ $\mathbb{W}f5$ 25... $\mathbb{B}xc8$ $\mathbb{W}xc8$ 26... $\mathbb{B}c1$ $\mathbb{W}d7$ 27... $\mathbb{B}c4$ $\mathbb{Q}g7$ 28... $\mathbb{W}c7$ $\mathbb{Q}d8\#$ covers all invasion squares, White is forced to give up the a5-pawn and hope for a counter-attack against e5.

23.c3 $\mathbb{W}a5$ 24.f4



24... $\mathbb{W}b5?$

A horrible mistake which might have cost me the point. The simple 24... $\mathbb{W}c7$ 25.fxe5 $\mathbb{D}xe5$ 26.d6 $\mathbb{Q}xd6$ 27... $\mathbb{W}f3$ $\mathbb{Q}g7$ 28... $\mathbb{W}xb7$ a5 would have retained the pawn with a good position. Even more consistent is:

24... $\mathbb{Q}d7!$ 25.fxe5 [Or 25... $\mathbb{W}f2$ f5! 26.fxe5 (26.g4 $\mathbb{Q}h4$) 26... $\mathbb{D}xe5$ 27... $\mathbb{Q}b6$ $\mathbb{W}b5$ 28... $\mathbb{Q}d4$ $\mathbb{Q}f6\#$.] 25... $\mathbb{D}xe5$ 26... $\mathbb{Q}d4$ $\mathbb{W}c7$ 27... $\mathbb{D}xe5$ (27... $\mathbb{Q}f1$ $\mathbb{Q}g7$ 28... $\mathbb{Q}de1$ $\mathbb{Q}ce8\#$) 27... $\mathbb{D}xe5$ 28... $\mathbb{W}xe5$ $\mathbb{W}c5$ 29... $\mathbb{Q}d4$ $\mathbb{Q}h5\#$.

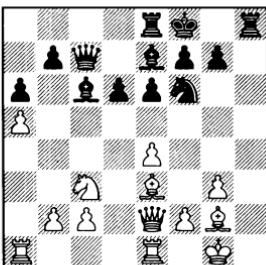
The rest of the game is a desperate struggle which was eventually rewarded with a draw.

25.fxe5 $\mathbb{W}xe2$ 26... $\mathbb{Q}xe2$ $\mathbb{Q}g4$ 27... $\mathbb{Q}xd6$ $\mathbb{Q}xd6$ 28... $\mathbb{Q}f4$ $\mathbb{Q}d8$

29... $\mathbb{Q}xd6+$ $\mathbb{Q}xd6$ 30.c4 $\mathbb{Q}g7$ 31.c5 $\mathbb{Q}d7$ 32.d6 $\mathbb{Q}f6$ 33.b4 $\mathbb{Q}h5$ 34... $\mathbb{Q}e7$ $\mathbb{Q}xe7$ 35... $\mathbb{D}xe7$ a5 36... $\mathbb{Q}xb7$ $\mathbb{A}xb4$ 37... $\mathbb{Q}c1$ b3 38... $\mathbb{C}6$ b2 39... $\mathbb{Q}b1$ $\mathbb{Q}e8$ 40... $\mathbb{Q}xb2$ $\mathbb{Q}e5$ 41... $\mathbb{Q}c8$ $\mathbb{Q}xe7$ 42... $\mathbb{Q}d7$ $\mathbb{Q}d6$ 43... $\mathbb{Q}g2$ f5 44... $\mathbb{Q}d2$ $\mathbb{Q}b5$ 45... $\mathbb{Q}d5$ $\mathbb{Q}c7$ 46... $\mathbb{Q}a5$ $\mathbb{Q}f6$ 47... $\mathbb{Q}a7$ $\mathbb{Q}b5$ 48... $\mathbb{Q}b7$ $\mathbb{Q}d6$ 49... $\mathbb{Q}b8$ $\mathbb{Q}e2+$ 50... $\mathbb{Q}f3$ $\mathbb{Q}c2$ 51... $\mathbb{Q}e3$ $\mathbb{Q}e5$ draw.

29. Timman-V. Milov Biel 1995

1.e4 c5 2... $\mathbb{Q}f3$ e6 3.d4 cxd4 4... $\mathbb{Q}xd4$ a6 5... $\mathbb{Q}c3$ $\mathbb{W}c7$ 6... $\mathbb{g}3$ $\mathbb{Q}c6$ 7... $\mathbb{g}2$ d6 8...0-0 $\mathbb{Q}e7$ 9... $\mathbb{Q}e1$ $\mathbb{Q}d7$ 10... $\mathbb{Q}xc6$ $\mathbb{Q}xc6$ 11... $\mathbb{W}g4$ h5 12... $\mathbb{W}e2$ h4 13.a4 hxg3 14.hxg3 $\mathbb{Q}f8$ 15.a5 $\mathbb{Q}f6$ (15... $\mathbb{Q}e8!$ 16... $\mathbb{Q}e3$ $\mathbb{Q}f6$) 16... $\mathbb{Q}e3$ $\mathbb{Q}e8$



This strange-looking move aims to ensure a good retreat square for the queen on c8 while protecting the e7-bishop against tactical hits as $\mathbb{Q}c3-d5$.

As a positive side effect, Black threatens to break in the centre by ...d5. 17... $\mathbb{Q}g5$ or 17... $\mathbb{Q}ed1$ could be met by 17... $\mathbb{Q}g8$.

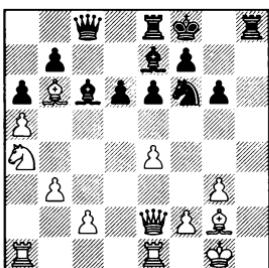
The Fianchetto

17.♗d4

Timman tries to carry on e5 with tempo. Most games continue 17.♗b6 ♜c8 and then:

a) 18.♗ed1 e5 19.b4 ♗d7 20.♗a3 g6 21.♗d5 ♗xd5 22.exd5 ♗g7+, Gallagher-Bosiocic, Olbia 2008;

b) 18.b3 g6 19.♗a4



19...d5! 20.e5 ♗d7 21.♗d4 ♗b4 22.♗c3 ♗e7 23.♗d4 ♗b4 24.♗c3 ♗e7 25.♗e3 ♗g7 26.♗d2 ♗h7 27.♗d4 ♗eh8 28.♗b6 ♗xb6 29.axb6, Salдано-Tsuboi, Campinas 2011, when 29...♗h2, intending ...♗8h7, ...♗h8 should win.

17...♗c8 18.♗ed1 ♗h7

18...e5 19.♗e3 ♗e6 would have been better, in order to avoid the capture on f6.

19.♗e3

White admits that he has no plan.

19...♗d7?!

Preparing to meet 20.♗f4 by 20...♗e5

20.♗f4 ♗f6 21.♗f3 g6 22.♗g2 ♗g7 23.♗h1 ♗eh8 24.♗xh7+ ♗xh7 25.♗h1 ♗xh1 26.♗xh1 e5 27.♗g2 ♗d7?!

White's king is weaker so Black's threats are more dangerous. Now he wants to transfer the bishop to e6.

28.♗d5 ♗xd5 29.exd5 ♗b5 30.♗d1 ♗f6 31.b3 ♗d7 32.c4 ♗h3+ 33.♗f2 exf4 34.gxf4 ♗h8# 35.♗h1

Black has gained the initiative and could have played for a win with 35...♗g8! threatening 35...♗d4 or 35...♗c3. Instead, he prefers to repeat the moves.

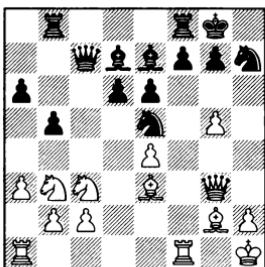
35...♗c8 36.♗d1 ♗h8 draw.

30. Guseinov-Vasovski Struga 12.08.2009

This game is a good example of what Black should not do – instead of staying active and generate constant threats, he opted for a defensive set-up on the kingside. This is rarely a good approach in the Sicilian

1.e4 c5 2.♗f3 ♗c6 3.♗c3 d6 4.d4 cxd4 5.♗xd4 e6 6.g3 ♗d7 7.♗g2 ♗f6 8.0-0 ♗e7 9.♗b3 a6 10.f4 ♗c7 11.♗e3 b5 12.a3 ♗b8 13.♗h1 0-0 14.g4 h6 15.g5 hxg5 16.fxg5 ♗h7 17.♗g4 ♗e5 18.♗g3

Part 5



It may seem that Black has an easy game thanks to the outpost on e5. In fact, White's plan is much more clear. He will push the h-pawn up to h5 (and even h6 sometimes) and then he will be looking for a way of swinging a knight to the kingside. Black must quickly generate concrete counterplay before it became too late. It would be a bad idea to stay passively, as the course of this game will teach us.

A logical continuation would be to target the weak pawn on c2 with 18...a5 19.h4 b4 20.axb4 axb4 21.Ba7 Bb7 22.Bxb7 Bxb7 23.Qd1 Bc8, with an initiative. The text move is not bad either.

18...Qc4 19.Qc1 g6 20.h4 Bfc8?!

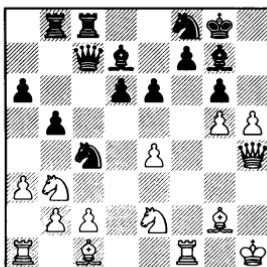
Black embarks on a wrong redeployment. His kingside pieces were perfectly placed, hitting g5. For instance, h4-h5 would often cost White a pawn due to ...Bd8. Therefore, he should have activate his queen with 20...Bb6!, denying the d4-square to the b3-knight. Then the straightforward 21.h5 Bh8 22.Bf3 would be strongly countered

by 22...gxh5 23.Wh4 Qe5 24.Bh3 Bg7+, when the h-file will open in Black's favour.

21.Qe2

I would take the chance to centralise the knight at once with 21.Qd4 Qe5 22.Qf3 Qxf3 23.Wxf3 Qe8 24.Bf2. The exchange of one pair of knights underlines the fact that Black practically plays without a piece.

21...Bf8 22.h5Bg7?! 23.Wh4 Bf8?!



Black has achieved his goal, but he will soon discover that his bishop will be useless on the long diagonal. It only takes away the g7-square to its king. He still could have reconsidered and captured on h5 to get some breathing space on the kingside.

24.Qbd4 a5

It is already late for 24...gxh5 25.Wxh5 Bb8 26.c3 Qe5 27.Qf4→.

25.b3 Qe5 26.Qe3?!

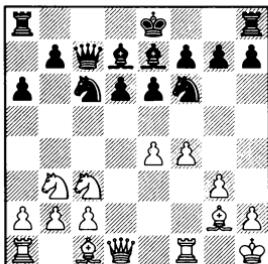
The Fianchetto

26.h6! $\mathbb{Q}h8$ 27. $\mathbb{Q}e3$ would have been clearly better for White as Black cannot untie himself. For instance, 27... $\mathbb{Q}c6$ would run into 28.h7+! $\mathbb{Q}xh7$ 29. $\mathbb{Q}xf7!$. After the text, instead of 26...gxh5!, Black falls into the same trap.

26... $\mathbb{Q}c6?$ 27.h6 $\mathbb{Q}xd4$ (27... $\mathbb{Q}h8$ 28.h7+!) 28. $\mathbb{Q}xd4$ $\mathbb{Q}h7$ 29. $\mathbb{Q}f2$ $\mathbb{Q}e8$ 30. $\mathbb{Q}f3$ $\mathbb{Q}d8$ 31. $\mathbb{Q}ad1$ $\mathbb{Q}c6$ 32. $\mathbb{Q}h2$ $\mathbb{Q}e7$ 33. $\mathbb{Q}g4$ $\mathbb{Q}c7$ 34. $\mathbb{Q}xd6$ f5 35.gxf6 $\mathbb{Q}xd6$ 36. $\mathbb{Q}f4$ $\mathbb{Q}d7$ 37. $\mathbb{Q}g3$ $\mathbb{Q}bb7$ 38. $\mathbb{Q}e5$ $\mathbb{Q}e8$ 39. $\mathbb{Q}xg6$ $\mathbb{Q}f7$ 40. $\mathbb{Q}e7+$ $\mathbb{Q}h8$ 41. $\mathbb{Q}g7+$ 1-0

31. Ponomariov-Dubov FIDE World Cup, Tromsø 2013

1.e4 c5 2. $\mathbb{Q}f3$ e6 3.d4 $\mathbb{Q}xd4$ 4. $\mathbb{Q}xd4$ $\mathbb{Q}c6$ 5. $\mathbb{Q}c3$ a6 6.g3 $\mathbb{Q}c7$ 7. $\mathbb{Q}g2$ d6 8.0-0 $\mathbb{Q}d7$ 9. $\mathbb{Q}b3$ $\mathbb{Q}f6$ 10.f4 $\mathbb{Q}e7$ 11. $\mathbb{Q}h1$



11...0-0

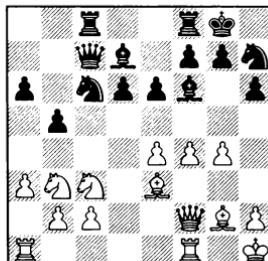
Black chooses to await g4 and h4 in order to strike back in the centre with ...d5. Another popular approach is to make yet another de-

veloping move before defining the king's position. Since sooner or later Black will have to at least threaten with ...d5, it looks logical to play 11... $\mathbb{Q}d8$. However, on this square the rook may be awkward when White plays $\mathbb{Q}e3$, $\mathbb{Q}f2(g1)$ hitting b6. For instance, 12. $\mathbb{Q}e3$ 0-0 13.g4 h6 (13...d5 14.e5 $\mathbb{Q}e8$ 15. $\mathbb{Q}e2$) 14.h4 d5 15.e5 $\mathbb{Q}e8$ 16.g5 hxg5 17.hxg5 g6 18. $\mathbb{Q}f3$ $\mathbb{Q}g7$ 19. $\mathbb{Q}h3$ $\mathbb{Q}h8$ 20. $\mathbb{Q}xh8$ $\mathbb{Q}xh8$ 21. $\mathbb{Q}g1$, winning a crucial tempo for $\mathbb{Q}h2+$.

Let's correct this idea by 11... $\mathbb{Q}c8$ 12. $\mathbb{Q}e3$

12.g4?! runs into 12...h6 13. $\mathbb{Q}e2$ e5+, but 12. $\mathbb{Q}e2$ is a fair alternative. Perhaps this is the maximum Black can extract from the delay of 0-0 – White has to play two quiet moves like $\mathbb{Q}h1$ and $\mathbb{Q}e2$. Then and it is time to castle. In Alekseev-Rodshstein, Legnica 2013, he persisted with his tricky move order, but 12...e5 13. $\mathbb{Q}e3$ 0-0 14.f5 put him under attack. The game went 14...b5 15.a3 b4 16.axb4 $\mathbb{Q}xb4$ 17.g4 h6 18.g5 hxg5 19. $\mathbb{Q}xg5$ $\mathbb{Q}c4$ 20. $\mathbb{Q}d2$ $\mathbb{Q}fd8$ 21. $\mathbb{Q}g1$ $\mathbb{Q}h7$ 22. $\mathbb{Q}f3+-$.

12...b5 13.a3 h6 14. $\mathbb{Q}e2$ 0-0 15.g4 $\mathbb{Q}h7$! 16. $\mathbb{Q}f2$ $\mathbb{Q}f6$



Part 5

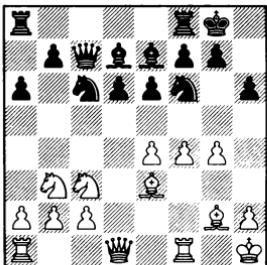
Black is OK here:

17.h4 ♜xc3 18.bxc3 ♜e7 19.g5 hxg5 20.hxg5 f6!?

Alekseev-Cordova, Khanty-Mansiysk 2010, saw 17.♗ad1, when I think that Black should have opted for a dark-squared blockade with 17...♜xc3 18.bxc3 e5 19.f5 ♜e7. White is not ready for a serious attack. After 20.h4 ♜f6 21.♗f3 (21.g5 ♜g4 22.♗e2 h5) 21...d5! 22.exd5 ♜exd5 23.g5 ♜xe3 24.♗xe3 hxg5 25.hxg5 ♜h7 26.f6 ♜f5+, he is clearly over-extended.

My conclusion is that 11...♝c8 deserves attention.

12.g4 h6 13.♗e3



Remember this position! When White has completed development and his bishop is on e3, we should take the threat of h4 very seriously and address it by 13...♝h7! following the example of the previous diagram. The ...d5 break is no longer effective!

13...♝ac8 14.h4 d5?

It was high time for 14...♝h7. The position after 15.g5 hxg5 16.hxg5 ♜d8 17.♗h5?! e5 18.♗d5 exf4 is

sharp, but White lacks immediate threats. For instance: 19.♗xf4 ♜xg5 20.♗xd6 ♜e7 or 19.♗xe7+ ♜xe7 20.♗xf4 ♜g6 21.♗f2 ♜e5.

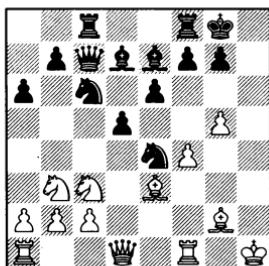
White can fight for the initiative with 17.♗f3, when 17...g6?!, intending ...♝g7, looks best. Instead, 17...e5 18.♗g3 exf4 19.♗xf4 ♜xg5 20.♗xg5 ♜xg5 21.♗xd6 ♜h7 22.♗h6 ♜f6 23.♗h2 ♜e5 24.♗d5 ♜d8 25.c3 leaves White with some edge.

15.g5!

15.exd5 ♜b4 is extremely demanding for White while Black's game is much easier.

15.e5 ♜e8 16.g5 hxg5 17.hxg5 g6 is double-edged – 18.♗f3 ♜g7 19.♗g1 ♜f5 20.♗b6 ♜b8 21.♗c5 ♜xc5 22.♗xc5 ♜fd8 23.♗b6 ♜e8∞.

15...hxg5 16.hxg5 ♜xe4



17.♗xe4?

17.♗xe4! dxе4 18.♗h5 ♜e8 19.♗f2 gives White an overwhelming attack. After the text, Black took over the initiative.

17...dxе4 18.♗xe4 f5 19.gxf6 ♜xf6 20.♗f2 ♜b4 21.♗g4 ♜c6

The Fianchetto

22.♗g2 ♕f8 23.♕xc6 ♖xc6
24.♔d4 ♘h6+ 25.♔g1 ♔d5?
26.♗e1 ♗e7 27.c3 ♘d8 28.♗e3
♘d5 29.♗d4 ♖d7 30.♗f2 ♘dh5
31.♗eg1 ♗d5 32.♗f3 ♘h3 33.♗g3
♗xg3 34.♗xg3 ♖f7 35.♗e2 ♕e7
36.♗g2 ♕f6 37.♗g1 ♕e5 38.♗e4
♗xe3 39.♗xe3 ♕d6 40.♗d4
♗c7 41.♗e4 ♕b6+ 42.♗d4 ♖h5
43.♗f2 ♖f6 44.♗e3 ♕c7 45.♗xb7
♗xf4+ 46.♗d3 ♘h6 47.♗c2 e5
48.♗d5+ ♘h8 49.♗a8+ ♘h7
50.♗e4+ ♘h8 51.♗a8+ ♘h7
52.♗e4+ ♘h8 53.♗a8+ ♘h7
54.♗e4+ Draw.

castle only when he is ready to meet g4 by ...d5. Long castling is also possible so White should think twice before flinging forward his kingside pawns. On the other hand, switching to restrictive play with 11.a4 ♘e5!?(11...b6 is the common retort) 12.a5 ♘c4 13.♔a4 0-0 is not very enticing for White.

11.f4 b5 12.a3

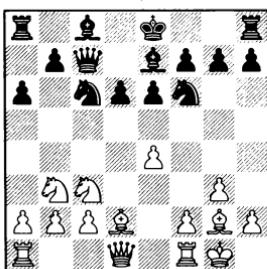
12.e5 dxe5 13.fxe5 ♘xe5 14.♗xa8?
♗a7+ is clearly better for Black.

12...♗b7 13.♗e2 0-0

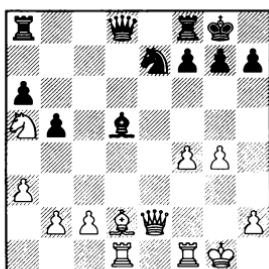
It makes sense to wait one more move before castling – 13...♗d8?!

14.g4 d5 15.e5?!

The critical line is, of course, 15.exd5 ♘xd5 16.♗xd5 (16.♔xd5 exd5 17.♗f2 d4 18.♔ad1 ♘fe8) 16... exd5 17.♗xd5 ♖d8 18.♗xe7+ ♘xe7 19.♔a5 ♕d5 20.♔ad1



This move shows that Black has put aside the idea of pushing ...d5 early. Instead, he will fianchetto the bishop, put a rook on c8 or d8 and

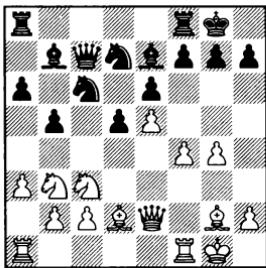


If Black consolidated, he would have fair chances against the weakened enemy king. But he has to make a couple of accurate moves: 20...♗c8! [20...♗e8 21.♗fe1 ♖b6+

Part 5

22. $\mathbb{W}f2$ $\mathbb{W}g6$ 23. h3 $\mathbb{Q}e4$ 24. $\mathbb{Q}b4$ $\mathbb{Q}d5$
25. f5 (25. $\mathbb{E}d4$ $\mathbb{Q}xb4$ 26. $\mathbb{E}xe4$ $\mathbb{E}xe4$
27. f5 $\mathbb{W}f6$ 28. $\mathbb{E}xe4$ $\mathbb{Q}xc2=$) 25...
 $\mathbb{W}h6$ 26. $\mathbb{Q}h2$ $\mathbb{Q}xb4$ 27. axb4 $\mathbb{W}f6$
28. $\mathbb{E}e2\pm$] 21. $\mathbb{Q}c3$ (21. $\mathbb{Q}b4$ $\mathbb{W}b6+$
22. $\mathbb{E}f2$ $\mathbb{Q}g6$ 23. $\mathbb{E}xd5$ $\mathbb{Q}xf4$ 24. $\mathbb{W}f3$
 $\mathbb{Q}xd5$ 25. $\mathbb{W}xd5$ $\mathbb{E}xc2$ 26. $\mathbb{W}f3=$) 21...
 $\mathbb{W}b6+$ 22. $\mathbb{W}f2$ $\mathbb{W}g6$ 23. h3 $\mathbb{Q}a8\infty$.

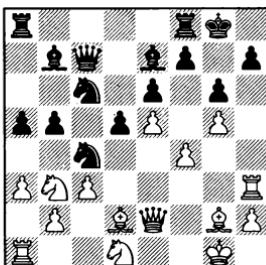
15... $\mathbb{Q}d7$



16. $\mathbb{E}f3$

White would be unable to hold his queenside with solid centralising moves. For instance, after 16. $\mathbb{Q}e3$ $\mathbb{Q}b6$ 17. $\mathbb{Q}c5$, he'll face 17... d4!. He also should reckon with the threat of ...g5 at some point. Therefore, Radulski makes a right choice. He tries to attack h7. He is not afraid of 16...g5 since after 17. $\mathbb{E}h3$ gxf4 he may draw by 18. $\mathbb{E}xf4$ $\mathbb{Q}cxe5$ 19. g5 f6 20. $\mathbb{E}xh7=$ or gamble with 18. $\mathbb{W}d3$ f5 19. exf6 $\mathbb{Q}xf6$ 20. $\mathbb{Q}xd5$ exd5 21. $\mathbb{Q}xd5+$ $\mathbb{Q}h8$ 22. $\mathbb{Q}c3$ $\mathbb{Q}d8\infty$. To be fair, in the latter line Black could neutralise the attack with 22... $\mathbb{Q}e5$ 23. $\mathbb{Q}xe5$ $\mathbb{W}xe5$ 24. $\mathbb{Q}xb7$ $\mathbb{E}ad8$ 25. $\mathbb{W}f5$ $\mathbb{W}xf5$ 26. gxf5 $\mathbb{E}g8+$ 27. $\mathbb{Q}f1$ $\mathbb{Q}g4$. This sharp endgame is probably balanced. Filev correctly refrains from forcing the play.

16... $\mathbb{Q}b6!$ 17. $\mathbb{E}h3$ $\mathbb{Q}c4$ 18. $\mathbb{g}5$
g6 19. $\mathbb{Q}d1$ a5 20. c3



20... $\mathbb{W}b6+$

White's attack has reached a dead end and Black can already launch a counter-attack. The general rule dictates to strike in the centre and, indeed, 20... a4 21. $\mathbb{Q}c1$ d4 is perhaps the best way to exploit the enemy weaknesses. The flank strike 20... b4 is also a plausible alternative. Instead, Black takes a seemingly inexplicable decision to seal the queenside.

21. $\mathbb{Q}e3$ $\mathbb{Q}xe3$ 22. $\mathbb{W}xe3$ $\mathbb{W}xe3+$
23. $\mathbb{Q}xe3$ a4?

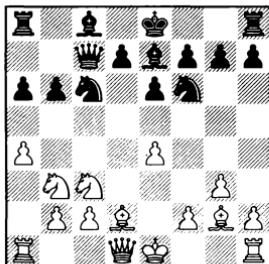
A horrible move. Did Filev forget that he had a light-squared bishop?! 23... $\mathbb{E}fc8$ 24. $\mathbb{Q}g4$ b4 would have preserved a strong pull. Now 24. $\mathbb{Q}c1$ followed by $\mathbb{Q}d3$ would have balanced the game. You could guess the reason behind Black's actions when you knew the ratings! He is more than 200 points underdog so he just wanted to make a draw! The rest is unrelated to the opening. White was stubbornly trying to win his worse position and eventually lost.

The Fianchetto

24. $\mathbb{Q}d2$ $\mathbb{Q}a5$ 25. $\mathbb{Q}g4$ $\mathbb{Q}g7$
26. $\mathbb{E}d1$ $\mathbb{E}ab8$ 27. $\mathbb{Q}f6$ $\mathbb{E}h8$ 28. $\mathbb{Q}f3$
 $h5?$ 29. $\mathbb{Q}f1$ $\mathbb{Q}c4$ 30. $\mathbb{Q}xc4$ $bxc4$
31. $\mathbb{Q}f1$ $\mathbb{Q}a8$ 32. $\mathbb{E}d2$ $\mathbb{E}b7$ 33. $f5$
 $exf5$ 34. $\mathbb{Q}xd5$ $\mathbb{Q}c5$ 35. $\mathbb{E}h4$ $\mathbb{E}d7$
36. $\mathbb{E}f4$ $\mathbb{E}e7$ 37. $\mathbb{Q}d5$ $\mathbb{E}d7$ 38. $\mathbb{Q}f4$
 $\mathbb{E}e7$ 39. $\mathbb{Q}e2$ $\mathbb{E}b8$ 40. $e6$ $\mathbb{E}b6$
41. $\mathbb{Q}e5$ $\mathbb{E}bx6$ 42. $\mathbb{Q}xe6+$ $\mathbb{E}xe6$
43. $\mathbb{E}xc4$ $\mathbb{E}xe5+$ 44. $\mathbb{Q}f1$ $\mathbb{Q}c6$
45. $\mathbb{E}h4$ $f4$ 46. $c4$ $\mathbb{Q}e3$ 47. $\mathbb{E}d6$
 $\mathbb{Q}e4$ 48. $\mathbb{E}h3$ $\mathbb{E}xg5$ 49. $\mathbb{E}xe3$ $fxe3$
50. $\mathbb{Q}e2$ $\mathbb{E}g2+$ 51. $\mathbb{Q}xe3$ $f5$ 52. $h4$
 $\mathbb{E}xb2$ 53. $\mathbb{Q}f4$ $\mathbb{E}c2$ 54. $\mathbb{E}d7+$ $\mathbb{Q}f6$
55. $\mathbb{E}d6+$ $\mathbb{Q}f7$ 0-1

33. Forcen Esteban-Korneev La Roda 07.04.2012

1. e4 c5 2. $\mathbb{Q}f3$ e6 3. d4 $cxd4$
4. $\mathbb{Q}xd4$ a6 5. $\mathbb{Q}c3$ $\mathbb{W}c7$ 6. g3 $\mathbb{Q}b4$
7. $\mathbb{Q}d2$ $\mathbb{Q}f6$ 8. $\mathbb{Q}g2$ $\mathbb{Q}c6$ 9. $\mathbb{Q}b3$ $\mathbb{Q}e7$
10. a4 b6



11.0-0

11. f4 d6 12. g4 h6 13. $\mathbb{W}e2$ is more aggressive. White is planning long castling. The mundane 13... $\mathbb{Q}b7$ is hardly the best answer although 14.0-0-0 (14. h4 d5) 14... $\mathbb{Q}d7$ (14... $\mathbb{Q}b4$ 15. g5 $hxg5$ 16. fxg5 $\mathbb{Q}d7$ 17. g6 $fxg6$ 18. $\mathbb{Q}d4$ $\mathbb{Q}c5$ 19. $\mathbb{W}g4 \rightarrow$) 15. $\mathbb{Q}b1$

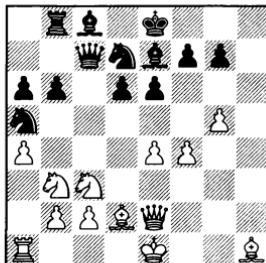
$\mathbb{Q}c5$ 16. $\mathbb{Q}e3$ $\mathbb{Q}xb3$ 17. $cxb3$ b5 is unclear. The bishop probably stands better on c8, protecting e6 and leaving the b-file open for the rook. So I like:

13... $\mathbb{Q}b8!?$

Now 14.0-0 $\mathbb{Q}a5$ is fine for Black, e.g. 15. $\mathbb{E}ad1$ $\mathbb{W}c4$ 16. $\mathbb{Q}xa5$ $\mathbb{W}xe2$ 17. $\mathbb{Q}xe2$ $bxa5$ 18. b3 $\mathbb{Q}xg4$ 19. h3 $\mathbb{Q}f6$ 20. $\mathbb{Q}xa5$ $\mathbb{Q}b7\uparrow$; 14.0-0-0 $\mathbb{Q}d7$ 15. $\mathbb{Q}b1$ $\mathbb{Q}c5$ is an improved version of the above-mentioned line. The game Malisauskas-Grabliauskas, Vilnius 2009, went:

14. h4 $\mathbb{Q}b4$ 15.0-0-0 h5 (15... b5?) 16. $gxh5$, when 16... $\mathbb{Q}xh5$ would have been double-edged.

I recommend the more concrete move 14... $\mathbb{Q}a5!$? 15. g5 (15.0-0-0? $\mathbb{Q}xb3+$ 16. $cxb3$ b5) 15... $hxg5$ 16. $hxg5$ $\mathbb{Q}xh1+$ 17. $\mathbb{Q}xh1$ $\mathbb{Q}d7$



18. $\mathbb{Q}xa5$ $bxa5$ with a tangled position, e.g. 19. b3 e5!, exploiting the hanging state of the c3-knight – 20. f5? $\mathbb{Q}xg5$.

11... $\mathbb{Q}b7$ 12. f4 d6 13. g4

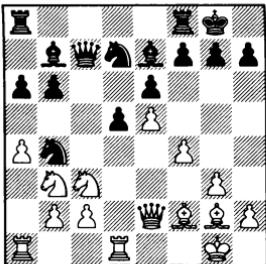
13. $\mathbb{Q}e3$ transposes to a side line of the Taimanov. Black's most natu-

Part 5

ral plan is to prepare the break ...d5 with 13... $\mathbb{Q}b4$. For instance, 14. $\mathbb{W}e2$ (14.a5 b5 15. $\mathbb{Q}b6$ $\mathbb{W}c4$) 14...0-0 15.g4 d5 16.e5 $\mathbb{Q}d7$ 17. $\mathbb{E}ad1$ $\mathbb{E}ac8$ 18. $\mathbb{E}d2$ g5.

15. $\mathbb{W}f2$ is dubious due to 15... $\mathbb{Q}g4$ 16. $\mathbb{Q}xb6$ $\mathbb{W}b8$ 17. $\mathbb{W}e2$ $\mathbb{Q}xe4\uparrow$ 18. $\mathbb{Q}xe4$ $\mathbb{W}xb6+$ 19. $\mathbb{Q}h1$ d5.

It is safer to sit tight on the kingside with 15. $\mathbb{E}fd1$ d5 16.e5 $\mathbb{Q}d7$ 17. $\mathbb{Q}f2$



This structure is generally good for Black. He can continue simply 17... $\mathbb{E}ac8$ 18. $\mathbb{Q}d4$ $\mathbb{Q}c6=$.

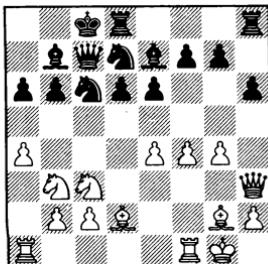
13...h6 14. $\mathbb{W}f3$

White aims to shift the queen to an active position on h3. If he adopted a waiting game with 14. $\mathbb{W}e2$, Black could prepare a counterattack with ...g5, for instance: 14... $\mathbb{Q}d7$ 15. $\mathbb{Q}e3$ g5! 16.f5 $\mathbb{Q}ce5$ 17. $\mathbb{Q}d4$ $\mathbb{W}c4\infty$, or 14... $\mathbb{Q}b4$ 15.a5 (15. $\mathbb{Q}f2$ d5) 15... $\mathbb{E}c8$ (15...b5? 16. $\mathbb{Q}xb5$) 16.axb6 $\mathbb{W}xb6+$ 17. $\mathbb{Q}e3$ $\mathbb{W}c7$ 18. $\mathbb{E}fd1$ d5 19.e5 $\mathbb{Q}d7$ 20. $\mathbb{E}d2$ g5 \uparrow .

14... $\mathbb{Q}d7$ 15. $\mathbb{W}h3$ 0-0-0!

Black should be satisfied with the opening. After the inevita-

ble ...g5, he will control the critical square e5.



16. $\mathbb{Q}e3$ g5 17.f5 $\mathbb{Q}f6$ 18.a5 b5 19.fxe6 $\mathbb{W}xe6$ 20. $\mathbb{Q}b6$ $\mathbb{Q}xb6$ 21. $\mathbb{E}xf6$ $\mathbb{W}e7$ 22. $\mathbb{E}xh6$

Or 22. $\mathbb{E}af1$ $\mathbb{Q}c4$ 23. $\mathbb{E}f7$ $\mathbb{W}e8$ 24. $\mathbb{E}1f6$ $\mathbb{Q}d7$ 25. $\mathbb{E}xd7$ $\mathbb{Q}xd7\mp$ 26. $\mathbb{E}xh6$ $\mathbb{E}xh6$ 27. $\mathbb{W}xh6$ $\mathbb{W}e7$.

22... $\mathbb{W}g7$ 23. $\mathbb{E}xh8$ $\mathbb{E}xh8$
24. $\mathbb{W}g3$ $\mathbb{Q}c4$

Black has a huge advantage thanks to the gaping dark squares in the enemy camp. The rest of the game went in a severe time trouble and at some point White even became better in the endgame.

25. $\mathbb{Q}d1$ $\mathbb{Q}6e5$ 26. $\mathbb{Q}d4$ $\mathbb{Q}g6$
27. $\mathbb{W}c3$ $\mathbb{Q}f4$ 28. $\mathbb{Q}f1$ $\mathbb{W}h7$ 29.h3
 $\mathbb{W}xe4$ 30. $\mathbb{Q}f2$ $\mathbb{W}e3$ 31. $\mathbb{Q}xb5$
 $\mathbb{W}xc3$ 32. $\mathbb{Q}xc3$ $\mathbb{Q}e5$ 33. $\mathbb{Q}h2$ $\mathbb{Q}d7$
34. $\mathbb{Q}g3$ d5 35.b4 $\mathbb{E}c8$ 36. $\mathbb{Q}a4$
 $\mathbb{E}xc2$ 37.h4 $\mathbb{Q}e2+38.\mathbb{Q}xe2gxh4+$
39. $\mathbb{Q}xh4$ $\mathbb{E}xe2$ 40. $\mathbb{Q}c5+$ $\mathbb{Q}c6$
41. $\mathbb{Q}g3$ $\mathbb{Q}c8$ 42.g5 $\mathbb{Q}b5$ 43. $\mathbb{Q}b1$
 $\mathbb{Q}g6$ 44. $\mathbb{Q}f3$ $\mathbb{E}e5$ 45. $\mathbb{Q}cd3$ $\mathbb{E}f5+$
46. $\mathbb{Q}e3$ $\mathbb{E}xg5$ 47. $\mathbb{E}c1$ $\mathbb{Q}d7$ 48. $\mathbb{Q}c7$
 $\mathbb{Q}c6$ 49. $\mathbb{Q}d1$ $\mathbb{E}g3+$ 50. $\mathbb{Q}d2$ d4
51. $\mathbb{E}g7$ e5 0-1

Part 6

Kan – the Maróczy Bind

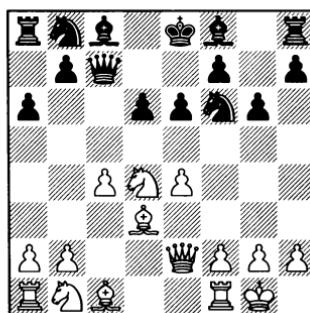
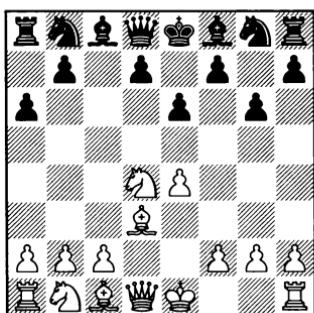
This part covers a huge material so I separated the Kan from the Taimanov. Actually, I analyse here both 1.e4 c5 2. $\mathbb{Q}f3$ e6 3.d4 cxd4 4. $\mathbb{Q}xd4$ a6 5.c4 and 5. $\mathbb{Q}d3$ which aim to establish pawn control of the centre with c4.

After 5.c4 $\mathbb{Q}f6$ 6. $\mathbb{Q}c3$ $\mathbb{Q}b4$, Black's dark-squared bishop is not caged behind a d6-pawn and it can split White's queenside.

5. $\mathbb{Q}d3$ commonly leads to Maróczy Bind structures, but the character of play greatly depends on the move order. I offer two alternative approaches for Black:

Line B1. 5...g6 followed by ... $\mathbb{Q}e7$ aims to eliminate the pawn centre with ...d7-d5. This is play for equalisation.

Line B2. 5... $\mathbb{Q}f6$ 6.0-0 $\mathbb{Q}c7$ 7. $\mathbb{Q}e2$ d6 accepts the Maróczy Bind. I advocate to fianchetto the bishop on g7 from where it exerts pressure on White's queenside and enables the positional threat of ... $\mathbb{Q}xc3$.

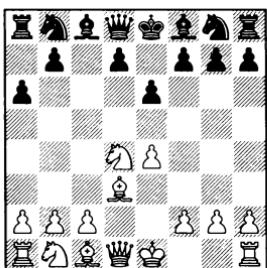


Part 6. Kan – the Maróczy Bind

Main Ideas

The previous parts taught us that Kan's utmost flexibility brings excellent dividends in all the systems where White puts early his queen's knight on c3. However, this flexibility has its cost – it allows White to build up the Maróczy Bind. This part should teach you to cope with White's most cunning retort to the Kan:

**1.e4 c5 2.♘f3 e6 3.d4 cxd4
4.♗xd4 a6 5.♗d3**



We are getting a taste of our own medicine! The enemy exploits the lack of ♘c6 and develops in a flexible way which keeps all his options open. Depending on our set-up, he may then return to ♘c3 and long castling, or opt for the restrictive

c2-c4. Black has tried in practice at least five distinct schemes in retort.

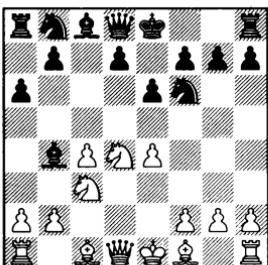
I do not cover the 5...♝c5 6.♗b3 ♝a7 system, because it does not suit my taste. White trades dark-squared bishops via e3 and the weakness of d6 forces Black to enter Kalashnikov-type structures with ...e5. They are too rigid and look passive to me. I have always preferred plans with ...d5 (or ...f5) in the Sicilian. Besides, White is usually well prepared against 5...♝c5 and we would hardly surprise him in the opening.

I will offer you instead a choice between two approaches. Both are based on the fianchetto of the dark-squared bishop, but the first one aims to quickly eliminate the centre with ...♝e7 and ...d7-d5 while the second one assumes a rather unusual hedgehog structure where the g7-bishop longs to split White's queenside pawns by taking the c3-knight. I think that the surprise effect should be at your side.

In practice 5...g6 and 5...♝c5 bring similar results.

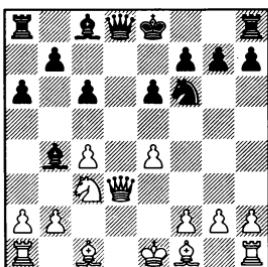
Kan – the Maróczy Bind

Let's step back a little and see what happens if White plays immediately 5.c4 $\mathbb{Q}f6$ 6. $\mathbb{Q}c3$ $\mathbb{Q}b4$



7. $\mathbb{Q}d3$ $\mathbb{Q}c6$ 8. $\mathbb{Q}xc6$ dxc6 9.e5 $\mathbb{Q}a5$ is equal – 10.exf6 $\mathbb{Q}xc3+$ 11.bxc3 $\mathbb{Q}xc3+$ so the top players prefer:

7. $\mathbb{Q}d3$ $\mathbb{Q}c6$ 8. $\mathbb{Q}xc6$ dxc6

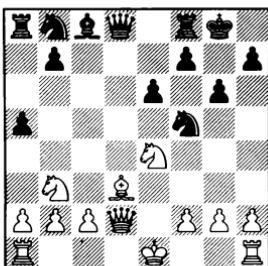


Here both 9. $\mathbb{Q}xd8+$ and 9.e5 lead to balanced endgames where White has the bishop pair, but his queenside is severely crippled, for instance: 9. $\mathbb{Q}xd8+$ $\mathbb{Q}xd8$ 10.e5 (10. $\mathbb{Q}d2$ e5) 10... $\mathbb{Q}xc3+!$ 11.bxc3 $\mathbb{Q}d7$ 12.f4 b6 13. $\mathbb{Q}e3$ c5 14. $\mathbb{Q}d3$ $\mathbb{Q}c7$ 15. $\mathbb{Q}f7$ $\mathbb{Q}b7$ 16.0-0 f5! with counterplay.

Let's now return to the more sophisticated 5. $\mathbb{Q}d3$. I propose to play for equalisation with:

5...g6!? 6.c4

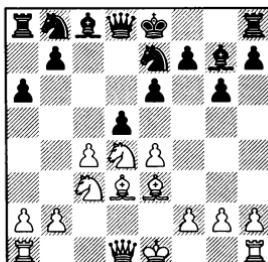
6. $\mathbb{Q}c3$ $\mathbb{Q}g7$ 7. $\mathbb{Q}e3$ $\mathbb{Q}e7$ 8. $\mathbb{Q}d2$ should not scare us out of our main idea: 8...d5 9. $\mathbb{Q}b3?$ dx $e4?$ 10. $\mathbb{Q}xe4$ 0-0 11. $\mathbb{Q}h6$ $\mathbb{Q}xh6!$ 12. $\mathbb{Q}xh6$ $\mathbb{Q}f5$ 13. $\mathbb{Q}d2$ a5!. A thematic method of seizing space on the queenside by tempo.



I give a detailed analysis of the endgame which arises after 14.0-0-0 a4 15. $\mathbb{Q}c4$ $\mathbb{Q}xd2+$. Remember to avoid rook exchanges! Instead of contesting the d-file, we should put our heavy pieces on c8 and a5.

6... $\mathbb{Q}g7$ 7. $\mathbb{Q}b3$

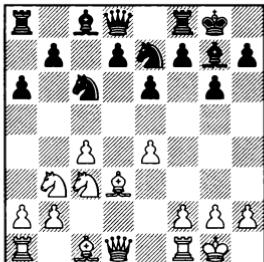
Alternatives do not hinder the freeing ...d7-d5 – 7. $\mathbb{Q}e2$ d5! 8.exd5 7... $\mathbb{Q}e7$ 8. $\mathbb{Q}c3$ (8.0-0 d5 9.exd5 exd5 10. $\mathbb{Q}c3$ 0-0!) 8...d5 cuts across White's plans to torture us in a Maróczy Bind structure.



Part 6

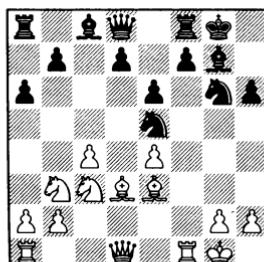
Black's play is straightforward and easy – 9.exd5 exd5 10.0-0 0-0 11. $\mathbb{Q}e1$ $\mathbb{Q}bc6$ 12. $\mathbb{Q}xc6$ bxc6 13. $\mathbb{Q}g5$ $\mathbb{Q}e6=$.

7... $\mathbb{Q}e7$ 8. $\mathbb{Q}bc3$ $\mathbb{Q}bc6$ 9.0-0 0-0



This is a very interesting position with mutual chances. White has discouraged ...d7-d5 due to the option of playing $\mathbb{Q}g5$, but his knight left the centre (and offered us a tempo!). That gives us a free hand on the kingside. Our offensive could begin with ...f7-f5, leaving the d-pawn on d7. The c8-bishop will enter play from the queenside after ...b6, or, even better, ...b5! See **game 34** Ermakov-Kotsur, Dubai 2000, which featured 10. $\mathbb{Q}e2$ f5!. 10. $\mathbb{Q}f4$ will be met by 10...d5.

10. $\mathbb{Q}g5!$? h6 11. $\mathbb{Q}h4$ g5 12. $\mathbb{Q}g3$ $\mathbb{Q}e5$ 13.f4 gxf4 14. $\mathbb{Q}xf4$ $\mathbb{Q}7g6$ 15. $\mathbb{Q}e3$

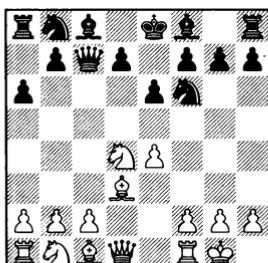


Black's pieces are very active so he can afford to sacrifice a pawn with 15...b5! 16.cxb5 $\mathbb{Q}xd3$ 17. $\mathbb{Q}xd3$ axb5.

You see that two hours of studying suffice to start playing 5...g6.

If the idea of getting a symmetric pawn structure with an early ...d5 is revolting to you, my backup solution is:

5... $\mathbb{Q}f6$ 6.0-0 $\mathbb{Q}c7$



7. $\mathbb{Q}e2!$

After this clever move which awaits ...d6, we cannot escape the Hedgehog. 7.c4 is a positional mistake due to 7... $\mathbb{Q}c6!$ 8. $\mathbb{Q}e3$ (8. $\mathbb{Q}xc6$ dx $c6$ 9. $\mathbb{Q}c3$ e5 – see **game 35** Eichhorn-Delchev, Bad Wiessee 2013) 8... $\mathbb{Q}e5$ 9.h3 b6. Fortunately, the queen move rules out the most dangerous plans with $\mathbb{Q}e3$, $\mathbb{Q}d2$, $\mathbb{Q}d1$. Even more importantly, $\mathbb{Q}d3$ cannot retreat to f1. We should use that to trade the bishop with ... $\mathbb{Q}b8$ -d7-e5xd3.

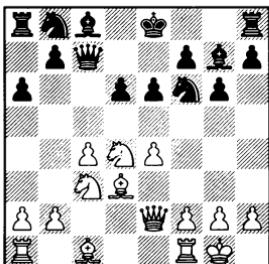
7...d6 8.c4

We should be happy to see the double-edged 8.f4 g6 9. $\mathbb{Q}c3$ $\mathbb{Q}g7$.

Kan – the Maróczy Bind

White's f-pawn cannot return to defend e4 anymore. The only way to justify its advance would be 10.e5 dx5 11.Qdb5 axb5 12.Qxb5 Qe7 13.fxe5 0-0 14.exf6 Qxf6, but our king is safe and the e- and f-pawns control the centre.

8...g6! 9.Qc3 Qg7



The fianchetto has certain pluses:

1. It limits the scope of the d3-bishop.

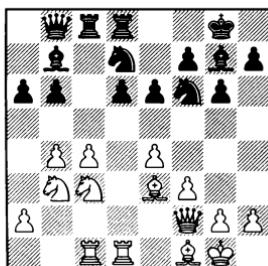
2. The bishop is more active on g7. It takes an active part in the battle for d4 and e5 enabling ideas like ...Qd7-e5 or ...e5 followed up by ...Qg4.

3. A very interesting positional idea is to cripple White's queenside by ...Qxc3, followed up by ...e5, ...Qd7-b6.

Of course it has downsides, too: Black spends an extra tempo, weakens the d6-pawn and the dark squares around his king. Now White can try to put pressure on d6 or follow a typical hedgehog plan:

A. 10.Qe3 0-0 11.Qac1 Qbd7!
(not 11...b6) 12.f3 Qe5!

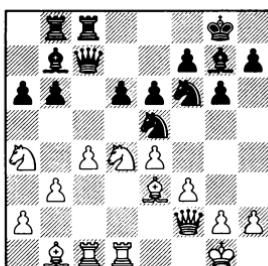
I analyse in detail the position after 12...b6 13.Qfd1 Qb7 14.Qf2 Qac8 15.Qf1 Qfd8 (or 15...Qfe8) 16.b4 Qb8 17.Qb3 – see **game 38** Simacek-Akopian, Plovdiv 2012.



My conclusion is that we should not allow it at all!

13.Qfd1 b6

Our plan is to take the bishop, but let's give White the option of displacing it to b1! Most practical games went from this point 14.b3 Qb7 15.Qb1?! Qfc8 16.Qf2 Qab8 17.Qa4



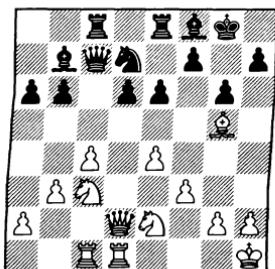
Note the rooks on b8 (protecting b6) and c8 (hitting c4). In the "Step by Step" chapter I consider two active plans for Black. They involve shifting our queen to the kingside (the b8-rook takes over the defence

Part 6

of b6!) followed up by ...g6-g5.

In the event of:

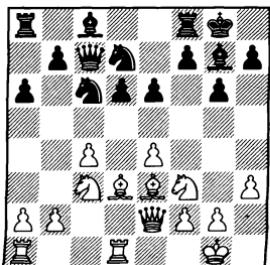
14.♗d2, we have no choice but kill the bishop: **14...♝xd3** **15.♗xd3 ♜d7!** **16.b3 ♜d8** **17.♗d2 ♜b7** **18.♗de2 ♜f8** **19.♗h1 ♜ac8** **20.♗g5 ♜e8**



White has not a clear plan for improvement.

B. Lately, White prefers more energetic plans. He tries to pinpoint our weakness on d6 with ♜f3, ♜d1, ♜f4. They all lead to a similar pawn structure:

10.♗d1 0-0 11.♗f3 ♜c6 12.h3 ♜d7! (targetting the c3-knight) **13.♗e3** (or **13.♗f4 ♜xc3 14.bxc3 e5**, see **game 36** Todorovic-Caruana, Rijeka 2010)

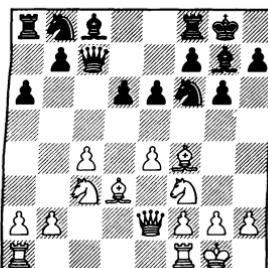


13...♝xc3! 14.bxc3 f6

It is easy to play this position with Black. See **game 37** Leko-Ivanchuk, Mukachevo 2007, for more explanation.

Here is another version of the same plan:

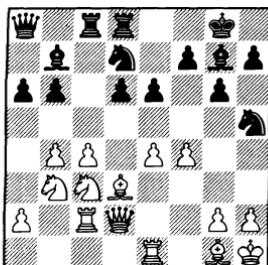
10.♗f3 0-0 11.♗f4



11...♝h5! 12.♗e3 ♜xc3! 13.bxc3 e5! See **game 40** Grischuk-Ivan-chuk, Beijing 2013.

The idea of giving up our dark-squared bishop sometimes works even without the benefit of splitting the enemy's queenside pawns:

**Simek-Kanovsky
Prague 2011**



19...♝xc3 20.♗xc3 e5 21.f5 ♜f4 22.fxg6 hxg6 23.♗b1 ♜f6 24.♗e3 b5→.

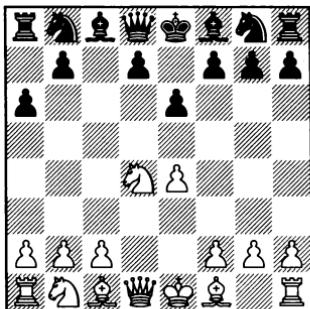
Kan – the Maróczy Bind

On a final note, Black should not be scared of 5. $\mathbb{Q}d3$. This move is not even White's first choice against the Kan. While the Maróczy Bind is rather restrictive, it is far from the true spirit of the open Sicilians. The 1.e4 players are commonly not big fans of long positional manoeuvring. Even when they choose 5. $\mathbb{Q}d3$ because it is supposed to be the "best" answer to 4...a6, they tend to treat it over-aggressively. That gives us fair chances for full-fledged counterplay.

Part 6. Kan – the Maróczy Bind

Step by Step

1.e4 c5 2.♘f3 e6 3.d4 cxd4
4.♗xd4 a6



This chapter deals with White's approach based on the Maróczy Bind. He either plays A. 5.c4 immediately, or delay it by B. 5.♗d3.

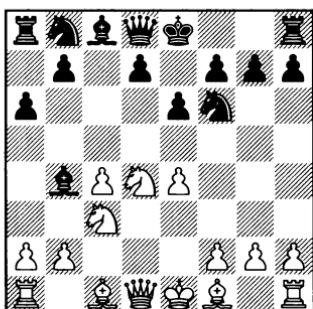
A. 5.c4 ♘f6 6.♘c3

6.♗d3 ♘c6 gains control over the dark squares and White often fails to even equalise. Here are two examples:

7.♘xc6 dxc6 8.♘c3 e5 9.♗e2 ♘c5 10.♗g5 h6 11.♗h4 ♗g4 12.f3 ♘e6 13.0-0-0 ♗a5 14.♗c2 b5 15.♗b3 ♘d4 16.♗e1 ♗b6+, Savchenko-Caruana, Moscow 2010;

7.♘c2 ♘e5 8.0-0 ♗c7 9.♘c3 b6 10.♘e3 ♘b7 11.f3 ♘d6+, Kokol-Korneev, Nova Gorica 2014

6...♗b4



If you aim for the Hedgehog, you should choose 6...♗c7 7.a3 b6 8.♘e3 ♘b7 9.f3 ♘e7 10.♗e2 0-0 11.♗c1 d6. This structure is not part of the opening, but rather of the middle-game.

In the diagram position, White has tested nearly all the legal moves. I will focus on:

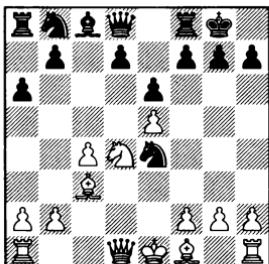
A1. 7.♗d3; A2. 7.♗d3; A3. 7.♗c2;
A4. 7.♗f3

Minor alternatives are:

Kan – the Maróczy Bind

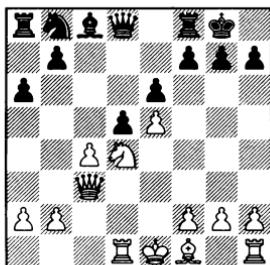
a) 7.e5? $\mathbb{Q}e4$ 8. $\mathbb{W}g4$ (8. $\mathbb{W}f3$
 $\mathbb{W}a5$ 9. $\mathbb{W}xe4$ $\mathbb{Q}xc3+$ 10. $\mathbb{Q}d1$ $\mathbb{Q}xd4$
 11. $\mathbb{W}xd4$ $\mathbb{Q}c6$; 8. $\mathbb{W}c2$ $\mathbb{Q}xc3$ 9. $\mathbb{B}xc3$
 $\mathbb{Q}e7$ 10. $\mathbb{W}e4$ d6 11. $\mathbb{Q}f4$ $\mathbb{W}a5$ 12. $\mathbb{Q}d3$
 $\mathbb{Q}d7$) 8... $\mathbb{Q}xc3$ 9.a3 $\mathbb{Q}f8$ 10. $\mathbb{B}xc3$
 $\mathbb{W}a5$ (10...d6?) 11. $\mathbb{W}g3$ d6 12. $\mathbb{B}xd6$
 $\mathbb{Q}xd6$ 13. $\mathbb{W}xd6$ $\mathbb{W}xc3+$ 14. $\mathbb{Q}d1$ (14. $\mathbb{Q}d2$ $\mathbb{W}xa1+$ 15. $\mathbb{Q}e2$ $\mathbb{W}b2$ 16. $\mathbb{Q}e3$ $\mathbb{Q}d7$
 17. $\mathbb{Q}b4$ $\mathbb{W}c1+$ 18. $\mathbb{Q}e2$ $\mathbb{W}g5$) 14... $\mathbb{W}xa1$
 15. $\mathbb{Q}d3$ $\mathbb{Q}d7+$, Enevoldsen-Portisch,
 Munich 1958.

b) 7. $\mathbb{Q}d2$ 0-0! 8.e5! (8. $\mathbb{Q}d3?$
 d5!) 8... $\mathbb{Q}xc3!$ 9. $\mathbb{Q}xc3$ $\mathbb{Q}e4$



Black's defence is based on the exchange sacrifice 10. $\mathbb{Q}b4$ d6! (10... $\mathbb{W}b6$ 11. $\mathbb{Q}xf8$ $\mathbb{Q}xf8$ offers Black enough material, but a bad position after 12. $\mathbb{Q}b1$ $\mathbb{W}a5+$ 13.b4 $\mathbb{W}xe5$ 14. $\mathbb{Q}f3$ $\mathbb{W}c3+$ 15. $\mathbb{Q}d2$ $\mathbb{W}d4$ 16. $\mathbb{Q}xe4$ $\mathbb{W}xe4+$ 17. $\mathbb{Q}e2$ $\mathbb{W}xg2$ 18. $\mathbb{Q}f3$ $\mathbb{W}g6$ 19. $\mathbb{W}d6+$) 11. $\mathbb{Q}e2$ $\mathbb{W}b6$ 12. $\mathbb{Q}c2$ $\mathbb{Q}c6$ 13.a3 d5!. The stem game Korchnoi-Furman, Leningrad 1957, went further 14.f3 $\mathbb{Q}c5$ 15. $\mathbb{W}e3$ d4 16. $\mathbb{Q}xd4$ $\mathbb{Q}xb4$ 17.axb4 $\mathbb{W}xb4+=$.

10. $\mathbb{W}c2$ $\mathbb{Q}xc3$ 11. $\mathbb{W}xc3$ d5! (avoiding 11...d6 12. $\mathbb{Q}d1$!) 12. $\mathbb{Q}d1$ (12. $\mathbb{B}xd6$ $\mathbb{W}xd6$ was thoroughly tested ...back in 1957!)



12...b5! White's lag in development prompts for energetic actions.
 13.c5

13.cxb5 axb5 14. $\mathbb{Q}xb5$ $\mathbb{W}xa2$
 15.0-0 $\mathbb{Q}d7$ is balanced. White can try to capture the pawn later, for instance, 14.a3 $\mathbb{Q}d7$ 15. $\mathbb{Q}xb5$ $\mathbb{Q}c6$ 16.f4 (16. $\mathbb{Q}e2$ $\mathbb{Q}xe5$ 17. $\mathbb{W}xe5$ $\mathbb{Q}xb5$ 18. $\mathbb{Q}xb5$ $\mathbb{W}a5+$) 16... $\mathbb{W}b8$ 17. $\mathbb{Q}d6$ f6+, or 15. $\mathbb{Q}xb5$ $\mathbb{Q}xb5$ 16. $\mathbb{Q}xb5$ $\mathbb{Q}d7$ 17.f4 $\mathbb{Q}c8$ (17... $\mathbb{W}h4+\uparrow$) 18. $\mathbb{Q}d2$ $\mathbb{W}b6$ 19. $\mathbb{Q}d4$ $\mathbb{Q}c5$ 20.0-0 $\mathbb{Q}e4\mp$. 15. $\mathbb{Q}d3$ $\mathbb{W}b6$ gives Black a "free" initiative.

13... $\mathbb{W}c7$ 14.f4 f6 15. $\mathbb{Q}e2$ fxe5
 16.fxe5 $\mathbb{W}xe5$ 17. $\mathbb{Q}xb5=$.

d) 7. $\mathbb{Q}c2$ $\mathbb{Q}xc3+$ 8.bxc3 $\mathbb{W}a5$
 (This is the most straightforward equaliser. For more complex play, you should opt for 8... $\mathbb{Q}c6$ 9. $\mathbb{Q}d3$ d6 10.0-0 $\mathbb{W}c7$ 11.f4 0-0 12. $\mathbb{Q}e3$ b6 or even 12...b5!?) 9. $\mathbb{W}d3$ $\mathbb{Q}c6$ (9... $\mathbb{W}e5?$ 10.f3 d5 11. $\mathbb{Q}d4\pm$) 10. $\mathbb{Q}e2$ (10. $\mathbb{Q}a3$ d5) 10... $\mathbb{W}e5$ 11.f3 d5 12. $\mathbb{B}xd6$ exd5 13.f4 dxcc4!= 14.fxe5 cxd3 15.exf6 dxe2 16.fxg7 $\mathbb{Q}g8$ 17. $\mathbb{Q}h6$ f6 18. $\mathbb{Q}xe2$ $\mathbb{Q}f7$.

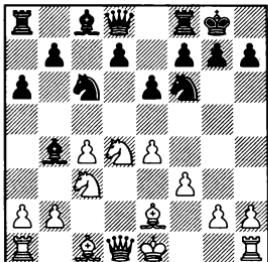
e) 7.f3 0-0

7... $\mathbb{W}c7$ is often seen, but it is connected with the passive set-up

Part 6

$\dots \mathbb{Q}bd7, \dots b6$. The queen move does not support the freeing $\dots d7-d5$. For instance, $8.\mathbb{Q}e2 0-0 9.0-0 d5!?$ is not enough due to $10.cxd5 \mathbb{Q}xc3 11.bxc3 exd5 12.\mathbb{Q}g5 \mathbb{Q}bd7 13.\mathbb{Q}f5 dx e4 14.\mathbb{W}d4\pm$.

$8.\mathbb{Q}e2$ ($8.\mathbb{Q}e3$ does not hamper $8\dots d5$, but Black may also consider the positional plan $8\dots \mathbb{Q}xc3+!?$ $9.bxc3 d6$). It is effective when White's bishop took away the e3 square putting an obstacle to the manoeuvre $\mathbb{Q}d4-c2-e3$.) $8\dots \mathbb{Q}c6$



$9.\mathbb{Q}e3 d5$. Of course, White can also play $9.\mathbb{Q}xc6 bxc6 10.e5 \mathbb{Q}e8$, but this is a fine version of the Taimanov. Black will get counterplay with $\dots f6$.

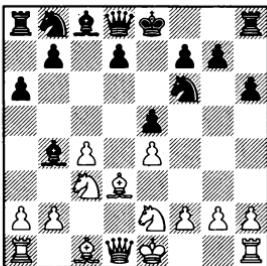
A1. $7.\mathbb{Q}d3 \mathbb{Q}c6$

This is the well known equaliser. Its only apparent drawback is that it leads by force to a drawish position with opposite-coloured bishops. A reasonable alternative is:

$7\dots \mathbb{W}c7 8.\mathbb{Q}de2 \mathbb{Q}c6 9.a3 \mathbb{Q}e7 10.\mathbb{Q}f4 d6 11.b3 \mathbb{Q}e5 12.\mathbb{Q}c2 \mathbb{Q}d7 13.a4 \mathbb{Q}g6$.

I have also analysed $7\dots e5 8.\mathbb{Q}de2$ ($8.\mathbb{Q}f5 0-0 9.\mathbb{Q}e3 \mathbb{Q}xc3+$

$10.bxc3 d6 11.\mathbb{Q}a3 \mathbb{W}c7 12.\mathbb{Q}c2 \mathbb{Q}d8) 8\dots h6!$ (This move order aims to avoid $8\dots d6 9.0-0 h6 10.\mathbb{Q}a4! 0-0 11.a3 \mathbb{Q}a5 12.b4 \mathbb{Q}c7$. $8\dots \mathbb{Q}c5!?$ pursues the same goal.)



$9.0-0 \mathbb{Q}c5!?$ $10.\mathbb{Q}d5 d6$. The game transposed to Perunovic-Gajewski, Legnica 2013 – $11.b4 \mathbb{Q}a7 12.\mathbb{Q}e3 \mathbb{Q}xd5 13.exd5 \mathbb{Q}xe3 14.fxe3 a5!$ with counterplay, for example, $15.a3 0-0 16.\mathbb{Q}c1 \mathbb{Q}d7 17.\mathbb{W}d2$ ($17.c5 axb4 18.axb4 dxc5 19.bxc5 \mathbb{Q}a5 20.c6 \mathbb{Q}f6=$) $17\dots b6$.

8. $\mathbb{Q}xc6$

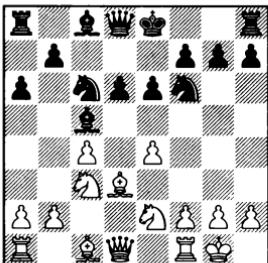
a) $8.\mathbb{Q}c2 \mathbb{Q}xc3+ (8\dots \mathbb{Q}c5) 9.bxc3 d6 10.0-0 (10.\mathbb{Q}a3 0-0 11.f4 \mathbb{W}c7 12.0-0 \mathbb{Q}d8 13.\mathbb{W}f3 b5 14.cxb5 axb5 15.\mathbb{Q}b2 \mathbb{Q}a5 16.\mathbb{Q}d4 \mathbb{Q}c4 17.\mathbb{Q}c1 e5\mp$, Ahmad-Ni Hua, Macau 2007) 10\dots \mathbb{W}c7 11.f4 0-0 12.\mathbb{Q}a3 \mathbb{Q}d8 13.\mathbb{W}e2 b6 14.\mathbb{Q}ae1 \mathbb{Q}b7 15.\mathbb{Q}e3 \mathbb{Q}ac8.

b) $8.\mathbb{Q}de2 \mathbb{Q}c5!?$

The idea of this retreat is to anticipate $\mathbb{Q}a4$, followed by $a3$. $8\dots d5$ unloads the centre and should gradually equalise. $8\dots \mathbb{W}c7!?$ $9.a3 \mathbb{Q}e7$ was mentioned in the comments to the previous move.

$9.0-0 d6 (9\dots \mathbb{Q}g4!?) 10.h3 \mathbb{Q}e5)$

Kan – the Maróczy Bind



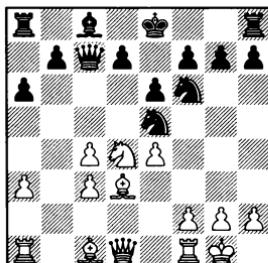
10.h3 (10.a3 0-0 11.b4 $\mathbb{Q}a7$ 12. $\mathbb{Q}f4 \mathbb{Q}h5=$) 10... $\mathbb{Q}e5$ (or 10...h6) 11.a3 $\mathbb{Q}d7$ (Miezis' idea 11... $\mathbb{E}g8$ is consistent due to the pawn lever White provided with h3, but it is still a little dubious. After 12.b4 $\mathbb{Q}a7$ 13. $\mathbb{Q}g5$ h6 14. $\mathbb{Q}f4$, Black has to play 14... $\mathbb{Q}fd7$, because 14...g5 15. $\mathbb{Q}xe5$ $\mathbb{dx}e5$ 16.c5 favours White.) 12.b4 $\mathbb{Q}a7$ 13. $\mathbb{Q}f4 \mathbb{W}c7\infty$.

c) 8. $\mathbb{Q}e3 \mathbb{Q}e5!$ 9.0-0 (after 9. $\mathbb{Q}f3$, best is perhaps 9... $\mathbb{Q}xd3+$ 10. $\mathbb{W}xd3$ b5! 11.0-0 $\mathbb{Q}b7$, destroying the enemy centre) 9... $\mathbb{W}c7$ 10. $\mathbb{E}c1 \mathbb{Q}eg4$.

d) 8.a3 $\mathbb{Q}xc3+$ 9.bxc3 $\mathbb{Q}e5$

9... $\mathbb{W}a5$ 10.0-0 $\mathbb{W}xc3$ is dubious: 11. $\mathbb{Q}xc6$ $\mathbb{dx}c6$ (11... $\mathbb{W}xa1$ 12. $\mathbb{W}b3$ $\mathbb{dx}c6$ 13. $\mathbb{Q}b2 \mathbb{W}xf1+$ 14. $\mathbb{Q}xf1$ 0-0 15. $\mathbb{W}g3 \mathbb{Q}e8$ 16.c5) 12. $\mathbb{E}b1$ e5 13. $\mathbb{Q}b2$ $\mathbb{W}a5$ 14. $\mathbb{W}c1$ h6 15. $\mathbb{Q}c3 \mathbb{W}c7$ 16.f4→.

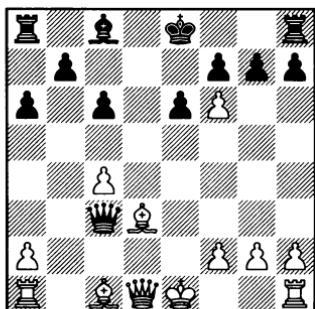
10.0-0 (10.f4 $\mathbb{Q}xd3+$ 11. $\mathbb{W}xd3$ d5) 10... $\mathbb{W}c7$



11.f4 $\mathbb{Q}xd3$ 12. $\mathbb{W}xd3$ d6. Black is only one move shy of castling and the pawn structure is favourable for him. The only way to generate some threats is 13.f5 e5 14. $\mathbb{Q}c2$ b5 15. $\mathbb{Q}g5$ bxc4 16. $\mathbb{W}e2 \mathbb{Q}d7$ 17.f6 gxf6 18. $\mathbb{Q}xf6$, but both 18... $\mathbb{E}g8$ 19. $\mathbb{W}h5$ $\mathbb{Q}xf6$ 20. $\mathbb{W}xf6$ $\mathbb{E}g6$ 21. $\mathbb{E}f2 \mathbb{Q}b7$ and 18... $\mathbb{Q}xf6$ 19. $\mathbb{W}xf6 \mathbb{Q}e6$ 20. $\mathbb{Q}e3 \mathbb{E}g8$ give Black good piece play while the extra pawn does not get in his way.

8... $\mathbb{dx}c6$ 9.e5 (or Black plays ...e5 himself)

9... $\mathbb{W}a5$ 10. $\mathbb{ex}f6$ $\mathbb{Q}xc3+$ 11.bxc3 $\mathbb{W}xc3+$



12. $\mathbb{Q}d2$

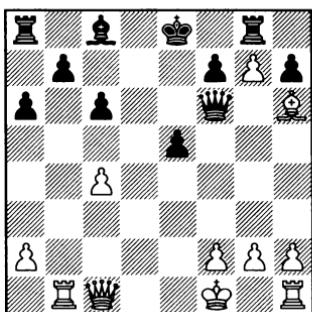
12. $\mathbb{Q}d2?$ is a good news for Black. With an extra exchange plus a couple of pawns he can always give back a part of the loot: 12... $\mathbb{W}xa1$ 13.0-0 $\mathbb{W}xf6$ 14. $\mathbb{Q}b2$ [14. $\mathbb{Q}a3$ e5 aiming for a long castle – 15. $\mathbb{E}e1$ (15. $\mathbb{W}b4 \mathbb{W}d8$ 16. $\mathbb{E}e1 \mathbb{W}c7$ 17.f4 $\mathbb{Q}e6$ 18.f5 0-0-0) 15... $\mathbb{Q}e6$ 16. $\mathbb{Q}d6 \mathbb{E}d8$ 17.c5 $\mathbb{E}xd6$] 14...e5 (14... $\mathbb{W}e7$) 15. $\mathbb{E}e1$ (15. $\mathbb{Q}xe5 \mathbb{W}xe5$ 16. $\mathbb{E}e1 \mathbb{W}xe1+$ 17. $\mathbb{W}xe1+$ $\mathbb{Q}e6$) 15... $\mathbb{W}h6+$.

Part 6

12... $\mathbb{W}xd3$ 13. $\mathbb{f}xg7$ $\mathbb{E}g8$ 14. $\mathbb{A}h6$ $\mathbb{W}c3+$

14... $\mathbb{W}e4+$ is similar: 15. $\mathbb{W}e2$ (15. $\mathbb{A}f1$ $\mathbb{W}h4$ 16. $\mathbb{W}c1$ f6 17. $\mathbb{A}g1$ e5 18. $\mathbb{B}b1$ $\mathbb{A}f5$ 19. $\mathbb{B}xb7?$ 0-0-0 20. $\mathbb{B}a7$ $\mathbb{W}xh6-$ + 15... $\mathbb{W}xe2+$ 16. $\mathbb{A}xe2$ e5 17.f4 (17. c5 f6) 17...exf4 18. $\mathbb{A}d3$ $\mathbb{A}e6$ 19. $\mathbb{B}hf1$ b5 20. $\mathbb{B}xf4$ $\mathbb{A}xc4+=$.

15. $\mathbb{A}f1$ $\mathbb{W}f6$ 16. $\mathbb{W}c1$ e5 17. $\mathbb{B}b1$



17... $\mathbb{A}e6$

17...b5 is also possible, but the text is more forced. The following mass elimination leads to a completely balanced endgame: 18. $\mathbb{B}xb7$ 0-0-0 19. $\mathbb{B}a7$ $\mathbb{W}h4$ 20. $\mathbb{B}a8+$ $\mathbb{A}c7$ 21. $\mathbb{B}xd8$ $\mathbb{B}xd8$ 22.h3 $\mathbb{W}xc4+$ 23. $\mathbb{W}xc4$ $\mathbb{A}xc4+$ 24. $\mathbb{A}e1$ f5=, Vandervoort-Kveinys, Charleroi 2007.

A2. 7. $\mathbb{W}d3$

This is perhaps the most challenging continuation. White prepares e5, $\mathbb{A}f4$, 0-0-0 and $\mathbb{W}g3$.

7... $\mathbb{A}c6$

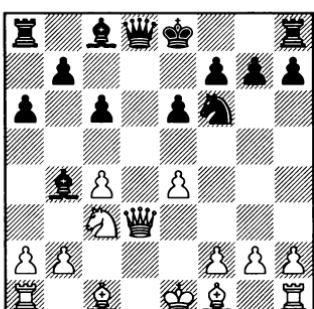
I do not like 7...0-0 due to 8.e5!, for instance: 8... $\mathbb{A}g4$ 9. $\mathbb{W}g3$ $\mathbb{W}a5$ 10. $\mathbb{A}e2$ h5!? (10... $\mathbb{A}xe5$ 11. $\mathbb{A}b3$ $\mathbb{W}c7$ 12. $\mathbb{A}h6$ $\mathbb{A}d3+$ 13. $\mathbb{A}xd3$ $\mathbb{W}xg3$ 14. $\mathbb{H}xg3$ $\mathbb{G}xh6$ 15. $\mathbb{B}xh6$ f5 16. $\mathbb{A}e2$) 11. $\mathbb{A}xg4$ $\mathbb{H}xg4$ 12.0-0± or 8... $\mathbb{A}e8$ 9. $\mathbb{A}f4!$ d6 10. $\mathbb{A}c2$ $\mathbb{A}xc3+$ 11. $\mathbb{W}xc3$ ±.

7...d5 is playing for two results only: 8.exd5 exd5 9. $\mathbb{A}e2$ 0-0 10.0-0 $\mathbb{A}c6!$ 11. $\mathbb{A}xc6$ bxc6 12. $\mathbb{A}g5$ a5 (Rublevsky's idea) 13.cxd5 $\mathbb{A}a6$ 14. $\mathbb{W}c2!$ ±.

7... $\mathbb{W}c7$ is the most popular move, but it leads to the Hedgehog after 8.a3 $\mathbb{A}e7$ (8... $\mathbb{A}xc3+$ 9. $\mathbb{W}xc3$ $\mathbb{A}xe4$ 10. $\mathbb{A}b5!$ is the point of White's idea – 10...axb5 11. $\mathbb{W}xg7$ $\mathbb{B}f8$ 12. $\mathbb{A}h6$ $\mathbb{W}c5$ 13.f3!, N.Ninov-Pikula, Lazarevac 1999) 9. $\mathbb{A}e2$ b6.

Black can try to stay in Taimanov waters with 9... $\mathbb{A}c6$ 10.0-0 $\mathbb{A}xd4$ 11. $\mathbb{W}xd4$ $\mathbb{A}d6$ 12. $\mathbb{A}h1$ $\mathbb{A}e5$, but White retained some edge after 13. $\mathbb{W}e3$ 0-0 14. $\mathbb{A}a4$ b5 15. $\mathbb{A}b6$ $\mathbb{B}b8$ 16. $\mathbb{A}xc8$ $\mathbb{B}fc8$ 17.f4 $\mathbb{A}d6$ 18.e5 $\mathbb{A}c5$ 19. $\mathbb{W}f3$ ±, Leko-Bologan, Beijing 2012; or 9...0-0 10.0-0 $\mathbb{A}c6$ 11. $\mathbb{A}h1$ $\mathbb{B}d8$ 12.f4 d5 13.cxd5 exd5 14.e5 $\mathbb{A}e4$ 15. $\mathbb{A}xc6$ $\mathbb{W}xc6$ 16.f5, Giri-Landa, Eilat 2012.

8. $\mathbb{A}xc6$ (8. $\mathbb{A}d2$ 0-0) 8... $\mathbb{A}xc6$



Kan – the Maróczy Bind

A21. 9. $\mathbb{W}xd8+$; A22. 9. e5

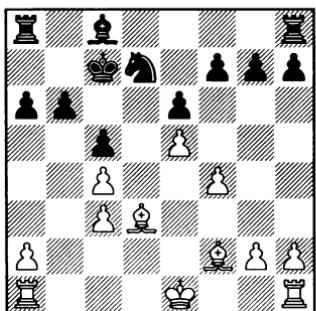
A21. 9. $\mathbb{W}xd8+$ $\mathbb{Q}xd8$ 10. e5

Or 10. $\mathbb{Q}d2$ e5.

10... $\mathbb{Q}xc3+!$

Black has played so far only 10... $\mathbb{Q}e4?$! when 11. a3! $\mathbb{Q}xc3+$ 12. bxc3 b5 13. h4! gives White strong pressure on the kingside, for instance: 13... $\mathbb{Q}xc3$ 14. $\mathbb{B}h3$ $\mathbb{Q}a4$ 15. $\mathbb{B}g3$ $\mathbb{B}g8$ 16. $\mathbb{B}h6$ g6 17. $\mathbb{B}g5+$. This example suggests that we should try to blockade the position rather than open it against White's bishop pair.

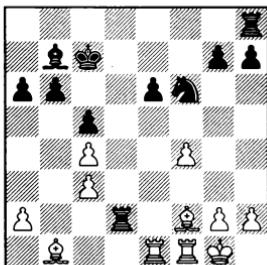
11. bxc3 $\mathbb{Q}d7$ 12. f4 b6 13. $\mathbb{Q}e3$ c5 14. $\mathbb{Q}d3$ $\mathbb{Q}c7$ 15. $\mathbb{Q}f2$



White hinders ... $\mathbb{Q}d8$ which would be possible after 15. 0-0 $\mathbb{Q}d8$ 16. $\mathbb{Q}ad1$ $\mathbb{Q}f8=$. After the text, Black should not wait passively because White will carry on f4-f5, for instance: 15... $\mathbb{Q}f8$ 16. 0-0 $\mathbb{Q}g6$ 17. $\mathbb{Q}ad1$ $\mathbb{Q}e7$ 18. g4 $\mathbb{Q}d7$ 19. f5 h5 20. $\mathbb{Q}g3$ h4 21. $\mathbb{Q}f4\pm$.

The solution is to blockade the centre with ... f5. White will

probably not allow it, but the variation 15... $\mathbb{Q}b7!$ 16. 0-0 f5! 17. exf6 $\mathbb{Q}xf6$ 18. $\mathbb{Q}ae1$ $\mathbb{Q}ad8$ 19. $\mathbb{Q}b1$ $\mathbb{Q}d2!$ is roughly equal.



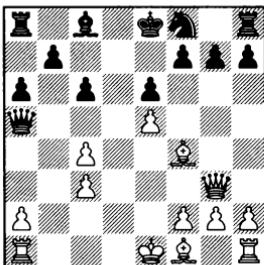
Black's rook is so active on the second rank, that White should be careful to maintain the balance: 20. $\mathbb{Q}xe6$ $\mathbb{Q}e8$ 21. $\mathbb{Q}xe8$ $\mathbb{Q}xe8$ 22. $\mathbb{Q}e1$ $\mathbb{Q}f6!$ (22... $\mathbb{Q}d6$ might be drawish, but only for computers – 23. $\mathbb{Q}xh7$ $\mathbb{Q}xa2$ 24. h4 a5 25. f5 $\mathbb{Q}e4$ 26. $\mathbb{Q}xe4$ $\mathbb{Q}xe4$ 27. f6 $\mathbb{Q}a1+$ 28. $\mathbb{Q}h2$ $\mathbb{Q}xf6$ 29. $\mathbb{Q}xe4$ f5 30. $\mathbb{Q}xf5$ a4 31. h5 a3 32. h6 a2 33. h7 $\mathbb{Q}h1+$ 34. $\mathbb{Q}xh1$ a1 $\mathbb{W}+$ 35. $\mathbb{Q}h2$ $\mathbb{Q}xc3=$) 23. h3 a5 24. g4 (24. a3 $\mathbb{Q}b8$ 25. g4 a4 26. g5 $\mathbb{Q}h5=$) 24... $\mathbb{Q}a6=$.

A22. 9. e5 $\mathbb{W}xd3!$

White's spatial advantage is more substantial with queens. His centre is a bit shaky, but once he consolidated, his prospects for a kingside attack would be considerable – 9... $\mathbb{Q}d7?!$ 10. $\mathbb{W}g3$ (10. $\mathbb{Q}f4$ $\mathbb{W}a5$) 10... $\mathbb{W}a5$ 11. $\mathbb{Q}f4$ $\mathbb{Q}xc3+$ (11... $\mathbb{Q}f8$ 12. $\mathbb{Q}d2$) 12. bxc3 $\mathbb{Q}f8$.

At the surface, it seems that Black has a good game. For example:

Part 6



13.Qe3 Qg6 14.Qg3 b6 (14...Qe7= 15.Qd2 Qf5 16.Qf4 0-0 17.Qd3 Qd8 18.Qd1 b5) 15.Qe2 c5 16.Qf3 (16.0-0-0 0-0 17.Qfd1 Qe7=) 16...Qa7 17.0-0 Qb7; 13.Qe2 Qg6 14.0-0 0-0=.

However, the stranded c8-bishop kept bothering me and a deeper analysis confirmed my fears. In the diagram position, White has the awkward manoeuvre:

13.h4! Qg6 14.Qh3!! Qd7 (14...h5 15.Qe2) 15.Qe2 h5 16.Qd1 c5 17.Qg5 Qc6 18.Qd2 Qe4 19.Qh1 and he is dominating all over the board. It is better to kill the enemy's strongest pieces right away.

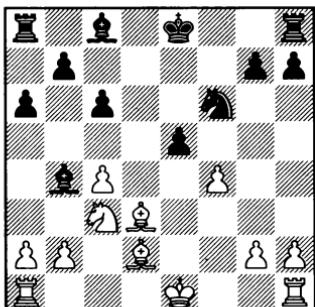
10.Qxd3 Qd7 11.f4

11.Qf4 Qa5 12.Qg3 Qc7 13.f4 f6 14.0-0 fxe5 15.fxe5 Qxe5 equalises: 16.Qae1 Qxg3 17.Qxe6+ Qd8 18.hxg3 Qf6 19.Qee1 Qe8 20.Qe4 Qxe4 21.Qxe4 Qxe4 22.Qxe4 Qe7 23.Qxh7 Qe6 24.b3 Qd8. Black's king will invade the queenside via the dark squares.

11...f6 12.exf6 Qxf6 13.Qd2 e5!

Kovacevic-Miezis, Nova Gorica

2010 saw 13...0-0 14.Qf1 e5, when instead of 15.f5, White had 15.fxe5.

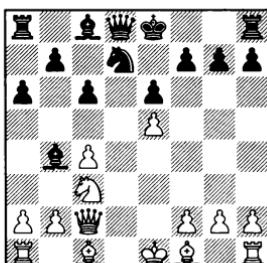


**14.f5 0-0 15.Qf1 Qxc3!
16.Qxc3 Qg4 17.Qe2 Qh6=**

A3. 7.Qc2 0-0!

This move is dubious after 7.Qd3 since White can meet it by 8.e5 Qg4 9.Qg3. Against 7.Qc2, it is the most principled retort. It has no decent alternatives if we want to avoid the main Hedgehog lines which arise after 7...Qc7 8.a3 Qe7.

Note that 7...Qc6 8.Qxc6 dxc6 9.e5! is dubious for Black: 9...Qd7 (9...Qg4 10.Qe2 Qxe5 11.0-0∞; 10.a3 Qc5 11.Qe4 Qd4 12.Qf4 Qb6 13.Qb1 c5 14.b4 0-0 15.Qe2 Qxe5 16.0-0∞)



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10.a3!

In his survey for *New in Chess Yearbook 101*, Ninov gives as a main line 10.f4 f6 11.exf6 $\mathbb{W}xf6$ 12. $\mathbb{Q}d2$ 0-0 13.0-0-0 $\mathbb{Q}c5$ 14. $\mathbb{E}e1$, but then 14...e5! takes over the initiative.

It is much stronger to play 13. $\mathbb{Q}d3$? when 13... $\mathbb{W}h4+?$ is positionally grim, but 13...g6! holds firmly, for example, 14.0-0-0 e5 (or 14... $\mathbb{Q}c5$ 15. $\mathbb{E}he1$ e5 16.fxe5 $\mathbb{W}e7$ 17.a3 $\mathbb{Q}xc3$ 18. $\mathbb{W}xc3$ $\mathbb{E}d8$ 19. $\mathbb{E}e3$ $\mathbb{Q}xd3+$ 20. $\mathbb{E}xd3$ $\mathbb{E}xd3$ 21. $\mathbb{W}xd3$ $\mathbb{Q}f5$ 22. $\mathbb{W}e3$ $\mathbb{E}e8$ 23. $\mathbb{Q}c3$ $\mathbb{W}h4$ 24.b3 $\mathbb{W}xh2=$) 15.a3 $\mathbb{Q}xc3$ 16. $\mathbb{Q}xc3$ (16. $\mathbb{W}xc3$ exf4 17. $\mathbb{W}xf6$ $\mathbb{Q}xf6$ 18. $\mathbb{Q}xf4$ $\mathbb{Q}g4$ 19. $\mathbb{E}hf1$ $\mathbb{Q}f5$ 20. $\mathbb{Q}d6$ $\mathbb{Q}e3$ 21. $\mathbb{Q}xf8$ $\mathbb{E}xf8$ 22. $\mathbb{Q}xf5$ gxf5 23. $\mathbb{E}f3$ $\mathbb{Q}xd1$ 24. $\mathbb{Q}xd1$ $\mathbb{E}f7=$) 16... $\mathbb{W}xf4+$ 17. $\mathbb{Q}b1$ $\mathbb{Q}c5$ 18. $\mathbb{E}hf1$ $\mathbb{W}xf1$ 19. $\mathbb{Q}xf1$ $\mathbb{Q}f5$ 20. $\mathbb{Q}d3$ $\mathbb{Q}xd3$ 21. $\mathbb{Q}a1$ $\mathbb{E}ad8$ 22. $\mathbb{W}e2$ $\mathbb{Q}f4$ – the endgame after 23. $\mathbb{W}e1$ $\mathbb{Q}xg2$ 24. $\mathbb{W}g1$ $\mathbb{E}xd1+$ 25. $\mathbb{W}xd1$ $\mathbb{Q}e3$ 26. $\mathbb{W}d2$ $\mathbb{Q}c2+$ 27. $\mathbb{Q}a2$ $\mathbb{Q}d4$ 28. $\mathbb{W}xd4$ exd4 29. $\mathbb{W}xd4$ is a draw. If White's king goes to b6, Black starts pushing his passed pawn on the g-file.

10... $\mathbb{W}a5$ (10... $\mathbb{Q}e7$ 11.f4 f6 12.exf6±) 11.f4 $\mathbb{Q}xc3+$ 12.bxc3! (12. $\mathbb{W}xc3$ $\mathbb{W}xc3+$ 13.bxc3 b6 14. $\mathbb{Q}e2$ $\mathbb{Q}b7$ 15.0-0 c5=) 12...0-0 (12...b5 13. $\mathbb{Q}e3$ $\mathbb{Q}b6$ 14. $\mathbb{E}b1±$) 13. $\mathbb{Q}d3$. White has an attack and the queen cannot help much from a5. If Black attempts to close the kingside, he lands in a difficult position – 13...f5 14.0-0 $\mathbb{Q}c5$ 15. $\mathbb{E}d1$ $\mathbb{E}d8$ 16. $\mathbb{Q}e3$ $\mathbb{E}xd3$ 17. $\mathbb{E}xd3$ $\mathbb{Q}xd3$ 18. $\mathbb{W}xd3$ b5 19. $\mathbb{E}d1±$.

8.e5

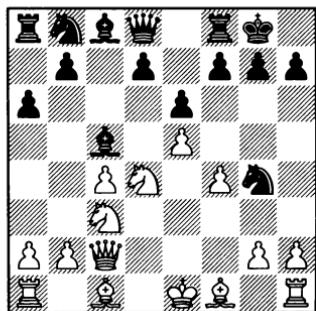
All the other moves allow the break ...d5:

a) 8. $\mathbb{Q}e2$ d5= 9.exd5 exd5 10.0-0 dxc4 11. $\mathbb{Q}d1$ $\mathbb{W}c7$ 12. $\mathbb{Q}g5$ (12. $\mathbb{Q}e4$ $\mathbb{Q}xe4$ 13. $\mathbb{W}xe4$ $\mathbb{Q}d6$ 14. $\mathbb{Q}f3$ $\mathbb{Q}d7$ 15. $\mathbb{W}xc4$ $\mathbb{W}xc4$ 16. $\mathbb{Q}xc4$ $\mathbb{Q}e5$) 12... $\mathbb{Q}bd7=$.

b) 8. $\mathbb{Q}d3$ d5! 9.cxd5 exd5 10.e5 $\mathbb{E}e8$ 11.0-0 $\mathbb{E}xe5$ 12. $\mathbb{Q}f3$ $\mathbb{E}h5$!.

8... $\mathbb{Q}g4$ 9.f4 $\mathbb{Q}c5$

The quieter 9...d6!? is also possible – 10. $\mathbb{Q}f3$ dxe5 11.h3 $\mathbb{Q}h6$ 12.fxe5 $\mathbb{Q}f5$ 13.a3 $\mathbb{Q}e7$ (13... $\mathbb{Q}c5$ 14. $\mathbb{Q}f4$ $\mathbb{Q}c6$ 15. $\mathbb{Q}d1$ $\mathbb{W}e7$ 16. $\mathbb{W}e4$ f6) 14. $\mathbb{Q}f4$ $\mathbb{Q}c6$ 15. $\mathbb{Q}d1$ $\mathbb{W}a5$ 16. $\mathbb{Q}d3$ f6, Ninov-Shchekachev, Bethune 2000.



10. $\mathbb{Q}b3$

10. $\mathbb{Q}f3$ $\mathbb{Q}c6$ 11.h3 $\mathbb{Q}e3$ 12. $\mathbb{Q}xe3$ $\mathbb{Q}xe3$ 13.g3 d5!.

10... $\mathbb{Q}f2+$

It would be a sin to miss this check. Still, 10... $\mathbb{Q}a7$ 11.c5 (11. $\mathbb{Q}e2$ f5) 11...b6 12. $\mathbb{Q}e4$ (12. $\mathbb{Q}d3$ f5 13.exf6 $\mathbb{Q}xf6$ 14. $\mathbb{Q}e4$ bxc5 15. $\mathbb{Q}xf6+$ $\mathbb{W}xf6$

Part 6

16.♕xh7+ ♜h8†) 12...bxc5 is possible, too.

11.♗e2 ♜a7

11...♝h4!? was played in Nanu-Markowski, Plovdiv 2008.

12.h3

Vuckovic-Pikula, Zlatibor 2006 ended up badly for Black after 12...♝h4!? 13.c5 (13.♗e4 f5) 13...♝f2+ 14.♔d1 ♜e3+ 15.♔xe3 ♜xe3 16.♗e4 ♜xc5 17.♔xc5 ♜xc5 18.♔d3 g6 19.h4 d5 20.♗f3, but the engines assure me that after 20...♝e7! 21.h5 ♔c6 only Black has an attack. I do not have any reason to doubt this assessment, but common sense and my practice of Taimanov/Kan player suggest a simple and safer solution:

12...♝h6†

This is my fifty cents in the theory of this variation. Now Black's castling position is unassailable while the enemy king in the centre is a ridiculous sight. Possible continuations are: 13.g4 ♔c6 14.♗g2 (14.f5 ♜h4; 14.♗e4 a5!) 14...d6†.

A4. 7.♗f3

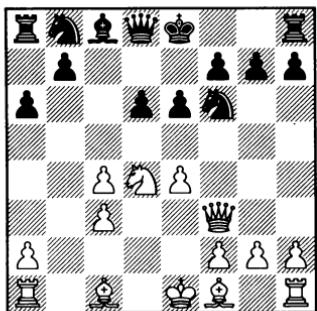
This move has obvious pluses – Black cannot trade queens like in the 7.♗d3 variation. Compared to 7.♗c2, the queen is more active on the kingside. Its drawback is not

so conspicuous. White releases the pressure on d6 and allows:

7...♜xc3+

Exploiting the fact that 8.♗xc3 drops a pawn. 7...d6 8.♔c2! ♜xc3+ is not enticing since the g7-pawn is already hanging.

8.bxc3 d6



9.♔a3

Piece attack on the kingside is ineffective. In this pawn structure, Black's knight pair is more powerful than the bishops.

a) 9.♗g3 0-0 10.♔h6 ♔e8, followed up by ...e5. Alsina Leal-Yu Yangyi, Moscow 2011, saw 10.♔d3 e5 11.♔f5 ♜xf5 12.exf5 ♔bd7! 13.0-0 ♜h8 14.♔d1 ♜c8 15.♗e2 ♜a5 16.♗e3 d5†.

b) 9.♔e2!? 0-0 10.0-0 ♔bd7. Black has no compelling reason to define the centre at this point with 10...e5 11.♔f5 ♜xf5 12.exf5 although it is possible – 12...♔bd7 13.♗xb7 ♔c5 14.♗f3 ♜a5. He can quietly complete development with natural

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moves while White's play is not trivial. Perhaps he will have to return to the plan with ♗a3.

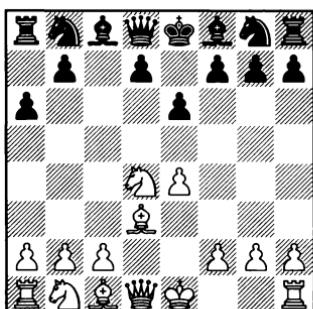
9...0-0! 10.gd1

10. ♜b3 ♜e8 (escaping the pin and preparing ...d6-d5) 11. ♜d1 (11. ♜d3?! ♜c6 12.0-0 ♜e5; 11. ♜e2 ♜c6 12.0-0 ♜e5 13. ♜e3 b5 14.c5 d5 15. ♜fd1 ♜b7 16.f4 ♜c4 17. ♜xc4 bxc4+) 11...d5 12.e5 ♜e4 13. ♜d3 ♜g5! 14.0-0 ♜c6 15. ♜xe4 dxe4 16. ♜xe4 ♜xe5 is equal.

10...e5! 11.Qf5 ♖xf5 12.exf5
 ♦c6! 13.Qe2 (13.Qxd6 ♦d4!) 13...
 ♕a5 14.Qxd6 ♦d4 15.Qd3 ♦xe2
 16.Qxe2 ♕xc3+.

Black has seized the initiative,
Dominguez Perez-Ivanchuk, Nice
2010.

B. 5.1d3



B1, 5...g6; B2, 5...d6

B1.5...g6

If you think that this move offends the basic strategic principles of chess, bear in mind that it was employed in the past by finest positional players like Smyslov, Vasiukov and recently by Kamsky, Bacrot. In contrast with the Hedgehog waiting approach, Black aims to open the centre early with ... $\mathbb{Q}g8-e7$ and ...d7-d5 or ...f5. I would like to warn you right away that this is straightforward play for equalisation. In line B12. 6.c4, we often see mass elimination and symmetric positions where White's initiative gradually evaporates. On the other hand, there is little theory to learn and Black's play is clear and easy – he makes obvious moves and lets the opponent sweat about how to generate tangible threats.

If you want to keep more tension, you can always postpone ...d5 in favour of ...d6 and enter a non-standard hedgehog with ... $\mathbb{Q}e7$ and ...g6. However, although practice experience has been favourable for Black, according to my database, I feel that White has the upper hand.

B11. 6. $\mathbb{Q}c3$; B12. 6.c4

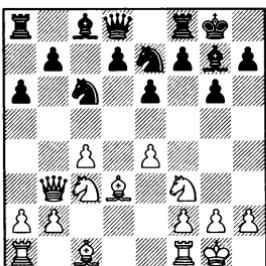
Minor alternatives are:

6.♗d2 ♗g7 7.♗c3 e5 8.♘f3 ♘c6
9.0-0 ♘ge7 10.♘bd2 d5±;

6. $\mathbb{Q}d2$ $\mathbb{Q}g7$ 7. $\mathbb{Q}f2$ f3 d6 8. 0-0 $\mathbb{Q}f6$
 9. $\mathbb{W}e2$ 0-0 10. $\mathbb{Q}d1$ $\mathbb{Q}bd7$ 11. $\mathbb{Q}b3$ $\mathbb{W}c7$
 12. c3 b6 13. h3 $\mathbb{Q}b7$ 14. $\mathbb{Q}f4$ e5 15. $\mathbb{Q}g3$
 $\mathbb{Q}fe8$, Bauer-Bologan, Germany
 1998.

Part 6

6.0-0 $\mathbb{B}g7$ will most probably transpose to the main lines, e.g. 7. $\mathbb{B}e3$ $\mathbb{Q}e7$ 8.c4. Instead, the game Sevian-Stripunsky, Ledyard 2014, introduced the novelty 7. $\mathbb{Q}f3$ $\mathbb{Q}c6$ 8.c4 $\mathbb{Q}ge7$ 9. $\mathbb{Q}c3$ 0-0 10. $\mathbb{W}b3$



We can follow the main plan with 10...d5! (of course, you can also create havoc on the board with 10...f5 11. $\mathbb{B}e3$ b5 12.cxb5 axb5 13. $\mathbb{B}xb5$ fxe4 14. $\mathbb{Q}xe4$ d5) 11.cxd5 exd5 12.exd5 $\mathbb{Q}a5$ [12... $\mathbb{Q}xd5$ 13. $\mathbb{B}g5$ (13. $\mathbb{W}xd5$ $\mathbb{Q}xc3$) 13... $\mathbb{Q}f6$ 14. $\mathbb{B}fd1$ $\mathbb{W}a5=$].

B11. 6. $\mathbb{Q}c3$ $\mathbb{B}g7$ 7. $\mathbb{B}e3$

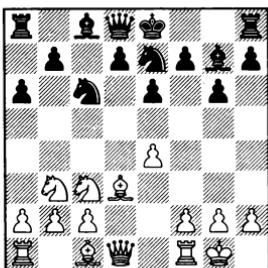
a) Another plan is to lead out the bishop to a more active square as f4 or g5:

7. $\mathbb{Q}b3$ $\mathbb{Q}c6$ 8.0-0

8. $\mathbb{B}f4$ is typically parried with 8... $\mathbb{Q}e5$.

Smyslov answered 8. $\mathbb{B}e3$ with 8...d5 9.exd5 exd5 and took over the initiative after 10. $\mathbb{Q}c5$! b6 11. $\mathbb{B}a3$ $\mathbb{Q}ge7$ 12.0-0 0-0 13. $\mathbb{Q}e2$ $\mathbb{W}c7$ 14.c3 $\mathbb{Q}e5$ 15. $\mathbb{Q}bd4$ $\mathbb{Q}c4$, Silman-Smyslov, Lone Pine 1976.

8... $\mathbb{Q}ge7$ (8...d6 is more solid, but it allows White to stay in his comfort zone)



9. $\mathbb{B}g5$

9. $\mathbb{B}f4$ $\mathbb{Q}e5$ 10. $\mathbb{B}e2$ f5! is a thematic break. Lutz-Bischoff, Essen 2001 went 11. $\mathbb{B}g5$ $\mathbb{Q}f7$ 12. $\mathbb{B}e3$ (12. $\mathbb{Q}xe7$ $\mathbb{W}xe7$ 13.exf5 gxf5 14. $\mathbb{Q}h5$ 0-0 15.f4 b5) 12...fxe4 13. $\mathbb{Q}xe4$ d5 14. $\mathbb{Q}c3$ $\mathbb{Q}f5$ 15. $\mathbb{Q}c5$ b6 16. $\mathbb{B}b4$ $\mathbb{Q}e5$ with excellent piece play.

9...0-0

Undoubtedly, this is the most flexible approach. 9...h6 weakens the g6-square although White has not much after 10. $\mathbb{B}h4$ (10. $\mathbb{B}f4$ $\mathbb{Q}e5$ is familiar from the previous example. The insertion of ...h6 brings about new possibilities for kingside play: 11. $\mathbb{W}d2$ g5 12. $\mathbb{B}e3$ $\mathbb{Q}g4$ 13. $\mathbb{Q}d4$ $\mathbb{W}c7$ 14.g3 $\mathbb{Q}xd4$ 15. $\mathbb{Q}xd4$ d6.) 10...d5!?

10...0-0 11.f4 d5 12.e5 is unpleasant. *Houdini 4* suggests the extravagant 10... $\mathbb{Q}xc3$ 11.bxc3 g5 12. $\mathbb{Q}g3$ e5 claiming full equality. However, in this pawn structure the knight should stay on f6 so I'm a bit reserved about this line. 10...0-0 11.f4 f5! 12.exf5 (12.g4 fxe4 13. $\mathbb{Q}xe4$ $\mathbb{W}b6+$ 14. $\mathbb{Q}f2$ $\mathbb{W}c7$) 12...gxf5 is strategically highly unbalanced. Black is behind in development, but the strong pawn control of the centre should keep him safe until he

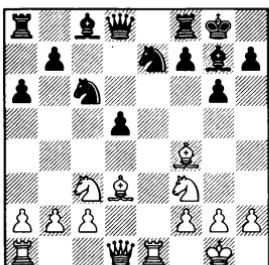
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regrouped: 13. $\mathbb{Q}f3$ $\mathbb{W}c7$ 14. $\mathbb{W}d2$ b6
 15. $\mathbb{Q}f2$ $\mathbb{Q}g6$ 16. $\mathbb{Q}d1$ $\mathbb{Q}ce7$ 17. $\mathbb{Q}e2$ $\mathbb{Q}b7$
 18. $\mathbb{Q}g3$ $\mathbb{Q}c6$ 19. $\mathbb{Q}d4$ $\mathbb{Q}f7$ 20. $\mathbb{Q}h5$ $\mathbb{Q}h7$.
 Black has counterplay against the f4-pawn and down the g-file.

11.exd5 exd5. Now 12.f4 0-0
 13.f5 $\mathbb{W}b6+$ 14. $\mathbb{Q}f2$ $\mathbb{W}c7$ 15.fxg6 fxg6 gives Black a good game mostly due to the e5-square for his minor pieces. On the other hand, 12. $\mathbb{W}d2$ 0-0 13. $\mathbb{Q}fe1$ $\mathbb{Q}e6$ is only slightly better for White.

10. $\mathbb{W}d2$ (10.f4 f5) 10...d6 11. $\mathbb{Q}ad1$ $\mathbb{W}c7$ 12. $\mathbb{Q}h6$ $\mathbb{Q}xh6$ 13. $\mathbb{W}xh6$ b5 14.f4 (14.a3 $\mathbb{Q}e5$), Wiwe-Stripunsky, Copenhagen 2007. Here, 14...b4 15. $\mathbb{Q}e2$ f5 assures Black of full-fledged counterplay, e.g. 16. $\mathbb{Q}h1$ fxе4 17. $\mathbb{Q}xe4$ $\mathbb{Q}d7$.

b) 7. $\mathbb{Q}f3$ $\mathbb{Q}c6$ 8. $\mathbb{Q}f4$ d5 9.exd5 (9.e5? f6 10. $\mathbb{W}e2$ fxе5 11. $\mathbb{Q}xe5$ $\mathbb{Q}ge7$ 12.0-0-0 0-0+, Li Chao2-Wang Chen, Chengdu 2011) 9...exd5 10.0-0 $\mathbb{Q}ge7$ 11. $\mathbb{Q}e1$ 0-0 is a typical position for this line.

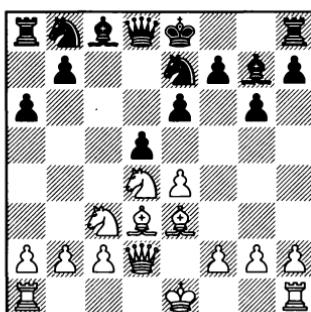


The game Martinovic-Strikovic, Zlatibor 1989, went 12. $\mathbb{W}d2$ (12.h3 $\mathbb{Q}e6$) 12... $\mathbb{Q}g4$ 13. $\mathbb{Q}e5$ $\mathbb{Q}e6$ 14. $\mathbb{Q}a4$ $\mathbb{Q}xe5$ 15. $\mathbb{Q}xe5$ $\mathbb{Q}xe5$ 16. $\mathbb{Q}xe5$ $\mathbb{W}d6$ and a draw was signed a few moves later.

7... $\mathbb{Q}e7$ 8. $\mathbb{W}d2$

8.f4 d5 9.e5 $\mathbb{Q}bc6$ 10. $\mathbb{Q}ce2$ f6 11.exf6 $\mathbb{Q}xf6$ 12.0-0-0 0-0 13.c3 is satisfactory for Black since he can easily develop his light-squared bishop. For instance, 13...e5 solves the problem at once while 13... $\mathbb{W}c7$ 14. $\mathbb{Q}f3$ $\mathbb{Q}d7$ is also possible.

8...d5



The main idea of this system. Black opens the centre and gradually neutralises the enemy initiative. 9.exd5 $\mathbb{Q}xd5$ 10. $\mathbb{Q}xd5$ $\mathbb{W}xd5$ 11.0-0-0-0, Leko-Vyzmanavin, Leon 1993, was extensively tested in practice and proved to be innocuous for Black. The plan with long castling seems more dangerous:

9. $\mathbb{Q}b3$!?

9... $\mathbb{Q}bc6$ 10. $\mathbb{Q}h6$ $\mathbb{Q}xh6$ 11. $\mathbb{W}xh6$ $\mathbb{Q}g8$ 12. $\mathbb{W}g7$ (12. $\mathbb{W}d2$ $\mathbb{Q}f6$) 12... $\mathbb{W}f6$ 13. $\mathbb{W}xf6$ $\mathbb{Q}xf6$ 14.exd5 exd5 offers White only a symbolic advantage, in my opinion. However, the text leads to more complex play.

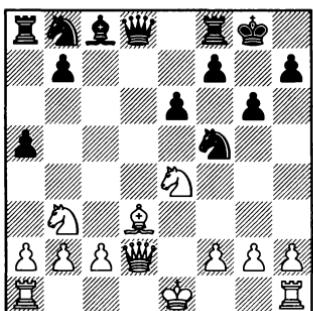
10. $\mathbb{Q}xe4$ 0-0 11. $\mathbb{Q}h6$ $\mathbb{Q}xh6$!

Part 6

Black has played only 11... $\mathbb{Q}bc6$ so far when 12. $\mathbb{Q}xg7$ $\mathbb{Q}xg7$ 13.h4 f5 14. $\mathbb{Q}g5?$ h6 was fine for him. However, 14. $\mathbb{Q}c3!$ h6 15.0-0-0 looks rather dangerous. I propose to play more concretely:

12. $\mathbb{W}xh6$ $\mathbb{Q}f5$ 13. $\mathbb{W}d2$ a5!

A thematic method of seizing space on the queenside by tempo.



14.0-0-0

14.g4 (14.a4 b6) 14...a4 15. $\mathbb{Q}bc5$ b6 16.gxf5 is strongly met by 16...exf5 17. $\mathbb{W}c3$ fxe4 18. $\mathbb{Q}xe4$ $\mathbb{Q}d7\infty$.

**14...a4 15. $\mathbb{Q}c4$ $\mathbb{W}xd2+!$
16. $\mathbb{Q}bxsd2$ $\mathbb{Q}d7$**

My analysis suggests that this endgame is balanced. We only have to avoid trading ANY rook. Instead, we keep them on the queenside – c8 and a5. White cannot improve his position. For instance:

17. $\mathbb{Q}f3$ $\mathbb{Q}c6$ 18. $\mathbb{Q}he1$ a3 19.b3 b5 20. $\mathbb{Q}d3$ b4;

17. $\mathbb{Q}f6+$ $\mathbb{Q}g7$ 18. $\mathbb{Q}xd7$ $\mathbb{Q}xd7$ 19. $\mathbb{Q}e4$ $\mathbb{Q}b6!$ [19... $\mathbb{Q}e5$ 20. $\mathbb{Q}e2$ a3

21.b3 $\mathbb{Q}ad8$ 22. $\mathbb{Q}xd8$ (22.c3 $\mathbb{Q}d5$ 23. $\mathbb{Q}d2$) 22... $\mathbb{Q}xd8$ 23.c3! (23. $\mathbb{Q}d1$ $\mathbb{Q}d4$ 24. $\mathbb{Q}f1$ $\mathbb{Q}ec6$ 25. $\mathbb{Q}d2$ b6=) 23... $\mathbb{Q}h4$ 24. $\mathbb{Q}g1\pm$] 20. $\mathbb{Q}e2$ $\mathbb{Q}a5!$ (we play a middlegame!) 21.a3 (21. $\mathbb{Q}d6?$! a3 22.b3 $\mathbb{Q}d5$ 23. $\mathbb{Q}xf5+$ exf5 24.c4 $\mathbb{Q}c3$ 25. $\mathbb{Q}d2$ $\mathbb{Q}e5$ 26. $\mathbb{Q}f3$ b5↑) 21... $\mathbb{Q}e5$ 22. $\mathbb{Q}d3$ $\mathbb{Q}c8=.$

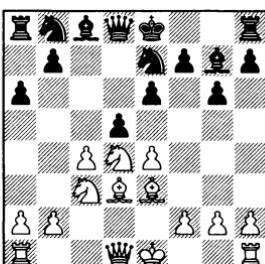
B12. 6.c4 $\mathbb{Q}g7$ 7. $\mathbb{Q}b3$

a) 7. $\mathbb{Q}e3$ $\mathbb{Q}e7$ 8. $\mathbb{Q}c3$

Or 8.0-0 d5 9.exd5 exd5 10. $\mathbb{Q}c3$ 0-0! – there is no reason to rush with taking on c4 although 10...dxc4 11. $\mathbb{Q}xc4$ 0-0 12. $\mathbb{Q}e1$ $\mathbb{Q}d7?$! 13. $\mathbb{Q}g5$ $\mathbb{Q}f6$ 14. $\mathbb{Q}c1$ h6 15. $\mathbb{Q}f4$ b5 16. $\mathbb{Q}b3$ $\mathbb{Q}e8$ holds on.

8...d5 (or 8...0-0 9.0-0 d5)

The plan with ...d6 may look more flexible, but in my opinion it is inferior to the text. For instance: 8...0-0 9.0-0 d6 10. $\mathbb{W}d2!$ $\mathbb{Q}bc6$ (10... $\mathbb{Q}d7$ 11. $\mathbb{Q}fd1!$ with pressure on d6 is clearly better for White. He has a clear plan with $\mathbb{Q}ac1$, b4, $\mathbb{Q}b3$, c5) 11. $\mathbb{Q}xc6!$ $\mathbb{Q}xc6$ 12. $\mathbb{Q}ad1$ e5 13. $\mathbb{Q}d5$ $\mathbb{Q}d4$ 14.f4 $\mathbb{Q}e6$ 15. $\mathbb{Q}f2$ $\mathbb{Q}c8$ 16. $\mathbb{Q}df1$ with an initiative. Therefore, if Black wants to play a hedgehog structure, he should choose the set-up with 5... $\mathbb{Q}f6$ – see line B2.

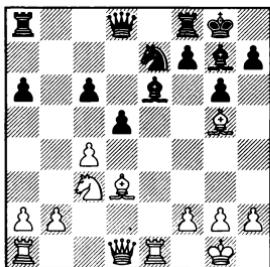


Kan – the Maróczy Bind

9.exd5

Spassky-Panno, Manila 1976, saw 9.cxd5 exd5 10.0-0 0-0 11. $\mathbb{E}c1$ $\mathbb{Q}d7!$? 12. $\mathbb{Q}xd5$ (after 12. $\mathbb{Q}f3$, we can choose between 12... $dxe4$ 13. $\mathbb{Q}xe4$ $\mathbb{Q}f6$ 14. $\mathbb{Q}c5$ $\mathbb{W}xd1$ 15. $\mathbb{Q}cx d1!$ $\mathbb{E}e8$ 16. $\mathbb{Q}fe1$ $\mathbb{Q}c6$ 17. $\mathbb{Q}xc6$ $bxc6$ 18. $\mathbb{Q}xe8+$ $\mathbb{Q}xe8$ 19. $\mathbb{Q}d4$ $\mathbb{Q}g4$ 20. $\mathbb{Q}xg7$ $\mathbb{Q}xf3!=$ and 12... $\mathbb{Q}f6$ 13. $\mathbb{Q}c5$ $\mathbb{E}e8!=$) 12... $\mathbb{Q}xd5$ 13.exd5 $\mathbb{Q}f6$ 14. $\mathbb{Q}c4$ $\mathbb{Q}xd5$ 15. $\mathbb{W}b3$ $\mathbb{Q}xe3$ 16.fxe3 when 16... $\mathbb{Q}e7!$ evens the game.

9...exd5 10.0-0 0-0 11. $\mathbb{E}e1$ (11. $\mathbb{E}c1$ $\mathbb{Q}d7!$; 11.cxd5 $\mathbb{Q}xd5$ 12. $\mathbb{Q}xd5$ $\mathbb{W}xd5$ 13. $\mathbb{E}c1$ $\mathbb{W}xa2$ 14. $\mathbb{Q}c4$ $\mathbb{W}xb2$ is very interesting. White has ample compensation for the missing pawns. Perhaps it is safer to decline the gift with 13... $\mathbb{Q}d7$.) 11... $\mathbb{Q}bc6$ 12. $\mathbb{Q}xc6$ $bxc6=$ 13. $\mathbb{Q}g5$ $\mathbb{Q}e6$



White can grab a pawn, but he will be unable to keep it for long after 14.cxd5 cxd5 15. $\mathbb{Q}xd5$ $\mathbb{W}xd5$ 16. $\mathbb{Q}xe7$ $\mathbb{E}fe8$ 17. $\mathbb{Q}a3$ $\mathbb{W}a5$, e.g. 18. $\mathbb{W}e2$ $\mathbb{W}a4$ 19.h3 $\mathbb{E}ab8$ 20. $\mathbb{Q}xa6$ $\mathbb{Q}xa2$.

b) 7. $\mathbb{Q}e2$ $\mathbb{Q}e7$ 8. $\mathbb{Q}bc3$ 0-0 9. $\mathbb{Q}g5$!?

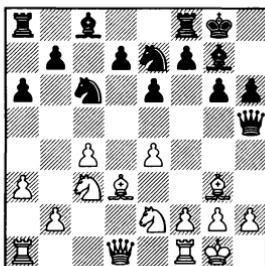
This is the only way to prevent ...d5. Commonly White plays 9.0-0 d5 10.cxd5 exd5 11. $\mathbb{Q}g5$ dxe4, unloading the center – 12. $\mathbb{Q}xe4$ (12.

$\mathbb{Q}xe4$ $\mathbb{Q}bc6$) 12... $\mathbb{W}xd1$ 13. $\mathbb{Q}axd1$ $\mathbb{Q}bc6$ 14. $\mathbb{Q}fe1$ h6 15. $\mathbb{Q}e3$ $\mathbb{Q}f5=$.

9... $\mathbb{Q}bc6$ 10.0-0 h6

My analysis suggests that Black equalises after 10... $\mathbb{W}a5$ 11. $\mathbb{W}d2$ d5 12.exd5 exd5 13.b4! (13. $\mathbb{Q}xd5$ $\mathbb{W}xd2$ 14. $\mathbb{Q}xd2$ $\mathbb{Q}xd5$ 15.cxd5 $\mathbb{Q}e5$ 16. $\mathbb{Q}e4$ $\mathbb{Q}c4$ 17. $\mathbb{Q}c3$ $\mathbb{E}e8$ 18. $\mathbb{Q}g3$ $\mathbb{Q}xb2$ 19. $\mathbb{Q}ac1$ $\mathbb{E}b8$ 20. $\mathbb{Q}xg7$ $\mathbb{Q}xg7$ 21. $\mathbb{Q}c7$ b5 22.d6 $\mathbb{Q}e6$ 23.f4 $\mathbb{Q}c4$ 24.f5 gxf5 25. $\mathbb{Q}xf5$ $\mathbb{Q}xd6$) 13... $\mathbb{W}xb4$ 14.cxd5 $\mathbb{Q}xd5$ 15. $\mathbb{Q}xd5$ $\mathbb{W}xd2$ 16. $\mathbb{Q}xd2$ $\mathbb{E}d8$, but the text is more interesting. It aims to break the connection between $\mathbb{Q}g5$ and $\mathbb{W}d2$.

11. $\mathbb{Q}h4$ $\mathbb{W}a5$ 12.a3 (now the queen will be pinned after 12. $\mathbb{W}d2$ d5) 12... $\mathbb{W}h5$ 13. $\mathbb{Q}g3$



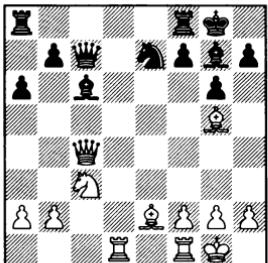
13...d5 14.cxd5 exd5 15.exd5 $\mathbb{Q}xd5$ 16. $\mathbb{Q}xg6$ fxe7 17. $\mathbb{Q}xd5$ $\mathbb{Q}g4$ 18. $\mathbb{Q}dc3$ g5. The bishop pair offers compensation for the pawn.

c) 7. $\mathbb{Q}e2$ d5! 8.exd5 exd5 9. $\mathbb{Q}c3$ $\mathbb{Q}e7$ 10. $\mathbb{Q}g5$

10.0-0 0-0 11. $\mathbb{Q}e3$ dxc4 12. $\mathbb{Q}xc4$ $\mathbb{Q}bc6$; 10. $\mathbb{Q}f3$?! d4 11. $\mathbb{Q}e4$ f5 12. $\mathbb{Q}g3$ $\mathbb{Q}d7$ 13. $\mathbb{Q}xd4$ (13.0-0 $\mathbb{Q}c5$ 14. $\mathbb{Q}e1$ 0-0 15. $\mathbb{Q}f1$ $\mathbb{Q}c6$ 16. $\mathbb{Q}g5$ $\mathbb{W}b6$) 13... $\mathbb{Q}b6$.

Part 6

10...dxc4 11.♗a4+ ♖d7 12.♗xc4 ♗bc6 13.♘xc6 ♗xc6 14.0-0 0-0 15.♖ad1 ♗c7

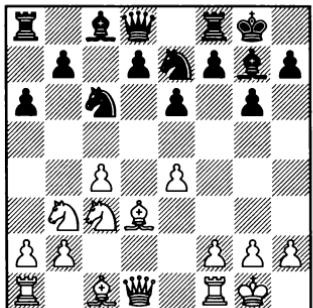


Black has equalised, since 16.♗fe1 (16.♗e4 ♗e5) 16...♗ae8 17.♗e4 ♗a5 18.♗f6+ ♗xf6 19.♗xf6 is well met by 19...♗d5 20.♗g5 (20.♗h4 ♗e3 21.fxe3 ♗e4 22.♗d4 ♗xh4) 20...♗c3!.

7...♗e7 8.♘bc3 ♗bc6 9.0-0

9.♗e2 0-0 10.0-0 f5 transposes to game 34 Ermenkov-Kotsur.

9...0-0



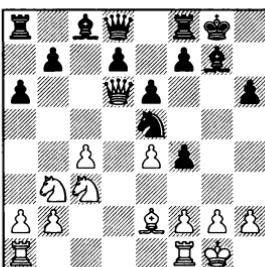
10.♗g5

White often attempts to generate pressure down the d-file with

10.♗e2. We should counter-attack the centre with 10...f5! – see game 34 Ermenkov-Kotsur, Dubai 2000.

10...h6 11.♗h4 (11.♗f4 d5 12.exd5 exd5 13.c5 ♗e5) 11...g5 12.♗g3 ♗e5 13.f4

Caruana opted for 13.♗e2 against Grandelius in Porto Carras 2011. The game went 13...♗7g6 (13...f5!?) 14.♗d6! (Seizing space. Or 14.♗d2 b6.) 14...♗f4 15.♗xf4 gxf4. It is difficult to understand what happens here.

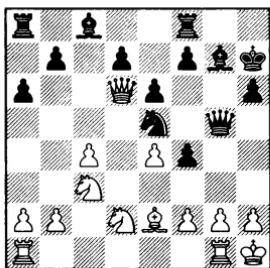


At first sight White is much better, because the black bishop looks stuck on c8. On the other hand, the other one – on g7 – is extremely powerful and its pressure over the enemy queenside would be tangible in an endgame. Black's main task should be to bring the sleeping bishop into play. The simplest way to achieve it is to sacrifice a pawn with ...b5. A finer point is the right timing for this break. I join Grandelius' assessment that Black should not be too hasty. Anyway, White's only way to prevent it is 16.c5, but then 16...♗g5 17.♗d2 ♗d8 threatening ...♗f8/♗e5, ...d6, easily equal-

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ises: 18.♕h1 ♜c6 (18...♝f8) 19.♕a4 ♜e5 20.♗d3 d6. The same method works against 17.♕h1 – 17...♜c6. Caruana decides to play on the kingside. This is a really dangerous plan as the g-file might open in White's favour:

16.♕d2 ♜g5 (16...b5 was already possible) 17.♕h1 (17.♕a4 b5 18.♕b6 ♜a7) 17...♕h7 (17...b5) 18.♗g1



White is fully prepared for an offensive so I think now is the best moment to distract him with:

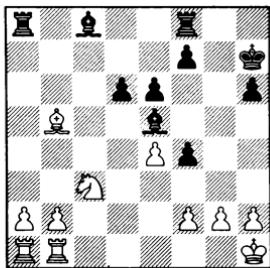
18...b5!

Grandelius postponed it with 18...♝g8, but I'm afraid that 19.♕a4 would have been unpleasant. Caruana played instead 19.♗ad1 ♜f6 (19...b5!?) 20.♕f3 ♜xf3 21.♕xf3 (21.gxsf3!?) when 21...♝e5! was called for: 22.♕a4 (22.♗d3 b5 23.c5 ♜a7 24.♗e2 b4 25.♕xf4 a5 26.g3 ♜a6 27.♗e3 ♜e7=) 22...b5 23.♕b6 ♜xd6 24.♗xd6 ♜a7 25.♗d2 d6 26.♗c1 ♜c7 27.♗cc2 ♜c6 28.♗xc8 ♜xc8=.

19.cxb5 axb5

I believe that Black has full compensation for the pawn. Here is an illustration:

a) 20.♗f3 ♜h5 21.♕xe5 (21.♕g4!?) ♜xg4 22.♗g2 f5∞ 23.♕e5 ♜a6 24.♗b4 d6 25.♗xg4 fxg4 26.♗xg4 ♜c5 27.♗xc5 dxc5 28.♗xb5 ♜a7∞; 21.♕d4 ♜h4 22.f3 ♜c4∞) 21...♝xe5 22.♗xe5 ♜xe5 23.♗xb5 d6 24.♗gb1



24...♜a6!. White is unable to hold his extra pawn due to the activity of the black long-range pieces – 25.a4 ♜fc8 26.♗xa6 ♜xa6 27.♗a3 ♜b6∞.

b) 20.♗xb5 ♜g4 21.♕xg4 ♜xb5 22.♗gb1 ♜b8 23.♗xb8 ♜xb8 24.♗e2 ♜xb2 25.♗xb2 ♜xb2 26.♗b1 ♜c3 27.♗f3 d5=.

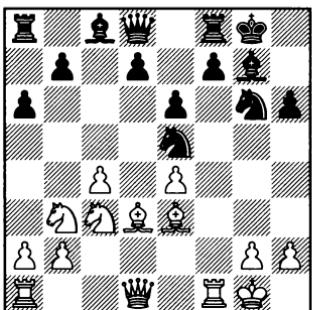
c) 20.♗ac1 ♜a6 21.a3 b4 22.axb4 ♜xe2 23.♗xe2 ♜g4 24.♗gf1 ♜e5 25.♗d3 ♜g8 26.g3 ♜h5 with an attack.

13...gxsf4 14.♗xf4 ♜7g6

The dark-squared strategy 14...♜c7 15.♗d2 (15.♗e3 b6 16.c5 bxc5 17.♗xc5 d6 18.♗e3 f5 19.♗c1 ♜g4) 15...♜7g6 16.♗e3 ♜xd3 17.♗xd3 ♜e5 is also possible, but we have more aggressive intentions in store.

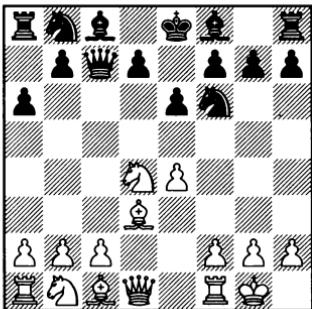
15.♗e3

Part 6



$\mathbb{W}b7$ 27. $\mathbb{W}f3$ f5. Black's mobile pawn centre assures him of the initiative. Perhaps 23. $\mathbb{Q}c7$ is more realistic, when 23... $\mathbb{E}ac8$ 24. $\mathbb{Q}xf8$ $\mathbb{W}xc7$ 25. $\mathbb{W}xc7$ $\mathbb{E}xc7$ 26. $\mathbb{Q}h6$ $\mathbb{E}c2$ is close to the draw, but still White must make it. Black maintains an attack due to the threats of ... $\mathbb{Q}b7$, ...f5, ... $\mathbb{Q}h4$.

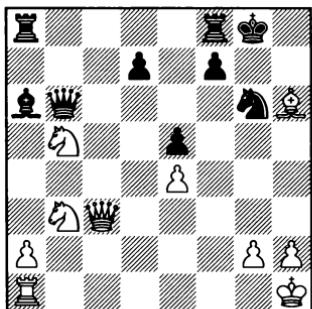
B2. 5... $\mathbb{Q}f6$ 6.0-0 $\mathbb{W}c7$



15...b5!

Our bishop pair will be very efficient in an open position. Black has only tried 15...b6 and 15... $\mathbb{W}c7$ so far.

16. $\mathbb{C}xb5$ $\mathbb{Q}xd3$ 17. $\mathbb{W}xd3$
 $\mathbb{A}xb5\bar{a}$ 18. $\mathbb{Q}xb5$ $\mathbb{Q}xb2$ 19. $\mathbb{Q}xh6$
 $\mathbb{Q}xa1$ 20. $\mathbb{E}xa1$ $\mathbb{W}b6+$ 21. $\mathbb{Q}h1$ $\mathbb{Q}a6$
22. $\mathbb{W}c3$ e5



Black is fine here. He only should avoid *Komodo TCEC*'s recommendation 23. $\mathbb{Q}xf8$ $\mathbb{Q}xf8?$ 24. a4 $\mathbb{Q}g7$ since White gets a strong attack with 25. $\mathbb{Q}3d4!!$ exd4 26. $\mathbb{Q}xd4$ $\mathbb{Q}f8$ 27. $\mathbb{Q}f5\pm$. Instead: 23... $\mathbb{E}xf8!$ (23... $\mathbb{Q}xb5$ 24. $\mathbb{Q}b4$ $\mathbb{W}f6$ 25. a3 $\mathbb{Q}f4$ is a decent alternative) 24. $\mathbb{Q}c7$ $\mathbb{Q}b7$ 25. $\mathbb{Q}d5$ $\mathbb{Q}xd5$ 26. exd5

7. $\mathbb{W}e2$

Here is the big difference with line B1. If White wants to put in c4, he has to move the queen first, but that rules out dangerous plans with $\mathbb{Q}e3$, $\mathbb{W}d2$, $\mathbb{E}d1$. To be sure, 7.c4 is also possible, but I consider it as a positional mistake. We answer 7... $\mathbb{Q}c6!$ 8. $\mathbb{Q}e3$ (8. $\mathbb{Q}xc6$ dx $c6$ 9. $\mathbb{Q}c3$ e5 – see **game 35** Eichhorn-Delchev, Bad Wiessee 2013) 8... $\mathbb{Q}e5$ 9. h3 b6!

9... $\mathbb{Q}c5!?$ in Taimanov-style is also possible: 10. $\mathbb{Q}c3$ d6 11. $\mathbb{E}c1$ 0-0 12. $\mathbb{Q}e2$ h6 13. f4 (13. a3 $\mathbb{Q}d7$ 14. b4 $\mathbb{Q}a7$ 15. $\mathbb{W}d2$ $\mathbb{E}ac8$ 16. f4 $\mathbb{Q}g6$ 17. $\mathbb{Q}f3$ $\mathbb{Q}xe3+$ 18. $\mathbb{W}xe3$ $\mathbb{E}fd8$ 19. $\mathbb{E}fd1$ $\mathbb{Q}h5$) 13... $\mathbb{Q}g6$ 14. f5 $\mathbb{Q}e5$ 15. $\mathbb{W}e1$ $\mathbb{Q}d7$ 16. b3 exf5 17. exf5 $\mathbb{Q}c6$.

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10.f4

This attack has no venom without the light-squared bishop, but after 10.♗c3 ♜b7 11.♗c1 (11.f4 ♗xc4 12.♗xc4 ♛xc4 13.♗c1 ♗xe4! 14.♗cb5 axb5?) 11...♝e7 (11...♝c5?) White will have to push f4 anyway.

10...♝xd3 11.♛xd3 d6 12.♗c3 ♜e7 13.♗ad1 (13.♗ac1 0-0 14.f5 ♜d7 15.b3 ♜ac8 16.a4 ♜b7=) 13...0-0 14.b3 ♜b7 15.f5 e5 16.♗f3 b5! with counterplay.

7.♗c3 and 7.♗h1 d6 8.f4 ♗bd7 9.♗c3 transpose to the Third Rank set-up.

7...d6 8.c4

White may keep us guessing about his queenside plans with:

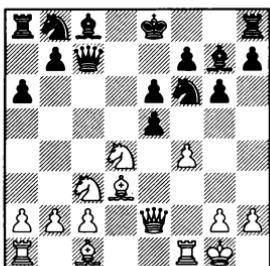
a) 8.f4. Then 8...♝bd7?! will be met by 9.c4 g6 10.f5. An interesting reply is 8...e5 9.♗b3 (9.♗f5 ♜xf5 10.exf5 ♜e7; 9.♗f3 ♜g4 10.♗c3 ♗bd7) 9...♝e7 10.♗c3 0-0 (10...♝bd7 11.g4) 11.f5 b5 12.g4 b4 13.♗d5 ♗xd5 14.exd5 ♗d7 15.g5 ♜d8∞.

Perhaps it is best to fianchetto the bishop:

8...g6 9.♗c3

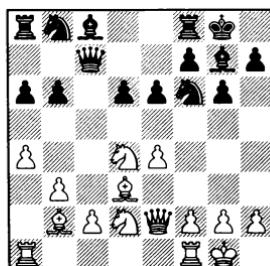
9.f5 ♜g7 10.fxe6 fxe6 11.♗c4 is bad due to 11...♛c5 12.♗e3 ♗g4 13.b4 ♜h5 14.h3 ♗xe3 15.♛xe3 ♗c6 16.c3 ♜h6 17.♛g3 ♛e5∞.

9...♝g7 10.e5 (or 10.♗h1 0-0 11.♗d2 b6 12.♗ae1 ♜b7 13.♗f3 ♗bd7∞, T.Bauer-Farago, Hungary 1993) 10...dxe5



11.♗db5 axb5 12.♗xb5 ♜e7 13.fxe5 0-0 14.exf6 ♜xf6 15.c3, Wei-Artemiev, Chongqing 2013. Black should be fine – his king is safe and the e- and f-pawns control the centre. The game went 15...♝g7 16.a4 ♜d7 17.♗f4 e5 18.b4 ♗a6 19.♗ae1 when 19...♝fe8 20.♗c4 ♜e6 21.♗e3 ♜ac8 22.♗xe6 ♛xe6 would have been balanced. I suppose that 15...♝d7 is slightly more accurate. Possible continuations are 16.♗e3 ♜g7 17.♗f2 ♗a6 or 16.a4 ♜d8.

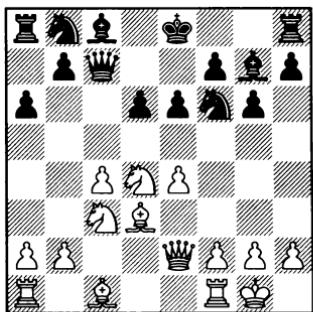
b) A rare set-up is 8.b3 g6 9.♗b2 ♜g7 10.♗d2 0-0 11.a4 (11.♗h1 b6 12.f4 ♜b7 13.♗ae1 ♗bd7 14.e5 ♗h5 15.♗c4 dxe5 16.fxe5 ♜d5 17.♗e3 ♜xe5 18.♗xd5 exd5 19.♗b5 axb5 20.♗xe5 ♗xe5 21.♗xe5 ♛c5 22.b4 ♛xb4 23.♗b1 ♜h4 24.♗xb5 ♜xa2∞, Dutreeuw-Psakhis, Vienna 1991) 11...b6



Part 6

It is unclear what White should do from this point. The game Geller-Huebner, Wijk aan Zee 1975 went 12.♗c4 ♗bd7 (12...d5!? 13.exd5 ♗xd5=) 13.♗fe1 ♗b7 14.♗d2 ♗fd8, preparing ...d6-d5. 14...♗ad8 would have been even better.

8...g6! 9.♗c3 ♗g7



The main branching point of this line. White must define his plans. In practice, he achieves best results by attacking the weakened d6-pawn with B21. 10.♗d1 or B22. 10.♗f3 (planning ♗f4). The third plan is to enter a standard hedgehog with B23. 10.♗e3. The latter is considered not very challenging and scores close to 50%.

**B21. 10.♗d1 0-0 11.♗f3 ♗c6
12.h3**

Alternatively:

a) 12.♗f4 faces 12...e5 13.♗e3 ♗g4 14.h3 ♗d4 15.♗xd4 ♗xf3 16.♗xf3 exd4 17.♗d5 ♗xd5 18.cxd5 ♗b6=, Svidler-Ivanchuk, Monte Carlo 2005.

b) 12.♗c2 is an original manoeuvre. The game Shirov-Wang, Shanghai 2010, illustrates its main idea: 12...♗d7 13.♗e3 ♗de5 14.♗b3 ♗d7 15.♗d2. The c4-pawn is defended while the d6-one is ripe for collection. I recommend the more active retort 13...♗a5! 14.♗b3 ♗xc3 15.bxc3 b6!?? or 15...e5 16.♗d3 ♗c5 17.♗xc5 dxc5=.

12...♗g4, preventing ♗e3, is also possible – 13.♗f4

Naiditch's 13.♗e1 looks overly ambitious. We can take up the gauntlet – 13...♗ge5 14.f4 ♗d7 when Shirov's move 15.♗d2 from the above-mentioned example fails to 15...♗xf3+ 16.gxf3 ♗d4.

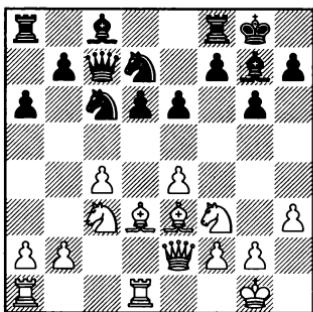
13...♗ge5 14.♗b3 (14.♗ac1 ♗xf3+ 15.♗xf3 e5 16.♗e3 ♗d4) 14...♗d7 when Shirov's move 15.♗d2 from the above-mentioned example fails to 15...♗xf3+ 16.gxf3 ♗d4.

12...♗d7! 13.♗e3

13.♗f4 provokes ...e5, but this moves is on Black's agenda anyway. After 13...♗xc3 14.bxc3 e5, the pawn structure is similar to the main line. See **game 36** Todorovic-Caruana, Rijeka 2010.

Only 13.♗d2 prevents 13...♗xc3 (although the engines still like this capture!). Then 13...b6 14.♗ac1 ♗b7 15.♗e3 leads to positions from line B23 with an extra tempo for Black. He can follow up with 15...♗c5 16.♗b1 ♗fe8 17.b3 ♗ad8, having ...f7-f5 in mind.

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13... $\mathbb{Q}xc3!$ 14.bxc3 f6

A critical position for this line. In my opinion, it is very easy to play it with Black. The last move is the first link of a plan which aims to ensure secure control of the dark squares. It includes ...b6 and ... $\mathbb{Q}c6-d8-f7$ if needed. Nakamura opted for 14...b6 against Dominguez in Wijk aan Zee 2004, but 15. $\mathbb{W}d2!$ $\mathbb{Q}c5$ 16. $\mathbb{Q}c2$ $\mathbb{Q}a5$ could have turned out badly after 17. $\mathbb{Q}h6!$ $\mathbb{E}e8$ 18. $\mathbb{W}f4$ e5 19. $\mathbb{W}f6$ $\mathbb{E}e6$ 20. $\mathbb{Q}h2$.

See **game 37** Leko-Ivanchuk, Mukachevo 2007, for more explanation.

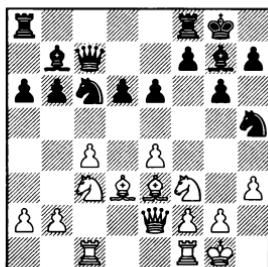
B22. 10. $\mathbb{Q}f3$ 0-0

10... $\mathbb{Q}c6$ is less flexible as it defines the placement of this knight too early while it would have been more useful on d7 in some lines. Black wants to seize the d4-square, but practice suggests that it might be insufficient to balance the game. For instance, 11. $\mathbb{Q}f4$ e5 (11... $\mathbb{Q}h5$, intending ... $\mathbb{Q}xc3$, is possible, but

after 12. $\mathbb{Q}d2$ 0-0 13. $\mathbb{Q}ac1$, the knight would be a bit awkward on c6. By all means this continuation has no advantages over the main line.) 12. $\mathbb{Q}d2!$ (12. $\mathbb{Q}e3$ $\mathbb{Q}g4$ 13.h3 $\mathbb{Q}d4!=$) 12... $\mathbb{Q}g4$ 13. $\mathbb{W}e3$ and White can organise an offensive on either flank.

11. $\mathbb{Q}f4$

11.h3 eliminates the idea of ...e5 followed up by ... $\mathbb{Q}g4$, but I noted above that it was not so attractive anyway. We follow our main plan enjoying a clear extra tempo – 11... $\mathbb{Q}c6$ 12. $\mathbb{Q}f4$ $\mathbb{Q}h5!$ 13. $\mathbb{Q}d2$ (13. $\mathbb{Q}e3$ $\mathbb{Q}xc3$ 14.bxc3 e5 15.c5 $\mathbb{Q}f4$ 16. $\mathbb{Q}xf4$ exf4 17.cxd6 $\mathbb{W}xd6$ 18.e5 $\mathbb{W}c5)$ 13...b6 14. $\mathbb{Q}ac1$ $\mathbb{Q}b7$ 15. $\mathbb{Q}e3$



White is threatening with $\mathbb{Q}d5$, but we are just in time to prevent it with 15... $\mathbb{Q}e5!$. Then:

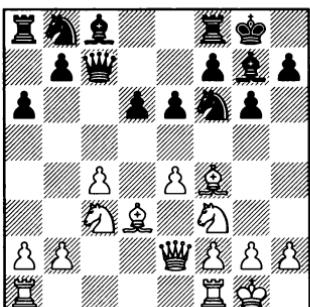
a) 16. $\mathbb{Q}xe5$ dx $e5$ 17. $\mathbb{Q}b1$ $\mathbb{Q}f4$ 18. $\mathbb{W}c2$ $\mathbb{Q}xc4=$; 17. $\mathbb{Q}a4$ $\mathbb{Q}f4$ 18. $\mathbb{W}c2$ $\mathbb{Q}c6$ 19. $\mathbb{Q}xb6$ $\mathbb{Q}ad8$) 17...f5.

b) 16. $\mathbb{Q}fd1$ $\mathbb{Q}xf3+$

Or 16... $\mathbb{Q}xd3$ 17. $\mathbb{W}xd3$ $\mathbb{Q}ad8=$

17. $\mathbb{W}xf3$ f5!. Black has seized the initiative: 18. $\mathbb{Q}b1$ $\mathbb{Q}f7!$ 19. $\mathbb{W}e2$ f4 20. $\mathbb{Q}d2$ f3 21.gxf3 $\mathbb{Q}af8\rightarrow$.

Part 6



11... $\mathbb{Q}h5!$

It is already late to return to the plan with 11... $\mathbb{Q}c6$ 12. $\mathbb{B}ac1$ e5? in view of 13. $\mathbb{Q}g5$ $\mathbb{Q}g4$ 14. $\mathbb{Q}d5$.

12. $\mathbb{Q}e3$

12. $\mathbb{Q}g5$ would give an extra tempo for ..f6 or ... $\mathbb{Q}e6$. For instance, 12... $\mathbb{Q}xc3$ 13.bxc3 e5 14. $\mathbb{Q}h4$, Shirov-Ivanchuk, Motril 2008, 14... $\mathbb{Q}g7$ 15.g3 $\mathbb{Q}h3$ 16. $\mathbb{Q}g2$ $\mathbb{Q}e6$ 17. $\mathbb{Q}h6$ $\mathbb{Q}d8$ 18. $\mathbb{Q}fd1$ $\mathbb{Q}xg2$ 19. $\mathbb{Q}xg2$ $\mathbb{Q}d7\infty$.

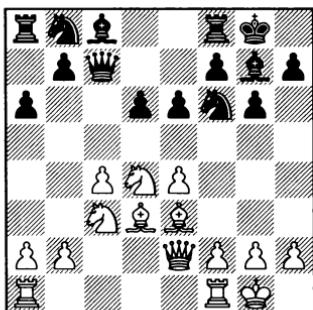
12. $\mathbb{Q}d2$ would mark a turn in White's strategy. He does preserve the Maróczy Bind's pawn structure, but his pieces need a serious regrouping. That gives us more than enough time for completing comfortably development. Black's best set-up is perhaps 12...b6 13. $\mathbb{E}ac1$ $\mathbb{Q}b7$ 14. $\mathbb{Q}fd1$ (Firat-Delchev, Skopje 30.03.2014, saw 12... $\mathbb{Q}d7$ 13. $\mathbb{E}ac1$ b6 14.b3 $\mathbb{Q}b7$ 15. $\mathbb{Q}b1$?! $\mathbb{E}ac8$ 16. $\mathbb{Q}e1$ $\mathbb{E}fe8$ 17.f4 f5+) 14... $\mathbb{Q}d7$ 15. $\mathbb{Q}e3$ (or 15.h3 $\mathbb{E}ac8$ 16. $\mathbb{Q}e3$ $\mathbb{W}b8$ 17. $\mathbb{Q}b1$ $\mathbb{E}fe8$ 18. $\mathbb{W}d2$ $\mathbb{Q}f8$ 19.b3 $\mathbb{Q}a8$ 20. $\mathbb{Q}h6$ $\mathbb{Q}e7$ 21. $\mathbb{Q}g5$ $\mathbb{Q}hf6$ 22. $\mathbb{Q}f4$ $\mathbb{Q}e5$ =, Vavulin-Artemiev, Moscow 2014) 15... $\mathbb{E}ac8$ 16. $\mathbb{Q}b1$ $\mathbb{E}fe8$ 17. $\mathbb{W}d2$ $\mathbb{Q}f8$

18.b3 $\mathbb{W}b8$ 19. $\mathbb{Q}h6$ $\mathbb{Q}e7$ 20. $\mathbb{Q}g5$ $\mathbb{Q}f8$, Kryvoruchko-Nikolov, Rethymnon 2011. It is good to preserve the dark-squared bishop which protects the d6-pawn and the kingside. At the same time, it usually plays an important role in a counter-attack with ...d5 by hitting b4 or by going to d6.

12... $\mathbb{Q}xc3!$ 13.bxc3 e5!

We have obtained the same pawn structure as in the previous line, only the knight is on h5. This "small" difference forces changes in Black's plan since after 13...f6, the knight would have no prospects whatsoever. The text opens the c8-bishop which is assigned to kill the white knight. It is better to eat it on f3 rather on d5. See **game 40** Grischuk-Ivanchuk, Beijing 2013.

B23. 10. $\mathbb{Q}e3$ 0-0



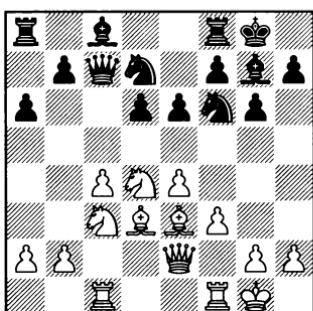
This line leads to the Hedgehog in its "nearly" best version for White. Why is it less popular than the previous two lines then? Kritz even accompanies the move 10. $\mathbb{Q}e3$

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with a question mark!! It does takes guts to stigmatise in such a way the white side of a hedgehog! In my opinion, this is the most principled and unpleasant weapon against the Kan and I can only be too happy that it is underrated. I suspect that 1.e4 players usually do not feel comfortable in these structures. They commonly prefer more straightforward plans which involve a kingside attack. In our case, Black's king is well protected by the fianchettoed bishop so the direct assault has little chances to succeed. After 11.f4 $\mathbb{Q}bd7$ 12. $\mathbb{E}ac1$ b6 13. $\mathbb{Q}h1$ $\mathbb{Q}b7$, 14.f5 would be a mistake, because it opens the e-file to Black's favour. In practice, White turns to the thematic plan with b4, but then why had he played f4?! – 14.b4 $\mathbb{E}fe8$ 15. $\mathbb{Q}b3$ $\mathbb{E}ac8$ 16.a4, when the best set-up is 16... $\mathbb{E}b8!$ 17.a5 bxa5 18. $\mathbb{Q}xa5$ $\mathbb{Q}a8$.

**11. $\mathbb{E}ac1$ $\mathbb{Q}bd7!$ (not 11...b6)
12.f3**

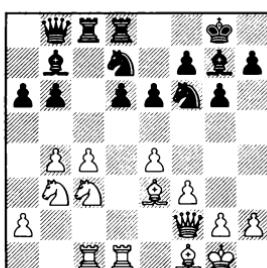
White may try to counter my plan of an early ... $\mathbb{Q}d7$ -e5 by 12. $\mathbb{E}fd1$ $\mathbb{Q}e5$ 13. $\mathbb{Q}f3$, but we get counterplay with 13... $\mathbb{Q}fg4$ 14. $\mathbb{Q}g5$ b6 15. $\mathbb{Q}xe5$ $\mathbb{Q}xe5$ 16.b3 $\mathbb{Q}b7$ 17. $\mathbb{Q}b1$ f5.



Amazingly, but this position seems utterly unexplored. I see more than 30 games in my database, but none of them can serve us as a model to follow. Even the young Karpov looks hesitant in his actions. Look at the game Musil-Karpov, Ljubljana 1975: 12...b6 13. $\mathbb{W}f2$ $\mathbb{Q}b7$ 14. $\mathbb{E}fd1$ $\mathbb{Q}h5?$! (What is this? Did he intend to push ...f5?) 15. $\mathbb{Q}f1$ $\mathbb{E}ac8$ 16. $\mathbb{E}c2$ (16.b4!) 16... $\mathbb{E}fe8$ (not at all!) 17. $\mathbb{E}cd2$ (17.b4!) 17... $\mathbb{Q}f8$ 18. $\mathbb{Q}db5?$! axb5 19. $\mathbb{Q}xb5$ $\mathbb{W}b8$ 20. $\mathbb{Q}xd6$ $\mathbb{Q}c5?$ 21. $\mathbb{Q}xe8$ and Black is in very bad shape.

Shipov has written 1100 pages on the Hedgehog. A great prose, but no answers, unfortunately. Or even worse – wrong answers. He mentions only two games (where White did not even choose the best continuations) where Black is conspicuously worse.

The overwhelming majority of players choose the set-up with ...b6 and even score more than 50%, but they clearly did not know what to do against the plan with 12...b6 13. $\mathbb{E}fd1$ $\mathbb{Q}b7$ 14. $\mathbb{W}f2$ $\mathbb{E}ac8$ 15. $\mathbb{Q}f1$ $\mathbb{E}fd8$ (or 15... $\mathbb{E}fe8$) 16.b4 $\mathbb{W}b8$ 17. $\mathbb{Q}b3$.



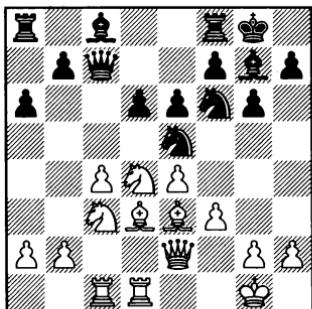
I analyse in detail this position in the annotations to **game 38**

Part 6

Simacek-Akopian, Plovdiv 2012. My conclusion is that we should not allow it at all!

I see only one possible way to exploit White's set-up with $\mathbb{Q}d3-\mathbb{W}e2$ – the bishop cannot retreat to f1. Therefore, our first task should be to play quickly ... $\mathbb{Q}bd7-e5$, aiming to trade it for the bishop if White answers $\mathbb{W}d2$. So we start with:

12... $\mathbb{Q}e5!$ 13. $\mathbb{B}fd1$



Now we have a choice. I spent some time on:

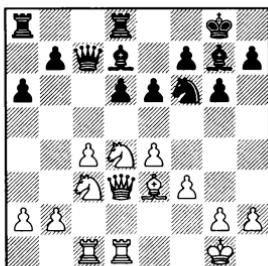
13... $\mathbb{Q}d7$. It is a logical development since the bishop would support ...b5. In practice White invariably answers:

a) 14.b3?! when, besides 14... $\mathbb{Q}xd3$, we can maintain the tension with 14... $\mathbb{W}a5!?$. Then 15. $\mathbb{Q}b1$ $\mathbb{E}fc8$ 16. $\mathbb{W}d2$ $\mathbb{Q}e8$ would allow us to push ...b5 (if White played a4, he would never achieve b4 due to the weakness of the c4-pawn). 15. $\mathbb{W}d2$ $\mathbb{Q}xd3$ 16. $\mathbb{W}xd3$ $\mathbb{E}fd8$ is similar to line b, so I analysed mainly 15. $\mathbb{W}b2$ (threatening $\mathbb{Q}f1$ or b4) 15... $\mathbb{Q}xd3$ 16. $\mathbb{E}xd3$ $\mathbb{E}fc8$ 17. $\mathbb{Q}de2$ (17.b4 $\mathbb{W}c7$ 18. $\mathbb{Q}de2$

$\mathbb{Q}e8$ 19. $\mathbb{Q}d4$ e5 20. $\mathbb{Q}e3$ $\mathbb{W}xc4$; 17.a4 $\mathbb{Q}e8$) 17...b5 18.b4 $\mathbb{W}d8$ 19. $\mathbb{E}xd6$ $\mathbb{E}xc4$ 20. $\mathbb{E}cd1$ $\mathbb{W}e8$ 21.e5 $\mathbb{Q}d5$ 22. $\mathbb{Q}xd5$ $\mathbb{E}xd5$ 23. $\mathbb{E}6xd5$ $\mathbb{Q}c6$.

b) 14. $\mathbb{W}d2!$ $\mathbb{Q}xd3$ 15. $\mathbb{W}xd3$ $\mathbb{E}fd8!$

15... $\mathbb{E}fc8?!$ looks more active, but the long forced variation 16. $\mathbb{Q}b3$ $\mathbb{Q}e8$ (16... $\mathbb{Q}e8$ 17.c5) 17. $\mathbb{W}xd6$ $\mathbb{W}xd6$ 18. $\mathbb{E}xd6$ $\mathbb{Q}d7$ 19.c5! $\mathbb{Q}f8$ 20.c6! $\mathbb{B}xc6$ 21. $\mathbb{E}d2$ c5 22. $\mathbb{Q}a4$ -c4 23. $\mathbb{E}dc2$ $\mathbb{Q}e5$ 24. $\mathbb{Q}b6$ $\mathbb{C}xb3$ 25. $\mathbb{E}xc8$ $\mathbb{E}xc8$ 26. $\mathbb{Q}xc8$ $\mathbb{Q}d3$ 27. $\mathbb{E}a1$ $\mathbb{Q}b4$ 28. $\mathbb{A}xb3$ $\mathbb{Q}c2$ 29. $\mathbb{E}xa6$ $\mathbb{Q}xe3$ 30. $\mathbb{Q}d6$ $\mathbb{Q}d7$ 31. $\mathbb{E}a7$ $\mathbb{Q}xd6$ 32. $\mathbb{E}xd7$ faces Black with a difficult ending – the $\mathbb{Q}+\mathbb{Q}$ generally perform poorly against a $\mathbb{E}+$ passed pawn.

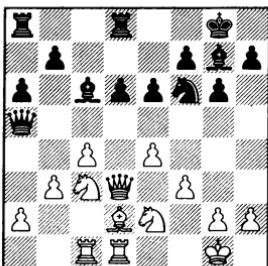


Here 16. $\mathbb{Q}b3$ is less effective as 16... $\mathbb{Q}e8$ 17. $\mathbb{Q}f4$ $\mathbb{W}b6+$ 18. $\mathbb{Q}h1$ $\mathbb{Q}d7!!$ 19. $\mathbb{W}xd6$ $\mathbb{W}xd6$ 20. $\mathbb{E}xd6$ $\mathbb{Q}e5$ 21. $\mathbb{E}xd8$ $\mathbb{E}xd8$ 22. $\mathbb{Q}xe5$ $\mathbb{Q}xe5$ offers Black full compensation for the pawn – 23.c5 f5=. Black plays on, ignoring the enemy's extra pawn. $\mathbb{Q}a5$ is always met by ... $\mathbb{Q}c6$. I took my time to explore this endgame very deeply. The verdict is that only Black can win it.

So far so good. I proved that this set-up was possible. However,

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returning back to move 16, my initial enthusiasm began to evaporate. I could not set up decent counterplay against best play: 16.b3 $\mathbb{W}a5$ 17. $\mathbb{Q}de2$ $\mathbb{Q}e8$ 18. $\mathbb{Q}f4!$ (to drag the bishop to c6, 18. $\mathbb{Q}d2$ $\mathbb{W}c5+$ 19. $\mathbb{Q}h1$ b5; 18. $\mathbb{Q}h1$ b5) 18... $\mathbb{Q}c6$ 19. $\mathbb{Q}d2!$



Black has to abandon his dream of ...b5 and consent to a waiting stand with 19... $\mathbb{Q}d7$ 20. $\mathbb{Q}h1$ (20. $\mathbb{Q}d4$ $\mathbb{Q}c8$ 21. $\mathbb{Q}a4$ $\mathbb{W}d8$ 22. $\mathbb{Q}xc6$ $\mathbb{Q}xc6$ 23. $\mathbb{Q}e3$) 20... $\mathbb{W}d8$.

This analysis made me explore the same structure with a bishop on b7.

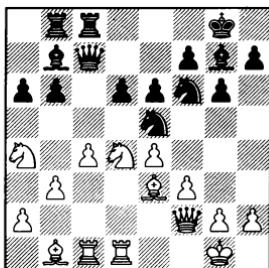
13...b6

Most practical games went from this point 14.b3 [14. $\mathbb{Q}b1$ $\mathbb{Q}xc4$ is balanced – 15. $\mathbb{Q}a4$ (15. $\mathbb{Q}f2$ $\mathbb{Q}b7$) 15...b5 16.b3 e5 17.bxc4 bxa4 18. $\mathbb{Q}c2$ $\mathbb{Q}d7$ 19. $\mathbb{W}d2$ $\mathbb{Q}fc8$] 14... $\mathbb{Q}b7$ 15. $\mathbb{Q}b1?$! (15. $\mathbb{W}f2$ could face 15...d5! 16.cxd5 $\mathbb{Q}fg4$). We politely allowed the bishop to live on and it ran away! Naturally, we could have traded on d3, but I think that Black has more chances to win if he kept both knights. My idea of playing ... $\mathbb{Q}d7$ -e5 was not so much aimed against the bishop, but against the plan

with $\mathbb{Q}f1$, b4, $\mathbb{Q}b3$.

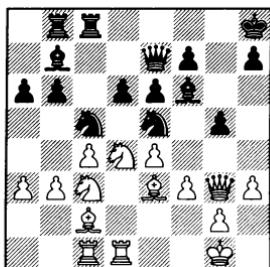
Having shifted the bishop to b1 gave us time for an active redeployment:

15... $\mathbb{Q}fc8$ 16. $\mathbb{W}f2$ $\mathbb{Q}ab8$ 17. $\mathbb{Q}a4$



Note that I propose to put the rooks on b8 (protecting b6) and c8 (hitting c4). We can already breathe freely as the enemy is left without an active plan. In contrast, we have at least two promising ideas based on kingside play with ...g5:

a) 17... $\mathbb{Q}fd7!$ 18.a3 (hoping for $\mathbb{Q}a2$, b4) 18... $\mathbb{Q}c5$ 19. $\mathbb{Q}c3$ $\mathbb{W}e7!$ (relocating the queen to the kingside) 20. $\mathbb{Q}c2$ $\mathbb{Q}f6$ (20... $\mathbb{Q}h8$!?) 21. $\mathbb{W}g3$ f5) 21.h3 (21. $\mathbb{W}e2$ g5 22.b4 $\mathbb{Q}cd7$ 23. $\mathbb{Q}b3$ $\mathbb{Q}c7=$) 21...g5 22. $\mathbb{W}g3$ $\mathbb{Q}h8$.



b) 17... $\mathbb{Q}a8$ 18. $\mathbb{Q}e2$ $\mathbb{Q}ed7$ 19. $\mathbb{Q}d3$ $\mathbb{W}d8$ 20. $\mathbb{Q}ac3$ $\mathbb{Q}e5$ 21. $\mathbb{W}e1$ $\mathbb{W}e7$ 22. $\mathbb{Q}d4$ $\mathbb{Q}ed7$ 23. $\mathbb{Q}f1$ (23.b4 $\mathbb{Q}e5$)

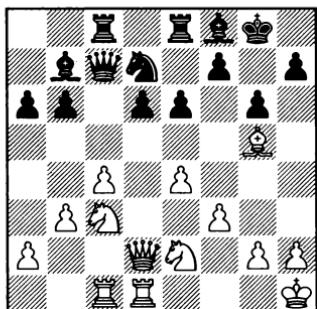
Part 6

$\mathbb{Q}e8$ (24.b4 $\mathbb{Q}e5$) 24.a3 $\mathbb{Q}e5$ 25.b4
 $\mathbb{W}f6$ 26. $\mathbb{W}d2$ g5 27. $\mathbb{Q}ce2$ h6 28. $\mathbb{Q}g3$
 $\mathbb{W}g6$ 29. $\mathbb{Q}d3$ $\mathbb{Q}ef6$ with an interesting game.

However, we must also prepare for White's best retort:

**14. $\mathbb{W}d2$ $\mathbb{Q}xd3$ 15. $\mathbb{W}xd3$ $\mathbb{Q}d7!$
16.b3 $\mathbb{E}d8$ 17. $\mathbb{W}d2$ $\mathbb{Q}b7$ 18. $\mathbb{Q}de2$
 $\mathbb{Q}f8$ 19. $\mathbb{Q}h1$ $\mathbb{E}ac8$ 20. $\mathbb{Q}g5$ $\mathbb{E}e8$**

White is very solid indeed, but at least he has not a clear plan for improvement. Black should be patient and wait for his chance.



You know what to look for – ...b5, or ...d5. He might wait with ... $\mathbb{W}b8$, ... $\mathbb{Q}a8$, ... $\mathbb{Q}c5$, ... $\mathbb{E}c7$ – all that typical hedgehog jazz.

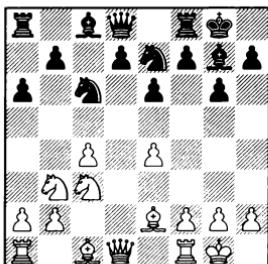
Part 6. Kan – the Maróczy Bind

Complete Games

34. Ermenkov-Kotsur Dubai 30.04.2000

This game was annotated back in 2000 for Chess Base Magazine by our friend and established Chess Stars translator, GM E.Ermenkov. He has been a devoted Sicilian player with both colours throughout his entire career so it would be interesting to compare his notes:

1.e4 c5 2.♘f3 e6 3.d4 cxd4
4.♗xd4 a6 5.♗d3 g6 6.c4 ♗g7
7.♗b3 ♘e7 8.♗c3 ♘bc6 9.0-0
0-0 10.♗e2



This move is the point of White's set-up. After the bishop's retreat, White is preventing ...d5 and intends simply ♘f4 followed by ♘d2, ♘fd1, ♘ac1, ♘h6, etc. with a strong positional bind.' (EE) 10.♗g5 is certainly more dangerous for Black.

10...f5 (! – A.D.)

'I am very suspicious toward this type of "Dutch Defense" in the Sicilian.' (EE) The break ...f5 is one of the main ideas of the set-up with ...♗e7. Black is going to destroy the enemy centre by taking on e4 and pushing ...d5. Therefore, White's next move is consistent and popular.

11.c5

'John Nunn recommends here 11.exf5!? in his wonderful book "BTS-3".' (EE) Well, after 11...♗xf5 12.♗f4 b5! nothing will remain from the Maroczy Bind pawns. Philidor would have been happy to see firstly ...f5, then ...b5! White is walking on thin ice – 13.cxb5 axb5 14.♗xb5 ♘cd4 – 15.♗xd4 ♘xd4 16.♗d6 ♘xb5 17.♗xb5 ♘f5 18.a4 ♘a6.

White can discourage ...b5 with 11.a4, but 11...fxe4 12.♗xe4 d5 solves the opening problems. (engines are fond of the more flexible 12...b6)

11.♗f4 fxe4 12.♗d6 e3! 13.fxe3 ♘xf1+ 14.♗xf1 ♘f5 is also pleasant for Black.

Only the paradoxical and somewhat ugly move 11.f3!? keeps control of the centre. Black should

choose the right moment for ...f4. He may play it at once and follow up by his initial idea of ...d7-d5.

11...fxe4

'11...b6 has been tried in practice, but White was a little better after 12.cxb6 $\mathbb{W}xb6$ 13. $\mathbb{Q}e3$ $\mathbb{W}d8$ 14.f4.' (EE)

14. $\mathbb{W}d2$ fxe4 15. $\mathbb{Q}xe4$ d5 16. $\mathbb{Q}ec5$ $\mathbb{Q}f5$ 17. $\mathbb{Q}g5$ $\mathbb{W}d6$ 18. $\mathbb{E}ac1$ h6 19. $\mathbb{Q}f4$, Psakhis-Oratovsky, Tel Aviv 1993, would have been fine for Black after 19...e5!, but Ermenkov's proposition 14.f4? is simply bad due to 14...fxe4 15. $\mathbb{Q}xe4$ $\mathbb{Q}d5$. Therefore, 11...b6 is a viable alternative to the game.

12. $\mathbb{Q}xe4$ b6

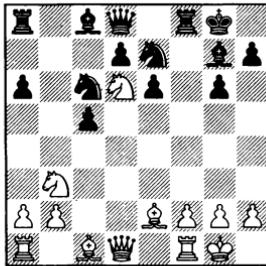
'At first sight what Black is doing seems very logical. He wants to get rid of the pawns on e4 and c5 and then using the "d" and "e" pawn tandem to prevail in the fight for the centre. This plan, however is too ambitious to succeed against the excellent development of White.' (EE)

In fact, White has no advantage neither in the centre, nor in development. I would say, Black's pieces are clearly more active which is balanced by the hole on d6.

13. $\mathbb{Q}d6!$

'This horse is coming here to stay and graze till retirement...' (EE)

13... $\mathbb{W}xc5$



14. $\mathbb{Q}xc5$

14. $\mathbb{Q}e3$ $\mathbb{W}xb2$ 15. $\mathbb{E}b1$ $\mathbb{Q}e5$ 16. $\mathbb{Q}xc5$ $\mathbb{W}c7$ 17.g3 $\mathbb{Q}d5$ 18. $\mathbb{Q}e4$ d6 19. $\mathbb{Q}a3$, Li,C.-Grandelius, Malmo 2012, does not look as an improvement. After 19...a5, White would have been struggling to prove sufficient compensation for the pawn.

14... $\mathbb{Q}d4?$

'But not 14... $\mathbb{Q}f5$ 15. $\mathbb{Q}xc8$ ' (EE)

14... $\mathbb{Q}f5$! assures Black of a fine game. Black should not delay this move as the pin from g5 would be awkward. Ermenkov's retort 15. $\mathbb{Q}xc8$ has no venom since 15... $\mathbb{W}xc8$ 16. $\mathbb{W}xd7?$ loses to 16... $\mathbb{Q}cd4$. Black rules in the centre after 16. $\mathbb{Q}g5$ d6 17. $\mathbb{Q}a4$ $\mathbb{W}b7$ 18. $\mathbb{E}c1$ $\mathbb{Q}cd4$ 19.b3 $\mathbb{Q}xe2+$ 20. $\mathbb{W}xe2$ $\mathbb{Q}d4$.

The possession of the d4-square ensures full-fledged counterplay in the other lines, too:

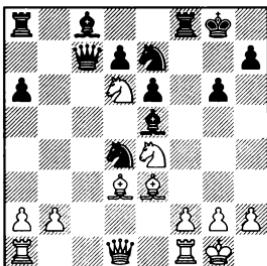
15. $\mathbb{Q}xf5$ $\mathbb{E}xf5$ 16. $\mathbb{Q}e3$ $\mathbb{E}d5$ 17. $\mathbb{W}e1$ $\mathbb{Q}d4$ 18. $\mathbb{E}c1$ a5 19. $\mathbb{Q}g4$ a4;
15. $\mathbb{Q}g4$ $\mathbb{Q}xd6$ 16. $\mathbb{W}xd6$ $\mathbb{Q}e5$ 17.h3
 $\mathbb{Q}c4$ 18. $\mathbb{W}d3$ $\mathbb{Q}e5$;
15. $\mathbb{Q}ce4$ $\mathbb{Q}cd4$.

15. $\mathbb{Q}d3?$

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It was essential to provoke weaknesses with 15... $\mathbb{Q}g5!$ h6 16. $\mathbb{Q}h4$ g5 17. $\mathbb{Q}g3$ $\mathbb{Q}ef5$ 18. $\mathbb{Q}d3$.

15... $\mathbb{W}c7$ 16. $\mathbb{Q}ce4$ $\mathbb{Q}e5$ (why not 16... $\mathbb{Q}f5!$) 17. $\mathbb{Q}e3$!



17... $\mathbb{Q}df5$

17... $\mathbb{Q}ec6!$ was simpler: 18. $\mathbb{Q}xc8$ $\mathbb{Q}axc8$ 19. $\mathbb{Q}h1$ d5 20. $\mathbb{Q}c5$ $\mathbb{W}d6$ 21. $\mathbb{Q}xa6$ $\mathbb{Q}xh2$ 22. $\mathbb{W}g4$ $\mathbb{Q}f4$. Also 17... $\mathbb{Q}f3+$ 18.gxf3 $\mathbb{Q}xd6$ 19. $\mathbb{Q}xd6$ $\mathbb{W}xd6$ deserves attention.

18. $\mathbb{B}c1$ $\mathbb{Q}c6?$

18... $\mathbb{W}b8$ was unclear. It seems that Kotsur forgot his kingside.

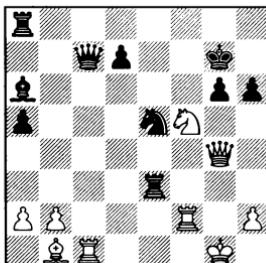
19. $\mathbb{Q}xf5$ $\mathbb{exf5}$

'19...gxf5 does not look attractive after 20. $\mathbb{Q}g5$ with the threat $\mathbb{Q}h5$, check or no check with ... $\mathbb{Q}xh2+$ while 19... $\mathbb{W}xf5$ 20. $\mathbb{Q}g3$ followed by 21. $\mathbb{W}g4$ and Black will not survive this attack.' (EE)

After the text, Black's centre is ruined and my heart is aching to watch his poor king left to the mercy of the opponent's pieces. Although Ermakov went for unnecessary

complications, he succeeded in finishing the game in style:

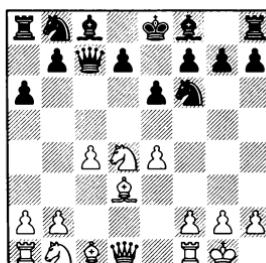
20.f4 $\mathbb{Q}g7$ 21. $\mathbb{Q}d6$ h6 22.g4 $\mathbb{Q}h8$ 23. $\mathbb{Q}b1$ a5 24. $\mathbb{B}f2$ $\mathbb{Q}a6$ 25.gxf5 $\mathbb{B}f6$ 26. $\mathbb{Q}e4$ $\mathbb{B}xf5$ 27. $\mathbb{Q}g3$ $\mathbb{B}f6$ 28. $\mathbb{W}g4$ $\mathbb{B}e6$ 29.f5?! $\mathbb{B}xe3$ 30.f6 $\mathbb{Q}e5$ 31.fxg7+ $\mathbb{Q}xg7$ 32. $\mathbb{Q}f5+$



32... $\mathbb{Q}h8?$ (32... $\mathbb{Q}h7$ was more resilient) 33. $\mathbb{W}d1$ $\mathbb{W}b6$ 34. $\mathbb{Q}xe3$ $\mathbb{W}xe3$ 35. $\mathbb{Q}c3$ $\mathbb{W}a7$ 36. $\mathbb{W}d6$ $\mathbb{Q}g4$ 37. $\mathbb{Q}c5!$ $\mathbb{B}e8$ 38. $\mathbb{B}f8+$ $\mathbb{B}xf8$ 39. $\mathbb{W}xf8+$ $\mathbb{Q}h7$ 40. $\mathbb{W}f7+$ $\mathbb{Q}h8$ 41. $\mathbb{W}e8+$ $\mathbb{Q}g7$ 42. $\mathbb{W}xg6+$ $\mathbb{Q}f8$ 43. $\mathbb{W}d6+$ $\mathbb{Q}f7$ 44. $\mathbb{W}c7$ 1-0

35. Eichhorn-Delchev Bad Wiessee 30.10.2013

1.e4 c5 2. $\mathbb{Q}f3$ e6 3.d4 $\mathbb{cxd4}$ 4. $\mathbb{Q}xd4$ a6 5. $\mathbb{Q}d3$ $\mathbb{Q}f6$ 6.0-0 $\mathbb{W}c7$ 7.c4?!



Part 6

This is a frequent positional mistake. White should delay c4 until ...d6 as now his dark squares pass under Black's control.

7... $\mathbb{Q}c6!$ 8. $\mathbb{Q}xc6$ dxc6 9. $\mathbb{Q}c3$ e5 10. $\mathbb{W}c2?$! (threatening $\mathbb{Q}a4$) 10... $\mathbb{Q}c5$ 11. $\mathbb{E}b1$ a5 12.a3

White intends to push b4. Then the bishop cannot survive long on d4 in view of $\mathbb{Q}e2$ – 12...0-0 13.b4 axb4 14.axb4 $\mathbb{Q}d4$ 15. $\mathbb{Q}e2$ $\mathbb{Q}a7$ 16.c5 $\mathbb{Q}e6$ 17.h3 b6 18. $\mathbb{Q}e3$. Therefore, it is important to hinder b4, at least for a while.

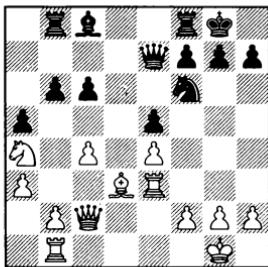
12... $\mathbb{W}e7!$ 13. $\mathbb{Q}a4$ $\mathbb{Q}d4$ 14. $\mathbb{Q}g5$

My bishop is well established in the centre, but now I must deal with a new positional threat – 14...h6 15. $\mathbb{Q}xf6$ $\mathbb{W}xf6$ 16.c5 $\mathbb{Q}e6$ 17. $\mathbb{Q}b6$. To be fair, the engines think that 17... $\mathbb{Q}a7$ (17... $\mathbb{Q}d8=$) would be fine for Black, but I doubt that an organic creature would voluntarily isolate his rook in such an exemplary way. It seemed to me better to keep the queenside fluid, but my idea has a serious flaw.

14...b6 15. $\mathbb{E}fe1$

15. $\mathbb{W}d2$ $\mathbb{Q}e6$ 16. $\mathbb{Q}e3$ $\mathbb{Q}d8!$ seizes the initiative, but 15.c5! b5 16. $\mathbb{Q}b6$ $\mathbb{Q}b8$ 17.a4! b4 18. $\mathbb{Q}xf6=$ would have effectively petrified the left wing.

15...0-0 16. $\mathbb{Q}e3$ $\mathbb{Q}xe3$ 17. $\mathbb{Q}xe3$ $\mathbb{Q}b8$



18.b4

White deludes himself that he is the active side, but his advance only produces a weakness. The fact that my setup on the queenside is defensive does not automatically mean that White has an advantage there. He could have stayed with $\mathbb{Q}e2$, $\mathbb{Q}bd1$.

18...axb4 19. $\mathbb{Q}xb4?$! $\mathbb{W}a7$ 20. $\mathbb{Q}b2?$

Who would believe that the game will be over in two moves?! 20. $\mathbb{Q}e2$ $\mathbb{Q}e6$ 21.c5 would be even – 21...b5 22. $\mathbb{Q}b6$ $\mathbb{Q}d7$ 23. $\mathbb{Q}xd7$ $\mathbb{W}xd7$ 24. $\mathbb{W}c3$ $\mathbb{W}c7$ 25.a4 bxa4 26. $\mathbb{Q}xa4$ $\mathbb{Q}b1+$ 27. $\mathbb{Q}f1$. However, White persists with his idea of attacking b6. This leads him to a tragic end:

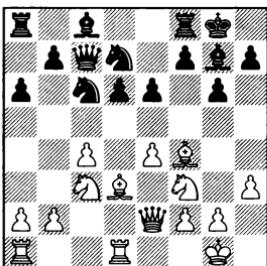
20... $\mathbb{Q}d7$ 21. $\mathbb{Q}f1?$ c5 0-1

**36. Todorovic-Caruana
Rijeka 06.03.2010**

1.e4 c5 2. $\mathbb{Q}f3$ e6 3.d4 cxd4 4. $\mathbb{Q}xd4$ a6 5. $\mathbb{Q}d3$ $\mathbb{Q}f6$ 6. $\mathbb{W}e2$ d6 7.0-0 g6 8.c4 $\mathbb{Q}g7$ 9. $\mathbb{Q}c3$ 0-0

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10.♗d1 ♜c7 11.h3 ♜c6 12.♘f3 ♜d7 13.♘f4



13...♘xc3!

This exchange is perhaps the main strategic aim of Black's set-up. It is possible in various settings, for instance, with a white bishop on e3, or a black knight on h5. The arising pawn structure is so static, that White practically remains without any active plan. He will push f2-f4-f5 and that is about all. Black, for his part, will seek to destroy the other enemy knight since it is a dangerous piece around his king. See also the next game.

14.bxc3 e5 15.♗h6 ♜e8

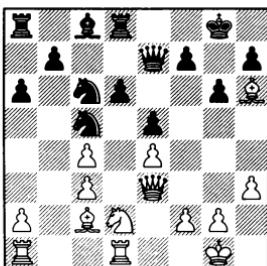
The idea of this strange move is to keep the d8-square for the manoeuvre ...♘c6-d8-f7.

Ivanchuk chose in an earlier game the more trivial 15...♝d8 when Karjakin answered 16.♕e3.

The manoeuvre ♘f3-h2-f1-e3-d5 is fairly slow and Black gets counterplay with ...b5 – 16.♘h2 ♘c5 17.♗g5 ♜f8 18.♘c2 (18.♗g4 ♜xg4) 18...♜e6 19.♘f1 f6 (it is safer to plug the hole on f6, but 19...♜ac8 20.♘e3

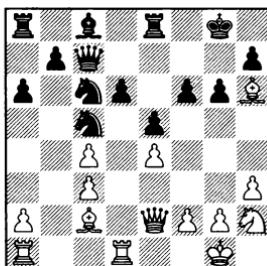
♞a5 21.♘d5 ♜xd5 22.cxd5 b5 is also possible) 20.♘c1 (20.♘h6 ♜fc8 21.♘e3 ♘d8 22.♘d5 ♜xd5 23.cxd5 g5 24.h4 ♘f7+) 20...♞a5 21.♘e3 b5 22.♘d5 ♜xd5 23.cxd5 ♘c4.

16...♘c5 17.♘c2 ♜e7 18.♘d2



Black has some initiative, Karjakin-Ivanchuk, Amber-blindfold Nice 2008.

16.♘h2 ♘c5 17.♘c2 f6



18.♗f3

18.♗g4 ♜xg4! is absolutely safe for Black. White might try to fix a little his pawn structure by trading the knight on d5 after 18.♘f1 ♘d8! 19.♘e3 ♘e6 20.♘d5?!, but suddenly the h6-bishop finds itself in a predicament – 20...♜xd5 21.cxd5 g5. White falls in the same trap in the game:

Part 6

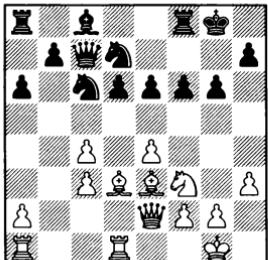
18... $\mathbb{W}e7$ 19. $\mathbb{Q}f1$ $\mathbb{Q}e6$ 20. $\mathbb{Q}e3$ $\mathbb{Q}d8!$

The threat ...g5 is extremely annoying. Todorovic braces himself for a desperate sacrifice which has no chances to succeed.

21. $\mathbb{Q}f5?$ $\mathbb{gxf5}$ 22. $\mathbb{exf5}$ $\mathbb{Qd7}$ 23. $\mathbb{Bxd6}$ $\mathbb{Qh8}$ 24. $\mathbb{Bad1}$ $\mathbb{Qc6}$ 25. $\mathbb{Wh5}$ $\mathbb{Qf7}$ 26. $\mathbb{Bxc6}$ $\mathbb{Bxc6}$ 27. $\mathbb{Qe3}$ $\mathbb{Bf8}$ 28. $\mathbb{Wh4}$ $\mathbb{Bad8}$ 29. $\mathbb{Qxc5}$ $\mathbb{Bxd1+}$ 30. $\mathbb{Qxd1}$ $\mathbb{Wxc5}$ 31. $\mathbb{Wxf6+}$ $\mathbb{Qg8}$ 32. $\mathbb{Wh5}$ $\mathbb{Qd6}$ 33. $\mathbb{Wg5+}$ $\mathbb{Qh8}$ 0-1

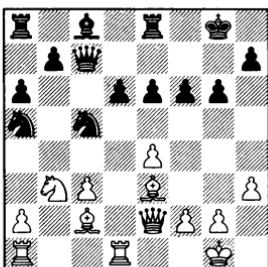
37. Leko-Ivanchuk Mukachevo g/10'+10" 2007

1.e4 c5 2. $\mathbb{Q}f3$ e6 3.d4 $\mathbb{cxd4}$ 4. $\mathbb{Qxd4}$ a6 5. $\mathbb{Qd3}$ $\mathbb{Qf6}$ 6.0-0 $\mathbb{Wc7}$ 7. $\mathbb{We2}$ d6 8.c4 g6 9. $\mathbb{Qc3}$ $\mathbb{Qg7}$ 10. $\mathbb{Qd1}$ 0-0 11. $\mathbb{Qf3}$ $\mathbb{Qc6}$ 12.h3 $\mathbb{Qd7}$ 13. $\mathbb{Qe3}$ $\mathbb{Qxc3}$ 14.bxc3 f6



White has an extra tempo in comparison to the previous game since ...e5 is undoubtedly a useful move. For instance, White's knight can reach g4 as in the line 15. $\mathbb{Qc2}$ $\mathbb{Qd8}$ 16. $\mathbb{Qh2}$ $\mathbb{Qf7}$ 17. $\mathbb{Qg4}$ with some initiative. Black's knight could hit the c4-pawn instead – 15... $\mathbb{Qa5}$

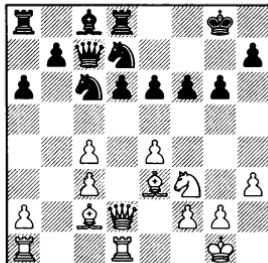
when White's only sensible idea is to sacrifice a pawn with 16. $\mathbb{Qd4}$ $\mathbb{Ee8}$ 17.c5! $\mathbb{Qxc5}$ 18. $\mathbb{Qb3}$



White has full compensation for the pawn and unpleasant initiative. Perhaps Black should simplify to an ending with 18...b6 19. $\mathbb{Qxa5}$ $\mathbb{bxa5}$ 20. $\mathbb{Bab1}$ $\mathbb{Qb7}$ 21. $\mathbb{Wc4}$ $\mathbb{Ee7}$ 22. $\mathbb{Wd4}$ e5 23. $\mathbb{Wxd6}$ $\mathbb{Wxd6}$ 24. $\mathbb{Bxd6}$ $\mathbb{Qxe4}$.

This example explains why in practice Black met 15. $\mathbb{Qc2}$ by 15... $\mathbb{Qc5}$ 16. $\mathbb{Qh2}$ (at first the engines offer 16. $\mathbb{Qxc5}$ $\mathbb{dxc5}$ 17.e5, but White has not any advantage after 17... $\mathbb{Qxe5}$ 18. $\mathbb{Qxe5}$ $\mathbb{Wxe5}$ 19. $\mathbb{Wxe5}$ $\mathbb{fxe5}$ 20. $\mathbb{Ee1}$ $\mathbb{Qd8}$ 21. $\mathbb{Bad1}$ $\mathbb{Qd7}$ 22. $\mathbb{Bxe5}$ $\mathbb{Qc6}=$) when instead of 16...e5 17. $\mathbb{Qxc5}$ $\mathbb{dxc5}$ 18. $\mathbb{Qf1\pm}$, I prefer 16... $\mathbb{Qa5}$ 17. $\mathbb{Qg4}$ e5.

15. $\mathbb{Wd2}$ $\mathbb{Qd8}$ (15... $\mathbb{Qd8}$ retains more tension) 16. $\mathbb{Qc2}$ $\mathbb{Qc5}$



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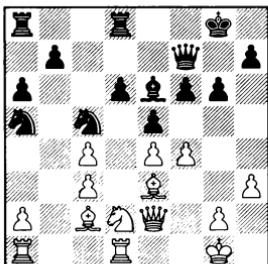
First critical position. 17.♗xc5 dxc5 18.♘e3 e5 19.♗xc5 ♖e6 20.♗ab1 assures White of a tiny edge although his doubled extra pawn has little practical value. For instance: 20...♗xd1

Grimberg-Kveinys, Bad Woerishofen 2011, went 20...♗ac8 21.♗b6 with a quick draw. 21.♗b6 is more testing. After 21...♗xb6 22.♗xb6 ♗xd1+ 23.♗xd1 ♖d8 24.♗d2 ♖f7, Black's knight is passive on d8.

21.♗xd1 ♖d8 22.♗e2 ♖a5 23.♗xa5 ♖xa5 24.♗f1 ♖d6 25.♗b4 b6, planning ...♗b7.

Leko's move is more ambitious, but it allows Black to consolidate. White loses his main trump – the initiative.

17.♗d4 ♖a5 18.♗e2 e5 19.♗f3 ♖e6 20.♗d2 ♖f7 21.f4



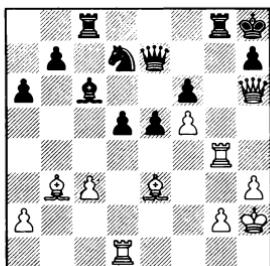
The second critical position. Black has already a clear advantage. He should take on f4 in order to make another target on e4, and then on c4. However, we cannot be exigent to a rapid game.

21...♗ac8 22.♗ab1 ♖xc4 23.f5 gxg5 24.exf5 ♖d5 25.♗xc4

♗xc4 26.♗g4+ ♖h8 27.♗b6 ♖d5 28.♗h4 ♖c6 29.♗b4

The weakness on f6 gives White enough counterplay and the game was eventually drawn.

29...♗g8 30.♗g4 ♖e7 31.♗h6 d5 32.♗h2 ♖d7 33.♗b3



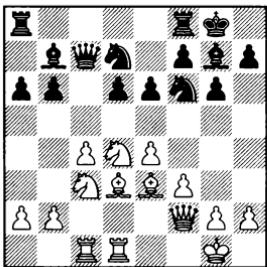
33...♗f7 34.♗f2 ♖xg4 35.hxg4 ♗g8 36.♗h3 ♗g7 37.♗h4 ♗g8 38.♗d3 ♗f8 39.♗g3 ♗e8 40.g5 ♗c5 41.♗d1 ♖d7 42.♗h5 ♗xf5+ 43.♗h2 ♗g6 44.♗xg6 ♗xg6 45.♗xg6+ hxg6 46.gxf6 ♗f7 47.♗e3 ♗e4 48.♗g1 b5 49.♗f1 g5 50.♗xe4 ♗xe4 51.♗xg5 ♗g6 52.♗e2 ♗e6 53.♗e3 ♗f5 54.♗h4 ♗g4 55.♗f2 ♗g5 56.♗d2 ♗xf6 57.♗c5 ♗b1 58.a3 ♗f5 59.♗e3 ♗e4 60.g3 ♗g2 61.♗b4 ♗h3 62.♗c5 ♗g4 63.♗b4 ♗e6 64.♗d2 ♗d7 65.♗a5 ♗c6 66.♗b4 d4 67.cxd4 exd4 68.♗a5 ♗c5 69.♗c2 ♗c4 70.♗b2 ♗d3 71.♗b4 ♗e2 72.♗c1 d3 73.♗c3 ♗e6 74.♗b4 ♗f3 75.♗d2 ♗f5 76.♗a5 ♗xg3 77.♗b4 ♗f3 78.♗a5 ♗e4 79.♗c1 ♗e3 80.♗d2+ ♗d4 81.♗b2 ♗c5 82.♗a5 ♗c4 83.♗d2 ♗g6 84.♗a5 Draw

Part 6

38. Simacek-Akopian Plovdiv 22.03.2012

This game is an illustration of what position we should avoid at any cost in the Hedgehog.

1.e4 c5 2.♘f3 e6 3.d4 cxd4 4.♗xd4 a6 5.♗d3 ♘f6 6.0-0 ♖c7 7.♗e2 d6 8.c4 g6 9.♗c3 ♗g7 10.♗e3 0-0 11.♗fd1 b6 (I recommend 11...♗bd7-e5xd3!) 12.♗ac1 ♗b7 13.f3 ♘bd7 14.♗f2

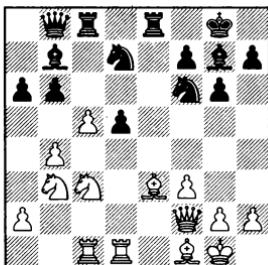


White has achieved the most unpleasant redeployment of his pieces. They are all directed to the queenside to support b2-b4 and then c4-c5 or a2-a4-a5. Since b6 is the sore point of Black's set-up, it makes sense to defend it with 14...♗ab8 15.♗f1 ♗a8 16.b4 ♘fe8 17.♗b3 ♗f8. Akopian prefers to keep b8 for his queen.

14...♗ac8 15.♗f1 ♘fd8

Black's main active plan is ...d5 so putting the king's rook on a potentially open file is more consistent – 15...♗fe8. However, after 16.b4 ♗b8 17.♗b3, the break-through in the centre 17...d5 does not solve the opening problems because White

can simply ignore the gift with 18.exd5 exd5 19.c5!

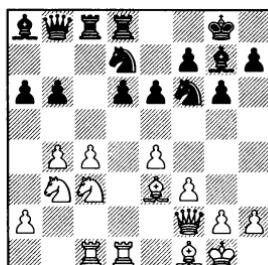


Perhaps this is White's best way of meeting ...d5 even when grabbing the pawn is possible. It is better to have a positional rather than a material advantage. After the text, 19...bxc5 20.♗xc5 ♘xc5 21.bxc5 ♗f8 22.♗a4 ♖c7 23.♗d4± would open the b-file in White's favour. The pawn on a6 and the b6-square are weak.

It is more consistent to keep the flank closed and hope to use the c4-square: 19...b5 20.♗a5 ♗e5 21.♗d4, but White is clearly on top in view of the threat a3-a4. 21...♗c4? simply drops a pawn after 22.♗xb7 ♗xb7 23.♗xf6 ♗xf6 24.♗xd5+–.

Instead of 17...d5, Eingorn played against E.Geller 17...♗f8, but White could safely take on b6.

16.b4 ♗b8 17.♗b3 ♗a8



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I feel that White is clearly better. He has not a direct breakthrough since 18.c5 dxc5 19.Qxa6 Qb7 20.Qxb7 Qxb7 21.bxc5 bxc5 22.Qxc5 Qxc5 23.Qxd8+ Qxd8 24.Qxc5 stumbles into 24...Qg4!=, but he can patiently wait for the best timing, for instance, with 18.a3 Qf8 19.Qa4 Ec6 20.Qb1! – thus he prevents counterplay with ...b5. Then he can double the rooks on the d-file or win the b6-pawn by b4-b5.

Note that White has another thematic plan in his disposal – to produce a passed pawn with 18.a4 Qc6 (Johnson-West, email Argentina 1997, saw 18...d5!? when 19.exd5 exd5 20.c5! is again the best retort) 19.Qa2 Qe5 20.a5 bxa5 21.Qxa5, followed by b4-b5, but it would be more effective when Black's pieces went to passive places, for instance, Qf8.

18.Qa4 Ec6 (18...b5? 19.Qa7)

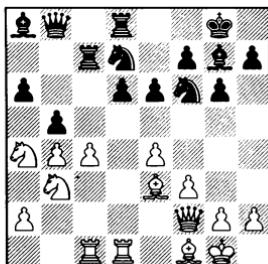
A critical position. The b6-pawn is doomed in view of the threat b4-b5. The only question is when to take it. The immediate 19.b5 axb5 20.cxb5 is not accurate since 20...Qxc1 21.Qxc1 d5 offers considerable counterplay. Instead, White can improve his position with 19.a3 Qdc8 20.Qb1!

More straightforward is 19.Qb1 when neither 19...b5 20.cxb5 axb5 21.Qa7 Qc7 (21...Qc2 22.Qxb8 Qxf2 23.Qxd6 Qxf1+ 24.Qxf1 bxa4 25.Qa5±) 22.Qxb5 Qc2 23.Qbc1 Qxc1 24.Qxc1 Qb7 25.Qb6 Qxb6 26.Qxb6

Qb8 27.a3, nor 19...Qe8 20.b5 axb5 21.cxb5 Qcc8 22.Qd4 d5 23.Qc6 Qxc6 24.bxc6 Qxc6 25.Qb5 are rosy for Black.

Instead, White tries to repeat moves! That suddenly unlocks the dozing power of the black pieces.

19.Qd4? Qc7 20.Qb3 b5!?



White has no longer Qa7 so this break is already possible. In the ensuing hand-to-hand combat Akopian outplays his opponent although White should still be better. For instance, 21.cxb5! axb5 22.Qb6 Qxc1 23.Qxc1 d5 24.Qxd7 Qxd7 25.exd5 Qxd5 26.Qd4 looks promising. Then 26...Qa8 leads to a grim ending after 27.Qxb5 (27.Qc2 Qc4!) 27...Qxa2 28.Qxa2 Qxa2 29.Qa7, but 26...Qe5! 27.f4 Qd6 28.a3 Qf6 keeps Black in the game.

21.Qb6 bxc4 22.Qxc4 Qxc4 23.Qxc4 Qe5?!

23...Qxb6 or 23...d5 24.exd5 Qxd5 25.Qxd5 Qxd5 26.Qxd5 Qf6= are stronger. After the text, 24.Qxa6! was possible: 24...Qxe4 (24...d5 25.Qxa8 Qxa8 26.b5 dxe4 27.Qxd8+ Qxd8 28.b6 exf3 29.gxf3

Part 6

Wd5 30. Bg2 Bfg4 31.b7 $\text{Qd7}\infty$)
25. Qa5 Qd5 26. Qxd5 Qxd5 27.b5
 Wa8 28. Qb6 Ee8 29.a4 $\text{Qd7}\right.$.

**24.Qe2 d5 25.Qxa8 Wxa8
26.exd5 Qxd5 27.Qc5 Qd7**

The game is equal (28.Qd4), but White blunders and he can resign immediately:

**28.a3?? Qc3 29.Qd3 Qxc5
30.Qxc5 Qd4 31.Qxd4 Qxe2+
32.Wxe2 Qxd4 33.Qxe6 Qd6
34.Qc5 Wd8 35.We4 Qd4 36.Qb7
Qd1+ 37.Qf2 Wg5 38.h4 Wf6
39.Qc5 Qg7 40.Qd3 Qa1 41.h5
Qxa3 42.Qe5 gxh5 43.Qd7 Qa2+
44.Qg1 Wb2 0-1**

39. Y.Gruenfeld-Psakhis Tel Aviv 1991

**1.e4 c5 2.Qf3 e6 3.d4 cxd4
4.Qxd4 a6 5.Qd3 Qf6 6.0-0 Wc7
7.We2 d6 8.c4 g6 9.Qc3 Qg7
10.Qe3 Qbd7 11.f4**

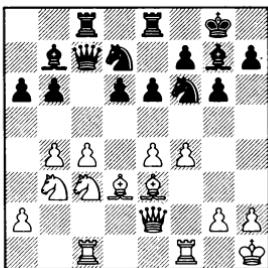
White assumes the obligation to play all over the board. It is clear that this move does not fit in well with the queenside plan b4, Qb3. Moreover, the hanging e4-pawn demands the bishop to remain on d3 so White has not the usual pressure on d6. What does White gain in return? Frankly, I'm not too sure. Perhaps the advance f4-f5, but it should be supported by all White's heavy pieces to be a serious threat.

As a whole, White often turns out to be overextended and his practical results are deplorable.

11...0-0 12.Qac1

12.Qae1 b6 13.Qh1 Qb7 14.Qf2 was countered by 14...e5! 15.fxe5 Qxe5, Salles-M.Nikolov, Marseille 2013.

**12...b6 13.Qh1 Qb7 14.b4
Qfe8 15.Qb3 Qac8**



Both sides has made the easy moves. It is time for White to define his plans. 16.c5 dxc5 17.bxc5 Qxc5 18.Qxc5 bxc5 19.Qxa6 Qxa6 20.Wxa6 c4= should be rejected by obvious reasons. 16.Qg1 only weakens the f4-square. Black can exploit it with 16...Qh5, threatening ...f5, ...d5 or ...Whd8-h4. Even ...Qxc3 followed up by ...e5 is an interesting option. Remains the move I mentioned in the previous game:

**16.a4 Wb8 17.a5 bxa5
18.Qxa5 Qa8 19.Qb1**

White has made some progress, but his further offensive is stalled. Black can trade a pair of knights

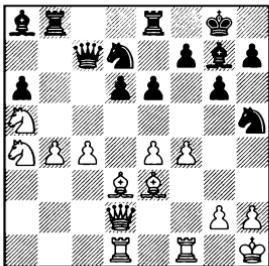
Kan – the Maróczy Bind

with 19... $\mathbb{Q}g4$, but Psakhis opts for a more aggressive approach.

19... $\mathbb{Q}h5$ 20. $\mathbb{W}d2$ $\mathbb{W}c7$ 21. $\mathbb{B}bd1$

This natural move proves to be dubious due to the tactical possibility 21... $\mathbb{Q}c5!$? 22. $\mathbb{Q}c2$ $\mathbb{Q}xc3$ 23. $\mathbb{W}xc3$ $\mathbb{W}xe4$. However, Psakhis prefers to maintain the tension.

21... $\mathbb{E}b8$ 22. $\mathbb{Q}a4$



22...f5

After 22... $\mathbb{Q}hf6$!, White cannot retain his front line intact. He must push 23.c5 $\mathbb{d}xc5$ 24. $\mathbb{Q}xc5$ $\mathbb{Q}xc5$ 25. $\mathbb{Q}xc5$ $\mathbb{W}a7$ where Black's bishop pair has more potential than the knights on a5 and c5. 22...f5 is also consistent, though.

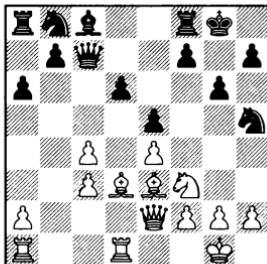
23.c5

23.exf5 exf5 24.c5 $\mathbb{d}xc5$ 25. $\mathbb{Q}xc5$ (25.bxc5 $\mathbb{E}xe3$ 26. $\mathbb{W}xe3$ $\mathbb{W}xa5$ 27. $\mathbb{W}e6+$ $\mathbb{Q}h8$ 28. $\mathbb{W}xd7$ $\mathbb{E}d8$) 25... $\mathbb{Q}xc5$ 26. $\mathbb{Q}xc5$ $\mathbb{Q}h8$ 27. $\mathbb{Q}xa6$ $\mathbb{E}bd8$ 28. $\mathbb{W}f2$ $\mathbb{E}xd1$ 29. $\mathbb{E}xd1$ $\mathbb{Q}xf4$ would be roughly equal, but White was afraid to open the e-file and the diagonal to the a8-bishop.

23... $\mathbb{d}xc5$ 24. $\mathbb{Q}xc5$ $\mathbb{Q}xc5$
25. $\mathbb{Q}xc5$ $\mathbb{F}xe4$ 26. $\mathbb{Q}e2$ $\mathbb{E}bd8$
27. $\mathbb{W}e3$ $\mathbb{E}xd1$ 28. $\mathbb{Q}xd1$ $\mathbb{Q}f6\bar{r}$
29. $\mathbb{Q}a4$ $\mathbb{Q}d5$ 30. $\mathbb{W}e1$ $\mathbb{E}c8$ 31. $\mathbb{W}xe4$
 $\mathbb{W}f7$ 32. $\mathbb{Q}b3$ $\mathbb{Q}c3$ 33. $\mathbb{Q}d4$ $\mathbb{Q}xd4$
34. $\mathbb{W}xd4$ $\mathbb{Q}xf4$ 0-1

40. Grischuk-Ivanchuk Beijing 05.07.2013

1.e4 c5 2. $\mathbb{Q}f3$ e6 3.d4 $\mathbb{c}xd4$
4. $\mathbb{Q}xd4$ a6 5. $\mathbb{Q}d3$ $\mathbb{Q}f6$ 6.0-0 $\mathbb{W}c7$
7. $\mathbb{W}e2$ d6 8.c4 g6 9. $\mathbb{Q}c3$ $\mathbb{Q}g7$
10. $\mathbb{Q}f3$ 0-0 11. $\mathbb{Q}f4$ $\mathbb{Q}h5$ 12. $\mathbb{Q}e3$
 $\mathbb{Q}xc3$ 13.bxc3 e5 14. $\mathbb{E}fd1$

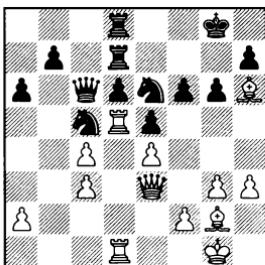


Compared to the previous game, this position is easier for Black. He cannot attack immediately the c4-pawn with ... $\mathbb{Q}c6-a5$, but in return he is not lagging behind in development. The game now enters a manoeuvring stage where Ivanchuk's primary goal is to blockade firmly the c4-pawn and prevent any white activity on the kingside. That's why he puts his queen's rook on d8 rather than activate it from c8.

14... $\mathbb{Q}g4$ 15.h3 $\mathbb{Q}xf3$ 16. $\mathbb{W}xf3$
 $\mathbb{Q}d7$ 17. $\mathbb{Q}f1$ $\mathbb{E}ad8$ 18. $\mathbb{Q}g5$ f6
19. $\mathbb{Q}h6$ $\mathbb{Q}g7$ 20. $\mathbb{E}d2$ $\mathbb{Q}c5$ 21. $\mathbb{E}ad1$

Part 6

21... $\mathbb{W}c6$ 22. $\mathbb{B}d5$ $\mathbb{B}f7$ 23. $\mathbb{W}e3$ $\mathbb{Q}ge6$ 24.g3 $\mathbb{B}fd7$ 25. $\mathbb{B}g2$



White is on the defensive. He must constantly think of the weak pawns on e4 and c4. For instance, 25. $\mathbb{B}e2?$ would have lost material after 25... $\mathbb{Q}c7$. The text, however, leaves his queenside even more vulnerable. Black should find a way of redeploying his knights from a blockading to attacking set-up. That is a delicate matter since White will also obtain chances with f4. Still, staying nicely will not win the game so he should seriously consider the manoeuvre 25... $\mathbb{Q}c7$ 26. $\mathbb{B}5d2$ $\mathbb{Q}a8!?$ targeting the c4-pawn. The text is also consistent.

25... $\mathbb{Q}a4$ 26. $\mathbb{W}f3$ $\mathbb{B}f7?!$

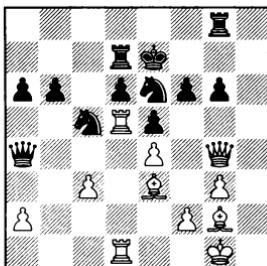
The game has entered a more concrete stage. The c4-pawn looks doomed so the question is what White will be able to do on the kingside. Thus I can understand Ivanchuk's reasoning – he evacuates

the king in the centre in advance. However, his king does not find a safe haven on e7. 26... $\mathbb{B}f7$ was more natural.

27.h4 $\mathbb{Q}e7$ 28.c5

28.g4 $\mathbb{W}xc4$ 29.g5 is a better way of seeking counterplay.

28... $\mathbb{Q}axc5$ 29.h5 $\mathbb{W}a4$ (29... $\mathbb{Q}a4!)$ 30. $\mathbb{Q}e3$ b6 31. $\mathbb{W}g4$ $\mathbb{B}g8$ 32.hxg6 hxg6



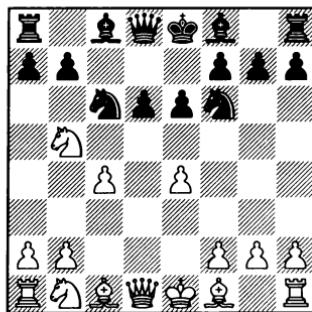
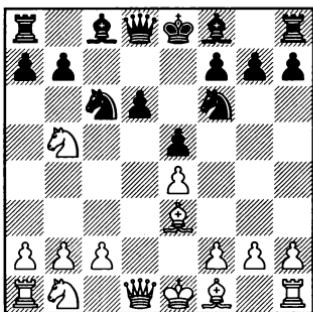
White is not without threats. Now 33.f4 would have added oil into the fire. Instead, Grischuk makes a couple of non-committal mundane moves which tip the scales back in Black's favour. The ending of the game looks heavy influenced by a mutual time trouble.

33. $\mathbb{B}f3$ $\mathbb{B}dd8$ 34. $\mathbb{B}g2$ $\mathbb{B}h8$ (34...g5!) 35. $\mathbb{W}xg6$ $\mathbb{B}dg8$ 36. $\mathbb{W}f5$ $\mathbb{B}g7$ 37. $\mathbb{W}g6$ $\mathbb{Q}e8$ 38. $\mathbb{W}f5$ $\mathbb{B}g7$ 39. $\mathbb{W}g6$ $\mathbb{Q}e8$ 40. $\mathbb{W}f5$ Draw.

Part 7

Taimanov with 5.♘b5

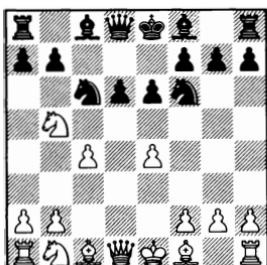
This part considers two different systems. Line A deals with Sveshnikov/Kalashnikov structures where White tries to build on his full control of the d5-square after 1.e4 c5 2.♘f3 e6 3.d4 cd4 4.♘d4 ♘c6 5.♘b5 d6 6.♗f4 e5. Line B considers the Taimanov version of the Maróczy Bind: 6.c4 ♘f6 7.♘1c3.



Part 7. Taimanov with 5. $\mathbb{Q}b5$

Main Ideas

1.e4 c5 2. $\mathbb{Q}f3$ e6 3. d4 cd4 4. $\mathbb{Q}d4$
 $\mathbb{Q}c6$ 5. $\mathbb{Q}b5$ d6 6. c4 $\mathbb{Q}f6$

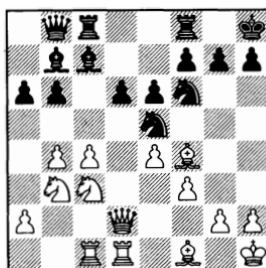


In this system, Black gets a hedgehog of a highly improved breed. In order to achieve the desired pawn structure, White's knight undertakes a time-wasting walk along the route d4-b5-a3. These tempi are just enough for Black to complete development and counter-attack in the centre before the opponent consolidated.

There is a widely accepted opinion that in this type of positions time is not too important. We can often see games where both sides are aimlessly manoeuvring for 20+ moves without committing to any concrete action.

**My first advice to Black is:
Do not wait passively!**

C. Ionescu-D. Heinbuch
Berlin 1988



Beware this setup! The hedgehog structure is not bullet-proof. White has a clear plan for a queenside pawn storm.

In the diagram position, White has a very unpleasant idea. Beside preparing c4-c5 or a4-a5, he could capture on e5 and base his play on the clumsy bishop pair.

19. $\mathbb{Q}xe5$! dx e 5 20. c5! $\mathbb{Q}fd8$ 21. $\mathbb{W}e1$
 $\mathbb{E}xd1$ 22. $\mathbb{Q}xd1$ $\mathbb{Q}d8$ 23. cx b 6 $\mathbb{Q}xb6$

Here instead of 24. $\mathbb{Q}a4$ $\mathbb{Q}xd1$ 25. $\mathbb{W}xd1$ $\mathbb{Q}xe4$! with counterplay, White should have exchanged the rooks by 24. $\mathbb{E}xd8$, followed by 25. $\mathbb{Q}a4\pm$.

This design works only when Black's dark-squared bishop has left the a3-f8 diagonal. It is espe-

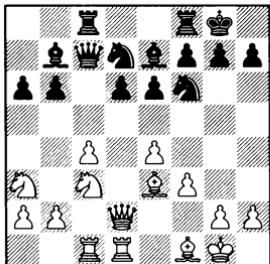
Taimanov with 5.♗b5

cially efficient if White's knight is on b3, but as we'll see later, from a3 it also could be activated via c4. In the latter case, however, White needs his queen on the g1-a7 diagonal and additional positional advantages like more active rooks.

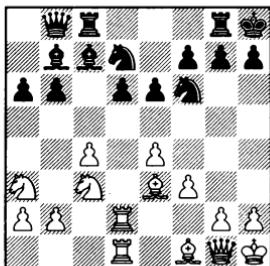
I could add more practical evidence on this theme, but I hope you have grasped the essential – White has a dangerous plan against Black's entrenchment. Therefore, we should hinder it.

It was supposed that Black had a universal set-up against this version of the hedgehog. In many games the second players half-automatically line up their forces by the following scheme, regardless of the opponents actions:

7.♗c3 a6 8.♗a3 b6 9.♗e2 ♜b7
10.0-0 ♜b8 11.f3 ♜bd7 12.♗e3 ♜e7
13.♗d2 ♜c7 14.♗fd1 0-0 15.♗ac1
♜ac8 16.♗f1



16...♜b8 17.♗f2 ♜d8 (In his book about the hedgehog Shipov calls this move "The Saemisch manoeuvre") 18.♗h1 ♜e8 19.♗c2 ♜c7 20.♗g1 ♜h8 21.♗cd2 ♜g8?! (see **game 46** Daly-Tregubov, Cappelle la Grande 2000)



My second advice is: Forget about this plan!

There are many reasons for this verdict. The most important one is that I consider the whole idea of putting the bishop to c7 dubious. It only facilitates c4-c5.

I'd like to cheer up Black players right away – they have other good plans!

The slogan of Black's campaign should be: ...d6-d5!

White is practically unable to prevent this break-trough. Even if Black forgot his lesson and failed to achieve it in the opening, he should be manoeuvring with this break in mind. Sometimes it could be combined also with ...b6-b5, but this queenside activity is usually less efficient and often only provides White with a juicy target.

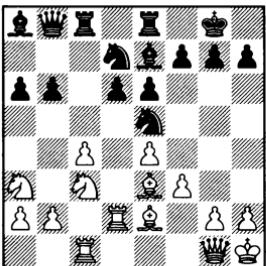
In some positions ...d6-d5 leads to a mass elimination and probable draw. In "Step by Step" I suggest, whenever possible, more complex alternatives, at your own risk of course. In the "Complete Games" you can see examples which could

Part 7

give you some insights about the possibilities of both sides.

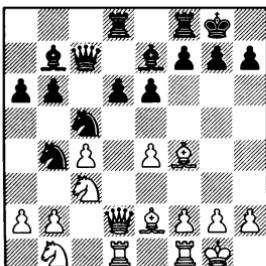
Sometimes ...f7-f5 deserves attention against passive White's play.

Analysis



1... $\mathbb{E}f8!$? 2. $\mathbb{W}f1$ (protecting c4 and hoping for $\mathfrak{Q}c2-d4$) 2...f5!.

Analysis



1... $\mathfrak{Q}h8!$ meeting 2.f3 or 2.b3 by 2...f5.

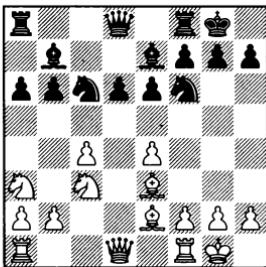
Let's go to the variations now. For more details check "Step by Step" chapter.

6... $\mathfrak{Q}f6$ 7. $\mathfrak{Q}1c3$

In the event of 7. $\mathfrak{Q}5c3$, Black refrains from ...a6 and follows

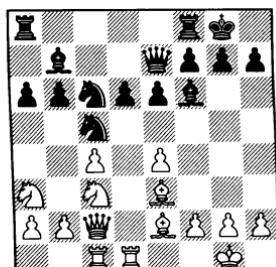
the scheme ...b6, ... $\mathbb{A}b7$, ... $\mathbb{E}c8$ (or ... $\mathbb{W}d7$, $\mathbb{E}fd8$).

7... $a6$ 8. $\mathfrak{Q}a3$ b6 9. $\mathbb{A}e2$ $\mathbb{A}b7$
10.0-0 (10.f4 d5!) 10... $\mathfrak{A}e7$ 11. $\mathfrak{A}e3$ (11.f4 0-0) 11...0-0



This is the system's "tabia". White should decide how to control the centre. f3 is solid while f4 suggests a more risky approach and possibly (but not obligatory!) a pawn storm on the kingside.

12. $\mathbb{W}b3$ is a modification of the f3-plan. The queen move is aimed at restricting the opponent's choice. White hinders ...d5 indeed, but Black obtains good play on the dark squares. 12... $\mathfrak{Q}d7$ 13. $\mathbb{E}fd1$ $\mathfrak{Q}c5$ 14. $\mathbb{W}c2$ $\mathbb{A}f6$ 15. $\mathbb{E}ac1$ $\mathbb{W}e7!$

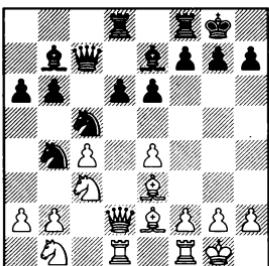


The queen moves away from the X-ray of the d1-rook. ...d6-d5 is al-

Taimanov with 5.♘b5

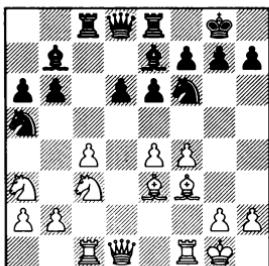
ready on the agenda: 16.♗ab1 ♘b4!
17.♗d2 ♜fd8, threatening d6-d5.

Pay attention to the modern
13.♗ad1. It demands a different approach – 13...♘c5 14.♗c2 ♛c7!
15.♗ab1 ♘b4 16.♗d2 ♜ad8!



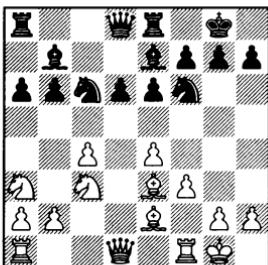
Black's plan is ...d5 or ...f5: 17.b3
d5! 18.exd5 exd5 19.♗f4 ♛c8; 17.f3
d5!.

After 12.♗f4 ♜c8 13.♗c1 ♜e8
14.♗f3 ♘a5, we reach a critical position for this line.

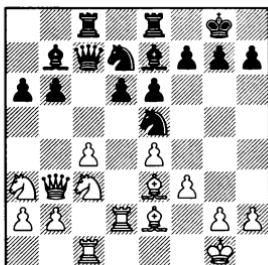


White aimed all his forces at preventing ...d5, but left c4 under-protected. Ironically, 15.♗d3 d5! is still possible while 15.♗e2 ♛c7! 16.b4
♘xc4 is another sharp option.

12.♗f3 leaves the e3-bishop hanging so 12...♝e8! is a natural retort.



Now 13.♗b3 is the only move to hinder ...d6-d5. We should then aim for the following set-up: 13...♘d7
14.♗ad1 ♜c8 15.♗d2 ♛c7 16.♗c1
♘ce5



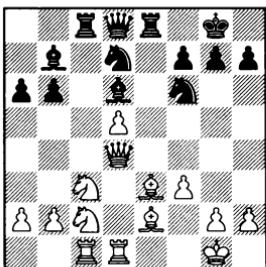
The game enters a manoeuvring stage where Black's task would be to keep the a3-knight pinned to protect the c4-pawn. A possible counterplay is ...♝f8 followed up by ...f7-f5.

After 12.♗c1, we set up our rooks to c8 and e8 and push ...d5:
12...♘e5 13.♗d4

13.f3 ♜e8 14.♗d4 ♘ed7 15.♗c2
(15.♗fd1 d5!) 15...d5!

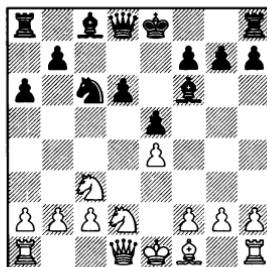
13...♘ed7 14.♗fd1 ♜e8 15.♗c2
♜e8 16.f3 d5?! 17.cxd5 exd5
18.exd5 ♘d6!

Part 7



Black plays all over the board.
His main threats are ... $\mathbb{E}e5$ or ... $\mathbb{B}b5$.

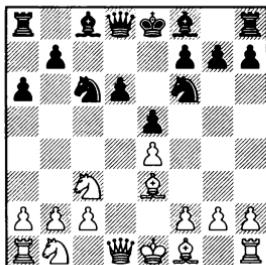
These lines should be enough to arm you sufficiently against White's attempt of imposing slow manoeuvring play in a Maróczy Bind structure.



11...0-0! 12. $\mathbb{Q}c4$ $\mathbb{E}e6$ 13. $\mathbb{W}xd6$ $\mathbb{W}e8!$

9. $\mathbb{Q}c4$ is perhaps the most annoying line – for both sides! White's positional aim is to exchange 2 or 3 minor pieces through $d5$ and obtain a lasting edge due to the better dark-squared bishop and more active rooks. Even without any minor piece the pressure on $d6$ usually ensures an advantage. In this scenario Black's situation would be aggravated if his b-pawn advanced to $b5$ since White could create a second weakness on the queenside by pushing $a4$. The best solution is to develop quickly:

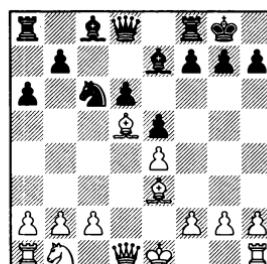
9... $\mathbb{E}e7$ 10. $\mathbb{Q}d5$ $\mathbb{Q}d5$ 11. $\mathbb{Q}d5$ 0-0



White has provoked ... $e5$, but lost tempi. This may prove to be very dangerous for him in the line:

9. $\mathbb{B}g5$ $\mathbb{E}e7$ 10. $\mathbb{Q}xf6$ $\mathbb{Q}xf6$ 11. $\mathbb{Q}d2$

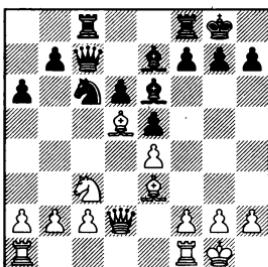
We sacrifice a pawn and seize the initiative with:



Now Black threatens to trade his bad bishop with ... $\mathbb{B}g5$.

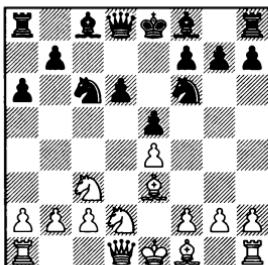
Taimanov with 5.♘b5

12.♗d2 ♖e6 13.♘c3 ♜c8
14.0-0 ♜c7!



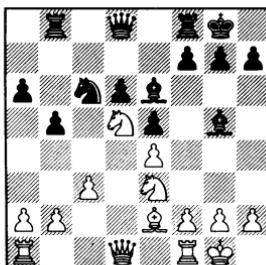
It is essential to avoid ...b7-b5 or ...f7-f5. Instead, we play ...♘a5 and patiently manoeuvre on the queenside.

9.♘d2!? is White's only fresh idea in the last years.



You should memorise the following move order:

9...♖e6 10.♘c4 b5 11.♘b6
♗b8 12.♘bd5 ♘g4 13.♖e2 ♘xe3
14.♘xe3 ♖e7 15.♘cd5 ♖g5 16.0-0
0-0 17.c3



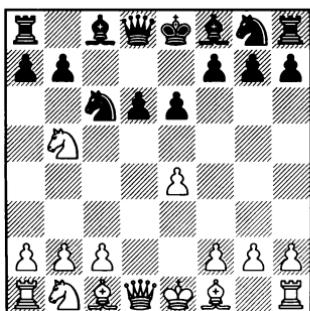
This position commonly arises from the Sveshnikov. It is rarely seen as Black has a decent game.

He may play for equalisation with 17...♘e7 18.♗d3 ♖xe3 19.♘xe3 ♖c7 (Rogozenco), or seek complications with ...f5 – 17...g6 18.a4 f5 19.axb5 axb5 20.♗a6 ♖c8 21.♗b6 ♖xb6 22.♗xb6 ♖b8 23.exf5 gxf5 24.♘bd5, Shukh-Frolyanov, Nabereznye Chelny 2010, 24...♗b7!∞.

Part 7. Taimanov with 5.♘b5

Step by Step

1.e4 c5 2.♘f3 e6 3.d4 cxd4 4.♗xd4 ♘c6 5.♘b5 d6



A. 6.♗f4; B. 6.c4

A. 6.♗f4 e5 7.♗e3

7.♗g5? ♗xg5 8.♘c7+ ♖d8 9.♘xa8 counts on the surprise effect. If Black decides to win the knight by b6, White gets some play by taking on b6 and attacking that pawn with the queen. Perhaps Black's best approach is to win the knight by his king, but firstly to develop with 9...♘f6!?. The game Grafl-Jansa, Fuerth 2002, continued:

10.♘d2

10.♘c3 allows 10...♘d4! 11.h4 (11.a4 d5!→; 11.h3 d5!→) 11...♗f4 12.♗d3 ♗g4 13.♗c1 (13.♗d2 ♗xd2+

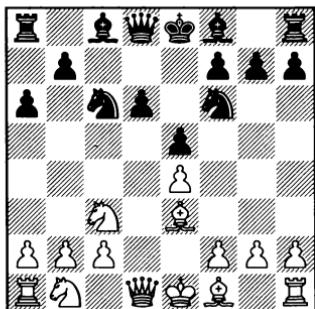
14.♗xd2 g6!→) 13...♗c1 14.♗c1 ♗e7 end the endgame is in Black's favour: 15.♘d5 ♘d5 16.ed5 g6 17.c3 ♘f5!→.

10...♗e7 11.b4

11.c3 ♗e6 12.♗a4 ♘d7 13.h4 ♗g6 14.♗b5 (14.h5 ♗g5 15.♗b5 ♘c8!→) 14...♘c8!→ is not appealing either.

11...♗g4 12.f3 ♗e6 13.b5 ♘d4 14.b6 ♗e3 15.♗e2 ♘h5!→.

7...a6 8.♘c3 ♘f6



A1. 9.♗c4; A2. 9.♗g5; A3. 9.♘d2

9.♘a3?! is well met by 9...♗b8! 10.♘d5 ♘xd5 11.exd5 ♘e7 12.c3 ♘f5!→.

9.♗e2 probably aims to transpose to the Sveshnikov with 7.♘d5

Taimanov with 5.♗b5

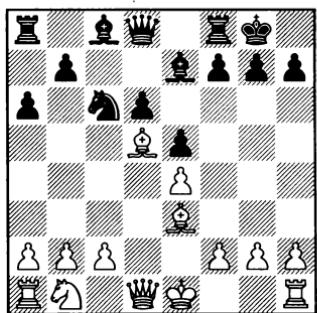
after 9...♝e7 10.♗d5 ♜xd5 11.exd5 ♜b8 12.0-0 0-0 13.c4 ♜d7 14.♗c3 f5 where Black is actually fine. We can also choose the independent line 9...♝e6!? 10.0-0 (10.♗d5 ♜xd5 11.exd5 ♜a5+ 12.♗c3 ♜e7 13.0-0 ♜exd5 14.♗xd5 ♜xd5 15.♗xd5 ♜xd5 16.♗f3 ♜xe3 17.fxe3 ♜b8) 10...♜c8 11.♗f3 (11.♗d2 ♜e7!) 11...♝e7 12.♗e1 (12.♗d2 d5) 12...♝g6 13.♗d2 ♜e7 with mutual chances.

9.♗d5 does not fit in with the move ♜e3 since White will lose a tempo after 9...♜xd5 10.exd5 ♜e7 11.c4 ♜f5=, for instance, 12.♗d2 ♜e7 13.♗d3 0-0 14.0-0 ♜h4.

A1. 9.♗c4 ♜e7!

Black solves the opening problems with natural, typical Sicilian methods. 9...♝e6 10.♗d5 ♜xe4 11.♗b6 ♜g5 12.0-0! ♜xd5 13.f4 exf4 14.♗xd5 is dangerous for him.

10.♗d5 ♜d5 11.♗d5 0-0



Black would be happy to trade his bad bishop with ...♝g5. That would be possible after:

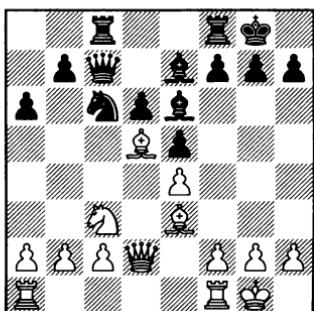
12.♗c3 ♜g5 13.♗g5 ♜g5 14.0-0 ♜h3 15.♗f3 ♜e6 16.♗ac1 ♜ac8 17.♗h1 h6 18.a3 ♜a5 19.♗d3 ♜e7 20.♗fd1 ♜fd8=, Sulskis-Tregubov, Koszalin 1999;

12.0-0 ♜g5 13.♗e1 ♜e6 14.♗a3 ♜xe3 15.♗xe3 ♜c8 16.c3 (16.♗d3 ♜c7 17.♗xe6 fxe6 18.♗xd6? ♜d4), J.Geller-Grachev, Moscow 2014, when simplest is 16...♜c7;

12.♗a3 ♜g5 (12...♝h8?! 13.0-0 f5 is sharper) 13.♗c4 ♜xe3 14.♗xe3 ♜e7.

Therefore, White should take g5 under control.

**12.♗d2 ♜e6 13.♗c3 ♜c8
14.0-0 ♜c7!**



It is essential to avoid b7-b5 as it only provides White with a lever on the queenside, e.g. 14...b5?! 15.a4 b4 16.♗a2!± a5 17.♗c1 ♜xd5 18.♗xd5 ♜d4 19.♗xd4 exd4 20.♗d3=.

After the text, Black has no problems:

15.a4 ♜a5=, Bacrot-Tajmanov, Cannes 1998;

15.♗ac1 ♜a5= 16.♗fd1 ♜c4 17.♗xc4 ♜xc4 18.a3 ♜c6 19.♗d5 ♜xd5 20.♗xd5 ♜fc8 21.c3 g6 22.f3

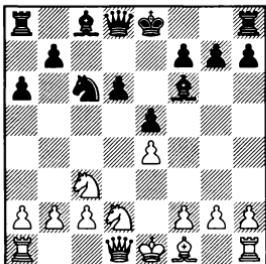
Part 7

$\mathbb{W}xd5$ 23. $\mathbb{B}xd5$ f6 24. $\mathbb{B}f2$ $\mathbb{B}f7$ 25. g4 $\mathbb{B}e6$ 26. $\mathbb{B}cd1$ f5, Wedberg-Gobet, St. Martin 1991.

A2. 9. $\mathbb{B}g5$ $\mathbb{B}e7$ 10. $\mathbb{B}xf6$

It is very tempting to keep the bishop for a while with 10. $\mathbb{B}d2?$ intending to play $\mathbb{B}c4$ first and only then exchange on f6. That would allow White to achieve the $\mathbb{B}d5-\mathbb{B}e3$ set-up. However, 10... $\mathbb{B}g4!$ 11. $\mathbb{B}e2$ $\mathbb{B}e2$ 12. $\mathbb{B}e2$ d5= spoils this plan – see game 41.

10... $\mathbb{B}f6$ 11. $\mathbb{B}d2$



11... 0-0! 12. $\mathbb{B}c4$ $\mathbb{B}e6$ 13. $\mathbb{W}xd6$

13. $\mathbb{B}xd6$ $\mathbb{W}e7\uparrow$ is dubious for White.

White's setup does not make much sense if he does not take the pawn at all: 13. $\mathbb{B}d5$ b5 14. $\mathbb{B}ce3$ (14. $\mathbb{B}xd6$ $\mathbb{B}xd5$ 15. $\mathbb{W}xd5$ $\mathbb{B}c7$) 14... $\mathbb{B}g5$ 15. $\mathbb{B}e2$, Ponomariov-Dubov, Tromso 2013. This is the same position as in line C, but it is Black to move!

13. $\mathbb{B}e3$ $\mathbb{B}b6$ 14. $\mathbb{B}b1$ $\mathbb{W}d4$ (14... $\mathbb{B}g5\uparrow$? 16. $\mathbb{B}cd5$ $\mathbb{W}a5+$ 17. b4 $\mathbb{W}d8$) 15. $\mathbb{B}d3$ $\mathbb{B}b4$ gave Black an initiative in Hartman-Shulman, Stockholm 1998.

13... $\mathbb{W}e8!$

I faced this idea as White many years ago in my game Delchev-Bernal Moro, Hyeres 2001, which went 14. $\mathbb{B}d5$ $\mathbb{B}xd5$ 15. $\mathbb{W}xd5$ $\mathbb{B}d8$ 16. $\mathbb{W}c5$ $\mathbb{B}d4\uparrow$? 17. $\mathbb{B}d3$ $\mathbb{W}e6=$. I underestimated it at that time, but later I returned to it and my wife tested it on the Black side in 2006. White immediately erred – 14. $\mathbb{B}e3\uparrow$? $\mathbb{B}d8$ 15. $\mathbb{W}c7$? $\mathbb{B}d7$ 16. $\mathbb{W}b6$ $\mathbb{B}d8$ 17. $\mathbb{W}c5$ $\mathbb{B}e7$ 18. $\mathbb{W}b6$ $\mathbb{B}b4\uparrow$ and went on to lose, Lillo Castan-Djingarova, Illes Medes 2007. Since no one seems to have entered this position ever since, here is our “family” analysis:

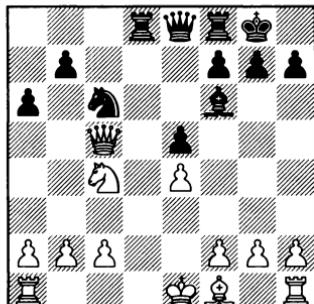
14. $\mathbb{B}d5$

14. $\mathbb{W}d2$ $\mathbb{B}d8$ 15. $\mathbb{B}d5$ (15. $\mathbb{W}c1$ $\mathbb{W}e7$) 15... $\mathbb{B}d4$ 16. $\mathbb{B}ce3$ (16. $\mathbb{B}xf6+$ $\mathbb{W}xf6$ 17. $\mathbb{W}c3$ $\mathbb{W}c6$) 16... $\mathbb{B}g5$ 17. c3 (17. h4 $\mathbb{B}h6$) 17... $\mathbb{B}xd5$ 18. $\mathbb{exd5}$ $\mathbb{B}xd5\uparrow$.

14... $\mathbb{B}xd5$ 15. $\mathbb{W}xd5$

15. $\mathbb{exd5}\uparrow$ $\mathbb{B}d4$ 16. $\mathbb{B}e3$ $\mathbb{B}g5$ 17. $\mathbb{B}d1$ (17. $\mathbb{B}d3$ e4) 17... f5 18. c3 $\mathbb{B}f6$.

15... $\mathbb{B}d8$ 16. $\mathbb{W}c5$



Taimanov with 5.♕b5

16...♝e7!

16...♝e6 17.♗e3 (17.♗d3 ♜d4!; 17.c3 ♜g4) 17...♜d4 18.♗c4 ♜c8 19.c3 ♜e7 is roughly equal.

17.♗b6

17.♗e3? b5 18.♗d2 (18.♗a3 f5) 18...♗b4-+.

17...♗b4 18.♗d3 (18.♗c1 ♜g5 19.♗e3 ♜a4; 18.♗e3 ♜d7-+) **18...♜xd3!**

18...♜d4 wins the queen, but White holds on: 19.0-0 ♜b8 20.a3 (20.c3 ♜xd3 21.cxb4 ♜d4) 20...♜c8 21.axb4 ♜d8 22.♗c5 ♜xc5 23.bxc5=.

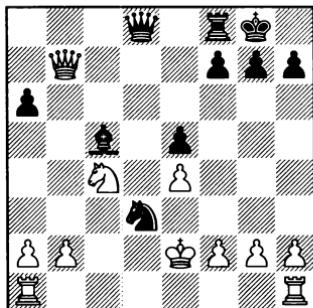
19.cxd3 ♜xd3+ 20.♔e2

Only move. 20.♔f1 ♜c5 21.♗c7 (21.♗xb7 ♜d8) 21...♗b5; 20.♔d2 ♜d7 21.♗hd1 ♜c8.

20...♜c5 21.♗xb7

21.♗c7? loses to 21...♗f4+ 22.♔f1 (22.♔f3 f5; 22.♔d2 ♜b5) 22...♗e6 23.♗xc5 ♜c8 24.♗d1 h6 25.♗b4 ♜xc4.

21...♗d8

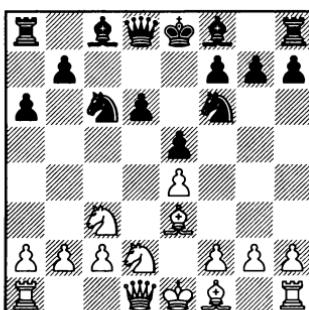


Black has a strong initiative. His queen is eyeing both d4 and h4, f2 is cracking. White can stay in the game with best defence only. It seems that he has a wide choice, but this impression is deceptive:

22.♗hd1 ♜f4+ 23.♔f1 ♜h4;
22.♗b3 ♜xf2 23.♗hf1 ♜xe4;
22.♗e3 ♜f4+ 23.♔f3 ♜h4 24.h3 ♜xe3 25.♗xe3 (25.fxe3 ♜h5) 25...♜xg2+.

Only 22.g3 ♜xf2 23.♗d5 allows White to consolidate – 23...♜c8 24.♗xe5 ♜xh1 25.♗xh1 ♜b6 26.♗c6 ♜h3 27.♗f3 ♜d4 28.♗d7 ♜h5+. Black regains the material while the enemy king will remain in the draught for long.

A3. 9.♗d2!?



I guess that this move owes its current popularity to the variation 9...♝g4?! 10.♗e2 ♜xe2 11.♗xe2 d5 12.exd5 ♜xd5 13.♗xd5 ♜xd5 14.0-0 ♜e7 15.♗g4 which is slightly better for White. We'll disillusion the opponent with:

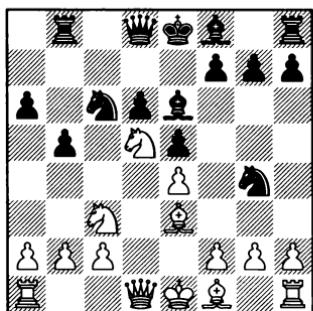
9...♝e6!?

Part 7

This move is based on the pawn sac 10.♗g5 ♜e7 11.♘c4 0-0! – as in line A2.

I suppose that 9...♝g4 10.♘d5 ♜xe3 11.♘xe3 ♜e7! also equalises – 12.♘c4 0-0 13.0-0 ♜g5 14.♘d5 ♜xe3 15.fxe3 ♜c7 16.♘c4 (16.♗h5 ♘b4 17.♗b3 ♜e6) 16...♝e7 17.♘xd6 ♜e6 18.♘f5 ♜xf5 19.exf5 ♜c5.

**10.♘c4 b5 11.♘b6 ♜b8
12.♘bd5 ♜g4 (12...♜e7 13.a4!)**



13.♗e2

White cannot exploit our move ...b5 by 13.a4 since 13...b4 14.♘b1 ♜xe3 15.♘xe3 ♜c8 16.♘d2 ♜e7 17.♘d3 0-0 was nice for Black in Eid-Al Modiahki, Casablanca 2002.

13.♗c1 may be questioned by 13...♜e7 14.♗e2 ♘f6. White's bishop might be more active on d3, moreover, we have sidestepped the variation 12...♜e7 13.a4!.

**13...♝xe3 14.♝xe3 ♜e7
15.♘cd5 ♜g5 16.0-0 0-0 17.c3**

This position commonly arises from the Sveshnikov. It is rarely seen as Black has a decent game.

He may play for equalisation with 17...♝e7 18.♗d3 ♜xe3 19.♘xe3 ♜c7 (Rogozenko), or seek complications with the thematic break ...f5 – 17...g6 18.a4 f5 19.axb5 axb5 20.♗a6 (20.exf5 gxf5 21.f4 exf4 22.♘c2 ♘h8) 20...♜c8 21.♗b6 ♜xb6 22.♘xb6 ♜b8 23.exf5 gxf5 24.♘bd5, Shukh-Frolyanov, Nabitereznye Chelny 2010, 24...♜b7!∞ (in the game, Black answered 24...♞h8 which left the f8-rook undefended in the line 25.♗xb5! ♜xb5 26.♘c7 ♜b3 27.♗xd6).

B. 6.♘c4 ♘f6

6...a6?! is not outright bad, but it is certainly inaccurate. In some variations this move is not necessary, for example after 7.♗c3, as noted in the next paragraph.

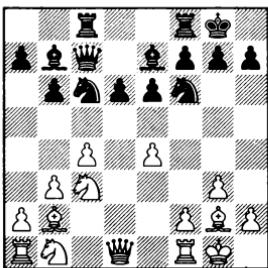
7.♗1c3

7.♗5c3 is rarely seen. Black usually saves a tempo on a6 and obtains a good game. White is unable to employ efficiently his b1-knight – 7...♜e7 8.♗e2 0-0 9.0-0 b6 10.♘f4 (or 10.♘e3 ♜b7 11.♘d2 d5= 12.exd5 exd5 13.cxd5 ♘b4) 10...♜b7 11.♘e1 ♜c8 (11...♜d7 12.♘d2 ♜fd8 13.♘c1 ♜ac8 14.a3 h6 15.♗g3 ♘h7 16.♗h1 ♘d4 17.♗d3 ♘f8 18.♗f1 ♘g6 is another interesting set-up) 12.♗f1 ♘e5, see **game 42** Kavalek-Liberzon, Amsterdam 1977.

The rematch Fischer-Spassky 1992, drew attention to 7.♗5c3 ♜e7 8.g3. Black chose the logical plan of

Taimanov with 5.♕b5

preparing ...b5 by ...a6, ...♝d7, but it is a bit passive. Perhaps the attack on c4 is more effective: 8...b6! 9.♗g2 ♜b7 10.0-0 0-0 11.b3 (11.f4∞ ♜c8 12.b3 a6 13.♗e3 ♜d7 14.♗d2 ♜f6 15.♗c1 ♜c5) 11...♜c8 (11...♜d7!)? 12.♗b2 ♜c5 13.♗a3 ♜e5 is an original idea. Black was slightly better after 14.♘e2 ♜ed3 15.♗ad1 ♜xb2 16.♘xb2 a6±, Nemeth-Markus, Szombathely 2003) 12.♗b2 ♜c7



13.♗d2 ♜b8 14.♗c1 a6 15.♗e2 ♜d7 16.♗fd1 (16.a3 b5!) 16...♜c5 17.♗f1 b5!

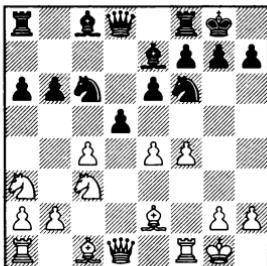
7...a6 8.♗a3

8.♗d4 is completely innocuous as Black can equalise at once with 8...d5 9.exd5 exd5 10.cxd5 ♜xd5 11.♗xc6 bxc6 12.♗xd5 cxd5. However, I would recommend 8...♝d7!, aiming to push ...b5 – 9.♗c2 [9.♗e2 ♜c8 10.0-0 (10.♗c2 ♜e5 11.♗e3 g5 12.b3 b5 13.a3 ♜b6 14.♗b1 ♜c6 15.f3 g4) 10...♝a5 11.b3 b5] 9...♝e7 10.♗e2 0-0 11.♗f4 (11.0-0 ♜c8 12.f4 b5 13.cxb5 axb5 14.♗xb5 ♜xe4 15.♗xe4 ♜b6+ 16.♗e3 ♜xb5 17.♗xd6 ♜xd6 18.♗xd6 ♜fd8) 11...♝e5 12.0-0 ♜c8 13.♗e3 b5! 14.cxb5 axb5 15.a3 ♜b6, Palac-Rublevsky, Aix-les-Bains 2011.

8...b6

This move order is hardly better than 8...♝e7 followed by 9...0-0. I chose it for the main line because it is more popular lately. Initially it was designed to counter f4-plans with an early ...d5. Black was afraid that otherwise White would achieve 9.♗e2, 10.f4 and 11.♗f3. The text move allows to meet 9.♗e2 ♜b7 10.f4 by 10...d5! with initiative, e.g. 11.cxd5 exd5 12.e5 d4 13.exf6 dxc3 14.♗xd8 ♜xd8!±.

Let's suppose, however, that Black played 8...♝e7 instead of 8...b6. After 9.♗e2 0-0 10.0-0 b6 11.f4, my analysis proves that 11...d5 is perfectly possible:



a) 12.e5 ♜e4! (this is better than 12...♝c5?! 13.♗h1 ♜e4 14.♗f3 ♜xc3 15.bxc3 ♜e7 16.cxd5 exd5 17.♗c2 ♜f5 18.♗d4 ♜e4 19.f5± or 14...♝f2 15.♗xf2 ♜xf2 16.cxd5 exd5 17.♗xd5 ♜b7 18.♗c4 ♜c5 19.♗e3↑, Vallejo Pons-Shavvaladze, Wch U16 Oropesa del Mar 1998) 13.♗xe4 dxe4 with initiative.

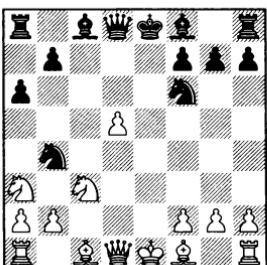
b) 12.cxd5 exd5 13.exd5 (13.e5 ♜c5 14.♗h1 ♜e4 15.♗d5 ♜f2 16.♗f2 ♜d5 17.♗d5 ♜f2±) 13...♝d4↑.

c) 12.exd5 ♜c5+ 13.♗h1 ♜d4

Part 7

14.♕e3 ♘xe2 15.♗xe2 exd5 16.♗xc5 bxc5 17.cxd5 ♘d5=.

In the game A. Karpov-G. Kasparov, World Championship Moscow (12) 1985, the young challenger surprised the chess world with 8...d5?! which was proclaimed “novelty of the year”. The game went on with 9.exd5 exd5 10.cxd5 ♘b4



Kasparov scored 1,5 out of two with this move and created a memorable evergreen, but the initial enthusiasm quickly evaporated. White discovered that he could continue developing by 11.♗e2. Then neither 11...♘c5 12.♗e3! ♗e3 13.♗a4 ♘d7 14.♗xb4 ♘c5 15.♗e4± nor 11...♗fxd5 12.0-0 ♗e6 13.♗a4 b5 14.♗axb5?! axb5 15.♗xb5→ is enticing for Black.

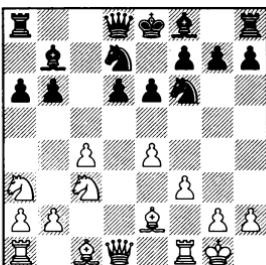
9.♗e2 ♘b7 10.0-0 (10.f4 d5!) 10...♗e7!

10...♗b8?! aims to draw the sting of plans with f2-f4 or ♘b3 (which is met by ...♗bd7). I do not recommend this manoeuvre because of three reasons:

1. I think that White's most dangerous plan is based on f2-f3 so every effort of Black should be aimed against it;

2. I find the manoeuvre ...♗c6-b8-d7 over-prophylactic. I prefer a more concrete approach with ...d7-d5 in mind. Black should redeploy his c6-knight indeed, but e5 is a better place to go than b8. Then in some variations Black can find a better use of his centralised knight than retreating it to d7. In some variations, especially when White places his queen on b3, Black has ...♗b4 (after ...♗c5 first) and ...d5.

3. In fact Black is unable to avoid f4-plans. Moreover, he obtains a passive version of them after 10...♗b8?! 11.f3 ♘bd7



12.♗f4?! ♘e5 13.♗d2 ♗e7 14.♗fd1 ♘c7 15.♗ac1 0-0 16.♗h1 ♘ac8 17.♗g3 ♘fd8 18.f4 ♘g6 19.♗f3 – see **game 45** Brodsky-Kruszynski, Pardubice 1993. Notice that in this example Black's choice is considerably restricted while White could also opt for 17.♗e3 which is even a bigger source of concern for the second player.

11.♗e3

a) 11.f4 0-0 (11...d5 12.cxd5 exd5 13.e5 ♘c5+ 14.♗h1 ♘e4 15.♗xe4±)

Taimanov with 5.♗b5

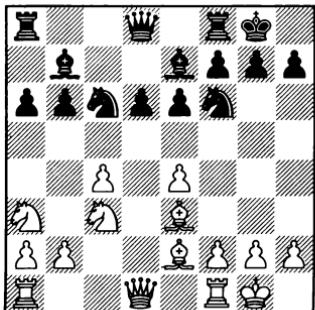
12.♗f3 ♜c8 13.♗e3 transposes to the main line.

Another plan for White is:

b) 11.♗c2 0-0 12.♗e3

This setup is aimed against the freeing break ...d6-d5. White hopes to regroup his forces later by the scheme b3, ♘e3-c2-d4, ♘e3, returning to the usual queenside plans. Black should not get lulled by the seemingly unambitious play of the opponent. Perhaps his best set-up includes the following moves: 12...♝c7 13.♗d2 ♞ad8 14.♗d1 ♜fe8 15.b3 (15.f3 d5) 15...♗e5 and if 16.f3, then 16...d5! 17.exd5 ♗g6!

11...0-0



B1. 12.f4; B2. 12.♗b3; B3. 12.f3; B4. 12.♗c1

12.♗d2 is an innocuous alternative. Black answers 12...♗e5 13.f3, when 13...d5!? 14.exd5 exd5 15.cxd5 ♖xd5 16.f4 ♘c6 17.♗ad1 ♘b4 18.♗d5 ♘fd5 or 18.♗d4 ♜e8 is equal. More tangled is 13...♜e8!? – see **game 47** Rabrenovic-Delchev, 2005.

White has three major plans in the diagram position. The attempt

for a kingside attack with f4 faces an energetic counterplay in the centre. I propose to attack c4 after preliminary ...♜c8 and ...♝e8. In most cases Black solves his problems with the help of the break ...d6-d5, followed by ...♝e7xa3. This exchange ensures an excellent outpost on c4 to the a5-knight. The variations are very sharp and nearly untested.

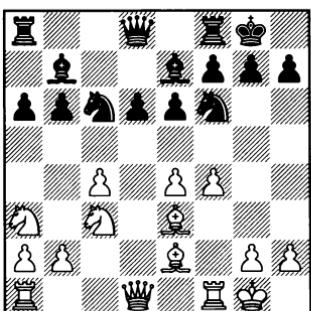
12.♗b3 has been Karpov's favourite choice. He used to win this position with both sides against any opposition, including Kasparov. I propose a modern set-up which gives Black comfortable play.

White's most dangerous plan is examined in lines B3 and B4. It is aimed at bolstering up the centre with f3 and rooks on c1 and d1. Then both bishops retreat to safer places while the king goes to h1. Finally, with all possible prophylaxis done, White plays b4 and looks for possibilities to expand on the queenside by a4-a5 or c4-c5. Although the position is dynamically balanced, if Black misses the right moment to generate counterplay, he risks to get in a murky situation.

It is difficult to show a clear-cut counter-plan for Black because the position allows many different move orders. I'll try to provide you with concrete variations where Black equalises by pushing ...d5 at the right moment. However, you should be acquainted with the main plans of Black in the event you land in a position which requires long and patient manoeuvring.

Part 7

B1. 12.f4



In the early days of the hedgehog structures, White believed that he should punish the opponent for his “passive” play by mating him. Practice has shown that Black has enough counter-chances due to the unstable centre and weaknesses on c4 and e4. However, if White consolidated and brought his knight to the centre by the manoeuvre $\mathbb{Q}a3-b1-d2$, he would have the better chances. Then he would be able to choose pawn storms on the queenside by b4-a4-a5 or on the opposite wing by g4-g5.

12... $\mathbb{E}c8$

Another possible design is to redeploy the c6-knight to d7 via b8 and adopt a waiting strategy, but I’m against such an approach whenever we have another clear plan.

13. $\mathbb{E}c1$

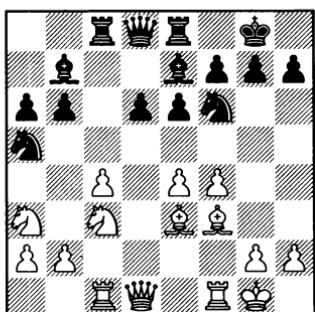
13. $\mathbb{Q}f3$ is less accurate due to 13... $\mathbb{Q}a5$ 14. $\mathbb{W}d3$ (or 14. $\mathbb{W}e2$ $d5$ 15. $\mathbb{Exd}5$ $\mathbb{Q}xa3$ 16. $\mathbb{Bxa3}$ $\mathbb{E}xc4\#$) 14... $d5!$ (A good idea of Cramling. 14...

$\mathbb{W}c7$?! stumbles into 15. $\mathbb{E}ac1$ $\mathbb{Q}d7$ 16. $b4$! when Black must retreat under the blow 17. $\mathbb{Q}d5!\pm$) 15. $\mathbb{Cxd5}$ $b5$ 16. $\mathbb{Q}e2$ $\mathbb{Exd}5$ 17. $e5$ $\mathbb{Q}e4=$.

Black can also transpose to the main line with 13... $\mathbb{E}e8$ 14. $\mathbb{E}c1$. Instead, 14. $\mathbb{W}d2$ $\mathbb{Q}a5$ was balanced in **game 43** Radulski-Iotov, Sunny Beach 2009. I also consider in the annotations 14. $\mathbb{W}e2$ $e5!?$.

13... $\mathbb{E}e8$ 14. $\mathbb{E}f3$ $\mathbb{Q}a5$

Black scores well without forcing the events, e.g. 14... $\mathbb{Q}d7$ (or 14... $\mathbb{Q}f8$) 15. $\mathbb{W}e2$ $\mathbb{W}c7$ 16. $\mathbb{E}fd1$ $\mathbb{W}b8$. The downside of this approach is that White is controlling firmly the centre and can gradually build a kingside attack with g4.



A crucial position for this line. White is unable to prevent a clash in the centre:

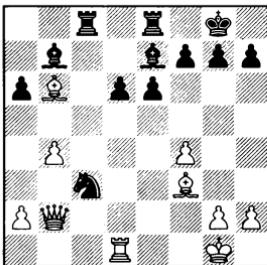
15. $\mathbb{W}d3$

Alternatively:

a) 15. $\mathbb{W}e2$ $\mathbb{W}c7$ 16. $b4$ (The game Mannion-Lautier, Barcelona 1993, went 16. $\mathbb{Q}a4?!$ $\mathbb{Q}xe4$ 17. $\mathbb{Bxb6}$ $\mathbb{W}c6$ and Black has a pleasant game. The

Taimanov with 5.♘b5

exchange of the central pawn for b6 is good for White only without queens. Karpov proved that against Kasparov in a famous game from the World title K-K series. 16.♗f2 is also harmless – 16...♗b8! 17.♕xb6 ♘xc4 18.♘xc4 ♜xc4∞.) 16...♘xc4 17.♘xc4 ♜xc4 18.♗b2 ♜d3 19.♕xb6 ♘xe4 20.♗fd1 ♜xc3 21.♗xc3 ♘xc3∞.



I proposed this queens sac in *The Safest Sicilian*, but there are no candidates to test it.

b) 15.♘a4 ♘d7 16.♗d2 (16.b4 d5) 16...♘c5 17.♘c3 ♘d7 18.♗e2 (18.♗e2 ♘f6) 18...♗c7 19.♗fd1 ♘xc4 20.♘cb5 axb5 21.♘xb5 ♜b8 22.♗xc4 ♜xc4 23.♗xc4 ♜c8∞.

15...d5! 16.cxd5 (16.exd5 ♜xa3 17.bxa3 ♘xc4) **16...b5 17.e5**

17.♘cb5?! axb5 18.♗xb5 ♜a8 19.♗b6 ♜d7∞;

17.♗d4 b4 18.e5 ♘xd5 19.♘xd5 ♜xd5 20.♗xc8 ♜xc8 21.♗xd5 bxa3↑.

17...♜xa3 18.bxa3 ♜xd5 19.♘xd5 ♜xd5 20.♗xc8 ♜xc8 21.♘xd5 exd5 22.♗xd5 ♜c4 23.♗f2 ♜xa3 24.♗d1 ♜c4 25.h3 ♜e6=.

B2. 12. ♜b3 ♘d7

12...♘a5?! 13.♗xb6± led to a better endgame in Karpov-Kasparov, 1984.

13.♗fd1

a) 13.f3 is inconsistent. Black could continue as in the main line or switch to ideas from line B3 by 12...♝e8.

b) 13.♗ad1

White enables the manoeuvre ♘a3-b1 and leaves the other rook on f1 from where it could support f4. The general crisis of the f4-plans had swept the queen's rook move out of fashion, but Naiditch and K.Szabo have been trying to revive it lately. Perhaps the most logical approach is to underline the absence of White's rook from c1 by preparing ...d5:

13...♘c5 14.♗c2 (14.♘xc5 bxc5 15.♗xb7?? drops the queen after 15...♘a5!) 14...♗c7!

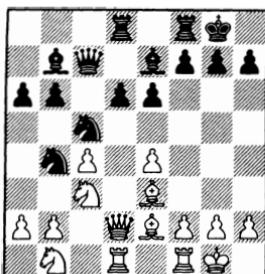
Naiditsch-Antoniewski, Berlin 2013, went 14...♗f6 15.♘ab1 ♜e7 16.a3 a5 17.♘b5 ♜fd8 18.♘1c3?! a4 19.f3, when 19...♘a7 neutralises White's pressure. Critical, however, is 18.b3?!, planning ♘c3-a4. The b6-pawn would be a sore point.

15.♘ab1

K.Szabo-Ribli, Paks 2014, saw the tricky 15.♗d2 when 15...♘b4 is already dubious due to 16.f3 – setting up the trap 16...♝ad8? 17.♘cb5!.

Black answered 15... $\mathbb{E}fe8$ (15... $\mathbb{E}ad8!?$) 16. $\mathbb{Q}c2$ $\mathbb{E}ad8$ 17.b4 $\mathbb{Q}d7$ 18. $\mathbb{Q}c1$. The knight does have more prospects on c2, but it also hinders the rook to defend the c4-pawn. Ribli could have exploited that with the thematic 18... $\mathbb{Q}ce5$ 19. $\mathbb{Q}d4$ $\mathbb{Q}f6$ 20.f3 d5! with an initiative.

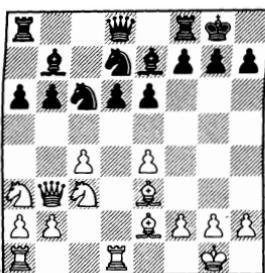
15... $\mathbb{Q}b4$ 16. $\mathbb{W}d2$ $\mathbb{E}ad8!$



Now 17.a3? fails to 17... $\mathbb{Q}b3$, the other moves allow ...d5, for instance: 17.b3 d5! 18.exd5 exd5 19. $\mathbb{Q}f4$ $\mathbb{W}c8$; 17.f3 d5!. The only way to hinder the break is:

17. $\mathbb{Q}f4$, but then we can attack the centre with ..f5 – 17... $\mathbb{Q}h8$ 18.b3 (18.f3 f5) 18...f5 19.exf5 $\mathbb{E}xf5$ 20. $\mathbb{Q}g4$ $\mathbb{E}f6$ 21. $\mathbb{Q}g3$ $\mathbb{E}g6$ 22. $\mathbb{W}e2$ $\mathbb{Q}f6\infty$.

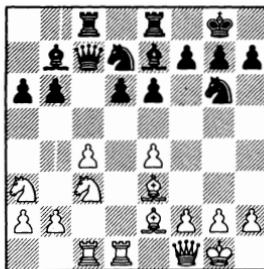
c) 13. $\mathbb{E}ac1$ $\mathbb{Q}c5$ 14. $\mathbb{W}c2$ $\mathbb{Q}f6$ 15. $\mathbb{E}fd1$ transposes to the main line.



13... $\mathbb{Q}c5$

In reserve, Black has another good set-up: 13... $\mathbb{E}e8$ 14. $\mathbb{E}d2$ $\mathbb{E}c8$. If White persists with his initial idea, he could quickly find himself lost as in Prié-Semkov, BUL-FRA m. Sofia 1990: 15. $\mathbb{W}d1$ $\mathbb{W}c7$ 16. $\mathbb{W}f1$ $\mathbb{Q}ce5$ 17. $\mathbb{E}ad1$ $\mathbb{Q}f6$ 18.f3, when 18...d5! 19.exd5 $\mathbb{Q}xa3$ 20.d6 $\mathbb{Q}xd6$ 21. $\mathbb{E}xd6$ $\mathbb{Q}d5\mp$ would have crowned Black's strategy.

More accurate is 15. $\mathbb{E}ac1$ $\mathbb{Q}ce5$ 16. $\mathbb{W}d1$ $\mathbb{Q}g6!$ (16... $\mathbb{W}c7?$ 17.f4 $\mathbb{Q}g6$ 18.e5±) 17. $\mathbb{W}f1$ (17.f4 $\mathbb{W}c7$ 18.e5 d5 19.cxd5 $\mathbb{Q}c5$) 17... $\mathbb{W}c7$ 18. $\mathbb{E}dd1$:



White protects the c1-rook against central breaks. The game Psakhis-Romanishin, Szirak 1986, went 18... $\mathbb{W}b8$ 19.f3 $\mathbb{Q}f6$ 20. $\mathbb{Q}ab1$ $\mathbb{Q}d8$ 21. $\mathbb{Q}h1$ draw, but Black could have played more actively – 18... $\mathbb{Q}f6$ 19.f3 $\mathbb{W}b8!$? 20. $\mathbb{W}f2$ d5 21.cxd5 $\mathbb{Q}d6!\mp$.

14. $\mathbb{W}c2$ (14. $\mathbb{Q}xc5?$! $\mathbb{B}xc5$ 15. $\mathbb{W}b7??$ $\mathbb{Q}a5$) 14... $\mathbb{Q}f6!$ 15. $\mathbb{E}ac1$

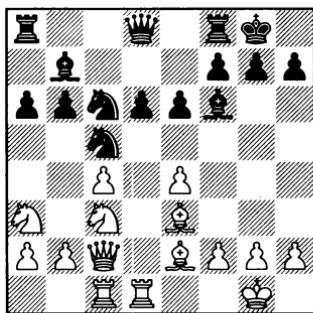
a) With the rook still on a1, 15. $\mathbb{Q}ab1$ is dubious. Black could counter-attack with 15... $\mathbb{Q}b4!$ 16. $\mathbb{W}d2$ a5 (16... $\mathbb{W}c8!?$) 17.f3 $\mathbb{W}e7$ 18. $\mathbb{Q}f4$ $\mathbb{Q}e5$

Taimanov with 5.♘b5

19.♗g5, Gajsin-Zakharstov, St. Petersburg 2002, 19...f6!? 20.♗e3 f5 21.exf5 exf5↑.

b) Another dubious alternative is 15.f3 ♜e5 16.♗d2 ♜h4 17.g3 ♜f6↑.

c) 15.♘ab1 creates the threat of b4 so Black has to blockade the pawn: 15...♘b4 16.♗d2 ♜e5! (it is good to provoke f4. In Averbakh-Polugaevsky, Palma de Mallorca 1972 was 16...♝xc3? 17.bc3±) 17.f4 ♜c3 18.bc3 ♘e4 19.♗b2 ♘c6=.



15...♝e7!

The queen feels superbly here. This set-up faces White with problems. The more provocative 15...♜e5 16.♘ab1 ♜h4 17.g3 ♜f6 18.♗d2 ♜g6 19.f4 ♘e4 20.♗xe4 ♜xe4 21.♗f2 ♜f5 22.g4 ♜f6 23.g5 ♜f5 24.♗e1 ♜e4 25.fxe5 ♜h1+ 26.♗f1 ♘xe5 27.♗f2 b5! also gave Black good chances in Ivanchuk-Wang, Beijing 2013.

16.♘ab1

Alternatives are:

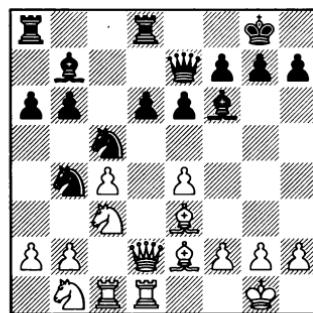
16.f3 ♜fd8 17.♗d2 ♘b4 leads to

similar positions – 18.♘ab1 (18.♗e1 d5!) 18...d5!↑.

16.♗d2 ♜fd8 17.♗e1! (17.f3 ♘b4 18.♗f4 ♜e5 19.♗g5 f6 20.♗e3 d5 21.cd5 ed5 22.♗d5 ♘d5 23.♗c4 ♘a4 24.♗d4 b5 25.♗b3 ♘h8!) 17...♘b4 18.♘ab1 d5=, Magem Badals-Rubio Mejia, Linares 2013.

16...♘b4! 17.♗d2 ♜fd8

Threatening ...d6-d5. Black gains the initiative after:



18.♗d4

18.f4 a5!↑ (attacking e4) 19.♗f3 ♘cd3! (Almasi) 20.♗xb6 ♜db8!↑;

18.♗e1 d5↑, Pokojowczyk-G. Kuzmin, Sochi 1976.

18...♞e5!

18...♞xd4 19.♗xd4 ♜g5 is good, too: 20.♗d2 h6 21.♗xg5 hxg5 22.a3 ♘c6 23.♗d2 ♘d4 24.♗f1 ♘db3 25.♗xb3 ♘xb3 26.♗b1 ♘f8 27.f3 ♘e7↑; 20.f3 ♘bd3 21.♗xd3 e5 22.♗f2 ♘xd3.

19.♗e3 ♘c6 20.♗xe5 dxe5

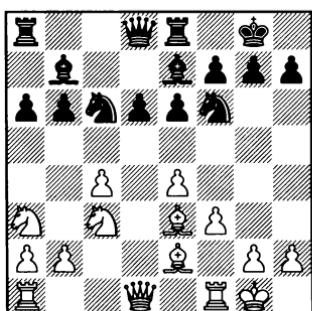
Black has a clear edge. Svetushkin-Ducarmon, Roquetas de Mar 2014, went further 21.♘d2 ♘d4 (21...a5) 22.♗f3 ♘ad8 23.♗f1 f6.

B3. 12.f3

White starts building the ideal set-up against the Hedgehog. However, Black is able to hinder his plan.

12...♜e8!

The rook's X-ray along the e-file cocks the trigger of the break ...d6-d5. Instead, 12...♝b4 13.♗b3! d5 leaves Black lagging behind in development – 14.cxd5 exd5 15.♗fd1 ♜c7 16.♗ac1! ♜c5 17.♘a4 ♜e3 18.♗e3±.



13.♗b3

The alternatives run into ...d6-d5 with a strong initiative:

13.♗e1?! d5!±;

13.♗c1?! is even worse: 13...d5!

14.cxd5 exd5 15.♗xd5 ♘xd5 16.exd5 ♘b4±;

13.♗d2 could also be met by 13...d5!= 14.cxd5 exd5 15.exd5 ♘b4.

Black's knight has found a more active stand than e5! We see here one more reason to delay the manoeuvre ...♞c6-e5. 16.d6! (16.♘c4 ♘fd5±) 16...♛xd6 17.♛xd6 ♘xd6 18.♘c4 ♘f8 19.♗f2 ♘bd5 20.♗fe1, Rindlisbacher-Huber, Legnica 2013, b5!=;

13.♘a4?! was invented by a computer: 13...♝d7 14.♗xb6 ♘xb6 15.♗b3, Comp Mephisto Genius – Loeffler, The Hague 1997. Here the human missed 15...♝d7! 16.♗b7 ♘c5 17.♗c6 (17.♗xc5 dxc5 18.♗xc6 ♘d4+ 19.♗f2 ♘b2±) 17...♝c8±.

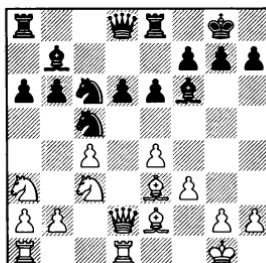
13...♝d7 14.♗ad1

The classic book on the Scheveningen by Kasparov/Nikitin, 1984, mentions this as the best move, without any analysis though. It took several decades to the mere mortals to reach to the same conclusion.

14.♗fd1 was the old main line – 14...♝c5 15.♗c2 ♘f6 16.♗d2!

16.♗ac1 ♘e5 17.♗d2 ♘h4 18.g3 ♘xg3 19.hxg3 ♘xg3+ is a draw by perpetual, but Black can play on with 16...♝b4 17.♗d2 d5=.

16.♗ab1 ♘b4 17.♗d2 ♘e5! (intending ...♞h4) 18.f4 ♘xc3 19.bxc3 ♘xe4 20.♗b2 ♘c6!∞.



Taimanov with 5.Qb5

16...Qe5! 17.Qc2 (17.Qac1 Qh4! 18.g3 Qxg3 19.hxg3 Qxg3+=) 17...Qh4 18.g3 Qxg3=.

14...Rc8

White hopes to revive his a3-knight with Qab1 so we must tie it up with the defence of the c4-pawn.

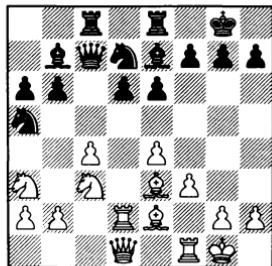
14...Qc5 15.Qc2 Qb4 16.Qd2 Qb8 (16...Qc7 17.Qab5) is acceptable, but a bit passive. White could continue 17.Qab1 (17.Qc2 Qxc2 18.Qxc2 Qc6 19.Qd2 b5?) 17...Rd8 18.Qf2! (threatening a3) 18...Qf6 (18...d5 19.exd5 exd5 20.a3 Qb3 21.Qe3 Qc5 22.Qg5 Qc2 23.Qxd5±) 19.a3 Qc6 20.Qc2 (20.b4?! Qb3 21.Qd3 Qbd4) 20...a5 21.Qb5 a4 22.Qa1c3 Qa7.

15.Qd2

15.Qc2 should be met by 15...Qce5 (15...d5 looks good only at a cursory glance. After 16.cxd5 exd5 17.Qxd5 Qxa3 18.bxa3 Qb4 19.Qxc8!, White has a nasty initiative – 19...Qxc8 20.axb4 b5 21.Qc1 Qb8 22.Qfd1 f5 23.Qc7 Qe7 24.Qe6 fxe4 25.f4 Qxe6 26.Qxd7 Qc6 27.Qa7 Qd6 28.Qxa6 Qe8 29.Qa7 Qd7 30.Qa5±) 16.Qd2 Qf6.

15...Qc7

15...Qa5!? targets the c4-pawn – 16.Qd1 (16.Qc2 d5! 17.Qfd1 Qxa3 18.bxa3 Qxc4) 16...Qc7. White has not a rook on c1 to defend c4 if the a3-knight headed to the centre.



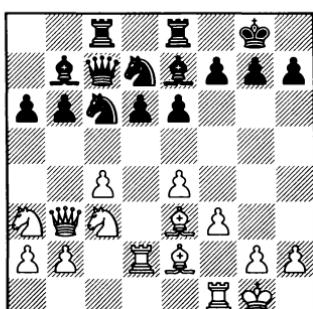
17.Qc2! – the only way to untie the a3-knight. Alternatives are:

17.b4 d5 (17...Qc6 18.b5 Qa7 19.c5 bxc5 20.bxa6 Qc6 21.Qab5 Qxb5 22.Qxb5 Qxb5 23.Qxb5 Qed8) 18.Qab5 (18.c5 Qf6) 18...axb5 19.Qxb5 Qb8 20.bxa5 bxa5;

17.b3 Qed8 18.Qab1 Qf6 19.Qc2 Qb8 20.Qd2 Qc6 21.Qd1 Qc5;

17.Qh1 Qed8 (17...Qe5 18.Qa4 Qd7 19.b4 Qc6 20.b5 Qce5 21.bxa6 Qxa6 22.Qc3 Qxc4 23.Qxc4 Qxc4 24.Qcb5 Qxb5 25.Qxb5 Qc4 26.Qxd6 Qxd6 27.Qxd6 Qe5) 18.b4 (18.b3 d5) 18...Qc6 19.Qb3 Qce5 20.Qc1 Qf6.

17...Qb8! 18.Qc1 (18.Qd2 Qc6! 19.Qa4 Qa8 20.b4 d5! →) 18...Qc6 19.Qd2 (19.Qc2 Qce5! 20.b3 b5; 19.Qab1 Qce5 20.Qd2 Qc6 21.f4 Qg6 22.b4 Qf6 23.Qb3 b5) 19...Qce5 and it is unclear how White can improve from this point.

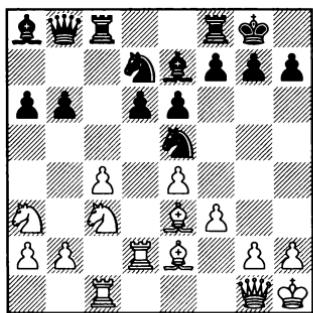


We have mobilised our forces while the enemy's pieces are still tangled on the queenside. Our next task is to prepare an active plan on the kingside, but not to rush with it! We should patiently manoeuvre and await the best timing for ...f5 or even g5. Of course, White should also hinder ...d5.

16. $\mathbb{E}c1!$?

16. $\mathbb{W}d1$ – anticipating 16... $\mathbb{Q}ce5$? 17. $\mathbb{f}4$. 16... $\mathbb{E}cd8$ and 17. $\mathbb{Q}c2$ does not help in view of 17... $\mathbb{Q}a5$ while 17. $\mathbb{Q}ab1$ is passive – 17... $\mathbb{Q}ce5$ 18. $b3$ $\mathbb{Q}f6$.

16... $\mathbb{Q}ce5$ 17. $\mathbb{W}d1$ $\mathbb{Q}f6$ 18. $\mathbb{E}dc2$ $\mathbb{W}b8$ 19. $\mathbb{Q}h1$ $\mathbb{Q}a8$ 20. $\mathbb{W}g1$ $\mathbb{Q}fd7$ 21. $\mathbb{E}d2$ $\mathbb{E}f8$

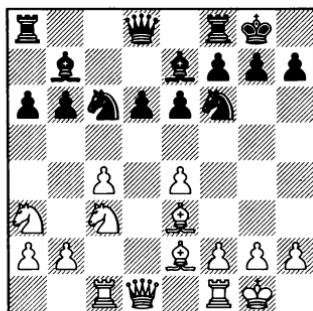


I do not see how White can make any progress. If he defends the c4-pawn with 22. $\mathbb{W}f1$, we can make a sortie out of the trench – 22...f5!? 23. $\mathbb{E}xf5$ $\mathbb{E}xf5$ \mathbb{E} .

You should remember Black's primary aim – the break ...d6-d5. If it is impossible, we keep pressure on c4.

B4. 12. $\mathbb{E}c1!$?

The old Kasparov/Nikitin book gives this as White's main option. Although it has drifted out of fashion, this move greatly restricts Black's options. By delaying f3, White deprives the opponent of tactical tricks along the e-file.



12... $\mathbb{Q}e5$

... $\mathbb{E}e8$ is not an obligatory move! The text is more straightforward – by hitting e4 Black is trying to drag the pawn to f3. Then he could try to carry on ...d6-d5.

13. $\mathbb{W}d4$

In the event of 13.f3, we should activate the rook – 13... $\mathbb{E}e8$ and White can hardly prevent a break in the centre:

14. $\mathbb{W}d4$ $\mathbb{Q}ed7$ 15. $\mathbb{Q}c2$ (15. $\mathbb{E}fd1$ d5!) 15...d5! 16. $cxd5$ $exd5$ 17. $exd5$ $\mathbb{Q}d6$ 18. $\mathbb{E}fd1$ b5! \mathbb{E} ;

14. $\mathbb{Q}d4$ $\mathbb{Q}c6$ 15. $\mathbb{Q}f2$ d5 16. $cxd5$ $exd5$ 17. $exd5$ $\mathbb{Q}b4=$, Beliavsky - Liberzon, Baden 1980.

Only 14. $\mathbb{W}b3$ hinders ...d5, but after 14... $\mathbb{E}fd7$ 15. $\mathbb{E}fd1$ $\mathbb{W}c7$ 16. $\mathbb{W}c2$

Taimanov with 5.♘b5

♖ac8 17.♗d2 ♕ed8, White is still facing the problem of how to activate the a3-knight.

13...♝ed7 14.♝fd1

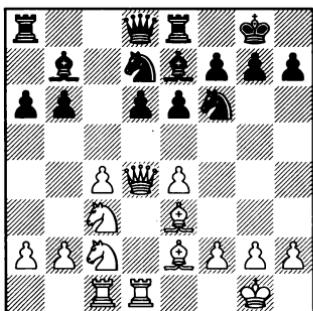
14.f3 is attacked with 14...d5!= 15.exd5 exd5! (15...♝c5?! 16.♗d2 ♜e3 17.♗e3 ed5 18.♗fd1!± Karpov-Tukmakov, URS-ch 1971) 16.cxd5 (18.♗fd1? ♜e8! 19.♗d2 dc4+) 16...♝c5 17.♗d2 ♜e3 18.♗e3 ♜e8 19.♗f2 ♘d5 20.♘d5 ♘d5 draw, Tseshkovsky-Geller, Las Palmas 1976.

14.b4 is also premature due to 14...a5.

14...♝e8

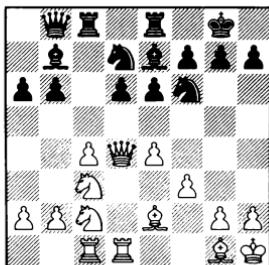
It is possible that 14...♝c7 is more precise. The text move aims for 15.f3 d5!

15.♘c2



15...♝c8

15...♝c7 occurred in my game Morovic Fernandez-Delchev, Pula 2000, but Black is unable to alter the hedgehog formation after 16.♘h1! ♜ac8 17.f3 ♜b8 18.♗g1.



White has prevented ...d6-d5 and preserves his spatial advantage. This does not implicitly mean that he has an edge, but at least Black should switch to defence. His main task is to hinder b4, ♘a1-b3 and eventually ♘d2. In the game, I managed to keep the balance with 18...♝c7 19.♘a1 ♜ec8 20.♘b3 ♘c5 21.♘d2 ♜e8 22.♗e3 h6 23.♗f1 ♜g5 24.♗e1 ♜c6 25.♗e3 ♜xe3 26.♗xe3 ♘a4 27.♗xa4 ♜xa4 28.♗e1 ♜d7 29.♗cd1 b5 30.b3 ♜a7 31.♗a7 draw.

16.f3

White should not delay this move much longer. 16.b4 ♜c7 17.♘a3 ♜b8 18.♘ab1 ♜e5 19.♗f4 ♘c6 20.♗xb6 e5 21.♗g5 ♘d4 22.♗a5 ♘e4 was in Black's favour, Tseshkovsky-Ribli, Riga 1979.

Instead of 17.♘a3, White had 17.f3. Then 17...d5!? (17...♝b8!?) equalises after 18.exd5 exd5 19.♗f4 (19.♘xd5? ♘xd5 20.cxd5 ♜f6 21.♗d3 ♜xb2+) 19...♝d8 20.♗f1 dxс4 21.♗xc4=.

16...d5!?

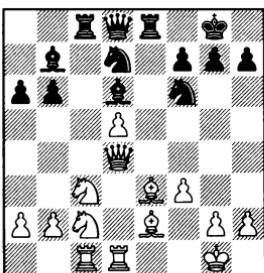
16...♝c7 transposes to the above game Morovic Fernandez-Delchev.

Part 7

17.cxd5 exd5 18.exd5

18.♕xd5?! ♕xd5 19.exd5 ♔f6
20.♗d2 ♔b2 21.♗b1 ♔xc3 22.♗d3
♔a5+.

18...♔d6!



This position is unanimously assessed as promising for Black. The game played between Leningrad Chess Club-Central Chess Club in 1971 seems to prove that evaluation:
19.♗d2 b5 20.a3 ♗c7 21.♔h1
(21.f4 ♔c5=) 21...♗b8 22.g3 ♗a8
23.♗g2 ♔e5=.

The e-mail game Nasybullin-Bern, ICCF 2006, saw 19.♗h4 b5 20.♗d3 ♗e5 21.♗f4 (21.♔e4 ♔xe4 is equal – 22.♗xd8 ♗xd8 23.fxe4 ♔c5 24.♗f4 ♗xd3 25.♗xd3 ♗xe4 26.♗xd6 ♗xd6 27.♗e3 ♗d7=) 21...♗h5 22.♗g3 ♗b6+ 23.♔h1 ♗xf4 24.♗xf4 ♗xd5 25.♗xd5 ♗xd5 26.♗b4 ♗xc1 27.♗xc1 ♗d6 28.h3 ♗f6=.

Part 7. Taimanov with 5.♘b5

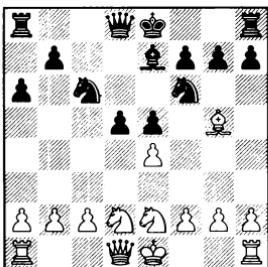
Complete Games

41. Almasi-Ivanchuk Polanica Zdroj 2000

1.e4 c5 2.♘f3 ♘c6 3.d4 cxd4 4.♗xd4 e6 5.♘b5 d6 6.♗f4 e5 7.♗e3 ♘f6 8.♗g5 a6 9.♘c3 ♘e7 10.♘d2 ♘g4 11.♗e2 ♘xe2 12.♗xe2

12.♗e2? ♘xe4 13.♗dxe4 ♘g5+ loses a pawn.

12...d5=



13.♗xf6 ♘xf6 14.0-0

In a later game, White played 14.♘c3 dxe4 15.♗dxe4 ♘e7 draw, Fontaine-Lautier, FRA-ch 2004.

14...0-0 15.c4?!

White overestimates his position and makes an active move while he had to think about how to equalise, probably with 15.♘c3!?

15...dxe4 16.♗xe4 ♘e7 17.c5

Following the same risky strategy.

17...♗c7 18.♗b3 ♘ad8 19.♗fd1 g6 20.♗c4 ♘a5 21.♗b4 ♘g7 22.♗c3?

According to Chess Stars book *Super Tournaments 2000*, White could have maintained the balance by 22.♗d6 ♘c6 23.♗a3 b6 24.♗a6=.

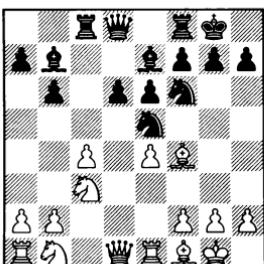
22...♘c6! 23.♗c4 f5 24.♗d6 ♘xd6 25.cxd6 ♘xd6 26.♗xd6 ♘xd6+ 27.♗d1 ♘d4 28.f4 b5 29.♗d3 ♘d8 30.♗h1 b4!

The knight endgame is won.

31.♗e2 ♘b5! 32.♗xd6 ♘xd6 33.♗xd6 ♘xd6 34.fxe5 ♘c4 35.b3 ♘xe5 36.♗f4 a5 37.h4 ♘f6 38.♗g1 ♘g4 39.♗d3 ♘e6 40.♗c5+ ♘d6! 41.♗b7+ ♘c7 0-1

**42. Kavalek-Liberzon
Amsterdam 1977**

**1.e4 c5 2.♘f3 e6 3.d4 cxd4
4.♗xd4 ♗c6 5.♗b5 d6 6.e4 ♘f6
7.♗c3 ♖e7 8.♗e2 0-0 9.0-0 b6
10.♗f4 ♖b7 11.♗e1 ♖c8 12.♗f1
♗e5**



13.♗d2!

White's plan is ♘c1, a3, b4, then ♗g3 and f4 in order to remove the restraining pressure on e4. Spragget got an edge in two of his games following this scenario. Our task should be to safeguard the e5-knight with ...g7-g5. 13.♗a3 would have been passive, for instance, 13...♗c7 14.♗c1 ♗b8 15.h3 ♗a8 16.♗e2 ♗a6 17.♗cb5 ♖b7 18.♗c3=.

13...♗fd7! 14.♗g3

Or 14.♗c1 a6 15.♗g3 g5 16.f3 ♗h8.

14...g5!

This plan is positionally sound with a white bishop on g3. Stayed it on e3, White would have the awkward plan ♘d4 followed up by b4,

c4-c5. It is the main reason I do not recommend the stand with ...g5 in the hedgehog. I prefer ...f5 or even ...h5-h4 instead. Of course, White can try to redeploy his bishop, but that costs tempi.

15.♗c1 a6

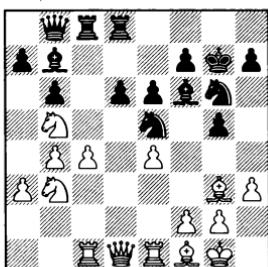
In the game Lopez Martinez-Fluvia Poyatos, Barcelona 2012, Black opted for a waiting game with:

15...♗c7. This is possible, but practice shows that White does not defend well in the Hedgehog. It is better to attack him even if that involves taking risks. The above game went:

16.b4 ♗b8 17.a3 ♘fd8 18.♗h5 ♗g6 19.h3

19.♗f3!? ♘f6 20.♗xg5 was a better try, (20.♗h6 ♘g4=) but Black has sufficient counterplay after 20...♗xe4 21.♗h6 ♘xg3 22.hxg3 d5!

19...♗g7 20.♗d1 ♘de5 21.♗b5 ♗f6 22.♗b3



Black could wait further with 22...♗f4, but he decided to throw more forces against the enemy king:

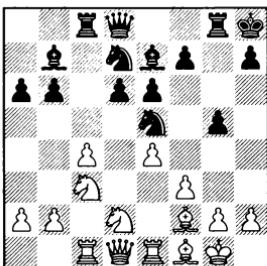
22...h5!? 23.f3 (White obviously panicked. 23.♗xh5? loses to 23...g4,

Taimanov with 5.♗b5

but he should not have made weaknesses. 23.♗d2 was unclear.) 23...♝c6 24.♗5d4 ♜a4 25.♗h1

25.♗d2 ♜xb3 26.♗xb3 d5!, planning ...♗xf3+, is also better for Black. After the text, 25...g4! 26.hxg4 (26. f4 h4! 27.♗h2 g3) 26...♝g5 would have given a decisive attack.

16.f3 ♜h8 17.♗f2 ♜g8

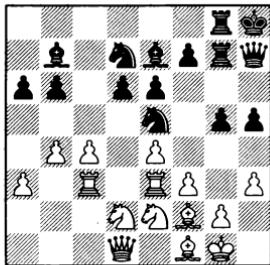


Black has some prospects for an attack, but White's position is very solid. The advance ...g4 is not an imminent threat – yet. After 18.b4 ♜f8! 19.♗e3 ♜f6, the play would be unclear. Instead, Kavalek considerably weakens his castling position:

18.h3 ♜g7

Another interesting resource was 18...♜f8 19.b4 f5 when 20.exf5 exf5 21.♗d5 is dubious due to 21...♝xd5 22.cxd5 ♜xc1 23.♗xc1 g4! 24.f4 gxh3 25.fxe5 hxg2.

19.b4 h5 20.a3 ♜g8 21.♗e3 ♜h7 (21...g4 22.f4 ♜g6 23.♗e2 e5 24.f5 ♜f4) **22.♗e2 ♜cg8!** (22...g4 was premature due to 23.f4 ♜f3+ 24.♗xf3 gxf3 25.♗xf3 ♜xe4) **23.♗cc3**



23...♜g6

Black's pieces are very menacing, but 23...g4 is still ineffective in view of 24.f4. He had to bring more power to the attack with ...♜h6 or ...f5. Liberzon's move is not bad either. Apparently Kavalek understood that passive waiting was doomed and he made a desperate attempt to free his pieces with:

**24.f4 gxf4 25.♗xf4 ♜h6
26.♗g3 ♜xg3**

26...♜f8! 27.♗d4 f5 would have kept more tension, but Liberzon simply grabs a pawn.

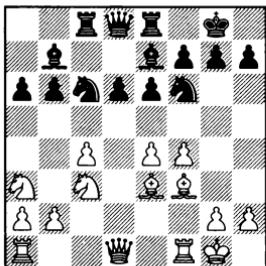
**27.♗xg3 h4 28.♗f2 ♜xe4
29.c5? dxc5 30.bxc5 ♜xc5
31.♗xc5 bxc5 32.♗c4 ♜f5 33.♗d2
♜f6 34.♗xe5 ♜xe5 35.♗d8+
♝g7 36.g3 ♜f3+ 37.♗xf3 ♜xf3
38.♗d3 ♜e5 0-1**

**43. Radulski-lotov
Sunny Beach 10.06.2009**

**1.e4 c5 2.♗f3 e6 3.d4 cxd4
4.♗xd4 ♜c6 5.♗b5 d6 6.c4 ♜f6**

Part 7

7. $\mathbb{Q}c3$ $a6$ 8. $\mathbb{Q}a3$ $\mathbb{Q}e7$ 9. $\mathbb{Q}e2$ $b6$
10.0-0 $\mathbb{Q}b7$ 11. $f4$ 0-0 12. $\mathbb{Q}f3$ $\mathbb{Q}c8$
13. $\mathbb{Q}e3$ $\mathbb{Q}e8$



14. $\mathbb{Q}d2$

14. $\mathbb{Q}c1$ is a more natural move since it protects White's most sensitive point – the c4-pawn.

14... $\mathbb{Q}a5$ 15. $\mathbb{Q}f2$

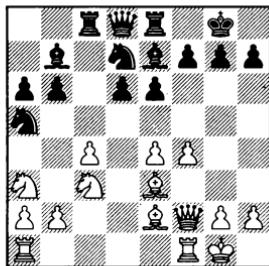
15. $\mathbb{Q}ac1$ is already late – 15... $d5$
16. $cxd5$ $\mathbb{Q}xa3$ 17. $bxa3$ $\mathbb{Q}c4$ 18. $\mathbb{Q}f2$
 $exd5$ 19. $\mathbb{Q}fd1$ $\mathbb{Q}d7$ 20. $e5$ $\mathbb{Q}g4\#$.

15... $\mathbb{Q}d7?$

15... $\mathbb{Q}xc4$ 16. $\mathbb{Q}xc4$ $\mathbb{Q}xc4$ 17. $e5$
 $\mathbb{Q}e4$ 18. $\mathbb{Q}xe4$ $\mathbb{Q}xe4$ 19. $\mathbb{Q}xb6$ $\mathbb{W}d7$
20. $\mathbb{Q}xe4$ $\mathbb{Q}xe4$ is roughly equal, but Itov decides to maintain the tension.

16. $\mathbb{Q}e2$

White is already on the defensive. 16. $\mathbb{Q}a4$ $\mathbb{Q}xc4$ 17. $\mathbb{Q}xc4$ $\mathbb{Q}xc4$
18. $\mathbb{Q}xb6$ $\mathbb{Q}xb6$ 19. $\mathbb{Q}xb6$ $\mathbb{W}a8$ gives Black an initiative – 20. $\mathbb{Q}fe1$ $\mathbb{Q}ec8$
21. $b3$ $\mathbb{Q}c2$ 22. $\mathbb{Q}e2$ $\mathbb{Q}c1+$ 23. $\mathbb{Q}xc1$
 $\mathbb{Q}xc1+$ 24. $\mathbb{Q}e1$ $\mathbb{Q}c8\rightarrow$.



16... $d5!$ 17. $exd5$

White cannot justify the placement of his queen on f2 by 17. $f5$ because he has only one check after 17... $\mathbb{Q}xa3$ 18. $fxe6$ $fxe6$ 19. $bxa3$ $\mathbb{Q}xc4$
20. $\mathbb{Q}f7+$ $\mathbb{Q}h8$ with an edge.

After the text, Black would be on top after 17... $\mathbb{Q}xa3!$ 18. $bxa3$ $\mathbb{Q}xc4$
19. $\mathbb{Q}xc4$ $\mathbb{Q}xc4$ 20. $dxe6$ $\mathbb{Q}xe6$ 21. $\mathbb{Q}d4$
 $\mathbb{Q}g6$ 22. $g3$ $\mathbb{Q}c8$.

17... $, exd5?!$ 18. $\mathbb{Q}ad1$

18. $\mathbb{Q}xd5$ simplifies to a nearly equal position although Black retains some initiative after 18...
 $\mathbb{Q}xa3$ 19. $bxa3$ $\mathbb{Q}xc4$ 20. $\mathbb{Q}xc4$ $\mathbb{Q}xc4$
21. $\mathbb{Q}xb6$ $\mathbb{Q}ce4$ 22. $\mathbb{Q}xd7$ $\mathbb{Q}xd7?!$.

18... $\mathbb{Q}xa3$ 19. $bxa3$ $\mathbb{Q}xc4$
20. $\mathbb{Q}d4$

White hopes to win the d5-pawn. 20. $\mathbb{Q}xc4$ $dxc4$ 21. $\mathbb{Q}xb6$ $\mathbb{Q}xb6$
22. $\mathbb{Q}xd7$ $\mathbb{Q}a5$ 23. $\mathbb{Q}d2$ $\mathbb{Q}a8$ was rather dull for him.

20... $\mathbb{Q}d6?!$ (20... $\mathbb{Q}f8\#$) 21. $f5?$

21. $\mathbb{Q}f3$ $\mathbb{Q}c5$ 22. $\mathbb{Q}xc5$ $bxc5$
23. $\mathbb{Q}xd5$ $\mathbb{Q}xd5$ 24. $\mathbb{Q}xd5$ $\mathbb{Q}e4$ 25. $\mathbb{Q}b2$

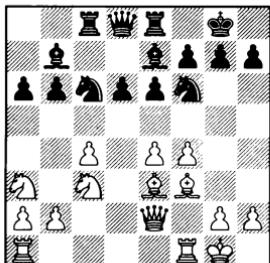
Taimanov with 5.♘b5

kept White in the game. Instead, he blunders material.

21...♝xc3 22.♞xc3 ♜e4 23.♝d4 ♜xc3 24.♝xc3 ♜xe2+ 25.♝d2 ♜xd2 26.♝xd2 ♜e7 27.♝e1 ♜c5+ 28.♝f2 ♜f8 29.h3 ♜c6 30.♝b1 ♜b5 31.♝b4 ♜xf2+ 32.♝xf2 ♜c4 33.♝b2 ♜e7 34.♝e3 ♜d6 35.♝d4 b5 36.a4 ♜b8 37.axb5 axb5 38.♝e3 ♜c6 39.♝f4 d4 40.g4 ♜d5 41.f6 gxf6 0-1

44. Sandu-Potkin Sautron 27.10.2007

1.e4 c5 2.♘f3 e6 3.d4 cxd4 4.♝xd4 ♜c6 5.♘b5 d6 6.c4 ♜f6 7.♘c3 a6 8.♘a3 ♜e7 9.♘e2 0-0 (9...b6 10.0-0 ♜b7 11.f4 d5) 10.0-0 b6 11.f4 ♜b7 12.♘f3 ♜c8 13.♘e3 ♜e8! 14.♝e2



We saw in the previous game that 14.♝d2 ♜a5 was awkward for White so ♜e2 looks logical. It has two major drawbacks, however. The queen falls under the X-ray of the e8-rook, and the d4-square remains without control. Potkin pinpoints both with his excellent move:

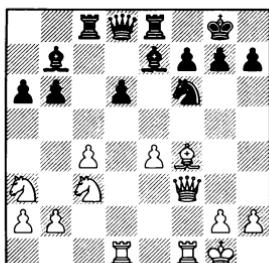
14...e5!? 15.♝f2

White cannot keep the centre closed since 15.f5 ♜d4 16.♝d3 stumbles into 16...b5! 17.cxb5 d5+. Alternatively, 15.♘d5 ♜d4 16.♝xd4 (16.♝f2 ♜xf3+ 17.♝xf3 ♜xd5 18.cxd5 exf4 19.♝xf4 b5) 16...exd4 17.♝fd1 ♜xd5 18.cxd5 ♜f6 is balanced. Black can play for a win though with 17...♜f8!? 18.♝xd4 ♜xd5 19.cxd5 b5 20.♝d2 g6. His dark-squared bishop has no opponent.

15...♝d4! (15...exf4 16.♝xb6 ♜d7 17.♝e2 g5) 16.♝ad1

16.♝xd4 exd4 17.♝d5 (17.♝xd4? d5) 17...♝xd5 18.cxd5 ♜f6 is equal, but Black can also sacrifice a pawn with full compensation – 17...d3 18.♝fd1 b5 19.cxb5 ♜xd5 20.exd5 axb5 21.♝xd3 ♜a5 22.♝c2 ♜d8 23.♝a3 ♜b6 24.♝d4 ♜f6 25.♝d3 ♜c4=.

16...♝xf3+ 17.♝xf3 exf4 18.♝xf4



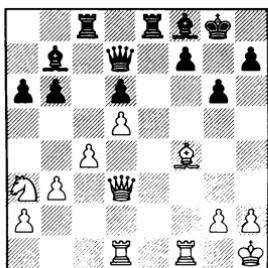
18...♝c7

Black has won the opening battle. This open Sicilian would have

Part 7

been satisfactory for him even with White's pawn on c2 and a knight on d4 instead of a3. Now 18... $\mathbb{W}d7!$, heading for e6, would be in his favour (19. $\mathbb{Q}d5$ $\mathbb{Q}d8$ 20. $\mathbb{E}fe1$ b5), but the text is also good enough.

19. $\mathbb{Q}h1$ $\mathbb{Q}f8$ (19... $\mathbb{W}d7!$) 20. $\mathbb{Q}d5$ $\mathbb{Q}xd5$ 21.exd5 $\mathbb{W}d7$ 22. $\mathbb{W}d3$ g6 23.b3



23...f5?

It seems that Potkin could not find an active plan. Had Black a knight to occupy e5, this move would have been normal, but here it only weakens the e6-square. He should have displayed activity on the queenside with 23...b5 and then ... $\mathbb{E}c5$, targeting the c4-pawn.

24. $\mathbb{E}fe1$ $\mathbb{W}g7?!$ 25. $\mathbb{Q}c2$ (25. $\mathbb{W}g3!)$ 25... $\mathbb{W}b2?$ (25...b5=) 26. $\mathbb{Q}d4?$ (26. $\mathbb{E}e3!+ -$) $\mathbb{E}xe1+$ 27. $\mathbb{E}xe1$ $\mathbb{E}e8$ 28. $\mathbb{E}g1$

It was more natural to trade rooks in order to invade Black's camp through the e-file – 28. $\mathbb{E}g3$ $\mathbb{E}xe1+$ 29. $\mathbb{E}xe1$ $\mathbb{W}c1$ 30. $\mathbb{W}e2$. After the text, Black is OK, e.g. 28... $\mathbb{E}e4$. He only must control the e-file. The

rest of the game is full of mistakes and is irrelevant to the opening.

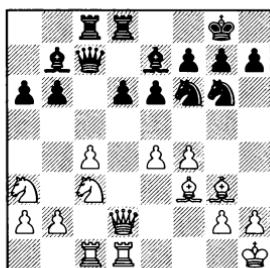
28... $\mathbb{W}f2$ 29. $\mathbb{E}g3$ $\mathbb{E}e3?$
30. $\mathbb{Q}xf2$ $\mathbb{E}xd3$ 31. $\mathbb{Q}f3?$ (31. $\mathbb{E}el$)
31...b5! \mp 32. $\mathbb{E}c1$ $\mathbb{Q}h6$ 33. $\mathbb{E}b1$ $\mathbb{E}c3$
34. $\mathbb{Q}g1$ $\mathbb{Q}f7$ 35. $\mathbb{Q}f1$ $\mathbb{B}xc4$ 36. $\mathbb{B}xc4$
 $\mathbb{Q}e8$ 37. $\mathbb{Q}d4?$ $\mathbb{E}xc4\mp$ 38. $\mathbb{E}b6$ $\mathbb{Q}f8$
39. $\mathbb{Q}e2$ $\mathbb{Q}e7$ 40. $\mathbb{Q}d3$ $\mathbb{Q}a4$ 41. $\mathbb{Q}b2$
 $\mathbb{E}xa2$ 42. $\mathbb{E}b8$ $\mathbb{Q}d7$ 43. $\mathbb{E}b7$ $\mathbb{Q}c8$
44. $\mathbb{E}b8$ f4 45. $\mathbb{Q}c4$ $\mathbb{Q}g4$ 46. $\mathbb{Q}d4$
 $\mathbb{E}a5$ 47.h3 $\mathbb{E}c5+$ 48. $\mathbb{Q}d3$ $\mathbb{Q}f5+$
49. $\mathbb{Q}e2$ $\mathbb{Q}e4$ 50. $\mathbb{Q}e6$ $\mathbb{E}xd5$ 0-1

45. Brodsky-Kruszynski Pardubice 1993

1.e4 c5 2. $\mathbb{Q}f3$ e6 3.d4 cxd4
4. $\mathbb{Q}xd4$ $\mathbb{Q}c6$ $\mathbb{Q}b5$ d6 6.c4 $\mathbb{Q}f6$
7. $\mathbb{Q}1c3$ a6 8. $\mathbb{Q}a3$ b6 9. $\mathbb{Q}e2$ $\mathbb{Q}b7$
10.0-0 $\mathbb{Q}b8$ 11.f3 $\mathbb{Q}bd7$ 12. $\mathbb{Q}f4$
 $\mathbb{Q}e5$ 13. $\mathbb{W}d2$ $\mathbb{Q}e7$ 14. $\mathbb{E}fd1$ $\mathbb{W}c7$
15. $\mathbb{E}ac1$ 0-0 16. $\mathbb{Q}h1$ $\mathbb{E}ac8$ 17. $\mathbb{Q}g3$

White opts for f4, but 18. $\mathbb{W}e1$ intending $\mathbb{W}g1$, $\mathbb{Q}e3$, $\mathbb{E}c1$ -c2-d2 and finally b4 is also promising.

17... $\mathbb{E}fd8$ 18.f4 $\mathbb{Q}g6$ 19. $\mathbb{Q}f3$



19... $\mathbb{W}b8$ 20. $\mathbb{W}e2$ $\mathbb{Q}d7$ 21. $\mathbb{Q}ab1$

Taimanov with 5.♘b5

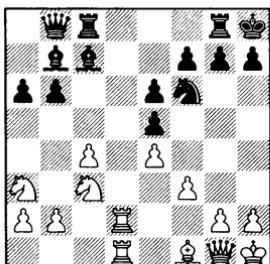
**1.f6 22.♗d2 ♜c6 23.b4 a5 24.a3
♛a8 25.♘db1 ♛e7 26.♗g4 ♘gf8
27.♗f3 ♗g6 28.♗e3 ♜b8 29.♗e2
♛a8 30.♗f3 ♜b8 31.♗e2 ♛a8
32.♗c2 ♜b8 33.♗a2 ♘f6 34.♗f3
axb4 35.axb4 b5?**

Black is the first to lose patience.

**36.cxb5 ♜xb5 37.e5 ♘d5
38.♘xd5 exd5 39.e6 ♜c4
40.exf7+ ♜xf7 41.♗a7 ♘f8
42.♗d2 d4 43.♗xd4 ♜f6 44.♗g1
♛xb4 45.♘xc4 ♜xc4 46.♗d5
♝d4 47.♗f7+ ♜e8 48.♗xf6 ♜xd5
49.♗e1+ ♘e5 50.♗f5 g6 51.♗f6 1-0**

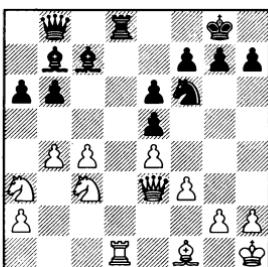
46. Daly-Tregubov Cappelle la Grande 2000

**1.e4 c5 2.♘f3 e6 3.d4 cxd4
4.♗xd4 ♘c6 5.♘b5 d6 6.c4 ♘f6
7.♘1c3 a6 8.♘a3 b6 9.♗e2 ♜b7
10.0-0 ♘b8 11.f3 ♘bd7 12.♗e3
♗e7 13.♗d2 ♜c7 14.♗fd1 0-0
15.♗ac1 ♜ac8 16.♗f1 ♜b8 17.♗f2
♗d8 18.♗h1 ♜e8 19.♗c2 ♜c7
20.♗g1 ♜h8 21.♗cd2 ♜g8 22.♗f4
♘e5 23.♗xe5! dxе5**



Let's compare this typical position to another model game:

Lupulescu-Perunovic Kavala 2004



**24.♗b1 ♜d4 25.b5 a5 26.c5! ♜f8?
27.cxb6 ♜xb6 28.♘c4 ♜c5 29.♗c1
♛d8 30.b6 ♘h5 31.♘xa5 ♜d2
32.♘e2 1-0**

Let's return now to our main game. White can obtain the better chances even without b4. That is possible thanks to the breakthrough 24.c5! bxc5 25.♘c4 ♜gd8 26.♗xc5±. In the game, White missed this opportunity and played too tentatively to lose in the end:

**24.♘c2 ♜gd8 25.b4 ♜d2
26.♗d2 ♜d8!**

Black's first step is correct. The bishop should control the squares b4-c5.

27.a3 ♜c7 28.♘a1!? g5?!

It is useless to discuss the pros and cons of this plan. If so many players like it, apparently it has some value, but to me it is only producing weaknesses around Black's king. The game will be decided in the centre so 28...♗d7 29.♘b3 ♜g5 30.♗d1 f5? looks more adequate.

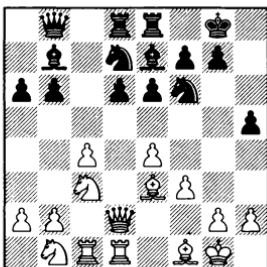
Part 8

29.♕b3 g4 30.♗e3 ♕e7 31.♕d3?

White is lingering again. 31.♕a4 gxf3 32.gxf3 ♘d7 33.c5 was called for – 33...bxc5 34.♘axc5 ♘xc5 35.♘xc5±.

31...♗g8 32.♕a4 ♘d7 33.♗c2 ♘c6 34.♕c3 gxf3 35.♗xf3 f5? 36.♗f1 f4 37.♘d2 (37.c5! bxc5 38.♕a5) 37...a5? 38.♗b2 ♘f6 39.♕f3 ♘g4 40.♗b1 axb4 41.axb4 ♘e8 42.♗d1 ♘h5 43.c5 bxc5 44.bxc5 ♘xc5 45.h3 ♘c8 46.♗c2 ♘e3 47.♗xc5 ♘xd1 48.♗b8 ♘d7 49.♗b7 ♘d8 50.♗a7 ♘e8 51.♗c4 ♘f7 52.♗a2 ♘g7 53.♗xe6 ♘f2+ 54.♗xf2 ♘xe6 0-1

13...♗e8 14.♗fd1 ♘c8 15.♗d4 ♘ed7 16.♗d2 ♘c7 17.♗ac1 ♘b8 18.♗ab1 ♘cd8 19.♗f1 h5?!



This flank assault is usually better than g5. It targets the g3 square.

20.♗f2 d5!

Eventually, I discovered that beating about the bush was not getting me any closer to the point.

21.exd5 exd5 22.♗xd5 ♘xd5 23.cxd5 ♘d6 24.♗xb6?

The abrupt change of the game course clearly confused my opponent and he commits a decisive mistake. 24.g3 h4! 25.♗g2 hxg3 26.hxg3 is more resilient although it would be difficult to defend after 26...♗xe3?! 27.♗xe3 ♘xg3 threatening ...♘f6-h5, or 26...♘f6 27.♗c3 b5.

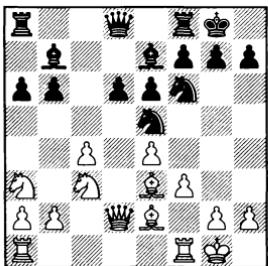
24...♗xh2 25.♗h1 ♘g3 26.♗d4 ♘xb6 27.♗xb6 ♘d6

27...♗f4 28.♗c2 ♘e5 was winning at once.

28.♗b4? ♘d8 29.♗c3 f5 30.♗d4 ♘g5 0-1

47. Rabrenovic-Delchev Bijelo Polje 2005

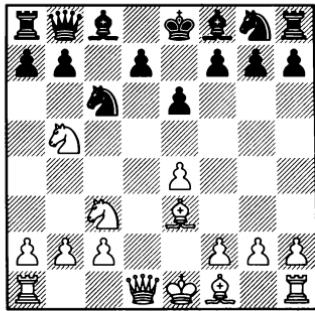
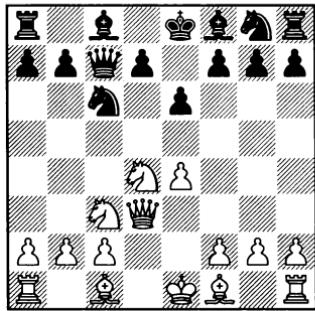
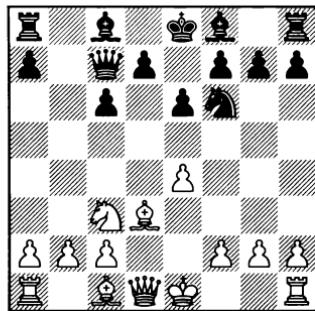
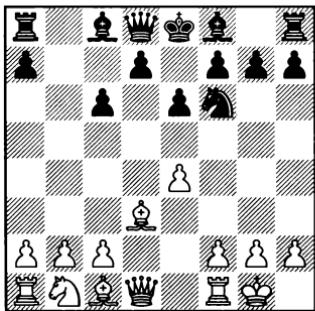
1.e4 c5 2.♘f3 e6 3.d4 cxd4 4.♗xd4 ♘c6 5.♘b5 d6 6.c4 ♘f6 7.♘c3 a6 8.♘a3 b6 9.♘e2 ♘b7 10.0-0 ♘e7 11.♘e3 0-0 12.♗d2 ♘e5 13.f3



I knew that now 13...d5 was roughly equal, but I decided to maintain the tension.

Part 8

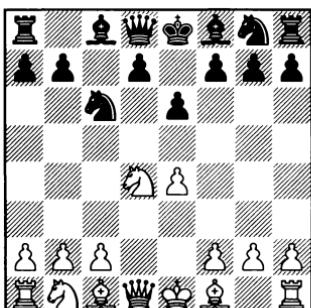
Rare Lines on 5th and 6th move



Part 8. Rare Lines on 5th and 6th Move

Main Ideas

**1.e4 c5 2. $\mathbb{Q}f3$ e6 3.d4 $\mathbb{Q}xd4$
4. $\mathbb{Q}xd4$ $\mathbb{Q}c6$**

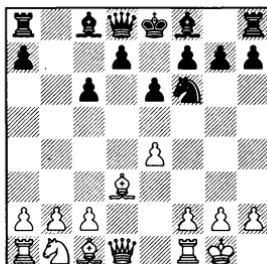


If you were a novice in chess, your first thought in this position might be: 'OK, how to mate the guy quick and neat? $\mathbb{Q}c4$ is apparently pointless, so I move the bishop to d3, the queen to h5 or g4 and throw all the rest against Black's king.' If you were also smart enough, you would notice that the knight on d4 was hanging and anyway it falls out of the whole design. At this point, you already know what to do. Of course wasting precious tempi on retreating the clumsy knight is out of question, so you part happily with it by:

A. 5. $\mathbb{Q}xc6$

Great ideas are simple, they say. This one might have been too, but when put to the practical test, it just does not work. Black has different ways of defending against the attack. When White's opening initiative begins to fade, it becomes clear that Black's powerful pawn centre is a weighty factor in the ensuing struggle.

5... $\mathbb{Q}xc6$ 6. $\mathbb{Q}d3$ $\mathbb{Q}f6$ 7.0-0



7...d5

When you choose this move, you should know how to survive against a direct kingside attack. Black has at least two other setups which are

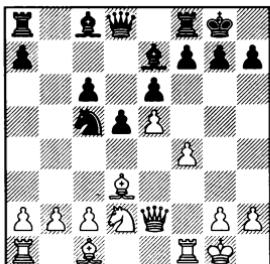
Rare Lines on 5th and 6th Move

probably not worse than the main line. One of them is connected with ...e6-e5, the other one – with ...d6. The latter is calm and safe, but not too popular. Black embraces the philosophy of the hedgehog structures. Hidden behind the pawn wall along the sixth rank, he is awaiting for the best moment to determine his plan. It could be an advance of any one of the three central pawns.

Our defence after 7...d5 is based on two main principles:

1. We destroy the most dangerous enemy piece which is the d3-bishop. That could be done in some variations by ... $\mathbb{Q}c8-a6$, but we often have a better solution – the manoeuvre ... $\mathbb{Q}f6-d7-c5xd3$:

Burger-Alburt Philadelphia 1989

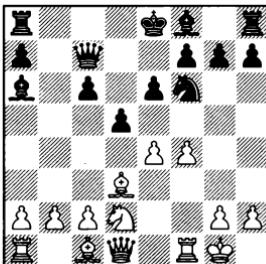


Position after 11... $\mathbb{Q}c5$.

Should your opponent allow it, take the bishop and push a- and c-pawns. That will ensure excellent counterplay.

2. If White attempted to secure his bishop with c3, we either take control of the centre with ... $\mathbb{W}c7$, ... $\mathbb{Q}d6$, ...e6-e5, or trade our main enemy with ... $\mathbb{Q}a6$.

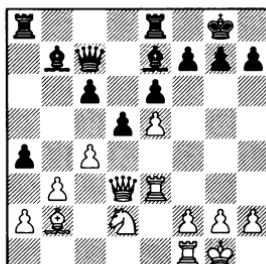
8. $\mathbb{Q}d2$ $\mathbb{W}c7!$ 9.f4 $\mathbb{Q}a6$



After castling, Black will push the a-pawn to a4, see **game 48** Hou,Yifan-Dzhumaev, Kuala Lumpur 2010.

More practical examples:

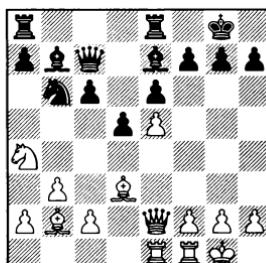
Martin-Illescas Dos Hermanas 2004



The attack a5-a4xb3 creates a weakness on b3:

18...axb3 19.axb3 $\mathbb{Q}a2\#$.

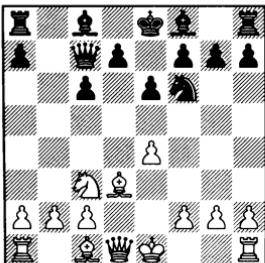
Analysis



Part 8

If White tries to stop the march of the a-pawn with a knight, Black should counter that by ... $\mathbb{Q}d7-b6$.

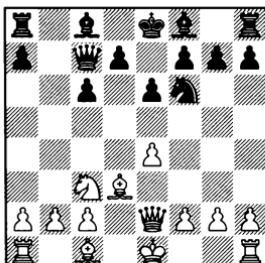
B. 5. $\mathbb{Q}c3$ $\mathbb{W}c7$ 6. $\mathbb{Q}xc6$ $bxc6$
7. $\mathbb{Q}d3$ $\mathbb{Q}f6$



Everything said about the move 5. $\mathbb{Q}xc6$ is valid here, too. Having committed his knight to c3, White has not a wide choice.

There is one important tactical nuance which you should take into account. The queen on c7 could be attacked by $\mathbb{Q}b5!$ That's why you should refrain from d5 before developing the bishop to e7:

In the diagram position, 8. $\mathbb{W}e2$ is not just a transposition (compared to 8.0-0 $\mathbb{Q}e7$):

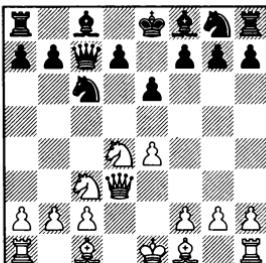


Black has a number of interesting options here except of 8...d5? in view of 9.exd5! cxd5 10. $\mathbb{Q}b5!$ $\mathbb{W}b8$ 11.g3

e5 12. $\mathbb{Q}f4!$

Perhaps 8... $\mathbb{Q}e7!?$ is best, since 9.e5 $\mathbb{Q}d5$ 10.0-0 0-0 is balanced.

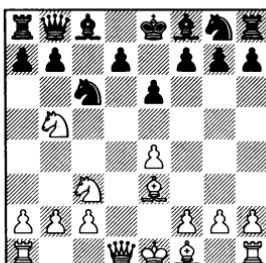
C. 5. $\mathbb{Q}c3$ $\mathbb{W}c7$ 6. $\mathbb{W}d3$



This move has occurred in only one game, Vallejo Pons-Adhiban, Caleta 2014. I propose:

**6... $\mathbb{Q}f6$ 7. $\mathbb{Q}db5$ $\mathbb{W}b8$ 8. $\mathbb{W}g3$ d6
9. $\mathbb{Q}e3$ (9. $\mathbb{Q}f4$ $\mathbb{Q}h5$) 9...a6 10. $\mathbb{Q}d4$
e5 11. $\mathbb{Q}b3$ $\mathbb{Q}e6$ with a normal Sicilian position.**

D. 6. $\mathbb{Q}db5$ $\mathbb{W}b8$ 7. $\mathbb{Q}e3$

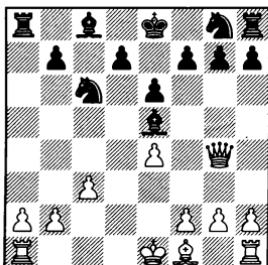


There is some mystification about this system. It has the reputation of "very" interesting, probably even better for White, but it is seldom seen. I suppose that common sense reminds us that a queen,

Rare Lines on 5th and 6th Move

even together with a pawn, is usually inferior to 3 pieces.

7...**a6!** 8.**♗b6 axb5** 9.**♗xb5 ♗b4** 10.**c3 ♗a5** 11.**♗c7 ♘xc7!**
12.♗xc7 ♘xc7 13.♗g4 ♗e5!?



Protecting indirectly g7 and providing Black with time to castle. Most importantly, we avoid weakening f6, which is a major downside of 13...g6.

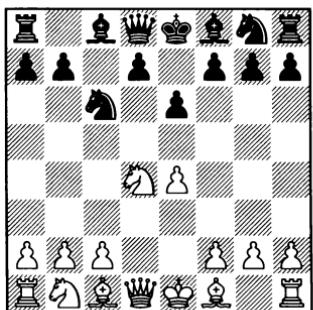
14.f4 ♗f6 15.♗f3 ♗c7

Black has full compensation for the queen. His only concern is how to activate the light-squared bishop. That could be achieved by either ...b6, ...♗b7 (beware the X-ray of the queen from f3!) or ...♗d7 after advancing the d-pawn.

Part 8. Rare Lines on 5th and 6th Move

Step by Step

1.e4 c5 2. \mathbb{Q} f3 e6 3.d4 cxd4
4. \mathbb{Q} xd4 \mathbb{Q} c6



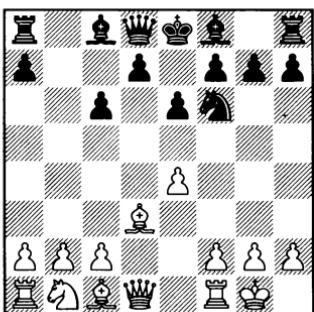
- A. 5. \mathbb{Q} xc6;
- B. 5. \mathbb{Q} c3 \mathbb{Q} c7 6. \mathbb{Q} xc6;
- C. 5. \mathbb{Q} c3 \mathbb{Q} c7 6. \mathbb{Q} db5;
- D. 5. \mathbb{Q} c3 \mathbb{Q} c7 6. \mathbb{Q} d3

For 5.c4 \mathbb{Q} f6 see Part 11/C1

A. 5. \mathbb{Q} xc6 bxc6 6. \mathbb{Q} d3

6.c4 is not flexible. It offers Black an ample choice. Perhaps simplest is 6... \mathbb{Q} f6 7. \mathbb{Q} d3 d5=, but 6... \mathbb{Q} c5 7. \mathbb{Q} d3 e5 8.0-0 \mathbb{Q} f6 is also a good option. Black has clear play on the dark squares.

6... \mathbb{Q} f6 7.0-0



7...d5

Sometimes Black chooses plans with e6-e5, but this set-up does not provide many possibilities for advancing the central pawns. On the contrary, the c6-d5-e6 wedge is quite mobile. Black could play c6-c5, d5-d4 or undermine White's e5-pawn with ...f6.

If you do not like the type of positions arising in the main line, I propose you to consider:

7...d6

The play is calmer and Black is running less risks of getting mated than after 7...d5. I have not chosen it for the main line mostly because it is significantly less popular.

Rare Lines on 5th and 6th Move

Game 50 Diez del Corral-Korchnoi, Palma de Mallorca 1968, is a typical example:

8.b3 ♘e7 9.♗b2 e5 (White was threatening 10.e5±) 10.♗d2 0-0 11.♘c4 ♗e6 12.♗e2 ♘d7. See the rest in the "Complete Games" section.

If White plays c4, Black should follow the plan with ...e5, ...g6. The other common set-up with ...f6-d7-e5-c6 is a bit passive:

8.c4 $\mathbb{Q}e7$ 9. $\mathbb{Q}c3$ 0-0 10. $\mathbb{W}e2$ e5
11.h3 $\mathbb{Q}e6$ 12.f4 exf4 13. $\mathbb{Q}xf4$ $\mathbb{Q}d7$:

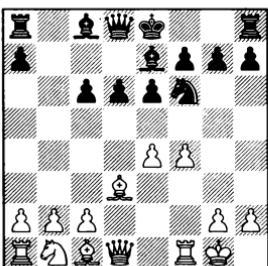
8 c4 $\mathbb{N}d7$ 9 $\mathbb{N}c3$ $\mathbb{N}e7$ 10 $\mathbb{N}c2$ $\mathbb{N}e5$

11.♘e2 c5 12.♗e3 0-0 13.♖ad1 ♖b6
14.f4 ♦c6, Meijers-Ksieski, Leutersdorf 2001.

The game Kholmov-Korchnoi, Riga 1970, shows the flexibility of ...d6. Black can always return to the ...d5-plan in proper circumstances:

8. $\text{\texttt{W}}\text{e}2 \text{\texttt{Q}}\text{e}7$ 9. $\text{\texttt{Q}}\text{d}2 \text{\texttt{Q}}\text{d}7$ 10. $\text{\texttt{f}}\text{4} \text{\texttt{Q}}\text{c}5$
 11. $\text{\texttt{Q}}\text{f}3$ 0-0 12. $\text{\texttt{Q}}\text{e}3 \text{\texttt{d}}5=.$

Perhaps the most testing plan is
8.f4 ♕e7



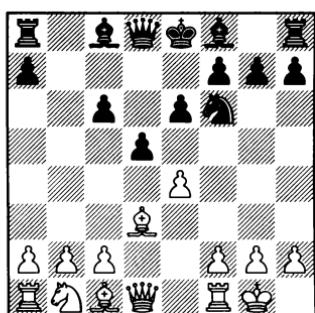
9. ♔h1

White's best set-up was shown in the game Lein-Tal, Kiev 1964: 9. $\mathbb{Q}d2$ 0-0 10. $\mathbb{Q}h1$ e5 11.fxe5 dxe5

12. $\mathbb{Q}c4$ $\mathbb{W}c7$ 13. $\mathbb{W}f3$ $\mathbb{Q}e6$ 14. $\mathbb{Q}d2$ $\mathbb{Q}d7$ 15. $\mathbb{Q}c3$ f6 16. $\mathbb{Q}e3$ $\mathbb{B}fe8$ 17. $\mathbb{Q}c4\pm$. Note that the bishop goes to c3 in order to bind Black with the defence of the e5-pawn and then White trades the light-squared bishops. However, 9. $\mathbb{Q}d2$ is inaccurate due to 9... e5! 10. fxe5 (or 10. $\mathbb{Q}c4$ d5! 11. exd5 e4; 10. $\mathbb{Q}f3$ 0-0! and White cannot achieve the set-up of the game Lein-Tal.) 10... $\mathbb{Q}g4$ 11. $\mathbb{Q}f3$ $\mathbb{W}b6$ 12. $\mathbb{Q}h1$ $\mathbb{Q}f2$ 13. $\mathbb{B}f2$ $\mathbb{W}f2$ 14. exd5 $\mathbb{Q}xd6$ 15. $\mathbb{Q}xb5$ cxb5 16. $\mathbb{W}xd6$ $\mathbb{W}f1$ 17. $\mathbb{Q}g1$ $\mathbb{W}c4$ 18. $\mathbb{W}e5$ $\mathbb{Q}e6\infty$. After the text, Black has to prevent 10. e5. If he plays 9... e5 himself, then 10. fxe5 dxe5 11. $\mathbb{Q}d2$ $\mathbb{Q}e6$ 12. $\mathbb{W}f3$ will probably transpose to the game Lein-Tal which is not too appealing. Remains:

9... $\mathbb{W}c7$ 10. $\mathfrak{Q}d2$ 0-0 11. $\mathbb{W}e1$ $\mathfrak{Q}d7$
with unclear play.

Let's return to 7...d5:



8. $\text{N}d2$

White often plays 8.e5, nurturing hopes for a kingside attack. This is a lost cause, since Black can easily eliminate the bishop on d3. Without it, any direct attack should fail – 8...

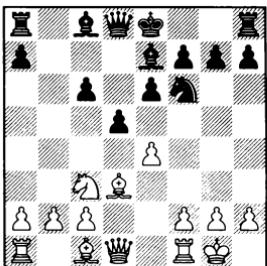
Part 8

$\mathbb{Q}d7$ 9. $\mathbb{W}e2$ (9.f4 limits the scope of the c1-bishop. We'll trade the other one with 9... $\mathbb{Q}a6$ or 9... $\mathbb{Q}c5$, followed by ... $\mathbb{Q}e7$, ...g6 and ...f5) 9... $\mathbb{Q}e7$ 10. $\mathbb{Q}d2$ 0-0 11.f4 (11. $\mathbb{Q}f3$!?) is more realistic, when Black follows the same design – with 11... $\mathbb{Q}c5$) 11... $\mathbb{Q}c5$ 12. $\mathbb{Q}h1$ a5= 13. $\mathbb{Q}f3$ $\mathbb{Q}xd3$ 14.cxd3 c5 15. $\mathbb{Q}e3$ $\mathbb{Q}a6$ 16. $\mathbb{Q}fc1$ $\mathbb{W}b6$ 17. $\mathbb{Q}c2$ a4=, Burger-Alburt, Philadelphia 1989.

8. $\mathbb{Q}c3$ is possible, but inconsistent. It leads to positions that commonly arise after another move order – 1.e4 c5 2. $\mathbb{Q}f3$ e6 3.d4 cxd4 4. $\mathbb{Q}d4$ $\mathbb{Q}f6$ 5. $\mathbb{Q}c3$ $\mathbb{Q}c6$ 6. $\mathbb{Q}xc6$. The knight is misplaced on c3, because it has no prospects there and should be redeployed, probably to a4. This plan is harmless for Black. He could oppose it by the manoeuvre ... $\mathbb{Q}f6$ -d7-b6 which is Black's universal retort to $\mathbb{Q}a4$.

Let's see some typical examples:

8. $\mathbb{Q}c3$ $\mathbb{Q}e7$



9.e5 $\mathbb{Q}d7$ 10. $\mathbb{W}g4$ (10. $\mathbb{Q}e1$ 0-0 11.f4 f5) 10... $\mathbb{Q}xe5$ 11. $\mathbb{W}xg7$ $\mathbb{Q}g8$ 12. $\mathbb{W}h6$ $\mathbb{Q}b8$ 13. $\mathbb{Q}e2$ $\mathbb{Q}b4$.

9.b3 0-0 10. $\mathbb{W}e2$ $\mathbb{Q}d7$ 11. $\mathbb{Q}a4$ $\mathbb{Q}b6$ =, Hector-Lautier, Malmo 1998.

9. $\mathbb{Q}e1$ $\mathbb{Q}d7$!? (avoiding $\mathbb{Q}g5$ or the variation 9...0-0 10. $\mathbb{Q}f4$ $\mathbb{Q}d7$ 11.exd5 cxd5 12. $\mathbb{Q}b5$ ±) 10. $\mathbb{Q}f4$ (10. $\mathbb{W}h5$ $\mathbb{Q}c5$) 10...d4

In normal circumstances, this set-up is not too flexible, but here it is with tempo.

11. $\mathbb{Q}a4$ e5 12. $\mathbb{Q}g3$ h5 (12...0-0) 13.h3 h4 14. $\mathbb{Q}h2$ 0-0 15.c3 dc3 16. $\mathbb{Q}c3$ $\mathbb{Q}c5$ 17. $\mathbb{Q}f1$ $\mathbb{Q}d4$ 18. $\mathbb{W}c2$ $\mathbb{Q}c5$ 19. $\mathbb{Q}c4$ = Delgado-Jobava, Havana 2005.

After 8. $\mathbb{Q}d2$, we reach a position which might be familiar to the French-playing people – 1.e4 e6 2.d4 d5 3. $\mathbb{Q}d2$ c5 4. $\mathbb{Q}gf3$ cxd4 5. $\mathbb{Q}xd4$ $\mathbb{Q}c6$ 6. $\mathbb{Q}xc6$ bxc6 7. $\mathbb{Q}d3$ $\mathbb{Q}f6$ 8.0-0. White is trying to be too clever and keep all his options open. However, it has its cost – he cannot play e5 without the help of his f-pawn after:

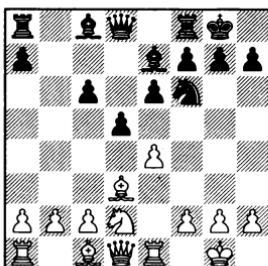
8... $\mathbb{W}c7$!

8... $\mathbb{Q}e7$ is less principled. 9. $\mathbb{W}e2$

Alternatively, White can choose to maintain the central tension with b3 and c4, where Black pushes his pawns to a4 (and even to a3 in some situations), and c5. Another possible setup is based on b3 and a4 which allows Black to trade the light-squared bishops through a6. These plans are less dangerous, because White plays on the wing where Black is stronger – 9. $\mathbb{W}e2$ 0-0 10.b3 a5 11.a4 $\mathbb{Q}e8$ 12. $\mathbb{Q}b2$ $\mathbb{W}b6$ 13. $\mathbb{Q}ad1$ $\mathbb{Q}a6$ 14. $\mathbb{Q}fe1$ $\mathbb{Q}xd3$ 15. $\mathbb{W}xd3$ $\mathbb{W}c7$ 16.e5 $\mathbb{Q}d7$ 17. $\mathbb{Q}e3$ =, Kofidis-Semkov, Heraklio 1993.

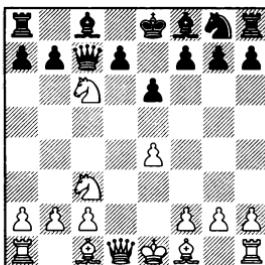
9. $\mathbb{Q}e1$ 0-0

Rare Lines on 5th and 6th Move



White does not have any active plan, see **game 48** Hou,Yifan-Dzhumaev, Kuala Lumpur 2010.

B. 5.♘c3 ♖c7 6.♘xc6



10.c3!

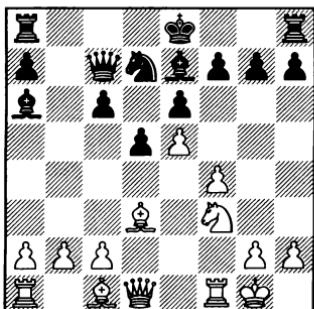
10.e5 ♘d7 11.c3 f5! is excellent for Black – 12.exf6 ♘xf6?! 13.♗h5 g6 14.♗xg6 hxg6 15.♗xg6+ ♘g7 16.♗xe6+ ♘f7 17.♗xc6 ♘b8 18.♗xd5 ♘b7 19.♗d3 ♘b6 with a strong attack, Senff-Nielsen, Germany 2008.

10...♘d7 11.♗c2! with unclear play.

9.f4

9.c4 abandons the centre – 9...♘d6 10.h3 0-0 11.♗e2 ♘b7 12.b3 ♘h2+ 13.♔h1 ♘e5 14.♗b1 c5 15.exd5 exd5 16.♗f3, Kofidis-Ehlvest, Komotini 1992, 16...♘d6! with initiative.

9...♘a6 10.e5 ♘d7 11.♗f3 ♘e7



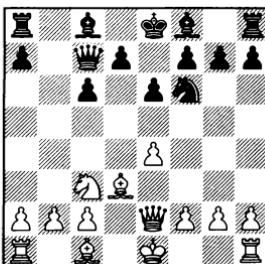
This exchange has a bad reputation, because the knight on c3 has not clear prospects. Sometimes White even returns it back to b1 in order to redirect it to d2-f3, or moves it to a4 in order to enable c4.

6...bxcc6

6...dxc6 has its adepts, but I do not like such symmetric pawn formations in the Sicilian. They are difficult to win.

7.♗d3 ♘f6 8.0-0

Attention! 8.♗e2 is not just a transposition:



Part 8

Black has a number of interesting options here except of 8...d5?

This move has never been punished in practice, but it is inferior to 8... $\mathbb{Q}e7$, 8... $\mathbb{Q}d6$, 8...d6 or 8...e5. The reason is:

9.exd5! cxd5 (or 9... $\mathbb{Q}xd5$ 10.0-0 $\mathbb{Q}d6$ 11.g3 $\mathbb{Q}c3$ 12.bxc3 0-0 13. $\mathbb{E}d1\pm$) 10. $\mathbb{Q}b5!$ $\mathbb{W}b8$ 11.g3 e5 12. $\mathbb{Q}f4$ where I have not a good advice for Black: 12... $\mathbb{Q}e4$ 13. $\mathbb{Q}xe4$ dxe4 14. $\mathbb{W}c4$ exf4 15. $\mathbb{Q}c7$ $\mathbb{Q}e7$ 16.0-0-0+– or 12... $\mathbb{Q}d7$ 13.0-0 (13.0-0-0±) 13... $\mathbb{Q}e7$ 14. $\mathbb{E}fe1\uparrow$.

Perhaps 8... $\mathbb{Q}e7$? is best, since 9.e5 $\mathbb{Q}d5$ 10.0-0 0-0 is good for Black.

More challenging is 8... $\mathbb{Q}d6$!? using the fact that White has not castled. This continuation has passed the test in a couple of games.

8... $\mathbb{Q}e7$

There is not a single reason to play d7-d5 unless White threatens e5. 8...d5 9.ed5 is not dangerous, but why to hand the opponent additional options connected with the exchange on d5. Still, in Stenzel-Sofia Polgar, Kona 1998, Black completed development after 9....exd5 (9...cxd5 10. $\mathbb{Q}b5$ with initiative) 10. $\mathbb{E}e1$ $\mathbb{Q}e7$ 11. $\mathbb{W}f3$, when 11...0-0= would have been safe enough.

9. $\mathbb{W}e2$

Black should be only happy to face a head-on “attack” of the type of 9.f4 d5 10. $\mathbb{Q}h1$ 0-0 11.e5 $\mathbb{Q}d7$ 12. $\mathbb{E}f3$. He could parry it by 12...f5

13.exf6 $\mathbb{Q}xf6$ or by the typical 12... $\mathbb{Q}c5$, since 13. $\mathbb{Q}xh7$ $\mathbb{Q}xh7$ 14. $\mathbb{E}h3$ $\mathbb{Q}g8$ 15. $\mathbb{W}h5$ f5 is not really a threat. Note that I do not recommend to trade light-squared bishops by preparing $\mathbb{Q}a6$. It is better to kill White’s bishop by the knight (... $\mathbb{Q}f6$ -d7-c5), when $\mathbb{Q}b7$ will rule along the main diagonal after ...c6-c5 and ...d5-d4.

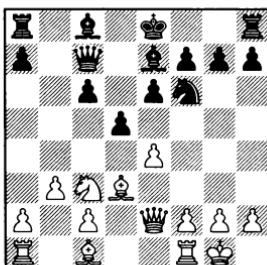
Black’s most flexible answer to 9. $\mathbb{E}e1$ is 9...d6. Then 10.f4 0-0 11.e5 $\mathbb{Q}d5$ 12. $\mathbb{Q}e4$ dxe5 13.fxe5, Kakabadze-Schlosser, Baden-Baden 1993, is better for Black due to 13... $\mathbb{Q}d8$!.

9...d5

9...d6 10.f4 $\mathbb{Q}d7$ offers Black nice statistics in the database.

10.b3

Black can meet 10.f4 0-0 11. $\mathbb{Q}h1$ with the typical setup 11... $\mathbb{E}e8$ 12. $\mathbb{Q}d2$ $\mathbb{Q}b7$ 13. $\mathbb{E}ae1$ $\mathbb{Q}d7$ 14.e5 (14. $\mathbb{Q}a4$ $\mathbb{Q}b6$) 14... $\mathbb{Q}c5$.



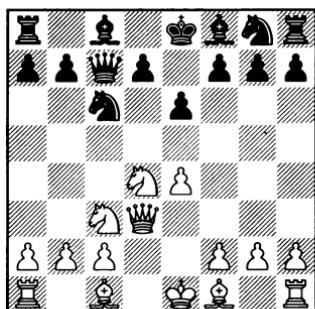
10...0-0 11. $\mathbb{Q}b2$ $\mathbb{E}e8$ 12. $\mathbb{E}ae1$ $\mathbb{Q}b7$ 13.e5 $\mathbb{Q}d7$

I prefer Black’s chances in this typical position, in view of his mo-

Rare Lines on 5th and 6th Move

bile pawn centre. See **game 49** Martin Perez-Illescas Cordoba, Dos Hermanas 2004.

C. 5. $\mathbb{Q}c3$ $\mathbb{W}c7$ 6. $\mathbb{W}d3$



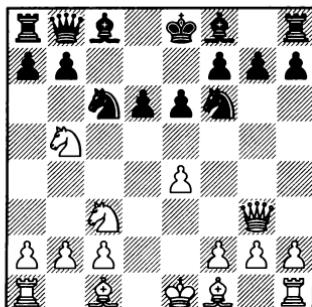
This move has occurred in only one game, Vallejo Pons-Adhiban, Caleta 2014, but when a 2700 player employs it, we should pay attention. There followed 6...a6 7. $\mathbb{Q}xc6$ $\mathbb{W}xc6$ 8. $\mathbb{W}g3$ b5 9. a3 $\mathbb{Q}b7$ 10. $\mathbb{Q}d3$ $\mathbb{Q}f6$ 11. 0-0 with a solid edge. Where went Black so wrong?! First of all, capturing by queen on c6 is dubious. In the event of 7... $\mathbb{B}xc6$ 8. $\mathbb{W}g3$, White has a clear extra tempo (spent on ...a6) in comparison to line B. That does not automatically promise him an edge. In fact, this position often arises following another move order. It is even considered to be roughly equal after 8... $\mathbb{W}xg3$ 9. $\mathbb{H}xg3$ $\mathbb{Q}b8$. We should not avoid such a structure at all costs, but I propose to get a better version of it by:

6... $\mathbb{Q}f6$

Now 7. $\mathbb{Q}g5$ a6 (7... $\mathbb{Q}xd4$ 8. $\mathbb{W}xd4$

$\mathbb{Q}c5$ 9. $\mathbb{W}d2$ a6 10. 0-0-0 b5 11. e5! $\mathbb{Q}g4$ 12. $\mathbb{Q}e4$ $\mathbb{W}xe5$ 13. $\mathbb{Q}e1$ is really dangerous for Black.) 8. $\mathbb{Q}xc6$ $\mathbb{B}xc6$ is a blank spot in theory, but g5 is hardly the best place for the enemy bishop. For instance, White cannot trade queens with 9. $\mathbb{W}g3$ due to 9... $\mathbb{Q}d6$ – the g5-bishop “protects” the g7-pawn. Of course, White can castle first, but 8. 0-0-0 $\mathbb{Q}e7$ 9. $\mathbb{W}g3$ $\mathbb{W}xg3$ 10. $\mathbb{H}xg3$ $\mathbb{Q}xd4$ 11. $\mathbb{Q}xd4$ $\mathbb{Q}c5$ 12. $\mathbb{Q}d2$ $\mathbb{Q}g4$ 13. f3 f6 14. $\mathbb{Q}f4$ $\mathbb{Q}e5$ is balanced. Perhaps White should try:

7. $\mathbb{Q}db5$ $\mathbb{W}b8$ 8. $\mathbb{W}g3$ d6



We know that the g3-queen is an obstacle to a kingside pawn storm with g4-g5:

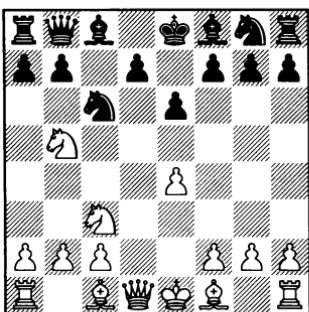
9. $\mathbb{Q}e3$ (9. $\mathbb{Q}f4$ $\mathbb{Q}h5$) 9... a6 10. $\mathbb{Q}d4$ e5 11. $\mathbb{Q}b3$

11. $\mathbb{Q}xc6$ $\mathbb{B}xc6$ 12. 0-0-0 $\mathbb{Q}e6$
13. $\mathbb{Q}e2$ $\mathbb{W}b4$ 14. a3 $\mathbb{W}b7$ 15. $\mathbb{Q}b1$ $\mathbb{Q}e7$
16. f4 $\mathbb{Q}b8$ 17. $\mathbb{Q}c1$ 0-0 18. f5 $\mathbb{Q}d7$.

11... $\mathbb{Q}e6$ 12. 0-0-0 (12. $\mathbb{Q}e2$ $\mathbb{Q}b4$
13. $\mathbb{Q}c1$ d5) 12... $\mathbb{Q}e7$ 13. $\mathbb{Q}e2$ 0-0
14. $\mathbb{Q}h6$ $\mathbb{Q}e8$ 15. $\mathbb{Q}d5$ $\mathbb{Q}h8=$.

Part 8

D. 6.♘db5 ♖b8



7.♗e3

White can try to substantiate his sixth move by 7.a4, making room for the knight on a3. This variation is seldom seen, so the arising positions are unexplored. I think that Black's safest way is to restrict White's knight with 7...♘f6 8.♘d3 (note the trap 8.♖g5 a6 9.♘a3? ♘xe4 10.♘xe4 ♖e5+) 8...a6 9.♘a3 d5 10.0-0 ♖e7 11.exd5 exd5=.

8...♗c5 is too risky: 9.0-0 h5 10.♗h1 a6 11.♘a3 ♘g4 12.f4=.

7...a6

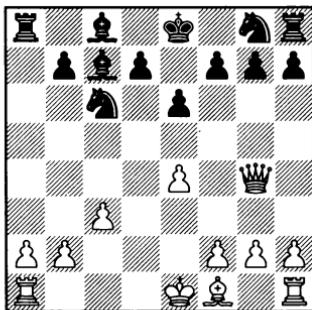
7...♘f6 8.f4 d6 is also playable, but I do not see any reason to avoid the text move.

8.♗b6

It is shameful to retreat back with 8.♗d4, but this might be a realistic approach. Then Black plays normal Taimanov, enjoying an extra "half tempo". If the queen returns to c7, we'll have the usual variations, but

Black should try to benefit from the tempo with 8...♘f6.

8...axb5 9.♘xb5 ♖b4 10.c3 ♖a5 11.♘c7+ ♖xc7! 12.♘xc7 ♖xc7 13.♗g4



13...♗e5!?

This move casts a shadow of doubt on the whole White's set-up.

13...♗f8 hampers the normal development of Black's pieces, but it also has enough fans. The game Kornev-J. Geller, Moscow 2007 saw further 14.♘d3 ♘f6 15.♗e2 h5 16.0-0 g5 17.a4 b6 18.b4 ♖b7 with a lively game.

14.f4 ♘f6 15.♗f3

15.♗xg7? fails to 15...♗g8 16.♗h6 ♗g6 (16...♗g4) 17.♗h4 ♗g4 18.♗h6 ♗xf4 19.♘d3 ♗f2!+.

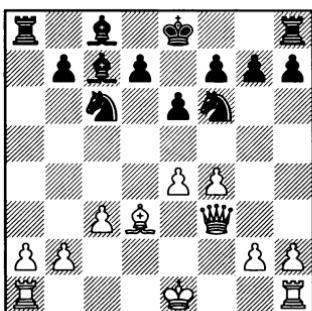
15...♗c7 16.♘d3

16.e5 opens up the main diagonal in Black's favour: 16...♘d5 17.♘c4 ♘ce7 (18.♘d3 0-0 19.0-0 b5 20.♘xb5 ♗b8 21.a4 ♖b6+ 22.♗h1

Rare Lines on 5th and 6th Move

$\mathbb{Q}b7\uparrow$; 18. $\mathbb{Q}b3$ 0-0 19.0-0 b5 20. $\mathbb{Q}c2$
 $\mathbb{Q}b7\infty$) 18.g3 0-0 19.0-0-0, Savicevic-
Rajkovic Srebrno Jezero 2013, 19...
 $\mathbb{Q}a5!$ intending ...b5,... $\mathbb{Q}b7\infty$.

16. $\mathbb{Q}c4$ provokes 16...d5!, which is good enough – 17.exd5 exd5
18. $\mathbb{W}e3+\mathbb{Q}e6$ 19.f5 dxc4∞. However,
16...0-0 17.e5 $\mathbb{Q}e8$ 18.0-0 f6 19. $\mathbb{W}h5$
g6 20. $\mathbb{W}h6$ $\mathbb{Q}g7$ was also pleasant for Black in Alcazar Jimenez-Antoli Royo, Mondariz 2004.



16...e5!

In the current situation 16...b6 runs into 17.e5 $\mathbb{Q}d5$ 18. $\mathbb{Q}e4$ while 16...d5 17.e5 $\mathbb{Q}d7$ 18.0-0 0-0 19.a4 is unclear.

17.f5 0-0 18.g4?!

White can prevent d7-d5 by 18.0-0 $\mathbb{Q}d8$ 19.c4?, but then 19... $\mathbb{Q}b6+$ 20. $\mathbb{Q}h1$ $\mathbb{Q}d4$ gives Black a total domination on the dark squares.

18...d5 19.g5 dxе4 20. $\mathbb{Q}xe4$ $\mathbb{Q}xe4$ 21. $\mathbb{W}xe4$ g6†.

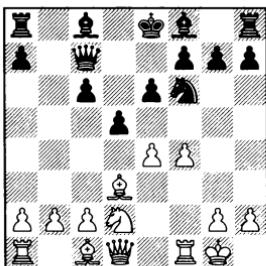
The bishop pair enters the play with decisive effect. White certainly can improve some variations in this analysis, but I like Black's position.

Part 8. Rare Lines on 5th and 6th Move

Complete Games

48. Hou,Yifan-Dzhumaev
Lumpur 11.04.2010

1.e4 c5 2. $\mathbb{Q}f3$ e6 3.d4 cxd4
4. $\mathbb{Q}xd4$ $\mathbb{Q}f6$ 5. $\mathbb{Q}d3$ $\mathbb{Q}c6$ 6. $\mathbb{Q}xc6$
 $bxc6$ 7.0-0 d5 8. $\mathbb{Q}d2$ $\mathbb{Q}c7$ 9.f4



Black can allow c2-c4 – 9... $\mathbb{Q}e7$ 10.e5 $\mathbb{Q}d7$ 11.c4 a5 12. $\mathbb{Q}h1$ g6 13.b3 a4 14. $\mathbb{Q}b2$ 0-0 15. $\mathbb{Q}c1$ $\mathbb{Q}b6\#$, Yap-Andersson, Rome 1985, but the text is perhaps more accurate.

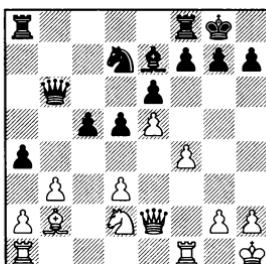
9... $\mathbb{Q}a6$ 10.e5 $\mathbb{Q}d7$ 11. $\mathbb{Q}f3$ $\mathbb{Q}e7$
12.b3

White will have to play this move anyway so 12. $\mathbb{Q}e3$ $\mathbb{Q}b7$ would not change the character of the game. Besides, Black may trade the second bishop, too, with 12... $\mathbb{Q}c5$.

12... $\mathbb{Q}xd3$ 13.cxd3 0-0
14. $\mathbb{Q}b2$?

Hou is still hoping for an attack with f4-f5. To be sure, 14. $\mathbb{Q}e3$ c5 15. $\mathbb{Q}c1$ $\mathbb{Q}b7$ followed up by ...a5-a4 is pleasant for Black, but at least the bishop is not on the semi-open b-file. It is instructive to watch how helpless White looks in this structure.

14...c5 15. $\mathbb{Q}h1$ a5 16. $\mathbb{Q}e2$ $\mathbb{Q}b6$
17. $\mathbb{Q}d2$ a4



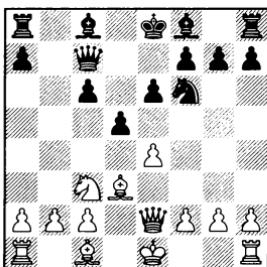
White has made all the “programmed” moves ... and has landed in a gloom position. The following display of activity is just a desperation. Dzhumaev does not give his very talented opponent any tactical chances.

Rare Lines on 5th and 6th Move

18.f5 exf5 19.Qxf5 a3! 20.Qc1
Qe6! 21.Qh5 g6 22.Qh3 Qxe5.
The rest is agony. 23.Qxe5 Qxe5
24.Qf1 Qf6 25.Qb1 Qfe8 26.Qd2
Qg4 27.Qf3 Qd4 28.h4 Qe2
29.b4 Qb8 30.b5 Qb2 31.d4
c4 32.Qb4 Qf2+ 33.Qh2 Qxd4
34.Qxa3 Qe5+ 35.Qg1 Qd3
36.Qd2 Qd4+ 37.Qh2 Qe4
38.Qg3 Qf2+ 39.Qf3 Qxh4
40.g3 Qe7 41.Qa7 Qc5 42.Qa6
Qe5+ 43.Qg2 Qe2+ 44.Qh3
Qf3 45.Qb4 Qg1+ 46.Qh4 Qe4+
47.g4 Qf2+ 48.Qg3 h5 49.Qxg1
Qxg4+ 50.Qh3 Qxg1 51.a4 Qe8
52.Qd6 c3 53.Qc6 Qc4 54.Qxc4
dxc4 55.a5 c2 56.Qf4 Qe3 0-1

49. Martin Perez-Illescas Dos Hermanas 2004

1.e4 c5 2.Qf3 Qc6 3.d4 cd4
4.Qd4 e6 5.Qc3 Qc7 6.Qc6 bc6
7.Qd3 Qf6 8.Qe2 d5?



Black's last move is an instructive mistake. All other reasonable continuations are better, for instance 8...Qe7?! 9.e5 (or 9.0-0

transposing to the game) 9...Qd5 10.0-0 0-0; 8...Qd6?! using that White cannot answer 9.f4.

9.0-0? 9.exd5! cxd5 10.Qb5!
Qb8 11.g3 e5 12.Qf4↑. 9...Qe7
10.b3

This set-up is sluggish and gives Black clear counterplay with a5-a4. 10.f4 0-0 11.Qh1 Qe8 12.Qd2 Qb7 13.Qae1 is more natural, although the same plan as in the game works fine: 13...Qd7 14.e5 (14.Qa4 Qb6) 14...Qc5.

10...0-0 11.Qb2 Qe8 12.Qae1
Qb7 13.e5 Qd7 14.Qb1?!

White is playing as if time in chess were for nothing. b3 is commonly connected with 14.Qa4, when Black responds with 14...Qb6!

14...Qc5 15.Qd2 Qxd3
16.Qxd3 (16.cxd3 a5?) 16...a5
17.c4 a4 18.Qe3 axb3 19.axb3
Qa2?

Black's game is developing by itself. Mundane play led White to a hopeless position thus early in the battle.

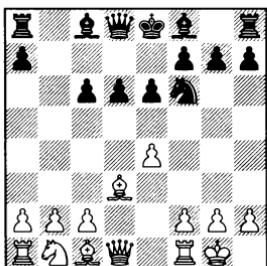
20.Qh3 h6 21.Qc3 Qd8 22.Qb1
Qda8 23.Qf3 c5 24.Qd2 dxc4-
+ 25.Qh6 Qa1 26.Qc2 cxb3
27.Qxb3 Qxf1 28.Qxf1 gxh6
29.Qxh6 Qa1 30.Qe2 Qa6 0-1

Part 8

50. Diez del Corral-Korchnoi Palma de Mallorca 1968

1.e4 c5 2.♘f3 ♘c6 3.d4 cxd4 4.♗xd4 e6 5.♗xc6 bxc6 6.♗d3 ♘f6 7.0-0 d6

This move is no better than 7...d5, but I suspect that it may be more unpleasant to the opponent. Indeed, White usually takes on c6 in order to have a clear-cut plan of a king-side attack. Instead, he will have to brace himself for a positional fight in the centre with the d6-pawn as the prime target.



8.b3 ♘e7 9.♗b2 e5

Against other setups, Black could arrange his pawns differently, for instance he could play ...c5, followed by the manoeuvre ♘f6-d7-b8-c6. Another possibility for Black is to delay disclosing his plans and complete development first. Then ...d6-d5 could be on the agenda again if meanwhile White undertook some dubious manoeuvre.

10.♗d2 0-0 11.♗c4 ♘e6 12.♗e2 ♘d7 13.♗ad1 ♘e8 14.♗d2

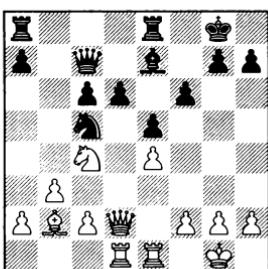
♗c5 15.♗fe1 f6

By bolstering e5, Black prepares d5.

16.♗a5 ♖c7 17.♗c4 ♘c4

17...♗ad8! 18.♗xe6 ♘xe6 would have been fine for Black since 19.c4?! runs into 19...d5 20.cxd5 cxd5 21.exd5 ♘f4??.

18.♗c4



Now Black solves the problem of his "bad bishop" with a little tactical trick:

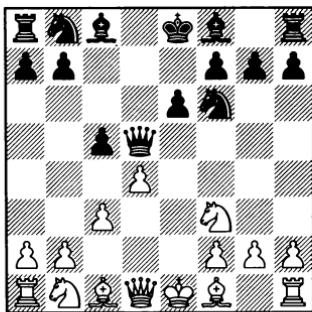
18...♗e4 19.♗e4 d5 20.♗g4 dxc4 21.♗h6 ♘c5 22.♗f6 cxb3 23.axb3 ♘e7 24.♗g5?

White would have had sufficient counterplay with 24.♗f3 ♘f8 25.♗e2 ♘f2 26.♗h1=. Black has an extra pawn, but the need of defending it makes his major pieces too passive. Instead, White suddenly crumbles down.

24...♗f8 25.♗f1 ♖d7 26.♗c4 ♘f2 27.♗h1 ♘ef7 28.♗h5 ♖d2 29.♗c6 ♘b6 0-1

Part 9

Alapin 3.c3 d5



Part 9. 3.c3 d5

Main Ideas

Sveshnikov's pet line with c3 is deservedly considered to be rather timid. You'll hardly see a top-level GM playing it regularly. The main lines are depressively equal and deeply explored. I have always had this problem – how to beat 2200–2300 rated opponents after:

1.e4 c5 2.♘f3 e6 3.c3

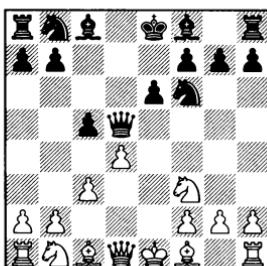
If White played 2.c3, then both 2...♘f6 and 2...d5 3.exd5 ♘xd5 4.d4 ♘f6 5.♘f3 ♘g4 would have offered more chances to complicate White's life. In the German league I even played 2...b6 and 2...d6. On both occasions I failed to equalise in the opening, but I went on to win easily very instructive games.

In *The Safest Sicilian*, I proposed my main repertoire with ...♘f6. It is still a fine choice. After 2008, I developed for my 1900–2300 students a repertoire, based on ...d5. It is easy to play against an isolated pawn. You can learn the basics very quickly. True, there are a number of drawish lines, but winning with Black is not always obligatory...

3...d5 4.exd5

4.e5 ♘c6 5.d4 is a sideline of the French Defence. I analyse in "Step by Step" 4...d4 5.♗d3 ♘d7, planning ..♘c6

4...♛xd5 5.d4 ♘f6



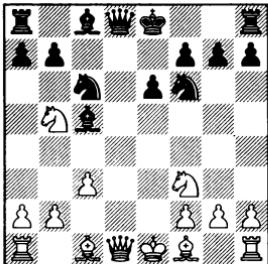
White has many different move orders from this point. You should remember several important points:

1. When to take on d4;
2. When to play ...♘c6 instead of ...♝e7;
3. When and where to retreat the queen from d5;
4. Where to develop the dark-squared bishop.

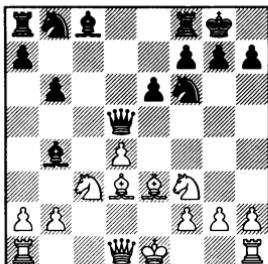
Alapin: 3.c3 d5

The following short lines answer these questions:

A. 6.♘a3 ♘c6! 7.♘b5 (7.♗e2 ♖d8!; 7.♗e3 cxd4!) 7...♖d8 8.dxc5 ♖xc5



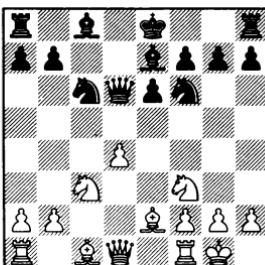
B. 6.♗e3 cxd4 7.cxd4 ♗b4+! 8.♘c3 0-0 9.♘d3 b6



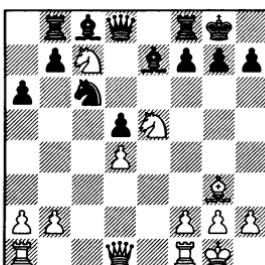
C. 6.♘d3 ♗e7! 7.0-0 0-0! 8.♗e3 cxd4 9.cxd4 b6



D. 6.♗e2 ♘c6 7.0-0 cxd4! 8.cxd4 ♗e7 9.♘c3 ♗d6



I would like to bring your attention to the following important line:
 10.♘b5 ♖d8 11.♗f4 ♘d5 12.♗g3 0-0
 13.♗c4 a6 14.♗xd5 exd5 15.♘c7 ♖b8
 16.♗e5 (which is allegedly better for White according to Sveshnikov)



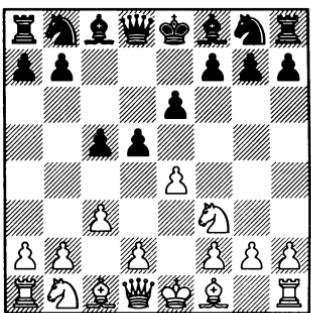
16...♗f5!=.

I did my best to keep the “Step by Step” chapter as succinct as possible. It will provide you with more details on the plans of both sides. Playing 3.c3 d5 does not demand a lot of theory, but you must be prepared for long endgames or IQP positions. In short, the better players are likely to prevail since it is rare to meet crushing novelties.

Part 9. 3.c3 d5

Step by Step

1.e4 c5 2.♘f3 e6 3.c3 d5



4.exd5

I suggest to meet 4.e5 by 4...d4 since the rare French which arises after 4...♘c6 5.d4 might be unfamiliar to you.

Our pawn on d4 is immune since 5.cxd4 cxd4 6.♗b5+ ♔d7 7.♘xd4?! ♕xb5 8.♕xb5 a6 9.♘c3 ♘c6 regains the pawn with an edge – 10.0-0 (10.♔e2 ♘d4; 10.f4? ♘h4+ 11.g3 ♘h3) 10...♘ge7 11.♘a3 ♘xe5 12.d4 ♘c6 13.♘c2 g6!.

Or 5.♘a3 ♘e7! 6.♗d3 ♘g6 7.0-0 ♘d7. So White plays:

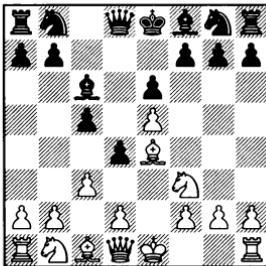
5.♗d3, hoping for ♘e4. I advocate to anticipate this idea with:

5...♗d7! when 6.cxd4 cxd4 7.♘xd4?! (7.0-0! ♘c6 8.♘a3 ♘e7 9.♘c2 ♘d7 10.♘cxd4 ♘xe5 11.♘xc6

♘xf3+ 12.♔xf3 ♘xc6 13.♗e4 ♘c8=) 7...♘c6 8.♘f3 ♘c7 9.♔e2?! does not keep the extra pawn because the c1-bishop is hanging – 9...♘xe5!.

Even more interesting is 6...♗c6! (instead of 6...cxd4). The ♘d3 is hanging so White has nothing better than 7.0-0=.

6.♗e4 ♘c6



7.d3

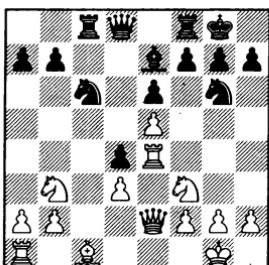
7.♔e2 gives a tempo for development – 7...♘e7 8.d3 (8.0-0 ♘xe4 9.♔xe4 ♘d5! 10.♔xd5 ♘xd5 11.cxd4 cxd4! 12.♘xd4 ♘b4 13.♘c3 ♘d3!=) 8...♘xe4 9.♔xe4 dxc3 10.bxc3 ♘bc6.

7...♘e7 8.0-0. Black has two interesting options here which need testing:

a) 8...♘g6 9.cxd4 (9.♗g5 ♘d7 10.cxd4 cxd4 11.♗bd2 h6 12.♗xg6 fxg6 13.♗h4 ♘a6 14.a3 g5 15.♗g3 ♘c5) 9...cxd4 10.♗e1 ♘e7 11.♗bd2

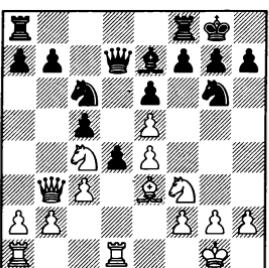
Alapin: 3.c3 d5

0-0 12. $\mathbb{Q}b3$ $\mathbb{Q}xe4$ 13. $\mathbb{Q}xe4$ $\mathbb{Q}c6$
14. $\mathbb{W}e2$ $\mathbb{Q}c8!?$



We'll sacrifice a pawn. The control of the c-file and our active pieces ensure sufficient compensation – 15. $\mathbb{Q}f4$ $\mathbb{W}b6$ 16. $\mathbb{Q}bx d4$ (16. $\mathbb{Q}g3$ $\mathbb{Q}fd8$ 17.h4 a5 18.h5 $\mathbb{Q}f8$) 16... $\mathbb{Q}xf4$ 17. $\mathbb{Q}xf4$ $\mathbb{Q}b4$ 18.a3 $\mathbb{Q}d5$ (18... $\mathbb{W}a6$ 19. $\mathbb{Q}e1$ $\mathbb{Q}c7$ 20. $\mathbb{Q}d1$ $\mathbb{Q}d5$ 21. $\mathbb{Q}g4$ $\mathbb{Q}fc8\infty$) 19. $\mathbb{Q}e4$ $\mathbb{Q}c7$ 20. $\mathbb{W}d2$ $\mathbb{Q}fc8$.

b) 8... $\mathbb{Q}xe4$ 9.dxe4 $\mathbb{Q}bc6$ 10. $\mathbb{W}b3$ $\mathbb{W}d7$ 11. $\mathbb{Q}bd2$ $\mathbb{Q}g6$ 12. $\mathbb{Q}c4$ $\mathbb{Q}e7$ 13. $\mathbb{Q}d1$ 0-0 14. $\mathbb{Q}e3$ is difficult to assess.



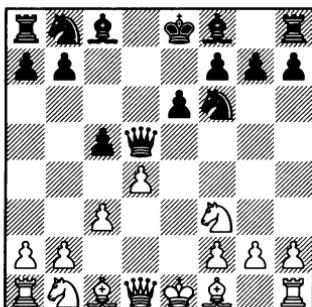
Both 14...d3!? and 14... $\mathbb{Q}h4$ lead to dynamically balanced positions.

4... $\mathbb{W}xd5$ 5.d4

5. $\mathbb{Q}a3$ $\mathbb{Q}f6$ 6.d4 transposes.
6. $\mathbb{Q}b5$ is dubious – 6... $\mathbb{W}d8$ 7.d4 a6.

Sveshnikov mentions that the delay of d4 "might" be in White's favour after 6. $\mathbb{Q}e2$ $\mathbb{Q}e7$ 7.0-0 0-0 8. $\mathbb{Q}b5$, but in fact it is the opposite. Following 8... $\mathbb{W}d8$, White has no other way to justify his strategy, but play 9.a4 $\mathbb{Q}c6$ and, again, 10.d4 is the only sensible continuation.

5... $\mathbb{Q}f6$



White cannot prove in practice any advantage in this system so he has tried nearly all legal moves. I will focus on:

A. 6. $\mathbb{Q}a3$; B. 6. $\mathbb{Q}e3$; C. 6. $\mathbb{Q}d3$ D. 6. $\mathbb{Q}e2$

Rozentalis also employs 6.a3 which is best met by 6... $\mathbb{Q}c6$ 7. $\mathbb{Q}e3$ $\mathbb{Q}e7$ 8. $\mathbb{Q}d3$ (8.dxc5 $\mathbb{W}xd1+$ 9. $\mathbb{Q}xd1$ $\mathbb{Q}g4$) 8...0-0 9.0-0 b6 10. $\mathbb{W}e2$ $\mathbb{Q}b7=$, Rozentalis-Volokitin, AUT 2014. After 11. $\mathbb{Q}d1$, Black can isolate the d4-pawn and follow the tested plans, or keep on the tension with 11... $\mathbb{Q}fd8$.

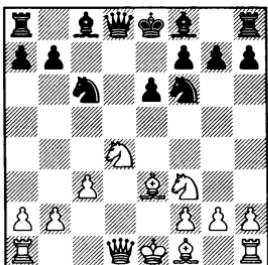
A. 6. $\mathbb{Q}a3$ $\mathbb{Q}c6!$ 7. $\mathbb{Q}b5$

Less popular alternatives are:
a) 7. $\mathbb{Q}e3$ cxd4

Part 9

7... $\mathbb{Q}g4$ is less explored. White commonly prefers to keep the bishop – 8. $\mathbb{Q}g5$ [8. $\mathbb{Q}c4!$? $\mathbb{Q}xe3$ 9.fxe3 $\mathbb{W}d8$ 10.0-0 $\mathbb{Q}e7$; 8. $\mathbb{Q}b5$ $\mathbb{Q}xe3$ 9.fxe3 $\mathbb{W}d8$ 10.d5 exd5 11. $\mathbb{W}xd5$ $\mathbb{Q}e6$ 12. $\mathbb{W}xd8+$ $\mathbb{Q}xd8$ 13.0-0-0+ $\mathbb{Q}c8$ 14. $\mathbb{Q}g5$, Iordachescu-Potkin, Serpuhov 2008, 14... $\mathbb{Q}xa2!$ 15.c4 $\mathbb{Q}b3$ 16. $\mathbb{Q}d5$ $\mathbb{Q}e7$] 8... $\mathbb{Q}d7$ 9. $\mathbb{Q}b5$ (9.h3 $\mathbb{Q}f6$ 10. $\mathbb{Q}d3$ cxd4 11. $\mathbb{Q}b5$ $\mathbb{Q}c8$ 12.0-0 dxc3 13. $\mathbb{Q}xc3$ $\mathbb{W}a5$ 14. $\mathbb{Q}xf6$ gxf6 15. $\mathbb{Q}e1$ $\mathbb{Q}e7$; 9. $\mathbb{Q}e2$ cxd4 10. $\mathbb{Q}b5$ $\mathbb{Q}c8$ 11.cxd4 $\mathbb{Q}b4+$ 12. $\mathbb{Q}c3$ 0-0 13.0-0 $\mathbb{W}a5=$) 9... $\mathbb{Q}c8$ 10.h3 $\mathbb{Q}f6$. Here 11.c4 $\mathbb{Q}e4+$ 12. $\mathbb{Q}e2$ $\mathbb{Q}xd4$ 13. $\mathbb{Q}bxsd4$ cxd4 14.0-0 was equal in Tiviakov-Lenic, Trieste 2008. 11.dxc5 $\mathbb{Q}xc5$ 12. $\mathbb{Q}e3$ $\mathbb{Q}xe3$ 13. $\mathbb{Q}d6+$ $\mathbb{Q}f8$ 14.fxe3 deserves attention although Black neutralises the initiative with 14... $\mathbb{Q}d8$.

8. $\mathbb{Q}b5$ $\mathbb{W}d8$ 9. $\mathbb{Q}bxsd4$



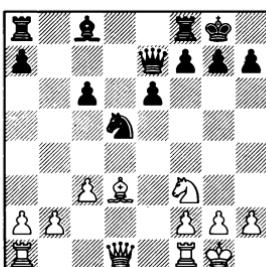
9... $\mathbb{Q}d5!$ (9... $\mathbb{Q}xd4$ 10. $\mathbb{Q}xd4$ $\mathbb{Q}e7$ 11. $\mathbb{Q}d3$ is dangerous) 10. $\mathbb{Q}c4$

10. $\mathbb{Q}xc6$ bxc6 11. $\mathbb{Q}d4$ f6 12. $\mathbb{Q}c4$ $\mathbb{Q}d6$ 13.0-0 0-0 14. $\mathbb{Q}e1$ – Black controls the centre. He has a number of good options: 14... $\mathbb{Q}h8!$? 15. $\mathbb{Q}e3$ $\mathbb{W}c7$ 16. $\mathbb{W}c2$ $\mathbb{Q}d8$; 14... $\mathbb{W}c7$ 15. $\mathbb{Q}b3$ (15. $\mathbb{W}c2$ $\mathbb{Q}h8$ 16. $\mathbb{Q}ad1$ e5 17. $\mathbb{Q}e3$ $\mathbb{Q}e6$ 18. $\mathbb{Q}c1$ $\mathbb{Q}ad8$) 15... $\mathbb{Q}d8$ 16. $\mathbb{W}e2$ e5; 14...e5 15. $\mathbb{Q}e3$ $\mathbb{Q}e6$.

10... $\mathbb{Q}e7$

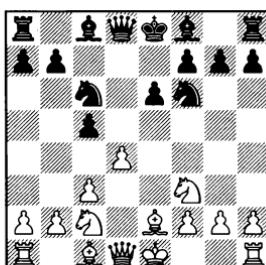
I do not like 10... $f6$, but 10... $\mathbb{W}b6$ is a solid alternative. However, the position after 11. $\mathbb{Q}c4!$ $\mathbb{Q}c5$ 12.0-0 $\mathbb{Q}xd4$ 13. $\mathbb{Q}xd4$ 0-0 (13... $\mathbb{Q}xd4$ 14. $\mathbb{Q}d5$) 14. $\mathbb{Q}xd5$ exd5 15. $\mathbb{Q}b3$ $\mathbb{Q}e6$ 16. $\mathbb{Q}xc5$ $\mathbb{W}xc5$ 17. $\mathbb{Q}e3$, albeit drawish, leaves Black zero winning chances.

11. $\mathbb{Q}xc6$ bxc6 12. $\mathbb{Q}xe7$ $\mathbb{W}xe7$ 13. $\mathbb{Q}d3$ (13. $\mathbb{Q}c4$ 0-0 14.0-0 $\mathbb{Q}b7$ 15. $\mathbb{Q}e1$ $\mathbb{Q}ad8$ 16. $\mathbb{W}c2$ c5=) 13...0-0 14.0-0



Black has a good centre and an excellent knight. He can follow up with 14... $\mathbb{Q}d8$ (14... $\mathbb{Q}f4!$?) 15. $\mathbb{W}a4$ $\mathbb{Q}b8$ 16. $\mathbb{Q}ab1$ c5 when all his pieces will be active.

b) 7. $\mathbb{Q}e2$ $\mathbb{W}d8!$ 8. $\mathbb{Q}c2$



8.0-0 cxd4 9. $\mathbb{Q}b5$ dxc3! (The most testing. 9... $\mathbb{Q}c5$ is balanced

Alapin: 3.c3 d5

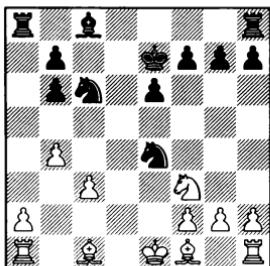
– 10.♕bx d4 ♕xd4 11.♕xd4 0-0.)
 10.♗xd8+ ♖xd8 11.♕g5 ♖e7
 12.bxc3 h6 13.♖a3+ (13.♖d1 ♖d7
 14.♕f3 a6) 13...♖e8 14.♕c7+ ♖d8
 15.♕xa8 hxg5.

8...♗e7 9.0-0 0-0 10.dxc5
 10.♕g5 cxd4 11.♕cx d4 ♖d7
 12.♗e1 ♕xd4 13.♗xd4 ♖c6=.

10...♗xc5 11.♗xd8 (11.♕g5 e5)
 11...♗xd8 12.♗e3 ♗xe3 13.♗xe3 b6=.

7...♗d8 8.dxc5 ♗xc5 9.♗xd8+
 ♖xd8 10.♗f4

a) 10.b4 ♖b6 11.♗d6 (11.♗f4
 11...♖e7 12.♗c4 ♗e4! 13.♗xb6
 axb6

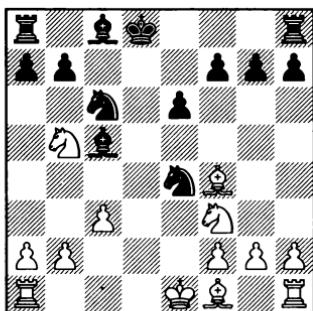


14.b5 (14.♗b2 ♖d8! 15.a3 f6 was slightly better for Black in Lastin-Krasenkov, Dagomys 2008)
 14...♗b8 15.a4 ♗d7 16.♗d2 ♗xd2
 17.♗xd2 ♖d8 18.♗c2 ♗c5 19.♗e3
 ♗a5 20.♗e2 e5=, Grekh-Kononenko, Odessa 2008.

b) 10.♗g5 ♖e7 11.♗d1 h6 12.♗xf6+ (12.♗f4 ♗e4) 12...gx f6=, Landenberger-Matlakov, Rhodes 2013.

10...♗e4!

Sveshnikov wrote in 2010: 'White has not found an advantage yet'. In 2014, that is all the more true. The latest top level game is Predojevic-Carlsen, Lillehammer 2013. It went:



11.♗g5

Or 11.♗d1+ ♖d7

11...♖e7 12.♗bd4 ♕xd4 13.♗xd4
 ♖d8 14.♗d3 ♖f6 15.♗b3 ♖d6=.

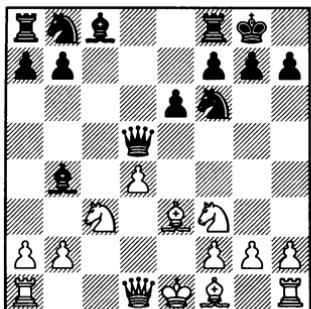
12.♗e3 (12.♗bd4 ♕xd4 13.♗xd4
 e5) 12...♗xe3 13.fxe3 ♖e7 [13...a6
 14.♗bd4 ♖e7 15.♗d3 ♖f6 (15...♗d6=)
 16.0-0 ♖hd8 17.e4 ♗g4 18.♗fe1 f6=,
 Sveshnikov-Balogh, Warsaw 2005]
 14.♗d3 ♖c5 (14...♗f6 15.0-0 ♗g4
 16.♗fe1 ♖ce5 17.♗f1 ♖xb5 18.♗xb5
 ♖hd8=, Schellmann-Kempinski,
 Dresden 2008) 15.♗c2 ♗e5=.

11...♗xg5 12.♗xg5+ f6 13.♗e3
 ♖xe3 14.fxe3 ♖e7 15.0-0-0 ♗e5
 16.♗e2 ♖d7

Predojevic has been following in the footsteps of Baklan (against Sutovsky, Plovdiv 2003). In both games White could not hold the balance!

Part 9

B. 6.♗e3 cxd4 7.cxd4 ♜b4+! 8.♘c3 0-0



9.♘d3

a) 9.♘e2 is passive – 9...♝a5! 10.♗b3 b6 11.♘e5 (11.0-0 ♜a6 12.♘xa6 ♜xa6 13.a3 ♜xc3 14.bxc3 ♜ac8 15.c4 ♜b8 is similar) 11...♝a6 12.♘xa6 ♜xc3+ 13.bxc3 ♜xa6. The hanging pawns are not dangerous because Black has traded two minor pieces. Thus White's chances for an attack are minimal. Radjabov-Ivanchuk, Amber-rapid Nice 2009, went further 14.c4 ♜c8 (14...♝b7 15.0-0 ♜c6=) 15.0-0 ♜c6 16.♗fd1=.

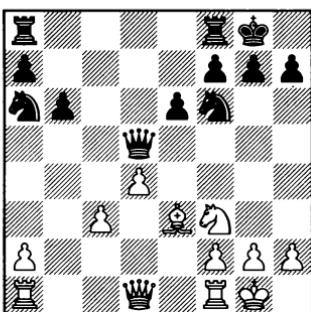
b) 9.a3?! ♜xc3+ 10.bxc3 ♜a5 11.♗c2 (11.♗b3 b6 12.♘e5 ♜a6 13.♗b4 ♜xb4 14.axb4 ♜xf1 15.♗xf1 ♜c8 16.♘d2 ♜c6) 11...b6 12.♘d2! (12.♘d3 ♜a6) 12...♝b7 is more tangled, but White cannot complete development without concessions: 13.♘d3 ♜xf3 14.gxf3 ♜c6 15.0-0 e5; 13.c4 ♜h5 14.♘e2 ♜g6! 15.♗xg6 hxg6 16.0-0 ♜c6=.

9...b6 10.0-0

White can prevent ...♜a6 with 10.♗a4, but the queen will be mis-

placed on the left flank. After 10...♜xc3+ 11.bxc3 ♜b7 12.0-0 ♜bd7 13.♗fb1 ♜fc8 14.♗c2 ♜a5 15.♘d2 ♜xf3 16.gxf3, Black obtained an attack. His knight pair completes well the queen – 16...♝h5 17.♘g2 ♜d5 18.♘a6 ♜c7 19.c4 ♜f6 20.a4 ♜e7, Vlassov-Sutovsky, playchess.com 2003.

10...♜xc3 11.bxc3 ♜a6 12.♘xa6 ♜xa6



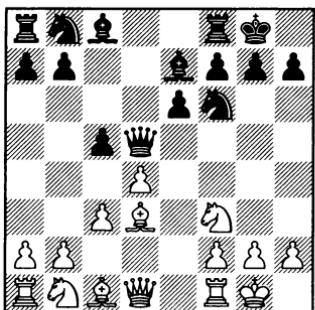
It is easy to play as Black here. White's pawn structure is really "hanging". He should squeeze some dynamic resources out of his pieces while we have the obligatory manoeuvre ...♘a6-b8-c6 and pressure on the c-pawn. Although the engines assess the position as roughly equal, practical experience is in Black's favour. Here are two examples:

13.♗e2 ♜b8 14.c4 ♜e4 15.♘e5 ♜bd7 (15...♘c6=) 16.f3 ♜b7 17.♘xd7 ♜xd7 18.a4 ♜fc8 19.a5 h6 20.♗fc1 ♜c6 21.♗d2 ♜d6 22.♗f4 e5=, Stevic-Grachev, Biel 2011;

13.♗a4 ♜b8 14.c4 ♜d7 15.♗xd7 ♜bxd7 16.a4 ♜ac8 17.♘d2 e5 18.a5 exd4 19.♗xd4 ♜fe8 20.axb6 axb6

21.♗fe1=, Stevic-Wojtaszek, Porto Carras 2011.

C. 6.♗d3 ♜e7! 7.0-0 0-0!



Note that our best move order here is slightly different from the other sixth moves. White develops his pieces more aggressively so we must castle quickly. We are not afraid of the endgame after 8.e4 ♜d7! 9.dxc5 ♜d8 10.♗c2 (10.♗e5 ♜d4 11.♗e2 ♜bd7 12.♗xd7 ♜xd7 13.♗e3 ♜e5 14.♗c3 ♜xc5=) 10...♜xd1 11.♗xd1 ♜xd1+ 12.♗xd1 ♜bd7! 13.c6 (13.b4 a5) 13...bxc6 14.♗c3 ♜b7 15.b3 c5=. Potapov-Hammer, Aix-les-Bains 2011, went on 16.♗f4 ♜e4 17.♗xe4 ♜xe4 18.♗e2 f6 19.♗d1 ♜c6.

**8.♗e3 cxd4 9.cxd4 b6!
10.♗c3 ♜d8!**

Another difference! We are planning ...♗d5 so we should not present a tempo on ♜e4 by retreating to d6.

11.♗c1

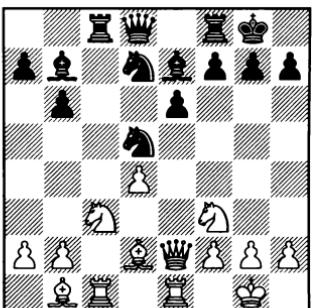
11.♗e2 planning ♜ad1, ♜c1 is more popular, but Black gets comfortable play against the isolated pawn – 11...♝b7 12.♗ad1 ♜d5 13.♗c1 ♜d7 14.a3 (14.♗b1 ♜7f6 15.♗e4 a5 16.♗e5 ♜a6 17.♗xf6+ ♜xf6 18.♗d3 ♜xd3 19.♗xd3 ♜c8=, Pap-Zubarev, Paleochora 2010) 14...♝c8 15.♗e4 h6 16.♗g3 ♜e8 17.♗fe1 ♜f8 18.h4 ♜d6 19.♗a6 ♜xa6 20.♗xa6 ♜xg3 21.fxg3 ♜c7 22.g4 ♜c4=, Kalezic-Malakhov, Budva 2009.

11.♗e5 ♜b7 12.♗e2 is a modification of the above line – 12...♗c6 13.♗ad1 ♜b4 14.♗c4 ♜bd5 15.♗fe1 ♜c8=.

11...♝b7 12.♗b1 ♜bd7 13.♗e2

Or 13.♗d3 ♜xf3 14.gxf3 ♜b8.

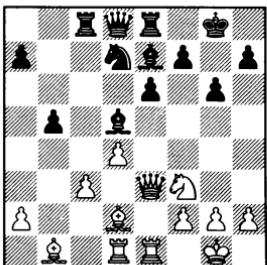
13...♗d5 14.♗d2 ♜c8 15.♗fe1



We have reached an IQP position. The firm control of d5 and comfortable development assure Black of an easy game. Sooner or later we'll have to define the pawn structure with ...♗xc3. Perhaps we should not delay this exchange – 15...♗xc3??. The only game in my database saw in-

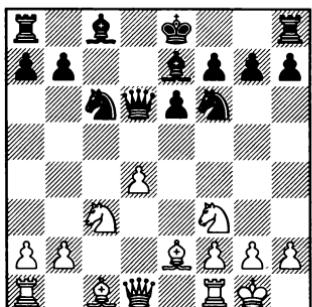
Part 9

stead 15... $\mathbb{E}e8$ 16. $\mathbb{E}cd1$ (16. $\mathbb{W}d3$ $\mathbb{Q}f8$ 17. $\mathbb{Q}e5$ f6 18. $\mathbb{Q}f3$ $\mathbb{W}d7=$) 16... $\mathbb{Q}xc3?$ 17.bxc3 $\mathbb{Q}d5!$ 18. $\mathbb{W}d3$ (18. $\mathbb{Q}d3$ $\mathbb{W}c7$) 18...g6 19. $\mathbb{W}e3$ b5



The transformation from an isolated pawn to a hanging duo c3-d4 is in Black's favour. The latter structure is more passive and easy to attack. 20. $\mathbb{W}f4$ $\mathbb{W}c7$ 21. $\mathbb{W}g4$ $\mathbb{Q}f6$ (Black should seek to trade dark-squared bishops in order to win the c3-pawn. Perhaps more energetic is 21... $\mathbb{Q}d6$ 22.h4 h5 23. $\mathbb{W}h3$ $\mathbb{Q}f4$) 22. $\mathbb{W}h3$ $\mathbb{Q}xf3$ 23. $\mathbb{W}xf3$ $\mathbb{Q}d5$, Malakhov-Zhou, Rapid Ningbo 2010. White cannot organise a dangerous attack without a knight.

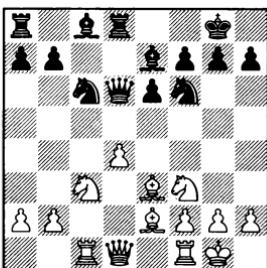
D. 6. $\mathbb{Q}e2$ $\mathbb{Q}c6$ 7.0-0 cxd4 (7... $\mathbb{Q}e7$ 8.c4 $\mathbb{W}d8$ 9.dxc5! gives White a pull) 8.cxd4 $\mathbb{Q}e7$ 9. $\mathbb{Q}c3$ $\mathbb{W}d6$



10. $\mathbb{Q}b5$

a) 10. $\mathbb{Q}g5$ is a typical development when White has a bishop on d3. 10...0-0 11. $\mathbb{E}c1$ (11. $\mathbb{Q}xf6$ $\mathbb{Q}xf6$ 12. $\mathbb{Q}e4$ $\mathbb{W}f4$ 13. $\mathbb{Q}xf6+$ $\mathbb{W}xf6$ 14. $\mathbb{E}c1$ $\mathbb{Q}d8$ 15. $\mathbb{Q}c4$ $\mathbb{Q}d7=$) 11... $\mathbb{Q}d5$ 12. $\mathbb{Q}e4$ (12. $\mathbb{Q}xe7$ $\mathbb{Q}cxe7$ 13. $\mathbb{Q}d3$ b6 14. $\mathbb{Q}e5$ $\mathbb{Q}b7$ 15. $\mathbb{Q}e4$ $\mathbb{W}d8$ 16. $\mathbb{E}e1$ $\mathbb{Q}f4$ 17. $\mathbb{Q}f1$ $\mathbb{Q}f5$ 18. $\mathbb{W}g4$ $\mathbb{Q}g6=$) 12... $\mathbb{W}d8$ 13. $\mathbb{Q}xe7$ $\mathbb{Q}cxe7$ 14. $\mathbb{Q}e5$ b6=.

b) 10. $\mathbb{Q}e3$ 0-0 11. $\mathbb{E}c1$ $\mathbb{Q}d8$



White's bishops are not impressive. That give us time to complete development with ... $\mathbb{Q}d7-e8$ or ...b6, ... $\mathbb{Q}b7$:

b1) 12.a3 b6 13. $\mathbb{Q}b5$ (13. $\mathbb{W}a4$ $\mathbb{Q}b7$ 14. $\mathbb{E}fd1$ $\mathbb{E}ac8$ 15. $\mathbb{Q}e5$ $\mathbb{W}b8$ 16. $\mathbb{Q}f4$ $\mathbb{W}a8$ 17. $\mathbb{Q}f1$ $\mathbb{Q}xe5$ 18.dxe5 $\mathbb{Q}d5$ 19. $\mathbb{Q}xd5$ $\mathbb{Q}xd5=$) 13... $\mathbb{W}d7$ 14. $\mathbb{Q}e5$ $\mathbb{Q}xe5$ 15.dxe5 $\mathbb{Q}d5$ 16. $\mathbb{Q}d2$ $\mathbb{Q}b7=$.

b2) 12. $\mathbb{W}d2$ $\mathbb{Q}d5!$ 13. $\mathbb{Q}e4$ (13. $\mathbb{Q}xd5$ $\mathbb{W}xd5$ 14. $\mathbb{Q}c4$ $\mathbb{W}a5$ 15. $\mathbb{W}e2$ $\mathbb{Q}d7$ 16. $\mathbb{E}fd1$ $\mathbb{Q}e8$ 17.a3 $\mathbb{E}ac8$ 18. $\mathbb{Q}a2$ $\mathbb{Q}f6=$; 13. $\mathbb{E}fd1$ $\mathbb{Q}d7$ 14. $\mathbb{Q}e4$ $\mathbb{W}b8$ 15. $\mathbb{Q}c5$ $\mathbb{Q}e8$ 16.a3 b6 17. $\mathbb{Q}e4$ $\mathbb{Q}a5$ 18. $\mathbb{W}c2$ $\mathbb{E}c8$ 19. $\mathbb{W}d3$ $\mathbb{E}xc1$ 20. $\mathbb{E}xc1$ b5) 13... $\mathbb{W}b4$ 14. $\mathbb{W}c2$, Benjamin-Yermolinsky, Parsippany 1996, 14... $\mathbb{W}b6!$ threatening ...e5!↑.

10... $\mathbb{W}d8$ 11. $\mathbb{Q}f4$

11. $\mathbb{Q}e5$ is an older move which has drifted out of fashion. Black can be only glad to see its knight swapped because exchanges decrease White's attacking potential and the pawn on c6 would bolster the blockade of the isolated pawn. 11...0-0 12. $\mathbb{Q}f3$ (12. $\mathbb{Q}xc6$ bxc6 13. $\mathbb{Q}c3$ $\mathbb{B}b8$ 14. $\mathbb{Q}a4$ $\mathbb{Q}d5$ 15. $\mathbb{W}c2$ $\mathbb{Q}d6$ 16.g3 $\mathbb{W}f6$ 17. $\mathbb{Q}d1$ e5 18.dxe5 $\mathbb{Q}xe5\uparrow$) 12... $\mathbb{W}b6$ 13. $\mathbb{Q}xc6$ (13.a4 a6 14. $\mathbb{Q}xc6$ bxc6 15. $\mathbb{Q}a3$ $\mathbb{Q}b7$ 16. $\mathbb{Q}c4$ $\mathbb{W}c7$ 17. $\mathbb{Q}e3$ $\mathbb{Q}d5$ 18. $\mathbb{Q}c1$ $\mathbb{Q}fc8$ 19. $\mathbb{W}e2$ c5=) 13...bxc6 14. $\mathbb{Q}c3$ $\mathbb{Q}a6$ 15. $\mathbb{Q}e1$ $\mathbb{Q}ad8$ 16. $\mathbb{W}a4$ $\mathbb{Q}xd4$ 17. $\mathbb{W}xc6$ $\mathbb{W}xc6$ 18. $\mathbb{Q}xc6$ $\mathbb{Q}c8\uparrow$.

11... $\mathbb{Q}d5$ 12. $\mathbb{Q}g3$ 0-0!

In my younger years, I played against E.Sveshnikov 12...a6 13. $\mathbb{Q}c3$ 0-0, but there is no urgent need to flap the knight away – yet!

13. $\mathbb{Q}c4$

13. $\mathbb{Q}c1$ $\mathbb{W}b6$ 14. $\mathbb{W}d2$ (14. $\mathbb{Q}c4$ $\mathbb{Q}d7$ 15. $\mathbb{Q}e1$ $\mathbb{Q}fd8$ 16. $\mathbb{Q}c3$ $\mathbb{Q}f6$ 17. $\mathbb{Q}a4$ $\mathbb{W}a5$ 18. $\mathbb{Q}c5$ $\mathbb{W}b6$) 14... $\mathbb{Q}d8$ 15. $\mathbb{Q}fd1$ $\mathbb{Q}d7$ 16. $\mathbb{Q}c3$ (16. $\mathbb{Q}d6$ $\mathbb{Q}xd6$ 17. $\mathbb{Q}xd6$ $\mathbb{Q}xd4$) 16... $\mathbb{Q}ac8=;$

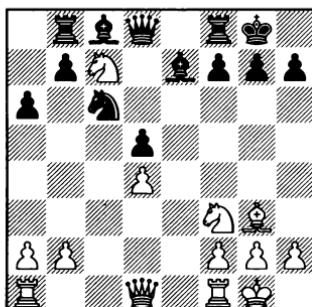
13. $\mathbb{Q}e5$ f5!? 14.h3 f4 with an initiative.

13...a6! 14. $\mathbb{Q}xd5$ (14. $\mathbb{Q}c3$ $\mathbb{Q}xc3$ 15.bxc3 b5 16. $\mathbb{Q}b3$ $\mathbb{Q}b7$) 14... $\mathbb{Q}xd5$

Entering a drawish line. 14...

$\mathbb{axb5}$ 15. $\mathbb{Q}e4$ has been extensively tested. It retains more pieces indeed, but the hole on e5 after 15... $\mathbb{Q}b4$ 16. $\mathbb{W}e2$ f5 17. $\mathbb{Q}b1$ $\mathbb{Q}d5$ 18. $\mathbb{Q}e5$ $\mathbb{Q}d7$ 19. $\mathbb{Q}c2$ $\mathbb{Q}c6$ 20. $\mathbb{Q}b3$ $\mathbb{W}d7$ is not to everyone's taste.

15. $\mathbb{Q}c7$ (15. $\mathbb{Q}c3$ $\mathbb{Q}g4$) 15... $\mathbb{Q}b8$



16. $\mathbb{Q}e5$

The c7-knight can also be saved with 16. $\mathbb{W}b3$ $\mathbb{Q}d6$ 17. $\mathbb{W}xd5$ $\mathbb{Q}xg3$ 18. $\mathbb{W}xd8$ $\mathbb{Q}xd8$ 19. $\mathbb{h}xg3$ $\mathbb{Q}xd4$ and 16. $\mathbb{Q}c1$ $\mathbb{Q}g4$ 17.h3 $\mathbb{Q}xf3$ 18. $\mathbb{W}xf3$ $\mathbb{Q}d6$ 19. $\mathbb{Q}xd5$ $\mathbb{Q}xg3$ 20. $\mathbb{f}xg3$ $\mathbb{Q}xd4=$.

Sveshnikov writes that Black is bound to struggle after the text, but the position is a dead draw, with opposite-coloured bishops:

16... $\mathbb{Q}f5!$ 17. $\mathbb{Q}xa6$

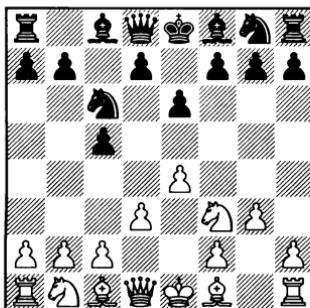
17. $\mathbb{Q}c1$ $\mathbb{Q}b4$ 18.a3 $\mathbb{Q}d6$ 19. $\mathbb{W}b3$ $\mathbb{Q}c2$ 20. $\mathbb{W}e3$ $\mathbb{Q}xc7$ 21. $\mathbb{a}xb4$ $\mathbb{Q}xe5$ 22. $\mathbb{Q}xe5$ $\mathbb{Q}c8$ 23. $\mathbb{W}d2$ $\mathbb{Q}f5$.

17... $\mathbb{Q}c8$ 18. $\mathbb{Q}xc6$ $\mathbb{Q}xc6$ 19. $\mathbb{Q}c5$ $\mathbb{Q}xc5$ 20. $\mathbb{d}xc5$ $\mathbb{Q}xc5$ 21. $\mathbb{Q}e5=$.

Part 10

King's Indian Reversed

1.e4 c5 2. \mathbb{Q} f3 e6 3.d3 \mathbb{Q} c6 4.g3



The idea of 3.d3 is to meet 3...d5 by 4. \mathbb{Q} bd2. This move order allows White to build a King's Indian set-up. In contrast, 3.g3 d5 forces White to take on d5 and play against an isolated pawn. I consider this trendy line in Part 11.

Part 10. King's Indian Reversed

Main Ideas

The typical reasoning behind **1.e4 c5 2.♘f3 e6 3.d3 ♘c6 4.g3** is: “I'm playing the King's Indian Defence where the pawn should stay on e4 instead of e3. So I'll have practically two extra tempi”. It is completely wrong, because we'll not comply and will choose a Sicilian set-up! If White stubbornly persists in delaying d4, he could easily end up with an inferior position right in the opening.

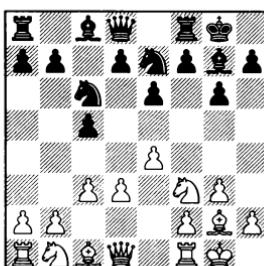


4...♗ge7 5.♗g2 g6 6.0-0

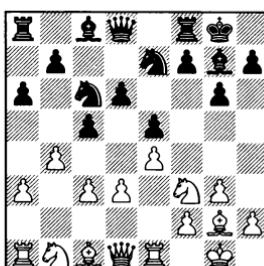
Black commonly meets h2-h4 by ...h6. This insertion is in Black's favour.

6...♗g7 7.c3 0-0

Black's general aim is to get hold of the centre by ...e6-e5 and proceed further with ...f7-f5. At the same time, he has not discarded yet plans with ...d7-d5 which is keeping the enemy in haze. White can expand on the queenside by a3-b4 or gain space in the centre by pushing d4:



A. 8.♗e1 (threatening e5) 8...e5 9.a3 d6 10.b4 a6!



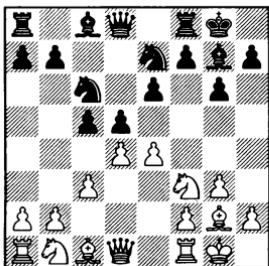
King's Indian Reversed

Do not allow b4-b5! It will be difficult to win such a position as White can blockade the kingside, too. For instance, when we push ...f7-f5-f4, he will defend with h3, g4, ♘h2.

11.♘bd2 h6 12.♗b1 ♖e6!?

Black has completed development and stands well in the centre.

B. 8.d4 d5!?



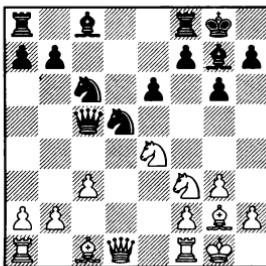
The point here is to delay 8...

cxd4 in order to keep c3 unavailable to White's knight.

9.exd5

Or 9.e5 ♖b6 10.♘a3 (10.dxc5 ♖c7!) 10...cxd4 11.cxd4 f6 12.♗e1 ♖d7, see **game 52** Bologan-Ivanchuk, Moscow 1996.

**9...♘xd5 10.dxc5 ♖a5
11.♘bd2 ♖xc5 12.♘e4**

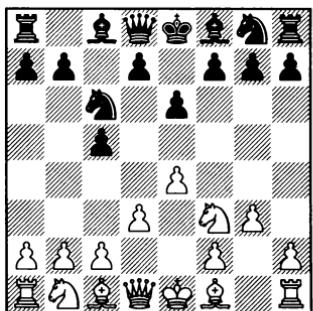


**12...♖e7 13.c4 ♘b6 14.c5 ♘d5
15.♗e1 ♖c7 16.♗b1 b6=.**

Part 10. King's Indian Reversed

Step by Step

1.e4 c5 2.♘f3 e6 3.d3 ♘c6 4.g3



4...♗ge7

White's insipid play also allows early flank activity like 4...b5 5.♗g2 ♗b7, but such treatment is not in the spirit of this book. Common sense and practical experience show that central strategy brings better results, moreover, it is easier to implement on the board.

4...d5 looks consistent. This set-up has numerous adherents, but I do not approve of it. In my opinion, White's play is too easy and straightforward after 5.♗bd2, followed by ♗g2, 0-0, ♜e1, e5, ♘f1, ♜f4, h4, ♘h2(e3)-g4. It is safer to

restrict enemy's options in the centre and on the kingside by fianchettoing the dark-squared bishop.

4...g6 is a reliable move order which commonly transposes to our main line. It allows two variations of independent significance though:

5.d4 cxd4 6.♗xd4 ♗g7! 7.♗b5 d5 8.exd5 exd5 9.♗xd5 ♛e7+ 10.♗e2 ♗g4 with full compensation for the pawn;

5.♗g5 ♛c7 6.♗g2 ♗g7 7.c3 ♘ge7 8.0-0 0-0 9.d4 (9.♗d2 d5 10.♗e1 f6 11.exd5 ♘xd5 12.♗h6 ♜d8 with a good control of the centre) 9...cxd4 10.cxd4 d5 11.e5 h6 12.♗f6 ♜xf6 13.exf6 ♘f5 14.g4 ♘d6 15.♗c1 ♜d8=.

5.♗g2

White may prevent 5...g6 with 5.b3?!, but on b2 the bishop stands worse than on c1 – 5...d5 6.♗e2 (6.♗b2 d4 7.♗bd2 e5) 6...g6 7.♗b2 d4 when 8.e5 ♗g7 9.♗bd2 0-0 10.a4 loses a pawn to 10...♗d5 11.♗c4 ♘xe5.

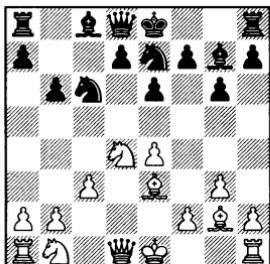
5...g6 6.0-0

King's Indian Reversed

6.d4 cxd4 7.♘xd4 ♜g7 8.♘xc6 bxc6 9.♗d6 is dubious owing to 9...f5!

According to Dvoretsky, it is still early for 6.c3 ♜g7 7.d4 cxd4 8.cxd4 due to 8...♗b6=.

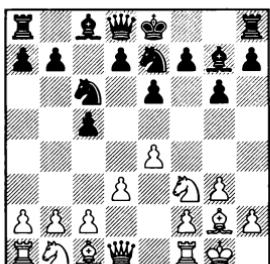
6.c3 ♜g7 7.♘e3!? is an interesting move order. Perhaps Black should accept the challenge by playing 7...b6. Black is threatening ...d7-d5, so White must follow up with 8.d4 cxd4 (8...d5!?) 9.♘xd4. This position is still unclear:



Black has considerable counter-play after 9...♗b7 – **see game53** Grigore-Itkis, Bucharest 2000.

6.h4 is commonly met by 6...h6 which is a useful move anyway.

6...♗ge7



7.c3

7.♗e1 d6 (or 7...e5!?) 8.c3 e5! commits White's rook to e1 too early. Basically it is better placed on f1.

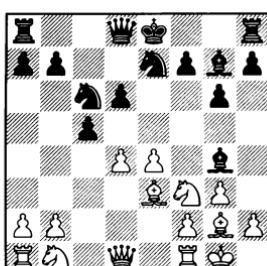
7.♗bd2 0-0 8.♗h4?! d5 9.f4 can quickly turn the tables in Black's favour because the only threat of White, g4, is easily parried by ...f5, while the queenside activity of Black (...b6, ...a5, ...♗a6, ...♗a7 or ...♗b8, ...b5) should gradually prevail.

7...0-0

Black's general aim is to get hold of the centre by ...e6-e5 and proceed further with ...f7-f5 or ...d6-d5. That would be possible if White delayed d3-d4, which is not dangerous, but significantly changes the character of play. Black is unable to prevent the central break-through, but it is up to him to decide what type of position to get after it.

If you are looking for clear play with less risks, you better choose:

7...e5!?. Then 8.♗e3 d6 9.d4 exd4 10.cxd4 ♜g4 reduces the tension to a roughly equal position:



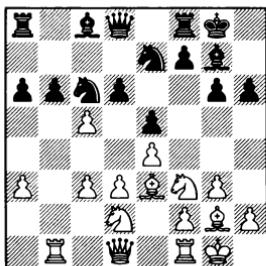
11.dxc5 (11.d5 ♜xf3 12.♗xf3 ♘d4=, Filipovic-Markus, Zadar

Part 10

2003) 11...dxc5 12.♗bd2 (12.♗c3 ♗d4!=, e.g. 13.♔a4 ♗ec6 14.♗xd4 cxd4 15.e5 dxe3 16.♗g4 exf2+ 17.♘xf2 0-0=) 12...b6 13.♗b1 0-0 14.a3 ♗d4!? 15.♗d4 (15.b4? ♗b5=) 15...cd4= Koskela-Zhukova, Istanbul 2003.

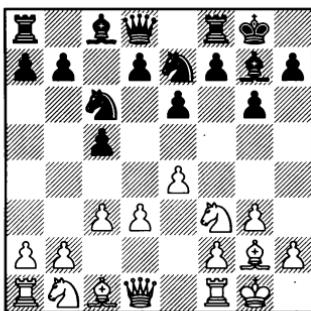
In his book *How to Beat the Sicilian Defence*, G. Jones actually shows how White can fight for equality in this line. He suggests:

8.a3 (instead of 8.♗e3) 8...d6 9.b4 a6 10.♗e3 b6 11.♗bd2 0-0 12.♗b1 h6 13.bxc5



I reached this position in one of my games. Black pieces are well placed, the centre is in my control, but White can probably maintain the balance after 13...dxc5 (Jones considers only 13...bxc5?!) 14.♗c4 ♘b8 (perhaps I should have tried the sharper 14...b5?! 15.♗b2 ♖d6 16.♗d2 ♘a5 17.f4 exf4 18.gxf4 ♘b7 19.e5 ♖c7 20.♗e4∞) 15.a4 and the game Reyes Larena-Delchev, Benidorm 2007 ended in a draw after 15...♗e6 16.♗c2 ♖c7 17.♗fe1 ♘fd8 18.♗fd2 b5 19.axb5 axb5 20.♗b2 ♘a5 21.c4 bxc4 22.♗bxc4 ♘xc4 23.♗xc4 ♘f8 24.♗xb8 ♘xb8 25.♖c1 ♘xc4 26.♖xc4 ♘c6 27.♗cl.

7...0-0 is flexible, but allows White to seize and hold the centre. The resulting positions are double-edged, with plenty of chances for the better player. White's main continuations are:



A. 8.♗e1; B. 8.♗d4

He has also tried:

a) 8.♗e3 b6 9.d4 is another version of the plan of line B. White wins a tempo on ♗e3, but on the other hand, the bishop is not well placed there. After ...♗f5, it should move elsewhere because Black would solve all his problems if he managed to trade it. Then ...b7-b6 could turn to be just a present from White's side. 9...d5 10.e5 ♘f5 11.♗g5 f6=.

b) 8.♗a3 e5 9.♗c4 d6! 10.a4 h6 11.♗d2 is extremely passive. In the game Sakaev-Rublevsky, St. Petersburg 2001, Black had the initiative after 11..f5 12.exf5 ♘xf5 13.♗e2 ♖d7 14.♗h4 ♘g4 15.f3 ♘e6 16.f4 exf4 17.gxf4 d5. Moutousis-Rogozenco, Debrecen 1992, also developed in Black's favour after 11...

King's Indian Reversed

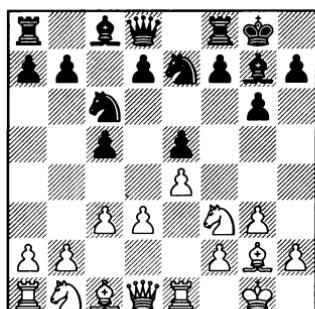
$\mathbb{Q}e6$ 12.b4 $\mathbb{W}d7$ 13.a5 f5 14. $\mathbb{W}e2$ cxb4 15.exf5 $\mathbb{Q}xf5=.$

c) 8. $\mathbb{Q}bd2$ is similar to 8. $\mathbb{Q}a3$. Black has many good possibilities. He can choose the flexible 8...d6, planning ...b5, ...b4 and ...f5. My game Pace-Delchev, Lugano 2007, went 9. $\mathbb{E}e1$ e5 10.a4 h6 11. $\mathbb{E}b1$ a6 12.b4 cxb4 13.cxb4 b5. My pieces are more active.

A. 8. $\mathbb{E}e1$

The only reason behind this move is to provoke e5, which is on Black's agenda anyway! I consider it in detail because it is surprisingly popular.

8...e5



9.a3

9. $\mathbb{Q}a3$ d6 10. $\mathbb{E}e3$ b6 11. $\mathbb{W}d2$ has been tested at highest level in Bruzon-Topalov, Wijk aan Zee 2005. White's idea is to trade dark-squared bishops and open the centre with d4. Topalov decided to

prevent it with 11... $\mathbb{Q}g4$ 12.h3 $\mathbb{Q}xf3$ 13. $\mathbb{Q}xf3$ $\mathbb{W}d7$ 14. $\mathbb{Q}g2$ f5 15.exf5 gxf5 with unclear position. All Black's pieces are well placed and co-ordinated. The more conservative 11...f5 yields good results, though.

9. $\mathbb{Q}bd2$ d6 often transposes to the other lines. In the game Udovcic-T. Petrosian, Zagreb 1970, White attempted to hinder plans with ...f5 by 10. $\mathbb{Q}f1$ h6 11. $\mathbb{Q}e3$ $\mathbb{Q}e6$ 12. $\mathbb{Q}h4$, when 12...d5! 13. $\mathbb{W}f3$ d4= allowed Black to gain space in the centre.

9...d6

Another good plan is to prevent b4 by 9...a5. White answers 10.a4 d6 11. $\mathbb{Q}a3$ h6 and Black is ready for d5 or f5, for example, 12. $\mathbb{Q}b5$ d5=.

10.b4 a6!?

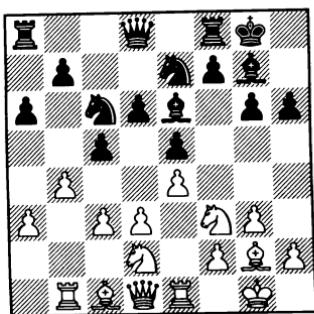
10...b6 allows 11.b5 $\mathbb{Q}a5$ 12.c4 with a closed position which would be difficult to break. In the game Grischuk-Najer, Moscow 2014, White chose the double-edged 11. $\mathbb{Q}bd2$ $\mathbb{Q}e6$ 12. $\mathbb{Q}g5$ $\mathbb{Q}d7$ 13. $\mathbb{Q}c4$ h6 14. $\mathbb{Q}f3$ $\mathbb{Q}e6$ 15. $\mathbb{Q}d2$ b5 16. $\mathbb{Q}e3$ when 16... $\mathbb{E}b8$ would have equalised.

11. $\mathbb{Q}bd2$ h6

We can try a little provocation – 11... $\mathbb{Q}e6$!. Then 12. $\mathbb{Q}g5$ $\mathbb{Q}c8$ 13. $\mathbb{Q}c4$ b5 14. $\mathbb{Q}e3$ h6 15. $\mathbb{Q}f3$ $\mathbb{Q}e6$ would be fine – 16. $\mathbb{Q}d2$ a5. However, White can transpose to the main line with 12. $\mathbb{E}b1$ h6!?.

12. $\mathbb{E}b1$ $\mathbb{Q}e6$!?

Part 10



After this novelty, I do not see any sensible plan for White. 13.♗b2 (preparing d4) 13...b5 14.♗b3 ♖b6 was pleasant for Black in Torre-Gheorghiu, Manila 1973. 13.♗b3 c4 gives a good version of an open Sicilian while 13.♘c2 ♘b8 (or 13...b6) again passes the move to White.

B. 8.d4 d5!

Practical experience has seen Black struggling after 8...cx4d 9.cxd4 d5 10.e5 f6 11.♗e1. White's knight finds a good stand on c3, parrying enemy counterplay on the c-file. The text is aimed against that possibility.

9.exd5

9.e5 ♖b6 hinders the normal development of the enemy queenside. White has tried without success three moves here:

10.dxc5 ♖c7! 11.♗f4 ♗xe5
12.♗xe5 ♖xe5 13.♗xe5 ♖xe5=;

10.b3 ♘d7 11.♗a3 cxd4 12.cxd4
♗fc8 13.♗c5 (13.♗c3 ♘b4 14.♗d2 a5
15.♗fc1 ♘f8 16.♗f1 ♘f5↑, Abergel-
Kveinys, Cappelle la Grande 2003)
13...♖d8 14.♗e1 ♘f5, Bravo Lutz-Sv.

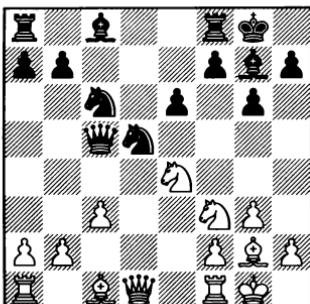
Mladenov, Schwaebisch Gmuend 2014;

10.♗a3 cxd4 11.cxd4 f6 12.♗e1
♘d7 13.♗b1 (13.exf6 ♖xf6) 13...♗ac8
14.♗f4 fxe5 15.dxe5 ♘f4!? 16.gxf4
♗b4 17.♗b3 ♘f8∞, see **game 52**
Bologan-Ivanchuk, Moscow 1996.

9...♗xd5 10.dxc5 ♖a5
11.♗bd2

11.c4 runs into 11...♗db4 12.♗e2
♗d8 13.♗e3 ♘d3 14.♗c3 ♘b2!

11...♖xc5 12.♗e4



12...♖e7

My suggestion from *The Safest Sicilian*, 2008 – 12...♖a5 is still valid:

a) 13.♗e2 ♖c7 14.♗d1 (14.c4
♗f6 15.♗c3 e5 16.♗g5 ♘e6=) 14...b6
15.♗b1 (15.a4 ♘b7) 15...h6 16.c4 ♘a6
17.b3 ♘ad8 leads to double-edged
play (18.♗b2 e5).

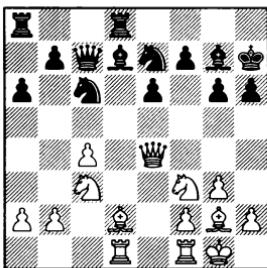
In 2014, I can add that 13...♖c7
could be saved – 13...b6!? 14.c4 ♘a6
15.♗d2 ♖a4 16.b3 ♖a3 17.♗c1 ♖e7
18.♗b2 e5 19.♗ad1 ♘ad8∞.

b) 13.♗g5 h6 14.♗d2 ♖c7 15.c4
♗de7 16.♗c3 a6! 17.♗e1 ♘d8 18.♗c1

King's Indian Reversed

Qh7= , Zhang Zhong-Rublevsky, Poikovsky 2004.

G. Jones offers as an improvement 17. Wc1 Qh7 18. Wc2 Qd8 19. Qad1 Qd7 20. We4 'and White can return to attacking on the kingside'.



Jones' statement must be a joke since Black has more pawns on the kingside and only he can attack there. After 20... Qe8 (ensuring the d4-square), White's alleged attack might be launched (and stopped) with 21. Wh4 Qf5 , or 21. h4 Qg8 (21... $\text{Qac8}?$ wins a pawn – 22. h5 Qa5 23. hxg6+ Qxg6=).

Black has active play in this line. In many variations, the queen returns home so it may be a better idea to put it there at once. The game might continue:

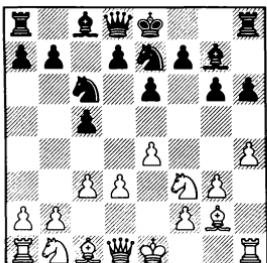
13. c4 Qb6 14. c5 Qd5 15. Re1 Wc7 16. Rb1 b6=.

Part 10. King's Indian Reversed

Complete Games

51. Kindermann-Volokitin Bundesliga 2003

1.e4 c5 2.♘f3 e6 3.d3 ♘c6
4.g3 ♘ge7 5.♗g2 g6 6.h4 h6 7.c3
♗g7



8.0-0

The combination of 6.h4 with 8.0-0 looks strange. White only weakens the g4-square and his castling position. I do not see what he achieves in return. Black commonly plays ...h6 anyway. 8.♗e3 d6! 9.♗d2 is a more consistent attempt to draw benefits from 6.h4, but 9...e5 10.♘a3 ♘e6 leads White to an impasse. 11.0-0-0 is rather risky (apart from losing the a2-pawn). 11.d4 exd4 12.cxd4 d5 is also dubious so

White can castle short 11.0-0, when 11...f5↑ earns Black the initiative, despite the uncastled king.

8...e5

8...0-0 might be even better. Then 9.♗e1 (an attempt to improve on Harikrishna-Navara, Dagomys 2008 which saw 9.d4 d5!) 9...e5 10.♗e3 b6 11.♗d2 ♘h7 12.d4 exd4 13.cxd4 d5! was slightly better for Black in Maze-Navara, Caleta 2014.

9.a3

Or 9.♗e3 d6 10.a3 (10.♗d2 ♘g4 11.♘a3 h5 12.♘c2 0-0 13.d4 exd4 14.cxd4 d5 15.exd5 ♘xd5 16.♗g5 ♗d6 draw, Minasian-M.Gurevich, New Delhi/Teheran 2000) 10...0-0 11.b4 b6 12.b5 ♘a5 13.c4 ♘e6 14.♘c3 f5∞, Minasian-M. Gurevich, New Delhi/Theran 2000.

**9...0-0 10.b4 b6 11.b5 ♘a5
12.c4 d6 13.♘h2!**

The break ...f7-f5 is looming so White tries to organise his king-

King's Indian Reversed

side's defence. The march of the black f-pawn should be prevented at all costs.

13... $\mathbb{A}e6$ 14.h5



14...f5?

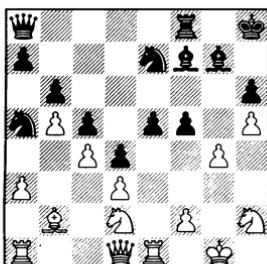
Every coach warns his pupils against hasty decisions and premature attacks. Black needed only one tempo to finish his preparation for a direct action. After 14... $\mathbb{A}b8$? 15. $\mathbb{Q}c3$ f5 16.hxg6 f4→, his position would have been very promising. Instead, he sacrifices the exchange. The problem is that White's castling position cannot be seized by an assault on the weakened light squares. Black needs open files and rooks to use them.

**15.exf5 gxf5 16. $\mathbb{A}xa8$ $\mathbb{W}xa8$
17. $\mathbb{Q}b2$ d5?!**

Black is nervous because the opponent is already threatening f4. However, this move only deprives Volokitin of future counterplay against the c4-pawn (and weakens e5), so he should have kept it for reserve. 17... $\mathbb{W}e8$ 18.f4 $\mathbb{Q}f7$ 19. $\mathbb{Q}d2$ $\mathbb{Q}h5$ 20. $\mathbb{W}e1$ ± is in White's favour,

too. Perhaps 17...f4 18.g4, counting on the closed character of the position, is the best practical chance, but it is difficult to admit a mistake...

**18. $\mathbb{E}e1$ d4 19. $\mathbb{Q}d2$ $\mathbb{Q}f7$ 20.g4!±
 $\mathbb{Q}h8$**



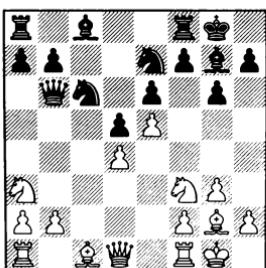
White launched a counter-attack and his chances are clearly better. Now 21. $\mathbb{W}f3$?! $\mathbb{W}e8$ 22. $\mathbb{W}g3$ $\mathbb{E}g8$ 23. $\mathbb{E}e5$ would have been promising. The rest of the game is entertaining, but irrelevant to the opening.

**21.gxf5 $\mathbb{W}e8$ 22. $\mathbb{W}g4$ $\mathbb{Q}h5$
23. $\mathbb{W}h3$ $\mathbb{E}f5$ 24. $\mathbb{Q}e4$ $\mathbb{Q}g6$ 25. $\mathbb{Q}g3$
 $\mathbb{E}f7$ 26. $\mathbb{Q}ad1$ $\mathbb{Q}f5$ 27. $\mathbb{Q}e4$ $\mathbb{W}e7$
28. $\mathbb{Q}c1$? $\mathbb{Q}h4$ 29.f4 $\mathbb{Q}h5$ (Or
29...exf4 30. $\mathbb{Q}g4$ $\mathbb{Q}xc4$! 31.dxc4
 $\mathbb{Q}xe4$ 32. $\mathbb{Q}xe4$ $\mathbb{W}xe4$ 33. $\mathbb{W}h4$ $\mathbb{W}g6$
34. $\mathbb{Q}h1$ f3+) 30. $\mathbb{Q}d2$ exf4 31. $\mathbb{Q}f2$
f3? 32. $\mathbb{Q}d2$ $\mathbb{W}d8$ 33. $\mathbb{Q}xa5$ bxa5
34. $\mathbb{Q}c5$ ± $\mathbb{W}g5$ 35. $\mathbb{Q}h1$ $\mathbb{Q}f5$ 36. $\mathbb{Q}e4$
 $\mathbb{W}h4$ 37. $\mathbb{W}xh4$ $\mathbb{Q}xh4$ 38.c5 $\mathbb{Q}g6$
39.c6 $\mathbb{Q}e5$ 40. $\mathbb{Q}g4$ $\mathbb{Q}f4$ 41. $\mathbb{Q}c2$
 $\mathbb{Q}g2$ 42. $\mathbb{Q}xg2$ fxg2+ 43. $\mathbb{Q}xg2$
 $\mathbb{E}g7$ 44. $\mathbb{Q}f3$ $\mathbb{E}f7$ 45. $\mathbb{Q}g2$ Suddenly White starts repeating the moves.
45. $\mathbb{Q}ef6$ $\mathbb{Q}e3$ 46. $\mathbb{Q}g3$ is probably winning, without risks at that.
45... $\mathbb{E}g7$ 46. $\mathbb{Q}f3$ $\mathbb{E}f7$ 47. $\mathbb{Q}g2$
Draw.**

Part 10

52. Bologan-Ivanchuk Moscow 1996

1.e4 c5 2.♘f3 e6 3.d3 ♘c6
4.g3 g6 5.♗g2 ♗g7 6.0-0 ♘ge7
7.c3 0-0 8.d4 d5! 9.e5 ♖b6
10.♘a3 (10.dxc5 is met by 10...♗c7)
10...cxd4 11.cxd4



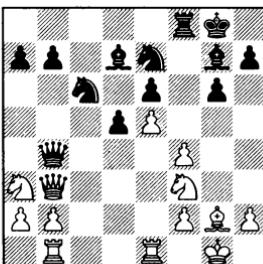
11...f6

Ivanchuk is persistently rasping at the enemy centre. If he chose a flank strategy like 11...♘b4, ...a5, ...♗d7, he would risk to see his initiative evaporate at some point. Then White's supremacy on the kingside might prevail. Ivanchuk prefers to fight for every inch of the centre. The mere fact that Black is able to choose between two tempting plans shows that he has solved the opening problems.

12.♗e1 ♘d7 13.♗b1 ♗ac8
14.♗f4 fxe5 15.dxe5 ♖xf4!?

15...♘b4 16.♗d2 a5 (16...♗xa2?
17.♗a1 ♖f4 18.gxf4±) was a good option too, but Ivanchuk grasps the chance of annihilating the enemy central pawns.

16.gxf4 ♖b4 17.♗b3 ♖f8±



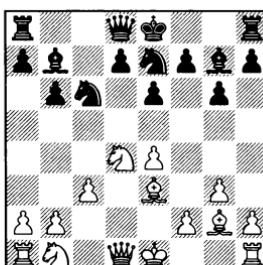
18.♗bc1?!

White is already on the defensive. He should have avoided doubled pawns by 18.♗e3. From now on Black is in total control and does not leave any chance to the opponent.

18...♖xb3 19.axb3 ♖xf4+ and Black went on to win 50 moves later 0-1

53. Grigore-Itkis Bucharest 2000

1.e4 e6 2.d3 c5 3.g3 ♘c6 4.♗g2
g6 5.c3 ♘g7 6.♗e3 b6 7.♗f3 ♘ge7
8.d4 cxd4 9.♗xd4 ♘b7



After 9...♘a6 10.♗a4, the bishop should retreat to b7 anyway.

King's Indian Reversed

10.f4

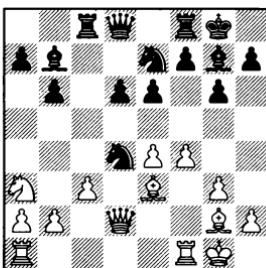
White could try to hinder the opponent's development with 10.0-0 0-0 11.♘xc6 ♘xc6 12.♗d6. Then 12...♝e8 13.♘d2 ♜b8 14.♘c4± maintains White's spatial advantage. In Nijboer-Sakaev, Elista 1998, Black came to the plan with f7-f5, but started with 12...♝e8. It may turn to be a waste of time since after 13.♘d2 f5 14.f3 Sakaev found nothing better than repelling the queen by 14...♘c8. I suppose that 12...♘c8 13.♗d2 f5∞ should be better. If White's left the d2-square free for his knight with 13.♗d3, then 13...d5 equalises.

10...0-0 11.0-0 ♘c8

Black is playing by "general considerations". That is not *a priori* bad, but he had a more concrete approach like 11...♘xd4!? 12.♘xd4 e5 (or perhaps 12...♘xd4 13.♗xd4 d5

14.e5 ♘f5=) 13.♗xe5 ♘xe5 14.fxe5 ♘c6. The arising position is tangled and double-edged. 15.♗d6 ♘e8 16.♘a3 ♘a6 17.♗f2 ♘xe5∞.

12.♘a3 d6 13.♗d2 ♘xd4



14.cxd4?

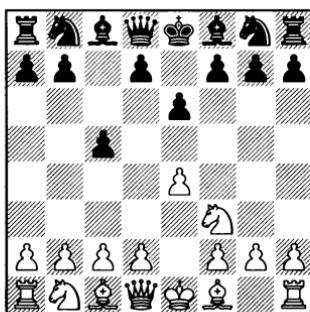
14.♘xd4 e5 15.fxe5 would have been equal.

14...f5+ 15.e5 ♘xg2 16.♗xg2
♘d5 17.♗f2 dxe5 18.dxe5 ♗d7
19.♘ac1 ♘a4 20.♗f3 g5 21.fxg5
♘xe5 22.♗e2 ♘e4 23.♗xe4 fxe4
24.♘c4 ♘g7 25.a4 ♘b4 26.b3
♘d5 27.♘e3 0-1

Part 11

Rare Lines on Move 3

1.e4 c5 2. \mathbb{Q} f3 e6



- A. 3.b4
- B. 3.b3
- C. 3.c4
- D. 3. \mathbb{Q} c3
- E. 3. \mathbb{W} e2
- F. 3.g3

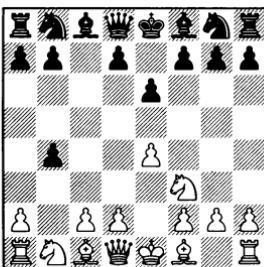
Part 11. Rare Lines on Move 3

Main Ideas

In this chapter, I'll try to arm you against different "rare" lines which are not that rare at lower level. I'm sure that any devoted Sicilian player is only too happy to see White deviating from the main lines. Still, some variations could be tricky and quite embarrassing if you do not know how to face them. Another problem when studying them is that most of the games in the database are between low rated players and only tend to obscure things instead of providing a clue. I think that it is unproductive to spend much time on rare lines, so I'll choose for you some essential information which should be enough. Have in mind that in most variations Black has other good options (unlike in the main lines where many moves are critical!). If you are used to another line and like it, stay with it.

I examine six different systems in one chapter, but the only thing that they have in common is that Black is fine without too much effort. Otherwise they should be treated separately.

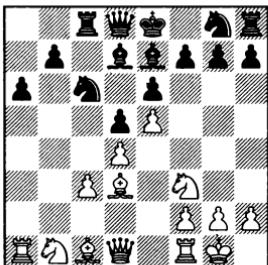
A. 3.b4 cxb4



If you feel unhappy to defend with an extra pawn for some initiative, you should look at **game 57** S.Williams-Delchev, London 2013 which featured 3...b6!?. I recommend you to grab the gift, because this version of the Sicilian Gambit is not too dangerous for Black. White has committed his knight to f3 and that deprives him of two important attacking plans. The one is linked with the exchange sacrifice $\mathbb{Q}a3$ which is pointless here. The knight is barring the third rank, it is pointless. The knight on f3 is impeding also his queen in its longing for the kingside and especially the square g4.

Rare Lines on Move 3

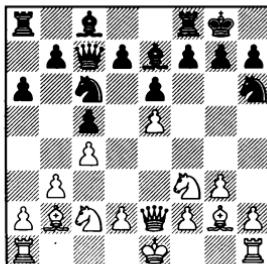
4.a3 d5 5.e5 ♜c6 6.axb4
♜xb4 7.c3 ♜e7 8.d4 ♜d7 9.♗d3
♝c8 10.0-0 a6



You must watch out here for c3-c4, for instance, meet 11.♗bd2 by 11...♝a5!..

6...♛f6! 7.c3 ♜c5 pinning the d4-knight.

5...♛c7 6.g3 ♜f6 7.e5 (7.♗c3
♝b8? 8.♗g2 b5=) 7...♝g4 8.♛e2
♝h6 9.♗a3 ♜e7 10.♗c2 0-0
11.♗g2



11...b5! 12.0-0 bxc4 13.♛xc4
a5=.

B. 3.b3

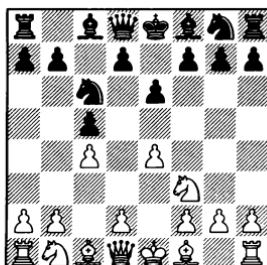


White hopes to gain a spatial advantage by pushing e5. Another idea is to swap the light-squared bishop via b5 and play a hedgehog structure after c4. In that event White's position would be very solid. I propose to deprive the opponent of both positional "threats". At least he will feel unhappy...

3...a6!? 4.♗b2 ♜c6 5.c4!?

5.d4 cxd4 6.♗xd4 stumbles into

C. 3.c4 ♜c6



White's "secret" thought is to enter hedgehog structures without having to lose tempi on manoeuvres like ♜f3-d4-b5-a3 as considered in Part 7. His "little" problem is that if he does not push d4 at once, he'll never be able to achieve it, because we'll close the centre with 4...e5!. And if he does play 4.d4, the pressure on the e4-pawn will force him

Part 11

to fetch another black pawn toward the centre: 4.d4 cd4 5.Qd4 Qf6 6.Qc3 Qb4 7.Qc6 bc6 8.Qd3 e5! followed up by ...Qxc3 and ...d6.

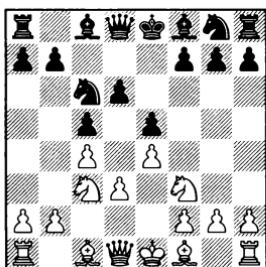
4.Qc3 e5!

This move challenges the fundamental principle of quick development in the opening. It is all the more provoking when played by the second player who practically lags two tempi behind the enemy. Yet most good players prefer it! There are two reasons for that:

1. 4...Qf6 5.Qe2! gives White some initiative.

2. 4...e5 is not dubious at all! In positions with closed centre the only reasonable plan is a flank breakthrough and White's knight on f3 is an obstacle before the f-pawn. That allows Black to fight for the initiative with an early ...f7-f5. The arising positions are strategic and the better player usually outplays the opponent.

5.d3 d6



Black pushes ...f5 and gets good counterplay. He can develop the dark-squared bishop to e7 or g7. See

game 56 Leventic-Delchev, Zadar 2004.

D. 3.Qc3

This continuation is often used by White to sidestep rare move orders, for instance 3.d4 cxd4 4.Qxd4 Qb6.

3...Qc6 4.Qb5

White's last move initiates a strange hybrid between different systems, which is amazingly popular lately.

4...Qd4!



5.0-0

Or 5.Qc4 Qf6! 6.0-0 a6! 7.a4 Qc7. Black is following the normal Sicilian ways of development. When White plays d3, he retreats the knight to c6 with good play.

5...a6 6.Qd3 Qc6!?

A funny position. Both sides have lost tempi aiming mostly at hindering enemy's plans. It seems to me that White is outwitted. He cannot

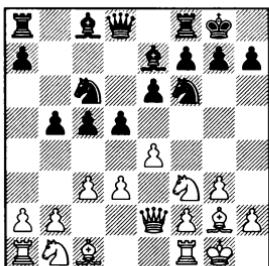
Rare Lines on Move 3

even transpose to the main open Sicilian lines because 7... $\mathbb{A}e2$ could be challenged again by 7... $\mathbb{Q}d4!?$.

7. $\mathbb{A}e1$ g5!

The flank attack is perfectly grounded here. The rook move prepared $\mathbb{A}f1$ and d4, but deprived the f3-knight of any retreat square. Black comfortably finishes development after 8.g3 d6 9.b3 $\mathbb{A}g7$ 10. $\mathbb{A}b2$ h6 11. $\mathbb{A}f1$ $\mathbb{Q}ge7=$, Souleidis-Bousios, Halkidiki 2002.

E. 3. $\mathbb{A}e2$ $\mathbb{Q}c6$ 4.c3 d5! 5.d3 $\mathbb{A}f6$ 6.g3 $\mathbb{A}e7$ 7. $\mathbb{A}g2$ 0-0 8.0-0 b5=.

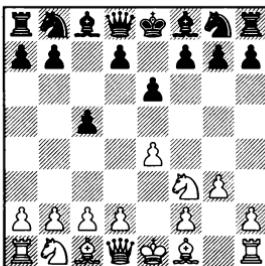


The c3-pawn provides a good target to attack.

F. 3.g3!?

This is a very trendy line. I also choose it occasionally. It is still at

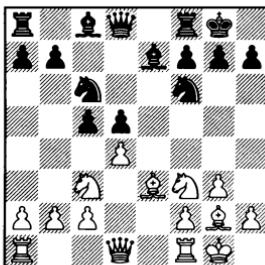
an early stage of development and there is not written theory so Black is at his own. The only serious way to exploit White's tricky move order is:



3...d5!? 4.exd5 (4.d3 dxе4)
4...exd5 5.d4 (5.Qg2 Qe7+!) 5...
 $\mathbb{Q}f6!$ 6.Qg2 $\mathbb{Q}e7$ 7.0-0 0-0 8.Qc3

8.Qe3 cxд4 (8...Qg4?! 9.dxc5)
9.Qxd4 Qg4!

8... $\mathbb{Q}c6$ 9.Qe3

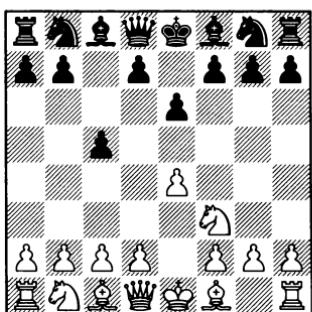


9...Qg4! 10.h3 cxд4 11.Qxd4
 $\mathbb{Q}e6$ 12.Qe1 Qc8=, Chadaev-Ivanchuk, Olginka 2011.

Part 11. Rare Lines on Move 3

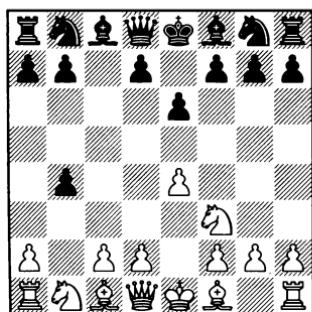
Step by Step

1.e4 c5 2. $\mathbb{Q}f3$ e6



- A. 3.b4
- B. 3.b3
- C. 3.c4
- D. 3.Qc3
- E. 3.Qe2
- F. 3.g3

A. 3.b4 cb4



What can White really count on by giving up a pawn? He does take the opening initiative and he reduces Black's control of the centre.

Chess Stars recently published the 550 pages-thick Soloviov's investigations on the Sicilian Gambit, *The Modern Anti-Sicilian* (via the move order 2.a3!?). The author summarised his opinion for the readers of this book in the following way: 'My feeling is that White has compensation for the pawn, but not more. For engines, Black has a nice position. Over the board, it is the opposite. Perhaps it is a matter of taste. Defenders like Black, attackers prefer White.' A few months ago, when I faced 3.b4 for the first time in my practice, I decided to question White's strategy by 3...b6!?. See my annotations to **game 57** S.Williams-Delchev, London 2013.

After the game, I took my time to make my homework and eventually came up with the following suggestion for more principled readers:

4.a3

4.d4 (4.Qb2 $\mathbb{Q}f6$) gives Black additional possibilities as 4... $\mathbb{Q}f6$

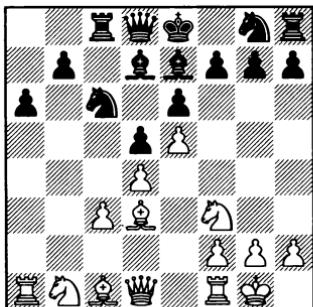
Rare Lines on Move 3

5.♗d3 d5 6.e5 ♗e4. The knight hinders White's development, for example, 7.0-0 ♗c6 8.a3 (8.♗bd2 ♗c3 9.♔e1 ♗d7) 8...f5 9.exf6 ♖xf6 10.♗e3 ♗d7 11.axb4 ♗xb4 12.c3 ♗xc3 13.♗xc3 ♗xc3 14.♗b1 ♗b4 15.♗e5 a5!, Zvjaginsev-Neverov, St. Petersburg 2010.

GM Zvjaginzev is the only top level GM who plays the gambit in classical time controls on a regular basis. He is some sort of the last of the Mohicans.

**4...d5 5.e5 ♗c6 6.axb4 ♗xb4
7.c3 ♗e7 8.d4 ♗d7 9.♗d3 ♗c8
10.0-0 a6**

Black should be able to reach this position against any White's move order.



We'll wait for an opportunity to develop our knight to h6. The centre is closed so we can leave our king there for a while and attack the c3-pawn.

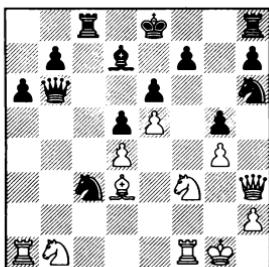
11.♗bd2

a) 11.♗fd2 ♗h6 12.♗b3 ♗f5
13.♗a3 ♗xa3 14.♗xa3 ♗c7 15.♔e2

♗a7! 16.♗c5 ♗b5 – I do not see enough compensation after the exchange of the light-squared bishops.

b) 11.♗a3 ♗a7 12.♗xe7 ♗xe7+.

c) 11.♗e1 ♗a7 12.f4 ♗h6 13.g4 ♗b5 14.f5 ♗g5 and it is unclear how to develop the attack. White should not forget that his king is also in danger. Look at the funny variation 15.f6 gxf6 16.♗xg5 fxg5 17.♔f3 ♗xc3 18.♗h3 ♗b6 19.♗f3



19...♗f5! 20.gxf5 ♗e4 21.♔h6 g4 22.♗g7 ♗f8 23.♗xg4 ♗b2 24.♗a5 ♗c1 25.♗g2 ♗xg2+ 26.♗xg2 ♗g8+ 27.♗h3 ♗xf1 28.♗xf1 exf5 with a mating net despite the trade of queens.

11...♗a5!

It is essential to prevent c3-c4! which would follow after 11...♗a7.

12.♗c2

Or 12.♗b3 ♗c4 13.♗e1 h5 14.♗fd2 ♗b5 15.♗c2 ♗b6 16.♗e3 ♗c7+.

12...♗c7 13.♗b2

13.♗xh7? ♗xc3 14.♗b1 ♗b4
15.♗b2 ♗h6 16.♗c2 0-0 was hop-

Part 11

less for White in Zvjaginsev-Rodstein, Moscow 2012.

**13...♝h6 14.♝fc1 ♝b5
15.♝xb5+ axb5 16.♞a3 ♞xa3
17.♞xa3 0-0-0 18.♗b2 ♜c4 19.♝xc4
bxс4 20.♝ca1**

It will be difficult to convert the extra pawn due to the activity of White's heavy pieces.

B. 3.b3



3...a6!?

Alternatively, Black might explore 3...♝c6 4.♝b2 ♜f6.

I used to play before 3...b6, but then 4.d4 cxd4 5.♞xd4 ♛f6 is quite risky. The text move is more useful.

4.♝b2 ♜c6

White must define his plans.

Main continuations are:

B1. 5.d4?!; B2. 5.c4!

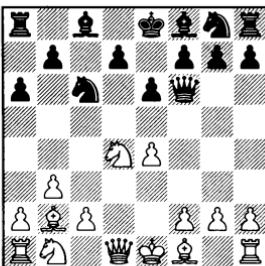
Other minor options:

a) 5.♛e2!? d6 6.g3 ♜f6 7.♝g2 ♜e7 8.0-0 0-0 9.d4 cxd4 10.♞xd4 ♜d7 with a pleasant open Sicilian.

b) 5.♛e2 d5!? Black enters a favourable position with an isolated pawn. Another decent solution is 5...♝f6 6.e5 ♜d5 7.0-0 ♜f4! 8.♝e1 d5 9.exd6 (9.♞f1 g5!?) → 9...♜xd6 10.♞f1 0-0=. 6.exd5 exd5 7.d4 ♜f6 8.0-0 ♜e7 9.dxc5 ♜xc5=. Black's plan is ...0-0, ...♝e8, ...♝g4, ...♝e4. He should only avoid exchanges.

c) 5.g3?! (if White wanted to fianchetto the bishop, 3.g3! would have been the better choice) 5...d5! 6.exd5 exd5 7.♝g2 (7.d4 ♜f6 8.♝g2 ♛e7+) 7...♛e7+ 8.♝e2 ♛xe2+ 9.♔xe2 ♜f5=.

B1. 5.d4?! cxd4 6.♞xd4 ♛f6!



By this original move, Black pins the d4-knight along the main diagonal. Soon the bishop will crucify it on the other diagonal, f2-c5, forcing c3. Evidently, White's strategy is a failure.

7.c3 ♜c5 8.♝e2 ♜ge7

This is a good and safe developing move. However, if you feel like grabbing a pawn, you can follow in my footsteps: 8...♛g6!? 9.0-0 ♛xe4 10.♞d2 ♛f4 11.g3 ♛c7 12.♞xc6 dxс6

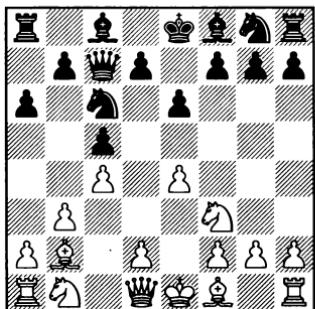
Rare Lines on Move 3

13.♕e4 ♜e7 14.c4 ♘f6 15.♘xf6 ♜f6 16.♗xf6 gxf6, Rivas Pastor-Delchev, Benasque 2005. However, White has probably enough long-term compensation. I encountered later 9.♗f3?! ♘e5 10.0-0 ♘f6 11.♗d2 0-0, Paljusaj-Delchev, Sibenik 2007.

9.0-0 0-0

The game is balanced, but White should still make a couple of accurate moves. For instance, 10.♗a3?! is not enough, owing to 10...d5 11.exd5 exd5=.

B2. 5.c4!? ♜c7 (discouraging 6.d4? in view of 6...cx d4 7.♗xd4 ♜e5)



6.g3

6.♗e2 ♘f6 7.♗c3 ♘d4 8.d3 is too modest. Perhaps simplest would be 8...♘xe2 9.♗xe2 d6=.

6.♗c3 ♘f6 7.g3 (7.d4 cxd4 8.♗xd4 ♜c5) 7...♗b8?! 8.♗g2 b5 9.d3 ♜e7 10.0-0 0-0 11.♗e1 d6=.

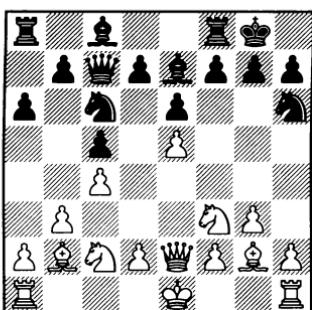
6...♘f6 7.e5

Alternatively: 7.♗c3 ♜b8?! 8.♗g2 b5=; 7.♗e2 e5= (7...d6!?).

7...♘g4 8.♗e2 ♘h6

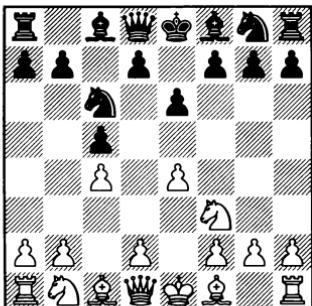
I'm following the game Romanov-Svidler, Sochi 2012, where Black had a comfortable game. Another option is 8...♜e7 9.♗g2 0-0 10.0-0 f6.

9.♗a3 ♜e7 10.♗c2 0-0 11.♗g2



11...b5! 12.0-0 bxc4 13.♗xc4 a5=.

C. 3.c4 ♘c6



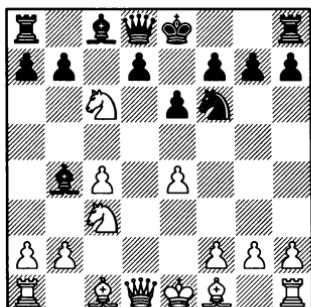
Part 11

C1. 4.d4 cxd4 5.Qxd4 Qf6 6.Qc3

6.Qxc6 dxc6!? (6...bxc6=) is good for Black

6...Qb4 7.Qxc6

Black can answer 7.f3?! or 7.Qd3?! by 7...0-0, while 7.Qb5 could be faced by 7...a6!? 8.Qd6 Qe7 9.Qf4 e5 10.Qf5 Qf8 11.Qg5 d5 12.cxd5 Qf5=, Lilov-Drenchev, Sunny Beach 2007.



7...bxc6

It is widely believed that 7...dxc6 8.Qxd8+ Qd8 is equal, but in my opinion 9.e5! gives White a lasting initiative on the kingside. It could be developed with h4 and Qh3.

8.Qd3

Or 8.e5?! Qe4 9.Qg4 Qxc3 10.a3, when 10...Qf8!? is the safest way to get an edge: 11.bxc3 Qa5 12.Qg3 g6 13.Qf4 Qg7=, Alburt-Sunye Neto, Wijk aan Zee 1980.

8...e5! 9.0-0 0-0

9...Qxc3 is overoptimistic. White can seize the initiative with 10.bxc3 d6 11.Qa4 Qc7 12.c5 d5 13.exd5 Qxd5 14.c4 Qe7 15.Qb2 0-0 16.Qae1 f6 17.Qc2 h6 18.f4↑.

10.Qe3

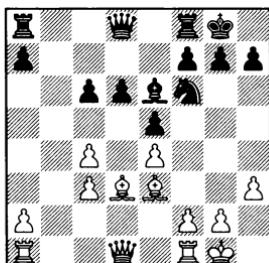
Here is the best place for the bishop. After 10.Qg5 h6 11.Qh4 Qc5! Black seizes the g1-a7 diagonal. In the game Christiansen-Ribli, Deutschland 1992 White tried to attack firstly on the queenside with 12.a3?! a5 13.Qd2 d6 14.Qh1 Qe6, and then on the other wing – 15.f4?! exf4 16.Qxf4 g5 17.Qaf1, but 17...Qd4! 18.Qf4f3 Qg4! 19.Qg3 Qe5 20.Qe5 Qe5= proved to be in Black's favour.

This example shows that 10.Qd2 could turn out to be a waste of time. Black answers ...Qc5, ...d6, ...Qe6.

10...Qxc3

In his game against Kramnik, Kramnik-Kasparov, New York 1994, Kasparov played 10...d6?! 11.Qa4!. In his comments he wrote that Black should double the opponent's pawns to achieve equality.

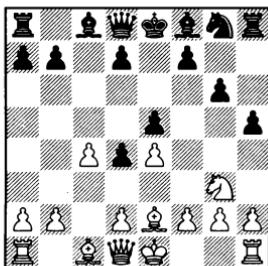
11.bxc3 d6 12.h3 Qe6



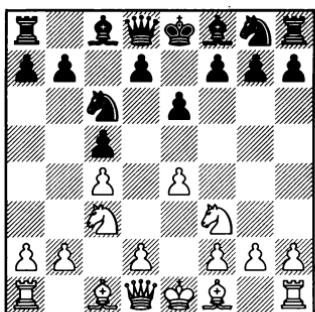
Rare Lines on Move 3

13.f4∞

Game 54 Chandler-Emms, Hastings 2000 (see “Complete Games”) confirmed Kasparov’s evaluation. Black had everything under control.



C2. 4.♘c3



4...e5?!

Any move which hinders d4 should be a fair alternative. Still, 4...♗b6, played by Swiercz, Sakaev, Movsesian, looks a bit too extravagant to me.

4...♘d4?!? is more logical as it solves the problem altogether! Its main advantage is that the arising positions are nearly unexplored.

5.♘xd4

If White delays this exchange, we’ll get the possibility to save ...e6-e5 - 5.d3 ♘e7 6.♘xd4 cxd4 7.♘e2 ♘c6 8.g3 b5!? with an initiative, Dolzhikova-Muzychuk, Kharkov 2012.

5...cxd4 6.♘e2 e5 7.♘g3 g6 8.♘e2 h5

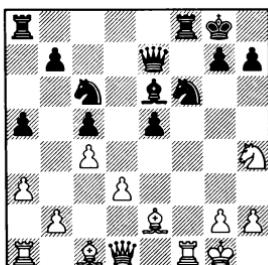
I did not like 9.0-0! h4 (9...♗h6 10.d3) 10.♗h1 ♗h6 11.d3 d6 12.f4 (12.♗xh6 ♗xh6 13.f4 ♗d7) 12...exf4 13.♗xf4 ♗xf4 14.♗xf4 ♖g5 15.♗f1 ♗e6 16.♗f2 0-0-0 17.♗f1 h3 18.g3 ♗e5. White’s pawn structure is more flexible.

4...e5 is a solid option which brings excellent practical results. Black is two tempi behind in a symmetric position, but he can push ...f5 without any preparation.

White can develop his bishop to e2 or g2. The same is valid for Black.

White’s play on the queenside can be slowed down with ...a5. Look at the game Naiditsch-Perunovic, Paks 2014:

5.a3 a5 6.♗e2 d6 7.d3 ♘e7 8.♘d5 f5 9.exf5 ♘xf5 10.0-0 ♗f6 11.♘h4 ♗e6 12.♘xe7 ♗xe7 13.f4 0-0 14.fxe5 dxe5



Part 11

Black's game is already slightly better.

5.d3 d6 6.♗e2 ♜e7 7.0-0 f5
 8.exf5 ♜xf5 9.♗e3 ♖f6 10.♗g5 0-0
 11.♗f3 ♖d7 12.♗ge4 ♕ab8 13.♗xf6+
 ♜xf6 14.♗e4 (Pridorozhni-Jakovenko,
 Aix-les-Bains 2011) 14...♗g4
 15.♗f3 ♜f5 16.♗e4 ♘h8=, Zhigalko-
 Roiz, Olginka 2011 (16...♗g4 17.♗f3
 draw, Solak-Nikolov, Albena 2012).

White can also fianchetto his bishop – 5.d3 d6 6.g3 $\hat{e}7$ 7. $\hat{g}2$ f5, see **game 56** Leventic-Delchev, Zadar 2004.

D. 3.2c3

This continuation is often used by White to sidestep rare move orders of the opponent, for instance 3.d4 cxd4 4.Qxd4 Bb6. Nothing unusual so far, we play:

3... ♞c6

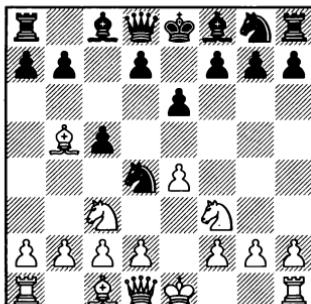
If your repertoire includes the Kan, you should choose 3...a6! when 4.d4 would lead to the most pleasant version of the Kan – with ♣c3 – while 4.g3 b5 is double-edged and in any case not worse for Black.

4.b5

White's last move leads to an amazingly popular lately hybrid between different systems.

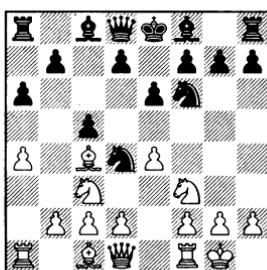
4...d4!

4... $\mathbb{Q}e7$ is also frequently seen, but it gives White a free hand in the centre.



5.0-0

After 5.♗c4 ♜f6! 6.0-0 (6.e5 ♜g4 7.♘xd4 ♜e5!=) 6...a6! (beware the trap 6...d5? 7.exd5 exd5 8.♘xd4 cxd4 9.♘xd5! ♜xd5 10.♗h5→) White's bishop is vulnerable on c4, for instance 7.d3 ♜c7?! 8.♘xd4 cxd4 9.♘e2 ♜d6 10.h3 ♜xe4!=. The last move explains why Black has been delaying b7-b5, which is also good, by the way. Some players prefer 7.a4 instead of 7.d3.



Now 7... $\mathbb{Q}e4$?! is dubious in view of 8. $\mathbb{Q}xe4$ d5 9.d3 dxc4 10.dxc4 $\mathbb{Q}e7$ 11. $\mathbb{Q}e3$ $\mathbb{Q}xf3$ 12. $\mathbb{W}xf3\pm$, Carlsson-Jansson, Stockholm 2004.

Rare Lines on Move 3

7...d5 8.exd5 exd5 9.♗a2 ♗g4
10.♗e1+ ♖e7 11.♘xd4 cxd4 12.♘e2
d3!? gives Black full compensation
for the pawn after 13.cxd3 0-0 14.d4
♗e8 15.f3 ♖f5 16.♗b1 ♖xb1 17.♖xb1
♗c7 18.♗d1 ♖d6 19.g3 ♖e6.

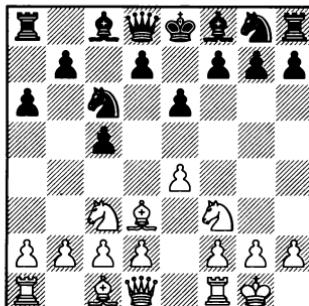
Perhaps the simplest solution
has been demonstrated by Kiril
Georgiev against Tissir, Gibraltar
2005: 7...♗c7? 8.h3 (8.d3 ♘c6!? is
similar) 8...♗e7 9.d3 ♘c6!? White
defended his bishop and the knight
retreats back.

Black has many good plans after
5.a4. I propose 5...a6 6.♗c4 (6.♗d3
♘c6) 6...♗f6 7.♘xd4 cxd4 8.♘e2
♗g6. Black's play is clear and easy.
9.♘g3 h5 10.♗f3 ♘f6 11.h4 (11.d3
♗b4) 11...♗d6 12.d3 ♘g4 13.♗f4.
This position occurred in Dragoljovic-Papp Zoltan, Szeged 1998.
Black could have gained the edge
with 13...♗b4!?

The most consistent response
to 5.♗d3 is 5...♘xf3!? (5...♗e7
6.♘xd4 cxd4 7.♘e2 ♘c6= is a
worthy alternative) 6.♗xf3 a6 7.0-0
(or 7.b3 ♘d6 8.♗b2 ♘e5=) 7...♗c7
8.♗e1 ♘d6! 9.g3 ♘f6 10.♗f1 ♘e5=
11.♗g2 b5 12.a4?! b4!, Iordache-
scu-Rublevsky, FIDE-Wch k.o. Tripoli
2004. Black's play in this game
was clear and straightforward.

5...a6 6.♗d3 ♘c6!?

A funny position. Both sides
have lost tempi aiming mostly at
hindering the opponent's plans. It
seems to me that White has been
outwitted. He cannot even transpose
to the main open Sicilian lines:



D1. 7.♗e2; D2. 7.♗e1

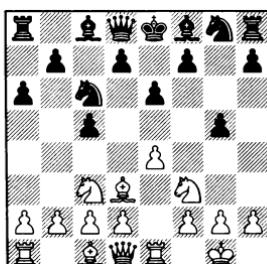
D1. 7.♗e2

In mathematics, you just write:
7...♗c7 (or 7...♗f6) 8.d4, transposing
to our main line Taimanov' and
move on to other pending problems.

You should also consider 7...
b5!? 8.d4 cxd4 9.♘xd4 ♘b7 10.♘xc6
♘xc6, Andreikin-Caruana, Biel
2010.

Finally, 7...♘d4!? is a capital
way of preventing d4. Perhaps it is
enough for equality, but you risk to
be summoned by the chief arbiter
for a booze control...

D2. 7.♗e1 g5!



Part 11

The flank assault is perfectly grounded here. The rook move to e1 prepared ♜f1 and d4, but deprived the f3-knight of retreat squares. In practice White has tried:

8.♗f1 ♜g7 9.b3 g4 10.♗e1 h5 11.♗b2 d5 (it is better to keep the centre closed – 11...d6!) 12.exd5 exd5 13.♗a4 ♜xb2 14.♗xb2 ♜ge7∞ Safarli-Brunello, Khanty-Mansiysk 2010.

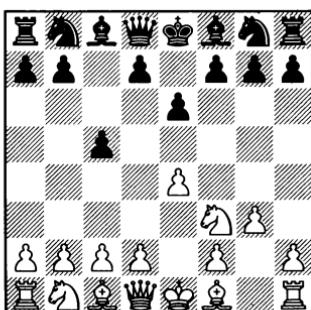
8.h3 h5 9.♗h2 ♜d6 10.b3 (10.♗e2? g4 11.g3 h4–+, Fruteau-Skipchenko, Chartres 2005, 10.g3? ♜c7) 10...g4 11.♗b2 ♜e5!;

8.g3 d6 9.b3 ♜g7 10.♗b2, Souleidis-Bousios, Halkidiki 2002, 10...g4 11.♗h4 h5;

8.♗h1 – see **game 55** Mark Tseitlin-Avrukh, Tel Aviv 2002.

target to attack. The Skripchenko-Koneru, blitz Moscow 2010, went on 9.e5 ♜d7 10.h4 b4 11.♗f4 bxc3 12.bxc3 ♜a6 13.♗bd2 ♜a5 14.♗fc1 ♜ab8 15.♗f1, when best would have been 15...♜a3 with a clear advantage.

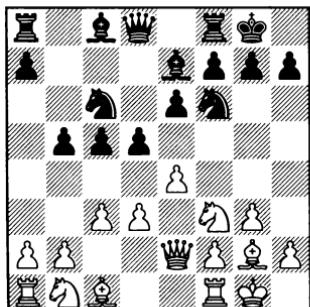
F. 3.g3!?



E. 3.♗e2 ♜c6 4.c3

White's queen does not fit in to the g3-design: 4.g3 ♜ge7 5.♗g2 g6 6.0-0 ♜g7 7.c3 0-0 8.♗d1 e5=.

4...d5! 5.d3 ♜f6 6.g3 ♜e7 7.♗g2 0-0 8.0-0 b5=.



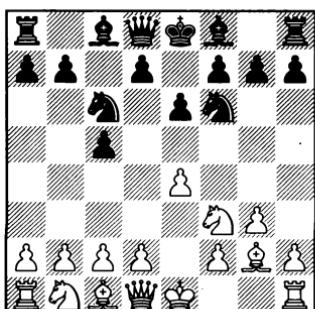
The c3-pawn provides a good

White avoids the risks of the open Sicilian and all the theoretical overhead it involves. The play takes a manoeuvring course without tactical complications. This allows the strategically-oriented players to impose their style which would be impossible after the sharp 3.d4. Sometimes the surprise effect can bring quick dividends. Look at my game Delchev-Bagaturov, Edirne 2013: 3...♝f6?! 4.e5 ♜d5 5.♗g2 d6 6.0-0 ♜c6 7.exd6 ♜xd6 8.d4 0-0 9.dxc5 ♜xc5 10.♗e2 ♜c7 11.c4 ♜de7 12.♗f4 ♜d6 13.♗xd6 ♜xd6 14.♗d1 ♜c7 15.♗c3 a6 16.♗d2 ♜d7 17.♗g5 ♜ad8 18.♗ad1 h6 19.♗ge4 e5. I made all the most natural moves and already my advantage is decisive – 20.♗xd7! ♜exd7 21.♗f6+ gxf6 22.♗g4+ was winning.

Rare Lines on Move 3

Black can prevent e5 with 3... $\mathbb{Q}c6$ 4. $\mathbb{Q}g2$ $\mathbb{Q}f6$ which I analyse as line F1, or he can attempt to exploit White's tricky move order with 3... d5 which is line F2. The choice depends entirely on your taste. Line F1 is closer to the spirit of the Sicilian while line F2 offers active piece play.

F1. 3... $\mathbb{Q}c6$ 4. $\mathbb{Q}g2$ $\mathbb{Q}f6$



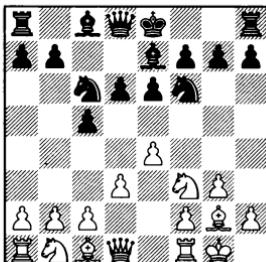
5. $\mathbb{W}e2$

a) 5. $\mathbb{Q}c3$ indicates that White intends to push d4, having sidestepped the Kan and a number of other lines. The principled answer is 5...d5 6. exd5 exd5 7. d4 cxd4 8. $\mathbb{Q}xd4$ $\mathbb{Q}g4!$. I got this position against Malakhov. He chose 9. $\mathbb{Q}xc6$ bxc6 10. $\mathbb{W}d4$ $\mathbb{Q}e7$ 11. 0-0 0-0 12. $\mathbb{Q}a4$ when best is 12... $\mathbb{Q}e8$ with an excellent position.

Similar is 9. $\mathbb{W}d3$ $\mathbb{Q}c5$ 10. $\mathbb{Q}e3$ $\mathbb{W}b6$ 11. $\mathbb{Q}xc6$ bxc6 12. $\mathbb{Q}xc5$ $\mathbb{W}xc5$ 13. 0-0 0-0.

The latest attempt to improve White's play was 9. f3 $\mathbb{Q}d7$ 10. $\mathbb{Q}e3$ $\mathbb{Q}e7$ 11. 0-0 0-0 12. $\mathbb{Q}e1$ $\mathbb{Q}e8$ 13. $\mathbb{Q}b3$, Safarli-Tregubov, Loo 2013, when 13... $\mathbb{Q}b4$ deserves attention.

b) 5. d3 d6 6. 0-0 $\mathbb{Q}e7$



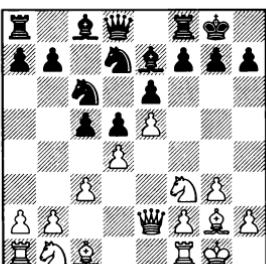
Both sides have an enormous choice here. For instance:

7. c4 0-0 8. $\mathbb{Q}c3$ a6 9. d4 cxd4 10. $\mathbb{Q}xd4$ $\mathbb{Q}d7$ followed up by ...b5; 7. $\mathbb{Q}e1$ 0-0 8. c3 $\mathbb{Q}d7$ 9. $\mathbb{Q}bd2$ $\mathbb{Q}c7!$ (aimed against e4-e5) 10. a3 $\mathbb{Q}ac8$ 11. d4 cxd4 12. cxd4 e5 13. d5 $\mathbb{Q}b8$ 14. $\mathbb{Q}f1$ a5=, Van der Weide-Kempinski, Groningen 1996;

7. $\mathbb{Q}g5$ h6 8. $\mathbb{Q}h3$ e5 9. f4 $\mathbb{Q}g4$ 10. $\mathbb{Q}d2$ $\mathbb{Q}d4$ 11. $\mathbb{Q}f2$ $\mathbb{Q}f3$.

5... e5

Fighting for every inch of the centre. Black can also allow e4-e5 after 5...d6 6. 0-0 $\mathbb{Q}e7$ 7. c3 (7. $\mathbb{Q}d1$ 0-0 8. d4 cxd4 9. $\mathbb{Q}xd4$ $\mathbb{Q}xd4$ 10. $\mathbb{Q}xd4$ $\mathbb{Q}d7$ 11. c4 a6 12. $\mathbb{Q}c3$ b5=) 7...0-0 8. d4 (8. $\mathbb{Q}d1$ d5! 9. e5 $\mathbb{Q}d7$ 10. d4 a5 11. $\mathbb{Q}e3$ b6=) 8...d5 9. e5 $\mathbb{Q}d7$



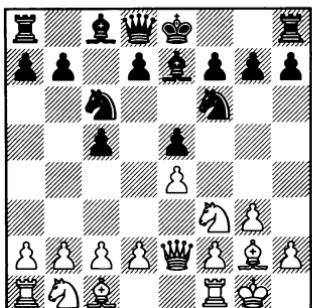
Part 11

This is the favourite set-up for Black of my club teammate Ganguly. He is Anand's second and one of the world's most erudite opening experts. He always puts his queenside pawns on b6 and a5:

10.♘e3 a5 11.a4 b6 12.♗c1 ♘a6
13.♗d1, E.Hansen-Ganguly, Linares 2013, 13...b5! 14.axb5 ♘xb5
15.♗bd2 ♘b8;

10.h4 b6 11.♗g5 (11.♗f4 a5 12.♗e1
♗a6 13.♗d1 ♘c8 14.♗f1 ♘xf1 15.♗xf1
b5 16.♗a3 ♘b6 17.h5 b4 18.♗c2
bxс3 19.bxc3 ♘b2 20.h6 g6 21.♗d2
cxд4 22.♗xd4 ♘xd2 23.♗xd2
♗c5+, Vea-Ganguly, Caleta 2014)
11...a5 12.♗c1 ♘a6 13.♗e3 ♘c8! (13...
b5 14.♗bd2 ♘b6 15.♗xe7 ♗xe7
16.dxc5=, Nitin-Ganguly, Kanpur
2014) 14.♗bd2 ♘c7 (14...♘e8) 15.♗f1
♘xf1 16.♗xf1 b5+.

6.0-0 ♘e7



White has not shown a convincing plan here. The most natural try is 7.c3 0-0 8.d4, but 8...cxд4 9.cxd4 exd4 10.e5 ♘e8 11.♗d1 ♘b6 is good for Black. Therefore, White should develop in the King's Indian manner:

7.♗a3 0-0 8.c3 d6 9.d3 ♘e8
10.♗c4 ♘f8 11.♗e3 h6

I'm following the game Naiditsch-E.Hansen, Reykjavik 2014. I'm not sure about Black's last move. 11...♗b8 planning ...b7-b5-b4 is worth considering

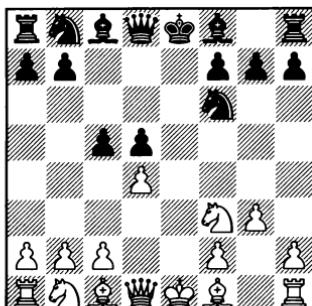
**12.♗h4 g6 13.♗h1 ♘g7 14.♗d2
♗b8= 15.♗ae1**

Obviously White's plan is f4 so it would be good before moving the b-pawn to defend the c6-knight with 15...♗d7!. Then 16.f4 would drop a pawn after 16...exf4 17.gxf4 ♗xe4.

F2. 3...d5!?

The point is that White cannot enter King's Indian structure with 4.d3 since 4...dxe4 5.dxe4 ♘xd1+ 6.♗xd1 ♗f6 can be only in Black's favour.

**4.exd5 exd5 5.d4 (5.♗g2
♗e7+!) 5...♗f6!**



It is better to castle quickly than display activity with 5...♗c6 6.♗g2

Rare Lines on Move 3

$\mathbb{g}4$ 7.0-0 $\mathbb{e}7$ in view of 8.dxc5!.

6. $\mathbb{g}2$ $\mathbb{e}7$

6... $\mathbb{e}7+$ is a mistake. In Rabineau-Delchev, Fourmies 2013, was 7. $\mathbb{e}2$?! $\mathbb{w}xe2+$ 8. $\mathbb{d}xe2$ $\mathbb{d}c6$ and I was already better.

7. $\mathbb{d}e5$ cxd4 8.0-0 $\mathbb{w}xe5$ 9. $\mathbb{d}e1$ $\mathbb{d}e4$ 10. $\mathbb{d}f4$ $\mathbb{w}f6$ 11.f3 $\mathbb{e}7$ is also pleasant. White should answer:

7. $\mathbb{d}e3$! $\mathbb{d}g4$ 8.0-0 $\mathbb{d}xe3$ 9. $\mathbb{f}xe3$ $\mathbb{d}c6$ 10.c4! and Black's centre is crumbling down.

7.0-0 0-0 8. $\mathbb{d}c3$

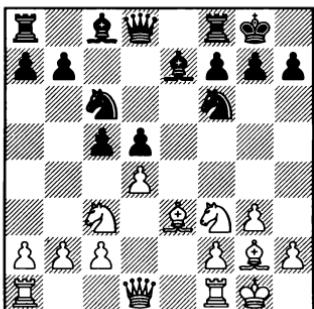
8. $\mathbb{d}e3$ cxd4 (8... $\mathbb{g}4$?! 9.dxc5) 9. $\mathbb{d}xd4$ $\mathbb{g}4$! (9... $\mathbb{d}c6$ 10.h3! was slightly better for White in Adams-Kryvoruchko, Tromso 2013, since Black's bishop could not find an active stand) 10. $\mathbb{w}d3$ $\mathbb{w}d7$ 11.c4 (11. $\mathbb{d}c3$ $\mathbb{d}c6$ 12. $\mathbb{d}fe1$ $\mathbb{d}fe8=$) 11... $\mathbb{d}c6$ 12. $\mathbb{d}xc6$ bxc6 13. $\mathbb{d}c3=$. If White attempts to trick us with the move order – 8.h3, we'll not take on d4 – 8... $\mathbb{d}c6$! 9. $\mathbb{d}e3$ $\mathbb{w}b6$ 10. $\mathbb{d}c3$ $\mathbb{w}xb2$ 11. $\mathbb{d}a4$ $\mathbb{w}a3$ 12. $\mathbb{d}xc5$ b6=.

8.dxc5 $\mathbb{d}xc5$ 9. $\mathbb{d}g5$ $\mathbb{d}c6$ 10. $\mathbb{d}c3$ $\mathbb{d}e6=$ 11. $\mathbb{d}d2$?! h6.

8... $\mathbb{d}c6$ 9. $\mathbb{d}e3$

9. $\mathbb{d}g5$ h6 10. $\mathbb{d}xf6$ $\mathbb{d}xf6$ 11.dxc5 $\mathbb{d}xc3$ 12.bxc3 $\mathbb{w}a5=$;

9.dxc5 $\mathbb{d}xc5$ is equal (9...d4 is a dubious attempt to play in the Tarrasch style – 10. $\mathbb{d}a4$ $\mathbb{g}4$ 11.h3 $\mathbb{f}5$ 12.a3) 10. $\mathbb{d}g5$ d4 11. $\mathbb{d}e4$ $\mathbb{d}e7$ 12. $\mathbb{d}xf6+$ $\mathbb{d}xf6$ 13. $\mathbb{d}xf6$ $\mathbb{w}xf6$ 14. $\mathbb{d}e1$ $\mathbb{f}5$ 15. $\mathbb{d}d3$ $\mathbb{d}e5$ 16. $\mathbb{d}xe5$ $\mathbb{w}xe5=$, Balogh-So, Saint Louis 2012.



9... $\mathbb{d}g4$! 10.h3 cxd4 11. $\mathbb{d}xd4$ $\mathbb{d}e6$ 12. $\mathbb{d}e1$ $\mathbb{d}c8=$

12...h6 13. $\mathbb{d}e2$ $\mathbb{d}d6$ 14. $\mathbb{d}xf6$ $\mathbb{w}xf6$ 15. $\mathbb{d}ed4$ $\mathbb{d}c5$ 16.c3 $\mathbb{d}ad8$ was also balanced in Sadvakasov-Khalifman, Liepaja 2001.

13. $\mathbb{d}e2$ $\mathbb{d}f5$ 14.c3 $\mathbb{d}e8$ 15. $\mathbb{d}e3$ $\mathbb{d}e4$ 16. $\mathbb{d}ed4$ $\mathbb{w}d7$ 17. $\mathbb{d}d2$ $\mathbb{d}g6$

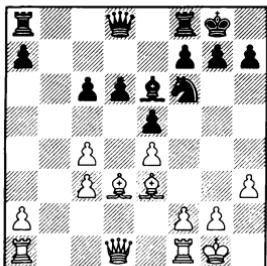
Ivanchuk follows the rule to keep more pieces when playing with an isolated pawn, but 17... $\mathbb{d}xg2$ was also good. The game went on 18. $\mathbb{d}xc6$ (18. $\mathbb{w}a4$ a6) 18...bxc6 19. $\mathbb{w}a4$ $\mathbb{d}d6$ with mutual chances, Chadaev-Ivanchuk, Olginka 2011.

Part 11. Rare Lines on Move 3

Complete Games

54. Chandler-Emms Hastings 2000

1.e4 c5 2.Ґf3 e6 3.d4 cxd4
4.Ґxd4 Ґc6 5.c4 Ґf6 6.Ґc3 Ґb4
7.Ґxc6 bxc6! 8.Ґd3 e5 9.0-0 0-0
10.Ґe3 Ґxc3 (10...d6?! 11.Ґa4!±)
11.bxc3 d6= 12.h3 Ґe6

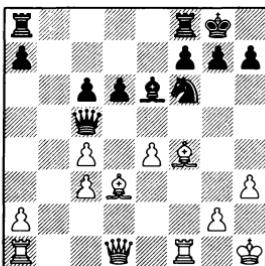


13.f4

If White seeks initiative on the queenside, the pawn on c4 could fall quickly, as in the game Van Weersel-Nill, Chisinau 2005, 13.Ґb1 Ґc7 14.Ґd2 (14.Ґa4 Ґd7) 14...Ґd7 15.Ґfd1 Ґfd8 16.Ґb4? c5 17.Ґb2 Ґb6 18.Ґe2 f6=.

Or 13.Ґa4 Ґc7 14.f4 exf4 15.Ґxf4 Ґd7 16.Ґfd1 c5=, Doell-Kovalev, Dresden 2010.

13...exf4 14.Ґxf4 Ґb6 15.Ґh1
Ґc5



White failed to achieve substantial compensation for the split pawn structure. Still, the bishop pair helps him to hold on.

16.Ґc2 Ґad8 17.Ґf3 Ґfe8!

Black improves his rooks before eating the enemy pawns. 17...Ґxc4 is about equal: 18.Ґe3 Ґh5 (18...Ґa5? 19.Ґxf6 gxsf6 20.Ґg4 Ґh8 21.Ґd4) 19.Ґd4= Ґe8 20.Ґxa7 d5 21.Ґb6=.

18.Ґd2 Ґc4?!

Black has achieved perfect coordination between his pieces. He could have displayed that by opening up the centre: 18...d5! Instead,

Rare Lines on Move 3

he inexplicably decides to sacrifice the exchange accepting an inferior position.

19.♗g5 ♗e4 20.♗e4 ♖e4
21.♗d8 ♖d8=

The a7-pawn is weak, but apparently Black should be able to hold the enemy to a draw.

22.♗d3 d5 23.♗e1 ♖h4
24.♗d4 ♖e7 25.♗d3 ♖a3 26.♗c2
♗b8 27.♗a4 ♖c5 28.♗d2 ♖e7?
29.♗d4 ♖b6 30.♗e5?

White misses his chance to reach a clear edge by 30.♗b6! ab6 31.♗a8 ♖f8 32.♗f8 ♖f8 33.a4±. Now Black gradually becomes better.

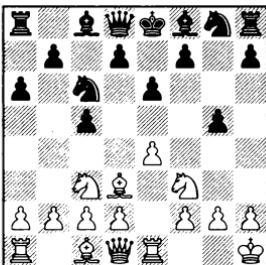
30...h6 31.♗e3 ♖h7 32.♗g3 f6
33.♗e3 ♖d7 34.♗c5 ♖f5 35.♗a5
♗b7 36.♗b4 ♖e4 37.♗xb7 ♖xb7
38.♗d8 c5 39.♗d6 c4 40.♗h2
a6 41.a3 a5 42.♗h1 a4 43.♗h2
♖f7 44.♗e3 f5 45.♗e5 ♖f8 46.♗e2
♖xa3 47.♗xe4 fxe4 48.♗f5+ ♖h8
49.♗c8+ ♖h7 50.♗f5+ g6 51.♗f7+
♖h8 52.♗f6+ ♖h7 53.♗f7+
♖h8 54.♗f6+ ♖g8 55.♗xg6+
♖f8 56.♗xh6+ ♖e7 57.♗g5+
♖e6 58.♗g6+ ♖d7 59.♗f5+ ♖c7
60.♗f7+ ♖c8 61.♗e8+ ♖c7 Draw.

55. Mark Tseitlin-Avrukh Tel Aviv 2002

1.e4 c5 2.♗f3 e6 3.♗c3 ♗c6
4.♗b5 ♗d4 5.0-0

5.♗xd4? cxd4 6.♗e2 ♖g5 is sometimes seen in blitz...

5...a6 6.♗d3 ♗c6!? 7.♗e1 g5!
8.♗h1



8...♗g7

Avrukh should have tried to develop his initiative by 8...g4!? 9.♗g1 h5 10.♗f1 (10.f4 ♖h6!), when 10...♗d6! best fits in the spirit of the Taimanov. Black's design is certainly not to mate the opponent, but to cramp him and prevent the freeing d2-d4

9.♗f1 h6 10.d3 ♗ge7 11.♗e2 d5?!

Black is inconsistent. Firstly he refrained from g4, now he suddenly opens up the centre. 11...♗g6 12.♗g3 0-0 13.♗h5 ♖h8= looks preferable to me.

12.c3 dxe4 13.dxe4 ♖xd1
14.♗xd1 b6 15.♗g3 ♖g8

15...♗g6! 16.♗h5 0-0 would be roughly equal.

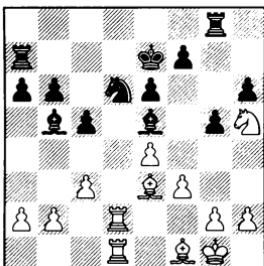
16.♗d2

Black's awkward break-trough in the centre only lost his tempo-

Part 11

rary initiative and activated the enemy pieces. Now 16.♘h5 ♘h8 17.h4± would have underlined this fact, but White sticks to routine manoeuvring and again falls under pressure. This time he gets into trouble because of his weak light squares.

16...♞e5 17.♘c4 ♞xc4
18.♕xc4 ♘b7 19.♗g1?! ♘e5
20.f3 ♘c8 21.♘h5 ♘e7 22.♘e3
♘d6 23.♘f1 ♘c6 24.♘d2 ♘b5±
25.♘ad1 ♘a7



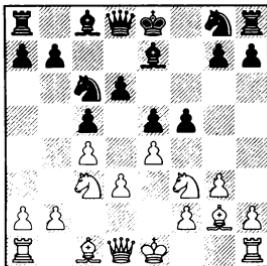
26.b3?

Avrukh suggests 26.♘d3 as the only move (26...♞c4 27.♘c4 ♘c4 28.b3 ♘b5 29.a4 ♘c6 30.a5±), but 26... ♘d3 27.♘d3 ♘d7± still leaves Black with the better game because of the ridiculous knight at the edge.

26...♞f1 27.♘f1 f5! (winning a pawn) 28.ef5 ♘xf5 29.♘d3 ♘xh2 30.♘f2 g4 31.f4 ♘f7 32.g3 ♘g6 33.♘g2 ♘xh5 34.♘xh2 ♘c7 35.♘d8 ♘xd8 36.♘xd8 ♘c6 37.a4 a5 38.♘b8 ♘g6 39.♘g8+ ♘f7 40.♘b8 ♘d6 41.♘b7+ ♘g6 42.♘g2 h5 43.♘b8 ♘f7 44.♘b7+ ♘f6 45.♘b8 ♘d2 46.♘f1 ♘d3 47.♘xb6 ♘xg3+ 48.♘g2 h4 49.♘xc5 ♘d2+ 50.♘g1 ♘f5 51.♘b8 h3 52.♘h8 ♘d1+ 53.♘f2 h2 0-1

56. Leventic-Delchev Zadar 2004

1.e4 c5 2.♘f3 e6 3.c4 ♘c6
4.♘c3 e5 5.d3 d6 6.g3 ♘e7? 7.♗g2
f5



Black is behind in development indeed, but the closed centre saves him from trouble. Practice has shown that White is unable to refute Black's design.

8.exf5 ♘xf5 9.0-0 ♘d7 10.♘d5
♘f6 11.♘g5 ♘xd5 12.♘xd5 ♘xg5

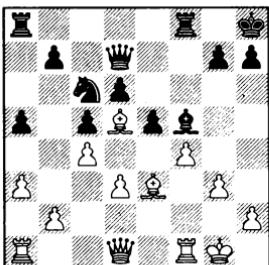
12...h6 13.♘f7? fails to 13...♝f8±, but 13.♘e4 is probably equal.

13.♘xg5 ♘b4 14.♘e4 0-0
15.♘e3 a5?!

We all know the ABC book, but somehow tend to forget about it in the heat of the battle. 15...♘xe4! 16.dxe4 ♘e6± would have fixed the pawns in my favour because my knight would be more mobile. Perhaps subconsciously I wanted to keep more pieces on the board.

16.a3 (16.f4!?) 16...♘c6
17.♘d5+ ♘h8 18.f4

Rare Lines on Move 3



18...♝e6

It would have been better to open lines: 18...exf4! 19.♗xf4 ♜d4??.

**19.♗a4 exf4 20.♗xf4 ♞f5
21.♗e4 ♞f7 22.♗ae1 ♘h3 23.♗f2
♗e8 24.♗e3**

24.♗d1! would have kept the balance because 24...♝g4 (24...♝ef8=; 24...♝ff8=) fails to 25.♗xc6! ♞xe1 26.♗xe1 ♗xc6 27.♗e4!±.

**24...♝xf2 25.♗xf2 ♖f7 26.♗d1
♝e5 27.♗d5 ♖f6 28.d4? (28.
♗d2??) 28...♝f8–+ 29.♗e3 ♘g4
30.♗f4 g5 31.♗g2 gxf4 32.♗xh3
fxg3 0-1**

**57. S.Williams-Delchev
London, 12.12.2013**

1.e4 c5 2.♘f3 e6 3.b4

My first reaction to this move was that I felt a bit scandalised and my ego was offended. Then I came to my senses and pondered rationally over the situation. The truth was that I was not prepared against the Sicilian Gambit. So finally I replied:

3...b6!?



This move was proposed by David Bronstein in his book *David Against Goliath*. It may not be the most principled retort, but it is an effective antidote to White's idea. Black keeps control of the centre. My wife, WGM Djingarova, played 3...b6 back in 2005 so I can say that I was still in my preparation!

4.bxc5 bxc5 5.♘a3

White had tried 12 (!) different moves, but the text seems to be a novelty. The knight is heading for c4-d6. Muzychuk-Djingarova, Nova Gorica 2005, saw the most logical 5.♘c3 ♘c6 6.♗b1 ♘e7 7.♗c4 ♘f6 8.0-0 0-0 9.♗e1 d6 10.d4 cxd4 11.♗xd4 ♘e5 12.♗f1 ♘d7?? and Black can be satisfied with his position. She achieved a Scheveningen formation where white has weakened considerably his queenside.

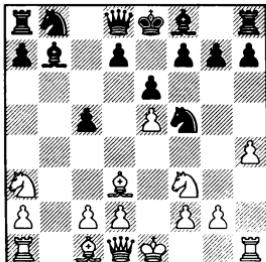
5...♝b7! 6.e5 ♘e7 7.h4?!

I could not understand this move. Instead of developing quickly in this semi-open position, White loses a tempo and weakens his

Part 11

kingside. The natural continuation is 7.♗b1 ♜d5 (7...♝e4!? 8.d3 ♜xf3) 8.♗c4 a6 (preventing ♜b5) 9.0-0 ♜bc6.

7...♜f5 8.♗d3



8...♞d5

I didn't want to close the diagonal to the bishop although 8...♞c6 9.♗b1 ♜b8 10.♗c4 ♜a6!+ would have been fine. Another forcing continuation is 8...♞d4 (removing a defender of the e5-pawn and prolonging the scope of my bishop) 9.♗xd4 cxd4 10.♗g4 ♜a5 11.♗c4 ♜d5.

9.c4

White creates a gaping hole on d4 and restricts his own pieces ♜a3 and ♜f1. Perhaps 9.♗xf5 maintained the balance.

9...♝xf3 10.♗xf3 ♜c6
11.♗b2?!

It was simpler to trade pieces with 11.♗xf5 ♜d4 12.♗b7 ♜b8 13.♗xa7 exf5 14.♗b5=.

11...♞fd4 12.♗xd4 cxd4
13.♗e4 ♜c8 14.♗xc6 dxc6

White's set-up is a total mess. He has not any co-ordination between pawns and pieces. The a3-knight is exceptionally useless. With my next moves I convert my strategic advantage into a pawn.

15.♗c2 d3 16.♗e3 ♜d4 17.0-0 ♜xe5 18.♗fe1

Or 18.♗g4 ♜d4 19.♗ae1 ♜d6 20.♗e4 ♜b2 21.♗xd3 ♜d8 22.♗e2 0-0+.

18...♞d6 19.♗g4?!

This is a step in a wrong direction. It was better to try 19.g3 0-0 20.♗c2 ♜a5 21.♗xd3 ♜fd8+ – the pawns are equal, but all my pieces are active.

19...♜d4 20.c5 ♜xc5 21.♗ac1 ♜d6 22.♗e4 ♜b2 23.♗ce1 0-0 (Game over) 24.♗xd3 ♜fd8 25.♗c4 ♜xd2 26.h5 ♜d5 27.♗e2 f5 28.♗xe6 fxg4 29.♗xg4 ♜f8 30.h6 ♜c7 31.♗e5 ♜xa2 32.♗g5 ♜b8 33.♗e8 ♜xe8 34.♗xe8 ♜a1+ 0-1

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9.♗g5 250
9.♘d2 251
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 ♗e7 253) 9.♗e2 ♗b7 10.0-0 ♗e7 (10...♗b8 254) 11.♗e3 0-0 12.f4 255
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5. ♠d3 g6 6. ♠c3 214

6c4216

5... $\mathbb{Q}f6$ 6.0-0 $\mathbb{W}c7$ 7. $\mathbb{W}e2$ d6 8.c4 g6 9. $\mathbb{Q}c3$ $\mathbb{Q}g7$ 10. $\mathbb{Q}d1$ 222

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10. ~~10~~
10. ~~10~~ 224

5. $\mathbb{N}c3 \mathbb{W}c7$

6. ♕e3 ♖f6 7. ♔d3 ♕b4 6.5 (7... ♕c5; 7... b5 6.5)

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3.c4 ♘c6 4.d4 324

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3.♘c3 ♘c6 4.♗b5 ♘d4 5.0-0 a6 6.♗d3 ♘c6 7.♗e2 327

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Alexander Delchev is the European Grand Prix winner in 2004. He has played in many Olympiads for Bulgaria. His best Elo was 2669, current rating – 2638. Delchev is the author of *The Safest Sicilian*, *The Safest Grünfeld* and *The Modern Reti*.



Semko Semkov played for Bulgaria in one Olympiad. He is a chess journalist and theoretician. He has authored Kill K.I.D. and three other books.

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