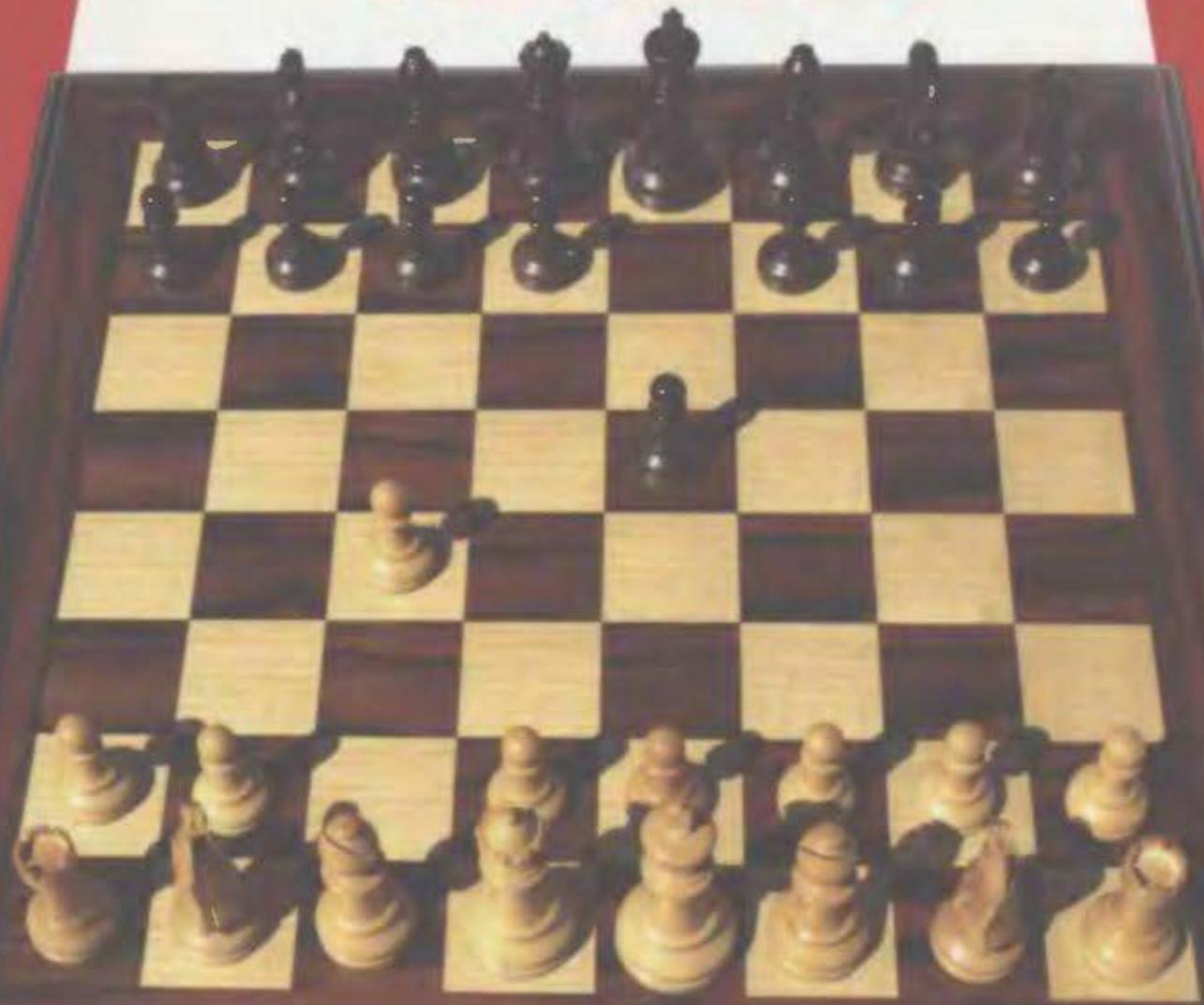


Grandmaster Répertoire

Mihail
Marin

**The English
Opening
VOLUME ONE**



Tired of bad positions? Try the main lines!

QUALITY CHESS



Grandmaster Repertoire 3

The English Opening

Volume One

By

Mihail Marin

with invaluable help from

Valentin Stoica

Quality Chess

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Grandmaster Repertoire 3 - The English Opening Volume One

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ISBN 978-1-906552-04-6

All sales or enquiries should be directed to Quality Chess UK LLP,
Central Chambers, 93 Hope Street, Glasgow G2 6LD, United Kingdom
+44 141 277 6771
e-mail: info@qualitychess.co.uk
website: www.qualitychess.co.uk

Distributed in US and Canada by SCB Distributors, Gardena, California, US
www.scbdistributors.com

Distributed in Rest of the World by Quality Chess UK LLP through
Sunrise Handicrafts, Smyczkowa 4/98, 20-844 Lublin, Poland

Typeset: Jacob Aagaard
Proofreading: Colin McNab, Jacob Aagaard and John Shaw
Editing: Jacob Aagaard and John Shaw
Cover design: Adamson Design
Printed in Estonia by Tallinna Raamatuträkikoja LLC

Publisher's Foreword

Creating the Grandmaster Repertoire series seemed a natural idea. There is a glut of opening books at the *Starting Out* level. These books have certainly been refreshing, but they have almost completely replaced high-level opening books.

As chess fans, we felt we were missing out, and because we can, we decided to do something about it.

The books in the Grandmaster Repertoire series are written by grandmasters, edited by grandmasters, and will certainly be read by grandmasters. **This does not mean that players who are not grandmasters cannot read them.** We have worked hard to make our books clear in their presentation and to make it possible for the readers to decide the depth to which they want to study them.

When we were young and trying to be up-and-coming, we understood that you do not have to remember everything in an opening book in order to use it. It is our hope that those readers who find this repertoire too extensive and detailed, will ignore many of the details. Even now that we are grandmasters, we see the bolded moves as what we want to memorize, and the notes as explanations and illustrations.

It is our conviction that you will eventually be more successful by playing the main lines, simply because they are based on better moves. Instinctively most players know this, but they fear losing to a prepared line and thus turn to unambitious systems, or unhealthy surprises. The opponent will not be able to use his preparation but, sadly, will not need it. These sidelines generally end in uninspiring positions almost automatically.

Possibly the main reason why high-level opening books have disappeared is the rise of databases. It has been assumed that there is no point in having traditional opening books anymore, as you can look it all up in the database. Some rather lazy authors have a system: collect a few hundred games from the database, give Fritz a few moments, then hit Print. Such books add nothing to chess literature. We have seen enough of them and have never wanted to add to that pile.

In these days of multi-million game databases, we all have access to information, what is lacking is understanding. In the Grandmaster Repertoire series, very strong players will share their understanding and suggest strong new moves that are in no one else's database.

We are excited about this new series and hope that the reader will share some of that excitement.

John Shaw & Jacob Aagaard

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Key to symbols used

±	White is slightly better
+	Black is slightly better
+	White is better
+	Black is better
+−	White has a decisive advantage
−+	Black has a decisive advantage
=	with equality
≡	with compensation
⇄	with counterplay
?	unclear
?	a weak move
??	a blunder
!	a good move
!!	an excellent move
!?	a move worth considering
?!	a move of doubtful value
#	mate

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Foreword¹

By the author

I have always regarded building up a *perfect* opening repertoire, suitable for one's style and skills, as no easier a task than the Argonauts' search for the Golden Fleece.

There is a whole series of aspects to be clarified before even starting thinking about picking specific openings. Should we approach the opening in the same way irrespective of colour, or would it be wiser to display our main ambitions with White, while playing in a more restrained style with the black pieces? At all levels, we will find adherents of both these methods.

There are also several ways to give the repertoire a coherent character. We may be guided by the same general principles in all *our* opening variations (such as fighting for space and the initiative, or, on the contrary, aiming for solid but somewhat passive positions). This is the widest approach, which can lead to the coexistence of systems that bear absolutely no optical similarity to each other. It has frequently been the choice of the greatest players in history, but it is not easy to handle for mere mortals.

Many prefer to develop and exchange their pawns and pieces according to the same general patterns, irrespective of the opponent's play. In order to achieve this with Black, they utilize tandems of related openings such as the Slav and the Caro-Kann, or the King's Indian and the Breyer Ruy Lopez. This is likely to lead to a high degree of specialization in the respective systems, but risks limiting one's chess horizon.

When building up my repertoire with White, I treasure space and the initiative, but also the possibility of keeping play within a relatively limited range of structures, which I tend to study in depth. I also make major changes in my repertoire every five, ten or fifteen years, to avoid the risk mentioned in the previous paragraph.

As a child and teenager I only played 1.e4, but at the age of 18 I switched to 1.d4. For several years I employed aggressive set-ups, but in the early '90s I started to be attracted to the schemes involving a kingside fianchetto. Without me being aware of it, this was the moment when the book you are holding in your hands started its unusually long period of gestation.

The Catalan and the Fianchetto variations against the King's Indian and Grünfeld yielded me many wins, but I failed to find adequate related schemes against the Slav. Experience taught me that 1.d4 d5 2.Qf3 Qf6 3.g3 c6 followed by ...Qc8-f5 or ...Qc8-g4 offers White nothing but trouble. I was amused to find out that, a long time ago, a certain Valentin Marin (!) managed to

hold his own by employing this set-up with Black against the great Saviely Tartakower. It is also ironical that, together with other games played by Tartakower at Barcelona in 1929, that game convinced theoreticians to baptize the system based on 1.d4 and 2.g3 "The Catalan Opening".

In order to avoid the aforementioned problems, I started employing 1. $\mathbb{Q}f3$ followed by 2.g3 and 3. $\mathbb{Q}g2$ as my main move order, delaying the direct fight for the centre. After a few years I understood that this works well if Black develops in the spirit of the Indian Defences, but does not offer chances for an advantage if Black occupies the centre with 1...d5 (or 1... $\mathbb{Q}f6$ and 2...d5).

After having had enough of 1. $\mathbb{Q}f3$, I decided that the d5-square should immediately be taken under observation with 1.c4. Thus was initiated the most consistent period of success with White in my whole career. Against most of Black's answers I would generally develop according to my own taste, with g2-g3, $\mathbb{Q}f1-g2$, etc. If allowed, I did not hesitate to transpose to the Catalan or the Fianchetto King's Indian and Grünfeld, by playing d2-d4 at the right moment. The Slav Opening remained somewhat aside from this point of view, but I usually answered 1...c6 with 2.e4, transposing to the aggressive Panov Attack.

When I first considered writing a book dedicated to a *pure* English Opening repertoire, I was afraid that I would face insurmountable problems proving an advantage for White in *every* line while avoiding recommending a transposition to 1.d4 at various points. This over-ambitious quest, which I had secretly been dreaming of, was against the long-established views of official theory and looked nearly impossible to accomplish.

After more than one year of deep analysis with Valentin Stoica, I managed to make a step I had never dared to try before, by building a viable repertoire based on 1.c4 followed by 2.g3 irrespective of Black's answer!

That White refrains from an early d2-d4 in all these lines does not mean that he gives up the fight for the centre. Once White has eliminated the danger of Black's counterplay, or achieved some other sort of advantage, White will strive to occupy the centre. You will find the spirit of this general strategy throughout this book and its companion volume.

I completed the initial analytical work shortly before participating in the 51st edition of the Reggio Emilia tournament, as 2008 turned into 2009, and felt ready to give the brand new repertoire a thorough practical testing. The result was more than encouraging: with White I scored 4 out of 5, the equivalent of a rating performance of over 2800. Moreover, I had the better position in the only game I lost.

I cannot anticipate how my understanding of chess will change in, say, ten years, but for the moment I feel confident that, after almost 20 years of research, I have finally found *my* Golden Fleece.

By writing this book, I wish to share my conquest with you, dear reader.

Mihail Marin
Bucharest, July 2009

How to Use this Book

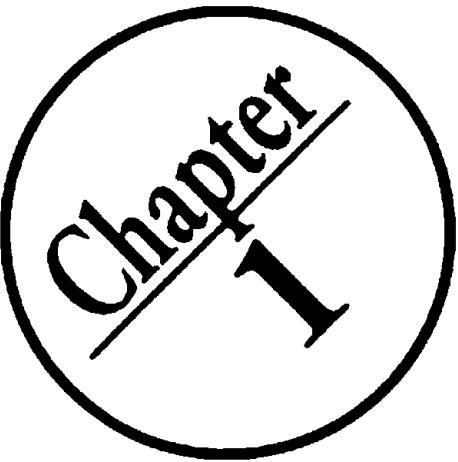
I have noticed that many chess players seem to read books by dipping in and out of various chapters, as the mood strikes them. I have a request – the first time you read this book, please read it in order. I ask this because I often introduce strategic ideas in one chapter that will be relied upon in later chapters. My plan is to build the reader's understanding of the English gradually, as the story unfolds.

This book supplies a complete repertoire for White after 1.c4 e5, so no significant variations are ignored. I may point out possible transpositions to other openings, but I will not rely on them for our repertoire.

In the English Opening, where direct contact between the pieces is often delayed, both sides often have a wide range of moves. I mention every significant variation, but covering every possible move would be neither practical nor especially helpful to the reader. What is important is to cover all of the key ideas. Thus, even though you may encounter unfamiliar moves from time to time, you will not be “all at sea” – your new understanding of the English will be a reliable compass. I have decades of experience in playing and analysing the English and yet I am often surprised in the opening – it is the nature of the beast.

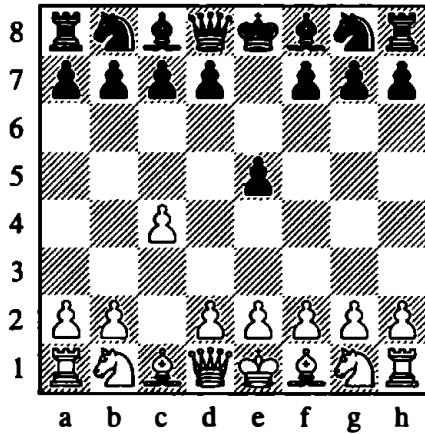
I have marked some moves with N for Novelty. This means the move is new to me and I cannot find it in my database or books. However, there is always a possibility that the move could have been played in some obscure game, unbeknown to me. Should the reader encounter any such examples, I would ask him to remember that it is almost impossible to acquaint oneself with every possible source of chess games. In any case, this book contains a great deal of original analysis, which I hope will prove useful to the reader.

I have delayed you long enough – I hope you enjoy the book.

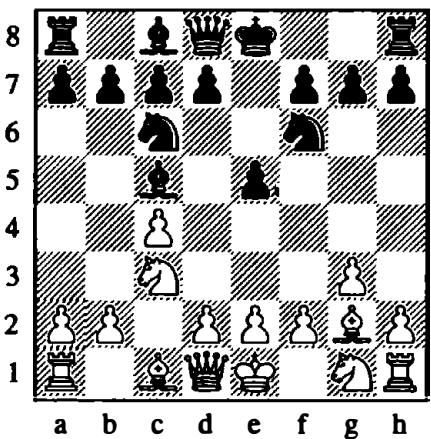


The English

A Repertoire

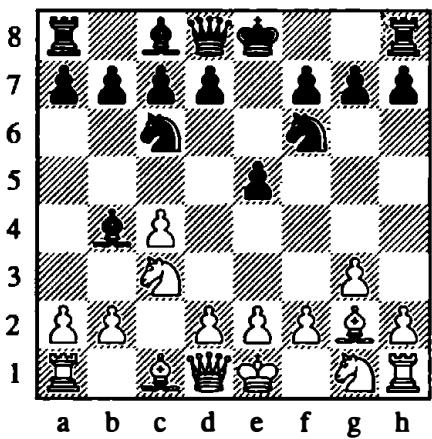


Chapters 2-6



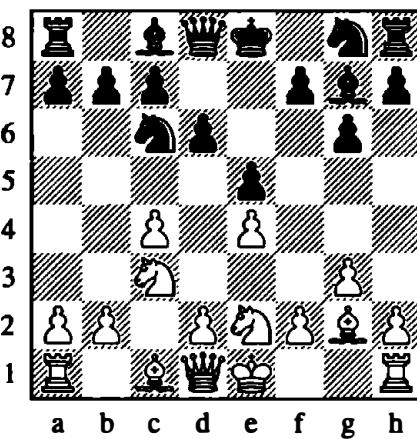
Karpov Variation

Chapters 7-12



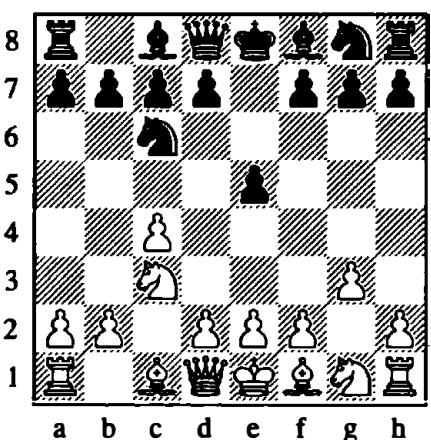
Reversed Rossolimo

Chapters 13-18



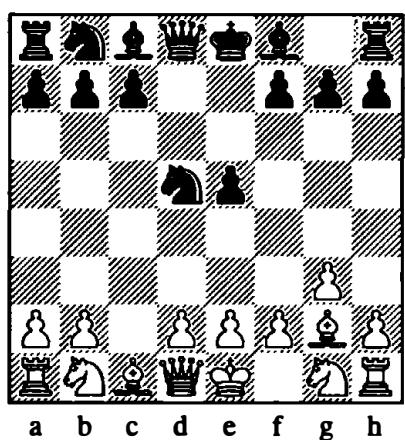
Botvinnik System

Chapter 19



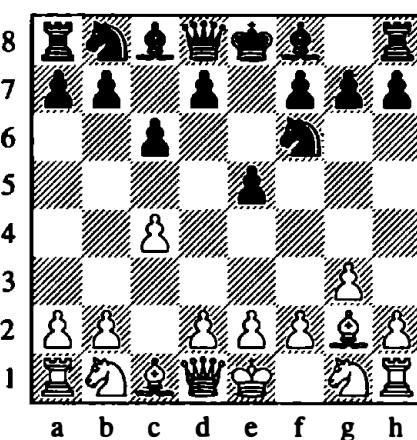
3rd move alternatives

Chapters 20-25



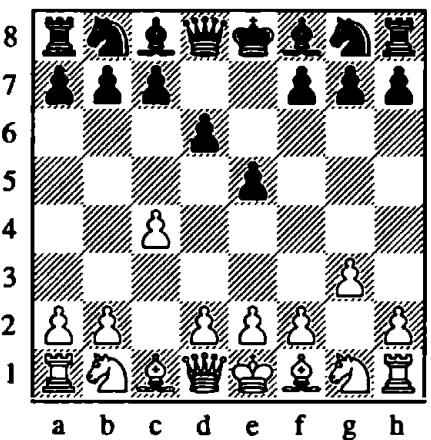
Reversed Dragon

Chapters 26-29



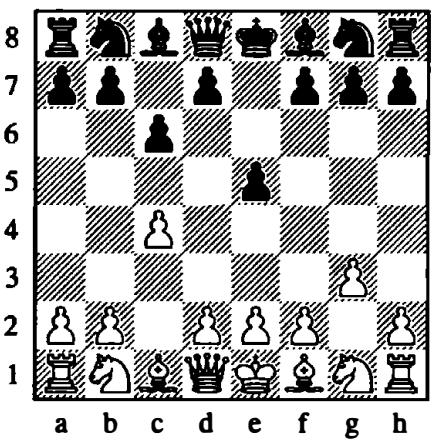
Keres Variation

Chapters 30-31



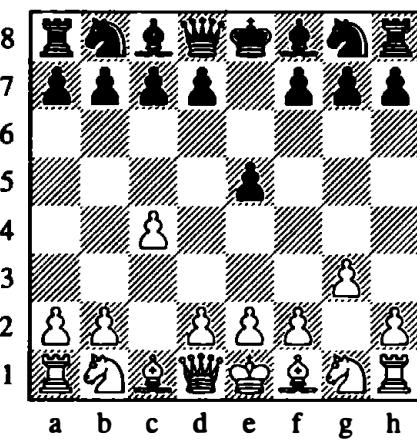
2...d6

Chapter 32



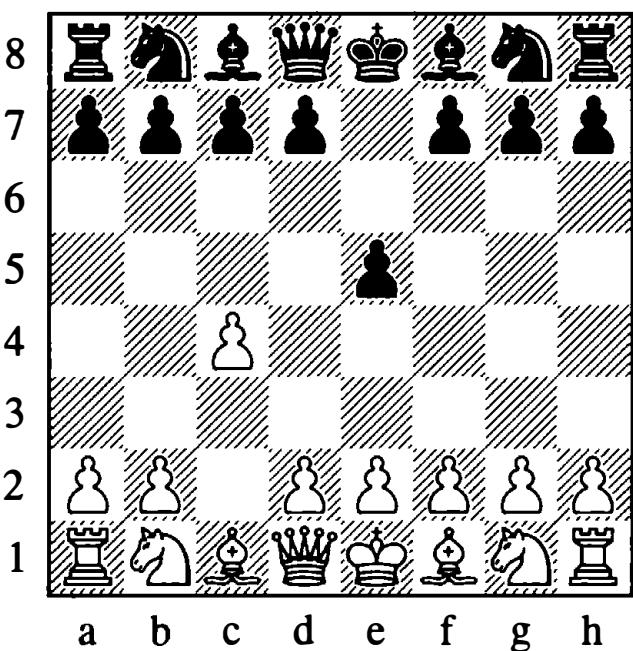
Accelerated Keres

Chapter 33



Odds and Trends

1.c4 e5



From the point of view of the fight for space, this is the most logical move, since the e5-pawn is more central than the c4-pawn. Black hopes to prove that White's extra tempo in this reversed Sicilian is not so relevant and that Black will be able to consolidate his space advantage in the long run.

Many players prefer to sidestep this position by playing 1. $\mathbb{Q}f3$ followed by 2. c4. Experience has taught me that delaying the development of the bishop to g2 can have a negative influence on White's chances to gain the initiative. I will dedicate a special chapter to the move order based on 1. $\mathbb{Q}f3$ in the second volume.

During my chats with fellow grandmasters about opening preparation, I frequently came across the opinion that White has no advantage in the diagrammed position. Some went even further and claimed that the position is a draw. One does not need to be an expert to understand that it is too early for such radical evaluations, but psychologically it is difficult to withstand such strong pressure. I must confess that there were times when I felt like a mere amateur because I started the vast majority of my games with 1.c4. Fortunately, I found consolation in my favourable results.

Some of my opponents prepared 1...e5 especially for their games against me, without

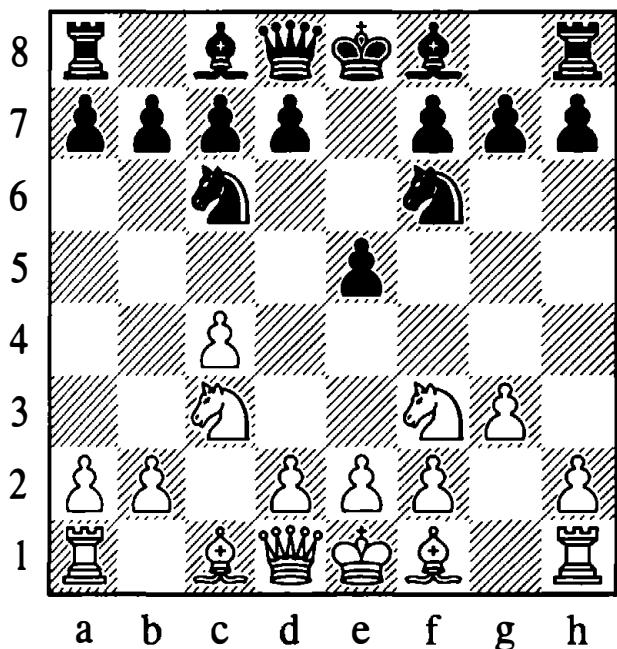
having previous experience with it. They probably thought that my narrow repertoire deserved punishment, but failed to understand that the English Opening cannot be learned in just a few hours of computer-assisted preparation. In any case, my results in these games are close to perfect.

A brief look at the diagram allows us to make a wild guess about the draft plans of both sides. Black will be attacking on the kingside, while White will exert pressure on the opposite wing. But obviously it is too early to generalize with any certainty, because the structure may suffer radical changes.

In the English Opening developing the bishop to g2 is White's most popular option, because it serves the purpose of building up pressure against the enemy queenside. However, 2.g3 is only the second most popular continuation. The main move is 2. $\mathbb{Q}c3$, which looks the most logical from an abstract point of view – one is supposed to develop knights and only then bishops. Besides, the knight move immediately increases White's control over the centre, while 2.g3 followed by 3. $\mathbb{Q}g2$ is one tempo slower. I have tried both moves in practice and I believe that they have similar merits, but there are several reasons why 2.g3 is essential from the point of view of our repertoire. I will explain them at a later stage, after making a comparative study of the main alternative.

After 2. $\mathbb{Q}c3$, Black is best advised to continue developing, as 2...c6 3.d4 would lead to a reversed Alapin Sicilian, where White's extra tempo would be very significant because the position is open, while 2...g6 3.d4 or 2...f5 3.d4 lead to similar consequences.

One of the most popular modern tabiyas arises after 2... $\mathbb{Q}f6$ 3. $\mathbb{Q}f3$ $\mathbb{Q}c6$ 4.g3:



Many wonderful games have been played from this position and I personally have a lot of pleasant memories with White. Players choosing 2.g3 usually aim to sidestep this tabiya by developing their king's knight to e2 after a previous e2-e3. In my preliminary work for this volume I feared that I would also have to avoid this important part of the English Opening. Fortunately, careful analysis revealed that $\mathbb{N}g1-f3$ remains White's best option in most cases, despite the opinion of many theoreticians.

Therefore, most of Black's continuations in the diagrammed position would transpose to lines analysed in this book.

- 4... $\mathbb{N}c5$ 5. $\mathbb{N}g2$ is Chapters 2-6.
- 4... $\mathbb{N}b4$ 5. $\mathbb{N}d5$ transposes to Chapters 7-12.
- 4... $d5$ 5. $cxd5$ $\mathbb{N}xd5$ 6. $\mathbb{N}g2$ $\mathbb{N}b6$ is a Reversed Dragon, which is examined in Chapters 20-25.
- 4... $\mathbb{N}d4$ is a line with a marked drawish tendency, but it is impossible to employ against the 2.g3 move order. Indeed, after 2... $\mathbb{N}c6$ 3. $\mathbb{N}c3$ $\mathbb{N}f6$ 4. $\mathbb{N}g2$ it makes little sense to play 4... $\mathbb{N}d4$ because of 5.e3.

One important advantage of the Four Knights move order is that if Black tries to fianchetto his

king's bishop White can win space in the centre. That is, 4... $g6$ 5. $\mathbb{N}g2$ $\mathbb{N}g7$ can be strongly met by 6.d4!. White cannot achieve this from the 2.g3 move order, after which the set-up with ... $g7-g6$ and ... $\mathbb{N}f8-g7$ leads to positions from Chapters 13-18 or 30-31. From the point of view of the coherence of our repertoire this is not a major drawback. In order to keep the game within English Opening territory after 1... $g6$ we have to refrain from d2-d4, which would transpose to the King's Indian. Therefore, 2.g3 transposes more or less by force to one of the aforementioned chapters.

The time has come to mention other move orders that make 2.g3 an essential answer to 1...e5. After 1.c4 $\mathbb{N}f6$ 2.g3, Black can play 2...e5. A similar situation arises after 1.c4 c6 2.g3 e5, which transposes to the important lines from Chapter 32.

One slight drawback of 2. $\mathbb{N}c3$ is that it allows 2... $\mathbb{N}b4$, which leads to interesting counterplay for Black after the fashionable continuation 3. $\mathbb{N}d5$ $\mathbb{N}e7$ 4.d4 d6 5.e4 $\mathbb{N}f6$. This is not a real reason to refrain from 2. $\mathbb{N}c3$, but since a thorough study of 2.g3 is essential, it makes sense to spare some analytical effort as well as editorial space by sidestepping the 2... $\mathbb{N}b4$ line.

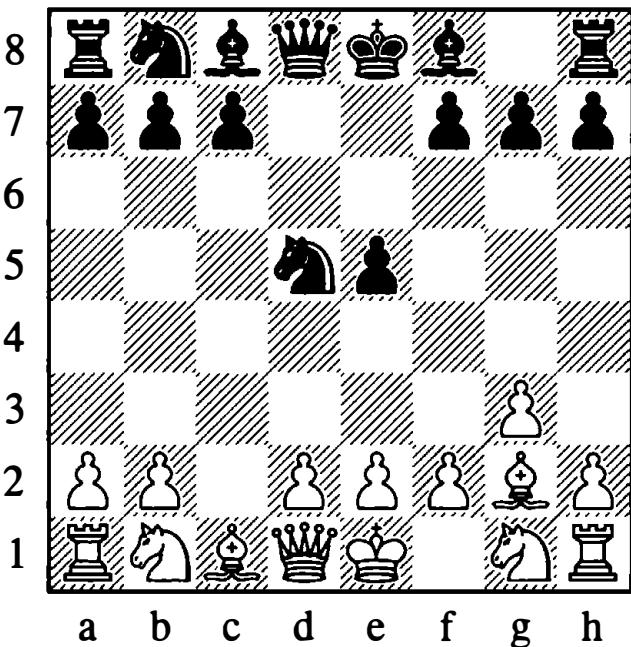
Finally, I will mention one interesting aspect. Many strong players, including World Champions, answer 1.c4 with 1... $\mathbb{N}f6$ and only after 2. $\mathbb{N}c3$ do they resort to 2...e5. This is a clear sign that they wish to avoid the line 1...e5 2.g3, which indirectly speaks about its merits.

The worth of the 2.g3 move order is clear, so the time has come to draw a map of the present volume.

Black's main continuations are the developing 2... $\mathbb{N}f6$ and 2... $\mathbb{N}c6$. As mentioned before,

2...g6 transposes to Chapters 13 to 18 or 30 to 31, as might 2...d6. Of the other pawn moves, 2...c6 is important, see Chapter 32.

The main variation after 2... $\mathbb{Q}f6$ continues: 3. $\mathbb{Q}g2$ d5 (3...c6 is an important alternative, which will be examined in detail in Chapters 26 to 29, while 3... $\mathbb{Q}c6$ transposes below) 4.cxd5 $\mathbb{Q}xd5$



This position is examined in Chapters 20 to 25 and basically transposes to an important branch of the Four Knights tabiya mentioned above.

2... $\mathbb{Q}c6$ demands an accurate reply from White: 3. $\mathbb{Q}c3$!

There is a strong temptation to play 3. $\mathbb{Q}g2$, in order to avoid the systems based on ... $\mathbb{Q}f8-b4$. The main problem with this move order is that after 3...f5 4. $\mathbb{Q}c3$ $\mathbb{Q}f6$ White lacks a useful move. I have failed to find a favourable way to continue developing. 5.d3 $\mathbb{Q}b4$ leads to active play for Black, while 5.e3 allows Black

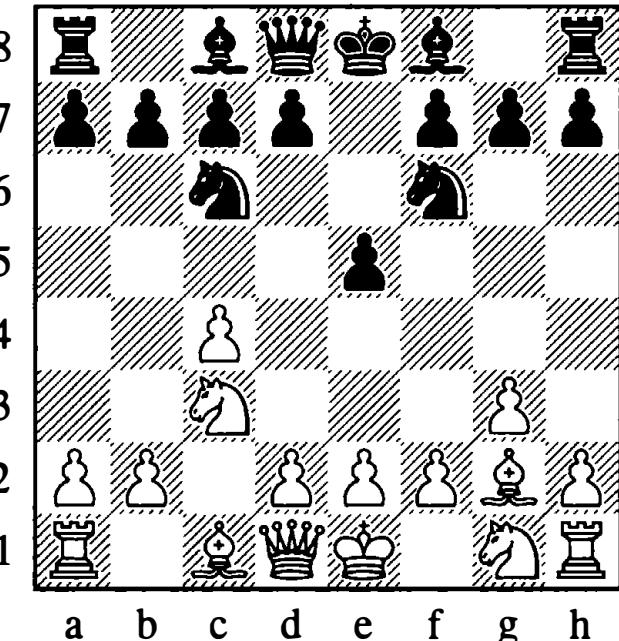
to open the centre with 5...d5! 6.cxd5 $\mathbb{Q}b4$. The position remains interesting, but White cannot claim an advantage.

Returning to 3. $\mathbb{Q}c3$, Black has a few options:

3...g6 is an important branch leading to the so-called reversed Closed Sicilian: see Chapters 13 to 18.

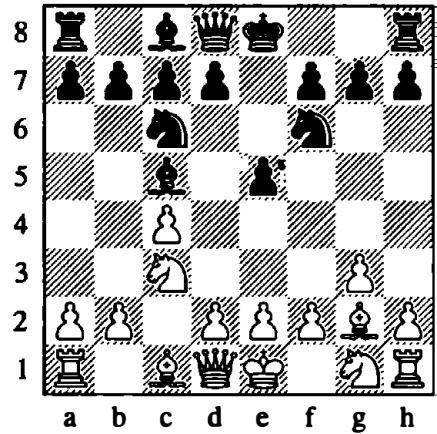
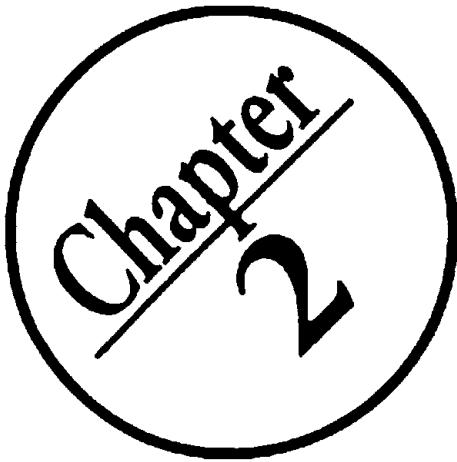
3... $\mathbb{Q}b4$ and 3... $\mathbb{Q}c5$ usually do not have much independent value, but they do in Chapter 19.

3... $\mathbb{Q}f6$ 4. $\mathbb{Q}g2$



Together with the Reversed Dragon mentioned above, this tabiya forms the equivalent of the Four Knights variation. Black now has a choice between systems based on 4... $\mathbb{Q}c5$ and 4... $\mathbb{Q}b4$.

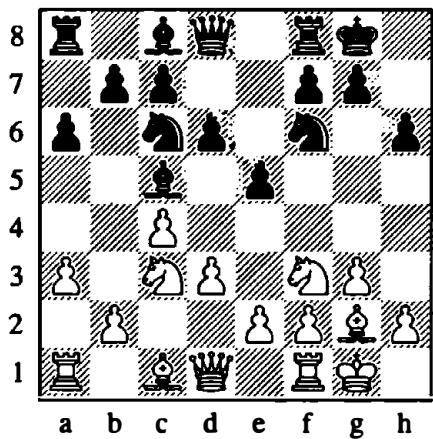
We are ready to start our journey through the incredible world of the English Opening.



Karpov Variation

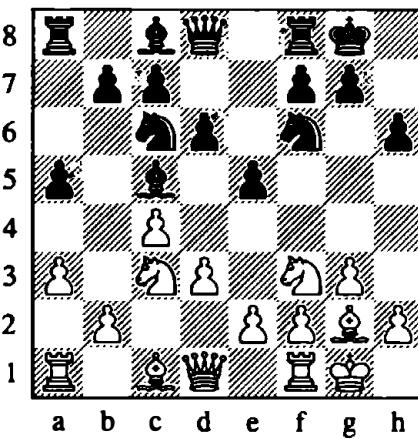
Introduction

Chapter 3 - page 23



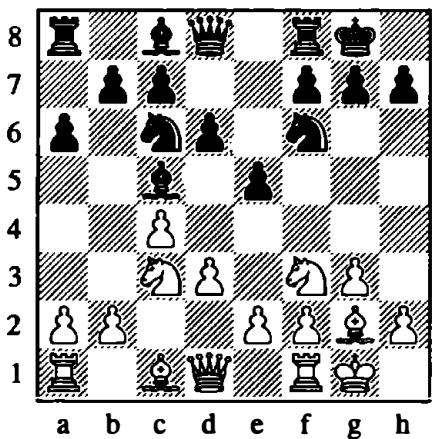
8...a6

Chapter 4 - page 47



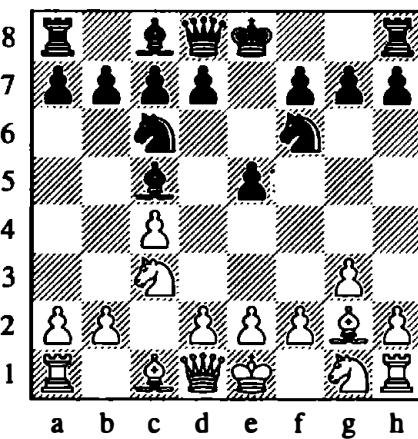
8...a5

Chapter 5 - page 57



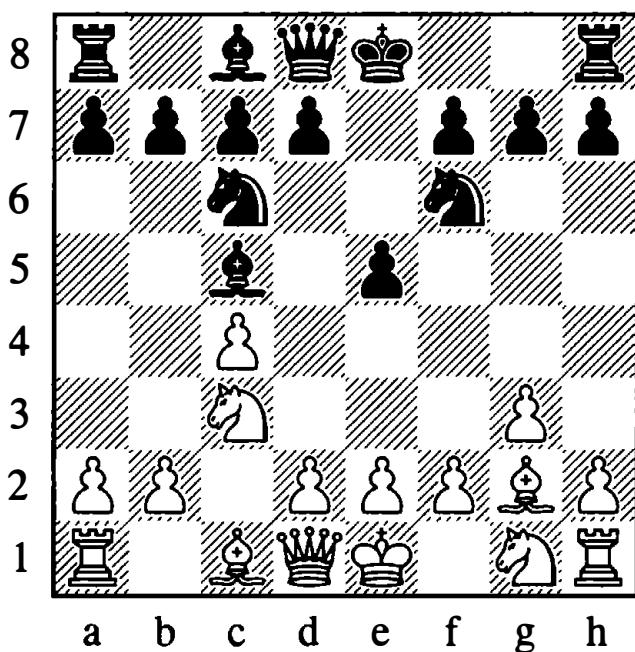
7...a6

Chapter 6 - page 71



Fifth move alternatives

1.c4 e5 2.g3 ♜c6 3.♗c3 ♜f6 4.♕g2 ♜c5



It is not by chance that I have picked this variation to be examined first in the analytical chapters. Black's natural way of developing his pieces, without losing time on unnecessary pawn moves, makes this system quite popular and I estimate that I have faced it in about one quarter of my games where 1...e5 (or 2...e5) was played. This aspect reveals the practical importance of mastering the secrets of this variation with White, but also suggests that it may be the kind of position I understand best, on the basis of enormous experience accumulated over the years. My intention is to make this chapter instructive in a wider sense, by explaining strategic ideas that may also be useful when facing other variations.

In the diagrammed position, White has to make an important choice. It is a common thought that, having refrained from ♜g1-f3 at an early stage of the game, White can deviate favourably from the Four Knights system (5.♗f3) by playing e2-e3 and ♜g1-e2. This is supposed to restrict the enemy dark-squared bishop and consolidate White's centre. On the other hand, this slows down White's development by spending a valuable tempo on a pawn move, while refraining from putting pressure on the e5-pawn. Moreover, there is a

small tactical problem with initiating this plan immediately.

5.e3 d5?

It appears that Black can take advantage of the temporary weakness of the d3-square by immediately opening the centre.

6.cxd5 ♜b4

Black will retrieve the pawn and simplify the position if White fights for space in the centre with d2-d4. This does not necessarily lead to absolute equality, but it will considerably reduce White's winning chances. The final evaluation of this variation may well be a matter of taste, so I have examined it briefly in line B1 of Chapter 6.

While allowing this forced line is optional, in view of the possibility of returning to the normal path with 5.♗f3, the position arising after the more restrained 5.e3 d6 is of crucial importance, because it can arise by force from a different move order, characteristic of line A from Chapter 19.

Prior to writing this book, my experience against this structure was limited to just a few games, but thorough analysis convinced me that White's chances to retain a strategic initiative are similar to after 5.♗f3. You will find this line classified under B2 in Chapter 6.

In his book *The Dynamic English*, Tony Kosten recommends the half-waiting move:

5.a3

Later, having prevented ...♜c6-b4, White can play e2-e3 and ♜g1-e2.

Instinctively, I do not like this approach, although objectively it may be sound. First of all, I have the feeling that White is wasting too much time on pawn moves at an early stage of the game. Moreover, a2-a3 induces

a slight weakening of the light squares on the queenside. With the king's knight on e2, White's structure after b2-b4 and d2-d3 will have a vulnerable spot on c4. We will see that after 5. $\mathbb{Q}f3$ White will eventually adopt the same structure, but with two important differences. First of all, he will play e2-e3 only after completing his development. Secondly, the king's knight will be ready to cover the c4-square with a later $\mathbb{Q}f3-d2$.

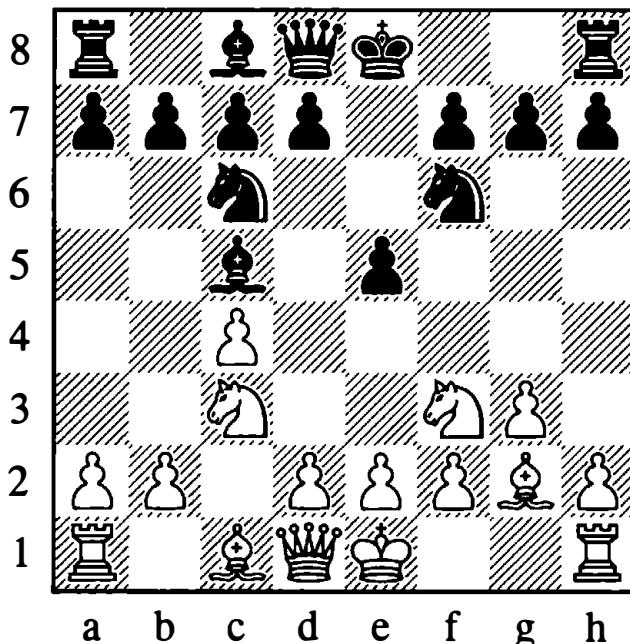
The reader will notice that in line B2 from Chapter 6, where 5.e3 is met by 5...d6, White keeps his queenside pawns on a2 and b2, focusing on the early occupation of the centre, which is the main idea of developing the knight to e2.

I do not pretend to have exhausted the subject, or to refute 5.a3, but in Chapter 6, line A I have expressed some of my specific doubts about this set-up.

The main body of Chapters 2 to 6 is 5. $\mathbb{Q}f3$, leading to very complex positions where tactics and strategy frequently walk hand in hand. Based on my tournament experience, I recommend examining both 5.e3 and 5. $\mathbb{Q}f3$. In one Romanian Championship almost all my games with White transposed to the 4... $\mathbb{B}c5$ 5. $\mathbb{Q}f3$ system. I won the first game, then a second one, but after obtaining a crushing advantage in the third one, I somehow got fed up with using autopilot all the way, lost the thread and eventually the game. For psychological reasons, it is sometimes useful to change patterns during a tournament and varying between 5. $\mathbb{Q}f3$ and 5.e3 is worthwhile.

I will explain the basic ideas for both sides in the introduction to 5. $\mathbb{Q}f3$ below. Later, when dealing with the other lines, I will highlight the concrete differences.

5. $\mathbb{Q}f3$

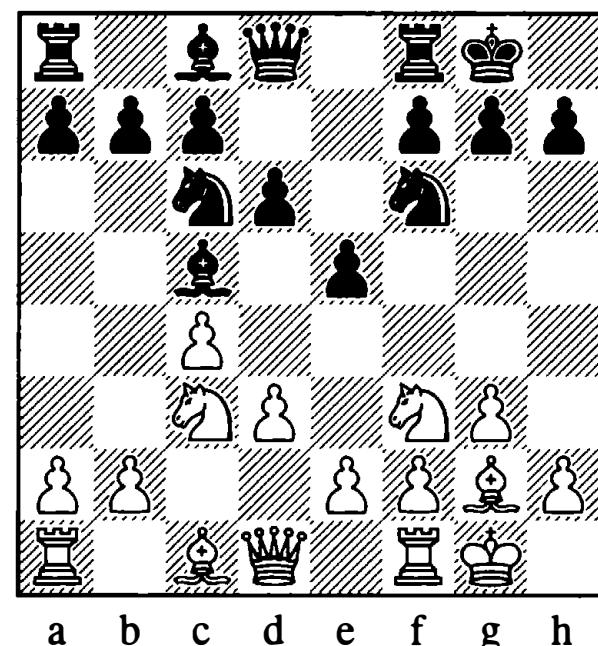


This move transposes to the solid Four Knights system with 4... $\mathbb{B}c5$, which Karpov has occasionally used with Black, yielding him excellent results. However, it should be mentioned that against heavyweight opponents like Korchnoi and Kasparov he preferred to develop the bishop to b4.

5...d6 6.d3

6.0–0 0–0 7.d3 is another possible move order.

6...0–0 7.0–0

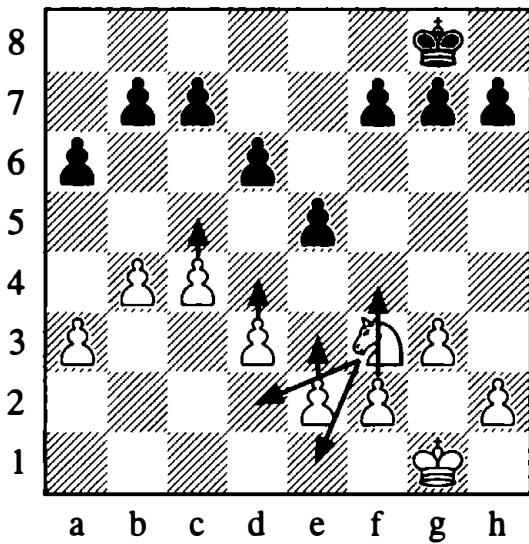


In abstract terms, the c5-bishop's cooperation with its central pawn chain (c7, d6, e5 and, sometimes, f4) is similar to that between

the English bishop and the e2-, d3- and c4-pawns (White also often desires a pawn on b5). Each player's pawns prevent the enemy pawns from obstructing the crucial h1-a8 and a7-g1 diagonals, respectively.

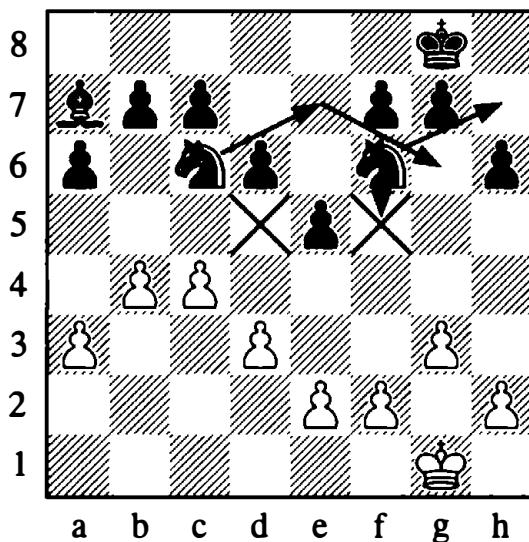
The targets of the bishops are of a different nature: Black hopes to launch a kingside attack after thorough preparation, while White is planning to carry out his customary pawn attack on the queenside. Both sides will increase (or at least maintain) the wide-ranging action of their bishops while restricting the enemy bishop.

White's main pawn play consists of a3 and b4 (if allowed!) followed by e3. In certain cases he can press with d4 and c5, aiming to leave the enemy bishop passive on a7. In this latter case, the bishop's power should not be underestimated: its pressure against the d4-pawn is similar to that exerted by the Grünfeld bishop from g7. If Black starts a bayonet attack based on ...f5, White can neutralize it with f4, after a previous knight retreat (usually to e1).



Black's pawn play is slightly more difficult to carry out. The equivalent of White's aforementioned plan would imply the moves ...f7-f5 and ...c7-c6, but both pawns are temporarily blocked by Black's own knights. Prematurely removing the knights from their active squares would leave either the d5- or e5-square insufficiently defended, allowing

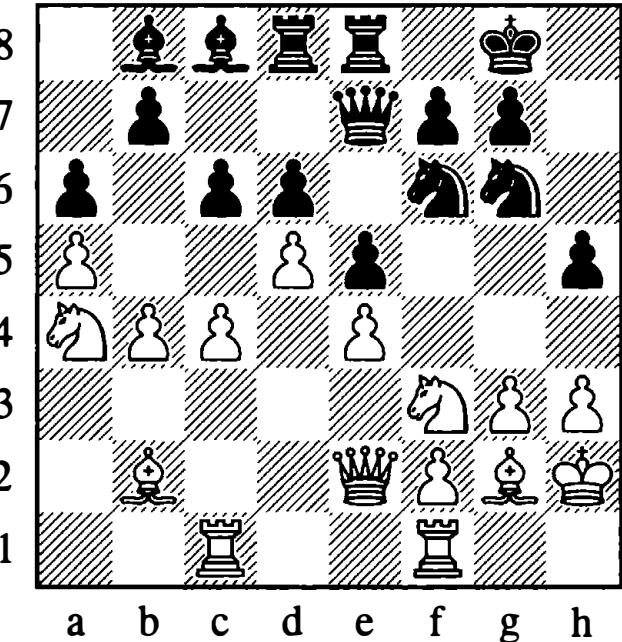
White to install his queen's knight to the wonderful d5-square or open the queenside with b4 and c5.



Black has a choice about how to secure the c5-bishop against the advance of White's queenside pawns. The most popular method is ...a7-a6 followed by ... $\mathbb{Q}c5-a7$. Black refrains from fighting for space, aiming to minimize the damage on the queenside by avoiding any kind of weaknesses. In doing so, he should not forget that the bishop enjoys only temporary safety. In the long run, the massive advance of White's queenside pawns could leave it completely out of play. Here is a typical example, taken from Chapter 3, line B, page 38.

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Black has achieved a favourable regrouping, with the exception of his dark-squared bishop.

22...cxd5

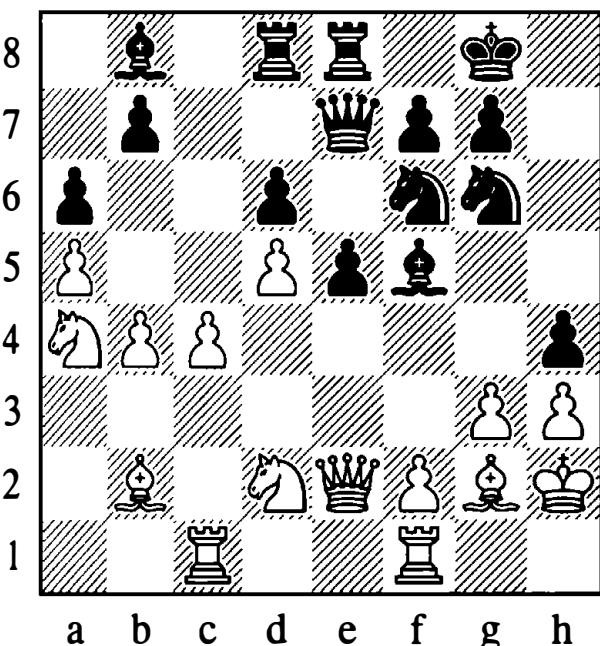
It was advisable to refrain from this move by playing 22...h4 immediately.

23.exd5!?

This looks risky, because it leaves Black with a threatening kingside majority, but 23.cxd5 allows Black to stabilize the queenside with 23... $\mathbb{Q}d7$ 24. $\mathbb{Q}b6$ $\mathbb{Q}b5$. By giving the position an asymmetrical character, White aims to keep his queenside attack going.

23... $\mathbb{Q}f5$ 24. $\mathbb{Q}d2$ h4

Apparently, everything is fine for Black, whose kingside attack develops without effort.



25.b5!

Suddenly, the threat of b5-b6, cutting the bishop out of the action for the rest of the game, cannot be parried.

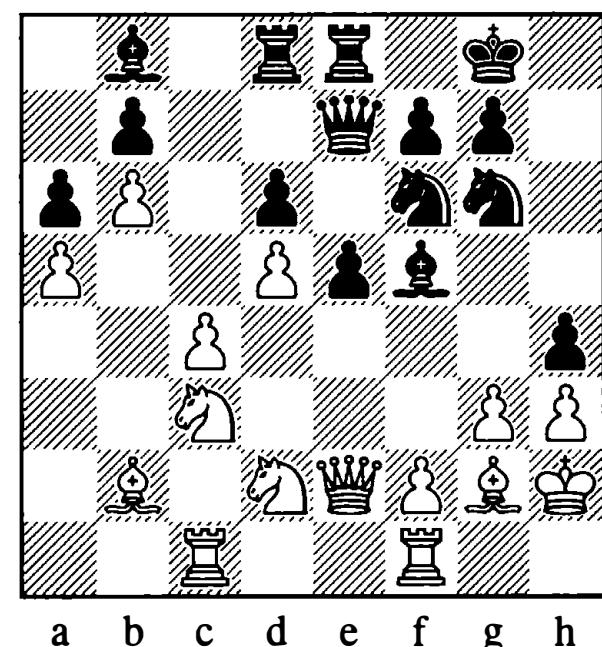
25... $\mathbb{Q}c7$

This just loses two tempos, but it is hard to suggest anything better.

For instance, 25... $\mathbb{Q}d7$, pinning the b5-pawn, can be answered with 26. $\mathbb{Q}b6$, threatening $\mathbb{Q}xd7$ followed by b6, when after 26... $\mathbb{Q}f5$

27. $\mathbb{W}f3$ the bishop has no favourable retreat squares.

26.b6 $\mathbb{Q}b8$ 27. $\mathbb{Q}c3$



Having achieved the main goal on the queenside, the knight returns to the centre in order to increase control over the e4-square. The rest was easy: White is practically playing with an extra piece, which yields him a decisive advantage.

27...e4

This looks like a logical continuation of the attack, but Black has insufficient forces to support this pawn.

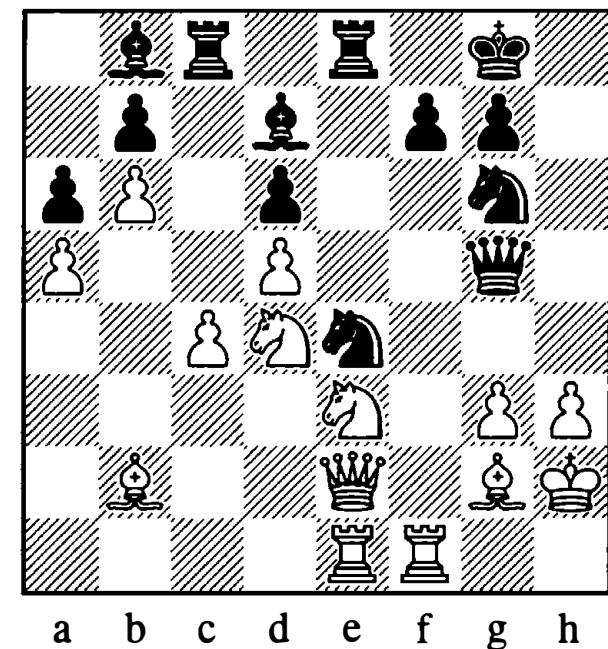
28. $\mathbb{B}ce1$ $\mathbb{h}xg3\#$ 29. $\mathbb{f}xg3$ e3 30. $\mathbb{Q}b3$ $\mathbb{Q}d7$ 31. $\mathbb{Q}d1$

The pawn will be lost without having improved the situation of the b8-bishop.

31... $\mathbb{Q}e5$ 32. $\mathbb{B}f4$ $\mathbb{B}c8$ 33. $\mathbb{Q}xe3$ $\mathbb{Q}g6$ 34. $\mathbb{B}f1$ $\mathbb{Q}e4$

With the dark-squared bishop on any reasonable square, the attack against the g3-pawn would be more dangerous. The way it is, White has no problems keeping everything defended.

35. $\mathbb{Q}d4$ $\mathbb{W}g5$



White can react accordingly, with a well timed e2(3)-e4 when, compared to the Ruy Lopez, he would be several tempos up. Indeed, he has avoided moving the queen's knight back and forth in order to allow the advance of the c-pawn, while the king's bishop has been developed to the active g2-square without loss of time (compare to ... $\mathbb{Q}f8-e7$ followed by ... $\mathbb{Q}f8-e8$, ... $\mathbb{Q}e7-f8$, etc.). Moreover, the plan involving ... $\mathbb{Q}b8-c6-e7-g6$ is rather time-consuming and White should be able to find a way to counter it by favourably opening the centre at an early stage.

36. $\mathbb{Q}xe4!$

The start of a massive exchanging operation, which will increase the significance of White's material superiority on the kingside.

**36... $\mathbb{B}xe4$ 37. $\mathbb{W}f3$ $\mathbb{B}e7$ 38. $\mathbb{Q}df5$ $\mathbb{Q}xf5$
39. $\mathbb{W}xf5$ $\mathbb{W}xf5$ 40. $\mathbb{Q}xf5$**

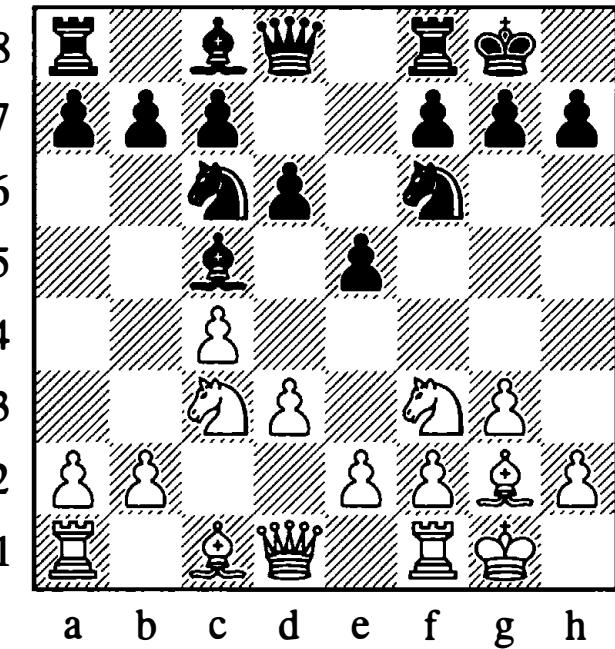
After the forced 40... $\mathbb{B}xe1$ 41. $\mathbb{B}xe1$ f6, White can play 42. $\mathbb{B}e7!$, with decisive threats along the seventh rank. The rook is taboo, because of the fork on e7. Therefore, Black resigned.

1-0

In view of this type of catastrophe, playing ...a7-a5 is an important alternative, preventing White's expansion. This move has the drawback of weakening the b5-square: a detail that could be important at a later stage. It also makes it almost compulsory to play ...a5xb4 when White finally plays b2(3)-b4, thus leaving the bishop exposed (and sometimes pinned) on a7.

Black would like to transfer the c6-knight to g6, without allowing c4-c5 anyway, and then strengthen his centre with ...c7-c6. This would not only create the threat of increasing his spatial advantage with ...d6-d5, but also enable the recycling of the dark-squared bishop via b8-c7. With reversed colours, this is similar to White's regrouping achieved after $\mathbb{Q}b1-d2-f1-g3$ and $\mathbb{Q}f1-b5-a4-b3-c2$ in the Ruy Lopez (!).

The situation is different if we refer to piece development. This time it is White who finds it more difficult to choose between moves with apparently equal merits.



Black's plan in the next phase of the game is quite clear: ... $\mathbb{Q}c8-e6$ (or to f5, g4), ... $\mathbb{W}d8-d7$, ... $\mathbb{B}f8-e8$ and eventually ... $\mathbb{Q}e6$ (or f5, g4)-h3.

White's play is usually subtler and includes such prophylactic moves such as $\mathbb{B}a1-c1$ and $\mathbb{B}f1-e1$, which will be explained at a later stage. His most acute problem is the development of the queen's bishop. The thematic move $\mathbb{Q}c1-g5$ followed by an exchange on f6 would increase White's control over the central light squares, but, if carried out prematurely, this operation

would fail to achieve anything concrete, while also helping Black to clear the path for the f-pawn.

If Black refrains from an early ...h7-h6, White should make the “obligatory” moves (a2-a3 and b2-b4 in the first place), waiting for an eventual commitment from Black, such as choosing the square to which the light-squared bishop will be developed. Only then should he play $\mathbb{B}c1-g5$. If Black decides to play ...h7-h6 at a slightly later stage, perhaps after b2-b4, play would simply transpose to the main line, in which White develops his bishop to b2, with the small satisfaction that the potentially dangerous bishop has caused Black to lose time.

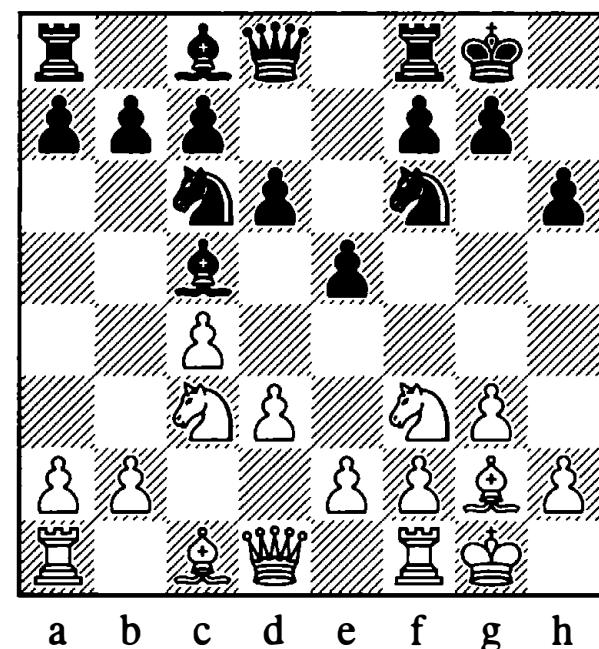
The bishop is quite effective on b2. It keeps several important squares under (direct or indirect) pressure, preventing black expansion based on ...d6-d5 or ...e5-e4. These pawn breaks would not only increase the white bishop's scope, but will completely fail to solve the problem of Black's own bishop. At the same time, the queen bishop's placement increases the force of such typical breaks as c4-c5, d3-d4 or f2-f4.

Finally, I will mention some essential aspects related to the thematic move $\mathbb{Q}c3-d5$. When carried out under favourable circumstances it will yield White an advantage. The knight cannot be tolerated on such an active square, while after ... $\mathbb{Q}f6xd5$, c4xd5 Black is left with a backward pawn on c7. White's strategic success will be complete only if he finds a way to prevent ...c7-c6 or if he manages to trade his d3-pawn for the e5-pawn (most likely with d3-d4, in a moment when ...e5-e4 is impossible or just bad). After this exchange, ...c7-c6 would leave the d6-pawn weak in view of d5xc6.

In order to simplify the process of explaining, we will start with Black's most common

continuation, 7...h6, which will be covered in the next two chapters. In Chapter 5, we will examine 7...a6, highlighting the differences induced by Black's refraining from the move ...h6.

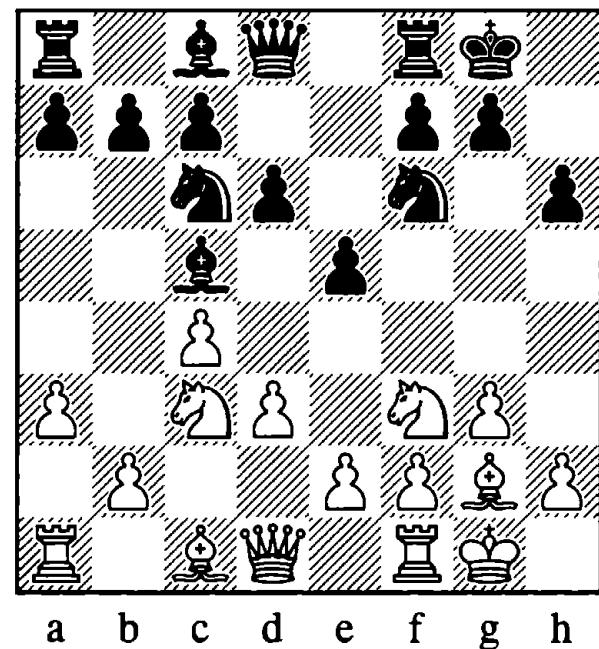
Let's start with 7...h6.



Most of my opponents have played ...h7-h6 immediately after d2-d3, probably afraid of the pin that would be created by $\mathbb{Q}c1-g5$. However, the English Opening offers practically unlimited possibilities for transposition, which makes the choice of the main move order slightly arbitrary.

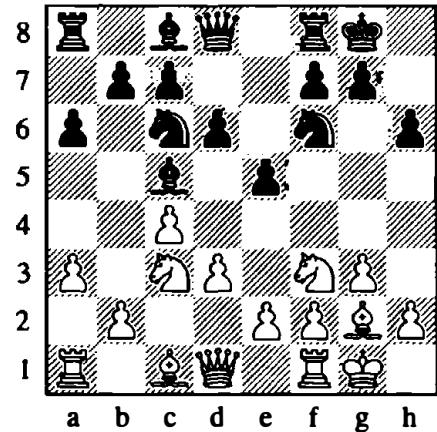
8.a3

This is the natural start of the queenside expansion.



We have a further subdivision. Black has a choice between **8...a6** and **8...a5**. In order to ensure the fluidity of the lecture, we will examine them separately. The former in Chapter 3 and the latter in Chapter 4.

Chapter 3



Karpov Variation

7...h6 8.a3 a6

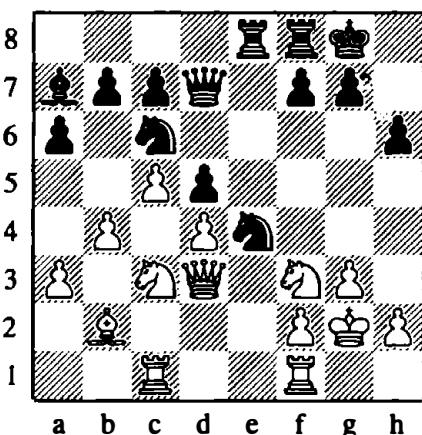
Variation Index

1.c4 e5 2.g3 ♜c6 3.♗c3 ♜f6 4.♗g2 ♜c5 5.♗f3 d6 6.d3 0-0 7.0-0 h6 8.a3

8...a6 9.b4 ♜a7 10.♗b2

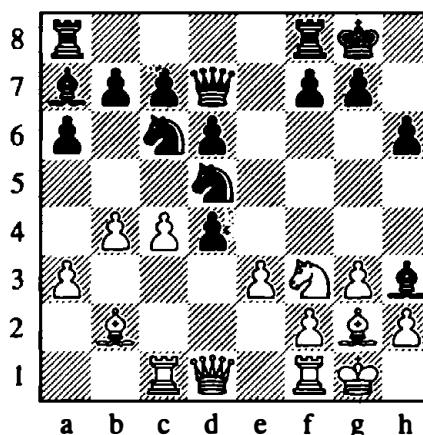
A) 10...♜e6 11.♝c1 ♜d7 12.e3	p 24
A1) 12...♜h3	p 24
A2) 12...♝ac8	p 30
A3) 12...♜e7	p 31
A4) 12...♝fe8	p 33
B) 10...♝g4	p 38
C) 10...♜f5	p 41
D) 10...♜d7	p 44

A11) after 17...♜e4



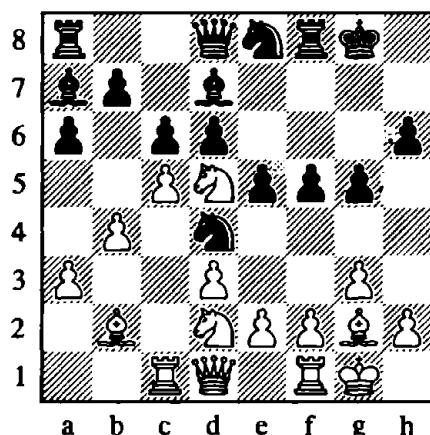
18.♝ce1!N

A122) Self-improvement



15.♗xh3!N

C) after 16...c6



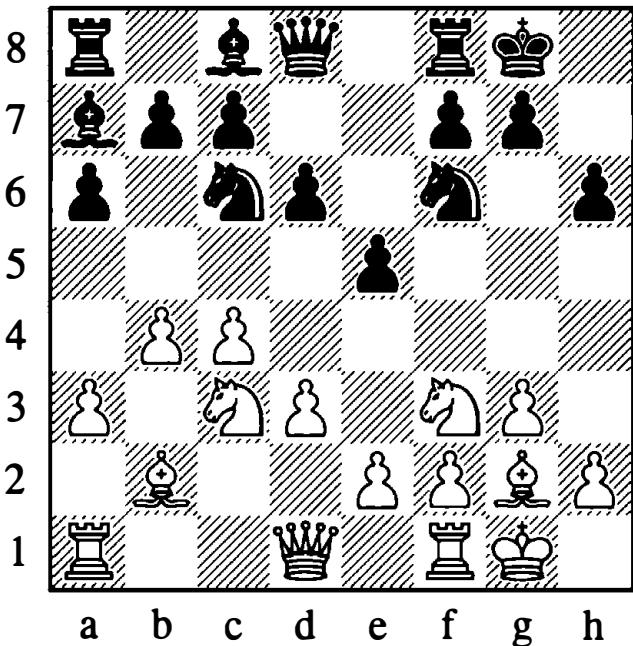
17.e3!N

**1.c4 e5 2.g3 ♜c6 3.♘c3 ♜f6 4.♗g2 ♜c5
5.♘f3 d6 6.d3 0-0 7.0-0 h6 8.a3 a6**

This is both the most flexible and the popular move. Black prepares a safe retreat for the bishop without weakening his queenside.

9.b4 ♜a7 10.♗b2

The time has come for Black to choose a square for the queen's bishop, as the half-waiting move 10...♝e8 does not cross White, who still has useful moves at his disposal. He would continue with 11.♝c1, leaving Black with the same problematic choice.



We have the natural A) 10...♝e6, the ambitious B) 10...♝g4, the rather neutral C) 10...♝f5 and the slightly exotic D) 10...♝d7.

(**1.c4 e5 2.g3 ♜c6 3.♘c3 ♜f6 4.♗g2 ♜c5
5.♘f3 d6 6.d3 0-0 7.0-0 h6 8.a3 a6 9.b4
♜a7 10.♗b2**)

A) 10...♝e6

This is the most natural developing move. Apart from preparing ...♝d8-d7 followed by ...♝e6-h3, it keeps the important d5-square under control, preventing ♜c3-d5.

White needs to handle the position with subtlety. Preparing ♜c3-d5 with ♜f3-d2

would release the pressure against the e5 pawn, allowing ...d6-d5 with an entirely viable position for Black. However, ...d6-d5 is not a threat while the knight is on f3, because of double exchange on d5 followed by e2-e4 and ♜f3xe5, winning a pawn.

11.♝c1

This is one of those subtle rook moves I mentioned in the introduction to this chapter. The rook's indirect pressure along the c-file can be very useful when "concrete play" starts. After a later ♜c3-d5 followed by ...♜xd5, c4xd5, the c7-pawn will come under pressure. In certain cases the rook supports the advance of the c-pawn, leaving the a7-bishop in a joyless situation.

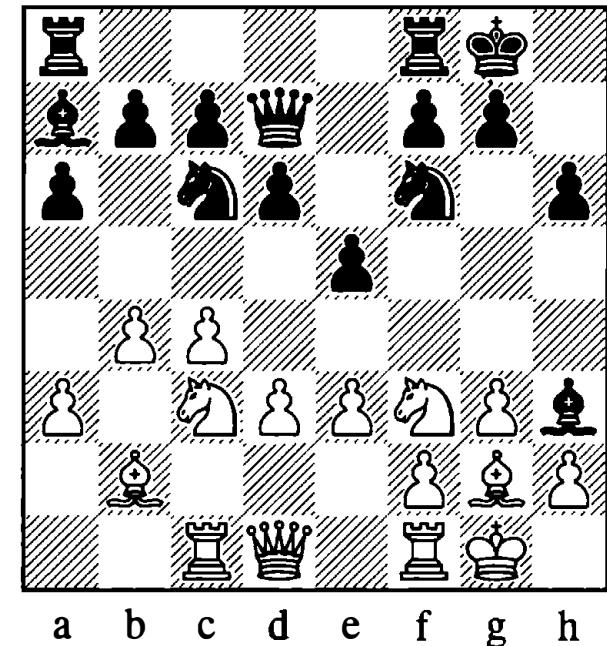
11...♛d7 12.e3

Although White is not threatening to play d3-d4 yet, this move is quite useful as it restricts the a7-bishop and the c6-knight. At the same time, he gets ready to meet Black's main threat, ...♝e6-h3, with d3-d4.

In practice Black has tried A1) 12...♝h3, A2) 12...♝ac8, A3) 12...♝e7 and A4) 12...♝fe8.

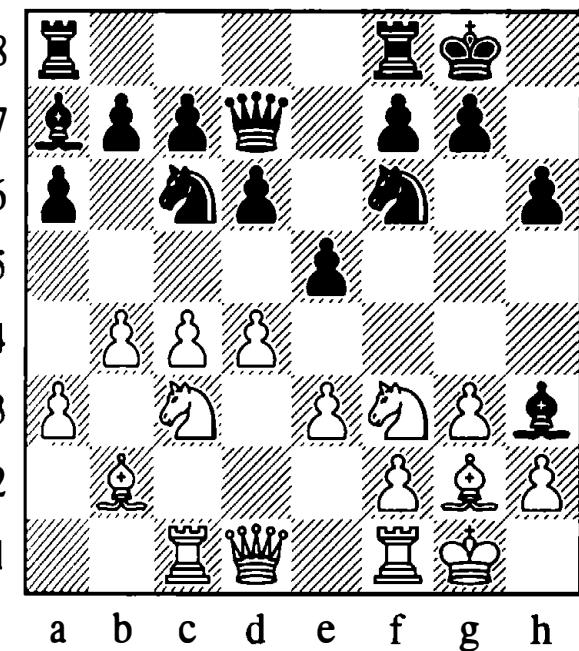
(**1.c4 e5 2.g3 ♜c6 3.♘c3 ♜f6 4.♗g2 ♜c5
5.♘f3 d6 6.d3 0-0 7.0-0 h6 8.a3 a6 9.b4
♜a7 10.♗b2 ♜e6 11.♝c1 ♛d7 12.e3**)

A1) 12...♝h3



This is considered to be the main move, but its drawback is that it releases the pressure against the c4-pawn.

13.d4!



The immediate consequence of the previous move is that White is allowed to occupy the centre.

As the subsequent analysis will prove, it is not easy for Black to choose the best moment for capturing on g2 and d4. Each move order has drawbacks.

We will examine **A11) 13...♝xg2** and **A12) 13...exd4**.

(1.c4 e5 2.g3 ♜c6 3.♜c3 ♜f6 4.♝g2 ♜c5 5.♝f3 d6 6.d3 0–0 7.0–0 h6 8.a3 a6 9.b4 ♜a7 10.♝b2 ♜e6 11.♝c1 ♜d7 12.e3 ♜h3 13.d4)

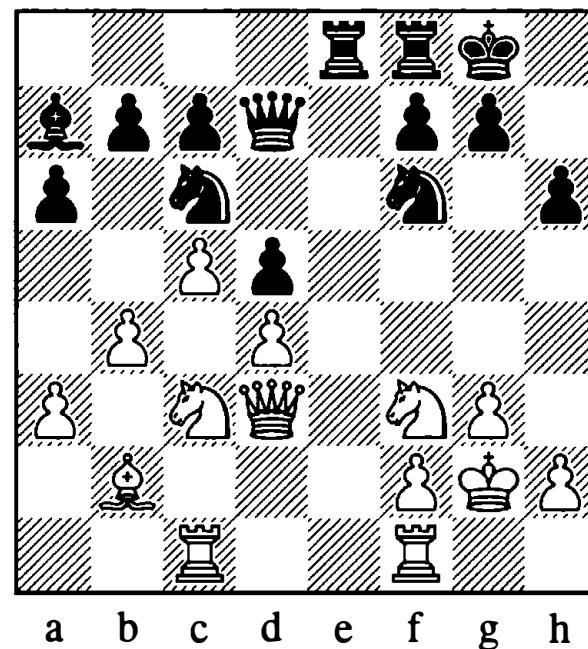
A11) 13...♝xg2

This move order leaves the a7-bishop passive. After the early exchange of the light-squared bishop, Black is no longer threatening to undermine the d4-pawn with ...♝h3-g4.

14.♝xg2 exd4 15.exd4

White should exploit this circumstance with energetic play. In the only game where I had this position, I failed to accomplish that and the bishop returned to the action, leaving me with a slightly unfavourable queenside structure.

15...♝ae8 16.♛d3 d5 17.c5



17...♝e4

This looks active, but it is not entirely logical from an abstract point of view: Black establishes direct piece contact while his bishop is several tempos away from being activated.

17...♝e7

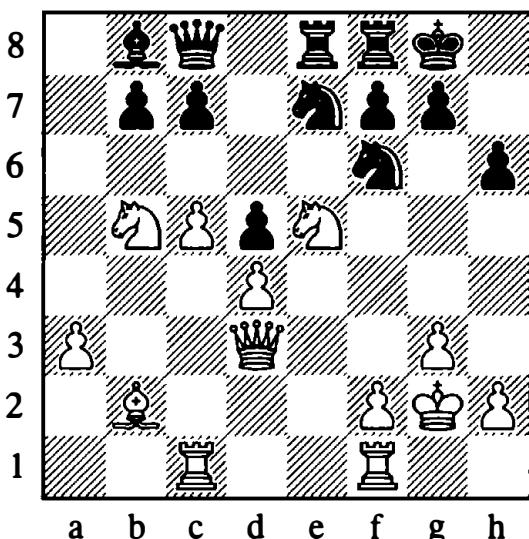
This prepares ...c7-c6 and ...♝a7-b8, and requires slightly more imagination from White than in the main line, although the objective merits of the two alternatives are similar.

Only after failing to prove an advantage by normal moves did I eventually hit on the right path with:

18.b5!

White has no time to waste on such preparatory moves as 18.a4. For the sake of keeping the enemy bishop out of play, he does not mind spoiling the integrity of his queenside structure.

18...axb5 19.♝e5 ♜c8 20.♝xb5 ♜b8



This is the type of position White was aiming for when he spoiled the flexibility of his queenside structure. The b8-bishop is not easy to activate, because ...c7-c6 is not a real threat for the time being, in view of the possible ♘b5-d6. In order to maintain his advantage, White has to anticipate Black's plan to increase his control over the d6-square.

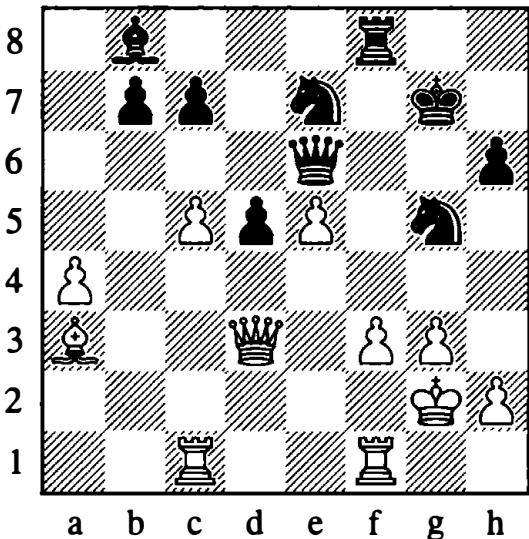
21.a4! ♔e4 22.♔a3

White is threatening c5-c6, burying the b8-bishop alive, so Black has to react quickly.

22...f6 23.♘d6!

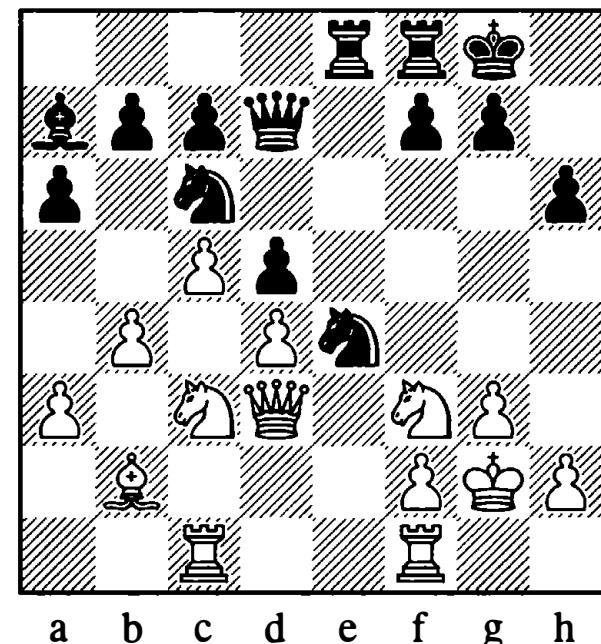
The c1-rook also proves very useful for the changed circumstances, by enabling this spectacular tactical operation.

23... $\mathbb{W}e6$ 24. $\mathfrak{Q}xe8$ $fxe5$ 25. $\mathfrak{Q}xg7$ $\mathfrak{K}xg7$ 26.f3
 $\mathfrak{Q}g5$ 27.dxe5±



White is not worse from a material point of view, and retains a significant positional

advantage. The enemy bishop remains passive and White's kingside pawns will not be easy to blockade.



18.Excel!N

After this move it appears that Black has insufficient stability in the centre.

In my game I avoided the piece contact, which simplified my opponent's task after 18.♘e2 ♕b8 19.♗cd1 ♘g5 20.♗fg1 ♘e7 21.h4 ♘e6 22.♕c1 c6. Black had regrouped well and had no problems at all in Marin – Jerez Perez, Andorra 2001.

18... xc3

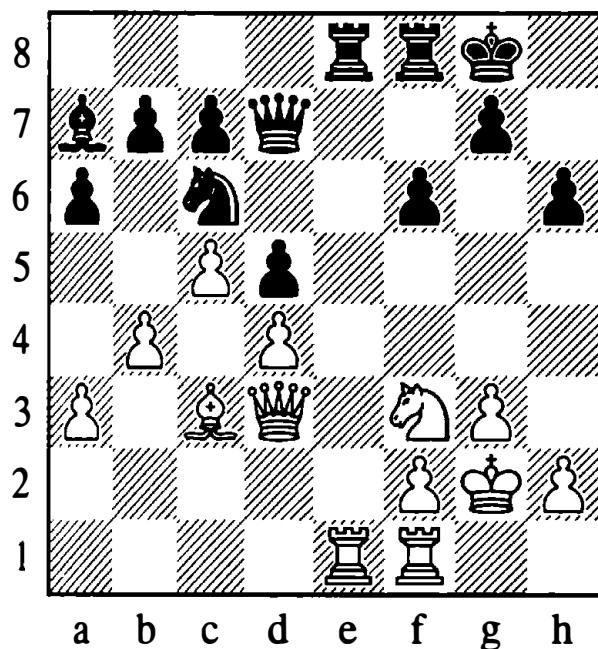
More or less forced, since 18...f5 allows 19.Qe5.

19. ~~Q~~xc3

This move creates the unpleasant threat ♘f3-e5. After an exchange on this square (...♘c6xe5, d4xe5) followed by f2-f4, White would be a piece up for the practical purpose of his kingside attack. An exchange on the c6-square with ♘e5xc6, ...b7xc6 would be even worse, because it would leave the a7-bishop buried for the rest of the game.

Black can prevent the threat only at the cost of accepting chronic kingside weaknesses.

19...f6



20.Qh4!

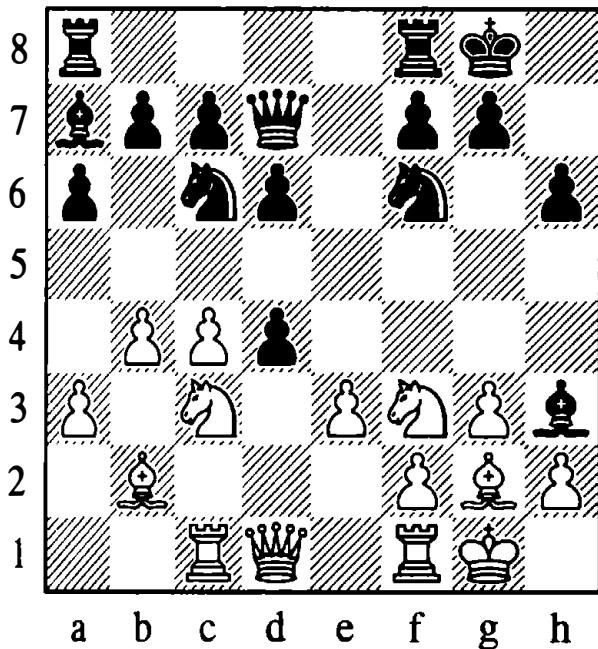
White obtains a strong kingside initiative free of charge.

20...Qd8 21.Wg6 Wf7 22.Wf5±

Black is under strong pressure on the kingside, while his bishop is many tempos away from reaching a reasonable square. Please note that ...c7-c6 followed by ...Wa7-b8-c7 would not solve the problem completely, as the bishop would still be ineffective.

(1.c4 e5 2.g3 Qc6 3.Qc3 Qf6 4.Qg2 Qc5 5.Qf3 d6 6.d3 0-0 7.0-0 h6 8.a3 a6 9.b4 Wa7 10.Qb2 Qe6 11.Bc1 Wd7 12.e3 Wh3 13.d4)

A12) 13...exd4

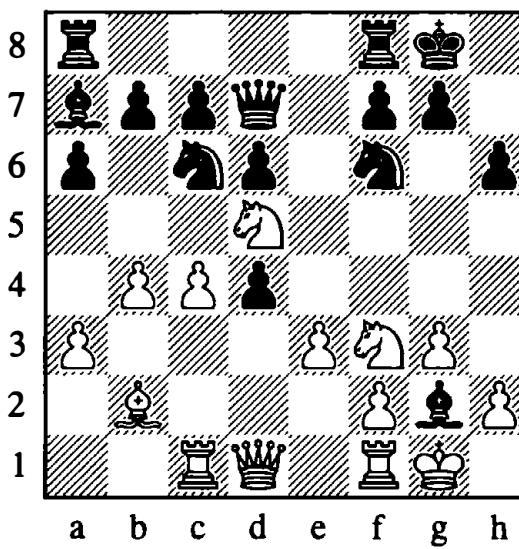


By delaying the exchange on g2, Black hopes for 14.exd4 Qg4! with pressure against the d4-pawn.

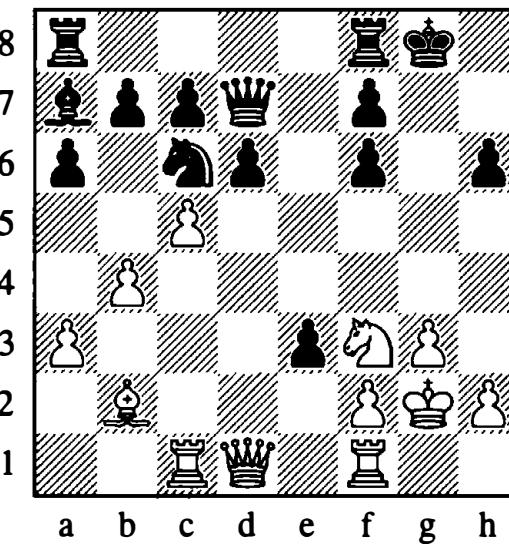
14.Qd5!

After this intermediate move it will not be easy for Black to find a good moment for swapping bishops. Since 14...dxe3 drops a piece to 15.Qxf6, Black's choice is restricted to A121) 14...Qe4 and A122) 14...Qxd5.

14...Qxg2 leads to a chronic weakening of Black's kingside, which will not be compensated by the small material gain.



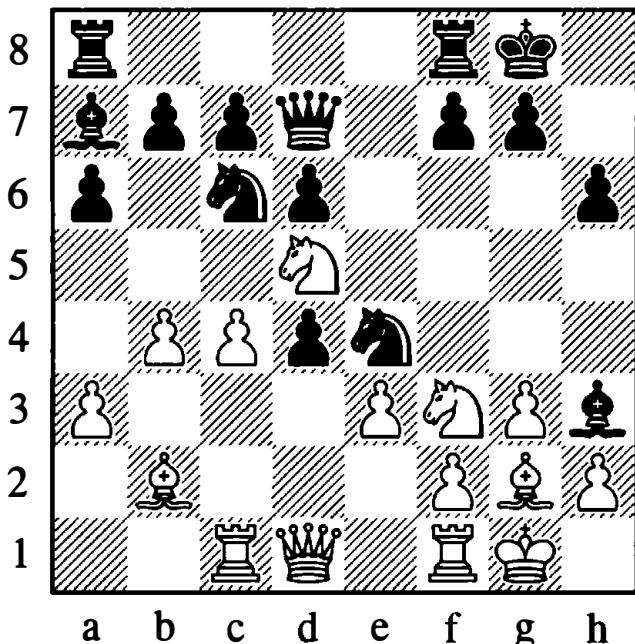
15.Qxf6†! This is the only move that promises White an advantage. (The neutral 15.Qxg2 is adequately met by 15...Qxd5, transposing to the comment to White's 15th move from the line A122 below.) 15...gxf6 16.Qxg2 dxe3 17.c5±



White has a clear advantage in view of his attacking chances, based on such moves as $\mathbb{Q}f3-h4$, $\mathbb{W}d1-h5$, $\mathbb{B}c1-c4$, with $f2xe3$ inserted somewhere. The passive placement of the enemy bishop also helps White. Engines tend to be sceptical in the beginning, because they count the a7-bishop as a “normal piece”. Only after advancing along the lines they suggest do they suddenly realise that Black is in deep trouble.

(1.c4 e5 2.g3 $\mathbb{Q}c6$ 3. $\mathbb{Q}c3$ $\mathbb{Q}f6$ 4. $\mathbb{B}g2$ $\mathbb{Q}c5$ 5. $\mathbb{Q}f3$ d6 6.d3 0-0 7.0-0 h6 8.a3 a6 9.b4 $\mathbb{Q}a7$ 10. $\mathbb{Q}b2$ $\mathbb{Q}e6$ 11. $\mathbb{B}c1$ $\mathbb{W}d7$ 12.e3 $\mathbb{Q}h3$ 13.d4! exd4 14. $\mathbb{Q}d5$)

A121) 14... $\mathbb{Q}e4$



This is the most active way of releasing the unfavourable piece tension, but the knight is unstable in the centre.

15.exd4

After having cleared the b2-d4 diagonal, the pawn is well defended on d4.

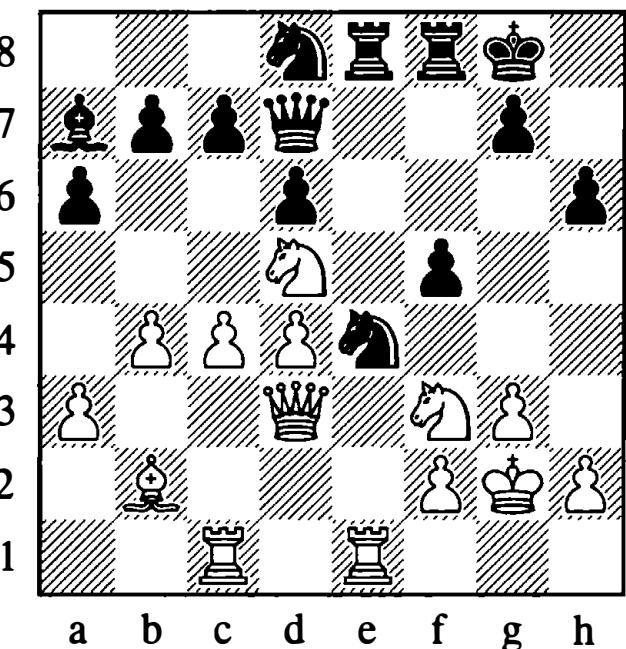
15... $\mathbb{Q}xg2$

15... $\mathbb{Q}g4$ fails to bother White, who can keep developing with 16. $\mathbb{W}d3\pm$. White has the more active pieces and a considerable space advantage.

16. $\mathbb{Q}xg2$ $\mathbb{B}ae8$ 17. $\mathbb{B}e1$ $\mathbb{Q}d8$

After having completed his development Black starts the standard plan of rerouting his bishop with ...c7-c6 and ... $\mathbb{Q}a7-b8$.

18. $\mathbb{W}d3$ f5



19. $\mathbb{Q}c3!$

After provoking the weakening move ...f7-f5, White hurries to exchange the active black knight.

19... $\mathbb{Q}xc3$ 20. $\mathbb{Q}xc3$!

This is the correct way to capture. The tempting 20. $\mathbb{W}xc3$, aiming to set up deadly pressure along the long diagonal with d4-d5, would leave the e4-square insufficiently defended, allowing Black to activate his play with 20... $\mathbb{B}e4$.

20...f4

This is ineffective as an attacking move, but Black needs to get rid of his weakness.

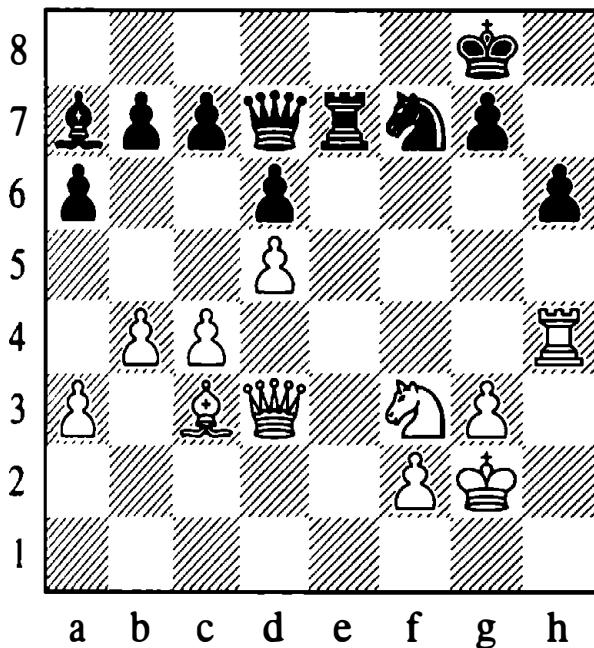
21.d5

White increases his space advantage and opens the long diagonal for his bishop. Removing the blockade on the a7-bishop is not dangerous, because the black knight, which is passively placed on the back rank, does not support the pressure against the f2-square.

21...fxg3 22.♕xe8!?

White gives up control of the e-file, intending to activate the remaining rook in an original way, but there was nothing wrong with 22.hxg3±.

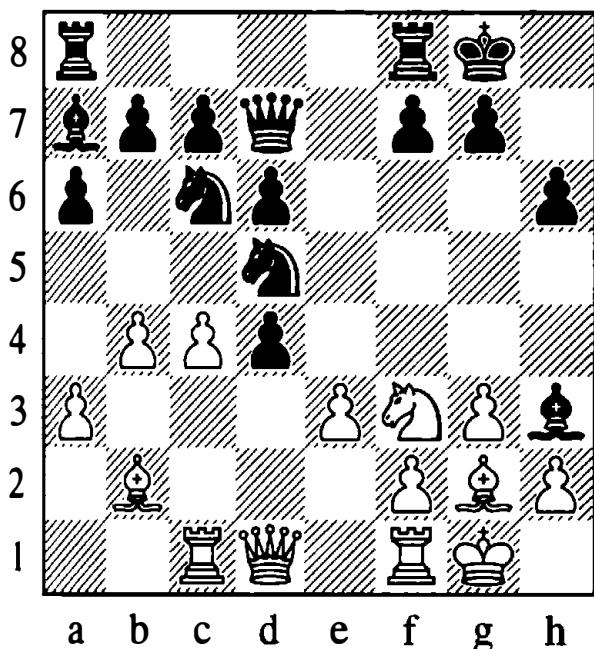
22...♕xe8 23.hxg3 ♖f7 24.♕h1 ♕e7
25.♕h4!±



After this rook lift the g7-pawn is in permanent danger. White has more space and very active pieces, Jensen – Postl, e-mail 2001.

(1.c4 e5 2.g3 ♖c6 3.♖c3 ♖f6 4.♕g2 ♖c5 5.♗f3 d6 6.d3 0–0 7.0–0 h6 8.a3 a6 9.b4 ♖a7 10.♗b2 ♖e6 11.♖c1 ♖d7 12.e3 ♖h3 13.d4! exd4 14.♗d5)

A122) 14...♗xd5

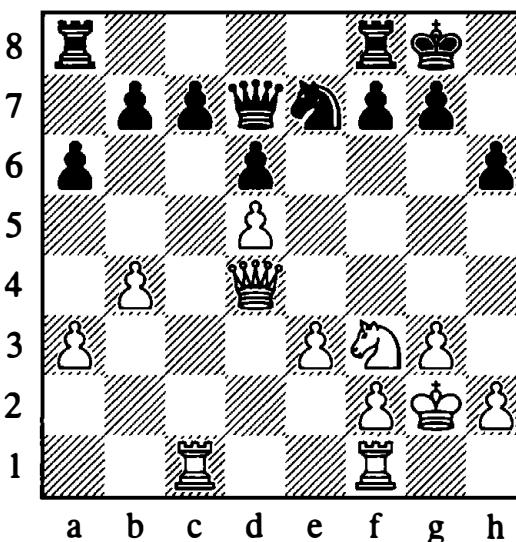


As mentioned in the introduction, the structural modifications induced by this move tend to favour White, but accuracy is needed in order to prevent Black from obtaining counterplay.

15.♕xh3!N

This is an important intermediate move, driving the enemy queen far from the centre.

In a recent game I considered such radical means to be unnecessary. 15.cxd5?! ♗xg2 16.♗xg2 ♖e7! 17.♕xd4 ♗xd4 18.♗xd4



Initially I thought that White was better, but after 18...a5!= I understood that I had no advantage at all. Black's activity on the a-file and the relative weakness of the b4-pawn offers Black good counterplay, Marin – Navara, Reggio Emilia 2007.

15...♗xh3 16.cxd5 ♖e7

This passive retreat is more or less forced.

16...♖e5

This loses material.

17.♗xe5 dxе5 18.exd4 e4!?

This was the move I was worried about, but it turns that it is not sufficient. Had I foreseen Navara's 18th move, I might have dug deeper here.

18...exd4 leaves Black poorly coordinated

after 19. $\mathbb{Q}xc7$ $\mathbb{Q}ad8$ 20. $\mathbb{Q}xb7$ $\mathbb{Q}xd5$ 21. $\mathbb{W}f3$ $\mathbb{Q}d7$ 22. $\mathbb{Q}e1$ d3 23. $\mathbb{Q}e7\pm$ White dominates.
19. $\mathbb{Q}xc7$ $\mathbb{Q}ae8$ 20. $\mathbb{Q}xb7$ $\mathbb{Q}b8$ 21. $\mathbb{W}e2\pm$

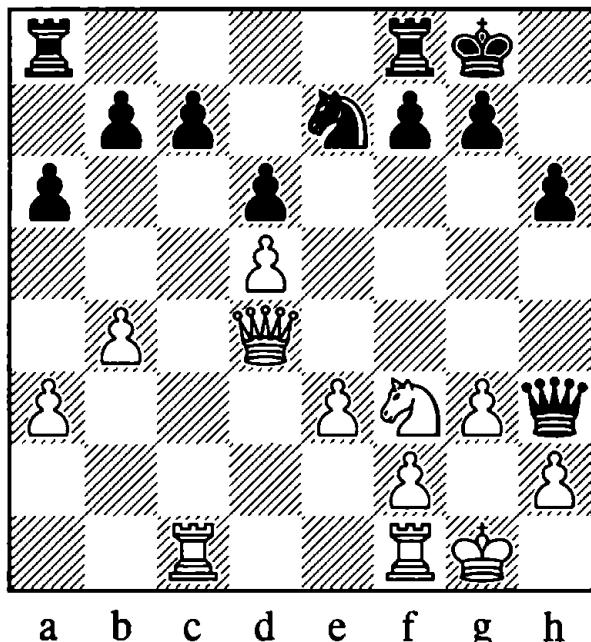
Black's attacking hopes are unrealistic and White's material advantage leaves him on top.

17. $\mathbb{Q}xd4$

From a practical point of view, this move has the advantage of preventing any form of black counterplay.

17. $\mathbb{Q}xc7$ $\mathbb{Q}xd5$ 18. $\mathbb{Q}xb7\pm$ also looks playable, but the position is more difficult to control.

17... $\mathbb{Q}xd4$ 18. $\mathbb{W}xd4\pm$

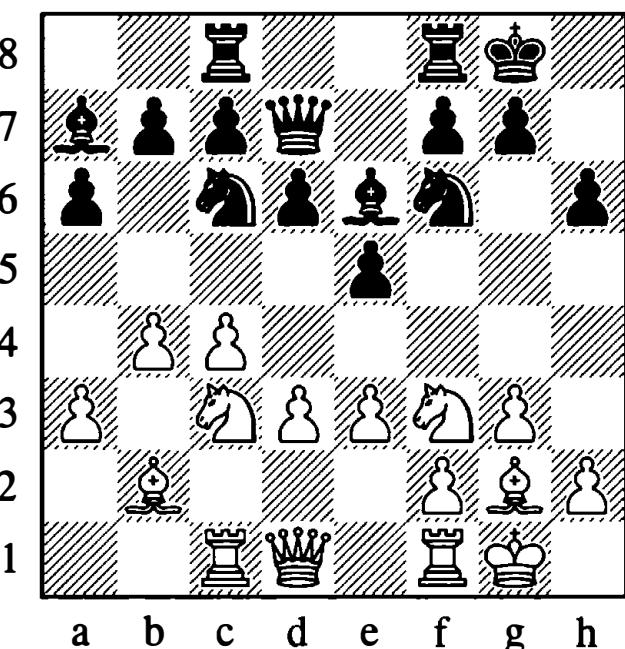


The black queen has been driven away from the defence of the c7-pawn and is unable to create any concrete threats on the kingside. Compared to the game Marin – Navara from the comment to White's 15th move, the situation clearly favours White, because ...a6-a5 can always be met by b4-b5, while otherwise the pressure along the c-file yields White a stable advantage.

Black's attempt to generate the same counterplay as in the aforementioned game with 18... $\mathbb{W}d7$ is easily parried with 19. $\mathbb{W}d3$, renewing the possibility of b4-b5 in reply to ...a5.

(1.c4 e5 2.g3 $\mathbb{Q}c6$ 3. $\mathbb{Q}c3$ $\mathbb{Q}f6$ 4. $\mathbb{Q}g2$ $\mathbb{Q}c5$ 5. $\mathbb{Q}f3$ d6 6.d3 0–0 7.0–0 h6 8.a3 a6 9.b4 $\mathbb{Q}a7$ 10. $\mathbb{Q}b2$ $\mathbb{Q}e6$ 11. $\mathbb{Q}c1$ $\mathbb{W}d7$ 12.e3)

A2) 12... $\mathbb{B}ac8$



At a superficial glance, this move may seem at least as mysterious as 11. $\mathbb{Q}c1$. Black defends the c7-pawn in advance, anticipating a later $\mathbb{Q}c3-d5$ followed by the opening of the c-file.

13. $\mathbb{Q}e1!$

The same policy: over-defending the e3-pawn, anticipating ... $\mathbb{Q}e6-h3$ and preparing an eventual d3-d4 without fearing ... $\mathbb{Q}e6xc4$.

13... $\mathbb{B}fe8$

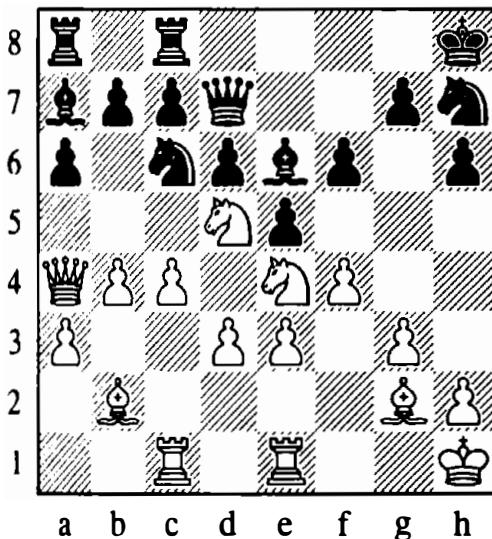
13... $\mathbb{Q}e7$ 14. d4! reveals a hidden point of White's previous move.

14. $\mathbb{Q}d2!$ d5

This is Black's standard reaction against $\mathbb{Q}d2$, but White is well prepared to meet it.

Black cannot strengthen his position any further, but it is interesting to follow how White increases his pressure in the case of neutral black moves. Although the following sequence of moves is quite amusing for its total lack of a plan, it was played in an official game. 14... $\mathbb{B}b8$ 15. $\mathbb{Q}d5$ $\mathbb{Q}h7$ 16. $\mathbb{W}a4$ $\mathbb{B}ec8$

(16... $\mathbb{Q}g5$ can be answered with 17. $\mathbb{Q}e4$ when 17... $\mathbb{Q}h3\#?$ 18. $\mathbb{Q}xh3 \mathbb{Q}xh3$ loses the queen to 19. $\mathbb{Q}f6\#$, while 17... $\mathbb{Q}xe4$ 18.dxe4± followed by $\mathbb{B}ed1$ leads to strong white pressure in the centre) 17. $\mathbb{Q}e4 \mathbb{Q}a8$ 18. $\mathbb{Q}h1 \mathbb{Q}h8$ 19.f4 f6



At this point, White lost the thread in Marin – Swapnil, Benasque 2008, and the game eventually ended in a draw. This would have been a good time to regroup with 20. $\mathbb{W}c2N$, for instance 20... $\mathbb{Q}d8$ 21.fxe5 dxe5 (21...fxe5 offers White attacking chances along the f-file) 22. $\mathbb{Q}c5!$ $\mathbb{Q}xc5$ 23.bxc5± followed by d4, with an overwhelming space advantage.

15.cxd5 $\mathbb{Q}xd5$ 16. $\mathbb{Q}a4$

White has a comfortable reversed Dragon, where the a7-bishop and the a6-pawn are not doing much to help Black's position.

16. $\mathbb{Q}ce4$ intending $\mathbb{Q}d2-b3$ looks more natural, although it may eventually transpose if White installs a knight on c5.

16... $\mathbb{Q}h3$ 17. $\mathbb{Q}e4$

17. $\mathbb{Q}h1!?$ N, preserving the bishop from exchange, deserves serious attention.

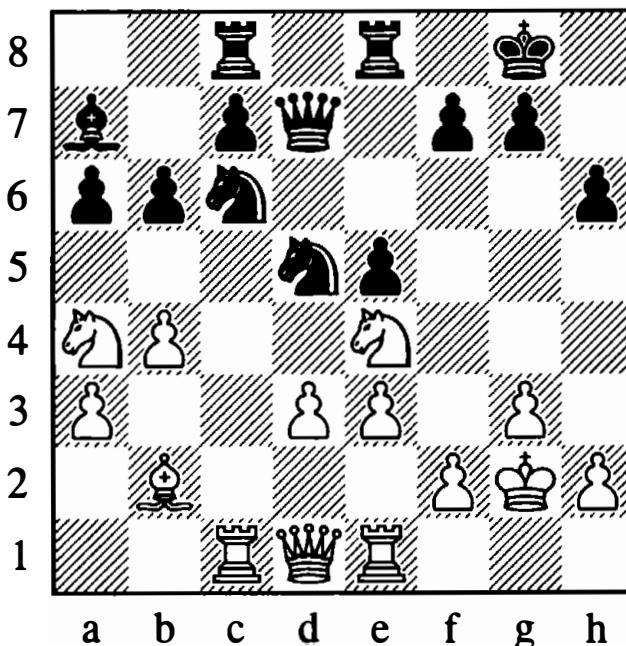
17... $\mathbb{Q}xg2$ 18. $\mathbb{Q}xg2\pm$

The (almost inevitable) threat $\mathbb{Q}c5$ (either of them) is very unpleasant. We can see another hidden point behind the move $\mathbb{Q}e1$: the threat of ... $\mathbb{Q}a7xe3$ is safely removed.

One of the things that attracts me to the English Opening is this kind of hidden logic of White's play. Finding multi-purpose moves such as $\mathbb{Q}e1$ requires deep strategic insight and provokes strong artistic emotion.

18...b6

If this is necessary, Black is in real trouble. Personally, I would prefer any neutral move, with just an unpleasant position for Black.



19. $\mathbb{W}b3\pm$

The a7-bishop is out of play and the c6-square is weak, Bologan – Volkov, Moscow 2005.

(1.c4 e5 2.g3 $\mathbb{Q}c6$ 3. $\mathbb{Q}c3$ $\mathbb{Q}f6$ 4. $\mathbb{Q}g2 \mathbb{Q}c5$ 5. $\mathbb{Q}f3$ d6 6.d3 0–0 7.0–0 h6 8.a3 a6 9.b4 $\mathbb{Q}a7$ 10. $\mathbb{Q}b2 \mathbb{Q}e6$ 11. $\mathbb{Q}c1 \mathbb{W}d7$ 12.e3)

A3) 12... $\mathbb{Q}e7$

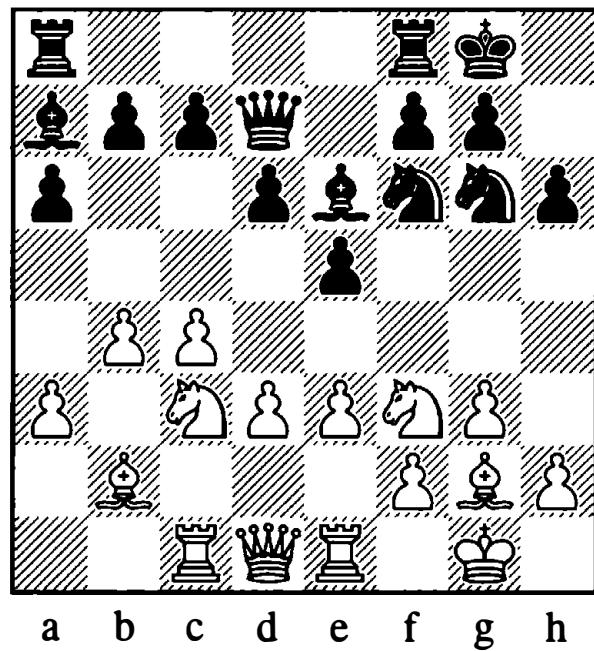
This is an ambitious move. If allowed to carry out the regrouping mentioned in the introduction, Black would have little to complain about.

13. $\mathbb{Q}e1!$

The main idea of this move is to remove the rook from the range of the enemy light-squared bishop in order to enable d3-d4.

13...♝g6

The other possible move order would be 13...c6, hoping to play ...♝g6 in time to consolidate. This move does not allow the tactics involving d3-d4 from the main line, but it weakens the d6-square prematurely, allowing 14.c5, which disrupts the enemy structure. White has a strategically promising position. For instance, 14...♝ad8 15.♝a4 ♝g6 16.cxd6 ♜xd6 17.d4 e4 18.♝d2± followed soon by ♜c5, with strong pressure against the e4- and b7-pawns. An eventual exchange on c5 would revive White's dark-squared bishop while otherwise the minority attack with a4 and b5 is quite unpleasant.

**14.d4!**

The only way to maintain the initiative. In the English Opening if White misses the right moment to play such thematic moves, the position will most likely become equal and uninteresting, and even more difficult than carrying out the concrete operations is preparing them properly, with moves such as ♘el.

14...♝xc4

14...exd4 15.♝xd4 allows White to consolidate his space advantage while maintaining material equality. The exchange of the c4- and b7-pawns would only weaken

Black's position. 15...♝g4 16.f3! ♜h3 17.♝d5± with a stable space advantage.

15.dxe5 dxe5

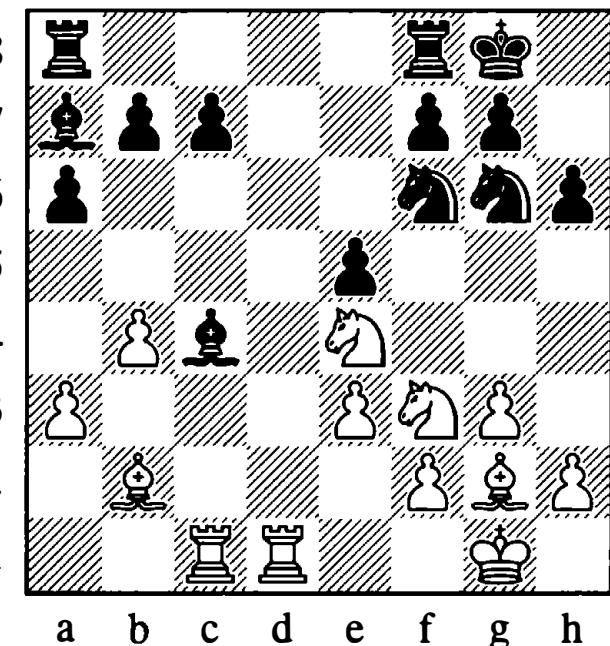
Black has temporarily won a pawn, but his c4-bishop is vulnerable while the a7-bishop is hopelessly passive. The position would be less clear if Black had time to play ...♝a8-d8, but his slight underdevelopment was caused by the time-consuming knight manoeuvre.

16.♝e4!

I like this move, which leaves Black's pieces hanging, but the trivial 16.♜xd7 ♜xd7 17.♝d2 ♜d3 18.♝xb7± is not bad either.

16...♜xd1

16...♝d3 is met by 17.♝xf6+ gxf6 18.♝d4! when 18...e4 consolidates the bishop but leaves the kingside exposed to 19.♝h5± followed by ♜d4-f5 with huge threats.

17.♝exd1!

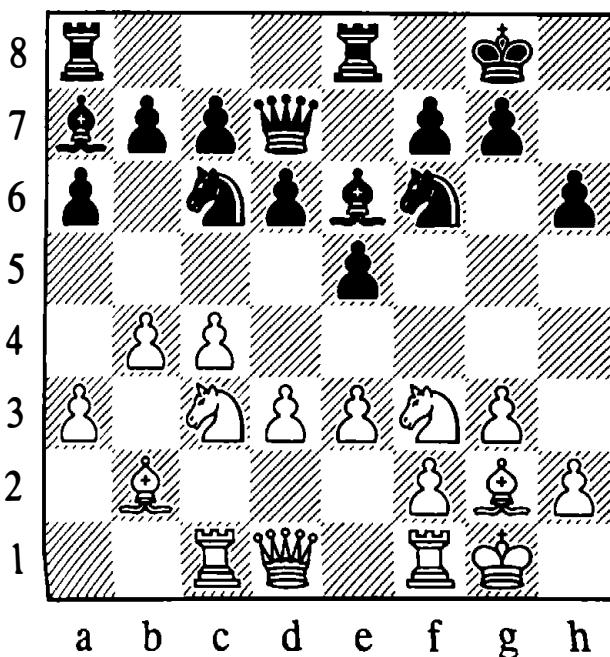
It makes no sense to exchange on f6, because this would just strengthen the e5-pawn.

17...♝b3 18.♝d3 ♜xe4 19.♝xb3±

White will soon retrieve the pawn, with an obvious advantage.

(1.c4 e5 2.g3 ♜c6 3.♗c3 ♜f6 4.♗g2 ♜c5 5.♗f3 d6 6.d3 0–0 7.0–0 h6 8.a3 a6 9.b4 ♜a7 10.♗b2 ♜e6 11.♗c1 ♜d7 12.e3)

A4) 12...♝fe8



This is the least committal move, allowing Black to maintain the possibility of later choosing any of the plans examined above. Play can eventually transpose to line A2 but, shortly after the moment I thought I had finished my work on this book, I faced a new idea introduced by a strong woman grandmaster.

13.♖e1 ♜bab8!?

The concrete purpose of this mysterious move is to over-defend the b7-pawn, allowing Black to play ...♜e7 in the event of the standard retreat ♜d2. Although this looks very logical, the decision to develop the rook to a file that is not likely to be opened (unlike the c- or d-files) is, in principle, questionable. Still, finding the right path with White requires deep calculation, which makes the position very interesting.

13...♝ac8 would transpose to A2).

14.♗c2!

White completes his development, keeping the e5-pawn under pressure.

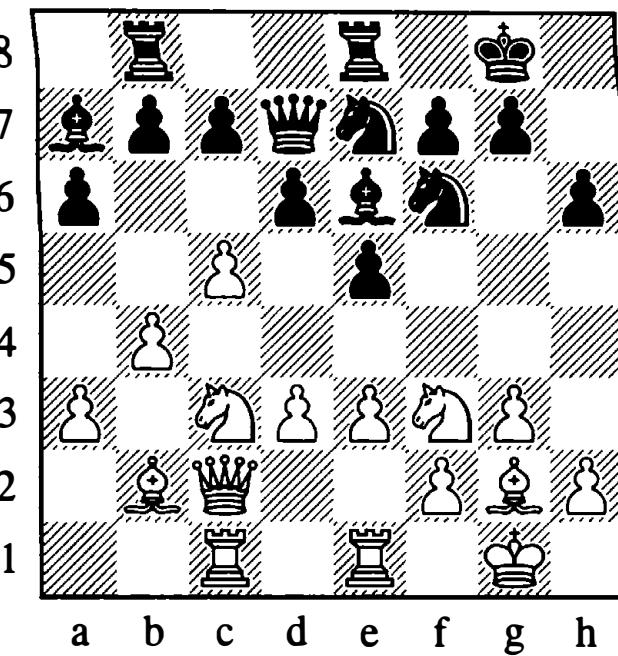
After 14.♗d2 ♜e7 followed by ...♜g6, Black could be happy with the outcome of the opening.

14...♜e7

This planned move allows White to open the centre, but it is hard to suggest any alternative. Black has already completed her development and moving any other of her pieces may just worsen her position.

15.c5

White has to break in the centre immediately, because after ...♜g6 the e5-pawn would be well protected. Before playing 14.♗c2, I had to foresee most of the complications examined in the next note.



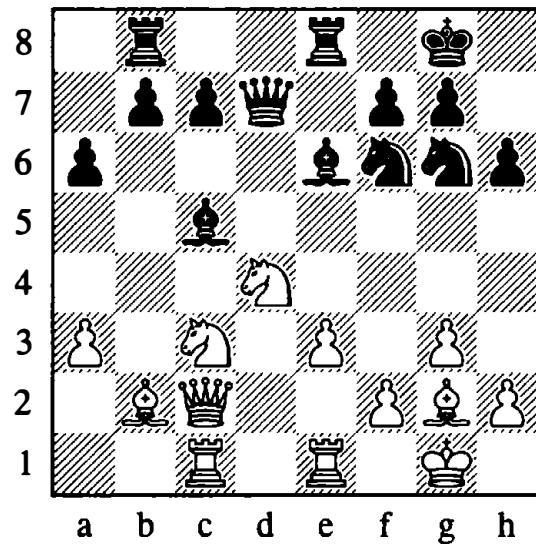
15...♞c6!?

This move caught me by surprise. After White's highly committal move, the knight returns to c6 to block the c-file and to keep an eye on the d4-square.

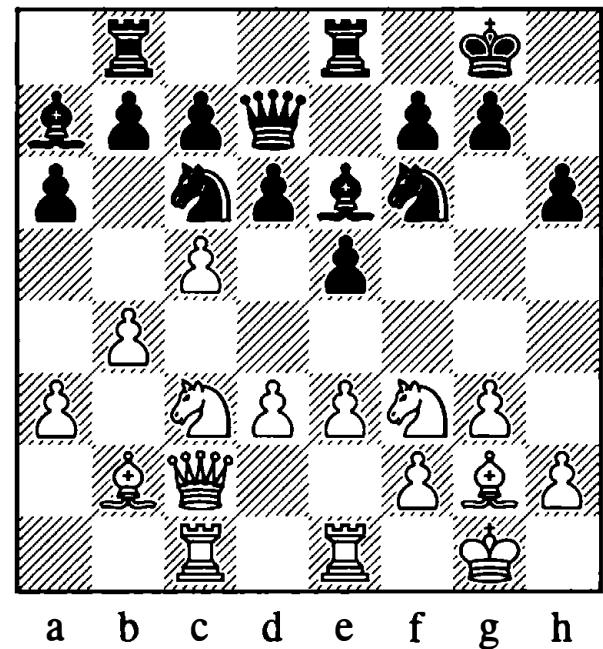
One critical move is 15...dxc5. Since 16.bxc5 ♜c6 leaves White with weaknesses on c5 and d3, he has to switch to dynamic play. The following variation is the fruit of my calculation during the game. It has been entirely validated by the engines and, although they prefer some other moves at certain points, I have kept

it as the main line in order to preserve its "humanity" and instructive character. 16. $\mathbb{Q}xe5$ $\mathbb{W}d6$ Black has to try to grab the b4-pawn, as otherwise she will be left in a strategically inferior position after the elimination of her central pawns. 17. $\mathbb{Q}c4$ $\mathbb{Q}xc4$ 18. $dxc4$ $cxb4$ 19. $\mathbb{E}cd1!$ (White continues winning time by attacking the enemy queen, but choosing the right rook is important. 19. $\mathbb{E}ed1?$ is a gross blunder, losing material to 19... $bxc3!$ 20. $\mathbb{E}xd6$ $cxb2-$.) 19... $\mathbb{W}b6$ 20. $\mathbb{Q}a4$ $\mathbb{W}a5$ 21. $axb4$ $\mathbb{W}xb4$ 22. $\mathbb{E}b1$ $\mathbb{W}d6$ 23. $\mathbb{E}ed1$ $\mathbb{W}e6$ 24. $\mathbb{Q}xf6$ $\mathbb{W}xf6$ 25. $\mathbb{Q}xb7\pm$ After six consecutive moves of the black queen, White retrieves the pawn while keeping the better structure, and the enemy bishop has remained passive.

I considered 15... $\mathbb{Q}g6$ to be Black's most natural move and intended to play 16. $d4$, developing the initiative in the centre. 16... $exd4$ (With her dark-squared bishop passive, Black should avoid the simplifications arising after 16... $\mathbb{Q}h3$ 17. $\mathbb{Q}e4$ $\mathbb{Q}xe4$ 18. $\mathbb{Q}xh3$ $\mathbb{W}xh3$ 19. $\mathbb{W}xe4$ $exd4$ 20. $\mathbb{W}xd4\pm$. The attempt to perpetually harass the queen with 16... $e4$ 17. $\mathbb{Q}xe4$ $\mathbb{Q}xe4$ 18. $\mathbb{W}xe4$ $\mathbb{Q}f5$ fails to 19. $c6!$ $\mathbb{W}c8$ 20. $cxb7\pm$ allowing White retain his extra pawn.) 17. $\mathbb{Q}xd4$ (I considered this to be the most challenging continuation, although I could not foresee the right way to continue after the pawn has been sacrificed. The more solid 17. $exd4$ is less effective than in the main game, because of 17... $c6$ followed by ... $\mathbb{Q}bd8$ and ... $\mathbb{Q}b8$.) 17... $dxc5$ 18. $bxc5$ (I considered 18. $\mathbb{Q}xe6$ $\mathbb{W}xe6$ 19. $b5$ to be an important alternative. White has two active bishops, while the black bishop is restricted by the c5-pawn. Opening its diagonal with ... $c4$ would most probably lose the c-pawn, while leaving the bishop hitting the rock solid e3-pawn.) 18... $\mathbb{Q}xc5$ White is better mobilized and the enemy queenside is under pressure. Moreover, the exposed position of the black queen is likely to cause a considerable loss of time.



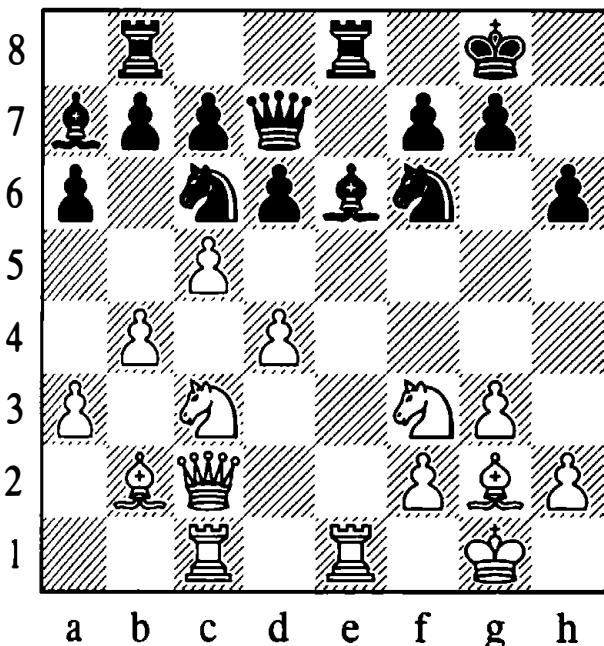
19. $\mathbb{Q}ce2$ White clears the c-file and the long dark diagonal, thus increasing his piece activity. 19... $\mathbb{Q}d6$ (Immediately giving up the bishop allows White to put his kingside pawns into motion: 19... $\mathbb{Q}xd4$ 20. $\mathbb{Q}xd4$ $c6$ 21. $\mathbb{E}cd1$ $\mathbb{W}e7$ 22. $\mathbb{Q}xe6$ $\mathbb{W}xe6$ 23. $f4$ $\mathbb{W}e7$ 24. $e4\pm$ The black kingside is in danger in view of the threat $e5$ followed by $f5$.) 20. $\mathbb{Q}xe6$ $\mathbb{W}xe6$ 21. $\mathbb{Q}d4$ $\mathbb{W}d7$ 22. $\mathbb{Q}f5$ $\mathbb{Q}e5$ 23. $\mathbb{E}ed1$ $\mathbb{W}e6$ 24. $\mathbb{Q}d4$ $\mathbb{W}e7$ 25. $f4$ $\mathbb{Q}xd4$ 26. $\mathbb{Q}xd4\pm$ The black queen is in danger in view of the threat $\mathbb{Q}c5$, while the c7-pawn is attacked.



16.d4

Just as in the previous line, White has to continue his pawn storm. Giving up the tension with 16. $cxd6$ would leave Black with a comfortable position.

16... $exd4$ 17. $exd4$



17...g4

This is one of the main ideas of returning the knight to c6. By indirectly attacking the d4-pawn, Black questions White's stability in the centre, hoping to activate her a7-bishop.

The tempting occupation of the d5-square with 17...d5 leads to simplifications that favour White, who is practically playing with an extra piece. 18.Qxd5 Qxd5 19.Qg5 hxg5 20.Qxd5 dxc5 21.Qxc6 Wxc6 22.dxc5± The black kingside is under pressure, while the a7-bishop needs several tempos to get back into play.

18.Qe4!

It took me a long time to understand that White has nothing better than allowing mass simplifications with this move. Any other knight jump, to defend the d4-pawn, would place the knight on an unfavourable square.

18...Qxe4

Black has to embark on the following forced line in order to stabilize the position in the centre and prepare the reactivation of the a7-bishop.

18...d5 would be strongly answered by 19.Qfd2 followed by Qc4. The pressure against the d6-pawn may force Black to release

the tension with ...dxc5, when after dxc5 the b2-bishop will eye Black's kingside.

19.Qxe4 Qf5 20.Qh4 Qxe4 21.Qxe4 Qxe4 22.Wxe4 d5 23.Wf5!

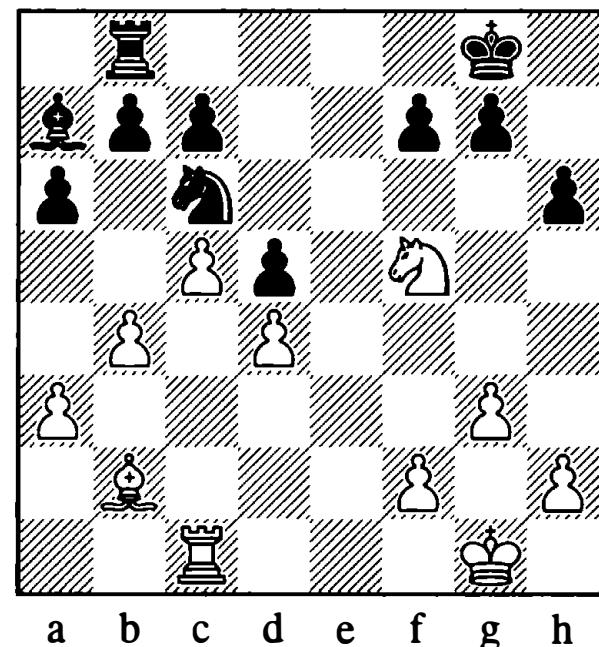
This is another difficult move, which I had planned while pondering 18.Qe4. By exchanging queens, White increases the significance of his temporary material advantage (which is how the desperate passivity of the a7-bishop can be defined).

23...Wxf5

Black would not achieve anything by refraining from this exchange. White has a clear plan based on Qc3, a4 and b5, putting the black queenside in danger.

23...Qd8 24.Qc3 is likely to transpose below, while after 23...We6 24.Qc3 Black may simply lose a tempo after a further Qe1 followed by ...Wxf5, Qxf5.

24.Qxf5



This type of position is essential for the evaluation of the whole variation based on ...Qc5. From a structural point of view, Black seems to be doing fine, because White's central pawns are blocked on dark squares. This does not mean that Black has a good bishop against

a bad one, though. Black's bishop has been buried alive and it will take several tempos to get it into play. We can see a major defect of the move 15... $\mathbb{Q}c6$: the knight prevents the essential move ...c6, which increases Black's problems.

White has no clear plan of attack on the kingside, where he is practically a piece up, but can increase his queenside space advantage with $\mathbb{Q}c3$, a4 and b5. In some cases this may lead to the permanent burial of the enemy bishop, as will be seen in some comments below.

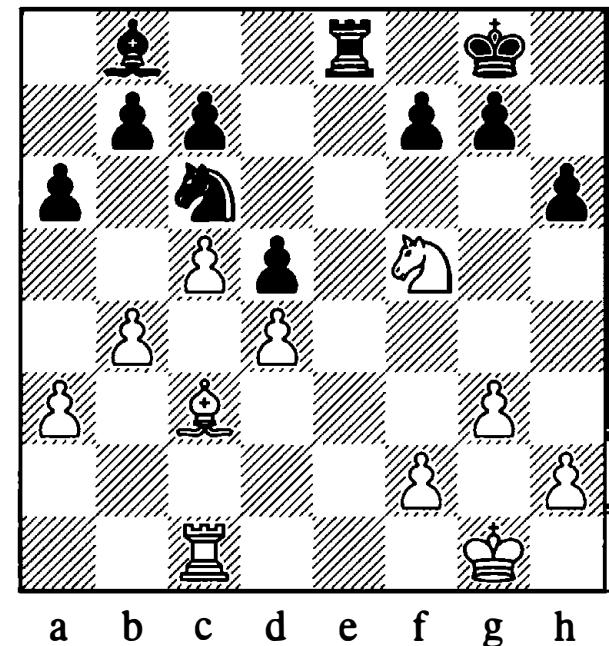
24... $\mathbb{B}e8$

Black decides to take control of the e-file in order to avoid any possible problems on the kingside. Knowing the further course of the game, it is easy to recommend: 24... $\mathbb{B}d8$, keeping the d5-pawn well defended. This was the main line I had been expecting and I planned to continue with 25. $\mathbb{Q}c3$ $\mathbb{Q}b8$ 26. $\mathbb{B}e1$ $\mathbb{Q}f8$ 27.a4 $\mathbb{Q}a7$. Black has managed to prevent b5 and is ready to free her bishop with ...c6. With the black knight so far from the kingside, White can switch the direction of his attack. 28. $\mathbb{Q}d2!$ $\mathbb{B}d7$ (Black has to defend the seventh rank. The point behind White's previous move can be seen after 28...c6 29. $\mathbb{B}e7$, when 29...g6 is impossible because of 30. $\mathbb{Q}xh6\#$) 29. $\mathbb{Q}xh6!$ $\mathbb{Q}xh6$ 30. $\mathbb{Q}xh6\#$ $\mathbb{Q}g8$ 31. $\mathbb{B}e8\#$ I ended my calculations here and further analysis proves that I correctly assessed the position as clearly better for White. 31... $\mathbb{Q}h7$ 32. $\mathbb{Q}g5$ $\mathbb{Q}c6$ 33. $\mathbb{Q}f6$ $\mathbb{Q}g6$ 34.b5 axb5 35.axb5 $\mathbb{Q}a5$ (35... $\mathbb{Q}xf6$ leads to a lost rook ending after 36.bxc6) 36. $\mathbb{Q}e5$ f6 37. $\mathbb{Q}f4$ $\mathbb{Q}a7$ 38. $\mathbb{B}a8$ $\mathbb{Q}xc5$ 39.dxc5± White has an extra pawn and active pieces.

25. $\mathbb{Q}c3$ $\mathbb{Q}b8$

A tricky and, for me, unexpected move. After having defended the e-file Black threatens to consolidate her queenside with ... $\mathbb{Q}a7$ and ...c6, when White would find it impossible to increase the pressure on either wing.

I expected 25... $\mathbb{Q}e7$ 26. $\mathbb{Q}e3$ c6 27.a4 $\mathbb{Q}b8$ 28.b5 axb5 29.axb5±, which poses Black big problems. According to circumstances, White can either cut the enemy bishop out of play with b6, or continue his attack with $\mathbb{Q}bl$ followed by bxc6 and $\mathbb{Q}b7$.



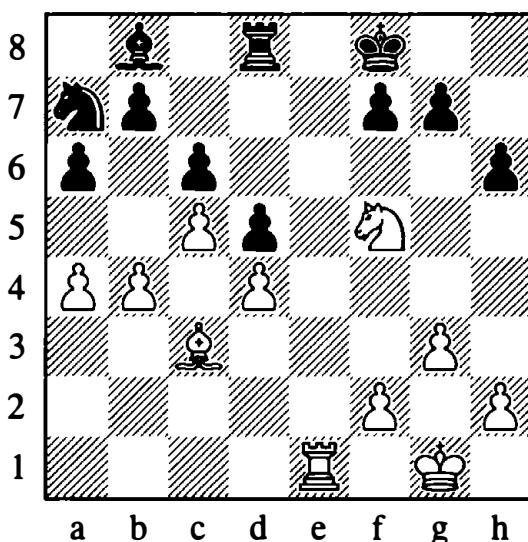
26. $\mathbb{Q}e3!$

By attacking the d5-pawn, White provokes a loss of coordination in the enemy camp.

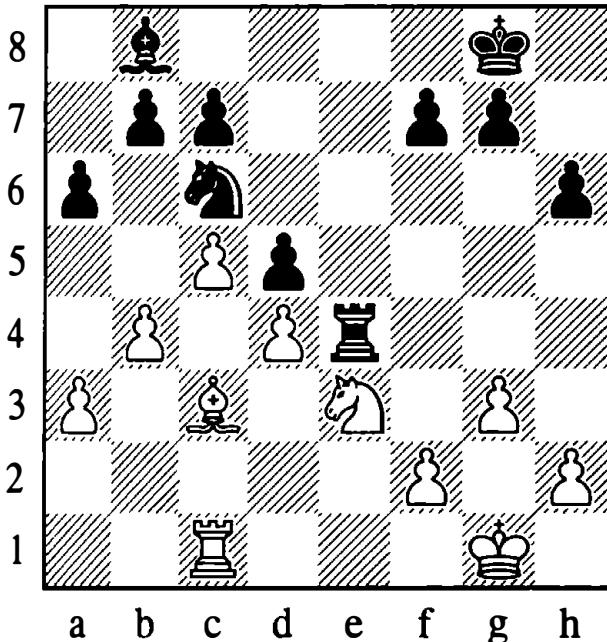
26... $\mathbb{B}e4$

After this seemingly active move Black will not be able to stop the queenside attack.

26... $\mathbb{B}d8$ would have required more inventiveness from White. 27.a4 $\mathbb{Q}a7$ 28. $\mathbb{B}el$ c6 29. $\mathbb{Q}f5$ Once again, White switches back to the kingside attack, although he is a whole tempo down compared with a previous line. 29... $\mathbb{Q}f8$



30.♗d2! (A familiar move, putting the h6-pawn under pressure. During some friendly analysis with Artur Yusupov later that evening, I also suggested 30.♗e7 g6 31.♗xb7 gxf5 32.♗d2 with complete domination, despite Black's considerable material advantage! I quickly indicated 30.♗d2! as an even better move, but Artur laughed and said he preferred the positional piece sacrifice in the ending for just one pawn!) 30...h5 (Black prepares to drive the enemy knight away. 30...♝c8 would mean giving up the initial plan by allowing the continuation of the queenside attack with 31.b5±. 30...♝d7 would allow another piece sacrifice with decisive effects. 31.♞xh6! gxh6 32.♗xh6† ♜g8 33.♗e8† ♜h7 34.♗xb8 ♜xh6 35.♗a8+–) 31.♗e7 g6 32.♗h6†! White has ensured his control over the seventh rank, with a decisive advantage.



27.♔g2!

White improves the king's placement, bringing it closer to the centre and avoiding possible checks on e2 or f3. The threat against the d4-pawn is now illusory, for instance 27...♝xd4 28.♗d1 ♘b5 29.♗xd5 ♘xc3 30.♗d8† ♜h7 31.♗xb8 with decisive material gains.

27...♝e7 28.a4 c6 29.b5

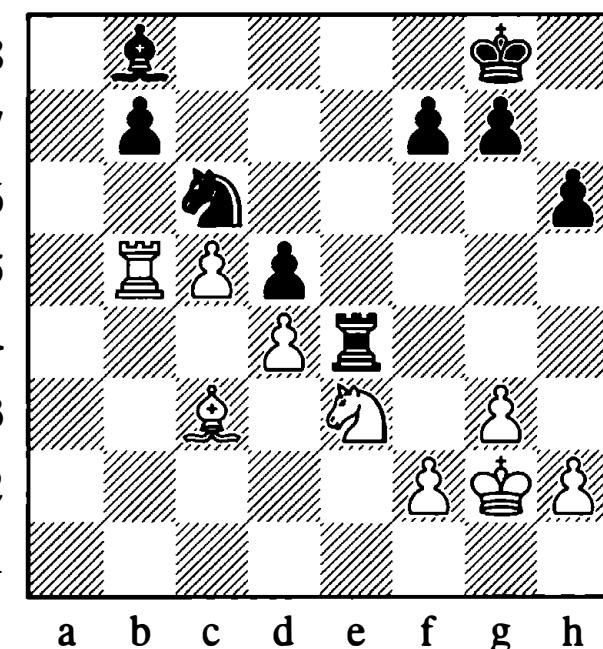
White's attack has finally broken through.

The black rook is misplaced on e4, because it fails to defend the back rank.

29...cx b5

29...axb5 30.axb5 would create the threat of b6 or just ♜a1-a8, forcing Black to transpose to the game with 30...cx b5.

30.axb5 axb5 31.♗b1 ♘c6 32.♗xb5



Black's position will inevitably collapse. Although officially alive, the b8-bishop does not contribute in any way to the defence, and is just a source of worry for Black.

32...♝e7

After 32...♝xd4 33.♗xd4 ♜xd4 34.♗xb7 ♜e5 35.c6 Black would have to give up the bishop for the c-pawn.

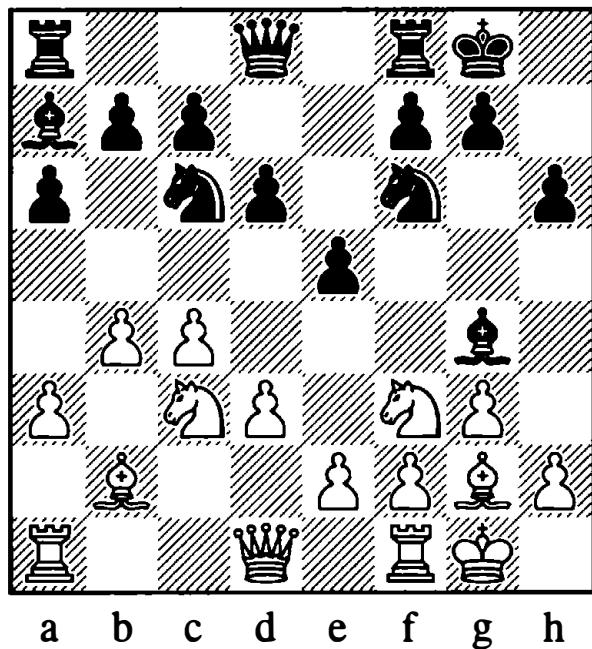
33.♗xd5 ♜d7 34.♗b6 ♜d8 35.d5

White soon won in Marin – Zozulia, Porto Mannu 2009.

This was one of the last games to be included in the book, and is one of my best creative achievements. The tight connection between tactics and strategy, which is characteristic of the English Opening in general, can be seen from the number of variations needed to justify the choice of concrete plans.

(1.c4 e5 2.g3 ♜c6 3.♗c3 ♜f6 4.♗g2 ♜c5 5.♗f3 d6 6.d3 0–0 7.0–0 h6 8.a3 a6 9.b4 ♜a7 10.♗b2)

B) 10...♝g4



Black plans to answer the "obvious" 11.h3 with 11...♜e6. Next, he will win a tempo with 12...♝d7 (provoking 13.♔h2), which will enable him to carry out the plan based on the knight's transfer to g6 followed by centralizing the rooks under more favourable circumstances than in the main line. In view of the possibility of occupying the h2-b8 diagonal with the bishop and advancing the h-pawn to h4, the white king's position would be vulnerable.

Despite having obtained good results with 11.h3, I came to the conclusion that White should ignore the bishop and play as in line A.

11.♝c1!

The bishop looks active on g4, but on the other hand it leaves the d5-square insufficiently defended.

The following is a typical example of the complicated fight to which 11.h3 tends to lead:

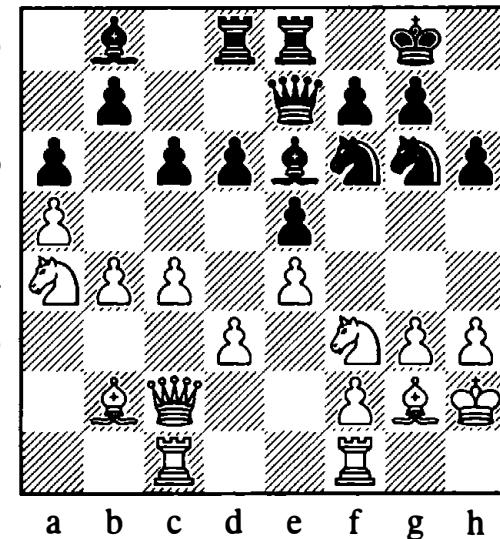
11...♜e6 12.♝c1 ♜d7 13.♔h2 ♜fe8 14.e3 ♜e7 15.a4 c6 16.a5

White takes the weak b6-square under control. The standard attack 16.b5 fails to achieve anything concrete, because it is hard to increase the pressure against the c6-pawn.

16...♞g6

Helped by White's loss of a tempo, Black has managed to transfer the knight to g6 without allowing the centre to be opened.

17.♞a4 ♜ad8 18.♝c2 ♜b8 19.e4 ♜e7



Black has achieved a favourable regrouping, with one exception: his dark-squared bishop is passive.

20.d4 h5 21.d5 ♜c8

When playing this move, Black may have failed to foresee White's plan. 21...♜d7 would have been better, keeping an eye on the b5-square. In this case, the position would have remained fairly balanced.

22.♝e2 cxd5

It would have been advisable to refrain from this move by playing 22...h4 immediately.

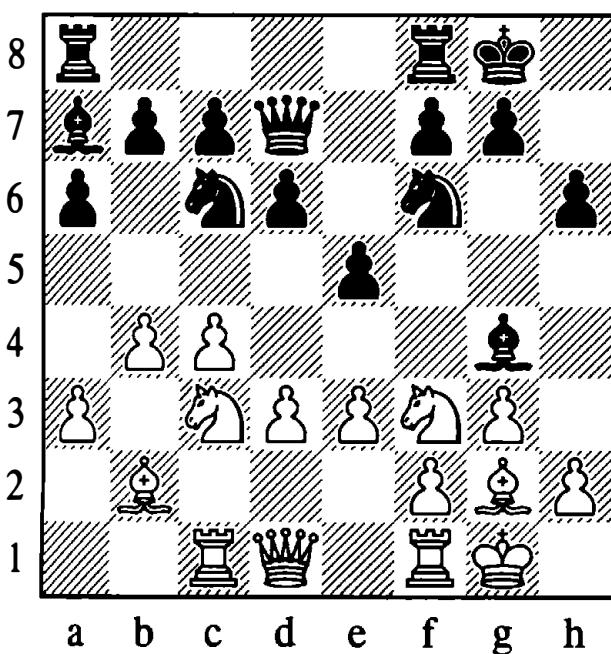
23.exd5!

This looks risky, because it leaves Black with a threatening kingside majority, but 23.cxd5 allows Black to stabilize the queenside with 23...♜d7 24.♞b6 ♜b5.

23...♜f5 24.♞d2 h4 25.b5!

The rest of the game Marin – Boudre, Cannes 2002, is known from Chapter 2, page 18.

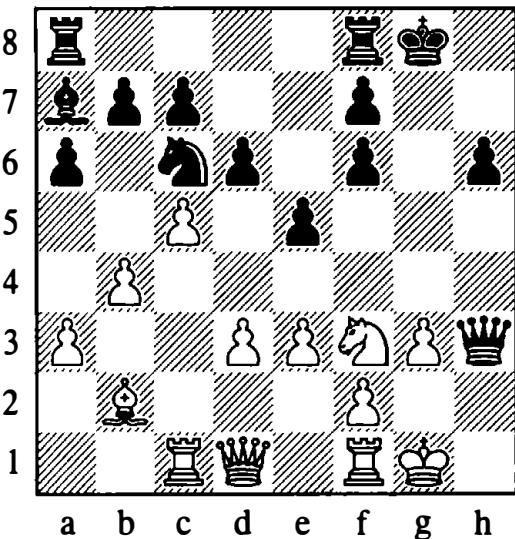
11... $\mathbb{W}d7$ 12.e3



12... $\mathbb{Q}e7$

12... $\mathbb{Q}h3$ would again transpose to A).

The attempt to keep White pinned with 12... $\mathbb{W}f5$ fails to 13. $\mathbb{Q}d5$. By capturing on d5 Black would lose a pawn, while after 13... $\mathbb{W}h5!$? 14. $\mathbb{Q}xf6\#$ gxf6 White has a strategically promising pawn sacrifice at his disposal: 15.h3! $\mathbb{Q}xh3$ 16. $\mathbb{Q}xh3$ $\mathbb{W}xh3$ 17.c5±

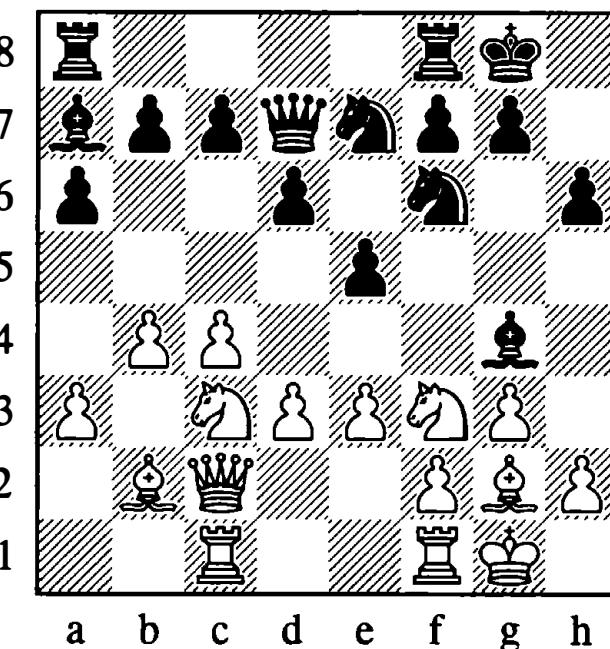


White has more than sufficient compensation for the pawn. The a7-bishop is out of play and Black's structure is weak. White will soon play $\mathbb{Q}f3-h4$ and $\mathbb{W}d1-f3$, eventually supported by a rook lift to c4.

Also, the immediate 15.c5! may be even better, keeping h2-h3 in reserve.

13. $\mathbb{W}c2$

Freeing the knight from the pin and taking the c7-pawn under observation.



13... $\mathbb{Q}g6N$

This is the most flexible continuation.

13...c6 allows White to break Black's compact structure into two pieces with 14.c5. Black's attempt to win a pawn with 14... $\mathbb{Q}xf3$ 15. $\mathbb{Q}xf3$ dx5 16.bxc5 $\mathbb{Q}xc5$ fails to 17. $\mathbb{Q}a4$, when he cannot defend e5 because of the fork on b6.

Instead after 14... $\mathbb{Q}g6$ 15.cxd6 $\mathbb{W}xd6$ 16.h3 $\mathbb{Q}f5$ 17.e4 $\mathbb{Q}e6$ 18. $\mathbb{Q}a4$ $\mathbb{Q}ad8$ 19. $\mathbb{Q}fd1$ $\mathbb{Q}c8$ 20.d4± White obtained a considerable space advantage in Marin – Valeanu, Romania (ch) 2005.

14. $\mathbb{Q}d5$ $\mathbb{Q}h7$

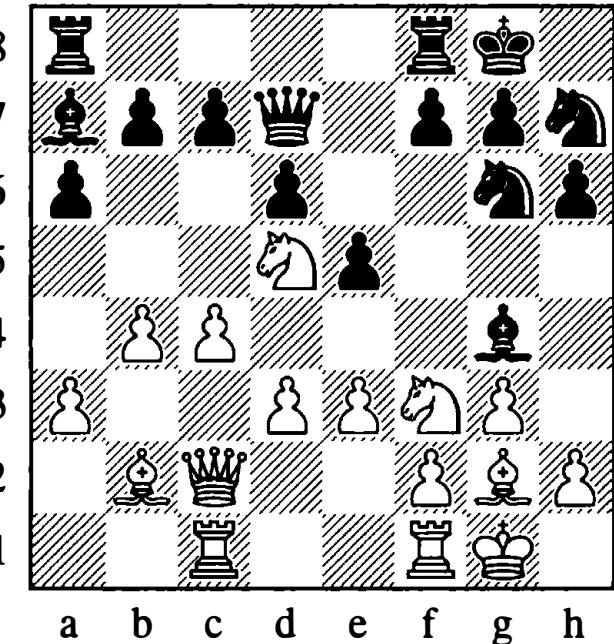
To avoid weakening his kingside, Black has to give up the tension. This retreat is the most active, because it allows a further activation of the knight with ... $\mathbb{Q}h7-g5$.

If 14... $\mathbb{Q}xd5$ 15.cxd5 $\mathbb{Q}ac8$, White can play the thematic 16.d4 under favourable circumstances. After 16... $\mathbb{Q}xf3$ 17. $\mathbb{Q}xf3$ exd4 18.exd4± Black is left with two passive minor pieces, an acute lack of space and a chronic weakness on c7. White's bishop pair is dangerous in the long

term, especially after the eventual transfer of the b2-bishop to e3.

The double pawns are very useful, as they keep several important squares under control. The d5-pawn ensures White a space advantage, while, if well protected, the d4-pawn keeps the a7-bishop out of play. The main plan would be to slowly increase the space advantage with $\mathbb{g}2$, h4 and eventually trade one pair of rooks to avoid any form of counterplay.

14... $\mathbb{d}e8$ keeps the c7-square well defended, but generally speaking this is a more passive way to avoid the exchange of knights. After 15.e4!? f5 White can deviate from the variation initiated by 14... $\mathbb{h}7$ with 16.d4!.



15.e4!

I spent quite some time looking for a dynamic way to meet the threatened 15...c6, but it turns out that neither 15.b5 nor 15.d4 offers White an advantage (Black would play 15...c6 in both cases). Finally, I understood that if the knight has to abandon d5, it should at least avoid losing two tempos retreating to its previous location. This is how the idea of 15.e4 was born.

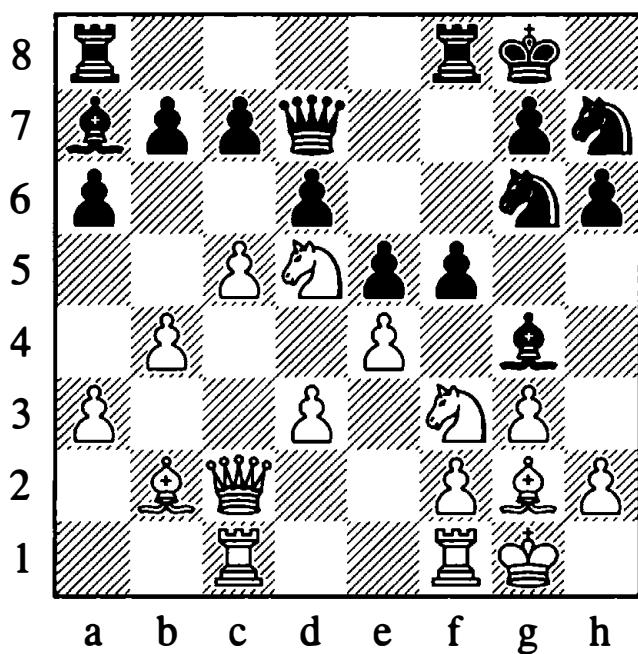
White's main idea is revealed after 15...c6 16. $\mathbb{d}e3$, when the knight keeps the important f5-square under control, while also attacking

the light-squared bishop. The main threat is c5 followed quickly by d4, while after 16... $\mathbb{x}e3$ 17.fxe3± White would have an impressive centre, which he would put in motion with d4 and c5, increasing the activity of his dark-squared bishop.

15...f5

Logical but risky.

16.c5!



It appears that with the knight on h7, the c7- and d6-squares are vulnerable.

16...fxe4

16...c6 would weaken Black's central structure even more. After 17. $\mathbb{d}e3$ fxe4 the retreat 18. $\mathbb{d}e1$ might be an entirely adequate move, when the inevitable pawn exchanges in the centre will leave White comfortable.

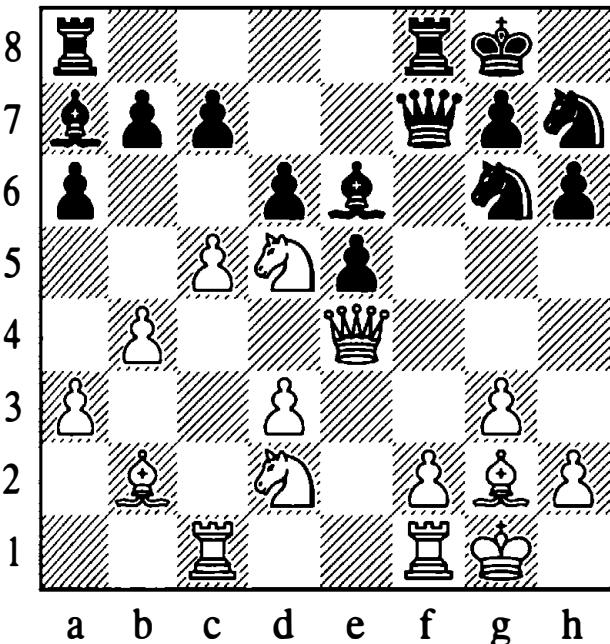
However, I like 18. $\mathbb{d}d2!$ even more. White is mainly concerned about essential squares and the trajectory of pieces, ignoring small material losses. 18... $\mathbb{e}2$ 19. $\mathbb{x}e4$ $\mathbb{xf}1$ 20. $\mathbb{xf}1$ $\mathbb{e}7$ 21. $\mathbb{dc}4$ White has wonderful compensation for the sacrificed exchange. He will soon take control of the centre, while the enemy kingside is weak. Besides, the a7-bishop will have a hard job finding an active diagonal.

17.♗c4!

This strong intermediate move ensures White's stability in the centre.

17...♝f7

If 17...♝h8 18.♗xe4 ♜xf3 19.♗xf3 ♜g5 White avoids material losses, while maintaining a positional advantage, with 20.♗g4!.

18.♘d2 ♜e6 19.♗xe4

White has strong pressure against the enemy centre and the a7-bishop is out of play. The vulnerability of his pieces in the centre is illusory because of the constant threat of simplifications with ♜e4xg6!.

**19...♝g5 20.♗xg6 ♜xg6 21.♝e7† ♜h7
22.♗xg6 ♜xg6 23.f4 exf4 24.gxf4 ♜h3†
25.♔h1 ♜xf4 26.♔xb7±**

Black's pieces lack coordination while his king is vulnerable.

(1.c4 e5 2.g3 ♜c6 3.♗c3 ♜f6 4.♗g2 ♜c5
5.♗f3 d6 6.d3 0–0 7.0–0 h6 8.a3 a6 9.b4
♜a7 10.♗b2)

C) 10...♝f5

This move is a rare guest in tournament practice. On f5 the bishop is slightly exposed,

allowing White to win a tempo under certain circumstances by attacking it. The pressure against the d3- and e4-squares is not so relevant.

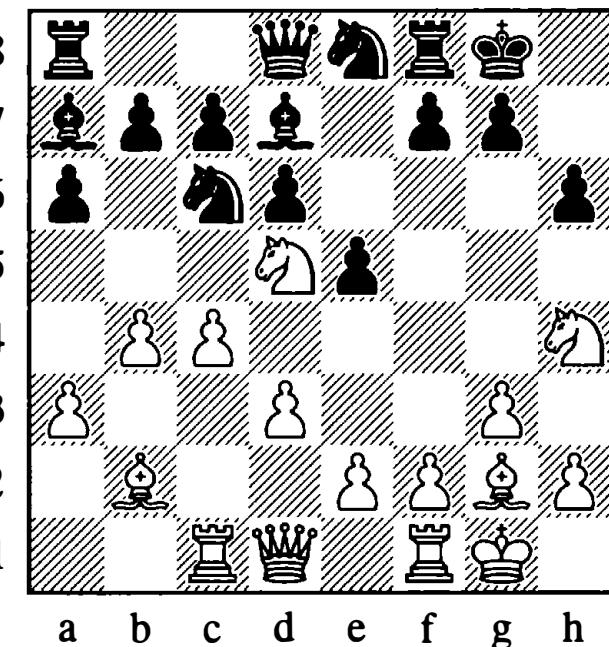
11.♗h4!?

A creative way of developing the initiative. White clears the path for his f-pawn with gain of time, hoping to provoke a weakening of the enemy kingside with ...g7-g5.

White can also continue as in line A with 11.♗c1N ♜d7 12.e3. The best Black can do now is transpose to the main line with 12...♝h3. In the case of a series of waiting moves such as 12...♝fe8 13.♗e1 ♜ad8, White can strengthen his central control with 14.♗d5! (everything is prepared for this thematic move) 14...♝xd5 15.cxd5 ♜e7 16.e4 ♜g4 17.d4±. The tactical trick 17...♝xd5, hoping for 18.exd5 e4, is ineffective because of 18.dxe5, opening the position in White's favour.

11...♝d7

This retreat looks rather passive, but I doubt that 11...♜e6 12.♗c1 ♜d7 13.♗d5± would have changed the character of the position.

12.♗c1 ♜e8 13.♗d5

White threatens c4-c5 followed by f2-f4.

13...g5!?

Black decides to start a kingside attack, but with his pieces passively placed he will only weaken his kingside.

14.♘f3 f5 15.♗d2 ♘d4

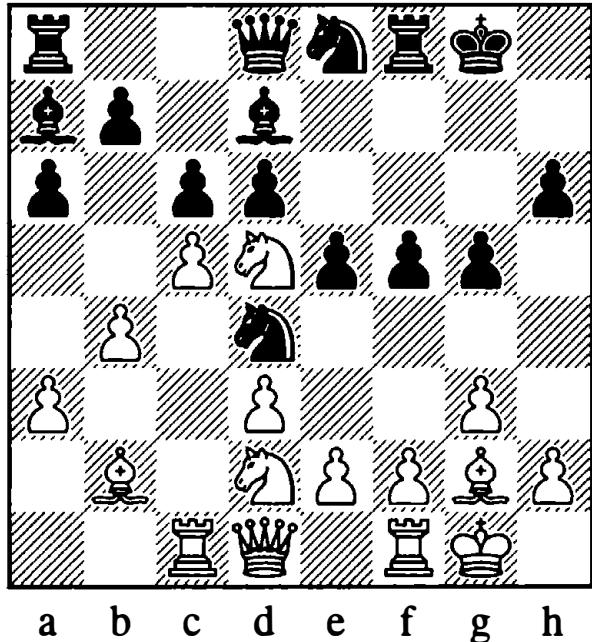
Black could neutralize the b2-bishop with 15...♝d4, but after 16.♗xd4 ♘xd4 17.e3 ♘e6 18.c5± the weakness of the b6-square will ensure the d5-knight permanent stability in the centre or on the queenside, for instance 18...c6 19.♗b6±.

16.c5

White has tempted his opponent to weaken his kingside and now sacrifices a pawn to gain unchallenged control of the dark squares.

16...c6

By refraining from the bishop exchange, Black intended to keep the b6-square well defended, in order to drive the enemy knight away from the centre.

**17.e3!N**

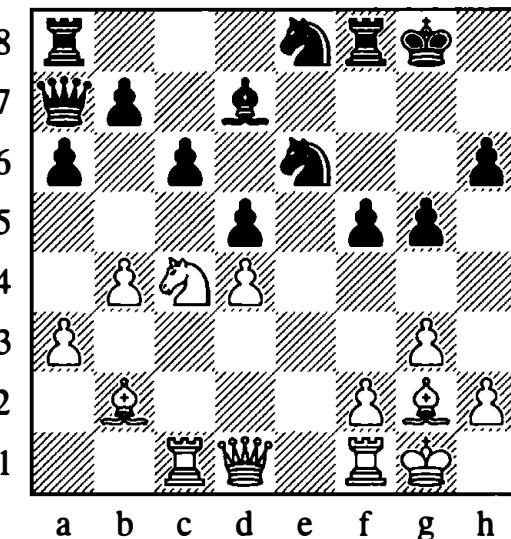
This is the simplest way to obtain an advantage at no risk.

It is worth looking at the following neo-romantic game, though.

17.♗b6!?

White sacrifices a pawn to make use of the weakened dark squares in Black's camp.

17...♕xb6 18.cxb6 ♜xb6 19.♘c4 ♜a7 20.e3 ♜e6 21.d4 exd4 22.exd4 d5



The long diagonal must be kept closed at any cost, but Black's knights are badly placed to fight against the e5-knight. The rest of the game is interesting to follow, although it may not be entirely typical of the English Opening.

23.♘e5 ♘f6 24.♗e1 ♘g7 25.a4 ♜b6 26.♗a3 ♜fe8 27.♗d3 ♜d8 28.♗e2 ♘g4 29.b5

Finally, Black has managed to challenge the intruder, but meanwhile White has activated his dark-squared bishop. His compensation is entirely satisfactory.

29...axb5 30.axb5 ♘xe5 31.dxe5 f4

This does not look like an attacking operation, because Black does not have enough forces in this area of the board.

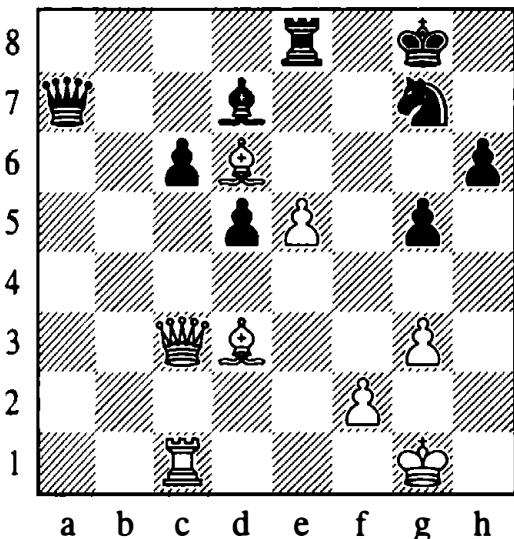
Instead of weakening his kingside, he should have activated his pieces on the other wing with 31...♗a5 32.bxc6 bxc6 33.♗d6 ♜a8. 32.bxc6 bxc6 33.♗d6 ♜a4 34.♗b2 ♜a8 35.♗f1

One of Black's main problems of coordination is that he has no favourable way of occupying the excellent blocking e6-square with his minor pieces: ...♗g7-e6 would leave the king exposed, while after ...♗d7-e6 the c6-pawn would be insufficiently defended.

35...♗a2 36.♗xa2 ♜xa2 37.♗c3!

With the threat of trapping the queen with $\mathbb{B}c1-a1$.

37...fxg3 38.hxg3 $\mathbb{W}a7$ 39. $\mathbb{Q}d3$



39... $\mathbb{Q}e6?$

The magnetism of the e6-square proves fatal in Black's time trouble.

A neutral move such as 39... $\mathbb{R}a8$ would have been answered with 40. $\mathbb{Q}g6\pm$ followed by $\mathbb{W}f3$, with a powerful attack.

Black should have tried 39... $\mathbb{Q}f5$, when the exchange on f5 followed by $\mathbb{W}xc6$ offers him chances to defend. White would probably have played 40. $\mathbb{Q}c5$ $\mathbb{W}c7$ 41. $\mathbb{R}e1$, maintaining the pressure.

40. $\mathbb{Q}g6$ $\mathbb{R}a8$ 41. $\mathbb{W}f3$

The attack is irresistible.

41... $\mathbb{Q}e8$ 42. $\mathbb{W}f6$ $\mathbb{Q}xg6$ 43. $\mathbb{W}xg6\pm$ $\mathbb{Q}g7$ 44.e6 $\mathbb{W}d4$ 45. $\mathbb{W}f7\pm$ $\mathbb{Q}h7$ 46. $\mathbb{Q}f8$

In view of the threat of e6-e7, Black resigned in Tal – Kavalek, Montreal 1979.

1–0

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

17... $cxd5$ would leave Black's structure in ruins after 18. $exd4$ e4 19. $\mathbb{W}b3\pm$.

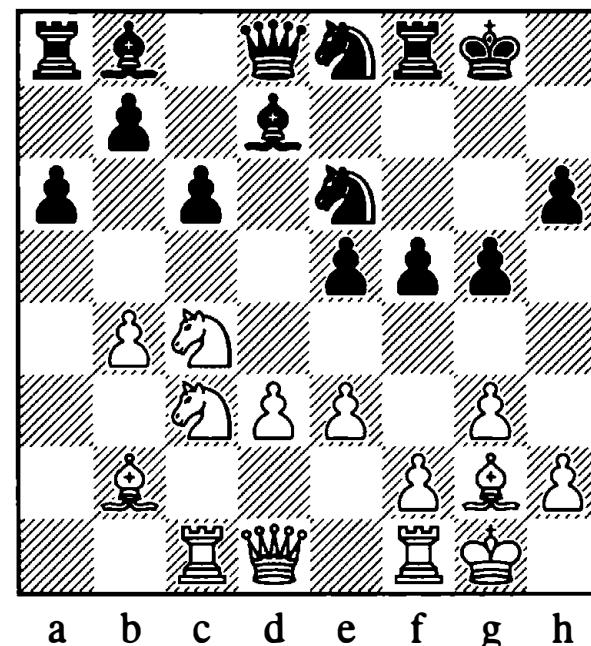
18. $\mathbb{Q}c3$ $dxc5$

Black has to pick up the gauntlet.

Blocking the centre with 18...d5 would leave the e5-pawn desperately weak after 19. $\mathbb{Q}a4$. For instance 19... $\mathbb{Q}b8$ 20. $\mathbb{Q}b6$ $\mathbb{R}a7$ 21. $\mathbb{Q}f3\pm$.

Black will have to open the centre with ...e5-e4, when the passivity of his a7-rook will prove decisive.

19. $\mathbb{Q}c4$ $cxb4$ 20. $axb4$ $\mathbb{Q}b8$



Black has managed to defend his e5-pawn, but his material advantage is hardly relevant due to his obvious lack of coordination. White only needs to find a good square for his c3-knight to increase the pressure against e5.

21. $\mathbb{Q}a4!$

Possibly not the only good move, but certainly the most ambitious. The knight moves closer to the c5- and b6-squares.

21... $b5$

Once again Black has to accept the challenge, because otherwise he would lose the e5-pawn and simply be much worse.

22. $\mathbb{Q}ab6$ $bxc4$ 23. $\mathbb{Q}xa8$

It appears that Black cannot easily trap the a8-knight.

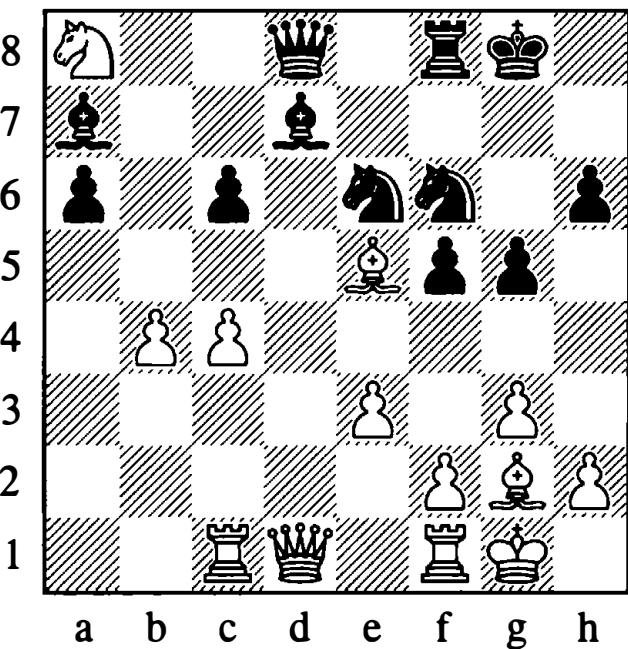
23... $\mathbb{Q}a7$

After 23... $\mathbb{Q}d6$ 24. $dxc4\pm$ the bishops would be hanging along the d-file.

Preventing the opening of the d-file with

23...c3 24.♗xc3 ♕d6 can be met by 25.♗xc6± and the knight will soon be safe.

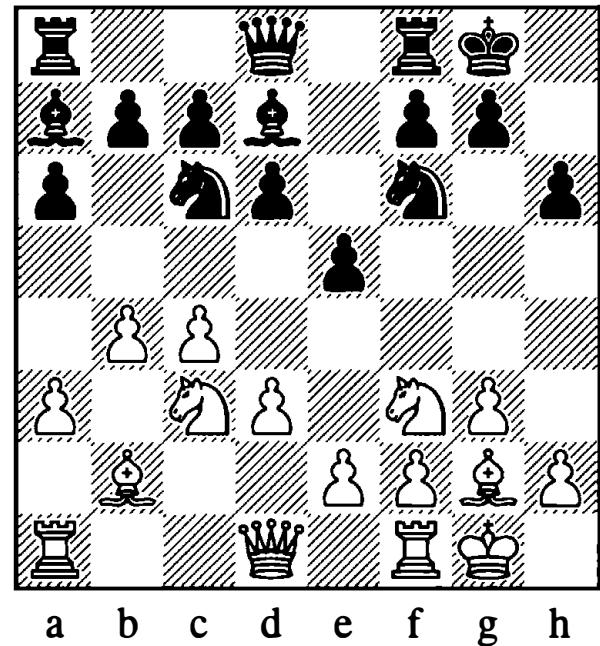
24.dxc4 ♖f6 25.♕xe5±



White is better coordinated and the knight is still taboo in view of ♕xf6 followed by ♜xd7. The immediate threat is c4-c5, cutting the a7-bishop out of play and preparing a knight retreat to b6.

(1.c4 e5 2.g3 ♖c6 3.♘c3 ♖f6 4.♗g2 ♕c5 5.♘f3 d6 6.d3 0-0 7.0-0 h6 8.a3 a6 9.b4 ♕a7 10.♗b2)

D) 10...♖d7

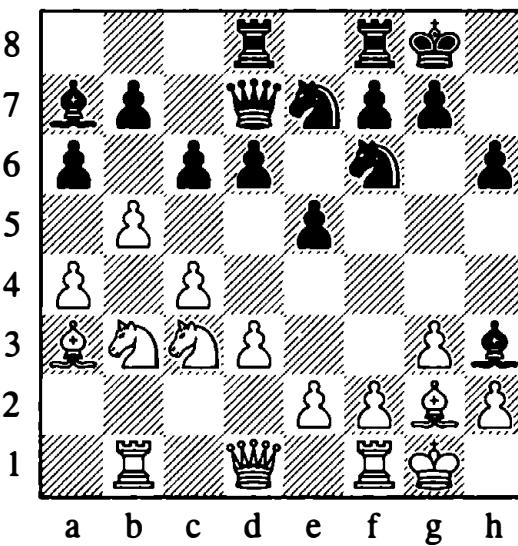


This slightly exotic and definitely rare move is inspired by Spassky's ♖c1-d2 in certain lines of the Closed Sicilian. The main idea is to over-defend the c6- and b5-squares in anticipation of White's queenside attack with b4-b5. The main drawback of this move is that it is just as passive as it looks, leaving the centre at White's mercy.

For a couple of moves White can play as in the line A.

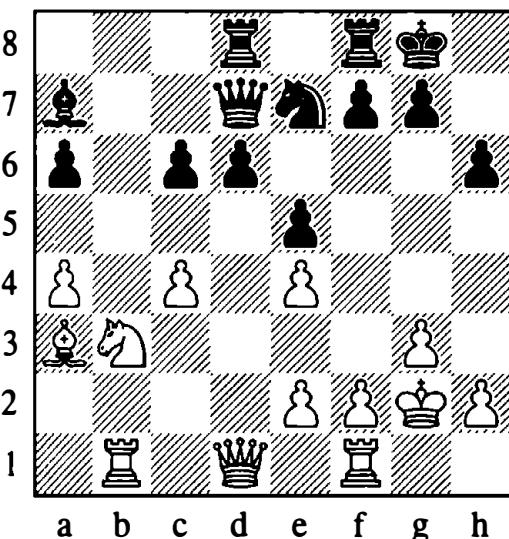
11.♗c1 ♗b8 12.e3

Even though Black is not threatening to play ...d6-d5, White should refrain from 12.♗d2 because this would deprive him of the possibility of opening the centre with d3-d4. A recent game of mine continued: 12...♗e7! (This is a good moment to initiate this standard regrouping. The point behind White's previous move is that 12...b5 would be impossible in view of 13.cxb5 axb5 14.♗xb5!, winning a pawn, but Black does not have to stick to his initial plan.) 13.♗b3 ♕e6 14.a4 ♜d7 15.b5 c6 16.♗a3 ♜bd8 17.♗b1 ♜h3



The loss of time caused by Black's repeated moves with the queen's rook and bishop are compensated by the time invested in transferring the f3-knight to the relatively passive b3-square. Black was very much okay in Marin – Rowson, Porto Mannu 2008. White tried to justify his previous play with

18.bxc6 bxc6 19.Qe4 Qxe4 20.dxe4 Qxg2 21.Qxg2, setting up pressure against the d6-pawn and hoping to initiate active operations along the b-file after a further Qa5. In doing so, he overlooked Black's paradoxical but brilliant reply.



21...c5!! At first sight, Black buries his own bishop alive, which in the event of simplifications would leave him with a bad ending. The hidden consequences of this move are that both White's minor pieces remain very passive, while the weakness of the a4- and c4-pawns forces White to take defensive measures. Later I had to retreat the b3-knight, allowing the black bishop to activate via b6-a5. I needed to defend very accurately to hold a draw.

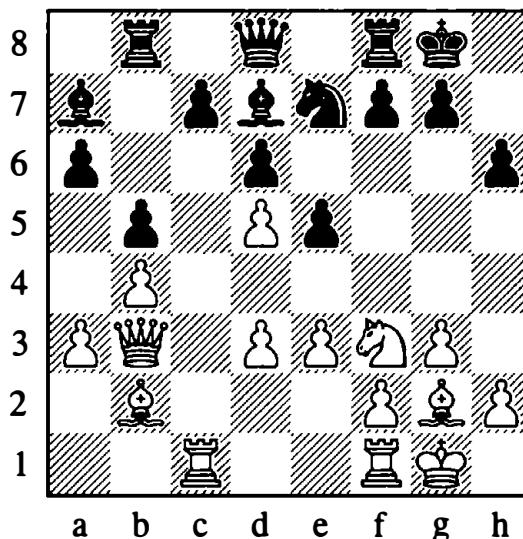
12...b5

With the knight on f3, 12...Qe7 can be met by 13.d4 with a slight edge, winning space in the centre.

13.Qd2

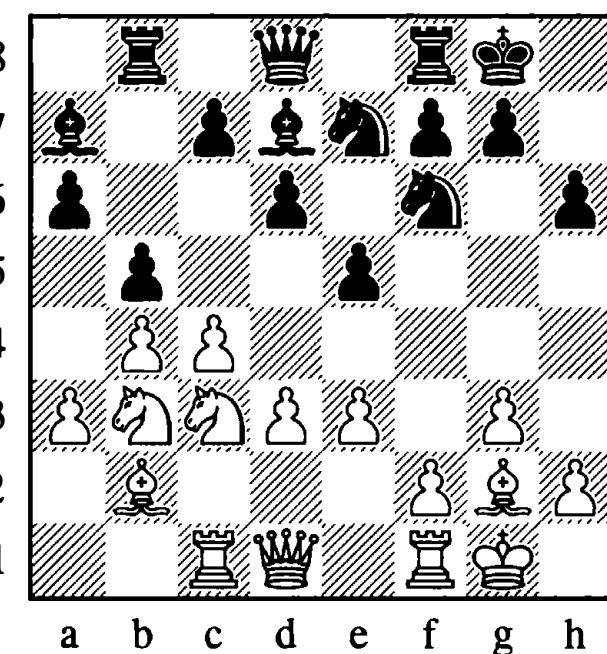
This is a flexible move, consolidating the c4-square and putting the c6-knight under pressure while maintaining the tension on the queenside.

The immediate 13.Qd5?!N also deserves attention. After 13...Qxd5 14.cxd5 Qe7 15.Wb3, the structure favours White.



Instead of queenside counterplay, Black has a backward c7-pawn. White intends to consolidate his space advantage with e4 and d4, while the generally desirable break 15...c6?! could be answered with an elegant tactical operation: 16.Qxe5! dx5 17.dxc6 Qe6 18.Wc3± In view of the threats c6-c7 and Wc3xe5, White will soon have three mobile pawns for the sacrificed knight, while the a7-bishop has not improved its situation at all. Black is not forced to capture on d5, but installing a knight on this central square without any effort is usually a success for White.

13...Qe7 14.Qb3



We have been following an interesting knight migration from both sides. Black's knight evacuates the vulnerable c6-square while its

white colleague approaches the weakened area.

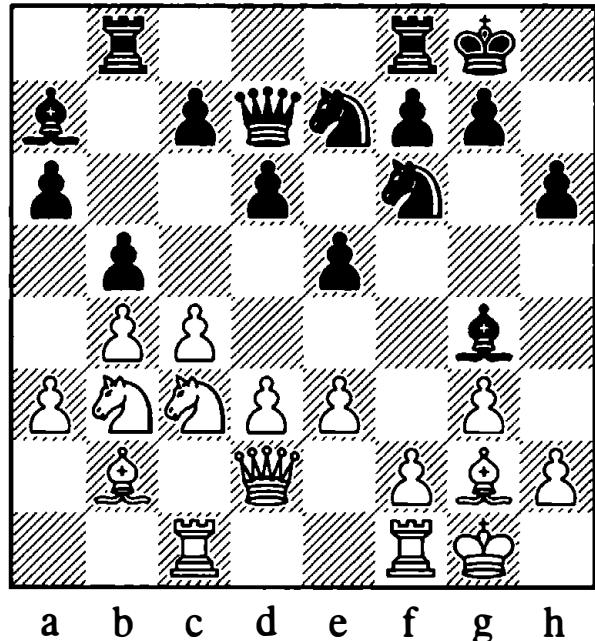
14... $\mathbb{Q}g4$

Black is not prepared to react on the queenside with 14...c5 because after 15.cxb5 axb5 16.bxc5 dxc5 17. $\mathbb{Q}e4$ $\mathbb{Q}xe4$ 18. $\mathbb{Q}xe4$ he would face problems defending the e5- and c5-pawns.

The seemingly solid 14...c6 can be answered with 15. $\mathbb{Q}e2$ $\mathbb{Q}g6$ 16.c5! when in order to avoid additional weaknesses Black would have to play 16...d5. However, this leaves the a7-bishop terribly misplaced and White can create a kingside initiative with 17.f4±, opening the f-file and the long dark diagonal, while making the d4-square available for his minor pieces.

Finally, 14... $\mathbb{Q}g6$ 15. $\mathbb{Q}d5$ c6 leaves the black centre shaky after 16. $\mathbb{Q}xf6\#$ $\mathbb{W}xf6$ 17.c5 d5 18.f4±.

15. $\mathbb{W}d2$ $\mathbb{W}d7$



16. $\mathbb{Q}d5$

With White's other knight close to the c6-square, this is well timed.

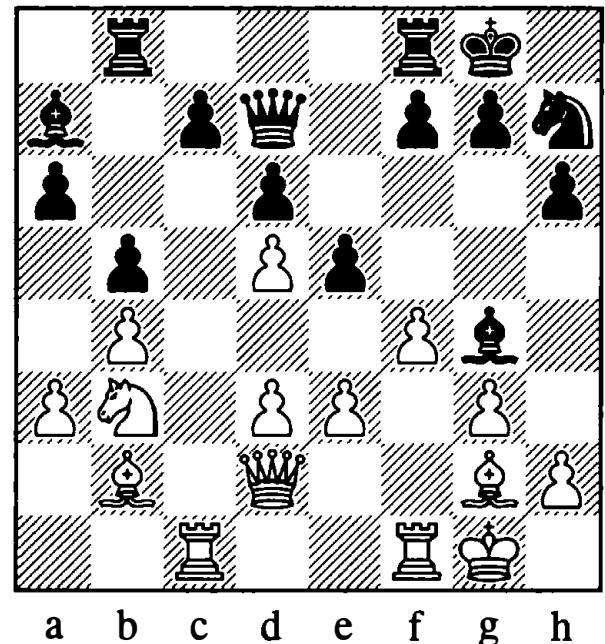
16... $\mathbb{Q}exd5$ 17.cxd5 $\mathbb{Q}h7$

After 17... $\mathbb{Q}h3$ White consolidates his space

advantage with 18.e4±. If Black prepares the thematic ...f7-f5 with 18... $\mathbb{Q}h7$, the central reaction 19.d4 would be strong, neutralizing the a7-bishop.

18.f4±

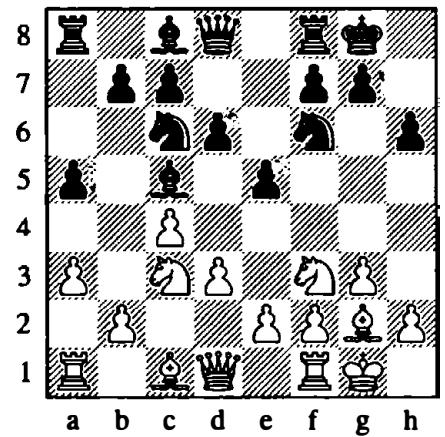
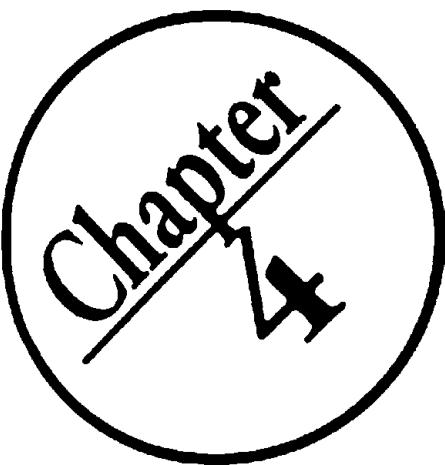
This is a typical move, activating the f1-rook and b2-bishop at the same time.



Black's kingside counterplay is annihilated even before it has started. His lack of space does not allow him to take advantage of the relative weakness of the e3-pawn. White plans to increase his space advantage with $\mathbb{Q}h1$ and e3-e4, as in Marin – Silvino Garcia, Benasque 2000.

Conclusion:

After having examined virtually all Black's possible ways to develop, we can conclude that White retains positional pressure after 8...a6.



Karpov Variation

7...h6 8.a3 a5

Variation Index

1.c4 e5 2.g3 ♜c6 3.♗c3 ♜f6 4.♗g2 ♜c5 5.♗f3 d6 6.d3 0-0 7.0-0 h6 8.a3

8...a5 9.e3!

A) 9...♝f5

p 48

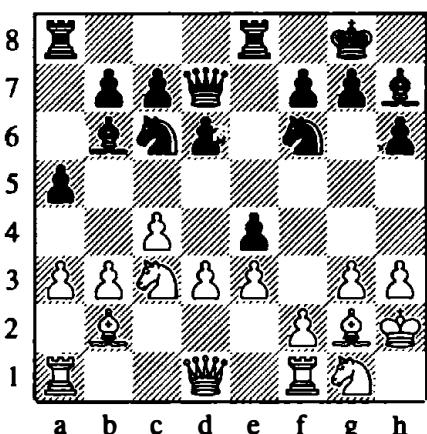
B) 9...♝b6

p 49

C) 9...♝e8

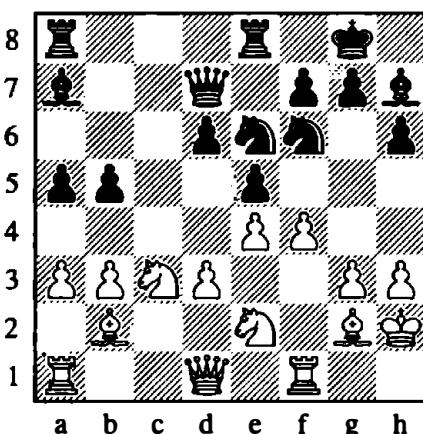
p 51

B) after 14...e4?!



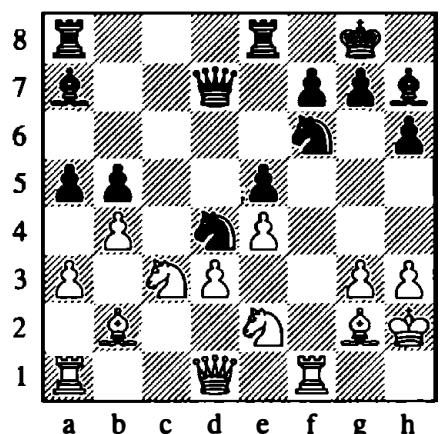
15.♗d5!

C) better than Marin - Karpov



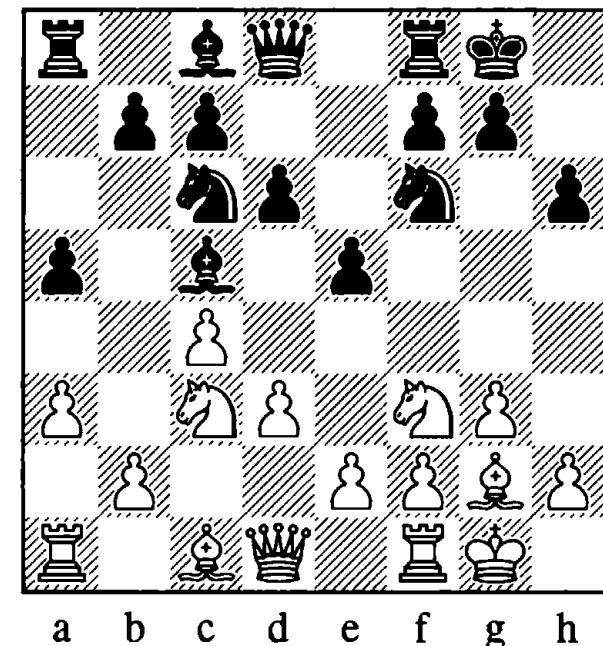
19.b4!

C) after 20...dxe5



21.♝xf6!

**1.c4 e5 2.g3 ♜c6 3.♗c3 ♜f6 4.♗g2 ♜c5
5.♘f3 d6 6.d3 0-0 7.0-0 h6 8.a3 a5**



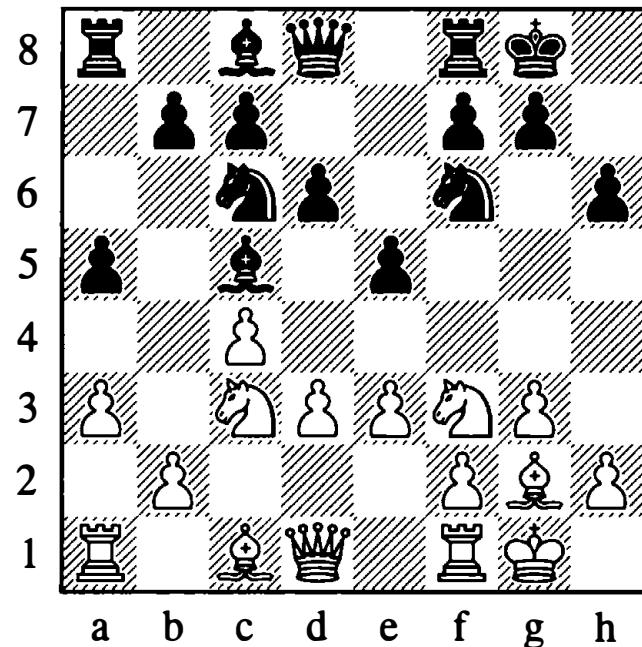
This move prevents White's queenside expansion, but weakens the b5-square. The bishop will not be stable on a7 because of the permanent danger of ♜c3-b5 nor will it enjoy safety on b6 because of ♜c3-d5.

At the same time, the fact that White will be constrained to play b2-b3 instead of b4 is not without positive sides for White. By keeping the c4-pawn safely defended, he will be able to advance his d-pawn even with a black bishop on e6. In conjunction with the instability of the dark-squared bishop, this usually offers White an advantage. After 8...a6, playing b2-b3 followed by d3-d4 would make less sense because the bishop would feel relatively comfortably on a7.

It is remarkable how much this apparently minor difference (...a7-a5 instead of ...a7-a6, the c4-pawn over-defended) can influence White's strategy. One paradoxical aspect refers to the move h2-h3, which had to be avoided after ...a7-a6 followed by ...♗c8-g4, while after 8...a5 White will play it even without winning a tempo (after ...♗c8-f5, for example). The explanation is that ...♗c6-e7, which initiates the only regrouping aimed to take advantage of the relative weakness of the g3-square, can always be met by d3-d4. Otherwise, h2-h3

simply increases White's influence over the squares along the fourth rank, as in a reversed hedgehog.

9.e3!



This is a good moment to advance this pawn, as it prevents Black's natural development. For the time being, 9...♗e6 is impossible because of 10.d4 followed by d4-d5, winning a piece. For the same reason, 9...♗g4 is not recommended because of 10.h3, when the bishop retreat to e6 is impossible.

We will examine A) 9...♗f5, B) 9...♗b6 and C) 9...♗e8.

**(1.c4 e5 2.g3 ♜c6 3.♗c3 ♜f6 4.♗g2 ♜c5
5.♘f3 d6 6.d3 0-0 7.0-0 h6 8.a3 a5 9.e3)**

A) 9...♗f5

This is a fairly safe square, but the bishop is relatively ineffective. We can call this a typical example of mechanical development.

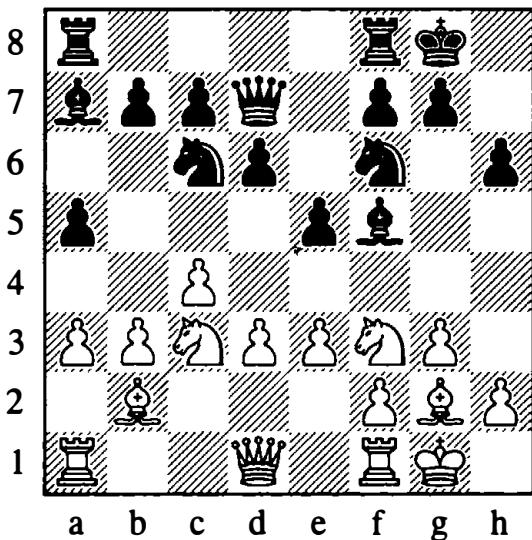
10.b3 ♗d7

I do not trust this straightforward plan. Black does not take any preventive measures against White's central expansion.

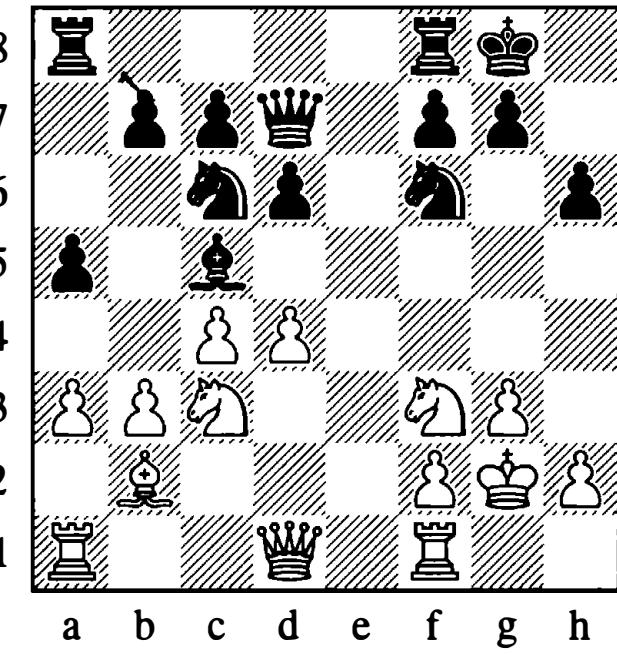
9...♗e8 transposes to line C, page 51.

11.♗b2 ♗h3

Right after the game, my opponent suggested 11...♗a7!?:



It is in such a position that it becomes clear how strong the move ...♝f8-e8 would have been instead of ...♝d8-d7. Here is an illustrative line: 12.d4!? e4 (the only way to fight for space in the centre) 13.♗d2 ♜ae8 14.♗c2 ♜e7 (Black has to lose a tempo in order to defend his central pawn) 15.♗ael (over-defending the e3-pawn and planning f2-f3) 15...♝h7 16.♗b5 (winning another tempo and soon after a pawn) 16...♝b6 17.d5 ♗b8 18.♗xf6 ♜xf6 19.♗xe4 ♜e7 20.♗bc3 White seems to be able to keep Black's counterplay under control after 20...f5 21.♗d2 f4 22.♗e4 ♜xe4 23.♗cxe4 fxe3 24.fxe3 ♜xf1† 25.♔xf1± with a solid extra pawn.

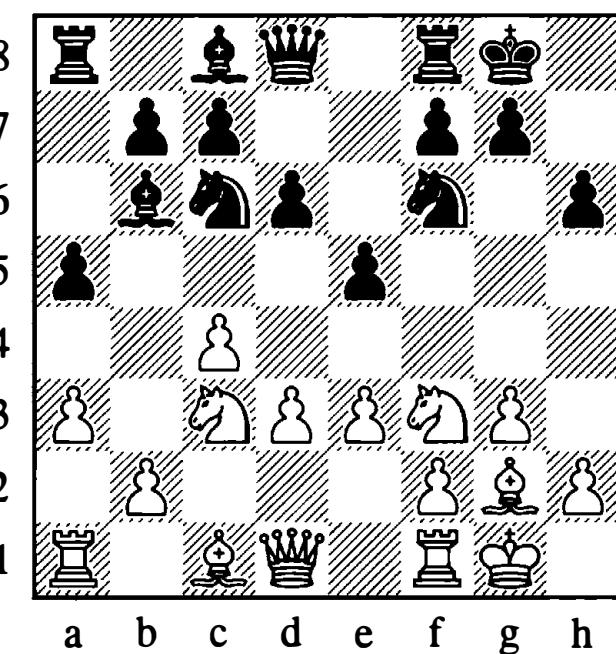
12.d4 exd4 13.exd4 ♜xg2 14.♔xg2**14...♝a7**

14...♝b6 is not without drawbacks either. White answers 15.♗a4!± threatening ♗xb6 or d5 followed by ♜xf6, spoiling Black's structure in either case.

15.♗b5

With a stable advantage for White, Marin – Vasallo, Burjassot (rapid) 2003. The a7-bishop is vulnerable and passive, while d4-d5 will offer White strong pressure on both wings.

(1.c4 e5 2.g3 ♗c6 3.♗c3 ♗f6 4.♗g2 ♜c5 5.♗f3 d6 6.d3 0–0 7.0–0 h6 8.a3 a5 9.e3)

B) 9...♝b6

The course of events in line A induces the thought that Black should retreat his dark-squared bishop at some point, in order to reduce the effects of the pawn advance d3-d4. However, playing this move at such an early stage also implies an undesirable commitment, because it far from clear yet what the best square for the bishop will be.

10.b3!

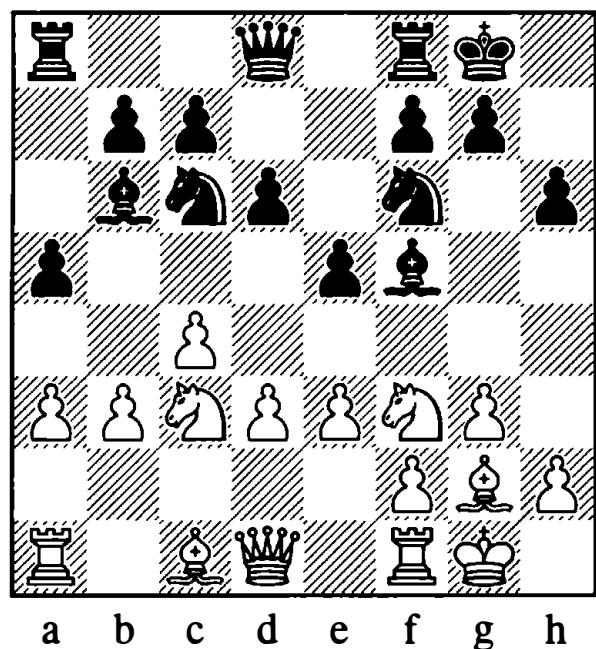
This move anticipates the bishop's development to e6 by defending the c4-pawn.

10...♝f5

It appears that, under the given circumstances, this is the safest square – a very different case from the variation with 8...a6.

10... $\mathbb{Q}e6$ is met by 11.d4 exd4 12. $\mathbb{Q}xd4!$ (Avoiding the pin with $\mathbb{Q}e6-g4$. Black faces problems stabilizing the position.) 12... $\mathbb{Q}xd4$ 13.exd4 d5 14. $\mathbb{Q}f4\pm$, followed by $\mathbb{Q}e5$ with pressure in the centre.

10... $\mathbb{Q}g4$ 11.h3 $\mathbb{Q}e6$ is even worse, because after 12.d4! exd4 White can avoid piece exchanges by playing 13.exd4±, which increases the significance of his space advantage, Marin – Hector, Gothenburg 2004.



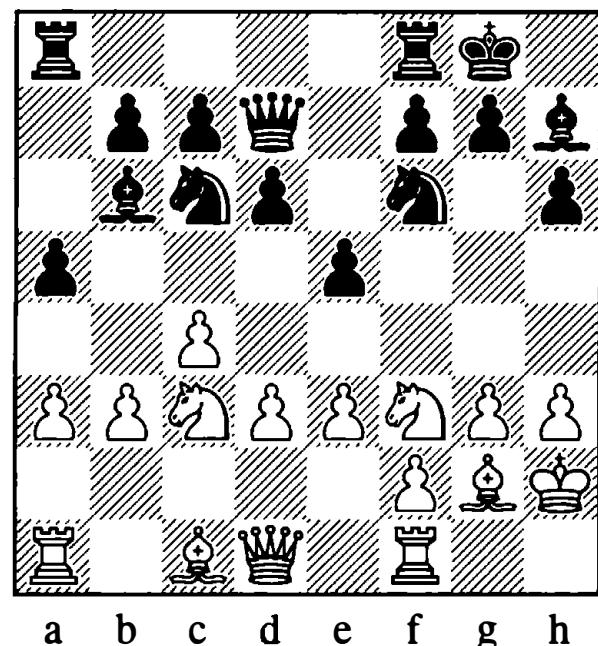
11.h3!?

An interesting plan designed by Mikhail Gurevich. White aims to restrict Black's counterplay to the minimum.

11... $\mathbb{W}d7$ 12. $\mathbb{Q}h2$ $\mathbb{Q}h7$

Black retreats his bishop to a safe but relatively passive square. It may seem that he is preparing ...e5-e4, but I do not consider this advance to be desirable for Black, because it would increase the significance of White's space advantage and his excellent outpost on d5.

Gurevich gives 12...e4 13. $\mathbb{Q}h4$ exd3 14. $\mathbb{Q}xf5$ $\mathbb{W}xf5$ 15.e4± when White has a space advantage and the bishop pair.



13. $\mathbb{Q}b2!$

As will become clear from the comment to Black's next move, there is no need to prevent ...e5-e4 yet, regardless of whether the advance is good or bad from a general point of view.

Mikhail Gurevich preferred the overcautious 13. $\mathbb{Q}g1$ intending a long regrouping: $\mathbb{Q}g1-e2$, $\mathbb{W}d1-d2$, $\mathbb{Q}c1-b2$, $\mathbb{B}a1-e1$, f2-f4. The further course of the game was similar to line C, 9... $\mathbb{E}e8$. In that line I will give further explanations of the main ideas. 13... $\mathbb{Q}h8$ (the idea behind this move remains a mystery to me, but I guess Black had run out of constructive ideas) 14. $\mathbb{Q}ge2$ $\mathbb{E}fe8$ 15. $\mathbb{Q}b2$ $\mathbb{Q}d8$ 16. $\mathbb{W}d2$ c6 17.e4 $\mathbb{Q}g8$ 18. $\mathbb{Q}a4$ $\mathbb{Q}c7$ 19.d4 exd4 20. $\mathbb{Q}xd4\pm$ Black is poorly coordinated and lacks space, M. Gurevich – I. Sokolov, Belgrade 1991.

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

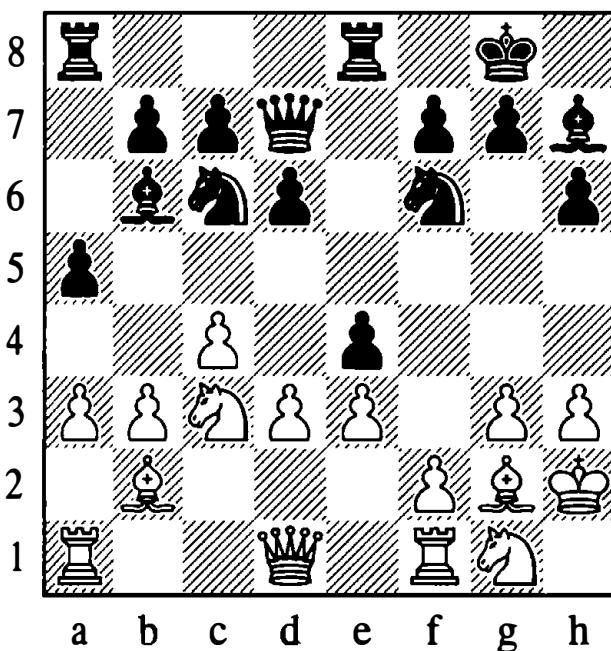
It appears that Black needs this move anyway.

After the immediate 13...e4 14.dxe4 $\mathbb{Q}xe4$ 15. $\mathbb{Q}xe4$ $\mathbb{Q}xe4$ White has 16. $\mathbb{Q}e5!$, winning the bishop pair or spoiling Black's queenside structure.

14.♗g1 e4?!

Finally, Black loses his temper.

It would have been better to keep regrouping with 14...♝d8 reaching an almost identical position to that from line C. The only difference is that the bishop is on b6, rather than on a7. From b6, the bishop prevents the pawn break ...b7-b5 as played in line C, which justifies my doubts about the decision to define the bishop's position so early.

**15.♗d5!**

This thematic move consolidates White's space advantage. The f6-knight is trapped, which forces the exchange on d5.

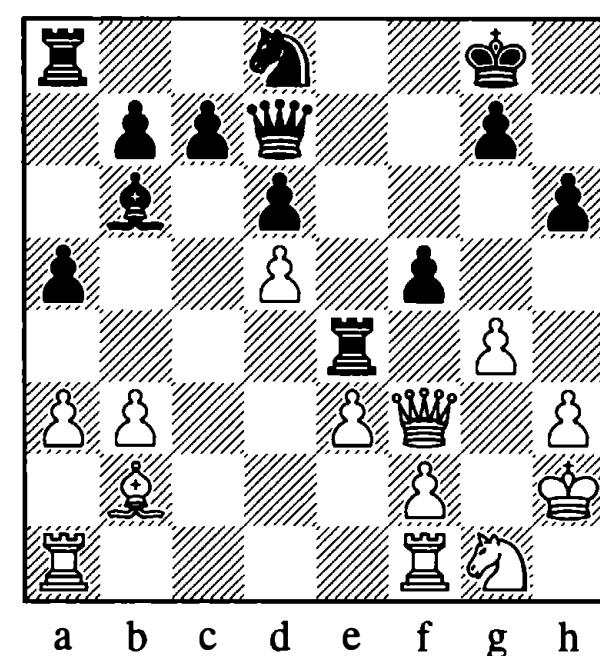
15...♝xd5 16.cxd5 ♘d8

Black had a choice between several unfavourable squares. Under different circumstances, the retreat to b8 followed by ...♝b8-d7 would be more flexible, but here the d7-square is unavailable.

17.dxe4 ♕xe4 18.♕xe4 ♜xe4 19.♘f3 f5

Black has to fight for space while clearing a square for the knight at the same time.

After 19...♜e7 20.♗e2 the threat ♘f4-h5 is very dangerous.

20.g4!

Black's poor coordination prevents him from exploiting the weaknesses induced by this strategically desirable move.

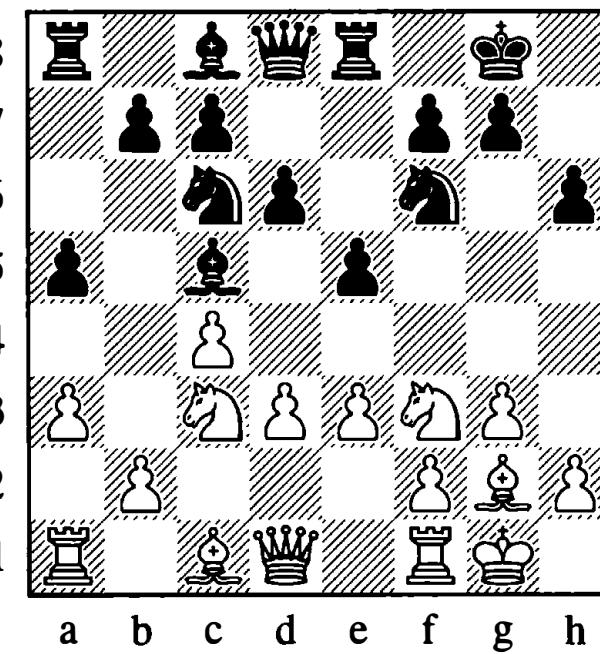
20...♝f7

It would be too dangerous to allow the opening of the g-file with 20...g6.

21.gxf5 ♘g5 22.♗g2 ♜ae8 23.f6±

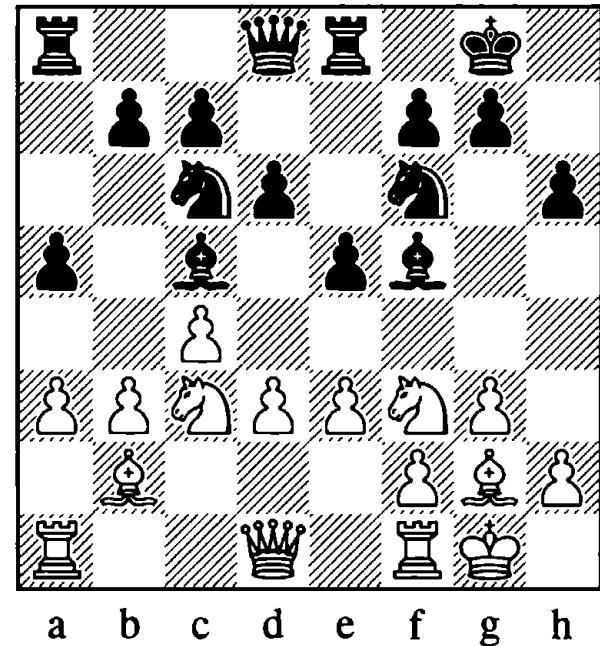
With a huge advantage for White in Marin – J. Fluvia Poyatos, Barcelona 2005.

(1.c4 e5 2.g3 ♘c6 3.♗c3 ♘f6 4.♗g2 ♜c5 5.♗f3 d6 6.d3 0–0 7.0–0 h6 8.a3 a5 9.e3)

C) 9...♜e8

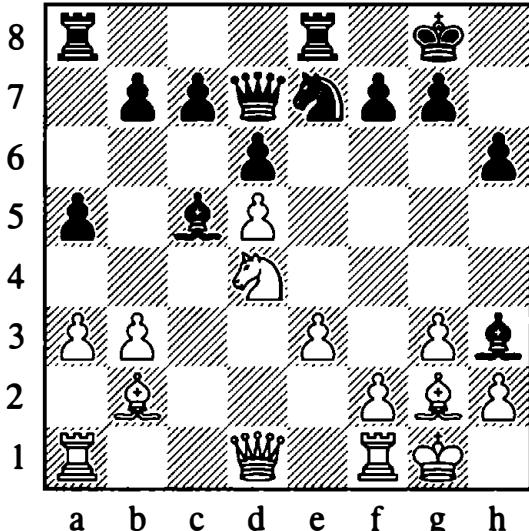
This move is the least committal, and has the seal of approval from a World Champion.

10.b3 ♕f5 11.♔b2



With the enemy bishop still on c5, White should not care about the threat of ...♕d8-d7 followed by ...♗f5-h3. Continuing development is a higher priority.

I planned to answer the ambitious 11...♕d7 with 12.♗d5 taking advantage of the black queen no longer defending the f6-knight. 12...♗xd5 13.cxd5 ♗e7 14.d4 (the bishop is under attack, which prevents Black from playing the generally desirable ...e5-e4) 14...exd4 15.♗xd4 ♗h3



I have seen too many of Karpov's games to fall into the following trap: 16.♗h5?? ♗g4 17.♗h4 ♗g6 and the queen is lost.

I considered White's best chance for a slight advantage to be 16.♗f3!± (the queen safely defends the central pawn and is out of immediate danger) as 16...♗g4 does not cause any trouble because of 17.♗e4±.

11...♗a7 12.h3 ♕d7 13.♔h2

This is not a waste of time, because the king steps out of the range of the a7-bishop.

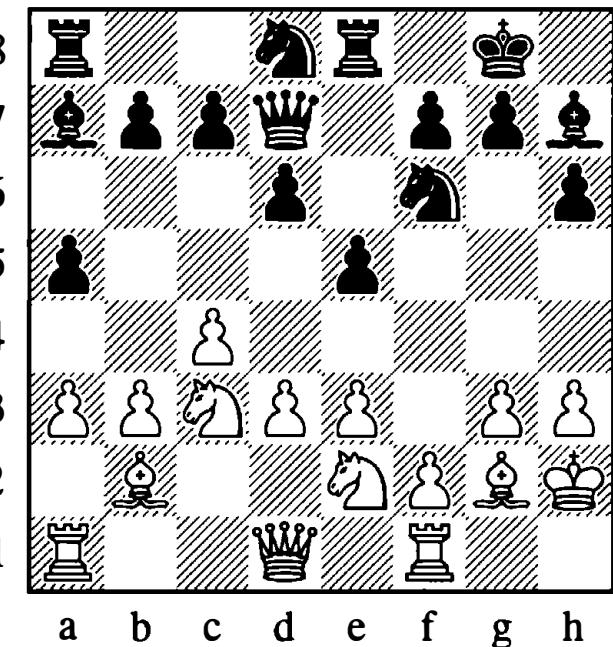
13...♔h7

Both sides have completed the first phase of mobilization. In the near future both sides have to improve the positions of their f3- and c6-knights to prepare pawn actions with, respectively, e3-e4 and f2-f4, and ...c7-c6 and ...d6-d5.

14.♗g1!

The same regrouping as in line B above.

14...♗d8 15.♗ge2



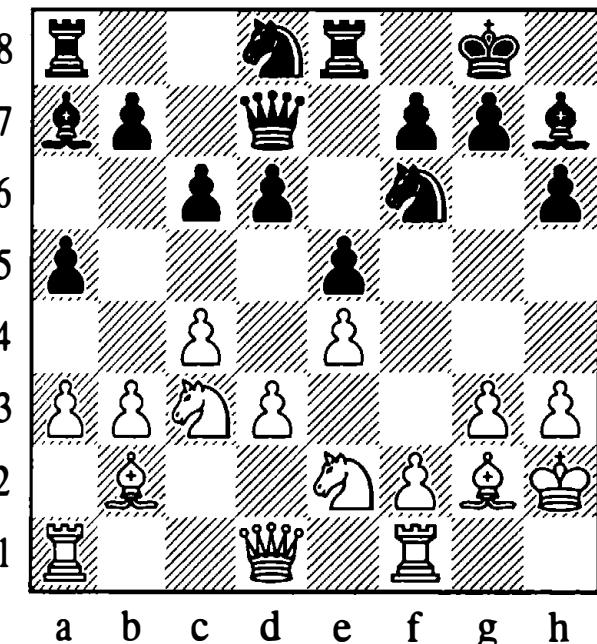
Looking at this position, the reader may ask, "Would it not have been simpler to develop the knight to e2 in the first place? Why did we lose two tempos to achieve this? And what is really wrong with the move 5.a3, since we later played a2-a3 anyway?"

The English Opening and chess in general are not as simple as that. White has initiated his

regrouping at a moment when his development is complete and he has prevented the early opening of the centre. Moreover, Black has made some important commitments, such as retreating his light-squared bishop to a safe but passive square, and weakening his queenside with ...a7-a5. To gain a better understanding of the difference, please compare with line A in Chapter 6, on page 72.

15...c6 16.e4

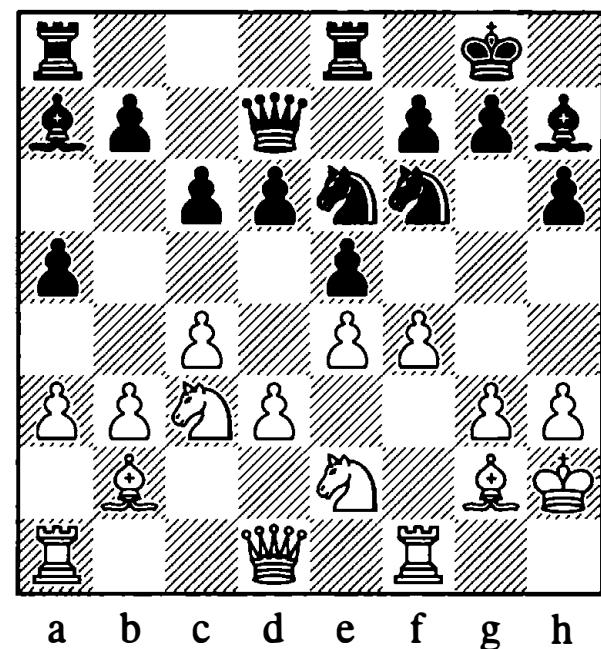
White cannot keep both black bishops blocked, but 16.e4 is logical, because it prevents ...d5 while the a7-bishop does not have much play on its newly opened diagonal anyway.



16...♝e6

Right after the game, my opponent was unhappy about this move and suggested the immediate 16...b5. I do not think this move would have solved all Black's problems either. 17.cxb5 cxb5 18.f4 b4 19.axb4 axb4 20.♝a4 ♝c6 21.♝c1! (The idea behind this move is that 21...d5 is dangerous in view of 22.♝xc6! ♜xc6 23.fxe5± followed by e4xd5.) 21...♝e3 22.♝c4± White plans to exchange Black's most active piece with ♜b2-c1, which will allow him to remain in control of the position. The black centre is under pressure, the b4-pawn is rather weak and the f6-knight is vulnerable to the threat f4xe5 followed by ♜f1xf6.

17.f4



17...b5

Quite logical, but involving a considerable amount of risk. Black cannot simply sit and wait for his opponent to increase the kingside pressure. At the same time, weakening the d5-square gives White tactical possibilities.

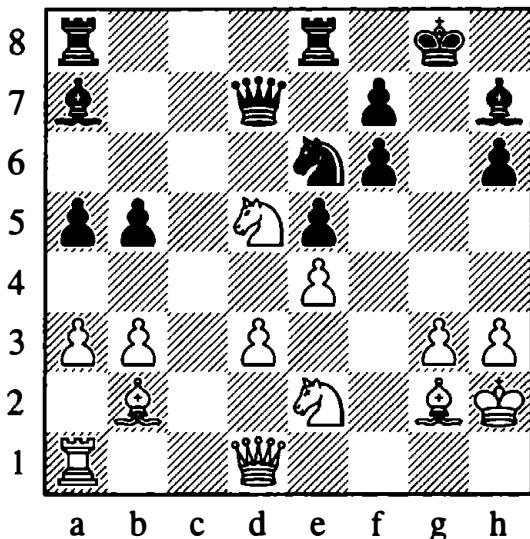
After 17...exf4 18.♝xf4!? White would still have obtained pressure along the f-file.

18.cxb5 cxb5

This is a crucial moment of the game.

In principle, White has two main threats. The first of them (f4-f5) is strategic, aiming to cut the h7-bishop out of play. Hurrying with this move would allow Black to choose a simple plan of reviving this piece with ...♜g8-h8, ...♝h7-g8, and at some point ...f7-f6. This would be time-consuming, but White's light-squared bishop is not so active either. Besides, Black controls the d4-square rather well.

In Marin – Karpov, Lanzarote 2003, White was seduced by the second idea, involving an exchange sacrifice with 19.fxe5 dxe5 20.♝xf6 gxsf6 21.♝d5.



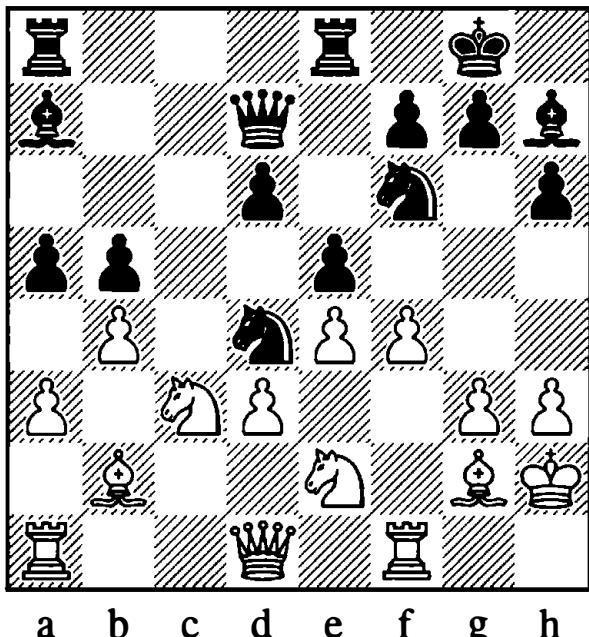
This led to interesting play with chances for both sides after the forced 21... $\mathbb{W}d8$. Logically, the better player won (0–1 after 80 moves).

In fact, it is best to keep both threats in reserve.

19.b4!N

White takes the c5-square under control and thus prepares to complete development with 20. $\mathbb{W}d2$. In one or two moves the pressure against the f6-knight will become very dangerous and Black's big problem is that he cannot easily remove the knight from its vulnerable position.

19...Qd4

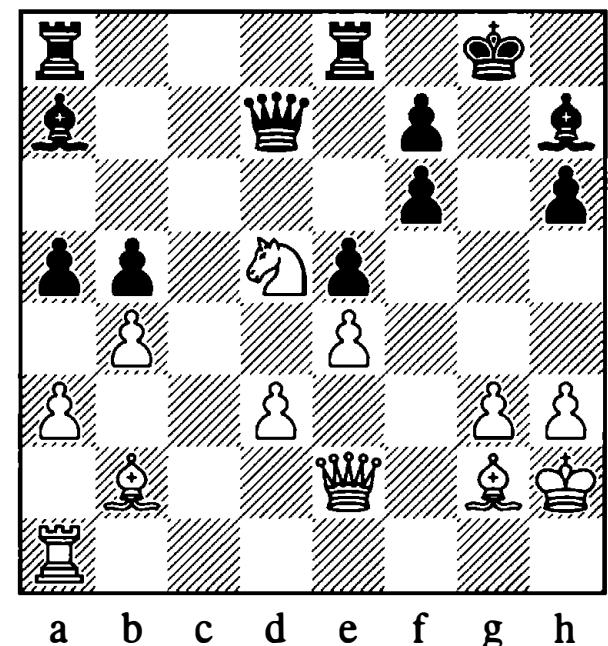


This logical move allows a more dangerous form of the attack I had in my game against Karpov.

20.fxe5! dx5 21.Qxf6! Qxe2

Black is more or less forced to exchange the knights on e2, thus helping White to bring his rook into play, since after 21...gx6 22.Qd5 Wd6 23.Qxd4 Qxd4 24.Qxd4 exd4 the weakness of the d4-pawn would only make things worse. White would play 25.Wg4† followed by Ra1-f1.

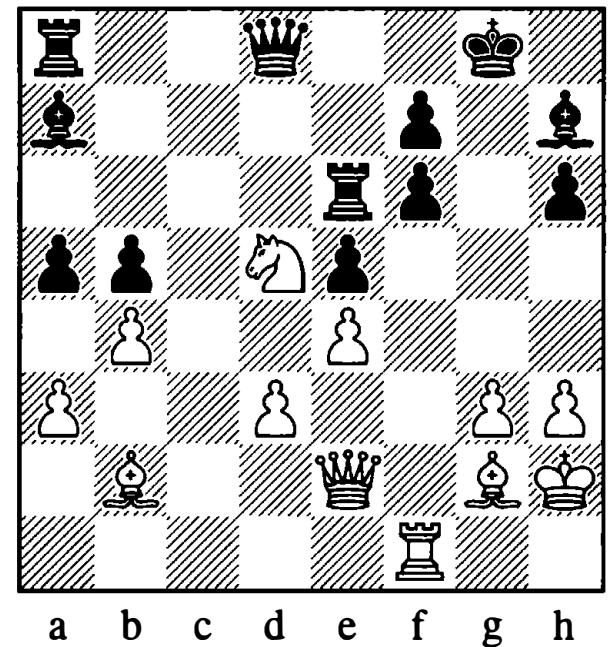
22.Wxe2 gx6 23.Qd5



23...Wd8

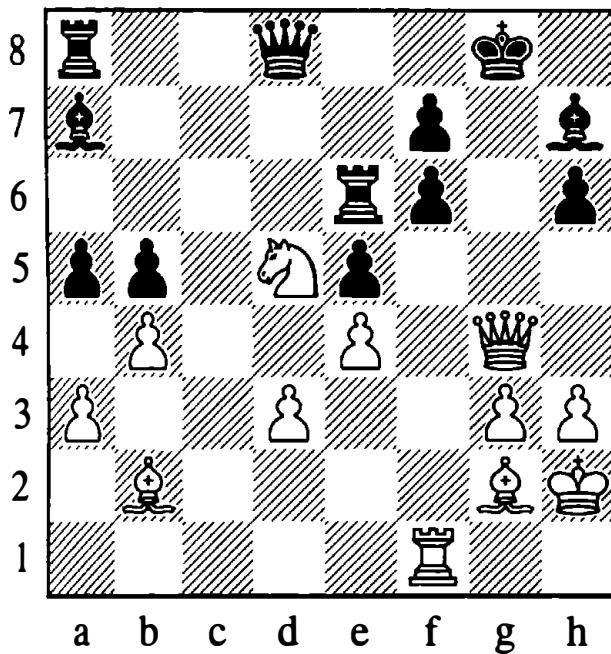
Or 23...Be6 24.Qf1 Wd6 25.Wh5 with threats such as Qd5xf6 followed by Qb2xe5.

24.Qf1 Be6



25.♗g4†

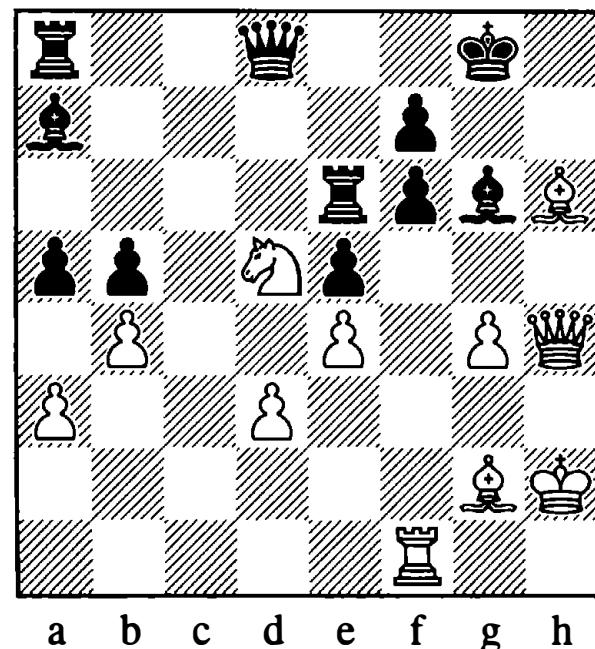
The subtle 25.h4!?, threatening ♘e2-g4†, without allowing the most convenient answer ...♝h7-g6, is also possible. There is not much Black can do against the forthcoming attack. 25...axb4 26.axb4 ♖d4 This neutralizes the pressure along the long diagonal, but loses an important pawn. 27.♗xd4 exd4 28.♘f2 ♛g7 29.♗xd4± White is in complete control of the position.

**25...♝g6**

This is forced.

25...♝f8? can be met by 26.♕xe5! when 26...fxe5 is impossible in view of 27.♗xe6, while 26...♝xe5 27.♗xf6 leaves Black helpless against the threats ♜f6xh7† and ♜f6-d7†.

25...♝h8? is equally bad because of 26.♗xf6!.

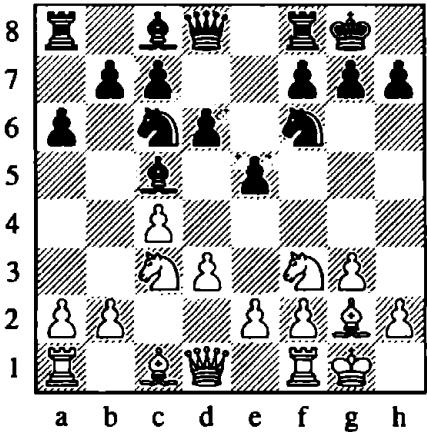
26.♗h4 ♛g7 27.♔c1 h5 28.g4 hxg4 29.♔h6† ♛g8 30.hxg4±

White has a strong attack.

Conclusion:

My view is that the weaknesses created by 8...a5 are more significant than the space it gains for Black.

Finally, we shall investigate the situations when Black ignores the threat of ♔c1-g5. He can do that by combining the development of his light-squared bishop with ...a7-a6 and ...♔c5-a7.



Karpov Variation

7...a6

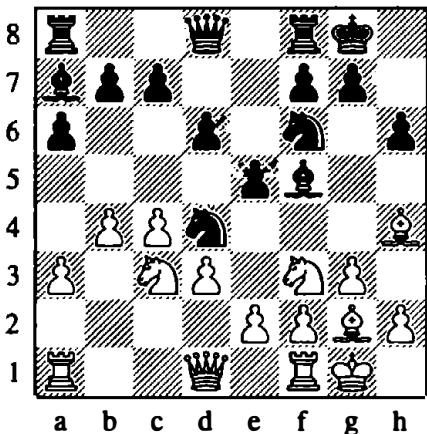
Variation Index

1.c4 e5 2.g3 ♜c6 3.♗c3 ♜f6 4.♗g2 ♜c5 5.♗f3 d6 6.d3 0-0 7.0-0

7...a6 8.a3

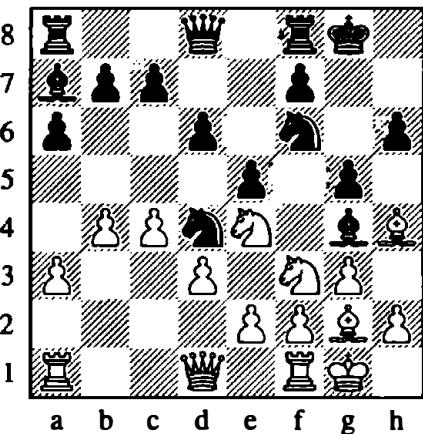
A) 8...♜a7 9.b4	p 58
A1) 9...♜f5	p 59
A2) 9...♜g4	p 60
B) 8...♜d4 9.♗e1!	p 62
B1) 9...c6	p 62
B2) 9...h6	p 67

A1) after 11...♜d4



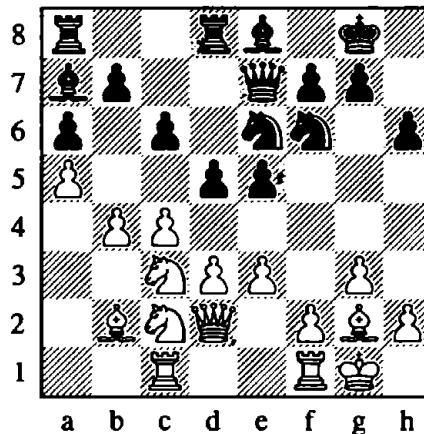
12.e3!!

A2) after 12...g5



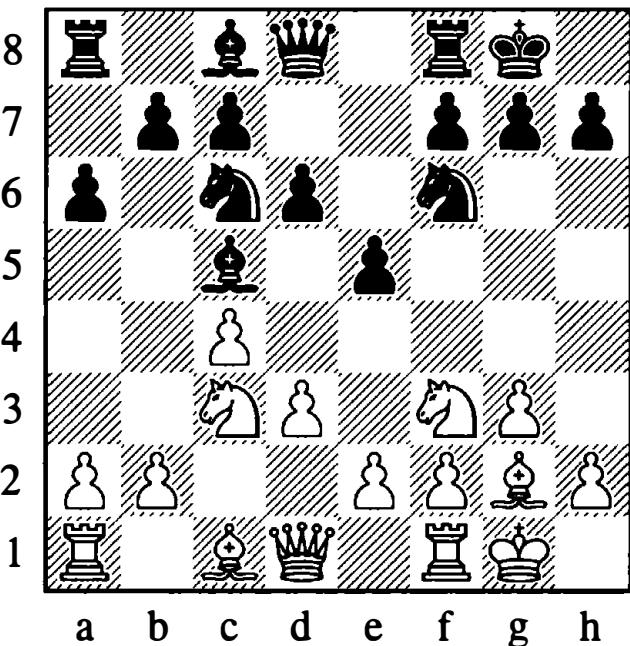
13.♗fxg5!!

B2) after 17...d5



18.c5!±

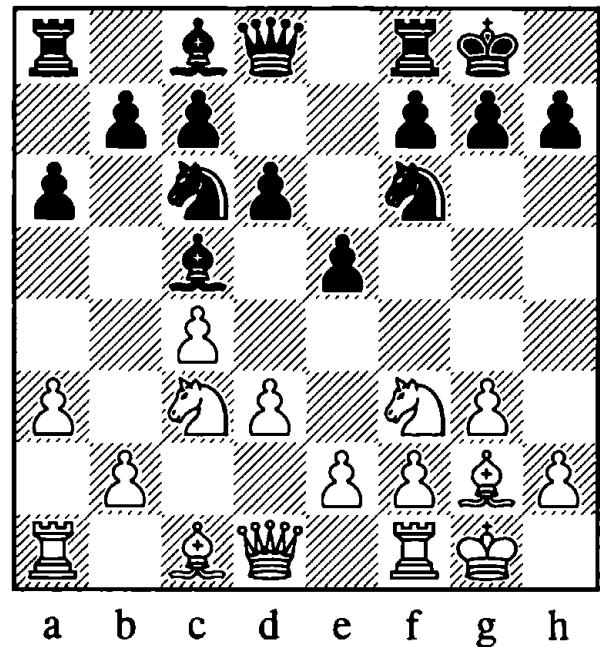
1.c4 e5 2.g3 ♜c6 3.♗c3 ♜f6 4.♗g2 ♜c5
5.♗f3 d6 6.d3 0-0 7.0-0 a6



By refraining from ...h7-h6, Black intends to save a tempo compared to the variations examined in Chapter 3.

8.a3

8.♗g5 h6 9.♗xf6 ♜xf6 does not achieve much for White. His control over the light squares has been increased, but the c5-bishop can become a very dangerous attacking piece. Black only needs to move his queen out of the way and then push the f-pawn. 10.♘e4 ♜e7 11.♗xc5 dxc5 does not look troubling for Black. He has good central control and I do not see an active plan for White.



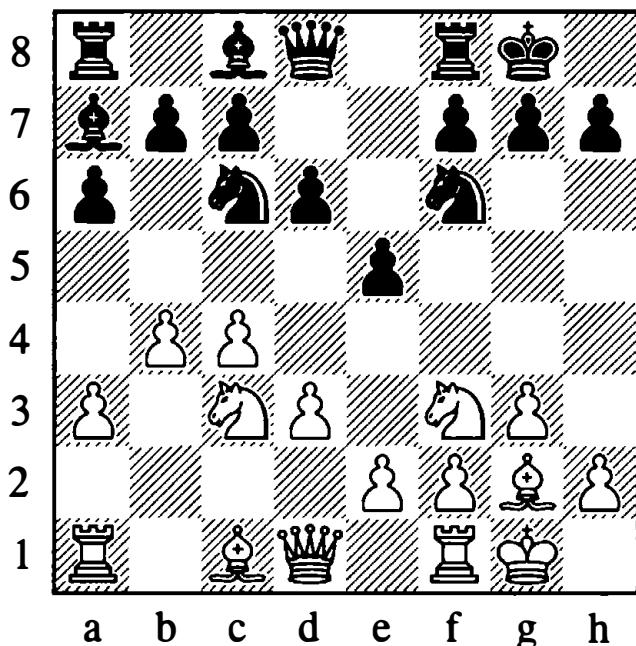
We now have A) 8...♜a7 and B) 8...♝d4.

(1.c4 e5 2.g3 ♜c6 3.♗c3 ♜f6 4.♗g2 ♜c5
5.♗f3 d6 6.d3 0-0 7.0-0 a6 8.a3)

A) 8...♜a7 9.b4

White uses his last “neutral” move, inviting Black to define his plans.

9...h6 would transpose to the normal lines examined above, but now we will examine the independent lines.



We have A1) 9...♝f5 and A2) 9...♝g4.

9...♝d4

This leads to a considerable loss of time.

10.♝xd4

This is the correct move.

If 10.♘e1?! h6 11.e3 Black can play the intermediate 11...♝g4! as in a sub-note of line B2.

10...♝xd4

10...exd4 11.♝d5 ♜xd5 12.cxd5± leaves White with the better structure and pressure along the c-file.

11.♗b2 c6 12.e3 ♜a7

This bishop has moved quite a lot already.

13.d4

Threatening to win space with d4-d5,

which would put the c6-pawn under serious pressure.

13...exd4 14.exd4

Renewing the threat.

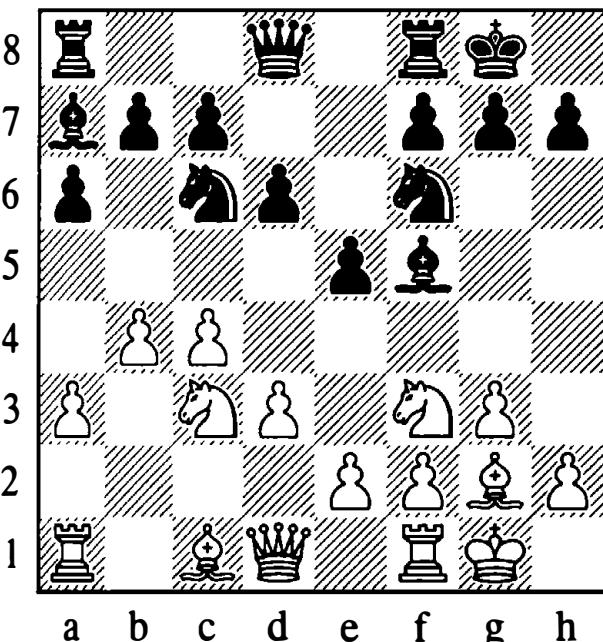
14...d5 15.c5 ♜f5 16.a4±

White has a promising queenside attack, while the a7-bishop is obviously misplaced.

9...♝e6 exposes the bishop to the knight jump ♟f3-g5. There has only been one game with this move between reasonably strong players.
 10.♗b2 ♜e7 11.♗g5 ♜c8 12.e3 h6 13.♗f3
 We are back into the normal paths, since Black has played ...h6, Spiridonov – Therkildsen, Nice 2000.

(1.c4 e5 2.g3 ♜c6 3.♗c3 ♜f6 4.♗g2 ♜c5 5.♗f3 d6 6.d3 0–0 7.0–0 a6 8.a3 ♜a7 9.b4)

A1) 9...♝f5



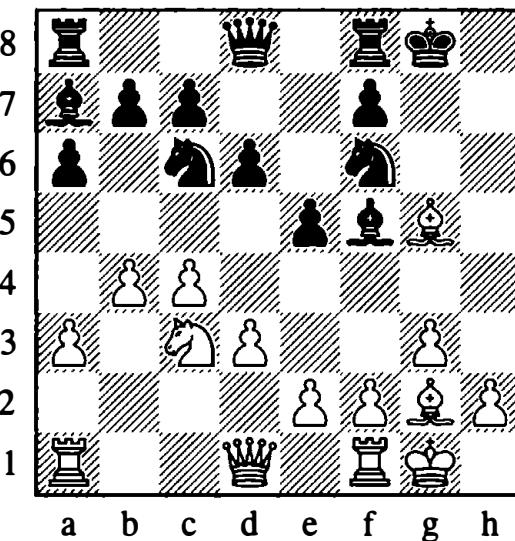
The development of the bishop to this square is hardly more constructive now than after ...h7-h6. The bishop is both passive and exposed at the same time.

10.♗g5 h6 11.♗h4!

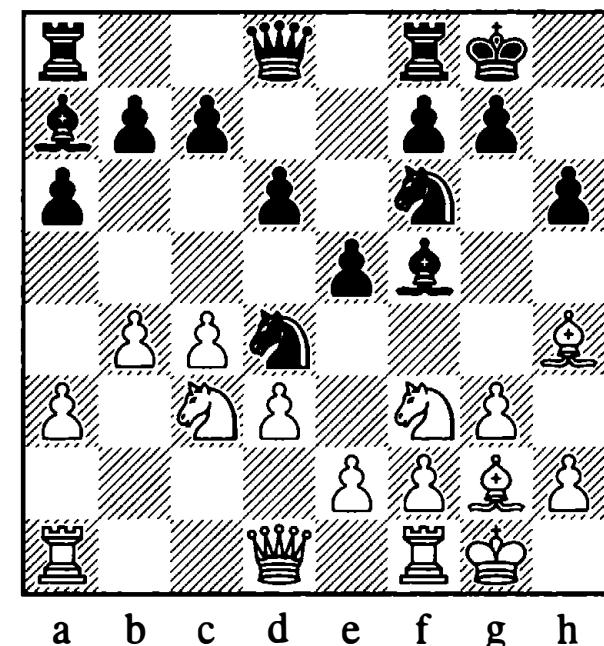
As we shall see, this is a recurring theme. The immediate exchange on f6 is inoffensive, but now the threat of ♜d5 is very unpleasant.

11...♞d4

Black intends to exchange the f3-knight to make ...g7-g5 a real threat. Of course, 11...g5? 12.♗xg5! hxg5 13.♗xg5 is bad for Black, who has no favourable way of freeing himself from the pin.



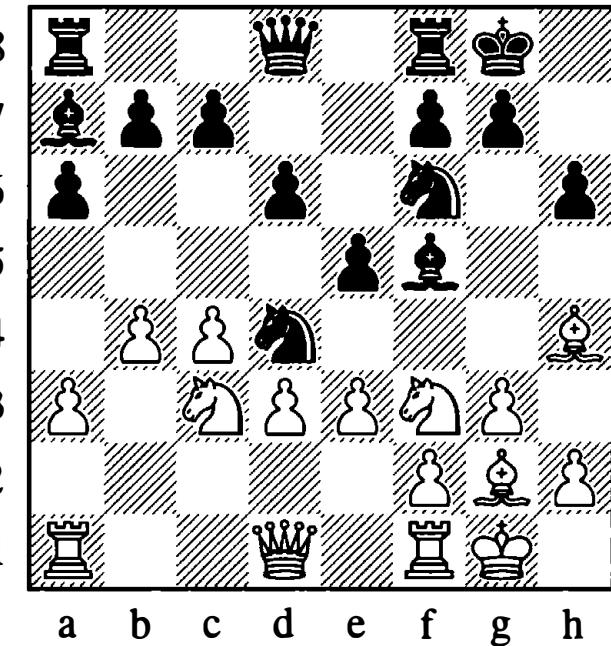
13...♝b8 (anticipating the threat ♜c3-d5)
 14.♗xb7 ♜bd7 15.♗d5 White threatens to win material by capturing on a8 and f6. 15...♝g7 is strongly met by 16.♗d2, threatening ♜g5xf6† followed by ♜d2-g5†, while 15...♝b8 16.♗c6 leaves him helpless against the threat of ♜c6xd7. 16...♝e6 17.♗xd7 ♜xd5 18.cxd5 White has a decisive material advantage.



12.e3!!N

This move, ignoring the threat of ...g7-g5, takes full advantage of the exposed position of the f5-bishop.

White did not get any advantage after 12.♕xf6 ♕xf6 13.♕h4 ♔c8 14.e3 ♕e6 15.♕e4 ♕d8 16.♕h5 f5= in Marin – Tomescu, Sovata 2003.

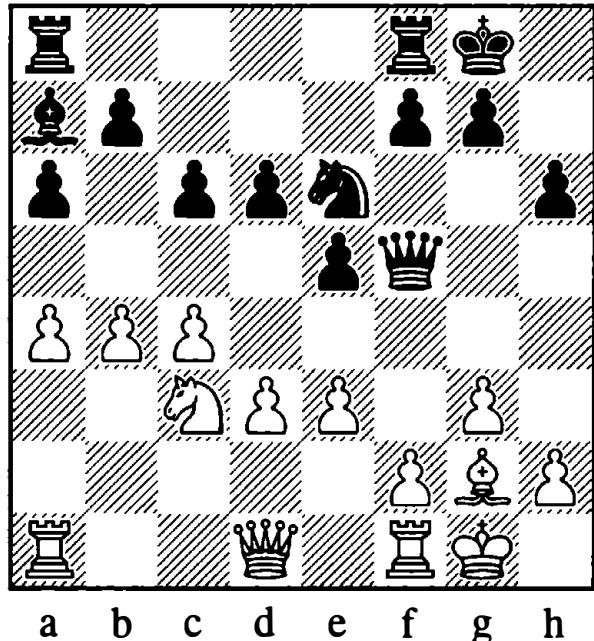


12...♕e6

After 12...♗xf3† 13.♕xf3 the f5-bishop is hanging. 13...♕xd3 This does not bring any relief. 14.♗d5 ♕xf1 15.♕xf1 With a decisive attack.

12...g5 13.♕xg5 hxg5 14.exd4± leaves Black with many weaknesses.

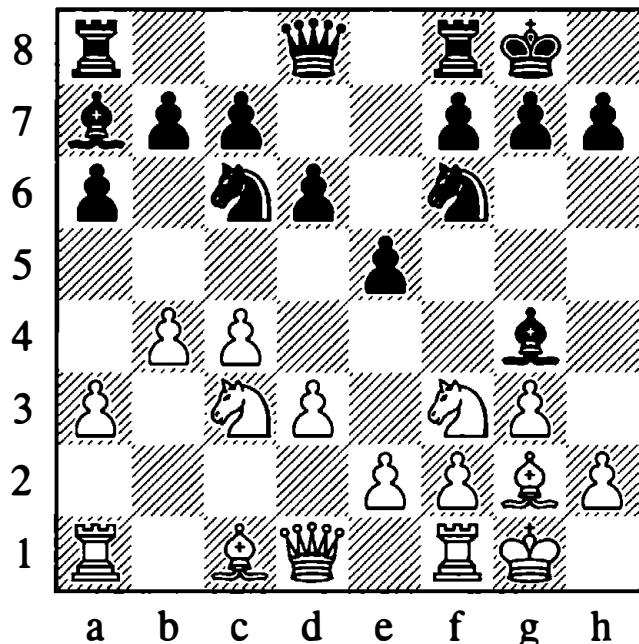
13.♕xf6 ♕xf6 14.♕h4 c6 15.♗xf5 ♕xf5 16.a4±



Black's pieces are poorly coordinated, partly because the queen is awkwardly placed, while White's attack on the light squares develops naturally.

(1.c4 e5 2.g3 ♗c6 3.♗c3 ♗f6 4.♗g2 ♕c5 5.♗f3 d6 6.d3 0–0 7.0–0 a6 8.a3 ♗a7 9.b4)

A2) 9...♕g4



For a long time I feared that after this rarely played move White would have to play h2-h3, which is generally undesirable, as we already know. I discovered the tactics presented below only when preparing the material for this book.

10.♗g5!N

The reasons this standard manoeuvre is possible with the black bishop on g4 are less obvious than in the variation with 9...♗f5.

10...h6 11.♗h4 ♗d4

The other way to create the threat of ...g7-g5 is:

11...♗xf3 12.♗xf6!

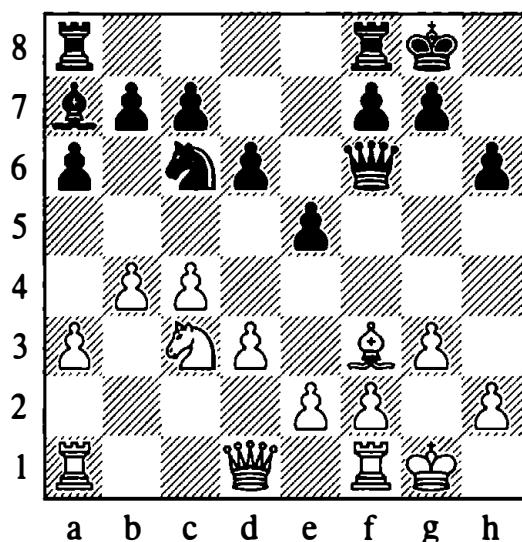
After this intermediate move White's control over the light squares is likely to be unchallenged.

12...♕xf6

12...♗xe2?! does not work because after 13.♗xd8 ♗xd1 14.♗xc7 ♗c2 White has

15.b5± putting the enemy queenside in danger.

13.♕xf3±



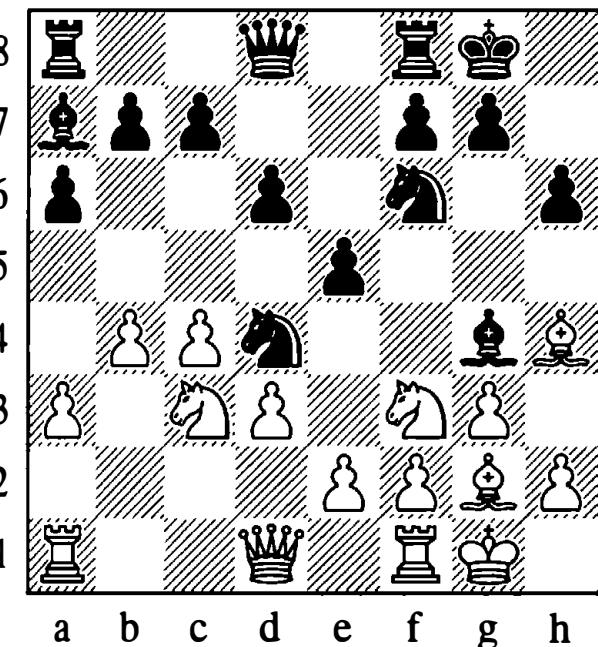
This certainly looks like a dream position for White, but does he have a real advantage? To reveal White's potential, we should continue the variation a few more moves.

13...♝ab8 14.♝b1 ♔d4 15.♔g2 c6 16.e3 ♔e6
17.a4 ♜e7 18.b5 ♜c7

Black proves that he is prepared to stand the queenside pressure.

19.♜f3!±

White declares his intention to play on both wings. Apart from increasing the pressure against the c6-pawn, he plans to take control of the kingside light squares with g3-g4 followed by h2-h4, ♜f3-g3, ♔g2-e4, etc.



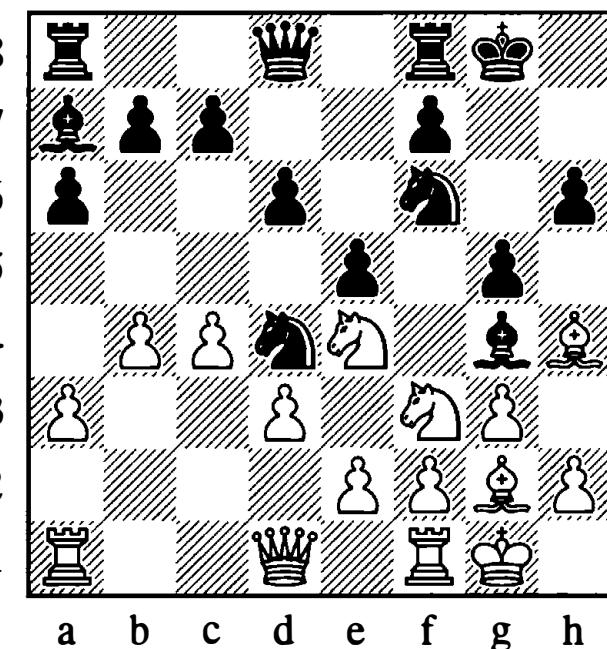
12.♗e4!

We shall understand later why this move should be preferred to the apparently more active 12.♗d5.

12...g5

This is the only way to question White's previous play, but it will put Black on the verge of disaster. Play now takes a fascinating course, requiring White to make a queen sacrifice.

The safer 12...♕xf3 fails to equalize after 13.♕xf6† ♜xf6 (It is generally desirable for Black to exchange queens to avoid major kingside dangers. 13...gxf6 14.♕xf3 ♜xf3† 15.exf3 ♔d4 16.♗a2 ♔g7 17.f4 ♜d7 18.♜f3± leaves White with very pleasant play.) 14.♕xf6 ♜xe2† 15.♔h1 ♜xg3† 16.fxg3 ♜xd1 17.♗axd1. Black now has the witty 17...♝ab8, preserving the b7-pawn and leaving White's extra bishop trapped, but after: 18.c5 gxf6 19.cxd6 cxd6 20.♜xf6± White retains strong pressure against both enemy wings. The presence of opposite-coloured bishops does not offer Black any relief, because his bishop is firing along on an empty diagonal.



13.♗fxg5!!

Although we have seen the sacrifice ♜f3xg5 before, the situation here is entirely different. Instead of a stable situation with an unpleasant pin, it leads to original play.

13... $\mathbb{Q}xe2\#$

The operation initiated by this move is enabled by the bishop's presence on g4.

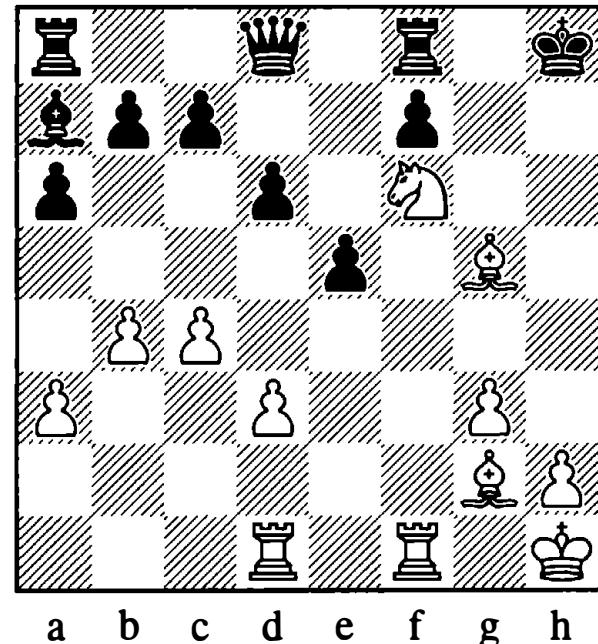
Had White played 12. $\mathbb{Q}d5$, Black could have played 13... $\mathbb{Q}xd5$, when 14. $\mathbb{Q}e4$ would have been relatively best but not entirely satisfactory.

The way it is, capturing the knight with 13... $\mathbb{Q}xe4$ can be met by 14. $\mathbb{Q}xe4$. The positions from the two cases are almost identical, but in the latter situation Black's d5-knight is missing!

14. $\mathbb{Q}h1$ $\mathbb{Q}xg3\#$ 15.fxg3!

The correct way of capturing, which opens the f-file for an attack.

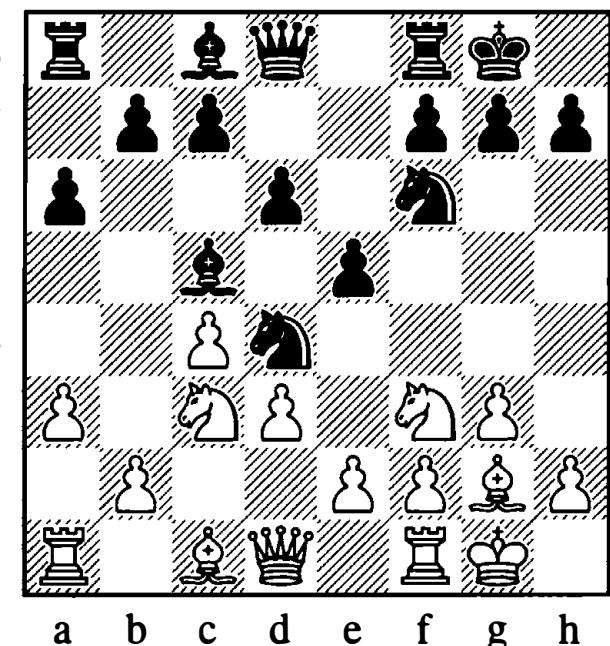
**15... $\mathbb{Q}xd1$ 16. $\mathbb{Q}xf6\#$ $\mathbb{Q}h8$ 17. $\mathbb{Q}axd1$ hxg5
18. $\mathbb{Q}xg5\pm$**



The position has temporarily calmed down. Despite his material disadvantage, White has an irresistible attack. His next moves will be $\mathbb{Q}f1-f5$, $\mathbb{Q}d1-f1$, $\mathbb{Q}g5-h4$, $\mathbb{Q}g2-e4$ (perhaps after capturing on b7). The move order depends on Black's reactions. As a general rule, ... $\mathbb{Q}f8-g8$ should be answered by $\mathbb{Q}g5-h4$ and ... $\mathbb{Q}d8-c8$ by $\mathbb{Q}g2-e4$, preparing $\mathbb{Q}f1-f5$.

(1.c4 e5 2.g3 $\mathbb{Q}c6$ 3. $\mathbb{Q}c3$ $\mathbb{Q}f6$ 4. $\mathbb{Q}g2$ $\mathbb{Q}c5$
5. $\mathbb{Q}f3$ d6 6.d3 0-0 7.0-0 a6 8.a3 $\mathbb{Q}d4$
9. $\mathbb{Q}e1$)

B) 8... $\mathbb{Q}d4$



Black clears a path for his c-pawn and invites White to simplify the position.

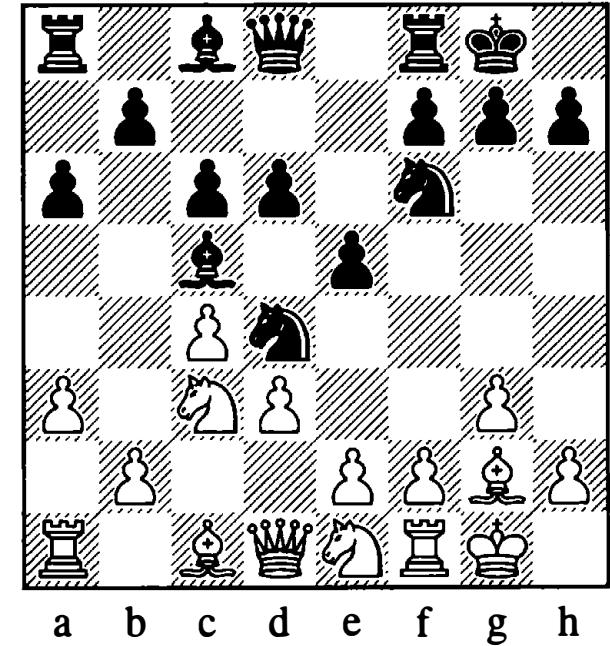
9. $\mathbb{Q}e1!$

White avoids the exchange because the enemy knight is unstable in the centre.

Black has a choice between **B1) 9...c6** and **B2) 9...h6**.

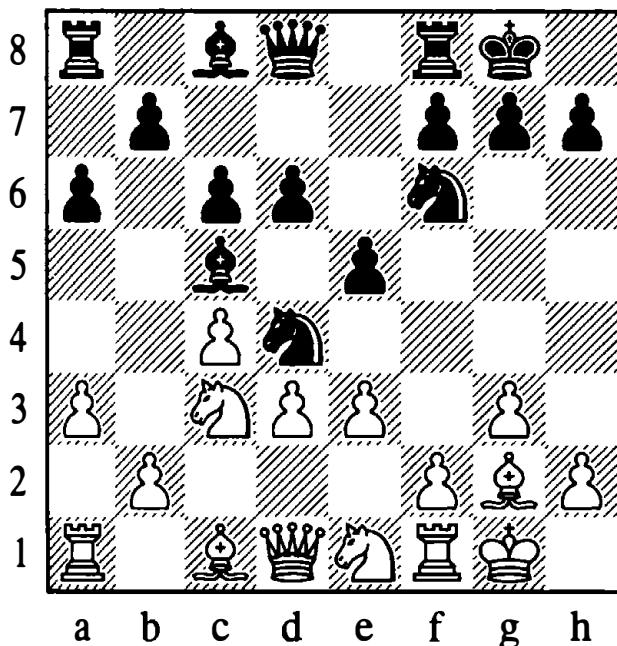
(1.c4 e5 2.g3 $\mathbb{Q}c6$ 3. $\mathbb{Q}c3$ $\mathbb{Q}f6$ 4. $\mathbb{Q}g2$ $\mathbb{Q}c5$
5. $\mathbb{Q}f3$ d6 6.d3 0-0 7.0-0 a6 8.a3 $\mathbb{Q}d4$
9. $\mathbb{Q}e1$)

B1) 9...c6



Black takes the d5-square under control and hopes for a further expansion with ...d6-d5.

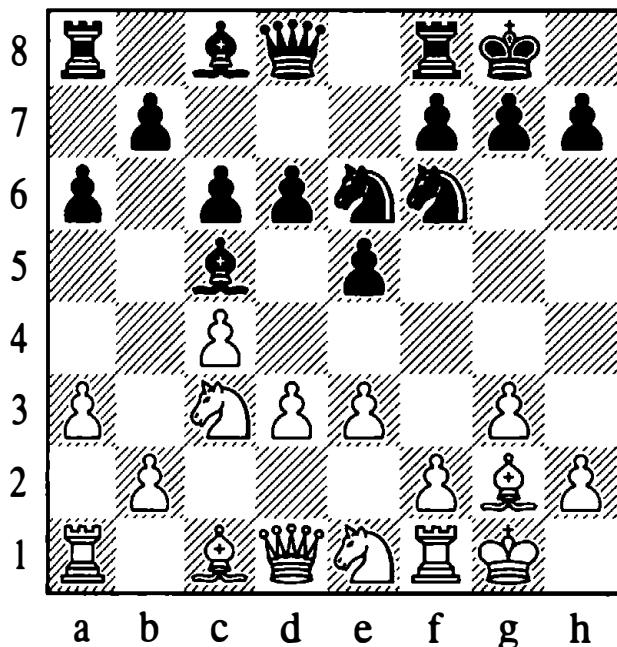
10.e3



Black can choose between **B11) 10...♝e6** and **B12) 10...♞f5**.

(1.c4 e5 2.g3 ♝c6 3.♘c3 ♝f6 4.♗g2 ♜c5 5.♘f3 d6 6.d3 0–0 7.0–0 a6 8.a3 ♞d4 9.♘e1 c6 10.e3)

B11) 10...♝e6

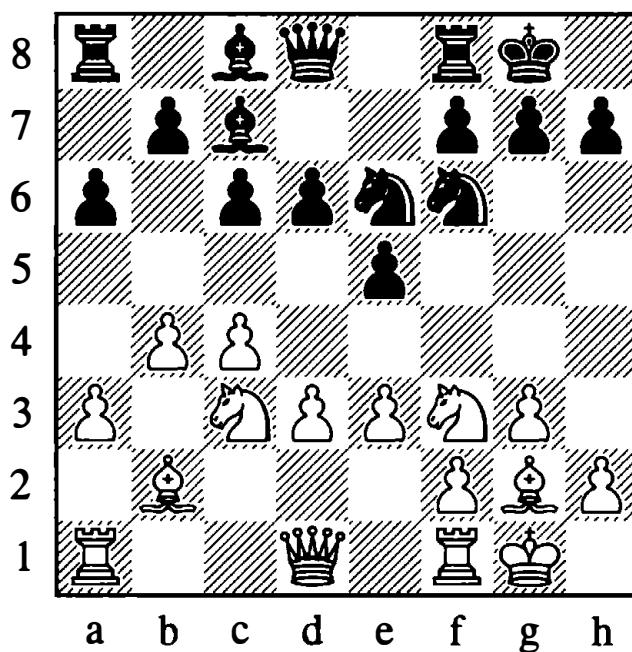


This move leaves the c8-bishop passive, while it will not be possible to over-defend the e5-pawn with ...♝f8-e8, which makes a further ...d6-d5 more difficult to carry out.

11.b4 ♜b6 12.♘f3 ♜c7

This is the only way to make ...d6-d5 possible. The cost is that the bishop is passive on c7.

13.♗b2



13...d5

As the further course of events will prove, this early occupation of the centre fails to equalize, but Black has no natural way to continue his development.

14.cxd5 cxd5

14...♝xd5 would lose a pawn to 15.♘xd5 followed by ♞f3xe5, irrespective of how Black re-captures on d5.

15.♘e2!

A flexible knight retreat, keeping the d4- and f4-squares under control and putting pressure against the e5-pawn.

15...e4

Black is forced to advance his pawns earlier than he might have wished, because 15...♝d7?! would have led to trouble after 16.♗b3!. Black cannot defend his central pawns properly because of his delay in developing.

16.♗xf6

White embarks on a forced variation that will allow him to keep his lead in development until deep in the endgame.

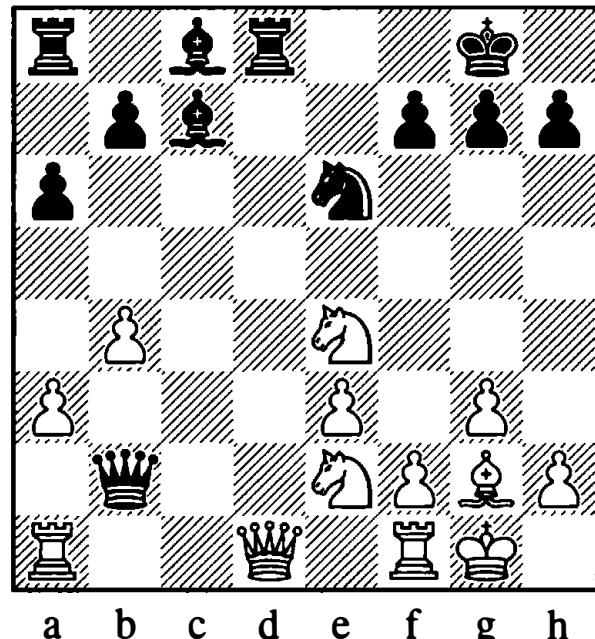
A simpler solution would have been 16.dxe4 dxe4 17.♗xd8 ♜xd8 18.♗fd4±. White is better developed and enjoys stability in the centre, while the e4-pawn is vulnerable and the c7-bishop quite passive.

I have included the following long sequence from the game as the main line because it is instructive about the lasting character of White's initiative even after simplifications. If any of the endings mentioned in the comments are eventually proven to be drawn, White still has the simple line given above in reserve.

16...♝xf6 17.dxe4 dxe4 18.♝d2 ♜d8

Black's initiative would be rapidly extinguished after 18...♝g5 19.♝xe4 ♜f3+?! 20.♔h1 ♜f5 21.♝d4!± with a sound extra pawn for White.

19.♝xe4 ♜b2



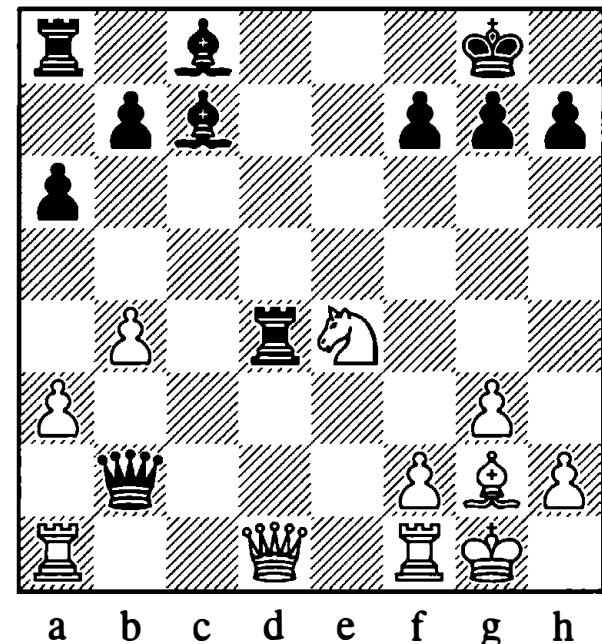
Black has obtained some initiative for the pawn.

20.♝d4!

White returns the pawn to provoke further simplifications. The passive 20.♔e1 would have been answered by 20...♝e5! winning the a3-pawn.

20...♝xd4 21.exd4 ♜xd4

21...♜xd4 would have transposed to the main line after 22.♝xd4 ♜xd4 23.♝ac1.



22.♝c1!

Forcing the exchange of Black's most active piece.

22...♜xc1 23.♝axc1

The mass simplifications have only increased the significance of White's lead in development. Black has to look for a favourable way of sacrificing a pawn to complete his development and fight for a draw in an inferior ending.

23...♝b6

Transferring the bishop to f6 would have been too time-consuming after 23...♝d8 24.♝c5 ♜b8 25.♝fd1!. The same policy again: White exchanges the most active black piece. 25...♝xd1† 26.♝xd1 ♜f6 27.♝d7 ♜xd7 28.♝xd7 b5 29.♝d5± Black faces a difficult defence in an ending a pawn down.

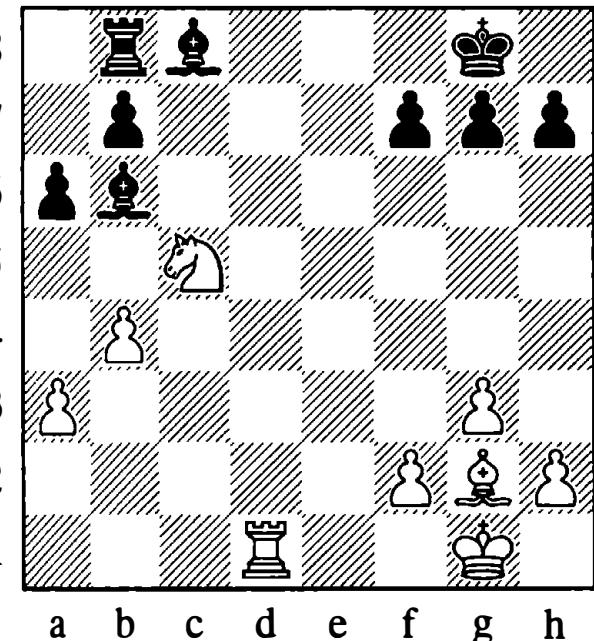
24.♝c5

24...♝b8

The collective post-mortem analysis revealed that Black's best chance would have been 24...a5!? 25.♗xb7 ♕xb7 (25...axb4 is met by the intermediate 26.♗d6!, winning material) 26.♕xb7 ♜b8 27.bxa5 ♜xa5 28.♗b1±. The presence of opposite-coloured bishops offers Black drawing chances.

25.♝fd1!

This is already a familiar pattern.

25...♝xd1† 26.♝xd1**26...a5**

It seems that after the exchange of rooks it is too late for this move.

White would also have maintained his initiative after a developing move such as 26...♝g4 27.♗d4†, or 26...♝xc5 27.bxc5 ♜g4 28.♗b1†, winning the b7-pawn.

26...♝f8

This centralizing move would have been better, although White retains an initiative with:

27.♗xb7! ♜xc5!

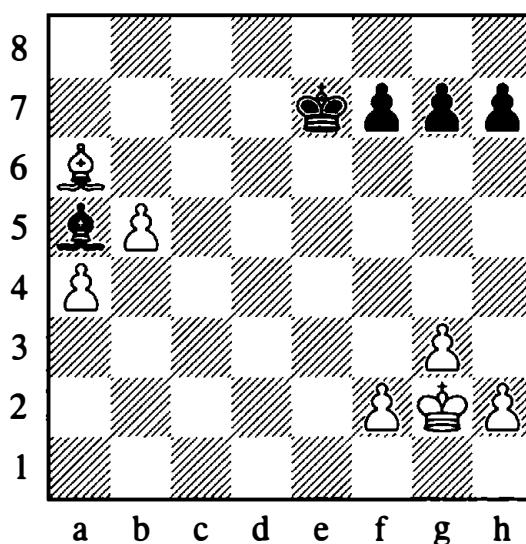
Any of the captures on b7 would lead to a material advantage for White. For instance, 27...♝xb7? 28.♗xb7 ♜xb7 29.♗d6! and

the bishops are vulnerable, or 27...♝xb7?

28.♗d7† winning the rook.**28.♗d8† ♜e7 29.♗xc8 ♜xf2†**

The text is still the best chance.

The opposite-coloured bishop ending arising after 29...♝xc8 30.♝xc8 ♜d4 31.♝xa6 ♜b2 32.a4 ♜c3 33.b5 ♜a5 34.♗g2 is probably winning.



The fact that the black bishop has to guard two enemy pawns allows White to create zugzwang positions, resulting in the white king infiltrating on either wing. Take for instance the position with White ♔c4, ♜g2 and Black ♜d6, ♜a5. Then ...♜a5-b6 would be met by ♜b4, threatening a5 and if ...♜c5†, then ♜a5. Or ...♜a5-d2 would allow b5-b6, while a king retreat from d6 would be answered by ♜c5.

30.♗xf2 ♜xb7 31.♗c6! a5

31...♜a7 looks too passive after 32.♔e3 ♜d7 33.♗c5†.

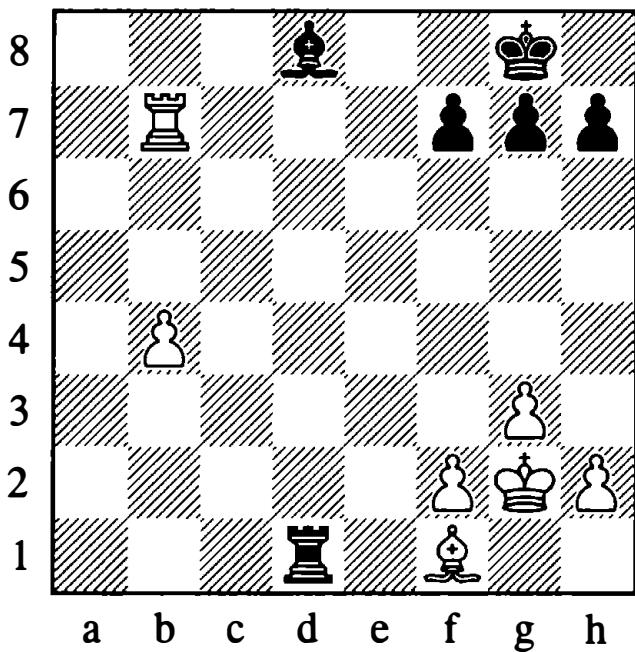
32.bxa5 ♜b3 33.a6 ♜xa3 34.♗c7† ♜e6 35.a7

This rook ending is extremely dangerous for Black, although only further analysis will reveal the final evaluation.

27.♗d7!

White consolidates his advantage by occupying the seventh rank.

27...♝xd7 28.♗xd7 axb4 29.axb4 ♜d8 30.♗xb7 ♜d1† 31.♔f1 ♜d8 32.♗g2†

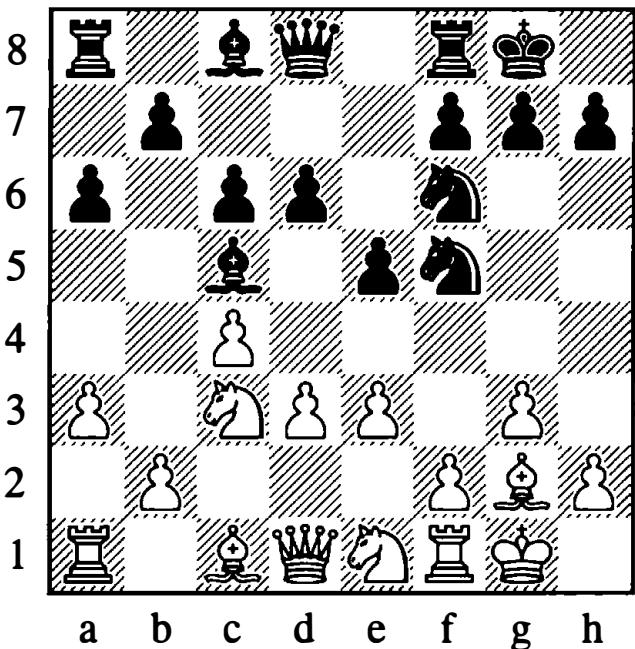


White has two clear ideas: keeping the f7-pawn under pressure and advancing his b-pawn. At some point, after reducing Black to complete passivity, centralizing the white king will decide the game.

In Marin – Svetushkin, Ploiesti 2005, Black blundered and lost a couple of moves later.

(1.c4 e5 2.g3 ♜c6 3.♘c3 ♜f6 4.♗g2 ♜c5
5.♘f3 d6 6.d3 0–0 7.0–0 a6 8.a3 ♜d4
9.♘e1! c6 10.e3)

B12) 10...♝f5



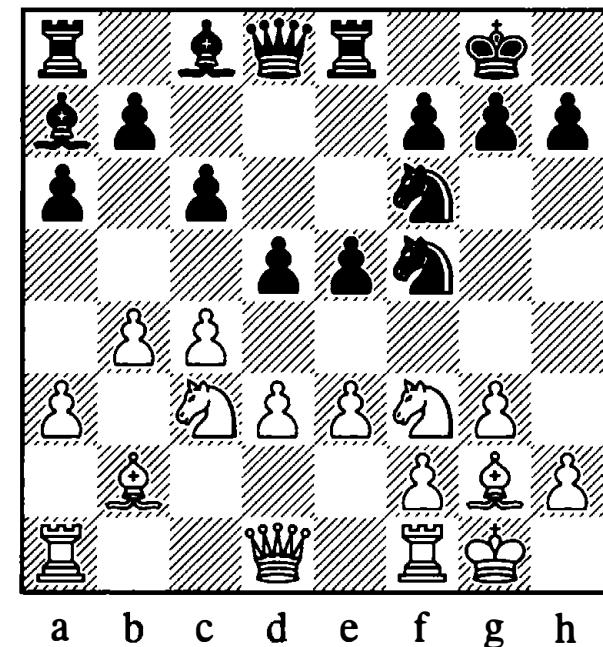
The knight is more active here than on e6, but it is exposed to a later e3-e4.

11.♘f3 ♜a7 12.b4 ♜e8 13.♘b2

White has developed harmoniously and it is hard to say whether Black has really improved the placement of his queen's knight. The knight is still two tempos away from the g6-square, from where it over-protects e5, preparing ...d6-d5.

13...d5!?

This move was recommended by Gukko as an improvement over 13...♝b8 14.♗c1± when White is better developed and his structure is more flexible. 14...b5 After this premature display of activity White's superior flexibility will prove significant. 15.c5! dx5 16.♗e4! The ensuing complications favoured White in Gukko – Sadler, Lucerne 1997.



14.cxd5!N

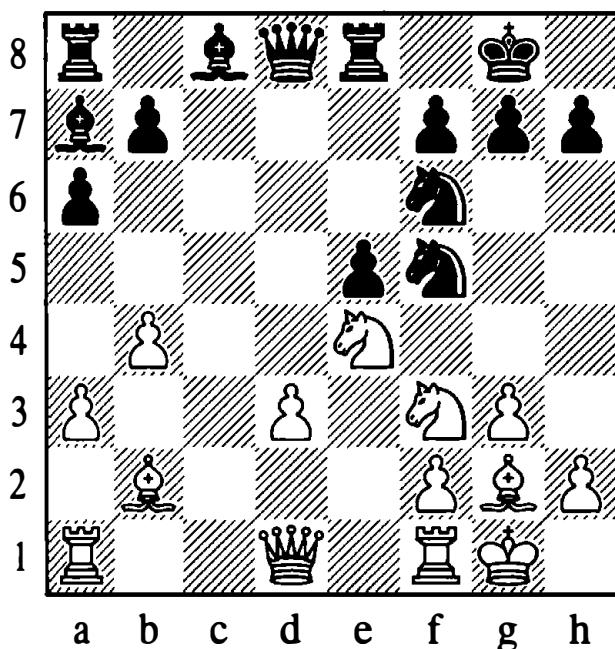
Before reacting with e3-e4, White opens the c-file and weakens the d5-square.

It is notable that when confronted with his own recommendation, Gukko did not react optimally: 14.e4 dx5 15.♗xe4 ♜d4 16.♗xd4 ♜xd4 17.♗xd4 ♜xd4 18.♗xf6† gxf6 19.♗e1 ♜g4 20.♗f3 f5 The game Gukko – P. Cramling, Malmo 2001, soon ended in a draw.

14...cxd5 15.e4!

Taking advantage of the knight's vulnerability on f5.

15...dxe4 16.♕xe4

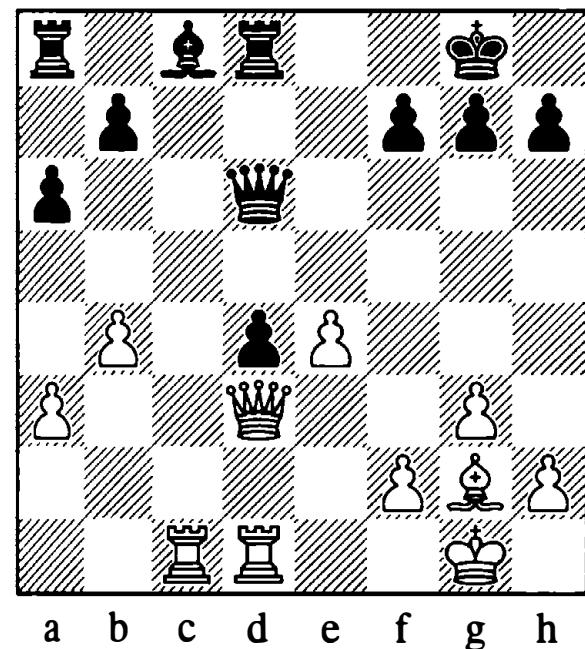


White is better developed and exerts strong pressure on both long diagonals.

16...♕xe4

16...♕d4 leaves White with an active position after 17.♕xf6† ♜xf6 18.♖xd4 ♜xd4 19.♕xd4 exd4 20.♗c1±. This is the kind of position every devotee of flank openings dreams of. White is better developed and will soon invade the seventh rank. The weakness of the b7-pawn prevents Black from catching up in development.

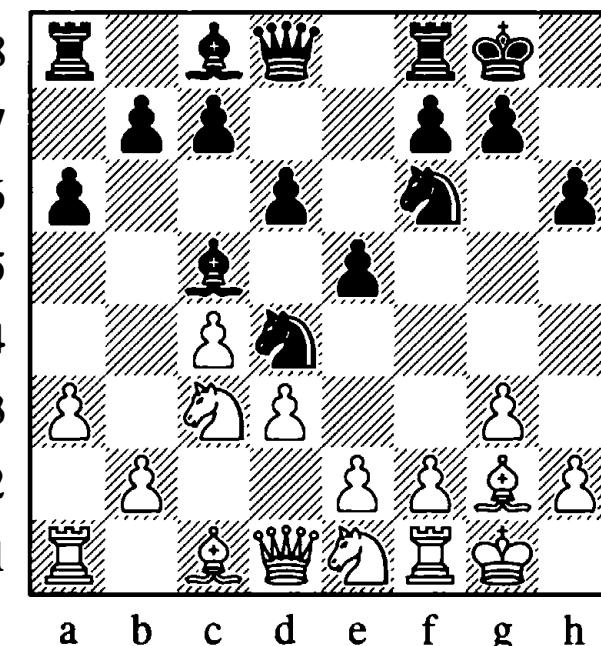
17.dxe4 ♜d4 18.♖xd4 ♜xd4 19.♕xd4 exd4
20.♗d3 ♜d6 21.♗fd1 ♜d8 22.♗ac1±



White is better developed, has the more flexible structure, and controls the only open file. The passed d4-pawn is more of a weakness than a strength, and it prevents Black from fighting for the c-file on equal terms.

(1.c4 e5 2.g3 ♜c6 3.♘c3 ♜f6 4.♗g2 ♜c5 5.♘f3 d6 6.d3 0-0 7.0-0 a6 8.a3 ♜d4 9.♘e1)

B2) 9...h6



In the heat of battle this move does not seem to make much sense, but is not wrong either. There is no need to prevent ♜c1-g5, since White will soon play e2-e3, but controlling the g5-square may prove useful later by allowing the activation of the queen's knight with ...♘e6-g5.

I twice faced this move in 2008.

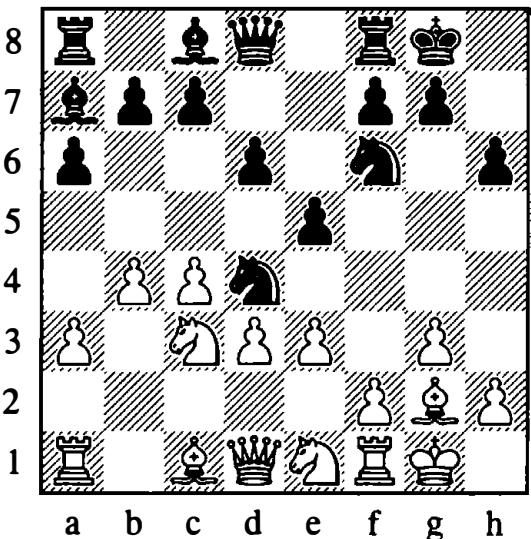
10.e3!

During his home preparation, my second opponent might have overlooked this improvement over my recent game against Korneev where I played:

10.b4?!

This move prematurely leaves the c3-knight undefended.

10...♗a7 11.e3



11...Bg4!

In the main line Black will be deprived of this strong intermediate move.

12.f3

A sad necessity, as the queen has no squares.

12...Qd7 13.a4

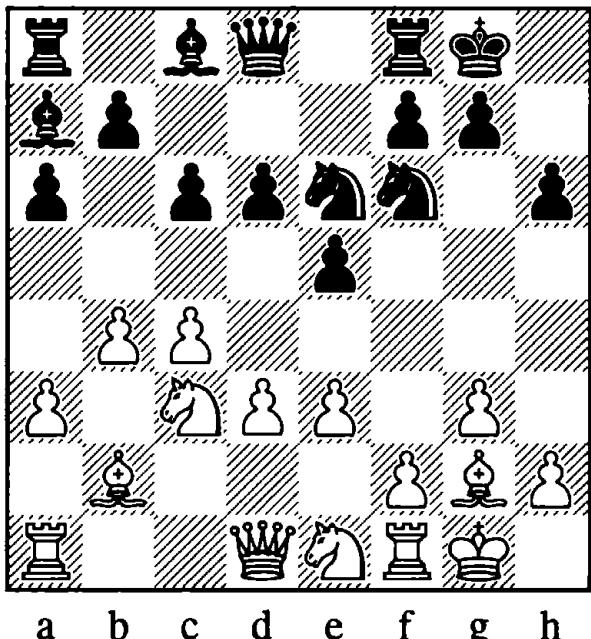
The rushed advance of the b-pawn has made 13.exd4? impossible because of 13...Qxd4†.

13...c6 14.a5 Be8 15.Qh1 Qf5 16.Qc2 d5

17.e4 Qd4 18.c5 Qb3=

A draw was agreed in Marin – Korneev, Porto Mannu 2008. Black has won the bishop pair, but White's position remains solid and his queenside space advantage may tell in the endgame.

10...Qe6 11.b4 Qa7 12.Qb2 c6



Play follows the same pattern as in line B12.

13.Qc1

White anticipates Black's main positional threat, ...d6-d5, by occupying the c-file in advance.

The usefulness of the move ...h7-h6 starts making itself felt. For instance, I refrained from 13.Qf3, as played by Galko, because of 13...Qg5, opening the diagonal for the c8-bishop and reducing White's pressure against the e5-pawn.

13...We7

My opponent does not repeat Svetushkin's mistake from line B12 – namely prematurely occupying the centre. Since he had also been playing in Ploesti, Dmitri may have complained to him about the hurried ...d6-d5.

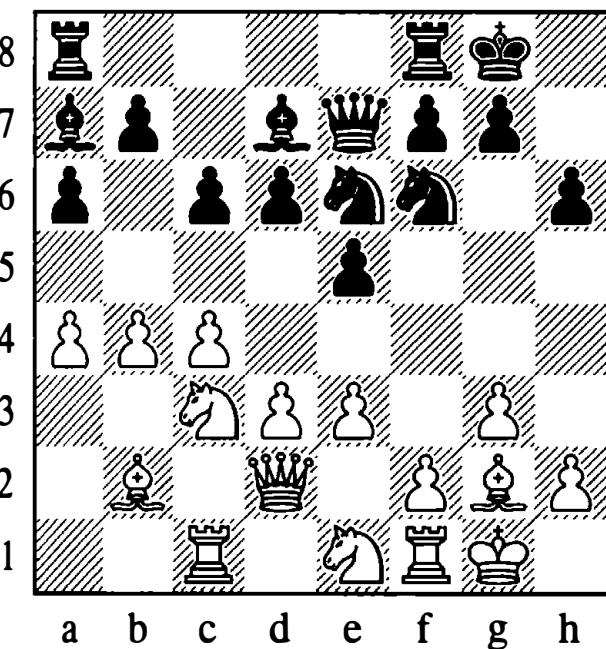
Anyway, 13...d5 could be met by 14.cxd5 cxd5 15.Qf3 (White can also start with 15.Qa4!, with a possible transposition) 15...Wd6 (15...d4 would create a weakness on d4 and leave the a7-bishop passive after 16.exd4 exd4 17.Qa4±) 16.Qa4± With a flexible position and better development for White. In order to parry the threat of 17.Qxe5, Black would have to either weaken his centre by advancing one of his pawns, or play the passive 16...Qd7. In this latter case, White would increase his pressure along the c-file, followed by a well timed Qa4-c5 or a central break with d3-d4 or e3-e4.

14.Wd2 Qd7

By defending the c6-pawn, Black threatens ...b7-b5.

15.a4!

White parries the threat and wins more space on the queenside. He also prepares b4-b5, putting pressure on c6, or a4-a5, blocking the b7-pawn and taking the relative weakness of the b6-square under control.



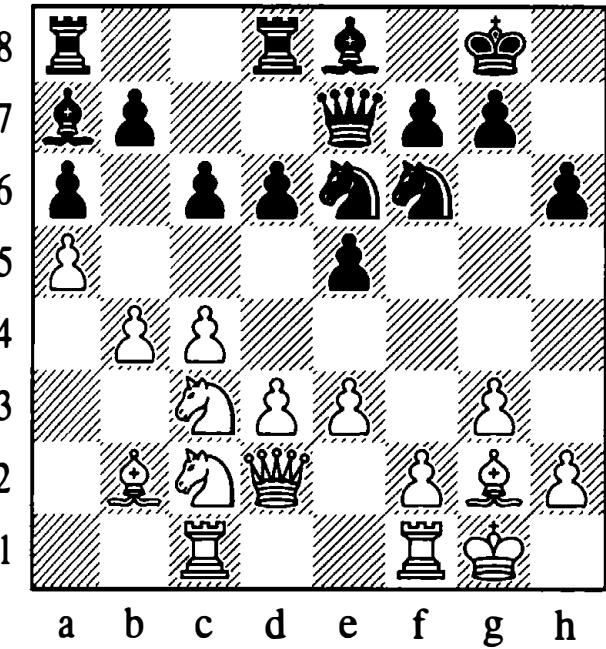
15...Bfd8?!

This is the start of an unfortunate regrouping. Instead Black should have tried to create some kingside activity. I planned to answer 15...Bg5 16.Qc2 Bfe8 17.Bce1 Bad8 with 18.f4 exf4 19.gxf4 Bh3† 20.Qh1±. Black's activity is temporary, while the white centre could become very threatening.

16.a5

We are familiar with this way of advancing the pawns from the game Marin – Boudre, Line B) of chapter 3, page 38 (also mentioned in Ch.2, page 18). Instead of attacking the well-defended c6-pawn with b4-b5, White takes control of the weak b6-square.

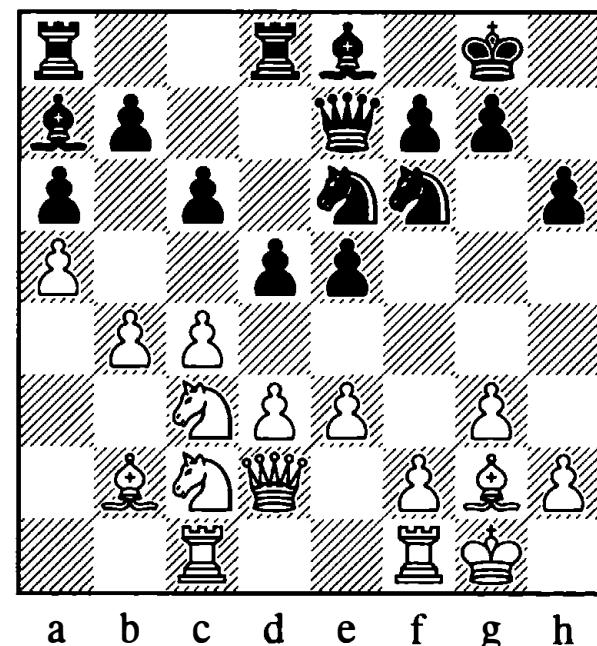
16...Bb8 17.Qc2



Both sides have completed their regroupings, but White's position remains more harmonious. The main plan is Bc1-e1, Qg1-h1 and, finally, f2-f4.

17...d5

Finally, Black decides to occupy the centre, but he may have underestimated the force of my next move.



18.c5!±

Since the English is a flank opening, we may be excused for reversing a famous saying by answering an action in the centre with a move on the wing. Black's bishops are now poorly placed and White's f2-f4 is hard to meet.

18...Qb8 19.f4 d4?!

Black is ill prepared for this kind of active move. The slightly better 19...e4 would have opened the a1-h8 diagonal and left the d4-square at White's mercy after 20.Qe2!.

20.Qa4!

Threatening to isolate the rook on a7 with Qa4-b6.

20...dxe3 21.Qxe3 Qd4 22.Qxd4!

This leads to a very strong initiative, but White could also have maintained the tension with 22.Bce1!±.

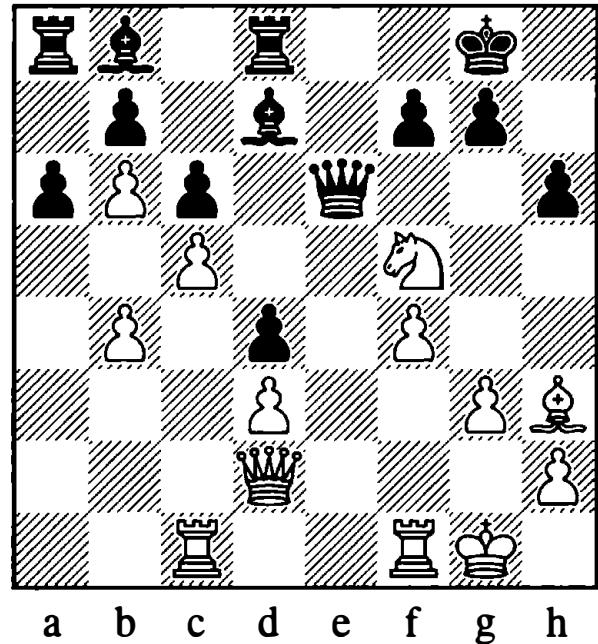
22...exd4 23.Qf5

White is much better after 23.Qc4± followed by Qce1, but I rightly considered that the position was ripe for more resolute action.

23...We6 24.Qh3

Threatening to win the queen with Qxh6†.

I was afraid that I would lose part of my advantage after 24.Qb6 Wxf5 25.Qxa8 Qd5. Black has got rid of his passive rook and his knight weighs a ton.

24...Qd5 25.Qb6 Qxb6 26.axb6 Qd7

Black is forced to play without his dark-squared bishop and queen's rook. Although it is likely that Black may free his pieces at some later point, White can use his temporary material superiority to launch a devastating attack against the black king.

27.g4! a5

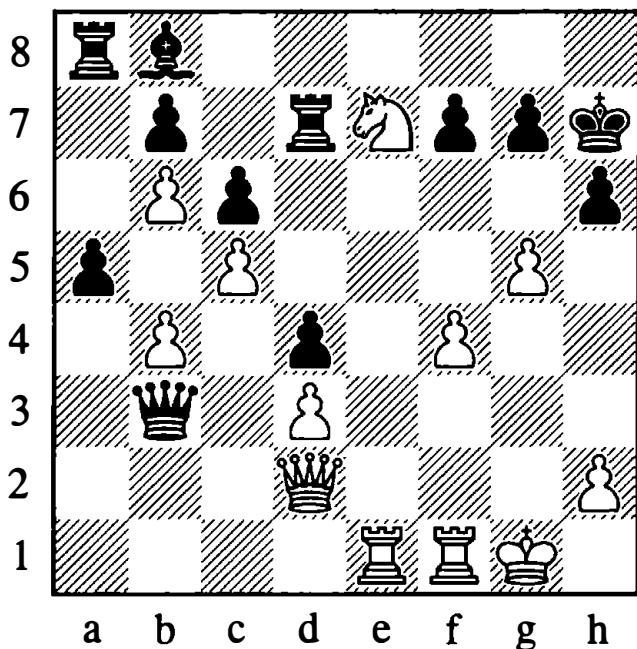
A desperate attempt to generate counterplay. I am not sure how Black would have continued after the simple capture on a5, but I preferred not to let myself be distracted from my main plan.

28.g5

Renewing the threat of Qf5xh6†.

28...Wh7 29.Qce1 Wd5

The queen has only a few squares available. In reply to the immediate 29...Wb3 I planned 30.Qe7 axb4 31.g6†! fxg6 32.Wg2! with a decisive attack.

30.Qe7 Wb3 31.Qxd7 Qxd7**32.f5!**

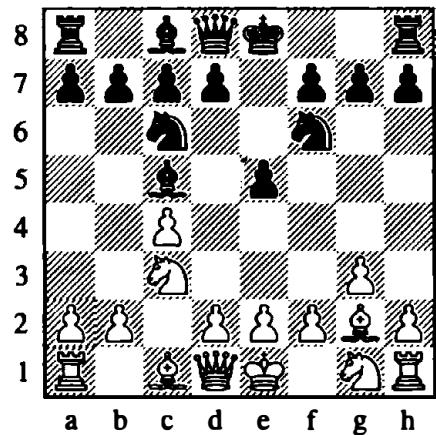
With all his pieces well coordinated, White simply pushes his pawns towards the enemy king.

32...axb4 33.g6† Wh8 34.f6!

The black king is helpless against the concentrated attacking of all White's pieces. Black resigned in Marin – Sanduleac, Romania 2008, depriving me of the satisfaction of sacrificing my queen after 34...Ra2 with 35.Wxh6†!.

Conclusion:

Delaying, or even completely avoiding, ...h6 does not free Black from problems. At best, he can transpose to variations examined in the previous chapters.



Karpov Variation

5th move alternatives

Variation Index

1.c4 e5 2.g3 ♜c6 3.♗c3 ♜f6 4.♗g2 ♜c5

A) 5.a3?!

p 72

B) 5.e3

p 73

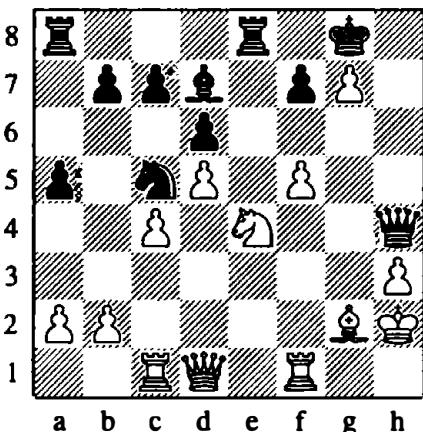
B1) 5...d5

p 73

B2) 5...d6

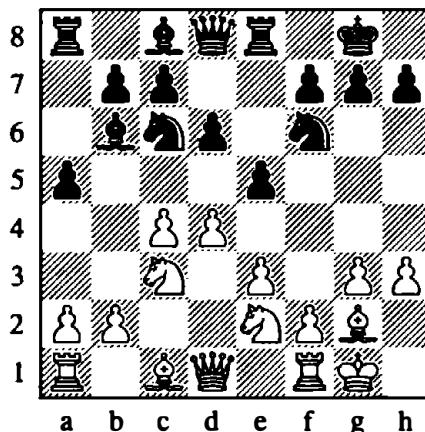
p 77

B221) after 22...♜c5



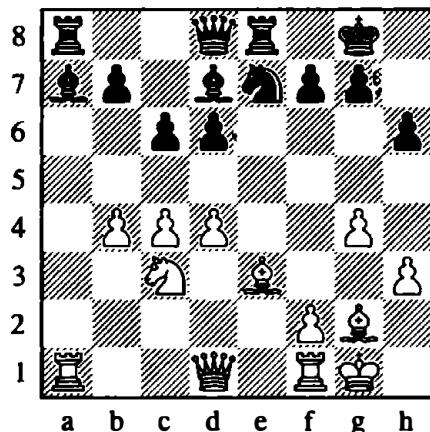
23.♝xc5!N

B222) after 9...a5



10.b3!N

B223) after 19...♝d7



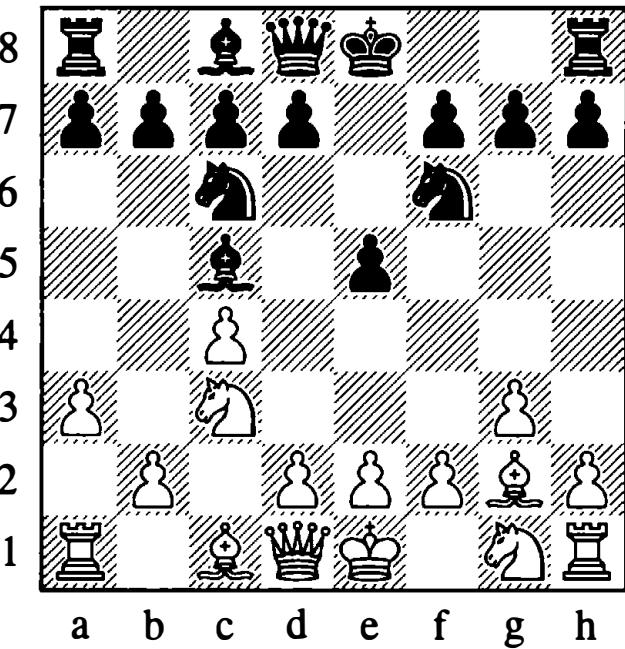
20.c5!N

1.c4 e5 2.g3 ♜c6 3.♗c3 ♜f6 4.♗g2 ♜c5

In this chapter we will examine possible deviations from 5.♗f3. We have **A) 5.a3?!** and **B) 5.e3.**

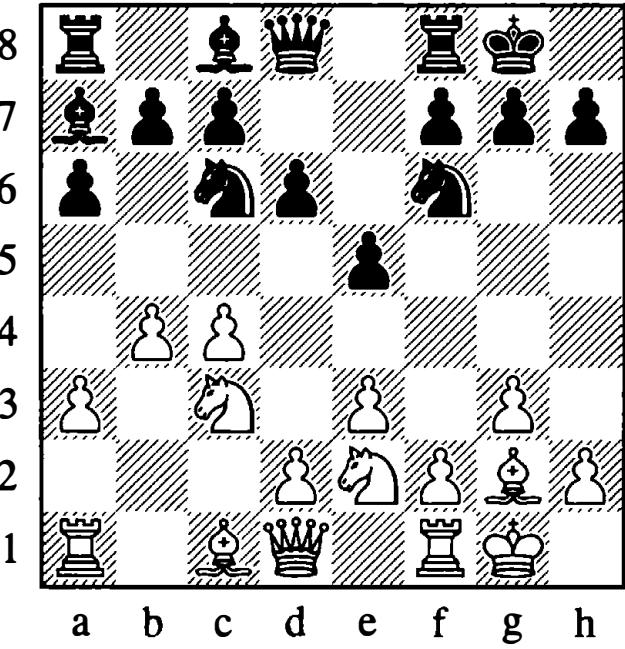
(**1.c4 e5 2.g3 ♜c6 3.♗c3 ♜f6 4.♗g2 ♜c5**)

A) 5.a3?!



There is no refutation of this move, but Black gets a valuable tempo to complete his development. Logically, White cannot hope for an opening advantage.

5...a6 6.e3 d6 7.♗ge2 0–0 8.b4 ♜a7 9.0–0

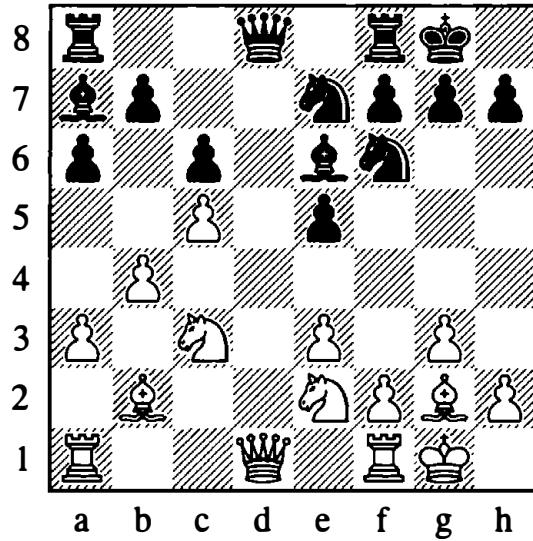


9...♜f5

I have taken this move as the main line, because it bears similarity with the positions examined under B2).

The simple 9...♝e7 seems even more disappointing for White after:

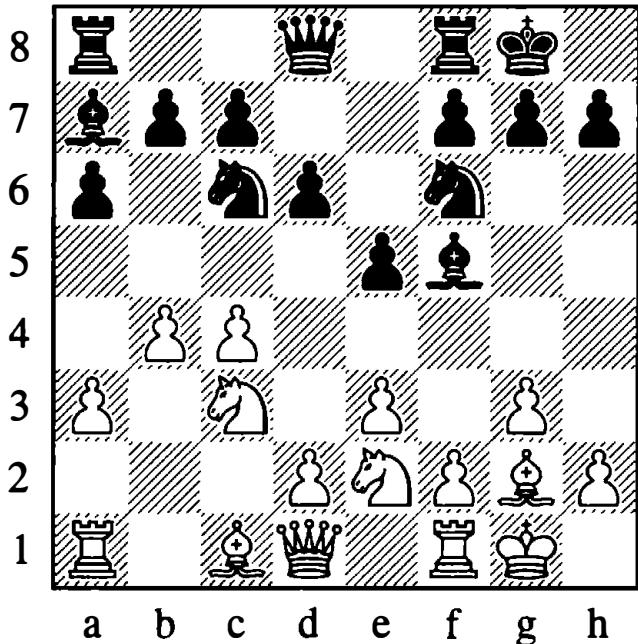
10.♗b2 c6 11.d4 ♜e6 12.dxe5 dxe5 13.c5



There are a couple of elements that prevent White from counting on an advantage, despite having cut the a7-bishop out of play: the c4-square is weak and the e2-knight is passive. These are two essential defects of the set-up based on 5.a3.

13...♝xd1 14.♝fxd1 ♜ad8 15.♔f1 ♜b8 16.♝xd8 ♜xd8 17.♝d1 ♜xd1† 18.♝xd1

The position is approximately equal and a draw was agreed after a long fight in Aronian – Bruzon, Yerevan 1997.



10.d4

This is the best way to meet the threat of ... $\mathbb{Q}f5-d3$.

10.d3

This is too passive and allows Black to take over the initiative.

10... $\mathbb{W}d7$ 11. $\mathbb{Q}d5$ $\mathbb{Q}xd5$ 12.cxd5 $\mathbb{Q}e7$ 13.d4 $\mathbb{Q}h3$

White's delay in developing prevents him from consolidating his space advantage.

14.e4

14.dxe5 dxe5 15. $\mathbb{Q}xh3$ $\mathbb{W}xh3$ 16. $\mathbb{Q}b2$ leaves the d5-pawn vulnerable after 16... $\mathbb{Q}ad8$.

14... $\mathbb{Q}xg2$ 15. $\mathbb{Q}xg2$ c6 16.dxe5 dxe5 17.d6?!

This loses a pawn, but White's position is not appealing after 17.dxc6 $\mathbb{W}xc6$ either.

17... $\mathbb{Q}c8$ 18.a4 $\mathbb{Q}xd6$ 19.b5 axb5 20. $\mathbb{Q}a3$ b4 21. $\mathbb{Q}xb4$ c5 22. $\mathbb{Q}a3$ $\mathbb{W}c6$ 23.f3 f5†

Black has an extra pawn and the initiative, Pogorelov – Epishin, Coria del Rio 2007.

10... $\mathbb{B}e8$ 11.h3

11.d5 $\mathbb{Q}e7$ 12.e4 would be premature because of 12... $\mathbb{Q}g4!$ followed by a later exchange on e2, which will most likely solve any problems Black might have had due to his lack of space.

11... $\mathbb{W}d7$ 12.exd4 $\mathbb{W}d7$ 13. $\mathbb{Q}h2$

Compared to some positions from the line B21, Black has utilized the available tempo to avoid the possible pin with $\mathbb{Q}g5$. Therefore, 13.g4 is not dangerous because of 13... $\mathbb{Q}g6$. For instance: 14. $\mathbb{Q}e3$ (14. $\mathbb{Q}g5$ $\mathbb{Q}e4$ is similar) 14...h5 15. $\mathbb{Q}g5$ Black is not forced to accept this familiar sacrifice. 15... $\mathbb{Q}e4?$ The vulnerability of the kingside prevents White from taking advantage of the temporary passivity of the a7-bishop.

13...h6 14. $\mathbb{Q}e3$ $\mathbb{Q}d8$ 15. $\mathbb{W}d2$ c6

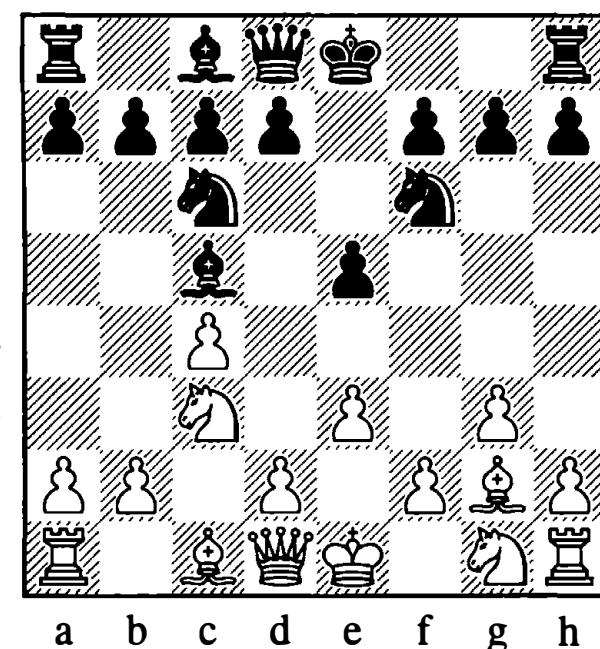
Black has managed to regroup properly. In the next phase he will play ... $\mathbb{Q}ac8$ followed by

either ...b7-b5 or ...d6-d5 and ... $\mathbb{Q}a7-b8$. The white king may soon feel insecure.

(1.c4 e5 2.g3 $\mathbb{Q}c6$ 3. $\mathbb{Q}c3$ $\mathbb{Q}f6$ 4. $\mathbb{Q}g2$ $\mathbb{Q}c5$)

B) 5.e3

White increases his control over the centre, restricts the enemy bishop and plans a quick expansion with $\mathbb{Q}ge2$ and d4.



Black can choose between the forcing B1) 5...d5 and the neutral B2) 5...d6. Other moves tend to transpose to B2) anyway.

(1.c4 e5 2.g3 $\mathbb{Q}c6$ 3. $\mathbb{Q}c3$ $\mathbb{Q}f6$ 4. $\mathbb{Q}g2$ $\mathbb{Q}c5$ 5.e3)

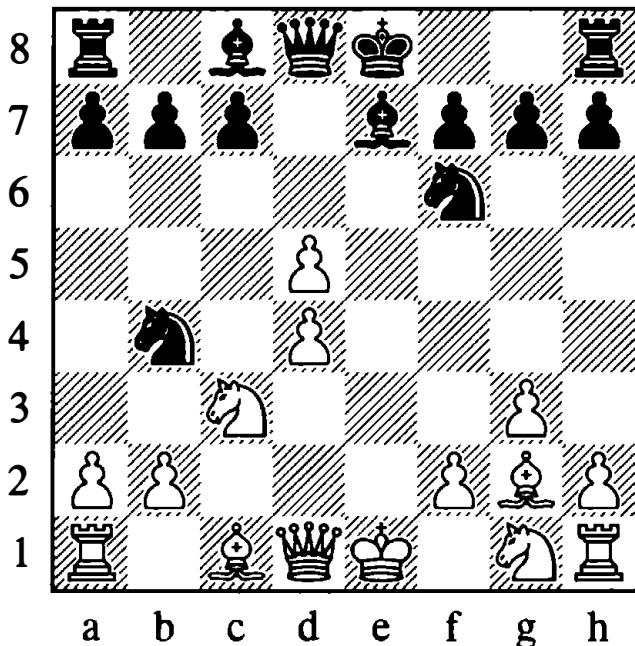
B1) 5...d5 6.cxd5 $\mathbb{Q}b4$ 7.d4

White defends the weak d3-square with gain of time.

7...exd4 8.exd4 $\mathbb{Q}e7$

Black has temporarily sacrificed a pawn, disrupting the white centre. White's only chance for an advantage is to increase his pressure on the d5-square once Black retrieves the pawn.

8... $\mathbb{Q}xd4?$, hoping for 9. $\mathbb{W}xd4?$ $\mathbb{Q}c2†$, drops a piece to 9. $\mathbb{W}a4†!$.



Apart from the natural B11) 9. $\mathbb{Q}ge2$, White also has the interesting B12) 9. d6.

(1. c4 e5 2. g3 $\mathbb{Q}c6$ 3. $\mathbb{Q}c3$ $\mathbb{Q}f6$ 4. $\mathbb{Q}g2$ $\mathbb{Q}c5$ 5. e3 d5 6. cxd5 $\mathbb{Q}b4$ 7. d4 exd4 8. exd4 $\mathbb{Q}e7$)

B11) 9. $\mathbb{Q}ge2$

White continues his development, bringing his knight one step closer to the d5-square.

9...0–0

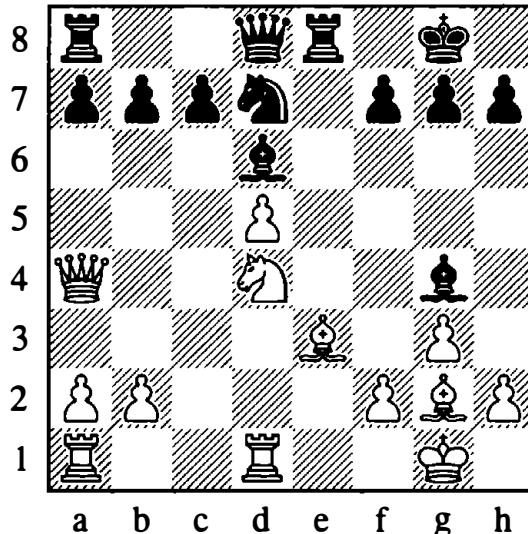
This is the safest continuation. The over-ambitious 9... $\mathbb{Q}f5$ 10. 0–0 $\mathbb{Q}c2$ led to trouble for Black after 11. g4 $\mathbb{Q}g6$ 12. f4! $\mathbb{Q}xal$ 13. f5 $\mathbb{Q}xg4$ 14. $\mathbb{Q}g3\pm$ in Rogozenko – Pârligras, Romania (ch) 1999. White will most likely win two minor pieces (the a1-knight and the g6-bishop) for the sacrificed rook, while retaining a space advantage in the centre.

10. 0–0 $\mathbb{Q}bxsd5$ 11. $\mathbb{W}b3$ c6

Black consolidates his knight in the centre, but by maintaining the tension he risks ending up worse in a symmetrical position. Compared to the game Bacrot – Gelfand from line B12 below, White has the right to move, but his dark-squared bishop is on c1 instead of e5. Numerically, this means White is a whole tempo down, but the bishop is not necessarily passive on its initial square, because

it supports $\mathbb{Q}e2-f4$ fighting for a key central square.

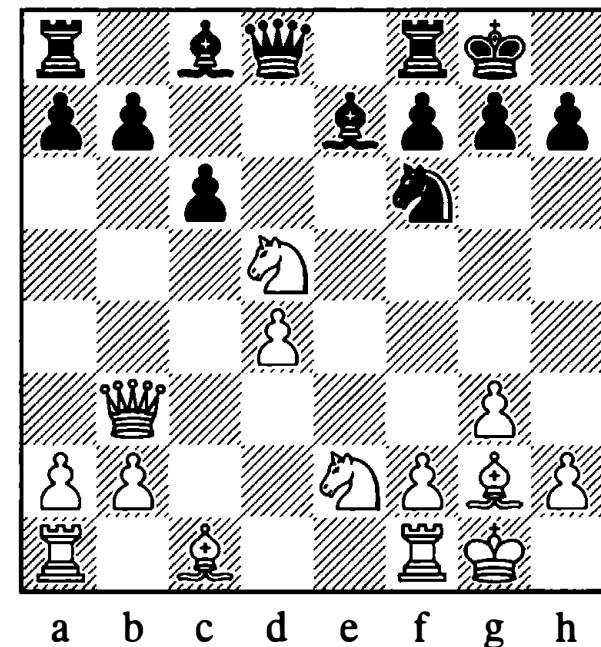
The retreat 11... $\mathbb{Q}b6$ leaves White with a space advantage in the centre after 12. d5 $\mathbb{Q}f5$ 13. $\mathbb{E}d1$ $\mathbb{Q}fd7$ 14. $\mathbb{Q}a4$ $\mathbb{Q}xa4$ 15. $\mathbb{W}xa4$ $\mathbb{E}e8$ 16. $\mathbb{Q}e3$ $\mathbb{Q}d6$ 17. $\mathbb{Q}d4$ $\mathbb{Q}g4$.



In Marin – Kogan, Internet 2005, I played 18. $\mathbb{E}d2?!$ – a move dictated by general considerations. I did not wish to lose a tempo and considered that only 18. $\mathbb{E}d2?!$ could be considered as activating the rook. I failed to understand that my bishop will remain exposed on e3.

It would have been better to play 18. $\mathbb{E}e1!N$. For instance, 18... $\mathbb{W}f6$ 19. h3 $\mathbb{Q}b6$ 20. $\mathbb{W}b3$ $\mathbb{Q}d7$ 21. a4 a5 22. $\mathbb{Q}b5\pm$ with strong pressure.

12. $\mathbb{Q}xd5$



12... $\mathbb{Q}xd5$

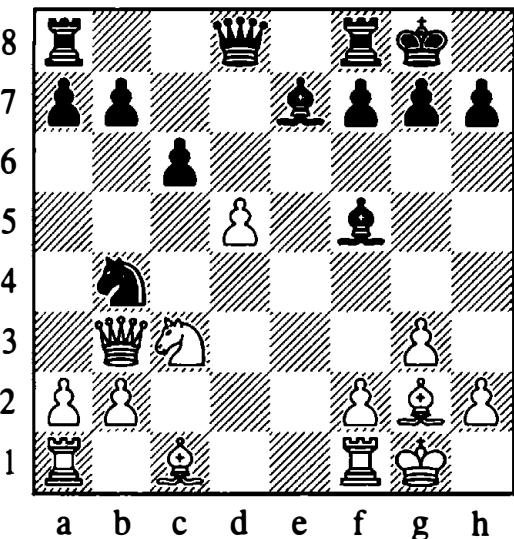
This is best. 12...cxd5 would allow the centre to be opened, making White's lead in development quite significant: 13. $\mathbb{Q}c3$ $\mathbb{W}b6$ 14. $\mathbb{Q}xd5$ $\mathbb{Q}xd5$ 15. $\mathbb{Q}xd5$ $\mathbb{W}xd4$ 16. $\mathbb{Q}e3$ $\mathbb{W}f6$ 17. $\mathbb{B}fe1\pm$ In order to complete his development Black would most likely have to give up one of his queenside pawns.

13. $\mathbb{Q}c3$

Black cannot maintain the tension any longer, which means he has failed to equalize. It is not easy to choose from the equally unpleasant alternatives.

13... $\mathbb{Q}xc3$

John Watson recommends 13... $\mathbb{Q}b4$ 14.d5 $\mathbb{Q}f5$, but I do not find this entirely satisfactory for Black.



White can retain the initiative with:

15. $\mathbb{Q}g5!N$

I like this move very much. It is refreshing that the solution to this complicated position is a developing move, even when it puts a piece en prise.

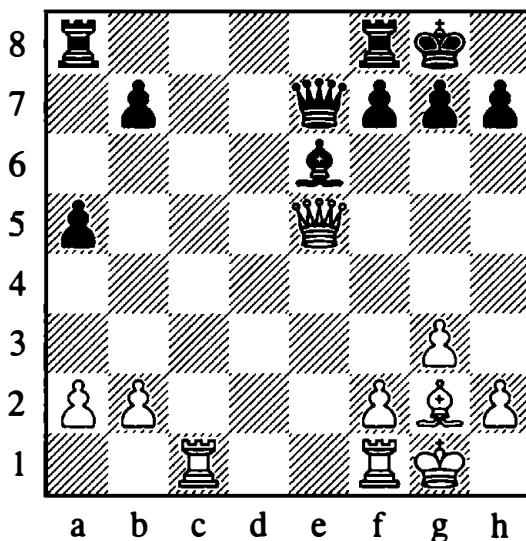
15...a5

Simplifying the position with 15... $\mathbb{Q}c2$ 16. $\mathbb{W}xb4$ $\mathbb{Q}xb4$ 17. $\mathbb{Q}xd8$ $\mathbb{B}axd8$ would lead to the loss of the c6-pawn after 18. $\mathbb{B}ac1\pm$, over-defending c3 with gain of time, followed by dxc6.

16. $\mathbb{Q}xe7$ $\mathbb{W}xe7$ 17. $\mathbb{B}ac1$

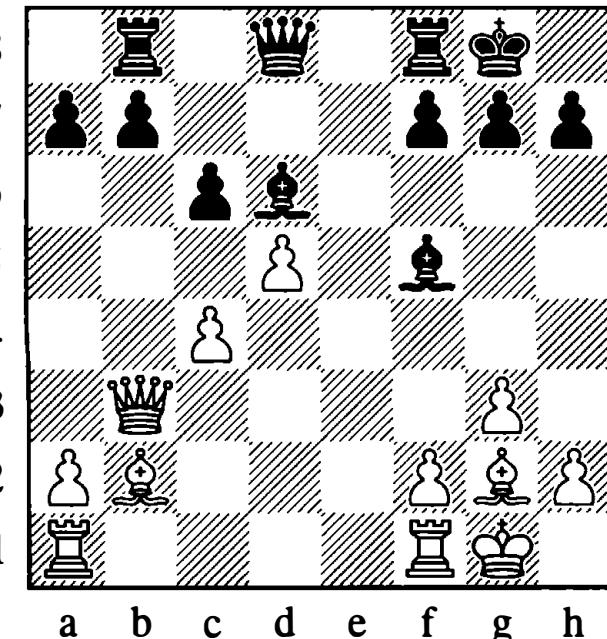
This move, preventing ... $\mathbb{Q}f5-c2$ and ... $\mathbb{Q}b4-c2$, is better than 17.dxc6 bxc6 18. $\mathbb{B}fe1$ $\mathbb{W}c5$ 19. $\mathbb{Q}e4$ when Black seems to be fine after 19... $\mathbb{W}c2=$.

17...cxd5 18. $\mathbb{Q}xd5$ $\mathbb{Q}xd5$ 19. $\mathbb{W}xd5$ $\mathbb{Q}e6$
20. $\mathbb{W}e5\pm$



With his a5- and b7-pawns attacked, Black cannot prevent $\mathbb{B}c1-c7$. White's lead in development persists despite the simplifications.

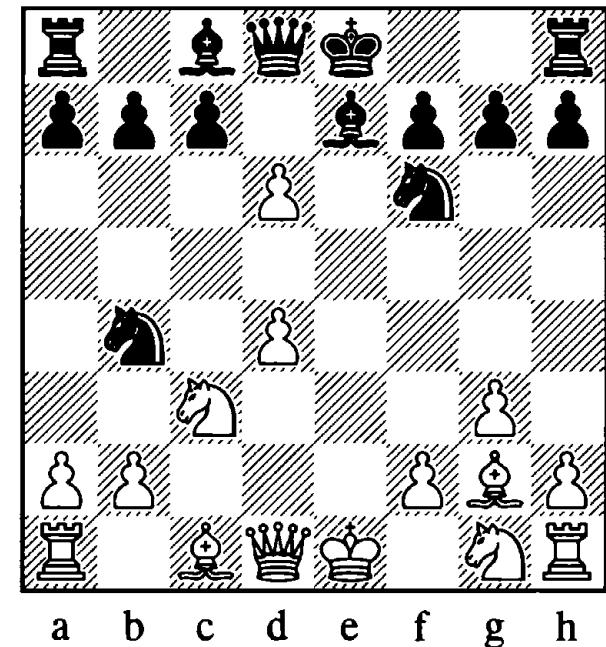
14.bxc3 $\mathbb{Q}d6$ 15.c4 $\mathbb{B}b8$ 16. $\mathbb{Q}b2$ $\mathbb{Q}f5$
17.d5±



White's two active bishops and strong passed pawn yield a stable advantage. In the game Sarakauskas – Kiik, Jyvaskyla 2006, Black could not cope with his difficult defensive task and eventually lost.

(1.c4 e5 2.g3 ♜c6 3.♗c3 ♜f6 4.♗g2 ♜c5 5.e3 d5 6.cxd5 ♜b4 7.d4 exd4 8.exd4 ♜e7)

B12) 9.d6!!



White immediately returns the pawn in the hope of creating a lack of harmony in Black's camp. This has been tried in a high-level rapid game.

9...♝xd6

9...cxsd6? is simply bad because of 10.♗a4† ♜c6 11.d5 winning the knight.

9...♝xd6 loses control of the d5-square, allowing 10.a3 ♜c6 11.♗ge2. Black has to live with the constant threat of d4-d5, which makes his position unstable. Maybe this is playable for him, but further practice is needed to prove this. Until 9...♝xd6 passes such tests, I feel that the text move offers Black better chances to stabilize the position.

10.♗ge2 c6 11.♗f4

As a result of d5-d6 White has won a tempo for his development.

11...♝d8 12.0–0 0–0 13.♗e5

From here the bishop keeps both wings under observation. It prevents Black from defending the b7-pawn with ...♜a8-b8 and it

maintains the threat of undermining Black's control of the d5-square with a well-timed capture on f6.

13...♝bd5 14.♗b3 ♜b6

Black has to abandon the d5-square to protect b7 and thus allow the development of the c8-bishop.

15.♗f4

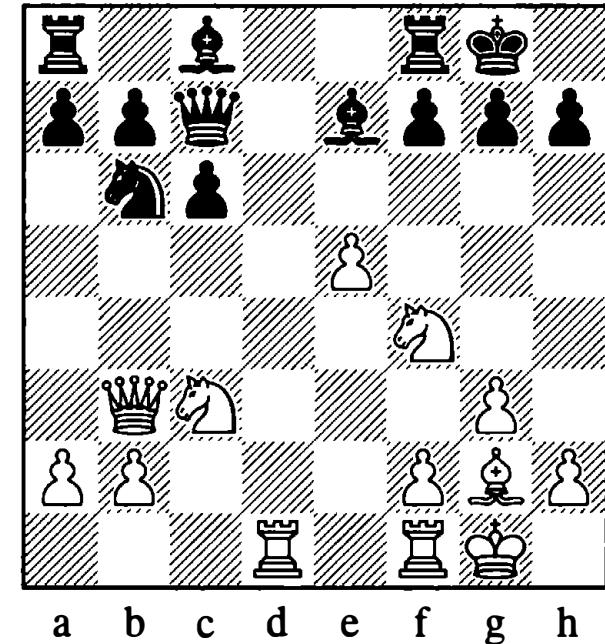
Increasing the pressure on d5 and preventing ...♝c8-e6.

15...♝g4

Black decides to get rid of the enemy bishop, even if this means improving White's structure.

After 15...♝f5 16.♗ad1 the perennial threat of d4-d5 is annoying, while the bishop is unstable on f5.

16.♗ad1 ♜xe5 17.dxe5 ♜c7



18.♗fe1!N

White completes his development and prepares to open the position with e5-e6.

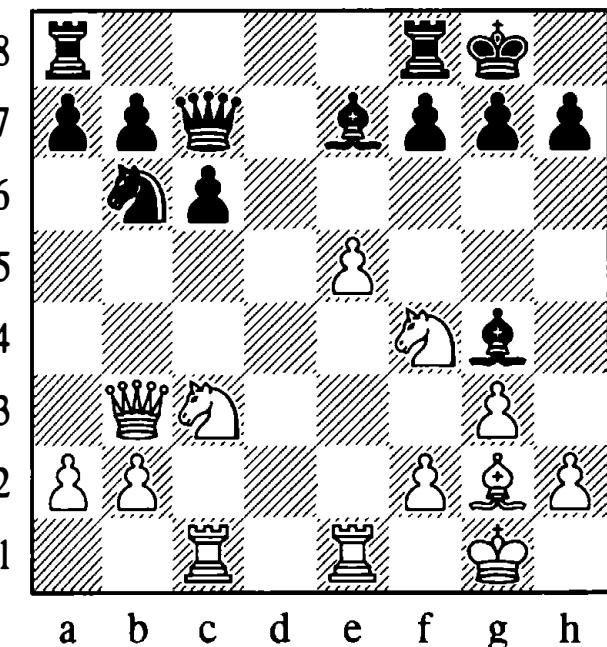
This is stronger than 18.e6 ♜g5 19.♗ce2, when White managed to weaken the enemy kingside and retain some initiative, but Black's position

proved defendable in Bacrot – Gelfand, Odessa (rapid) 2007.

18... $\mathbb{B}g4$

When pushing his e-pawn, Bacrot probably wanted to prevent Black from developing his bishop with gain of tempo.

19. $\mathbb{B}c1!±$



This move is similar to the recommended 18. $\mathbb{B}e1!$ from the notes to the game Marin – Kogan, line B11, page 74. White is not really losing time, because the g4-bishop is exposed and threats such as $\mathbb{Q}c3-b5$ or $\mathbb{Q}c3-d5$ are irritating.

(1.c4 e5 2.g3 $\mathbb{Q}c6$ 3. $\mathbb{Q}c3$ $\mathbb{Q}c5$ 4. $\mathbb{B}g2$ $\mathbb{Q}f6$ 5.e3)

B2) 5...d6

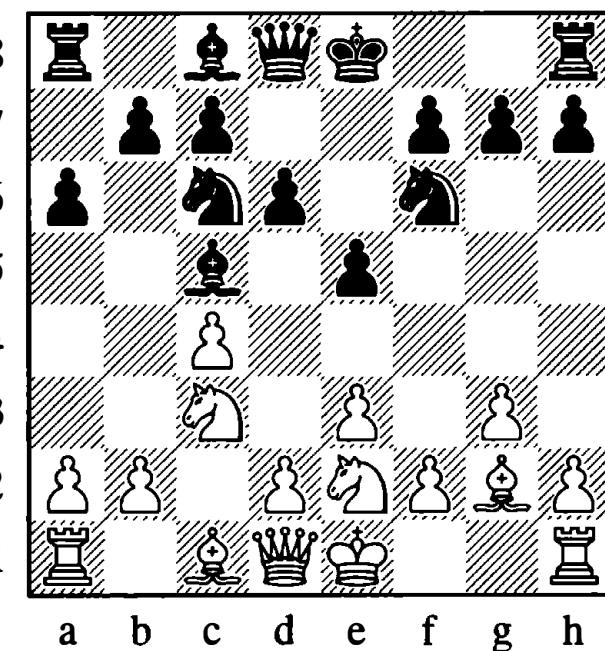
This normal developing move is of crucial importance if Black chooses the move order that is characteristic of Chapter 19.

6. $\mathbb{Q}ge2$

White creates the positional threat of d2-d4. Black can choose between opening a retreat for the bishop with **B21) 6...a6** and ignoring the threat with **B22) 6...0–0**.

(1.c4 e5 2.g3 $\mathbb{Q}c6$ 3. $\mathbb{Q}c3$ $\mathbb{Q}f6$ 4. $\mathbb{B}g2$ $\mathbb{Q}c5$ 5.e3 d6 6. $\mathbb{Q}ge2$)

B21) 6...a6



7.0–0 0–0

7... $\mathbb{B}g4$ is premature because there is no pawn tension in the centre yet, and after 8.h3 the exchange on e2 simply gifts White the bishop pair. The bishop cannot retreat to e6 because of d4 followed by d5, winning a piece. After other retreats the extra move h2-h3 is useful for White, as will be seen at a later stage of the main line.

8.d4 $\mathbb{Q}a7$

White has occupied the centre with pawns, but has to be careful to avoid losing stability after an exchange on d4 followed by ... $\mathbb{Q}c8-g4$.

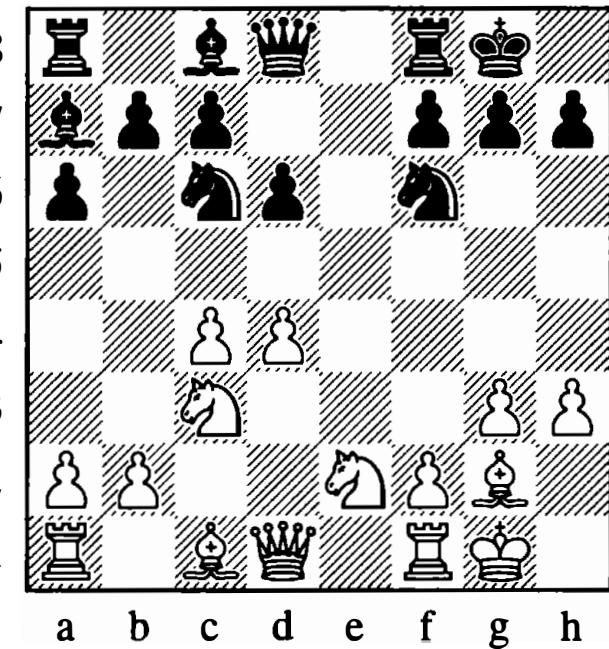
9.h3

This generally useful move, preventing the aforementioned threat, prepares a later kingside expansion based on g3-g4.

9...exd4

Black releases the tension, hoping to obtain counterplay by building up piece pressure. 9... $\mathbb{Q}f5$ 10.d5 more or less transposes to B22.

10.exd4



10...♝e8

Preparing ...♝c8-f5 followed by occupying the e4-square.

The immediate 10...♝f5 can be strongly met by 11.g4 ♜g6 12.f4 h6 13.f5 ♜h7, as in the classic game Koltanowski – Colle, Belgium 1925. Both black bishops are out of play and White should have simply continued his development with 14.♝f4±.

10...h6 can also be met by 11.g4 followed by ♜c1-e3 and ♜e2-g3, or ♜f4-g3 followed by f4-f5.

11.g4!?

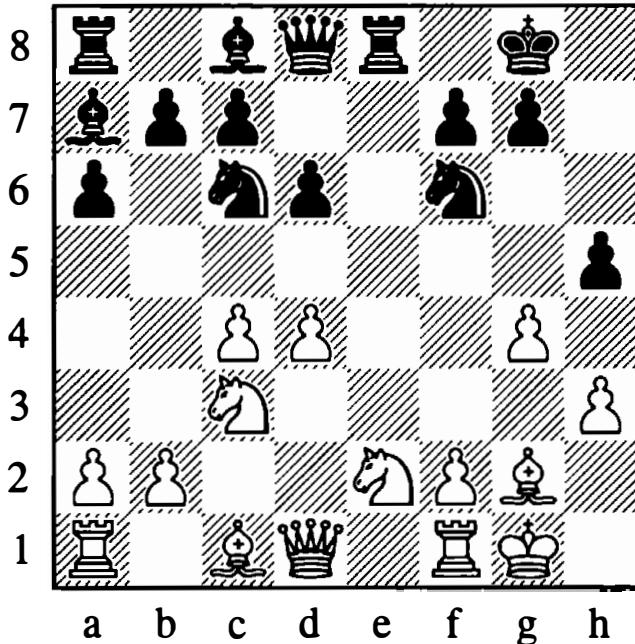
White increases his space advantage and prevents Black's natural development.

11...h5

The logical reaction, aiming to make the f5-square available for his bishop by provoking the further advance of the g4-pawn.

The restrained 11...♝d7 would allow White to consolidate his domination with 12.♝g5 h6 13.♝h4±. In order to get rid of the pin, Black would have to weaken his position with ...g7-g5, leaving his king much more exposed than White's, mainly because of the isolation of the dark-squared bishop on the other wing.

11...h6?! would be simply bad because of 12.g5 hxg5 13.♝xg5± when Black cannot escape the pin without allowing his structure to be spoiled.



12.♝g5!

The start of a spectacular but entirely logical sacrificial attack.

12...hxg4 13.♞d5 gxh3 14.♝xf6 gxf6 15.♝f3

In view of the threat of ♜g1-h2 followed by ♜f1-g1, Black faces a difficult defensive task. The engines are quite sceptical about White's attacking chances and consider that Black is much better due to his extra pawns.

The course of the following e-mail game (in which, supposedly, the part played by engines was significant) illustrates the machines' weakness in this type of position.

15...♛g7 16.♚h2 ♜h8 17.♝g1† ♛f8 18.♛d3 ♜h4 19.♝g3

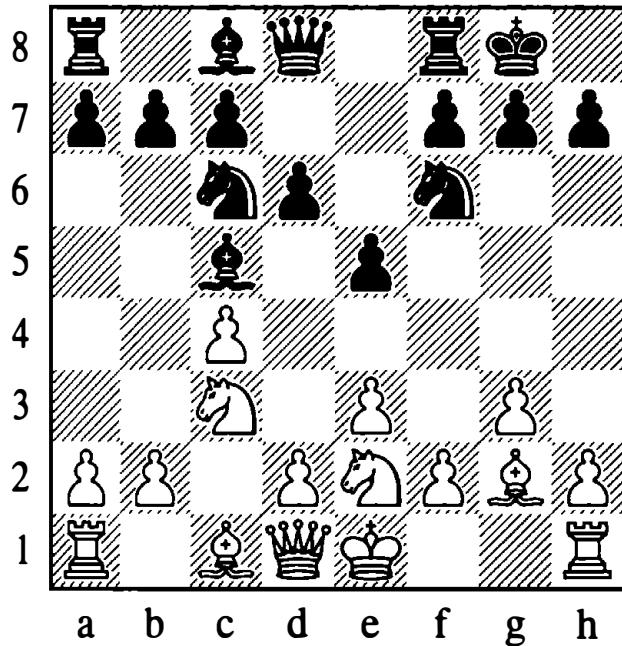
Only now did Black (and/or his engine) understand the danger, and retreat his rook.

19...♜h8 20.♝ag1 ♜e7 21.♝xf6

White has a devastating attack, N. Oliver – M. Lane, e-mail 2000.

(1.c4 e5 2.g3 $\mathbb{Q}c6$ 3. $\mathbb{Q}c3$ $\mathbb{Q}f6$ 4. $\mathbb{Q}g2$ $\mathbb{Q}c5$
5.e3 d6 6. $\mathbb{Q}ge2$)

B22) 6...0–0



By ignoring the threat of d2-d4, Black aims to win time for his development.

7.d4 $\mathbb{Q}b6$ 8.0–0 $\mathbb{Q}e8$

This rook move is the extra tempo Black gains by refraining from 6...a6. In line B21 he lacked just one tempo to play ... $\mathbb{Q}f5$ followed by ... $\mathbb{Q}e4$.

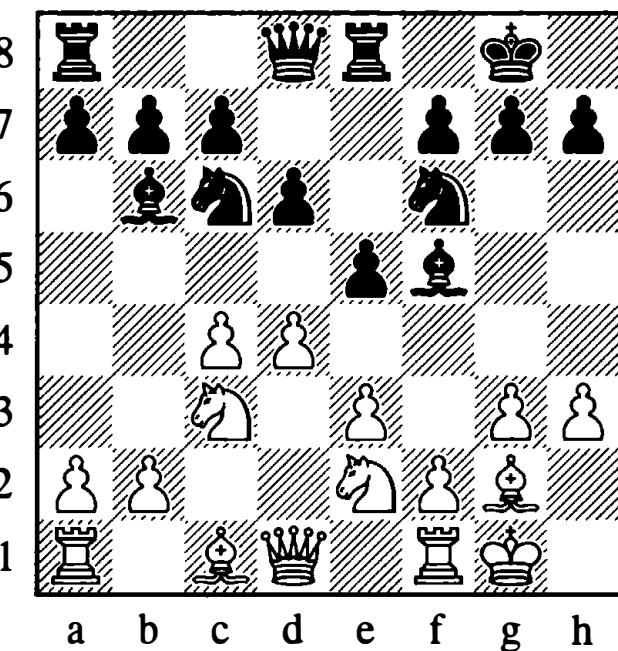
8...exd4 9.exd4 $\mathbb{Q}g4$ would not be effective because of 10.h3. Retreating the bishop would practically lose a tempo over the line B223 below, since the move h2-h3 is useful anyway. Or 10... $\mathbb{Q}xe2$ 11. $\mathbb{Q}xe2$ gives up the pair of bishops without putting the d4-pawn in danger.

9.h3

A familiar move. Black can now choose whether to maintain the tension, B221) 9... $\mathbb{Q}f5$ and B222) 9...a5, or open the e-file, B223) 9...exd4.

(1.c4 e5 2.g3 $\mathbb{Q}c6$ 3. $\mathbb{Q}c3$ $\mathbb{Q}f6$ 4. $\mathbb{Q}g2$ $\mathbb{Q}c5$
5.e3 d6 6. $\mathbb{Q}ge2$ 0–0 7.d4 $\mathbb{Q}b6$ 8.0–0 $\mathbb{Q}e8$
9.h3)

B221) 9... $\mathbb{Q}f5$



By placing the bishop on this seemingly active square, Black allows his opponent to win space with gain of time.

10.d5! $\mathbb{Q}b8$

10... $\mathbb{Q}e7$ looks more natural. In this case the knight would be closer to the h4-square, but White would not be forced to play g3-g4 as in the main line. He may deviate with 11.e4, followed by $\mathbb{Q}g1-h2$ and f2-f4.

11.g4!?

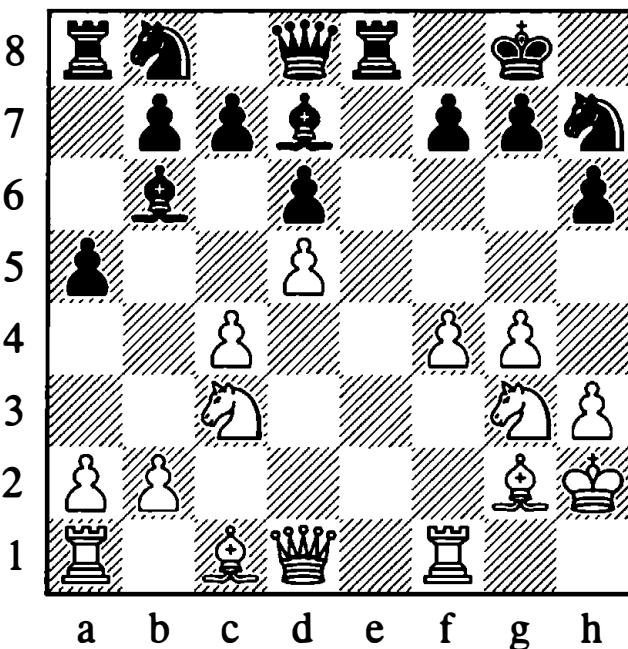
One of the positive aspects of having a space advantage is flexibility. White can adapt his plan in accordance with his opponent's reactions.

When playing his previous move, Black probably wanted to meet 11.e4 with 11... $\mathbb{Q}g6$, followed by ... $\mathbb{Q}bd7-c5$.

11... $\mathbb{Q}d7$ 12. $\mathbb{Q}g3$

White has a space advantage everywhere on the board, and yet he is not at risk from over-extending because of Black's incomplete development.

12...h6 13. $\mathbb{Q}h2$ a5 14.f4 exf4 15.exf4 $\mathbb{Q}h7$

**16.g5!**

The attack takes concrete form while two of Black's queenside pieces are still on their initial squares.

16...d6

Accepting the sacrifice with 16...hxg5 17.fxg5 $\mathbb{Q}xg5$ would lead to a devastating attack after 18. $\mathbb{W}h5!$ f6 19. $\mathbb{Q}xg5$ fxg5 20. $\mathbb{W}f7\#$ $\mathbb{Q}h8$ 21. $\mathbb{Q}e4!$.

17.gxh6 $\mathbb{W}h4$ 18.hxg7 $\mathbb{Q}f6$

White has won two pawns, but he has to continue to play energetically to prevent Black from obtaining counterplay.

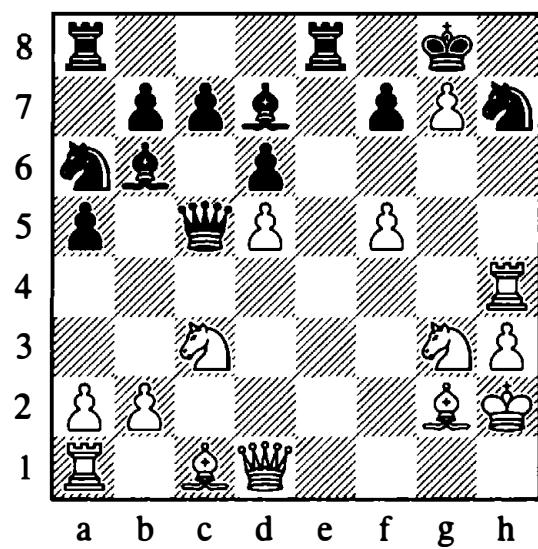
19.f5!

Preventing ... $\mathbb{Q}f6-g4$ and threatening 20. $\mathbb{Q}f4$ $\mathbb{W}h7$ 21. $\mathbb{Q}e4!$ with a crushing attack (Korchnoi).

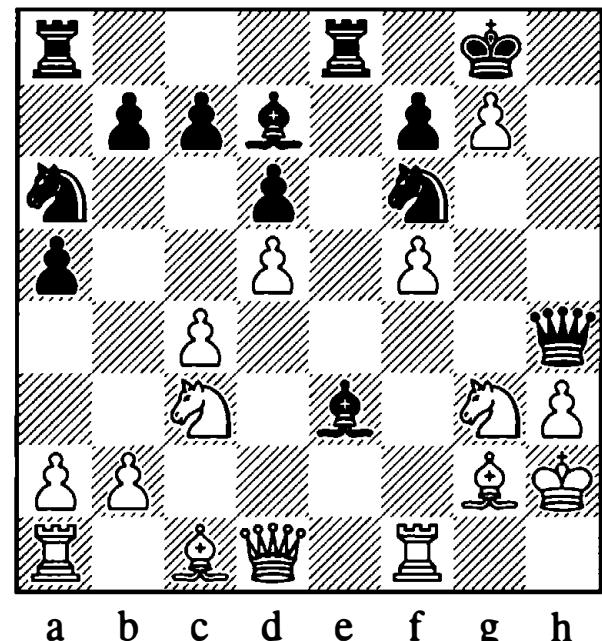
19... $\mathbb{Q}e3$

Black tries to exchange at least one of the attacking pieces.

After the greedy 19... $\mathbb{W}xc4$ Korchnoi gives the following lines: 20. $\mathbb{Q}f4$ $\mathbb{W}c5$ 21. $\mathbb{Q}h4$ (threatening 22. $\mathbb{Q}g5$) 21... $\mathbb{Q}h7$ (This attempt to save the king fails painfully, but 21... $\mathbb{Q}xg7$ would also leave the king exposed to a deadly attack after 22. $\mathbb{Q}h6\#$ $\mathbb{Q}g8$ 23. $\mathbb{Q}h5$ $\mathbb{Q}xh5$ 24. $\mathbb{W}xh5$.)



22. $\mathbb{Q}xh7!$ The king's only defender is eliminated. 22... $\mathbb{Q}xh7$ 23. $\mathbb{W}h5\#$ $\mathbb{Q}xg7$ 24.f6# With mate to follow.

**20. $\mathbb{Q}ce4!$**

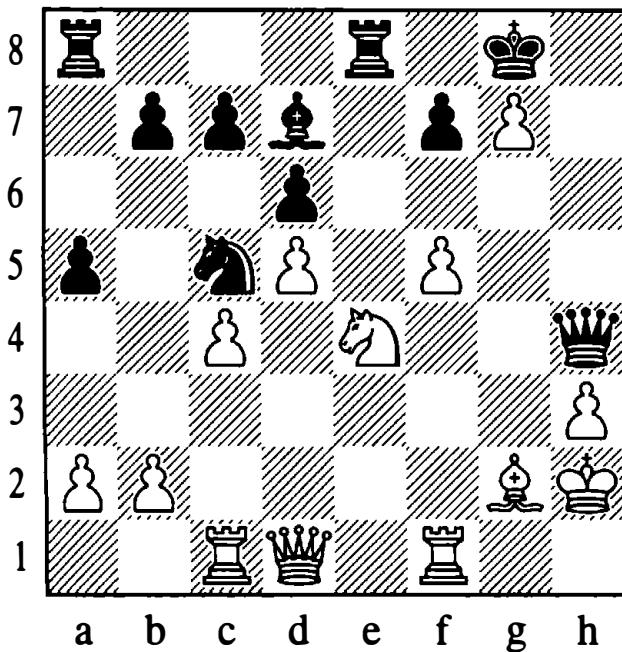
White uses the same strategy as his opponent – aiming to exchange the well-placed enemy pieces. Since he has a material advantage and some attacking chances, he does not mind returning part of the material.

20... $\mathbb{Q}xe4$ 21. $\mathbb{Q}xe4$ $\mathbb{Q}xc1$

Or 21... $\mathbb{Q}xe4$ 22. $\mathbb{Q}xe4$ $\mathbb{W}xe4$ 23. $\mathbb{W}h5$ with decisive threats.

22. $\mathbb{Q}xc1$ $\mathbb{Q}c5$

22... $\mathbb{Q}xe4$ would be impossible because of 23. $\mathbb{Q}xe4$ $\mathbb{W}xe4$ 24. $\mathbb{W}h5!$ with a decisive attack (Korchnoi).



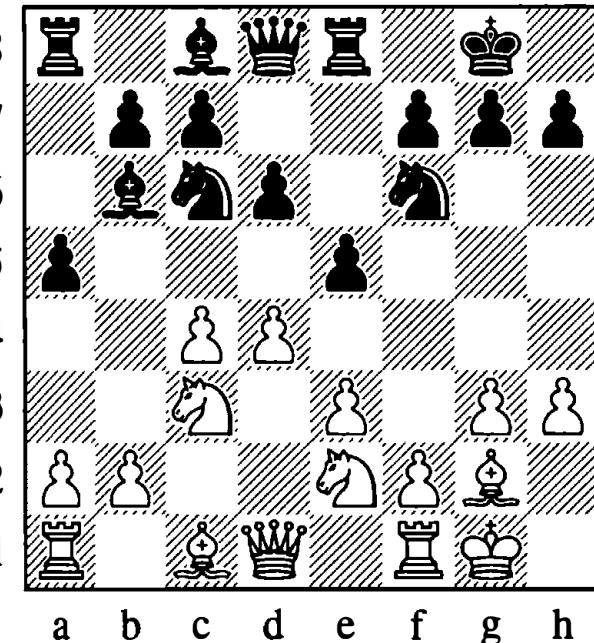
So far we have followed the game Korchnoi - S. Szabo, Bucharest 1954. White's simplest continuation would have been:

23.♕xc5!N dxc5 24.♗c3+–

White has two extra pawns and a continuing attack.

(1.c4 e5 2.g3 ♜c6 3.♘c3 ♜f6 4.♗g2 ♜c5 5.e3 d6 6.♗ge2 0–0 7.d4 ♜b6 8.0–0 ♜e8 9.h3)

B222) 9...a5



After this restrained move White should continue playing useful moves, waiting for ...♗f5 to come.

10.b3!N

This is the best way to carry out the above plan: White prepares the development of his dark-squared bishop.

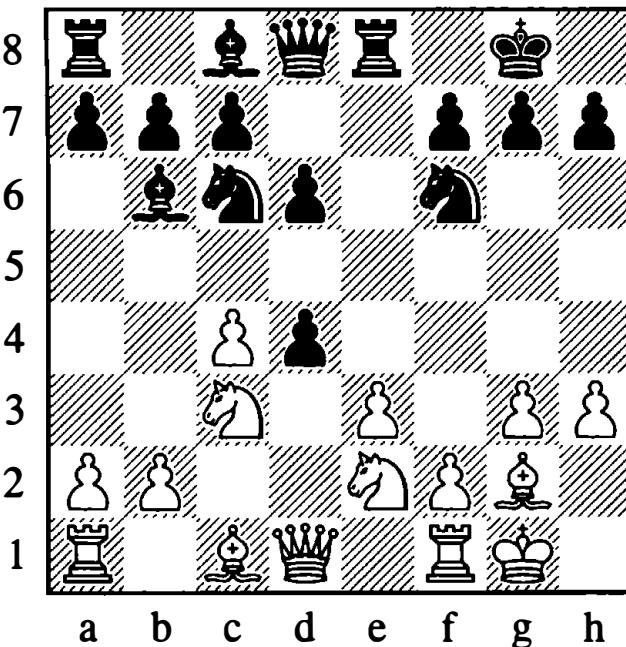
10.d5 seems premature and offers Black the possibility of regrouping properly: 10...♝e7 11.e4 c6 12.♗h2 cxd5 13.cxd5 ♜g6 14.b3 ♜c5 15.♗a4 b6 16.♗xc5 bxc5 Black had a good position in Korchnoi – Reshko, Moscow 1966.

10...♝f5 11.d5 ♜b4 12.e4 ♜d7 13.a3 ♜a6 14.♗b1±

White gets ready for his queenside attack, but during the next phase of the game he should improve his position on the other wing as well, with ♛g1-h2, f2-f4, etc.

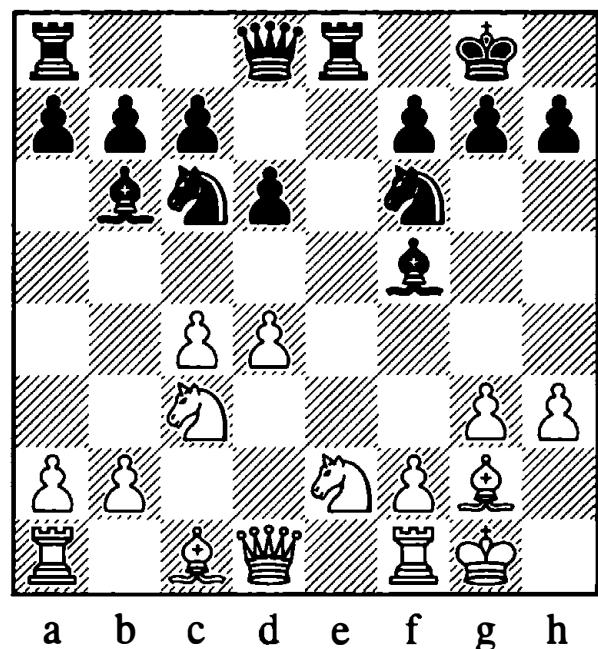
(1.c4 e5 2.g3 ♜c6 3.♘c3 ♜f6 4.♗g2 ♜c5 5.e3 d6 6.♗ge2 0–0 7.d4 ♜b6 8.0–0 ♜e8 9.h3)

B223) 9...exd4



By releasing the tension in the centre, Black clears the e5-square, getting ready to answer d4-d5 (which was so annoying in the previous lines) with ...♞c6-e5.

10.exd4 ♜f5



Black has achieved a position he could only dream of in line B21, but with one significant difference: his dark-squared bishop is not entirely safe.

11.a3!

Once the bishop has committed to b6, this move becomes promising. The threat of b2-b4 followed by c4-c5 is very strong.

11...a5

It is best to prevent White's expansion on the queenside at once.

The normal developing move 11... $\mathbb{W}d7$ leaves Black suffocated after 12.g4 $\mathbb{Q}g6$ 13.b4 a6 14.c5 $\mathbb{Q}a7$ 15. $\mathbb{Q}g5$ $\mathbb{Q}e4$ 16. $\mathbb{Q}xe4$ $\mathbb{Q}xe4$ 17.d5 $\mathbb{Q}d8$ 18. $\mathbb{Q}xe4$ $\mathbb{Q}xe4$ 19. $\mathbb{Q}g3$ $\mathbb{Q}e8$ 20. $\mathbb{Q}c1\pm$.

The programmed 11... $\mathbb{Q}e4$ is not yet effective because of 12. $\mathbb{Q}xe4$ (another possibility would be 12. $\mathbb{Q}d5!?$, ensuring White of the advantage of the bishop pair) 12... $\mathbb{Q}xe4$ 13.b4 $\mathbb{W}f6$ 14. $\mathbb{Q}e3$ $\mathbb{Q}xg2$ 15. $\mathbb{Q}xg2$ a5 16.c5 \pm . The black bishop met a horrible fate.

12.b3

A useful move, consolidating the c4-pawn.

12...h6

After 12... $\mathbb{Q}e4$ the advance of Black's a-pawn makes 13. $\mathbb{Q}d5$ even more effective than in the previous comment.

13. $\mathbb{Q}e3$

White over-defends the d4-pawn in order to allow $\mathbb{Q}e2-f4$, followed by the comfortable occupation of the d5-square.

13... $\mathbb{Q}e4$

Black cannot delay this move forever. After 13... $\mathbb{W}d7$ 14. $\mathbb{Q}f4$ followed by $\mathbb{Q}cd5$, White's space advantage would become overwhelming.

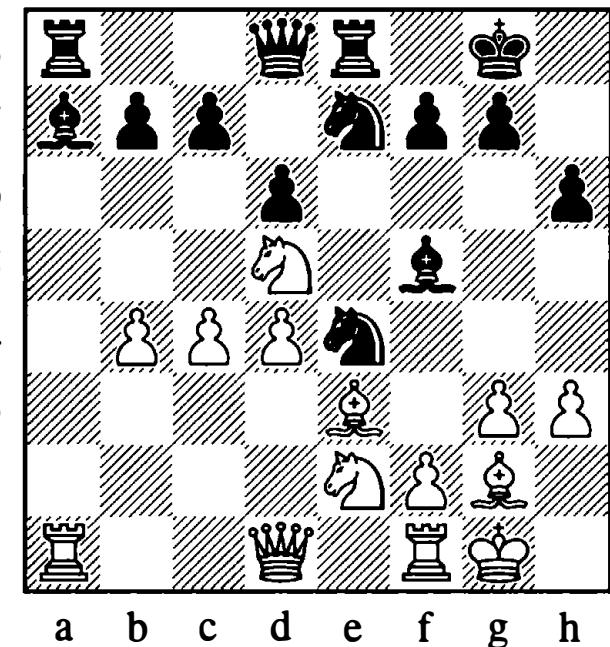
14. $\mathbb{Q}d5$ $\mathbb{Q}a7$ 15.b4

"If one piece stands badly, the whole position is bad" – Tarrasch. This statement applies perfectly here: with his bishop desperately passive on a7, Black is in trouble.

15...axb4

This exchange only makes things worse, by opening the a-file. Black probably wanted to get rid of the potentially weak a5-pawn, fearing that after 15... $\mathbb{Q}e7$ 16. $\mathbb{Q}dc3$ $\mathbb{Q}xc3$ 17. $\mathbb{Q}xc3$ c6 White would play 18.b5.

16.axb4 $\mathbb{Q}e7$



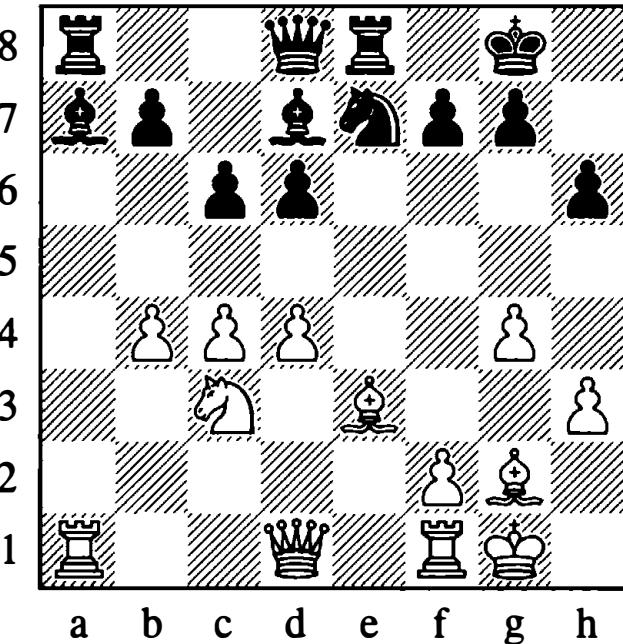
17. $\mathbb{Q}dc3!$

White prefers to exchange the active black knight, rather than the passive one.

17... $\mathbb{Q}xc3$

Black could not maintain the tension with 17... $\mathbb{Q}g6$ because of 18. $\mathbb{B}a5! \pm$.

18. $\mathbb{Q}xc3$ c6 19.g4 $\mathbb{B}d7$



This position was reached in Razuvayev – Grigorian, Vilnius 1969. White has a space advantage and active pieces. The simplest way to consolidate his advantage would have been:

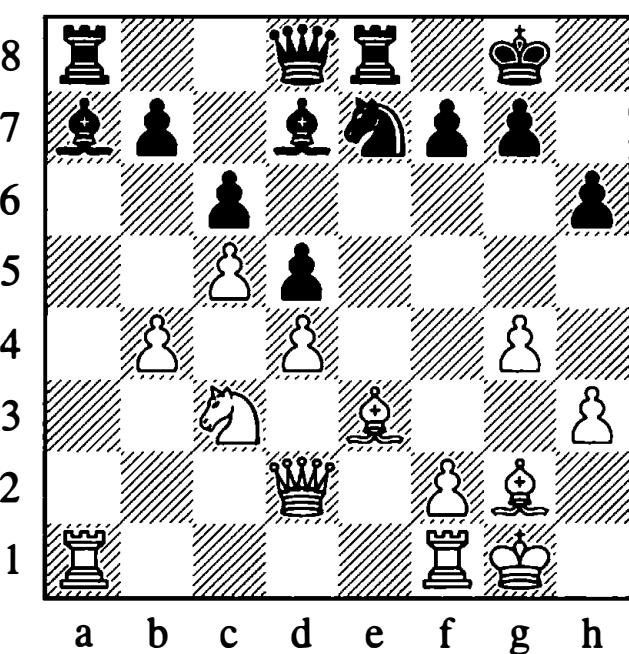
20.c5!N

The centre is under tension and Black is far from solving the problem of his a7-bishop.

20...d5

This attempt to calm the play by blocking the centre fails because of the unfortunate position of the a7-bishop.

21. $\mathbb{W}d2! \pm$



White plans to double rooks on the a-file, starting with $\mathbb{R}a1-a3$. There is no obvious way for Black to escape the pin.

Conclusion:

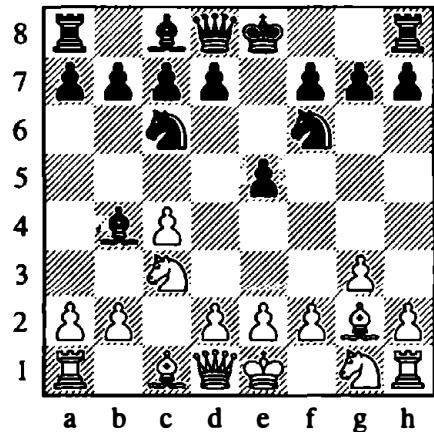
If Black refrains from ...d5 (or has committed himself to an early ...d6, by using a different move order), the variations arising after 5.e3 offer White similar chances for an advantage as 5. $\mathbb{Q}f3$. The only open question remains whether Black can reach a draw from an inferior position after 5.e3 d5, but the evaluation may be a matter of style. Players with good technical skills would not shy away from this type of position.

Conclusion to Chapters 2 to 6:

Many players have the notion that the $4... \mathbb{Q}c5$ variation is quite boring but absolutely safe. This would indeed apply if White plays without a clear plan in mind.

I hope that the analysis and explanations provided above (take, for instance, line A2 in Chapter 5) have convinced the reader that tactics and strategy are tightly related in this line. When each side's strategic plans are carried out logically, the position is likely to explode tactically, much to the delight of the spectators and the better-prepared player.

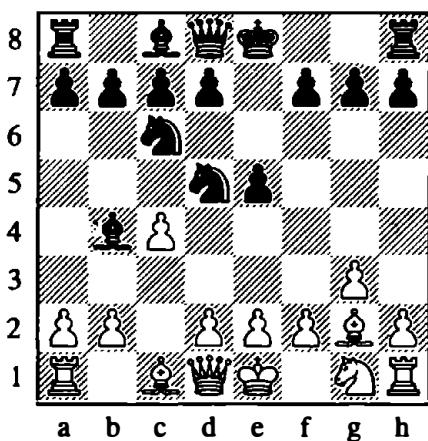
This trait applies to many other English set-ups. When choosing this variation as the very first chapters of this book, I wanted to show the reader what I consider to be a typical English Opening "climate". Once we have assimilated the subtleties of this variation, we are ready to move on.



Reversed Rossolimo

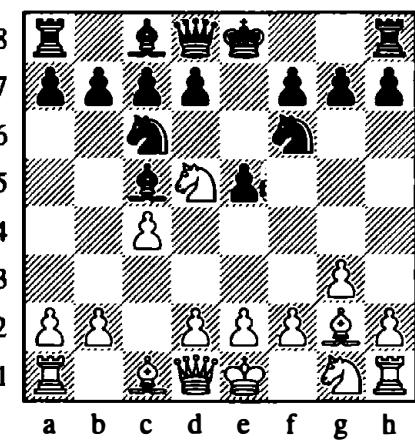
Introduction

Chapter 8 - page 89



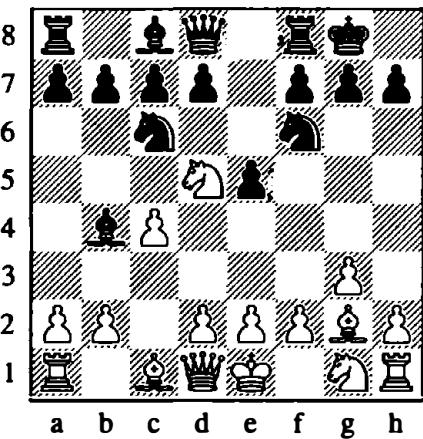
5... $\mathbb{Q}xd5?!$

Chapter 9 - page 99



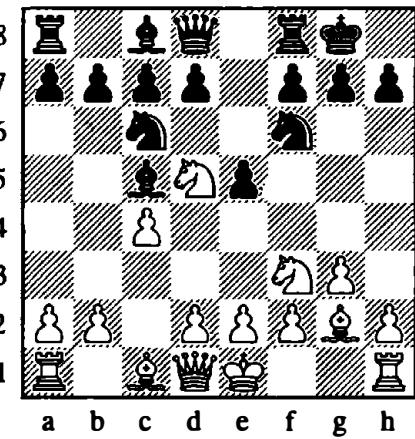
5... $\mathbb{Q}c5$

Chapter 10 - page 111



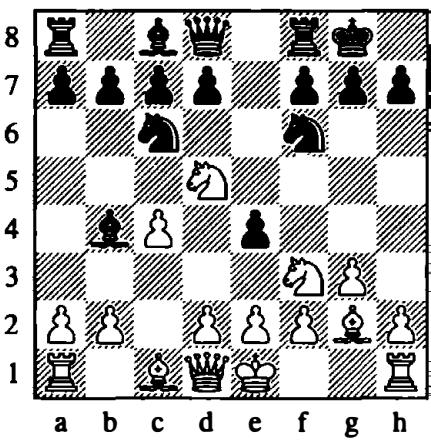
5...0-0 Minor Lines

Chapter 11 - page 123



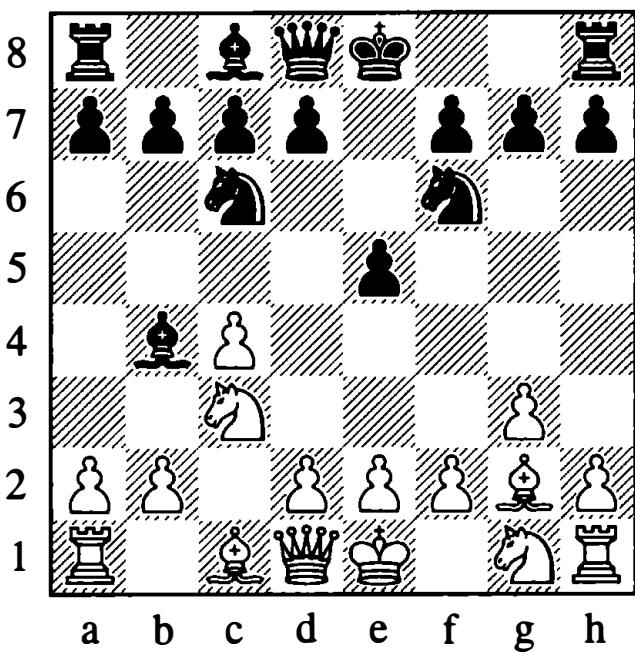
5...0-0 6.Qf3! $\mathbb{Q}c5$

Chapter 12 - page 141



5...0-0 6.Qf3! e4

1.c4 e5 2.g3 ♜c6 3.♘c3 ♜f6 4.♗g2 ♜b4



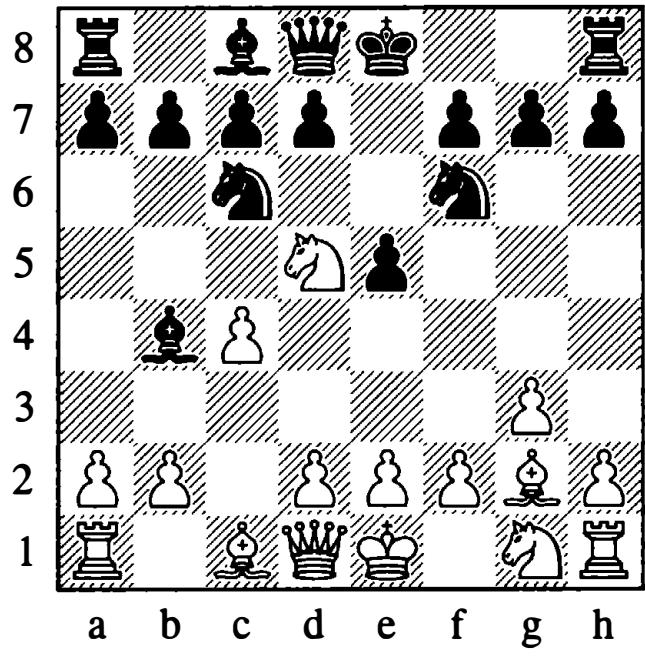
This is a strategically ambitious move. Black puts pressure on the c3-knight and is ready to exchange it, thus eliminating a key defender of the e4- and d5-squares. Since these squares are aligned along the h1-a8 diagonal, the activity of the “English” bishop is endangered. After a well-timed ...♗xc3, Black could play ...e5-e4 and/or ...d7-d5, thus leaving the enemy bishop (at least temporarily) passive.

The consequences of the exchange on c3 are far from one-sided. White gains the bishop pair, but the mobility of his structure is somewhat reduced. He gets control over the d4- and b4-squares, but it will take a long time before the remaining knight reaches the key d5-square.

I have occasionally played the position arising after 5.♘f3 0–0 6.0–0, when Black can choose between 6...♗xc3 and 6...e4 followed by 7...♗xc3.

Despite my favourable results, I have the feeling that Black’s counter-chances are too strong and often unpredictable. Therefore, I prefer to radically cross Black’s main plan by playing:

5.♘d5



This will be our repertoire variation.

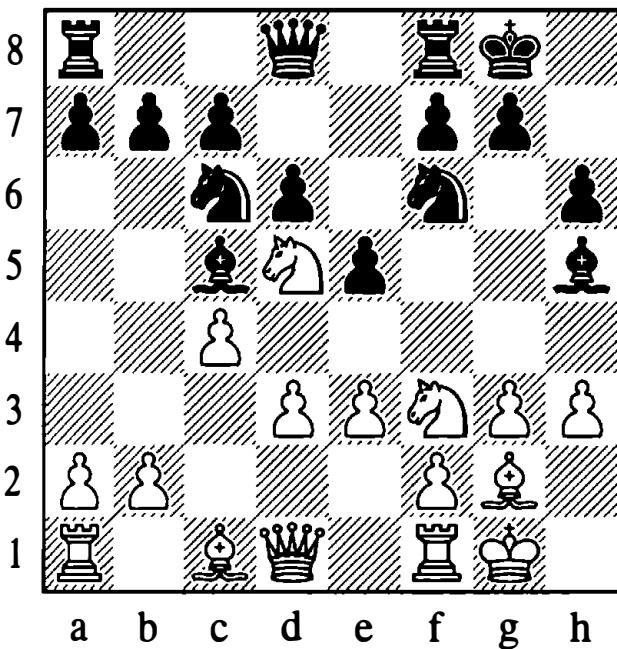
It is difficult to generalize, but 5.♘d5 (with the current move order, or in the Four Knights line) seems to appeal to intuitive players, such as Karpov, Tal and Gheorghiu. It may have formed part of Karpov and Tal’s joint preparation before the Baguio 1978 match, since both started using it with success shortly after that.

The structure and piece placement of both sides are similar to those from Chapters 2 to 6. Since an early exchange on d5 would cause Black coordination problems after c4xd5, it is likely that the b4-bishop will have to retreat to c5 in the near future. In this case, White would be a whole tempo up (♘c3-d5), compared to the previous chapters, but the consequences of this element are far from one-sided.

The reader already knows that in the 4...♗c5 system White should handle the occupation of the d5-square with care. In our case, playing ♘c3-d5 when White has not completed development is likely to cause problems maintaining stability in the centre. In the next phase of the game White always has to be ready for the threat of ...♗f6xd5. In the following example I failed to deal with this problem properly.

Marin – Olausson

Gothenburg 2001



This position is taken from a comment to line B3, Chapter 11, page 138.

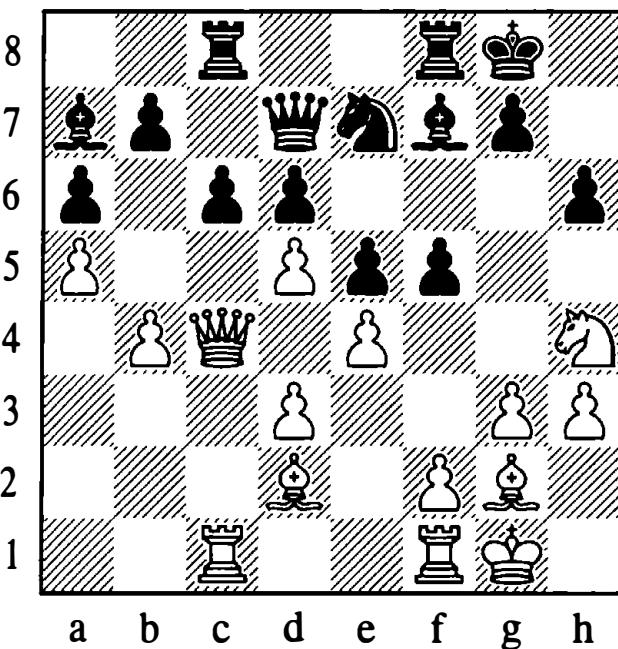
11.♗d2?!

This mechanical development allows Black to carry out an exchange on d5 under favourable circumstances.

11...♝xd5! 12.cxd5 ♝e7 13.b4 ♜b6 14.a4 a6 15.♝b3

I hoped to gain a queenside initiative, but soon ran into a dead end.

15...♝d7 16.♝ac1 f5 17.a5 ♜a7 18.♝c4 ♜ac8 19.♝h4 ♜f7 20.e4 c6

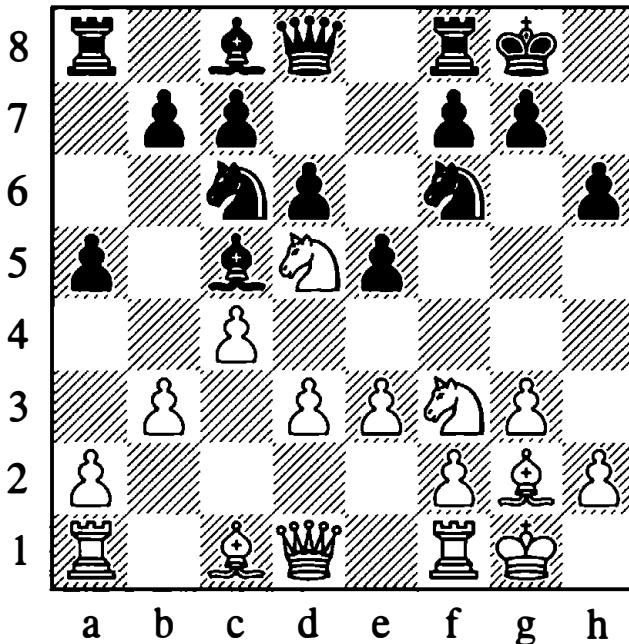


Black has an advantage on both wings. White's mistake in this game was depriving himself of the possibility of an early pawn break with d3-d4, by obstructing the d-file with his bishop.

The following is another typical example, in which White was able to react optimally to the exchange on d5.

Huebner – Karpov

Bad Kissingen 1980



10...♝xd5?!

This move is premature and it allows White to obtain a space advantage in the centre.

11.cxd5 ♝e7 12.d4!

This move is effective only because the bishop is exposed on c5. Otherwise, Black could react with ...e5-e4 followed by ...f7-f5, cutting the g2-bishop out of play and leaving the d5-pawn weak.

12...exd4 13.♝xd4

White dominates the centre and the c7-pawn is likely to become weak.

At some point Black's preparation will make the threat to exchange on d5 quite real.

At that point White will have to choose between releasing the tension with $\mathbb{Q}d5xf6\ddagger$, which may help Black become active after ... $\mathbb{W}xf6$, and $\mathbb{Q}d5-c3$, which basically leads to the loss of a tempo compared to the main lines of Chapters 3 or 4. I have explained the subtleties of such situations in the comments to line B from Chapter 11 and its sub-lines.

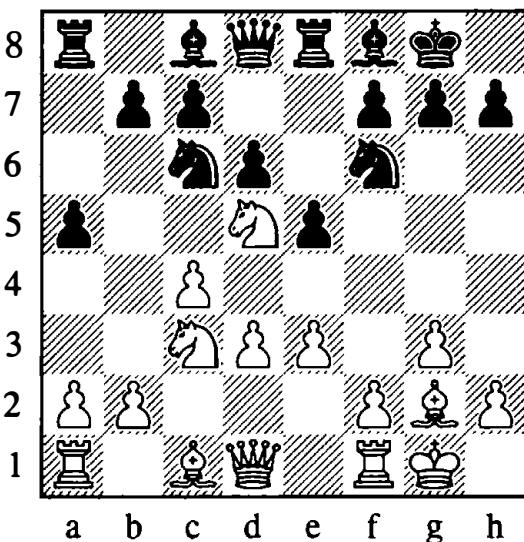
Given the strong similarity between these two variations, I will not mention the basic elements of the position again. The reader will note that the discussion regarding the choice between the plans based on $\mathbb{Q}g1-f3$ or $e2-e3$ followed by $\mathbb{Q}g1-e2$ are also similar.

Sometimes the plans have equal merit (see the introduction to Chapter 9), but in other cases $\mathbb{Q}g1-f3$ should be preferred because it saves time for developing and puts pressure on the $e5$ -pawn (see Chapter 10).

After 5. $\mathbb{Q}d5$ Black has a choice between 5... $\mathbb{Q}xd5?!$ (Chapter 8), 5... $\mathbb{Q}c5$ (Chapter 9), and 5...0-0 (Chapters 10 to 12).

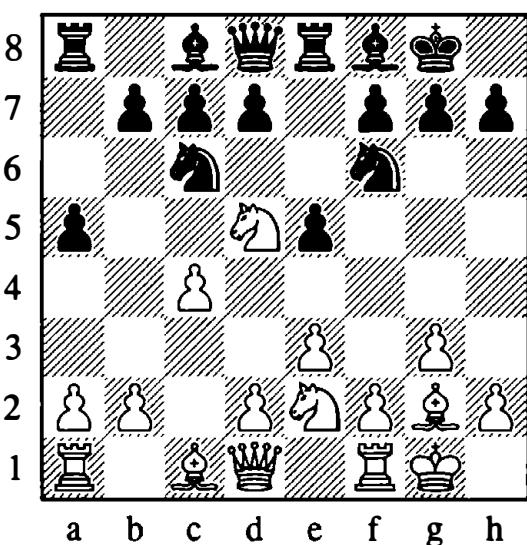
5...a5 is rarely played: 6.e3 (6. $\mathbb{Q}f3$ is likely to transpose to line B1 from Chapter 10) 6...0-0 7. $\mathbb{Q}e2$ $\mathbb{E}e8$ 8.0-0 $\mathbb{Q}f8$

developed and dominates the centre, Elsness – Fyllingen, Molde 2004) 9...d6 10.d3±

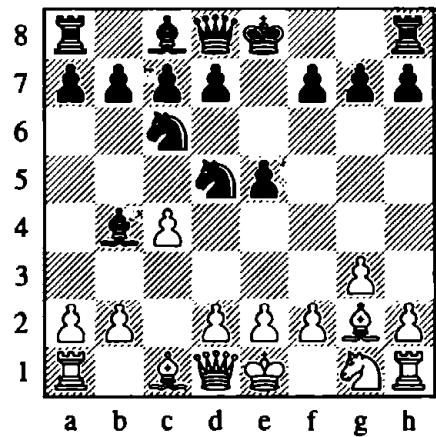


Black is under strong pressure. In the game Partos – Vulevic, Switzerland 1997, he blundered with 10... $\mathbb{Q}d7??$ when after 11. $\mathbb{Q}b5$ White won a pawn and the game.

After this general introduction to 5. $\mathbb{Q}d5$ we shall move on to a detailed examination of Black's most important replies.



This is a typical regrouping, but the usefulness of ...a7-a5 is questionable. Moreover, the b5-square is vulnerable. 9. $\mathbb{Q}ec3$ (or 9.d3 $\mathbb{Q}b4$ 10. $\mathbb{Q}xf6\ddagger$ $\mathbb{W}xf6$ 11.f4± and White is better



Reversed Rossolimo

5...♞xd5?!

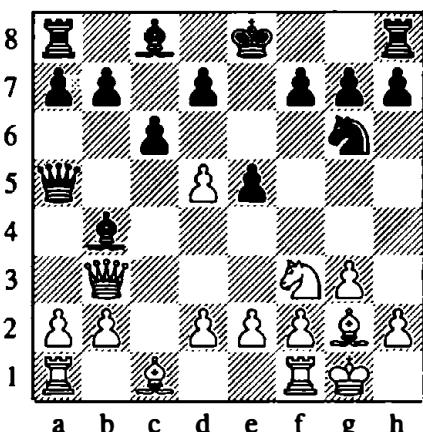
Variation Index

1.c4 e5 2.g3 ♜c6 3.♗c3 ♜f6 4.♗g2 ♛b4 5.♘d5

5...♞xd5 6.cxd5 ♜e7 7.♘f3!

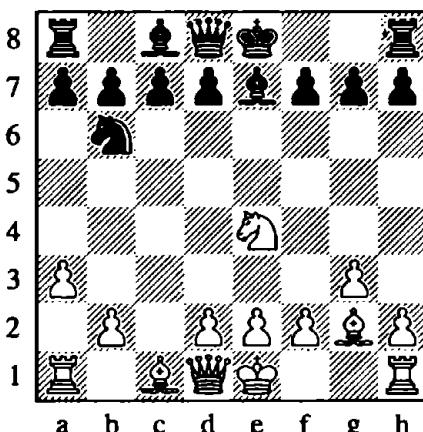
A) 7...♞g6	p 90
B) 7...♛d6	p 92
C) 7...e4	p 94
C1) 8.♞g5	p 94
C2) 8.♞d4	p 96

A) subline c) after 8...0-0



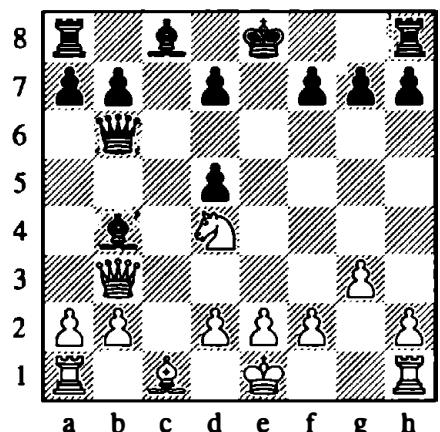
10.♘xe5!N!

C1) after 10...♛e7



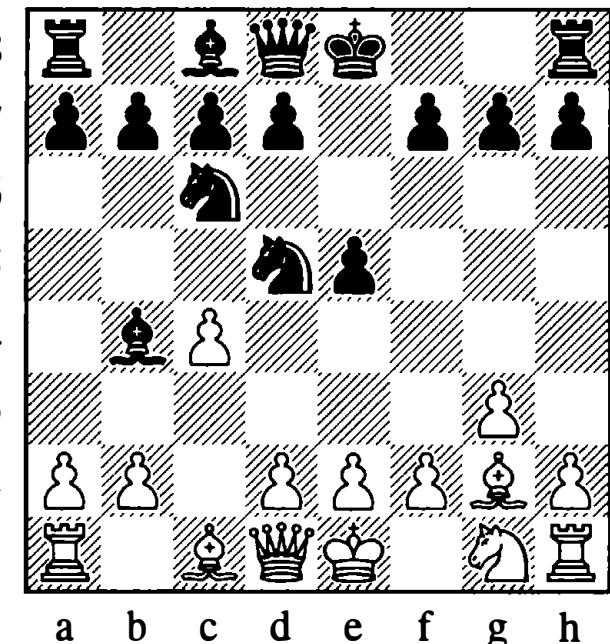
11.b4!N

C2) after 11...cxd5



12.♛e3†!N

1.c4 e5 2.g3 ♜c6 3.♗c3 ♜f6 4.♗g2 ♜b4 5.♘d5 ♜xd5?!



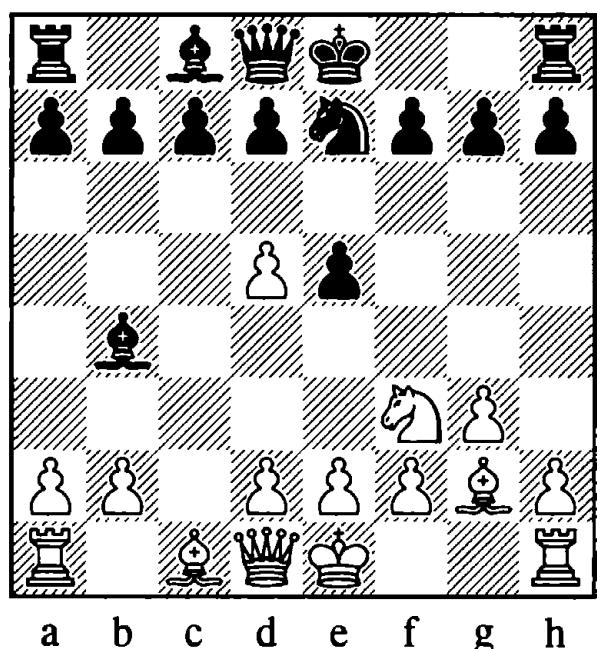
This move is rightly considered premature. Although theory tends to exaggerate Black's problems in this line, White frequently has a choice between pleasant alternatives that lead to a small but lasting advantage.

6.cx d5 ♜e7

This is the only good retreat for the knight.

6...♜b8 is too passive, while 6...♞d4? drops a piece to 7.e3, then 7...♞f5 8.♝g4 or 7...♞b5 8.♝a4.

7.♘f3!



White should develop as quickly as possible to prevent Black's counterplay based on the slight weakness of the d5-pawn.

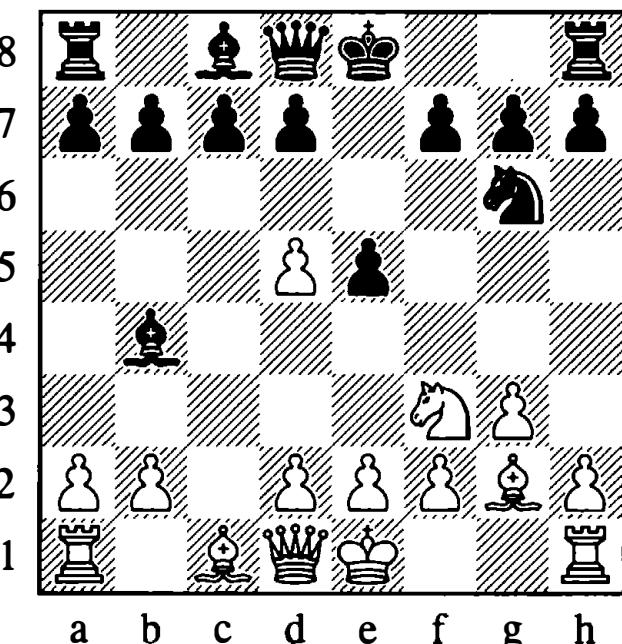
7.e3 is less energetic, and leads to similar play to 6.e3?!, which is examined in the introduction to Chapter 10.

Black can defend his e5-pawn with **A) 7...♞g6** or **B) 7...♝d6**, or else strive for counterplay with **C) 7...e4**.

The generally desirable 7...d6?? is impossible because of 8.♝a4†, winning the bishop.

(**1.c4 e5 2.g3 ♜c6 3.♗c3 ♜f6 4.♗g2 ♜b4 5.♘d5 ♜xd5 6.cxd5 ♜e7 7.♘f3!**)

A) 7...♞g6



The knight is poorly placed on this square, since the g3-pawn takes away the f4- and h4-squares from it.

8.0–0!

White should not care about driving the enemy bishop away from its exposed position. With his last move, he unpins the d-pawn, preparing to open the centre.

8...0–0

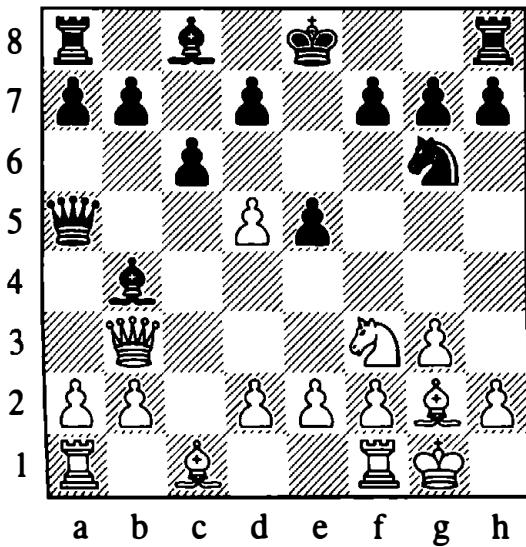
Black aims to consolidate with ...d7-d6, then start active operations with ...f7-f5-f4.

The typical counterplay in the centre based on 8...c6 is less effective once the knight has been removed from d5: 9. $\mathbb{W}b3$! White activates his queen with gain of time. We will examine three continuations.

a) 9... $\mathbb{Q}e7$? is not advisable due to 10.d4 e4 11. $\mathbb{Q}e5\pm$ when White wins a pawn, because 11...f5? loses a piece to 12.d6!+-.

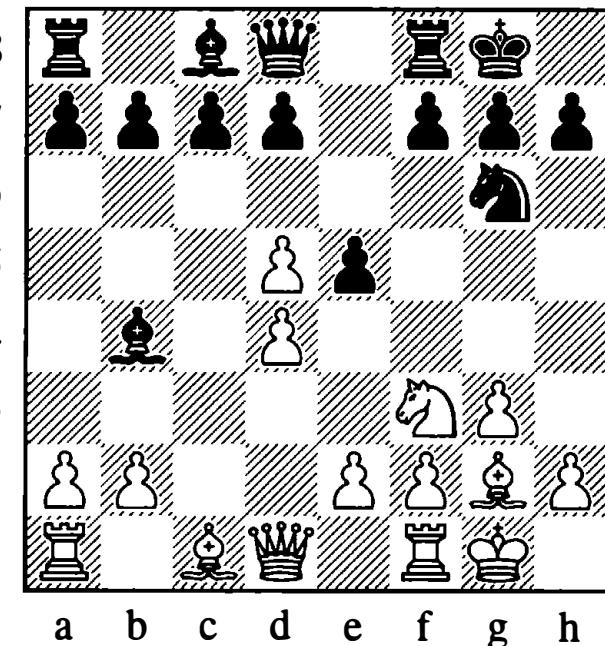
b) 9... $\mathbb{W}e7$ This is the most natural way to defend the bishop. 10.d4 e4 11. $\mathbb{Q}g5$ f5 Apparently Black has consolidated, but White's superior development enables him to open the centre with a strong initiative. 12.f3! h6 13.fxe4 hxg5 14. $\mathbb{B}xf5\pm$ White has two pawns for a knight, an overwhelming centre and a considerable lead in development.

c) 9... $\mathbb{W}a5$ was played in Kononenko – Aseeva, St Petersburg 1999.



White missed the chance to open the centre with 10. $\mathbb{Q}xe5!N$ $\mathbb{Q}xe5$ 11. $\mathbb{W}e3$ d6 12.dxc6 $\mathbb{B}e6$ 13.cxb7 $\mathbb{B}b8$ 14.d4±. White has three pawns and a strong initiative for the knight. The b7-pawn paralyses Black, while next move she will lose the right to castle after $\mathbb{Q}c6\pm$.

9.d4



9...exd4

Giving up the tension like this is the lesser evil.

9...d6? loses material to 10. $\mathbb{W}a4$ c5 11.dxc6+– as in Karlsson – Winge, Stockholm 2007.

9...e4?! 10. $\mathbb{Q}g5$ f5 weakens the a2-g8 diagonal, allowing 11.d6 $\mathbb{Q}xd6$ 12. $\mathbb{W}b3\pm$ $\mathbb{Q}h8$ 13. $\mathbb{Q}f7\pm$ $\mathbb{B}xf7$ 14. $\mathbb{W}xf7\pm$ when Black had no compensation for the lost exchange in Markowski – Alvarado, Warsaw 2006.

10. $\mathbb{Q}xd4$

White has obtained a considerable space advantage and is better developed.

10...c6

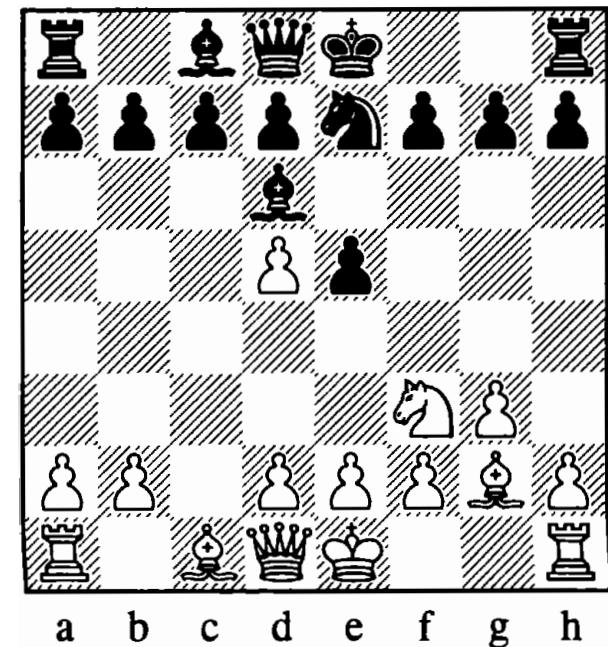
This position was reached in Hoelzl – Weinzettl, Austria 1987.

11. $\mathbb{A}e3!N\pm$

White's best way of consolidating his advantage is to continue developing with maximum speed. I prefer the text move to 11.a3 followed by b4 and $\mathbb{A}b2$ because it does not create any weaknesses and it leaves the black bishop on an exposed square, which may offer White additional tactical possibilities later in the game. Also, the c-file is cleared for the rook at once.

(1.c4 e5 2.g3 ♜c6 3.♗c3 ♜f6 4.♗g2 ♜b4 5.♗d5 ♜xd5 6.cxd5 ♜e7 7.♗f3!)

B) 7...♝d6



Black removes the bishop from its exposed square and intends to undermine White's superiority in the centre with ...c7-c6.

8.e4 c6

8...c5

This prevents d2-d4, but fails to challenge White's superiority in the centre and leaves Black's minor pieces badly placed.

9.d3

The sacrificial 9.b4!? was tried in Cu. Hansen – Drabke, Hofheim 2005. Black answered with the cautious 9...b6 and after a later b4xc5 ...b6xc5, White gained the c4-square for his knight. The critical line was 9...cxb4N 10.d4 with an initiative in the centre that compensates for the sacrificed pawn. However, as the main line shows, there is no need for such radical measures.

9...0–0 10.♗d2

White intends to consolidate his knight on c4. This will put the enemy pawn chain under serious pressure, allowing breaks with either b2-b4 or f2-f4.

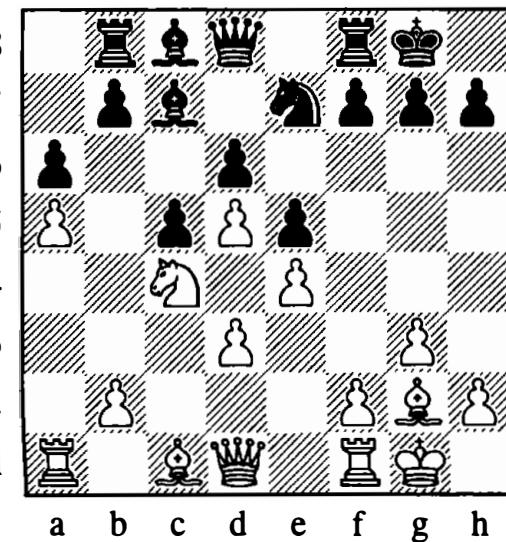
10...♝c7 11.0–0 ♜b8 12.a4 a6 13.a5!

Despite initial appearances, this is not a pawn sacrifice.

13...d6

After 13...♝xa5 14.♗c4 Black loses the important e5-pawn.

14.♗c4



In this structure, Black's dark-squared bishop is passive on c7, which casts doubt on Black's opening play.

14...f5

Black cannot do without this counter-attacking move. 14...♝d7 was played in Vijayalakshmi – Ikonnikov, Vlissingen 2003, and White should have reacted with 15.b4!N cxb4 16.♗d2 followed by ♜xb4, and then d3-d4 or f2-f4.

15.♗d2

White prepares the same pawn break as in the previous line.

15...f4

Again, this is the only consistent continuation, aiming for a kingside attack, but Black's centre will become unstable.

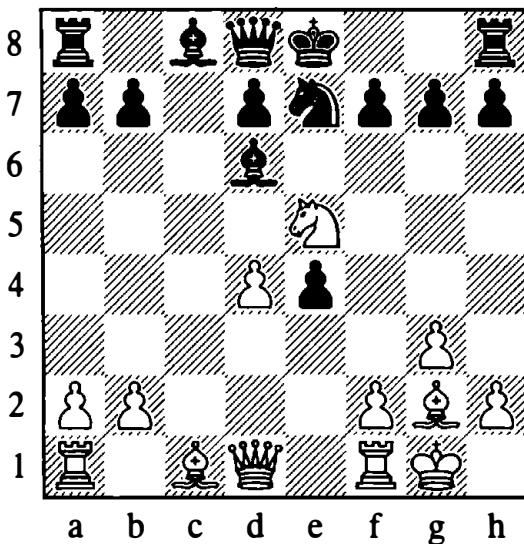
16.b4 cxb4 17.♗xb4 ♜f6 18.d4 exd4 19.♗a3!

After preventing ...f4-f3, White is ready to capture on d4 and prepare the central break e4-e5. He may even consider gxf4 followed by ♜g3 and ♜c3, with pressure against the g7-square and excellent attacking chances.

9.d4!

This immediate reaction in the centre is the only way to obtain a clear advantage. It used to be thought that 9.0–0 cxd5 10.d4, which prevents the check on b4, was even better.

I had the opportunity to convince myself that White's chances are only marginally better after 10...dxe4 11. $\mathbb{Q}xe5$.



Two classical games continued:

a) 11... $\mathbb{W}c7$ 12. $\mathbb{Q}f4$ f6 13. $\mathbb{B}c1$ $\mathbb{W}b8$ 14. $\mathbb{Q}xe4$ fx5 15.dxe5 $\mathbb{Q}c7$ 16. $\mathbb{W}h5\#$ g6 17. $\mathbb{W}h6$ $\mathbb{Q}xe5$ 18. $\mathbb{B}xc8\#$!! The start of a brilliant sacrificial attack. 18... $\mathbb{Q}xc8$ 19. $\mathbb{Q}xg6\#$ ± White eventually won in Adorjan – Glatt, Budapest 1982.

b) 11... $\mathbb{Q}g6$ 12. $\mathbb{Q}xg6$ hxg6 13. $\mathbb{Q}xe4\pm$ White had a huge lead in development in Petrosian – Vaganian, Yerevan 1975.

c) Black has a better try, though. 11... $\mathbb{Q}c7$! It is curious that this simple move escaped the attention of theoreticians for so long. Black clears the path for the d-pawn, in order to complete his development. 12. $\mathbb{Q}xe4$ d5 13. $\mathbb{Q}d3$ 0–0 14. $\mathbb{W}c2$ $\mathbb{Q}g6$ 15.f4 $\mathbb{Q}b6$ 16. $\mathbb{Q}e3$ $\mathbb{B}e8$ White's position looks more active, but Black has no weaknesses and can count on a successful defence, Marin – Finkel, Internet (rapid) 2002.

9...cxd5 10.dxe5 $\mathbb{Q}b4\#$

This intermediate check prevents Black from being crushed in the centre, but the considerable loss of time caused by this bishop will be a telling factor.

11. $\mathbb{Q}d2$ $\mathbb{Q}xd2\#$ 12. $\mathbb{Q}xd2$ d6 13.exd6 $\mathbb{W}xd6$ 14.0–0

Black has simplified the position, but is far behind in development.

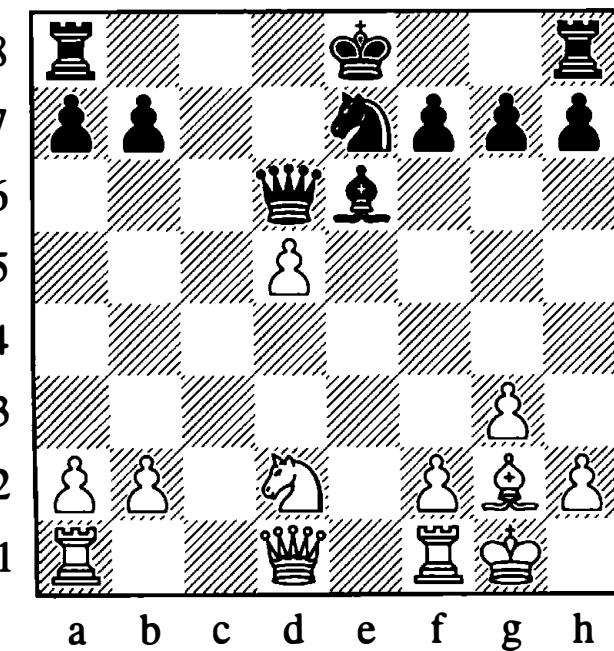
14... $\mathbb{Q}e6$

Black tries to consolidate in the centre.

14...0–0 loses a pawn to 15.exd5±, because 15... $\mathbb{Q}xd5$? drops the knight to 16. $\mathbb{Q}c4+-$.

Giving up the tension with 14...dxe4 leads to an unpleasant ending after 15. $\mathbb{Q}xe4$ $\mathbb{W}xd1$ 16. $\mathbb{B}fxd1$ 0–0 17. $\mathbb{Q}d6$ $\mathbb{B}b8$ (This is the only way to prepare the bishop's development without losing the b7-pawn. 17... $\mathbb{Q}g4$ can be answered with 18. $\mathbb{B}d4\pm$.) 18. $\mathbb{Q}xc8$ White gives up his active knight to invade the seventh rank. 18... $\mathbb{B}fxc8$ 19. $\mathbb{B}d7$ $\mathbb{Q}c6$ 20. $\mathbb{B}c1$ $\mathbb{Q}f8$ 21. $\mathbb{Q}d5$ $\mathbb{Q}d8$ 22. $\mathbb{B}cc7$ $\mathbb{B}xc7$ 23. $\mathbb{B}xc7\pm$ Despite the symmetrical character of the position, Black is doomed to a passive defence. Compare this with line B11 from Chapter 5, page 63.

15.exd5



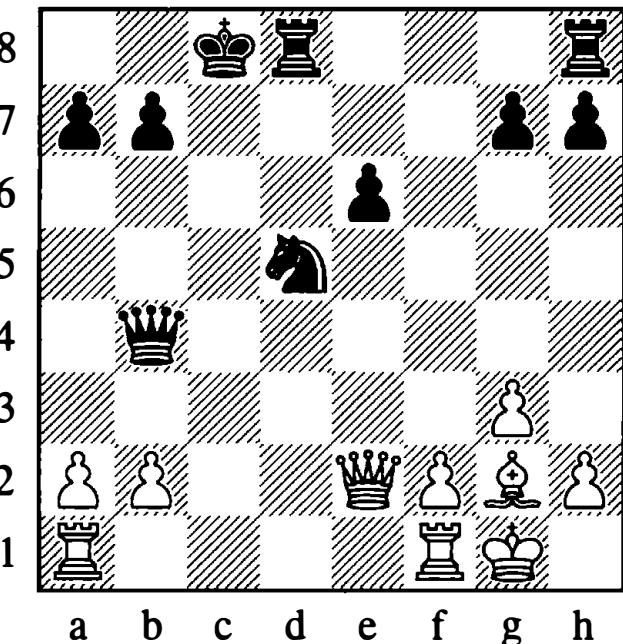
15... $\mathbb{Q}xd5$

Black makes a wise choice: after 15... $\mathbb{Q}xd5?!$ 16. $\mathbb{Q}c4$ $\mathbb{W}c5$ 17. $\mathbb{Q}xd5$ $\mathbb{Q}xd5$ (17... $\mathbb{W}xd5$ 18. $\mathbb{Q}d6\#$ is equally bad) 18. $\mathbb{E}e1\#$, his king would feel very unsafe.

16. $\mathbb{Q}e4$ $\mathbb{W}b4$

Black has avoided immediate disaster, but White can convert his lead in development into a stable strategic advantage.

17. $\mathbb{Q}g5$ 0–0–0 18. $\mathbb{Q}xe6$ fxe6 19. $\mathbb{W}e2\pm$



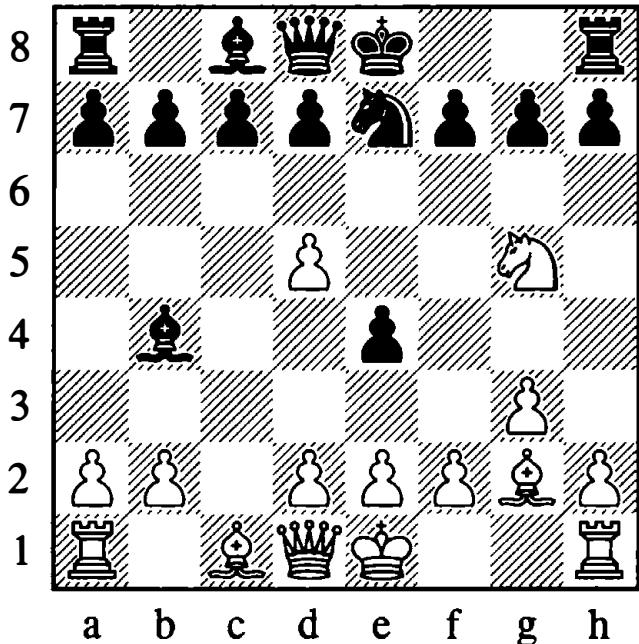
Black's e-pawn is weak and his king is vulnerable, Geller – Debarnot, Las Palmas 1976.

(1.c4 e5 2.g3 $\mathbb{Q}c6$ 3. $\mathbb{Q}c3$ $\mathbb{Q}f6$ 4. $\mathbb{Q}g2$ $\mathbb{Q}b4$ 5. $\mathbb{Q}d5$ $\mathbb{Q}xd5$ 6.cxd5 $\mathbb{Q}e7$ 7. $\mathbb{Q}f3!$)

C) 7...e4

This is the only move that offers Black a decent, though somewhat worse, position. We will examine C1) 8. $\mathbb{Q}g5$ and C2) 8. $\mathbb{Q}d4$.

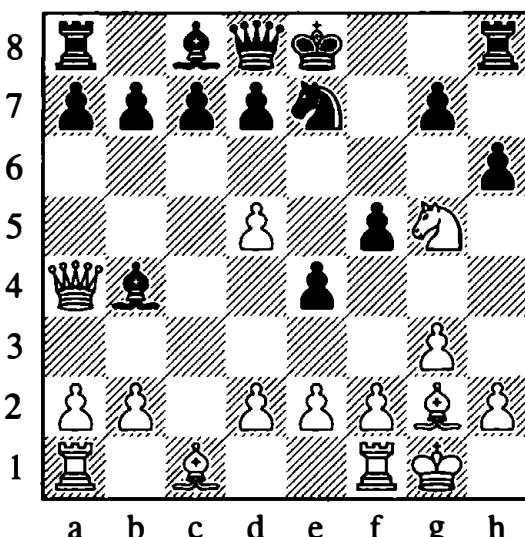
(1.c4 e5 2.g3 $\mathbb{Q}c6$ 3. $\mathbb{Q}c3$ $\mathbb{Q}f6$ 4. $\mathbb{Q}g2$ $\mathbb{Q}b4$ 5. $\mathbb{Q}d5$ $\mathbb{Q}xd5$ 6.cxd5 $\mathbb{Q}e7$ 7. $\mathbb{Q}f3!$ e4)

C1) 8. $\mathbb{Q}g5$ 

This was recommended by Kosten in *The Dynamic English*. This seemingly active knight jump has a significant drawback: if Black ignores the threat against the e4-pawn, for which he will be rewarded with the d5-pawn, White's knight will spend two tempos getting to a vulnerable square in front of its own pawns.

8... $\mathbb{Q}xd5!$

Kosten analysed only: 8...f5?! 9.0–0 h6 (or 9... $\mathbb{Q}xd5$ 10.d3± when White retrieves the pawn, leaving Black with a weakened position – Kosten) 10. $\mathbb{W}a4!$

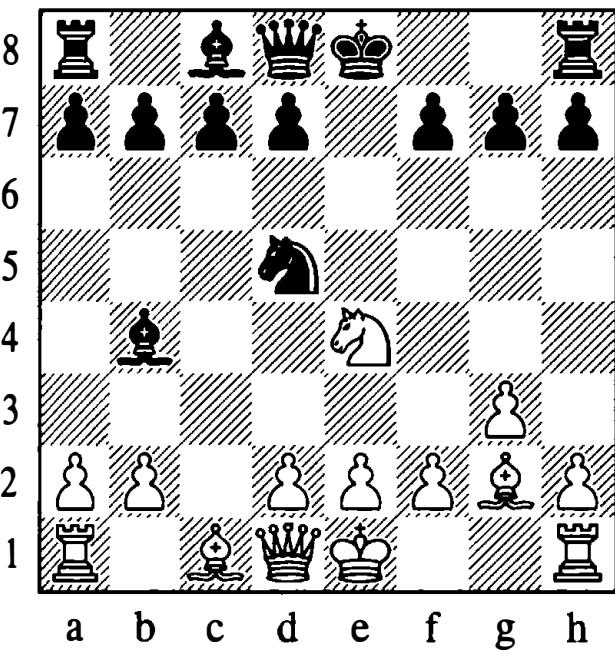


White threatens the deadly $\mathbb{Q}e6$. If we follow a few more moves of Kosten's analysis, we can confirm the validity of his evaluation of this position. 10...hxg5 (10... $\mathbb{Q}xd5$ is answered with 11. $\mathbb{Q}xe4!$ fxe4 12. $\mathbb{Q}xe4$, winning the piece back with an overwhelming

advantage) 11. $\mathbb{W}xb4$ $\mathbb{Q}xd5$ 12. $\mathbb{W}d4$ $\mathbb{Q}f6$ 13.d3 exd3 14. $\mathbb{Q}xg5\pm$ White is far ahead in development.

9. $\mathbb{Q}xe4$

For both sides it is essential to free the path of their d-pawn in order to occupy the centre. White starts the race from a better position, because the b4-bishop is vulnerable to $\mathbb{W}a4\ddagger$.



9... $\mathbb{Q}b6!$

This is not the most active square for the knight, but Black wins time by preventing $\mathbb{W}a4\ddagger$ after the predictable ...d7-d5.

Other moves would leave White with a space advantage in the centre.

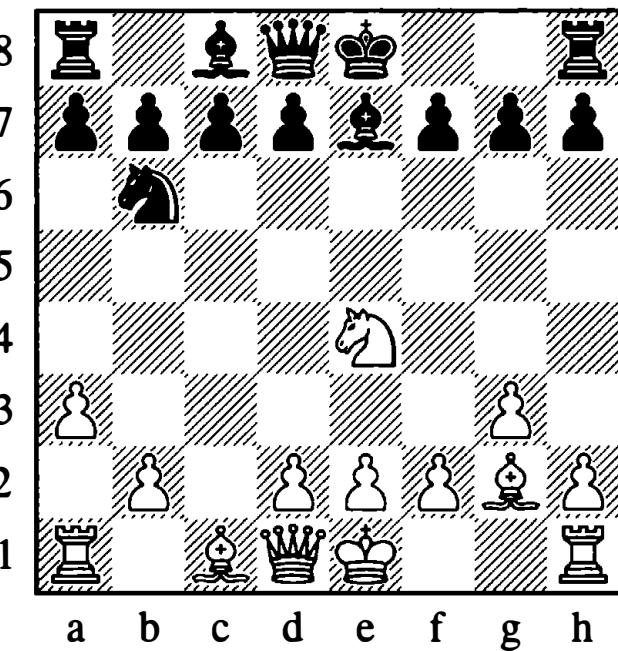
9...c6 (as we will see, this is not an entirely adequate defence of the a4-e8 diagonal) 10.0-0 $\mathbb{Q}f6$ 11. $\mathbb{Q}xf6\ddagger$ $\mathbb{W}xf6$ 12.d4 (reversing the move order with 12.e4?! is also possible) 12...0-0 (the point is that 12...d5?! loses a pawn to 13. $\mathbb{Q}xd5\ddagger$) 13.e4 \pm

Or 9...0-0 10. $\mathbb{W}b3$?! c6 11. $\mathbb{Q}c3$ $\mathbb{Q}xc3$ 12. $\mathbb{W}xb4$ $\mathbb{Q}d5$ 13. $\mathbb{Q}xd5$ cxd5 14.d3 d6 15.0-0 \pm . Despite the presence of opposite-coloured bishops, Black's weaknesses leave him struggling.

10.a3

Since the bishop's vulnerability is no longer a source of tactical threats, White drives it away to win space on the queenside.

10... $\mathbb{Q}e7$



11.b4!N

In order to justify the long knight manoeuvre, White needs to enable another jump to c5. It is desirable to maintain the possibility of a minority attack, which requires keeping the c4-square defended.

For this reason, 11.d4?! is worse. After 11...d5 12. $\mathbb{Q}c5$ 0-0 13.0-0 $\mathbb{E}e8$ 14. $\mathbb{Q}f4$ c6 Black was absolutely fine in Bogdanov – Nanu, St Quentin 2002, since b2-b4 would leave the c4-square at Black's mercy.

11...a5 12. $\mathbb{Q}b2$ d5 13. $\mathbb{Q}c5$ 0-0 14.d3 $\mathbb{Q}f6$

From a structural point of view, White has the advantage, but his slight lag in development causes him some trouble in retaining control of the a-file. Although subjectively I prefer White's position, Black may be able to maintain the balance with dynamic play.

(1.c4 e5 2.g3 $\mathbb{Q}c6$ 3. $\mathbb{Q}c3$ $\mathbb{Q}f6$ 4. $\mathbb{Q}g2$ $\mathbb{Q}b4$ 5. $\mathbb{Q}d5$ $\mathbb{Q}xd5$ 6.cxd5 $\mathbb{Q}e7$ 7. $\mathbb{Q}f3$! e4)

C2) 8.♘d4!

White keeps his knight on a favourable path, while still attacking the e4-pawn.

8...♞xd5

8...c6 9.♗xe4 ♜xd5 leads to a transposition.

Black cannot hang on to the e4-pawn with:

8...f5

Because this fails tactically after:

9.♘a4

White is attacking the bishop and also threatening ♘e6.

9...♝d6N

This is the critical line.

9...c5 has been tried a couple of times, but White achieves excellent play with 10.dxc6 ♜b6 11.♘e6! as in Weiss – Blehm, Werfen 1994. The knight is taboo because of cxb7† and the pawn promotes.

9...♞xd5 10.♘xf5 leaves the black pieces hanging and the central pawn doomed.

10.♘e6 b5!

Hoping for 11.♗xb5 c6! but White can do better.

11.♘xg7† ♕f7 12.♗d4 h5

Cutting off the knight's retreat.

13.♗h3 ♔g6 14.b3 ♜f8 15.♗b2 ♜g8

The knight is trapped, but White can trade it for the enemy's central pawns.

16.♘xf5 ♜xf5 17.♗xe4+–

White has three pawns for the knight and a strong attack.

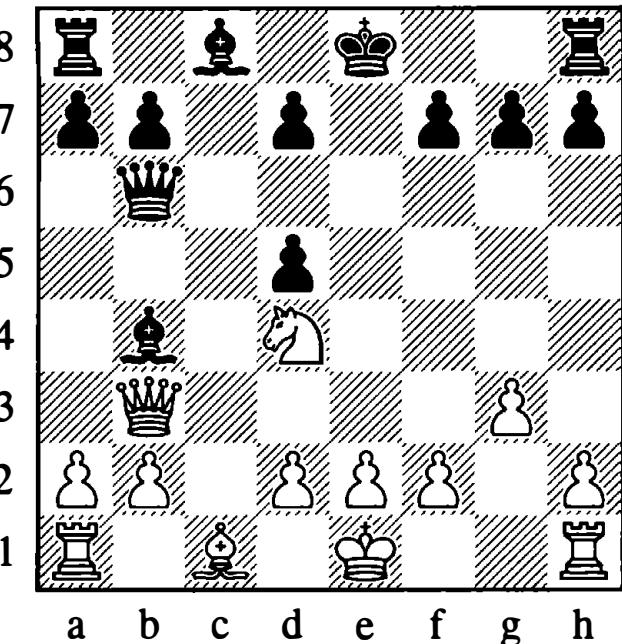
9.♗b3 c6 10.♗xe4

As a result of the hanging position of his minor pieces, Black cannot avoid structural damage.

10...♝b6

After 10...♝a5 11.♞xd5 ♜xd5 12.♗xd5 cxd5 13.b3±, the absence of queens eliminates the danger of an attack on the light squares,

and White retains the better chances in view of his superior structure.

11.♗xd5 cxd5**12.♗e3†!N**

White should ignore the d5-pawn and play on the dark squares, while also causing Black some problems with his development.

The greedy 12.♗xd5 led to unclear consequences after 12...0–0 13.0–0 d6 14.♘c2 ♜e6 15.♗e4 a5 16.b3 ♜fe8 17.♗h4 ♜ac8 in Polugaevsky – Fuchs, Sochi 1966. Black is fully developed and has an active pair of bishops. An exchange on b4 would offer Black chances for an attack with opposite-coloured bishops.

12...♞e7 13.b3

This developing move is more ambitious than 13.0–0 0–0 14.♗xe7 ♜xd4 15.d3±, which offers Black chances to reach a drawn opposite-coloured bishops ending.

13...0–0 14.♗b2 ♜f6

The queenless middlegame arising after 14...♜e8 15.♘f5 ♜xe3 16.fxe3 ♜f8 17.♗c1± leaves White better developed and with firm control of the dark squares.

15.g4!?

Since he is better developed, White can afford to launch a slow positional attack. The massive advance of the kingside pawns aims to weaken the dark squares around the black king. White will most likely keep his own king in the centre for a while. If necessary, the white rooks can be connected by f2-f3 and $\mathbb{Q}f2$.

15... $\mathbb{Q}xd4$

Black is trying to ease his defensive task by simplifying the position.

16. $\mathbb{Q}xd4$ $\mathbb{W}e6$ 17. $\mathbb{W}c3!$

White would retain some advantage even after an exchange of queens, but his attacking chances would disappear.

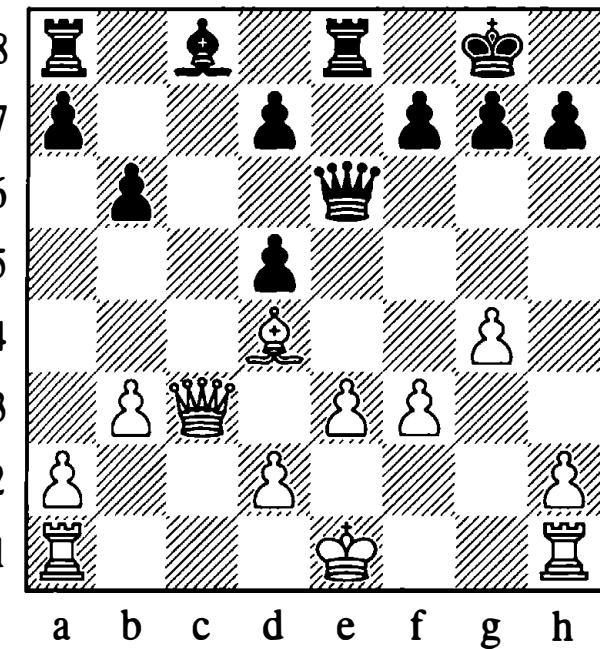
17... $\mathbb{E}e8$ 18.e3 b6 19.f3†

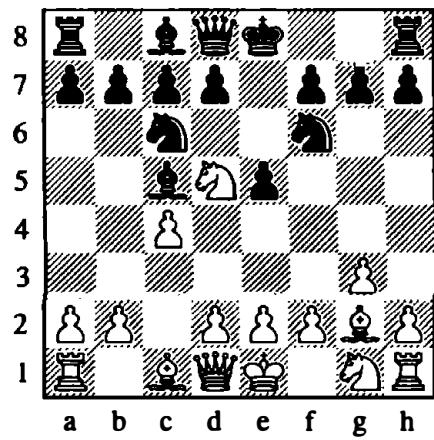
White's pressure will be long-lasting because of his more compact structure and the presence of opposite-coloured bishops.

The previous move should be preferred over 19.h3 for several reasons: White increases his control of the centre and retains the possibility of launching a strategic attack based on h4-h5-h6, weakening Black's dark squares. With queens still on the board, this could develop into a mating attack. At the same time, the f2-square, which cannot be attacked by the enemy bishop, is cleared for the king.

Conclusion:

The early exchange on d5 offers White a very pleasant position at no cost.





Reversed Rossolimo

5...♝c5

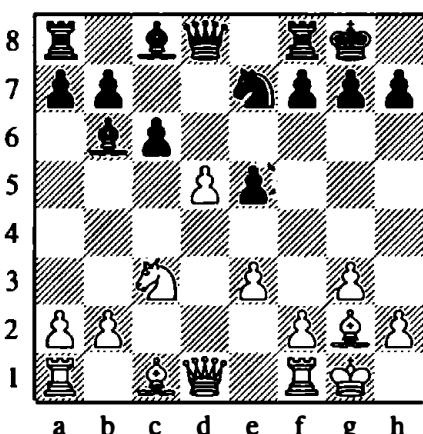
Variation Index

1.c4 e5 2.g3 ♝c6 3.♗c3 ♝f6 4.♗g2 ♛b4 5.♗d5

5...♝c5 6.e3

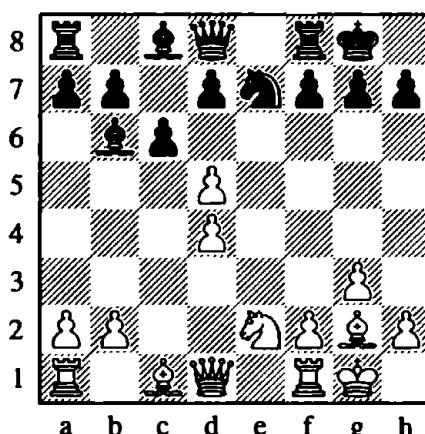
- | | |
|-------------------------|--------------|
| A) 6...♝xd5 | p 100 |
| B) 6...0-0 7.♗e2 | p 101 |
| B1) 7...♝xd5 | p 101 |
| B2) 7...d6 | p 105 |

B11) notes to 9...c6



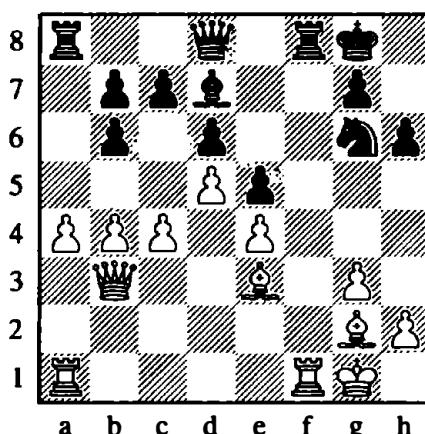
13.d6!N

B11) after 11...♛b6



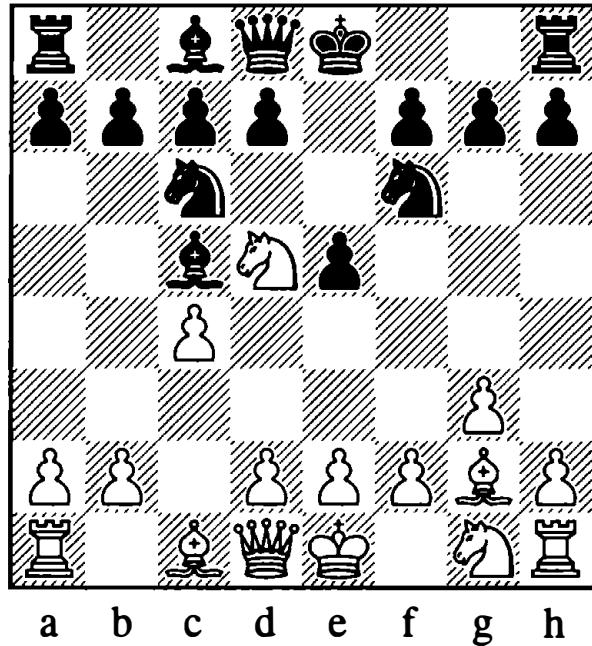
12.d6!

B21) after 21...♞d7



22.♜xf8†!N

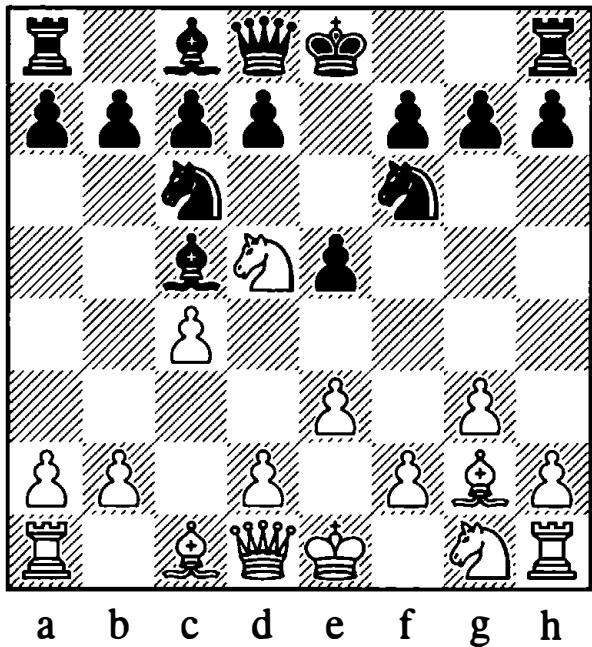
1.c4 e5 2.g3 ♜c6 3.♘c3 ♜f6 4.♗g2 ♜b4
5.♘d5 ♜c5



This is one of the most frequent answers. Black retreats the attacked bishop, ignoring the central tension. He hopes that in the long run the white knight will be vulnerable.

In the Four Knights variation this is Black's main continuation, but with the move order that is characteristic of our repertoire it offers White a pleasant choice. He can play 6.♘f3, which would transpose to Chapter 11 after 6...0–0, but developing the king's knight to e2 also remains a viable plan. In this concrete case, I consider White's choice to be purely a matter of taste.

6.e3

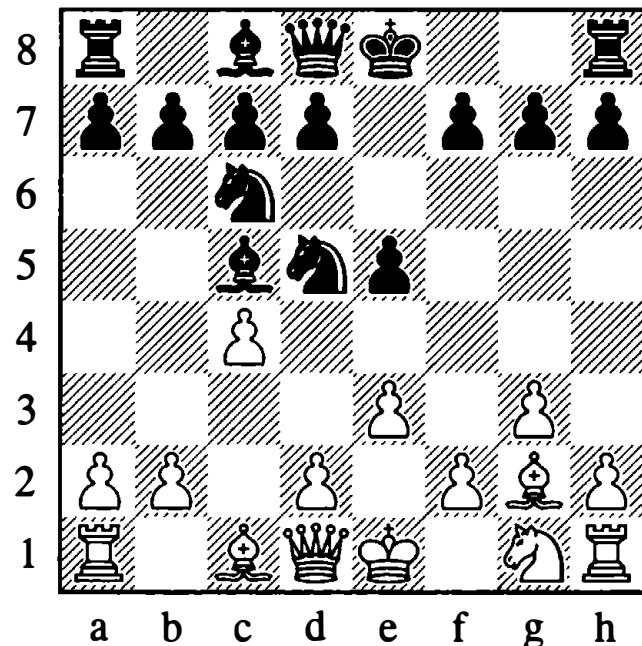


Many of the positions arising after this move are relevant for the move order used in Chapter 19. This makes studying this variation absolutely essential.

Black can play A) 6...♝xd5 or B) 6...0–0.

(1.c4 e5 2.g3 ♜c6 3.♘c3 ♜f6 4.♗g2 ♜b4
5.♘d5 ♜c5 6.e3)

A) 6...♝xd5?!



After the bishop retreat this capture is less favourable than one move earlier, because it allows White to win space with gain of time, by hitting the bishop with d2-d4.

7.cxd5 ♜b4

The knight is exposed here and the tactical tricks Black may have been relying on will not work out well.

According to Timman, the more natural 7...♝e7 can be met by 8.b4!?. ♜b6 (8...♜xb4 loses the g7-pawn after 9.♗g4±) 9.♗b2± followed by f4.

8.d4 exd4 9.exd4 ♜d6

9...♜xd4?! loses a piece to 10.a3 ♜f6 11.♘f3, as indicated by Timman. Ribli continues the line with 11...♜xb2 12.♗xb2 ♜xb2 13.axb4

$\mathbb{W}xb4\#$ 14. $\mathbb{W}d2$ $\mathbb{W}xd2\#$ 15. $\mathbb{Q}xd2\pm$. Black's poor development means that the three pawns are feeble compensation for the knight.

10.a3 $\mathbb{Q}a6$

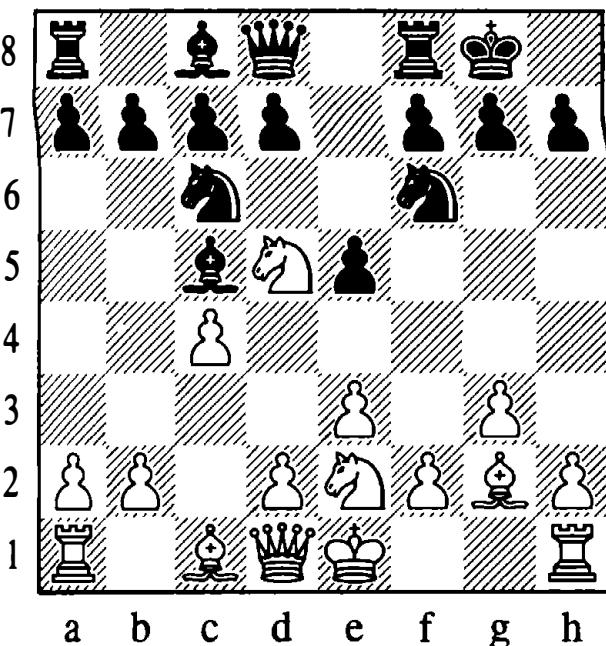
The knight has been forced to retreat to a passive square and Black remains badly underdeveloped.

11. $\mathbb{Q}e2$ c6 12. $\mathbb{Q}c3$ cxd5 13. $\mathbb{W}e2\#$ $\mathbb{W}e7$ 14. $\mathbb{W}xe7\#$ $\mathbb{Q}xe7$ 15. $\mathbb{Q}xd5\#$ $\mathbb{Q}f8$ 16.0–0±

Black's position is hopelessly passive, Balashov - Pribyl, Schwaebisch Gmuend 1998.

(1.c4 e5 2.g3 $\mathbb{Q}c6$ 3. $\mathbb{Q}c3$ $\mathbb{Q}f6$ 4. $\mathbb{Q}g2$ $\mathbb{Q}b4$ 5. $\mathbb{Q}d5$ $\mathbb{Q}c5$ 6.e3)

B) 6...0–0 7. $\mathbb{Q}e2$



For the last time, Black has a choice between exchanging the intruder with B1) 7... $\mathbb{Q}xd5$ and continuing development with B2) 7...d6.

7... $\mathbb{Q}e8$ is likely to transpose to B21 after 8.0–0 d6. Black can deviate with 8... $\mathbb{Q}f8$, but this looks too passive. The most energetic continuation is 9.f4, gaining an advantage in the centre after: 9...d6 10.fxe5 $\mathbb{Q}xd5$ (10...dxe5 11. $\mathbb{Q}xf6\#$ gxf6 12. $\mathbb{Q}c3$, followed by $\mathbb{W}h5$ and $\mathbb{Q}d5$, puts Black's kingside in danger) 11.cxd5 $\mathbb{Q}xe5$ 12.d4 $\mathbb{Q}g4$ 13. $\mathbb{W}d3$ $\mathbb{Q}d7$ 14. $\mathbb{Q}d2\pm$ White

is better developed and has a space advantage.

(1.c4 e5 2.g3 $\mathbb{Q}c6$ 3. $\mathbb{Q}c3$ $\mathbb{Q}f6$ 4. $\mathbb{Q}g2$ $\mathbb{Q}b4$ 5. $\mathbb{Q}d5$ $\mathbb{Q}c5$ 6.e3 0–0 7. $\mathbb{Q}e2$)

B1) 7... $\mathbb{Q}xd5$ 8.cxd5 $\mathbb{Q}e7$

Grandmaster practice has proved that it is still too early for this standard operation. With his light-squared bishop undeveloped and the dark-squared one exposed, Black is not ready to organize his counterplay in the centre.

White has two continuations of equal merit:
B11) 9.0–0 and B12) 9.d4.

(1.c4 e5 2.g3 $\mathbb{Q}c6$ 3. $\mathbb{Q}c3$ $\mathbb{Q}f6$ 4. $\mathbb{Q}g2$ $\mathbb{Q}b4$ 5. $\mathbb{Q}d5$ $\mathbb{Q}c5$ 6.e3 0–0 7. $\mathbb{Q}e2$ $\mathbb{Q}xd5$ 8.cxd5 $\mathbb{Q}e7$)

B11) 9.0–0

White intends to play d2-d4 without allowing the exchange of bishops with ... $\mathbb{Q}b4\#$. We are familiar with this idea from line B, Chapter 8.

9...c6

Black attacks the enemy pawn while his own d-pawn is on its initial square, hoping to complete his development after dxc6 by answering ...dxc6.

9...d6

This allows White to obtain a space advantage in the centre:

10.d4 $\mathbb{Q}b6$

Or 10...exd4 11. $\mathbb{Q}xd4\pm$ followed by b3 and $\mathbb{Q}b2$.

11.dxe5 dxe5 12. $\mathbb{Q}c3$ c6

Black aims to neutralize White's extra space, and no doubt he also feared that in the long run his c7-pawn would be weak.

13.dxc6 $\mathbb{Q}xc6$ 14. $\mathbb{Q}d5$ $\mathbb{Q}e6$ 15.b3

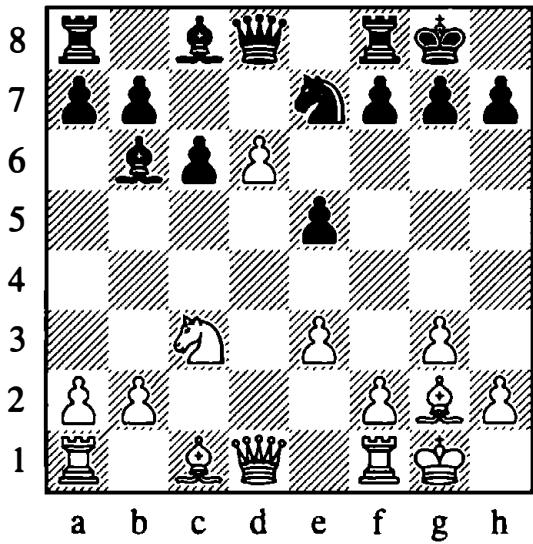
Despite the almost complete symmetry,

the weakness of the d5-square makes Black's position unpleasant. The following simplifying operation fails to completely equalize.

15... $\mathbb{Q}d4$ 16. $\text{exd}4$ $\mathbb{Q}xd5$ 17. $\text{dxe}5$ $\mathbb{Q}xg2$ 18. $\mathbb{W}xd8$
 $\mathbb{Q}fxd8$ 19. $\mathbb{Q}xg2$ $\mathbb{Q}xe5$ 20. $\mathbb{Q}e3$ f6 21. $\mathbb{Q}fd1\pm$

White has the better chances in the endgame because of his strong bishop. In Dorfman – Nedev, Cannes 1996, White managed to convert this minimal advantage into a win.

In this line 13.d6!N would be a more ambitious try.



White increases his space advantage, without fearing that he might lose the d-pawn. 13... $\mathbb{Q}f5$ 14. $\mathbb{Q}e4$ $\mathbb{Q}e6$ 15.b3 $\mathbb{Q}d5$ 16. $\mathbb{Q}a3$ The d6-pawn is not easy to attack. White plans to strengthen the pressure with $\mathbb{W}e2$ and $\mathbb{Q}ad1$. The tactical try 16... $\mathbb{Q}xe3?$ fails to 17. $\mathbb{W}f3!$, leaving Black's pieces hanging.

The attempt to prevent d2-d4 with 9... $\mathbb{Q}f5$

places the knight on an unfavourable square, with no possibilities of further activation.

10.b3 d6 11. $\mathbb{Q}b2$ $\mathbb{Q}b6$ 12.a4 $\mathbb{Q}d7?$

A careless move that leads to disaster. Ribli gives 12...a5 13.f4 \pm and 12...a6 13.a5 $\mathbb{Q}a7$ 14.f4 \pm , with a space advantage for White in both cases.

13.d4! \pm

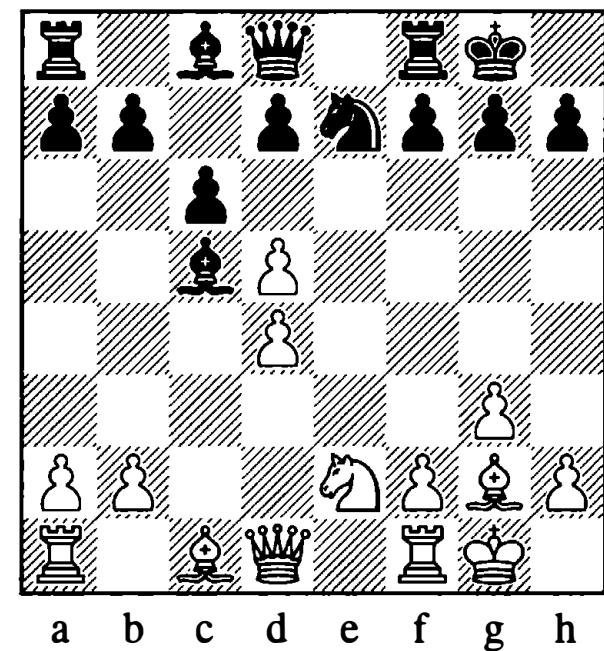
White threatens to trap the bishop with a4-a5. In Balashov – Najer, Elista 2000, Black had to give up the e5-pawn, because

13... $\text{exd}4$

would lose a piece after

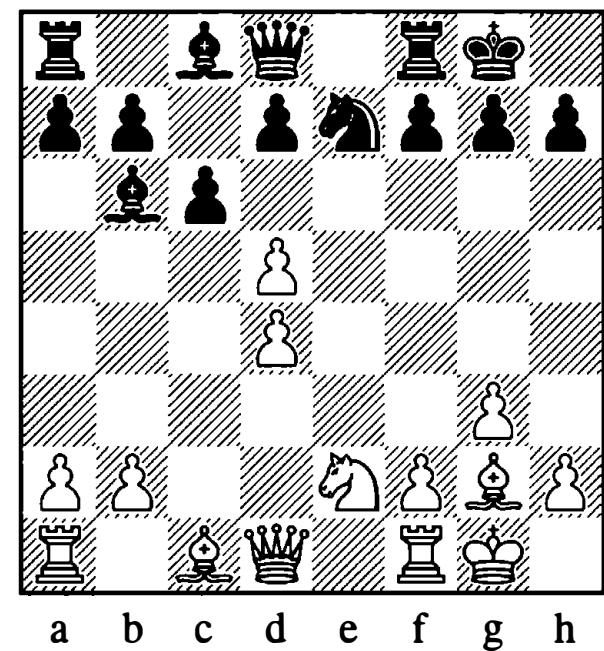
14.e4 $\mathbb{Q}e7$ 15.a5 $\mathbb{Q}c5$ 16.b4 $\mathbb{Q}xb4$ 17. $\mathbb{W}xd4$ with a double attack on g7 and b4.

10.d4 exd4 11.exd4



11... $\mathbb{Q}b6$

In leaving the d6-square undefended, Black probably underestimated White's next move, but after 11... $\mathbb{Q}d6$ 12. $\mathbb{Q}f4\pm$ White retains a considerable lead in development anyway.



12.d4!

By blocking the d7-pawn, White causes Black huge problems with his development. The fact that the courageous pawn will eventually perish is of less importance.

12.dxc6?! would lead to a dream position for Black after 12...dxc6!.

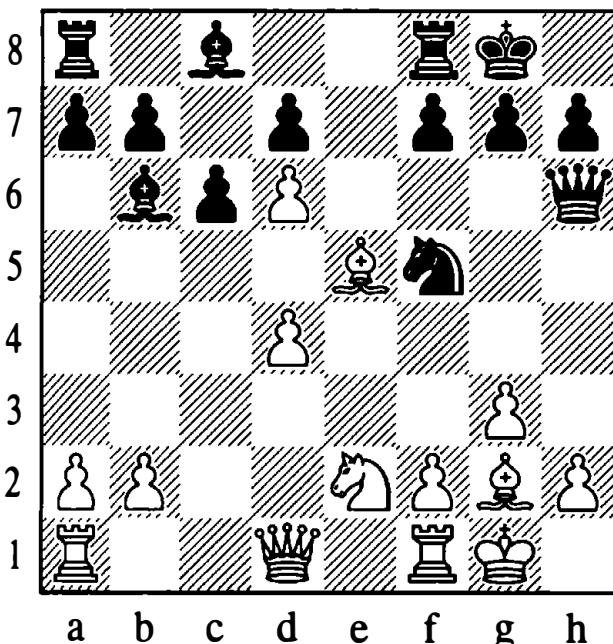
12... $\mathbb{Q}f5$

12... $\mathbb{Q}d5$ allows White to stabilize the position in his favour with 13. $\mathbb{Q}xd5$ cxd5 14. $\mathbb{Q}c3$ $\mathbb{W}f6$ 15. $\mathbb{Q}f4$ $\mathbb{W}xd4$ 16. $\mathbb{B}c1\pm$ (Ribli). Black is several moves away from completing his development.

13. $\mathbb{Q}f4$ $\mathbb{W}f6$

13...g5 leads nowhere because of 14. $\mathbb{W}d3!$.

14. $\mathbb{Q}e5$ $\mathbb{W}h6$

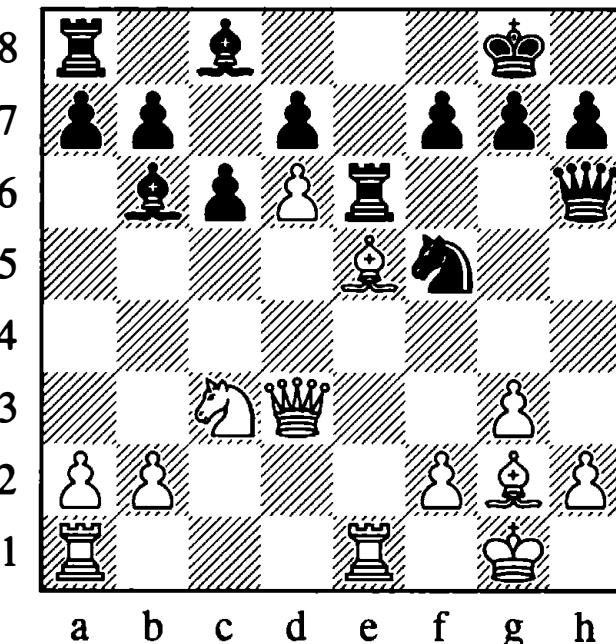


A superficial glance at the position might make one think that Black has no weaknesses and that he will soon win the d6-pawn. However, these aspects do not compensate for Black's lack of development.

15. $\mathbb{Q}c3$ $\mathbb{Q}xd6$ 16.d5!

The second d-pawn is ready to replace its colleague.

16... $\mathbb{Q}f5$ 17.d6 $\mathbb{B}e8$ 18. $\mathbb{B}e1$ $\mathbb{B}e6$ 19. $\mathbb{W}d3\pm$



Black has no obvious way to complete his development and eventually succumbed to the pressure in Timman – Kuzubov, Gothenburg 2005.

(1.c4 e5 2.g3 $\mathbb{Q}c6$ 3. $\mathbb{Q}c3$ $\mathbb{Q}f6$ 4. $\mathbb{Q}g2$ $\mathbb{Q}b4$ 5. $\mathbb{Q}d5$ $\mathbb{Q}c5$ 6.e3 0–0 7. $\mathbb{Q}e2$ $\mathbb{Q}xd5$ 8.cxd5 $\mathbb{Q}e7)$

B12) 9.d4

White starts fighting for space in the centre without delay.

9...exd4 10.exd4!

The only correct move. The tempting 10. $\mathbb{Q}xd4$, trying to keep White's structure compact, leaves White underdeveloped after 10...c6, when the passivity of the c1-bishop makes itself felt. With the d6-square defended by his bishop, Black does not need to fear the thematic d5-d6. He would answer with ... $\mathbb{Q}xd6$ followed by ... $\mathbb{Q}c7$ and ...d5, continuing his development without losing much time.

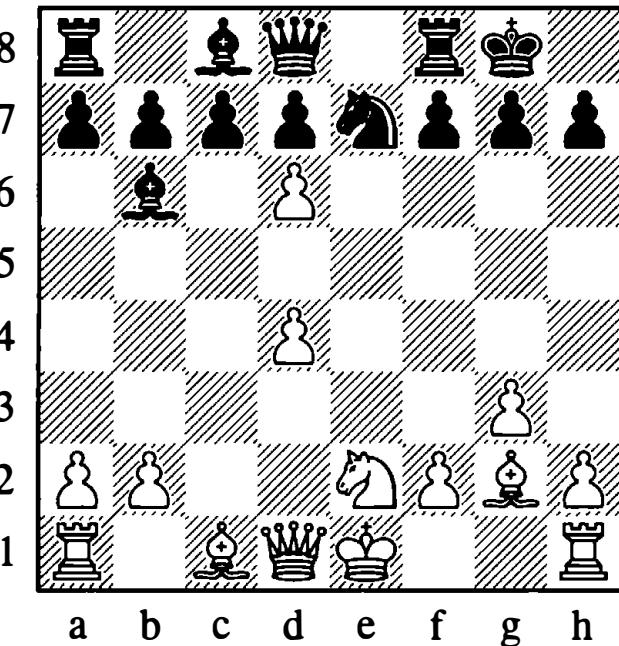
10... $\mathbb{Q}b6$

As in the game from line B11, Black may have overlooked (or at least underestimated) the further advance of White's d-pawn when retreating his bishop to b6.

In any case, 10... $\mathbb{Q}b4\#$ 11. $\mathbb{Q}d2\mathbb{Q}xd2\#$ 12. $\mathbb{W}xd2$ would also leave White on top. To avoid having a weak pawn on c7, Black should play 12...c6, but after 13. $\mathbb{Q}c3\mathbb{Q}xd5$ 14. $\mathbb{Q}xd5$ cxd5 15.0–0 d6 16. $\mathbb{Q}xd5\mathbb{W}b6$ 17. $\mathbb{E}f1\pm$, threatening $\mathbb{E}e1-e7$, White's lead in development is not easy to neutralize.

11.d6!

Once again this pawn sacrifice is the only way to hinder Black's normal development with ...d7-d6. This method of play is not new. See for instance the game Morphy – Shulten, New York 1857, where, from a completely different opening, a similar structure had arisen and White played d5-d6 with the same purpose as in our game.



11...cxd6

If Black had refused the pawn by playing 11... $\mathbb{Q}f5$ White would have kept a slightly better position with 12.dxc7 $\mathbb{W}xc7$ 13.0–0 d6 14. $\mathbb{Q}f4\mathbb{Q}e6$ 15. $\mathbb{B}c1\mathbb{W}e7$ 16. $\mathbb{E}e1\pm$. Black faces problems finding a safe square for the queen.

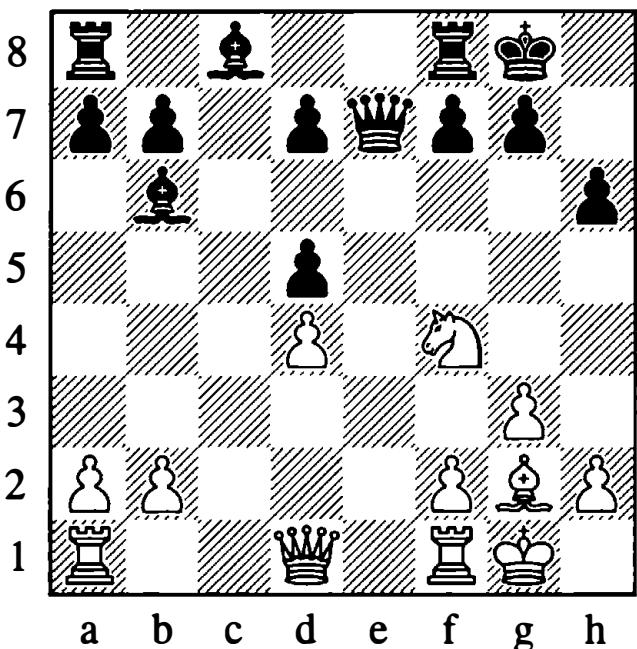
12.0–0 d5 13. $\mathbb{Q}g5$ h6

This seems like a concession, because it loses a tempo and weakens the light squares on the kingside, but Black had good reasons to avoid weakening his position with ...f7-f6. For instance, 13...d6 14. $\mathbb{Q}c3$ f6

15. $\mathbb{Q}f4$ g5 (or 15... $\mathbb{Q}e6$ 16. $\mathbb{E}e1\mathbb{Q}f7$ 17. $\mathbb{Q}b5$ with strong pressure) 16. $\mathbb{Q}e3\mathbb{Q}e6$ 17.f4, with an initiative.

13...f6 is even worse, because it allows White to regroup optimally with 14. $\mathbb{Q}e3$ d6 15. $\mathbb{Q}f4\#$. The d5-pawn cannot be defended, while the weakness of the e6-square is permanent.

14. $\mathbb{Q}xe7\mathbb{W}xe7$ 15. $\mathbb{Q}f4$



15... $\mathbb{W}f6$

White would have obtained a very powerful attack if the queen had left the kingside with: 15... $\mathbb{W}b4$ 16. $\mathbb{Q}xd5$ d6

16... $\mathbb{W}xb2$ would leave the f7-pawn desperately weak after 17. $\mathbb{Q}g6\mathbb{E}e8$ 18. $\mathbb{W}f3\pm$.

Exchanging queens would not offer Black his desired relief after 16... $\mathbb{W}xd4$ 17. $\mathbb{Q}g6\mathbb{E}e8$ 18. $\mathbb{W}xd4\mathbb{Q}xd4$ 19. $\mathbb{B}ae1$ and Black's development problems remain the same.

17. $\mathbb{W}h5!$

White activates his pieces without counting the pawns.

17... $\mathbb{W}xd4$ 18. $\mathbb{B}ae1\mathbb{W}f6$ 19. $\mathbb{Q}g6\mathbb{E}d8$ 20. $\mathbb{Q}e7\#$ $\mathbb{Q}f8$ 21. $\mathbb{Q}xc8\mathbb{B}axc8$

Apparently, Black's troubles are over, but after the unexpected 22. $\mathbb{B}e3!$, threatening $\mathbb{B}f3$, White has a strong attack. 22... $\mathbb{Q}xe3?$ is impossible because of 23.fxe3 when Black

would have to part with his queen to avoid mate.

16. $\mathbb{Q}xd5$ $\mathbb{W}xd4$ 17. $\mathbb{W}b3$

The position has calmed down, but White's lead in development is worth more than Black's bishop pair and extra pawn.

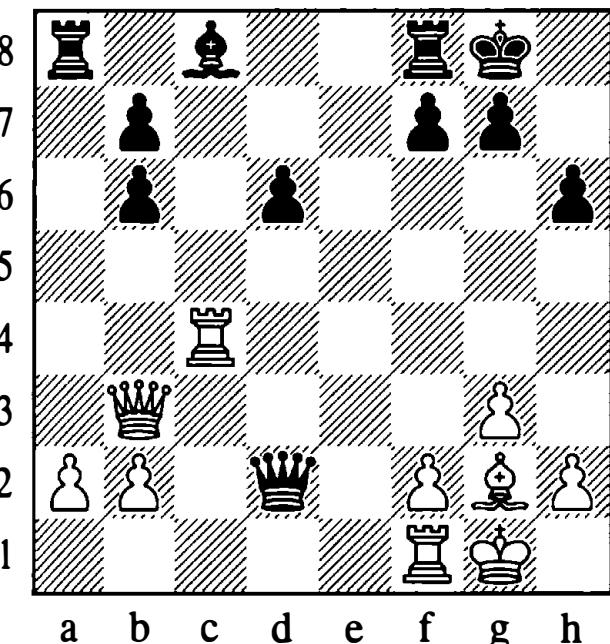
17...d6 18. $\mathbb{B}ad1$ $\mathbb{W}c5$ 19. $\mathbb{B}c1$ $\mathbb{W}d4$

Black could not avoid this repetition of moves, since moving the queen away from the centre would have led to serious consequences: 19... $\mathbb{W}a5$ 20. $\mathbb{Q}e7\#$ $\mathbb{Q}h8$ 21. $\mathbb{B}xc8$ $\mathbb{B}axc8$ 22. $\mathbb{Q}xc8$ $\mathbb{B}xc8$ 23. $\mathbb{W}xf7\pm$ The exposed black king guarantees White a lasting advantage.

20. $\mathbb{B}cd1$ $\mathbb{W}c5$ 21. $\mathbb{B}c1$ $\mathbb{W}d4$ 22. $\mathbb{B}c4!$

With his queen still in the centre, Black could have reduced the damage to acceptable proportions if White had played as in the previous line: 22. $\mathbb{Q}e7\#$ $\mathbb{Q}h8$ 23. $\mathbb{B}xc8$ $\mathbb{B}axc8$ 24. $\mathbb{Q}xc8$ $\mathbb{B}xc8$ 25. $\mathbb{W}xf7$ $\mathbb{W}xb2$ 26. $\mathbb{Q}xb7$ $\mathbb{B}d8$ 27. $\mathbb{Q}d5$ $\mathbb{W}f6\pm$ The endgame will be unpleasant for Black, but not necessarily lost.

22... $\mathbb{W}d2$ 23. $\mathbb{Q}xb6$ $axb6$



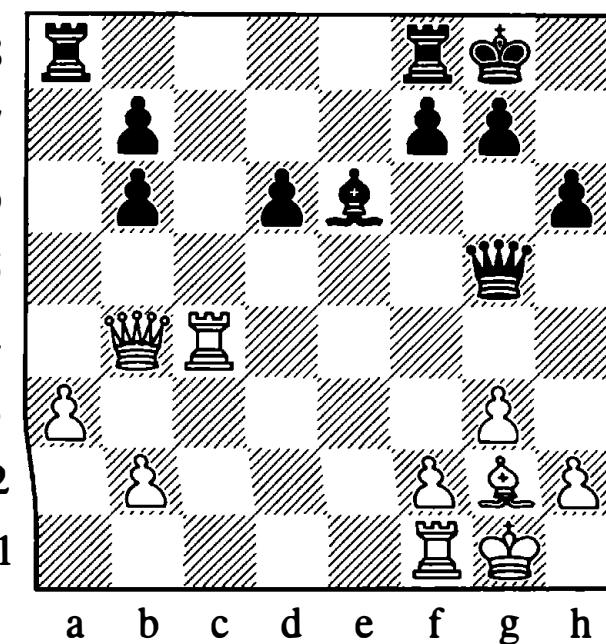
Apparently, White has not achieved a great deal: he is still a pawn down, he needs to parry the threat of ... $\mathbb{Q}c8-e6$, and the a8-rook is already developed and attacking the a2-pawn.

24.a3!!†

With this simple move White keeps all the plusses of his position, while parrying Black's apparently dangerous threats.

24... $\mathbb{Q}e6$ 25. $\mathbb{W}b4$ $\mathbb{W}g5$

25... $\mathbb{W}xb4$ leads to an unpleasant ending after 26. $\mathbb{B}xb4\pm$.



26. $\mathbb{B}c7!N$

This is an improvement over 26. $\mathbb{B}d4\pm$, as in Marin – Nevednichy, Sovata 2000, when White managed to win only as a result of Black's inaccurate defence in a rook ending.

26...d5 27. $\mathbb{W}xb6\pm$

White has active pieces and a dangerous queenside majority.

(1.c4 e5 2.g3 $\mathbb{Q}c6$ 3. $\mathbb{Q}c3$ $\mathbb{Q}f6$ 4. $\mathbb{B}g2$ $\mathbb{B}b4$ 5. $\mathbb{Q}d5$ $\mathbb{Q}c5$ 6.e3 0–0 7. $\mathbb{Q}e2$)

B2) 7...d6

This is Black's most solid continuation: he continues developing and keeps the exchange on d5 in reserve.

8.0–0

Starting from this moment, it is interesting to compare the positions with those arising in

line B2 from Chapter 6. Basically, White is a tempo up ($\mathbb{Q}c3-d5$), but he has to play actively to consolidate this outpost.

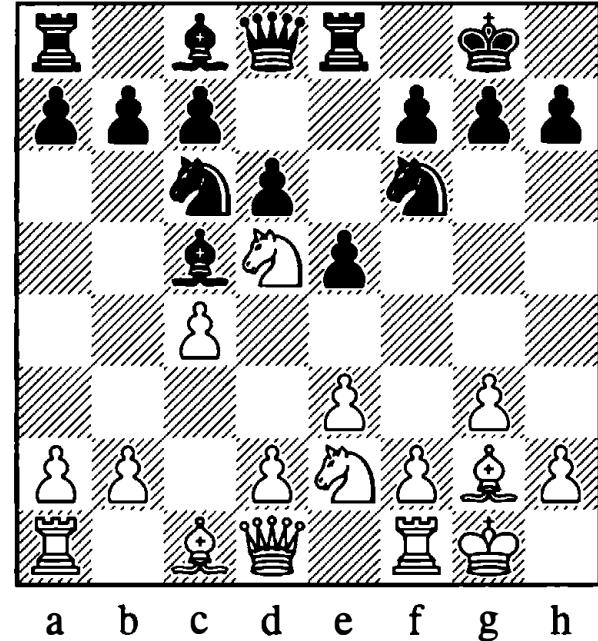
Black has a similar choice to the aforementioned line. He can ignore the threat of d2-d4 with **B21) 8... $\mathbb{E}e8$** or open an escape square for the bishop with **B22) 8...a6**.

8... $\mathbb{Q}b6$ is rather passive and should not inhibit White from playing 9.d4, with a possible transposition to line B21. In addition, 9.b3 followed by $\mathbb{Q}b2$ is also possible.

Karpov once experimented with 8...h6, but after 9.b3!N I consider the move ...h7-h6 to be less useful than ...a7-a6 from line B22.

(1.c4 e5 2.g3 $\mathbb{Q}c6$ 3. $\mathbb{Q}c3$ $\mathbb{Q}f6$ 4. $\mathbb{Q}g2$ $\mathbb{Q}b4$ 5. $\mathbb{Q}d5$ $\mathbb{Q}c5$ 6.e3 0-0 7. $\mathbb{Q}e2$ d6 8.0-0)

B21) 8... $\mathbb{E}e8$



Black does not spend time on pawn moves and aims for rapid piece development, hoping that this will compensate for White's strong centre.

9.d4 $\mathbb{Q}b6$

The first consequence of the presence of the knight on d5 is that Black cannot afford to play

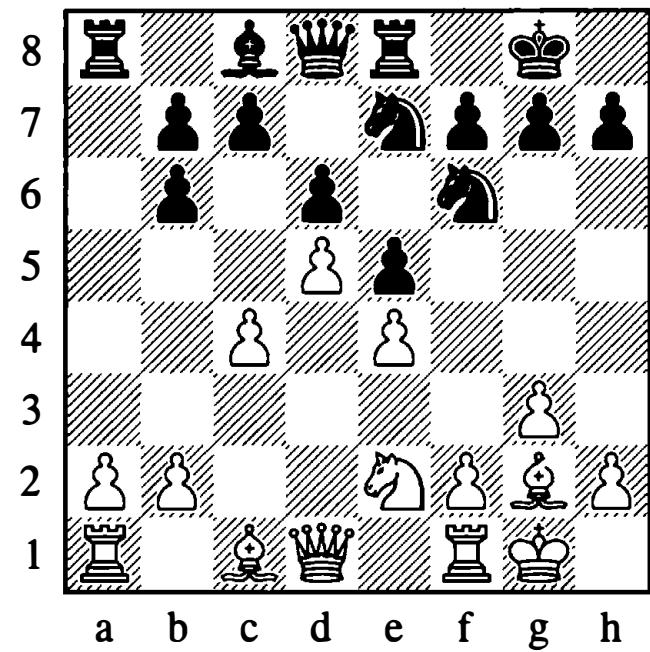
9...exd4 10.exd4 $\mathbb{Q}b6$ because of 11. $\mathbb{Q}g5!$, ruining Black's kingside structure.

10. $\mathbb{Q}xb6$!

This is the best way to release the tension. White gains the bishop pair and clears the path for his d-pawn. Otherwise, he would have problems finding a coherent plan of development because of the continuing threat of ...exd4, followed by either ... $\mathbb{Q}c8-g4$ or ... $\mathbb{Q}f6xd5$.

10...axb6 11.d5 $\mathbb{Q}e7$ 12.e4±

This position has occurred in several games between strong players, and the results suggest that White has a clear advantage. White can open the position on either wing, because this would increase the activity of his strong dark-squared bishop. Besides, Black's structural defect on the queenside prevents him from organizing an adequate defence on that wing.



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

Black has also tried other moves, without changing the character of the position.

a) 12...h6 13. $\mathbb{Q}c3$ $\mathbb{Q}f8$ 14.f4 exf4 15.gxf4 $\mathbb{Q}g6$ 16.f5!?

An interesting move. White gives up the e5-square, but stabilizes the kingside and cuts the enemy bishop out of play. In addition,

the attack along the g-file is likely to be very dangerous.

16... $\mathbb{Q}e5$

One important element that justifies White's previous move is that the knight cannot create dangerous threats from this central square.

17.b3 $\mathbb{W}e7$ 18.h3 $\mathbb{Q}d7$ 19.a4 c6 20. $\mathbb{Q}a3$ $\mathbb{W}fd8$

21. $\mathbb{R}a2$

A nice way to activate the rook.

21...c5 22. $\mathbb{Q}c1$ $\mathbb{Q}h7$ 23. $\mathbb{R}a2\pm$

Black was doomed to a passive defence in Zaichik – Garcia Gonzales, Camaguey 1987.

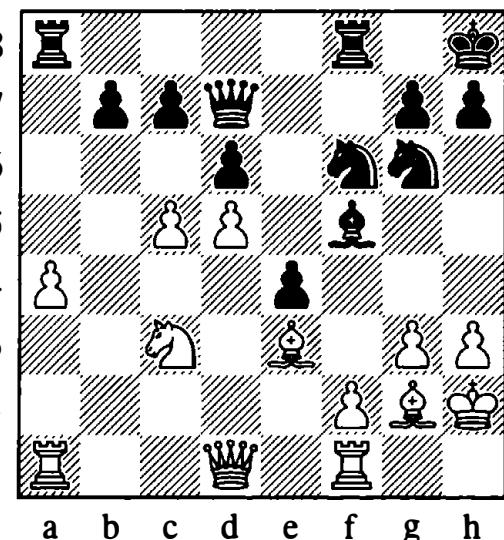
b) 12... $\mathbb{Q}g6$

The knight takes the e5-, f4- and h4- squares under control, aiming to inhibit White's kingside pawn break. In the event of f2-f4, he could answer with ...exf4, when after gxf4 he could either attack the centre with ...f5 (after retreating the f6-knight), without fearing e4-e5, or harass the g2-bishop with ... $\mathbb{Q}h4$.

13. $\mathbb{Q}c3$ $\mathbb{Q}h8$ 14.b4 $\mathbb{E}f8$ 15.a4 $\mathbb{Q}g8$ 16. $\mathbb{Q}e3$

In this game White ignores the kingside and focuses on his queenside attack.

16...f5 17.exf5 $\mathbb{Q}xf5$ 18.c5 bxc5 19.bxc5 $\mathbb{Q}f6$
20.h3 $\mathbb{W}d7$ 21. $\mathbb{Q}h2$ e4



In the game Wirthensohn – Wittmann, Aosta 1988, White could have consolidated his advantage with:

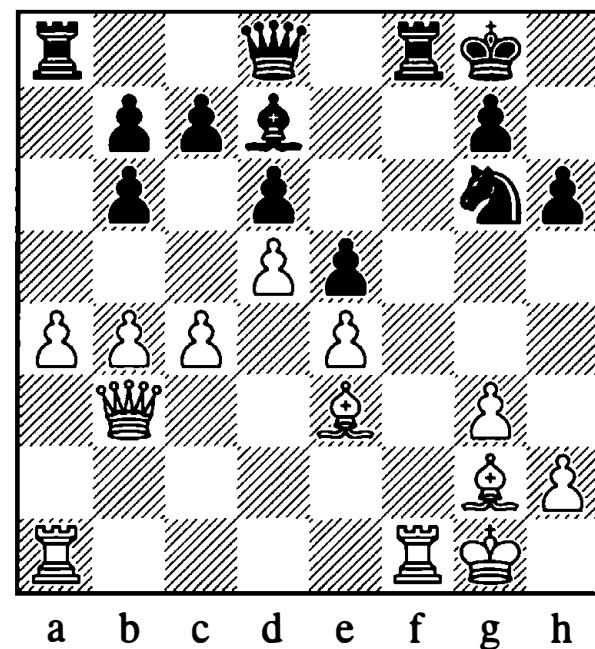
22. $\mathbb{R}b1!N$ $\mathbb{R}ab8$ 23. $\mathbb{R}xb7$ $\mathbb{R}xb7$ 24.c6±

Black's attack has come to a dead end, while the a-pawn is very dangerous.

13. $\mathbb{Q}c3$ $\mathbb{Q}g6$ 14.f3 h6 15. $\mathbb{Q}e3$ $\mathbb{Q}h7$ 16.b4 f5
17.exf5 $\mathbb{Q}xf5$ 18.a4

White plays in a similar way to line b above, but also maintains firm control of the e4-square.

18... $\mathbb{Q}f6$ 19. $\mathbb{Q}e4$ $\mathbb{E}f8$ 20. $\mathbb{W}b3$ $\mathbb{Q}xe4$ 21.fxe4
 $\mathbb{Q}d7$



This position was reached in the game Nogueiras – Hernandez Carmenates, Santa Clara 2008.

22. $\mathbb{R}xf8\#N$

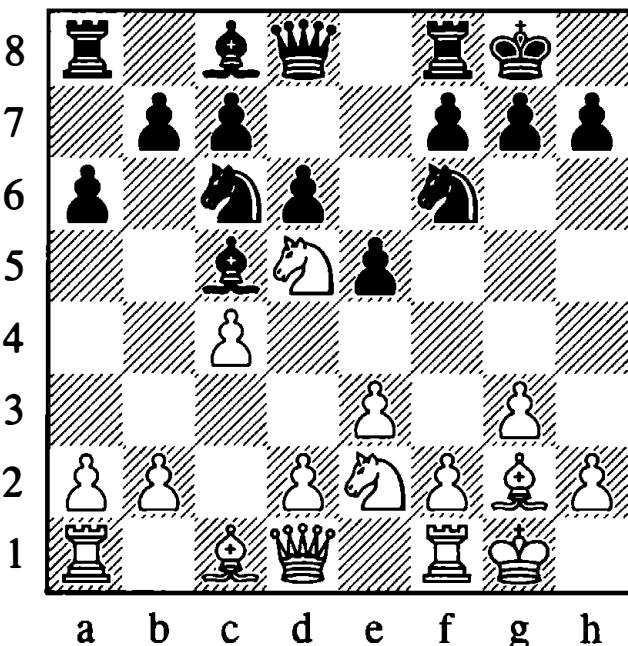
White needs his queen's rook on the a-file to support his queenside attack. In the game 22.a5 was played, but after 22... $\mathbb{R}xf1\#!$ White had no favourable way of recapturing. The text move causes Black similar problems.

22... $\mathbb{Q}xf8$ 23.c5±

Black has little to show against White's systematic queenside attack.

(1.c4 e5 2.g3 $\mathbb{Q}c6$ 3. $\mathbb{Q}c3$ $\mathbb{Q}f6$ 4. $\mathbb{Q}g2$ $\mathbb{Q}b4$
5. $\mathbb{Q}d5$ $\mathbb{Q}c5$ 6.e3 0–0 7. $\mathbb{Q}e2$ d6 8.0–0)

B22) 8...a6

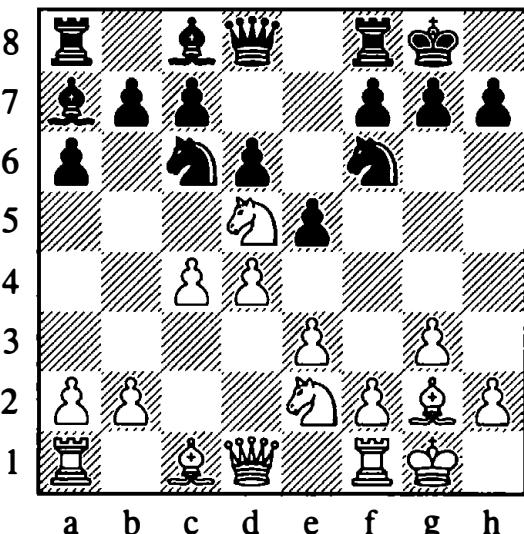


Line B21 gave us sufficient reasons to consider this move to be necessary.

9.b3!

With the black bishop on c5, ... $\mathbb{Q}xd5$ is not yet a serious threat, and White should use the available tempo before ... $\mathbb{Q}c5-a7$ to complete his development.

Prematurely occupying the centre with 9.d4 leaves White with problems maintaining his domination after 9... $\mathbb{Q}a7$:



10.dxe5

10.b3 would be strongly met by 10... $\mathbb{Q}g4!$, putting the d4-pawn under pressure.

10... $\mathbb{Q}xe5!$

Black should strive for active piece play.

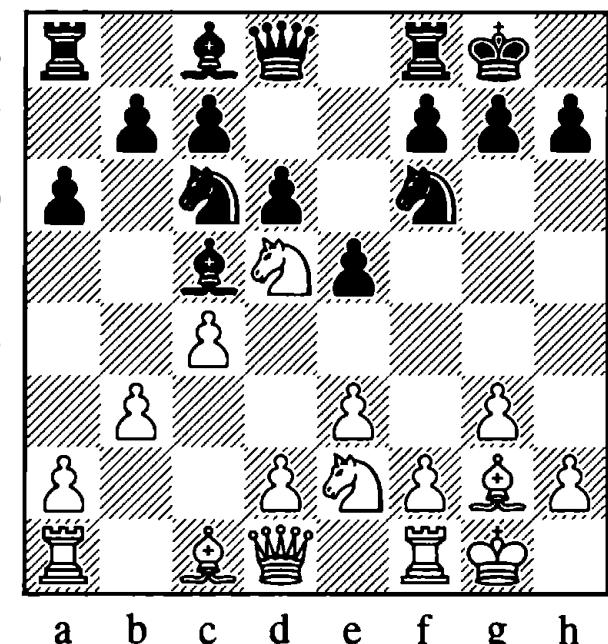
10... $dxe5$ 11.b3± followed by $\mathbb{Q}a3$ is pleasant for White.

11. $\mathbb{Q}xf6\#$

White fails to consolidate after 11.b3 $\mathbb{Q}xd5$ 12.cxd5 $\mathbb{W}f6$ 13. $\mathbb{Q}d4$ $\mathbb{E}e8$ 14.h3 $\mathbb{Q}xd4$ 15.exd4 $\mathbb{Q}g6$ 16. $\mathbb{Q}e3$ $\mathbb{Q}f5=$ and Black has a comfortable position in Uhlmann - Shestoporov, Gmunden 2007.

11... $\mathbb{W}xf6$

His slight lag in development and the weakness of the e3-pawn prevent White from enjoying his space advantage, Vaulin - Zavoronkov, St Petersburg 1997.



9... $\mathbb{Q}a7$

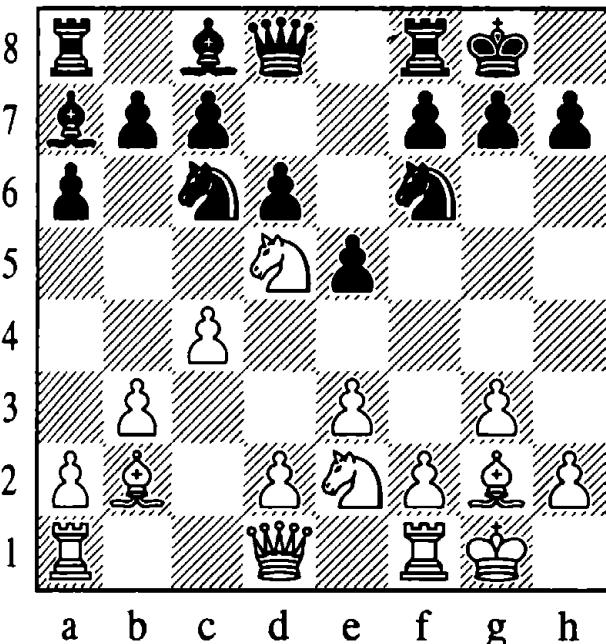
The most logical continuation.

9... $\mathbb{Q}xd5$ 10.cxd5 $\mathbb{Q}e7$ is met by the standard 11.d4 exd4 12. $\mathbb{Q}xd4\pm$.

If Black commits his light-squared bishop with 9... $\mathbb{Q}f5$, threatening ... $\mathbb{Q}f5-d3$, White can start playing in the centre. 10.d4 $\mathbb{Q}a7$ 11. $\mathbb{Q}b2$ $\mathbb{E}e8$ (11...exd4 12. $\mathbb{Q}xd4$ $\mathbb{Q}xd4$ 13. $\mathbb{Q}xd4\pm$ offers White a comfortable space advantage, while 11...e4 12. $\mathbb{Q}ec3$ $\mathbb{E}e8$ 13.f3± causes trouble along the f-file.) 12.dxe5 dxe5 13. $\mathbb{E}c1$ White anticipates an eventual exchange on d5, indirectly targeting the c7-pawn. 13...h5 14.h3± White will play $\mathbb{Q}g1-h2$, followed by activating the king's knight with either $\mathbb{Q}ec3$ or $\mathbb{Q}g1-f3$. Black can only sit and wait, while his a7-bishop is completely out of play.

Without any tension in the centre, 9... $\mathbb{Q}g4$ leads nowhere after 10.h3±.

10. $\mathbb{Q}b2$



White has completed his development and is ready to start advancing his pawns. Black now has to define his plans.

10... $\mathbb{Q}xd5$

This is the only move that has been tried in practice.

10... $\mathbb{Q}f5?!$

In reply to this careless move White does not need to transpose to a line from the previous comment with 11.b4 (see 9... $\mathbb{Q}f5$ 10.d4), but can play the stronger:

11.f4!

This is in the best hypermodern style: the d-pawn remains on its initial square to keep the a7-bishop out of play. Now Black loses stability in the centre.

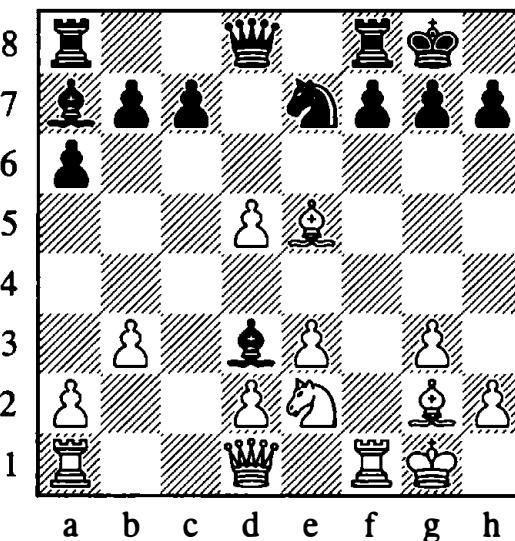
11... $\mathbb{Q}xd5$

After 11... $\mathbb{Q}d3$ 12. $\mathbb{Q}xf6\#$ Black has an unpleasant choice between 12... $\mathbb{W}xf6$ 13.fxe5, winning a pawn, and the ugly 12... $\mathbb{W}xf6$.

12.cxd5 $\mathbb{Q}e7$

Black needs to defend the f5-bishop, as 12... $\mathbb{Q}b4$ simply loses a pawn to 13.fxe5±.

13.fxe5 dxe5 14. $\mathbb{Q}xe5$ $\mathbb{Q}d3$



Apparently, Black will retrieve the d5-pawn with a good game.

15. $\mathbb{Q}f4!$

This well-timed exchange sacrifice allows White to keep his space advantage and create excellent attacking chances.

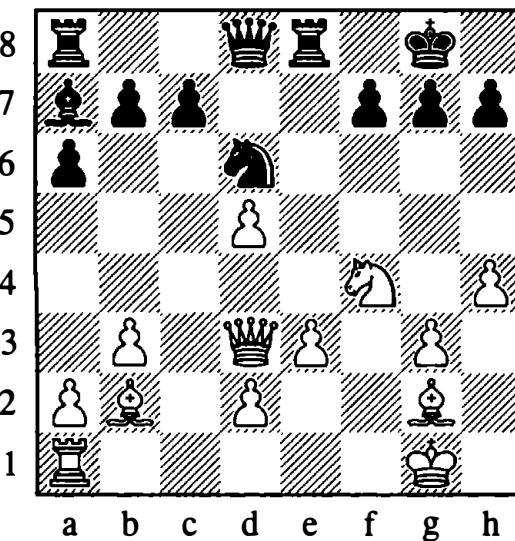
15... $\mathbb{Q}xf1$ 16. $\mathbb{W}xf1$ $\mathbb{Q}f5$

Black has to defend the g7-square. After a neutral move such as 16... $\mathbb{E}e8$ White can start a sacrificial attack with 17. $\mathbb{Q}xg7!$ $\mathbb{Q}xg7$ 18. $\mathbb{Q}h5\#$ $\mathbb{Q}f8$ 19. $\mathbb{W}f6$ $\mathbb{Q}xd5$ 20. $\mathbb{W}g7\#$ $\mathbb{Q}e7$ 21. $\mathbb{Q}f1\pm$.

17. $\mathbb{W}d3$ $\mathbb{Q}d6$ 18.h4!?

Preventing the black queen from activating with ... $\mathbb{W}d8-g5$.

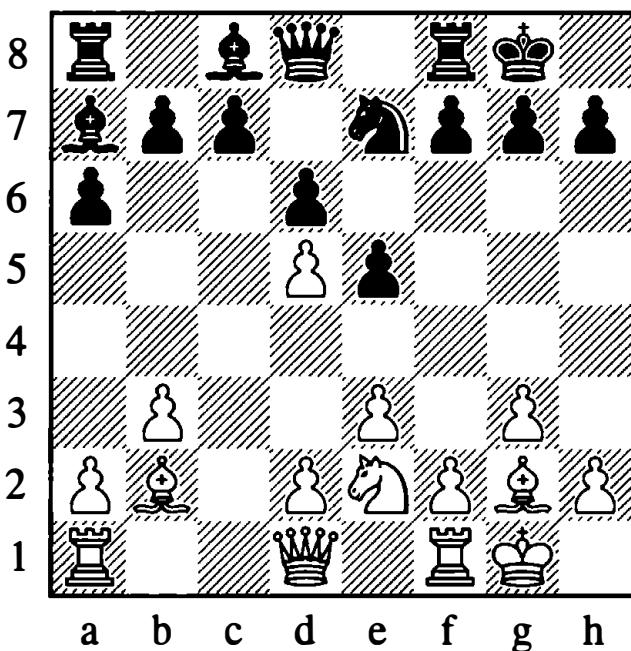
18... $\mathbb{E}e8$ 19. $\mathbb{Q}b2\pm$



White threatens $\mathbb{Q}f4-h5$ or $\mathbb{W}d3-c3$, perhaps after a previous $\mathbb{Q}a1-f1$. Black's kingside is vulnerable and his bishop is rather passive.

Against 10... $\mathbb{Q}e6$ White also has a choice between 11.d4 and the more interesting 11.f4!±.

11.cxd5 $\mathbb{Q}e7$



12.d4

We can see that in some cases the knight is well placed on e2. If it had been on f3, Black could have answered with 12...e4.

12.f4!? deserves attention as well, when Black should consolidate as in the main line with 12...f6±.

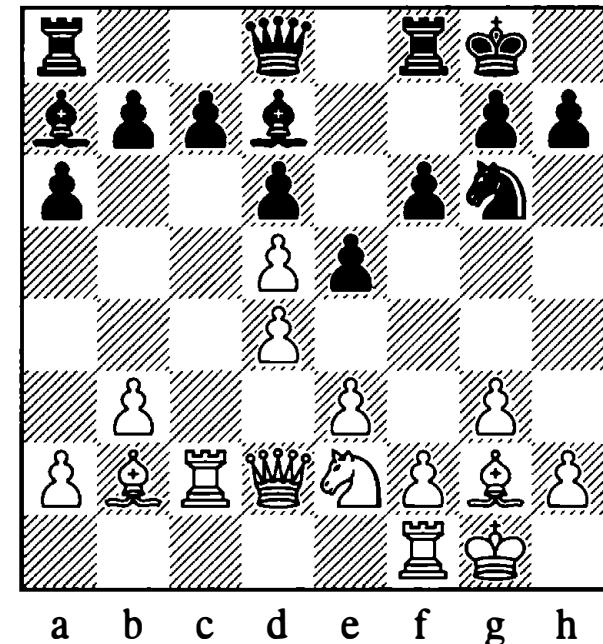
12...f6

Black has managed to maintain the tension in the centre, thanks to the prophylactic retreat of the bishop to a7, but White retains the better play because of his space advantage.

13. $\mathbb{B}c1$ $\mathbb{Q}d7$

13... $\mathbb{Q}g4$?! only helps White win space on the kingside with 14.h3 $\mathbb{Q}h5$ 15. $\mathbb{W}d2$ $\mathbb{Q}g6$. In Wirthensohn – Klauser, Switzerland 1996, White should have continued with 16.g4!N. For instance, 16... $\mathbb{W}d7$ 17.dxe5 fxe5 18.f4 exf4 19. $\mathbb{Q}xf4$ ± and Black cannot defend the e6-square with 19... $\mathbb{Q}f7$? because of 20. $\mathbb{W}c3$!+–.

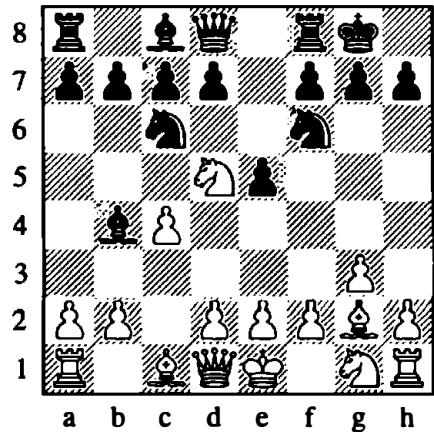
14. $\mathbb{W}d2$ $\mathbb{Q}g6$ 15. $\mathbb{B}c2$ ±



Black is restricted to a passive defence, Ruck – Dautov, Vienna 1996.

Conclusion:

1.c4 e5 2.g3 $\mathbb{Q}c6$ 3. $\mathbb{Q}c3$ $\mathbb{Q}f6$ 4. $\mathbb{Q}g2$ $\mathbb{Q}b4$ 5. $\mathbb{Q}d5$ $\mathbb{Q}c5$ 6.e3 offers White excellent chances of retaining an advantage. Therefore, Black is best advised to resort to 5...0–0, which will be examined in the next three chapters.



Reversed Rossolimo

5...0–0 Minor Lines

Variation Index

1.c4 e5 2.g3 ♖c6 3.♖c3 ♖f6 4.♗g2 ♖b4 5.♗d5

5...0–0

A) 6.a3?!

p 113

A1) 6...♖c5

p 114

A2) 6...♖d6

p 116

B) 6.♗f3!

p 118

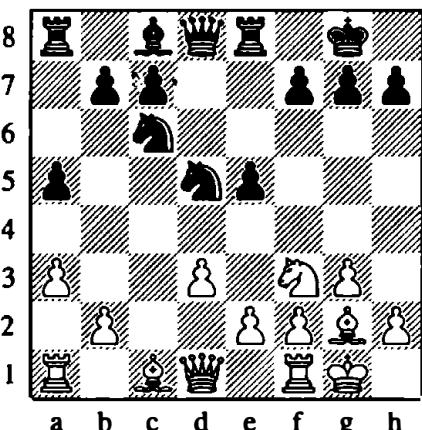
B1) 6...a5

p 118

B2) 6...♗e8

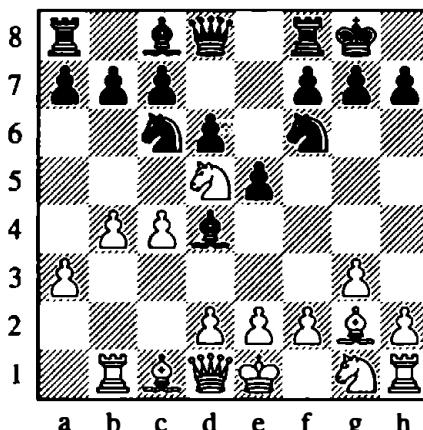
p 120

Kosten's 6.♗xb4?! – after 11...♗e8



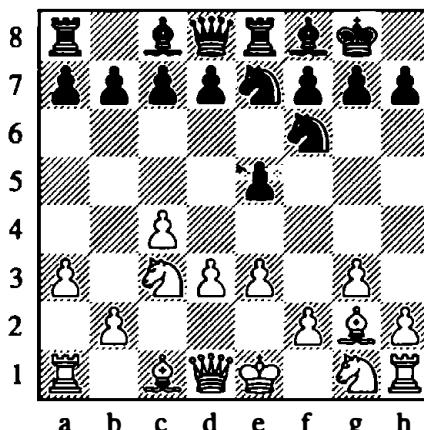
12.b3!N

A1) after 8...d6



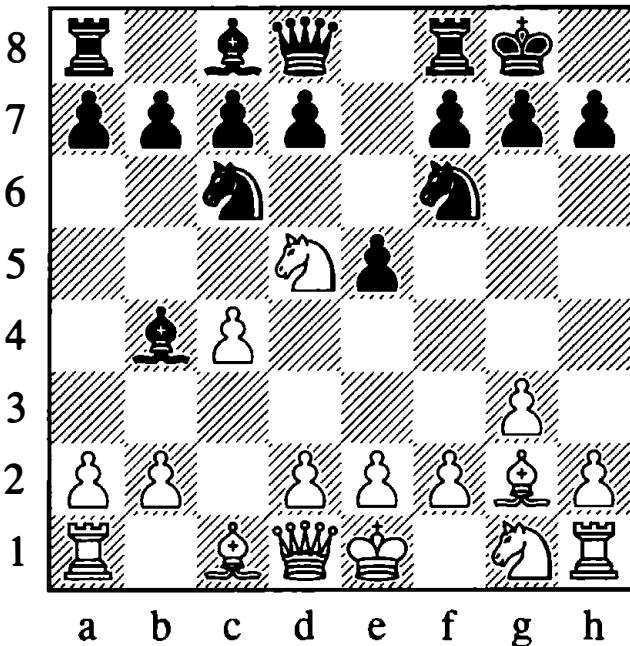
9.♗f3!N

A2) after 9...♗e7



10.♗f3!N

1.c4 e5 2.g3 $\mathbb{Q}c6$ 3. $\mathbb{Q}c3$ $\mathbb{Q}f6$ 4. $\mathbb{Q}g2$ $\mathbb{Q}b4$
5. $\mathbb{Q}d5$ 0-0



This is Black's most consistent continuation. He ignores the threat of $\mathbb{Q}xb4$ and continues developing without losing a single tempo.

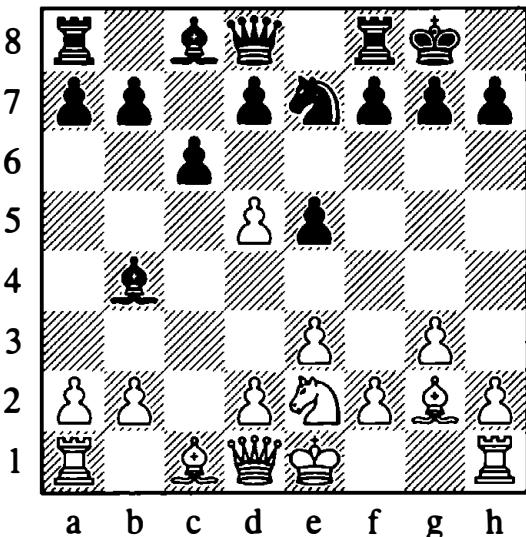
We now have A) 6.a3?! and B) 6. $\mathbb{Q}f3$!.

6.e3?!

This is too slow, allowing Black to carry out his central counterplay in optimal form:

6... $\mathbb{Q}xd5$ 7.cxd5 $\mathbb{Q}e7$ 8. $\mathbb{Q}e2$ c6

We can see that the bishop is well placed on b4: it pins the d-pawn, making the standard d2-d4 impossible, and prevents White from supporting his central pawn with 9. $\mathbb{Q}c3$, in view of 9... $\mathbb{Q}xc3$ 10.dxc3 cxd5. With almost all his pawns on dark squares, White would not want to give up his light-squared bishop to get the pawn back.



9.a3

White has to spend valuable time driving the bishop away, as he is compelled to maintain the tension at any cost.

9.dxc6 dxc6 would leave White underdeveloped and with a weak d3-square.

9... $\mathbb{Q}d6$!?

By retreating to this stable square, the bishop blocks the d7-pawn, but Black had in mind an alternate way to develop the light-squared bishop.

10. $\mathbb{Q}c3$ b6!

This is the fastest way to develop the queenside.

11.0-0 $\mathbb{Q}a6$ 12.d3!N

This is the only way to maintain equality.

After 12. $\mathbb{Q}e1$?! $\mathbb{Q}d3$! White had serious problems with development in Chiburdanidze – Skembris, Karditsa 1995.

12... $\mathbb{Q}c8=$

Black would have little to complain about, but at least White is in the game.

6. $\mathbb{Q}xb4$!?

This was recommended by Kosten in *The Dynamic English*. Eliminating Black's dark-squared bishop without spoiling his own structure (as would be the case after ... $\mathbb{Q}b4xc3$, in the lines without 5. $\mathbb{Q}d5$) is indeed tempting. On the other hand, giving up his most active minor piece, the d5-knight, by moving it for the third time at such an early stage, means losing control of the centre.

6... $\mathbb{Q}xb4$ 7.d3

Kosten gives this position as slightly better for White, without further analysis.

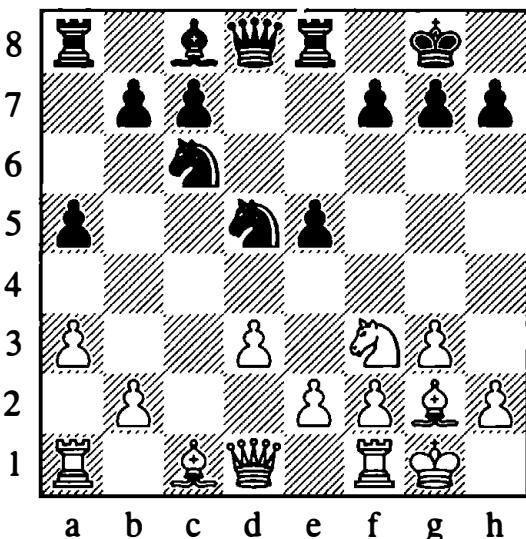
7...d5

Black opens the centre for the sake of rapid piece development.

8.a3 $\mathbb{Q}c6$ 9.cxd5 $\mathbb{Q}xd5$

Compared to the positions from Chapters 20 to 25, Black can keep his knight in the centre, which offers him active play.

10.♕f3 a5 11.0–0 ♜e8



In the game Ma. Pavlov – Shkuro, Alushta 2008, White played the extravagant 12.♕g5 and reached a worse position. Instead, he should have continued developing:

12.b3!N ♜d4 13.♗b2 ♜g4=

Black is well developed and has no reason to fear White's pair of bishops. The weakness of the c3-square and Black's pressure against the e2-pawn prevent White from winning a pawn by capturing twice on d4.

Kosten also recommends 7.d4 exd4 8.a3 ♜c6 9.♕f3 (± Kosten), but after the active 9...d5! White's lack of development and the weakness of the b3-square start making themselves felt. Black is certainly not worse. I often faced a similar situation a long time ago, when I used to play 4.♗c2 against the Nimzo-Indian.

(1.c4 e5 2.g3 ♜c6 3.♕c3 ♜f6 4.♗g2 ♜b4 5.♕d5 0–0)

A) 6.a3!?

This is a more consistent move than 6.e3 or 6.♕xb4. Black has problems maintaining the stability of his bishop. The main continuations are A1) 6...♗c5 and A2) 6...♗d6.

6...♗e7

This is too passive and takes away the e7-square from the c6-knight, which makes the

standard operation based on...♗xd5 more difficult to carry out. Therefore, White can take his time consolidating.

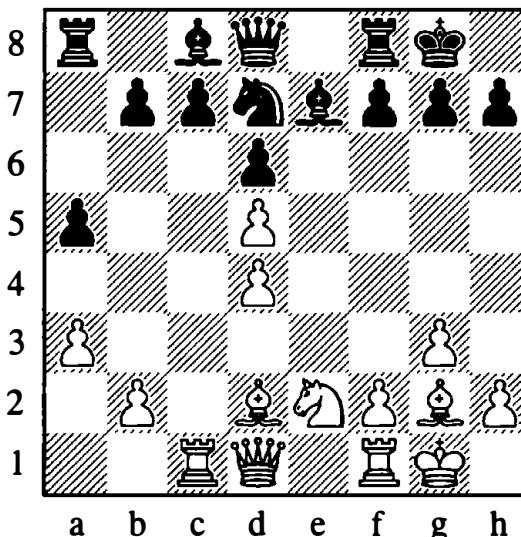
7.e3 a5 8.♗e2 d6 9.d3 ♜xd5

Finally giving in, but now the c6-knight will have to retreat to a passive square.

10.cxd5 ♜b8 11.0–0 ♜d7 12.♗d2 ♜c5

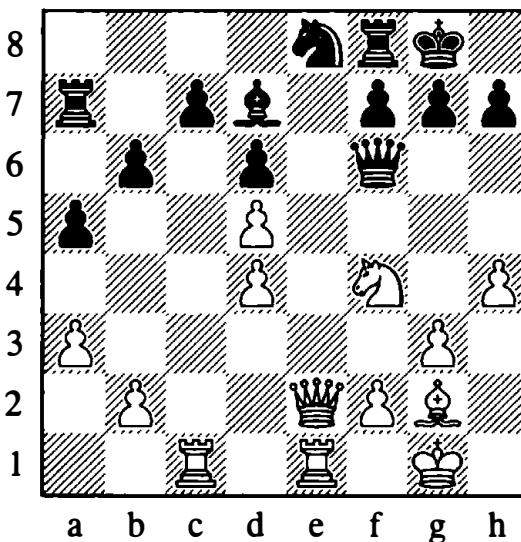
Black hopes to occupy the b3-square after ...a5-a4, but he will be denied this rosy picture.

13.d4! exd4 14.exd4 ♜d7 15.♗c1



White is better developed and can set up pressure against the backward c7-pawn. It is interesting to follow how his lead in development will be maintained despite simplifications.

15...♗f6 16.♗c2 ♜e8 17.♗fe1 ♜d7 18.h3 ♜g5 19.♗xg5 ♜xg5 20.♗f4 ♜a7 21.♗e2 b6 22.h4 ♜f6



23.♗e7!

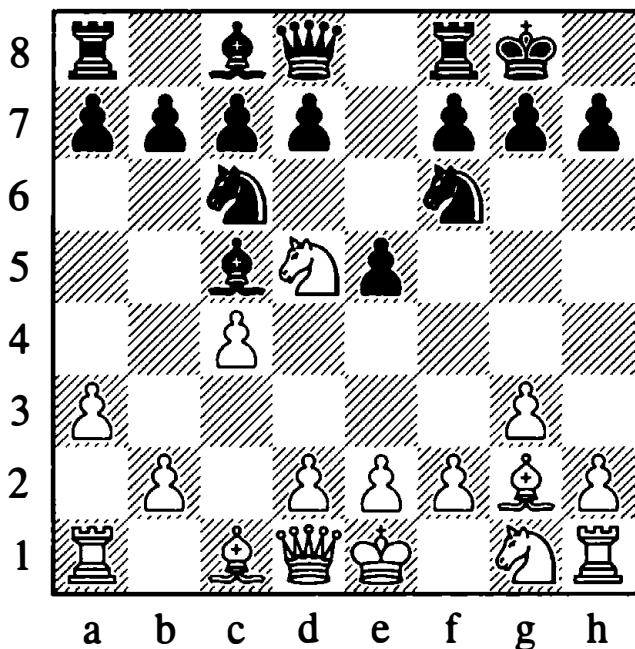
Swapping queens is frequently the best way to take advantage of a lead in development. Deprived of his strongest piece, Black will have problems displaying any activity.

23... $\mathbb{W}xe7$ 24. $\mathbb{B}xe7$ $\mathbb{Q}f6$ 25. $\mathbb{Q}h5\pm$

White had overwhelming activity, and eventually won in Suba – Garcia Ilundain, Castellar 1995.

(1.c4 e5 2.g3 $\mathbb{Q}c6$ 3. $\mathbb{Q}c3$ $\mathbb{Q}f6$ 4. $\mathbb{Q}g2$ $\mathbb{Q}b4$ 5. $\mathbb{Q}d5$ 0–0 6.a3!?)

A1) 6... $\mathbb{Q}c5$



The bishop is active on this square, but very unstable.

7.b4 $\mathbb{Q}d4$ 8. $\mathbb{B}b1$

White has improved his queenside position with gain of time, and threatens to trap the bishop with $\mathbb{Q}d5xf6$, e2-e3 and c4-c5.

8...d6

With the bishop on d4, 8... $\mathbb{Q}xd5$ 9.cxd5 $\mathbb{Q}e7$ is ineffective. After 10. $\mathbb{Q}f3$ d6 11. $\mathbb{Q}xd4$ exd4 12. $\mathbb{Q}b2$ $\mathbb{Q}f5$ 13.0–0 h5 14.e4 dxе3 15.dxe3± White has a space advantage and an active pair of bishops, Petran – Grund, Balatonbereny 1995.

8...a6

This prophylactic move offers White time to

complete his development with:

9. $\mathbb{Q}f3$ d6 10.d3

White threatens $\mathbb{Q}c1-g5$.

10... $\mathbb{Q}xd5$

10...h6 is too slow and offers White the initiative after 11. $\mathbb{Q}xd4$ $\mathbb{Q}xd4$ 12. $\mathbb{Q}xf6\uparrow$ $\mathbb{W}xf6$ 13.e3±.

11.cxd5 $\mathbb{Q}c3\uparrow$

Otherwise, White would capture the bishop, with similar play to Petran – Grund.

12. $\mathbb{Q}d2$ $\mathbb{Q}e7$ 13.0–0 $\mathbb{Q}d4$

White threatened to more or less trap the bishop with $\mathbb{Q}b3$.

The exchange 13... $\mathbb{Q}xd2$ 14. $\mathbb{Q}xd2$ would give White the advantage, since the kingside attack based on 14...f5 can be stopped with 15.f4! and the absence of Black's dark-squared bishop starts making itself felt.

14.e3 $\mathbb{Q}a7$

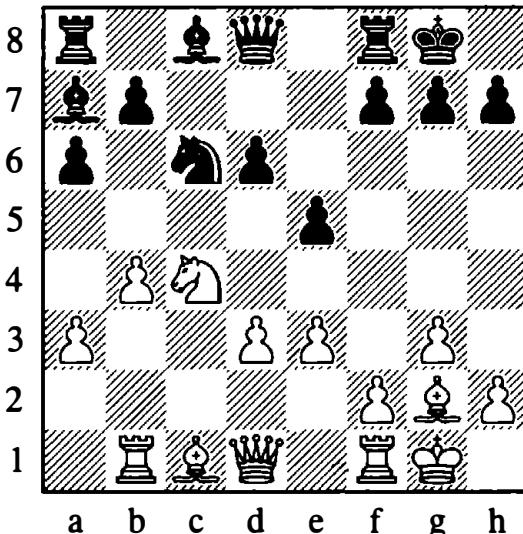
Black has achieved a favourable regrouping but with a considerable waste of time.

15. $\mathbb{Q}c4$

White threatens a3-a4 followed by b4-b5-b6. Black has to open the queenside without delay.

15...c6 16.dxc6 $\mathbb{Q}xc6$

16...bxc6 leaves White with a clear target on c6 after, for instance, 17. $\mathbb{Q}b2$ $\mathbb{Q}e6$ 18. $\mathbb{W}a4$ $\mathbb{W}d7$ 19. $\mathbb{Q}a5$ $\mathbb{B}ac8$ 20. $\mathbb{B}bc1\pm$.

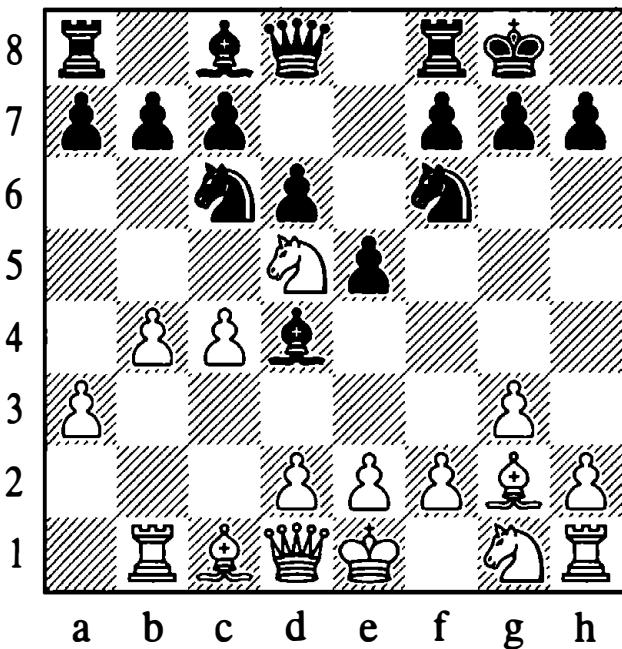


17.b5!

The fastest way to obtain active play. Otherwise, Black may play ...d6-d5.

17...axb5 18.♗xb5 ♕c7 19.♕c2 ♔e6 20.♔d2±

White intends to build up the pressure with $\mathbb{B}b1$ and $a3-a4-a5$. With his bishop passive on $a7$, Black has little chance of creating counterplay.



9.4 f3!N

Despite having gained some time by pursuing the enemy bishop, White should not delay his development.

After 9.e3 ♜b6 10.♘e2, as in Miles – Rossiter, England 1999, Black would have obtained a reasonable position with 10...♞xd5 11.cxd5 ♜e7 followed by ...c7-c6.

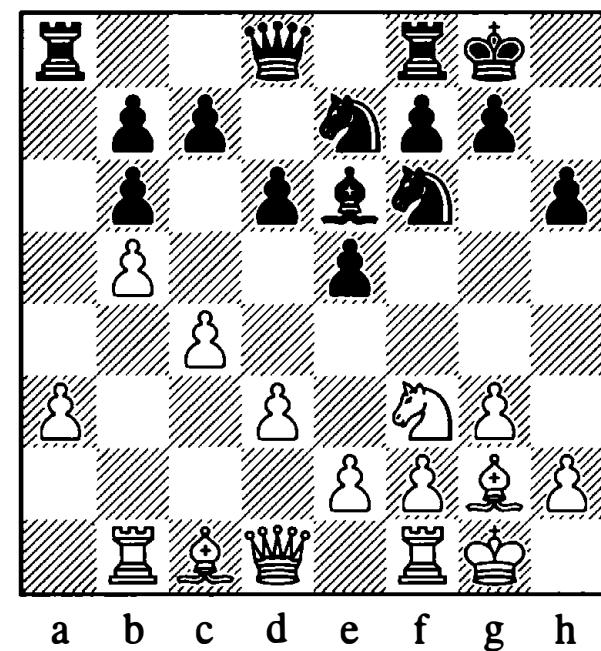
9... ♕b6 10. ♔xb6!

Facing the threat of ... $\mathbb{Q}f6xd5$, White decides to eliminate the bishop that has cost Black four tempos.

10...axb6 11.d3

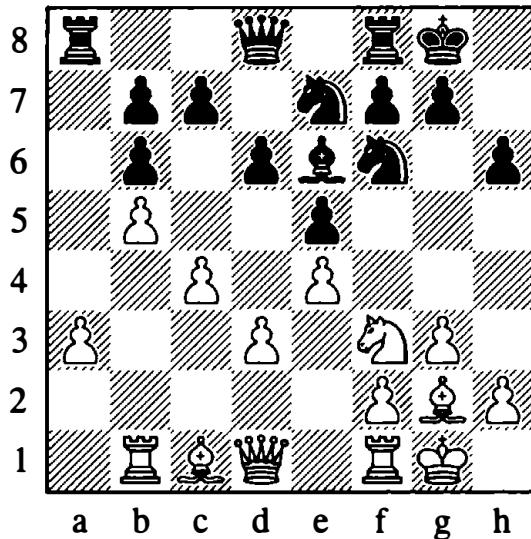
If we compare this variation with the line starting with 6. $\mathbb{Q}xb4?$! from page 112, where the exchange of White's queen's knight for Black's dark-squared bishop was also carried out, we can see that White has far better development. Because of the constant threat of b4-b5, Black cannot open the centre with ...d5, while the doubled b-pawns prevent him from getting any queenside counterplay.

11...h6 12.b5 ♔e7 13.0-0 ♕e6



14.Qb2

I was tempted to give 14.e4 as the main line, but analysis convinced me that White is not well enough developed to fight for space all over the board. The main plan would be to transfer the knight to e3 and play f2-f4, but Black seems to be faster in preparing the counter-blow ...f7-f5.



14... $\text{Qd}7!$

The knight transfers to c5, while clearing a path for the f7-pawn.

White's play would be justified after the pseudo-attacking sequence:

14... $\mathbb{Q}g6$ 15. $\mathbb{Q}e1$ $\mathbb{W}d7$ 16. $\mathbb{Q}c2$ $\mathbb{Q}h3$ 17. $\mathbb{Q}e3$
 h5 18. $\mathbb{W}e2$ h4 19.f4! hxg3 20.hxg3 exf4
 21.gxf4 $\mathbb{Q}h4$ 22.f5 $\mathbb{Q}xg2$ 23. $\mathbb{Q}xg2$ $\mathbb{W}fe8$
 24. $\mathbb{Q}b2\pm$

Black's initiative will soon be extinguished and White's enormous space advantage will be the telling factor.

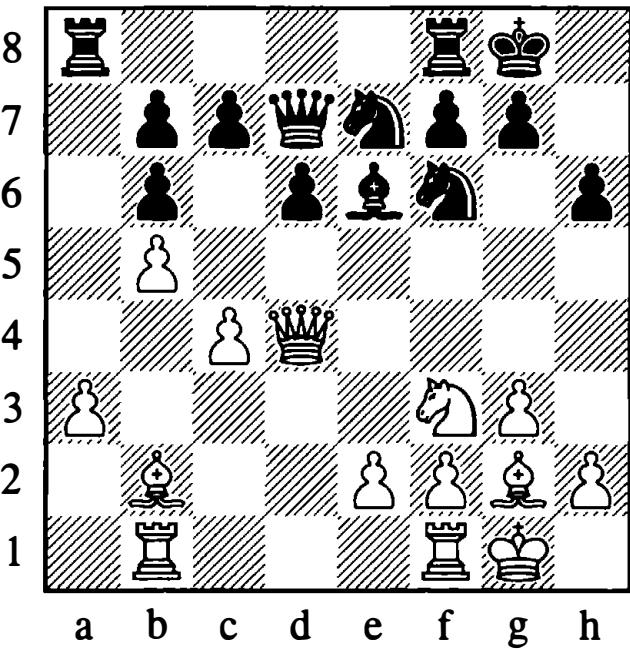
15. $\mathbb{Q}e1 \mathbb{Q}c5=$

By safely defending the b7-pawn, Black is ready to play ...f7-f5.

14... $\mathbb{W}d7$ 15.d4 exd4

15... $\mathbb{Q}xc4$ 16.dxe5 opens the position for the white bishops.

16. $\mathbb{W}xd4\#$



White has two active bishops and a space advantage, but the slight weakness of his queenside slightly restricts his possibilities.

(1.c4 e5 2.g3 $\mathbb{Q}c6$ 3. $\mathbb{Q}c3$ $\mathbb{Q}f6$ 4. $\mathbb{Q}g2$ $\mathbb{Q}b4$ 5. $\mathbb{Q}d5$ 0-0 6.a3!?)

A2) 6... $\mathbb{Q}d6!$

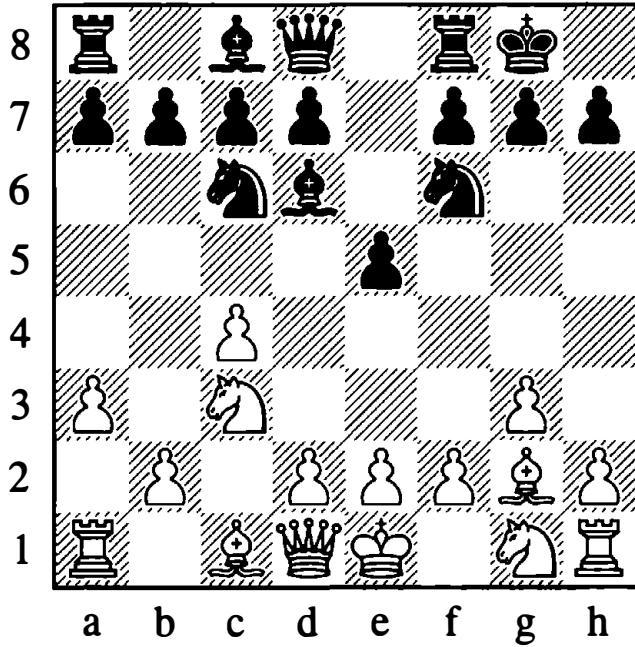
This slightly extravagant move is probably best. It is born out of a concrete approach to the position: Black places the bishop on the safest square and creates the threat of carrying out the standard operation ... $\mathbb{Q}f6xd5$, followed by ... $\mathbb{Q}c6-e7$ and ...c7-c6. Since White is not very well developed, Black can afford to leave his c8-bishop out of play for a short while.

We sometimes see the f8-bishop developed in front of the d7-pawn in open games. The first example I can remember is 1.e4 e5 2. $\mathbb{Q}f3$ $\mathbb{Q}c6$ 3. $\mathbb{Q}b5$ a6 4. $\mathbb{Q}a4$ $\mathbb{Q}f6$ 5. $\mathbb{Q}c3$ $\mathbb{Q}d6$!?. Black plans to castle and regroup with ... $\mathbb{Q}fe8$ and ... $\mathbb{Q}d6-f8$. Later he may win a tempo by playing ...d7-d5, having bypassed the need to defend the e5-pawn with ...d7-d6 at an earlier stage.

7. $\mathbb{Q}c3!$

This is the best way to cross Black's plans.

7. $\mathbb{Q}xf6\#$ activates Black's play after 7... $\mathbb{W}xf6$. White's hope was that after 8.d3 his opponent would have to lose several tempos preparing the development of the light-squared bishop with ...d7-d6, but Black can continue with non-standard play. 8...b6!? 9. $\mathbb{Q}f3$ $\mathbb{Q}b7$ Black is better developed and can think about starting a kingside attack with ... $\mathbb{W}f6-e7$ and ...f7-f5, Plachetka – Kholmov, Trencianske Teplice 1979.



7... $\mathbb{Q}e8$

Black starts the regrouping that is typical in open games.

7...b6 is less advisable than in the previous note. After 8.e3 $\mathbb{Q}b7$ 9. $\mathbb{Q}ge2$ Black will have to remove his knight from f6 to prepare ...f7-f5. In this case White's c3-knight (which was prematurely exchanged in the Plakhetka –

Kholmov game) could return to d5, leaving the b7-bishop passive.

8.d3 ♜f8 9.e3

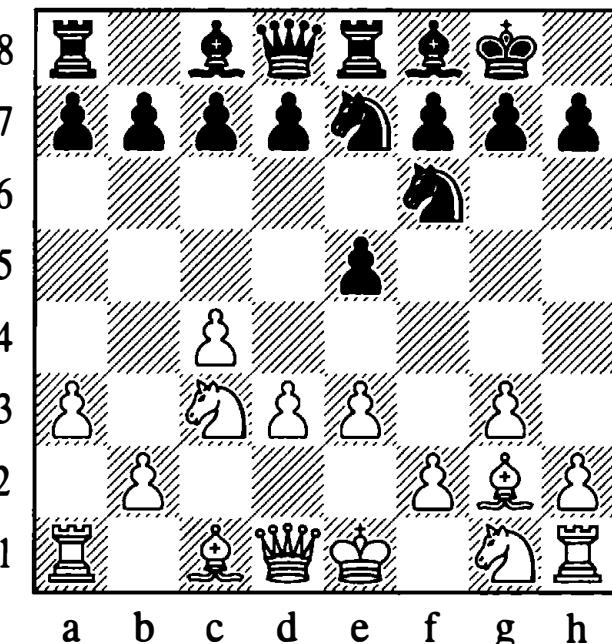
White needs to keep the g2-bishop's diagonal open.

If 9.♘f3 then Black could reach a favourable form of the reversed Dragon with 9...d5 10.cxd5 ♜xd5. If we compare this with the straightforward move order that is characteristic of Chapter 23, Black is a tempo up and has not been forced to retreat his d5-knight.

9...♞e7

Black also has to be careful with his time. With the text move he prepares to open the centre with ...d7-d5.

If he had continued regrouping with 9...g6 10.♗ge2 ♜g7 11.0–0 d6, then White would play 12.b4, gaining a tempo over the following line of the reversed Closed Sicilian: 1.c4 e5 2.♘c3 ♜c6 3.g3 g6 4.♗g2 ♜g7 5.d3 d6 6.e3 ♜f6 7.♗ge2 0–0 8.0–0. Besides, in this specific line Black would not spend a tempo on ...♝f8-e8, but instead play 8...♝e6 9.♘d5 ♜d7.



10.♘f3!N

This move is consistent with the policy of rapid development and also puts the e5-pawn under pressure.

Readjusting the pawn structure with 10.e4 loses too much time. 10...c6 11.♗g5 ♜g6 12.♗ge2 h6 13.♗d2 ♜e7 14.f4 exf4 15.gxf4 d5 White's control of the centre did not yield him any advantage because of his lack of development, Spraggett – Adams, Hastings 1989.

10...♜g6

The pawn sacrifice 10...d5?! 11.♗xe5 d4 does not work because of 12.exd4 ♜xd4 13.♘f3 ♜f5† 14.♗e2± and nothing can prevent White from castling.

11.0–0 c6 12.e4

Once his king is away from the centre, White can afford to lose a tempo with the e-pawn to prevent Black's central expansion.

12...h6

The hurried 12...d5 can be met by 13.cxd5 cxd5 14.♗g5± when White will gain control of the d5-square, while the g6-knight has no active prospects.

13.♝e1 d6

Black has to refrain from central activity, since 13...d5?! loses a pawn to 14.exd5 cxd5 15.cxd5 ♜xd5 16.♗xd5 ♜xd5 17.♗xe5±.

14.b4

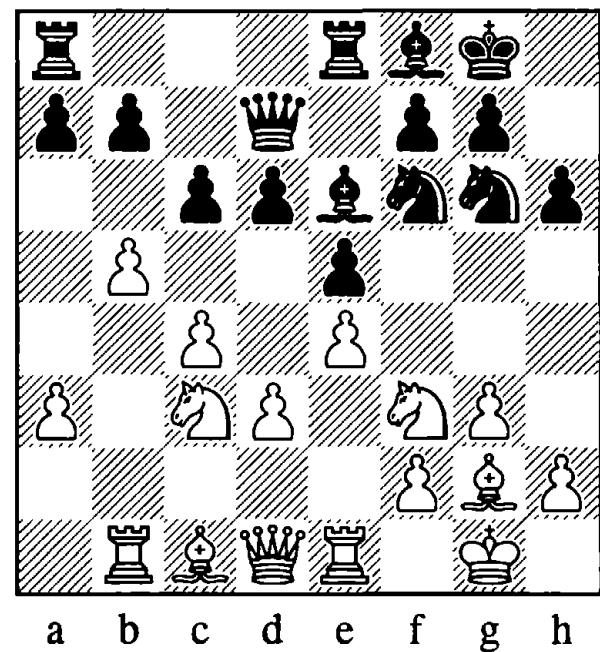
This queenside attack is typical for the English Opening, but I would be tempted to transpose to an Old Indian position with 14.d4±. Strictly speaking, this would mean playing a whole tempo down compared with the normal lines, but after having transferred the knight to g6, Black has fewer forces available on the queenside to prepare his most active plan, which is based on ...a7-a6 and ...b7-b5.

14...♝e6 15.b5 ♜d7

Black should not weaken the d5-square merely for the sake of keeping the queenside

closed. After 15...c5 Black's knights do not have easy access to d4, and White can slowly regroup with 16.♘d2± followed by ♘f1-e3 and ♘cd5. Capturing on d5 would clear the c4-square for the e3-knight after cxd5, while otherwise White would slowly prepare to open the kingside with f2-f4.

16.♗b1



White has some initiative on the queenside, although it is difficult to say whether this ensures him an advantage. Although I am prepared to play this line with White occasionally, I do not entirely trust that it offers an objective advantage.

(1.c4 e5 2.g3 ♘c6 3.♘c3 ♘f6 4.♗g2 ♘b4 5.♘d5 0-0)

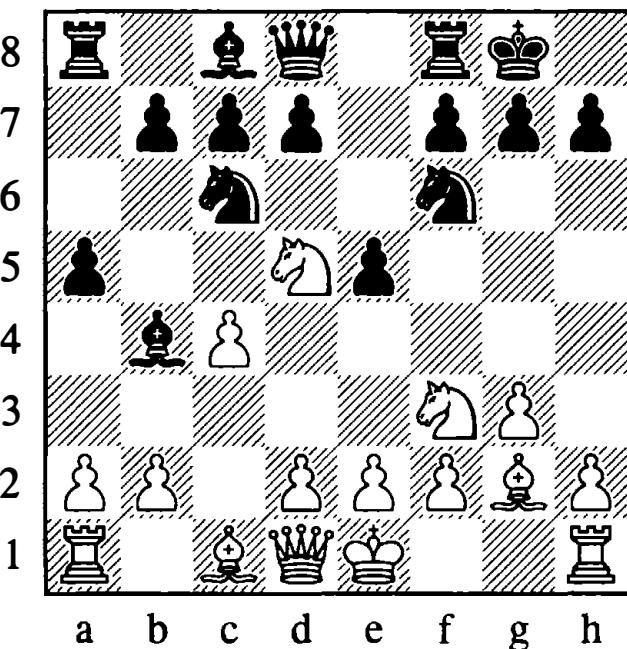
B) 6.♘f3!

Switching back to the main lines of the 1...e5 English is the best chance to retain a strategic initiative.

Black's main continuations are 6...♗c5 (Chapter 11) and 6...e4 (Chapter 12), but B1) 6...a5 and B2) 6...♗e8 need to be examined as well.

(1.c4 e5 2.g3 ♘c6 3.♘c3 ♘f6 4.♗g2 ♘b4 5.♘d5 0-0 6.♘f3)

B1) 6...a5



This move does not have much independent value: play is likely to transpose to lines examined above. Moreover, since White was not planning to capture on b4 anyway, Black's last move may be merely a loss of time.

7.0-0 ♜e8

By keeping his queen's pawn on d7, Black retains the possibility of ...♘xd5 followed quickly by ...c7-c6.

7...d6 8.d3 h6 9.e3 ♜c5 would transpose to the main lines, while 8...♘xd5 9.cxd5 ♘d4 10.♘xd4 exd4 11.e4± is very similar to Yusupov – Petrosian, Chapter 11, line A1.

8.d3 ♘xd5

Black cannot play 8...d6 because of 9.♗g5. If 8...h6 White should play 9.b3 followed by ♜b2, when play is likely to transpose to the main lines, since the bishop is not doing much on b4.

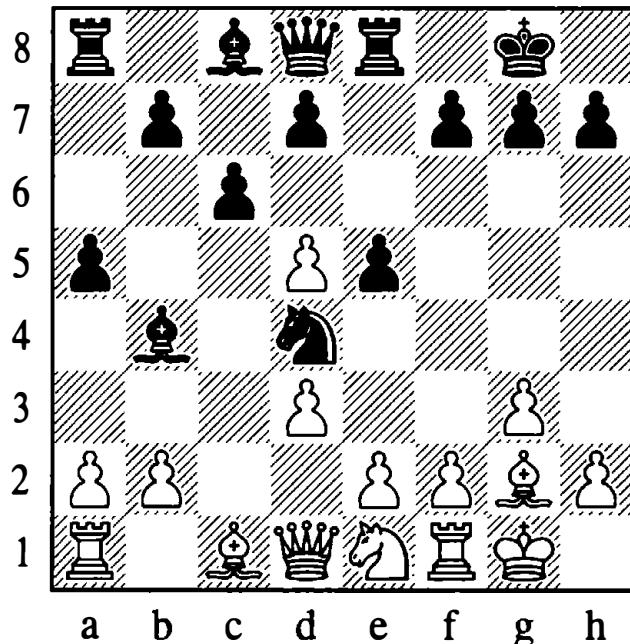
9.cxd5 ♘d4 10.♘e1

Quite an unusual picture: after just ten moves, two of Black's pieces have already

crossed the middle of the board, while White's pieces are mostly arranged on the first rank. However, this does not mean that Black has an active position. Due to their lack of stability, the b4-bishop and the d4-knight will cost Black a few tempos, while White's only far-advanced pawn will disrupt Black's natural development.

10...c6

Black leaves the a3-f8 diagonal open so his bishop can retreat later. The more natural 10...d6 would illustrate the previous comment quite convincingly after 11.e3 $\mathbb{Q}f5$ 12. $\mathbb{Q}c2$ $\mathbb{Q}c5$ 13.d4 exd4 14.e4 $\mathbb{Q}e7$ 15. $\mathbb{Q}xd4\pm$ with the usual space advantage for White.



11.e3 $\mathbb{Q}f5$ 12. $\mathbb{Q}c2$ $\mathbb{Q}f8$ 13.f4

With his e3-pawn safely defended, White can quietly play this thematic move, fighting for space on the kingside.

13...exf4 14. $\mathbb{Q}xf4$ $\mathbb{Q}e7$ 15. $\mathbb{Q}d2$

We already know that White should ignore the tension in the centre because $dxc6$ would help Black develop his queenside after ... $d7xc6$. After the text move White is threatening $\mathbb{W}h5$ and $\mathbb{B}af1$.

15... $\mathbb{Q}xd5$ 16. $\mathbb{Q}xd5$

With all his other pieces well placed, White can give up his "English" bishop without a trace of regret.

16... $\mathbb{cxd5}$ 17. $\mathbb{W}h5$ $\mathbb{W}e7$ 18. $\mathbb{B}af1$

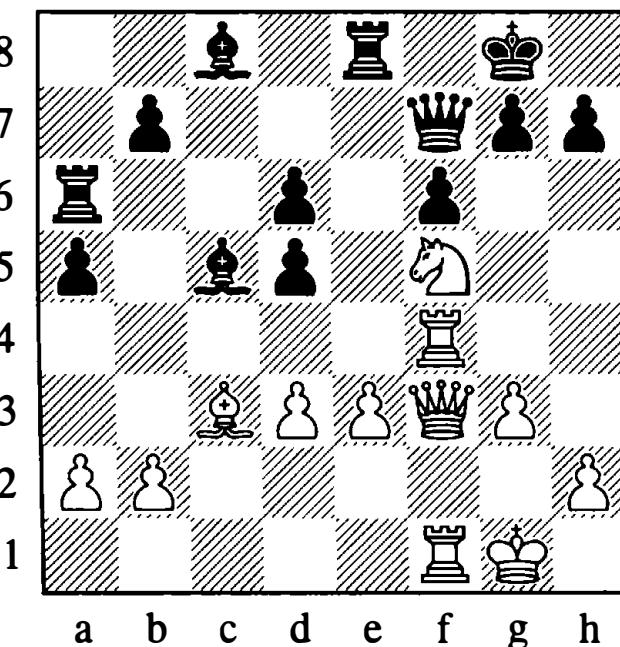
White bets on a kingside attack, but the safer 18. $\mathbb{Q}d4!?$ N would have ensured a stable advantage after 18...d6 19. $\mathbb{W}xd5$ $\mathbb{Q}e6$ (this is the only way to neutralize the pressure against the f7-pawn) 20. $\mathbb{Q}xe6$ $\mathbb{W}xe6$ 21. $\mathbb{W}xe6$ fxe6 22. $\mathbb{B}c4\pm$. White has the more active bishop, controls the important c-file, and Black's queenside has been weakened.

18...f6 19. $\mathbb{Q}c3$ $\mathbb{W}f7$ 20. $\mathbb{W}f3$ $\mathbb{B}a6$ 21. $\mathbb{Q}d4$ $\mathbb{Q}c5$

21...d6 would have taken the f5-square under control, but left the a6-rook isolated from the kingside. White could continue with 22.g4, when Black's extra pawn would not be important for the moment. Still, this would have been an improvement for Black. By trying to "activate" his dark-squared bishop first, Black only succeeds in isolating it from the kingside.

22. $\mathbb{Q}f5$ d6?

Black overlooks a simple combination. Instead 22... $\mathbb{Q}h8$ would have given some chances of resisting.



23. $\mathbb{Q}h6\#!$ gxh6 24. $\mathbb{B}xf6$

The impossibility of continuing to defend the d5-pawn costs Black dearly.

24... $\mathbb{W}e7$ 25. $\mathbb{W}xd5\#$ $\mathbb{E}e6$ 26. $\mathbb{W}e4!$

Threatening $\mathbb{B}g6\#$.

26... $\mathbb{Q}xe3\#$ 27. $\mathbb{W}xe3$

Black resigned in Stein – Lepeshkin, Soviet Championship 1965.

(1.c4 e5 2.g3 $\mathbb{Q}c6$ 3. $\mathbb{Q}c3$ $\mathbb{Q}f6$ 4. $\mathbb{Q}g2$ $\mathbb{Q}b4$ 5. $\mathbb{Q}d5$ 0–0 6. $\mathbb{Q}f3$)

B2) 6... $\mathbb{E}e8$

This variation is currently out of fashion, but the general character of the position is already familiar to us.

7.0–0 $\mathbb{Q}xd5$

The exchange on d5 would be more difficult to carry out under favourable circumstances after:

7... $\mathbb{Q}f8$

The bishop will be passive on f8.

8.d3 h6 9. $\mathbb{Q}d2$ a5

Or 9...d6 10. $\mathbb{Q}c3$ $\mathbb{Q}xd5$ 11.cxd5 $\mathbb{Q}e7$ 12.e4 c6 13.dxc6 $\mathbb{Q}xc6$ 14.d4± when White had a space advantage and active pieces in Stein – Barcza, Zagreb 1972.

10. $\mathbb{Q}c3$ d6 11. $\mathbb{Q}d2$ $\mathbb{Q}xd5$ 12.cxd5 $\mathbb{Q}e7$ 13.d4!

In the lines where Black's dark-squared bishop is active, White cannot play this move after retreating his knight from f3 to d2.

13...exd4 14. $\mathbb{Q}xd4$ c5

In Polugaevsky – Podgaets, Moscow 1973, White should have played

15.dxc6!N $\mathbb{Q}xc6$

Or 15...bxc6 16. $\mathbb{Q}c4\pm$ with pressure against the weakened queenside.

16. $\mathbb{Q}f3\pm$

With comfortable control of the d4-square.

7...e4 8. $\mathbb{Q}h4$ transposes to line A of Chapter 12.

7... $\mathbb{Q}c5$

This has occasionally been played. The position with ...d6 instead of ... $\mathbb{E}e8$ is familiar to us. By placing the rook on the e-file, Black hopes to reach a favourable form of the structure arising after ... $\mathbb{Q}xd5$.

8.d3 $\mathbb{Q}xd5$

This is the critical continuation.

If 8...h6 9.e3 then the usefulness of ... $\mathbb{E}e8$ would be questionable.

9.cxd5 $\mathbb{Q}d4$ 10. $\mathbb{Q}d2$

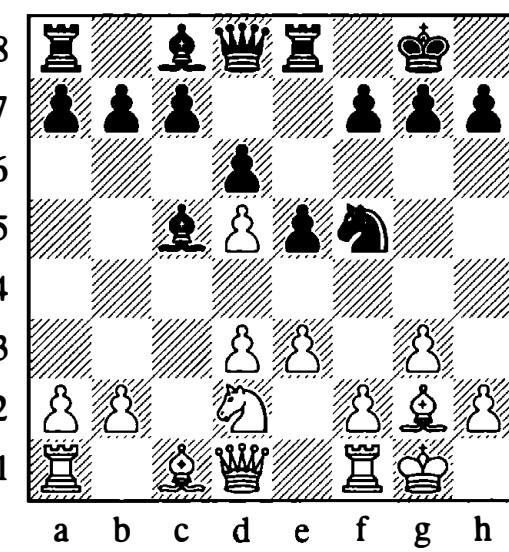
The main point is that after 10. $\mathbb{Q}xd4$ exd4, the pawn break e2-e4 is more difficult to carry out than usual.

10...d6

10...c6 is premature in view of 11.e3 $\mathbb{Q}f5$ 12. $\mathbb{W}c2$ $\mathbb{Q}f8$ 13.d4±. White has taken advantage of Black's hanging minor pieces to seize the initiative.

11.e3 $\mathbb{Q}f5$

The knight stands badly on f5. It lacks active squares and is, for the time being, making ...f5-f4 impossible.



12. $\mathbb{Q}c4$ $\mathbb{Q}d7$

12...a5 fails to prevent White's queenside activity and only creates unnecessary weaknesses. 13. $\mathbb{Q}d2$ a4 14.b4± Serper – Korchnoi, New York 1996.

12... $\mathbb{Q}e7$ 13. $\mathbb{Q}d2$ c6 is premature, because

of Black's lack of development. 14.b4 ♜b6 15.dxc6 bxc6 16.b5± White has easy play on the queenside, Gheorghiu – Benko, Las Palmas 1972.

13.♗d2 a6 14.b4 ♜a7 15.♘a5 ♜c8 16.♗c1 ♜h6

Black prepares a kingside attack, but the knight still needs to find a better square. Meanwhile, the pressure along the c-file becomes ever stronger.

17.♗c3 f5 18.♗c2 ♜e7 19.♗c1 ♜b6

This position was reached in Botvinnik – Ree, Wijk aan Zee 1969. White could have gained an overwhelming advantage with:

20.♘c4!N ♜a7 21.♘b2 ♜b6 22.♘a4±

8.cxd5 ♘d4 9.♘xd4 exd4 10.e3 dxe3

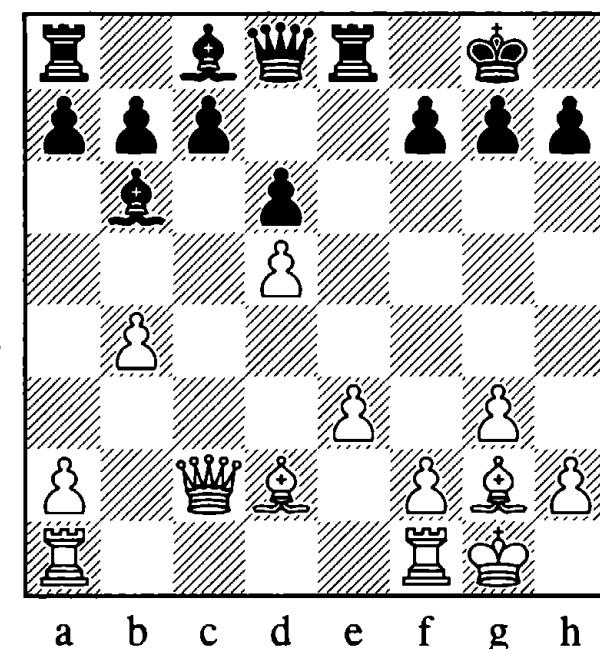
This is an obvious concession, leaving White with his customary space advantage in the centre.

Attempting to maintain symmetry in the centre with 10...c5 leads to problems with development after: 11.a3 ♜a5 12.exd4 cxd4 13.d6! A familiar pawn sacrifice, slowing down Black's development. 13...♗f6 (Timman analysed 13...♗e6 14.b4 ♜b6 15.d3 ♜xd6 16.♗f4 ♜e6 17.♗d5± with a strong initiative.) 14.d3 ♜xd6 15.♗f4 ♜a6 16.b4 ♜d8 17.♗e1 ♜f8 18.♗h5 d6 19.♗d5 ♜d7 20.a4± White was better all over the board in Timman – Huebner, Sarajevo 1991.

11.dxe3 d6 12.♗d2 ♜c5

Black preserves the bishop from exchange so that the c7-pawn will be well defended. After 12...♗xd2 13.♗xd2, followed by ♜ac1-c3 and ♜fc1, White would have strong pressure.

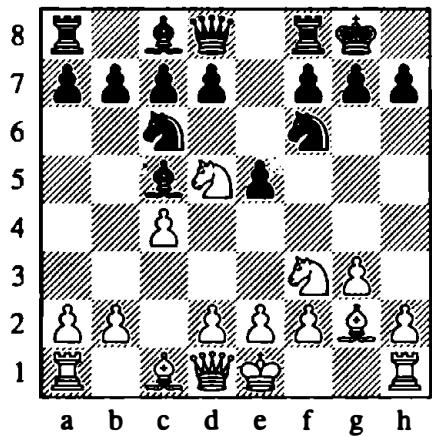
13.b4 ♜b6 14.♗c2±



White has a stable advantage, although Black's position proved difficult to crack in Ribli – Andersson, Reggio Emilia 1991.

Conclusion:

The lines examined above after 6.♘f3 are rightly considered to be inferior for Black. Black does nothing to challenge White's superiority in the centre and is doomed to long-term passivity.



Reversed Rossolimo

5...0-0 6.♘f3! ♖c5

Variation Index

1.c4 e5 2.g3 ♘c6 3.♘c3 ♘f6 4.♗g2 ♗b4 5.♘d5 0-0 6.♘f3!

6...♖c5 7.0-0 d6 8.d3

A) 8...♘xd5 9.cxd5 ♘d4 10.♘xd4

p 124

A1) 10...exd4

p 124

A2) 10...♘xd4

p 127

B) 8...h6 9.e3

p 130

B1) 9...a6

p 132

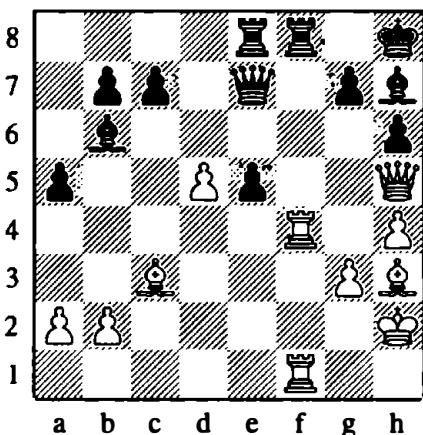
B2) 9...a5

p 134

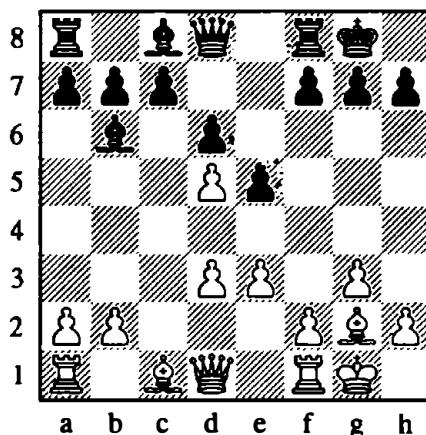
B3) 9...♗g4

p 137

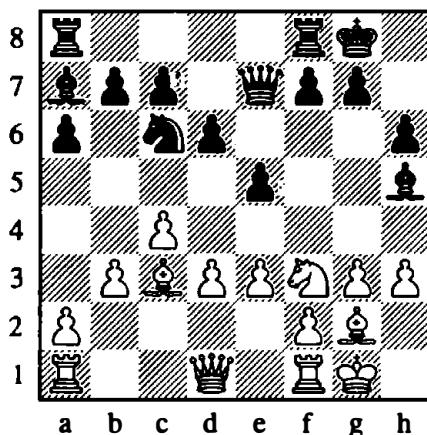
A1) a late novelty



A2) after 11...♗b6



B1) after 14...♗e7



28.♗xf8†!N

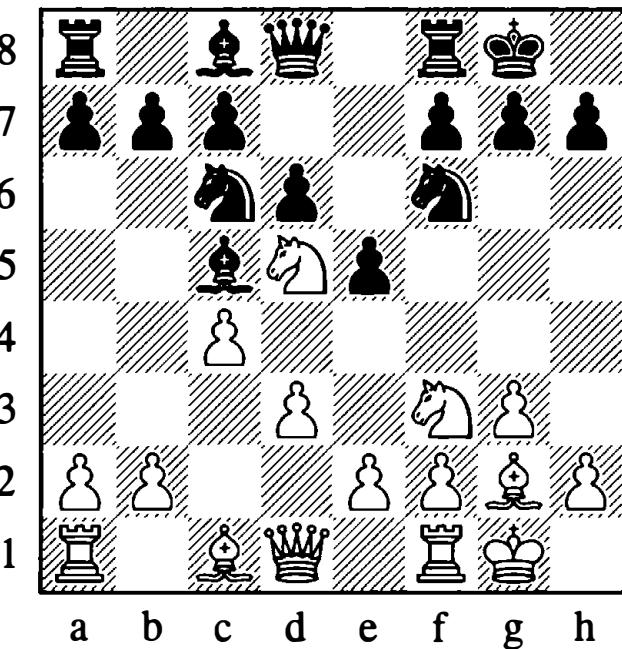
12.a4!

15.♗c2!N

**1.c4 e5 2.g3 ♜c6 3.♘c3 ♜f6 4.♗g2 ♜b4
5.♘d5 0-0 6.♘f3! ♜c5**

Black retreats his bishop from the exposed b4-square and gets ready to start a discussion about the effectiveness of the move ♜c3-d5.

7.0-0 d6 8.d3



Both sides have completed their first phase of development and we can note a strong resemblance with the main tabiya of Chapters 3 and 4.

Black faces the strong threat of ♜c1-g5, which restricts his choice to A) 8...♘xd5 and B) 8...h6.

(**1.c4 e5 2.g3 ♜c6 3.♘c3 ♜f6 4.♗g2 ♜b4
5.♘d5 0-0 6.♘f3 ♜c5 7.0-0 d6 8.d3**)

A) 8...♘xd5

Black is unwilling to spend a valuable tempo on a pawn move and releases the tension at once. Although this will most likely lead to simplifications, White's space advantage in the centre offers him a lasting superiority.

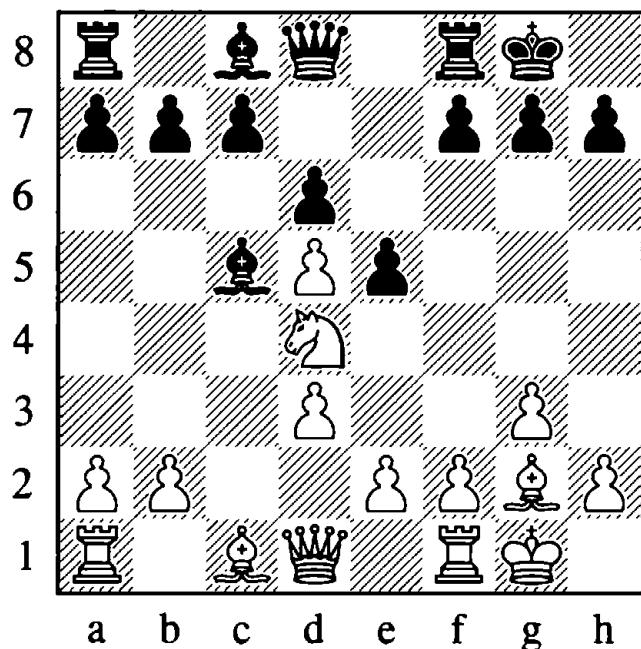
9.cxd5 ♜d4

The knight has to jump forward, since after 9...♘e7 White can win space in the centre with 10.d4 exd4 11.♘xd4±.

10.♘xd4

White cannot avoid the exchange of knights, because 10.♘e1 or 10.♘d2 would be strongly met by 10...♗g4.

It is better to clarify matters in the centre immediately rather than play a neutral developing move such as 10.♘d2, when Black would win time for his development with 10...♘xf3† 11.♗xf3 ♜h3.



We will examine A1) 10...exd4 and A2) 10...♗xd4.

(**1.c4 e5 2.g3 ♜c6 3.♘c3 ♜f6 4.♗g2 ♜b4
5.♘d5 0-0 6.♘f3 ♜c5 7.0-0 d6 8.d3 ♜xd5
9.cxd5 ♜d4 10.♘xd4**)

A1) 10...exd4

Black opens the e-file for his rook(s) and gains some space in the centre, but practice has proved that this structure allows White to cut Black's dark-squared bishop out of play.

11.♗d2

White threatens to win space on the queen-side with 12.b4 ♜b6 13.a4. If Black reacts with 13...a5, then the bishop exchange after 14.bxa5 will leave the c7-pawn chronically weak. 13...a6 14.a5 would have a similar effect.

11...a5

This move transposes to the main game from this variation, in which a slightly different move order was played: 10.♗d2?! a5?! 11.♗xd4 exd4 Black should have preferred 10...♗xf3† 11.♗xf3 ♖h3, with rapid development.

Black has an alternative that is worth analysing:

11...♗g4

John Shaw suggested this move with the aim of preventing e2-e4 and establishing strong pressure against the e2-pawn.

12.b4 ♖b6 13.h3

It is important to force the bishop to define its intentions.

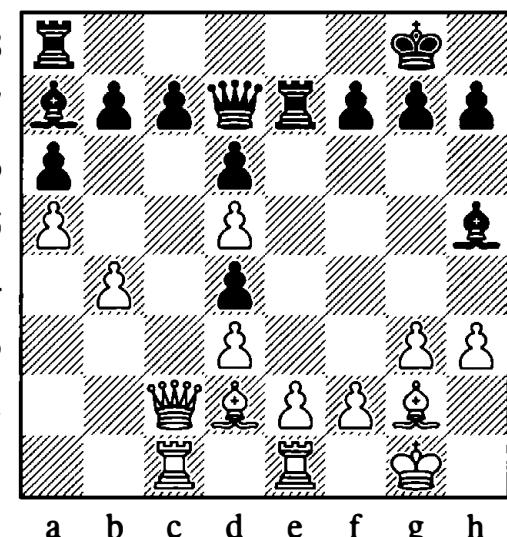
13...♗h5

This is the only way to keep the e2-pawn pinned. White should not hurry with g3-g4, which would weaken his kingside, but keep it in reserve for the cases when removing the pressure against the e2-pawn is likely to allow him to obtain an advantage elsewhere on the board.

14.a4 a5

This is the most ambitious move, fighting for space on the queenside.

Instead 14...a6 15.a5 ♖a7 leaves the bishop passive and the c7-pawn vulnerable. 16.♗c1 ♖e8 17.♗e1 ♖d7 18.♗c2 ♖e7 Black has to defend his seventh rank. Trading the c7-pawn for the e2-pawn would leave Black's queenside in danger.

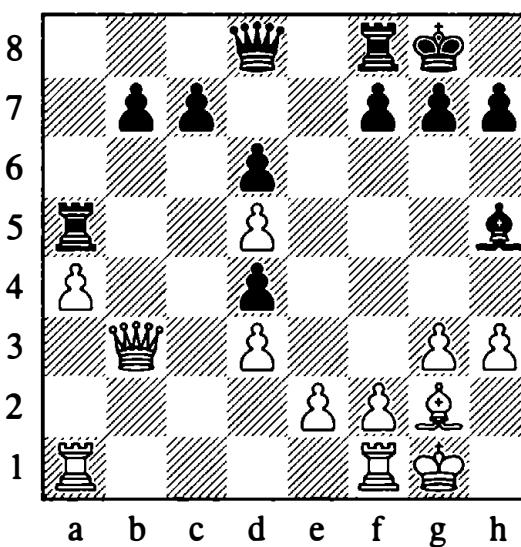


19.e4! The same pawn break, leading to the same structural modification as in the main game. 19...dxe3 20.fxe3 ♖ae8 21.d4 ♖g6 22.♗c4±

White plans to strengthen his position with ♖h2, ♖f1-f4, preparing to put his centre into motion. Compared to the main variation, Black's dark-squared bishop is more passive.

15.bxa5 ♖xa5 16.♗xa5 ♖xa5 17.♗b3!

Black has prevented being pushed back on the queenside, but after the exchange of the dark-squared bishops his d4- and c7-pawns are weak.



17...b6

The series of pawn captures initiated by 17...♗xe2 ends up badly for Black: 18.♗fe1 ♖e8 19.♗xb7 ♖xd3 20.♗xe8† ♖xe8 21.♗xc7 ♖a6 22.♗d1± Followed by ♖xd4.

18.g4 ♖g6 19.♗c4±

Black will lose a pawn and his counterplay based on ...f5 is unlikely to offer sufficient compensation.

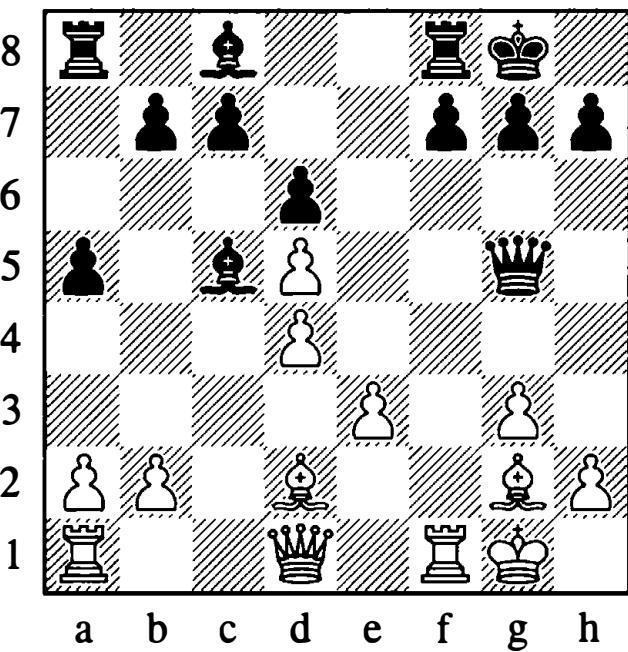
12.e4!

White starts fighting for space in the centre with this push.

12...dxe3

Black cannot tolerate White's mobile kingside majority, but after this exchange his bishop will remain out of play.

13.fxe3 ♜g5 14.d4



This unusual structure is a lot better for White than it may seem at first sight. The compact mass of central pawns splits the position in two and White's space advantage ensures him better possibilities of transferring his forces from one wing to the other.

Black's worst piece is the dark-squared bishop, which has consumed three valuable tempos so far.

14...♝b6

After 14...♝b4? 15.♝c1!+ Black would have to give up his a-pawn with 15...a4 16.a3 ♜a5 in order to save the bishop.

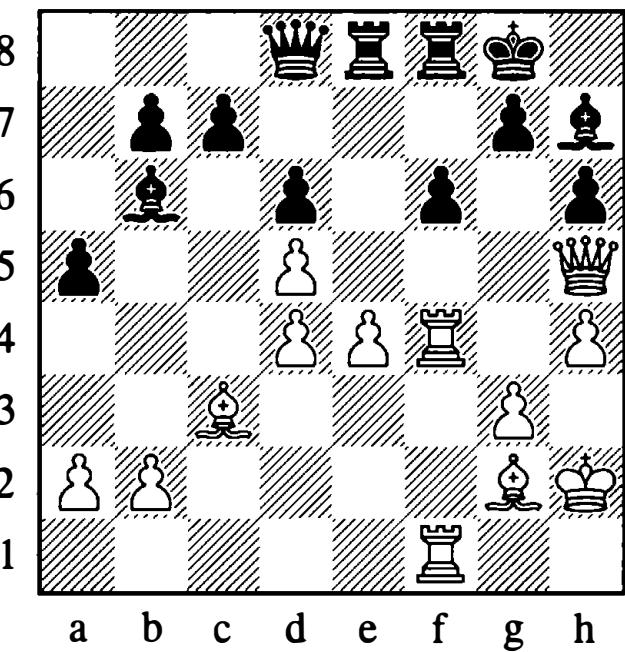
**15.♝f4 ♜d7 16.♝b3 ♜f5 17.♝afl ♜g6
18.♝c4**

White has activated his pieces and will start preparing the advance of his central pawns. Black's position has no chronic weaknesses, but remains quite passive.

18...♝e7 19.h4 h6 20.♝h2 ♜ae8 21.♝e2

According to Yusupov, 21.e4?! would have been premature because of 21...c5!, with counterplay. Before playing e3-e4 White needs to place all his pieces on optimal squares.

21...♝d8 22.♝c3 f6 23.e4 ♜h7 24.♝h5!±



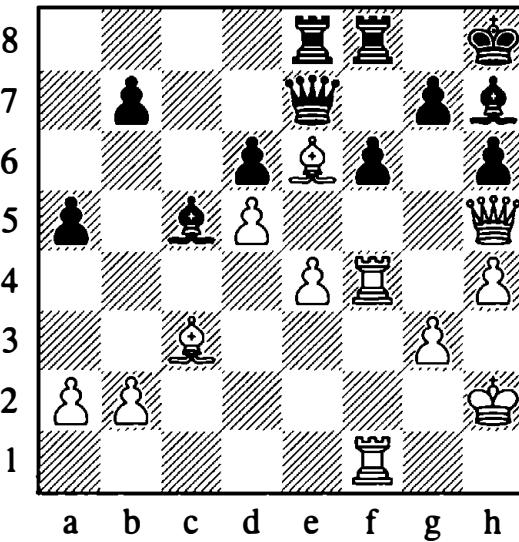
According to Yusupov, White has a clear advantage. Indeed, the central break e4-e5 is hard to stop and the b6-bishop cannot help its king in any way.

24...♝e7

24...g5? loses a pawn to 25.♝xf6! taking advantage of the hanging e8-rook.

25.♝h3 ♜h8

Yusupov gives this elegant variation: 25...c5?
26.dxc5 ♜xc5 27.♝e6† ♜h8



28.♝xf6!! This spectacular sacrifice is justified because White is attacking with all his pieces, while the c5-bishop is completely out of play: 28...gxsf6 29.♝xf6 ♜xf6 30.♝xe8† ♜xe8 31.♝xf6 mate

26.e5!

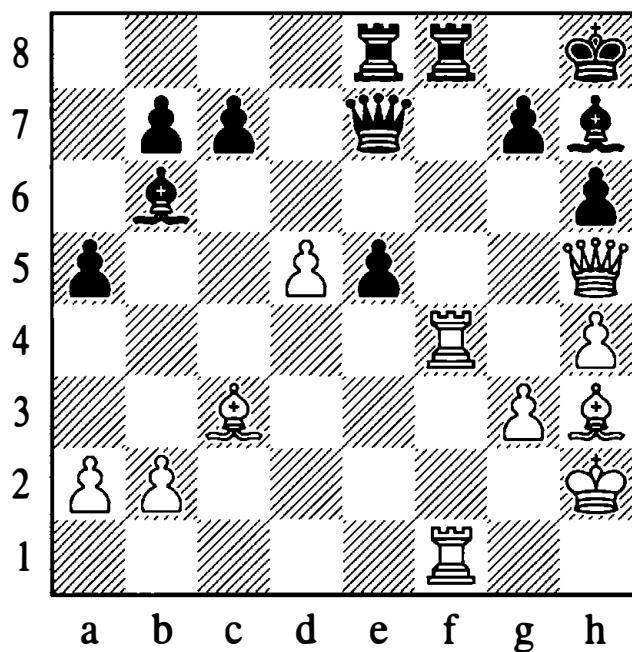
Everything was prepared for this move.

26...dxe5

Or 26...fxe5 27.♗f7 g6 28.♗xe7 gxh5 29.dxe5+– as given by Yusupov.

27.dxe5 fxe5

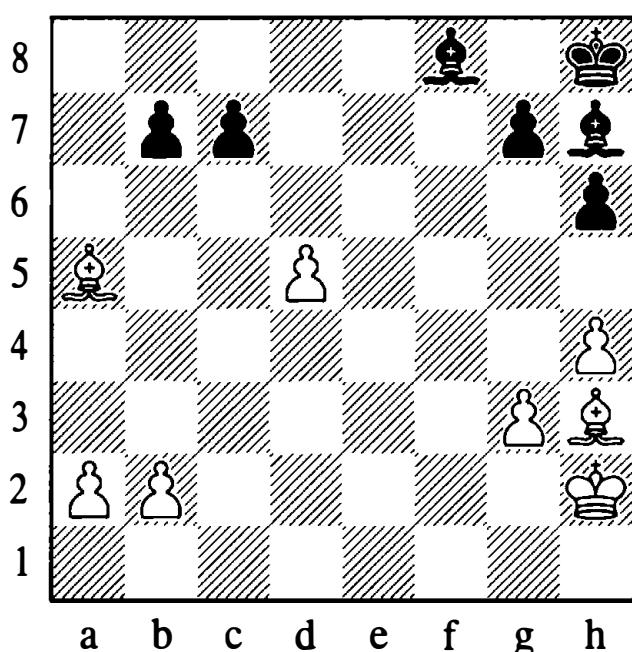
So far, we have been following the game Yusupov – Petrosian, Vrbas 1980.



28.♗xf8†!N ♗xf8 29.♗xe5!

White wins an important tempo because of the hanging position of Black's pieces.

29...♜c5 30.♗xe7 ♜xe7 31.♗xf8† ♜xf8 32.♗xa5+–



White should have no problem winning this ending: he will soon create a passed pawn on the a-file that will be hard to stop.

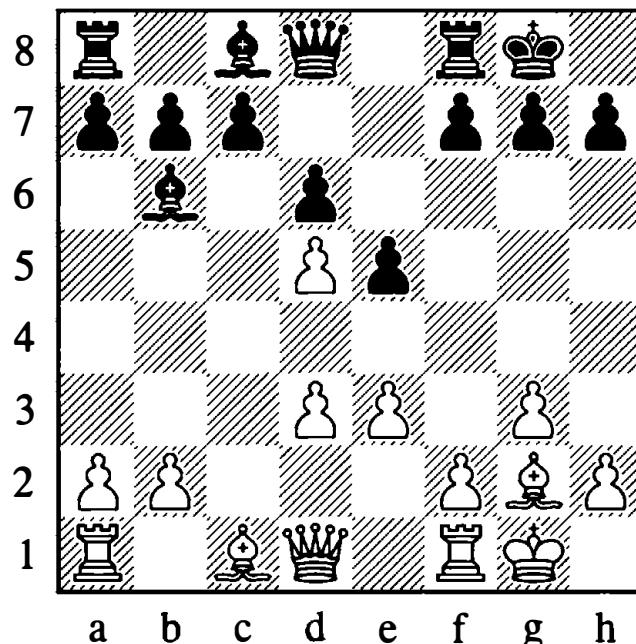
(1.c4 e5 2.g3 ♜c6 3.♗c3 ♜f6 4.♗g2 ♜b4 5.♗d5 0–0 6.♗f3 ♜c5 7.0–0 d6 8.d3 ♜xd5 9.cxd5 ♜d4 10.♗xd4)

A2) 10...♜xd4

Black keeps his central structure intact, as well as the possibility of a later kingside attack based on ...f5-f4.

11.e3 ♜b6

This is the safest square. After 11...♜c5 12.♗d2 a5 13.♗c3± the threat of d3-d4 is annoying.



This is the first time in this chapter that an important tabiya has nothing to do with the structures from Chapter 2 to 6, so we need an abstract examination of the position.

The situation may seem completely uninteresting, because of the absence of knights and of obvious pawn breaks. In reality, White has good chances to impose his will if he finds a way to combine his ideas on both wings. On the queenside he will try to win space and challenge the stability of the b6-bishop, thus transforming the c7-pawn into a potential weakness.

Specifically, he will push his a- and b-pawns as far as allowed. On the kingside it seems to be Black who has attacking chances, but a well-timed f2-f4 would not only keep things under control, but also allow White to develop a strong initiative on this wing.

In view of all this, White will have to keep the dark-squared bishop on d2 to defend the e3-pawn and put some pressure on the queenside. It is remarkable that several strong grandmasters including Bent Larsen, a great expert on the flank openings, have hurried to place the bishop on c3, thus removing any argument against Black's natural ...f5-f4.

Another aspect to consider is the placement of the major pieces. The half-open c-file is key in this position, but the details about which rook to place on c1 will have to be worked out concretely in each specific position.

Black's possible pawn breaks are ...c7-c6 and ...f5-f4, but neither is easy to carry out because of the action of the enemy bishops. Therefore, the exchange of the g2-bishop with ... $\mathbb{Q}c8-f5$, ... $\mathbb{W}d8-d7$ and ... $\mathbb{Q}f5-h3$ looks like a reasonable plan.

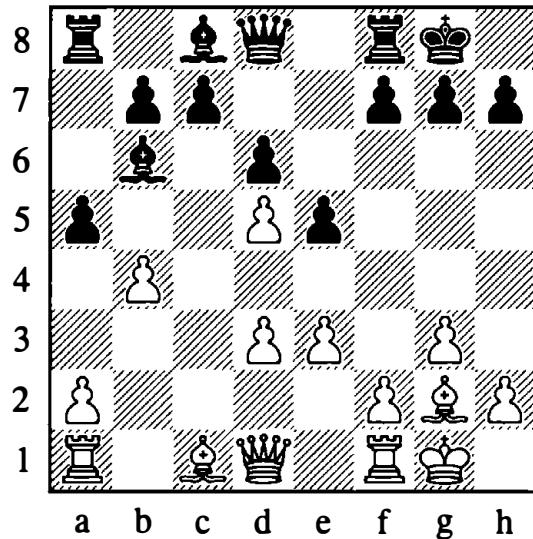
12.a4!

This is the right way to start operations on the queenside.

12.b4?! was successful in a game between two World Champions of different generations, as after the unambitious 12... $\mathbb{Q}d7$?! White gained space on the queenside with 13.a4 a5 14.b5 and went on to win a good game in Karpov – Anand, Frankfurt (rapid) 1997.

Unfortunately, Black can take advantage of the premature advance of the b-pawn with a counterpunch:

12...a5!



White has no good way to keep his queenside attack going.

13. $\mathbb{Q}d2$

This is the most consistent answer.

13.b5 allows Black to isolate the b-pawn from the rest of the army with 13...a4!. After 14. $\mathbb{Q}d2$ $\mathbb{Q}d7$ 15. $\mathbb{B}b1$ $\mathbb{W}e8$ White can no longer defend his pawn.

My only game with this line ended in a draw after 13.bxa5 $\mathbb{Q}xa5$ 14. $\mathbb{B}b2$ $\mathbb{W}e7$ 15.e4, Marin – Komarov, Cairo 2001.

13...axb4 14. $\mathbb{Q}xb4$ $\mathbb{Q}d7$ 15.a4 f5!

Well timed counterplay: the threat of ...f5-f4 soon forces White to retreat his bishop.

Instead 15... $\mathbb{Q}a5$ 16. $\mathbb{W}d2$ b6 17. $\mathbb{B}fc1$ would offer White long-term pressure along the c-file.

16.a5 $\mathbb{Q}a7$ 17. $\mathbb{Q}d2$ $\mathbb{Q}b5$!

Black transfers this bishop to a6 to consolidate his queenside and also keep the d3-pawn under pressure.

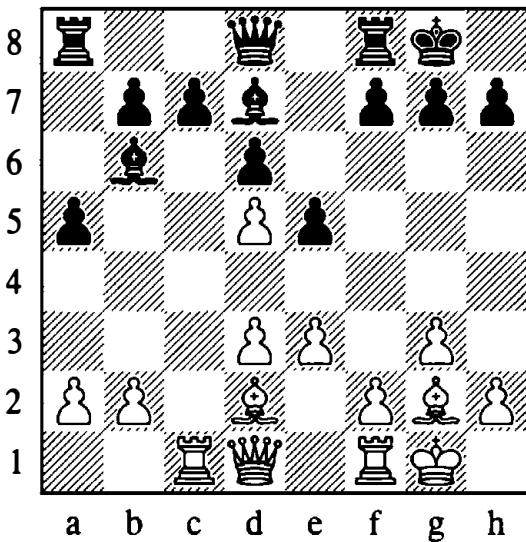
18. $\mathbb{W}b3$ $\mathbb{W}d7$ 19. $\mathbb{B}fb1$ $\mathbb{Q}a6=$

Black has a comfortable position.

Soon after my game with Komarov, I discovered that 12.a4 was much better than 12.b4. Although White will not obtain such a big space advantage as in the Karpov – Anand game, the general plan remains very much the same.

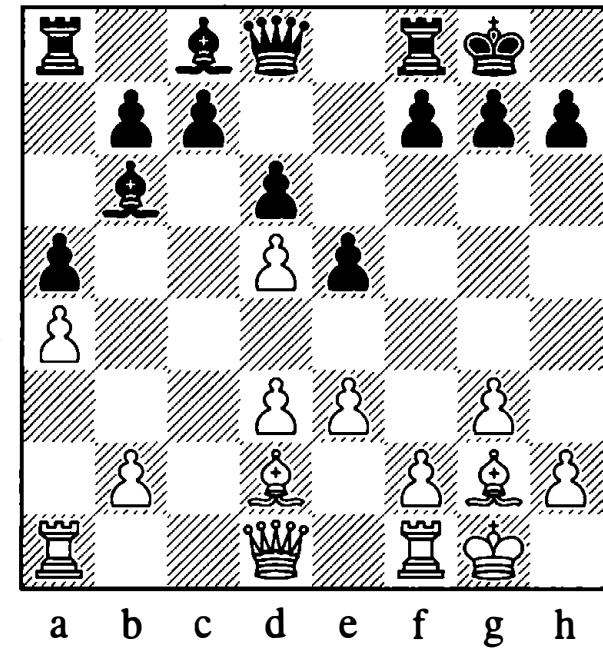
White can also start with the developing move 12. $\mathbb{Q}d2$, leaving a2-a4 for later, but he should

not refrain from it forever. 12...♜d7 13.♝c1
a5



This is a good moment to play 14.a4!N, securing the c4-square for the rook and transposing to the line from the comment to Black's 13th move below.

12...a5 13.♝d2



13...♚f5

Black avoids any pawn moves and tries to keep his position as solid as possible.

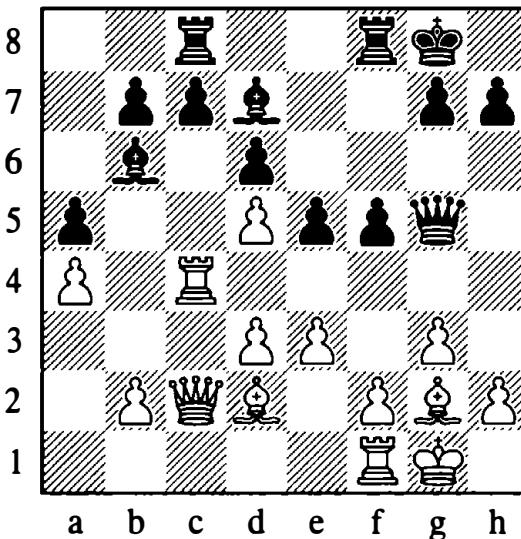
It is interesting to check what would happen if Black chose an aggressive plan:

13...f5 14.♝c1 ♜d7 15.♝c4 ♜g5 16.♛c2

The kingside attack based on ...f5-f4 is impossible to launch and Black always has to be ready for f2-f4. It is remarkable that

the presence of the pawn on b2 (rather than b5 as in the Karpov – Anand game above) offers White additional ideas if Black removes the queen's rook from its initial position.

16...♝ac8



17.b4!

After this well-timed break Black's dark-squared bishop loses its stability and thus so does Black's whole queenside.

17...axb4 18.♛xb4 ♜a8

The return of the rook fails to prevent a4-a5, but there is nothing better, since 18...f4 simply loses a pawn to 19.exf4 exf4 20.♛d2.

19.a5 ♜xa5 20.♛xa5 ♜xa5 21.♝xc7 ♜d8 22.♝xb7±

White has won a pawn, while the seventh rank has been weakened.

After 13...♜d7 14.♝c3?! f5 Black had kingside counterplay in Cu. Hansen – Anand, Middelfart (rapid) 2003.

Instead 14.♝c1!N is likely to transpose to the previous line.

14.♛b3 ♜d7 15.♛c4

Under the new circumstances this is a good square for the queen. It would be too early to play ♜ac1 or ♜fc1, because it is not entirely clear yet which rook belongs on the c-file: this mainly depends on Black's next move.

After the careless 15.f4?!, which is generally part of White's main plan, Black would react with 15... $\mathbb{E}ae8$ 16. $\mathbb{E}ae1$ e4!, taking control of the important e4-square.

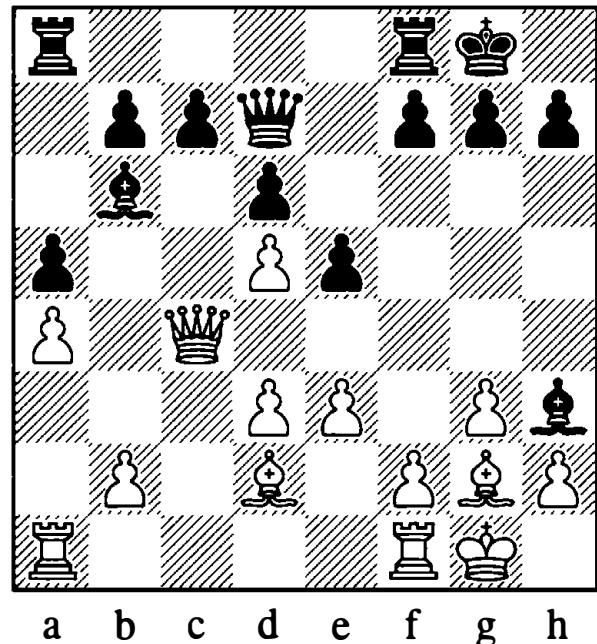
15... $\mathbb{E}h3$

Black has several alternatives to this natural move, but they all have drawbacks.

Preparing ...c7-c6 with 15... $\mathbb{E}ac8$ would leave the a-file unattended, allowing 16.b4! $\mathbb{E}a8$ 17.b5± when White has improved his position with gain of time.

15... $\mathbb{E}fc8$ would reduce the danger of a kingside attack, allowing White to continue with 16. $\mathbb{E}fc1\pm$, keeping Black passive.

In the event of a half-waiting move such as 15... $\mathbb{E}fe8$, White would have time to initiate kingside operations with 16. $\mathbb{E}ae1$ $\mathbb{E}ac8$ 17.f4±, since 17...c6?! 18. $\mathbb{W}b3!$ undermines Black's stability due to his hanging bishops.



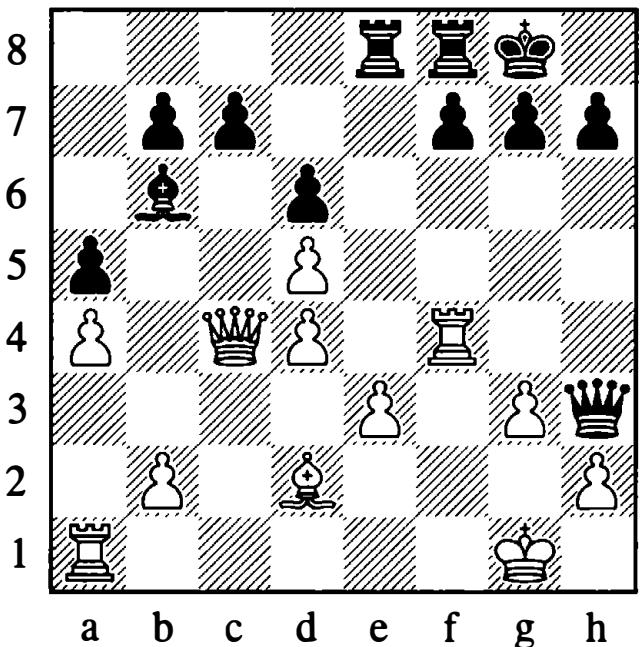
16. $\mathbb{Q}xh3!$

Since there is no danger of an attack it is useful to force the black queen far from the centre.

16... $\mathbb{W}xh3$ 17.f4 $\mathbb{E}xf4$

17... $\mathbb{E}fe8$ would allow 18.f5± when White has more space on many parts of the board.

18. $\mathbb{E}xf4$ $\mathbb{E}ae8$ 19.d4±



This structure is familiar to us from the game Yusupov – Petrosian, as examined in line A1. Whenever I see such a position, I cannot help thinking about the great originality of the English Opening. It may seem that the last move only prepares an inferior endgame, with a bad bishop against a good one because the d4- and e3- pawns are placed on dark squares. In fact, the endgame is far away and in the middlegame White's central pawn chain restricts the enemy bishop. In the absence of knights, the apparent weakness of the e4-square is not relevant and in the future White can consider placing his bishop on c3 and advancing his e-pawn to gain space.

Playing ...f5 would just weaken Black's kingside. He should not forget that he will practically be a bishop down on that side of the board.

(1.c4 e5 2.g3 $\mathbb{Q}c6$ 3. $\mathbb{Q}c3$ $\mathbb{Q}f6$ 4. $\mathbb{Q}g2$ $\mathbb{Q}b4$ 5. $\mathbb{Q}d5$ 0–0 6. $\mathbb{Q}f3$ $\mathbb{Q}c5$ 7.0–0 d6 8.d3)

B) 8...h6

Black parries the threat of $\mathbb{Q}c1-g5$ and keeps the tension in the centre. For the time being,

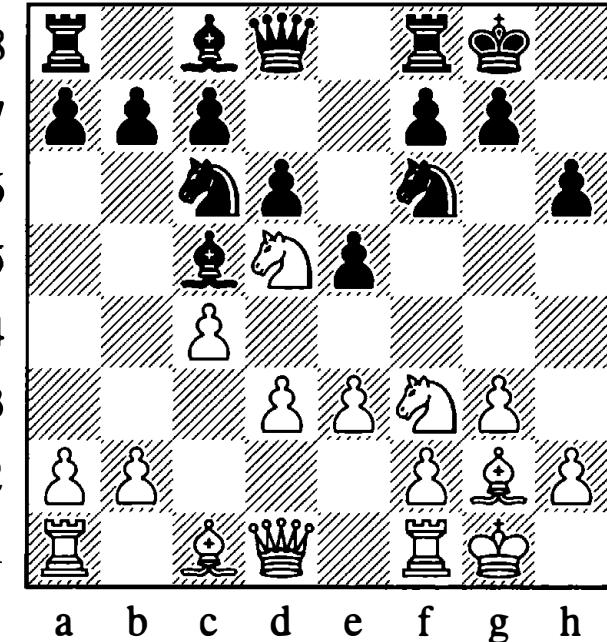
the similarity with the main variations from Chapters 3 and 4 is preserved, but both players' efforts should focus on the possibility of ...♘f6xd5.

9.e3

After having induced Black to spend a tempo on ...h7-h6, White strengthens his control over the centre, without regretting closing the c1-h6 diagonal. In principle, White should complete the development of his queenside as soon as possible, but his last move is a necessary preliminary step to achieving that.

For instance, 9.♗d2 prematurely obstructs the queen's view, allowing Black to play 9...♘xd5 10.cxd5 ♘e7!, without fearing 11.d4 because the d4-square is not well enough controlled by White.

9.b3 is also inaccurate because of 9...♘xd5 10.cxd5 ♘d4 11.♘xd4 ♘xd4 and Black wins some time compared to line A2.



White intends to develop slowly with 10.b3 and 11.♗b2, which would create the strong positional threat of d3-d4. This gives Black some time to organize his counterplay.

First of all, it should be mentioned that the careless 9...♗e6??, aiming to increase the

pressure against the d5-knight, loses a piece to 10.d4 followed by ♘xf6† and d4-d5.

Black should look for the optimal way to make the exchange on d5 playable. He can do that by retreating the bishop to a7, after either ...a7-a6 or ...a7-a5. Alternatively, he can pin the f3-knight with ...♗g4, hoping to prevent d3-d4 after ♘f6xd5, c4xd5, ♘c6-e7.

When ...♘f6xd5 becomes a real threat, White will face a difficult choice. Should he exchange on f6, winning time but activating the enemy queen, or retreat the knight to c3, which may look like a loss of time? We shall see that the answer depends on the concrete circumstances.

We will examine **B1) 9...a6**, **B2) 9...a5** and **B3) 9...♗g4**.

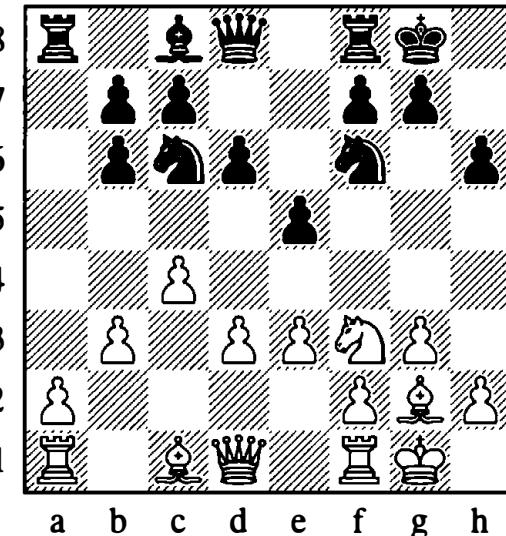
9...♗b6

This allows White to eliminate this important bishop with:

10.♘xb6!N

10.♘xf6†?! unfavourably releases the tension, allowing Black to obtain active play after 10...♗xf6 11.♗d2 ♗g4 12.h3 ♗h5 13.b4 a5 14.b5 ♘b4, Marin – Lobron, Internet 2001.

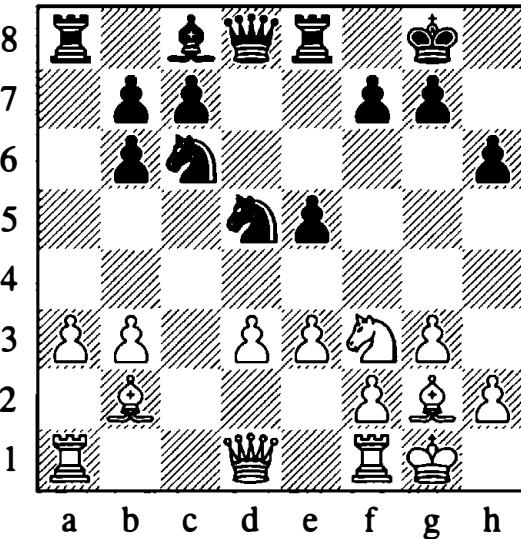
10...axb6 11.b3



11...d5

Opening the centre is a better plan than launching a kingside attack. After 11... $\mathbb{Q}h7$ 12. $\mathbb{Q}b2$ f5 13. $\mathbb{W}d2$ g5 14.b4 f4 15.b5 $\mathbb{Q}e7$ 16.exf4 gxf4 17. $\mathbb{W}e2$ followed by d3-d4±, the weakness of the long dark diagonal will tell.

12.cxd5 $\mathbb{Q}xd5$ 13. $\mathbb{Q}b2$ $\mathbb{E}e8$ 14.a3±



White will play $\mathbb{W}d1-c2$ and b3-b4, with a pleasant strategic initiative. In view of the increasing pressure against the e5-pawn, Black will have to weaken his position with either ...f6 or ...b5 (which prevents b4-b5). White would place his rooks on c1 and d1 and look for a favourable moment to open the centre by means of e4 followed d4, when his pair of bishops would offer him a strong initiative.

(1.c4 e5 2.g3 $\mathbb{Q}c6$ 3. $\mathbb{Q}c3$ $\mathbb{Q}f6$ 4. $\mathbb{Q}g2$ $\mathbb{Q}b4$ 5. $\mathbb{Q}d5$ 0-0 6. $\mathbb{Q}f3$ $\mathbb{Q}c5$ 7.0-0 d6 8.d3 h6 9.e3)

B1) 9...a6

This is the least committal way of preparing the bishop's retreat to a7, in the spirit of Black's play from Chapter 3. On the other hand, this move does not in any way fight for space on the queenside.

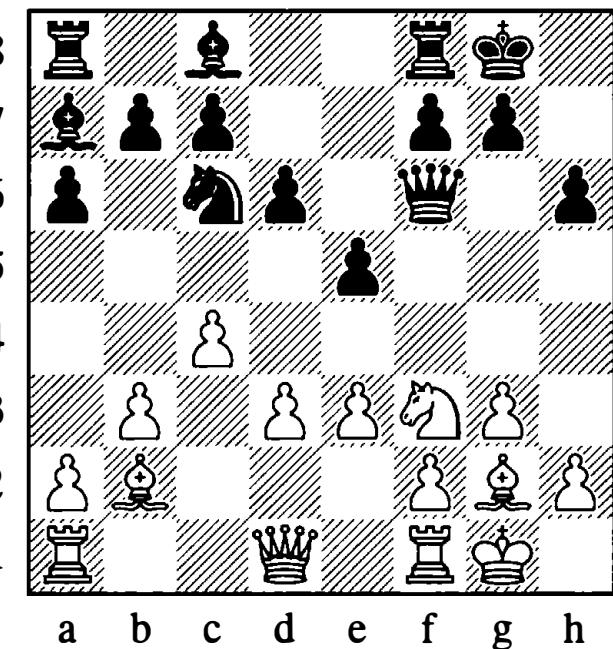
10.b3!

We are familiar with this move: White aims for rapid development without creating unnecessary weaknesses.

10... $\mathbb{Q}a7$

This is the critical moment of the opening. White can no longer ignore the threat of ... $\mathbb{Q}f6xd5$, and has to release the tension.

11. $\mathbb{Q}xf6\#$ $\mathbb{W}xf6$ 12. $\mathbb{Q}b2$



In principle, the exchange on f6 has improved the position of the black queen, but after White's last move it becomes clear that Her Majesty will not feel too comfortable on the same diagonal as White's dark-squared bishop.

White plans to start his queenside attack with $\mathbb{Q}b2-c3$, b3-b4 and a2-a4, keeping the e5-pawn under pressure at the same time.

12... $\mathbb{Q}g4$

Black must create this pin, which somewhat restricts White's mobility.

13.h3 $\mathbb{Q}h5$ 14. $\mathbb{Q}c3$

White is in no hurry to play g3-g4, since this would give Black an excellent target to attack. White will unpin his knight only when this yields some concrete advantage.

14... $\mathbb{W}e7$

Black willingly releases the pressure against the f3-knight. With his queen in front of the

f-pawn, he cannot start a kingside attack, while White can make slow but consistent progress on the opposite wing.

The following is a possible course of events if Black keeps his queen on f6:

14...a5 15.a3 ♜b6

Black clears the a-file, which makes b3-b4 temporarily impossible because of ...a5xb4 followed by ...♝a8xa1, when White would not be able to keep the b4-pawn and the f3-knight defended at the same time. Therefore, he finally has to weaken his king's position.

16.g4 ♜g6 17.♗d2 ♜e7

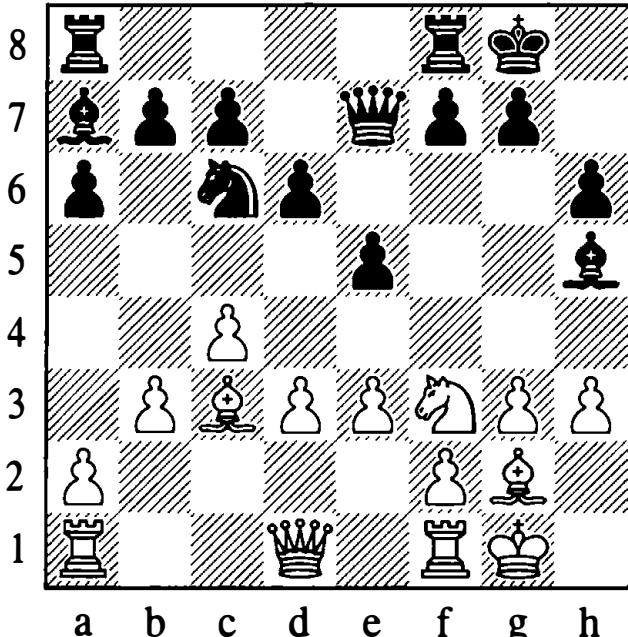
Black prepares to open the kingside with ...f7-f5.

18.b4 f5 19.c5!

An important move in White's queenside attack. Finally, the pressure against the e5-pawn bears fruit.

19...fxg4 20.hxg4 axb4 21.axb4 ♜xa1 22.♗xa1 dxс5 23.b5±

White will play ♘f3xe5 next, with complete domination.

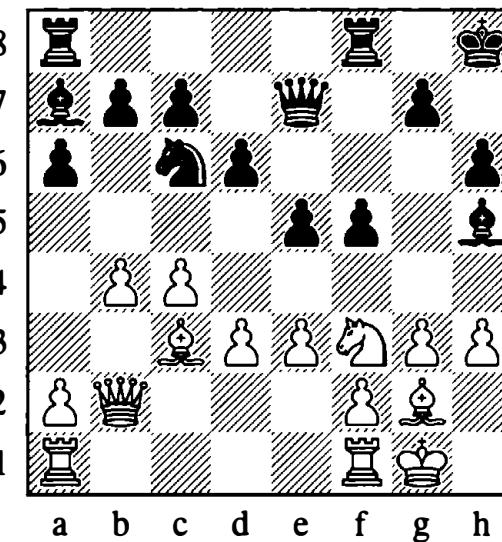


15.♗c2!N

The most flexible and the best continuation. White can play b3-b4 anytime, but the highest priority is to take pre-emptive measures against Black's threatened attack with ...f7-f5-f4.

15.b4

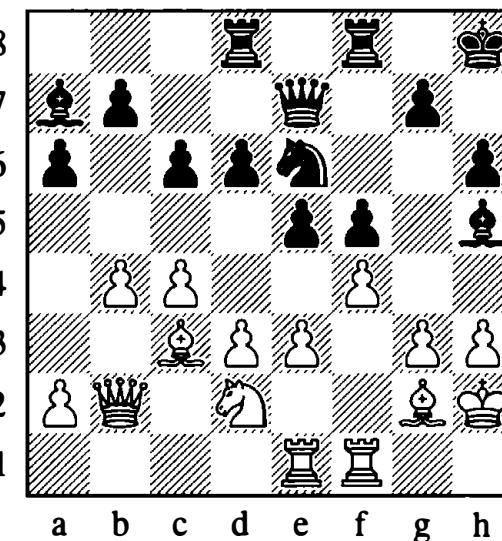
This offers Black good counterplay:
15...f5 16.♗b3 ♔h8 17.♗b2



White has spent a considerable amount of time creating a rather useless battery along the long diagonal.

17...e4!N

This is an improvement over the slow regrouping move 17...♗d8?!, when the game would re-enter a favourable path for White:
18.♗ae1 ♜e6 19.♗d2 c6 20.♔h2 ♜ad8
21.f4



White has managed to stabilize the position and has comfortable play, Rogozenko – Wells, Germany 1999.

18.dxe4 fxe4 19.♗h4

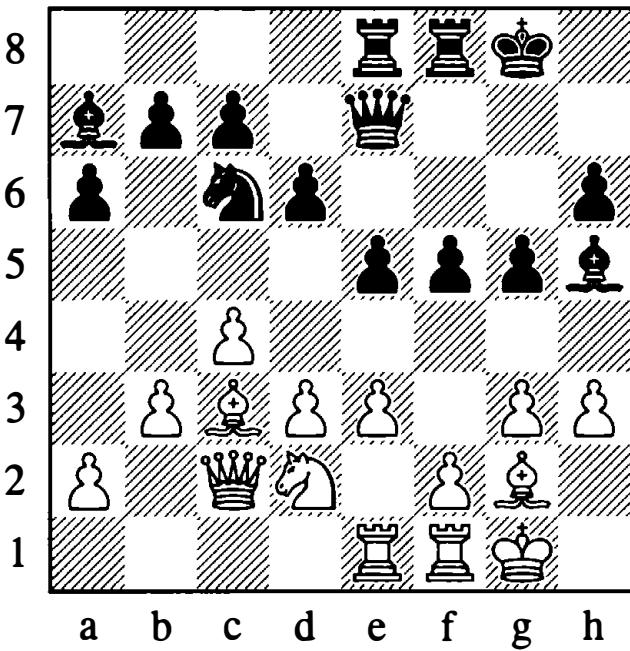
19.♗d2 is strongly met by 19...♘f3!.

19...♗ae8

Black has completed the first phase of piece mobilization and can hope to successfully

continue his attack. The weakness of the g6-square allows certain tactical tricks, but they all involve the move g3-g4, which weakens the white king's position and makes the situation unclear.

15...f5 16.Qae1 Qae8 17.Qd2 g5



18.Qh2

White plans to consolidate with f2-f4, followed by the standard queenside attack, which practically forces Black to continue advancing his f-pawn.

18...f4 19.exf4 gxf4 20.g4!

This is the first step to stabilizing the position: White prepares an excellent blockading square on f3 for his knight.

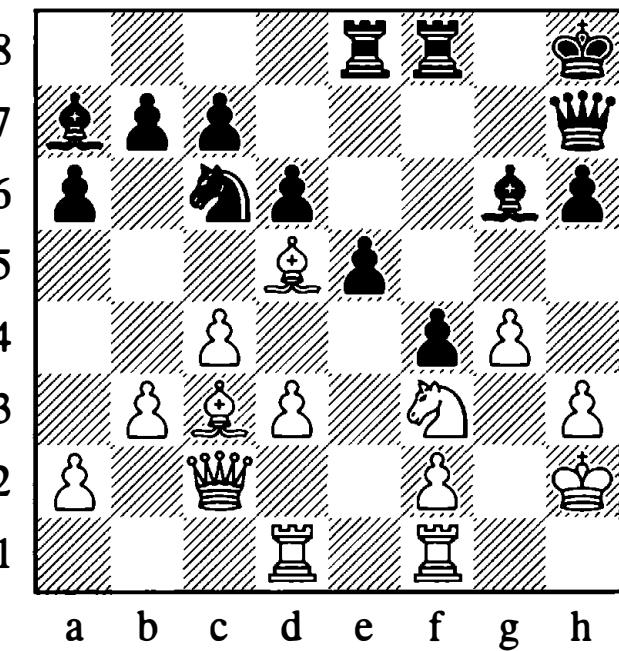
20...Qg6

The attack initiated by 20...Qg4?! 21.hxg4 Wh4† can be parried with a series of accurate moves: 22.Qg1 Qe7 (22...Qxg4 allows White to include his queen in the defence with 23.Qd1!+) 23.Qf3 Qxg4 24.Qh2 Wh4 25.Qd5† Wh8 26.Qh1†

21.Qd5† Wh8 22.Qf3 Wh7 23.Qd1†

White has blunted Black's kingside attack, and safely defended his only weakness (the d3-pawn). The e5-pawn is under serious pressure,

allowing White to cut the a7-bishop out of play with b3-b4 followed by c4-c5, when ...dxc5 would weaken the long diagonal with near decisive results. If Black does not capture on c5 then White will find a favourable way of opening the centre with d3-d4.



23...Wg7

Black increases his control over the d4-square, in order to prepare ...Qd4.

23...Qd4 loses a pawn to 24.Qxd4 Qxd4 25.Qxb7, and Black also fails to get adequate compensation after 23...Qd4 24.Qxc6 bxc6 25.Qxd4 exd4 26.Qxd4†. The presence of opposite-coloured bishops favours White, who has the safer king and the more active bishop.

24.b4 Qd4

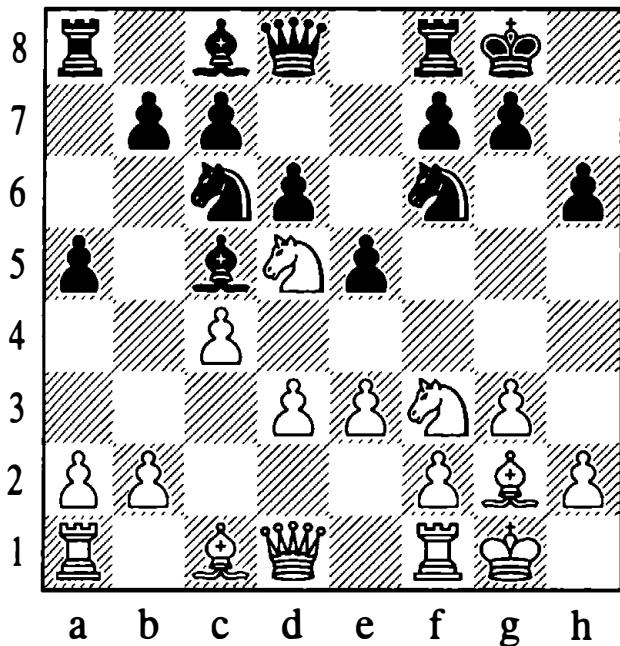
This is the last moment when the bishop can be saved from joyless captivity.

25.Qxc6 bxc6 26.Qxd4 exd4 27.Wa4†

Black will soon lose some pawns, while his bishop is on an unfavourable diagonal where it cannot create dangerous threats.

(1.c4 e5 2.g3 Qc6 3.Qc3 Qf6 4.Qg2 Qb4 5.Qd5 0-0 6.Qf3 Qc5 7.0-0 d6 8.d3 h6 9.e3)

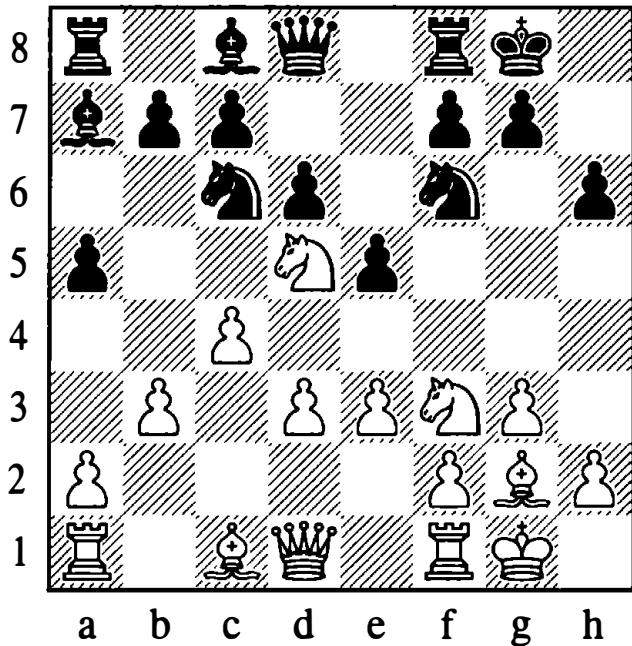
B2) 9...a5



Since a queenside attack is an important part of White's plan in line B1, it makes sense to slow it down.

10.b3 ♘a7

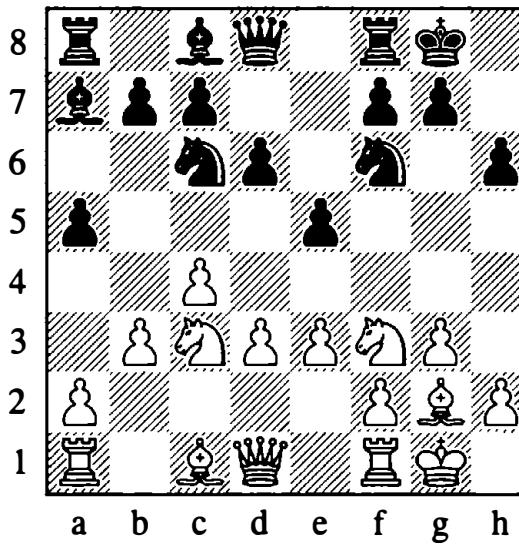
The premature 10...♘xd5 11.cxd5 ♘e7 leaves Black with a slightly inferior position after 12.d4 exd4 13.♘xd4 ♖d7 14.♗b2 c6??. The last move is the only way to prevent White from consolidating his space advantage, but Black's central pawns will now be vulnerable. 15.dxc6 bxc6 16.♗c2 ♘b7 17.♗fd1 ♗fd8 18.♗ac1± White exerts strong pressure on the black pawns, Huebner – Karpov, Bad Kissingen 1980. We saw a little of this game earlier on page 87.



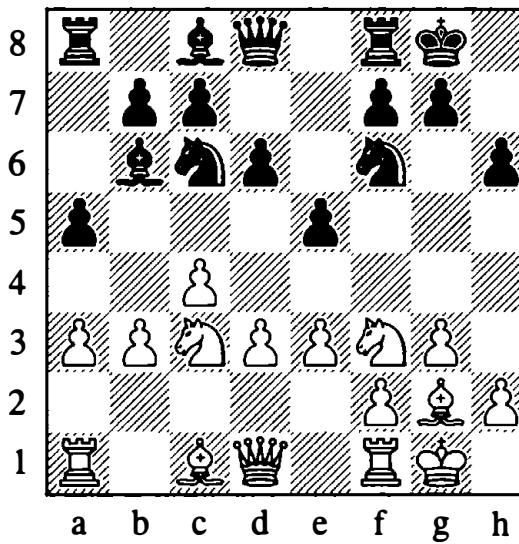
11.♘c3!

Since Black is well prepared for the queenside attack, but has weakened the b5-square, this knight retreat is the best reaction to the threat of ...♘f6xd5. The reader may have noticed that this position is almost identical to the position after the 9th move of the game Gurevich – Sokolov, from Chapter 4, line B, page 49.

Let's compare the positions.



Current line with 4...♘b4



The line with 4...♘c5

There are two minor differences between the positions. First of all, in the present line the bishop is on a7 instead of b6. Both squares have downsides, because the bishop will be exposed to intermediate moves (♘c3-b5 and ♘c3-a4, respectively). Secondly, White has not yet played a2-a3. In the aforementioned game b3-b4 was not part of White's plan for a

long time, so it may be useful to have the b3-pawn well defended. The only problem is that sometimes ... $\mathbb{Q}c6$ -b4 may be disruptive, but we will see that White can live with that.

The knight retreat with 11. $\mathbb{Q}c3$ has rarely been seen in practice. I first saw the idea in Game 5 of the Korchnoi – Petrosian Candidates match in Il Ciocco 1977, but White had played the weaker 10.a3.

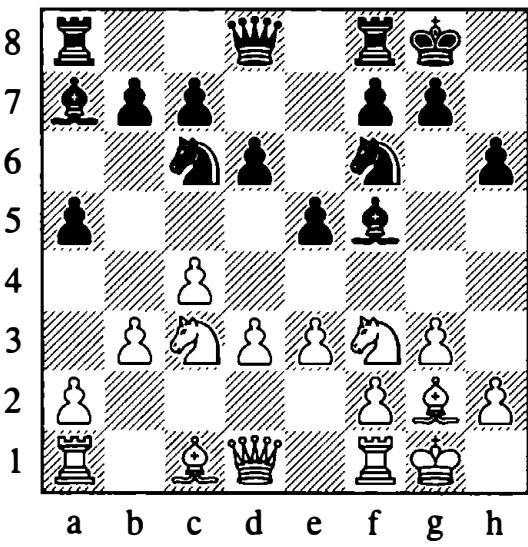
The same plan as in line B1 may still be playable, but it is irritating that after 11. $\mathbb{Q}xf6\#$ $\mathbb{W}xf6$ 12. $\mathbb{Q}b2$ $\mathbb{Q}g4$ 13. $\mathbb{Q}c3$ Black would be a tempo up, having played ...a7-a5 in one move.

11...d5?!

Black wrongly evaluates that he can punish his opponent for losing time with his knight.

In the only other game where this position was reached, Black played 11... $\mathbb{Q}e6$!?, Cu. Hansen – Gabriel, Germany 1999. White should have continued in the same way as in the similar position from Chapter 4, with 12.d4!N exd4 13. $\mathbb{Q}xd4$ $\mathbb{Q}xd4$ 14.exd4 d5 15. $\mathbb{Q}f4\pm$. With a black bishop on e6, the pawn is definitely better placed on a2 than on a3, because it strengthens White's pawn chain.

The best move is 11... $\mathbb{Q}f5$!N, but it has never been tried in practice.



Play may continue more or less as in line B from Chapter 4:

12.h3 $\mathbb{W}d7$ 13. $\mathbb{Q}h2$

Black seems to be unable to draw any advantage from the possibility of playing:

13... $\mathbb{Q}b4$

Because of:

14.e4 $\mathbb{Q}e6$

14... $\mathbb{Q}h7$ misplaces the bishop and can be met by 15. $\mathbb{Q}e3$!? $\mathbb{Q}xe3$ 16.fxe3±. With an open f-file, the positional threat of $\mathbb{Q}h4$, followed by doubling rooks on the f-file, is quite unpleasant for Black.

15.a3 $\mathbb{Q}a6$

15... $\mathbb{Q}c6$ leaves the d5-square in White's hands after 16. $\mathbb{Q}d5\pm$.

16.d4±

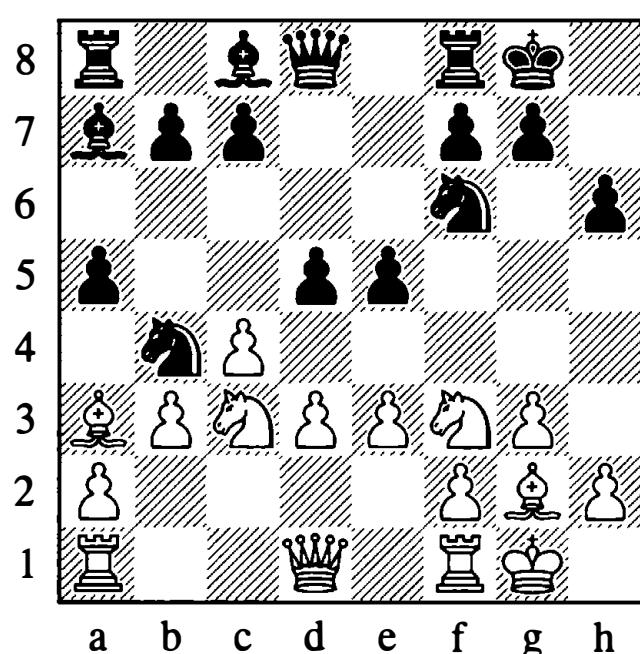
White has normal development and a space advantage in the centre.

12. $\mathbb{Q}a3$

There is nothing wrong with 12. $\mathbb{Q}xd5$ $\mathbb{Q}xd5$ 13.cxd5 $\mathbb{W}xd5$ 14. $\mathbb{Q}d4$ $\mathbb{W}d6$ 15. $\mathbb{Q}xc6$ bxc6 16. $\mathbb{Q}b2$ ±, but I feared that the weakness of the d3-pawn would offer Black reasonable drawing chances, despite his awful structure.

12... $\mathbb{Q}b4$

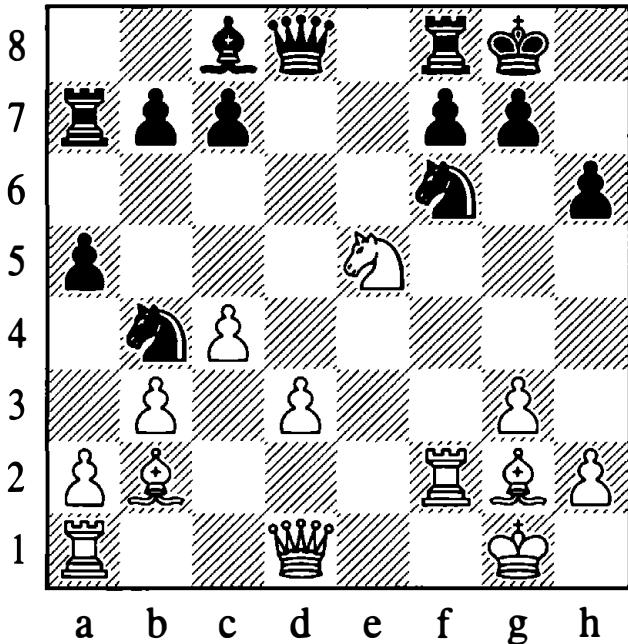
If 12... $\mathbb{Q}e8$ then the operation mentioned in the previous comment is much stronger: 13. $\mathbb{Q}xd5$ $\mathbb{Q}xd5$ 14.cxd5 $\mathbb{W}xd5$ 15. $\mathbb{Q}d4$ $\mathbb{W}d7$ 16. $\mathbb{Q}xc6$ bxc6 17. $\mathbb{Q}c1$ ±



13.♗xe5 d4

Black continues making active moves, but his initiative will soon be extinguished.

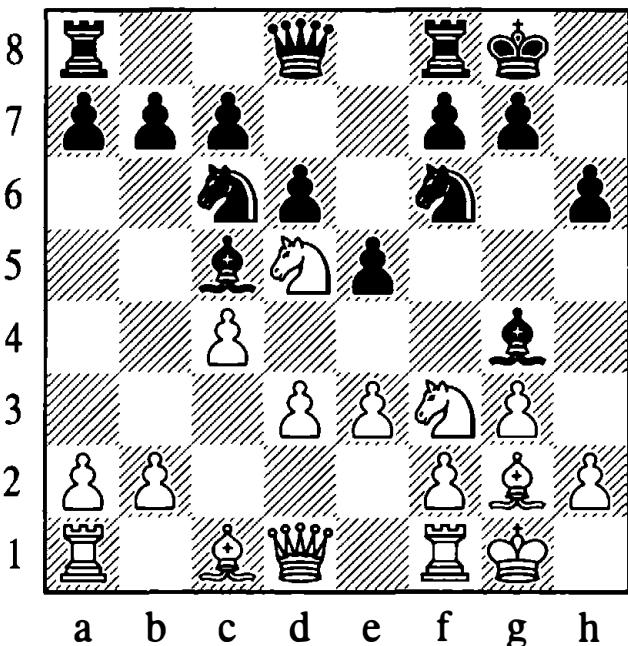
14.♗b5 dxe3 15.♗xa7 exf2† 16.♗xf2 ♗xa7
17.♗b2±



White's bishop pair, central majority and better development eventually delivered a win in Marin – Moskalenko, Barcelona 2008.

(1.c4 e5 2.g3 ♘c6 3.♗c3 ♘f6 4.♗g2 ♖b4
5.♗d5 0–0 6.♗f3 ♖c5 7.0–0 d6 8.d3 h6
9.e3)

B3) 9...♗g4

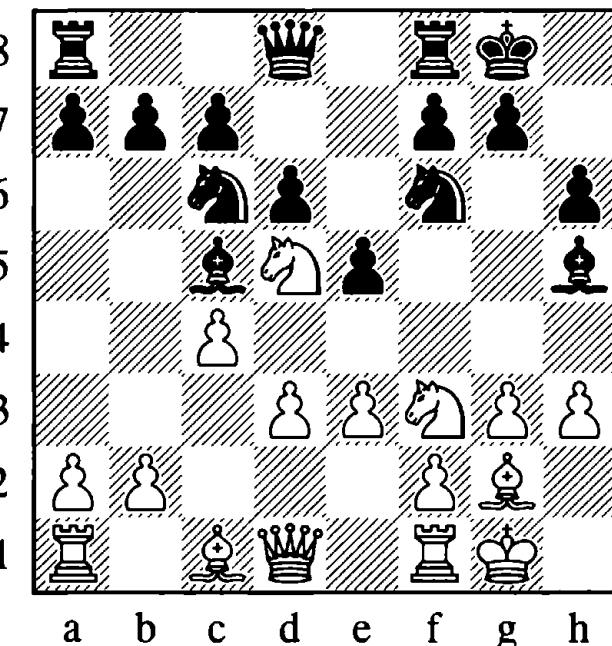


This is a fairly new move. When I first faced it in 2000 I did not know that this was the start of a fashion trend, and that I would play three more games against it in the next few years.

Objectively, the move is inferior to 9...a5 and 9...a6. Black develops a piece to an active square, but does not make any progress with his main plan, which gives White time to complete his development.

10.h3 ♖h5

Giving up the bishop with 10...♗xf3 offers White easy play: 11.♗xf3 a5 12.♗d2 ♗a7 13.♗c3± Uhlmann – Davydov, Bad Wildbad 1997.



11.b3!

Despite having analysed the lines starting with 9...a6 and 9...a5, and having concluded that 10.b3 was the best move in both cases, it took me a couple of years to realize that the same also applies after 9...♗g4.

At first, I came up with the sophisticated 11.♗d2?!. White's idea is revealed after the neutral 11...a6?! 12.b4! ♖a7 13.♗xf6† ♗xf6 14.♗c3±. White is a tempo up compared to line B1, Marin – Brynell, Gothenburg 2000.

Stronger is 11... $\mathbb{Q}xd5!$. There is no reason for Black to refrain from this exchange. 12.cxd5 $\mathbb{Q}e7$ 13.b4 $\mathbb{Q}b6$ 14.a4 a6 15. $\mathbb{W}b3$ I had evaluated this position as promising for White, but it appears that Black's attack on both wings is more effective. 15... $\mathbb{W}d7$ 16. $\mathbb{Q}ac1$ f5 17.a5 $\mathbb{Q}a7$ 18. $\mathbb{W}c4$ $\mathbb{Q}ac8$ 19. $\mathbb{Q}h4$ $\mathbb{Q}f7$ 20.e4 c6 White has serious problems, which he managed to solve only with a well-timed draw offer in Marin – Olausson, Gothenburg 2001.

11.a3!?

This is somewhat better, because it leaves the d-file open for the queen. Still, the reader may remember my opinion about spending an additional tempo and weakening the queenside light squares with unnecessary pawn moves.

11... $\mathbb{Q}xd5$ 12.cxd5 $\mathbb{Q}e7$ 13.g4 $\mathbb{Q}g6$ 14.d4 exd4 15. $\mathbb{Q}xd4$

White has obtained the customary space advantage, but is slightly underdeveloped and his kingside has been weakened.

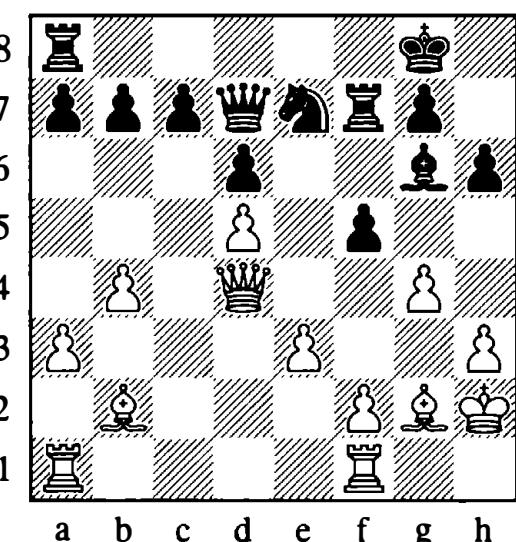
15... $\mathbb{Q}xd4$

Before playing ...f7-f5, Black has to eliminate this knight, which could have jumped to e6.

16. $\mathbb{W}xd4$ f5 17.b4 $\mathbb{W}d7$ 18. $\mathbb{Q}b2$ $\mathbb{Q}f7$

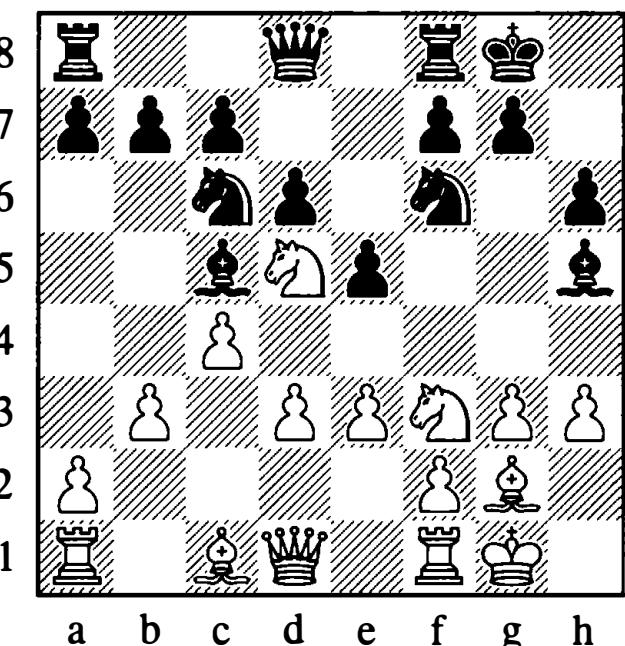
Black has some counterplay, because of the slightly weakened white kingside, which keeps White's advantage within reasonable limits.

19. $\mathbb{Q}h2$



In Marin – Barkhagen, Gothenburg 2002, Black played 19... $\mathbb{Q}af8$?! when White should have answered 20.gxf5!N $\mathbb{Q}xf5$ 21. $\mathbb{W}g4$, with pressure on the centre and on the kingside.

Instead of 19... $\mathbb{Q}af8$, Black could have challenged White's stability in the centre and opened new horizons for his knight with 19...c6!N. The weakness of White's light squares on the queenside would soon have become noticeable.



11... $\mathbb{Q}xd5$

In practice, this exchange has become an almost invariable complement to 9... $\mathbb{Q}g4$. If Black switches back to clearing the a7-square for the c5-bishop (with 11...a5 or 11...a6) then White will react in the standard way.

11...a5!? 12. $\mathbb{Q}b2$ $\mathbb{Q}a7$ 13. $\mathbb{Q}c3$ \pm

11...a6 12. $\mathbb{Q}b2$ $\mathbb{Q}e8$

12... $\mathbb{Q}a7$ 13. $\mathbb{Q}xf6$ \dagger $\mathbb{W}xf6$ 14. $\mathbb{Q}c3$ would transpose to B1.

13.g4 $\mathbb{Q}g6$ 14.d4!

White takes advantage of the bishop's presence on c5.

14...exd4

14... $\mathbb{Q}a7$ leaves the a7-bishop passive after 15.dxe5 \pm .

15. $\mathbb{Q}xd4$

15.exd4 ♖a7 followed by ...♗e4 would leave the white centre under pressure.

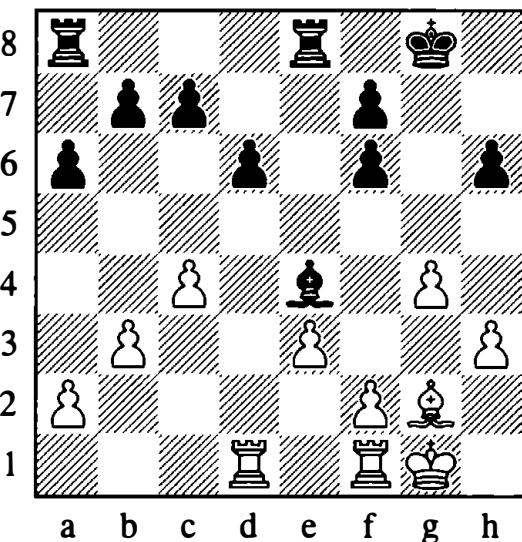
15...♘xd4 16.♖xd4 ♖xd4 17.♗xd4

White has more space and the g6-bishop risks remaining out of play.

17...♗e4?!

Black exchanges his passive bishop at the cost of spoiling his kingside structure.

18.♘xf6+ ♗xf6 19.♗xf6 gxf6 20.♖ad1±



In the forthcoming double rook ending, White enjoys more space and the better structure. A difficult defence awaits Black, Marin – Finkel, Internet (rapid) 2002.

12.cxd5 ♘e7

Black could consider taking advantage of the omission of a2-a3 with:

12...♗b4 13.g4 ♘g6 14.e4!

A necessary change of plan. 14.d4? exd4 15.♘xd4 ♘xd4 16.♗xd4 loses the exchange for little compensation after 16...♘c2.

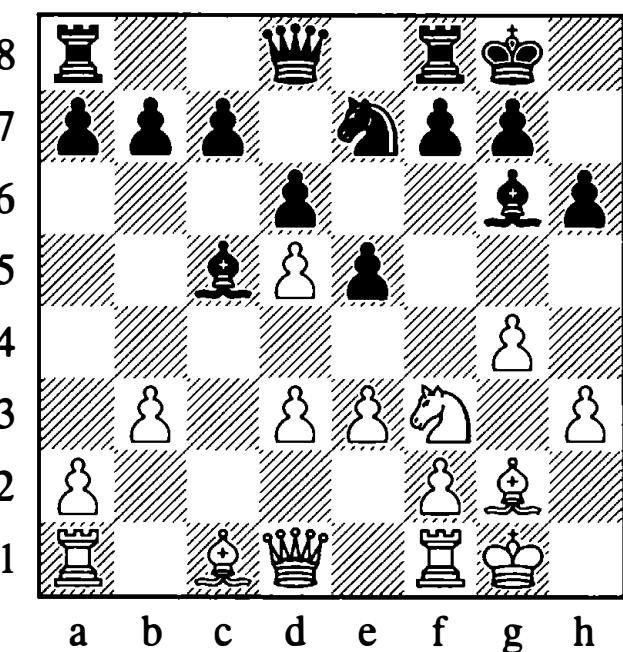
14...c6

If Black delays this pawn break then White gains time to prepare d3-d4 at his own convenience, for instance 14...♗b6 15.♖e1 ♘e8 16.♗b2 c6 17.a3 ♘a6 18.dxc6 bxc6 19.d4±.

15.a3 ♘a6 16.d4 exd4 17.dxc6 bxc6 18.♘xd4±

White has obtained the usual space advantage, while the g6-bishop and the a6-knight are passive.

13.g4 ♘g6



14.d4

With the black knight stable on e7, 14.e4 would be less effective because of 14...♗b6! (Black prevents the immediate d3-d4 due to the hanging e4-pawn) 15.♗b2 c6 16.dxc6 ♘xc6. Black has stabilized his centre, while the weaknesses of White's kingside may eventually tell.

14...exd4 15.♘xd4 c6

This pawn sacrifice is not entirely sound, but Black has to fight for space one way or another.

It is interesting to follow what could happen if Black plays as in the Marin – Barkhagen game above: 15...♖xd4 16.♗xd4 f5 17.♗b2 ♘f7 18.♖ad1 ♘d7 19.♗h2± White's queenside is invulnerable and the extra tempo was used for a developing move, ♘ad1, which prevents the pawn break ...c7-c6.

Black can prepare to open the centre with:

15...♗d7

But this leaves White on top after:

16.♗b2 c6 17.dxc6 bxc6

After 17...♘xc6 White is not forced to exchange on c6, which would more or less transpose to the main game, but can

instead improve the knight's placement with 18. $\mathbb{Q}e2\pm$ followed by $\mathbb{Q}f4$.

18. $\mathbb{B}c1!$

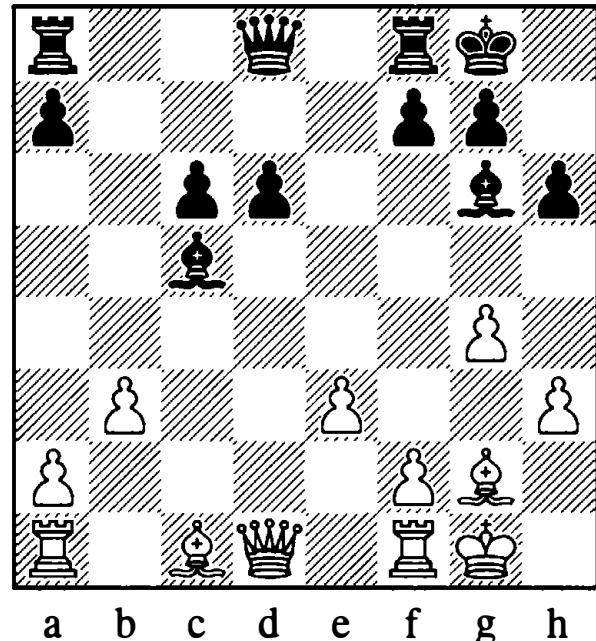
White develops a piece creating the well-masked threat of 19. $\mathbb{Q}xc6 \mathbb{Q}xc6$ 20. $\mathbb{B}xc5!$. Therefore, Black has no time for pawn moves such as ...a7-a5 or ...f7-f5.

18... $\mathbb{W}b7$ 19. $\mathbb{W}f3 \mathbb{B}ac8$ 20. $\mathbb{B}fd1\pm$

16. $dxc6 \mathbb{Q}xc6$ 17. $\mathbb{Q}xc6$

If White wishes to avoid complications, he can consolidate his knight with 17. $\mathbb{Q}b2\pm$, retaining the better structure and normal development. Black cannot increase the pressure against d4 with 17... $\mathbb{W}f6?!$ because of 18. $\mathbb{Q}xc6! \mathbb{W}xb2$ 19. $\mathbb{Q}e7\# \mathbb{Q}h7$ 20. $\mathbb{Q}xb7\pm$. White has won a pawn and kept the better structure.

17... $bxc6$



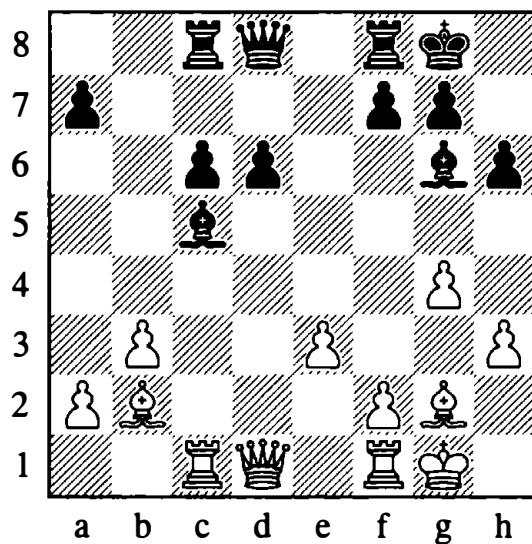
18. $\mathbb{Q}xc6!N$

After this brave move Black's initiative may be sufficient to retrieve the pawn, but not to compensate for the strategic damage.

The overcautious 18. $\mathbb{Q}b2$ lets at least part of White's advantage slip away. 18... $\mathbb{B}c8$

19. $\mathbb{B}c1$ a5?! 20. $\mathbb{Q}d4!$ After the exchange of dark-squared bishops, Black's pawns become vulnerable. 20... $\mathbb{W}xd4$ 21. $\mathbb{W}xd4$ c5 22. $\mathbb{W}d5$ $\mathbb{W}c7$ 23. $\mathbb{B}fd1\pm$ White's superior structure guarantees him a minimal, but stable, advantage, Cu. Hansen – Nikolic, Biel 1993.

Black has an improvement in this line in the position after 19. $\mathbb{B}c1$:



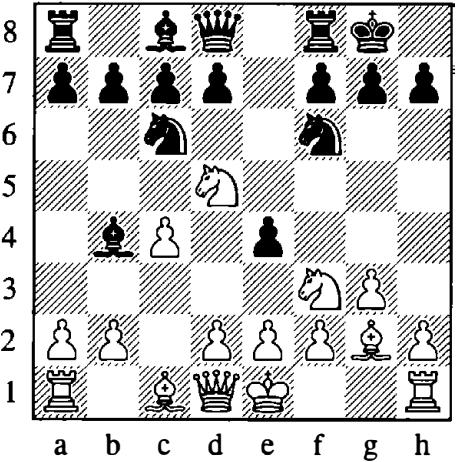
Instead of 19...a5, it would have made sense to increase the control over the d4-square, while developing a piece, with 19... $\mathbb{W}b6!N$. White's more compact structure (two pawn islands against three black ones) is compensated by the weakness of the kingside induced by g3-g4. Chances are about equal.

18... $\mathbb{W}f6$ 19. $\mathbb{Q}d2 \mathbb{B}ac8$ 20. $\mathbb{W}f3 \mathbb{W}b2$ 21. $\mathbb{Q}a5$ $\mathbb{Q}a3$ 22. $\mathbb{B}ad1 \mathbb{W}xa2$ 23. $b4 \mathbb{W}b2$ 24. $\mathbb{B}d4\pm$

White is dominant: his pieces are very active and Black's d-pawn is chronically weak.

Conclusion:

The positions examined in this chapter require very subtle play from White, as the evaluation frequently depends on hidden nuances. At one point in my career I had doubts about White's chances of an objective advantage, but my recent analysis, which I have just shared with you, restored my faith in White's position.



Reversed Rossolimo

5...0-0 6.♘f3! e4

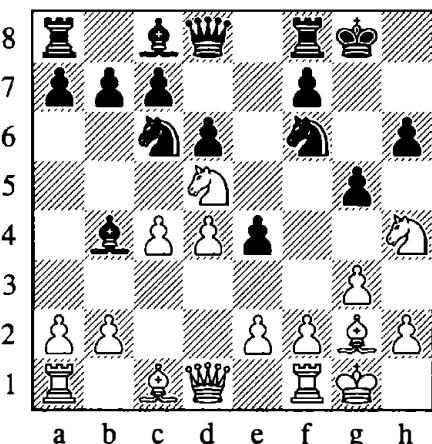
Variation Index

1.c4 e5 2.g3 ♘c6 3.♘c3 ♘f6 4.♗g2 ♗b4 5.♘d5 0-0 6.♘f3!

6...e4 7.♘h4

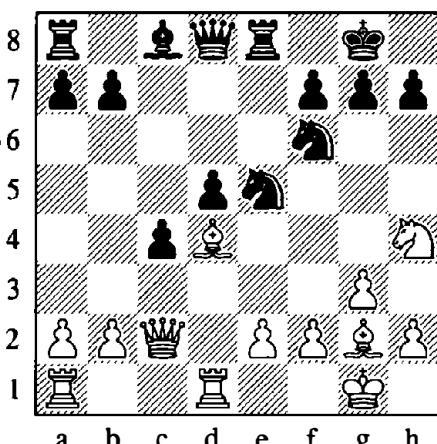
- | | |
|-----------------------|-------|
| A) 7...♝e8 | p 142 |
| B) 7...d6 | p 145 |
| C) 7... ♔c5 8.0-0 ♜e8 | p 148 |
| C1) 9.d3!? | p 149 |
| C2) 9.e3! | p 152 |

B) after 9...h6



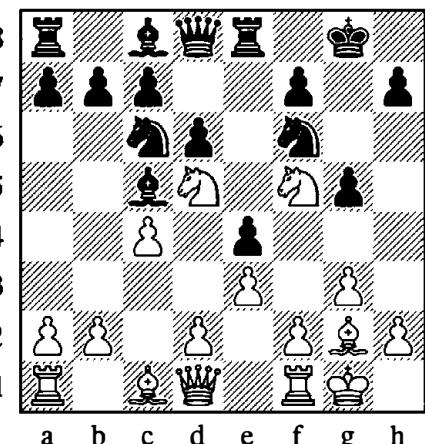
10.♘xb4!

C1) note to 15...♝e7



16.♗d2!N

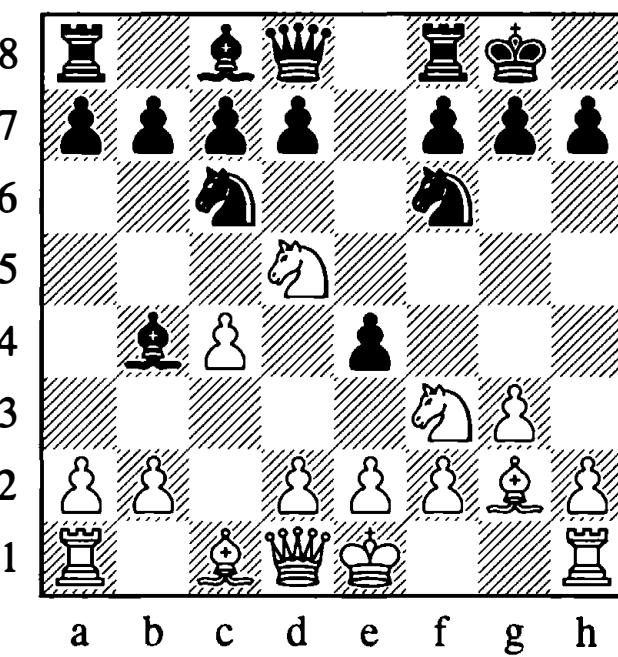
C2) Marin – Fressinet



“e7, e7, e7!”

1.c4 e5 2.g3 ♜c6 3.♘c3 ♜f6 4.♗g2 ♜b4
5.♘d5 0-0 6.♘f3! e4

Black has tried A) 7...♝e8, B) 7...d6 and C)
7...♝c5.

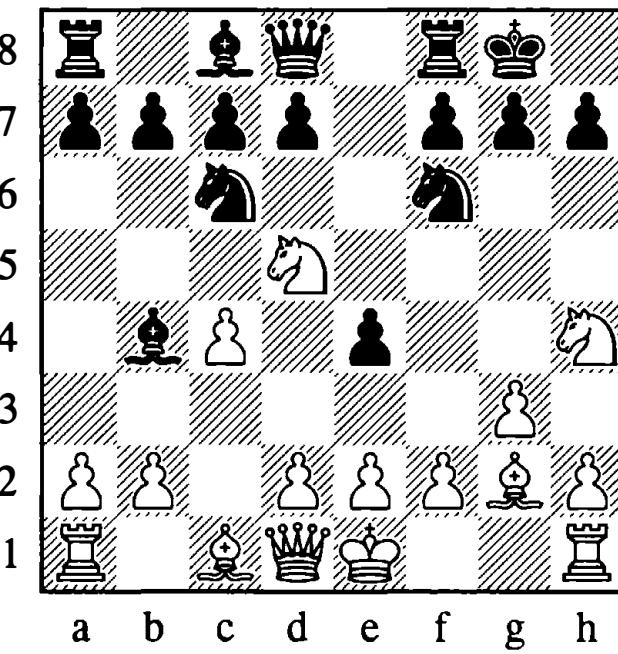


This early attempt to win space in the centre leads to double-edged play with subtle tactical nuances.

7.♘h4

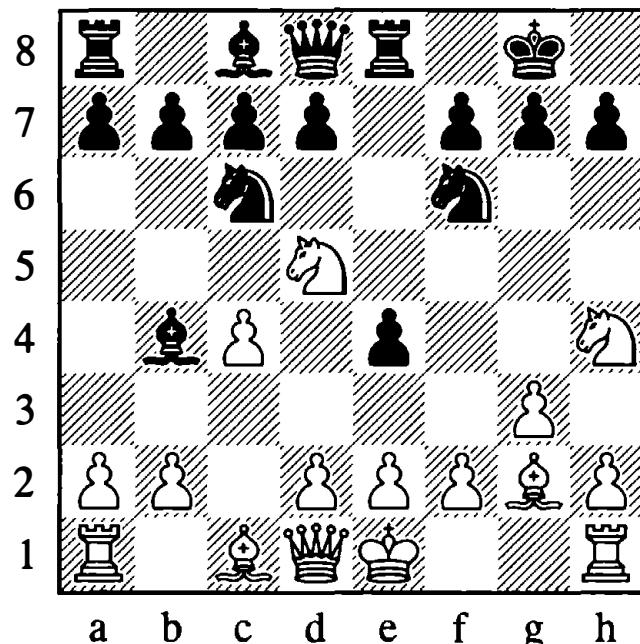
Having a knight on the edge of the board is not always shameful! In this position it all depends on whether the knight will be in time to join the rest of the army via f5.

White will try to exploit the slight weakness of the e4-pawn. True, this pawn is impossible to win, but after a well-timed pawn break d2-d3 or f2-f3, Black will most likely have to release the tension immediately, offering White a space advantage in the centre. Black will try to compensate for this drawback with active piece play.



(1.c4 e5 2.g3 ♜c6 3.♘c3 ♜f6 4.♗g2 ♜b4
5.♘d5 0-0 6.♘f3 e4 7.♘h4)

A) 7...♝e8



Black over-defends the e4-pawn and prepares to retreat the bishop to f8.

Theoretical discussions in the '70s classified this variation as slightly passive, and so it fell out of fashion.

8.0-0 ♜f8

The active 8...♝c5 transposes to line C.

8...d6

This commits the d-pawn earlier than in line C, which causes Black's position to lose some of its dynamism.

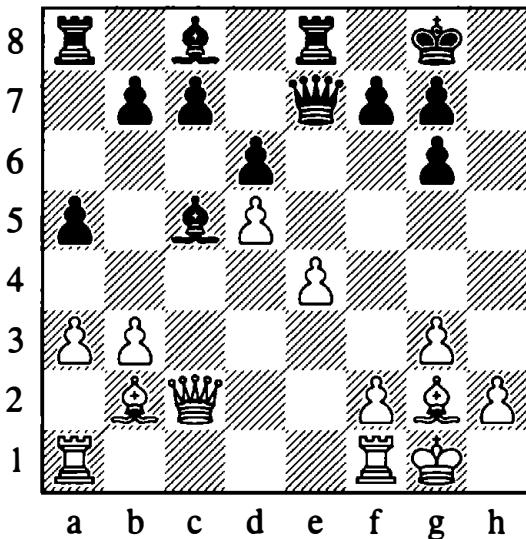
9.d3 exd3 10.♗xd3 ♜e5 11.♗c2 ♜xd5
If 11...♝c5 then 12.b3 c6 13.♘xf6† ♜xf6
14.♗b2 and White makes use of the tempo spent by Black on ...d7-d6 to complete his development and avoid tactical tricks along the a1-h8 diagonal.

12.cxd5

White has a space advantage and the b4-bishop is not easy to activate.

12...♝c5 13.b3 ♜e7 14.♝b2 a5 15.a3 ♝g6
16.♗xg6 hxg6 17.e4

Black can do little against the systematic advance of the white pawns.



In Lautier – Karpov, Dortmund 1993, the former World Champion was crushed by his much younger opponent.

9.d3 exd3

It is better to refrain from the intermediate:
9...♝xd5

As this just strengthens White's domination in the centre after:

10.cxd5 exd3

Elegant, but not very effective: the threat of ...d3xe2 makes the c6-knight taboo.

11.♗xd3 ♝e5 12.♗c2 c5

A typical Benoni structure has arisen, with Black's dark-squared bishop passively placed and his knight unstable in the centre.

13.f4

The more restrained 13.b3 d6 14.♝b2 is also possible. Exchanging knights with 14...♝g6 15.♗xg6 hxg6 does not make Black's life easier. After 16.e4 a5 17.f4± White had a strong initiative in the centre in Ghitescu – Tringov, Skopje (ol) 1972.

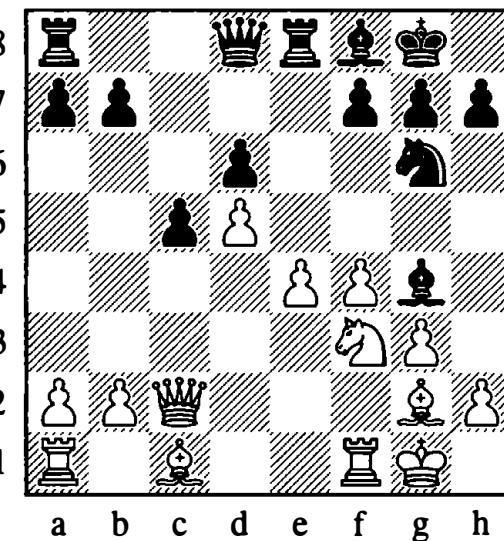
13...♝g6 14.♗f3

This was the point behind White's previous move. He avoids the exchange of knights without blocking the path of the f-pawn.

14...d6 15.e4

White has more space in the centre and will soon be ready to start a pawn attack with e4-e5.

15...♝g4



16.f5!?

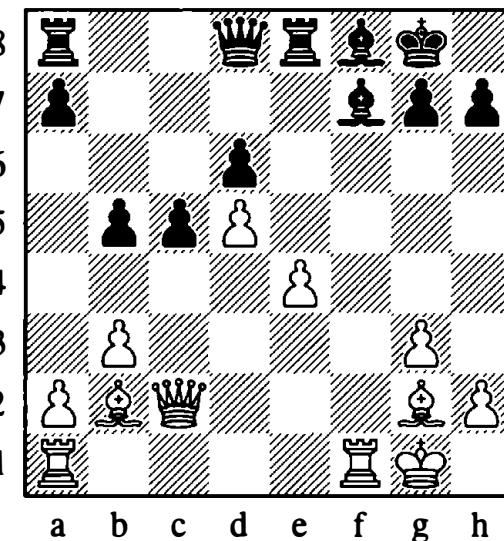
The vulnerable position of the bishop on g4 gives White the opportunity to change the character of the position.

16...♝h8

This looks awfully passive, but it is not easy to advise Black.

The general desirable 16...♝e5? would drop a piece to 17.♗xe5 followed by h2-h3 and g3-g4.

16...♝xf3 is strongly met by 17.fxg6, but after 17...♝h5 things may not be as bad for Black as he feared when he retreated the knight to h8: 18.gxf7† ♜xf7 19.b3 b5 20.♝b2±



From a structural point of view, Black has a

dream position, but his bishops are passive and the e5-square is impossible to blockade. These circumstances leave White with a stable advantage.

17. $\text{Qe}1 \text{ h}5$ 18. $\text{h}3$

The threat of trapping the bishop with g3-g4 forces Black to weaken his e6-square.

18. $\text{\texttt{d3}}$ was an interesting alternative. If Black replies 18...f6, then the knight would get to e6 with a decisive advantage for White. After the slightly better 18...g5 19.f6 h6, Black's dark-squared bishop will remain immobile for the rest of the game, which cannot be compensated by the possibility of transferring the knight to e5.

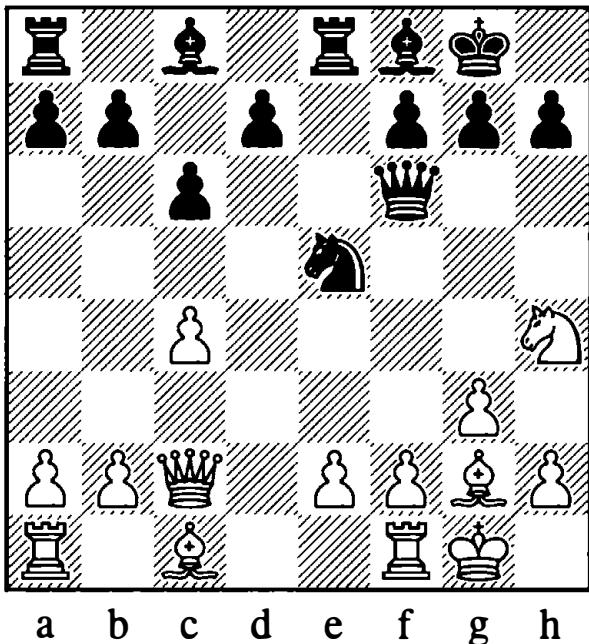
18...f6 19.♘d3 g5

A sad necessity: Black prevents the intrusion of the knight to e6, but his dark-squared bishop becomes very passive.

20.b3±

White has a huge space advantage and eventually won in Vaganian – Taimanov, Baku 1977.

10. $\mathbb{W}xd3$ $\mathfrak{Q}e5$ 11. $\mathbb{W}c2$ $c6$ 12. $\mathfrak{Q}xf6\#$ $\mathbb{W}xf6$



This is a vital point in the opening fight. White seems to face problems continuing his development.

His knight cannot be activated easily, since 13...f5 can be met by 13...d5!, while

after 13. $\mathbb{Q}f3$ d6, followed by ... $\mathbb{Q}c8-f5$, Black has active play. Also, the c4-pawn is vulnerable.

13.b3!

White cuts the Gordian Knot. Black's queenside is underdeveloped, so he cannot take advantage of the apparent vulnerability of the a1-rook.

13...d6

13... $\mathbb{Q}xc4$? simply loses material to 14. $bxc4$
 $\mathbb{W}xa1$ 15. $\mathbb{Q}b2$ $\mathbb{W}xa2$ 16. $\mathbb{Q}a1+-$.

13...g5?

This weakens the kingside too much.

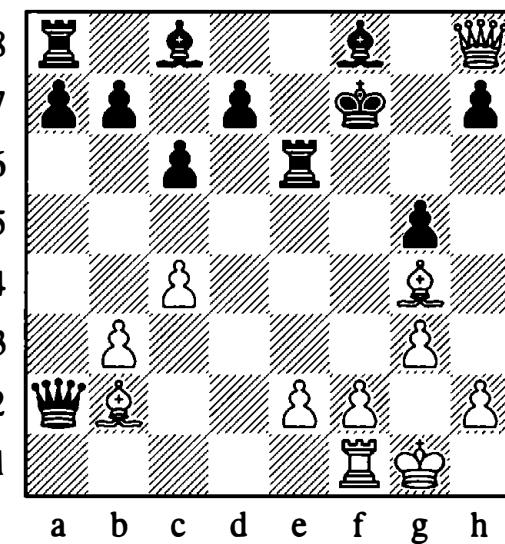
14. $\mathbb{Q}f3$ $\mathbb{Q}xf3\#$ 15. $\mathbb{Q}xf3$ $\mathbb{W}xa1$ 16. $\mathbb{Q}b2$ $\mathbb{W}xa2$
17. $\mathbb{W}c3!$

The careless 17. $\mathbb{Q}a1$?! would allow Black to simplify the position with 17... $\mathbb{W}xb2$! 18. $\mathbb{W}xb2$ $\mathbb{Q}g7$. With two rooks and a pawn for the queen, Black would be out of danger despite his lack of development.

17...f6?!

17... $\mathbb{W}xb2$ would be somewhat better, although after 18. $\mathbb{W}xb2\pm$ White would retain a minimal material advantage and a clear strategic superiority.

18. $\mathbb{W}xf6$ $\mathbb{E}e6$ 19. $\mathbb{W}h8\#$ $\mathbb{F}f7$ 20. $\mathbb{Q}g4+$



Despite his extra rook, Black cannot repel White's massive attack. If needed, White will include his final piece, the rook, into the attack with f2-f4

14.♗b2

White has almost completed his development and retains a space advantage.

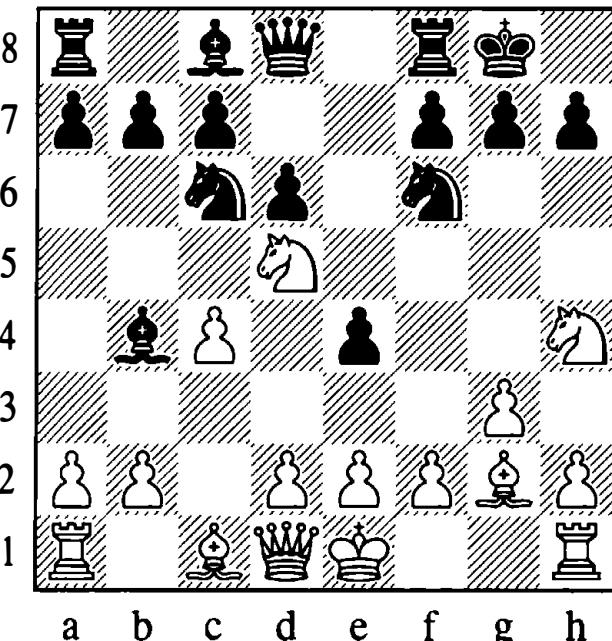
14...♝h6 15.♝ad1

15.♝ael?! was recommended by Petrosian as an interesting alternative, with the idea of over-defending the e2-pawn.

15...♝g6 16.♞f5 ♜h5 17.♞d4±

White has transferred the knight to its optimal square and enjoys a stable space advantage. Black has no easy way to obtain counterplay, Petrosian – Liebert, Siegen (ol) 1970.

(1.c4 e5 2.g3 ♜c6 3.♞c3 ♜f6 4.♝g2 ♜b4 5.♞d5 0–0 6.♞f3 e4 7.♞h4)

B) 7...d6

Black takes the f5-square under control, creating the threat of winning the knight with ...g7-g5. One move later (after, say, 7...♝e8 8.0–0) then 8...d6 would fail to bother White because of 9.d3, opening the c1-bishop's diagonal and preventing 9...g5. Of course, in the diagram position White does not have this resource because the d-pawn is pinned.

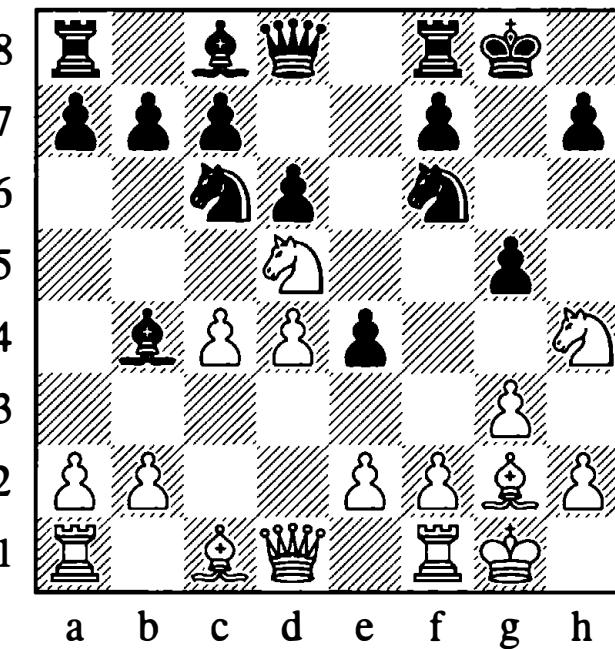
The significant drawback of Black's last move is that it isolates the b4-bishop from the kingside, which will make the weaknesses created by the advance of the g7-pawn hard to defend.

8.0–0!

White refuses to be distracted from his natural course of development. Instead 8.♞xf6†?! ♜xf6 9.♝xe4 ♜e8± offers Black a strong initiative.

8...g5

Otherwise White would retain a stable advantage with 9.d3.

9.d4!

Another strong developing move: winning space in the centre and attacking the g5-pawn. In some of the comments given below I will explain why this move should be preferred to 9.d3.

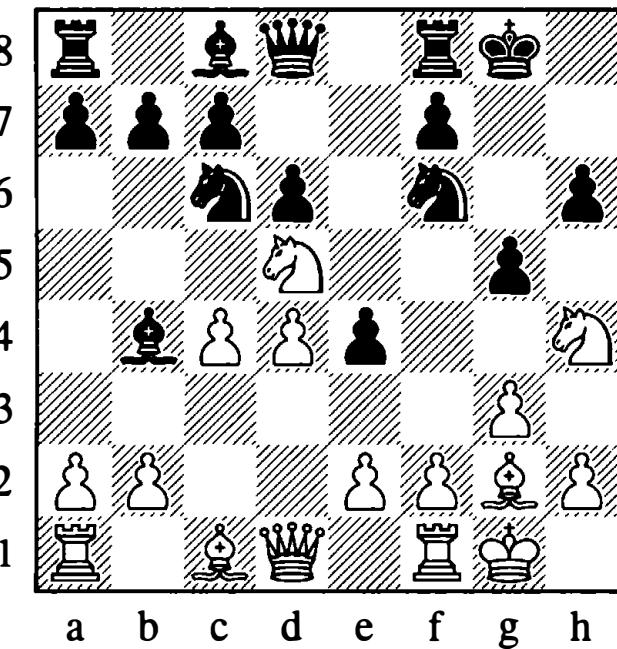
9...h6

Black defends g5 and keeps the threat of ...gxh4 in reserve.

Of course 9...gxh4? would lose instantly to 10.♝g5.

If Black avoids the pin on the f6-knight with 9... $\mathbb{Q}e8$?! then White would play 10. $\mathbb{Q}xb4$ $\mathbb{Q}xb4$ 11. $\mathbb{W}d2\pm$ with a double attack on b4 and g5.

Finally, 9... $\mathbb{Q}xd5$?! 10.cxd5 $\mathbb{Q}b8$ would leave the bishop trapped after 11. $\mathbb{W}a4\pm$. This is the first moment in which the presence of the white pawn on d4 is essential.



10. $\mathbb{Q}xb4$!

An important improvement over 10. $\mathbb{W}a4$ as played in McNab – Haik, Metz 1988. The b4-bishop is trapped, but Black could play 10... $\mathbb{Q}xd4$!N with unclear consequences after 11. $\mathbb{W}xb4$ $\mathbb{Q}xe2\ddagger$ 12. $\mathbb{Q}h1$ $\mathbb{Q}xc1$ 13. $\mathbb{B}axc1$ $\mathbb{Q}xh4$. Black's material advantage offers him adequate compensation for the weakened position of his king.

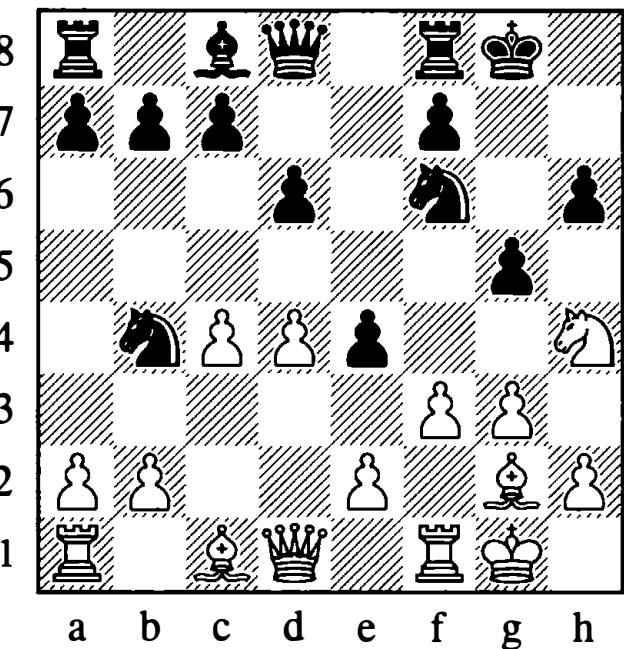
10... $\mathbb{Q}xb4$

The hanging position of this knight will allow White to win time for his attack.

11.f3!

This is the logical consequence of White's play in the previous phase, but the move is still spectacular. It may seem that both sides are playing their own game: Black is focused on trapping the h4-knight, while White aims to open files on the kingside.

It is worth mentioning that if the d-pawn was on d3 instead of d4, 11.f3 could have been answered with 11...exd3, keeping the f-file closed.



11...e3!?

It is advisable for Black to keep the f-file closed. Other moves give White a powerful attack.

11... $\mathbb{Q}xh4$ allows the immediate development of the c1-bishop to the most active square with 12. $\mathbb{Q}xh6$ h3 13. $\mathbb{Q}h1$ exf3 14. $\mathbb{B}xf3\pm$. Black cannot save the rook with 14... $\mathbb{E}e8$? because of 15. $\mathbb{Q}g5$ $\mathbb{E}e6$ 16.d5, retrieving the sacrificed material with a decisive advantage. Therefore, White will be able to continue his attack with approximate material equality after $\mathbb{Q}xf8$.

Black could remove the rook from its exposed square with:

11... $\mathbb{E}e8$

But then White could also change his attacking methods:

12.fxe4 $\mathbb{Q}xh4$

After 12... $\mathbb{Q}xe4$ 13. $\mathbb{Q}f5$ $\mathbb{Q}xf5$ 14. $\mathbb{B}xf5$ $\mathbb{W}e7$ 15.a3 $\mathbb{Q}c6$ 16. $\mathbb{W}d3\pm$ the relative stability of Black's knight in the centre does not fully compensate for the kingside weaknesses and the mighty bishop pair.

13.♕d2!?

In this case, and somewhat unusually, White places the queen in front of the bishop.

13...♗xe4!?

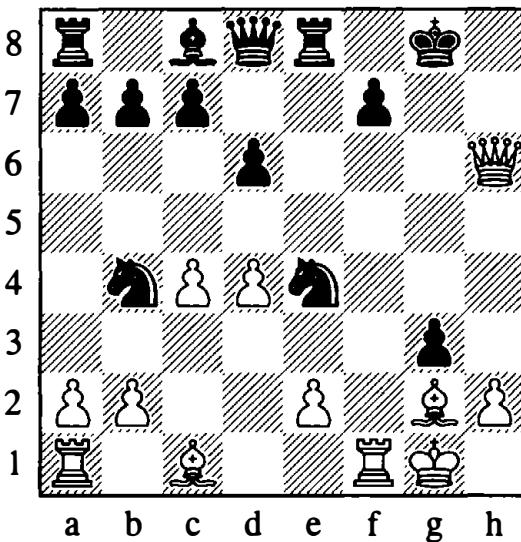
Black is ready to abandon the b4-knight in order to start active counterplay.

14.♕xh6!

14.♕xb4 hxg3 would be less clear.

14...hxg3

This attempt to bother the white king loses by force, but it is not easy for Black to get his pieces into the defence.



15.♗xf7!

A decisive blow: the king will fall victim to the combined attack of the white pieces.

15...♔xf7 16.♕h7+ ♔f6 17.♗xe4 gxh2+

18.♔h1 ♗xe4 19.♕h6+ ♔f7

19...♔f5 would prevent ♔c1-g5, but after the modest 20.♔d2, followed by ♘f1, the game is over.

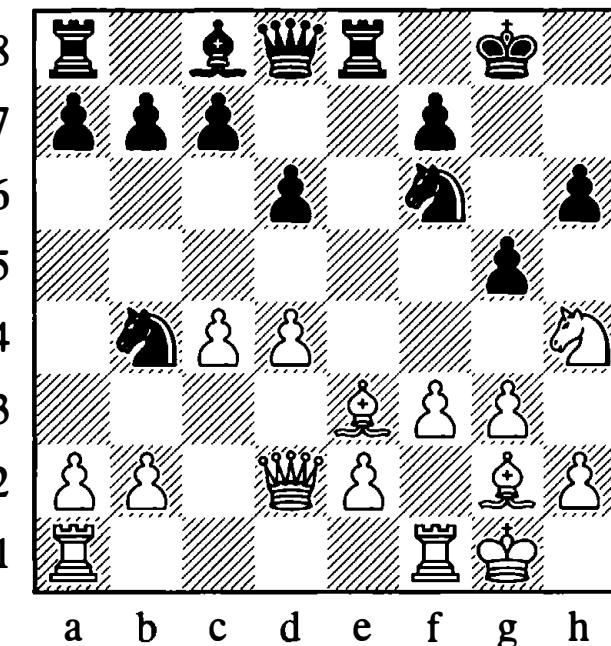
20.♔g5+-

To avoid mate, Black has to give up his queen, but this would only prolong the agony.

12.♗xe3 ♗e8

It is better to play this move at once, as after 12...gxh4 13.♕d2 ♗e8 White has 14.♗xh6, threatening mate in two in addition to the knight on b4.

13.♕d2



13...♗xe3!?

Black refuses material gain and forces the simplification of the position. This policy will allow him to eliminate the immediate danger of an attack, but the weakness of his kingside will have long-term consequences.

13...♘c6 14.♗xg5 hxg5 15.♕xg5† leaves White with three mobile pawns for the knight, while the black king remains vulnerable.

13...♘h7

There is no obvious refutation of this move, but White can build up his attack with:

14.♗f2 ♘a6

The knight has to retreat to this passive square.

After 14...♘c6 15.d5 it would have to jump back to b8, since 15...♘e5 allows White to save his knight with 16.f4, while after 15...♘e7 16.e4 gxh4 17.♗xh6 Black is deprived of his main hope: the exchange of queens with ...♕d8-g5.

15.♔h1

White anticipates the opening of the g-file.

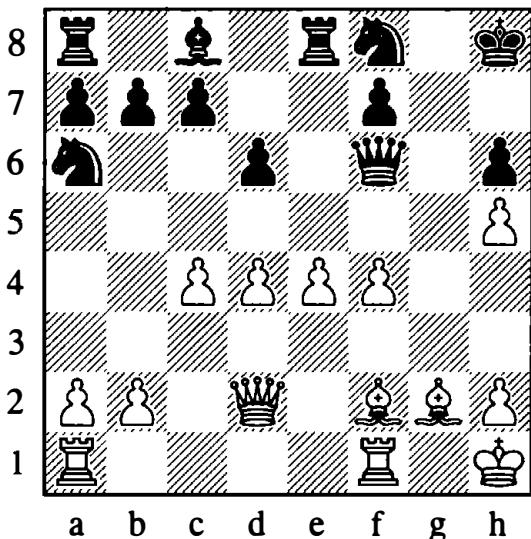
15...♕f6

Black brings in defensive forces.

16.e4

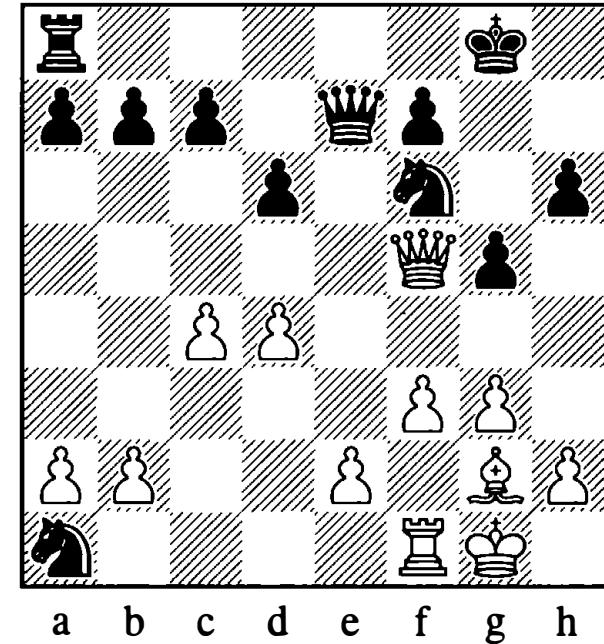
The threat of ♘h4-f5 finally forces Black to capture the knight.

16...gxh4 17.gxh4 ♘f8 18.f4 ♔h8 19.h5



White only has two pawns for the sacrificed piece, but his pair of bishops and mobile pawn mass offer him chances of a slow attack, aided by the almost total passivity of Black's pieces.

14. $\mathbb{W}xe3$ $\mathfrak{Q}c2$ 15. $\mathbb{W}d3$ $\mathfrak{Q}xal$ 16. $\mathfrak{Q}f5$ $\mathbb{W}xf5$
17. $\mathbb{W}xf5$ $\mathbb{W}e7$



18. $f4!$

White opens the long diagonal with gain of time, since Black cannot afford to open the f-file.

18... $g4!$ 19. $\mathbb{B}xal$ $\mathbb{W}e3\#$ 20. $\mathfrak{K}f1$ $\mathbb{W}xd4$
21. $\mathbb{W}c2$

Material equality has been restored after a long forced sequence. Since Black's knight cannot get to e3, White's king feels a lot safer than its colleague. Another important element is White's space advantage.

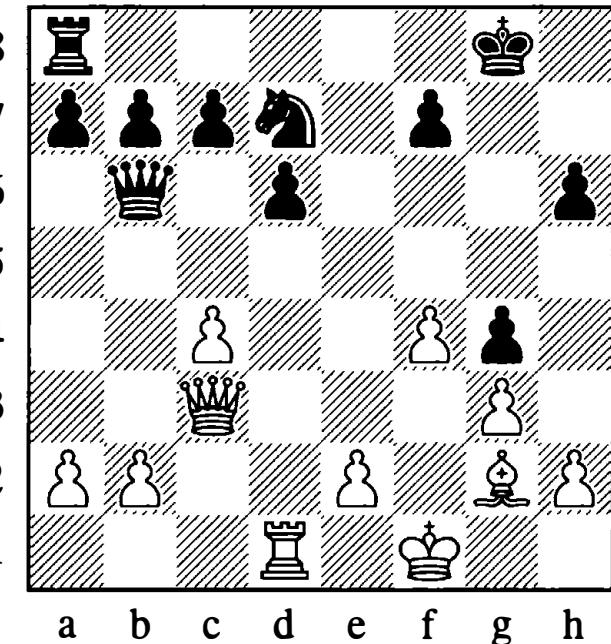
21... $\mathbb{W}b6$

Black defends the pawn and removes the queen from the exposed central square.

If 21... $\mathbb{B}e8$ White could simply capture the pawn with 22. $\mathbb{Q}xb7$ $\mathfrak{Q}e4$ 23. $\mathbb{Q}xe4$ $\mathbb{B}xe4$ 24. $\mathbb{B}c1\pm$. White has consolidated and is ready to reduce Black's pressure with $\mathbb{W}d3$.

21... $c6$ creates a weakness on d6 that is difficult to defend. 22. $\mathbb{B}d1$ $\mathbb{W}c5$ 23. $\mathbb{W}c3$ $\mathfrak{Q}e8$ (this is a sad necessity, since 23... $\mathfrak{Q}g7$ 24. $b4$ $\mathbb{W}f5$ 25. $\mathbb{B}xd6+-$, followed by $e4-e5$, would soon put an end to the game) 24. $e4\pm$ Black's position is very passive.

22. $\mathbb{W}c3$ $\mathfrak{Q}d7$ 23. $\mathbb{B}d1\pm$



White has stabilized the position in his favour. The threat of $\mathbb{B}d5-h5$ is quite unpleasant.

(1. $c4$ $e5$ 2. $g3$ $\mathfrak{Q}c6$ 3. $\mathfrak{Q}c3$ $\mathfrak{Q}f6$ 4. $\mathbb{B}g2$ $\mathbb{B}b4$ 5. $\mathfrak{Q}d5$ 0-0 6. $\mathfrak{Q}f3$ $e4$ 7. $\mathfrak{Q}h4$)

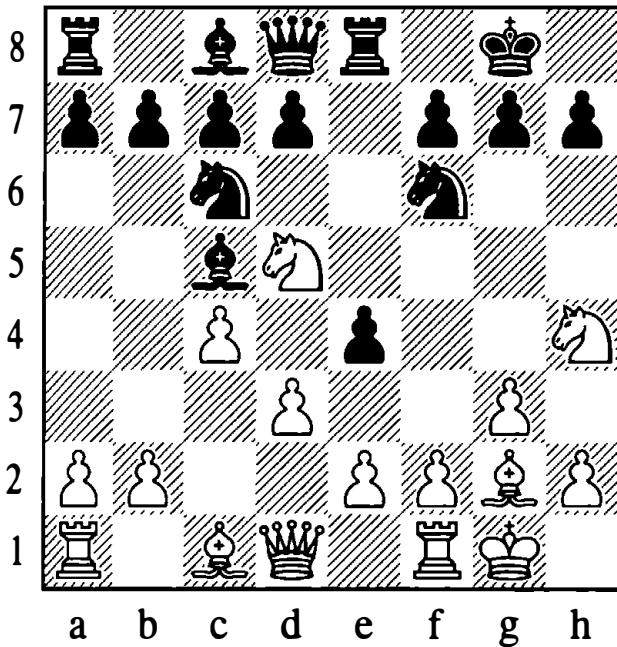
C) 7... $\mathfrak{Q}c5$ 8. 0-0 $\mathbb{B}e8$

This is a more active version of the old-fashioned line A. The pressure against f2 offers Black additional possibilities, but White can also make use of the more vulnerable placement of the bishop on c5.

White can choose between the traditional C1) 9.d3!? and the brand new C2) 9.e3!

(1.c4 e5 2.g3 ♘c6 3.♘c3 ♘f6 4.♗g2 ♕b4 5.♗d5 0–0 6.♘f3 e4 7.♘h4 ♕c5 8.0–0 ♖e8)

C1) 9.d3!?



Until recently this natural move was always played. White opens the c1-h6 diagonal for his bishop and starts fighting for the centre.

I find the resulting positions fascinating and feel sorry that line C2 allows White to sidestep this classical tabiya. Even so, I remember that at one point I had decided to write just a few lines about 9.d3, and focus on 9.e3. Although I am conservative and nostalgic by nature, I am occasionally ready to accept this painful thing called progress.

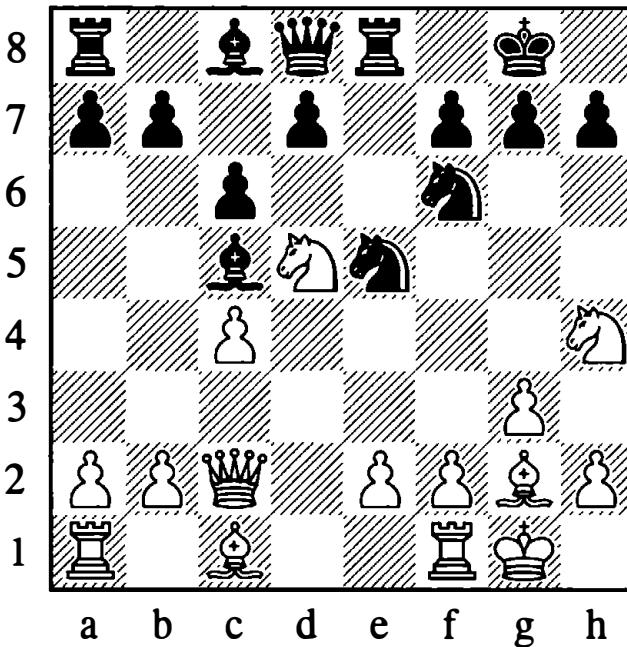
There are two main reasons I decided to give both variations equal attention. Examining line C1 will help the reader to build up his positional understanding of the English Opening. Moreover, it is always useful to have a backup move to the main lines. Although, as I write these lines, my trust in 9.e3 is unshakeable, who am I to predict theory's evolution in 10-20 years?

9...exd3 10.♗xd3 ♘e5 11.♗c2

This is the best square for the queen. It keeps the e2-pawn defended and allows a later activation of the h4-knight with ♘f5.

11...c6

Black tries to provoke the exchange on f6, in order to activate his queen.



12.♗e3!

This is the only way to fight for the initiative.

Imitating White's play from line A would lead to trouble after 12.♘xf6†?! ♗xf6 13.b3? ♘g4† with a double attack against f2 and a1. Instead of 13.b3? Karpov and Kasparov recommended 13.♗d2, but White's development does not look harmonious.

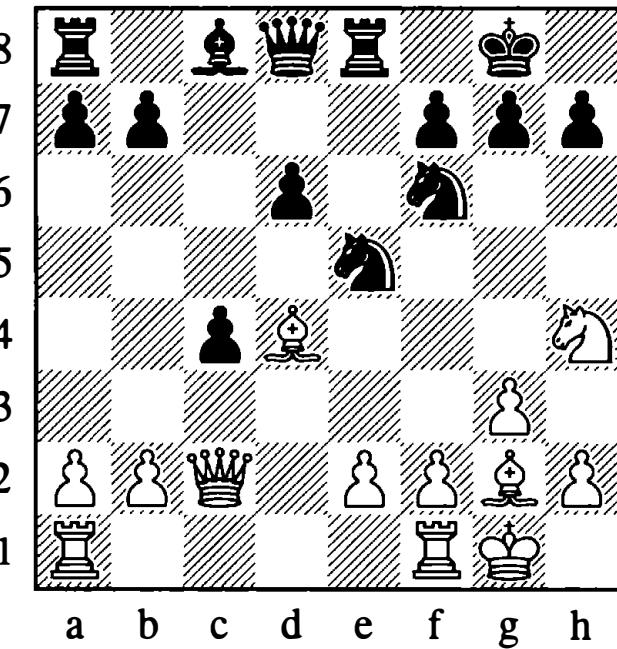
12...cxsd5

Black has to accept the sacrifice. After 12...♗xe3 13.♘xe3 or 12...♗f8 13.♘xf6† ♗xf6 14.♗ad1 followed by ♘d4, White would simply be better thanks to his space advantage.

13.♘xc5 d6!

An important intermediate move. 13...dxc4? would leave Black paralysed after 14.♘d6±.

14.♘d6 dxc4



This is another important tabiya of the '70s. The position looks very pleasant for White. His forces are harmoniously developed and he has an active pair of bishops. Even the problem-knight is ready to jump to f5 at the right moment, putting pressure on the enemy kingside and practically forcing Black to give up his remaining bishop.

Black has an extra pawn, but his structure is weak and his pieces lack scope. It will be difficult for Black to push his pawn majority, because White dominates the dark squares.

It is not easy to prove that White has an advantage, but for a long time results have strongly supported this point of view. White's best strategy is to improve his position move by move, without rushing to retrieve the pawn, because that would probably reduce his offensive potential and lead to a probable draw.

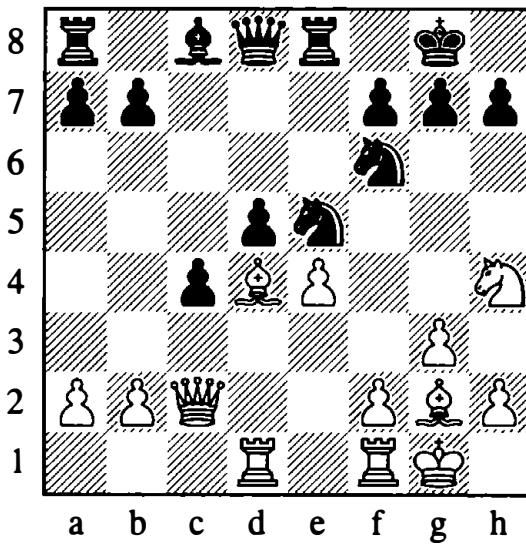
15. $\mathbb{R}fd1!$

White has two half-open files in the centre, so the rooks are most naturally placed on d1 and c1. Doubling rooks on the d-file is an important alternative, because Black's d-pawn is weaker than his c-pawn. In this case it is irrelevant which rook is moved to d1 first. However, there is a third possibility

of activating the queen's rook along the a-file, after a2-a4-a5. Thus, developing the king's rook to d1 offers White the widest choice of plans.

In modern times, when using a computer is such a common habit, players tend to give play a forcing character as soon as possible, in order to gain a definitive evaluation from the engines. This may be the reason the following impatient plan, aiming to open the centre, was recently seen in a high level game:

15. $\mathbb{R}ad1$ d5 16. e4?!



16... $\mathbb{B}g4$ 17. f3 $\mathbb{Q}d7!$

This simple move casts doubt on White's strategy. After having provoked the weakening of the e3-square and the closure of the h1-a8 diagonal, the bishop retreats in such a way that it keeps the f5-square under control.

White may have expected 17... $\mathbb{Q}h5$, when a well-timed $\mathbb{Q}f5$ would have put the enemy kingside under serious pressure.

18. exd5 b5 19. $\mathbb{R}fe1$

This was recommended by Kasparov as an improvement over 19. $\mathbb{Q}xe5?!$ $\mathbb{R}xe5$ 20. f4 $\mathbb{W}b6\#$ 21. $\mathbb{Q}h1$ $\mathbb{E}e8$, with great play for Black in Lautier – Kasparov, Moscow (rapid) 2002.

19... $\mathbb{Q}d3$ 20. $\mathbb{R}xe8\#$ $\mathbb{Q}xe8$ 21. b3 $\mathbb{R}c8=$

The awkwardly placed h4-knight and the weakness of White's kingside, together with

Black's active d3-knight, prevents White from taking full advantage of his bishop pair and passed pawn. Remarkably, on the basis of this game the whole variation was classified as unplayable for White.

Instead of 16.e4?!, it was not too late to return to the normal plans with 16.♗d2, which may transpose to the main line.

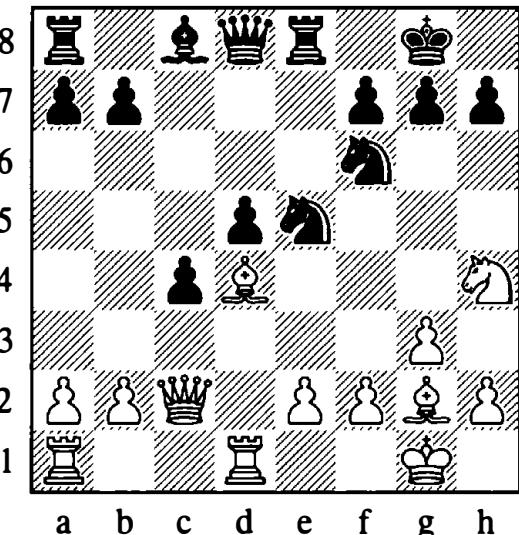
15...♛e7

This is the most frequently played move. Black removes the queen from the d-file, which is dominated by the white rook, before any tactical tricks become possible.

Attempting to simplify the position by giving up the pawn with 15...♞c6 fails to yield complete equality, because of the weakness of the d-pawn. 16.♝xc4 ♞xd4 17.♝xd4 ♛b6 18.♗d2 ♜e6 This position was reached in Gheorghiu – Szmetan, Torremolinos 1976. Szmetan recommended 19.♛f4!? d5 20.♞f5, with a stable advantage.

The game Tomashevsky – Rublevsky, Moscow 2005, introduced the new move:

15...d5?!



The correct answer was:

16.♗d2!N

Instead the game continued 16.♗c3?! and after 16...♞c6! Black managed to regroup

properly, because 17.♕xf6 ♛xf6 18.♕xd5 is met by 18...♝d4, regaining the pawn with complete equality.

16...♛e7

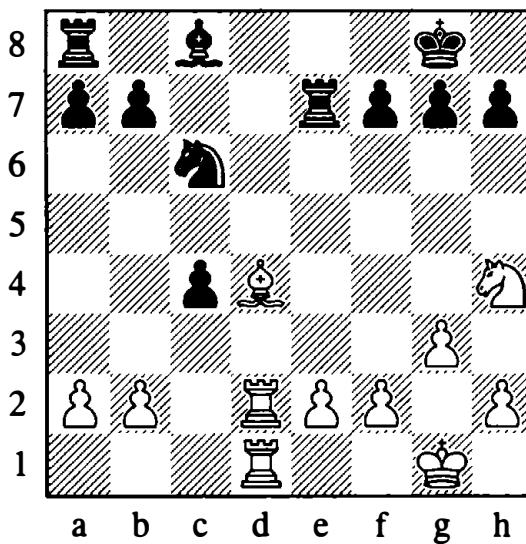
This move is indicated anyway.

It is worth mentioning that in this position 16...♞c6 does not work because after 17.♕xf6 ♛xf6 18.♕xd5± the e2-pawn is well defended.

17.♗ad1 ♜e4?!

This move allows Black to simplify the position, but fails to achieve complete equality.

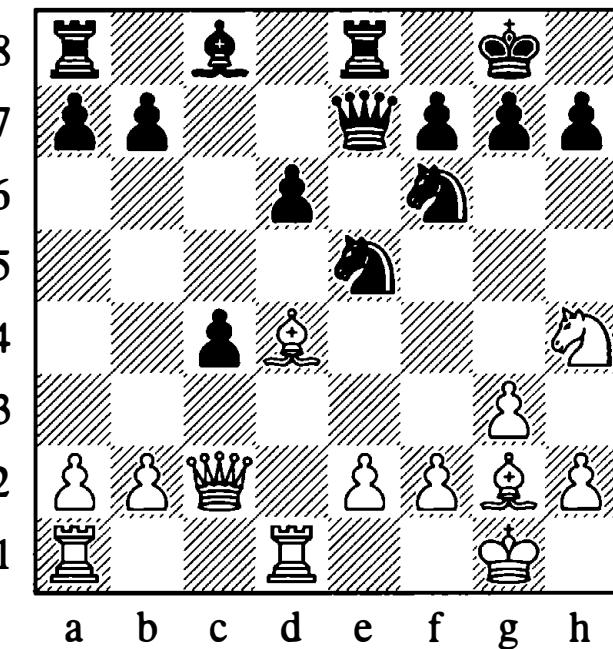
18.♕xe4 dxe4 19.♛xe4 ♞c6 20.♛xe7 ♛xe7



A player with good defensive skills may be able to draw this position, but White will retain long-term pressure because of his strong centralization. A possible continuation is:

21.♞g2 f6 22.♞f4

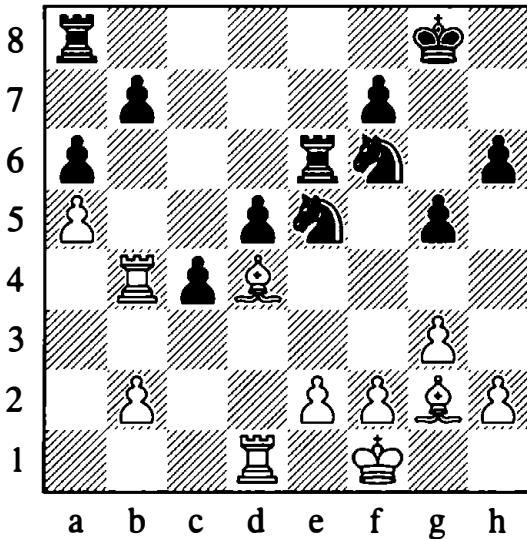
Followed by f2-f3 and e2-e4.



16.♖d2

After this move the discussion about which rook belongs on d1 loses its relevance, but it is useful to consider alternate plans, in case Black deviates at an earlier stage.

In the following example White chose another fate for his queen's rook: 16.♕f5 ♜xf5 17.♗xf5 d5 18.a4 This move prepares to activate the queen's rook along the a-file. 18...♝e6 19.♗xe6 ♜xe6 20.a5 h6 21.♔f1 g5 22.♔a4 a6 23.♔b4±



Black's position is quite unpleasant, as his weak d5- and b7-pawns are under strong pressure. He also has problems regrouping, because any knight move would lose a pawn, Cvetkovic – Lerner, Belgrade 1988.

16...♝e6

Once again, 16...♝c6 fails to equalize after 17.♕xf6 ♜xf6 18.♗xc4±, as in Smejkal – Mecking, Rio de Janeiro (izt) 1979.

17.♔ad1 ♜ac8

Black completes his development and sets a small trap. Instead 17...♜ad8 would have allowed 18.♔xa7.

18.♔c3

In this position 18.♔xa7?! is inadvisable because of 18...c3 19.bxc3 ♜c4, when White has to give up an exchange, since 20.♔d3? b6 and 20.♔d4 ♜a8 are both bad.

18...♜ed8 19.♕f5 ♜xf5 20.♗xf5

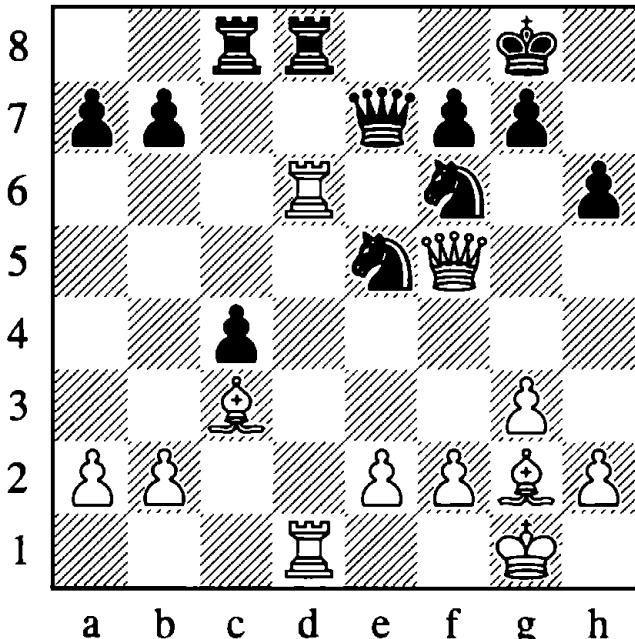
Black has not achieved anything by keeping his pawn on d6, as he is still under great pressure.

20...h6?

This blunder loses a pawn under very unfavourable circumstances.

20...♜b8 has been recommended, but White restores material equality with 21.♔xb7±, when the bishop is taboo in view of ♜xe5.

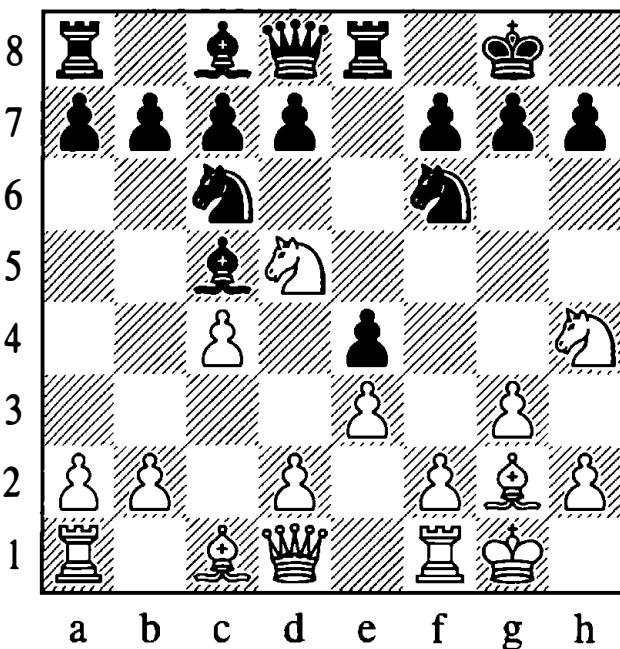
20...♝e8 is too passive to be good: White plays 21.♔xe5 dxe5 22.♔d7± with a strong initiative.

21.♔xd6!±

After regaining the pawn, White obtains a clear advantage because of his active pair of bishops, Zueger – Landenbergue, Horgen 1994.

(1.c4 e5 2.g3 ♜c6 3.♔c3 ♜f6 4.♔g2 ♜b4 5.♔d5 0–0 6.♔f3 e4 7.♔h4 ♜c5 8.0–0 ♜e8)

C2) 9.e3!



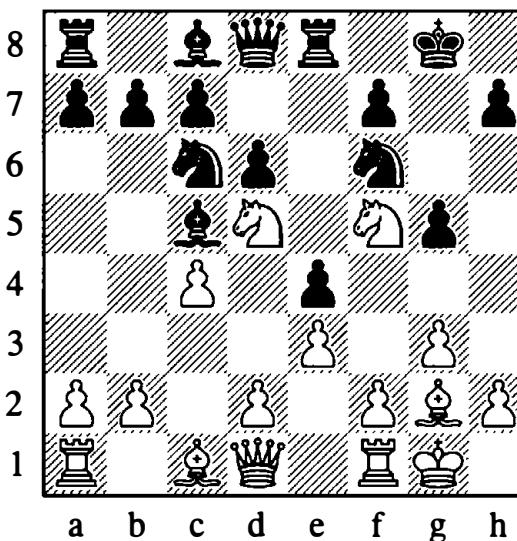
This strong move was shown to me by Marius Ceteras, the captain of the Romanian Women's correspondence chess team. While breaking in the centre with d2-d3 looks natural, it would be much better to do so with f2-f3, thus putting the f6-knight and the f7-square under serious pressure. In order to achieve this, it is necessary to unpin the f2-pawn and safely blockade the e4-pawn, preventing a possible ...e4-e3.

Curiously, this move was introduced into serious tournament play as recently as 2008, and since then only a few more games have been played. The current verdict is that Black faces a difficult defence and my personal feeling is that this evaluation will not change.

9...d6

This looks like the most constructive move, as it avoids prematurely releasing the tension.

Instead in the game Marin – Fressinet, Plovdiv 2008, my opponent thought for half an hour and produced the suicidal 9...g5?? and after 10.♘f5 d6 we reached the following position:

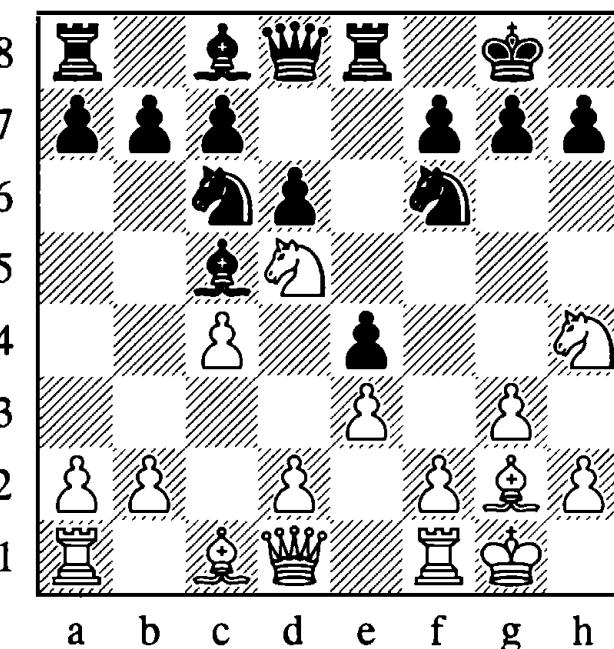


Now a curious thing happened: I heard an inner voice saying, “e7, e7, e7!” but I could not understand what on earth this meant. So I played a normal move, then later rejected a draw in a promising position, but eventually had to fight to save a draw.

When I arrived back at my hotel room, I found the simple combination 11.♘fe7†!N ♕xe7 12.♘xf6† ♔g7 13.♘xe4 with an extra pawn and a decisive advantage due to the weakened position of the black king.

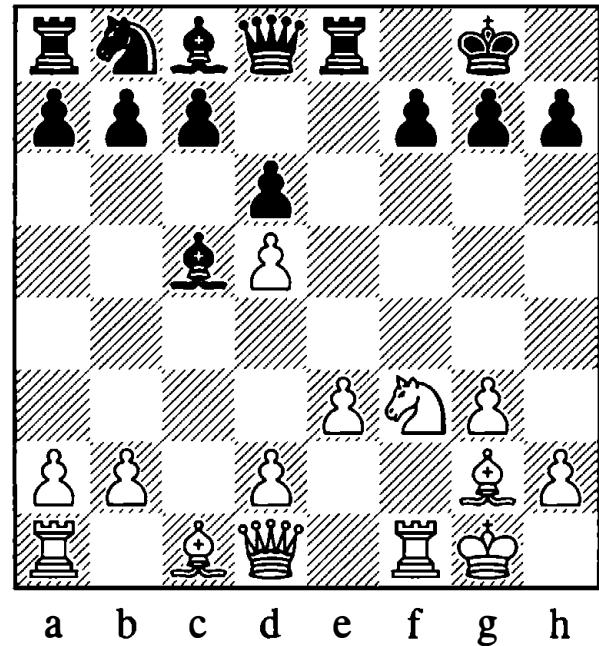
9...♘xd5 10.cxd5 ♘b4 leads to similar play to the main line after 11.f3 exf3 12.♗xf3 f6 13.d4 ♖f8 14.♖d2±.

9...♗e7, targeting the h4-knight, fails to bother White in view of 10.♘f5 ♗f8 11.f3± with strong pressure.



10.f3 ♜xd5 11.cxd5 exf3 12.♘xf3 ♜b8

The knight has to retreat to this passive square, because after 12...♜e5? 13.d4 ♜xf3† 14.♗xf3 Black loses an important pawn.

**13.d4!N**

This is better than 13.♘h4??, which is slightly premature because White's development is incomplete. 13...♞d7 14.b3 ♜b6 15.♗b2 ♜e5 16.♗c2 ♜g4 17.♗f2 ♜e7 18.♗af1 ♜f8 19.♗e4± White has a space advantage and harmonious pieces, but Black managed to defend in Vitiugov – Volkov, Novokuznetsk 2008.

13...♜b6 14.♗d3 ♜d7 15.♗d2±

White has a stable advantage, as the b6-bishop is very passive and Black lacks space.

15...♝f6

This generally desirable move allows White to start a powerful attack.

16.♘g5!

White threatens ♜xf6.

16...h6 17.♘xf7!

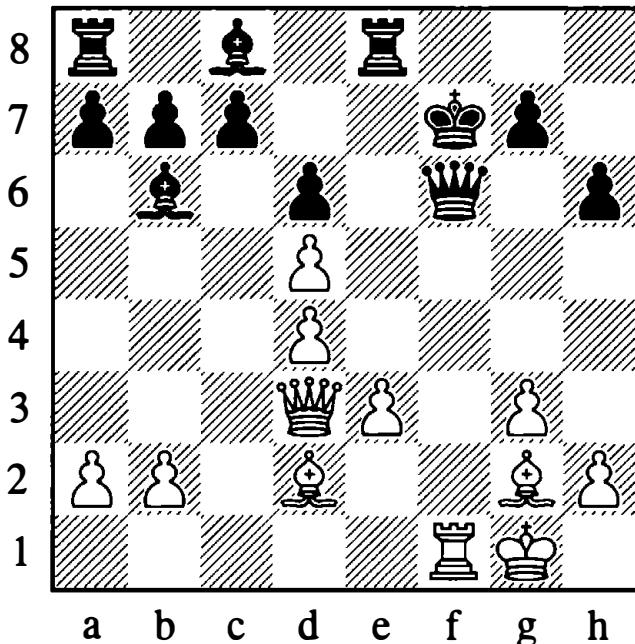
The tactical operation initiated by this move is justified by White's considerable lead in development.

17...♚xf7 18.♝xf6†!

White enjoys a clear material superiority on the kingside, so he can afford to destroy the black king's defence by sacrificial means.

18...♛xf6

The lesser evil, as 18...gxsf6? exposes the king to a deadly attack after 19.♗h7† ♚f8 20.e4.

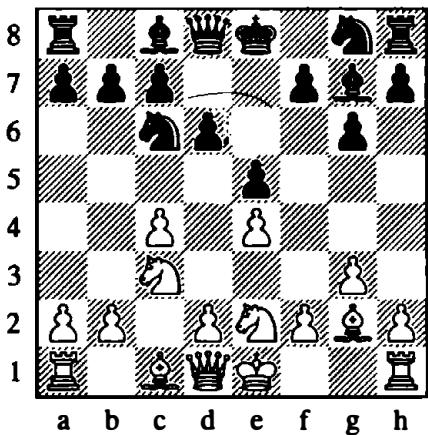
19.♝f1±

White restores material equality and retains his space advantage. After 19...♛xf6† 20.♝xf6 the black king is still exposed, and 20...♚g8 does not solve the problem because of 21.♗g6 followed by ♜d3.

Conclusion:

The reader may have noticed that compared with Chapters 2-6, the positions in this section tend to simplify more quickly because of the early knight contact in the centre. As an extreme example, all four knights are exchanged in line A from Chapter 11. These circumstances do not damage White's chances of gaining an advantage, due to his more flexible structure and the active g2-bishop.

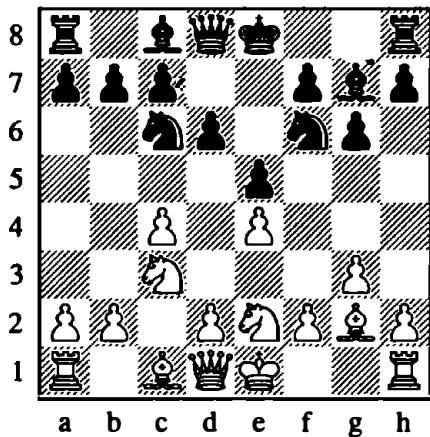
Therefore, I find 5.♘d5 entirely satisfactory from a theoretical point of view, while the types of position are also fully in accordance with the spirit of this book.



Botvinnik System

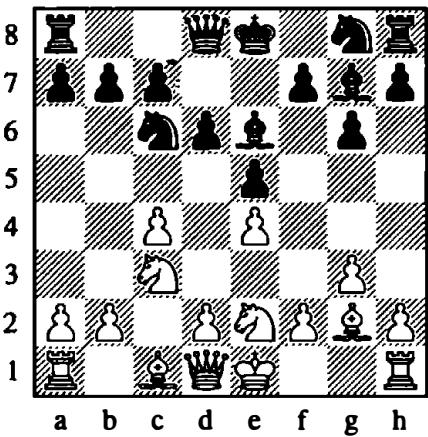
Introduction

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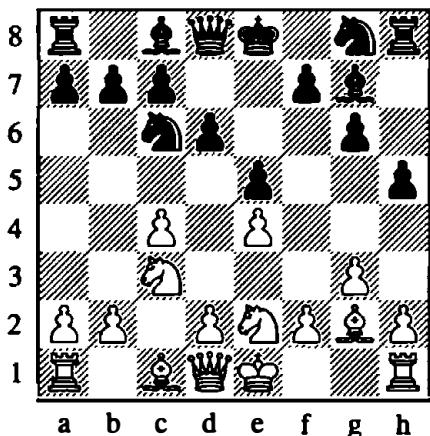
6... $\mathbb{Q}f6$

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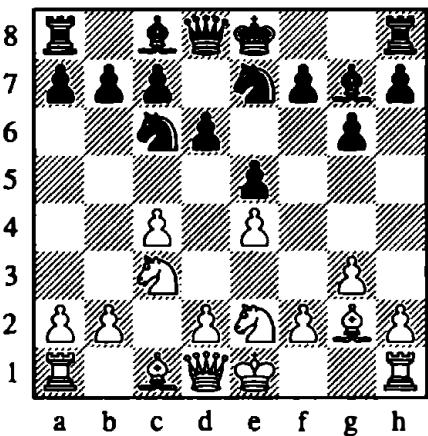
6... $\mathbb{Q}e6$

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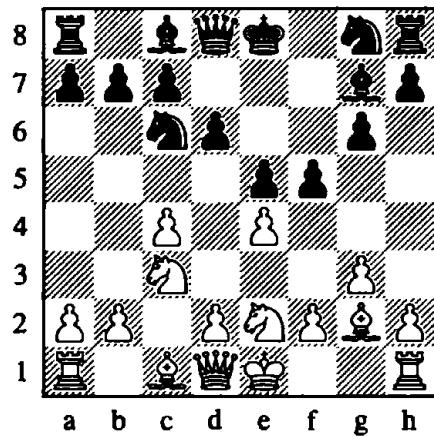
6...h5

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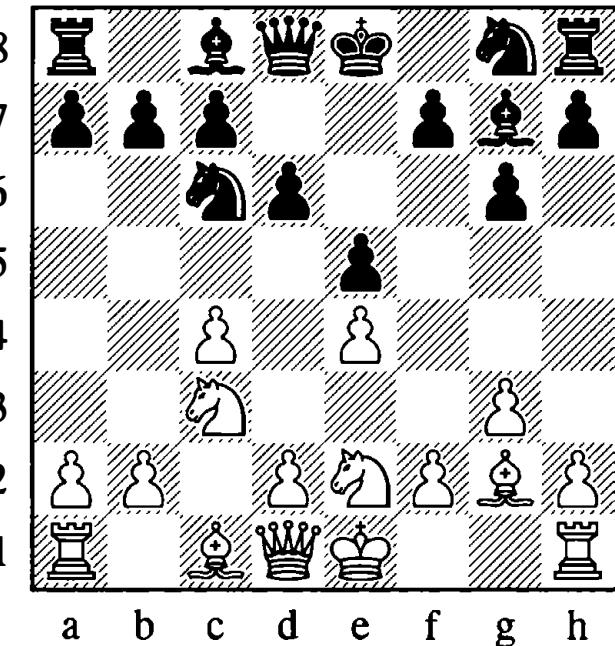
6... $\mathbb{Q}ge7$

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6...f5

1.c4 e5 2.g3 ♜c6 3.♗c3 g6 4.♗g2 ♛g7 5.e4 d6 6.♗ge2



White's system of development is named after Botvinnik. The Patriarch of the Soviet chess school employed it a few times towards the end of his career, usually against top class players such as Petrosian, Spassky and Geller. Several generations later, one of Botvinnik's pupils used this set-up against a worthy opponent and won a fine attacking game (see Kasparov – Short, page 185-188).

The whole variation is unfashionable nowadays, when opening preparation tends to be mainly based on the engines' suggestions. Computers can do an excellent job when forced variations with clear consequences are available, but they cannot help us to understand strategic subtleties and long-term planning – two elements that are essential for handling this variation properly. This latter aspect also explains why the great players of the past liked this variation.

White's set-up is a lot more dangerous for Black than is commonly believed. I must confess that I first played it as an over-the-board inspiration, when a much higher rated opponent (Vadim Milov) unexpectedly answered my 1.c4 with 1...e5. My initial idea was to get a solid position to minimize the effects of his opening preparation, but I

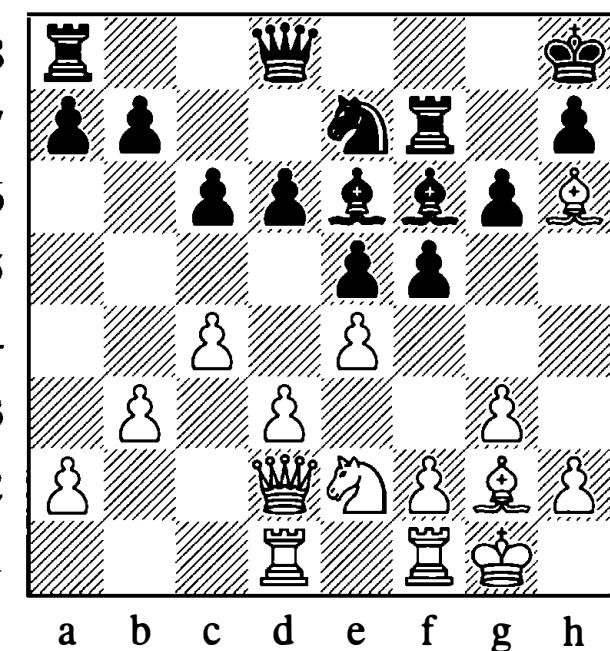
was very surprised by the ease with which I obtained a decisive advantage (see the game on page 222-224). Ever since, I have used this variation as my main weapon against Black's systems based on ...g6 (see also Chapters 30).

At first sight, the whole set-up seems paradoxical. The standard view of the English Opening is for White to make use of his powerful g2-bishop by launching an attack with b4-b5, while Black seeks counterplay on the kingside and in the centre. From this point of view, e2-e4 looks rather ugly: why would White voluntarily close the long diagonal and weaken the d4-square? (The reader might be amazed to see that in some games White even plays f2-f3 at some point. I must admit that in most of these cases I also fail to see the point of this move.)

A deeper look at the position reveals some answers. First of all, by playing e2-e4 White reduces the dangers on the kingside and starts fighting for space in the centre. Botvinnik was very successful with the Maroczy bind (even with reversed colours) and we can suppose that he considered his favourite structure with pawns on e4, d3 and c4 as a transitory step to the further advance of the d3-pawn. The following is a typical example taken from Chapter 18, line B62.

Delchev – Saucy

Nice 2000



In the previous phase of the game the actions of both sides were dictated by the current structure. Black has managed to get rid of the annoying d5-knight, but his coordination is far from optimal. White is fully developed and can occupy the centre.

15.d4+

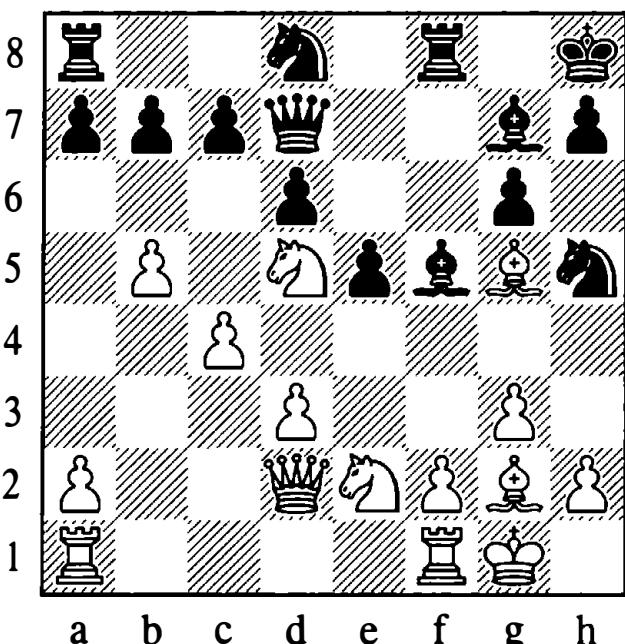
Black's position is very vulnerable.

A further point is that the g2-bishop is still alive after e2-e4. Since Black is deprived of counterplay in the centre, he usually plays ...f7-f5 at some point, when White has the possibility of playing exf5 to open his bishop, followed by b4-b5, as in the "typical" English lines.

Black has two main ways of answering exf5. The capture ... $\mathbb{Q}c8xf5$ aims for active piece play, but concedes control of the e4-square to White. This would transform the g2-bishop into a very active piece, making the queenside attack based on b4-b5 quite effective. Here is a typical position taken from Chapter 18, line B5.

Ribli – Van Mil

European Cup, London 1997



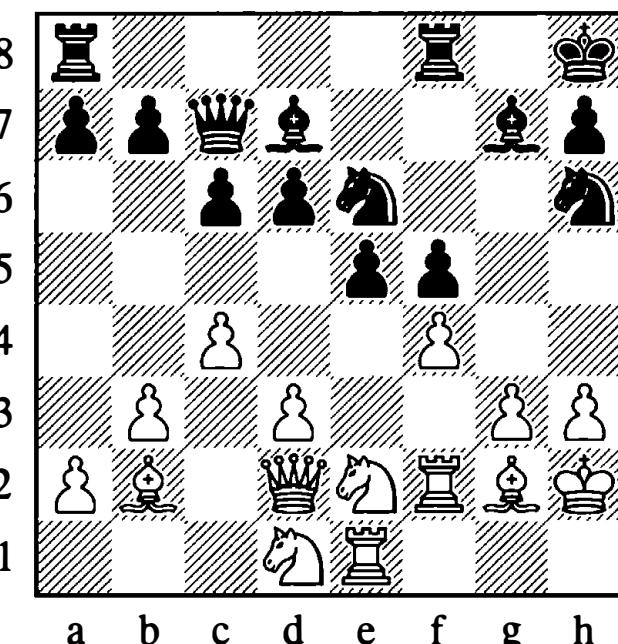
Capturing with the g6-pawn on f5 looks more consistent strategically, because it

maintains the theoretical possibility of a kingside attack based on ...f5-f4. The main drawback of the move is that it restricts Black's light-squared bishop. White's usual reaction is f2-f4, stabilizing the kingside and transforming the f5-pawn into a potential weakness. This is only a partial achievement and further structural modifications are needed to guarantee an objective advantage.

For White, the most favourable way to release the tension is fxe5 and if ...dxe5, then d4, in order to gain control of the f4-square. Since ...dxe5 opens the d-file for Black's major pieces, which makes d3-d4 hard to carry out, this method only works if Black is poorly coordinated. The following is a typical case:

Cvitan – Nevednichy

Nova Gorica 2002



19.fxe5 dxe5 20.d4 $\mathbb{Q}f7$

From a strategic point of view, 20...e4? leaves White with perfect blockading squares on e3 and f4, but in this specific case it is simply bad because of 21.d5!, winning material.

The only way to avoid the immediate weakening of the f4-square was 20... $\mathbb{W}d6$, pinning the d-pawn. After 21.b4 Black's lack of space along the d-file, caused by the unfortunate

placement of the queen's bishop, makes itself felt. White threatens c4-c5 followed by dxe5. 21...b6!? The only way to fight for the c5-square. 22.c5! A pawn sacrifice that increases the chaos in Black's camp. 22...bxc5 23.bxc5 ♜xc5 24.♗a3 exd4 25.♗b2 The pin along the a3-f8 diagonal will lead to material gains for White.

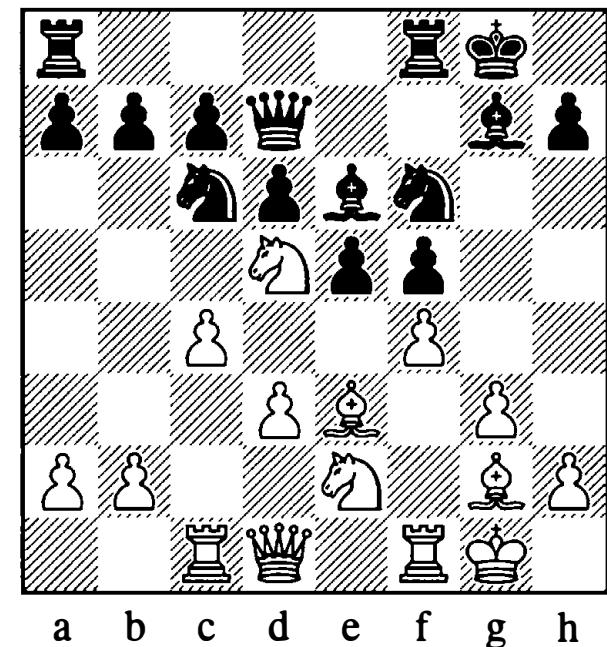
21.dxe5 ♜xe5 22.♗f4 ♜ad8 23.♗fe2±

White has completed his regrouping, while Black's pieces are hanging. Material losses are unavoidable.

In the following example Black is better coordinated for the fight along the d-file, and White will have to play d3-d4 without the preliminary exchange on e5.

Nogueiras – Paramos

Santa Clara 1999



14.d4!

White threatens to exchange twice on e5 to gain the f4-square for his e2-knight.

14...♝g4

An ambitious answer. Black hopes that after exchanging the e3-bishop he will get counterplay on the dark squares. In many cases White plays h2-h3 or ♛h1 prior to opening the centre, in

order to preserve the bishop from exchange. In our case, Black's counter-attacking move fails to equalize.

As a general rule ...e4 is the lesser evil, although it allows White to stabilize the position favourably and to retain a space advantage in the centre. But, as above, in this concrete position 14...e4? just loses material: 15.♗xf6† ♜xf6 16.d5+–

14...exd4 is a strategic concession, leaving White with a space advantage and the more compact structure after 15.♗xd4±.

15.dxe5 ♜xe3 16.♗xe3 dxe5 17.fxe5 ♜xe5 18.♗f4 c6 19.♗b3 ♔h8 20.♗cd1±

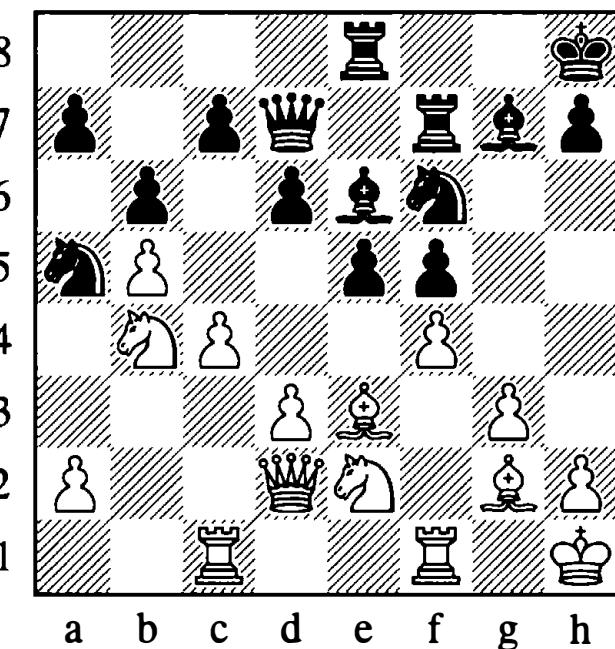
White has the initiative and Black's b7- and f5-pawns are weak.

A less common method is to increase the pressure against the f5-pawn until Black is forced to release the tension with ...exf4. This is only likely to work under special circumstances. For instance, if the black queen's bishop, the main defender of the f5-pawn, has been exchanged.

Finally, we shall consider an optimal situation for White in the following example, taken from Chapter 17, line C1.

Agrest – Popov

Stockholm 2002

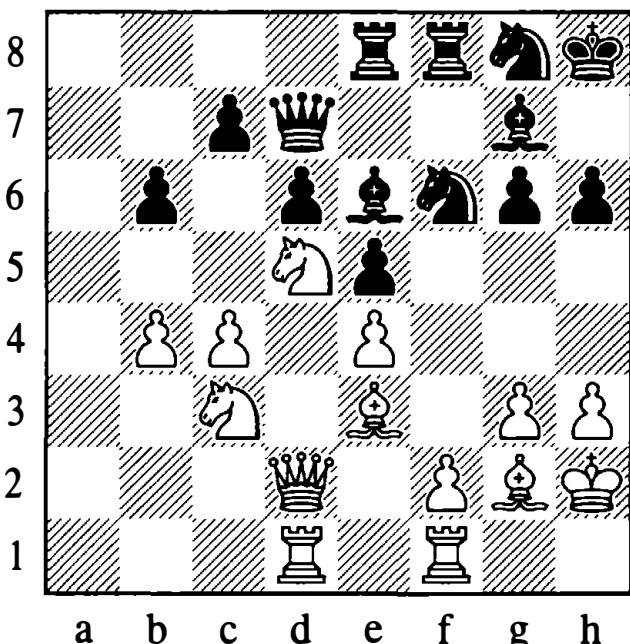


White has the advantage on both wings: he controls the light squares on the queenside, while the hanging f5- and e5-pawns are under strong pressure.

It is difficult to give a complete overview of the situations when ...gxf5 is met by f4, but as a general rule this structure offers White pleasant play against the hanging pawns. Black has no easy way to deal with the kingside tension. If he plays ...fxe4, this usually leaves White with strong pressure along the d-file, and the possibility of carrying out a minority attack based on b4 and c5. The fact that the g2-bishop has become passive is a feeble consolation, because the same applies to the g7-bishop. Moreover, White's space advantage makes it easier for him to activate his bishop, most likely via f1-d3. I once achieved such a position from a different variation, in which e3-e4 was played at a later stage.

Marin – Astrom

Gothenburg 1999



Black's queenside is vulnerable, while he has no counterplay on the other wing.

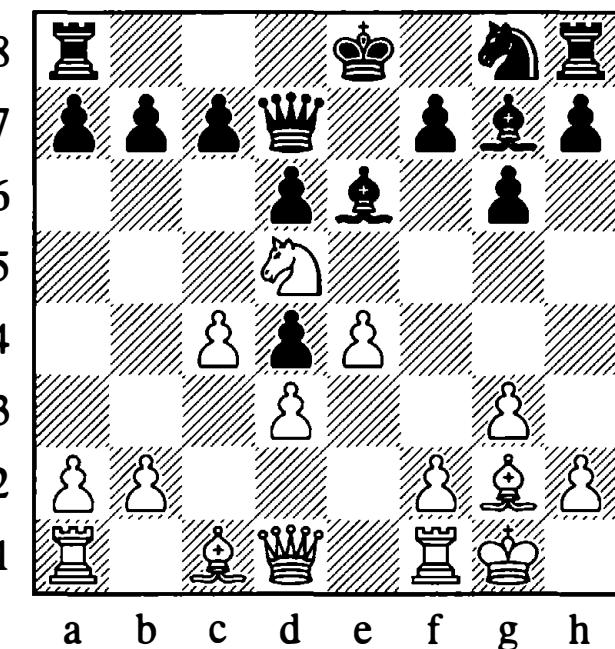
Finally, we shall examine the problem of the

relatively weak d4-square and its correspondent in Black's camp, the d5-square.

At first sight, the d4-square is weaker than the d5-square, because no white pawn can take it under control. However, from a practical point of view, it is precisely the opposite: an unprepared occupation of the d4-square with ...Qc6-d4 leads to a structural modification that favours White after Qe2xd4 and ...exd4.

Giorgadze – Gazik

Formia 1994

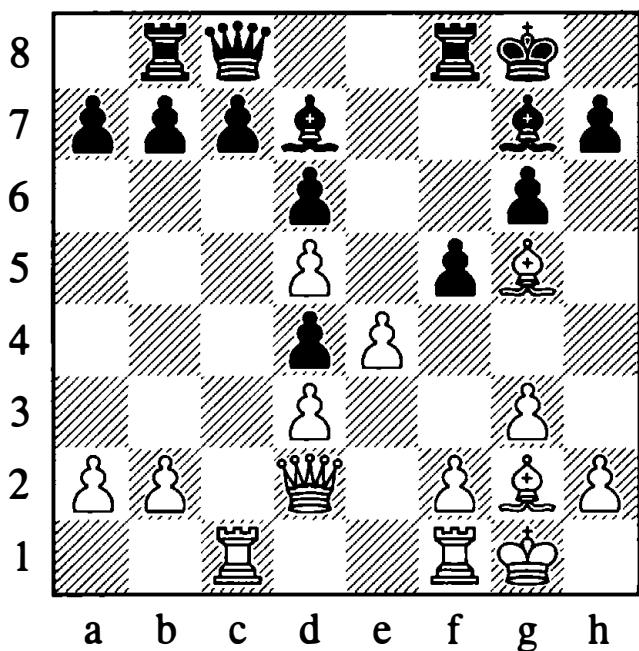


White can attack on either wing, with f2-f4 or b2-b4. In this specific case, the kingside attack is more promising because the enemy king remains in the centre.

Black would not achieve anything favourable if he captured a white knight on d5. White would most likely recapture with the c-pawn (something Black cannot do after ...Qc6-d4), opening the c-file and consolidating his space advantage in the centre. In the following example, taken from line A in Chapter 17, both exchanges had been carried out and we can evaluate the difference between the two apparently equivalent operations.

Botvinnik – Spassky

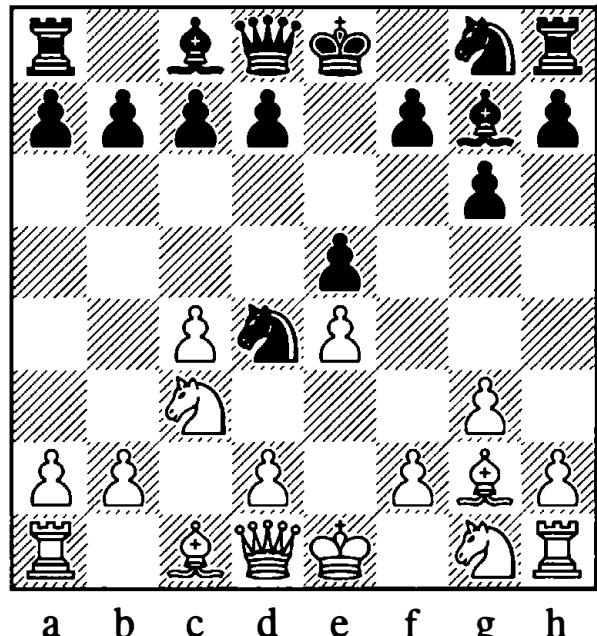
Leiden 1970



White has pressure along the c-file and a mobile majority on the other wing.

One natural question is what happens if Black occupies the d4-square before White takes it under control with $\mathbb{Q}ge2$. Instead of 5...d6, leading to the tabiya of this chapter, he can try:

5... $\mathbb{Q}d4$



White has no reason to deviate from the natural course of his development.

6. $\mathbb{Q}ge2 \mathbb{Q}xe2$

Strategically, this is the most consistent move.

6...c5

This consolidates the knight, but would not absolve Black from his strategic problems.

7. $\mathbb{Q}xd4$ cxd4

7...exd4 leaves White with a mobile kingside majority after 8. $\mathbb{Q}e2$ d6 9.d3 $\mathbb{Q}e7$ 10.0–0 0–0 11. $\mathbb{Q}f4\pm$. In addition, he has good prospects of starting queenside operations with $\mathbb{Q}d2$ and b2-b4.

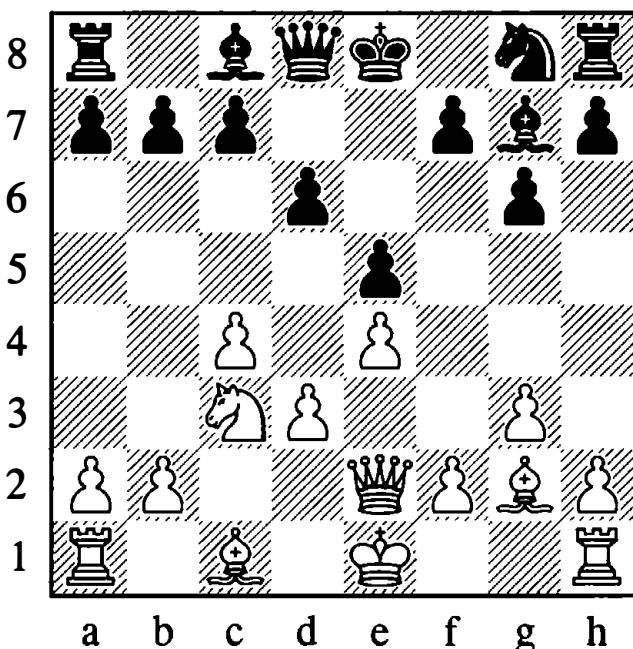
8. $\mathbb{Q}d5 \mathbb{Q}e7$ 9. $\mathbb{Q}xe7!$

White prevents the long light diagonal from being blocked by another pawn. So if ...f7-f5 is played, then White's g2-bishop would become very active after exf5.

9... $\mathbb{W}xe7$ 10.d3 0–0 11.0–0 d6 12. $\mathbb{Q}d2\pm$

White can combine play on both sides, with f4 and b4. It should be noted that ...exf4 would fail to activate the g7-bishop, because of the presence of a black pawn on d4.

7. $\mathbb{W}xe2$ d6 8.d3



Although Black seems to be fine strategically, he is behind in development because of the repeated moves of his queen's knight.

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

This looks the most active way to develop the knight.

Instead, transferring it to d4 would be rather time-consuming.

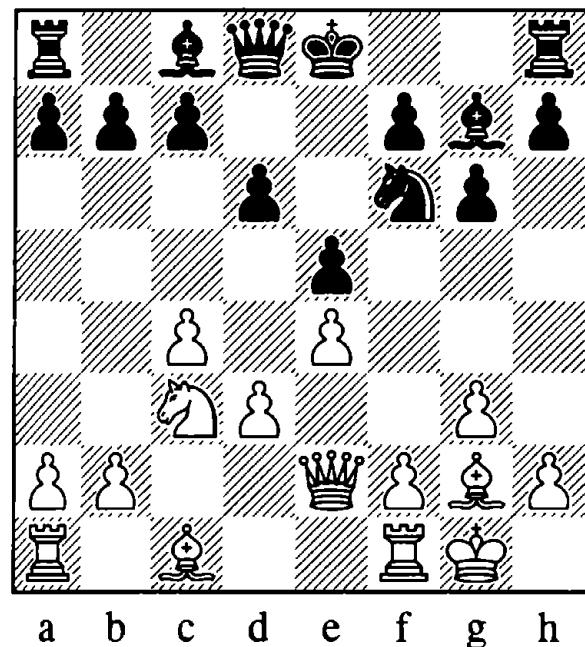
8... $\mathbb{Q}e7$ 9.0–0 $\mathbb{Q}c6$ 10. $\mathbb{Q}e3!$ N

An important improvement over 10.f4 $\mathbb{Q}d4$ 11. $\mathbb{W}f2$ 0–0 12. $\mathbb{Q}e3$ f5 13. $\mathbb{B}ae1$ c6, as played in Kron – Golubev, Moscow 1996. White has no obvious way to increase his pressure and his queen is exposed on the f-file.

10... $\mathbb{Q}d4$ 11. $\mathbb{W}d2$ 0–0 12.f4 c6 13. $\mathbb{B}f2!$ \pm

White is several tempos ahead in development and threatens $\mathbb{B}af1$ and f4-f5.

9.0–0



9... $\mathbb{Q}h5$

Black anticipates the positional threat of f2-f4, but the knight will be badly placed on the edge of the board. Black was afraid that after 9...0–0 10.f4 exf4 11.gxf4 it would be too late for 11... $\mathbb{Q}h5$ because of 12. $\mathbb{Q}f3$ $\mathbb{Q}h3$ 13. $\mathbb{B}f2$ $\mathbb{Q}f6$ 14. $\mathbb{Q}e3$ followed by a slow but effective attack with $\mathbb{Q}h1$ and $\mathbb{B}g1$.

Black's development is not good enough to justify opening the h-file:

9...h5 10. $\mathbb{Q}g5$ h4 11.gxh4

The careless 11... $\mathbb{Q}xh4$! would offer Black excellent play on the dark squares after 11... $\mathbb{B}xh4$ 12.gxh4 $\mathbb{Q}h5$.

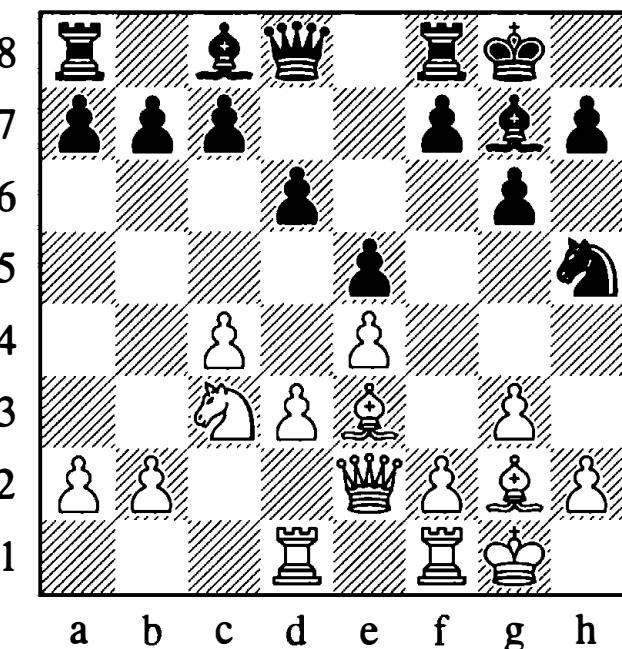
11... $\mathbb{Q}h6$ 12.f4 $\mathbb{Q}xg5$ 13.hxg5 $\mathbb{Q}h5$ 14.fxe5 dxе5 15. $\mathbb{Q}d5\pm$

White will play $\mathbb{Q}f6$, keeping an extra pawn and pressure along the f-file.

10. $\mathbb{Q}e3!$

Since Black was ready to meet 10.f4 with 10...exf4 11.gxf4 $\mathbb{W}h4$, White changes his plans. With the knight on h5, Black cannot find a favourable way to carry out the desirable break ...f7-f5, because of the simple exf5. In most cases ... $\mathbb{Q}xf5$ would lose a piece to g3-g4, while ... $\mathbb{B}xf5$ would fail to improve Black's development and control of the light squares.

10...0–0 11. $\mathbb{B}ad1$



11...c6

Black could prevent the opening of the centre with:

11...c5

But this would lead to a symmetrical position where White's superior development and the unfortunate position of the black knight are telling factors.

12.b4

White opens the position as far away as possible from the enemy knight. Preparing f2-f4 would make less sense, because the h5-knight would suddenly become useful.

12...b6

The greedy 12...cxb4 13.♗d5 a5 leaves Black with serious coordination problems after 14.♕b6 ♘d7. White would open the centre with 15.d4, retaining a strong initiative.

13.♗b1 ♔e6 14.♗d5 ♘d7 15.bxc5 bxc5

After 15...dxc5 16.♘c2 followed by a4-a5, Black's queenside would be badly weakened.

16.♗b3 ♘ab8 17.♗fb1±

White will invade the enemy position via the b-file.

12.d4 ♘e7

Black's position remains solid, but he has no easy way to complete his development. Therefore, White refrains from concrete action, preferring to slowly improve his position.

13.♗d2!

Planning to increase his pressure along the d-file with ♘fd1.

13...f5

When playing this premature move, Black hoped that his opponent would be tempted by material gains and would embark on some forced variations.

However, it is easier to criticize this move than suggest an improvement:

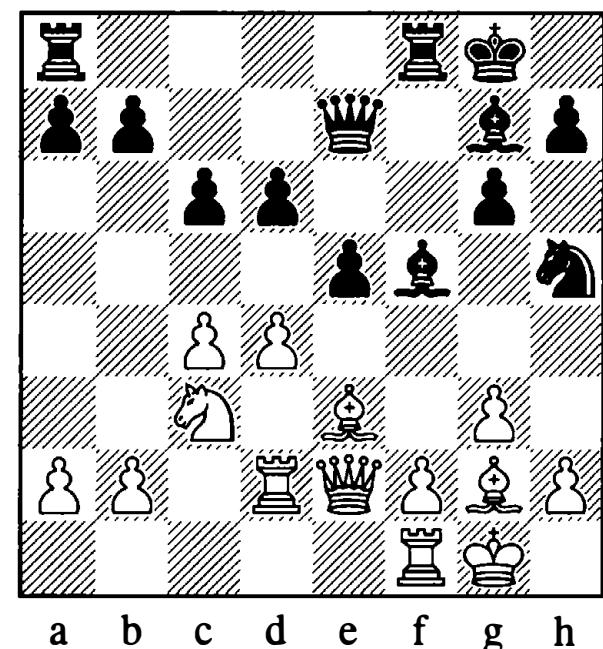
13...♔e6?! leaves Black with a chronic weakness on d6 after 14.d5 ♔d7 (14...cxd5 15.♗xd5± is similar) 15.dxc6 ♔xc6 16.♗fd1±.

13...♗f6 14.h3 ♔e6 leaves the e5-pawn insufficiently defended, allowing White to gain space in the centre with the thematic break 15.c5!±.

The most solid continuation would have been: 13...♔d7 14.♗fd1 ♘fd8 (the generally desirable 14...♗ad8 drops a pawn to 15.dxe5 dxe5 16.♔xa7±) 15.a3!± White is in total control of the position and prepares to win even more space with b2-b4 followed by either c4-c5 or

d4-d5. The immediate 15.b4 may also be good, but since Black has no counterplay, it is better to defend the b4-square before occupying it.

14.exf5 ♘xf5



15.d5!

White had no good way to make the fork with g3-g4 work. For example, 15.g4? is simply bad because of 15...exd4 16.♗xd4 ♘xe2 17.♗xe2 ♔xg4†.

15.dxe5

This would allow Black to activate his pieces:

15...♔xe5 16.g4

16.f4?! is strongly met by 16...♗xc3 17.bxc3 ♘ae8, weakening White's light squares and leaving him pinned.

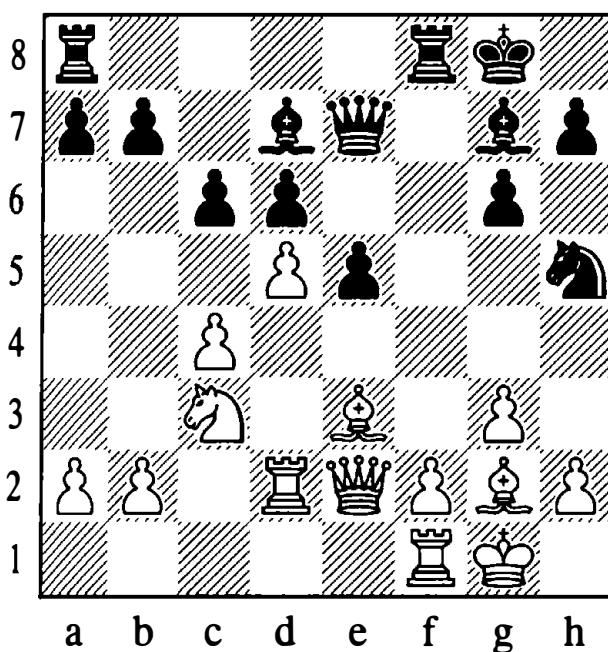
16...♗h4 17.h3 ♘f4 18.♗xf4 ♘xf4 19.gxf5 ♘ae8 20.♗d3 ♘xd2 21.♗xd2 ♘xf5

Despite his minimal material advantage, White does not seem to be better, because of the weakened position of his king.

The text move threatens dxc6, while reinforcing the threat of g3-g4.

15...♔d7

The only way to stay in the game.



16.c5!

The decisive blow, which causes major damage to Black's structure.

Once again, if White was greedy then Black would gain adequate play:

16.dxc6 ♕xc6 17.♕xc6 bxc6 18.♖fd1 ♔ad8
19.♘e4 ♘f4!

This move is only possible because of the white knight on e4. Otherwise, ♘xf4 would win a piece because of the pin along the e-file.

20.gxf4 exf4 21.♔d4 f3

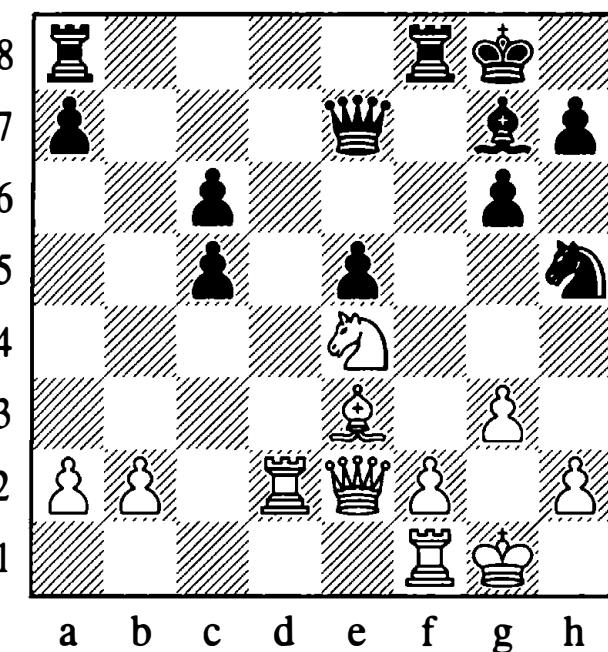
Black has powerful counterplay.

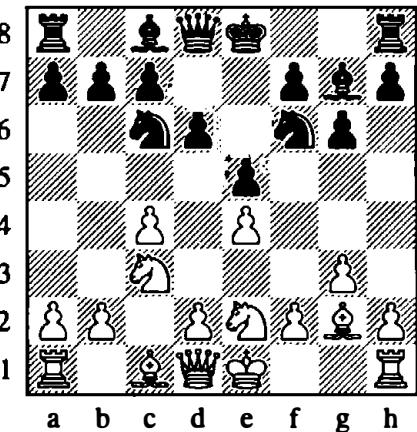
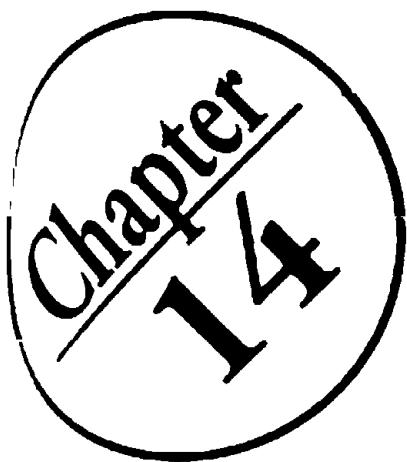
**16...dxc5 17.dxc6 ♕xc6 18.♕xc6 bxc6
19.♘e4±**

With so many pawn weaknesses, Black had practically no chance of saving the game in Marin – Shytaj, Andorra 2009. This game was played shortly before the manuscript was sent to the printer, and offered me the pleasure of a last minute addition to the original text.

We have now seen enough elements to understand the high degree of complexity in the Botvinnik structure, which is one of the reasons Botvinnik included this set-up in his opening arsenal.

Black has several continuations at his disposal. We shall examine 6...♞f6 (Chapter 14), 6...♝e6 (Chapter 15), 6...h5 (Chapter 16), 6...♞ge7 (Chapter 17) and 6...♝ (Chapter 18).





Botvinnik System

6...♞f6

Variation Index

1.c4 e5 2.g3 ♜c6 3.♗c3 g6 4.♗g2 ♗g7 5.e4 d6 6.♗ge2

6...♞f6 7.d3 0-0 7.0-0 ♖e6

A) 9.h3 ♖d7 10.♔h2

p 167

A1) 10...♝e8

p 167

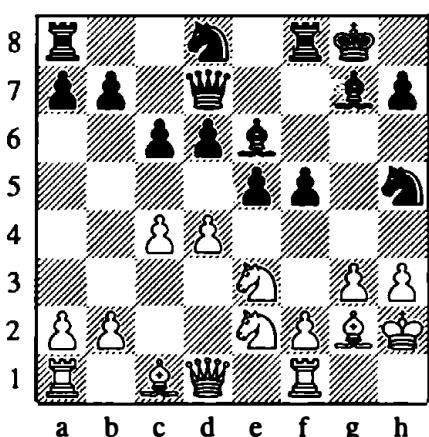
A2) 10...♞h5

p 168

B) 9.♞d5!

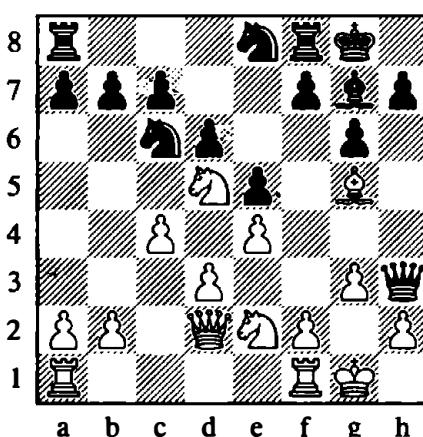
p 170

A2) after 14...gxfs



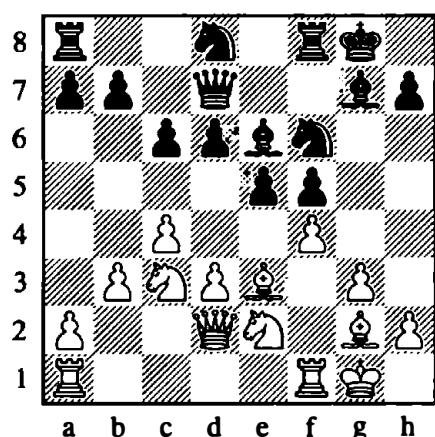
15.d5!N

B) note to 11...f6



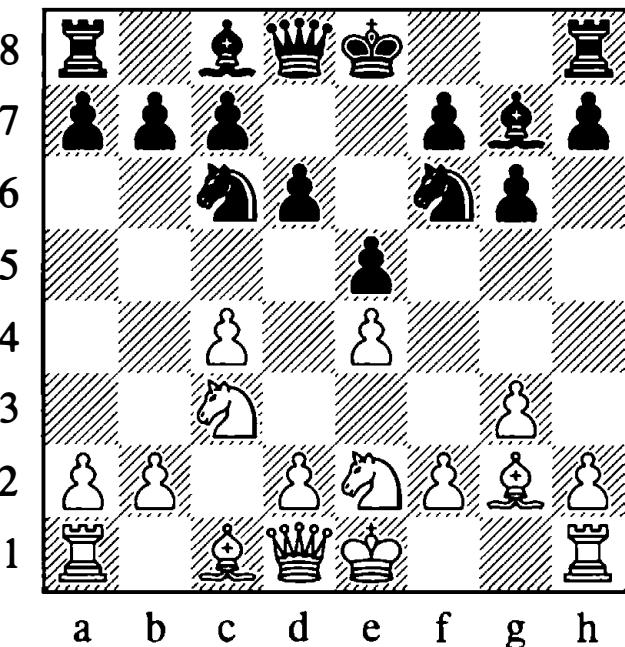
13.b4!N

B) after 16...♞f6



17.fxe5!N

1.c4 e5 2.g3 ♜c6 3.♗c3 g6 4.♗g2 ♜g7 5.e4 d6 6.♗ge2 ♜f6

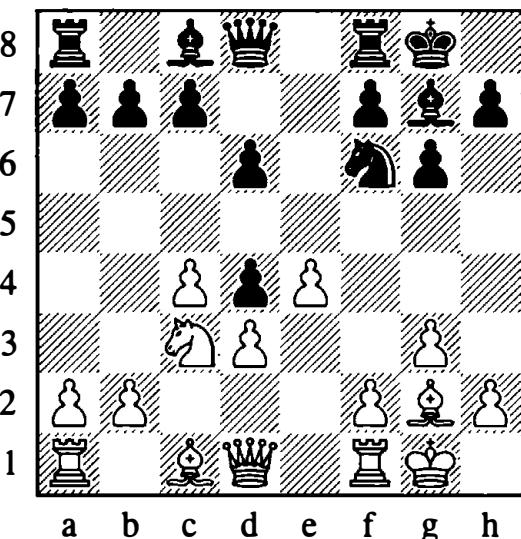


By developing the king's knight in front of the f7-pawn, Black gives up the fight for space in the centre. Instead, he aims for rapid mobilization of his forces, without spending valuable time on pawn moves.

7.d3 0–0 8.0–0 ♜e6

This is the most logical move, planning to complete development with ...♝d8-d7 followed by ...♝a8-d8 or ...♝a8-e8.

Immediately occupying the d4-square with 8...♞d4 leaves White with a dangerous kingside majority after 9.♘xd4 exd4:



10.♗e2 c5 11.b4 ♜d7 12.bxc5 dxc5 13.f4 f6 14.a4 a5 15.g4 ♜b8 16.♗g3 ♜c6 17.♗f2 ♜d7

18.♗f3 ♜a7 19.h4±

White can prepare the kingside attack at his own convenience, while Black cannot achieve much on the queenside, Petrosian – Bertok, Zagreb 1965.

Black sometimes initiates a long knight manoeuvre with:

8...♞d7

Black aims to increase his control over the d4-square, but this plan is time-consuming and is not fully justified due to Black's lack of development.

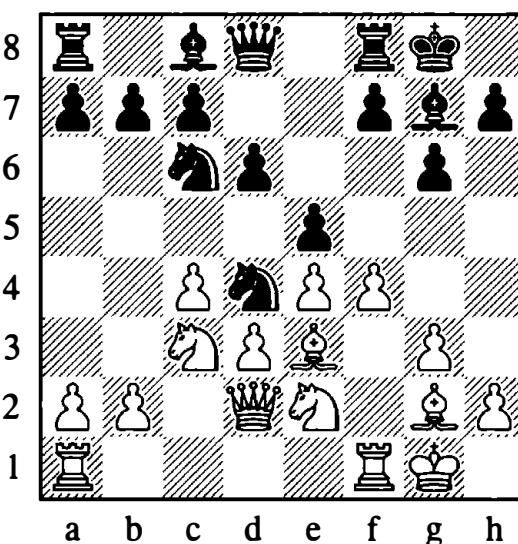
9.♗e3

An immediate consequence of the early knight retreat: White can develop the bishop on this natural square without fearing ...♝g4.

9...♞c5 10.♗d2 ♜e6

In the game L. Marin – Camarena, Cullera 2003, Black consolidated his knight on c5 with 10...a5, but this weakens the b5-square and White could have secured his central domination with 11.♘b5!N.

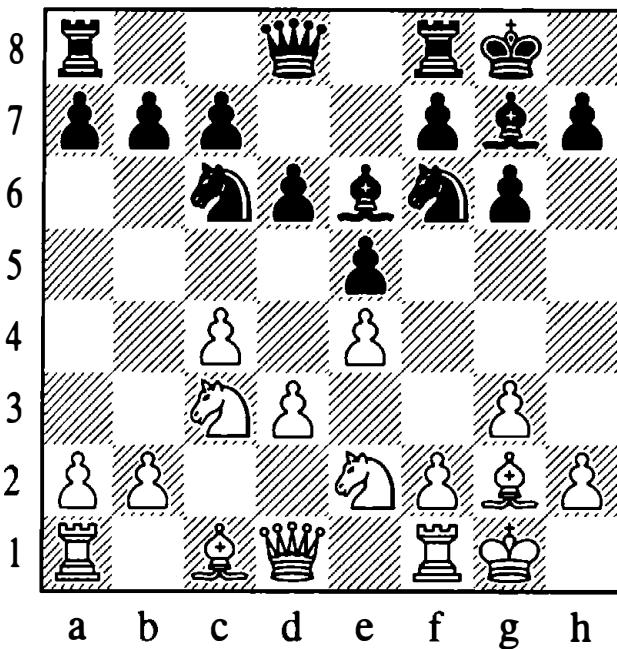
11.f4 ♜ed4



Black has carried out his plan, but he is underdeveloped. In the blitz game Wahls – McShane, Internet 2004, White could have used the available time to increase his kingside pressure:

12.♗f2!N ♜e6 13.♗af1±

The threat of f4-f5 has become quite annoying.



White can choose between A) 9.h3 and B) 9. $\mathbb{Q}d5$!

(1.c4 e5 2.g3 $\mathbb{Q}c6$ 3. $\mathbb{Q}c3$ g6 4. $\mathbb{Q}g2$ $\mathbb{Q}g7$ 5.e4 d6 6. $\mathbb{Q}ge2$ $\mathbb{Q}f6$ 7.d3 0–0 8.0–0 $\mathbb{Q}e6$)

A) 9.h3

White prevents the exchange of bishops with ... $\mathbb{W}d7$ and ... $\mathbb{Q}h3$, gaining some space on the kingside at the same time. This plan leads to complex play, but it is a bit too slow for my taste. However, it is a suitable choice if you are happy with an unhurried fight.

9... $\mathbb{W}d7$ 10. $\mathbb{Q}h2$

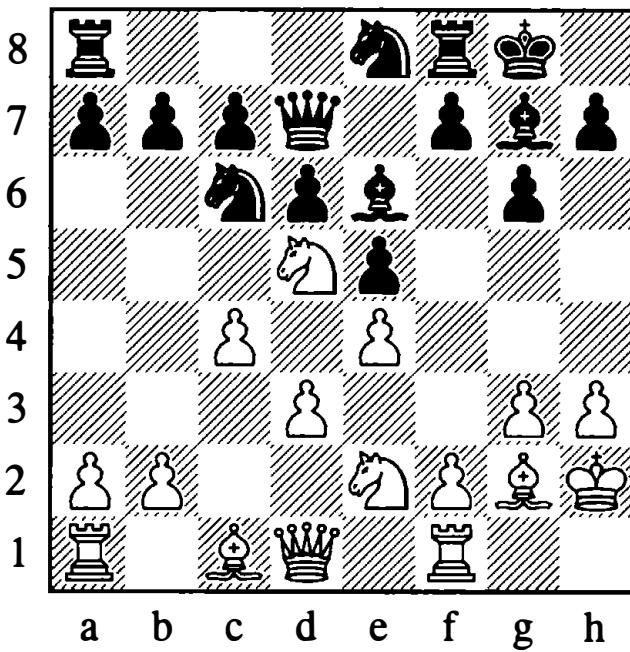
Since White has slightly weakened his king's position, Black needs to clear the path of his f7-pawn to create some attacking chances. He can achieve this with A1) 10... $\mathbb{Q}e8$ or A2) 10... $\mathbb{Q}h5$.

(1.c4 e5 2.g3 $\mathbb{Q}c6$ 3. $\mathbb{Q}c3$ g6 4. $\mathbb{Q}g2$ $\mathbb{Q}g7$ 5.e4 d6 6. $\mathbb{Q}ge2$ $\mathbb{Q}f6$ 7.d3 0–0 8.0–0 $\mathbb{Q}e6$ 9.h3 $\mathbb{W}d7$ 10. $\mathbb{Q}h2$)

A1) 10... $\mathbb{Q}e8$

The knight retreats to a safe square, but fails to put pressure on the enemy king and disconnects Black's rooks.

11. $\mathbb{Q}d5$



11... $\mathbb{Q}d8$

Black intends to drive the enemy knight away with ...c7-c6.

11...f5

This fails to generate an attack after:

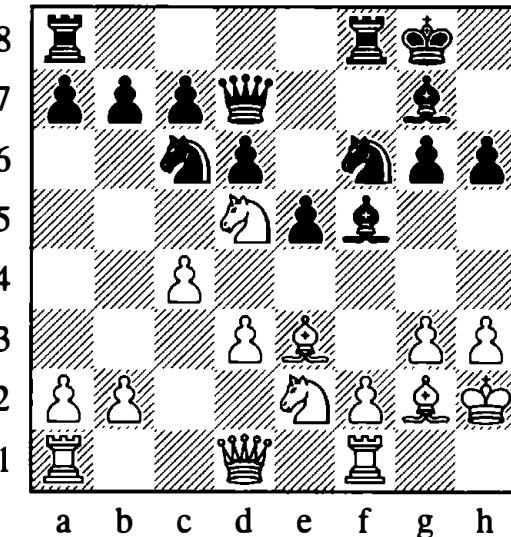
12.exf5 $\mathbb{Q}xf5$

If 12...gxf5 then 13.f4, followed by $\mathbb{Q}e3$ and $\mathbb{W}d2$, stabilizes the position in White's favour.

13. $\mathbb{Q}g5$ h6 14. $\mathbb{Q}e3$

By provoking ...h6, White has weakened the enemy kingside.

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



This position was reached in Makarichev – Parr, Cappelle la Grande 1993. White's best way to achieve a stable advantage is:

15. $\mathbb{W}b3!N \mathbb{B}ab8$ 16. $\mathbb{Q}xf6\# \mathbb{Q}xf6$

The necessity of playing this unnatural move, weakening the pressure against the d4-square, is a direct consequence of ...h6.

17. $d4\pm$

12.d4!

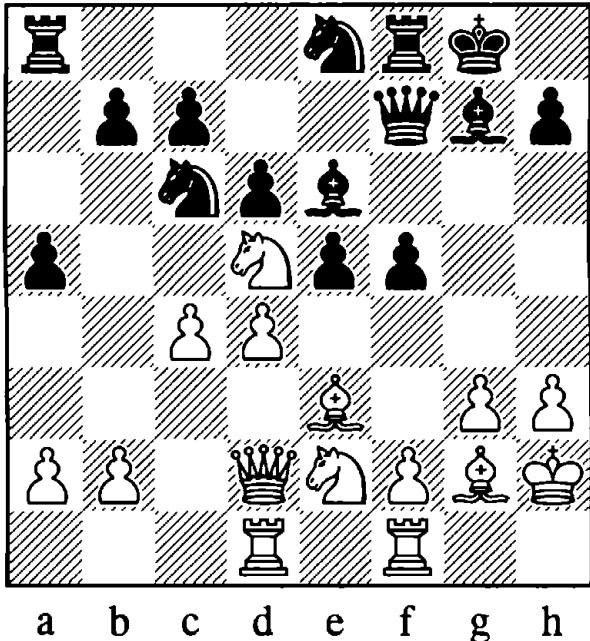
This is the logical reaction to the retreat of both black knights to the back rank. White wins space in the centre, transposing to some sort of favourable King's Indian.

12... $\mathbb{Q}c6$

The knight returns to c6 to put the d4-pawn under pressure, aiming to induce an early exchange on e5.

12...c6 13. $\mathbb{Q}e3$ leaves the bishop exposed to the threat of d4-d5. After 13...exd4 14. $\mathbb{Q}xd4\pm$ Black's minor pieces are badly placed for this typical King's Indian structure.

13. $\mathbb{Q}e3 f5$ 14. $exf5 gxf5$ 15. $\mathbb{W}d2 a5$ 16. $\mathbb{B}ad1 \mathbb{W}f7$



White is better developed and has more space, but Black's position is hard to crack.

17.b3!N

Before undertaking anything concrete, White should improve his position as much

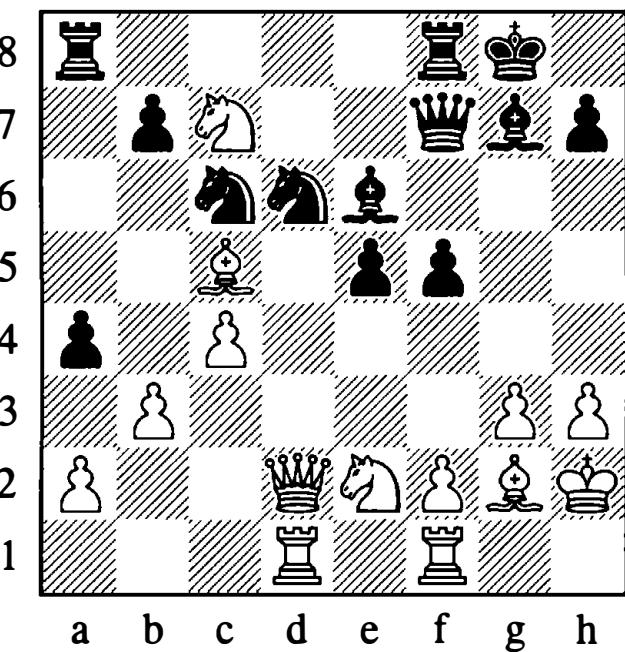
as possible. Protecting the c4-pawn may prove useful if the position opens.

17. $\mathbb{Q}xc7$ is premature: 17... $\mathbb{W}xc7$ 18. $d5 \mathbb{Q}f7$ 19. $dxc6 bxc6$ 20. $b3$ We can see that White had to play this move anyway. After 20... $\mathbb{Q}h5$ Black had counterplay in Sher – Skalik, Anapa 1991.

17...a4

This is Black's most logical move. Giving up the tension in the centre with either ...e5-e4 or ...e5xd4 leaves the f4-square in White's hands, while otherwise it is difficult to suggest any constructive continuation.

18. $dxe5 dxe5$ 19. $\mathbb{Q}c5 \mathbb{Q}d6$ 20. $\mathbb{Q}xc7!\pm$



White wins material. There is no intermediate capture on c4 available and the usefulness of the move b2-b3 is fully revealed.

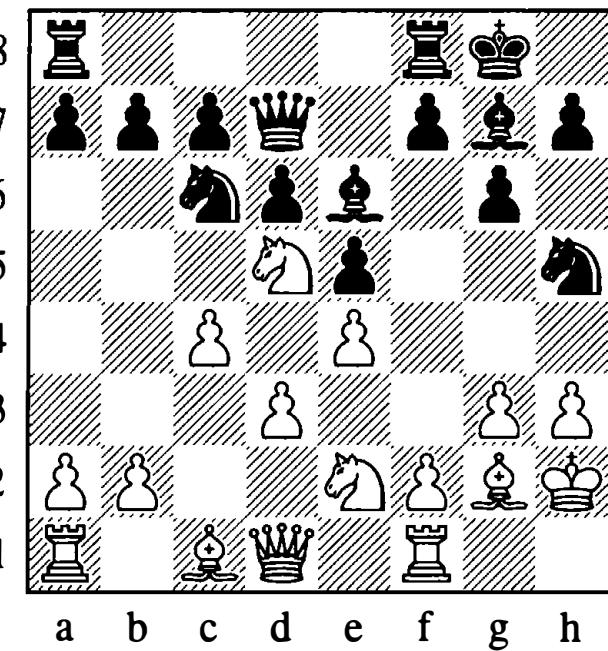
(1. $c4 e5$ 2. $g3 \mathbb{Q}c6$ 3. $\mathbb{Q}c3 g6$ 4. $\mathbb{Q}g2 \mathbb{Q}g7$ 5. $e4 d6$ 6. $\mathbb{Q}ge2 \mathbb{Q}f6$ 7. $d3 0-0$ 8. $0-0 \mathbb{Q}e6$ 9. $h3 \mathbb{W}d7$ 10. $\mathbb{Q}h2$)

A2) 10... $\mathbb{Q}h5$

A very provocative move, targeting the g3-pawn in view of the predictable advance f2-f4.

11. $\mathbb{Q}d5$

11.g4 has not been seen at a high level and might be premature. For instance, 11... $\mathbb{Q}f6$ (The pawn sacrifice 11... $\mathbb{Q}f4$ 12. $\mathbb{Q}xf4$ $\mathbb{exf}4$ 13. $\mathbb{Q}xf4$ f5 should not offer enough compensation after 14.exf5 gxf5 15.g5±. White has stabilized the kingside and faces no danger.) 12.f4 exf4 13. $\mathbb{Q}xf4$ (13. $\mathbb{Q}xf4$ allows 13...h5!? with some counterplay) 13... $\mathbb{Q}d4$ The weakness of the dark squares on White's kingside may play an important part.

**11... $\mathbb{Q}d8$**

A familiar move. As we know already, 11...f5 12.exf5 gxf5 leads nowhere after 13.f4 $\mathbb{Q}ae8$ 14. $\mathbb{Q}e3$ ±.

A more logical continuation is:

11... $\mathbb{Q}ae8$

This completes the mobilization of Black's forces and avoids disconnecting the rooks if ... $\mathbb{Q}c6$ -d8 is played. The critical line is:

12.g4 $\mathbb{Q}f6$ 13. $\mathbb{Q}g5$ $\mathbb{W}d8$

Black defends the knight, which had no retreat squares.

14. $\mathbb{Q}g1!$

By removing the king from the exposed h2-square, White parries the threat of ... $\mathbb{Q}f6$ xg4†.

Half measures such as 14. $\mathbb{W}d2$ would be insufficient because after 14... $\mathbb{Q}d4$ 15. $\mathbb{Q}xd4$

$\mathbb{exd}4$ 16.f4 $\mathbb{Q}xd5$ 17.cxd5 h6 White would have to give up his bishop with 18. $\mathbb{Q}xf6$ as 18. $\mathbb{Q}h4?$ would lose a pawn to 18... $\mathbb{Q}xg4$ †!.

14... $\mathbb{Q}d4$

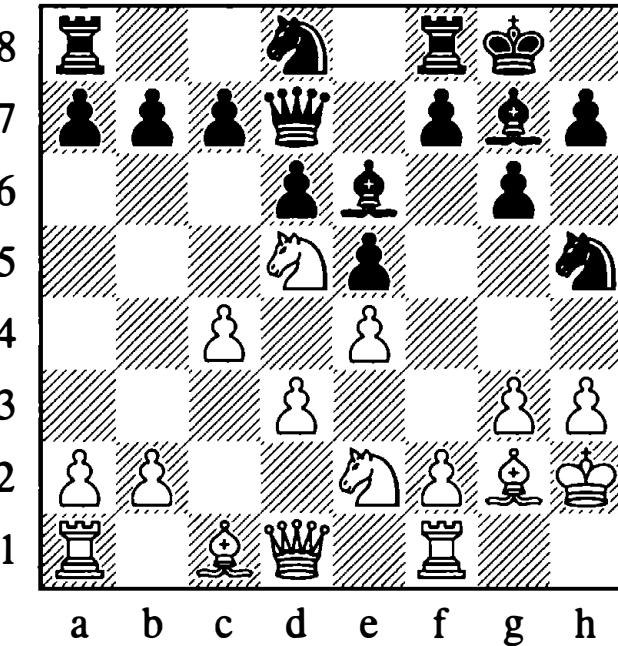
Black needs to make ...c6 possible to free himself from the unpleasant pin.

15. $\mathbb{Q}xd4$ exd4 16. $\mathbb{W}b3$

With all Black's pieces massed on the kingside, this queen incursion will provoke important weaknesses in Black's structure.

16...b6 17. $\mathbb{W}a4$ a5 18. $\mathbb{W}c6$ $\mathbb{Q}xd5$ 19.cxd5±

White will set up strong pressure along the c-file.

**12.d4**

A logical reaction now that the knight has abandoned the c6-square.

Also strong was:

12.g4? $\mathbb{Q}f6$ 13.f4!

The tempting 13. $\mathbb{Q}g5$ can be met by 13... $\mathbb{Q}e8!$ not fearing the loss of an exchange after 14. $\mathbb{Q}e7$ $\mathbb{Q}xd5$ 15. $\mathbb{Q}xf8$ $\mathbb{Q}xe4$ 16. $\mathbb{Q}xg7$ $\mathbb{Q}xg2$ 17. $\mathbb{Q}xg2$ $\mathbb{Q}xg7$. The weakness of the dark squares in the centre and on the kingside offers Black excellent compensation for his small material disadvantage.

13...exf4 14. $\mathbb{Q}xf4$ ±

White is better developed and has a space advantage.

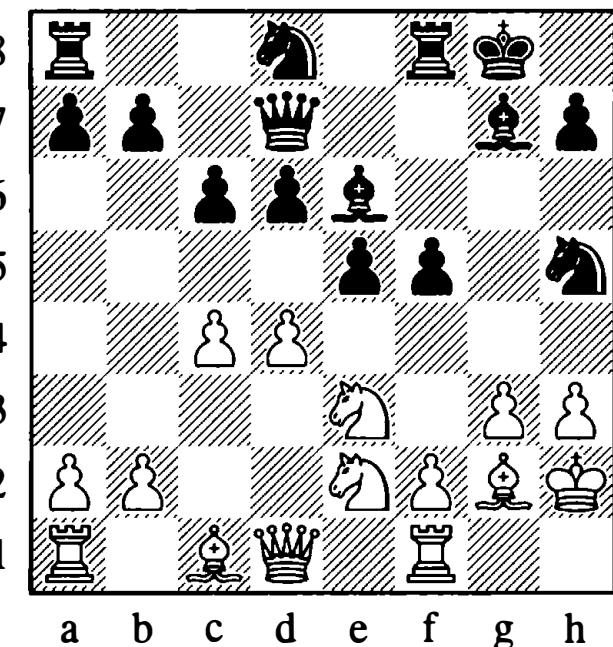
12...c6 13.♗e3

Threatening to trap the bishop with 14.d5.

13...f5

Black clears the f7-square for the bishop, hoping to build a kingside initiative at the same time.

14.exf5 gx5



15.d5!N

This is an important improvement over 15.f4?! exf4 16.gxf4 d5! 17.cxd5 cxd5= Averbakh – Trajkovic, Dresden 1956. Black and White then transferred a knight to e4 and e5, respectively, with near total symmetry.

15...♗f7 16.f4±

White is better coordinated for dealing with the tension in the centre: his minor pieces protect the f4- and d5-squares and keep the c6- and f5-squares under strong pressure. He also has a considerable space advantage.

(1.c4 e5 2.g3 ♗c6 3.♗c3 g6 4.♗g2 ♗g7 5.e4 d6 6.♗ge2 ♗f6 7.d3 0–0 8.0–0 ♗e6)

B) 9.♗d5!

Although there is no clear path to equality for Black in line A, I slightly prefer this move

for general reasons. White improves his piece placement without losing time with pawn moves. This is the right choice if you wish to strive for the initiative from an early stage of the game.

9...♗d7

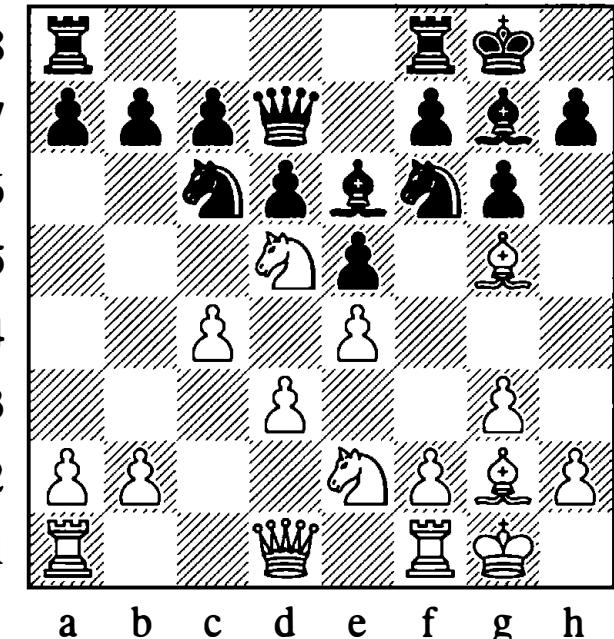
This practically invites White's next move.

Instead of the text move, Black occasionally retreats the f6-knight to d7 or e8, but this removes the threat of ...♗g4, allowing White to develop naturally with 10.♗e3.

10.♗g5

This is an important complement to the previous move. Since White has already put the f6-knight under pressure, White does not have to fear the typical ...h7-h6.

Black now has the usual choice between 10...♗e8 and 10...♗h5.



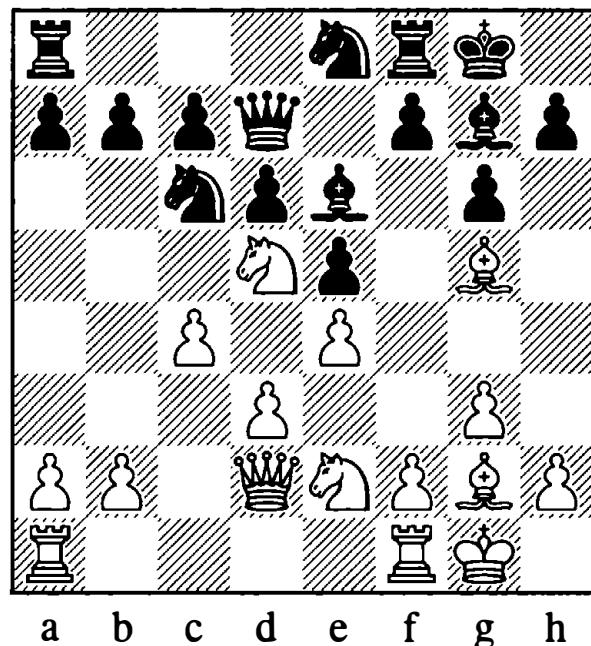
10...♗e8

By retreating the knight to this passive square, Black intends to retain the possibility of pushing White back with ...f7-f6. This would be risky after 10...♗h5, because the knight would remain out of play on h5.

After 10...♗h5 11.♗d2 the only logical follow-up would be ...f7-f5, perhaps after completing

development with ... $\mathbb{B}a8-e8$. In this case, play would transpose to line B5 from Chapter 18.

11. $\mathbb{W}d2$

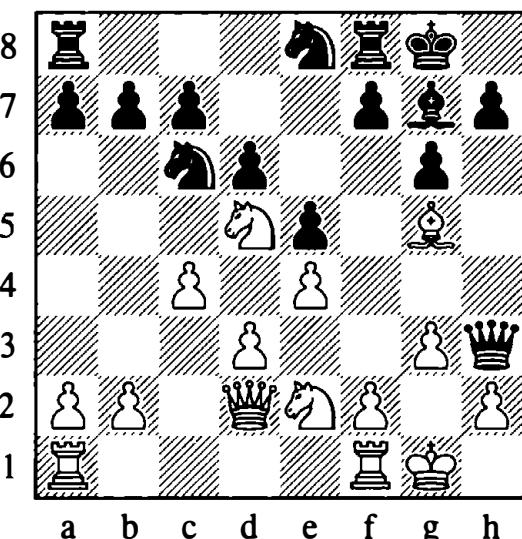


11...f6

Black needs to play this move at some point, so it is better to do so immediately, before making any other commitment.

Instead Nikolac – Fercec, Pula 2001, continued:

11... $\mathbb{Q}h3$ 12. $\mathbb{Q}xh3$ $\mathbb{W}xh3$



White could have taken advantage of the temporary lack of harmony in Black's camp with:

13.b4!N

White wins space and threatens b4-b5 followed by $\mathbb{Q}e7$.

The attempt to win an exchange with 13. $\mathbb{Q}e7\#$ $\mathbb{Q}xe7$ 14. $\mathbb{Q}xe7$ fails to 14... $\mathbb{Q}f6!$ when the threat of ... $\mathbb{Q}f6-g4$ prevents White from capturing the rook.

13...f6 14. $\mathbb{Q}e3$ $\mathbb{Q}f7$

Black prepares to meet b4-b5 with ... $\mathbb{Q}e7$.

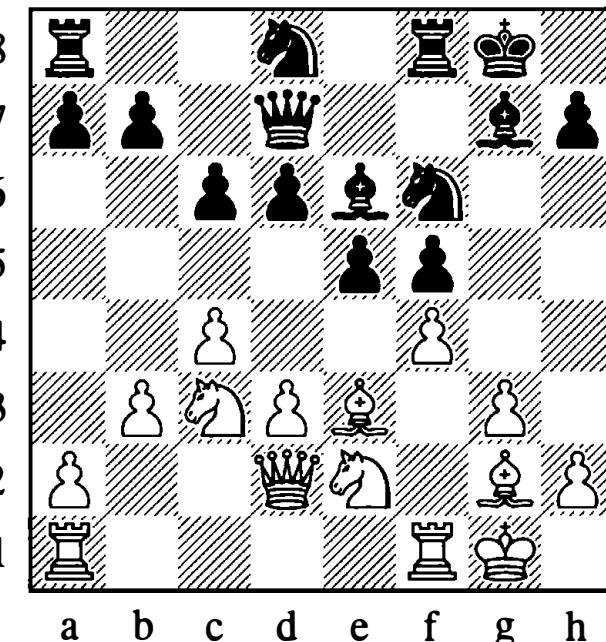
15.f4±

White has a space advantage over the whole board.

12. $\mathbb{Q}e3$ $\mathbb{Q}d8$

12... $\mathbb{Q}e7$ led to a considerable space advantage for White after 13. $\mathbb{Q}xe7\#$ $\mathbb{W}xe7$ 14.f4 c6 15. $\mathbb{B}ac1$ $\mathbb{Q}c7$ 16.d4± in Fatin – McKenna, London 1994.

13.f4 c6 14. $\mathbb{Q}dc3$ f5 15.exf5 gxf5 16.b3 $\mathbb{Q}f6$



This position was reached in Wirthensohn – Weindl, Germany 2001.

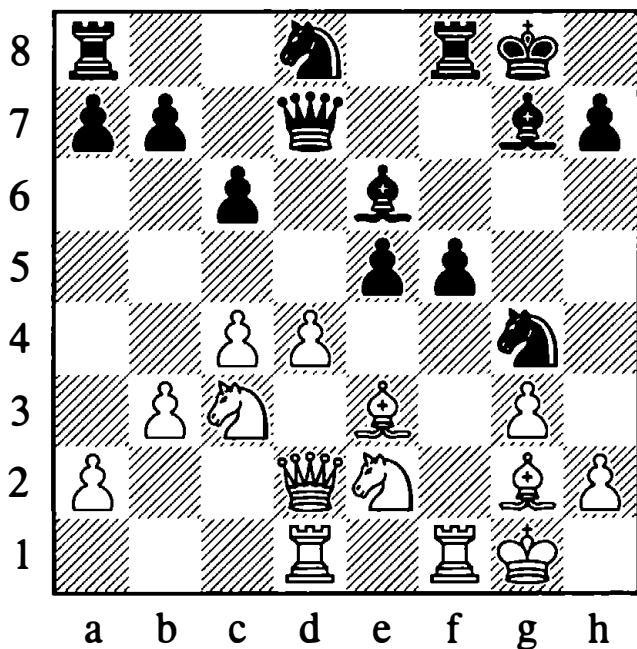
17.fxe5!N

Opening the d-file is justified because the d8-square is occupied by a knight, preventing Black from putting pressure on the d-pawn.

17...dxe5 18.d4

Black cannot avoid losing control of the f4-square.

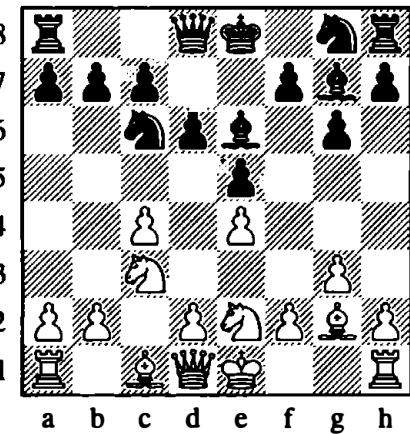
18...♝g4 19.♝ad1±



Due to his big lead in development, the exchange of the e3-bishop does not bother White. The g7-bishop's activity is easily neutralized by White's centralized pieces while the f5-pawn remains chronically weak.

Conclusion:

Despite being such a natural developing move, 6...♝f6 has the strategic drawback of allowing White to consolidate his central dominance.



Botvinnik System

6...♝e6

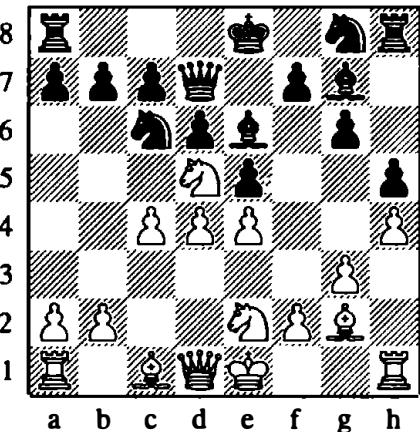
Variation Index

1.c4 e5 2.g3 ♝c6 3.♗c3 g6 4.♗g2 ♗g7 5.e4 d6 6.♗ge2

6...♝e6 7.d3 ♖d7 8.♗d5

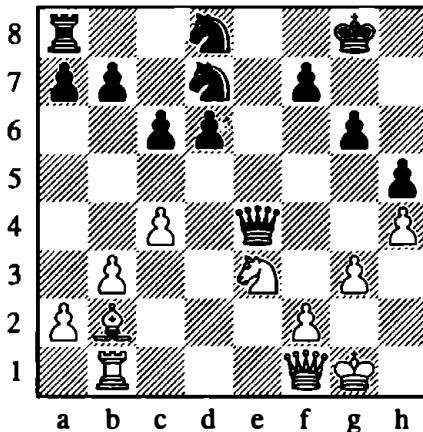
- | | |
|---------------------------------|-------|
| A) 8...♝d4 | p 174 |
| B) 8...♝d8 | p 176 |
| C) 8...h5 9.h4 ♜d8 10.d4 | p 178 |
| C1) 10...♝c6 | p 180 |
| C2) 10...c6 | p 182 |
| D) 8...♝ce7 | p 185 |

C1) 10...♝c6



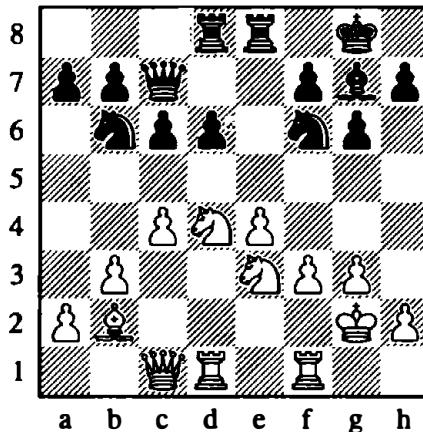
11.dxe5!N

C2) after 20...♝d7



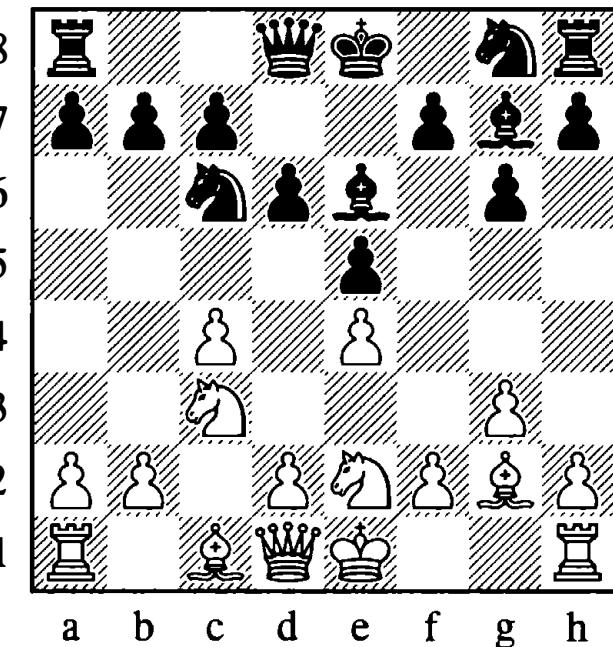
21.♖e1!N

D) note to 13...h5?!



20.♗ef5!

1.c4 e5 2.g3 ♜c6 3.♗c3 g6 4.♗g2 ♗g7 5.e4 d6 6.♗ge2 ♘e6



This is a popular method of development against various white set-ups in the English Opening. Black delays his kingside development and hurries to create the positional threat of exchanging the light-squared bishops.

This plan can be quite effective if White plays 5.d3 followed by 6.♗f3 or 6.e3 and 7.♗ge2, because it would weaken his control over the central squares. However, with the pawn on e4, the aforementioned exchange is likely to solve White's potential problem of being left with a "bad" bishop.

7.d3 ♖d7 8.♗d5

White avoids making any important commitments and makes a natural move, preventing ...♗e6-h3 by attacking the c7-pawn.

Black's independent tries are A) 8...♗d4, B) 8...♗d8, C) 8...h5 and D) 8...♗ce7.

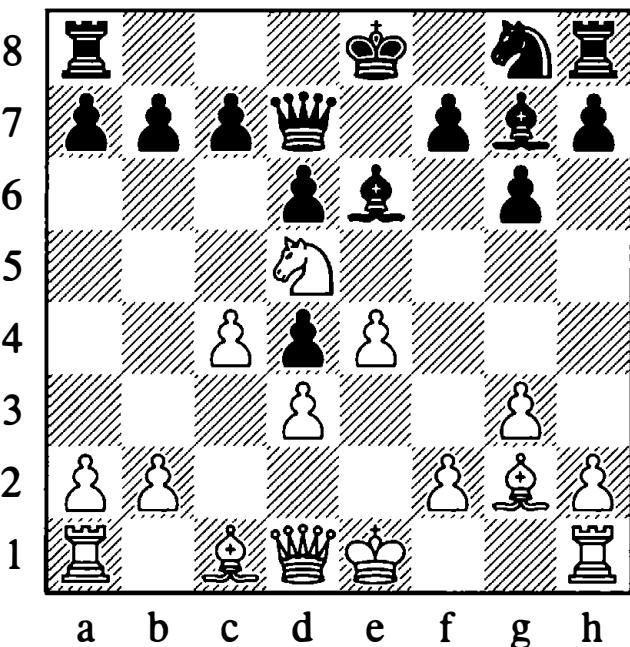
8...f5 9.0-0 is likely to transpose to Chapter 18.

(1.c4 e5 2.g3 ♜c6 3.♗c3 g6 4.♗g2 ♗g7 5.e4 d6 6.♗ge2 ♘e6 7.d3 ♖d7 8.♗d5)

A) 8...♗d4?!

This premature occupation of the relatively weak d4-square leaves White with the better structure.

9.♗xd4 exd4



10.0-0!

White intends to combine his strategic advantage with better development.

The slightly less ambitious 10.♗f4± would have yielded "only" the advantage of the bishop pair.

10...c6

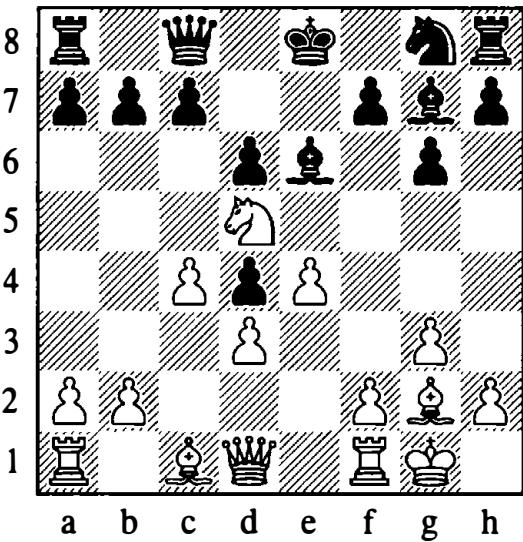
Black cannot tolerate the enemy knight on its dominating position and has to spend a tempo forcing it to retreat to another favourable square.

10...♗f6? is simply bad because of 11.♗h6! 0-0 12.♗xf6†, winning the exchange.

10...♗e7?! is strongly met by 11.♗g5! ♖xd5 12.cxd5±, with a dangerous kingside majority and the possibility of exerting pressure along the c-file.

Black is not well enough developed to afford

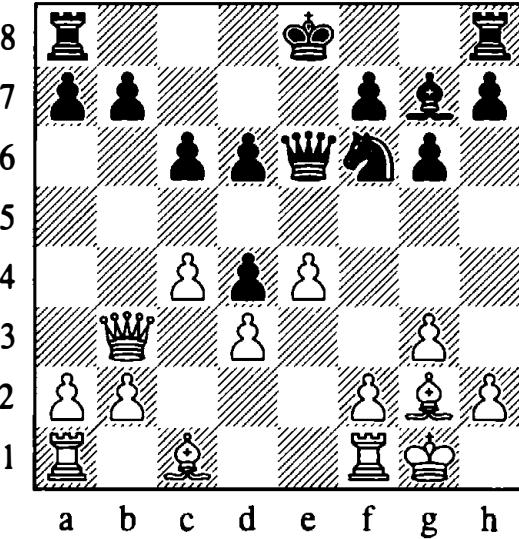
conservative moves as 10... $\mathbb{W}c8?!$, clearing the d7-square for the bishop:



After 11.f4! White obtained a strong attack and won quickly in G. Giorgadze – Gazik, Formia 1994.

11. $\mathbb{Q}f4$ $\mathbb{Q}f6$ 12. $\mathbb{Q}xe6$ $fxe6$

This is a strategic concession, weakening the e6- and g6-squares. Keeping the structure intact with 12... $\mathbb{W}xe6$ would leave Black's queenside vulnerable after 13. $\mathbb{W}b3$:



13...b6? This unnecessary weakening of the c6-square will have serious consequences. 14. $\mathbb{W}a4!?$ Black has no good way to defend the c6-pawn, Filguth – Matsuura, Cabo Frio 1984.

It is easy to criticise Black's 13th move, but none of the alternatives would solve his problems.

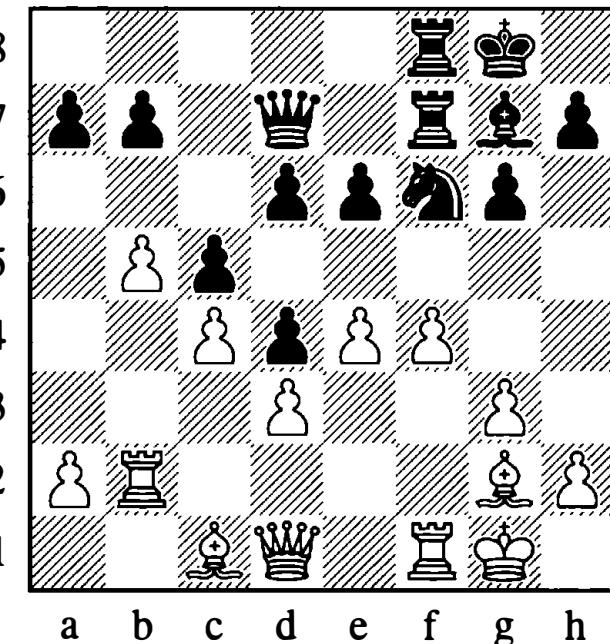
After 13... $\mathbb{W}e7$ 14. $\mathbb{Q}f4$ Black cannot play 14...0–0 because of 15. $\mathbb{W}a3$, when 15... $\mathbb{Q}fd8$ is met by 16.e5, when the centre opens in White's favour. Therefore, 14... $\mathbb{Q}g4$ is necessary, but after 15.h3 $\mathbb{Q}e5$ 16. $\mathbb{Q}d2\pm$, followed by f2-f4, White will conquer more space with gain of time.

13... $\mathbb{W}d7$ avoids the pin along the a3-e7 diagonal, but does not prevent White's general plan of development: 14. $\mathbb{Q}f4$ 0–0 15. $\mathbb{W}a3$ $\mathbb{Q}fd8$ 16. $\mathbb{Q}ae1$ Threatening e4-e5. 16... $\mathbb{Q}f8$ 17. $\mathbb{W}a5\pm$ Black is under serious pressure.

13.b4 0–0 14. $\mathbb{Q}b1$

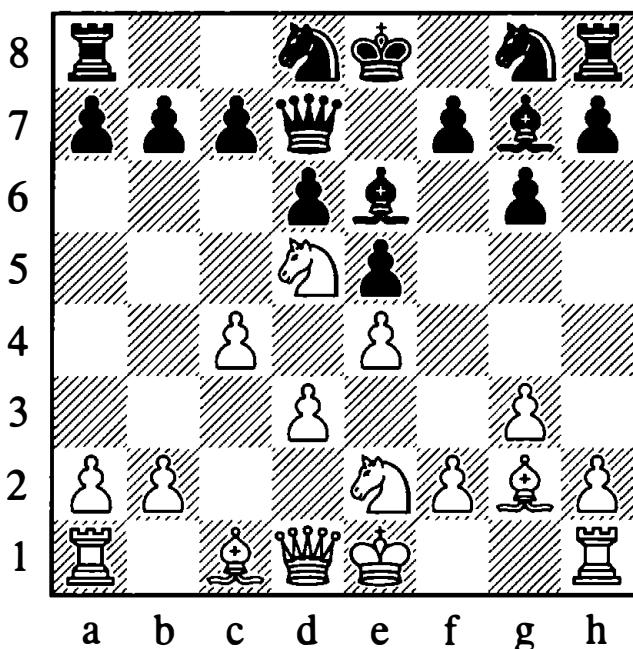
The last two moves prepare the standard queenside attack, aiming to win space and weaken the light squares from Black's camp, but also enable the transfer of the queen's rook to the opposite wing.

14... $\mathbb{Q}f7$ 15.b5 c5 16.f4 $\mathbb{Q}af8$ 17. $\mathbb{Q}b2\pm$



White will continue with $\mathbb{Q}b2$ -f2, h2-h4, $\mathbb{Q}h3$, perhaps g3-g4-g5, slowly increasing his kingside pressure. At the right moment, the pawn break f4-f5 will bring him a strong attack.

(1.c4 e5 2.g3 $\mathbb{Q}c6$ 3. $\mathbb{Q}c3$ g6 4. $\mathbb{Q}g2$ $\mathbb{Q}g7$ 5.e4 d6 6. $\mathbb{Q}ge2$ $\mathbb{Q}e6$ 7.d3 $\mathbb{W}d7$ 8. $\mathbb{Q}d5$)

B) 8...♝d8

Compared with line B in Chapter 15, this move aims to save Black two tempos: he will not have to move his other knight away from f6 before playing ...c7-c6. The drawback of this plan is that the presence of the black king in the centre adds force to the thematic break d3-d4.

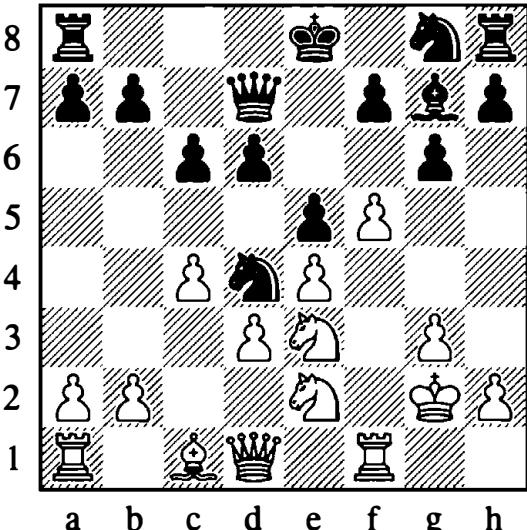
9.d4**9.f4**

This is an interesting alternative. The following rapid game between two top players is quite instructive:

9...c6 10.♝e3 ♕h3 11.0–0 ♘xg2 12.♗xg2

The exchange of bishops has not offered Black any attacking chances because of his lack of development.

12...♝e6 13.f5 ♝d4

**14.g4**

Instead, it is White who wins space on the kingside.

14...♝f6 15.g5 ♜h5 16.f6 ♜f8

The bishop is miserably placed and Black will need to make a huge effort to free it.

17.♝xd4 exd4 18.♝g4 0–0–0 19.♕f3 d5

This is the only way to re-develop the bishop and connect rooks, but the black king's situation becomes unsafe after the c-file opens.

20.cxd5 cxd5

This position was reached in Korchnoi – Yusupov, Frankfurt (rapid) 1998. White's simplest way to obtain an advantage is:

21.e5

This threatens to freeze the f8-bishop for the rest of the game with ♜c1-d2 and b2-b4, followed by the consolidating a2-a3.

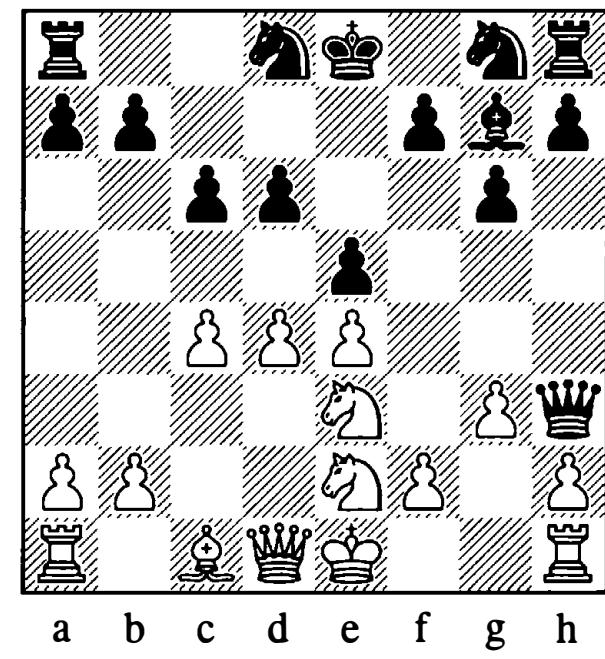
21...♜c5 22.♝d2 ♜b8 23.b4 ♜b6 24.a4±

White has a space advantage on both wings, and Black's minor pieces are passive.

9...c6 10.♝e3

This is the standard retreat, protecting the c4-pawn and strengthening the defence of the king's wing.

10...♞h3 11.♝xh3 ♜xh3



Black has managed to fulfil his initial plan,

but White retains a space advantage in the centre. Since White has not castled yet, Black's threats on the kingside are not dangerous.

12.d5

White wins even more space, restricting both the d8-knight and the g7-bishop at the same time.

12...h5!?

Blocking the centre with 12...c5 would only allow White to speed up his attack with 13.b4!±.

13. $\mathbb{Q}c3$

White continues regrouping, opening the path for the queen towards the kingside. At the same time, he strengthens his control over the d5-square. If Black exchanges pawns, then White will be left with a strong knight in the centre.

The greedy 13.dxc6 $\mathbb{Q}xc6$ 14. $\mathbb{W}xd6$ would offer Black adequate compensation for the pawn after 14... $\mathbb{E}d8$ 15. $\mathbb{W}a3$ $\mathbb{Q}f8$ 16.c5 $\mathbb{Q}f6$ 17.f3 h4∞ (Ribli).

13... $\mathbb{Q}f6$ 14. $\mathbb{W}e2$ 0–0 15.f3

Once the light-squared bishops have been exchanged, it is strategically desirable to place most of the pawns on light squares. At the same time, the second rank is cleared for the white queen.

15...a6

Black prepares an eventual break with ...b5, hoping to keep White busy on both wings.

From a strategic point of view, it may seem desirable to prepare to exchange the dark-squared bishops with:

15... $\mathbb{Q}h6$

But after the developing move:

16. $\mathbb{Q}d2!$

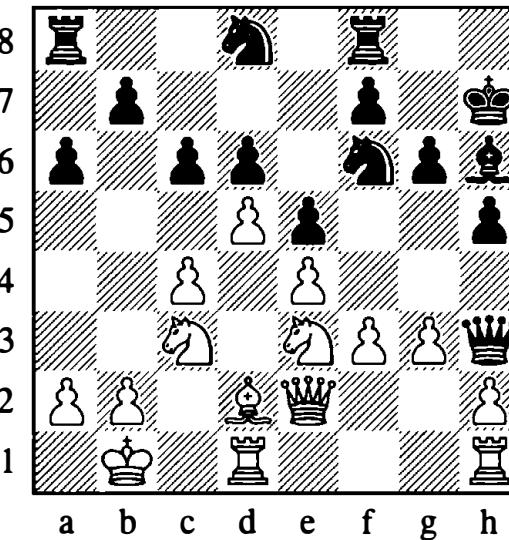
White establishes contact between his queen

and bishop, so Black has to spend another tempo with:

16... $\mathbb{Q}h7$

The point is that 16...a6?! is strongly met by 17. $\mathbb{Q}f5!$ $\mathbb{Q}xd2\#$ 18. $\mathbb{W}xd2$, when the threat of $\mathbb{W}h6$ offers White a strong initiative, while after 18...gxf5?! White regains the piece with 19. $\mathbb{W}g5\#$, keeping a strong attack.

17.0–0–0 a6 18. $\mathbb{Q}b1$



White has completed his development and is ready to start a massive kingside attack with $\mathbb{Q}df1$, followed by either f3-f4 or $\mathbb{Q}c3-d1-f2$.

16. $\mathbb{W}g2$

By offering a queen exchange, White releases any form of kingside tension, making Black's planned queenside action easier to meet.

16... $\mathbb{W}xg2$ 17. $\mathbb{Q}xg2$ cxd5

Black takes advantage of the fact that one of the white knights has temporarily been driven away from covering the d5-square. The pawn exchange stabilizes the centre and opens the c-file for counterplay, since White cannot capture twice with a piece.

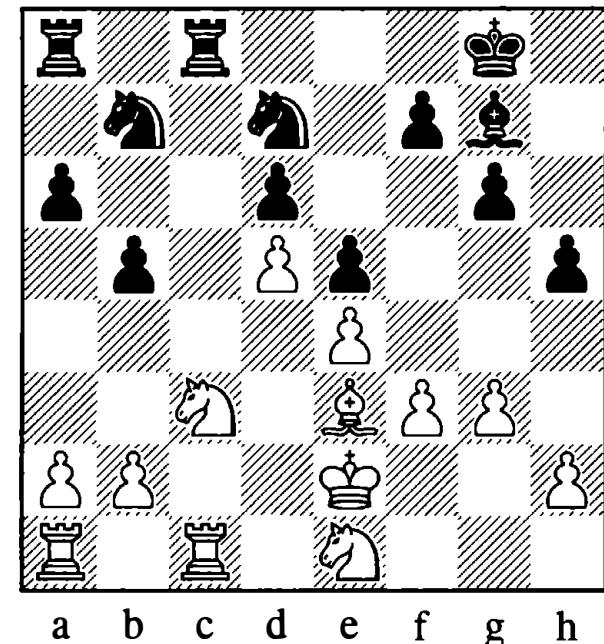
18.cxd5 b5

Ribli assessed this position as equal. In fact, there are a few elements that define White's stable advantage: his extra space, the weakness of the c6-square, and the passivity of the d8-knight.

19.♕e2

White hurries to complete his development, but the more radical 19.♗b1!?N, aiming to restrict the enemy knight with b2-b4 (and if ...a6-a5, then a2-a3), is also possible. 19...♘b7 20.b4 ♘fc8 21.♗d2 ♘h6 22.♗b3 ♕xd2† 23.♔xd2 ♘d7 24.♗e3 ♘b6 25.♗c1±

19...♘b7 20.♕e3 ♘fc8 21.♗hc1 ♘d7 22.♗e1!



White intends to transfer this knight to c6, leaving Black completely paralysed.

22...♘a5

It appears that even without a white pawn on b4 this knight cannot find a favourable square.

22...♘bc5 would be strongly met by 23.b4 when 23...♘a4?! only makes things worse after 24.♘xa4 bxa4 25.♗c6+-. Black's queenside is hopelessly weak.

23.b3

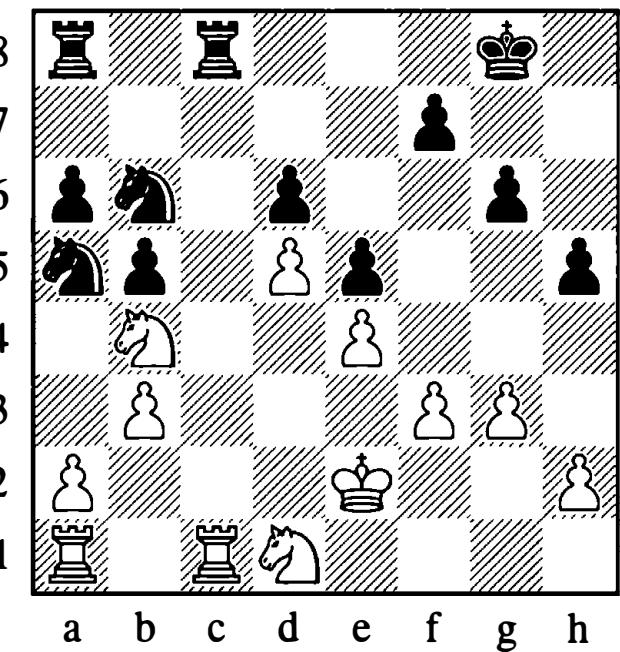
The knight is not allowed to reach a favourable path with ...♘c4.

23...♗f6

Black prepares to exchange his passive

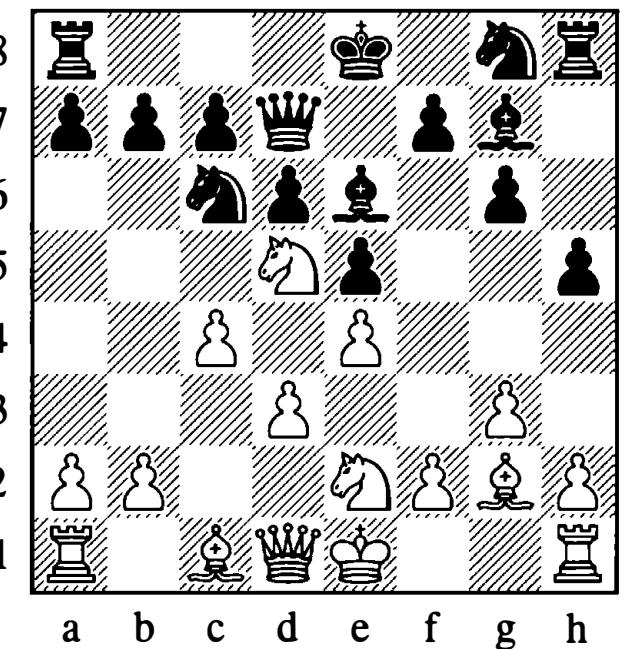
bishop, but this manoeuvre will solve only part of his strategic problem.

24.♗d1 ♕d8 25.♗d3 ♕b6 26.♕xb6 ♘xb6 27.♗b4±



In Serper – Xu Jun, Lucerne 1993, Black had a solid position, but he was confined to a passive defence as his knights are passive and his queenside is vulnerable.

(1.c4 e5 2.g3 ♘c6 3.♗c3 g6 4.♗g2 ♘g7 5.e4 d6 6.♗ge2 ♕e6 7.d3 ♖d7 8.♗d5)

C) 8...h5

This is a typical move in kingside fianchetto positions once the king's knight has developed

to e2. Apart from winning space on the king-side, Black prepares an eventual development of his knight to h6. With the pawn on h7 this would be impossible because after $\mathbb{Q}xh6$, ... $\mathbb{Q}xh6$ Black would lose his queen to $\mathbb{Q}f6\#$.

9.h4

The h5-pawn should be prevented from advancing further, as otherwise White would be under permanent pressure on the kingside.

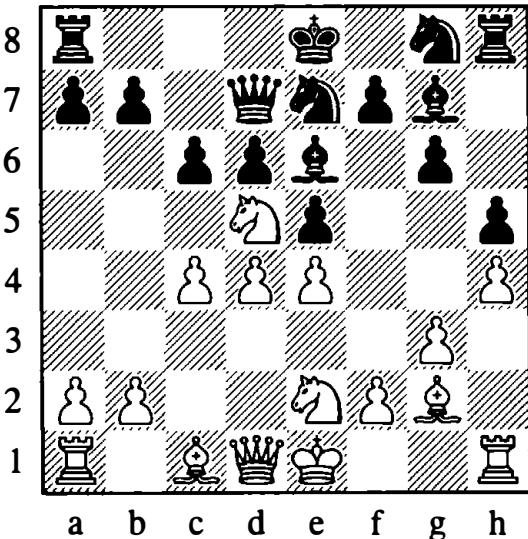
Black's main idea when provoking h2-h4 is that his king's knight could reach the g4-square in the near future, while the e2-knight could not easily reach g5. Since White always has the possibility of driving the enemy knight away with f2-f3, this aspect does not bother White. Moreover, ... $\mathbb{Q}h3$ is now impossible, unless White castles short.

9... $\mathbb{Q}d8$

This manoeuvre is more popular after the insertion of ...h7-h5 and h2-h4 than one move earlier. The ideas are the same, but Black hopes that the modified kingside configuration will favour him after the centre opens.

The alternate way to carry out the same plan is:

9... $\mathbb{Q}ce7$ 10.d4 c6



11. $\mathbb{Q}xe7!N$

11. $\mathbb{Q}e3?!$ is illogical, because the enemy knight is better placed on e7 than it would be on d8.

11... $\mathbb{W}xe7$

Black has to move an already developed piece. Against any other capture, White would win a piece with 12.d5 $\mathbb{Q}g4$ 13.f3.

12.d5

This move is strong anyway, because it wins space in the centre.

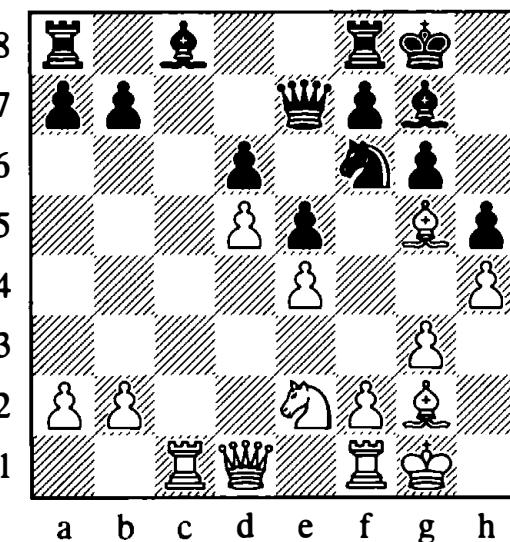
12...cxd5

12... $\mathbb{Q}c8$ allows White to spoil Black's queenside structure with 13.dxc6 bxc6 14. $\mathbb{W}a4$ $\mathbb{W}c7$ 15.c5 dxc5 16. $\mathbb{Q}e3\pm$. The g8-knight is too far from the d4-square to allow Black to hold the balance.

13.cxd5 $\mathbb{Q}c8$

Another undesirable but necessary move. The bishop retreats to its initial square because after 13... $\mathbb{Q}d7$ White would win time for his development with 14. $\mathbb{W}b3\pm$.

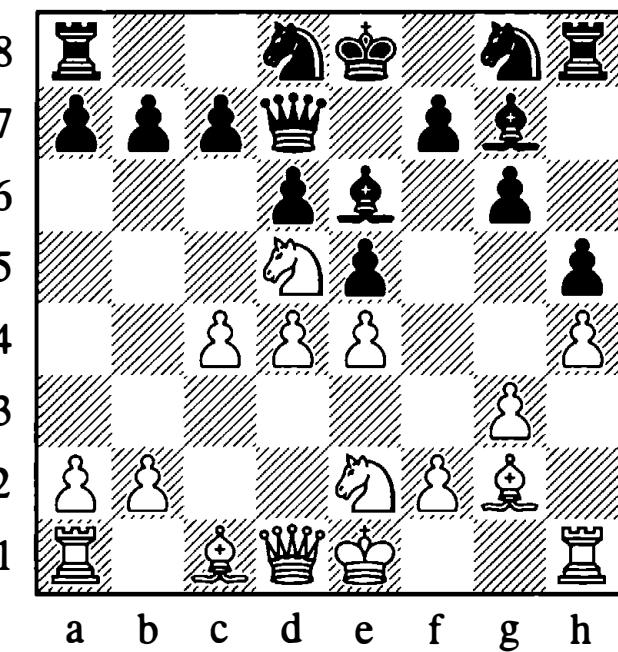
14.0–0 $\mathbb{Q}f6$ 15. $\mathbb{Q}g5$ 0–0 16. $\mathbb{B}c1\pm$



White threatens to invade via the c-file, while Black has no easy way to start his kingside attack.

9...0–0–0 has been played a few times, but this places the king in danger after 10.b4!. The threat of b4-b5 followed by $\mathbb{W}a4$ and $\mathbb{Q}e3$ is very strong, while after 10... $\mathbb{Q}xd5$ 11.cxd5 $\mathbb{Q}xb4$, the attack along the b- and c-files would be hard to parry.

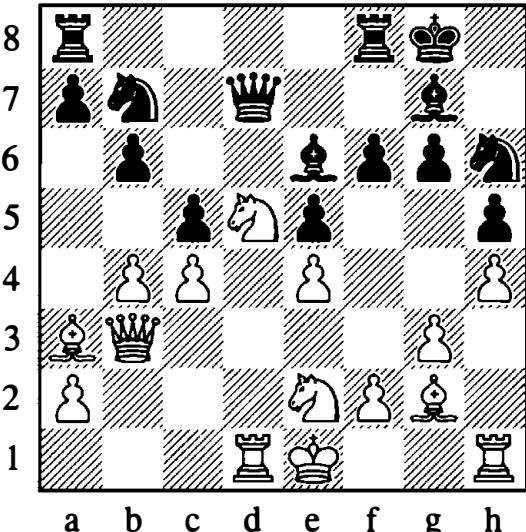
10.d4



Black has a choice between **C1) 10... $\mathbb{Q}c6$** and **C2) 10...c5**.

The following two alternatives show unsuccessful attempts by Black to fight for the d4-square with ...c7-c5:

a) 10...f6 11.b3 $\mathbb{Q}h6$ 12. $\mathbb{Q}b2$ c5?! Black probably hoped to get his d8-knight to d4, but the weakness of the c5-pawn prevents him from achieving that. 13.dxc5 dxc5 14. $\mathbb{Q}a3$ b6 15.b4 $\mathbb{Q}b7$ 16. $\mathbb{W}b3$ 0-0 17. $\mathbb{Q}d1\pm$



White has strong pressure, Spraggett – Pelts, Toronto 1987.

b) Black's second way is more direct but no stronger:

10...c5?! 11.dxe5 dxe5 12. $\mathbb{Q}e3$ b6 13. $\mathbb{Q}ec3$ $\mathbb{Q}c6$

Black will manage to install his knight on d4, but this will not in any way stop White's initiative.

14. $\mathbb{Q}b5$

The threat of $\mathbb{Q}bc7\#$ is not easy to parry.

14... $\mathbb{Q}f8$

14... $\mathbb{Q}c8$ 15. $\mathbb{W}a4$ would make ... $\mathbb{Q}c6-d4$ impossible because of $\mathbb{Q}d6\#$, leaving Black with problems stopping the threat of $\mathbb{Q}d1$ followed by $\mathbb{Q}xb6$ or some other discovered attack.

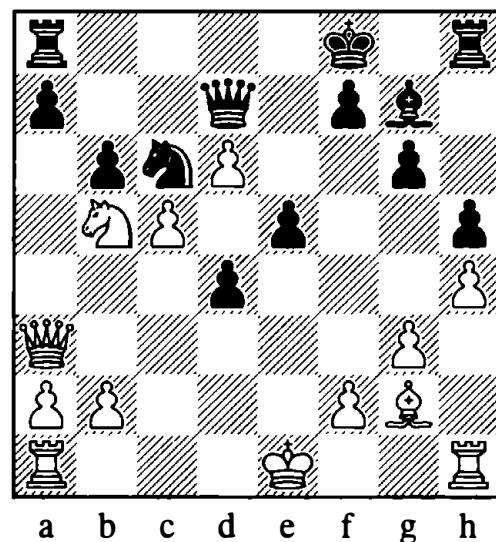
15. $\mathbb{W}a4$ $\mathbb{Q}xd5$

Black needs to eliminate the d5-knight before playing his own knight to d4, since 15... $\mathbb{Q}d4?$ would lose material to 16. $\mathbb{Q}xd4$ exd4 17. $\mathbb{Q}xb6+-$.

16.exd5 $\mathbb{Q}d4$ 17. $\mathbb{Q}xd4$ cxd4

17...exd4 is no better on account of 18.0-0± followed by d5-d6.

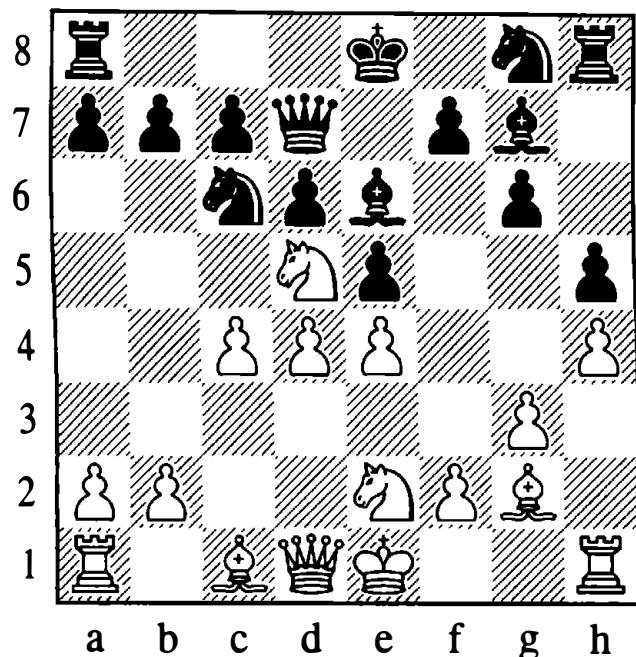
18. $\mathbb{W}a3\#$ $\mathbb{Q}e7$ 19.d6 $\mathbb{Q}c6$ 20.c5±



White has a strong initiative. His bishop is more active than its rival, while Black will struggle to connect her rooks, Miezis – Voiska, Taranto 2002.

(1.c4 e5 2.g3 $\mathbb{Q}c6$ 3. $\mathbb{Q}c3$ g6 4. $\mathbb{Q}g2$ $\mathbb{Q}g7$ 5.e4 d6 6. $\mathbb{Q}ge2$ $\mathbb{Q}e6$ 7.d3 $\mathbb{W}d7$ 8. $\mathbb{Q}d5$ h5 9.h4 $\mathbb{Q}d8$ 10.d4)

C1) 10... $\mathbb{Q}c6$



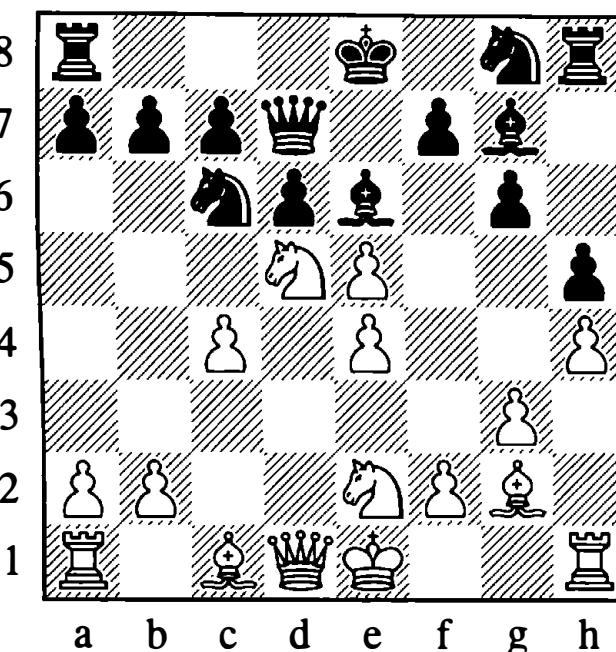
This is a more refined method of fighting for the d4-square compared to the plans based on ...c7-c5. Black hopes to conquer the central square for his knight without allowing the white knight to remain safely on d5. This move has been quite successful in grandmaster practice, but only because White has failed to hit on the right plan.

11.dxe5!N

This is the right moment to exchange as it forces Black to define his intentions in the centre immediately. This means White will have better information when he decides how to organize his play in the next phase of the game.

Delaying the exchange with 11. $\mathbb{Q}e3$ $\mathbb{Q}h6$ 12.dxe5 allows 12... $\mathbb{Q}xe5!$ leaving the e3-bishop exposed to the threats of ... $\mathbb{Q}e5xc4$ or ... $\mathbb{Q}h6-g4$. After 13. $\mathbb{Q}d4$ c6 14. $\mathbb{Q}e3$ $\mathbb{Q}hg4$ 15. $\mathbb{Q}xg4$ $hxg4\bar{f}$ Black had harmonious development and a favourable kingside structure in E. Lie – Nataf, Reykjavik 2008.

The simplifying operation 11. $\mathbb{Q}xc7\bar{f}$ $\mathbb{W}xc7$ 12.d5 fails to offer White any advantage after 12... $\mathbb{Q}g4$ 13.dxc6 bxc6 14.0–0 $\mathbb{Q}e7=$, Spiridonov – Azmaiparashvili, Albena 1984.



11... $\mathbb{Q}xe5$

This move, in the spirit of the plan chosen by Nataf, is critical for the evaluation of the whole line.

11...dxe5

From a strategic point of view, the pawn capture, keeping control of the relatively weak d4-square, looks more natural, but opening the d-file allows White to get a grip on the position with:

12.0–0 $\mathbb{Q}h6$ 13. $\mathbb{Q}g5$ $\mathbb{Q}g4$ 14.f3 f6

After this forced closure of the long diagonal a black invasion on d4 becomes improbable.

15. $\mathbb{Q}d2$ $\mathbb{Q}h6$ 16. $\mathbb{W}b3$

This is only a temporary square for the queen, aiming to force the enemy king towards the more dangerous wing.

16...0–0–0

If 16... $\mathbb{B}b8$ then 17. $\mathbb{W}a3$ and Black would find it difficult to remove his king from the centre.

17. $\mathbb{Q}e3\pm$

The centralizing $\mathbb{E}f1-d1$ will soon follow, putting Black under serious pressure. White would then start a powerful queenside attack with $\mathbb{W}a4$ and $b4-b5$.

12. $\mathbb{Q}ef4!$

White does not need to lose time defending his c4-pawn, but instead immediately takes

advantage of the uncomfortable position of the e6-bishop.

12... $\mathbb{Q}xc4$ 13. $\mathbb{Q}xe6$ $f\times e6$ 14. $\mathbb{Q}h3$

Black has serious problems defending the light squares on his kingside. We can feel the negative consequences of ...h7-h5, which has weakened the g6-square. The immediate threat is $\mathbb{Q}xe6!$.

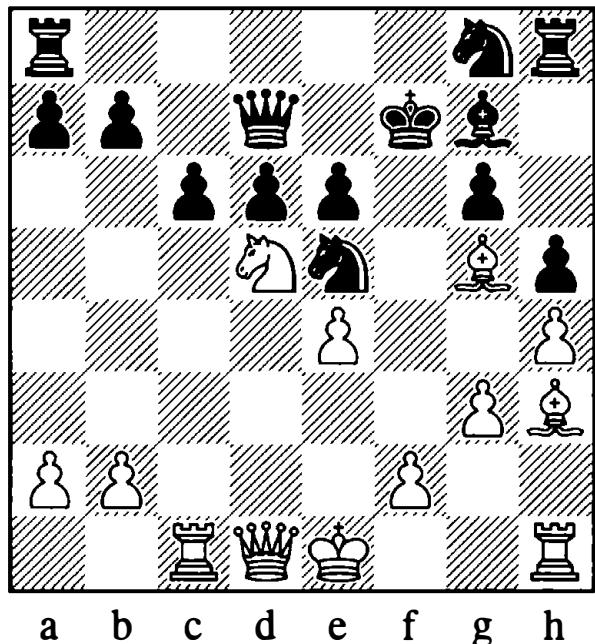
14... $\mathbb{Q}f7$ 15. $\mathbb{Q}g5$

White continues developing and threatens $\mathbb{W}d1-f3\pm$.

15... $\mathbb{Q}e5$ 16. $\mathbb{K}c1$ c6

This looks the most flexible way to defend the c-pawn. Black hopes that after the expected knight retreat he will be able to complete his development.

16...c5 would clear the c6-square for the knight, but after 17.0–0 $\mathbb{Q}f6$ 18. $\mathbb{Q}xf6$ $\mathbb{Q}xf6$ 19. $\mathbb{Q}xf6$ $\mathbb{Q}xf6$ 20.f4 $\mathbb{Q}c6$ the c5-pawn is eliminated with 21. $\mathbb{K}xc5\pm$.



17.0–0!

To prevent Black's natural development, White ignores the threat against his knight.

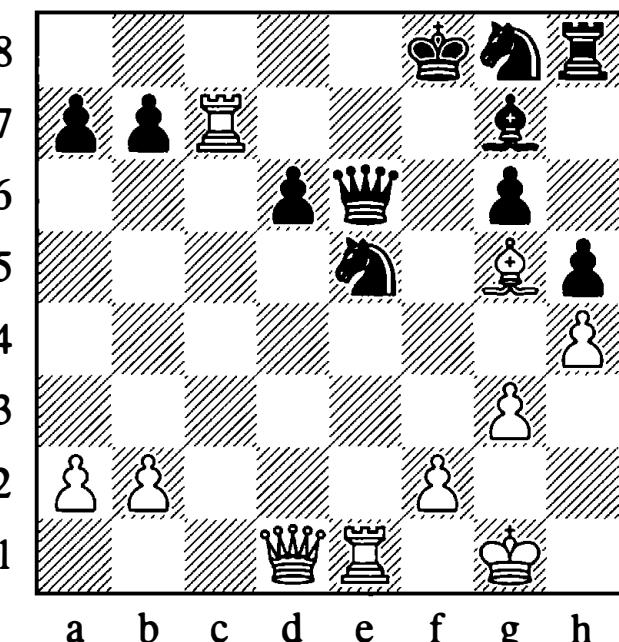
17... $\mathbb{Q}xd5$

It is hard to suggest anything better.

The simplifications resulting after 17... $\mathbb{Q}f6$ 18. $\mathbb{Q}xf6$ $\mathbb{Q}xf6$ 19.f4 $\mathbb{Q}g4$ 20. $\mathbb{Q}xg4$ $hxg4$ would not earn Black a reprieve because of 21.e5 $\mathbb{Q}e7$ 22.exd6 $\mathbb{W}xd6$ 23. $\mathbb{W}xd6$ $\mathbb{Q}xd6$ 24. $\mathbb{K}fd1\pm$, followed by an invasion on the seventh rank.

Developing the knight to the edge of the board with 17... $\mathbb{Q}h6$ leaves Black poorly coordinated after 18. $\mathbb{Q}f4$ $\mathbb{K}he8$ 19. $\mathbb{W}b3\pm$.

18.exd5 $\mathbb{K}e8$ 19.dxe6† $\mathbb{Q}xe6$ 20. $\mathbb{Q}xe6†$ $\mathbb{W}xe6$ 21. $\mathbb{K}c7\pm$ $\mathbb{Q}f8$ 22. $\mathbb{K}e1\pm$



White's huge lead in development more than compensates for his small material deficit. Black's queenside is vulnerable, and his central position rather unstable in view of the enduring threat of f2-f4.

(1.c4 e5 2.g3 $\mathbb{Q}c6$ 3. $\mathbb{Q}c3$ g6 4. $\mathbb{Q}g2$ $\mathbb{Q}g7$ 5.e4 d6 6. $\mathbb{Q}ge2$ $\mathbb{Q}e6$ 7.d3 $\mathbb{W}d7$ 8. $\mathbb{Q}d5$ h5 9.h4 $\mathbb{Q}d8$ 10.d4)

C2) 10...c6

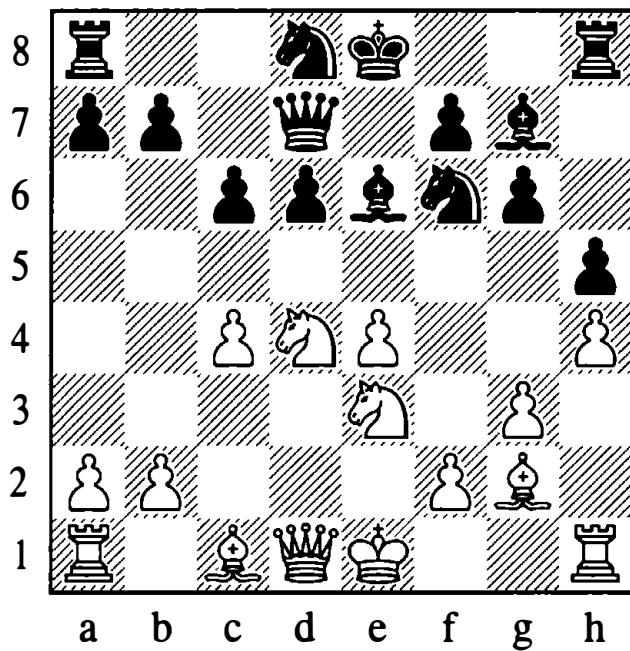
Black drives the enemy knight away, but leaves his own queen's knight passive on d8.

11. $\mathbb{Q}e3$ $\mathbb{Q}xd4$

Black is more or less forced to give up the centre in view of the threat of d4-d5.

12. $\mathbb{Q}xd4$ $\mathbb{Q}f6$

The first phase of mobilization has been completed and White needs to make several important choices. It is best to refrain from taking the bishop with $\mathbb{Q}xe6$, because this would activate the enemy knight after ... $\mathbb{Q}d8xe6$. He should also avoid the exchange of light-squared bishops with ... $\mathbb{Q}e6-h3$, because once again this would clear the e6-square and, moreover, it would weaken the e4-pawn.

13. $\mathbb{B}b1$

By evacuating the long diagonal White prepares to over-defend the c4-pawn with b2-b3.

13. $\mathbb{Q}xe6$?! leads to an acceptable position for Black after 13... $\mathbb{Q}xe6$ 14.0–0 0–0 15. $\mathbb{B}b1$ $\mathbb{Q}c5$ 16. $\mathbb{W}c2$ $\mathbb{B}fe8$ 17.f3 a5. White has a space advantage, but Black is harmoniously developed, McNab – Barua, Yerevan (ol) 1996.

Also possible was:

13.0–0 0–0

13... $\mathbb{Q}h3$? is premature because of 14. $\mathbb{Q}df5$! $\mathbb{Q}xg2$ 15. $\mathbb{Q}xg7\#$ $\mathbb{Q}f8$ 16. $\mathbb{Q}xg2$ $\mathbb{Q}xg7$ 17. $\mathbb{B}e1\pm$ followed by b3 and $\mathbb{Q}b2$, with excellent attacking chances.

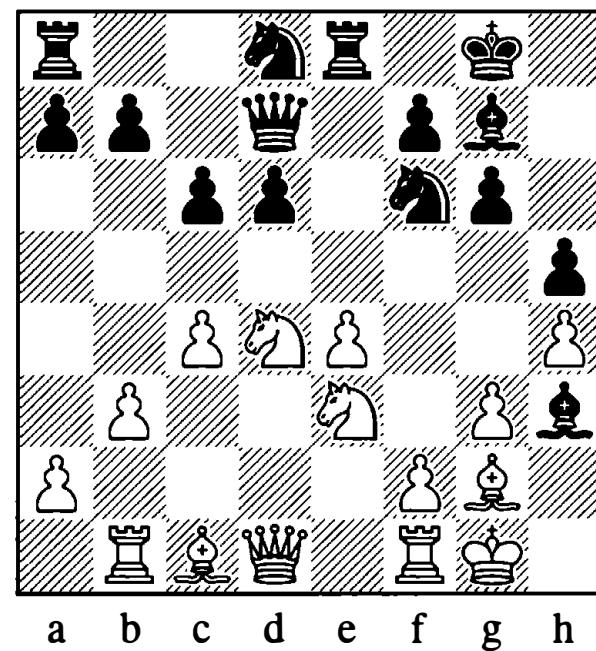
14. $\mathbb{B}e1$ a6!?

Black prepares his queenside counterplay based on ...c6-c5 followed by ...b7-b5, or

just ...b7-b5.

15. $\mathbb{B}b1$ b5 16.b3 $\mathbb{Q}h3$ 17. $\mathbb{Q}h1\pm$

With all the minor pieces still on the board, Black has not yet solved his coordination problems.

13...0–0 14.b3 $\mathbb{B}e8$ 15.0–0 $\mathbb{Q}h3$ 

Black may seem to have solved his opening problems, but in fact White can carry out a tactical operation that is similar to the one in the previous comment.

16. $\mathbb{Q}df5$!

At the cost of the e4-pawn, White exchanges a knight for the g7-bishop, weakening the enemy king's defence.

16... $\mathbb{Q}xg2$ 17. $\mathbb{Q}xg7$ $\mathbb{Q}xf1$

Black simplifies the position as much as possible to reduce White's attacking potential.

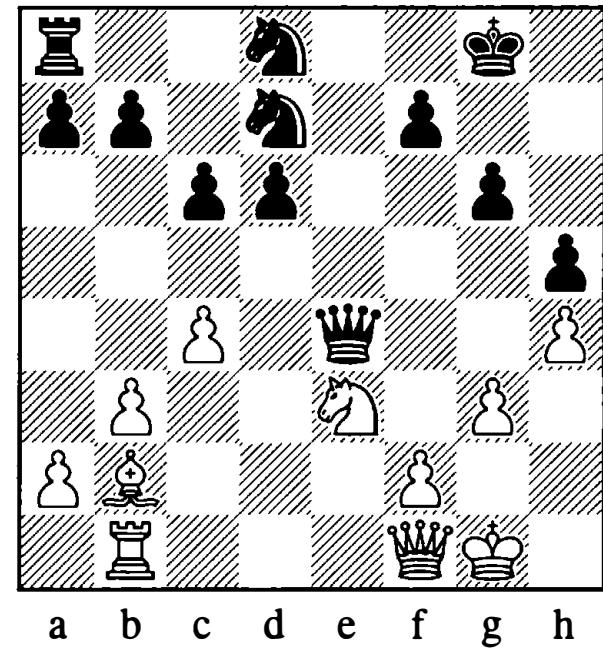
The over-ambitious 17... $\mathbb{W}h3$? does not work after: 18. $\mathbb{Q}xg2$ $\mathbb{Q}g4$? This logical continuation is elegantly refuted by 19. $\mathbb{W}xg4!$ $\mathbb{W}xg4$ 20. $\mathbb{Q}xe8$ and White has a decisive material advantage. 18... $\mathbb{Q}xg7$ is a better try, but the pin created by 19. $\mathbb{Q}b2\pm$ is very unpleasant.

17... $\mathbb{Q}xg7$ 18. $\mathbb{Q}xg2$ $\mathbb{Q}xe4$ 19. $\mathbb{Q}b2\#$ offers White an even stronger attack than in the

game, because of the presence of an extra pair of rooks.

18.♘xe8 ♜xe8 19.♗xf1 ♜xe4 20.♕b2 ♘d7

The tactical phase has come to an end. White is better developed and has lasting pressure along the a1-h8 diagonal. Black relies on his active queen and the threat of ...♘d7-e5, taking advantage of the weakness of the f3-square.



21.♖e1!N

White immediately starts the fight against the enemy queen. This is a strong improvement over:

21.♖d1

After which a draw was agreed in Marin – Badea, Tusnad 2005. Total simplification could have followed:

21...♘e5 22.♕xe5 ♜xe5

22...dxe5 is risky because of 23.♖d3!. The threat to trap the queen with f2-f3 forces Black to weaken his position with either ...c6-c5 or ...g6-g5, opening new horizons for the e3-knight.

23.♗d3

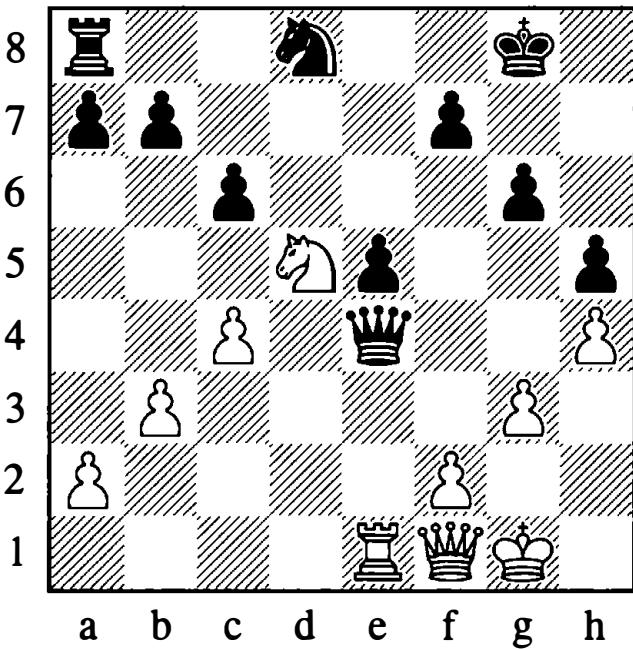
Followed by ♜d3xd6.

21...♘e5 22.♕xe5 dxe5

Black needs to keep the e-file closed.

After 22...♜xe5 23.♗d5 ♜d4 24.♗e4 ♜b2 25.♗e8† ♔g7 26.♗f4± he would not be able to complete his development, leaving his king completely helpless against the combined attack of White's army.

23.♗d5



23...♗d4

Her Majesty has to watch her step.

23...♗f3? leaves the queen trapped after 24.♗e3, since 24...♗g4/f5 allows the forks 25.♗f6/e7†.

23...♗c2?!

This is refuted by a far from obvious sequence:

24.♗xe5 ♘e6

24...cxd5 leads to a decisive attack after 25.♗e8† ♔g7 26.♗a1† f6 27.♗e1.

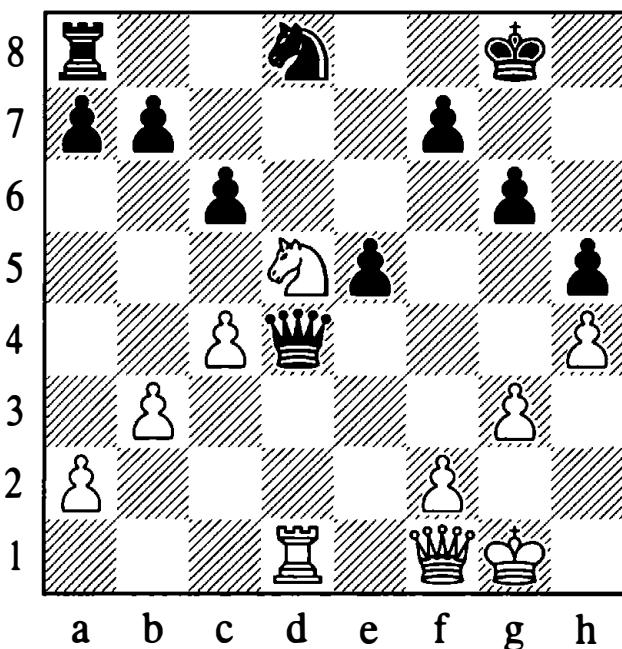
25.♗e2!

This forces the queen to occupy an unfavourable square.

25...♗d3 26.♘c7!

The knight is taboo because of ♗e8†, winning the queen, while otherwise ♘xe6 will win a pawn while also weakening the king's position.

24.♗d1



24... $\mathbb{W}c5$

Black keeps his queen as close to the kingside as possible, but we will see that the continuing possibility of b3-b4 makes the queen unstable on this square.

The alternative is:

24... $\mathbb{W}b2$ 25. $\mathbb{Q}c7$ $\mathbb{B}c8$ 26. $\mathbb{W}e1!$

This apparently modest move is the best way to develop an initiative. By attacking the e5-pawn, White prepares the further activation of his forces with $\mathbb{B}d2$ followed by $\mathbb{B}d2-d7$ and $\mathbb{W}xe5$.

26... $\mathbb{B}xc7$

Attempting to activate the knight with 26... $c5$ weakens the d5-square and obstructs the a3-f8 diagonal, leaving the queen isolated from the kingside after 27. $\mathbb{B}d2$ $\mathbb{W}a3$ 28. $\mathbb{B}d7$ $\mathbb{Q}c6$ 29. $\mathbb{W}d2\pm$, with a strong initiative.

27. $\mathbb{B}d2$ $\mathbb{W}xd2$

The only practical chance.

After 27... $\mathbb{W}a3?$ 28. $\mathbb{B}xd8\ddagger$ Black has to give up his queen with 28... $\mathbb{W}f8$ to avoid being mated after $\mathbb{W}xe5$.

28. $\mathbb{W}xd2$ $\mathbb{Q}e6$ 29. $\mathbb{W}d6\pm$

25. $\mathbb{Q}c7$ $\mathbb{B}c8$ 26. $\mathbb{B}d7$

White threatens to paralyse his opponent with $\mathbb{W}d3$.

26... $\mathbb{B}xc7$

By sacrificing the exchange, Black eliminates the danger of an immediate attack and hopes to keep the enemy rook out of play.

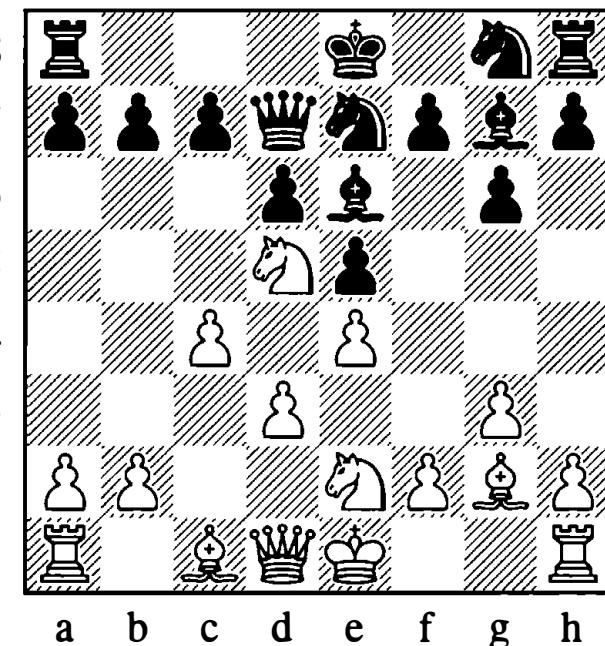
Attacking the knight with 26... $\mathbb{W}a5$ would be ineffective because of 27. $\mathbb{W}e2!$ with the threat of b3-b4 followed by $\mathbb{W}e2xe5$. For instance, 27... $\mathbb{B}xc7$ 28. $\mathbb{B}xd8\ddagger$ $\mathbb{Q}h7$ 29.b4 $\mathbb{W}xb4$ 30. $\mathbb{W}xe5$ and mate will soon follow.

27. $\mathbb{B}xc7$ $\mathbb{W}d6$ 28. $\mathbb{B}c8$ $\mathbb{Q}g7$ 29. $\mathbb{W}e2$ $\mathbb{Q}e6$
30. $\mathbb{W}e3\pm$

White has a small material advantage. With his queen actively placed on e3, he should not fear a combined attack by the enemy queen and knight.

(1.c4 e5 2.g3 $\mathbb{Q}c6$ 3. $\mathbb{Q}c3$ g6 4. $\mathbb{Q}g2$ $\mathbb{Q}g7$ 5.e4 d6 6. $\mathbb{Q}ge2$ $\mathbb{Q}e6$ 7.d3 $\mathbb{W}d7$ 8. $\mathbb{Q}d5$)

D) 8... $\mathbb{Q}ce7$



This is intended to be an improved version of line C, where Black had many problems with his passive knight on d8.

9.d4 c6 10. $\mathbb{Q}e3$

If we compare with 9... $\mathbb{Q}ce7$ from line C, 10. $\mathbb{Q}xe7$ is less effective because of 10... $\mathbb{Q}xe7\ddagger$. This move is now possible, because after 11.d5 cxd5 12.cxd5 Black has 12... $\mathbb{Q}h3$ with adequate counterplay.

10...h3

Once the attack against the c7-square has been removed, Black can play this programmed move.

After 10...exd4 11.Qxd4 ♜h3 White should transpose to the main line with 12.0–0. If instead 12.Qdf5 ♜xf5 13.exf5 gxf5 14.♘h3 h5 then the usefulness of the knight on e7 is revealed, because the f5-pawn is not easy to win back, Bogdanovski – Cabrilo, Budva 1996.

11.0-0 ♠xg2 12. ♠xg2 exd4

This is a necessary concession before launching the kingside attack.

Let's see what happens if Black tries to attack directly with:

12...h5?!

White could take advantage of his lead in development with:

13.dxe5!

Normally, Black would not fear this exchange, which weakens the d4-square, but the problem is that his knights are several moves away from d4 and his king is vulnerable. The weakness of the d6-square is much more relevant, with White's e3-knight just one step away.

13...xe5

13...dxe5 allows White to retain the same kind of initiative, without the necessity of sacrificing a pawn. 14.♗xd7† ♕xd7 15.♘d1† Black has no favourable squares for his king. 15...♔e8 would be met by 16.c5 followed by ♜c4-d6, and 15...♔c7 allows 16.b3† followed by ♜a3. In both cases, the e7-knight is awfully passive.

14.c5!

White clears the c4-square for his knight and removes Black's last central pawn.

14...dxc5 15.♗xd7† ♔xd7 16.♘c4 ♔c7
17.♗d1† ♔c8

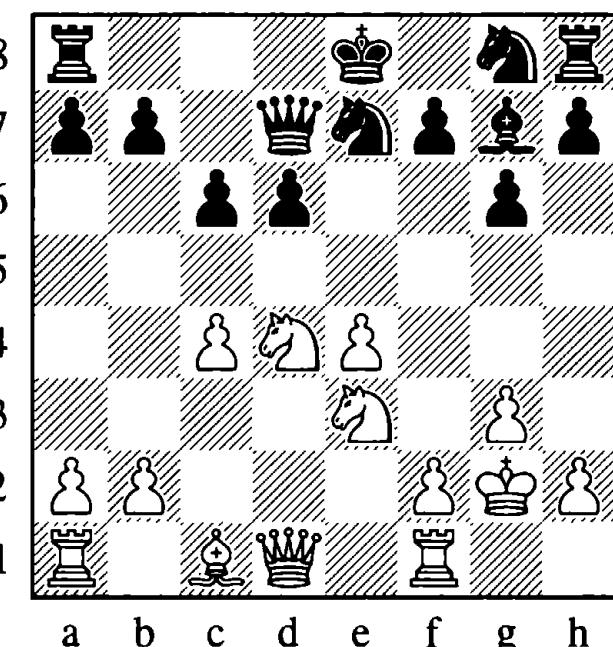
Black places another piece between his

rooks, making their connection improbable, but after 17... $\mathbb{Q}e6$ 18. $\mathbb{Q}f4$ a white rook would soon invade on the seventh rank.

18. ♕e3 b6 19. ♔d6† ♕xd6 20. ♕xd6†

White threatens $\mathbb{E}ad1$ followed by $\mathbb{E}d7$, while Black has no obvious way to complete his development.

13. ♜xd4



White has more space and normal development. Black needs to play actively to avoid being suffocated.

13...h5!?

After the bishop exchange, advancing the h-pawn offers Black some attacking chances.

Let's see what happens if Black plays less aggressively:

13... ♔f6

This is natural, but it allows White to consolidate:

14.f3 0-0 15.b3 ♕c7

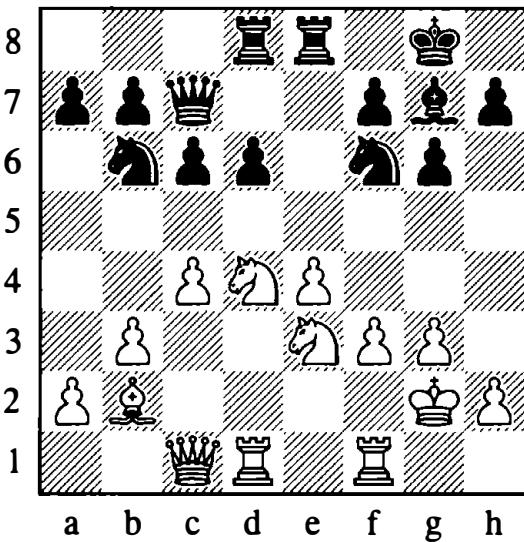
15...c5 weakens the d5-square for nothing. After 16.¤dc2 the a1-rook is defended and Black has no favourable discovered attack.

16. ♕b2 ♔fe8 17. ♜c2 ♔ad8 18. ♜ad1±

White has completed his development and enjoys a long-term advantage. With his next two moves Black tries to activate his e7-

knight, failing to notice the similarity of his position to a classic game.

18... $\mathbb{Q}c8$ 19. $\mathbb{W}c1$ $\mathbb{Q}b6$



20. $\mathbb{Q}ef5!$

This is the same combination as in the famous game Kotov – Barcza, Saltsjobaden (izt) 1952. Barcza's knights were on a7 and e8, but otherwise the games are very similar.

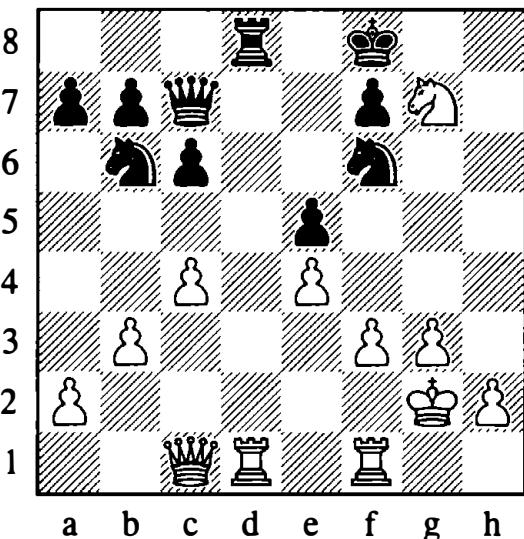
20...gxf5 21. $\mathbb{Q}xf5$ h6

Black gives up a pawn to prevent $\mathbb{W}g5$, but this is only a temporary solution.

22. $\mathbb{Q}xh6\#$ $\mathbb{Q}f8$ 23. $\mathbb{Q}f5$

Renewing the threat.

23... $\mathbb{E}e5$ 24. $\mathbb{Q}xe5$ dxe5 25. $\mathbb{Q}xg7$



Black resigned in Timman – Bednarski, Dieren 1970, in view of 25... $\mathbb{Q}xg7$ 26. $\mathbb{W}g5\#$.

14.a4

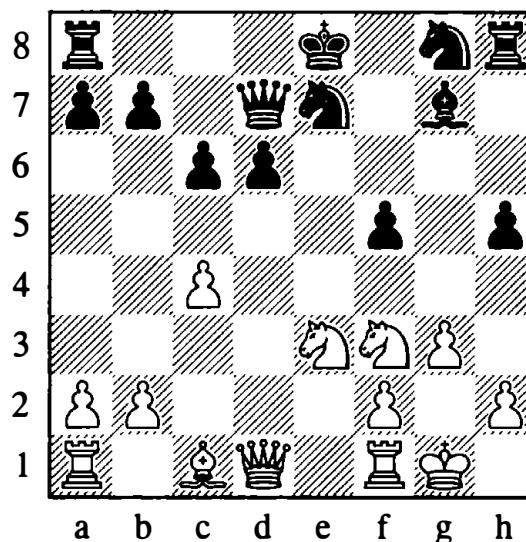
With a single stroke White prepares his queenside attack and the activation of his rook along the third rank.

Instead, Kasparov recommended:

14. $\mathbb{Q}f3$

This prevents ...h5-h4.

14...f5 15.exf5 gxf5 16. $\mathbb{Q}g1$



The king clears the g2-square for the knight, preparing a regrouping that has been known since the first game of the 1910 Lasker – Schlechter match. The only difference is that Schlechter used this set-up on the queenside, placing his pawns on a2, b3 and c2 and the knights on c3 and b2, in order to keep Lasker's a5- and c5-pawns under control.

16...f4 17. $\mathbb{Q}g2$ fxg3 18.fxg3 0–0–0 19. $\mathbb{Q}g5\pm$

Kasparov's analysis ends here. White has taken control of Black's weakened kingside and is ready to start his queenside attack.

14... $\mathbb{Q}h6$

This way of developing the knight is consistent with the move ...h7-h5.

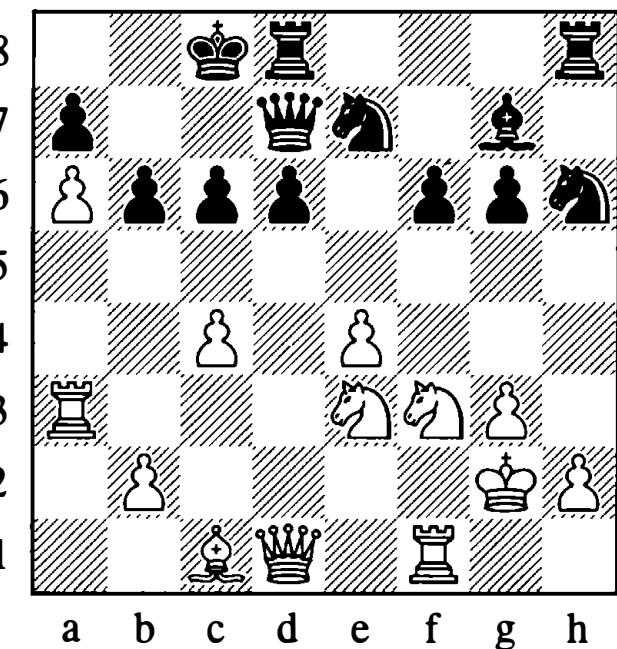
15. $\mathbb{E}a3$ 0–0–0 16.a5 h4 17.a6 b6

Black has prevented the queenside being opened, but the light squares around his king have become vulnerable.

18. $\mathbb{Q}f3$ hxg3 19.fxg3

The consequences of the pawn exchange are double-sided. Black gets the h-file for his attack, but White's positional pressure along the f-file is also unpleasant.

19...f6



So far, both sides have carried out their attacks logically, provoking weaknesses in the enemy king's position. White's progress seems more significant, though, which allows him to open the position by sacrificing a pawn.

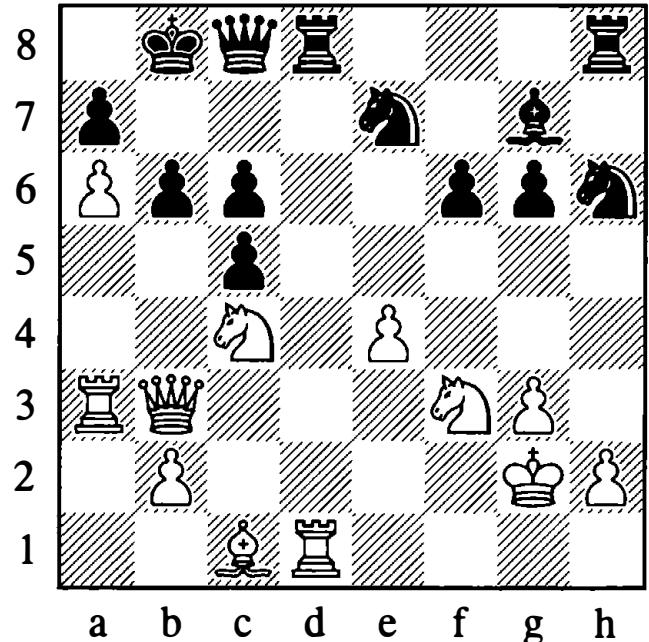
20.c5!?

White provokes the opening of the d-file and clears the c4-square for his knight.

20...dxc5

According to Kasparov, 20...bxc5? is bad because of 21.♗b3± followed by ♗b7.

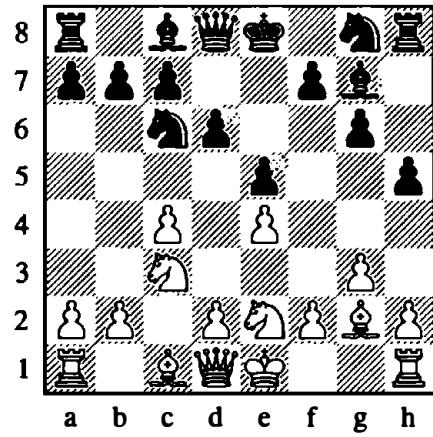
21.♗b3 ♕b8 22.♗d1 ♜c8 23.♘c4



White had a strong initiative and eventually won in Kasparov – Short, Linares 1990.

Conclusion:

6...♝e6 leads to interesting play. White needs to show some inventiveness at the critical moments to retain the initiative.



Botvinnik System

6...h5

Variation Index

1.c4 e5 2.g3 ♜c6 3.♗c3 g6 4.♗g2 ♜g7 5.e4 d6 6.♗ge2

6...h5 7.h4

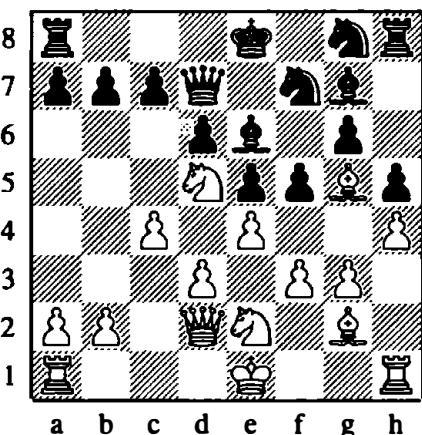
A) 7...♝g4

p 190

B) 7...♜h6

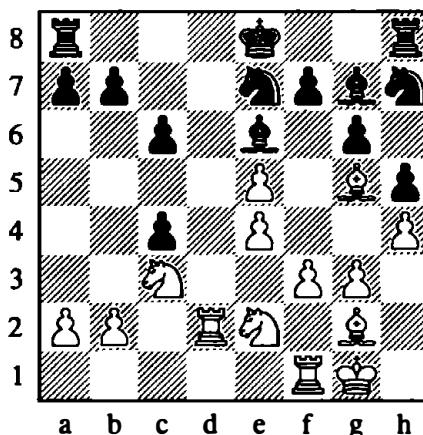
p 194

A) note to 9...♝d7



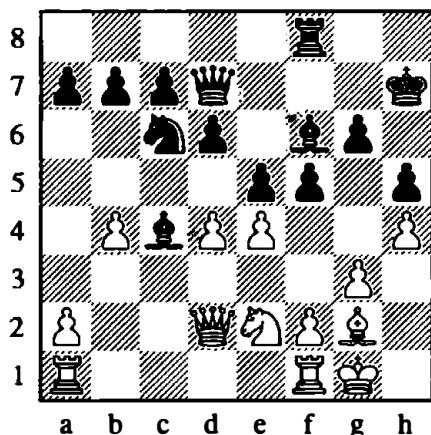
13.exf5!N

A) after 16...♜h7



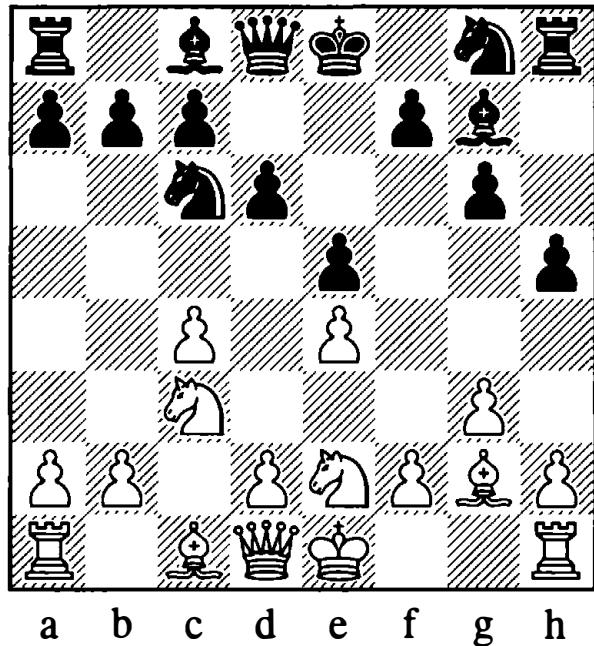
17.♗f4!N

B) after 17...♝xf8



18.d5!N

1.c4 e5 2.g3 ♜c6 3.♗c3 g6 4.♗g2 ♗g7 5.e4 d6 6.♗ge2 h5



This early advance of the h-pawn can eventually transpose to lines from the previous chapter, but in this chapter we will examine the continuations that have independent value.

7.h4

Black can play A) 7...♗g4 or B) 7...♗h6.

If 7...♗e6 8.d3 ♖d7 then White can either transpose to line C from the previous chapter with 9.♗d5 or continue with 9.♗g5, leading to similar play to line A.

(1.c4 e5 2.g3 ♜c6 3.♗c3 g6 4.♗g2 ♗g7 5.e4 d6 6.♗ge2 h5 7.h4)

A) 7...♗g4 8.f3

This move is necessary to prevent ...♗c6-d4 from becoming annoying.

8...♗e6 9.d3 ♖d7

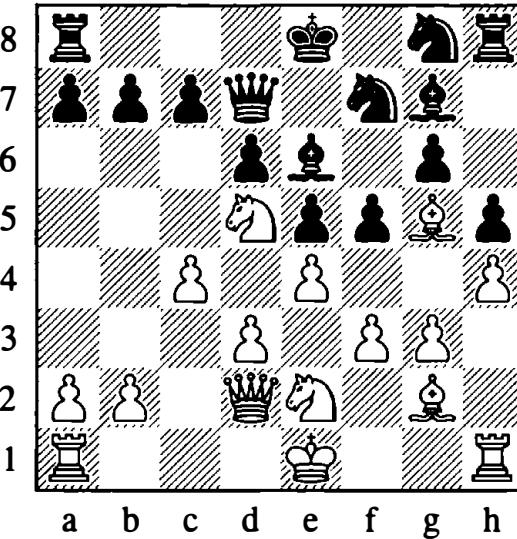
The position is similar to those arising from line C of Chapter 15. The consequences of f2-f3 are far from one-sided. It is true that the bishop looks more passive on g2, but on the other hand the e4-square will be better defended in the event of a later d3-d4, and Black's minor pieces are denied access to g4.

Although Black's last move does not threaten ...♗e6-h3 (due to the insertion of the moves ...h7-h5 and h2-h4) it remains Black's most logical developing continuation.

Pushing the f-pawn would be premature:
9...f5?!

This weakens the g5-square and allows White to take over the initiative.

10.♗d5 ♖d7 11.♗g5 ♜d8 12.♗d2 ♗f7



This position was reached in Franco Ocampos – Shirov, Villarrobledo (rapid) 2001.

13.exf5!N

White is much better developed, and so it is logical to open the position.

13...gxf5

Strategically, this is the most consistent move.

13...♗xf5 leads to chronic weaknesses on the light squares after 14.♗a5 b6 15.♗a3 ♜xg5. This is the only way to develop the other knight. 16.hxg5 ♗e7 17.♗f6†! White is willing to exchange his active knight for the passive bishop, in order to maintain the initiative. 17...♗xf6 18.gxf6 ♜c6 19.g4 ♗e6 20.g5± White has built a huge space advantage on the kingside, and the enemy queenside is weak.

14.♗a5

Once again White exploits the difference in development. Black must make a concession to avoid losing a pawn.

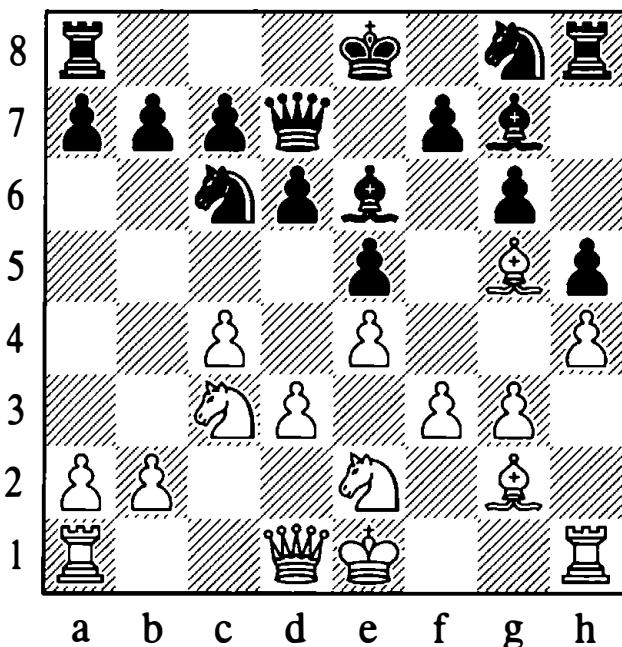
14... $\mathbb{Q}xd5$ 15.cxd5 $\mathbb{Q}xg5$ 16.hxg5 $\mathbb{Q}e7$ 17.f4±

White has a space advantage on every sector of the board and the weakness of the e6-square and the h5-pawn will cause Black plenty of problems.

10. $\mathbb{Q}g5$

This is a logical consequence of the early weakening of the g5-square. With the pawn still on h7, Black could play ...h7-h6 when after $\mathbb{Q}g5-e3$ the bishop would be in danger of harassment after ... $\mathbb{Q}g8-f6$.

10. $\mathbb{Q}d5$, in the spirit of line C from the previous chapter, also looks playable.



10... $\mathbb{Q}ce7$

Black prepares to occupy the centre with ...c7-c6 and ...d6-d5. This plan is not so effective here, because White has not yet played $\mathbb{Q}d5$ and will not have to lose time retreating (or exchanging) the knight.

Normal developing moves such as 10... $\mathbb{Q}ge7$ or 10... $\mathbb{Q}h6$ would be strongly met by 11. $\mathbb{Q}d5$ ±, taking advantage of the inadequately defended f6-square.

10...f6 11. $\mathbb{Q}e3$ $\mathbb{Q}h6$ looks more constructive, but after 12. $\mathbb{W}d2$ $\mathbb{Q}f7$ 13. $\mathbb{Q}d5$ 0–0 14.f4, followed by 0–0–0, White would obtain a strong initiative.

11. $\mathbb{W}d2$ c6

Setting up a symmetrical centre with 11...c5 does not offer Black complete equality. White could react actively with 12.b4!? cxb4 13. $\mathbb{Q}d5$ $\mathbb{Q}xd5$ 14.cxd5. The passivity of the black knights and the strong pressure White's light-squared bishop will exert after a later $\mathbb{Q}g2-h3$ promises White a good game.

12. $\mathbb{B}d1$

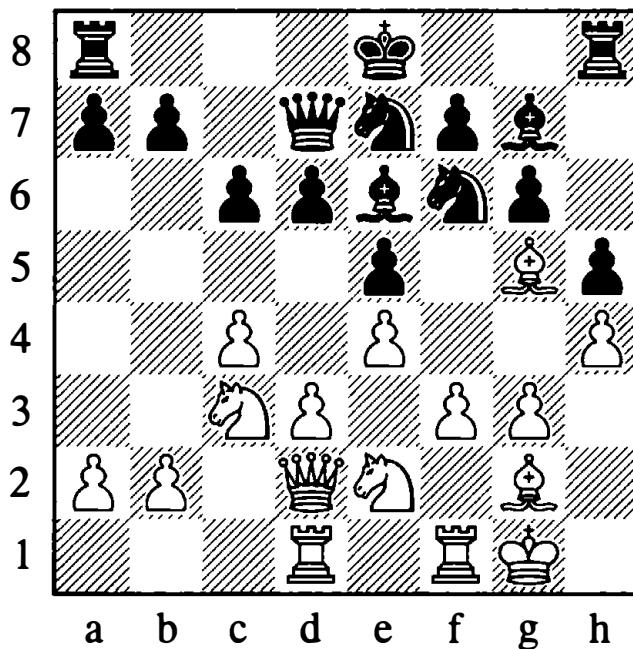
By increasing his potential pressure on the d-file, White gets ready to meet ...d6-d5 with cxd5 ...cxd5, followed by d3-d4.

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

This is the best way to continue development, since 12...0–0–0 would be met by 13.b4 with attacking chances.

13.0–0

White cannot play d3-d4 yet, because his c4-pawn would be hanging. Before preparing to open the centre, he makes the last "obligatory" move of his general plan.



13...d5

This will not work out well, but the alternatives also have drawbacks.

13...0–0

This leaves the d7- and e7-squares

insufficiently defended after the inevitable opening of the centre. This important aspect will be revealed in some of the lines below.

14.b3

White defends the c4-pawn and threatens d3-d4.

14...d5 15.d4 exd4

The king's departure from the centre makes itself felt after 15...dxc4? or 15...dxe4? which would both lose a knight to 16.dxe5, because the e7-knight is vulnerable.

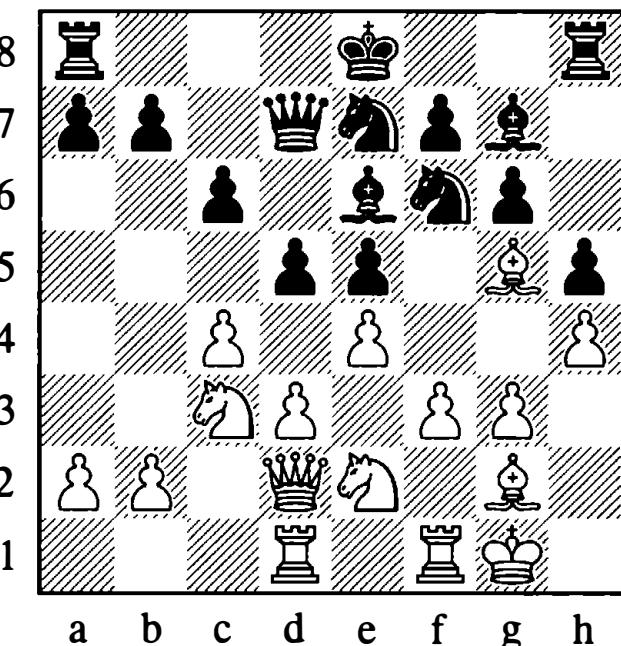
16. ♔xd4 dxc4

16...dxe4 would leave the e7-knight passive after 17.♘xe4 ♘xe4 18.fxe4. Attempting to open new horizons for it with 18...c5 fails to 19.♘xe6 ♜xe6 20.♗d7. This time it is the insufficient defence of the d7-square that counts. After 20...♘c6 21.♗xe6 fxe6 22.♗d7 White has a strong initiative. He may activate his light-squared bishop with e4-e5 or simply ♔h3.

17. $\text{w}f4!$

Most of Black's pieces are vulnerable.

Strengthening Black's control of the centre with 13... $\mathbb{R}d8$ would place the rook under indirect pressure from the g5-bishop, while 13... $\mathbb{Q}h3$ would allow 14.d4 without the necessity of a preparatory b2-b3.



14.d4!?

Since White is better developed it is in his favour to open the centre. I refrained from exchanging on d5 before playing d3-d4 on general grounds: I did not wish to make the d5-square available to the black knights.

However, concrete analysis proves that 14.cxd5 cxd5 15.d4 is also playable. For instance: 15...dxe4 16.fxe4 ♘h7 17.♔h6 0–0 18.♕xg7 ♕xg7 19.♘d5 ♔xd5 20.dxe5!± White's superior centralization creates a strong initiative.

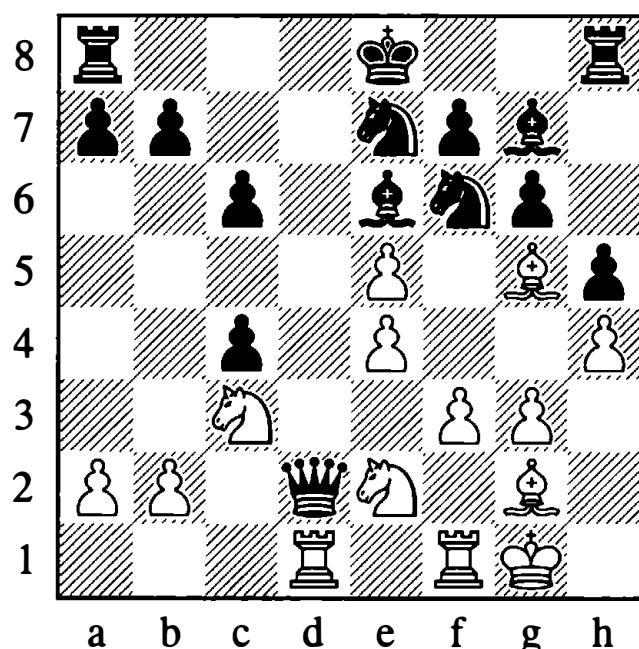
14...dxc4

Black tries to create complications by making the position asymmetrical.

The careless 14...exd4? would put the f6-knight in trouble after 15. $\mathbb{W}xd4! \pm$.

Black's minor pieces would remain passive and vulnerable after 14...dxe4 15.dxe5 ♕xd2 16.♔xd2 ♔d7 17.♔xe4 ♔f5 18.b3 ♔xe5 19.♔f4±.

15.dxe5 \mathbb{W} xd2



16. $\text{g} \times \text{d}2!$

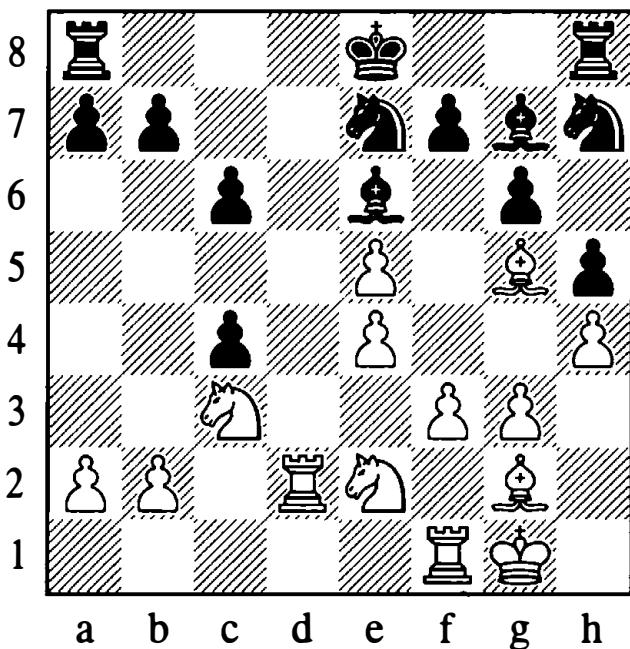
This is the most active continuation.

The simpler 16.♗xd2, retreating the bishop from its active but exposed position, would

also preserve an advantage after 16... $\mathbb{Q}d7$ 17.f4 $\mathbb{Q}c5$ 18. $\mathbb{Q}e3$ $\mathbb{Q}d3$ 19.b3±, as suggested by Shytaj.

16... $\mathbb{Q}h7$

16... $\mathbb{Q}h7$ 17.f4± leaves White with a crushing space advantage.

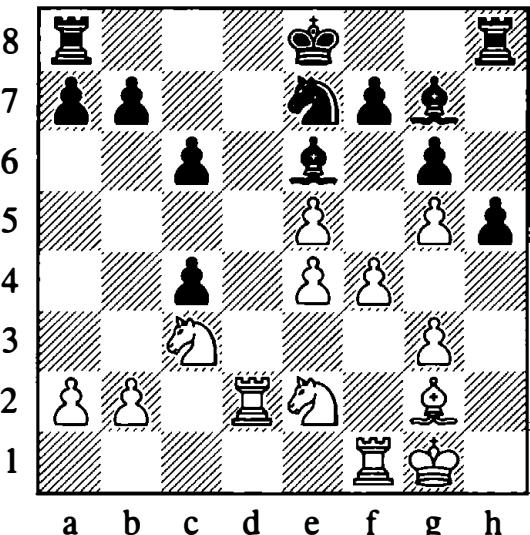


17. $\mathbb{Q}f4!$ N

White must preserve his bishop to retain his advantage.

Less accurate is:

17.f4?! $\mathbb{Q}xg5$ 18.hxg5



White is better developed and has a considerable space advantage on the kingside, but the relative weakness of his dark squares causes him some problems.

18... $\mathbb{Q}d8$ 19. $\mathbb{Q}fd1$

White cannot increase his pressure along the d-file with 19. $\mathbb{Q}d6$ because after 19... $\mathbb{Q}g4$ 20. $\mathbb{Q}fd1$ $\mathbb{Q}xd6$ the generally desirable 21.exd6? loses material to 21... $\mathbb{Q}xc3$!.

19... $\mathbb{Q}xd2$ 20. $\mathbb{Q}xd2$ 0–0??

This move was dictated by Black's desire to get his rook into play as soon as possible, but it has the drawback of removing the king from the centre.

21. $\mathbb{Q}d1$

The start of an effective plan to regroup. The knights will be transferred to e3 and c3, allowing the activation of the bishop along the f1-a6 diagonal.

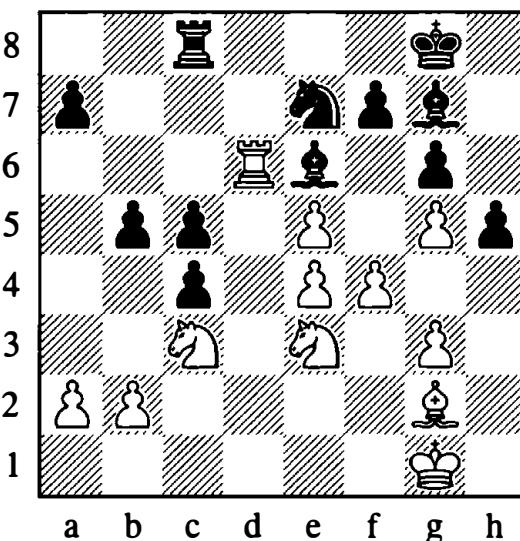
21... $\mathbb{Q}c8$ 22. $\mathbb{Q}e3$ b5

This weakening move looks premature, because the c4-pawn was not in danger yet, but Black would have been forced to play it after $\mathbb{Q}d1$ -e3 and $\mathbb{Q}f1$ anyway.

23. $\mathbb{Q}d6$ c5

Another necessary weakening, in order to prevent $\mathbb{Q}d4$.

24. $\mathbb{Q}c3$ ±



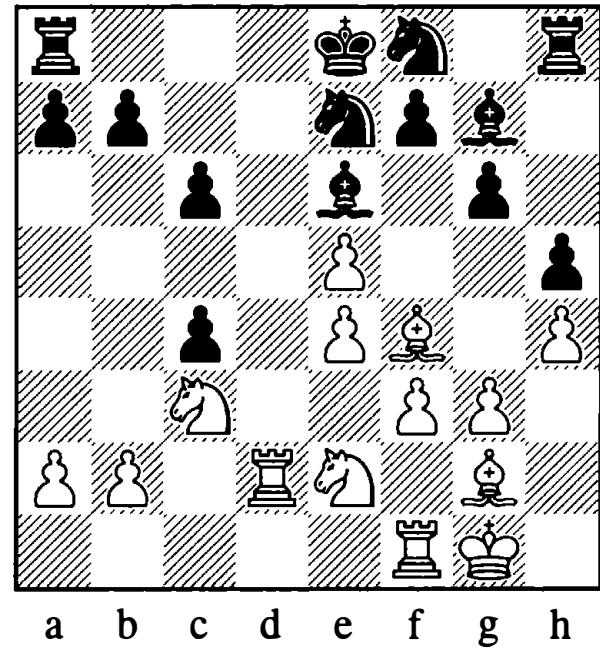
White's pieces are dominating and the black pawns are weak. Black's minor pieces are either passive or vulnerable, Marin – Shytaj, Reggio Emilia 2008.

After the game, Shytaj recommended 20... $\mathbb{Q}c8$, clearing the e7-square for his king and improving the knight's position. Black would also avoid the weakening ...b7-b5.

After 21.♘d4 ♕d7 22.♗f1 ♘b6, followed by ...♝e8-e7 and ...♝h8-d8, Black would have chances to equalize.

17...♞f8

This move, threatening ...♞f8-d7, was the reason I avoided playing 17.♗f4 in my game against Shytaj, but White has a strong retort.



18.♘d4!

Black's position becomes unstable.

18...♝d7

A necessary retreat. The planned 18...♞d7 is met by 19.♘xe6 fxe6 20.♗h3 ♜xe5 21.♗xe6+. White has the better structure, a considerable lead in development, and a mighty bishop pair.

19.♗fd1 b5 20.b3!

White undermines Black's compact queenside structure, in order to gain new squares for his pieces.

20...b4 21.♘a4 c3

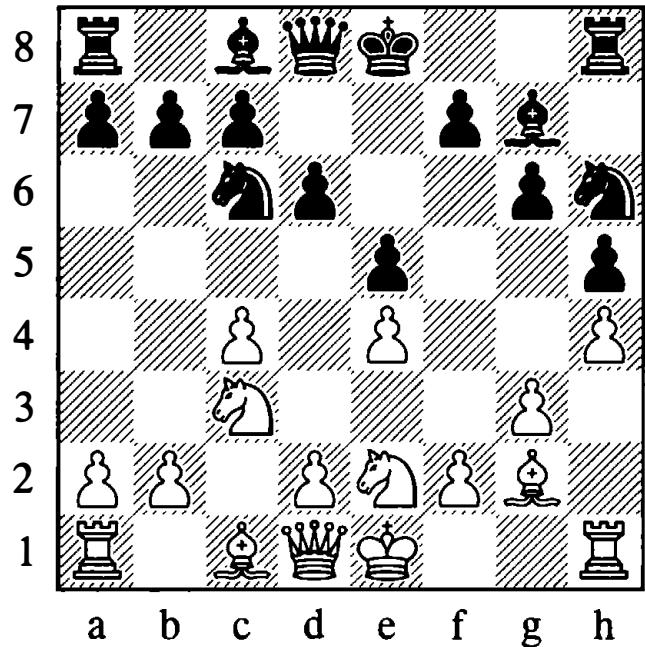
Black has managed to create an advanced passed pawn, but his pieces cannot support it in any way, while several white pieces guard the c2- and c1-squares.

22.♗d3±

White has a huge lead in development and a space advantage in the centre. The strong pressure along the d-file prevents Black from regrouping properly. White's main threat is ♘c5, increasing his control over the e6-square and harassing the d7-bishop. From c5, the knight could jump further to b7 and then d6.

(1.c4 e5 2.g3 ♘c6 3.♘c3 g6 4.♗g2 ♜g7 5.e4 d6 6.♘ge2 h5 7.h4)

B) 7...♞h6



This is consistent with Black's previous move. After the slight weakening of the g4-square, the thematic advance f2-f4 would be answered with ...♞g4. On the other hand, the knight is not especially well placed on h6 if White refrains from advancing his f-pawn, as it far from the centre and it might be attacked with ♜g5 and ♜d2.

8.d3 0-0 9.0-0 ♜e6 10.♘d5

White's dark-squared bishop does not have stable squares for development, since ♜c1-g5 can be answered with ...f7-f6, and ♜e3 with ...♞h6-g4. Therefore, White plays the thematic text move, which prepares the standard attack with b2-b4-b5, and puts Black under pressure on several areas of the board.

10...♝f5

This move allows White to complete his development with gain of time, but it is not easy to suggest anything better.

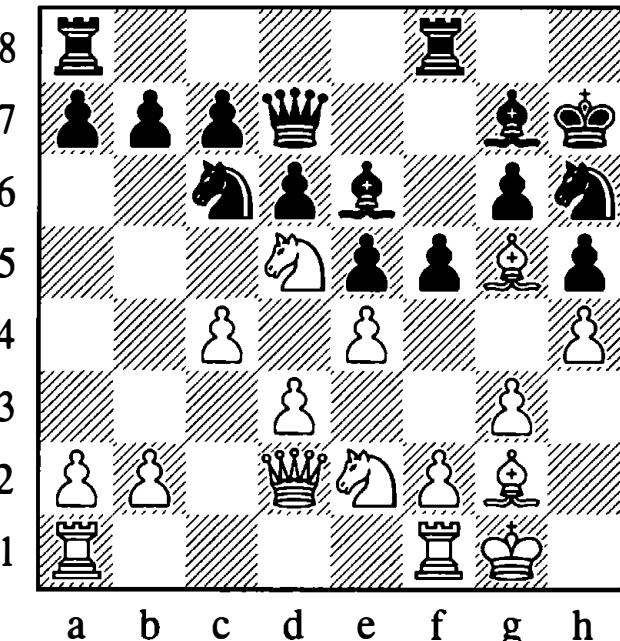
With the pawn still on f7, the developing move 10... $\mathbb{W}d7??$ loses a piece to 11. $\mathbb{Q}xh6!$

If Black wishes to avoid weakening the g5-square, he may prepare ... $\mathbb{W}d8-d7$ with 10... $\mathbb{Q}h7$, but this seems to be too slow. White can immediately start his queenside attack with 11.b4, leaving the development of the bishop for later. 11... $\mathbb{Q}xd5$ would give up the bishop pair for nothing, since after 12.cxd5 $\mathbb{Q}xb4$ 13. $\mathbb{Q}b1\pm$ White will retrieve the pawn with $\mathbb{Q}xb7$.

11. $\mathbb{Q}g5$ $\mathbb{W}d7$ 12. $\mathbb{W}d2$ $\mathbb{Q}h7$

The most natural and probably best answer: Black defends the knight without releasing the kingside tension.

It would be impossible to challenge the bishop's stability after 12... $\mathbb{Q}f7$ 13. $\mathbb{Q}f6\uparrow$ $\mathbb{Q}xf6$ 14. $\mathbb{Q}xf6\pm$. White would soon open the centre with f2-f4 or d3-d4, placing the enemy king in serious danger.



13.b4!

White prepares to drive the c6-knight away, in order to increase his domination in the centre. This is the only constructive plan,

since f2-f4 cannot be recommended because of ... $\mathbb{Q}h6-g4$, while d3-d4 is currently impossible. As we shall see, the weakening of the a1-h8 diagonal is not dangerous.

13... $\mathbb{Q}d8$

Black anticipates White's plan and prepares ...c7-c6. The main drawback of this move is that it disconnects the rooks.

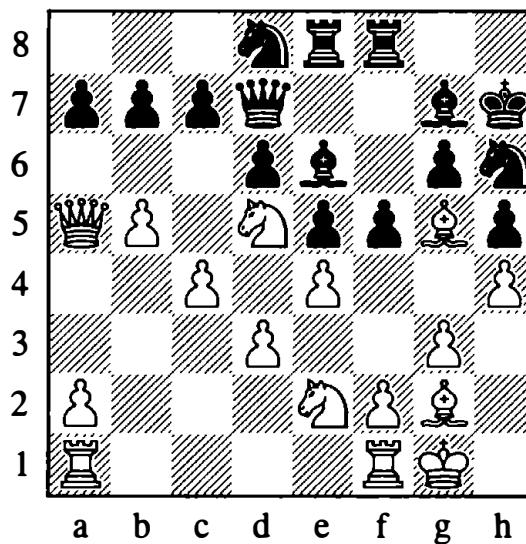
The thematic 13...f4?! is not effective, because after 14.gxf4 exf4 White can give up the exchange with 15. $\mathbb{Q}exf4!$ $\mathbb{Q}xa1$ 16. $\mathbb{Q}xa1$. White has achieved a considerable space advantage and the enemy king's position has been weakened.

If Black wants to keep his rooks connected then he could try:

13... $\mathbb{R}ae8$

This logical move is as yet untested. Its downside is that it leaves Black's queenside vulnerable:

14.b5 $\mathbb{Q}d8$ 15. $\mathbb{W}a5!$



Black's congested pieces cannot find a good way to defend the c7- and a7-pawns.

15...c6 16. $\mathbb{Q}c7!$

A daring move that requires accurate calculation.

16...b6

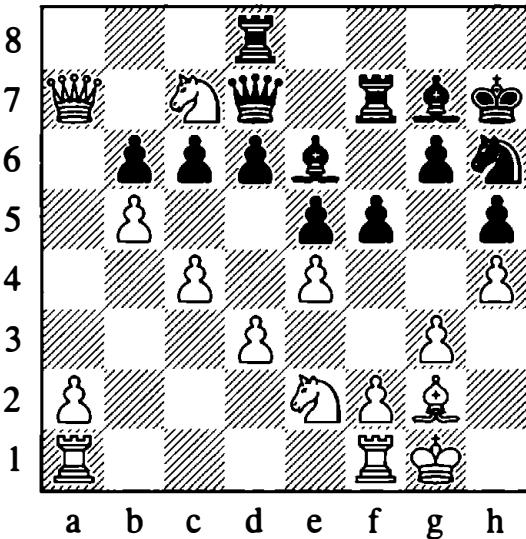
Otherwise Black would simply lose an exchange.

17. $\mathbb{W}xa7 \mathbb{B}f7$ 18. $\mathbb{Q}xd8!$

White eliminates the main defender of the c6-square and forces one of Black's major pieces to occupy the vulnerable d8-square.

18... $\mathbb{B}xd8$

18... $\mathbb{B}xd8$ allows White get out of the pin with 19. $\mathbb{Q}xe6\pm$.



19. $\mathbb{Q}xe6!$

White will obtain more than sufficient compensation for this forced queen sacrifice.

19... $\mathbb{W}xa7$ 20. $\mathbb{Q}xd8 \mathbb{B}f6$

Black has to allow the opening of the long diagonal, since after 20...f4 21. $\mathbb{Q}xf7 \mathbb{W}xf7$ 22. $bxc6$ f3 23. c7 $\mathbb{W}xc7$ 24. $\mathbb{Q}xf3+\text{--}$ his attack would come to an end, leaving him well behind on material.

21. $exf5$

White opens the long diagonal before Black can play ...f5-f4.

21... $cxb5$

After 21... $gxf5$ 22. $bxc6\pm$ the c-pawn would be too dangerous.

22. $f\text{xe}6\text{+} \mathbb{B}xg6$ 23. $cxb5\pm$

Simply counting the material, White is fine. Positionally, his general stability and control of the light squares are the telling factors.

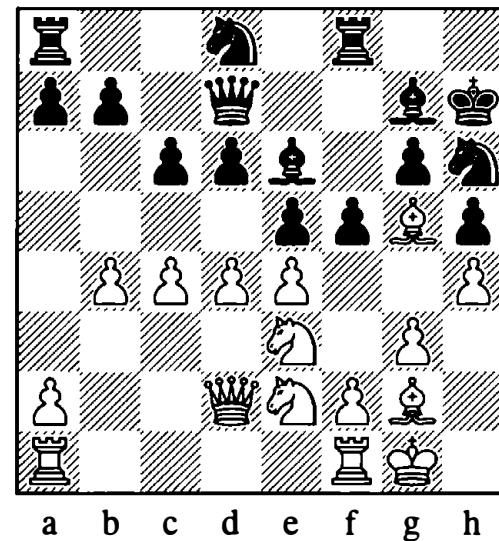
14.d4

This is the standard reaction to the c6-knight's retreat. White increases his space advantage.

14... $\mathbb{Q}c6$

We are familiar with the idea behind this apparent loss of time. Black intends to force his opponent to release the tension in the centre with $dxe5$.

White remains in control after 14...c6 15. $\mathbb{Q}e3$:



a) In Kutirov – Jacimovic, Struga 2005, Black chose:

15... $\mathbb{Q}hf7$

White should have replied:

16. $exf5!N gxf5$

Giving up the bishop with 16... $\mathbb{Q}xf5$ hardly solves Black's problems after 17. $\mathbb{Q}xf5$ $gxf5$ 18. $d5\pm$.

17. $d5 \mathbb{Q}xg5$ 18. $hxg5 \mathbb{Q}f7$

From this square the bishop obstructs the d8-knight, but after 18... $\mathbb{Q}g8$ 19. $\mathbb{Q}h3\pm$ the f5-pawn would remain vulnerable.

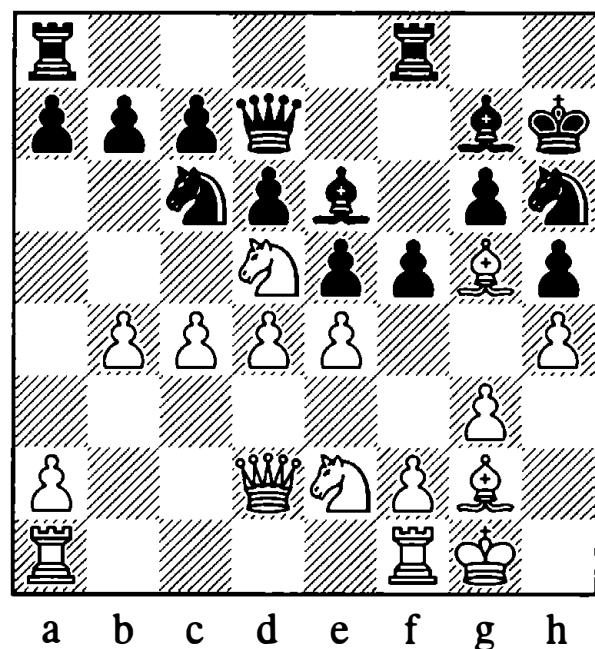
19. $\mathbb{B}ad1$

White increases his pressure against the d6-pawn, forcing Black to release the tension.

19... $cxd5$ 20. $\mathbb{Q}xd5\pm$

White has good control of the light squares. Black's pieces lack coordination and his structure is weak.

b) 15... $fxe4$ looks better, but after 16. $d5 \mathbb{Q}h3$ 17. $\mathbb{Q}c3 \mathbb{Q}xg2$ 18. $\mathbb{Q}xg2 \mathbb{Q}f5$ 19. $\mathbb{Q}xe4\pm$ White has a space advantage in the centre and on the queenside, while his kingside position is very stable.



15.♘f6†!

This simple combination wins material without offering Black sufficient counterplay.

15...♝xf6

This way, Black gets the c4-pawn for the exchange.

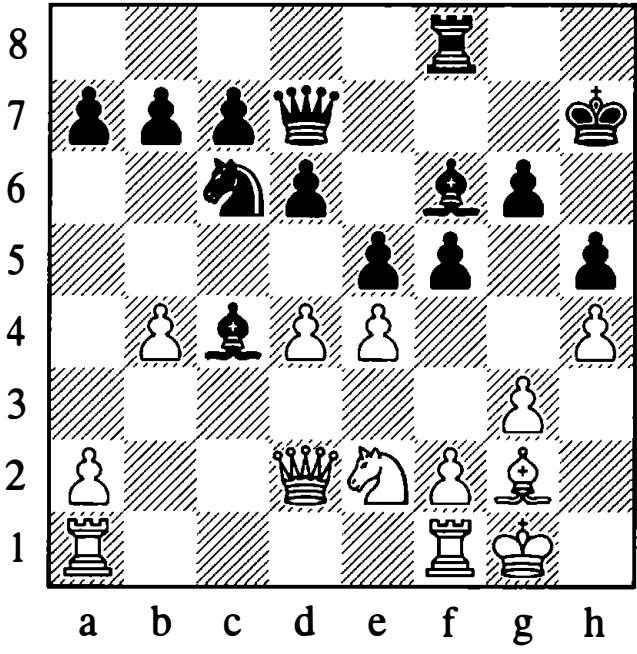
15...♜xf6 would be worse because of 16.♝xf6 ♜xf6 17.d5±.

16.♝xh6

Black cannot save his f8-rook and prevent the d4-d5 threat at the same time.

16...♝xc4 17.♝xf8 ♜xf8

The c4-bishop is active, but White's position remains quite solid, allowing him to retain his material advantage.



18.d5!N

This is the most precise move order.

18.exf5?!

This eventually worked out well in the game quoted at the end of this line, but only after a further mistake from Black. The idea of opening the long diagonal is correct, but the move order is wrong, because it allows Black to activate his queen.

18...♛xf5 19.d5 ♔d4?!

After this move White can stabilize the position in his favour.

19...♔e7! would have been stronger since ♜fc1, as in the main line, would leave the f2-square vulnerable.

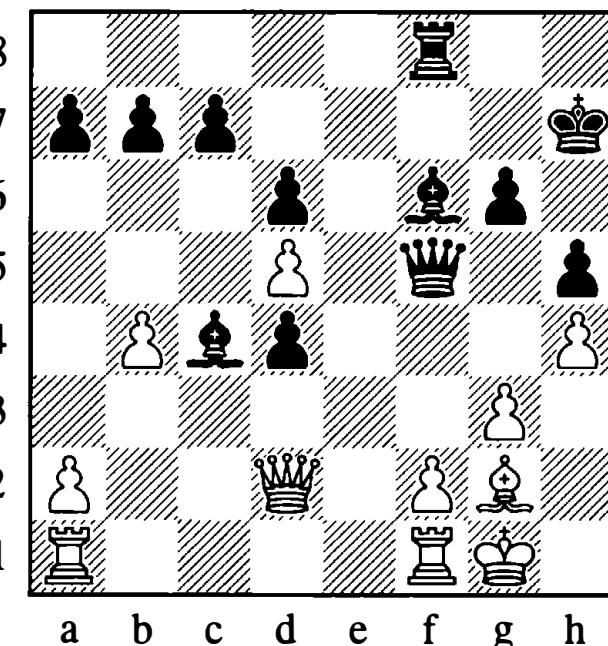
20.♘xd4 exd4

We have transposed to the main line.

18...♔d4

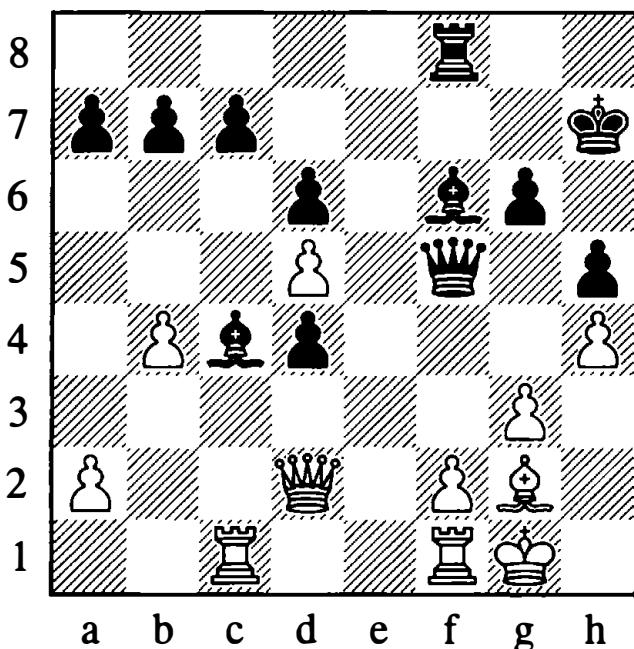
18...♔e7 is less effective than in the previous comment because of 19.♜fc1 b5 20.a4 a6 21.axb5 axb5 22.♖h3±. White has reorganized his position harmoniously and can hope to convert his minimal material advantage.

19.♘xd4 exd4 20.exf5 ♛xf5



21.♜ac1!

White is ready to return the exchange to seize complete control of the light squares.

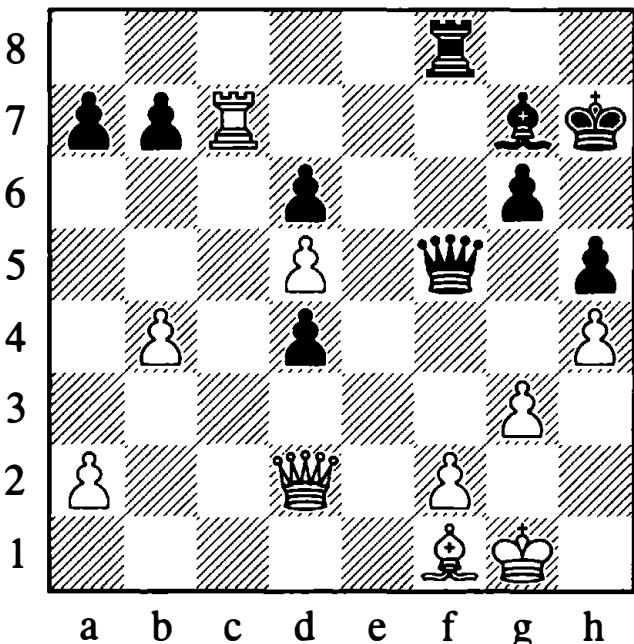


21...Qxfl?!

This is equivalent to strategic surrender. Black should have consolidated with 21...b5, although after 22.Qf1±, followed by Qe4 or Qe6, White would dictate the course of events.

22.Qxc7† Qg7 23.Qxf1

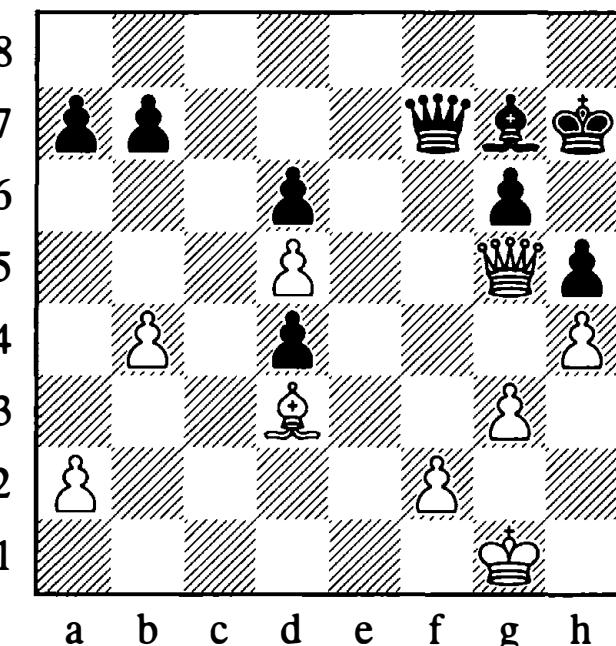
White intends to put the weakened enemy kingside under pressure with Qd3, while the queenside is already under attack.



23...Bf7?!

This move loses by force, so 23...Wxd5 was a better try. After 24.Qc4 Black must play 24...We4 to keep the b7-pawn defended, allowing White to activate his bishop with tempo: 25.Qd3 Wd5 26.We2± The threat of We7 is hard to meet.

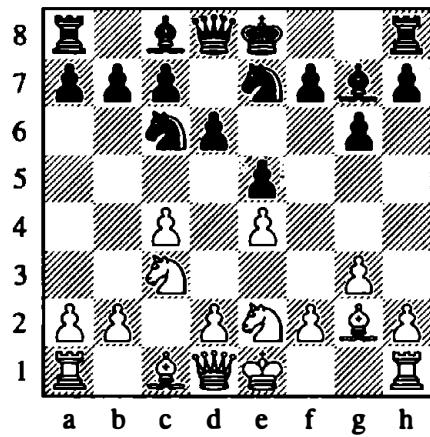
24.Qd3 Wf6 25.Bxf7 Wxf7 26.Wg5+–



White will win the h5-pawn, obtaining a decisive attack with opposite coloured bishops, Webster – King, Dublin 1993.

Conclusion:

6...h5 is rather similar to 6...Qe6 and the conclusion is similar: White is confronted with concrete problems, but accurate play should allow him to retain an advantage.



Botvinnik System

6... $\mathbb{Q}ge7$

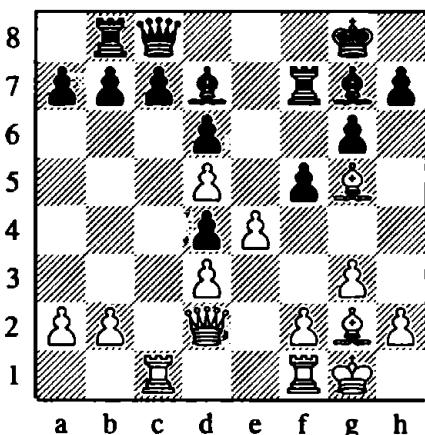
Variation Index

1.c4 e5 2.g3 $\mathbb{Q}c6$ 3. $\mathbb{Q}c3$ g6 4. $\mathbb{Q}g2$ $\mathbb{Q}g7$ 5.e4 d6 6. $\mathbb{Q}ge2$

6... $\mathbb{Q}ge7$ 7.d3 0-0 8.0-0

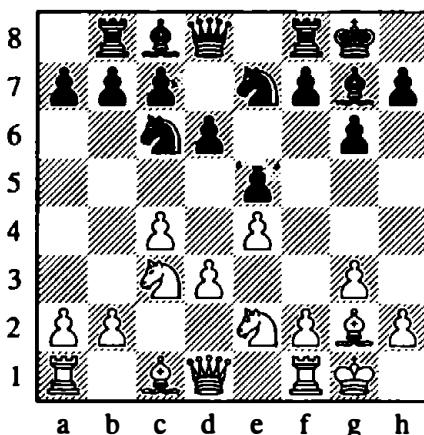
- A) 8... $\mathbb{Q}d7$ p 200
- B) 8... $\mathbb{Q}b8$ p 202
- C) 8... $\mathbb{Q}e6$ 9. $\mathbb{Q}d5$ $\mathbb{Q}d7$ 10. $\mathbb{Q}e3$ f5 11. $\mathbb{Q}d2$ p 203
- C1) 11... $\mathbb{Q}ae8$ p 204
- C2) 11... $\mathbb{Q}f7!?$ p 206

A) after 16... $\mathbb{Q}f7$



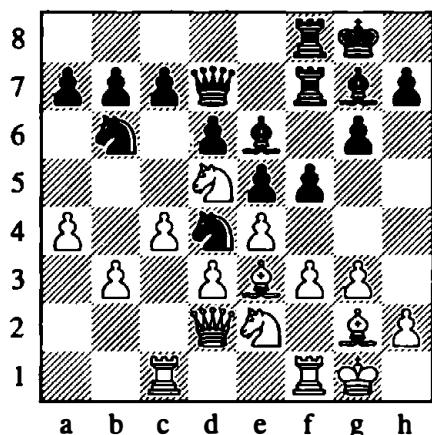
17. $\mathbb{Q}c2!N$

B) 8... $\mathbb{Q}b8$



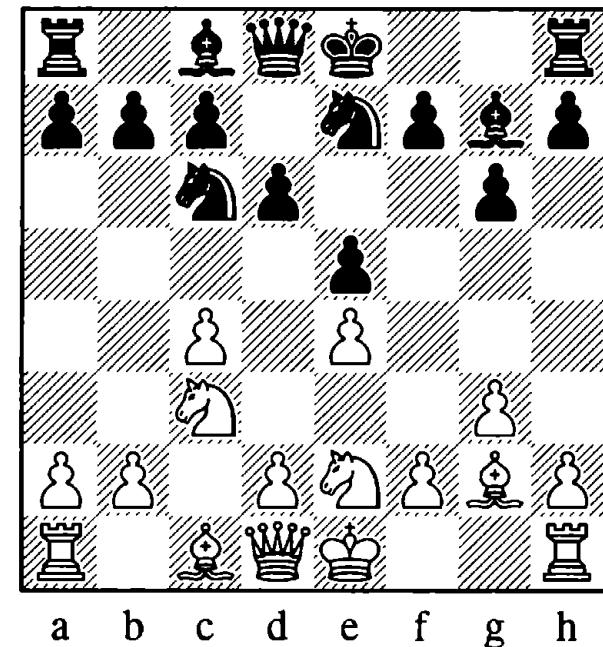
9. $\mathbb{Q}g5!N$

C22) after 15... $\mathbb{Q}d4$



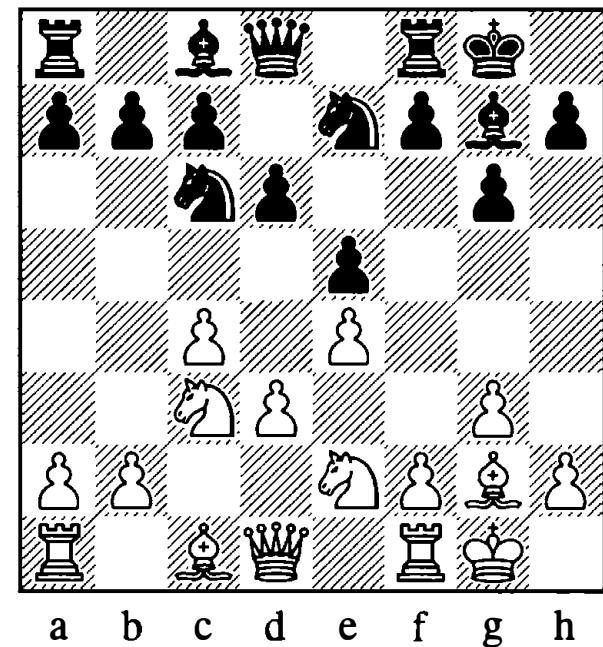
16. $\mathbb{Q}xd4!N$

1.c4 e5 2.g3 ♜c6 3.♘c3 g6 4.♗g2 ♗g7 5.e4 d6 6.♗ge2 ♜ge7



This is a flexible move, maintaining the possibility of a further ...f7-f5, but the risk is that the knight will remain passive on e7.

7.d3 0-0 8.0-0



In practice, Black has tried A) 8...♝d7, B) 8...♝b8 and C) 8...♝e6.

8...f5 is likely to transpose to line C.

8...♝g4 is sometimes played, but it makes little sense to provoke f2-f3. We will see when examining line C that White sometimes

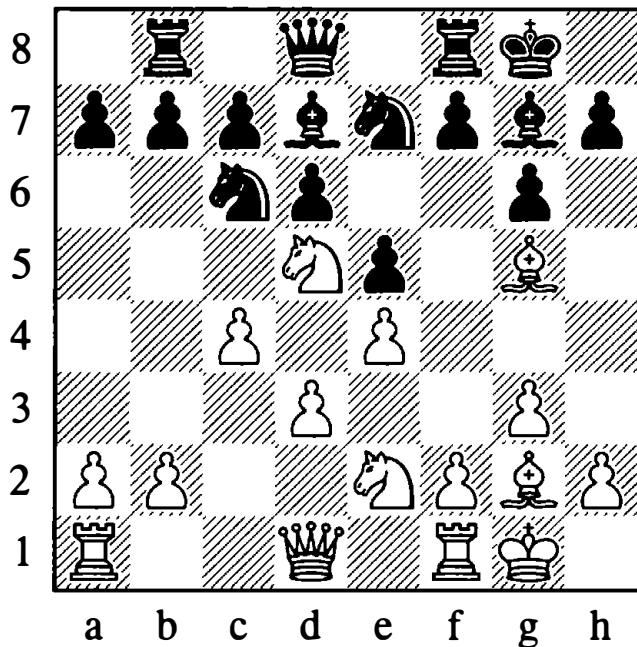
plays this move by himself, which means that 8...♝g4 is likely to be merely a loss of time.

(1.c4 e5 2.g3 ♜c6 3.♘c3 g6 4.♗g2 ♗g7 5.e4 d6 6.♗ge2 ♜ge7 7.d3 0-0 8.0-0)

A) 8...♝d7

By over-defending the c6-knight, Black prepares to set up play on the queenside, with ...♝ab8, ...a6 and ...b5. This plan was employed by Spassky, who also used to play ♘d2 as White in the Closed Sicilian.

9.♘d5 ♘b8 10.♗g5



This move is quite effective with a knight on d5, because the threat of ♘f6† forces Black to obstruct the long diagonal of his g7-bishop.

10...f6 11.♗e3 f5

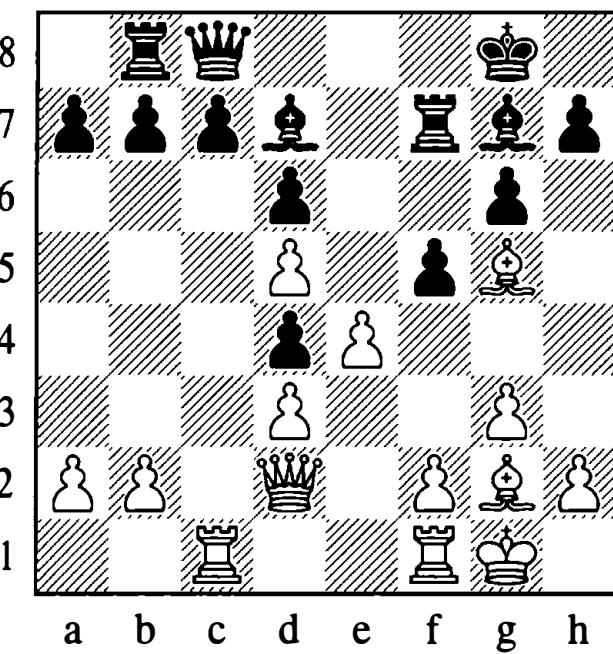
It was also typical for Spassky to readjust his plans. After opening the kingside, the initial plan does not look viable anymore.

In any case, without the possibility of invading the d4-square anymore, advancing the b-pawn fails to bother White after 11...a6 12.♗c1 b5 13.♗d2±. White is well developed and can choose the right moment to play c5, f4 or d4.

12.♗d2

A multi-purpose move. White connects rooks and consolidates his control of the c1-h6 diagonal, in order to threaten $\mathbb{Q}g5$ without fearing ...h6. To avoid remaining passive, Black is more or less forced to make a concession in the centre.

**12... $\mathbb{Q}xd5$ 13.cxd5 $\mathbb{Q}d4$ 14. $\mathbb{Q}xd4$ exd4
15. $\mathbb{Q}g5$ $\mathbb{W}c8$ 16. $\mathbb{B}ac1$ $\mathbb{B}f7$**



The course of the game over the last few moves strongly suggests that ... $\mathbb{B}a8-b8$ has been merely a loss of time. White has a mobile majority on the kingside and pressure along the c-file.

17. $\mathbb{B}c2!$ N

White prepares to double rooks on the c-file. With his rooks disconnected, Black has problems finding an adequate solution.

Since Black has two immobile pawns on dark squares (d6 and d4), it would be illogical to trade bishops with 17. $\mathbb{Q}h6$ $\mathbb{Q}xh6$ 18. $\mathbb{W}xh6$: White has no attacking chances and the departure of the queen from the centre allows Black to activate his position. In Botvinnik – Spassky, Leiden 1970, a draw was soon agreed.

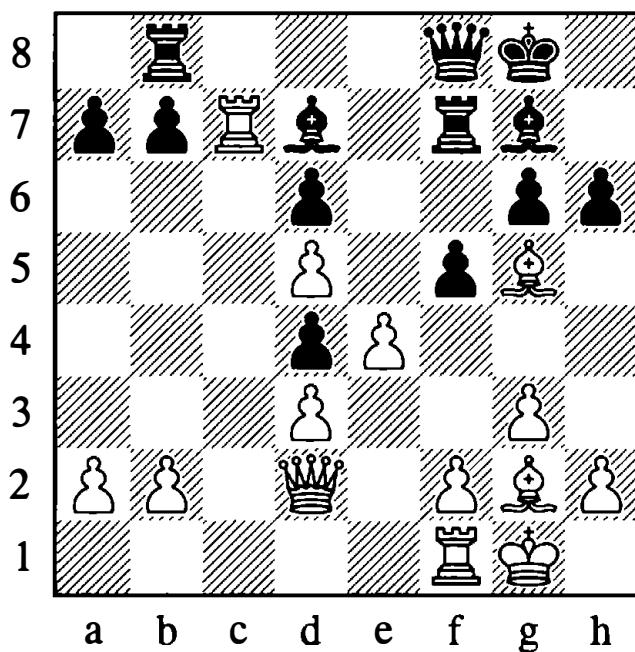
A less committal plan than the one suggested in the main line is 17. $\mathbb{Q}f4!?$ N: White threatens

$\mathbb{Q}xd6$. 17... $\mathbb{W}d8$ 18. $\mathbb{B}fe1\pm$ Black cannot coordinate his rooks and the permanent threat of e4-e5 is annoying.

17... $\mathbb{W}f8$

This attempt to trap the enemy bishop does not work out, but White also retains an active position after 17...fxe4 18. $\mathbb{Q}xe4$ $\mathbb{Q}h3$ 19. $\mathbb{B}fc1\pm$.

18. $\mathbb{B}xc7$ h6



19.exf5!

This is the best way to give up the bishop.

19...hxg5

Black's "neutral" option is weaker:

19... $\mathbb{Q}xf5?!$

This leaves Black poorly coordinated after:

20. $\mathbb{B}xf7$ $\mathbb{Q}xf7$

Otherwise, the h6-pawn would be lost.

21. $\mathbb{Q}f4$ g5 22.g4 $\mathbb{Q}xg4$ 23. $\mathbb{Q}g3$

White threatens to obtain a strong attack with f2-f4.

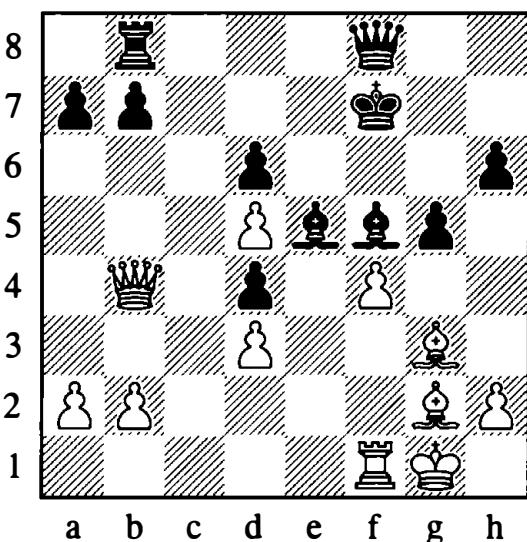
23... $\mathbb{Q}f5$

Black is ready to meet f4 with ...g4.

24. $\mathbb{W}b4$ $\mathbb{Q}e5$

This is the only way to avoid the loss of a pawn, but it allows White to open the kingside in his favour:

25.f4±



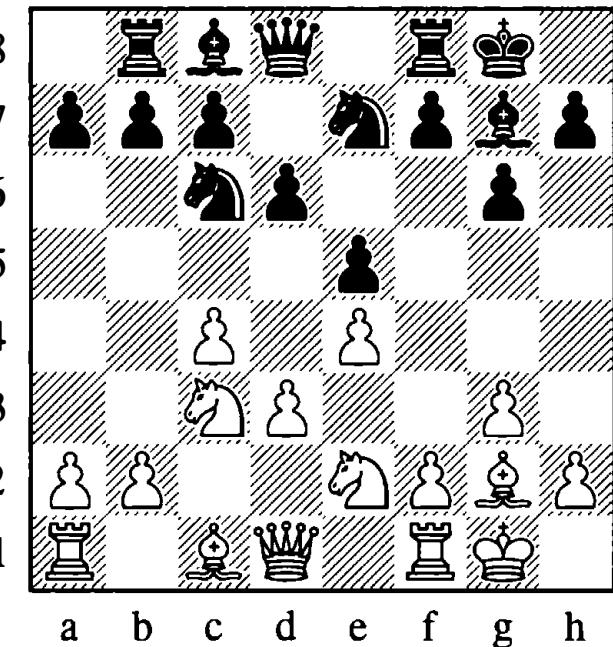
The black king is in grave danger.

20.fxg6 ♕e7 21.♕xg5±

White has four pawns for a bishop and an active position. Black will struggle to deal with the threats of ♘h4 or ♘h5.

(1.c4 e5 2.g3 ♖c6 3.♖c3 g6 4.♗g2 ♗g7 5.e4 d6 6.♘ge2 ♖ge7 7.d3 0–0 8.0–0)

B) 8...♝b8



This move, aiming to prepare the same plan as in line A, is risky since it does not really contribute to Black's development.

9.♗g5!N

The best way to consolidate a lead in development is to keep developing!

9.♘d5

This move partly justifies Black's play by allowing an immediate ...b7-b5.

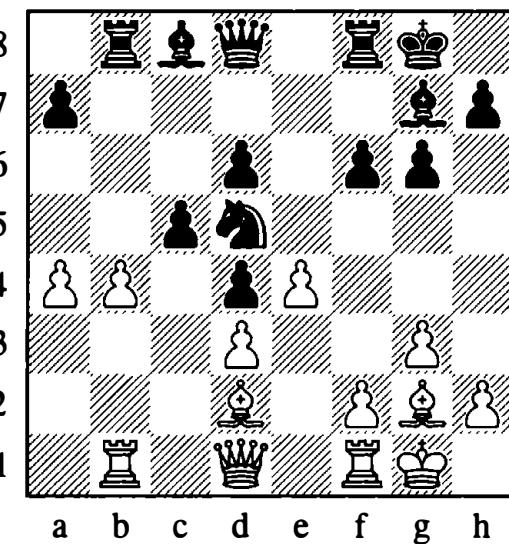
9...b5

It may seem that Black's experiment was crowned with success, but White can remain in control of the position.

10.♗b1

White has better control of the centre, and prepares his queenside reaction in slow motion. The advance of his a- and b-pawns is to be expected soon.

10...♘d4 11.♘xd4 exd4 12.cxb5 ♜xb5 13.a4 ♜b8 14.♗g5 f6 15.♘d2 c5 16.b4 ♘xd5



A draw was agreed in Lombardy – Spassky, New York 1987, but White retains the more pleasant position.

17.♗b3 ♜e8

This is a more subtle way to prevent ♜b3xd5 than 17...♗e6 18.exd5 ♜f5 19.♗c4± with pressure on the queenside. Now 18.♗xd5? is impossible because of 18...♗e6 19.♗c6 ♜b6–+, but instead:

18.♗c4±

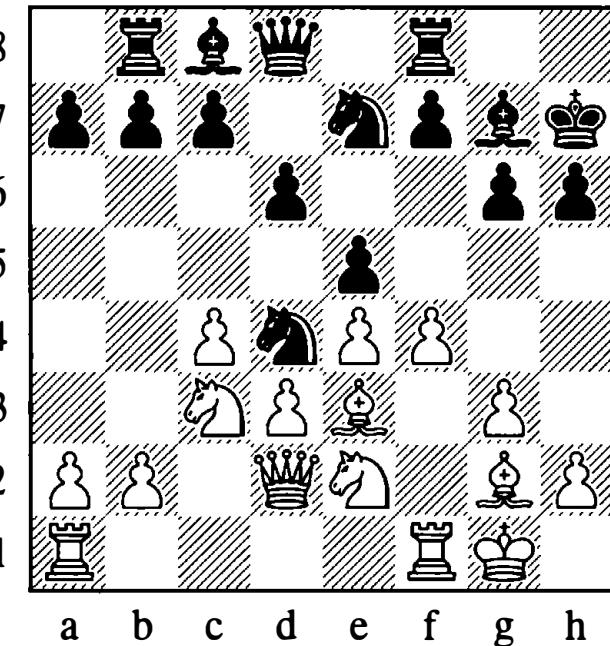
This will be followed by e4xd5 whenever Black unpins his knight. White has the initiative.

9...h6 10.♗e3 ♘d4

This is the only way Black can try to take advantage of the early development of White's bishop to e3, since ♘e2xd4 is impossible.

On the other hand, any later exchange on e2 would force Black to spend a tempo defending the a7-pawn, which is a significant drawback of ... $\mathbb{B}ab8$.

11. $\mathbb{W}d2$ $\mathbb{Q}h7$ 12.f4±



White is better developed and plans to increase his pressure with $\mathbb{B}f2$ and $\mathbb{B}af1$. This will increase the force of the enduring threat of f4-f5, which aims to generate attacking chances while keeping the g7-bishop passive. In order to avoid this, Black will be forced to give up the centre with ... $\mathbb{Q}xe2\#$ and ...exf4, which will leave White with a space advantage. Instead, ...f7-f5 would be risky because of White's better mobilization, which would make the f5-pawn vulnerable.

(1.c4 e5 2.g3 $\mathbb{Q}c6$ 3. $\mathbb{Q}c3$ g6 4. $\mathbb{Q}g2$ $\mathbb{Q}g7$ 5.e4 d6 6. $\mathbb{Q}ge2$ $\mathbb{Q}ge7$ 7.d3 0–0 8.0–0)

C) 8... $\mathbb{Q}e6$

This natural developing move leads to the main variation after 6... $\mathbb{Q}ge7$.

9. $\mathbb{Q}d5$ $\mathbb{W}d7$ 10. $\mathbb{Q}e3$ f5

This is the most popular and logical move: Black prepares an attack along the f-file.

10... $\mathbb{Q}d4$

This is premature, leaving White with the usual mobile kingside majority.

11. $\mathbb{Q}xd4$ exd4 12. $\mathbb{Q}h6$

A straightforward approach: White exchanges the enemy's potentially bad bishop in order to weaken the king's position and obtain attacking chances.

12. $\mathbb{Q}g5\!?\mathbb{N}$ f6 13. $\mathbb{W}d2$ c6 14. $\mathbb{Q}f4\pm$ was a good alternative.

12...c5

Black strengthens his centre, but allows the white knight to remain in its dominating position.

12...c6 looks more restricting, but White has a pleasant position after 13. $\mathbb{Q}xg7$ $\mathbb{Q}xg7$ 14. $\mathbb{Q}xe7$ $\mathbb{W}xe7$ 15.f4±.

13. $\mathbb{Q}xg7$ $\mathbb{Q}xg7$ 14. $\mathbb{W}d2$ $\mathbb{Q}xd5$ 15.cxd5 $\mathbb{Q}h3$ 16. $\mathbb{Q}xh3$ $\mathbb{W}xh3$ 17.f4

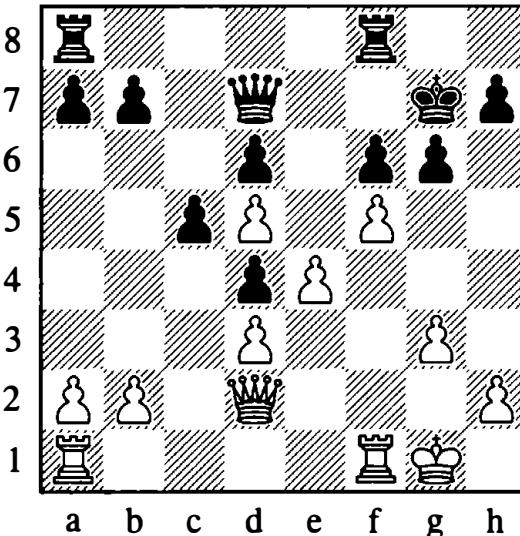
Black has managed to exchange all the minor pieces, but White's mobile centre remains threatening.

17... $\mathbb{W}d7$

The queen retreats in order to keep both wings defended.

After the "automatic" concentration of forces on the kingside with 17... $\mathbb{B}ae8$, White could play 18.f5, isolating the queen from the queenside. The practically forced 18...f6 would be answered by 19.b4! and Black's queenside becomes vulnerable.

18.f5 f6



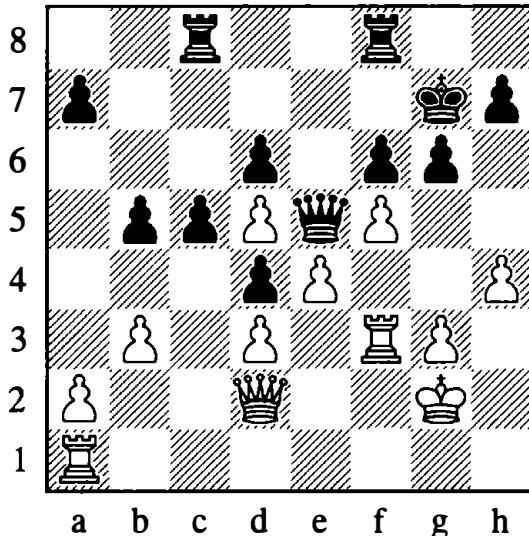
19.h4

An important move: White does not allow ...g5 followed by the consolidating ...h6.

19... $\mathbb{W}e7$ 20. $\mathbb{B}f3$ $\mathbb{W}e5$ 21. $\mathbb{Q}g2$

White has a slow but dangerous plan of $\mathbb{B}a1-h1$ and g3-g4, followed by either g4-g5 or fxg6 and h4-h5.

21... $\mathbb{B}ac8$ 22.b3 b5



23.a4!

White forces his opponent to carry out his pawn break before he has prepared it properly.

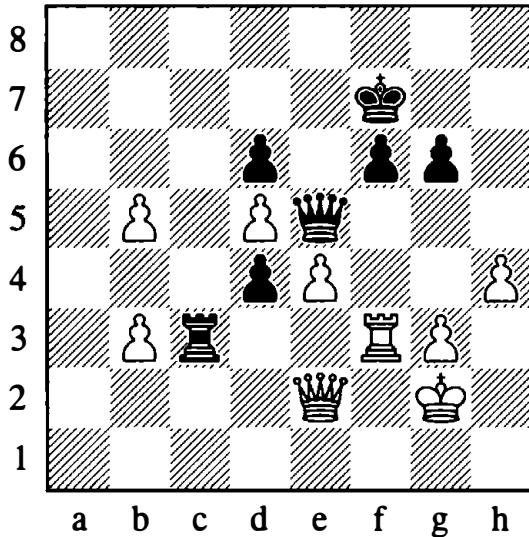
23...c4

This is the only way to stay in the game.

23...b4 would give White a free hand on the kingside after 24. $\mathbb{B}h1$.

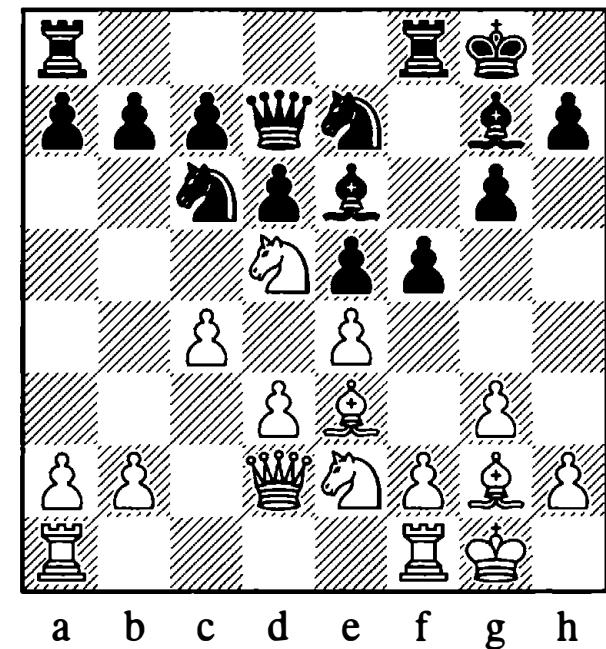
Attempting to keep the structure intact with 23...a6? allows White to open the a-file for his rook, with decisive effect: 24.axb5 axb5 25. $\mathbb{B}a7\#$ $\mathbb{B}f7$ 26. $\mathbb{B}xf7\#$ $\mathbb{Q}xf7$ 27. $\mathbb{W}h6+$ – Black cannot defend his kingside.

24.axb5 cxd3 25. $\mathbb{B}xa7\#$ $\mathbb{B}f7$ 26. $\mathbb{B}xf7\#$ $\mathbb{Q}xf7$
27.fxg6+ hxg6 28. $\mathbb{W}xd3$ $\mathbb{B}c3$ 29. $\mathbb{W}e2\#$



White has two extra pawns and the safer king, Botvinnik – Geller, Moscow 1966.

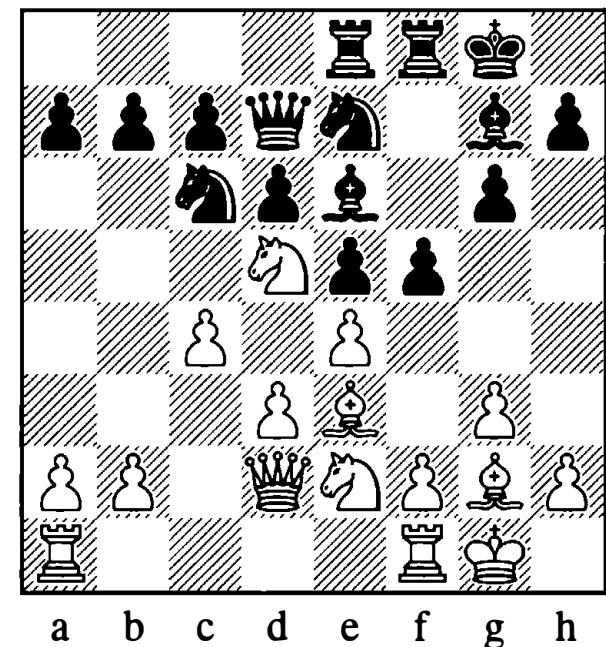
11. $\mathbb{W}d2$



Black has two main continuations, C1) 11... $\mathbb{B}ae8$ and C2) 11... $\mathbb{B}f7\?$.

(1.c4 e5 2.g3 $\mathbb{Q}c6$ 3. $\mathbb{Q}c3$ g6 4. $\mathbb{B}g2$ $\mathbb{B}g7$ 5.e4 d6 6. $\mathbb{Q}ge2$ $\mathbb{Q}ge7$ 7.d3 0–0 8.0–0 $\mathbb{B}e6$ 9. $\mathbb{Q}d5$ $\mathbb{W}d7$ 10. $\mathbb{B}e3$ f5 11. $\mathbb{W}d2$)

C1) 11... $\mathbb{B}ae8$



Black develops his last piece, allowing the thematic knight retreat ... $\mathbb{Q}c6-d8$ without the undesired disconnection of rooks. The drawback

of this somewhat neutral move is that it fails to put pressure on White's kingside.

12. $\mathbb{R}ac1$

White removes the rook from the a1-h8 diagonal in order to prepare the queenside attack with b4-b5 without fearing ...f5-f4. In some cases the rook would over-defend the c4-pawn in order to allow d3-d4, while also discouraging an exchange on d5 because of cxd5 with pressure along the c-file.

12... $\mathbb{B}f7$

Black over-defends the seventh rank and prepares a general retreat of the knights to d8 and c8.

Another distribution of the knights could be seen after 12...b6 13.b4 $\mathbb{Q}h8$ 14.f3 $\mathbb{Q}g8$ 15.b5 $\mathbb{Q}a5$ 16.f4 $\mathbb{B}f7$ 17.exf5 gxf5 18. $\mathbb{Q}h1$ $\mathbb{Q}f6$ 19. $\mathbb{Q}b4\pm$. White had firm control of both wings in E. Agrest – Val. Popov, Stockholm 2002.

The hurried 12... $\mathbb{Q}c8$, intending the standard regrouping 13... $\mathbb{Q}d8$, removes the pressure against the d5-knight and thus allows 13.c5 earlier than usual.

13.b4

This is the most natural continuation, but equally typical for this structure would be Ribli's suggestion of 13.f3 $\mathbb{Q}c8$ 14.b3 $\mathbb{Q}d8$ 15.exf5 $\mathbb{Q}xf5$ 16.d4± with a space advantage in the centre.

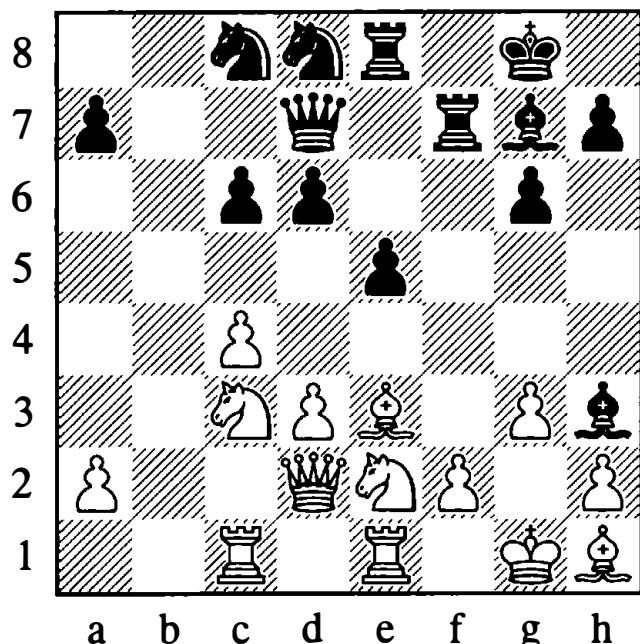
13... $\mathbb{Q}c8$ 14.b5 $\mathbb{Q}d8$ 15.exf5 $\mathbb{Q}xf5$

15...gxf5 would be met by 16.f4± when White has a promising position on both wings.

16. $\mathbb{B}fe1$

White preserves his English bishop from exchange, but 16.d4!± also looks playable.

16... $\mathbb{Q}h3$ 17. $\mathbb{Q}h1$ c6 18.bxc6 bxc6 19. $\mathbb{Q}dc3$



White threatens d3-d4 with an initiative in the centre.

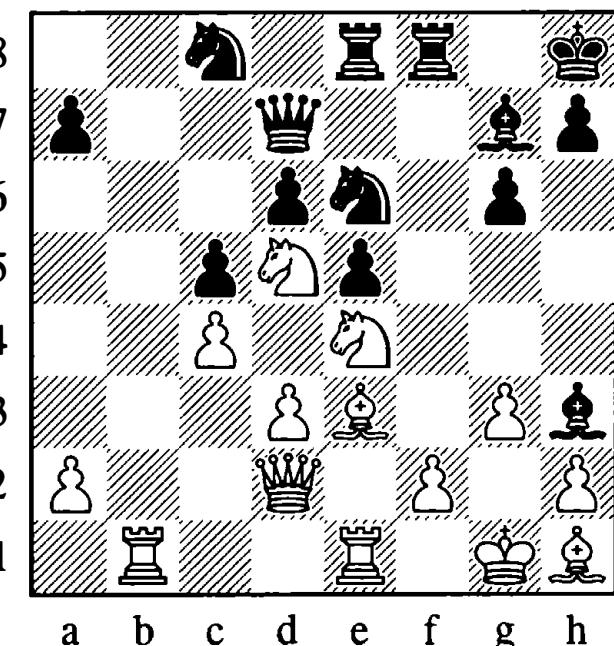
19...c5

Black prevents the opening of the centre, but weakens the d5-square. It is hard to say whether the remedy is worse than the problem.

20. $\mathbb{B}b1$ $\mathbb{Q}h8$

Black cannot activate his d8-knight with 20... $\mathbb{Q}e6$ because of 21. $\mathbb{B}b7\pm$.

21. $\mathbb{Q}e4$ $\mathbb{B}ff8$ 22. $\mathbb{Q}2c3$ $\mathbb{Q}e6$ 23. $\mathbb{Q}d5\pm$



White has an active position and excellent control of the centre, Ribli – Mokry, Moscow (ol) 1994.

(1.c4 e5 2.g3 ♜c6 3.♗c3 g6 4.♗g2 ♗g7 5.e4 d6 6.♗ge2 ♗ge7 7.d3 0-0 8.0-0 ♗e6 9.♗d5 ♖d7 10.♗e3 f5 11.♗d2)

C2) 11...♝f7!?

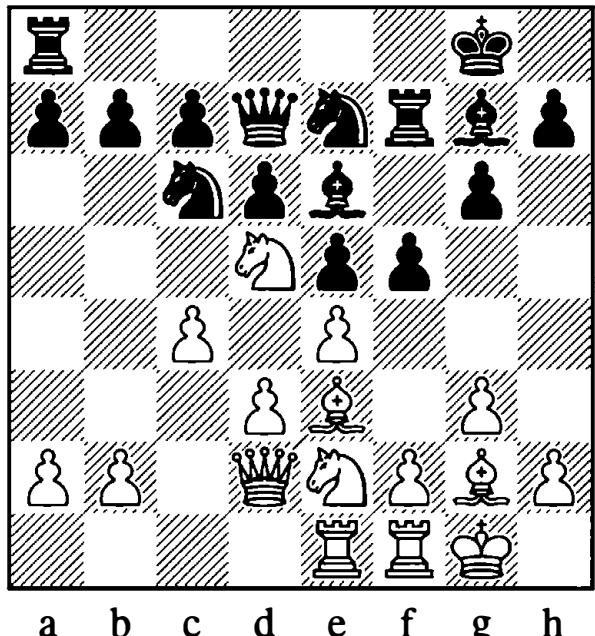
This move, planning to increase the pressure along the f-file with ...♝af8, poses more problems. Its only drawback is that it is more time-consuming than the previous line.

We will examine C21) 12.♗ae1 and C22) 12.f3!.

The same plan as in line C1 would be less effective: 12.♗ac1 ♘af8 13.b4 f4! This is the point behind doubling rooks on the f-file. Black sacrifices a pawn for attack. 14.gxf4 ♗h3 15.♗xe7† ♗xe7 16.f3 ♗xg2 17.♗xg2 exf4 18.♗xf4 g5 19.♗h5 h6 Black has excellent chances of taking control of the dark squares, while the white king is vulnerable, Uhlmann – Jansa, Germany 2007.

(1.c4 e5 2.g3 ♜c6 3.♗c3 g6 4.♗g2 ♗g7 5.e4 d6 6.♗ge2 ♗ge7 7.d3 0-0 8.0-0 ♗e6 9.♗d5 ♖d7 10.♗e3 f5 11.♗d2 ♘f7!?)

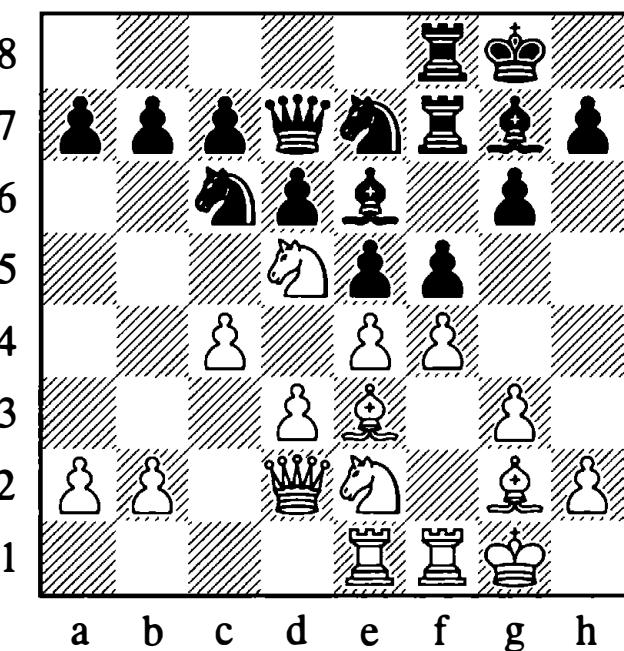
C21) 12.♗ae1



White anticipates Black's attack by preparing to open the kingside himself. This

is a very ambitious plan, but the risk is that White's centre will become overextended. This variation will suit active players who are sensitive to every dynamic nuance.

12...♝af8 13.f4



13...fxe4

The natural response: Black decides to play against the hanging pawns.

Once again, immediately occupying the d4-square is premature:

13...♝d4 14.fxe5!

An important intermediate exchange: it eliminates the main defender of the e5-square, opens the c1-f6 diagonal for the bishop and clears the f4-square for the d5-knight.

14...dxe5

14...♝xe2† would leave the b7-pawn vulnerable after 15.♗xe2 followed by general exchanges: ♗xe7†, exf5, ♗xb7.

15.♗xd4 exd4 16.♗g5!±

Suddenly, Black finds himself under strong pressure.

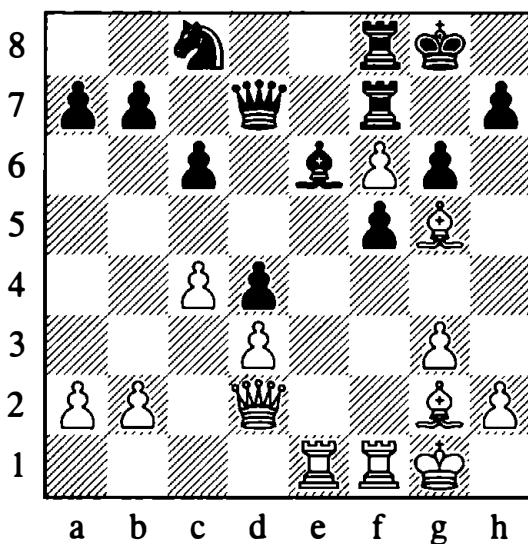
16...♝c8?!

This looks too passive to be good, but after 16...♝c6 17.♗f4†, followed by the exchange of the e6-bishop, Black would be in strategic trouble anyway.

17.e5

White has taken full advantage of his 14th move and has a dominating position.

17...c6 18. $\mathbb{Q}f6\#$ $\mathbb{Q}xf6$ 19.exf6



White's attack was soon decisive in Wl. Schmidt – Ribli, Leipzig 1973.

14.dxe4 $\mathbb{Q}c8$

The main plan when fighting against hanging pawns includes exchanging the g2-bishop, in order to weaken the e4-pawn (or, if the opening is a Tartakower Queen's Gambit, we are referring to the b7-bishop and the d5-pawn). To make ... $\mathbb{Q}e6-h3$ possible, Black needs to over-defend the c7-pawn by clearing the seventh rank.

tage of the fact that Black has released his pressure against the white centre.

15... $\mathbb{Q}h3$ 16.b4 $\mathbb{Q}xg2$ 17. $\mathbb{Q}xg2$ exf4 18.gxf4 $\mathbb{Q}e8$

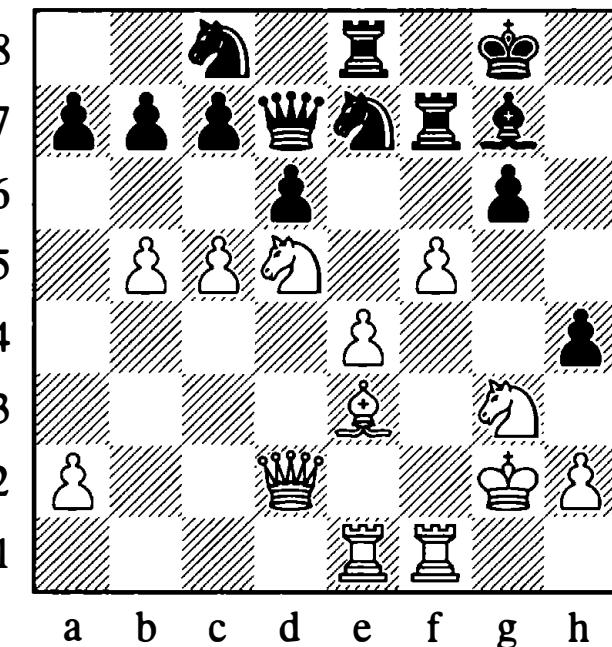
Black starts to play against the e4-pawn, which is generally consistent but concretely has some significant drawbacks.

19. $\mathbb{Q}g3$ h5

Black continues undermining the e4-pawn, but this move weakens Black's kingside.

20.b5 $\mathbb{Q}6e7$ 21.f5 h4

This position was reached in the game Benko – Botvinnik, Monte Carlo 1968. White failed to find the best attacking continuation (he played 22.fxg6) and his position soon collapsed.



22.f6!N

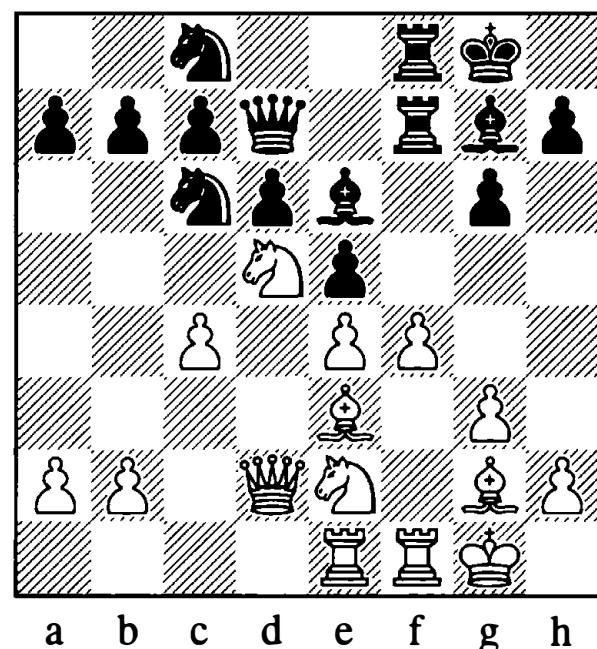
White does not need to retreat: with such a huge space advantage on both wings, he is entitled (and needs) to attack!

22... $\mathbb{Q}xd5$

The simplifications initiated by 22... $\mathbb{Q}xd5$ lead to a dangerous ending after 23.fxg7 $\mathbb{Q}xd5$ 24. $\mathbb{W}xd5$ gxh2 25. $\mathbb{W}xf7$ $\mathbb{W}xf7$ 26. $\mathbb{B}xf7$ $\mathbb{Q}xf7$ 27. $\mathbb{Q}h6\pm$. The threat of $\mathbb{B}f1-f8$ is very dangerous.

15.c5!

This is the most active move, taking advan-

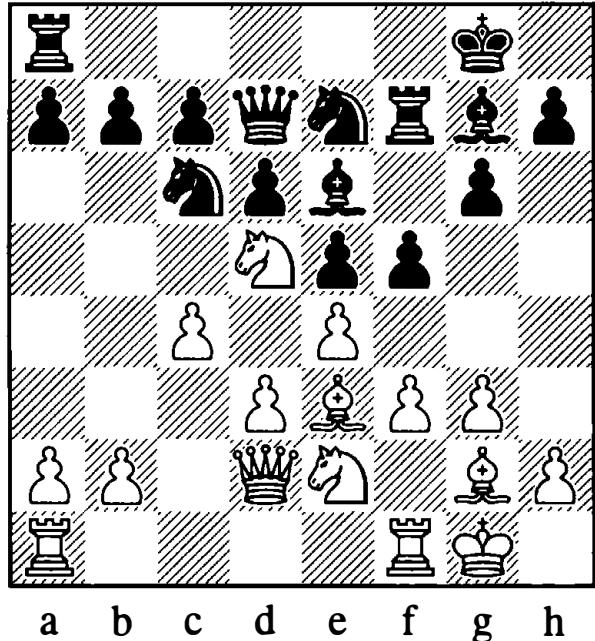


**23.♗xd5 c6 24.bxc6 bxc6 25.♗g5 hxg3
26.fxg7±**

White's better coordination and his powerful bishop offer him excellent attacking chances. White will play ♜d4 soon and, facing the threat of ♜h6-h8 mate, Black may not have anything better than giving up an exchange with ...♝xg7.

(1.c4 e5 2.g3 ♜c6 3.♗c3 g6 4.♗g2 ♜g7 5.e4 d6 6.♗ge2 ♜ge7 7.d3 0-0 8.0-0 ♜e6 9.♗d5 ♜d7 10.♗e3 f5 11.♗d2 ♜f7!?)

C22) 12.f3!



This is a more subtle way of anticipating Black's threat. After the sequence ...f5-f4, gxf4 ...♜e6-h3, White's best defence is f2-f3 (see the aforementioned game Uhlmann – Jansa, page 206), so White wins a whole tempo for his defence by advancing the f-pawn immediately. Practice has proved that, being deprived of his main threat, Black lacks sufficient flexibility to adapt to the new circumstances.

Players with positional skills and patience will prefer this safe and promising variation instead of line C21.

12...♝af8 13.♝ac1

We are familiar with the merits of this move, but there is a playable alternative:

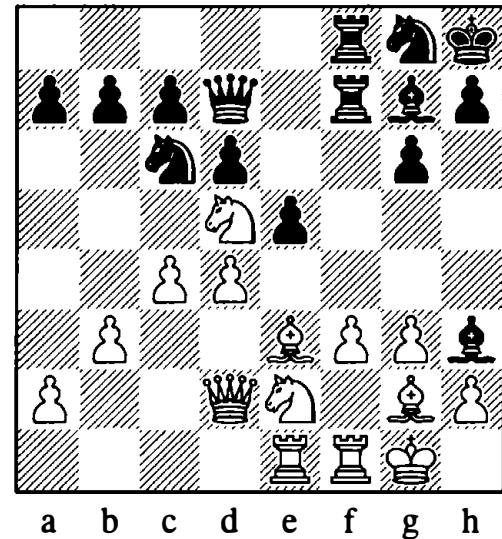
13.♝ae1

The game Smejkal – Yusupov, Germany 1992, continued:

13...♚h8 14.b3 ♜g8 15.exf5 ♜xf5

15...gxf5 justifies the presence of the rook on e1 after 16.f4±.

16.d4 ♜h3



Now White could have consolidated his advantage with:

17.dxe5!N ♜xe5 18.f4 ♜c6 19.♗xh3 ♜xh3
20.♗d4

White threatens ♜f3-g5, practically forcing Black to release the tension.

20...♜xd4 21.♗xd4±

White has a dominating position. The black rooks have remained passive on the f-file.

13...♜c8

Black needs to activate the e7-knight somehow.

There are two alternate solutions to the knight's problems, but neither of them is fully satisfactory.

13...♚h8 14.b3 ♜g8 15.exf5 gxf5 16.f4 ♜f6
17.♗xf6 ♜xf6 18.d4 exd4 19.♗xd4 ♜xd4
20.♗xd4 b6 21.♗fe1±

White has the better structure, greater space and a more harmonious development, Csom – Gulko, Biel (itz) 1976.

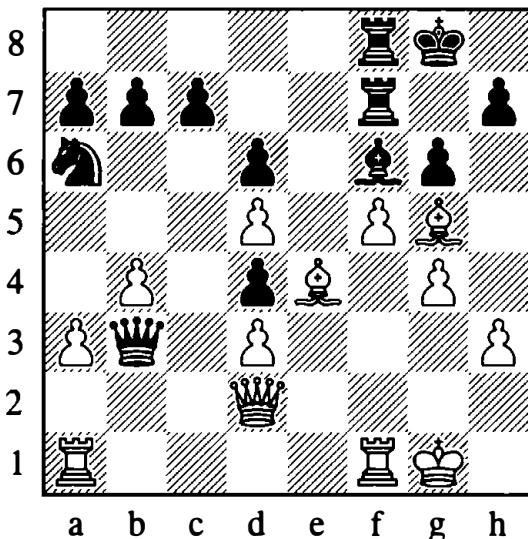
13...♝d4

Black clears the c6-square for the e7-knight, but worsens his structure.

14. $\mathbb{Q}xd4$ $exd4$ 15. $\mathbb{Q}g5$ $\mathbb{Q}c6$ 16. $exf5$ $\mathbb{Q}xf5$
17. $g4$ $\mathbb{Q}e6$ 18. $h3!$

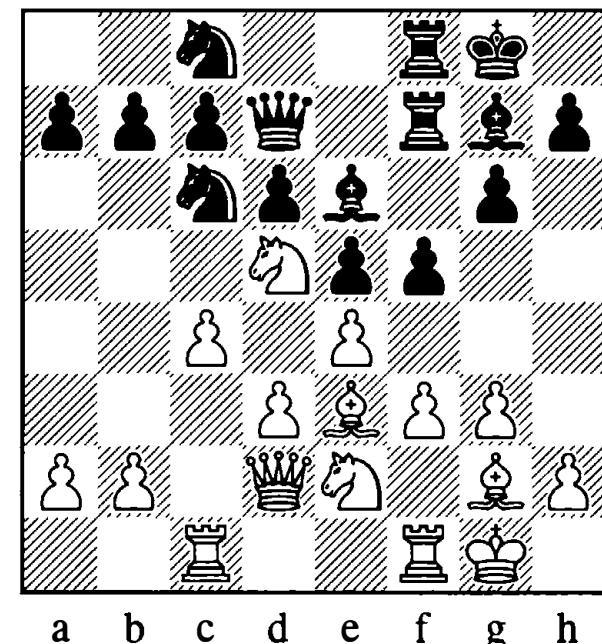
White threatens f3-f4.

18... $\mathbb{Q}xd5$ 19. $cxd5$ $\mathbb{Q}b8$ 20. $f4$ $\mathbb{W}b5$ 21. $b4$ $\mathbb{Q}a6$
22. $a3$ $\mathbb{W}a4$ 23. $\mathbb{Q}a1$ $\mathbb{W}b3$ 24. $\mathbb{Q}e4$ $\mathbb{Q}f6$ 25. $f5!$



With the black knight passive on a6 and the black queen isolated from the rest of the board, White has a powerful attack, Bischoff – Jansa, Luxembourg 1995.

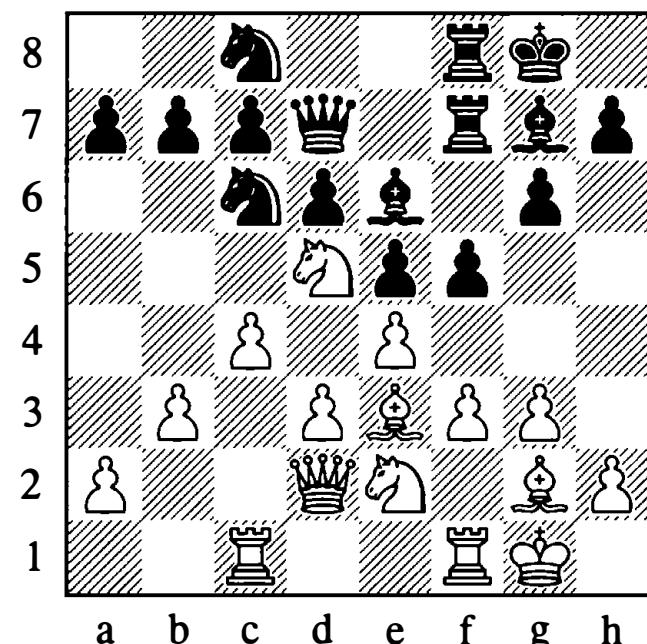
Finally, the pawn sacrifice 13...f4 is ineffective after 14.gxf4 $\mathbb{Q}h3$ 15. $\mathbb{Q}xh3$ $\mathbb{W}xh3$ 16. $\mathbb{Q}xc7!$. With the pawn on f3, there is no threat of perpetual check with ... $\mathbb{W}g4-f3$ and White can safely grab a second pawn.



14.b3

White's main plan is $exf5$ followed by d3-d4, but before releasing the tension he should first make every other useful move.

14. $exf5$ prematurely opens the h3-c8 diagonal, allowing the exchange of light-squared bishops with 14... $\mathbb{Q}xf5$ 15. $d4$ $\mathbb{Q}h3$ 16. $b3$ $\mathbb{Q}e8$ 17. $dxe5$ $\mathbb{Q}xe5$ 18. $\mathbb{Q}ce1$ c6 19. $\mathbb{Q}dc3$ $\mathbb{Q}xg2$ 20. $\mathbb{Q}xg2$ $\mathbb{Q}e7$. Black had a viable position in Csom – Jansa, Prague 1985.



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

Black plays a waiting game, refraining from the otherwise thematic knight retreat to d8.

14... $\mathbb{Q}d8$

After this giving up the centre is fully justified:

15. $exf5$ $\mathbb{Q}xf5$

This offers Black more space for his pieces than 15... $gxf5$ 16. $f4$ c6 17. $\mathbb{Q}dc3$ $\mathbb{Q}e7$ 18. $d4\pm$.

16. $d4$ h5

Black prevents White's expansion with g3-g4.

17. $dxe5$ $dxe5$

Creating an isolated pawn is a necessary strategic concession, because after 17... $\mathbb{Q}xe5$ Black loses ground to 18. $f4$ $\mathbb{Q}g7$ 19. $\mathbb{Q}d4$ $\mathbb{Q}h3$ 20. $\mathbb{Q}xh3$ $\mathbb{W}xh3$ 21. $\mathbb{Q}f3\pm$.

18. $\mathbb{Q}cd1$ c6 19. $\mathbb{Q}dc3$ $\mathbb{W}c7$

In Nogueiras – Mulyar, North Bay 1999, the best way to consolidate the advantage would have been:

20.♘e4!N ♘e6 21.c5 ♘d8 22.♗b2 ♘xe4 23.fxe4±

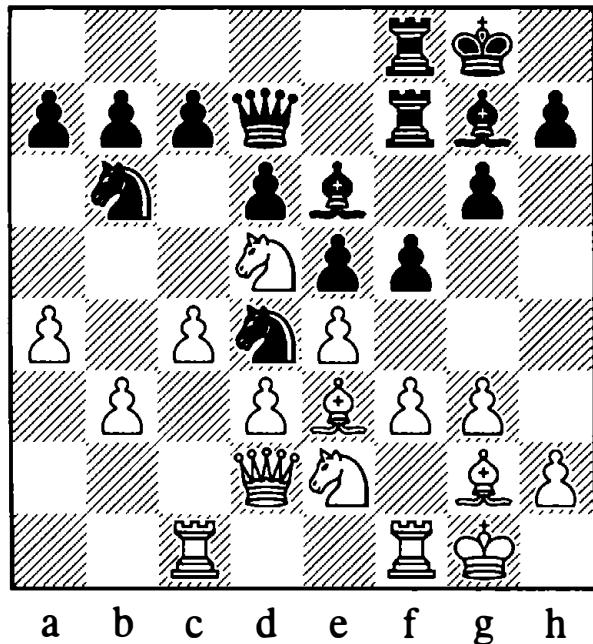
White will increase the pressure with ♘h3, while the c8-knight is very passive.

15.a4

White immediately starts harassing the b6-knight.

A worthy alternative is 15.♗g5?!N. White activates his bishop, and anticipates the sequence ...♘d4, ♘xd4 ...exd4. For example, 15...♔h8 16.a4±.

15...♘d4



16.♗xd4!N

Only this capture allows White to retain the initiative.

16.♗xd4 exd4 17.♗g5 offered White only a symbolic advantage after 17...fxe4 18.fxe4 ♘h3 19.♗e2 ♘xg2 20.♗xg2 ♘xd5 21.exd5 in Ribli – Pribyl, Germany 1990.

16...exd4 17.a5 ♘c8 18.♗df4 fxe4 19.♗xe6 ♘xe6

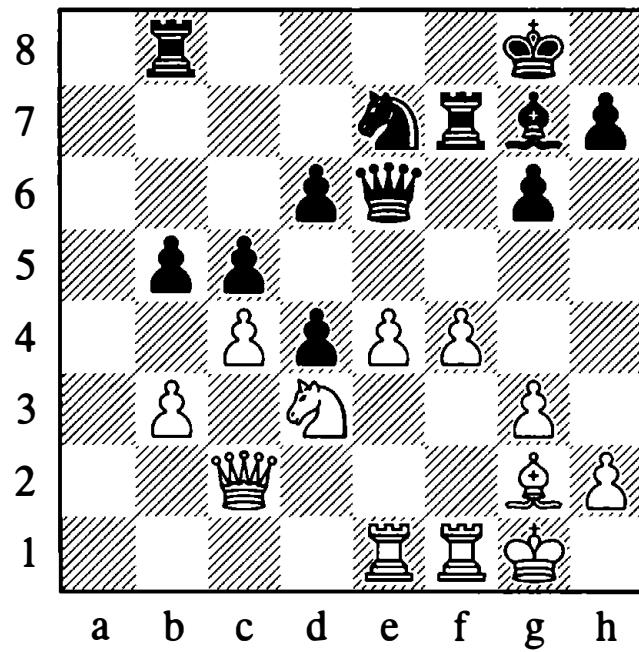
The intermediate move 19...e3 leads to an unpleasant endgame after 20.♗xf8 exd2 21.♗xd7 dxc1=♕ 22.♗xc1 ♘xd7 23.♗h3 ♘d8 24.c5 d5 25.a6 bxa6 26.♗a1±. White has the better structure and more active pieces.

20.dxe4 c5 21.♗ce1

White prepares to transfer the knight to the optimal blockading square on d3.

The impatient 21.♗f4?!, with the same idea, would allow 21...♗xf4! 22.gxf4 ♘h6 with fantastic play on the dark squares.

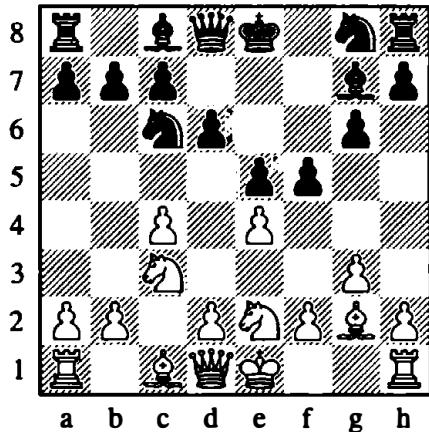
21...♗e7 22.f4 b5 23.axb6 axb6 24.♗c1 ♘b8 25.♗d3 b5 26.♗c2±



White's stability on the light squares offers him a long-term advantage. He can prepare a slow kingside attack with h4, ♘h2 and ♘h3.

Conclusion:

The main drawback for Black of this popular system is that the knight is relatively passive on e7. Black needs a lot of time to regroup, which usually gives White the chance to carry out favourable operations in the centre or on the queenside.



Botvinnik System

6...f5

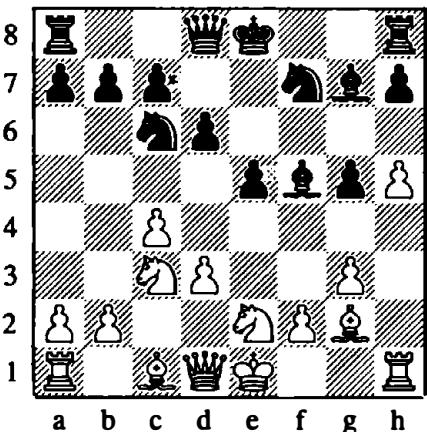
Variation Index

1.c4 e5 2.g3 ♜c6 3.♗c3 g6 4.♗g2 ♗g7 5.e4 d6 6.♗ge2

6...f5 7.d3

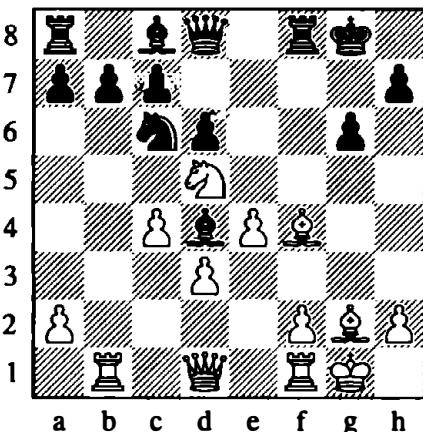
A) 7...♝h6 8.h4	p 212
A1) 8...0–0	p 212
A2) 8...fxe4	p 213
A3) 8...♝f7	p 215
B) 7...♝f6 8.0-0 0-0 9.♝d5	p 217
B1) 9...♝xd5	p 218
B2) 9...♝h5	p 220
B3) 9...♚h8	p 222
B4) 9...h6	p 224
B5) 9...♛e6	p 225
B6) 9...♝e7	p 229

A3) after 10...♝xf5



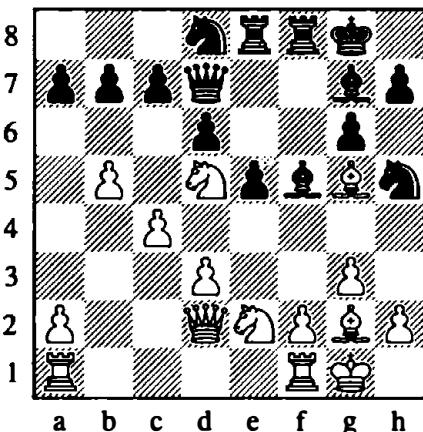
11.♗b3!N

B2) after 14...♝d4



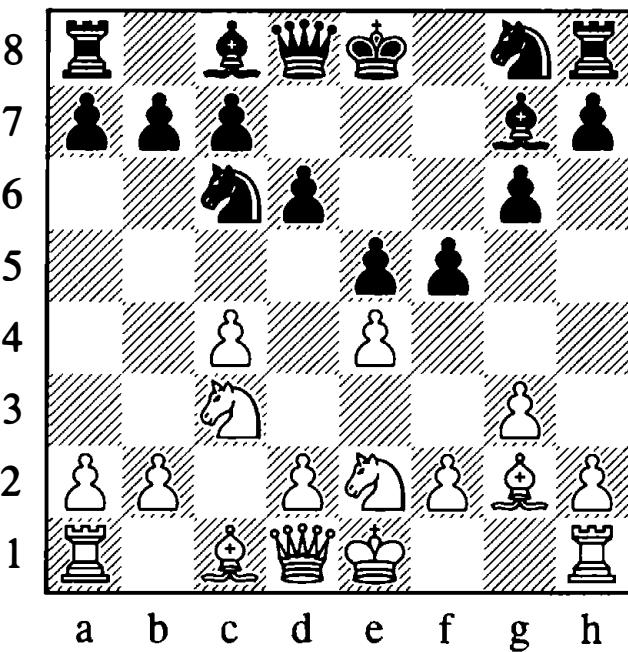
15.♗d2!N

B5) after 14...♝d8



15.♗xd8!N

1.c4 e5 2.g3 ♘c6 3.♘c3 g6 4.♗g2 ♗g7 5.e4 d6 6.♘ge2 f5



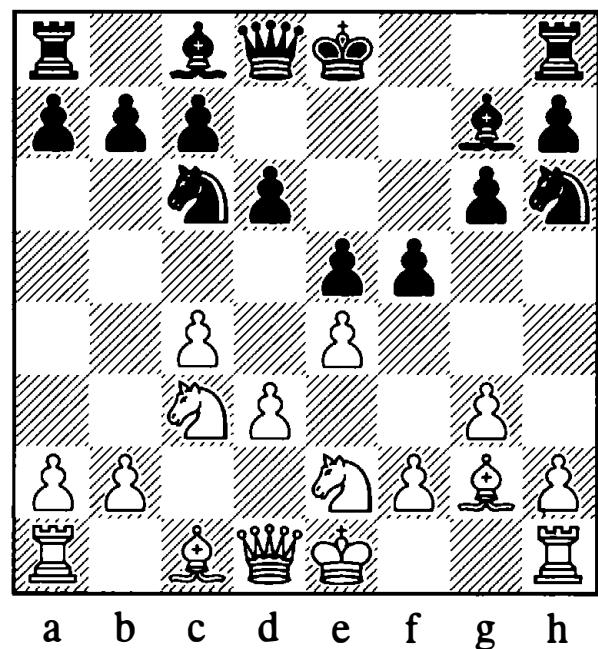
This is Black's most active continuation. Play could transpose to line C of the previous chapter if Black later plays ... ♘ge7 , but there are more active ways of developing the king's knight.

7.d3

We will examine A) 7... ♘h6 and B) 7... ♘f6 .

(1.c4 e5 2.g3 ♘c6 3.♘c3 g6 4.♗g2 ♗g7 5.e4 d6 6.♘ge2 f5 7.d3)

A) 7... ♘h6



This slightly extravagant move is similar to Spassky's favourite h3 with White in the Closed Sicilian. The knight is ready to recapture on f5 after exf5 , and does not disturb the activity of its own pieces in any way. The only drawback of this plan is revealed by White's answer.

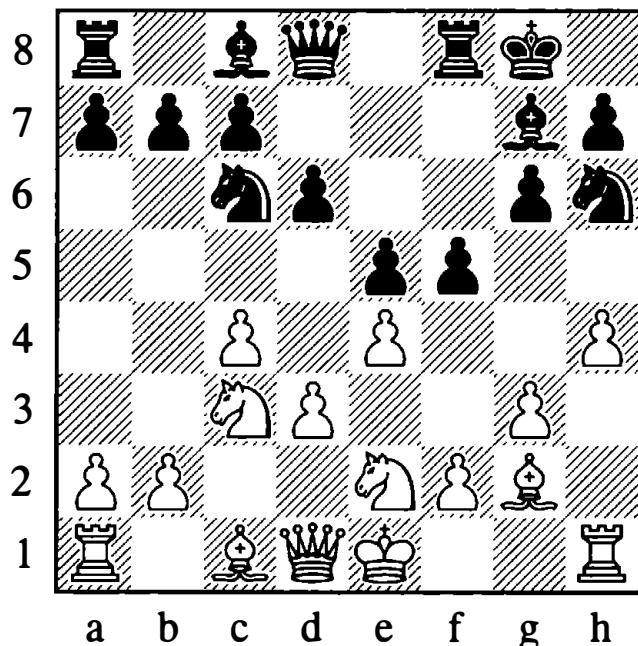
8.h4

Since Black has temporarily blocked the h7-pawn, this move is quite effective. The standard reactions ... h7-h5 or ... h7-h6 are impossible.

Black can choose between A1) 8...0–0, A2) 8... fxe4 and A3) 8... ♘f7 .

(1.c4 e5 2.g3 ♘c6 3.♘c3 g6 4.♗g2 ♗g7 5.e4 d6 6.♘ge2 f5 7.d3 ♘h6 8.h4)

A1) 8...0–0



Black castles right into the fire. Although White's attack is unlikely to be decisive, it will force Black to make some strategic concessions.

9.♗g5!

This is an important intermediate move, forcing Black to spoil his coordination.

We can note two main aspects. First of all,

White takes full advantage of his previous move, which supported this ambitious bishop incursion. If he had played the mechanical 9.h5, this important idea would have been lost. Only after $\mathbb{Q}c1-g5$ will it make sense to prepare h4-h5.

Secondly, we can observe an important defect of Black's set-up: the development of the knight to h6 has left the h4-d8 diagonal insufficiently defended, causing Black problems meeting such a simple move as $\mathbb{Q}g5$.

9... $\mathbb{W}d7$

The queen is unnaturally placed in front of the bishop, but Black needs to keep defending the c7-pawn.

Otherwise, after 9... $\mathbb{W}e8$ 10. $\mathbb{Q}d5$ $\mathbb{W}f7$ 11.f3± the h6-knight would remain passive and vulnerable. White would continue with $\mathbb{W}d1-d2$, 0-0-0 and h4-h5.

10. $\mathbb{Q}d5$ $\mathbb{Q}f7$ 11. $\mathbb{Q}e3$ $\mathbb{Q}cd8$

The standard regrouping.

11... $\mathbb{Q}d4$ would free Black from the danger of an attack, but leave him with strategic problems after 12. $\mathbb{Q}xd4$ exd4 13.exf5 gxf5 14. $\mathbb{W}d2$ c6 15. $\mathbb{Q}df4\pm$.

Since Black has already castled, 11...h5 would leave him with a chronic weakness on h5 after 12.exf5 gxf5 13. $\mathbb{W}d2$ followed by 0-0-0.

12.h5 c6 13.hxg6 hxg6 14. $\mathbb{Q}dc3$ $\mathbb{Q}e6$ 15.exf5 gxf5 16. $\mathbb{W}d2$

White threatens to castle long, followed by doubling rooks on the h-file, putting Black under serious pressure.

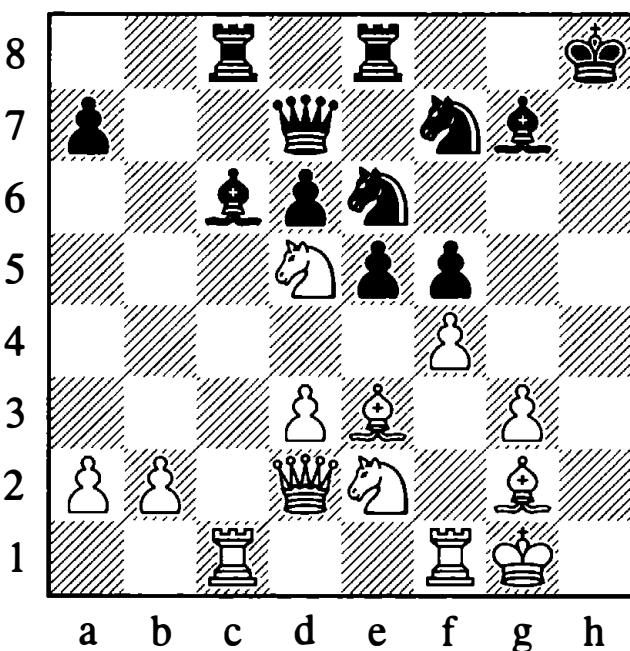
16...b5

With this unsound pawn sacrifice Black prepares a warm welcome for the white king,

but overlooks that His Majesty has not yet defined his intentions. However, even after the more cautious 16...a6!? White would have retained a strong initiative with 17.0-0-0 b5 18. $\mathbb{Q}h5$ $\mathbb{Q}c5$ 19.d4±.

17.cxb5 $\mathbb{Q}b7$ 18.bxc6 $\mathbb{Q}xc6$ 19. $\mathbb{Q}d5$ $\mathbb{Q}fe8$

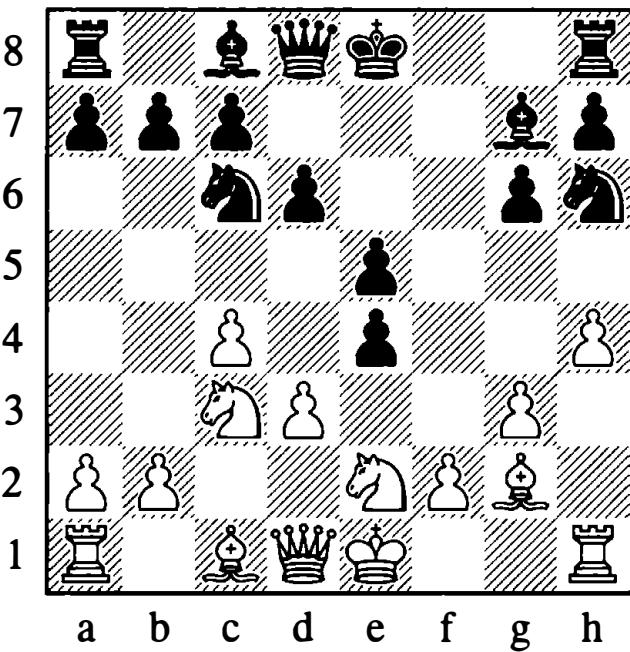
20. $\mathbb{Q}c1$ $\mathbb{Q}ac8$ 21.0-0-0 $\mathbb{Q}h8$ 22.f4±



White is a pawn up and has a stable position, Chernin – Kupreichik, USSR (ch) 1985.

(1.c4 e5 2.g3 $\mathbb{Q}c6$ 3. $\mathbb{Q}c3$ g6 4. $\mathbb{Q}g2$ $\mathbb{Q}g7$ 5.e4 d6 6. $\mathbb{Q}ge2$ f5 7.d3 $\mathbb{Q}h6$ 8.h4)

A2) 8...fxe4

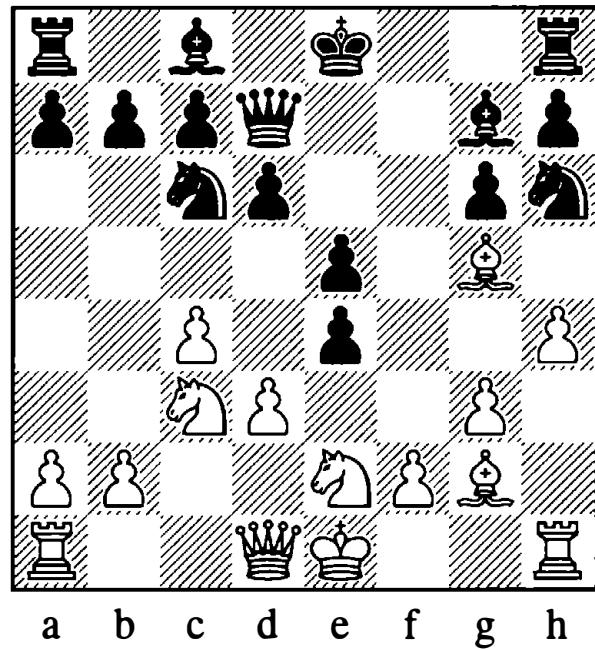


By releasing the tension in the centre, Black clears the f5-square for his knight.

9.♕g5!

A familiar move, provoking some disharmony in Black's camp.

9...♗d7



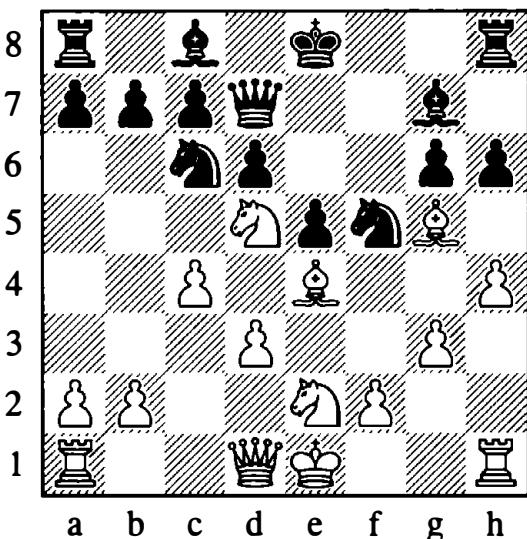
10.♘xe4!N

It is best to centralize the knight as soon as possible, in order to create the threats of ♘xh6 followed by ♘f6†, or simply ♘f6†.

10.♘xe4

This move, with the idea of occupying both central light squares after a further ♘d5, is somewhat slower.

10...♘f5 11.♘d5 h6



12.♗e3!N

12.♗d2 is too passive and offered Black good counterplay after 12...0–0 in Psakhis – Svidler, Haifa 1995.

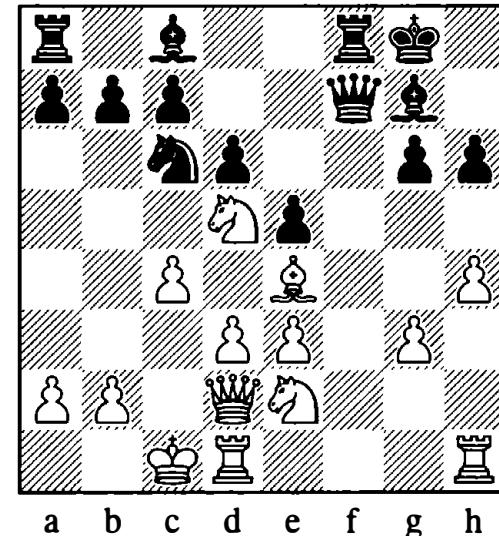
12...0–0

The immediate 12...♗xe3? loses a pawn to 13.♗xg6†.

13.♗d2 ♗xe3 14.fxe3

White takes control of the d4-square, but 14.♗xe3!? also looks playable.

14...♗f7 15.0–0–0



Both sides have completed their development, but White has a strategic advantage because of his control over the light squares and the weakness of the g6-pawn. Black's compensation consists of his control over the only open file, but White will be able to neutralize it.

There is also nothing wrong with a solid approach based on 10.dxe4!N, which leaves the h6-knight poorly placed.

10...♘g4

This is the best way to defend the f6-square, because Black also creates the threat of relieving his position with ...h7-h6.

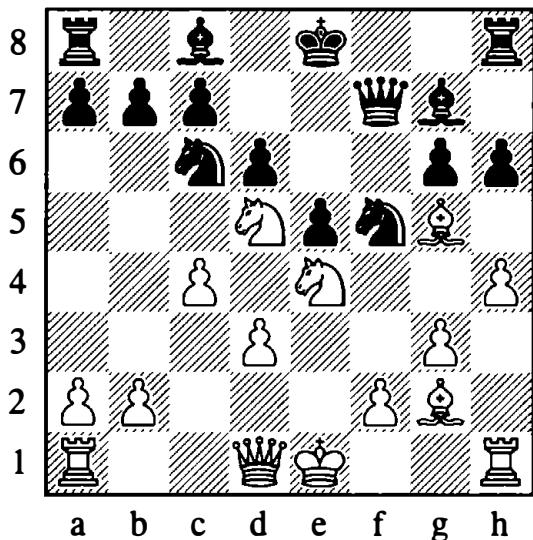
We shall also consider a couple of alternatives:

10...♗f7

This allows White to activate his other knight with:

11.♘2c3 ♘f5 12.♗d5 h6

This move comes too late.



13.h5!

The loss of the bishop will be compensated by the creation of squares for the knights.

13...hxg5 14.♗xg5 ♕d7 15.♗e6±

After having installed his knights deep in Black's territory, White threatens to win material with ♘xc7, but also to continue his attack with ♕g4.

10...0–0

This exposes the king to a standard attack.

11.h5 gxh5 12.♕d2 ♘f5 13.♕xh5 ♕f7

14.♕h2

White plans to castle long and double rooks on the h-file. Black has to react in the centre.

14...♘cd4 15.♗xd4 ♘xd4 16.♕e3!

White over-defends the f2-pawn in order to castle, and also clears the g5-square for the knight.

16...♘f3† 17.♕xf3 ♕xf3 18.♗g5 ♕c6

19.♗xh7±

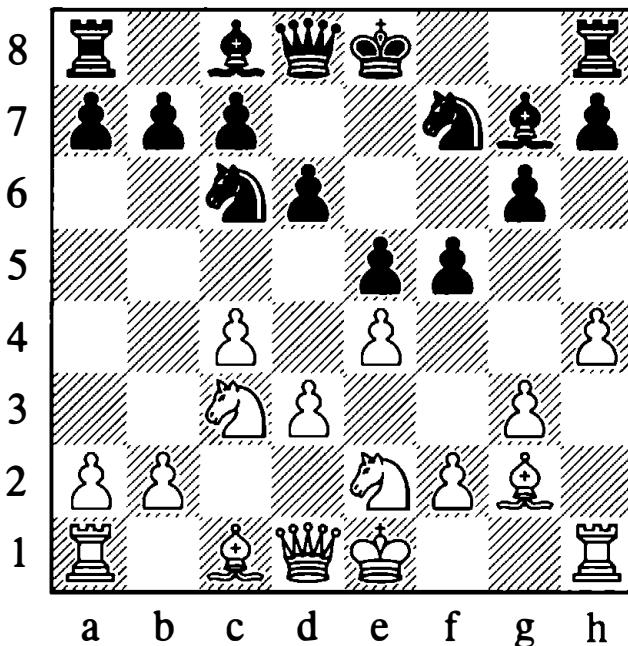
11.h5 h6 12.♕d2 g5 13.♕b3±

White has a pleasant position from a strategic point of view and his king will be safer than Black's. The queen is well placed on b3: it slows down Black's queenside development by keeping the b7-pawn under pressure, and if Black castles short it allows

a discovered check with c4-c5†, further weakening the enemy structure.

(1.c4 e5 2.g3 ♘c6 3.♗c3 g6 4.♗g2 ♗g7 5.e4 d6 6.♗ge2 f5 7.d3 ♘h6 8.h4)

A3) 8...♘f7



Black prevents ♔c1-g5, but the knight is not well placed, being far from the d5-square.

9.h5

This is the most direct attempt, but maybe White can wait for a more favourable moment to advance the h-pawn. For the moment, he could be satisfied with the fact that the enemy knight has been pushed back to a passive square and could simply continue developing with 9.♗d5 ♕e6 10.♗e3. White is waiting for a committal move such as 10...♕d7 in order to play 11.h5 when 11...g5? loses to 12.h6!.

9...g5

Sooner or later, Black will have to play this move, which weakens the light squares, in order to secure the kingside before castling.

9...♔e6 10.♗d5:

It is possible to insert these before playing: 10...g5

But this does not change anything essential:

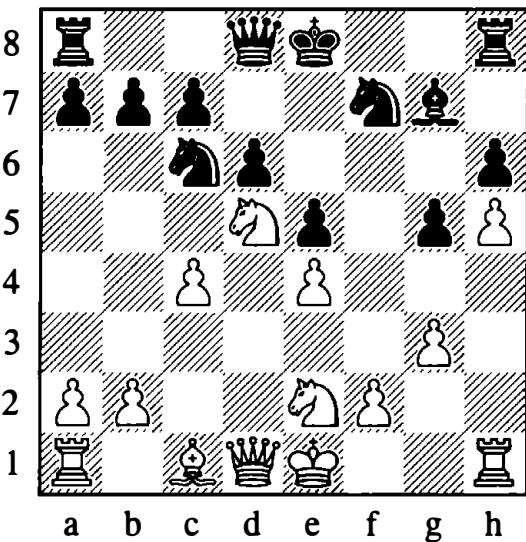
11.exf5

The intermediate attack against the b7-pawn with 11.♗b3!? also looks interesting.

11...♝xf5 12.♕e4 ♜xe4 13.dxe4

White has firm control of the light squares, but we should not underestimate the dynamic elements in what may appear to be a static position.

13...h6



14.♗e3!N

This is the correct treatment of the position. For the moment, the d4-square is well defended and White can consider playing b2-b4-b5 or c4-c5. The f5-square will be there forever, waiting for a white knight.

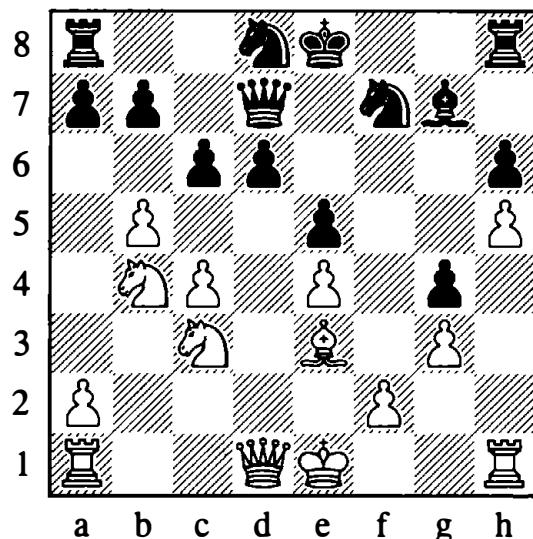
The straightforward 14.♗e3 ♜d7 15.♘f5 leaves White underdeveloped after 15...0-0 16.♗e3 ♜e7 17.g4 ♜xf5 18.gxf5. After this exchange White's only strong outpost on a light square is g4, but there is no time to get the knight there, since Black hits on the other side: 18...b5! 19.b3 bxc4 20.bxc4 ♜ab8. Black is better developed and has the more compact structure. This over-compensates for the passive g7-bishop, Nevednichy – Fedorov, Romania 2000.

14...♜d7

Black prepares to reduce White's influence on the light squares with ...g5-g4.

The immediate 14...g4 would lose a pawn to 15.♗h4 ♜d7 16.♗ec3±.

15.b4 g4 16.b5 ♜cd8 17.♗ec3 c6 18.♗b4±

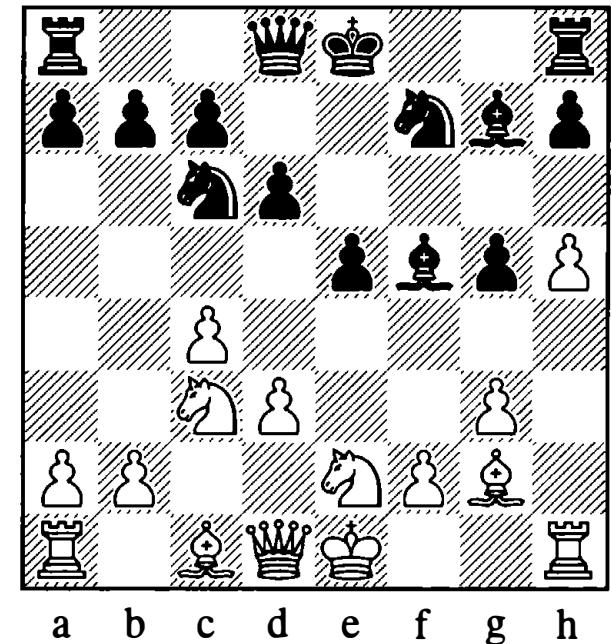


White has active minor pieces and a space advantage on most parts of the board.

10.exf5

Faced with the threat of ...f5-f4, White has to release the tension. This pawn exchange offers him good chances to take control of the light squares.

10...♝xf5



11.♗b3!N

We are already familiar with this way of developing the queen. By attacking the b7-pawn White prevents the enemy king from castling long, and as will be seen in the main line, the kingside is not a safe residence for His Majesty.

11.♗d5 allowed Black to complete his

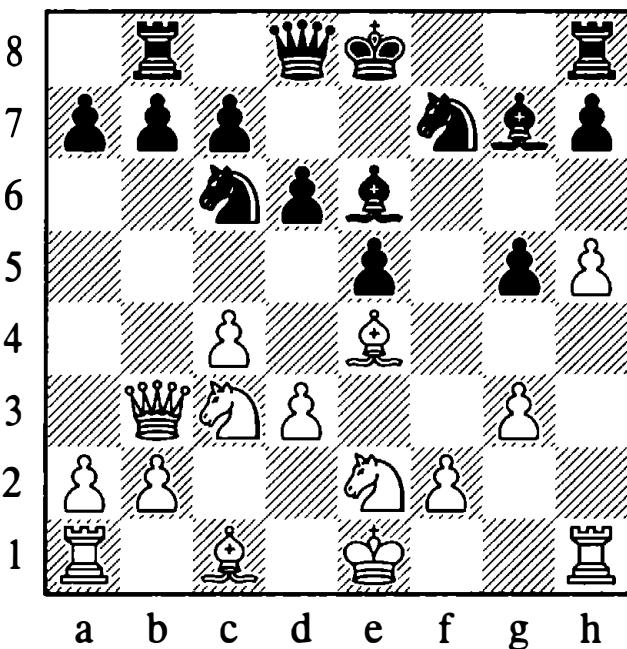
development comfortably and equalize after 11...h6 12.♗e3 ♖d7 in Portisch – Sax, Tilburg 1979.

11...♝b8 12.♗e4

White defends the d3-pawn and faces Black with a dilemma: he has to either weaken his light squares by exchanging bishops or lose valuable time.

12.♗e6

This looks like the most consistent decision, since after 12...♝xe4 13.♝xe4 h6 Black's position would have many weaknesses. After 14.♗d2 0–0 15.0–0–0 a6 16.f4± White's attacking chances look more realistic than Black's.



13.h6!

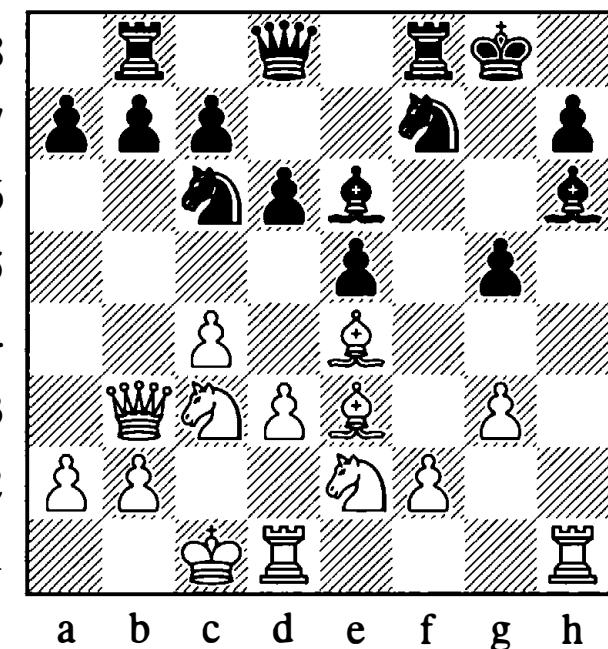
At the cost of a pawn, White keeps his attack along the h-file alive.

13...♝xh6

Black has to misplace his bishop to keep the g5-pawn adequately defended.

If 13...♝xh6 then White has 14.♗xg5 ♖xg5 15.♗xc6† retrieving the sacrificed material and retaining a strong initiative.

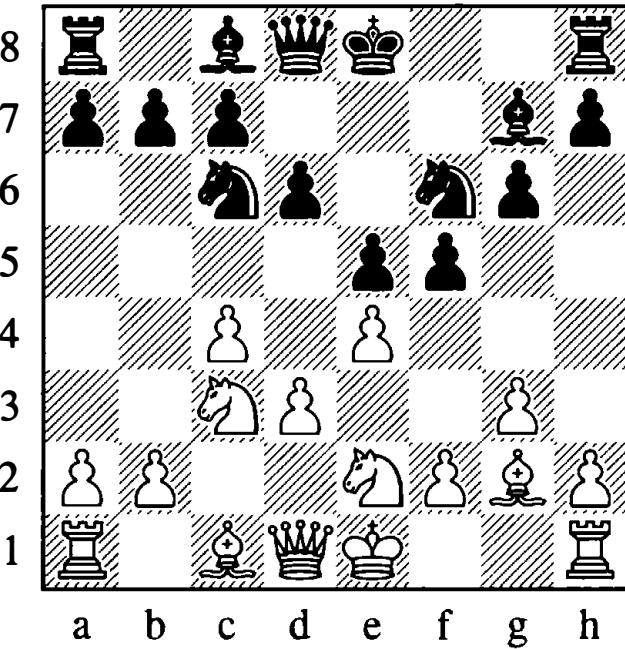
14.♗e3 0–0 15.0–0–0±



Black's position is immobile and he can do little against the simple plan of ♜h1-h5 and then ♜d1-h1.

(1.c4 e5 2.g3 ♜c6 3.♗c3 g6 4.♗g2 ♜g7 5.e4 d6 6.♗ge2 f5 7.d3)

B) 7...♞f6

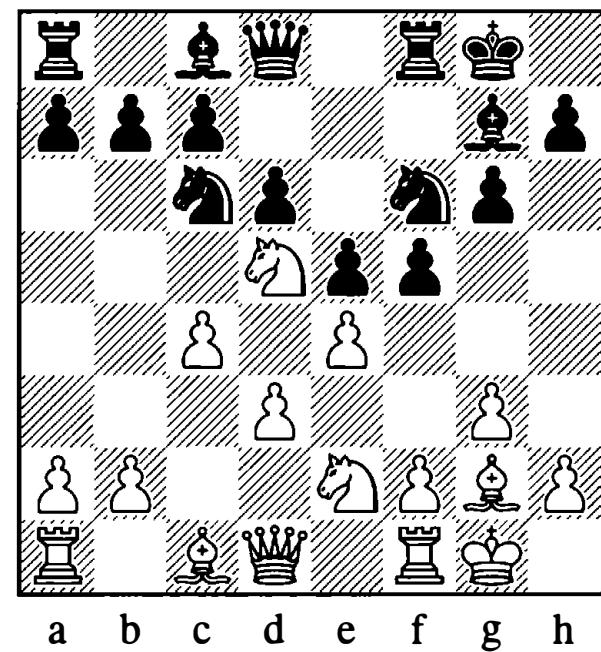


This is Black's most active set-up in this chapter. Note that this tabiya can also be reached via an Anti-Dutch move order.

The knight stands well on f6 and, unlike in line A, it does not block the path of Black's f-pawn.

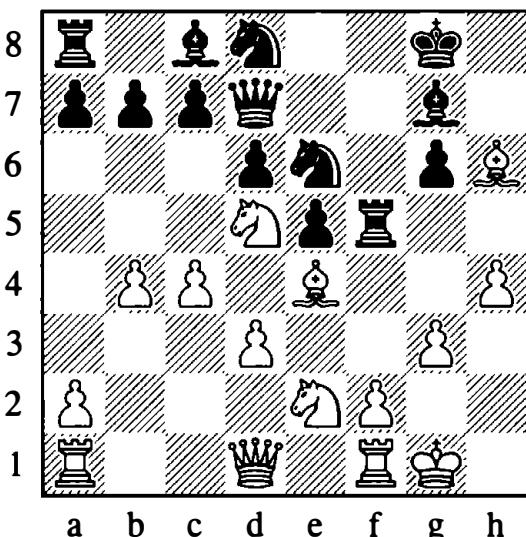
8.0–0 0–0 9.♘d5

It is not the right time to develop the c1-bishop, because the g5- and e3-squares are not stable in view of ...h7-h6 or ... $\mathbb{Q}f6-g4$. Therefore, White makes a move that is useful in any case.



Black has tried a wide range of replies. We will examine six moves in detail: **B1) 9... $\mathbb{Q}xd5$** , **B2) 9... $\mathbb{Q}h5$** , **B3) 9... $\mathbb{Q}h8$** , **B4) 9...h6**, **B5) 9... $\mathbb{Q}e6$** and **B6) 9... $\mathbb{Q}e7$** .

Transferring the f6-knight to d4 is not a viable plan for Black due to his incomplete development: 9... $\mathbb{Q}d7$?! 10.exf5 $\mathbb{Q}xf5$ 11.h4 After White has castled, this is no longer an attacking move. Its main purpose is to prepare $\mathbb{Q}c1-g5$. 11... $\mathbb{Q}c5$ 12. $\mathbb{Q}g5$ $\mathbb{W}d7$ 13.b4 h6 14. $\mathbb{Q}e3$ $\mathbb{Q}e6$ 15. $\mathbb{Q}e4$ $\mathbb{Q}cd8$ 16. $\mathbb{Q}xh6$!±

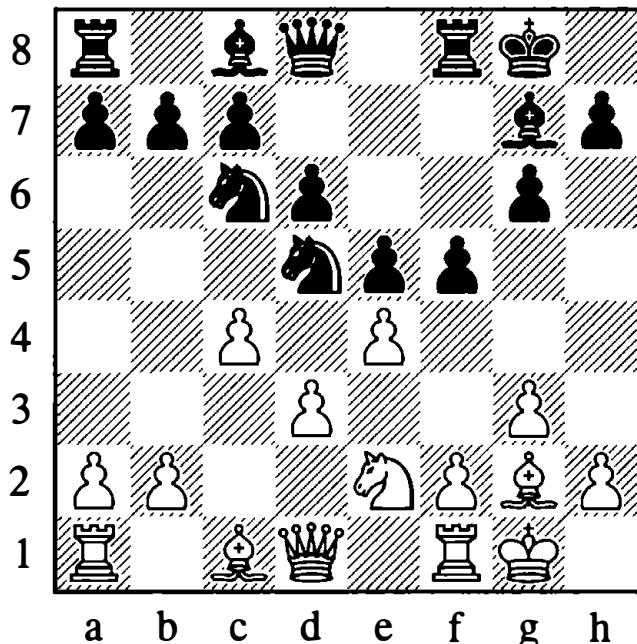


White is better developed and has simply

won a pawn, Makarichev – Kupreichik, USSR (ch) 1979.

(1.c4 e5 2.g3 $\mathbb{Q}c6$ 3. $\mathbb{Q}c3$ g6 4. $\mathbb{Q}g2$ $\mathbb{Q}g7$ 5.e4 d6 6. $\mathbb{Q}ge2$ f5 7.d3 $\mathbb{Q}f6$ 8.0–0 0–0 9. $\mathbb{Q}d5$)

B1) 9... $\mathbb{Q}xd5$



This exchange is premature: Black creates problems for himself on the c-file. White's centre is strengthened, the c7-pawn will be relatively weak, and White will gain time for development.

10.cxd5 $\mathbb{Q}e7$

This is the most consistent continuation: Black needs to challenge White's space advantage in the centre with ...c7-c6.

Advancing the knight is weaker:

10... $\mathbb{Q}d4$

Now White's combined play on the c-file and in the centre (f2-f4) is easy to carry out. 11. $\mathbb{Q}xd4$ exd4 12. $\mathbb{Q}d2$ h6

Black was probably worried about $\mathbb{W}c1$, when White would have dominated the c1-h6 diagonal, but the weakness of the h6-pawn will tell in the long run.

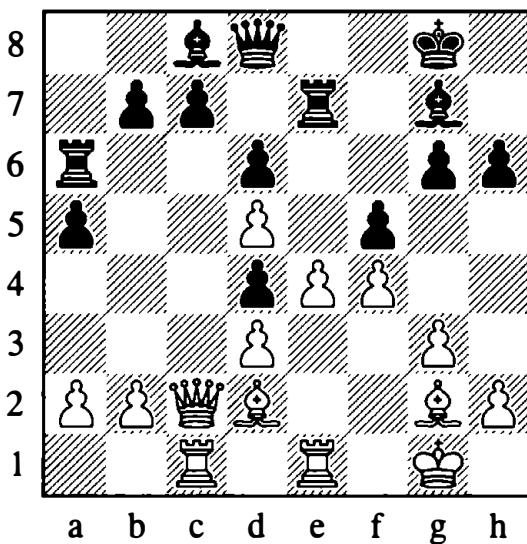
13. $\mathbb{Q}c1$ a5

An original way to continue Black's development, but as we shall see, the rook will be badly placed on a6.

14. $\mathbb{W}c2$ $\mathbb{B}f7$ 15. f4 $\mathbb{B}a6$ 16. $\mathbb{B}fe1$

Black cannot resist the pressure in the centre and along the c-file.

16... $\mathbb{B}e7$



17. e5!

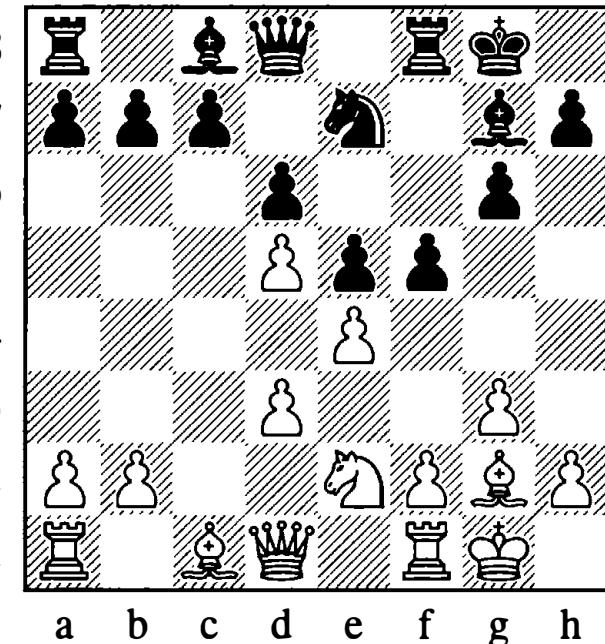
Since White is better coordinated, he opens the centre. With the black pawn on h6, this is not a real sacrifice.

17... $dxe5$ 18. $f \times e5$ $\mathbb{B}xe5$ 19. $\mathbb{B}xh6$ $\mathbb{W}d6$ 20. $\mathbb{B}g5$ $\mathbb{B}f6$

20... $\mathbb{B}f7$ loses control of the e-file after 21. $\mathbb{W}e2 \pm$.

21. $\mathbb{B}f4$ $\mathbb{B}e5$ 22. $\mathbb{B}xe5$ $\mathbb{B}xe5$ 23. $\mathbb{W}c4 \pm$

Black cannot defend his weaknesses, Istratescu – Agouridis, Corinth 2000.



11. $\mathbb{W}b3!$

White prevents 11...c6 and wins a tempo for his development.

11... $\mathbb{B}h8$ 12. $\mathbb{B}e3$ $c5$

Black gets rid of his backward c7-pawn, but weakens the d6-pawn.

The main alternative is:

12... c6

White should ignore the tension with:

13. $\mathbb{B}ac1$ h6

Black prepares ...g6-g5.

After 13... $cxd5$ 14. $exd5 \pm$ Black can do little against the plan based on $\mathbb{B}c2$ and $\mathbb{B}fc1$.

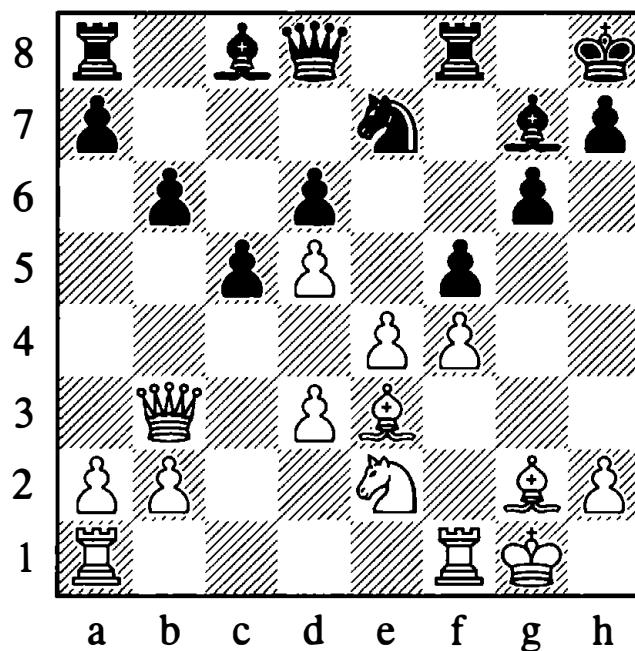
14. f4 \pm

White is better developed and can take advantage of this by opening of the centre.

13. f4 $\mathbb{B}xf4$ 14. $\mathbb{B}xf4$ b6

Black needs to over-defend the c5-pawn in order to prevent, or at least limit the damage caused by, the advance e4-e5.

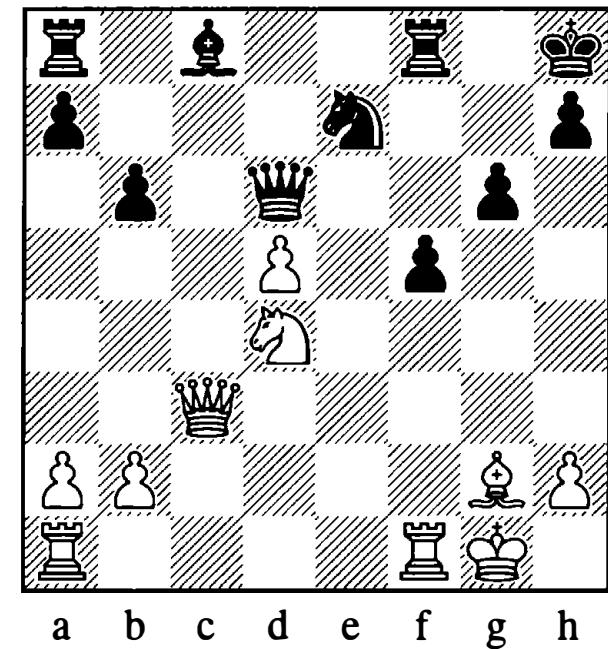
14... $\mathbb{W}c7$ allows White additional possibilities after 15. $\mathbb{B}ac1$ b6 in view of 16. $\mathbb{B}d4! \pm$, exchanging the active g7-bishop, Grzelak – Grabowsky, corr. 1993.



15. e5!

White sacrifices a pawn to open the position before Black is fully developed.

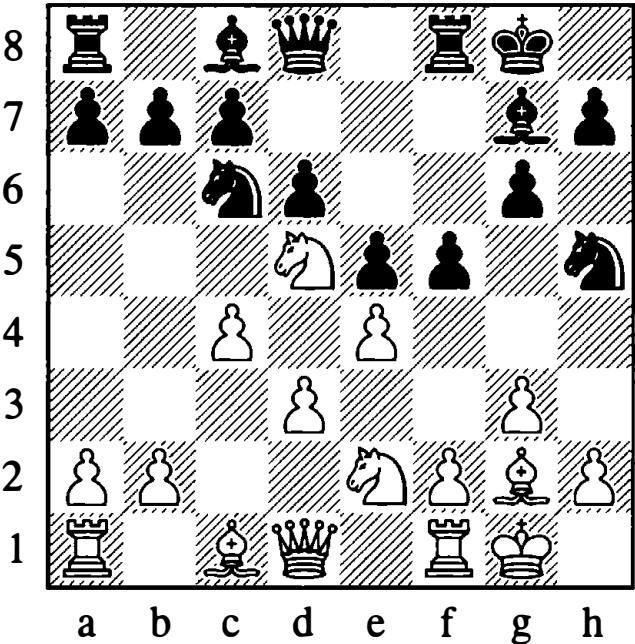
15... $dxe5$ 16. $f \times e5$ $\mathbb{B}xe5$ 17. d4 $cxd4$ 18. $\mathbb{B}xd4$ $\mathbb{B}xd4 \dagger$ 19. $\mathbb{B}xd4$ $\mathbb{W}d6$ 20. $\mathbb{W}c3 \pm$



The e7-knight is passive, the black king is vulnerable, and the weakness of the c6- and e6-squares offers White possibilities of infiltrating into enemy territory, Klimera – Radecky, corr. 1993.

(1.c4 e5 2.g3 ♜c6 3.♗c3 g6 4.♗g2 ♗g7 5.e4 d6 6.♗ge2 f5 7.d3 ♜f6 8.0–0 0–0 9.♗d5)

B2) 9...♝h5



Black clears the f-file and puts additional pressure on the f4-square, in order to create the potential threat of ...f5-f4. However, with Black's development still incomplete, this looks premature.

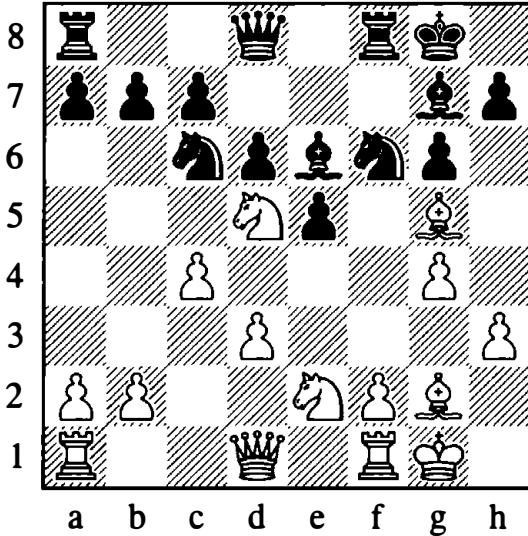
10.♗e3

White ignores the threat and continues developing, taking advantage of the fact that ...♜f6-g4 is no longer possible.

10.exf5

This is a thematic move, but in this position it is too hasty:

10...♜xf5 11.h3 ♜e6 12.g4 ♜f6 13.♗g5



13...♝d7!

This natural developing move is a significant improvement over 13...♜e7 14.♗xf6+ ♜xf6 15.♗xf6 ♜xf6 16.b3 c6 17.d4±, as in Makarichev – Svidler, Oviedo 1992. From a structural point of view, Black might seem to be doing fine, since he has managed to exchange his supposedly "bad" bishop. In fact, this exchange has weakened the black king's position, while the f4-square is, for the moment, well defended. White is likely to play f2-f4 soon. The main problem for Black is the poor placement of some of his pieces: the passive e7-knight and the exposed f6-rook.

14.♝d2

After having unpinned his king's knight, Black can meet 14.f4 with 14...h5.

14...♝f7=

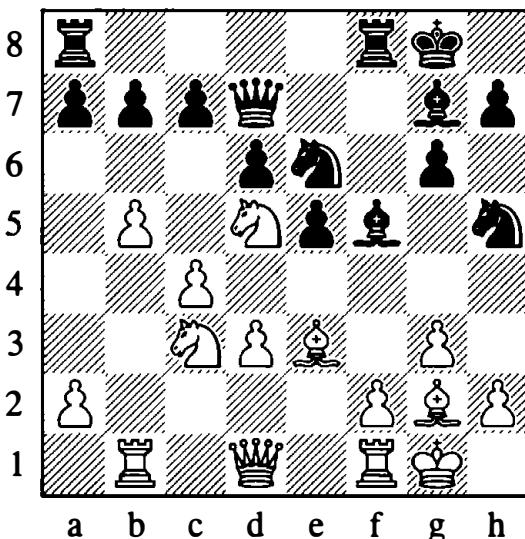
Black intends to play ...♝a8-f8 with comfortable development.

An alternate way of ignoring the threat of ...f5-f4 is:

10.♗b1!? ♜e6

10...f4 would be even less effective than in the main line, since the b2-pawn is already defended.

11.b4 ♜d7 12.b5 ♜d8 13.exf5 ♜xf5 14.♗ec3 ♜e6 15.♗e3±

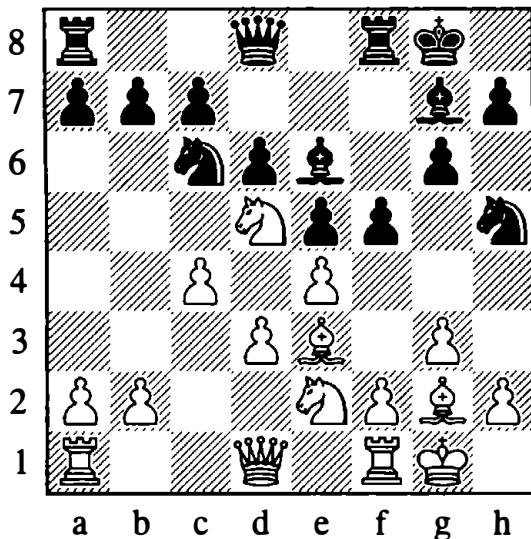


White has excellent control of the light squares.

10...f4

This is the only logical follow-up to Black's previous move.

10...♜e6, as played in Larsen – Ivkov, Sousse (itz) 1967, is too slow.



White should have replied: 11.exf5!N gxf5 (11...♜xf5 loses a tempo compared to the aforementioned game Makarichev – Svidler) 12.f4 ♜d7 13.♗d2± White has stabilized the position and the h5-knight remains passive.

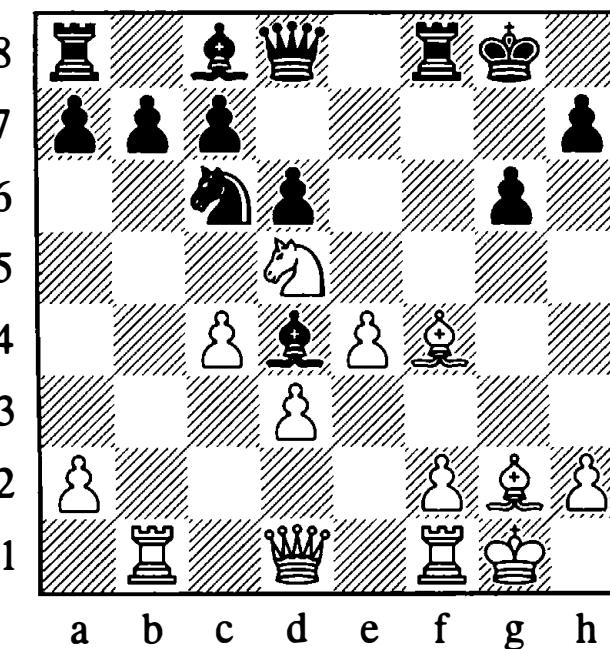
11.gxf4 exf4 12.♗exf4 ♜xf4 13.♖xf4 ♜xb2 14.♗b1

Black has managed to weaken White's kingside and retrieve the sacrificed pawn, but White has a potentially strong mass of central pawns and is better developed.

14.♗h6 looks tempting, as 14...♝xa1 is too risky because it weakens the black king's defence. However, on general principles I prefer the text move because it does not define the bishop's intentions yet. We will see that in the main line Black will move his rook without being attacked. At the same time, White's queen's rook belongs on the newly opened b-file, making Black's queenside development difficult.

14...♝d4

Black fails to consolidate after 14...♝e5 15.♗e3 ♜d4 16.f4 ♜g7 17.f5 gxf5 18.♗h5, with a strong initiative.



15.♗d2!N

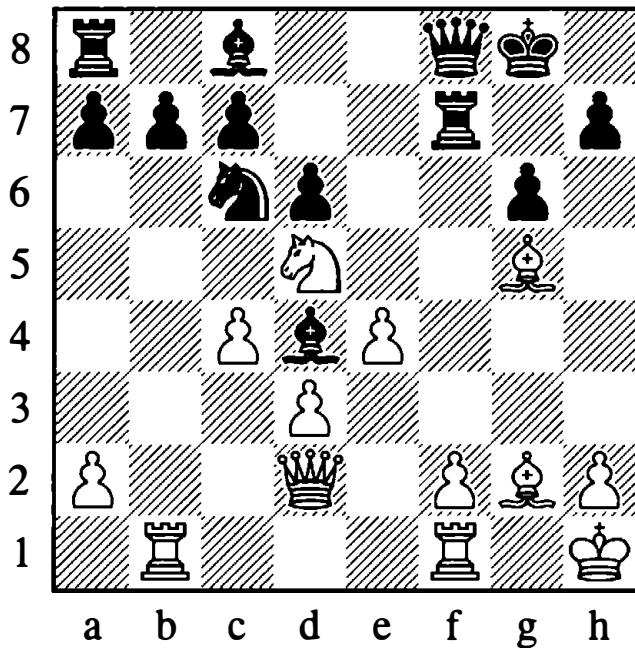
This developing move is an improvement over 15.♗e3 ♜b8 16.♗e2 ♜e6=. Black has almost caught up in development and has a viable position, Vl. Panov – Matulovic, Skopje 1967.

15...♝f7

Black clears the f8-square for his queen.

After 15... $\mathbb{B}b8$, defending the b7-pawn to prepare the bishop's development, White obtains an initiative with 16. $\mathbb{Q}g5$ $\mathbb{W}d7$ 17. $\mathbb{Q}h1$ $\mathbb{W}f7$ 18.f4.

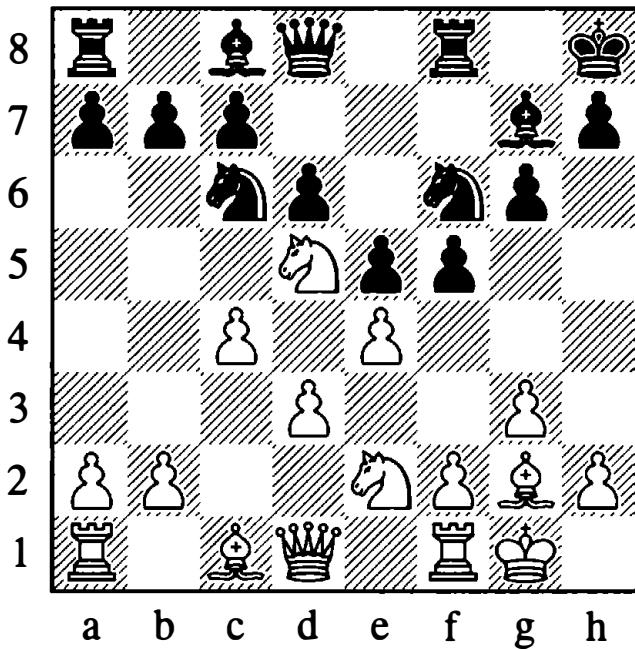
16. $\mathbb{Q}g5$ $\mathbb{W}f8$ 17. $\mathbb{Q}h1\pm$



White will play f2-f4, threatening to open the kingside with either e5 or f5, in order to take advantage of his superior development. The weakness of the c7-pawn prevents Black from capturing on f2.

(1.c4 e5 2.g3 $\mathbb{Q}c6$ 3. $\mathbb{Q}c3$ g6 4. $\mathbb{Q}g2$ $\mathbb{Q}g7$ 5.e4 d6 6. $\mathbb{Q}ge2$ f5 7.d3 $\mathbb{Q}f6$ 8.0-0 0-0 9. $\mathbb{Q}d5$)

B3) 9... $\mathbb{Q}h8$



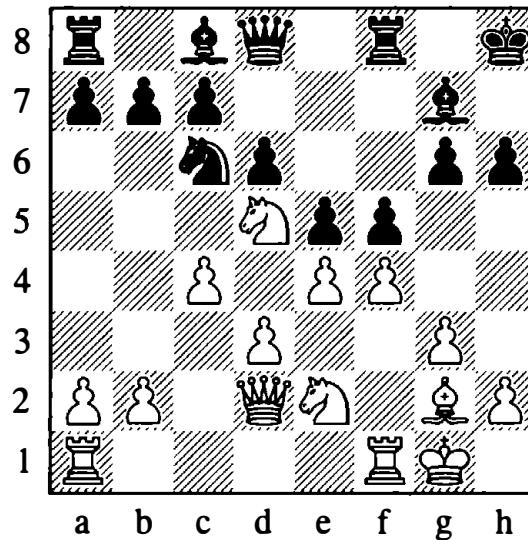
The king vacates the g8-square, planning a flexible regrouping. The main drawback of this plan is its slowness, which allows White to activate his pieces.

10. $\mathbb{Q}g5$

White cannot delay the development of this bishop eternally. With the knight already on d5, the text move makes sense.

10... $\mathbb{B}f7$

10...h6 would weaken the g6-square: 11. $\mathbb{Q}xf6$ (with the king on h8, 11. $\mathbb{Q}xf6$ fails to win the h6-pawn because of 11...hxg5!) 11... $\mathbb{Q}xf6$ 12. $\mathbb{W}d2$ $\mathbb{Q}g7$ 13.f4±



White's lead in development is dangerous, especially in view of Black's weakened kingside.

13... $\mathbb{Q}e7$ 14. $\mathbb{Q}e3$, possibly followed by d3-d4, illustrates this reality.

13... $\mathbb{Q}e6$, aiming to complete development, is better. White would play 14.exf5 gxf5 15. $\mathbb{Q}ael$ followed by the standard b4-b5, when Black must start to worry about the opposite wing as well.

11. $\mathbb{W}d2$ $\mathbb{W}f8$ 12. $\mathbb{Q}ac1$ $\mathbb{Q}g8$

Black has completed the first phase of his regrouping and threatens ...f5-f4. Fortunately White can nip his opponent's intended counterplay in the bud.

13.exf5

This is the standard reaction to Black's threat of ...f5-f4, but 13.f4 h6 14.Qh4± is a worthy alternative.

13...Qxf5

Black aims to catch up in development, but gives up control of the e4-square. The alternative is 13...gxf5 14.f4 h6 15.Qh4± with a stable and harmonious position for White.

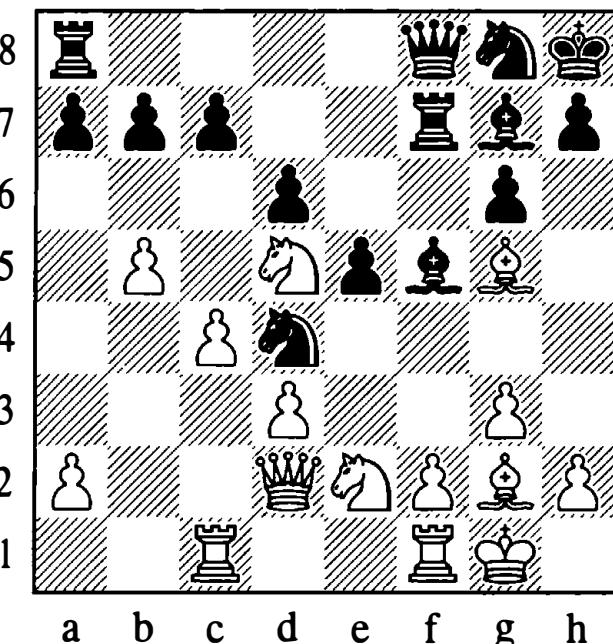
14.b4!

Advancing the b-pawn will increase White's control over the light squares.

14...Qd4 15.b5

For the time being, White leaves the e3-square available to the bishop.

The careless 15.Qxd4? would leave White's minor pieces exposed to the threats of ...c7-c6 and ...h7-h6 after 15...exd4.



15...Qh3?!

This spectacular but erroneous move must have been caused by a miscalculation.

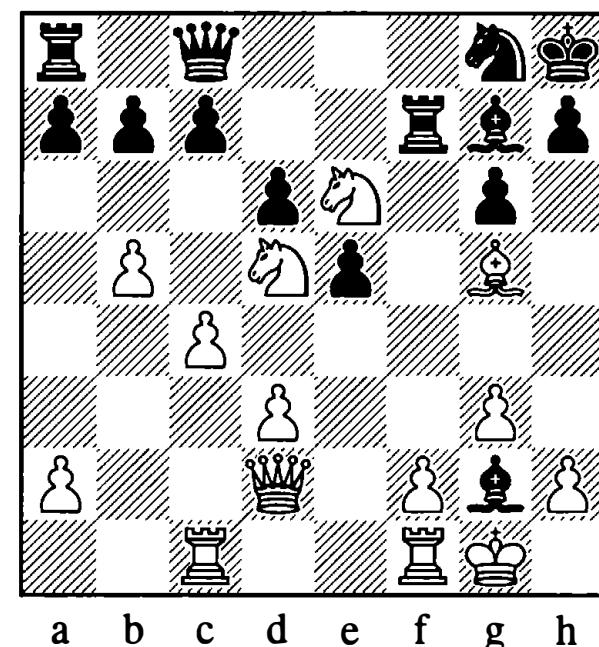
Black's desire to exchange the light-squared bishops is understandable since 15...c6 16.bxc6 bxc6 17.Qb4± would leave him under serious pressure on the long diagonal, while otherwise it is difficult to free his position.

16.Qxd4

Of course not 16.Qxh3?? because of 16...Qf3† winning the queen.

16...Qxg2 17.Qe6 Wc8

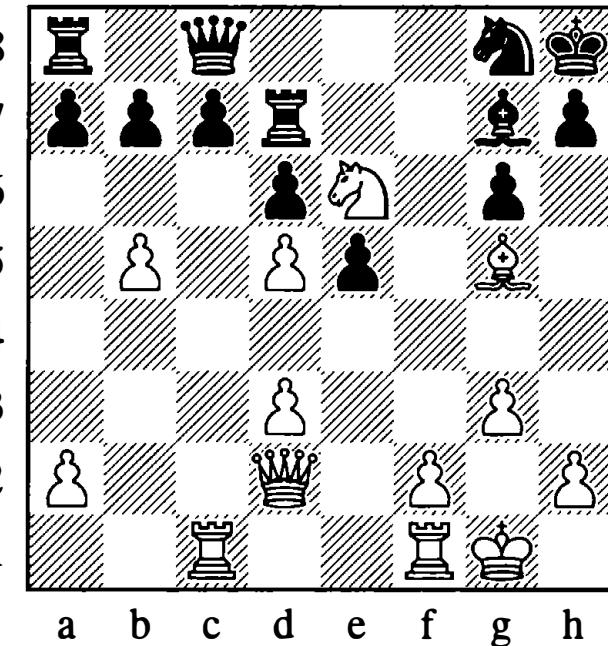
The queen has to occupy this passive square since 17...We8 would lose material to 18.Qxg7+-.



18.Qd8!

When initiating this sequence, Black must have overlooked this knight jump deep into his territory, counting only on 18.Qxg2 Wxe6= followed by ...c7-c6.

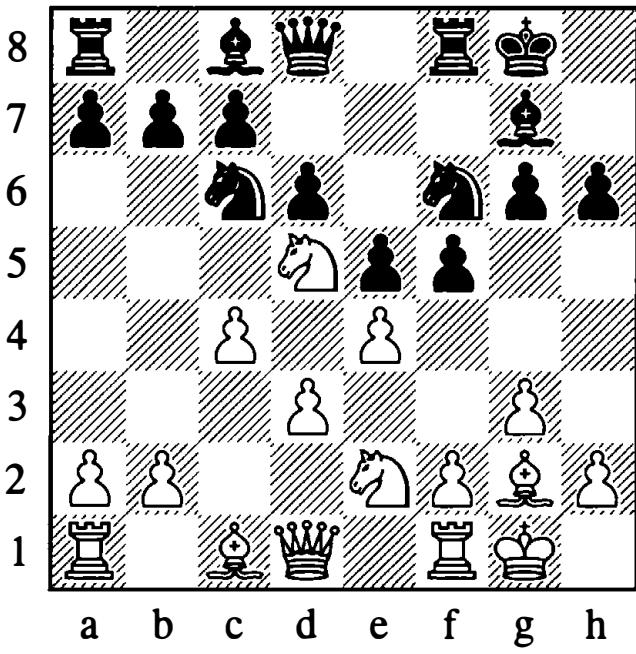
18...Qxd5 19.cxd5 Qd7 20.Qe6



The e6-knight weighs a ton and, despite 60 moves of tough resistance, Black lost in Marin – V. Milov, Batumi 2002.

(1.c4 e5 2.g3 ♜c6 3.♗c3 g6 4.♗g2 ♜g7 5.e4 d6 6.♗ge2 f5 7.d3 ♜f6 8.0–0 0–0 9.♘d5)

B4) 9...h6



Black intends to restrict the enemy dark-squared bishop and prepares a kingside attack based on ...g6-g5. This plan is premature, since Black is not fully developed yet.

10.♗e3

This is the most constructive move, although the bishop seems to be exposed on this square.

White has a playable alternative:

10.♗b1

This is a more neutral move, which prepares the standard queenside attack.

10...♝e7

More consistent would have been 10...g5, although White retains a pleasant position after 11.exf5 ♜xf5 12.b4 ♜d7 13.b5 ♜d8 14.♗ec3±.

11.♝xf6† ♜xf6

As a consequence of the early weakening of the h6-pawn, Black has to resort to this unnatural re-capture.

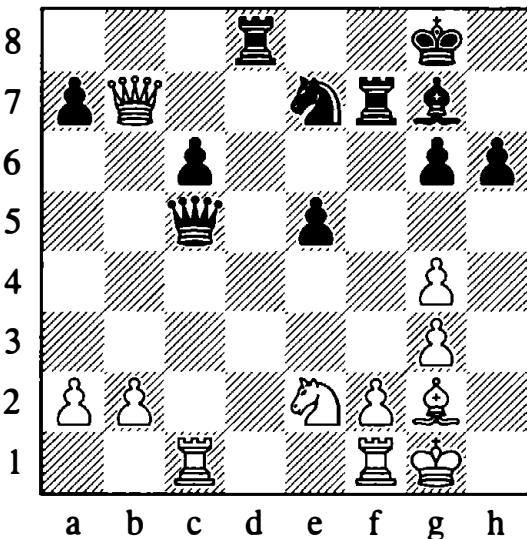
12.d4 ♜f8

Black unpins the d-pawn anticipating a possible d4xe5, and threatens ...f4.

13.exf5 ♜xf5 14.♗a1

White has lost two tempos with his rook, but Black's general development looks rather artificial. Besides, White's space advantage is not easy to neutralize.

14...c6 15.♗e3 ♜g4 16.dxe5 dxe5 17.♗c5 ♜f7 18.h3 ♜xc4 19.hxg4 ♜xc5 20.♗b3† ♜f7 21.♗xb7 ♜d8 22.♗ac1±



White has the better structure and the more active bishop, Suba – Sax, Moscow 1977.

10...g5

It appears that Black does not get anywhere by harassing the e3-bishop with 10...♝g4 11.♗d2 ♜e6 (Black does not gain sufficient compensation for the pawn after 11...f4 12.f3 ♜f6 13.gxf4±) 12.b4 a6 13.♗c1± White's attack develops naturally, while the black kingside is slightly hanging.

Black can delay ...g6-g5 with:

10...♚h7

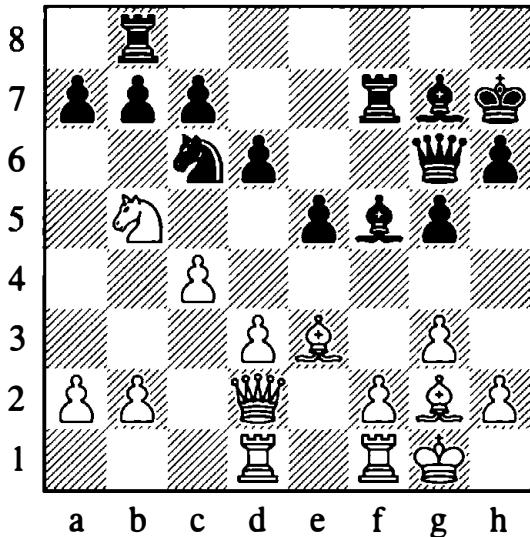
However, essentially this does not change anything.

11.♝xf6† ♜xf6 12.♗d2 g5 13.exf5 ♜xf5 14.♗c3 ♜g6 15.♗ad1 ♜ab8

Black defends the b7-pawn in order to free his knight, but the a7-pawn becomes vulnerable.

16.Qb5

The more neutral 16.Qd5 is also playable: 16...Bf7 17.b4 Bbf8 18.b5 Qd4 19.Qxd4 exd4 20.Qb4± White has achieved an optimal queenside configuration. Black cannot avoid chronically weakening his light squares.

16...Bf7

In this position a draw was prematurely agreed in Balduan – Savchenko, Germany 2000. Instead White could have safely won a pawn:

17.Qxa7!N Qxa7 18.Qxa7 Ba8 19.Qe3 Bxa2 20.Qxb7±

11.exf5 Qxf5 12.b4 a6 13.Wd2 Wd7 14.b5!?

The text move somewhat spoils the compactness of White's structure, but it leads to a strong initiative. White could also have prepared b4-b5 with 14.Bac1 followed by a2-a4.

14...axb5 15.cxb5 Qa5

Black intends to blockade White's a-pawn, but the knight stands badly on the edge of the board.

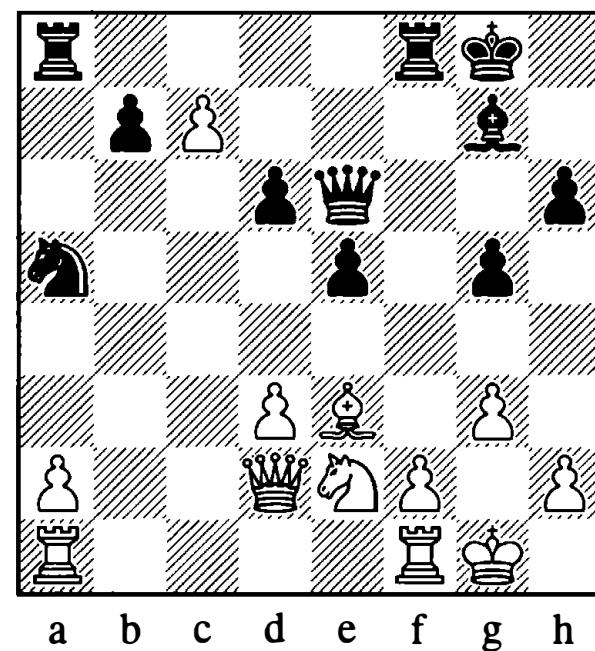
15...Qd8 would be met by 16.Qec3 followed by a2-a4(-a5).

16.b6!

A logical continuation of the attack.

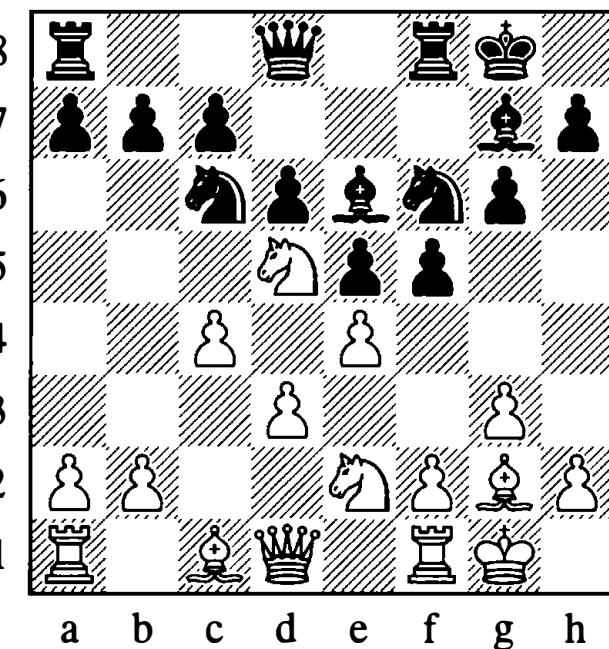
16...Qxd5

Black's main problem is that after the generally desirable 16...c6 White plays 17.Qc7, winning an exchange because of the vulnerability of the a5-knight.

17.Qxd5† Qe6 18.Qxe6† Wxe6 19.bxc7±

Black's position has been weakened and the c7-pawn is not easy to retrieve, Bruzon – B. Gonzalez, Santa Clara 2000.

(1.c4 e5 2.g3 Qc6 3.Qc3 g6 4.Qg2 Qg7 5.e4 d6 6.Qge2 f5 7.d3 Qf6 8.0–0 0–0 9.Qd5)

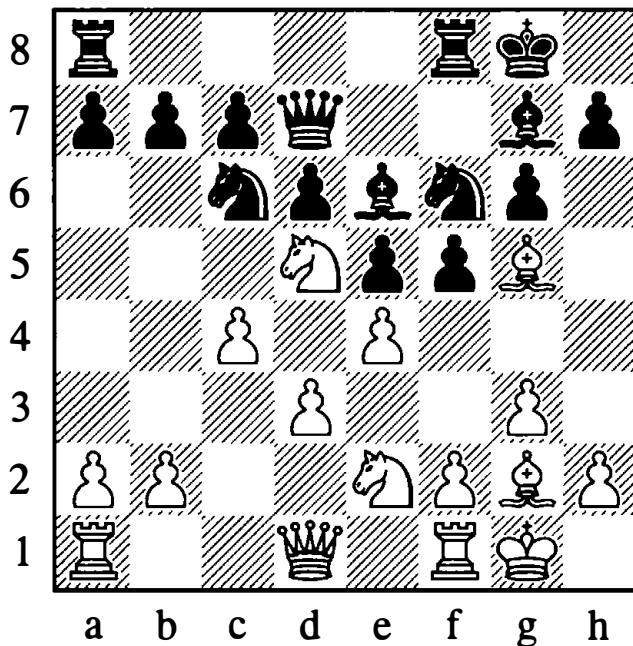
B5) 9...Qe6

We will now examine a natural developing move, which is one of Black's most popular choices.

10.♗g5 ♖d7

Black cannot evict the bishop from g5 yet, because 10...h6? would lose a pawn to 11.♕xf6+. Therefore, he continues developing, planning ...♝f6-h5 followed by activating the queen's rook (with either ...♜a8-e8 or ...♜f8-f7 followed by ...♜a8-f8). The increasing danger of ...f5-f4 will force White to release the tension with e4xf5 at some point, but then ...♝e6xf5 would create the threat of exchanging White's active bishop with ...♝f5-h3.

This is a coherent but relatively slow plan. White should use the available time to make progress with his queenside attack.



11.♖d2!

This is the most effective move. White connects rooks and takes control of two important diagonals. The stability of the g5-bishop is ensured and the b4-square is over-defended, aiding the plan of b2-b4-b5.

In practice, 11.♖c1 is frequently played, probably because White fears that on a1 the rook would be vulnerable to a later ...f5-f4 or, after e4xf5 and ...♝e6xf5, ...e5-e4. We shall see that

losing an exchange is not dangerous for White, while the drawbacks of losing a valuable tempo on the rook move are highlighted in the comments to White's 12th move.

11...♝h5

Black immediately takes measures against 12.b4, which could be answered with 12...f4. In the event of general exchanges on f4 and a1, White would have little compensation for the sacrificed exchange, because of Black's good development and the weakened position of the white king. The main drawback of this system of development is that the knight risks remaining out of play on the edge of the board, requiring another tempo for its later recycling.

Refraining from 11...♝h5 would allow White to carry out his plan undisturbed. For example:

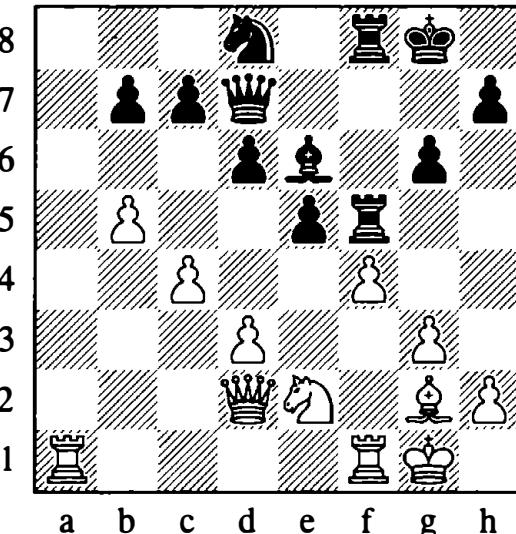
11...♜f7 12.b4 a6 13.a4 ♜af8 14.b5 axb5
15.axb5 ♜d8

White has achieved complete success on the queenside and the time has come to open the other wing:

16.♝xf6+ ♜xf6 17.♗xf6 ♜xf6 18.exf5 ♜xf5

Black keeps the c4-pawn under observation, since 18...♝xf5 would allow 19.d4±.

19.f4±



White has more space and the safer king position, L. Marin – Paulet, Plovdiv 2008.

Releasing the tension at once is possible:

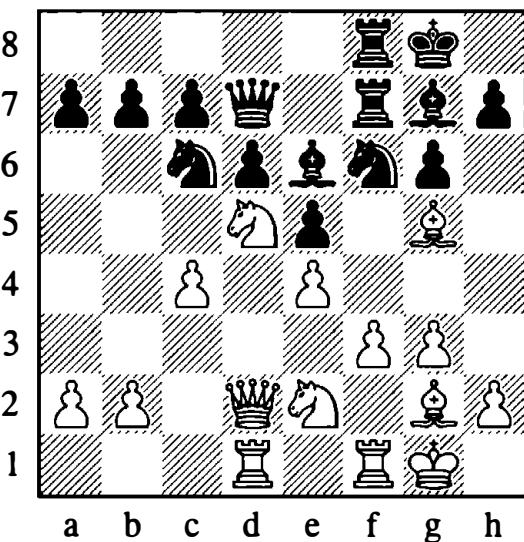
11...fxe4

This was once tried by a strong grandmaster, but it cannot be recommended.

12.dxe4 $\mathbb{Q}f7$ 13.f3

White consolidates her kingside, neutralizing Black's pressure along the f-file.

13... $\mathbb{Q}af8$ 14. $\mathbb{Q}ad1\pm$



White has regrouped well and has a considerable space advantage. Soon she may start a minority attack with b2-b4 and c4-c5.

14...a5 15.b3 $\mathbb{Q}h3$ 16. $\mathbb{Q}e3$ b6

This position was reached in Bojkovic – Onischuk, Skopje 2002. White could have increased her pressure with:

17. $\mathbb{Q}ec3$

White threatens $\mathbb{Q}c3-b5$.

17... $\mathbb{Q}xg2$ 18. $\mathbb{Q}xg2$ $\mathbb{Q}d4!?$

The only active way to parry the threat.

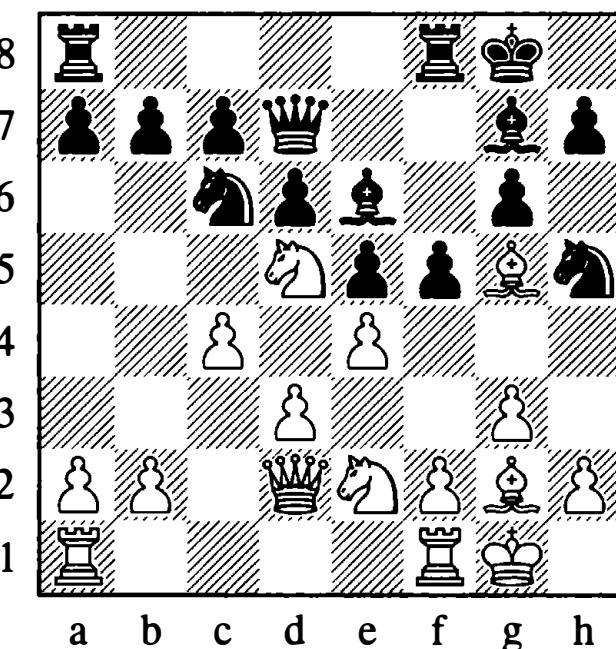
19. $\mathbb{Q}xd4$ exd4 20. $\mathbb{Q}b5$

This is the most active move.

The consequences of 20. $\mathbb{Q}e2$ c5 21. $\mathbb{Q}xb6$ are less clear after 21... $\mathbb{W}b7$ 22. $\mathbb{Q}d5$ $\mathbb{Q}xd5$ 23.cxd5 a4 with compensation.

20... $\mathbb{Q}xd5$ 21.exd5 c5 22. $\mathbb{Q}de1\pm$

The d6-pawn and the e6-square are weak, and White controls the only open file. Moreover, Black is likely to end up on the nasty side of a good knight versus bad bishop ending.



12.exf5!

This is the quickest way to get the attack going.

There is no need to hesitate with:

12. $\mathbb{Q}ac1$

This overcautious move would allow Black to complicate matters.

12... $\mathbb{Q}ae8!$

Black needs to take the e7-square under control before undertaking any concrete action in the centre.

The impulsive 12...fxe4 13.dxe4 $\mathbb{Q}d4$ offers White a strong initiative after 14. $\mathbb{Q}xd4$ exd4 15.f4 c6 16.f5 gxf5 17. $\mathbb{Q}e7\#$. This is why the e7-square is important. 17... $\mathbb{Q}h8$ 18.exf5± White wins more space on the kingside, since 18... $\mathbb{Q}xf5?$ loses material to 19. $\mathbb{Q}xf5$ $\mathbb{Q}xf5$ 20. $\mathbb{Q}h3$ $\mathbb{Q}af8$ 21. $\mathbb{Q}xf5$ $\mathbb{Q}xf5$ 22. $\mathbb{W}d3+-$.

13.b4 fxe4 14.dxe4 $\mathbb{Q}d4$ 15. $\mathbb{Q}xd4$ exd4 16.c5 c6 17. $\mathbb{Q}f4$ $\mathbb{Q}xf4$ 18. $\mathbb{Q}xf4\infty$

The position is interesting, but Black is well mobilized and has adequate play, Miralles – Santo Roman, France 1989.

12... $\mathbb{Q}xf5$

Instead if:

12...gxf5 13.f4

Black's kingside play comes to an end.

13... $\mathbb{Q}h8$ 14. $\mathbb{Q}ae1$ $\mathbb{Q}ae8$ 15.b4 $\mathbb{Q}d8$ 16. $\mathbb{Q}e3$

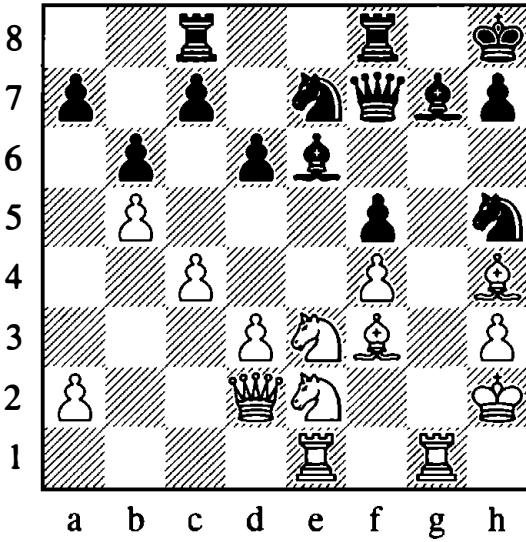
$\mathbb{Q}f7$ 17. $\mathbb{Q}h4$

The bishop is out of danger on this square, while exerting fierce pressure on the h4-d8 diagonal.

17...exf4 18.gxf4 $\mathbb{Q}h6$ 19.h3

Both black knights are strongly restricted.

19...b6 20.b5 $\mathbb{W}f7$ 21. $\mathbb{Q}h2$ $\mathbb{Q}g8$ 22. $\mathbb{Q}c6$ $\mathbb{W}c8$
23. $\mathbb{E}g1$ $\mathbb{Q}e7$ 24. $\mathbb{Q}f3\pm$



White has made important strategic achievements on the queenside, and has more harmonious development, Serper – Sakaev, Kherson 1991.

13.b4 $\mathbb{E}ae8$

We are familiar with the necessity of defending the e7-square. For example, 13...a6 loses a pawn to 14.b5 axb5 15.cxb5 $\mathbb{Q}d8$ 16. $\mathbb{Q}e7\#$ $\mathbb{Q}h8$ 17. $\mathbb{Q}xf5$ $\mathbb{W}xf5$ 18. $\mathbb{Q}xd8$ $\mathbb{E}xd8$ 19. $\mathbb{Q}xb7\pm$.

One of the main points of White's move order with 11. $\mathbb{W}d2$ is that after the discovered attack:

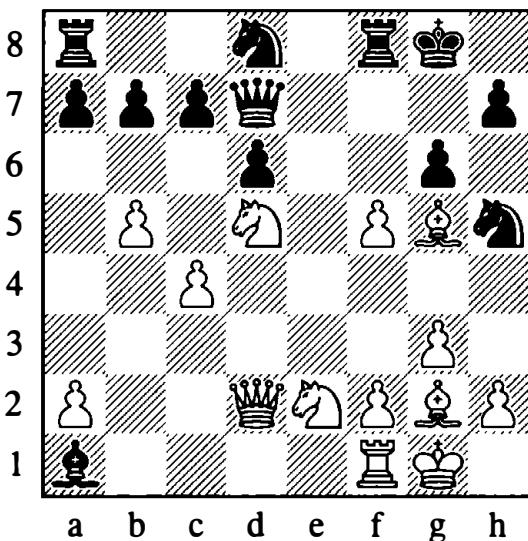
13...e4

White can now reply with an exchange sacrifice:

14.dxe4! $\mathbb{Q}xa1$ 15.b5 $\mathbb{Q}d8$

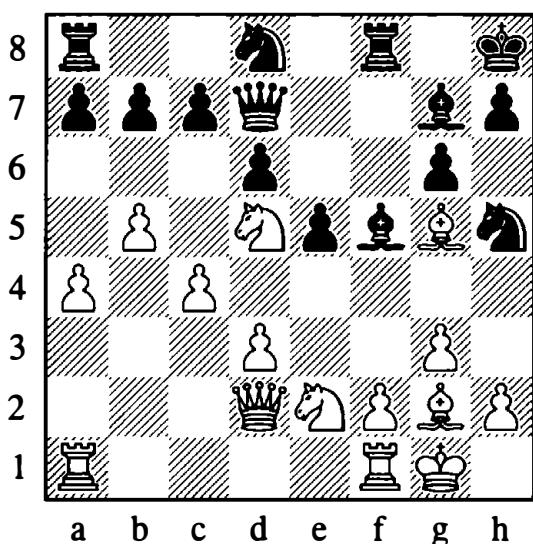
Or 15... $\mathbb{Q}g7$ 16. bxc6 bxc6 17. $\mathbb{Q}e7\#$ $\mathbb{Q}h8$ 18. exf5± when the threats of $\mathbb{Q}xc6$ and fxg6 are hard to meet. White will get two pieces for a rook, while retaining a strong initiative.

16.exf5±



After the forced bishop retreat White will continue to win space with g3-g4, soon getting his pawns to g5 and f6.

Instead 13... $\mathbb{Q}h8$ avoids the check on e7, but does not contribute to Black's development. Following 14.b5 $\mathbb{Q}d8$ White can play 15. $\mathbb{Q}xd8$ as in the main line. After 15... $\mathbb{E}xd8$ Black will have the extra tempo ... $\mathbb{Q}g8-h8$, but this would not dramatically change the evaluation. Since Black is not completely developed, the strategically constructive 15.a4± also makes a lot of sense.

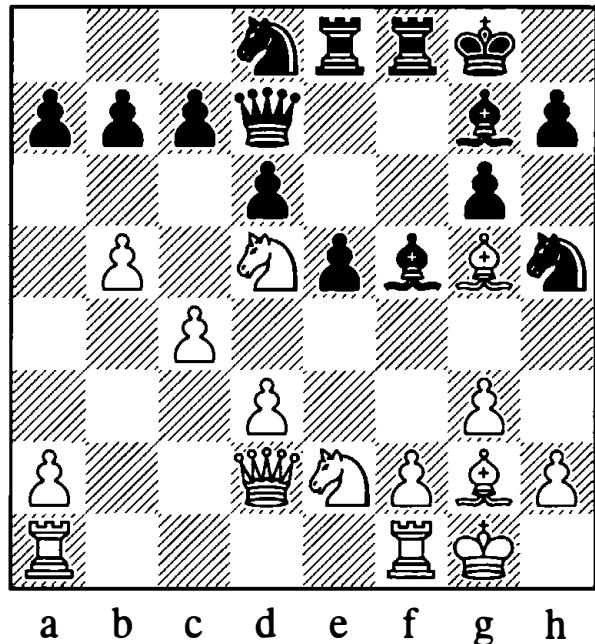


After 15.a4 White's attack developed naturally in Ribli – Van Mil, Slough 1997.

14.b5 $\mathbb{Q}d8$

This position was reached in the game Gavrikov – I. Ibragimov, Sweden 1999. Black

has completed his development and threatens ...c7-c6 followed by ... $\mathbb{Q}f5-h3$.



15. $\mathbb{Q}xd8!N$

White eliminates the main defender of the light squares on Black's queenside.

15... $\mathbb{Q}xd8$

Black needs to keep the threat of ... $\mathbb{Q}h3$ alive. If 15... $\mathbb{W}xd8$ then White could increase his pressure on the light squares without needing to hurry, starting with 16. $\mathbb{Q}ec3$, possibly followed by centralizing the a1-rook and $\mathbb{W}e3$. Opening the queenside with ...c7-c6 would chronically weaken the light squares after $bxc6$ followed by $\mathbb{Q}b4$.

16. $\mathbb{Q}b4$

The pressure along the h1-a8 diagonal becomes unpleasant.

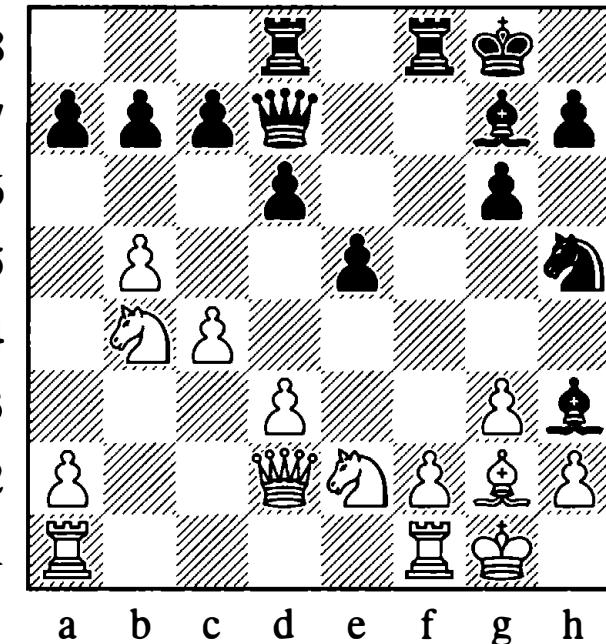
16... $\mathbb{Q}h3$

The text is the most logical choice, aiming to exchange White's most active piece.

Once again 16...e4? is bad because of 17.dxe4 $\mathbb{Q}xa1$ 18.exf5!±.

Black could maintain the integrity of his queenside only at the cost of retreating his queen to a very passive square: 16... $\mathbb{W}c8$

17. $\mathbb{W}e3$ $\mathbb{W}b8$ 18. $\mathbb{Q}c3$ ± There is little Black can do against the positional threat of a4-a5-a6.



17. $\mathbb{Q}xb7!$

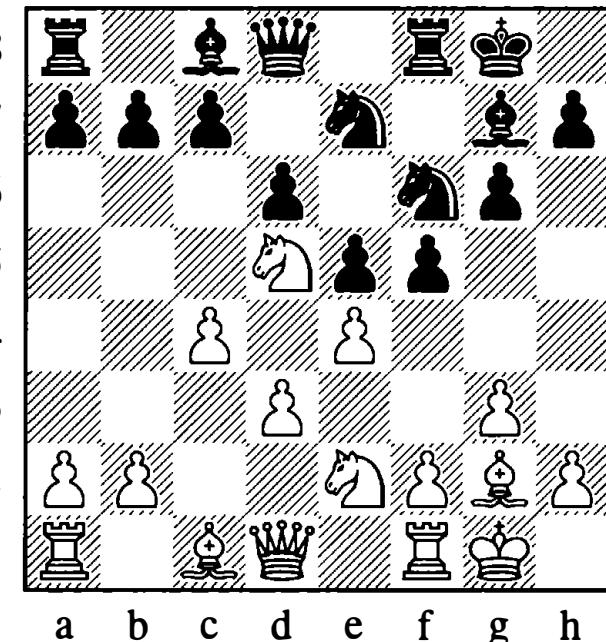
It is essential to keep this bishop, while weakening the enemy light squares at the same time.

17... $\mathbb{Q}xf1$ 18. $\mathbb{B}xf1$ $\mathbb{Q}f6$ 19. $\mathbb{Q}c3$ ±

White's huge strategic advantage more than compensates for the small material investment.

(1.c4 e5 2.g3 $\mathbb{Q}c6$ 3. $\mathbb{Q}c3$ g6 4. $\mathbb{Q}g2$ $\mathbb{Q}g7$ 5.e4 d6 6. $\mathbb{Q}ge2$ f5 7.d3 $\mathbb{Q}f6$ 8.0–0 0–0 9. $\mathbb{Q}d5$)

B6) 9... $\mathbb{Q}e7$

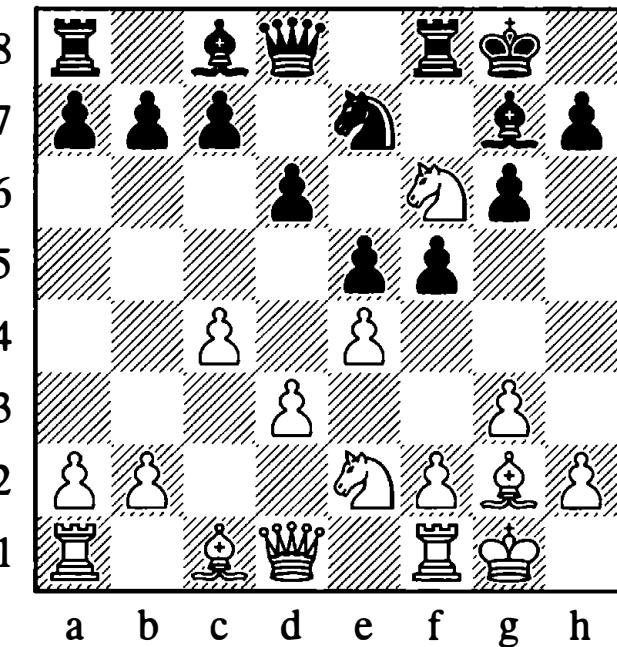


In most of the previously examined lines the d5-knight has restricted Black's activity. Therefore, it looks logical to exchange it as soon as possible. If White allows ... $\mathbb{Q}e7xd5$ then the difference compared to line B1 is that Black will be left with the active f6-knight, instead of the passive e7-one.

The main drawback of this plan is that it moves an already developed piece for a second time, without improving its placement. This gives White the chance to gain a slight lead in development.

10. $\mathbb{Q}xf6\#!$

This is the correct choice: White exchanges the better placed knight.



10... $\mathbb{Q}xf6$

This is almost always played.

The other recapture has obvious drawbacks:

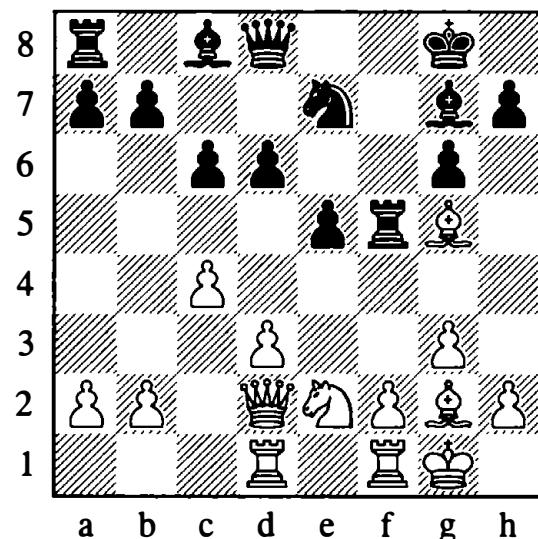
10... $\mathbb{B}xf6$ 11. $\mathbb{Q}g5$

The pin along the h4-d8 diagonal is unpleasant.

11... $\mathbb{B}f8$ 12. $exf5$ $\mathbb{B}xf5$

12... $gxf5$ is met by 13. $d4\pm$ and Black has to deal with the threat of $d4xe5$, since exchanging queens would lead to the loss of the e7-knight.

13. $\mathbb{W}d2$ $c6$ 14. $\mathbb{B}ad1\pm$



White is better developed and ready to open the centre with either d3-d4 or f2-f4.

11. $\mathbb{Q}h6$ $\mathbb{B}f7$

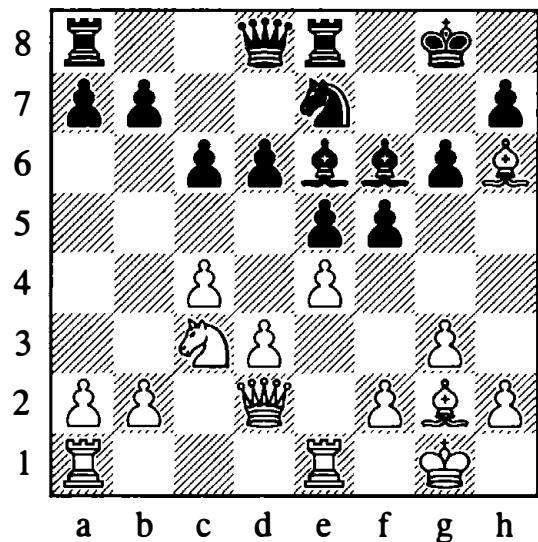
The most common reply.

11... $\mathbb{Q}g7$ would leave the black king exposed after 12. $\mathbb{Q}xg7$ $\mathbb{Q}xg7$ 13. $\mathbb{W}d2\pm$ followed by opening the centre.

11... $\mathbb{B}e8$

This natural move is far less popular than the text move, but I can find no obvious reason for that, since White gets the same kind of advantage in both cases.

12. $\mathbb{W}d2$ $c6$ 13. $\mathbb{Q}c3$ $\mathbb{Q}e6$ 14. $\mathbb{B}fe1$



14... $d5?!$

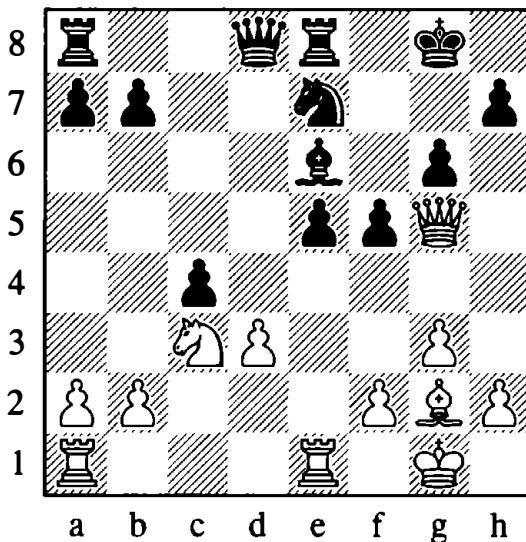
After this impatient move White gets rid of his c4-pawn, which was preventing him from opening the centre. A more conservative continuation would be 14... $\mathbb{W}d7$ 15. $\mathbb{B}ad1$

a6 16.♕g5 ♕g7 17.b4 b5 18.a4±. White's structure is more flexible and his pieces are better coordinated. Then the naive 18...bxc4?! would lead only to an unfavourable pawn exchange after 19.dxc4 ♕xc4 20.♗xd6±.

15.exd5 cxd5 16.♕g5!

A well timed move, exchanging the only defender of the e5-pawn.

16...♕xg5 17.♗xg5 dxc4



This position was reached in Psakhis – J. Wilson, London 1994. White could have simplified to a promising ending with:

18.♗xe5!N ♜c6 19.♗xd8 ♜axd8 20.♕xc6 bxc6 21.dxc4 ♜xc4 22.♗xe8† ♜xe8 23.♗d1 ♜f7 24.b3 ♜e6 25.f4±

The knight is stronger than the bishop because of Black's numerous weaknesses on the dark squares. Objectively, the position may be just ±/±, but I am used to winning endings that start with a minimal advantage, and I find this one quite promising.

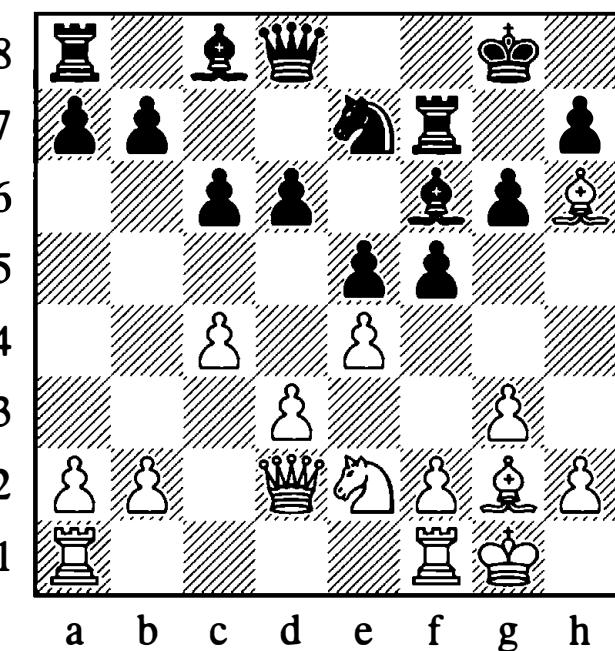
12.♗d2

As compensation for having given up his domination in the centre, White has obtained easy development.

Black has tried **B61) 12...c6** and **B62) 12...♜e6!**.

(1.c4 e5 2.g3 ♜c6 3.♘c3 g6 4.♗g2 ♜g7 5.e4 d6 6.♘ge2 f5 7.d3 ♜f6 8.0–0 0–0 9.♘d5 ♜e7 10.♘xf6† ♜xf6 11.♗h6 ♜f7 12.♗d2)

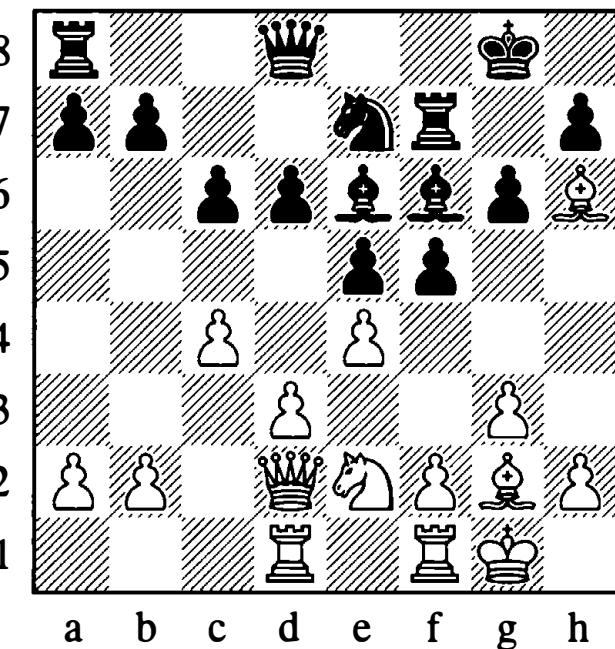
B61) 12...c6



Black reduces the enemy bishop's activity and prepares to occupy the centre with ...d6-d5. However, in view of the novelty suggested on move 14, line B62 is a safer choice for Black.

13.♗ad1 ♜e6

Black threatens not only ...d6-d5 but also ...f5xe4, since the generally desirable d3xe4 loses the c4-pawn.



14.♗fe1!N

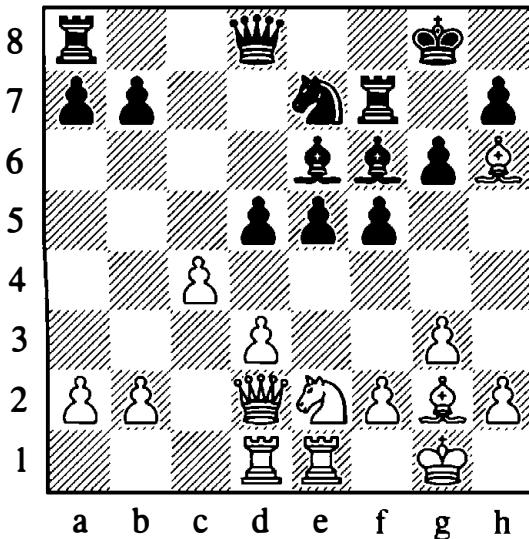
This indirect defence of the c4-pawn has never been played. The rook will be useful on e1 if Black opens the centre with ...d6-d5.

White's usual move is 14.b3, transposing to line B62.

14... \hat{w} d7

After 14...fxe4 15.dxe4 ♕xc4 White retrieves the pawn with 16.b3 ♔xe2 17.♔xe2 ♖c8 18.♔h3±, followed by ♔h3xc8 and ♕d2xd6, when White would have the more compact structure. Black cannot defend his pawn with 18...♔e7 because of 19.♔e6, winning an exchange.

14...d5 is premature because of 15.exd5 cxd5:



16. $\mathbb{Q}f4!$ White takes full advantage of the rook's presence on e1. 16...exf4 17. $\mathbb{B}xe6$ dxc4 18. $\mathbb{Q}xf4\pm$ White has an active pair of bishops in an open position and the black king is vulnerable.

15.b3

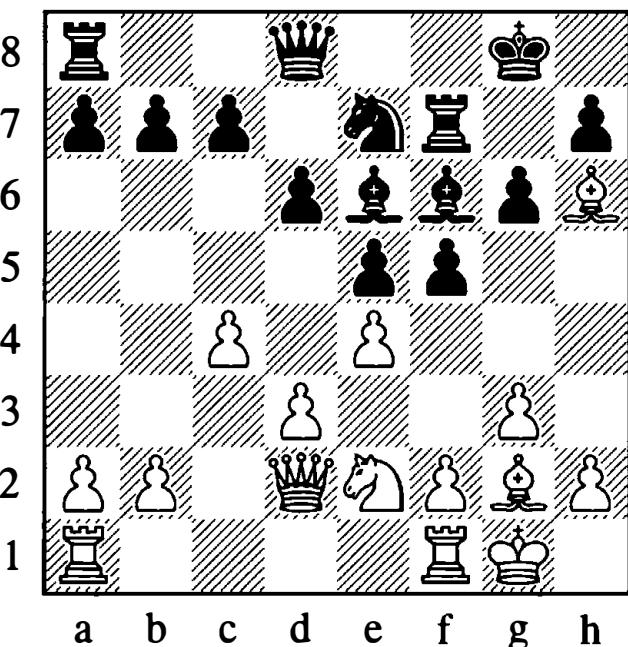
After the black queen has defined her intentions, White returns to the standard plan. By over-defending the c4-pawn he prepares to occupy the centre with d3-d4.

15...d5 16.exd5 cxd5 17.f4±

The black centre is vulnerable because of the hanging position of his pieces.

(1.c4 e5 2.g3 ♜c6 3.♗c3 g6 4.♔g2 ♔g7 5.e4 d6 6.♗ge2 f5 7.d3 ♜f6 8.0-0 0-0 9.♗d5 ♜e7 10.♗xf6+ ♔xf6 11.♔h6 ♜f7 12.♗d2)

B62) 12...e6!



This is Black's most accurate move: he immediately attacks the c4-pawn to force White's hand.

It is easy to establish that the b7-pawn is taboo:

13.exf5 ♕xf5

Suddenly Black's pieces have revived.

14. ♕xb7? ♜b8

After a neutral bishop retreat, Black wins with 15... \mathbb{Q} xh6 16. \mathbb{W} xh6 \mathbb{Q} g5.

15.d5

This exchange of bishops, aiming to make the h3-square available for the queen, modifies Black's answer, but not the evaluation:

15... $\hat{\text{x}}$ d5 16.cxd5 g5!-+

The h6-bishop is lost.

13.b3 c6

Black cannot refrain from this move indefinitely.

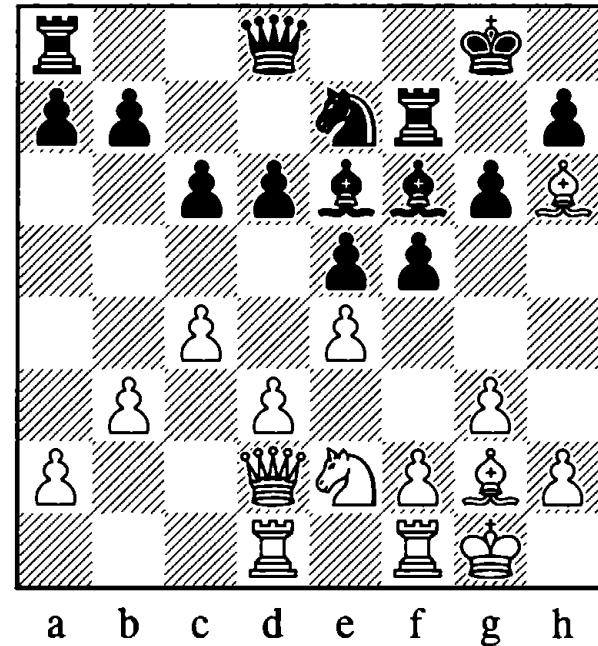
13... $\mathbb{W}d7$ loses the b7-pawn to 14.exf5 $\mathbb{Q}xf5$ 15. $\mathbb{Q}xb7\pm$. Black's insufficient control of the g5-square neutralizes both the threats that worked in the previous comment.

White has better chances in the almost symmetrical position that results after:

13...c5 14.♗ad1 ♖d7 15.exf5 ♗xf5 16.♗c3 ♗d4 17.♔e3± The main difference is that the f6-bishop may become “bad”, while the g2-bishop is fine.

14.♗ad1

White has completed his development and is ready to occupy the centre with d3-d4.



14...d5

The text move is the logical continuation, but naturally there is an alternative:

14...♗h8

This is too passive.

15.d4 ♖e8

Attempting to trap the bishop with 15...f4 16.gxf4 ♗g8 fails to 17.♔g5±.

The other way of releasing the tension in the centre also leaves White with a space advantage after 15...fxe4 16.dxe5 ♔xe5 17.♔xe4±.

16.f4

White's pawns look impressive along the fourth rank.

16...fxe4

Once again, the h6-bishop is out of danger after 16...exd4 17.♗xd4 ♗g8 18.exf5 gxf5 19.♔g5±.

17.fxe5 dxe5 18.♗c3

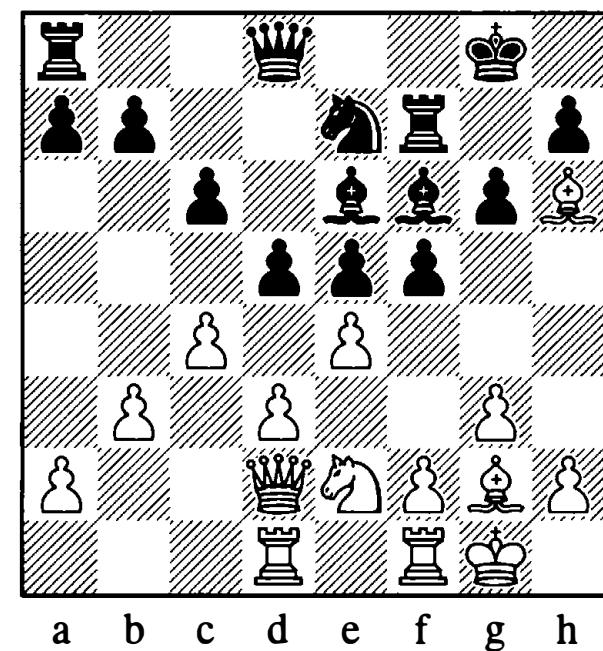
Black's position is very vulnerable.

18...♗d8

18...exd4 allows the elegant exchanging operation 19.♗xf6! ♗xf6 20.♖xd4±, followed by ♗c3xe4.

19.♗xe4 ♗xd4 20.♗xf6 ♗xf6 21.♕a5±

Black's position soon collapsed in Delchev – Saucy, Nice 2000.



15.exd5 cxd5 16.♗fe1

Even though played later than in line B61, this stylish move is still quite effective. The latent pressure along the e-file troubles the black pieces: the immediate threat is to activate the knight with ♗e2-f4.

The simpler 16.d4!? is also satisfactory. After 16...e4 17.♗f4 ♖b6 18.f3± Black has problems defending his massive centre.

16...♖d6

In line B61 Black had to develop his queen on d7, since the d6-square was not yet available. The wider choice Black has in this line does not change the evaluation of the position much.

16...♗b6

This was tried in Makarichev – Yrjola, Reykjavik 1990. Now White has two ways of retaining the initiative:

17.♔e3!?

Or 17. $\mathbb{Q}g5$ $\mathbb{Q}xg5$ 18. $\mathbb{W}xg5$ $\mathbb{B}d8$ 19. $\mathbb{Q}c3\pm$ as in the main line, but the queen is no longer exposed to $\mathbb{Q}c3-b5$.

17... $\mathbb{W}xe3$ 18. $\mathbb{Q}xe3\pm$

White threatens to increase his pressure with $\mathbb{Q}e3-c5$. For example:

18... $d4$

This only makes things worse for Black.

19. $\mathbb{Q}d2$

The threats of $\mathbb{Q}xb7$, $f2-f4$ or $\mathbb{Q}xd4$ are hard to parry.

Although in the previous phase $b2-b3$ may have seemed a loss of time, the $b3$ -pawn is useful as it keeps the $c4$ -square well defended. Therefore, after:

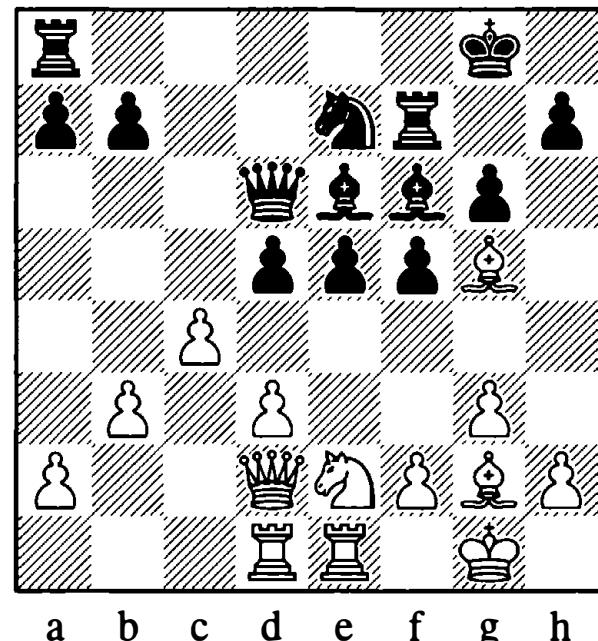
16... $dxc4$ 17. $dxc4$

Black's minor pieces remain passive, while the $d5$ -square belongs to White. Also, White's pressure along the central files is hard to meet.

17... $\mathbb{Q}c6$ 18. $\mathbb{Q}f4\pm$

17. $\mathbb{Q}g5!?$

White eliminates an important defender of the $e5$ -pawn.



17... $\mathbb{Q}xg5$

17... $\mathbb{B}d8$ leads to similar play after 18. $\mathbb{Q}xf6$ $\mathbb{B}xf6$ 19. $\mathbb{Q}c3\pm$.

Rejecting the exchange of bishops with 17... $\mathbb{Q}g7!?$ leaves the $e7$ -knight vulnerable, allowing the elegant 18. $\mathbb{Q}d4!$ $exd4$ 19. $\mathbb{W}e2\pm$ when White retrieves the piece with a great strategic advantage.

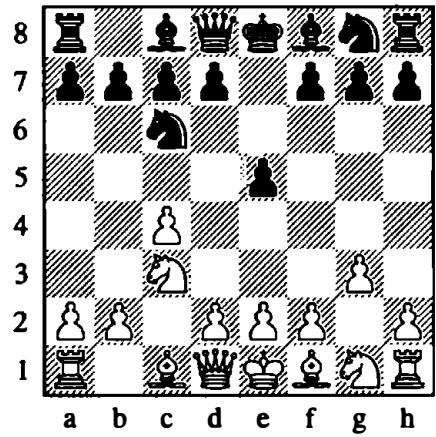
18. $\mathbb{W}xg5$ $\mathbb{B}d8$ 19. $\mathbb{Q}c3\pm$

Black's centre is under heavy pressure. One threat is $cxd5$ followed by general exchanges on $d5$ and then $\mathbb{B}xe5$, winning a pawn because the $d8$ -rook is hanging. True, this would simplify the position and offer Black some saving chances. White has other threats: $\mathbb{W}e3$ is hard to meet, as is $\mathbb{Q}b5$ and if ... $\mathbb{W}b8$, defending the $e5$ -pawn, then $\mathbb{Q}b5-d4!$.

Conclusion:

Black's most active plan is $6...f5$ followed by developing the $g8$ -knight to $f6$. Black is well prepared for a fight in the centre and even gets a space advantage at times. White frequently has to switch to hyper-modern play to prove that Black's position is over-extended. Objectively, White can count on retaining a small plus.

Although at first sight it may seem that the Botvinnik System is a static and inflexible set-up, dynamic elements are always present. Basic notions such as development, the initiative and space are of no lesser importance than in any other variation. Despite having many different set-ups at his disposal, Black has no obvious path to equality.



2...♞c6 3.♝c3

3rd move alternatives

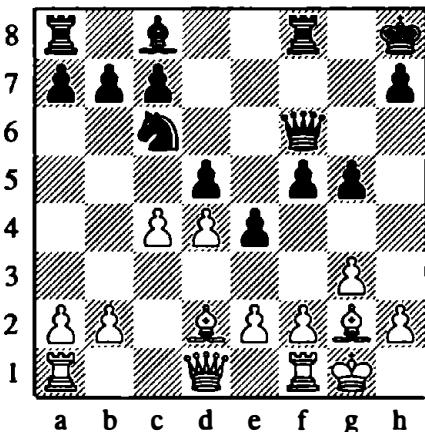
Variation Index

1.c4 e5 2.g3 ♜c6

3.♝c3

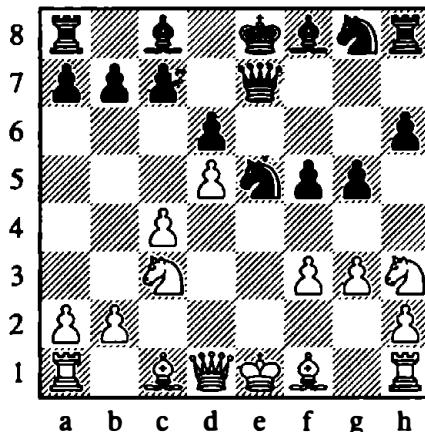
A) 3...♜c5	p 236
B) 3...f5 4.♝f3	p 241
B1) 4...e4	p 242
B2) 4...d6	p 245
B3) 4...g6	p 248
B4) 4...♝f6	p 251

B21) after 14...d5



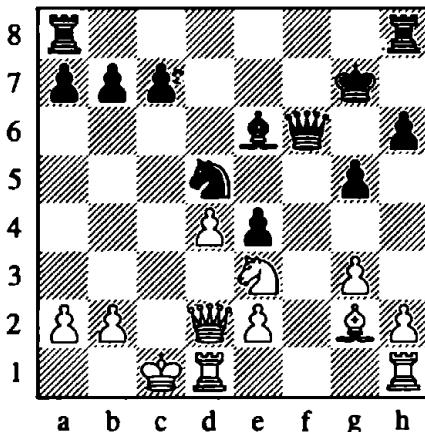
15.cxd5 ♜e7 16.♛c1!

B22) after 10...♛e7



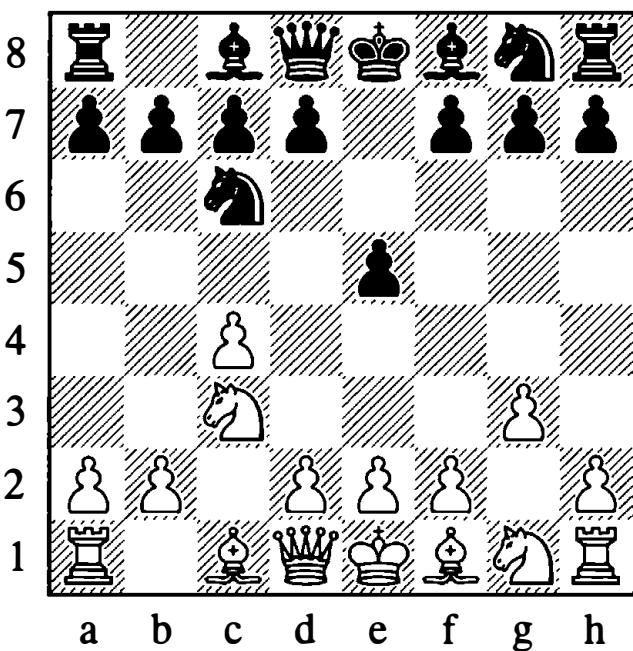
11.f4!!

B4) after 18...♚g7



19.♝h1!N

1.c4 e5 2.g3 $\mathbb{Q}c6$ 3. $\mathbb{Q}c3$



Black's main continuations, 3... $\mathbb{Q}f6$ and 3...g6, have been examined in the previous chapters. We will now examine A) 3... $\mathbb{Q}c5$ and B) 3... $\mathbb{B}5$.

Other moves have little independent value.

3...d6 4. $\mathbb{Q}g2$ is likely to transpose to a line covered in Chapters 13 to 18.

3... $\mathbb{Q}b4$

This can be met in a similar way to 4... $\mathbb{Q}b4$ from Chapters 7-12:

4. $\mathbb{Q}d5$ $\mathbb{Q}c5$ 5. $\mathbb{Q}g2$

In practice, play has usually transposed back into the main lines examined in the aforementioned chapters.

5... $\mathbb{Q}ge7$

This only looks like a deviation, as in most cases Black plays ... $\mathbb{Q}xd5$, transposing.

5...f5 should be met by 6.e3 $\mathbb{Q}f6$ 7. $\mathbb{Q}e2\pm$ followed by d2-d4, when the move ...f7-f5 has weakened Black's position and lost valuable time. Basically, Black will have problems finding safety for his c5-bishop.

6.e3 0-0 7. $\mathbb{Q}e2$ d6 8.0-0 a6

I have failed to find any relevant games in which Black refrains from ... $\mathbb{Q}xd5$ for long. The knight is not especially well placed on e7

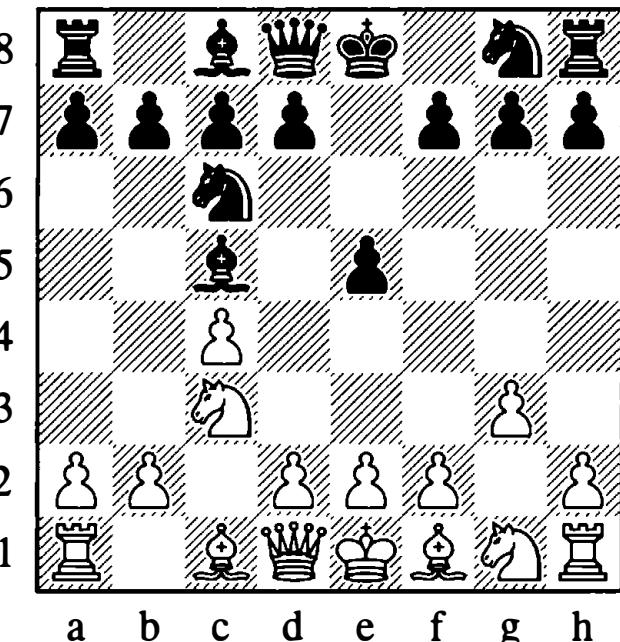
and White should continue with the already familiar plan:

9.b3

White will play $\mathbb{Q}b2$ next, followed by either d2-d4 or f2-f4.

(1.c4 e5 2.g3 $\mathbb{Q}c6$ 3. $\mathbb{Q}c3$)

A) 3... $\mathbb{Q}c5$



If Black develops the knight to f6 in the near future then this variation will lose its independent value, transposing to one of Chapters 2 to 6.

4. $\mathbb{Q}g2$

White makes this obligatory move, waiting for Black's answer before deciding between the two possible systems of development: $\mathbb{Q}f3$ or e2-e3 followed by $\mathbb{Q}ge2$.

4...d6

This is the trickiest move order, inviting White to define his plan.

We shall also scan the alternatives:

4... $\mathbb{Q}f6$ would transpose back to one of Chapters 2 to 6.

If 4...f5 then 5.e3 followed by 6. $\mathbb{Q}ge2$ and d2-d4 puts the c5-bishop in early trouble.

Compare this with the Sicilian Variation 1.e4 c5 2.♘c3 ♘c6 3.f4 g6 4.♘f3 ♙g7 5.♗c4 e6 6.d3 ♘ge7 7.f5 d5 8.♗b3 b5, which is considered to be unsatisfactory for White. In our case, White is a tempo up in the same position with reversed colours.

4...♘ge7 5.e3

This transposes to the main line examined below. With his king's knight on e7, Black cannot play as in Chapter 6 with:

5...d5?

Because after:

6.cxd5 ♘b4 7.d4 exd4 8.exd4

The bishop cannot retreat to e7, which makes the further capture on d5 impossible.

8...♗d6

8...♗b6? loses a knight to 9.♘a4†.

9.a3 ♘a6 10.♘ge2±

White has won a pawn and the a6-knight is passive.

f2-f4 is not available and an early e2-e3 would be strongly met by ...e5-e4.

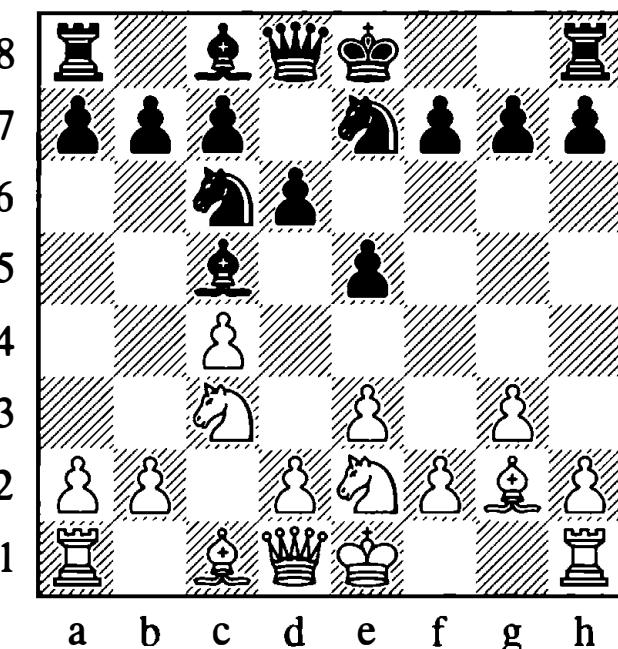
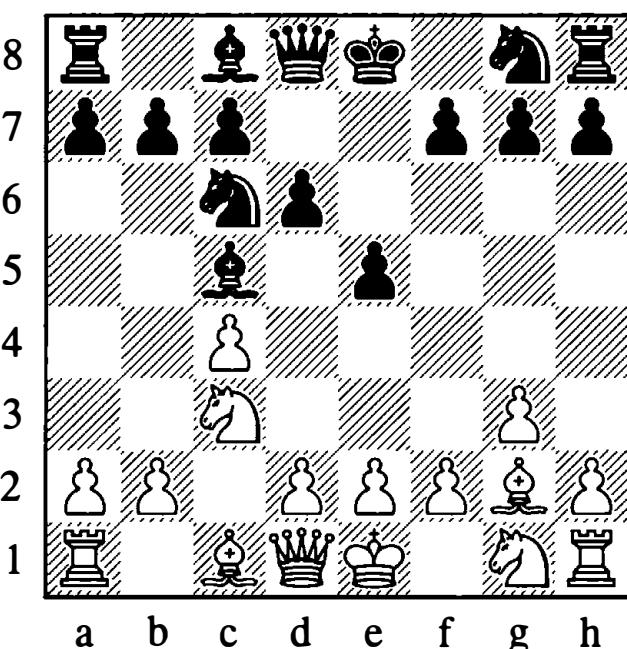
5...♘ge7

Once he has provoked White's last move, Black can transpose back to line B2 from Chapter 6 by playing 5...♘f6. This is, however, only a partial success: by playing ...d7-d6 Black has deprived himself of his main hope of equalizing, ...d7-d5, as in line B1 from the same chapter.

6.♘ge2

Existing theory is rather chaotic in this variation, which explains why I have only quoted one game.

I have figured out a plan for White that is similar to the lines from Chapter 6, so I will not repeat the ideas I have mentioned there. We will see that in most cases the knight is badly placed on e7, obstructing a rook and failing to keep the e4-square under control. In some cases the long dark diagonal will be vulnerable because there is no knight on f6.



5.e3

Since Black has left the path of the f7-pawn open, it is best to prepare the knight's development to e2.

If 5.♘f3 then White has to be ready for 5...f5 or 5...♘ge7 followed by ...f5 in the near future. Black's kingside pressure would be more difficult to neutralize since the move

6...a6

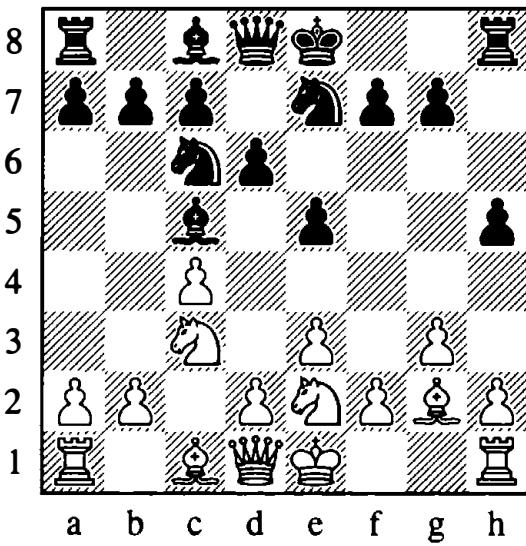
Black clears the a7-square for the bishop.

After the knight's development to e2, it may seem to make sense to play:

2... $\mathbb{Q}c6$ 3. $\mathbb{Q}c3$

6...h5!?

This move was tested in Marin – Alvarez Pedraza, Benasque 2008, but it completely neglects development.

7.d4 $\mathbb{Q}b6$

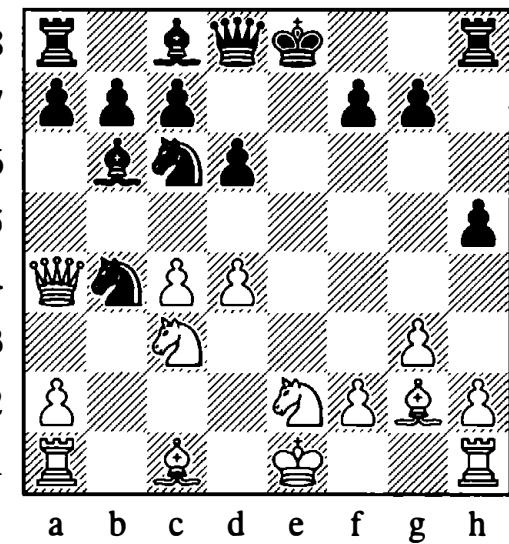
Now White unjustifiably avoided:

8.b4!N exd4

8... $\mathbb{Q}xb4$ leads to similar play after 9. $\mathbb{W}a4\#$ $\mathbb{Q}ec6$ 10.0–0!±.

9.exd4 $\mathbb{Q}xb4$

9...a6 leaves Black in a passive position after 10. $\mathbb{Q}g5$ f6 11. $\mathbb{Q}e3\pm$.

10. $\mathbb{W}a4\#$ $\mathbb{Q}ec6$ 

I only calculated 11.d5 $\mathbb{Q}d3\#$ followed by 12... $\mathbb{Q}c5$, and 11. $\mathbb{Q}xc6\#$ $\mathbb{Q}xc6$ 12.d5 $\mathbb{Q}d7\#$, when Black keeps his extra pawn, failing to notice that I have time for:

11.0–0!±

White will play d4-d5, winning a knight.

6...0–0

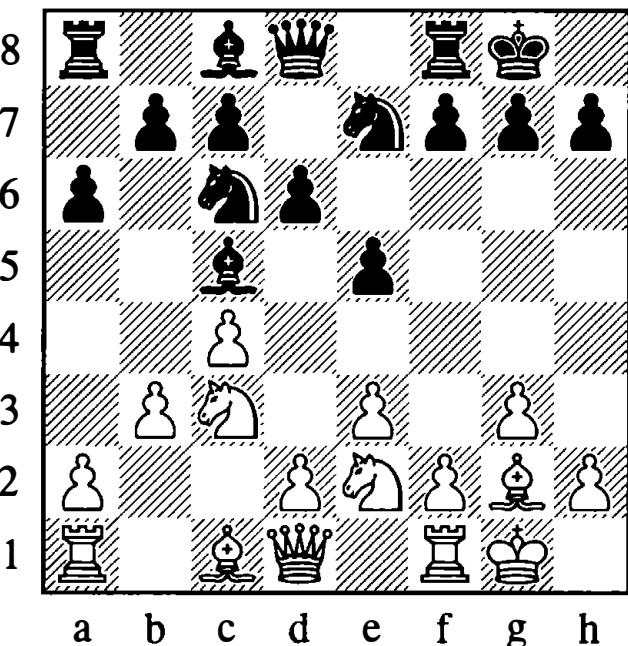
This leaves the bishop in an uncomfortable position after:

7.d4 $\mathbb{Q}b6$ 8.0–0 $\mathbb{Q}f5$ 9.b3 $\mathbb{E}e8$ 10. $\mathbb{Q}a3$ exd4
11. $\mathbb{Q}xd4$ $\mathbb{Q}xd4$ 12.exd4 c6 13.d5±

In view of his weak d6-pawn, Black will most likely have to make a concession, such as ...c6-c5, which would leave the bishop passive on b6, or ...c6xd5 when Black has a bad structure after $\mathbb{Q}c3xd5$.

7.0–0 0–0 8.b3

We are familiar with this way of developing. White avoids prematurely occupying the centre and prepares $\mathbb{Q}b2$, while also consolidating the c4-pawn.

8... $\mathbb{Q}f5$

This is the best way to develop the bishop: 8... $\mathbb{Q}g4$ simply loses a tempo to 9.h3±.

9.d4 $\mathbb{Q}a7$

White retains the better structure and a space advantage after 9...exd4 10. $\mathbb{Q}xd4$ $\mathbb{Q}g6$ 11. $\mathbb{Q}b2$ $\mathbb{Q}a7$ 12. $\mathbb{Q}xc6$ bxc6 (Black denies the white knight access to d5) 13. $\mathbb{Q}e2\pm$.

10. $\mathbb{Q}b2$

This is the most constructive move, but White also has another route to a pleasant position:

10.dxe5 dxe5

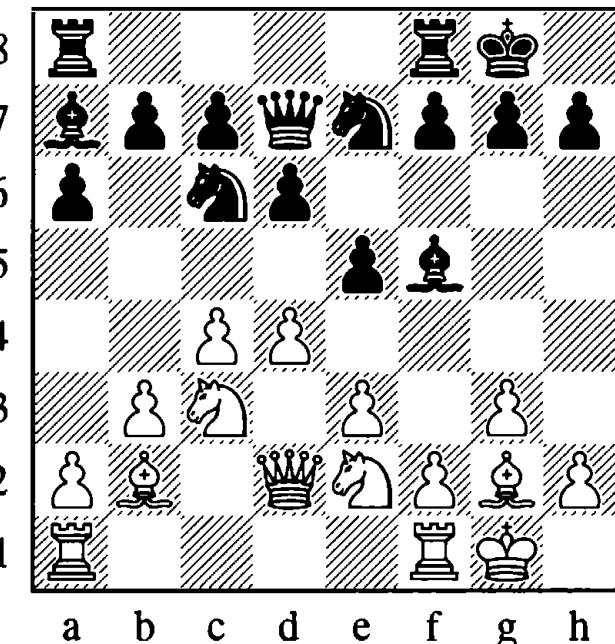
10... $\mathbb{Q}xe5$ loses a pawn after 11. $\mathbb{Q}xb7\pm$.

11. $\mathbb{Q}a3$ $\mathbb{E}e8$ 12. $\mathbb{W}xd8$ $\mathbb{E}axd8$ 13. $\mathbb{E}fd1\pm$

The continuing threat of $\mathbb{Q}c3-d5$ leaves Black under pressure, while the a7-bishop is passive.

10. $\mathbb{Q}a3!$? is an interesting alternative, aiming to put pressure on the e7-knight after d4xe5 ...d6xe5.

10... $\mathbb{W}d7$ 11. $\mathbb{W}d2$



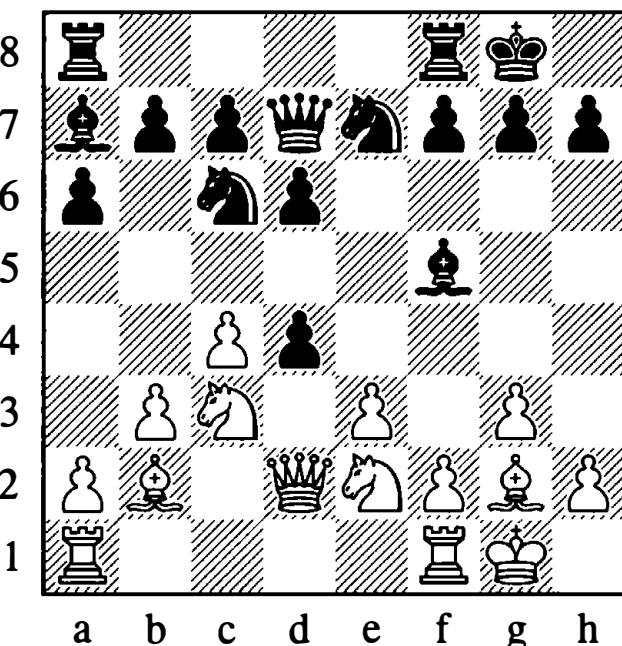
White continues developing, keeping both his main threats (d4-d5 and d4xe5) in reserve.

11...exd4

This looks like a good moment to release the tension, in order to parry White's aforementioned threats.

If 11... $\mathbb{Q}h3$ 12. $\mathbb{Q}xh3$ $\mathbb{W}xh3$ then White would open the centre with 13. $\mathbb{Q}d5$ $\mathbb{W}d7$ 14.dxe5 \pm .

Mechanically completing development with 11... $\mathbb{E}ad8$ is best met by 12.d5 $\mathbb{Q}b8$ 13.f4 \pm . Note that the move $\mathbb{W}d2$ has been quite useful, because the e3-pawn is defended. Black needs a couple of tempos to re-develop his queen's knight. Meanwhile, White can develop his kingside initiative with $\mathbb{Q}h1$ and e4.



12. $\mathbb{Q}xd4!$

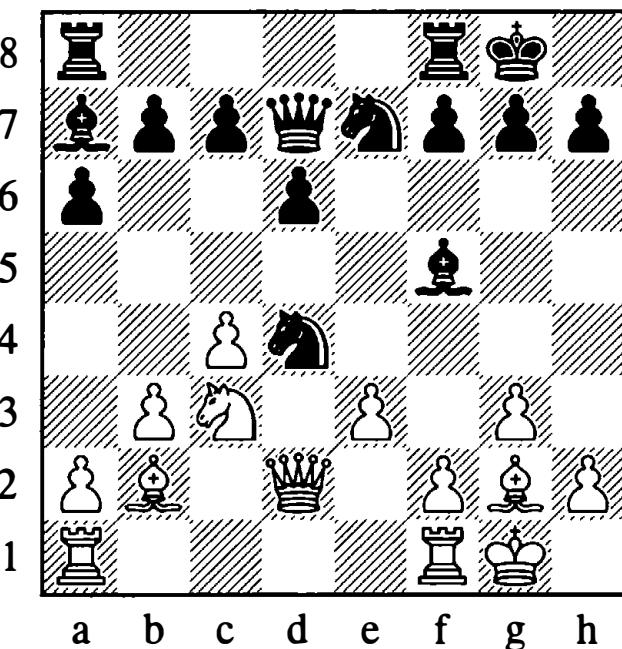
White needs to put pressure on the enemy queenside.

After 12.exd4 $\mathbb{Q}h3=$, threatening ... $\mathbb{Q}xg2$ followed by ...d5, Black has a viable position.

12... $\mathbb{Q}xd4$

12... $\mathbb{Q}h3$ leaves White with a favourable central configuration after: 13. $\mathbb{Q}xc6$ $\mathbb{Q}xc6$ (13... $\mathbb{B}xc6$ takes the d5-square under control, but creates permanent weaknesses: 14. $\mathbb{E}ad1\pm$) 14. $\mathbb{Q}xh3$ $\mathbb{W}xh3$ 15. $\mathbb{Q}d5\pm$

If 12... $\mathbb{Q}xd4$ 13.exd4 $\mathbb{Q}h3$ then White can open the diagonal for his b2-bishop with 14.d5 \pm , since there is no longer any danger along the g1-a7 diagonal.



13.exd4 c6

If Black tries:

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

Then he fails to exchange the light-squared bishops, as White answers:

14. $\mathbb{Q}xb7$

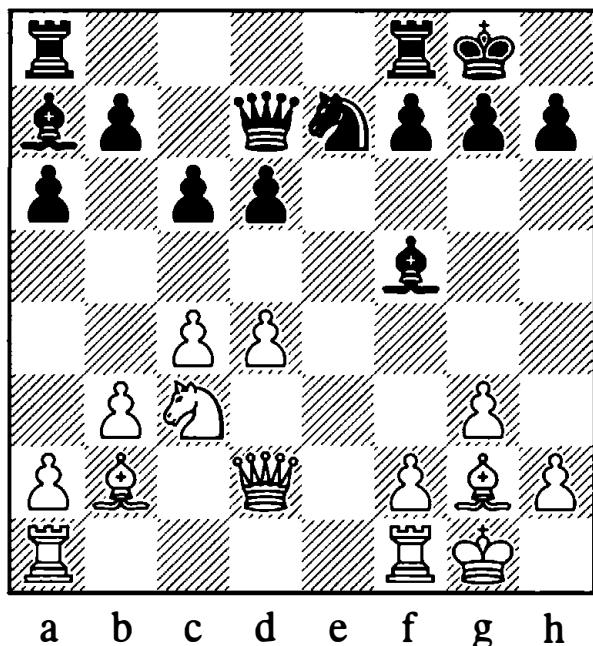
Although Black can maintain material equality with:

14... $\mathbb{Q}xf1$ 15. $\mathbb{Q}xa8$ $\mathbb{Q}xc4$

White keeps the more active position after:

16. $\mathbb{Q}f3$ $\mathbb{Q}e6$ 17. $\mathbb{Q}e1\pm$

A worthy alternative for White would be 15. $\mathbb{Q}xf1$, sacrificing an exchange for a pawn in order to gain unchallenged control of the light squares.

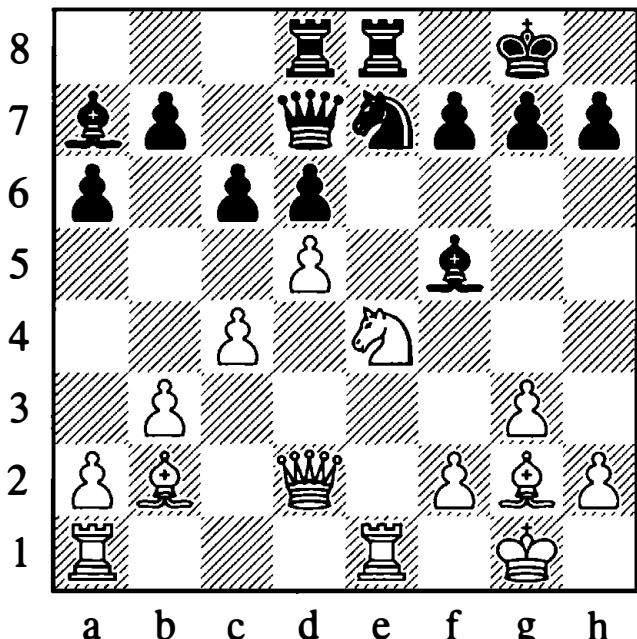
**14.d5!**

White prevents ...d6-d5, which would offer Black an almost equal position. The newly created tension in the centre clearly favours White. Just as in a previously examined position, Black has no favourable way to release the tension and has to endure long-term pressure.

14... $\mathbb{R}fe8$ 15. $\mathbb{R}fe1$ $\mathbb{R}ad8$ 16. $\mathbb{Q}e4!$

It was not clear yet where the queen's rook belongs, since $\mathbb{R}ad1$ could always be met by ... $\mathbb{Q}f5-g4$.

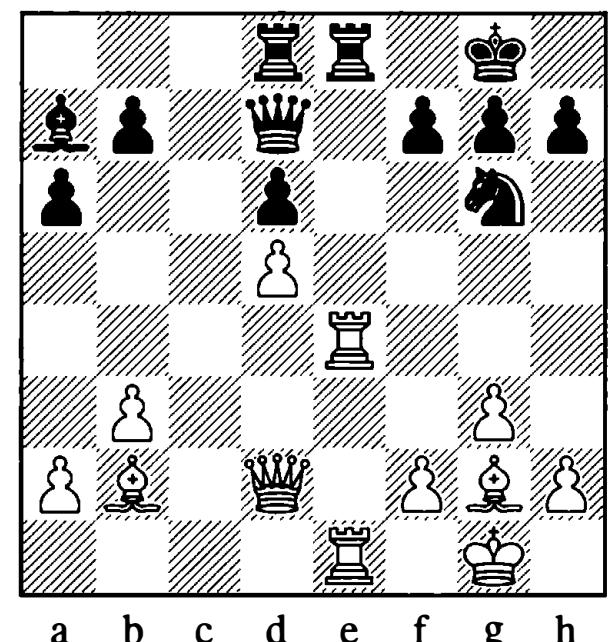
Therefore White activates his knight and queen's bishop.

**16... $\mathbb{Q}xe4$**

Black has to part with a bishop, because the e4-knight was too dangerous.

16... $cxd5?$ would allow 17. $\mathbb{Q}f6\#$! with a decisive attack: 17... $gxf6$ 18. $\mathbb{Q}xf6$ $\mathbb{Q}g6$ 19. $\mathbb{Q}xe7$ $\mathbb{Q}xe7$ 20. $\mathbb{W}h6+-$

16... $\mathbb{Q}g6$ leaves the d6-pawn vulnerable after 17. $dxc6$ $bxc6$ 18. $\mathbb{Q}ad1\pm$. Black cannot solve his problems with 18... $\mathbb{Q}g4?$ because of 19. $\mathbb{W}c3$ f6 20. $\mathbb{Q}xd6+-$. White has won a pawn and has a huge strategic advantage.

17. $\mathbb{Q}xe4$ $cxd5$ 18. $cxd5$ $\mathbb{Q}g6$ 19. $\mathbb{Q}ae1\pm$ 

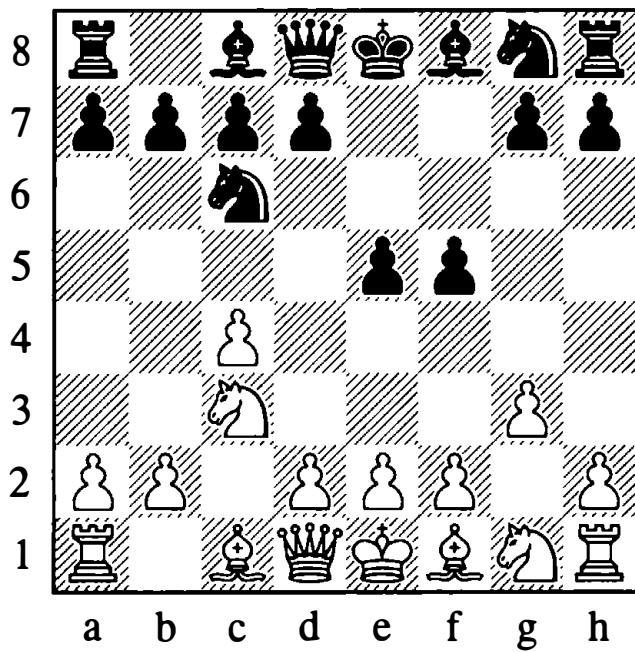
After the inevitable exchange of rooks, White will reach a favourable ending with an

active pair of bishops and a considerable space advantage in the centre.

We can conclude that Black does not achieve anything by refraining from the natural development of his king's knight.

(1.c4 e5 2.g3 $\mathbb{Q}c6$ 3. $\mathbb{Q}c3$)

B) 3...f5



This is an active and fairly flexible move. Black wins space on the kingside and maintains the possibility of developing his bishop to b4, c5 or g7, according to White's reaction. For a long time I considered it as some sort of punishment for White's move order based on 2.g3.

After 4. $\mathbb{Q}g2$ $\mathbb{Q}f6$ White faces a difficult choice.

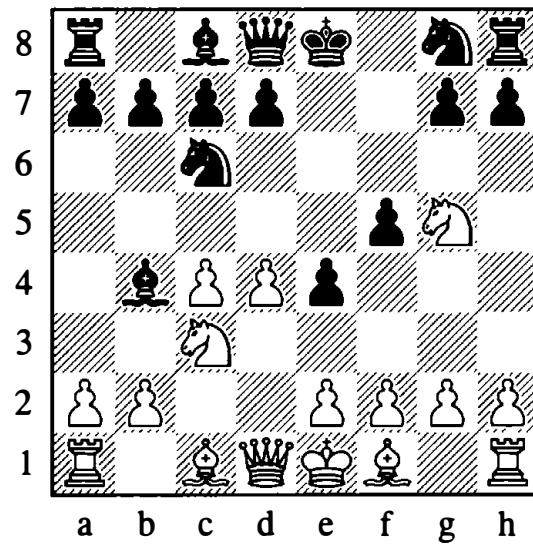
5.e3 prematurely weakens the d3-square, allowing Black to open the centre with 5...d5 6.cxd5 $\mathbb{Q}b4$ with approximate equality.

5.d3 allows 5... $\mathbb{Q}b4$, reducing White's influence over the d5- and e4-squares.

Finally, the half-waiting move 5.a3 is answered by 5...g6, when the usefulness of the move

a2-a3 remains debatable, at least if we wish to transpose to the Botvinnik system.

In order to get a full picture of the ...f7-f5 system, it is useful to know that theory considers that after 2. $\mathbb{Q}c3$ $\mathbb{Q}c6$ 3. $\mathbb{Q}f3$ f5, White's most active answer is 4.d4. This is far from clear though, because after 4...e4 5. $\mathbb{Q}g5$ $\mathbb{Q}b4$ White cannot avoid getting doubled pawns on the c-file, which offers Black a clear target for counterplay.

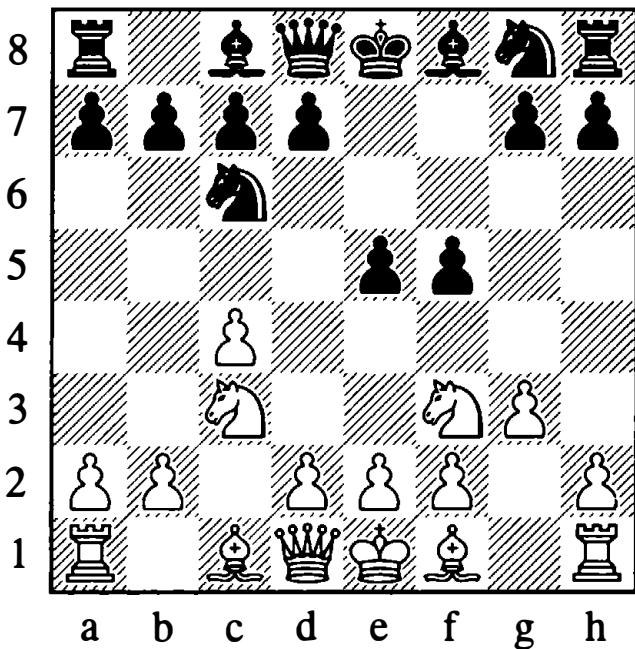


I was not satisfied with such prospects, and discovered the merits of the move 4.g3 (instead of 4.d4). Since the same position can be reached via the 2.g3 move order, we can state quite happily that 3...f5 does not restrict White's possibilities in any way.

4. $\mathbb{Q}f3$!

This move, transposing to the afore mentioned line, is White's only chance of keeping the initiative. White is ready to meet ...e4 with $\mathbb{Q}h4$, attacking the f5-pawn and getting ready to open the centre with d2-d3. In case of emergency, the knight can retreat to g2, taking advantage of the fact that the f1-bishop has not developed yet.

The main threat of the last move is d2-d4, in order to meet ...e4 with $\mathbb{Q}h4$, soon followed by f2-f3. We can feel the hypermodern spirit of White's approach: he allows Black to build up an advanced pawn centre, and then starts undermining it with all his energy.



We will examine B1) 4...e4, B2) 4...d6, B3) 4...g6 and B4) 4... $\mathbb{Q}f6$.

4... $\mathbb{Q}c5$ cannot be recommended because of 5.e3, threatening d2-d4. After 5...e4 6.d4 $\mathbb{Q}b4$ 7. $\mathbb{Q}d2\pm$ followed by f2-f3, Black's loss of a tempo in a sharp position will make itself felt, even if he spoils White's queenside structure with ... $\mathbb{Q}b4xc3$.

4... $\mathbb{Q}e7$

This is occasionally played, with the aim of preventing $\mathbb{Q}h4$. The drawback of this move is that it commits the bishop too soon.

5. $\mathbb{Q}g2$ $\mathbb{Q}f6$

5...e4 6. $\mathbb{Q}g1$ $\mathbb{Q}f6$ 7.d3 exd3 8. $\mathbb{W}xd3$ 0-0

9. $\mathbb{Q}f3$ leaves Black without any central pawns and with a passive bishop on e7.

6.0-0 0-0 7.d4 d6

7...e4 8. $\mathbb{Q}g5$ is likely to transpose to line B2 after 8...d6. Black is not ready to occupy the centre with 8...d5?! because of 9.cxd5 $\mathbb{Q}xd5$ 10. $\mathbb{W}b3\pm$.

8.d5!

This is the best way to release the tension, since the knight cannot retreat to the more favourable e7- or d8-squares.

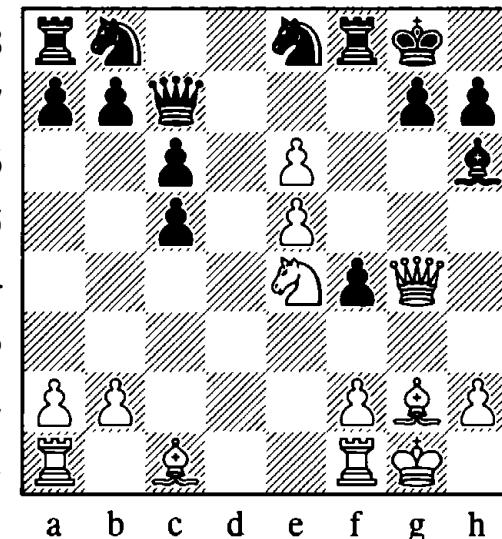
8... $\mathbb{Q}b8$ 9. $\mathbb{Q}g5$!

White is better developed and starts fighting for the light squares, even though this will lead to an unusual structure.

9... $\mathbb{Q}e8$ 10. $\mathbb{Q}e6$ $\mathbb{Q}xe6$ 11.dxe6 c6 12.e4!

An important move, forcing Black to open the h3-a6 diagonal.

12...f4 13.gxf4 exf4 14. $\mathbb{W}g4$ $\mathbb{Q}g5$ 15.c5 dxc5 16.e5 $\mathbb{Q}h6$ 17. $\mathbb{Q}e4$ $\mathbb{W}c7$



This position was reached in Miezis - Williams, Liverpool 2008. White should have continued his development with:

18. $\mathbb{Q}d2!N$ $\mathbb{W}xe5$ 19. $\mathbb{Q}c3$ $\mathbb{W}f5$ 20.f3!

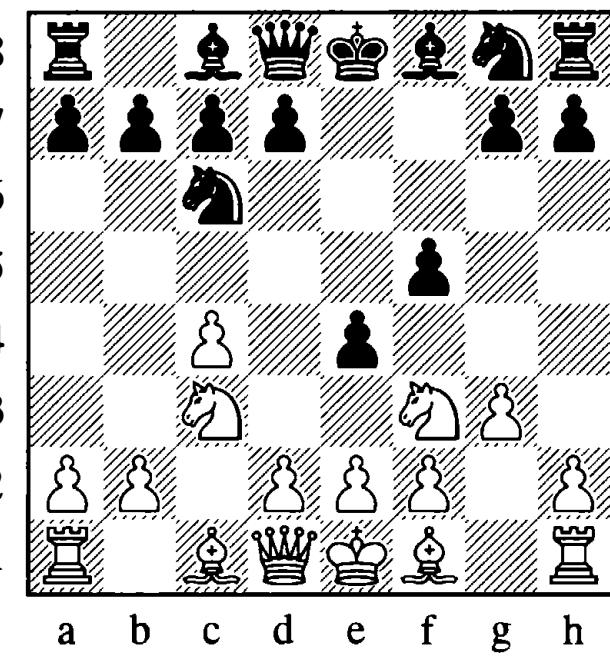
An original way to maintain the tension; an exchange on g4 would endanger the h6-bishop.

20... $\mathbb{Q}a6$ 21. $\mathbb{Q}ad1\pm$

White is much better developed and has a dangerous e-pawn. Black's extra pawns have little significance.

(1.c4 e5 2.g3 $\mathbb{Q}c6$ 3. $\mathbb{Q}c3$ f5 4. $\mathbb{Q}f3$)

B1) 4...e4



This is premature, but understandable from a psychological point of view: White's last move looks so provocative that one may be inclined to test its correctness.

5. $\mathbb{Q}h4$

Black has no favourable way to keep a grip on the centre after the inevitable d2-d3. For the time being, he has to defend his f5-pawn.

5...g6

Black aims for a Leningrad Dutch set-up.

Alternatively, he could harass the knight with:
 5...d6 6.d3 $\mathbb{Q}e7$ 7. $\mathbb{Q}g2$ $\mathbb{Q}f6$ 8. $\mathbb{Q}f4$ $\mathbb{Q}e5$
 9. $\mathbb{Q}g2$

White has the more harmonious development and Black's centre is vulnerable. The main threat is b2-b3 followed by dx e 4.

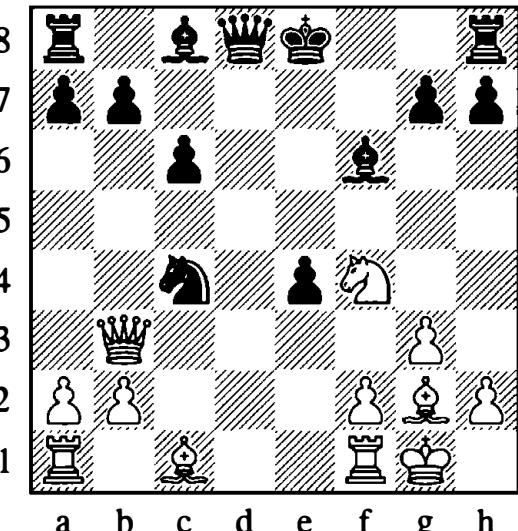
9...c6

Planning to consolidate in the centre with ...d6-d5.

10. dx e 4 fx e 4 11. $\mathbb{Q}xe4$ $\mathbb{Q}xc4$ 12. 0-0 d5
 13. $\mathbb{Q}xf6\#$ $\mathbb{Q}xf6$ 14. e4!

White opens the centre, underlining Black's lagging development and the hanging position of his knight.

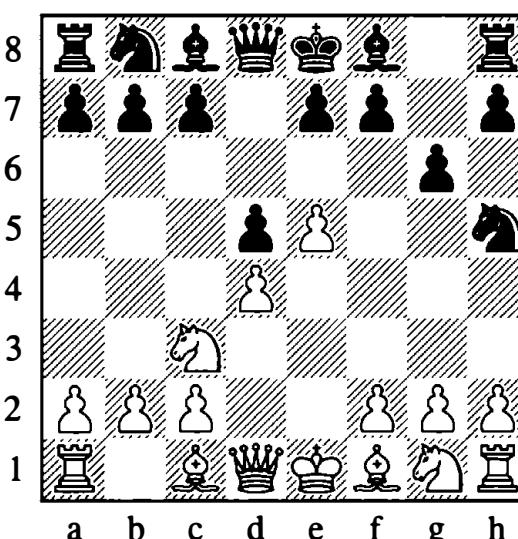
14...dx e 4 15. $\mathbb{W}b3\pm$



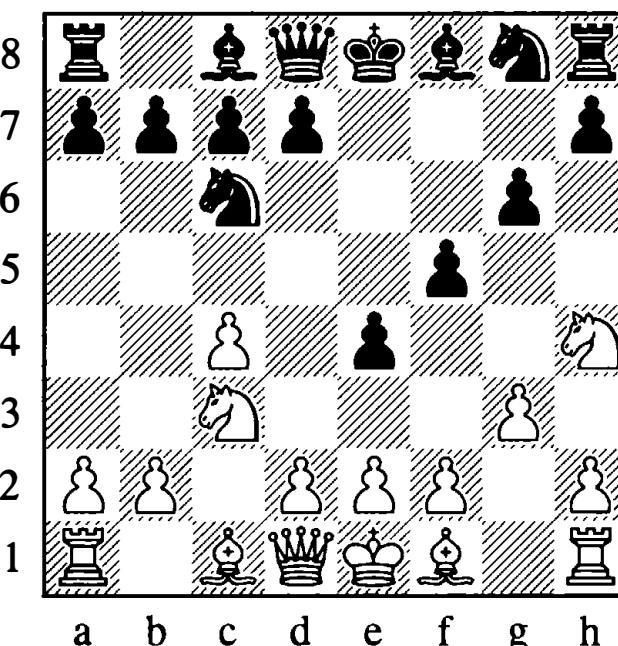
White has a strong initiative, which more than compensates for the missing pawn. His king is safer and his pieces more active, which

is especially significant in a position with an open centre, Miles – McMahon, Lisbon 2000.

I am not surprised to find a game played by Tony Miles in this line. In his later years he experimented with the following, let's call it *ultra-hypermodern*, opening with Black: 1.e4 g6 2.d4 $\mathbb{Q}f6$ 3. $\mathbb{Q}c3$ d5 4.e5 $\mathbb{Q}h5$ Is this The Norwegian Rat, or perhaps this name only refers to the closely related variation 1.e4 g6 2.d4 $\mathbb{Q}f6$ 3.e5 $\mathbb{Q}h5$.

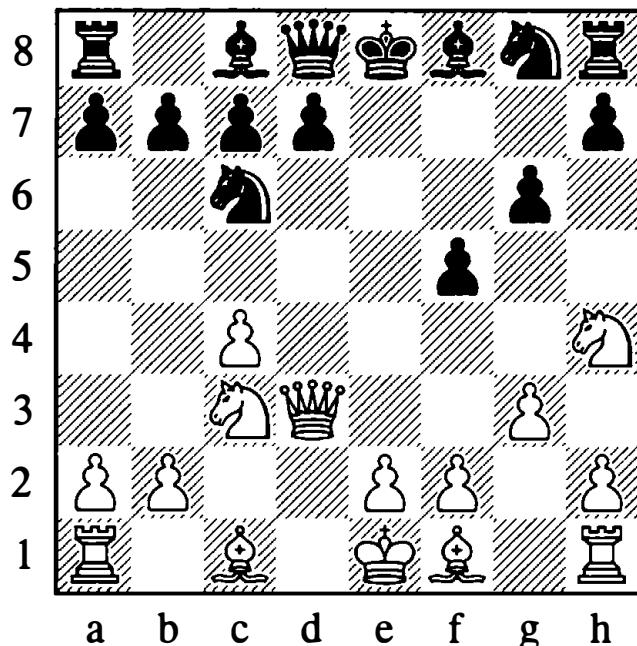


True, this line looks rather exaggerated, because Black's control in the centre is insufficient to compensate for the time that will have to be spent re-activating his knight.



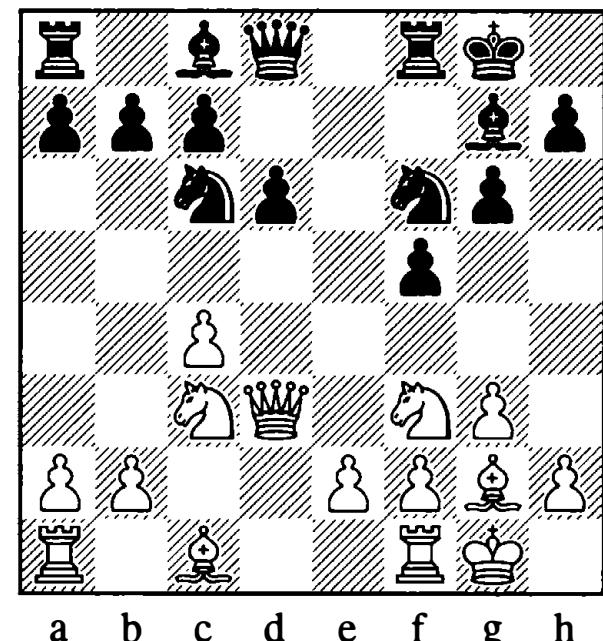
6. d3 exd3 7. $\mathbb{W}xd3$

White has eliminated the courageous enemy pawn and kept a space advantage. The h4-knight can now return to the centre.



7... $\mathbb{Q}f6$ 8. $\mathbb{Q}g2$ $\mathbb{Q}g7$ 9.0-0 0-0 10. $\mathbb{Q}f3$ d6

Both sides have completed their development with natural moves. It is interesting to compare this position with a tabiya of the Leningrad Dutch that arises after: 1.d4 f5 2.g3 $\mathbb{Q}f6$ 3. $\mathbb{Q}g2$ g6 4. $\mathbb{Q}f3$ $\mathbb{Q}g7$ 5.0-0 0-0 6.c4 d6 7. $\mathbb{Q}c3$ $\mathbb{Q}c6$ 8.d5 $\mathbb{Q}a5$ 9. $\mathbb{W}d3$ e5 10.dxe6 $\mathbb{Q}xe6$ 11.b3 $\mathbb{Q}c6$ This is considered to slightly favour White, because of his space advantage. From our English Opening line, play would transpose to the Dutch after 11.b3 $\mathbb{Q}e6$, but White can play more actively.



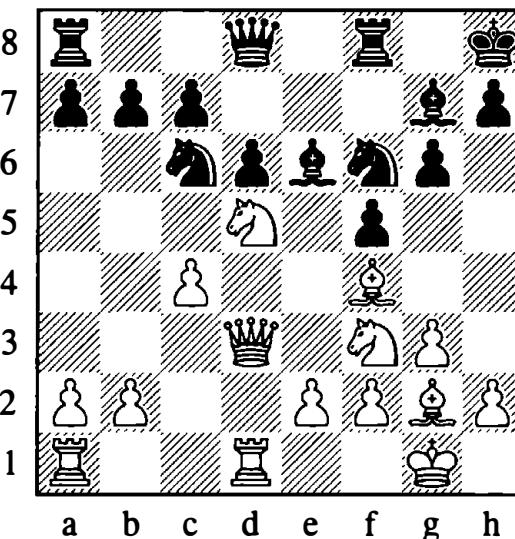
11. $\mathbb{Q}f4!$ $\mathbb{Q}h8$

Black prepares ... $\mathbb{Q}e6$, allowing the bishop to retreat to g8 in case of $\mathbb{Q}g5$.

12.c5!?

White is better developed and tries to open the position. The structural modification provoked by his last move weakens Black's dark squares, but does not increase White's advantage.

The more restrained 12. $\mathbb{B}fd1!?$ N is a worthy alternative: 12... $\mathbb{Q}e6$ 13. $\mathbb{Q}d5\pm$



White has strong pressure in the centre. The d5-knight restricts Black's active possibilities, while an exchange on this square would open the c-file after cxd5, leaving Black with a backward pawn on c7.

12...d5

Black keeps the position closed and wins some space with his d-pawn.

According to Gleizerov, 12...dxc5 would have been worse on account of 13. $\mathbb{W}xd8$ $\mathbb{B}xd8$ 14. $\mathbb{Q}xc7\pm$. Black is underdeveloped and his position has many weaknesses.

13. $\mathbb{B}ad1$

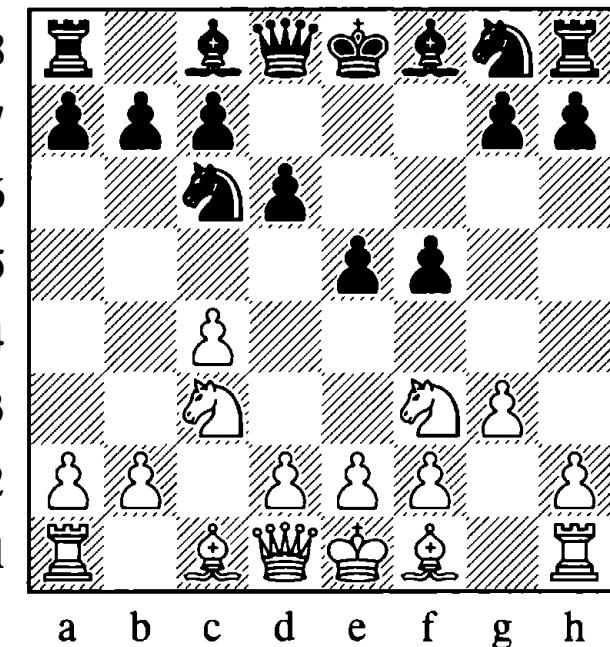
Before starting his play on the dark squares, White develops his last piece.

13... $\mathbb{Q}e6$ 14. $\mathbb{Q}b5$ $\mathbb{Q}c8$ 15. $\mathbb{Q}e5$ $\mathbb{Q}xe5$ 16. $\mathbb{Q}xe5$ c6 17. $\mathbb{Q}d6\pm$

White dominates the dark squares, but Black's position is solid, Sorokin – Gleizerov, Calcutta 1999.

(1.c4 e5 2.g3 $\mathbb{Q}c6$ 3. $\mathbb{Q}c3$ f5 4. $\mathbb{Q}f3$)

B2) 4...d6!?



This innocent looking move has been successfully employed by Nigel Short. Black anticipates the knight hop to h4 by defending the f5-pawn. At the same time, he leaves the h4-d8 diagonal available for his bishop, with the idea of chasing the knight with ... $\mathbb{Q}e7$.

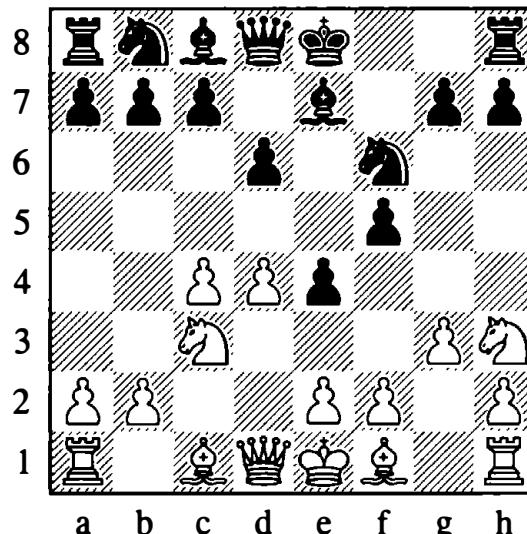
5.d4 e4 6. $\mathbb{Q}g5!$?

A necessary deviation from the initial plans.

Short's games have proved that 6.d5 $\mathbb{Q}e5$ is not dangerous for Black.

After the standard plan of 6. $\mathbb{Q}h4$ White has problems finding an optimal move after 6...g6, since $\mathbb{Q}g5$ is no longer possible.

In order to understand the merits of the text move, we will resort to a comparison with the similar variation: 1.c4 e5 2. $\mathbb{Q}c3$ d6 3. $\mathbb{Q}f3$ f5 4.d4 e4 5. $\mathbb{Q}g5$ $\mathbb{Q}e7$ 6. $\mathbb{Q}h3$ $\mathbb{Q}f6$ 7.g3



This is considered to be playable with both colours, but I doubt that White can prove an objective advantage. Black will develop with ...c7-c6 and ... $\mathbb{Q}a6-c7$, maintaining a flexible position.

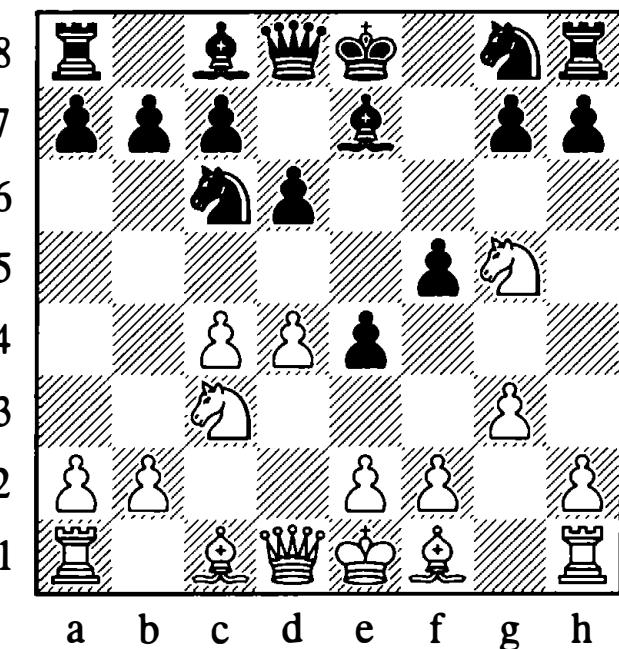
In our current variation the presence of the knight on c6 represents an important commitment. Black cannot easily connect his pawns with ...c7-c6 and ...d6-d5, while the d5-square may be occupied by a white knight in the near future.

Black has tried B21) 6... $\mathbb{Q}e7$ and B22) 6...h6.

6...g6 would transpose to a comment from line B3, page 248.

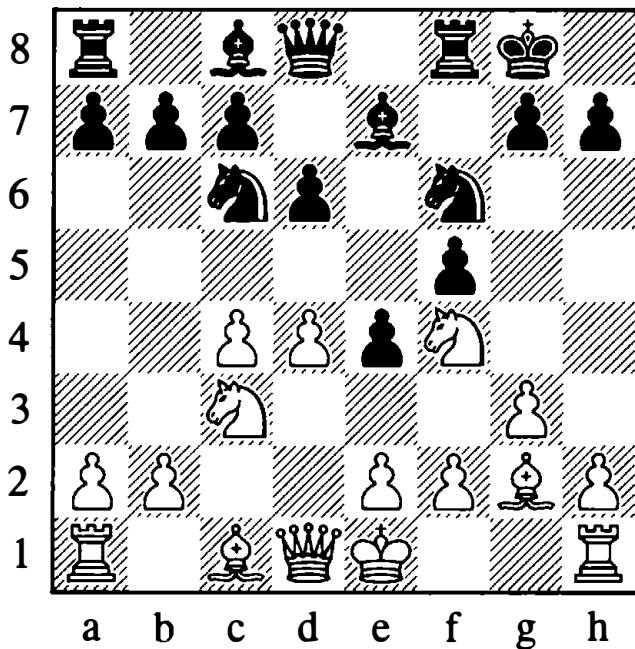
(1.c4 e5 2.g3 $\mathbb{Q}c6$ 3. $\mathbb{Q}c3$ f5 4. $\mathbb{Q}f3$ d6!?
5.d4 e4 6. $\mathbb{Q}g5$)

B21) 6... $\mathbb{Q}e7$



7. $\mathbb{Q}h3$ $\mathbb{Q}f6$ 8. $\mathbb{Q}f4!$

It is important to play this move immediately to prevent ...d6-d5.

8...0-0 9. $\mathbb{Q}g2$ 

White's position is more flexible. He has two main threats, namely $\mathbb{Q}c$ (or f)-d5 and f2-f3. Black is struggling to display any form of activity.

9... $\mathbb{Q}h8$

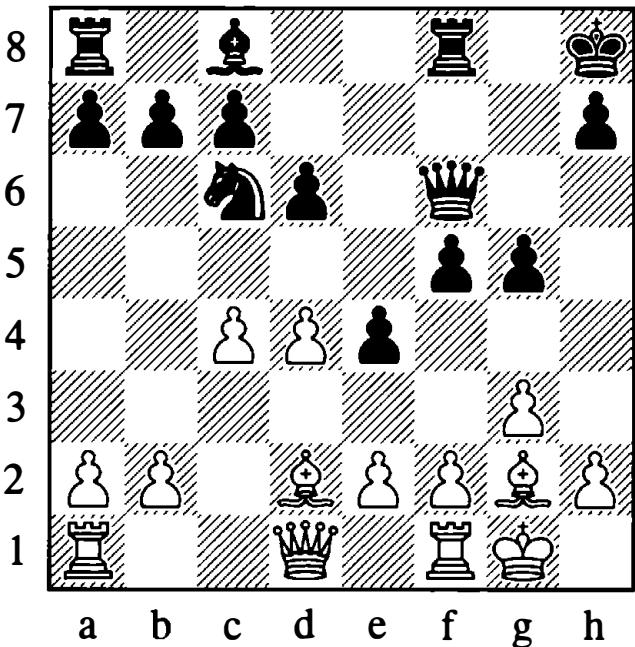
In the event of slow piece manoeuvring, Black risks being suffocated, as happened in the following game: 9... $\mathbb{W}e8$ 10.0-0 $\mathbb{W}f7$ 11.b3 $\mathbb{Q}d7$ 12.f3 exf3 13.exf3 $\mathbb{Q}ae8$ 14. $\mathbb{Q}b5$ $\mathbb{Q}d8$ 15.d5 $\mathbb{Q}e5$ 16. $\mathbb{Q}d4\pm$ The occupation of the e6-square by a white knight will paralyse Black, Negulescu – Nicolaide, Romania (ch) 1988.

10.0-0 g5 11. $\mathbb{Q}fd5$ $\mathbb{Q}xd5$ 12. $\mathbb{Q}xd5$

After the opening of the long diagonal and the inevitable exchange of Black's dark-squared bishop, the black king will be vulnerable.

12... $\mathbb{Q}f6$ 13. $\mathbb{Q}xf6$ $\mathbb{W}xf6$ 14. $\mathbb{Q}d2!$

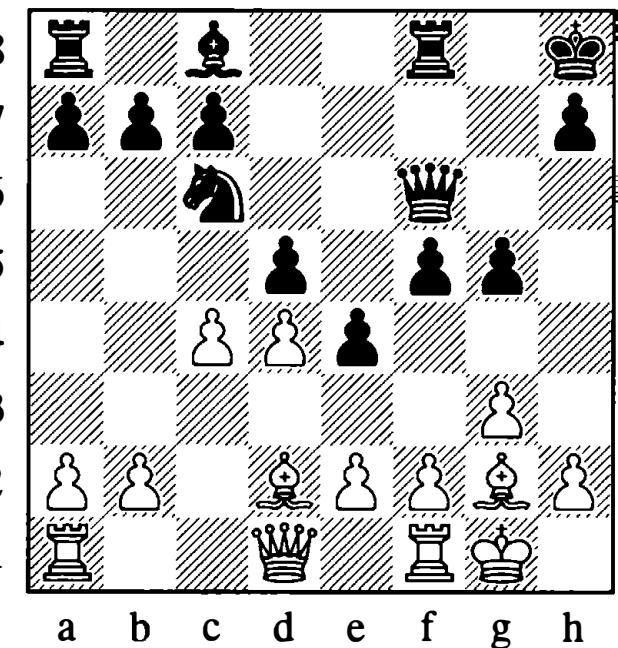
This is stronger than 14.b3, when after $\mathbb{Q}c1-b2$ White would still need to spend a tempo to defend the bishop in order to create the threat of d4-d5. After $\mathbb{Q}d2-c3$, the bishop will already be defended.

**14...d5**

The desire to keep the long diagonal closed is understandable, but this move is tactically flawed. However, it is hard to give reliable advice to Black:

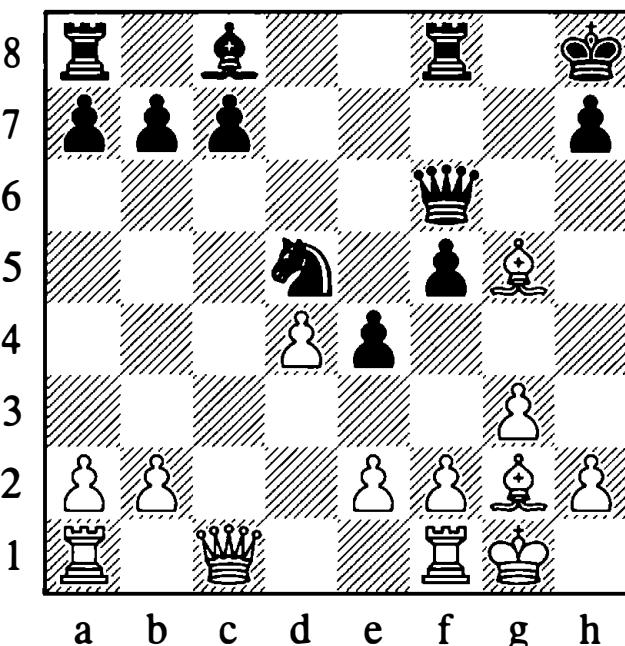
14... $\mathbb{Q}xd4?$ loses the knight after 15. $\mathbb{Q}c3$ c5 16.e3+–.

It was best to continue developing with 14... $\mathbb{Q}d7$, although after 15. $\mathbb{Q}c3$ $\mathbb{Q}ae8$ 16.d5 $\mathbb{Q}e5$ 17. $\mathbb{W}d4$ b6 18. $\mathbb{Q}ae1\pm$, followed by f2-f4, the position would open in White's favour.

**15.cxd5 $\mathbb{Q}e7$ 16. $\mathbb{W}c1!$**

Black cannot simultaneously defend the c7- and g5-pawns.

16...Qxd5 17.Qxg5±



White has won a pawn and retained the more compact structure, Conquest – O. Jackson, Liverpool 2006. Black cannot win back his pawn with:

17...Wxd4?

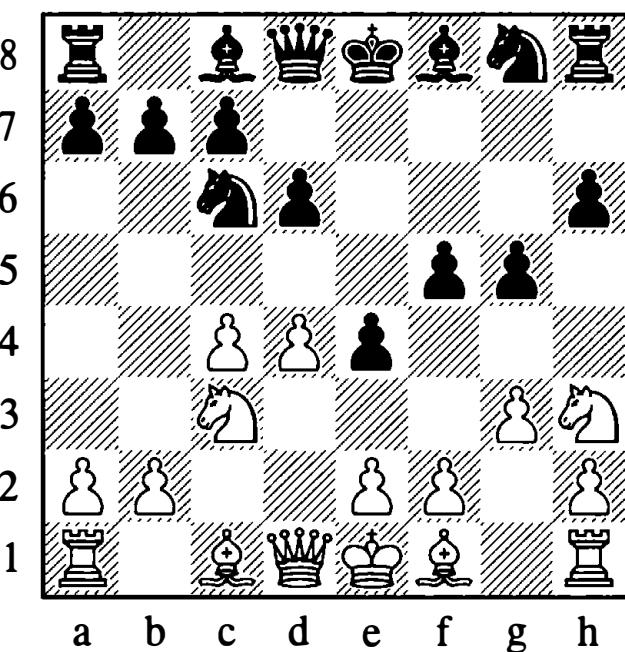
Due to:

18.Bd1 We5 19.Wc5 Qe6

And now 20.Qf4 or 20.Qe3 are both killing. Naturally, retribution arrives on the dark squares.

(1.c4 e5 2.g3 Qc6 3.Qc3 f5 4.Qf3 d6!
5.d4 e4 6.Qg5)

B22) 6...h6 7.Qh3 g5



This ambitious attempt to isolate the h3-knight fails because of Black's lack of development, which makes such an early expansion unjustified.

8.d5!N

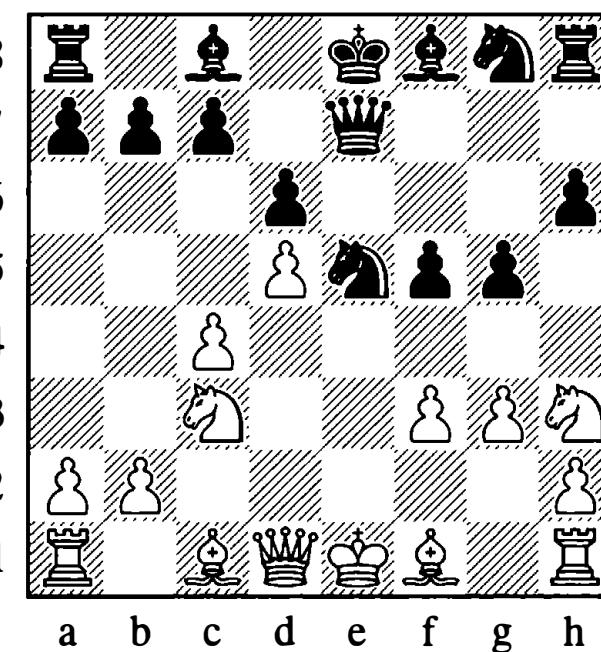
This is better than 8.f3 as played in Korchnoi – Hodgson, Groningen 1996. By reversing the order of the planned operations (attacking the c6-knight and undermining the e4-pawn), White gets better results.

8...Qe5 9.f4 exf3

9...gxf4 offers White excellent stability and easier development after 10.Qxf4 Qf6 11.Qh3 c6 12.Wb3±. White will play Qc1-d2 (or to e3), 0–0–0 and Whf1, with strong pressure.

10.exf3 We7

It may seem that this move causes White some problems, but, paradoxically, the discovered check is not especially threatening.



11.f4!!

From a strategic point of view, this is the most natural move, aiming to conquer the f4-square for the h3-knight. The double exclamation mark is for the aesthetic value of the move. Ignoring two double checks, and several other discovered checks, at such an early phase of the

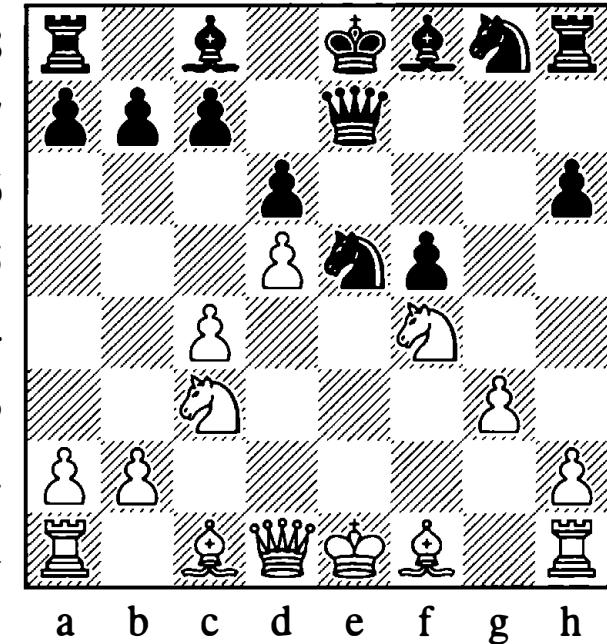
game recreates some of the romantic spirit of the King's Gambit.

11...gx f 4

White's main point is that if 11... $\mathbb{Q}xc4\#?$ 12. $\mathbb{Q}f2$ $\mathbb{Q}b6$ White completes his development with decisive effect after 13. $\mathbb{Q}b5\#$ $\mathbb{Q}f7$ 14. $\mathbb{Q}e1+-$.

12. $\mathbb{Q}xf4$

White has improved his position and the discovered checks are still not dangerous – they would only shake Black's stability in the centre.



12... $\mathbb{Q}f6$ 13. $\mathbb{W}e2$ $\mathbb{Q}d7$ 14. $\mathbb{Q}d2$ $\mathbb{Q}f3\#$

Finally, Black has to make use of this battery. With his last move he exchanges one of the enemy bishops and deprives the white king of the right to castle.

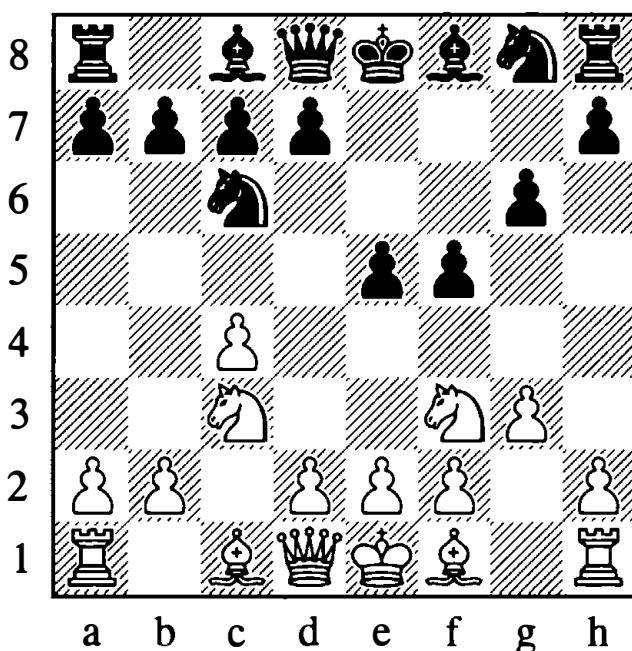
Neutral play would leave Black passively placed. For example: 14...0–0–0 15.0–0–0 $\mathbb{Q}g7$ 16. $\mathbb{Q}g2\pm$ White will have a lasting advantage, because of his extra space and the weakness of the f5-pawn and e6-square.

15. $\mathbb{Q}d1$ $\mathbb{Q}xd2$ 16. $\mathbb{Q}xd2\pm$

Black has obtained the bishop pair and prevented the enemy king from castling, but White remains in control of the position.

(1.c4 e5 2.g3 $\mathbb{Q}c6$ 3. $\mathbb{Q}c3$ f5 4. $\mathbb{Q}f3$)

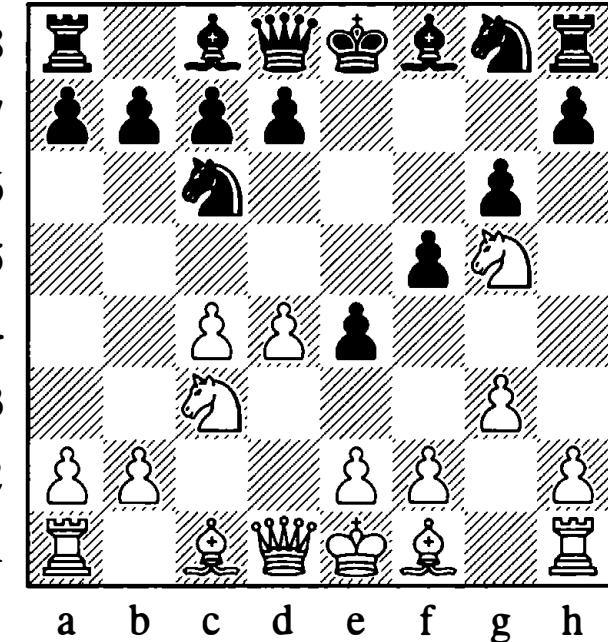
B3) 4...g6



This move has similar ideas to 4...d6: Black delays the development of the g8-knight to discourage an early $\mathbb{Q}g5$. White's antidote remains the same as in the previous line.

5.d4 e4 6. $\mathbb{Q}g5!$

6. $\mathbb{Q}h4$ offers Black a good game after 6... $\mathbb{Q}g7$ 7.d5 $\mathbb{Q}e5=$.



6... $\mathbb{Q}b4$

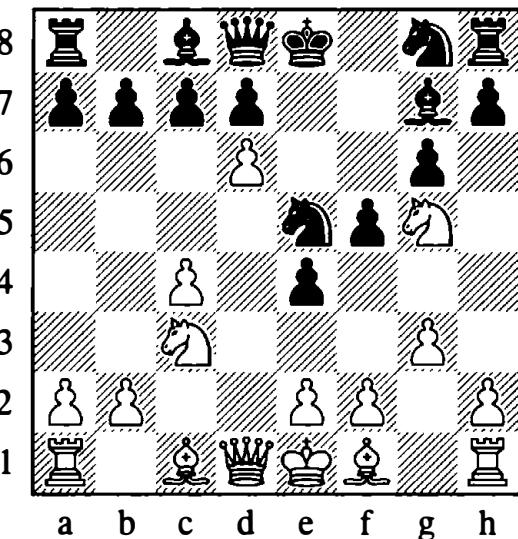
This is the standard reaction in the line without g3 and ...g6, but the insertion of these moves significantly changes the evaluation.

We shall consider two alternatives.

6... $\mathbb{Q}g7$

This leaves the d6-square insufficiently defended.

7.d5 $\mathbb{Q}e5$ 8.d6



8... $\mathbb{Q}xc4$

This looks like the best try: Black grabs a pawn and attacks the courageous d6-pawn. Black would be almost paralysed after 8...c6 9.f3 $\mathbb{Q}xc4$ 10.fxe4.

9. $\mathbb{W}a4!$

This paradoxical move is strong.

If White was forced to release the tension with 9.dxc7 then Black would have chances to complete his development properly.

10... $\mathbb{Q}xd6$

Black has to eliminate the pawn.

10... $\mathbb{Q}b6$ would be strongly met by 11. $\mathbb{W}b3!$, threatening mate on f7, as well as $\mathbb{Q}b5$. 11... $\mathbb{Q}xc3\#$ 12.bxc3 $\mathbb{Q}h6$ 13.a4! Both black knights are miserably placed, as they are vulnerable to threats of a5 or $\mathbb{Q}xe4$. The dark squares in Black's camp are also desperately weak.

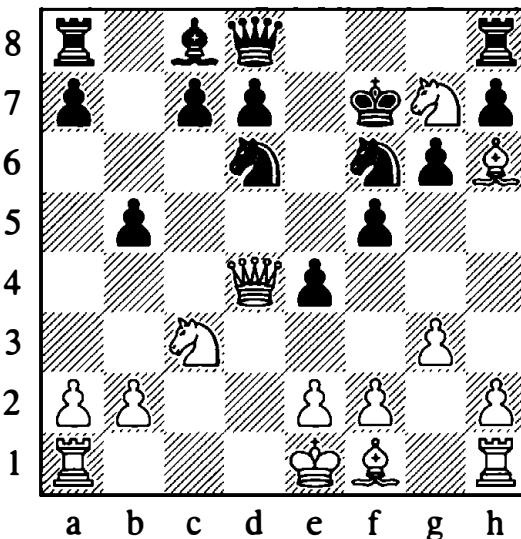
10. $\mathbb{Q}e6!$

This is one of the basic ideas of White's previous move: the d7-pawn is pinned.

10... $b5$

Practically forced: if Black's queen moved then White's knight would take on c7 then a8.

11. $\mathbb{Q}xg7\#$ $\mathbb{Q}f7$ 12. $\mathbb{W}d4$ $\mathbb{Q}f6$ 13. $\mathbb{Q}h6$



White's extra piece is trapped, but the essential feature of the position is that the black king is vulnerable, since the dark squares lack their natural defender, the g7-bishop.

6...d6

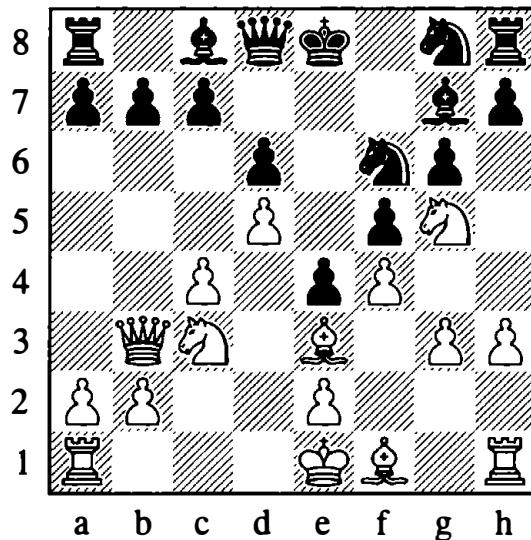
This can be met in two radically different ways:

7.d5

This is a straightforward approach.

The slower 7.h4 $\mathbb{Q}g7$ 8.e3 $\mathbb{Q}f6$ 9. $\mathbb{Q}e2$ 0-0 10. $\mathbb{Q}d2\pm$ also gives White the more flexible position.

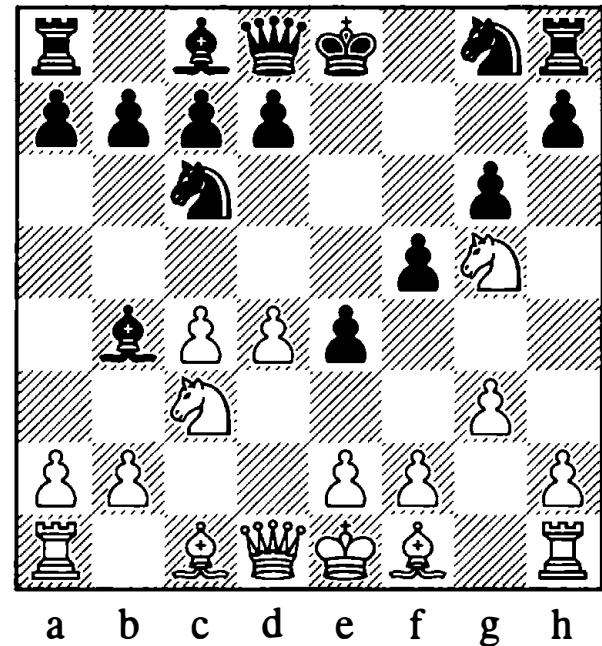
7... $\mathbb{Q}e5$ 8.f4 $\mathbb{Q}g4$ 9. $\mathbb{W}b3$ $\mathbb{Q}g7$ 10.h3 $\mathbb{Q}4f6$ 11. $\mathbb{Q}e3\pm$



White intends to activate his position with 0-0-0, $\mathbb{Q}d4$, g3-g4, e2-e3, $\mathbb{Q}e2$, etc. Whenever Black spends a tempo on the weakening move ...h7-h6, White would answer with $\mathbb{Q}g5-e6$.

2... $\mathbb{Q}c6$ 3. $\mathbb{Q}c3$

In some cases this may cost White a pawn, but his superior development would more than compensate for it.

7. $\mathbb{Q}d2!$

Without the prior weakening of the long dark diagonal, this move would have been ineffective. The d2-bishop would have been bound to the defence of the g5-knight, leaving White with doubled pawns after ... $\mathbb{Q}b4xc3$.

7... $\mathbb{Q}xd4$

Black has to act quickly, because otherwise the combination of ...g6 with ... $\mathbb{Q}b4$ would lead to a slow and painful demise.

7... $\mathbb{Q}xc3?!$ is met by 8. $\mathbb{Q}xc3!±$ when the threat of d4-d5 makes the g5-knight taboo.

7...h6

This would only help the knight reach a better square:

8. $\mathbb{Q}h3$ $\mathbb{Q}xd4$

8...g5 loses a pawn to 9.d5 $\mathbb{Q}e5$ 10. $\mathbb{Q}xe4$ $\mathbb{Q}e7$ 11. $\mathbb{Q}c3±$.

9. $\mathbb{Q}f4!$

The knight heads for d5.

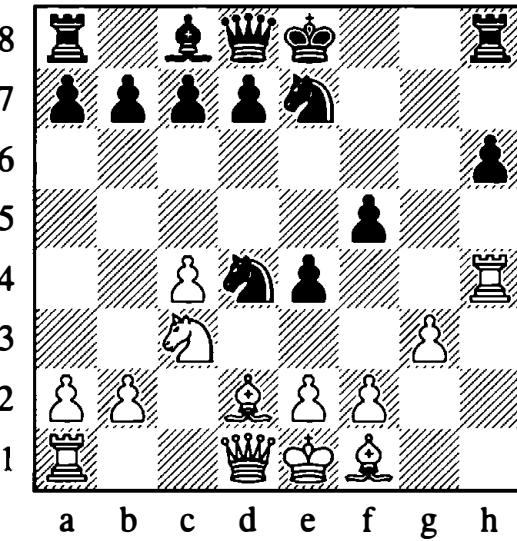
9. $\mathbb{Q}xe4?$ would be strongly met by 9... $\mathbb{W}e7!.$

9...g5 10. $\mathbb{Q}fd5$ $\mathbb{Q}e7$ 11.h4!

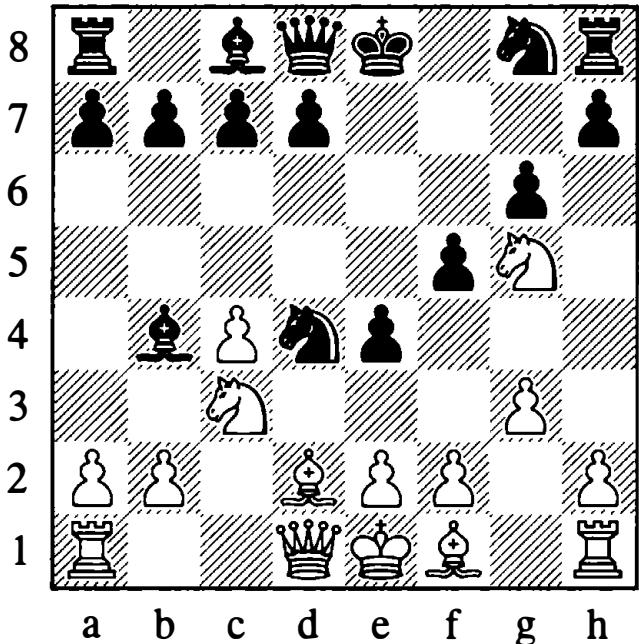
White finally ruins Black's structure.

11...gxh4

11...g4 allows White to retrieve the pawn with 12. $\mathbb{Q}xh6±$, while keeping a grip on the dark squares.

12. $\mathbb{Q}xe7$ $\mathbb{Q}xe7$ 13. $\mathbb{Q}xh4$ 

Black's weakened structure and poor development, plus White's strong dark-squared bishop, more than compensates for the pawn deficit.

8. $\mathbb{Q}cxe4$

This thematic blow restores material equality and eliminates Black's most advanced pawn.

8... $\mathbb{W}e7$

Black tries to stay in the game by answering the tactical operation with developing moves.

Instead 8... $\mathbb{Q}xd2†$ 9. $\mathbb{W}xd2$ $\mathbb{Q}xe4$ 10. $\mathbb{W}xd4$ would reveal another drawback of ...g7-g6:

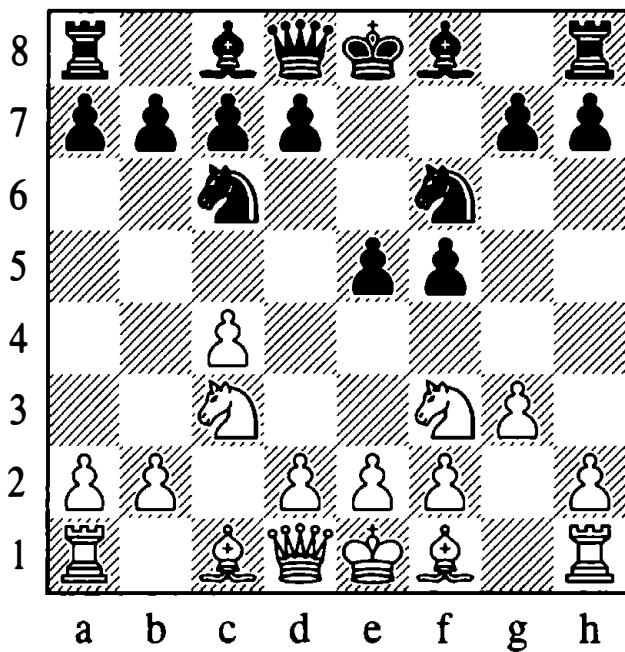
Black has no time to capture on g5 because his rook is hanging.

9.♕c3 ♔f6 10.♖g2±

Black's activity has come to an end and soon he will have to start retreating his most advanced minor pieces. White retains his space advantage in the centre.

(1.c4 e5 2.g3 ♔c6 3.♕c3 f5 4.♕f3)

B4) 4...♔f6



This logical developing move is also the most popular. Its main drawback is that it does nothing to consolidate the f5-pawn, which allows White to keep the initiative.

5.d4 e4 6.♘h4

Black can defend the f5-pawn with B41) 6...g6 or B42) 6...d6.

Black's minor pieces are not well placed for the purpose of fighting for a blockade on d5 after: 6...d5 7.♗g5 ♗e7

This puts some indirect pressure on the h4-knight, but White has everything under control.

After 7...dxc4 8.e3±, followed by ♖xc4, White has a simple edge.
8.e3!

Opening the f1-c4 diagonal and consolidating the central structure, anticipating the inevitable capture on f6.

8...0-0 9.♘g2!

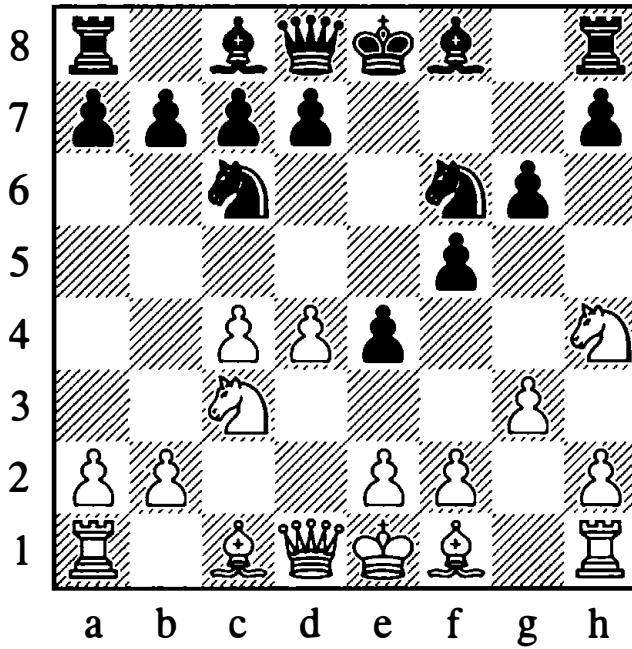
The knight evacuates the exposed h4-square and is ready to jump to f4, putting the d5- and e6-squares under pressure.

9...dxc4 10.♗xc4† ♘h8 11.♘f4±

White will play h2-h4 next, consolidating the f4-knight's position and reaching a favourable form of reversed French. The king will move either to f1 then g2, or to the queenside. In either case, the h1-rook will stay on its initial square to support possible tactical tricks against the enemy king (such as h4-h5 and ♗g6†).

(1.c4 e5 2.g3 ♔c6 3.♕c3 f5 4.♕f3 ♔f6
5.d4 e4 6.♘h4)

B41) 6...g6



Black is trying to play as flexibly as possible: he does not define his intentions regarding the d7-pawn, and hurries to complete his kingside development. The problem with 6...g6 is that it needlessly weakens the kingside. We will see in line B42 that White plays the slightly awkward ♗h3 to provoke ...g6. After 6...g6, White can choose a more natural way to develop the bishop.

7. $\mathbb{Q}g5$

White makes a developing move and delays revealing the intentions of the f1-bishop. The g2-square may be necessary for a knight retreat, while $\mathbb{Q}h3$ makes less sense now that the f5-pawn is defended.

7... $\mathbb{Q}g7$

Black must be careful:

7...h6?

This is premature.

8. $\mathbb{Q}xg6!$

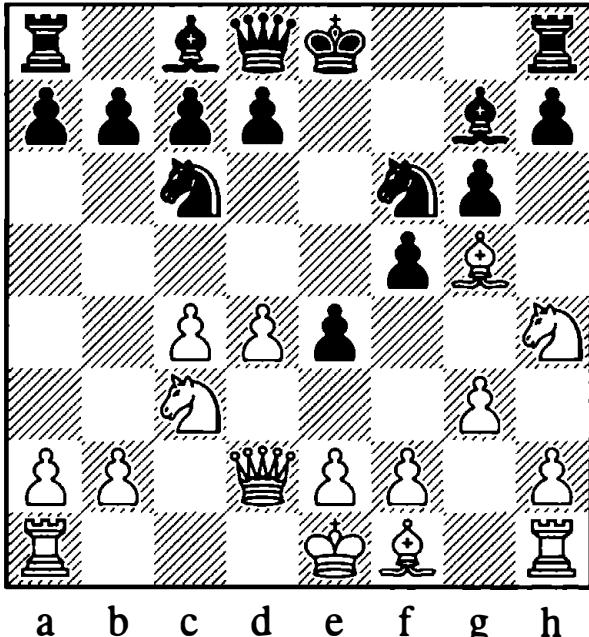
Once again, a white knight rushes to capture an enemy rook on its initial square, without fearing being trapped. The only difference is that this time it happens on the opposite wing.

8...h x g5 9. $\mathbb{Q}xh8$ $\mathbb{Q}g7$

9... $\mathbb{Q}e7$ is met by 10.h4 g4 11.h5+– followed by $\mathbb{Q}h8-g6$, as indicated by Ftacnik.

10.h4 g4 11. $\mathbb{Q}g6+$ –

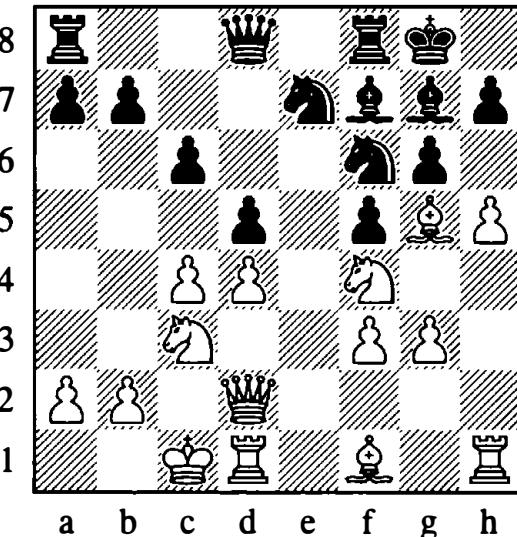
The knight will safely return home (Byrne and Mednis).

8. $\mathbb{W}d2$ 

Black can play B411) 8...h6, B412) 8... $\mathbb{Q}f7$, B413) 8...d6 or B414) 8...0–0.

8... $\mathbb{Q}e7$ is too slow and allows White to open the centre in his favour: 9.f3 exf3 10.exf3 d5

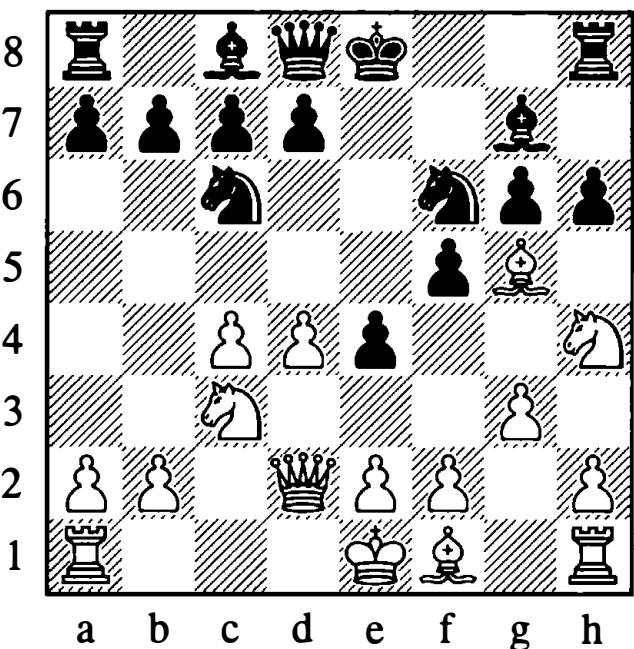
11.0–0–0 0–0 12. $\mathbb{Q}g2$ $\mathbb{Q}e6$ 13.h4 c6 14. $\mathbb{Q}f4$ $\mathbb{Q}f7$ 15.h5±



White has everything he could possibly want – a strong attack *and* a strategic advantage due to the weakness of Black's dark squares, Gulko – Waldmann, Nova Gorica 1997.

(1.c4 e5 2.g3 $\mathbb{Q}c6$ 3. $\mathbb{Q}c3$ f5 4. $\mathbb{Q}f3$ $\mathbb{Q}f6$ 5.d4 e4 6. $\mathbb{Q}h4$ g6 7. $\mathbb{Q}g5$ $\mathbb{Q}g7$ 8. $\mathbb{W}d2$)

B411) 8...h6?!



Spending a tempo on a pawn move that weakens the g6-square is not recommended at a stage when Black is underdeveloped.

9. $\mathbb{Q}xf6$ $\mathbb{W}xf6$ 10. $\mathbb{Q}d5$ $\mathbb{W}xd4$

If instead:

10... $\mathbb{W}d6$

White exchanges the only defender of the c7- and g6-pawns with:

11. $\mathbb{W}f4 \mathbb{W}xf4$ 12. $gxf4 \mathbb{Q}xd4$ 13. 0–0–0

Gulko evaluates this position as clearly favourable for White. The following picturesque line supports his opinion:

13... $\mathbb{Q}e6$ 14. $\mathbb{Q}xg6 \mathbb{B}g8$ 15. $\mathbb{Q}h3 c6$ 16. $\mathbb{Q}de7\pm$

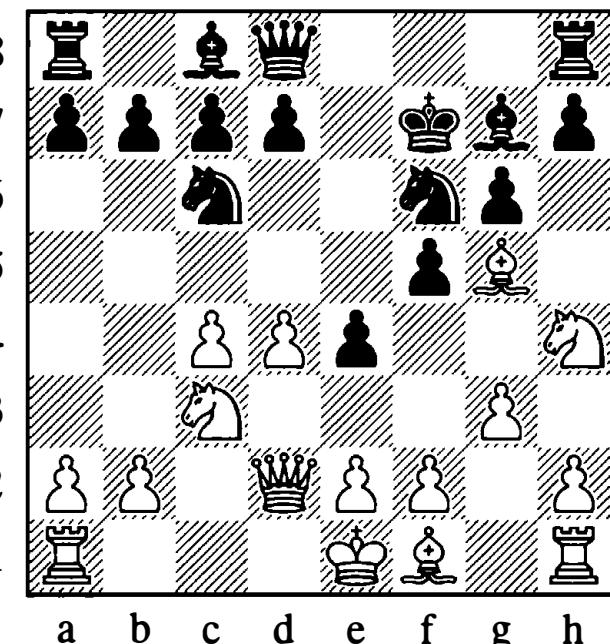
White's pieces feel very much at home deep inside enemy territory. Black will lose an exchange and his poor development prevents him claiming any form of compensation.

11. $\mathbb{W}xd4 \mathbb{Q}xd4$ 12. 0–0–0 $g5$ 13. $\mathbb{Q}xc7\pm \mathbb{Q}d8$ 14. $\mathbb{Q}xa8 gxh4$ 15. $e3 \mathbb{Q}f3$ 16. $c5 \mathbb{Q}f8$ 17. $\mathbb{Q}d5\pm$

The temporarily trapped white knight does not compensate Black for his huge lag in development and considerable material disadvantage. Black has no obvious way to capture the knight, since ... $b7-b6$ (planning ... $\mathbb{Q}b7$) is met by $c5-c6$. Otherwise, White will continue his development with $\mathbb{Q}b5$ and $\mathbb{Q}hd1$, putting the d7-pawn under strong pressure.

(1. $c4 e5$ 2. $g3 \mathbb{Q}c6$ 3. $\mathbb{Q}c3 f5$ 4. $\mathbb{Q}f3 \mathbb{Q}f6$ 5. $d4 e4$ 6. $\mathbb{Q}h4 g6$ 7. $\mathbb{Q}g5 \mathbb{Q}g7$ 8. $\mathbb{W}d2$)

B412) 8... $\mathbb{Q}f7$

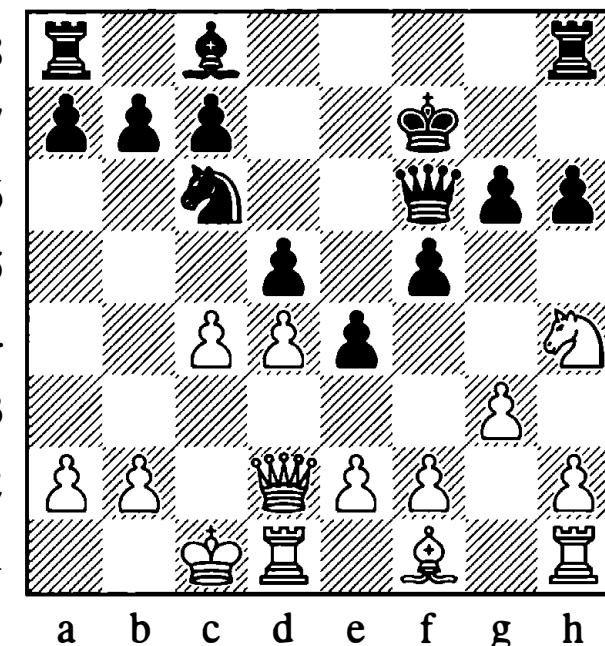


Black defends g6, preparing to challenge White's stability on the kingside with ...h7-h6.

9. $\mathbb{Q}d5$

The exchanges initiated by this move are intended to weaken the black king's defence.

9... $h6$ 10. $\mathbb{Q}xf6 \mathbb{Q}xf6$ 11. $\mathbb{Q}xf6 \mathbb{W}xf6$ 12. 0–0–0 $d5!?$



Black fights for the light squares in the centre, but weakens the e5-square.

Gleizerov considers 12...d6 to be insufficient because of 13.f3±. White will open the position, which will worry the vulnerable black king.

13. $cxd5 \mathbb{Q}e7$ 14. $f3 g5$

14... $exf3$ would allow the white knight to become hyper-active after 15. $\mathbb{Q}xf3 \mathbb{Q}xd5$ 16. $\mathbb{Q}e5\pm$ (Gleizerov).

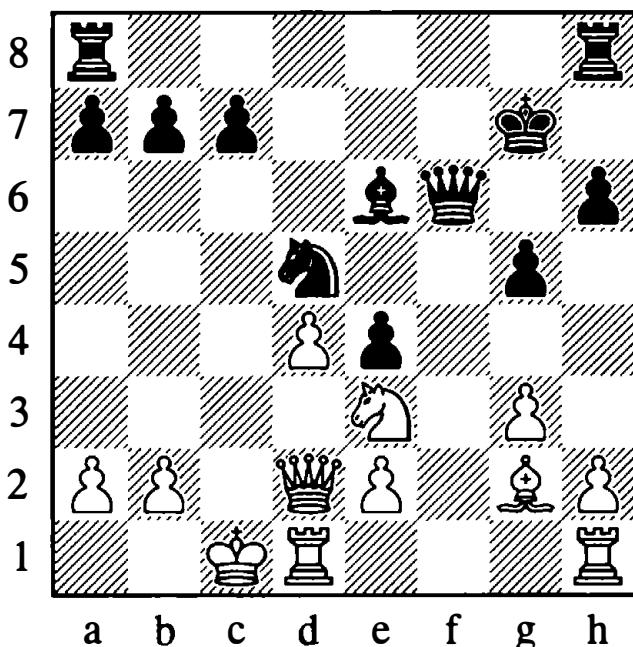
15. $\mathbb{Q}g2 \mathbb{Q}xd5$

Gleizerov analyses 15... $exf3$ 16. $\mathbb{Q}e5!\pm$, when White has secured his space advantage in the centre.

16. $fxe4 fxe4$ 17. $\mathbb{Q}e3 \mathbb{Q}e6$ 18. $\mathbb{Q}g2$

Black has managed to consolidate his control of the d5-square, but the weakness of the e4-pawn and the vulnerability of his king cause him a lot of trouble. For example, 18... $\mathbb{W}g6$ is strongly met by 19. $\mathbb{Q}c4$ followed by $\mathbb{Q}e5$ (Gleizerov).

18... $\mathbb{Q}g7$



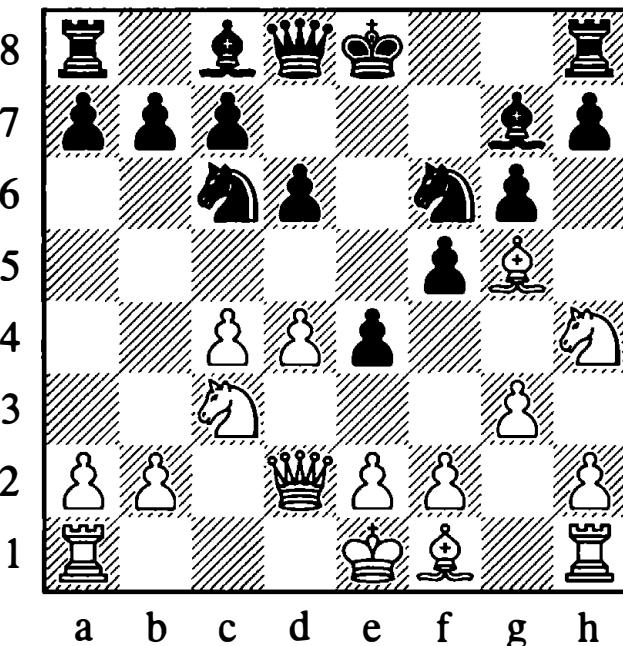
This position was reached in Vaulin – Gleizerov, Bydgoszcz 2000.

19. $\mathbb{B}hf1!N$ $\mathbb{W}g6$ 20. $\mathbb{Q}c4!±$

White has a strong initiative according to Gleizerov. The e4-pawn and the e5-square are weak.

(1.c4 e5 2.g3 $\mathbb{Q}c6$ 3. $\mathbb{Q}c3$ f5 4. $\mathbb{Q}f3$ $\mathbb{Q}f6$ 5.d4 e4 6. $\mathbb{Q}h4$ g6 7. $\mathbb{Q}g5$ $\mathbb{Q}g7$ 8. $\mathbb{W}d2$)

B413) 8...d6

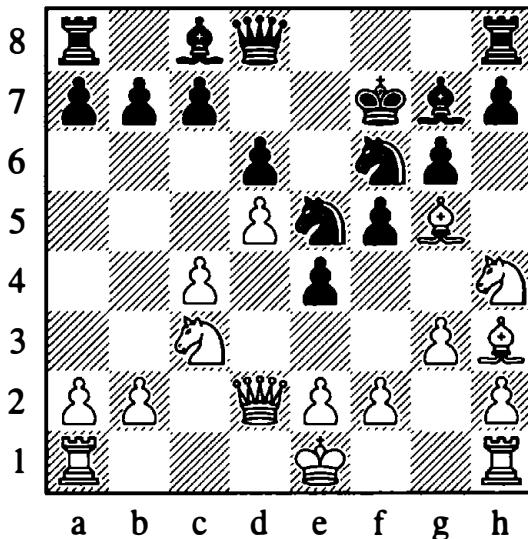


This move does not put any pressure on White, and allows him to play another developing move.

9.0–0–0!N

This is the most flexible continuation. White does not define his kingside intentions, and waits for Black to reveal his plans.

9. $\mathbb{Q}h3$ is not really necessary, since the f5-pawn is safely defended. Thus, the bishop risks remaining passive on h3: 9... $\mathbb{Q}f7$ 10.d5 $\mathbb{Q}e5$



Black has managed to consolidate and threatens ...h7-h6, Zvjaginsev – Val. Popov, Moscow 2003.

9... $\mathbb{Q}f7$

Black finally creates the threat of ...h7-h6.

9...0–0 would ensure White almost total stability on the kingside, allowing him to prepare f2-f3 with 10. $\mathbb{Q}g2±$.

10.f3 h6 11. $\mathbb{Q}e3$ d5

Black has broken the pin, and starts the fight for the centre. The situation becomes very tense.

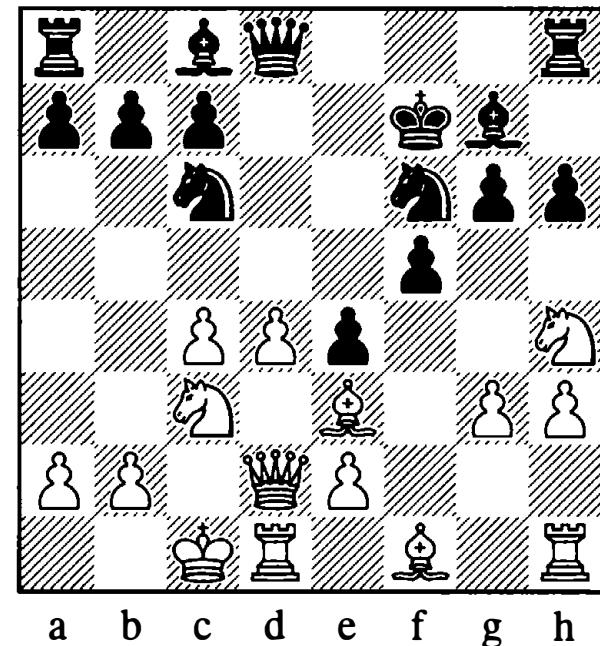
Black cannot afford to release the tension with 11...exf3 as after 12.exf3, followed by $\mathbb{Q}d3$, the only consequence of Black's previous pawn advances would be a weakened kingside.

12.fxe4

12.cxd5 $\mathbb{Q}xd5$ 13.fxe4 is less clear because of 13... $\mathbb{Q}xe3$ 14. $\mathbb{W}xe3$ $\mathbb{Q}xd4$.

12...dxe4

This is the only way to maintain some level of stability in the centre. Instead 12...fxe4 leaves the e4-pawn vulnerable after 13.cxd5±.

13.h3!

This move prepares the thematic pawn break g3-g4. White has a strong pawn majority on the queenside, but he has to weaken the enemy structure on the other wing, without shying away from sacrifices.

13...We7 14.g4 f4!?

Black's structural integrity is already compromised and he must try to balance the situation by making significant material gains.

The more "cooperative" move is:

14...fxg4

This allows White to activate all of his pieces at the cost of just one pawn.

15.hxg4 Wxg4 16.Qg2

White threatens Wdf1 followed by Qxe4, which forces Black to seek material gains under less favourable circumstances than in the main line.

16...g5 17.Wdf1 gxh4 18.Wxh4

With his king stuck in the middle of the action, Black cannot stabilize the position.

18...h5

The counterplay based on 18...Qa5 arrives too late because of 19.Wxg4! Qxc4 20.Wel Qxe3 21.Wxe4±. White restores material equality and retains a strong initiative.

19.Qd5 We6 20.Qg5±

Black cannot avoid material losses.

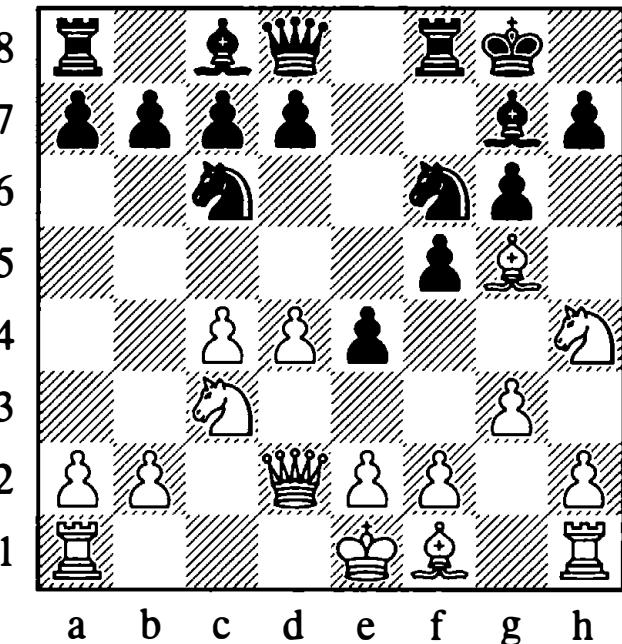
15.Qxf4 g5 16.Qb5!

Hitting the vulnerable c7-pawn.

16...gxf4 17.Wxf4±

White obtains strong pressure all over the board. Black's king is exposed and several black pawns are weak.

(1.c4 e5 2.g3 Qc6 3.Qc3 f5 4.Qf3 Qf6 5.d4 e4 6.Qh4 g6 7.Qg5 Qg7 8.Wd2)

B414) 8...0–0

This natural developing move has the drawback of giving up all hopes of pushing White back on the kingside, since ...h7-h6 is no longer possible.

9.Qg2 Qe7 10.f3!

White has to hurry with this thematic break, since 10.0–0?! allows 10...d5!=, consolidating in the centre.

10...exf3 11.Qxf3

This is the best way to recapture, because it keeps the bishop active and clears the g2-square for the knight.

11...c6 12. $\mathbb{Q}g2!$

The start of an effective regrouping that will target the enemy's weak squares.

12...d6

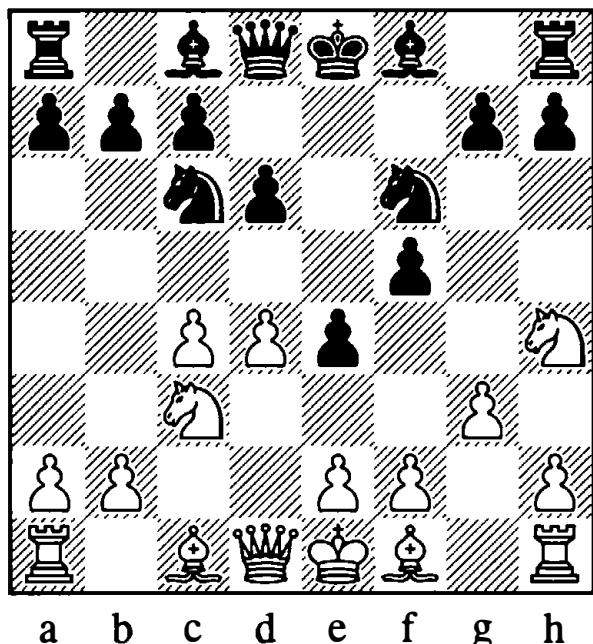
The over-ambitious 12...d5? loses a pawn to 13.cxd5 cxd5 14. $\mathbb{Q}f4+-$.

13.0–0 $\mathbb{Q}e6$ 14.d5 cxd5 15.cxd5 $\mathbb{Q}f7$ 16. $\mathbb{Q}h1$ $\mathbb{W}d7$ 17.a4 $\mathbb{Q}ae8$ 18. $\mathbb{Q}e3$ $\mathbb{Q}c8$ 19. $\mathbb{Q}d4$ $\mathbb{Q}h8$ 20. $\mathbb{Q}f4\pm$

White has an active position and a space advantage in the centre. The weakness of the e6-square restricts Black's active possibilities, Gukko – Browne, USA (ch) 1994.

(1.c4 e5 2.g3 $\mathbb{Q}c6$ 3. $\mathbb{Q}c3$ f5 4. $\mathbb{Q}f3$ $\mathbb{Q}f6$ 5.d4 e4 6. $\mathbb{Q}h4$)

B42) 6...d6

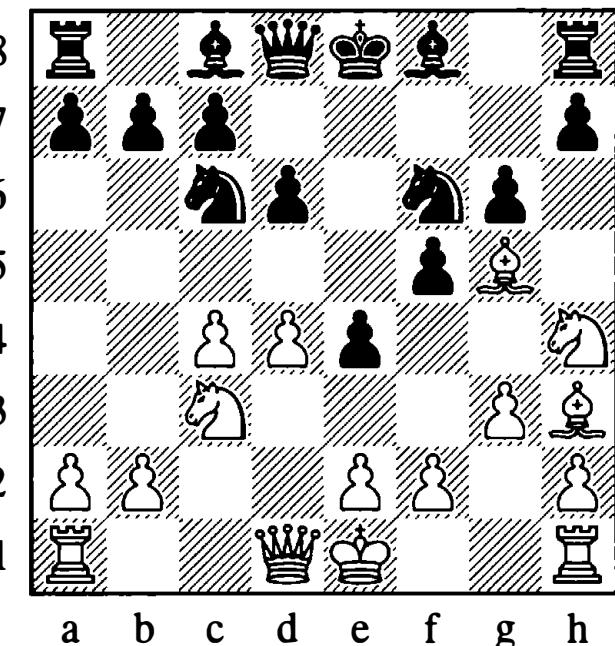


Black delays weakening his kingside with ...g7-g6, provoking White's next move in the hope that the bishop will be misplaced on h3.

7. $\mathbb{Q}h3$ g6 8. $\mathbb{Q}g5$

White plays completely in accordance with

the hypermodern spirit: he keeps increasing the piece pressure, leaving the thematic pawn break f2-f3 for later.



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

Black eliminates the unpleasant pin to prepare ...d6-d5.

The more natural move is:

8... $\mathbb{Q}g7$

However, this gives White a free hand to carry out his plan.

9.0–0 0–0

9...h6?! is tactically unsound: 10. $\mathbb{Q}xf6$ $\mathbb{W}xf6$ 11. $\mathbb{Q}d5$ $\mathbb{W}f7$ 12. $\mathbb{Q}xg6$ $\mathbb{W}xg6$ 13. $\mathbb{Q}xc7\#$ $\mathbb{Q}d8$ 14. $\mathbb{Q}xa8$ White has achieved a considerable material advantage. Black's poor coordination prevents him from trapping the a8-knight. For instance: 14... $\mathbb{Q}xd4$ 15.e3 $\mathbb{Q}xb2$ 16. $\mathbb{Q}b1$ $\mathbb{Q}a3$ 17. $\mathbb{Q}b5\pm$ The rook exerts strong pressure along the fifth rank. The immediate threat is c4-c5, with the probable liberation of the knight.

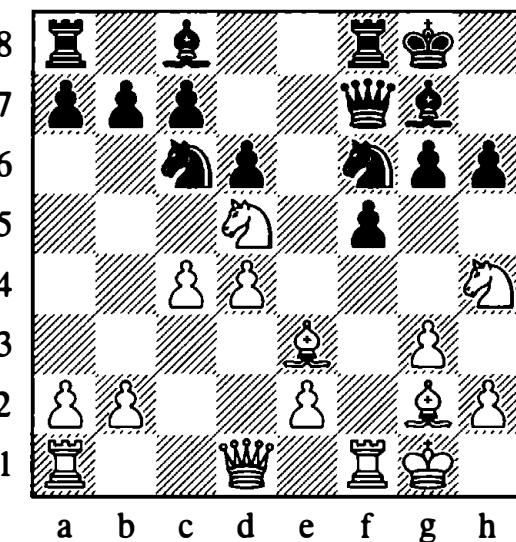
10.f3!

After this well timed pawn break, Black will be unable to keep his pawn chain intact.

10...h6 11. $\mathbb{Q}e3$ $\mathbb{W}e8$ 12.fxe4 $\mathbb{Q}xe4$ 13. $\mathbb{Q}d5$ $\mathbb{W}f7$ 14. $\mathbb{Q}g2$

This is the start of a short phase in which both sides relocate their pieces.

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



15.♗d2!

The bishop was slightly vulnerable on e3. White intends to place it on c3, when his pressure against the weakened black kingside would become quite strong.

15...♝xd4

This is practically forced. If allowed to regroup as intended, White would retain the pressure at no cost.

16.♞xg6 ♕e8

The knight is taboo because of the fork on e7.

17.e3

This forced sequence leads to a clear advantage for White, but the more static 17.♞gf4± is also satisfactory.

17...♝xd5

Once again, the a8-knight cannot be trapped after 17...♛xg6 18.♝xc7 ♜c6 19.♝xa8 ♕e7 20.♝b4!±.

Black's pieces are poorly coordinated and vulnerable.

18.♝xd5 ♕e6 19.♝f4 c6

Now...♝xd5 leaves the knight trapped after 20.cxd5 ♜b5 21.a4+-.

20.♝xe6 ♜xe6 21.♝e4 ♜g5 22.♝xf5 ♜xc4

23.♛h5±

Black has kept material equality, but White's bishop pair and the weakened black kingside offer White attacking chances.

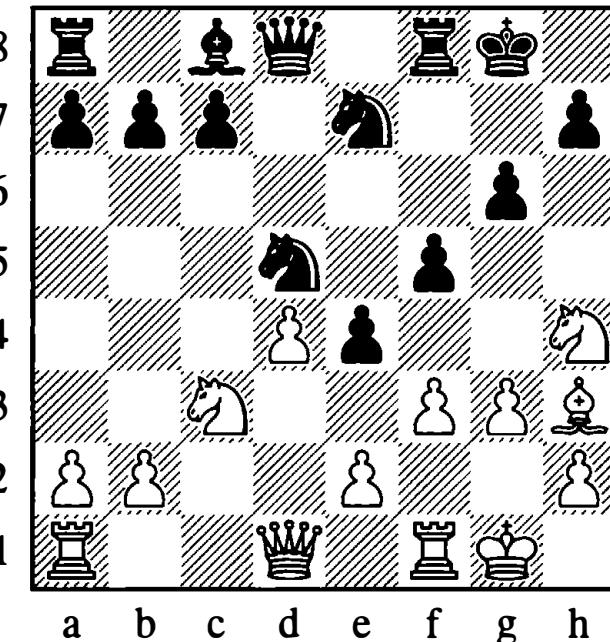
9.0–0 0–0 10.f3 d5

Black plays ambitiously, but the d5-pawn

will fail to consolidate Black's centre, since it is not supported by his c-pawn.

After 10...exf3 11.exf3± White is better prepared to fight for the open e-file.

11.cxd5 ♜xd5 12.♝xe7 ♜xe7



13.fxe4!N

White should not release the piece tension with 13.♝xd5?! ♜xd5 14.♝d2 exf3 15.♝xf3 ♜d6 16.♝g2 c6. Black's more compact structure compensates for the weakness of the dark squares, Gulko – Ljubojevic, New York 1995.

With the recommended text move, White keeps the e4-square under control, aiming to provoke ...♝d5xc3, which would strengthen White's centre after b2xc3.

13...♝e3

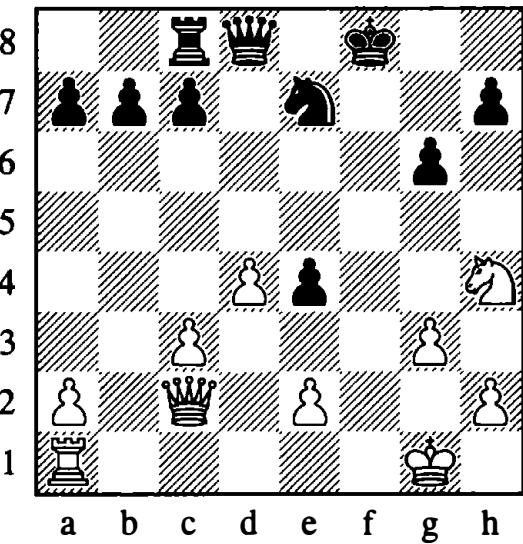
This may be the move Gulko was afraid of.

13...♝xc3

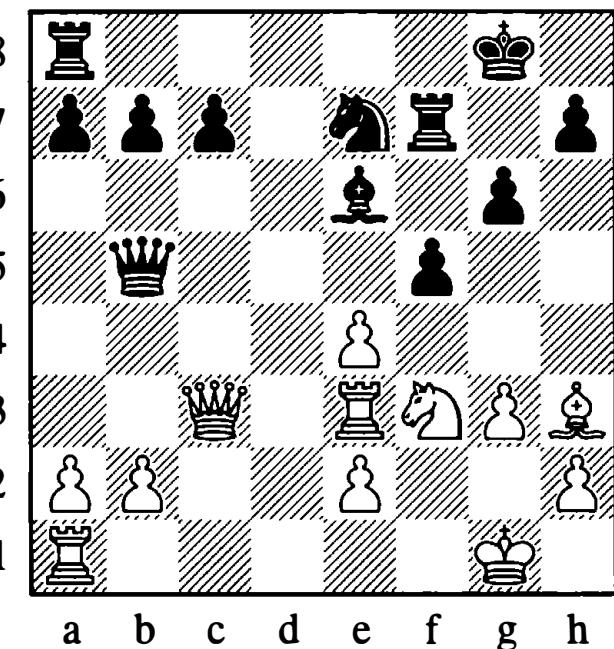
This is the kind of concession White is waiting for.

14.bxc3 fxe4 15.♝xf8† ♜xf8

15...♜xf8 leads to similar play after 16.♝xc8 ♜xc8. Black's last move is necessary, in order to defend the b7-pawn. 17.♝b3† ♜h8 18.♝f1±

2... $\mathbb{Q}c6$ 3. $\mathbb{Q}c3$ 16. $\mathbb{Q}xc8$ $\mathbb{B}xc8$ 17. $\mathbb{W}c2\pm$ 

The e4-pawn is weak and the black king is exposed.

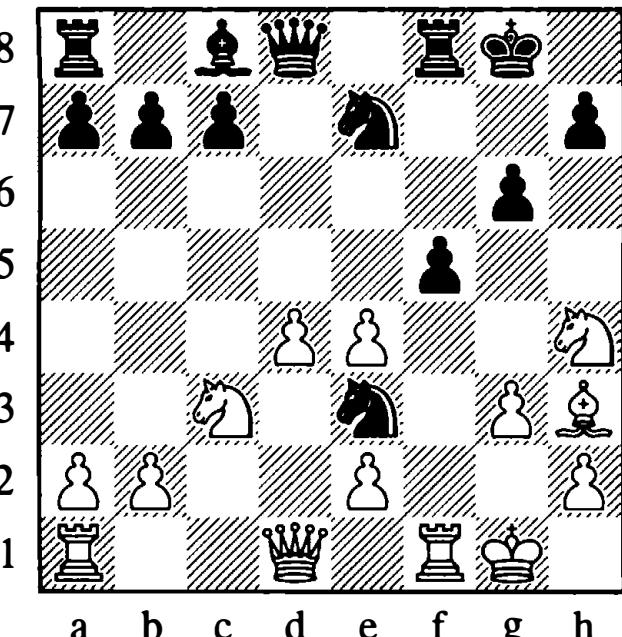
18. $\mathbb{W}c3$ $\mathbb{W}xb5$ 19. $\mathbb{Q}f3\pm$ 

Black has managed to maintain material equality, but White has a strong initiative. The dark squares around the black king are weak and several black pieces are vulnerable to attacks by the white knight.

In summary, gaining space with 3...f5 places Black at risk of becoming over-extended: White can obtain a dangerous initiative with accurate play.

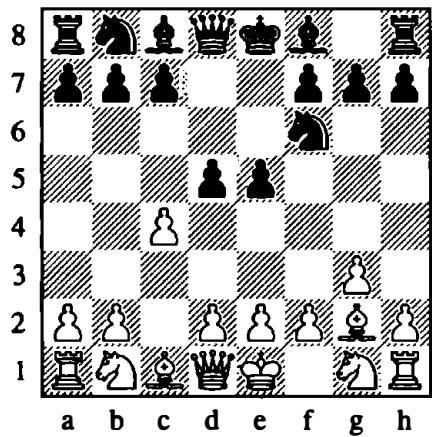
Conclusion:

In a more general sense, the variations examined in this chapter prove that Black cannot take advantage of the 2.g3 move order by delaying the development of his g8-knight.

14. $\mathbb{W}b3\pm$ $\mathbb{B}f7$ 15. $\mathbb{B}f3$

Black's next moves are forced in order to avoid material losses.

15... $\mathbb{W}xd4$ 16. $\mathbb{Q}b5$ $\mathbb{W}b6$ 17. $\mathbb{B}xe3$ $\mathbb{Q}e6$



Reversed Dragon

Introduction and minor lines

Variation Index

1.c4 e5 2.g3 ♜f6 3.♗g2 d5

4.cxd5 ♜xd5 5.♘c3

A) 5...♝e6 6.♞f3 ♜c6 7.0-0 ♛e7?! 8.d4

p 262

A1) 8...exd4?!

p 263

A2) 8...♜xc3

p 264

B) 5...♝e7 6.♞f3 ♜bc6 7.0-0

p 268

B1) 7...♝f5

p 268

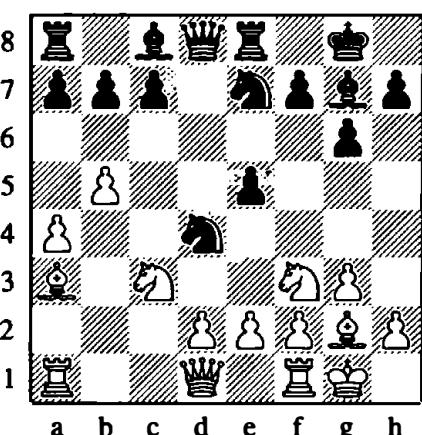
B2) 7...g6

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C) 5...♜b6

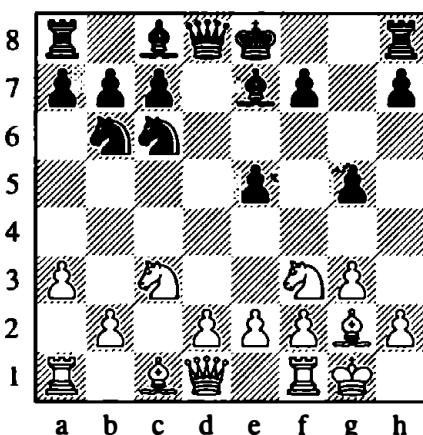
p 271

B2) notes to 8...a6



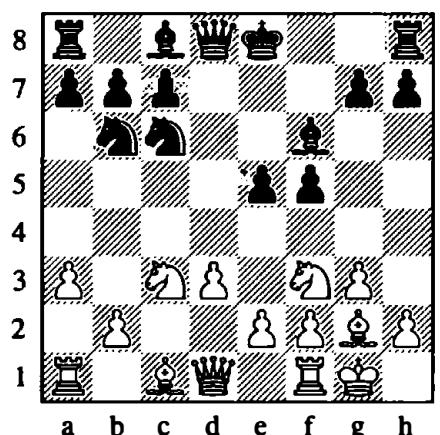
12.e3!N

C) 8...g5?!



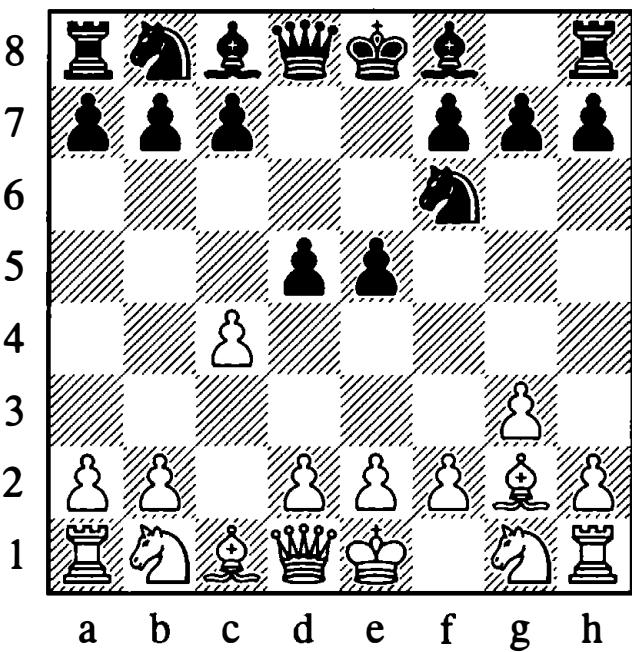
9.d4!

C) 8...f5 9.d3 ♛f6



10.e4!

1.c4 e5 2.g3 ♕f6 3.♗g2 d5



This is the most ambitious continuation. Black wins space in the centre by exchanging White's only pawn that had influence in this area.

4.cxd5 ♕xd5

When I started playing 1.c4 on a regular basis, I did not dedicate any special attention to this variation. My logic was quite simple: since I had excellent results playing the Sicilian Dragon with Black, how could I possibly have any problems playing the same opening with reversed colours and a whole extra tempo?

Practical experience quickly proved me wrong. Instead of pleasant one-sided games, I frequently found myself in enormously complicated situations that were very difficult to handle over-the-board. Sometimes I landed in inferior positions without understanding where I had gone wrong. Finally, the most humiliating situation arose when I could not remember my own analysis despite prolonged thought...

I decided to dedicate a few weeks to a thorough analysis of this variation. After that I was pleasantly surprised to note that the competitive situation turned 180 degrees

– the resulting positions continued to be complicated, but now it was my opponents who ran into trouble without any obvious reason or, in some cases, could not remember what they had looked at during their three hours of pre-game preparation.

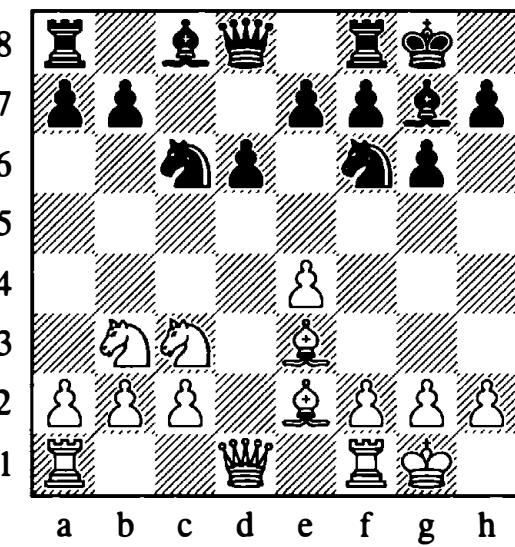
Distilling this double-sided experience into just a few words, I would say that the Reversed Dragon is very sharp and the gap between a clear advantage and a clearly worse position is very slim.

I will also explain why Black has an easier life in the real Classical Dragon than in the similar line from the English opening.

The equivalent of the 3...d5 English is:

1.e4 c5 2.♘f3 d6 3.d4 cxd4 4.♕xd4 ♕f6 5.♘c3 g6 6.♗e2 ♗g7 7.0–0 0–0 8.♗e3 ♘c6 9.♘b3

As will become obvious after examining lines A and B, Black has nothing better than retreating his knight to b6. Otherwise, White would get a strong initiative in the centre or on the queenside. This makes the similarity with the Classical variation of the Dragon quite appropriate.



9...♗e6

Black threatens ...d6-d5, which would immediately equalize, which practically forces White to play a rather committal move.

10.f4

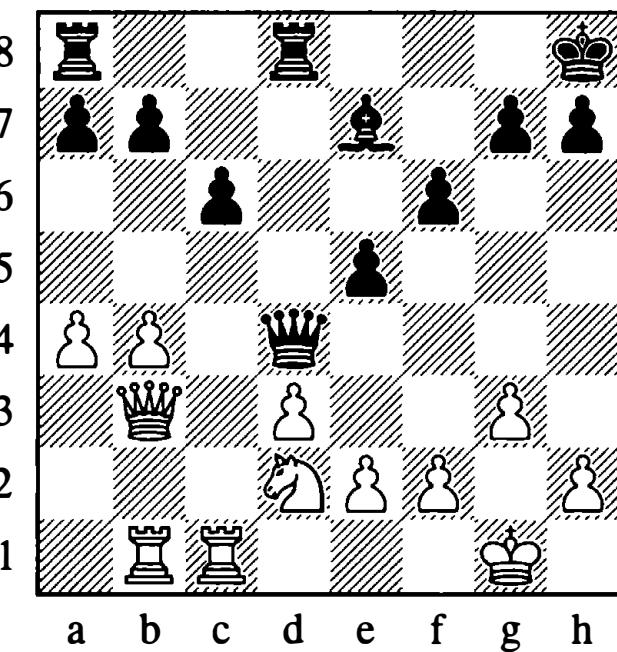
One of the lines from my repertoire with Black continued:

10... $\mathbb{E}c8$ 11.f5 $\mathbb{Q}d7$ 12.g4 $\mathbb{Q}e5$ 13.g5 $\mathbb{E}xc3!$

The main difference in the reversed Dragon is that the equality offered by an early d3-d4 is unsatisfactory for White. Therefore, White has to resort to a committal plan based on queenside expansion with a2-a3 and b2-b4. This looks quite promising from a strategic point of view, but the pawn advance leaves some weak squares behind and tends to delay White's development.

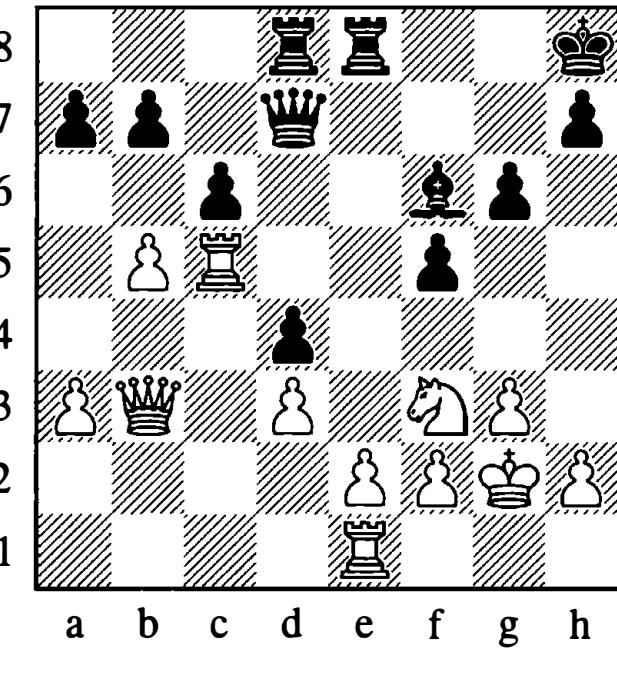
Compared with the previous chapters, the position is more open because of the early pawn break in the centre. We can also note that each side's structure has been broken into two islands. As usual in the English Opening, White aims to combine the g2-bishop's pressure against the enemy queenside with the massive advance of the a- and b-pawns. Since Black is a whole tempo down compared with the Dragon, he usually does not have enough time to launch an attack based on ...f5-f4. Instead, he will defend his e-pawn solidly with ...f7-f6 and try to make use of the relatively weak d4-square with ... $\mathbb{Q}d4$. Neutralizing the g2-bishop with ... $\mathbb{E}e6-h3$ or ... $\mathbb{E}e6-d5$ is another important element, although this is not always easy to carry out.

Thorough analysis and intense practical testing have convinced me that White is likely to achieve the more pleasant position if both sides' plans are carried out logically. The following is a typical position, taken from line B22, Chapter 25:



Black has nothing to show in response to White's methodical queenside attack. After b4-b5 the knight will get the excellent c4-square, while the enemy bishop is restricted by its own pawns.

In the next position, taken from the game Tomashevsky – Khismatullin, Tomsk 2006, line A2, Chapter 25, Black's e-pawn has been transferred to d4, but this does not radically change the situation.

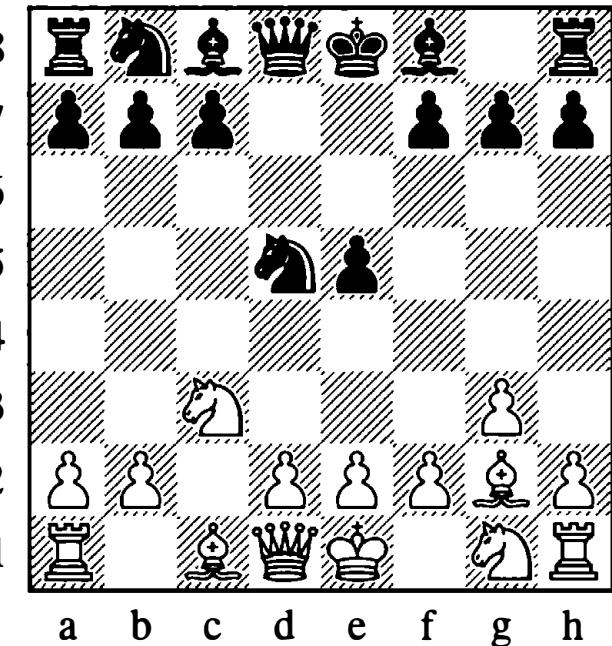


Black has more space in the centre, but the d4-pawn needs constant care. White's queenside attack is far more effective than Black's kingside pressure.

We have studied enough general points, so let's start a more concrete examination. Further ideas will be explained in the introductions to the individual variations.

5.♘c3

White increases his pressure on the central knight and, indirectly, over the entire long diagonal.

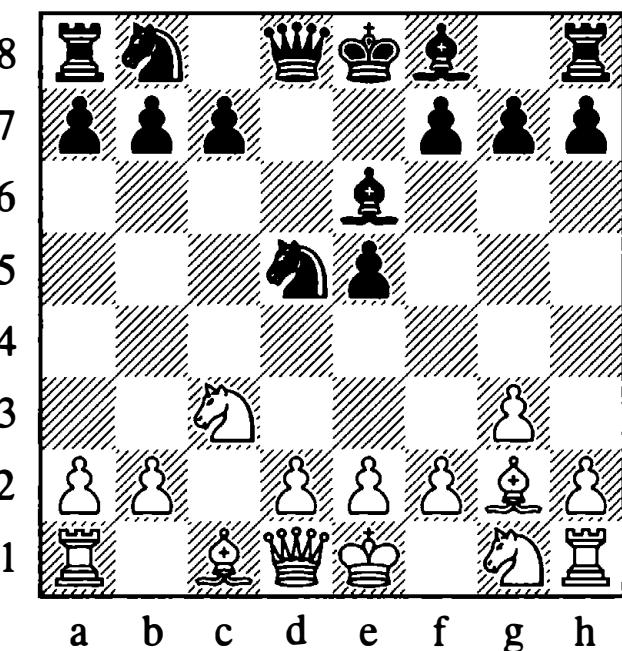


In this chapter we will examine the secondary lines A) 5...♝e6 and B) 5...♞e7. We will also mention some basic elements and draw a map of the chapters covering the main continuation C) 5...♝b6.

5...♞xc3 This is a positional concession, which helps White to increase his influence in the centre. 6.bxc3 ♜d6 7.♘f3 ♜e7 8.d3 (8.d4!± deserves serious attention) 8...0-0 9.♘d2 c6 10.0-0 ♜e6 11.♘e4 ♜a3 12.♘xa3 ♜xa3 13.d4± White is better developed and has more space in the centre, Chernin – Mikhalchishin, USSR (ch) 1984.

(1.c4 e5 2.g3 ♘f6 3.♗g2 d5 4.cxd5 ♘xd5 5.♘c3)

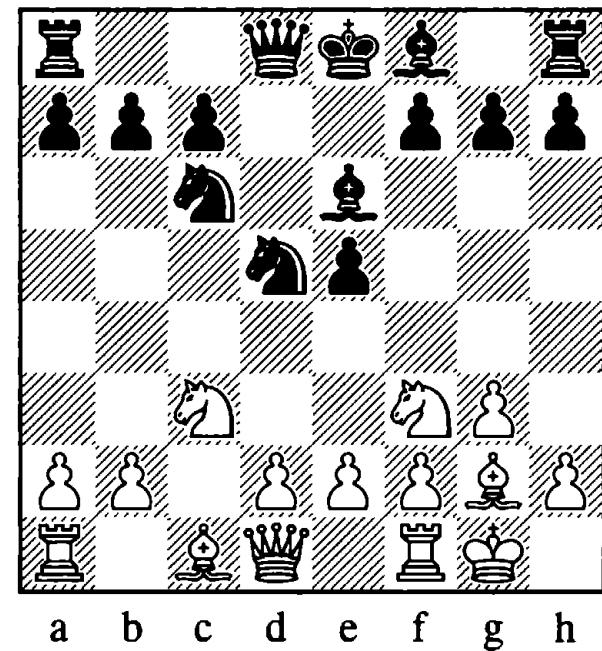
A) 5...♝e6



Black consolidates his central knight, but the knight obstructs the queen's pressure along the d-file, allowing White to open the centre in his favour.

6.♘f3 ♜c6 7.0-0

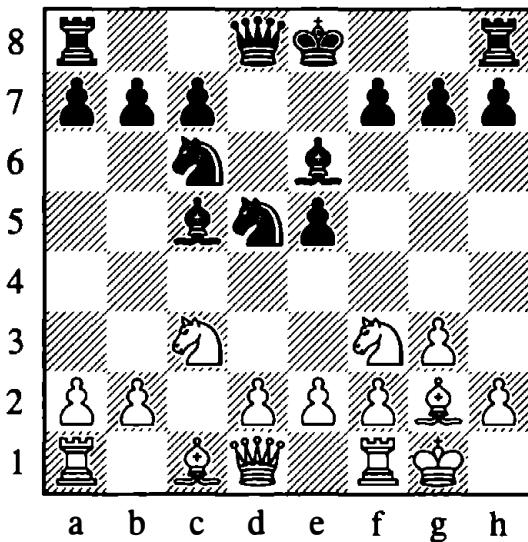
It is too early for 7.d4 because of 7...♝b4! with an unpleasant pin.



Black could transpose to the main lines by playing 7...♝b6, but here we shall examine the variations with an independent character.

7... $\mathbb{Q}e7?!$

7... $\mathbb{Q}c5?!$ would prevent d2-d4, but the bishop is exposed to a standard tactical operation.



8. $\mathbb{Q}xe5!$ $\mathbb{Q}xf2\#$ 9. $\mathbb{Q}xf2$ $\mathbb{Q}xe5$ 10.d4 $\mathbb{Q}g4$
11. $\mathbb{Q}f3$ 0–0 12.e4 $\mathbb{Q}xc3$ 13.bxc3± White has the bishop pair and a mobile pawn centre, Serper – Turmo, Sioux Falls 1998.

8.d4

This is the logical answer. Opening the position takes advantage of the black king's presence in the centre and of the g2-bishop's activity along the h1-a8 diagonal.

In the Classical Dragon ...d6-d5 is supposed to yield Black easy equality if White does not retreat his knight from d4. In the current variation White is two tempos up. The first saved due to the reversed colours, the second by the d-pawn moving to d4 directly from d2.

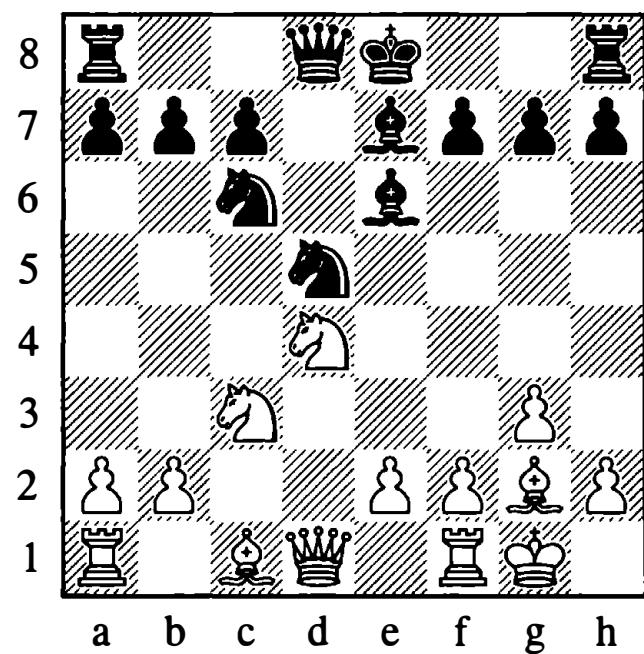
We will examine A1) 8...exd4?! and A2) 8... $\mathbb{Q}xc3$.

(1.c4 e5 2.g3 $\mathbb{Q}f6$ 3. $\mathbb{Q}g2$ d5 4.cxd5 $\mathbb{Q}xd5$
5. $\mathbb{Q}c3$ $\mathbb{Q}e6$ 6. $\mathbb{Q}f3$ $\mathbb{Q}c6$ 7.0–0 $\mathbb{Q}e7$ 8.d4)

A1) 8...exd4?!

This is an unambitious move, aiming to simplify the position in the hope of gaining chances for a draw in a slightly worse position.

9. $\mathbb{Q}xd4$



9... $\mathbb{Q}xc3$

This is the best option.

9... $\mathbb{Q}xd4?!$

This careless move leaves Black in trouble after:

10. $\mathbb{W}xd4$

The g7-pawn is attacked and the b7-pawn is also under indirect pressure.

10... $\mathbb{Q}xc3$

After 10... $\mathbb{Q}f6$ 11. $\mathbb{W}a4\#$! Black has serious coordination problems:

11...c6 12. $\mathbb{Q}xd5$ $\mathbb{Q}xd5$ 13. $\mathbb{Q}d1$ leaves him in unpleasant pins.

11... $\mathbb{Q}d7$ is no better because of 12. $\mathbb{W}b3$

$\mathbb{Q}xc3$ 13.bxc3 $\mathbb{Q}b8$ 14. $\mathbb{Q}a3$ $\mathbb{Q}e7$ 15. $\mathbb{Q}ad1\pm$

In view of the threat of $\mathbb{Q}h3$, Black cannot find a good way to castle.

11. $\mathbb{W}xc3$

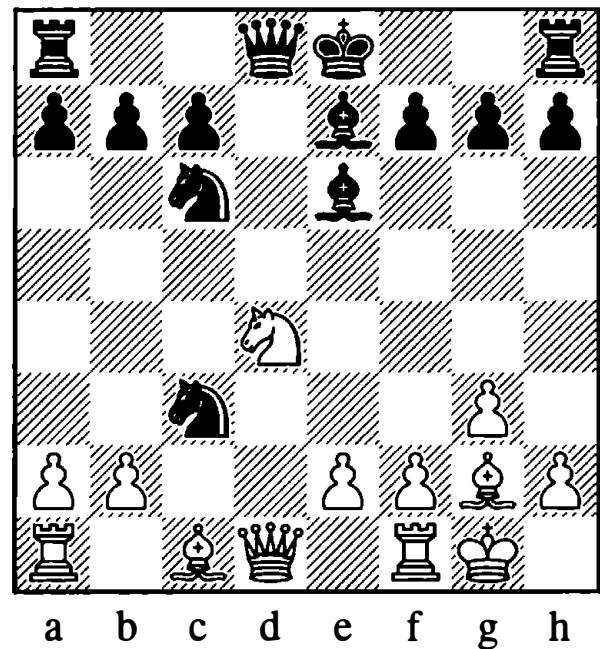
Both black knight pawns are attacked.

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

11...0–0 12. $\mathbb{Q}xb7\pm$ left Black without compensation for the pawn in Marin – Skjoldborg, Stockholm 2001.

12. $\mathbb{W}b4$ $\mathbb{Q}b8$ 13. $\mathbb{Q}f4\pm$

In order to castle, Black will have to give up one of his queenside pawns.



10.bxc3 ♜xd4 11.cxd4 c6

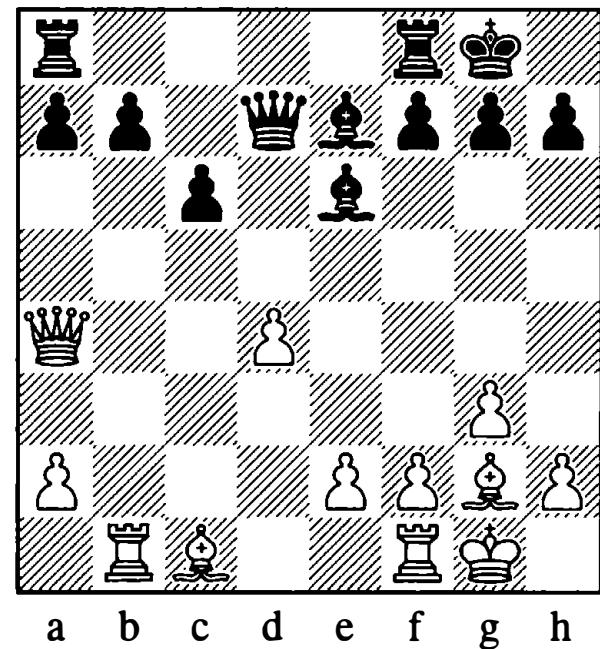
Black has managed to calm the position, but White's mobile centre leaves him on the top.

12.♗b1 ♜d7 13.♗a4

This interesting plan, employed in a game between two low rated players, is probably best.

At grandmaster level 13.♗c2 was tried, with just an edge for White after 13...0-0 14.♘f4 ♜ac8 15.♗fc1 ♜a3 16.♗d1 ♜e7±. In the absence of knights, White's extra space is not easy to convert into a lasting advantage, Christiansen – Handoko, Surakarta 1982.

13...0-0



14.d5!

This is the point! White utilizes the pin along the a4-d7 diagonal to provoke favourable structural modifications.

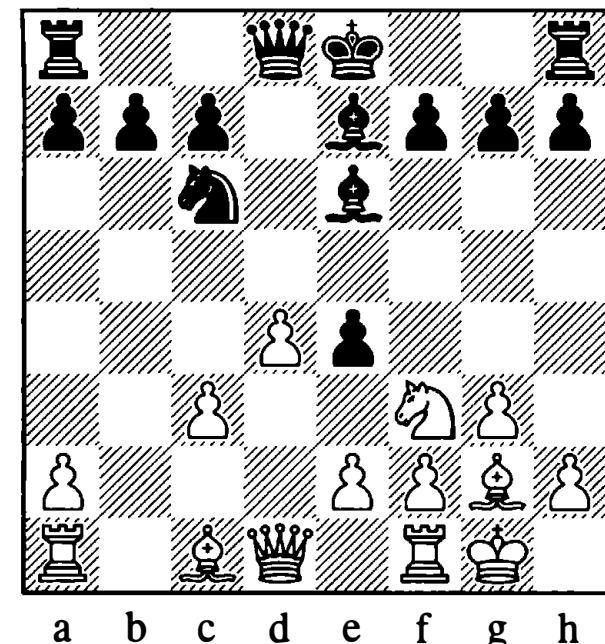
**14...♜xd5 15.♞xd5 ♜xd5 16.♝xb7 ♜c5
17.♘f4±**

White has an active position and the c6-pawn is weak, Moro Adame – Ferron Garcia, Vila de Salou 1995.

(1.c4 e5 2.g3 ♜f6 3.♘g2 d5 4.cxd5 ♜xd5
5.♘c3 ♜e6 6.♘f3 ♜c6 7.0-0 ♜e7 8.d4)

A2) 8...♜xc3 9.bxc3 e4

This is a more ambitious continuation, aiming to compensate for the strengthening of White's centre by gaining space on the kingside.



10.♘e5!?

This was my choice in the only game in which I faced this variation. In doing so, I was inspired by vague memories of the game Adams – Khalifman, Las Palmas 1993, where a Classical Sicilian Dragon was played.

By jumping forward with the knight, White strives for the initiative in a position with mutual pawn weaknesses. I find Black's position very difficult to defend.

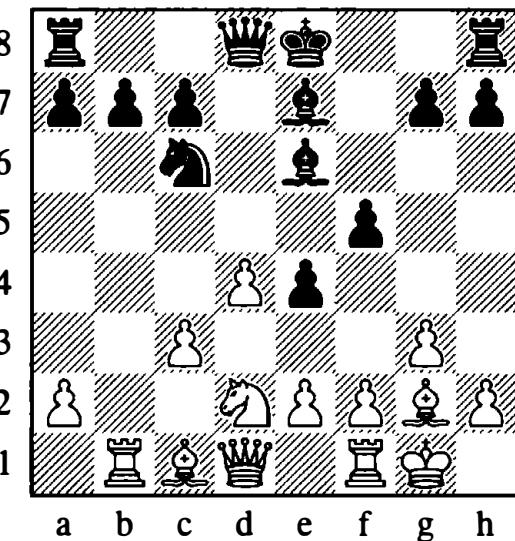
Instead, the approved continuation is:

10.♘d2

This leads to a slow strategic struggle, with somewhat better chances for White.

10...f5 11.♗b1

White creates strong piece pressure against the enemy queenside.

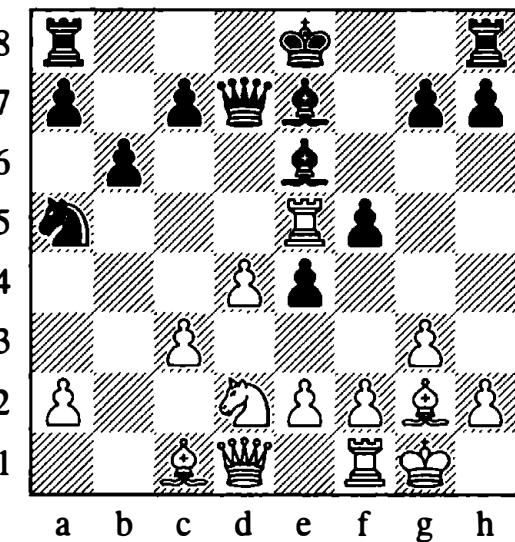


Black has to handle this phase of the game with care. With his king still in the centre, Black is not prepared to initiate queenside play with:

11...♞a5

This move takes the weakened c4-square under control, but prematurely removes the knight from the centre, allowing a powerful attacking operation.

12.♗b5 b6 13.♗e5 ♜d7



14.♘xe4!

White clears the c1-h6 diagonal and the d-file, after which the pin along the e-file will lead to fatal consequences for Black.

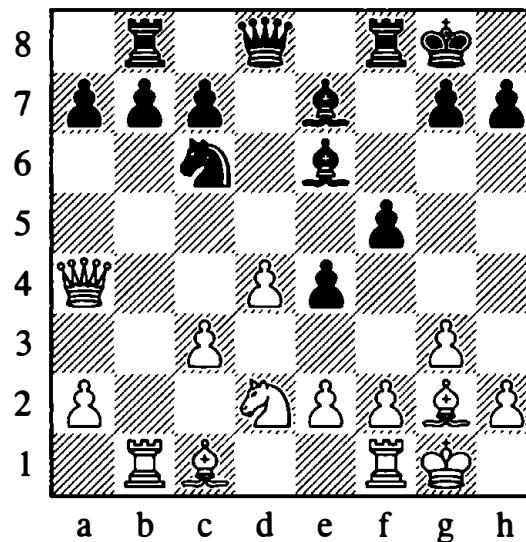
14...fxe4 15.d5 ♜f7 16.♗g5±

White will retrieve the sacrificed piece, leaving Black's position in ruins, Larsen – Grünfeld, Beverwijk 1961.

11...♝b8

This is more solid, but also insufficient for equality.

12.♗a4 0–0



13.f3!

This is the most logical continuation. After opening the long diagonal, a third white piece will be putting pressure on Black's queenside.

13...exf3 14.♗xf3 ♜d5

Black exchanges the dangerous fianchetto bishop, but allows White to obtain strong initiative.

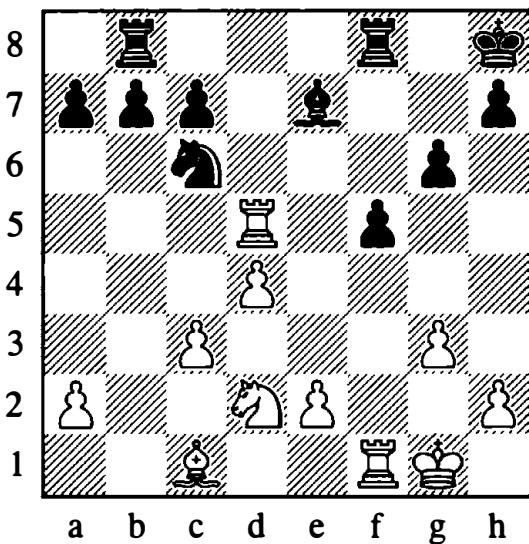
The main alternative is 14...♜d7, but it does not look much rosier: 15.♗xb7 ♜xb7 16.♗xc6 ♜c8 17.♗a3 ♜xa3 18.♗xb7 ♜xb7 19.♗xa3±

White has won a pawn and has good control over the central dark squares. Black has no easy way to organize an attack along the weakened a8-h1 diagonal.

15.♗xd5† ♜xd5 16.♗b5 ♜d7 17.♗b3† ♜h8 18.♗d5

White keeps centralizing, exchanging one of the defenders of the f5-pawn, which will force Black to weaken his kingside. Instead 18.♗xb7 runs into the fork 18...♞a5!.

18... $\mathbb{W}xd5$ 19. $\mathbb{B}xd5$ g6

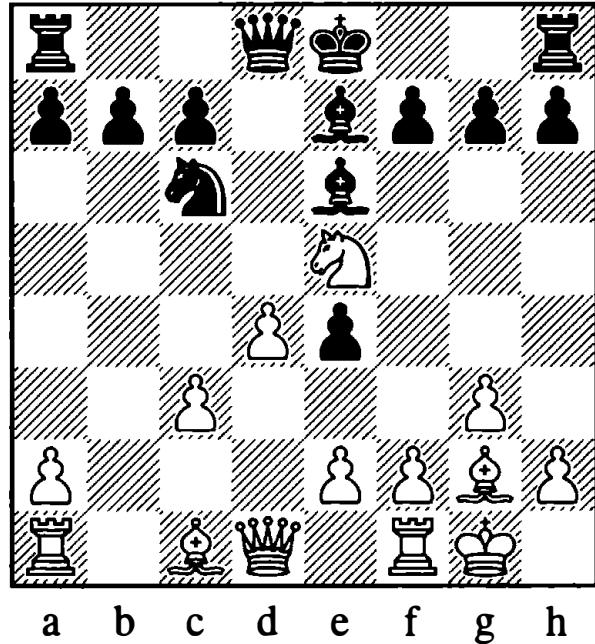


20.e4

Very consistent play: White maintains his initiative without fearing simplifications.

20...fxe4 21. $\mathbb{Q}xe4$ $\mathbb{B}xf1\#$ 22. $\mathbb{Q}xf1$ $\mathbb{B}d8$
23. $\mathbb{B}xd8\#$ $\mathbb{Q}xd8$ 24.d5±

White has preserved his initiative deep into the endgame. He also has a space advantage in the centre and a better centralized king, Psakhis – Scetinin, Leeuwarden 1993.



10... $\mathbb{Q}xe5$

Black has to pick up the gauntlet.

10... $\mathbb{W}d5$, as played in Zita – Tarnowski, Szczawno Zdroj 1950, should have led to disaster after 11.c4! $\mathbb{W}xd4$ 12. $\mathbb{Q}xc6$ $\mathbb{W}xa1$ 13. $\mathbb{Q}xe7\pm$. White has won material, since 13... $\mathbb{Q}xe7?$ loses the queen to 14. $\mathbb{Q}a3\#$.

10...f5 fails to consolidate the position after 11. $\mathbb{W}a4$ $\mathbb{W}d5$ 12.f3± Bonaldi – Cena, La Falda 1984.

11.dxe5 $\mathbb{W}xd1$

Black had to make this important concession.

Maintaining the tension along the d-file with 11... $\mathbb{Q}f5$ is strongly met by 12. $\mathbb{W}b3\pm$, followed by $\mathbb{B}f1-d1$ and $\mathbb{W}b3-c4$, winning the e4-pawn.

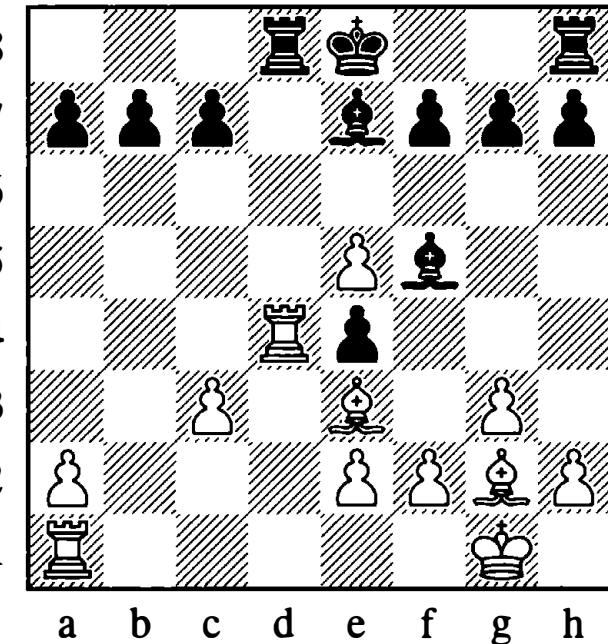
12. $\mathbb{B}xd1$ $\mathbb{Q}f5$

Black has to lose another tempo to defend his central pawn.

12...f5? is disastrous after 13.exf6 $\mathbb{Q}xf6$ 14. $\mathbb{Q}xe4$ $\mathbb{Q}xc3$ 15. $\mathbb{B}b1$, as in Gubay – Semenenko, Dnepropetrovsk 2004.

13. $\mathbb{B}d4$ $\mathbb{B}d8$ 14. $\mathbb{Q}e3$

White continues increasing the pressure with natural developing moves.



14... $\mathbb{B}xd4$

This is another necessary concession. Once again, Black carries out an exchange along the d-file, which this time results in White's centre being strengthened.

Any black move that maintains the tension

would be answered with $\mathbb{B}d4-a4$, making the white rook the unchallenged master of the fourth rank, with fatal consequences for the e4-pawn.

14...c5 would lose a pawn, while failing to endanger the white rook, after: 15. $\mathbb{B}a4$ a6 16. $\mathbb{Q}xe4\pm$ b5?! This does not work because of the intermediate check 17. $\mathbb{Q}c6\!\dagger$!.

14...0–0

This leads to more subtle play, but with the same result.

15. $\mathbb{B}a4$ a6 16. $\mathbb{B}b1$

The exchange sacrifice 16. $\mathbb{Q}xe4$ b5 17. $\mathbb{Q}xf5$ bxa4 18. $\mathbb{Q}d3$ leads to unclear consequences. The text move does not threaten $\mathbb{Q}xb7$ because of the weakness of the back rank, but White intends to play h2-h4 first. Having been forced to play ... $\mathbb{B}a8-d8$ at an early stage, Black cannot include his other rook in the defence, which leaves him with no constructive moves.

16...h5

The generally desirable 16... $\mathbb{B}d7$, clearing a path for the king's rook to the queenside, allows a tactical nuance: 17. $\mathbb{Q}xe4!$ b5 18. $\mathbb{Q}xf5+-$ It is apparent that the rook is exposed on d7.

17.h4 b6 18. $\mathbb{B}c4+-$

Black cannot defend his pawns.

15.cxd4 f6 16.f4 fxe5

16...exf3 would open the position for White's bishops. 17. $\mathbb{Q}xf3$ fxe5 18. $\mathbb{Q}xb7\pm$

17.fxe5 c6?!

Black's desire to immobilize the enemy centre is understandable, but he is not well enough developed to afford spending valuable time on another pawn move.

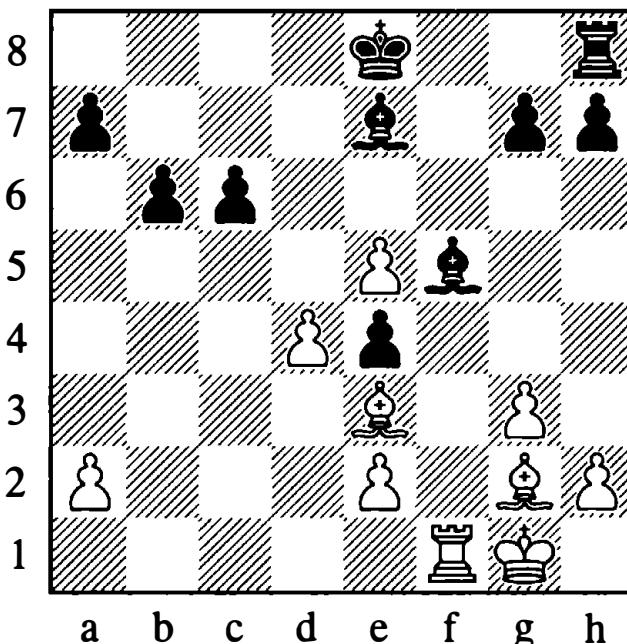
17... $\mathbb{Q}d7$ would have been more cautious, although after 18.d5± Black's position would be rather cramped.

18. $\mathbb{B}b1$!

An important intermediate move, provoking the weakening of the c6-square.

18...b6 19. $\mathbb{B}f1$

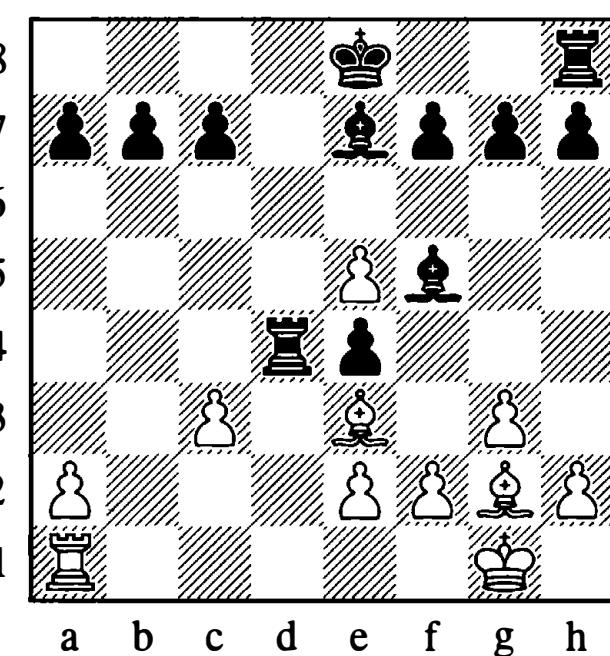
The rook switches to the kingside to challenge Black's stability on the light squares.



19... $\mathbb{B}f8$

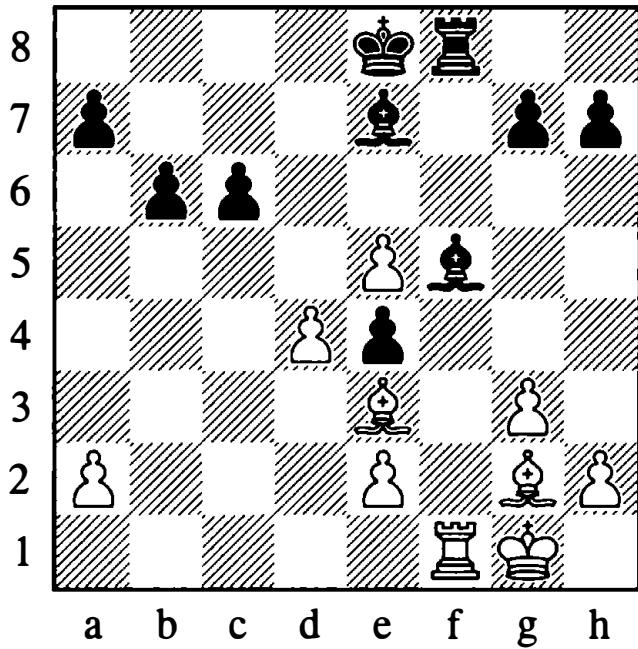
This is the lesser evil. Black allows an exchange sacrifice, but keeps his king in the centre in order to fight against White's compact mass of pawns.

19...0–0 20. $\mathbb{B}xf5$ $\mathbb{B}xf5$ 21. $\mathbb{Q}xe4\pm$ is an improved version for White of the game continuation.



Preserving the bishop with 19... $\hat{B}g6$ leaves the h3-c8 diagonal vulnerable: 20. $\hat{B}c1$ $\hat{Q}d7$ 21. $\hat{B}h3\#$ $\hat{Q}c7$ 22.d5+-

19...g6 allows White to eliminate the e4-pawn without needing to sacrifice material. 20.h3 h5 21.g4 hxg4 22.hxg4 ♕xg4 23.♕xe4+– With his pieces poorly coordinated and the c6- and g6-pawns hanging, Black cannot put up any resistance.



20. $\mathbb{B}x\mathfrak{f}5$ $\mathbb{B}x\mathfrak{f}5$ 21. $\mathbb{Q}xe4$ $\mathbb{Q}g5$

An important defensive resource. Exchanging the dark-squared bishops will allow Black to gain at least a little stability.

22.♕xc6† ♔e7 23.♔xg5† ♕xg5 24.e4 ♕g6
25.♔b5±

White has an impressive cluster of passed pawns, while the enemy rook is passive. Black defended stubbornly in Marin – Kveinys, Istanbul 2000, but nevertheless lost.

(1.c4 e5 2.g3 ♘f6 3.♗g2 d5 4.cxd5 ♘xd5
5.♗c3)

B) 5... $\text{N}e7$

This is an artificial move. Black keeps the knight on a route leading to d4, but this will interfere with the other knight's actions. In

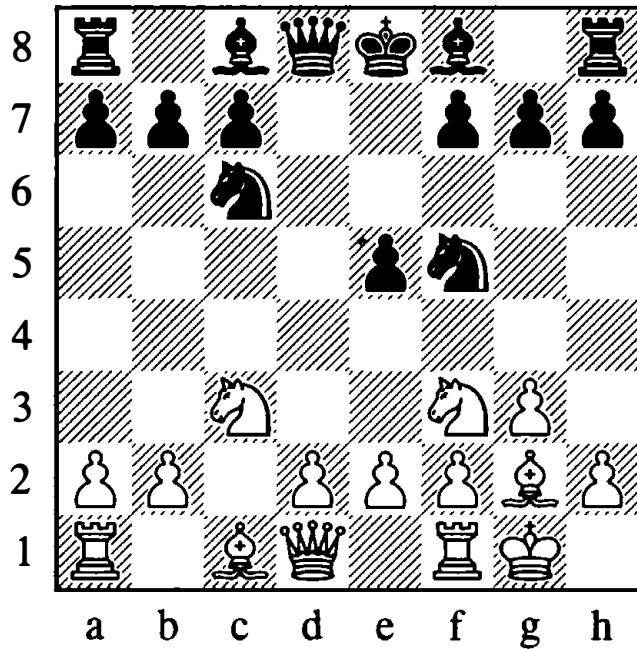
addition, Black will have to lose more time before he can develop his kingside.

6.4f3 6bc6 7.0-0

Black can play B1) 7... $\mathbb{N}f5$ or B2) 7...g6.

(1.c4 e5 2.g3 ♕f6 3.♔g2 d5 4.cxd5 ♕xd5
5.♕c3 ♕e7 6.♕f3 ♕bc6 7.0-0)

B1) 7...



Black clears the f8-a3 diagonal, hoping to slow down White's queenside attack.

8.b4!

This move was employed by Wolfgang Uhlmann at the peak of his career. It marks the failure of Black's aforementioned idea.

It is curious that many years later, while participating in the Veterans World Championship, Uhlmann played the less resolute 8.a3 a5 9.b3 ♕e6 10.d3 ♔e7 11.♔b2 0–0 12.♗c1 ♜c8 13.♕e4 f6 14.♕fd2±. Even so, White's position is more pleasant because of his queenside pressure, Uhlmann – Bondick, Bad Zwischenahn 2008.

8...a6

8... $\mathbb{Q}xb4$ is strongly met by 9. $\mathfrak{Q}xe5!$ $\mathfrak{Q}xe5$ 10. $\mathbb{W}a4\#$ $\mathfrak{Q}c6$ 11. $\mathbb{Q}xc6\#$ $bx\mathfrak{c}6$ 12. $\mathbb{W}xb4\#$ (Uhlmann). Black's structure is in ruins.

9.a3

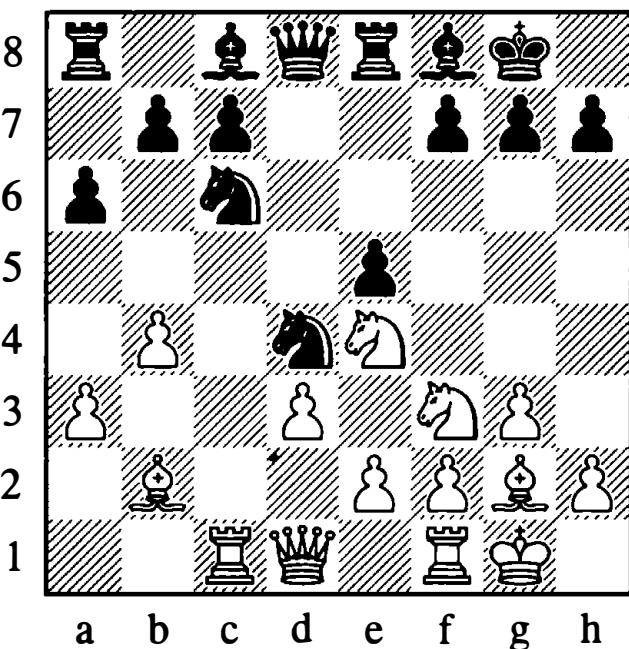
After having gained space and provoked the slightly weakening move ...a6, White switches back to solid play. He consolidates his b4-pawn in order to keep developing normally.

9...♝e7 10.♝b2 0–0 11.♝c1 ♜e8 12.d3

White has completed his queenside mobilization and there was no reason to refrain from this useful move, increasing his control over the centre and clearing the d2-square for his pieces.

12...♝f8 13.♞e4

Uhlmann recommended 13.e3 ♞d6 14.♞a4±, but the move he played is good enough.

13...♝fd4**14.♞c5**

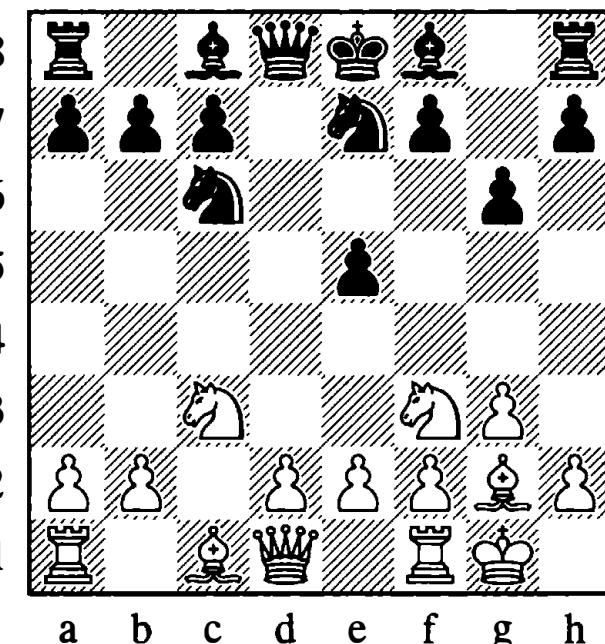
Uhlmann mentioned another possible continuation: 14.♞xd4 ♞xd4 15.e3 ♞f5 16.♗c2 c6 17.♗fd1± White has superb development. He will play ♞e4-c5, followed by either a3-a4 or d3-d4, depending on Black's reaction.

14...♝b8 15.e3 ♞xf3† 16.♗xf3±

White is better developed and his queenside attack is under way, Uhlmann – Taimanov,

Budapest 1982. The main threat is ♞c5xa6, winning a pawn.

(1.c4 e5 2.g3 ♜f6 3.♗g2 d5 4.cxd5 ♜xd5 5.♞c3 ♜e7 6.♞f3 ♜bc6 7.0–0)

B2) 7...g6

Fianchettoing the bishop fails to cause White any major inconvenience in the centre, while Black's queenside is left vulnerable.

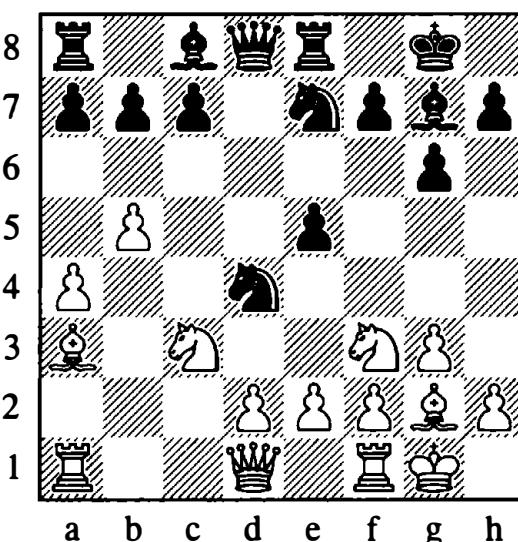
8.b4 a6

Black takes preventive measures against White's queenside expansion.

Alternatively:

8...♝g7 9.b5 ♜d4 10.a4 0–0 11.♗a3 ♜e8

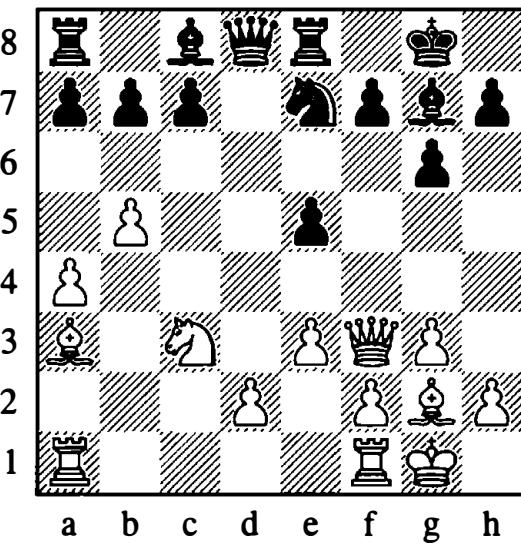
White has made important progress on the queenside, but the d4-knight restricts his active possibilities.



12.e3!N

This is stronger than 12.Qg5, as the consequences of this time-consuming knight manoeuvre are not easy to anticipate. One example is 12...Bb8 13.Bc1 h6 14.Qge4 f5 15.Qc5 b6 16.Qa6 Qxa6 17.bxa6 c5 18.a5 e4 19.d3± when Black had problems maintaining his space advantage, Taimanov – Witkowski, Dresden 1959.

12...Qxf3† 13.Wxf3±



White intends to place his rooks on d1 and c1, leaving Black with problems completing his development. Black cannot afford to be greedy:

13...Wxd2? 14.Bac1

White threatens to trap the queen with Bf1-d1.

14...Wd7 15.Bfd1 We6 16.Qxe7 Wxe7
17.Qd5+–

White wins the exchange while retaining the better development.

9.a4

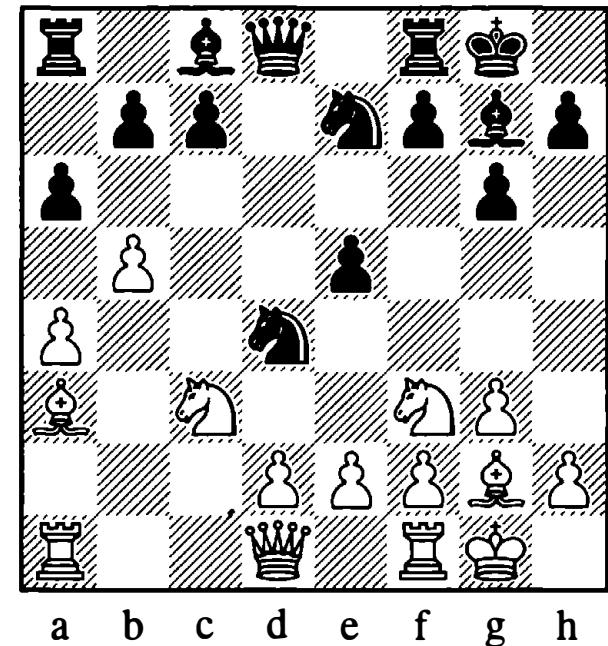
White plans to arrange his forces in the same way as in the variation from the previous comment.

An alternate plan is 9.Bb1 Qg7 10.d3 0–0 11.a4 h6 12.Qd2 Rh7 13.Wc2 Be8 14.e3 a5 15.bxa5 Qxa5 16.Bfc1 c6 17.Qe4±. White is fully mobilized, while Black is underdeveloped and poorly coordinated, Lautier – J. Ivanov, Berlin 1989.

9...Qg7 10.Qa3 0–0 11.b5

The pin along the a3-f8 diagonal is unpleasant.

11...Qd4



12.e3!

Once again, the slightly exotic knight lunge is possible:

12.Qg5!?

This is playable, but less accurate.

12...axb5 13.axb5 Qd7?

The pawn exchange provoked by this move leaves Black with the weaker structure.

Instead he could have questioned the value of the knight manoeuvre with 13...h6 14.Qge4 f5 15.Qc5 Bxa3!?. The possibility of this tactical operation is an indirect consequence of 8...a6, which provoked the opening of the a-file. 16.Bxa3 Wd6 17.Q3a4 b6 18.e3 bxc5 19.exd4 cxd4 20.Wc1 e4 21.Wc5 The position is not easy to assess. Black's pawn centre looks impressive, but White's rooks have active possibilities.

14.Qxb7 Bb8 15.Qg2 Qxb5 16.Qxb5 Qxb5
17.Bb1 h6 18.Qe4 Be8 19.d3±

The chronic weakness of the c7-pawn offers White excellent play, Larsen – Lehmann, Palma de Mallorca 1967.

12...Qxf3† 13.Wxf3 Be8 14.We2 h5

15.h3 $\mathbb{R}a7$

Black over-defends the b7-pawn in order to allow the development of the bishop, but the rook is awkwardly placed on a7.

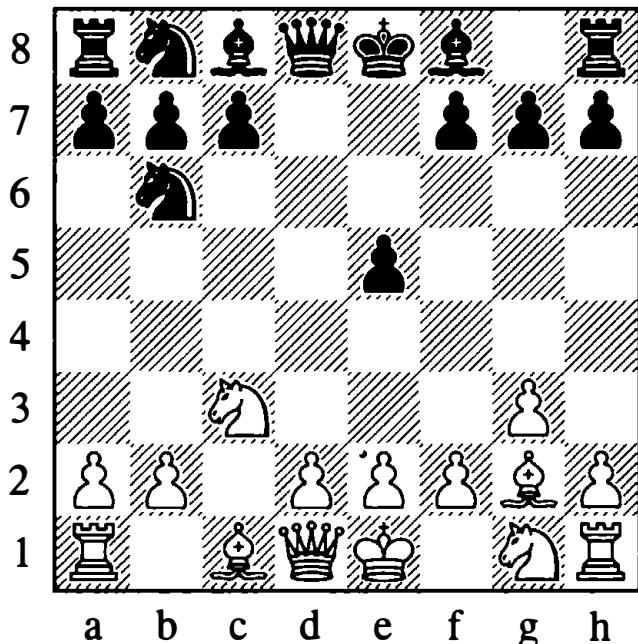
16. $\mathbb{B}fc1\pm$

White is better developed and has strong pressure against the enemy queenside, Zwaig – Romanishin, Hastings 1976/77.

In conclusion, lines A and B show that Black is likely to run into trouble if he refrains from the natural knight retreat to b6. So let's move on to the most important move.

(1.c4 e5 2.g3 $\mathbb{Q}f6$ 3. $\mathbb{Q}g2$ d5 4.cxd5 $\mathbb{Q}xd5$ 5. $\mathbb{Q}c3$)

C) 5... $\mathbb{Q}b6$



This is the most natural and by far the most popular continuation. Black's knight tandem will be quite effective on b6 and c6, while the f8-a3 diagonal is left open.

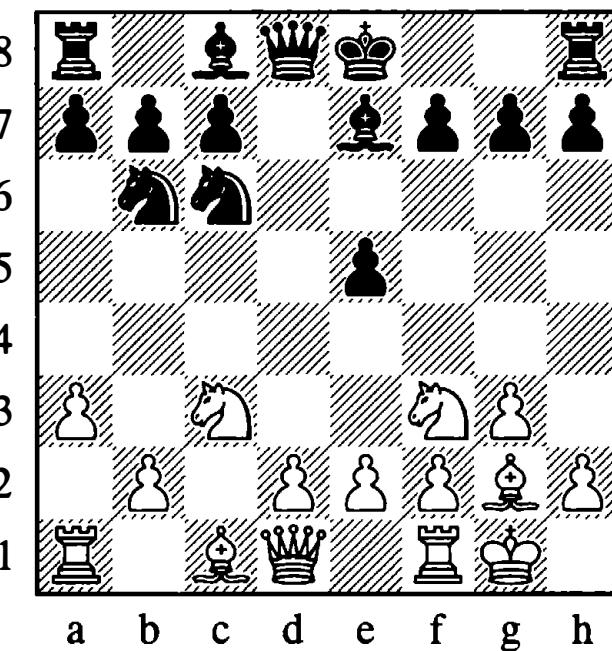
6. $\mathbb{Q}f3$ $\mathbb{Q}c6$ 7.0–0 $\mathbb{Q}e7$

With the knight on b6 it makes little sense for Black to fianchetto: 7...g6 8.b3!? White is ready to meet ... $\mathbb{Q}f8-g7$ with $\mathbb{Q}c1-a3$, preventing Black castling. 8... $\mathbb{Q}e6$ 9.d3 $\mathbb{Q}g7$ 10. $\mathbb{Q}a3$ $\mathbb{Q}c8$ 11. $\mathbb{Q}c1$ $\mathbb{Q}8e7$ Black has covered

the a3-f8 diagonal, but this has cost him two tempos. 12. $\mathbb{Q}e4$ 0–0 13. $\mathbb{Q}c5\pm$ White has a strong queenside initiative, Znamenacek – Trichkov, Prague 1994.

White has several ways of starting his queenside attack. The traditional method is 8.d3 followed by either 9.a4 or 9.a3. In recent years there have been some theoretical developments after 9. $\mathbb{Q}b1$ – the main drawback is that after 9...a5 the rook is not especially well placed on b1. Compare this with the variation examined in Chapter 21, in which the rook belongs on c1.

8.a3



Experience has taught me that this is the most effective continuation. White hurries to put the e5-pawn under pressure, in order to provoke the weakening move ...f7-f6. White is not rejecting the move d2-d3, which is quite useful, but instead delaying it until after the central structure has been defined.

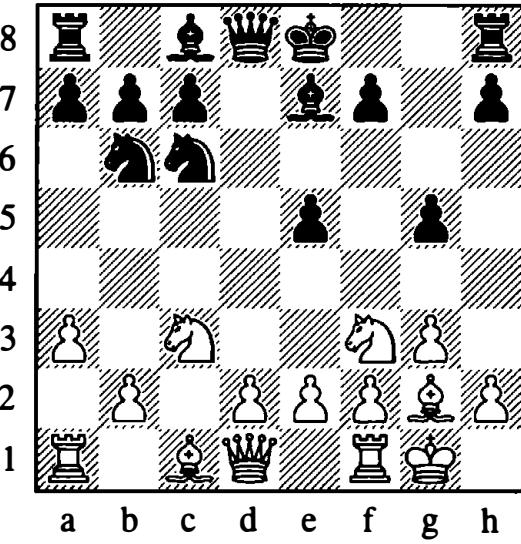
Black can radically cross White's plans with 8...a5 (Chapter 21), or anticipate those plans with 8... $\mathbb{Q}e6$, intending an early knight jump to d4 (Chapter 22), but neither of these lines is entirely satisfactory. The most common continuation is 8...0–0, continuing to develop naturally. Before defining his intentions, Black

moves his king to safety. The variations arising after **9.b4** will be examined in Chapters 23 to 25.

Before moving on to the serious lines we should quickly dispose of a couple of minor sidelines:

8...g5?!

Remarkably, this premature attack has been played by a few grandmasters.



9.d4!

As usual, unsound activity on the wing should be countered with a blow in the centre.

9...exd4

9... $\mathbb{Q}xd4$ allows 10. $\mathbb{Q}xe5\pm$.

10. $\mathbb{Q}b5$ g4

The text move leaves White clearly better, but it is still Black's best option.

If Black tries to keep his material advantage, then his overextended position would collapse: 10... $\mathbb{Q}f6$ 11. $\mathbb{Q}xg5!$ $\mathbb{Q}xg5$ 12. $\mathbb{Q}xg5$ $\mathbb{W}xg5$ 13. $\mathbb{Q}xc7\#$ $\mathbb{Q}e7$ 14. $\mathbb{Q}xc6$ $bxc6$ 15. $\mathbb{Q}xa8$ $\mathbb{Q}xa8$ 16. $\mathbb{W}xd4\pm$

11. $\mathbb{Q}fxd4$ $\mathbb{Q}xd4$ 12. $\mathbb{Q}xd4\pm$

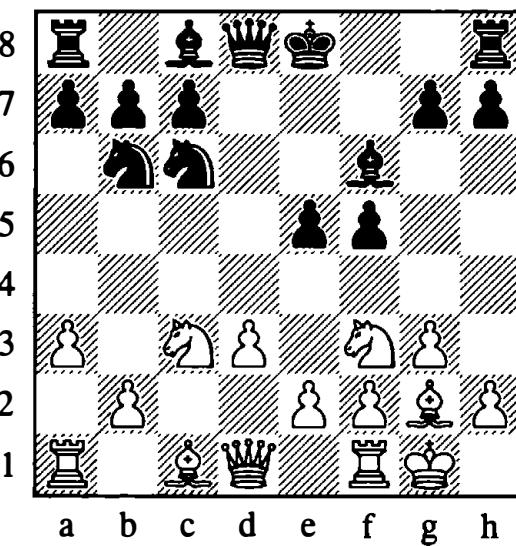
Black's attacking lunge has weakened his kingside, while his queenside will be subjected to the usual pressure, Marin – L. Perez, Burjassot (rapid) 2002.

8...f5

This is standard against the Dragon, but

with colours reversed it is very risky as Black is a tempo down compared to the Sicilian positions.

9.d3 $\mathbb{Q}f6$



10.e4!

This move is also seen in some variations of the Dragon. White wishes to secure the e4-square for his knight.

10...0–0 11.b4 a6

This position was reached in Ki. Georgiev – Korchnoi, Sarajevo 1998. Ribli now recommended:

12. $\mathbb{Q}b2$ $\mathbb{Q}h8$ 13. $\mathbb{Q}xf5$ $\mathbb{Q}xf5$ 14. $\mathbb{Q}e4\pm$

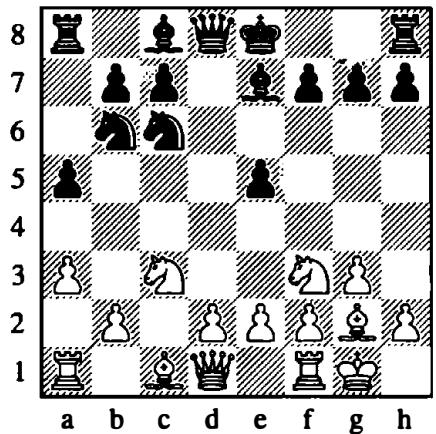
Curiously, after:

14... $\mathbb{Q}g4$ 15. $\mathbb{W}c2$

Play would transpose to an older game in which White employed a mistaken move order at an earlier stage.

15... $\mathbb{W}d7$ 16. $\mathbb{Q}c5$ $\mathbb{W}f5$ 17. $\mathbb{Q}d2!\pm$

In addition to $\mathbb{Q}xb7$, White is threatening f2-f3 trapping the bishop, Dorfman – Zaichik, Tallinn (rapid) 1988.



Reversed Dragon

8...a5

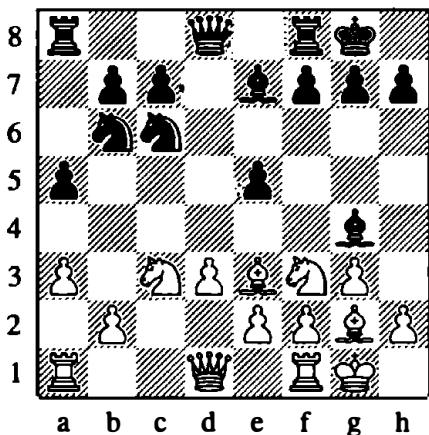
Variation Index

**1.c4 e5 2.g3 ♜f6 3.♗g2 d5 4.cxd5 ♜xd5 5.♘c3 ♜b6 6.♘f3 ♜c6
7.0–0 ♜e7 8.a3**

8...a5 9.d3 0–0 10.♗e3

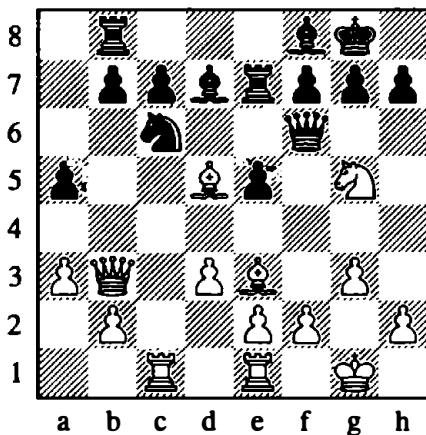
- | | |
|--|--------------|
| A) 10...♝g4 | p 274 |
| B) 10...♝e6 11.♞a4 ♜xa4 12.♝xa4 | p 278 |
| B1) 12...f5 | p 279 |
| B2) 12...♞d5 | p 279 |

A) 10...♝g4



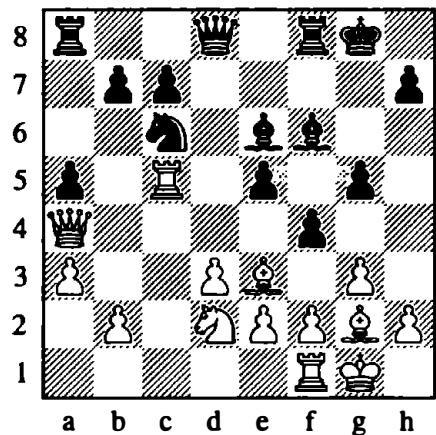
11.♝c1

A) note to 15...♝e6



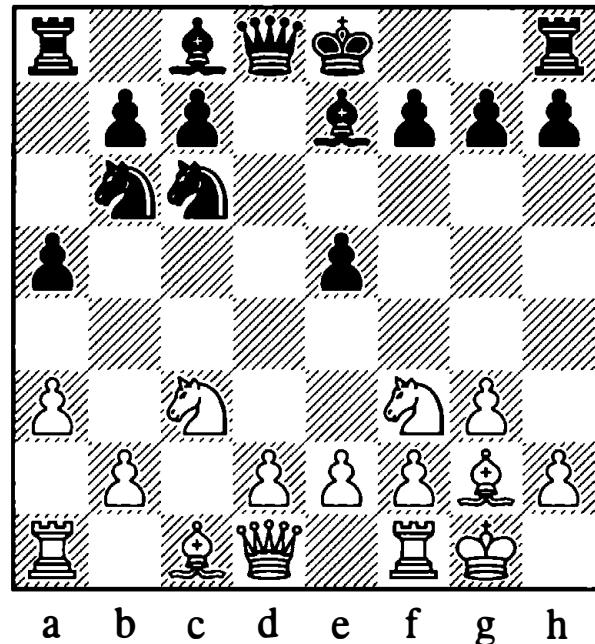
18.♝e4! g6 19.♞d5!+–

B1) after 15...f4



16.♝xc6!

1.c4 e5 2.g3 ♘f6 3.♗g2 d5 4.cxd5 ♘xd5
5.♘c3 ♘b6 6.♘f3 ♘c6 7.0-0 ♕e7 8.a3 a5

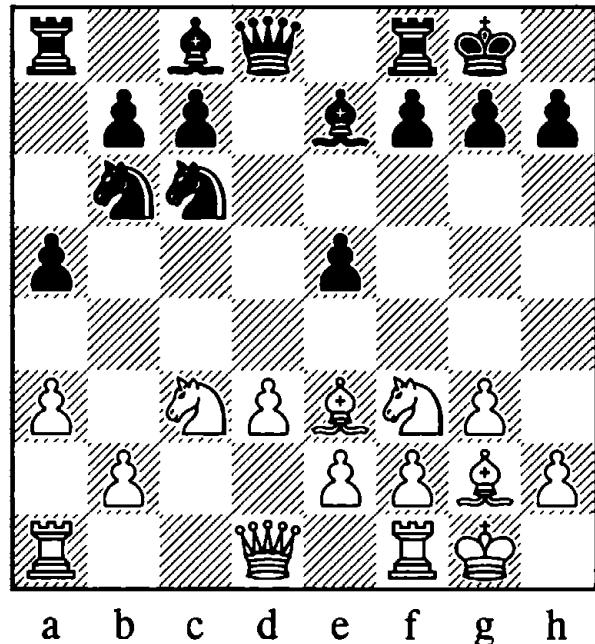


This radical method of crossing White's plans has the drawback of weakening Black's queenside. In the past this line was the subject of theoretical and practical disputes between strong players, but nowadays it is out of fashion.

9.d3

White now has no reason to delay this move.

9...0-0 10.♕e3



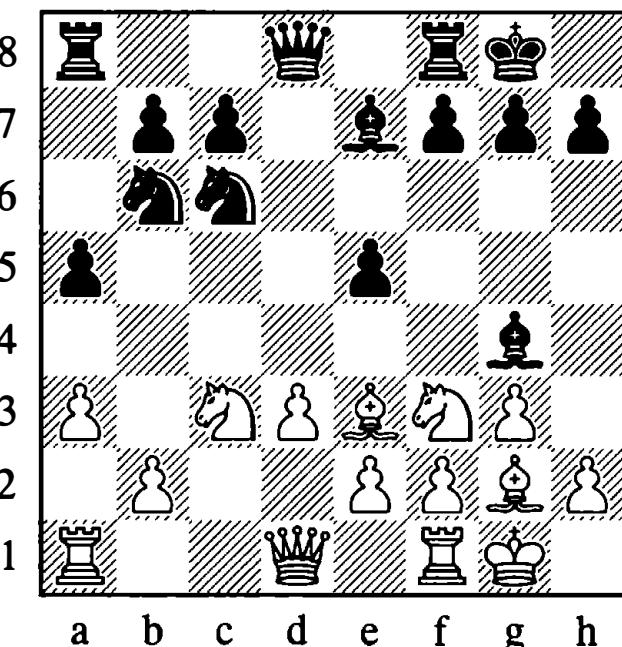
Both white bishops are targeting the enemy queenside. As a consequence of ...a7-a5 the

b6-knight has lost some stability. This makes ♘xb6 a potential threat, although in some cases this would activate the e7-bishop.

Black can choose between A) 10...♗g4 and B) 10...♗e6.

(1.c4 e5 2.g3 ♘f6 3.♗g2 d5 4.cxd5 ♘xd5
5.♘c3 ♘b6 6.♘f3 ♘c6 7.0-0 ♕e7 8.a3 a5
9.d3 0-0 10.♕e3)

A) 10...♗g4



This is an active move, putting the e2-pawn under indirect pressure.

In the Sicilian Dragon the systems based on ♘f1-e2 and ♘c1-g5 are quite playable, but White's extra tempo in the English Opening allows him to take advantage of the relative weakness of the a2-g8 diagonal.

11.♘c1

Before undertaking anything concrete, White completes his queenside development.

11...♗e8

Black prepares to over-defend his central pawn.

The premature 11...f5 would allow 12.b4!±. If Black captures the pawn with 12...axb4

13.axb4 ♜xb4 then the weakness of the a2-g8 diagonal allows White to retrieve the pawn, with strategic gain, after 14.♗xe5 ♜xe5 15.♗b3†±.

12.♗e1

Before starting queenside operations, White makes a useful move, over-protecting the e2-pawn. This way, the move ...♝b6-d5 is delayed for at least one tempo.

White has an important alternative in the more straightforward:

12.♕a4

White immediately initiates active operations.

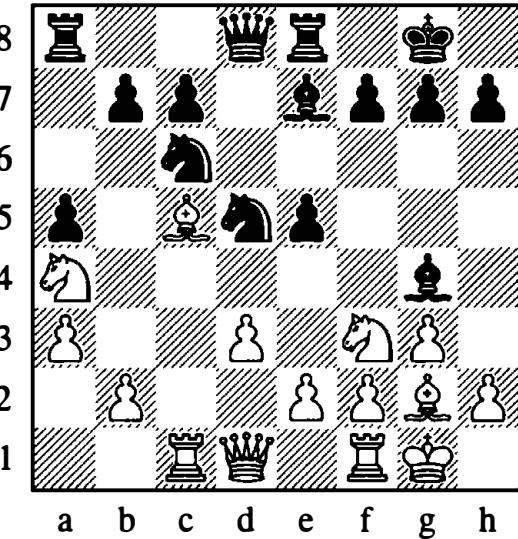
12...♞d5

After the pressure against the d5-square has been released, the knight returns to the centre.

Instead 12...♝xa4 13.♗xa4 would help White develop his queenside initiative.

13.♗c5

White intends to make the c5-square available to the knight by trading bishops.



13...♝f6

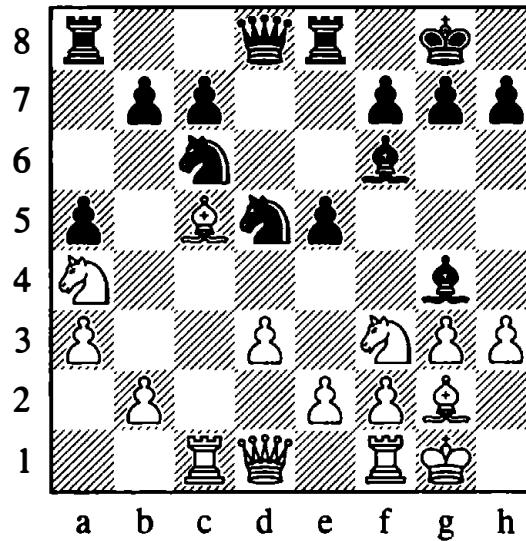
This is a necessary concession, caused by the weakness of the a2-g8 diagonal. The bishop is passive on f6 and also blocks the path of the f7-pawn.

13...♝d6, which is the best solution when the other bishop is on e6, would fail to:

14.♗xd6 cxd6 15.♗b3! This is the difference! The queen feels at home on the weakened queenside. 15...♛e6 16.♗xb7±

14.h3?!

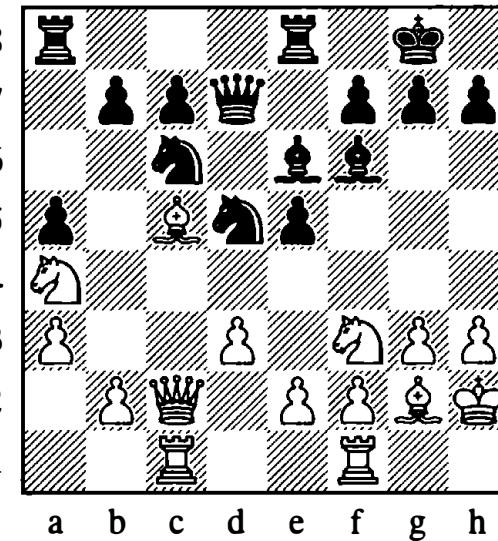
After having made significant progress on the queenside, White drives away the enemy bishop, in order to gain better control of the centre.



14...♛e6

14...♝h5 would cut off the bishop from the queenside, allowing White to invade that part of the board with ♗b3.

15.♔h2 ♘d7 16.♗c2



16...g6

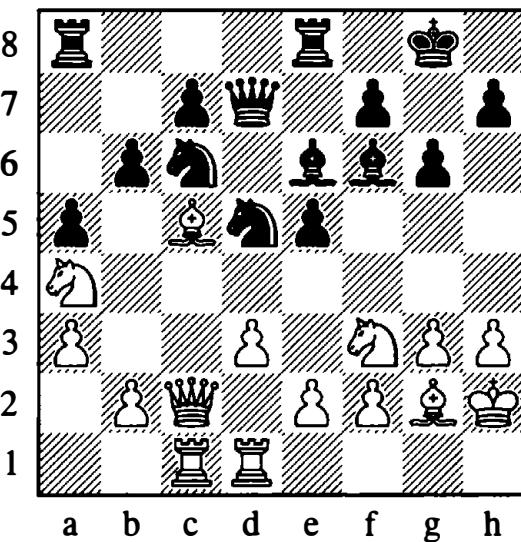
Black initiates a slow plan of improving his position, based on ...h6, ...♝g7 and ...f5. He cannot challenge White on the queenside with 16...b6? because of 17.♗xb6! cxb6 18.♗xc6 ♘xc6 19.♗xc6 ♔d7 20.♗d6+–, as indicated by V. Sokolov.

17. $\mathbb{R}fd1$

White concentrates his pieces in the centre, preparing for the breakthrough with d3-d4.

17... b6

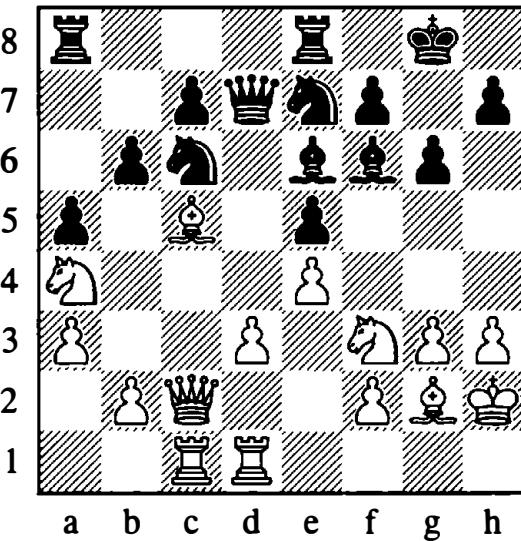
With the rook on d1, this move looks to have become possible, but another surprise awaits Black.



18. e4!

This time the forced operation 18. $\mathbb{Q}xb6$ $cxb6$ 19. $\mathbb{W}xc6$ $\mathbb{W}xc6$ 20. $\mathbb{B}xc6$ does not work, because of 20... $\mathbb{Q}d7$ 21. $\mathbb{B}d6$ $\mathbb{Q}xa4+$, as indicated by V. Sokolov.

18... $\mathbb{Q}de7$



19. d4!

With all White's pieces placed more actively than Black's, it is no wonder that White has a tactical resource.

19... exd4

After 19... $bxc5$ 20. $dxe5\pm$ White regains the piece with interest.

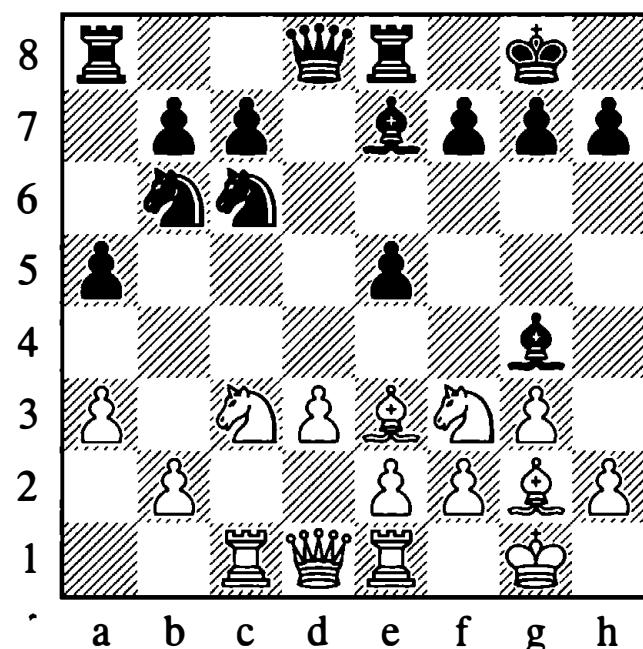
20. $\mathbb{Q}xe7$ $\mathbb{Q}xe7$ 21. e5 $\mathbb{Q}f5$

21... $\mathbb{Q}g7$ leaves Black's position hanging after 22. $\mathbb{Q}xd4\pm$.

22. $\mathbb{W}xc7$ $\mathbb{W}xa4$ 23. $exf6$ $\mathbb{Q}d5$ 24. $\mathbb{W}c6$ $\mathbb{W}xc6$

25. $\mathbb{B}xc6\pm$

Black has temporarily managed to maintain the material balance, but White's pieces continue to dominate the board, Uhlmann – Korchnoi, Moscow 1971.



12... $\mathbb{Q}f8$

The drawbacks of this move will be revealed in the comment to Black's 13th move, but it is not easy to play this "wait and see" game White has created.

12... a4 According to Suba, this move would have left the queenside vulnerable after: 13. $\mathbb{Q}d2!$ White threatens $\mathbb{Q}xb6$ followed by $\mathbb{Q}xa4$. (13. $\mathbb{Q}xb6?$ $cxb6$ 14. $\mathbb{Q}xa4$ is premature because of 14... e4!) 13... $\mathbb{Q}g5$ 14. $\mathbb{Q}xg5$ $\mathbb{W}xg5$ 15. $\mathbb{Q}b5$ $\mathbb{W}e7$ 16. $\mathbb{B}xc6\pm$

13. $\mathbb{Q}a4$

After the bishop retreat to f8 this is well-timed, but White could also continue his waiting policy with:

13. $\mathbb{Q}d2$ $\mathbb{B}b8?!$

This move, defending the b7-pawn in order to allow ... $\mathbb{Q}c6-d4$, will result in a loss of time.

13... $\mathbb{B}h8$ should have been preferred, preparing ...f7-f5.

14. $\mathbb{Q}b3$

White threatens $\mathbb{Q}g2xc6$ followed by $\mathbb{Q}b3xa5$.

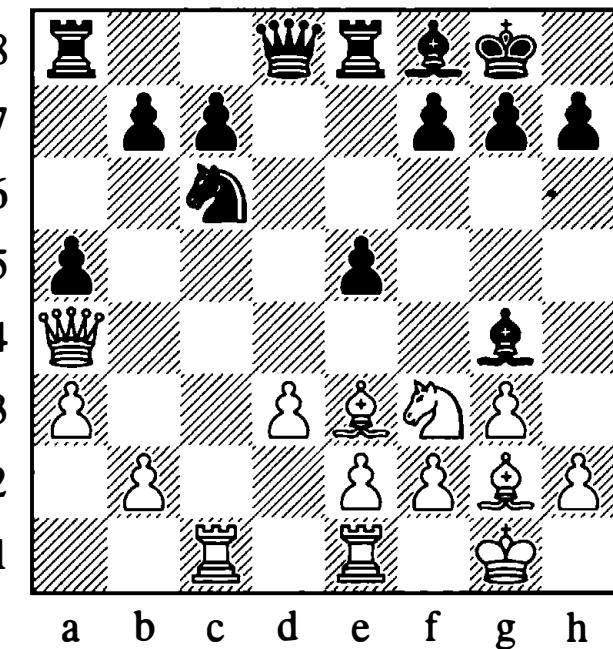
14... $\mathbb{E}a8$ 15. $\mathbb{Q}b5$ a4 16. $\mathbb{Q}c5$ $\mathbb{Q}xc5$ 17. $\mathbb{E}xc5$ $\mathbb{Q}d7$ 18.d4±

After having invaded Black's queenside, White favourably opens the centre, Adorjan – Wirthensohn, Biel 1983.

13... $\mathbb{Q}xa4$

With the bishop trapped on f8, 13... $\mathbb{Q}d5$ 14. $\mathbb{Q}c5\pm$ would result in White installing his knight on c5.

14. $\mathbb{W}xa4$



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

This looks like a clumsy attempt to reduce the white queen's influence on the queenside.

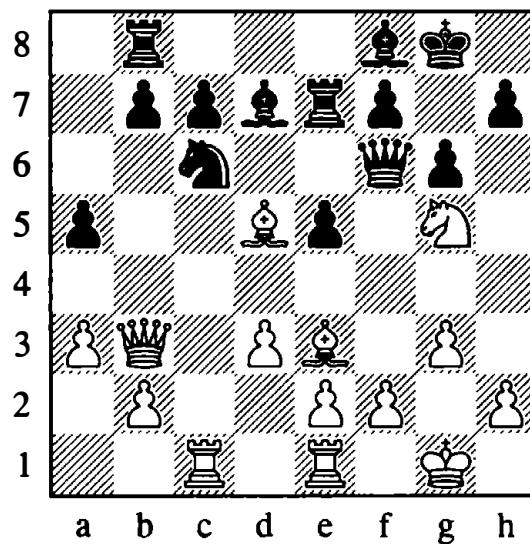
14... $\mathbb{W}c8!?$ was recommended by Suba, but after 15. $\mathbb{Q}g5\pm$ Black would remain under strong pressure. We can note a double effect of the insertion of the moves $\mathbb{E}f1-e1$ and ... $\mathbb{Q}e7-f8$. The e2-pawn is defended, ensuring the mobility of the f3-knight, and the g5-square is available, which allows White to put the f7-square under pressure.

15. $\mathbb{W}b3!$

White simultaneously threatens 16. $\mathbb{W}xb7$ and 16. $\mathbb{Q}g5$.

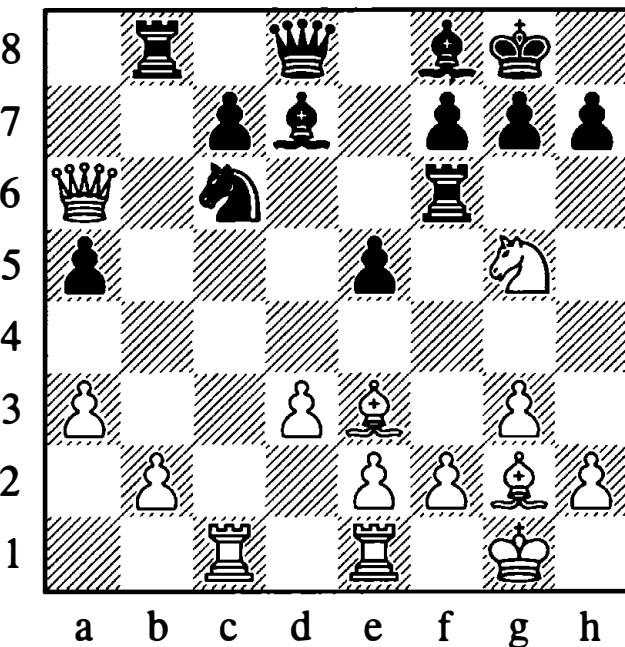
15... $\mathbb{E}e6$

After 15... $\mathbb{E}b8$ Suba analyses the following interesting variation: 16. $\mathbb{Q}g5$ $\mathbb{W}f6$ 17. $\mathbb{Q}d5$ $\mathbb{E}e7$ 18. $\mathbb{Q}e4!$ g6 19. $\mathbb{Q}d5!+-$



After having provoked the weakening of the f6-square, the bishop clears the e4-square for the knight. Suba's evaluation is slightly exaggerated (\pm may be more accurate), but Black is on the ropes.

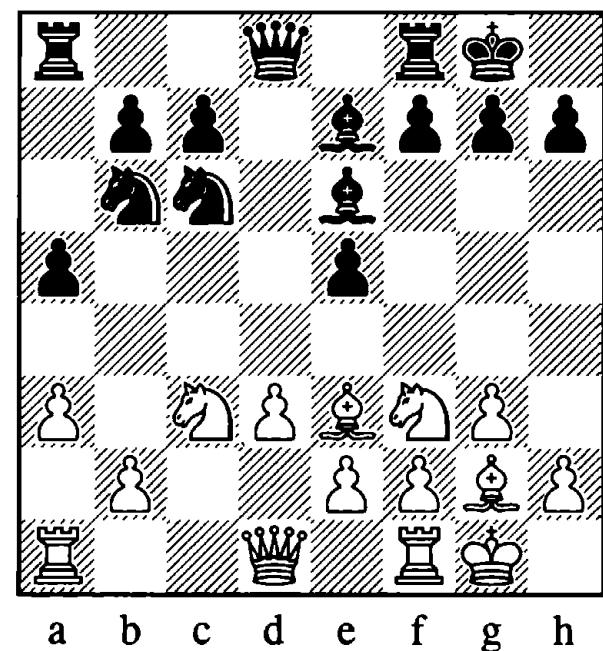
16. $\mathbb{Q}g5$ $\mathbb{E}f6$ 17. $\mathbb{W}xb7$ $\mathbb{E}b8$ 18. $\mathbb{Q}a6\pm$



Black has no compensation for the lost pawn, Suba – Mestel, Beersheba 1984.

(1.c4 e5 2.g3 ♜f6 3.♗g2 d5 4.cxd5 ♜xd5 5.♘c3 ♜b6 6.♘f3 ♜c6 7.0–0 ♔e7 8.a3 a5 9.d3 0–0 10.♗e3)

B) 10...♝e6



This is a more solid move than 10...♝g4. Black keeps the a2-g8 diagonal well defended.

11.♘a4

This move has been a favourite of World Champions. There is a subtle logic in hurrying with this thematic move – since 10...♝e6 enables ...♞d5, White immediately prepares to invade the c5-square with his (otherwise vulnerable) bishop.

In practice, 12.♗c1 has also been a frequent choice. If 12...♞d5 13.♘xd5 ♔xd5 14.♗a4 then play would just transpose to the main line, but as Black is under less immediate pressure, he has a wider choice on the 12th move.

11...♞xa4

The alternative is:

11...♞d5

As mentioned above, this would be met by:

12.♗c5 ♔d6 13.♗c1 h6

This rather unnatural move has been played several times at grandmaster level. Black prepares to develop his queen to the

most natural square, avoiding 13...♔d7 14.♗g5±.

Against 13...♔e7 White could play, as in the main line, 14.d4!? taking advantage of the fact that Black has released the pressure along the d-file.

Against 13...♔e8 the most dangerous plan is 14.♗c2, planning ♘fd1, e4 and d4.

14.d4

A well-timed opening of the centre.

Alternatively, White can increase his piece pressure with 14.♘d2 ♘c8 15.♘e4 b6 16.♘xd6 cxd6 17.♗xb6 ♘xb6 18.♗xc6± Kasparov – Ki. Georgiev, Saint John (Blitz World Ch) 1988.

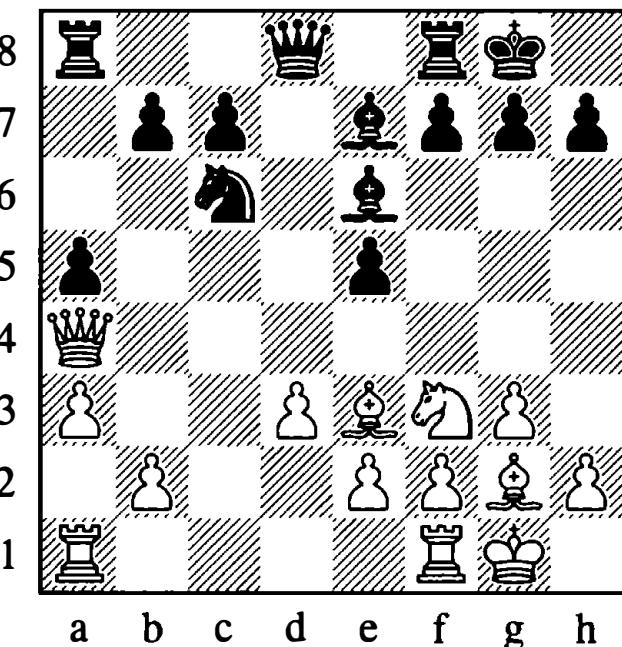
14...exd4

14...e4 leaves Black with structural defects after 15.♘e5 f5 16.♘xd6 ♘xd6 17.♘xc6 bxc6 18.♗c2 ♘f6 19.e3± Quinteros – Dzindzichashvili, New York 1983.

15.♘xd4 ♘xd4 16.♗xd4 b6 17.♗xd6 ♘xd6 18.♗fd1±

Black is caught in unpleasant pins, Kasparov – Ki. Georgiev, Saint John (Blitz World Ch) 1988.

12.♗xa4

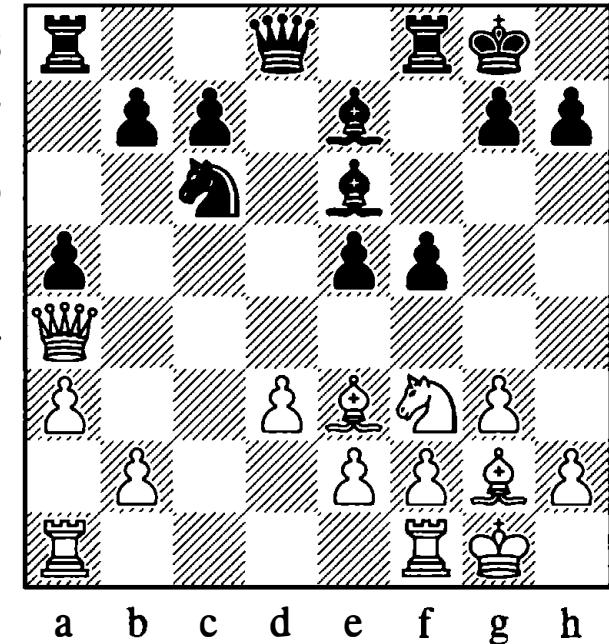


After the knight exchange, several queenside squares have been cleared for the white pieces. White's initiative, based on ♘(a or f)-c1, ♘b5

and $\mathbb{Q}c5$, can become threatening. Black can choose between the hyperactive B1) 12...f5 and the more restrained B2) 12... $\mathbb{Q}d5$.

(1.c4 e5 2.g3 $\mathbb{Q}f6$ 3. $\mathbb{Q}g2$ d5 4.cxd5 $\mathbb{Q}xd5$ 5. $\mathbb{Q}c3$ $\mathbb{Q}b6$ 6. $\mathbb{Q}f3$ $\mathbb{Q}c6$ 7.0–0 $\mathbb{Q}e7$ 8.a3 a5 9.d3 0–0 10. $\mathbb{Q}e3$ $\mathbb{Q}e6$ 11. $\mathbb{Q}a4$ $\mathbb{Q}xa4$ 12. $\mathbb{W}xa4$)

B1) 12...f5



This is a double-edged move, challenging the stability of the e3-bishop, but weakening Black's position in the centre.

The more solid 12... $\mathbb{Q}d5$ would transpose to line B2 after 13. $\mathbb{R}ac1$. White can take advantage of the specific move order to play the other rook to c1, but this will not change much if he carries out a plan involving doubling rooks on the c-file. For example, 13. $\mathbb{R}fc1$ $\mathbb{R}e8$ 14. $\mathbb{R}c2$ $\mathbb{Q}f8$ 15. $\mathbb{R}ac1$.

13. $\mathbb{R}ac1$ $\mathbb{Q}f6$

13... $\mathbb{Q}d5$ is less logical. 14. $\mathbb{W}b5$ $\mathbb{Q}f6$ 15. $\mathbb{Q}d2\pm$ Black's light squares are vulnerable, Johansen – Solomon, Sydney 1991.

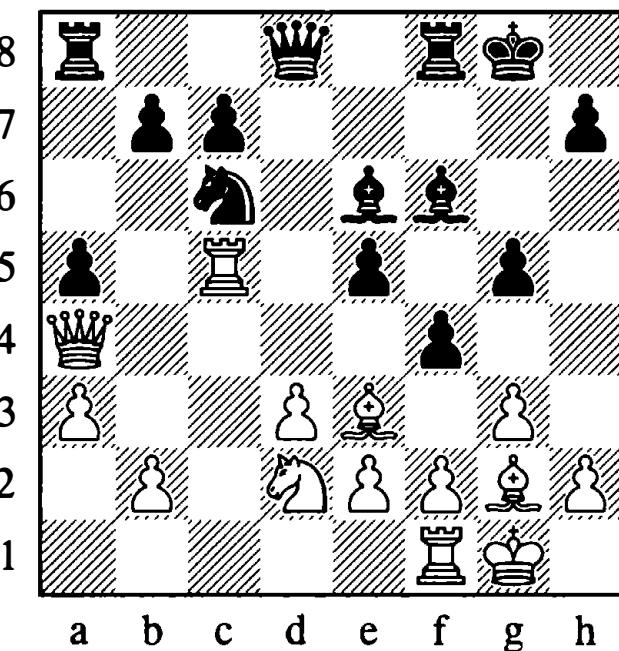
14. $\mathbb{R}c5$ g5

Black plays consistently and creates the threat of ...f5-f4.

15. $\mathbb{Q}d2$

A strong move, preparing a thematic sacrifice.

15...f4



16. $\mathbb{R}xc6!$ $\mathbb{B}xc6$ 17. $\mathbb{Q}c5$

Black's structure is in ruins and, amazingly, he cannot avoid losing his material advantage.

17... $\mathbb{Q}d5$

The f8-rook had no good escape squares. 17... $\mathbb{R}f7$ 18. $\mathbb{W}xc6$ or 17... $\mathbb{R}e8$ 18. $\mathbb{Q}xc6$ would leave him a pawn down.

18. $\mathbb{Q}xf8$ $\mathbb{W}xf8$ 19. $\mathbb{R}c1\pm$

White has the better structure and strong pressure on the light squares, Zwaig – Pomar Salamanca, Costa Brava 1976.

(1.c4 e5 2.g3 $\mathbb{Q}f6$ 3. $\mathbb{Q}g2$ d5 4.cxd5 $\mathbb{Q}xd5$ 5. $\mathbb{Q}c3$ $\mathbb{Q}b6$ 6. $\mathbb{Q}f3$ $\mathbb{Q}c6$ 7.0–0 $\mathbb{Q}e7$ 8.a3 a5 9.d3 0–0 10. $\mathbb{Q}e3$ $\mathbb{Q}e6$ 11. $\mathbb{Q}a4$ $\mathbb{Q}xa4$ 12. $\mathbb{W}xa4$)

B2) 12... $\mathbb{Q}d5$

Black intends to neutralize the enemy bishop, while avoiding any weakening moves.

13. $\mathbb{R}ac1$

13. $\mathbb{R}fc1$ was played by Botvinnik, but may make less sense. In some cases the king's rook

belongs on e1, defending e2 in anticipation of a possible ... $\mathbb{Q}d4$, while $\mathbb{B}fd1$ might allow the opening of the centre with d3-d4.

If White doubles rooks on the c-file (as Botvinnik did, see below), then play would simply transpose.

13... $\mathbb{Q}d6$

Black consolidates his position, anticipating the positional threat $\mathbb{Q}c5$.

13... $\mathbb{B}e8$

This move is more subtle, but it does not change the character of the position.

14. $\mathbb{B}c2$ $\mathbb{Q}f8$ 15. $\mathbb{B}fc1\pm$

This position was actually reached with $\mathbb{B}fc1-c2$ followed by $\mathbb{B}ac1$. White's pressure against the black queenside has become annoying. In general, his next move would usually be $\mathbb{Q}c5$.

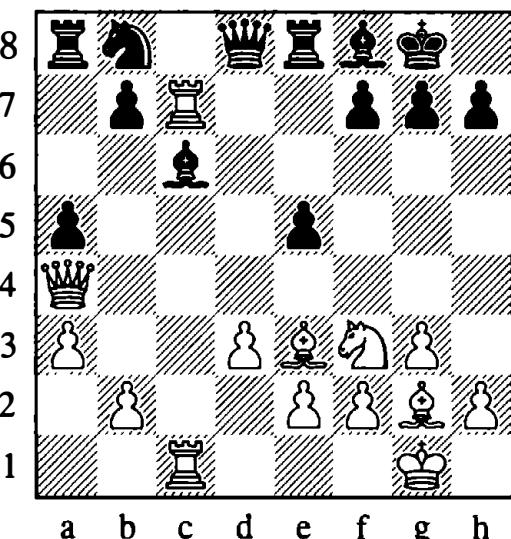
15... $\mathbb{Q}b8?$

Black takes an extreme approach in his attempts to solve his problems. He hopes that the c7-pawn is taboo, which would allow him to regroup with ...c6 and ... $\mathbb{Q}d7$.

16. $\mathbb{B}xc7!$

The start of a well calculated tactical operation.

16... $\mathbb{Q}c6$



17. $\mathbb{R}1xc6!$ $\mathbb{B}xc6$ 18. $\mathbb{R}xf7!+ -$

This double rook sacrifice earned White a decisive advantage in Botvinnik – Portisch,

Monte Carlo 1968. This game has been published many times with Botvinnik's comments, so I will just give the final part of it with some general remarks.

18...h6

Accepting the second sacrifice would be met by the deadly 19. $\mathbb{W}c4\#$. With his last move Black takes away the g5-square from the f3-knight, but instead provides it with a comfortable outpost on g6.

19. $\mathbb{B}b7$ $\mathbb{W}c8$ 20. $\mathbb{W}c4\#$ $\mathbb{K}h8$ 21. $\mathbb{Q}h4$ $\mathbb{W}xb7$ 22. $\mathbb{Q}g6\#$ $\mathbb{K}h7$ 23. $\mathbb{Q}e4$

The great attacking players from the romantic era would have been delighted to play such a game. White has a huge material disadvantage, but his attack is irresistible.

23... $\mathbb{Q}d6$ 24. $\mathbb{Q}xe5\#$ g6 25. $\mathbb{Q}xg6\#$ $\mathbb{K}g7$ 26. $\mathbb{Q}xh6\#$ 1–0

14. $\mathbb{Q}c5$ $\mathbb{Q}e7$

This move allows White to start active play in the centre immediately. It would have been more difficult to develop an initiative after a half-waiting move such as 14... $\mathbb{B}e8$ when, because of the possible pressure against e2, White might have been forced to play 15. $\mathbb{B}fe1$ rather than put the rook on the more active d1-square.

15.e4 $\mathbb{Q}c6$ 16. $\mathbb{W}c2$ b6 17.d4!

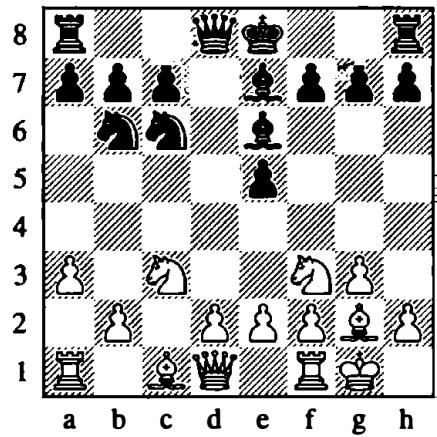
This move is tactically justified because the d6-bishop is trapped.

17... $bxc5$ 18. $dxc5$ $\mathbb{W}b8$ 19. $\mathbb{B}fd1$ $\mathbb{B}d8$ 20. $\mathbb{Q}d2$ $\mathbb{Q}b5$ 21. $\mathbb{Q}f1$ h6 22. $cxd6$ $\mathbb{Q}xd6$ 23. $\mathbb{W}c7\pm$

White has active pieces and a potentially dangerous queenside majority, Polugaevsky – Huebner, Bugojno 1982.

Conclusion:

8...a5 is quite risky for Black, as he is spending a tempo on a pawn move that weakens his queenside. I find White's play easier than in the main systems that will be examined later.



Reversed Dragon

8...♝e6

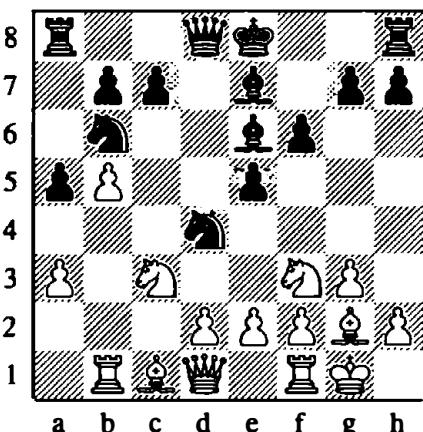
Variation Index

**1.c4 e5 2.g3 ♝f6 3.♗g2 d5 4.cxd5 ♝xd5 5.♘c3 ♝b6 6.♘f3 ♝c6 7.0–0 ♜e7
8.a3**

8...♜e6 9.b4

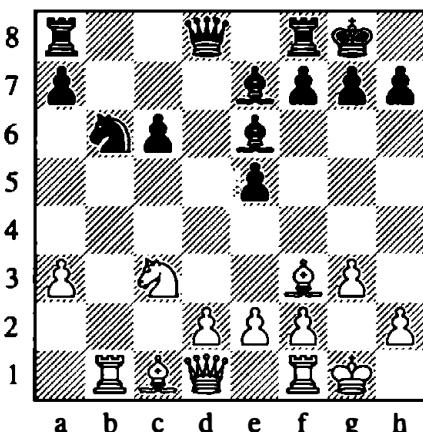
- | | |
|---|--------------|
| A) 9...a5?! | p 282 |
| B) 9...♞d4 10.♝b1 ♞xf3† 11.♝xf3 c6 12.b5 | p 284 |
| B1) 12...0–0?! | p 284 |
| B2) 12...♝c8 | p 285 |

A) after 11...f6



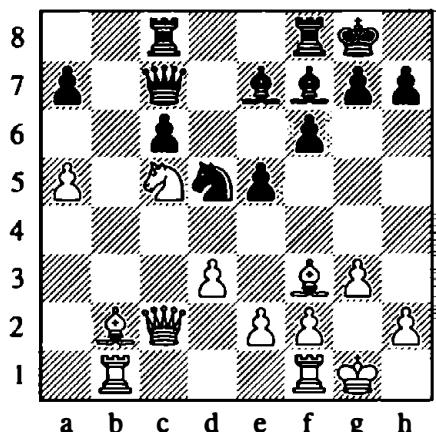
12.♞h4!

B1) after 13...bxc6



14.♝xc6!N

B2) after 20...♛c7



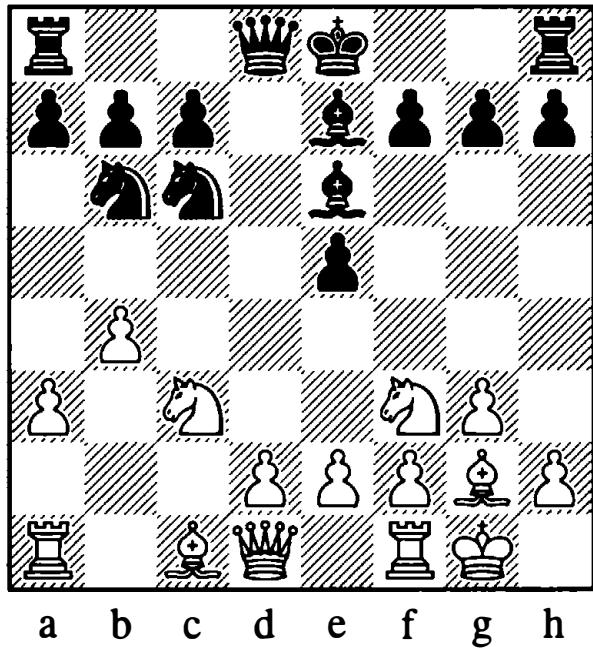
21.d4!N

1.c4 e5 2.g3 ♘f6 3.♗g2 d5 4.cxd5 ♘xd5 5.♘c3 ♘b6 6.♗f3 ♘c6 7.0–0 ♔e7 8.a3 ♔e6

This early development of the bishop anticipates White's queenside attack by putting the b3-square under pressure. Black plans an early knight jump to d4, when the e5-pawn is taboo because of the threat of ...♗b3.

The drawback of this plan is that it defines the central situation too quickly, thus allowing White to orientate his queenside play more easily. In some cases the black king's continued presence in the centre will also be an important factor.

9.b4



9...0–0 would transpose to Chapters 24 or 25, as would 9...f6 10.d3 0-0, but Black has two independent continuations, A) 9...a5 and B) 9...♗d4.

(1.c4 e5 2.g3 ♘f6 3.♗g2 d5 4.cxd5 ♘xd5 5.♘c3 ♘b6 6.♗f3 ♘c6 7.0–0 ♔e7 8.a3 ♔e6
9.b4)

A) 9...a5?!

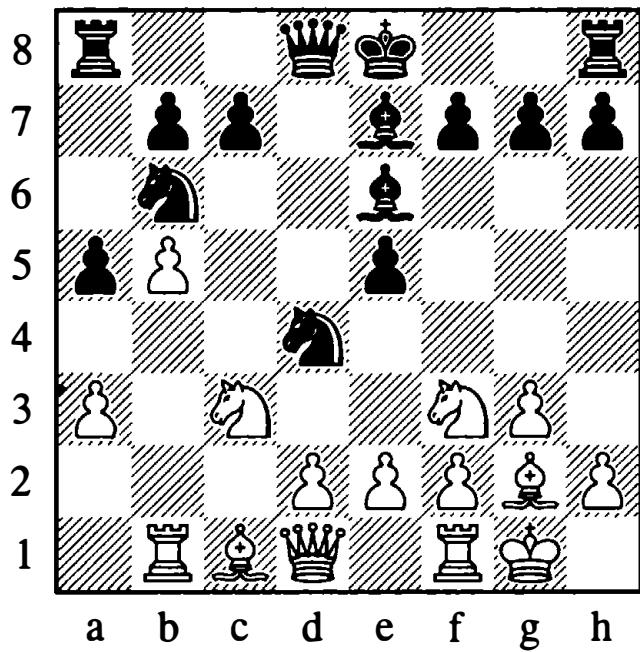
As we shall see, provoking White's next move and then hopping the knight into d4 cannot be recommended.

10.b5 ♘d4

The idea of the early ...♔c8-e6 is revealed, as the e5-pawn is saved by the strong threat of ...♔e6-b3. Since White has not played d2-d3 yet, the standard answer ♗f3-d2 is unavailable.

11.♗b1

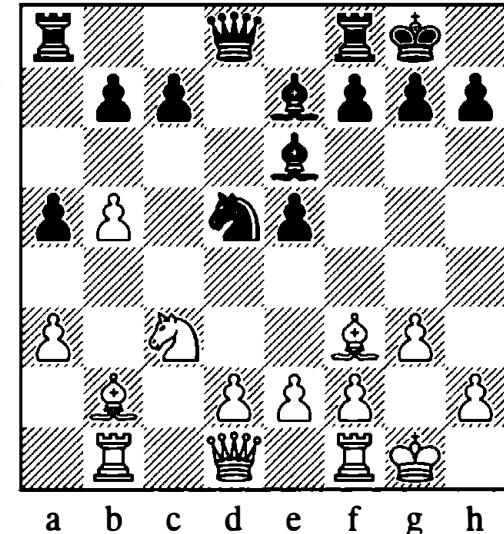
White defends the b3-square and leaves Black with the problem of defending the e5-pawn.



11...f6

If Black has to play this weakening move anyway, then his whole strategy has ended in failure.

Instead, the unfavourable queenside configuration leaves Black struggling after 11...♗xf3† 12.♔xf3 ♘d5 13.♗b2 0–0.



This position was reached in McDonald – Jakobsen, Budapest 2003. Now after 14. $\mathbb{W}c2!N$ f6 15. $\mathbb{E}fd1\pm$ White would have had perfect development and the threat of d2-d4.

11...a4

This is an interesting but unsound attempt to ignore the threat against the e5-pawn.

12. $\mathbb{Q}xe5$ f6

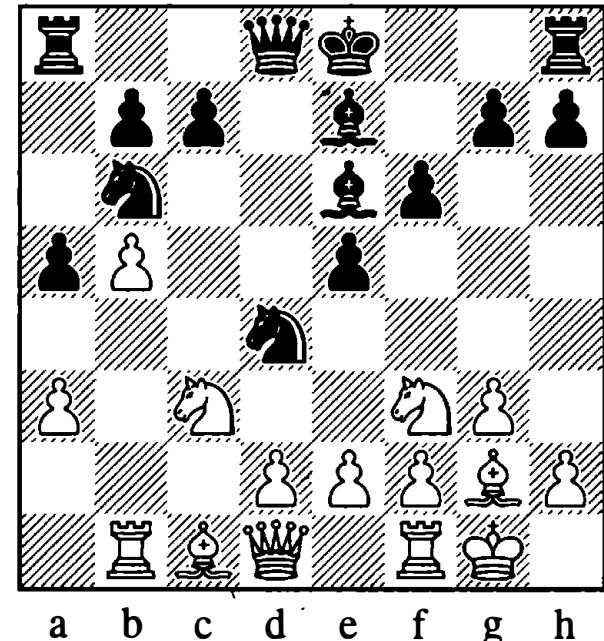
12... $\mathbb{Q}b3$ leads to strategic disaster on the light squares after 13. $\mathbb{E}xb3!$ axb3 14. $\mathbb{Q}xb7$ $\mathbb{E}b8$ 15. $\mathbb{Q}c6$ $\mathbb{Q}xc6$ 16. $\mathbb{Q}xc6\pm$ $\mathbb{Q}f8$ 17. $\mathbb{W}xb3+-$, as indicated by Ribli.

13. $\mathbb{Q}d3$ $\mathbb{E}a7?!$

Black could have limited the damage with 13... $\mathbb{Q}b3$ 14. $\mathbb{E}xb3$ axb3 15.e3 $\mathbb{Q}c2$ 16. $\mathbb{Q}el$ $\mathbb{Q}xe1$ 17. $\mathbb{E}xe1\pm$. The b3-pawn is doomed, the b7-pawn is vulnerable, and the black king has not castled yet, so the damage is still considerable.

14. $\mathbb{Q}f4$ $\mathbb{Q}f7$ 15.e3 $\mathbb{Q}b3$ 16.d4+–

Black has lost a pawn and the a7-rook is passive, Yakovich – Hector, Koge 1997.



12. $\mathbb{Q}h4!$

A very ambitious move, exploiting that Black has not castled yet. Apart from $\mathbb{Q}xb7$, White threatens e2-e3 followed by $\mathbb{W}h5\pm$.

White also retains an edge after:

12. $\mathbb{Q}xd4$ exd4 13. $\mathbb{Q}a4$ $\mathbb{Q}d5$

Black is forced to make a structural concession, as 13... $\mathbb{Q}xa4$ 14. $\mathbb{W}xa4\pm$ would leave the b7- and d4-pawns vulnerable.

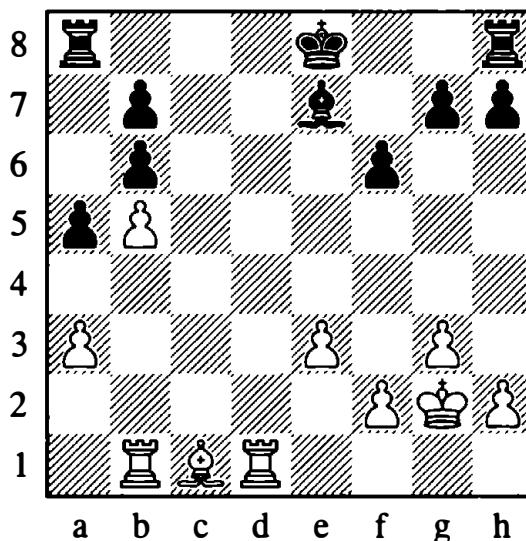
14. $\mathbb{Q}xb6$ cxb6

Had White played d2-d3 at an earlier stage, this position would not have been so simple because of Black's space advantage in the centre.

15.e4!

With the pawn still on d2, White can play this move without creating any pawn weaknesses.

15...dxe3 16.dxe3 $\mathbb{Q}xg2$ 17. $\mathbb{Q}xg2$ $\mathbb{W}xd1$
18. $\mathbb{E}xd1\pm$



White's mobile kingside majority secures him a stable advantage in the ending, Petursson – Motwani, Iceland 1992.

12...g5

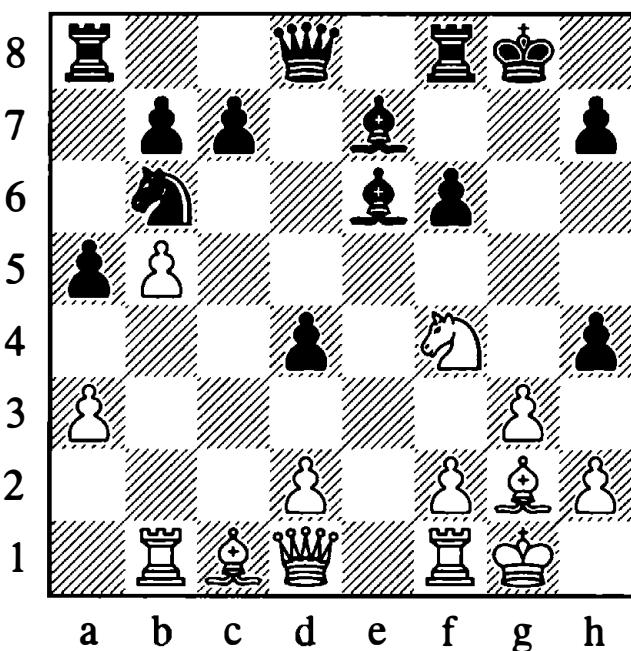
Black has to weaken his kingside, because 12... $\mathbb{E}b8$ is strongly met by 13.e3 $\mathbb{Q}f5$ 14. $\mathbb{W}h5\pm$ g6 15. $\mathbb{Q}xg6$ $\mathbb{Q}f7$ 16. $\mathbb{W}xf5$ $\mathbb{Q}xg6$ 17. $\mathbb{W}h3$ $\mathbb{Q}xb1$ 18. $\mathbb{Q}xb1\pm$. Black's weakness on the light squares, and the impossibility of finding a safe place for his king, offers White more than sufficient compensation for the sacrificed exchange.

13.e3 gxh4 14.exd4 exd4

14... $\mathbb{W}xd4$ would allow White to restore material equality with 15. $\mathbb{Q}xb7\pm$ while leaving Black's structure in ruins.

Reversed Dragon

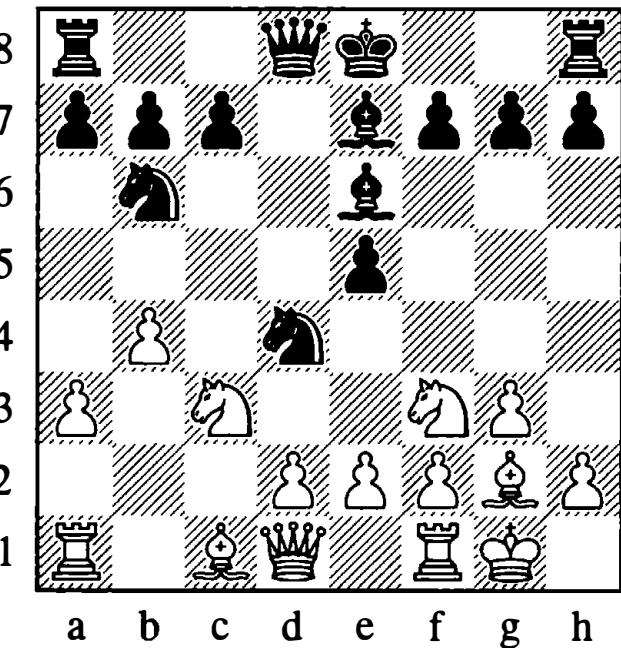
15.♕e2 0–0 16.♕f4±



White has an active position and the more compact structure, while the black king is exposed. Black's material advantage is probably temporary and is not especially relevant, Radziewicz – Stefanova, Yekaterinburg 2006.

(1.c4 e5 2.g3 ♔f6 3.♔g2 d5 4.cxd5 ♔xd5
5.♕c3 ♔b6 6.♕f3 ♔c6 7.0–0 ♔e7 8.a3 ♔e6
9.b4)

B) 9...♕d4



The reason it is better to play this move without the preliminary ...a7-a5 will be revealed two moves later.

10.♗b1 ♔xf3† 11.♔xf3 c6

This move was not possible in line A, which forced Black to lose time.

12.b5

There is no need to spend a tempo on d2-d3, as in the main lines examined in the next chapters. Black's premature activity has left White with a clear target on the queenside and he immediately starts undermining the wall Black has built in front of the English bishop.

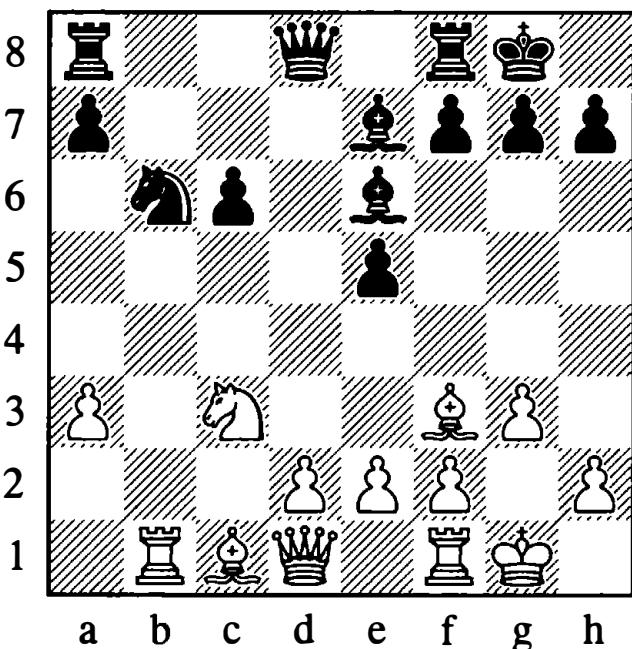
Black has played **B1) 12...0–0?!** and **B2) 12...♗c8.**

(1.c4 e5 2.g3 ♔f6 3.♔g2 d5 4.cxd5 ♔xd5
5.♕c3 ♔b6 6.♕f3 ♔c6 7.0–0 ♔e7 8.a3 ♔e6
9.b4 ♔d4 10.♗b1 ♔xf3† 11.♔xf3 c6 12.b5)

B1) 12...0–0?!

There is nothing to justify this pawn sacrifice.

13.bxc6 bxc6

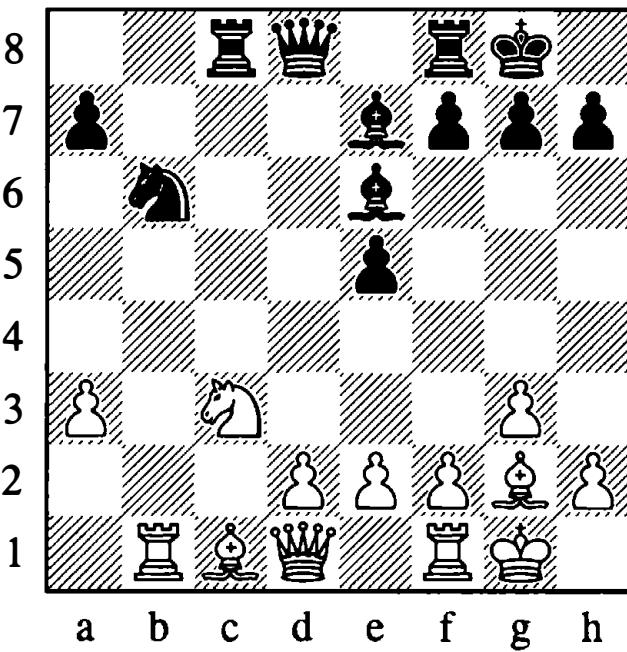


14.♔xc6!N

There is no reason to shy away with 14.d3 as in L.B. Hansen – Romanishin, Altensteig 1993. Quite remarkably, in his comments to this game Lars Bo Hansen attached a question mark to 14.♔xc6.

14...♝c8 15.♝g2

White has spent two tempos winning the pawn, but his position has no weaknesses. Black has a tough task proving he has compensation.

**15...f5**

This is the most consistent try. Natural developing moves would not help. According to his notes, Lars Bo rejected the pawn sacrifice because of 15...♛d7. He only analysed 16.♛c2 f5 and preferred Black's position.

In this line, Ribli recommends the more logical 16.a4 ♜fd8 17.a5±, aiming to challenge Black's queenside stability. Continuing the line a few more moves would confirm his evaluation: 17...♞c4 18.♝b7 ♜c7 19.a6 ♞a5 20.♝b5 ♜xc3 21.♝xa5 f6 22.♛a4± White simply is a pawn up.

16.♞b5 ♛d7 17.a4

This diversion is necessary, because the vulnerability of the knight on c3 was preventing White from completing his development with d2-d3 and ♞c1-d2.

17...e4

Black logically plays to gain space, hoping to make the g2-bishop passive.

17...a6 18.♞c3 leaves Black with problems

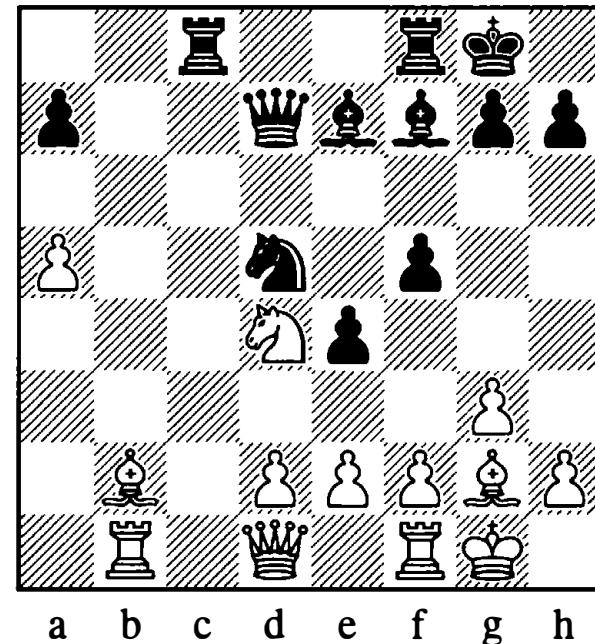
defending his knight. 18...♝b8 (18...♛d6 would be strongly met by 19.♞a3±) 19.d3± White will have no problems completing his development.

18.a5 ♞d5

18...♞c4 would leave Black's centre vulnerable after 19.d3 ♜fd8 20.♝e1!±. Black cannot win the d3-pawn because his e6-bishop would be hanging.

19.♞d4 ♜f7

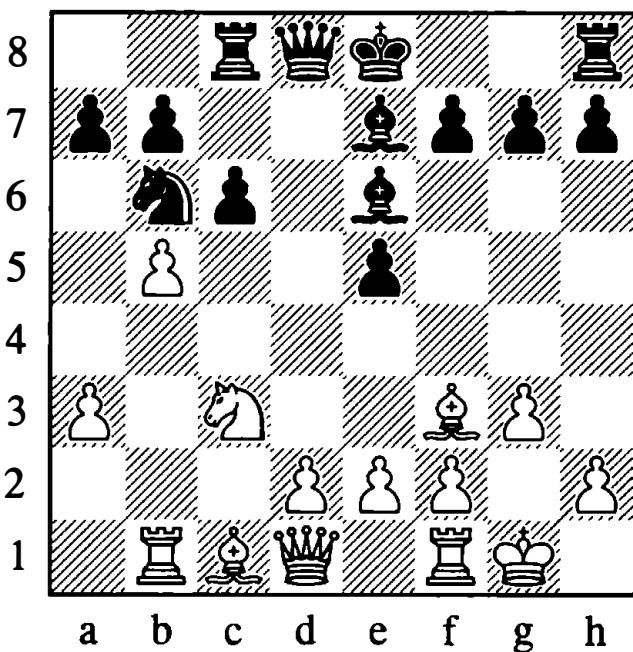
Black has to save his bishop from exchange. After 19...♜fd8 20.♞xe6 ♛xe6 21.♝b3± Black's centre will soon be submitted to attacks with d2-d3 or f2-f3.

20.♝b2±

White has almost completed his development and is ready to undermine the enemy centre. Depending on Black's reactions, he may consider e2-e3 followed by d2-d3 or f2-f3, with ♜h3 somewhere in between.

(1.c4 e5 2.g3 ♞f6 3.♝g2 d5 4.cxd5 ♞xd5 5.♞c3 ♜b6 6.♞f3 ♞c6 7.0–0 ♜e7 8.a3 ♜e6 9.b4 ♞d4 10.♝b1 ♜xf3† 11.♝xf3 c6 12.b5)

B2) 12...♝c8



In view of our conclusions about the previous line, the c6-pawn needs to be defended.

13.bxc6 bxc6 14.d3 0-0

This is an important modern tabiya. White has managed to weaken the enemy queenside, but needs to play very accurately to take advantage of this achievement. Black's main trump is that the squares in front of the weak c-pawn are controlled by his minor pieces, which may give him a chance to exchange it with ...c6-c5-c4, achieving full equality.

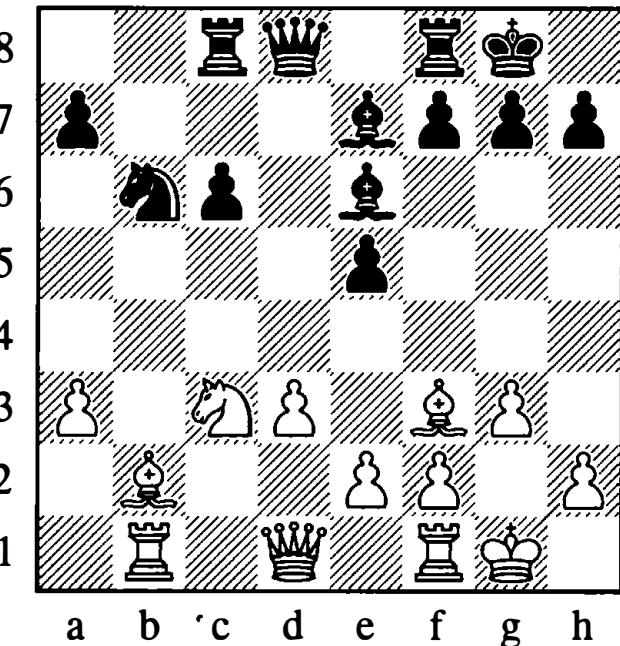
In principle, White has an antidote against this plan, consisting of a4-a5, but it must be handled with care. If advanced too early (meaning with the black pawn still on c6), the a-pawn would leave the b4-square vulnerable to ... $\mathbb{Q}d5-b4$. This would be a significant aspect, unless White manages to open the centre.

The idea of a4-a5 becomes viable mainly after ...c6-c5, because after ... $\mathbb{Q}b6-d5$ White could exchange two pairs of minor pieces (as ...c6xd5 is no longer possible), with chances to reach an ending with a good bishop against a bad one.

15. $\mathbb{Q}b2$

It may seem that this move has the significant drawback of obstructing the b1-rook. However, on the positive side, it increases

the pressure against the enemy centre and prepares to connect rooks, while also keeping the a3-pawn well defended. The indirect pressure against the e5-pawn is important if White plays a4-a5.



15... $\mathbb{W}d7$

A logical developing move.

The careless 15...c5? loses a pawn to 16. $\mathbb{Q}b5\pm$ as in Bacrot – Rytshagov, India, FIDE KO World Ch. (1.3) 2000.

15...f6

This unnecessarily spends a tempo on a move that weakens the light squares.

16.a4!

Black's slow development makes this move viable, because White will be able to open the centre with d3-d4.

16... $\mathbb{Q}d5$

If Black delays this move with 16... $\mathbb{W}c7$ then White would gain an essential tempo to regroup properly with 17.a5 $\mathbb{Q}d5$ 18. $\mathbb{W}a4\pm$ followed by $\mathbb{B}fc1$.

17.d4! $\mathbb{Q}xc3$ 18. $\mathbb{Q}xc3$ exd4 19. $\mathbb{W}xd4$ $\mathbb{W}xd4$ 20. $\mathbb{Q}xd4$ c5 21. $\mathbb{Q}c3$ $\mathbb{B}b8$ 22.a5 \pm

The c-pawn is safely blocked and White has the dangerous plan of a5-a6 followed by $\mathbb{B}b1-b7$ or $\mathbb{Q}f3-b7$, Bui Vinh – Rytshagov, Bled (ol) 2002.

16. $\mathbb{W}c2$

White connects rooks and intends to play $\mathbb{Q}c3-a4$ with the double threat of $\mathbb{Q}xe5$ and $\mathbb{Q}a4-c5$.

Instead 16. $\mathbb{Q}a4$ is premature because of 16...f6 17. $\mathbb{W}c2$ c5=. However, with the e5-pawn under indirect pressure, 16.a4?! deserves some interest, as 16... $\mathbb{Q}d5$! would lose the e5-pawn to 17. $\mathbb{Q}xd5$ $\mathbb{Q}xd5$ 18.e4±.

16... $\mathbb{Q}d5$

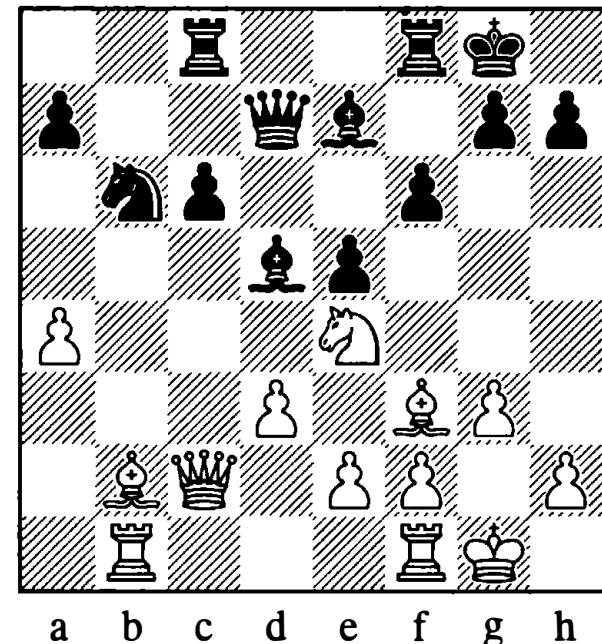
Black neutralizes the enemy bishop's pressure, but takes the d5-square away from the b6-knight. Instead, 16...f5 would be met by the planned 17. $\mathbb{Q}a4$ ±.

17. $\mathbb{Q}e4$ f6

17...f5 would leave the centre vulnerable after 18. $\mathbb{Q}d2$ ±.

18.a4

With d5 occupied by the bishop, this move is excellently timed.

**18... $\mathbb{Q}f7$**

The main alternative was:

18... $\mathbb{W}e6$

This clears the d7-square and activates Black's position.

19. $\mathbb{Q}c3$

White opens the b-file, in order to increase the force of a4-a5.

19... $\mathbb{Q}b8$

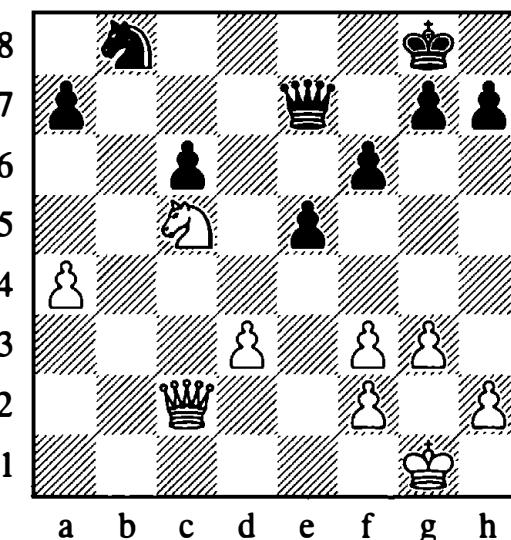
Black takes measures against White's planned intrusion along the b-file, but leaves the c-file unattended, which allows White to carry out a favourable exchange.

20. $\mathbb{Q}b4$!

The weakness of the c5-square becomes significant.

20... $\mathbb{Q}d7$ 21. $\mathbb{Q}xe7$ $\mathbb{W}xe7$ 22. $\mathbb{Q}fc1$ ±

White has strong pressure against the enemy queenside. Black's position does not become easier after the exchange of all the rooks.

22... $\mathbb{Q}xb1$ 23. $\mathbb{Q}xb1$ $\mathbb{Q}b8$ 24. $\mathbb{Q}xb8$ † $\mathbb{Q}xb8$ 25. $\mathbb{Q}c5$ $\mathbb{Q}xf3$ 26.exf3±

Despite the structural concession, White's domination is dangerous. The exposed position of Black's king prevents him from activating his knight.

26... $\mathbb{W}f7$

Black needs to defend this dangerous diagonal.

26... $\mathbb{Q}d7$ would gain the knight only temporary activity: 27. $\mathbb{W}c4$ † $\mathbb{Q}h8$ 28. $\mathbb{Q}e6$ Now since 28... $\mathbb{W}d6$ drops the c6-pawn to 29. $\mathbb{Q}d8$, Black has to retreat his knight. 28... $\mathbb{Q}b8$ 29.f4± White improves his structure, neutralizing Black's space advantage in the centre, while the b8-knight remains passive.

27. $\mathbb{W}b2$ $\mathbb{Q}d7$ 28. $\mathbb{Q}a6$

White threatens $\mathbb{W}b7$.

28... $\mathbb{W}d5$ 29. $\mathbb{Q}c7!$

The queen has to leave the a2-g8 diagonal undefended.

29... $\mathbb{W}d6$ 30. $\mathbb{W}b3\ddagger$ $\mathbb{Q}f8$ 31. $\mathbb{Q}e6\ddagger$ $\mathbb{Q}f7$

32. $\mathbb{Q}g5\ddagger$ $\mathbb{Q}e8$

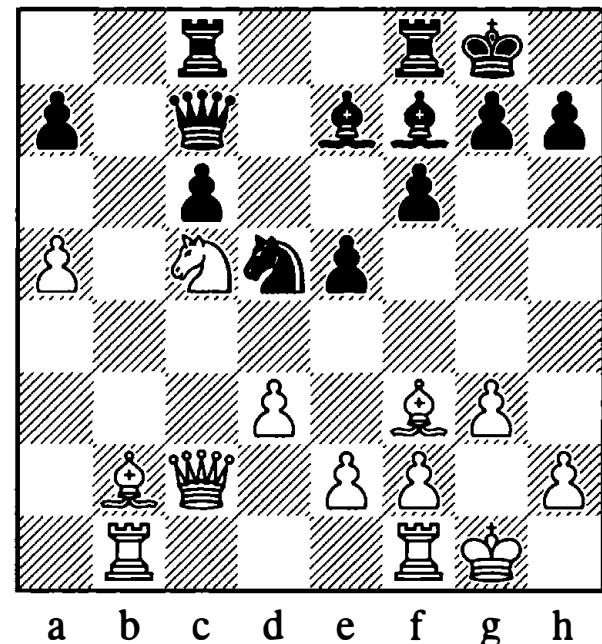
32... $\mathbb{Q}g6?$ leads to mate after 33. $\mathbb{W}f7\ddagger!$.

33. $\mathbb{W}f7\ddagger$ $\mathbb{Q}d8$ 34. $\mathbb{Q}e6\ddagger$ $\mathbb{Q}c8$ 35. $\mathbb{W}e8\ddagger$ $\mathbb{Q}b7$

36. $\mathbb{Q}xg7\pm$

Black has lost an important pawn, without improving the placement of his pieces

19.a5 $\mathbb{Q}d5$ 20. $\mathbb{Q}c5$ $\mathbb{W}c7$



21.d4!N

This central break is better than 21. $\mathbb{Q}g4$, which eventually led to a draw by repetition after 21... $\mathbb{Q}b4$ 22. $\mathbb{W}c3$ $\mathbb{Q}a2$ 23. $\mathbb{W}c2$ $\mathbb{Q}b4$ 24. $\mathbb{W}c3$ $\mathbb{Q}a2$ in Dittmar – Romanishin, St Vincent 2004.

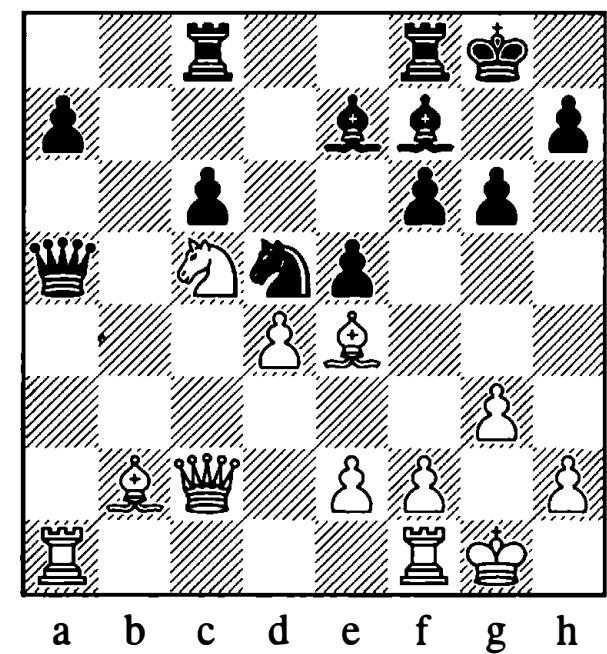
21... $\mathbb{W}xa5$

Black is practically forced to accept the pawn, since after 21... $\mathbb{Q}b4$ 22. $\mathbb{W}a4\pm$ White would be better at no cost.

22. $\mathbb{Q}e4$

An important move, provoking a weakness in the enemy kingside.

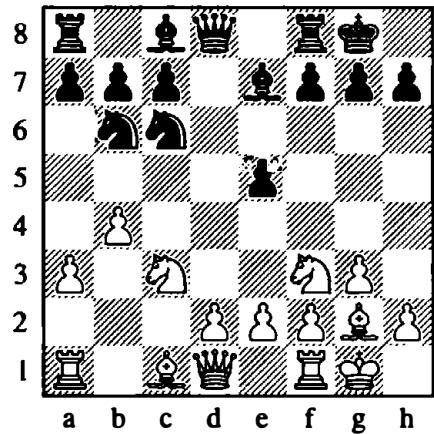
22... $\mathbb{g}6$ 23. $\mathbb{E}a1$



White has a dangerous initiative and Black's position is full of weaknesses.

Conclusion:

Black's early activity in the centre prematurely defines his plans. This allows White to orientate his play more easily than after the more cautious 8...0-0 (see the following chapters).



Reversed Dragon

8...0-0 Minor Lines

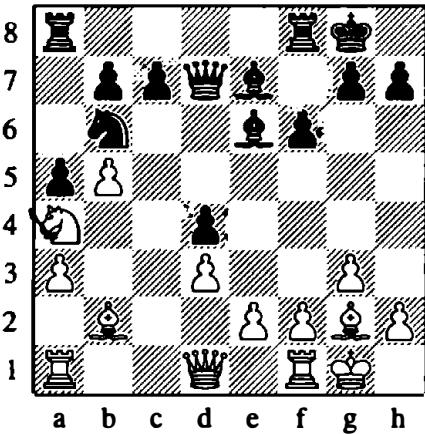
Variation Index

1.c4 e5 2.g3 ♕f6 3.♕g2 d5 4.cxd5 ♔xd5 5.♔c3 ♔b6 6.♔f3 ♔c6
7.0-0 ♔e7 8.a3

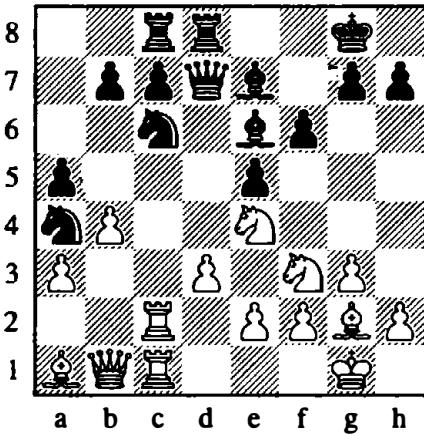
8...0-0 9.b4

A) 9...f6 10.d3 ♔e6 11.♔b2	p 290
A1) 11...♗d7	p 291
A2) 11...a5	p 294
B) 9...♗e8 10.♗b1 ♔f8 11.d3	p 295
B1) 11...a5	p 296
B2) 11...♔d4	p 298
C) 9...♔e6 10.♗b1 f6 11.d3	p 300
C1) 12.♔b2	p 301
C2) 12.♗c2	p 305

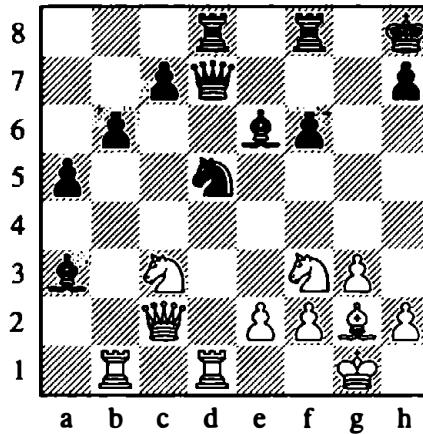
A2) after 14...♗d7!



C1) after 18...a5



C2) 21...♗ad8

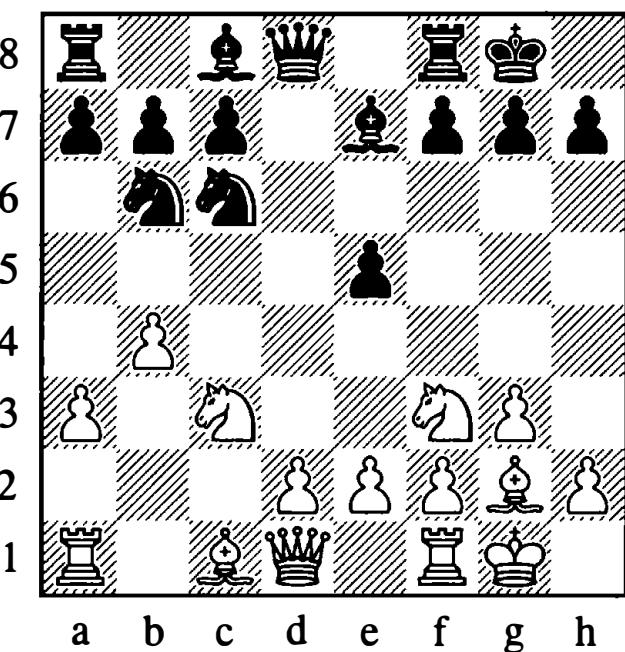


15.♗b1!N

19.♔eg5!!±

22.e4!N

**1.c4 e5 2.g3 ♘f6 3.♗g2 d5 4.cxd5 ♘xd5
5.♘c3 ♘b6 6.♘f3 ♘c6 7.0–0 ♕e7 8.a3 0–0
9.b4**



This is an important tabiya of the Reversed Dragon. Both sides have completed their kingside development and will now turn their attention towards the queenside and the centre.

Black can parry the threat of 10.b5 followed by 11.♘xe5 by direct means with A) 9...f6, or indirectly with B) 9...♝e8 or C) 9...♞e6.

I have already explained that not every move that Black might play can be mentioned. I will now take the paradoxical approach of mentioning a move that is not worth mentioning! Black may play 9...a6, to stop the further advance of the b4-pawn. This move has been played many times, though never at the top level, so what are its drawbacks? Black puts no pressure on White, and instead spends a valuable move weakening his own queenside. This will be especially clear if White follows the standard plan of manoeuvring his queen's knight to c5, and if Black takes it, recapture with bxc5. The b7-pawn will then be a target and ...b7-b6 will be more difficult to achieve now that the a-pawn has left a7.

The reader does not need to know about 9...a6 because standard play will work perfectly well. That is the key point (and the reason I have mentioned 9...a6). I would ask the reader to remember this when you are “surprised” over-the-board by some other move – standard knowledge of the English will be a reliable guide.

(**1.c4 e5 2.g3 ♘f6 3.♗g2 d5 4.cxd5 ♘xd5
5.♘c3 ♘b6 6.♘f3 ♘c6 7.0–0 ♕e7 8.a3 0–0
9.b4**)

A) 9...f6

This prematurely weakens the light squares. In variation C White spends a tempo ($\kappa a1-b1$) to provoke this move, while here Black plays it willingly.

It is important to understand that Black's central pawn chain does not offer a completely safe barrier against White's minor pieces. Under certain circumstances, piece sacrifices on e5 or g5 could reduce Black's fortress to rubble. See the second variation from the comments to Black's 16th move in line A1, and the neo-romantic game examined in line C1.

10.d3

Since White has achieved one of his aims, he has no reason to keep his d-pawn on its initial square. The text move takes the c4-square under control, preparing $\kappa c1-b2$.

10...♞e6

White could now transpose to the main lines with 11.♗b1, but given the move order chosen by Black, he can also play a more natural developing move.

11.♗b2

Now Black's main choice is between A1) 11...♝d7 and A2) 11...a5.

One minor line should be mentioned first. Transferring the queen to f7, in order to

increase the pressure on the b3-square, is rather time-consuming:

11... $\mathbb{W}e8$ 12. $\mathfrak{Q}d2$ $\mathbb{W}f7$ 13. $\mathfrak{B}c1$ a6

The text move was intended as an improvement over 13... $\mathfrak{B}fd8$ as played in Larsen – Timman, Amsterdam 1980, when 14. $\mathfrak{Q}a4\pm$ has been recommended, with similar play as in the main line.

14. $\mathfrak{Q}a4$ $\mathfrak{Q}xa4$

The text is practically forced, in view of the threat of $\mathfrak{Q}c5$.

15. $\mathbb{W}xa4$ $\mathbb{Q}d5$ 16. $\mathbb{Q}xd5$ $\mathbb{W}xd5$ 17. $\mathbb{W}b3$ $\mathfrak{B}fd8$

This position was reached in Adorjan – Timman, Wijk aan Zee 1981.

White has queenside pressure, whereas it is not easy for Black to display any form of activity. White's most effective method of regrouping would have been:

18. $\mathbb{W}c4$ $\mathfrak{B}d7$ 19. $\mathfrak{Q}b3$ $\mathfrak{B}ad8$ 20. $\mathfrak{B}c2$ $\mathbb{Q}f8$

21. $\mathfrak{B}fc1\pm$

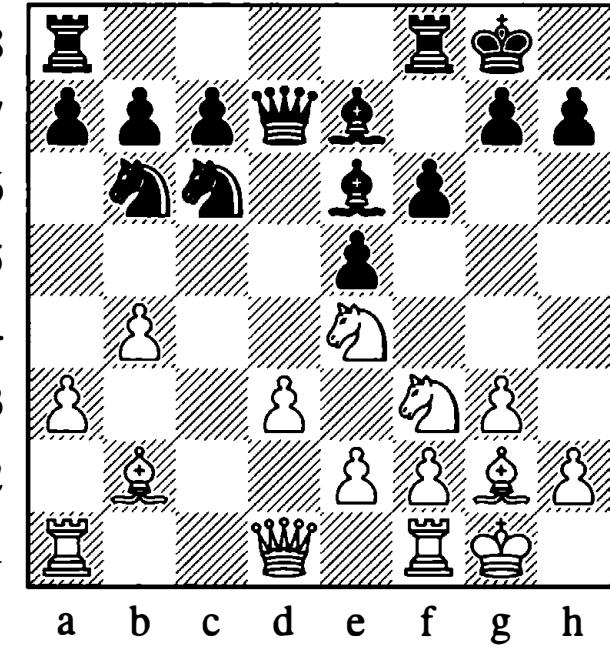
Later, White could trade queens, place a rook on c4 and start kingside play with $\mathbb{Q}g2$ and g3-g4 or f2-f4.

(1.c4 e5 2.g3 $\mathfrak{Q}f6$ 3. $\mathbb{Q}g2$ d5 4.cxd5 $\mathfrak{Q}xd5$
5. $\mathfrak{Q}c3$ $\mathfrak{Q}b6$ 6. $\mathfrak{Q}f3$ $\mathfrak{Q}c6$ 7.0–0 $\mathbb{Q}e7$ 8.a3 0–0
9.b4 f6 10.d3 $\mathbb{Q}e6$ 11. $\mathbb{Q}b2$)

A1) 11... $\mathbb{W}d7$

Black continues his development by connecting rooks.

12. $\mathfrak{Q}e4$



This is the start of a typical Sicilian Dragon plan, designed to put the black queenside under strong pressure. In order to be successful, White needs to display great flexibility, keeping all the basic threats in reserve. At this point of the game, the main threats are $\mathfrak{Q}e4\text{-}c5$ and $b4\text{-}b5$. Carrying out either of them would be premature, but it is interesting to note from the further course of the game that Black has problems dealing with both of them at the same time.

12... $\mathfrak{B}fd8$

12...f5? loses a pawn to 13. $\mathfrak{Q}c5$ $\mathbb{Q}xc5$ 14.bxc5± followed by $\mathfrak{Q}xe5$.

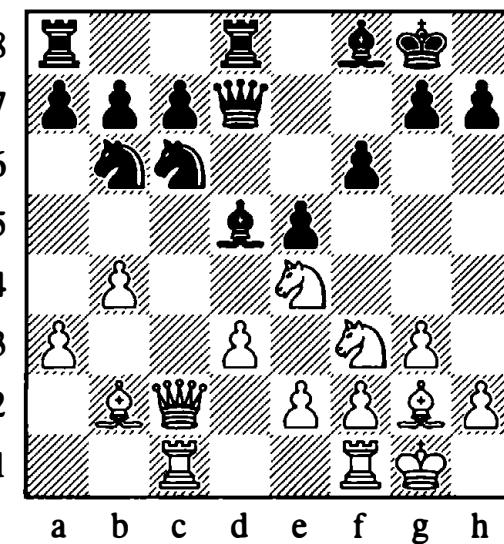
13. $\mathbb{W}c2$

White's lack of development makes 13. $\mathfrak{Q}c5$ ineffective because of 13... $\mathbb{Q}xc5$ 14.bxc5 $\mathfrak{Q}d5$ with a stable position.

13... $\mathbb{Q}f8$

Another grandmaster game featured a slightly different regrouping:

13... $\mathbb{Q}d5$ 14. $\mathfrak{B}ac1$ $\mathbb{Q}f8$?



15.e3

White is preparing d3-d4. With the d5-square occupied by a bishop, and after Black has spent a tempo retreating the other bishop, 15. $\mathfrak{Q}c5$? makes a lot of sense. Mikhail Gurevich gave the following variation: 15... $\mathbb{Q}xc5$ 16.bxc5 $\mathfrak{Q}c8$ 17.e4 $\mathbb{Q}e6$ 18.d4! This move is possible because of Black's lack

of coordination. 18...exd4 19.♕xd4 ♕xd4 20.♗xd4± White has the bishop pair and a dangerous kingside majority. 20...♛xd4? is impossible because of 21.♗fd1 winning.

15...a5

Gurevich recommended 15...♝xe4 16.dxe4 ♜d3 17.♔h3 a6 18.♔e6† ♔h8. This does not seem entirely satisfactory for Black, since after 19.♕c3± Black's activity is temporary, while White's bishop pair and Black's weak light squares are permanent.

16.♗c5 ♜c8

After having weakened his queenside with ...a7-a5, Black cannot consider ...♝f8xc5.

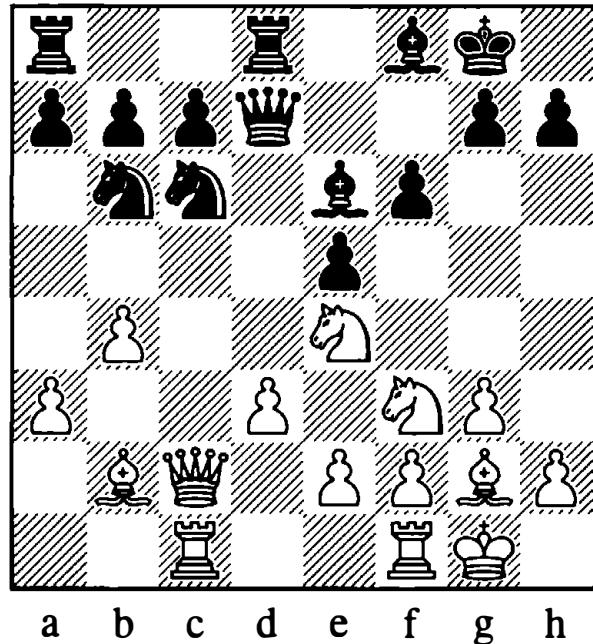
17.b5 ♜a7 18.d4!±

This well-timed central break underlines the difference in activity between the enemy armies, Vaganian – M. Gurevich, Antwerp 1997.

13...a5 cannot be recommended because after 14.♗c5 ♜xc5 15.bxc5 ♜d5 it would simply lead to a waste of time and a weakening of the queenside. White would play 16.♗fd1± followed by d3-d4, perhaps with e2-e4 in between.

14.♗ac1

After setting up pressure along the c-file, White's threat of b4-b5 followed by ♜xc7 becomes real.



14...♛f7

Black decides to parry the threat by indirect means, while also taking measures against ♔e4-c5. In both cases, control of the b3-square is essential.

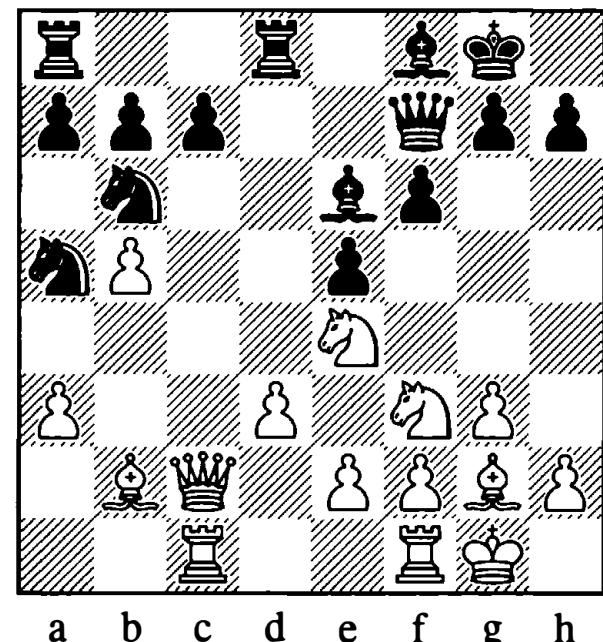
Black could have defended the c7-pawn with 14...♜ac8, but the rook would be passive on c8. White could switch to the alternate plan with 15.♗c5 ♜xc5 16.bxc5 ♜d5 17.♗fd1± followed by d3-d4, or e2-e4 and d3-d4, with an initiative in the centre.

15.b5!

This is the correct decision!

If 15.♗c5 ♜xc5 16.bxc5, Black would invade the enemy queenside with 16...♔b3 17.♗d2 ♜a4 with counterplay.

15...♝a5



16.♗fd2!

White takes the important b3-square under control.

Petrosian, who was Black in this game, had expected 16.♗xc7?! ♜xc7 17.♗xc7 ♜a4. This would have offered Black good compensation for the pawn due to his pressure against White's weakened queenside.

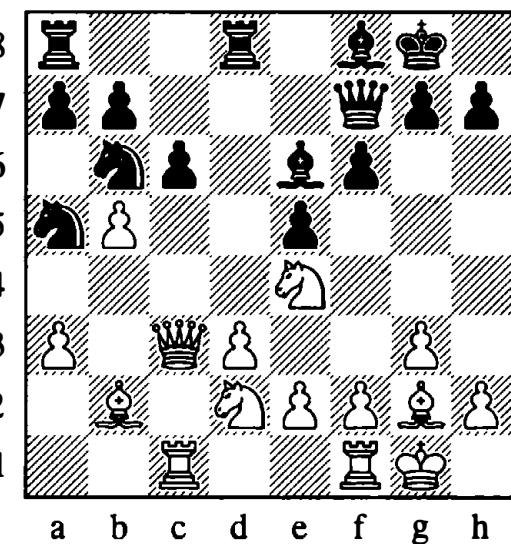
16... $\mathbb{Q}b3$

Black insists on sacrificing the c7-pawn, but after the exchange of one of his minor pieces for the d2-knight, his queenside play will be less effective.

16...c6

Petrosian pointed out this was insufficient because of:

17. $\mathbb{W}c3! \pm$



17... $\mathbb{Q}b3$ 18. $\mathbb{Q}xb3$ $\mathbb{Q}xb3$ 19.bxc6

Now the tactics do not work out well for Black.

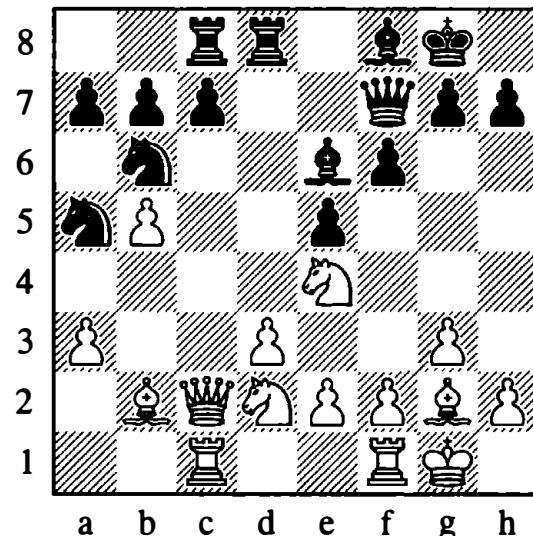
19... $\mathbb{Q}a4?$

19... $\mathbb{E}ac8$ is better, when Black will “only” have a chronic weakness on c6.

20. $\mathbb{W}a5$ $\mathbb{Q}xb2$ 21.cxb7 $\mathbb{E}ab8$ 22. $\mathbb{E}c7$ $\mathbb{W}e6$
23. $\mathbb{E}b1$ $\mathbb{Q}a4$ 24. $\mathbb{Q}d2$ $\mathbb{Q}a2$ 25. $\mathbb{W}xa4$ $\mathbb{Q}xb1$
26. $\mathbb{Q}xb1+ -$

The forced variation, along which Black has desperately fought to save his hanging pieces, has led to a material advantage for White, who also has absolute control of the light squares and a strong pawn on the seventh rank.

It is curious that Petrosian does not analyse the natural 16... $\mathbb{E}ac8$. His unique positional feel may have warned him that something was wrong with Black’s position and he may even have seen the following variation, but forgotten to write it down.



17. $\mathbb{Q}xe5!$ $\mathbb{Q}xe5$ 18. $\mathbb{Q}g5$ $\mathbb{W}f6$ 19. $\mathbb{Q}xe6$ $\mathbb{W}xe6$
20. $\mathbb{W}c3 \pm$

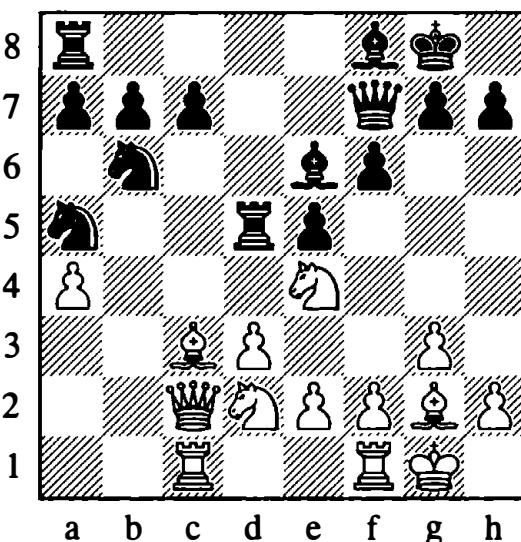
White has eliminated one of the defenders of the b3-square, and now the a5-knight is trapped.

My suppositions in the comment to the previous line are partly justified by the fact that Petrosian analyses the following line:

16... $\mathbb{E}d5$

This may seem like a counter-attack against the b5-pawn, but Petrosian probably thought of it as over-defending the e5-square. The drawback of this move is that it blocks the a2-g8 diagonal.

17. $\mathbb{Q}c3!$ $\mathbb{E}xb5$ 18.a4 $\mathbb{E}d5$



19. $\mathbb{Q}xf6! +$

This has the same idea of clearing the long diagonal with gain of time as 19. $\mathbb{Q}g5$, as given by Petrosian, but has the advantage of capturing a pawn in the process.

19...gxf6 20.Qxd5±

Black has no compensation for the exchange, because the white kingside remains very compact even after giving up the g2-bishop.

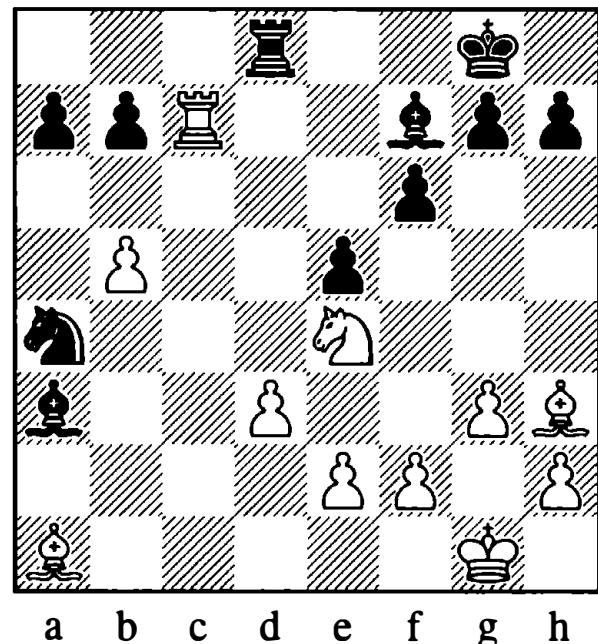
17.Qxb3 Qxb3 18.Wxc7 Qa4 19.Wxf7† Qxf7 20.Qa1 Eac8

The a3-pawn is lost anyway, but, before capturing it, Black exchanges one pair of rooks to reduce White's pressure. 20...Qxa3 21.Ec7± would have been even better for White than in the game.

21.Qh3!

White gains control of the c-file.

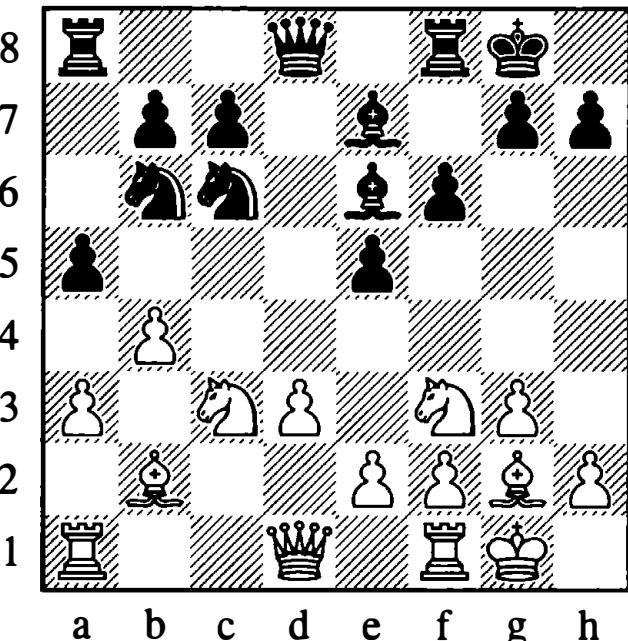
21...Ecx1 22.Ecx1 Qxa3 23.Ec7±



White's control of the c-file and the seventh rank, as well as his overall activity, secured a lasting advantage. In Portisch – Petrosian, Niksic 1983, the former World Champion could not save the game against an opponent who often proved difficult for him.

(1.c4 e5 2.g3 Qf6 3.Qg2 d5 4.cxd5 Qxd5 5.Qc3 Qb6 6.Qf3 Qc6 7.0–0 Qe7 8.a3 0–0 9.b4 f6 10.d3 Qe6 11.Qb2)

A2) 11...a5



Now that the e5-pawn has been safely defended, Black invites the b4-pawn to advance, hoping to take advantage of the weaknesses it will leave behind.

12.b5 Qd4

12...Qa7 has also been played, but it is rather passive. The most active answer is 13.d4!N Qc4 14.Qc1± with an initiative in the centre.

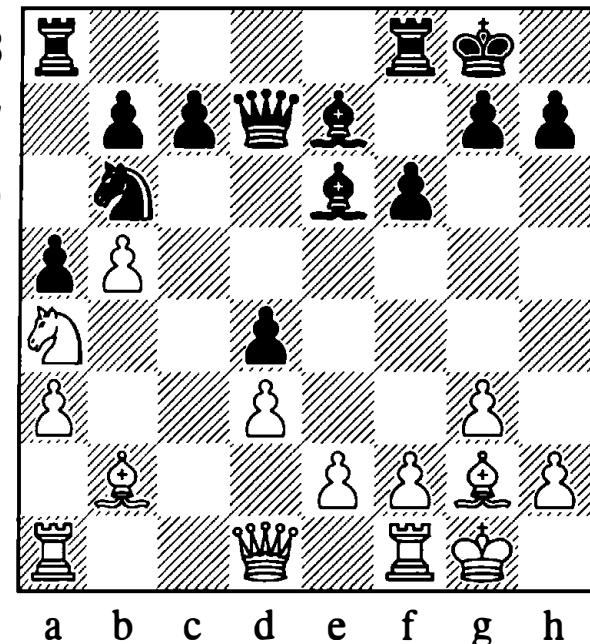
13.Qxd4 exd4 14.Qa4

The queenside tension requires careful handling from both sides. White should play Qxb6 (obviously Black will reply ...cxxb6) only if he is sure that the d4-pawn will be eliminated, since otherwise Black would consolidate with ...Qc5, leaving no file available for the white rooks. Black should generally refrain from ...Qxa4, since this would allow White to activate his play and exert pressure against d4 and c7.

14...Wd7!

This developing move is best. 14...Qd5?! is strongly met by 15.Qh3! when Black needs to spend a tempo defending his d4-pawn. The game Jobava – Cheparinov, Antalya 2004, continued: 15...Qf7 16.Ec1 Ee8 17.Qg2 Eb8 18.Ee1 Qf8 19.Qc5 After having made every useful preparatory move, White finally invades the c5-outpost. 19...Qd5 20.Qh3 Qf7 Now

White could have developed his initiative with 21.♕b3!N ♜a4 22.♗c2 ♜xb2 23.♗xb2±. Black will struggle to defend his queenside weaknesses.



15.♗b1!N

A strong move that indirectly defends the b5-pawn. The impatient 15.♕xb7 would leave White's minor pieces in a tangle after 15...♗xb5 16.♗xb6 ♜ab8=.

15...♗d5

Now that ♜g2-h3 is no longer possible, this move is well timed. Instead, after 15...♗xb5 16.♗xb6 ♗xb6 17.♗a4± White would regain the pawn and keep up the pressure on the queenside.

16.♗xd5† ♗xd5 17.♗c2 ♗fe8

Black prepares to put pressure on the e2-pawn. White's rooks cannot simultaneously defend b5 and e2, and control the c-file, so White has to start concrete action immediately.

18.♗fc1 ♜f8 19.♗xb6

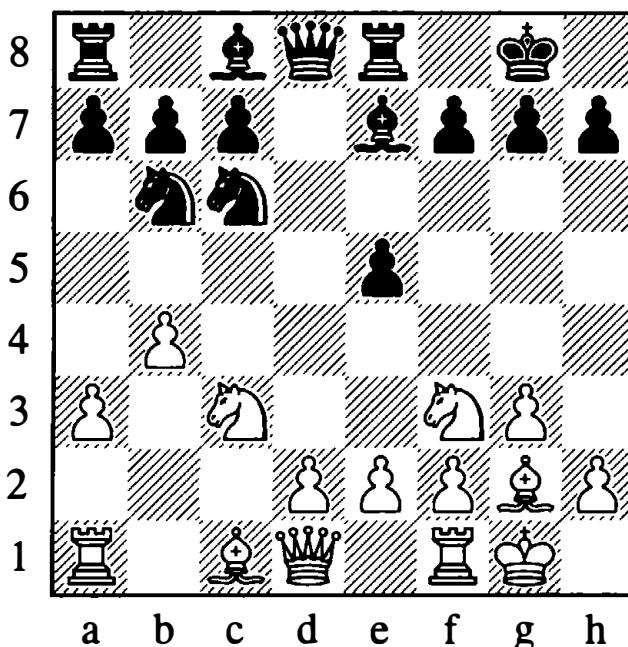
This is a good moment to carry out the exchange, since the d4-pawn will be impossible to defend.

19...cx b6 20.♗c4 ♗xc4 21.♗xc4 ♗xe2 22.a4 ♜c5 23.♗xd4±

White has the better structure and Black's second rank is weak. With four rooks on the board, this will offer White attacking chances. A player with good technical skills would certainly enjoy playing White's position.

(1.c4 e5 2.g3 ♜f6 3.♗g2 d5 4.cxd5 ♜xd5 5.♗c3 ♜b6 6.♗f3 ♜c6 7.0–0 ♜e7 8.a3 0–0 9.b4)

B) 9...♗e8



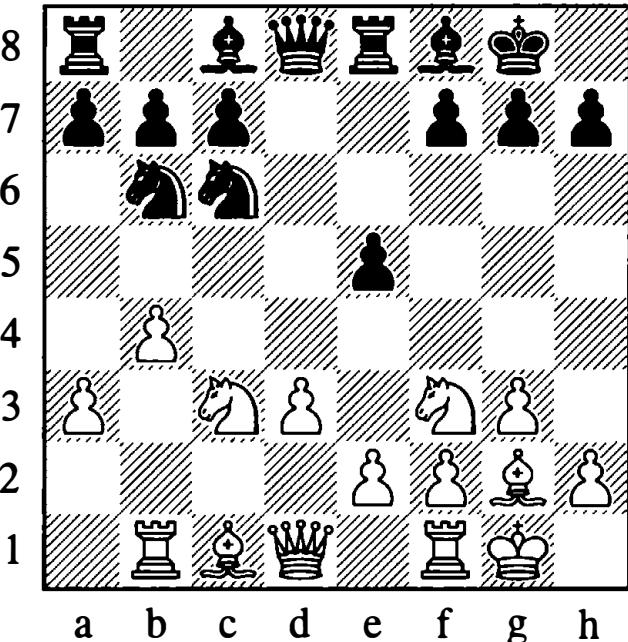
This is a solid move, which prepares to safely defend the e5-pawn after ...♗f8, avoiding weakening the kingside with ...f7-f6. The rook will prove useful on e8 if White answers a later ...♗c6-d4 with ♜xd4, allowing Black to open the e-file with ...e5xd4.

White cannot win a pawn with 10.b5 ♜d4 11.♗xe5 because after 11...♗f6= he has nothing better than returning it with 12.f4. Instead, 12.♗f3? would lose to 12...♗xe2†!.

The main drawback of the 9...♗e8 variation is that it does not help Black make progress with his development. If White manages to increase his pressure against the queenside, then completing development may become a real problem for Black.

10.♗b1

White removes the rook from the corner, renewing the threat of b4-b5 followed by ♜f3xe5.

10...♝f8 11.d3

Black's main continuations are **B1) 11...a5** and **B2) 11...♝d4**.

Black should not delay concrete action, because his whole system of development is rather inflexible. For example:

11...♝g4?!

This can be strongly met by:

12.♝g5!

Revealing the vulnerability of the f7- and b7-squares.

12...♝b8

By defending the b7-pawn, Black prepares to meet b4-b5 with ...♝c6-d4.

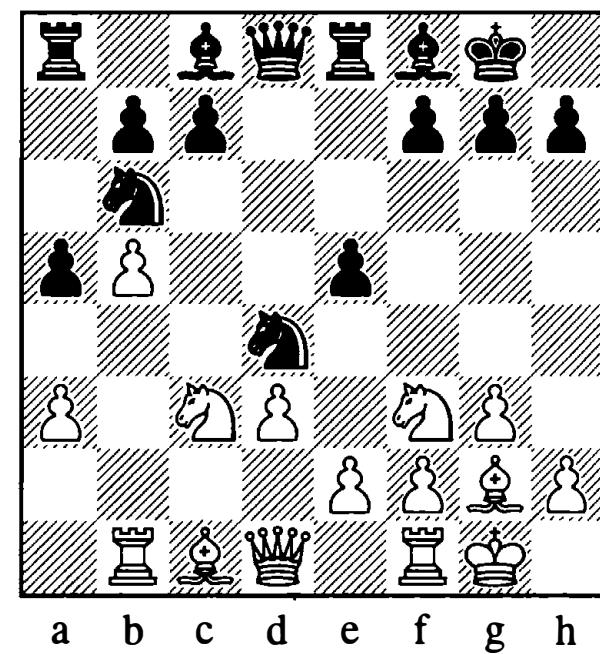
13.♛e4!

White is threatening to win the queen with ♛e4xh7† followed by ♜g5xf7†.

13...g6 14.♝b3 ♜e7 15.♝xc6 bxc6 16.♝ge4 h6 17.♛e3 ♜d8 18.f3 ♜e6 19.♝c2±

Black has weaknesses on both wings, Piasetski – Lutz, Manila (ol) 1992.

(1.c4 e5 2.g3 ♜f6 3.♗g2 d5 4.cxd5 ♜xd5 5.♝c3 ♜b6 6.♝f3 ♜c6 7.0–0 ♜e7 8.a3 0–0 9.b4 ♜e8 10.♝b1 ♜f8 11.d3)

B1) 11...a5 12.b5 ♜d4**13.♝d2 a4**

Black wins some space before his knight is pushed back from the centre.

14.e3 ♜e6 15.♝f3

It may seem that White has just lost two tempos, but Black's wandering knight will also cost some time.

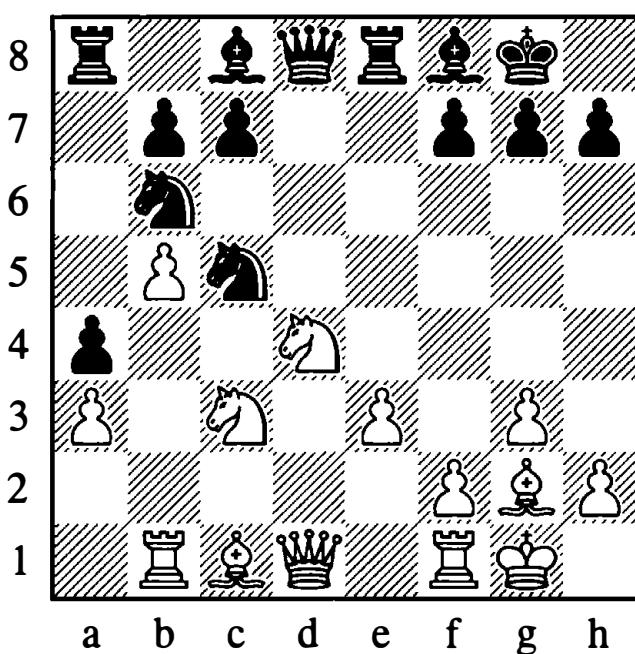
15...♝c5

This move allows White to open the centre, but Black needs to clear the c8-h3 diagonal anyway.

It makes little sense to weaken the kingside with 15...f6 16.♝c2 ♜c5 17.d4± as in Azmaiparashvili – I. Novak, Haifa 1989. Compared to the main game, the move ♜d1-c2 is more useful than ...f7-f6.

The alternate way to remove the knight from the bishop's way is 15...♝g5, but after 16.♝xg5 ♜xg5 17.♝c2± the insufficiently defended b7-pawn would leave the bishop immobile.

16.d4 exd4 17.Qxd4



White has annihilated Black's space advantage in the centre and has a mobile kingside majority. In the next phase of the game, White needs to find a favourable way of developing his dark-squared bishop, while keeping his queenside weaknesses well defended. Ironically, Black has a rather similar problem. His c8-bishop has no favourable squares at its disposal, while the b7- and a5-pawns need constant care.

17...g6

Black restricts the active d4-knight and prepares to re-activate his f8-bishop.

In the following game, Black played without a clear plan, allowing White to complete his development and put his kingside majority in motion: 17...Wf6 18.Wc2 Wg6 19.e4 Bd8 20.Qce2 Qg4 21.f3 Qd7 22.Qe3± Webster – Lewis, Eastbourne 1990.

18.Wc2 We7

If instead:

18...Qg7

White can carry out the same plan as in the main game.

19.Qce2 Qe6 20.Qb2 Qxd4 21.Qxd4 We7

22.Qfe1 Bb8 23.Qbc1

White has placed his rooks on optimal squares, putting the c7-pawn under pressure and supporting the advance of the e-pawn.

23...Qe5 24.Wc3!

White is threatening f2-f4, after which Black will not be able to defend the long diagonal and the c7-pawn at the same time.

24...f6 25.f4 Qd6 26.e4±

White has a space advantage and the black king is vulnerable, Sher – Baburin, Denmark 1993.

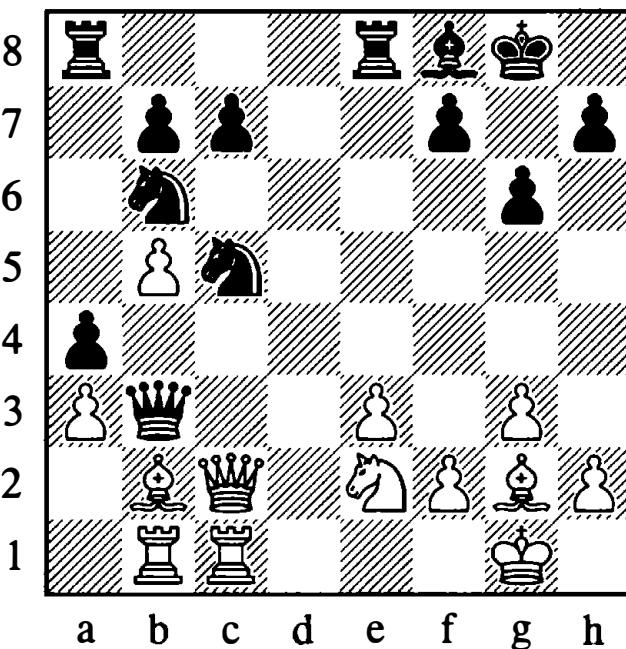
19.Qce2

White clears the c-file and the e1-a5 diagonal, allowing the queen to control the c4-square and creating the threat of Qc1-d2-b4.

19...Qe6 20.Qxe6 Wxe6 21.Qb2 Wb3

Black has almost completed his development and displays some activity, but his strategic problems have increased after having given up his light-squared bishop.

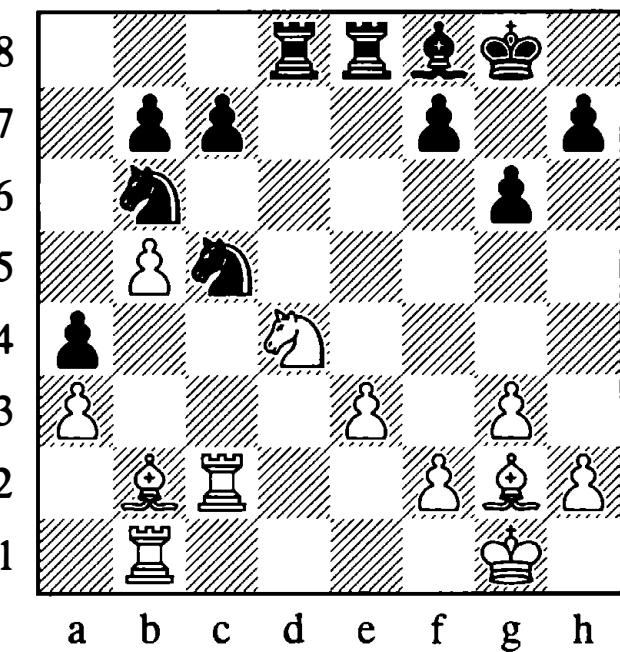
22.Qfc1



22...Wad8

22...Qd3 would be met by 23.Qd4! as indicated by Kiril Georgiev.

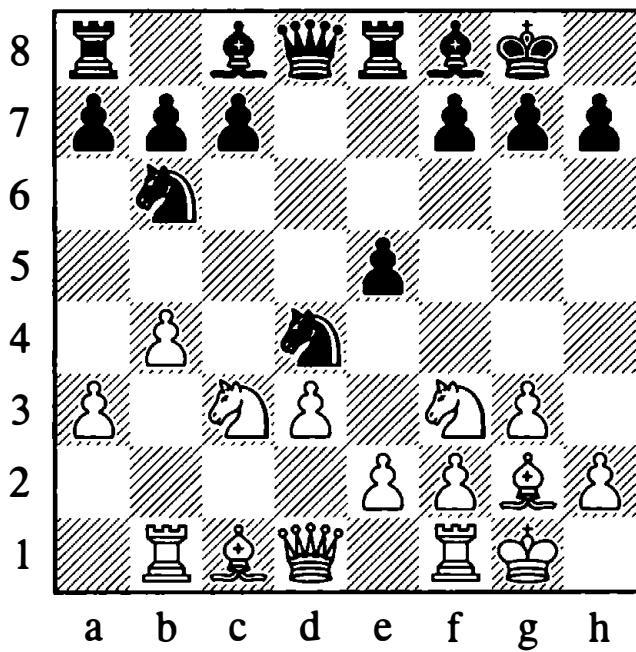
23.Qd4 Wxc2 24.Qxc2±



Black's initiative has been extinguished and White retains the better structure and an active pair of bishops, Ki. Georgiev – Gelfand, Manila (izt) 1990.

(1.c4 e5 2.g3 ♜f6 3.♗g2 d5 4.cxd5 ♜xd5 5.♘c3 ♜b6 6.♘f3 ♜c6 7.0–0 ♔e7 8.a3 0–0 9.b4 ♕e8 10.♗b1 ♜f8 11.d3)

B2) 11...♞d4



12.♘e1!?

Since Black has refrained from ...a7-a5, there is no threat of ...a5-a4 followed by the occupation of the b3-square. This allows White to deviate from the natural 12.♘d2. In certain cases, it may be important that the

d3-pawn is safely defended after chasing the enemy away with e2-e3, but, since the white knight usually belongs on f3, both lines may simply transpose.

12...c6 13.e3 ♜e6

Black has an interesting alternative:
13...♝b5!?

Black agrees to play with doubled pawns, in order to consolidate his control over the a4- and c4-squares.

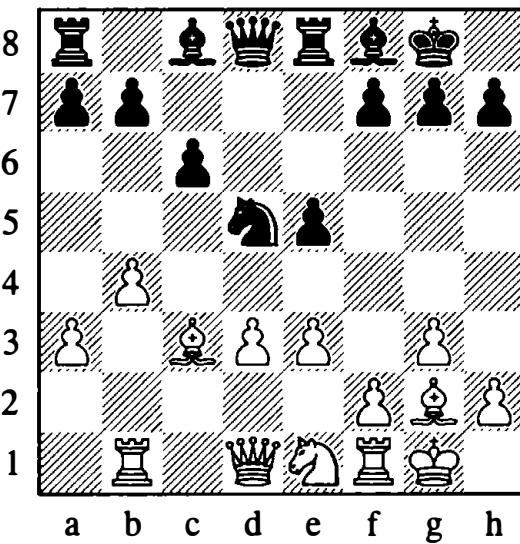
14.♔b2!

For the time being, it is better to develop, ignoring the tension.

14...♜xc3

After the tempting 14...a5, the knight retreat to e1 would show its worth with 15.♘xb5 cxb5 16.♘c2. The knight is ready to jump to b4 after bxa5 or ...axb4. 16...a4 would give up any ambitions Black had on the queenside and once again White can justify the knight's placement with 17.f4!, taking advantage of the fact that the e3-pawn is well defended.

15.♔xc3 ♜d5



This position was reached in San Segundo – Kharlov, Oviedo (rapid) 1993.

16.♔d2!N±

This is the most effective retreat. White intends to answer ...a7-a5 with b4xa5. Meanwhile, he over-defends the b4-pawn, keeping the possibility of a minority attack

with a2-a4 and b4-b5. But prior to that, White should complete his development with $\mathbb{W}c2$, $\mathbb{Q}f3$, $\mathbb{B}fc1$. Black does not have an active plan and his knight is unstable in the centre, because of the constant possibility of e3-e4.

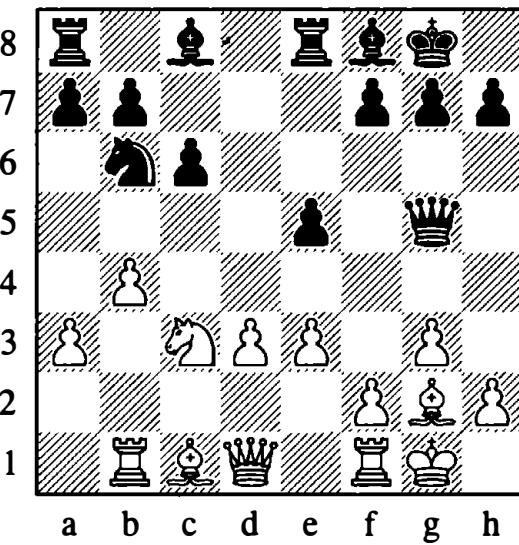
14. $\mathbb{Q}f3$

Apparently, White has lost two tempos, but it is not clear whether Black has improved his position in the meantime. The knight's placement on e6 (rather than on c6) leaves the e5-pawn vulnerable and the c8-bishop passive.

14... $\mathbb{Q}c7$

Black defends the e5-pawn and prepares to develop his bishop. At the same time, the b5-square is defended.

14... $\mathbb{Q}g5$ 15. $\mathbb{Q}xg5$ $\mathbb{W}xg5$, as played in Lautier – Wolff, Biel 1993, opens the diagonal for the g2-bishop and places the queen on an awkward square.



White should play 16.b5!N with a queenside initiative.

15. $\mathbb{W}c2$

White increases his control over the e4-square, threatening d3-d4 without allowing ...e5-e4.

15... $\mathbb{Q}bd5$

Another way of parrying the threat is:

15... $\mathbb{Q}f5$

However, the bishop is unstable on f5.
16. $\mathbb{Q}e4$ f6

Gelfand recommended 16... $\mathbb{Q}xe4$ 17. $dxe4$ $\mathbb{W}c8$ with counterplay, but giving up the light-squared bishop is unlikely to offer Black an easy life. 18. $\mathbb{Q}b2$ f6 19. $\mathbb{B}fd1$ $\mathbb{W}e6$ 20. $\mathbb{Q}f1$ $\mathbb{B}ad8$ 21. $\mathbb{Q}d2\pm$ White threatens $\mathbb{Q}d2-c4$, which will make the weakness of the light squares quite noticeable.

17. $\mathbb{Q}h4$ $\mathbb{Q}c8$

The bishop fails to find stability along the c8-h3 diagonal because of the permanent threat of $\mathbb{Q}e4-c5$.

18. $\mathbb{Q}c5$ $\mathbb{Q}e6$

This position was reached in Bouterweck – Reschke, corr. 1995.

19. $\mathbb{Q}d2!N\pm$

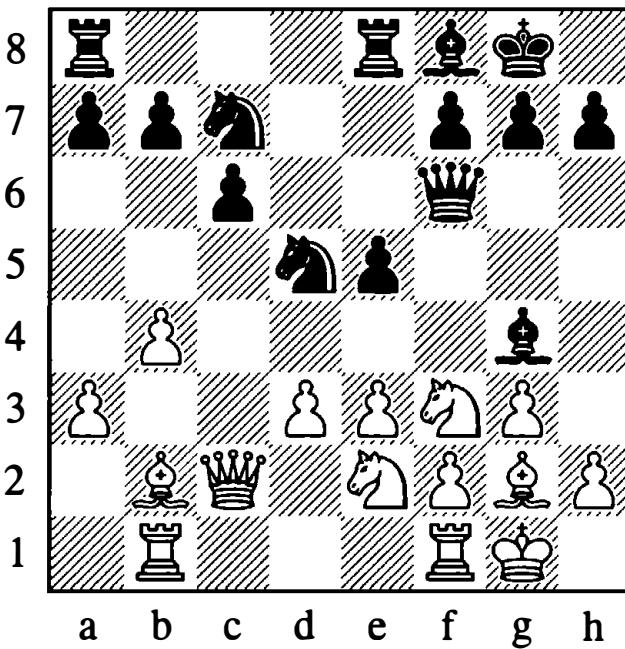
White can prepare a queenside attack at his leisure, with $\mathbb{B}fc1$, $\mathbb{Q}f3$, a3-a4.

16. $\mathbb{Q}e2$

White avoids the exchange of knights, because the d5-knight is unstable.

16... $\mathbb{Q}g4$ 17. $\mathbb{Q}b2$ $\mathbb{W}f6$

The pressure against the f3-knight fails to solve Black's problems, while the queen will remain exposed. 17...f6 looks more solid, but White would win space with 18.e4 $\mathbb{Q}e7$ 19.d4 \pm , as indicated by Ribli.



18.d4!

The slightly artificial placement of Black's pieces allows White to carry out this thematic break under favourable circumstances.

18...exd4

Black admits that he has failed to equalize, and allows White to gain an advantage in the centre.

18...e4 would lose a pawn after 19.Qe5 Qf3 20.Qxf3 exf3 21.Qf4 Qxf4 22.exf4±, although converting the minimal material advantage would have been anything but easy, because of White's imperfect structure.

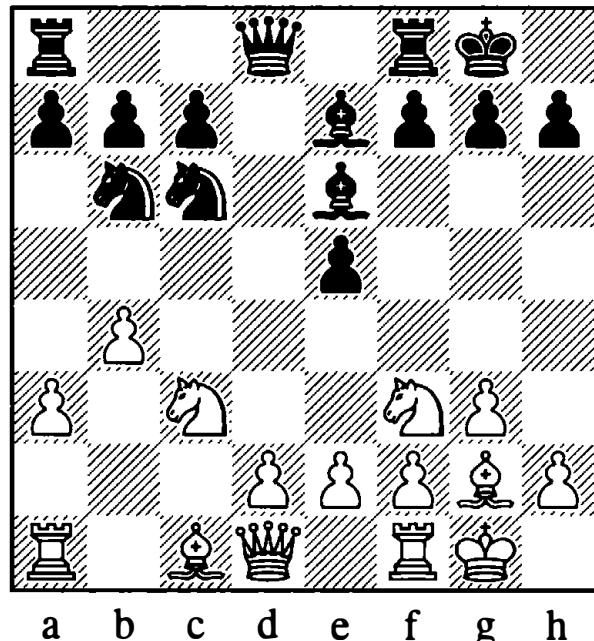
18...Qxf3 would be simply bad because of 19.dxe5+- as indicated by Ribli.

19.Qfxd4 Ng6 20.e4±

White has the initiative in the centre, Lautier – Gelfand, Munich 1993.

(1.c4 e5 2.g3 Qf6 3.Qg2 d5 4.cxd5 Qxd5 5.Qc3 Qb6 6.Qf3 Qc6 7.0–0 Qe7 8.a3 0–0 9.b4)

C) 9...Qe6



This is by far the most popular move and logically so. Black defends the e5-pawn by

indirect means, while developing a piece at the same time.

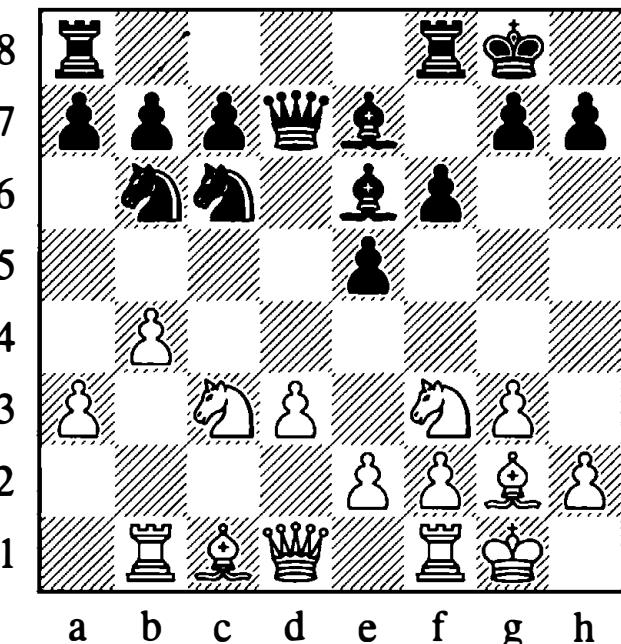
This time it is the weakness of the b3-square that prevents White from grabbing the pawn with 10.b5 Qd4 11.Qxe5?, in view of 11...Qb3 winning material.

10.Qb1

White plays the same move as against 9...Qe8, with the purpose of over-defending the vulnerable b3-square. The threat to win the pawn is renewed and Black has to slightly weaken his kingside.

10...f6 11.d3

Black has tried 11...Qd7 (below), 11...a5 (Chapter 24) and 11...Qd4 (Chapter 25).

11...Qd7

This natural developing move, refraining from the early occupation of the d4-square, allows White to build up his queenside pressure in a similar way as in line A. The reader should refer to my comments in that line, in order to understand the finer nuances.

12.Qe4

With the rook on b1 the threat of Qc5 is quite strong, because after an exchange on c5

the b7-pawn would be hanging.

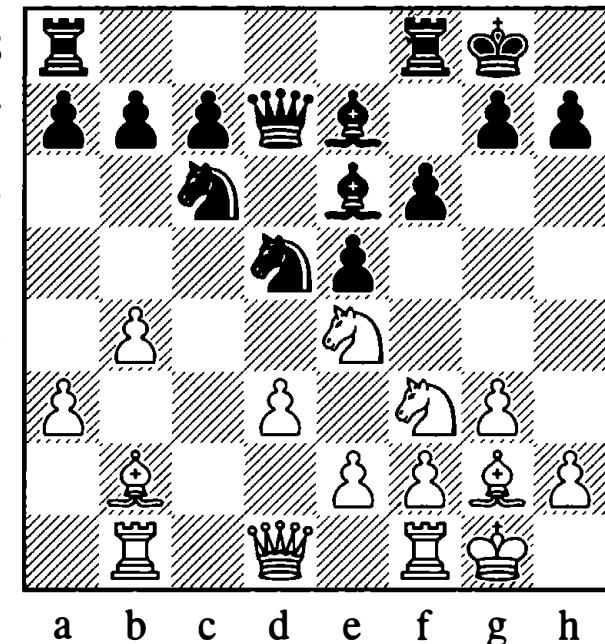
12... $\mathbb{Q}d5$

This is a radical way to parry the threat, but in the long run the knight will not be stable in the centre.

White has tried **C1) 13. $\mathbb{Q}b2$** and **C2) 13. $\mathbb{W}c2$** . Both moves have merit and both have been played in highly instructive games, which explains my decision to examine them both, instead of making a clear choice for our repertoire.

(1.c4 e5 2.g3 $\mathbb{Q}f6$ 3. $\mathbb{Q}g2$ d5 4.cxd5 $\mathbb{Q}xd5$ 5. $\mathbb{Q}c3$ $\mathbb{Q}b6$ 6. $\mathbb{Q}f3$ $\mathbb{Q}c6$ 7.0–0 $\mathbb{Q}e7$ 8.a3 0–0 9.b4 $\mathbb{Q}e6$ 10. $\mathbb{B}b1$ f6 11.d3 $\mathbb{W}d7$ 12. $\mathbb{Q}e4$ $\mathbb{Q}d5$)

C1) 13. $\mathbb{Q}b2$



White plans a long regrouping manoeuvre, with $\mathbb{Q}c1-c2$, $\mathbb{W}b1$ and $\mathbb{Q}fc1$. This may seem to imply a loss of time, because the queen's rook will move for a second time along the back rank, but White relies on the fact that Black's king's knight has also jumped back and forth.

13...a6

Black is concerned about the possibility of his knight being driven away to a bad square

after b4-b5. On the other hand, 13...a6 creates a weakness on the queenside: an eventual ...c7-c6 would leave the b6-square undefended.

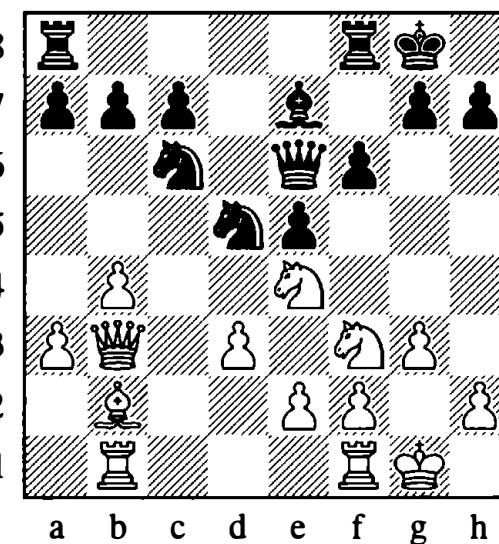
Black could exchange the light-squared bishops with:

13... $\mathbb{Q}h3$ 14. $\mathbb{Q}xh3$ $\mathbb{W}xh3$

However, this would create some problems on the light squares.

15. $\mathbb{W}b3$ $\mathbb{W}e6$

15... $\mathbb{B}ad8$ would take the d8-square away from the c6-knight. 16.b5 $\mathbb{Q}a5$ 17. $\mathbb{W}a4$ b6 A forced weakening of the c6-square. 18. $\mathbb{Q}c3!$ White provokes the exchange of the d5-knight in order to question Black's queenside stability with $\mathbb{Q}b2-c3$. 18... $\mathbb{W}e6$ 19. $\mathbb{Q}fc1\pm$ White has strong pressure.

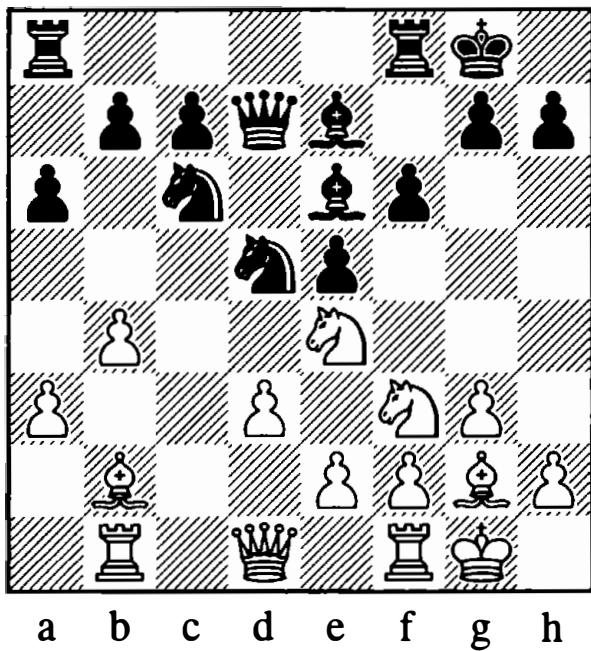


The game Kosten – Cioara now continued with 16. $\mathbb{Q}c3\pm$. Even more effective would be:

16. $\mathbb{Q}fc1!N$

Before undertaking concrete action, White concentrates his forces on the queenside.

In Hjartarson – Oll, Budapest 1991, the exchange of the bishops was carried out slightly later: 13... $\mathbb{B}ad8$ 14. $\mathbb{W}c2$ $\mathbb{Q}h3$ 15. $\mathbb{Q}c5$ $\mathbb{Q}xc5$ 16. $\mathbb{W}xc5$ $\mathbb{Q}xg2$ 17. $\mathbb{Q}xg2$ $\mathbb{Q}h8$ 18.h3!? (White secures his king against the idea of ... $\mathbb{Q}d5-f4\ddagger$, thus creating the threat of e2-e4) 18... $\mathbb{W}e8$ 19.b5 $\mathbb{Q}ce7$ 20. $\mathbb{W}xa7$ $\mathbb{W}xb5$ 21. $\mathbb{Q}a1!\pm$ Black's queenside will be destroyed.

**14. $\mathbb{R}c1$ $\mathbb{R}fd8$**

By keeping the queen's rook on its initial square, Black declares his intentions to counter-attack on this wing in the near future. This plan is rather one-sided and will not work out well.

14... $\mathbb{R}ad8$ looks more consistent, but it also fails to solve Black's problems. The following is a possible continuation if White plays as in the main game: 15. $\mathbb{R}c2$ $\mathbb{R}fe8$ 16. $\mathbb{W}b1$ $\mathbb{Q}f8$ 17. $\mathbb{R}fc1\pm$ Black's position is solid, but his queenside is under tremendous pressure.

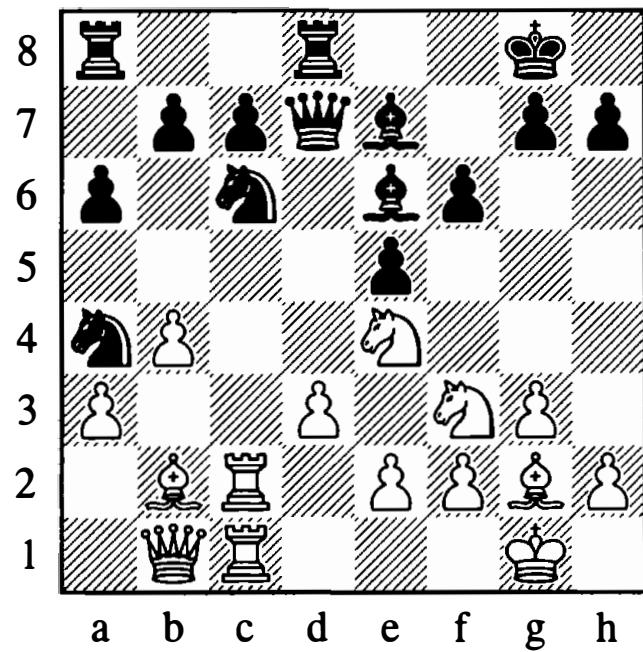
15. $\mathbb{R}c2$ $\mathbb{Q}b6$

Black believed he had found the weak point in White's regrouping: the a4-square is not under control any more. However, in playing this way, Black underestimated the fact that the time spent repeatedly moving his knight will allow White to create a massive concentration of forces in the centre and on the queenside.

15... $\mathbb{Q}f8$ looks more circumspect, although after 16. $\mathbb{W}b1\pm$ Black still lacks a constructive plan.

16. $\mathbb{W}b1$ $\mathbb{Q}a4$

The thematic 16... $\mathbb{Q}d4$ is premature. 17. $\mathbb{Q}xd4$ $exd4$ 18. $\mathbb{Q}c5$ $\mathbb{Q}xc5$ 19. $bxc5$ $\mathbb{Q}a4$ 20. $c6\pm$ Black's queenside is in ruins and his pieces are hanging.

17. $\mathbb{R}fc1$ **17... $\mathbb{R}ac8$**

Black defends the c7-pawn to prepare ... $\mathbb{Q}c6-d4$.

It would be pointless to exchange the knight in which Black has invested so much time: 17... $\mathbb{Q}xb2?!$ 18. $\mathbb{W}xb2\pm$ White is planning 19. $\mathbb{Q}c5$ $\mathbb{Q}xc5$ 20. $\mathbb{R}xc5$ followed by a3-a4 and b4-b5 with an initiative.

18. $\mathbb{Q}a1$ a5

Black wants to deprive his opponent of control of the important c5-square before moving his knight to d4, but if he had read his opponent's mind, he would probably have preferred a waiting move such as 18... $\mathbb{Q}h8$.

18... $\mathbb{Q}d4$

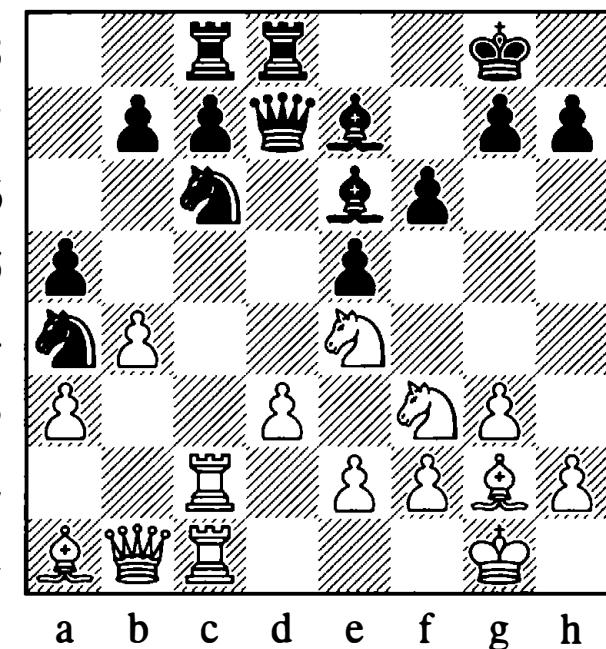
This still does not work properly.

19. $\mathbb{Q}xd4$ $exd4$ 20. $\mathbb{Q}c5$ $\mathbb{Q}xc5$

After 20... $\mathbb{Q}xc5$ 21. $bxc5$, besides the usual problems with the d4- and b7-pawns, Black has to worry about his knight, which would be especially vulnerable after ...c7-c6.

21. $bxc5\pm$

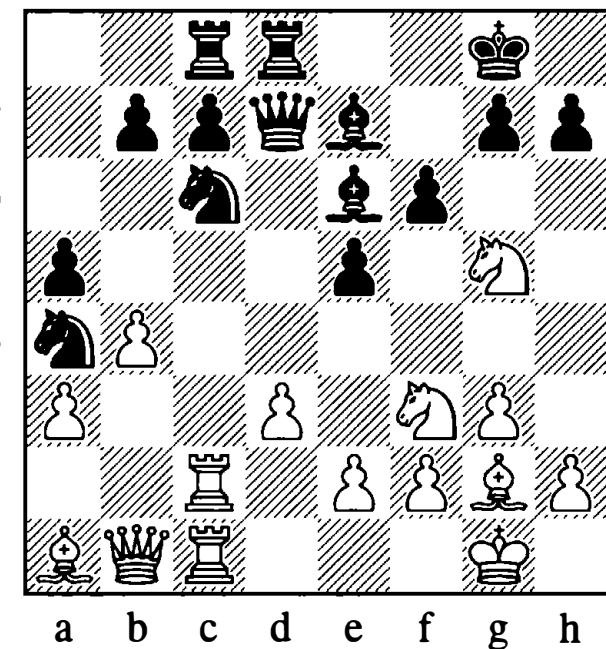
In view of the threat of $\mathbb{R}c2-b2-b4$, Black has problems defending his weak pawns.



19.♘eg5!!±

I was playing a dull game on the next board. Since the opening of this encounter interested me, I turned my eyes to it quite often. When White picked up his knight I had no doubt that the move would be 19.♘c5, and so I turned back to my own game. A few moves later, I could not understand how the position on the board had been reached. Finding a move like 19.♘eg5, especially when there is a reasonable alternative (19.♘c5), requires a special feel for the dynamics of chess, a lot of imagination and, last but not least, an artist's soul.

19.b5 would have been answered with 19...♗d4 when White no longer has ♘e4-c5 at his disposal.



19...axb4

After the obvious 19...fxg5 there would have followed: 20.♗xc6! bxc6 21.♕xe5 ♕e8 (21...♕d6? 22.♗xc6 traps the queen) 22.♗xc6± White has two pawns for the sacrificed exchange and Black's pawn structure is weak.

20.♗xe6 ♕xe6 21.axb4 ♘xb4

Otherwise, after the favourable exchange ♘xe6, White would simply be better in view of his control of the light squares.

21...♘xb4? would lose a piece to 22.♗xc6.

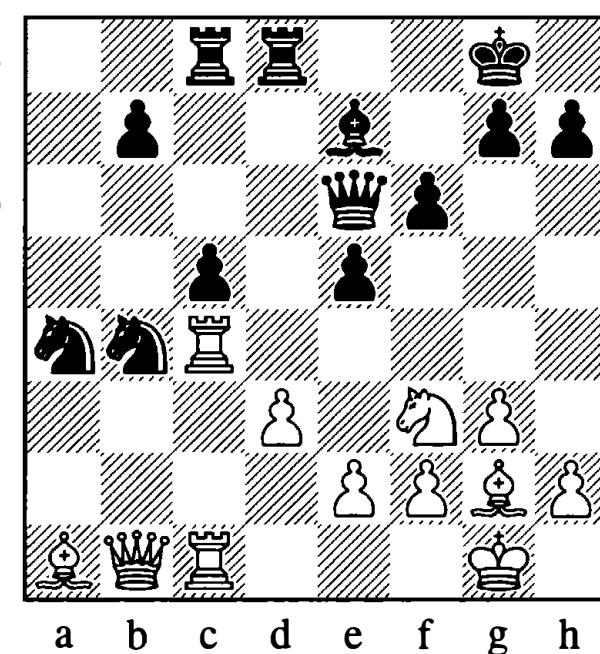
22.♗c4!

White noticed that Black's knights are hanging and devised a plan to take advantage of this.

Black was probably expecting 22.♗xc7, when his active knights would have guaranteed him counterplay.

22...c5

Everything seems to be safely defended, but a second shock was to come.

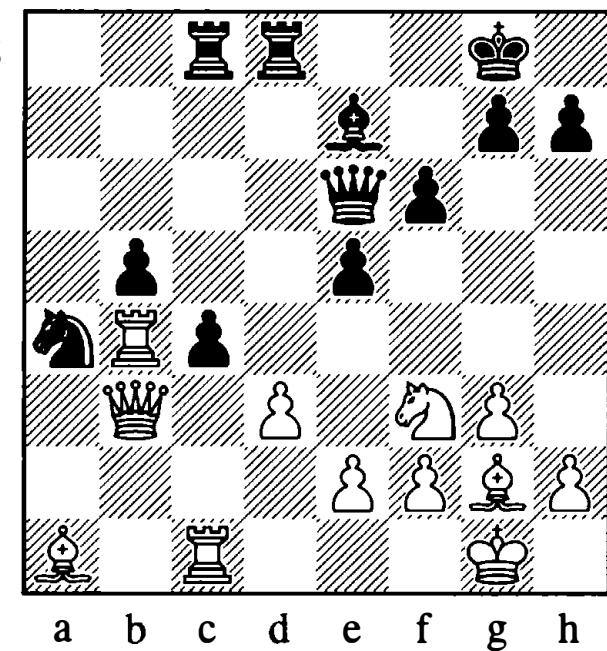


23.♕b3!

Attacking the hanging a4-knight and the "safely defended" b4-knight.

23...b5 24.♗xb4 c4

This is the only way to complicate matters, as otherwise White would simply be a piece up.



25.♗bxc4!

Another spectacular and effective move. Instead, 25.dxc4 would lead to unclear consequences after 25...♗xb4 26.♗xb4 ♗xc4.

25...bxc4 26.♘xa4 cxd3 27.♗xc8 ♗xc8

28.exd3

White has the considerable material advantage of two minor pieces for a rook, but the situation is not totally clear. The d3-pawn is weak and the a1-bishop is passive and exposed.

28...♛c6

After 28...♝c1† 29.♔f1 there is no way to continue the offensive, while Black's back rank would have been seriously weakened. White would continue ♔d2-c4.

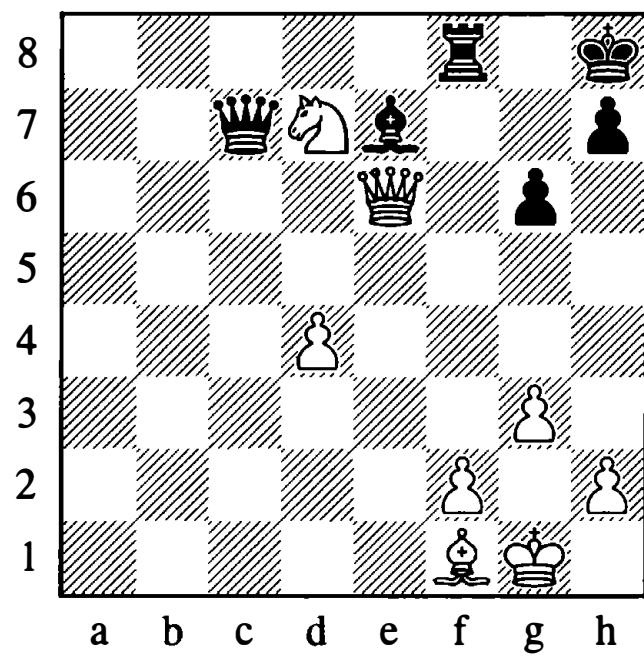
29.♝b3† ♔h8 30.♔xe5!!?

Black gets his third shock of the game. By returning part of his material advantage, White gains a strong attack on the light squares.

30...fxe5 31.♔xe5 ♛c1†

Black is forced to misplace his queen to defend against the threat of ♔f7†.

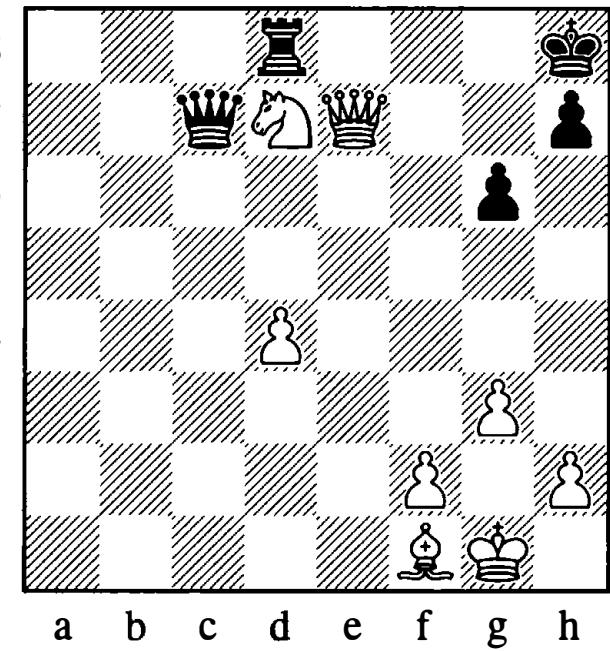
32.♔f1 g6 33.♕e6 ♜c7 34.d4 ♘f8 35.♔d7



35...♗d8?

This loses at once, whereas 35...♗e8 would have allowed Black to put up tough resistance.

36.♕xe7



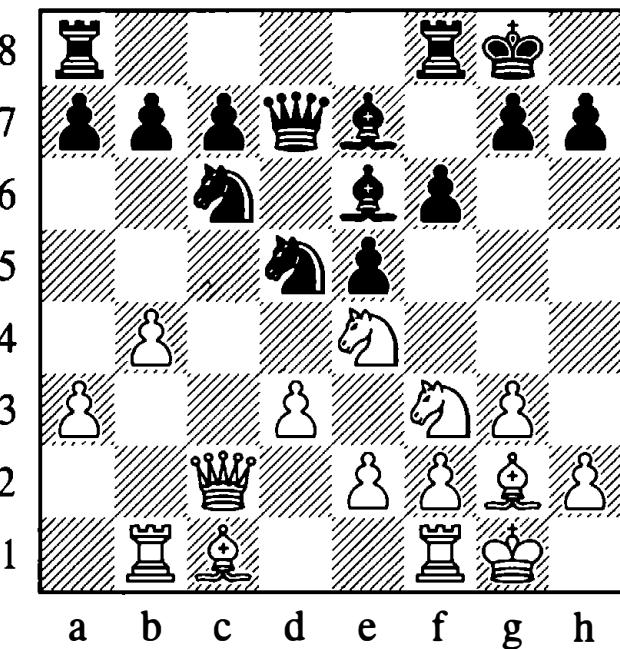
Black resigned in Suba – Solozhenkin, Berga 1993, as he cannot capture the knight. 36...♗xd7 allows mate in one, and 36...♛xd7 37.♕f6† ♔g8 38.♔c4† is little better.

In the early 1990s I participated in a couple of dozen Spanish tournaments where Suba was also playing. My more experienced compatriot has always been generous in sharing his

original ideas, and our long chats were highly instructive. I believe it was games like the one we have just seen that made me to fall in love with the English Opening.

(1.c4 e5 2.g3 ♜f6 3.♗g2 d5 4.cxd5 ♜xd5 5.♘c3 ♜b6 6.♘f3 ♜c6 7.0–0 ♜e7 8.a3 0–0 9.b4 ♜e6 10.♗b1 f6 11.d3 ♜d7 12.♘e4 ♜d5)

C2) 13.♗c2



This is the less committal and more popular move. White leaves the b-file clear for his rook and does not intend to lose time re-positioning this already developed piece. For these reasons, I may have chosen it as our repertoire move if Suba had not produced his pearl in line C1.

13...b6

This move prevents White occupying the c5-square, but it also weakens the c6-square.

Karpov recommended 13...a6 14.♘c5 ♜xc5 15.bxc5 ♜ab8, but after 16.♗d1 b5 17.♗b2± the practically unstoppable d3-d4 will give White a good position. In this line, 14.♘c5 is not at all forced. White could play 14.♗b2 followed by ♜fd1, preparing d3-d4.

13...♜ac8

This is a somewhat mysterious move, over-defending the not yet attacked c7-pawn. The fact that such a move occurs in grandmaster practice give us a hint about Black's shortage of constructive ideas.

14.♘c5 ♜xc5 15.bxc5 b6 16.♗b2 ♜fd8
17.d4!N

White does not need to prepare this move with 17.♗bd1, which also led to some advantage for White after 17...bxc5 18.♗xc5± in Serper – Granda, Groningen 1993.

17...e4!?

This is the move Serper wanted to avoid.

18.♗xe4 ♜f5 19.♗h4 ♜ce7

Accepting the sacrifice with 19...♜xb1 would leave Black under serious pressure after 20.♗xb1±. White threatens not only e2-e4 followed by d4-d5, but also ♜h3, regaining the exchange.

20.e4 ♜g6

If White was forced to play 21.♗h5, then Black would stabilize his position with 21...♜xe4.

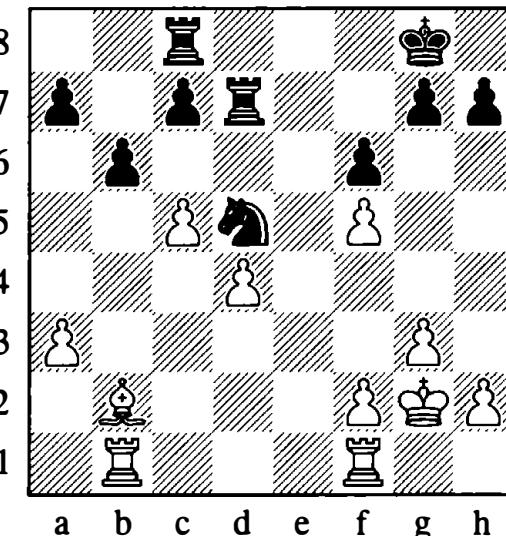
21.♘e5!

A strong intermediate move, defending the e4-pawn with gain of time.

21...♜xh4

21...fxe5 22.♗g5± retrieves the piece while maintaining the initiative.

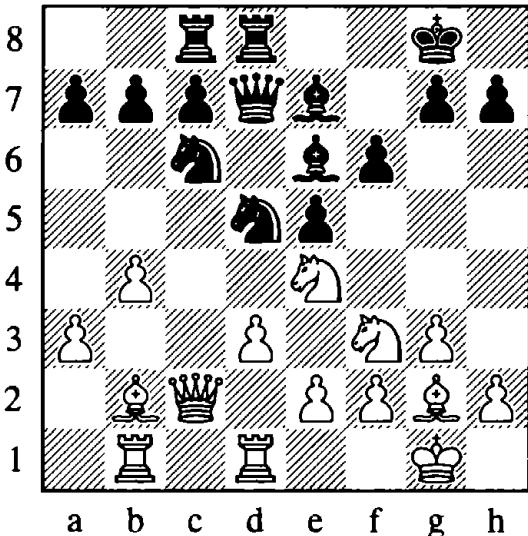
22.♘xd7 ♜xg2 23.exf5 ♜xd7 24.♔xg2±



In the centre, Black is doing perfectly fine,

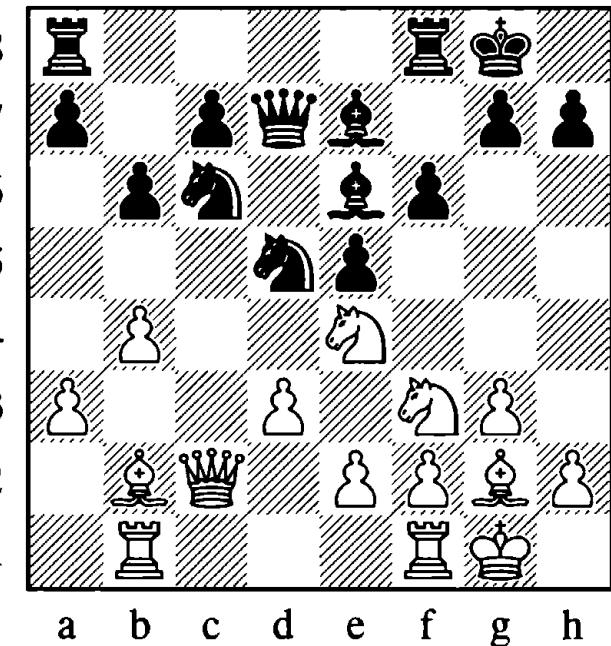
but on the kingside he lacks space and is a pawn down.

Although this looks good for White, I would prefer the simpler 14. $\mathbb{Q}b2!N$ $\mathbb{E}fd8$ 15. $\mathbb{E}fd1\pm$.



White threatens d3-d4 and keeps $\mathbb{Q}e4-c5$ in reserve.

14. $\mathbb{Q}b2$



14...a5

Once the unpleasant $\mathbb{Q}e4-c5$ is no longer possible, this typical queenside break makes sense.

14... $\mathbb{E}ac8?!$

This was tried in a Candidates Match, but it is too passive.

15. $\mathbb{E}bc1$ $\mathbb{Q}d4$

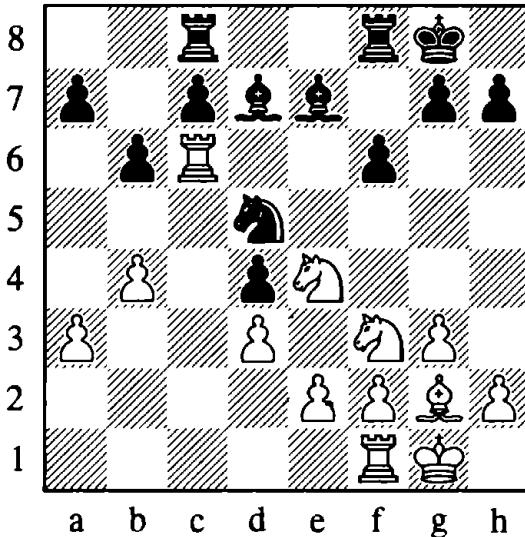
15... $\mathbb{Q}d8$ allows White too much play after 16. d4±.

16. $\mathbb{Q}xd4$ $\mathbb{E}xd4$ 17. $\mathbb{W}c6!$

White occupies the weak square, even though keeping control of it will require sacrificing an exchange.

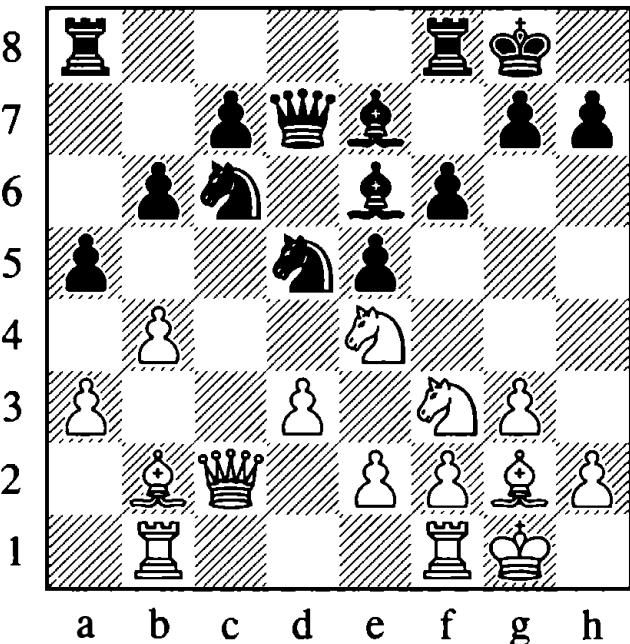
Black was probably relying on 17. $\mathbb{Q}xd4$ $\mathbb{Q}xb4$ with counter-chances.

17... $\mathbb{W}xc6$ 18. $\mathbb{E}xc6$ $\mathbb{Q}d7$



19. $\mathbb{Q}xd4!$ $\mathbb{Q}xc6$ 20. $\mathbb{Q}xc6\pm$

In Karpov – Hjartarson, Seattle (4) 1989, White had unchallenged supremacy of the light squares. Black's small material advantage is irrelevant, because his rooks have no open lines at their disposal.



15. $b5$ $\mathbb{Q}a7$ 16. $d4$

White answers an action on the wing with a break in the centre. An as yet untested way to

achieve a similar effect is 16.a4 c6 17.d4 with an initiative.

16... $\mathbb{Q}xb5$ 17.dxe5

Black's queenside achievements are impressive, but his kingside will soon fall apart.

17... $\mathbb{Q}xa3$

Black decides to get rid of the threatening b2-bishop, but his light squares will remain vulnerable.

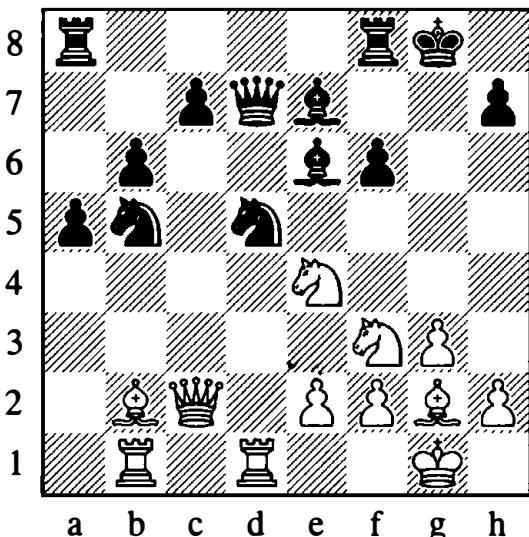
17... $\mathbb{Q}xa3$ 18. $\mathbb{B}fd1!$

This leaves Black pinned and hanging.

18... $\mathbb{Q}e7$

After 18... $\mathbb{Q}xb2$ White develops his initiative with 19. $\mathbb{W}xb2$ c6 20.exf6 gxf6 21. $\mathbb{Q}xf6\uparrow$ $\mathbb{B}xf6$ 22.e4 $\mathbb{B}af8$ 23.exd5 $\mathbb{Q}xd5$ 24. $\mathbb{Q}e5\pm$. Black's queenside pawns are not so threatening yet, while his king is wide open.

19.exf6 gxf6



This position was reached in Birmingham – Miralles, Epinal 1989.

Now White could have gained an advantage with:

20. $\mathbb{Q}xf6\uparrow$!N $\mathbb{Q}xf6$ 21. $\mathbb{Q}xf6$ $\mathbb{B}xf6$ 22. $\mathbb{Q}e5\pm$

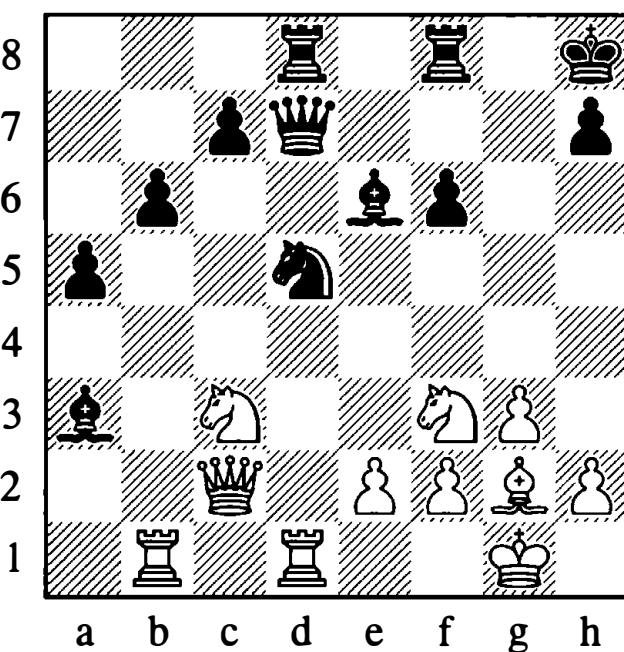
Black cannot defend his hanging pieces.

18. $\mathbb{Q}xa3$ $\mathbb{Q}xa3$ 19.exf6 gxf6 20. $\mathbb{B}fd1$ $\mathbb{Q}h8\text{?}$

This move fails to react to the unpleasant pin on the d-file.

20... $\mathbb{Q}b4$ was necessary, in order to prevent $\mathbb{Q}e4$ -c3. Even so, after 21. $\mathbb{Q}d4$ $\mathbb{Q}f7$ 22. $\mathbb{Q}c6\pm$ White has strong pressure all over the board.

21. $\mathbb{Q}c3$ $\mathbb{B}ad8$



This position was reached in Sunye Neto – Granda Zuniga, Cienfuegos 1986.

22.e4!N

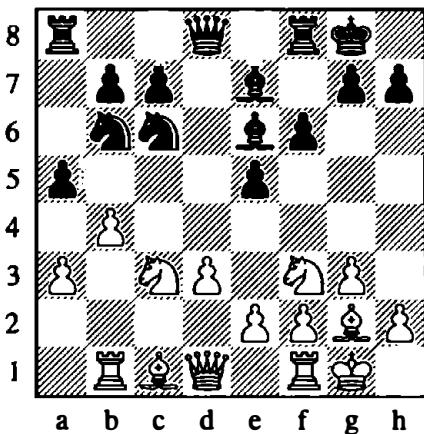
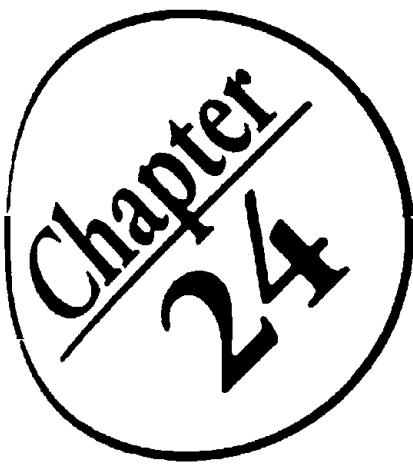
White simply wins material.

22... $\mathbb{Q}b4$ 23. $\mathbb{B}xb4$ $\mathbb{W}xd1\uparrow$ 24. $\mathbb{Q}xd1$ $\mathbb{axb4}$ 25. $\mathbb{Q}d2$ $\mathbb{B}d6$ 26. $\mathbb{Q}e3\text{--}$

White has regrouped perfectly and Black's passed pawns are harmless.

Conclusion:

The variations examined in this chapter have one element in common: Black is careful to over-defend his e5-pawn. While this looks like a solid approach, the main drawback is that Black's development is slightly delayed, which gives White the opportunity to develop his initiative.



Reversed Dragon

11...a5

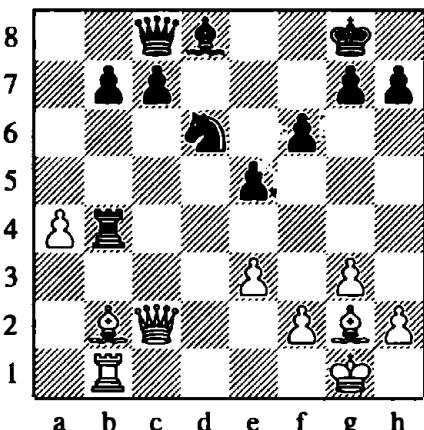
Variation Index

**1.c4 e5 2.g3 ♜f6 3.♗g2 d5 4.cxd5 ♜xd5 5.♘c3 ♜b6
6.♘f3 ♜c6 7.0–0 ♜e7 8.a3 0–0 9.b4 ♜e6 10.♗b1 f6 11.d3**

11...a5 12.b4 ♜d4 13.♘d2

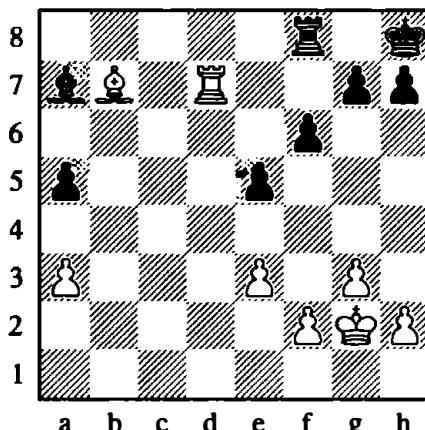
- | | |
|---|--------------|
| A) 13...♛c8 | p 310 |
| B) 13...c6 | p 314 |
| C) 13...♜d5 14.♝xd5 ♜xd5 15.♜b2 a4 | p 320 |
| C1) 16.♜xd4 | p 321 |
| C2) 16.♜a1! | p 324 |

A) after 24...♝b4



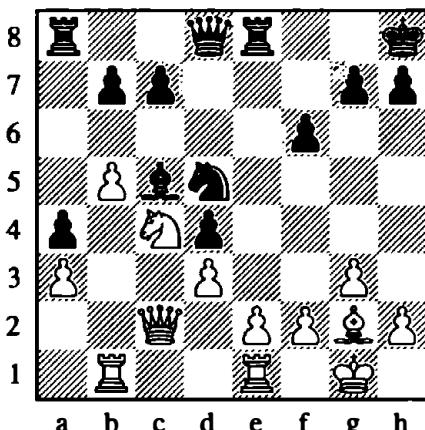
25.♜c1!!

B) a pleasant endgame



30.g4±

C12) after 19...♞c5



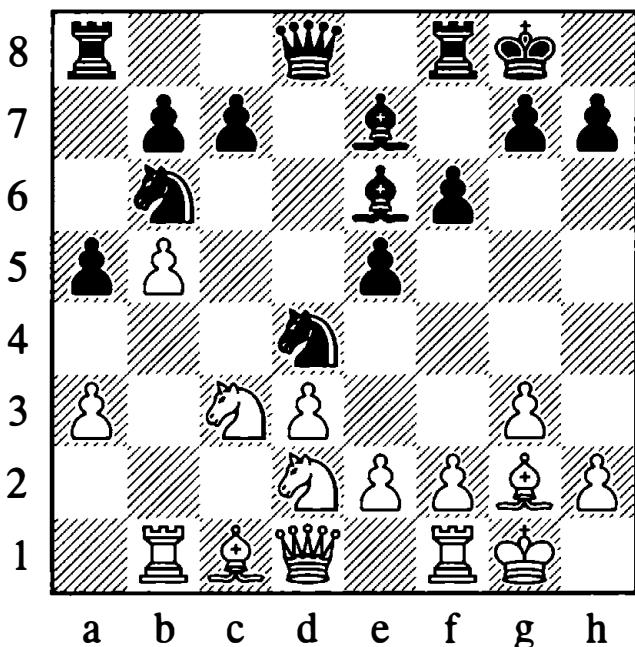
20.♘a5!

1.c4 e5 2.g3 ♜f6 3.♗g2 d5 4.cxd5 ♜xd5
 5.♘c3 ♜b6 6.♘f3 ♜c6 7.0–0 ♛e7 8.a3 0–0
 9.b4 ♛e6 10.♗b1 f6 11.d3 a5 12.b5 ♜d4

For many years, this line was considered to offer Black comfortable equality. I wish to thank IM and ex-Romanian champion Ovidiu Foisor for helping me to understand the subtleties of the position a long time ago.

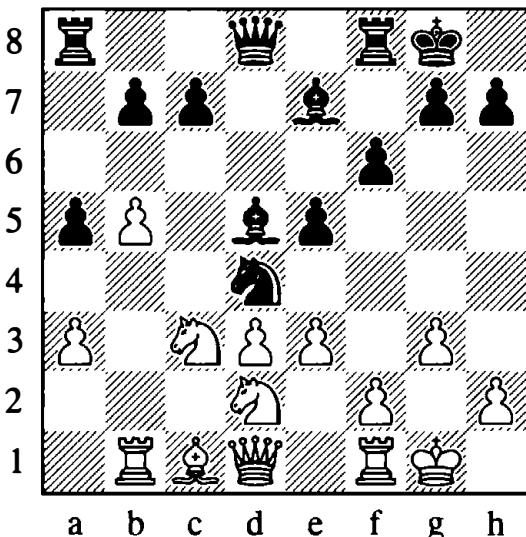
13.♘d2

White avoids the exchange, hoping to prove that the d4-knight is unstable. At the same time, he clears the long diagonal, attacking the b7-pawn.



Black has three main ways of defending the b7-pawn: A) 13...♛c8, B) 13...c6 and C) 13...♝d5.

The natural 13...♝d5?? famously loses a piece to 14.♕xd5 ♜xd5 15.e3.



This is a trick to remember!

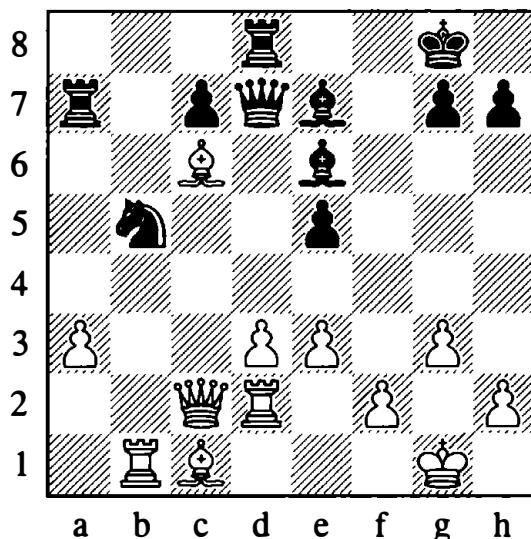
(1.c4 e5 2.g3 ♜f6 3.♗g2 d5 4.cxd5 ♜xd5
 5.♘c3 ♜b6 6.♘f3 ♜c6 7.0–0 ♛e7 8.a3 0–0
 9.b4 ♛e6 10.♗b1 f6 11.d3 a5 12.b5 ♜d4
 13.♘d2)

A) 13...♛c8

Black defends the pawn without making any major structural or positional concessions. The queen clears the d8-square for the rook, but leaves the a8-rook cut off from the rest of the army.

13...♝b8 would pursue a similar aim, but has the drawback that the a-pawn is left without sufficient defence. In the following game, White eventually managed to win that pawn and Black's attempts to restore material equality only led to an immediate catastrophe:

14.e3 ♜f5 15.♛c2 ♛d6 16.♘b3 a4 17.♘d2 ♛e7 18.♗d1 ♜d7 19.♘c4 ♜fd8 20.♗d2 ♜d6 21.♘xa4 ♜xa4 22.♛xa4 ♜a8 23.♛c2 ♜xb5 24.♛xb7 ♜a7 25.♘xe5 fxe5 26.♛c6±

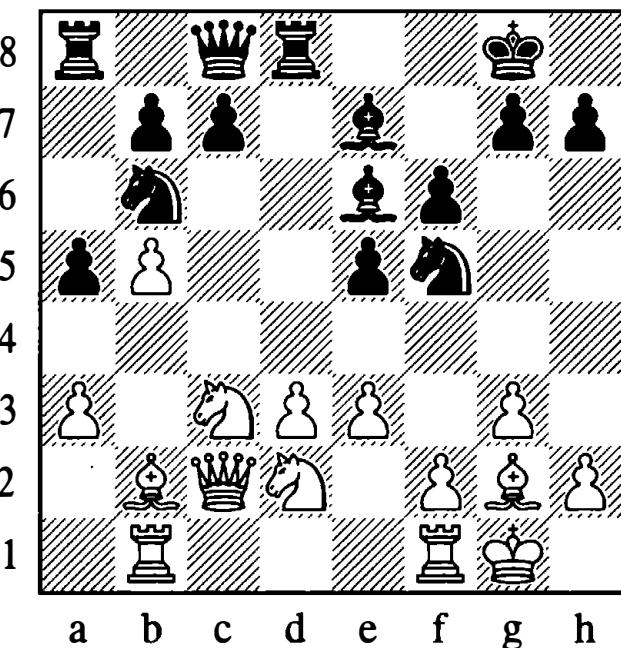


Black has lost material and his remaining pawns are weak, Azmaiparashvili – Olafsson, Moscow 1989.

14.e3 ♜f5 15.♛b2 ♜d8 16.♛c2

Both sides have played a series of natural moves, leading Black to a critical moment. White still has useful non-committal moves

to play ($\mathbb{E}fc1$, for instance), but Black has to define his intentions now.



16...a4

Black takes control of the relatively weak b3-square, and also vacates the a5-square for his rook, in order to attack the b5-pawn. The further course of the game will show that the queen's rook faces serious problems getting in tune with the rest of Black's forces, which leads to tactical problems.

An important alternative is:

16...c6 17.bxc6 bxc6

This opens the b-file for the rook. The drawbacks of this continuation are strategic rather than tactical, as Black is left with a weakened queenside.

18. $\mathbb{E}fc1$ $\mathbb{W}d7$ 19. $\mathbb{Q}f1!$

White cannot create threats along the h1-a8 diagonal yet, so instead he utilizes his bishop for defensive purposes, thus ensuring freedom of action for his other pieces.

19... $\mathbb{E}ab8$ 20. $\mathbb{Q}ce4$ $\mathbb{E}dc8$

Pelletier analysed 20... $\mathbb{Q}d5$ 21. $\mathbb{Q}c5$ $\mathbb{Q}xc5$ 22. $\mathbb{W}xc5\pm$. His point being that 22... $\mathbb{Q}a2$ fails tactically to 23. $\mathbb{Q}xe5!\pm$, when Black's pieces are hanging.

21. $\mathbb{Q}f3$

White prepares to open the centre.

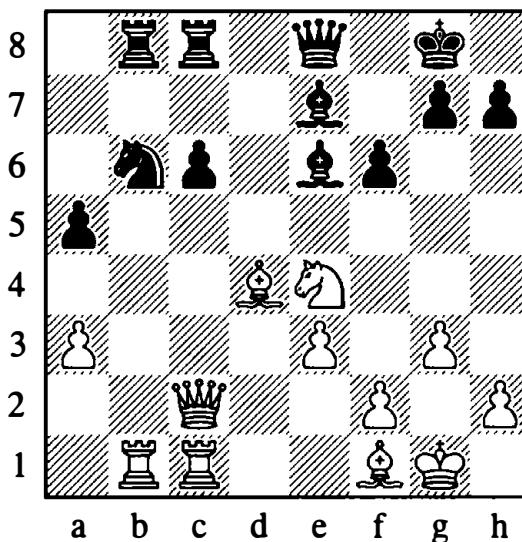
According to Ribli, 21. $\mathbb{Q}c5$ $\mathbb{Q}xc5$ 22. $\mathbb{W}xc5$

would also have been sufficient for a small advantage, since the simplifications provoked by 22... $\mathbb{Q}a4$ 23. $\mathbb{W}c2$ $\mathbb{Q}xb2$ 24. $\mathbb{E}xb2$ $\mathbb{E}xb2$ 25. $\mathbb{W}xb2\pm$ do not solve Black's strategic problems.

21... $\mathbb{W}e8$

Black could have prevented d3-d4 with 21...c5, but after 22. $\mathbb{Q}fd2\pm$ followed by $\mathbb{Q}d2-c4$, the weakness of the a5-pawn would practically force Black to play ... $\mathbb{Q}b6xc4$, when d3xc4 would leave the d5-square in White's hands.

22.d4 exd4 23. $\mathbb{Q}xd4$ $\mathbb{Q}xd4$ 24. $\mathbb{Q}xd4\pm$

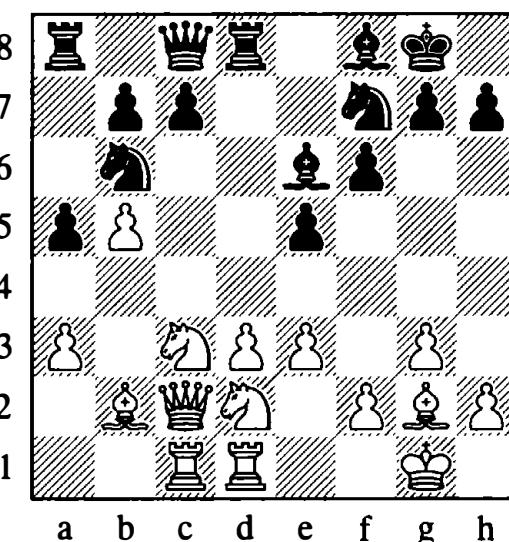


White is very active and Black's structure is weak, Pelletier – M. Gurevich, Cap d'Agde 2002.

In a more recent game, Tiviakov avoided making any pawn moves and continued manoeuvring with his knight:

16... $\mathbb{Q}h6$ 17. $\mathbb{E}fd1$ $\mathbb{Q}f7$ 18. $\mathbb{E}bc1$ $\mathbb{Q}f8$

This position was reached in Van Wely – Tiviakov, Netherlands (ch) 2006.



19.♕c4!N

Having placed all his pieces on optimal squares, White is ready for direct piece contact. Black's queenside is under pressure and accepting the sacrifice allows White a strong initiative:

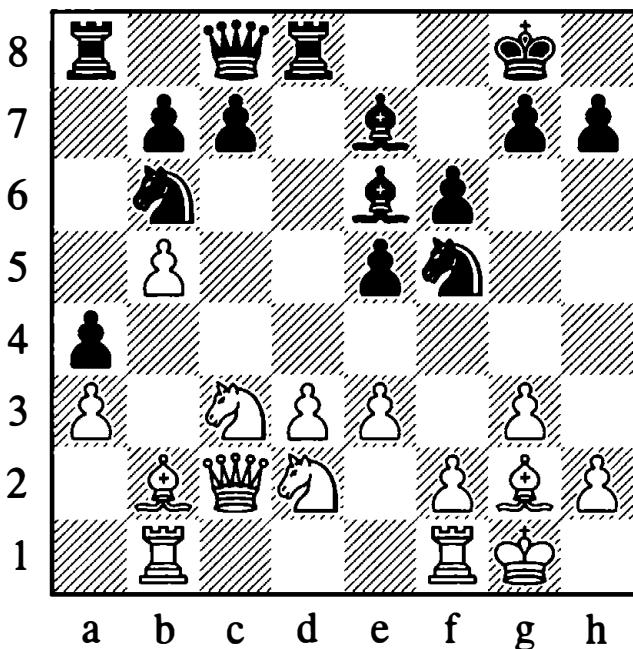
19...♝xc4 20.dxc4 ♜xd1† 21.♜xd1 ♕xc4

22.♗d5 ♜xb5

22...♜xd5 23.♜xd5± leaves Black desperately weak on the light squares.

23.♗xc7±

White threatens either ♔e4, unpinning his own knight and making the threats from the fork real, or ♔d5, pinning the f7-knight. Black is poorly coordinated and has many weaknesses on the light squares.



17.♖fd1

Quite a subtle move. Black's predictable rook lift to a5 will leave his back rank vulnerable, which justifies the idea of trading a pair of rooks along the d-file.

17...♜a5 18.♗c4! ♜xc4 19.dxc4 ♕xc4

20.♜xd8† ♜xd8 21.♗xa4

The recent exchanges have left Black poorly coordinated, which offers White a dangerous initiative.

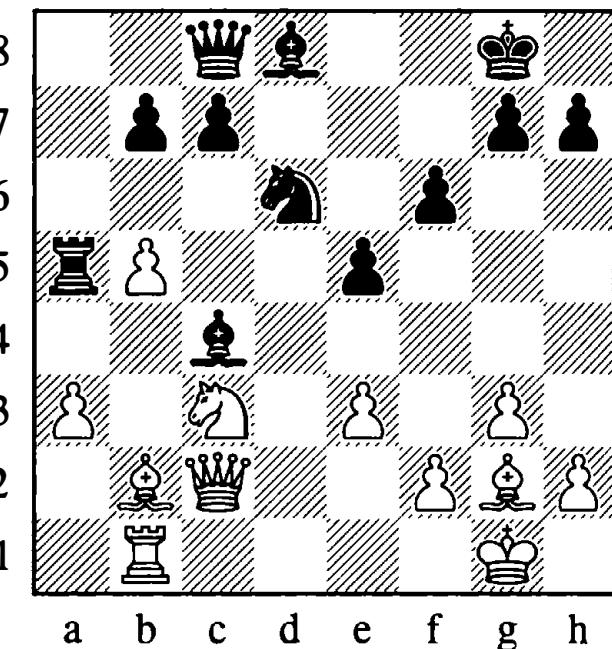
21...♗d6

21...♜xb5?? would lose to 22.♗b6 ♜b8

23.♗b3† ♔h8 24.♗b4, attacking the rook and threatening mate on f8.

22.♗c3

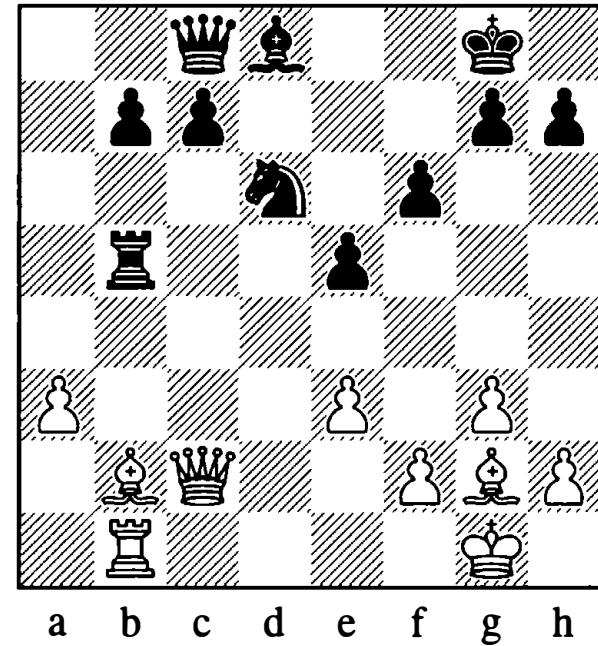
White threatens a3-a4 followed by ♔a3, which forces Black to eliminate the b5-pawn regardless of the risk.



22...♜xb5

22...♜xb5? would lose material to 23.♗xb5 ♜xb5 24.♗b3† ♔h8 25.♔c3. But now the absence of the light-squared bishop will make itself felt.

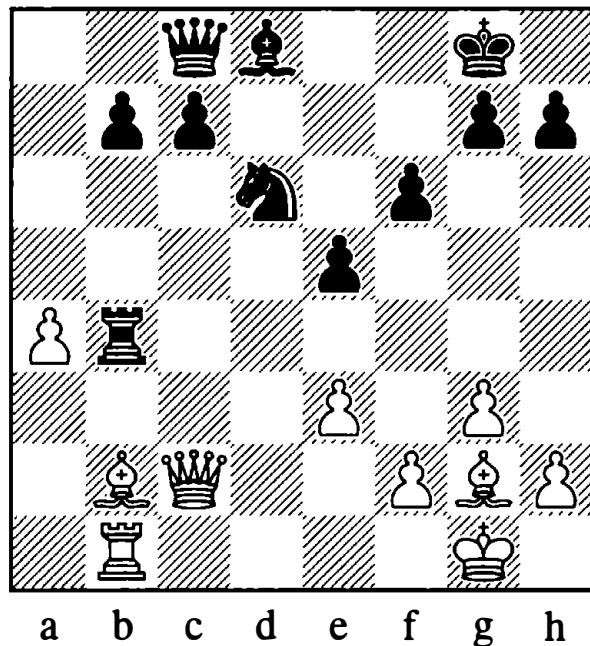
23.♗xb5 ♜xb5



24.♔a4!N

This move, aiming to take advantage of the exposed position of the rook, was suggested by Ribli as an alternative to 24.♗d1, which was played in Wedberg – Tiviakov, Haninge 1992. White eventually won this game, but Black's position looks defensible.

24...♝b4



25.♝c1!!

A far from obvious move. White gets out of the pin and puts pressure on the c-file, for reasons that will become clear a few moves later. The immediate threat is 26.♔a3 ♘b6 27.a5 ♘a6 28.♗b3† ♔h8 29.♕xd6 ♘xd6 30.♕xb7, when the a-pawn, combined with the vulnerability of the black king, would decide the battle.

Ribli's analysis ends with 25.♝d1 when White's position remains more pleasant, but Black can hope to hold.

25...♛f5

Black strives for simplifications. With queens on the board, his situation would be extremely dangerous.

25...♔h8 Black removes the king from the vulnerable diagonal, but makes centralization more difficult in the endgame. This can be met by another forcing manoeuvre. 26.♛c5

♝b6 This is forced, in order to parry ♘xd6 with mating threats. 27.♕xb6 cxb6 28.♝xc8 ♘xc8 29.♕xb7 ♘d6 30.♕c6± White has an active pair of bishops and the more flexible structure.

25...♛d7

This leads to a similar position as in the main line, except with queens on the board.

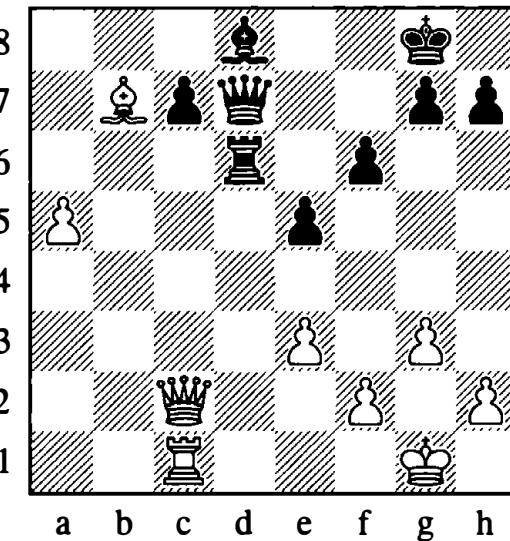
26.♔a3 ♘b6

26...♝xa4? loses because of the weakness of the back rank. 27.♕xd6 cxd6 28.♔d5† ♔h8 29.♛c8, winning the bishop, or 28...♚f8 29.♛xh7 with a decisive attack.

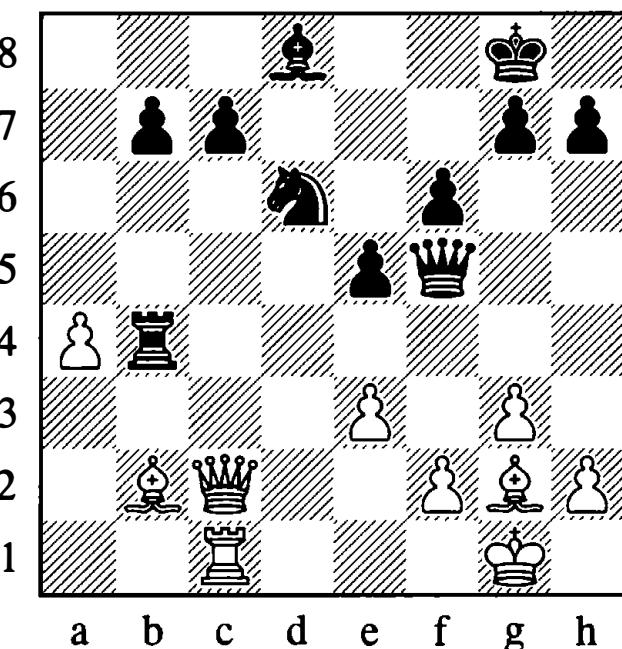
27.a5 ♘a6 28.♔xd6 ♘xd6

28...cxd6? loses in a familiar way after 29.♔d5† ♔h8 30.♛c8.

29.♕xb7



The a-pawn is impossible to stop.

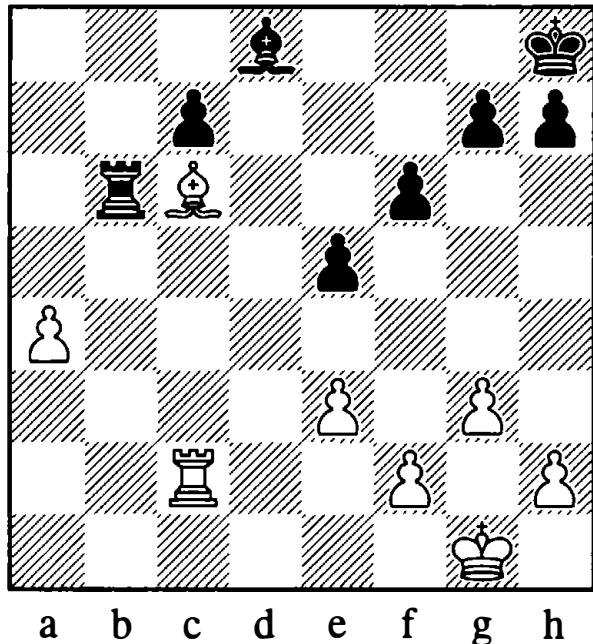


26.♕d5† ♔h8

The king has to move to the corner, since 26...♔f8? allows a deadly pin after 27.♗xf5 ♗xf5 28.♕a3.

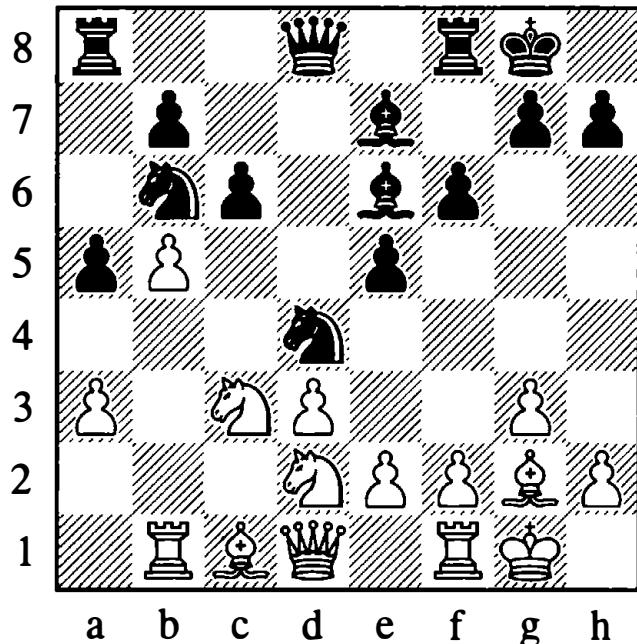
27.♕a3 ♘xc2 28.♗xc2 ♘b6

28...♗b1† would gift White a tempo, because after 29.♗g2 the threat of ♕xd6 forces the rook to retreat to b6 anyway. Curiously, the knight has no favourable escape squares, because the d8-bishop would be trapped. For instance, 29...♘f5? 30.♕e6 g6 31.♕xf5 gxf5 32.♗d2+–.

29.♕xd6 ♘xd6 30.♕xb7 ♘b6 31.♕c6†

The weakness of the light squares on Black's kingside and the power of the passed a-pawn offer White good winning chances, despite the opposite-coloured bishops. The kingside position is practically identical to that arising in the main line of variation B, while on the queenside White is in a more favourable situation.

(1.c4 e5 2.g3 ♘f6 3.♗g2 d5 4.cxd5 ♘xd5 5.♘c3 ♘b6 6.♘f3 ♘c6 7.0–0 ♕e7 8.a3 0–0 9.b4 ♕e6 10.♗b1 f6 11.d3 a5 12.b5 ♘d4 13.♘d2)

B) 13...c6

This method of neutralizing the g2-bishop works better in lines where the rook is on a1 and the bishop is on b2. In the current position, the rook's pressure along the b-file is quite effective.

14.bxc6

This is the correct reaction, forcing Black's centralized knight to retreat before it provokes any damage.

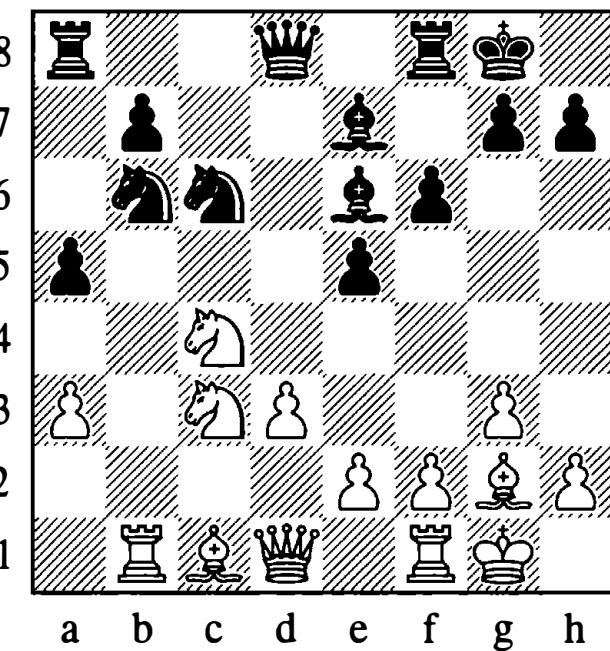
In two games (against Varga in 1998 and Smerdon in 2004) I played the inferior 14.e3?! ♘xb5 15.♘xb5 cxb5 16.♗xb5 ♘d5, which leaves White slightly underdeveloped and with problems maintaining stability on the queenside. Curiously, Ovidiu Foisor had shown me his game against Cebalo in between my two games (see below), but during my second game I did not realize that this was the same variation! This is one of the cases I referred to in the introduction, regarding the difficulties I used to have accurately remembering the details of opening theory.

14...♘xc6

14...bxc6 loses a pawn to 15.e3±.

15.♘c4!

White forces the exchange of the b6-knight, which is defending the b-file and d5-square.



15...Qxc4

Black cannot maintain the tension for long with:

15...Ra6 16.Qe3 Qxc4 17.dxc4 Qxa3 18.Qxb7
Wc8

Black has no favourable way of winning the c4-pawn: 18...Qxc4? loses to 19.Wa4.

The preliminary exchange of queens with 18...Wxd1 19.Qxd1 leaves White with dangerous pressure along the seventh rank after 19...Qxc4 20.Qdd7±.

19.Qb3±

16...Wxd1?! 17.Qxd1 Rab8 (after the queen exchange, 17...Qxc4? 18.Qxb7 would leave the e7-bishop hanging) 18.Qd5 Qf7 19.Qxe7
Qxe7 20.c5± Black's queenside is desperately weak, O. Foisor – Cebalo, Martigny 2001.

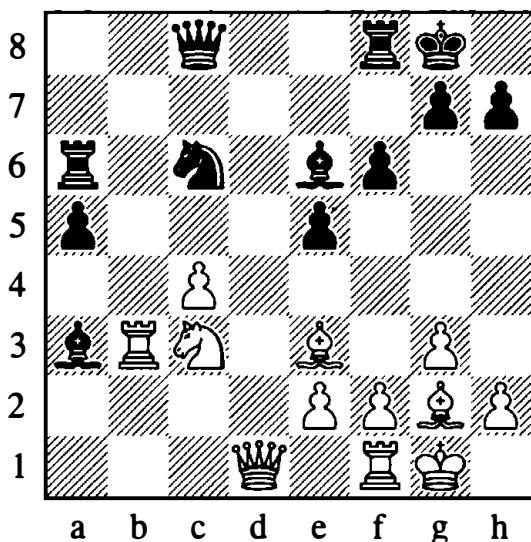
17.Qxb7

The position is not easy to evaluate using general principles. Black seems to be better developed, but his position contains weaknesses and his pieces are hanging. Detailed analysis proves that White's chances are preferable.

17...Qd4

Black is first to install a knight in the centre, but this is a temporary achievement, as we shall see.

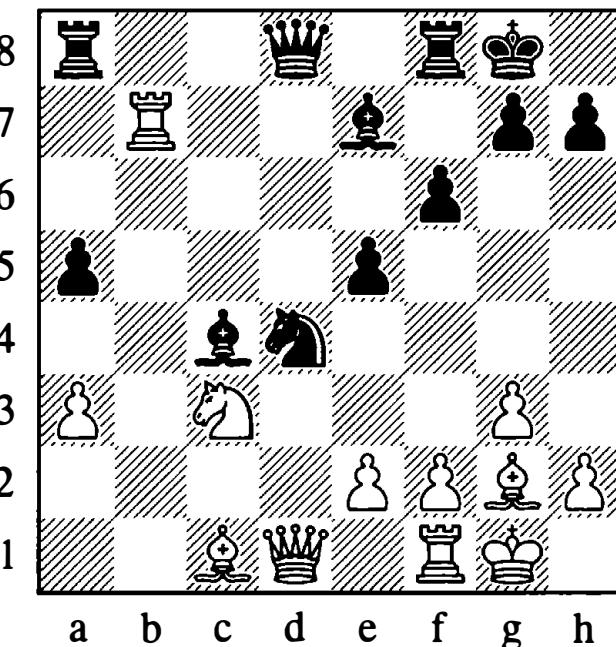
17...Rc8 would allow 18.Qd5 with a strong initiative. 18...Rf7 19.Qb6 Ra6 20.Qxe7 Qxe7 (20...Rxe7? loses to the intermediate check 21.Qd5† followed by Qxc8) 21.Qxc8 Wxc8 22.Qd2± White has an active pair of bishops and the enemy king's position is slightly unsafe. In addition, Black's a-pawn is vulnerable.



White wins an important tempo to defend his pawn. Next, he will install the knight on d5, with a dominant position.

16.dxc4 Qxc4

This is Cebalo's improvement over an older game of his, which continued with the timid:



18.e3!

An important move that prevents Black from consolidating. White would be happy to give up his undeveloped rook for Black's main defender of the light squares.

18...♜c8

This is the most rational answer. Black removes the rook from the vulnerable a8-square and reinforces the threat of ...♝c4xf1, which would now leave the c3-knight en prise.

After the greedy:

18...♝xf1 19.♝xf1

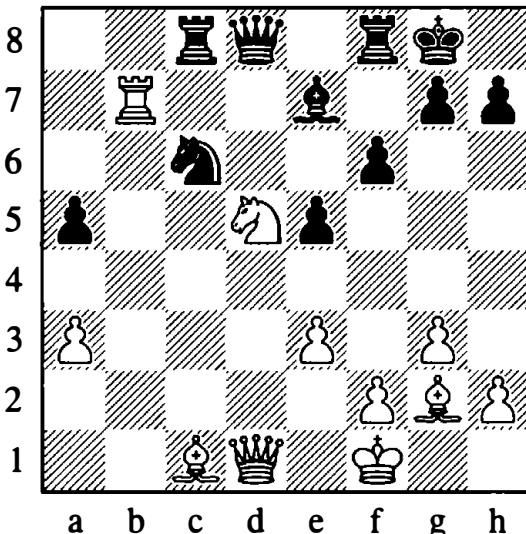
Black would be vulnerable.

19...♜c8

This is less effective than in the game variation, because the d5-square is available to White's knight.

19...♞f5? would lose material to 20.♝d7 ♜c8 21.♝xa8 ♜xa8 22.e4.

Also losing is 19...♝e6? 20.♝d7 ♜c8 21.♝xa8.

20.♝d5 ♜c6**21.♝d7!**

The rook is taboo because of ♜d5xf6†.

21...♜e8 22.♝c7±

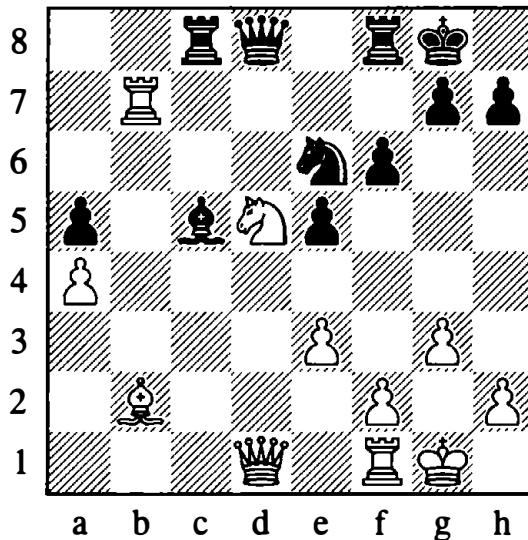
Black will have to return the exchange, leaving White with unchallenged domination of the light squares.

19.♝e1

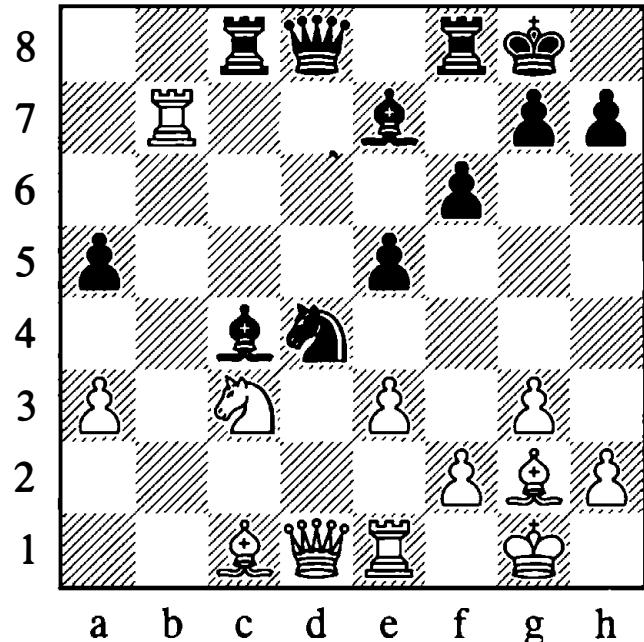
This move leads almost by force to an ending with rooks and opposite-coloured bishops, in which Black is doomed to passive defence.

Alternatively, White could try to get an ending with a dominating knight against a bad bishop

with: 19.♝b2!N ♜e6 20.♝d5 ♜xd5 21.♝xd5 ♜c5 22.a4±



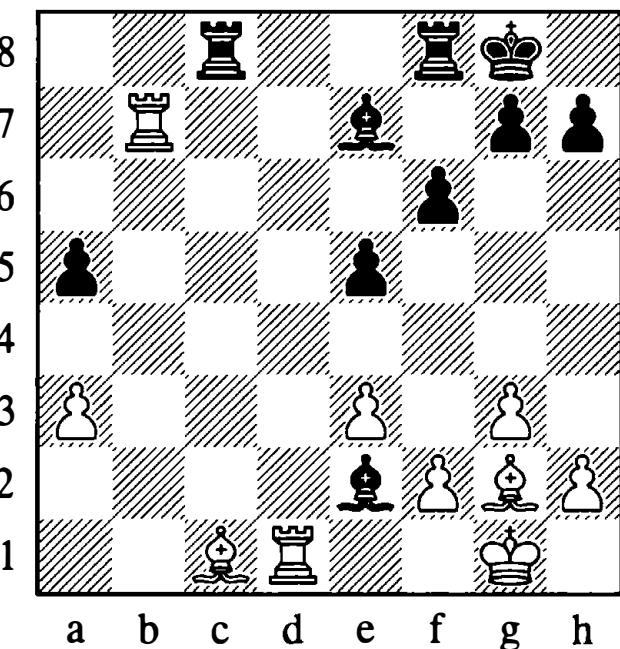
This looks like a rational way of avoiding the drawish tendencies of the opposite-coloured bishop ending mentioned above, but the consequences of 19...♝xf1 (instead of 19...♝e6) are less clear than one move earlier.

**19...♝e2†**

Black understandably provokes mass exchanges.

From a practical point of view, the position arising after 19...♝e6 20.♝a4± is difficult for Black to defend because of the hyperactivity of White's pieces (with the exception of the c1-bishop).

20.♝xe2 ♜xd1 21.♝xd1 ♜xe2



22. $\mathbb{Q}d5\#!$

It is important to drive the enemy king away from the centre.

22. $\mathbb{Q}e1$ would allow 22... $\mathbb{B}fe8$, keeping the bishop on a relatively favourable position, when 23. $\mathbb{Q}d5\#$ is inoffensive because of 23... $\mathbb{Q}f8!$ covering the f7-square.

22... $\mathbb{Q}h8$ 23. $\mathbb{Q}e1$

Later, White will be able to choose the best moment to exchange his c1-bishop for the one on e2. Meanwhile, Black's dark-squared bishop will be forced to a worse square, as placing it on the c-file would lose material to $\mathbb{B}xe2$.

23... $\mathbb{Q}d6$

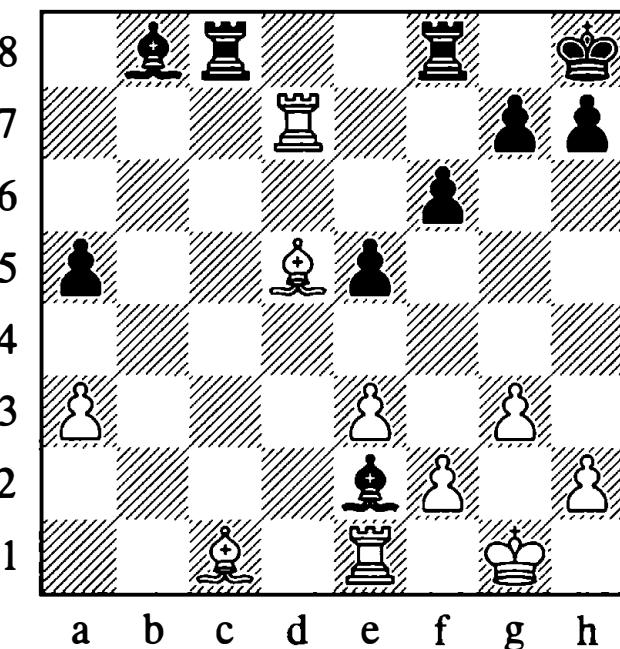
The bishop is not stable on this square, but the alternatives are no better.

23... $\mathbb{B}fe8?$ loses an exchange to 24. $\mathbb{Q}f7$.

23... $\mathbb{Q}d8?!$ 24. $\mathbb{B}xe2$ $\mathbb{B}xc1\#$ 25. $\mathbb{Q}g2\pm$ leaves the f8-rook and the bishop quite passive.

24. $\mathbb{B}d7$ $\mathbb{Q}b8$

Finally, the bishop escapes the harassment, but it is dreadfully passive.



25. $\mathbb{Q}b7!$

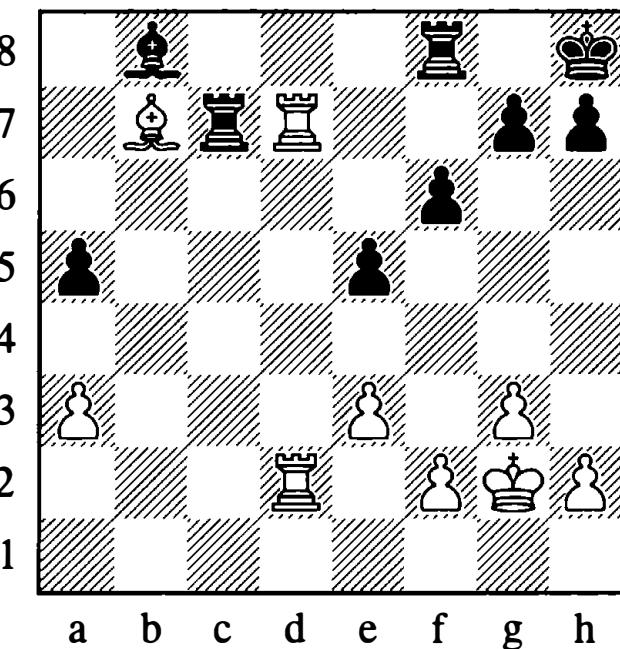
An important intermediate move, clearing the d-file with gain of time.

After a hurried transposition to the desired ending with 25. $\mathbb{B}xe2$ $\mathbb{B}xc1\#$ 26. $\mathbb{Q}g2$, White would lose control of the seventh rank after 26... $\mathbb{B}c7$, which would increase Black's chances of holding a draw.

25. $\mathbb{Q}d2$ looks tempting, but after 25... $\mathbb{Q}g4$ 26. $\mathbb{B}b7$ $\mathbb{Q}d6$ Black avoids losing the a5-pawn. The position is still interesting and White may retain the better chances, but play would be far less one-sided than the game continuation.

25... $\mathbb{B}c5$ 26. $\mathbb{B}xe2$ $\mathbb{B}xc1\#$ 27. $\mathbb{Q}g2$ $\mathbb{B}c7$ 28. $\mathbb{B}ed2!$

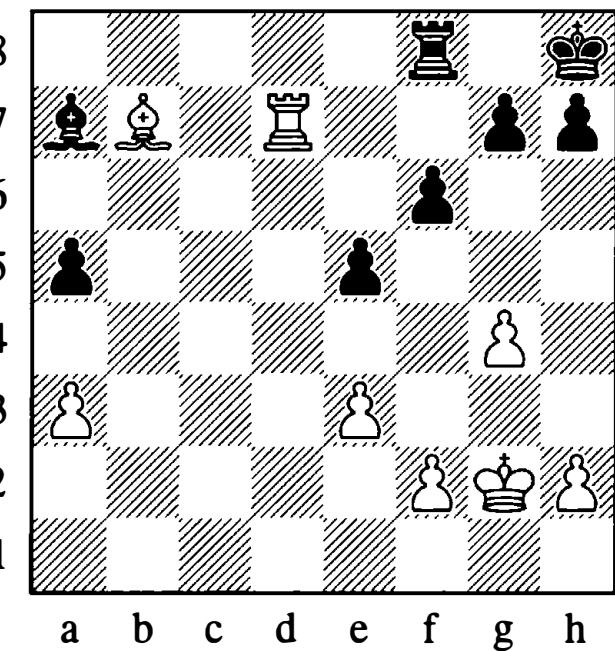
This is the benefit of the 25th move! White keeps control of the seventh rank.



28...♝xd7

This exchange may look premature, but Black had no good way to maintain the tension.

After 28...f5 29.♝d8 ♜cf7 30.♝2d7± the threats of 31.♝xb8 or 31.♝xf7 ♜xd8 32.♝xf5 would force Black to lose a tempo with 30...♝f6 anyway, leading to similar play as in the game.

29.♝xd7 ♜a7 30.g4±

Many of my friends were watching this game on-line. When this position was reached, they disconnected, convinced that a draw would soon be agreed. During the game I had the feeling that my experienced opponent was also slightly surprised that I was playing on “in earnest”, although during the post-mortem he agreed that Black’s position is not easy to defend.

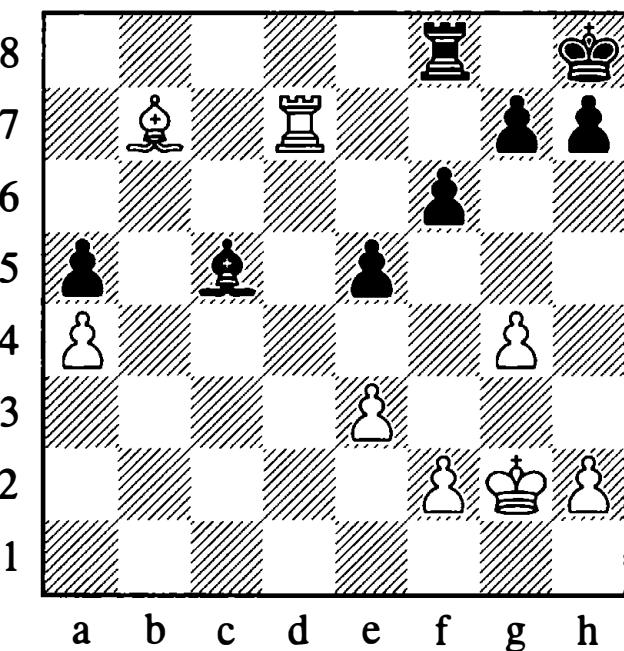
The well known drawish tendency of opposite-coloured bishop endings is not relevant when an additional pair of rooks is on the board. In such positions, overall piece activity and the safety of the kings become the telling factors. In our example, all White’s pieces are more active than Black’s, while the black king is in danger of being ensnared in a mating net. An important part is played by the weakness of the d5-square, which, in a general sense, is a consequence of Black’s very first move!

It is difficult to claim a forced win for White,

but there is absolutely no guarantee that Black will be able to defend this ending. In practice, I would expect to win at least three or four games out of ten, which would not be a bad result at all.

White’s plan in the next phase of the game is to increase his space advantage with ♔e4 followed by h4-h5, which would leave Black with chronic back rank weaknesses. Later, the white king would march either to b5, to prepare an exchange sacrifice on a5, or to f5, aiming for attacking chances with ♔f7 and h5-h6.

I will examine this game until the moment White gains a decisive advantage. My goal is to dispel any lingering “superstition” the reader may have about supposedly drawish opposite-coloured bishop endings. For a better understanding of this type of position, refer to the chapter dedicated to Karpov’s handling of these endings, from my book *Learn from the Legends – Chess Champions at their Best*. Such endings with a minimal but stable advantage are quite typical for the English Opening.

30...♜c5 31.a4**31...g6**

Black decides to place his kingside pawns on light squares, in order to reduce the enemy bishop’s activity.

During the game, I was more concerned about 31...h5, although after 32.gxh5 ♘h7 33.♗d5 ♘h6 34.♗f7± the black king's position would still not be enviable.

32.h4 ♘b4 33.♗d5 f5 34.g5!

This pawn is an important element of the mating net. The black rook cannot leave the back rank because of ♜d8† followed by ♜g8 mate.

34...e4

During the next phase I played neutral moves to get out of time trouble. The next relevant position, which differs from the current one only in the placement of the black bishop on c3 instead of b4, arose ten moves later...

Maintaining the tension with 44...♝e1 would lose the g6-pawn and the game after 45.hxg6 hxg6 46.♗f7 ♘g7 47.♗e8† ♘g8 48.♗xg6. After the base of Black's structure has been destroyed, the remaining pawns are doomed.

Keeping the bishop on the long diagonal may seem a better try, but it is not effective, either. 44...♝b2 45.hxg6 (during the game I only considered 45.♗f7 when 45...♞g7 allows 46.♗xg6†!) 45...hxg6 46.♗f7 ♘h7 47.♗e8† ♘g7 Apparently, Black has defended, but 48.♗e7 followed by ♜e6 wins the g6-pawn anyway.

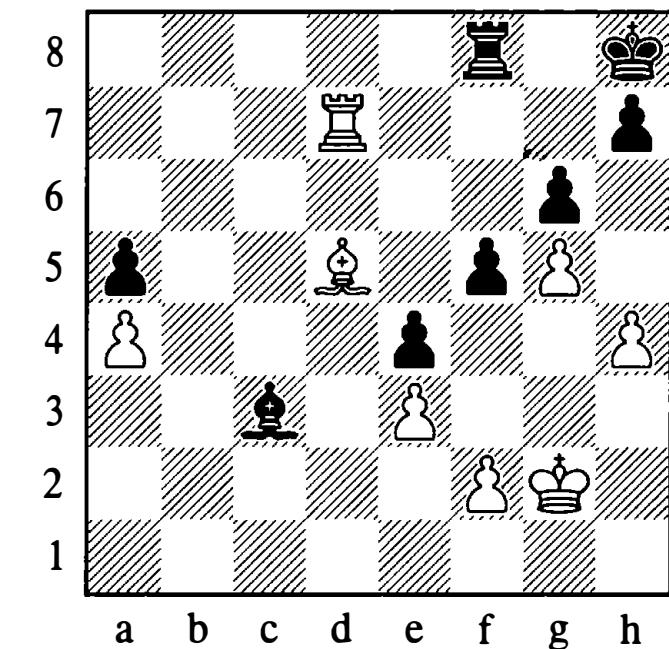
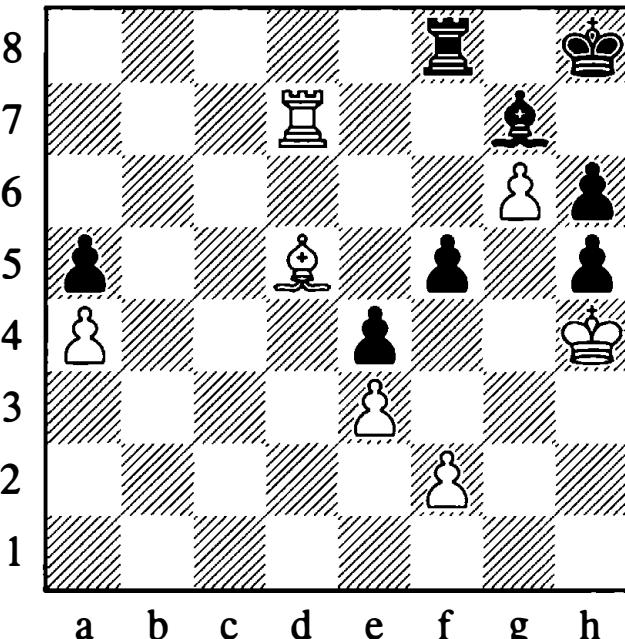
45.♔h3

The king intends to march to h6.

45...h6

Black has no time for pawn-grabbing: 45...♝e1 46.♔h4 ♜xf2† 47.♔xh5 ♜xe3 48.g6! (avoiding the trap 48.♔h6? ♜f6†!) 48...hxg6† 49.♔xg6 The white king has taken over the g-pawn's attacking functions and Black cannot avoid mate.

46.g6 ♜g7 47.♔h4+–



Black has a compact structure and a considerable space advantage in the centre, but the next move will reveal the Achilles' heel of his position – the g6-pawn.

44.h5!±

The main point of this attack is that if White gets a pawn to g6, he will create mating threats such as ♜h7 or g6-g7.

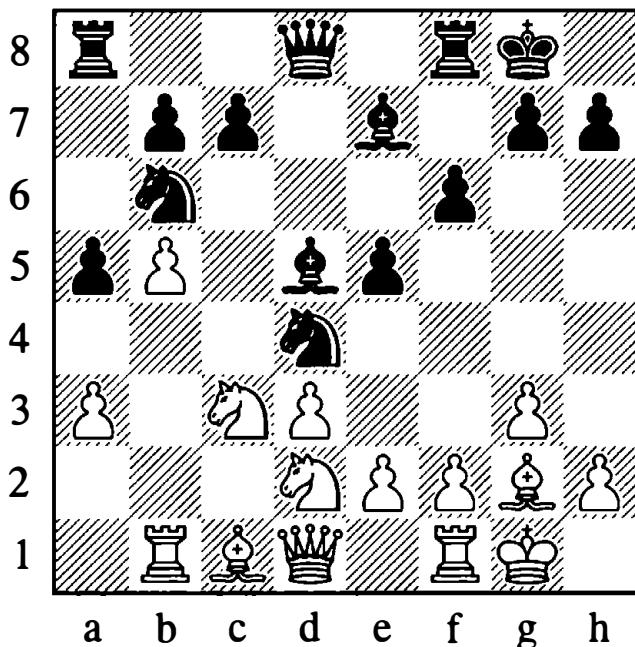
44...gxh5

Black is forced to make this structural concession.

Black's position is horribly passive. In Marin – Cebalo, Reggio Emilia 2008, he could not avoid losing all his pawns and, despite some hesitation from White, the game.

(1.c4 e5 2.g3 ♘f6 3.♗g2 d5 4.cxd5 ♘xd5 5.♘c3 ♘b6 6.♘f3 ♘c6 7.0–0 ♔e7 8.a3 0–0 9.b4 ♔e6 10.♗b1 f6 11.d3 a5 12.b5 ♘d4 13.♘d2)

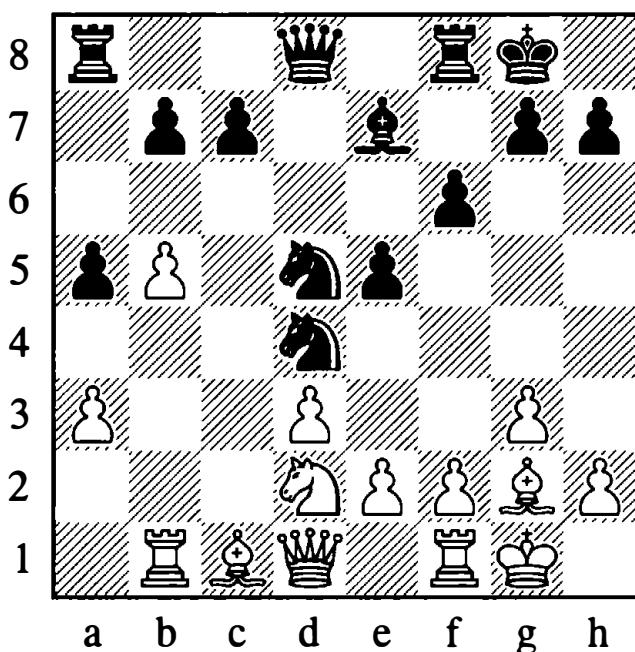
C) 13...♗d5



This move has been quite fashionable lately. Black exchanges his light-squared bishop for a knight, relying on the activity of his knights.

I have played several games against it, using some of Foisor's ideas, and my conclusion is that the strategic concession outweighs Black's temporary initiative.

14.♘xd5 ♘xd5



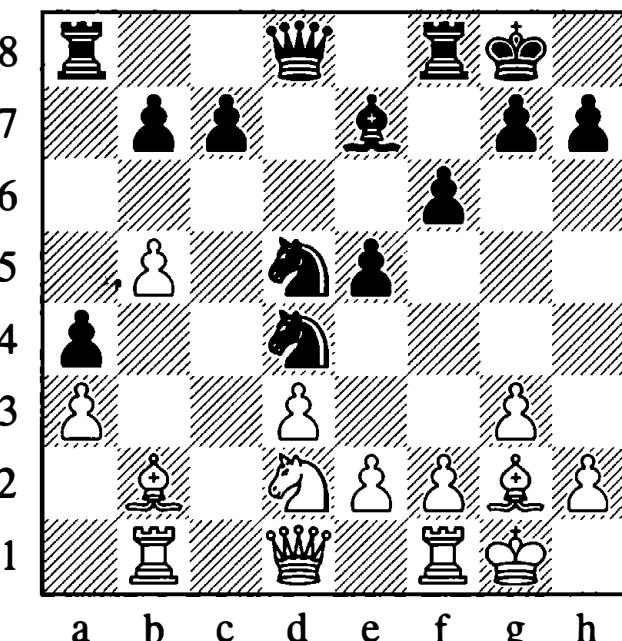
15.♔b2!

White defends the c3-square and threatens e2-e3 when, in view of a possible ♕b3 and/or e3-e4, the black knight would lack a favourable retreat.

Fashion is a strange thing. This natural developing move was underestimated for a long time and there has been a lot of theoretical and practical discussion about the insufficiently prepared operation 15.♘e4 f5 16.e3.

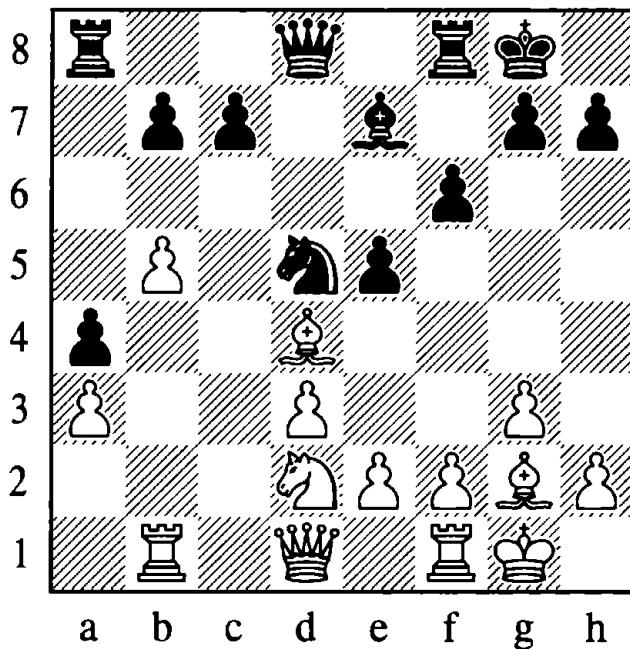
15...a4

Black takes the b3-square under control and threatens ...♘xb5. Instead 15...♘xb5? blunders a knight after 16.♕b3 c6 17.e4.



White has two main possibilities, C1) 16.♗xd4 and C2) 16.♘a1!. The latter is our repertoire choice, but only practical testing of the former allowed me to come to this conclusion. I find it useful to follow the development of knowledge in this variation by examining the basic ideas of line C1 and then their refinement in line C2.

(1.c4 e5 2.g3 ♘f6 3.♗g2 d5 4.cxd5 ♘xd5 5.♘c3 ♘b6 6.♘f3 ♘c6 7.0–0 ♔e7 8.a3 0–0 9.b4 ♔e6 10.♗b1 f6 11.d3 a5 12.b5 ♘d4 13.♘d2 ♘d5 14.♘xd5 ♘xd5 15.♔b2 a4)

C1) 16.♕xd4

White removes the threat of ...♞xb5 and gains some freedom for his queen.

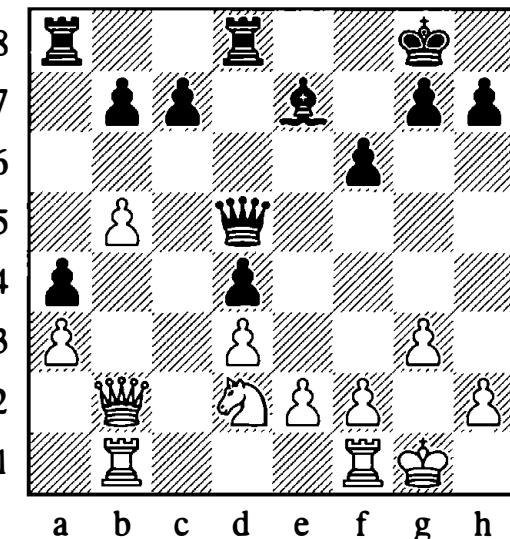
16...exd4

It may seem that the weakness of the c3-square offers Black excellent play. In fact, matters are far from one-sided because, in order to occupy that square, Black has to open the enemy bishop's diagonal, which could have devastating effects.

17.♗c2!

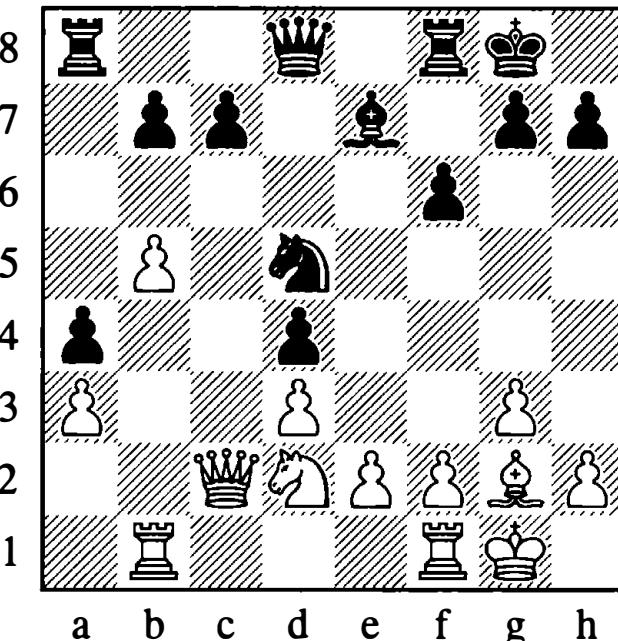
White completes his development and threatens to win a pawn with ♗c2-c4, without fearing the knight's intrusion.

The over-cautious 17.♕xd5† worked out well in a game by an outstanding English specialist, but only as a consequence of Black's inaccurate play. 17...♗xd5 18.♗c1 ♘fd8 19.♗b2



19...♗e6?! 20.♗fc1 ♘d7 21.♘f3! White defends his e2-pawn and attacks the d4-pawn at the same time. 21...♗d5 22.♗c4† Black has problems defending his a4- and d4-pawns, Suba – Solozhenkin, Avoine 1996.

19...♗e6?! needlessly lost Black two tempos. The immediate 19...♘d7 would have offered him adequate play.



Black can choose between C11) 17...♘c3?! and C12) 17...♗h8!

(1.c4 e5 2.g3 ♘f6 3.♗g2 d5 4.cxd5 ♘xd5 5.♘c3 ♘b6 6.♗f3 ♘c6 7.0–0 ♘e7 8.a3 0–0 9.b4 ♘e6 10.♗b1 f6 11.d3 a5 12.b5 ♘d4 13.♘d2 ♘d5 14.♘xd5 ♘xd5 15.♘b2 a4 16.♘xd4 exd4 17.♗c2!)

C11) 17...♘c3?!

This hurried occupation of the weak c3-square allows White to reveal his main idea.

18.♘xb7!

This move, with its implied exchange sacrifice, establishes firm control of the light squares.

18...♗b8

The text move leaves the a4-pawn vulnerable, but after 18... $\mathbb{R}a7$ 19. $\mathbb{B}c6$ $\mathbb{Q}xb1$ 20. $\mathbb{B}xb1\pm$ the a7-rook would remain completely out of play. Black is a pawn down and the a7-rook's only hope is to give itself up for the c6-bishop.

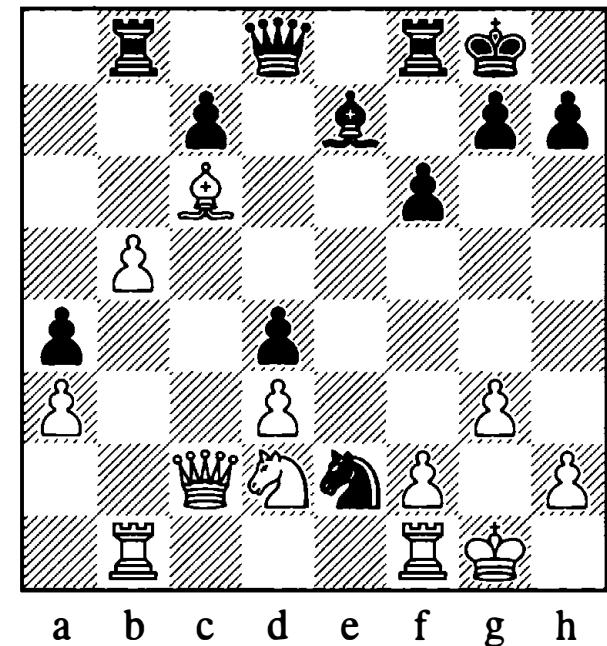
19. $\mathbb{B}c6!$

It is important to keep the b5-pawn well defended, in order to cut Black's army in two. This was my prepared novelty compared to Chernin – Van den Doel, Corinth 2000, which continued 19. $\mathbb{F}f3$ $\mathbb{Q}xa3$ 20. $\mathbb{B}a1$ $\mathbb{B}b4$ 21. $\mathbb{Q}b1$ and a draw was agreed. White seems to be slightly better after the inevitable exchange of knights and queenside pawns, but whether to play on in such positions is often decided by the player's mood.

19... $\mathbb{Q}xe2\ddagger$

19... $\mathbb{Q}xb1$ 20. $\mathbb{B}xb1\pm$ followed by $\mathbb{W}c2xa4$ would leave White with two pawns for the exchange. Moreover, the a-pawn would be practically unstoppable. One important aspect is that 20... $\mathbb{Q}xa3?$ loses the bishop to 21. $\mathbb{W}a2\ddagger$.

The move 17... $\mathbb{Q}h8$ in line C12 aims to eliminate the possibility of such indirect defences of White's queenside pawns.



20. $\mathbb{Q}g2$ $\mathbb{Q}c3$ 21. $\mathbb{B}a1!$

The check on a2 has been prevented, so the rook rushes to defend the important a3-pawn.

21... $\mathbb{Q}h8$

Black could prevent White's next move with:

21... $f5$

However, White can still exchange knights.

22. $\mathbb{Q}b1$ $\mathbb{Q}f6$

The b5-pawn is taboo because of $\mathbb{W}c4\ddagger$.

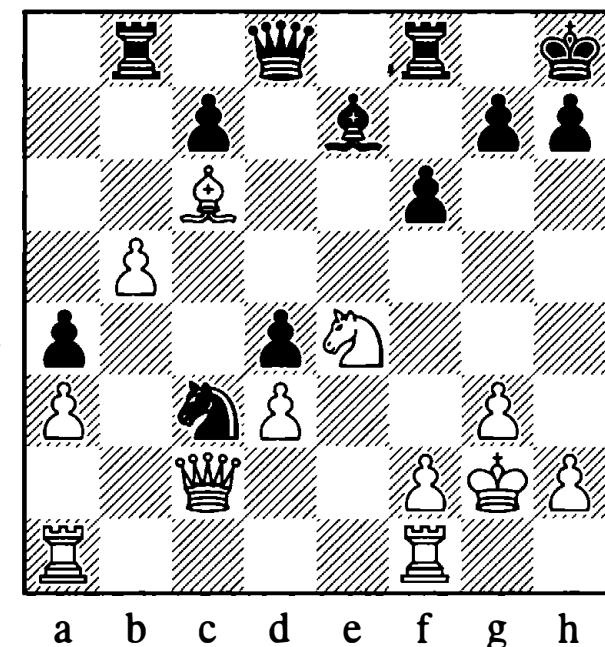
23. $\mathbb{Q}xc3$ $dxc3$ 24. $\mathbb{W}xa4$ $\mathbb{W}xd3$ 25. $\mathbb{B}fd1$ $\mathbb{W}e2$ 26. $\mathbb{B}a2!$

The rook is indirectly defended by the possible fork $\mathbb{Q}d5\ddagger$.

26... $\mathbb{W}h5$ 27. $\mathbb{W}c4\ddagger$ $\mathbb{Q}h8$ 28. $\mathbb{Q}f3\pm$

White will start advancing his a-pawn. Black will need to transfer his bishop to the g1-a7 diagonal, but this would lose the c3-pawn, making White's win merely a matter of time.

22. $\mathbb{Q}e4$



22... $\mathbb{Q}d5\text{?}$

After this move, Black loses almost without a fight.

He should at least have eliminated the b5-pawn with 22... $\mathbb{Q}xb5$, although after 23. $\mathbb{W}xa4$ $\mathbb{Q}c3$ 24. $\mathbb{W}c4$ $f5$ 25. $\mathbb{Q}xc3$ $dxc3$ 26. $a4\pm$ his situation would have remained critical.

23.♘xa4 f5 24.♗d2 ♗c3 25.♗c4

The seemingly active black knight does not cause White any trouble.

25...f4 26.a4 ♘f5

Black increases his pressure on the b5-pawn, hoping to prevent a4-a5.

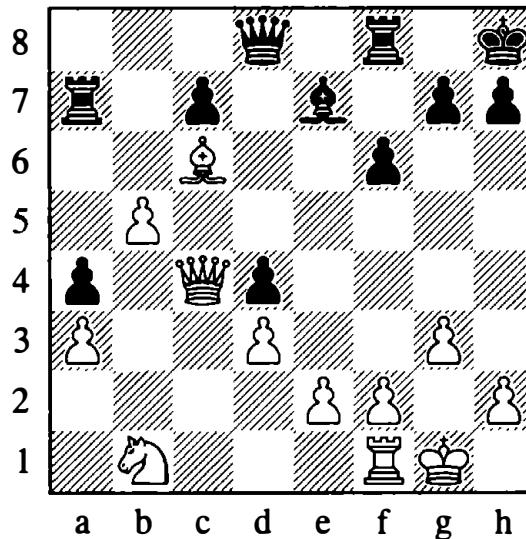
27.♗f3 ♘h5 28.♗f7

Black's rook lift has left his back rank vulnerable. In view of the threat of ♘f1-e1, Black resigned in Marin – Sulava, Cannes 2002.

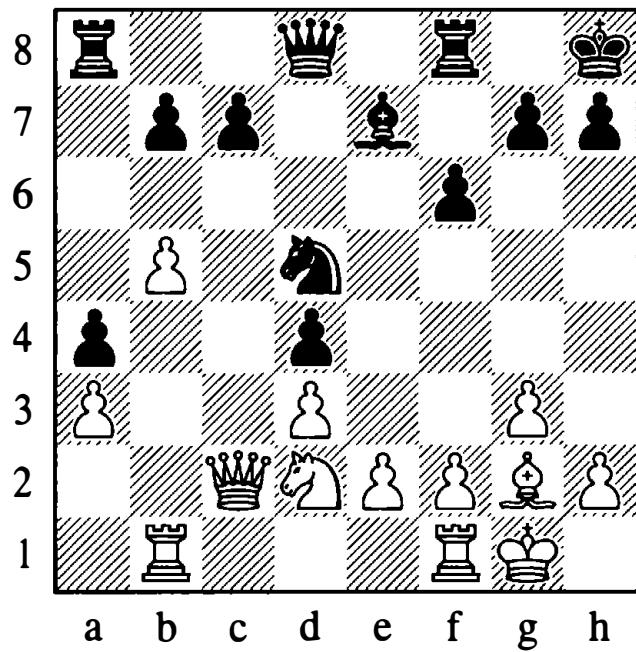
(1.c4 e5 2.g3 ♘f6 3.♗g2 d5 4.cxd5 ♘xd5 5.♗c3 ♘b6 6.♗f3 ♘c6 7.0–0 ♔e7 8.a3 0–0 9.b4 ♔e6 10.♗b1 f6 11.d3 a5 12.b5 ♘d4 13.♗d2 ♔d5 14.♗xd5 ♘xd5 15.♔b2 a4 16.♔xd4 exd4 17.♗c2!)

C12) 17...♔h8!

The usefulness of 17...♔h8 is revealed if White continues as planned: 18.♗c4 ♘c3 19.♔xb7 ♘a7 20.♔c6 ♘xb1 In order to save the a3-pawn, White has to play the passive 21.♗xb1.



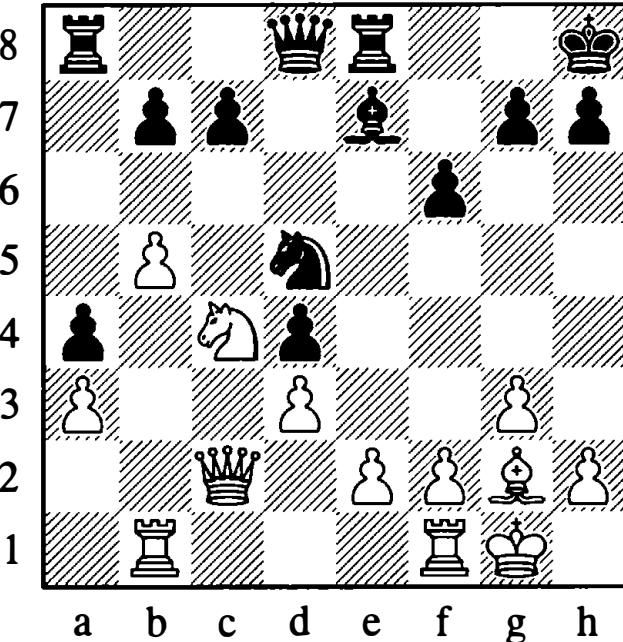
Frankly, I am not sure if Black is absolutely fine, because his queen's rook remains captive on a7, but compared to my game against Sulava, the position looks slightly disappointing for White.

18...♝e8

This is a strong prophylactic move, which delays defining the d5-knight's intentions.

18.♗c4

White's deviation from his previous plan is an important achievement for Black. When the c4-square is occupied by the knight, Black will be able to delay his knight hop to c3 until the most favourable moment.

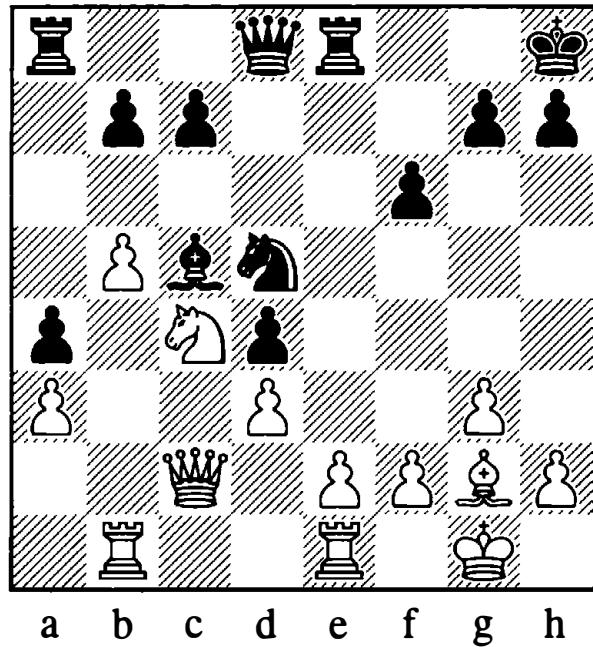
**19.♗fe1**

White has also tried 19.♗bc1 ♔f8 20.♗b2 ♘c3 21.♗fe1 ♘b8 22.e3 ♘d7 23.b6 c6 24.e4 ♔c5 25.f4±. This offered White some advantage in Ostenstad – L.E. Johannessen, Norway (ch) 2006, due to his superior structure and stability. However, the

question remains what to do against 19... $\mathbb{Q}c5$, as played by Lima in the main game.

19... $\mathbb{Q}c5$

Black has strengthened his control over the centre; White has to react immediately.



20. $\mathbb{Q}a5!$

The simplifications provoked by this move prevent Black from consolidating his queenside.

20... $\mathbb{Q}xa5$ 21. $\mathbb{W}xc5$ $\mathbb{Q}c3$ 22. $\mathbb{Q}xb7$ $\mathbb{B}e5$

23. $\mathbb{W}c4$ $\mathbb{Q}xb1$ 24. $\mathbb{B}xb1$ $\mathbb{W}xe2$ 25. $\mathbb{Q}e4$ $f5!$

This well-timed pawn sacrifice prevents White from stabilizing the position.

26. $\mathbb{Q}xf5$ $\mathbb{B}a8$ 27. $\mathbb{Q}e4$ $\mathbb{W}f6$ 28.f4

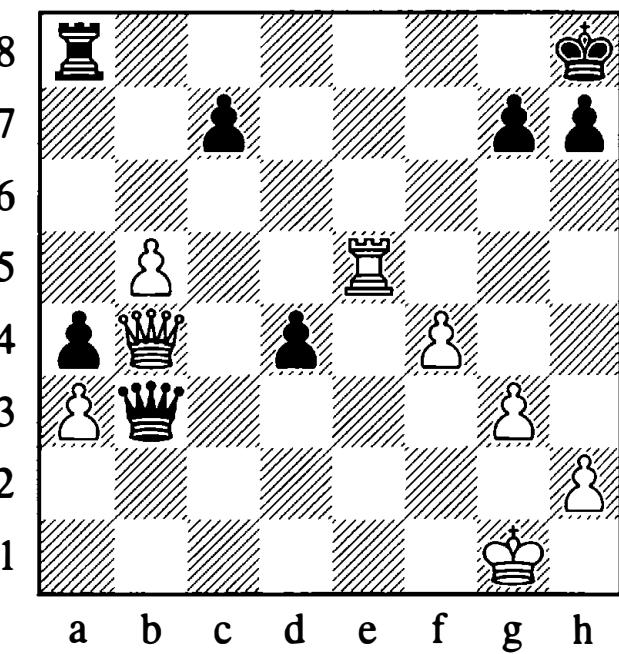
This forced move, weakening the second rank, makes the position double-edged.

28... $\mathbb{W}e7$ 29. $\mathbb{W}b4$ $\mathbb{B}xe4!$

The well-placed bishop was worth a rook. In addition, after the text move the white king becomes vulnerable.

Exchanging queens would have led to a difficult ending for Black, because of his ruined structure, while 29... $\mathbb{W}d8$ 30. $\mathbb{W}c5$ leaves White with pressure all over the board.

30.dxe4 $\mathbb{W}xe4$ 31. $\mathbb{B}e1$ $\mathbb{W}d5$ 32. $\mathbb{B}e5$ $\mathbb{W}b3$



This position was reached in Marin – Lima, Calvia (ol) 2004.

33. $\mathbb{W}xd4!N$

In the game I exchanged queens and held the draw. However, despite the open position of my king, White can play on with queens on the board, because Black cannot activate his rook.

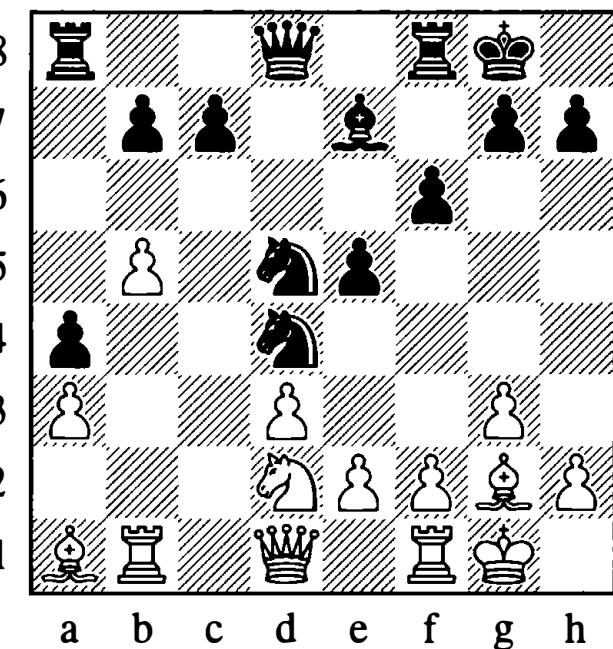
33... $\mathbb{W}xa3$ 34. $\mathbb{B}c5$ $\mathbb{W}b3$ 35. $\mathbb{B}xc7$ $\mathbb{B}g8$ 36.b6±

Objectively, Black may be entitled to hope for a draw. This would be the most probable result in the event of the passed pawns being exchanged.

Although White seems to retain the better chances in this line, he cannot remain in complete control of the position, which is slightly annoying. Therefore, the next line is a better practical choice.

(1.c4 e5 2.g3 $\mathbb{Q}f6$ 3. $\mathbb{Q}g2$ d5 4.cxd5 $\mathbb{Q}xd5$ 5. $\mathbb{Q}c3$ $\mathbb{Q}b6$ 6. $\mathbb{Q}f3$ $\mathbb{Q}c6$ 7.0–0 $\mathbb{Q}e7$ 8.a3 0–0 9.b4 $\mathbb{Q}e6$ 10. $\mathbb{B}b1$ f6 11.d3 a5 12.b5 $\mathbb{Q}d4$ 13. $\mathbb{Q}d2$ $\mathbb{Q}d5$ 14. $\mathbb{Q}xd5$ $\mathbb{Q}xd5$ 15. $\mathbb{Q}b2$ a4)

C2) 16. $\mathbb{Q}a1!$



This move, together with the whole plan connected with it, was suggested to me by Ovidiu Foisor several years ago. White defends the b5-pawn, threatening e2-e3. I kept it in reserve until my game against Lima convinced me that White's chances for a significant advantage in line C1 are rather limited.

16... $\mathbb{W}d7$

Black has to renew the threat of ... $\mathbb{Q}d4xb5$ to avoid losing stability in the centre. The queen will be exposed on this square, but Black had no reasonable alternative.

16... $\mathbb{Q}xa3?$ is well met by 17.e3 $\mathbb{Q}e6$ 18. $\mathbb{W}c2$ when Black's loose minor pieces allow White to regain the pawn with a huge advantage, as played in Wolochowicz – Rubio Doblas, corr. 2000.

Attacking the pawn with 16... $\mathbb{B}a5$ fails to 17.e3. 17... $\mathbb{Q}xb5$ loses the exchange to 18. $\mathbb{Q}c4\pm$.

16... $\mathbb{Q}h8$ is not effective either. 17.e3 $\mathbb{Q}e6$ 18. $\mathbb{Q}c4\pm$ White has an almost perfect position, because of his strong light-squared bishop.

17 $\mathbb{Q}xd4!$

Despite appearances, this is not a loss of time, because the black queen has worsened its position.

17... $\mathbb{exd}4$ 18. $\mathbb{W}c2$ $\mathbb{B}f7$

In some variations of the reversed Dragon this is a strong manoeuvre, but in the absence of Black's light-squared bishop it looks dangerous. With the queen on the exposed d7-square, 18... $\mathbb{Q}c3?$ does not work because of 19. $\mathbb{Q}xb7$ $\mathbb{B}a7$ 20. $\mathbb{Q}c6\pm$. This intermediate move deprives Black of the consolation of "winning" the exchange.

We should analyse the move introduced by Lima in the previous line:

18... $\mathbb{Q}h8$

In the current position it fails to solve Black's problems.

19. $\mathbb{W}c4$ $\mathbb{Q}c3$ 20. $\mathbb{Q}xb7$ $\mathbb{Q}xb1$ 21. $\mathbb{B}xb1!$

This time White does not need to capture with the knight.

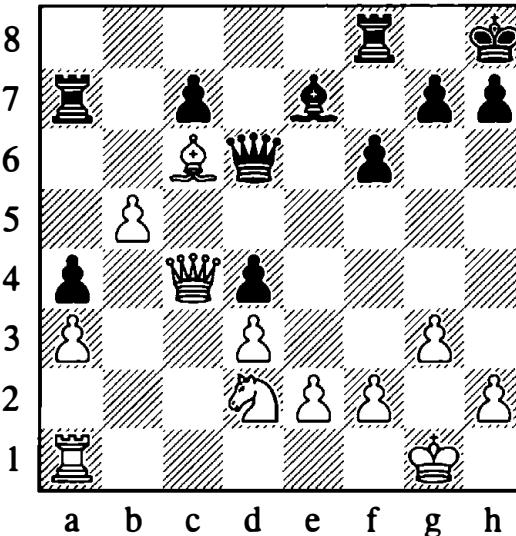
21... $\mathbb{B}a7$

21... $\mathbb{Q}xa3$ leaves Black hanging after 22. $\mathbb{Q}xa8$ $\mathbb{B}xa8$ 23. $\mathbb{B}a1$ $\mathbb{W}e7$ 24. $\mathbb{W}c6$ $\mathbb{B}g8$ 25. $\mathbb{Q}f3\pm$.

22. $\mathbb{Q}c6!$

The same intermediate move gives White the time to defend the a3-pawn.

22... $\mathbb{W}d6$ 23. $\mathbb{B}a1\pm$



White has a pawn for the exchange, with the better structure and the a7-rook is trapped.

19. $\mathbb{W}c4$ $c6$

This is strategic surrender, but it is not easy to suggest anything better.

19... $\mathbb{Q}b6$

White has easy queenside play after:

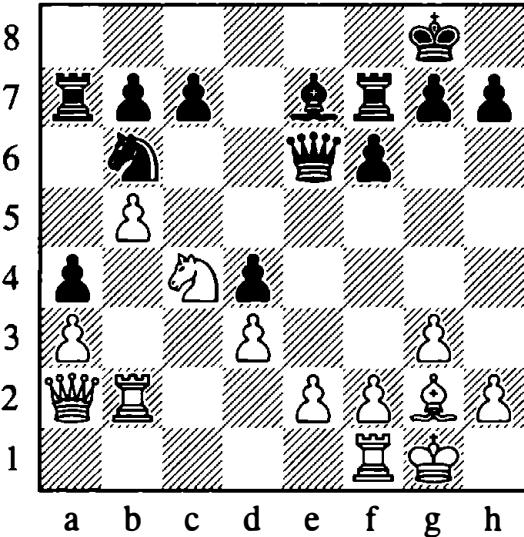
20. $\mathbb{W}a2 \mathbb{E}a7$ 21. $\mathbb{Q}c4$

The preliminary 21. $\mathbb{E}fc1!?$ deserves consideration.

21... $\mathbb{W}e6$

21... $\mathbb{Q}d5?$ loses material to 22. $\mathbb{Q}e5!$ when we can see the drawbacks of the rook lift to f7. 21... $\mathbb{Q}c8$ is too passive. 22. $\mathbb{E}fc1 \mathbb{Q}f8$ 23. $b6\pm$ White has a dream version of the usual queenside attack.

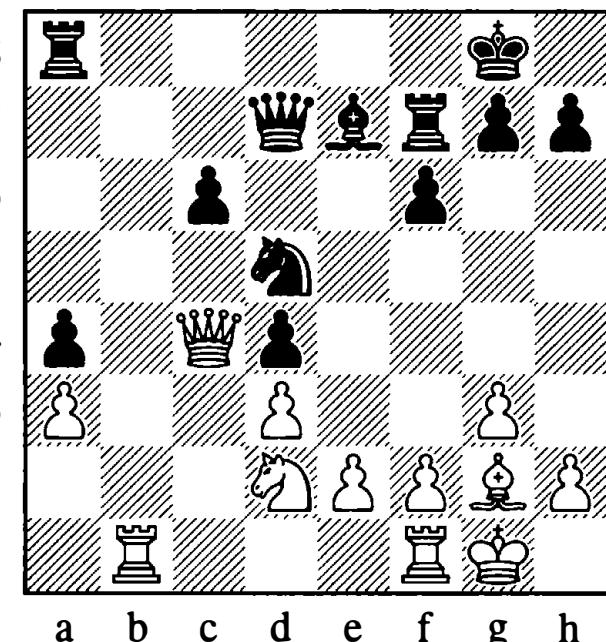
22. $\mathbb{E}b2\pm$



Black is poorly coordinated and has structural problems; the play is rather one-sided.

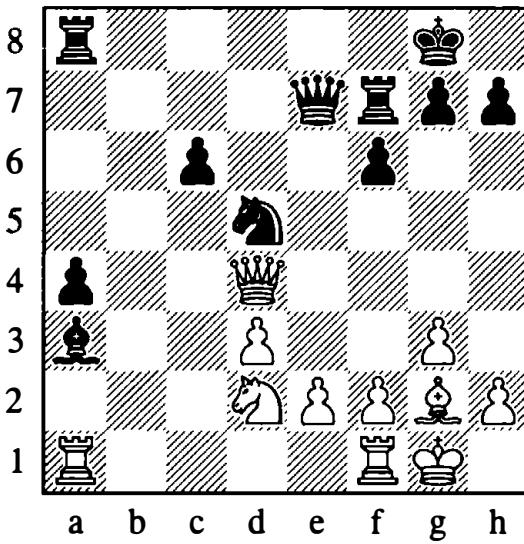
19... $\mathbb{Q}c3$ 20. $\mathbb{Q}xb7\pm$ followed by $\mathbb{Q}b7-c6$ is simply good for White.

20. $bxc6$ $bx $c6$$



21. $\mathbb{E}a1!?$

This quiet move is good enough, because it defends White's only weakness while leaving Black with his structural problems unsolved. I refrained from the more active 21. $\mathbb{W}xd4!N$ because of the variation 21... $\mathbb{Q}xa3$ 22. $\mathbb{E}a1 \mathbb{W}e7$:



Indeed, after 23. $\mathbb{Q}xd5$ $cxd5$ 24. $\mathbb{W}xd5$ $\mathbb{E}d8$ Black would be quite active and the a4-pawn is dangerous. What I missed was that if instead I played 23. $\mathbb{W}c4!$, threatening $\mathbb{W}c4xc6$, Black cannot hold his position.

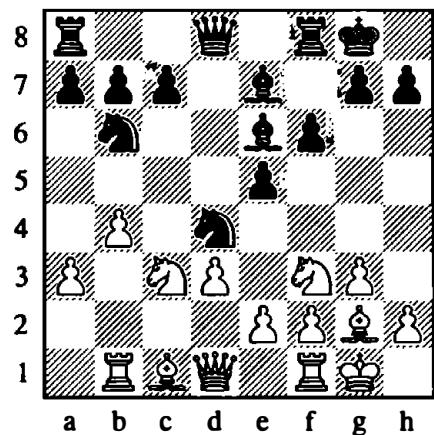
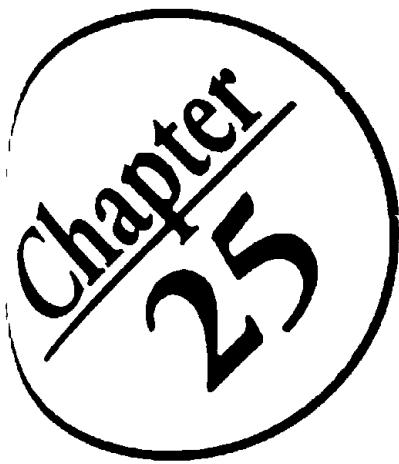
21... $f5$

Black defends his d4-pawn indirectly, in view of ... $\mathbb{Q}e7-f6$.

22. $\mathbb{E}fc1\pm$

Black has problems defending his weaknesses, Marin – Moldovan, Predeal 2007.

The conclusion is that 11...a5 causes Black strategic problems on the queenside and 13... $\mathbb{Q}d5$ only aggravates them.



Reversed Dragon

11... $\mathbb{Q}d4$

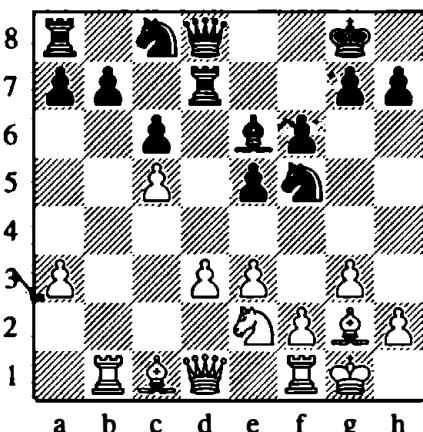
Variation Index

**1.c4 e5 2.g3 $\mathbb{Q}f6$ 3. $\mathbb{Q}g2$ d5 4.cxd5 $\mathbb{Q}xd5$ 5. $\mathbb{Q}c3$ $\mathbb{Q}b6$ 6. $\mathbb{Q}f3$ $\mathbb{Q}c6$
7.0–0 $\mathbb{Q}e7$ 8.a3 0–0 9.b4 $\mathbb{Q}e6$ 10. $\mathbb{E}b1$ f6 11.d3**

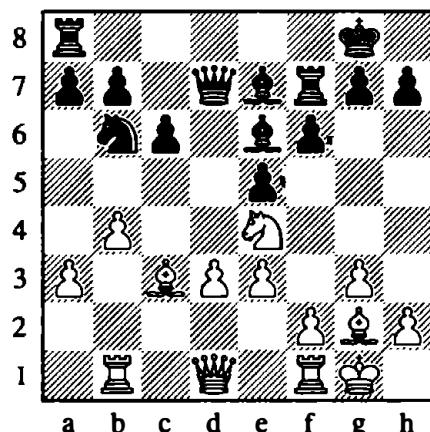
11... $\mathbb{Q}d4$ 12. $\mathbb{Q}d2$

A) 12...c6 13. $\mathbb{Q}de4$	p 328
A1) 13... $\mathbb{Q}f7$	p 329
A2) 13... $\mathbb{Q}d5$	p 330
A3) 13... $\mathbb{E}f7$	p 331
A4) 13... $\mathbb{W}d7$	p 334
B) 12... $\mathbb{Q}d5$ 13. $\mathbb{Q}b2$	p 335
B1) 13... $\mathbb{Q}xc3$	p 336
B2) 13...c6	p 338

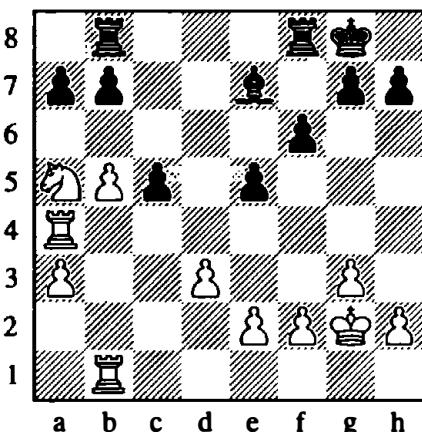
A3) note to 14... $\mathbb{Q}b5$



A3) after 16... $\mathbb{W}d7$



B21) after 24... $\mathbb{Q}g8$

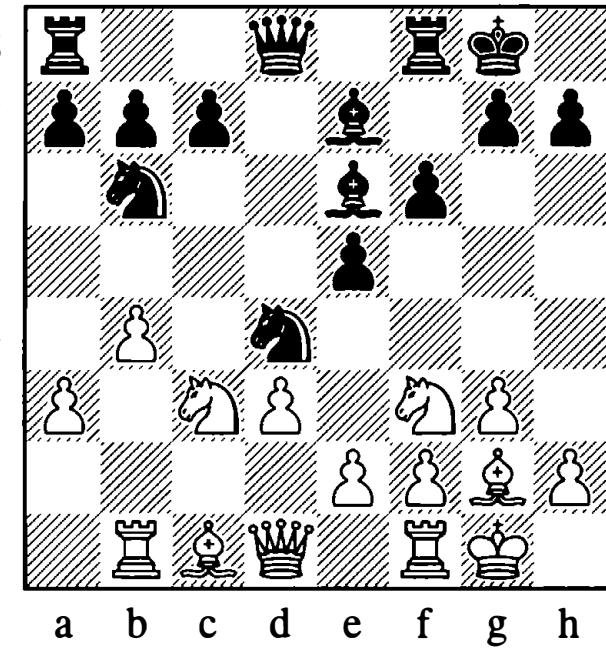


18. $\mathbb{W}c2!$

17. $\mathbb{Q}c5!N$

25.g4!

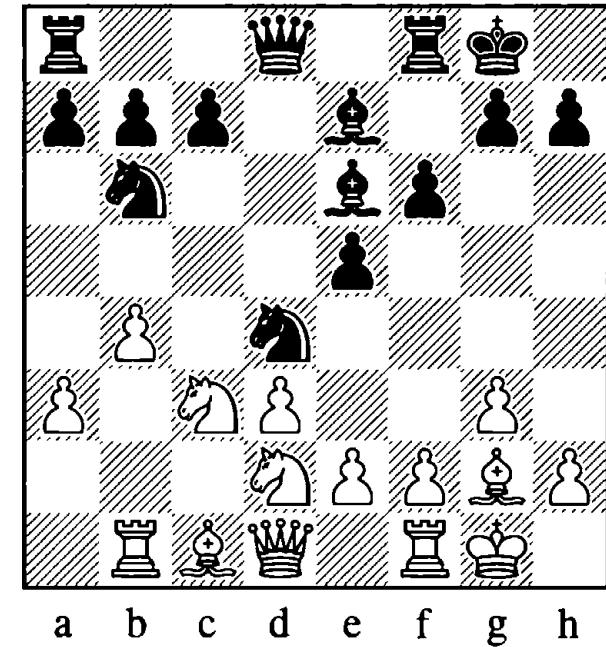
1.c4 e5 2.g3 ♘f6 3.♗g2 d5 4.cxd5 ♘xd5
 5.♘c3 ♘b6 6.♘f3 ♘c6 7.0–0 ♔e7 8.a3 0–0
 9.b4 ♔e6 10.♗b1 f6 11.d3 ♘d4



By the method of elimination, this is the safest continuation. Black maintains the flexibility of his structure and does not provoke White into winning space on the queenside. On the other hand, White's queenside pawns remain compact, restricting the e7-bishop and keeping control of the c5-square.

12.♘d2

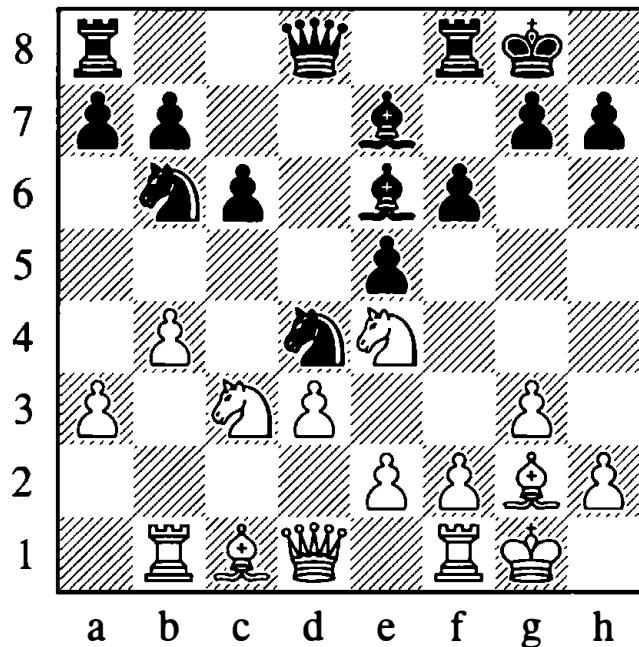
White employs the same method as in the previous chapter.



Black has two main ways of defending the b7-pawn, A) 12...c6 and B) 12...♘d5.

(1.c4 e5 2.g3 ♘f6 3.♗g2 d5 4.cxd5 ♘xd5
 5.♘c3 ♘b6 6.♘f3 ♘c6 7.0–0 ♔e7 8.a3 0–0
 9.b4 ♔e6 10.♗b1 f6 11.d3 ♘d4 12.♘d2)

A) 12...c6 13.♘de4



The knight moves a step closer to the favourable c5-square. With the rook on b1, the threat of ♘e4-c5 is quite unpleasant, because an exchange on c5 would lose the b7-pawn.

We have A1) 13...♔f7, A2) 13...♘d5, A3) 13...♗f7 and A4) 13...♗d7.

13...♔g4

This contradicts the rules of development, by losing time with an already developed piece.
 14.f3!

This looks a bit awkward because it obstructs the g2-bishop, but this is only temporary as White can later play f3-f4. Meanwhile, the enemy bishop will have to spend another tempo trying to find a good square.

14...♔h5

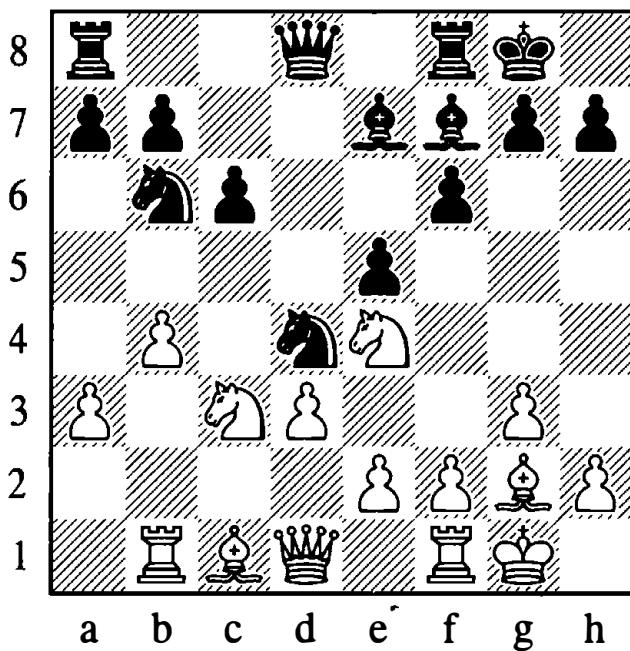
14...♔c8, as played in Lapshun – Goldin, Seattle 2003, is too passive. White's simplest continuation is 15.f4!N with an initiative.

15.♘c5 ♗c8 16.e3 ♘e6 17.♘3e4±

White has strong queenside pressure and his central structure is very flexible, which will later allow him to win space with f3-f4, g3-g4 or d3-d4, depending on Black's reactions.

(1.c4 e5 2.g3 $\mathbb{Q}f6$ 3. $\mathbb{Q}g2$ d5 4.cxd5 $\mathbb{Q}xd5$
 5. $\mathbb{Q}c3$ $\mathbb{Q}b6$ 6. $\mathbb{Q}f3$ $\mathbb{Q}c6$ 7.0–0 $\mathbb{Q}e7$ 8.a3 0–0
 9.b4 $\mathbb{Q}e6$ 10. $\mathbb{Q}b1$ f6 11.d3 $\mathbb{Q}d4$ 12. $\mathbb{Q}d2$ c6
 13. $\mathbb{Q}de4$)

A1) 13... $\mathbb{Q}f7$



Black retreats the bishop to a safer square, anticipating $\mathbb{Q}c5$.

14. $\mathbb{Q}c5$ $\mathbb{W}c7$

14... $\mathbb{Q}b8$, as played in Winants–Vyzmanavin, Ostend 1991, is a less natural way to defend the b7-pawn, because the rook is supposed to occupy a central file. White should play as in the main line. 15.e3!N $\mathbb{Q}e6$ 16. $\mathbb{Q}3e4\pm$

15.e3 $\mathbb{Q}e6$ 16. $\mathbb{Q}3e4$

White intends to build up his queenside attack with $\mathbb{W}d1-c2$, $\mathbb{Q}c1-d2$, $\mathbb{B}f1-c1$, etc.

The following correspondence game gives a clear hint about the computers' limited ability to anticipate Black's problems.

16...f5 17. $\mathbb{Q}xe6$ $\mathbb{Q}xe6$ 18. $\mathbb{Q}c5$ $\mathbb{Q}f7$ 19.e4!

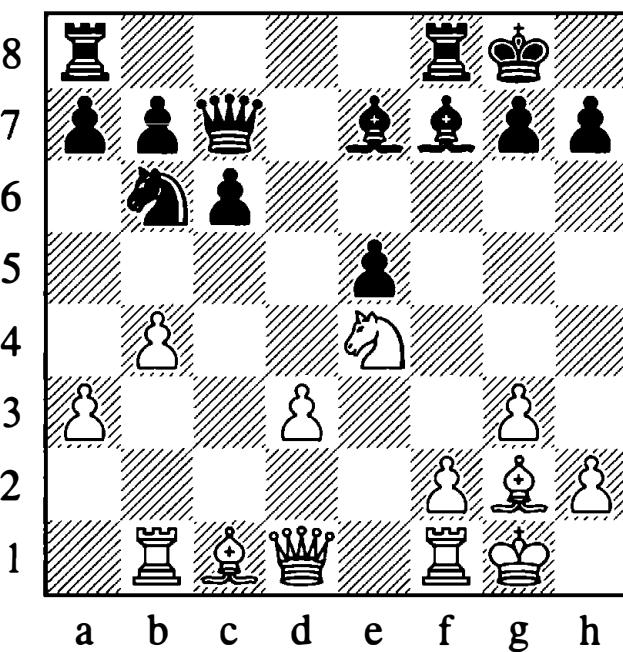
A typical Sicilian pawn break. This is its optimal form, because of the active placement of the g2-bishop and the absence of a black knight on c6, which would control the d4-square.

19...fxe4

19...f4 would leave White with a dangerous central majority after 20.gxf4 exf4 21. $\mathbb{W}g4$ $\mathbb{Q}d6$ 22. $\mathbb{Q}b2\pm$.

20. $\mathbb{Q}xe4$

With reversed colours, this would be a dream position for a Sicilian player.



20... $\mathbb{B}ad8$ 21. $\mathbb{W}c2$ $\mathbb{Q}e6$

This will lead to the loss of a tempo, but I am not convinced the more natural 21... $\mathbb{Q}d5$ would have radically changed the situation.

22. $\mathbb{Q}b2$ $\mathbb{Q}d5$ 23. $\mathbb{B}fe1$

White logically increases her pressure against the e5-pawn.

23... $\mathbb{B}f7$ 24. $\mathbb{B}e2$ $\mathbb{B}df8$ 25. $\mathbb{B}be1$ a6 26. $\mathbb{Q}h3$ $\mathbb{Q}d7$

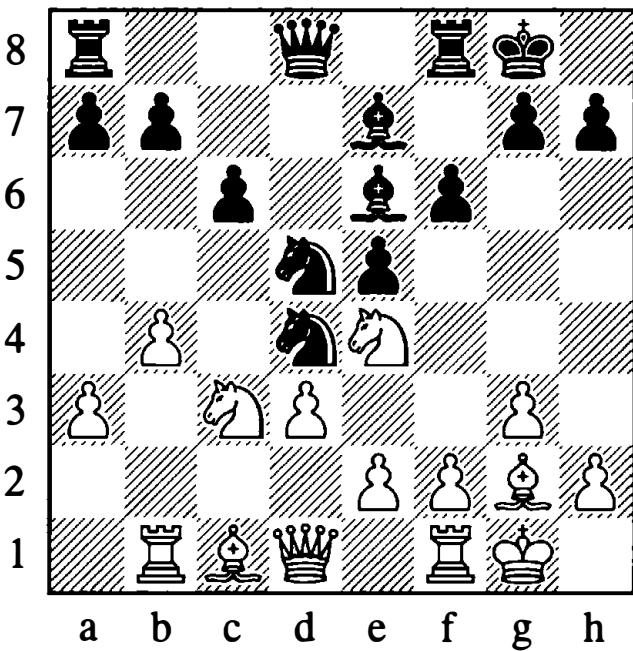
White has activated all her pieces and the time has come for the central break.

27.d4±

Opening the position is in White's favour because of her greater activity, Luiza Marin – Garcia Ruiz, corr. 2008. At this stage of the game the computers understand the seriousness of Black's situation, which explains why she resigned!

(1.c4 e5 2.g3 ♜f6 3.♗g2 d5 4.cxd5 ♜xd5 5.♘c3 ♜b6 6.♗f3 ♜c6 7.0–0 ♛e7 8.a3 0–0 9.b4 ♛e6 10.♗b1 f6 11.d3 ♜d4 12.♘d2 c6 13.♘de4)

A2) 13...♞d5



By attacking the c3-knight, Black prevents ♘e4-c5, at least temporarily.

14.♗b2

Since an exchange on d5 would consolidate the enemy centre, White has to over-defend his c3-knight. In order to gain a fuller picture of the typical ideas, the reader should also refer to line B.

14...♝f7

Black gets the bishop out of the e4-knight's range, but this move will eventually lead to a loss of time.

14...a5N

This ambitious move, aiming to take advantage of White's slightly congested queenside regrouping, is best answered with:

15.♘xd5

15.♘c5 leads to unclear consequences after 15...♗g4 16.♘xd5† cxd5 17.♗xb7 ♜d7 18.♗xa5 f5 19.f3 ♜h3 20.♗e1 f4 with a strong initiative for the sacrificed pawns.

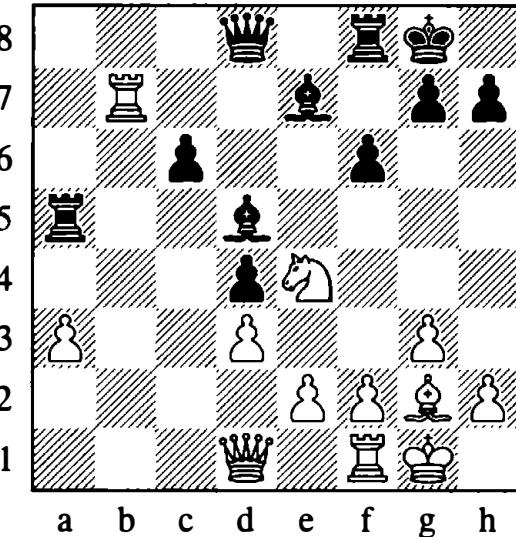
15...♝xd5

15...cxd5 leaves Black's weakened queenside under strong pressure after 16.♘c5 ♜xc5 17.bxc5 ♜c6 18.♗a4± followed by ♜c3 and ♜b6.

16.bxa5 ♜xa5

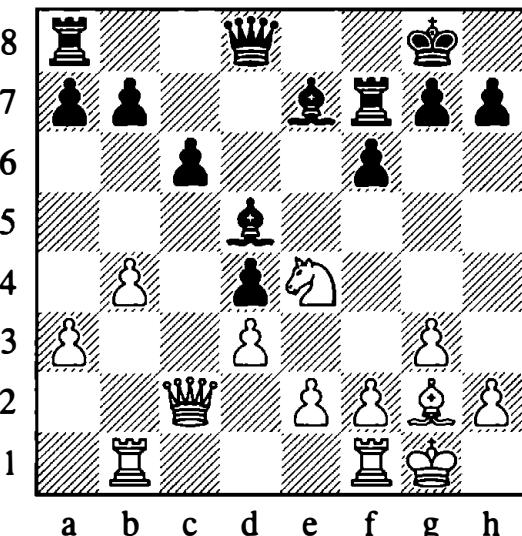
Otherwise, White would defend the important a5-pawn with ♜b2-c3.

17.♘xd4 exd4 18.♗xb7±



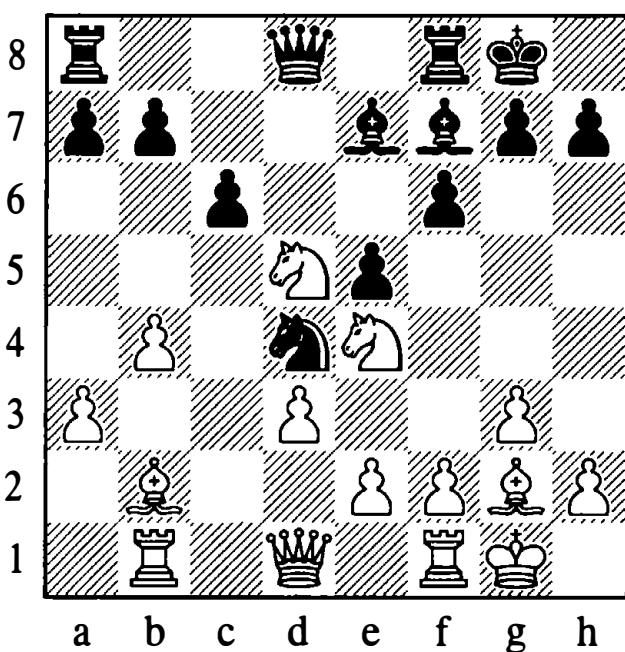
White retains the more compact structure and has chances for an ending with a good c4-knight against a bad dark-squared bishop.

14...♝f7 may save Black a tempo, but would not change the position radically. 15.♘xd5 ♜xd5 (Black cannot maintain the integrity of his centre after 15...cxd5 16.♘xd4 dxe4 17.♗e3 exd3 18.♗xb7 ♜b8 19.♗e4 dxe2 20.♗xe2 f5 21.♗fd1 ♜e8 22.♗d5±. White has a dangerous queenside majority.) 16.♘xd4 exd4 17.♗c2±



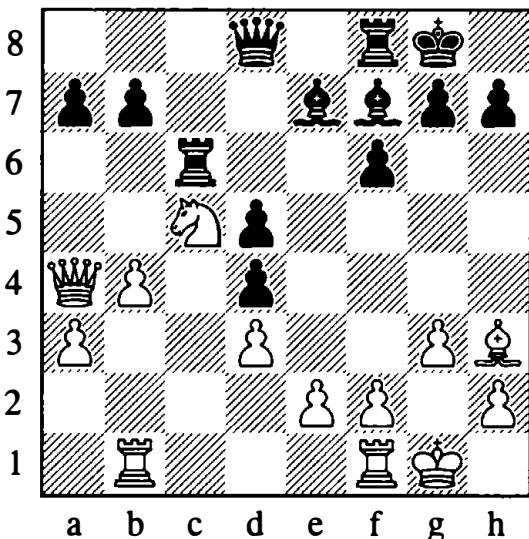
With similar play as in the main game.

15. $\mathbb{Q}xd5$



15... $\mathbb{Q}xd5$

Once again, the strategically ambitious 15... $cxd5$ fails to offer Black anything favourable. 16. $\mathbb{Q}xd4$ $exd4$ (If 16... $dxe4$, besides 17. $\mathbb{Q}e3$ as in a previously examined line, White can consider 17. $\mathbb{Q}c5!$? $exd3$ 18. $\mathbb{W}xd3\pm$, with strong pressure. Most likely, Black would have to release the tension with ... $\mathbb{Q}xc5$, opening the b-file for the white rook.) 17. $\mathbb{Q}c5$ $\mathbb{B}c8$ 18. $\mathbb{Q}h3$ $\mathbb{B}c6$ 19. $\mathbb{W}a4\pm$



White is very active and Black's structure is weak.

16. $\mathbb{Q}xd4$ $exd4$ 17. $\mathbb{W}c2$

White completes his development, preparing his queenside attack.

17... $\mathbb{B}e8$ 18. $\mathbb{Q}d2$

Exchanging the light-squared bishops is an important element in White's strategy, as can also be seen from the variations in line B. Since White has to lose time to achieve this in the current game, and considering the evaluation of all the previous lines from this chapter, we can conclude that this is one of Black's critical equalizing attempts in the reversed Dragon.

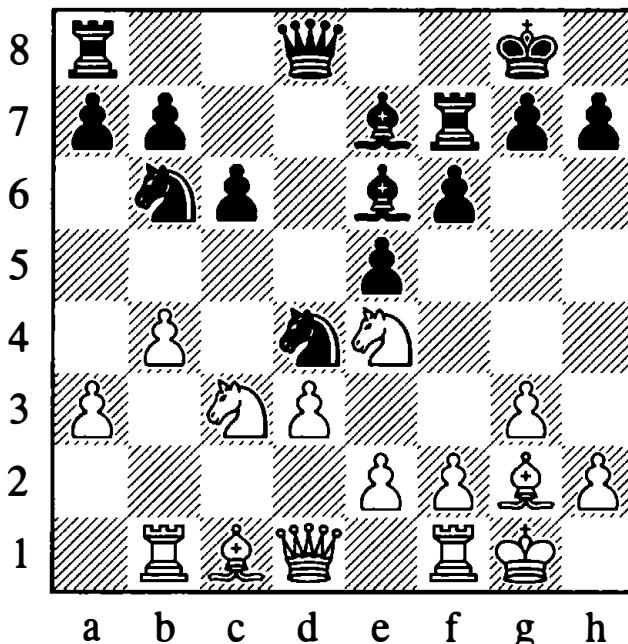
Despite Black's efforts, White retains a slight edge. The following game between two strong young grandmasters is just one example of how the play may continue.

18... $\mathbb{Q}f8$ 19. $\mathbb{B}fe1$ $\mathbb{Q}h8$ 20. $\mathbb{Q}xd5$ $\mathbb{W}xd5$ 21. $\mathbb{W}c4$ $\mathbb{W}d7$ 22. $\mathbb{Q}f3$ $\mathbb{B}ad8$ 23. $\mathbb{Q}g2$ $g6$ 24. $\mathbb{B}bc1$ $f5$ 25. $\mathbb{W}b3$ $\mathbb{Q}g7$ 26. $\mathbb{B}c5$ $\mathbb{Q}f6$ 27. $b5\pm$

White's queenside attack develops naturally, while Black has achieved very little on the opposite wing, Tomashevsky – Khismatullin, Tomsk 2006.

(1.c4 e5 2.g3 $\mathbb{Q}f6$ 3. $\mathbb{Q}g2$ $d5$ 4. $cxd5$ $\mathbb{Q}xd5$ 5. $\mathbb{Q}c3$ $\mathbb{Q}b6$ 6. $\mathbb{Q}f3$ $\mathbb{Q}c6$ 7.0–0 $\mathbb{Q}e7$ 8.a3 0–0 9.b4 $\mathbb{Q}e6$ 10. $\mathbb{B}b1$ $f6$ 11.d3 $\mathbb{Q}d4$ 12. $\mathbb{Q}d2$ $c6$ 13. $\mathbb{Q}de4$)

A3) 13... $\mathbb{B}f7$



Black indirectly defends the seventh rank,

getting ready to meet 14. $\mathbb{Q}c5$ with 14... $\mathbb{Q}xc5$ 15. $bxc5$ $\mathbb{Q}d5$ followed by ... $\mathbb{B}f7-d7$. The drawback of this move is that if White refrains from $\mathbb{Q}e4-c5$, Black will need to spend another tempo on ... $\mathbb{Q}e7-f8$ in order to activate the rook.

14.e3 $\mathbb{Q}b5$

Black has to resort to this slightly awkward move, allowing his pawns to be doubled.

The knight would be exposed after:

14... $\mathbb{Q}f5?!$ 15. $\mathbb{Q}c5$ $\mathbb{Q}xc5$

15... $\mathbb{Q}c8$ is too passive and leaves Black underdeveloped and pinned after 16. $\mathbb{W}b3\pm$.

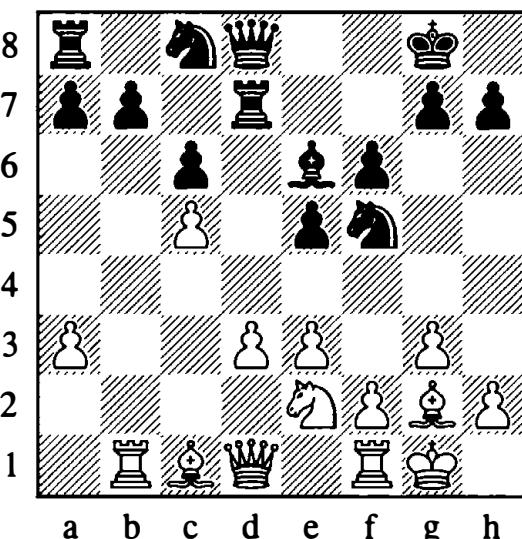
16. $bxc5$ $\mathbb{Q}c8$

Black has to retreat his knight to a passive square, since the generally desirable 16... $\mathbb{Q}d5$ is strongly met by 17. $\mathbb{Q}e2!\pm$ with the threat of e3-e4. The d5-knight will soon have to block the seventh rank, when the b7-pawn would be lost.

17. $\mathbb{Q}e2$

White takes the d4-square under control, preparing e3-e4.

17... $\mathbb{B}d7$



18. $\mathbb{W}c2!$

The d3-pawn is taboo in view of $\mathbb{Q}g2-e4$.

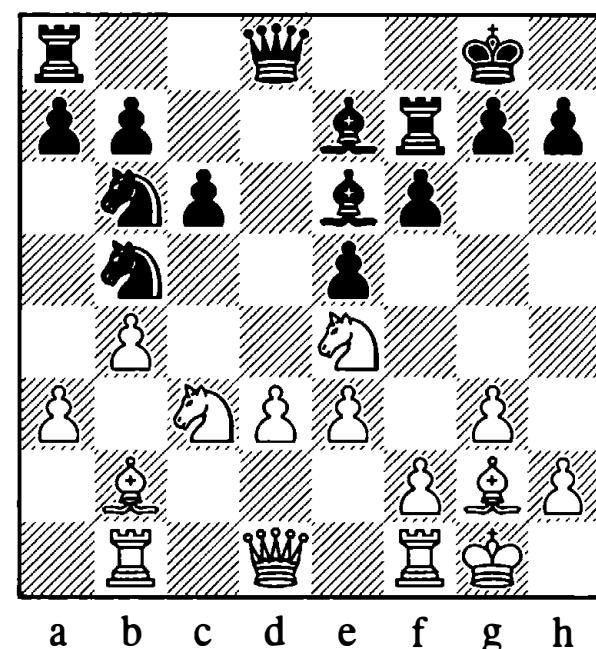
18... $\mathbb{Q}ce7$ 19. e4 $\mathbb{Q}d4$ 20. $\mathbb{Q}xd4$ exd4 21. a4 \pm

White has an advantage on both wings.

15. $\mathbb{Q}b2!$

White should not define the queenside structure too soon.

15. $\mathbb{Q}xb5?!$ $cxb5$ 16. $\mathbb{Q}b2$ $\mathbb{B}c8$ was played in M. Gurevich – Palac, Saint Vincent 2003. Black safely prevented $\mathbb{Q}e4-c5$ and is ready to move his own knight, either to a4 or, if d3-d4, to c4. This leaves White's queenside under permanent pressure.



15... $\mathbb{Q}xc3$

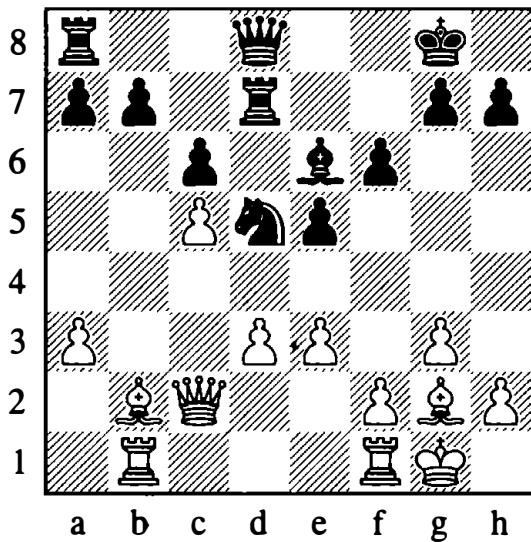
Black would gain nothing by maintaining the tension. He will most likely have to exchange on c3 at some point anyway, while having to calculate the consequences of $\mathbb{Q}c3xb5$ on every move.

After, for example, 15... $\mathbb{W}d7$ 16. $\mathbb{Q}c5$ $\mathbb{Q}xc5$ 17. $bxc5$, he should transpose to the main line with 17... $\mathbb{Q}xc3$, since 17... $\mathbb{Q}d5$ 18. $\mathbb{Q}e4$ would leave the d6-square in White's hands after a3-a4. 18... $f5$, hoping to deliver a fork on c3, does not bother White because of 19. a4! \pm . The position opens in White's favour, because of the strength of his dark-squared bishop.

16. $\mathbb{Q}xc3$ $\mathbb{W}d7$

This natural developing move looks inconsistent with Black's previous play, because it gives up the idea of transferring

the f7-rook to d7. However, one fundamental problem of the 13... $\mathbb{B}f7$ line is that 16... $\mathbb{Q}f8$ would most likely imply the loss of a tempo (... $\mathbb{Q}e7-f8xc5$). For example: 17. $\mathbb{W}c2$ $\mathbb{B}d7$ 18. $\mathbb{Q}c5$ $\mathbb{Q}xc5$ 19.bxc5 $\mathbb{Q}d5$ 20. $\mathbb{Q}b2\pm$



White has several ways of opening the centre, after due preparation. Apart from the simple d3-d4, he has e3-e4 followed by f2-f4 or d3-d4.

16... $\mathbb{Q}d5$, aiming to discourage $\mathbb{Q}e4-c5$, leaves White in control of an important diagonal after 17. $\mathbb{Q}h3\pm$.

The main alternative to the text move is:

16... $\mathbb{Q}d5$

Black removes the knight from a potentially exposed square.

17. $\mathbb{Q}a1$ b6

Black prevents $\mathbb{Q}e4-c5$ forever, but weakens the c6-square.

17...a5 offers White an initiative in the centre after 18. $\mathbb{Q}c5$ $\mathbb{Q}c8$ 19.d4±.

18. $\mathbb{W}c2$ $\mathbb{B}c8$

18... $\mathbb{W}d7$ places the queen on a vulnerable square, which would become relevant after

19.d4 f5 20. $\mathbb{Q}d2$ e4 21. $\mathbb{Q}c4$. In order to save the c6-pawn and the exchange, Black has to give up the bishop pair. 21... $\mathbb{Q}f6$ 22. $\mathbb{Q}e5$ $\mathbb{Q}xe5$ 23.dxe5± White will concentrate his major pieces on the open central files and look for an opportunity

to undermine Black's stability with b4-b5 or f2-f3. In some cases the g2-bishop could be transferred to c4. The d5-knight would practically be immobile, because of the necessity of preventing a white rook invading to d6.

19. $\mathbb{Q}d2$

A similar variation to the previous comment would now work less well, because after ... $\mathbb{Q}e7-f8$ Black could regroup with ... $\mathbb{B}f7-c7$ followed by ...c6-c5, with an initiative.

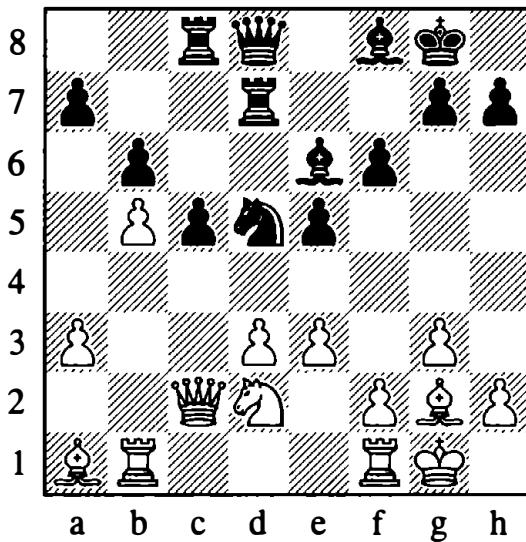
19... $\mathbb{Q}f8$ 20. $\mathbb{Q}f3$

White threatens d3-d4 or e3-e4 followed by d3-d4.

20...c5 21.b5!

White ensures that his knight will have the c4-square.

21... $\mathbb{B}d7$ 22. $\mathbb{Q}d2\pm$



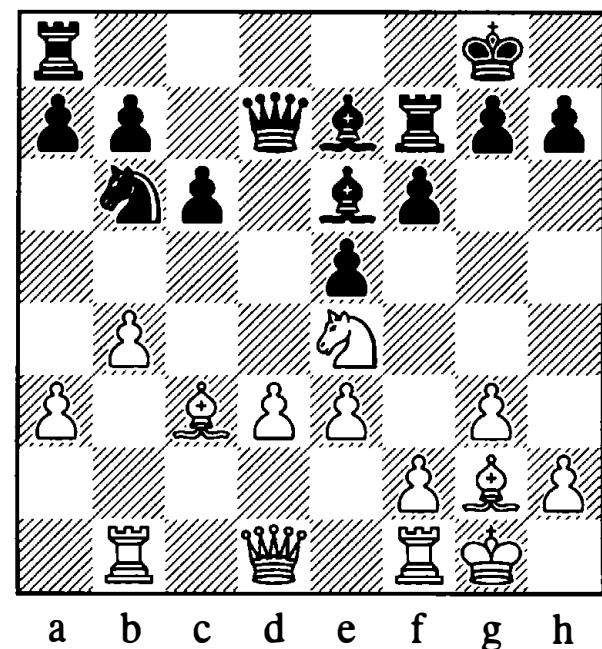
The position is similar to the game Marin – Spassov, which will be examined in the second volume in the section dedicated to the symmetrical English.

22... $\mathbb{Q}c7$

This attempt to win the d3-pawn fails painfully.

23. $\mathbb{Q}c4$ $\mathbb{B}xd3$?! 24. $\mathbb{Q}e4\pm$

The exchange of the d3-pawn for the h7-pawn favours White, since it helps him to get rid of a potential weakness, while weakening the enemy king's position. The blockade on c4 is not affected in any way.



17.♕c5!N

This is a significant improvement over 17.d4, which prematurely concedes the c4-square. 17...exd4 18.♕xd4 ♕c4 19.♗c1 ♕d5= Zueger – Cvitan, Turin (ol) 2006.

17...♕xc5 18.bxc5 ♕d5 19.♔a1±

White has an active pair of bishops, some pressure along the b-file, and the possibility of opening the centre with d3-d4, or e3-e4 followed by d3-d4. Black's position looks solid, but it is difficult for him to become active. Advancing the f6-pawn is impossible and 19...♔h3 loses a pawn to 20.♕xh3 followed by 21.e4.

(1.c4 e5 2.g3 ♕f6 3.♗g2 d5 4.cxd5 ♕xd5 5.♕c3 ♕b6 6.♗f3 ♕c6 7.0–0 ♕e7 8.a3 0–0 9.b4 ♕e6 10.♗b1 f6 11.d3 ♕d4 12.♗d2 c6 13.♗de4)

A4) 13...♗d7

This is a natural developing move, but it also places the queen within the e4-knight's range.

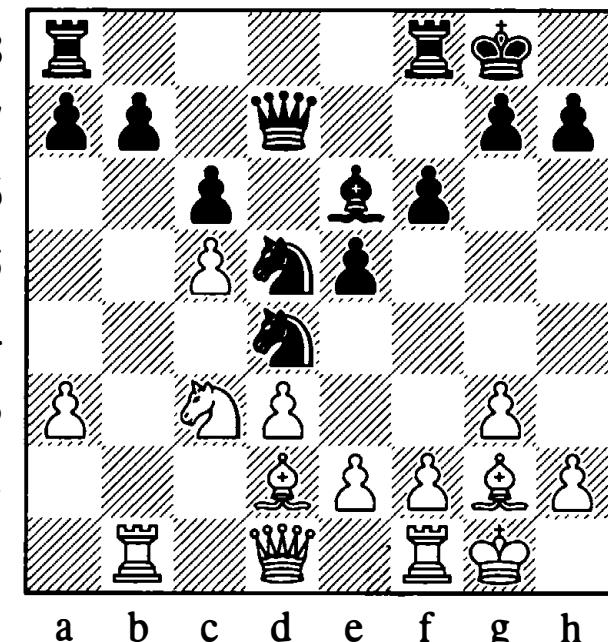
14.♗d2!N

White over-defends the c3-square, preparing a forcing operation with ♕c5. It is better to develop the bishop to d2 rather than b2, in order to leave the b-file open in case ♕c5 is

answered by ...♗xc5, bxc5. At the same time, the indirect pressure along the e1-a5 diagonal discourages the thematic break ...a7-a5.

14.♗e1?! is a typical prophylactic move, but it does not make much sense in this position, and so it is just a waste of time. 14...♗ad8 As we shall see, this move is quite useful. 15.♗d2 ♕d5 16.♗c5 ♕xc5 17.bxc5 ♕xc3 18.♕xc3 ♘f7 Black threatens to invade the b3-square, which more or less forces the following exchange. 19.♕xd4 ♘xd4 Black has avoided any major weaknesses and has a viable position, Ki. Georgiev – Goldin, Niksic 1996.

14...♗d5 15.♗c5 ♕xc5 16.bxc5



16...♗xc3

16...♗ad8 would leave Black unstable in the centre after 17.♗e4± followed by ♕d2-a5 and e2-e3.

17.♕xc3 ♘f7

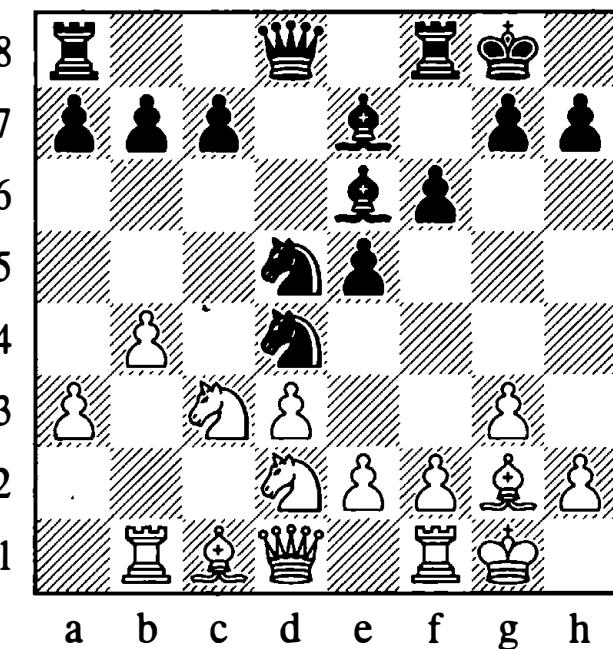
Black lacks an essential tempo to regroup as in the game quoted above. The centralizing move 17...♗ad8 fails to keep up the pressure along the d-file because of 18.♗a5! ♘de8 19.e3±.

18.♕xd4 exd4 19.♗b4±

White has two fine targets on b7 and d4.

(1.c4 e5 2.g3 $\mathbb{Q}f6$ 3. $\mathbb{Q}g2$ d5 4.cxd5 $\mathbb{Q}xd5$ 5. $\mathbb{Q}c3$ $\mathbb{Q}b6$ 6. $\mathbb{Q}f3$ $\mathbb{Q}c6$ 7.0–0 $\mathbb{Q}e7$ 8.a3 0–0 9.b4 $\mathbb{Q}e6$ 10. $\mathbb{Q}b1$ f6 11.d3 $\mathbb{Q}d4$ 12. $\mathbb{Q}d2$)

B) 12... $\mathbb{Q}d5$



Black establishes contact between the pieces before White is fully developed.

13. $\mathbb{Q}b2$

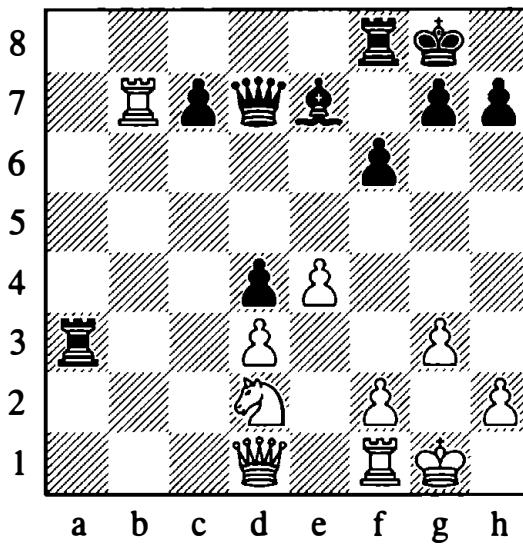
Logically, White answers with a developing move, maintaining the tension. His main threat is to provoke general exchanges on d5 and d4, hoping to prove that his remaining knight is superior to the enemy dark-squared bishop and that his slow queenside attack will be hard to stop.

We will examine B1) 13... $\mathbb{Q}xc3$ and B2) 13...c6.

13... $\mathbb{Q}f7$, as played in Sarno – Brunner, Debrecen 1992, does nothing to prevent White's plan. 14. $\mathbb{Q}xd5!$ N $\mathbb{Q}xd5$ 15. $\mathbb{Q}xd5$ $\mathbb{W}xd5$ 16. $\mathbb{Q}xd4$ exd4 (16... $\mathbb{W}xd4$ would leave the f7-rook pinned after 17. $\mathbb{W}b3\pm$) 17. $\mathbb{W}b3$ $\mathbb{Q}d8$ 18. $\mathbb{Q}fc1$ $\mathbb{Q}f8$ 19. $\mathbb{Q}f3\pm$ White is well coordinated for launching his queenside attack.

13...a5 exposes the a-pawn too soon. 14. $\mathbb{Q}xd5$ $\mathbb{Q}xd5$ 15. $\mathbb{Q}xd5\pm$ $\mathbb{W}xd5$ 16.e4! An important intermediate move, as White avoids being

left with a backward pawn on e2 after the exchange on d4. 16... $\mathbb{W}d7$ 17. $\mathbb{Q}xd4$ exd4 (from a structural point of view, this is a concession, but the generally desirable 17... $\mathbb{W}xd4$ loses a pawn to 18. $\mathbb{Q}b3\pm$) 18.bxa5 $\mathbb{Q}xa5$ 19. $\mathbb{Q}xb7$ $\mathbb{Q}xa3$



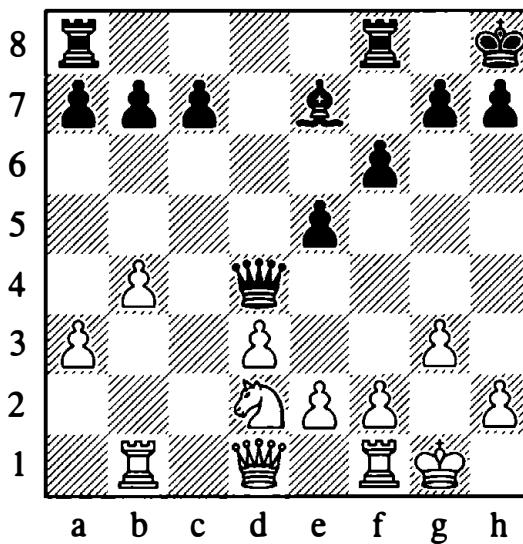
This position was reached in Cvitan – Antal, Pula 2007. After 20. $\mathbb{Q}c4!$ N± White would have the better structure and a fantastic knight.

13... $\mathbb{Q}h8$

This removes the king from a potentially vulnerable diagonal, but it does not have much independent value.

14. $\mathbb{Q}xd5$ $\mathbb{Q}xd5$ 15. $\mathbb{Q}xd5$ $\mathbb{W}xd5$ 16. $\mathbb{Q}xd4$ $\mathbb{W}xd4$

16...exd4 unnecessarily weakens the d4-pawn. 17. $\mathbb{W}b3$ $\mathbb{W}d7$ Black has to keep the queens on the board, in order to retain chances of launching a kingside attack. 18. $\mathbb{Q}fc1$ f5 19. $\mathbb{Q}f3$ $\mathbb{Q}f6$ 20. $\mathbb{Q}c5\pm$ White is well ahead with his attack.



17. $\mathbb{W}b3!N$

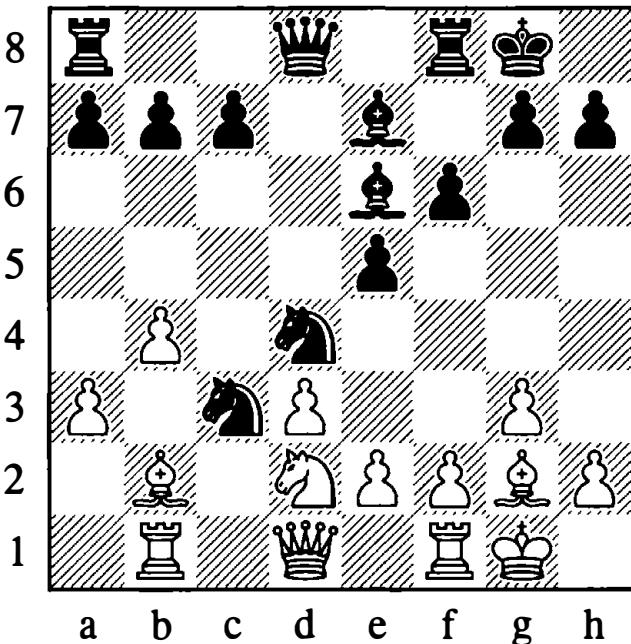
This is more active than 17. $\mathbb{W}c2$ c6 18. $\mathbb{E}fc1$ $\mathbb{E}ad8$ 19. $\mathbb{W}c4$ $\mathbb{W}d7$ 20. $\mathbb{Q}b3$ a6 21. $\mathbb{W}e4$ $\mathbb{W}e6$ 22. d4 $\mathbb{E}d5$ with equality. White's interesting plan has allowed him to open the centre, but the merits of this operation are questionable, because the bishop has a longer range than the knight, Urban – Bobras, Poznan 1999.

17... c6 18. $\mathbb{E}fc1\pm$

We have transposed to line B2.

(1.c4 e5 2.g3 $\mathbb{Q}f6$ 3. $\mathbb{Q}g2$ d5 4. cxd5 $\mathbb{Q}xd5$ 5. $\mathbb{Q}c3$ $\mathbb{Q}b6$ 6. $\mathbb{Q}f3$ $\mathbb{Q}c6$ 7. 0–0 $\mathbb{Q}e7$ 8. a3 0–0 9. b4 $\mathbb{Q}e6$ 10. $\mathbb{E}b1$ f6 11. d3 $\mathbb{Q}d4$ 12. $\mathbb{Q}d2$ $\mathbb{Q}d5$ 13. $\mathbb{Q}b2$)

B1) 13... $\mathbb{Q}xc3$



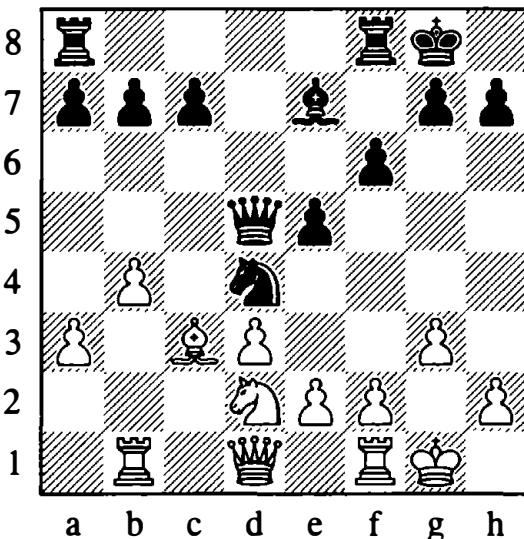
Black releases the tension, in order to avoid the exchange of the light-squared bishops. This way, White will have fewer possibilities of activating his queen, but on the other hand his English bishop will exert strong pressure along the h1-a8 diagonal.

14. $\mathbb{Q}xc3$ c6

14... $\mathbb{Q}d5?!$ is pointless and merely wastes time. 15. $\mathbb{Q}xd5\#!$ (This restricts Black's options more than 15. $\mathbb{Q}xd4$ $\mathbb{Q}xg2$ 16. $\mathbb{Q}xg2$ $\mathbb{W}xd4$ 17. $\mathbb{W}b3\#$ $\mathbb{E}f7$. This position was reached in Danailov – Barbulescu, Albena 1986. White

should have continued with 18. $\mathbb{E}fc1!N\pm$)

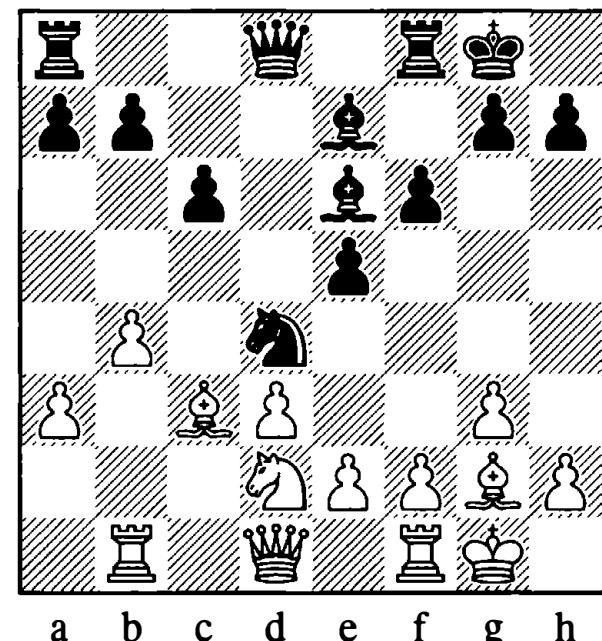
15... $\mathbb{W}xd5$



16. $e4?!$ $\mathbb{W}d7$ 17. $\mathbb{Q}xd4$ $\mathbb{W}xd4$ 18. $\mathbb{Q}f3$ $\mathbb{W}d7$ 19. $\mathbb{W}b3\#$ $\mathbb{Q}h8$ 20. $\mathbb{E}fd1$ c5?! 21. $\mathbb{Q}h4$ g6 22. $\mathbb{Q}g2\pm$ After having weakened the enemy kingside, the knight is heading for d5, Iordachescu – Ricci, Bratto 2005.

In this game 20... c5?! unnecessarily weakened the d5-square. Black probably feared d3-d4, but this pawn break would in fact help Black to get rid of the e5-pawn, which restricts his bishop. Instead 20... $\mathbb{Q}d6$ would have offered him reasonable play. White can improve earlier, though.

16. $e4?!$ is an unfavourable deviation from the main plan. After 16. $\mathbb{Q}xd4!N$ White would be a tempo up compared to line B2.



15. $\mathbb{Q}xd4$ $\mathbb{W}xd4$

Black strives for active piece play. Instead 15...exd4 would offer White the initiative after 16.b5±, as in Pereverzev – Orellana, corr. 2004.

16. $\mathbb{Q}b3$ $\mathbb{W}d7$

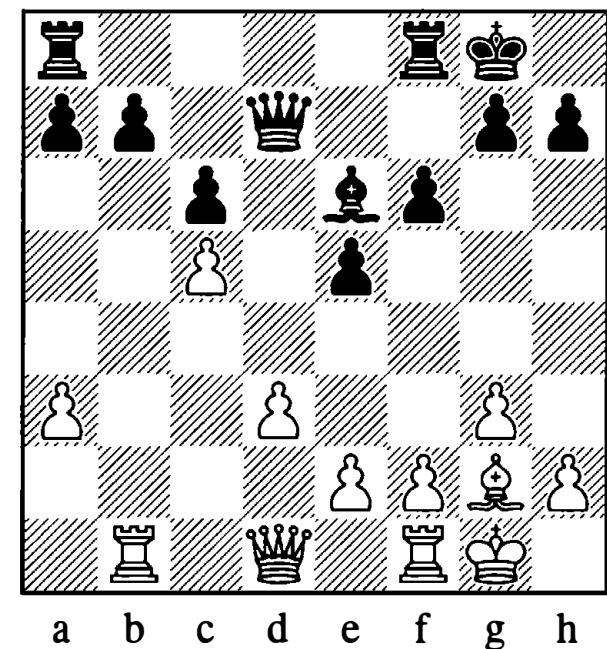
This retreat allows White to provoke a favourable structural modification, but the alternatives were no better.

Massive simplifications would not solve Black's problems after 16... $\mathbb{W}c3$ 17. $\mathbb{W}c1$ $\mathbb{W}xc1$ 18. $\mathbb{B}fxc1$ $\mathbb{Q}xb3$ 19. $\mathbb{B}xb3$ $\mathbb{B}ab8$ 20.b5 $\mathbb{B}fd8$ 21.bxc6 bxc6 22. $\mathbb{B}cb1$ ±. White controls the only open file, and has the better structure and the safer king, Smejkal – Huebner, Germany 1991.

16... $\mathbb{Q}xb3$ also leads to pleasant play for White, with opposite-coloured bishops. 17. $\mathbb{W}xb3$ † $\mathbb{Q}h8$ 18.b5±

17. $\mathbb{Q}c5$ $\mathbb{Q}xc5$ 18.bxc5

White's more compact structure and the pressure against the b7-pawn offer him the better chances. It is interesting to observe how this advantage can slowly but surely increase.



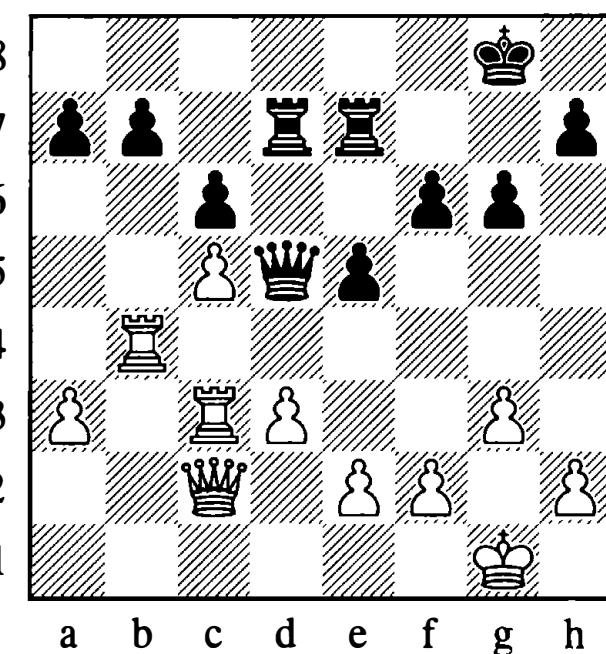
18... $\mathbb{Q}d5$ 19. $\mathbb{W}c2$ $\mathbb{B}f7$ 20. $\mathbb{B}b4$ $\mathbb{B}d8$ 21. $\mathbb{B}fb1$ $\mathbb{Q}xg2$ 22. $\mathbb{Q}xg2$ $\mathbb{W}d5$ † 23. $\mathbb{Q}g1$ $\mathbb{B}dd7$

Black has managed to exchange bishops, but is confined to the passive defence of the b7-pawn. Some players would guess that the position is close to equal, but this view is misguided. Play is one-sided and White can increase his pressure gradually, without any risk. From a practical point of view, such positions (which often occur in the English) can easily develop into a clear advantage for White, because the opponent's desire to improve his position often leads to the creation of new weaknesses.

In order to make progress, White needs to win space in the centre.

24. $\mathbb{B}1b3$ $\mathbb{B}fe7$ 25. $\mathbb{B}c3$ g6

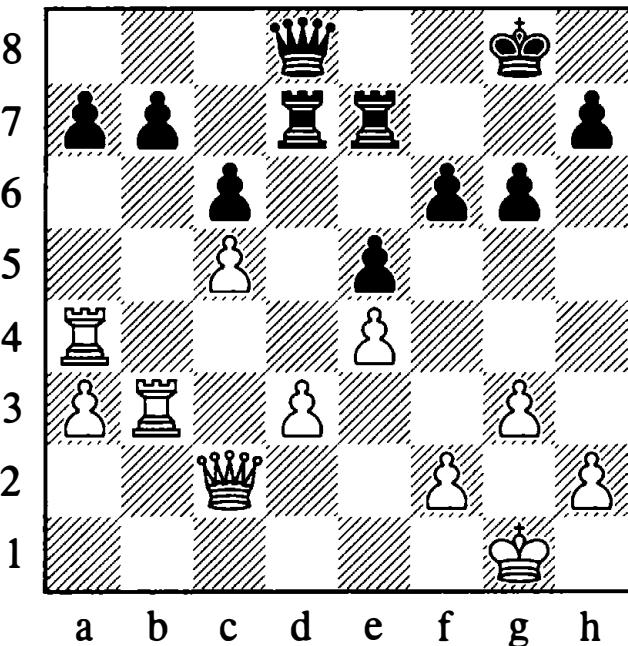
This is one of the interesting psychological situations mentioned above. Black clears the g7-square for his king, anticipating future back rank problems. The downside of this move is that it weakens the f6-pawn. However, avoiding such a committal move would not have spared Black from problems, because White would have regrouped in the same way as in the game.

**26. $\mathbb{W}c1$ $\mathbb{W}f7$ 27.e4**

After this move Black's queen will no longer be able to occupy a centralized position.

27... $\mathbb{W}e8$ 28. $\mathbb{B}cb3$ $\mathbb{W}d8$ 29. $\mathbb{W}b1$ $\mathbb{W}a5$ 30. $\mathbb{W}c2$ $\mathbb{W}d8$ 31. $\mathbb{B}a4$!

It is always useful to provoke additional weaknesses in the enemy camp, even in cases where it is hard to foresee if and when the weakness will make a difference.



31...a6

In this case, there is a clear difference created by the new weakness. After this forced structural modification, most pawn endings would be lost for Black, because he would not be able to create a queenside passed pawn quickly, while White's central majority would be easier to put in motion by transferring the king to e3 and playing d3-d4.

32.♗b1 ♔g7 33.♗ab4 ♗c8 34.♗b2

White has completed an optimal regrouping. All his pieces are attacking the backward b7-pawn, while two of them keep the d4-square under control, which will allow a well-timed break with d3-d4.

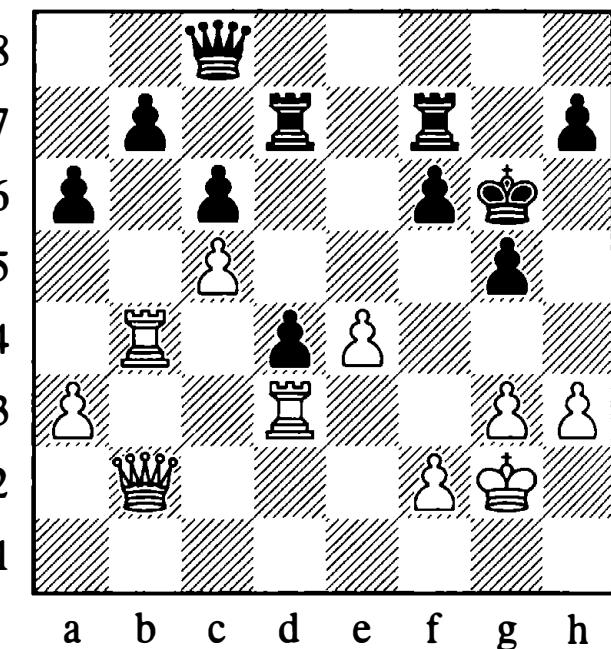
34...g5

With the white queen on the long diagonal, Black had good reason to fear that White might play f2-f4.

35.♔g2 ♔g6 36.h3 ♘f7

After careful preparation, everything is ready for White to open the centre.

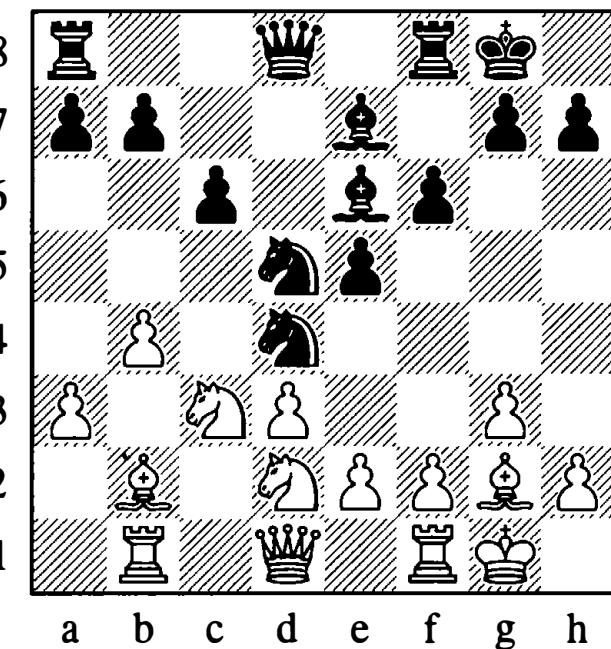
37.d4! exd4 38.♗d3±



White has the more flexible structure and the safer king position, Azmaiparashvili – Aseev, Lvov 1990.

(1.c4 e5 2.g3 ♖f6 3.♗g2 d5 4.cxd5 ♖xd5 5.♘c3 ♖b6 6.♘f3 ♖c6 7.0–0 ♔e7 8.a3 0–0 9.b4 ♔e6 10.♗b1 f6 11.d3 ♖d4 12.♘d2 ♖d5 13.♗b2)

B2) 13...c6



This move may look solid, but in fact it fails to strengthen Black's centre. As we shall see, the capture ...c6xd5 would cause Black nothing but trouble, while in the long run the c6-pawn will be vulnerable to White's minority attack.

14. $\mathbb{Q}xd5!$

White has no reason to refrain from his main plan. However, 14. $\mathbb{Q}de4$ is also playable, transposing to line A2.

14... $\mathbb{Q}xd5$

Let's consider the other recapture:

14... $cxd5$

This leaves Black with pawn weaknesses after:

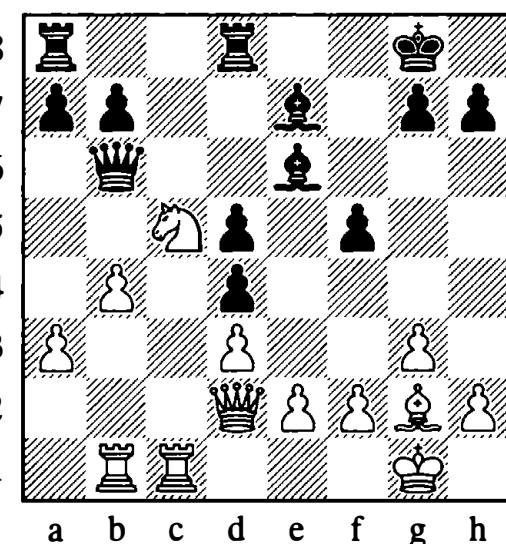
15. $\mathbb{Q}xd4$ $exd4$ 16. $\mathbb{Q}b3$ $\mathbb{W}b6$ 17. $\mathbb{W}d2$

White threatens $\mathbb{W}f4$ or $\mathbb{W}b2$, winning the d4-pawn.

17... $f5$

Black enables ... $\mathbb{Q}f6$, but weakens the f-pawn.

18. $\mathbb{B}fc1$ $\mathbb{B}fd8$ 19. $\mathbb{Q}c5\pm$



White has completed his development and has active play. Black is forced to part with one of his bishops, since 19... $\mathbb{Q}f7$?! would drop a pawn to 20. $\mathbb{W}f4\pm$.

Note that if Black had played something other than 18... $\mathbb{B}fd8$, White could have won an exchange with 20. $\mathbb{Q}d7$.

15. $\mathbb{Q}xd5\mathbb{+}$ $\mathbb{W}xd5$

15... $cxd5$ is even worse than one move earlier. White wins a pawn with 16. $\mathbb{Q}xd4$ $exd4$ 17. $\mathbb{Q}f3$ $\mathbb{W}b6$ 18. $\mathbb{W}b3$ $\mathbb{B}fd8$ 19. $\mathbb{W}b2\pm$.

16. $\mathbb{Q}xd4$ $\mathbb{W}xd4$

16... $exd4$ 17. $\mathbb{W}b3\pm$ leads to a familiar position.

17. $\mathbb{W}b3\mathbb{+}$

White takes advantage of the weakness of the a2-g8 diagonal by connecting rooks with gain of time.

17... $\mathbb{Q}h8$

This is the only move that has been tried in practice. Although the king seems to be safe in the corner, in the long run the weakness of the seventh rank may become worrying. Also, the weakened defence of the f7-square will in some cases allow the white queen to transfer to the kingside.

17... $\mathbb{Q}f7$?! cannot be recommended, because Black will struggle to break the pin. 18. $\mathbb{B}fc1$ $\mathbb{Q}f8$ 19.b5± White's play develops systematically, while the pin restricts Black's possibilities. For instance, 19... $cxb5$? is impossible because of 20. $\mathbb{B}c7$.

17... $\mathbb{W}d5$

This is a sounder alternative than 17... $\mathbb{Q}f7$ to the main continuation. After the predictable simplifications, the king will be closer to the centre.

18.b5

The insufficient defence of the black queen allows White to carry out this thematic break immediately.

18... $\mathbb{W}xb3$ 19. $\mathbb{B}xb3$

Play is likely to have a similar character to the main line. Black's only possibility to deviate is:

19... $cxb5$ 20. $\mathbb{B}xb5$ $\mathbb{Q}xa3$

But this allows White to create pressure.

21. $\mathbb{Q}c4$ $\mathbb{Q}e7$ 22. $\mathbb{B}xb7$ $\mathbb{Q}c5$ 23. $\mathbb{B}fb1$

The bishop is unstable and the passed a7-pawn is more of a weakness than a strength. With four rooks on board, Black's vulnerability on the seventh rank is a significant problem.

23... $\mathbb{B}f7$

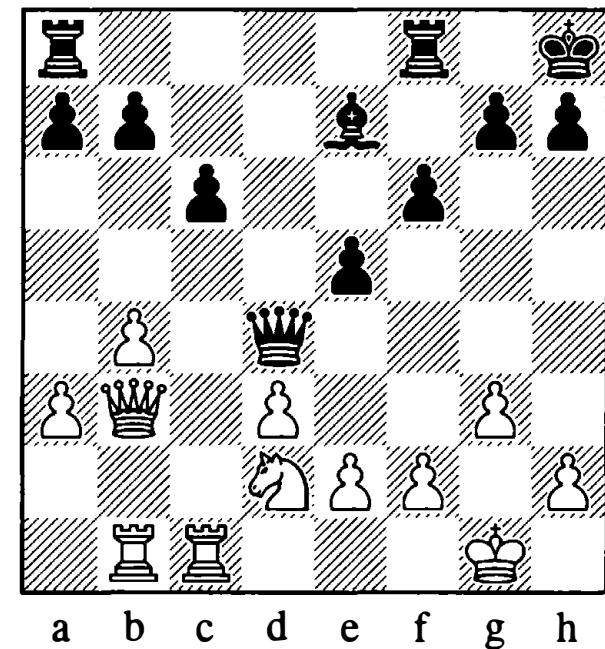
Relatively best. Black prepares to activate his king.

23...a5?! would lose the pawn after 24.♕b5 ♜b4 25.♖a1±. It is worth mentioning that the rook ending with five pawns versus four is very difficult to defend for Black.

24.♕b5 ♜c7 25.♔g2 ♜f7 26.♖a5±

White will install his rooks on b5 and a6 and put the enemy kingside under pressure with a slow advance of his pawns (g3-g4, ♜f3, h2-h4).

18.♖fc1



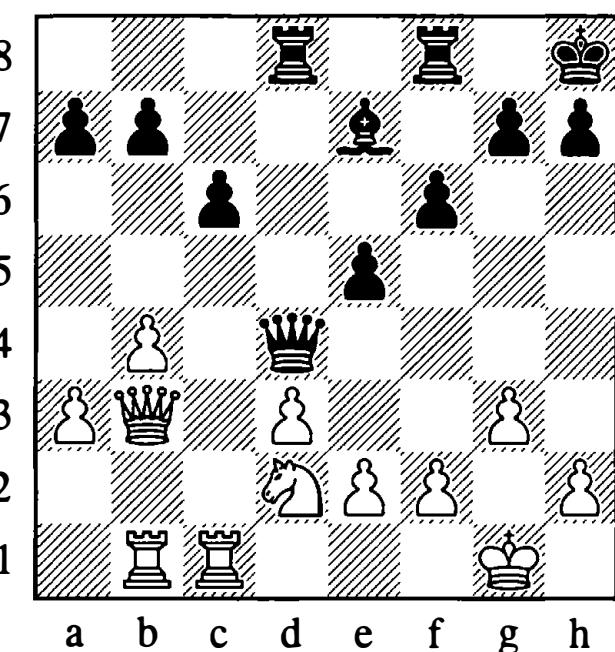
White has completed his development and is ready to start a minority attack.

Black has tried **B21) 18...♜ad8** and **B22) 18...♝fd8**.

18...♝g4 removes the queen from the centre without causing White any trouble with his e2-pawn. 19.♞f3 ♜ad8 (the pseudo-active 19...e4? loses a pawn to 20.♖c4 f5 21.dxe4 fxe4 22.♝e3±) 20.b5 cxb5 21.♝xb5 ♜xa3 22.♖c4± White will play ♜xb7 next, with a dangerous initiative. The a7-pawn and the seventh rank are weak.

(1.c4 e5 2.g3 ♜f6 3.♗g2 d5 4.cxd5 ♜xd5 5.♘c3 ♜b6 6.♘f3 ♜c6 7.0-0 ♜e7 8.a3 ♜e6 9.b4 0-0 10.♗b1 f6 11.d3 ♜d4 12.♘d2 ♜d5 13.♗b2 c6 14.♗xd5 ♜xd5 15.♗xd5† ♜xd5 16.♗xd4 ♜xd4 17.♗b3† ♜h8 18.♖fc1)

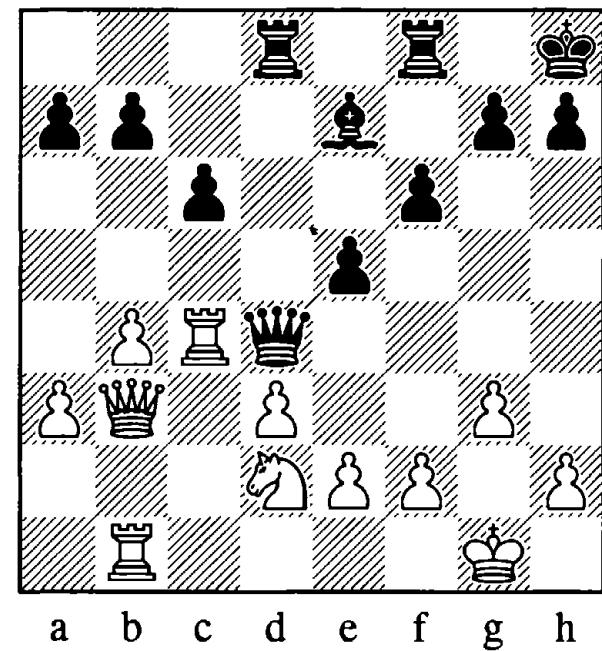
B21) 18...♜ad8



This looks like a logical centralizing move, preparing a regrouping based on ...♜fe8 and ...♝f8, with chances to take over the initiative in the centre. However, this plan is rather slow and leaves Black's queenside poorly defended.

19.♖c4

Before starting the minority attack, White forces the active black queen to retreat.



19...♝d5??

Black decides to fight for the a2-g8 diagonal, but this move allows White to increase his advantage with a forcing exchange manoeuvre.

19... $\mathbb{W}d7$

This would have been more cautious.

20.b5 c5 21.b6!?

White isolates the c5-pawn from its colleagues.

21...a6

Black has to keep the queenside closed.

After 21...axb6? 22. $\mathbb{W}xb6\pm$ White's pressure against the b7- and c5-pawns is too strong.

22. $\mathbb{Q}e4$ $\mathbb{E}c8$ 23. $\mathbb{E}bc1$

White increases the pressure against the c5-pawn. Black's only chance is to trade it for the b6-pawn.

23... $\mathbb{W}e6$ 24. $\mathbb{W}b2$

Unpinning the c4-rook.

24... $\mathbb{E}c6$ 25. $\mathbb{Q}xc5$ $\mathbb{Q}xc5$ 26. $\mathbb{E}xc5$ $\mathbb{E}xb6$

27. $\mathbb{W}c2\pm$

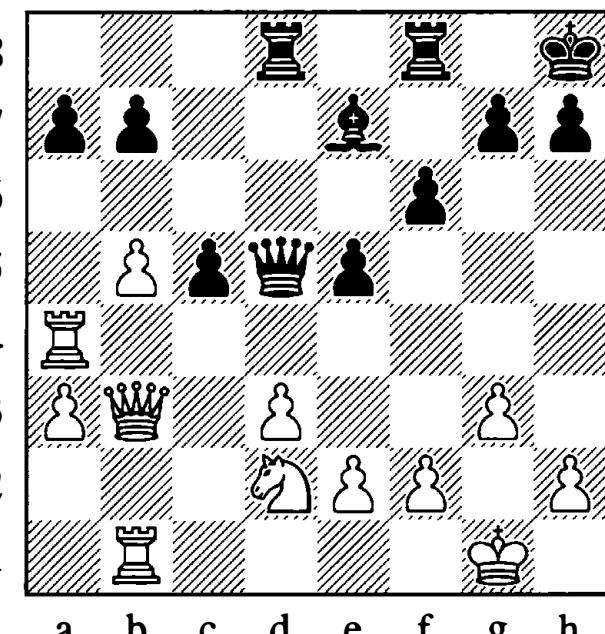
White controls the only open file and threatens to occupy the seventh rank. His advantage is kept within reasonable limits by the fact that in the case of simplifications, Black's queenside majority could become dangerous.

20.b5 c5

Black has to keep the position closed, because 20...cx b 5 21. $\mathbb{E}c7\pm$ leaves his queenside vulnerable.

21. $\mathbb{E}a4!$

The weakness of the a7-pawn and the hanging position of his queen forces Black to retreat into passive defence. In doing so, he also has to allow the activation of the white knight.



21... $\mathbb{W}xb3$ 22. $\mathbb{Q}xb3!N$

Having reached a dream position in my game against Damian Lemos at Porto Mannu 2009, for some reason I refrained from this move after long thought. Instead 22. $\mathbb{E}xb3$ gave me a slight advantage, but then I played slowly and without a clear plan, and eventually drew.

Capturing with the knight allows White to increase the pressure with gain of time.

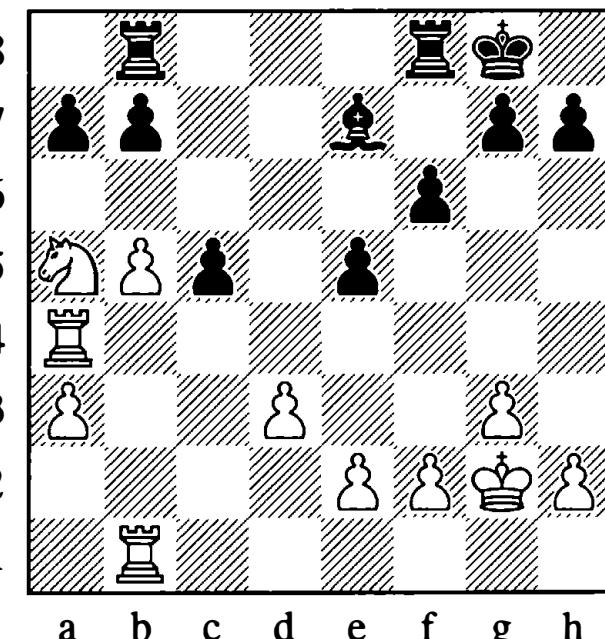
22... $\mathbb{E}a8$ 23. $\mathbb{Q}a5$ $\mathbb{E}ab8$

This is the most consistent defence.

23... $\mathbb{E}fb8$ This leaves Black's rooks awfully passive. 24. $\mathbb{E}b3!$ White over-defends the d3-pawn, in order to increase his control of the light squares with e2-e4, without allowing the freeing manoeuvre ... $\mathbb{E}d8-d7$. 24... $\mathbb{Q}g8$ 25.e4 $\mathbb{Q}f7$ 26. $\mathbb{Q}f1$ $\mathbb{Q}e6$ 27. $\mathbb{Q}e2\pm$ Once the d3-pawn has been safely defended, White will transfer his b3-rook to the kingside, followed by f2-f4. Black will face a passive and joyless defence.

23...b6 is an important concession, weakening the light squares even more and offering White a comfortable target on b6. 24. $\mathbb{Q}c6$ $\mathbb{Q}d6$ 25. $\mathbb{E}a6!$ (25. $\mathbb{E}xa7?$ only leads to a pawn exchange and the loss of the a-file after 25... $\mathbb{E}xa7$ 26. $\mathbb{Q}xa7$ $\mathbb{E}a8$ 27. $\mathbb{Q}c6$ $\mathbb{E}xa3=$) 25... $\mathbb{E}f7$ 26.a4 Followed by a4-a5, with increasing pressure.

24. $\mathbb{Q}g2$ $\mathbb{Q}g8$



25.g4!

White is threatening to take control of all the light squares on the kingside with h2-h4-h5.

In the absence of queens, the queenside operation based on b5-b6 would be less effective than in the comments to Black's 19th move, because Black's king would feel much safer.

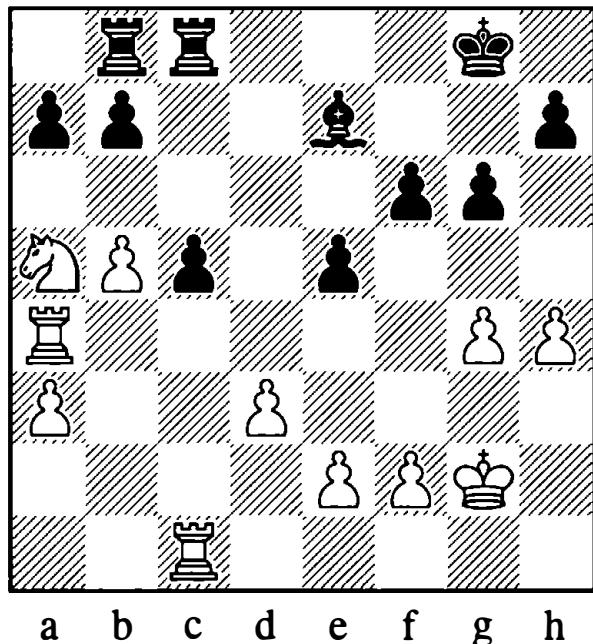
25...g6

25... $\mathbb{Q}f7$ 26.h4 g6 leaves White in control of the h-file after 27.h5, since 27...gxh5 only makes matters worse after 28. $\mathbb{E}h1$ hxg4 29. $\mathbb{E}xh7\#$ $\mathbb{Q}e6$ 30. $\mathbb{E}xg4\pm$. Black is struggling to defend on both wings.

26. $\mathbb{E}c1!$

By threatening $\mathbb{Q}b3$, with a simultaneous attack against the a7- and c5-pawns, White forces the f8-rook to abandon the kingside.

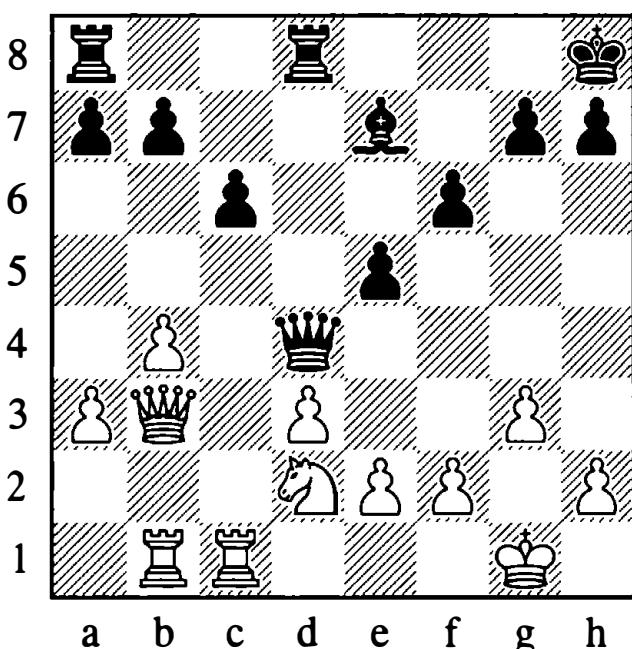
26.h4 f5 27.gxf5 $\mathbb{E}xf5$ is less convincing.

26... $\mathbb{E}fc8$ 27.h4

Black is doomed to passive defence, since 27...f5 would allow White to open the position in his favour. 28.gxf5 gxf5 29. $\mathbb{Q}c4$ a6 The only way to avoid the loss of a pawn. 30. $\mathbb{E}b1!$ The rook returns to the b-file, which will inevitably

be opened. 30...axb5 31. $\mathbb{E}xb5\pm$ White has achieved an optimal queenside position.

(1.c4 e5 2.g3 $\mathbb{Q}f6$ 3. $\mathbb{Q}g2$ d5 4.cxd5 $\mathbb{Q}xd5$ 5. $\mathbb{Q}c3$ $\mathbb{Q}b6$ 6. $\mathbb{Q}f3$ $\mathbb{Q}c6$ 7.0-0 $\mathbb{Q}e7$ 8.a3 $\mathbb{Q}e6$ 9.b4 0-0 10. $\mathbb{E}b1$ f6 11.d3 $\mathbb{Q}d4$ 12. $\mathbb{Q}d2$ $\mathbb{Q}d5$ 13. $\mathbb{Q}b2$ c6 14. $\mathbb{Q}xd5$ $\mathbb{Q}xd5$ 15. $\mathbb{Q}xd5\#$ $\mathbb{W}xd5$ 16. $\mathbb{Q}xd4$ $\mathbb{W}xd4$ 17. $\mathbb{W}b3\#$ $\mathbb{Q}h8$ 18. $\mathbb{E}fc1$)

B22) 18... $\mathbb{E}fd8$ 

Black gives up any kingside ambitions, but keeps the queenside better defended than in the previous line.

19.a4

Since nothing is going to happen on the kingside, White can afford to play this preparatory move.

The same method as in the previous line is less effective: 19. $\mathbb{E}c4$ $\mathbb{W}d5$ 20.b5 cxb5 21. $\mathbb{E}c7$ $\mathbb{W}xb3$ 22. $\mathbb{E}xb3$ $\mathbb{Q}d6$ 23. $\mathbb{E}xb7$ a6 Black has managed to consolidate his queenside and the position is unclear.

19... $\mathbb{W}d5$

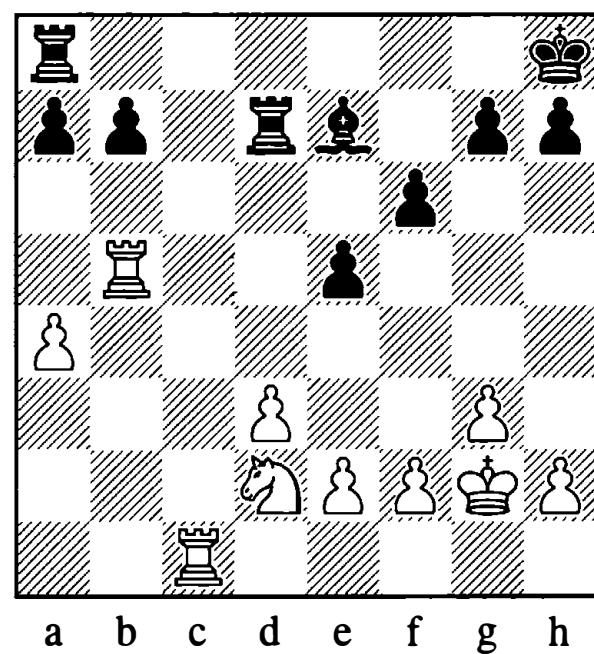
19... $\mathbb{W}g4$ does not cross White's plans after: 20. $\mathbb{Q}f3$ $\mathbb{E}d7$ (20...e4? leads to disaster after 21. $\mathbb{E}c4$ f5 22. $\mathbb{Q}e5$ $\mathbb{W}h5$ 23. $\mathbb{E}xc6!$ followed by a check on f7) 21.b5 c5 22. $\mathbb{E}c4$ $\mathbb{W}e6$ 23.a5 \pm

White has fine play on the light squares, as in the main lines.

20.b5 $\mathbb{W}xb3$ 21. $\mathbb{B}xb3$ $cxb5$

21...c5 weakens the c4-square and the c5-pawn. Apart from 22. $\mathbb{Q}c4$, with enduring pressure, White can try to open the queenside immediately with 22.b6 a6 23. $\mathbb{B}bc3$ $\mathbb{B}ac8$ 24. $\mathbb{Q}b3\pm$.

22. $\mathbb{B}xb5$ $\mathbb{B}d7$, 23. $\mathbb{Q}g2\pm$



White has strong queenside pressure and will prepare an advance of his kingside majority,
Lerner – Aseev, St Petersburg 1993.

Conclusion:

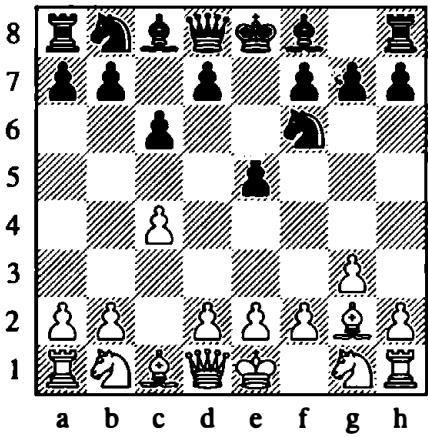
The variations examined in this chapter are Black's main hope of obtaining a viable position in the reversed Dragon. For a while I was sceptical about White's chances of an advantage. This may have been a general crisis of confidence in the English Opening as it coincided with the period mentioned in the conclusion to the 11th chapter. The cure was the same as in that case: perseverance and optimism in analysis.

Although Black's position looks very solid, White retains a long-term queenside initiative.

Reversed Dragon Conclusion:

Chapters 20 to 25 feature some of the most fascinating positions in the whole book. One should not play such variations without first studying them closely, because the correct positional assessment is usually deeper than the superficial evidence may suggest. Objectively, the whole line should be evaluated as slightly better for White, but a minor slip from either side is likely to change this evaluation abruptly.

As a final word of advice for White: do not fear the reversed Dragon, but be sure you know what you are doing!



Keres Variation

Introduction and Sidelines

Variation Index

1.c4 e5 2.g3 ♜f6 3.♗g2

3...c6 4.d4

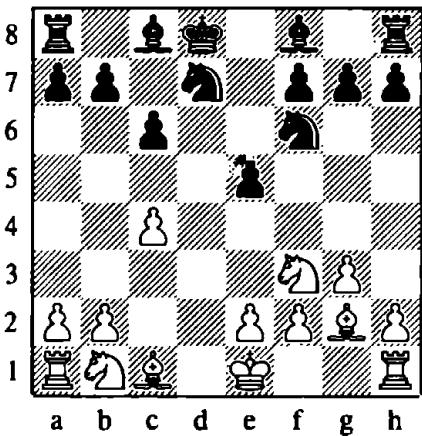
A) 4...d6

B) 4...e4

p 346

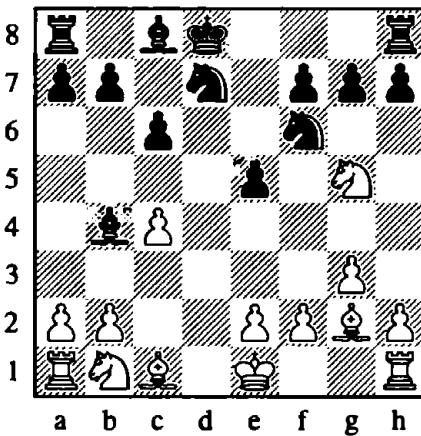
p 349

A) after 7...♜bd7



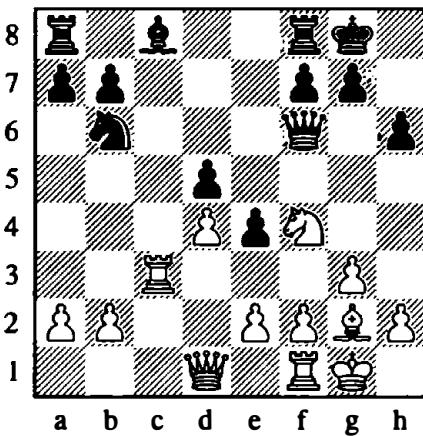
8.0–0!N

A) note to 8.0–0!N



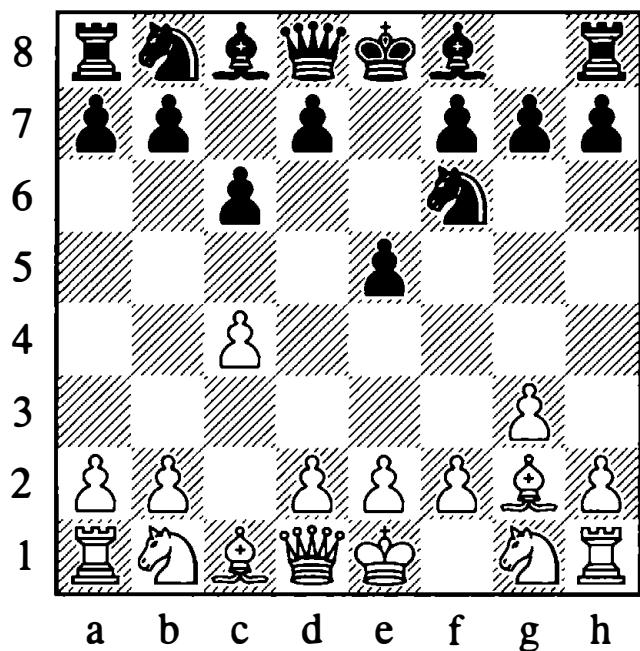
9.♝c3!N

B) after 13...♛xf6



14.f3!

1.c4 e5 2.g3 ♘f6 3.♗g2 c6



This is a logical reaction to the fact that White has not put the e5-pawn under pressure with ♘g1-f3. Black threatens to occupy the centre with ...d7-d5.

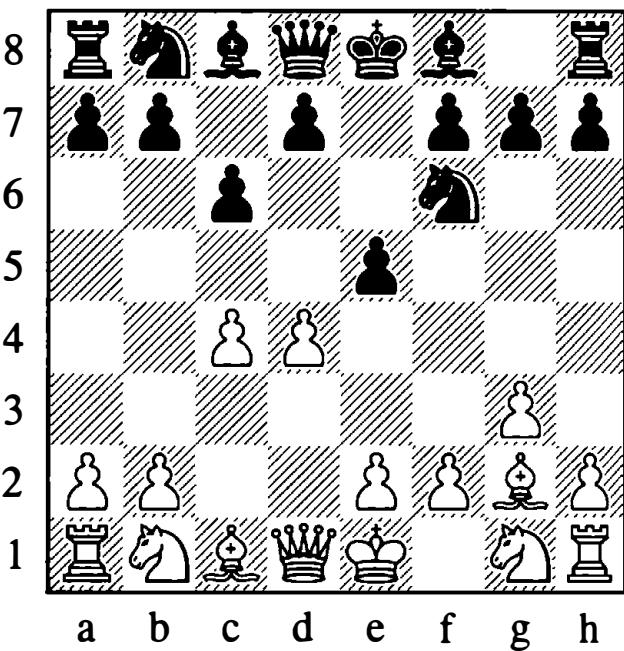
4.♘c3 d5 5.cxd5 cxd5 6.♗b3? is a typical opening trap. Black plays 6...♘c6! obtaining a strong initiative for the sacrificed pawn.

4.d4

Since the c6-square is not available to the b8-knight, the queen would be relatively stable on d4, which makes this pawn break well-timed.

With the centre under tension, a wide range of structures may arise and I will explain the basic ideas in the introductory part of each of the individual lines.

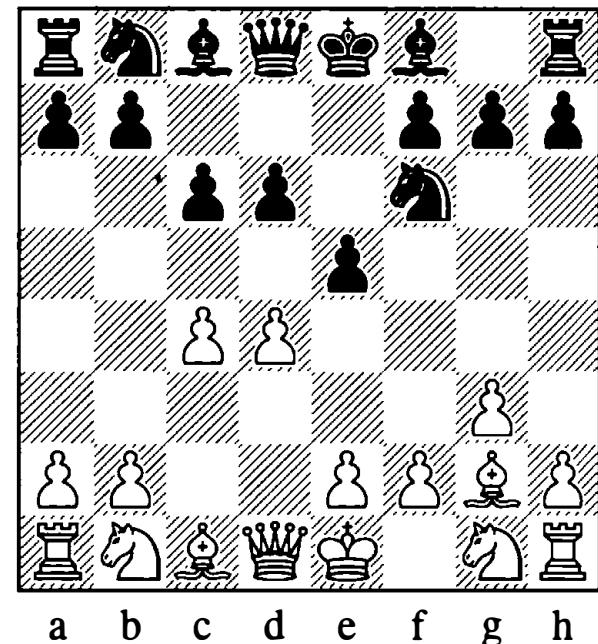
In *Dangerous Weapons: Flank Openings*, Palliser includes this variation and that from Chapter 32 in a category he names “Kostenites”, because they were recommended by Kosten in his *The Dynamic English*. I grew up in Romania not England, so I associate these lines with the name of Mihai Suba, whose games against top class players (including a crushing win against Jan Timman) made an enormous contribution to the theoretical development of the move order based on 2.g3.



In this chapter, we will examine the relatively unpopular continuations **A) 4...d6** and **B) 4...e4**. In Chapter 27 we will deal with 4...♗b4†, aiming to consolidate on the dark squares in the spirit of the Bogo-Indian. The most popular continuation is **4...exd4**. Black gives up the centre and aims for rapid piece development, in the hope of taking advantage of the exposed position of the white queen. After **5.♗xd4** we have a further subdivision, **5...♘a6** (Chapter 28) and the main continuation **5...d5** (Chapter 29).

(1.c4 e5 2.g3 ♘f6 3.♗g2 c6 4.d4)

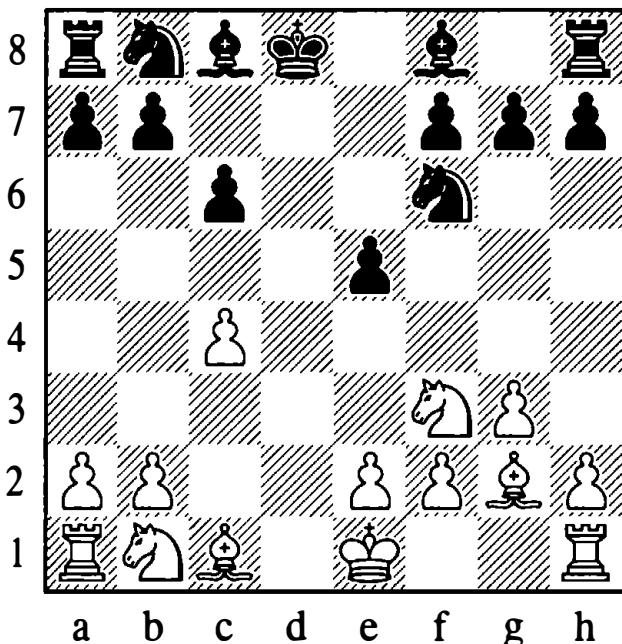
A) 4...d6



White's most principled way of reacting to this ultra-cautious move is to transpose to a genuine King's Indian or Old Indian, by playing 5.♘c3 followed by e2-e4 and ♘f3. These lines will be covered in Boris Avrukh's second volume of his repertoire based on 1.d4.

However, we will examine the only continuation that gives play an independent character, keeping the game in English paths.

5.dxe5 dxe5 6.♗xd8† ♘xd8 7.♘f3



Since Black has lost the right to castle, he will face some problems coordinating, but only rarely will there be a danger of a direct attack. The f7-square remains vulnerable and connecting rooks will require some time. White should take into account that in the event of excessive simplifications, Black's king would be well placed in the centre, offering him a better ending. Therefore, White should maintain the queenless middlegame character of the position.

If we compare with line A from Chapter 32, the knight does not stand well on f6, because it prevents the solid defence of the e5-pawn with ...f7-f6.

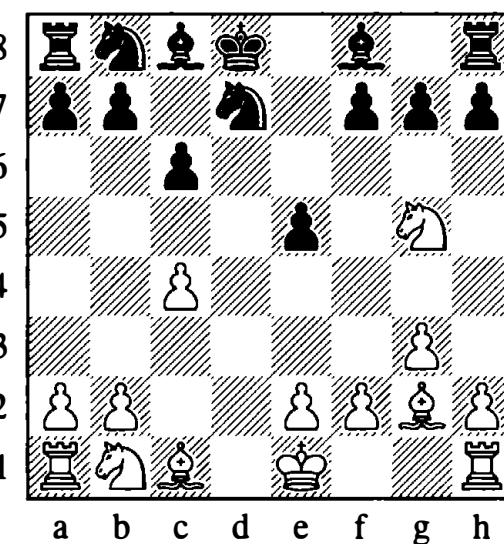
7...♗bd7

Black can also put the other knight on this square.

7...♘fd7

This looks more ambitious, allowing ...f7-f6. The drawback of this move is that it delays the development of the queenside.

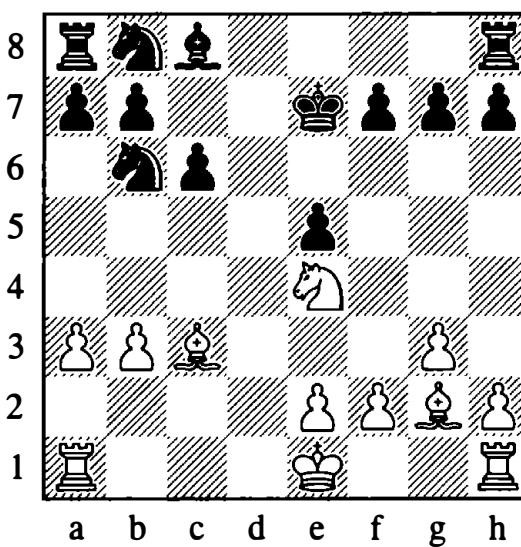
8.♘g5!



White does not even pretend that the f7-pawn is in danger. The purpose of the last move is to keep the enemy king far from the optimal c7-square and also to prevent ...f7-f6.

8...♔e8

8...♗b4† wins some time for regrouping, but exposes the bishop, putting the dark squares in some danger. 9.♘c3 ♔e7 10.♗d2 ♗b6 11.a3! White sacrifices the c4-pawn in order to force the exchange of the important bishop and obtain a strong initiative. 11...♗xc3 12.♗xc3 ♗xc4 13.b3 ♗b6 14.♗e4∞

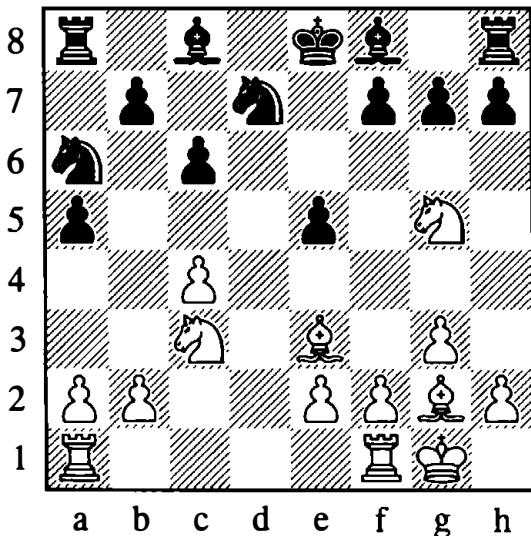


Black is badly underdeveloped, which leaves him struggling to parry the threats against his king. Despite the early exchange of queens, this is not an ending, which means the extra pawn is not so relevant.

9.0–0 a5

Black prepares a standard queenside set-up. 9...h6 weakens the g6-square and helps the knight return to a normal path. 10.♘f3 f6 11.♘h4± White plans ♘b1-c3 and f2-f4 with a strong initiative.

10.♘c3 ♘a6 11.♗e3



11...♘dc5

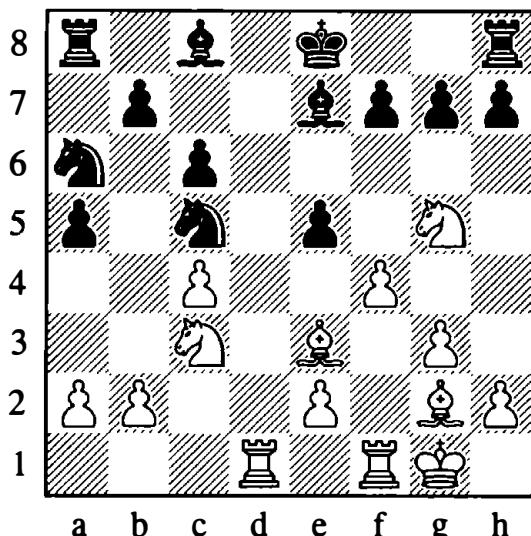
Black occupies the important c5-square and prepares the development of his c8-bishop.

11...♗c5 only exposes the bishop to 12.♘ce4. The exchange on e3 would leave the d6-square and the f7-pawn desperately weak.

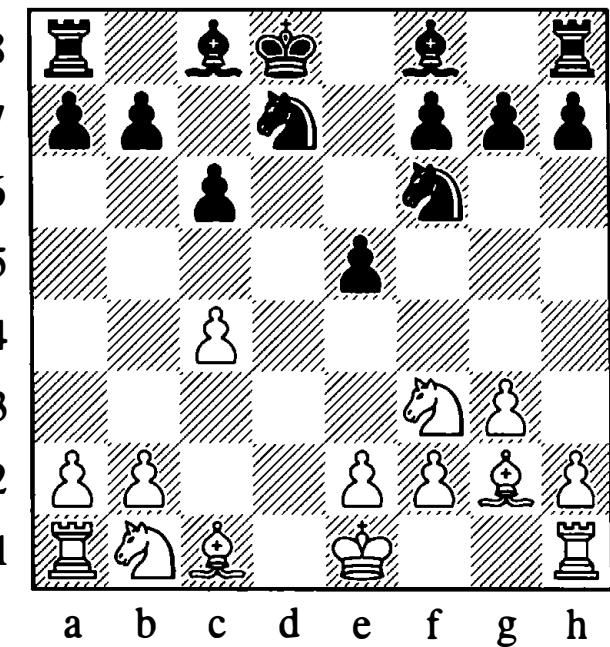
12.♗ad1

The immediate 12.f4!? is also possible.

12...♗e7 13.f4



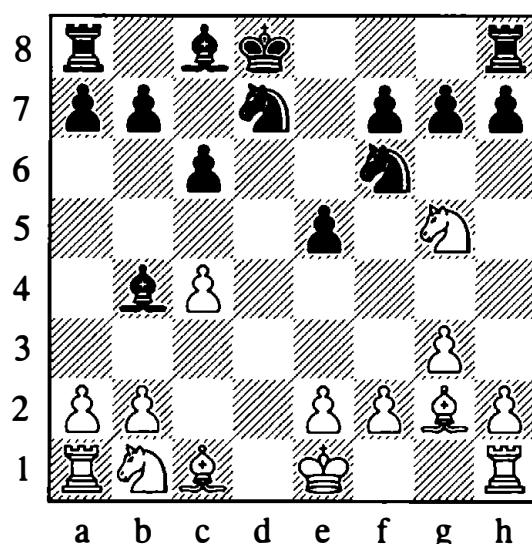
After having completed his development, White opens the centre. Black is in serious trouble, because his wandering king disrupts the coordination of his forces.



8.0–0!N

This is the most precise move order. Since Black is not threatening ...f7-f6, allowing the check on b4 does not make sense. However, even in that case, White would still be better:

8.♘g5 ♗b4†



9.♘c3!N

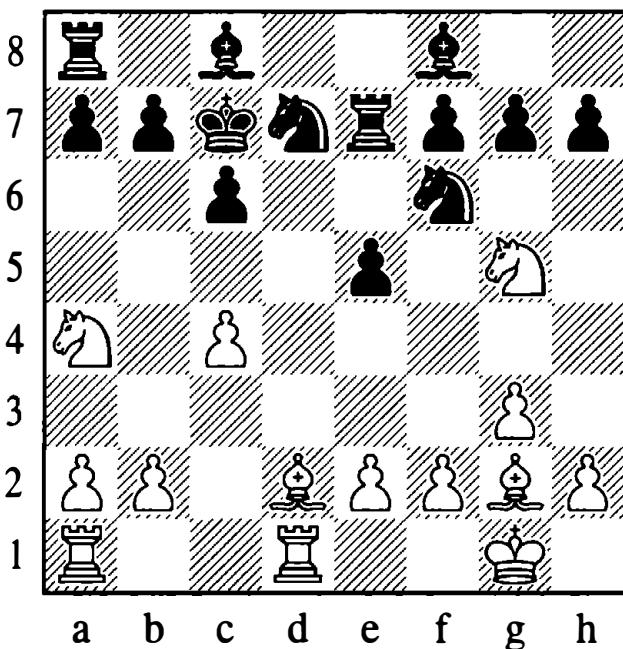
Exchanging bishops would guarantee the enemy king absolute stability on e7: 9.♗d2?! ♗xd2† 10.♘xd2 ♔e7 11.♗d1 ♘c5 12.♗ge4 ♘fxe4 13.♗xe4 ♘xe4 14.♗xe4 ♗e6 15.b3 f5 Black has a space advantage in the centre

and a centralized king, Koshy – Zagrebelny, Kuala Lumpur 1993.

9... $\mathbb{Q}e7$ 10. $\mathbb{Q}d2\pm$

Black is better developed than in the similar line from the comment on the 7th move, but White still has the more active position.

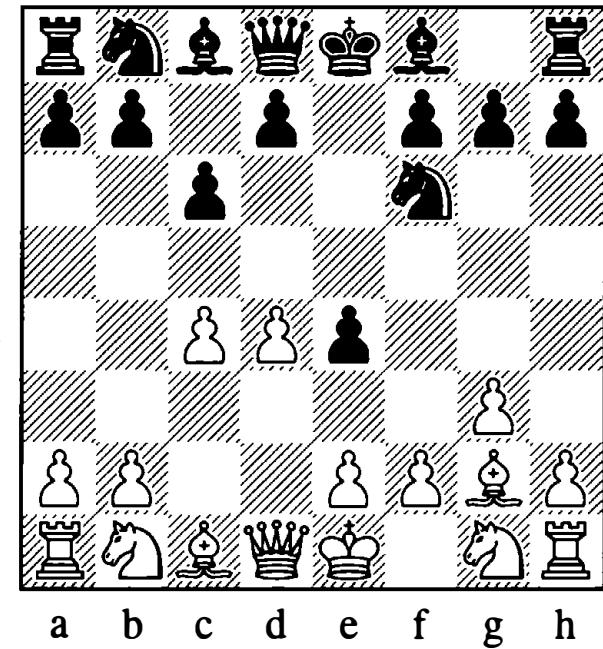
8... $\mathbb{Q}c5$ 9. $\mathbb{Q}c3$ $\mathbb{Q}c7$ 10. $\mathbb{Q}d1$ $\mathbb{Q}e8$ 11. $\mathbb{Q}a4$ $\mathbb{Q}f8$
12. $\mathbb{Q}g5$ $\mathbb{Q}e7$ 13. $\mathbb{Q}d2$



White has achieved a considerable lead in development. His plan consists of $\mathbb{Q}a1-c1$, $b2-b4$ and $f2-f4$, with an initiative that stretches across the whole board.

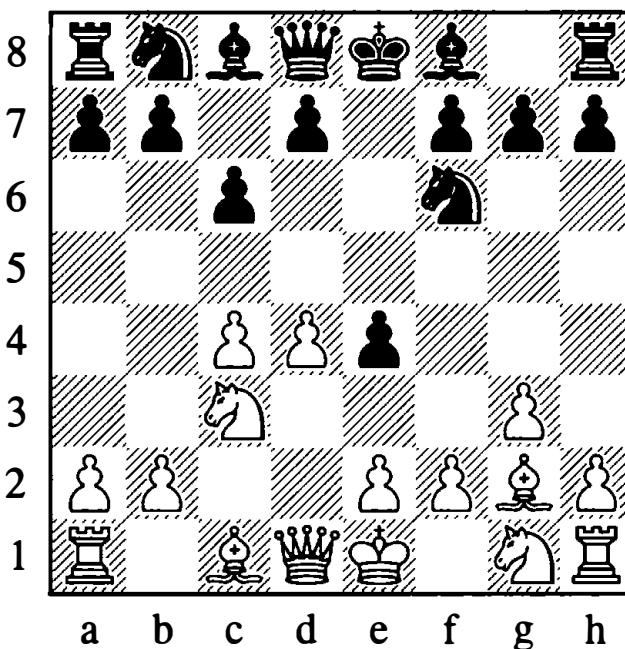
(1.c4 e5 2.g3 $\mathbb{Q}f6$ 3. $\mathbb{Q}g2$ c6 4.d4)

B) 4...e4



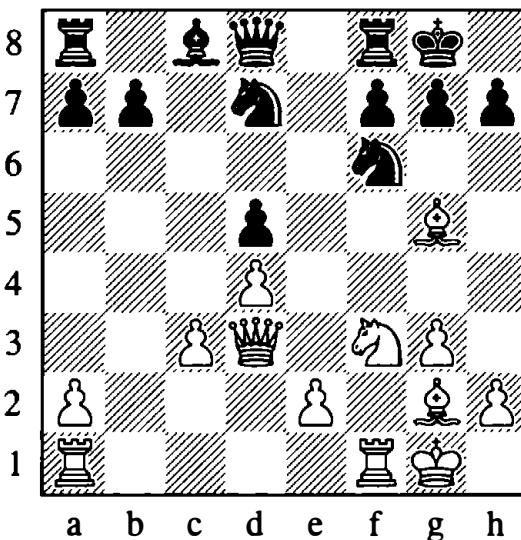
Closing the centre at this stage is premature. In the resulting reversed French structure, White obtains strong pressure against the e4- and d5-pawns.

5. $\mathbb{Q}c3$

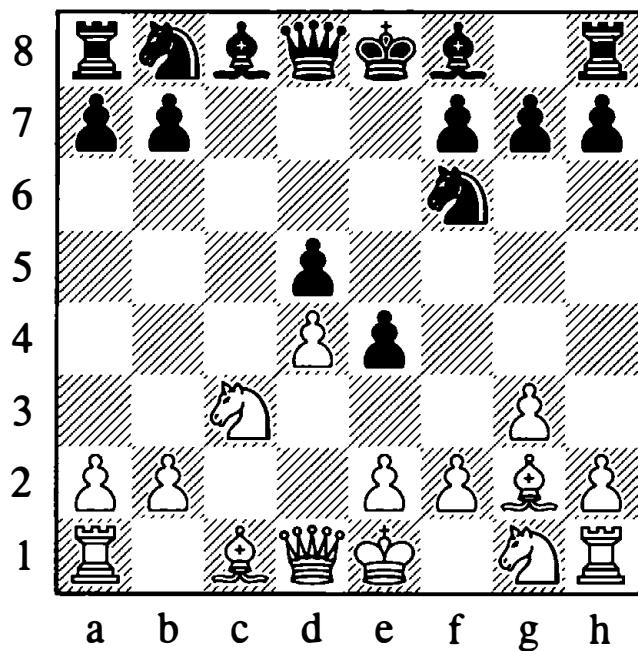


5...d5

Black can delay ...d7-d5 but it must be played at some point, because of the vulnerability of the e4-pawn. For example: 5... $\mathbb{Q}b4$ 6. $\mathbb{Q}g5$ d5 7.cxd5 $\mathbb{Q}xc3\ddagger$ This is the only way to prevent a transposition to the main line. 8.bxc3 cxd5 9.f3 exf3 10. $\mathbb{Q}xf3$ 0–0 11.0–0 $\mathbb{Q}bd7$ 12. $\mathbb{W}d3\pm$

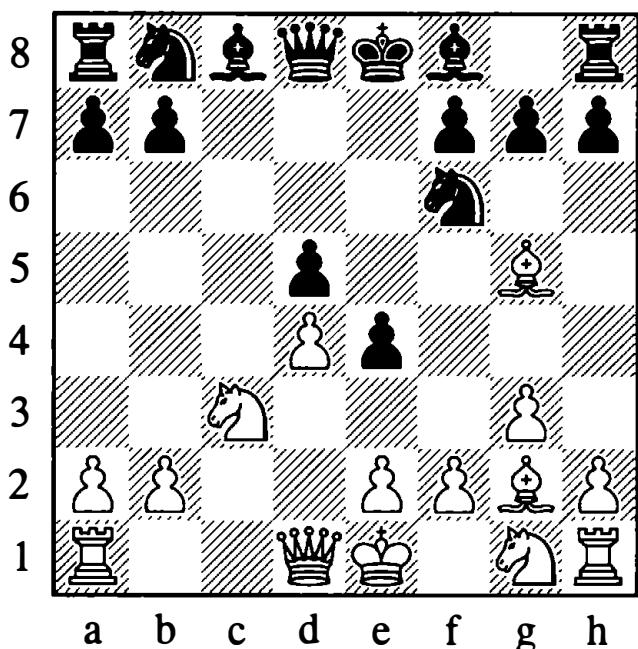


Since Black is behind in development, he cannot keep control of the c4- and e4-squares, which leaves White with an advantage in the centre.

6.cxd5 cxd5**7.♗g5**

White threatens to spoil Black's structure with ♘xf6. In the event of neutral developing moves from Black, White will most likely increase the pressure against the d5-pawn with ♜d1-b3.

The g2-bishop is only temporarily locked out of play, because of the possibility of breaking in the centre with f2-f3. The king's knight has two possibilities of development – it can either go to h3-f4, or, after f2-f3 ...e4xf3, to f3 and later to e5.

**7...♝b4**

Black has another way to save his structure:

7...♝bd7

This was played in Braga – Delgado, Rio de Janeiro 2003.

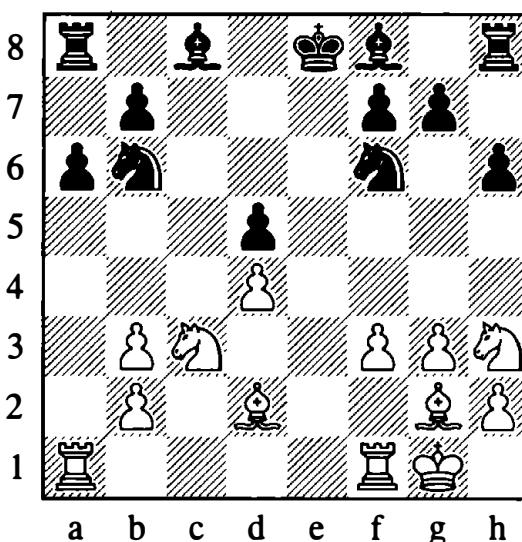
8.♛b3!N ♛b6

Black has to exchange the active white queen.

Harassing the bishop with 8...h6?! is ineffective. 9.♕f4 g5 10.♕e5 ♔e7 11.0–0–0† Apart from the vulnerability of the d5-pawn, Black has problems finding a safe place for his king.

9.♘h3 ♛xb3

9...♛xd4 would leave Black badly underdeveloped after 10.♘f4†.

10.axb3 h6 11.♕d2 a6 12.0–0 ♘b6 13.f3 exf3**14.exf3±**

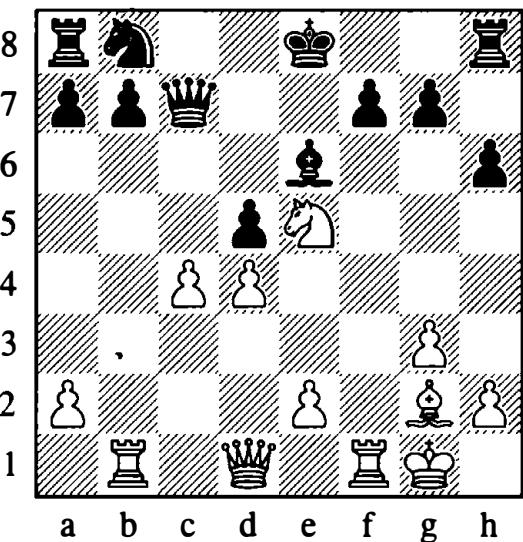
Black has parried the immediate threats, but is still lagging behind in development. White can combine the transfer of the h3-knight to e5 or c5 with a slow kingside expansion involving g3-g4.

8.♜c1

This is a strong move, preparing to activate the rook after the predictable exchange on c3.

8.f3 exf3 9.♘xf3, aiming for rapid kingside development, is also possible. 9...h6? (This loses too much time. 9...♞xc3† 10.bxc3 0–0 was better, transposing to the note to Black's 5th move.) 10.♕xf6 ♛xf6 11.0–0 ♛xc3 12.♘e5

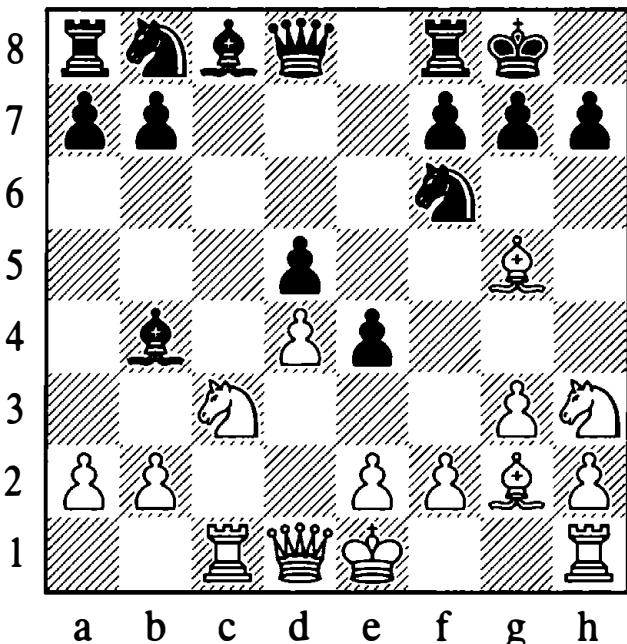
$\mathbb{W}b6$ 13. $bxc3$ $\mathbb{Q}e6$ 14. $\mathbb{B}b1$ $\mathbb{W}c7$ 15. $c4$



Black is desperately underdeveloped and his centre is under unbearable pressure.

In Danielsen – Bronowicki, Poland 2008, Black immediately resigned.

8...0–0 9. $\mathbb{Q}h3$



Black faces a difficult choice: to allow $\mathbb{Q}h3-f4$ or exchange the knight.

9... $\mathbb{Q}bd7$

Let's see what happens if Black exchanges the knight:

9... $\mathbb{Q}xh3$ 10. $\mathbb{Q}xh3$

This hits the c8-square and thus deprives Black of the possibility of fighting for the only open file.

10... $\mathbb{Q}c6$ 11. 0–0 $\mathbb{Q}e7$

Black has to parry the threat of $\mathbb{Q}xf6$, which would spoil his kingside structure.

A more radical way to do so would be 11... $\mathbb{Q}xc3$ 12. $\mathbb{B}xc3$ $h6$, but after 13. $\mathbb{Q}e3\pm$ White has a powerful pair of bishops, pressure along the c-file and the possibility of opening the centre with f2-f3.

12. $e3$

White defends the d4-pawn in order to threaten $\mathbb{W}d1-b3$.

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

Black tries to exchange bishops, hoping to relieve his position.

Instead 12... $h6$ 13. $\mathbb{Q}xf6$ $\mathbb{Q}xf6$ 14. $\mathbb{W}b3$ $\mathbb{Q}e7$ would lose a pawn to 15. $\mathbb{W}xb7$ $\mathbb{B}b8$ 16. $\mathbb{W}xa7\pm$.

13. $\mathbb{Q}f4!$

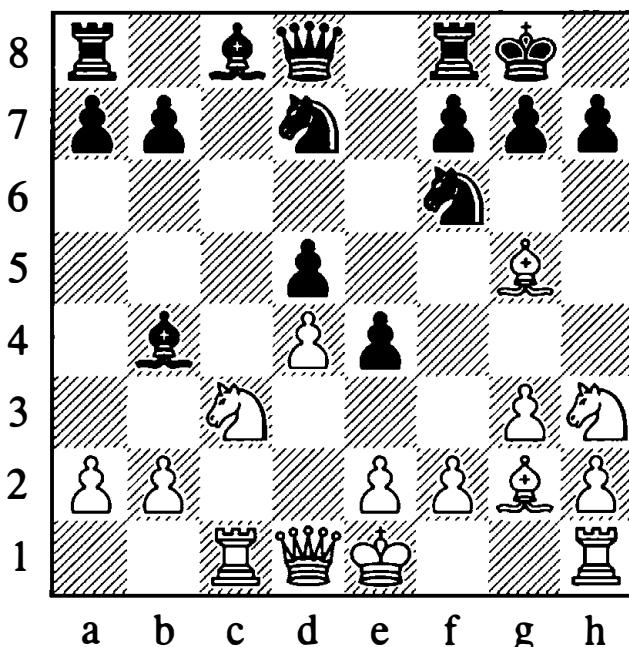
White has a small tactical trick that allows him to avoid the exchange.

13... $\mathbb{Q}b6$

13... $g5$ can be met by 14. $\mathbb{Q}xd5\pm$ when 14... $gxf4$ does not win a piece because of 15. $\mathbb{W}g4\#$.

14. $\mathbb{Q}b5\pm$

Black's queenside is being submitted to strong pressure from all White's minor pieces.



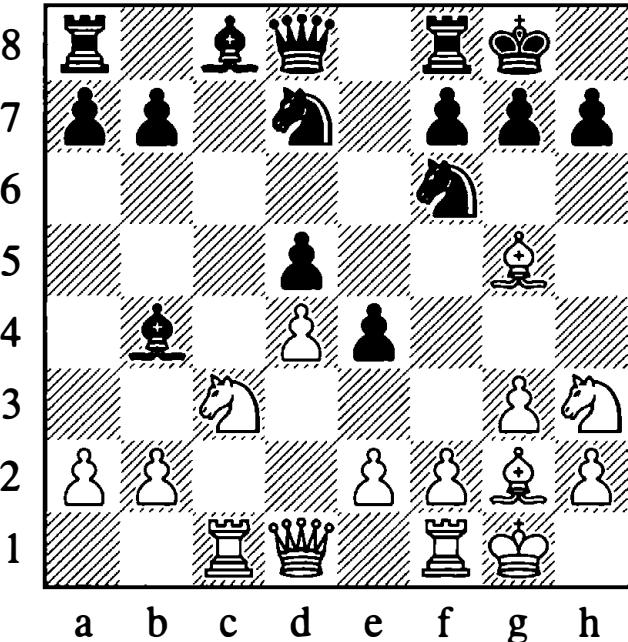
10. 0–0!

White continues developing naturally, creating the threat of $\mathbb{Q}c3xd5$. He should not hurry to force the b4-bishop to define its

intentions, because Black's ... $\mathbb{Q}b4xc3$ will most probably be necessary anyway.

Instead, 10. $\mathbb{W}b3$?! prematurely defines the queen's position. 10... $\mathbb{Q}xc3\#$ 11. $\mathbb{B}xc3$ h6 12. $\mathbb{Q}f4$ $\mathbb{W}b6$?! After this move, White's strategy will be entirely justified. 13. $\mathbb{W}xb6$ $\mathbb{Q}xb6$ 14.b3 Since it has been deprived of the c4-square, the knight stands badly on b6. 14... $\mathbb{Q}d7$ 15. $\mathbb{Q}d2$ $\mathbb{E}fc8$ 16. $\mathbb{B}c5$ $\mathbb{Q}c6$ 17.f3 exf3 18.exf3 $\mathbb{E}e8$ 19. $\mathbb{B}hc1$ $\mathbb{E}e6$ 20.g4 g5 21. $\mathbb{Q}g3\pm$ White has enduring pressure all over the board, E. Ragozin – Povah, London 1994.

Instead of 12... $\mathbb{W}b6$!?, Black could have taken advantage of the unfortunate placement of the white queen with 12... $\mathbb{Q}b6$!N. The possibility of ... $\mathbb{Q}b6-c4$ offers Black good chances in the fight for the c-file.



10... $\mathbb{Q}b6$

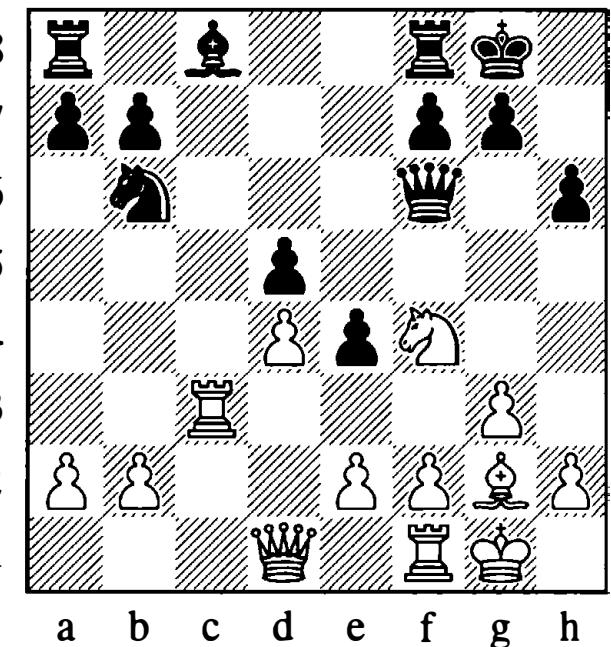
In the recent game Marin – N.V. Pedersen, Benasque 2009, my opponent immediately gave up the bishop with 10... $\mathbb{Q}xc3$. After 11. $\mathbb{B}xc3$ h6 12. $\mathbb{Q}f4$ $\mathbb{W}e7$ 13. $\mathbb{W}d2$ White was comfortably better, and I eventually won.

11. $\mathbb{Q}f4$ $\mathbb{Q}xc3$

Black has to give in, since 11... $\mathbb{Q}e7$ 12. $\mathbb{W}b3$ leaves the d5-pawn in danger.

12. $\mathbb{B}xc3$ h6 13. $\mathbb{Q}xf6$ $\mathbb{W}xf6$

Black has managed to reduce the pressure against the d5-pawn and almost completed his development.



14.f3!

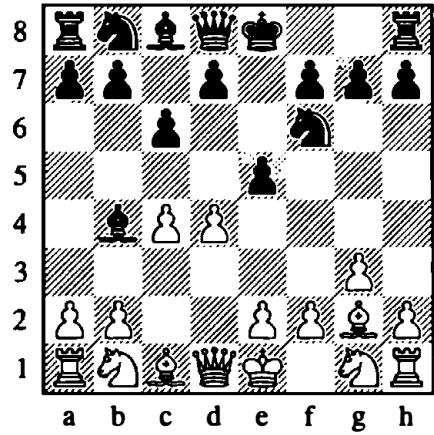
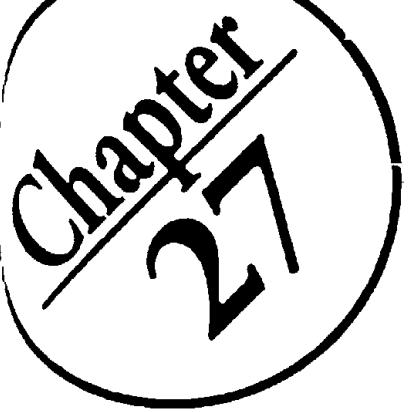
White immediately takes advantage of the exposed position of the enemy queen, in order to gain time to develop his initiative. It also makes sense to play 14.a4, and only after 14...a5 open the centre with 15.f3.

14...exf3 15. $\mathbb{Q}xf3$ $\mathbb{W}d6$ 16. $\mathbb{W}b3$ $\mathbb{Q}e6$ 17. $\mathbb{B}fc1\pm$

White is better developed and his strong pressure against the d5-pawn prevents Black from successfully fighting for the c-file.

Conclusion:

Line A leaves Black with development problems, while White also has a reasonable alternative in transposing to a King's Indian or Old Indian. Line B prematurely releases the tension and places Black at risk of becoming over-extended.



Keres Variation

4...♝b4†

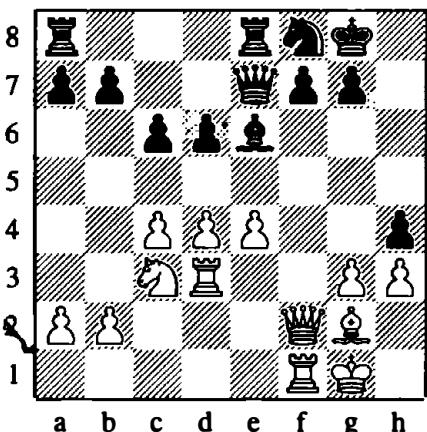
Variation Index

1.c4 e5 2.g3 ♝f6 3.♗g2 c6 4.d4

4...♝b4† 5.♗d2 ♜xd2† 6.♛xd2 d6 7.♗c3 0-0 8.e3

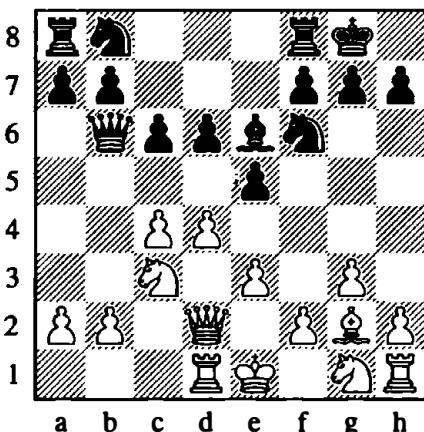
A) 8...♛e7	p 356
B) 8...♝e6 9.♝d1!	p 359
B1) 9...♛b6	p 360
B2) 9...♛a5	p 361
B3) 9...♝a6	p 362
C) 8...♝bd7 9.♝ge2 ♛e7 10.h3	p 364
C1) 10...♝b6	p 364
C2) 10...♝e8	p 366

A) after 19...♝xe6



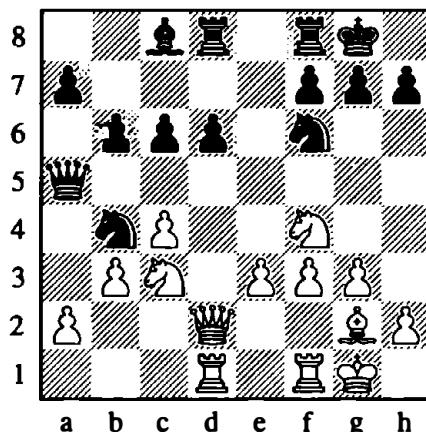
20.b3N!

B1) 9...♛b6



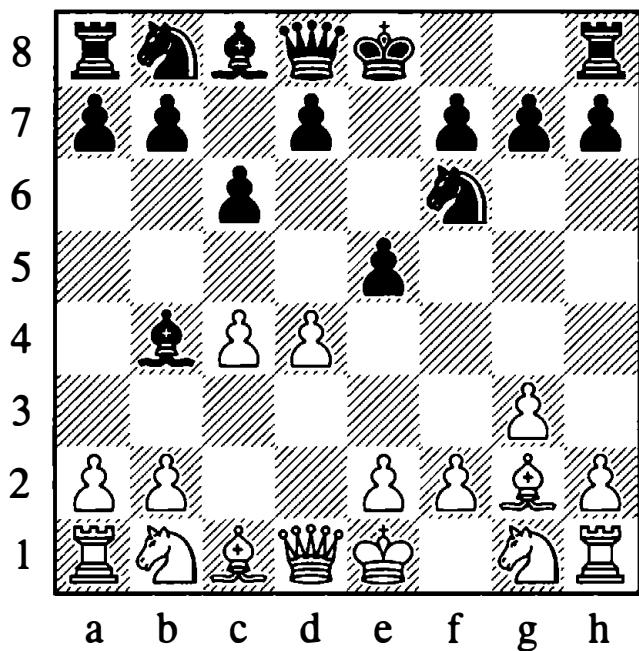
10.b3!N

B3) after 16...b6



17.♝fe1!N

1.c4 e5 2.g3 ♘f6 3.♗g2 c6 4.d4 ♗b4†



This is one of Black's safest continuations. After exchanging the dark-squared bishops, he will adopt a dark-squared strategy that is similar to some variations of the Bogo-Indian. The drawback of this line is that it is rather passive and offers Black few possibilities for counterplay.

5.♗d2 ♗xd2† 6.♕xd2 d6

This is the most consistent move, consolidating on the dark squares. Two other moves deserve to be mentioned though.

6...exd4

This gives up the centre in the hope that after the white queen's "inevitable" recapture on d4, Black will develop with gain of time. This hope was fulfilled in a few games which continued 7.♕xd4 d5 8.cxd5 cxd5 9.♘c3 ♘c6, followed by ...0–0 and ...♗e6.

But I prefer:

7.♘f3!

This has been played only once so far. White develops a piece and intends to occupy the d4-square with a knight rather than with the queen, which would offer White more stability.

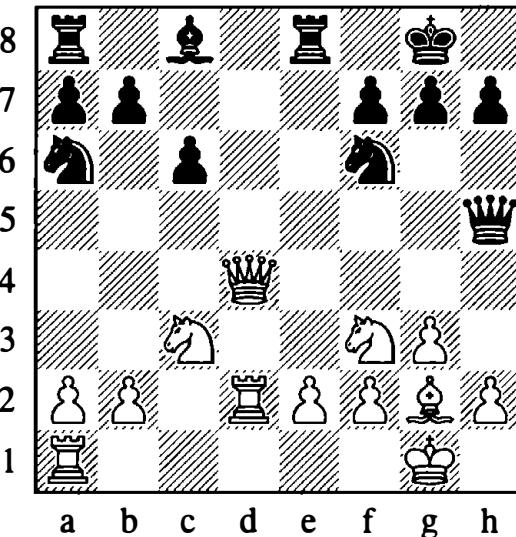
7...d5

After this cautious move White has no

problems in retaining a small plus.

The experienced grandmaster playing Black understood perfectly well the dangers that would be connected with the greedy 7...c5. White then eliminates one of the important c5- and g7-pawns with 8.♗g5!. The following line illustrates the problems Black would face. These problems are not spotted by the engines until it is too late! 8...♗b6 9.♗xg7 ♜g8 10.♗h6 ♜xb2 11.0–0 By removing the possibility of ...♗c1#, White creates the threat of ♜xf6. 11...♗g6 12.♗f4 ♜xal 13.♗e5† ♔d8 14.♗g5± Despite his extra rook, Black has no good defence.

8.cxd5 ♜xd5 9.♗xd4 0–0 10.♘c3 ♜h5 11.0–0 ♘a6 12.♗fd1 ♜e8 13.♗d2±

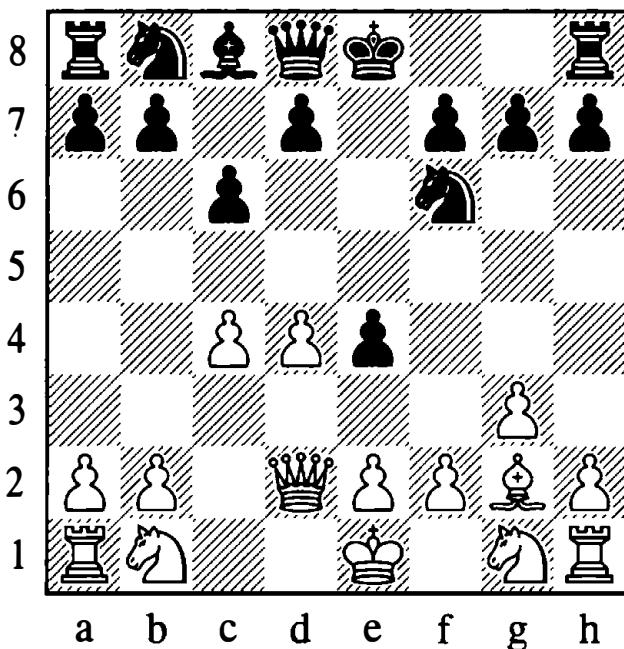


Black cannot challenge White's domination of the only open file, Stryjecki – Eingorn, Cappelle la Grande 2000. In this line, 10...♗xd4 may have offered Black better chances of equality, but White can improve earlier with 9.0–0 c5 10.e3, regaining the pawn and retaining a lead in development.

6...e4

This move has been employed by strong players. After the exchange of dark-squared bishops, Black's pawns being blocked on light squares should favour White from a strategic point of view, but the absence of the threat of ♜g5 secures Black greater stability than in the lines from the previous chapter. Indeed,

Black has been doing quite well after 7. $\mathbb{Q}c3$
d5, so I prefer the untested:



7.c5!N

This prevents Black from consolidating his e4-pawn.

7...0–0

After 7...d5 8.cxd6 $\mathbb{W}xd6$ 9. $\mathbb{Q}c3$ $\mathbb{Q}f5$ 10. $\mathbb{W}g5$ Black has a choice between 10...g6 11.f3 exf3 12. $\mathbb{Q}xf3\pm$ and 10... $\mathbb{Q}g6$ 11. $\mathbb{W}e5\ddagger$ but both leave the initiative in White's hands.

Black would not succeed in undermining the c5-pawn with 7...b6 8. $\mathbb{Q}c3$ bxc5 9.dxc5 $\mathbb{Q}a6$ because of 10.b4! decoying his knight. 10... $\mathbb{Q}xb4$ 11. $\mathbb{Q}xe4$ $\mathbb{Q}xe4$ 12. $\mathbb{W}xb4\pm$

8.f3

The text move secures a stable advantage in the centre.

After 8. $\mathbb{Q}c3$ $\mathbb{Q}e8$ it would be too late for 9.f3 because of 9...e3!, but 9. $\mathbb{W}f4$ $\mathbb{Q}d5$ 10. $\mathbb{Q}xd5$ cxd5 11. $\mathbb{Q}h3$ is still slightly more pleasant for White, because of his chances of reaching an ending against a bad bishop.

8...d6 9.cxd6 exf3 10. $\mathbb{Q}xf3$ $\mathbb{W}xd6$ 11.0–0 $\mathbb{Q}e6$

Black's development is not good enough to fight for the e4-square.

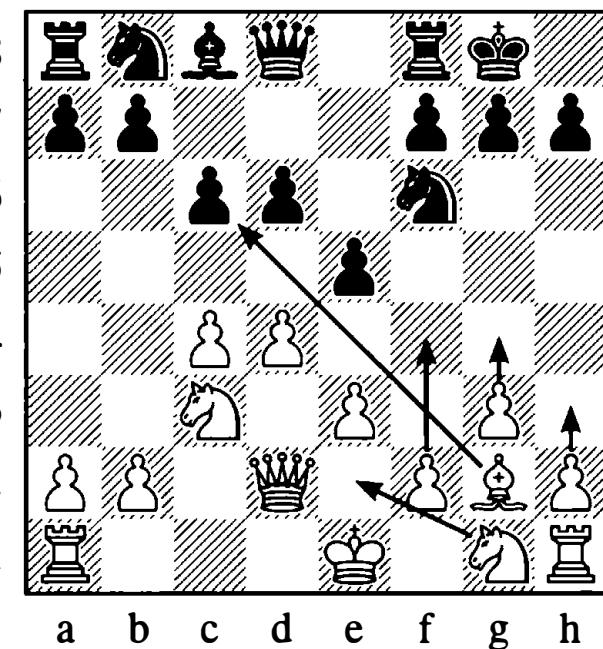
12. $\mathbb{Q}c3$ $\mathbb{Q}bd7$ 13.e4±

White is well developed and has a strong centre.

7. $\mathbb{Q}c3$ 0–0 8.e3

White prepares to develop the g1-knight to e2, and leaves the long diagonal open in order to prevent queenside counterplay based on ...a7-a6 and ...b7-b5. At the same time, he over-defends the f4-square, in order to allow a slow kingside expansion, based on h2-h3, g3-g4 and f2-f4.

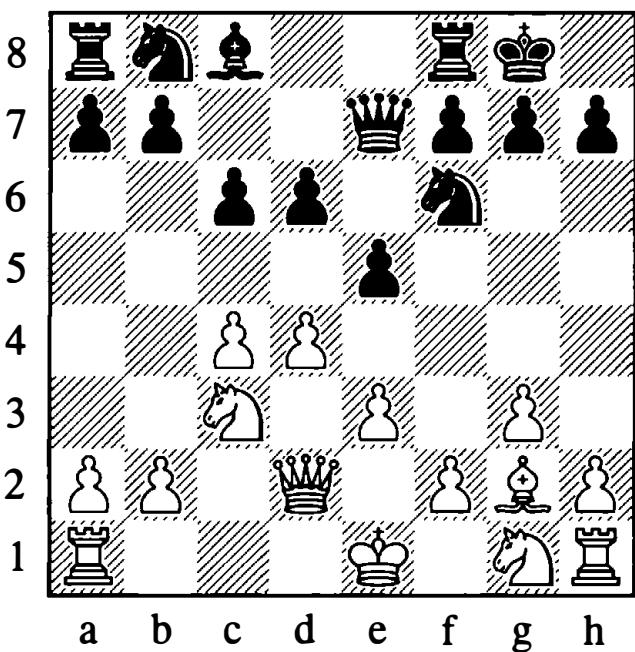
After the apparently more active 8.e4 $\mathbb{Q}bd7$ 9. $\mathbb{Q}ge2$ a6 10.0–0 b5, White cannot advantageously stabilize the position.



development. 13... $\mathbb{Q}g4$ 14. $\mathbb{B}f4$ $\mathbb{Q}c6$ 15. $\mathbb{B}af1$ $\mathbb{Q}xe2?$ Black was already worse and was understandably worried about an exchange sacrifice on f6, but this is disastrous. 16. $\mathbb{W}xe2$ $\mathbb{B}e6$ 17.g4 White was winning as g4-g5 cannot be prevented.

(1.c4 e5 2.g3 $\mathbb{Q}f6$ 3. $\mathbb{B}g2$ c6 4.d4 $\mathbb{B}b4+$ 5. $\mathbb{Q}d2$ $\mathbb{Q}xd2+$ 6. $\mathbb{W}xd2$ d6 7. $\mathbb{Q}c3$ 0-0 8.e3)

A) 8... $\mathbb{W}e7$

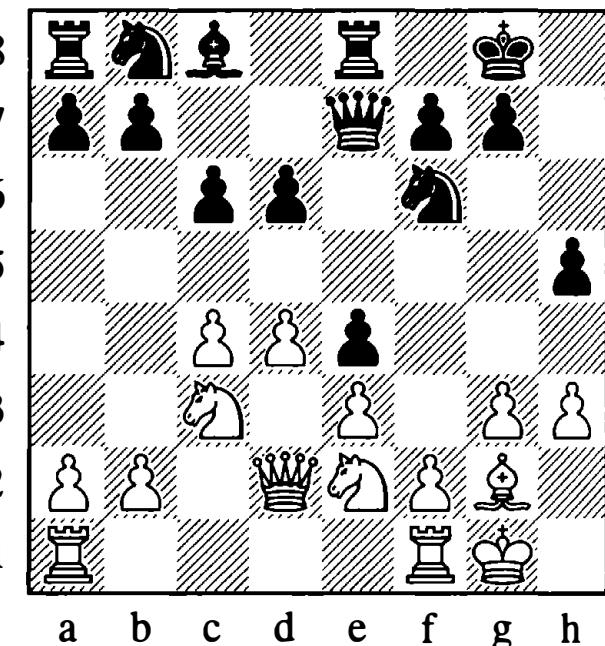


Black intends to make every useful move he can with the exception of ... $\mathbb{Q}b8-d7$, in order to keep the c8-bishop's diagonal open. This will allow him to fight against White's main plan with ...h7-h5, ...e5-e4 and ... $\mathbb{Q}c8-f5$.

9. $\mathbb{Q}ge2$ $\mathbb{B}e8$

9... $\mathbb{Q}a6$ is typical for the King's Indian structure, but here it is slightly passive and fails to put pressure on White's centre. 10.h3 $\mathbb{B}e8$ 11.0-0 $\mathbb{Q}e6$ 12.b3 $\mathbb{B}ad8$ 13. $\mathbb{B}ae1$ $\mathbb{Q}c8$ 14.g4 After having concentrated all his forces on the kingside, White is ready for his planned expansion. 14...h6 15. $\mathbb{Q}g3\pm$ After f2-f4, Black will be under strong pressure, Nogueiras – Illescas, Moscow (ol) 1994.

10.h3 h5 11.0-0 e4



12.f4!

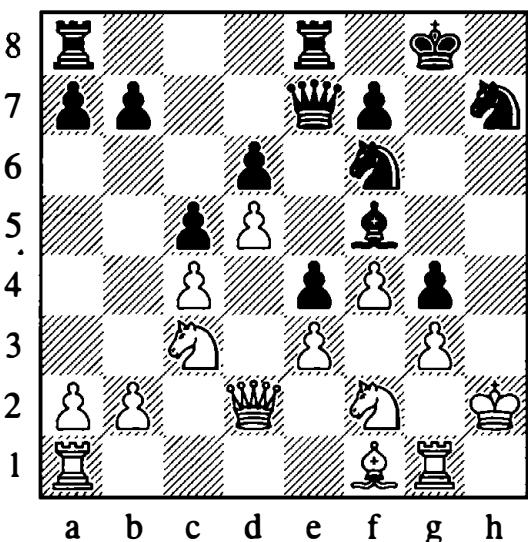
White needs to eliminate the weakness of the f3-square before Black completes his development. The weakness of the e3-pawn after ...e4xf3 is not important, precisely because of White's better mobilization.

The text move is much stronger than 12.f3, which can be answered with 12... $\mathbb{Q}f5!$ allowing Black to consolidate on the light squares. White could still retain the better position with 13.f4, with similar play as in the next comment, but this would unnecessarily lose a tempo.

12...exf3

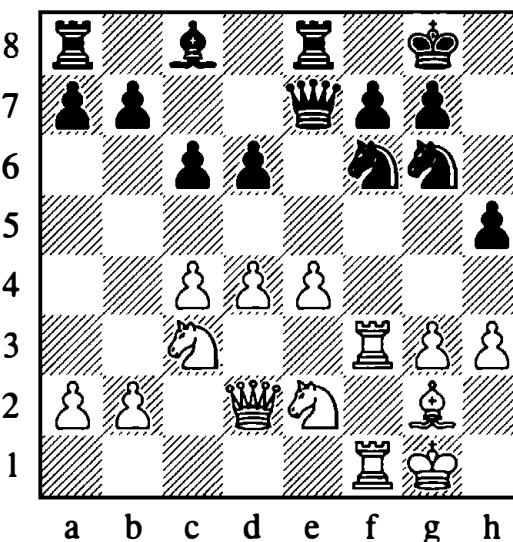
Opening the kingside is risky with all the queenside pieces on their initial squares, but if Black allows the position to remain blocked he would most likely be suffocated.

12... $\mathbb{Q}f5$ Black parries the threat of f4-f5 and intends to strengthen his centre with ...d6-d5. 13.d5 c5 14. $\mathbb{Q}d1!$ This is the start of a slow but effective regrouping that prepares pawn breaks on both wings. Black's structure is not flexible enough to counter this plan. 14... $\mathbb{Q}bd7$ 15. $\mathbb{Q}ec3$ $\mathbb{Q}f8$ 16. $\mathbb{Q}f2$ $\mathbb{Q}8h7$ 17. $\mathbb{Q}h2$ The next steps of White's plans are $\mathbb{B}f1-g1$ and $\mathbb{B}f1-e2$. 17...g5 This pawn break prevents White's initial plan, but fails to solve the kingside problems. 18. $\mathbb{B}g1$ g4 19.hxg4 hxg4 20. $\mathbb{Q}f1\pm$



White plans $\mathbb{Q}e2$, $\mathbb{Q}g2$ and $\mathbb{Q}h1-h4$. If necessary, he could also open the queenside with b2-b4.

12...g6 was played in Talla – Dydushko, Ostrava 2005. 13.d5!N c5 14. $\mathbb{Q}d1\pm$ White will play as in the previous line, with $\mathbb{Q}e2-c3$, $\mathbb{Q}d1-f2$, etc.



16. $\mathbb{Q}xf6!$ $\mathbb{Q}xf6$ 17. $\mathbb{Q}h6$ White will get at least a pawn for the sacrificed exchange, while the enemy king will always be in danger.

14. $\mathbb{Q}f4$ h4

Black is trying to weaken the dark squares around the white king.

Long before the game mentioned below was played, I carried out the following “handmade” analysis, which was later confirmed by the engines:

14... $\mathbb{Q}g5$ 15. $\mathbb{Q}f1$ $\mathbb{Q}xe3\ddagger$

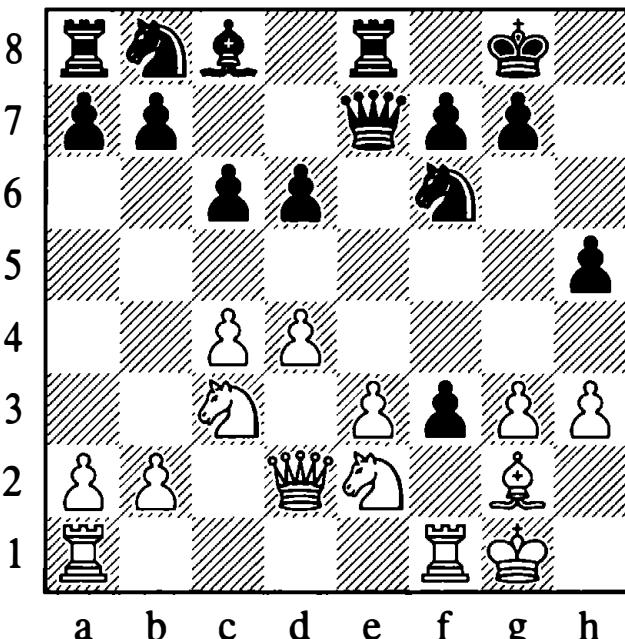
This is the critical continuation.

After other moves, White consolidates his centre: 15... $\mathbb{Q}d7$ 16. $\mathbb{Q}ae1\pm$ or 15... $\mathbb{Q}f5$ 16.e4!±.

16. $\mathbb{Q}xe3$ $\mathbb{Q}xe3$ 17. $\mathbb{Q}h2!$

Since White is so well developed, he can afford to spend a move on prophylaxis. By defending the h3- and g3-pawns, he threatens $\mathbb{Q}xh5$.

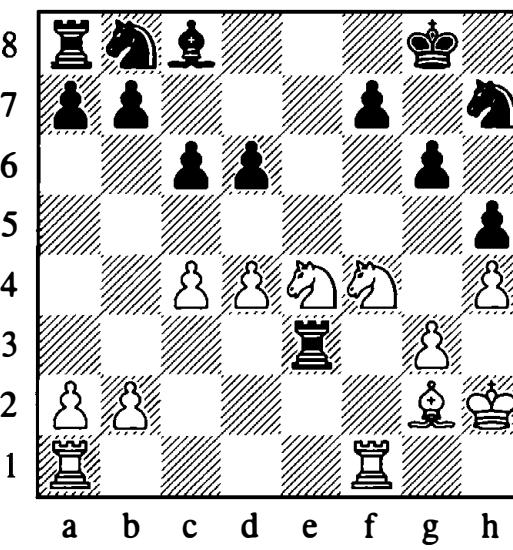
17...g6 18.h4 $\mathbb{Q}h7$ 19. $\mathbb{Q}e4\pm$



13. $\mathbb{Q}xf3$ $\mathbb{Q}h7$

Black tries to take advantage of the relative weakness of White’s kingside, but neglects his own development on the other wing.

The more logical 13... $\mathbb{Q}bd7$ would allow White to increase his pressure with 14. $\mathbb{Q}af1$ $\mathbb{Q}f8$ 15.e4 $\mathbb{Q}g6$. It may seem that Black has regrouped properly, but White’s superior mobilization allows him to start a sacrificial attack.

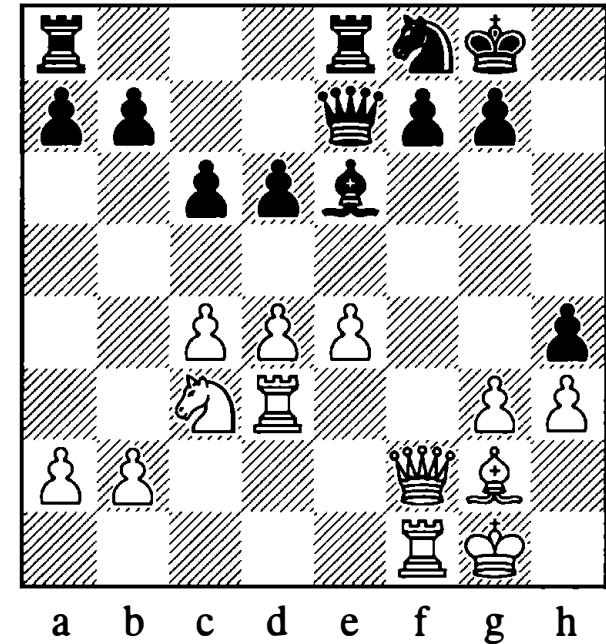


With both his wings vulnerable and the queenside undeveloped, Black is in trouble.

15.e4

White has gained space in the centre, but it is too early to foresee if he will manage to consolidate. In the next phase of the game both players will regroup logically.

15...Bg7 16.Baf1 Bdf8 17.Wf2 Bg5 18.Bd3 Bge6 19.Bxe6 Bxe6



20.b3!N

White keeps his centre intact, aiming to start an attack along the f- and g-files.

The hurried 20.d5?! led to unclear consequences after 20...Bd7 21.e5 dx5 22.d6 We6 23.Bd5 cxd5 24.Bxd5 Wf6 in Matamoros Franco – Conquest, Saint Vincent 2000.

20...Bg6

Black tries to maintain the tension. Taking on g3 would allow White to activate his pieces:

20...hxg3 21.Wxg3!

The queen puts the g7- and d6-pawns under pressure.

21...Bg6 22.d5! cxd5

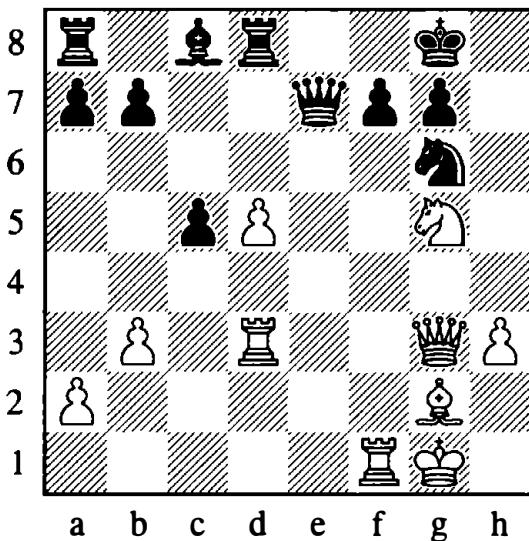
22...Bd7 loses the d6-pawn to 23.dxc6±.

23.exd5 Bc8

A sad necessity. The bishop returns to its initial square before the a8-rook has been developed.

Once again, 23...Bd7 leaves the d6-pawn vulnerable to 24.Be4±.

24.Be4 Bd8 25.c5 dxc5 26.Bg5±



23. $\mathbb{Q}f5!$

Generally speaking, this would be the optimal square for the knight, but White's strong pieces justify the sacrificial attack

23... $\mathbb{Q}xf5$

If Black rejects the sacrifice, White will increase his pressure with $\mathbb{Q}h5$ followed by $\mathbb{Q}d1-e3-f5$.

24.exf5 $\mathbb{Q}h8$

An awful square for the knight.

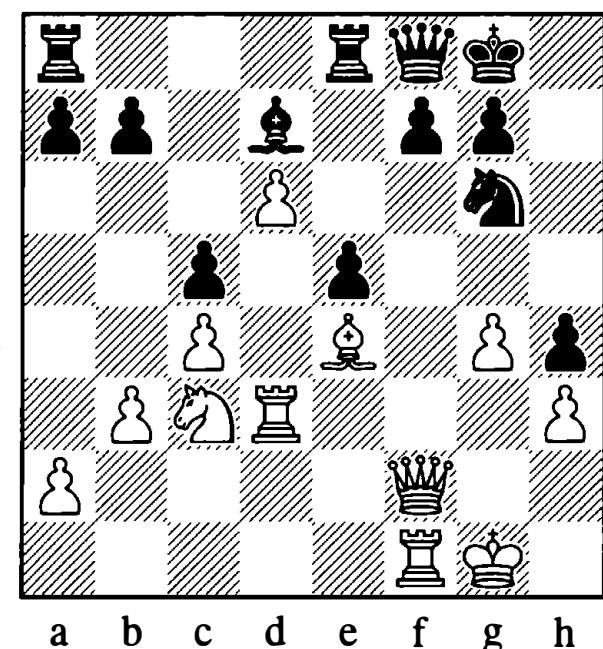
25. $\mathbb{Q}e1$ $\mathbb{W}f6$ 26. $\mathbb{Q}e4$ $\mathbb{W}h6$ 27.g5 $\mathbb{W}h7$ 28.f6±

Black has a material advantage, but his position is desperately passive.

22.e5!

White sacrifices a pawn rather than concede the e5-square. After this well-timed pawn break, his minor pieces become very active.

22...dxe5 23.d5 $\mathbb{Q}d7$ 24.d6 $\mathbb{W}f8$ 25. $\mathbb{Q}e4\ddagger$



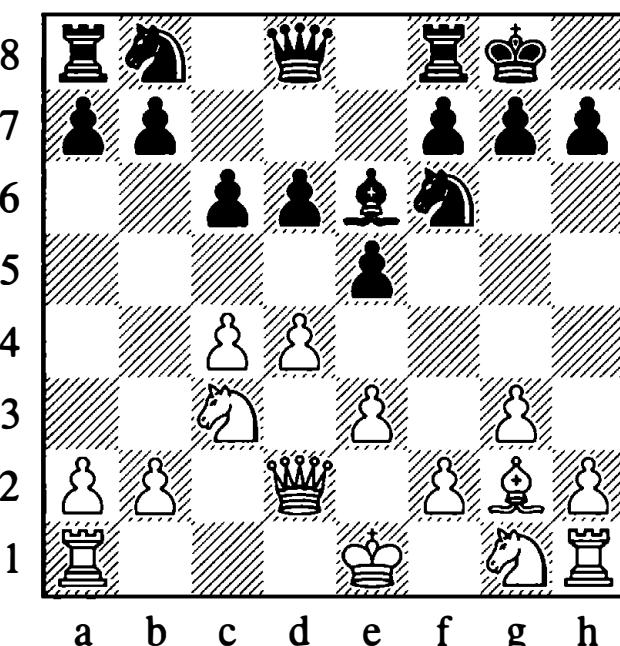
Black's position is strategically lost. The threats of $\mathbb{Q}xg6$ and $\mathbb{Q}d5$ are hard to meet, and Black cannot even make good use of his only trump, the f4-square:

25... $\mathbb{Q}f4$ 26. $\mathbb{W}xh4!$

White has regained his pawn and has a powerful attack.

(1.c4 e5 2.g3 $\mathbb{Q}f6$ 3. $\mathbb{Q}g2$ c6 4.d4 $\mathbb{Q}b4\ddagger$
5. $\mathbb{Q}d2$ $\mathbb{Q}xd2\ddagger$ 6. $\mathbb{W}xd2$ d6 7. $\mathbb{Q}c3$ 0-0 8.e3)

B) 8... $\mathbb{Q}e6$



This early attack against the vulnerable c4-pawn is wrongly considered by some to offer Black equality. It would be quite illogical if it did equalize, since it deviates from the standard developing order – first knights, then bishops...

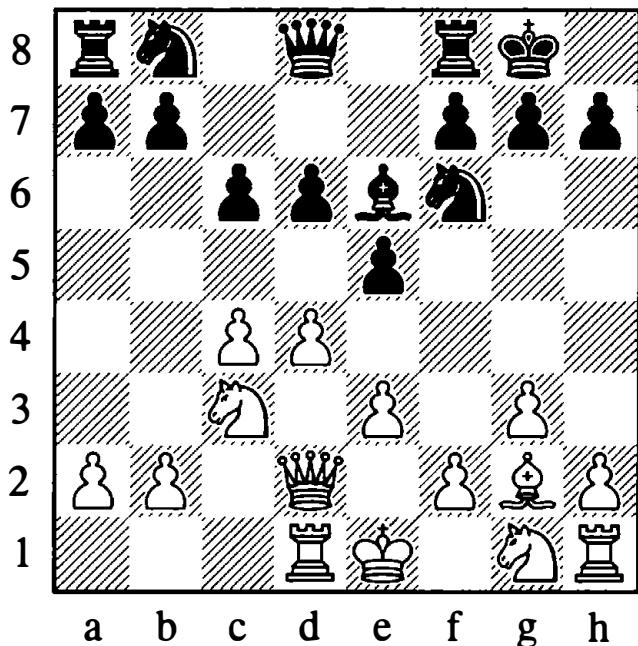
9. $\mathbb{Q}d1!$

This strong intermediate move is rarely seen in practice, but it is the only way to retain an advantage. White takes advantage of the enemy queen's lack of defenders, which is a direct consequence of the fact that Black has not developed his b8-knight yet!

The almost universally played 9.b3?! leads to approximate equality after: 9...exd4 10. $\mathbb{W}xd4$ (the near symmetrical position arising after 10.exd4 d5 11.c5 b6= causes Black no problems at all) 10...d5 11.cxd5 $\mathbb{Q}xd5$ 12. $\mathbb{Q}xd5$ $\mathbb{Q}xd5$ 13. $\mathbb{Q}xd5$ cxd5= Practice has proven that the relative weakness of the isolani is compensated by the weakness of the f3-square.

After 9. $\mathbb{Q}d1$, White will probably have to play b2-b3 one move later anyway, but the increased pressure along the d-file will offer him better prospects of consolidating.

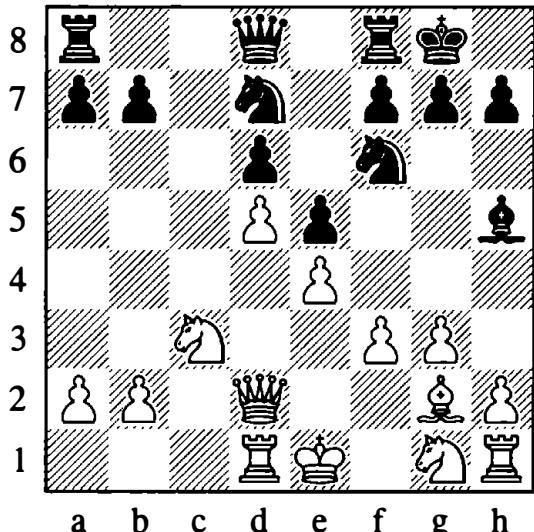
9.d5 is inoffensive because of 9...cxd5 10.cxd5 ♜d7 followed by ...♝b8-a6.



We shall examine B1) 9... $\mathbb{W}b6$, B2) 9... $\mathbb{W}a5N$ and B3) 9... $\mathfrak{Q}a6$.

9... $\hat{\text{Q}}$ x c 4 is bad because of 10.dxe5±.

9...♝bd7 cuts off the bishop's retreat, allowing 10.d5! (In fact, once the threat of ...d6-d5 has been removed, White can also play 10.b3 exd4 11.♛xd4 ♜a5 12.♝ge2 ♜c5 13.0-0 ♜ad8 14.♝f4 ♜c8 15.h3±. White has a space advantage and a solid position, Glud – Matthiesen, Skanderborg 2005.) 10...cxsd5 11.cxd5 ♜g4 12.f3 ♜h5 13.e4±



Black's bishop is completely out of play. One might argue that White also has a bad bishop, because many of his pawns are on light

squares, but that would be dogmatic thinking. The side that enjoys a space advantage rarely has a bad bishop, as greater space implies higher mobility for the pieces. In this specific example, the g2-bishop can emerge to h3, disrupting Black's fight for the only open file, or else be transferred to the f1-a6 diagonal if Black weakens his queenside with ...a5 or ...a6 followed by ...b5.

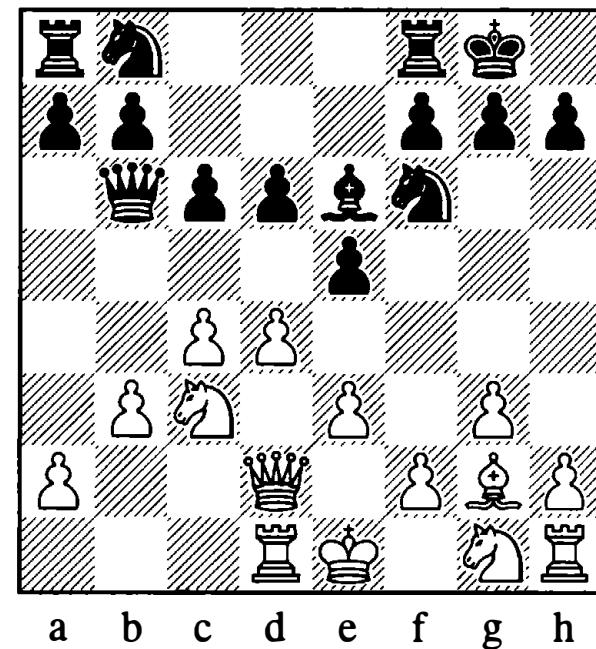
(1.c4 e5 2.g3 ♘f6 3.♔g2 c6 4.d4 ♔b4† 5.♔d2 ♖xd2† 6.♘xd2 d6 7.♘c3 0–0 8.e3 ♔e6 9.♘d1)

B1) 9... \mathbb{W} b6

This move parries the immediate threat, but fails to put pressure on White.

10.b3!N

White is not ready for the thematic pawn break 10.c5?, as played in Gaillard – O. Chernin, New York 2006.



10...exd4

If Black intends to give up the centre, he has to do so before White develops his king's knight. For example, 10... $\mathbb{Q}bd7$ 11. $\mathbb{Q}ge2\pm$ $exd4?!$ allows 12. $\mathbb{Q}xd4\pm$ when White has regrouped perfectly.

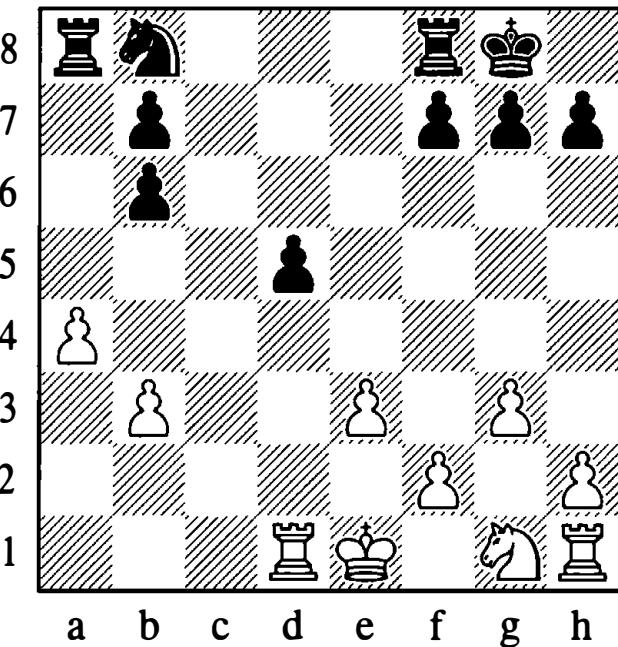
11. $\mathbb{W}xd4$ d5

This pawn break fails to equalize, but otherwise Black's position would remain passive.

In reply to the provocative 11...c5!? White should ignore the d6-pawn and play 12. $\mathbb{W}d2\pm$. After White's development is completed, the weakness of the d5-square and the d6-pawn will tell.

**12.cxd5 $\mathbb{Q}xd5$ 13. $\mathbb{Q}xd5$ $\mathbb{Q}xd5$ 14. $\mathbb{Q}xd5$ cxd5
15. $\mathbb{W}xb6$ axb6 16.a4**

After the exchange of queens, the weakness of the f3-square loses its relevance. Moreover, Black's queenside has also been weakened.



16...b5!?

Black tries to take over the initiative before White completes his development.

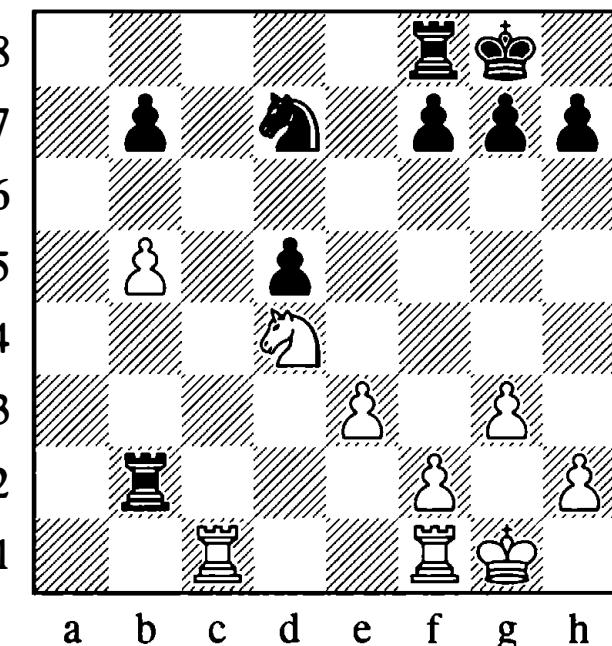
After the more static 16... $\mathbb{Q}a6$ White has every chance of reaching a better ending, due to his superior structure. 17. $\mathbb{Q}e2$ $\mathbb{Q}c5$ 18. $\mathbb{Q}d4$ $\mathbb{E}fc8$ 19. $\mathbb{Q}e2$ $\mathbb{Q}e4$ 20. $\mathbb{E}c1$ $\mathbb{Q}c3\ddagger$ 21. $\mathbb{Q}f3$ White threatens $\mathbb{E}c2$ followed by $\mathbb{E}hc1$. 21... $\mathbb{Q}e4$ 22. $\mathbb{E}hd1$ $\mathbb{Q}f8$ 23. $\mathbb{Q}e2$ $\mathbb{E}xc1$ 24. $\mathbb{Q}xc1$ $\mathbb{E}d8$ 25. $\mathbb{Q}e2\pm$ White will play $\mathbb{Q}f4$, forcing ... $\mathbb{Q}f6$, when he will take control of the c-file with $\mathbb{E}d1-c1$.

17.axb5 $\mathbb{E}a3$ 18. $\mathbb{Q}e2$ $\mathbb{E}xb3$ 19. $\mathbb{Q}d4$

19... $\mathbb{E}b2$

Black has to prevent the centralization of the enemy king. For example, 19... $\mathbb{E}c3$ is strongly met by 20. $\mathbb{Q}d2\pm$.

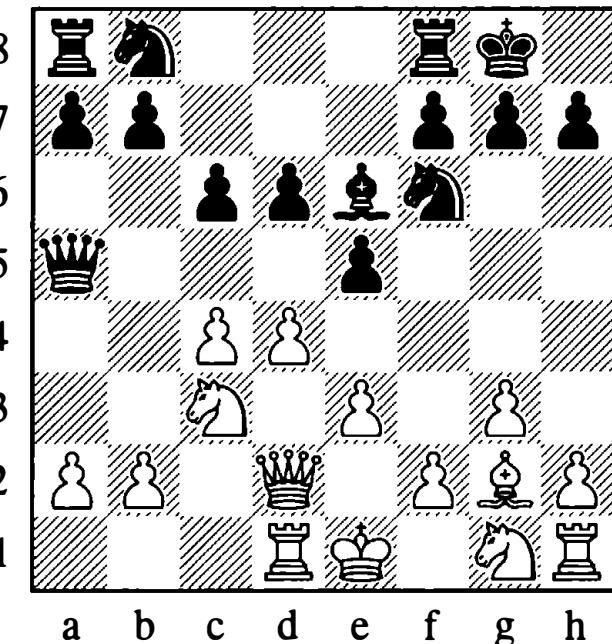
20.0–0 $\mathbb{Q}d7$ 21. $\mathbb{E}c1\pm$



In addition to Black's structural defects, the threat of $\mathbb{E}c1-c7$ is annoying.

(1.c4 e5 2.g3 $\mathbb{Q}f6$ 3. $\mathbb{Q}g2$ c6 4.d4 $\mathbb{Q}b4\ddagger$
5. $\mathbb{Q}d2$ $\mathbb{Q}xd2\ddagger$ 6. $\mathbb{W}xd2$ d6 7. $\mathbb{Q}c3$ 0–0 8.e3
 $\mathbb{Q}e6$ 9. $\mathbb{E}d1$)

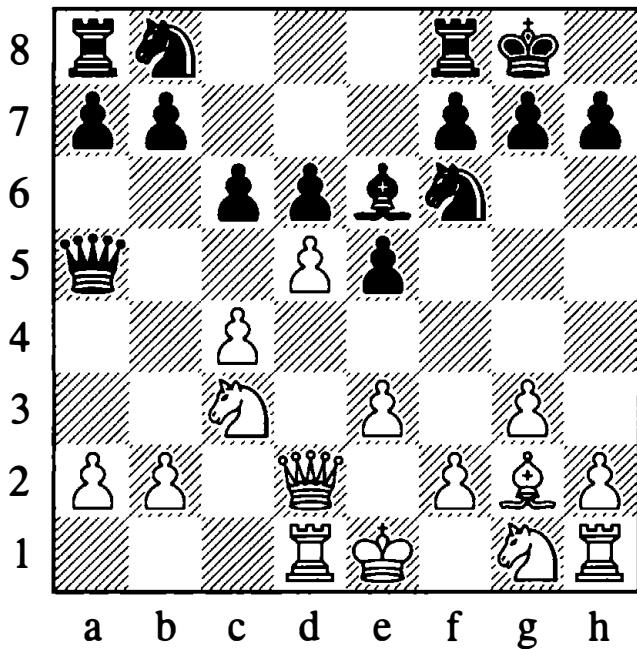
B2) 9... $\mathbb{W}a5N$



Black pins the c3-knight in order to maintain his initial threat of opening the centre.

10.d5!

After this well-timed pawn break the opposition of queens along the e1-a5 diagonal will turn in White's favour. Instead, the slightly cooperative 10.b3 offers Black good play after 10...exd4 11.♕xd4 d5=.

**10...cxd5 11.♘xd5!**

This is the point! After the exchange of queens, the d6-pawn will remain weak. It may not be obvious at this stage, but the weakness of the d5-square will have even greater long-term significance.

11...♗xd2†

White does not have to accept the queen sacrifice that is offered by 11...♗xd5?!. Instead, he should keep control of the central light squares with 12.♗xd5 ♗b6 13.b3 ♘c6 14.♗e2±, followed by ♘e2-c3.

**12.♗xd2 ♘xd5 13.♗xd5 ♘xd5 14.♗xd5 ♘c6
15.♗e2**

White has obtained a strategic advantage, but he is slightly behind in development. Thus, Black has to act quickly, before White consolidates with ♘e2-c3, ♔e1-e2 and ♕h1-d1.

15...♘b4 16.♗xd6 ♕fd8

16...♘xa2 17.0–0± leaves White in control of the d-file.

Black cannot fight for this file with 17...♗fd8 because of 18.♗xd8† ♗xd8 19.♗a1 ♘b4 20.♗xa7± when White has an extra pawn and an active position.

17.♗xd8† ♗xd8

Apparently, Black is doing fine. He threatens both ...♘xa2 and ...♘d3† followed by ...♘xb2. And if White plays 18.0–0 then Black would play 18...♗d2 with very active play.

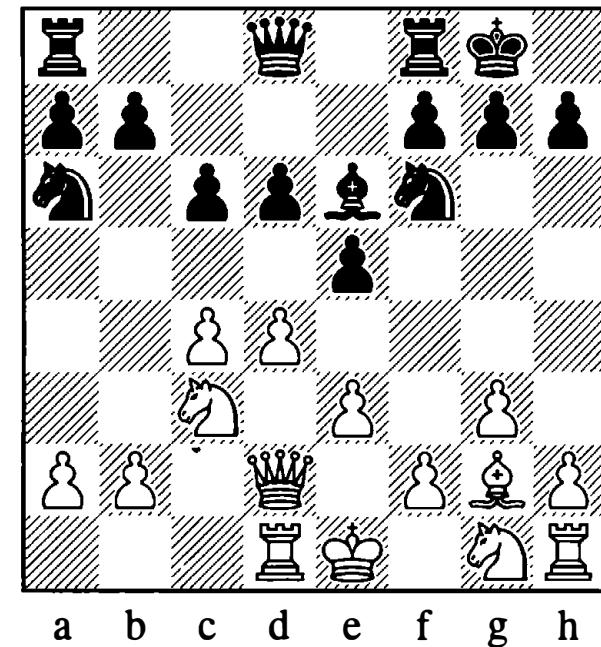
18.♔c3!

White takes the d5-square under control and prepares to centralize his king with ♔e2. Since the black king is far from the centre, we can state that the lead in development will in fact pass to White.

**18...♘d3† 19.♔e2 ♘xb2 20.♗b1 ♘xc4
21.♗xb7±/±**

White's more active rook and king, together with the weakness of the d5-square, offer him a very pleasant endgame.

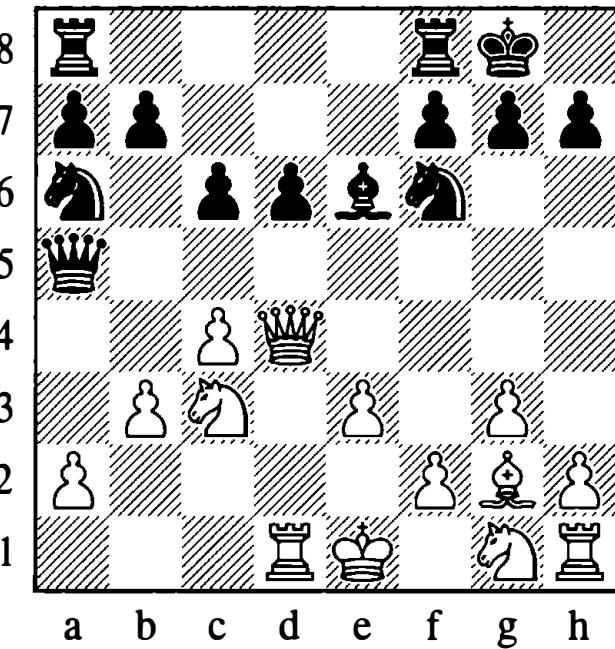
(1.c4 e5 2.g3 ♘f6 3.♗g2 c6 4.d4 ♘b4†
5.♗d2 ♘xd2† 6.♗xd2 d6 7.♘c3 0–0 8.e3
♔e6 9.♗d1)

B3) 9...♘a6

Black develops the knight in the most

harmonious way, without cutting off the bishop's retreat. This looks natural, but Black's counterplay based on ...d6-d5 will fail by one tempo.

10.b3 exd4 11. $\mathbb{W}xd4 \mathbb{Q}a5$



12. $\mathbb{W}d2!$

White spends the available tempo eliminating the pin and creating the already familiar opposition of the queens along the e1-a5 diagonal.

12. $\mathbb{B}d2$ would be less effective because of 12...c5 13. $\mathbb{W}d3 \mathbb{Q}b4$ 14. $\mathbb{W}b1$ d5 with a strong initiative.

12... $\mathbb{B}ad8$ 13. $\mathbb{Q}ge2 \mathbb{Q}b4$

In this particular case, the usual ...d6-d5 break would just leave Black with weaknesses. Let's see a couple of illustrative variations:

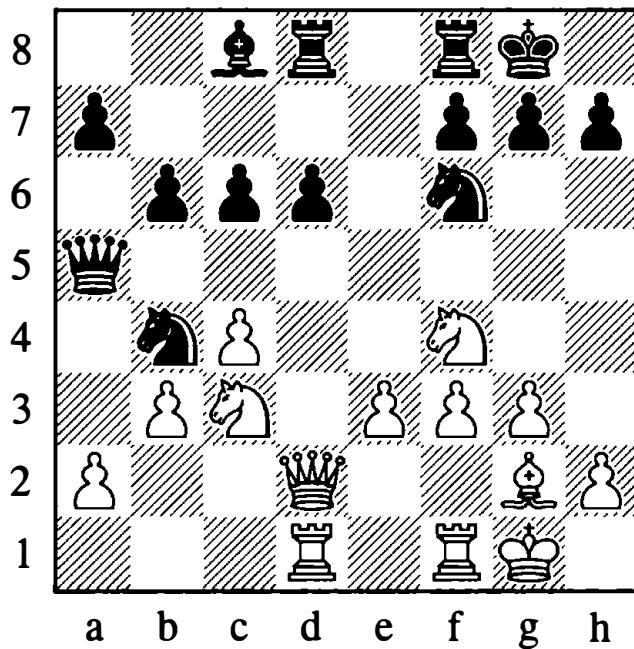
13...d5 14.cxd5 $\mathbb{Q}xd5$ 15. $\mathbb{Q}xd5$ $\mathbb{W}xd2\#$ 16. $\mathbb{B}xd2$ $\mathbb{Q}xd5$ 17. $\mathbb{Q}xd5$ $\mathbb{B}xd5$ 18. $\mathbb{B}xd5$ cxd5 19. $\mathbb{Q}d2\pm$ White's king is very active and the d5-pawn is weak; Black faces a difficult defence.

Slightly more laborious is: 13... $\mathbb{Q}c7$ 14. $\mathbb{Q}f4$ $\mathbb{Q}g4$ 15.f3 $\mathbb{Q}c8$ 16.0–0 Threatening e3-e4 with a space advantage. Now 16...d5 is even worse: 17.cxd5 $\mathbb{Q}cxd5$ 18. $\mathbb{Q}cxd5$ $\mathbb{W}xd2$ 19. $\mathbb{B}xd2$

$\mathbb{Q}xd5$ (after 19...cxd5 20. $\mathbb{B}c1\pm$ White has a very active position) 20. $\mathbb{B}fd1\pm$ Black will lose a pawn because of the pin along the d-file.

14. $\mathbb{Q}f4 \mathbb{Q}g4$ 15.f3 $\mathbb{Q}c8$ 16.0–0 b6

Once again, the central break 16...d5 fails to equalize. 17.cxd5 $\mathbb{Q}bx d5$ 18. $\mathbb{Q}cxd5$ $\mathbb{W}xd2$ 19. $\mathbb{B}xd2$ $\mathbb{Q}xd5$ 20. $\mathbb{B}fd1$ $\mathbb{B}de8$ 21. $\mathbb{Q}xd5$ cxd5 22. $\mathbb{Q}f2\pm$ The d5-pawn is doomed.



17. $\mathbb{B}fe1!N$

White continues improving the placement of his pieces.

The more committal 17. $\mathbb{Q}a4$ is also playable. 17...c5 18. $\mathbb{Q}c3$ $\mathbb{Q}a6$ 19. $\mathbb{B}fe1$ b5 20.a3 $\mathbb{W}xa3?$ 21. $\mathbb{B}a1$ $\mathbb{W}xb3$ 22. $\mathbb{B}eb1\pm$ Black loses material, Turner – Plueg, Birmingham 2001. 22... $\mathbb{W}xc4$ 23. $\mathbb{Q}f1$ traps the queen.

Instead of 20... $\mathbb{W}xa3$, Black should have resigned himself to a slightly worse position with 20... $\mathbb{Q}c6$ 21. $\mathbb{Q}xb5$ $\mathbb{Q}xb5$ 22. $\mathbb{W}xa5$ $\mathbb{Q}xa5$ 23.cxb5 $\mathbb{Q}xb3$ 24. $\mathbb{Q}d5\pm$. White has the better structure and a dangerous queenside majority.

17... $\mathbb{Q}b7$ 18.e4±

White has an enduring space advantage; Black can do little other than waiting passively.

(1.c4 e5 2.g3 ♘f6 3.♗g2 c6 4.d4 ♖b4† 5.♗d2 ♖xd2† 6.♘xd2 d6 7.♗c3 0–0 8.e3)

C) 8...♗bd7

According to classical precepts, this is the most logical way of continuing development.

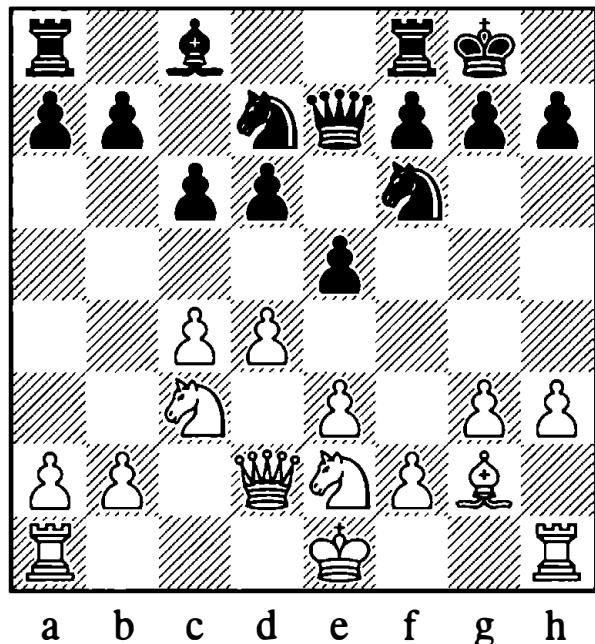
9.♗ge2 ♕e7

Since moving the f-pawn to f3 or f4 is an important part of White's plan, it makes sense to develop the queen on e7.

In Miezis – Adams, Liverpool 2008, Black preferred 9...♝e8 10.h3 h6. White later deviated from the standard plan by castling long, but instead 11.0–0 would have steered the game along familiar lines. For example: 11...e4 12.g4 d5 13.♗g3 ♘f8 14.cxd5 cxd5 15.f4 exf3 16.♗xf3 ♔e6 17.♗af1 ♘g8h7 18.♗f2 ♘c8 19.♗f4± White has strong pressure against the d5-pawn and Black's entire kingside.

10.h3

White is in no hurry to castle, because his king is safe in the centre, at least for the moment. The text move is useful in every foreseeable case.



The continuations that have independent value are C1) 10...♗b6 and C2) 10...♝e8.

10...e4?! leaves Black's centre vulnerable to 11.g4± followed by 12.♗g3.

10...h5!? was recommended by Dorfman. After 11.0–0 ♜e8 it transposes to a note from line C2, page 366.

(1.c4 e5 2.g3 ♘f6 3.♗g2 c6 4.d4 ♖b4† 5.♗d2 ♖xd2† 6.♘xd2 d6 7.♗c3 0–0 8.e3 ♘bd7 9.♗ge2 ♕e7 10.h3)

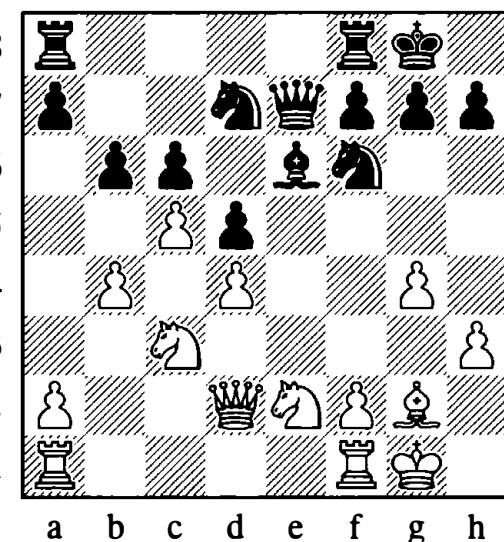
C1) 10...♗b6

Black opens the c8-h3 diagonal and takes control of the d5-square with gain of time, but the knight may remain passive on b6.

11.b3 e4

This is the critical variation. Black intends to consolidate his centre with ...d6-d5.

11...♔e6 was played in Eingorn – Golubovic, Oberwart 2001. 12.g4!N exd4 13.exd4 d5 14.c5 ♘bd7 15.0–0 b6 16.b4±



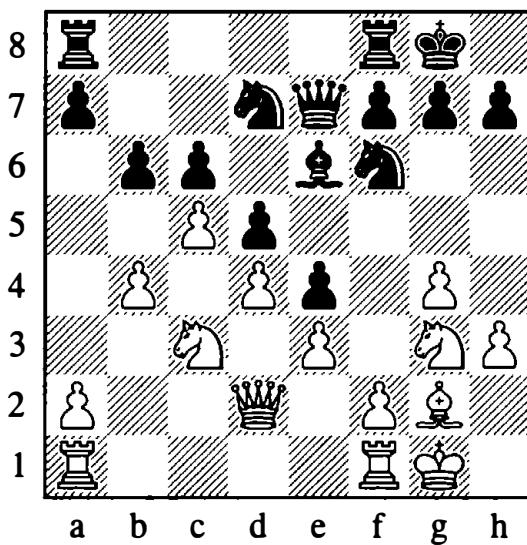
Since Black's plan has been rather slow, White has had time to consolidate the c5-pawn without fearing ...a7-a5 because of a2-a3. Next, he will play ♜ae1, followed by ♘g3 and f4-f5.

12.0–0!N

White anticipates Black's plan and prepares

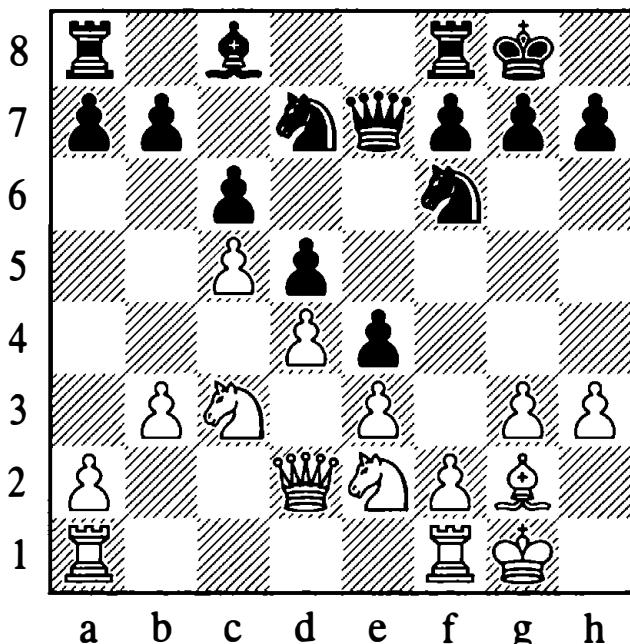
to connect rooks and concentrate them on the queenside.

The thematic 12.g4 is less effective: 12...d5 13. $\mathbb{Q}g3$ (one important detail is that after 13.c5 $\mathbb{Q}bd7$ 14. $\mathbb{Q}g3$ b6 \rightarrow , White cannot consolidate his queenside with 15.b4 because of 15...a5 and the a1-rook is undefended) 13... $\mathbb{Q}e6$ 14.c5 $\mathbb{Q}bd7$ 15.0–0 b6 16.b4



A draw was agreed in Schandorff – Psakhis, Copenhagen 2000. Having committed himself with an early g3-g4, White cannot take full advantage of his space advantage on the queenside.

12...d5 13.c5 $\mathbb{Q}bd7$



Black has lost two tempos in order to block the centre. White will have to reconsider his

strategy towards the queenside, where he has a considerable space advantage.

14. $\mathbb{B}fc1$ b6 15. $\mathbb{Q}a4$

Now that the central structure has changed, White's minor pieces have become passive. The regrouping initiated with this move aims to re-activate them.

15... $\mathbb{Q}b7$ 16.b4 $\mathbb{B}fc8$

It is risky for Black to block the queenside with 16...b5. After 17. $\mathbb{Q}b2$ followed by a2-a4, $\mathbb{Q}e2-c3$, $\mathbb{Q}f1$, $\mathbb{B}a2$ and $\mathbb{B}fa1$, White's pressure may culminate in a piece sacrifice on b5.

17. $\mathbb{Q}ec3$

The second knight moves to c3 in order to clear the f1-a6 diagonal for the g2-bishop.

17... $\mathbb{Q}a6$

Black occupies the important diagonal himself, but this is a temporary achievement, because his bishop will lack stability.

18. $\mathbb{Q}b2$

The knight clears the a4-square for the queen and also covers c4. Now Black cannot occupy c4 without allowing structural damage.

18... $\mathbb{B}ab8$ 19. $\mathbb{W}c2$

Black cannot maintain the tension for long because of the slight congestion on his queenside. The main threat is $\mathbb{W}a4$.

19...bxc5 20.bxc5 $\mathbb{B}b7$ 21. $\mathbb{W}a4$ $\mathbb{Q}b5$

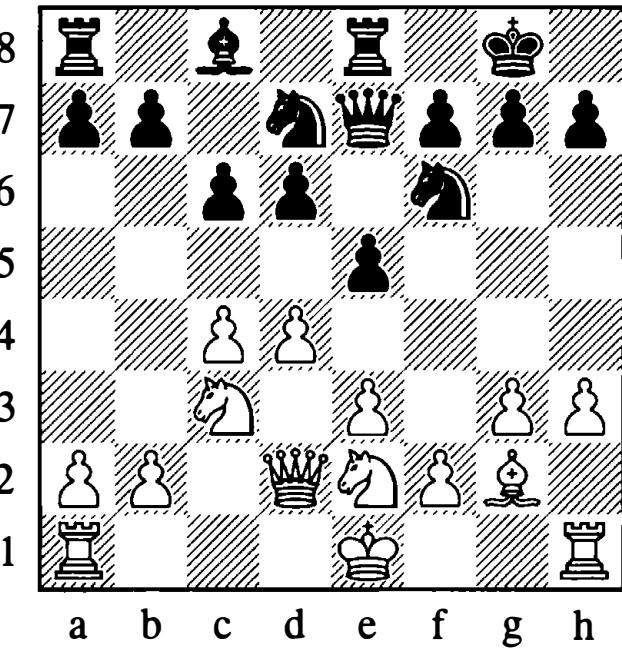
21... $\mathbb{B}xb2$ 22. $\mathbb{W}xa6\pm$, with pressure against the a7- and c6-pawns, is similar.

22. $\mathbb{Q}xb5$ $\mathbb{B}xb5$ 23. $\mathbb{Q}d1\pm$

White will play $\mathbb{Q}c3$ followed by $\mathbb{Q}f1$, with strong pressure against Black's chronic weaknesses – the c6- and a7-pawns. Meanwhile, nothing is likely to happen on the kingside.

(1.c4 e5 2.g3 ♕f6 3.♕g2 c6 4.d4 ♔b4† 5.♔d2 ♔xd2† 6.♔xd2 d6 7.♕c3 0–0 8.e3 ♔bd7 9.♕ge2 ♔e7 10.h3)

C2) 10...♔e8



Black keeps improving the position of his pieces. Generally speaking, this is the most logical move. Thus, the fact that Black still fails to equalize is relevant for the evaluation of the whole variation.

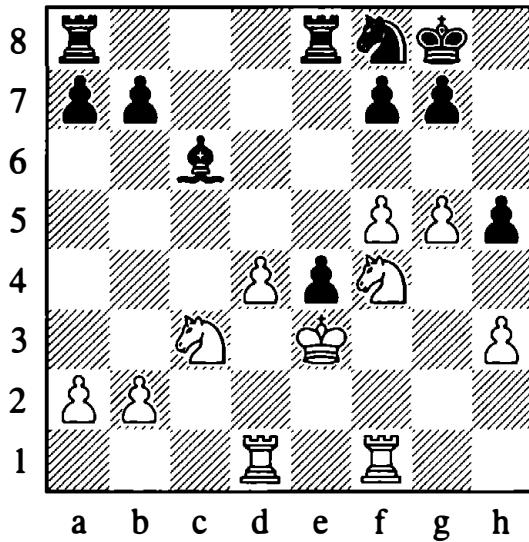
11.g4

White plays this move before defining his intentions about which side he will castle.

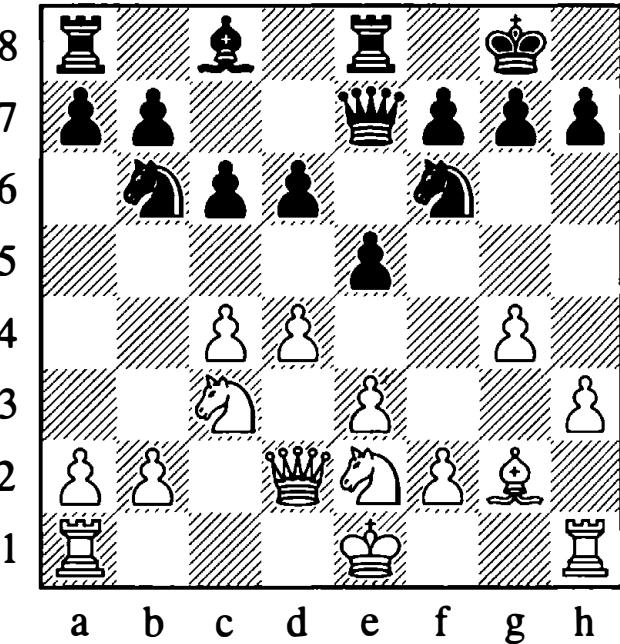
11.0–0 is also possible, when 11...h5 could be met by 12.♔ae1 ♔f8 13.f4 e4 14.d5 c5 15.♔d1±. This is the start of a familiar plan that leads to White's optimal regrouping.

11...♔b6

11...h6 weakens the kingside and fails to contribute to Black's development. 12.f4 exf4 13.exf4 ♔f8 14.f5 h5 15.♔f3 d5 16.cxd5 cxd5 17.0–0–0! It would make much less sense to castle on the side where a pawn storm is under way. 17...♔e3 18.♔hf1 ♔d7 19.♔f4 ♔c6 20.g5 ♔xd2† 21.♔xd2 ♔e4† 22.♔xe4 dxe4 23.♔e3±



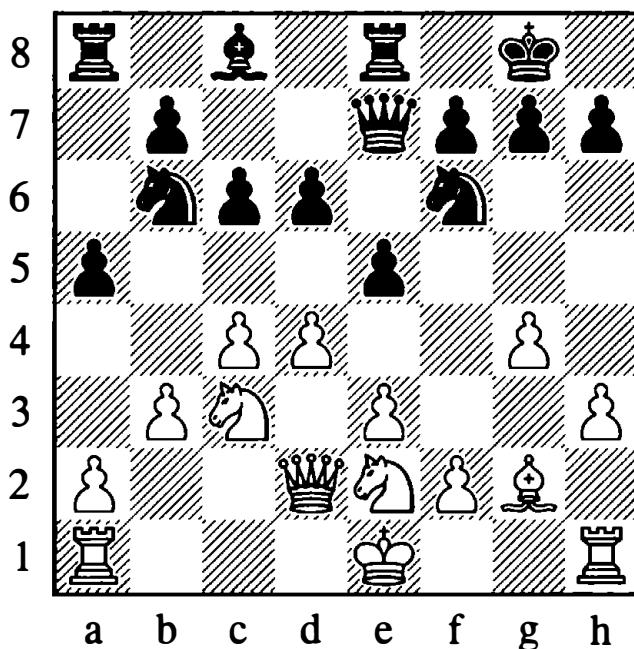
Despite the exchange of queens, White's huge space advantage leaves him on top, Christiansen – Friedel, Internet (rapid) 2003.



12.b3 a5

According to Dorfman, the plan of opening the a-file is too slow and rather ineffective.

He recommends 12...exd4, but this does not solve Black's problems either. 13.exd4 (13.♔xd4?! would allow 13...d5 under favourable circumstances) 13...d5 14.c5 ♔bd7 15.0–0 b6 16.♔fe1! With the e-file open, White's lead in development is especially significant. 16...bxc5 17.g5 ♔e4 18.♔xe4 dxe4 19.♔g3± White is more active, has a threatening space advantage on the kingside, and will retain the more compact structure after the exchanges in the centre.

**Conclusion:**

Black's position looks solid in this line, but White has a space advantage, a flexible structure and a slight lead in development. This secures White a long-term superiority.

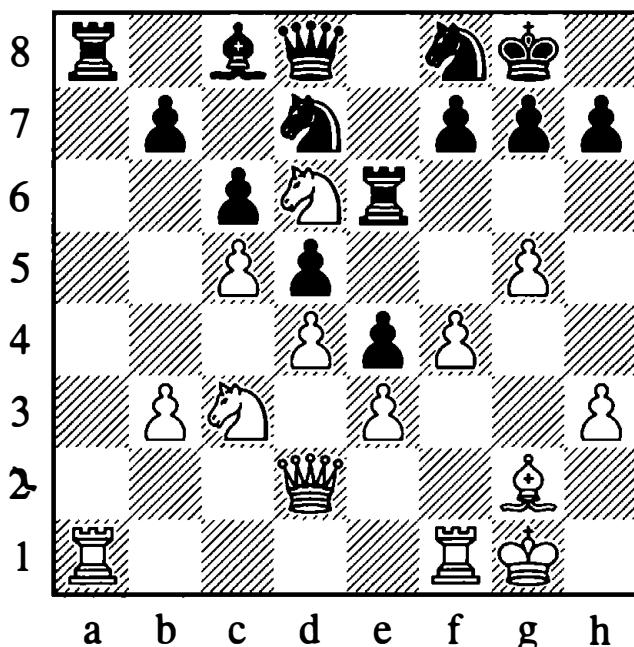
**13.0–0 a4 14. $\mathbb{Q}a1$ axb3 15.axb3 d5 16.c5
 $\mathbb{Q}bd7$ 17. $\mathbb{Q}g3$**

The threat of $\mathbb{Q}g3-f5-d6$ is very unpleasant.

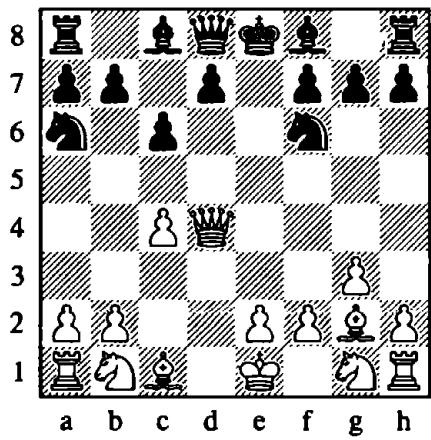
17... $\mathbb{Q}f8$

17...g6 parries the threat, but leaves the kingside weakened after 18.f4 e4 19.g5± (Dorfman).

**18.g5 $\mathbb{Q}6d7$ 19.f4 e4 20. $\mathbb{Q}f5$ $\mathbb{W}d8$ 21. $\mathbb{Q}d6$
 $\mathbb{E}e6$ 22. $\mathbb{Q}a1\pm$**



White dominates the whole board, Dorfman
– Razuvayev, Elenite 1992.



Keres Variation

4...exd4 5.Qxd4 ♕a6

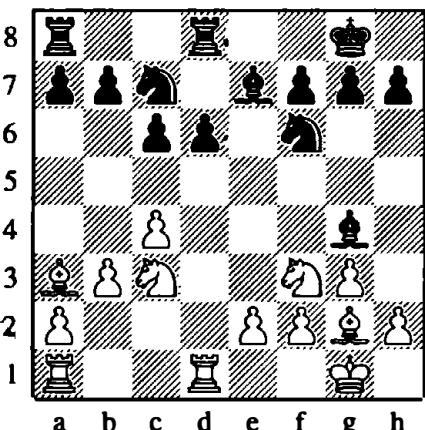
Variation Index

1.c4 e5 2.g3 ♔f6 3.♔g2 c6 4.d4 exd4 5.♕xd4

5...♕a6 6.♔f3

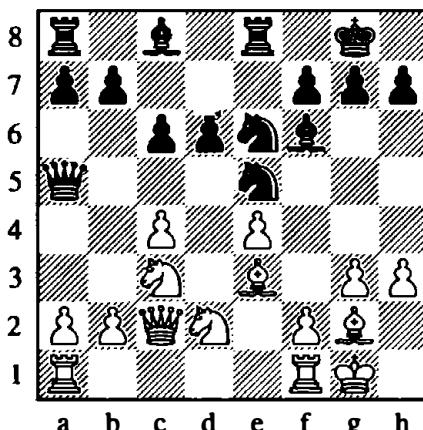
A) 6...d5 7.0-0 ♔b4 8.cxd5 ♕xd5 9.♔c3 ♕xd4 10.♔xd4 ♔c5	p 370
A1) 11.a3	p 372
A2) 11.♔b3	p 376
B) 6...♔c5 7.♕e5†	p 378
B1) 7...♕e7	p 379
B2) 7...♔e7	p 381

B1) after 13...♔g4



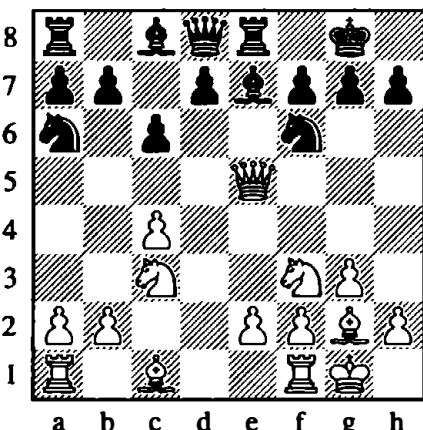
14.♖d2!N

B21) 16...♕a5



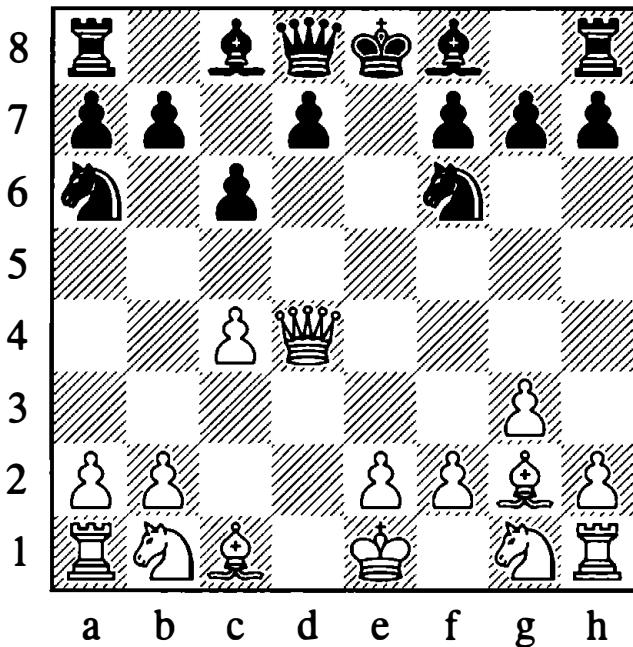
17.♖ad1!N±

B22) after 9...♕e8



10.♖d1!N

1.c4 e5 2.g3 ♘f6 3.♗g2 c6 4.d4 exd4 5.♘xd4 ♘a6



This is a rare move with similar ideas to those behind White's ♘a3 in the 2.c3 Sicilian. The knight is heading for a good central square on d5, but the process is rather time-consuming, involving ...♗b4, ...d7-d5 and, after c4xd5, ...♘xd5. In addition, the knight will not be stable in the centre, because of the permanent threat of e2-e4.

An alternate plan is to harass the white queen with ...♗f8-c5, but after the natural response ♘d4-e5† it is not entirely clear which side has lost time. Besides, delaying the more or less obligatory move ...d7-d5 is likely to gift White a space advantage in the centre and also leave the d6-square weak.

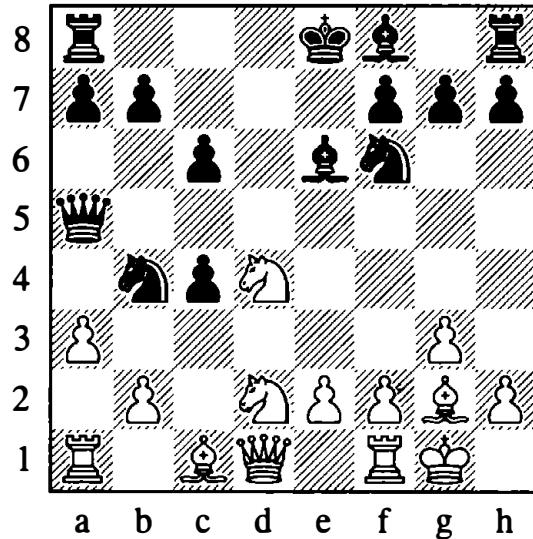
I have dedicated more attention to this variation than to other sidelines for subjective reasons. While working on this chapter, I was surprised to read Richard Palliser's statement in *Dangerous Weapons: Flank Openings* that this is "an easy equaliser". One of the arguments invoked is that the variation has been adopted by such players as Sutovsky, Bologan and Sokolov. This is not so relevant, though, since the former played it against an opponent rated 400 points below him, and the latter

two in rapid games. Moreover, the results of the opening were anything but satisfactory for Black in the latter two games.

6.♘f3

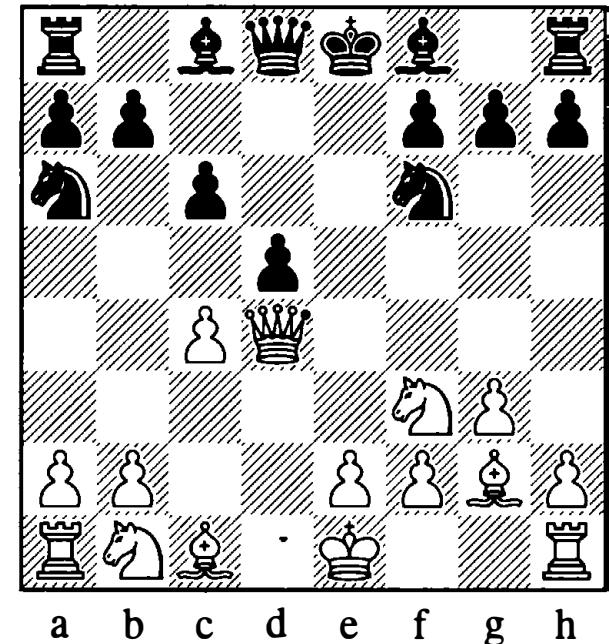
We will examine A) 6...d5 and B) 6...♗c5.

6...♗b4 is premature, because after 7.♗d1 d5 8.a3 the knight does not make it to d5. Attempting to keep the pseudo-initiative going with 8...♗a5 leaves Black poorly coordinated after 9.0–0 dxc4 10.♘bd2 ♗e6 11.♘d4±.



(1.c4 e5 2.g3 ♘f6 3.♗g2 c6 4.d4 exd4 5.♘xd4 ♘a6 6.♘f3)

A) 6...d5



7.0–0 ♗b4

This is an important element in Black's plan. The knight moves closer to the d5-square, while also creating the threat of ...♗b4-c2.

If White needed to spend a tempo parrying the threat, then Black's opening strategy would be crowned by success. Fortunately, White can do better than that.

8.cxd5! ♘xd5

None of my opponents have been interested in testing the correctness of the rook sacrifice with:

8...♞c2 9.♔a4 ♞xa1 10.dxc6

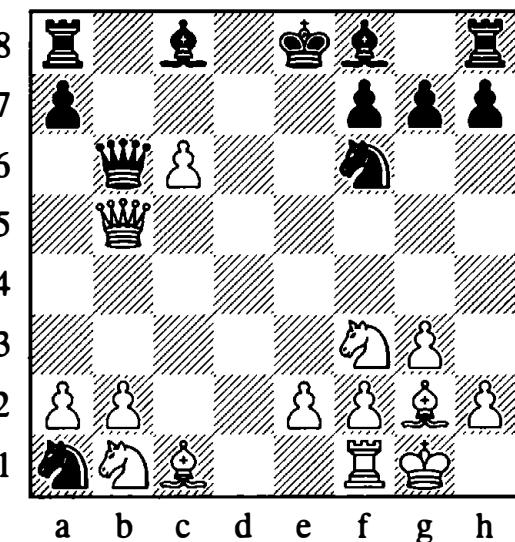
It is probable that the daring knight will be trapped, which would reduce Black's material advantage to an exchange. With two or three extra pawns and better development, White obviously has more than sufficient compensation.

10...b5

This is the best way to avert huge material losses after cxb7†.

Instead 10...bxc6 would be strongly met by 11.♞e5±.

11.♘xb5 ♘b6



12.♞c3

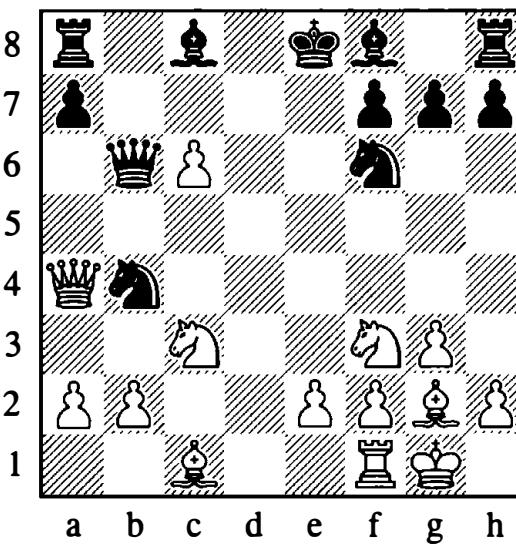
In the diagram position computers provide a list of candidate moves, but change the order of preference frequently. I prefer the text move, which I considered over-the-board and finished my calculation in this

position. The simple reason I like this move is that it maintains the queenside tension and develops a piece at the same time.

12...♞c2

Black tries to save the knight, but this will give White time to regroup for the final attack.

13.♔a4 ♘b4



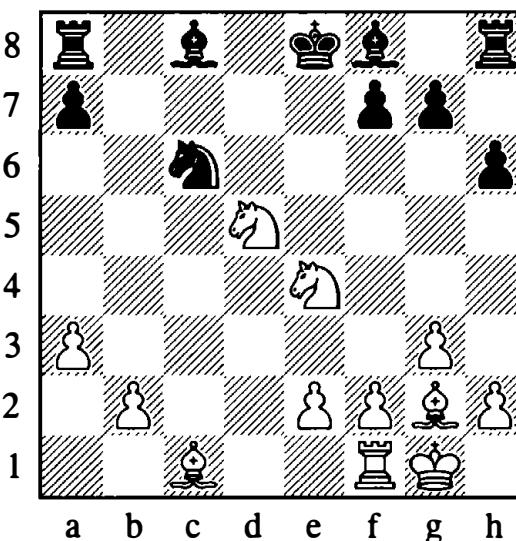
14.♘g5!

White threatens to win back the sacrificed rook with 15.c7† ♘d7 16.♘xa8, when the queen is taboo because of c7-c8=♔†.

14...h6 15.♘ge4

This move renews the threat, preceded by an exchange of knights.

15...♞fd5 16.a3 ♘xc6 17.♔xc6† ♘xc6 18.♘xd5±



White has two pawns for the exchange, a considerable lead in development and a dominant position.

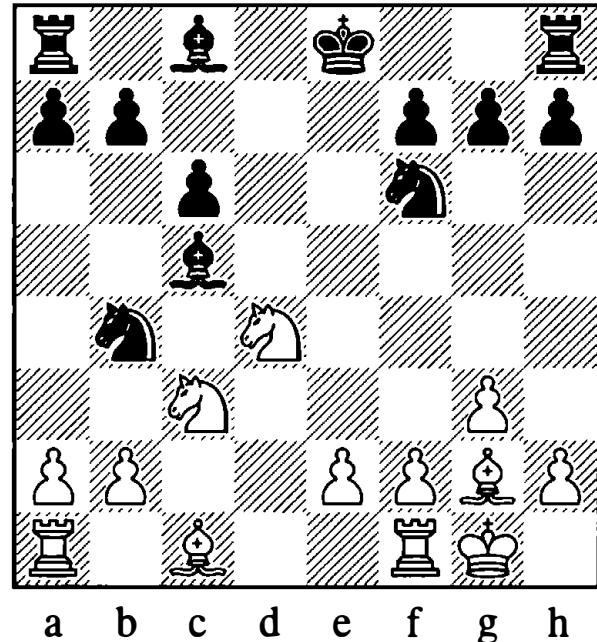
8... $\mathbb{Q}bx d5$ has not been tried in practice either.
 9.e4 $\mathbb{Q}b4$ 10. $\mathbb{W}xd8\#$ $\mathbb{Q}xd8$ 11. $\mathbb{B}d1\#$ $\mathbb{Q}e8$
 12. $\mathbb{Q}c3\pm$ Having lost the right to castle, Black will find it hard to connect rooks.

9. $\mathbb{Q}c3$

The best way to obtain (or maintain) a lead in development is of course to make development the top priority. In this case, White is willing to exchange queens to gain time. By attacking the black queen, White practically forces the exchange on d4 and the subsequent activation of the f3-knight.

9. $\mathbb{W}h4!?\pm$ also comes into consideration, when White will regain the tempo with a further $\mathbb{Q}b1-c3$.

9... $\mathbb{W}xd4$ 10. $\mathbb{Q}xd4$ $\mathbb{Q}c5$

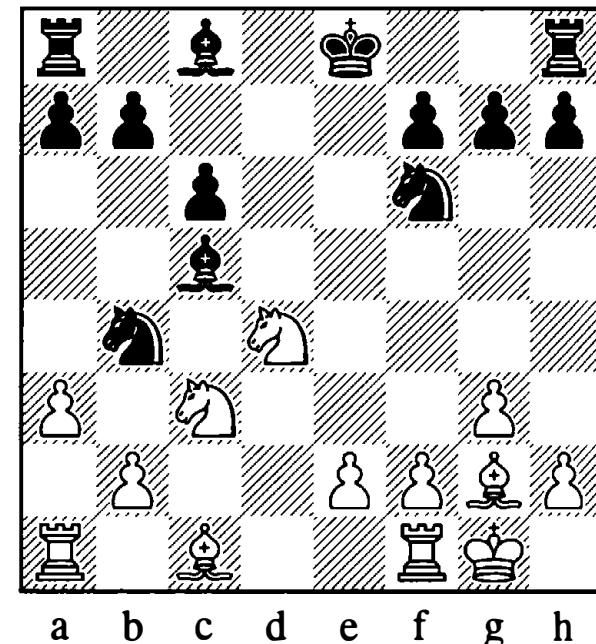


Black refuses to tolerate the active knight on d4. White now has a choice. **A1) 11.a3** aims to keep a slight initiative, which will eventually lead to an ending with a minimal but stable edge. **A2) 11. $\mathbb{Q}b3$** is a more static approach, relying on the long-term pressure against Black's queenside. As will be explained in the comments to the latter, it is hard to state a preference between these moves, because they both lead to an advantage. Subjectively, I would indicate line A2 as the main repertoire

continuation, as although I have played both moves, I have played 11. $\mathbb{Q}b3$ more recently.

(1.c4 e5 2.g3 $\mathbb{Q}f6$ 3. $\mathbb{Q}g2$ c6 4.d4 exd4 5. $\mathbb{W}xd4$ $\mathbb{Q}a6$ 6. $\mathbb{Q}f3$ d5 7.0-0 $\mathbb{Q}b4$ 8.cxd5 $\mathbb{W}xd5$ 9. $\mathbb{Q}c3$ $\mathbb{W}xd4$ 10. $\mathbb{Q}xd4$ $\mathbb{Q}c5$)

A1) 11.a3



This is the dynamic approach. Instead of retreating his knight, White answers with an attacking move.

11... $\mathbb{Q}bd5$

This is safest, although the knight is unstable in the centre.

11... $\mathbb{Q}xd4$

This would allow White to activate his al-rook with:

12.axb4

White has the strong positional threat of b4-b5, weakening the light squares in Black's camp and activating the g2-bishop.

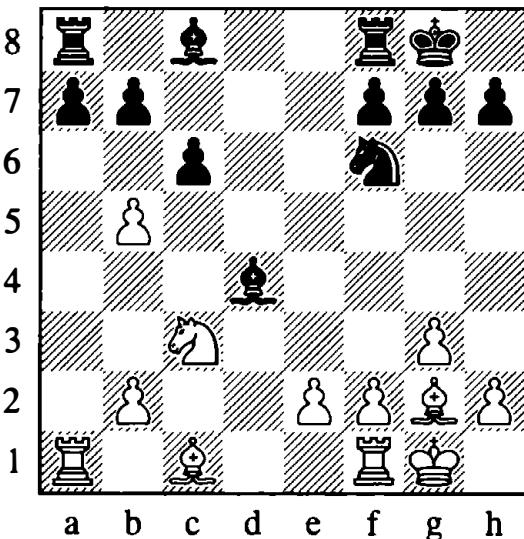
12...0-0

12... $\mathbb{Q}xc3$ 13.bxc3 would leave White with the bishop pair and a mobile pawn majority in the centre.

12...a6 would not stop 13.b5! because the a-pawn is pinned.

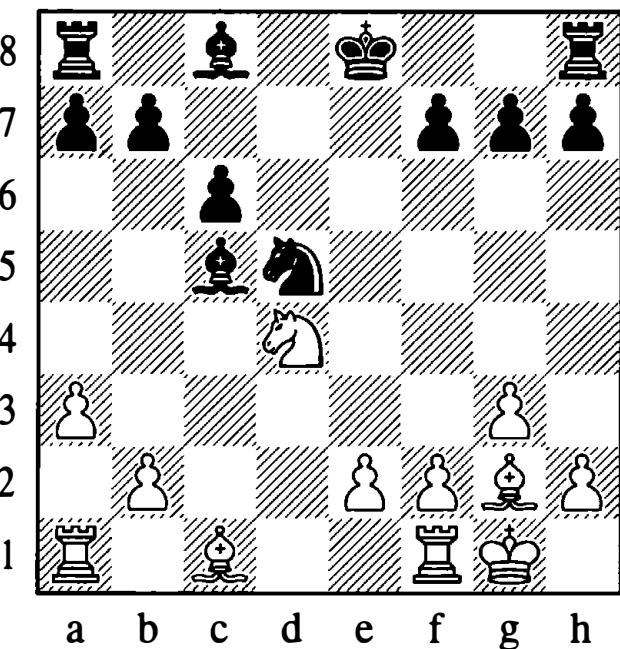
13.b5

White has a promising queenside attack.



For example, 13... $\mathbb{Q}xc3$ can be strongly met by the intermediate 14.bxc6!±.

12. ♗xd5 ♗xd5

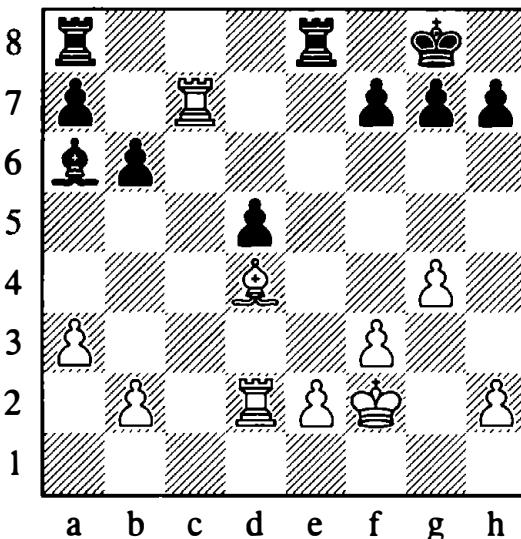


13. ♜b5!?

An interesting way to fight for the initiative. The immediate threat is ♜xd5. 13. ♜xd5?! at once would lead to complete equality after 13.... ♜xd4!.

The more static 13.♗d1, which has the abstract advantage of developing a piece, is also quite good. 13...♝b6 14.♝xd5 cxd5 15.♝e3 ♝g4 16.♝d2 White would like to exchange the dark-squared bishops, reaching a promising ending. 16...♝xd4 Black wrongly assumes that the presence of opposite-coloured bishops

will ensure him an easy draw. White is better developed and his structure is more flexible.

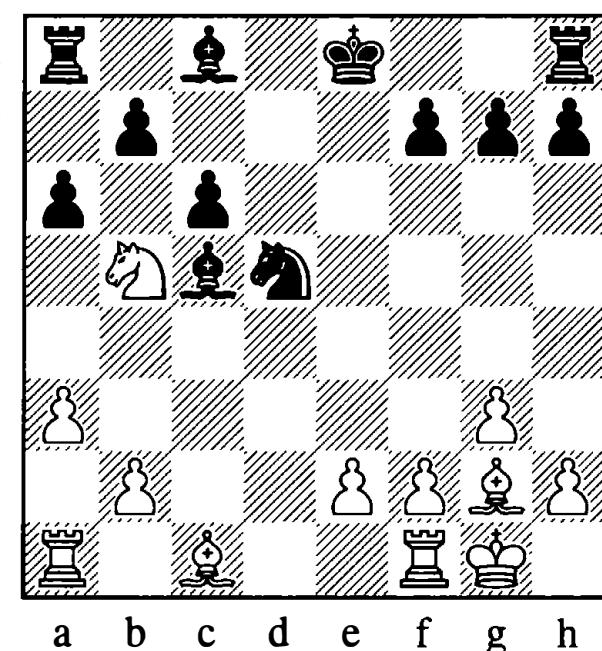


This position was reached in A. Mastrovasilis – Banikas, Greece 2005. 23.b3!N White prevents ...♝a6-c4, and thus keeps control of the only open file. 23...♝ec8 24.♝dc2± White has strong pressure on the queenside and will soon launch an attack on the opposite wing, with h2-h4-h5, g4-g5, etc.

After 13. $\mathbb{Q}b5$, Black has a choice between A11) 13...a6 and A12) 13...0-0.

(1.c4 e5 2.g3 ♘f6 3.♗g2 c6 4.d4 exd4 5.♘xd4 ♘a6 6.♘f3 d5 7.0-0 ♘b4 8.cxd5 ♘xd5 9.♘c3 ♘xd4 10.♘xd4 ♕c5 11.a3 ♘bd5 12.♘xd5 ♘xd5 13.♘b5!?)

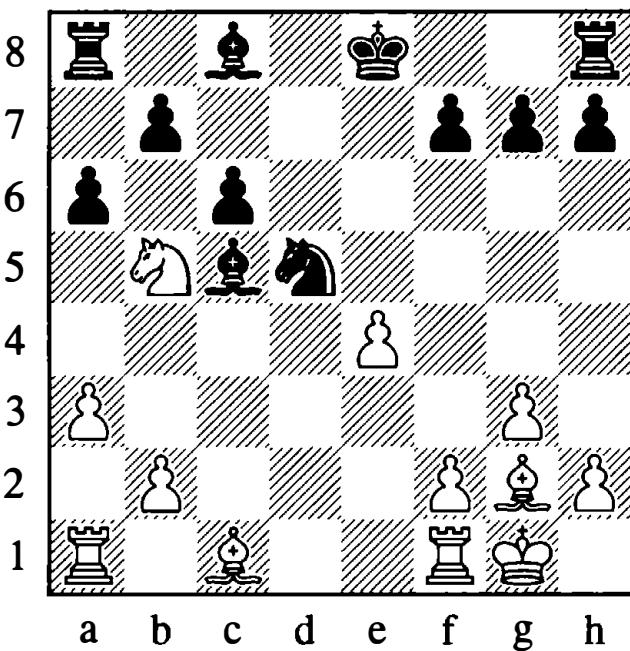
A11) 13...a6



A tempting move, since the knight has no favourable retreat squares.

14.e4!

White has no intention of retreating.



14...axb5

14... cxb5 would be much sharper, but it is insufficient to equalize. If Black manages to safely block the central pawn, his chances would improve. After rook exchanges on the open files, he would even hope to win that pawn. White's chances lie in the dynamics of the position. 15. exd5 Qf5 Black prepares the d7-square for his king. 16. Qf4! Threatening Qc7 and d5-d6. 16... d7 17.d6! White should not allow ... d6 . 17... Qab8 18. Qac1 Qhc8 19. Qfd1! The terrible threat of 20.b4 Qb6 21. $\text{Qc7} \dagger$ ensures White a big advantage.

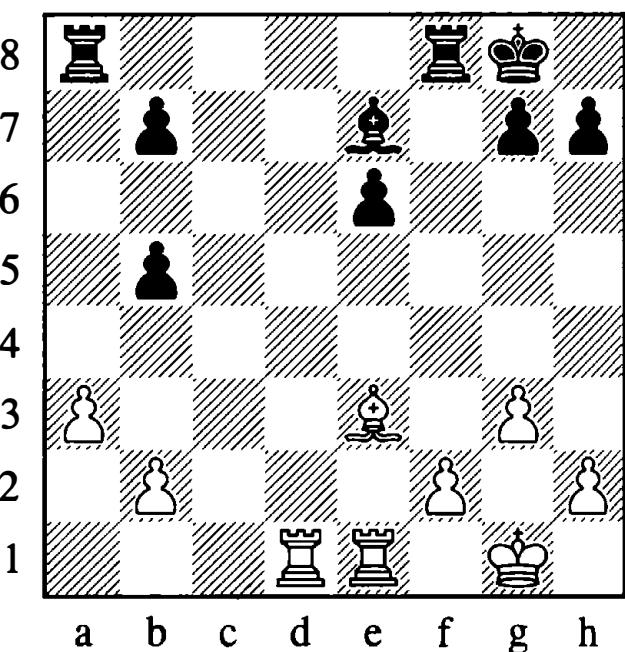
**15.exd5 cxd5 16.Qe1† Qe6 17.Qxd5 0–0
18.Qxe6**

This is the best practical solution, as the weakness of the e6-pawn will cause Black permanent problems. Instead the greedy 18.Qxb7 would leave Black with the better development and good chances of holding a draw.

18...fxe6 19.Qe3 Qe7

The double rook ending would be very dangerous for Black, due to his numerous weaknesses and the vulnerability of the seventh rank.

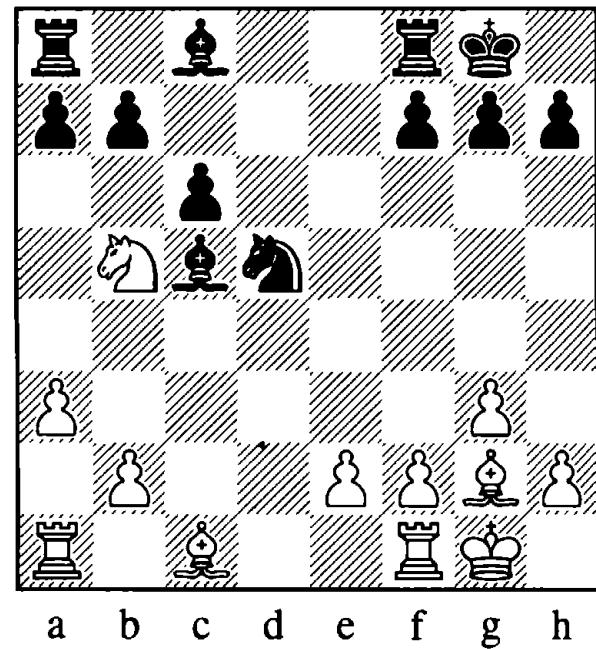
20.Qad1±



White has the superior structure and better development, which secures a long-term advantage. In Marin – Alzate, Bled (ol) 2002, Black could not hold the ending.

(1.c4 e5 2.g3 Qf6 3.Qg2 c6 4.d4 exd4 5.Wxd4 Qa6 6.Qf3 d5 7.0–0 Qb4 8.cxd5 Wxd5 9.Qc3 Wxd4 10.Qxd4 Qc5 11.a3 Qbd5 12.Qxd5 Qxd5 13.Qb5?!)

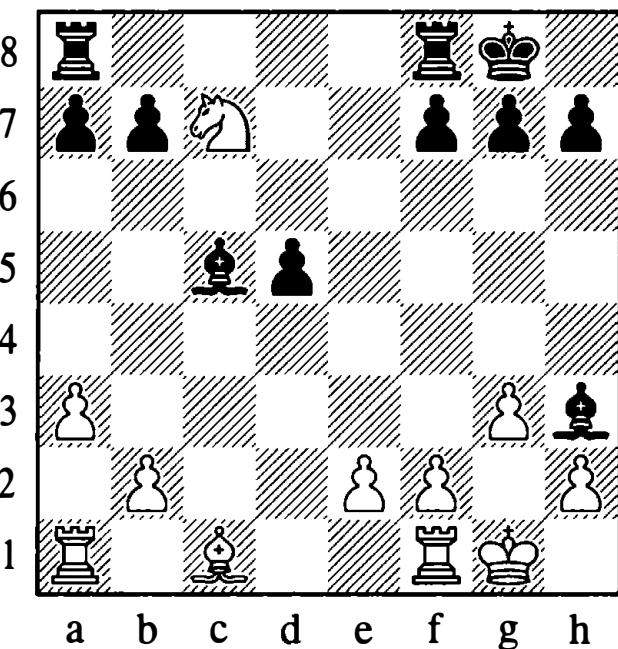
A12) 13...0–0



This somewhat safer move does not guarantee Black an easy life either.

14.♗xd5 cxd5 15.♕c7 ♘h3

Black has to play actively, as otherwise he would simply be a pawn down after ♕c7xd5.



White can win the pawn with 16.♖d1, but this would lead to a probable draw after: 16...♜ad8 17.b4 ♜b6 18.♗xd5 ♜e6 19.e4 ♜g4 20.♖d3 ♜e2 21.♖d2 ♜f3 22.♗xb6 axb6 23.e5 ♜xd2 24.♗xd2 ♜d8= If the bishop moves away, ...♜d8-d1† would follow, with a dead drawn ending.

Therefore, it is necessary to provoke further simplifications, which will allow White to retain the initiative.

16.♗xa8!

This move was accompanied by a premature draw agreement in Matamoros Franco – Strikovic, Campillos 2007.

16...♜xf1 17.♔xf1 ♜xa8 18.♖f4

The d5-pawn is weak, White's king is closer to the centre and he will most likely take control of the only open file.

It is hard to evaluate the precise extent of White's advantage, but Black has nothing like

easy equality. I would expect to win three or four games out of ten, which would not be a worse result than what is usually achieved nowadays with 1.e4 in the topical lines like the Marshall Attack.

18...f6

Attempting to fight for the c-file with 18...♝c8 19.♝c1 ♜c6 loses a pawn to 20.♖d1 d4 21.♗e5±.

Palliser writes that the diagram position 'gives White nothing more than a nominal edge after:'

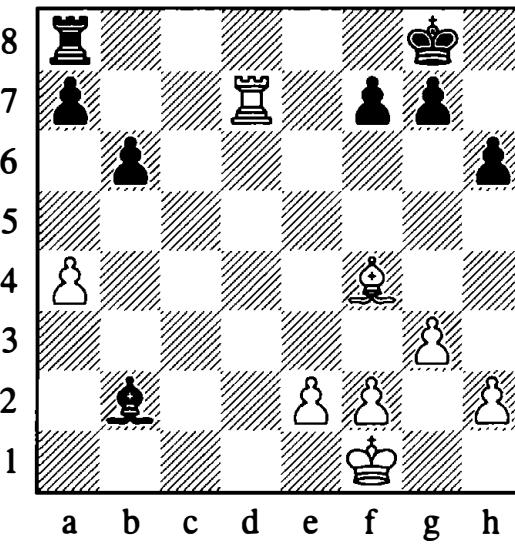
18...♝d4

In my opinion, Black's position is still difficult.

19.a4!

White removes the pawn from the vulnerable dark square, creating the threat of 20.♖d1, when 20...♝xb2 can be met by either 21.♗xd5 or 21.♝b1 followed by ♜xb7.

19...b6 20.♖d1 ♜xb2 21.♗xd5 h6 22.♖d7±



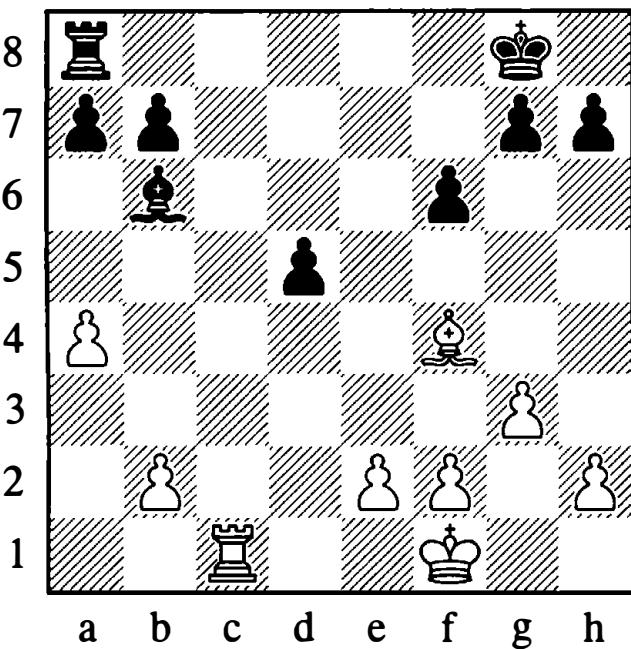
White is dominating and he will gradually win space on the kingside. The lesser evil for Black would be to liquidate the queenside.

22...a6 23.♝b7 b5 24.axb5 axb5 25.♝xb5

This pawn-down ending does not guarantee Black a draw, despite the play all being on one side of the board. For example, consider the fifth game of the 2004 Kramnik – Leko World Championship match, where Kramnik could

not save an ending with precisely this material imbalance. It should be added that Leko's structure was worse than in our case, as he had doubled f-pawns.

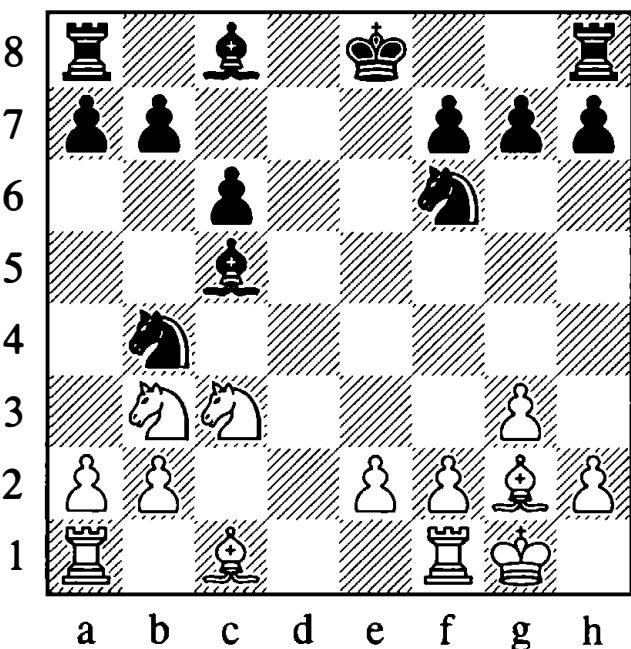
19.♗c1 ♜b6 20.a4±



White has active pieces and the better structure, while the b6-bishop is unstable. The plan based on b2-b4 and a4-a5 is very strong. If Black answers b2-b4 with ...a7-a5, then after b4-b5 he would have an additional weakness on a5, which can be attacked by the enemy bishop.

(1.c4 e5 2.g3 ♜f6 3.♗g2 c6 4.d4 exd4 5.♘xd4 ♜a6 6.♗f3 d5 7.0–0 ♜b4 8.cxd5 ♜xd5 9.♘c3 ♜xd4 10.♘xd4 ♜c5)

A2) 11.♘b3



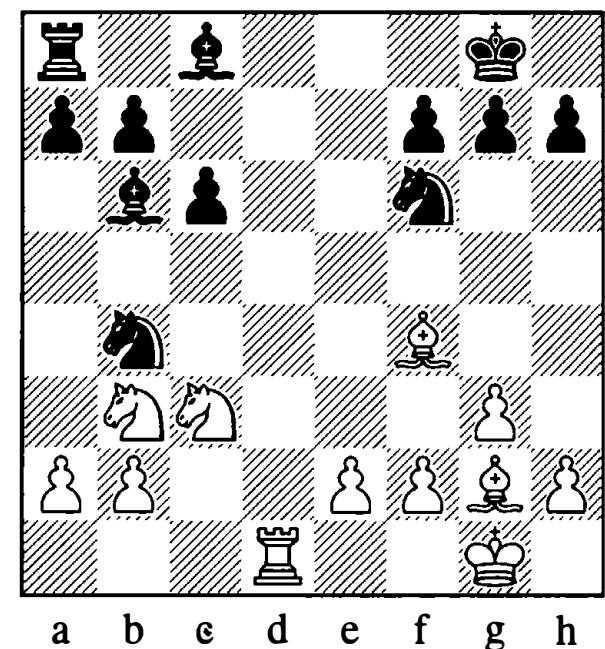
This avoids early simplifications and is a simpler way to retain an edge. The knight retreat is not a concession, because from b3 it may hop to a5 or c5, putting Black's queenside under serious pressure. This move does not lose time, because Black will need to spend a tempo to retreat his bishop.

This move was my choice when I faced this variation for the second time, but this was not caused by any discontent regarding my previous experience. To be honest, I only vaguely remembered my game against Alzate (in which I played 11.a3). The one thing I was sure about was that I needed to offer a rook sacrifice on the 8th move. The only explanation I can give for preferring different moves at two moments in my career is that my taste and style had changed in the interim.

11...♝e7

After the game, my opponent criticized this move and suggested 11...♜b6. The drawback of this move is that after 12.♗g5± Black would either have to lose another tempo or allow his kingside structure to be spoiled.

**12.♗f4 0–0 13.♗fd1 ♜d8 14.♗xd8† ♜xd8
15.♗d1 ♜b6**



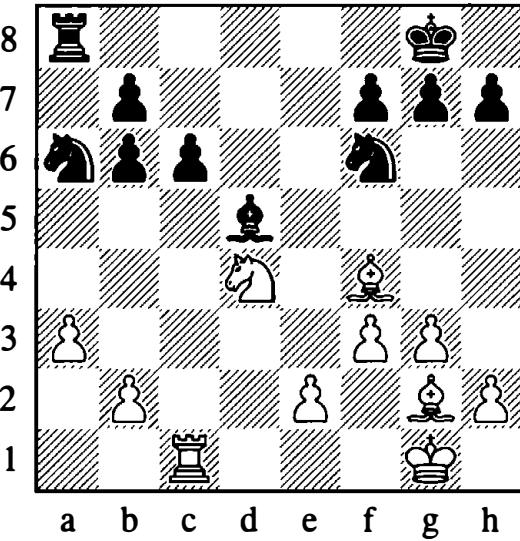
Palliser writes that Black is "very solid and no more than a touch worse". During the

game I thought that I could and should win this position, with just a little concentration, although sadly this proved beyond me. This radical divergence of opinions is more than just a matter of taste. White is two whole tempos ahead in development and it is his turn to move.

16.a3 ♖a6 17.♕e3

Starting from this moment, White's play becomes rather speculative. I was constantly aiming to keep the initiative, instead of looking for a way to convert my lead in development into a stable advantage, such as the bishop pair or a better structure.

The text move is good enough, but simpler would have been 17.♘a4! N ♔e6 18.♗xb6 axb6 19.♗d4 ♕c4 20.♖c1 ♕d5 21.f3!±.



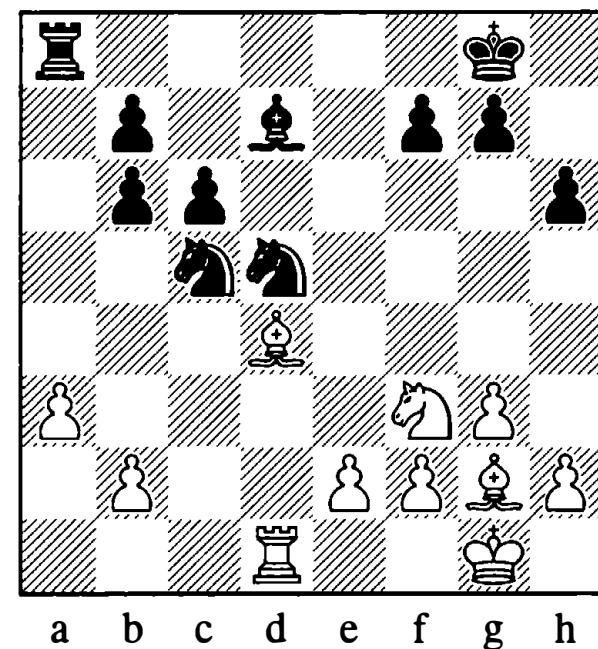
White prevents the exchange of bishops and prepares to advance the mighty kingside majority. In the long run, White's bishops will make their presence felt.

The text move does not diminish White's objective advantage, but it does delay the moment of simplification into a technical ending.

17...♔e6 18.♗d4 ♕d7 19.♘a4 h6

19...♗c7 would leave the a6-knight out of play. White would play 20.b4 with strong pressure.

20.♗xb6 axb6 21.♗f3 ♕c5 22.♗d4 ♕d5



Black has been balancing on a precipice. He has avoided material losses, but his position is still shaky.

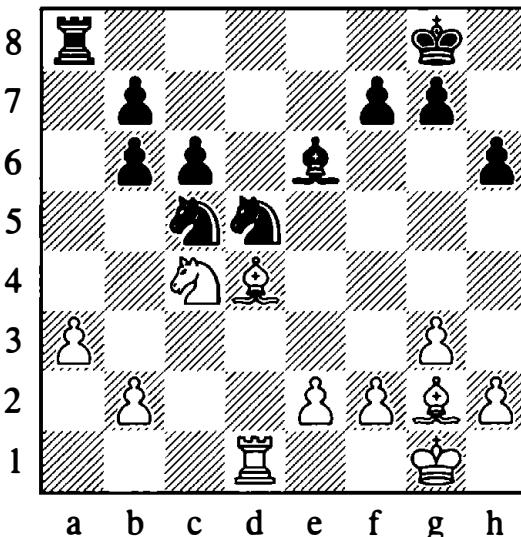
23.b4!N

This move is considerably stronger than:

23.♗e5?!

I played this move in the game. This inaccuracy was caused by an error in calculation, which is typical for rapidplay chess.

23...♔e6 24.♗c4



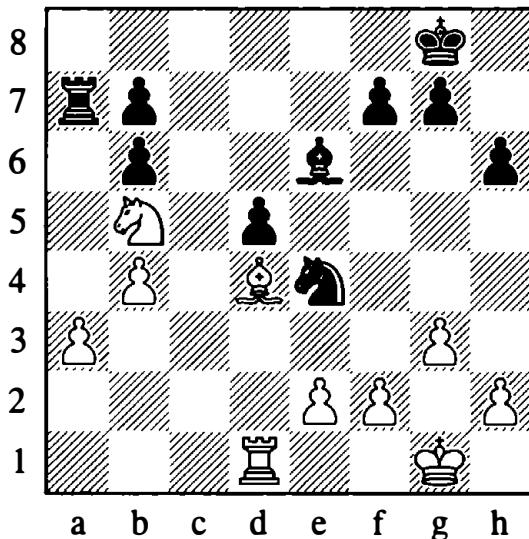
24...♗a6?! 25.♗d6 ♗a7 26.♗xd5 cxd5?!

Black maintains material equality, but ruins his structure irredeemably.

He would have had better chances to save the game by sacrificing a pawn with 26...♗xd5

27. $\mathbb{Q}xc5$ $bxc5$ 28. $\mathbb{Q}c8$ $\mathbb{Q}a6$ 29. $\mathbb{Q}e7\#$ $\mathbb{Q}f8$
 30. $\mathbb{Q}xd5$ $cxd5$ 31. $\mathbb{Q}xd5$ $\mathbb{Q}b6$ 32. $\mathbb{Q}d2\pm$.
 Black's queenside activity, and the drawish tendency of rook endings in general, restricts White's winning chances.

27. $b4$ $\mathbb{Q}e4$ 28. $\mathbb{Q}b5\pm$



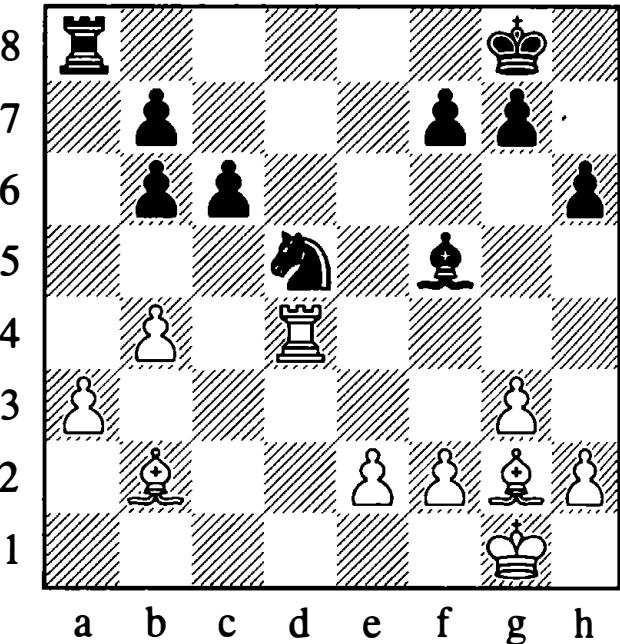
The main consequence of Black's poor structure is that White's pieces are much more active. The black rook and bishop are very passive, while the knight will soon be pushed back with f2-f3. The game Marin – I. Sokolov, Ciudad Real (rapid) 2007, ended in a win for Black after I blundered my bishop in a position where I had reasonable winning chances.

In this line, 24... $\mathbb{Q}a6\text{?!}$ was too cooperative. Both players believed that 24... $\mathbb{Q}c3\text{!}$ would not work because of 25. $\mathbb{Q}xb6$ $\mathbb{Q}xd1$ 26. $\mathbb{Q}xa8$, winning a pawn. This is a manifestation of the so-called "horizon effect", which is mostly used when speaking about computers' shortcomings. During a normal tournament game, we probably would have continued to calculate the variation until its logical end: 26... $\mathbb{Q}b3$ 27. $\mathbb{Q}c3$ $\mathbb{Q}xc3$ 28. $bxc3$ $\mathbb{Q}d2\text{!=}$ Black threatens ... $\mathbb{Q}b1$, winning one of the weak pawns.

23... $\mathbb{Q}b3$ 24. $\mathbb{Q}b2$

The main threat is $\mathbb{Q}d1-d3$.

24... $\mathbb{Q}f5$ 25. $\mathbb{Q}d4$ $\mathbb{Q}xd4$ 26. $\mathbb{Q}xd4\pm$



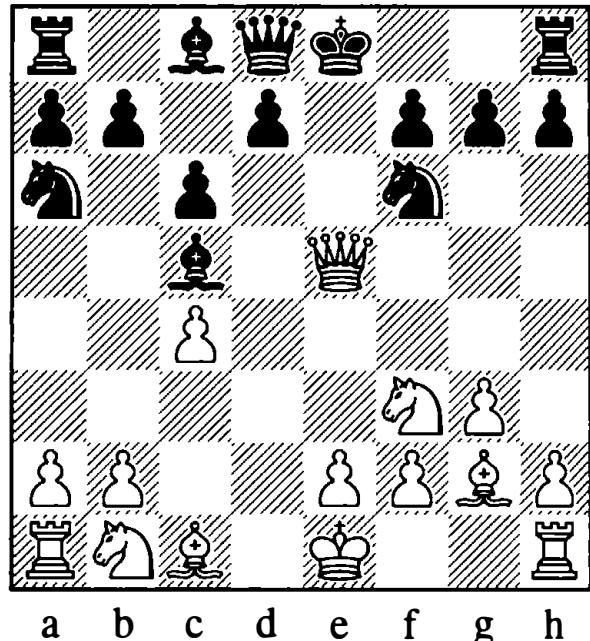
White has a powerful pair of bishops and a mobile kingside majority, while Black's pieces are unstable.

(1. $c4$ $e5$ 2. $g3$ $\mathbb{Q}f6$ 3. $\mathbb{Q}g2$ $c6$ 4. $d4$ $exd4$ 5. $\mathbb{Q}xd4$ $\mathbb{Q}a6$ 6. $\mathbb{Q}f3$)

B) 6... $\mathbb{Q}c5$

This is the second possible way to make use of the a6-knight. Black hopes to win time for his development by attacking the exposed queen.

7. $\mathbb{Q}e5\#$

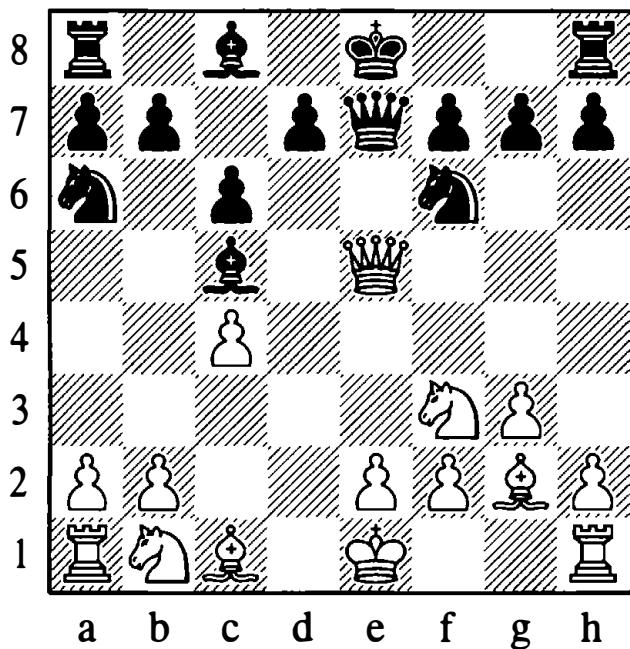


This is the only way to maintain the initiative, as it also causes Black to lose time.

Black can play **B1) 7... $\mathbb{W}e7$** or **B2) 7... $\mathbb{Q}e7$** .

(1.c4 e5 2.g3 $\mathbb{Q}f6$ 3. $\mathbb{Q}g2$ c6 4.d4 $exd4$ 5. $\mathbb{W}xd4$ $\mathbb{Q}a6$ 6. $\mathbb{Q}f3$ $\mathbb{Q}c5$ 7. $\mathbb{W}e5\#$)

B1) 7... $\mathbb{W}e7$

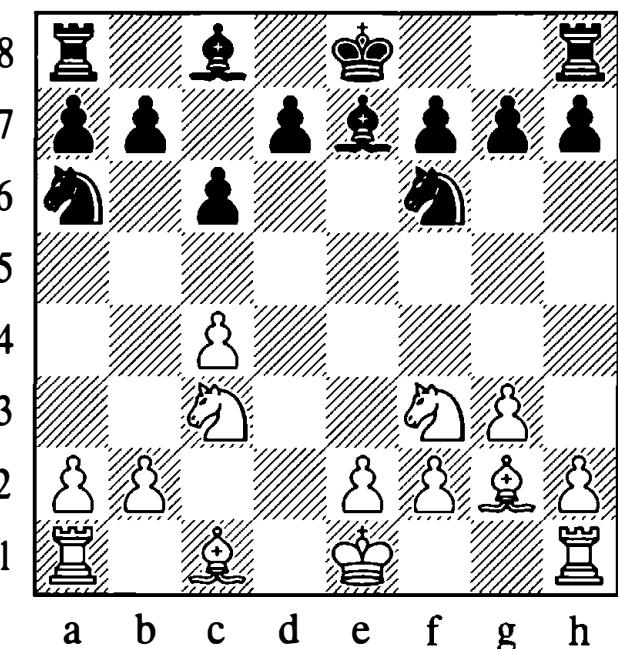


Since White's only problem in this line is the exposed position of his queen, this move helps him to continue his development in a harmonious way, while preserving his space advantage.

8. $\mathbb{W}xe7\#$ $\mathbb{Q}xe7$

The loss of time implied by this recapture is another significant drawback of Black's seventh move.

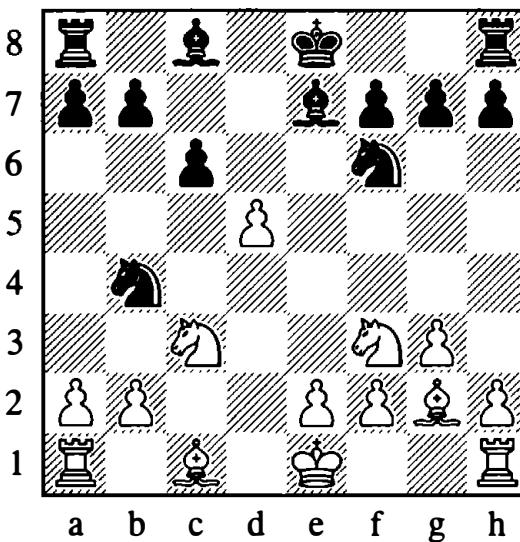
9. $\mathbb{Q}c3$



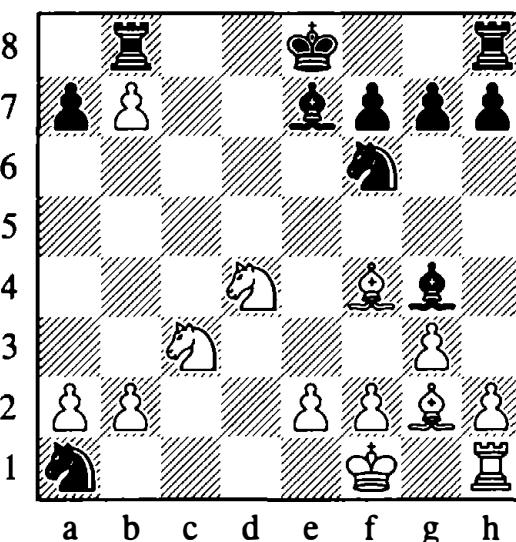
9... $\mathbb{d}6$

Black has to refrain from central activity and accept a passive position with a chronic lack of space.

The ambitious but unsound 9... $d5?$ 10. $cxd5$ $\mathbb{Q}b4$ eventually worked out well for Black in M. Gurevich – Bologan, Corsica (rapid) 2005, as White now castled.



However, White should have ignored the threat of ... $\mathbb{Q}c2\#$ with 11. $dxc6!N$ $\mathbb{Q}c2\#$ 12. $\mathbb{Q}f1$ $\mathbb{Q}xa1$ 13. $\mathbb{Q}d4$. Black has won a rook for two pawns, but White threatens to win a bishop with $cxb7$, and the a1-knight is trapped. Since 13... $bxc6$ loses a whole rook, Black has nothing better than: 13... $\mathbb{Q}g4$ 14. $cxb7$ $\mathbb{B}b8$ 15. $\mathbb{Q}f4\pm$

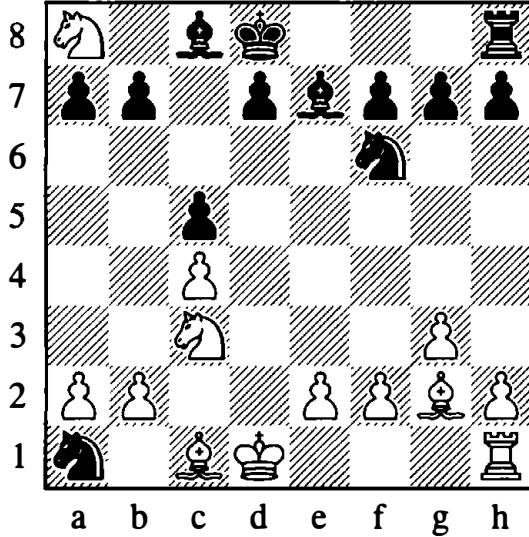


Soon, material equality (three pawns for a bishop) will be restored, but the strong b7-pawn and the trapped a1-knight leave Black in trouble.

Reversing the order in which ... $\mathbb{Q}b4$ and ...d5 are played does not improve matters for Black:

9... $\mathbb{Q}b4$ 10. $\mathbb{Q}d4$ $\mathbb{Q}c5$

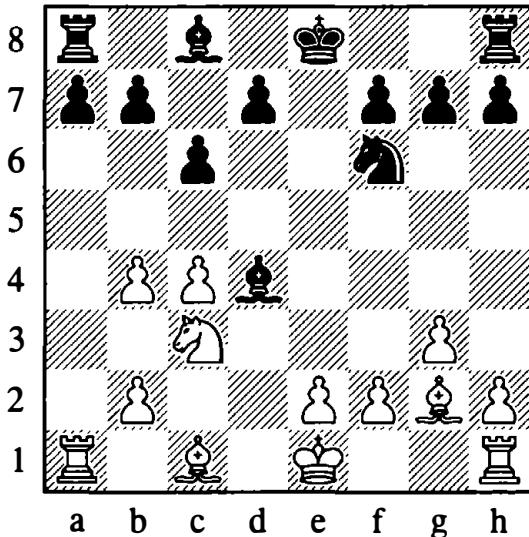
The other way to attack the defender of the c2-square is 10...c5 11. $\mathbb{Q}db5$ $\mathbb{Q}c2\#$ 12. $\mathbb{Q}d1$ $\mathbb{Q}xa1$ 13. $\mathbb{Q}c7\#$ $\mathbb{Q}d8$ 14. $\mathbb{Q}xa8\pm$.



Both courageous knights have been trapped, but the white one will be harder to capture because of the indirect support provided by the g2-bishop. Even in the extreme case where both knights are eliminated, White will retain the better structure.

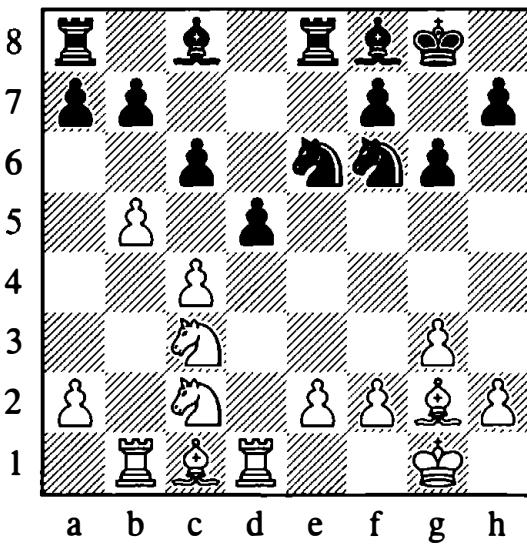
Instead 10...d5?! would be met by 11.a3± followed by cxd5.

11.a3 $\mathbb{Q}xd4$ 12.axb4±



White is better developed and enjoys a big space advantage, while the only active black piece, the bishop, is vulnerable.

Another game in which Black refrained from central activity continued with: 9... $\mathbb{Q}c5$ 10. $\mathbb{Q}d4$ g6 (this is the only way to prevent $\mathbb{Q}d4-f5$, since 10...d6? loses a pawn to 11. $\mathbb{Q}xc6!$) 11.0-0 0-0 12. $\mathbb{Q}d1$ $\mathbb{Q}e8$ 13.b4 $\mathbb{Q}e6$ 14. $\mathbb{Q}c2$ $\mathbb{Q}f8$ 15. $\mathbb{Q}b1$ d5 16.b5±

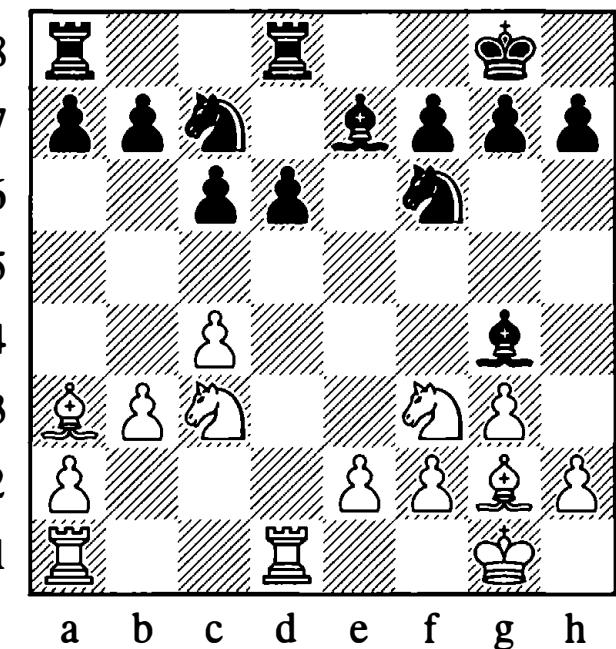


White has a strong queenside attack,
O. Foisor – Midoux, Cannes 2007.

10.0-0 0-0 11. $\mathbb{Q}d1$

White starts building up the pressure against the d6-pawn.

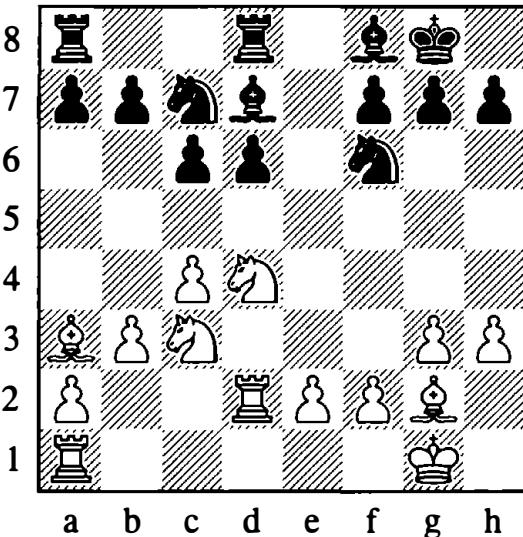
11... $\mathbb{Q}d8$ 12.b3 $\mathbb{Q}c7$ 13. $\mathbb{Q}a3$ $\mathbb{Q}g4$



14. $\mathbb{Q}d2!N$

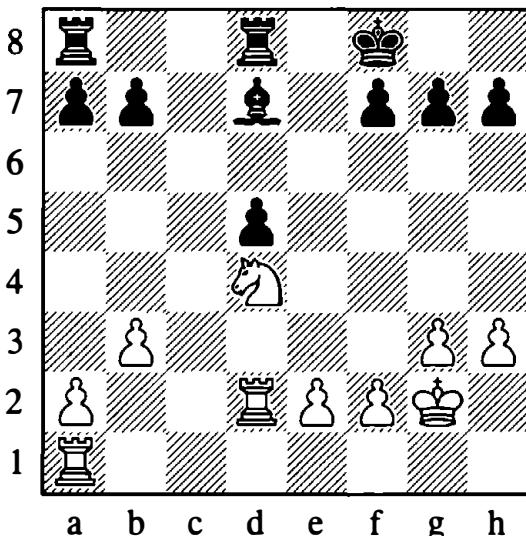
Doubling rooks immediately is the most accurate plan.

The apparently active 14.♗d4 has the drawback of obstructing the d-file, along which White should be exerting pressure.
14...♗f8 15.h3 ♗d7 16.♗d2±



16...c5? 17.♗db5 ♗xb5 18.♗xb5 ♗xb5
19.cxb5 ♗ab8 (when playing his 16th move, Black perhaps failed to understand that after 19...d5 20.♗ad1 a6 21.b6!± his centre would be vulnerable) 20.♗b2± The active bishops and the weakness of Black's light squares secured White a huge advantage in Webster – N. Pert, West Bromwich 2003.

On the 16th move, Black unnecessarily weakened the d5-square. In view of White's ever-growing pressure, Black should have simplified into a worse ending with 16...d5 17.♗xf8 ♗xf8 18.cxd5 ♗cxd5 19.♗xd5 ♗xd5 20.♗xd5 cxd5 21.♗g2±.



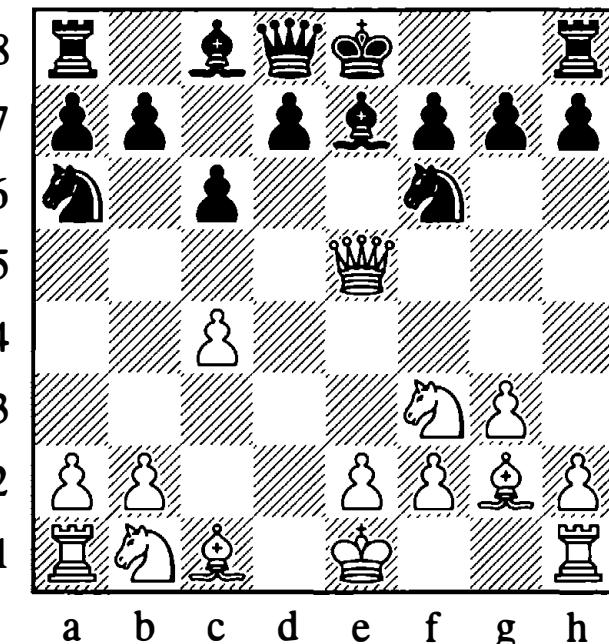
The superiority of the knight over the bishop ensures White a stable advantage.

14...♗f8 15.♗ad1 d5 16.♗xf8 ♗xf8
17.♗e5±

Black is under strong pressure.

(1.c4 e5 2.g3 ♗f6 3.♗g2 c6 4.d4 exd4 5.♗xd4 ♗a6 6.♗f3 ♗c5 7.♗e5†)

B2) 7...♗e7



This move is logical, because Black will later gain time by attacking the enemy queen.

8.0–0 0–0 9.♗c3 ♗e8

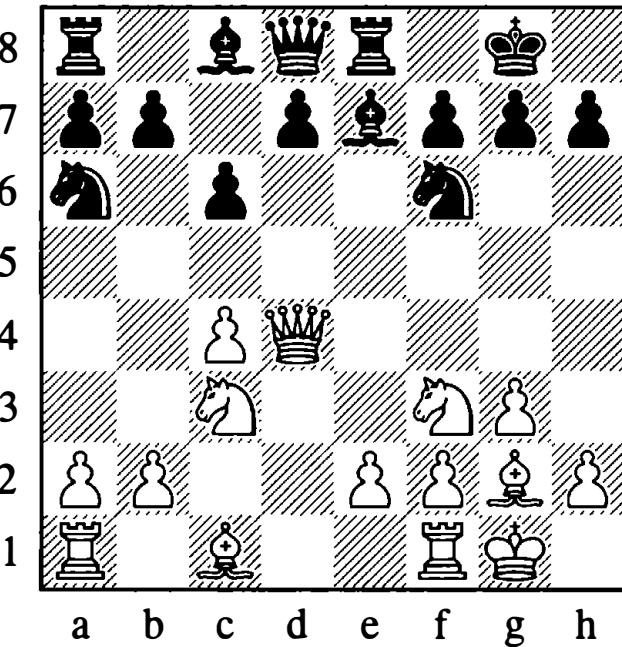
This is the critical move. Black creates indirect pressure against the queen, without defining his intentions regarding the d7-pawn. The main threat is ...♗e7-b4xc3, when the weakness of the doubled pawns may restrict White's chances of an advantage.

If 9...d6, White would answer 10.♗d4, retaining his space advantage with entirely satisfactory development.

Of the moves that have been tested in practice, the most promising is B21) 10.♗d4. Subsequent analysis proves that it is sufficient to retain an edge. However, abstract reasoning led me to analyse the untested B22) 10.♗d1!N. I recommend it as our repertoire continuation, keeping 10.♗d4 in reserve, just in case practice does not confirm my evaluation.

(1.c4 e5 2.g3 ♜f6 3.♗g2 c6 4.d4 exd4 5.♘xd4 ♜a6 6.♘f3 ♛c5 7.♗e5† ♛e7 8.0–0 0–0 9.♘c3 ♜e8)

B21) 10.♗d4



This is the most natural answer. The queen retreats to an active, though somewhat exposed, square.

10...♝c7

Black threatens ...d7-d5, which would offer him an acceptable game.

The compulsive pursuit of the queen with 10...♛c5 would lead only to a loss of time. 11.♗d3 ♛b4 12.♗d2 d6 13.♗ad1 ♜c5 14.♗c2± With Black's kind cooperation, the queen has reached a safe square. White has a stable advantage, Kemp – Sakai, e-mail 2002.

Palliser takes 10...♝c5 as the main line, but after 11.♗d1± Black is left in a passive position with no prospects of counterplay.

11.e4

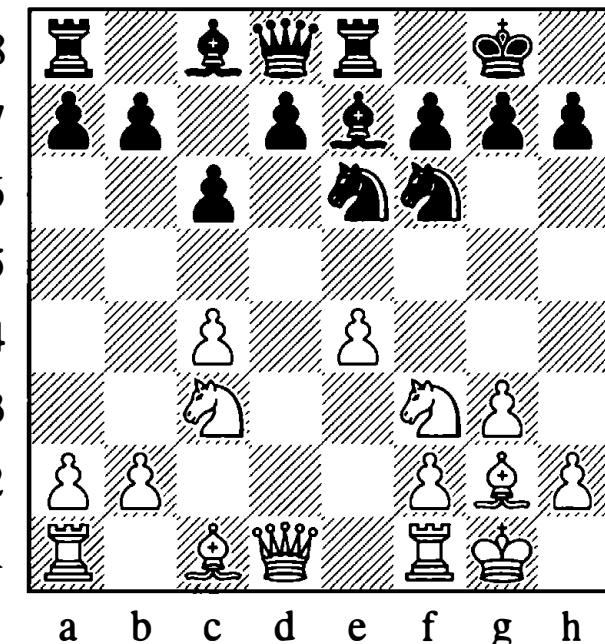
White prepares to meet 11...d5 with 12.cxd5 cxd5 13.e5, winning a pawn.

The slight weakening of the d4-square will offer Black just a temporary initiative, while White's space advantage will persist.

11...♝e6 12.♗d1

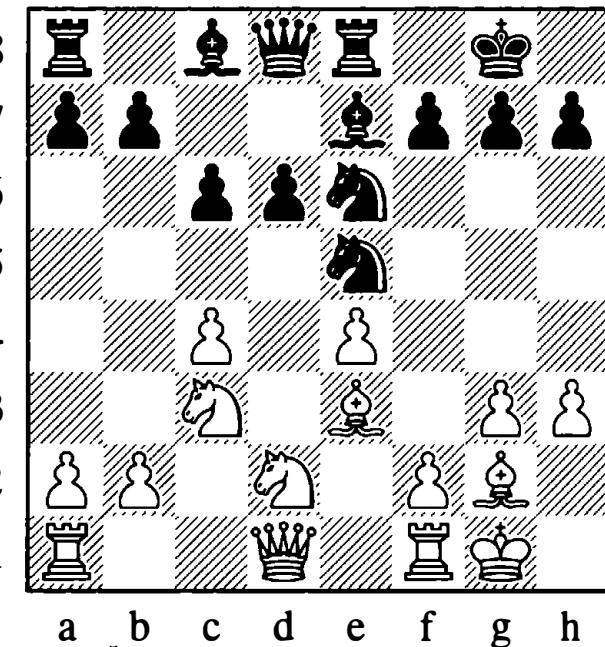
This is the safest retreat.

The queen would be more exposed after 12.♗d3 d6 13.b3, as played in Kusnetsov – Degerhammar, e-mail 2003. Palliser recommends 13...♝g4 14.♗d1 ♛b6 with some initiative for Black, which compensates for his lack of space.



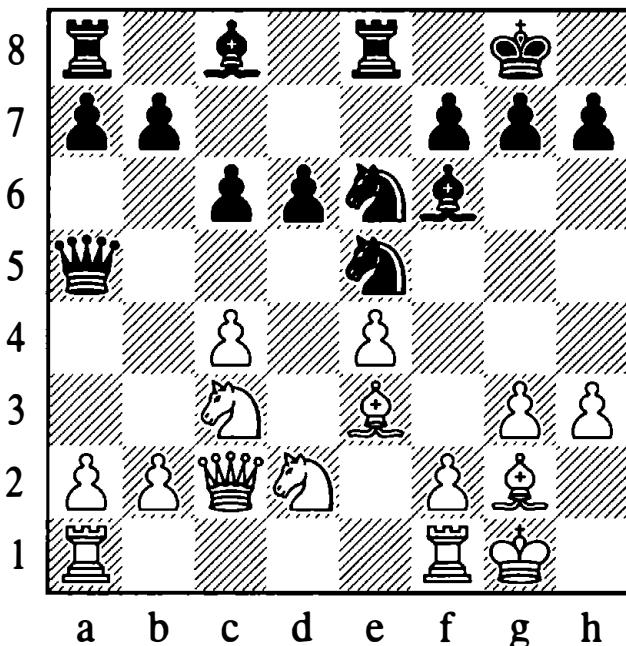
12...d6 13.h3 ♜d7 14.♗e3 ♜e5 15.♗d2

This is a moment when the queen's safety makes a difference. White can avoid the exchange of knights, leaving Black with problems in view of the continuing threat of f2-f4.



15...♝f6 16.♗c2 ♜a5

So far, we have followed the game Shestakov - Dokutchaev, Tula 1998.

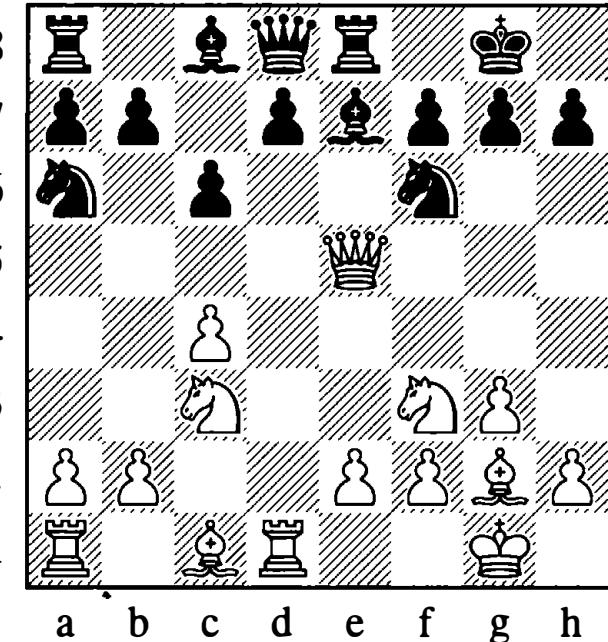


17.♖ad1!N±

White has completed his development and is ready to extinguish Black's pseudo-initiative with f2-f4 and ♘d2-b3.

(1.c4 e5 2.g3 ♘f6 3.♗g2 c6 4.d4 exd4 5.♗xd4 ♖a6 6.♘f3 ♛c5 7.♗e5† ♛e7 8.0-0 0-0 9.♘c3 ♛e8)

B22) 10.♗d1!N



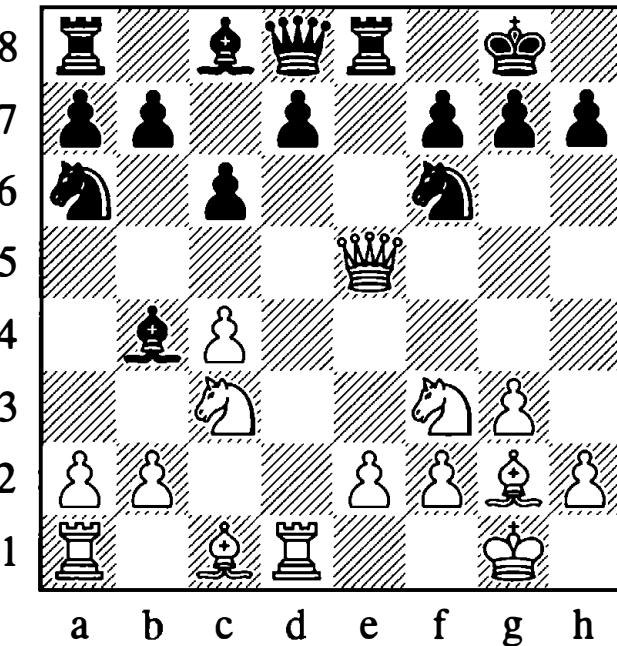
Despite having failed to find a clear path to equality for Black after 10.♗d4, I could not help being bothered by one point: the

queen manoeuvre ♗d1-d4-e5-d4-d1 looks like a considerable waste of time. In one of the comments to line B21, page 382, I mentioned that the queen is optimally placed on c2. The shortest path to c2 is e5-f5-c2, but the immediate 10.♗f5 would be pointless, because it would allow Black to play ...d7-d5 with gain of time and without any previous commitment.

The text move has never been played, but that is probably only because the position after 9...♝e8 is rather rare. By putting the d-file under pressure, White aims to make the planned manoeuvre ...♝e7-b4xc3 less attractive for Black. The weakness of the d6-square would become annoying, while after ...d7-d5 White would get rid of his doubled pawns, and keep an advantage due to his bishop pair.

10...♝b4

10...♝c5 is inoffensive because of 11.♗f4 ♘c7 12.♗g5±. White has protected his queen against the threat of ...♝c7-e6 and threatens to chase away the bishop with ♘c3-e4.

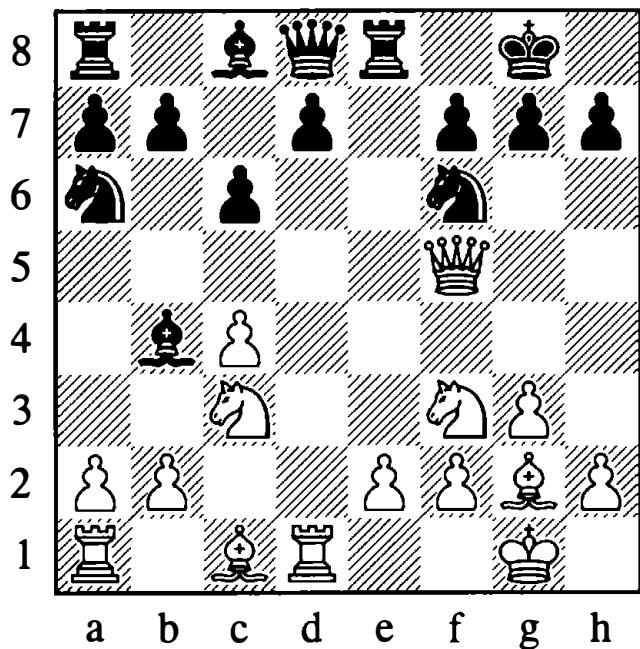


11.♗f5!

The queen is heading for c2.

White cannot favourably defend the c3-square: 11.♗d4 ♜b6! (Black threatens to exchange on

d4 and c3) 12. $\mathbb{Q}a4$ $\mathbb{W}a5$ 13. b3 d5 Black has opened the centre at a moment when White's coordination is far from optimal.



11... $\mathbb{Q}xc3$

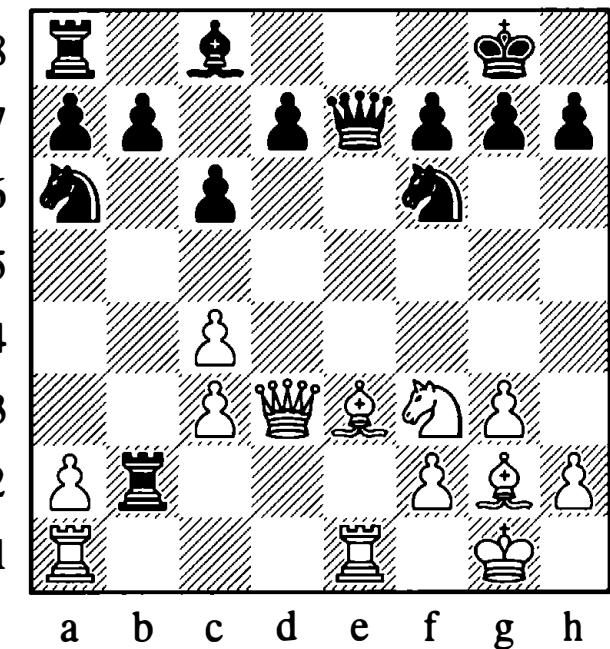
After 11...d5 12. $\mathbb{W}c2\pm$ the queen would feel safe, because ... $\mathbb{Q}a6-b4$ is no longer possible.

12. bxc3 $\mathbb{B}xe2$

In order to prove the viability of his opening play, Black has to accept the sacrifice.

After 12...d5 13. $\mathbb{W}c2\pm$ White's pair of bishops and the pressure against Black's centre would make the play rather one-sided.

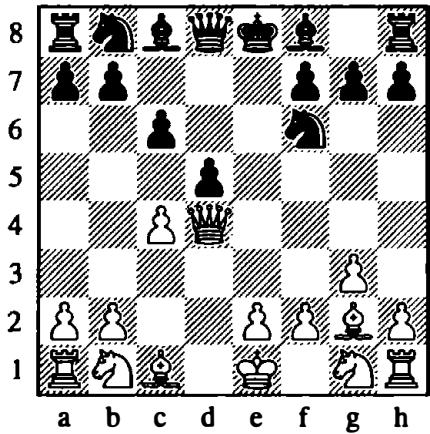
13. $\mathbb{Q}e3$ $\mathbb{W}e7$ 14. $\mathbb{W}d3$ $\mathbb{B}b2$ 15. $\mathbb{W}e1\pm$



White has a considerable lead in development, while Black's dark squares are weak and his coordination is poor. This adds up to more than sufficient compensation for White's pawn sacrifice.

Conclusion:

The early knight development to a6 may be tricky enough to confuse some opponents, but it does not guarantee Black an easy life. In the critical lines White has more than one way of retaining an advantage.



Keres Variation

5...d5

Variation Index

1.c4 e5 2.g3 ♘f6 3.♗g2 c6 4.d4 exd4 5.♕xd4

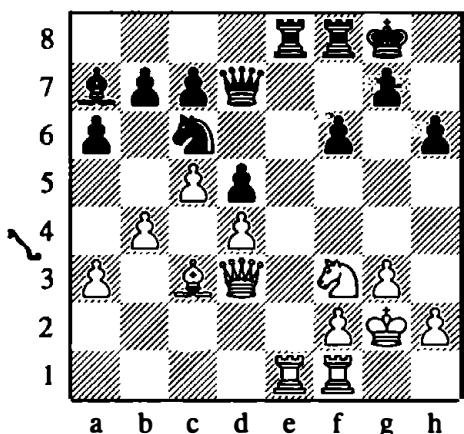
5...d5 6.♘f3

A) 6...♕e6	p 386
B) 6...dxc4 7.♕xd8† ♔xd8 8.0-0	p 387
B1) 8...♗bd7	p 387
B2) 8...♔b4	p 392
B3) 8...♕e6	p 393
C) 6...♕e7 7.cxd5 cxd5 8.0-0 ♘c6 9.♗a4 0-0 10.♘c3	p 397
C1) 10...♗b6	p 398
C2) 10...♔d7	p 401
C3) 10...♕e6	p 402

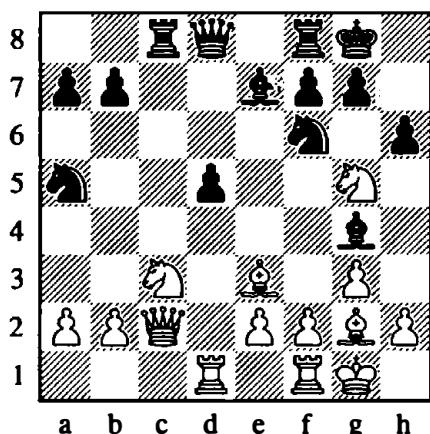
B1) after 8...♗bd7

C2) after 14...h6

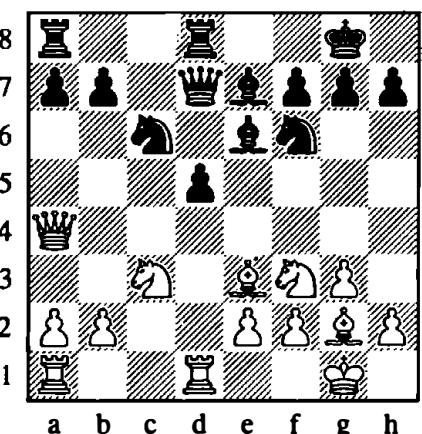
C3) after 14...♗fd8



9.a4!



15.♗ge4!N±

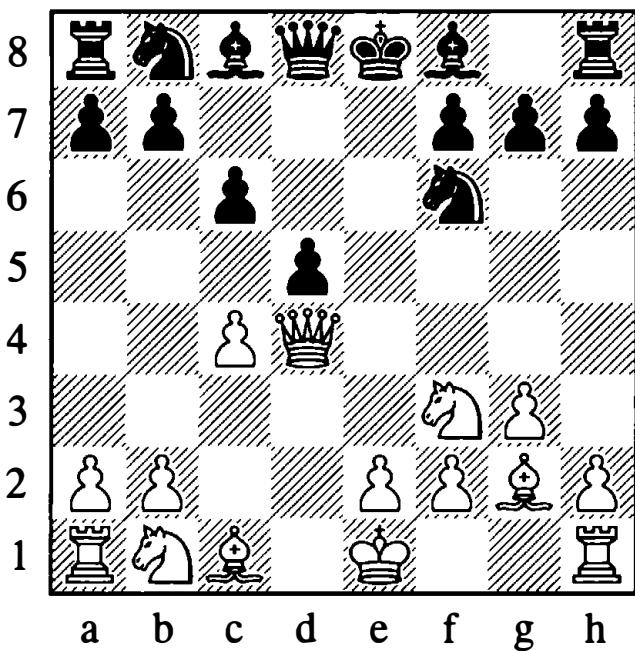


13.♗d2!N

1.c4 e5 2.g3 ♘f6 3.♗g2 c6 4.d4 exd4 5.♕xd4 d5

This natural move is best. Black hopes that his queen's knight will have a better fate than wandering around without a clear purpose as in Chapter 28. In the event of an exchange on d5, Black could develop the knight to its most active square, which is of course c6.

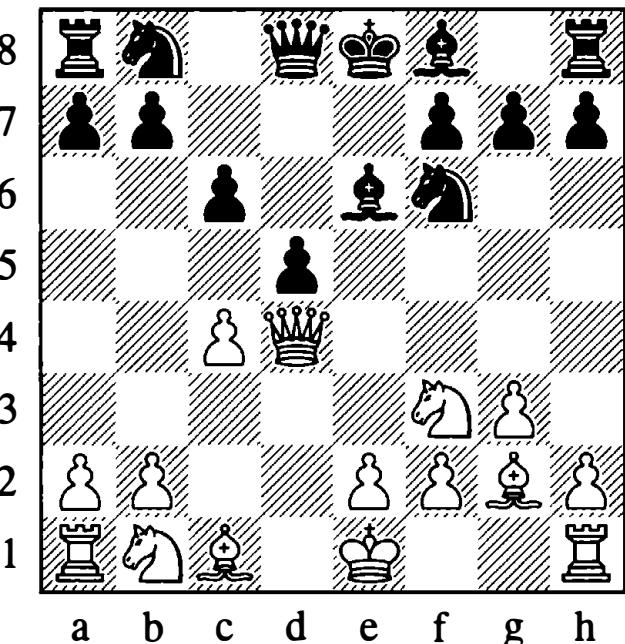
6.♘f3



Black has tried A) 6...♝e6, B) 6...dxc4 and C) 6...♝e7.

(1.c4 e5 2.g3 ♘f6 3.♗g2 c6 4.d4 exd4 5.♕xd4 d5 6.♘f3)

A) 6...♝e6



Black increases the pressure against the c4-pawn, hoping to provoke 7.cxd5 when he would develop in the most active way with 7...cxd5 8.0–0 ♘c6 9.♕a4 ♜c5, etc.

In order to make the most of White's possibilities, I have as a general rule refrained from playing cxd5 before Black plays ...♝e7, even if this means sacrificing a pawn.

7.0–0! c5?!

This premature display of activity weakens Black's light squares, and so boosts the power of the g2-bishop. It is the only continuation that has independent value.

7...dxc4 would be better, when 8.♕xd8† ♜xd8 9.♗g5 would transpose to line B.

8.♕d3

This is the strongest of several tempting retreats.

8.♕h4!? is interesting, leaving the d-file available for the rook, but the queen may be somewhat exposed after ...♝e7.

8.♕d1 is sufficient for a small advantage. 8...♘c6 9.cxd5 ♕xd5 10.♗g5 ♕xd1 11.♖xd1± The weakness of the light squares is bothersome for Black.

8...♘c6 9.cxd5 ♕xd5

9...♗xd5 10.♗g5±, or 9...♕xd5 10.♗c3± would both leave Black's light-squared bishop feeling uncomfortable.

10.♗b5!

The main merit of 8.♕d3 is that it allows this active incursion, which puts the enemy queenside under serious pressure.

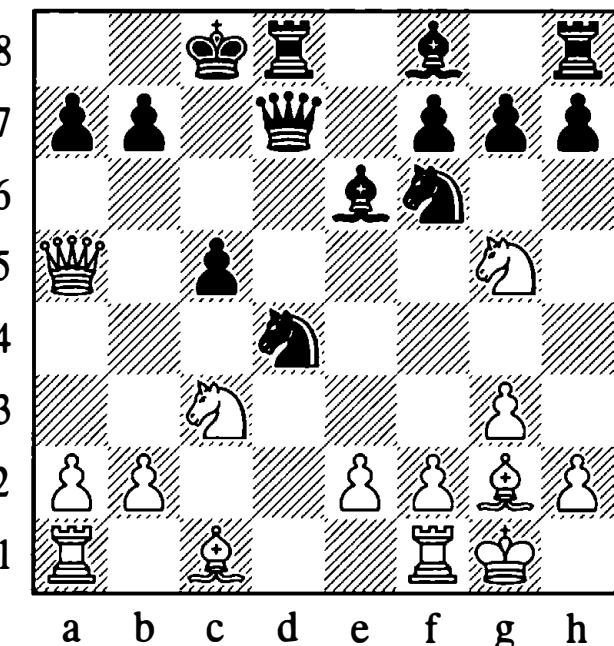
10...0–0–0

10...♕d7 11.♗c3± followed by ♕d1 would offer White a strong initiative.

11.♘g5 ♖d7

11...♖c4? leads to disaster after 12.♕xc6!.

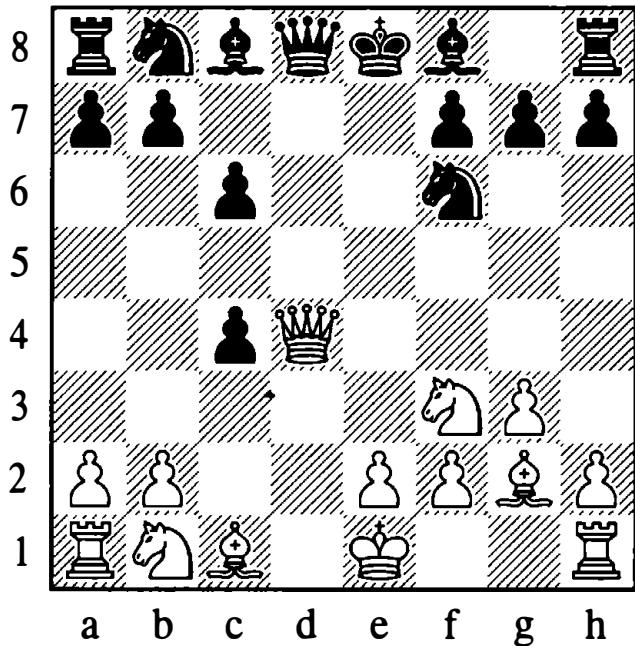
12.♘c3 ♘d4 13.♗a5±



Most of Black's pieces seem active, but his king is far from safe. Returning to Tarrasch's turn of phrase, that one badly placed piece makes the whole position bad – this is doubly true when that piece is the king.

(1.c4 e5 2.g3 ♘f6 3.♗g2 c6 4.d4 exd4 5.♗xd4 d5 6.♘f3)

B) 6...dxc4



Black releases the tension in order to avoid any weaknesses being created in his centre.

7.♗xd8†!

White deprives the enemy king of the right to castle, which will cause Black serious problems of coordination. In certain cases, the king will face a strong attack.

The cautious and more popular 7.♗xc4 would allow Black easy development with 7...♝e6 8.♗c2 ♘a6, although I still prefer White.

7...♚xd8 8.0–0

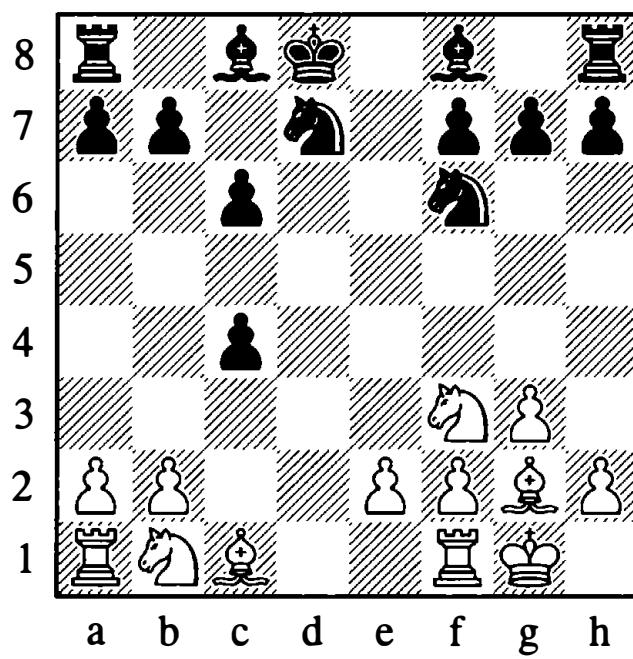
The queenside structure is similar to those that arise in the gambit lines of the Anti-Slav (as we shall see in Volume 2). In order to defend his extra pawn, Black will have to make some important concessions.

There is little practical material available from this position. Most of the lines examined below were analysed specially for this book.

We will examine B1) 8...♘bd7, B2) 8...♜b4 and B3) 8...♝e6.

(1.c4 e5 2.g3 ♘f6 3.♗g2 c6 4.d4 exd4 5.♗xd4 d5 6.♘f3 dxc4 7.♗xd8† ♚xd8 8.0–0)

B1) 8...♘bd7



Black makes a natural developing move and prepares to defend the c4-pawn with ...♘d7-b6.

9.a4!N

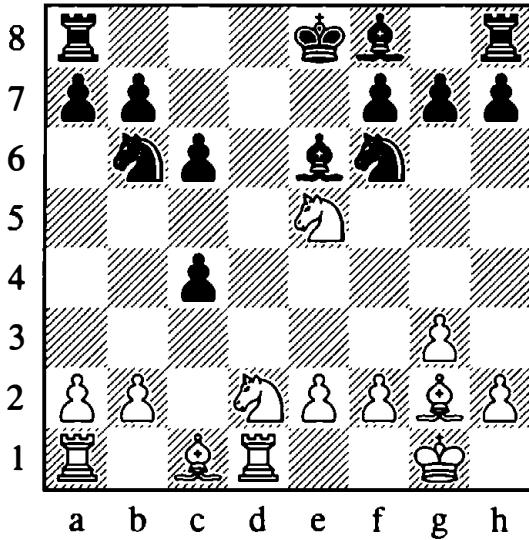
With this untested move, White immediately takes measures against Black's plan.

Theory mainly relies on a wild game where Black was crushed only because of a slip at the critical moment:

9.♗d1 ♕e8 10.♗bd2

10.a4 is now less effective than if played one move earlier: 10...♝c5 11.♗bd2 ♕e6 12.♗d4 ♘d8! The possibility of creating this annoying pin along the d-file is a direct consequence of inserting the moves ♘d1 and ...♕e8.

10...♝b6 11.♗e5 ♕e6



12.♗xc6

Again, 12.a4 fails to achieve the desired effects because of 12...♝fd7 13.a5 ♜xe5 14.axb6 a6 and White's initiative has been extinguished.

12...bxc6!

Black has no reason to shy away from this move.

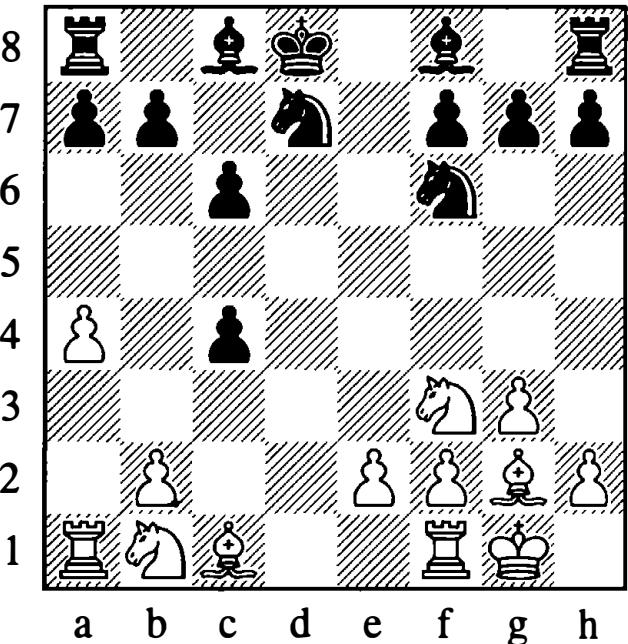
In the game Suba – Sax, Baile Herculane 1982, he "chickened out" with 12...♝d5? and had a bad position after 13.♗a5 ♜xg2 14.♔xg2 ♘c8 15.♗f3±.

13.♗xc6† ♜fd7 14.♗xa8 ♜xa8 15.♗e4

Annotating the game for *Chess Informant*, Ilijin evaluates this position as slightly better for White, but after:

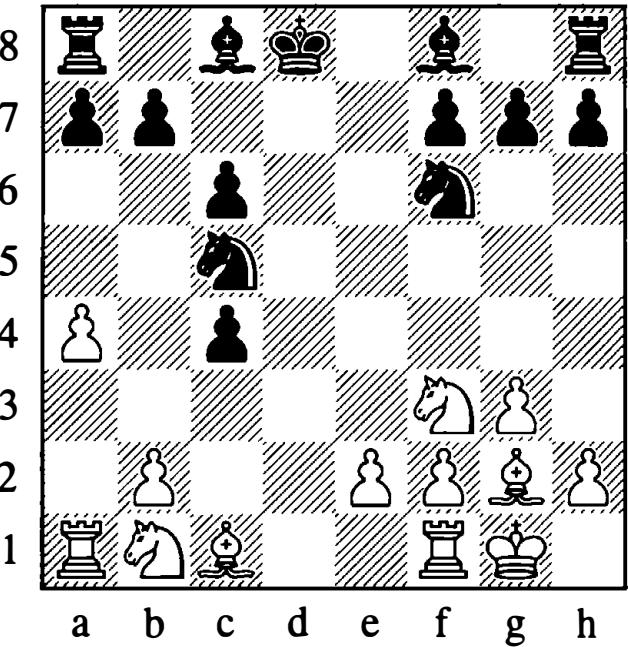
15...♝ab6

Black is at least equal.



Black has a wide range of options. We will examine B11) 9...♝c5, B12) 9...♝b4 and B13) 9...a5.

(1.c4 e5 2.g3 ♘f6 3.♗g2 c6 4.d4 exd4 5.♘xd4 d5 6.♗f3 dxc4 7.♘xd8† ♔xd8 8.0–0 ♘bd7 9.a4)

B11) 9...♝c5

Black takes the newly created weakness on b3 under observation, but his lack of development will prevent him taking advantage of it.

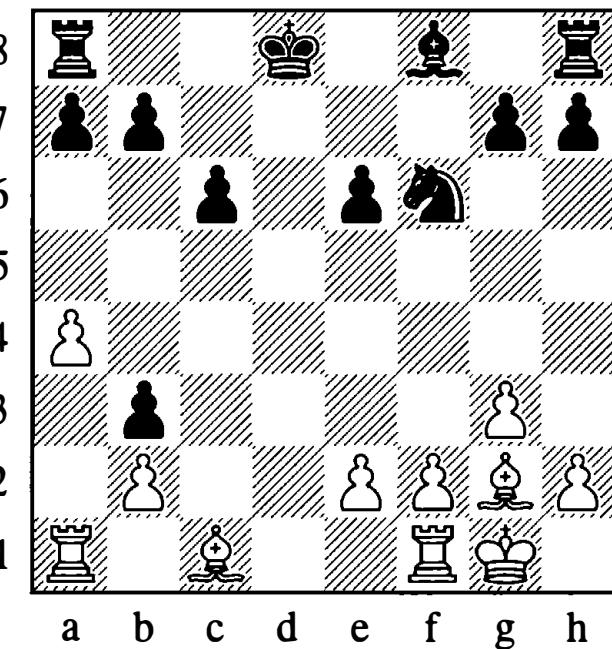
10.♗bd2 ♕e6

10...a5 would be answered with 11.♗d1 ♜e8 12.♗d4±. After defending the b3-

square, White is ready to regain the pawn with ♘d2xc4.

11.♘g5 ♘b3 12.♘xb3 cxb3 13.♘xe6† fxe6

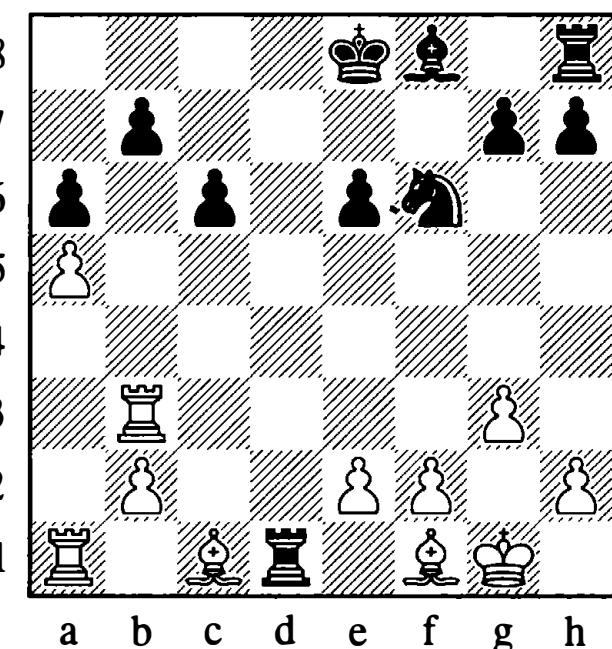
Black's structure has been seriously damaged and his extra pawn is doomed.



14.a5!

An important intermediate move that prevents Black from consolidating on the dark squares with ...a7-a5 followed by ...♖f8-b4. The threat of a5-a6 forces Black's answer.

14...a6 15.♗d1† ♖e8 16.♗d3 ♗d8 17.♗xb3 ♗d1† 18.♗f1±

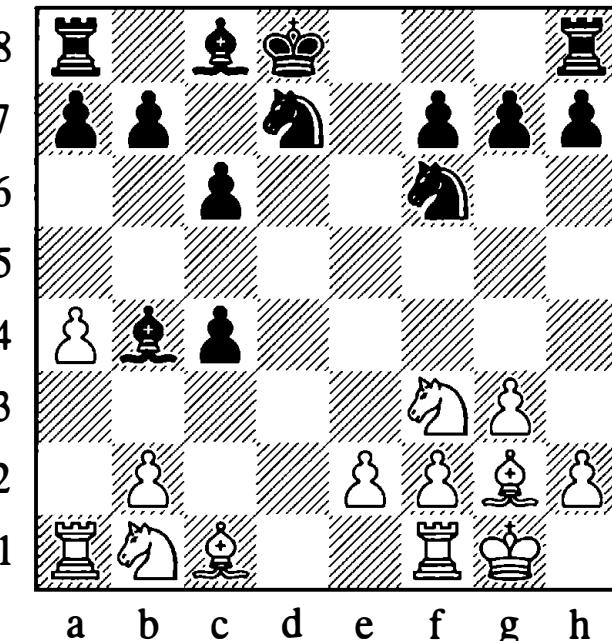


White has the bishop pair and the better structure. The pin along the back rank is not so

dangerous because Black's other pieces are not supporting the d1-rook. Still, as I suggested above, this variation and the final position need practical tests.

(1.c4 e5 2.g3 ♘f6 3.♗g2 c6 4.d4 exd4 5.♗xd4 d5 6.♘f3 dxc4 7.♗xd8† ♖xd8 8.0–0 ♘bd7 9.a4)

B12) 9...♗b4



Black occupies the weakened b4-square, hoping to consolidate with a later ...a7-a5.

10.a5!

White prevents Black's plan by radical means, while also creating the potential threat of a5-a6.

10...♗e8

It is hard to suggest another useful move. Black develops the rook, attacking the e2-pawn.

11.♗a4 c5

Black has to play this weakening move, because 11...♗f8 would simply be too passive. 12.♘c3 ♘d5 13.♗xc4 ♘xc3 14.bxc3 ♗xe2 15.a6± In view of the weakness of the c6-pawn, Black's material advantage is temporary, while White's lead in development is difficult to neutralize.

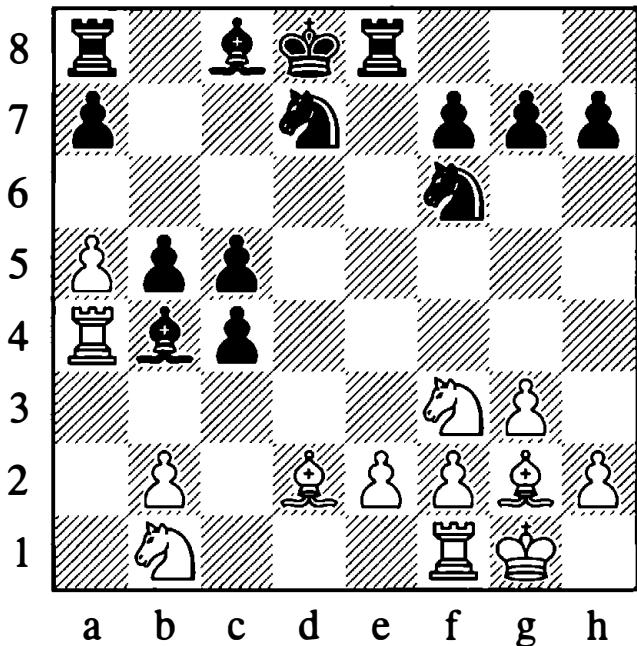
12.♖d2!

White has to undermine the queenside fortress at once. Otherwise, his rook would remain passive on a4.

12...b5

This is the only way to fight back.

Black can maintain his material advantage with 12...♕xd2 13.♘fxd2 ♜xe2, but after 14.♘xc4 ♜e6 15.♘c3 he has no obvious way to complete development. 15...♝b8 16.♝d1 ♜e7 17.f4 g6 18.♝a3± White will increase the pressure with ♜a4 and ♜h3, followed by transferring the a3-rook to a central file.

**13.♝xb4!**

This exchange sacrifice is the only way to keep the initiative. It also undermines Black's control of the dark squares.

13...cx b4 14.♘d4 ♜e4 15.♘xb4 a6 16.♘f5

White is threatening ♜d6.

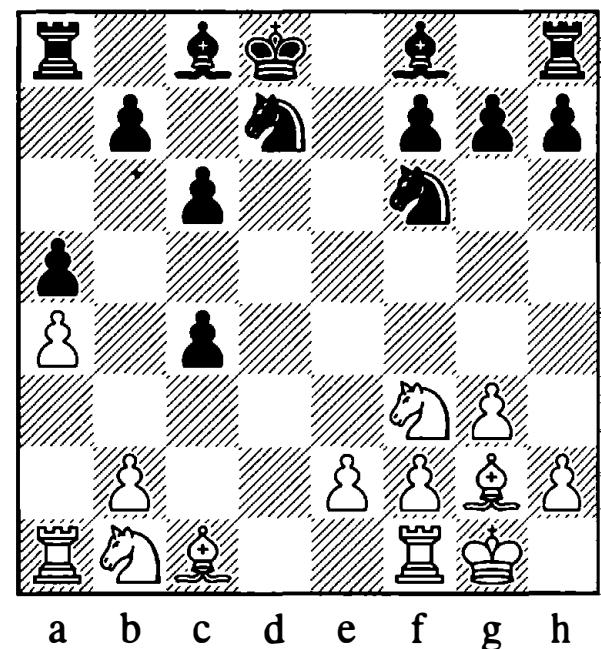
16...♝b7 17.♘xg7 ♜g8

17...♝e5 would leave the rook trapped in the middle of the board after 18.f4±.

18.♘f5 ♜c7 19.f3±

White has only one pawn for the exchange, but he also has the better structure, active pieces and the safer king.

(1.c4 e5 2.g3 ♜f6 3.♕g2 c6 4.d4 exd4 5.♗xd4 d5 6.♘f3 dxc4 7.♗xd8† ♜xd8 8.0-0 ♜bd7 9.a4)

B13) 9...a5

Black blocks the enemy pawn, but weakens the b6-square, which will make ...♘d7-b6 a less effective defence of the extra pawn.

10.♝d1!

Under the changed circumstances, this move is essential. White plans ♜b1-a3 and has to make sure Black cannot develop quickly with ...♝f8xa3 followed by ...♞h8-e8. Therefore, the black king is kindly invited to occupy the e8-square.

10...♞e8

Black has to unpin the knight in order to parry the threats of ♜b1-d2 or ♜f3-e5, retrieving the pawn. Instead 10...♞c7? is answered by 11.♗f4† ♜b6 12.♘bd2±, or 12.♘g5±.

11.♘a3

When replaying the following variations, it is essential to remember that Black has lost the right to castle. There is a famous game Tal – Larsen, in which White had a strong attack against the black king, which had moved to and fro and was now back home on e8. Tal

misplayed the position by trying desperately to prevent Black castling!

11...♝b6

Giving up the bishop would leave Black unstable on the dark squares:

11...♜xa3 12.♝xa3

The rook's activity along the third rank makes the enemy king feel uncomfortable.

12...♞c5

12...♝b6 13.♕e3 ♜fd5 leaves the knights hanging after 14.♕d4± threatening ♜xg7 and e4.

13.♞d4!

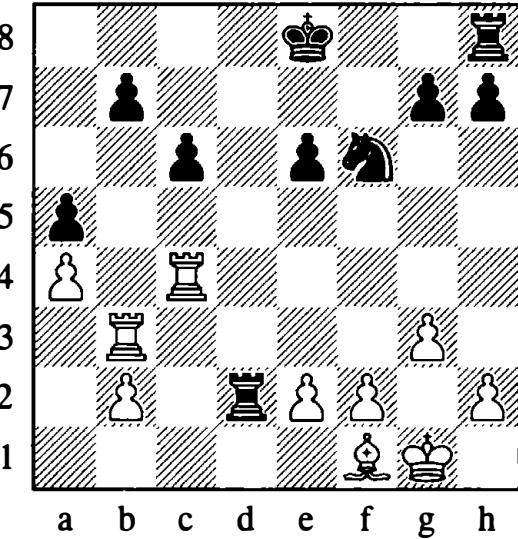
White improves his position without hurrying to retrieve the pawn.

13.♞e5 is less effective because of 13...♜e6 14.♕e3 ♜fd7, exchanging the active knight.

13...♜e6 14.♕e3 ♜d8 15.♕c1

White has finished his regrouping and Black cannot save his extra pawn.

15...♝b3 16.♝xe6 fxe6 17.♜xc4 ♜d1† 18.♕f1 ♜d2 19.♕xd2 ♜xd2 20.♜b3±

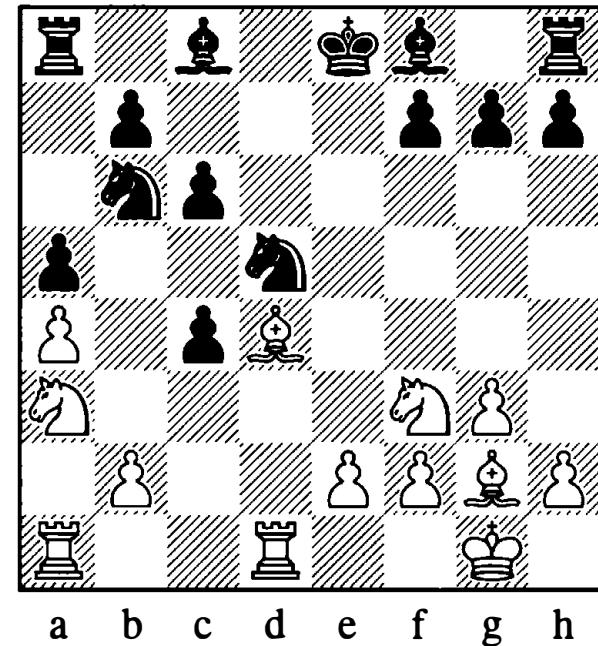


The passivity of White's bishop is temporary, while the black queenside is under serious pressure. In addition, Black has structural problems on the other wing.

12.♕e3 ♜fd5 13.♕d4

White has almost completed his development and threatens e2-e4. With his dark-squared bishop still on the board, Black

can offer better resistance than in a similar sub-variation from the previous comment.

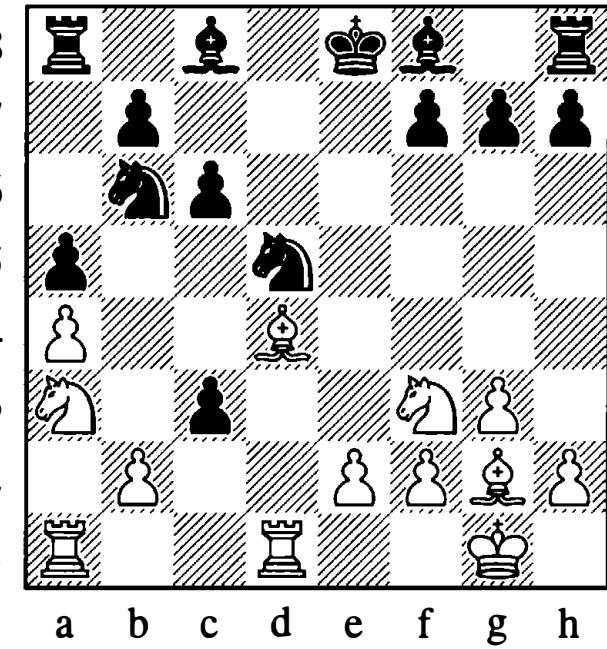


13...c3

Black tries to cause some structural damage, using the doomed pawn as a kamikaze.

13...c5 chronically weakens the light squares.
14.♕e5 ♜d7 15.e4 ♜b4 16.♕c7 ♜xa4
17.♞xc4± Black is badly underdeveloped and his pieces are hanging.

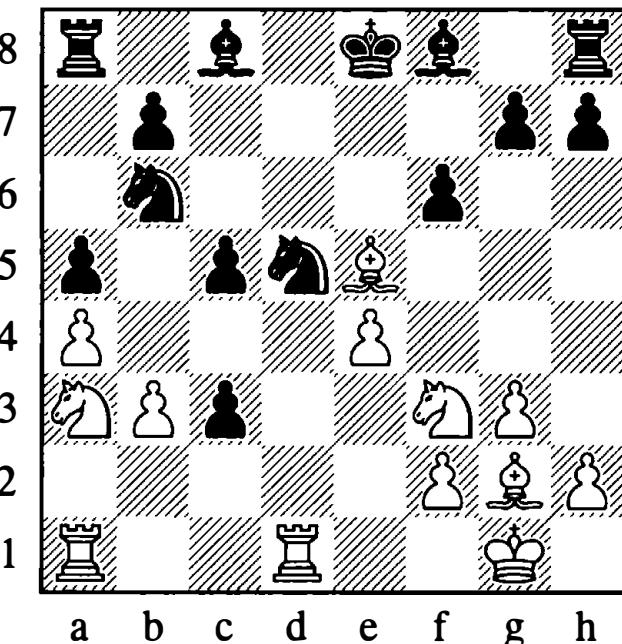
The greedy 13...♝xa4 allows White to build a strong initiative after 14.♞xc4 b5 15.♝fe5 ♜b7 16.e4 ♜b4 17.♝b6 ♜xb6 18.♝xb6 a4 19.♝d7±. White is several tempos ahead in development, while Black's extra pawn is irrelevant.



14.b3!

After this consolidating move the c3-pawn survives for the moment, but it will inevitably die soon. Instead, 14.bxc3 would make the c3-square available for the black knights after 14... $\mathbb{Q}xa4!$.

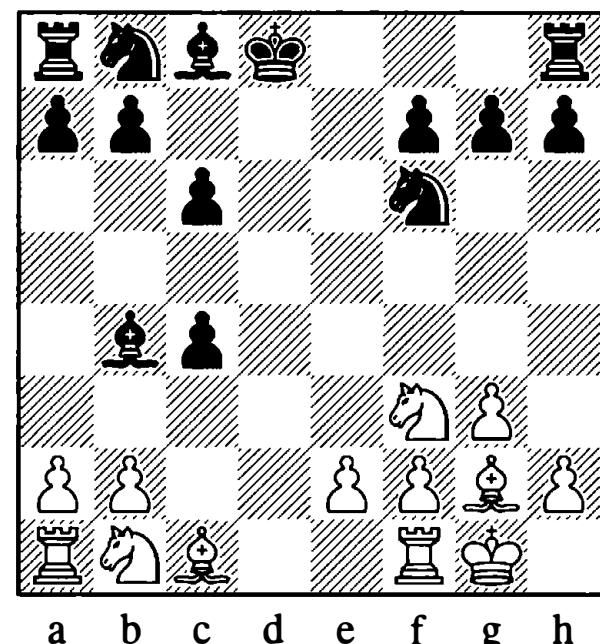
14...c5 15. $\mathbb{Q}e5$ f6 16.e4!±



White has a strong initiative.

(1.c4 e5 2.g3 $\mathbb{Q}f6$ 3. $\mathbb{Q}g2$ c6 4.d4 exd4 5. $\mathbb{W}xd4$ d5 6. $\mathbb{Q}f3$ dx $c4$ 7. $\mathbb{W}xd8\#$ $\mathbb{Q}xd8$ 8.0–0)

B2) 8... $\mathbb{Q}b4$



A very ambitious move. Black intends to make his material advantage permanent by exchanging his c4-pawn for the b2-pawn.

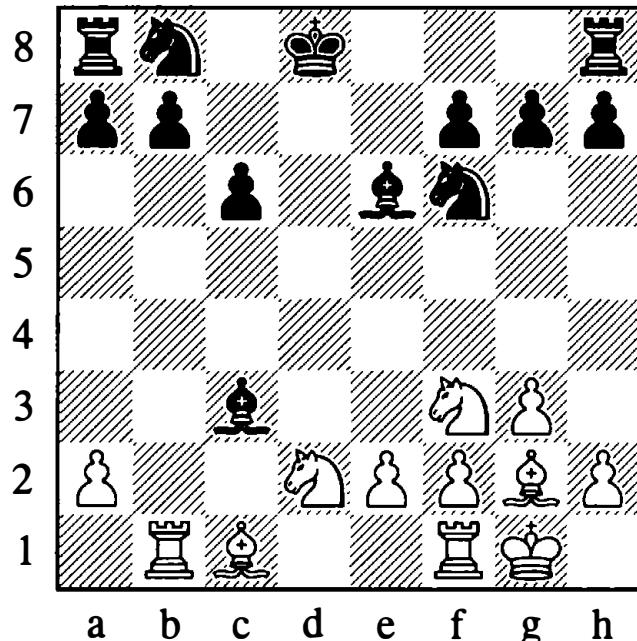
9. $\mathbb{Q}bd2$ c3

Inserting the moves 9... $\mathbb{Q}e6$ 10. $\mathbb{Q}g5$ before playing 10...c3 only weakens the b7-square. 11. $\mathbb{Q}xe6\#$ fx $e6$ 12.bxc3 $\mathbb{Q}xc3$ 13. $\mathbb{B}b1$ $\mathbb{Q}xd2$ 14. $\mathbb{Q}xd2\pm$ Black's position will almost certainly crack under the pressure, Carlier – Van Gisbergen, Dieren 1990.

10.bxc3 $\mathbb{Q}xc3$ 11. $\mathbb{B}b1$

White threatens to create a powerful attack with $\mathbb{B}f1-d1$, $\mathbb{Q}d2-c4$ and $\mathbb{Q}c1-f4$, which forces Black to make some tough decisions.

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

**12. $\mathbb{Q}g5\?!$**

12. $\mathbb{B}xb7$ would be less accurate because of 12... $\mathbb{Q}c8$ followed by ... $\mathbb{Q}e6xa2$.

12... $\mathbb{Q}xa2$

Paradoxically, grabbing this queenside pawn is the only way Black can keep the light squares on his kingside defended, but it is only a temporary solution.

12... $\mathbb{Q}xd2$ 13. $\mathbb{Q}xe6\#$ fx $e6$ 14. $\mathbb{Q}xd2$ transposes back to Carlier – Van Gisbergen, above.

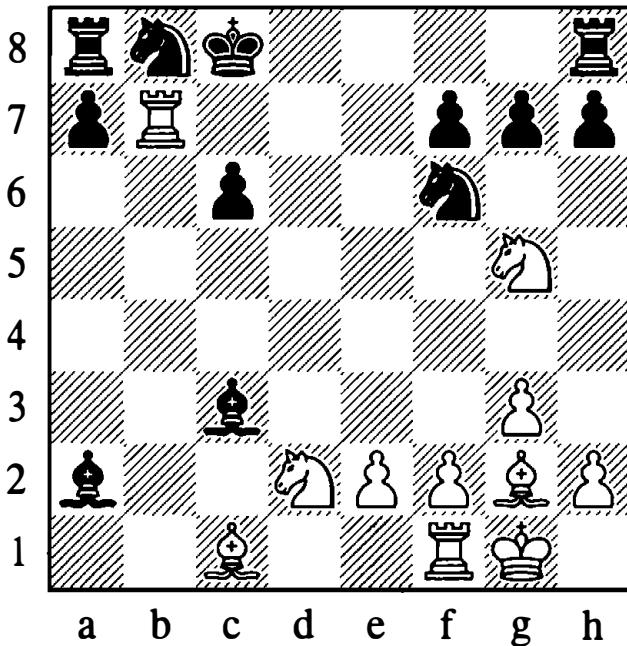
13. $\mathbb{B}xb7$

Black's position has no harmony, but he can try one last chance.

13...♚c8

Apparently, the rook will soon be expelled from the seventh rank.

13...♝fd7 leaves Black facing a strong attack after 14.♞de4 ♜e5 15.♝h3±, since 15...♝c8 loses to 16.♝c5.

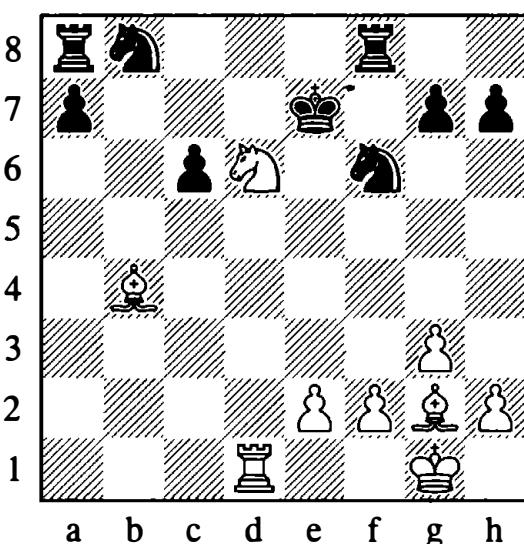


14.♝xf7!

A well-timed sacrifice that seizes control of the light squares in Black's camp.

14...♝xf7 15.♝xf7 ♜f8

Giving up the other bishop with 15...♜xd2 would leave Black with problems on the dark squares, too: 16.♝xd2 ♜f8 17.♝d6† ♚d7 18.♝d1 ♜e7 19.♝b4±



White has a powerful attack. At the very least, he will regain the exchange with ♜b5-c7.

16.♞c4 ♜b4 17.♝fe5±

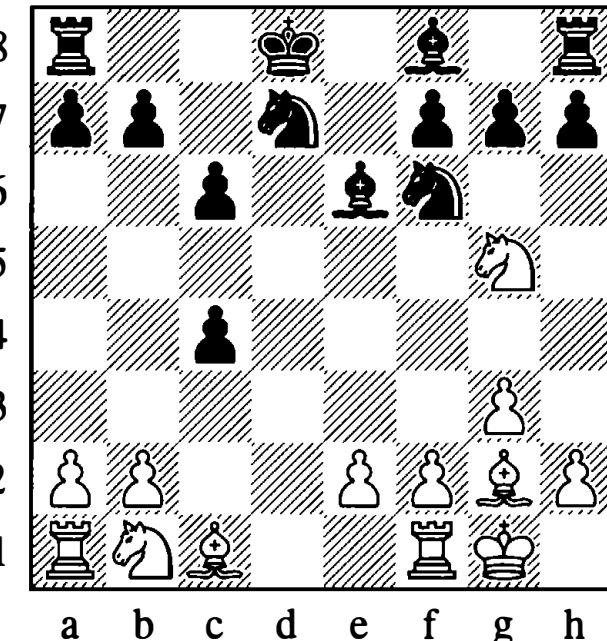
Black has a material advantage, but he has no easy way to coordinate his pieces. White threatens to increase the pressure with ♜e3 followed by ♜b1. The e5-knight has a bright future: it might win a tempo with ♜d3 or instead simply capture on c6.

(1.c4 e5 2.g3 ♜f6 3.♝g2 c6 4.d4 exd4 5.♗xd4 d5 6.♞f3 dxc4 7.♗xd8† ♜xd8 8.0–0)

B3) 8...♜e6

The previous variations suggest that Black cannot do without this move, so it makes sense to play it immediately.

9.♞g5 ♜bd7



10.♝d1!

This is an important move, forcing the enemy king to occupy the e8-square. The idea is familiar to us from line B13.

Immediately attacking the pawn with 10.♞d2 offers Black more freedom of action. 10...♝b6 11.♝xe6† fxe6 12.♝h3 ♜b4 13.♞f3 (13.♝xe6 would be answered with 13...♝e8 followed by ...♝xe2) 13...♝e7 The king has reached the optimal e7-square without loss of time, Rotstein – Ortega, Italy 1999.

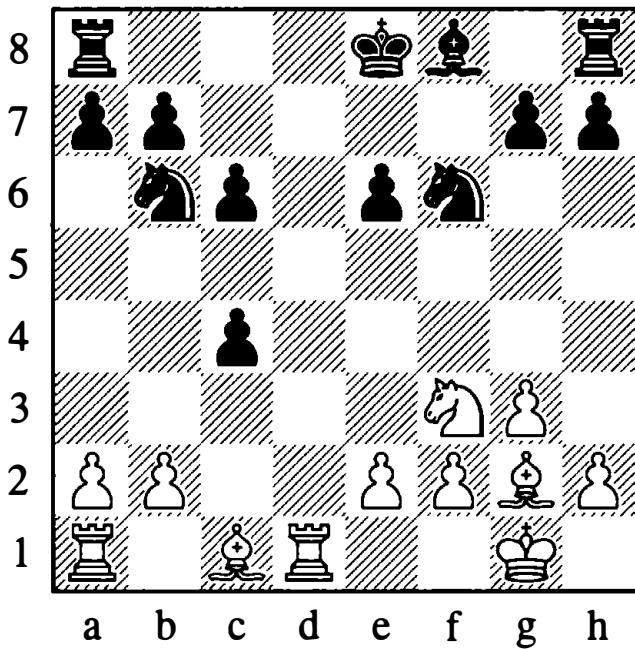
10... $\mathbb{Q}e8$

After 10... $\mathbb{Q}b4$ 11. $\mathbb{Q}xe6\#$ fxe6 12. $\mathbb{B}d4\pm$ White would regain the pawn with advantage.

11. $\mathbb{Q}d2$ $\mathbb{Q}b6$ 12. $\mathbb{Q}xe6$ fxe6 13. $\mathbb{Q}f3!$

This is another important detail, as instead 13. $\mathbb{Q}h3?!$ can be met by 13... $\mathbb{B}d8!$ pinning the knight, as in King – Adams, Kilkenny 1996.

After the text move White threatens to attack the e6-pawn with $\mathbb{Q}f3-g5$ and $\mathbb{Q}g2-h3$. The position looks pleasant for White, but it requires careful handling. In some cases, Black can return the e6-pawn in order to complete his development, hoping that his space advantage on the queenside will be significant in the event of simplifications.



Black has several ways of trying to catch up in development. We will examine B31) 13... $\mathbb{B}d8$, B32) 13... $\mathbb{Q}c5$ and B33) 13... $\mathbb{Q}b4$.

(1.c4 e5 2.g3 $\mathbb{Q}f6$ 3. $\mathbb{Q}g2$ c6 4.d4 exd4 5. $\mathbb{B}xd4$ d5 6. $\mathbb{Q}f3$ dx $\mathbb{Q}c4$ 7. $\mathbb{B}xd8\#$ $\mathbb{Q}xd8$ 8.0-0 $\mathbb{Q}e6$ 9. $\mathbb{Q}g5$ $\mathbb{Q}bd7$ 10. $\mathbb{B}d1$ $\mathbb{Q}e8$ 11. $\mathbb{Q}d2$ $\mathbb{Q}b6$ 12. $\mathbb{Q}xe6$ fxe6 13. $\mathbb{Q}f3)$

B31) 13... $\mathbb{B}d8$

Black exchanges the active white rook, but loses more time.

14. $\mathbb{B}xd8\#$ $\mathbb{Q}xd8$ 15. $\mathbb{Q}g5$ $\mathbb{Q}e7$

This unfortunate move, blocking the bishop, is the only way to parry the threats of $\mathbb{Q}xe6\#$ and $\mathbb{Q}f7\#$.

16. $\mathbb{Q}e3$

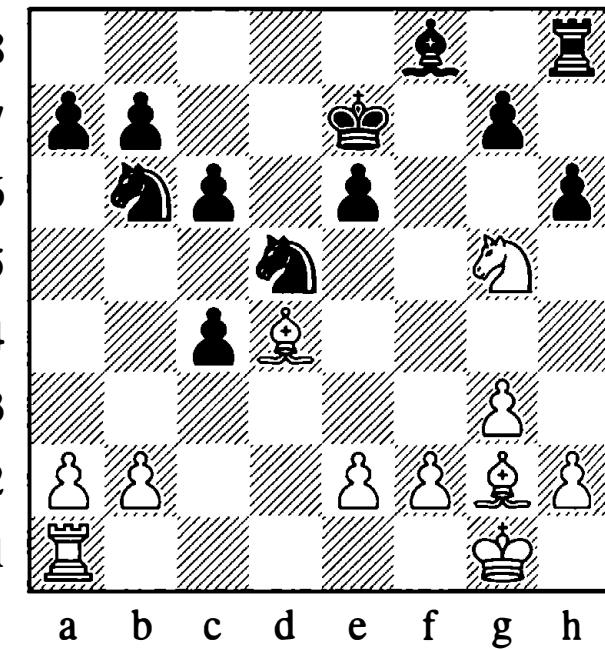
White increases the pressure with natural developing moves.

16... $\mathbb{Q}fd5$ 17. $\mathbb{Q}d4$

17. $\mathbb{Q}c5\#$ leads nowhere because of 17... $\mathbb{Q}d7$. Then White can win the h7-pawn, but this would require exchanging bishops and allowing Black to complete his development, when the position would become unclear.

17...h6

Black has no other way of freeing himself.

**18. $\mathbb{Q}f3!$**

The knight moves closer to the newly weakened g6-square and prepares to submit the enemy king to a fresh form of domination. Instead 18. $\mathbb{Q}e4$ $\mathbb{Q}f7$ 19.a4 $\mathbb{Q}b4$ looks entirely playable for Black.

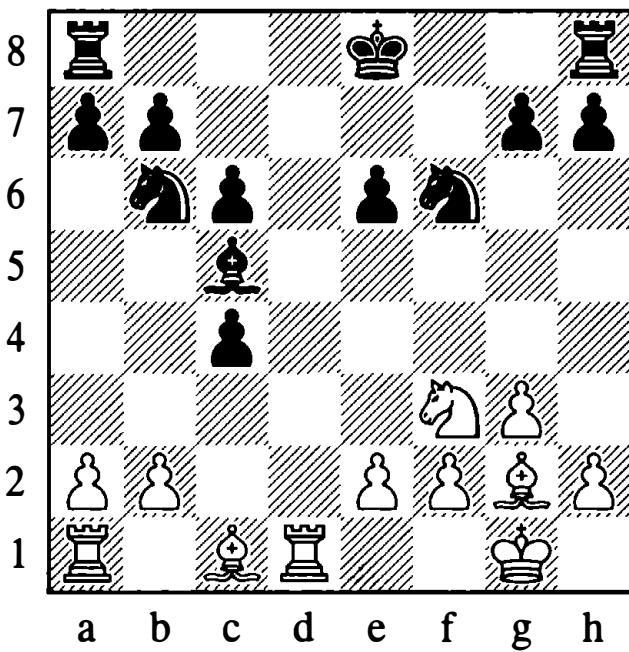
18... $\mathbb{B}g8$

Black unpins the g-pawn, in order to play ...g7-g5 and ... $\mathbb{Q}f8-g7$. 18... $\mathbb{Q}f7$ would make no sense because of 19. $\mathbb{Q}e5\#$ and the king has no good retreat square.

19.♔a4±

White will soon win the c4-pawn, while keeping his positional advantage.

(1.c4 e5 2.g3 ♘f6 3.♗g2 c6 4.d4 exd4 5.♗xd4 d5 6.♘f3 dxc4 7.♗xd8† ♖xd8 8.0–0 ♕e6 9.♗g5 ♘bd7 10.♗d1 ♕e8 11.♗d2 ♘b6 12.♗xe6 fxe6 13.♘f3)

B32) 13...♕c5N

This looks like an active move, but the bishop will be exposed on c5, while the pressure against the f2-square is not dangerous.

14.♗g5 ♕e7

14...♗g4 is adequately met by 15.♗e4±.

15.♗h3 e5

Black clings to his small material advantage.

Attempting to equalize by returning the pawn with 15...♗ad8 fails because of White's great attacking potential. 16.♗f4 ♘bd5 17.♗e5 ♘d6 18.♗xf6† ♘xf6 19.♗xe6 ♗de8 20.e4 ♗xe6 21.exd5 ♗e7 22.dxc6± White has won a pawn and the presence of opposite-coloured bishops only makes matters worse for Black, whose king is exposed.

16.♗e6

The unfavourable position of the black bishop makes itself felt.

16...♗e4

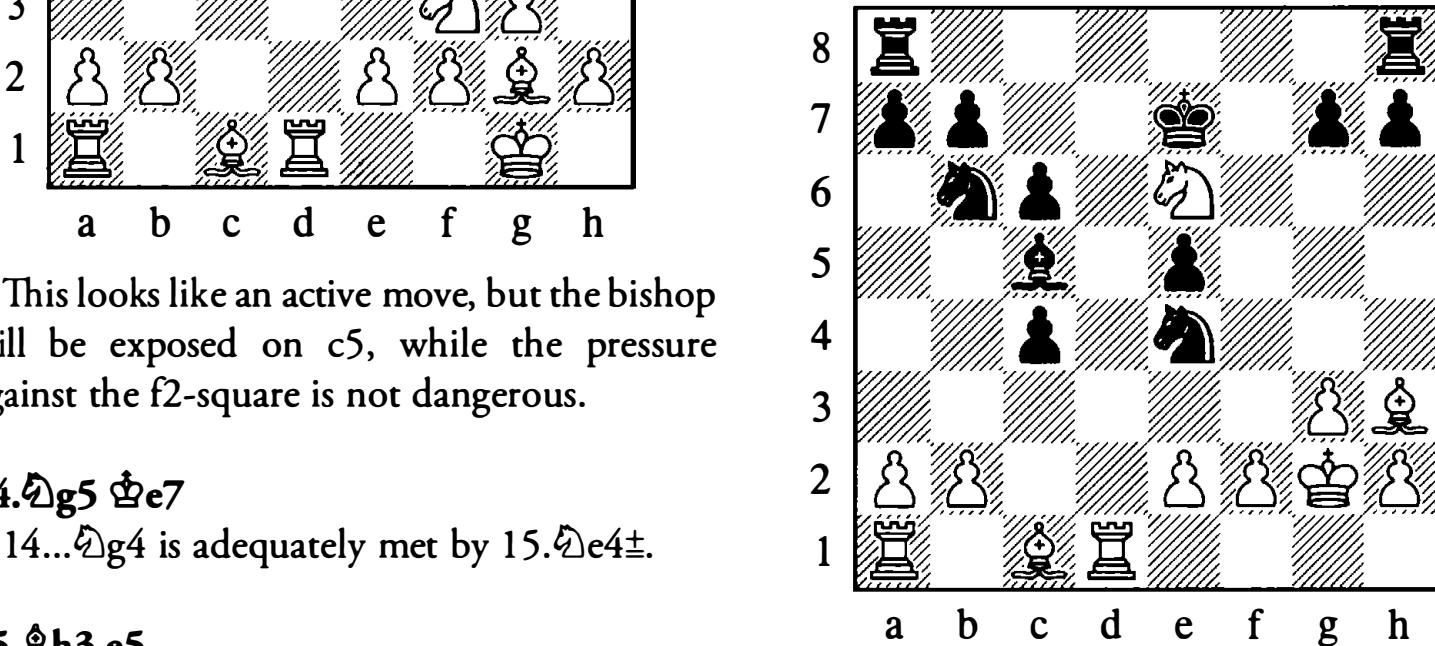
This is the most active way of defending the bishop.

16...♗a4 loses material to 17.b3! ♘c3 18.♗xc5 ♘xd1 19.♔a3±.

16...♗d6 places the bishop on an equally vulnerable square, as is clear after 17.♗xg7† with the strong threat of ♘g7-f5†.

17.♔g2!

After this prophylactic move the f2-pawn remains taboo, while the threat of ♘xg7 is rather strong.

**17...♗f7**

17...♗xf2? drops a piece to 18.♗g5!.

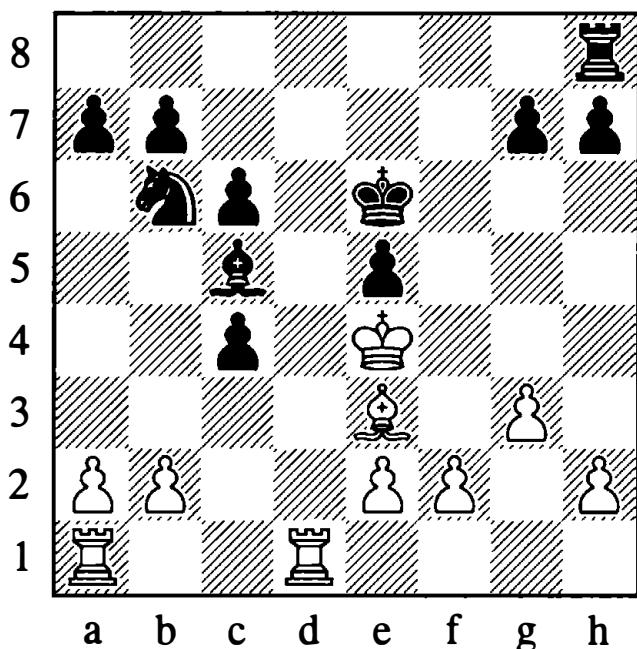
18.♔f3!

White's king has a more glorious career than its rival; Black's minor pieces are hanging.

18...♗ae8

This is the best way to keep the damage within bearable limits. For example, 18...♗xf2? loses material to 19.♗f1.

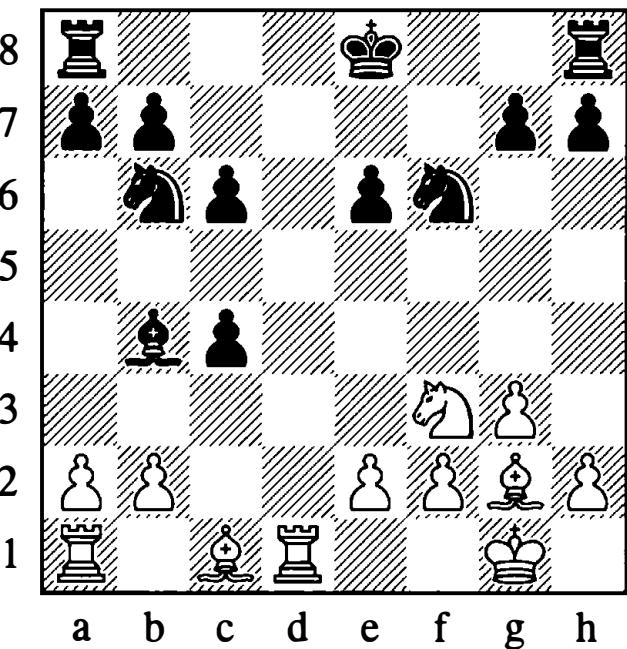
19. $\mathbb{Q}xe4$ $\mathbb{B}xe6$ 20. $\mathbb{Q}xe6\#$ $\mathbb{Q}xe6$ 21. $\mathbb{Q}e3\pm$



Black has some compensation for the exchange, but he will struggle for the rest of the game.

(1.c4 e5 2.g3 $\mathbb{Q}f6$ 3. $\mathbb{Q}g2$ c6 4.d4 exd4 5. $\mathbb{W}xd4$ d5 6. $\mathbb{Q}f3$ dxc4 7. $\mathbb{W}xd8\#$ $\mathbb{Q}xd8$ 8.0-0 $\mathbb{Q}e6$ 9. $\mathbb{Q}g5$ $\mathbb{Q}bd7$ 10. $\mathbb{B}d1$ $\mathbb{Q}e8$ 11. $\mathbb{Q}d2$ $\mathbb{Q}b6$ 12. $\mathbb{Q}xe6$ fxe6 13. $\mathbb{Q}f3$)

B33) 13... $\mathbb{Q}b4!$ N



This is Black's trickiest continuation. If White plays in the same way as in the previous line, then $\mathbb{Q}g5$ -e6 will not win a tempo.

14.a3

The bishop will be forced to occupy the c5-square anyway, but the weakness of the b3-square makes a difference.

14... $\mathbb{Q}c5$

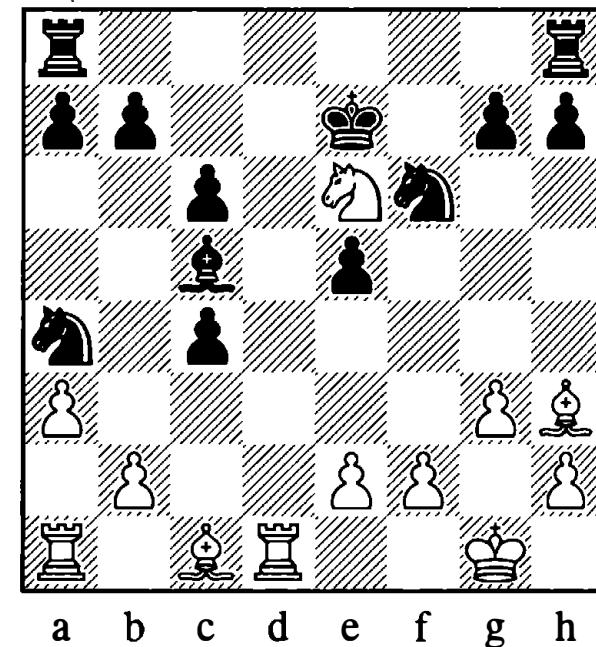
14... $\mathbb{Q}a5$ would place the bishop on an unfavourable square. After 15. $\mathbb{Q}e5\pm$ White threatens not only $\mathbb{B}d1-d4$, but also 16. $\mathbb{Q}xc6$ bxc6 17. $\mathbb{Q}xc6$, trapping the bishop.

15. $\mathbb{Q}g5$ $\mathbb{Q}e7$ 16. $\mathbb{Q}h3$ e5 17. $\mathbb{Q}e6$

So far, play has been similar to one of the lines of B32.

17... $\mathbb{Q}a4!$

This is the position in which the weakness induced by the move a2-a3 makes itself felt. White no longer has b2-b3 and so has to resort to other methods.



18. $\mathbb{Q}g5!$

18. $\mathbb{Q}xg7$ $\mathbb{B}ad8$ would be less clear, but after the text move the threat of $\mathbb{Q}xg7$, leaving the f6-knight under pressure, becomes stronger.

18...h6 19. $\mathbb{Q}xf6\#$ $\mathbb{Q}xf6$

19...gxf6 would allow the spectacular 20. $\mathbb{B}d7\#!$ $\mathbb{Q}xd7$ 21. $\mathbb{Q}xc5\#$ $\mathbb{Q}c7$ 22. $\mathbb{Q}xa4\#$ when White has a material advantage in a stable position.

20.♗dc1!

This is the only effective way of attacking the c4-pawn. After 20.♗ac1 ♕e7! the pawn is taboo because of the fork on b2.

20...b5 21.b3!

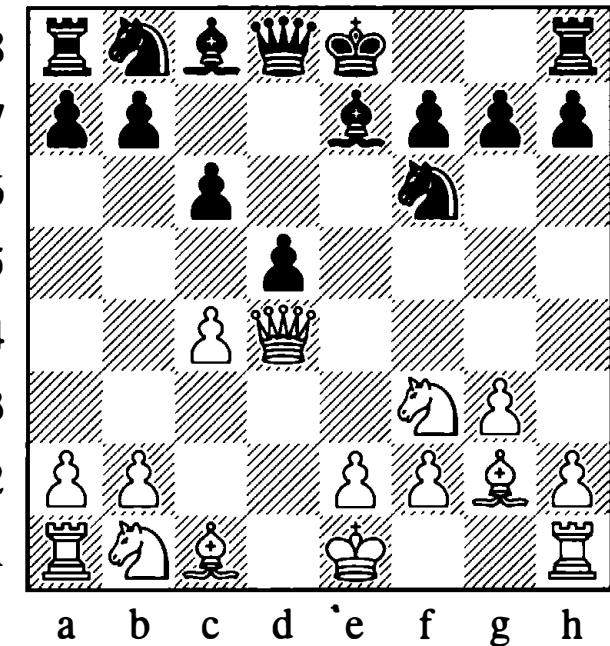
Finally, White has managed to play this move, which undermines Black's queenside stability.

21...cxb3 22.♗xc5±

White has obtained a small material advantage. Black's queenside pawns are not mobile enough to cause White real trouble, but the position remains sharp.

We can conclude that 6...dxc4 is risky because of 7.♗xd8†, but the play is complex and requires great accuracy from White.

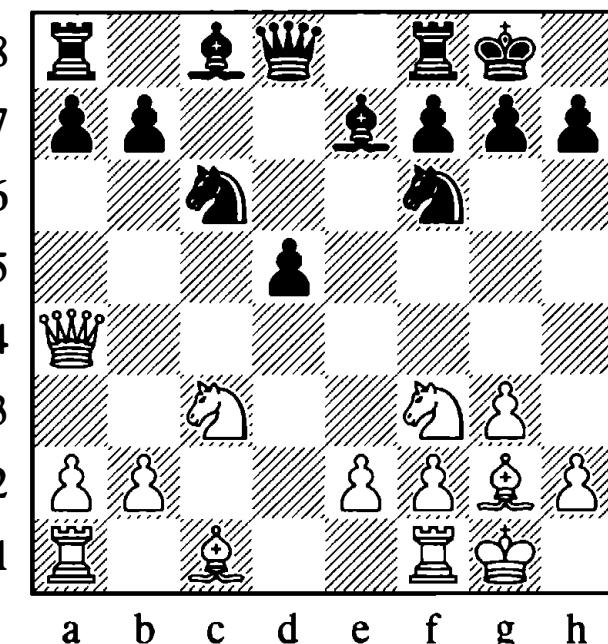
(1.c4 e5 2.g3 ♘f6 3.♗g2 c6 4.d4 exd4 5.♗xd4 d5 6.♗f3)

C) 6...♕e7

This is the soundest move, continuing the development of the kingside and reinforcing all the pre-existing threats. The capture on c4 becomes entirely possible, because ♗xd8† could be adequately met by ...♗xd8. Besides, White has to be ready for the threat of ...c6-c5,

which was not dangerous one move earlier due to ♖e5† followed by exchanging on d5.

These aspects explain the necessity of finally exchanging on d5, which allows Black to clear the c6-square for his knight. This is an acceptable concession from White, because Black's dark-squared bishop has already moved, discarding the possibility of a strong ...♗f8-c5, as mentioned in the comments to line A.

7.cxd5 cxd5 8.0–0 ♘c6 9.♗a4 0–0 10.♘c3

This is an important tabiya, which bears a strong similarity with the main line of the Tarrasch Defence. The pressure against the d5-pawn offers White better chances, but Black's minor piece activity should not be underestimated.

It is difficult to make an entirely accurate comparison with the Tarrasch Defence. Numerically, it may seem that White is a tempo behind in the English Opening, because from the Tarrasch move order his king's knight would already be on d4. This method of comparison is hardly relevant, because in the Tarrasch Black would never capture on d4 without being forced to. He would rather try to induce White to release the tension himself

with dxc5 , allowing the activation of the bishop after ... Qxc5 . Besides, the fact that the knight is on f3 leaves the d-file and the e3-a7 diagonal open, and makes the d4-square available for the bishop. All these elements create additional ideas for White.

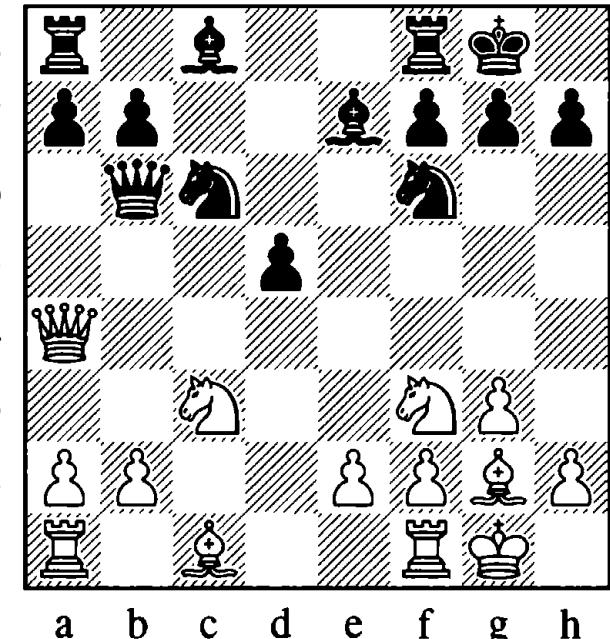
Keeping all this in mind, it is occasionally useful to compare our lines with the Tarrasch, but not in a dogmatic way. The positions are similar, but they can lead to very different play.

We shall examine C1) 10... Wb6 , C2) 10... Qd7 and C3) 10... Qe6 .

Instead 10...d4?! is premature. After 11. Qd1 Qc5 Kaidanov recommended 12. Wc4 Qb6 13.e3± as an improvement over I. Novikov – Kaidanov, USSR 1984, where the immediate 12.e3 was less clear after 12... Qd7 .

(1.c4 e5 2.g3 Qf6 3. Qg2 c6 4.d4 exd4 5. Wxd4 d5 6. Qf3 Qe7 7. cxd5 cxd5 8.0–0 Qc6 9. Wa4 0–0 10. Qc3)

C1) 10... Wb6



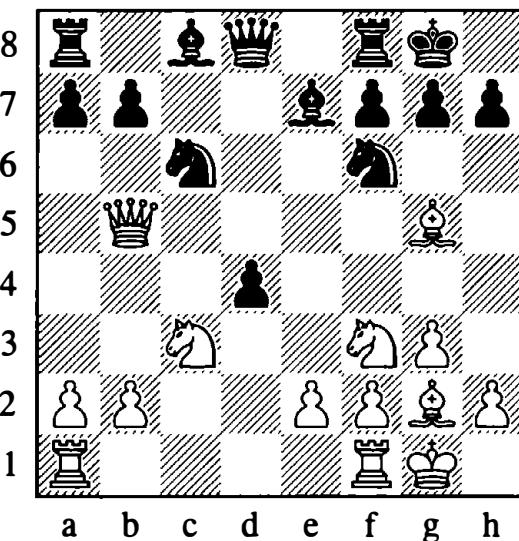
This ambitious move prevents the natural developing move Qe3 by putting the b2-pawn under pressure.

11. Wb5

This is the simplest way of defending the pawn.

Black's main continuations are C11) 11...d4 and C12) 11... Wxb5 .

The slightly paradoxical 11... Wd8 also deserves to be mentioned. Black hopes to prove that the enemy queen is exposed and openly aims for a draw by repetition. 12. Qg5 d4

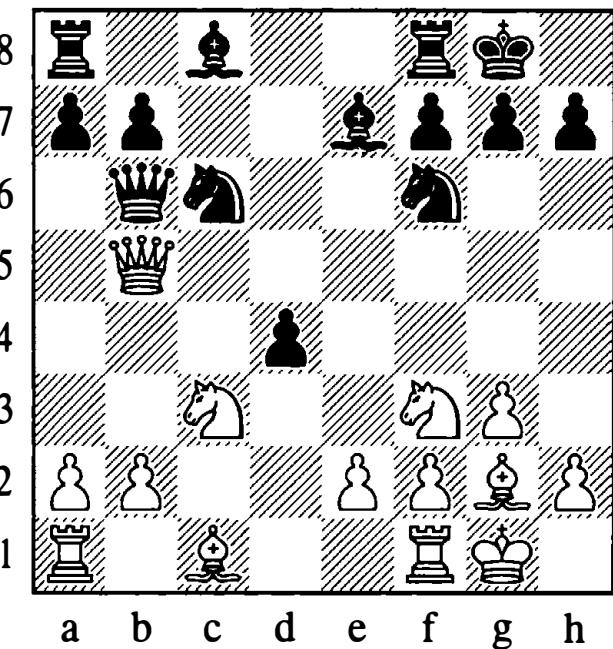


In Marin – Bae, Andorra 2008, White made a typical mistake: I chose the wrong rook to move to d1. In playing 13. Rfd1 , I took into account that there are two open files and I believed that the rooks belonged on c1 and d1. However, when fighting against an isolani, White frequently puts the other rook on d1, in order to allow a rapid queen retreat to b1 and avoid rook exchanges on the c-file, which would release the pressure against the weak pawn.

The correct move is: 13. Rad1!N The difference becomes clear after 13...a6 14. Wxa4 b5 15. Wc2 Qe6 16.e3 Qb4 17. Wb1± . White will win the central pawn without needing to spoil his coordination. In the game, this manoeuvre would have left the a1-rook passive and so I had to deviate on the 16th move, which allowed Black to complete his development satisfactorily.

(1.c4 e5 2.g3 ♜f6 3.♗g2 c6 4.d4 exd4 5.♗xd4 d5 6.♘f3 ♛e7 7.cxd5 cxd5 8.0–0 ♜c6 9.♗a4 0–0 10.♘c3 ♜b6 11.♗b5)

C11) 11...d4



This is a dynamic approach. Black spoils his queenside structure, but gains space in the centre.

12.♗xb6 axb6 13.♘b5 ♜d8 14.♗d1 ♜c5 15.♗g5

This move is unanimously played. White completes his development and creates the potential threat of spoiling Black's structure on the other wing, too.

The untested 15.♗c7!N may also be unpleasant for Black. 15...♜a5 (15...♜a7 leaves the rook passive after 16.♗g5±) 16.♗d2 ♜a4 17.b3 ♜a3 18.♘b5 ♜a8 19.a3± White threatens b3-b4 followed by ♜f4, putting the central pawn in danger.

15...♜a5

It is not clear to me why this is the most popular move, as the rook will remain passive on a5 after White's natural answer.

According to general principles, Black should develop his queen's bishop, although it is far from easy to choose the best square.

15...♗e6

This attacks the a2-square, but the bishop is exposed on e6.

16.b4

16.b3!N looks a simpler solution.

16...♞xb4

16...♞xb4 leads to a similar position and a similar evaluation as in the main line:

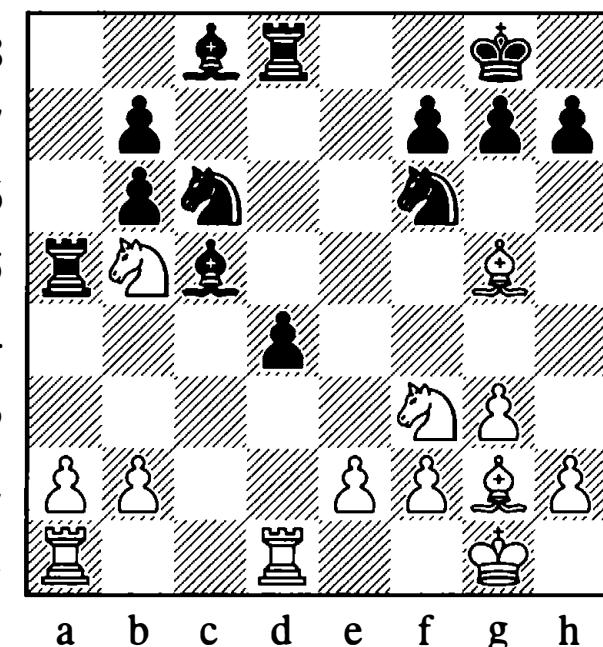
17.♘fxd4 ♜xd4 18.♘xd4 ♜xa2 19.♘xe6 ♜xd1† 20.♗xd1 fxe6 21.e3±

17.♘fxd4 ♜xa2 18.♘xe6 ♜xd1† 19.♗xd1 fxe6 20.♘xf6 gxf6 21.e3±

White has the more compact structure and the safer king. The presence of opposite-coloured bishops does not guarantee a draw at all, Ornstein – Moberg, Sweden 2000.

15...♗f5 can also be met by 16.b4!± and the bishop will be hanging after ♜xd4.

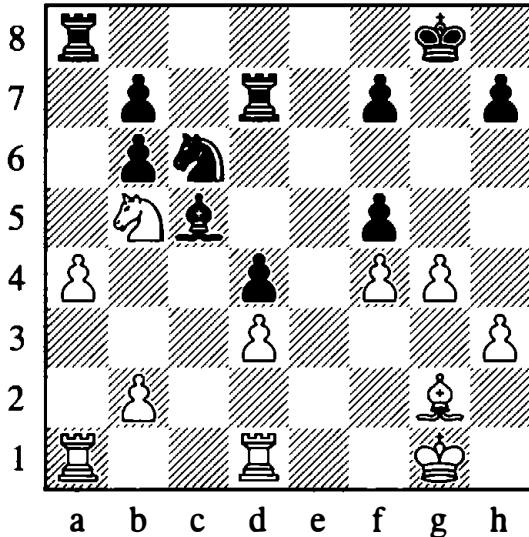
The best move seems to be 15...♗g4. Black threatens to improve his position with ...♜d8-d7 and ...♜a8-d8. I could not find anything better than: 16.a3 (threatening b2-b4) 16...♜a5 17.♘xf6 gxf6 18.a4± White is better, but a whole tempo down compared to the first line from the next comment.



16.a4 ♜f5

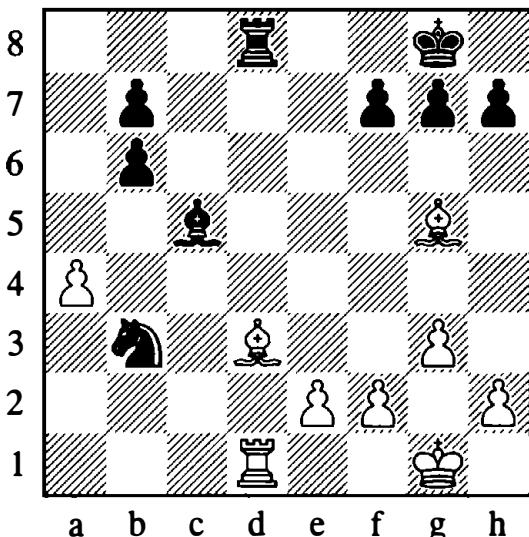
The alternatives also deserve to be considered.

16... $\mathbb{Q}g4$ 17.h3 $\mathbb{Q}h5$ 18.g4 $\mathbb{Q}g6$ 19. $\mathbb{Q}e1$
 White directs his knight towards the perfect
 blockading square on d3, but the more
 dynamic 19.b4 is also possible. 19... $\mathbb{Q}d7$
 20. $\mathbb{Q}xf6$ gxf6 21. $\mathbb{Q}d3$ $\mathbb{Q}a8$ 22.f4 $\mathbb{Q}xd3$ 23.exd3
 f5 A draw was prematurely agreed in Gulko –
 I. Gurevich, St Martin 1993.

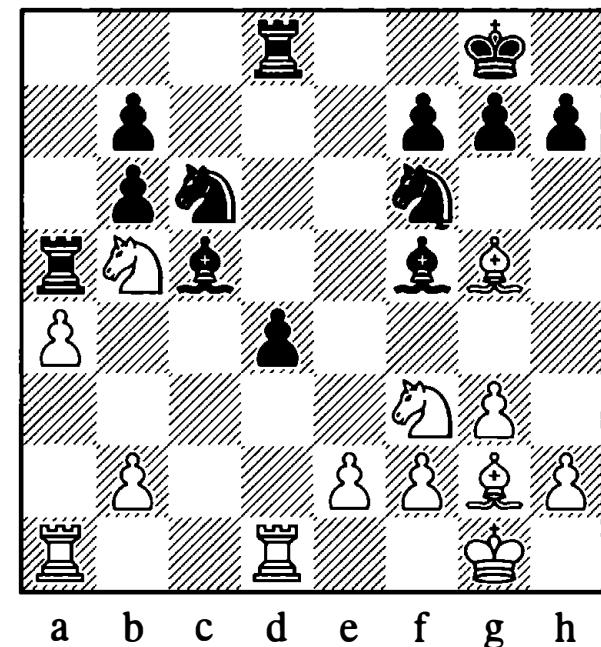


24.gxf5 (24.g5± is also strong) 24... $\mathbb{Q}g7$
 25. $\mathbb{Q}e4\pm$ White has an extra pawn, the better
 structure and the better bishop.

16... $\mathbb{Q}e6$ Black threatens ... $\mathbb{Q}e6-b3$, but
 exposes the bishop to a fork on c7. 17. $\mathbb{Q}d2$
 $\mathbb{Q}aa8$ 18. $\mathbb{Q}c7$ $\mathbb{Q}b3$ 19. $\mathbb{Q}xa8$ $\mathbb{Q}xd1$ 20. $\mathbb{Q}xd1$
 $\mathbb{Q}xa8$ 21.b3 White has managed to stabilize the
 position and his strong light-squared bishop
 ensures him an advantage. 21... $\mathbb{Q}e4$ This
 leads to favourable simplifications for White.
 22. $\mathbb{Q}xd4$ $\mathbb{Q}xd4$ 23. $\mathbb{Q}xe4$ $\mathbb{Q}d8$ 24. $\mathbb{Q}d3$ $\mathbb{Q}xb3$
 25. $\mathbb{Q}g5\pm$



White has the bishop pair and a healthy
 kingside majority, Simic – Tasic, Vrnjacka
 Banja 1982.



17. $\mathbb{Q}e1$

Apart from this standard plan, White can also
 try 17.b4 $\mathbb{Q}xb4$ 18. $\mathbb{Q}fxd4$ $\mathbb{Q}xd4$ 19. $\mathbb{Q}xd4\pm$
 Christiansen – Diesen, Internet (rapid) 2001.

17. $\mathbb{Q}xf6$ is premature and throws away White's
 advantage. For example, 17...gxf6 18. $\mathbb{Q}el$
 $\mathbb{Q}e6=$ Romanishin – Polugaevsky, USSR (ch)
 1974.

17... $\mathbb{Q}aa8$

17... $\mathbb{Q}e6$ can be met by a familiar manoeuvre:
 18. $\mathbb{Q}d2$ $\mathbb{Q}aa8$ 19. $\mathbb{Q}c7\pm$

18. $\mathbb{Q}c7$ $\mathbb{Q}ac8$ 19. $\mathbb{Q}xf6$ gxf6 20. $\mathbb{Q}d5$ $\mathbb{Q}g7$
 21. $\mathbb{Q}d3\pm$

White has regrouped his knights wonderfully.
 Black has many weaknesses and his pieces are
 vulnerable.

21... $\mathbb{Q}e7?$

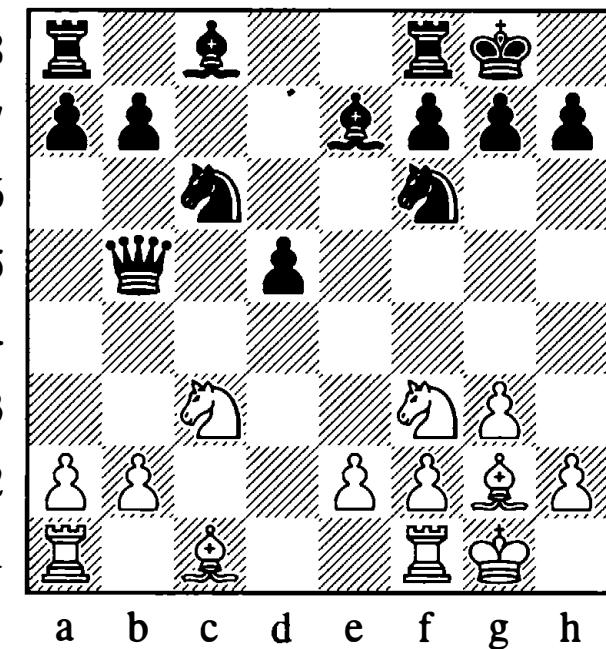
A terrible blunder in a difficult position.

22. $\mathbb{Q}xc5$ $\mathbb{Q}xd5$ 23. $\mathbb{Q}xb7$ $\mathbb{Q}d7$ 24. $\mathbb{Q}xd4$

Black resigned, Berkovich – Timmermans,
 Cappelle la Grande 2004.

(1.c4 e5 2.g3 ♜f6 3.♗g2 c6 4.d4 exd4 5.♗xd4 d5 6.♘f3 ♜e7 7.cxd5 cxd5 8.0–0 ♜c6 9.♗a4 0–0 10.♘c3 ♜b6 11.♗b5)

C12) 11...♗xb5



Black avoids structural defects, but allows White to take control of the d4-square.

12.♘xb5 ♜f5 13.♗f4

Although the d-pawn is not easy to win, White has a very pleasant position because of his active minor pieces.

13...♗e4

Black hopes to neutralize the enemy bishop's pressure.

Another possible move order is 13...♝fd8 14.♝fd1 a6 15.♘bd4 ♜e4 16.♝h3 ♜xd4 17.♘xd4 h6 18.♝ac1±. Since he cannot fight for the c-file Black is confined to passive defence, Suetin – Marszalek, Moscow 1991.

14.♝ac1 a6 15.♘d6

White gains the advantage of the bishop pair.

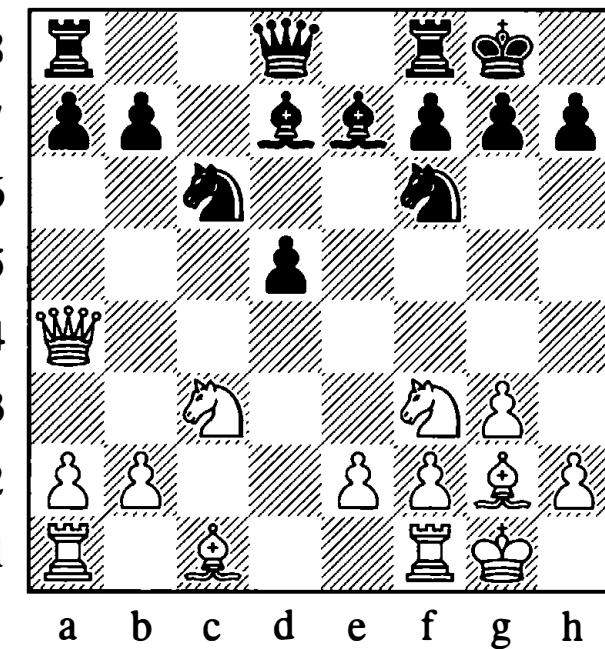
This is slightly more ambitious than 15.♘bd4±, after which Black could at least exchange the light-squared bishops.

15...♗xd6 16.♘xd6 ♜fe8 17.♝fd1 h6 18.b3!±

This was Rogozenko – Conquest, Germany 1999. White plans to reroute his bishop with ♜a3-b2, as indicated by Rogozenko.

(1.c4 e5 2.g3 ♜f6 3.♗g2 c6 4.d4 exd4 5.♗xd4 d5 6.♘f3 ♜e7 7.cxd5 cxd5 8.0–0 ♜c6 9.♗a4 0–0 10.♘c3)

C2) 10...♗d7



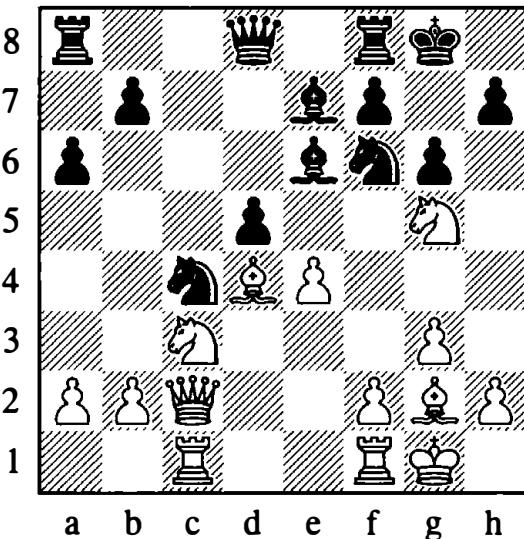
In the Tarrasch Defence, this move is a typical reaction to the queen's development to a4. In the current position, this move is unnecessary, because there is no pressure against the c6-knight yet. The standard manoeuvre ...♘c6-a5-c4 fails to bother the e3-bishop, because, unlike in the Tarrasch, the d4-square is available.

11.♗e3 ♜a5

This is the most active continuation.

11...♝e8 12.♝ad1 ♜b4 13.♗b3 a5 was played in Larsen – Yrjola, Gausdal 1985. This is a typical manoeuvre in the Tarrasch Defence. In the current position, White can take advantage of the fact that the e3-a7 diagonal is not obstructed by playing 14.♘a4!±, followed by either ♜b6 or ♜c5.

11...a6 is too slow. 12. $\mathbb{B}ac1$ $\mathfrak{Q}a5$ 13. $\mathbb{W}c2$ $\mathfrak{Q}c4$ 14. $\mathbb{Q}d4$ $\mathbb{Q}e6$ 15. $\mathfrak{Q}g5$ We can see another virtue of the knight's placement on f3: the pressure against the enemy kingside is very unpleasant. 15...g6 16.e4±

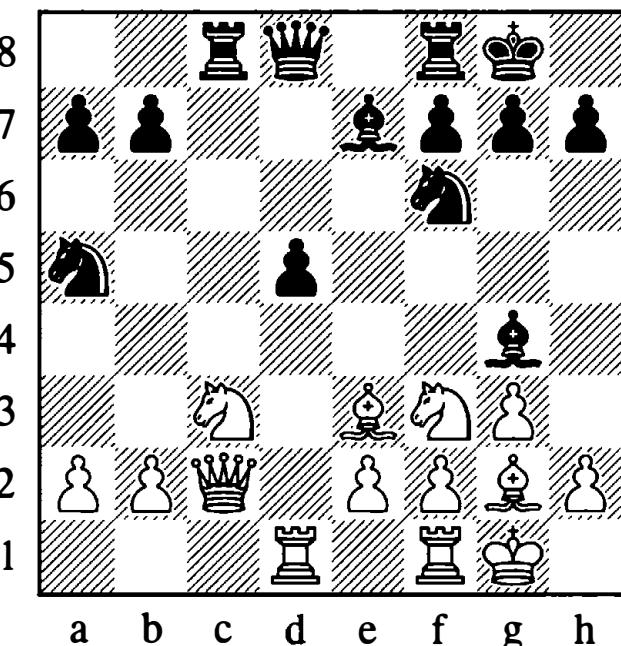


A draw was agreed in Suba – Balashov, Malta (ol) 1980. According to Suba, this happened in exchange for a draw in the game Karpov – Gheorghiu from the same match. This sounds like a credible explanation of why a very combative player like Suba refused to play on in such a promising position.

12. $\mathbb{W}c2$ $\mathbb{B}c8$

12... $\mathfrak{Q}c4$ 13. $\mathbb{Q}d4\pm$ would leave the d5-pawn in danger.

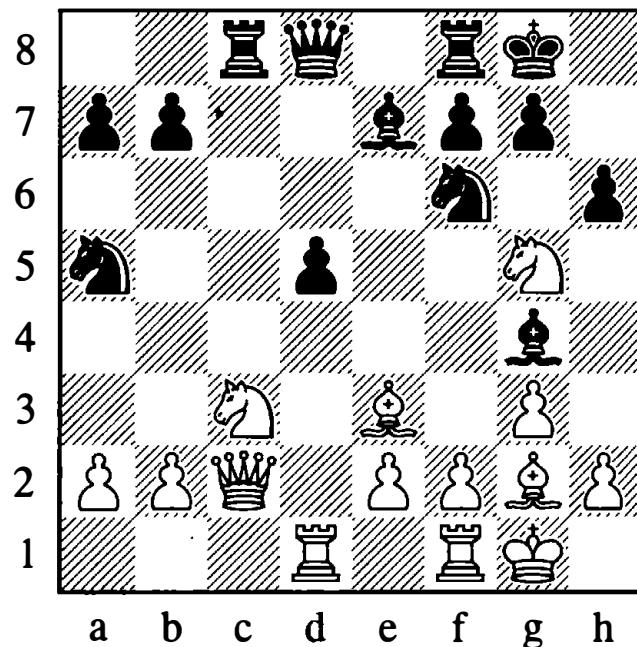
13. $\mathbb{B}ad1$ $\mathbb{Q}g4$



14. $\mathfrak{Q}g5$

Against 14. $\mathbb{Q}d4$ Huebner recommended 14... $\mathfrak{Q}e4$, but after 15. $\mathfrak{Q}e5$ $\mathbb{Q}f5$ 16. $\mathbb{W}a4\pm$ White retains strong pressure.

14...h6



These moves were played in Suba – Huebner, Thessaloniki (ol) 1984.

15. $\mathfrak{Q}ge4!N\pm$

White's excellent regrouping puts the d5-pawn in danger.

(1.c4 e5 2.g3 $\mathfrak{Q}f6$ 3. $\mathbb{Q}g2$ c6 4.d4 exd4 5. $\mathbb{W}xd4$ d5 6. $\mathfrak{Q}f3$ $\mathbb{Q}e7$ 7.cxd5 cxd5 8.0–0 $\mathfrak{Q}c6$ 9. $\mathbb{W}a4$ 0–0 10. $\mathfrak{Q}c3$)

C3) 10... $\mathbb{Q}e6$

The absence of a white knight from d4 means this move looks the most logical. Black consolidates his central pawn without having to fear his light squares will be weakened by $\mathfrak{Q}d4xe6$.

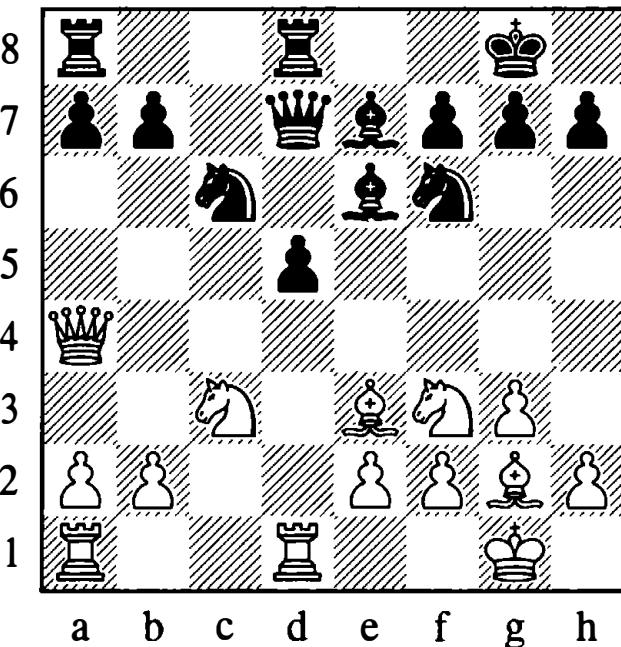
11. $\mathbb{Q}e3$ $\mathbb{W}d7$

11... $\mathfrak{Q}g4$ is an interesting attempt to change the character of the position. In every game where this has been played White has answered with 12. $\mathbb{Q}d4$, and then not found it easy to

increase the pressure against the d5-pawn. It may be better to leave the d4-square available for the knight with 12.♘f4, intending ♘ad1 and ♖d4. 12...♗b6 can be answered with the standard 13.♗b5.

12.♗fd1 ♗fd8

This has been recommended as an improvement over 12...h6 13.♗ac1 a6?! 14.♗b6±. White immediately takes advantage of the weakness of the b6-square, preventing ...♗fd8. 14...♗ac8 15.♘e1 ♗fe8 16.♘d3 ♗d6 This position was reached in Kasparov – Hjartarson, Belfort 1988. Kasparov recommended 17.♘c5!N ♗e7 18.♘xe6 fxe6 19.e4±, breaking up Black's centre.



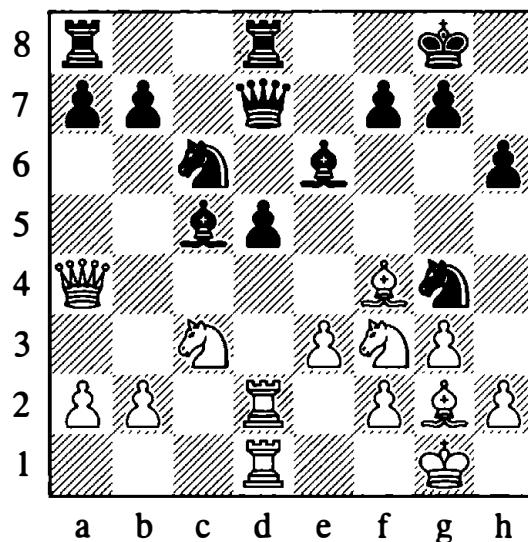
13.♗d2!N

White makes use of the fact that the d-file is not obstructed by his knight, and increases the pressure against the d5-pawn.

This is even better than 13.♗ac1, which leads to a slight advantage.

13...♗ac8

Black can try to cross White's plans with 13...♘g4 but after 14.♗f4 ♗c5 his only achievement is spoiling his own pieces' coordination. 15.e3 h6 16.♗ad1±



The d5-pawn is in great danger. 16...g5 would not save Black because of 17.♗xd5! ♗xd5 18.♗xd5 ♗e7 19.♗xg5+–. Most of Black's pieces are hanging.

14.♗ad1 h6

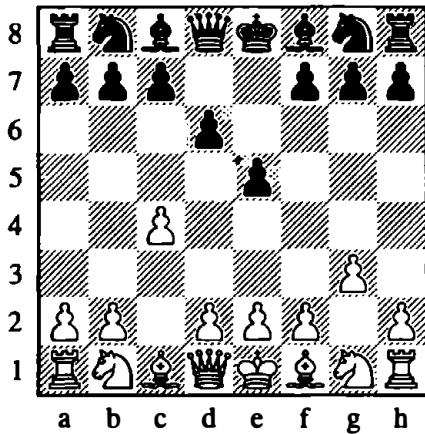
Black prevents ♗e3-g5, in order to create the threat of ...♗e7-b4.

15.a3 ♗f8 16.♘e1±

Black's pieces are well placed around the isolani, but White's pressure will soon become threatening. Apart from ♖xd5±, which would lead to an interesting ending with queen and a pawn versus two rooks, White can continue with ♘d3-f4.

Conclusion:

Black has several ways to steer the game towards interesting play, but none of them free him from the usual opening problems. With accurate play, White is able to retain the better chances. Together with the conclusions of Chapter 32, this justifies the move order based on 2.g3, not only against 1...e5, but also against 1...♘f6 and 1...c6 (see also Volume 2).



2...d6

Minor Lines

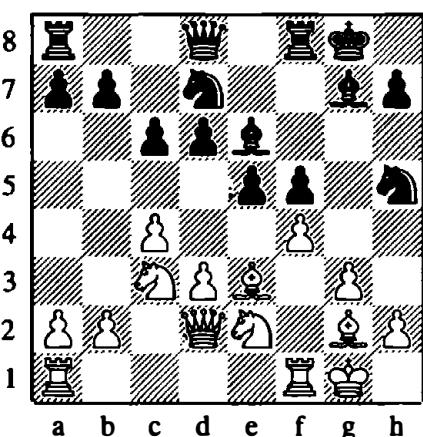
Variation Index

1.c4 e5 2.g3 d6

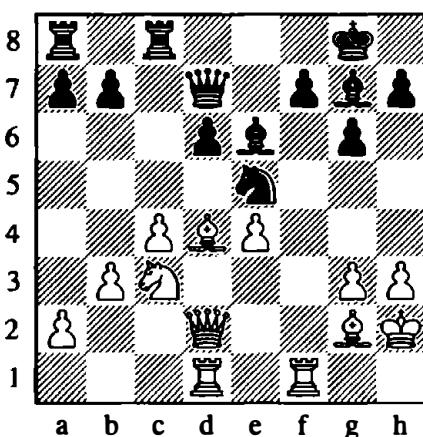
3.♘c3

A) 3...g6 4.♗g2 ♗g7 5.d3 ♘f6 6.e4 0-0 7.♗ge2 c6 8.0-0	p 407
A1) 8...♘h5	p 407
A2) 8...♘a6	p 409
A3) 8...a5	p 411
A4) 8...a6	p 414
A5) 8...♘bd7	p 415
B) 5...♘e7 6.e4 c5 7.a3 ♘bc6 8.♗b1 a5 9.♗ge2 0-0 10.0-0	p 417
B1) 10...♘d4	p 418
B2) 10...f5	p 419
B3) 10...♗e6	p 420
B4) 10...♗b8	p 421
C) 3...f5	p 422

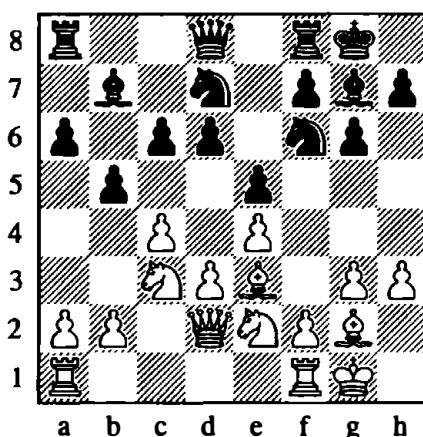
A1) making sense



A2) after 19...♗fc8



A5) after 11...♗b7

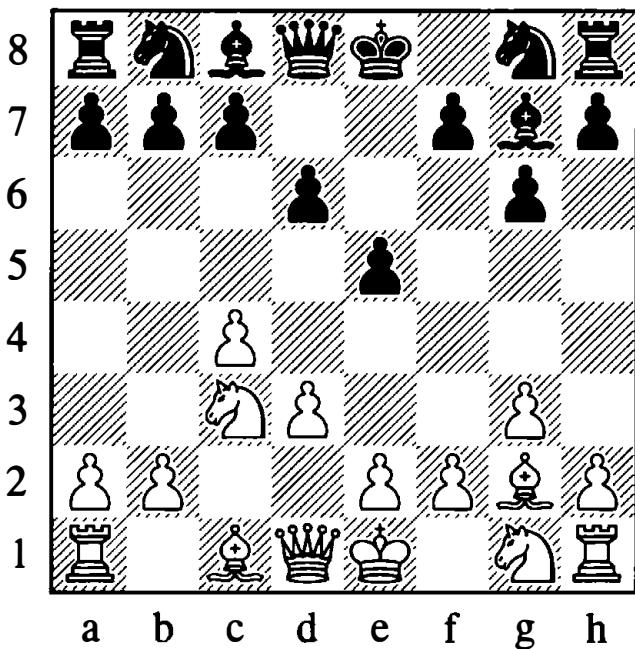


13.♗ad1!N

20.♗g1!N

12.b4!N

1.c4 e5 2.g3 d6 3.Qc3 g6 4.Qg2 Qg7 5.d3
and:



6.e4

The positions examined in this chapter are similar to those from Chapters 13 to 18.

The only difference is the way in which Black develops his queen's knight. Instead of ...Qb8-c6, he plays ...Qb8-d7 or even ...Qb8-a6, in order to gain more control over the centre with ...c7-c6. The general ideas are basically the same as in the aforementioned chapters, with the exception of the issues regarding the d4- and d5-squares. Black's queen's knight will not control the d4-square, while its white counterpart will generally refrain from Qc3-d5 in order to avoid losing time after ...c7-c6.

In most of the variations examined below, Black's position is more flexible than in the similar lines from Chapters 13 to 18. On the other hand, the absence of pressure against the d4-square leaves White with greater freedom of action in the centre.

I have taken 5.d3 followed by 6.e4 as my main move order because this was the only way to integrate my Anti-Dutch systems (see Volume 2) with the other variations. In those lines, Black plays ...f7-f5 as early as the first move

and White needs to prepare e2-e4 with d2-d3.

From an English move order, 5.e4 is of course possible when Black should refrain from 5...f5, because of 6.exf5!. With the b7-pawn under fire, 6...gxf5 is forced but then 7.Wh5† Qf8 8.d3 Qf6 9.Wd1, followed by Qge2, 0-0 and f2-f4, leaves the black king vulnerable.

We shall examine the same ways of developing as in Chapters 13 to 18 (with the exception of 5...Qe6??). Namely, **A) 5...Qf6**, **B) 5...Qe7** and **5...f5**. Due to the greater amount of practical material, **5...f5** will be covered separately in Chapter 31. At the end of the present chapter, we shall also examine **C) 3...f5** followed by ...Qe7, rather than the more common ...g7-g6 and ...Qg7.

Another possible deviation from the main lines is:

3...Qe6

Also possible is 3...c5, transposing to a Symmetrical variation which I will cover in Volume 2.

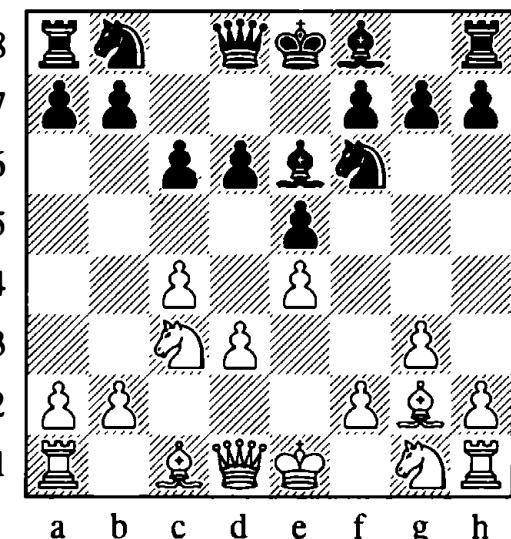
4.Qg2 c6

4...Qc6 5.e4 is likely to transpose to Chapters 13 to 18 after a later ...f7-f5, ...g7-g6 and ...Qg7.

5.d3 Qf6

5...d5?! is premature because of 6.Wb3! with pressure against b7 and d5.

6.e4



Black's only way to avoid familiar patterns is:

6...d5?!

However, occupying the centre with loss of time (...d7-d6-d5) allows White a strong initiative after:

7.exd5 cxd5 8.cxd5 ♜xd5 9.♗f3 ♜c6

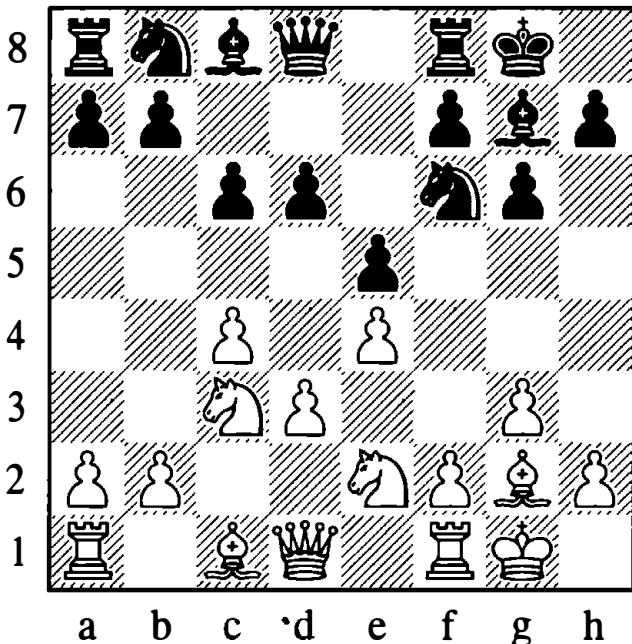
Against 9...♝b4 White can ignore the threat with 10.0–0! ♜xc3 11.bxc3 ♜xc3 12.♗b1, which leaves Black underdeveloped.

10.0–0 ♜e7 11.♗e1 f6 12.d4±

Black has not even castled and yet his centre is already under strong pressure.

(1.c4 e5 2.g3 d6 3.♗c3 g6 4.♗g2 ♜g7 5.d3)

A) 5...♝f6 6.e4 0–0 7.♗ge2 c6 8.0–0



It is worth mentioning that this is one of Black's most consistent (if not *the* most consistent) ways of developing, which is very different to 6...♝f6 from Chapter 14. Black develops rather quickly, without spending time on unnecessary pawn moves, and prevents White from dominating the centre with ♜c3-d5.

The main replies we shall examine are A1) 8...♝h5, A2) 8...♝a6, A3) 8...a5, A4) 8...a6, A5) 8...♝bd7.

One minor line is:

8...♝e6

This move has been played more often than it deserves. Black intends ...♝d7, which may look like a promising plan but in the long run the bishop will feel uncomfortable due to the threat of f2-f4-f5.

9.h3?!

White immediately starts restricting the bishop.

9...♝d7 10.♔h2 d5

Since Black's queenside is not fully developed, this will turn out badly for him. However, after 10...♝a6 11.f4 Black would no longer have the option of opening the centre. 11...h5!? (a tricky attempt to prevent the natural 12.♔e3 in view of 12...h4 13.g4? ♜xg4) 12.♗f3!? A far from obvious move; White not only defends the e3-square in advance, but also clears the f1-square for the queen, creating the nasty threat of 13.f5 gxf5 14.exf5 ♜xf5 15.♗f1.

11.exd5 cxd5 12.d4 e4

12...dxc4 13.dxe5 and 12...exd4 13.♗xd4 dxc4 14.♗xe6 fxe6 15.♗e2 are also better for White, as Taimanov pointed out.

13.♗g5!

White continues developing and undermines the d5-pawn.

13...♝c6 14.♗xf6 ♜xf6 15.♗f4 ♜xd4 16.♗fxd5 ♜xd5 17.♗xd5 ♜g7 18.♗xe4±

Despite the presence of opposite-coloured bishops, White has reasonable chances of converting his extra pawn into a win, Taimanov – Kochyev, Leningrad 1977.

(1.c4 e5 2.g3 d6 3.♗c3 g6 4.♗g2 ♜g7 5.d3
♝f6 6.e4 0–0 7.♗ge2 c6 8.0–0)

A1) 8...♝h5

Black clears a path for the f7-pawn, in order to initiate kingside operations. However, with his queenside completely undeveloped, this

looks premature. This feeling becomes even stronger if we compare with the line examined in Chapter 31, in which ...f7-f5 was played before ... $\mathbb{Q}g8-f6$, and Black did not need to misplace his king's knight.

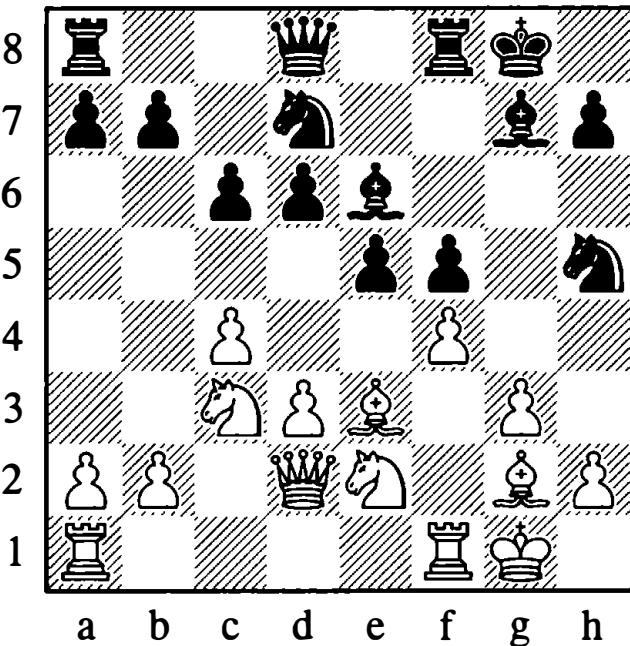
9. $\mathbb{Q}e3$

This is the logical way of developing, once the threat of ... $\mathbb{Q}f6-g4$ has been removed.

9...f5 10. $\mathbb{W}d2$ $\mathbb{Q}e6$ 11.exf5 gx5

This is a strategically committal move which leaves Black with hanging pawns, but 11... $\mathbb{Q}xf5$ would simply lose a tempo. After 12.d4± White has comfortable play in the centre.

12.f4 $\mathbb{Q}d7$



13. $\mathbb{B}ae1$ $\mathbb{W}c7$ 14.h3 $\mathbb{B}ae8$ 15. $\mathbb{Q}h2$ $\mathbb{Q}h8$

16.b3 $\mathbb{Q}df6$ 17.d4±

Even if played under slightly less favourable circumstances, this move remains quite effective.

17...exf4

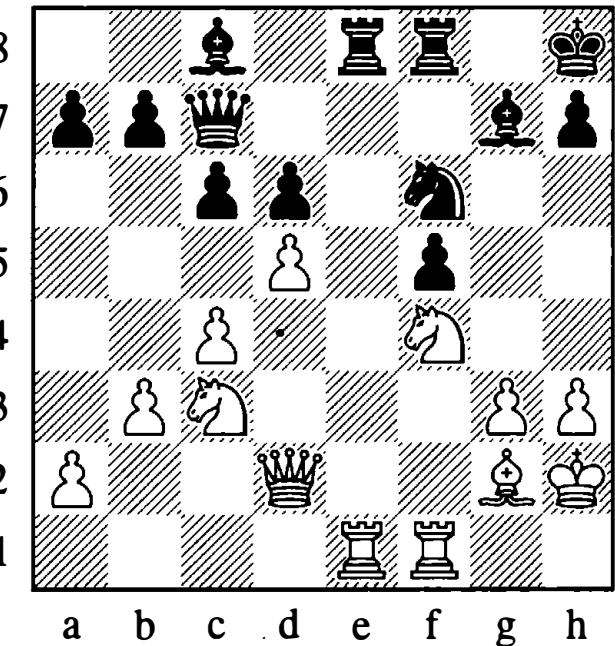
After this move, the placement of the white rooks is entirely justified.

The lesser evil would have been 17...e4. After 18.d5± White's position is still preferable, but his rooks are now not ideally placed (see also the final comment below).

18. $\mathbb{Q}xf4$

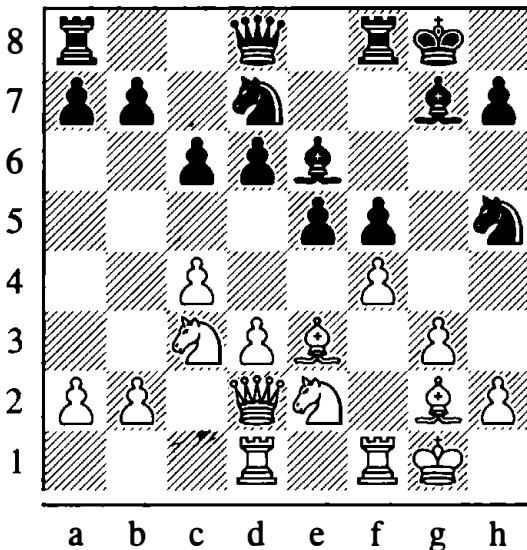
White is not worried about giving up the bishop pair, because his knight will be at least as effective on the blockading f4-square.

18... $\mathbb{Q}xf4$ 19. $\mathbb{Q}xf4$ $\mathbb{Q}c8$ 20.d5±



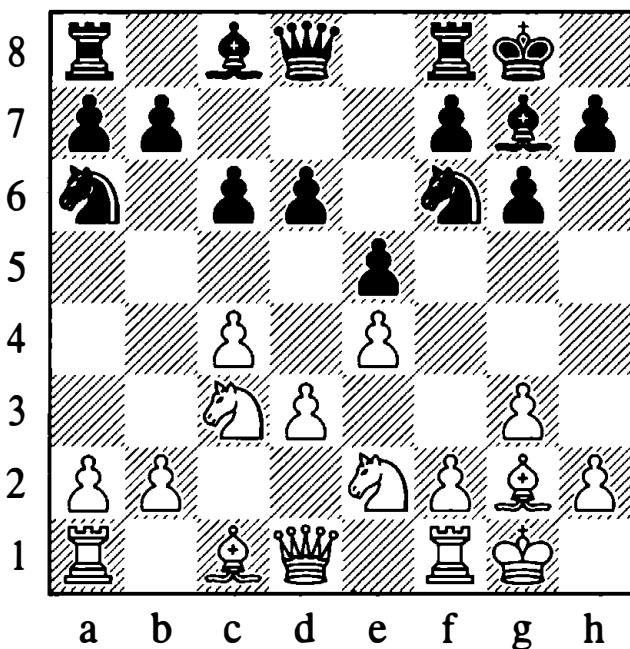
Black's position is passive and full of weaknesses, Bilek – Tisdall, Lone Pine 1975.

In the above line, the natural 13. $\mathbb{B}ae1$ may not be best. In view of the planned pawn break d3-d4, the untested 13. $\mathbb{B}ad1!N$ makes more sense.



13... $\mathbb{W}c7$ 14.b3 $\mathbb{B}ae8$ 15.d4± Black will soon be left with chronic weaknesses.

(1.c4 e5 2.g3 d6 3. $\mathbb{Q}c3$ g6 4. $\mathbb{Q}g2$ $\mathbb{Q}g7$ 5.d3 $\mathbb{Q}f6$ 6.e4 0-0 7. $\mathbb{Q}ge2$ c6 8.0-0)

A2) 8...♞a6

This natural developing move is a speciality of GM Joe Gallagher. The knight is heading for c7, creating the threat of ...d6-d5 and stepping closer to the d4-square.

9.h3

White restricts the f6-knight and the c8-bishop, while preparing ♜c1-e3 and f2-f4.

9...♞c7 10.f4

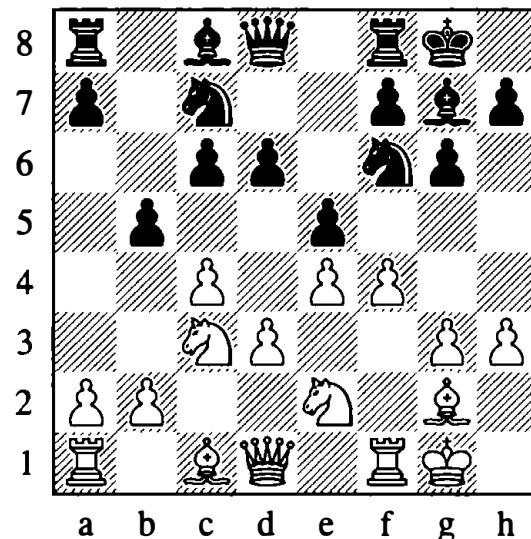
This is the most effective way of preventing ...d6-d5.

The main alternative is 10.d4. White transposes to a King's Indian after having lost a tempo with his d-pawn, but aims to prove that the enemy queen's knight is passively placed on c7. This judgement is questionable in view of 10...exd4 11.♘xd4 ♜e6. Several games played by Gallagher have shown that Black's position is entirely viable.

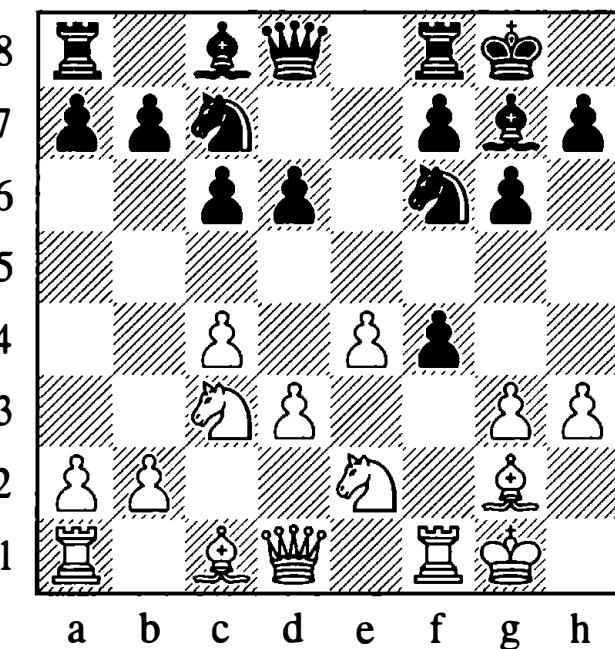
10...exf4

Black removes the danger of a bind with f4-f5 and avoids creating any weaknesses.

As Black's development is incomplete, Black is not ready to expand the war zone with 10...b5, as was tried in Paneque – A. Zapata, Cuba 1990.



White should ignore the tension and continue developing. 11.♗e3!N b4 12.♞a4 exf4 13.♘xf4 ♜d7 Black increases his control over the c5-square, hoping to build a blockade with ...c6-c5. 14.a3 White immediately undermines Black's stability on the dark squares. 14...a5 15.d4± White has more space and is better developed.

**11.♗xf4**

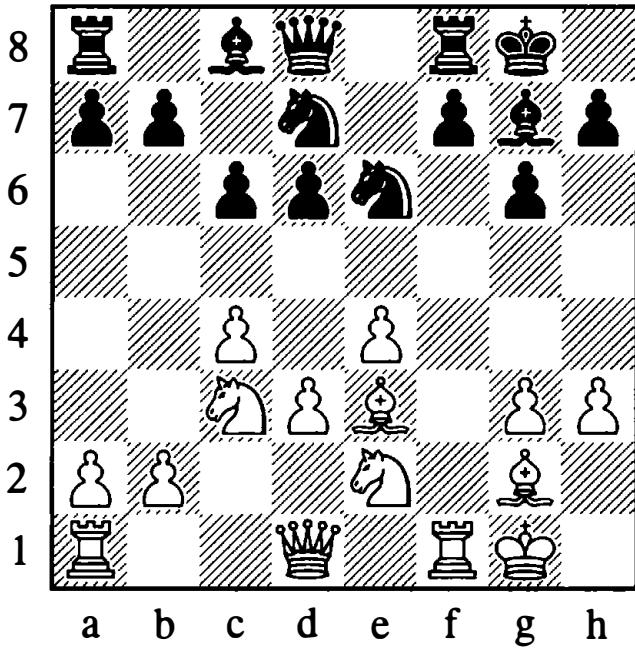
This developing move is best. Instead, after 11.gxf4 ♜h5 12.♗e3 f5 the hanging pawns are not easy to handle, partly because of the weakness of the g3-square, Hickl – Forster, Switzerland 1997.

11...♜e6 12.♗e3 ♜d7

Black has no obvious way of completing his development, which forces him to rely on the static elements of the position. With his last

move he prepares to take more control of the central dark squares with ... $\mathbb{Q}d7-e5$, ...c6-c5 and ... $\mathbb{Q}e5-c6$.

The immediate 12...c5 would allow White to attack the c5-pawn from the wing. 13. $\mathbb{B}b1$ $\mathbb{Q}d7$ 14.b4 $\mathbb{Q}e5$ 15. $\mathbb{Q}d5$ $\mathbb{Q}c6$ 16. $\mathbb{W}d2\pm$ Black's control over the d4-square loses some of its relevance, because White exerts pressure on both wings.



13. $\mathbb{W}d2$

We are witnessing a clash between two opposing concepts. Black manoeuvres with a concrete purpose in mind (taking control of the central dark squares), but he is neglecting his development. White prefers general developing moves, trusting that they will prove useful no matter how the game changes.

13... $\mathbb{Q}e5$ 14.b3

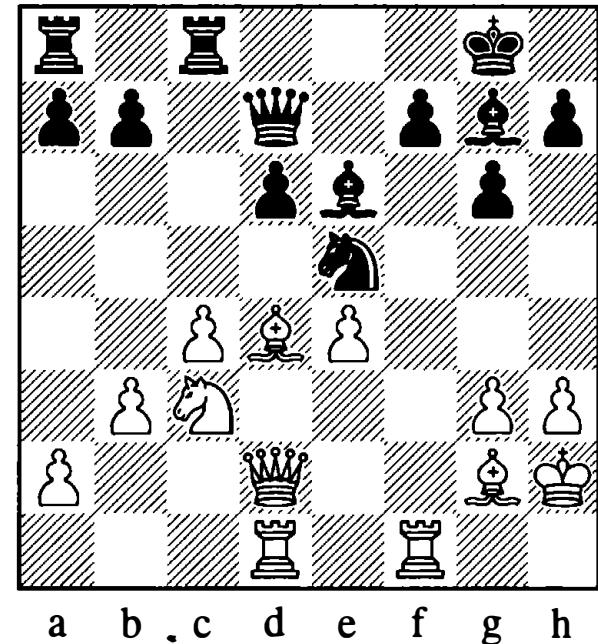
White over-defends the c4-pawn in order to threaten d3-d4.

14...c5 15.d4

White should not allow his opponent to seize control of the d4-square.

15... $\mathbb{C}xd4$ 16. $\mathbb{Q}xd4$ $\mathbb{Q}xd4$ 17. $\mathbb{Q}xd4$ $\mathbb{Q}e6$
18. $\mathbb{B}ad1$ $\mathbb{W}d7$ 19. $\mathbb{Q}h2$ $\mathbb{E}fc8$

So far, we have followed the game Wirthensohn – Gallagher, Lucerne 1994.

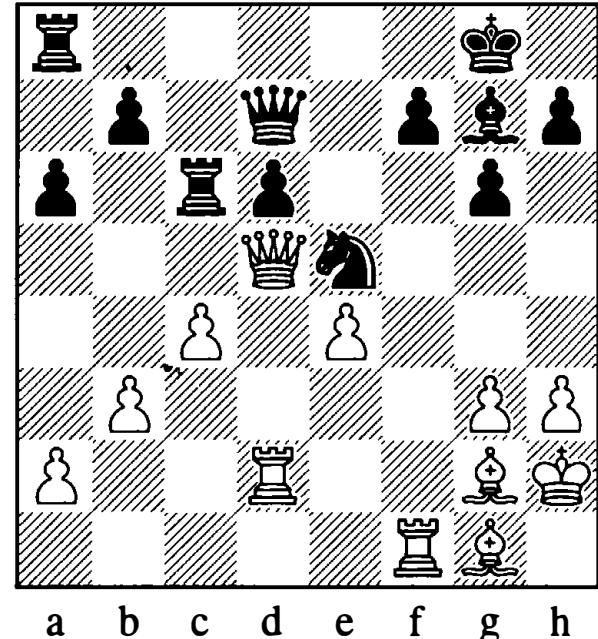


Black has achieved a stable position that would be typical in the Sicilian, but the d6-pawn is relatively weak and White's space advantage is difficult to neutralize.

20. $\mathbb{Q}g1!N$

White retreats his bishop to a safe square, clears the d-file to put the d6-pawn under pressure, and still keeps an eye on the enemy queenside.

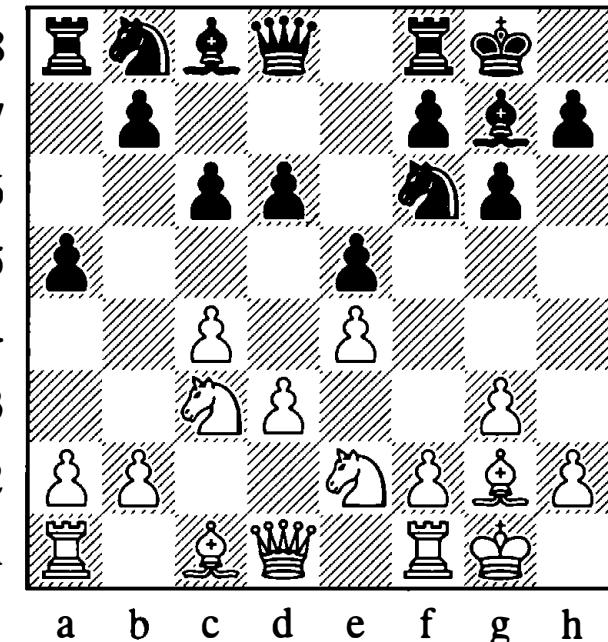
20...a6 21. $\mathbb{Q}d5$ $\mathbb{Q}xd5$ 22. $\mathbb{W}xd5$ $\mathbb{E}c6$
23. $\mathbb{B}d2\pm$



White can increase the pressure at his leisure; a possible plan is $\mathbb{B}f1-d1$ and $a4-a5$. If Black plays ... $a6-a5$, the $b5$ -square would be weakened. Moreover, with both dark-squared bishops still on the board, the queenside blockade would tend to favour White, because the $a5$ -pawn would be a potential weakness in the endgame.

(1.c4 e5 2.g3 d6 3. $\mathbb{Q}c3$ g6 4. $\mathbb{Q}g2$ $\mathbb{Q}g7$ 5.d3 $\mathbb{Q}f6$ 6.e4 0–0 7. $\mathbb{Q}ge2$ c6 8.0–0)

A3) 8...a5.



This is the start of an ambitious plan, aiming to win space on the queenside with ... $\mathbb{Q}b8-a6$ and ... $b7-b5-b4$, supported by either ... $\mathbb{Q}a8-b8$ or ... $\mathbb{Q}c8-d7$. This will secure the $c5$ -square for the $a6$ -knight. The main drawback of this plan is that it is too time-consuming.

9.h3 $\mathbb{Q}a6$ 10. $\mathbb{Q}e3$ $\mathbb{Q}b8$

This looks like the most flexible way of preparing ... $b7-b5$, but, even so, moving the rook to $b8$ is an important commitment.

An alternate plan is:

10... $\mathbb{Q}e8$ 11. $\mathbb{W}d2$ $\mathbb{Q}d7$

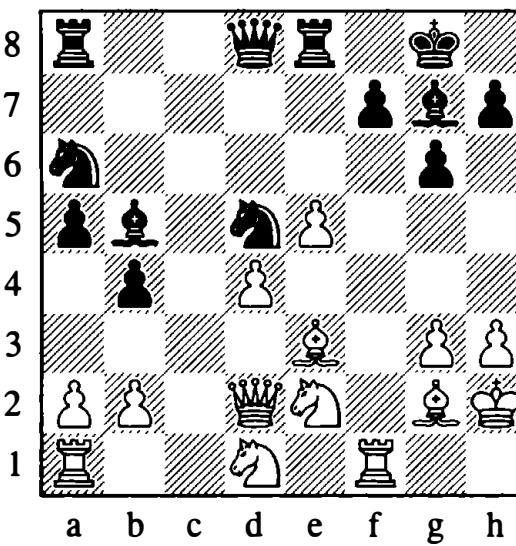
The downside of this move is that it obstructs the queen. This detail will make itself felt if the centre opens.

12.f4 b5 13. $\mathbb{Q}h2$ b4 14. $\mathbb{Q}d1$ d5

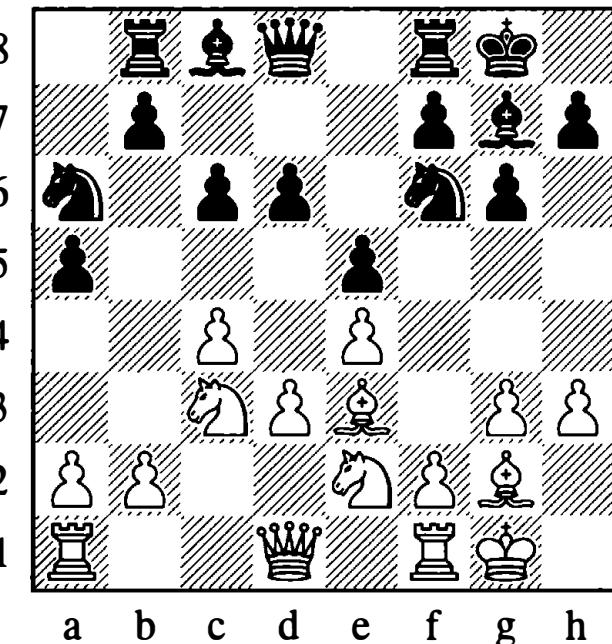
This does not work out well, but the threat of $f4-f5$ was unpleasant.

If instead 14... $exf4$ 15. $\mathbb{Q}xf4$ then we can see another drawback of ... $\mathbb{Q}c8-d7$: it obstructs the $f6$ -knight, which makes the threat of $\mathbb{Q}f4-g5$ (followed by $\mathbb{Q}d1-e3$, $\mathbb{Q}f1-f2$ and $\mathbb{Q}a1-f1$) quite unpleasant.

15.exd5 cxd5 16.cxd5 $\mathbb{Q}b5$ 17.fxe5 $\mathbb{Q}xd5$
18.d4±



Black has no compensation for the lost pawn,
Velikov – Solomunovic, Sutomore 2004.

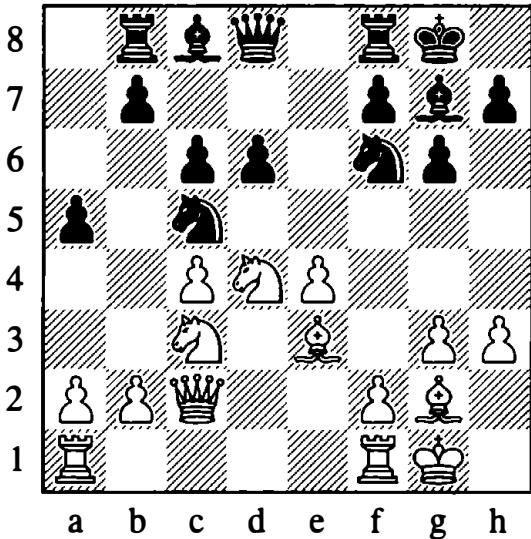


11.d4!

This is an instructive moment about the fate of White's d -pawn in the English Opening in general and, more specifically, against the $2...d6$ set-up. White refrains from $d2-d4$ in the first phase of the game, in order to restrict

the opponent's choices and obtain the typical English structure. But just a few moves later, White seizes the opportunity to fight for more space in the centre. It may seem that the text move allows a transposition to a King's Indian with an extra tempo for Black, but it's a little more complicated than that.

After 11...exd4 12.Qxd4 Qc5 13.Wc2 the difference is that Black has used his extra move to misplace the rook on b8.



King's Indian specialists will know that from a8 the rook would support ...a5-a4. A more subtle aspect is that in the King's Indian Black has more active variations at his disposal, such as ...c7-c6 and ...Wd8-b6, or an early ...exd4 followed by active piece play, to name just two of them. The purpose of these lines is precisely to prevent White from consolidating as in the current position.

11.Wd2 b5 12.f4 is also playable, but Black seems to be better coordinated than in the similar line examined in the previous comment.

11...Qe6

If Black continues the initial plan with:

11...b5

White can counter with the thematic break:

12.c5!

Black's centre is undermined.

12...b4

12...dxc5 13.dxe5 Qd7 14.f4± leaves the g7-bishop passive.

12...exd4 would allow White to win an important tempo with 13.Qxd4±, attacking the c6-pawn.

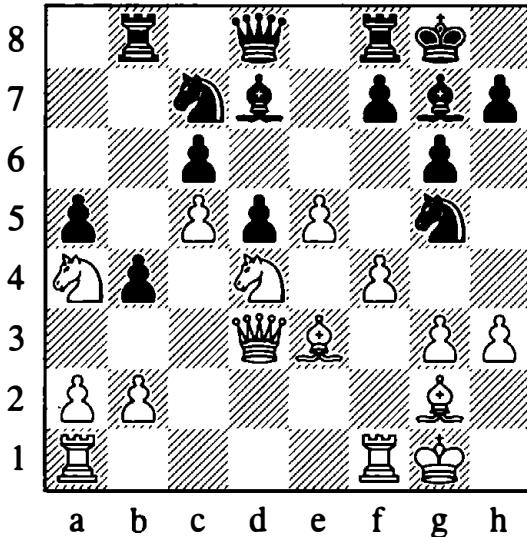
13.Qa4 d5!?

This is the only way to avoid being crushed in the centre.

14.dxe5 Qxe4 15.f3 Qg5 16.Qd4 Qd7

In this phase of the game ...Qg5xh3† would be answered with ♔g1-h2, leaving the knight vulnerable or, in some cases, trapping it!

17.Wd3 Qc7 18.f4±



White has secured a considerable space advantage all over the board.

12.b3 Qe8 13.Qc1

White has consolidated and is in complete control of the position.

13...b5?!

This natural move will be refuted tactically, but this is far from obvious.

Black should have adopted a waiting policy, but this is easier to advise than carry out. One important aspect is that the queen does not have a favourable square for development.

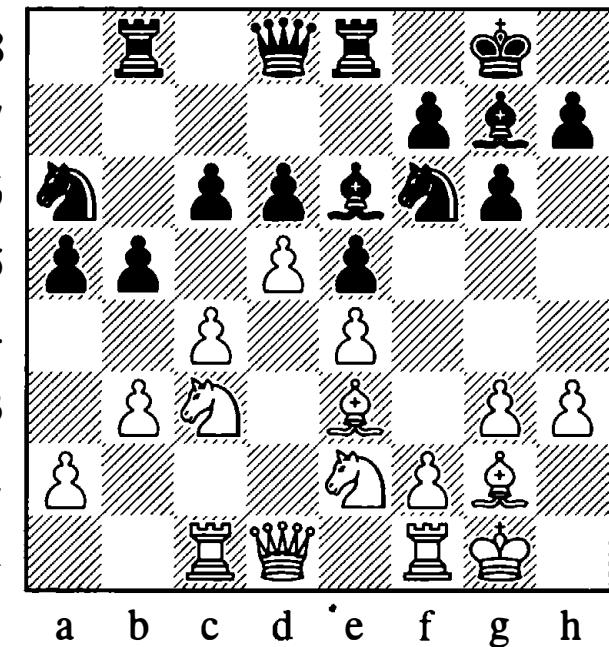
13...Wd7 leaves the e6-bishop vulnerable to the threat of d4-d5 after 14.Qh2. If ...Wd8-c7 then

the opposition with the c1-rook is annoying and Black would always have to be wary of $\mathbb{Q}c3-d5$. 13... $\mathbb{W}e7$ looks more flexible, but in this case the b6-square would be vulnerable.

By the method of elimination, 13...h5 becomes a strong candidate, preventing further expansion by White on the kingside.

14.d5!

There is nothing wrong with 14.c5!?, but, surprisingly enough, the text move wins material.



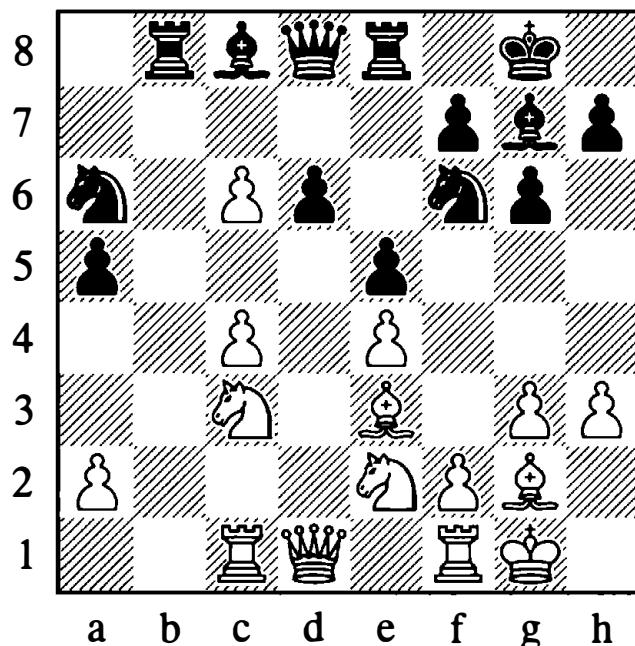
14... $\mathbb{Q}c8$

This move works out badly, but the alternatives were not too rosy, either.

Believe it or not, after 14...cx d 5 15.ex d 5 (Black may only have considered 15.cxb5 d4! or 15.cxd5 $\mathbb{Q}d7$ with good play for Black in both cases) 15... $\mathbb{Q}d7$ 16. $\mathbb{Q}xb5!$ $\mathbb{Q}xb5$ 17.cxb5 $\mathbb{Q}xb5$ 18. $\mathbb{W}d3$ the pin along the d3-a6 diagonal proves to be deadly. 18... $\mathbb{W}b8$ does not save Black because of 19.a4±.

14... $\mathbb{Q}d7$ leads to similar play after 15.dxc6 $\mathbb{Q}xc6$ 16.cxb5 $\mathbb{Q}xb5$ 17. $\mathbb{Q}xb5$ $\mathbb{Q}xb5$ 18. $\mathbb{W}d3$ ±. In these lines we can see the vulnerability of the a6-knight, which is a frequent problem for Black after 8...a5.

15.dxc6 bxc4 16.bxc4



16... $\mathbb{E}b2?!$

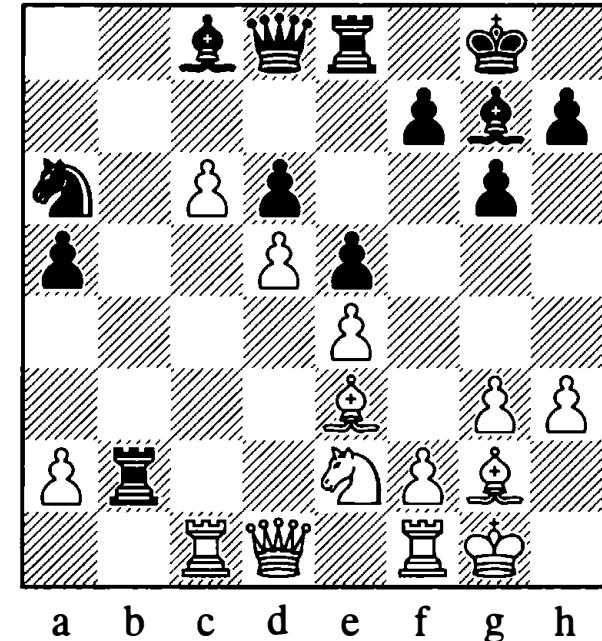
This allows White to create a monstrous pawn chain.

Black should have eliminated the c6-pawn with 16... $\mathbb{Q}b4$ although after 17. $\mathbb{Q}b5$ $\mathbb{Q}xc6$ 18. $\mathbb{Q}xd6$ ± the extra pawn would offer White every chance of victory.

17. $\mathbb{Q}d5$ $\mathbb{Q}xd5$

17... $\mathbb{E}xa2?$ is impossible because of 18. $\mathbb{Q}b6$ trapping the queen.

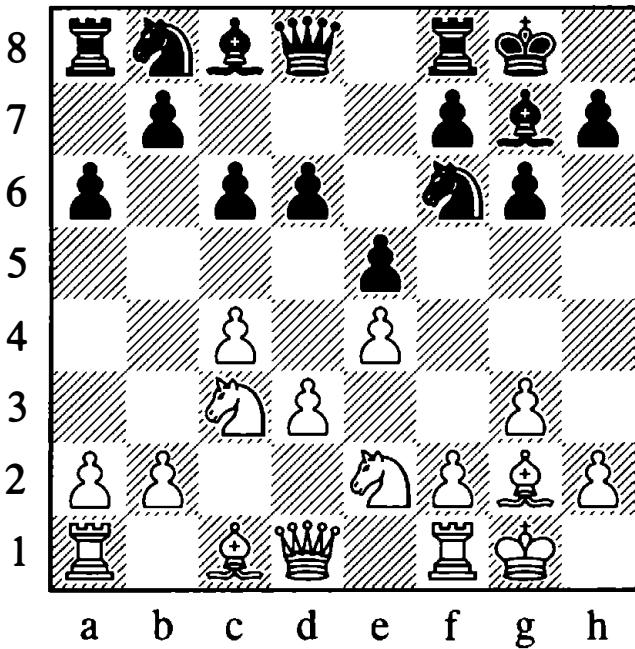
18.cxd5+–



The mighty c6-pawn makes Black's position hopeless, Chernin – A. Zapata, Tunis (izt) 1985.

(1.c4 e5 2.g3 d6 3.Qc3 g6 4.Qg2 Qg7 5.d3 Qf6 6.e4 0–0 7.Qge2 c6 8.0–0)

A4) 8...a6



Black prepares an immediate queenside offensive based on ...b7-b5. This line should be examined in comparison with line A5, where Black plays ...Qb8-d7 first.

9.b4!

Since Black's queen's knight is still far from b6, White does not fear weakening the c4-square.

This is a rare case where I have used a blitz game played on the Internet as the main line. The justification is that it was played by a World Champion who is famous for his maximalist approach in the opening, and this is precisely what is required in this position! The text move is radical, and not only justified but also necessary.

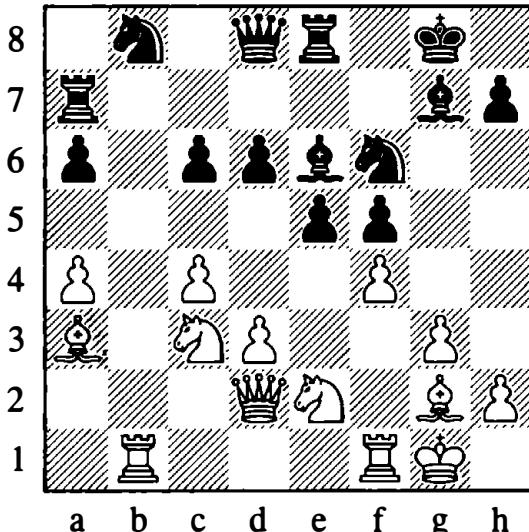
If White plays in the same way as in line A5 below, Black would make use of the fact that he has delayed the development of the

b8-knight. 9.h3 b5 10.Qe3 b4 11.Qa4 c5! Followed by ...Qb8-c6, with excellent stability in the centre.

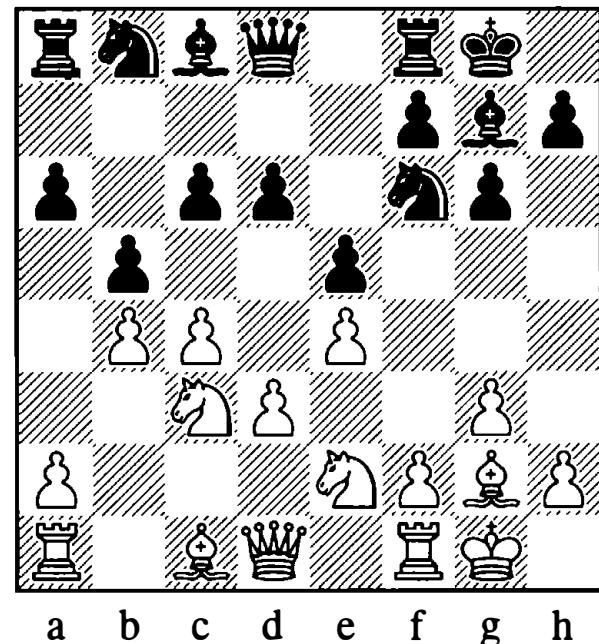
9...b5

Black would fail to establish control of the queenside dark squares after 9...a5 10.b5 Qbd7 11.Qa4±.

The neutral 9...Qe6 allows White to consolidate his queenside space advantage with 10.a4. If Black attempts to obtain counterplay on the opposite wing, then he would fail to familiar methods: 10...Qh5 11.b5 f5 12.exf5 gxf5 13.bxc6 bxc6 14.f4 Qf6 15.Qb1 Qa7 16.Qa3 Qe8 17.Qd2±



White is better developed and has the more flexible structure, Bareev – J. Polgar, Cannes 2001.



10.a4!

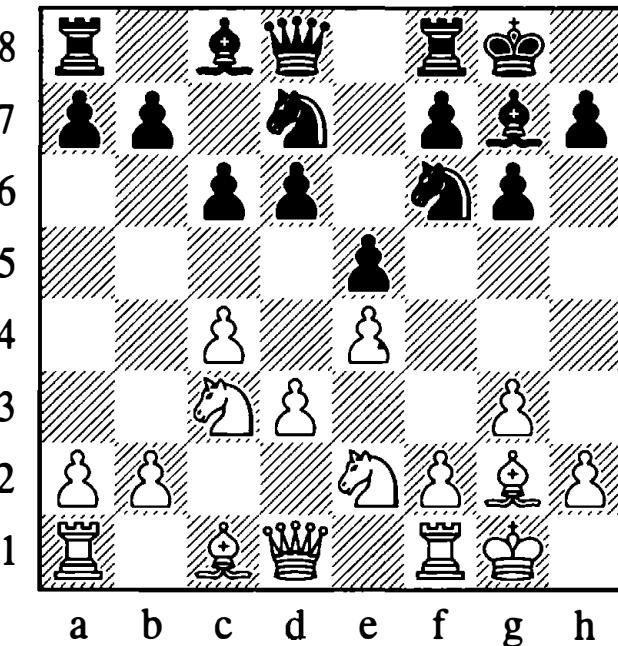
This is the same plan as in Chernin – Rodriguez from line A5, but practically with an extra tempo.

10...bxc4 11.dxc4 ♜e6 12.♗d3 ♜e8 13.♕e3 ♜d7 14.a5!±

White ensures that the c4-pawn will not be in any danger, by preventing ...♝d7-b6. Black's premature queenside attack has only weakened his position, Kasparov – Nataf, Internet (blitz) 1998.

(1.c4 e5 2.g3 d6 3.♘c3 g6 4.♗g2 ♜g7 5.d3 ♜f6 6.e4 0–0 7.♗ge2 c6 8.0–0)

A5) 8...♝bd7



This natural developing move is probably best. Black does not show his cards yet, but his main plan remains ...a7-a6 and ...b7-b5.

9.h3

9.b4 would be less effective than in line A4 because of 9...a5 10.b5 ♘c5 with a stable position.

9...a6 10.♕e3 b5 11.♗d2

Again, playing in similar style to line A4 would fail to bother Black:

11.b4 ♜e8!

This is an important move, preparing ...♜e8-e6 or ...♝g7-f6.

The premature 11...♝b6 leads to advantage for White after 12.a4 bxc4 13.a5 cxd3 14.♗xd3 ♜bd7 15.♗xd6±.

12.a4 bxc4 13.dxc4 ♜b6 14.♗xb6

White could not defend the c4-pawn properly, because of the threat of ...♞c8-e6.

14...♗xb6 15.♗xd6 ♜e6

Black will regain the pawn with a comfortable position, Chernin – R. Rodriguez, Bangalore 1981.

11...♝b7

A key alternative is:

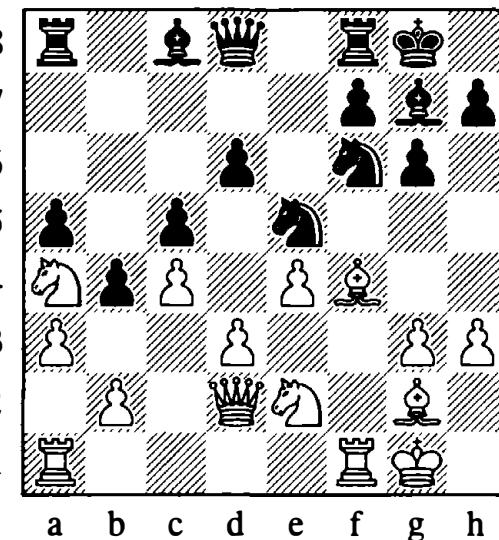
11...b4

However, with the knight already on d7, this fails to stabilize the position completely.

12.♘a4 c5 13.f4

White threatens f4-f5, practically forcing Black to give up the centre.

13...exf4 14.♗xf4 ♜e5 15.a3 a5



16.♗xc5!

This leads to a favourable pawn exchange, eliminating the defender of the c5-square.

16...bxa3

The pin created by 16...♗b6 does not prevent White from gaining the upper hand in the centre. 17.♗xe5 dxe5 18.axb4 ♘d7 19.d4± White eliminates the pin and clears the d3-square for the knight, while retaining the better development.

17. $\mathbb{Q}a4$ axb2 18. $\mathbb{Q}xb2\pm$

White's centre is very strong.

Another important alternative is:

11... $\mathbb{E}b8$

This inhibits b2-b4, but takes the rook away from the a-file, so:

12. cxb5

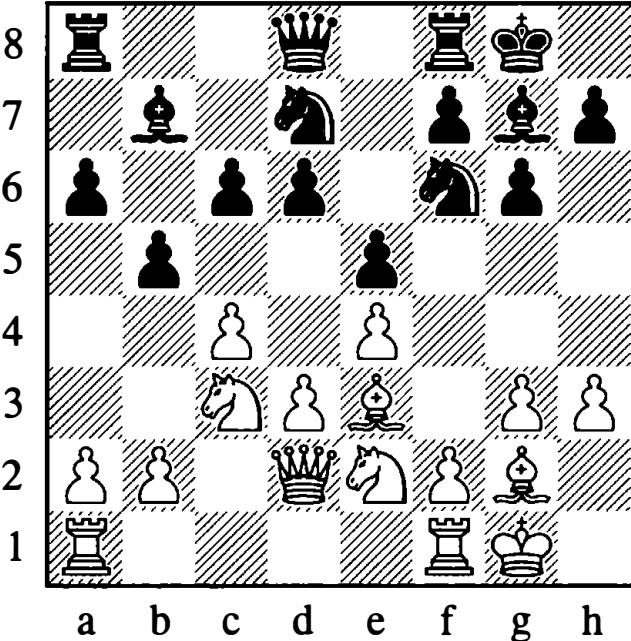
If 12. b4 bxc4 13. dxc4 then 13... $\mathbb{E}xb4?$ does not work because of 14. $\mathbb{Q}b5!$ but 13... $\mathbb{Q}b6!$ is stronger.

12... axb5 13. b4

Black always has to be ready for a2-a4.

13... $\mathbb{Q}b6$ 14. f4 exf4 15. gxf4 \pm

White has a pleasant choice of plans. For example, he could transfer the e2-knight to a5 via d4 and b3, or prepare a kingside attack.



12.b4!N

After White has completed his development, this move is entirely justified.

The alternate plan is to initiate kingside operations, but this leads to double-edged play:

12. f4 exf4

12... $\mathbb{Q}b6$ may be more difficult to meet.

13. gxf4 $\mathbb{E}e8$

The pressure against the e4-pawn is real, because of the permanent threat of ...b5xc4.

14. $\mathbb{Q}g3$ $\mathbb{Q}b6$ 15. a4

White decides to close the wing that is causing him problems with his coordination.

15... b4

15... bxc4?! is strongly met by 16. a5 $\mathbb{Q}bd7$ 17. dxc4 \pm , leaving Black with many weaknesses.

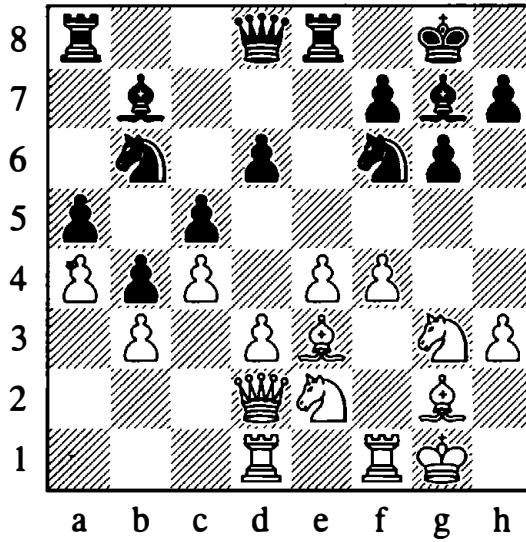
16. $\mathbb{Q}ce2$

The knight is not well placed here, as it is obstructed by its colleague on g3.

16. $\mathbb{Q}d1$ looks like a better way to regroup.

16... c5 17. $\mathbb{Q}f2$ $\mathbb{W}c7$ 18. b3 $\mathbb{Q}bd7$ 19. $\mathbb{E}ad1\pm$ White can later choose between d3-d4 and $\mathbb{Q}f2-g4$ followed by f4-f5.

16... a5 17. b3 c5 18. $\mathbb{E}ad1\pm/=$



The position is almost completely blocked and probably equal, but only White can consider an active plan, as f4-f5 may be possible later, Lein – Vasiukov, Tbilisi 1966.

12... $\mathbb{Q}b6$

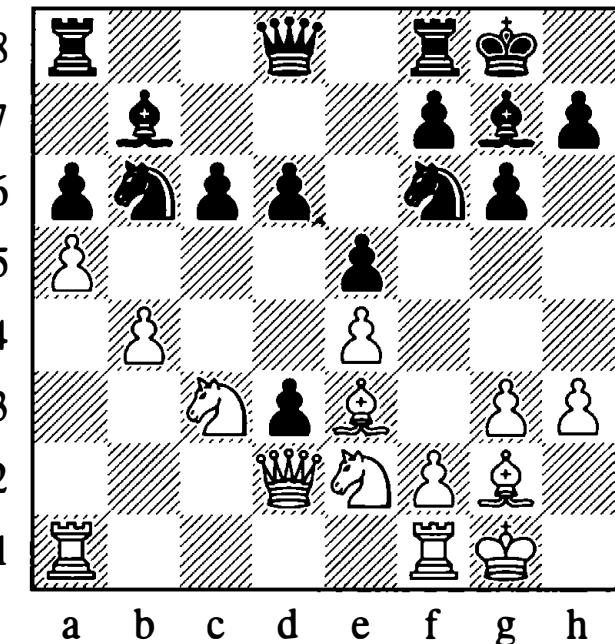
12... a5 13. a3 would leave the b5-pawn vulnerable, forcing Black to release the tension. 13... bxc4 14. dxc4 $\mathbb{Q}b6$ 15. $\mathbb{W}d3\pm$ White plans $\mathbb{E}f1-d1$ followed by b4-b5 with active play in the centre.

13. a4!

A well known motif: the apparent vulnerability of the c4-pawn is not significant, because of the intermediate move a4-a5.

13... bxc4 14. a5 cxd3

This minor detail does not solve all Black's problems.

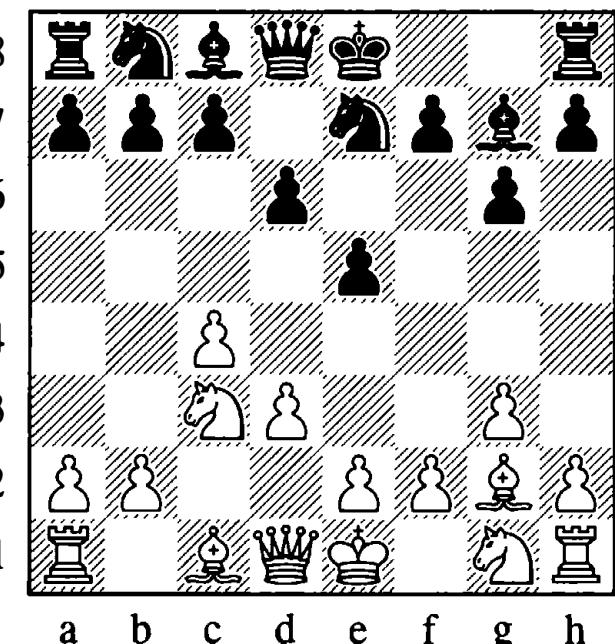


15...Qxb6 dxe2 16.Qxd8 exf1=Q+ 17.Qxf1 Qfxd8 18.Qa4±

Black has some compensation for the sacrificed queen, but his queenside is still weak.

(1.c4 e5 2.g3 d6 3.Qc3 g6 4.Qg2 Qg7 5.d3)

B) 5...Qe7



This is a flexible move that allows Black to choose between several plans within the next few moves, but only one of them is relevant for this line.

6.e4 c5

Black aims for complete symmetry in the centre.

6...Qbc6 would transpose to Chapter 17. 6...f5 and 6...0–0 could do the same, or transpose to the next chapter, depending on whether Black plays ...Qb8-c6.

When I started studying this repertoire, I was afraid that this move order would transpose by force to the following drawish variation:
 1.c4 e5 2.g3 d6 3.Qc3 g6 4.Qg2 Qg7 5.e4 e5 6.Qge2 Qge7 7.0–0 0–0 8.d3 d6 9.a3 a6 10.Qb1 Qb8 11.b4 cxb4 12.axb4 b5 13.cxb5 axb5 Black has managed to maintain symmetry for a long time, and I failed to find any games in which anything relevant happened after this position.

It was not until I started working on this chapter that I discovered a negative aspect of Black's move order. The delayed development of his queen's knight prevents him from reacting in time with ...b7-b5, which allows White to retain a minimal but stable advantage.

7.a3 Qbc6 8.Qb1 a5

Black prevents b2-b4, but weakens the b5-square. In conjunction with the weakness of the d5-square, this is likely to cause him long-term problems.

Ignoring the threat would allow White to gain space on the queenside:

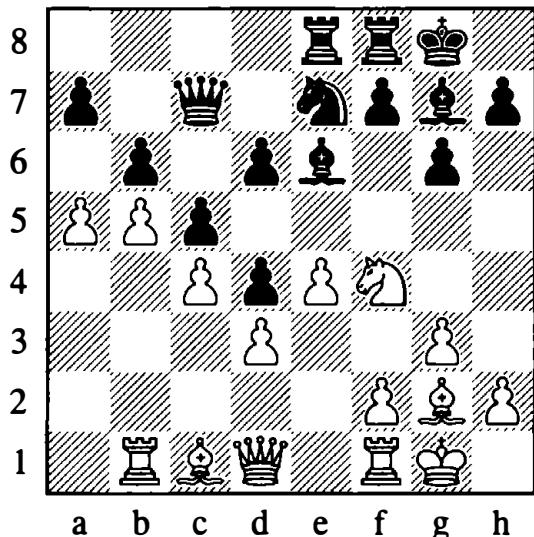
8...Qe6 9.b4 b6 10.Qge2 Qd7 11.Qd5 0–0 12.0–0 Qab8 13.b5 Qd4 14.Qxd4 exd4

With the knight placed on e7, Black would not be able to take advantage of the c5-square after 14...cxd4. Moreover, he would make the c6-square available for the white knight.

15.Qf4 Qbe8 16.a4 Qc7 17.a5

Despite the absence of concrete threats from

White, Black's position is unpleasant because he has no active plan.



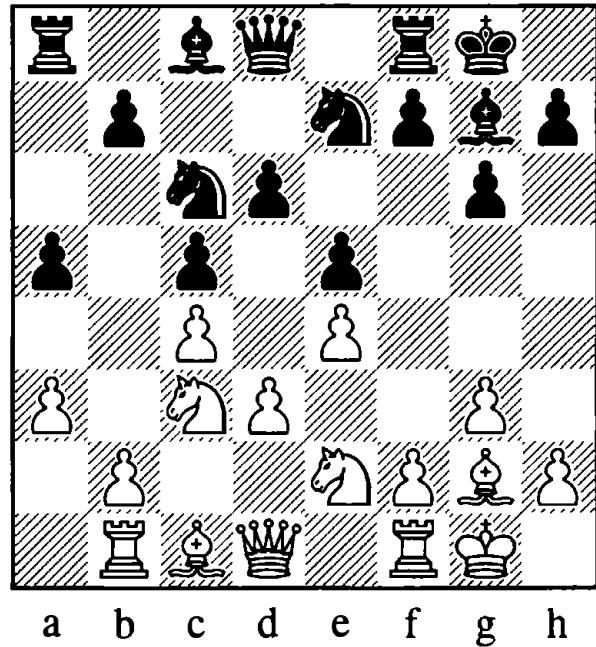
17... $\mathbb{Q}c8$ 18. $\mathbb{B}a1$ $\mathbb{Q}b7$

After transferring the bishop to the long diagonal, Black hopes to open the centre with ...f7-f5.

19. $\mathbb{Q}d2$ $\mathbb{B}b8$ 20.h4 h6 21. $\mathbb{Q}h3\pm$

White has an advantage on both wings, B. Knezevic – I. Ivanisevic, Cetinje 1992.

9. $\mathbb{Q}ge2$ 0–0 10.0–0



From the c-file to the h-file the position is perfectly symmetrical, and Black has the right to move. This does not offer him any advantage, because the move $\mathbb{B}a1$ -b1 is very useful. Moreover, some of the lines below make one feel that Black is in some sort of zugzwang, since several natural moves have drawbacks.

We will examine B1) 10... $\mathbb{Q}d4$, B2) 10... $\mathbb{B}5$, B3) 10... $\mathbb{Q}e6$ and B4) 10... $\mathbb{B}b8$.

(1.c4 e5 2.g3 d6 3. $\mathbb{Q}c3$ g6 4. $\mathbb{Q}g2$ $\mathbb{Q}g7$ 5.d3 $\mathbb{Q}e7$ 6.e4 c5 7.a3 $\mathbb{Q}bc6$ 8. $\mathbb{B}b1$ a5 9. $\mathbb{Q}ge2$ 0–0 10.0–0)

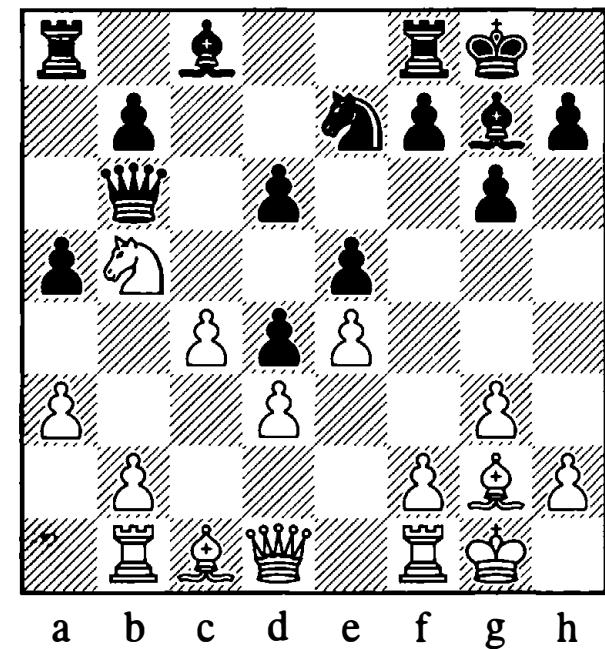
B1) 10... $\mathbb{Q}d4$

This tempting but premature occupation of the centre leaves the b4-square insufficiently defended.

11. $\mathbb{Q}xd4$ cxd4

11...exd4 gives White a mobile kingside majority and fails to prevent b2-b4, while increasing the impact of this pawn break by exposing the c5-pawn. 12. $\mathbb{Q}b5$ $\mathbb{Q}c6$ 13.f4 $\mathbb{E}e8$ 14. $\mathbb{Q}d2\pm$ White has the initiative on both wings.

12. $\mathbb{Q}b5$ $\mathbb{W}b6$

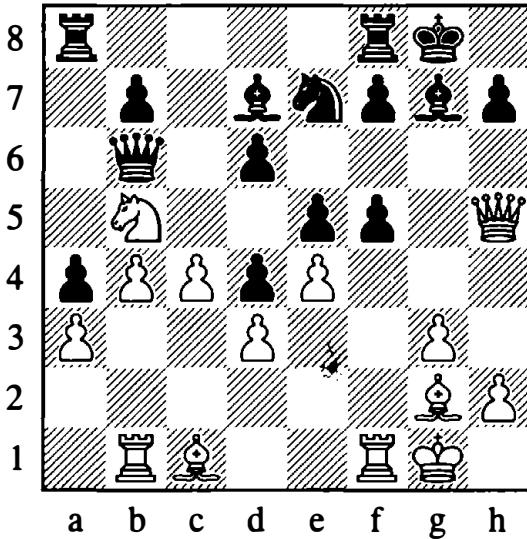


13.f4!N

White has to combine the plans based on f2-f4 and b2-b4, but the move order is important.

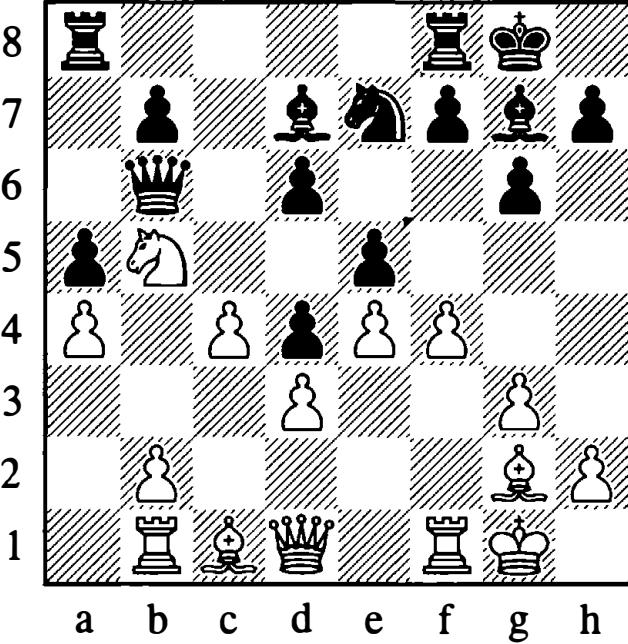
13.b4 is less accurate because of: 13...a4! (This leaves the b5-knight vulnerable. Instead 13...axb4 14. $\mathbb{B}xb4\pm$ would offer White

pressure along the b-file.) 14.f4 $\mathbb{Q}d7$ 15.f5 $gxf5$ 16. $\mathbb{W}h5$



This was played in Taimanov – Ljubisavljevic, Saint Vincent 2002. Black could have taken advantage of the exposed white knight with 16...f6!N 17.exf5 d5, undermining White's stability in the centre.

13... $\mathbb{Q}d7$ 14.a4!±



After this strong move, blocking the a5-pawn, the threat of b2-b4 becomes very strong. Black cannot keep control of the b4-square without weakening his defences on the kingside.

14... $\mathbb{W}c5$ 15. $\mathbb{Q}d2$ $\mathbb{Q}c6$ 16.f5±

White has a strong kingside attack, while the queenside is only temporarily blocked.

(1.c4 e5 2.g3 d6 3. $\mathbb{Q}c3$ g6 4. $\mathbb{Q}g2$ $\mathbb{Q}g7$ 5.d3 $\mathbb{Q}e7$ 6.e4 c5 7.a3 $\mathbb{Q}bc6$ 8. $\mathbb{B}b1$ a5 9. $\mathbb{Q}ge2$ 0–0 10.0–0)

B2) 10...f5

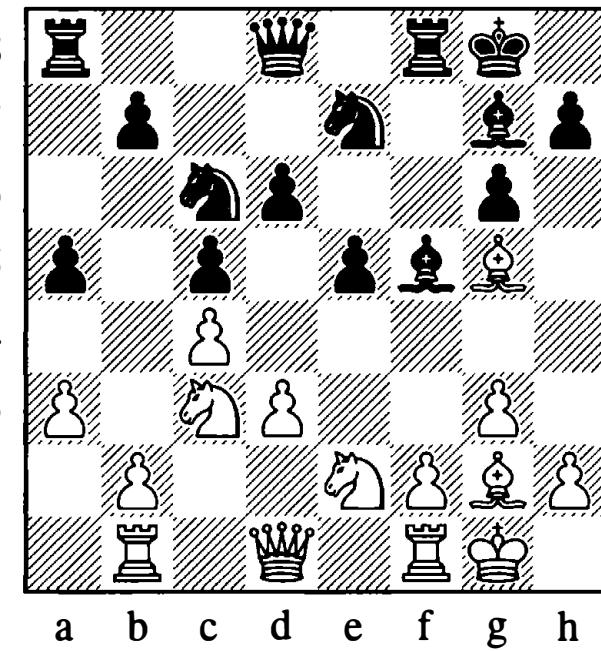
This is another premature display of activity; it allows White to organize his play optimally.

11.exf5 $\mathbb{Q}xf5$

11...gxf5 is met by the customary 12.f4±.

12. $\mathbb{Q}g5!$

A typical strategic method. With so many of Black's pawns blockaded on dark squares, it is useful for White to give up his dark-squared bishop for a knight, steering the game towards an ending with a good knight versus a bad bishop.



12... $\mathbb{W}d7$

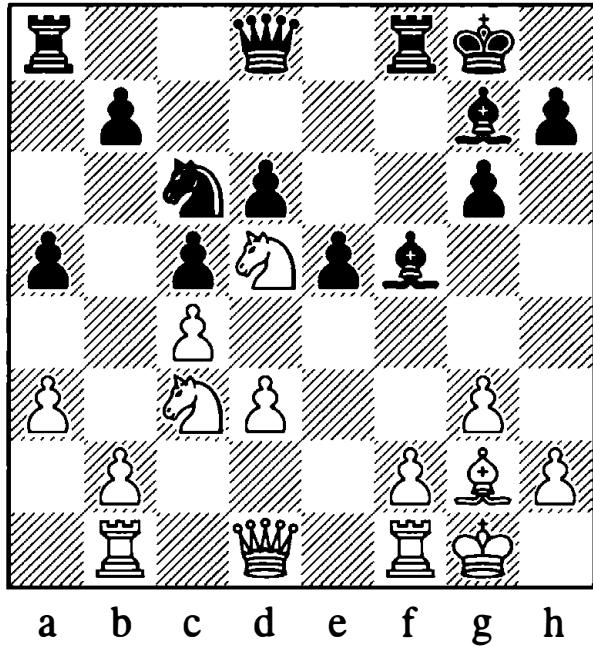
Crossing White's plans with 12... $\mathbb{Q}f6$ would allow White to gain time for developing his initiative. 13. $\mathbb{Q}xf6$ $\mathbb{Q}xf6$ 14. $\mathbb{Q}e4$ $\mathbb{Q}f8$ 15. $\mathbb{W}d2$ $\mathbb{W}d7$ 16.f4± Once the dark-squared bishops have been exchanged, White opens the kingside to take advantage of the relative weakness of the f6-square.

13. $\mathbb{Q}xe7$ $\mathbb{W}xe7$ 14. $\mathbb{Q}d5$ $\mathbb{W}d8$ 15. $\mathbb{Q}ec3$

White continues strengthening his control over the light squares.

Belov pointed out that 15.b4 is premature due to 15...axb4 16.axb4 $\mathbb{B}a3$ 17. $\mathbb{B}b3$ cxb4 ∞ . The weakness of the d3-pawn makes the b4-pawn difficult to capture.

(1.c4 e5 2.g3 d6 3. $\mathbb{Q}c3$ g6 4. $\mathbb{Q}g2$ $\mathbb{Q}g7$ 5.d3 $\mathbb{Q}e7$ 6.e4 c5 7.a3 $\mathbb{Q}bc6$ 8. $\mathbb{B}b1$ a5 9. $\mathbb{Q}ge2$ 0-0 10.0-0)



15... $\mathbb{Q}h8$

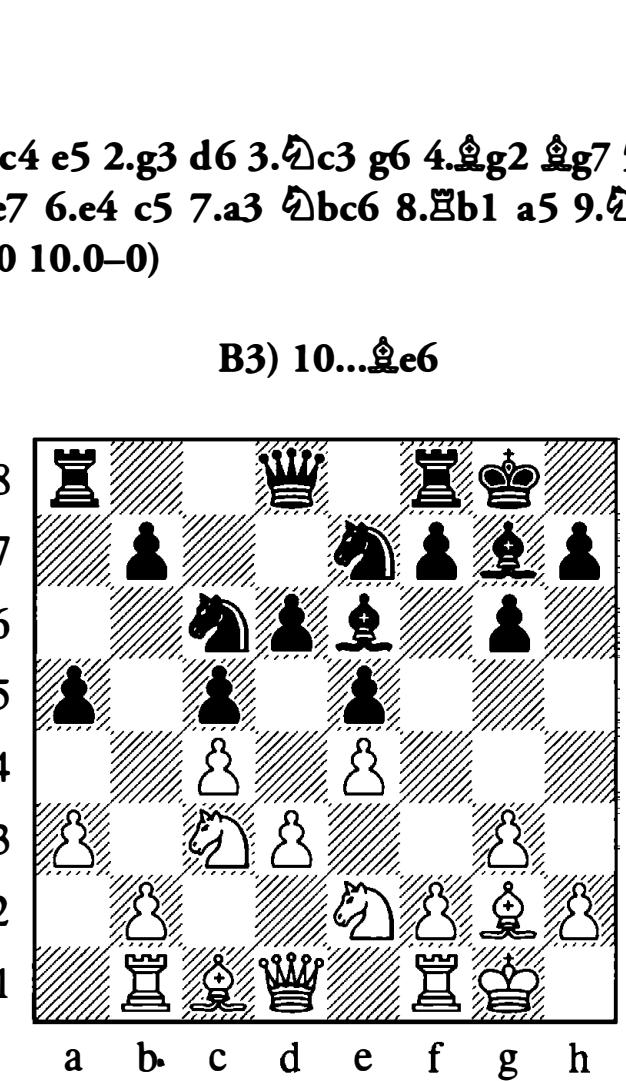
Belov recommended 15...a4 16. $\mathbb{Q}xa4$ (16. $\mathbb{Q}e3\pm$ is also strong, threatening $\mathbb{Q}xf5$ followed by $\mathbb{Q}xa4$) 16... $\mathbb{B}xa4$ 17. $\mathbb{W}xa4$ $\mathbb{Q}xd3$. His evaluation that Black had equalized is too optimistic, though. Black will have to give up his d3-bishop for a rook, leaving White with unchallenged control of the dark squares. 18. $\mathbb{Q}c3\pm$ White plans $\mathbb{Q}d5$ followed by b2-b4 with a strong initiative.

16. $\mathbb{Q}b5$ $\mathbb{Q}a7$ 17. $\mathbb{Q}xa7$ $\mathbb{B}xa7$ 18.b3!?

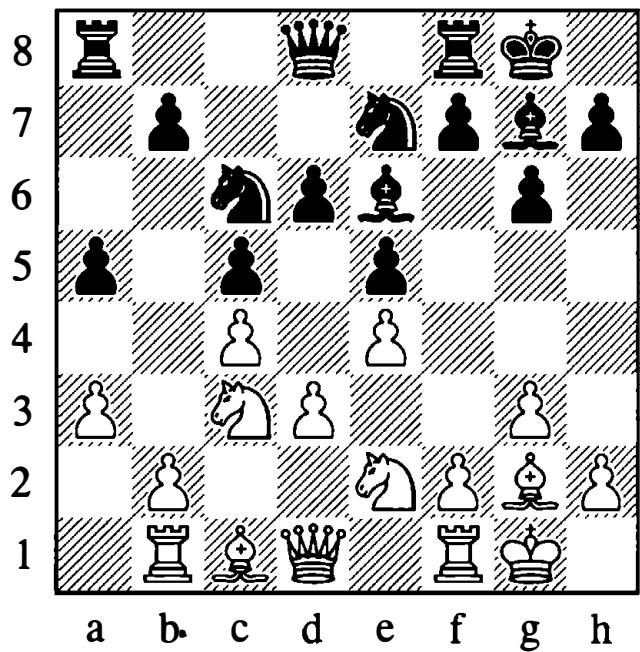
White delays playing b2-b4 so that his d3-pawn will not be vulnerable after ...a5xb4 a3xb4 and ... $\mathbb{B}a8-a3$. The text move maintains the elasticity of the queenside structure by preventing ...a5-a4. White will play b3-b4 only when everything has been prepared for it.

18...b6 19. $\mathbb{W}e2$ $\mathbb{B}af7$ 20.b4 \pm

White has active minor pieces and the more flexible structure, Makarichev – Belov, Pula 1989.



B3) 10... $\mathbb{Q}e6$



The previous lines have convinced us that it is too early for Black to undertake active operations. Therefore, it makes more sense to keep developing.

11. $\mathbb{Q}d5!$

This is the best way to underline the drawbacks of Black's natural developing move. The generally desirable capture ... $\mathbb{Q}e7xd5$ would lose a piece to e4xd5 or c4xd5.

11... $\mathbb{B}b8$

Giving up the bishop would leave the e7-knight passive:

11... $\mathbb{Q}xd5$ 12.exd5 $\mathbb{Q}d4$ 13. $\mathbb{Q}xd4$ exd4 14.b4 axb4 15.axb4 b6 16.bxc5 bxc5 17. $\mathbb{B}b7$

White has a strong initiative, and threatens to increase her pressure with $\mathbb{W}d1-b3$, $\mathbb{Q}c1-g5$, $\mathbb{B}f1-e1$ and $\mathbb{Q}g2-h3$.

17... $\mathbb{Q}c8$

This looks passive, but after 17... $\mathbb{Q}f5$ 18. $\mathbb{Q}h3$ the knight is unstable.

18.h4 h6 19. $\mathbb{W}b3$ $\mathbb{B}a6$ 20. $\mathbb{Q}d2$ $\mathbb{B}b6$ 21. $\mathbb{B}xb6$ $\mathbb{W}xb6$ 22. $\mathbb{W}xb6$ $\mathbb{Q}xb6$ 23. $\mathbb{Q}a5$ $\mathbb{Q}c8$ 24. $\mathbb{B}b1\pm$

Despite the simplifications, Black's position

remains passive and her d6-pawn is weak, Chelushkina – A. Mijovic, Pancevo 2005.

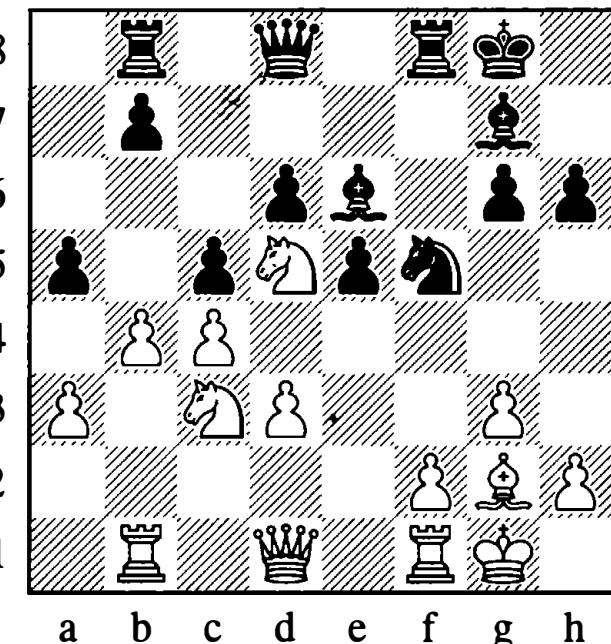
12.♘ec3

White has established firm control over the critical squares and intends to strengthen the pressure with ♘c3-b5 followed by ♖c1-d2 and b2-b4.

12...f5

This apparently active move allows a favourable exchange for White.

**13.♗g5 h6 14.♗xe7 ♘xe7 15.exf5 ♘xf5
16.b4±**



White's queenside attack develops effectively, Rivas Pastor – So. Polgar, Leon 1989.

(1.c4 e5 2.g3 d6 3.♘c3 g6 4.♗g2 ♗g7 5.d3
♘e7 6.e4 c5 7.a3 ♘bc6 8.♗b1 a5 9.♘ge2
0-0 10.0-0)

B4) 10...♝b8

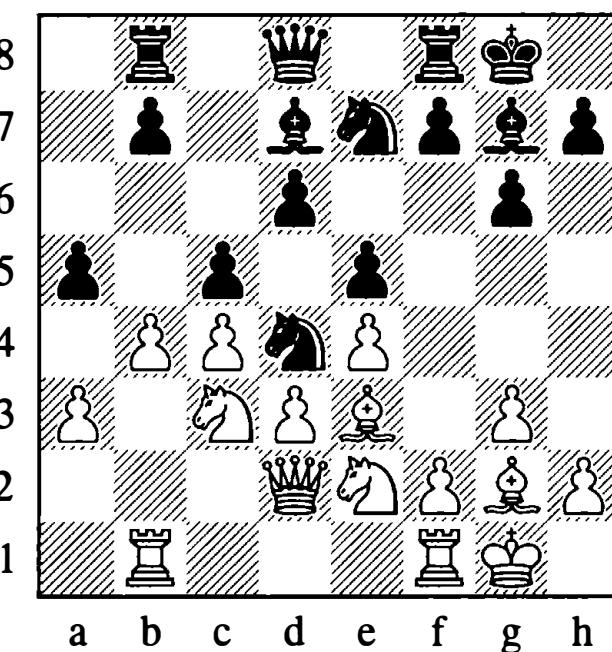
This move is less committal than the previously examined ones. Black prepares to meet ♘c3-d5 with ...b7-b5. The position has become almost symmetrical, but the weakness of the b5-square and White's right to move offer him the better chances.

11.♗e3 ♘d7

Black intends to prepare ...b7-b5, in order to eliminate his main weakness. Instead 11...♗d4 would be answered with 12.b4±.

12.♗d2 ♘d4 13.b4±

White has achieved a comfortable advantage and Black's position is rather unpleasant to play, despite the absence of immediate threats.



13...axb4 14.axb4 b6

As pointed out by Ribli, the counterblow 14...b5 loses a pawn to 15.bxc5 dxc5 16.cxb5 ♘xb5 17.♗xc5±.

15.b5 ♜a8 16.♗b2

White prepares ♜b1-a1, which would have been impossible immediately because of ...♘d4-b3.

**16...♗g4 17.f3 ♜c8 18.♗g5 ♘xe2† 19.♗xe2
♗b7**

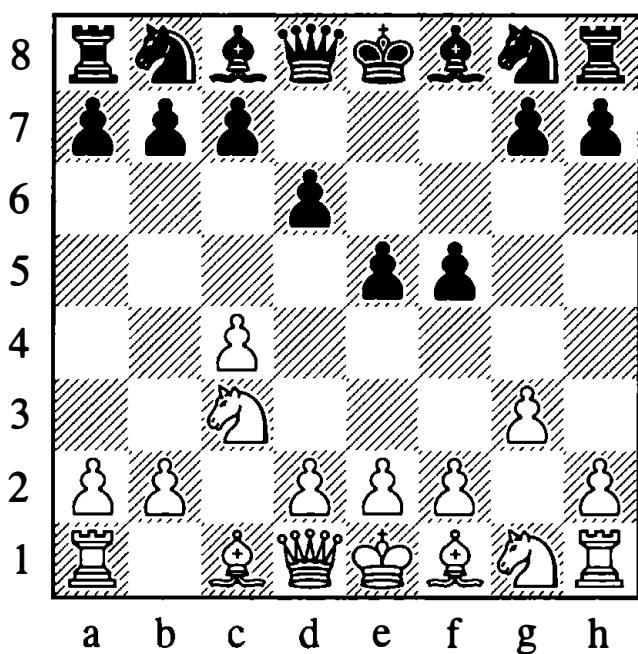
We have seen this plan before. Black could not make his bishop useful on the h3-c8 diagonal and so decides to neutralize the enemy's light-squared bishop.

20.♗h3

White has space on the queenside and his minor pieces are more active than Black's, Seirawan – Anastasian, Groningen 1997.

(1.c4 e5 2.g3 d6 3.Qc3)

C) 3...f5

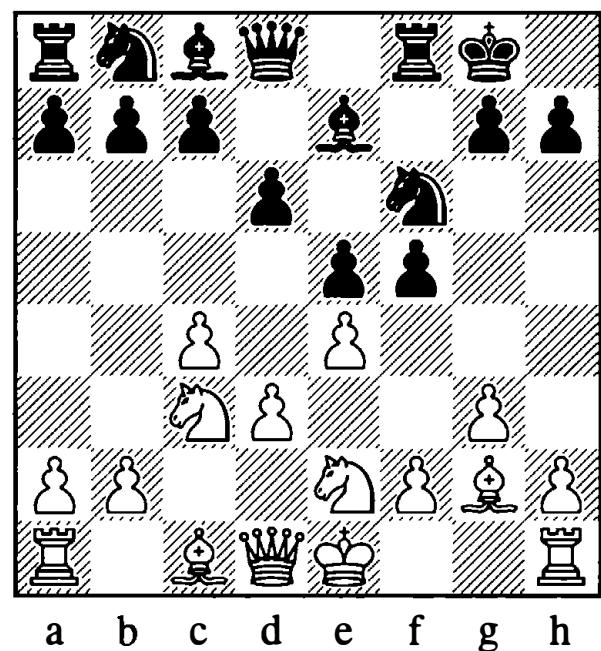


In most cases, this would transpose to other variations. In this section we shall only examine set-ups in which Black chooses to develop his f8-bishop to e7 (instead of the more common fianchetto).

4.Qg2 Qf6 5.d3 Qe7 6.e4

In reply to Black's plan, the set-up based on e2-e3 and Qge2 is also quite effective, but I have decided to remain consistent with our repertoire style of development.

6...0-0 7.Qge2



This method of developing, which is similar to the Ilyin-Zhenevsky variation of the Dutch, leaves the e8-h5 diagonal available for the black queen, aiming to create dangerous kingside threats. The drawback of this variation is that the bishop is more passive on e7 than in the "normal" lines of the Botvinnik System, but White needs to play accurately to take advantage of this.

7...Qc6

The main alternative is:

7...c6

Obviously, this prevents White's usual Botvinnik plan of occupying the d5-square.

8.0-0 Qa6

After 8...We8 the early transfer of the queen to the kingside leaves Black's centre inadequately defended. 9.b3 Wh5 10.f3! A strong move, stopping the attack before it has even started. We have seen this method before in Chapters 13 to 18. 10...Qa6 11.exf5! (White takes advantage of the fact that the generally desirable 11...Qxf5 would lose a piece to 12.g4 in order to force the enemy queen to occupy an uncomfortable square.) 11...Wxf5 12.Qa3± White is better developed and threatens to open the centre with d3-d4, Olafsson – Thibault, Lone Pine 1979.

9.h3!?

I consider this move to be best; White prepares to expand on the kingside.

9...We8 10.exf5 Qxf5 11.g4 Qe6 12.f4

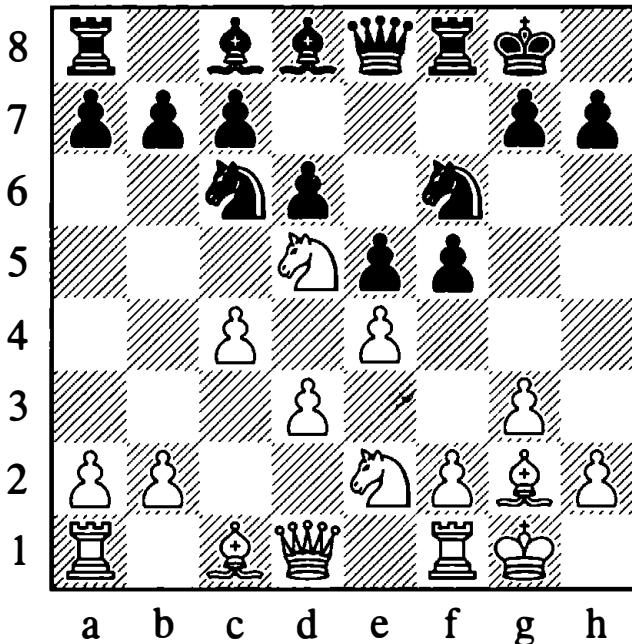
Black's attacking chances are questionable and White has every chance of consolidating his space advantage.

12...h6 13.b3 Qd8 14.f5 Qf7 15.d4±

Black's army lacks coordination, which prevents him from proving that White's position is over-extended, McNab – Ansell, West Bromwich 2004.

8.0-0 We8 9.Qd5 Qd8

This is another regrouping that is typical of the Ilyin-Zhenevsky Dutch. Black defends the c7-pawn with his bishop in order to allow the queen to reach h5. However, the bishop is passive and prevents the rooks connecting.



10.f3!

Once again we play this typical move. White stops ... $\mathbb{Q}g4$, preventing Black's attacking plans and preparing to continue developing with $\mathbb{Q}e3$.

10...g5?!

This looks like the most consistent attempt to develop Black's attack and was successful in Talla – Shtyrenkov, Czech Republic 2001. Black takes advantage of the fact that, after having weakened the e3-square, White gets nowhere with 11. $\mathbb{Q}xg5$ because of 11... $\mathbb{Q}xd5$ and if 12. $\mathbb{Q}xd8?$ then 12... $\mathbb{Q}e3$!

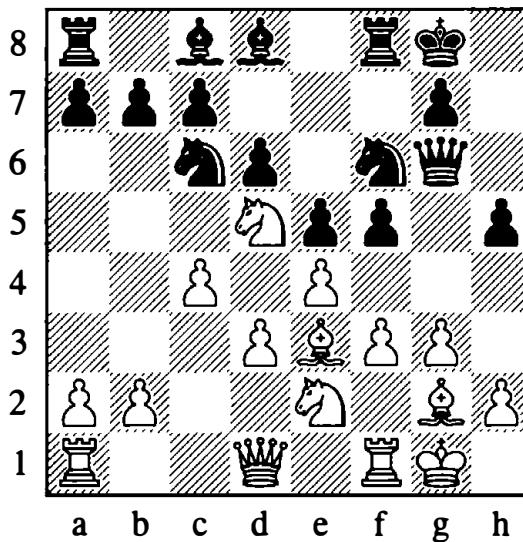
Let's see some other possibilities:

10... $\mathbb{Q}xd5$ 11.cxd5 $\mathbb{Q}e7$, as played in Ribli – Hickl, Austria 1999, should be answered with 12. $\mathbb{W}b3!N$ $\mathbb{Q}h8$ 13. $\mathbb{Q}e3$ c5 14.dxc6 $\mathbb{Q}xc6$ 15.f4±. White is better developed; Black still needs time to activate his bishops.

10... $\mathbb{W}g6$ 11. $\mathbb{Q}e3$ h5

This has been played a few times. The threat of ...h5-h4 is not very dangerous, because the

g3-pawn is well defended. Therefore, White should consolidate his grip on the centre.



12. $\mathbb{W}b3!N$ fxe4

12... $\mathbb{Q}h8$ is strongly met by 13.exf5. Since the b7-pawn would be hanging if the bishop recaptured, Black has to go for the unappealing 13... $\mathbb{W}xf5$ 14.f4± when White has a powerful initiative.

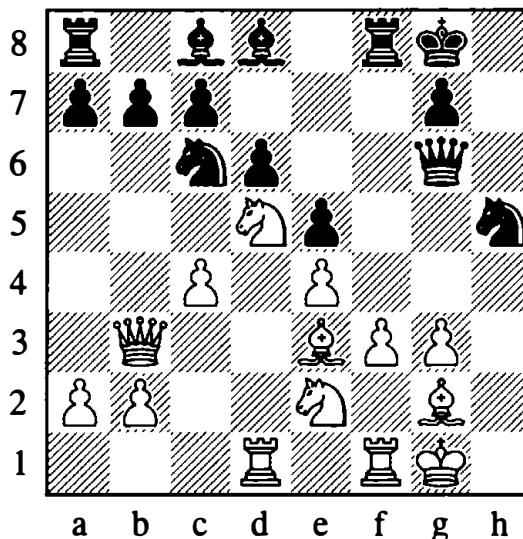
13.dxe4 h4 14. $\mathbb{E}ad1\pm$

White has completed his development and exerts strong pressure. As Black's development is incomplete, he has few attacking chances.

For instance:

14...hxg3 15.hxg3 $\mathbb{Q}h5?!$

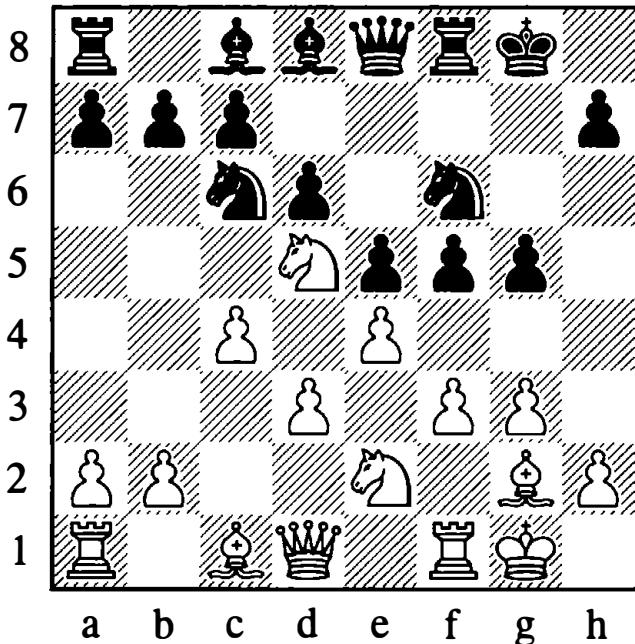
This move only weakens Black's centre.



16.c5 $\mathbb{E}f7$ 17.cxd6 cxd6 18. $\mathbb{Q}f2\pm$

White's kingside is safely defended, while Black's structure has been irremediably damaged. In addition, he still needs to complete his development.

If 10... $\mathbb{Q}e7$ White should exchange the more active knight with 11. $\mathbb{Q}xf6\# \mathbb{B}xf6$ 12. $\mathbb{Q}e3\pm$. Black is poorly coordinated, which will allow White to open the centre in his favour.



11. d2!N

As the long dark diagonal has been weakened, the bishop will be optimally placed on c3. It should be mentioned that 11.b3 followed by ♕b2 would be slightly less effective, because the bishop would not be supporting a further advance of the b-pawn.

11...f4 12.♗c3 ♜g6 13.d4

Optically, it may seem that Black has good attacking chances, but White's pressure in the centre is far more effective. One important element is that Black's dark-squared bishop is not helping consolidate the e5-pawn, as it would do from g7.

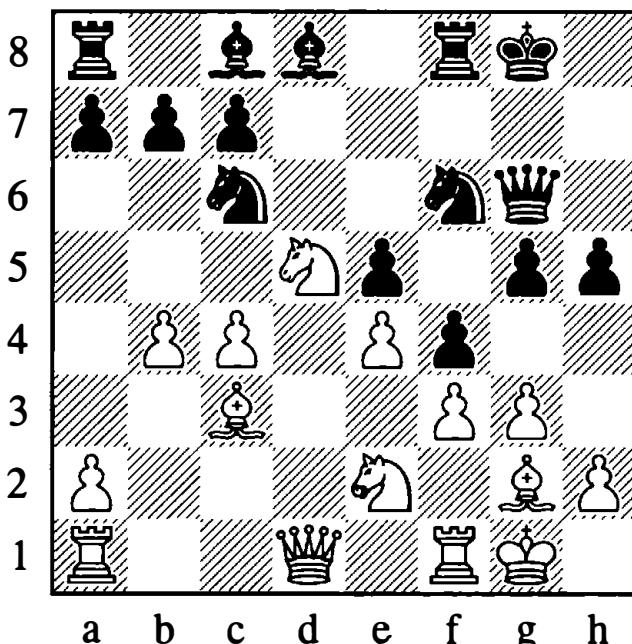
13...h5

If Black avoids the creation of a weak pawn on e5 with 13...fxg3 14.hxg3 h5 15.dxe5

Qxe5 , then White can favourably open the position with $16.f4 \text{ gxf4} 17.\text{Qexf4}\pm$.

Alternatively, after 13...exd4 14.♘xd4± Black's position is unstable and the f5-square is vulnerable.

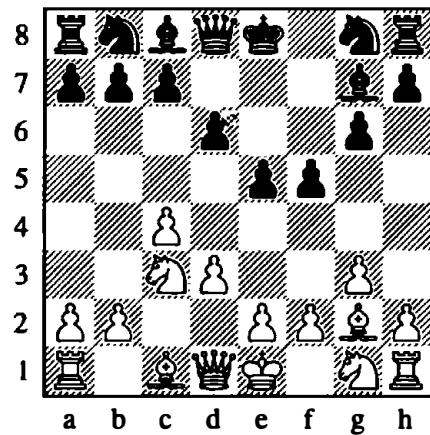
14.dxe5 dxe5 15.b4±



White has a strong initiative in the centre. If necessary, White can open the g-file with gxf4 followed by Qh1 and Bg1 , when Black's king might be in danger.

Conclusion:

Line A gives Black a flexible position, but White can retain his space advantage. Line B openly aims for complete symmetry and a rapid draw, but White can take advantage of the specific move order to retain a strategic advantage. In Line C Black's dreams of an attack on the wing are quashed by a blow in the centre – just as the old masters advised.



2...d6

5...f5

Variation Index

1.c4 e5 2.g3 d6 3.Qc3 g6 4.Qg2 Qg7 5.d3

5...f5 6.e4

A) 6...Qf6 7.Qge2 0-0 8.0-0 c6 9.exf5!

p 426

A1) 9...Qxf5

p 426

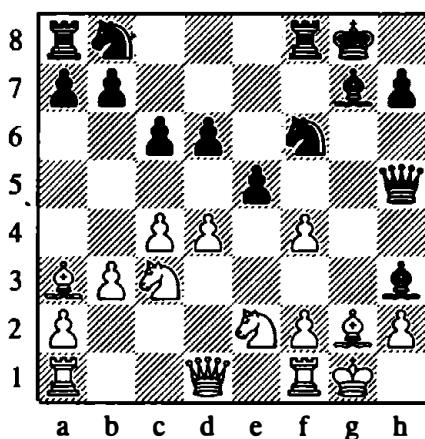
A2) 9...gxsf5

p 428

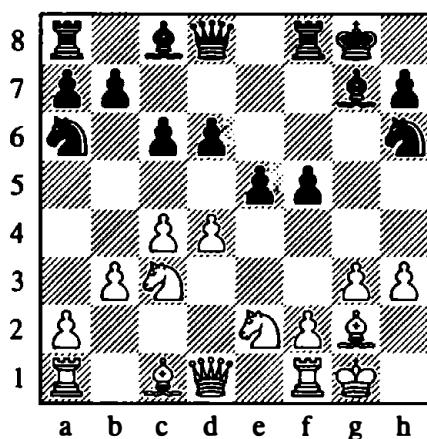
B) 6...Qe7

p 434

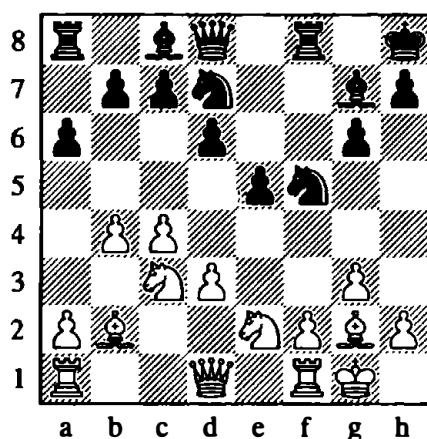
A21) after 13...Qh3?!



A232) after 12...Qh6



B) after 11...a6

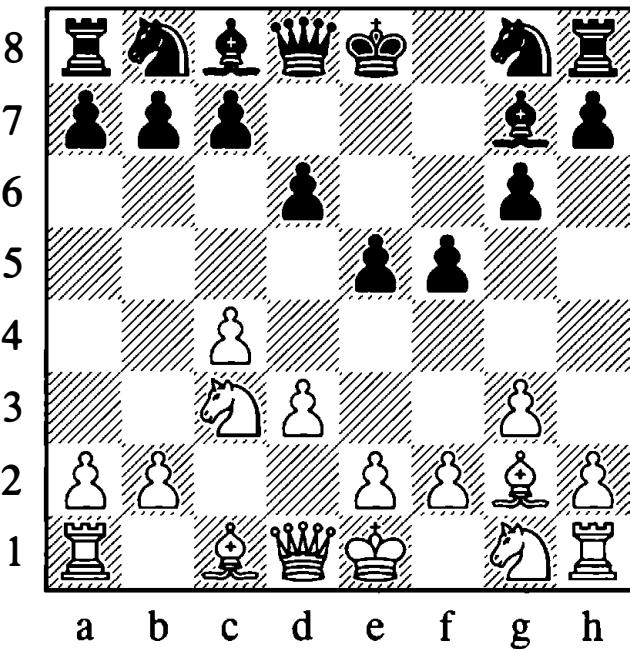


14.Qxd6!N+-

13.d5!N

12.Qe4!N

**1.c4 e5 2.g3 d6 3.♘c3 g6 4.♗g2 ♗g7 5.d3
f5**



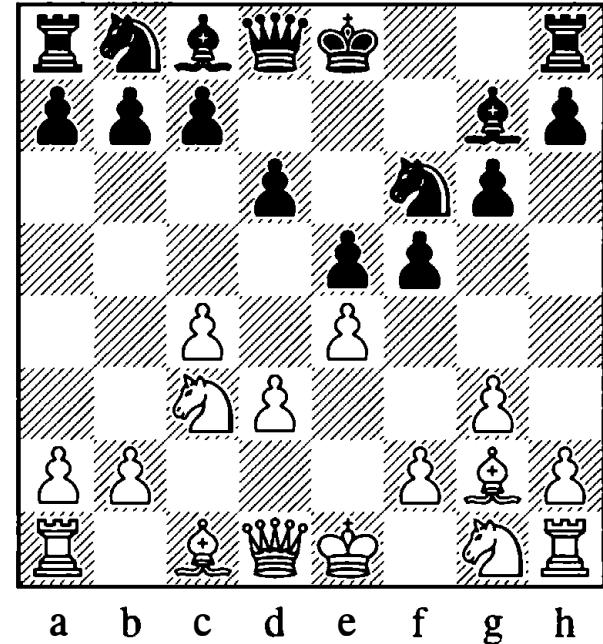
In the variations examined in Chapters 13 to 18, this is Black's most active plan, but if he refrains from ...♘b8-c6 (which Black usually does in this chapter and most of the previous chapter also), there is a risk that Black's position will be vulnerable to a well-timed d3-d4.

6.e4

We shall examine A) 6...♘f6 and B) 6...♘e7.

(1.c4 e5 2.g3 d6 3.♘c3 g6 4.♗g2 f5 5.d3
♗g7 6.e4)

A) 6...♘f6



This is the most natural and popular move. The knight takes the d5- and e4-squares under observation. This variation is also important from the point of view of the Anti-Leningrad Dutch move order (see Volume 2).

7.♘ge2 0-0 8.0-0 c6

Black has built up a flexible position and has good control of the centre. The only drawback of his plan is that his queenside is completely undeveloped, which induces the idea that White should open the centre.

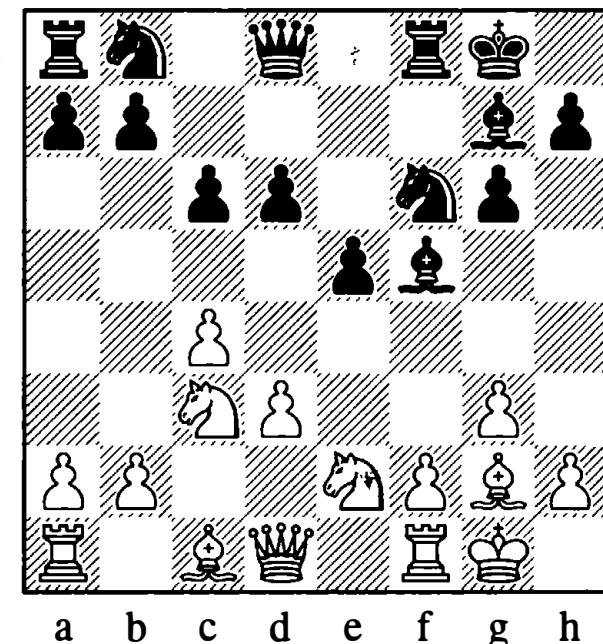
9.exf5!

Before playing d3-d4, it is useful to exchange the e4-pawn, which would otherwise be inadequately defended.

In practice, Black has tried both recaptures, A1) 9...♗xf5 and A2) 9...gx5.

(1.c4 e5 2.g3 d6 3.♘c3 g6 4.♗g2 ♗g7 5.d3
f5 6.e4 ♘f6 7.♘ge2 0-0 8.0-0 c6 9.exf5)

A1) 9...♗xf5



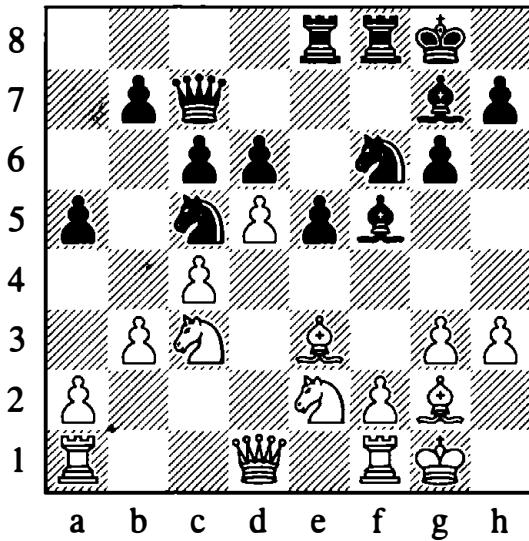
Black hurries to catch up in development, but abandons the initial idea of his set-up, by giving up control of the e4-square.

10.d4

White's main plan is to take control of the e4-square with h2-h3, g3-g4, d4-d5 and ♘e2-g3. It should be mentioned that activating the temporarily passive e2-knight is essential.

10...♞a6

10...♞bd7 does not change the character of the position. 11.h3 ♜c7 12.b3 ♜ae8 13.d5 ♜c5 14.♕e3 a5 Black's stability on the queenside is restricted, because his c6- and d6-pawns need constant care. Of course, the exchange ...c6xd5 would leave the d5-square at White's mercy.



15.g4 ♜c8 16.♗d2 ♜f7 17.♗ad1 ♜f8 18.♘g3 ♜h8 White's development is far more harmonious, which justifies immediately opening the position. 19.f4 ♜fd7 20.f5± White has a crushing space advantage, Spraggett – Baragar, Canada 1994.

10...♝d7 was tried in Markowski – Malaniuk, Minsk 1998. Black prevents h2-h3, hoping to leave the e2-knight passive. 11.♗g5 This is a logical move, once the f6-knight cannot be supported with ...♝b8-d7. 11...♞a6 (11...h6 is answered with 12.♗xf6 ♜xf6 13.d5± followed by ♘e4 and ♘c3) 12.♗d2± White has secured his bishop against the potential threat of ...h7-h6 and is preparing to challenge Black's stability with ♜a1-d1. If the black queen leaves the d7-square then h2-h3 would become possible again.

11.h3 ♜d7

Knowing the future course of the game, it is easy to recommend 11...h5, preventing White's kingside expansion.

However, this would be a double-edged solution, because the g6- and g5-squares would be weakened. White would answer with 12.♗g5±, followed by ♜d1-d2 and ♜a1-d1 with strong pressure.

12.g4 ♜e6 13.d5 cxd5 14.cxd5 ♜f7 15.♘g3

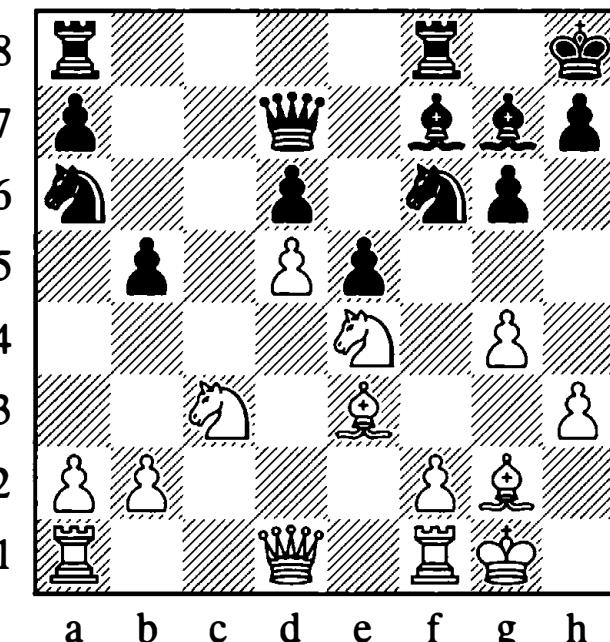
White has activated his problem-knight and has excellent control over the e4-square. Black's minor pieces, especially his bishops, are rather passive.

15...♝h8 16.♗e3 b5

This typical King's Indian-style counterplay has the drawback of weakening the c6-square.

17.♘ge4

White exchanges one of the pieces that was putting pressure on the d5-pawn, thus anticipating the threat of ...b5-b4.



17...♞xe4 18.♞xe4 ♜ac8 19.♗d2 ♜c7

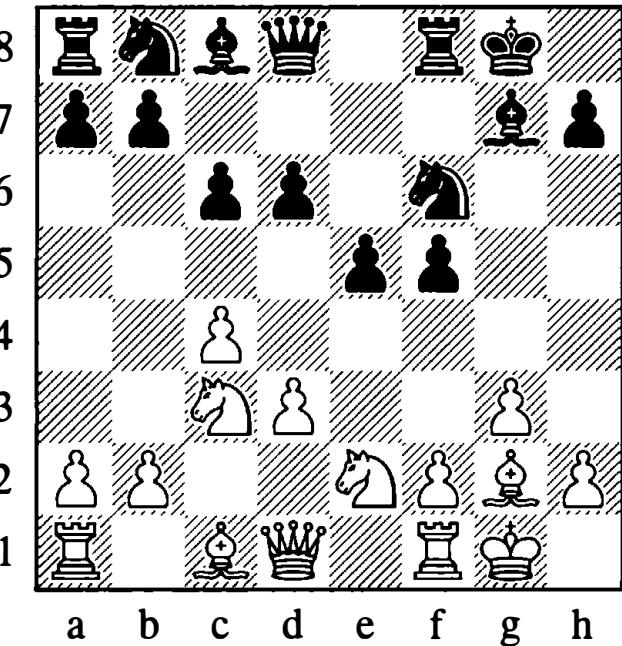
20.♘g3 b4 21.♗ac1±

White plans to take control of the only open file, using the weakness of the c6-square, Marin – Guseinov, Internet (rapid) 2002.

(1.c4 e5 2.g3 d6 3.Qc3 g6 4.Qg2 Qg7 5.d3 f5 6.e4 Qf6 7.Qge2 0-0 8.0-0 c6 9.exf5)

11.Qg5 Qe6 12.b3 Qf7 13.Wd2 We8 14.Qf4 a5 15.Qad1 Qa6 16.d5 c5 17.Qh3 Wd7

A2) 9...gxh5



Black maintains the integrity of his structure, but his lack of development will make his centre vulnerable.

10.d4

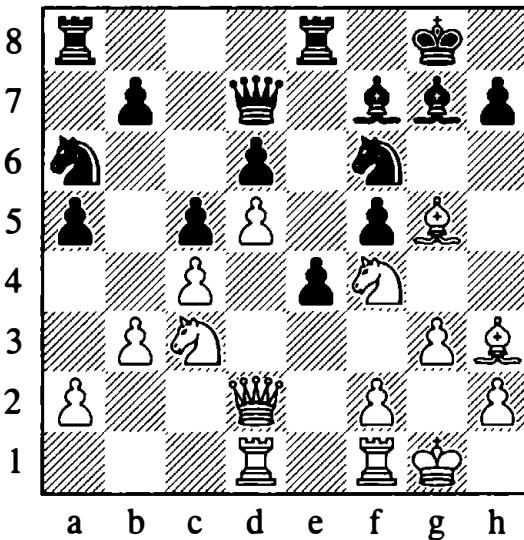
The reader may have become used to 10.f4 being the typical reaction to ...g6xf5. However, with the a5-d8 diagonal open, this method is less effective because of 10...Wb6† 11.Qh1 Qg4. Facing the threats of ...Qe3 and ...Qf2†, White has nothing better than allowing a draw by perpetual with 12.Qa4 Qf2† 13.Qg1 Qh3† 14.Qh1.

In practice, Black has tried several moves. We will examine A21) 10...We8, A22) 10...Qbd7 and A23) 10...Qa6.

Other moves are less common.

10...a5, as played in Pelletier – Mahjoob, Turin (ol) 2006, is too slow to neutralize White's lead in development. The most effective answer is 11.Qg5 h6 12.Qh4 Qa6 13.Wd2± followed by Qa1-d1.

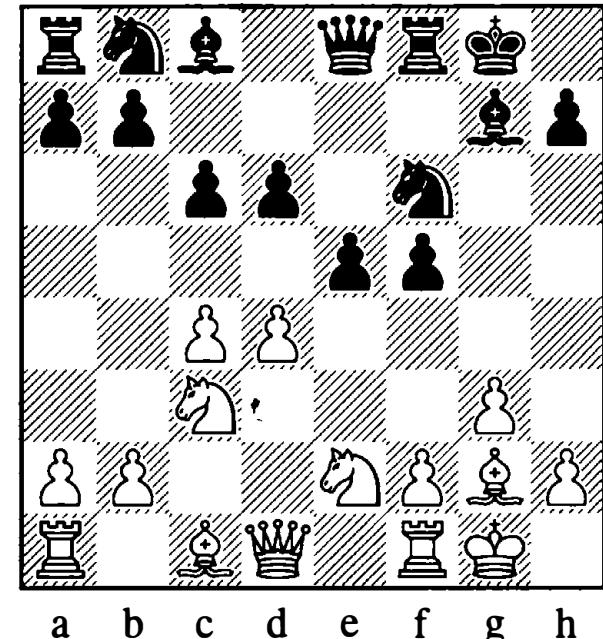
10...e4 is an obvious concession, giving up control of the f4-square without a fight.



All White's pieces are on optimal squares, and the time is right to open the position with a temporary pawn sacrifice: 18.Qe6!± Marin – Zatonskih, Internet 2003.

(1.c4 e5 2.g3 d6 3.Qc3 g6 4.Qg2 Qg7 5.d3 f5 6.e4 Qf6 7.Qge2 0-0 8.0-0 c6 9.exf5 gxh5 10.d4)

A21) 10...We8



This move, which is also typical in the Ilyin-Zhenevsky Dutch where the e8-h5 diagonal is open, is premature in this position because of Black's lack of development.

11.b3!

Now that the d6-pawn has been left undefended, ♜c1-a3 becomes a very strong threat.

11...♝h5

Releasing the tension with 11...exd4 leaves White with a strategic advantage after 12.♗xd4 ♜e4 13.♗b2±, Psakhis – Tejero, Andorra 1996.

12.♗a3!

White carries out his plan without fearing any ghosts.

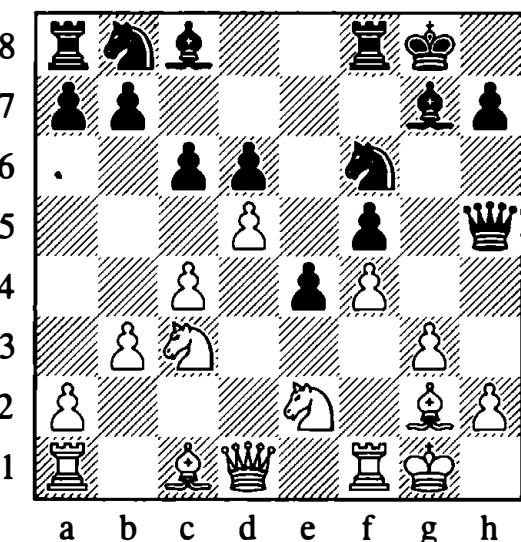
There is no need for the over-cautious:

12.f4

This offers Black better chances of reaching a viable position.

12...e4 13.d5

This is more or less forced, in order to prevent Black from consolidating with ...d6-d5.



a) 13...c5?!

By blocking the centre, Black offers White the opportunity to regroup optimally.

14.h3 a6 15.♗b2 ♜bd7 16.♗d2±

White intends to regroup with ♜d1-e3 and open the queenside with b3-b4, while Black's attack is not easy to carry out.

16...♜h6?!

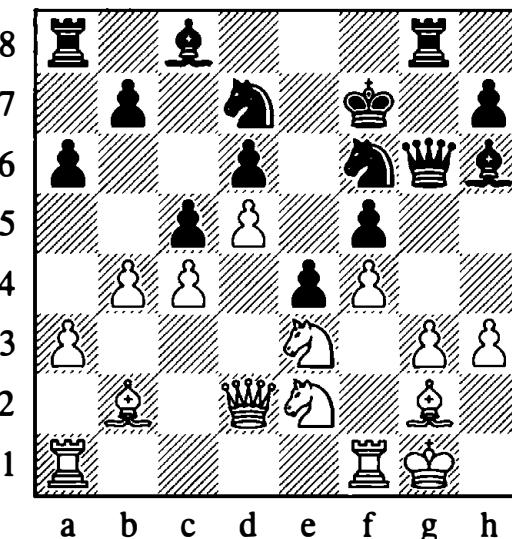
Black clears the g-file for his rook, but the bishop is horribly placed on this square. A better continuation would have been

16...♝b8 17.a4 b6 followed by ...♝f8-f7 and ...♝d7-f8.

17.♗d1 ♜f7 18.♗e3 ♜g8 19.a3

White follows his main plan, but overlooks that the congestion of Black's pieces allowed a decisive pawn break: 19.g4! fxg4 20.♗g3 ♜g6 21.hxg4 ♜xg4 22.♕xe4 Black's queen is trapped.

19...♝g6 20.b4±



White can build up his attack at his own convenience, while Black cannot create real threats, Sunye Neto – Lucena, Fortaleza 1989.

b) Given that the g2-bishop is out of play, Black should have opened the position with:

13...cxsd5!N 14.♗xd5 ♜c6 15.♗a3 ♜e6!

Black does not care about losing the d6-pawn, because his superior piece activity would offer him adequate compensation.

16.♗c7

This does not win the exchange, but instead leads to simplifications without solving the problem of the g2-bishop.

16...♜f7 17.♗xa8 ♜g4 18.h3 ♜e3

Black has strong counterplay.

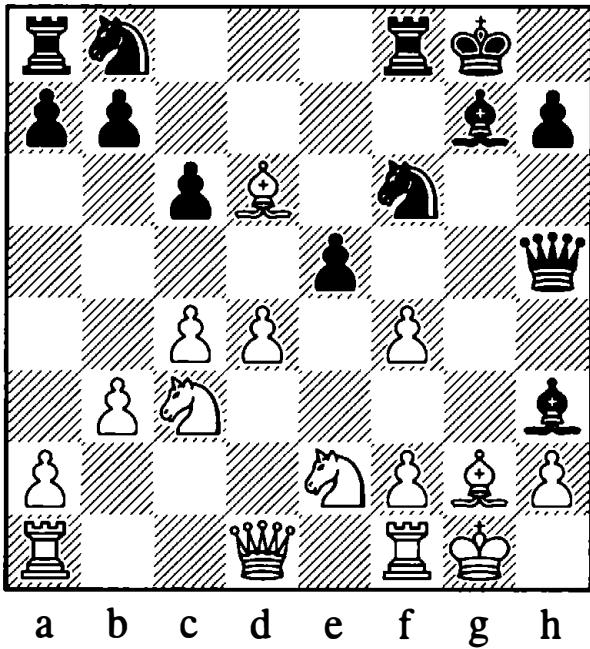
12...f4

This thematic pawn sacrifice fails to gain Black attacking chances because of his poor development, but he no longer had a way to hold his position together.

13.gxf4 ♜h3?!

This hazardous move was played in Karttunen – Keskinen, Tampere 2002. Black's alternatives were uninspired: 13...exd4 14.♗xd4± and 13...exf4 14.♗xf4± would both leave White with an extra pawn and the better development.

After the text move, the game continued with 14.♗d3, when Black could have kept some saving chances by exchanging on g2 and d4.

14.♗xd6!N+–

Black will suffer heavy material losses, without managing to create any dangerous threats against the enemy king.

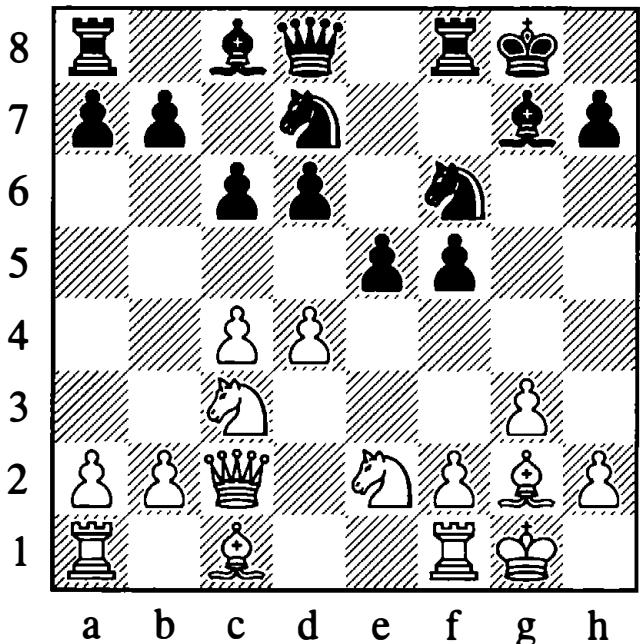
(1.c4 e5 2.g3 d6 3.♗c3 g6 4.♗g2 ♜g7 5.d3 f5 6.e4 ♜f6 7.♗ge2 0–0 8.0–0 c6 9.exf5 gx5 10.d4)

A22) 10...♝bd7

This move has the drawback of obstructing the c8-bishop.

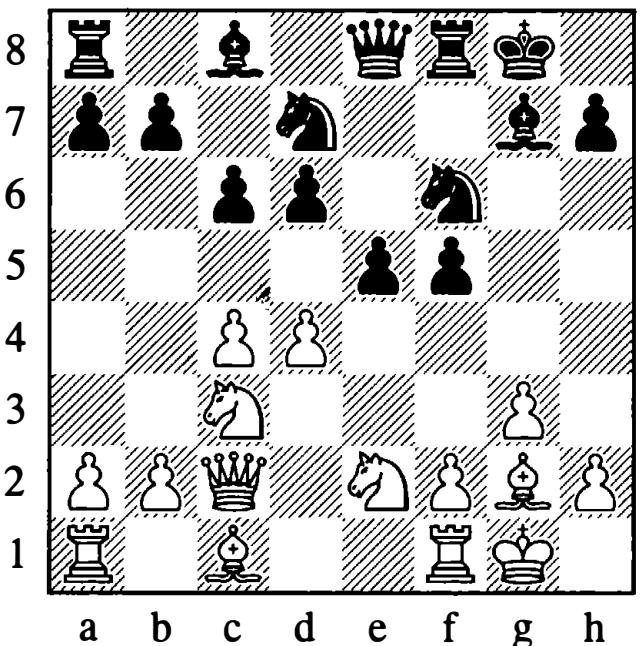
11.♗c2

By attacking the vulnerable pawn, White hopes to cause Black some problems with his coordination. However, at the end of this game we shall return to this position to consider a possible improvement for White.

**11...♜e8**

Black defends the pawn by indirect means.

11...♝g4 would allow White to complete his development with gain of time. 12.dxe5 dxe5 13.h3 ♜h6 14.♗e3 ♜e7 15.♗ad1 f4 This thematic pawn sacrifice injects some life into Black's play, but it fails to equalize. 16.gxf4 ♜f5 17.♗e4 ♜xe3 18.fxe3 ♜c5 19.♔h2 exf4 20.exf4 ♜e6 21.♗2g3± Despite his strong dark-squared bishop, Black has insufficient compensation for the pawn, because White's pieces are well organized and centralized.

**12.d5**

White puts pressure on the c6-pawn, taking advantage of the fact that the generally desirable ...♝c8-d7 is not possible.

The text move is certainly not the only possible continuation:

Capturing the pawn with 12. $\mathbb{W}xf5$ would allow Black a little activity after 12...exd4 13. $\mathbb{Q}xd4$ $\mathbb{Q}e5$ 14. $\mathbb{W}c2$ $\mathbb{Q}xc4$ 15. b3 $\mathbb{Q}e5$. Still, White is better developed after 16. $\mathbb{Q}a3\pm$.

An alternate solution is: 12. dxe5! N $\mathbb{Q}xe5$ (12...dxe5 loses a pawn without compensation to 13. $\mathbb{W}xf5\pm$) 13. b3± Black's activity would be temporary, while his structural defects will persist.

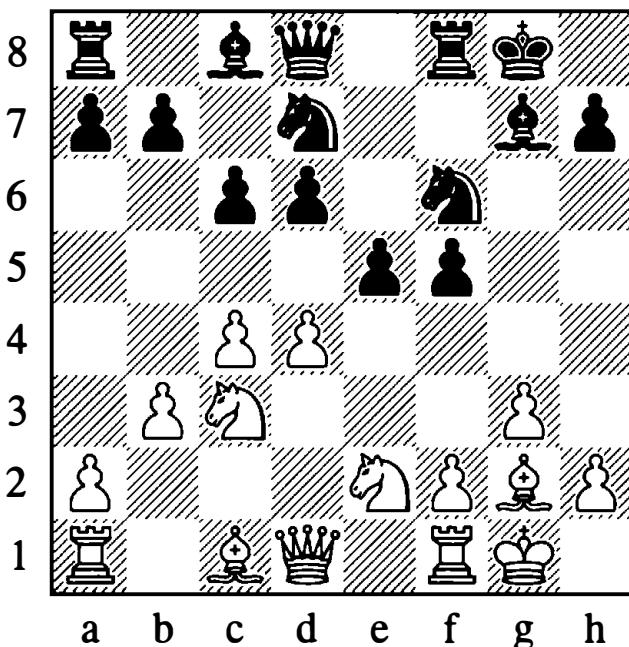
12...e4

This seems to be the lesser evil. Black surrenders control of the f4-square, in order to get his knight to e5 and to restrict the g2-bishop. 12...c5? leads to disaster after 13. $\mathbb{Q}b5$ $\mathbb{W}e7$ 14. $\mathbb{Q}c7$ $\mathbb{B}b8$ 15. $\mathbb{Q}e6\pm$. And 12... $\mathbb{Q}b6$ leaves Black's centre vulnerable after 13. dxc6 bxc6 14. $\mathbb{Q}d1\pm$.

With the text move, we have followed the game Forintos – Planinec, Ljubljana 1969, which continued 13. f4. I believe that is the right square, but the wrong piece:

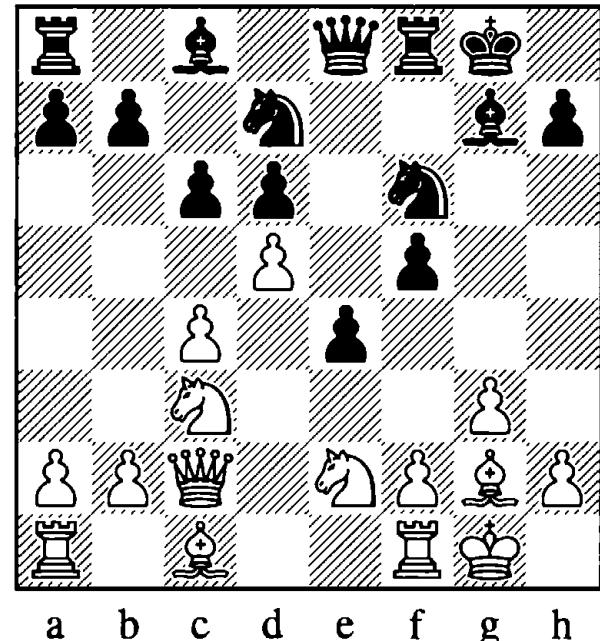
I have quoted this game as it is quite instructive, but I have some doubts about recommending 11. $\mathbb{W}c2$. Generally speaking, the queen should be the last piece to be developed.

The simple 11. b3! N± is more natural and probably better.



White could continue with $\mathbb{Q}c1-a3$ or $\mathbb{Q}c1-b2$, according to circumstances.

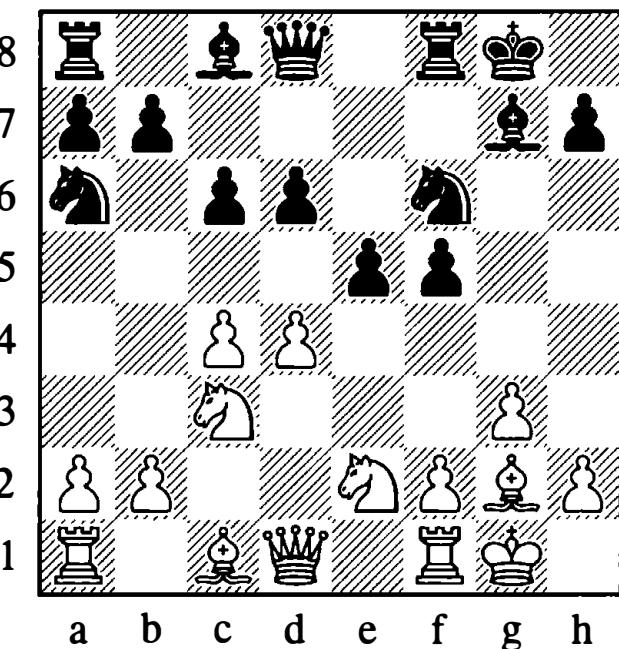
(1. c4 e5 2. g3 d6 3. $\mathbb{Q}c3$ g6 4. $\mathbb{Q}g2$ $\mathbb{Q}g7$ 5. d3 f5 6. e4 $\mathbb{Q}f6$ 7. $\mathbb{Q}ge2$ 0–0 8. 0–0 c6 9. exf5 $\mathbb{Q}xf5$ 10. d4)



13. $\mathbb{Q}f4!$ N $\mathbb{Q}e5$ 14. $\mathbb{W}e2\pm$

White will play $\mathbb{Q}c1-d2$ and $\mathbb{Q}a1-e1$, and then open the centre with f2-f3.

A23) 10... $\mathbb{Q}a6$



This is the most flexible continuation. Black develops the knight without obstructing the c8-bishop.

11.b3

An equally flexible reply – the c1-bishop now has a range of squares available. White defends the c4-pawn before it is even attacked, allowing ♜b2 or ♜a3, but also maintaining the possibility of developing the bishop to g5.

Black also has a wide choice. We will examine A231) 11...e4, A232) 11...♝g4 and A233) 11...♝d7.

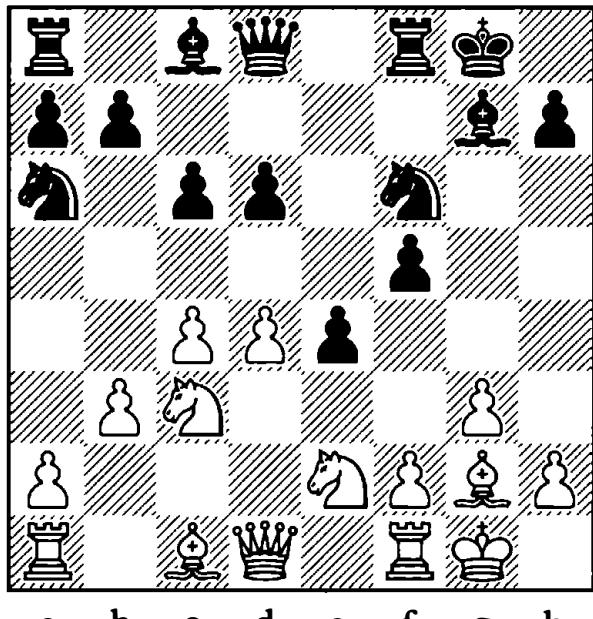
Other continuations are less common.

11...♝e6?!, as played in Spraggett – D. Ross, Winnipeg 1994, places the bishop on a vulnerable square. After 12.d5 cxd5 13.♝xd5± White would have a strong initiative, aided by his control of the d5-square and Black's vulnerable centre.

11...♝a5 fails to spoil White's coordination after 12.♝d2 ♜c7 13.♝g5 h6 14.♝h4±.

(1.c4 e5 2.g3 d6 3.♞c3 g6 4.♝g2 ♜g7 5.d3 f5 6.e4 ♜f6 7.♝ge2 0–0 8.0–0 c6 9.exf5 gxf5 10.d4 ♜a6 11.b3)

A231) 11...e4

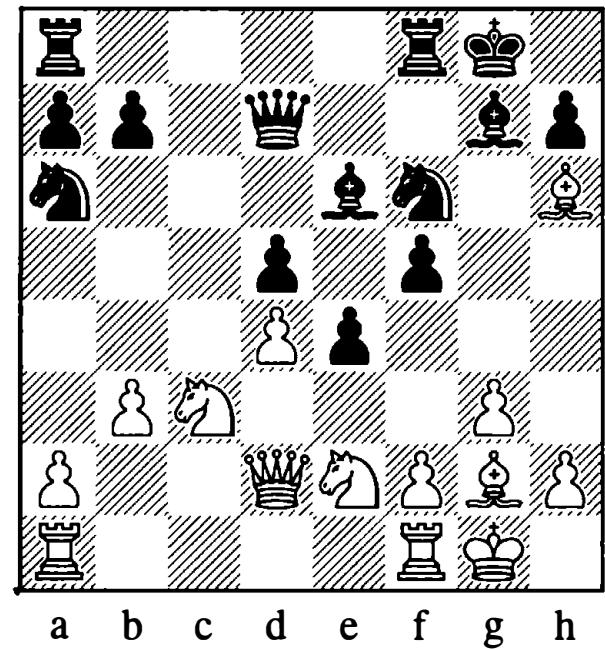


Black releases the tension, relying on the solidity of his central pawn chain.

12.♝g5 d5 13.cxd5 cxd5 14.♝d2±

White enjoys good control of the dark squares.

14...♝e6 15.♝h6 ♜d7



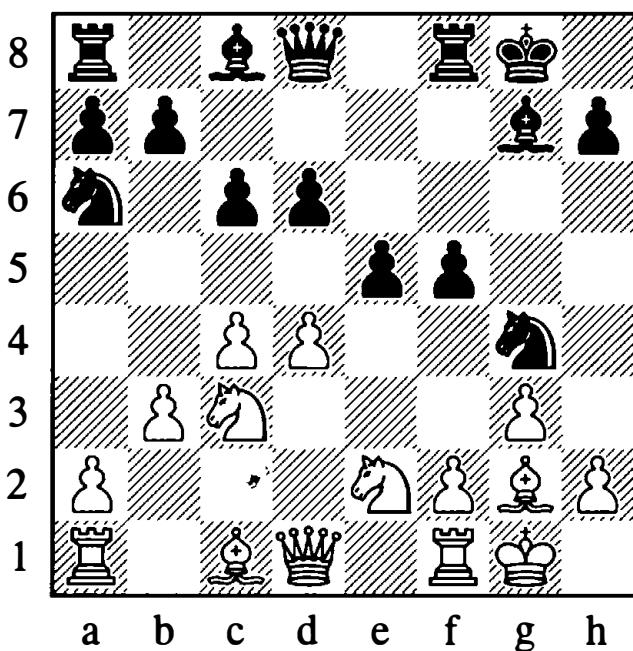
16.♝xg7!N

This is clearer than 16.♝g5, as played in San Segundo – Romero Holmes, Cala Galdana 1994. White was tempted by a tactical possibility and the game continued: 16...♝g4 17.♝xg7† ♜xg7 18.♝xg7 ♜xg7 19.♞f4 ♜c7 20.♞b5 (20.♝ac1??) 20...♜xb5 21.♝xe6† ♜f6 22.♝xf8 ♜xf8 White has won an exchange for nothing (in material terms), but he has traded all his active pieces. The g2-bishop is now passive and the d4-pawn needs permanent care. Black has some compensation, although perhaps not enough.

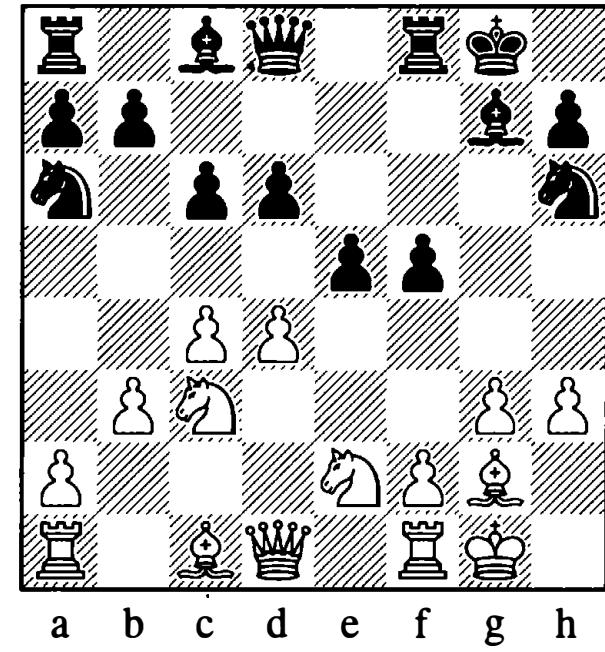
16...♜xg7 17.♞f4 ♜f7 18.♝h3±

White will continue with ♜a1-c1 and then ♜c3-b5 or ♜c3-a4, with strong pressure.

(1.c4 e5 2.g3 d6 3.♞c3 g6 4.♝g2 ♜g7 5.d3 f5 6.e4 ♜f6 7.♝ge2 0–0 8.0–0 c6 9.exf5 gxf5 10.d4 ♜a6 11.b3)

A232) 11...♞g4

This move was designed by yours truly, but I am not especially proud of its invention. Black transfers the knight to f7, in order to consolidate the d6-square, but completely neglects his development.

12.h3 ♞h6**13.d5!N**

This is the only way to challenge the viability of Black's plan. The c6- and d6-pawns can only be defended by blocking the position, which will leave the a6-knight passive.

13.f4 e4 14.d5 allows Black adequate counterplay after 14...♝b6† 15.♔h2 ♞f7=.

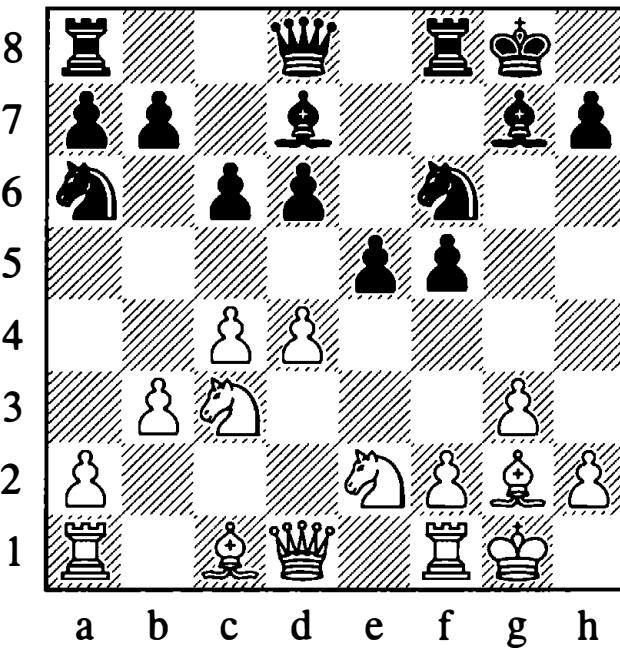
The careless 13.♕e3?! is met by 13...f4 14.gxf4 ♜h4 with a strong initiative.

Finally, 13.dxe5 is completely inoffensive. 13...dxe5 14.♝xd8 ♜xd8 15.♕e3 and a draw was agreed in Matamoros Franco – Marin, Cala Galdana 2001.

**13...c5 14.f4 e4 15.a3 ♜f7 16.♕b2 ♜d7
17.♝c2 ♜c7 18.♝d1 ♜xb2 19.♝xb2 b5
20.♝e3±**

Black's queenside activity is only temporary. In the future, it will be White who breaks through on this wing. On the other side of the board Black has no attacking chances and will always have to watch out for the possibility of g3-g4.

(1.c4 e5 2.g3 d6 3.♞c3 g6 4.♗g2 ♜g7 5.d3 f5 6.e4 ♜f6 7.♗ge2 0–0 8.0–0 c6 9.exf5 gxf5 10.d4 ♜a6 11.b3)

A233) 11...♚d7

This looks like the best way to retain some harmony in Black's position.

12.♗a3!N

This is a lot more principled than 12.dxe5. Even so, in Markowski – Topalov, Polanica Zdroj 1995, 12.dxe5 eventually led to a small

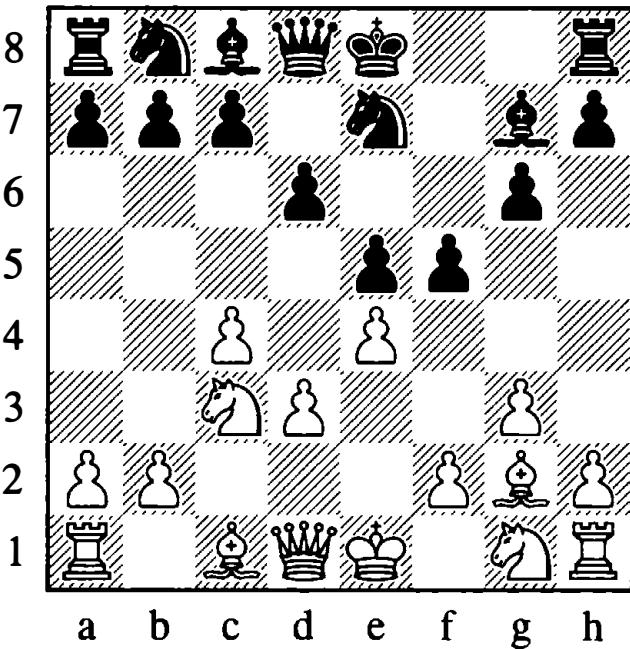
advantage for White after some interesting complications: 12...dxe5 13.♘d6 ♘e8 14.♗g5 h6 15.♗h4 ♜d8 16.♗ad1 ♗c8 17.♗a3 ♜xd1 18.♗xd1 f4 19.♗d6 ♗g4 20.♗e4 fxg3 21.♗xg3± White's position is more active and more stable – a fine mixture

12...exd4 13.♗xd4 ♗c5 14.♗d2±

White will complete his development with ♜a1-d1 and ♜f1-e1, with strong pressure in the centre.

(1.c4 e5 2.g3 d6 3.♗c3 g6 4.♗g2 ♗g7 5.d3 f5 6.e4)

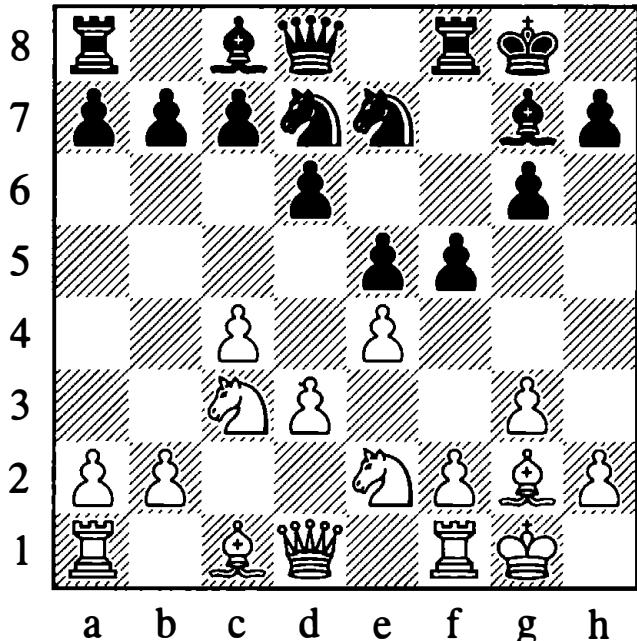
B) 6...♗e7



For a long while I thought that the system of development initiated by this move would leave White without realistic chances of an advantage.

7.♗ge2 0-0 8.0-0 ♗d7

The black knights' placement may look rather odd, but there is a hidden logic behind Black's strategy. He intends to play ...♗d7-f6 next, reaching a favourable form of line B from Chapter 18. White would not achieve anything with 9.♗d5 because of 9...♗xd5 10.cxd5 ♗f6, leading to a position that White avoids in the aforementioned line.



9.exf5!

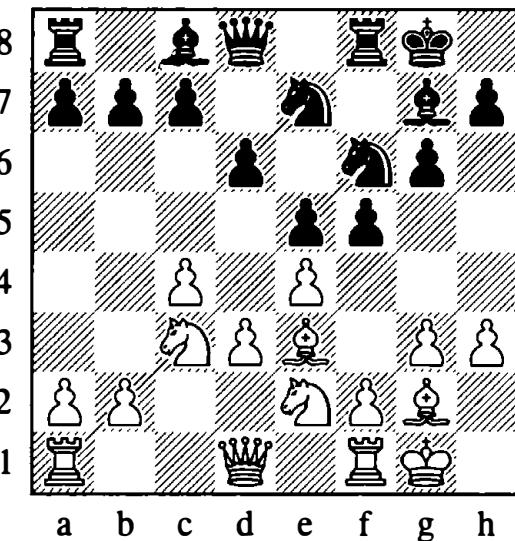
This was my reaction when I first faced this tricky line, but, probably influenced by the final result (a draw), I underestimated its objective merit. My opponent praised 9.exf5 during the post-mortem, and yet I still failed to appreciate the move's worth.

Later, I unsuccessfully tried to improve with: 9.♗e3?!

This natural developing move was played by Botvinnik, which convinced me to adopt it after my first experience with this line.

9...♗f6 10.h3

The threat of ...♗f6-g4 forces White to spend a tempo on this weakening move.



10...♗e6!

This is a significant improvement over 10...♗h5?!, which allows White to

complete his development and consolidate his advantage in the centre. 11.♗d2 ♜c5 12.♗d5 ♔e6 13.♔g5 ♗d7 14.exf5 gxf5 15.f4± White had the usual positional pressure in Botvinnik – Robatsch, Varna (ol) 1962.

The text move threatens to win a pawn with ...f5xe4.

11.♗c1 ♗d7

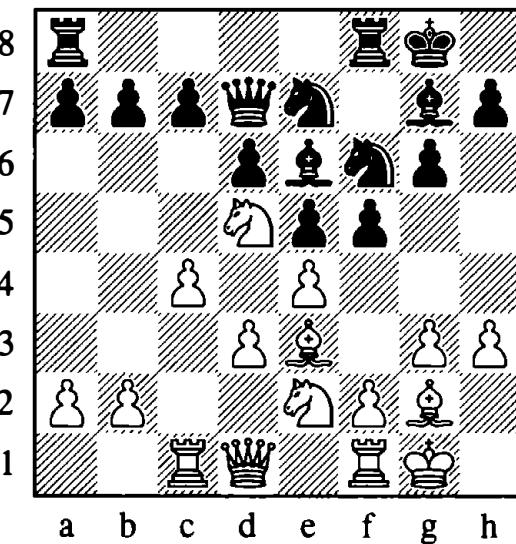
Black keeps developing with gain of time.

11...fxe4 would not bother White because of 12.♗xe4 ♜xe4 13.dxe4±.

12.♗d5

White anticipates the threat of ...f5-f4 and gains some influence in the centre.

Black would obtain excellent attacking chances after 12.♔h2 because of 12...f4 13.gxf4 ♜h5 14.fxe5 dxe5. The king's exposed position prevents White from playing f2-f4.



12...f4!

Black should not delay this pawn sacrifice.

After 12...c6 13.♗xe7† ♗xe7 14.♗d2± White would complete his development, and be ready to play the usual exf5 followed by d3-d4 or f2-f4.

13.gxf4 ♜h5

Black had a strong kingside initiative in Marin – Nisipeanu, Bucharest 2003.

Disappointed by my results in the previous games, I then tried 9.f4?!, but without any

success. 9...exf4 10.♔xf4 ♜c5 11.♗d2 fxe4 12.d4 ♜e6 13.♔h6 ♔xh6 14.♗xh6 ♜f5 15.♗d2 e3 16.♗d3 c5 Black had excellent counterplay in Marin – Gallego Eraso, Andorra 2004.

9...♗xf5

Black strives for active piece play, but gives up control of the e4-square.

I was more worried about:

9...gxf5 10.f4

10.d4 would allow 10...f4? 11.gxf4 exd4∞. The weakness of White's kingside compensates for the extra doubled pawn.

10...♗g6

Black seems to have regrouped well enough to create the threat of ...h7-h5-h4, but analysis proves that my initial fears were unjustified.

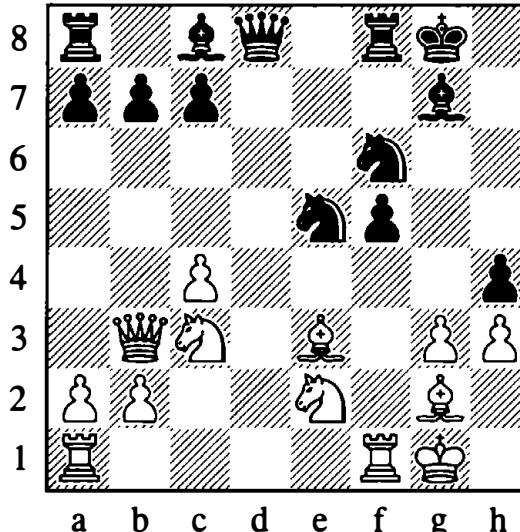
11.♔e3 ♜f6

11...h5? is simply bad because of 12.fxe5 dxe5 13.♔d5† ♔h8 14.♗d4!±. The black king's position is desperately weak.

12.h3

White has safeguarded the e3-bishop against the threat of ...♗f6-g4 and is ready to play the typical operation f4xe5 ...d6xe5, d3-d4.

12...h5 13.fxe5 dxe5 14.d4 h4 15.dxe5 ♜xe5 16.♗b3±



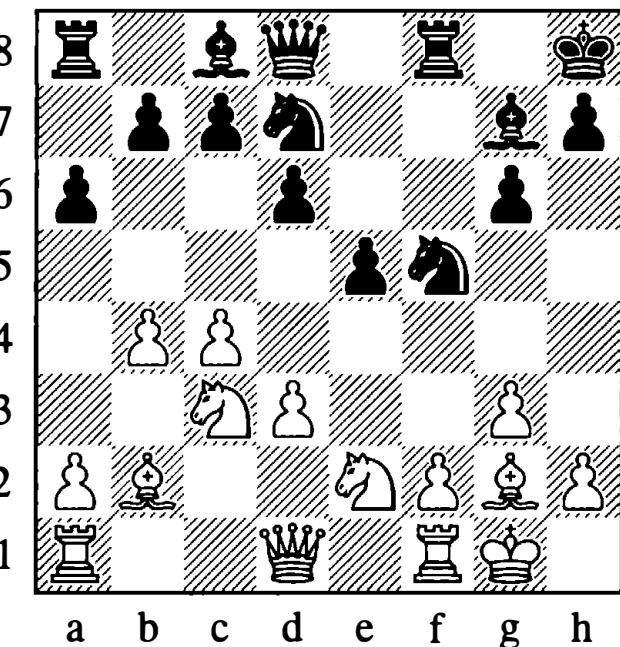
The advance of the h-pawn has failed to create dangerous threats. A later capture on

g3 would just activate the e2-knight after $\mathbb{Q}e2xg3$. Otherwise, White intends to play $\mathbb{Q}a1-d1$ followed by $g3xh4$ and $\mathbb{Q}e2-f4$.

10.b4

White initiates a typical queenside attack, while also preparing to neutralize the g7-bishop's latent pressure with $\mathbb{Q}c1-b2$.

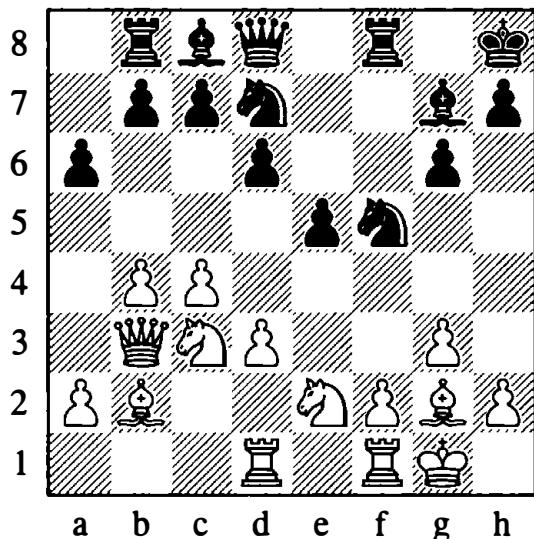
10... $\mathbb{Q}h8$ 11. $\mathbb{Q}b2$ a6



12. $\mathbb{Q}e4!N$

This opens the long diagonal for the b2-bishop, creating the potential threat of d3-d4.

12. $\mathbb{W}b3$ defines the queen's position prematurely. 12... $\mathbb{B}b8$ 13. $\mathbb{Q}ad1$ We have been following the game Marin – Hernandez Guerrero, Mondariz 2002.



Black could have obtained strong counterplay with 13...b5!N, taking advantage of the exposed position of the queen.

12.a4!?± is a worthy alternative to my main recommendation.

12... $\mathbb{B}b8$

12...c6, threatening ...d6-d5, would be answered with 13. $\mathbb{W}b3\pm$ followed by a2-a4.

13.a4±

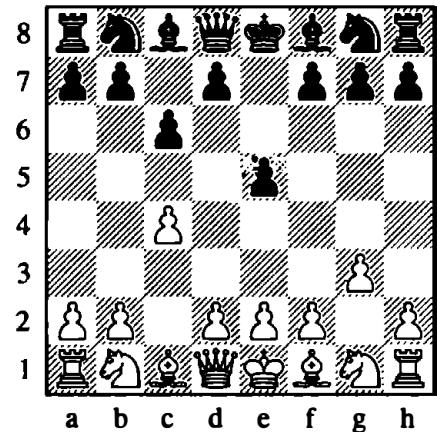
White's attack develops naturally, while Black is struggling to find a constructive plan.

Conclusion:

By playing ...f7-f5 without developing the knight to c6, Black risks becoming overextended and under-developed.

Conclusion to Chapters 30 and 31:

Experienced 1.d4 players may consider sidestepping some of the lines from these chapters with a well-timed d2-d4. (If so, they should refer to the second volume of Avrukh's GM Repertoire with 1.d4.) Objectively, this may be a more ambitious approach, but I have failed to find specific problems with the repertoire variations given above. If you are in love with the English Opening, you can safely remain within its territory with d2-d3 and e2-e4, without any danger of Black finding an easy equalizer.



Accelerated Keres

2...c6

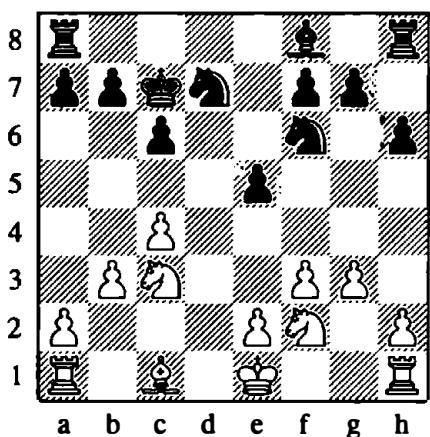
Variation Index

1.c4 e5 2.g3

2...c6 3.d4

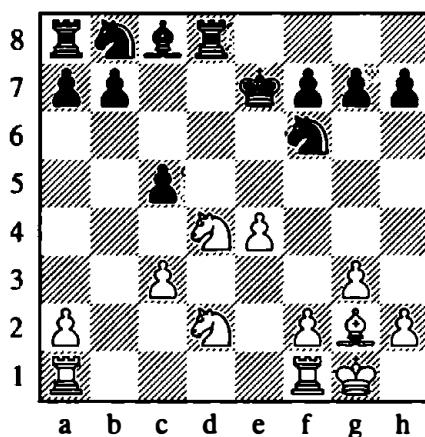
A) 3...d6	p 438
B) 3...exd4	p 440
C) 3...e4 4.♘c3	p 442
C1) 4...f5	p 442
C2) 4...d5	p 444

A) after 11...♔c7



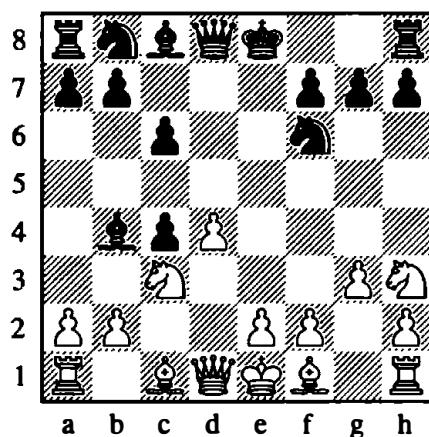
12.e3!N

B) note to 12...♗a6



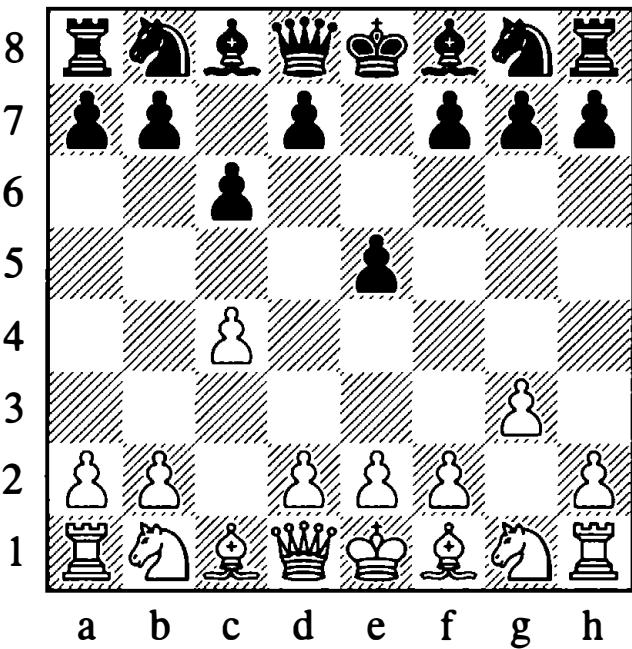
14.♘f5!N

C2) note to 5.♗g2!



8.♗g2!N

1.c4 e5 2.g3 c6



We are familiar with this plan from Chapters 26 to 29. In most cases, 2...c6 transposes to the lines we have already studied, but there are some lines with independent value.

3.d4

White has to play this at once.

After 3.♗g2 d5 it is not easy to undermine Black's centre. 4.d4 (instead 4.cxd5 cxd5 5.d4 e4 would lead to the relatively unfavourable position for White that is examined under C21 below) 4...dxc4 The tension along the d-file favours Black. White will either have to lose the right to castle with 5.dxe5 or sacrifice a pawn under unclear circumstances with 5.♗f3.

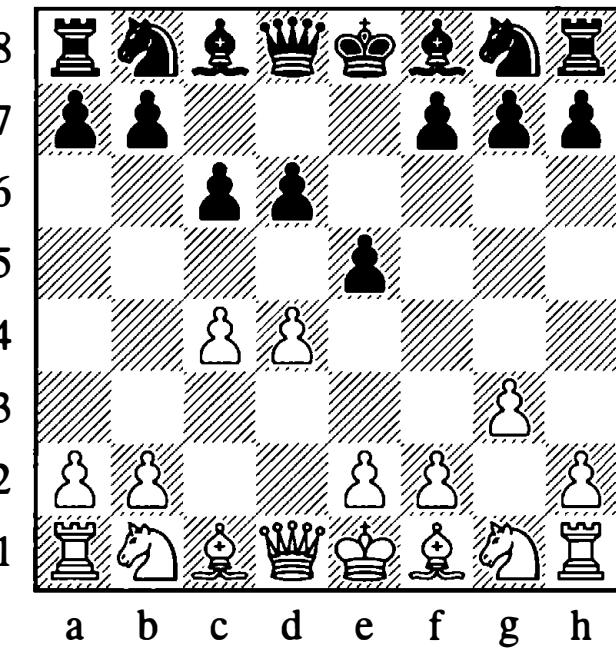
This is important to know and explains the necessity of answering 1.c4 c6 2.g3 d5 with 3.♗f3 (preventing 3...e5) rather than 3.♗g2. Of course, this line will be covered in Volume Two.

We will examine A) 3...d6, B) 3...exd4 and C) 3...e4.

3...♗b4† is frequently played, but it usually transposes to Chapter 27.

(1.c4 e5 2.g3 c6 3.d4)

A) 3...d6



Against this solid move, I consider transposing to Indian openings with 4.♗c3 followed by e2-e4 to be best. However, the reader was promised a complete and independent English repertoire, so we shall examine a similar approach as in line A from Chapter 26.

4.dxe5 dxe5 5.♗xd8† ♕xd8 6.♗c3

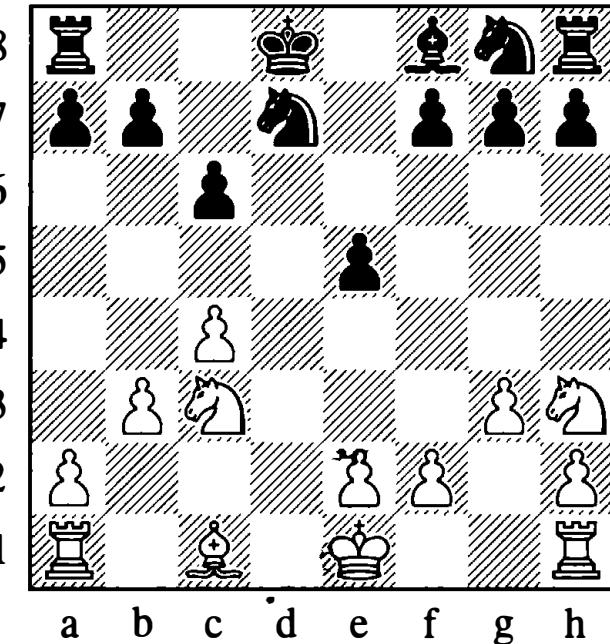
There are two important elements that make this position very different from line B in Chapter 29. Having refrained from an early ...♗g8-f6, Black can consolidate his centre with ...f7-f6. This means that he will not have to worry about ♘f3-g5 hitting f7, and so he may be able to place his king safely on c7.

White's main trump is that he has not yet defined his intentions regarding the king's bishop. Since Black plans to consolidate his pawn chain on the dark squares, it makes a lot of sense to exchange bishops with ♘f1-h3 and then aim for a stable blockade on the light squares.

It is hard to say whether White's chances for an advantage are slimmer with the present move order. A more useful evaluation of the situation

is that White's approach will be static, while in Chapter 26 it was mainly dynamic with rapid piece development and opening the position early with f2-f4.

6...♝e6 7.b3 ♝d7 8.♝h3 ♞xh3 9.♞xh3



9...h6

After the modification of the strategic balance induced by the exchange of bishops, Black prevents ♘h3-g5 and keeps the f6-square available for his knight. This way, he will be able to fight against the blockade on the e4-square and avoid weakening the e6-square.

9...f6

This allows White to carry out his plan unhindered.

10.f3

The move order plays an important part.

10.♝b2 is premature because it allows 10...♝h6, as in Kludacz – Malaniuk, Poland 2000.

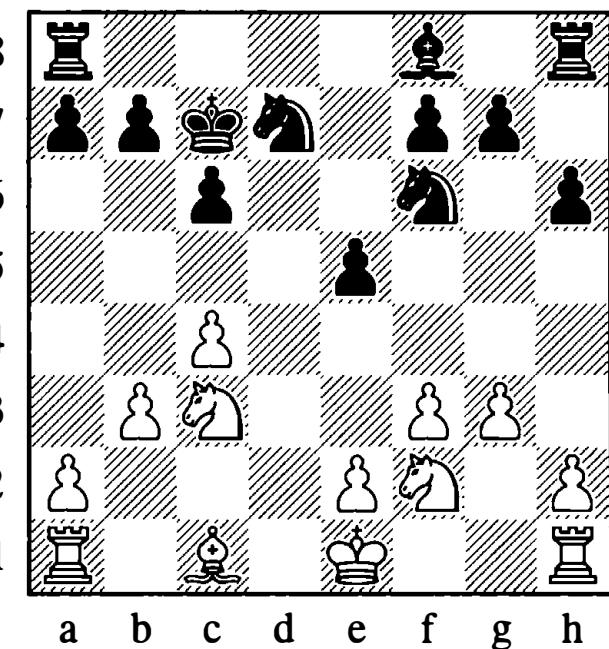
10...♛c7 11.♞f2 ♞c5 12.♝b2

White develops the bishop only after having made every other useful move.

12...♝h6 13.g4 a5 14.♝fe4±

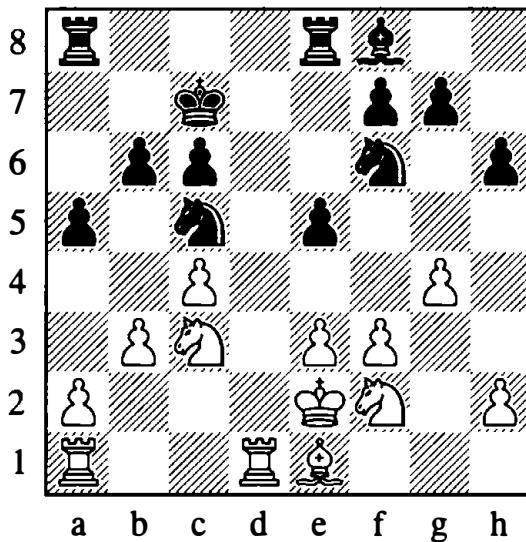
With so many black pawns situated on dark squares, White can hope to reach an ending with a good bishop against a bad one.

10.f3 ♘gf6 11.♞f2 ♞c7



12.e3!N

This is an improvement over 12.♝d2?!, which places the bishop in the way of its colleagues. 12...♞c5 13.e3 ♛e7 14.♝e2 a5 15.♝hd1 ♜he8 16.♝e1 ♜f8 17.g4 b6 White has spent two tempos just to place the bishop on an unfavourable square, Gheorghiu – Ki. Georgiev, Haifa 1989.



Even so, 18.h4!N followed by g4-g5 and occupying the e4-square, may have offered him a slight edge.

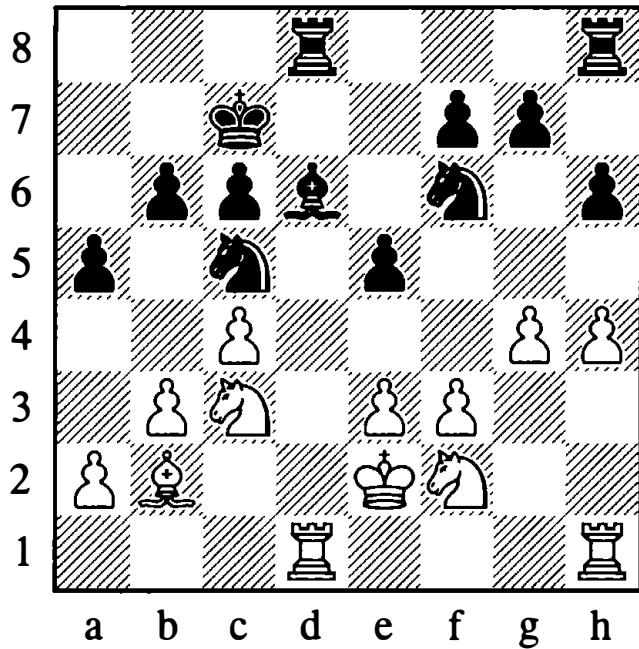
12...♞c5 13.♝e2 a5 14.♝b2 ♛d6

14...a4?! loses a pawn to 15.♝xa4! ♜xa4 16.♝xe5†±.

15.♝ad1 b6

With the bishop on d6, 15...a4 does not work well for various reasons. After 16.b4± Black cannot play the intermediate 16...a3? because of 17.bxc5 winning a piece.

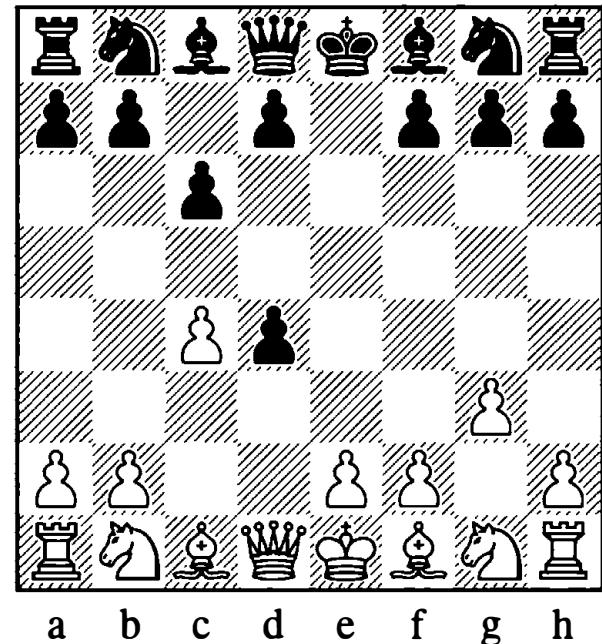
16.g4 $\mathbb{B}ad8$ 17.h4±



After g4-g5, White will take control of the e4-square, while the e5-pawn will be vulnerable.

(1.c4 e5 2.g3 c6 3.d4)

B) 3...exd4



4. $\mathbb{W}xd4$ d5

Play can take an independent course after this move only if Black plays an early ...d5xc4, refraining from ... $\mathbb{B}g8-f6$.

5. $\mathbb{B}g2$ $\mathbb{d}xc4$

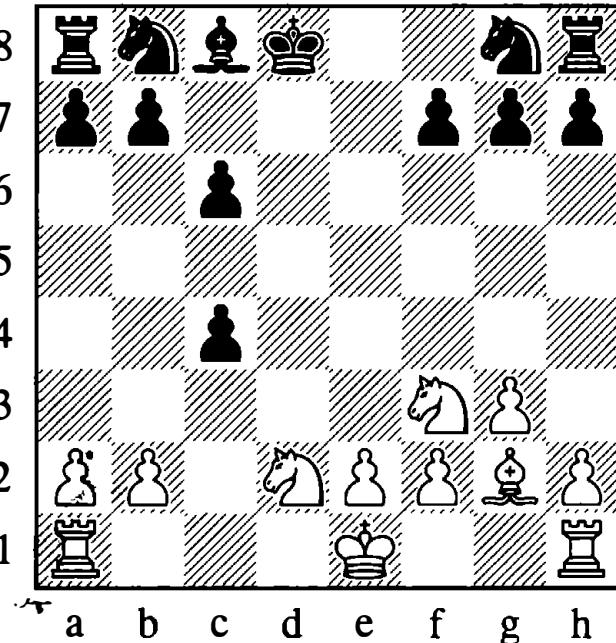
5... $\mathbb{B}f6$ transposes to Chapter 29.

6. $\mathbb{W}xd8\#$ $\mathbb{Q}xd8$ 7. $\mathbb{Q}f3$ $\mathbb{B}b4\#$

It is hard to suggest anything else that would not transpose back to already known lines. The exchange of the dark-squared bishops will offer the black king a safer life in the centre.

8. $\mathbb{Q}d2$ $\mathbb{Q}xd2\#$ 9. $\mathbb{Q}bx d2$

Black cannot keep his extra pawn. 9... $\mathbb{Q}e6$ is answered with 10. $\mathbb{Q}g5$ and 9... $b5$ is bad because of 10. $\mathbb{Q}d4$, threatening $\mathbb{Q}xc6$ or $\mathbb{Q}xb5$.



9...c3

This move spoils White's structure, but loses a whole tempo.

The alternatives leave White with a stable advantage at no strategic risk.

9...f6

Black protects his kingside against $\mathbb{Q}g5$ and $\mathbb{Q}e5$, thus allowing the king to reach safety on c7.

10. $\mathbb{Q}xc4$ $\mathbb{Q}c7$ 11. $\mathbb{B}c1$

Placing the rook on the same file as the enemy king looks logical, but I would also consider rapid centralization with 11. $\mathbb{Q}d4$ $\mathbb{Q}e7$ 12.0–0–0 $\mathbb{Q}a6$ 13.e4 $\mathbb{B}d8$ 14. $\mathbb{B}he1\pm$.

11... $\mathbb{Q}e7$ 12.0–0

Black faces no immediate threats, but he needs several tempos to complete his development. In the meantime, White's central majority may become threatening.

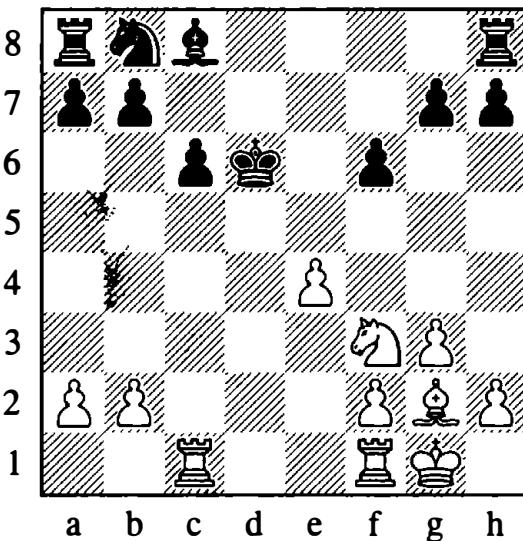
12... $\mathbb{Q}f5?$

Moving an already developed piece for a second time is playing with fire.

12... $\mathbb{Q}a6$ would allow White to increase his pressure with 13. $\mathbb{Q}fd1$ $\mathbb{Q}d7$ 14. $\mathbb{Q}d6\pm$.

The lesser evil would have been 12... $\mathbb{Q}d8!?\pm$ fighting for the d-file and hoping for a relieving rook exchange.

13.e4 $\mathbb{Q}d6$ 14. $\mathbb{Q}xd6$ $\mathbb{Q}xd6$



15.e5!

Opening the position is clearly in White's favour, given his lead in development and Black's wandering king.

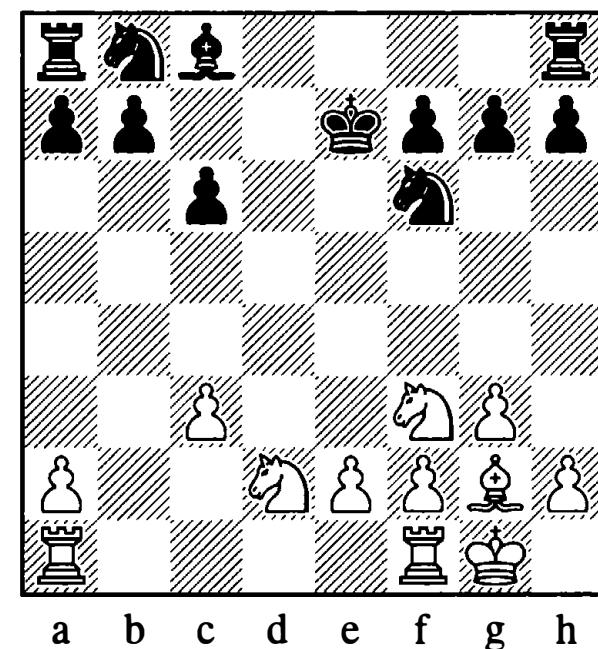
15...fxe5 16. $\mathbb{Q}fd1\uparrow$ $\mathbb{Q}c7$ 17. $\mathbb{Q}el$ $\mathbb{Q}e8$ 18. $\mathbb{Q}xe5$ $\mathbb{Q}e6$ 19.a3 a5 20.f4±

White has a dominant position, which makes it difficult for Black to complete his development, Suba – Peric, Geneva 1995. If 20... $\mathbb{Q}a6$ or 20... $\mathbb{Q}d7$, then White would win with 21. $\mathbb{Q}xc6!$.

9... $\mathbb{Q}e7$ leaves the queenside inadequately defended. 10. $\mathbb{Q}xc4$ $\mathbb{Q}e6$ So far, we have followed Gruskovnjak – Basagic, Slovenia 2007. 11. $\mathbb{Q}c1$ $\mathbb{Q}f6$ (after 11... $\mathbb{Q}xc4$ 12. $\mathbb{Q}xc4\pm$ the rook's activity along the fourth rank is annoying) 12.0–0 $\mathbb{Q}d8$ 13. $\mathbb{Q}a5\pm$ White's

pressure against the queenside will tie down some of Black's forces to passive defence.

10.bxc3 $\mathbb{Q}f6$ 11.0–0 $\mathbb{Q}e7$

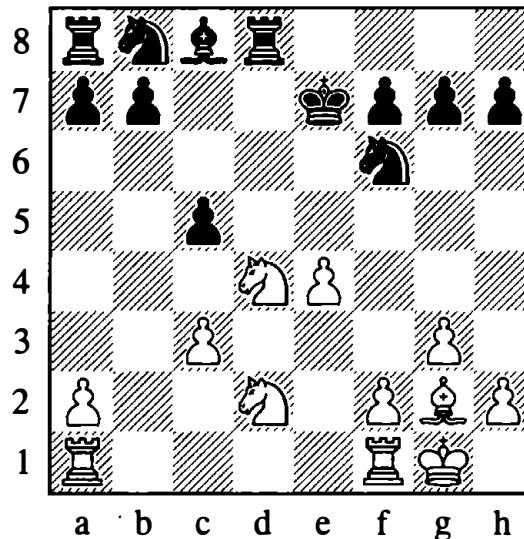


12.e4!

White is better developed and now starts winning space.

12... $\mathbb{Q}a6$

12... $\mathbb{Q}d8$ 13. $\mathbb{Q}d4$ c5 This position was reached in Bischoff – Holzke, Dresden 1997.



14. $\mathbb{Q}f5\uparrow N$ $\mathbb{Q}f8$ (14... $\mathbb{Q}xf5$ 15. $\mathbb{Q}xf5\pm$ opens the long diagonal, offering White a strong initiative. The d2-knight is taboo because of $\mathbb{Q}xb7$.) 15. $\mathbb{Q}b3\pm$ White is better developed and Black's queenside is vulnerable.

In this line, 13.e5!N looks even stronger.

13... $\mathbb{Q}d5$ 14. $\mathbb{Q}e4$ $\mathbb{Q}d7$ 15.c4± It appears that b2xc3 has been a useful structural modification. White will play c4-c5, securing the d6-square for his knight. I faced this position in practice recently and was happy to have a chance to test my recommendation.

13.e5 $\mathbb{Q}d5$ 14. $\mathbb{Q}e4$ $\mathbb{Q}d7$ 15. $\mathbb{B}ab1$ $\mathbb{B}ab8$ 16. $\mathbb{Q}d4$ $\mathbb{B}hd8$ 17. $\mathbb{B}fe1$

White increases his pressure in the centre and clears the f1-square for the bishop.

17...g6

Black takes the f5-square under control in order to prepare the knight's transfer to e6 without fearing $\mathbb{Q}d4-f5\#$.

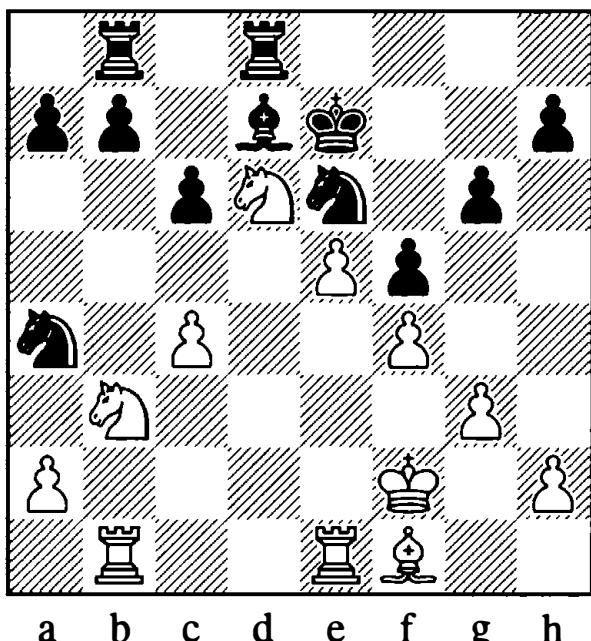
18. $\mathbb{B}f1$ $\mathbb{Q}ac7$ 19.c4 $\mathbb{Q}b6$ 20. $\mathbb{Q}d6$ $\mathbb{Q}e6$ 21. $\mathbb{Q}b3$

White enjoys more space and is well advised to avoid piece exchanges.

21... $\mathbb{Q}a4$ 22.f4 f5

Black prevents an eventual opening of the centre with f4-f5, but the e5-pawn becomes a permanent threat in the endgame.

23. $\mathbb{Q}f2\pm$

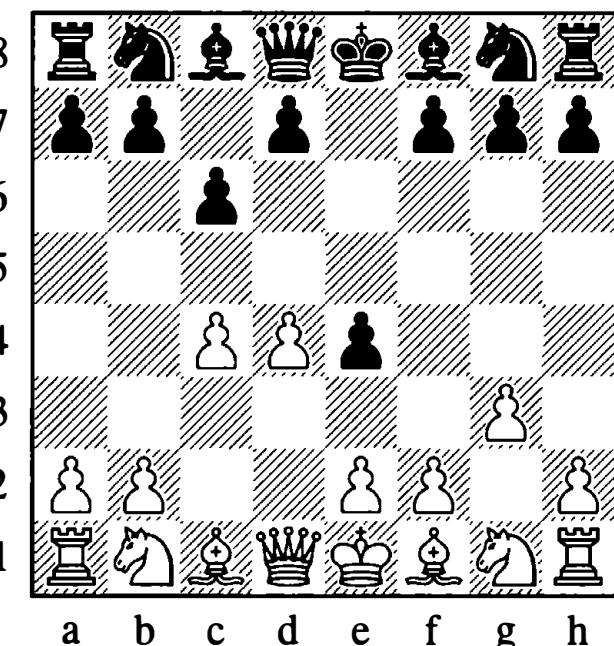


White has more space, which ensures a lasting advantage. Black's position proved

difficult to crack in Marin – S. Bjarnason, Reykjavik 2009, but White eventually broke through.

(1.c4 e5 2.g3 c6 3.d4)

C) 3...e4



Just like in line B from Chapter 26, this is a highly committal move that offers White a target in the centre. It was once thought that this pawn advance was almost unplayable with this move order, but recent discoveries prove that play should either transpose to the aforementioned line, or to similar positions.

4. $\mathbb{Q}c3$

We will examine C1) 4...f5 and C2) 4...d5.

(1.c4 e5 2.g3 c6 3.d4 e4 4. $\mathbb{Q}c3$)

C1) 4...f5

This move leads to similar play as in line B1 from Chapter 33. The general drawbacks of adopting such a structure have been explained already.

5.h4

White makes sure that he will have stable control of the c1-g5 diagonal.

5...Qf6

This move has been criticized because it allows White to pin the knight with the bishop immediately.

5...Qe7!? has been recommended, but it would just transpose to line A1 after 6.Qh3 Qf6 7.Qg5 d6 8.Qf4 Qa6 9.e3 0–0 10.Wb3±.

6.Qg5 h6 7.Qxf6 Wxf6 8.e3

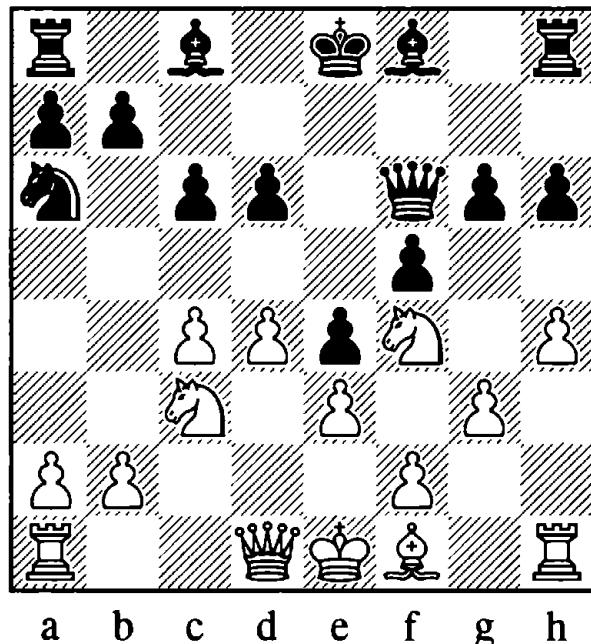
White consolidates his pawn chain, avoiding the unnecessary complications that could ensue after 8.h5 e3?.

8...g6

Black has maintained the flexibility of his structure, but his kingside light squares have been seriously weakened. Moreover, his only developed piece is the queen, which is likely to cause Black to lose more time in the near future.

9.Qge2 d6 10.Qf4 Qa6

10...h5± would have prevented White's next move, but it would also have been a strategic surrender of the kingside.

**11.g4!**

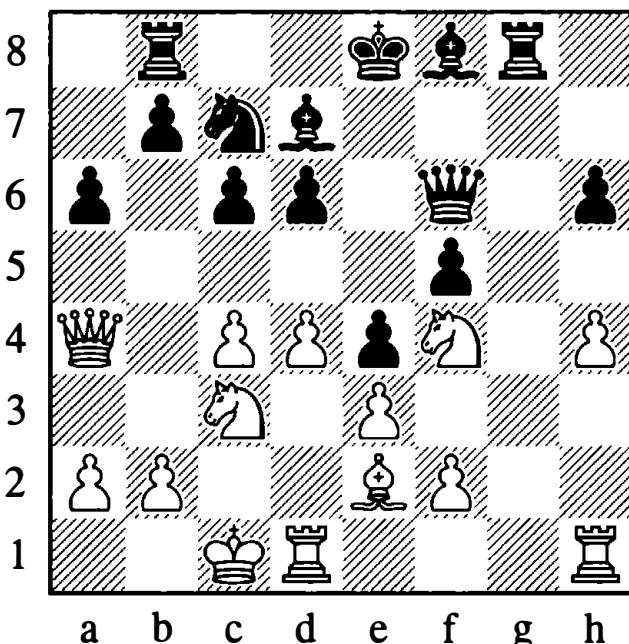
A strong move that is justified by White's better development and which aims to undermine Black's pawn chain.

11...Bg8

11...fxg4 would be met by 12.Qxe4 Wf7 13.Qd3 with a strong initiative according to Suba, who was White in this game, but 13.h5 would also have been strong.

12.Wb3 Qc7 13.gxf5 gxf5 14.Qe2

White has ensured the stability of his knight on f4 and opened the important h5-e8 diagonal for an attack.

14...Bb8 15.Wa4 a6 16.0–0–0 Qd7**17.c5!**

Over the past few moves, Black has been preparing ...b7-b5; White parries the threat with a single stroke.

17...d5

Black has to keep the position closed. Suba intended to meet 17...dxc5? with 18.dxc5 Qxc5 19.Wc4 Wf8 20.Bhg1 with a decisive attack.

18.Wa5

Black's position is so cramped that he cannot adequately defend the c7-knight.

18...Wd8

After the text move, most of Black's pieces are on the back rank, but he had to avoid several spectacular tricks:

18... $\mathbb{Q}e6$ leads to mate after 19. $\mathbb{Q}h5\#$ $\mathbb{Q}e7$
20. $\mathbb{Q}cxd5\#$ $cxd5$ 21. $\mathbb{Q}xd5\#$.

18... $\mathbb{Q}d8$ loses two pawns to 19. $\mathbb{W}xc7\#$! $\mathbb{Q}xc7$
20. $\mathbb{Q}cxd5\#$.

18... $\mathbb{B}c8$ leaves Black's entire queenside structure in trouble after 19. $\mathbb{W}b6+-$.

19. $\mathbb{Q}h5\#$ $\mathbb{Q}e7$

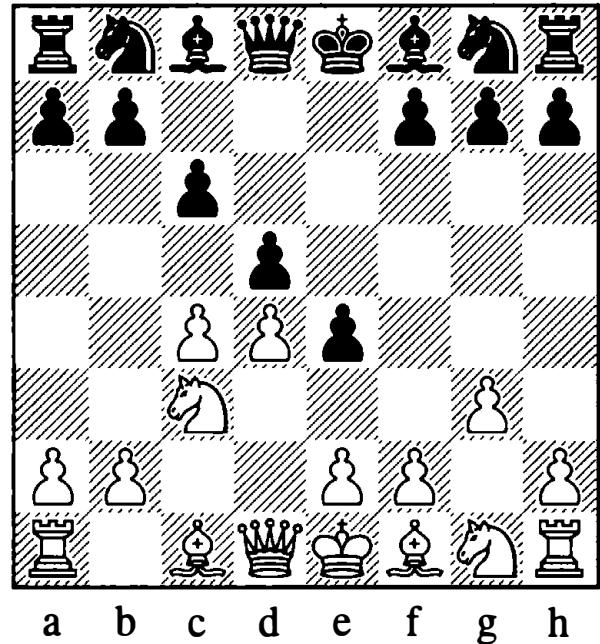
In tragicomic fashion, the black king occupies a more advanced position than most of his army.

20. $\mathbb{B}hg1\#$

Despite stubborn resistance, Black could not avoid defeat in Suba – Timman, Thessaloniki (ol) 1984.

(1.c4 e5 2.g3 c6 3.d4 e4 4. $\mathbb{Q}c3$)

C2) 4...d5



This is the best move, opening the c8-h3 diagonal and gaining space in the centre.

5. $\mathbb{Q}g2!$

Traditionally, 5.cxd5 $cxd5$ 6. $\mathbb{W}b3$ was considered to pose Black serious problems.

Since 6... $\mathbb{Q}f6$ runs into 7. $\mathbb{Q}g5$, Black used to defend his central pawn with:

6... $\mathbb{Q}e7$

White replies:

7. $\mathbb{Q}f4$

The threat is $\mathbb{Q}c3-b5$, so Black has to spend a valuable tempo with:

7...a6 8.f3!

This move, undermining Black's centre, is stronger than 8. $\mathbb{Q}xb8$ $\mathbb{Q}xb8$ 9.e3 $\mathbb{Q}e6=$. White eventually won in the finest hypermodern style in Suba – Ubilava, Roses 1992, but objectively Black had little to worry about after the opening.

8...exf3 9. $\mathbb{Q}xf3$

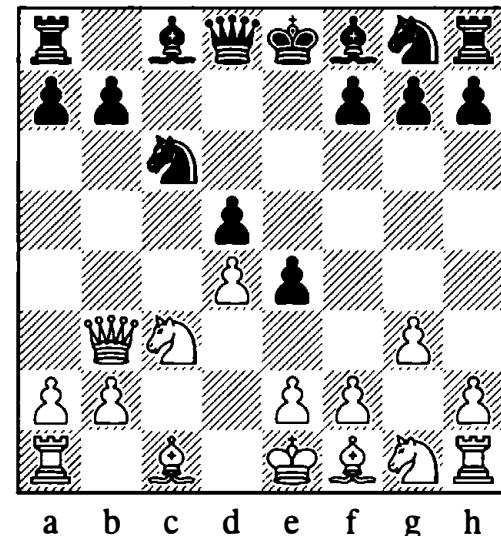
According to Korchnoi, 9.e4!? may be even better.

9... $\mathbb{Q}bc6$ 10.e4!

White had a dangerous initiative in Korchnoi – Bacrot, Albert (4) 1997.

Everything looked promising for White, but during the 2008 European Championship in Plovdiv I stumbled across a major problem. While playing against a young player with a lower rating, my wife faced an unpleasant surprise:

6... $\mathbb{Q}c6!$



Instead of defending the d5-pawn, Black counterattacks.

7. $\mathbb{W}xd5$ $\mathbb{W}xd5$ 8. $\mathbb{Q}xd5$ $\mathbb{Q}xd4$ 9. $\mathbb{Q}c7\#$ $\mathbb{Q}d8$
10. $\mathbb{Q}xa8$ $\mathbb{Q}c2\#$ 11. $\mathbb{Q}d1$ $\mathbb{Q}xa1$

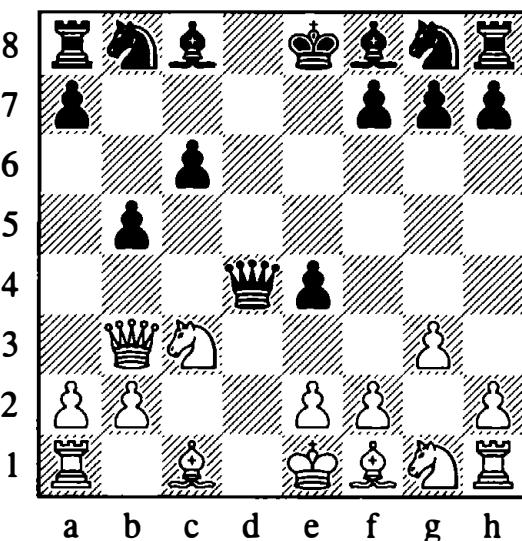
This is how the game L. Marin – Ikonomopoulou, Plovdiv 2008, developed.

The position is almost symmetrical and it is White's turn to move, but the e4-pawn strongly restricts the f1-bishop's activity. Checking the database, we found that the whole variation had been played just a few months earlier in Gelfand – Karjakin, ACP World Cup (rapid) 2008, and yielded a win for Black.

Later, this line was recommended by Palliser as another way to fight against the 2.g3 lines (see also Chapter 28).

I did not try to analyse this final position deeply, because it was obvious that Black has entirely adequate play and that an improvement had to be found at an earlier stage. In view of the previous line, it is not difficult to establish that the exchange on d5 is premature, because it allows Black to clear the c6-square for his knight. White needs to make a generally useful move, postponing the exchange until Black makes a major commitment.

I started investigating 5.♗b3, but was not convinced by White's compensation for the pawn after 5...dxc4 6.♗xc4 b5 7.♗b3 ♗xd4:



The position looks playable, but I do not think White has a convincing route to an advantage.

Next, I turned my attention towards the natural:

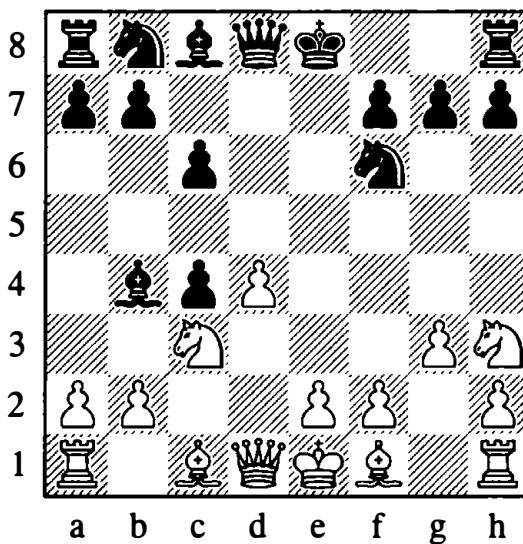
5.♘h3

I was amazed to discover that this move had been played more than four years ago by GM Marc Narciso Dublan, one of my team-mates from Foment Martinenc Barcelona, on the board next to me! I offer him my sincerest praise for deviating from the “official theory”, probably by anticipating the problem long before it was revealed in practice.

5...♝e7

Understandably, Black delays ...♝g8-f6 in order to avoid ♘c1-g5.

On the website *ChessPublishing.com*, IM John Watson recommended 5...dxc4 6.♘xe4 ♜b4† 7.♘c3 ♜f6, stating that White's position “is not pleasant”. Finding something pleasant or not is a matter of taste, but objectively speaking White's position is very promising, thanks to his mobile pawn centre. White would be struggling in almost every variation, but fortunately he has one good move, which Watson possibly overlooked:



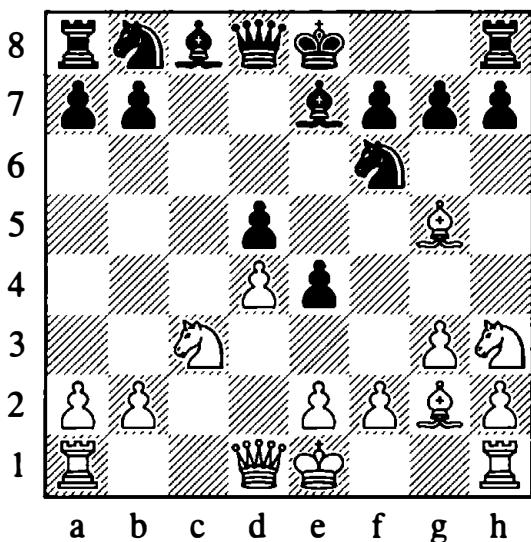
8.♗g2!N ♜e4!? (this is the only way to cross White's plan of 0–0 and e2-e4, perhaps supported by f2-f3 and ♘h3-f2) 9.0–0! This pawn sacrifice is typical in the Catalan Opening. See for instance the game Kramnik – Morozевич, World Championship, Mexico City 2007. 9...♘xc3 10.bxc3 ♜xc3 11.♗b1

White threatens $\mathbb{Q}c1-a3$, preventing Black from castling. 11...0-0 12. $\mathbb{W}c2$ $\mathbb{Q}xd4$ 13. $\mathbb{Q}g5$ g6 14. $\mathbb{B}d1\pm$

Black's development is poor, his king is vulnerable and the d4-bishop is pinned.

6. $\mathbb{Q}g2$ $\mathbb{Q}f6$ 7.cxd5 cxd5 8. $\mathbb{Q}g5$

White only needs to play $\mathbb{Q}g5xf6$ followed by $\mathbb{Q}h3-f4$ to secure his advantage.



8... $\mathbb{Q}g8!$

This move keeps Black in the game and Narciso Dublan – San Segundo, Sanxenxo (Spanish League) 2004, ended in a draw after a complicated fight.

In general, 5. $\mathbb{Q}h3$ has the drawback of placing the knight on a vulnerable square, while failing to put immediate pressure on Black's centre. Compare the game above with line C23.

By the method of elimination, I switched to the slightly paradoxical 5. $\mathbb{Q}g2$, which places the bishop on an apparently passive square.

In fact, the bishop may be useful for several reasons. The pawn break f2-f3 becomes a continuing threat, while in the event of an exchange of the d4- for the d5-pawn (as in Gelfand – Karjakin) the e4-pawn would be hanging.

Since there are practically no relevant games available, I have examined virtually every reasonable continuation for Black.

We have C21) 5... $f5$, C22) 5... $\mathbb{Q}a6$, C23) 5... $\mathbb{Q}e7$, C24) 5... $\mathbb{Q}e6$ and C25) 5... $\mathbb{Q}b4$.

5... $\mathbb{Q}e7$ prevents Black from developing naturally and is strongly met by 6.cxd5 cxd5 7.f3 exf3 8. $\mathbb{Q}xf3$ $\mathbb{Q}bc6$ 9.0-0-0 with a big lead in development.

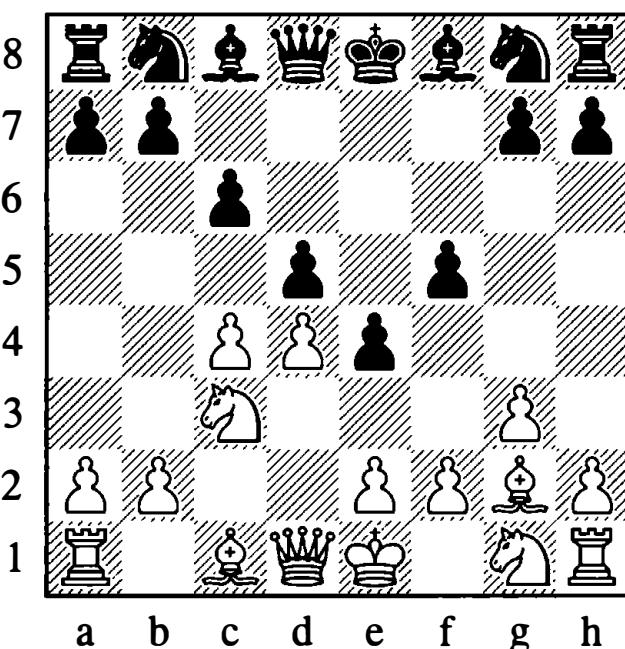
5...dxc4 is even less attractive than after 5. $\mathbb{Q}h3$, because White's king's knight can be developed on the more active f3-square. 6. $\mathbb{Q}xe4$ $\mathbb{Q}e7$ 7. $\mathbb{Q}f3$ $\mathbb{Q}f6$ 8. $\mathbb{Q}xf6\#$ $\mathbb{Q}xf6$ 9.0-0-0 0-0 10. $\mathbb{W}c2\pm$ Black has nothing to show against White's strong centre.

John Watson suggested 5...h6, but, with all his pieces on their initial squares, Black cannot afford to lose a tempo on another pawn move. 6.cxd5 cxd5 7.f3 exf3 (7... $f5$ leaves Black's position hanging after 8. $\mathbb{Q}h3\pm$) 8. $\mathbb{Q}xf3\pm$ White has excellent development and the d5-pawn is vulnerable.

Finally, the most natural move is 5... $\mathbb{Q}f6$ but after 6. $\mathbb{Q}g5$ play transposes to line B from Chapter 26:

(1.c4 e5 2.g3 c6 3.d4 e4 4. $\mathbb{Q}c3$ d5 5. $\mathbb{Q}g2$)

C21) 5... $f5$



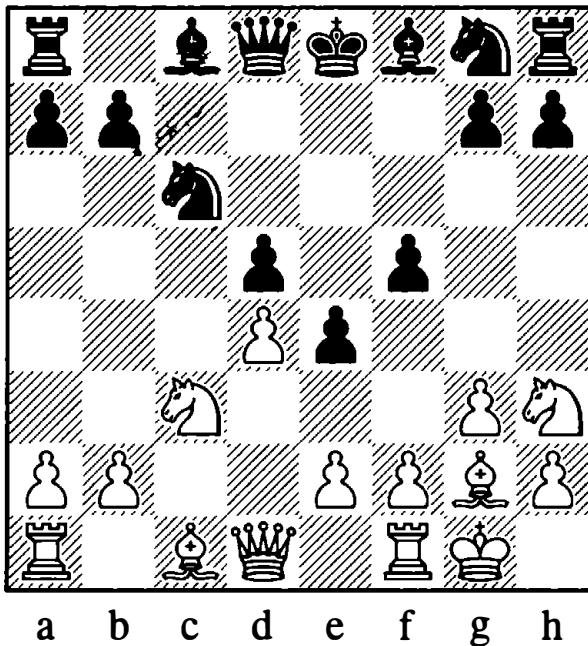
Black consolidates the e4-pawn, putting another brick in the wall, but the drawbacks of his last move are familiar to us already.

6.cxd5!

White's lead in development justifies immediate action. Besides, ...d5xc4 had become a real threat.

6...cxd5 7.♘h3 ♘c6 8.0–0

White plays every “obligatory” move before challenging Black's centre. Instead 8.♗g5 would be premature because of 8...♝e7 9.♝xe7 ♝gxe7∞.



8...♝e7

Black tries to follow a similar waiting strategy.

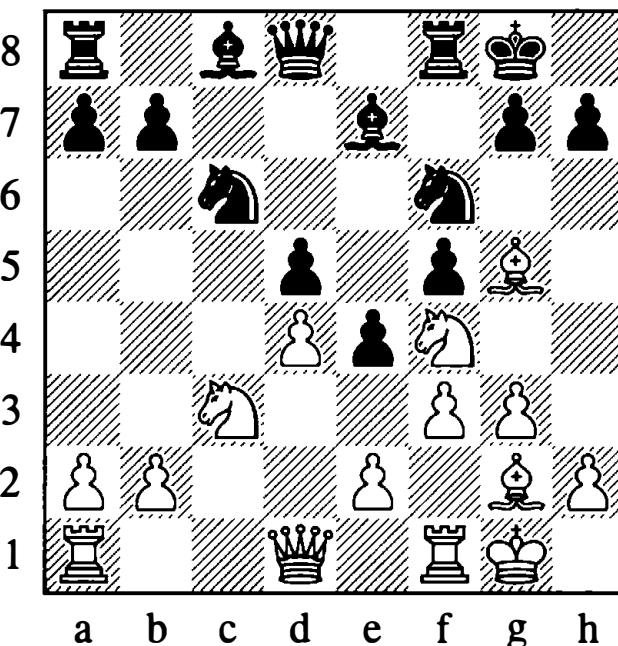
8...♝f6 would leave the d5-pawn in trouble after 9.♗g5 ♛e7 10.♝f4±.

8...♝e6 can be met by 9.♗b3 ♘xd4 10.♗a4† ♘c6 11.♝f4 ♛f7 12.♝fxd5 ♛xd5 13.♗d1 ♛ge7 14.♗g5±. White will regain the sacrificed piece, with a huge lead in development.

9.f3

9.♗f4 is also interesting, threatening ♘b5.

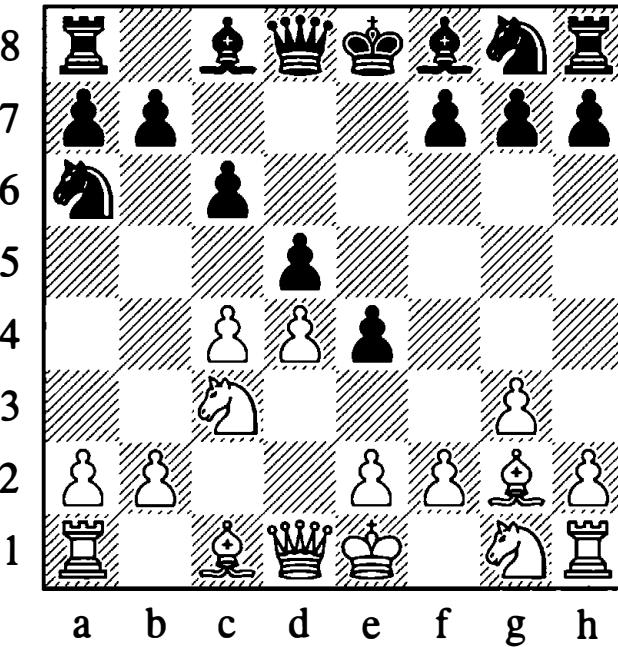
9...♝f6 10.♗g5 0–0 11.♝f4±



Black has problems keeping his centre intact.

(1.c4 e5 2.g3 c6 3.d4 e4 4.♘c3 d5 5.♗g2)

C22) 5...♞a6N



This move, suggested by John Watson, is typical in reversed French structures and is similar to ♘b1-a3 in the Advance French. The knight is heading for c7 to consolidate the d5-pawn. The main drawback of this move is that it gives up the possibility of developing the knight to c6, which allows White to exchange on d5 immediately.

6.cxd5 cxd5 7.♘h3 ♛e7 8.♗b3 ♘f6

8...♝c7 can be strongly met by 9.♗f4±.

9.♗g5 ♗c7 10.0-0 0-0 11.♗f4

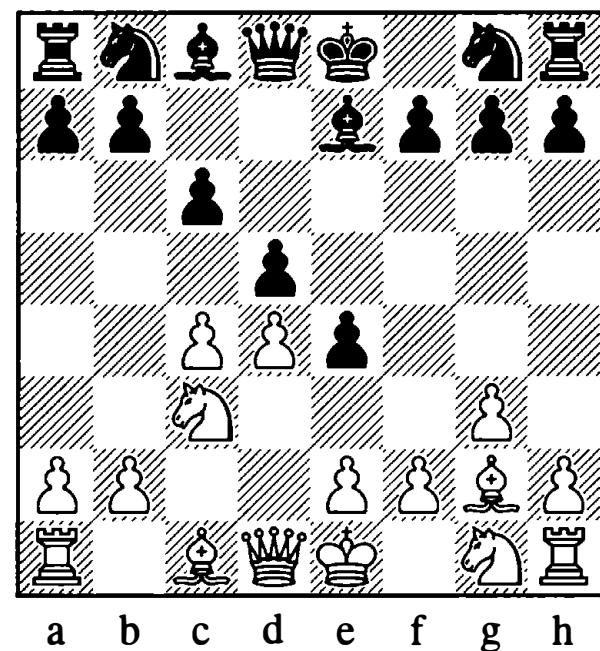
Black cannot hold his centre together.

**11...♗e6 12.♗xf6 ♗xf6 13.♗fxd5 ♗xd4
14.♗d1±**

The e4-pawn is doomed.

(1.c4 e5 2.g3 c6 3.d4 e4 4.♗c3 d5 5.♗g2)

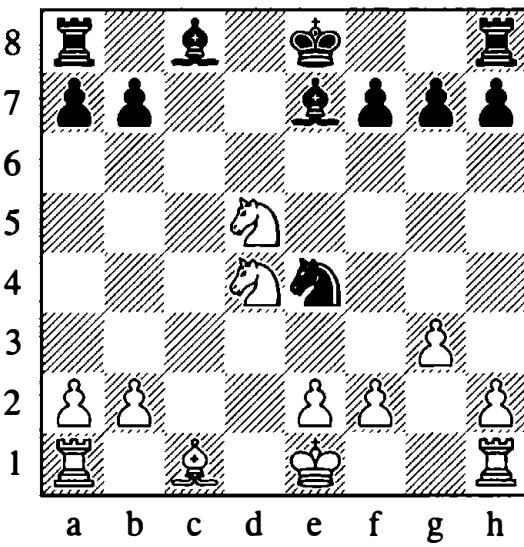
C23) 5...♗e7



This move is much less effective here than against 5.♘h3, because White's king's knight is not vulnerable.

6.cxd5 cxd5 7.♗b3 ♗f6

The insertion of the moves ♘f1-g2 and ...♗f8-e7 favours White in the following line: 7...♗c6 8.♗xd5 ♗xd5 9.♗xd5 ♗xd4 10.♗xe4 (White has won a pawn, while defending the c2-square at the same time) 10...♗f6 11.♗f3 ♗xe4 12.♗xd4±



The bishop pair does not offer Black sufficient compensation because White's knights are well centralized. Note that a similar line would not have worked out well for White in the game Narciso Dublan – San Segundo.

8.♗g5 ♗g8

This standard reaction does not work so well in this position.

9.♗f4 ♗f6 10.♗e5±

White has managed to put the main defender of the d5-pawn under pressure, without losing any time.

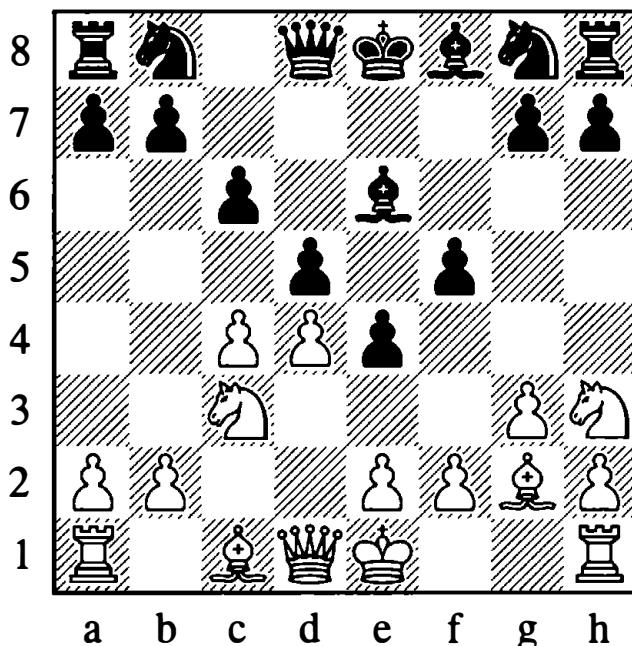
(1.c4 e5 2.g3 c6 3.d4 e4 4.♗c3 d5 5.♗g2)

C24) 5...♗e6

This move defends the d5-pawn in advance, but exposes the bishop to the enemy knight's attack.

6.♘h3 f5

Black would not benefit from clearing the d5-square for the bishop with 6...dxc4 7.♗g5 ♗d5 8.♗gxe4 f5 9.♗xd5 cxd5 10.♗c3±. Black has no development and his central pawns are weak.



7.0-0!N

White makes a useful developing move, ignoring the threat of ...d5xc4. Defining the intentions of the h3-knight now would be premature:

7. $\mathbb{Q}f4$ $\mathbb{Q}f7$ 8. cxd5 cxd5 9. f3 g5 10. $\mathbb{Q}h3$ h6 left the knight out of play in Weyrich – R. Stern, Germany 1998.

7. $\mathbb{Q}g5$ $\mathbb{Q}c8$ 8. cxd5 cxd5 9. h4 $\mathbb{Q}c6$ 10. $\mathbb{Q}e3$ $\mathbb{Q}f6$ was also acceptable for Black in F. Gruenberg – N. Medvegy, Hungary 2004.

7...dxc4

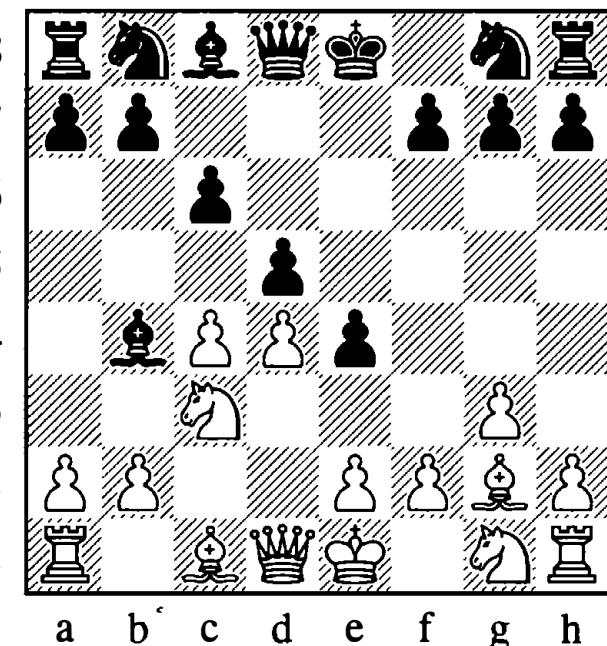
This capture seems more logical in this position, but it is still not good enough to equalize. In the event of a normal developing move, White would increase his pressure as in line C21.

8.f3 exf3 9.exf3±

Now that the e-file is open the weaknesses left behind by Black's ...f7-f5 advance are very noticeable, as is Black's poor development.

(1.c4 e5 2.g3 c6 3.d4 e4 4. $\mathbb{Q}c3$ d5 5. $\mathbb{Q}g2$)

C25) 5... $\mathbb{Q}b4$



This is Black's most consistent continuation, aiming to reduce the pressure against the d5-pawn.

6. $\mathbb{Q}d2!$

White breaks the pin using the method that is optimal from the point of view of development. The immediate threat is $\mathbb{Q}c3xe4$, winning a pawn.

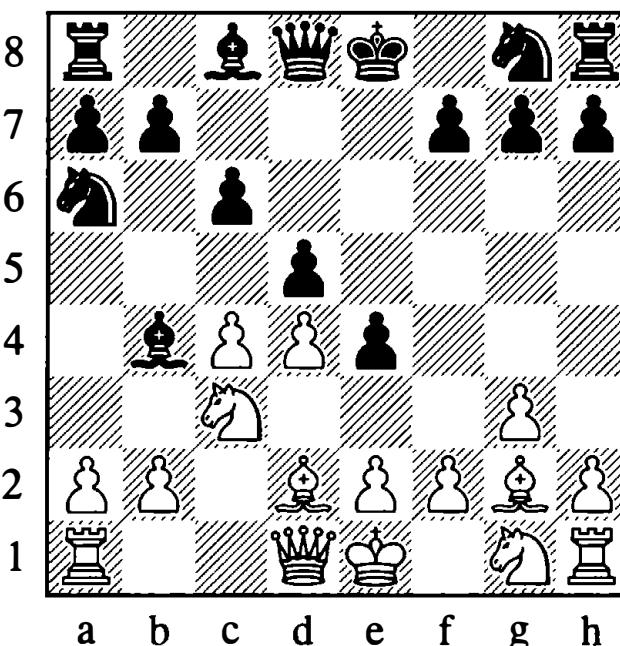
The premature 6. cxd5 would of course clear the c6-square for the enemy knight.

6... $\mathbb{Q}a6$

Black defends the bishop by developing a piece, but the knight is far from ideally placed on a6.

6... $\mathbb{Q}xc3$ would be strongly met by 7. bxc3! strengthening White's centre. 7... $\mathbb{Q}e7$ 8. f3 exf3 9. $\mathbb{Q}xf3$ dxc4 10. e4 0–0 11. 0–0± White has strong compensation for the pawn, due to his active pair of bishops and mobile pawn centre.

6...a5 does not define the intentions of the b8-knight yet, but does not contribute to Black's development either. 7. $\mathbb{Q}h3$ $\mathbb{Q}f6$ 8. 0–0 0–0 (8...h6 can be met by the usual antidote of 9. cxd5 cxd5 10. f3±) 9. $\mathbb{Q}g5$ ± Please note that after ...a7-a5, the weakness of the b6- and b5-squares makes opening the b-file (with ... $\mathbb{Q}b4xc3$, $b2xc3$) favourable for White.



7. cxd5 cxd5 8. a3

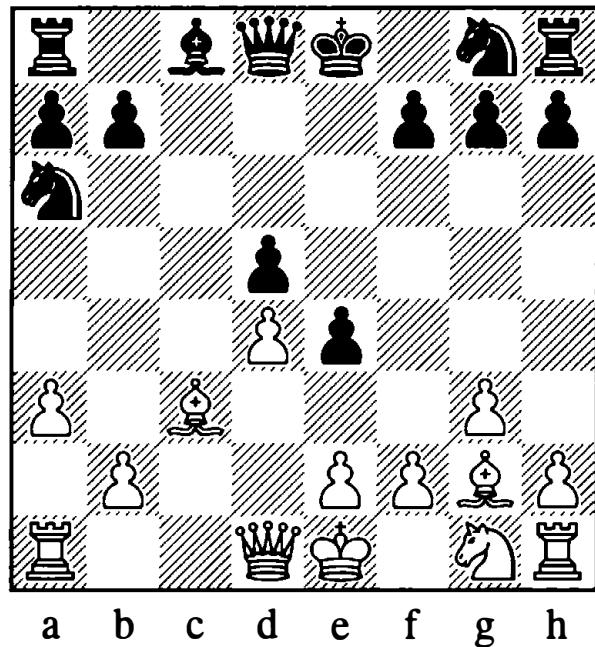
White forces his opponent to make a decision regarding the bishop.

8... $\mathbb{Q}xc3$

8... $\mathbb{Q}a5?$ loses a pawn to 9. $\mathbb{Q}xe4!$ $dxe4$ 10. $\mathbb{W}a4\pm$.

8... $\mathbb{Q}e7$ would mean giving up on the original idea of ... $\mathbb{Q}f8-b4$, after having caused the unfavourable move ... $\mathbb{Q}b8-a6$. White could play 9. $\mathbb{Q}h3\pm$.

9. $\mathbb{Q}xc3$



9... $\mathbb{Q}f6$ 10. $\mathbb{Q}h3$ 0-0 11.0-0 $\mathbb{Q}f5$ 12.f3 $\mathbb{Q}e8$
13. $\mathbb{W}b3$ $\mathbb{W}d7$

Black has managed to defend the d5- and e4-pawns adequately, but White has not yet exhausted his resources.

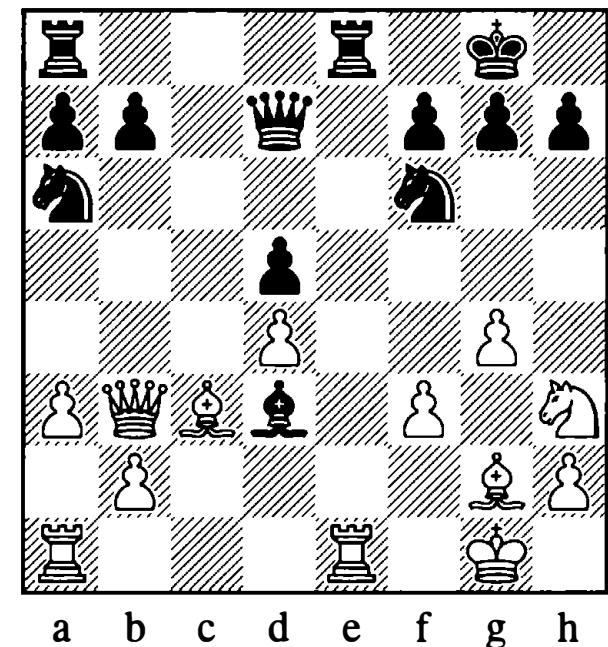
14.g4

This is a typical way to win space when White has the bishop pair.

14...exf3

14... $\mathbb{Q}g6$ 15. $\mathbb{Q}f4\pm$ leaves the bishop uncomfortable.

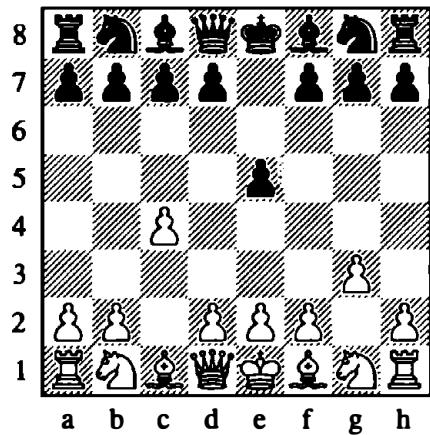
15.exf3 $\mathbb{Q}d3$ 16. $\mathbb{Q}fe1\pm$



In this almost symmetrical position, White has the bishop pair and the more flexible structure. The black knights are passive, while the white knight can dream of reaching the e5-square via d3.

Conclusion:

In the absence of practical material, the subject is difficult to exhaust, but I believe that the analysis above keeps the "Subasian" 2.g3 line alive and kicking.



Odds and Trends

Minor Lines

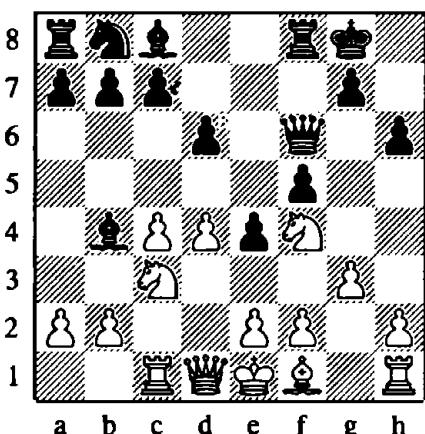
Variation Index

1.c4 e5

2.g3

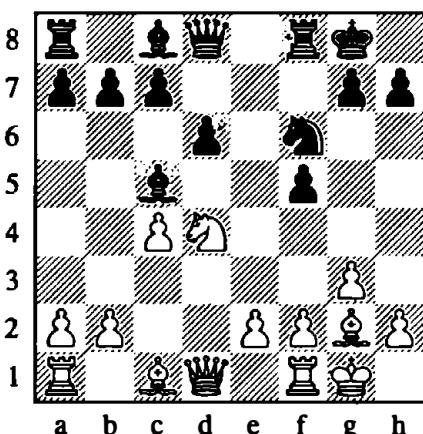
A) 2...d5?!	p 452
B) 2...f5 3.d4	p 453
B1) 3...e4	p 453
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C) 2...♝f6 3.g3 h6 4.♝c3 ♛b4 5.♝f3 ♛xc3 6.bxc3	p 461
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B1) note to 5...c6



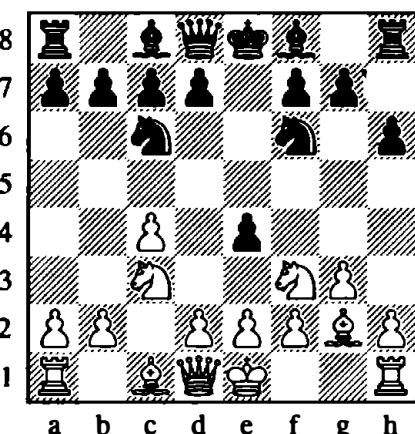
10.e3!N

B32) after 10...0–0

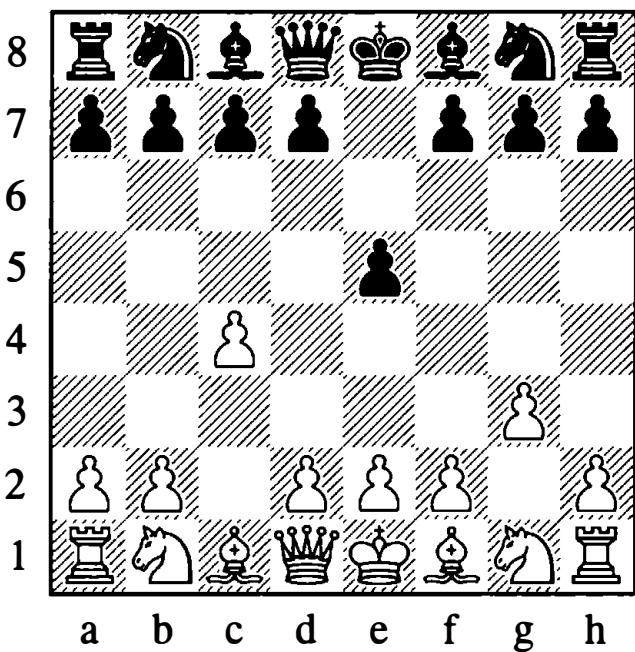


11.b3!N

C) note to 4...♝b4

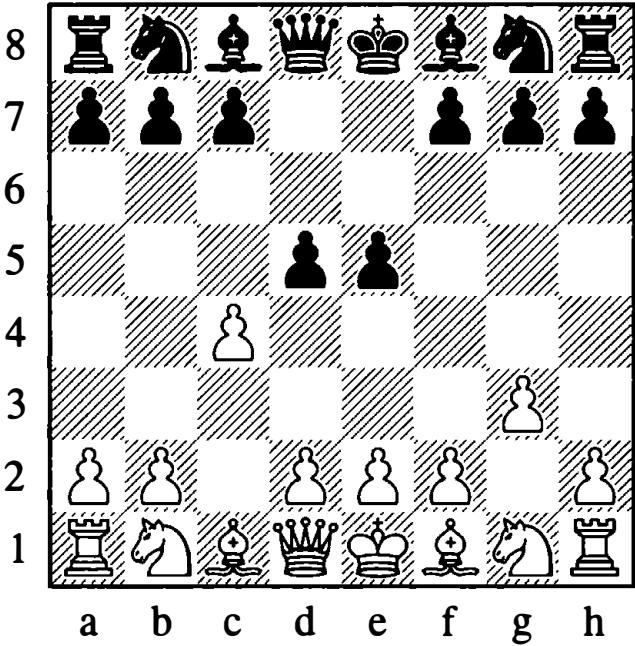


6.♝h4!N

1.c4 e5 2.g3

It would have been nice to end the book with 32 chapters – the same number of chessmen on the board. But no, we still have a little work to do. In this chapter, we will examine early deviations from the main lines, which perhaps have less theoretical interest than the rest of the book.

We have A) 2...d5 and B) 2...f5, but also rare continuations for Black after C) 2...Qf6 3.Qg2.

(1.c4 e5 2.g3)**A) 2...d5?!**

A radical attempt to prove that White's second move is premature.

3.cxd5 Qxd5 4.Qf3 Qb4

Black fights to ensure his queen's stability in the centre. Otherwise, Qb1-c3 would cause Black to lose time. There is a similar variation with reversed colours, which goes 1.e4 c5 2.Qf3 g6 3.d4 cxd4 4.Qxd4 Qf6 5.Qb5, but White's extra tempo in the English Opening makes a big difference.

If instead of the text move Black tries 4...e4 then after 5.Qc3 Black has no good way to keep defending the pawn. For instance, 5...Qc6 6.Qe5 Qe6 7.Qa4†±.

5.a3!

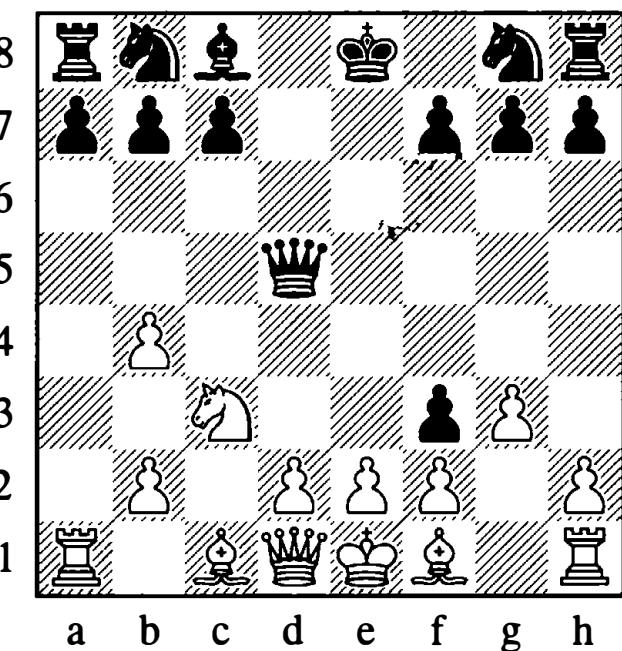
The most straightforward continuation; 5.Qc3 Qxc3 6.bxc3 e4 is less convincing.

5...e4 6.axb4

White has managed to activate his a1-rook without moving it.

6...exf3 7.Qc3

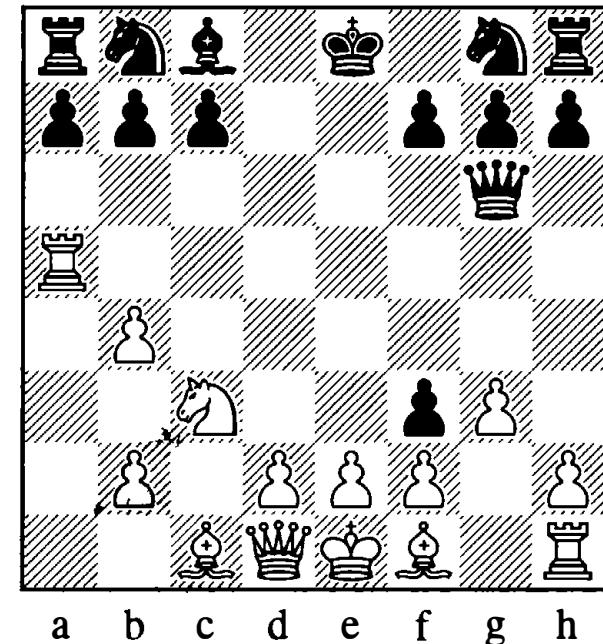
White wins an important tempo.

**7...Wh5**

7...fxe2 8.Qxe2† Qe6 loses a pawn to 9.Qb5 Qd8 10.Qxa7†, and 7...Qe6 8.e3 Qc6 9.b5, followed by Qd1xf3, also wins a pawn.

8.Qa5 Qg6

This position was reached in Azmaiparashvili – G. Giorgadze, Pavlodar 1982. White continued 9.e3 and won convincingly, but I think we can do even better:



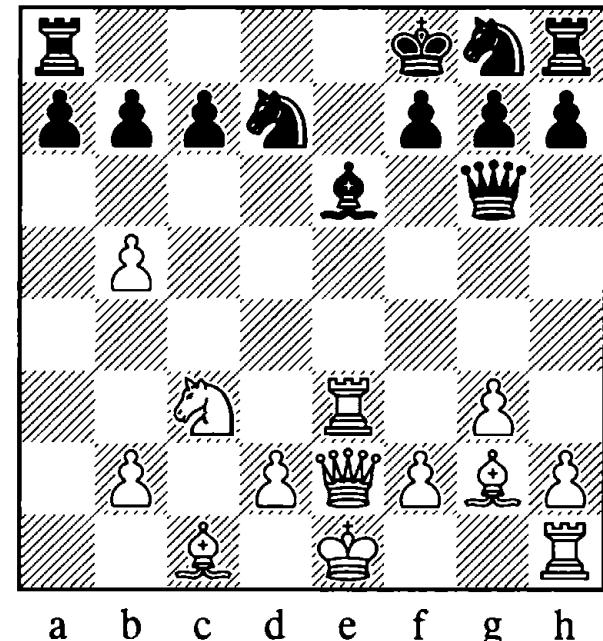
9.Ke5!N f8

If Black blocks the check with a minor piece then 10.Qd5 would be strong.

10.b5!?

White denies the knight access to c6 and threatens e2xf3.

**10...fxe2 11.Wxe2 ♕e6 12.Qg2 ♘d7
13.Ke3±**

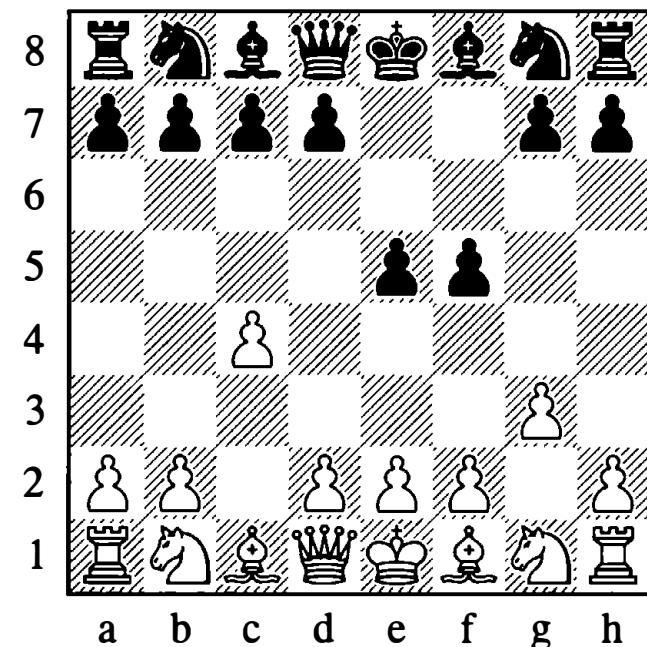


White is better developed, has the bishop

pair, and enjoys a space advantage on the queenside.

(1.c4 e5 2.g3)

B) 2...f5



Since Black has not played ...Nb8-c6 yet, this early attempt to gain space allows White to carry out the thematic central break effortlessly.

3.d4

The reader may remember that in line B from Chapter 19 White's advance of the d-pawn required some accuracy. In this position everything is simpler. Since Black cannot maintain the tension in the centre without losing the right to castle, the f5-pawn is likely to become a weakness rather than a strength.

We will examine **B1) 3...e4**, **B2) 3...Nb4†** and **B3) 3...exd4**.

(1.c4 e5 2.g3 f5 3.d4)

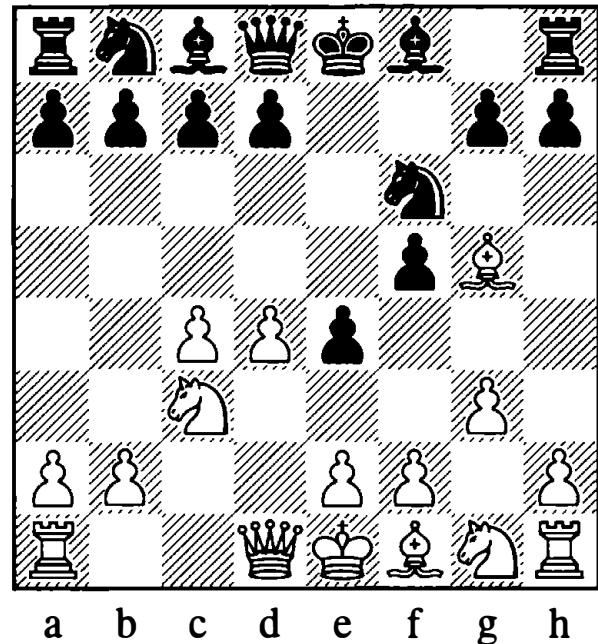
B1) 3...e4

This bold advance concedes the f4-square, and allows White to organize his play in the spirit of a reversed Advance Caro-Kann or French, but with a couple of extra tempos. I would

add that in the aforementioned openings, White usually refrains from an early f2-f4, which is the equivalent of ...f7-f5 in the current position. Black's queen's bishop will be restricted, valuable time will be lost, and the pawn itself may become a weakness.

We could also draw a parallel with the variation 1.c4 e5 2. $\mathbb{Q}c3$ d6 3. $\mathbb{Q}f3$ f5 4.d4 e4 5. $\mathbb{Q}g5$ $\mathbb{Q}e7$ 6. $\mathbb{Q}h3$ $\mathbb{Q}f6$, which was mentioned in the comments to line B3 from Chapter 19. How do the variations compare? Put simply, in the present variation White is two tempos up!

4. $\mathbb{Q}c3$ $\mathbb{Q}f6$ 5. $\mathbb{Q}g5$



White builds up the pressure against the d5- and e4-squares with natural developing moves.

5...c6

Black develops in the spirit of the aforementioned 1.c4 e5 2. $\mathbb{Q}c3$ d6 variation, aiming for a flexible structure and harmonious development.

Black could also try to take advantage of the fact that ...d7-d6 has not been played yet with:

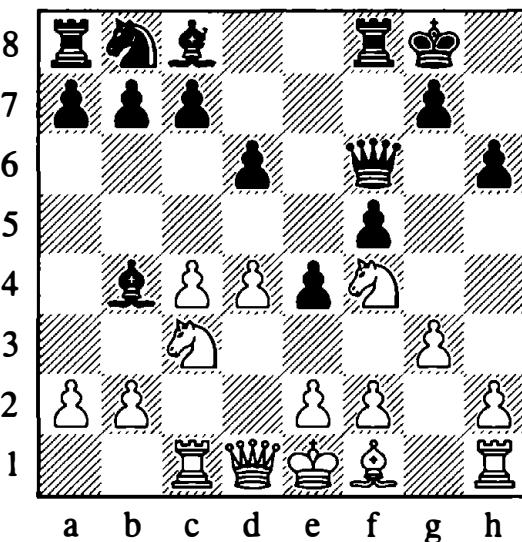
5... $\mathbb{Q}b4$ 6. $\mathbb{Q}c1$

White should not allow his structure to be

spoiled on the wing where he later intends to attack, but 6. $\mathbb{Q}b3$ may also be a good way to parry the threat, while keeping the possibility of castling long.

6...0-0 7. $\mathbb{Q}h3$ h6 8. $\mathbb{Q}xf6$ $\mathbb{Q}xf6$ 9. $\mathbb{Q}f4$ d6

This position was reached in Rustemov – Heberla, Legnica 2005.



10.e3!N

After giving away his queen's bishop, White arranges his pawns on dark squares.

10...c6 11.h4 g6

Black prevents his structure from losing its flexibility after h4-h5.

12. $\mathbb{Q}e2\pm$

White has a flexible position, which will allow him to choose between plans on either wing. The most tempting among them is $\mathbb{Q}d2$ followed by g3-g4, perhaps with $\mathbb{Q}d2-c2-b1$ and $\mathbb{W}g1$. This would underline the weakness of Black's kingside and the absence of his dark-squared bishop from that area.

6.e3

This looks natural, but I wonder whether the player handling the white pieces was aware that 6.h4!? would transpose to the same position as one of his most precious wins, which is examined in line C1), page 442.

6... $\mathbb{Q}a6$ 7. $\mathbb{Q}ge2$ $\mathbb{Q}e7$ 8. $\mathbb{Q}f4$ 0-0 9. $\mathbb{W}b3$ d6
10.h4

White has built up a perfect position. He

has a space advantage on the queenside and excellent stability on the other wing.

10...♞c7

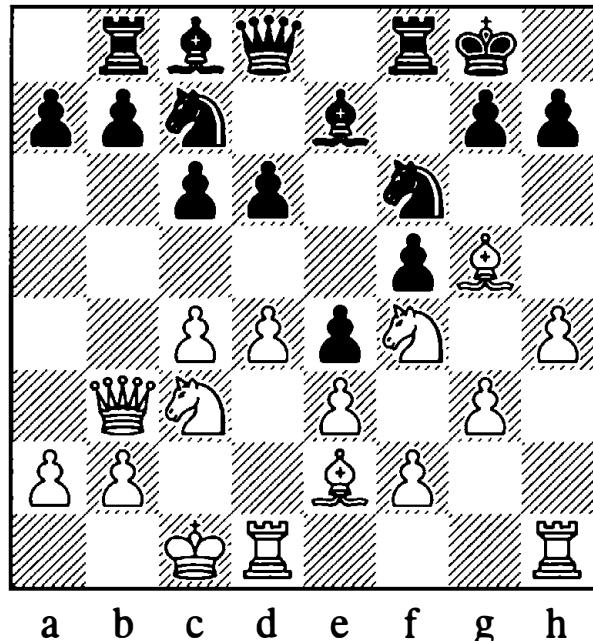
Black intends to exchange this knight for one of the white minor pieces that is creating pressure on the kingside.

Black's pawns would be less effective in the fight against the blockade:

10...h6 leaves Black's structure immobile after
11.♝xf6 ♜xf6 12.h5±.

10...g6 is more consistent strategically, preparing ...♝g7 and then ...h7-h6, but it offers White attacking chances after **11.h5±** followed by **♝e2** and **0–0–0**.

11.♝e2 ♜b8 12.0–0–0

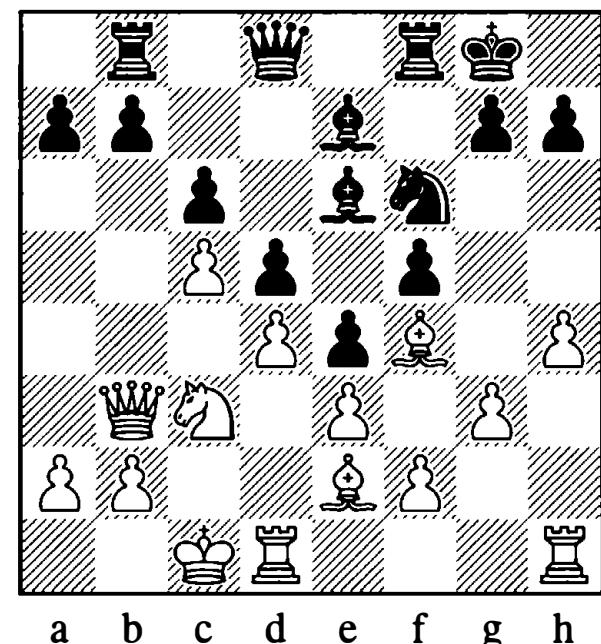


12...♞e6?!

This is a tactical blunder.

Black should have limited the damage with a less committal move. For example, **12...a6 13.♝b1 ♜h8** (the main threat is ...b7-b5) **14.c5! d5 15.♝a4±**. After blocking the queenside, White has a promising position on both wings.

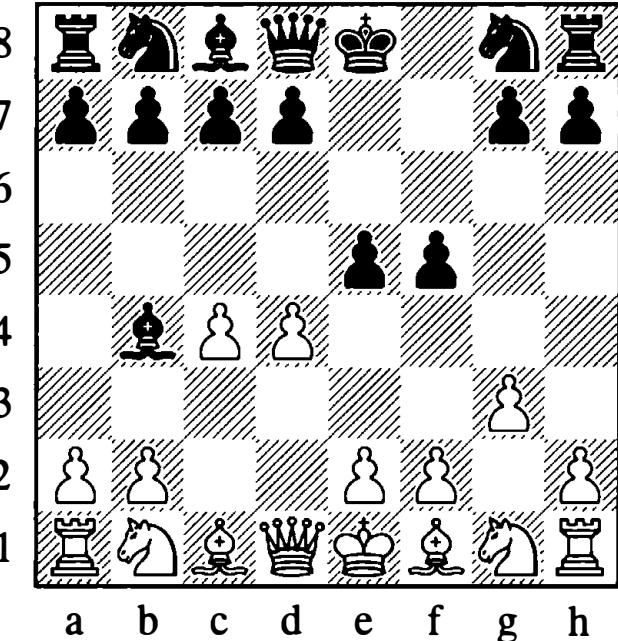
13.c5 d5 14.♝xe6 ♜xe6 15.♝f4±



Black is losing material, Suba – Buchenau, Badalona 1994.

(**1.c4 e5 2.g3 f5 3.d4**)

B2) 3...♝b4†



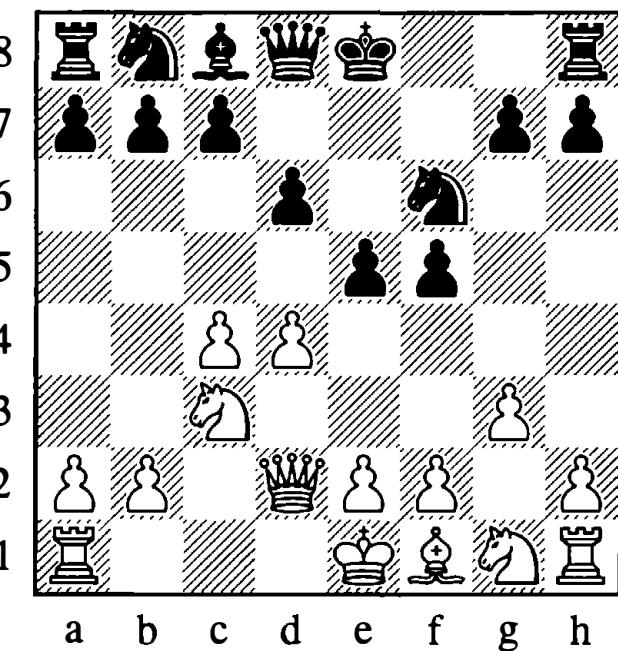
This variation bears some similarity to the line examined in Chapter 27. Instead of the generally useful ...c7-c6, which restricts the g2-bishop, Black has played ...f7-f5, which gains space but may lead to weaknesses in his position, especially given Black's lack of development.

4.♝d2

This is the most natural answer. Instead, the more ambitious 4... $\mathbb{Q}d2$ implies a pawn sacrifice. After 4...exd4 5. $\mathbb{Q}gf3$ we have transposed to line B32 below.

4... $\mathbb{Q}xd2\#$ 5. $\mathbb{W}xd2$ d6 6. $\mathbb{Q}c3$ $\mathbb{Q}f6$

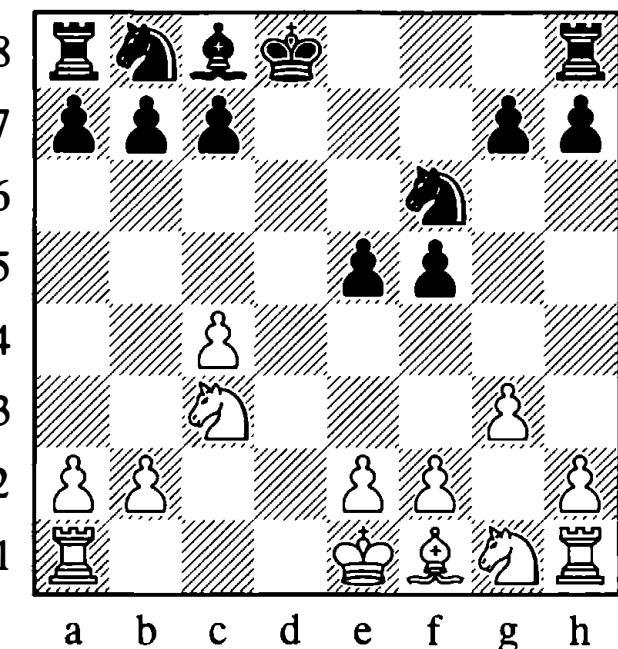
If White allows the play to take a slow course, then Black's kingside space advantage might become threatening.



7.dxe5!

After losing the right to castle, Black will face the usual problems of coordination and the weaknesses induced by ...f7-f5 will become noticeable.

7...dxe5 8. $\mathbb{W}xd8\#$ $\mathbb{Q}xd8$



9. $\mathbb{Q}f3$ e4 10.0-0-0#N

This is an important check, which forces Black to make a concession. 10. $\mathbb{Q}d4$, as played in Markowski – Gulko, Polanica Zdroj 1996, leaves Black with a wider choice.

10... $\mathbb{Q}e7$

Black would like to get his king to c7 and leave the c8-e6 diagonal open in order to develop his bishop to e6, but this is impossible.

Although it may seem passive, 10... $\mathbb{Q}bd7$ gives play a double-edged character. After 11. $\mathbb{Q}d4$ the strong threats of $\mathbb{Q}xf5$ and $\mathbb{Q}e6\#$ force Black to play 11... $\mathbb{Q}g4$. A possible continuation is 12. $\mathbb{Q}e6\#$ $\mathbb{Q}e7$ 13. $\mathbb{Q}xc7$ $\mathbb{B}b8$ 14. $\mathbb{Q}3d5\#$ $\mathbb{Q}f7$ 15. $\mathbb{B}d4$ $\mathbb{Q}xf2$ 16. $\mathbb{B}g1$ $\mathbb{Q}e5$ 17. $\mathbb{Q}g2$. White is better developed and the dark squares in Black's camp are weak. The f2-knight is in some danger and Black's king will be exposed after h2-h3 followed by $\mathbb{B}f1$ and g3-g4.

11. $\mathbb{Q}d4$ $\mathbb{Q}a6$

Black must avoid creating new weaknesses, because he is still underdeveloped. The pseudo-active 11...c5?! would leave Black vulnerable after 12. $\mathbb{Q}db5$ $\mathbb{Q}a6$ 13. $\mathbb{Q}h3$ b6 14.f3±. After the centre opens the black king will feel unsafe.

12. $\mathbb{Q}h3$

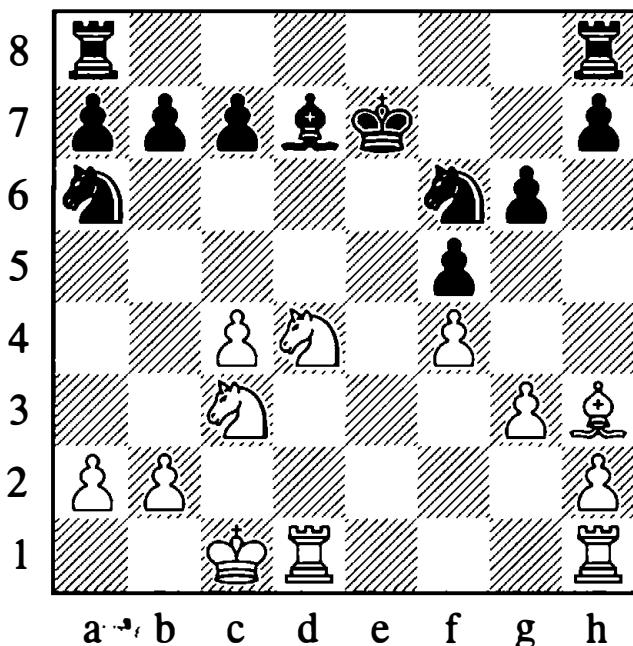
White forces another black pawn to occupy a light square, hoping that in the remote future an ending will be reached with a good knight or bishop against Black's bad bishop.

12...g6 13.f3

White is better developed and so he opens the centre.

13...exf3 14.exf3 $\mathbb{Q}d7$ 15.f4

White prepares to re-activate his bishop and also takes the e5-square under control.

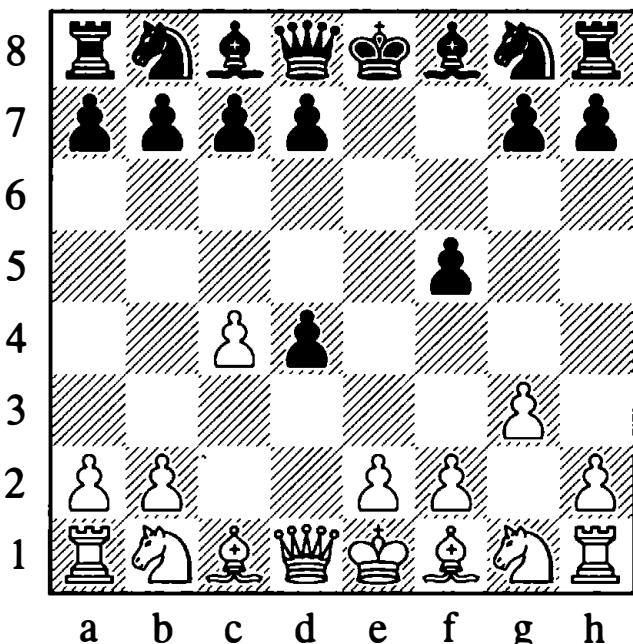


**15... $\mathbb{E}he8$ 16. $\mathbb{B}g2$ c6 17. $\mathbb{B}h6\#t$ $\mathbb{K}f7$
18. $\mathbb{Q}f3\pm$**

White is well developed and has a strategically promising position. Black cannot play ...c6-c5 without leaving his queenside vulnerable to the white bishop's pressure. At some point, White may play c4-c5 himself, taking another step towards the aforementioned ending.

(1.c4 e5 2.g3 f5 3.d4)

B3) 3...exd4



This is the best practical decision. Black gives up his strategic ambitions in the centre, and instead aims for rapid piece development. White can choose between B31) 4. $\mathbb{W}xd4$ and

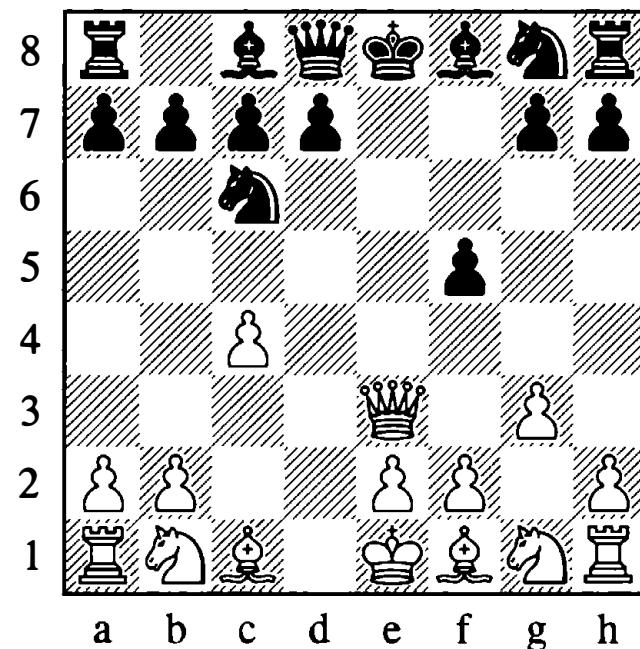
B32) 4. $\mathbb{Q}f3$. While the former is entirely playable, the relatively unexplored latter line features a maximalist approach. If you do not mind playing a pawn down for the sake of maintaining an initiative, then line B32 should be your repertoire choice. Otherwise, you can stick to the cautious and safe line B31.

(1.c4 e5 2.g3 f5 3.d4 exd4)

B31) 4. $\mathbb{W}xd4$

This is the old theoretically-approved continuation, which offers White a space advantage without any risks.

4... $\mathbb{Q}c6$ 5. $\mathbb{W}e3\#t!$



This is an important move, which justifies the queen's early centralization. The queen is fairly safe on e3 and Black will be forced to make a concession in order to parry the check.

5... $\mathbb{B}e7$

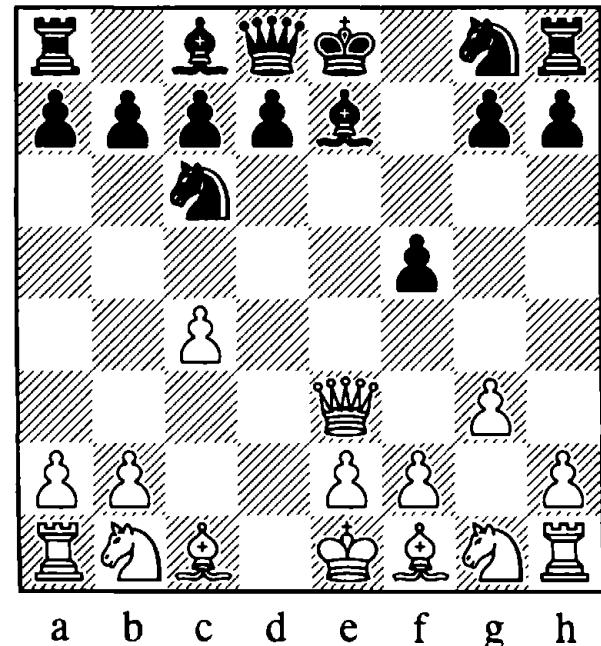
This is the most natural move, continuing with development, but the bishop will be passive on e7. Black would much prefer to develop it on g7, b4 or c5.

5... $\mathbb{K}f7$ is an exotic attempt to maintain the possibility of active development. The king

will not be in danger on f7, but Black will need some time to castle artificially. 6.♘f3 (6.♘h3!?) is an important alternative, when the knight is heading for d5) 6...♞f6 7.♗g2 ♕b4† 8.♗d2 ♜e8 9.♗b3 ♔c5 10.♘c3 h6 11.0–0 d6 12.♖ad1±

White's coordination is not yet optimal, but he is ahead in development and retains a space advantage, Delchev – Nikcevic, France 2003.

The tension created by 5...♝e7 tends to favour White after 6.♘c3±. In order to complete his kingside development, Black will probably have to exchange on e3, but this will contribute to White's rapid mobilization. As indicated by Ribli, 6...♞b4 would be easily parried with 7.♗d2, when the b4-knight and the black queen would be vulnerable to a2-a3 and ♘c3-d5, respectively. The white queen would be well placed on d2, in view of the plan of development based on b2-b3 and ♔c1-b2.



6.♘c3 ♞f6 7.♗g2 0–0 8.♘h3

There is a certain similarity between this position and that arising from line B1 from Chapter 19. Black does not have sufficient dynamic resources to take advantage of the potentially exposed white queen, which allows White to consolidate his space advantage.

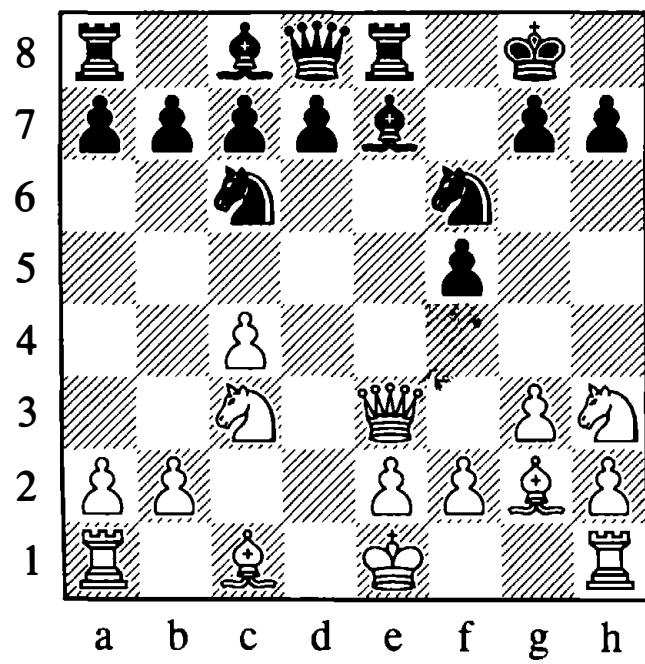
8...♜e8

Black intends to harass the queen with a discovered attack, in similar style to line B2 from Chapter 28.

In the following two examples, Black chose a more static approach:

8...d6 9.0–0 ♘e5 10.b3 c6 was played in Romero Holmes – De la Villa, Leon 1996. After 11.♗b2!N± White will play ♜a1-d1 next and then prepare to open the centre with e2-e4.

8...♞b4 This is the start of a time-consuming plan designed to take control of the b4- and c5-squares. The slowness of the manoeuvre will allow White to regroup perfectly. 9.♗d2 a5 10.♘f4 c6 11.0–0 ♘a6 12.♘d3 d6 13.b3 ♛e8 14.♗b2 ♔d8 15.♖ae1± White is better developed and is ready to open the centre with e2-e4, Miezis – Damljanovic, Istanbul (ol) 2000.



9.0–0 ♜b4

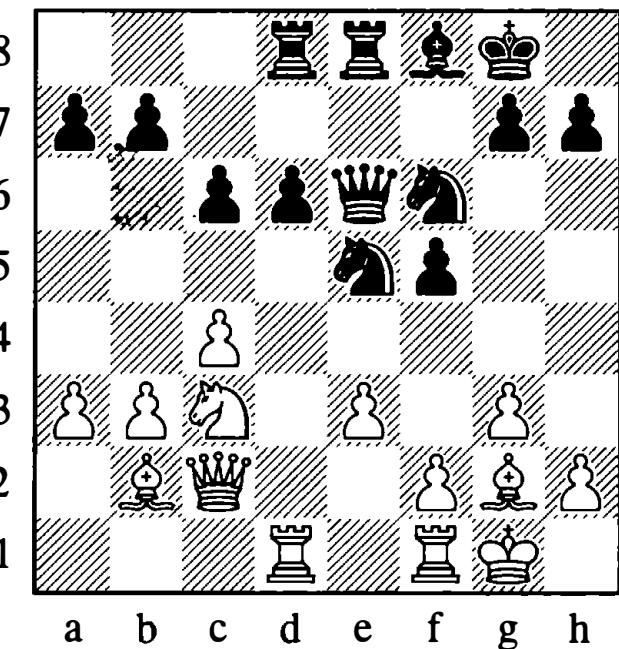
9...♞f8 is too passive to cause any problems. For example, 10.♗d2 ♘e5 11.b3 d6 12.♘f4 c6 13.♖d1 ♛c7 14.♔a3 ♘f7 15.♖ac1 ♔d7 16.e3 ♜ad8 17.b4. White has a space advantage and a queenside initiative, Kramnik – Bacrot, Moscow (blitz) 2007.

10.♗d3 ♜e5 11.♗c2 c6

11...♝xc4? loses material to 12.♝d5+–.

**12.a3 ♕f8 13.b3 d6 14.♕b2 ♕e6 15.♗g5
♗e7 16.♗ad1 ♘ad8 17.♗xe6 ♗xe6 18.e3**

A draw was prematurely agreed in Chernin – Bologan, Geneva 1996; White still has plenty of play.

**18...g6 19.♗e2±**

White will transfer the knight to d4 and then prepare his queenside attack with b4-b5. Black is vulnerable on the light squares, and so cannot create effective counterplay.

This looks pleasant for White, and it may even be possible to improve on 12.a3. This move weakens the queenside and helps the enemy bishop retreat to a safe square. 12.b3!N± looks better.

Although I can find no real problems for White in this line, instinctively I feel more inclined towards the more ambitious line A32.

(1.c4 e5 2.g3 f5 3.d4 exd4)**B32) 4.♗f3!!?**

White intends to recapture the pawn in the most natural way with ♘xd4. If Black plays

...c7-c5, then after e2-e3 the weakness of the d5- and d6-squares will offer White good compensation for the pawn. The position resembles the Sicilian variation 1.e4 c5 2.f4 d5 3.exd5 ♘f6. The extra tempo, consisting of g2-g3, is helpful for White's development.

There is not much relevant material available, but the line deserves at least a brief examination, since it was played at the top level recently.

4...♗b4†

If Black plans to hold onto his extra pawn with ...c7-c5, then it is useful to activate or exchange his dark-squared bishop first.

4...c5 5.e3 dxе3 6.♕xe3 offers White excellent compensation. 6...♝f6 7.♝c3 ♕e7 8.♗d2 was played in Videki – Ruban, Denmark 1992. The position resembles a reversed Scandinavian, namely 1.e4 d5 2.exd5 ♘f6 3.c4 e6 4.dxе6 ♕xe6, etc. Black eventually won, which can be explained by the considerable difference in strength between the players.

5.♗bd2

This is the most ambitious move, aiming to force Black to give up his bishop for the d2-knight.

5.♗d2

This simple move helps White to develop rapidly, and is a good alternative to the text move.

5...♝xd2† 6.♗xd2 c5 7.♗g2 ♘f6 8.e3 0–0

8...♝e4 should be answered with 9.♗d3, as in the main line.

9.♗e2 is less precise, because the queen is exposed on the e-file: 9...0–0 10.0–0 In the game King – Westerinen, Gausdal 1993, Black played 10...dxе3, transposing to the main line, missing 10...♝e8! when the queen on e2 causes White problems: 11.♗e1 ♘c6∞

9.0–0 ♘e4 10.♗d3 dxе3

With the queen on d3, Black cannot avoid this exchange.

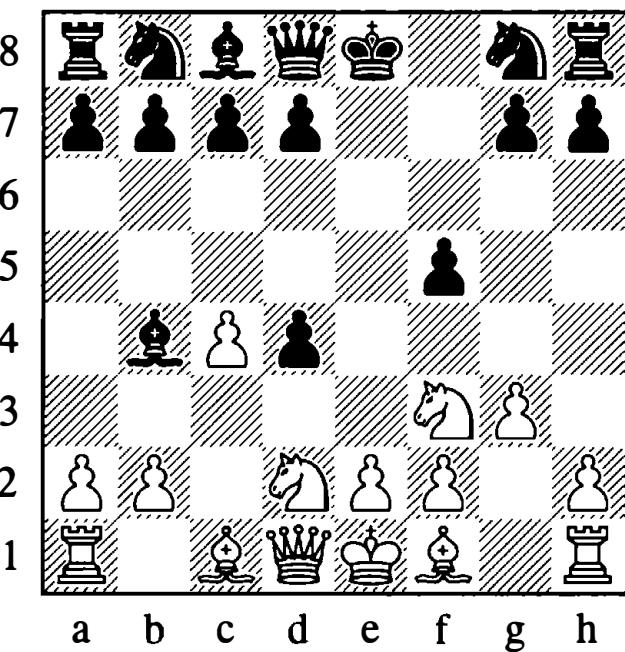
11. $\mathbb{W}xe3 \mathfrak{Q}c6$

Play has transposed back to the aforementioned game.

12. $\mathfrak{Q}c3 \mathfrak{Q}xc3$ 13. $bxc3 \mathbb{W}e7$ 14. $\mathbb{W}xe7 \mathfrak{Q}xe7$

15. $\mathfrak{B}f1 \mathfrak{Q}c6$ 16. $\mathfrak{B}ad1$

White is much better developed and has numerous pawn targets, King – Westerinen, Gausdal 1993.



5... $\mathfrak{Q}f6$

Black refuses to be lured into dangerous adventures in gambit variations.

5... $c5$

Once again this involves major strategic risks.

6. $\mathfrak{B}g2 \mathfrak{Q}f6$

Black should castle as soon as possible.

6... $\mathfrak{Q}c6$?! is likely to create more problems for Black due to the danger of a check along the e-file. 7. $0-0$ After unpinning his knight, White threatens $\mathfrak{B}b3$, leaving the enemy bishop in an uncomfortable position.

7... $\mathfrak{Q}xd2$ 8. $\mathbb{W}xd2 \mathfrak{Q}f6$ 9. $e3$ $dxe3$ 10. $\mathbb{W}xe3 \mathbb{W}e7$ 11. $\mathfrak{B}e1 \mathbb{W}xe3$ 12. $\mathfrak{Q}xe3 \pm$ White will regain the pawn, leaving Black's position in ruins.

7. $0-0$ $\mathfrak{Q}xd2$ 8. $\mathbb{W}xd2$ $0-0$ 9. $e3$ $dxe3$ 10. $\mathbb{W}xe3$

Even though Black has castled, he is slightly

behind in development and his dark squares are weak, as a consequence of the moves ... $f7-f5$ and ... $c7-c5$.

10... $d6$ 11. $b3 \mathfrak{B}e8$ 12. $\mathbb{W}f4 \mathfrak{Q}c6$ 13. $\mathbb{Q}b2 \bar{\infty}$

White's development is harmonious and he has strong pressure along both long diagonals.

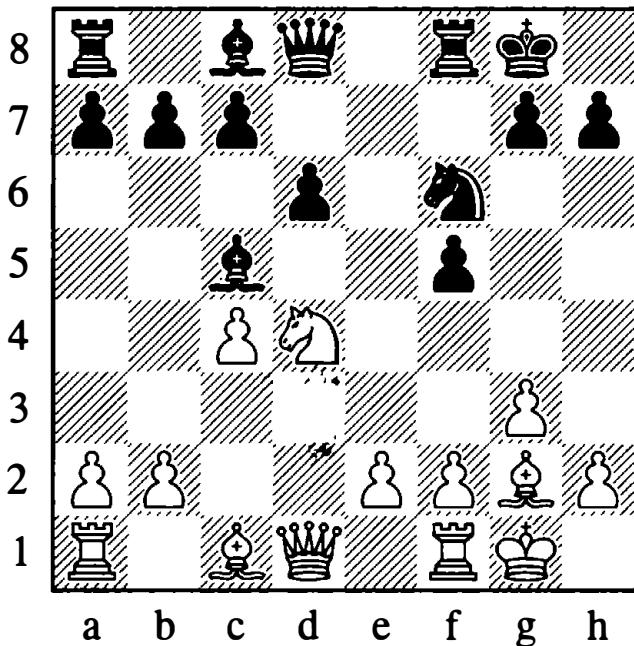
6. $\mathfrak{Q}g2$

A psychological battle is under way – White keeps tempting Black to defend his extra pawn, but Black refuses to bite. There was also nothing wrong with 6. $\mathfrak{Q}xd4$, which would probably transpose to the game in a few moves time.

6... $\mathfrak{Q}c6$ 7. $0-0$ $\mathfrak{Q}c5$ 8. $\mathfrak{B}b3$ $d6$ 9. $\mathfrak{Q}fxd4 \mathfrak{Q}xd4$
10. $\mathfrak{Q}xd4 \pm$

White has retrieved the pawn and enjoys the usual space advantage in the centre.

10... $0-0$

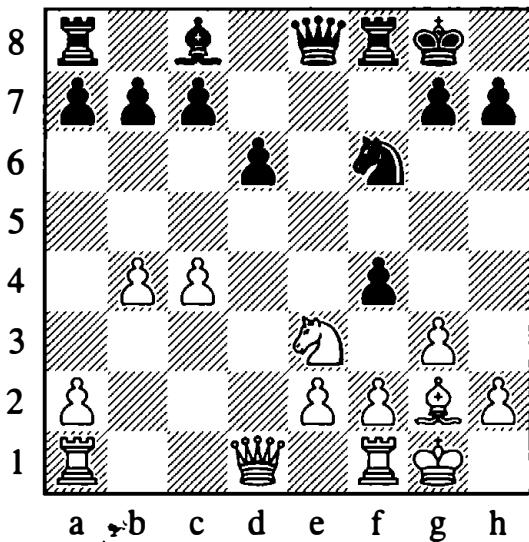


11. $b3!N$

White consolidates his advantage by completing development.

A recent top-level game continued with 11. $\mathfrak{Q}c2$?!. The plan initiated by this move is coherent, but rather time-consuming. 11... $\mathbb{W}e8$ 12. $b4 \mathbb{Q}b6$ 13. $\mathfrak{Q}e3 \mathbb{Q}xe3$ 14. $\mathfrak{Q}xe3$ White has transferred his knight closer to the d5-square

and his queenside attack has already started, but Black is also well prepared for his kingside counterattack. 14...f4!



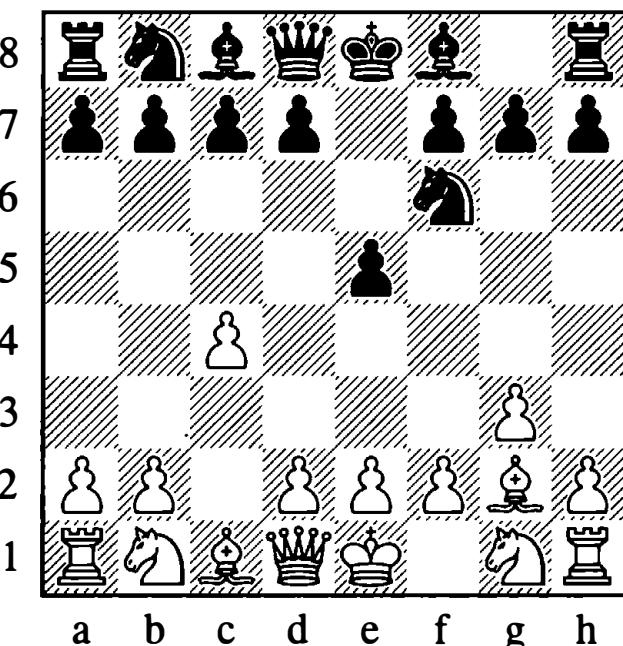
Black gets rid of a potentially weak pawn, opens the diagonal for his bishop, and puts the enemy kingside under pressure. White's space advantage had lost part of its relevance in Ivanchuk – Aronian, Nanjing 2008.

11... $\mathbb{W}e7$ 12. $\mathbb{Q}b2$ $\mathbb{Q}e4$ 13.e3±

Next, White will play $\mathbb{W}d1-c2$, $\mathbb{Q}a1-d1$, $\mathbb{Q}f1-e1$, gradually increasing the pressure.

(1.c4 e5 2.g3)

C) 2... $\mathbb{Q}f6$ 3. $\mathbb{Q}g2$



3...h6

With this move, Black is trying to be tricky.

Black waits for White to define his intentions by making a move that can be useful in many positions. I believe that this method would only confuse inexperienced players, by taking them away from familiar patterns. Against an expert on the English Opening, the effect is likely to be reversed. Objectively, White has done nothing wrong and thus Black is not entitled to play for zugzwang. With a little "English" culture, White should be able to spot the structures in which ...h7-h6 is not really useful, but rather a loss of time and a weakening of the kingside.

Of the other rare alternatives, I would also mention:

3... $\mathbb{Q}c5$

This is likely to transpose to the early chapters of this book, but play can take an independent course if Black wishes:

4. $\mathbb{Q}c3$

One important point is that 4. $\mathbb{Q}f3$?! is met by 4...e4! when 5. $\mathbb{Q}g5$? is impossible because of 5... $\mathbb{Q}xf2$! while other knight moves would fail to put pressure on the e4-pawn, because the other knight is still on b1.

4...c6

4... $\mathbb{Q}c6$ would transpose to familiar positions.

5.e3 d6

The strategically ambitious 5...d5 6.cxd5 cxd5 loses time after 7.d4 exd4 8.exd4 $\mathbb{Q}b4$ 9. $\mathbb{Q}ge2$ ±. In this almost symmetrical position, the d5-pawn is weaker than its counterpart on d4.

6. $\mathbb{Q}ge2$ $\mathbb{Q}e6$ 7.d4 $\mathbb{Q}b6$ 8.b3 h5 9.h3 a5 10. $\mathbb{Q}b2$ 0–0 11. $\mathbb{W}d2$ ±

Black has not gained anything by avoiding ... $\mathbb{Q}c6$. White is well developed and has firm control of the centre, Portisch – Fedorchuk, Warsaw 2005.

4. $\mathbb{Q}c3$!

This is the best way to continue developing.

4.a3?! can be met by 4...c6?! 5.d4 exd4 6. $\mathbb{W}xd4$ d5. I would be afraid that a2-a3 is more of a weakening move than a useful one, while ...h7-h6 avoids the occasionally unpleasant pin with $\mathbb{Q}g5$.

Against 4. $\mathbb{Q}f3$?! Black can react with 4...e4 5. $\mathbb{Q}d4$ d5 6.cxd5 $\mathbb{W}xd5$. There is a similar position in which Black has played ...c7-c6 instead of ...h7-h6. That position is considered to be unsatisfactory for White. With his pawn still on c7, Black will be able to play ... $\mathbb{Q}c6$, which makes this position even more promising.

Finally, 4.d3 is a reasonable move, but it does not prevent Black from developing rapidly with 4... $\mathbb{Q}b4\#$.

4... $\mathbb{Q}b4$

This is the only logical continuation of Black's previous play. Having "decoyed" the knight to c3, he transposes to a reversed Rossolimo, hoping that ...h7-h6 will prove useful anyway.

After 4... $\mathbb{Q}c5$ White can either return to the paths of the Four Knights system with 5. $\mathbb{Q}f3$ or play the more ambitious 5.e3, when the usefulness of ...h7-h6 is debatable, because there would be no threat of $\mathbb{Q}g5$ in the resulting structure.

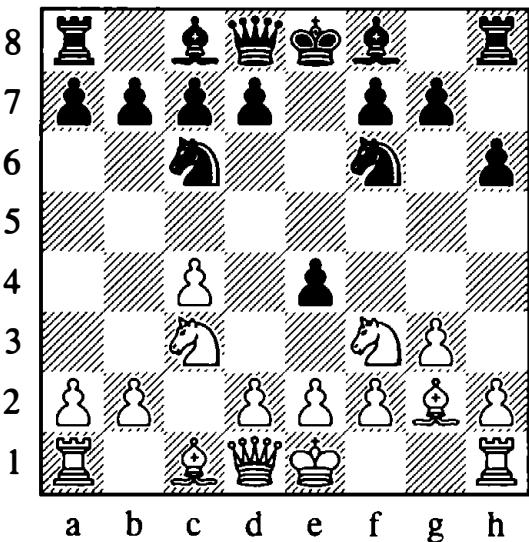
4... $\mathbb{Q}c6$ 5. $\mathbb{Q}f3$

This transposes to what might be called "The 4...h6 variation of the Four Knights" but 4...h6 would be a bizarre choice in the regular Four Knights move order.

Now Black should play 5... $\mathbb{Q}c5$ 6.0-0 d6. Apart from transposing to familiar lines with 7.d3, White could try the more ambitious 7.e3 followed by d2-d4. It would be as if in the Four Knights with ... $\mathbb{Q}c5$, Black decided to play ...h7-h6 before $\mathbb{Q}g5$ was even threatened, thus allowing White to vary his strategy.

5...e4?!

This has been played a few times, but it cannot be recommended.

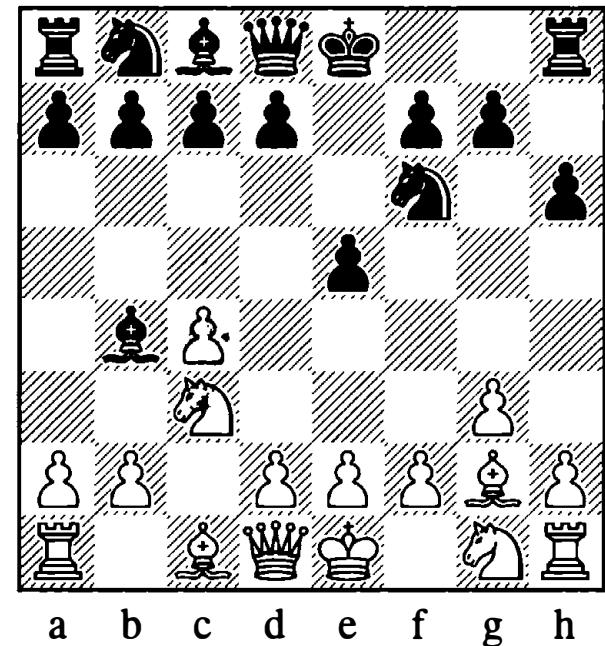


6. $\mathbb{Q}h4$!N

Curiously, this move has not been tried over-the-board. The e4-pawn is under attack and after:

6... $\mathbb{W}e7$ 7. $\mathbb{Q}f5$ $\mathbb{W}e6$ 8. $\mathbb{Q}e3\pm$

White has activated his knight with gain of time, and is ready to continue with $\mathbb{Q}ed5$ and/or d2-d3.



5. $\mathbb{Q}f3$

5.e4 $\mathbb{Q}xc3$ 6.bxc3 would also transpose to a variation in which Black does not usually play ...h7-h6, but I prefer the natural development of the text move.

With Black's queen's knight still on b8, 5. $\mathbb{Q}d5$ is ineffective because of 5... $\mathbb{Q}xd5$, when 6.cxd5

does not force Black to lose time. He can play 6...c6, immediately starting to undermine the white centre. The fact that 3...h6 provokes us into deviating from the style of our main repertoire is only a partial success for Black. Objectively, ...h7-h6 is a less useful move than ...d6.

5... $\mathbb{Q}xc3$

Black is more or less forced to make this thematic exchange at an earlier stage than he might have wished.

5...d6? simply loses material to 6. $\mathbb{W}a4\#$ $\mathbb{Q}c6$ 7. $\mathbb{Q}xe5$ dx e 8. $\mathbb{Q}xc6\#$ bxc6 9. $\mathbb{W}xb4\pm$. White's compact structure and Black's problems with castling mean that White will not suffer from the absence of the g2-bishop.

5... $\mathbb{Q}c6$ 6. $\mathbb{Q}d5$ would lead to a known theory position with an extra tempo for White, since it is hard to believe that ...h7-h6 will prove useful.

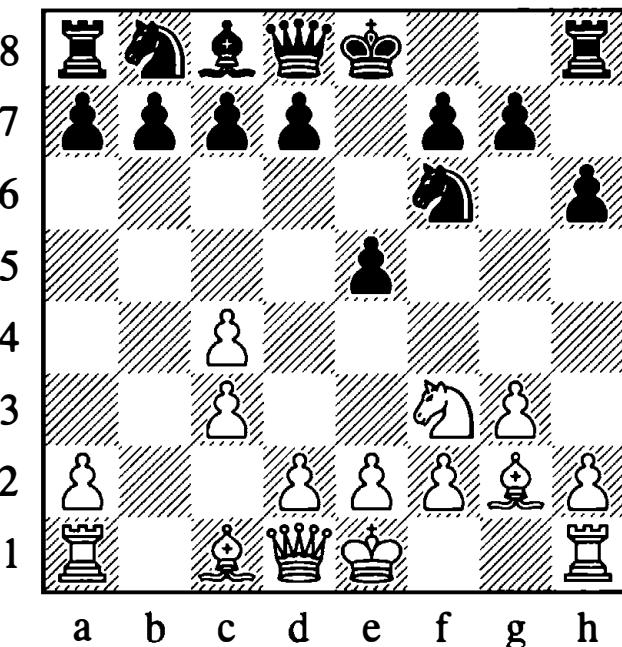
After 5...e4 6. $\mathbb{Q}d4$ the weakness of the e4-pawn would force Black to transpose to line C1 with 6... $\mathbb{Q}xc3$ 7.bxc3.

6.bxc3!

This is an important moment, as the other capture with 6.dxc3 would justify Black's previous play. The move ...h7-h6 would prevent the standard plan of $\mathbb{Q}g5$ followed by $\mathbb{Q}d2-f1-e3$ with increased control over the e4- and d5-squares.

In the normal lines of the reversed Rossolimo without $\mathbb{Q}c3-d5$, bxc3 is best met by active play in the centre. Otherwise, White's strong centre would secure him a long-term advantage. Wasting a tempo on ...h7-h6 obviously does not fit well with that strategy for Black, especially since the threat of $\mathbb{Q}g5$ does not exist yet. We can draw the preliminary conclusion

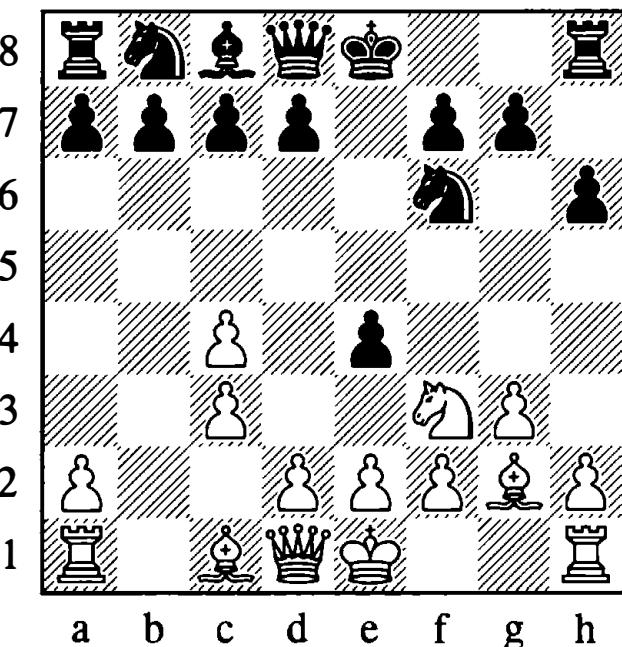
that Black has managed to take us away from our repertoire lines based on 4... $\mathbb{Q}b4$ 5. $\mathbb{Q}d5$, but now Black has reached an unfavourable form of 4... $\mathbb{Q}b4$ 5. $\mathbb{Q}g2$.



We will examine C1) 6...e4 and C2) 6... $\mathbb{Q}c6$.

(1.c4 e5 2.g3 $\mathbb{Q}f6$ 3. $\mathbb{Q}g2$ h6 4. $\mathbb{Q}c3$ $\mathbb{Q}b4$ 5. $\mathbb{Q}f3$ $\mathbb{Q}xc3$ 6.bxc3)

C1) 6...e4



This move weakens the dark squares, and Black's extra space in the centre is only temporary, in view of the continuing threats of d2-d3 and f2-f3.

7.♘d4

The knight proudly occupies this fine square.

7...0–0 8.0–0 d6

The seemingly more active option is:

8...♞c6

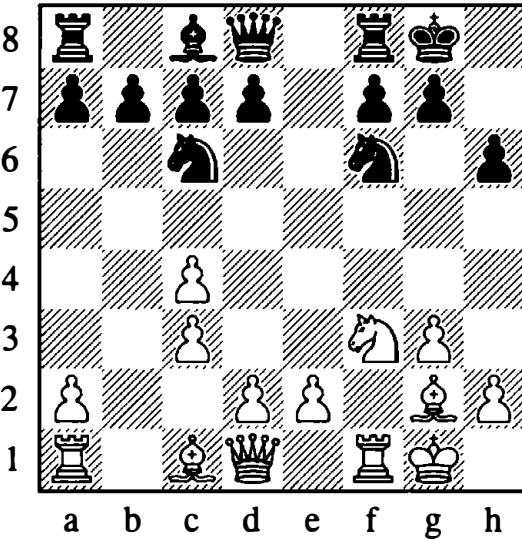
However, this gives White a free hand in the centre after:

9.f3 exf3

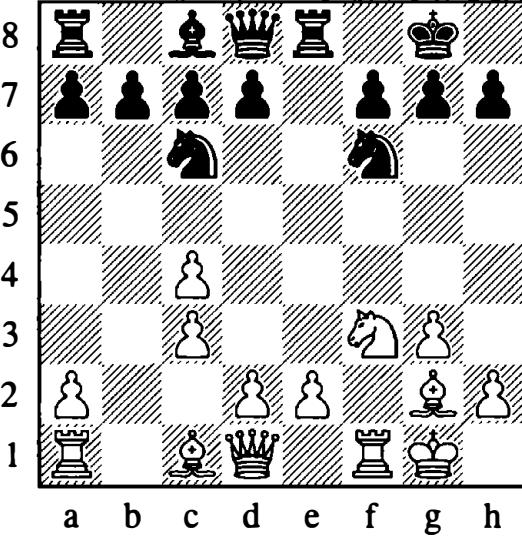
After 9...♞xd4 10.cxd4 exf3 11.♗xf3 White's centre is simply too strong.

10.♗xf3

We can now make an interesting comparison.



The position resembles an important tabiya that arises after: 1.c4 e5 2.♘c3 ♜f6 3.♘f3 ♜c6 4.g3 ♜b4 5.♗g2 0–0 6.0–0 e4 7.♘g5 ♜xc3 8.bxc3 ♜e8 9.f3 exf3?! (Karpov's 9...e3 is considered to be Black's only chance for equality) 10.♗xf3± White has a space advantage and a strong pair of bishops.



From this position, Kasparov achieved two fine wins, against Karpov (4th game of the 1987 Seville match) and Ivanchuk (Soviet Championship 1988).

It almost goes without saying that ...♝e8 is more useful than ...h7-h6. A possible continuation from our position would be:

10...♝e8 11.♘h4 d6 12.d3±

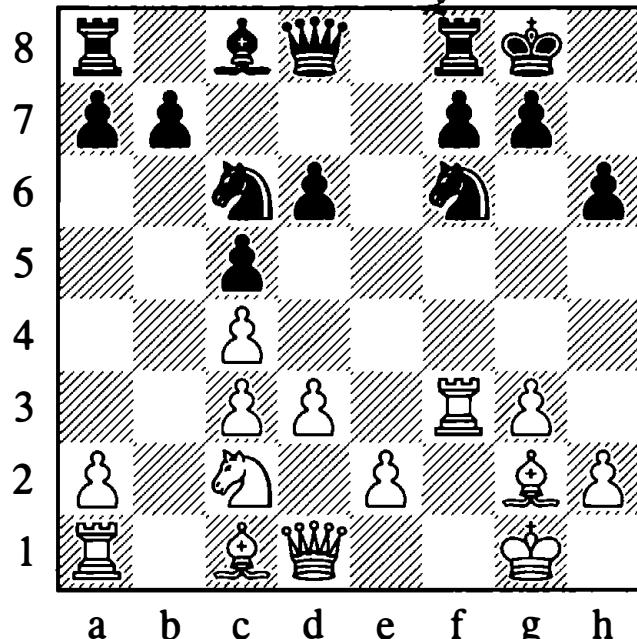
White intends e2-e4 and ♜f5.

9.f3 c5

Black is more or less forced to make this weakening move in order to drive the enemy knight away from the centre. After 9...exf3 10.♗xf3± we would reach a similar position as in the previous comment.

10.♘c2 exf3 11.♗xf3 ♜c6 12.d3

Black has managed to provoke a slight loss of harmony in White's camp, but this will be easily solved by moving the rook away from the long diagonal. The weakness of the d5-square and of Black's kingside are more persistent, and guarantee White a long-term strategic advantage. A draft plan is ♜e3, ♜d2, ♜a4 and ♜af1, with pressure on every sector of the board. In some cases, e2-e4 can be an important link in White's plan, strengthening his control over the f5-square.

**12...♝g4**

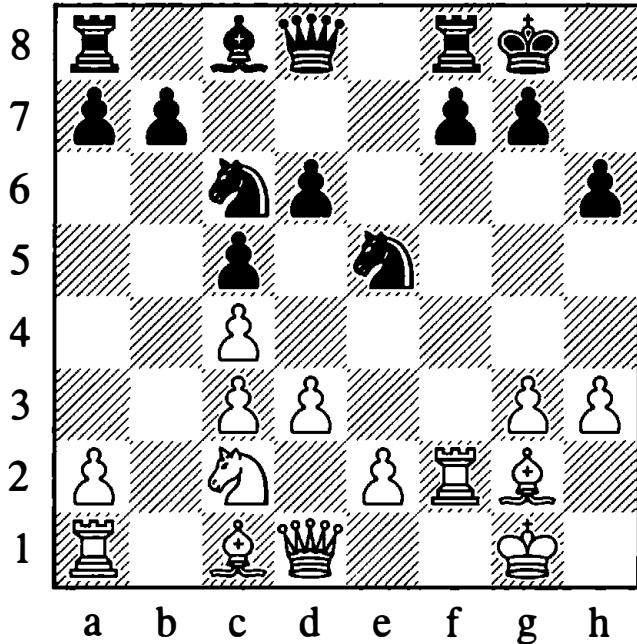
Black removes the knight from the exposed f6-square and hopes to find some stability by moving it to e5.

Ribli recommended 12...d5, but White can maintain the tension with 13.♗f4.

If 13...dxc4, then 14.♗xc4 would put the c5-pawn in danger, while otherwise White plans ♜a3, ♜d2 and ♜af1.

13...g5 does not help because of 14.♗xf6! ♜xf6 15.cxd5 ♜e5 16.♕a3 b6 17.♗d2±. After ♜f1 followed by c3-c4 and ♜b2, White would have a strong centre, an active pair of bishops and excellent chances for a kingside attack.

13.h3 ♜ge5 14.♗f2



14...♛a5

Ribli criticized this move. He also mentioned that 14...♝e6? loses material to 15.d4+- . His recommendation was 14...♝e8, but the character of the position would not change drastically after 15.♗b1±.

15.♗b1!

This move not only keeps the a2- and c3-pawns indirectly defended in view of the lines 15...♛xa2? 16.♞a3 and 15...♛xc3? 16.♞d2, trapping the queen in both cases, but also puts the b7-square under pressure, causing Black problems with his queenside development.

15...♛c7

This makes the queen's incursion to a5 merely a loss of time.

Once again, a neutral move seems to be preferable. For example:

15...♝e8

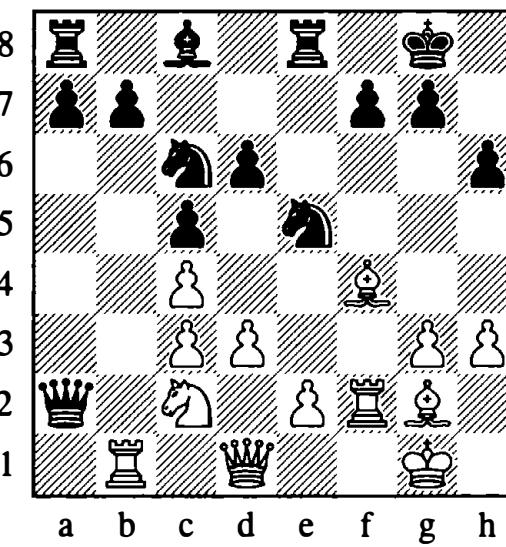
But Black is struggling anyway after:

16.♗f4

He cannot prepare to develop his queenside with: 16...♝b8? Because of: 17.d4!

Black's knights are hanging, while the courageous capture of the a2-pawn leads to a considerable loss of time:

16...♛xa2



17.♞e3!

This is the start of a slow but systematic plan to increase the pressure.

17...♛a5

Otherwise, the queen would get into trouble after ♜b1 followed by ♜d5 and e2-e4.

18.♞d5 ♛d8 19.♗d2 ♜e6

Black had to be ready to meet the threat of ♜xh6.

20.♗bf1 ♜d7

In this type of position it is too late for normal developing moves to help.

21.♝xe5!

Finally, everything is ready for the invasion of f7.

21...♜xe5 22.d4 ♜xc4 23.♗d3±

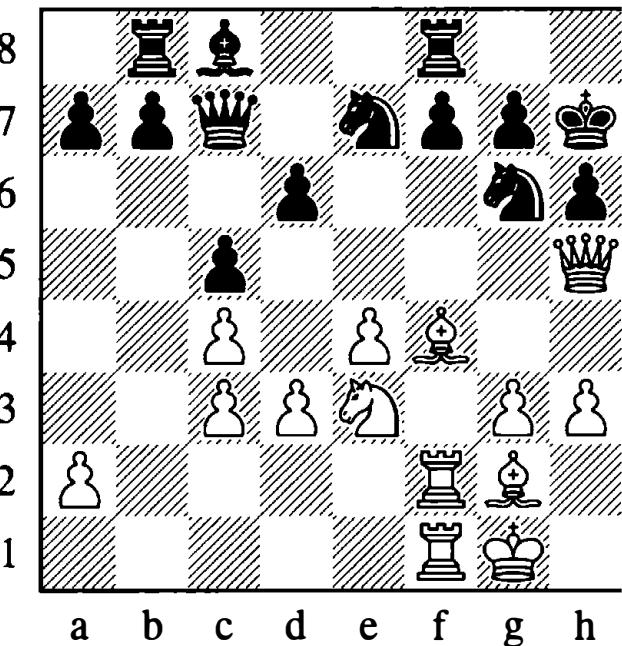
After ♜xf7 White will have a very strong attack.

16.e4 ♜e7 17.♗f4 ♜g6 18.♘e3

White has completed the regrouping of his minor pieces and only needs two more tempos to bring his remaining major pieces into the attack.

18...♝b8 19.♔h5 ♔h7 20.♝bf1

Black is behind in development and his kingside is weak. The early advance of the h-pawn can take at least part of the blame for both problems.

**20...f6?**

Amazingly, this solid-looking move does not consolidate Black's kingside, but instead weakens it decisively!

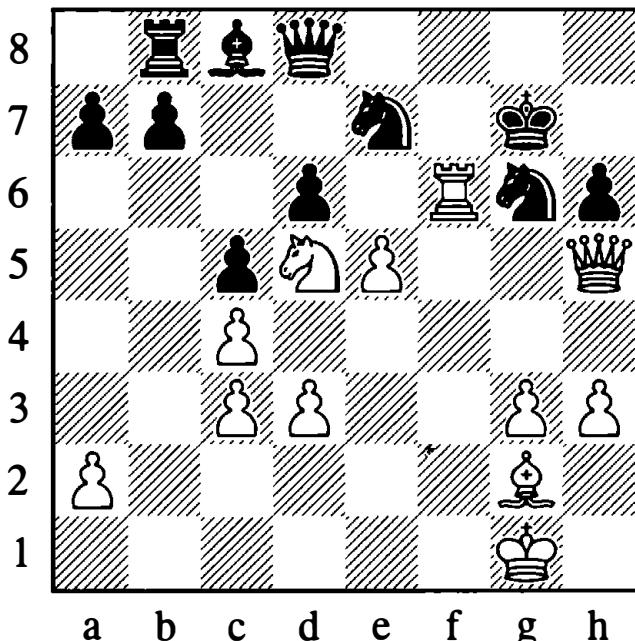
Black could instead try 20...♝e6, however, as pointed out by Ribli, White retains his strategic advantage after 21.♘d5±.

21.♔xh6!

An elegant sacrifice, crowning White's superior strategy.

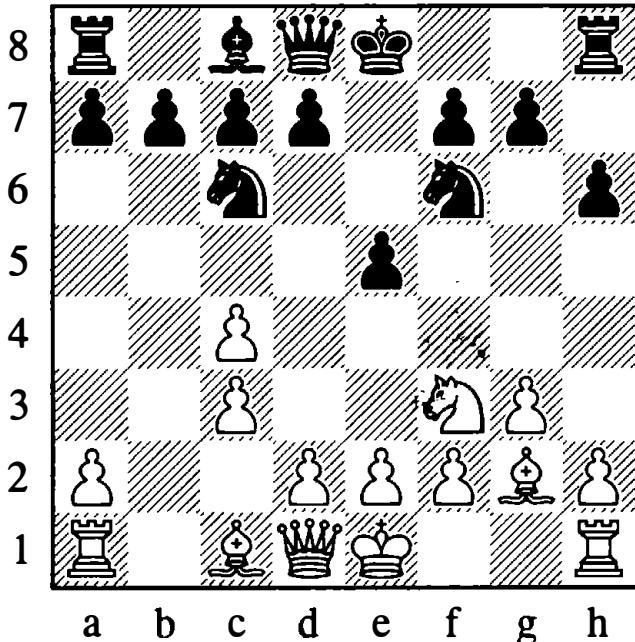
21...gxh6 22.♝xf6 ♞xf6 23.♝xf6

Black's knights cannot defend the king against the concentrated attack of all White's pieces.

23...♚g7 24.♘d5 ♔d8 25.e5!

The final blow, clearing the e4-square for the bishop. White won convincingly in Ribli – Rustemov, Germany 2005.

(1.c4 e5 2.g3 ♜f6 3.♗g2 h6 4.♘c3 ♜b4 5.♘f3 ♜xc3 6.bxc3)

C2) 6...♜c6

This move avoids weakening Black's dark squares, but allows White to secure a full share of the space in the centre.

7.0–0 0–0 8.d3 d6

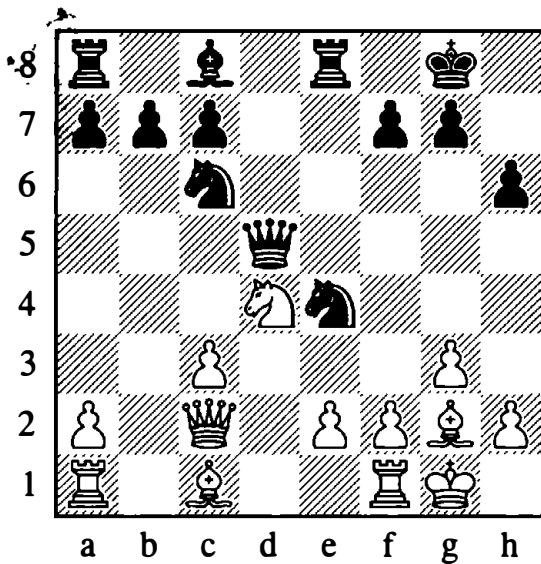
This is the most consistent continuation, consolidating on the dark squares.

Black's other option is:

8...e4 9.dxe4 ♜xe4 10.♗c2 ♜e8 11.♗d4 d5

Playing for a blockade with 11...♜c5 does not solve all Black's problems, because of his lack of development. 12.♕a3 ♜e6 13.♗ad1 ♜e5 14.♗xe6 ♜xe6 15.c5! Black is struggling to complete his development, while White is fully mobilized. 15...♝b8 16.♗d5 ♜a6 17.♗b4 b5 18.♗e4!± White threatens to double rooks on the d-file with strong pressure against the d7- and f7-pawns, Gulko – Khmelnitsky, USA (ch) 1995.

12.cxd5 ♜xd5

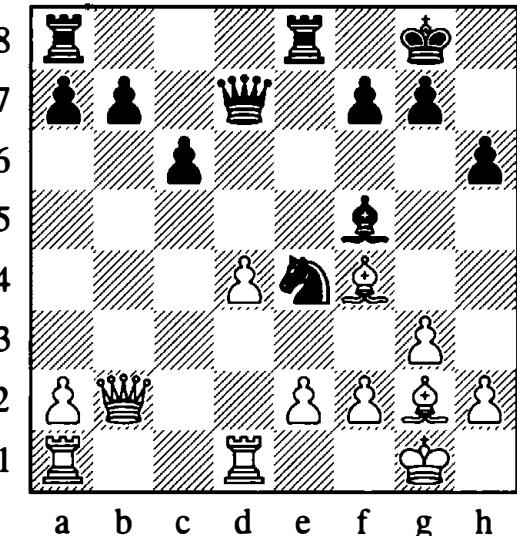


In the Seville match, Karpov played this position successfully with Black, but a later game showed the correct way to play with White:

13.♗d1 ♜f5 14.♗b2

The exposed position of most of Black's pieces forces him to release the tension in the centre, thus improving White's structure.

14...♜xd4 15.cxd4 ♜d7 16.♗f4 c6



This position was reached in Portisch – Salov, Tilburg 1994. Now, as Salov stated, White could have consolidated his advantage with: 17.♗ac1! ♜ad8 18.f3 ♜f6 19.e4±

Black has nothing to compensate for White's bishop pair and mobile centre.

I should warn the reader that neither Karpov nor Salov played 3...h6. They advanced the h-pawn on the 9th move in the 4...♗b4 Four Knights variation, but this variation never became popular. In fact, all the games examined in this section started with a Four Knights move order.

9.e4

To a certain extent, the structure is similar to the Botvinnik system. Two important differences are that the d4-square is not available to the enemy knights and White has the bishop pair. The only drawback of this position for White is that the f3-knight blocks the path of the f2-pawn, but this can easily be solved with ♜h4.

9...♝e6

Black can try to cross his opponent's plans with 9...♜e7 10.♗h4 g5, but this would weaken his kingside too much. 11.♘f3 ♜g6 After 12.♗xg5!? hxg5 13.♗xg5, followed by f2-f4, White had a powerful attack and won quickly in Jansa – Bisguier, Skopje 1972, but the simpler 12.h4!± may be even better.

10.♗h4 ♜b8 11.♗b1

White plans ♜e1 (to defend the h4-knight) followed by f2-f4 and an eventual invasion on f5.

11...a6

Remarkably, one of Black's possible plans is to exchange one of White's doubled pawns with ...b7-b5, and then open the centre with ...d6-d5. In fact, this seems to be the only

possible counterplay, but White has sufficient resources to stay in control.

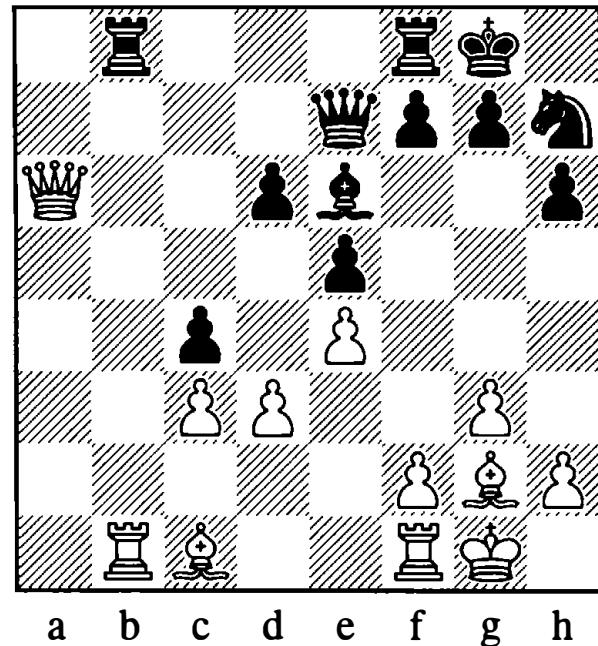
12.a4 ♜h7 13.♗f5 ♜e7 14.♗xe7† ♜xe7 15.a5!

Now that the b7-pawn is vulnerable, Black has to delay his plans regarding a possible ...f7-f5.

15...b5

This weakens Black's structure even more, but otherwise White would play f4-f5 with a kingside attack.

16.axb6 cxb6 17.♘a4 b5 18.♘xa6 bxc4



This position was reached in Serper – Zagrebelyn, St Petersburg 1994. Serper now recommended:

19.♗xb8 ♗xb8 20.♕a3 ♘d8 21.dxc4 ♘b6 22.♘a4±

White has an extra pawn and the weakness of the c4- and d6-pawns compensate for each other.

All these examples prove that the classical rules should not be ignored on the third move. 3...h6 should be regarded as a possible surprise weapon, but as a risky experiment against a strong opponent.

Conclusion:

Black's early deviations from the classical paths do not challenge the correctness of White's 2.g3 move order.

We have reached the end of a long journey. Although 1...e5 is a critical test of 1.c4, I feel there is no reason to be afraid of it. The Sicilian Defence is enormously popular nowadays, so what could possibly be wrong with the reversed Sicilian?

Index of Variations

Some chapters contain no theory and are thus not included in this index.

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