

Grandmaster Repertoire

Mihail
Marin

**The English
Opening**

VOLUME THREE



Tired of bad positions? Try the main lines!

QUALITY CHESS



Grandmaster Repertoire 5

The English Opening

Volume Three

By

Mihail Marin

with invaluable help from Valentin Stoica



Quality Chess
www.qualitychess.co.uk

First edition 2010 by Quality Chess UK Ltd

Copyright © 2010 Mihail Marin

Grandmaster Repertoire 5 - The English volume 3

All rights reserved. No part of this publication may be reproduced, stored in a retrieval system or transmitted in any form or by any means, electronic, electrostatic, magnetic tape, photocopying, recording or otherwise, without prior permission of the publisher.

Paperback ISBN 978-1-906552-59-6

Hardback ISBN 978-1-906552-30-5

All sales or enquiries should be directed to Quality Chess UK Ltd,
20 Balvie Road, Milngavie, Glasgow G62 7TA, United Kingdom

Phone +44 141 227 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 Ltd through
Sunrise Handicrafts, Smyczkowa 4/98, 20-844 Lublin, Poland

Typeset by Jacob Aagaard

Proofreading by Colin McNab

Edited by John Shaw and Andrew Greet

Cover design by Adamson Design

Printed in Estonia by Tallinna Raamatuträükikoja LLC

TO LUIZA

Series 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 series and hope that the reader will share some of that excitement.

John Shaw & Jacob Aagaard

Contents

Key to symbols used	6
Bibliography	7
Foreword by the Author	8
How to Use this Book	10
1 The Double English – A Repertoire	11
The Closed System	
2 Introduction and Sidelines	15
3 5...d6	27
4 5...e5	51
5 5...e6 – The Fischer System	79
6 5... $\mathbb{Q}f6$	101
7 Main Line with 8... $\mathbb{Q}xd4$	123
The Open Lines	
8 2... $\mathbb{Q}f6$	149
9 The Reversed Maroczy	165
10 Reversed Maroczy with ...g6	195
The Flexible 3...e6	
11 Introduction	215
12 4...b6 – The Inferior Queen's Indian	219
13 4...a6 – The Inferior Hedgehog	229
14 The Anti Tarrasch Catalan	237
15 6...cxd4 – The delayed Hedgehog and others	259
Variation Index	271

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
↑	with initiative
?	a weak move
??	a blunder
!	a good move
!!	an excellent move
!?	a move worth considering
?!	a move of doubtful value
#	mate

Bibliography

- Bagirov, Vladimir Konstantinovich. *Angliiskoe Nachalo*, Fizkultura i Sport, Moscow 1989.
- Botvinnik, Mikhail. *Analiticheskie i kriticheskie rabotii 1-4*, Fizkultura i Sport, Moscow 1984-87.
- Garrett and Marin. *Reggio Emilia 2007/8 – Il torneo del giubileo*, Caissa Italia Editore 2008.
- Hansen, Carsten. *The Gambit Guide to the English Opening 1...c5*, Gambit 1999.
- Karpov, Anatoly. *How to Play the English Opening*, Batsford Chess 2007.
- Khalifman, Alexander. *Opening for White According to Kramnik: Volume 3*, Chess Stars 2002.
- Kosten, Tony. *The Dynamic English*, Gambit 1999.
- Marin, Mihail. *Beating the Open Games*, Quality Chess 2008.
- McDonald, Neil. *Starting Out: The English*, Everyman Chess 2003.
- Osnos, Viacheslav Vulfovich. *Debiut Reti*, Fizkultura i Sport, Moscow 1990.
- Palliser, Kosten and Vigus. *Dangerous Weapons: Flank Openings*, Everyman Chess 2008.
- Pritchett, Craig. *Play the English*, Everyman Chess 2007.
- Watson, John. *Mastering the Chess Openings: Volume 3*, Gambit 2008.

Periodicals

- Chess Express*, Bucharest 1998-2001.
- Chess Informant*, Belgrade 1965-2010.
- Jaque*, Valencia 1990-2010.
- New in Chess Yearbooks*, Alkmaar 1987-2010.
- Ocho x Ocho*, Madrid 1994-2000.
- Schaknytt*, Gothenburg 1999-2006.
- 64 Shakhmatnoe obozrenie*, Moscow 1976-81.

Electronic Resources

- ChessPublishing.com*
- MegaCorr3*
- Mega Database 2010*

Foreword

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.Ґf3 followed by 2.g3 and 3.Ґg2 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...Ґf6 and 2...d5).

After having had enough of 1.Ґf3, 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, Ґf1-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, August 2010

How to Use this Book

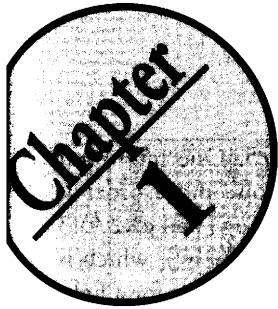
I have noticed that many chess players seem to read books by dipping in and out of various chapters, as the mood strikes them. I have a request – the first time you read this book, please read it in order. I ask this because I often introduce strategic ideas in one chapter that will be relied upon in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

This book supplies the third and final part of our complete repertoire for White with 1.c4 by covering the reply 1...c5. My usual approach throughout the series has been to point out possible transpositions to other openings, but not to rely on them for our repertoire. In this volume there are a couple of exceptions where I recommend a “non-English” approach, but only when Black is committed to a markedly inferior line. For example, in a couple of minor lines in Chapter 15 I suggest steering Black into ugly versions of the Tarrasch and Semi-Tarrasch. I hope in those cases the reader will forgive me and accept the fine positions White gains as compensation for my disloyalty to English purity!

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.

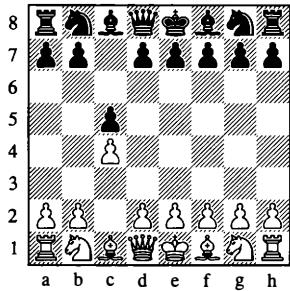
I have marked some moves with N for Novelty. This means the move is new to me and I cannot find it in my database or books. However, there is always a possibility that the move could have been played in some obscure game, unbeknown to me. Should the reader encounter any such examples, I would ask him 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.

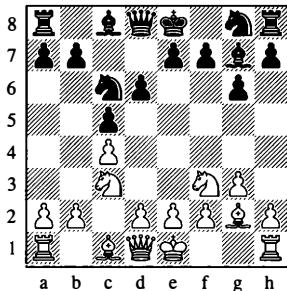


The Double English

A Repertoire

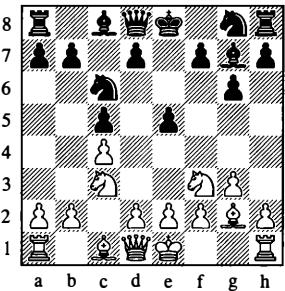


Chapter 3



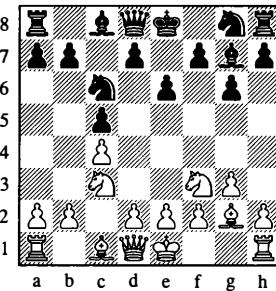
5...d6

Chapter 4



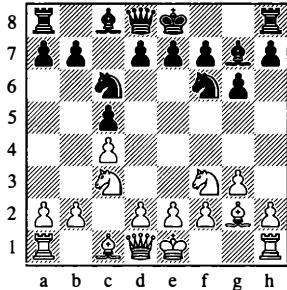
5...e5

Chapter 5



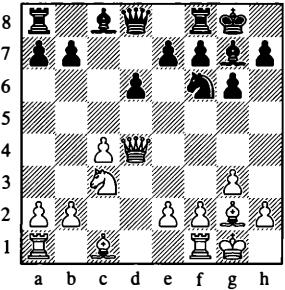
5...e6 – The Fischer System

Chapter 6



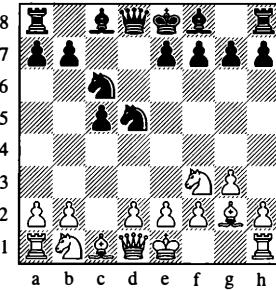
5...Qf6

Chapter 7



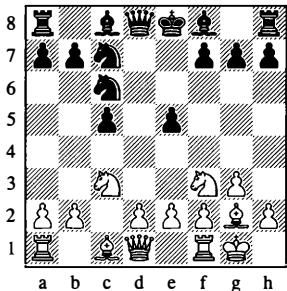
Main Line with 8...Qxd4

Chapter 8



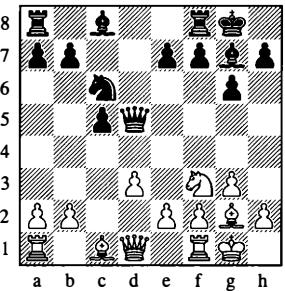
2...Qf6

Chapter 9



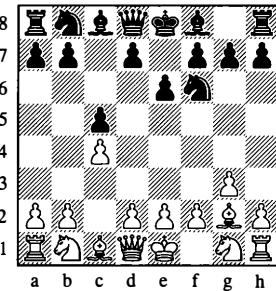
The Reversed Maroczy

Chapter 10

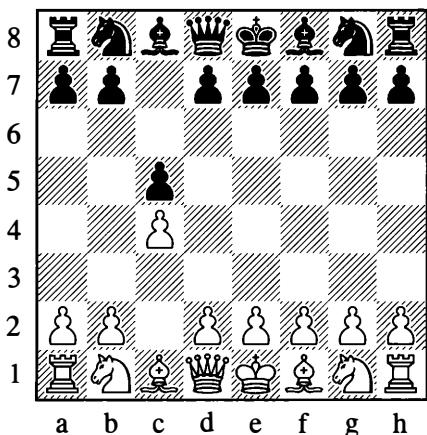


Reversed Maroczy with ...g6

Chapters 11-15



The Flexible 3...e6

1.c4 c5

For some reasons, the large variety of variations possible from this position is grouped under the name The Symmetrical English. Experience has taught me that, with all the pieces on board, it is much too early to speak about symmetry and that play can take a very interesting and non symmetrical course after just a few moves.

I would think of "The Double English" as a more adequate description, because both sides have more or less the same plans at their disposal, although it is White who generally restricts Black's choice to a certain extent. It is enough to compare the tabiyas examined in the Chapters 7 and 10 or some lines from Chapters 2 and 3 in order to get a picture of what I mean by that.

White's second move is the same as in the variations from the first two volumes:

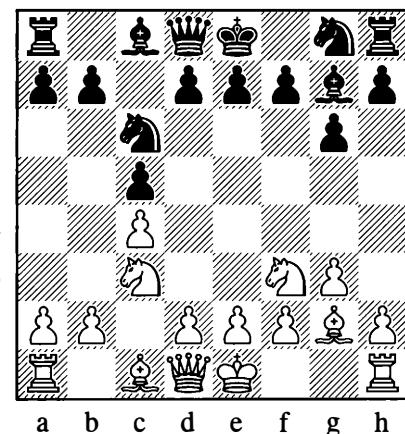
2.g3

In tournament practice, 2. $\mathbb{Q}f3$ is an important alternative, aiming to fight for space in the centre with an early d2-d4. From the point of view of our general repertoire, this is of little relevance, because we are committed to playing 2.g3 against moves like 1... $\mathbb{Q}f6$ or 1...g6, when Black can transpose to the Double

English with 2...c5 or 3...c5. One important achievement of our repertoire move order is avoiding the English Hedgehog (1.c4 c5 2. $\mathbb{Q}f3$ $\mathbb{Q}f6$ 3. $\mathbb{Q}c3$ e6 4.g3 b6 5. $\mathbb{Q}g2$ $\mathbb{Q}b7$), which is a reliable weapon for players aiming for a fight with mutual chances.

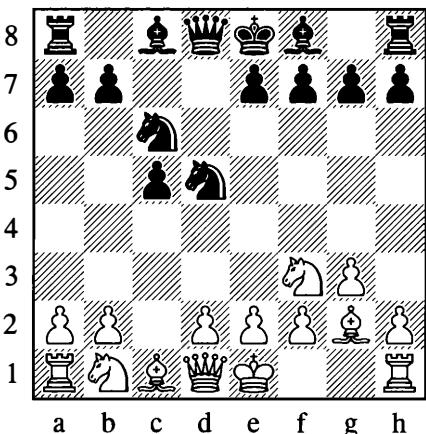
I have grouped the analytical material into three big categories.

In Chapters 2 to 7 we will examine the so-called closed system.



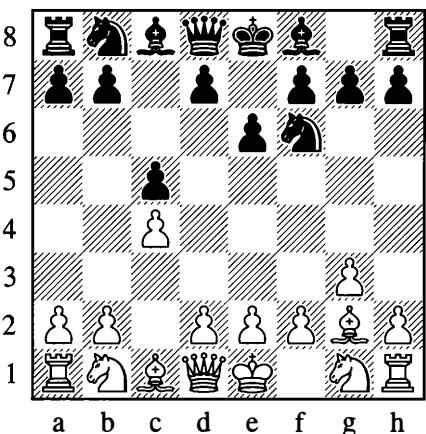
These lines are characterized by the fact that both sides refrain from an early opening of the centre with d4 or ...d5, and play symmetrically for as many as four or five moves! I assume that the main reason that makes 2. $\mathbb{Q}f3$ more popular than 2.g3 at grandmaster level is the lack of confidence in White's chances for an advantage in the closed system. Black has several ways of trying to trick his opponent into a long lasting symmetry and I must confess that only during my work on the present volume did I find adequate antidotes to all these early equalizing attempts.

In Chapters 8 to 10 we will see a more ambitious black approach. Given the fact that White is refraining from an early d4, Black bravely opens the centre himself, with ...d5.



Being a tempo down with respect to similar positions with reversed colours, Black risks becoming a bit overextended and cannot prevent White from taking over the initiative in typically hypermodern fashion.

Black's approach in the last five chapters is more flexible. The move order employed ($\dots \mathbb{Q}f6$ $3.\mathbb{Q}g2$ $e6$) leaves open the possibility of either reaching a Hedgehog or transposing to an opening outside our English repertoire.



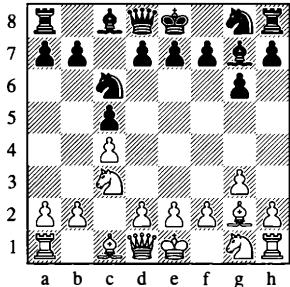
It is physically impossible to prevent all such transpositions, but objectively speaking Black cannot be proud of his achievements. In Chapter 12 he reaches an unfavourable line of the Queen's Indian. In Chapter 13 he gets quite close to a genuine Hedgehog, but the only move that makes a difference ($\dots \mathbb{Q}a8-a7$) is quite awkward and leads to difficult play. The Catalan variation examined in Chapter 14 is very pleasant for White. Finally, in Chapter 15 we get the Hedgehog structure with reasonable development for Black, but with the move $\dots \mathbb{Q}d7$ instead of $\dots b6$ and $\dots \mathbb{Q}b7$, which is far more passive.

Having completed my work on this final volume, I retain the feeling that precisely in the so called symmetrical variation White obtains the best chances to reach a position with a risk-free initiative. Black's kingside space advantage from the first volume and his extra pawn after an early $\dots dxc4$ in the second one frequently result in double-edged positions, but in the present volume we can state that Black simply is a tempo down.



The Closed System

Introduction and Sidelines



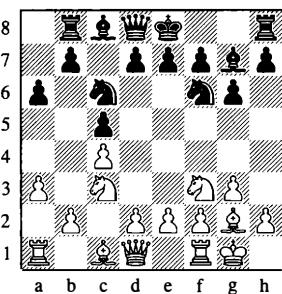
Variation Index

1.c4 c5 2.g3 ♜c6 3.♗g2 g6 4.♗c3 ♗g7

5.♗f3

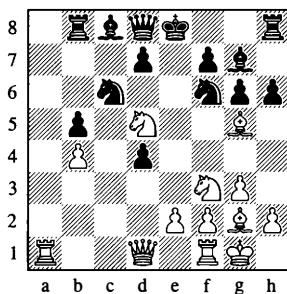
A) 5...♝h6?!	17
B) 5...a6 6.0–0 ♞b8 7.a3!	20
B1) 7...♝f6	20
B2) 7...b5	21

B1) after 7...♝f6



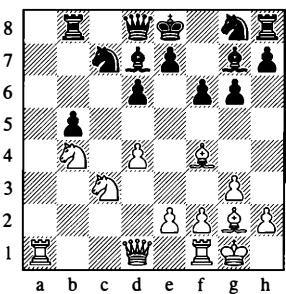
8.b4!N

B2) note to 10...♝xb4



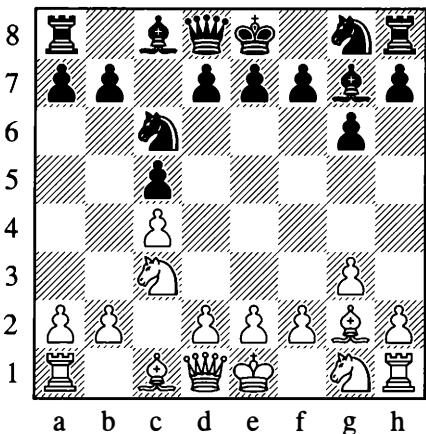
14.♗xf6!N

B2) after 15...♝d7



16.♛d3±

1.c4 c5 2.g3 ♘c6 3.♗g2 g6 4.♘c3 ♗g7



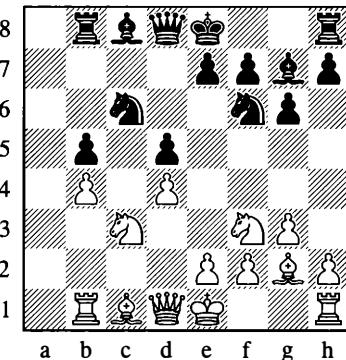
This is one of the most important and controversial tabiyas of the English Opening. So far Black has developed in a manner consistent with his first move, imitating White's play identically. If he manages to maintain symmetry for, let us say, 5-7 more moves, his chances to achieve complete equality would be excellent. White, on the other hand, is concerned about breaking symmetry as soon as possible.

Ever since I was a kid I was fascinated by the richness of strategic and tactical ideas that could be masked behind a seemingly dull and static position. Florin Gheorghiu, who was a national idol for most Romanian kids of my age, used to say half-jokingly that the above position is a mutual zugzwang! There is some truth in it, in the sense that most of the reasonable moves tend to be an important commitment, allowing the opponent to orientate his counter action better. In order to understand this paradoxical aspect, we should conduct a review of the main plans available.

The situation in the centre is relatively stable at this stage. In the near future, White can aim to undermine the enemy c-pawn with either a3 followed by b4, or d4, which can be prepared

by either ♘f3 or e3 and ♘ge2. (Obviously the exact same ideas are available to Black as well.)

White does not achieve anything after an immediate queenside operation with 5.a3. Black can maintain symmetry for a long time, with excellent chances for equality. An illustrative line is 5...a6 6.♗b1 ♗b8 7.b4 cxb4 8.axb4 b5 9.cxb5 axb5 10.♘f3 ♘f6 11.d4 d5 and so on.



We reach a similar situation after 5.e3, planning 6.♘ge2 and d4. The main line goes 5...e6 6.♘ge2 ♘ge7 7.0-0 0-0 8.d4 cxd4 9.♘xd4 d5 10.cxd5 ♘xd5 11.♘xd5 ♘xd4 12.exd4 exd5 and the only thing Black has to know is that after 13.♗b3 he should finally break symmetry with 13...♗e6, achieving complete equality.

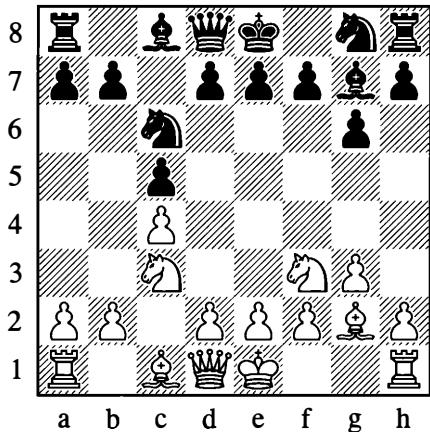
Adopting the Botvinnik triangle with 5.e4 is not effective either. After 5...e5 6.♘ge2 ♘ge7 7.0-0 0-0 8.a3 a6 9.♗b1 ♗b8 10.b4 cxb4 11.axb4 b5 12.cxb5 axb5 the position is dead equal.

All these leave us with the most natural developing move:

5.♘f3

There are some negative aspects to this move that immediately spring up to mind. White does not threaten d2-d4 yet, while the control over the d5-square is weakened, which seems to offer Black a wide choice of plans.

On the other hand, maintaining symmetry is not possible, because 5... $\mathbb{Q}f6$ is answered with 6.d4, allowing White to convert the advantage of the first move into a space advantage in the centre. This important line is examined in detail in Chapters 6 and 7.

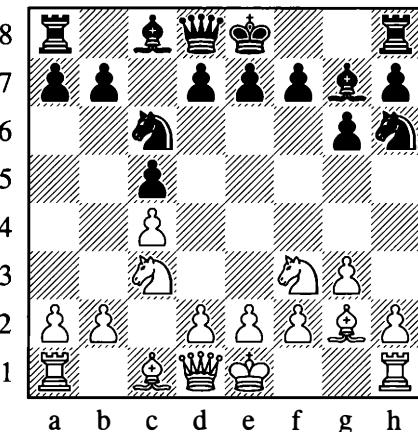


Black has made numerous attempts to prove that White's last move is an important commitment. 5...d6, 5...e5 and 5...e6 are examined in Chapters 3, 4 and 5 respectively. In this chapter, we will deal with A) 5... $\mathbb{Q}h6$! and B) 5...a6.

Before exploring any specific variations, I will mention that most of the aforementioned continuations have the major drawback of delaying Black's kingside development. It may seem that this is not too relevant, since the position is stable and play is supposed to have a slow character. To a certain extent, the situation is similar to that from the Giuoco Pianissimo variation. In my introduction to the respective chapter from *Beating the Open Games*, I emphasized the fact that development should remain a high priority even in apparently peaceful positions. Applying the same rule in the Symmetrical English has helped me finding adequate antidotes to all Black's answers to 5. $\mathbb{Q}f3$. In some cases, this has required some intense analytical effort,

but the final result was quite rewarding: I have concluded that Gheorghiu's axiom regarding the mutual zugzwang is not valid!

A) 5... $\mathbb{Q}h6$?



Black makes a developing move without weakening the control over the d4-square. However, with the white rook still on h1, this method of developing the knight allows the strong answer:

6.h4!

White takes advantage of the fact that ...h5 is temporarily impossible in order to submit the enemy kingside to unpleasant pressure.

Playing in the spirit of line C from Chapter 3, where the moves 5...d6 and 6.0–0 are inserted before ... $\mathbb{Q}h6$, is less effective with the Black d-pawn on its initial square: 6.d4 cxd4 7. $\mathbb{Q}xd4$ 0–0 Since the c6-square has not been weakened, Black is not forced to release the tension. White cannot play 8.0–0 because of 8... $\mathbb{Q}xd4$ 9. $\mathbb{Q}xh6$ $\mathbb{Q}xe2!$ †, winning a pawn. Therefore, he has to make some sort of concession, such as 8. $\mathbb{Q}c2$, relieving the pressure against the enemy queenside and allowing 8...d6, or 8. $\mathbb{Q}xh6$ $\mathbb{Q}xh6$ 9.0–0, when after 9... $\mathbb{Q}g7$ his problem regarding maintaining stability in the centre would be reiterated.

6...d6 7.d3 ♜g4

Since the kingside is not a safe location for his king, Black prepares long castling. Unfortunately, after the planned ...♝d7, his bishop will not enjoy the desired stability along the h3-c8 diagonal.

One famous classical game went:

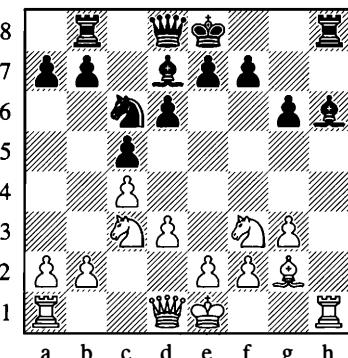
7...♝b8 8.h5 ♜d7

Black underestimates the kingside danger and hopes to generate some queenside counterplay with ...a6 and ...b5.

9.♗xh6!

The point behind this exchange will become clear a few moves later.

9...♝xh6 10.hxg6 hxg6



11.♕c1!

A very elegant move, utilizing the enemy bishop's pin for taking over the control of the h-file. Under the given circumstances, the queen is taboo because of ♜xh8 mate, but even if Black had played ...a6 instead of ...♝d7, 11...♝xc1 would have lost material to 12.♜xh8† ♜d7 13.♜xd8†.

11...♝g7 12.♜xh8† ♜xh8 13.♕h6 ♜xc3†

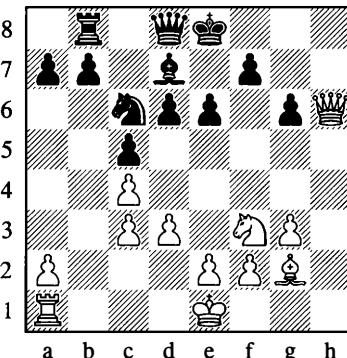
Black gives up his active bishop in order to speed up the development of his poorly coordinated army. As pointed out by Botvinnik, 13...♝f6 14.♗g5 would have left the bishop exposed to the threats ♜h7 or ♜ge4 anyway.

14.bxc3

White controls the only open file and has a stable advantage.

14...e6

So far, we have followed the game Botvinnik – Gligoric, Moscow 1956.



15.♗d2!N

This was recommended by Botvinnik as the best continuation. Here are some lines analysed by the Patriarch:

15...♛f6

15...♝e7 can be met by 16.♝h1, thus avoiding simplifications with ...♛h8.

The attempted counterattack with 15...♝b6 is easily parried by 16.♝c1.

16.♗g5 ♜e7

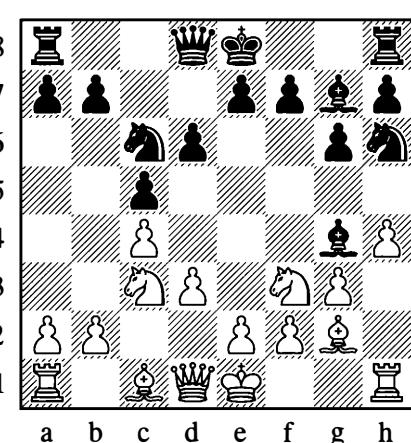
16...♝xf2? leads to a decisive attack after 17.♝f1.

17.♗e4

Black is not in time to put up a fight for the h-file:

17...♝h8 18.♝xf6 ♜xh6 19.♝g8†

With a decisive material advantage.



8.h5!

It transpires that Black's previous move did not prevent the further advance of the h-pawn.

8... $\mathbb{W}d7$

The most consistent move, although it involves a certain amount of risk.

8... $\mathbb{Q}xh5?$ loses a piece after 9. $\mathbb{Q}xh6$ $\mathbb{Q}xh6$ 10.g4.

8...gxh5 is a strategic concession, chronically weakening Black's kingside structure. 9. $\mathbb{Q}g5!$ The most active way to clear the path for the f-pawn in order to retrieve the sacrificed pawn. From g5, the knight puts pressure on the enemy kingside and can retreat to the active e4-square if chased away by the weakening move ...f7-f6. 9... $\mathbb{W}d7$ 10.f3 $\mathbb{Q}f5$ 11. $\mathbb{Q}xh5$ $\mathbb{Q}g6$ 12. $\mathbb{Q}h2$ $\mathbb{Q}f5$ 13. $\mathbb{Q}h3$ e6 14. $\mathbb{Q}ge4$ 0–0–0 15. $\mathbb{Q}g5\pm$ White has the better structure and a harmonious piece development, Simpson – J. Shahade, Internet (blitz) 2008.

9. $\mathbb{Q}g5$

The same idea as in the line from the previous comment. White immediately questions the stability of Black's pieces by creating the threat of f2-f3.

Botvinnik's tactical operation is less effective once Black has enabled long castling: 9. $\mathbb{Q}xh6$ $\mathbb{Q}xh6$ 10.hxg6 hxg6 11. $\mathbb{W}c1$ $\mathbb{Q}g7$ 12. $\mathbb{Q}xh8\uparrow$ $\mathbb{Q}xh8$ 13. $\mathbb{W}h6$ 0–0–0 White's control over the h-file is not too threatening and may have a temporary character in view of the threat of ... $\mathbb{Q}f6$ followed by ... $\mathbb{Q}h8$, Marcus – Christiansen, Wijk aan Zee 1976.

9... $\mathbb{Q}xh5$

This certainly looks risky, as Black is placing the bishop on an unfavourable square.

9...0–0–0

This consistent move also fails to solve Black's problems.

10.f3 $\mathbb{Q}e6$ 11.g4

The e6-bishop and the h6-knight are badly placed, outweighing Black's formal lead in development. White intends to play $\mathbb{Q}d2$, $\mathbb{Q}a4$ and castle long. A possible continuation is:

11... $\mathbb{Q}b8$

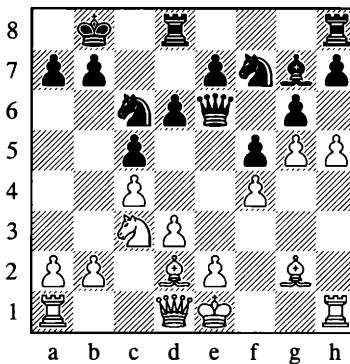
Removing the king from a dangerous diagonal.

12. $\mathbb{Q}d2$ f5

The only way to strive for a constructive regrouping.

13. $\mathbb{Q}xe6$ $\mathbb{W}xe6$ 14.g5 $\mathbb{Q}f7$ 15.f4!

White keeps restricting the enemy knight and activates his own light-squared bishop. His strategic advantage is indisputable.

**15... $\mathbb{Q}b4$**

This attempt to create some counterplay while parrying the strong threat of $\mathbb{Q}d5$ fails tactically.

16. $\mathbb{W}b3!$

It turns out that the d3-pawn is taboo:

16... $\mathbb{Q}xd3\uparrow$ 17. $\mathbb{Q}f1$ $\mathbb{Q}b4$ 18.a3±

And White wins a piece.

10.f3!

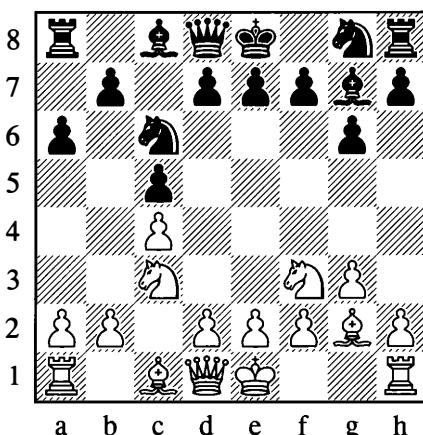
Rather soon, the h5-bishop will be trapped and Black will not manage to get adequate compensation for the lost material.

10...f6 11.Qh3 e5 12.Qf2

White reinforces the g4-square in order to discourage eventual sacrifices after the inevitable g3-g4.

12...f5 13.Qxh6 Qxh6 14.g4

White won a piece and eventually the game in Krivoshey – Topalov, Albox (rapid) 2005.

B) 5...a6

A very ambitious move. Since nothing seems to be happening in the centre for the time being, Black starts the thematic queenside counterplay. Abstractly speaking, this must be very risky, because the kingside development is strongly delayed, but concretely this is far from easy to exploit.

I must confess that initially I had been quite worried about this approach. As mentioned already, White is not interested in a symmetrical course of events such as 6.a3 Bb8 7.Bb1 b5 8.cxb5 axb5 9.b4 cxb4 10.axb4 Qf6, when Black would be very close to equality. At the same time, allowing Black to gain space on the queenside may have negative long term effects if not countered in the best way.

6.0–0

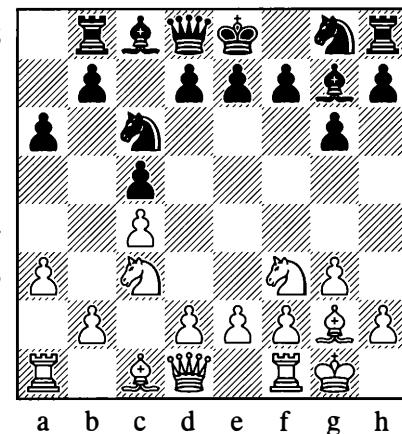
The most flexible move, inviting Black to continue his risky plan.

6...Bb8

The more cautious 6...d6 transposes to line A from Chapter 3 after 7.a3.

7.a3!

Once White has obtained a lead of two tempos in the kingside development, it is a good moment to initiate queenside operations, even if this involves a pawn sacrifice.



We will examine B1) 7...Qf6 and B2) 7...b5. Once again, a transposition to line A from the next chapter is possible after 7...d6 8.Bb1.

B1) 7...Qf6

This was played in a couple of games, but White's next move proves that it is already too late for Black to return to safe paths.

8.b4!N

The theory of the English Opening was in an incipient phase in Steinitz's times, but one of the rules formulated by the first official World Champion is perfectly illustrated by this resolute move: the player having an advantage has to attack, under the threat of losing his trumps.

Having spent two tempos on ...a6 and ...Bb8 without carrying out the thematic ...b5, Black

faces problems maintaining stability in the centre.

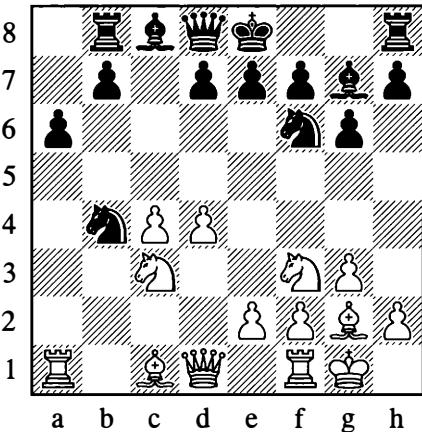
8...cxb4

One more time, a transposition to the next chapter is possible after 8...d6 9.Qb1±.

The hyperactive 8...Qe4 brings Black nothing but chronic problems of development after 9.bxc5 Qxc3 10.dxc3±.

9.axb4 Qxb4 10.d4

At the cost of a pawn, White has obtained a mobile central majority, while Black's pieces are unstable.



10...0-0

The strategically constructive 10...d6, aiming to slow down the advance of White's centre, leads to trouble after 11.Qa4† Qc6 12.d5.

Fighting back for space on the queenside only accentuates Black's developing problems: 10...b5 11.cxb5 axb5 12.Qb3 Qa6 (12...Qc6?! is strongly met by 13.Qf4± when 13...d6 loses to 14.Qg5, while against any rook move 14.d5 would be crushing.) 13.Qe5 0-0 14.Qd5 Qxd5 15.Qxd5 e6 16.Qf3± Black has no obvious way to complete his development, while his extra pawn has no significance and is likely to be lost anyway.

11.Qb3 a5

Black decides to return the pawn in order to speed up his development.

After 11...Qc6 12.d5± Black loses ground completely.

12.Qa3 d5

12...Qa6 13.e4± is not especially appealing for Black.

13.Qxb4 dxc4

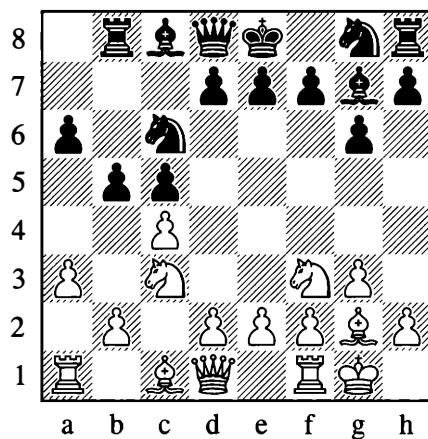
This intermediate move allows Black to keep his problems within bearable limits.

14.Qxc4 Qe6 15.Qb5 axb4 16.Qxb4 Qd5

17.Qxd5 Qxd5 18.e3±

White has the more compact structure and an active position. These elements offer him realistic hopes to reach a favourable endgame.

B2) 7...b5



Consistent, but risky. Black completes his queenside plan without touching the kingside.

8.cxb5 axb5 9.b4!

Just as in the previous line, this pawn sacrifice is the only way to punish Black for neglecting his development. Black is more or less forced

to accept the sacrifice, otherwise White would have an advantage of several tempos in a symmetrical structure. Apart from the right to move first, he has also saved time by omitting the move $\mathbb{E}ab1$. This latter detail could potentially be worth two tempos, because after the predictable opening of the a-file the rook is better placed on a1 than on b1. For a concrete example, refer to the first variation given in the comments to Black's 10th move.

9... $\mathbb{C}xb4$

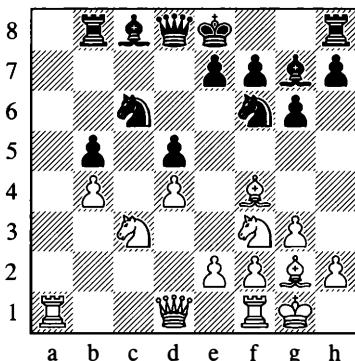
This is the lesser evil. Black fails to stabilize the position after 9...c4 10.a4±.

9...d6 is also unsatisfactory, as 10.bxc5 dxc5 11. $\mathbb{E}b1\pm$ leaves the black queenside pawns hanging.

10.axb4 $\mathbb{Q}xb4$

The critical continuation, aiming to compensate for the problems of development with a minimal material advantage.

10... $\mathbb{Q}f6$?! leads to a strong White initiative after: 11.d4 d5 12. $\mathbb{Q}f4\pm$



This position should be compared to that which arises after 5.a3 a6 6. $\mathbb{E}b1$ $\mathbb{E}b8$ 7.b4 cxb4 8.axb4 b5 9.cxb5 axb5 10. $\mathbb{Q}f3$ $\mathbb{Q}f6$ 11.0–0 0–0 12.d4 d5 13. $\mathbb{Q}f4$, which is considered to be almost equal. In our current position, Black has not yet castled and the a-file is under White's control.

10...e5

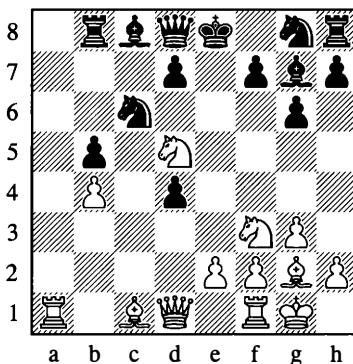
This fails to stabilize the centre because of a new pawn sacrifice:

11.d4! exd4

White's play is simpler after 11... $\mathbb{Q}xd4$ 12. $\mathbb{Q}xd4$ exd4 13. $\mathbb{Q}d5$, when 13... $\mathbb{Q}f6$ is met by 14. $\mathbb{W}xd4\pm$ and 13... $\mathbb{Q}e7$? is bad because of 14. $\mathbb{Q}g5$. In both cases, we can notice the effects of the absence of the c6-knight.

12. $\mathbb{Q}d5$

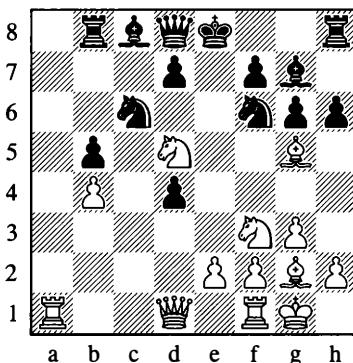
Black's extra pawn is vulnerable, while he has problems developing.



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

After 12... $\mathbb{Q}f6$ 13. $\mathbb{Q}g5$ the strong threat of 14. $\mathbb{Q}xd4$ forces Black to spend a tempo on 13...h6, allowing White to retrieve the pawn with 14. $\mathbb{Q}f6\pm$.

13. $\mathbb{Q}g5$ h6



14. $\mathbb{Q}xf6$!N

After 14.♕xf6† ♜xf6 15.♕xf6 ♜xf6 16.♗d2 0–0 17.♗ad1 ♜e8 18.♗fe1± White will retrieve the pawn and maintain the better structure in the endgame, Sichinava – Telljohann, Leon 1996.

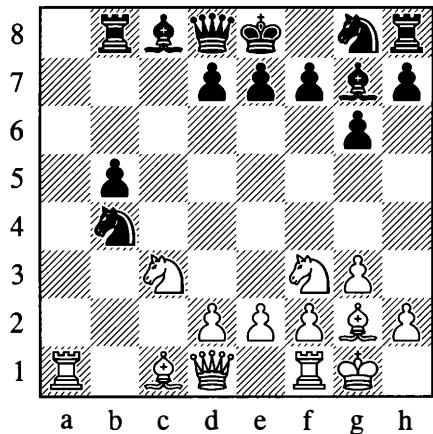
The text move is even stronger. White refrains from retrieving the pawn at once, but keeps his central knight.

14...♜xf6 15.♗c1!

The queen keeps the h6-pawn under observation, inhibiting castling while also threatening ♜c5, which would leave the enemy king stuck in the centre.

15...♝f8 16.♗d2 ♜g7 17.♗e4 ♜e7 18.♗b2±

Black has big problems completing his development, while his extra pawn remains weak.



11.d4!

The most energetic continuation. After a short queenside diversion, he starts gaining space in the centre, opening the c1-h6 diagonal for his bishop and putting the enemy knight in a delicate situation.

Alternatively, White can opt for absolute safety with:

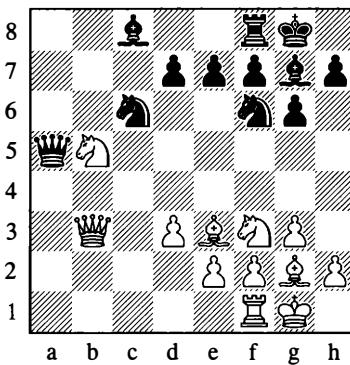
11.♗b1

With this move White immediately regains the pawn, maintaining a slight but persistent initiative. The time spent in restoring

material equality allows Black to complete his kingside development and hope of reaching a draw with careful defence. The following game, played between two outstanding classical players, is a good illustration for the description above.

11...♛c6 12.♗xb5 ♜xb5 13.♗xb5 ♜a5 14.♗b3 ♜f6 15.d3 0–0 16.♗d2 ♜b6 17.♗e3 ♜a5 18.♗d2 ♜b6 19.♗e3 ♜a5

The structure is perfectly symmetrical, but Black is underdeveloped and has to play carefully. We will encounter a similar situation in line D of Chapter 3. I analysed two continuations from this position:



a) 20.♗b1 ♜g4 21.♗d2 ♜b6 22.♗e1 d6 23.♗c2

Most White's pieces are targeting the enemy queenside, while the black rook is out of play. Fortunately for the defender, Black has no pawn left on the queenside, otherwise he would face huge problems defending it.

23...♛ce5 24.♛c7 ♜a7 25.♛b5 ♜b6 26.♛xe5 ♜xe5 27.♛c7 ♜xc7 28.♛xc7

The queen swap does not bring full relief for Black, because the white rook is still unchallenged in its domination on the queenside.

28...♛d7 29.♛d5 ♜e8 30.♗c1 ♜c5 31.♗b4 ♜g4

Black has finally opened the rook's access to the queenside open files, but the vulnerability

of the e7-pawn delays the moment of its effective activation.

32.♗f1 ♗a6 33.♕a3 ♗f8 34.♗e3 ♗d7
35.♗b7

This new wave of White's attack consists of the harassment of Black's poorly coordinated minor pieces.

35...♗b5 36.♗b1 ♗c7 37.♗d5 ♗xd5 38.♗xb5

Finally, after a sequence of about 25 moves, White has converted his initiative into a of more stable nature: the bishop pair.

38...♗b8 39.e3 ♗c7 40.♗b3 ♗e6 41.d4±

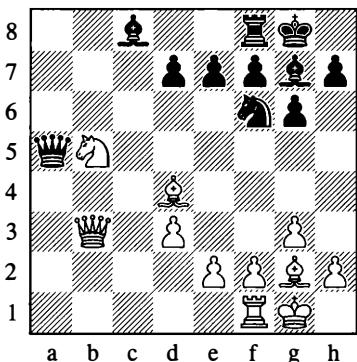
Despite the simplifications, Black's position remains passive. Both his minor pieces are restricted and the white bishop pair can inflict damages at the first sign of weakness. Nevertheless, Black managed to reach a draw after another 30 moves of suffering in Romanishin – Tal, Lvov 1984.

b) It may be a matter of nuance, but the following improvement looks even more unpleasant for the defender:

20.♗fd4!N

In order to avoid being left with a weakness on c6, Black has to play:

20...♗xd4 21.♗xd4±



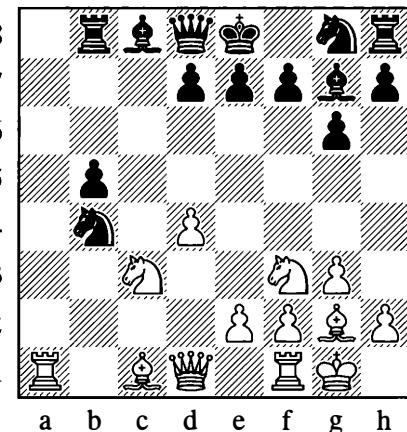
White threatens to increase his queenside domination with ♘a1, and Black is unable to develop his queenside as follows:

21...♗a6!

This tempting move only accentuates Black's problems after:

22.♗a7!±

When the threat is even more powerful than before.



11...♗a6

The safest continuation, although the knight is somewhat passive on the edge of the board. White would also retain a strong initiative after 11...♗b7 12.♗f4 d6 13.♗b3±.

In the event of 11...♗f6 B. Maksimovic recommends 12.♗e5!, taking the c6-square under control while also eyeing f7. After 12...0–0 13.♗b3 play would transpose to the note to Black's tenth move in line B1.

After a loss of two tempos, the knight would be exposed on c6:

11...♗c6 12.♗f4 d6 13.d5!!

An energetic move, aiming to drive the enemy knight away and clearing the d4-square for the king's knight. The enthusiastic punctuation refers to the fact that White is not put off by the fact that his pieces are hanging along the g7-a1 diagonal.

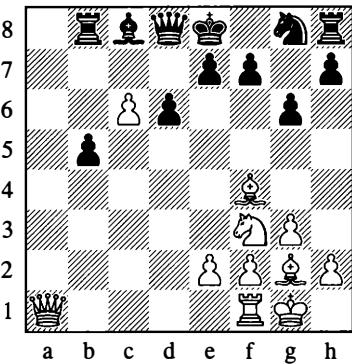
13.♗xb5?! ♗xb5 14.♗a4 is also interesting, according to B. Maksimovic.

13...♗xc3 14.dxc6!

Threatening ♗a7 followed by c7.

14... $\mathbb{Q}xa1$ 15. $\mathbb{W}xa1$

B. Maksimovic ends his analysis for *Chess Informant* in this position, concluding that White has compensation for the sacrificed material. He is absolutely right, but maybe a bit too modest. As shown by the following analysis, White has an advantage.



15... $\mathbb{Q}f6$ 16.e4!

Threatening to increase the action scope of the f4-bishop with e4-e5.

16... $\mathbb{Q}b6$

Unfortunately for Black, he cannot castle yet, as this would leave the e7-pawn undefended: 16...0-0?! 17. $\mathbb{W}a7$ $\mathbb{W}b6$ 18. $\mathbb{W}xe7$ And White will retrieve the sacrificed material with interest, in view of the threats of $\mathbb{W}xf6$ and $\mathbb{Q}xd6$.

17.e5 dxe5 18. $\mathbb{Q}xe5$ 0-0 19.c7!

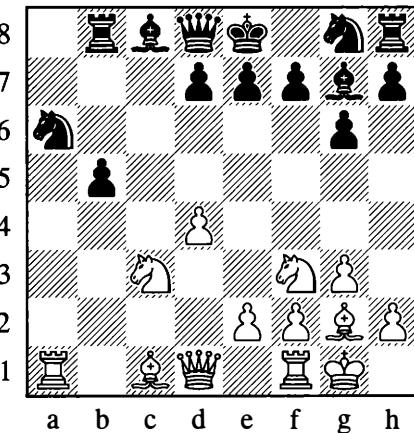
A fantastic situation: the pawn obviously is poisoned, but the queen has no favourable squares along the d-file, despite its apparent mobility!

19... $\mathbb{W}xc7$

19... $\mathbb{W}e8$ 20. $\mathbb{Q}h6\pm$ regains the exchange, keeping a deadly strong pawn on the seventh rank.

20. $\mathbb{Q}xg6\pm$

Followed by $\mathbb{Q}xf8$. With his excellent development, safer king and mighty bishop pair, White will have more than enough compensation for the missing pawn.



12. $\mathbb{Q}e5$

Such moves are effective only with the benefit of a considerable lead in development. The knight looks exposed in the centre and the enemy structure does not yet contain any serious weaknesses. On the other hand, the knight exerts definite pressure against Black's territory and any attempt to drive it away with pawn moves would lead to a strong loss of harmony in Black's camp.

12... $\mathbb{f}6$

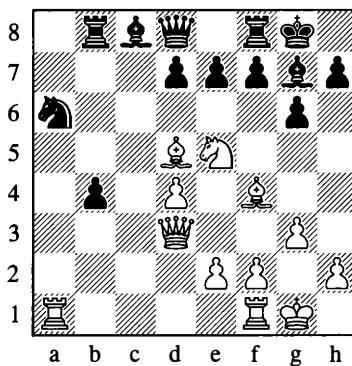
The alternative is:

12... $\mathbb{Q}f6$ 13. $\mathbb{Q}f4$

"With compensation" according to B. Maksimovic. Here is a possible continuation:

13...0-0 14. $\mathbb{W}d3$ b4 15. $\mathbb{Q}d5$ $\mathbb{Q}xd5$ 16. $\mathbb{Q}xd5$

White's centralization is impressive, while the black knight is in danger.



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

Perhaps the lesser evil is 16... $\mathbb{Q}xe5$, although this would be a clear positional concession, weakening the king's defence and increasing White's space advantage. Following 17.dxe5± White dominates the whole board and can prepare a slow kingside attack.

17. $\mathbb{Q}xf7!$

This elegant and efficient tactical operation ensures White's advantage.

17... $\mathbb{Q}xf7$ 18. $\mathbb{Q}xf7\#$ 19. $\mathbb{W}c4\#$ 20. $\mathbb{W}xc7$ $\mathbb{W}xc7$ 21. $\mathbb{Q}xc7$ $\mathbb{B}b7$ 22. $\mathbb{Q}e5$ $\mathbb{Q}xe5$ 23.dxe5

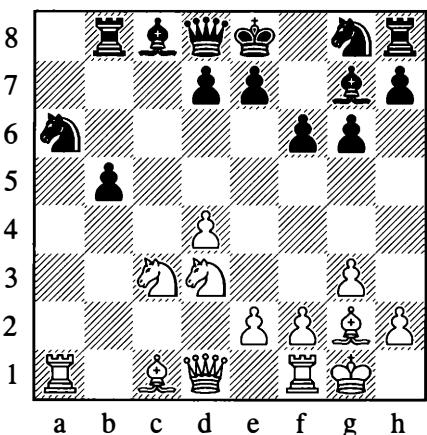
The position has almost calmed down and White is a clear exchange up. Nevertheless Black's passed pawn gives him some hope of survival.

23... $\mathbb{Q}f5$ 24. $\mathbb{B}a2$ b3 25. $\mathbb{B}b2$ $\mathbb{Q}c2$ 26.f4±

At the right moment, White will exchange his caged rook for the bishop and pawn, obtaining a promising rook ending in view of his extra pawn and considerable space advantage.

13. $\mathbb{Q}d3$

White has regrouped harmoniously, while Black's position is a mess.

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

It is hard to give any good advice for Black. For instance, 13...b4 fails to spoil White's coordination after 14. $\mathbb{Q}a4\pm$.

The developing 13... $\mathbb{Q}h6$ runs into: 14. $\mathbb{Q}f4$ $\mathbb{B}b6$ (After 14...d6 15. $\mathbb{Q}c6\#$ $\mathbb{Q}f8$ 16. $\mathbb{Q}xb5$ White regains the pawn and retains a decisive advance in development.) 15. $\mathbb{Q}d5$ $\mathbb{B}c6$ 16. $\mathbb{Q}d2\pm$ Amongst others, the threat of $\mathbb{Q}a5$ is very annoying.

14. $\mathbb{Q}f4$ d6 15. $\mathbb{Q}b4$ $\mathbb{Q}d7$ 16. $\mathbb{W}d3\pm$

We have been following the game B. Maksimovic – Marjanovic, Nis 1993. Black's extra pawn is completely irrelevant, while White displays fantastic activity. Although Black managed to draw this game, we should be impressed by the opening play and analysis of IM Branimir Maksimovic, at a time when engines were too weak to rely on in such positions.

Conclusion

This chapter focuses on two sidelines: A) 5... $\mathbb{Q}h6\#$! and B) 5...a6.

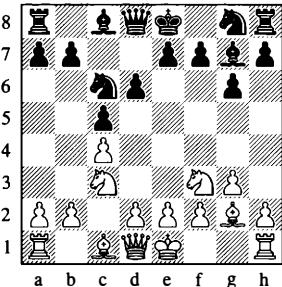
The former is dubious and can be punished with 6.h4! when obviously Black cannot play the standard reply ...h7-h5. Thus White will soon have the pleasure of playing h4-h5, with promising kingside play.

5...a6 is far more respectable, especially if Black follows up by developing calmly, in which case the game would transpose to later chapters. However, in this chapter we looked at risky attempts to play an early ...b7-b5. In general, White can exploit his opponent's over-ambition with a well-timed b2-b4!. For example, 6.0–0 $\mathbb{B}b8$ 7.a3 $\mathbb{Q}f6$ 8.b4!N is one key idea.



The Closed System

5...d6



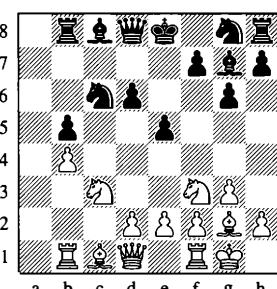
Variation Index

1.c4 c5 2.g3 ♜c6 3.♗g2 g6 4.♘c3 ♗g7 5.♘f3 d6

6.0–0

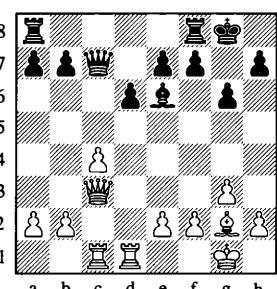
A) 6...a6 7.a3! ♜b8 8.♗b1 b5 9.cxb5 axb5 10.b4 cxb4 11.axb4	28
A1) 11...♘f6	29
A2) 11...e5	30
B) 6...♗d7?!	31
C) 6...♘h6 7.d4! cxd4 8.♕xh6 ♕xh6 9.♘xd4	34
C1) 9...♘xd4	34
C2) 9...♗d7	36
D) 6...♘f6 7.a3 0–0 8.♗b1 a5 9.d3 ♛d7 10.♗d2 ♜e8 11.♘e1 ♜c7 12.♘c2 ♜b8	38
13.b4 axb4 14.axb4 ♘xb4 15.♘xb4 cxb4 16.♗xb4 b5 17.cxb5 ♘xb5 18.♘xb5	44
♗xb5 19.♗xb5 ♛xb5 20.♗b3	44
D1) 20...♗d7	47
D2) 20...♗d7 21.♗c1	47
D21) 21...e6	47
D22) 21...♔a4	48

A2) after 11...e5



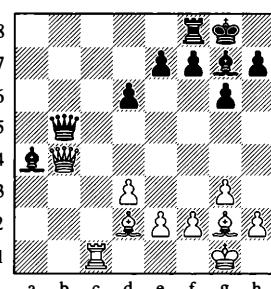
12.d4!N

C1) after 14...♗e6



15.♗e3!N

D22) after 22...♗b5



23.♗c4!N

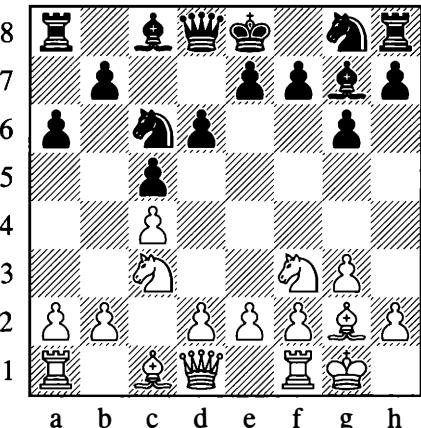
1.c4 c5 2.g3 ♜c6 3.♗g2 g6 4.♗c3 ♜g7 5.♗f3 d6

This is a flexible move. Black keeps the d4-square under firm control while retaining the possibility of continuing the development of either wing. The drawback is that in certain lines, the early commitment of the d-pawn will restrict Black's possibilities in the fight for the centre, as the typical idea of meeting d2-d4 with ...d6-d5 would mean a loss of a tempo.

6.0–0

Since Black has not defined his intentions yet, White plays a useful developing move, delaying the moment of choosing a concrete plan. From this position we will examine A) 6...a6, B) 6...♗d7?!, C) 6...♝h6 and D) 6...♝f6. Each of these moves leads to a distinct type of position. Grouping them under the same chapter is justified by the fact that they are sub-branches of 5...d6 and the volume of theoretical material does not warrant separate chapters.

A) 6...a6



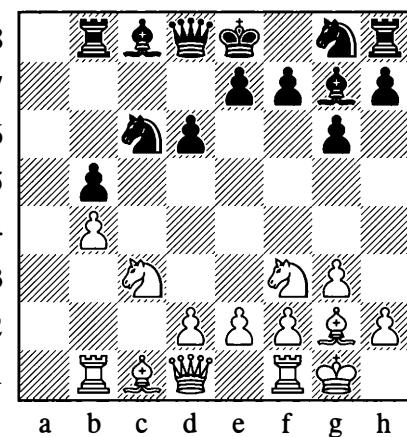
This early queenside action has similar drawbacks as in line B from Chapter 2. With his king two tempos away from castling, Black should not display strategic ambitions.

7.a3!

This is one of the rare cases in which White agrees to embark on symmetric play. In doing so, he relies on the fact that 5...d6 has cost Black an important tempo.

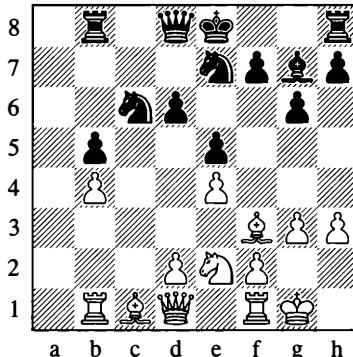
7...♝b8 8.♝b1 b5 9.cxb5 axb5 10.b4 cxb4 11.axb4

The queenside position has been stabilized and Black should think about developing his other wing.



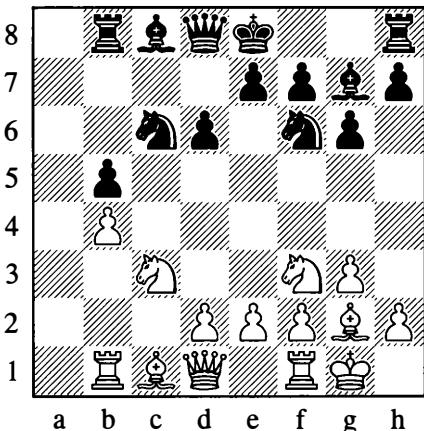
We examine A1) 11...♝f6 and A2) 11...e5.

11...♝f6 avoids immediate troubles, but does not provide a solution to White's lead in development. 12.e4 ♜g4 13.♝e2 e5 14.h3 ♜xf3 15.♝xf3 ♜ge7 So far, we have followed Urban – Schmidt, Poznan 1997.



16. $\mathbb{W}b3!$ N Before embarking on an active plan, White should prevent the freeing move ...d5. 16...0–0 17.d3 $\mathbb{R}a8$ 18. $\mathbb{Q}d2\pm$ Despite the near-symmetrical character of the position, White retains a stable advantage because of his strong bishop pair. The e7-knight is passive and the b5-pawn is likely to become vulnerable.

A1) 11... $\mathbb{Q}f6$



As a consequence of the unfortunate combination of ...d6 and ...a6, the natural text move fails to offer Black a viable game.

12.d4!

This is it! White has not touched his d-pawn yet and can start the fight for space in the centre without any loss of time. The threat is d5 followed by $\mathbb{Q}d4$, with a crushing positional advantage.

12... $\mathbb{Q}f5$

As will be revealed immediately, this counterattacking move, aiming to take advantage of the weakening of the b1-h7 diagonal, does not cross White's plans in any way.

Blocking the d4-pawn physically would involve the loss of an important tempo: 12...d5 13. $\mathbb{Q}f4$ $\mathbb{R}b6$ 14. $\mathbb{W}b3$ 0–0 15. $\mathbb{R}fc1\pm$

White is a tempo up over a theoretical position that is considered to be almost equal. One consequence of this circumstance is that the black rook has been forced to b6, while the corresponding b3-square has been occupied by the white queen. With the b4-pawn overprotected, the b1-rook is free to return to the a-file.

13.d5!

White bravely carries out his plan. The sacrificed exchange will be more than balanced by the strong passed c-pawn and the tempos lost by the enemy bishop.

13... $\mathbb{Q}xb1$

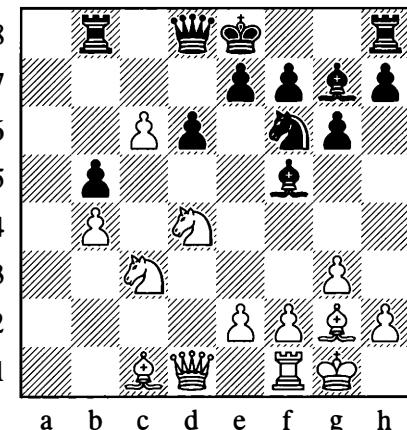
Practically forced, since 13... $\mathbb{Q}a7$ 14. $\mathbb{R}a1$ followed by $\mathbb{Q}d4$ is awful for Black.

14.dxc6 $\mathbb{Q}f5$

The best chance, but it is still insufficient.

14... $\mathbb{Q}e4?$! loses material: 15. $\mathbb{Q}xe4$ $\mathbb{Q}xe4$ 16. $\mathbb{W}c2$ With the dual threats of c7 and $\mathbb{W}xe4$. 16... $\mathbb{Q}c3$ 17. $\mathbb{Q}b2$ White has a winning position, Frias – Frois, Caceres 1996.

15. $\mathbb{Q}d4$

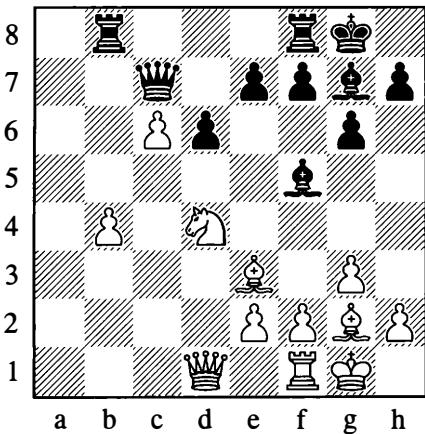


The b5-pawn cannot be saved, which will leave White with two dangerous passers on

the queenside. Besides, after a later $\mathbb{Q}e3$, his bishops will be ideally placed for supporting the pawns' advance.

15...0-0 16.♘cxb5 ♘e8 17.♗e3 ♘c7 18.♘xc7 ♜xc7

So far we have been following the game O. Ivanov – Orev, Gyongyos 1995.



19.♘xf5!N

The start of the most effective sequence, allowing White to capitalize on his advantage.

19...gxsf5 20.♗a4

Threatening b5.

20...♗a8 21.♗c2 ♗fb8

Black has no time to defend f5 – his number one priority must be to slow down the b-pawn.

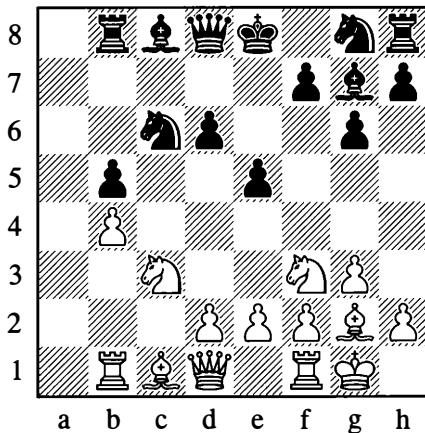
22.♗xf5 e6

Worse is 22...♗xb4 23.♗e4!.

23.♗f4

White remains in control. He has restored full material equality and can prepare the further advance of his queenside pawns.

A2) 11...e5



This move, aiming to prevent White's expansion in the centre, worked out well in Najdorf – Sanguinetti, Sao Paulo 1957, but only as a consequence of White's insufficiently energetic play.

12.d4!N

We became acquainted with this type of central break in the note to Black's 10th move in line B2 of the previous chapter. White prepares the rapid development of his queen's bishop and spoils the flexibility of Black's central structure.

12...exd4

The alternative is equally unappealing: 12...♗xd4 13.♗xd4 exd4 14.♗d5 ♘e6 Black should exchange the powerful knight as soon as possible, in order to keep his extra pawn, thus retaining some material compensation for his general problems. 15.♗b2 ♘xd5 16.♗xd5 ♗b6 17.♗b3 ♘h6 18.♗fc1 0-0 19.♗c6 ♗d8 20.♗bc1± White's pieces dominate the board and the extra pawn is not relevant at all.

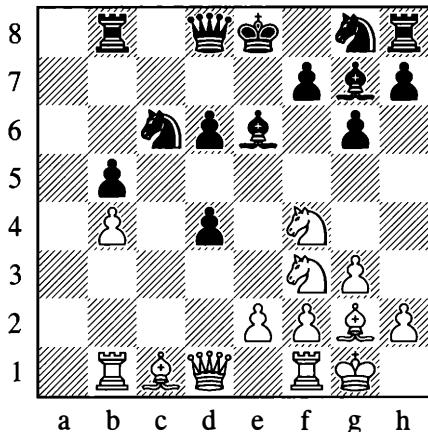
13.♗d5

Threatening ♘b2 followed by ♘xd4.

13...♘e6 14.♗f4

Threatening to weaken the light squares in

the enemy camp with $\mathbb{Q}xe6$ followed by $\mathbb{W}b3$ and $\mathbb{Q}h3$.



14... $\mathbb{Q}f5$

The more solid 14... $\mathbb{Q}c4$ allows White to retrieve the pawn and maintain his positional advantage: 15. $\mathbb{Q}b2$ $\mathbb{W}b6$ 16. $\mathbb{W}d2$ $\mathbb{Q}ge7$ 17. $\mathbb{Q}fd1$ $\mathbb{Q}f5$ 18.g4! The knight is driven back onto a passive square. Black's somewhat chaotic coordination does not allow him take advantage of the relative weakness of the white kingside. 18... $\mathbb{Q}fe7$ 19. $\mathbb{Q}xd4\pm$

15. $\mathbb{Q}a1$ d3

Other moves can be met by $\mathbb{Q}b2$, regaining the sacrificed pawn with a significant positional advantage. The text move is principled, but it gives White the opportunity to activate his pieces considerably.

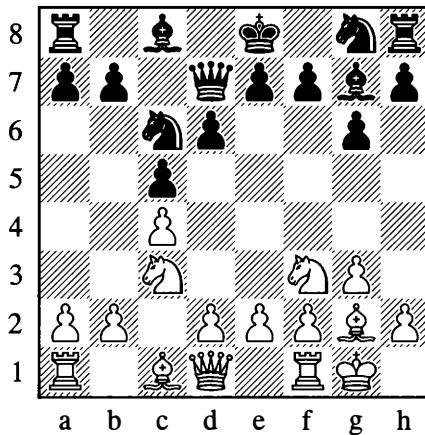
16. $\mathbb{Q}a3$ dxe2 17. $\mathbb{Q}xe2$ $\mathbb{Q}ge7$ 18. $\mathbb{Q}fd4!$

This is the most effective way to make the white pieces work together harmoniously.

18... $\mathbb{Q}xd4$ 19. $\mathbb{Q}xd4$ 0–0 20. $\mathbb{Q}g5$ f6 21. $\mathbb{Q}f4\pm$

Black's extra pawn is contributing nothing. Most of his pieces are passive or vulnerable, and his position contains numerous weaknesses.

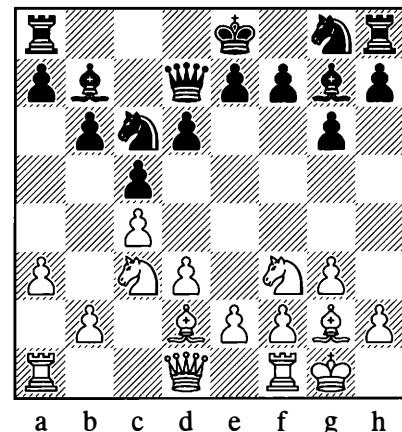
B) 6... $\mathbb{W}d7!!$



A somewhat exotic move, deviating from the natural course of development. It is characteristic for the original style of the late great Bent Larsen who employed this kind of plan with both colours! Black over-protects the c6-knight in order to prepare ...b6 and ... $\mathbb{Q}b7$, thus neutralizing the g2-bishop almost completely. Black usually gets a solid, but somewhat passive position. He refrains from any ambitions on the queenside, and leaves White a free hand with the standard plan of a3, $\mathbb{B}b1$ and b4.

7.d3 b6 8. $\mathbb{Q}d2$ $\mathbb{Q}b7$ 9.a3

After defending his knight, White is ready to prepare the advance of the b-pawn.



9...♞h6

Black keeps the long diagonal open and prepares to increase his control over the d4-square with ...♞f5.

The main alternative is:

9...♞f6

This looks like a more natural placement of the knight, but the course of the game highlights some of its negative sides.

10.♗b1 0–0 11.b4 ♞d4

Black answers an attack on the wing with a counter in the centre. If delayed, this knight jump may become impossible after ♜a4 or e3.

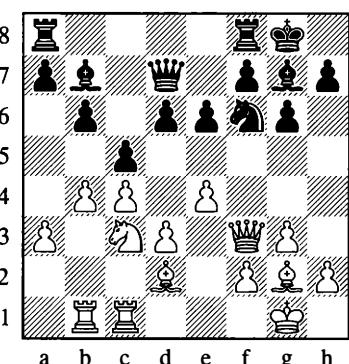
12.e4!

By switching to Botvinnik's triangle at the right moment, White restricts the activity of the b7-bishop and the f6-knight with just one stroke. The threat is 13.♘xd4 cxd4 14.♗e2 with the more flexible structure for White.

It should be noted that the immediate 12.♘xd4?! is premature because the remaining knight does not have adequate squares for his retreat: 12...♗xg2 13.♔xg2 cxd4 14.♗b5 d5± With some initiative in the centre.

12...♝xf3† 13.♗xf3 e6 14.♗fc1

Controlling more space in the centre and on the queenside, White can regroup at his own convenience. With his knight far from the d4-square, Black is rather passive.

**14...♝e8 15.♗e2 ♞c7 16.♗d1 ♕ae8 17.♗e3**

White has almost completed his regrouping and can choose between a kingside attack with ♖c3 and ♘g4 or an action on the opposite wing, starting with ♗d1 and a4-a5.

17...e5

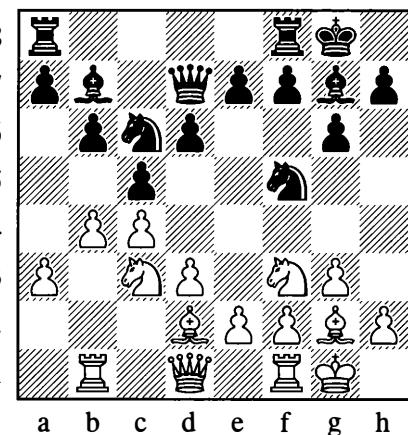
Switching to symmetry in the centre does not promise full equality, because of the passivity of the b7-bishop and White's space advantage on the queenside.

18.bxc5 dxc5 19.a4±

Black cannot avoid the weakening of his queenside with a4-a5, Kotronias – Frias, Athens 1984.

10.♗b1 0–0 11.b4 ♞f5

Black is ready to occupy the d4-square in comfort, but White can cross this plan effortlessly.

**12.e3!**

After this modest-looking move, Black will have problems justifying the awkward placement of his king's knight. His position is not really bad, but little by little he will run into micro-problems that will tend to accumulate into a distinct disadvantage.

12...e6 13.♗e2 ♕ad8 14.♗fd1 ♕a8 15.♗b5!

Having harmoniously completed his development, White harasses his opponent.

15...♝fe8

15...a6 16.♗c3± would leave the b6-square weak. Black would have to be permanently on guard against ideas such as ♘a4 and bxc5 followed by ♞b6 and ♜db1.

16.♗c3 ♜xc3

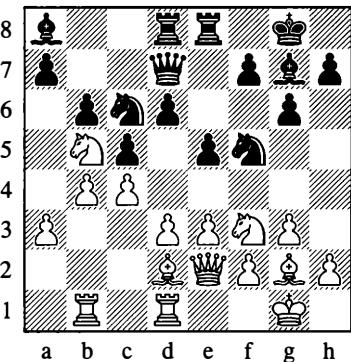
Black can also prevent the bishop exchange with:

16...e5

But this would weaken the d5-square.

17.♗d2!±

Having provoked a concession, the bishop retreats to clear the c3-square, in order to regroup with ♘c3-d5.



17...♘cd4?!

I see no other way to cross White's plans of exploiting the weakness on d5.

18.exd4 exd4 19.♕f1 a6

Black regains the temporarily sacrificed piece, but White's pieces are well placed in the resulting structure, which resembles a Benoni with colours reversed.

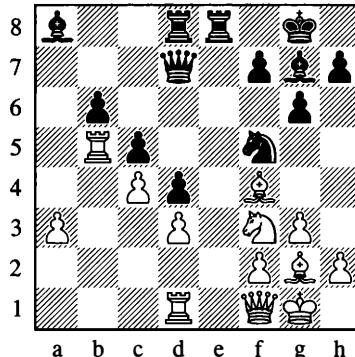
20.bxc5 dxc5

20...bxc5?! allows 21.♕a5 ♜c8 22.♘c7± with an extra exchange.

21.♗f4

Returning to the comment on the 17th move, it is clear that the bishop would have had fewer possibilities of being activated from b2 or a1.

21...axb5 22.♗xb5±



The b6-pawn is difficult to defend. Black's minor pieces are of little use for this purpose, and the equivalent weakness of the a3-pawn is difficult to exploit. Here is a sample variation:

22...♛a7 23.♗db1 ♛xa3 24.♗a1 ♛c3

25.♗b1

Threatening to trap the queen with ♘b3.

25...♝xf3 26.♗xf3 ♜e6

Preparing ...♝de8 and hoping for 27.♗b3?! ♜e1!† with favourable simplifications.

27.♔g2!+–

After this quiet move, the threat of 28.♗b3 ♜e1 29.♗d1 is impossible to parry.

17.♘xc3

White threatens either ♘e4 followed by ♜b2, or the simple d4 with a space advantage. Having completed the mobilization of his forces, Black has nothing better than to gain some space in the centre, even though this means weakening the c5-pawn.

17...d5

This position was reached in King – Larsen, Hastings 1990.

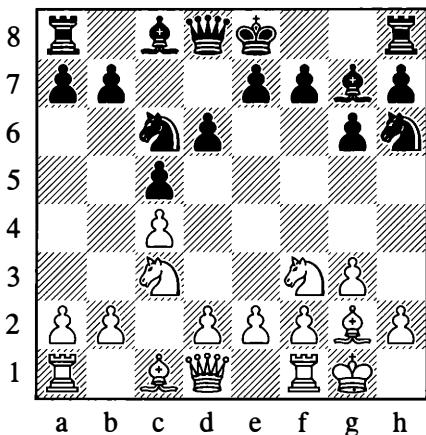
18.♗xc5!N

The most logical reaction to the previous move. White immediately starts the siege of the weakened c5-pawn.

18...bxc5 19.♗b5±

The c5-pawn is a comfortable target for the white pieces, preventing Black from enjoying his space advantage in the centre. The apparently active black knights are of very little use in defending c5, thus forcing Black to use his queen for this defensive job. In the meanwhile White can steadily increase the pressure with $\mathbb{E}db1$ and $\mathfrak{Q}a4$.

C) 6... $\mathfrak{Q}h6$



After the white rook has departed from h1, Black does not need to fear h4-h5 anymore, which seems to justify the lateral development of the knight. If allowed, he would play ... $\mathfrak{Q}f5$ soon, keeping the centre closed and retaining good chances for equality in an almost symmetrical position.

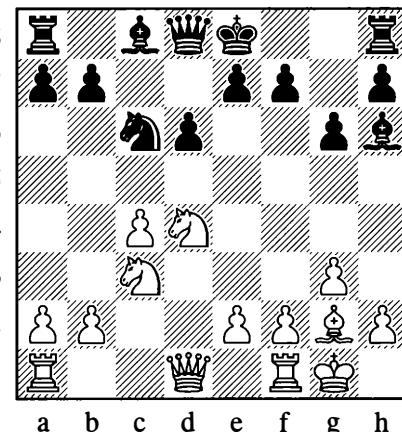
7.d4!

White takes advantage of the position of the h6-knight, thus crossing Black's plan of keeping the position closed.

7...cxd4 8. $\mathfrak{Q}xh6$

From a dynamic point of view, this is a very strong move. The c1-bishop spends just one tempo to eliminate an already developed piece (the knight) and to force another one (the g7-bishop) to worsen its position.

8... $\mathfrak{Q}xh6$ 9. $\mathfrak{Q}xd4$

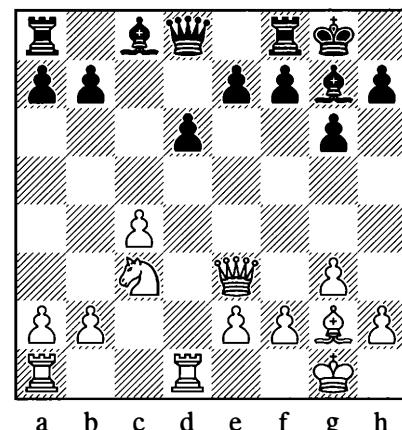


Compared with the note to White's sixth move in variation A of Chapter 2, the c6-knight is less well defended, which causes Black some queenside stability problems. He can choose between C1) 9... $\mathfrak{Q}xd4$ and C2) 9... $\mathfrak{Q}d7$.

C1) 9... $\mathfrak{Q}xd4$

Black releases the tension, and avoids any strategic problems connected with the c6-square. The drawback of this move is that it allows the activation of the white queen and clears the long diagonal for the g2-bishop.

10. $\mathbb{W}xd4$ 0-0 11. $\mathbb{B}fd1$ $\mathfrak{Q}g7$ 12. $\mathbb{W}e3$

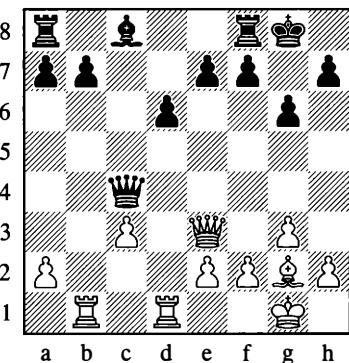


White is better developed and has a space advantage in the centre. Black must also worry about ideas of c5 and ♦d5, which are constantly hanging in the air. For this reason his safest course of action involves giving up his active bishop.

12...♗xc3 13.♕xc3

To tell the truth, it is a bit irritating that White has to move again with his queen, thus reducing his advantage in development. The optimal answer would be ♜c1xc3, but it is not easy to make that work, because on the eleventh move the c1-square was still under Black's control.

13.bxc3?! is an interesting attempt to increase White's lead in development. From e3, the queen exerts strong pressure against e7 and a7, while the b-file has become available for the queen's rook. White certainly is better, but his pawn weaknesses mean that the position has a double edged-character. 13...♕c7 14.♖ab1 ♕xc4 This position was reached in Bakic – Paunovic, Tivat 1995, and here I suggest the improvement:



15.♕xe7!N White has no reason to refrain from this move, capturing an important pawn and weakening the enemy king's defences. 15...♕xa2 16.♗d5 ♕c2 17.c4 a5 18.♖dc1 ♕d2 19.♕xd6± White is better developed and boasts impressive centralization, but the force

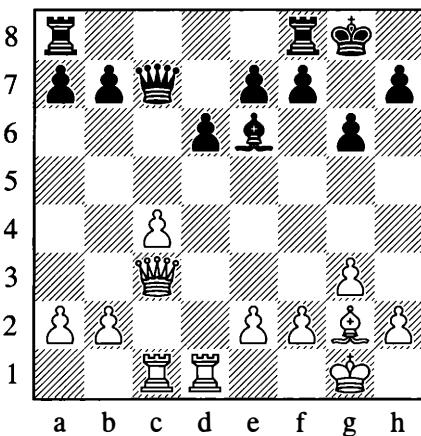
of the a-pawn should not be underestimated. 19...♕xe2? is too risky in view of 20.♖e1± followed by ♕f6 with dangerous kingside threats. Instead 19...♗e6 is Black's best bet, when White should consolidate with 20.e4±.

Ultimately I believe that choosing between 13.♕xc3 and 13.bxc3 is a matter of taste, as White gets a promising position in either case.

13...♕c7 14.♖ac1 ♗e6

So far we have followed the game Loginov – Stanec, Aschach 1994. White is perfectly mobilized, but Black's position contains no serious weaknesses. If he were allowed to put his rooks on c8 and b8 and carry out the thematic break ...b5, he would achieve a good game.

Compared with a Sicilian Maroczy, Black's kingside defence has been weakened (there are no knights left!) and the fourth rank is available for the rook's transfer from one wing to the other. White's plan, illustrated by the following sequence, should be to provoke a significant weakening of the black kingside, by means of brutal mating threats.



15.♗e3!N ♖ac8 16.♗d4 ♕b6

Black pins the rook and hits b2, in an attempt to slow down White's attack. On

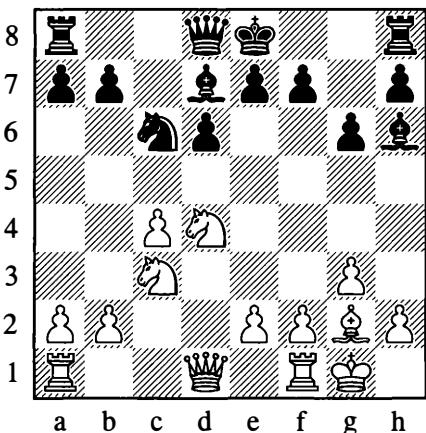
the other hand, the counterattack based on ...b5 is delayed, leaving White a free hand in regrouping.

16...b5? is premature, as White can whip up a dangerous attack: 17.♘h4 h5 18.♗e4 (Threatening 19.♗xh5 gxh5 20.♗g5† with mate to follow.) 18...♝c5 19.♗h6 (With the threat of ♘xg6.) 19...♞f5 20.♗d5 e6 (Forced, in view of the threat of e4 followed by ♘xg6†.) 21.♗f3 The decisive threats of e4, trapping the bishop, as well as g4 or ♘xh5, with a mating attack, are impossible to parry.

17.b3 ♘c7 18.♗d2±

White will play ♘h4 next, with strong kingside pressure.

C2) 9...♞d7



From an abstract point of view, this looks to be the most logical continuation. Black maintains the tension with a developing move, but an unpleasant reply awaits him.

10.c5!

Being better developed, White should open the centre immediately, with the aim of leaving Black with a chronic weakness on c6. Once again, Black must decide whether or not to maintain the tension.

10...♝g7

This looks like the most principled move, forcing White to release the tension himself. Unfortunately, Black requires just one more tempo (...0–0) to prove the correctness of his strategy, but repeated time losses are the direct consequence of the line initiated by 6...♝h6.

The alternative is:

10...dxc5

This provokes simplifications leading to a very pleasant endgame for White.

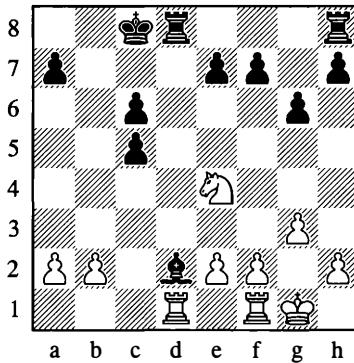
11.♗xc6 ♘xc6 12.♗xc6† bxc6 13.♗c2

The pawn retrieval is a matter of time. White threatens ♘fd1 followed by ♘a4 or ♘e4.

13...♝d2

By trading queens, Black intends to use his king for the defence of the weakness on c6.

14.♛xd2 ♘xd2 15.♗e4 0–0–0 16.♗ad1



16...♝h6

Andersson gives the following alternative: 16...♝b4 17.a3 ♘a5 18.♗xc5 ♘b6 19.♗d3 ♘d6 20.♗c1± The position does not differ from that obtained in the game too much. The bishop defends the c5-square, but otherwise is not too active.

17.♗xc5 ♘d5 18.♗d3

An excellent square for the knight in all kinds of Catalan lines. Black's counterplay along the d-file is blocked, thus allowing White to focus on his own plan, which consists of doubling rooks along the c-file.

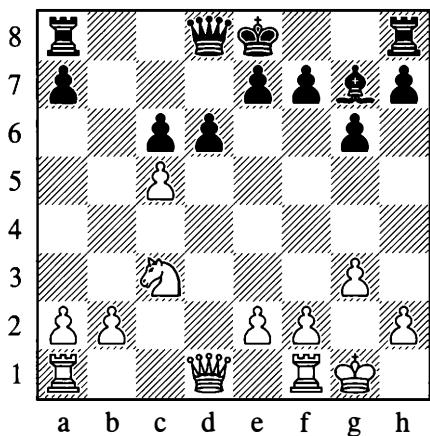
18... $\mathbb{Q}c7$ 19.f4

This not only stabilizes the knight by preventing ...e5, but also makes the c1-square available to the rooks.

19... $\mathbb{Q}g7$ 20. $\mathbb{E}c1$ $\mathbb{E}a5$ 21.a3 $\mathbb{E}b5$ 22. $\mathbb{E}c2$ $\mathbb{E}hb8$
23.b4 a5 24. $\mathbb{E}fc1\pm$

White's advantage may seem minimal, but the play is rather one-sided. In Andersson – Van der Wiel, Wijk aan Zee 1983, White went on to win confidently.

11. $\mathbb{Q}xc6$ $\mathbb{Q}xc6$ 12. $\mathbb{Q}xc6\uparrow$ bxc6



13. $\mathbb{W}a4!$

With the black king still uncastled, this move is quite unpleasant. White intends to submit the pawns on c6 and d6 to strong pressure.

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

Black embarks on a long and forcing line, leading by force to an ending with a pawn less, in the hope that the weakness of White's queenside structure will offer reasonable compensation.

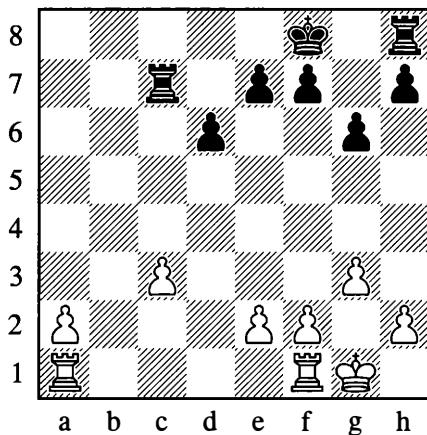
13...0–0!N is an important alternative, after which 14.cxd6 is ineffective because of the intermediate 14... $\mathbb{Q}xc3$, when 15.dxe7 $\mathbb{W}xe7$ 16.bxc3 $\mathbb{W}xe2$ leads to equality.

Instead White should prevent the weakening of his queenside structure with: 14. $\mathbb{E}ac1$ $\mathbb{E}b8$

15.b3± With $\mathbb{E}fd1$ to follow. Black's central pawns remain under unpleasant pressure.

14. $\mathbb{W}xc6\uparrow$ $\mathbb{Q}f8$ 15.bxc3 $\mathbb{E}c8$ 16. $\mathbb{W}a6$ $\mathbb{E}xc5$
17. $\mathbb{W}xa7$ $\mathbb{Q}c7$ 18. $\mathbb{W}xc7$ $\mathbb{E}xc7$

I must confess that in the only game in which I reached this position, I was on my own after ten moves or so. Being fully concentrated, I managed to deliver a strong over the board innovation, without being aware of it.



19. $\mathbb{E}fb1!$

I correctly evaluated that White does not need to keep his rook passive for the sake of defending his c3-pawn. An earlier game at grandmaster level went 19. $\mathbb{E}fc1$ $\mathbb{Q}g7$ 20.a4 $\mathbb{E}a8$ 21.a3 $\mathbb{E}c4$ 22.a5 $\mathbb{E}a6$ and White was unable to convert his material advantage into a win, Loginov – Csom, Budapest 1993.

19... $\mathbb{Q}g7$

The point is that the ending resulting after 19... $\mathbb{E}xc3$ 20. $\mathbb{E}b8\uparrow$ $\mathbb{Q}g7$ 21. $\mathbb{E}xh8$ $\mathbb{Q}xh8$ 22.a4 $\mathbb{E}c6$ 23.a5 $\mathbb{E}a6$ 24.f4 followed by the king's centralization is lost for Black.

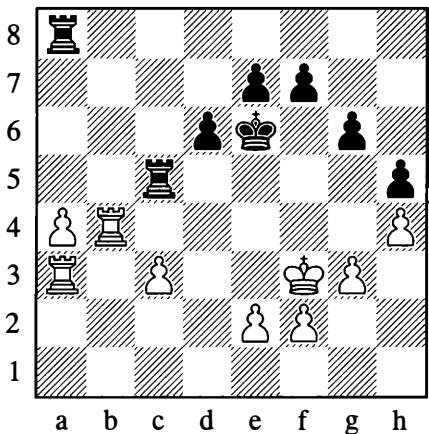
20.a4 $\mathbb{E}a8$

Once again, the pawn is not edible: 20... $\mathbb{E}xc3$ 21. $\mathbb{E}b7$ $\mathbb{Q}f6$ 22.a5+– In order to stop the a-pawn, Black will have to keep both rooks on the back rank, resulting in desperate passivity.

21.♖a3 ♜c5 22.♖b4

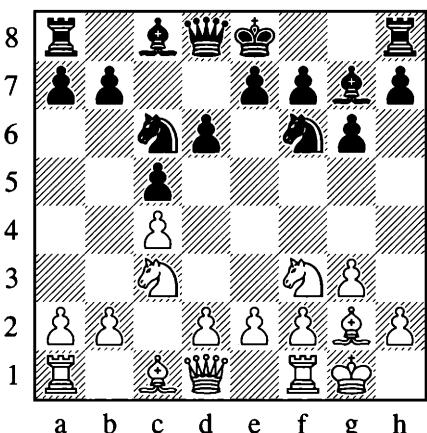
It is plain to see that my king's rook is much more active than Loginov's in his aforementioned game.

22...♔f6 23.♕g2 ♔e6 24.h4 h5 25.♗f3±



Black faces a difficult defence. In Marin – Illescas, Sanxenxo 2004, White reached a winning position, although a series of miracles led to an eventual draw.

D) 6...♝f6



This logical developing move is the soundest at Black's disposal, but in principle it should have little independent value. A transposition

to the lines examined in Chapters 6 and 7 is very probable after 7.d4 cxd4 8.♗xd4. However, there is a small detail that causes us some problems in keeping the game within purely English Opening territory. Having used a different move order that forced White to delay for one move the opening of the centre, Black can maintain the tension with 7...0–0, leading to a position that belongs to the King's Indian!

At this point White has a pleasant choice between 8.dxc5, with persistent initiative despite the symmetrical character of the position, and the more ambitious 8.d5 ♐a5 9.♗d2. Personally, I have very nice memories connected with these lines with a black knight on a5 and strongly recommend 7.d4, but am bound to offer in these pages a continuation in the spirit of the English Opening.

I would add that this is one of the cases when the standard formula “please also refer to the King's Indian chapters from Avrukh's book” does not work, because Boris recommends different variations against ...c5 and ...♝c6!

7.a3

With the exception of 7.d4, this is the only way to avoid persistent symmetry. The reader has already seen that, once ...d6 has been played, Black is best advised to refrain from the symmetrical counterattack starting with 7...a6. Thus in order to prevent White from gaining space on the queenside, he will have to weaken the b5-square with ...a5.

I will discuss the objective merits of this variation in more detail when we will reach the tabiya, after Black's 19th move, just before the splitting point between lines D1 and D2.

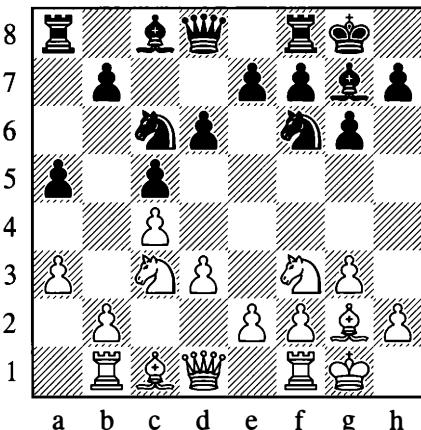
7...0–0 8.♗b1 a5

The apparently active 8...♝f5 more or less forces 9.d3, which is useful anyway, while the bishop is not especially well placed on f5. As

we will see in the main line, the knights on c3 and c6 need to be defended by bishops.

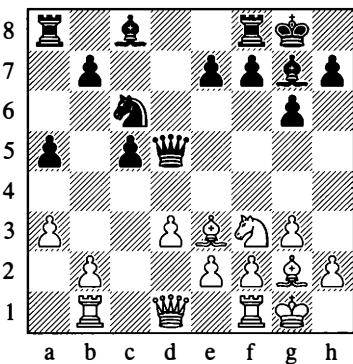
9.d3

The first phase of the opening is over. Both sides have refrained from opening the centre with d4 (...d5), which leaves only one possibility open for undermining the enemy c-pawns, namely the advance of the b-pawns. In the current position this is not possible, but both sides have at their disposal the following thematic plan: ♖d2 followed by ♔e1-c2 (and the equivalent manoeuvre for Black, including also ...♗b8).



9...♔d7

It is too late to display ambitions in the centre: 9...d5 10.cxd5 ♔xd5 11.♔xd5 ♕xd5 12.♔e3±



White has reached a favourable version of the positions arising in Chapter 10. The extra tempo offered by ...d7-d6-d5 has been used to defend the b2-pawn, while the insertion of the moves a3 and ...a5 favours White, who has chances to establish control over the light squares.

10.♖d2 ♔e8

Both sides carry out the main plan consistently.

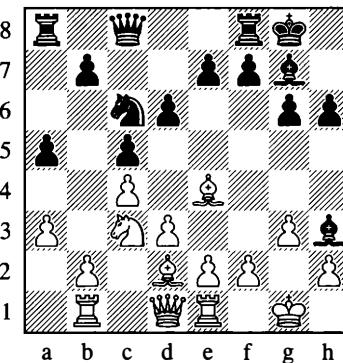
Another popular idea in positions with a fianchetto is to prepare ...♔h3, but in the current situation it is ineffective:

10...♕c8 11.♔g5!

Crossing Black's plans and inviting him to weaken his king's position.

11...h6 12.♔ge4 ♔xe4 13.♔xe4 ♔h3 14.♔e1

White has managed to avoid the bishop exchange, while Black's position lacks harmony. The queen is exposed to ♔d5-b6, while the h6-pawn is vulnerable.



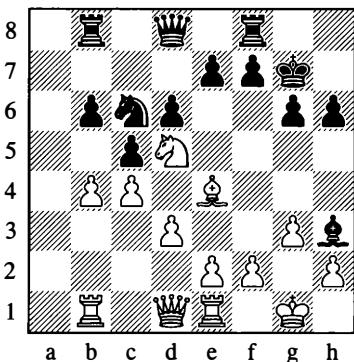
14...♔h7 15.♔d5 ♕d8 16.♔c3 ♘b8 17.♔xg7 ♕xg7 18.b4 axb4 19.axb4

White has carried out his principal plan in a favourable form.

19...b6

19...e6, with the aim of removing the main defender of the b4-pawn, is ineffective because of 20.♔f4, putting the bishop in danger. Therefore Black has nothing better than to try to consolidate his queenside.

So far we have been following Quinteros – Bazan, Cordoba 1970. In that game White exchanged on c5 but did not get anything concrete. Instead, he should have kept the b-file closed and looked for a way of invading along the a-file, helped by the fact that his strong bishop puts permanent pressure on the a8-square. This could have been achieved by means of:



20.b5!N

Followed by $\mathbb{E}a1$. In fact White was slightly spoiled for choice, as 20. $\mathbb{W}a4!$?N also looks promising.

**11. $\mathbb{Q}e1$ $\mathbb{Q}c7$ 12. $\mathbb{Q}c2$ $\mathbb{E}b8$ 13.b4 axb4
14.axb4**

As was to be expected, White has won the initial race to carry out the main plan.

14... $\mathbb{Q}xb4$

A necessary release of tension before playing ...b5.

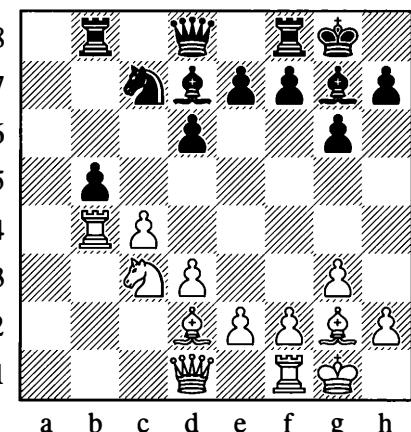
Black cannot maintain perfect symmetry any more, as 14...b5?! loses a pawn to 15.bxc5+. It is worth adding that the attempt to imitate White's play identically leads to heavy material losses after 15...bxc4 16.cxd6 cxd3? 17.dxc7 dxc2 18.cxd8= \mathbb{W} cxd1= \mathbb{W} 19. $\mathbb{W}xf8\#$ +–.

The passive 14...b6?! allows White to obtain a strategic advantage with 15.b5 $\mathbb{Q}d4$ 16. $\mathbb{Q}xd4$

$\mathbb{Q}xd4$ 17. $\mathbb{E}a1$ d5 18. $\mathbb{E}a7$ dxc4 19.dxc4± Ree – Damjanovic, Amsterdam 1969. White controls the open a-file and the b6-pawn is a permanent source of concern for Black, especially in endings.

15. $\mathbb{Q}xb4$ cxb4 16. $\mathbb{E}xb4$ b5

Black ensures the exchange of his backward pawn, but his slight delay in doing so prevents him from achieving complete equality.



**17.cxb5 $\mathbb{Q}xb5$ 18. $\mathbb{Q}xb5$ $\mathbb{E}xb5$ 19. $\mathbb{E}xb5$
 $\mathbb{Q}xb5$**

The position has been strongly simplified and the structure is perfectly symmetrical, but it is White's turn to move and the exposed position of the b5-bishop will cause Black some loss of time. It is very probable that these one or two extra tempos will allow White to occupy the seventh rank with at least one of his major pieces, but can this be enough to ensure him of a lasting initiative or some other form of advantage?

The answer to this question is of crucial importance for the evaluation of the whole variation recommended as an alternative to studying the King's Indian lines after 7.d4 0–0. The first game to reach the current position, Bagirov – Suetin, Baku 1962, had an encouraging course and final result. I find it useful to have a brief look at this game in order

to get acquainted with some of the hidden dangers awaiting Black, and only later examine the position more concretely.

Bagirov confesses that his first thought around this moment of the game had been to offer a draw, but then he realized that White could play on without any shadow of risk. The game continued:

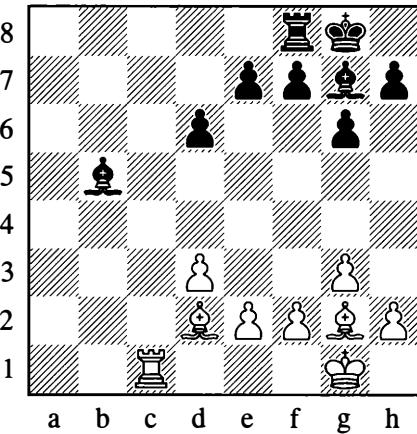
20.♗b3 ♗d7 21.♗c1 ♘a4 22.♗b4 ♗b5

23.♗xb5

In fact it turns out that 23.♗c4! is slightly more accurate, and leads to a similar situation but with some concrete nuances explained in the theoretical part below.

23...♘xb5

Despite the exchange of queens, Black is not completely out of danger yet. In fact, White's advance in piece mobilization has increased. As in the position after 19 moves, it is his turn to move, the b5-bishop is still in the air, and additionally, the white rook is developed on an open file already!



24.♗g5!

An important element in White's plan. It soon transpires that the task of defending the e7-pawn, which can be considered the Achilles' heel in Black's position, is not so simple.

24...f6?!

Suetin probably thought that he would achieve a draw anyway and did not pay attention to the negative effects of this careless move: the weakening of the seventh rank and, after White's answer, the king's forced move away from the centre. In fact Black already has to be quite precise, and only one of the following three alternatives is satisfactory.

24...e6? simply loses a pawn after 25.♗e7.

24...♗f6?!

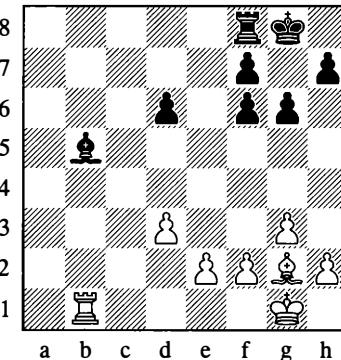
This is at least as bad as Suetin's move.

25.♗xf6 exf6

The d6-pawn has been weakened and Black has become vulnerable along the a2-g8 diagonal.

26.♗b1!

A very instructive situation! The bishop is strongly restricted by the pawn chain d3-e2 and dominated by the rook.



26...♗a4

Other retreats would enable White to win the d6-pawn by means of 27.♗b6.

27.♗b4 ♘d1

The bishop seems to have found temporary peace, but a closer inspection reveals that it is caged!

28.♔f1 ♘e8 29.♔f3

The black bishop is close to being trapped. Black can defend this piece with his rook, but

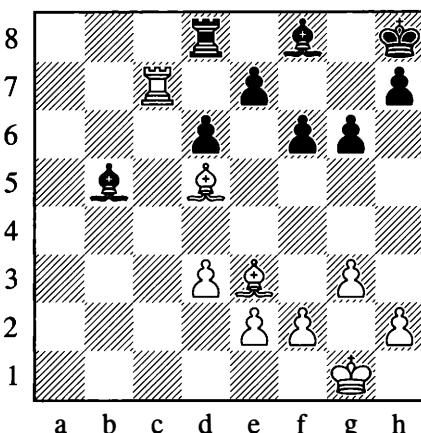
this would leave White free to attack the pawns on d6 or f7. White is close to winning.

It should be noted that the previous exchange of the dark-squared bishops has deprived Black of any chance for counterplay. With the bishops on the board, the white king would face some problems approaching via e1-d2, because of the permanent possibility of ... $\mathbb{B}c3\#$.

As will be explained later, 24... $\mathbb{B}e8!$ is the best answer, offering Black good chances to achieve equality despite its apparent passivity. This move will be considered in more detail in line D22 of the theoretical section.

25. $\mathbb{Q}d5\#$ $\mathbb{B}h8$ 26. $\mathbb{Q}e3$ $\mathbb{B}d8$ 27. $\mathbb{B}c7$ $\mathbb{Q}f8$

Black has stabilized the position, but remains quite passive. It is hard to give a definite evaluation – White cannot prove a forced route to victory, but Black is likely to be condemned to a passive defence for quite a long time. In practice, this can prove quite dangerous. If we were to use Bronstein's evaluation system, I feel that White could reasonably expect to win around two or three games out of 10 with no losses, which is not such a bad percentage at all. Let us see how the game continued:



28.g4!

With all his pieces placed actively, White starts a pawn attack, aiming to weaken the enemy structure and the king's defences.

28... $\mathbb{B}g7$ 29.h4 h6 30.g5 hxg5 31.hxg5 fxg5 32. $\mathbb{Q}xg5$

White has cleared the path for his bishop towards the e7-pawn. In order to defend it, Black has to abandon the back rank.

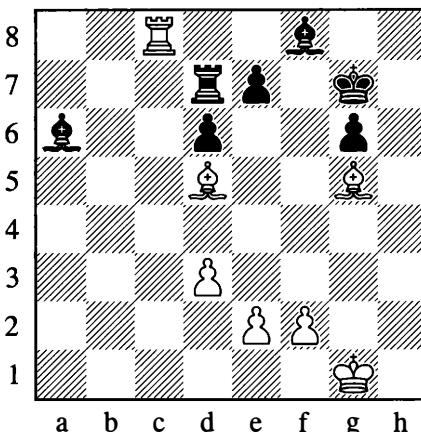
32... $\mathbb{B}d7$ 33. $\mathbb{B}c8$

White's domination with so little material on the board is impressive. Apart from the fact that Black is almost in zugzwang, there is a strong threat of $\mathbb{Q}e3$ followed by $\mathbb{Q}e6$ and $\mathbb{Q}d4\#$, winning the f8-bishop.

33... $\mathbb{Q}a6$

Trying to dismantle the deadly white mechanism.

Evacuating the rook from the danger area would weaken the king's defence: 33... $\mathbb{R}a7$ 34. $\mathbb{Q}e3$ $\mathbb{R}a4$ Trying to avoid a check along the long diagonal. (Other rook moves, such as 34... $\mathbb{R}a3$ allow 35. $\mathbb{Q}d4\#$ e5 36. $\mathbb{B}c7\#$ $\mathbb{Q}h6$ 37. $\mathbb{Q}e3\#$ g5 38. $\mathbb{Q}e4$ with a decisive attack. Also 34... $\mathbb{R}a1\#$ does not solve the problems because after 35. $\mathbb{Q}g2$ White threatens to win the rook with $\mathbb{Q}d4\#$.) 35. $\mathbb{Q}d2$ In order to renew the threat of a check along the a1-h8 diagonal, White has to make the a7-square available for the enemy rook. Fortunately, it turns out that this does not increase Black's chances for a successful defence. 35... $\mathbb{R}a7$ 36. $\mathbb{B}b8$ $\mathbb{R}a4$ 37. $\mathbb{Q}c3\#$ e5 38.f4. After the king's centralization, White will win the e5-pawn and, with some technical accuracy, the game.



34.♖c1!!

Paradoxically, this is the best square for the rook. While it maintains the possibility to return to the back rank in any moment, it also prepares to switch to an attack along the h-file after ♜g2.

34...♗b7

Once again Black is almost in zugzwang. Although his last move loses a pawn by force, it was impossible to find an acceptable alternative.

34...♗a7? 35.♖a1! puts the bishop in a deadly pin.

34...♔h7?! allows White switch to the kingside attack with 35.♗e6 ♕b7 36.♕g2 followed by ♔h1†.

35.♗e6 ♕d8 36.f3!!

A sadistic move, underlining Black's tragicomic passivity.

White notices that after 36.♖c7 ♕b8 the pawn is poisoned, as 37.♗xe7? ♗xe7 38.♗xe7† ♔f6 would be embarrassing. Therefore he makes a generally useful move, avoiding any kind of counterplay based on a back rank check followed by ...♔h1† and ...♔g1†.

36...d5

Black could not anticipate ♕c1–c7 with 36...♗b8? because of 37.♗b1 with a deadly pin.

The neutral 36...♗a8 would have justified White's previous move after 37.♖c7 ♕b8 38.♗a2 followed by ♗xe7, when White would have an extra tempo (f2–f3) by comparison with the line starting with the impatient 36.♖c7. Of course, this finesse does not change the final evaluation in an absolute sense, but it gives us a hint for the players' thinking depth half a

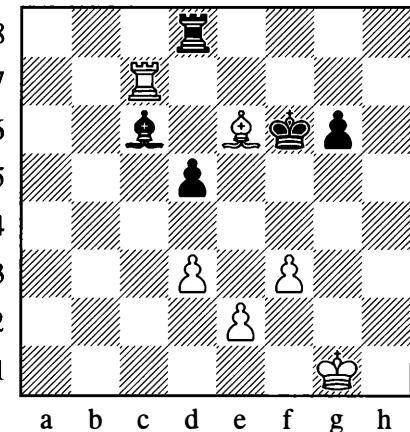
century ago. Nowadays we would be tempted to call 34.♖c1!! and 36.f3!! "computer moves", but in those happy years this was accepted as the human standard.

37.♖c7 ♗a8

Another nice variation is 37...♗b8 38.♗f2 (threatening ♔e3-d4) 38...♗a8 39.♖c5, winning the d5-pawn, because after 39...♗d8? 40.♗f4! followed by ♕c7 the rook would soon be trapped.

38.♗a7 ♗c6

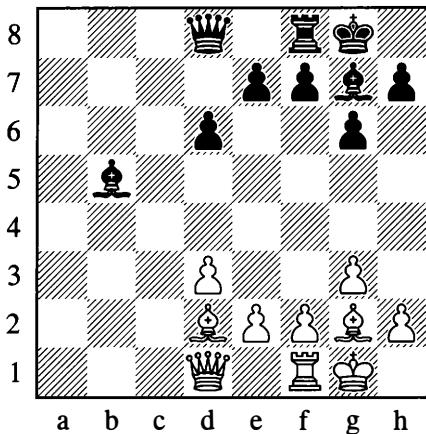
38...♗b8 leads to a familiar situation after 39.♗a5 ♕d8 40.♗f4+–.

39.♗xe7 ♗xe7 40.♗xe7† ♔f6 41.♖c7

White's accurate handling of the position has resulted in the win of a pawn, and Black resigned 17 moves later in Bagirov – Suetin, Baku 1962.

Bagirov's final comment to this game is quite suggestive: "It is obvious that all this was not forced. Thorough analysis may reveal improvements for Black, but one thing is clear. If a grandmaster loses this endgame, without making any obvious mistakes, it means that White's right to make the first move is likely to tell sooner or later."

We are now ready to take a detailed look at this “almost symmetrical” variation.



After 20... $\mathbb{W}b3$, Black has a choice between D1) 20... $\mathbb{Q}d7$ and D2) 20... $\mathbb{W}d7$.

D1) 20... $\mathbb{Q}d7$

Black restores the general symmetry of the bishops, but practically accepts a two-tempo deficit with regard to the mobilization of the major pieces.

21. $\mathbb{B}b1$

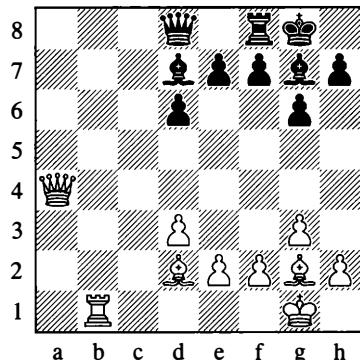
Preventing the freeing move ... $\mathbb{W}b8$.

21... $\mathbb{W}c8$

Black has to activate his position with small steps.

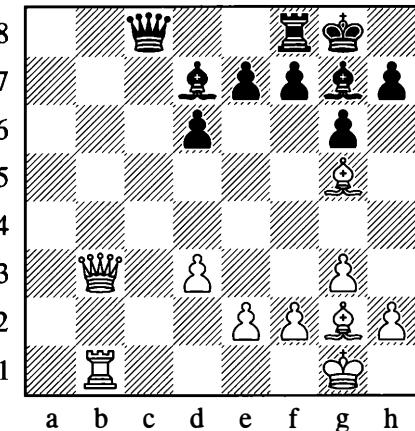
21... $\mathbb{Q}g4$ is ineffective because of 22.h3, forcing the bishop to retreat. 22... $\mathbb{Q}xe2?$ loses to 23. $\mathbb{E}e1$ $\mathbb{Q}h5$ 24.g4 when the bishop is trapped.

21... $\mathbb{Q}e6$ 22. $\mathbb{W}a4$ $\mathbb{Q}d7$ led by a short draw by repetition in Flesch – Sandor, Beverwijk 1964, but White had good reasons to be more ambitious.



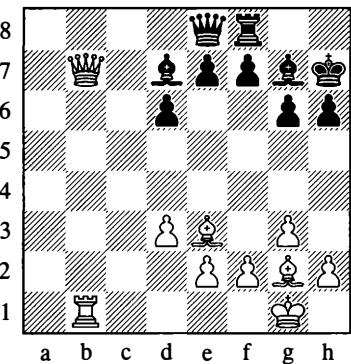
23. $\mathbb{W}a7!$ N White's advantage in piece mobilization has reached three tempos. The immediate threat is 24. $\mathbb{B}b7$. 23... $\mathbb{Q}f6$ 24. $\mathbb{Q}h6$ $\mathbb{E}e8$ 25. $\mathbb{Q}e3!$ White threatens $\mathbb{B}b7$ followed by $\mathbb{Q}b6$, putting the black queen in big danger, which practically forces the next move, which loses yet another tempo. 25... $\mathbb{E}f8$ 26. $\mathbb{Q}d5$ A typical situation. White does not threaten too much yet, but it is almost impossible for Black to free himself. For instance: 26... $\mathbb{E}6$?! 27. $\mathbb{Q}f3$ $d5$ loses a pawn after 28. $\mathbb{B}b6$ (threatening $\mathbb{Q}d6$) 28... $\mathbb{W}c8$ 29. $\mathbb{Q}xd5$ ±

22. $\mathbb{Q}g5$



22... $\mathbb{W}c5$

22... $\mathbb{W}e8$ is too passive. 23. $\mathbb{W}b7$ $h6$ 24. $\mathbb{Q}e3$ $\mathbb{Q}h7$ This position was reached in Shirok – Salm, corr. 1972.



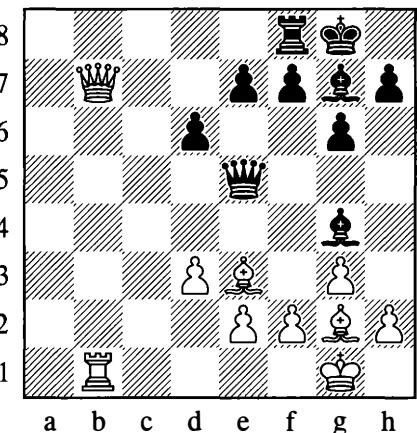
25.♖d5!N Black has no obvious way of freeing himself, since ...e6 induces additional weaknesses.

23.♕e3

White must avoid 23.♕xe7? on account of 23...♝e8 trapping the bishop.

23...♝e5 24.♗b7 ♕g4

Black is doing his best to generate some counterplay or simplify the position. So far, we have been following Udovcic – Parma, Zagreb 1964.



25.d4!N

It is essential to maintain the initiative by attacking the exposed black pieces before the rook gets out of its cage.

25...♝e6

Black has to keep his queen in the narrow central area in order to maintain the defence of the e7-pawn.

25...♛a5 loses a pawn to 26.♗xe7 ♔xe2 27.♗xd6±.

The main alternative to the text move is:

25...♝f6

This does not really alter the character of the position.

26.♗b2

White defends his e2-pawn and threatens to develop his initiative with 27.h3 ♔c8 28.♗c7, when Black's position would be very uncomfortable.

26...e5

The only way to display some activity.

27.d5!

An important decision. Black has got rid of the weakness on e7, but now the pawn on d6 will cause him permanent worries. This kind of weakness weighs a lot in the evaluation of positions resulting from openings such as the Benoni and King's Indian.

27...e4 28.♗c2 ♛a1† 29.♗c1 ♛a2

Black seems to have some counterplay, but the exchange of the e-pawns will not solve his underlying problems.

30.h3 ♔xe2 31.♔e4 ♔e5 32.♔h6

It is obvious that White's coordination is superior.

32...♛a8 33.♗c7 ♗b8 34.♗g2

White evacuates the king from the back rank in order to enable the next move.

34...♔a6 35.♗c6

Black's position remains very passive. He has to contend permanently with the exchange sacrifice ♗xd6, which might easily be followed by ♛f6-g7 mate. In accordance with the spirit of this whole line, Black cannot free himself easily, for instance:

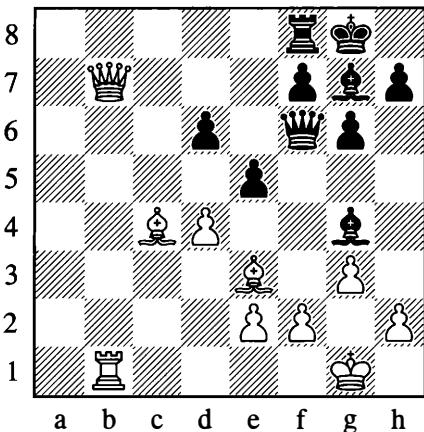
35...♛b7? 36.♗xb7 ♔xb7 37.♗b6

With a decisive pin.

26.♗d5

This is the most energetic continuation, although it involves a degree of risk since the king's defence is weakened.

26...♝f6 27.♝c4 e5

**28.dxe5!**

The most consistent continuation, leaving the c4-f7 diagonal open. With the bishop on c4, 28.d5 makes less sense, and Black would obtain good counterplay with 28...e4.

After the text move, Black faces a difficult choice between two evils: to continue the game with a weak pawn on d6, or open the a3-f8 diagonal for the enemy bishop.

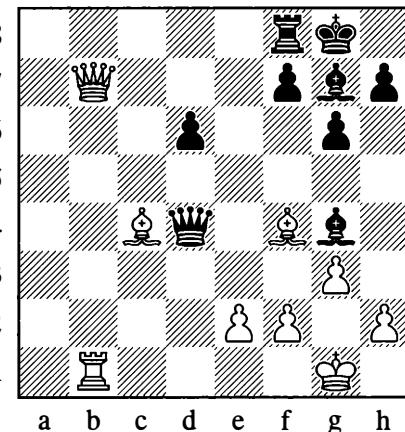
28...♝xe5

This looks like the safest continuation, but Black's poor coordination will most probably lead to the loss of the d6-pawn.

28...dxe5 allows White to assume global control over the position: 29.♗c5 ♜e8 (The rook is vulnerable after 29...♝c8?! 30.♝b6 ♜f5 31.♗e6! winning an exchange.) 30.♝b6 ♜f5 31.f3 e4 Desperately striving for counterplay. (31...♝h3 32.♗d5 leaves Black very passive.) 32.♗xf7† ♜xf7 33.♗xf7† ♜xf7 34.♝b7† ♜g8 35.fxg4± White's extra pawn and the

vulnerability of the e4-pawn offer him good winning chances.

29.♝f4 ♜d4

**30.♛b3!**

A strong queen retreat, defending the bishop on c4, maintaining the pressure against f7 and threatening ♜d1.

30...♝e5

The only way to defend the weak pawn. After 30...♝f6 31.♜d1 ♜d8 32.♝e3± the threat of ♜g5 and the weakness of the back rank force Black to give up the d6-pawn.

31.♝e3 ♜c3 32.♝xc3 ♜xc3 33.♝b7

We are familiar with the fact that the queen exchange does not offer Black the desired relief. His rook is tied to the defence of the f7-pawn, which leaves the d6-pawn in big danger. It should be mentioned that the rook and bishop ending with an extra pawn for White offers good practical winning chances.

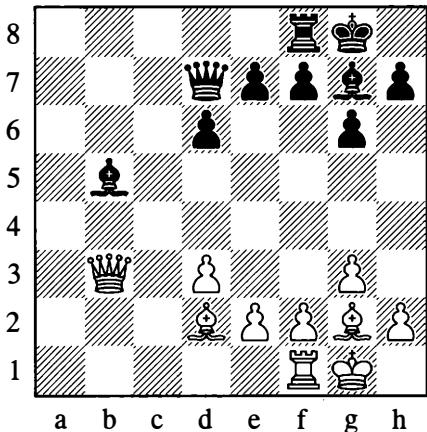
33...♝e6

This is the only move to maintain material equality, but after the exchange on e6 Black's position will be seriously weakened.

34.♝xe6 fxe6 35.♝e7 e5 36.♝h6±

Despite mass simplification and material equality, Black's position is very difficult. His king is caged, the rook is bound to defend the back rank, and the white king can be centralized with ease.

D2) 20... $\mathbb{W}d7$



This is the most active and natural move, which has the drawback of failing to improve the bishop's situation.

21. $\mathbb{B}c1$

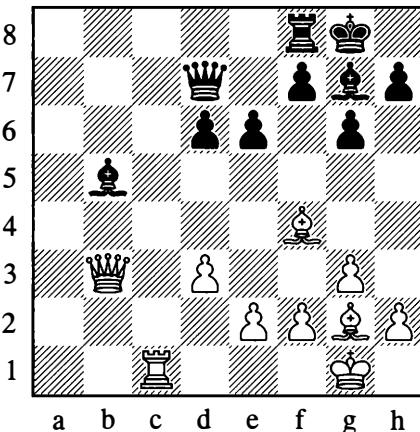
White completes his development and prevents the activation of the enemy rook. Indeed, 21... $\mathbb{W}b8?$ is a blunder because of 22. $\mathbb{B}c6$ $\mathbb{W}e6$ 23. $\mathbb{W}xe6$ $fxe6$ 24. $\mathbb{B}b1$ winning a piece, Radosavljevic – Maljevic, Paracin 2009. There are two better options available: D21) 21...e6 and D22) 21... $\mathbb{Q}a4$.

D21) 21...e6

Black eliminates his weakness on e7, but weakens the seventh rank and the d6-square, while also restricting his light-squared bishop even more.

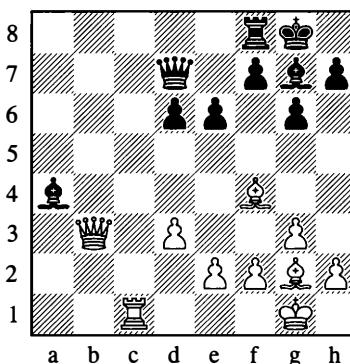
22. $\mathbb{Q}f4$

Immediately taking the newly created weakness under observation. The threat is $\mathbb{Q}xd6$, winning a pawn.



22...d5

22... $\mathbb{Q}a4$ was played in H. Hansen – Ertbjerg, corr. 1984, and here White should have insisted on attacking the d6-pawn:



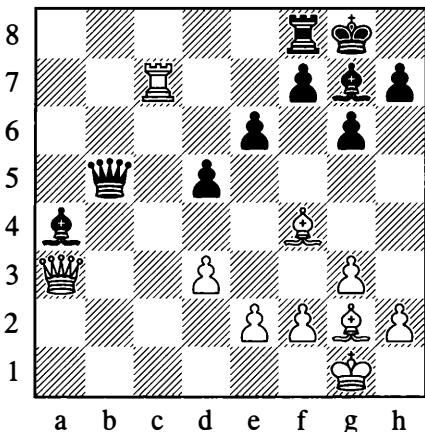
23. $\mathbb{W}a3!$ After this move Black has nothing better than transposing to the main line with 23...d5, since 23... $\mathbb{Q}e5?$! weakens his structure too much: 24. $\mathbb{Q}xe5$ $dxe5$ 25. $\mathbb{B}c4$ $\mathbb{Q}b5$ 26. $\mathbb{B}c5$ By attacking the e5-pawn, White wins an important tempo for his regrouping. 26...f6 27. $\mathbb{W}a5$ $\mathbb{B}b8$ 28. $\mathbb{Q}f3\pm$ Black is completely paralysed, while his seventh rank is weak. White can improve his position at his own convenience, with $\mathbb{Q}g2$, $g4$, $h4$, etc. At the right moment, he could switch to a direct attack with $\mathbb{Q}c3$ followed by $\mathbb{Q}c7$.

23. $\mathbb{Q}c7$ $\mathbb{Q}a4$

The only move, since 23... $\mathbb{W}e8?$ loses an exchange after 24. $\mathbb{Q}d6$.

24. $\mathbb{W}a3 \mathbb{W}b5$

The critical moment of the variation. Black has more or less consolidated, but his coordination remains rather poor. In order to maintain his initiative, White should take measures against the threat of ... $\mathbb{W}b1\#$.

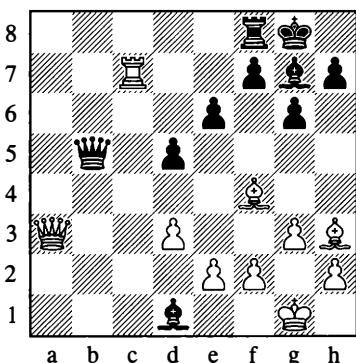
**25. $\mathbb{Q}f3! N\ddagger$**

Objectively speaking, this is a slight improvement over the following game, even though White went on to win in spectacular style.

25. $\mathbb{Q}h3 \mathbb{Q}d1?$

Completely overlooking White's threat.

Protecting the e6-pawn with 25... $\mathbb{E}e8!N$ would have avoided immediate danger, while also questioning the effectiveness of the bishop's development to h3.



26. $\mathbb{Q}xe6!$

An elegant combination, leading to a decisive attack.

26. ... $\mathbb{Q}xe2$

Against 26... $\mathbb{F}xe6$, White has several winning moves, such as 27. $\mathbb{W}e7$ or 27. $\mathbb{Q}h6$, but the most elegant continuation is 27. $\mathbb{Q}xg7\#$ $\mathbb{Q}xg7$ 28. $\mathbb{Q}h6\#$ $\mathbb{Q}xh6$ 29. $\mathbb{W}xf8\#$ $\mathbb{Q}h5$ 30. $\mathbb{W}f4$ $g5$ 31. $\mathbb{W}f7\#$ $\mathbb{Q}h6$ 32. $\mathbb{W}f6\#$ $\mathbb{Q}h5$ 33. $f3$ $g4$ 34. $fxg4\#$ $\mathbb{Q}xg4$ 35. $h3\#$ $\mathbb{Q}xg3$ 36. $\mathbb{W}f3\#$ $\mathbb{Q}h4$ 37. $\mathbb{W}g4$ mate.

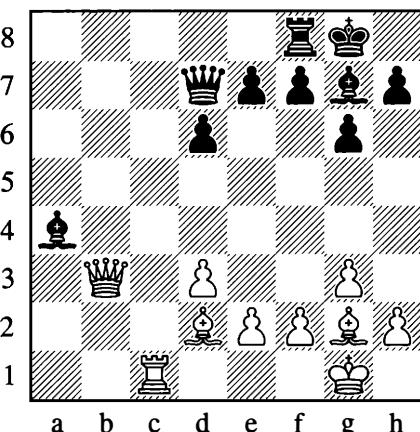
27. $\mathbb{W}xf8\#!!$

A neo-romantic queen sacrifice in a supposedly boring variation!

27... $\mathbb{Q}xf8$ 28. $\mathbb{Q}d6\#$ $\mathbb{Q}g8$ 29. $\mathbb{Q}xf7\#$ $\mathbb{Q}h8$ 30. $\mathbb{Q}c8\#$ $\mathbb{Q}f8$ 31. $\mathbb{Q}e5\#$

Vokac – Van der Veen, Dortmund 1989. This is a very inspiring game, which highlights some of the hidden dangers awaiting Black. Nevertheless, for reasons explained in the note to Black's 25th move, the more modest step with the bishop to f3 is more appropriate.

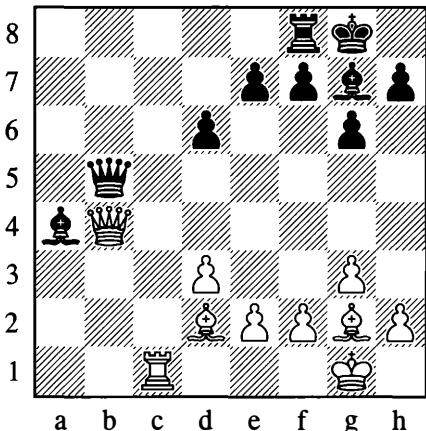
With his last move, White avoided any back rank problems while also safeguarding the e2-pawn. He retains long-term pressure along the seventh rank. As usual, Black should not be in any immediate danger, but at the same time he has no obvious way to free himself.

D22) 21... $\mathbb{Q}a4$ 

This time Black refrains from any weakening pawn moves and clears the b5-square for the queen.

22.♗b4 ♗b5

This position is familiar to us from the introductory game Bagirov – Suetin.



23.♕c4!N

White has nothing against the queen swap, but wants to carry it out from a position of force.

In the introductory section we saw White succeed with:

23.♗xb5 ♕xb5 24.♕g5

But here Black should have defended with:

24...♝e8!

Instead of the weakening 24...f6?!, as played in the Bagirov – Suetin game.

The text move maintains the flexibility of Black's position. Unfortunately, White cannot prevent the black light-squared bishop from reaching a safe square.

25.♗b1 ♘a4 26.♗b4

This position was reached in Wozniak – Weber, Bydgoszcz 2001.

26...♝d7!N

In the game Black unnecessarily kept his bishop on the d1-a4 diagonal. After the text move, White's advantage is purely symbolic.

27.♗b7 h6! 28.♗e3

Black's last move is justified by the fact that 28.♗xh6?! loses an exchange to 28...♝c8!.

Alternatively, 28.♗h4 ♘g4 leads to simplifications and a probable draw.

28...♝g4

Any further attempts to maintain the initiative can be repelled by accurate defence, for instance:

29.♗c6 ♘c8 30.♗d5 e6 31.f3 ♘c2 32.♗f2

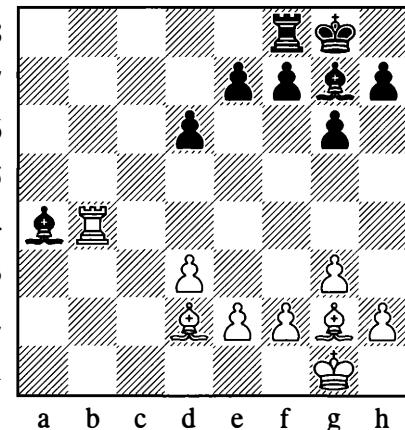
32.fxg4? is strongly met by 32...♝xe2! when both white bishops are hanging.

32...♝f5

Black has activated his position, achieving full equality.

23...♗xb4 24.♗xb4

White maintains his advantage of two tempos. More surprisingly, the enemy bishop has only a single adequate escape square.



24...♝d1

This looks rather awkward, but other moves lose a pawn, for instance:

24...♝c2? 25.♗g5 ♘e8 26.♗c6 ♘c8 27.♗xe7±

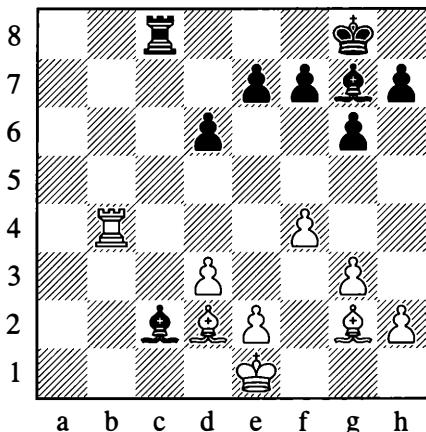
The c6-bishop is taboo on account of Black's vulnerable back rank.

Or 24...♝d7? 25.♗b7 ♘d8 26.♗e3!± The threat of ♘b6 forces Black to move away with the bishop, leaving the e7-pawn undefended.

25.♗f1!

Suddenly the bishop starts to feel uncomfortable.

25...♝c8 26.♗e1 ♘c2 27.f4†



Black is in no immediate danger, but his light-squared bishop will remain caged for a long time. Meanwhile White intends to conduct a kingside pawn advance, with the aim of gaining space and/or provoking a weakness. In a general sense, the character of the position is similar to that from the introductory game Bagirov – Suetin. It is hard to evaluate White's chances to get anything concrete, but the play remains very much one-sided.

Conclusion

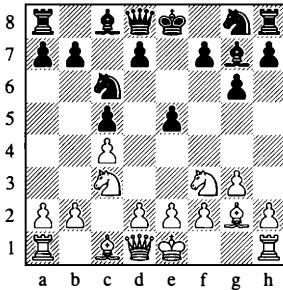
In variations A, B and C, in which Black deviates from the natural scheme of development with ...♝f6, White usually gets the upper hand with energetic play.

Line D stands somewhat apart. The system recommended to those wishing to avoid the King's Indian positions contains more venom than may be apparent at first sight. Despite being quite successful against the ...c5 King's Indian, I am looking forward to testing this variation in practice. The tactical nuances hidden under its apparent simplicity have fascinated me while working on this chapter.

Chapter 4

The Closed System

5...e5



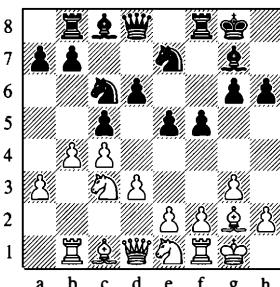
Variation Index

1.c4 c5 2.g3 ♜c6 3.♗g2 g6 4.♗c3 ♗g7 5.♗f3 e5

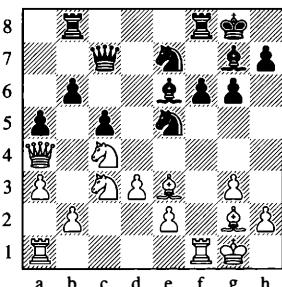
6.0–0

A) 6...d6 7.a3	52
A1) 7...♗ge7 8.b4	53
A11) 8...cxb4 9.axb4 ♜xb4	54
A12) 8...e4	55
A13) 8...0–0 9.♗b1	57
A131) 9...♗b8	58
A132) 9...f5	61
A2) 7...a5	65
B) 6...♗ge7 7.a3 0–0 8.♗b1 a5 9.♗e1! d6 10.♗c2 ♗e6 11.♗e3	69
B1) 11...♗b8	70
B2) 11...f5 12.d3 h6 13.♗ed5 ♗b8 14.♗d2	73
B21) 14...♗f7	74
B22) 14...♗h7	76

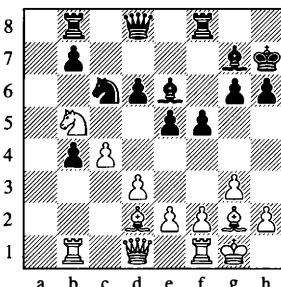
A132) note to 10...e4



A2) after 18...♗xe5



B22) after 18...♗c6

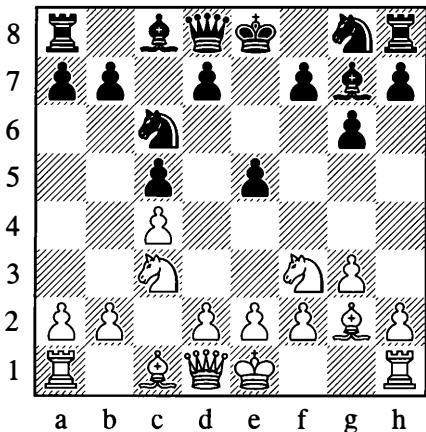


12.♗d2!N

19.♗f4!N

19.♗b3!N

1.c4 c5 2.g3 ♘c6 3.♗g2 g6 4.♘c3 ♗g7 5.♘f3 e5



This is the first major branch of the closed system that we are going to examine. Black out rules the opening of the centre with d2-d4 and prepares a scheme of development in the spirit of Botvinnik's triangle. He hopes that his space advantage and flexible development will compensate for the weakness of the d5-square. Later he can aim to undermine the c4-pawn with either ...d5 or ...b5, or even play for a kingside attack.

The readers of the second volume will notice that we actually get the recommended Anti King's Indian system with reversed colours. One obvious question is whether White's extra tempo will be enough to convert a slightly worse position into a better one. In fact, this is a common theme in many hypermodern openings. While working on the second volume I sometimes had problems proving that such a sharp opening as the Benoni would offer White an advantage with reversed colours and an extra tempo. Surprisingly, I felt much more at ease in the apparently peaceful Botvinnik triangle, both in over the board games and at my working desk.

In order to understand the abstract explanation for such a paradoxical situation,

the reader should refer to line B from Chapter 2 and line A from Chapter 3. In the current variation too, the queenside attacks with b2-b4 or ...b7-b5 are of vital importance and the player who manages to carry it out first is likely to get the upper hand.

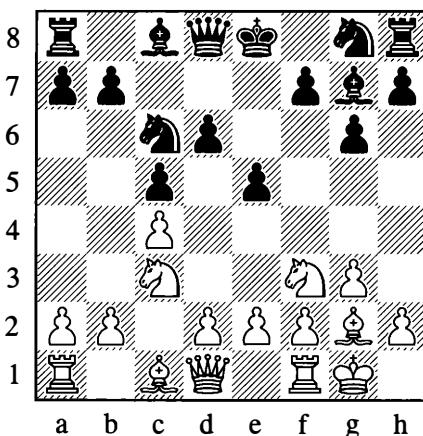
Another important element is the fight for the d5-square. In some lines of the Anti King's Indian system from the second volume, Black was missing just one tempo to reach e6 with his king's knight. Thanks to the extra tempo, White's chances to consolidate in the centre are much higher in the current variation.

6.0–0

Before undertaking anything concrete, White makes the most natural developing move.

Although the position appears quite static at this stage of the game, it makes a lot of difference if Black plays A) 6...d6 or B) 6...♗ge7.

A) 6...d6



With this move Black opens the diagonal for his queen's bishop in order to be able to meet the thematic ♘e1 with ...♗e6. Combined with the standard ...♗ge7, this will enable him to break in the centre with ...d5. With the knight on f3, however, ...♗e6 is not a threat because of the reply d3, leaving the bishop exposed to ♘g5 attacks.

The drawback of Black's last move is that once the d-pawn has been moved, a sacrificial attack based on a3 and b4 (without $\mathbb{B}b1$) can hardly be met with the dynamic ...d5, as the lost tempo would harm Black's chances considerably.

7.a3

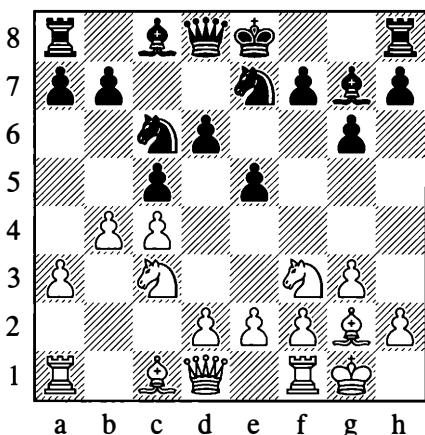
At this point Black can either ignore the threat of b4 with A1) 7... $\mathbb{Q}ge7$ or parry it with A2) 7...a5.

A1) 7... $\mathbb{Q}ge7$

Black refrains from weakening his position with ...a5, aiming to prove that White's queenside initiative can be kept under control.

8.b4

White sacrifices a pawn in the spirit of the Benko Gambit, for the sake of opening lines and diagonals.



Black has three main ways of reacting. He can accept the sacrifice with A11) 8... $\mathbb{C}xb4$, or try taking advantage of the weakening of the long diagonal with A12) 8...e4, or simply ignore the queenside tension with A13) 8...0–0.

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

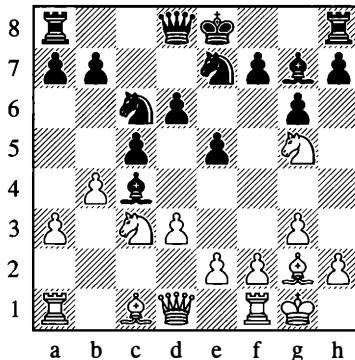
This move exposes the bishop too soon and

leads to the chronic weakening of the light squares in the centre.

9.Qg5!

It transpires that the c4-pawn does not need to be protected.

9... $\mathbb{Q}xc4$ 10.d3



Quite sadly, the bishop has to retreat to e6 (with or without ... $\mathbb{C}xb4$ in between) where it will be exchanged, leading to a chronic weakening of Black's light squares, not to mention the deterioration of his central structure. Starting from this position, grandmaster Lubomir Ftacnik won two good games with White at nine years apart.

a) 10... $\mathbb{Q}e6$ 11.Qxe6 fxe6 12.bxc5 d5

Black decides to keep his central pawns compact, but this does not solve the problem of the weakness on e6 in any way.

12... $\mathbb{C}xc5$ would have made the g2-bishop the indisputable master of the light squares all over the board. 13.Wb3 Wd7 14.Qe4 b6 15.Qg5 The e6-pawn is in big danger, forcing Black to embark on a long forced variation. 15...Qd4 16.Wa2 Qd5 17.Qxe6 Qc3 18.Qxg7† Wxg7 19.Wc4 Qcxe2† 20.Qh1 Black has won a pawn, but his king is unsafe and the e2-knight may get into danger. White has a dangerous initiative after 20...Qd8 21.Qg5 or 20...Qc8 21.Qb2 Wf7 22.Qae1, perhaps followed by f4.

13.e4 0–0 14.Wg4†

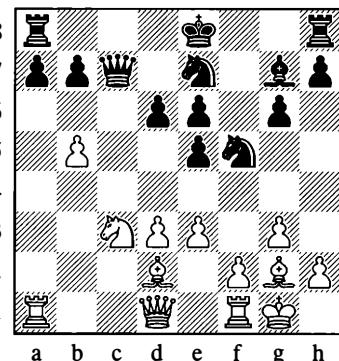
Black has structural defects and his bishop and e7-knight are passive, Ftacnik – Rogers, Groningen 1977.

b) In the second game, Black fared no better by inserting the pawn exchange:

10...cxb4 11.axb4 ♜e6 12.♗xe6 fxe6

Black has avoided the unfavourable consequences of the exchange on c5, but has opened the a-file for the white rook. The next move is the best way to take advantage of this circumstance.

13.b5! ♖d4 14.e3 ♜c7 15.♖d2 ♜df5



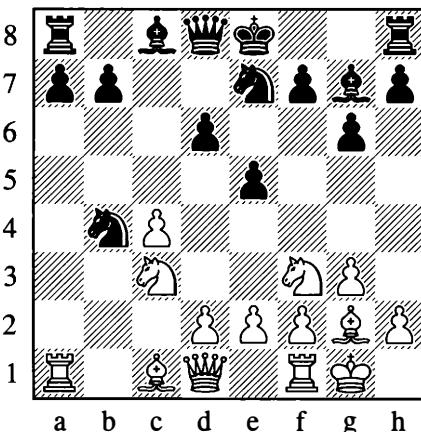
16.b6!

Opening both the b-file and the a4-e8 diagonal, while winning time for the attack.

16...♘xb6 17.♕a4† ♔f7 18.♖fb1±

With a powerful attack, Ftacnik – Danner, Vienna 1986.

A11) 8...cxb4 9.axb4 ♜xb4



Accepting the sacrifice is quite risky, as White wins both time and open lines for his queenside attack.

10.♔a3

Played in the spirit of ...♝xa6 from the Benko Gambit. In the present situation the bishop is all the more effective, given the choice of its opposite number to desert the a3-f8 diagonal.

10...♝ec6

Other moves would see the d6-pawn become seriously weak:

10...♝bc6?! 11.♕e4 ♜f5 12.g4±

10...♝a6?! 11.♕e4 ♜c5 At this point White could safely retrieve his pawn, but in the following game he preferred to play cat and mouse with: 12.♗fg5?!. Now Black could have castled and suffered for a while before resigning, but he made things worse for himself with: 12...♘c7?! 13.♗xd6† ♜xd6 14.♕e4+– Martinovic – De Firmian, Bor 1984.

11.♘a4 ♜a6

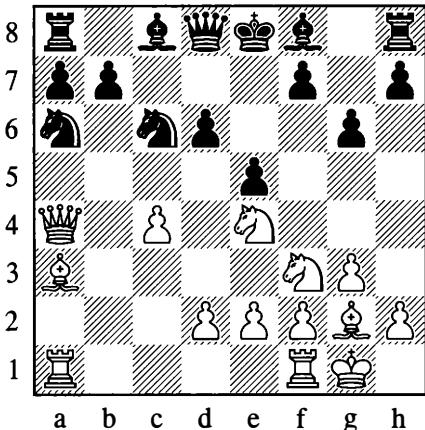
11...a5?? would be an amusing blunder. Both pieces defending the knight are pinned, allowing 12.♔xb4+–.

12.♕e4 ♜f8?!

Ribli considers 12...♜c5 to be a better practical chance, and also suggests the most effective continuation for White: 13.♗xc5 dxc5 14.♗xc5 e4 Otherwise, Black would simply be worse in conditions of material equality. 15.♕e1 ♜xa1 16.♕xa1 ♜g8 17.♗xe4 White has a pawn for the exchange, but his strategic superiority is overwhelming. 17...♘xd2 Hoping to find some consolation in material gains. 18.♗f3+– Ribli modestly concludes that White has compensation for the exchange. He probably overlooked the fact that the black queen will not find peace easily,

allowing White to win several tempos for his attack.

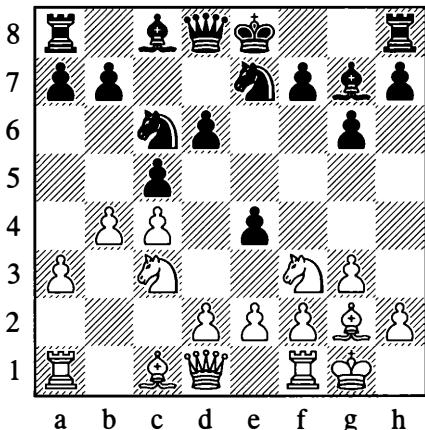
The absurd-looking text move was played in Romanishin – Maksimenko, Ordzhonikidze 2000. At this point White's most effective continuation of the attack would have been:



13.c5!N

With this powerful move White undermines the e5-pawn, with a near-decisive advantage. (Romanishin played the slightly less effective 13.d4 and won anyway).

A12) 8...e4



Black gains space in the centre, taking advantage of the pin along the a1-h8 diagonal.

This action can be evaluated as premature, because Black is not sufficiently well developed to keep his advanced central pawn defended under favourable circumstances.

9.Qg5

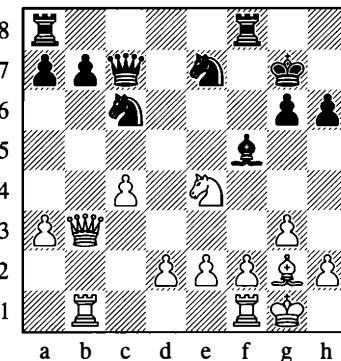
The most active answer.

I was tempted to suggest 9.Qe1, aiming for a transposition to line A132 after 9...f5 10.Qb2 0-0 11.Qb1, but Black can instead deviate with 9...Qe6!? In this case, 10.Qb1 f5 11.Qb2 Qxc4 12.d3 exd3 13.Qxd3 0-0 would transpose to a position from the note to White's 13th move in line A132, which is very close to equality.

9...f5

Against 9...h6 White should allow his knight to be trapped with 10.Qgxe4!, as he will get more than enough material and positional compensation for it. Here are two examples:

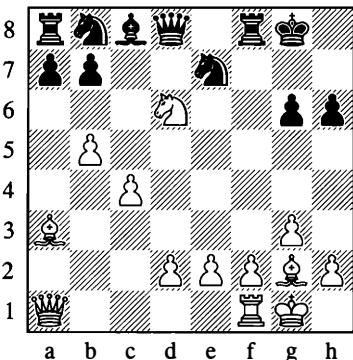
- a) 10...f5 11.bxc5 fxe4 12.cxd6 Qxd6 13.Qxe4 Qc7 14.Qb1 0-0 15.Qb2 Qf5 16.Qxg7 Qxg7 17.Qb3±



The material balance is even, but White has the more active position and his central pawns can start advancing at any moment, Lehtinen – Mertanen, Tampere 2001.

10...cxib4 11.axb4 f5 Black has avoided bxc5, but has opened the a3-f8 diagonal and the a-file

for the enemy pieces. 12.b5 $\mathbb{Q}b8$ (12... $\mathbb{Q}e5$ allows White save his knight with 13.d4± as, mentioned by Graham Burgess. Also 12... $\mathbb{Q}a5$ can be answered with 13. $\mathbb{Q}xa5$, getting lots of pawns for the exchange.) 13. $\mathbb{Q}a3$ fxe4 14. $\mathbb{Q}xe4$ 0–0 15. $\mathbb{Q}xd6$ $\mathbb{Q}xa1$ 16. $\mathbb{W}xa1$



White has only three pawns for the rook, but has a huge lead in development, while Black's kingside is wide open. 16... $\mathbb{Q}d7$ 17. $\mathbb{Q}xb7$ $\mathbb{Q}xb7$ 18. $\mathbb{Q}xb7$ $\mathbb{Q}b8$ 19. $\mathbb{Q}xe7$ $\mathbb{W}xe7$ 20. $\mathbb{Q}d5±$ $\mathbb{Q}h7$ 21. $\mathbb{W}xa7±$ White has five mobile pawns for the rook and a safer king, Kruse – Daw, corr. 1995.

10. $\mathbb{Q}b2$ 0–0

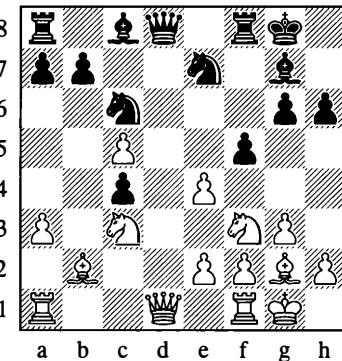
10...h6 11. $\mathbb{Q}h3$ cxb4 12.axb4 $\mathbb{Q}xb4$ fails to win a pawn after 13. $\mathbb{W}b3$ $\mathbb{Q}bc6$ 14. $\mathbb{Q}xe4!±$ Black's centre has been destroyed and he remains vulnerable along the a1-h8 diagonal.

11.d3 h6

Before making the f3-square available for the enemy knight with...exd3, Black drives it back to the generally less favourable spot on h3. In doing so, however, he weakens the g6-square.

After having consumed a tempo with...d6, it would be strange if the thematic central counterplay with 11...d5 would prove effective: 12.bxc5 dxc4 (Alternatively, 12...h6 13.cxd5 $\mathbb{Q}xd5$ 14. $\mathbb{Q}xd5$ $\mathbb{W}xd5$ 15. $\mathbb{Q}xg7$ $\mathbb{Q}xg7$ 16. $\mathbb{Q}h3±$ leaves Black's structure unstable.) 13.dxe4 h6

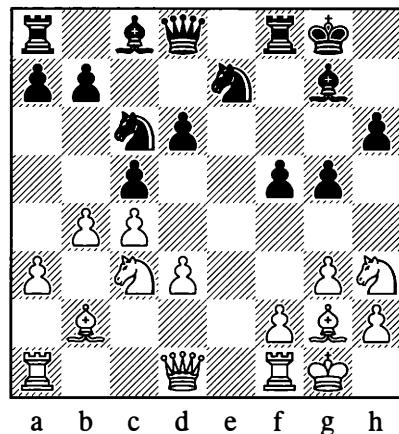
14. $\mathbb{Q}f3$ The position has opened to White's favour, because of his better development.



14... $\mathbb{W}xd1$ 15. $\mathbb{Q}axd1$ fxe4 16. $\mathbb{Q}d2±$ White will win a pawn and will occupy the d6-square with his king's knight.

12. $\mathbb{Q}h3$ exd3 13.exd3 g5

This is the consistent move, aiming to keep the knight away from favourable paths such as f4-d5.



14.b5 $\mathbb{Q}d4$ 15.f4!

Preventing any eventual counterplay based on...f4 and preparing the return of the knight into the game with $\mathbb{Q}f2$.

15...g4 16. $\mathbb{Q}f2$ $\mathbb{Q}b8$ 17. $\mathbb{Q}a2$

Defending the b2-bishop in order to facilitate the exchange of Black's central knight and the neutralization of the g7-bishop.

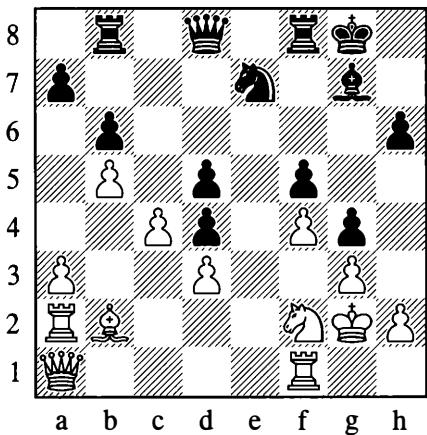
17...b6 18.Qe2 Qb7

Black tries to maintain his central outpost.

After the seemingly active 18...Qf3† 19.Qxf3 gxf3 20.Qc1 Qxb2 21.Qxb2, the pawn on f3 is more of a weakness than a strength, for instance: 21...Qb7 22.d4 (threatening d5) 22...d5 The only way to fight against the unfavourable stabilization of the position. 23.dxc5 bxc5 24.Qd2 d4 25.Qcd3+ Black has numerous weaknesses and his minor pieces are restricted by both their own and the enemy pawns. Apart from Qxc5, White threatens Qe5xf3 followed by Qd3-e5.

19.Qxd4 cxd4 20.Wa1 Qxg2 21.Qxg2 d5

At this point a draw was prematurely agreed in the game Leski – De Firmian, Las Vegas 1996. However, White has every reason to continue.

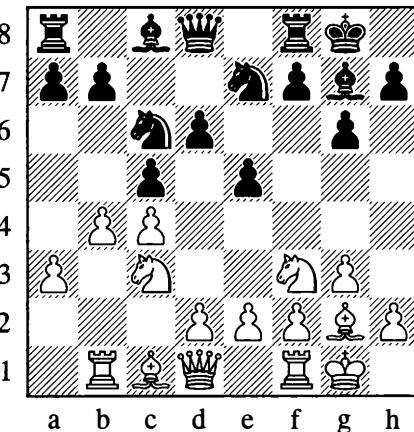
**22.Qd1!N±**

Having secured the d-file, White will win the central pawn with ease.

A13) 8...0–0

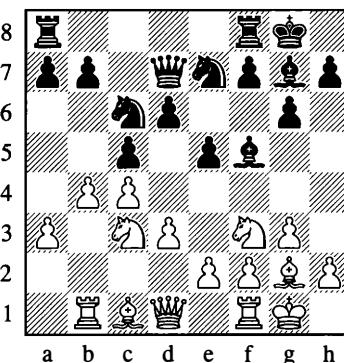
Black does not pay attention to the queenside tension, believing that White cannot create dangerous threats there. This is only partially true. There might not be anything immediately

critical, but in the long run, Black will experience some unpleasantness in that area, which could have a knock-on effect to his overall coordination throughout his position.

9.Qb1

White defends the b4-pawn and begins to exert some pressure on the b-file. We will examine A131) 9...Qb8 and A132) 9...f5.

9...Qf5 wins a tempo for Black's development, but the bishop is not well placed on f5. It does not control the d5-square and is a bit exposed. 10.d3 Wd7 This was Andersson – Ivanovic, Niksic 1983, and here White could have highlighted the misplacement of the bishop by means of a thematic manoeuvre:



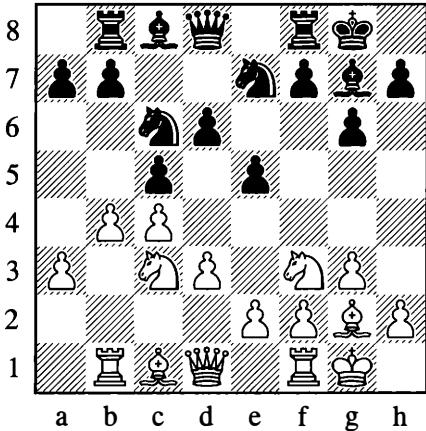
11.Qe1!N (In the game White played 11.Qd2,

which did not offer him anything special. The text move enables him to take over the control of the d5-square, while also targeting the enemy bishop.) 11... $\mathbb{B}ae8$ 12. $\mathbb{Q}c2$ b6 13. $\mathbb{Q}e3$ $\mathbb{Q}h3$ 14. $\mathbb{Q}xh3$ $\mathbb{W}xh3$ 15. $\mathbb{Q}ed5\pm$ Followed by $\mathbb{W}a4$ or a4, with a promising queenside initiative. For more information about this type of position, refer to line B1 below.

A131) 9... $\mathbb{B}b8$

This is the most solid move. Black overprotects the b7-pawn in order to prepare the development of his queen's bishop.

10.d3



10...b6

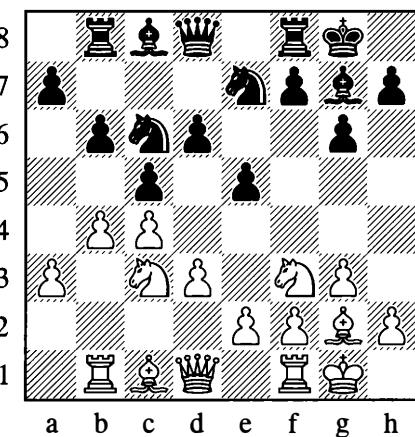
Black plays a waiting game. In the event of a hurried $\mathbb{Q}e1$, he would answer with ... $\mathbb{Q}e6$, being ready to open the centre with...d5.

10...h6 has been played in a few games. I recommend 11.e3!N, with similar ideas as in the main line.

After the text move, White needs to choose his plan for the next phase of the game. The pressure along the b-file, in terms of the permanent possibility of bxc5, has done its job: Black has spent two tempos in order to consolidate. The time has now come to switch to the other

aspect of the queenside attack, the gaining of space with b4-b5. In order to make it effective, White needs to prevent the centralization of the enemy knight with ... $\mathbb{Q}d4$.

I must underline the fact that there is a tight relationship between these two different aspects of the queenside attack. Had Black been able to spare the two tempos needed to secure his b-pawn and play ... $\mathbb{Q}e6$ and ... $\mathbb{W}d7$, the knight could have regrouped via d8 and later f7.



11.e3! h6

By preventing $\mathbb{Q}g5$, Black prepares both ... $\mathbb{Q}e6$ and ...f5.

11... $\mathbb{Q}f5\text{?!$

This is premature because of:

12. $\mathbb{Q}d5!$ $\mathbb{Q}h8$

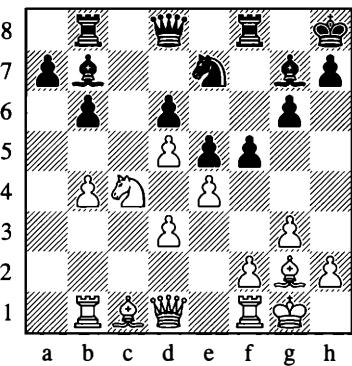
Usually White would not like to allow the d5-square to be occupied by a pawn, but after 12... $\mathbb{Q}xd5$ 13.cxd5 $\mathbb{Q}e7$ 14. $\mathbb{W}b3$, apart from 15.bxc5 dxc5 16.d6†, he would also threaten 15. $\mathbb{Q}g5$ followed by $\mathbb{Q}e6$.

13. $\mathbb{Q}d2$ cxb4 14.axb4 $\mathbb{Q}xd5$ 15.cxd5

This way of capturing is justified by the fact that Black has spent two tempos on relatively useless moves (...f5 and ... $\mathbb{Q}h8$), while remaining underdeveloped.

15... $\mathbb{Q}e7$ 16. $\mathbb{Q}c4$ $\mathbb{Q}b7$ 17.e4

Threatening b5 followed by $\mathbb{Q}a3$.



17...Bc8 18.Qd2

Keeping the possibility of dxе4 in response to ...fxе4. The loss of two tempos with the knight is only apparent. The bishop is awfully passive on b7 and Black will require at least two tempos to bring it back into the game.

18...h6 19.b5±

White has a space advantage in the centre and on the queenside, and all Black's minor pieces are very passive, Brenjo – Velimirovic, Valjevo 2000.

12.b5!

The logical sequel to the previous move: the black knight is forced onto a passive square.

In the following game White was successful only thanks to Black's cooperation:

12.Qd2 Qe6 13.Qe1 Wd7?!

Black does not pay proper attention to the fight for the d5-square.

Instead he should have opened the centre: 13...cbx4!N 14.axb4 d5 Suddenly, White has

problems defending the d3- and c4-squares. 15.b5 Qa5 16.Qxd5 Qxd5 17.cxd5 Qxd5 18.Qxd5 Wxd5 Black is better developed,

which compensates for White's queenside achievements.

14.Qd5 Wh7 15.f4 f5 16.Qc2 Bfc8?!

Concentrating the pieces on the queenside does not make too much sense.

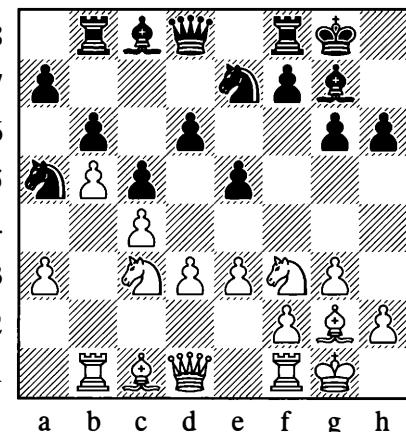
17.b5 Qd8 18.e4±

With his knights passive and lacking space on the queenside, Black is under strong pressure, Smyslov – Bobotsov, Munich 1958.

In general terms, we can observe that maintaining the tension, after having slightly weakened the central pawn chain with the previous move, could cause White problems. After blocking the queenside he will be able to organise his play much more easily.

12...Qa5

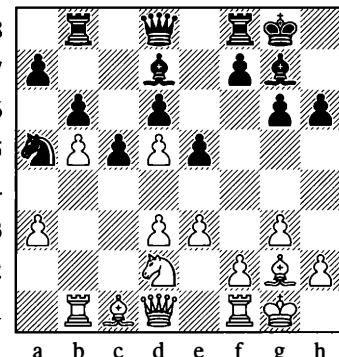
After the queenside has been blocked, the strategic plot gravitates around the central d5- and c4-squares. The c4-square can be cleared in two ways: either Black plays ...d5, or White installs a knight on d5, answering ...Qxd5 with cxd5. In both cases, the knight manoeuvre Qd2-c4 will feature in White's plans at some point. Ideally, the a5-knight should be exchanged or driven away with Qc3(xa5), but this is not always necessary. In some situations after the sequence ...d5, cxd5 and later Qc4, the exchange ...Qxc4 can leave the d5-square under White's control after dxc4.



13.Qb2?!N

White should not hurry to carry out the concrete phase of his plan. Development is almost always a high priority, which explains this and the next few moves. It is worth considering a few alternatives briefly:

13.♕d2?! is premature: 13...♝e6 14.♕d5 If White had the time to play ♜b2-c3, everything would be okay, but Black can take advantage of White's slight underdevelopment. 14...♜xd5 15.cxd5 ♜d7 Suddenly the b5-pawn has become a weakness.



16.a4 ♛e8! 17.♗b2 a6 18.♕e4 Deflecting the queen in order to win time to defend the b5-pawn. 18...♛e7 19.♗c3 f5 20.♕d2 axb5 21.axb5 ♜a8 Black has managed to consolidate his knight on a5. Being tied up to the defence of the b5-pawn, White has no obvious way to make progress. He may have to play ♜c4 soon, leading to approximate equality after the knight exchange.

13.♕d2 is not such a bad move, and after 13...♝e6 14.e4, intending ♜d5, White stood slightly better in Olarasu – Baumstark, Baile Tusnad 1997. Nevertheless, I think it is best to keep the white position more flexible.

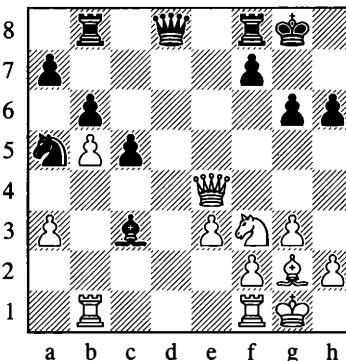
13...♝e6 14.♛c2

The best square for the queen, from where it keeps b3 defended.

14...♛d7

White is well prepared against the opening of the centre: 14...d5 15.cxd5 ♜xd5 16.♕xd5 ♜xd5 17.♗c3 Apart from the main strategic plan, there is a tactical nuance behind this move. Having prevented both ...♝b3 and

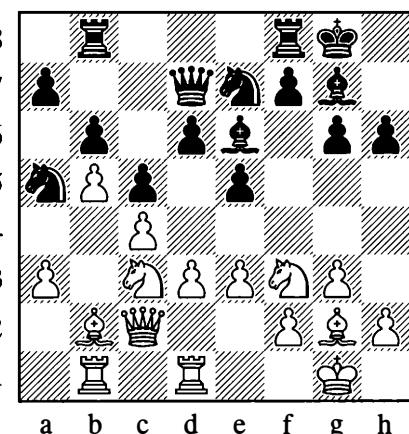
...♝a2, White threatens to win a pawn with e4 followed by ♜xe5. 17...e4 The only way to deviate from the unfavourable course of events. 18.dxe4 ♜xe4 19.♛xe4 ♜xc3 Black has simplified the position and earned himself a passed pawn. On the other hand, White has excellent control of the light squares and a dangerous kingside majority.



20.h4! White will build up a strong kingside attack, helped by the presence of opposite-coloured bishops.

15.♗fd1

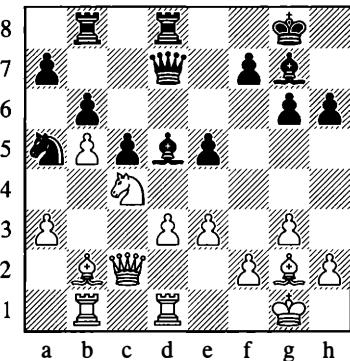
Having completed his development and overprotected the d3-pawn, White is ready for ♜d2 followed by ♜d5 and ♜c3.



15...♝g4

Trying to cross White's plans.

The main alternative is: 15...♝fd8 16.♞d2 d5 17.cxd5 ♞xd5 18.♞xd5 ♜xd5 19.♞c4



After the practically forced exchange on c4, White will have good chances to reach a favourable ending, with an outpost on d5 and a good bishop versus a bad one.

16.♝el

Renewing the threat.

16...♝e6??

Now that the defence of the d3-pawn has been weakened, the bishop has good reason to retreat to its best square, in order to prepare to meet ♞d2 with ...d5. However, it will soon become clear that White has won a relevant tempo, as the rook is better placed on e1 than on f1.

17.♞d2 d5

Otherwise White will execute his plan without hitch.

18.cxd5 ♞xd5 19.♞xd5 ♜xd5 20.♝xd5 ♜xd5 21.e4 ♜d7 22.♞c3

White is close to achieving a perfect blockade on the light squares.

22...♝fd8 23.♝e3

This is the moment when the extra move ♜el becomes useful!

23...♞b7

23...h5 is well met by 24.♝b2!, hitting e5 and overprotecting b5, in order to renew the threat of ♜xa5 followed by ♞c4. (It is too early for 24.♜xa5?! bxa5 when White must worry about the simultaneous threats of ...♝xb5 and ...♞h6.) Play might continue: 24...♞h6 25.♝f3 ♜xd2 26.♝xd2± Black has succeeded in eliminating the knight before it could take up residence on c4. However, in the resulting position he is still weak on both wings and will, in all likelihood, have to shed a pawn.

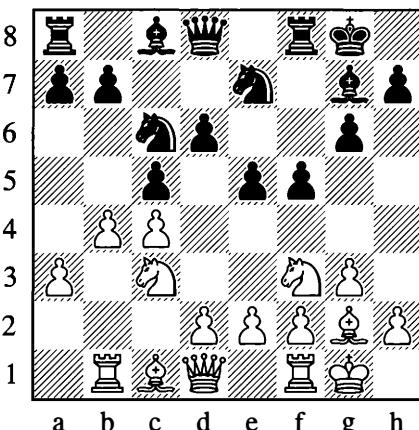
24.♞c4 ♜e6 25.♝el!

Having fulfilled its duty, the rook clears the e3-square for the knight.

25...♞d6 26.♞e3±

White has avoided the exchange of knights and threatens to occupy the d5-square. His main plan is based on a4-a5, opening the a-file for his rooks and creating a permanent weakness on b6. In the long run, he also has good reason to feel optimistic about endgames involving a bad black bishop.

A132) 9...f5

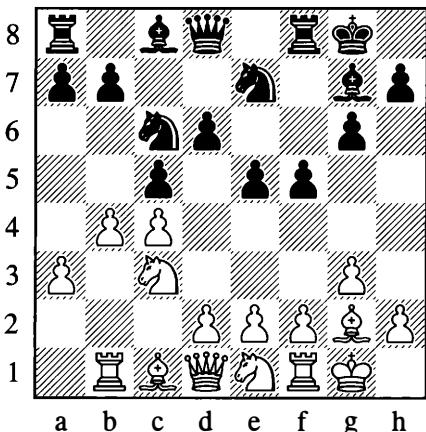


With this move Black tries to take advantage of the fact that White has delayed d2-d3. Since 10.d3?? loses a piece to 10...e4, White cannot avoid having his knight pushed back. However,

Black will find it hard to maintain his space advantage in the centre, because the e4-pawn cannot be supported by means of ...d5. This variation is closely related to line A12, the main difference being that the f3-knight will choose an alternative route here.

10.♘e1

In most of the lines examined below (starting with line A2), this knight retreat signifies the start of the standard manoeuvre to c2, e3 and d5. In the current position this possibility is certainly not out of the question, but the main idea of the last move is to prepare d2-d3.



10...e4

This is the most ambitious continuation.

10...♗b8

This is less consistent, and makes ...f5 look like both a weakening and a loss of time simultaneously.

11.d3

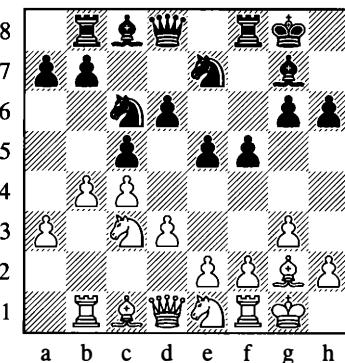
Once ...f6 is not possible any more, ♘g5xe7 becomes a serious positional threat, weakening Black's defence of the d5-square.

11...h6

Ignoring the threat offers White easy play: 11...♗e6 12.♗g5 ♕d7 13.b5 ♗d8 14.♗xe7 ♘xe7 Now in Dannevig – Miezis, Oslo 2004, White should have played: 15.♘d5!N ♕d7

16.e3± With the black knight committed to an unfavourable path, White's control over the d5-square is unchallenged. He will consolidate his advantage with f4, ♖f3, ♜c2 and ♜ae1.

Preventing ♘g5 is more consistent strategically, but spends another tempo on a pawn move. In Marin – Edouard, Andorra 2009, the most accurate way to consolidate White's domination would have been:



12.♗d2!N

A strong developing move. White's main plan is to force the enemy queen's knight onto the passive a5-square. Once this has been achieved, the indirect pressure exerted by the bishop will discourage Black's only bid for activity, the central break ...d5.

12...b6

12...♘e6 prematurely deprives the knight of the e6-square, thus allowing: 13.b5! ♗a5 (Since 13...♗d4? would now lose a piece to 14.e3, White can attack the knight without spending time on the prophylactic e2-e3.) 14.♘c2 Threatening ♘e3-d5 with a positional crush. 14...f4 15.e3! This is the right moment to advance the e-pawn, because Black cannot undermine the c4-pawn with ...e4 anymore. 15...g5 16.♖e2± With his knight marooned on a5, Black will find it hard to conduct a sound attack on the other wing. Sooner or later, he will have to release the tension with ...fxe3, leaving

White with a strategically winning position.

13.♕c2 f4

The only way to prevent ♘e3-d5.

14.e3

We are familiar with the circumstances under which this move is favourable.

14...♗e6 15.b5±

With similar play as in the previous line.

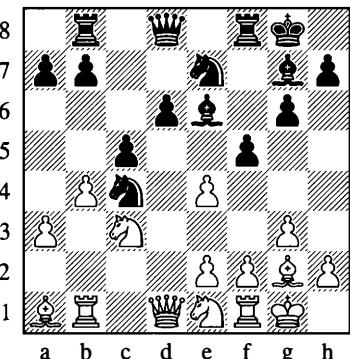
11.♗b2

White defends his knight in order to prepare d3. In the long run, the possible exchange of dark-squared bishops will weaken the enemy king's position.

11...♗e6 12.d3 exd3

Black has no favourable ways to maintain the tension.

Here is one such example: 12...♘e5 13.♗a1 ♘b8 14.dxe4 ♘xc4 Kosten – Bellin, West Bromwich 2004. At this point it is worth examining the game continuation before moving onto a more precise path for White.

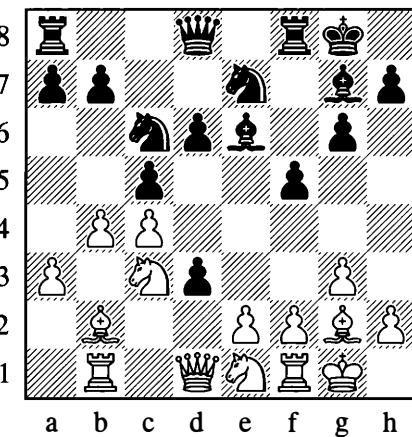


a) The game continued 15.exf5?! gxf5? 16.♗c1± Black's structure is very weak all over the board and his king's position is unsafe. Besides, some of his minor pieces are vulnerable. White intends to regroup with ♘d3-f4 and ♘d1, with strong pressure against several important sectors of the board,

Although the game turned out well for White,

it is important to appreciate that Black's 15th move was a strategic blunder. Black probably discarded 15...♝xf5!N because it weakens the defence of the d5-square, but presumably overlooked that 16.♗c1 (the most desirable way to defend the a3-pawn under different circumstances) could be met by 16...♝h6!, as 17.e3? allows the crushing 17...♞cxe3!.

b) In the above variation, it was obvious that Black benefitted tremendously from the activation of the e7-knight. Thus the following improvement is easy to understand: 15.♗c1!N± The idea remains the same as in the game (♘d3, ♘d1, etc.), but the opponent's counterplay is prevented.

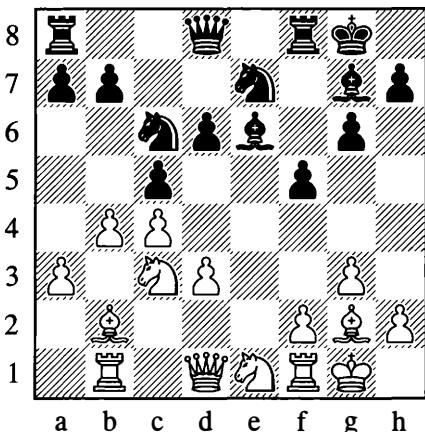


13.exd3!

13.♘xd3 leads towards drawish simplifications: 13...♝xc4 14.bxc5 dxc5 15.♘xc5 ♘xd1 16.♗fxd1 ♘fd8 17.♘xb7 ♘xd1† 18.♘xd1 ♘b8 19.♗xg7 ♘xg7 20.♘c3 ♘a6 21.♘c5 ♘xb1† 22.♘xb1 ♘xe2= Dizdar – Cramling, Debrecen 1992.

The text move is more consistent. Now it becomes obvious that Black's attack in the centre has resulted in weaknesses along the e-file as well as the passivity of the e7-knight and e6-bishop. White intends to regroup with ♘f3 and ♘e2, neutralizing Black's pressure

along the a1-h8 diagonal and the d4-square in particular.



13...cxb4?!

The idea of giving up the centre for the sake of carrying out the ...d5 advance is not justified.

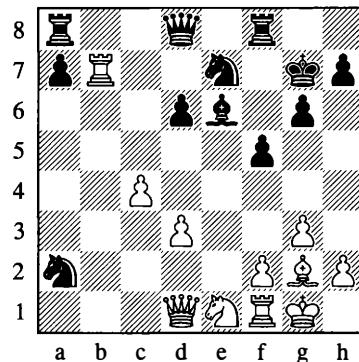
Another pseudo-active move is: 13...Qd4?!. With his development incomplete, Black should not move for the second time with one of his best placed pieces. 14.Qf3! Immediately exchanging the active knight and restoring the connection between the major pieces. 14...f4 15.Qxd4 Qxd4 16.Qe4 Black's premature activity has led to a fiasco. 16...Qc6 17.bxc5 dxc5 18.Qxd4 Qxd4 19.Qxb7± With a sound extra pawn, Loginov – Iskusnyh, Togliatti 2003.

A sounder alternative is 13...Qd7, although after 14.Qe2 Qxb2 15.Qxb2± White's queenside pressure and the weakened enemy kingside offer him a stable advantage.

The other logical idea is 13...f4, increasing the scope of the e6-bishop and e7-knight. But here too, White maintains the upper hand after: 14.Qe4 Qxb2 15.Qxb2±

14.axb4 d5

14...Qxb4 can be met with the spectacular 15.Qa2!!, provoking favourable exchanges and facilitating an intrusion to the seventh rank: 15...Qxa2 16.Qxg7 Qxg7 17.Qxb7±



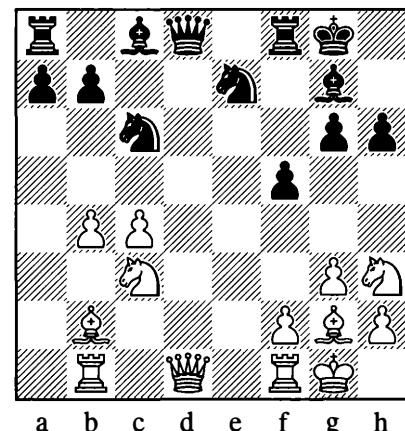
White will retrieve the knight with Wa1(†), maintaining a devastating positional advantage.

15.Qf3!

Suddenly Black is exposed to such threats as Qe1 and Qg5.

15...dxc4 16.Qg5 Qc8 17.dxc4 h6 18.Qh3

White is better developed and has lots of potential invasion squares.



18...Qxb4

I would be tempted to say that this greediness only makes things worse, but is there anything better to recommend for Black?

19.♗b3 ♗bc6 20.♘fd1

White has a devastating initiative.

20...♗d4

20...♗e8 does not change matters after 21.♗d5.

21.♘xd4!

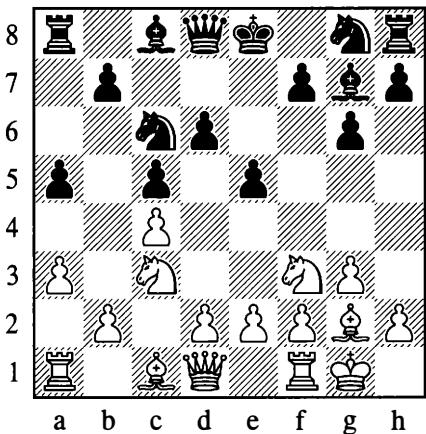
This simple combination highlights Black's lack of development and coordination.

21...♗xd4

21...♗xd4 loses even more material after 22.♗d5+–.

22.c5† ♔h7 23.♗d1

With a deadly pin, Schulze – Partos, Switzerland 1987.

A2) 7...a5

With this move Black prevents b2-b4, but the fact that White has provoked the weakening of the b5-square without spending a tempo on ♘b1 can be considered an important achievement in certain variations.

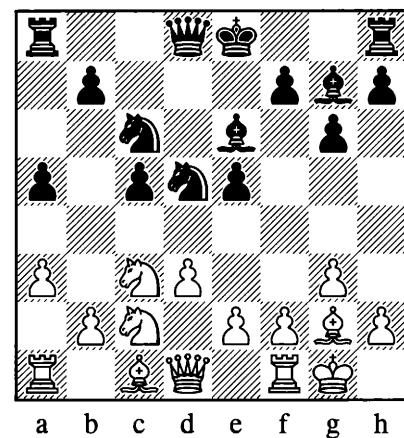
8.♘e1

Initiating the standard manoeuvre ♘e1-c2-e3-d5.

8...♗e6

After 8...♗ge7 White can transpose to line B by playing ♘b1 at any moment. He can certainly do without the rook move for a few more turns, but it is doubtful that he can benefit from omitting it indefinitely.

The text move is the main idea behind the 6...d6 move order. Black will manage to play ...d5 before the white knight reaches e3.

9.d3 ♗ge7 10.♘c2 d5 11.cxd5 ♗xd5

Black has managed to carry out the central break, but his king is still uncastled. It is interesting to compare the present position with that arising after 6...♗ge7 7.a3 0–0 8.♗b1 a5 9.d3?! (as we will see in line B, 9.♘e1 is better) 9...d6 10.♗e1 ♗e6 11.♘c2 d5 12.cxd5 ♗xd5. In the past, this has been a popular tabiya. White has repeatedly failed to demonstrate an advantage, which has led to the somewhat superficial conclusion that 5...e5 is a very safe line for Black. (I would add that White can also get tricked into this line if, in line A1, he refrains from the sacrificial b2-b4 and instead prepares his queenside break with ♘b1.)

The present position is identical, except that Black has not yet castled, while White has avoided the move ♘b1. This obviously works in White's favour, and indeed the first player has excellent chances to maintain the initiative.

12.♕e3

White completes his planned manoeuvre, putting pressure on the central knight.

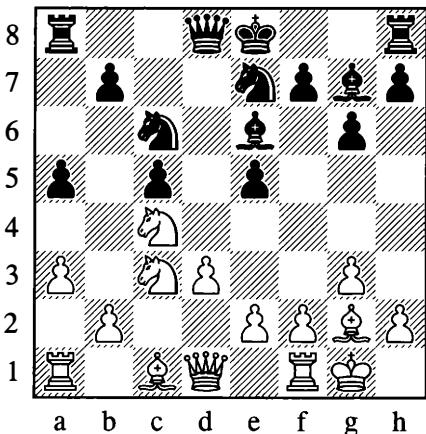
12...♝de7

The most consistent move. Black reinforces the c6-knight, preventing his structure from being spoiled with ♜xc6(†) and facilitating the defence of the c5-pawn with ...b6.

12...♝xe3 13.♝xe3 speeds up White's development and leaves the black queenside exposed to unpleasant pressure from the white bishops.

13.♞c4

White activates his knight, taking several important squares under observation (such as a5, b6, d6 and e5) and preparing the development of the queen's bishop.

**13...0-0**

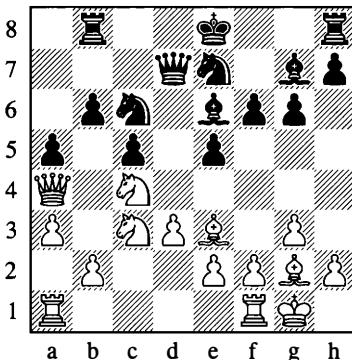
Black does best to play this move sooner rather than later. Here is an example of what might happen if he leaves his king in the centre for too long:

13...♝b8?! 14.♝g5

By pinning the e7-knight, White threatens 15.♝xc6(†) bxc6 16.♛a4, when the whole black queenside would be in danger.

14...f6 15.♝e3 b6 16.♛a4 ♛d7

It turns out that this natural move does not completely solve the problem of the pin along the a4-e8 diagonal.

**17.b4!**

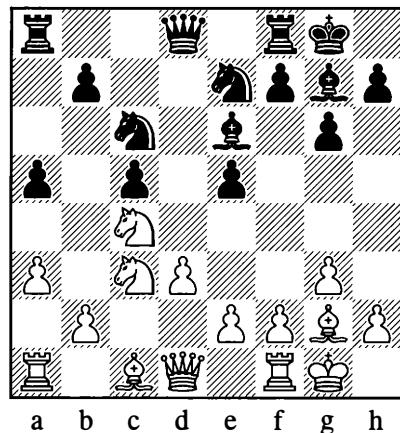
A well calculated pawn sacrifice, opening files and taking full advantage of the enemy king's presence in the centre.

17...axb4 18.axb4 ♜xc4

Curt Hansen analyses 18...♝xb4 19.♝xb6 ♜xb6 20.♝xc5 ♜b8 21.♝xb4 ♜xa4 22.♝xa4 with an extra pawn for White, since 22...♝d7 is parried by 23.♝d6.

19.dxс4 ♜xb4 20.♝xd7† ♜xd7 21.♝a7† ♜e8 22.♝d1±

Black's position lacks harmony and his king is in danger, Kaidanov – Ernst, Gausdal 1991.

**14.♝g5**

We are familiar with this pinning move from

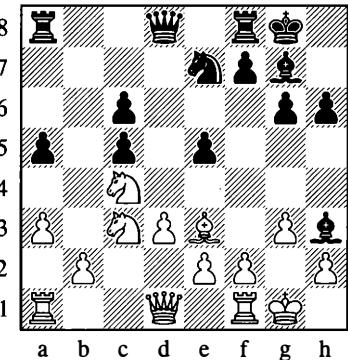
the last note. The immediate positional threat is $\mathbb{Q}xc6$.

14...f6

The most natural answer, which, however, has the drawback of weakening the a2-g8 diagonal.

According to the databases, 14...b6?? was played in Hall – Ernst, Sweden 1993, leading to a draw by repetition soon. This must surely be a data input error, since 15. $\mathbb{Q}xc6$ wins a piece.

14...h6 allows White to carry out his positional threat: 15. $\mathbb{Q}xc6$ bxc6 16. $\mathbb{Q}e3$ $\mathbb{Q}h3$



From this position, in Rohonyan – Maiko, Dnepropetrovsk 2004, White sacrificed an exchange with 17. $\mathbb{Q}xc5!?$, obtaining excellent compensation in view of his better structure and eventually winning the game. Despite his success the sacrifice was hardly necessary, and 17. $\mathbb{Q}e1!N\pm$ would have secured his advantage without the need for material investments.

14... $\mathbb{Q}c8$

With this move Black reinforces the knight, but leaves the a- and b-files insufficiently defended. My feeling is that White should start the queenside attack with a developing move:

15. $\mathbb{W}b3!N$

In Malakhov – Narciso, Torrelavega 2007, White chose the tempting 15. $\mathbb{Q}xc6$ $\mathbb{Q}xc6$ 16. $\mathbb{Q}xa5$ $\mathbb{W}xa5$ 17. $\mathbb{Q}xe7$, winning a pawn, but after 17... $\mathbb{Q}e8$ 18. $\mathbb{Q}g5$ Black could have obtained a strong initiative with 18...c4!N.

15...h6 16. $\mathbb{Q}e3$ $\mathbb{Q}d4$ 17. $\mathbb{W}b6!$

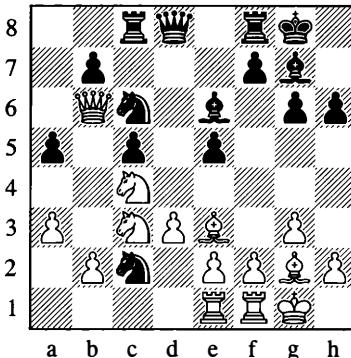
The occupation of this square spoils the flexibility of Black's structure.

Instead 17. $\mathbb{W}xb7?!$ offers Black good counterplay after 17... $\mathbb{Q}xc4$ 18.dxc4 $\mathbb{Q}b8$, retrieving the pawn and occupying the second rank with the rook.

17... $\mathbb{Q}ec6$ 18. $\mathbb{Q}ae1$

Overprotecting the e2-pawn in order to create the threats of $\mathbb{Q}a4$ or $\mathbb{Q}e4$.

18... $\mathbb{Q}c2$



19. $\mathbb{Q}xc5!$

By giving up a relatively passive rook for the most active black piece, the queen's knight, White seizes control over several important central squares.

19... $\mathbb{Q}xe1$ 20. $\mathbb{Q}xe1$ $\mathbb{Q}xc4$

A forced positional concession. Without it Black would have to return the exchange, for instance: 20... $\mathbb{Q}e8$ 21. $\mathbb{Q}d6\pm$, or 20... $\mathbb{W}xb6$ 21. $\mathbb{Q}xb6\pm$ with an extra pawn for White in both cases.

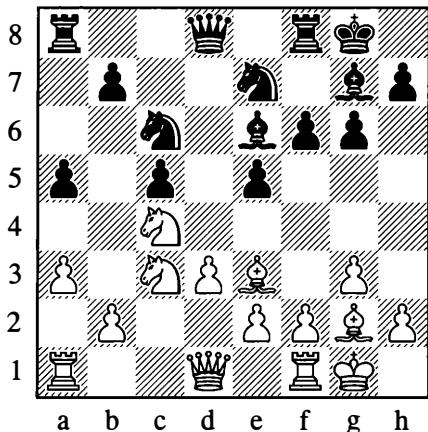
21.dxc4 $\mathbb{W}xb6$

21... $\mathbb{Q}e8$ drops a second pawn after 22. $\mathbb{W}xb7\pm$.

22. $\mathbb{Q}xb6\pm$

White's bishops dominate the whole board, while the black rooks, being unable to occupy the only open file, are destined to remain relatively passive for a good while longer. White has excellent chances of occupying all the important squares with his minor pieces.

15.♗e3



15...b6

This weakens the long diagonal, but it is hard to suggest anything better.

15...♗d4?! does not yield sufficient counterplay after 16.♗xb7 ♗b8 17.♗g2 ♗xc4 18.dxc4 ♗xb2 19.♗a4. In view of the threat of ♗xc5, Black has to embark the forced line 19...♗xe2† 20.♔h1 ♗xd1 21.♗fxd1, after which the imminent ♗xc5 will give White a dangerous initiative. Black's lack of coordination and the vulnerability of his king will soon become telling factors.

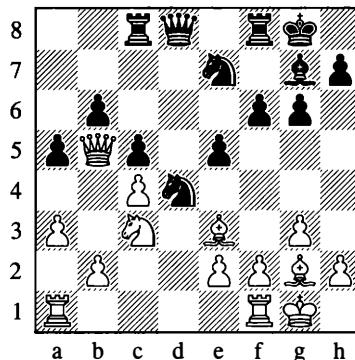
16.♗a4

Move by move, the pressure against Black's queenside increases.

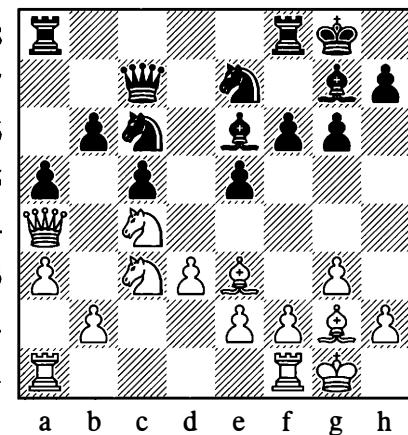
16...♕c7

Once again, defending the knight with the rook would weaken the queenside too much: 16...♖c8 17.♗b5 ♗xc4 There is no other

reasonable answer. 18.dxc4 ♗d4 So far, we have followed Marin – Edouard, Benasque 2009. At this point I captured on d4, spoiling my whole advantage in one stroke, although I eventually won after a series of miracles. A much stronger continuation would have been:



19.♗a6!N Supported by the strong king's bishop, the queen feels very much at home deep in the enemy queenside. Black can do very little against the slow plan of ♗ad1, ♗d2 and e3, followed by the occupation of the d5-square. For instance, the counterattacking ...f5 would be met by ♗g5, pinning the main defender of d5.



17.f4!

With the queen on c7, this thematic break is very effective. The dark-squared bishop is heading for f4.

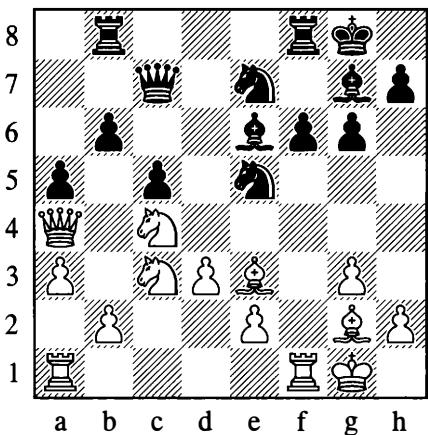
17...♝ab8

With this move Black overprotects the b-pawn while escaping the pin along the h1-a8 diagonal, thus allowing the knight to recapture on e5.

18.fxe5 ♟xe5

18...fxe5 would be strategically undesirable, as the e4-square would fall into White's hands. The best answer is 19.♗g5! intending ♜xe7, increasing White's domination on the light squares.

The present position was reached in Kramnik – Alekseev, Moscow 2008. Here I found an attractive new idea:

**19.♞f4!N**

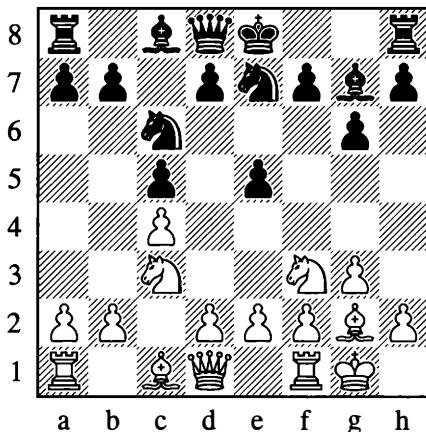
The former World Champion preferred 19.♗xe5, but after 19...fxe5 he failed to obtain an advantage and eventually lost. The idea behind the text move is to exchange on e5 with the dark-squared bishop instead of the knight, as the latter will play a key role in White's intended domination over the light squares.

19...♛d8

Restoring the communication of the queen with the kingside. Black cannot avoid the capture ...fxe5 with 19...f5?? in view of 20.♕b5, winning a piece.

20.♝xe5 fxe5 21.♜xf8+ ♛xf8 22.♜f1 ♛d8**23.♕b5†**

White is in complete control, and threatens to increase the pressure with ♜a6 followed by ♜a7 and/or ♜b5.

B) 6...♝ge7

Black continues the kingside development without defining his intentions regarding the d-pawn yet.

7.a3 0–0 8.♜b1

With the pawn still on d7, 8.b4 is less effective: 8...e4 9.♘e1 (Or 9.♗g5 f5 10.bxc5 ♜a5, when White will not find it easy to start fighting for the centre.) 9...d5! With adequate counterplay for Black, Arkhipov – Winants, Nettetal 1992.

8...a5

8...d6 9.b4 would transpose to line A13.

9.♘e1!

This is the only way to take advantage of Black's move order. Since ...♝e6 is not possible yet, the knight will have enough time to reach e3 before Black can arrange ...d5.

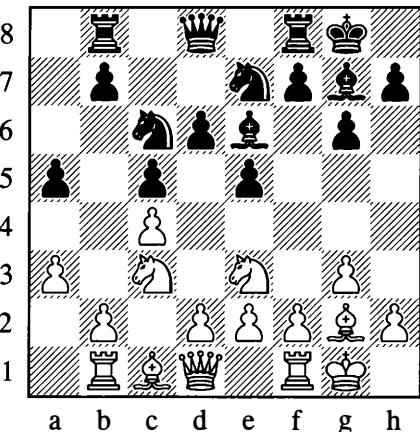
9.d3 d6 would lead to an aforementioned tabiya (see the comments to the 11th move

in line A2). 10.♕e1 ♜e6 The readers of the second volume will notice that this is a reversed version of the Anti King's Indian system, the only difference being that Black has not played the generally useful, but not essential ...h7-h6. 11.♕c2 (Or 11.♕d5 ♜b8 12.♕c2 b5 with initiative for Black.) 11...d5 Black has occupied the centre and is certainly not worse.

9...d6 10.♕c2 ♜e6 11.♕e3

White has carried out the first phase of his plan by stabilizing the situation in the centre. Next, he plans to complete his development with d3 and ♜d2, followed by ♜ed5 and b2-b4. With so many weaknesses in his structure, Black needs to act energetically. We will examine B1) 11...♝b8 and B2) 11...f5.

B1) 11...♝b8



A multipurpose move. Black prepares two possible plans: either ...♝d7 followed by ...♞h3 without fearing the fork ♜ed5-b6, or queenside action with ...b5. The subsequent analysis will demonstrate that the former plan is not easy to carry out while the latter does not bring any strategic relief.

12.d3 ♜d7

The alternative is:

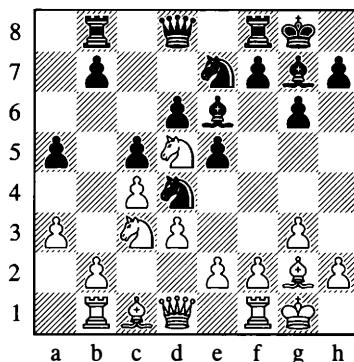
12...♜d4

With this move Black prepares ...b5.

13.♕ed5!

White gets nowhere with the hurried 13.b4, because of 13...cx b4 14.ax b4 b5, with reasonable play for Black, Miguel Lago – Estremera, Mondariz 1994.

The text move is better, as White prepares to drive the enemy knight back with e2-e3.



13...♞xd5

13...b5?! leads to a forced sequence in which Black has to part with his light-squared bishop: 14.♕xe7+ ♜xe7 15.e3 b4 16.axb4 axb4 17.♕d5 ♜xd5 18.♕xd5 ♜e6 19.♖a1± White's control over the light squares and the a-file is unchallenged.

14.cxd5!

White shows a deep understanding of the position. The central pawn will restrict the enemy minor pieces.

Remarkably, most games have continued with 14.♕xd5?!, but the comfortable occupation of this square is fully compensated by Black's gain of space after 14...b5.

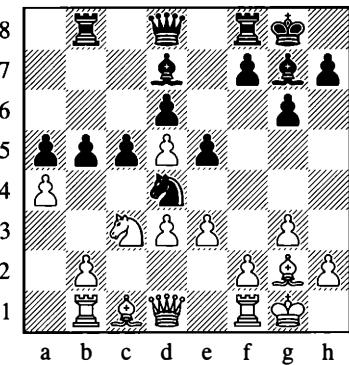
14...♞d7 15.a4!

Another important element in White's fight for space and the control of the light squares. His strategic threat consists of e3 and ♜d2 followed by the knight's transfer to c4, ♜c3, and finally f2-f4.

15...b5

This counterplay fails to level the chances.

16.e3



16...b4!?

This is an improvement over the following game: 16...Qf5?! Black allows the exchange of a valuable bishop, and will be left with a weak pawn on a5 and two passive minor pieces. 17.axb5 Qxb5 18.Qxb5 Qxb5 19.Qd2 Qc7 20.Qc3 Qfb8 21.Qa1 Qb7 22.Qc2 Qe8 23.Qa4± The a5-pawn is as good as lost and Black does not have any constructive plan for counterplay, Šubă – V. Adler, Mallorca 2004. The text move enables Black to maintain the integrity of his structure, as well as his light-squared bishop, but White's control over the c4-square enables him to claim a plus anyway.

17.Qe4 Qf5 18.b3 Qc7 19.Qb2 Qe7 20.Qd2 f5 21.f4±

Followed by Qc4, Qf3 and Qbe1, with a strong kingside initiative. Black's knight cannot easily find a useful role.

13.Qed5 Qh3

It is well known that this exchange is strategically favourable for White, who already has good control over the light squares. Black's chances to create a kingside attack are close to nonexistent, but the text move is justified by his desire to clarify the situation in the centre somehow. (With the bishop on e6, ...Qxd5 is simply impossible).

Against a waiting move such as 13...b6, White can prepare his queenside attack anyway:

14.Qg5 The bishop belongs on d2, but it is not a bad idea to provoke Black's next move. It is hard to say which of the threats Qxe7 and Qf6† is stronger. The former increases White's domination on the light squares while the latter puts the enemy king in danger. 14...f6 15.Qd2± With b4 to follow, Loginov – Dory, Hungary 1992.

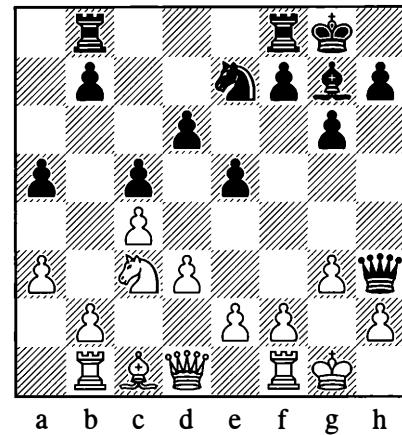
14...Qxe7†!

White makes sure that his planned b2-b4 will not allow the exchange of all four knights (with ...axb4 followed by ...Qxd5 and ...Qxb4), thus retaining a wider range of possibilities to develop his initiative.

14...Qxe7 15.Qxh3!

Since Black cannot create any mating threats, it is best to draw the queen away from the weakened queenside.

15...Qxh3



16.b4 axb4 17.axb4 b6 18.Qg5

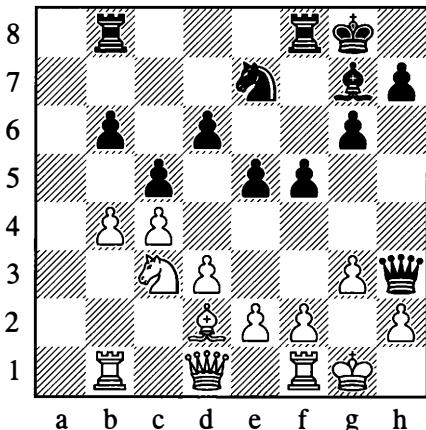
A familiar idea. In order to keep the d5-square defended, Black needs to weaken his kingside position.

18...f6 19.Qd2 f5

This kind of attack would yield chances for success – if only the queenside was more

stable. The course of the game shows clearly that White's attack develops much more effectively. Furthermore, the opposite wings communicate rather well, thus allowing White to combine attack with defence.

19... $\mathbb{W}d7$ looks more solid, but would practically admit that the whole exchanging operation has been a loss of time. 20. $\mathbb{W}a4$ White is interested in exchanging the most reliable defender of the d6-pawn. 20... $\mathbb{W}xa4$ 21. $\mathbb{Q}xa4$ f5 22.f3!± Apart from its strategic usefulness (increasing control over the light squares), this move prepares to meet ... $\mathbb{Q}c6$ -d4 with e3, without fearing the fork on f3. White plans to transfer his knight to b5 (or, if allowed, d5) and double rooks on the b-file.



20.bxc5 bxc5

From a structural point of view this is clearly the sounder of the two options, but dynamically it just speeds up White's attack.

20...dxc5

This wins some time for the kingside attack, but the strategic damage caused by this move is so severe that it allows White to spend a few moves on defensive measures.

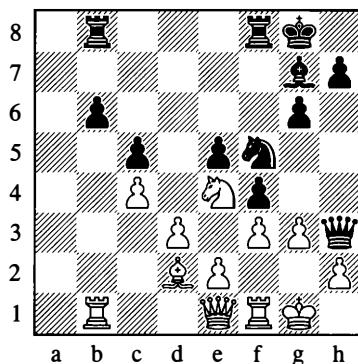
21.f3

Anticipating the next move, without which Black's attack cannot do.

21...f4 22.Qe4

With such a dominating knight, White defends his kingside rather easily.

22...Qf5 23.We1

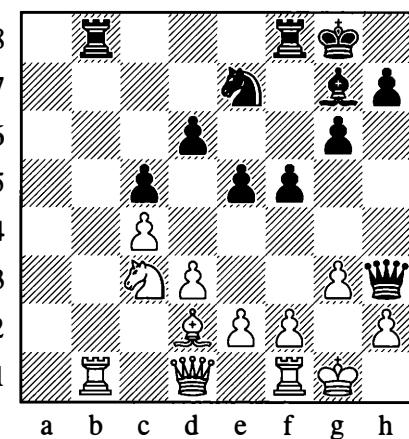


23...Qd4

23... $\mathbb{Q}d4$ leads to the exchange of the only black piece that could create some tactical problems. 24. $\mathbb{Q}xe3$ fxe3 25. $\mathbb{W}c1$ $\mathbb{Q}h6$ 26. $\mathbb{W}c3$ $\mathbb{W}e6$ 27. $\mathbb{R}a1$ ± White is perfectly stable and has a clear route of invasion along the a-file.

24.Wf2±

White has re-connected his rooks and defended his kingside rather well. Black faces the unpleasant threat of $\mathbb{R}b2$ followed by $\mathbb{R}fb1$, possibly combined with $\mathbb{Q}c3xd4$.



21.Rxb8!

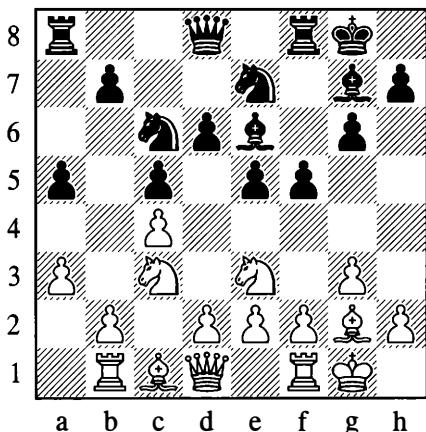
Distracting the king's rook from the f-file and causing a loss of coordination in Black's camp.

21...♝xb8 22.♛a4 f4 23.♝a7

White starts creating strong threats before the black attack has even started. The absence of the black queen from the seventh rank makes itself felt.

23...♜e8 24.♝e4 ♜c6 25.♛a4 ♜c8 26.♝c3±

This was all seen in Ghaem – Sadorra, Manila 2007. Having parried the threat of ...♝d4, White is ready to bring his last reserves into the attack with ♜b1-b6. In addition to that, Black's d6-pawn is already not easy to defend.

B2) 11...f5

With this move Black takes advantage of the fact that the dreaded ♜g5 is temporarily not available, in order to gain some kingside space.

12.d3 h6

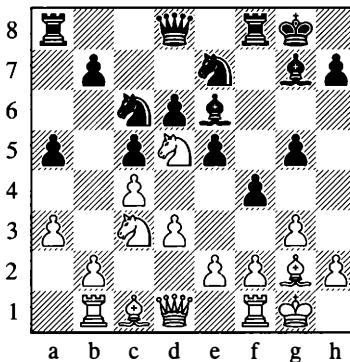
This is a precautionary measure against ♜ed5 followed by ♜g5.

12...♝f7 is a thematic move, preparing to meet 13.♝ed5 with 13...♝xd5, without fearing the fork. In this position White has two promising replies:

- There is nothing wrong with 14.♝xd5, since 14...♝e7 is bad in view of 15.♝g5, while after 14...h6 15.b4 White clearly has the initiative.

b) 14.cxd5 is of equal objective merit. Black's knight and light-squared bishop are strongly restricted. 14...♝e7 15.e4 ♜h8 16.b4 axb4 17.axb4 b6 18.bxc5 bxc5 19.♝b7± White has the initiative in a rather one-sided position, Miroshnichenko – Iskusnyh, St Petersburg 2002.

Black is not prepared for a direct kingside attack:

12...f4 13.♝ed5 g5

Most of Black's pawns are on dark squares, meaning strategic trouble, while his development is insufficient to facilitate the creation of concrete threats.

14.e3

A generally useful move. The centralizing ...♝d4 is prevented and in some cases the queen incursion ♜h5 may become unpleasant. Furthermore, Black will constantly have to consider a pawn-grabbing act on f4.

14...♝b8

Preparing ...♝d7. An exchange on e3 or g3 would eliminate any attacking chances, leaving Black with numerous positional weaknesses.

15.♝d2

Threatening b2-b4.

I am not entirely sure whether Black gets sufficient compensation for the pawn after the greedy exf4, either on this move or in the

following phase of the game, but I believe that he simply does not deserve the reward of practical chances against the weakened white kingside. The continuation presented here looks much safer and generally more attractive for White.

15... $\mathbb{W}d7$ 16. $\mathcal{Q}b6!$

Now Black will have a hard job maintaining his battery along the c8-h3 diagonal.

16... $\mathbb{W}d8$ 17. $\mathcal{Q}cd5$ $\mathbb{Q}f5$

Preparing ... $\mathcal{Q}xd5$.

18. $\mathbb{Q}c3$ $\mathcal{Q}xd5$ 19. $\mathcal{Q}xd5$ $\mathbb{W}d7$

Finally the queen has returned to the active diagonal, but White will be the first one to create threats.

20.b4 axb4 21.axb4 $\mathbb{Q}g4$

The only way to look for counterplay.

22. $\mathcal{Q}b6$ $\mathbb{W}e6$

22... $\mathbb{W}f5?$ loses a piece after 23.f3 $\mathbb{Q}h5$ 24.g4.

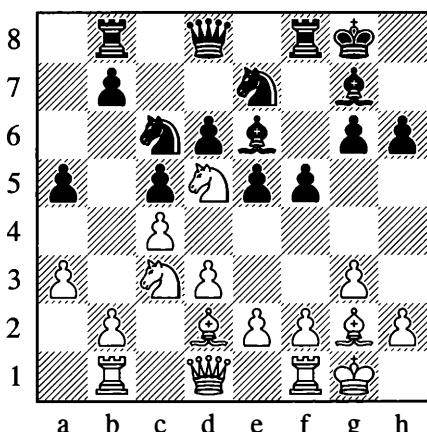
23. $\mathbb{Q}d5!$

Simplifying to a favourable ending.

23... $\mathbb{W}xd5$ 24. $\mathcal{Q}xd5$ $\mathbb{Q}xd1$ 25. $\mathbb{Q}fxd1\pm$

Without queens on the board, Black's attack is not dangerous at all, while his queenside problems are irremediable.

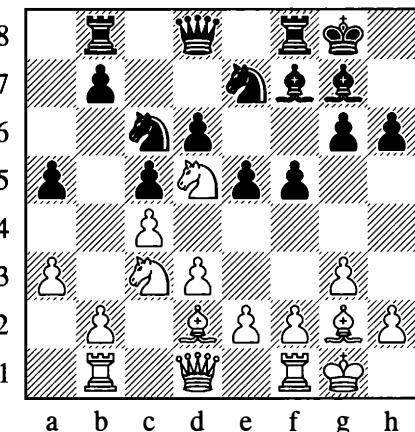
13. $\mathcal{Q}ed5$ $\mathbb{Q}b8$ 14. $\mathbb{Q}d2$



White has almost completed his development and is ready to start his queenside attack. From

here we will examine B21) 14... $\mathbb{Q}f7$ and B22) 14... $\mathbb{Q}h7$.

B21) 14... $\mathbb{Q}f7$



This solid-looking move is not connected with any concrete plan, apart from playing ... $\mathcal{Q}xd5$ without losing a piece. The game presented below is a good illustration of Black's strategic problems in the event that he fails to generate any counterplay.

15.b4 axb4 16.axb4 $\mathcal{Q}xd5$ 17. $\mathcal{Q}xd5$ b6 18. $\mathbb{W}a4!$

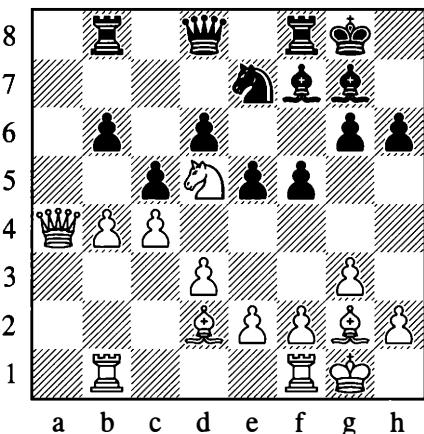
The queen is the last piece to be moved: fully in accordance with the classic principles of development! Her activation is timely, and causes Black serious problems of stability.

18... $\mathcal{Q}e7$

Hoping to exchange the active white knight. There is nothing better to recommend for Black:

18... $\mathbb{W}d7??$ is impossible because of 19. $\mathbb{W}xc6!$

The seemingly active 18... $\mathcal{Q}d4$ is answered by: 19.e3 $\mathcal{Q}e6$ (19... $\mathcal{Q}e2\#?$ leaves the knight trapped after 20. $\mathbb{Q}h1$) 20. $\mathbb{W}a7\pm$ With strong pressure and, amongst other ideas, the unpleasant threat of $\mathcal{Q}e7-c6$.



19.♘c3!

The knight exchange would bring Black a degree of relief. After the text move the black knight is very passive, while his rival can attack the weak d6-pawn with ♘b5 in the near future.

19...♗c7 20.bxc5 bxc5 21.♗a6

Threatening ♘b5.

21...♗d7 22.♗b6

Simple chess. White utilizes a classic method of gaining control over the open b-file.

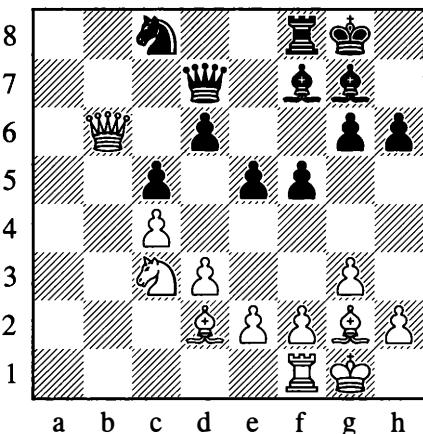
My opponent confessed that he was even more afraid of 22.♗b5, threatening ♗fb1 and intending to meet 22...♗xb5 with 23.cxb5. His evaluation that the b-pawn would be very dangerous is correct in principle, but I felt that the asymmetrical character of the position would offer Black some (maybe hypothetical) counterchances.

After the game continuation play remains one-sided, which is generally desirable for the side with an advantageous position.

22...♗xb6 23.♗xb6

White plans to invade the seventh rank with ♗b1 and ♗b7 or ♗a1-a7.

23...♘c8



24.♗b7!

Once Black has blocked the access of his rook to the queenside, the exchange of the main defender of the seventh rank is the simplest way to develop the initiative.

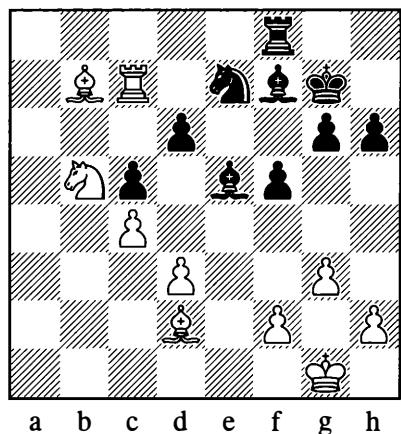
24...♗xb7 25.♗xb7 ♔h7 26.♔a1 e4

A very pale attempt for counterplay. With only one active piece (his dark-squared bishop), Black cannot really be satisfied.

27.♔a6

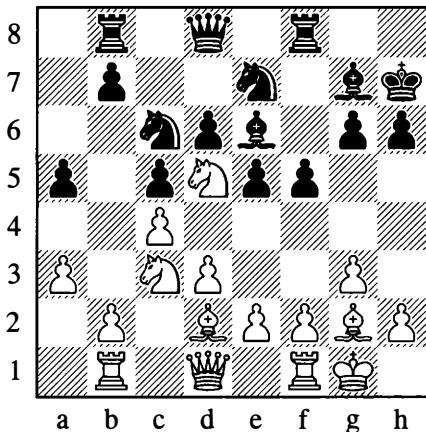
Tying Black's pieces to the defence of the d6-pawn.

27...exd3 28.exd3 ♔e5 29.♘b5 ♔g7 30.♗c6 ♘e7 31.♗c7±



White has completely invaded his opponent's territory. In Marin – Macak, Benasque 2009, Black went down rather quickly. This game, along with that from variation B1, offers quite a convincing demonstration of Black's problems in the 5...e5 set-up.

B22) 14... $\mathbb{Q}h7$



Having evacuated his king from the dangerous a2-g8 diagonal, Black now intends to meet b4 with wholesale exchanges followed by ...d5.

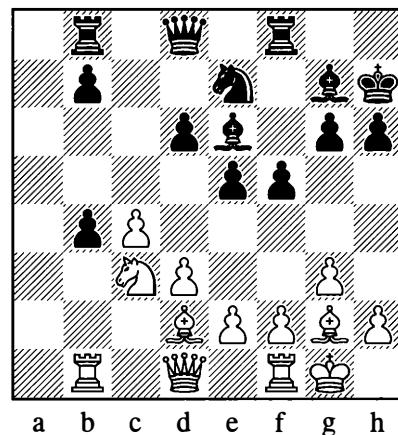
15.b4 axb4 16.axb4 $\mathbb{Q}xb4$

This is the most direct way to carry out the simplifying operation.

16... $\mathbb{Q}xb4$ offers White a pleasant choice. 17. $\mathbb{Q}xb4$ $\mathbb{Q}xb4$ 18. $\mathbb{Q}xb4$ d5 19.cxd5 $\mathbb{Q}xd5$ 20. $\mathbb{Q}xd5$ $\mathbb{Q}xd5$ 21. $\mathbb{Q}xd5$ $\mathbb{W}xd5$ 22. $\mathbb{W}b3$ $\mathbb{W}xb3$ 23. $\mathbb{Q}xb3\pm$ With $\mathbb{Q}fb1$ to follow, White had a very pleasant ending in Smejkal – Annageldyev, Moscow 1994. The pawns on b7 and e5 are both weak.

Nevertheless I think White can do even better with 17. $\mathbb{Q}b5!$, aiming to capture the pawn with $\mathbb{Q}xb4$, perhaps after $\mathbb{W}b3$). By keeping his knights, White has even better chances to exploit Black's weaknesses.

17. $\mathbb{Q}xb4$ $\mathbb{Q}xb4$

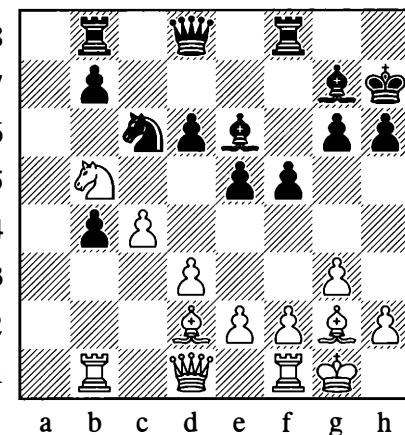


18. $\mathbb{Q}b5!$

A familiar idea. White intends to play $\mathbb{Q}xb4$, creating pressure along the a3-f8 diagonal.

18... $\mathbb{Q}c6$

18...d5 is premature in view of 19. $\mathbb{Q}xb4$, when the pin of the knight is unpleasant, and in fact Black cannot parry the threat of $\mathbb{Q}xe7$ followed by $\mathbb{Q}xd5$ adequately. 19... $\mathbb{E}e8$ and 19... $\mathbb{F}f7$ can both be answered with 20. $\mathbb{Q}d6$ with gain of time, while 19... $\mathbb{D}d5$ 20. $\mathbb{D}xc4$ opens the d-file for White's pieces.

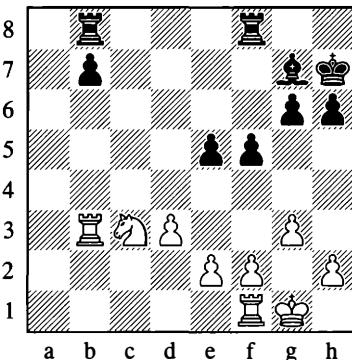


19. $\mathbb{W}b3!$

Since the b4-pawn is doomed anyway, White should complete his development

before undertaking anything concrete. The text move prevents ...d5 and makes the threat of ♖xb4 even stronger, since in the event of a subsequent minor piece exchange on b4, the pressure against the d6-pawn will be maintained.

For this reason 19.♖xb4 is slightly premature, although White's position remains somewhat more pleasant in any case. 19...♝xb4 20.♜xb4 d5 21.cxd5 ♖xd5 22.♗xd5 ♜xd5 23.♗c3 ♜f7 24.♗b3 ♜xb3 25.♗xb3



Now In Marin – Y. Gonzales, Manresa 2004, Black played the passive 25...♝f7 and went on losing a difficult ending.

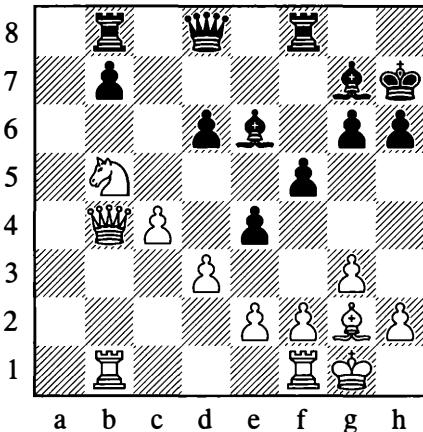
Instead, 25...♝fc8!N would have offered him chances to generate some dynamic counterplay, as White is not yet fully mobilized and his knight is not completely stable.

19...e4

This was the move suggested by my opponent during post mortem analysis. Against any neutral move, 20.♖xb4 would offer White a more active version of the aforementioned game.

19...♝d4 would exchange the last white knight, at the expense of Black's pawn structure: 20.♝xd4 exd4 21.♗xb4± Black has nothing to compensate for his numerous weaknesses.

20.♗xb4 ♛xb4 21.♗xb4



21...exd3

Black is not sufficiently prepared to maintain the tension in the centre. For instance, 21...d5 loses a pawn: 22.cxd5 ♖xd5 23.dxe4 ♖xe4 24.♗xe4 fxe4 25.♘xe4± White's position is stable and the black bishop merely dominates an empty diagonal.

22.exd3 d5 23.♗fe1±

White is fully mobilized, while Black is incompletely coordinated and has numerous weaknesses. Against most answers, 24.c5 followed by ♗d6 will be very strong.

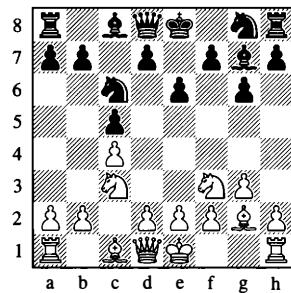
Conclusion

I find the set-up examined in this chapter to be one of the most pleasant to meet as White. My own practical experience, combined with the thorough analysis presented above, lead me to conclude that Black faces real difficulties in justifying the weakening of the d5-square.



The Closed System

5...e6 – The Fischer System



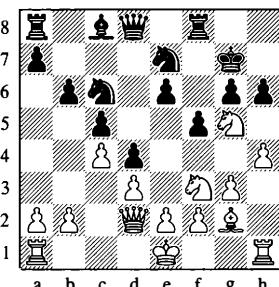
Variation Index

1.c4 c5 2.g3 ♜c6 3.♗g2 g6 4.♗c3 ♗g7 5.♗f3 e6

6.d3 ♜ge7 7.♗g5

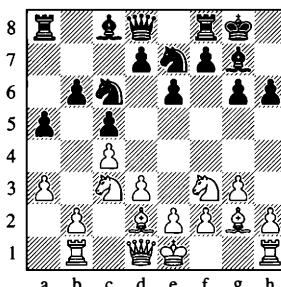
A) 7...b6N	83
B) 7...d5	83
C) 7...0–0	85
D) 7...h6 8.♗d2 0–0 9.a3 b6 10.♗b1	92
D1) 10...♗b7	93
D2) 10...a5	95
D3) 10...d5 11.♕c1 ♔h7 12.b4 dxc4 13.dxc4 cxb4 14.axb4 ♗b7 15.0–0	97
D31) 15...♗c8	98
D32) 15...♕c8	99

C) after 13...h6



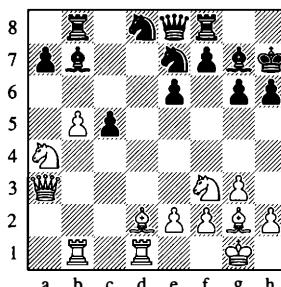
14.h5!

D2) after 10...a5



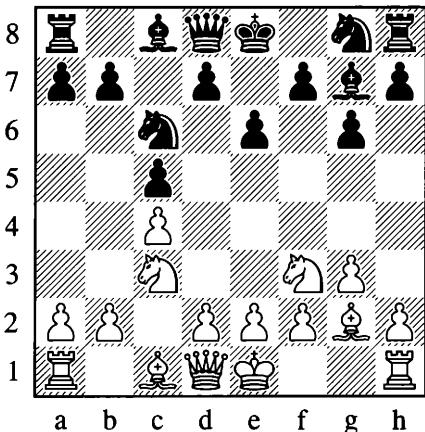
11.♕c1!N

D31) note to 16...♕c7



21.♗f4!N

1.c4 c5 2.g3 ♜c6 3.♗g2 g6 4.♘c3 ♜g7 5.♘f3 e6



This is one of Black's most flexible options, and at the same time one of the most ambitious. Black leaves the long diagonal open for his bishop and prepares to gain space in the centre with the following coherent scheme: ... $\mathbb{Q}ge7$, ...0–0, ...b6, ... $\mathbb{Q}b7$, ...d5. (The move order can vary, of course.) If allowed to carry out this plan under favourable circumstances, Black could easily emerge with an advantage out of the opening. Simply put, this is the most double-edged variation in the closed system of the symmetrical opening. It used to be one of Bobby Fischer's favourite weapons and it caused lots of trouble to a renowned English expert, the equally legendary Bent Larsen. Therefore, I was quite surprised to read in Bagirov's *Angliiskoe Zashchita* published in 1989 that this variation was not even mentioned in older theory books!

In any case, during my years as an English Opening adherent, I have never had a very clear idea about White's most effective way to meet this variation and was ready to use it with black whenever given the possibility. Only recently, while working on this book, did I manage to find a convincing way for White to fight for the advantage.

Before examining the best variations for White, I believe it will be useful to explain Black's main ideas and illustrate the dangers for White. We will start with a famous game in which a former World Champion lost to a future one without committing any obvious mistakes.

6.0–0 $\mathbb{Q}ge7$ 7.d3 0–0 8. $\mathbb{Q}d2$

By overprotecting the c3-knight, White prepares his typical queenside attack. Since d3-d4 is impossible, there does not seem to be a reasonable alternative to this plan.

8...d5 9.a3 b6 10. $\mathbb{E}b1$ $\mathbb{Q}b7$ 11.b4

Both sides have carried out their plans consistently. Once the pawn tension has been established, Black's turn to move is pivotal to the evaluation of the position.

Fischer considers 11.cxd5 $\mathbb{Q}xd5$ 12. $\mathbb{Q}xd5$ $\mathbb{W}xd5$ to be the lesser evil, but White is definitely not better in this line. Black is well developed and exerts strong pressure along both long diagonals.

11...cx b4!

This and the following exchange may look like strategic concessions, but Black has a very clear plan in mind.

One important theme in positions with this pawn structure is that Black should generally refrain from blocking the centre. For instance, in the present position 11...d4? 12. $\mathbb{Q}a4$ gives White a favourable version of a reversed King's Indian. Black cannot defend the c5-pawn conveniently because of the unfavourable placement of his knights. By contrast, in the genuine King's Indian the retreat $\mathbb{Q}f3-d2$ usually enables White to maintain the queenside stability.

12.axb4 dxc4 13.dxc4 $\mathbb{E}c8$

This is the position Black had in mind when starting the exchange operation. White is slightly underdeveloped, his c4-pawn is weak and the d2-bishop is somewhat hanging. According to Fischer, Black's threat is ...a5.

14.c5

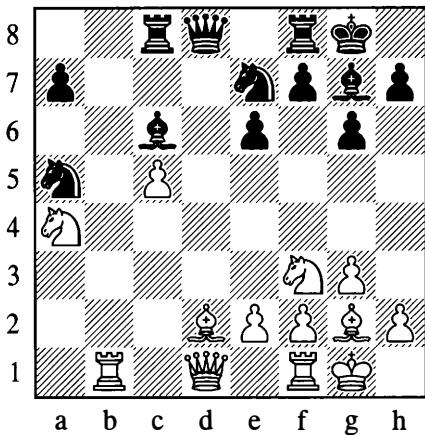
Fischer mentions that both 14.♗a4 ♗d4! and 14.♗e4 ♗a5! leave White unstable in the centre.

14.♗b5 a6 15.♗a3 was suggested by Petrosian as a better chance to maintain equality. He is probably right, although for our purposes this is hardly a satisfactory outcome from a theoretical point of view.

14...bxc5 15.bxc5 ♗a5!

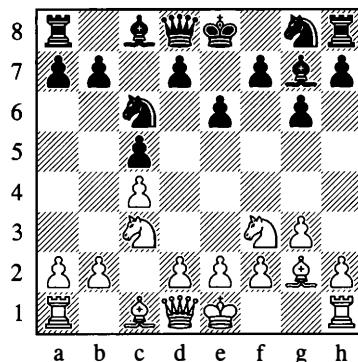
The start of an effective regrouping, aimed at winning the c5-pawn.

16.♗a4 ♗c6

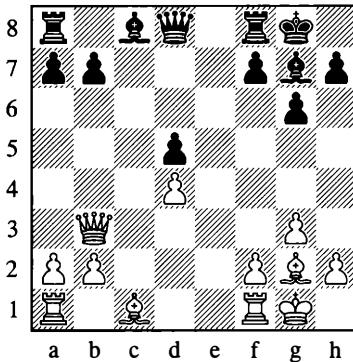


We have been following the game Petrosian – Fischer, Belgrade (USSR – World) 1970. White's lack of coordination prevented him from saving the weak c-pawn, and Black went on to win. All in all, the impression caused by this game was so strong that it determined the evaluation of the whole variation as promising for Black over the following decades.

How can White attempt to improve? Let us start again after the opening moves 1.c4 c5 2.g3 ♗c6 3.♗g2 g6 4.♗c3 ♗g7 5.♗f3 e6:



a) He can play safely with 6.e3 ♗ge7 7.d4, but this would not yield anything more than plain equality: 7...cxd4 8.♗xd4 0–0 9.0–0 d5 10.cxd5 ♗xd5 11.♗xd5 ♗xd4 12.exd4 exd5 13.♗b3

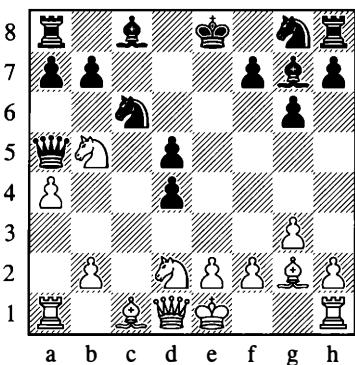


13...♗e6!= (This is better than 13...♗xd4?! 14.♗h6 followed by ♗ad1, with some pressure in a near-symmetrical position.)

b) Theory holds 6.d4!? to be the best way to take advantage of the early weakening of the d6-square. I had this move in my repertoire for a long time, although I never had an opportunity to play it. My initial intention was to recommend it as our repertoire choice, but in the end I found several reasons not to do so.

First of all, this abrupt change of the course of events is not entirely in accordance with the rest of the variations of the closed symmetrical system. Instead of subtle manoeuvring combined with just occasional dynamic fireworks, 6.d4 leads to long forced variations.

Apart from that, Vali Stoica unearthed a few significant improvements for Black with respect to the generally approved lines. Here is just one example: 6...cxd4 7.Qb5 d5 8.cxd5 Wa5† 9.Qd2 exd5 10.a4 (This is held to be better than 10.Qd6†, which looks a bit premature in view of 10...Qe7.)



At this point Vali discovered that 10...Wd8! puts 10.a4 under serious doubt. It may seem that Black has lost two tempos, but after 11.0–0 Qge7 12.Qb3 0–0 13.Q3xd4 White, too, has lost two tempos with his king's knight, while the insertion of a2-a4 can be considered a loss of time that weakens the queenside.

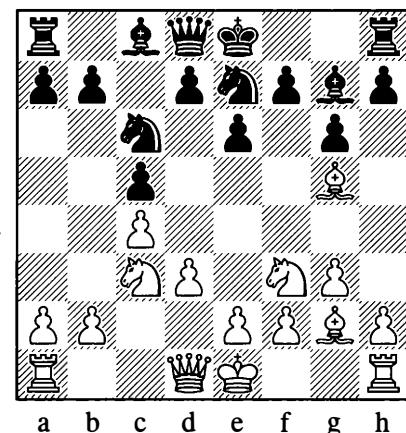
c) I remember that some 15 years ago I tried hard to refine Petrosian's plan from the aforementioned Fischer game. I had the feeling that White was missing just one tempo to get properly coordinated. What if he provokes ...h6 in order to win that essential tempo with a well-timed Wc1? This led me to investigate lines such as 6.d3 Qge7 7.Qg5 h6 8.Qd2 0–0 9.0–0 b6 10.a3 Qb7 11.Qb1 d5 12.Wc1 Wh7 13.b4 dxc4 14.dxc4 cxb4 15.axb4, when the extra tempo should be of

some benefit. I did not record my analysis and do not remember how it continued, although I do recall that, for some mysterious reasons, I eventually concluded that the plan was not really effective.

Many years later, I was surprised to see that Baadur Jobava had scored a few rather convincing games with this line, and decided to take a fresh look at the position. After a while I understood what I had probably failed to appreciate previously. After Qd1, which is quite an obvious follow-up, the extra move Wc1 allows the activation of the queen with Wa3, with perfect coordination for White. (See, for instance, the notes to the lines D3 and D31 below.) After this revelation, I understood that White's plan is absolutely coherent and decided to give it as our repertoire line.

6.d3 Qge7 7.Qg5

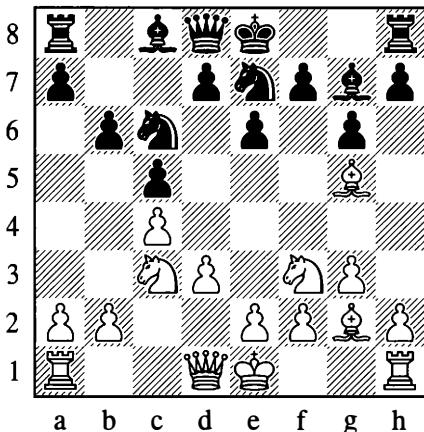
The move order is quite important. It is particularly important to emphasize that White should be in no hurry to castle. In some cases, the rook on h1 can facilitate an attack based on h4-h5, while in others the spare tempo might prove essential in speeding up White's thematic queenside expansion.



At this stage, it is far from obvious if ...h6 is necessary. We will start by investigating the

cases in which Black ignores the bishop and makes some other generally useful move. Thus our four main branches will be: A) 7...b6N, B) 7...d5, C) 7...0–0 and finally the critical D) 7...h6.

A) 7...b6N



I was unable to find any examples of this move in the database, but it is certainly a natural candidate move that we should consider. It turns out that the early weakening of the long diagonal allows White to open the centre favourably.

8.d4!

This may seem to lose a tempo (d2-d3-d4) by comparison with the aforementioned 6.d4 line. The reality is that White is actually helped by the fact that Black's extra move ...b6 has made the resource ...Wa5† impossible.

The tempting 8.Qe4, threatening Qd6(†), can be met by 8...d5 9.Qf6† Qf8, when White's pieces are hanging.

8...cxd4

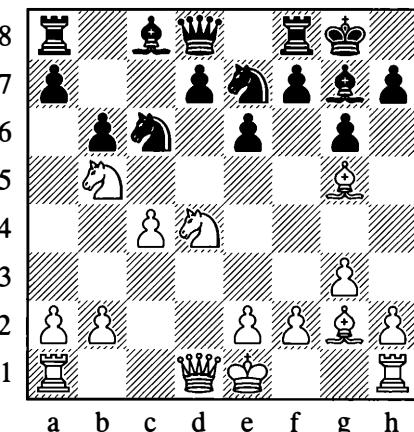
It is hard to suggest a better way to meet the threat of d4-d5, for instance: 8...h6 9.Qxe7 Wxe7 10.d5 Qa5 11.Wd3 As a consequence of his numerous pawn moves in the opening,

Black is underdeveloped and his light squares are weak, while the knight is also quite passive on a5.

9.Qb5 0–0

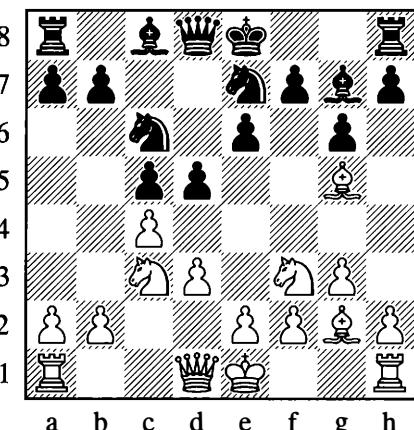
The greedy 9...e5?!, defending the extra pawn, offers White a powerful attack after 10.Qd6† Qf8 11.c5!, threatening Wb3.

10.Qfxd4±



White has a space advantage in the centre and Black's coordination is rather artificial, while the weakness of the d6-square is likely to cause him troubles.

B) 7...d5



This move is entirely sound, but has little independent value. If White chooses the correct move order, Black will have to transpose to the lines with ...h6 a few moves later.

8.0–0

Given the newly-created central tension, there is no reason for White to delay castling any longer.

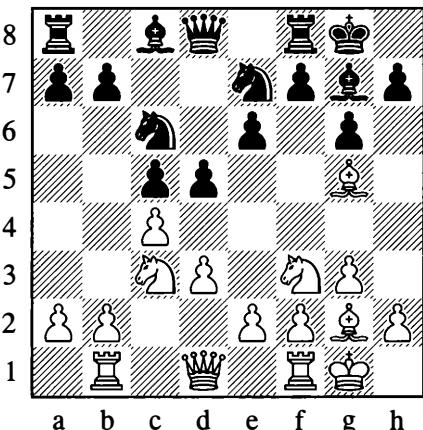
8...0–0

This position has been reached in a number of games, via a few different move orders. So far, however, nobody has found the most precise continuation for White.

9. $\mathbb{B}b1!$ N

This is the most effective way to prepare the queenside attack. For reasons that will shortly become clear, it is essential to defend the b2-pawn.

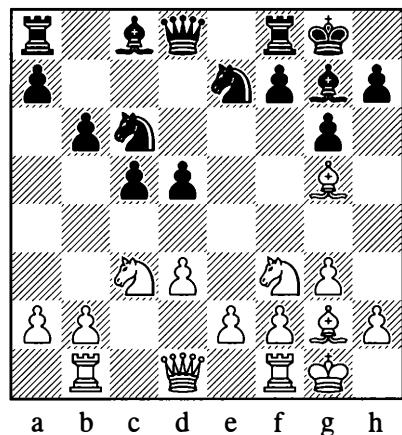
After 9.a3 Black can continue ignoring the g5-bishop with 9...b6.



9...b6?!

Black has exhausted his useful moves and has nothing better than advancing his b-pawn, but he should do so only after inserting 9...h6 10. $\mathbb{Q}d2$, when after 10...b6 11.a3 play would transpose to line D.

10.cxd5 exd5



11. $\mathbb{Q}xd5!$

The bishop proves its worth on g5, by pinning (and shortly capturing) the e7-knight. The black queen is forced to step into the crosshairs of the other bishop.

11... $\mathbb{W}xd5$ 12. $\mathbb{Q}xe7$ $\mathbb{Q}e8$

12... $\mathbb{Q}xe7$?! loses an exchange after 13. $\mathbb{Q}d2$.

13. $\mathbb{Q}d4!$

Another pseudo sacrifice, putting all White's pieces to work and neutralizing Black's activity in the search for compensation for the missing pawn.

13... $\mathbb{W}xd4$ 14. $\mathbb{Q}xc6$ $\mathbb{Q}h3$ 15. $\mathbb{Q}g5$ $\mathbb{Q}xf1$

16. $\mathbb{W}xf1$

Had White prepared his queenside attack with 9.a3 rather than 9. $\mathbb{B}b1$, Black could have safely grabbed the b-pawn. The way it is, he cannot prove adequate compensation for the material deficit, although White will have to remain careful for a few more moves.

16... $\mathbb{R}ac8$ 17. $\mathbb{Q}xe8$ $\mathbb{Q}xe8$ 18.b3

An important move. White frees the rook from its defensive task and consolidates on the light squares.

18... $\mathbb{W}c3$ 19. $\mathbb{W}d1$

Preparing to expel the enemy queen with $\mathbb{E}c1$, and if ... $\mathbb{W}b2$ then $\mathbb{E}c2$.

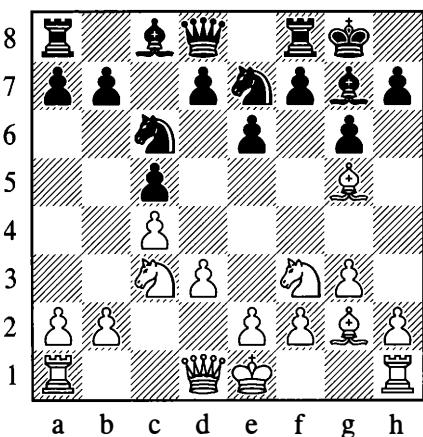
19... $\mathbb{W}a5$ 20. $\mathbb{W}c2$ c4

Black's activity was about to be extinguished, and the text move is the only way to keep some tension.

21. $\mathbb{A}e3$ c3 22.d4±

Black has no compensation for the missing pawn. The c3-pawn is going nowhere, and might turn out to be more of a weakness than a strength.

C) 7...0–0



This may look like the most flexible move, but defining the king's position implies an important commitment.

8. $\mathbb{W}d2!$

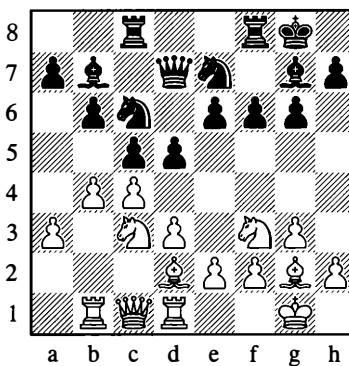
Technically speaking, this is not a novelty, because it has been played once. Although the game was completely irrelevant, I have attached the sign “N” to a later move, but generally speaking the whole concept presented from this moment onwards is new.

Compared with 8. $\mathbb{W}c1$, the queen is more active on d2, allowing the rapid connecting of rooks with 0–0–0, but she is also more

vulnerable to being exchanged in the event of ...d5 and ...dxc4. Also on the negative side, we can add that the queen takes away the d2-square away from the knights, which might become relevant after a subsequent ...d5-d4, when $\mathbb{Q}e4$ could be met by ...f5.

On balance, since the black king has been transferred to a dangerous zone already, I consider the pluses of the text move to be more relevant than its drawbacks.

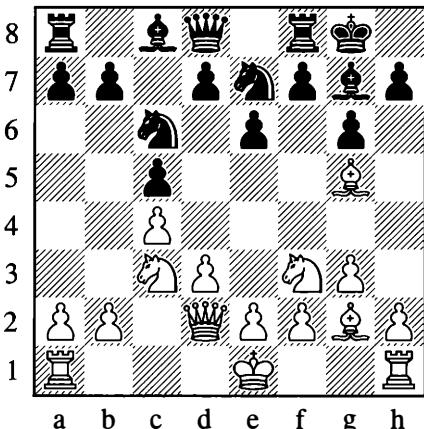
The standard plan involving short castling and a queenside pawn advance loses some punch without the benefit of the tempo-gaining move $\mathbb{W}c1$. Here is one sample variation that I considered: 8.0–0 d5 9. $\mathbb{W}c1$ b6 10.a3 $\mathbb{A}b7$ 11. $\mathbb{B}b1$ $\mathbb{E}c8$ 12. $\mathbb{B}d1$ $\mathbb{W}d7$ 13.b4 f6 14. $\mathbb{Q}d2$



14...d4! Having completed his development, Black is ready to reinforce the c5-pawn. 15. $\mathbb{Q}a4$ $\mathbb{Q}d8$ 16. $\mathbb{W}c2$ $\mathbb{Q}c6$ White's queenside play has reached a dead end and Black has an advantage already.

I also examined the tempting 8. $\mathbb{Q}e4?!$ N, but was unable to make it work after: 8...h6 (8...d5?! would offer White a strong attack after 9. $\mathbb{Q}f6\#$ $\mathbb{Q}h8$ 10.h4, threatening h5.) 9. $\mathbb{Q}d2$ (Having spared the tempo ...d5, Black is better prepared for 9. $\mathbb{Q}f6\#$ $\mathbb{Q}h8$ 10.h4, when after 10... $\mathbb{Q}f5$ White's pieces are hanging and his attack lacks the necessary force.) 9...d6 Having parried $\mathbb{Q}d6$, Black plans to develop

with ...b6, ... $\mathbb{Q}b7$ and ... $\mathbb{W}d7$, while the knight on e4 remains unstable.



8...d5N

With the queen on d2, it makes sense to establish the central pawn contact as soon as possible. After this move White must constantly consider the possibilities of ...d4 and ...dxc4.

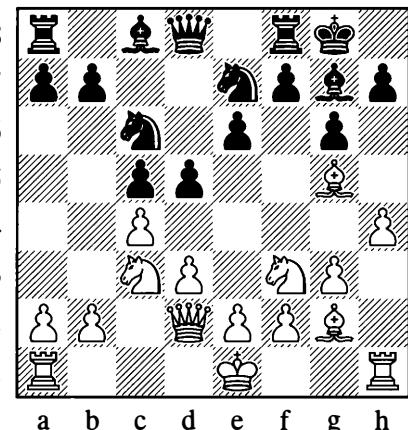
Delaying ...d5 for too long does not do Black any good: 8...b6 9.h4 f6 10. $\mathbb{Q}h6$ $\mathbb{Q}b7$ 11. $\mathbb{Q}xg7$ $\mathbb{Q}xg7$ 12.h5 g5 13.h6† $\mathbb{Q}h8$ 14.0–0–0 $\mathbb{Q}d4$ 15. $\mathbb{Q}e1\pm$ Although neither side is in immediate danger, it is obvious that the black king is in a more delicate situation than its rival, which can be relevant even in simplified positions.

8...f6 was played in Ristoja – Escondrillas, Buenos Aires 1978. At this point White had no reason to refrain from 9. $\mathbb{Q}h6!N$, when the play is likely to transpose into one of the other lines involving a subsequent ...f6.

9.h4!

In the introduction, I mentioned the importance of delaying castling short, with one of the reasons being to speed up the queenside attack. In the present position, a symmetrical principle is valid: White should not be in a hurry to castle on the queenside, as

it is more important to begin gaining space and generating attacking threats on the kingside. This is especially important when we factor in the potential threat of ...d4, intending to meet $\mathbb{Q}e4$ with ...f5 at the earliest convenience. Refer also to the comment on White's 14th move in the main line below.



9...b6

By anticipating the potential attack on the c5-pawn, Black makes ...d4 into a real threat.

The only reason why 9.0–0–0 might seem like a tempting alternative is that White would be able to meet 9...dxc4 10.dxc4 $\mathbb{W}xd2\ddagger$ with 11. $\mathbb{Q}xd2$ followed by $\mathbb{Q}hd1$, with authoritarian control of the only open file, and a generally more harmonious position.

The way it is, however, 11. $\mathbb{Q}xd2$ is perfectly acceptable and indeed quite promising for White. The knight takes a step towards the d6-square and clears the long diagonal for the bishop. 11...f6 12. $\mathbb{Q}e3$ b6 13.h5 g5 14.h6 $\mathbb{Q}h8$ 15.0–0–0 $\mathbb{Q}b7$ 16. $\mathbb{Q}b5\pm$ White's active pieces are ready to attack Black's numerous weaknesses, while the black king remains in a delicate situation.

Black does not gain anything from the immediate:

9...d4 10. $\mathbb{Q}e4$

Now the threats of $\mathbb{Q}f6\#$ and $\mathbb{Q}xc5$ force the following weakening:

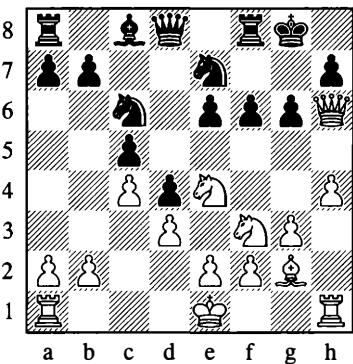
10...f6 11. $\mathbb{Q}h6 \mathbb{Q}xh6?$

This is too risky. Still, it will be beneficial for us to analyse this move in order to become acquainted with some of the attacking resources at White's disposal.

11...b6 looks safer, when 12. $\mathbb{Q}xg7$ (12.g4!?)

12... $\mathbb{Q}xg7$ transposes to the note to Black's 12th move in the main line.

12. $\mathbb{W}xh6$



12... $\mathbb{Q}f5$

This is not a good square for the knight, because it blocks the f-pawn and invites White to speed up his attack with g4-g5. Black has little choice, though, as he needs to drive the enemy queen away in order to avoid the worst.

The natural 12...b6? leads to a devastating attack out of a blue sky: 13. $\mathbb{Q}fg5!$ $\mathbb{Q}xg5$ 14. $\mathbb{Q}xg5$ $\mathbb{B}f7$ 15. $\mathbb{Q}f6\#$ And Black is defenceless.

The overcautious 12... $\mathbb{B}f7$ is met by 13.h5, when 13... $\mathbb{Q}f5$ is forced. (The generally desirable 13...g5, aiming to keep the h-file closed, is impossible because the f6-pawn is hanging.) Now after the simple 14. $\mathbb{W}d2\pm$ Black cannot parry the opening of the h-file and defend the c5-pawn at the same time.

13. $\mathbb{W}d2$ b6 14. g4 $\mathbb{Q}d6$ 15. $\mathbb{Q}xd6$ $\mathbb{W}xd6$ 16. g5!±

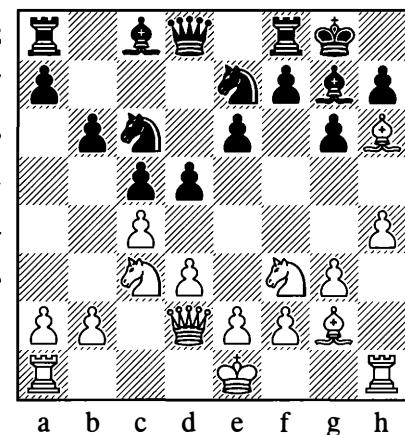
Not only weakening the dark squares in Black's camp, but also blocking the g6-pawn in order to add real force to the planned h4-h5.

10. $\mathbb{Q}h6!$

Among the thematic attacking moves, this one has to be preferred because it clears the g5-square for the queen's knight.

Instead after 10.0–0–0 d4 11. $\mathbb{Q}e4$ f5 White would have to give up his dark-squared bishop with 12. $\mathbb{Q}xe7$, allowing Black to increase his stability on the kingside and in the centre.

Despite the engines' enthusiasm, the sacrificial attack initiated by 10.h5 does not seem to be justified: 10...f6 11. $\mathbb{Q}h6 \mathbb{Q}xh6$ 12. $\mathbb{W}xh6$ g5 traps the queen, forcing 13. $\mathbb{Q}xg5$ with questionable compensation.) 11... $\mathbb{Q}xg5$ 12. $\mathbb{Q}xh7\#$ $\mathbb{B}h8$ 13. $\mathbb{Q}xd5$ $\mathbb{Q}xd5$ 14. $\mathbb{Q}xg5$ $\mathbb{W}d6$ Black's king is very well defended by the enemy pawn, while his rival cannot find a safe residence. In the event of long castling, Black's attack based on ... $\mathbb{B}b8$ and ...b5-b4 would be very strong, partly because of the unchallenged pressure exerted by the g7-bishop.



10...d4

Black has no time for simplifying with 10... $\mathbb{Q}xc4\text{?!}$ on account of 11. $\mathbb{Q}xg7$ $\mathbb{Q}xg7$ 12. h5! with a strong attack.

10... $\mathbb{Q}xh6$ 11. $\mathbb{W}xh6$ does not solve Black's problems either: 11... $\mathbb{Q}f5$ (11... $f6$ 12. $g4\pm$ leaves the e7-knight passive) 12. $\mathbb{W}f4\pm$ The queen's influence over the weakened black kingside is quite unpleasant. White threatens either h5 or g4, with dangerous threats in both cases.

11. $\mathbb{Q}xg7$ $\mathbb{Q}xg7$ 12. $\mathbb{Q}e4$

The position has stabilized and Black has to take measures against the deadly threat of h4-h5.

12... $f5$

The most ambitious move, driving the knight away from the centre.

The only reasonable alternative is the more restrained:

12... $f6$

Although this enables Black to keep the h-file closed, his kingside structure will lose flexibility and his king will be pushed back onto an uncomfortable square.

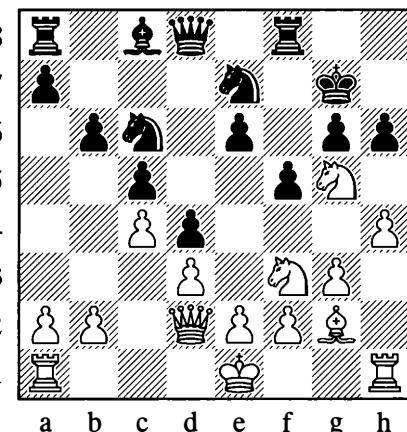
13.h5 g5 14.h6†

Adherents of the Benko Gambit may favour the opening of a new front on the queenside: 14.b4! $cxb4$ (Since 14... $\mathbb{Q}xb4?$ allows 15. $\mathbb{Q}xf6$ followed by $\mathbb{W}xg5\ddagger$ and $\mathbb{Q}e5\ddagger$, winning the a8-rook, Black has to allow his central structure to be disrupted.) 15.h6† $\mathbb{Q}h8$ 16.a3 $bxa3$ 17. $\mathbb{E}xa3$ This position may well be promising for White, but I have never played the Benko Gambit and cannot be sure of the final evaluation. Instead I have suggested a main line in the spirit of the Benoni, an opening with which I have vast experience.

14... $\mathbb{Q}h8$ 15.0–0–0 e5 16.e3±

As in other sub-variations of this line, White's king is safer than his counterpart. This will become relevant after the opening of the e-file, which will benefit White's rooks and queen.

13. $\mathbb{Q}eg5$ h6



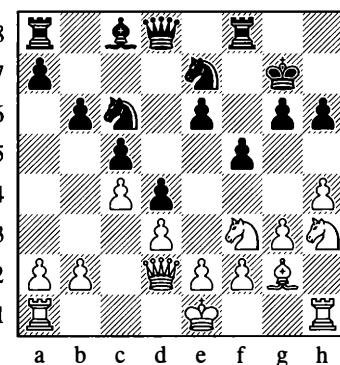
14.h5!

This strong attacking move was suggested by John Shaw. Instead of retreating the knight to a passive square, White sacrifices it in order to open lines towards the enemy king. Initially, I had fallen into a second trap set by the engines (after avoiding the one mentioned in the comments to 10. $\mathbb{Q}h6$).

My line went:

14. $\mathbb{Q}h3$

When White plans 15.h5, with the idea of meeting the strategically consistent 15...g5 with a knight sacrifice on g5. However, Black has an adequate defence.



14... $\mathbb{W}d6$!

Although this gives up control of the h4-d8

diagonal, it allows a later queen transfer to the kingside with ... $\mathbb{W}e5$. White has nothing better than to force a draw by perpetual:
 15.h5 g5 16. $\mathbb{Q}fxg5$ hxg5 17. $\mathbb{W}xg5\#$ $\mathbb{Q}h7$
 18. $\mathbb{Q}xc6$

After 18.h6 $\mathbb{W}e5!$ it would already be too late to draw. Despite the computers' optimism, White may be close to losing, because his attack has reached a dead end, as observed by Andrew Greet.

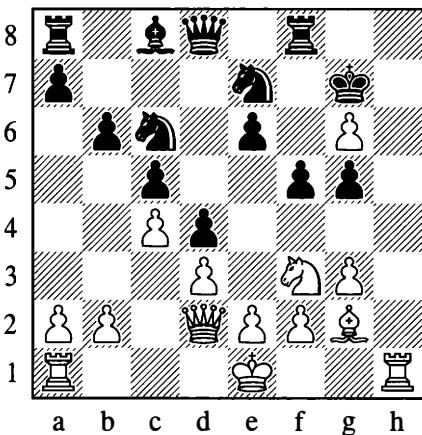
18... $\mathbb{Q}xc6$ 19. $\mathbb{W}g6\#$

With a draw.

14...hxg5 15.hxg6

In general, White's plan looks coherent; almost all his pieces are targeting the enemy king. The only exception is the bishop, which however causes Black some discomfort along the h1-a8 diagonal, thus reducing his defensive possibilities. The strategic aspects also tend to favour White; his structure is more compact and he has good chances of winning some additional pawns for the piece, while retaining the initiative.

However, the final outcome of the tactical operation is still far from clear, because White will have to spend a valuable tempo to connect rooks before launching a new wave of the offensive.



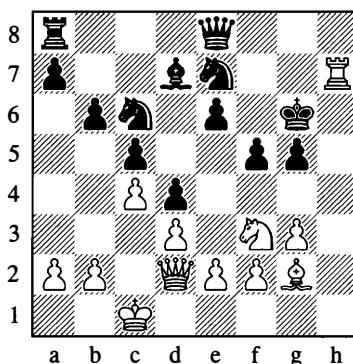
15... $\mathbb{Q}h8$ 16.0-0-0

It seems that Black is about to lose the battle for the open h-file, but he has several ways of returning part of his material advantage to avoid the immediate threats.

16...g4!

The most stubborn defence. At first sight, it looks illogical to spend a tempo on a pawn move, but as will soon become clear, keeping the g-pawn on the board is quite important. Besides, Black's generally useful moves do not offer an adequate defence anyway and it makes sense to force White to make a decision regarding his knight's trajectory.

16... $\mathbb{Q}d7$ is simply too slow, because the a8-rook does not have a realistic chance of getting into play. 17. $\mathbb{Q}xh8$ $\mathbb{W}xh8$ 18. $\mathbb{Q}h1$ $\mathbb{W}e8$ (intending to meet 19. $\mathbb{W}xg5$ with 19... $\mathbb{W}xg6$) 19. $\mathbb{Q}h7\#$ $\mathbb{Q}xg6$ Apparently, White's attack has slowed down, but an elegant move restores perfect piece cooperation.



20. $\mathbb{Q}h5!!$ The rook is taboo because of 21. $\mathbb{W}xg5$ mate, so Black faces a dangerous attack.

16... $\mathbb{W}e8$

This brings the queen closer to the king, but the lack of connection between the rooks prevents Black from completely extinguishing White's initiative.

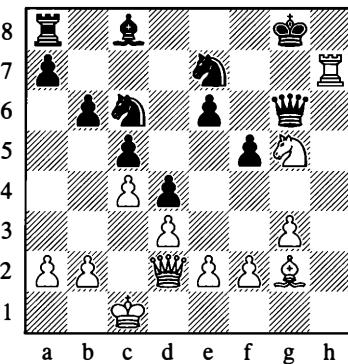
17. $\mathbb{Q}xg5$ $\mathbb{W}xg6$

17... $\mathbb{Q}xg6$ allows 18. $\mathbb{Q}e4!$, threatening $\mathbb{W}g5\#$, but also $\mathbb{Q}xh8$ followed by $\mathbb{Q}h1$.

18...fxe4 19.Qxe4† leaves the king deadly exposed, because 19...Qf5 is strongly met by 20.g4. In this line, a black pawn on g4 would have been most useful, although 20.Qxc6 would have been a reasonable alternative for White, taking advantage of the unfavourable placement of the queen.

18.Qxh8 Qxh8 19.Qh1† Qg8 20.Qh7!

White's lead in development and the absolutely safe position of his king allows him to continue the attack in such an apparently slow way. In fact, the last move cannot be defined as "quiet", because it threatens Qxe7. Black is at a crossroads: a) 20...Bb8 or b) 20...Wxh7.



a) 20...Bb8

This parries the threat, but does not improve Black's position greatly. This latter aspect allows White to build up his attack in the same slow manner.

21.Wf4 Wxg5

More or less forced. Black could delay this sacrifice for one more move, waiting for 22.Wh4 to come, but he has no useful move at his disposal. For instance, 21...Qd7 loses a piece to 22.Qxc6, while 21...a6 or 21...a5 only weaken the b6-pawn. Or 21...Wxh7 22.Qxh7 Qxh7 allows 23.Qxc6 Qxc6 24.Qc7†.

22.Wxg5† Qxh7

Arithmetically, Black has a small material advantage, but his king is exposed and his piece cooperation rather poor. With so many

weak squares in Black's camp, the queen is very strong.

23.g4!

Once again, the absence of the black g-pawn makes itself felt. White weakens the enemy structure and opens new lines for the bishop.

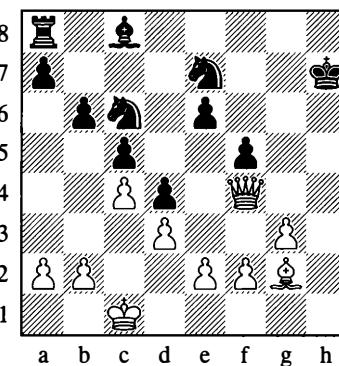
23...Qd7 24.gxf5 exf5 25.Wf6†

Black's pieces, including the king, are vulnerable.

b) Since sacrificing the queen is inevitable, it makes sense to consider doing so at once:

20...Wxh7 21.Qxh7 Qxh7 22.Wf4

We have reached a position similar to the one mentioned in the line above, but now Black has a tempo to meet the threat of Wc7.

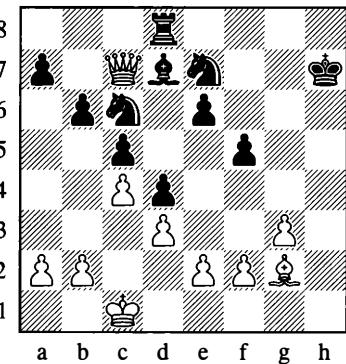


22...Qd7

22...e5 weakens the light squares and can be answered with: 23.Wh4† Qg7 24.Wg5† Qf7 25.f4! Before playing the thematic g3-g4, White weakens the fifth rank. The immediate threat is fxe5 followed by Wf6†. 25...exf4 26.Wh5† Qe6 27.g4! White has a decisive attack, since 27...fxg4 loses material to 28.Qxc6 Qxc6 29.Wd5†.

23.Wc7 Qd8

Apparently, Black has managed to consolidate without making any kind of concession. His pieces defend each other rather well, but a closer look reveals that this apparently strong group is completely paralysed.

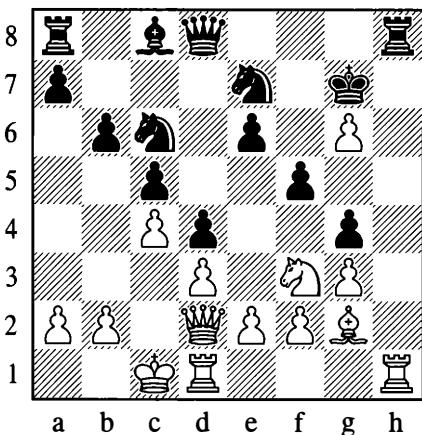


24.a3!!

Tragically, Black has no adequate defence against b2-b4-b5.

24...a5 25.♕xb6

After ♕xc5, White will have a small material advantage, while keeping all the other positive aspects of his position.



17.♘xd4!

This knight does not have any favourable squares and it is best to give it away for the sake of getting some other form of compensation. With the g4-pawn alive, 17.♗g5 ♘xg6 18.♗e4 is not effective because of: 18...fxe4 19.♗xe4† ♗f5!

17...♘xd4!

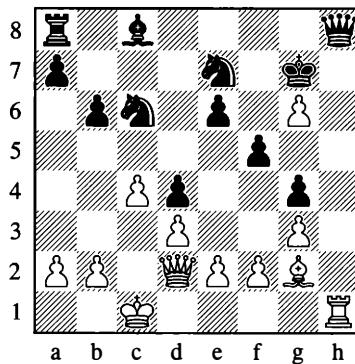
This allows White to restore approximate material equality, but avoids worsening Black's structure.

17...cxd4

This leaves White with a dangerous queenside majority. At this stage of the game, this may seem irrelevant from the point of view of White's kingside attack, but the following variations are a good illustration of how effective playing on two wings can be.

18.♖xh8 ♕xh8 19.♖h1

Black is two knights up, but with his king in danger he will have to look for a way to sacrifice his queen.



19...♗b7

19...♗g8 only delays the sacrifice. The queen is miserably placed and will have to be exchanged for the enemy rook after a later ♖h7† anyway. 20.♖xc6 We will see more of this exchanging operation. Since the dark squares in Black's camp are weak, it makes sense to eliminate one of the knights. In some cases, this kind of move will cause Black coordination problems. 20...♘xc6 21.♗g5 ♔d7 22.b4! White challenges Black's queenside stability. 22...a6 23.a4 ♘e5 24.♖h7† With Black's pieces somewhat hanging, now is a good moment to carry out the main threat. 24...♗xh7 25.gxh7† ♘g6 26.b5 axb5 27.axb5† The h7-pawn is not easy to collect (...♗xh7 can be met by ♘f6) and Black's pawns, situated on dark squares, are weak. At some point, e2-e3 will deprive Black of any stability on the whole board.

20.♕xc6 ♕xc6

Keeping the knight around the king.

The knight would be insecure after 20...♘xc6 in view of a familiar scenario: 21.♗h7† ♜xh7 22.gxh7 ♜xh7 23.♗g5 (threatening ♜f6) 23...♗f8 24.b4! Once again, the queenside majority gets into motion with great effect. 24...♗f7 25.b5 ♜e5 26.♗f4 ♜g6 27.♗xd4± White has restored approximate material equality and retains the better structure and a very active queen.

21.♗xh8 ♜xh8 22.♗f4!

With a bishop on c6 rather than a knight, the d4-pawn is impossible to defend.

22.♗xg6

22...♗d8? would lose to 23.♗e5† followed by 24.♗xe6.

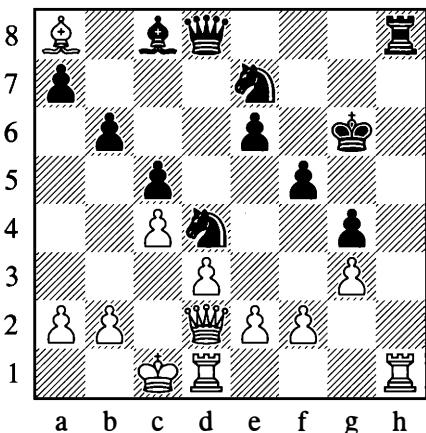
23.♗xd4±

With a similar situation as in the previous line. White will play b4-b5 and a4-a5 soon.

In all these lines, Black's minor pieces are severely restricted by White's compact pawn chain. In addition, the queen's pressure on both wings is rather annoying.

18.♖xa8 ♜xg6

The material balance has become more or less even, but Black's king is exposed and he is generally uncoordinated.

**19.♗g2!**

Before starting active operations in the centre, it makes sense to retreat the bishop.

19.e3 would leave the bishop trapped after 19...♗dc6, forcing White into undesired simplifications: 20.d4 cxd4 21.♗xh8 ♜xh8 22.exd4 ♜a6 23.♖xc6 ♜xc6 Suddenly, the white king also starts feeling insecure and Black can hardly be worse.

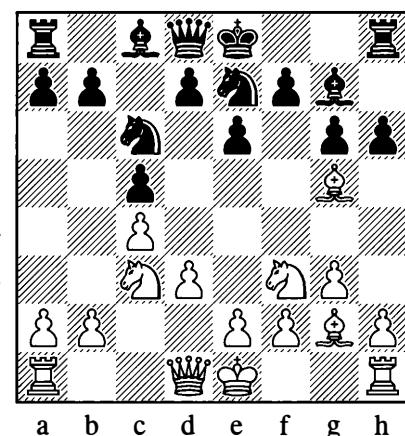
The text move threatens e2-e3 followed by d3-d4, which induces the next move.

19...e5 20.e3 ♜e6

20...♗f3 allows the opening of the position at a moment when Black's pieces lack harmony. 21.♖xf3 gxf3 22.♗xh8 ♜xh8 23.d4 In the event of general exchanges on d4, the ending with an active rook versus the poorly coordinated black pieces is quite promising. Black's whole queenside would be in danger.

21.f3±

White starts clearing a path towards the enemy king. The position remains complicated, but it is certainly easier to play White's side.

D) 7...h6

This has been the most common reply. Black immediately breaks the pin and avoids any

of the kingside problems that might result from $\mathbb{W}c1(d2)$ and $\mathbb{Q}h6$, at the cost of a slight kingside weakness.

8. $\mathbb{Q}d2$ 0–0 9. a3

For the time being White is in no hurry to castle, and instead prefers to commence his queenside play.

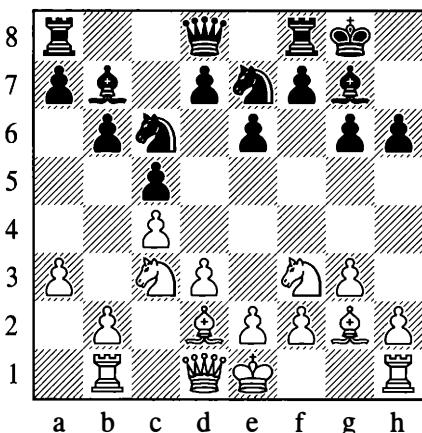
9...b6

9...d5 is likely to transpose to line D2 or D3 after 10.0–0 b6 11. $\mathbb{E}b1$.

10. $\mathbb{E}b1$

With this move White prepares to set his queenside attack in motion. Black can choose between D1) 10... $\mathbb{Q}b7$, D2) 10...a5 and D3) 10...d5.

D1) 10... $\mathbb{Q}b7$

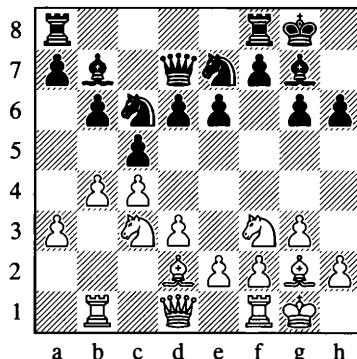


White needs to respond with accuracy against this innocent-looking developing move.

11. $\mathbb{W}c1!$ N

In order to understand the merits of the recommended move order, we should check the drawbacks of the alternatives.

11.0–0?! allows Black to obtain a solid and harmonious position with 11...d6 12. b4 $\mathbb{W}d7$.



In practice, White has failed to demonstrate any convincing plan, and although the position is objectively equal, the statistics favour Black.

As in the main line D3, it is better to attack the h6-pawn before pushing the b-pawn. The actual move order from our main game was 11.b4 d6 12. $\mathbb{W}c1$ $\mathbb{Q}h7$, but Black could have done better with: 11...d5! After this move White has no way of transposing to the main line. 12.0–0 (12. $\mathbb{W}c1$ leaves the g2-bishop undefended for too long, allowing 12...cx b4 13. ax b4 dx c4 14. dx c4 $\mathbb{Q}e5$ with counterplay against the c4-pawn.) Through a different move order, we have arrived at a position that has been reached in several games, in which Black is at least holding his own, for instance: 12...cx b4 13. ax b4 dx c4 14. dx c4 $\mathbb{E}c8$ 15. $\mathbb{W}c1$. This arrives too late. Instead of defending his h6-pawn, Black can now react with 15... $\mathbb{Q}d4$!, leaving White's position shaky, as in Pugusov – Tal, Podolsk 1990.

11... $\mathbb{Q}h7$

With the c-file closed, Black does not get sufficient compensation for the pawn after: 11... $\mathbb{Q}d4$ (or, similarly, 11... $\mathbb{Q}e5$) 12. $\mathbb{Q}xh6$ $\mathbb{Q}xh6$ 13. $\mathbb{W}xh6$ $\mathbb{Q}ef5$ 14. $\mathbb{W}f4$ e5 15. $\mathbb{W}g4$ +. White keeps his extra pawn and threatens to start a kingside attack with h4–h5.

As a general rule, 11...g5 weakens the king's position too much: 12. h4 g4 13. $\mathbb{Q}h2$ h5 14. b4

d6 15. $\mathbb{Q}h6\pm$ With some initiative for White on both wings.

After Black's 11th move we have transposed to the game Stamenkov – Ilic, Skopje 2002, which we will now follow.

12.b4 d6

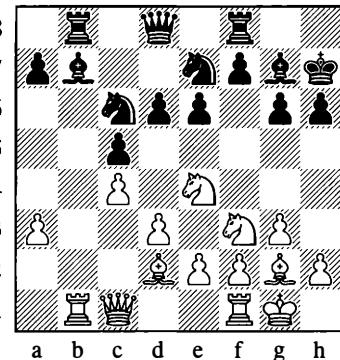
Black prepares to meet bxc5 with ...dxc5 and is just one move away (... $\mathbb{W}d7$) from reaching the set-up mentioned in the first variation from the note to 11. $\mathbb{W}c1$.

12... $\mathbb{E}b8$

This allows the opening of the b-file, which should yield White a strong initiative.

13.bxc5 bxc5 14. $\mathbb{Q}e4$ d6 15.0–0

Due to the exposed position of the black king, the knight is more stable on e4 than it may appear at first sight.



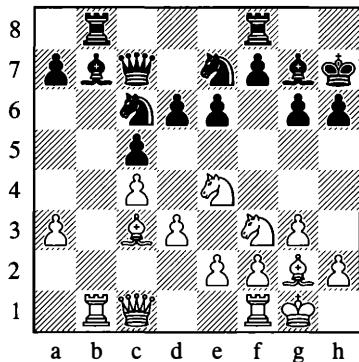
15... $\mathbb{W}c7$

Black cannot defend the e6-pawn with 15... $\mathbb{W}d7?$, preparing ...f5, because of 16. $\mathbb{Q}xh6!$ winning a pawn.

15...f5 allows 16. $\mathbb{Q}eg5\uparrow$ hxg5 17. $\mathbb{Q}xg5\uparrow$ $\mathbb{Q}g8$ 18. $\mathbb{Q}xe6$ $\mathbb{W}c8$ 19. $\mathbb{Q}xf8\pm$ White has a minimal material advantage, the safer king and excellent chances to seize control over the only open file.

16. $\mathbb{Q}c3$

With the powerful threat of 17. $\mathbb{Q}f6\uparrow$ $\mathbb{Q}h8$ 18. $\mathbb{Q}d5!$, when the threat of $\mathbb{W}xh6\uparrow$ decides the game.



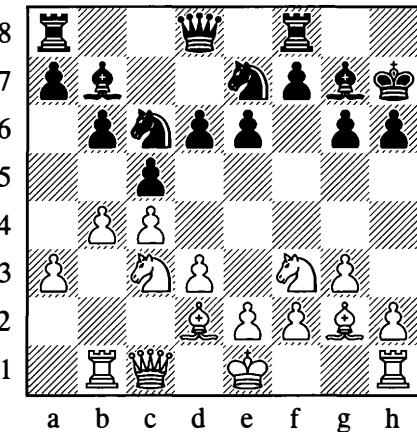
16...e5

16...f5? is worse than ever because of 17. $\mathbb{Q}eg5\uparrow$ hxg5 18. $\mathbb{Q}xg5\uparrow$ $\mathbb{Q}g8$ 19. $\mathbb{Q}xg7$ followed by $\mathbb{Q}xe6$.

16... $\mathbb{Q}d4$ leaves White with the better structure and promising queenside play after 17. $\mathbb{Q}xd4$ cxd4 18. $\mathbb{Q}b4\pm$.

17. $\mathbb{Q}d2\pm$

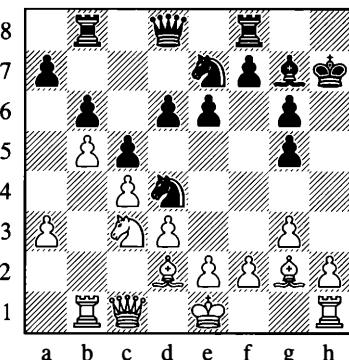
Once the d5-square has been weakened, the knight will retreat to c3. This is a favourable form of the structure examined in Chapter 4. The b-file has been opened and Black's light-squared bishop has vacated the optimal h3-c8 diagonal.



13.b5!

White takes advantage of the exposed position of the enemy king in order to drive the enemy knight to an unfavourable square.

The generally desirable 13... $\mathbb{Q}d4?$! is strongly met by 14. $\mathbb{Q}g5\#$ h $xg5$ 15. $\mathbb{Q}xb7$ $\mathbb{B}b8$ 16. $\mathbb{Q}g2$

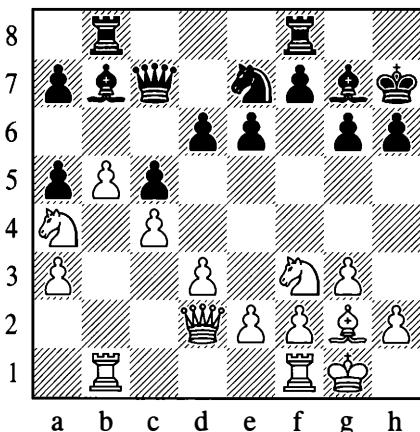


Apart from the advantage of the bishop pair, White has excellent chances for a kingside attack due to Black's structural damage. 16...g4 (16...f6 is no better: 17.h4 g4 18. $\mathbb{W}d1\pm$ White threatens to win a pawn with 19.e3, which cannot be parried with 19...f5? because it would block the knight's retreat.) 17.h3 \pm The h-file will be opened with severe consequences.

13... $\mathbb{Q}a5$ 14.0–0

Having made considerable progress on the queenside, White finally takes a moment to castle.

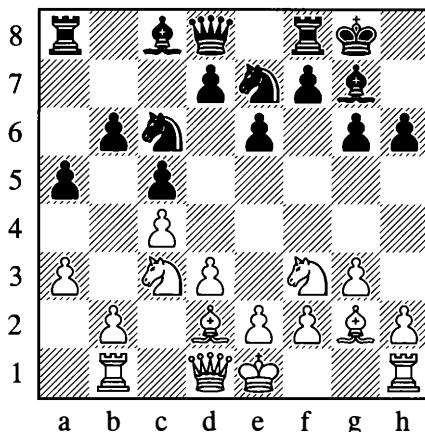
14... $\mathbb{W}c7$ 15. $\mathbb{Q}a4$ $\mathbb{B}ab8$ 16. $\mathbb{Q}xa5$ $bxa5$
17. $\mathbb{W}d2$



17... $\mathbb{Q}c8$ 18. $\mathbb{B}fc1$ $\mathbb{Q}d7$ 19.e3 $\mathbb{Q}c8$ 20.d4 \pm

White has the better structure and a space advantage in the centre and on the queenside, Stamenkov – Ilic, Skopje 2002.

D2) 10...a5



This radical way of slowing down White's queenside attack (which is possible with the pawn on h7, too) is not too popular. Black saddles himself with chronic weaknesses on b5 and b6. In the rare games between very strong players Black has failed to obtain a satisfactory position out of the opening.

In the present variation the play tends to take a less forced course than in the main lines, which explains why the practical material available (with or without ...h6) is not easy to organize. After studying the position I decided to recommend the following sequence, which I found the most appealing.

11. $\mathbb{W}c1!$ N

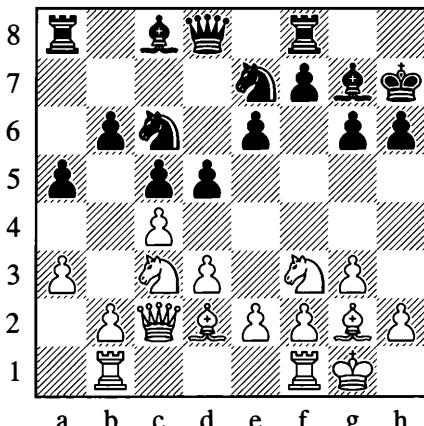
Forcing the black king onto an exposed square.

11... $\mathbb{Q}h7$ 12. $\mathbb{W}c2!$

With the c1-a3 diagonal blocked by pawns, the queen has little to do on c1. After having achieved a partial aim, the queen switches back

to the light squares. It was well worth ‘losing’ a tempo to entice the black king to h7, as there could easily arise a tactical situation where the possibility of $\mathbb{Q}g5\#$ swings the evaluation in White’s favour.

12...d5 13.0-0



13... $\mathbb{B}b8$

Practice suggests that overprotecting the b6-pawn is a good idea before developing the bishop.

After 13... $\mathbb{B}b7$ 14. $\mathbb{Q}a4$, the threat of $\mathbb{W}b3$ more or less forces Black to play 14... $\mathbb{B}b8$ anyway, when it is up to White whether to transpose to the main line with 15. $\mathbb{E}fd1$ or look for a different strengthening move.

One of the ideas behind provoking ... $\mathbb{B}h7$ is revealed after: 13... $\mathbb{Q}f5?$ (threatening ... $\mathbb{Q}fd4$ and hoping for 14.e3?! d4 with counterplay) 14.cxd5 exd5 15. $\mathbb{Q}xd5\pm$ And the knight is taboo because of the check on g5.

14. $\mathbb{E}fd1$

A harmonious way to complete the development. White’s three major pieces each exert some sort of X-ray pressure along the three neighbouring files, which, together with the need to keep the b6-pawn protected, cause

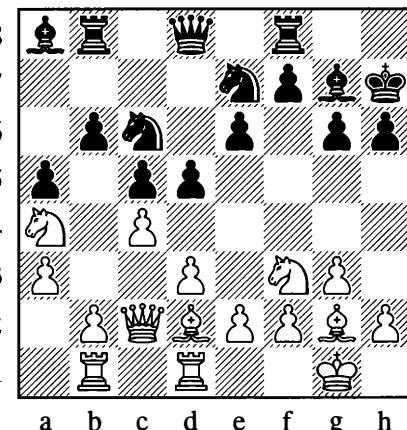
Black some difficulties in finding a good square for his queen.

14... $\mathbb{Q}b7$ 15. $\mathbb{Q}a4$ $\mathbb{Q}a8$

By overprotecting the vulnerable b6-pawn, Black hopes to obtain some freedom of action for his queen.

15... $\mathbb{Q}f5$ 16.e3 d4 is not effective without a white knight on c3 because of 17.e4± followed by b4. Black’s light-squared bishop will remain passive and the weakened queenside structure would be a source of worries.

15... $\mathbb{W}c7$ places the queen in a potential pin, allowing White to seize the initiative with 16.cxd5 $\mathbb{Q}xd5$ 17.e4± followed by b4.



16.b4!

Having developed all his pieces on purposeful squares, the time has come for White to take action.

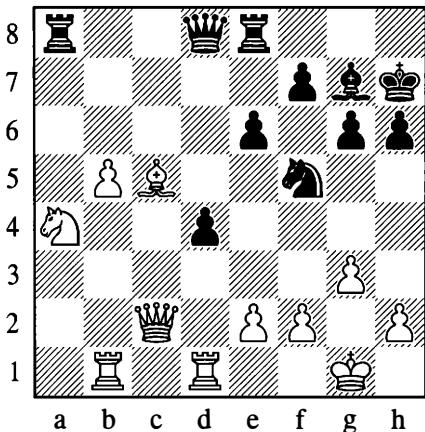
16...axb4 17.axb4 dxc4

17... $\mathbb{C}xb4$ does not solve Black’s structural problems either: 18. $\mathbb{A}xb4$ $\mathbb{Q}xb4$ 19. $\mathbb{E}xb4$ $dxc4$ 20. $dxc4$ $\mathbb{W}c7$ 21. $\mathbb{E}db1$ The b6-pawn is in big danger. 21...f5 The threat of ... $\mathbb{E}e4$ is a temporary solution only. 22. $\mathbb{Q}d2\pm$ Black has weaknesses on both wings.

18.dxc4 $\mathbb{Q}d4$ 19. $\mathbb{Q}xd4$ $cxd4$ 20. $\mathbb{Q}xa8$ $\mathbb{E}xa8$

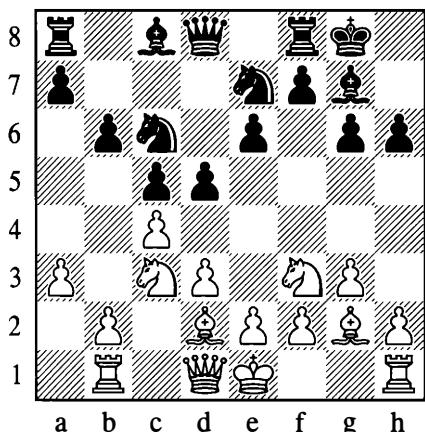
Black has obtained a space advantage in the centre, but his pieces (especially the minor ones) are more passive than White's, while the first player's queenside majority is likely to become dangerous.

**21.b5 ♕f5 22.♔b4 ♔e8 23.c5 bxc5
24.♕xc5±**



White's passed pawn is more dangerous than Black's central majority.

D3) 10...d5

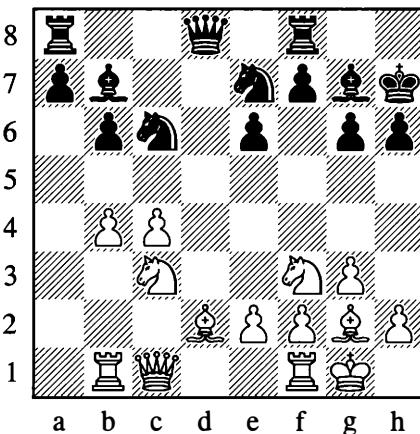


Black carries out his main plan without paying attention to White's intentions. We will now see how the inclusion of ...h7-h6 affects the evaluation of the position.

11.♔c1

Technically this seems to be a new move here, although the position after move 15 has been reached in several games via numerous move orders. Another possible sequence is 11.0–0 ♔b7 12.♔c1 ♔h7 13.b4, which is likely to lead to the same thing.

**11...♔h7 12.b4 dxc4 13.dxc4 cxb4 14.axb4
♔b7 15.0–0**



Both sides have played in the spirit of the game Petrosian – Fischer, but White is better coordinated with the queen on c1. We should also not forget that the black king might find itself exposed to ♔g5† tactics. Black's main continuations are D31) 15...♕c8 and D32) 15...♔c8.

15...♗d4? loses a pawn after 16.♗xd4 ♔xg2 17.♗xe6 fxe6 18.♗xg2±. Apart from his material advantage, White has the healthier structure.

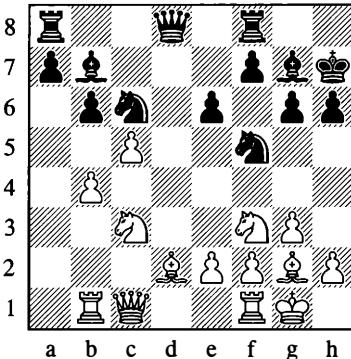
15...♗f5

This move suffers from the drawback that it does not put any pressure on the c-file, thus allowing White to open the queenside to his favour.

16.c5

Here and in several other positions below,

the advance of the c-pawn threatens b4-b5 followed by c5-c6, with a decisive space advantage.



16... $\mathbb{Q}xc5$ 17. $\mathbb{Q}xc5$ $\mathbb{Q}a6$ 18. $\mathbb{W}a3!$

This elegantly completes White's harmonious regrouping.

18... $\mathbb{W}c8$ 19. $g4!$

Forcing the knight back into passivity and preparing the favourable stabilization of the kingside structure with $h4$ and $g5$.

19... $\mathbb{Q}fe7$

19... $\mathbb{Q}fd4?$ loses material to 20. $\mathbb{Q}xd4$ after either 20... $\mathbb{Q}xd4$ 21. $\mathbb{W}a4$ or 20... $\mathbb{Q}xd4$ 21. $\mathbb{Q}xa8$.

20. $\mathbb{E}a1$ $\mathbb{Q}b7$ 21. $\mathbb{Q}e4!$

Preparing the devastating intrusion to $d6$ without being intimidated by the potential loss of the exchange.

21... $\mathbb{Q}d5$

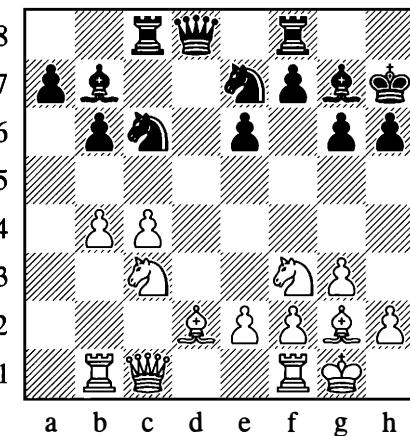
It is obvious that 21... $\mathbb{Q}xa1$ weakens the king too much, but the following spectacular line is worth mentioning all the same: 22. $\mathbb{W}xal$ $\mathbb{Q}d5$ 23. $\mathbb{Q}d6$ $\mathbb{W}d7$ 24. $\mathbb{E}b1$ $\mathbb{E}ab8$ 25. $e4$ $\mathbb{Q}de7$

26. $\mathbb{Q}xh6!$ A combination made possible by the fact that almost all of White's pieces can participate in the demolition of the black king's defences. 26... $\mathbb{Q}xh6$ 27. $\mathbb{E}xb7!$ $\mathbb{E}xb7$ 28. $\mathbb{Q}xf7\#$ $\mathbb{Q}xf7$ 29. $\mathbb{W}h8\#$ $\mathbb{Q}h7$ 30. $g5\#$ with mate to follow soon.

22. $\mathbb{E}ab1$ $\mathbb{W}c7$ 23. $h4$ $\mathbb{E}ab8$ 24. $\mathbb{Q}d6\pm$

With complete white domination, Jobava – Mchedlishvili, Tbilisi 2000.

D31) 15... $\mathbb{E}c8$



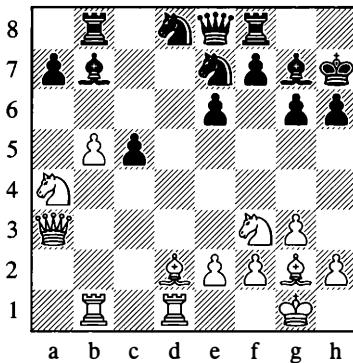
Fischer's plan is considerably less effective under the changed circumstances.

16. $\mathbb{E}d1!$

Suddenly, the threat of a discovered attack (including $\mathbb{Q}xh6$, which wins a pawn) causes Black problems in finding a favourable square for the queen.

16... $\mathbb{W}c7$

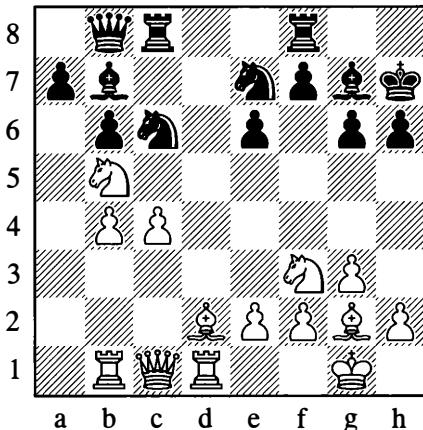
The queen is safer, but also more passive after: 16... $\mathbb{W}e8$ 17. $c5$ $\mathbb{Q}d8$ Black prevents both $b4-b5$ and $\mathbb{Q}b5-d6$, but the coordination of his major pieces becomes rather poor. 18. $\mathbb{W}a3$ A familiar regrouping. 18... $\mathbb{E}a8$ 19. $b5$ $\mathbb{Q}xc5$ 20. $\mathbb{Q}a4$ White has a strong initiative. 20... $\mathbb{E}b8$ (20... $c4$ allows 21. $\mathbb{Q}b4$) This was Tadic – Ninov, Belgrade 2003, and here White could have secured a large advantage with:



21.♕f4!N ♜c8 22.♘xc5± With overwhelming queenside domination.

17.♘b5 ♜b8

This position was reached in Bratus – Vrublevskaya, St. Petersburg 2006.



18.♘d6!N

This small tactical finesse enables White to develop his initiative.

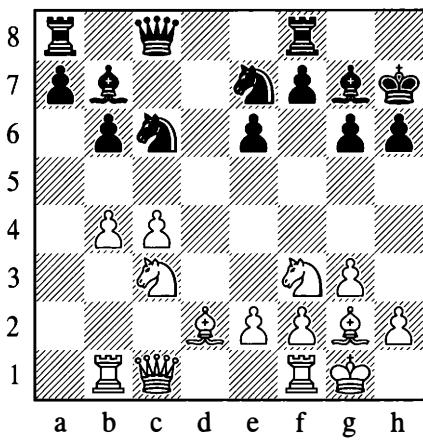
18...♜c7

The only way to avoid material losses. 18...♝xd6 19.♕f4± traps the queen.

19.♘xb7 ♜xb7 20.b5 ♘d8 21.♕b4±

White has a considerable space advantage and virtually all of his pieces are more active than their enemy counterparts.

D32) 15...♜c8



Black anticipates White's planned ♘d1 by evacuating the queen, but delays the development of the a8-rook.

16.♘e4

It turns out that the queen is not safe on c8 either. White threatens ♘d6xb7 followed by b5, winning material.

16...♞f5

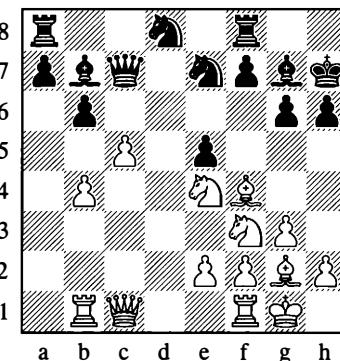
This method of parrying the threat involves placing the knight on a passive square, but the alternatives are no better.

16...♜d8 leads to similar play as in the game:
17.c5 ♘f5 18.♕c3 e5 19.e3±

16...♜c7

Connecting rooks is a temporary achievement, and besides, the queen is exposed on this square too.

17.c5 ♘d8 18.♕f4 e5



19.♘xe5!

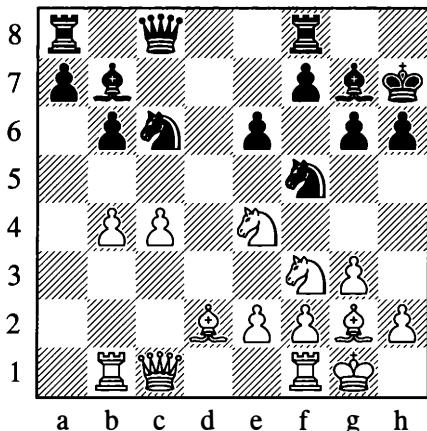
The presence of such a tactical strike should come as no surprise, given the disharmony amongst Black's forces.

19...g5

19...♜xe5 is answered with 20.♘f6† ♜g7 21.♕xh6† ♜xf6 22.♗g5† ♜e6 23.♕xf8± when White has a slight material advantage and a powerful attack.

20.♘g6 gx f4 21.♘xf8† ♜xf8 22.c6!±

Despite being attacked by four enemy pieces, the pawn is taboo! The material balance is about even, but the black king is exposed and his whole army lacks coordination. Jobava – Pogorelov, Budva 2009.



17...Qc3!

White makes full use of the queen's presence on c1. In order to defend the long diagonal, Black will be forced to make strategic concessions.

17...e5

The multiple exchanges after 17...Qcd4 do not make Black's life easier: 18.Qxd4 Qxd4 (18...Qxd4? loses material after 19.Qxd4 Qxd4 20.Qd6+) 19.e3 Qxc3 20.Qxc3 Qxe4 21.Qxe4 Bb8 22.Qfd1± Black has managed to exchange all his minor pieces, with one unfortunate exception: his strongly restricted knight. White has an active bishop, a safer king and mobile queenside pawns.

18.e3!

Preventing the misplaced f5-knight from coming to d4.

18...Qc7 19.c5 Qce7

The alternative is no more appealing: 19...bxc5 20.Qxc5± With the threat of Qxb7 followed by b5.

After the text move, White will still require a few regrouping moves in order to consolidate his advantage.

20.Qc2 Qd5 21.Qd2 a5 22.bxa5 bxa5

The a-pawn is not too dangerous, but its rival on c5 is ready to support the knight's intrusion to d6.

23.Qfd1 Qg8 24.h4

Putting pressure on the other wing as well.

24...a4 25.h5 Qh8 26.Qbc1 Qc6 27.g4!

Having improved his position to the maximum, White finally drives the enemy knight away from the defence of the d6-square.

27...Qfe7 28.Qd6±

White has conducted the game with great skill and remains in full control, Jobava – Alekseev, Moscow 2006.

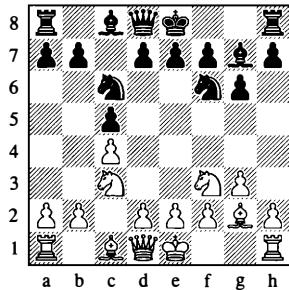
Conclusion:

In spite of the traditional theoretical verdict, White can successfully meet Black's central strategy with a restrained and flexible set-up, which is very much in the spirit of the English Opening. To me, this has been no less of a surprise than that invoked by the structure and conclusions of the Anti-Slav gambit lines from the second volume. The only difference is for those lines I relied mainly on independent analytical work and on my own games, whereas in the present chapter I was guided by Baadur Jobava's wonderful games, for which I wish to express my sincerest gratitude.



The Closed System

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



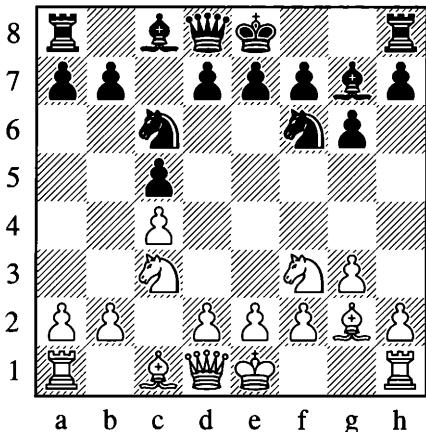
Variation Index

1.c4 c5 2.g3 $\mathbb{Q}c6$ 3. $\mathbb{Q}g2$ g6 4. $\mathbb{Q}c3$ $\mathbb{Q}g7$ 5. $\mathbb{Q}f3$ $\mathbb{Q}f6$

6.d4

A) 6...0–0 7.dxc5 $\mathbb{W}a5$ 8.0–0 $\mathbb{W}xc5$ 9.b3	103
A1) 9... $\mathbb{Q}d8$	103
A2) 9...d6	105
B) 6...cxd4 7. $\mathbb{Q}xd4$ 0–0 8.0–0	106
B1) 8...d6?! 9. $\mathbb{Q}xc6$ bxc6 10. $\mathbb{Q}xc6$	106
B11) 10... $\mathbb{Q}h3$	106
B12) 10... $\mathbb{Q}b8$	107
B2) 8... $\mathbb{W}a5$ 9. $\mathbb{Q}b3$!	109
B21) 9... $\mathbb{W}h5$	110
B22) 9... $\mathbb{W}b4$	111
B3) 8... $\mathbb{W}b6$ 9. $\mathbb{Q}c2$ d6 10.b3	114
B31) 10... $\mathbb{W}a5$	114
B32) 10... $\mathbb{Q}e6$	115
B4) 8... $\mathbb{Q}g4$ 9.e3	116
B41) 9... $\mathbb{Q}ge5$ 10.b3 d6 11.h3 $\mathbb{Q}xd4$ 12.exd4 $\mathbb{Q}c6$ 13. $\mathbb{Q}e3$	117
B411) 13...e5	118
B412) 13... $\mathbb{Q}d7$	119
B42) 9...d6	120

1.c4 c5 2.g3 ♘c6 3.♗g2 g6 4.♗c3 ♗g7 5.♘f3 ♘f6



The most natural developing move. Black continues his copycat policy, but White will break the symmetry on the very next move.

6.d4

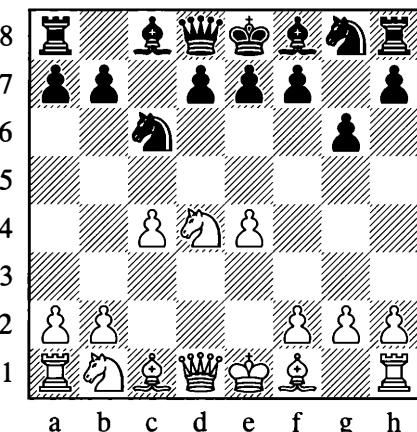
Opening the centre, now or on the next move, is White's only chance for an advantage.

For our English repertoire, it is essential to do so without delay, since after 6.0–0 0–0 7.d4 Black can play 7...d6, with a transposition to the King's Indian that has already been mentioned in Chapter 3.

Other moves tend to lead to perfect equality. For instance, 7.d3 (7.a3 is a bit passive and can even be met by 7...d5, when suddenly the roles would be reversed, with Black taking a space advantage in the centre.) 7...d6 (7...d5 transposes to Chapter 10 after 8.cxd5 ♘xd5 9.♗xd5 ♕xd5 10.♗e3) 8.a3 a6 and so on.

When designing the move order for our repertoire, based on 2.g3 against any black first move (with the exception of 1...b6, see the second volume), one of my greatest initial regrets was giving up the possibility of

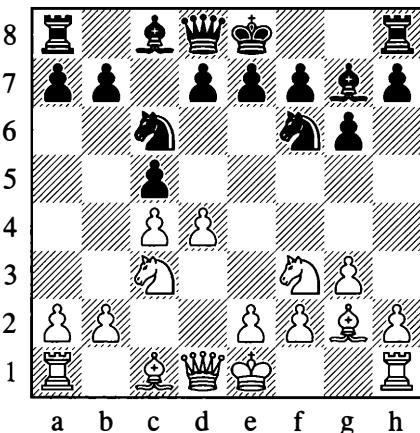
transposing to the Maroczy Sicilian after, for instance, 1.c4 c5 2.♘f3 g6 3.d4 cxd4 4.♗xd4 ♘c6 5.e4.



For players of my generation, this used to be considered the classic one-sided style of position in which only two results are possible, because of Black's lack of space and rigid structure. Recent practice has proved that Black's position is not easy to crack, though, and even if White's losing chances are very low, his winning possibilities against accurate defence are not necessarily higher than in other openings.

The structure of the positions examined in this and the next chapter bear some similarity with the Maroczy Bind. White's centre is less massive, because in most cases his e-pawn remains on its initial square. While Black's position seems freer to a certain extent, this also has some positive implications for White. The typical counterplay based on ...f7-f5 only punches fresh air, while the g2-bishop has the whole diagonal wide open, exerting strong pressure against the enemy queenside.

After completing my analytical work on these two chapters, I stopped longing for the Maroczy Bind. White's play in the lines examined here is at least as promising and definitely more entertaining!



Black has a choice between A) 6...0–0 and B) 6...cxd4.

With the black king still in the centre, 6...d6? is answered by 7.dxc5 dxc5 8. $\mathbb{W}xd8\#$ forcing one of Black's pieces onto an unfavourable square. Giving up the right to castle with 8... $\mathbb{Q}xd8$ would leave Black with severe coordination problems, while 8... $\mathbb{Q}xd8$ loses two tempos, since the knight will have to return to c6 anyway.

A) 6...0–0

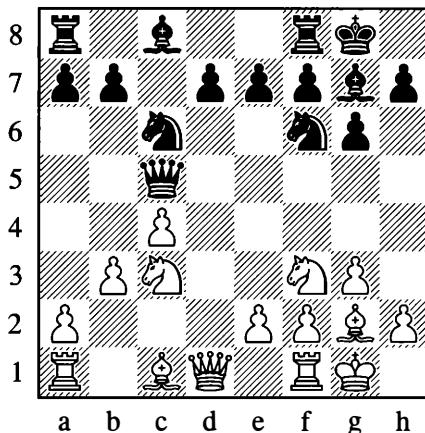
Black maintains the central tension, hoping to decoy us into standard King's Indian territory after either 7.0–0 d6 or 7.d5 $\mathbb{Q}a5$.

7.dxc5

A question of nomenclature arises. My ChessBase 10 classifies the current position under the ECO code E60, belonging to the King's Indian Defence, but I find this rather irrelevant. The structure is characteristic of our intended repertoire and this is what really matters.

7... $\mathbb{W}a5$ 8.0–0 $\mathbb{W}xc5$ 9.b3

The first phase of piece mobilization has been completed and Black has to decide how to continue his development.



We will examine A1) 9... $\mathbb{E}d8$ preparing to open the centre with ...d7-d5 and A2) 9...d6, planning a kingside attack.

9...d5? is premature: 10. $\mathbb{Q}e3$ $\mathbb{W}a5$ 11. $\mathbb{Q}xd5$? A temporary exchange sacrifice, completely neutralizing Black's chances for counterplay. 11... $\mathbb{Q}xd5$ 12.cxd5 $\mathbb{Q}xa1$ 13. $\mathbb{W}xa1$ $\mathbb{W}xd5$ 14. $\mathbb{Q}h6\pm$ White will regain the exchange, while retaining better development and a strong initiative.

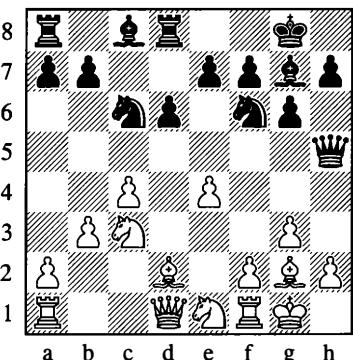
A1) 9... $\mathbb{E}d8$

Black intends to play ...d7-d5 under more favourable circumstances than in the comment above.

10. $\mathbb{Q}e3!N$

Curiously, this developing move, which gains an important tempo, has never been played before.

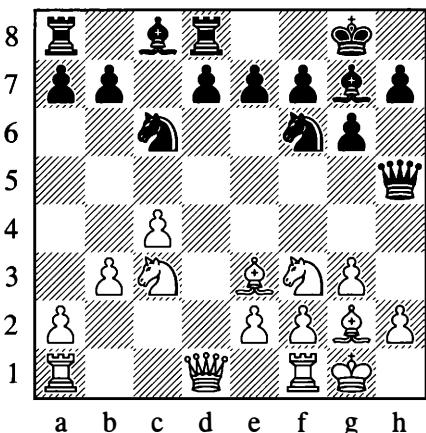
In practice, White has unanimously chosen 10.e4, which has the drawback of exposing the e4-pawn at a stage when White's development is still incomplete. 10... $\mathbb{W}h5$ Once the queen has evacuated the exposed c5-square, the threat of ... $\mathbb{Q}xe4$ becomes real. 11. $\mathbb{Q}d2$ d6 With the intention of creating a most unpleasant pin with ... $\mathbb{Q}g4$. 12. $\mathbb{Q}e1$



White has managed to maintain his space advantage, but his development lacks harmony. It is little wonder that Black's results from this position are highly satisfactory.

10... $\mathbb{W}h5$

Renewing the threat of ...d7-d5 and creating a new one: ... $\mathbb{Q}g4$



11. $\mathbb{Q}d5!$

An essential link in White's plan. Although it served the purpose of creating a concrete threat, ... $\mathbb{E}d8$ cannot be considered a developing move in the proper sense of this term. Once ...d7-d5 has been physically stopped, Black's lagging development becomes obvious. Together with some dynamic elements highlighted below, this entirely justifies the exchange sacrifice.

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

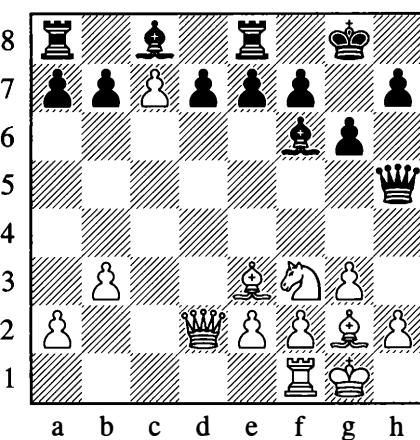
If Black does not exchange the central knight, his queen may run into trouble: 11... $\mathbb{Q}g4$ 12. $\mathbb{Q}f4$ $\mathbb{Q}xa1$ 13. $\mathbb{W}xa1\pm$ Threatening h2-h3 followed by g3-g4.

12.cxd5 $\mathbb{Q}xa1$

Otherwise, Black would be simply worse in conditions of material equality.

13.dxc6 $\mathbb{Q}f6$ 14.c7 $\mathbb{E}e8$ 15. $\mathbb{W}d2$

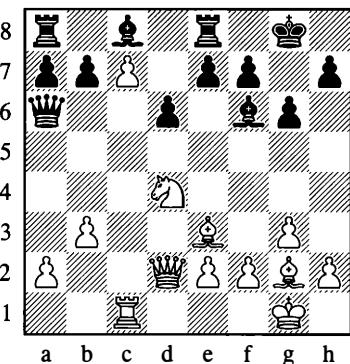
The tactical phase has come to an end. The white pawn has reached the seventh rank and Black faces serious problems completing his development. In view of the inevitable $\mathbb{Q}f3$ -d4, he has to find a way of defending the b7-pawn before he can move his queen's bishop.



15...d5

Black blocks the long diagonal, but also cuts off his queen's communication with the left wing.

The main alternative is defending b7 with the help of the queen: 15... $\mathbb{W}b5$ 16. $\mathbb{E}c1$ d6 17. $\mathbb{Q}d4$ $\mathbb{W}a6$ Giving up the dark-squared bishop is undesirable, because that would cause Black problems on the kingside. Apparently, Black has almost solved his problems with his last move, but in fact the black queen is still not comfortable.



18.a4!± A strong consolidating move, creating a series of nasty threats such as $\mathbb{Q}d5-c4$, $\mathbb{Q}e4-d3$ or simply $\mathbb{W}b4$.

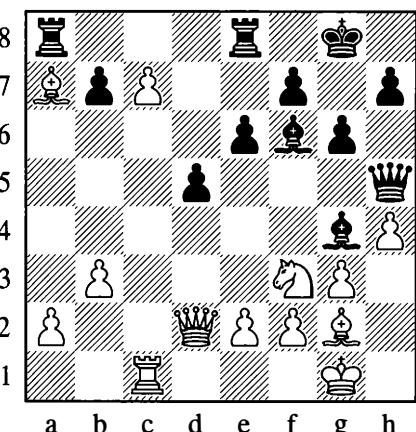
16. $\mathbb{E}c1$ $\mathbb{Q}g4$ 17.h4!

With the same idea as the symmetrical 18.a4 from the previous comment; the black queen is deprived of breathing space.

17...e6

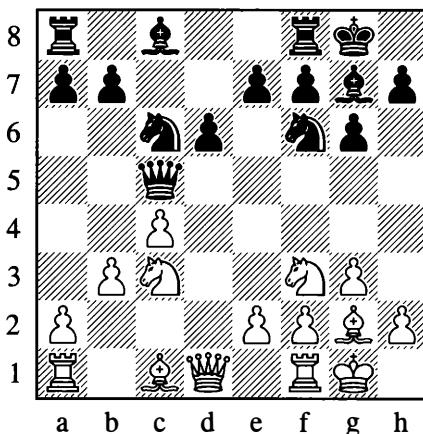
Trying to consolidate, but cutting another line of communication between the two wings. Instead 17... $\mathbb{W}f5$ 18. $\mathbb{Q}h2$ leaves Black facing the simultaneous threats of f2-f3 and $\mathbb{W}xd5$.

18. $\mathbb{Q}xa7!$ ±



This is possible because the g4-bishop no longer defends c8. White has a pawn for the exchange (and what a pawn!) and also has the more harmonious development.

A2) 9...d6



In general, this is a more useful developing move than 9... $\mathbb{Q}d8$.

10.h3!

We will see more of this kind of move in the following pages; White parries the threat of ... $\mathbb{W}h5$ followed by ... $\mathbb{Q}h3$.

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

10... $\mathbb{W}h5$ is answered by the typical 11.g4!. White gains time and space, relying on the fact that Black is not well enough developed to take advantage of the relative weakness of the kingside. 11... $\mathbb{W}c5$ (11... $\mathbb{Q}xg4$? 12.hxg4 $\mathbb{W}a5$ fails to 13. $\mathbb{Q}a4$ $\mathbb{Q}xa1$ 14. $\mathbb{Q}d2$ with a decisive material advantage) 12. $\mathbb{Q}e3$ $\mathbb{W}a5$ 13. $\mathbb{Q}d2$ $\mathbb{Q}d7$ 14. $\mathbb{E}c1$ $\mathbb{E}ab8$ 15. $\mathbb{Q}d5$ $\mathbb{W}a3$ 16. $\mathbb{Q}c3$ ± White has completed his development and exerts strong pressure in the centre.

11. $\mathbb{Q}e3$

As a general rule, in this structure I subjectively prefer harmonious piece development to gaining space with the pawns. (This will become obvious in several lines from the next chapter).

Objectively, 11. $\mathbb{Q}d2$, leaving the path for the e4-pawn free, may have equal merit, although

to my taste the bishop is rather in the way of its colleagues. 11... $\mathbb{W}b6$ 12.e4 $\mathbb{E}fc8$ 13. $\mathbb{W}e2\pm$
Uhlmann – Gligoric, Sarajevo 1983.

11... $\mathbb{W}a5$ 12. $\mathbb{E}c1$ $\mathbb{E}fc8$ 13. $\mathbb{W}d2$ $\mathbb{E}ab8$ 14. $\mathbb{E}fd1$
 $\mathbb{E}e8$ 15. $\mathbb{Q}g5\pm$

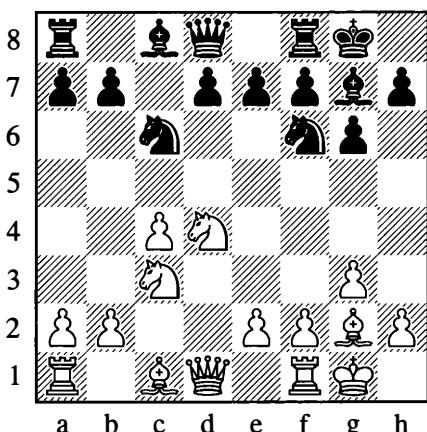
Both sides have completed their development, but Black does not have any counterplay yet, while the threat of $\mathbb{Q}d5$ has to be taken into account, Jurek – Smejkal, Mlada Boleslav 1995.

B) 6...cxd4

The most popular continuation. The previous line has proven that the queen's excursion along the fifth rank tends to lead to the loss of several tempos, which justifies giving up the tension in the centre at once.

7. $\mathbb{Q}xd4$ 0–0 8.0–0

This is the tabiya I had in mind when making the comparison with the Maroczy Bind. In this chapter, we will examine Black's attempts to complete his queenside development without releasing the tension with 8... $\mathbb{Q}xd4$ (which will be the subject of Chapter 7).



We have: B1) 8...d6?!, B2) 8... $\mathbb{W}a5$, B3)
8... $\mathbb{W}b6$ and B4) 8... $\mathbb{Q}g4$.

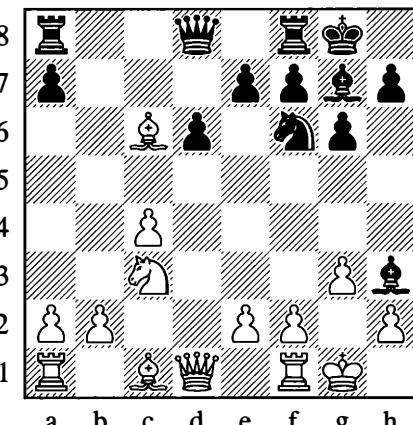
B1) 8...d6?!

In the Maroczy system, advancing the d-pawn without first capturing on d4 is entirely viable, but here the g2-bishop is guarding the long diagonal... At one point this pawn sacrifice enjoyed meteoric popularity, but White found adequate ways of neutralizing Black's initiative.

9. $\mathbb{Q}xc6$ $\mathbb{B}xc6$ 10. $\mathbb{Q}xc6$

Black has a choice between B11) 10... $\mathbb{Q}h3$ and B12) 10... $\mathbb{Q}b8$.

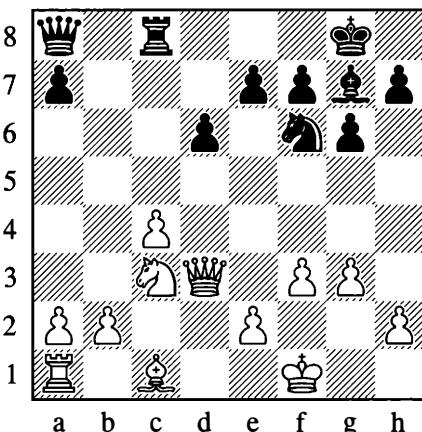
B11) 10... $\mathbb{Q}h3$



A straightforward approach that leads to simplifications. This obviously favours White, who needs to find just a couple of accurate defensive moves before starting to enjoy his extra pawn.

11. $\mathbb{Q}xa8$ $\mathbb{W}xa8$ 12.f3 $\mathbb{Q}xf1$ 13. $\mathbb{Q}xf1$ $\mathbb{E}c8$ 14. $\mathbb{W}d3$

White needs two tempos to complete his development, but Black finds it difficult to keep his initiative alive. Black lacks space, so he cannot create simultaneous threats on both wings, which allows White to conduct his defence without any great problems.



14...Wb7

Preventing the bishop's development.

The standard transfer of the knight to c5 is too slow and practically gives up the fight for any kind of compensation. 14... $\mathbb{Q}d7$! 15. $\mathbb{Q}d5$ $\mathbb{Q}f8$ 16. $\mathbb{Q}g5$ f6 17. $\mathbb{Q}f4$ $\mathbb{Q}c5$ 18. $\mathbb{W}d2$ +– Apart from her material advantage, White also has the better position, Cmilyte – Thorfinnsson, Novi Sad 2009.

The attacking operation initiated by 14... $\mathbb{Q}c5$ is easy to predict and parry move by move: 15. $\mathbb{Q}e3$ $\mathbb{Q}h5$ 16. $\mathbb{Q}g1$ $\mathbb{W}c8$ 17. $\mathbb{Q}d1$ $\mathbb{W}h3$ † 18. $\mathbb{Q}e1$ $\mathbb{Q}h6$ 19. $\mathbb{W}d4$ $\mathbb{W}g2$ 20. $\mathbb{W}f2$ $\mathbb{W}h1$ 21. $\mathbb{Q}f1$ $\mathbb{Q}g7$ 22. $\mathbb{W}g2$ +– The queens will be exchanged, meaning that the attack is over, Baburin – Manca, Cappelle la Grande 1993.

The only move that continues attacking something is 14... $\mathbb{W}c6$, but after 15.b3 Black comes to a dead end. 15...d5 This fails to bother White but what else to do in order to prevent $\mathbb{Q}g5$ (or elsewhere) followed by $\mathbb{Q}d1$? 16. $\mathbb{Q}xd5$ $\mathbb{Q}xd5$ 17.cxd5 $\mathbb{W}d7$ 18. $\mathbb{Q}b1$ $\mathbb{Q}c5$ 19. $\mathbb{Q}g2$ $\mathbb{Q}xd5$ 20. $\mathbb{W}e4$ h5 21. $\mathbb{Q}b2$ $\mathbb{Q}d2$ 22. $\mathbb{Q}xg7$ $\mathbb{Q}xg7$ 23. $\mathbb{Q}b2$ ± An elegant way to defend the second rank. White has every chance of converting his extra pawn, Borges – Almeida, Santa Clara 2000.

15. $\mathbb{Q}b1$

Over-defending b2 and evacuating the dangerous diagonal.

15... $\mathbb{W}a6$

The manoeuvre initiated by 15... $\mathbb{Q}d7$ is just as ineffective as one move earlier: 16.b3 $\mathbb{Q}e5$ 17. $\mathbb{W}e4$ $\mathbb{W}d7$ 18. $\mathbb{Q}d2$ $\mathbb{Q}c5$ 19. $\mathbb{Q}g2$ ± The position has stabilized and Black is a pawn down, Wl. Schmidt – T. Giorgadze, Polanica Zdroj 1976.

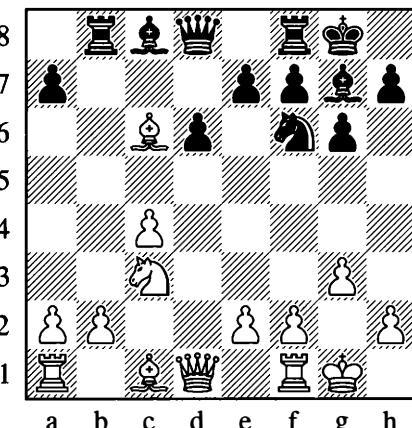
16.b3 d5

This desperate attempt to generate some dynamism fails to trouble White.

17. $\mathbb{Q}xd5$ $\mathbb{Q}xd5$ 18. $\mathbb{W}xd5$ $\mathbb{W}xa2$ 19. $\mathbb{W}d3$ ±

White is a pawn up in an otherwise absolutely normal position, Huebner – Degraeve, Pula 1997.

B12) 10... $\mathbb{Q}b8$



This is the trickiest continuation. Black hopes to get some tactical chances based on the exposed position of the c6-bishop.

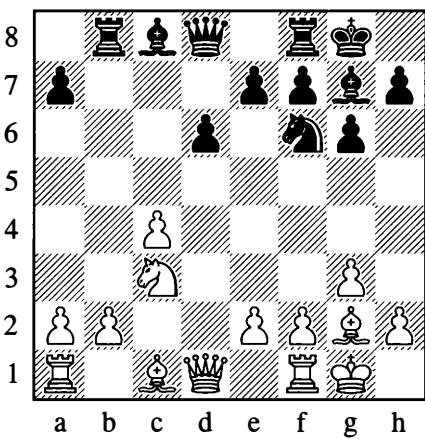
11. $\mathbb{Q}g2$!

White immediately “adjusts his position” by retreating his bishop to a safe square.

The main alternative is 11. $\mathbb{W}a4$ $\mathbb{Q}h3$ 12. $\mathbb{Q}d1$,

as recommended by Khalifman in *Opening for White According to Kramnik*. The statistics largely favour White, but the following recent game illustrates the artificial character of his development. 12...a5! Suddenly, White loses stability on the queenside. Instead of one vulnerable piece, the bishop, he now has two, with the queen facing the threat of ... $\mathbb{B}b$ 4. 13. $\mathbb{Q}b$ 5 $\mathbb{W}b$ 6 14. $\mathbb{Q}h$ 1 All this moving around with already-developed pieces allows Black to take over the initiative. 14... $\mathbb{Q}g$ 4 15.e3 $\mathbb{E}fc$ 8 16. $\mathbb{Q}d$ 4 $\mathbb{Q}e$ 5 17.b3 $\mathbb{Q}g$ 4 18. $\mathbb{E}d$ 2 $\mathbb{Q}f$ 3† 19. $\mathbb{Q}xf$ 3 $\mathbb{Q}xf$ 3 20. $\mathbb{Q}b$ 2 $\mathbb{Q}a$ 8= The weakness of the long light diagonal and the awkward placement of the white queen offer Black ample compensation for the pawn, Vasilev – Solak, Plovdiv 2008.

After the text move, Black needs to find an effective way of attacking the c4-pawn in the hope that the weakness of the long diagonal after b2-b3 would offer him tactical chances.



11... $\mathbb{W}a$ 5

Before attacking c4, Black puts pressure on the c3-knight.

The immediate attack:

11... $\mathbb{Q}e$ 6

Can be safely answered with:

12.b3

When tactics do not work out well for Black:

12...d5

12... $\mathbb{Q}e$ 4 only leads to simplifications:

13. $\mathbb{Q}xe$ 4 $\mathbb{Q}xc$ 3 14. $\mathbb{Q}h$ 6±

13. $\mathbb{Q}f$ 4!

White ignores the central tension and takes advantage of the weakening of the h2-b8 diagonal in order to develop with gain of time.

13... $\mathbb{E}b$ 7

13... dxc 4? gives up an exchange for nothing:

14. $\mathbb{Q}xb$ 8 $\mathbb{W}xb$ 8 15.bxc4 $\mathbb{Q}xc$ 4 16. $\mathbb{W}a$ 4+– Lobron – Borik, Germany 1989.

With the text move, Black prepares to block the d-file, which is impossible after the more natural: 13... $\mathbb{E}c$ 8 14.cxd5 $\mathbb{Q}xd$ 5 15. $\mathbb{Q}xd$ 5 $\mathbb{Q}xa$ 1 16. $\mathbb{W}xa$ 1 $\mathbb{Q}xd$ 5 17. $\mathbb{E}d$ 1 e6 18. $\mathbb{Q}h$ 6 f6 19.e4 With a decisive material advantage.

14. $\mathbb{E}c$ 1

It becomes clear that Black's last move is not without drawbacks: the d5-pawn is pinned.

14... $\mathbb{E}d$ 7 15.cxd5 $\mathbb{Q}xd$ 5 16. $\mathbb{Q}xd$ 5 $\mathbb{Q}xd$ 5 17. $\mathbb{W}c$ 2±

White has an extra pawn and normal development, Fogelman – Schweber, Buenos Aires 1972.

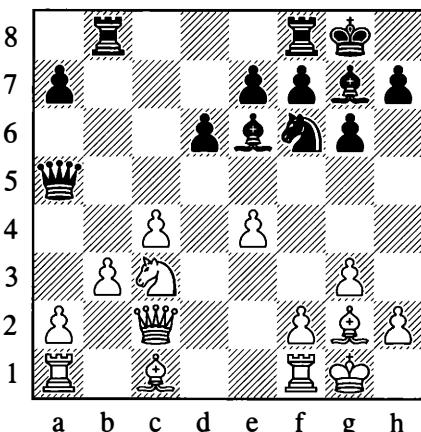
12. $\mathbb{W}c$ 2

Over-defending c3 in order to allow b2-b3 if needed.

12... $\mathbb{Q}f$ 5

After 12... $\mathbb{Q}f$ 5 White can ignore the threat with 13. $\mathbb{Q}d$ 2, taking advantage of the exposed position of the enemy queen. 13... $\mathbb{Q}xc$ 4 14. $\mathbb{Q}d$ 5 $\mathbb{W}b$ 5 15. $\mathbb{Q}xe$ 7† $\mathbb{Q}h$ 8 16. $\mathbb{Q}c$ 6± Black may regain the sacrificed pawn, but his coordination is rather poor and his structure a complete mess, Stohl – Enders, Germany 1997.

13.e4 $\mathbb{Q}e$ 6 14.b3



14... $\mathbb{Q}xe4$

Good or bad, this is the only practical chance. If given a tempo, White would develop his queen's bishop, with a decisive material and positional advantage.

15. $\mathbb{Q}xe4$ $\mathbb{Q}xal$ 16. $\mathbb{Q}g5!$

An important move, inviting Black to cut off his bishop's retreat.

16...f6

It is essential to maintain the integrity of the kingside structure.

After 16... $\mathbb{Q}f6$ 17. $\mathbb{Q}xf6\#$ $\mathbb{Q}xf6$ 18. $\mathbb{Q}xf6\pm$ White's bishops are dominating the whole board, the black king is vulnerable and the d6-pawn is weak. Together with his extra pawn, this offers White more than enough compensation for the exchange. Also, the threat of $\mathbb{Q}e7xd6$ is unpleasant. Note that the attempt to open the central files for the rooks with 18...d5? loses instantly to 19. $\mathbb{W}c1!$ threatening $\mathbb{W}h6$.

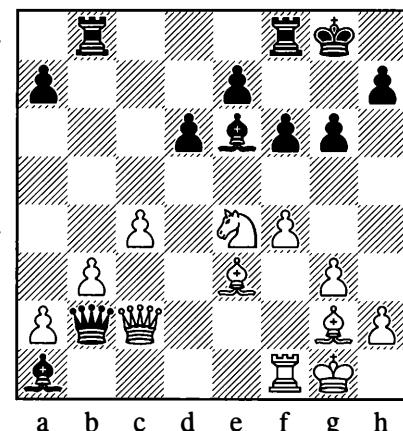
From a structural point of view, 16... $\mathbb{Q}e5$ is similar: 17. $\mathbb{Q}xe7$ d5 A desperate attempt to get some counterplay. (17... $\mathbb{Q}fe8$ leaves White with two pawns for the exchange and a dominating position: 18. $\mathbb{Q}xd6$ $\mathbb{Q}xd6$ 19. $\mathbb{Q}xd6$ $\mathbb{Q}ed8$ 20.c5±) 18. $\mathbb{Q}xf8$ $\mathbb{Q}xf8$ 19.cxd5 $\mathbb{Q}xd5$ 20. $\mathbb{W}c5$ $\mathbb{W}xc5$ 21. $\mathbb{Q}xc5$ $\mathbb{Q}xg2\pm$ With

good chances to convert the extra pawn into a win, Fancsy – Szieberth, Hungary 1996.

17. $\mathbb{Q}e3$ $\mathbb{W}e5$

The only way to keep the bishop alive, but not for long...

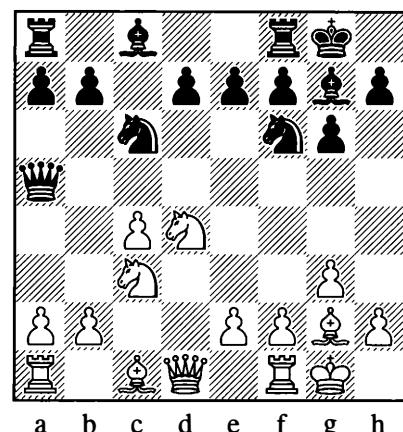
18.f4 $\mathbb{W}b2$



19. $\mathbb{W}b1!!\pm$

A very elegant move, trapping the bishop. In Wojtkiewicz – Wahls, Geneva 1995, and Lukov – Ivanov, Varna 1995, White went on to win comfortably.

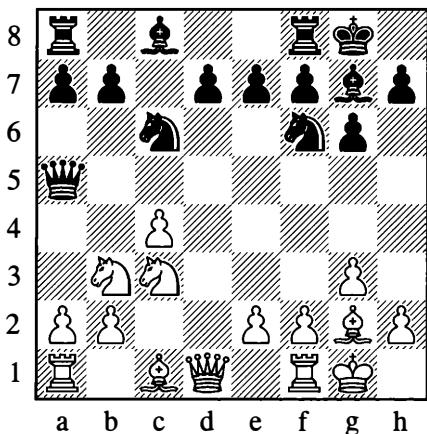
B2) 8... $\mathbb{W}a5$



We are already familiar with the plan of transferring the queen to h5. However, with the d-pawn on its initial square, the last move fails to achieve the desired counterplay.

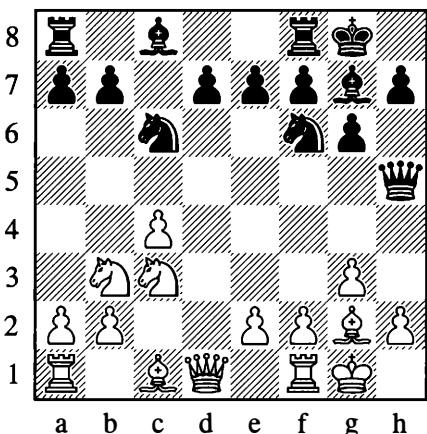
9.♕b3!

After this energetic move, White will manage to hinder Black's development with c4-c5.



Black can choose between B21) 9...♛h5 and B22) 9...♝b4.

B21) 9...♛h5



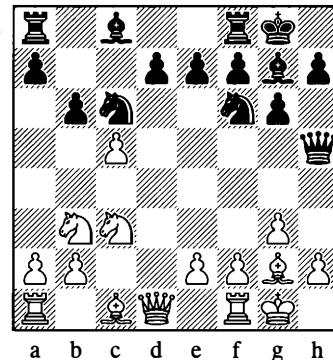
With this long queen move, Black hopes to create dangerous kingside threats; his main problem is that it will not be easy to open the c8-h3 diagonal after White's next move.

10.c5 d6

The alternative is:

10...b6

As played in Varnusz – Bilek, Budapest 1958.



11.e4!N

As suggested by Khalifman in *Opening for White According to Kramnik*. White intends to exchange the black queen, which has already burned two tempos, leaving Black's queenside without sufficient support.

11...♝a6

This move is the best available, but Black's coordination remains poor.

11...bxс5 leads to trouble after an accurate forcing manoeuvre: 12.♗f3 ♛h3 (12...♛e5 runs into 13.♗f4) 13.e5 ♜xe5 The rook is temporarily taboo, because of the threat of ...♝(either)-g4, but 14.♗g2! (Khalifman) followed by ♜xa8 is winning.

12.♛xh5 ♜xh5 13.♗d1 ♜fd8 14.♗e3±

11.cxd6 ♜d8

Black also has the option of an unprepared attacking move:

11...♝h3

This was tried in Merdinjan – Gunev, Ruse 1978.

12.e4!N

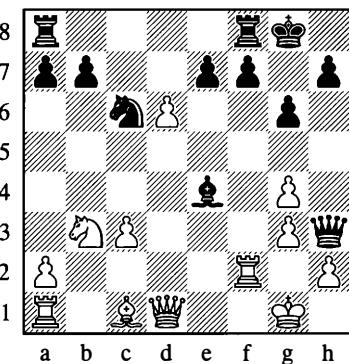
Suddenly, Black is hanging all over the board.

12...♝g4

12... $\mathbb{Q}xg2$ loses a pawn: 13. $\mathbb{W}xh5$ $\mathbb{Q}xh5$ 14.dxe7±

13.f3 $\mathbb{Q}xg2$ 14.fxg4 $\mathbb{W}h3$ 15. $\mathbb{B}f2$ $\mathbb{Q}xc3$ 16.bxc3 $\mathbb{Q}xe4$

At first glance it may seem that Black is not doing so badly. A closer look reveals that the bishop is trapped in the middle of the board!



17. $\mathbb{Q}c5$ f5 18. $\mathbb{Q}b2$

Black is helpless against the threat $\mathbb{Q}xe4$ followed by $\mathbb{W}d5\#$ and c3-c4.

12.e4 $\mathbb{Q}g4?$!

Consistent, but it does not work. 12... $\mathbb{B}xd6$ is safer, but White retains the initiative with 13. $\mathbb{W}xh5$ $\mathbb{Q}xh5$ 14. $\mathbb{Q}e3\pm$.

13.f3 $\mathbb{Q}h3$

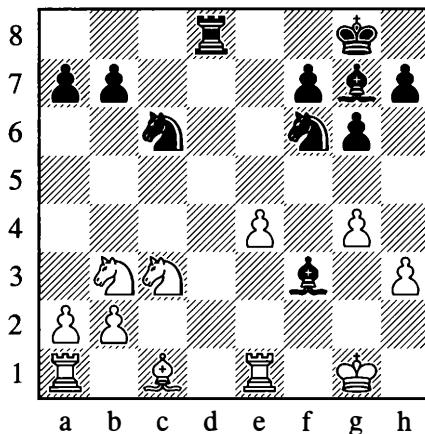
13... $\mathbb{B}xd6$ 14. $\mathbb{Q}d5\#N$ wins material in view of the threat of $\mathbb{Q}xe7\#$.

13... $\mathbb{Q}e6$ was played in Schulz – Dvoiryš, Berlin 1995. Now 14. $\mathbb{W}e1\#N$ was suggested by Khalifman, and it leaves Black's pieces vulnerable. 14... $\mathbb{B}xd6$ 15.g4 Black has to give up a piece for insufficient compensation, because 15... $\mathbb{W}e5?$ loses the queen to 16.f4+-.

14.g4 $\mathbb{W}h4$ 15. $\mathbb{W}e1$!

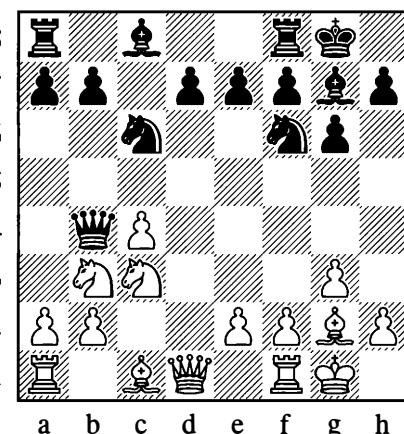
Black is forced to exchange queens anyway and, as most of his position is hanging, he must lose material.

15... $\mathbb{W}xe1$ 16. $\mathbb{B}xe1$ $\mathbb{Q}xg2$ 17.dxe7 $\mathbb{Q}xf3$
18.exd8= $\mathbb{W}\#$ $\mathbb{B}xd8$ 19.h3±



Black has insufficient compensation for the exchange, Honfi – Dely, Budapest 1968.

B22) 9... $\mathbb{W}b4$



Black keeps his queen on the left wing, hoping that she will support his freeing operation. However, in some cases the queen will be exposed to attacks by White's minor pieces.

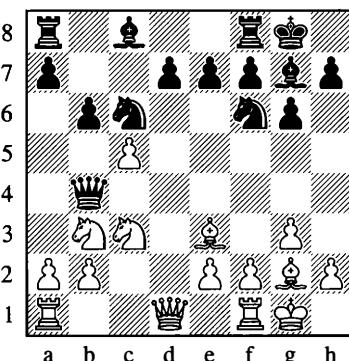
10.c5 a5

The most direct approach; Black threatens to win the annoying c5-pawn with ...a5-a4.

10... $\mathbb{Q}a5$ does not contribute to development and allows White to simplify the position in his favour: 11. $\mathbb{W}d4$ $\mathbb{W}xd4$ 12. $\mathbb{Q}xd4$ $\mathbb{Q}e8$. This passive move is the only reasonable way to prepare ...d7-d6. 13. $\mathbb{E}d1$ d6 14. $\mathbb{Q}d5!$ The queen's departure from d8 has weakened the e7-square; Black loses his stability in the centre. 14...dxc5 15. $\mathbb{Q}xe7\#$ $\mathbb{Q}h8$ 16. $\mathbb{Q}b3$ $\mathbb{Q}xb3$ 17.axb3± The a1-rook has been developed without the necessity of moving. Black's queenside is under serious pressure and most of his pieces are passive, Petrovs – Czerniak, Buenos Aires 1939. Vladimirs Petrovs was one of the first great specialists of the Catalan Opening, and it appears that he understood the virtues of the g2-bishop in other openings as well. However, his style was only tangentially related with the hyper-modern school; unlike Reti, he used to combine the pressure along the h1-a8 diagonal with the occupation of the centre.

10... $\mathbb{E}d8$, threatening ...d7-d6, was played in Gasser – Stanojevic, Goetzi 1996. White should discourage it with the developing move 11. $\mathbb{Q}f4!$ N followed by $\mathbb{E}c1$ and a2-a3. It is interesting to note that the bishop also prevents the queen's transfer to g4, which otherwise might have been an emergency escape route.

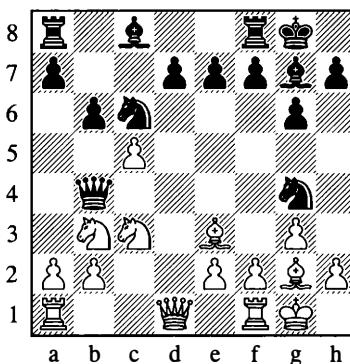
10...b6 would be a constructive solution if White was forced to release the tension. 11. $\mathbb{Q}e3!$



It now becomes clear that after 11...bxc5 12. $\mathbb{Q}xc5$ the e7-pawn would be lost, for instance 12... $\mathbb{W}b7$ 13. $\mathbb{Q}xe7$ or 12... $\mathbb{W}b8$ 13. $\mathbb{Q}xc6$.

In practice, two other moves have been tried:

11... $\mathbb{Q}g4$ was played in Middendorf – Horvath, Zürich 1970.



12. $\mathbb{Q}d5!$ N White accepts the ruination of his structure for the sake of maintaining the initiative. 12... $\mathbb{Q}xe3$ 13.fxe3 $\mathbb{W}g4$ 14. $\mathbb{Q}xe7\#$ $\mathbb{Q}xe7$ 15. $\mathbb{Q}xa8\pm$ Black has no compensation for his big material disadvantage.

After the neutral 11... $\mathbb{E}e8$, defending e7, as played in Bohm – Ree, Amsterdam 1984, White should calmly continue his development: 12. $\mathbb{E}c1!$ N Threatening h2-h3 followed by a2-a3, more or less trapping the queen. 12...bxc5 13.a3 $\mathbb{W}b8$ 14. $\mathbb{Q}xc5$ $\mathbb{W}xb2$ 15. $\mathbb{W}a4\pm$ White's huge lead in development and the exposed black queen more than compensates for the missing pawn.

11. $\mathbb{Q}g5!$

It is always best to parry minor threats by indirect means, using developing moves.

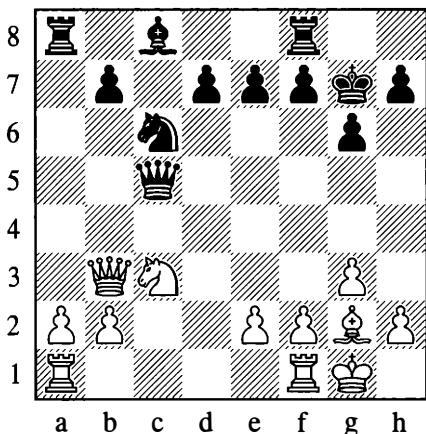
11...a4

Defending the d5-square wastes too much time: 11...e6 12.a3 $\mathbb{W}g4$ 13. $\mathbb{Q}f4!$ Threatening to trap the queen with the help of the pawns, starting with h2-h3. 13...e5 Clearing the

e6-square for Her Majesty, but chronically weakening the d5-square. 14.h3 $\mathbb{W}e6$ 15. $\mathbb{Q}g5!$ \pm The bishop has done its job on f4 and so the time has come for it to be traded for the main defender of the d5-square. White is well ahead in development and Black's structure lacks any coherence, Li Zunian – Beitar, Dubai (ol) 1986.

12. $\mathbb{Q}xf6$ $axb3$ 13. $\mathbb{Q}xg7$ $\mathbb{Q}xg7$ 14. $\mathbb{W}xb3$ $\mathbb{W}xc5$

The forcing sequence has come to an end. From a structural point of view, Black can be satisfied in having exchanged a wing pawn for a central one. However, his lack of development and the exchange of the dark-squared bishops make his central majority look more like a weakness than a strength.

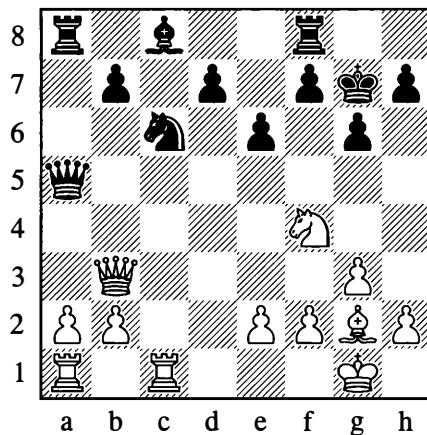


15. $\mathbb{Q}d5!$ N

The most ambitious move, continuing to pose problems for the black queen. Instead 15. $\mathbb{Q}ac1$ $\mathbb{W}b4$ 16. $\mathbb{Q}c2$ d6 was played in Balster – Zimmermann, Germany 1993. Even here, occupying the central square with 17. $\mathbb{Q}d5!$ N would have retained the initiative.

15...e6 16. $\mathbb{Q}fc1$ $\mathbb{W}a5$ 17. $\mathbb{Q}f4$

The knight has been forced back, but at a high price: the kingside dark squares have been weakened.



17... $\mathbb{W}b4$

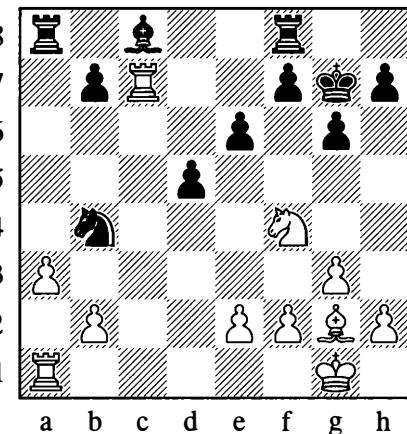
Hoping to ease his defence by simplifications.

After 17...d5 18.a4 \pm , followed by $\mathbb{Q}d3$, White's queenside majority is more mobile than the black centre, mainly because of the difference in activity of the bishops.

18. $\mathbb{W}xb4$ $\mathbb{Q}xb4$ 19. $\mathbb{Q}c7$ d5

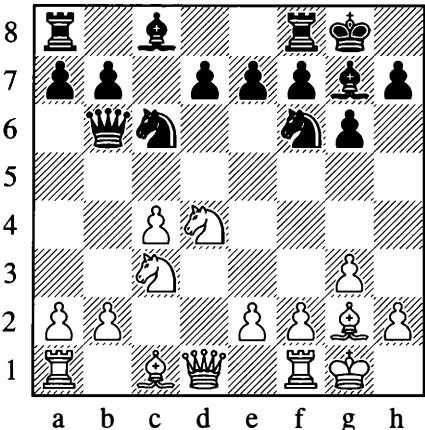
Continuing the simplifying policy cannot be recommended: 19... $\mathbb{E}xa2$ 20. $\mathbb{E}xa2$ $\mathbb{Q}xa2$ 21. $\mathbb{Q}xb7$ $\mathbb{Q}xb7$ 22. $\mathbb{Q}xb7$ $\mathbb{Q}d8$ The only way to avoid the loss of a pawn. 23. $\mathbb{Q}d3$ \pm Black's knight is trapped and his rook is passive. In addition, the b-pawn may become dangerous.

20.a3 \pm



White will continue with $\mathbb{Q}ac1$ and $e2-e4$ (possibly after $\mathbb{Q}d3$). Black remains poorly developed and his bishop is likely to be 'bad'.

B3) 8... $\mathbb{Q}b6$



This is a sounder queen move than 8... $\mathbb{Q}a5$. Black forces the central knight to retreat in order to continue his development with ...d7-d6 and ... $\mathbb{Q}e6$. The main drawback of this plan is that in the long run the queen is not especially well placed on b6. It blocks the b-pawn, slowing down the thematic counterplay based on ...a7-a6 and ...b7-b5, and is likely to face attacks from White's minor pieces.

9. $\mathbb{Q}c2$

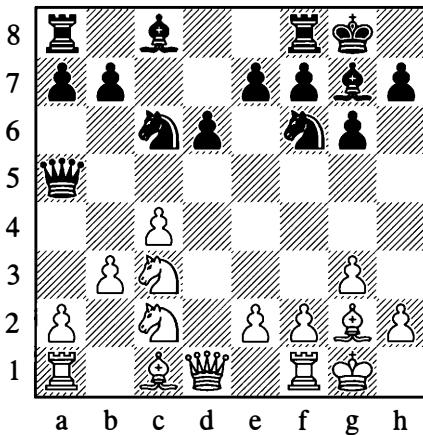
The most flexible knight retreat, allowing the c4-pawn to be defended with b2-b3 if necessary.

9...d6 10.b3

By eliminating the pressure against b2, White gets ready to complete his development with $\mathbb{Q}e3$.

We examine B31) 10... $\mathbb{Q}a5$ and B32) 10... $\mathbb{Q}e6$.

B31) 10... $\mathbb{Q}a5$



After having stabilized the situation in the centre, Black intends to carry out a similar plan as in line B21, but moving the queen for a second time before having completed development cannot be a viable solution.

11. $\mathbb{Q}d5!$

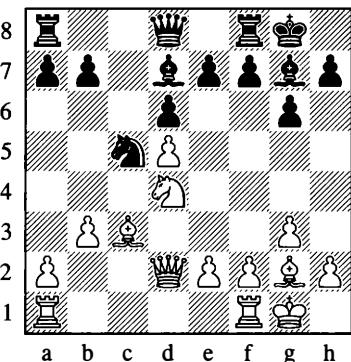
We are familiar with this kind of early knight jump to the centre from line A1. The main idea is to cut off the queen's access from one wing to the other.

11... $\mathbb{Q}xd5$ 12.cxd5 $\mathbb{Q}e5$

The most active reply, but the knight is not so stable in the centre.

12... $\mathbb{Q}xa1$?! loses material to 13.dxc6±, simultaneously threatening $\mathbb{Q}xal$ and $cxb7$.

The more passive-looking 12... $\mathbb{Q}b8$ may transpose to the main line if Black plays ... $\mathbb{Q}d7$ later, but independent lines are also possible: 13. $\mathbb{Q}d4$ This central knight has a paralysing effect on Black's position; the break ...e7-e6 is out of the question, as are ideas based on ...b7-b5, which would just weaken the c6-square. 13... $\mathbb{Q}a6$ 14. $\mathbb{Q}d2$ $\mathbb{Q}d8$ 15. $\mathbb{Q}c3$ $\mathbb{Q}d7$ 16. $\mathbb{Q}d2$ $\mathbb{Q}c5$ So far, we have followed Irzhanov – Ortiz, Shenyang 1999.

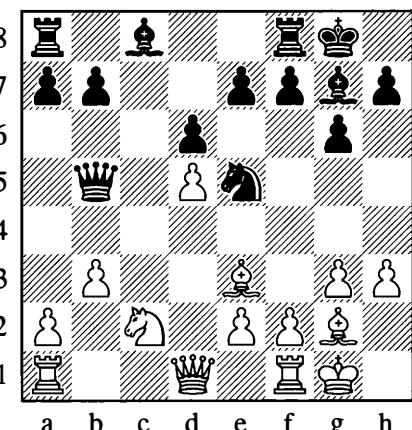


17. $\mathbb{Q}a5!$ N A nasty move, causing Black coordination problems (since 17... $b6$ would allow the occupation of the $c6$ -square, Black has to place his queen on a passive square). 17... $\mathbb{W}e8$ 18. $\mathbb{E}ac1\pm$ White is better developed and has a considerable space advantage.

13. $\mathbb{Q}d2$ $\mathbb{W}b6$ 14. $\mathbb{Q}e3$ $\mathbb{W}b5$ 15.h3

One of the merits of 12... $\mathbb{Q}e5$ is that White has to spend a tempo on this prophylactic move to prevent ... $\mathbb{Q}g4$ and create the potential threat of f2-f4.

Now against any neutral move, White would continue his development with $\mathbb{W}d2$ followed by $\mathbb{E}fc1$ and $\mathbb{E}ab1$. Black's main problem is that ... $\mathbb{Q}d7$ would leave the knight trapped after f2-f4.



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

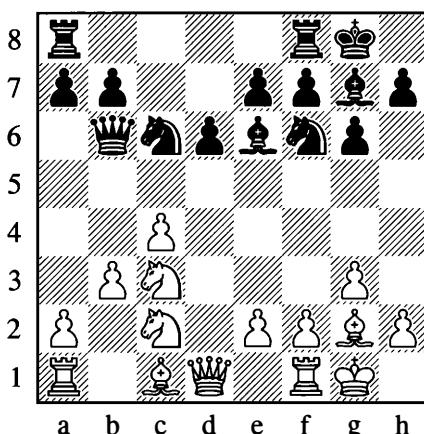
The only way to allow the c8-bishop's

development is to relocate the knight, but this loses a lot of time.

16. $\mathbb{Q}d4$ $\mathbb{W}a5$ 17.a3 $\mathbb{Q}f6$ 18.b4 $\mathbb{W}d8$ 19. $\mathbb{W}d2$ $\mathbb{Q}d7$ 20. $\mathbb{E}ac1$ $\mathbb{E}c8$ 21. $\mathbb{Q}b3\pm$

Despite the symmetrical nature of the position, Black has serious coordination problems. White intends to play $\mathbb{Q}a5$ with enduring pressure, Gross – Velickovic, Nuremberg 1989.

B32) 10... $\mathbb{Q}e6$



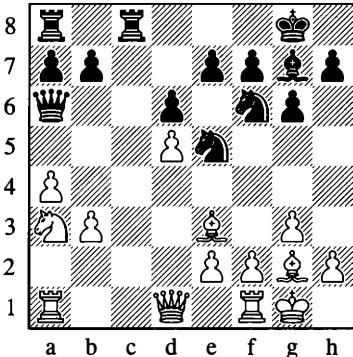
Black continues developing without defining his plans yet.

11.e4

The most active move, gaining space and getting closer to a Maroczy type of structure in which the placement of Black's pieces is far from optimal.

As I am inclined towards technical solutions, I may prefer 11. $\mathbb{Q}d5$ in an over-the-board game. 11... $\mathbb{Q}xd5$ (11... $\mathbb{Q}xd5?$ loses material to 12.cxd5 $\mathbb{Q}f5$ 13.e4 $\mathbb{Q}d4$ 14. $\mathbb{Q}e3\rightarrow$) 12.cxd5 $\mathbb{Q}e5$ In the short term, giving up the bishop for the central knight offers Black increased flexibility if compared to line B31. On the other hand, the bishop pair is usually very strong in endings with this structure. White

"only" needs to trade off all the major pieces in order to gain a close-to-winning position.
 13.♕e3 ♘a6 14.a4 ♜fc8 15.♘a3±



White controls the position quite well and can look to the future with optimism, Keene – J. Littlewood, Hammersmith 1971.

However, this choice is a matter of taste and I have taken the more complex continuation as the main line. With the pawn on e4, White can answer (♘d5) ... ♘xd5 with exd5, opening the e-file for his rooks. In the resulting structure, the bishop is better placed on g2 than on e2 (where it would be in a genuine Maroczy), because it would not obstruct the rooks.

11...♗g4

The only way to get some counterplay.

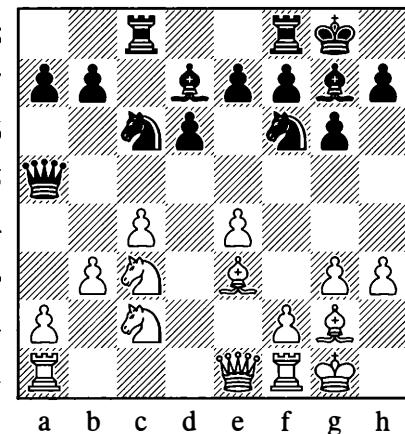
12.♗e1!

White leaves the c1-h6 diagonal open, in order to be able to meet 12...♘e5 with 13.♕e3 followed by f2-f3.

12...♖ac8

Simplifying with 12...♗b4 13.♗xb4 ♗xb4 does not bring complete relief: 14.♗d2 ♗c5 15.h3 ♘e6 16.♗e2 ♕ac8 17.♗a1 a6 18.♗h2 ♘a3 19.♗c2 ♘d7 20.f4± Confronted with the constant threats of ♘d5 or e4-e5, Black faces a difficult defence, Uhlmann – Fronczek, Bad Wildbad 1997.

13.h3 ♘d7 14.♗e3 ♘a5



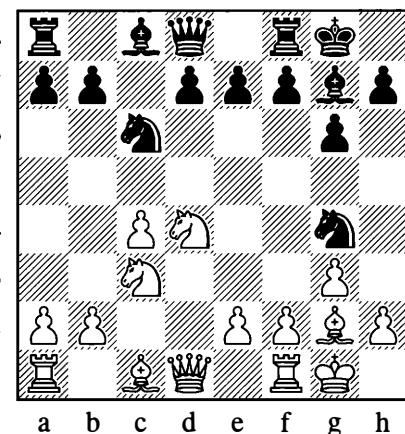
15.♘d5

After neutralizing Black's temporary activity, White finally installs his knight in the centre. Once again, the black queen's transfer to h5 is blocked.

15...♗xe1 16.♗fxe1 ♘e8 17.♗ad1 ♘c7 18.f4±

White has a stable space advantage, Kramnik – Kamsky, New York (6) 1994.

B4) 8...♘g4



The start of a sophisticated knight manoeuvre, aiming to increase the pressure on the d4-square. Strategically, this looks quite appealing.

but with his development incomplete, Black has very little chance of success.

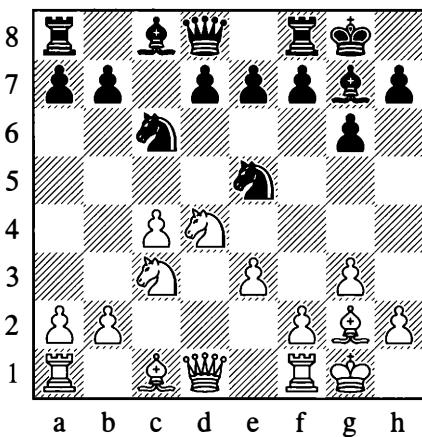
9.e3

The most solid answer, keeping the long diagonal defended. Instead 9. $\mathbb{Q}c2$ would offer Black some counterplay after 9... $\mathbb{Q}xc3$ 10.bxc3 $\mathbb{W}a5$.

Black's main choice is between **B41) 9... $\mathbb{Q}ge5$** and **B42) 9...d6**.

9... $\mathbb{Q}xd4$?! is premature. After 10.exd4 $\mathbb{Q}h6$ 11. $\mathbb{Q}xh6$ $\mathbb{Q}xh6$ we reach a similar position as in line B42, without the insertion of the moves b2-b3 and ...d7-d6. Since White's general plan includes b4 anyway, we can infer that Black has simply given away a tempo. Just as in line B42, the most active regrouping is 12. $\mathbb{W}e5$ $\mathbb{Q}g7$ 13. $\mathbb{Q}fd1$ d6 14. $\mathbb{Q}ac1\pm$.

B41) 9... $\mathbb{Q}ge5$



Black directs the knight towards the c6-square, to replace its colleague after it exchanges on d4.

10.b3 d6 11.h3

Preventing the nasty ... $\mathbb{Q}g4$, which would force White to weaken his kingside with f2-f3.

11... $\mathbb{Q}xd4$

The critical continuation. In the event of a neutral policy, the presence of the knight on e5 is likely to become pointless:

11...a6 12. $\mathbb{Q}b2$ $\mathbb{Q}b8$

After the c3-knight has been defended, 12... $\mathbb{Q}xd4$ 13.exd4 $\mathbb{Q}c6$ can simply be met by 14.d5±.

13. $\mathbb{Q}b1$ $\mathbb{Q}e8$ 14. $\mathbb{Q}h2$ $\mathbb{W}a5$ 15. $\mathbb{Q}de2!$

After having completed his development, White avoids the knight exchange in the centre and prepares the active $\mathbb{Q}d5$.

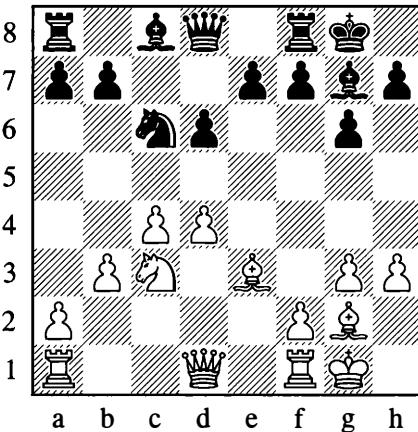
15... $\mathbb{Q}d7$ 16. $\mathbb{Q}d5$ $\mathbb{Q}xb2$ 17. $\mathbb{Q}xb2$ b5

With his development incomplete, Black cannot hope to gain equality with this thematic counterattack.

18.b4 $\mathbb{W}d8$ 19.cxb5 axb5 20. $\mathbb{Q}c2$ $\mathbb{Q}b7$ 21. $\mathbb{Q}d4$ $\mathbb{Q}xd4$ 22. $\mathbb{W}xd4$ $\mathbb{Q}xd5$ 23. $\mathbb{Q}xd5\pm$

White is well centralized and controls the only open file. In the long run, the b5-pawn is likely to become weak, Tkachiev – Grigoriants, Dagomys 2008.

12.exd4 $\mathbb{Q}c6$ 13. $\mathbb{Q}e3$



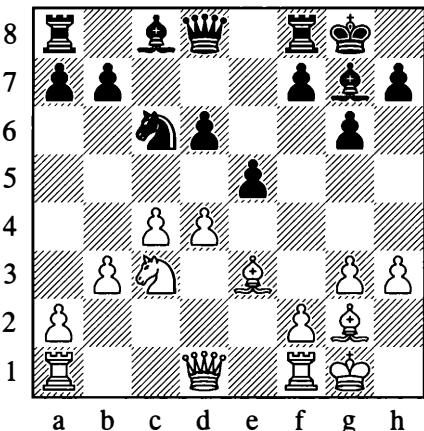
We will mainly examine the straightforward **B41) 13...e5** and the more flexible **B412) 13... $\mathbb{Q}d7$** . Black has also tried several other moves, but they are not connected with any effective plan.

13... $\mathbb{W}a5$ 14. $\mathbb{W}d2$ e5 This is hardly an improved version of line B411. 15.dxe5 dxe5 16. $\mathbb{E}ad1$ $\mathbb{Q}e6$ 17. $\mathbb{Q}b5$ $\mathbb{W}xd2$ 18. $\mathbb{E}xd2$ $\mathbb{E}fd8$ 19. $\mathbb{E}fd1\pm$ Black's queenside is under strong pressure, Guenthner – Fronczek, Pforzheim 1998.

13... $\mathbb{E}e8$ is also not a good way to prepare to open the centre: 14. $\mathbb{E}c1$ e5 15.dxe5 $\mathbb{Q}xe5$ 16. $\mathbb{W}d2$ $\mathbb{Q}e6$ 17. $\mathbb{Q}d5\pm$ White has a strong centralized position, Marzolo – Vachier Lagrave, Val d'Isere 2002.

Playing for queenside counterplay is too slow: 13...a6 14. $\mathbb{E}c1$ $\mathbb{B}b8$ 15. $\mathbb{E}e1$ $\mathbb{E}e8$ 16.d5 $\mathbb{Q}e5$ 17. $\mathbb{Q}a7!$ Winning a tempo. 17... $\mathbb{E}a8$ 18. $\mathbb{Q}d4\pm$ White can combine his pressure along the e-file with the advance of his queenside majority, P.H. Nielsen – Brynell, Aars 1995.

B411) 13...e5



A consistent move; Black keeps fighting for the d4-square, but weakens the d5-square in exchange. The determining factor in this strategically double-edged situation will be White's better development – a direct consequence of Black's time-consuming knight manoeuvre.

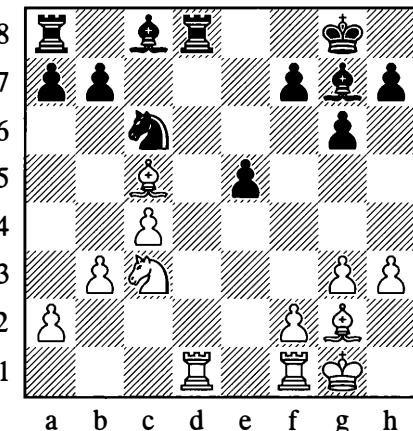
14.dxe5 dxe5

14... $\mathbb{W}a5$, as played in a couple of games, is

best met by: 15. $\mathbb{W}d2$!N $\mathbb{Q}xe5$ This may be the move White feared in practice. Black threatens both ... $\mathbb{Q}xh3$ and ... $\mathbb{Q}xc4$ (instead 15...dxe5 16. $\mathbb{E}ad1\pm$ transposes to the game Guenthner – Fronczek, mentioned above in the comment about Black's alternatives on move 13). 16. $\mathbb{Q}e4!$ A simple and effective way to parry the threats. 16... $\mathbb{W}xd2$ 17. $\mathbb{Q}xd2\pm$ The d6-pawn is desperately weak.

15. $\mathbb{Q}c5$ $\mathbb{E}e8$ 16. $\mathbb{W}xd8$ $\mathbb{E}xd8$ 17. $\mathbb{E}ad1$

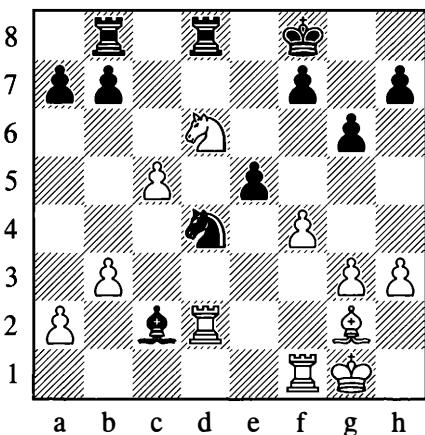
White's initiative becomes threatening. Black cannot complete his original plan with 17... $\mathbb{Q}d4$ because after 18. $\mathbb{Q}d5$, with the threat of f2-f4, the black knight would soon lose its stability. Besides, the c8-bishop would not have any favourable squares for development, because of the possible knight forks on e7 or c7, not to mention that the b7-pawn would remain in great danger.



17... $\mathbb{Q}f5$

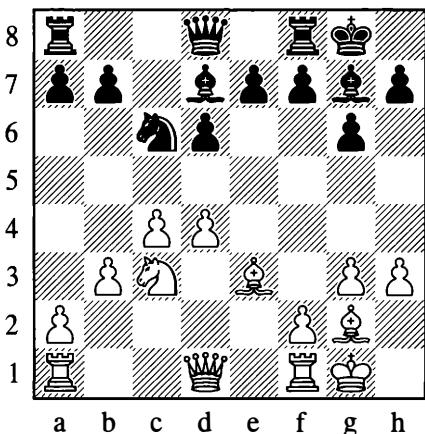
The text move is more active but no more effective than: 17... $\mathbb{Q}d7$ 18. $\mathbb{Q}b5$ $\mathbb{Q}f6$ 19. $\mathbb{E}d6$ $\mathbb{Q}g7$ 20. $\mathbb{E}fd1$ $\mathbb{Q}e7$ 21. $\mathbb{E}xd7$ $\mathbb{E}xd7$ 22. $\mathbb{E}xd7$ $\mathbb{Q}xc5$ 23. $\mathbb{E}xb7\pm$ With an extra pawn and a dominating position, Manor – Lendwai, Borsodtavho 1991.

18. $\mathbb{Q}b5$ $\mathbb{Q}f8$ 19. $\mathbb{E}xf8$ $\mathbb{Q}f8$ 20. $\mathbb{Q}d6$ $\mathbb{Q}c2$ 21. $\mathbb{E}d2$ $\mathbb{E}ab8$ 22.c5 $\mathbb{Q}d4$ 23.f4±



Black's queenside is in danger, as are his minor pieces, Nepomniashchy – Poddubnyi, Leningrad 1987.

B412) 13... $\mathbb{Q}d7$

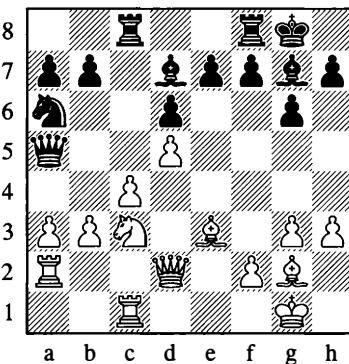


I am not totally convinced of the merits of this neutral move, but I have taken it as the main line because it was played in a rapid game between two top-class players.

14. $\mathbb{W}d2$ $\mathbb{W}a5$ 15. $\mathbb{E}fd1$

This is the most natural way to continue developing, but I consider 15. $\mathbb{E}fc1!?$ N to be an important alternative. White over-defends the knight in order to prepare d4-d5 and keeps the possibility of playing a2-a3 with the help of

the queen's rook. 15... $\mathbb{E}ac8$ 16.d5 $\mathbb{Q}b4$ 17.a3 $\mathbb{Q}a6$ 18. $\mathbb{E}a2\pm$



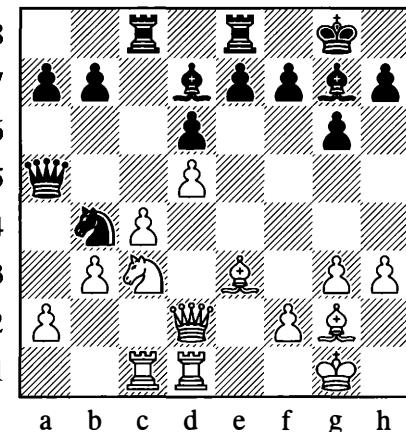
White has broken the pin and enjoys a stable space advantage.

15... $\mathbb{E}ac8$ 16. $\mathbb{E}ac1$ $\mathbb{E}fe8$

White has completed his development and so the time has come to gain space.

17.d5 $\mathbb{Q}b4$

So far, we have followed Karpov – Carlsen, Cap d'Agde 2006.



18.a4!N

A paradoxical, apparently self-blocking, move. However, the strong threat of $\mathbb{Q}a2$ forces Black to retreat and subsequent analysis proves that Black has no good way to maintain the blockade on the dark squares.

18...b6

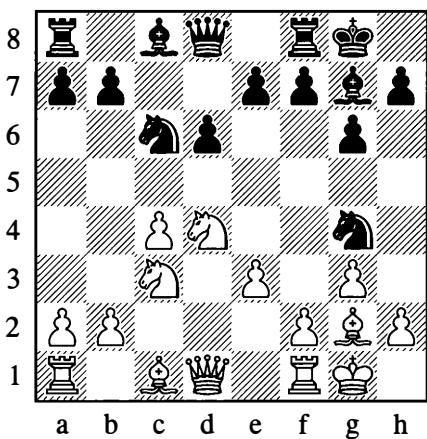
This is the only way to avoid losing stability.

18... $\mathbb{Q}a6$ loses a pawn: 19. $\mathbb{Q}b5$ $\mathbb{W}xd2$ 20. $\mathbb{E}xd2$ $\mathbb{Q}c5$ 21. $\mathbb{Q}xc5$ $\mathbb{E}xc5$ 22. $\mathbb{Q}xa7$ $\mathbb{Q}h6$ The counterplay initiated by this move is easy to neutralize. 23.f4 g5 24. $\mathbb{E}f1\pm$ White has a space advantage and an extra pawn.

18... $\mathbb{W}c7$ allows White to take the bishop pair and gain a lot of space: 19. $\mathbb{Q}b5$ $\mathbb{Q}xb5$ 20.axb5 a5 The only way to save the trapped knight. 21.bxa6 $\mathbb{Q}xa6$ 22.b4± The threat of c4-c5-c6 is hard to meet.

19. $\mathbb{Q}b5$ a6 20. $\mathbb{Q}d4\pm$

Black has managed to prevent the unblocking of the queenside, but his blockading pieces are as good as caged. White can prepare an attack on the other wing at his own convenience.

B42) 9...d6

A half-waiting move, delaying the moment when Black defines his plan.

10.b3!

White also has useful moves at his disposal.

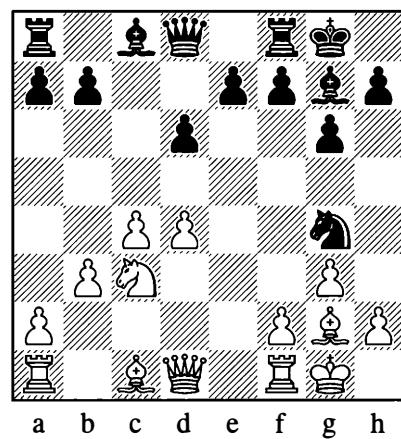
Under the current circumstances, pawn-grabbing is not recommended: 10. $\mathbb{Q}xc6$ $\mathbb{B}xc6$

11. $\mathbb{Q}xc6$ $\mathbb{B}b8$ Compared with line B1, the insertion of the moves ... $\mathbb{Q}g4$ and e2-e3 favours Black. He has several additional threats, such as ... $\mathbb{Q}xc3$ ruining White's queenside, ... $\mathbb{Q}e5$ with a double attack, or ... $\mathbb{W}a5-h5$ with attacking chances.

10... $\mathbb{Q}xd4$

Aiming to put strong pressure on the d4-pawn with ... $\mathbb{Q}h6-f5$.

10... $\mathbb{Q}h6?$ is premature because of 11. $\mathbb{Q}de2!$, leaving the knight looking awkward on h6. 11... $\mathbb{Q}g4$ 12. $\mathbb{Q}b2$ $\mathbb{W}d7$ 13. $\mathbb{W}d2$ $\mathbb{Q}h3$ 14. $\mathbb{Q}d5\pm$ White is strongly centralized, Gelfand – Krasenkow, Leon 2001.

11.exd4**11... $\mathbb{Q}h6$**

The most logical continuation. Black does not have any especially useful moves that delay the knight retreat in order to avoid $\mathbb{Q}xh6$:

11... $\mathbb{B}b8$

This does not really improve Black's position and practically gives up a tempo.

12. $\mathbb{Q}b2$ $\mathbb{Q}h6$ 13. $\mathbb{W}d2$ $\mathbb{Q}f5$

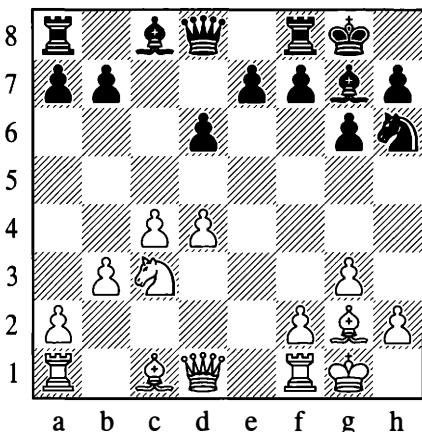
Black has managed to carry out his plan, but White is well developed and remains in control of the situation.

14.d5 $\mathbb{Q}d7$ 15. $\mathbb{Q}e4$ $\mathbb{Q}xb2$ 16. $\mathbb{W}xb2$ b5

Apparently, Black has obtained some counterplay, but after White's answer it becomes clear he has merely weakened his queenside.

17.c5! dxc5 18. $\mathbb{Q}xc5$ b4 19. $\mathbb{E}fe1$ $\mathbb{Q}b5$
20. $\mathbb{E}ac1\pm$

White has a space advantage in the centre and harmonious development, Arbakov – Schlosser, Schwaebisch Gmuend 1995.



12. $\mathbb{Q}xh6!$

White exchanges the knight that has consumed three of Black's tempos and forces the enemy bishop to occupy a relatively unfavourable square. This will speed up White's initiative considerably.

12... $\mathbb{Q}xh6$ 13. $\mathbb{W}e2$

A classical approach; the queen is the last piece to be developed. White only needs to centralize his rooks in order to maximize his activity when he will be ready for the massed advance of his queenside majority, supported by the minor pieces.

13... $\mathbb{B}g7$

Delaying the bishop retreat would prevent $\mathbb{E}ac1$, but it would not cross White's general strategy:

13... $\mathbb{E}b8$ 14. $\mathbb{E}fd1$ $\mathbb{W}a5$

A risky queen incursion, but a neutral policy is likely to lead to absolute passivity: 14... $\mathbb{Q}e6$ 15.b4 $\mathbb{W}c8$ 16.c5± White's attack develops by itself, Vitiugov – Timofeev, Serpukhov 2008.

15.b4 $\mathbb{W}a3$

After 15... $\mathbb{W}xb4$ 16. $\mathbb{Q}d5\pm$ White regains the pawn with a strong initiative.

16. $\mathbb{E}ab1\pm$

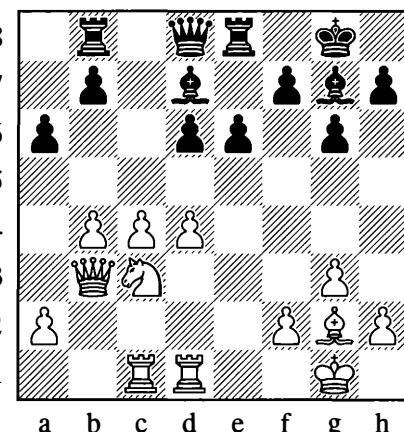
The lone queen cannot stop White's attack, Mikhalkishin – Krivoshey, Bled 1999.

14. $\mathbb{E}fd1$ $\mathbb{E}b8$ 15.b4 $\mathbb{E}e8$

The attempt to slow down the advance of the c-pawn with 15...b6 leaves the c6-square at White's mercy. 16. $\mathbb{E}ac1$ $\mathbb{Q}b7$ 17. $\mathbb{Q}xb7$ $\mathbb{E}xb7$ 18.b5 $\mathbb{Q}d7$ (the importance of defending the d-file is revealed after 18...e6?! 19.c5!±) 19. $\mathbb{Q}d5$ e6 20. $\mathbb{Q}b4\pm$ Followed by $\mathbb{Q}c6$ and a4-a5; Black's position is rather passive.

16. $\mathbb{E}ac1$ e6 17. $\mathbb{W}c2$ a6 18. $\mathbb{W}b3$ $\mathbb{Q}d7$

So far, we have followed Cvitan – Delchev, Kastel Stari 1997, in which the premature 19.d5 was played, allowing Black to simplify and eventually defend.



19.a4!N±

White continues gaining space, leaving concrete action for later; Black has nothing better than sitting and waiting.

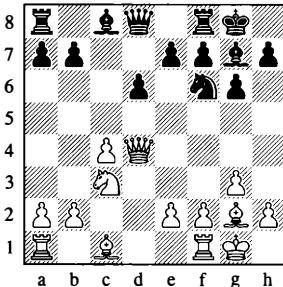
Conclusion

In the lines examined in this chapter Black attempts to maintain the tension, but this tends to imply ever greater concessions (usually losses of time). The line examined in the next chapter is rightly considered to lead to more consistent play.



The Closed System

Main Line with 8... $\mathbb{Q}xd4$



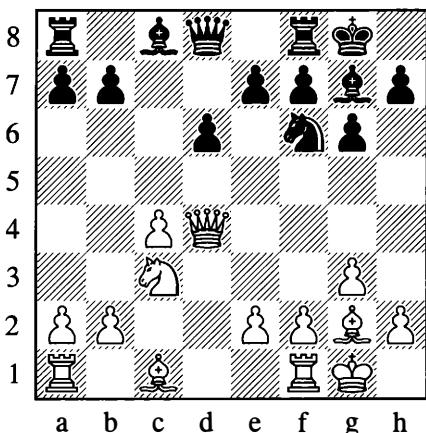
Variation Index

1.c4 c5 2.g3 $\mathbb{Q}c6$ 3. $\mathbb{Q}g2$ g6 4. $\mathbb{Q}c3$ $\mathbb{Q}g7$ 5. $\mathbb{Q}f3$ $\mathbb{Q}f6$ 6.d4 cxd4
7. $\mathbb{Q}xd4$ 0-0 8.0-0 $\mathbb{Q}xd4$

9. $\mathbb{Q}xd4$ d6 10. $\mathbb{Q}d3$

A) 10... $\mathbb{Q}d7$ 11.b3 $\mathbb{Q}c5$ 12. $\mathbb{Q}e3!$? $\mathbb{Q}d7$ 13. $\mathbb{Q}d2$ $\mathbb{Q}c6$ 14. $\mathbb{Q}ac1$	125
A1) 14...a5	126
A2) 14...a6	128
B) 10... $\mathbb{Q}a5$	129
C) 10... $\mathbb{Q}e6$	130
D) 10... $\mathbb{Q}f5$ 11.e4 $\mathbb{Q}e6$ 12.b3	130
D1) 12...a6	131
D2) 12... $\mathbb{Q}a5$ 13. $\mathbb{Q}d2!$ $\mathbb{Q}h5$ 14.f3	133
D21) 14... $\mathbb{Q}ac8$	134
D22) 14... $\mathbb{Q}h3$	134
E) 10...a6 11. $\mathbb{Q}e3!$	135
E1) 11... $\mathbb{Q}a5$	136
E2) 11... $\mathbb{Q}f5$ 12. $\mathbb{Q}d2$ $\mathbb{Q}d7$ 13. $\mathbb{Q}fd1$	138
E21) 13... $\mathbb{Q}h3$ 14. $\mathbb{Q}h1$	138
E211) 14... $\mathbb{Q}ac8$	138
E212) 14... $\mathbb{Q}ab8$	140
E22) 13... $\mathbb{Q}ac8$	140
E23) 13... $\mathbb{Q}fd8$	142
E3) 11... $\mathbb{Q}g4$ 12. $\mathbb{Q}d4$ $\mathbb{Q}e5$ 13. $\mathbb{Q}e4!N$ $\mathbb{Q}f5$ 14. $\mathbb{Q}f4$ $\mathbb{Q}c8$ 15.b3 b5 16.cxb5	144
E31) 16... $\mathbb{Q}d3$	145
E32) 16...axb5	146

1.c4 c5 2.g3 ♘c6 3.♗g2 g6 4.♘c3 ♗g7 5.♘f3 ♘f6 6.d4 cxd4 7.♘xd4 0-0 8.0-0 ♘xd4 9.♗xd4 d6



This is the simplest way to start developing the queenside. Black's decision to release the tension in the centre is at least partially compensated by the exposed position of the white queen, which is likely to cause a loss of time in the near future.

This variation has featured in the black repertoires of several great players in history, not only as a way to meet 1.c4, but also as an antidote to the fianchetto variation against the King's Indian. Its most noteworthy adherents include Efim Geller, Garry Kasparov and, more recently, Magnus Carlsen. This short list of outstanding names speaks quite eloquently about Black's resources and the interesting character of the whole variation. Personally, I first came across this tabiya at the age of seven, while following the Fischer – Spassky match (the 10th World Champion once used it with black, probably persuaded by Geller, who was his main second at Reykjavik). I was immediately fascinated by the action of the opposing bishop pairs along parallel diagonals, as well as the flexible character of the pawn structures, and this feeling never abandoned me completely.

Not for the first time in this volume, the

tabiya of the present chapter features a position recommended elsewhere in our repertoire, with reversed colours and an extra tempo for White. (The current position is a reversed version of the tabiya from Chapter 10.) Fortunately White's extra tempo is sufficient to invert the evaluation.

If allowed, Black's next move would be ...♗e6, putting pressure on the c4-pawn and creating the threat of ...♘d5. (In Chapter 10 we will see White taking advantage of the extra tempo by playing ♜c1-e3 immediately.) At this stage of the game, adequate developing moves are hard to find for White. For instance, the natural 10.♕e3, increasing the pressure against the enemy queenside, would run into 10...♘g4, taking advantage of the exposed position of the queen.

For this reason, it is best to solve the main problem at once, by retreating with the queen to an active and safe square:

10.♗d3

Several other moves have been tried here, but this always has been the main line. From d3 the queen defends the c4-pawn while maintaining her influence over the half open d-file. Black has several ways of attacking Her Majesty (...♘d7-c5, ...♘g4-e5, ...♗f5), but all of them tend to cause more significant losses of time to himself than to the opponent.

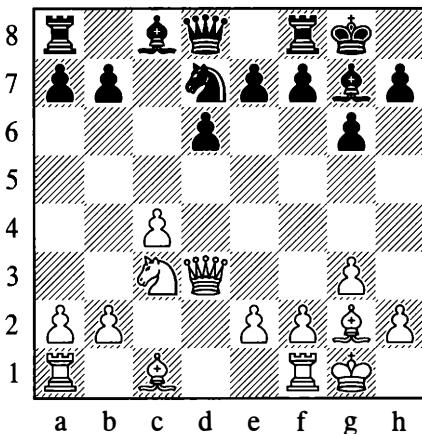
Some of Black's main plans are inspired from the Maroczy variation of the Sicilian. He can prepare a queenside counterattack with ...a6 and ...b5, although this plan may run into certain practical difficulties in view of the strong pressure of White's bishops against that area of the board. The blockade on the dark squares based on ...♘d7-c5 and ...a5 would only be effective if White was previously "convinced" to play e2-e4, thus restricting his own bishop and placing another pawn on a light square. Finally, the bishop's presence on

$g2$ suggests some additional specific plans, such as ... $\mathbb{W}a5-h5$ or ... $\mathbb{Q}e6(f5)$ followed by ... $\mathbb{W}d7$ and ... $\mathbb{Q}h3$.

Thanks to his slight space advantage, White can adjust his plans according to Black's intentions. In the present structure, his rooks should typically be deployed on $d1$ and $c1$, but if $e4$ is played, $\mathbb{E}ae1$ followed by $f4-f5$ becomes a serious alternative. The queen's bishop can choose between being developed on $e3$, $b2$ and, in some cases, $d2$. The knight jump to $d5$ remains a key theme, but has to be carried out with careful timing. Since one pair of knights has already been exchanged, the positions resulting after ... $\mathbb{Q}xd5$ or ... $\mathbb{Q}xd5$ will tend to cause Black fewer problems of coordination compared with lines A and B3 from the previous chapter, for example.

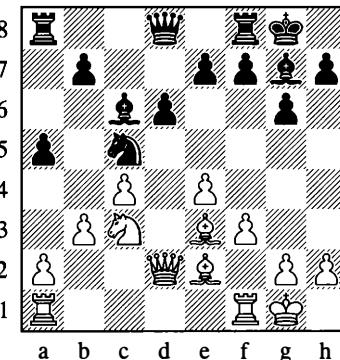
We will examine: A) 10... $\mathbb{Q}d7$, B) 10... $\mathbb{W}a5$, C) 10... $\mathbb{Q}e6$, D) 10... $\mathbb{Q}f5$ and E) 10... $a6$.

A) 10... $\mathbb{Q}d7$



The plan involving a blockade on the dark squares based on ... $\mathbb{Q}d7-c5$, ... $a5$ and ... $\mathbb{Q}d7-c6$ is characteristic for one of the main lines of the Maroczy Sicilian, which can, incidentally, also be reached via an English move order: 1.c4 $c5$ 2. $\mathbb{Q}f3$ $g6$ 3.d4 $cxd4$ 4. $\mathbb{Q}xd4$ $\mathbb{Q}c6$ 5.e4 $\mathbb{Q}g7$ 6. $\mathbb{Q}e3$ $\mathbb{Q}f6$ 7. $\mathbb{Q}c3$ 0-0 8. $\mathbb{Q}e2$ $d6$ 9.0-0 $\mathbb{Q}d7$

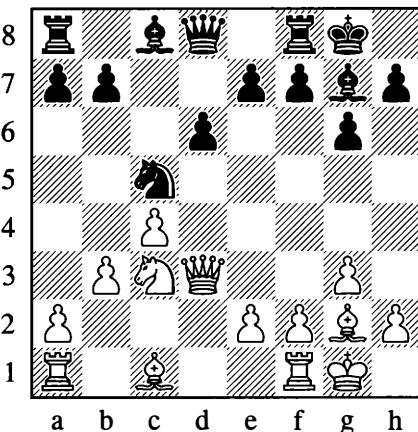
10. $\mathbb{W}d2$ $\mathbb{Q}xd4$ 11. $\mathbb{Q}xd4$ $\mathbb{Q}c6$ 12.f3 $a5$ 13.b3 $\mathbb{Q}d7$ 14. $\mathbb{Q}e3$ $\mathbb{Q}c5$



With the bishop on $g2$ and the long diagonal wide open, Black's blockade has a less global character. Since ... $\mathbb{Q}c6$ is part of Black's regrouping plan, making an exchange highly probable, the hope of reaching an ending against a bad white bishop is out of the question.

In the English Opening, this set-up is relatively uncommon, although White still needs to display certain accuracy in order to obtain a stable edge.

11.b3 $\mathbb{Q}c5$

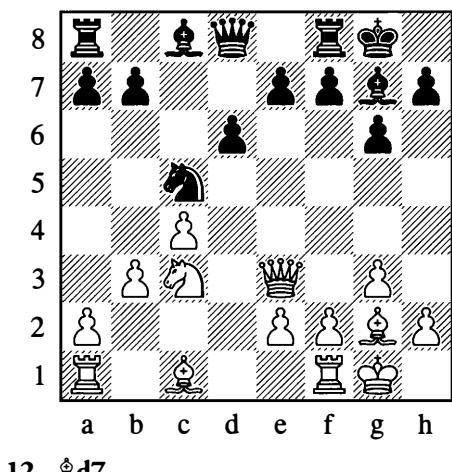


12. $\mathbb{W}e3!!$

Before explaining the reasoning behind this slightly extravagant move, which blocks the

path of the e-pawn, I will invite you to take a few steps along what is the most frequently employed scheme: 12. $\mathbb{W}d2$ a5 13. $\mathbb{Q}b2$ $\mathbb{Q}d7$ 14. $\mathbb{E}fd1$ $\mathbb{Q}c6$ White enjoys the usual space advantage, but the relative pin along the dark diagonal restricts his strategic possibilities. The thematic $\mathbb{Q}d5$ jump automatically implies the exchange of the dark-squared bishops, after which Black could consider playing ... $\mathbb{Q}xd5$ followed by ... $\mathbb{W}b6$ with a stable position. Besides, the white queen would be driven away from the kingside, where the first player is entitled to entertain some hopes for an attack after the departure of the black knight.

The text move is connected with a more refined arrangement of White's forces involving $\mathbb{Q}d2$, $\mathbb{E}ac1$ and $\mathbb{E}fd1$, after which the thematic $\mathbb{Q}d5$ would cause Black more problems. With both white bishops on the board, the exchange on d5 becomes strategically riskier. On the other hand, if Black answers $\mathbb{Q}d5$ with ...e6, after a subsequent $\mathbb{Q}f4$ White can consider playing $\mathbb{Q}c3$, in order to take advantage of the weakness of the f6-square. In this case, ... $\mathbb{Q}xc3$ would facilitate the activation of the queen's rook along the third rank. Together with the queen's presence close to the enemy king, this can result in a dangerous attack.



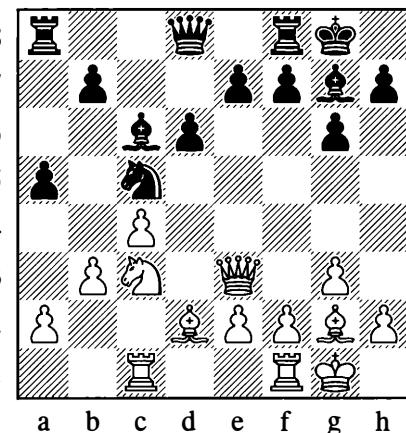
The move order is important: 12...a5 is premature because of 13. $\mathbb{Q}a3! \pm$, when Black loses stability on the queenside, Lushenkov – Kamov, Kazan 2009.

The attempt to generate counterplay against the c4-pawn is unsound: 12... $\mathbb{Q}e6$ 13. $\mathbb{Q}d2$ a5 14. $\mathbb{E}ac1$ a4?! This is objectively too risky, but without this plan, the decision to play ... $\mathbb{Q}e6$ instead of ... $\mathbb{Q}d7-c6$ would make little sense. 15. b4 $\mathbb{Q}d7$ 16. $\mathbb{E}xb7$ $\mathbb{Q}e5$ 17. $\mathbb{Q}xa8$ $\mathbb{Q}xc4$ 18. $\mathbb{W}a7$ $\mathbb{W}xa8$ 19. $\mathbb{W}xa8$ $\mathbb{E}xa8$ 20. $\mathbb{Q}f4 \pm$ Black does not have sufficient compensation for the exchange, Romanishin – Manca, Reggio Emilia 1999.

13. $\mathbb{Q}d2$ $\mathbb{Q}c6$ 14. $\mathbb{E}ac1$

At this point Black can choose between **A1) 14...a5** and **A2) 14...a6**.

A1) 14...a5



Played in the spirit of the aforementioned variation of the Maroczy Sicilian.

15. $\mathbb{E}fd1!N$

Before undertaking anything concrete, White completes his development.

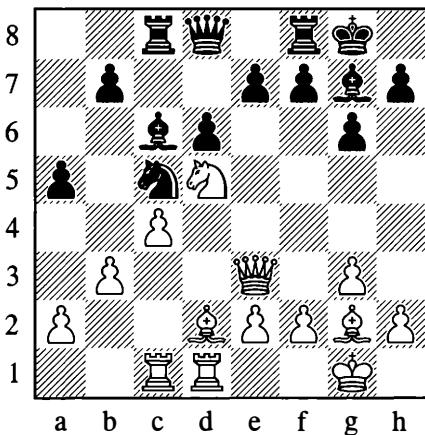
I only found a single practical example of the present position, in which White opted for

15. $\mathbb{Q}e4$, leading to premature simplifications in Djabri – Armstrong, Sunningdale 2006.

15... $\mathbb{B}c8$

15... $\mathbb{Q}xg2$ 16. $\mathbb{Q}xg2$ would leave the b5-square to White's mercy, while the presence of the dark-squared bishops would highlight the a5-pawn as a potential weakness.

16. $\mathbb{Q}d5$



16...e6

In the long run, Black cannot do without this move.

Against a neutral continuation such as 16... $\mathbb{E}e8$, White retains an edge with: 17.h4± As we will see below, the advance of the h-pawn is part of White's plan anyway.

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

With the dark-squared bishops on the board, the decision to eliminate the troublesome knight in this fashion is strategically risky. Instead of dreaming about an ending with a good knight versus a bad bishop, Black would have to face the cruel reality of defending against the bishop pair.

17.cxd5

This space-gaining move is the most ambitious, although the natural 17. $\mathbb{Q}xd5$ followed by h4 also looks promising.

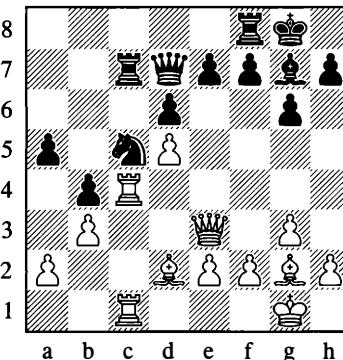
17...b5

This is the typical method of stabilizing the knight, although the drawback is revealed in the weakening of the c6-square. It becomes obvious that the knight should not move again for a long time, in order to avoid $\mathbb{E}c6$.

18. $\mathbb{E}c2$ b4

Despite the solid appearance, Black's blockade is not perfect, as in the long run his queenside pawns may become easy targets for White's dark-squared bishop.

19. $\mathbb{E}dc1$ $\mathbb{W}d7$ 20. $\mathbb{E}c4$ $\mathbb{E}c7$



21.h4!

With the centre stabilized, White's attacking plan is quite unpleasant. From a positional perspective, the transfer of the bishop to h3 is also a useful option.

21...h5

Perhaps Black should refrain from this move, although he faces a tough defence in any case.

22. $\mathbb{E}h2$

White intends $\mathbb{E}h3$, $\mathbb{W}f4$ and g3-g4, with good attacking chances.

17. $\mathbb{Q}f4$ $\mathbb{W}b6$ 18.h4

Although the f6-square has been weakened, White should not be too hasty in exchanging the dark-squared bishops. This would offer Black promising queenside counterplay based on ...a4, perhaps in conjunction with ... $\mathbb{W}b4$. With the white bishop on the e1-a5 diagonal,

...a4 would always be met by b4, while ... $\mathbb{W}b4$ is not possible at all.

Simply put, for the time being Black has reached a dead end on the queenside. Therefore White should strive to make as much progress as possible on the opposite flank before exchanging bishops.

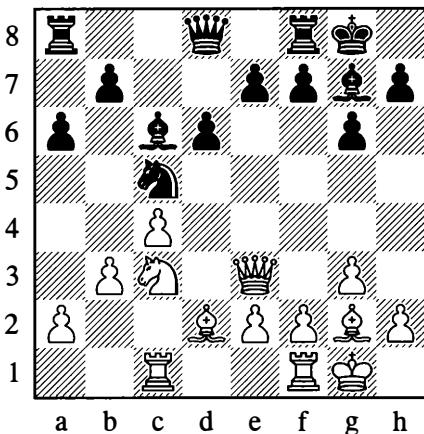
18... $\mathbb{E}fd8$

18...h5 would be answered with 19. $\mathbb{Q}h3$ followed by $\mathbb{Q}g5$, with kingside pressure.

19.h5±

White intends $\mathbb{Q}c3$ (meeting ... $\mathbb{Q}xc3$ with $\mathbb{Q}xc3$) followed by h6. His kingside initiative is quite promising, while Black's counterplay has not even started yet.

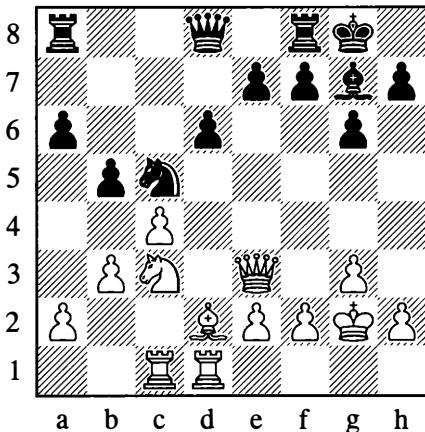
A2) 14...a6



In the Maroczy system, the transfer of the knight to c5 is only seldom combined with the ...b5 pawn break. In the present position, Black is hoping that his opponent's slightly unusual scheme of development will prevent him from properly neutralizing Black's intended counterplay.

15. $\mathbb{E}fd1$ $\mathbb{Q}xg2$ 16. $\mathbb{Q}xg2$ b5

Black has carried out the typical pawn break, but is slightly underdeveloped and his knight is rather unstable.



17. $\mathbb{Q}d5$ e6 18. $\mathbb{Q}f4$ $\mathbb{W}e7$ 19. $\mathbb{Q}b4$ $\mathbb{E}fc8$

20. $\mathbb{W}f3$

White has achieved a state of complete harmony. His pieces control the important files and diagonals and do not stand in each other's way as they did a few moves earlier.

20... $\mathbb{E}ab8$ 21.cxb5 axb5

Black has obtained a central majority, but this is hardly an achievement. With his knight unstable, advancing the pawns is not easy and they risk becoming targets for White's pieces.

22. $\mathbb{E}c2$ $\mathbb{Q}f8$

Overprotecting the d6-pawn and, indirectly, the knight.

23. $\mathbb{E}dc1$ $\mathbb{W}d7$

According to Gligoric, 23... $\mathbb{W}b7$ is strongly met by 24. $\mathbb{Q}d3!±$ and Black has problems maintaining his stability.

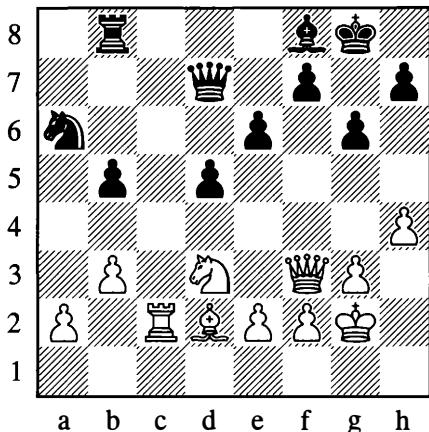
24.h4

Having reached a maximum of piece activity, White turns his attention to the enemy kingside.

24... $\mathbb{Q}a6$ 25. $\mathbb{Q}d2$ $\mathbb{E}xc2$ 26. $\mathbb{E}xc2$ d5 27. $\mathbb{Q}d3$

Black has managed to gain space in the centre, but his main problem remains his knight, which lacks active possibilities. Moreover, the f6-square is insufficiently defended, which is

a direct consequence of the knight's departure from the kingside.



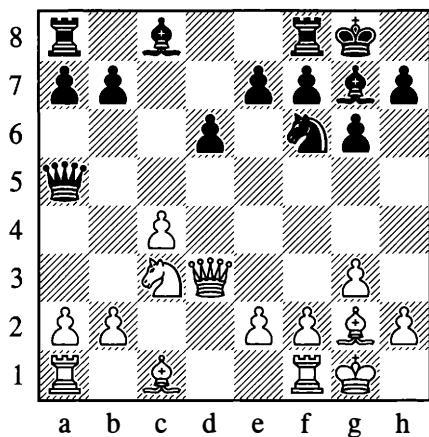
27... $\mathbb{Q}g7$ 28. $\mathbb{Q}f4$ $\mathbb{Q}c8$

Pavlovic gives the following line: 28... $\mathbb{Q}e5$ 29. $\mathbb{Q}e5$ $\mathbb{W}b7$ 30. $\mathbb{Q}g4\pm$ White practically attacks with an extra piece.

29. $\mathbb{Q}e5$ $\mathbb{W}e8$ 30. $\mathbb{Q}xc8$ $\mathbb{W}xc8$ 31.h5±

Despite the simplifications, Black's position remains difficult. In certain cases, White could create a dangerous passed pawn with a2-a4, which would cause Black serious problems in defending both wings. In Pavlovic – Gligoric, Niksic 1997, the living legend was unable to hold the position.

B) 10... $\mathbb{W}a5$



An ambitious move, aiming to develop kingside threats after ... $\mathbb{W}h5$. The problem is that if this plan fails, the queen will be exposed on a5.

11.h3!

Preparing a "warm welcome" for the queen.

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

Black chooses a solid, but rather passive setup. It is hard to aspire to anything more.

As pointed out by Gheorghiu, 11... $\mathbb{W}h5$?! is met by 12.g4 $\mathbb{W}h4$ 13. $\mathbb{Q}f4$! with a considerable advantage in development. The attempt to continue the attack with 13...h5 fails to 14. $\mathbb{Q}g3$ $\mathbb{W}g5$ 15.f4± followed by g5 with a huge space advantage.

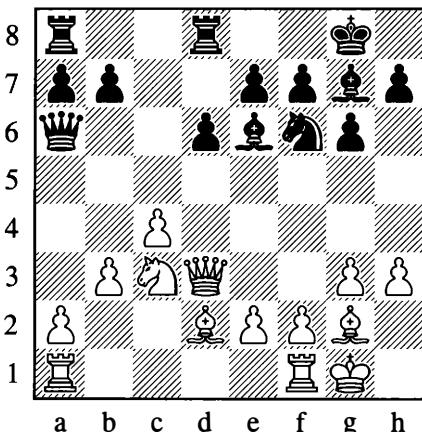
Preparing ...b5 with 11... $\mathbb{Q}b8$ 12. $\mathbb{Q}d2$ a6 takes the a6-square from the queen, which is asking for trouble: 13. $\mathbb{Q}ac1$ $\mathbb{Q}d7$ 14.b4! The pawn is taboo because of $\mathbb{Q}d5xe7\#$. 14... $\mathbb{W}c7$ 15. $\mathbb{Q}f4$ Threatening c5. 15...e5 16. $\mathbb{Q}g5\pm$ Followed by the invasion of the d5-square, Panchenko – Mujagic, Prague 1982.

12. $\mathbb{Q}d2$ $\mathbb{W}a6$

Black is hoping to obtain counterplay based on the crossfire along the a6-f1 and h8-a1 diagonals.

The queen does not find peace on the kingside and in the centre: 12... $\mathbb{W}h5$ 13.g4 $\mathbb{W}e5$ 14.b3 $\mathbb{Q}d7$ 15.f4 $\mathbb{W}c5\#$ 16. $\mathbb{Q}h1$ $\mathbb{W}c8$ So far, we have followed Bisticic – Kovalev, Plovdiv 2003. 17.f5!N With this move, suggested by Kosten, White gets an overwhelming space advantage. 17... $\mathbb{Q}c5$ 18. $\mathbb{W}f3$ $\mathbb{Q}d7$ 19. $\mathbb{Q}d5$ $\mathbb{W}d8$ 20. $\mathbb{Q}g5$ f6 21. $\mathbb{Q}e3\pm$ With a tragedy on the light squares for Black.

13.b3 $\mathbb{Q}fd8$



14.♗ad1!

A very accurate move, preventing the freeing break 14...d5 which would now lose material to 15.♗g5!, since 15...dxc4 is impossible because of 16.♗xd8† (Gheorghiu).

14...♝ac8 15.♝e3 b6

A clear sign that Black's play has reached a dead end.

16.♝d4 ♝e8 17.♝d2 ♜d7 18.a4†

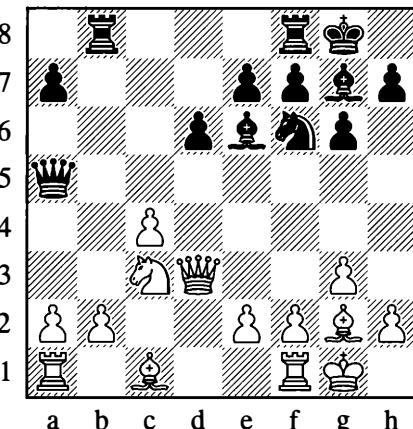
We have been following the game Gheorghiu – Sahovic, Mendrisio 1987. Since the thematic regrouping with ...♜d7-c5 and ...a5 does not seem too probable, the text move is the best way to increase White's dominance. Apart from ♜xf6 followed by ♜d5, Black must constantly worry about ♜b5, while White can slowly increase his pressure and strike at a moment of his choosing.

C) 10...♝e6

Black plays in the spirit of White's 10.♝e3 from Chapter 10, leaving the b7-pawn undefended for the sake of rapid piece development. The absence of the threat ...♜d5 makes this plan less effective, although the pawn sacrifice is sounder than that from line B1 of Chapter 6.

11.♝xb7 ♞b8 12.♝g2 ♜a5

Black has gained some time for his development and threatens to increase his pressure with ...♝fc8. White should not hesitate to return the extra pawn for the sake of completing his development and improving the quality of his position.



13.b3! ♞xb3 14.axb3 ♜xal 15.♝b5 ♜a2

Trying to prevent the harmonious coordination of White's forces. Instead 15...♜a6 would allow 16.♝b2 followed by ♜a1.

16.♝d4 ♜d7 17.♝d2

Planning the regrouping ♜c3 followed by ♜a1, with the incidental threat of trapping the enemy queen.

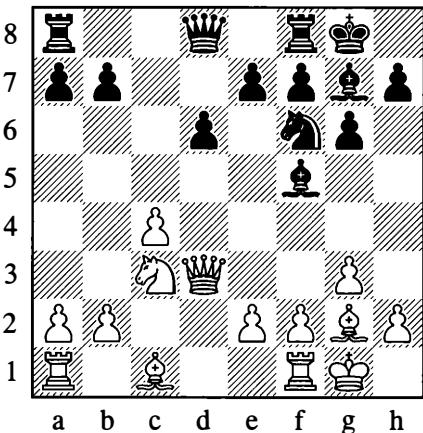
17...♜a6 18.♝c3

The position has calmed down and White has the better structure and more space.

18...♜b8 19.♝a1 ♜b6 20.♝a3 ♜g4 21.e3†

Ribli – Weiss, Austria 1996. White has completed his regrouping and it has become clear that the a7-pawn is a more significant weakness than the one on b3. Black's position is flexible, but quite passive.

D) 10...♝f5



Black is intentionally provoking the next move in order to block the long light diagonal and keep developing without fearing the pressure against b7.

11.e4

The transposition to a Maroczy structure only represents a partial success for Black. White's extra tempo may serve him quite well for the purpose of starting a powerful kingside attack.

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

The most common answer.

The alternative is 11... $\mathbb{Q}d7$, initiating a familiar regrouping, typical for the Maroczy system: 12. $\mathbb{Q}d2$ $\mathbb{Q}c6$ 13. $\mathbb{E}ac1$ $\mathbb{Q}d7$ 14.b3 a5 15. $\mathbb{W}e2$ $\mathbb{Q}c5$ 16. $\mathbb{E}fd1$ $\mathbb{W}b8$ 17. $\mathbb{Q}d5$ $\mathbb{Q}xd5$ 18.exd5 We can see that e2-e4 has been quite useful, as White obtains pressure along the e-file. As mentioned before, the bishop is very well placed on g2 in the resulting structure. 18... $\mathbb{W}c7$ 19.h4± With rather one-sided play, Makarov – Sumaneev, Elista 1995.

12.b3

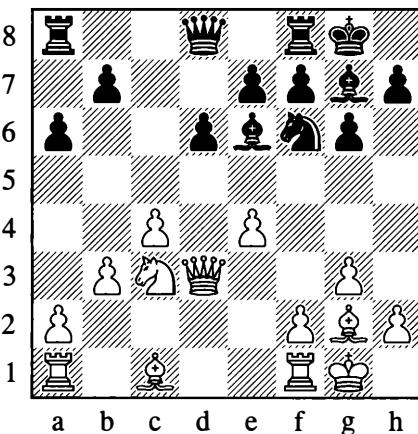
I like this move best. Theory (for instance, Khalifman in *Opening for White According to Kramnik*) recommends 12. $\mathbb{Q}d2$ in order to prevent 12... $\mathbb{W}a5$. However, given the choice,

I would prefer to avoid placing the bishop on a square where it obstructs the other white pieces. In line A above, I allowed myself an exception for general strategic reasons, but not for the sake of preventing just one individual move.

Apart from that, 12.b3 has been the choice of the late Vassily Smyslov, an outstanding exponent of what he used to call harmony. I believe that the English Opening should be a permanent search for harmony, just like the whole career of the seventh World Champion.

In the present position Black has mainly played D1) 12...a6 and D2) 12... $\mathbb{W}a5$.

D1) 12...a6



Black makes a generally useful move, waiting for White to commit himself.

13. $\mathbb{Q}b2$

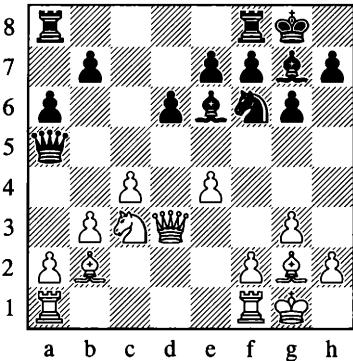
By placing his bishop on the long diagonal, White intends to add force to a massive kingside attack.

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

This looks like a logical answer. From the notes to line A, we are familiar with the fact that the tension along the long diagonal is likely to favour Black, but the situation is slightly

different here. White has received a present of one tempo, while the exposed position of the e6-bishop is likely to cause Black to lose additional time.

13... $\mathbb{W}a5$ has been played in a couple of games. In this position I found a promising new idea:



14. $\mathbb{B}fe1!$ N A multipurpose move. The obvious point is that White is intending $\mathbb{Q}d5$, after which the possible opening of the e-file will leave the rook ideally placed. However, there is a tactical nuance too. White has in mind a sequence involving the moves: 15. $\mathbb{Q}d5$ $\mathbb{Q}xd5$ 16. $\mathbb{Q}xg7$ $\mathbb{Q}f4$ (16... $\mathbb{Q}xg7$ 17.exd5 is simply worse for Black) 17. $\mathbb{W}d4!$, defending the strong bishop. In this line, the control of the e2-square is essential in order to prevent the deadly knight fork.

14. $\mathbb{W}d2$ $\mathbb{Q}c5$

The queen would be unstable after:

14... $\mathbb{W}a5$ 15. $\mathbb{Q}ad1$ $\mathbb{W}fc8$ 16. $\mathbb{Q}d5!$

In order to avoid the loss of a pawn, Black has to play the passive:

16... $\mathbb{W}d8$ 17. $\mathbb{Q}xg7$ $\mathbb{Q}xg7$ 18. $\mathbb{Q}f4\pm$

Black's pieces are unfavourably placed. The looming dangers are illustrated by the following line:

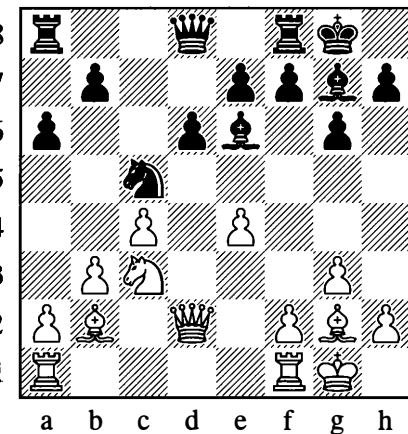
18... $\mathbb{W}c7$ 19. $\mathbb{Q}xe6\ddagger$ $fxe6$ 20. $\mathbb{Q}h3$ e5

Under different circumstances, this position would be acceptable for Black, who could dream of transferring his knight to d4.

But with the knight pinned and the king vulnerable, the second player soon gets into trouble:

21.f4! $exf4$ 22. $\mathbb{W}d4\ddagger$

With a decisive attack.



15.f4!

This is not only a space-gaining operation, but also the prelude to a direct attack. Remarkably enough, Black does not seem to have sufficient resources to prevent it.

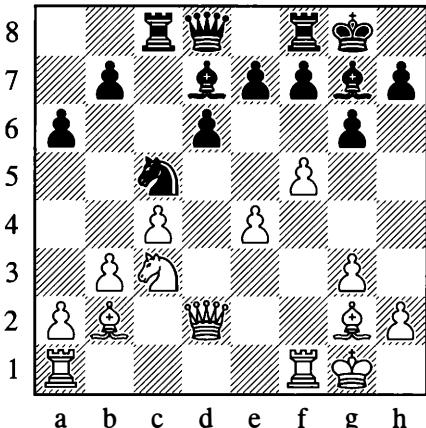
15... $\mathbb{B}c8$

15... $f5$ would have prevented the further advance of the f-pawn, but only at the cost of severely weakening the e-file. Following the straightforward 16. $\mathbb{B}ae1\pm$ White is better developed and has strong pressure in the centre.

Despite increasing Black's control over f5, 15... $\mathbb{W}d7$ fails to prevent the threat, and White obtains a powerful initiative after 16. $f5!$ $gxf5$ 17. $exf5$ $\mathbb{Q}xf5$ 18. $\mathbb{Q}d5$ $\mathbb{Q}xb2N$ (18... $\mathbb{Q}g6\ddagger$ simply lost material after 19. $\mathbb{Q}xg7$ $\mathbb{Q}xg7$ 20. $\mathbb{Q}b6\pm$ in Orlov – K. Larsen, Los Angeles 1991.) 19. $\mathbb{W}xb2$ $\mathbb{B}ae8$ 20.b4± Since the retreat of the knight to e6 would leave the bishop undefended, White will be able to follow with $\mathbb{W}d4$, centralizing the queen and keeping both wings under pressure. Black cannot free

himself with ...e5, thus he will remain awfully passive and with an exposed king.

16.f5 $\mathbb{Q}d7$



17.f6!±

At the age of 60, the seventh World Champion proved that he was still much more than an endgame specialist. The organic defect of Black's position is that the c5-knight is isolated from the f6-square, while most of White's pieces are targeting it.

17...exf6

The more spectacular variation was 17... $\mathbb{Q}xf6$ 18. $\mathbb{Q}xf6!$ exf6 19. $\mathbb{Q}d5$ with decisive threats.

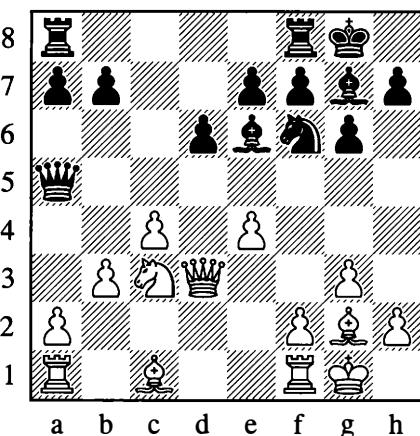
18. $\mathbb{Q}d5$ f5 19.exf5 $\mathbb{Q}xf5$

This loses by force, but 19...gx f5 was anything but appealing. 20. $\mathbb{Q}xg7$ $\mathbb{Q}xg7$ 21. $\mathbb{W}d4\#$ f6 Smyslov modestly evaluates this position as “±”, but after 22. $\mathbb{Q}ae1$ $\mathbb{Q}e6$ 23. $\mathbb{Q}h3$ threatening b4 (after which ... $\mathbb{Q}e4$ runs into $\mathbb{Q}xe4$) or simply $\mathbb{Q}xf5$, Black is as good as lost.

20. $\mathbb{Q}xg7$ $\mathbb{Q}xg7$ 21. $\mathbb{W}d4\#$ f6 22.g4!+–

Smyslov – Timman, Moscow 1981. The f6-pawn will be lost, together with Black's position in general. This was an impressive display of energy and harmony, anticipating the former champion's ascent to the Candidates Final only three years later.

D2) 12... $\mathbb{W}a5$

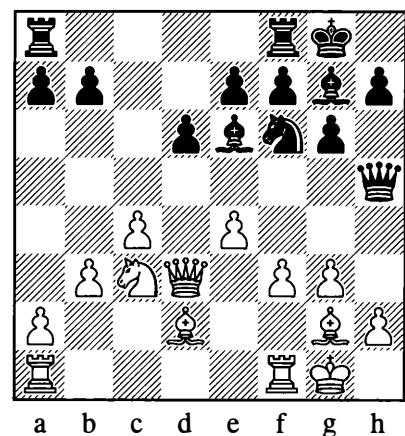


This is supposed to be the punishment for White's previous move. By increasing the pressure against the c3-knight, Black wins a tempo for the queen's transfer to h5.

13. $\mathbb{Q}d2!$

In the present position, the bishop pursues a concrete aim on this square, namely to prevent the enemy queen from returning to safety after its daring mission in foreign territory.

13... $\mathbb{W}h5$ 14.f3

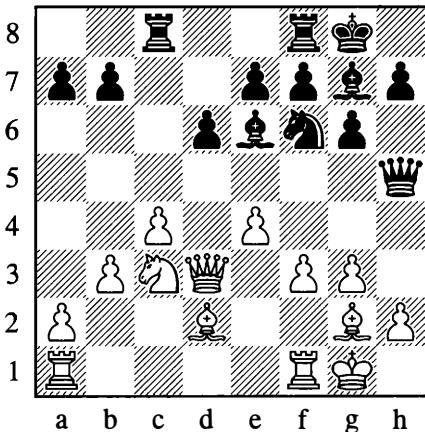


White starts to weave the net around the enemy queen. From this position Black has

mainly played D21) 14... $\mathbb{E}ac8$ and D22) 14... $\mathbb{Q}h3$.

14... $\mathbb{E}fc8$, as played in Hausner – Babula, Brno 1974, should be answered in the same way as 14... $\mathbb{E}ac8$: 15. $\mathbb{E}ae1!N$ with similar play and ideas as in line D21 below.

D21) 14... $\mathbb{E}ac8$



Before undertaking concrete actions, Black completes his development.

15. $\mathbb{E}ae1!N$

In this and the following line (D22) I find a piece build-up on the kingside to be the most logical follow-up of 13. $\mathbb{Q}d2$. The rooks are optimally placed behind the mobile kingside pawns, in an effort to isolate the queen from the rest of the board completely.

15...a6

Returning with the queen is only a partial solution: 15... $\mathbb{W}c5\uparrow$ 16. $\mathbb{Q}h1$ a6 17.a4 $\mathbb{E}fe8$ 18.f4 $\mathbb{Q}g4$ 19. $\mathbb{W}e2\pm$ Black faces the strong threats of f5 and $\mathbb{Q}d5$.

16. $\mathbb{Q}d5$ $\mathbb{Q}xd5$ 17.exd5 $\mathbb{Q}f5$ 18. $\mathbb{W}e3!$

From this square, the queen controls both wings. At the same time, the space around the black queen begins to shrink.

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

Black has managed to obtain some dynamic kingside stability, but his other wing is poorly defended.

19.a4

Preventing ...b5.

19... $\mathbb{E}fe8$ 20. $\mathbb{Q}c3$ $\mathbb{Q}xc3$ 21. $\mathbb{W}xc3$ $\mathbb{W}g5$ 22.a5

White has achieved a strategic advantage on both wings.

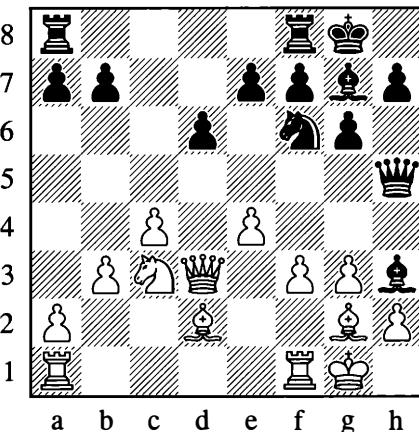
22... $\mathbb{W}f6$ 23. $\mathbb{W}xf6$ $\mathbb{exf6}$

Black has managed to eliminate his main weakness, but in many endings he will practically be a pawn down.

24. $\mathbb{Q}f2\pm$

White's superior pawn structure and space advantage make this ending very promising for him.

D22) 14... $\mathbb{Q}h3$



Black tries to solve the space problems of his queen by trading bishops. From a strategic point of view, this exchange favours White, because the defence of the d5-square is weakened, while the g2-bishop is his most passive piece!

15. $\mathbb{E}ae1!N$

The same concept as in the previous line. After completing his development harmoniously, White will be able to play either $\mathbb{Q}d5$ or f4-f5, with a strong initiative.

In the event of 15.g4 $\mathbb{W}h4$ 16. $\mathbb{Q}e1$ $\mathbb{W}h6$ White is unable to exploit the suspicious-looking position of the enemy queen, although he does have the option of forcing a draw with 17. $\mathbb{Q}d2$ if he wishes it.

15... $\mathbb{Q}xg2$ 16. $\mathbb{Q}xg2$ e6!?

Strategically consistent. Black prevents the positional threat of $\mathbb{Q}d5$.

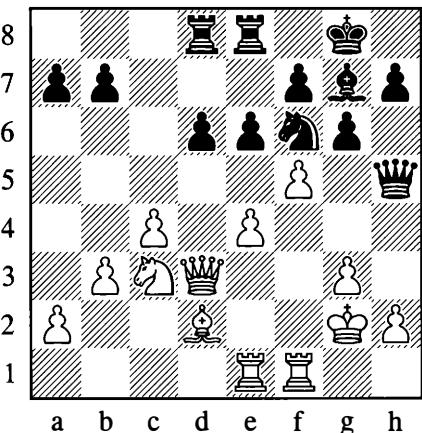
17.f4 $\mathbb{Q}fe8$

The classic way to anticipate f4-f5, putting some pressure along the e-file.

17... $\mathbb{W}c5$ loses a lot of time and leaves Black with problems defending d6 after 18. $\mathbb{Q}e3$.

18.f5 $\mathbb{Q}ad8$

Black has completed his development and his position would be absolutely fine if his queen was not in trouble.



19. $\mathbb{Q}f4!$

With the brutal threat of $\mathbb{Q}h4$, trapping the queen.

19... $\mathbb{exf}5$

19... $\mathbb{g}5$ 20. $\mathbb{Q}ff1\pm$ looks awful for Black.

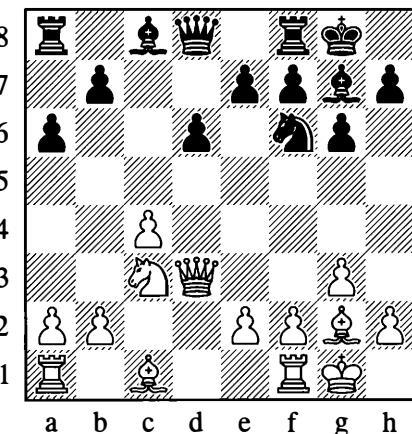
20. $\mathbb{exf}5$ $\mathbb{Qxe}1$ 21. $\mathbb{Qxe}1$ $\mathbb{Qe}8$ 22. $\mathbb{Qd}2$

In order to save his queen, Black has been forced to weaken the d5-square, and his control over the e-file does not provide enough compensation. Here is a sample continuation:

22... $\mathbb{Q}g4$ 23.h3 $\mathbb{Q}e5$ 24. $\mathbb{W}xd6$ $\mathbb{Q}h6$ 25. $\mathbb{Q}f2$ $\mathbb{Q}xd2$ 26. $\mathbb{W}xd2$ $\mathbb{gx}f5$ 27. $\mathbb{Q}d5\pm$

White has stabilized the position. The black king is vulnerable and the d5-knight weighs a ton.

E) 10...a6



This is the most popular continuation, and rightly so. Before defining his future intentions, Black plays a generally useful move to prepare his future queenside counterplay based on ...b5.

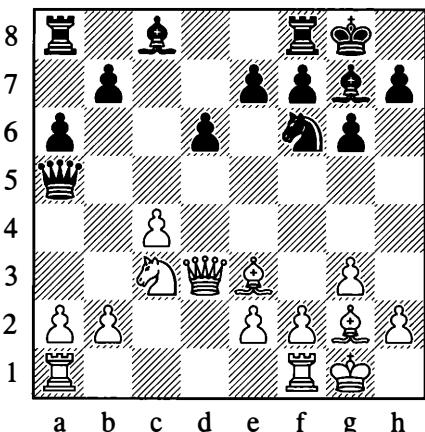
11. $\mathbb{Q}e3!$

In choosing this move for our repertoire, I have followed the same principle of harmony explained above. Optically, I find the bishops' action against the enemy queenside absolutely great. Theory considers that there are two concrete reasons why the text move is not the strongest, but it is my conviction that subsequent analysis will lead to an adjustment of this generally approved evaluation.

The main move is considered to be 11.♗d2. Apart from the questionable aesthetic value of this way of developing, I also found at least one debatable variation, which occurs after 11...♝b8 12.♝ac1 ♛f5 13.e4 ♛d7. The threat of ...b5 makes the position double edged, while White's initiative is not easy to develop. Almost half a century ago, Smyslov failed to get anything concrete from the white side of this position. In recent years, Magnus Carlsen has repeatedly (and successfully!) defended Black's point of view. I must confess that I, too have "sinned" by playing (and winning with) this line with Black, exposing myself to the risk of facing my own (until now, unpublished) recommendation.

After the text move we will examine E1) 11...♝a5, E2) 11...♛f5 and E3) 11...♝g4.

E1) 11...♝a5



This rare move is the only one I faced before publishing this book. I reacted well by producing an effective novelty, but later got carried away by unrealistic attacking dreams.

12.♗d4!

This natural move had not been played previously. White takes advantage of the fact that the queen does not defend e7 anymore,

and creates the threat of ♜xf6 followed by ♜d5.

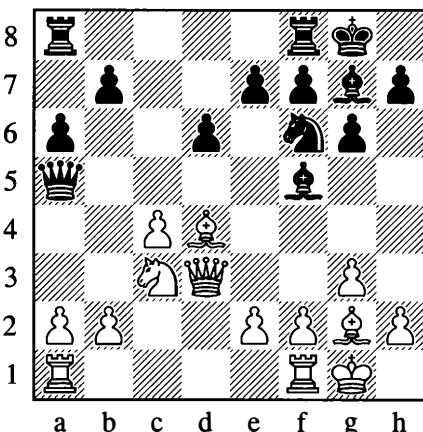
In all previous games, White reacted with 12.h3 in anticipation of the queen's arrival on h5. However, since White has already committed his dark-squared bishop, the plan of dominating the queen is less effective, because it would imply a loss of a tempo with ♜e3-d2 at a certain moment.

The text move discourages ...♝h5 by indirect means.

12...♛f5

Switching plans in time.

12...♝h5?! would be asking for troubles: 13.♜xf6 ♜xf6 14.♝d5 ♜e5 The only way to maintain the integrity of the structure, at least temporarily. 15.♝ad1 Planning ♜d2 followed by f4, with a rather uncomfortable position for Black. 15...♝xb2 Trying to get some material consolation. 16.♝d2 ♜e5 17.f4 ♜h5 18.♝b1† Black is gravely underdeveloped and his queen is passive. Besides, White can retrieve the pawn with ♜xf6† at any moment of his choosing.



13.♝d2!N

White avoids blocking the h1-a8 diagonal and creates some indirect pressure against the enemy queen.

When I reached this position over the board, I tried to play in the spirit of the game Smyslov – Timman from line D1, but underestimated Black's counterplay: 13.e4 $\mathbb{Q}e6$ 14.f4 $\mathbb{Q}ac8$ 15.b3 b5 16.cxb5 $\mathbb{Q}g4!$ Weakening the defence of the c3-knight. 17. $\mathbb{Q}xg7$ $\mathbb{Q}xg7$ 18. $\mathbb{W}d4\#$ $\mathbb{Q}g8$ 19. $\mathbb{Q}ac1$ axb5 20.f5 If the bishop was forced to retreat, White would get an overwhelming advantage with $\mathbb{Q}d5$, but Black can do better. 20...b4! Attacking the knight before the control over the d5-square is released. In Marin – Leon Hoyos, Reykjavik 2009, White had to play carefully in order to maintain the balance.

13... $\mathbb{Q}ab8$

Preparing ... $\mathbb{Q}fc8$, which is currently impossible as the b7-pawn hangs.

The alternative is:

13... $\mathbb{Q}ac8$

By playing this move Black practically abandons all hopes of counterplay based on ...b5, while the c4-pawn can be defended by indirect means:

14. $\mathbb{Q}fd1$ $\mathbb{Q}xc4$ 15. $\mathbb{Q}d5$ $\mathbb{W}d8$

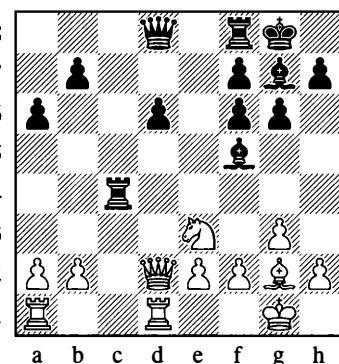
The only way to prevent the intermediate $\mathbb{Q}xe7\#$ with a strategic disaster for Black.

16. $\mathbb{Q}xf6$ exf6

After 16... $\mathbb{Q}xf6$ 17. $\mathbb{Q}xf6\#$ exf6 18. $\mathbb{Q}xb7\#$ Black has too many weaknesses.

17. $\mathbb{Q}e3$

Black is threatened with the ruination of his kingside after $\mathbb{Q}xf5$.



17.... $\mathbb{Q}h6$ 18.f4 $\mathbb{W}b6$ 19. $\mathbb{Q}h1$

The successive pins have been parried and the rook has to retreat.

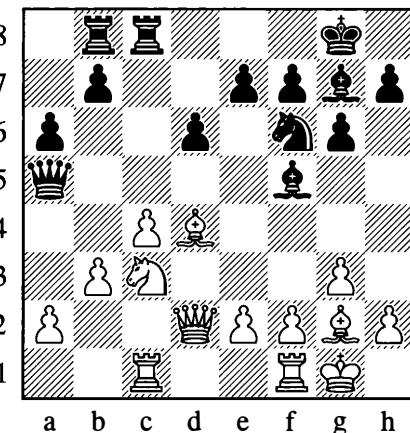
19... $\mathbb{Q}cc8$

19... $\mathbb{Q}c5$ would not change anything because of 20.b4±.

20. $\mathbb{Q}xf5$ gxf5 21. $\mathbb{W}d3\pm$

Despite his extra pawn, Black is in trouble. His kingside is in danger and his bishop is desperately passive.

14. $\mathbb{Q}ac1$ $\mathbb{Q}fc8$ 15.b3



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

The thematic and long-awaited 15...b5 drops an exchange to 16. $\mathbb{Q}a7$. The same trick in a similar position was overlooked by Spassky against Fischer in the eighth game from Reykjavik 1972.

16. $\mathbb{Q}fd1$ $\mathbb{Q}c7$

Preparing ...b5 by defending the a7-square in advance.

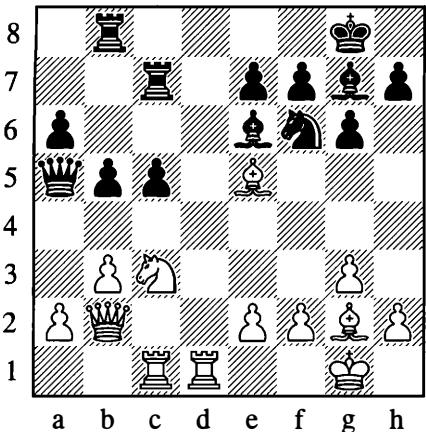
17. $\mathbb{W}b2$

Threatening $\mathbb{Q}e4$.

17...b5

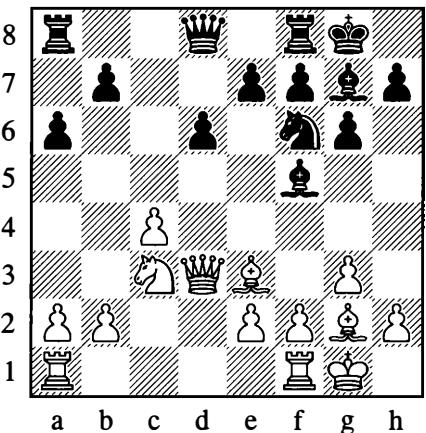
Now or never! Otherwise Black's position would become too passive.

18.c5 dxc5 19. $\mathbb{Q}e5\pm$



Black will not obtain full compensation for the exchange.

E2) 11...♝f5



This is widely viewed as an effective answer to White's 11th move. Black wins time for his development, taking advantage of the fact that e2-e4 is impossible.

12.♗d2 ♗d7

Preparing to exchange the bishops with ...♝h3.

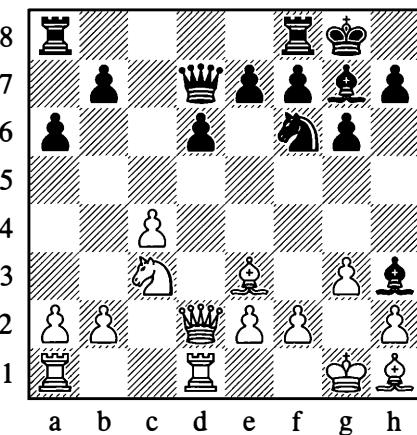
Since in the main lines Black will have constant problems caused by the pin along the d-file, 12...♝c8?! deserves to be mentioned, although the move is hardly satisfactory for reasons that

will become clear: 13.♕ac1 ♘h3 14.♘d5! After this well timed move, it will be the c-file that will cause Black troubles. 14...♘xd5 15.cxd5 ♖d7 16.♖xh3 ♖xh3 17.♗c7± After a series of simple moves White has retained a space advantage and controls the only open file.

13.♗fd1

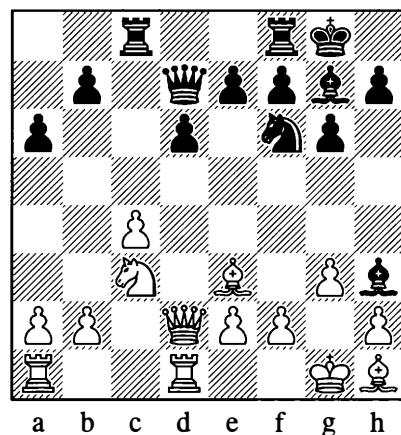
Preparing to meet ...♝h3 with ♘h1, while also creating some pressure along the d-file. Now we will examine E21) 13...♝h3, E22) 13...♝ac8 and E23) 13...♝fd8.

E21) 13...♝h3 14.♗h1



And here we have a further subdivision between E211) 14...♝ac8 and E212) 14...♝ab8.

E211) 14...♝ac8



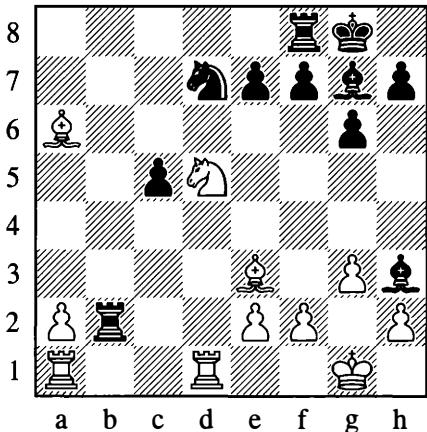
The rook evacuates the long diagonal while attacking the c-pawn. In doing so, Black hopes to win enough time to play ...b5.

15.c5!

This type of idea is absolutely in keeping with the dynamic approach based on 11. $\mathbb{Q}e3$. White is ready to transform his space advantage into a lasting initiative.

**15...dxc5 16. $\mathbb{W}xd7$ $\mathbb{Q}xd7$ 17. $\mathbb{Q}xb7$ $\mathbb{Q}b8$
18. $\mathbb{Q}xa6$ $\mathbb{Q}xb2$ 19. $\mathbb{Q}d5$**

After a series of forced pawn exchanges, White retains the better coordination and a dangerous outside passed pawn.



19... $\mathbb{Q}a8$

This position was reached in Filippov – Stojanovski, Saint Vincent 2005, and here White should have played:

20. $\mathbb{Q}c4!$ N

This was suggested by Ribli, who evaluated the resulting position as “±” without any further comment.

In the aforementioned game White preferred 20. $\mathbb{Q}c8$, at which point Black should have played 20... $\mathbb{Q}xe2N$ with counter chances.

Ribli also mentions 20. $\mathbb{Q}d3$, but compared

to the text move, this blocks White’s threats along the d-file and can be met by 20... $\mathbb{Q}g4$ with unclear play.

20... $\mathbb{Q}f8$

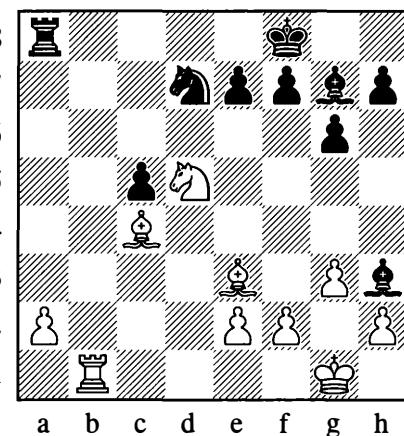
With the d-file open, 20... $\mathbb{Q}g4$ loses material to 21.f3 followed by $\mathbb{Q}xe7\#$.

21. $\mathbb{Q}ab1$ $\mathbb{Q}xb1$

Black should keep a rook on the a-file since after 21... $\mathbb{Q}ab8$ 22. $\mathbb{Q}xb2$ $\mathbb{Q}xb2$ 23.a4± the pawn would become dangerous.

22. $\mathbb{Q}xb1$

White’s overall coordination is superior. His rook controls an important open file and any piece exchanges will tend to increase the strength of the a-pawn.



22... $\mathbb{Q}d4$

22... $\mathbb{Q}e5$ fails to spoil White’s coordination:
23. $\mathbb{Q}b6$ $\mathbb{Q}a5$ The rook is forced to move to this awkward square in order to defend the c5-pawn. 24. $\mathbb{Q}d1$ White switches to the other open file, threatening mate in one. Next he will regroup with $\mathbb{Q}b3$, maintaining the initiative.

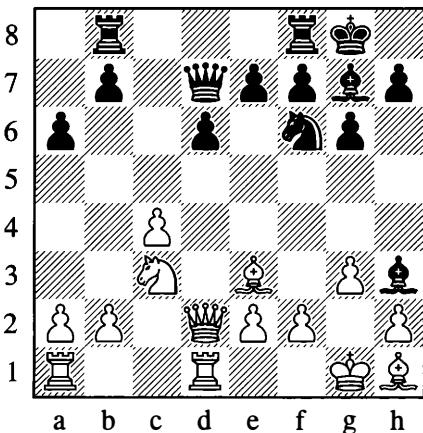
23. $\mathbb{Q}h6\#$ $\mathbb{Q}g7$ 24. $\mathbb{Q}g5$ e6 25. $\mathbb{Q}b6$ $\mathbb{Q}xb6$

26. $\mathbb{Q}xb6\pm$

After the knight exchange the position has stabilized almost completely. White’s pieces are

more active, and the h3-bishop risks remaining out of play. Black also faces problems keeping his c5-pawn and preventing the a-pawn from advancing at the same time.

E212) 14... $\mathbb{E}ab8$



Black prepares ...b5 in a slower mode than in the previous line. With the b7-pawn overprotected, the break c4-c5 will be less effective.

15. $\mathbb{Q}b6!$ N

White blocks the b-pawn and threatens to obtain a permanent queenside grip with a4-a5. Instead the game Mikhalkishin – Mandl, Dortmund 1993, continued 15...Eac1 b5 with counterplay for Black.

15... $\mathbb{E}bc8$ 16.b3!

Under the given circumstances, 16.c5 is not effective because the bishop would be almost trapped after 16...dxc5 17...xd7 $\mathbb{Q}xd7$.

16... $\mathbb{W}e6$

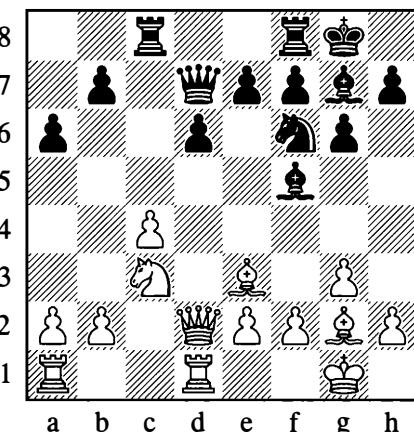
Aiming to unblock the b-pawn with ... $\mathbb{Q}d7$. The character of White's domination is such that Black's self-freeing plans imply such awkward placement of pieces as the last move.

17...Eac1 $\mathbb{Q}d7$ 18... $\mathbb{Q}d4$ $\mathbb{Q}xd4$ 19... $\mathbb{W}xd4$ $\mathbb{E}b8$

20... $\mathbb{Q}d5\pm$

White dominates the whole board and Black's pieces are exposed.

E22) 13... $\mathbb{E}ac8$



The same plan as in line E211, but without the insertion of the moves ... $\mathbb{Q}h3$ and $\mathbb{Q}h1$. Black hopes that his bishop will be more active on the b1-h7 diagonal, from which it might hope to molest the white rooks.

14.c5!

The familiar reaction is best here, too.

14...dxc5 15...xd7 $\mathbb{Q}xd7$ 16... $\mathbb{Q}xb7$ $\mathbb{E}b8$

17... $\mathbb{Q}xa6$ $\mathbb{E}xb2$ 18... $\mathbb{Q}d5$

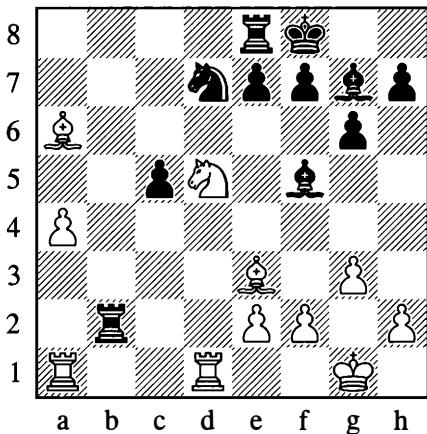
With the bishop on f5, White threatens to win immediately with $\mathbb{Q}xe7\#$ followed by $\mathbb{Q}xf5$. Thus Black is forced into a defensive move.

18... $\mathbb{E}e8$ 19.a4 $\mathbb{Q}f8$

Black overprotects the e7-pawn, freeing his rook from its defensive task and threatening to activate his position with ... $\mathbb{E}a8$.

19... $\mathbb{Q}c2$ leads to simplifications favouring White: 20... $\mathbb{Q}b5$ $\mathbb{E}xb5$ 21... $\mathbb{A}xb5$ $\mathbb{Q}xg1$ 22... $\mathbb{E}xg1$ e6 23... $\mathbb{Q}c7$ $\mathbb{E}b8$ White's pieces remain more active, the b5-pawn is very strong and White's king

position is safer. 24.f3! Preventing the bishop's transfer to the long diagonal, from where it would serve to block the b-pawn. 24... $\mathbb{B}b3$ 25. $\mathbb{B}a7$ Preventing ... $\mathbb{B}d5$. 25... $\mathbb{B}c4$ 26. $\mathbb{B}f2$ $\mathbb{B}g7$ 27.g4 h6 28.h4± White has an advantage on both wings and Black is confined to passive defence, Davies – Arkell, London 1991.



20. $\mathbb{Q}b5!$ N

This was recommended by Ribli and has the same idea as in the above note: White forces favourable simplifications.

20. $\mathbb{B}ac1?$ allowed Black to obtain good counterplay with 20... $\mathbb{B}c2$ in Fominyh – Fish, Alushta 1994.

20... $\mathbb{B}xb5$ 21.axb5 $\mathbb{Q}xa1$ 22. $\mathbb{B}xa1$

When making the decision to leave his bishop on f5, Black hoped to prevent his opponent from occupying the only open queenside file. After the recent exchanges, it has become clear that he has been defrauded. The open file has "moved" to the left!

22... $\mathbb{B}b8$ 23. $\mathbb{Q}c3!$

This is the most stable square for the knight, and ensures White's long term domination.

Ribli suggests 23. $\mathbb{Q}c7$ (together with a “±” sign), but Black has good chances to draw after

23...e6 24. $\mathbb{B}c1$ $\mathbb{Q}e7$ 25. $\mathbb{Q}xc5\#$ $\mathbb{Q}xc5$ 26. $\mathbb{B}xc5$ $\mathbb{B}b6$. With his king far from the queenside, White does not seem to be able to promote his extra pawn.

23... $\mathbb{Q}e8$ 24.f3!

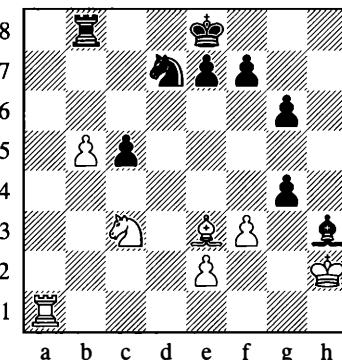
Having achieved a clear advantage on the queenside, White starts fighting for space on the other wing.

24...h5

This is practically forced. In the event of a neutral move such as 24... $\mathbb{Q}d8$, Black would risk being suffocated after: 25. $\mathbb{B}a7$ $\mathbb{Q}c8$ 26.g4 $\mathbb{Q}e6$ 27. $\mathbb{Q}f4$ $\mathbb{B}b7$ 28. $\mathbb{B}a8\#$ $\mathbb{Q}b8$ 29. $\mathbb{Q}f2$ $\mathbb{Q}c4$ 30.g5± Black is desperately passive. The pawn is taboo (... $\mathbb{Q}xb5$ loses a piece to $\mathbb{Q}xb8$ or $\mathbb{Q}xb8\#$) and White can activate his king with decisive effect.

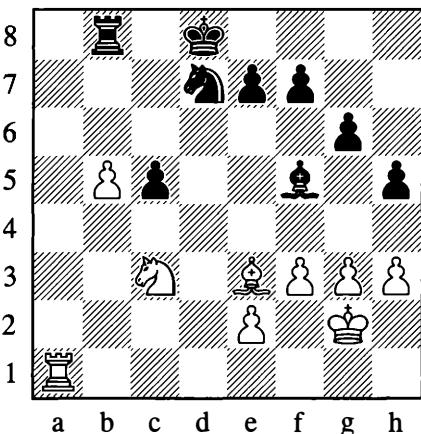
25. $\mathbb{Q}g2$

25.h3? is an interesting alternative. White renews the threat of g3-g4, practically forcing the enemy bishop to let itself be caged. 25... $\mathbb{Q}xh3$ 26.g4 hxg4 27. $\mathbb{Q}h2\pm$



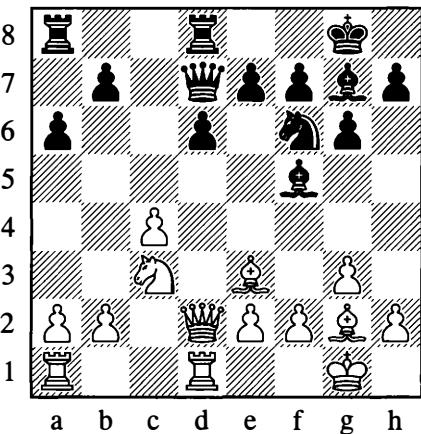
Black has two extra pawns, but his bishop cannot contribute to the queenside defence. As long as White keeps his b-pawn, sacrificing the bishop with ...gxh3 does not guarantee a draw, while otherwise the play is rather one-sided.

25... $\mathbb{Q}d8$ 26.h3±



Despite having lost a tempo by comparison to the note to Black's 24th move, White retains a stable edge.

E23) 13... $\mathbb{Q}fd8$



In the previous lines, Black constantly experienced problems along the d-file, which explains the reasoning behind the text move.

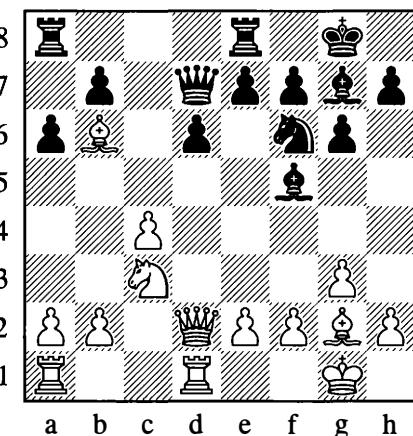
14. $\mathbb{Q}b6$

White should take the opportunity to block the b-pawn with gain of time.

14... $\mathbb{Q}e8!?$ N

This seems like the best chance to justify Black's previous play.

Agglomerating rooks on the queenside with 14... $\mathbb{Q}dc8$ is ineffective. In Plantet – Chiche, Saint Quentin 1998, White should have played 15.b3!N, planning a4-a5. Black cannot clear the d7-square for the knight due to the constant threat of $\mathbb{Q}xb7$, forking the rooks. Making one more preparatory move would be too slow: 15... $\mathbb{Q}ab8$ 16.a4 $\mathbb{Q}e6$ 17.a5± Black's queenside has been frozen and White can build up his space advantage at his convenience.



15.a4 $\mathbb{Q}e6$

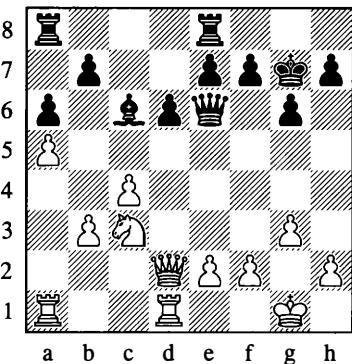
Under the given circumstances, the queen can leave the b7-pawn undefended, because $\mathbb{Q}xb7$ would lose material to ... $\mathbb{Q}ab8$. Having now attacked the c4-pawn, Black seems to be on the brink of achieving his goal of unblocking his queenside with ... $\mathbb{Q}d7$.

16.a5!

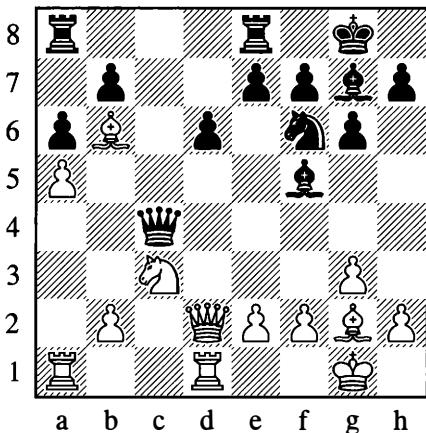
White gives higher priority to his strategic aim than to defending the attacked pawn. His better development will offer him ample compensation.

16... $\mathbb{Q}xc4$

Black is more or less forced to accept the challenge. The only other way to justify the position of the queen on e6 would be 16... $\mathbb{Q}e4$, which would fail to question White's domination: 17. $\mathbb{Q}xe4$ $\mathbb{Q}xe4$ 18. $\mathbb{Q}d4$ $\mathbb{Q}c6$ 19. $\mathbb{Q}xg7$ $\mathbb{Q}xg7$ 20.b3±



The c6-bishop can be neutralized with f2-f3, thus White remains in full control.



17... $\mathbb{Q}dc1!$

Initiating the queen hunt.

17... $\mathbb{Q}b4$

17... $\mathbb{Q}e6$ loses both queenside pawns to 18. $\mathbb{Q}xb7$ $\mathbb{Q}ab8$ 19. $\mathbb{Q}xa6$. The bid for counterplay based on 19... $\mathbb{Q}d7$ fails to the centralizing 20. $\mathbb{Q}d5\pm$, threatening, among others, $\mathbb{Q}c7$.

18. $\mathbb{Q}a4$

With the queen on b4, the line from the previous note is no longer convincing on account of 20... $\mathbb{Q}xb2$.

18... $\mathbb{Q}b3$ 19. $\mathbb{Q}d4!$

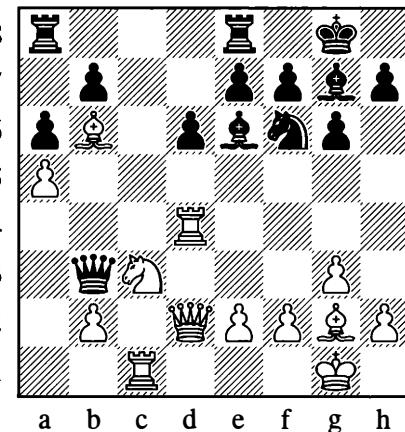
A strong centralizing move, freeing the

knight from the task of defending the rook. The primary threat is $\mathbb{Q}xb7xa6-c4$.

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

19... $\mathbb{Q}d7?$ 20. $\mathbb{Q}d5$ traps the queen.

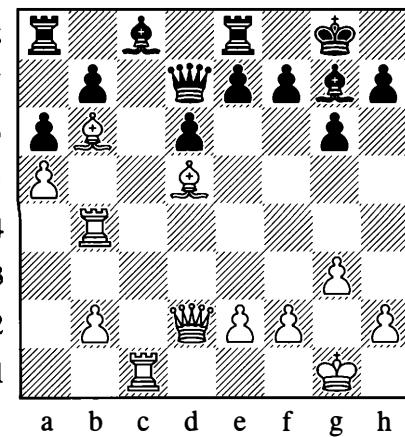
19... $\mathbb{Q}ab8$ also fails to improve Black's prospects after 20. $\mathbb{Q}d5\pm$ threatening $\mathbb{Q}b4$.



20. $\mathbb{Q}a1!$

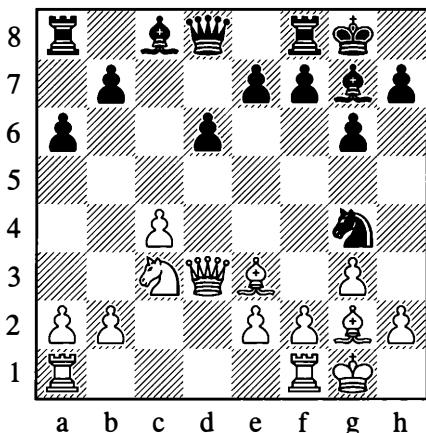
The rooks' circulation creates a deep aesthetic impression. The threat of $\mathbb{Q}a3$ forces the e6-bishop to retreat.

20... $\mathbb{Q}c8$ 21. $\mathbb{Q}d5$ $\mathbb{Q}xd5$ 22. $\mathbb{Q}xd5$ $\mathbb{W}b5$
23. $\mathbb{Q}b4$ $\mathbb{W}d7$ 24. $\mathbb{Q}c1\pm$



Black has managed to avoid immediate material losses and even to hold on to his extra pawn, but White's advantage in development is crushing. The loss of the b7-pawn is practically inevitable, leaving Black with a weakness on a6 and White with a dangerous queenside majority.

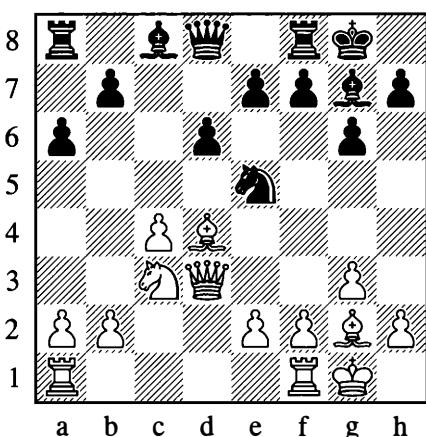
E3) 11... $\mathbb{Q}g4$



This is supposed to be the second way of punishing White for his decision to post the bishop on e3 on the last move. Black gains some time for attacking the c4-pawn, but in the long run his knight will not be stable on e5.

12. $\mathbb{Q}d4$ $\mathbb{Q}e5$

Black has carried out the first part of his plan. The queen cannot retreat to d2 because of ... $\mathbb{Q}xc4$.



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

This active move is the only attempt to justify 11. $\mathbb{Q}e3$ as a try for an opening advantage. White keeps the c4-pawn indirectly defended and leaves the d1-square open for the rooks. The exposed position of the queen offers Black some tactical chances, but the analysis presented below suggests that White should remain in control with accurate play.

In practice, White has unanimously played 13. $\mathbb{W}d1$, which is a bit too passive for my tastes. The main line continues 13... $\mathbb{E}b8$ 14. $\mathbb{E}c1$ $\mathbb{Q}e6$ 15. $\mathbb{Q}d5$ b5 16.c5 $\mathbb{Q}xd5$ 17. $\mathbb{Q}xd5$ $dxc5$ 18. $\mathbb{Q}xc5$ $\mathbb{Q}d7$ 19.b4 $\mathbb{Q}xc5$ 20.bxc5 with only a symbolic advantage to White.

13... $\mathbb{Q}f5$ 14. $\mathbb{W}f4$

This is the most stable square for the queen, at least for the time being.

14. $\mathbb{W}h4$?! offers Black an important tempo: 14... $\mathbb{Q}f6$ 15. $\mathbb{W}f4$ e6! Consolidating the centre and threatening to trap the queen with ... $\mathbb{Q}g5$.

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

Black tries to combine his standard queenside play with some tactical motifs based on the queen's unusual situation.

The position is not ripe for tactical blows yet: 14... $\mathbb{Q}d3$?! 15.exd3 e5 16. $\mathbb{W}d2$ exd4 17. $\mathbb{Q}d5$ ± White has the better structure and two wonderful minor pieces.

14... $\mathbb{Q}f3$?! is even worse, because it fails to create a relative weakness on d3. After 15. $\mathbb{Q}xf3$ e5 16. $\mathbb{Q}xe5$ followed by $\mathbb{Q}e3$ White has a big advantage, with an extra pawn and excellent control over the light squares.

Compared with the 14. $\mathbb{W}h4$?! line noted above, 14...e6?! offers White a vital extra tempo for consolidating. 15.b3 (Only not 15. $\mathbb{E}fd1$?! g5!

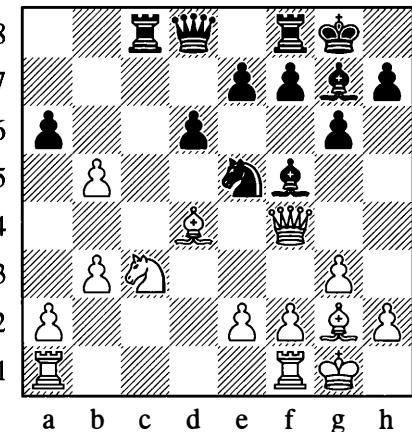
when the c4-pawn is lost.) 15... $\mathbb{W}e7$ (With the c4-pawn safely defended, 15... $\mathbb{Q}f6$ can be met by 16. $\mathbb{W}d2\pm$) 16. $\mathbb{W}d2$ Threatening to trap the bishop with e2-e4. 16...g5 17. $\mathbb{Q}ad1\pm$ White has completed his development and maintains his space advantage, while Black's minor pieces are vulnerable.

15.b3 b5

Adding more wood to the fire.

The familiar 15... $\mathbb{Q}f3\pm$ is slightly better than one move earlier, but fails to equalize nevertheless: 16. $\mathbb{Q}xf3$ e5 17. $\mathbb{Q}xe5$ $\mathbb{Q}xe5$ 18. $\mathbb{W}e3$ b5 Black will retrieve the pawn, but his weaknesses remain. 19. $\mathbb{Q}ac1$ bxc4 20. $\mathbb{Q}d5$ cxb3 21. $\mathbb{Q}xc8$ $\mathbb{Q}xc8$ 22.axb3± Followed by $\mathbb{Q}c1$, with a strategic advantage and certain initiative for White.

16.cxb5



In this critical position Black can choose between E31) 16... $\mathbb{Q}d3$ and E32) 16...axb5.

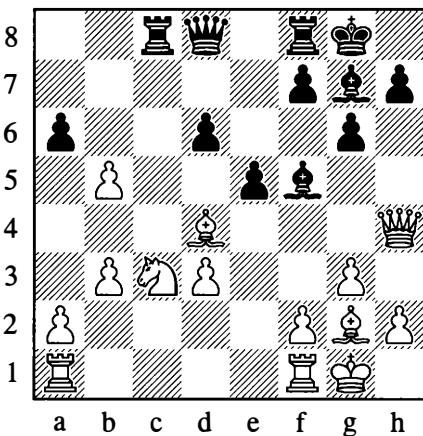
E31) 16... $\mathbb{Q}d3$

After the opening of the c-file, the tactical operation initiated by this move leaves the c3-knight vulnerable. On the other hand, the constant threats of bxa6 or b5-b6 are rather

troublesome for Black and are likely to cause him the loss of a crucial tempo in the next phase of the game.

17.exd3 e5 18. $\mathbb{W}h4!$

The only way to maintain the advantage. White needs to make $\mathbb{Q}d5-e7\pm$ possible.



18...exd4

18... $\mathbb{Q}f6$ is met by the splendid counterattacking move: 19. $\mathbb{Q}b6!$ Everything is hanging, but we should not forget that White is a piece up in the current position. 19... $\mathbb{W}xh4$ (19... $\mathbb{W}xb6$ is met by 20. $\mathbb{Q}d5!$, bringing the knight into play with decisive effect: 20... $\mathbb{Q}xh4$ 21. $\mathbb{Q}xb6$ $\mathbb{Q}b8$ 22. $\mathbb{Q}d5$ $\mathbb{Q}d8$ 23.bxa6 And the a-pawn is unstoppable.) 20. $\mathbb{Q}xd8$ $\mathbb{Q}xd8$ 21.bxa6± White will win an exchange with a7-a8= \mathbb{W} , keeping two more passed pawns on board.

18...g5 leads to similar play after 19. $\mathbb{Q}b6!$.

18... $\mathbb{W}xh4$ spoils White's structure, but the more relevant aspect is that the c8-rook remains under the threat of a fork with $\mathbb{Q}e7\pm$. 19.gxh4 exd4 20. $\mathbb{Q}d5$ axb5 (With his rook on c8, Black cannot play 20... $\mathbb{Q}xd3$ because of 21. $\mathbb{Q}e7\pm$ $\mathbb{Q}h8$ 22. $\mathbb{Q}xc8$ with a winning advantage.) 21. $\mathbb{Q}e7\pm$ $\mathbb{Q}h8$ 22. $\mathbb{Q}xf5!$ The most technical solution. White secures his d-pawn

and obtains complete control over the long diagonal. 22...gxf5 23.a4± The mighty passed pawn offers White excellent winning chances.

19.♗xd8

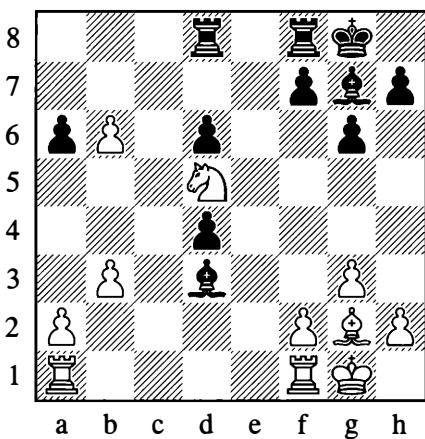
Even though this move helps the enemy rook to escape from its exposed location, it is the right decision because 19.♗d5 is met by 19...g5 with unclear consequences.

19...♖cxd8 20.♗d5 ♖xd3

The only chance to complicate matters, since 20...axb5 21.♗e7† leads to a similar situation as in the 18...♗xh4 line in the note to Black's 18th above.

21.b6!

Black's main weapon against White's intended domination on the light squares is his light-squared bishop. Therefore White should have no qualms about giving up one of his passive rooks for it.



21...♗e2

Black tries to obtain some counterplay with his d-pawn. The alternative 21...♗xf1 enables White to stabilize the position to his favour: 22.♗xf1 a5 23.♗e7† ♔h8 24.♗c6± Supported by White's excellent minor pieces, the b-pawn is extremely strong. Besides, the a5-pawn is in danger.

22.a4

Threatening to consolidate the b-pawn with a5, while also preparing the activation of the rook along the second rank.

22...d3 23.♗a2 ♗xf1

By now Black has nothing better, as after 23...a5 24.♗b1 followed by b4, Black's counterplay would grind to a halt, while the queenside pawns would decide the battle.

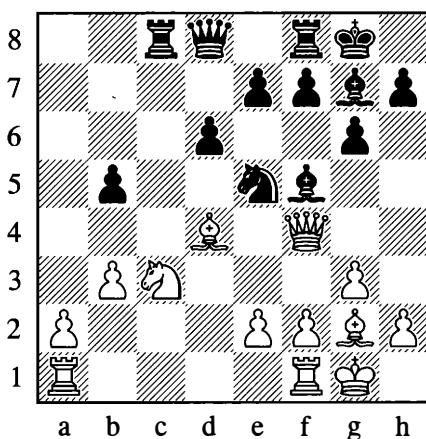
24.♗xf1 a5 25.♗xd3±

In return for a mere exchange, White has a dangerous passed pawn and a dominating position. Black's bishop controls an empty diagonal and it is not easy to activate it. For instance:

25...♗d4 26.♗e7† ♔g7 27.b7

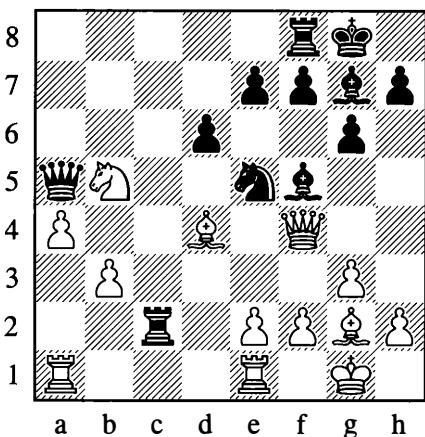
With the bishop on d4, the threat of ♗c6 is decisive.

E32) 16...axb5



The previous lines have demonstrated that tactical fireworks do not turn out well for Black. We will now turn our attention to the more modest text move, with which Black aims to get some initiative based on the departure of the knight from the centre.

17.♗xb5 ♗c2 18.♗fe1 ♗a5 19.a4



19... $\mathbb{Q}fc8$

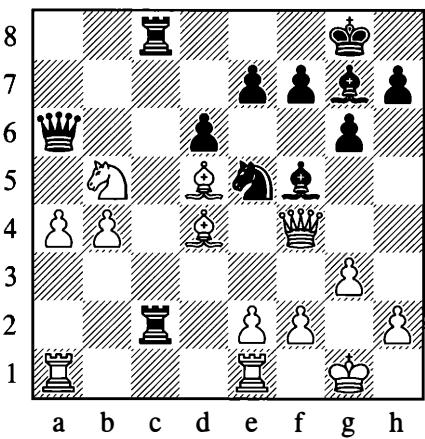
Once again, the thematic jump to d3 is not effective: 19... $\mathbb{Q}d3$ 20. $\mathbb{Q}xd3$ e5 21. $\mathbb{W}e3$ $\mathbb{Q}xd4$ 22. $\mathbb{Q}xd4$ It turns out that the knight was not so badly placed in b5. Next it will jump to c6, with a decisive advantage to White.

After the text move Black has activated his position to the maximum, and it may seem as though he has good compensation for the pawn.

20.b4!

This simple trick, based on the fact that 20... $\mathbb{W}xb4$ loses a piece to 21. $\mathbb{Q}xe5$, allows White take over the initiative.

20... $\mathbb{W}a6$ 21. $\mathbb{Q}d5!$



The threat is 22. $\mathbb{Q}b3$ $\mathbb{Q}2c6$ 23. $\mathbb{Q}a7$, winning an exchange. Black has no choice but to turn and retreat, after which White's extra pawn should be enough to decide the game.

The lines examined after 13. $\mathbb{W}e4!$ all ended up in really bad positions for Black. Of course, he is by no means forced to enter such complications as were analysed, but in the event of a neutral policy, White would have time to consolidate his position with $\mathbb{E}fd1$, $\mathbb{E}ac1$, b3 and so on, with a stable advantage.

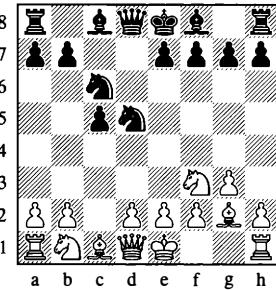
Conclusion

As a conclusion to this and the previous chapter, I would say that my initial regrets regarding leaving the Maroczy system out of our repertoire have vanished completely. White has excellent chances of maintaining an edge and from a practical point of view his strategy is simpler to carry out than in the Maroczy, where the intended domination has a more global character.



The Open Lines

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



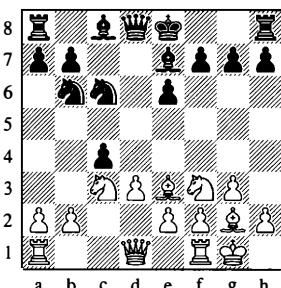
Variation Index

1.c4 c5 2.g3 $\mathbb{Q}f6$ 3. $\mathbb{Q}g2$ $\mathbb{Q}c6$ 4. $\mathbb{Q}f3$ d5 5.cxd5 $\mathbb{Q}xd5$

6. $\mathbb{Q}c3$

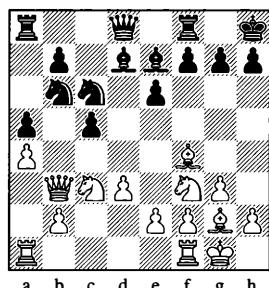
A) 6... $\mathbb{Q}b6$!?	151
B) 6... $\mathbb{Q}f6$!?	152
C) 6... $\mathbb{Q}xc3$?!?	153
D) 6...e6 7. $\mathbb{Q}a4$	154
D1) 7... $\mathbb{Q}d6$	155
D2) 7... $\mathbb{Q}b6$	155
D3) 7... $\mathbb{Q}d7$	157
E) 6... $\mathbb{Q}c7$ 7.0–0 g6 8. $\mathbb{Q}a4$!	158
E1) 8... $\mathbb{Q}d6$!?	158
E2) 8...b6?!	159
E3) 8...e5	160
E4) 8... $\mathbb{Q}e6$	162

A) after 9...c4



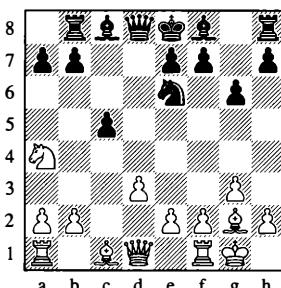
10. $\mathbb{Q}c1$!N

D3) 12... $\mathbb{Q}h8$



13. $\mathbb{Q}fc1$!N±

E2) after 11... $\mathbb{Q}xe6$



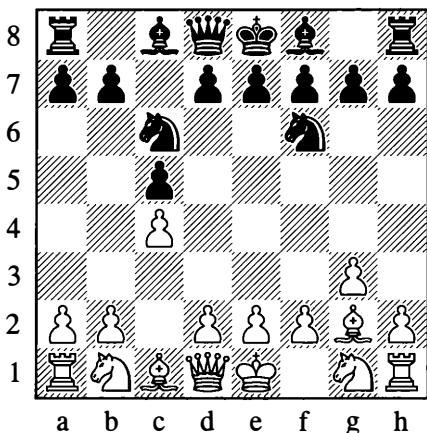
12.f4!N

**1.c4 c5 2.g3 ♘f6 3.♗g2 ♘c6 4.♘f3 d5 5.cxd5
♘xd5 6.♘c3**

The group of chapters that starts now is characterized by Black displaying early ambition in the centre. Instead of waiting for or fighting against White's d2-d4, Black plays ...d7-d5 himself, in an attempt to reverse the roles by grabbing and consolidating a space advantage. We are used to the fact that White's extra tempo in reversed versions of the Benoni, King's Indian or Sicilian tends to offer him the upper hand; the situation is similar in this group of variations.

The move order mentioned above is just one of several possibilities and my purpose is to present the available material in the most systematic way. There are certain restrictions for White, if he intends to avoid being "decoyed" into openings that are not characteristic of our main repertoire, such as the Tarrasch and the Semi-Tarrasch.

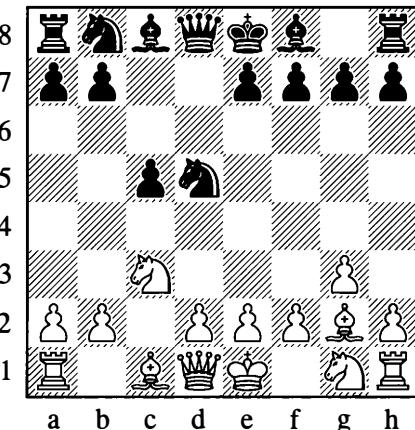
This latter aspect explains White's fourth move.



More active is 4.♘c3 of course, avoiding ...d7-d5, but then 4...e6 5.♘f3 d5 (threatening ...d5-d4) forces us to transpose to the Tarrasch Defence with 6.cxd5 exd5. (It should be mentioned that 6...♘xd5 is less forcing. White can play 7.♔a4 as in line D below.) Because of the early development of the queen's knight

we can no longer transpose to the lines with 1...e6 from the second volume. In contrast, after 4.♘f3 e6 5.0-0 d5, we can safely play 6.b3, keeping the game within English/Reti territory.

Black can also play ...d7-d5 one move earlier than in the line given above. After 4.cxd5 ♘xd5 5.♘c3, his possibilities are more restricted though.



The Semi-Tarrasch set-up is now impossible to reach, because 5...e6? loses a pawn to 6.♘xd5 exd5 7.♔b3.

Curiously, this blunder has occurred many times even between strong players, including the top-level game Gelfand – Kramnik, Sanghi Nagar (8) 1994. Kramnik's loss in this critical game sealed his elimination from the Candidates matches.

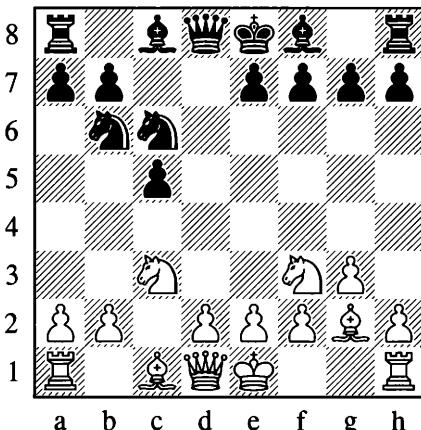
While 5...♗b6, 5...♗f6 and 5...♗xc3 are likely to transpose to the sidelines A, B and C examined below, 5...♘c7 6.♘f3 ♘c6 7.0-0 e5 leads to the main line from Chapter 9. There is no way of transposing to the variation from Chapter 10, though, which induces an important conclusion – if White feels at home in the Tarrasch Defence, he should play 4.♘c3, avoiding the line mentioned above, which has certain drawish tendencies. It is worth noting that Black can try to reach this line via a slightly different move order: 1.c4 c5 2.g3 ♘f6 3.♗g2

g6 4. $\mathbb{Q}c3$ $\mathbb{Q}g7$ 5. $\mathbb{Q}f3$ d5 In this line, White can deviate with 5.e4?!, transposing to the Botvinnik set-up examined in the first volume (in the event of a later ...e5) or the second volume (if Black decides he prefers ...c5).

Also, if White is prepared to face the Semi-Tarrasch, examining line D below is not required. However, I have thoroughly examined the lines below, because I took it as my duty to present a complete English repertoire, to the extent to which the word “complete” can have any meaning in chess.

All this having been said, let's examine Black's options in the diagram above. Since 6...e5? loses a pawn to the typical Dragon-like combination starting with 7. $\mathbb{Q}xe5$!, we have: A) 6... $\mathbb{Q}b6$!?, B) 6... $\mathbb{Q}f6$!?, C) 6... $\mathbb{Q}xc3$, D) 6...e6 and E) 6... $\mathbb{Q}c7$ 7.0-0 g6 (as mentioned above, 7...e5 is examined separately in the following chapter). Lines A and B are rarely played, so I decided to give just one illustrative game between strong players in each case. Line C is not very common either, but I have covered it in slightly more detail, because one should know how to deal with this kind of strategic concession.

A) 6... $\mathbb{Q}b6$!?



The knight does not stand well here; it prevents the natural defence of the c5-pawn

with ...b7-b6 and is likely to be attacked by a4-a5.

GM Lev Alburt has managed to survive with Black in this line in a couple of games, but that was not due to any merits of the opening.

7.0-0 e6

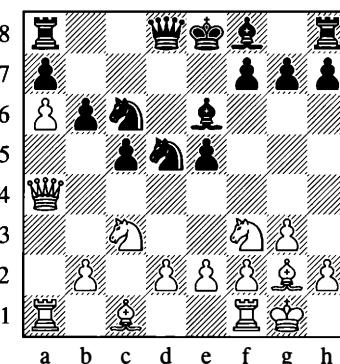
With his knight on b6, Black is best advised not to weaken the d5-square in view of the permanent threat of a4-a5. Thus, being overambitious can lead to a quick disaster:

7...e5 8.a4 $\mathbb{Q}e6$!?

8...a5 is somewhat better, although the weakness of the queenside light squares offers White comfortable play. For example: 9.d3 $\mathbb{Q}e7$ 10. $\mathbb{Q}e3$ 0-0 11. $\mathbb{Q}d2$ $\mathbb{Q}e6$ 12. $\mathbb{Q}c1$ f5 The only way to avoid losing a pawn after $\mathbb{Q}e4$. 13. $\mathbb{Q}b5$ $\mathbb{Q}d7$ 14.f4± Followed by $\mathbb{Q}c4$, with very active play.

9.a5 $\mathbb{Q}d5$ 10.a6 b6 11. $\mathbb{W}a4$

With a deadly pin.



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

11... $\mathbb{W}d7$ also loses an important pawn to 12. $\mathbb{Q}xe5$.

12.dxc3 $\mathbb{Q}d7$ 13. $\mathbb{Q}xe5$ $\mathbb{Q}xe5$ 14. $\mathbb{W}e4$

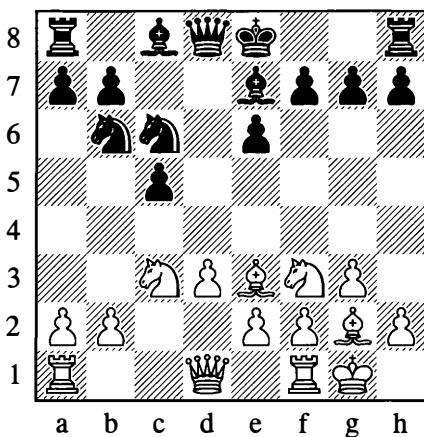
White was winning in R. Garcia-Sampaolesi, Zarate 1972. In this game, White's extra tempo compared to a normal Maroczy certainly made itself felt; if Black had time to play ... $\mathbb{Q}e6$ and ... $\mathbb{W}d7$ before a4-a5, things would be okay for him.

8.d3

Preparing a massive attack against the c5-pawn. Instead 8.a4 is now less effective than with the pawn on e5, because the knight can return to the safely defended d5-square.

8...♝e7 9.♞e3

Things start looking dangerous for Black. For example, after 9...0–0 10.♝c1 the threat of ♜e4 is very unpleasant.

**9...c4**

A desperate attempt to get rid of the main weakness. In H. Olafsson – Alburt, Reykjavik 1984, White replied 10.dxc4, allowing Black some activity.

10.♜c1!N

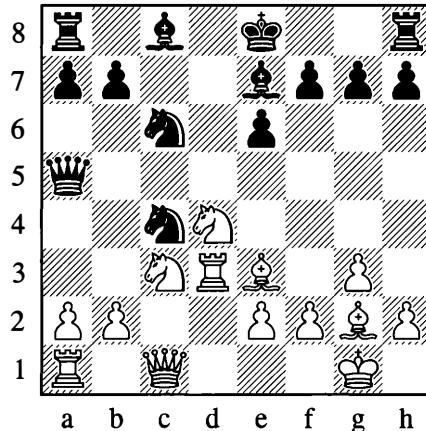
Clearing the d1-square for the rook in order to put pressure on the enemy queen.

10...cxd3 11.♝d1 ♜c4

Black opens the d8-a5 diagonal for his queen, but the knight is exposed on c4. Instead 11...0–0 is just as unappealing: 12.♝xd3 ♜e8 13.a3± White has a superb Catalan-type position, in which Black has no obvious way to complete his queenside development.

12.♝xd3 ♜a5 13.♛d4!

Putting all the minor pieces to work.

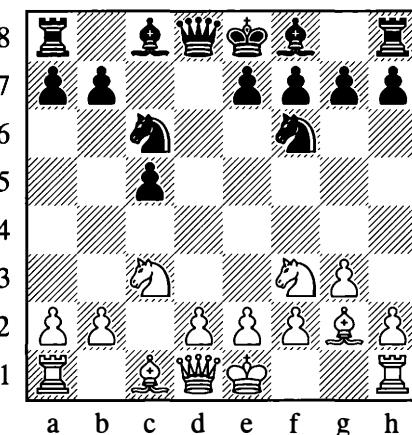
**13...♝d7**

13...♝xd4 14.♝xd4 0–0 15.♝c2+ leaves Black underdeveloped and hanging.

13...♝e5 fails to win time because of the intermediate 14.♝b3! ♜b4 15.♝d4± when the fight is obviously uneven. Three black pieces cannot withstand the combined action of almost all the enemy forces.

14.♝xc6 ♜xc6 15.♝xc6† bxc6 16.♞e4±

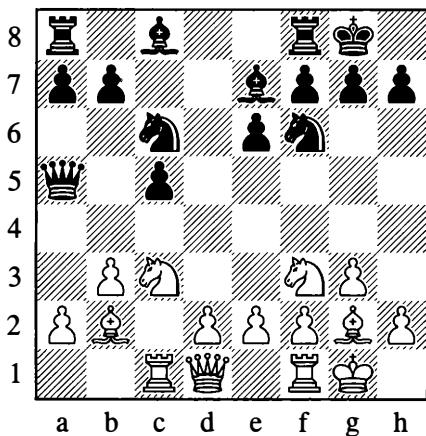
In general, Black's position is strategically unfavourable; one concrete problem is avoiding a deadly check on c6.

B) 6...♝f6?!

The knight keeps the kingside safely defended, but this move has a significant strategic drawback: it prevents ...f7-f6, which would consolidate Black's control in the centre.

This move was Bronstein's choice in a decisive game of the 1956 Candidates tournament. According to Smyslov, both players needed to win, which slightly confuses me – could Black even dream of gaining active play with such a variation? Possibly, Bronstein hoped to provoke his opponent into becoming over-optimistic, but things did not go his way.

7.0–0 e6 8.b3 $\mathbb{Q}e7$ 9. $\mathbb{Q}b2$ 0–0 10. $\mathbb{Q}c1$ $\mathbb{W}a5$



11. $\mathbb{Q}a4$

White has developed very harmoniously and the time has come to create concrete threats; the c5-pawn is in some danger.

11... $\mathbb{Q}d8$ 12. $\mathbb{W}c2$ $\mathbb{Q}b4$ 13. $\mathbb{W}b1$ $\mathbb{Q}fd5$

This jumping around with the knights loses a lot of time, but, according to Smyslov, Black had to contend with the threat of $\mathbb{Q}g5$.

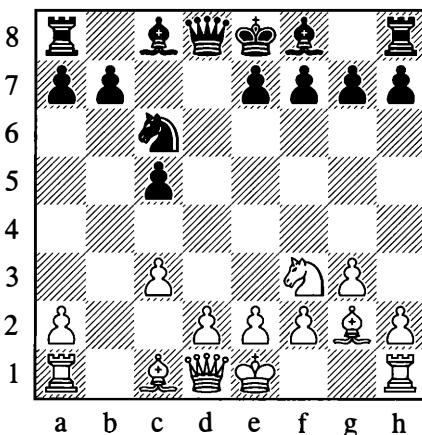
14.a3 $\mathbb{Q}a6$ 15.e4 $\mathbb{Q}f6$

15... $\mathbb{Q}b6$ would have left the queen uncomfortable after 16. $\mathbb{Q}c3$ $\mathbb{W}b5$ 17. $\mathbb{Q}xb6$, planning $\mathbb{W}b2$ and d2-d4.

16. $\mathbb{Q}c3$ $\mathbb{W}b5$ 17. $\mathbb{Q}fd1\pm$

White has mobilized all his pieces and is in complete control; Black has no obvious way to complete his own development. As mentioned by Smyslov, 17... $\mathbb{Q}d7$ is bad because of 18. $\mathbb{Q}e5$ followed by 19. $\mathbb{Q}f1$. In Smyslov – Bronstein, Amsterdam 1956, Black managed to create some confusion in the middlegame, but not enough to avoid defeat.

C) 6... $\mathbb{Q}xc3?$! 7.bxc3



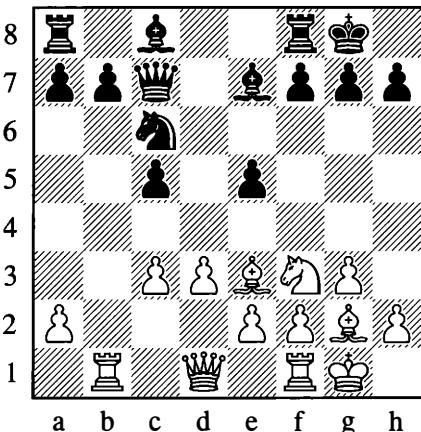
This early exchange allows Black to avoid immediate opening problems, but leaves him without a clear plan for the middlegame. The last move strengthens White's centre and opens the b-file for his major pieces.

7...e5

The main alternative is 7...g6, with a possible transposition to the Anti-Grünfeld system examined in the second volume: 8.0–0 $\mathbb{Q}g7$ 9. $\mathbb{Q}b1$ 0–0 10. $\mathbb{W}a4\pm$

8.0–0 $\mathbb{Q}e7$ 9.d3 0–0 10. $\mathbb{Q}b1$ $\mathbb{W}c7$ 11. $\mathbb{Q}e3$

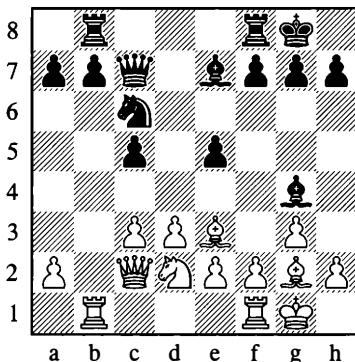
Both sides have developed naturally, but White's position remains more flexible. His main plan is to combine the pressure along the b-file with a well-timed f2-f4 break on the other wing. The knight should be transferred to c4, from where it would keep both wings under pressure.



11...Qe6

This looks like the most natural continuation, as Black should not be in a hurry to define his intentions regarding the placement of his rooks:

11...Bb8 12.Qd2 Qe6 13.Wa4 Qd7 14.Wc2 Qg4 This was played in Rechlis – Stefansson, Baguio City 1987.

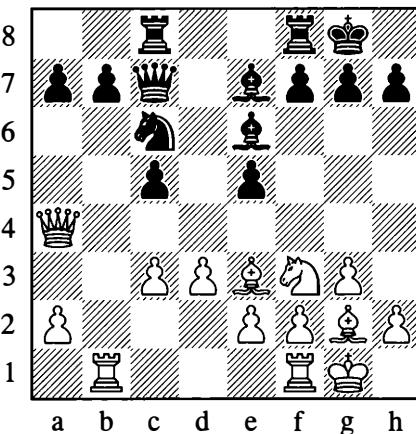


15.f3!N The most effective way to prepare the f4 pawn break. 15...Qh5 16.Qe4 b6 17.g4 Qg6 18.f4± The rook is obviously misplaced on b8.

11...Bd8 leaves the kingside inadequately defended. 12.Qd2 Qe6 13.Wa4 Qd7 14.f4? Not fearing the following discovered attack. 14...Qd4 15.Wd1 Qf5 16.Bxb7 Wxb7 17.Qxb7 Qxe3 18.Wc1 Bb8 19.Qf3± With a material advantage, Zhao Zong – Rej, Sydney 2010.

12.Wa4 Bc8

This position has occurred in a few games.



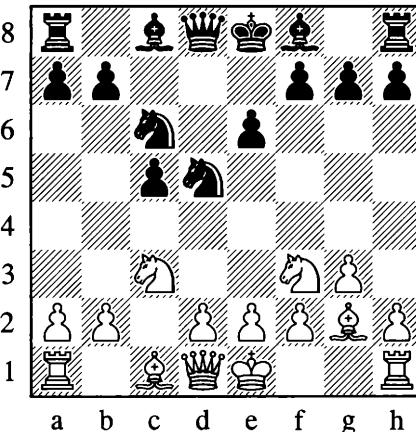
13.Qd2!N

The start of the plan mentioned a couple of moves ago.

13...b6 14.Qc4±

White can combine play on both wings, with Wb5, a2-a4 and f2-f4.

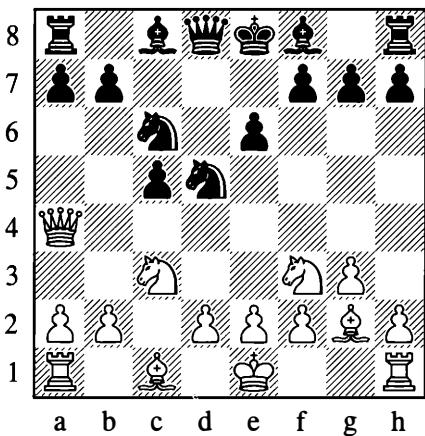
D) 6...e6



This is an open invitation to the Semi-Tarrasch Defence (7.0–0 Qe7 8.d4 0–0). Instead the line examined in this chapter allows White to fight for the initiative in the spirit of the English Opening.

7. $\mathbb{W}a4$

Creating the unpleasant threat of $\mathbb{Q}e5$, which would either spoil Black's structure or gain the advantage of the bishop pair. This move has been tried in just a few games, which makes the whole variation somewhat experimental. However, the practical results are encouraging: White won every time!



Black can parry the threat with D1) 7... $\mathbb{Q}d6$, D2) 7... $\mathbb{Q}b6$ or D3) 7... $\mathbb{Q}d7$.

D1) 7... $\mathbb{Q}d6$

Black stops the threat with a developing move, but now the bishop is in the way of the black queen, which allows White to open the centre under favourable circumstances.

8.d4 0–0 9.0–0 $\mathbb{Q}b6$

Removing the knight from the central tension with gain of time looks like the safest choice. Allowing or provoking exchanges tends to favour White:

9... $\mathbb{Q}xc3$ 10.bxc3 $\mathbb{Q}d7$ 11.dxc5 $\mathbb{Q}xc5$ 12. $\mathbb{E}b1\pm$
With strong queenside pressure.

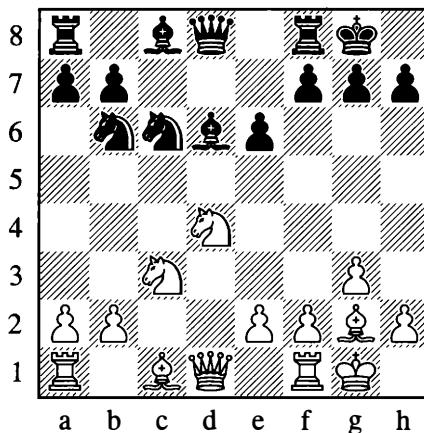
Or 9... $\mathbb{Q}d7$ 10.dxc5 $\mathbb{Q}xc5$ 11. $\mathbb{Q}xd5$ exd5
12. $\mathbb{W}b3\pm$ and Black loses a pawn without getting adequate compensation.

10. $\mathbb{Q}d1!$

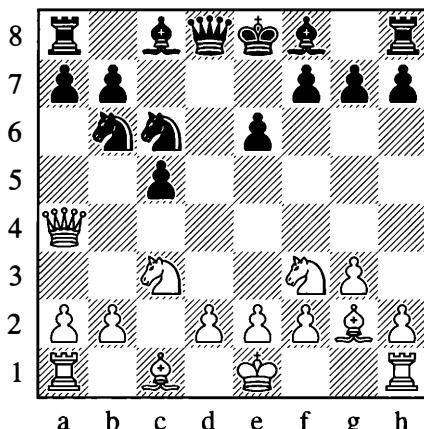
The best square for the queen, keeping the d4-pawn protected. With the bishop on e7, Black could have won a pawn with ...cx d4.

10...cx d4

10...c4?! would leave White with a strong centre and chances of creating dangerous kingside threats: 11. $\mathbb{W}c2$ $\mathbb{Q}d7$ 12. $\mathbb{Q}g5\pm$

11. $\mathbb{Q}xd4\#$ 

With a pleasant Catalan-style position, in which Black will have problems developing his queenside.

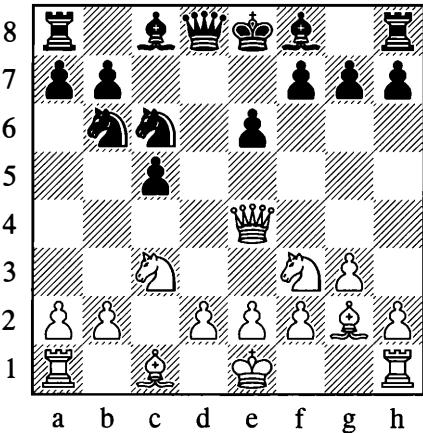
D2) 7... $\mathbb{Q}b6$ 

A natural reaction, trying to cause some discomfort to the enemy queen. However, the knight retreat has the drawback of weakening Black's control in the centre and opening the long diagonal for the g2-bishop.

8.♕e4!

Certainly an original-looking move; White keeps his queen close to the centre, in order to retain the threat of ♔e5 or possibly d2-d4.

8.♕c2 is too passive and allows Black to continue his development with gain of time: 8...♝d7 9.0-0 ♝d4 With approximate equality.



8...♝e7

One awkward-looking option deserves to be mentioned:

8.f5

Black weakens his kingside structure for the sake of driving the queen away from the centre.

9.♕c2 ♘d7 10.a4!

White should start chasing the b6-knight as soon as possible, before Black manages to consolidate.

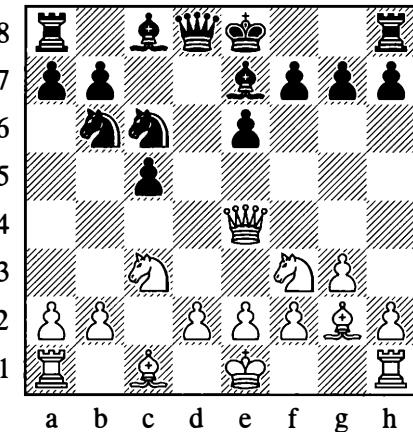
10...♝b4 11.♕d1 ♘e7 12.a5 ♘d5 13.0-0 0-0 14.♘xd5 ♘xd5

14...exd5 15.d4 leads to a favourable position for White, where the d5-pawn is a

target and the e5-square has been critically weakened.

15.d3±

White will soon play ♜b3 and ♜d2, leaving Black with problems achieving piece and pawn harmony.



9.♔e5!N

White should make this thematic move before it is prevented.

9.0-0, as played in Fusthy – Solyomvari, Budapest 2008, could have been answered with: 9...f5?! 10.♕c2 ♘d7 Since White castling does not have a direct dynamic impact, Black is practically a tempo up if compared with the previous line, so he has good chances for counterplay.

9...♝d7

The lesser evil. Black gives up the bishop pair for the sake of speeding up his development.

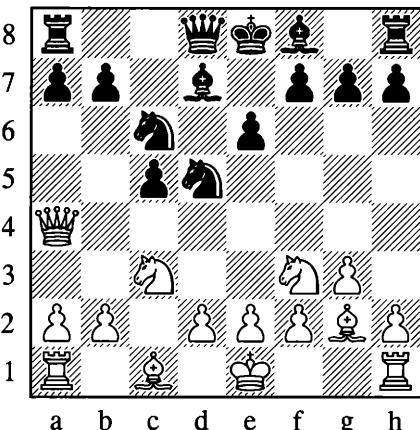
9...f5?! can be met by 10.♘xc6±, ruining Black's structure.

9...♞xe5 10.♕xe5 would open the long diagonal, leaving Black with problems completing his development.

10.0-0 0-0 11.d3 ♘f6 12.♘xd5 ♜xd7

13. $\mathbb{Q}d2$

Followed by $\mathbb{B}ac1$, with pressure along the long diagonal and the c-file.

D3) 7... $\mathbb{Q}d7$ 

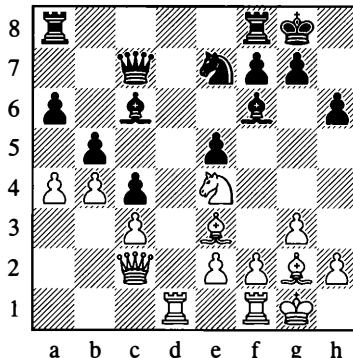
This move was chosen both times strong players reached the position after 7. $\mathbb{W}a4$. Black defends the a4-e8 diagonal and immediately puts pressure on the enemy queen. On the other hand, the bishop is not especially well placed on d7, obstructing the black queen and leaving the b7-pawn vulnerable.

8. $\mathbb{W}b3!$

Attacking Black's vulnerable spots: d5 and b7.

8... $\mathbb{Q}b6$

After 8... $\mathbb{Q}db4$ Black's initiative is only temporary. 9.a3 c4 10. $\mathbb{W}d1$ $\mathbb{Q}d5$ 11.0–0 $\mathbb{Q}e7$ 12.b4 0–0 13. $\mathbb{Q}b2$ $\mathbb{Q}f6$ 14. $\mathbb{W}c2$ $\mathbb{Q}xc3$ 15.dxc3 The position has settled down and White retains the better chances. He intends to regroup with $\mathbb{Q}ad1$, $\mathbb{Q}c1$ and $\mathbb{Q}d2-e4$, while Black's minor pieces lack mobility. 15...b5 16.a4 a6 17. $\mathbb{Q}ad1$ $\mathbb{W}c7$ 18. $\mathbb{Q}c1$ h6 Preventing $\mathbb{Q}g5$ and $\mathbb{Q}g5$, but weakening the king's position. 19. $\mathbb{Q}f4$ e5 20. $\mathbb{Q}e3$ $\mathbb{Q}e7$ 21. $\mathbb{Q}d2$ $\mathbb{Q}c6$ 22. $\mathbb{Q}e4$ Black's position is dubious, but his next move loses instantly.

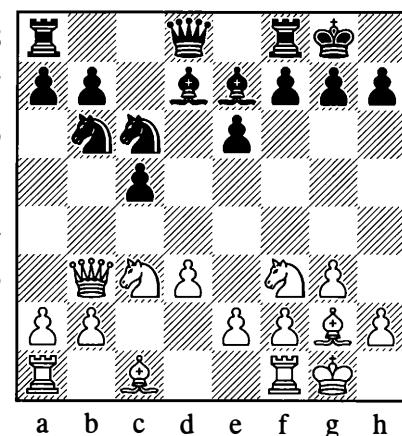


22... $\mathbb{Q}d5??$ 23. $\mathbb{Q}xd5!$ And Black resigned in I. Sokolov – Podlesnik, Yugoslavia 1988.

9.0–0 $\mathbb{Q}e7$

Black keeps developing without sensing the strategic danger.

9... $\mathbb{Q}d4$ might have been safer, although after 10. $\mathbb{Q}xd4$ cxd4 11. $\mathbb{Q}b5$ $\mathbb{Q}c6$ 12.d3±, followed by $\mathbb{Q}d2$ (or f4) and $\mathbb{B}ac1$, White has the initiative and a good grip on the light squares.

10.d3 0–0**11.a4!**

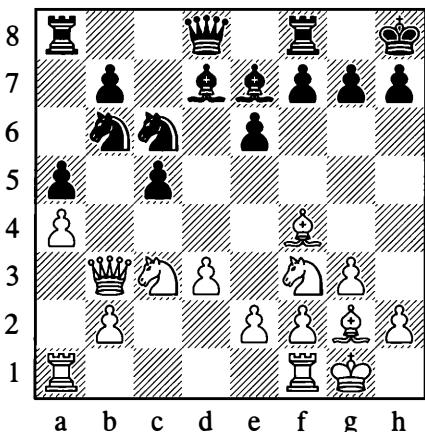
We are familiar with this method of punishing the unfavourable placement of what used to be the king's knight.

11...a5

The knight did not have any good retreat squares, but after the text move the permanent weakness of Black's queenside light squares offers White a stable advantage.

12.♘f4 ♔h8

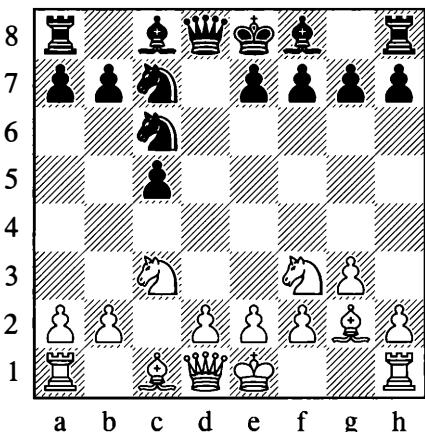
So far, we have followed Uhlmann – J. Horvath, Debrecen 1987.



13.♗fc1!N±

Black has a hard time meeting the threats of ♘e4, ♖e3 or ♗e5.

E) 6...♝c7



Along with 6...e6, this is one of Black's most consistent continuations, but only if followed

by 7...e5, as in the line examined in the next chapter. In this chapter we will look at an inferior plan that has been intensively tested in correspondence games.

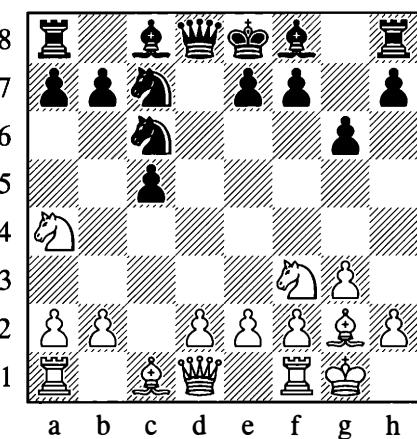
7.0-0 g6

Aesthetically speaking, quite an appealing set-up. If allowed to complete his development, Black would reach a position in the spirit of line B3 from Chapter 6 (with reversed colours, of course). However, White's extra tempo enables him to take full advantage of Black's rather slow development.

If Black wants to combine ...d5 with ...g6 and ...♝g7, he is best advised to settle for the variation examined in Chapter 10, by leaving the knight in the centre.

8.♞a4!

An energetic move, immediately underlining the defects of Black's set-up; the planned ...♝g7 leaves the c5-pawn undefended.



We will examine E1) 8...♛d6?!, E2) 8...b6, E3) 8...e5 and E4) 8...♝e6.

E1) 8...♛d6?!

Not really recommended; the exposed black queen allows White to win time by attacking the c5-pawn.

9. $\mathbb{Q}g5$ f5!?

An awfully ugly move, weakening the whole kingside.

No better is 9... $\mathbb{Q}e6$?! 10. $\mathbb{Q}e4$ $\mathbb{W}e5$ 11.d3±, threatening $\mathbb{Q}e3$ or $\mathbb{Q}d2-c3$, when the c5-pawn is in great danger.

Also not entirely satisfactory is the following attempt to muddy the waters:

9...c4

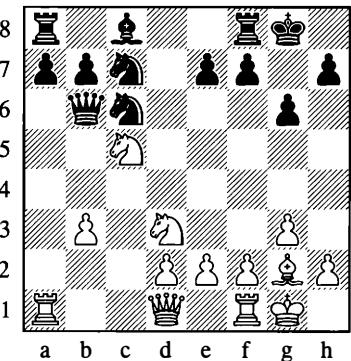
This move does not really contribute to Black's development, but it may be a better chance for survival than the text move, because it does not create additional weaknesses.

10. $\mathbb{Q}e4$ $\mathbb{W}b4$

10... $\mathbb{W}e5$ prevents b2-b3, but White can open the other diagonal for his bishop. 11.d3 cxd3 12. $\mathbb{W}xd3$ ± With a lead in development in an open position.

11.b3 $\mathbb{Q}g7$ 12. $\mathbb{Q}b2$ $\mathbb{Q}xb2$ 13. $\mathbb{Q}xb2$ cxb3

14. $\mathbb{Q}d3$ $\mathbb{W}b6$ 15.axb3 0–0 16. $\mathbb{Q}ec5$ ±



White is better developed, has a flexible central pawn mass and exerts some pressure against the enemy queenside.

10.b4!

The fastest way to bring more pieces into the attack.

10...c4

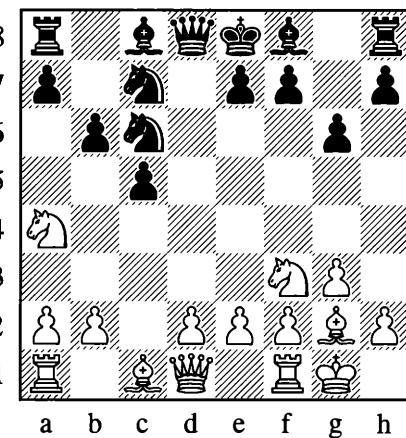
Trying to avoid opening any lines. Both 10... $\mathbb{Q}xb4$?! 11. $\mathbb{W}b3$ ± and 10...cxb4 11. $\mathbb{W}b3$

$\mathbb{Q}e6$ 12. $\mathbb{W}b2$ ± offer White a strong, perhaps decisive, initiative.

11. $\mathbb{Q}b2$ e5 12. $\mathbb{Q}xc6$ † $\mathbb{B}xc6$ 13. $\mathbb{W}c2$ $\mathbb{W}d5$ 14.f4±

Black's position soon collapsed in Krause – Doplicher, corr. 1988.

8... $\mathbb{W}d6$ is slightly dubious, but the punishment it received in this game is exaggerated; Black's play was far from optimal and his 9th move certainly deserves criticism.

E2) 8...b6?!

Another provocative move; temporarily restricting the a4-knight does not justify weakening the long diagonal.

9.d4!

The logical reaction; with both long diagonals undefended, Black has no effective way to meet the opening of the centre.

9...cx d4 10. $\mathbb{Q}f4$ $\mathbb{Q}g7$ 11. $\mathbb{Q}c1$

White keeps developing with gain of time.

11...e5

This weakens his position even more, but it is already too late for half measures; defending the c6-knight would allow White to regain the pawn with a very strong initiative:

11... $\mathbb{Q}d7$ 12. $\mathbb{Q}xd4$ Most of Black's pieces are hanging after this simple tactical blow. 12... $\mathbb{Q}xd4$ 13. $\mathbb{Q}xc7$ $\mathbb{Q}xa4$ 14. $\mathbb{W}xa4\#$ $\mathbb{W}d7$ 15. $\mathbb{W}a6$ $\mathbb{E}c8$ 16. $\mathbb{Q}xb6\pm$ With a sound extra pawn for White.

11... $\mathbb{Q}b7$ 12. $\mathbb{Q}xd4$ $\mathbb{W}xd4$ Somewhat freeing Black's play (12... $\mathbb{Q}xd4$ 13. $\mathbb{E}xc6!$ would leave him with serious coordination problems). 13. $\mathbb{Q}xc7\pm$ White is much better developed and the pin along the h1-a8 diagonal is very annoying.

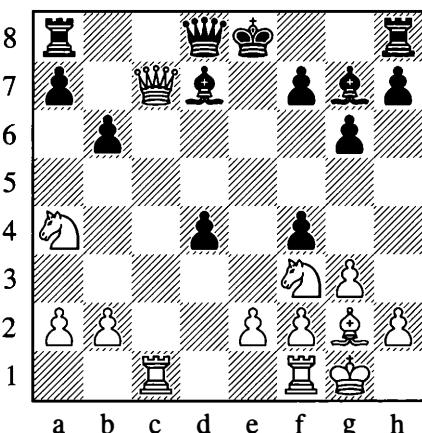
12. $\mathbb{W}c2!$

Keeping up the rhythm of the initiative.

12... $\mathbb{exf}4$

After 12... $\mathbb{Q}d7$ 13. $\mathbb{Q}xe5!\pm$ Black's pieces are hanging again and the d4-pawn is likely to be lost soon.

13. $\mathbb{W}xc6\#$ $\mathbb{Q}d7$ 14. $\mathbb{W}xc7$



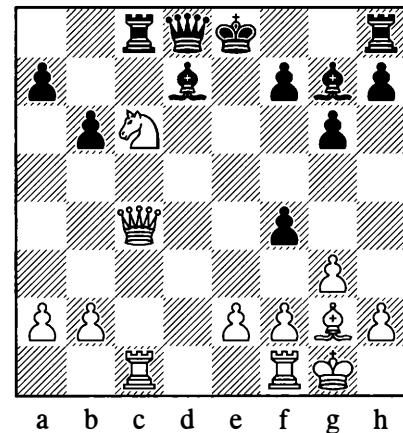
14... $\mathbb{Q}xa4$

Black needs his queen in order to hold his position together. The hurried exchange 14... $\mathbb{W}xc7$ makes things even worse: 15. $\mathbb{E}xc7$ $\mathbb{Q}xa4$ 16. $\mathbb{Q}g5\pm$ Hitting a8 and f7 at the same time.

15. $\mathbb{W}c4!$

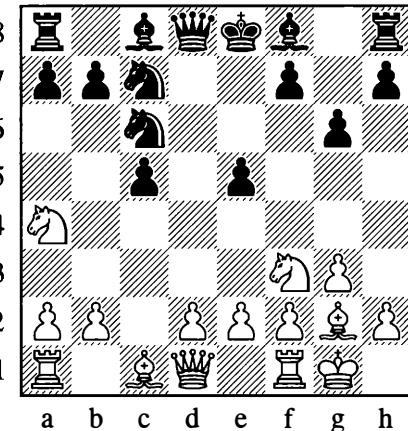
The best way to maintain the initiative. Instead the knight incursion 15. $\mathbb{Q}g5$ would be slightly less effective than in the previous line: 15...0-0 16. $\mathbb{Q}xa8$ $\mathbb{W}xg5\pm$ Black is an exchange down, but still alive.

15... $\mathbb{Q}d7$ 16. $\mathbb{Q}xd4$ $\mathbb{E}c8$ 17. $\mathbb{Q}c6\pm$



White has a strong initiative at no cost, Techmer – Grzeskowiak, corr. 1977.

E3) 8...e5



The mixture of the moves ...g6 and ...e5 is not very impressive, because it creates a lot of weaknesses. Black's aim is to neutralize the pressure against the c5-pawn with a minimum of effort and leave the knight misplaced on a4.

However, the knight can easily get back into play with $\mathbb{Q}c3$, while Black's weaknesses are permanent.

9.b3

White prepares $\mathbb{Q}b2$, putting the newly created weakness under pressure, but $\mathbb{Q}a3$ is also possible under certain circumstances.

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

This has been unanimously played in practice, but two other moves also deserve a mention.

9...e4?! is a premature display of activity:
 10. $\mathbb{Q}e1$ $\mathbb{Q}g7$ 11. $\mathbb{Q}b1$ $\mathbb{W}e7$ 12.d3± Black is poorly developed and over-extended.

9... $\mathbb{Q}g7$!?

This is sounder than 9...e4. Black sacrifices the c5-pawn for the sake of rapid development and creating the potential threat of ...e5-e4.

10. $\mathbb{Q}xc5$ $\mathbb{W}e7$

Immediately challenging the knight's stability.

10...e4?! allows the spectacular sacrifice 11. $\mathbb{Q}xe4$! leading to a powerful attack against the uncastled king: 11... $\mathbb{Q}xa1$ 12. $\mathbb{Q}a3$ $\mathbb{Q}g7$ 13. $\mathbb{Q}d6$ † $\mathbb{Q}d7$ 14.d4± Black is helpless against the numerous threats such as $\mathbb{Q}xf7$, d4-d5, $\mathbb{Q}h6$ or $\mathbb{Q}e5$.

10...b6 leaves Black hanging after 11. $\mathbb{Q}el$!.

11.d4!

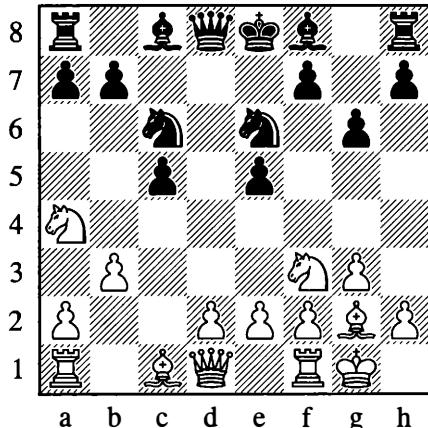
White returns the pawn, creating favourable structural modifications.

11...exd4 12. $\mathbb{Q}d3$

Just one move earlier, this knight was vulnerable, but now it is White's most stable piece.

12...0-0 13. $\mathbb{Q}g5$ f6 14. $\mathbb{Q}d2$ $\mathbb{Q}e8$ 15. $\mathbb{Q}e1$ $\mathbb{Q}e6$ 16. $\mathbb{Q}c1$ $\mathbb{Q}d5$ 17.e3±

Despite the symmetrical nature of the position, the weakness of the e6-square and White's better mobilization offers him the preferable game.



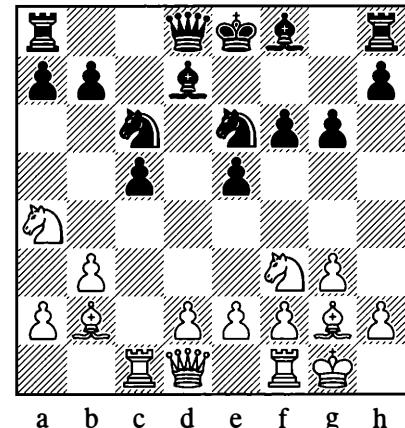
10. $\mathbb{Q}b2$ f6

Recommended by Harding.

10... $\mathbb{W}d6$ has been played in a couple of correspondence games. White has a rather wide choice of promising moves, but the most restricting is: 11. $\mathbb{Q}xe5$!N $\mathbb{Q}xe5$ 12.f4 $\mathbb{Q}g7$ 13.fxe5 $\mathbb{Q}xe5$ 14. $\mathbb{Q}c3$ Threatening $\mathbb{Q}e4$ -f6. 14...f5 Parrying the threat, but weakening his position even more. 15. $\mathbb{Q}b5$ $\mathbb{W}b8$ 16.d4± White has a strong initiative.

11. $\mathbb{Q}c1$ $\mathbb{Q}d7$

Preparing to meet $\mathbb{Q}a3$ with ...b7-b6.

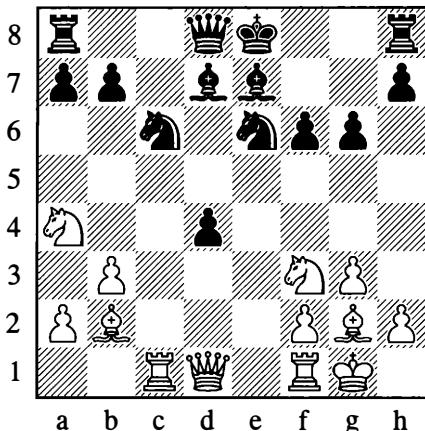


12.e3!

Played in the spirit of several lines from the next chapter; the d7-bishop obstructs

the queen and Black has weaknesses along the a1-h8 diagonal, which makes opening the centre quite effective.

12... $\mathbb{Q}e7$ 13.d4 cxd4 14.exd4 exd4



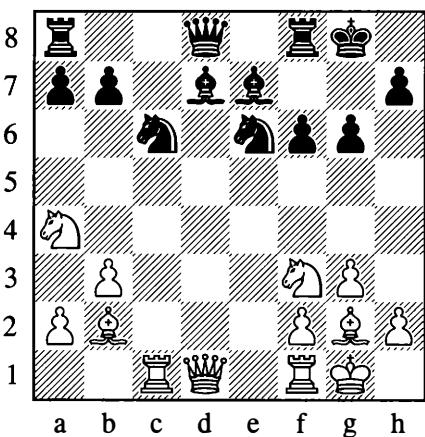
15. $\mathbb{Q}xd4!$

The careless 15. $\mathbb{Q}xd4?$ loses material to 15... $\mathbb{Q}cxd4$ 16. $\mathbb{Q}xd4$ $\mathbb{Q}xa4$.

15...0-0

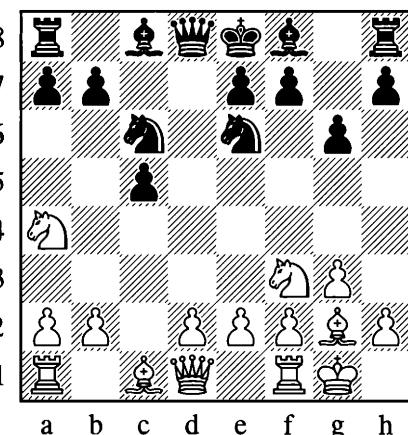
Maintaining the tension, as exchanging in the centre would activate White's play: 15... $\mathbb{Q}cxd4$ 16. $\mathbb{Q}xd4$ $\mathbb{Q}xd4$ 17. $\mathbb{W}xd4$ $\mathbb{Q}b5$ 18. $\mathbb{R}fd1\pm$ White has a considerable lead in development.

16. $\mathbb{Q}b2\pm$



White has the more harmonious development and the better structure.

E4) 8... $\mathbb{Q}e6$



This is a solid way to defend the pawn, but White has a strong plan based on d2-d3 and $\mathbb{Q}g5$, exchanging the black knight that has consumed four of Black's tempos and renewing the threat against the c5-pawn.

9.d3 $\mathbb{Q}b8$

The best practical chance. The rook evacuates the long diagonal, preparing to defend the c5-pawn with ...b7-b6 if necessary. On the other hand, the a7-pawn becomes vulnerable and the rook is not entirely safe on b8 either.

9... $\mathbb{Q}g7?!$

Trying to get castled as soon as possible, but this does not contribute to the defence of the c5-pawn.

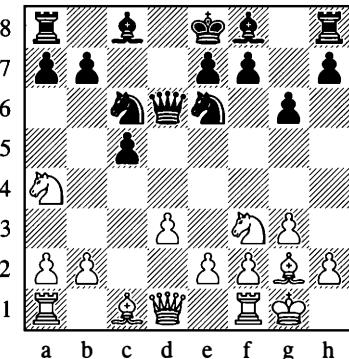
10. $\mathbb{Q}g5$ $\mathbb{Q}cd4$

10... $\mathbb{Q}xg5$ 11. $\mathbb{Q}xg5$ $\mathbb{W}d6$ 12. $\mathbb{E}c1\pm$ leaves the c5-pawn doomed, Lehtinen – Nyysti, Laukaa 2000. 12...b6?! only makes things worse because of 13.d4.

11. $\mathbb{Q}xe6$ $\mathbb{Q}xe6$ 12. $\mathbb{Q}e3$ $\mathbb{Q}d4$ 13. $\mathbb{Q}h6\pm$

Black has managed to defend his weak pawn, but the king is stuck in the centre, Leotard – Druon, corr. 1997.

9... $\mathbb{W}d6?!$, as played in Schreiber – Drzasga, corr. 1998, exposes the queen to attacks by White's minor pieces.

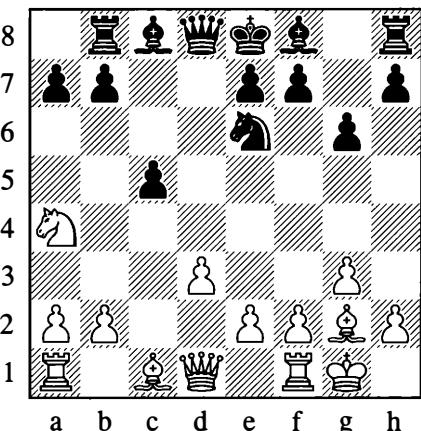


10. $\mathbb{Q}e3!N$ Threatening $\mathbb{Q}c1$. 10... $\mathbb{B}b8$ 11. $\mathbb{Q}c3$ b6 This natural defence against $\mathbb{Q}e4xc5$ allows White to open the centre and seize the initiative. 12.d4! cxd4 13. $\mathbb{Q}b5\pm$ With a huge lead in development.

10. $\mathbb{Q}g5$ $\mathbb{Q}cd4$

10... $\mathbb{Q}xg5?!$ leaves the c5-pawn in danger: 11. $\mathbb{Q}xg5$ $\mathbb{W}d6$ 12. $\mathbb{Q}c1$ b6 13. $\mathbb{Q}f4\pm$ White will win material.

11. $\mathbb{Q}xe6$ $\mathbb{Q}xe6$



12.f4!N

Since Black has defended quite well on the queenside, White opens a new front on

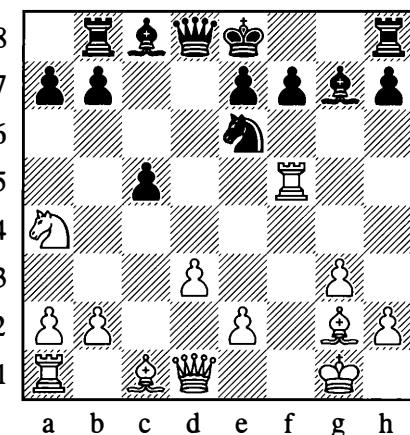
the opposite wing, taking advantage of the slightly unnatural placement of the black knight.

In Zschunke – Vogelmann, corr. 1994, White was successful with 12. $\mathbb{Q}e3$ b6 13. $\mathbb{Q}c3$, but only because Black did not notice the threat of $\mathbb{W}a4\uparrow$ followed by $\mathbb{W}xa7$. Instead 13... $\mathbb{W}d7?$ would have offered Black an acceptable position.

12... $\mathbb{Q}g7$

After 12...f5 13.e4±, threatening exf5 followed by $\mathbb{W}h5\uparrow$, the black king becomes vulnerable.

13.f5 gxf5 14. $\mathbb{Q}xf5\pm$



In order to maintain his queenside stability, Black has been forced to weaken his king's future residence, offering White an appealing target.

Conclusion

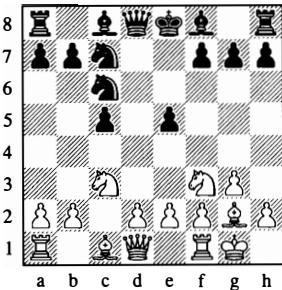
Most of the lines examined in this chapter are unsatisfactory for Black, as his piece set-up does not suit his territorial ambitions. With accurate play, White can prove that the pawns Black uses to gain space are more of a weakness than a strength.

Only in line D is more practice needed before giving a final evaluation. White's play looks pleasant, but I do not exclude the possibility that practical results will suggest transposing to the Semi-Tarrasch offers better chances of achieving an advantage.



The Open Lines

The Reversed Maroczy



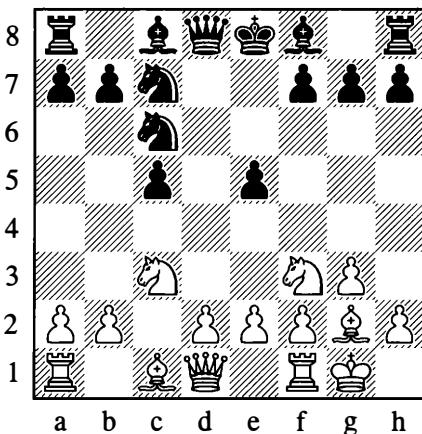
Variation Index

1.c4 c5 2.g3 ♜f6 3.♗g2 ♜c6 4.♗f3 d5 5.cxd5 ♜xd5 6.♗c3 ♜c7 7.0–0 e5

8.a3

A) 8...♜e7 9.b4	166
A1) 9...cxb4	167
A2) 9...f6	170
A3) 9...0–0	171
B) 8...♜e6 9.b4	173
B1) 9...cxb4N	173
B2) 9...♜e7	173
B3) 9...f6	174
C) 8...a5	175
D) 8...♜d6	176
E) 8...f6 9.e3!	177
E1) 9...♜e6	178
E2) 9...♜g4 10.h3	179
E3) 9...♜e7 10.d4 cxd4 11.exd4 exd4 12.♗e2	181
F) 8...♜d7	185
G) 8...♝d7 9.♝b1 f6 10.e3!N	186
G1) 10...♜e6	187
G2) 10...♜e7	187
H) 8...♝b8 9.♝b1	188
H1) 9...♜e7	189
H2) 9...f6 10.d3! ♜e7 11.♗e3	190
H21) 11...0–0	191
H22) 11...♜d7	193

1.c4 c5 2.g3 ♘f6 3.♗g2 ♘c6 4.♗f3 d5 5.cxd5
♘xd5 6.♘c3 ♘c7 7.0-0 e5



This is one of the most ambitious set-ups at Black's disposal. Despite being a tempo down, Black fights for space in the centre in the same way as White does in the Maroczy Sicilian. If allowed to complete his development without making any concessions, he would definitely be better, as demonstrated by Botvinnik in a few games.

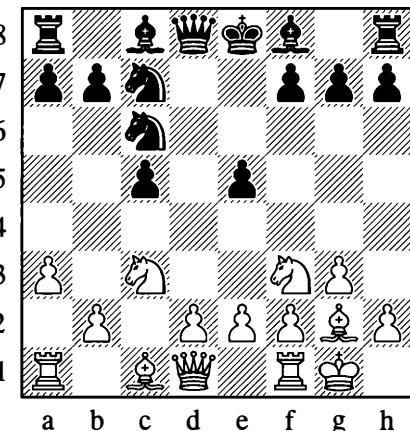
Compared to some of the sidelines examined in the previous chapter, we can notice the harmonious character of Black's set-up. The knight does not stand in the way of Black's pawns, allowing the second player to consolidate his centre with ...b6 and/or ...f6 if needed.

From the diagram position, the main theoretical lines are 8.d3 followed by ♘d2-c4 and f2-f4, and 8.b3 followed by ♘b2, ♜c1 and ♜e1-d3. I find both plans a bit too slow for my liking, and have always preferred the following dynamic approach, which I witnessed in the games of Šuba and his Spanish pupils.

8.a3

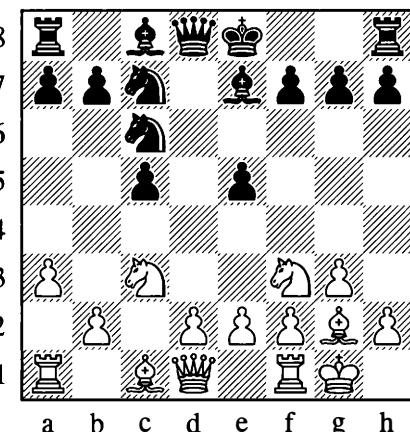
This modest-looking pawn move creates the strong positional threat of eliminating one (or even both) of Black's central pawns with 9.b4.

The tactical justification would be revealed after the continuation: 9...cxb4 10.axb4 ♜xb4 11.♘xe5! ♘xe5 12.♗a4† ♘c6 13.♗xc6† bxc6 14.♗xb4 With a strategic disaster for Black.



Black has tested numerous responses in practice. He can ignore the threat with the developing moves A) 8...♘e7 and B) 8...♘e6, prevent it physically with C) 8...a5, defend the e5-pawn with D) 8...♗d6 or E) 8...f6, or, finally, prevent 9.b4 by indirect means with F) 8...♗d7, G) 8...♗d7 or H) 8...♗b8. Quite a wide choice, indeed...

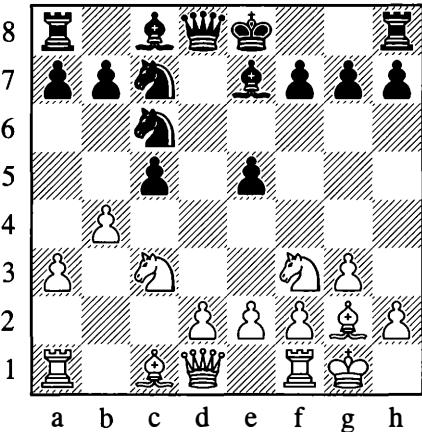
A) 8...♘e7



Black continues the development of the kingside, preparing short castling. The

drawback of this move is that after $b4xc5$, the bishop will be forced to capture on $c5$ with loss of tempo.

9.b4



After this move Black must worry not only about $b4xc5$, but also the pawn advance to $b5$, which would drive away the defender of the $e5$ -pawn. Black can choose between A1) 9... cxb4 , A2) 9...f6 and A3) 9...0–0.

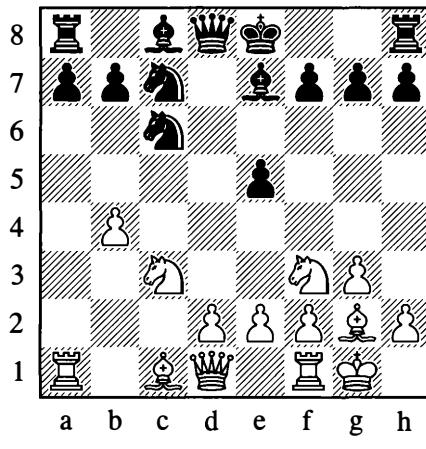
9... $\text{e}6$ transposes to line B2.

9...a6 would prevent $b4$ - $b5$, but weakening the $b6$ -square and delaying the development constitute too high a price. 10. bxc5 xc5 This loss of time is practically forced by the threat of Qa4 , not only defending the pawn but also targeting the weak $b6$ -square. 11. b2 0–0 12. $\text{e}4\pm$ With some initiative in the centre, Adamski – Oliwa, Poland 1996.

A1) 9... cxb4

Releasing the tension is not a good idea. After White's obvious answer, the a-file opens for the white rook and the threat of $b4$ - $b5$ is renewed.

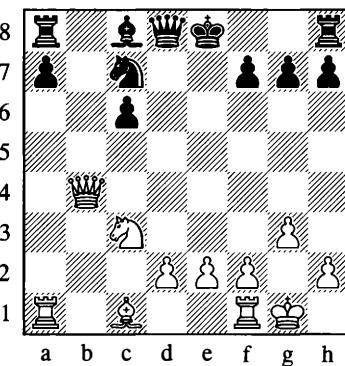
10.axb4



10...f6

The most principled move, consolidating $e5$. Its drawbacks are the weakening of the $a2$ - $g8$ diagonal and the delay in development.

As mentioned above, 10... $\text{xb4}?$ leads to unfavourable simplifications: 11. Qxe5 Qxe5 (11... xc3 loses a pawn: 12. Qxc6 bxc6 13. $\text{Qxc6}\dagger$ $\text{d}7$ 14. $\text{Qxd7}\dagger$ $\text{xd}7$ 15. $\text{dxc3}\pm$ White will install his bishop on $d4$ and double rooks on the a -file, with complete domination.) 12. $\text{Wxa4}\dagger$ $\text{c}6$ 13. $\text{Qxc6}\dagger$ bxc6 14. $\text{Wxb4}\pm$



White has the better structure (one pawn island against three black ones) and Black cannot castle easily. One game continued: 14... $\text{e}6$ 15. $\text{a}3$ $\text{c}5$ 16. $\text{e}4$ $\text{b}8$ 17. xc5 And White won a pawn while maintaining his positional advantage, Gulbrandsen – Kristiansen, Oslo 1975.

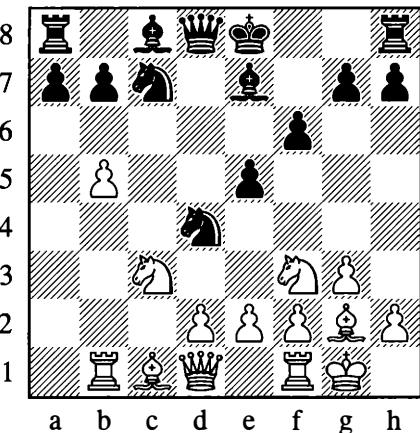
Black is also not helped by: 10... $\mathbb{Q}xb4$?! 11. $\mathbb{Q}xe5$ 0–0 12.d4± White's mobile centre is more dangerous than Black's queenside pawns, which are under strong pressure.

Another form of exchanging the e-pawn for the b-pawn is 10...0–0?!. 11.b5 $\mathbb{Q}d4$ 12. $\mathbb{Q}xe5$ $\mathbb{Q}f6$ 13.f4 $\mathbb{Q}dxb5$ 14. $\mathbb{Q}xb5$ $\mathbb{Q}xb5$ 15. $\mathbb{Q}b2$ a6 16.d4 $\mathbb{Q}d6$ 17. $\mathbb{W}d3$ ± Here, too, White's space advantage in the centre was the telling factor in Kubos – Maroszyk, Karvina 2005.

Finally, 10...a6 fails to prevent the threat: 11.b5 axb5 12. $\mathbb{E}xa8$ $\mathbb{Q}xa8$ 13. $\mathbb{Q}xb5$ $\mathbb{W}a5$ 14. $\mathbb{Q}c3$ 0–0 15. $\mathbb{Q}b2$ $\mathbb{Q}b6$ 16. $\mathbb{W}a1$ ± White has the better structure and the more harmonious development. The e5-pawn needs permanent care and the b7-pawn is also likely to become weak.

11.b5 $\mathbb{Q}d4$ 12. $\mathbb{E}b1$

White defends his pawn, creating two different threats. He may complete the minority attack with b5-b6 or drive the active knight away with e2-e3.



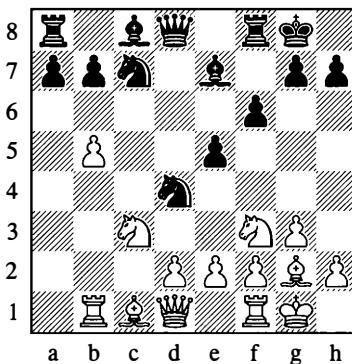
12... $\mathbb{Q}d7$

Black increases the pressure against the b5-pawn, practically forcing it to advance at once. This looks like a good practical decision,

leading to some complications, although the drawback is that, for the time being, the bishop is standing in the way of the queen.

12...0–0

This was played in Krutti – Hoang, Budapest 1993. At this point it looks promising for White to fight for space in the centre by means of:



13.e3!N $\mathbb{Q}xf3$ †

13... $\mathbb{Q}f5$ practically gives up a tempo for nothing: 14.d4 exd4 15. $\mathbb{Q}xd4$ $\mathbb{Q}xd4$ 16.exd4± And Black's active knight has been exchanged anyway. Meanwhile White is better developed and enjoys a space advantage in the centre and on the queenside.

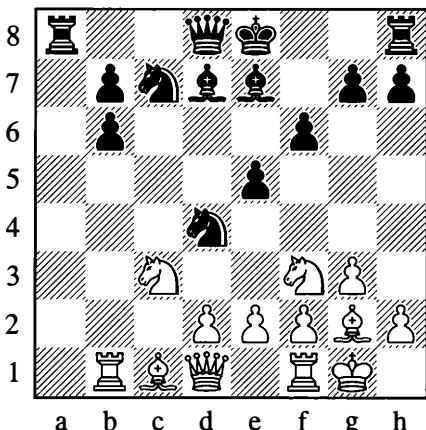
14. $\mathbb{Q}xf3$ $\mathbb{Q}f5$ 15. $\mathbb{E}a1$ $\mathbb{W}c8$

Black needs to spend a valuable tempo defending the b7-pawn.

The blocking move 15... $\mathbb{Q}d3$?! is met with the strong riposte: 16. $\mathbb{Q}xb7$! $\mathbb{E}b8$ 17. $\mathbb{Q}c6$ ± The point is that "winning" the exchange with ... $\mathbb{Q}xf1$ would leave the a7-pawn doomed, with fatal consequences. Black had better employ his bishop to assist in the elimination of the b5-pawn, with, for instance, 17...a6, but then he would just be a pawn down for no compensation.

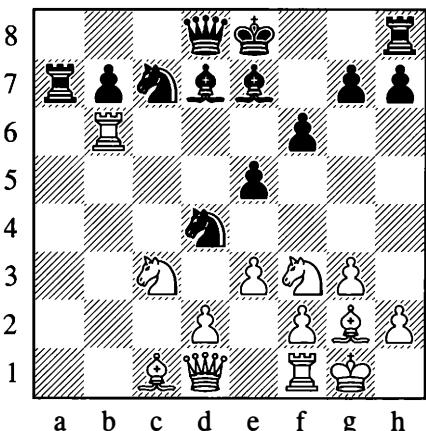
16.d4 exd4 17.exd4±

Black is slightly better developed than in the line starting with 13... $\mathbb{Q}f5$ above, but White's space advantage is telling anyway.

13.b6 axb6**14.♖xb6**

The most principled continuation. White sends his rook into a dangerous mission, relying on the fact that in the worse of the cases he will be able to sacrifice an exchange for the benefit of shaking Black's central structure.

The more cautious 14.e3 leads to more peaceful play with an edge for White, but Black's chances for a successful defence are also higher than in the main line. Play may continue: 14... ♖db5 15.♘h4 ♖xc3 16.dxc3 0–0 17.♖xb6± The structure is almost symmetrical, but Black has more weaknesses. White's only problem remains his c1-bishop, which will need some time to locate an active diagonal.

14...♗a7 15.e3**15...♗cb5!?**

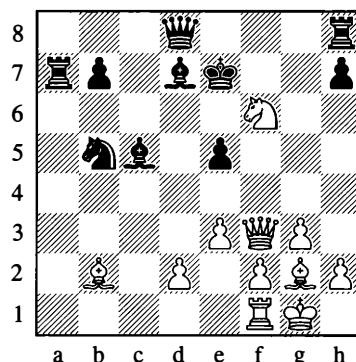
This is the most challenging reply, after which the game enters an interesting tactical phase. 15... ♖db5 is possible, but then 16.♘h4 maintains some initiative for White, while the ultra-ambitious 16.♗xe5!? also deserves attention.

In the event of other knight moves, White will play d2-d4 with a space advantage. The resulting positions may be compared with the line starting with 12...0–0 above.

16.♘d5 ♗c5

Black renews the threat against the rook without releasing the tension in the centre.

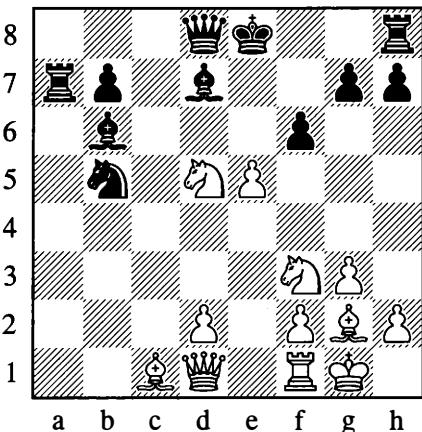
He rightly feared that the intermediate 16... ♖xf3† 17.♔xf3 would activate the white queen: 17...♗c5 18.♗xf6! Destroying the black king's hopes of reaching a safe zone. 18...gxsf6 19.♗xf6† ♔e7 20.♗b2



Black's king is vulnerable and his army is poorly coordinated, with several loose pieces. These factors more than compensate for the considerable amount of sacrificed material.

17.exd4 ♗xb6 18.dxe5

Black has won the exchange for a pawn, but he has lost all stability in the centre. Besides, most of his pieces are awkwardly placed and his king is unsafe.



18...0-0

Black has no choice but to allow the radical weakening of his kingside structure. After 18...fxe5 19.Qxe5± he cannot castle because his bishops are hanging, and the threat of Wh5† is highly unpleasant.

19.exf6 gxf6?!N

The only way to stay in the game. After 19...Exf6?! 20.Qxf6†± White had an extra pawn and the safer king in Sunye Neto – Machado, Brazil 1995.

20.Qe1

White continues to strengthen his position. With his king vulnerable and pieces scattered all over the board, Black remains in some trouble.

20...Qd4

Trying to restore the coordination of Black's forces, while preventing the enemy queen from moving to b3.

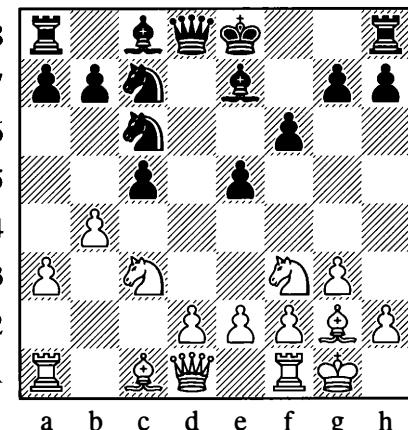
It is worth noting that Black cannot fight for the e-file with 20...Ee8? because of 21.Qb2, with decisive pressure against the f6-pawn.

21.Qxb6 Wxb6 22.Qxd4 Wxd4 23.Wh5±/±

White maintains a powerful initiative, the primary threats being Qd5† and Ee7. 23...Ea1

would leave the b7-pawn undefended, while 23...Eg4 is met by 24.Wb5! followed by Eb2, when the white bishops would be very strong.

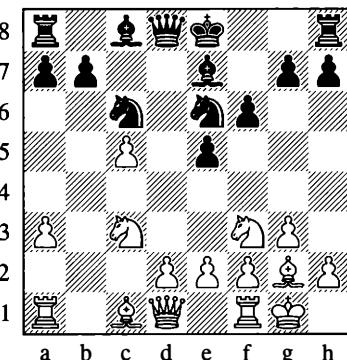
A2) 9...f6



Black defends e5 without releasing the tension. The only problem is that after White's obvious answer, he will most likely have to lose a tempo with his already developed bishop.

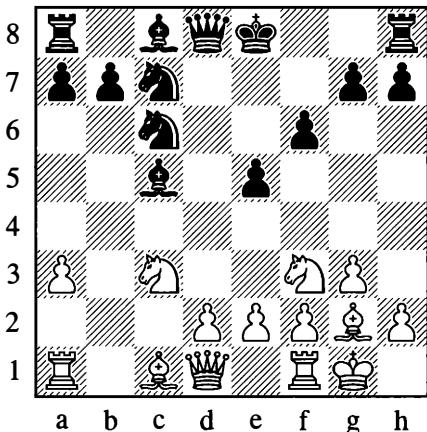
10.bxc5 Qxc5

10...Qe6 fails to solve the aforementioned problem, as long as White responds correctly.



11.e3!N Aiming to discourage ...Qxc5 in view of the possible d2-d4, with an initiative in the centre. (This is certainly stronger than 11.Qh4, as played in Schmidt – O'Kelly, Saarbrucken 1950, when Black should have continued with

the consistent 11... $\mathbb{Q}xc5$ N, leaving the knight looking stupid on h4.) 11...0–0 12. $\mathbb{Q}b2$ $\mathbb{Q}xc5$ 13. $\mathbb{B}c1\pm$ White has a harmonious development and intends to increase his pressure with $\mathbb{W}b3$ and $\mathbb{Q}e4$. Black still has to find a stable square for his c5-bishop and a way of developing his other bishop as well.



11. $\mathbb{W}b3!$

Preventing the enemy king from castling. Black has no simple solution to this problem.

11... $\mathbb{Q}b6$

11... $\mathbb{B}b8$, preparing ... $\mathbb{Q}e6$, is well met by: 12. $\mathbb{Q}b5!$ $\mathbb{Q}xb5$ 13. $\mathbb{W}xb5$ $\mathbb{W}d6$ 14.d4± Suddenly the rook's placement on b8 causes problems along the h2-b8 diagonal.

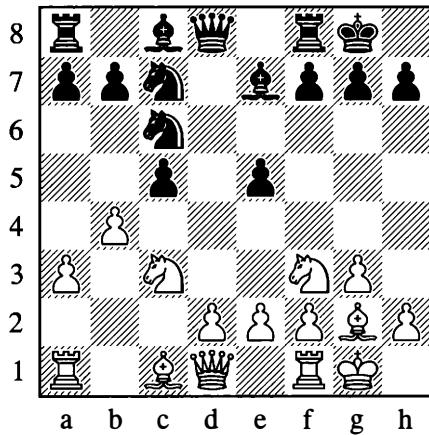
12.a4!

Gaining space and clearing the a3-square, which can be utilized by both the queen and the bishop.

12... $\mathbb{Q}e6$ 13. $\mathbb{W}a3$ $\mathbb{Q}a5$ 14. $\mathbb{Q}e4$ $\mathbb{Q}c4$
15. $\mathbb{W}b4\pm$

Black's pieces are hanging and his king remains stuck in the centre, Dizdarevic – Sibarevic, Mendrisio 1988.

A3) 9...0–0



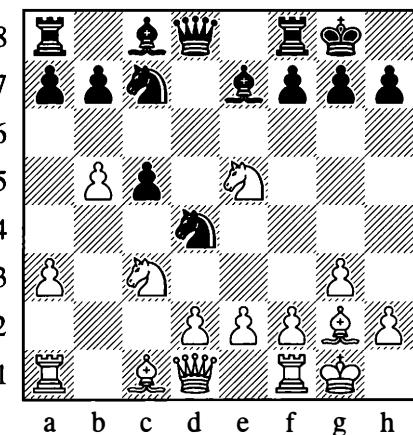
This time Black gets his king out of danger at once, without weakening the a2-g8 diagonal.

10.b5

The logical reaction – White exchanges his b-pawn for the central e5-pawn.

10.bxc5 would be less dangerous, as Black would practically be a tempo up compared with the previous line.

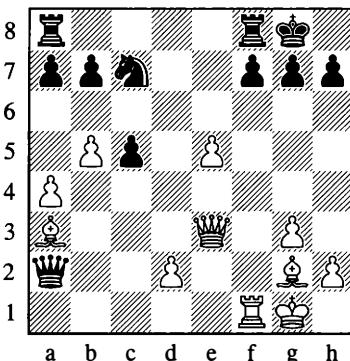
10... $\mathbb{Q}d4$ 11. $\mathbb{Q}xe5$



11... $\mathbb{Q}dxb5$

It is advisable to eliminate this pawn, which, if supported by his colleague from the a-file, could become a serious candidate for promotion.

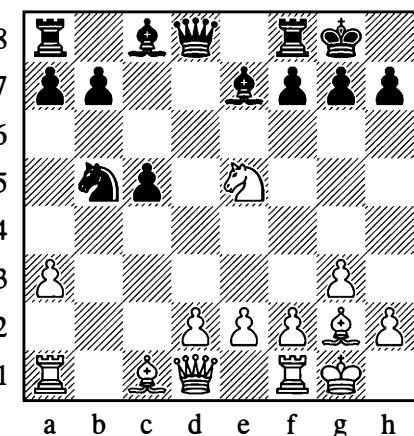
Here is an example where Black's attempt to generate counterplay is refuted: 11... $\mathbb{Q}f6$ 12.f4 $\mathbb{Q}xe5$ 13.fxe5 $\mathbb{Q}g4$ 14.a4! White defends his important b-pawn, bravely ignoring Black's tactical threat. 14... $\mathbb{Q}xe2\#$ 15. $\mathbb{Q}xe2$ $\mathbb{Q}xe2$ 16. $\mathbb{W}xe2$ $\mathbb{W}d4\#$ 17. $\mathbb{W}e3$ $\mathbb{W}xa1$ 18. $\mathbb{Q}a3$ $\mathbb{W}a2$ So far, we have followed Cu. Hansen – Mueller, Germany 2006.



19. $\mathbb{Q}xb7!$ N White increases his domination over the light squares, while also bagging a useful pawn. 19... $\mathbb{R}ad8$ 20. $\mathbb{Q}xc5$ $\mathbb{Q}fe8$ 21.d4 $\mathbb{W}xa4$ 22. $\mathbb{Q}c6\pm$ White has two powerful bishops and a mighty pawn centre.

12. $\mathbb{Q}xb5$ $\mathbb{Q}xb5$

In principle, the exchange of a flank pawn for a central one should favour White. Besides, the open b-file can be used to build up the queenside pressure.



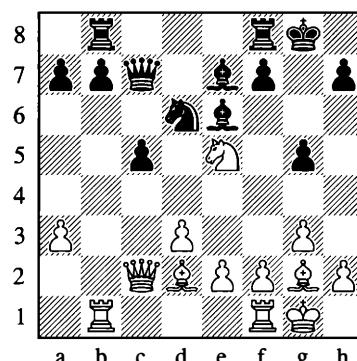
13. $\mathbb{B}b1$ $\mathbb{Q}d6$ 14.d3

Opening the path for the dark-squared bishop, while also facilitating the knight's retreat to c4.

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

Black prepares the queen's development to e7.

14... $\mathbb{W}c7$ 15. $\mathbb{Q}f4$ leaves Black in an unpleasant X-ray pin. In the following game he resorted to drastic measures to break it: 15...g5?! This attempt to fight for space weakens the kingside too much. 16. $\mathbb{Q}d2$ $\mathbb{Q}e6$ 17. $\mathbb{W}c2$ $\mathbb{Q}ab8$ This position was reached in Hakulinen – Kivistö, Finland 1989.



18. $\mathbb{Q}f3!$ N White starts playing against the weaknesses in the enemy camp. By attacking g5, he wins a tempo for the transfer of the knight towards the hole on f5. 18...h6 19.h4 f6 20. $\mathbb{Q}d4$ $\mathbb{Q}f7$ 21. $\mathbb{Q}h3\pm$ With strong domination on the light squares, in addition to the pressure along the half open queenside files.

15. $\mathbb{Q}c4$ $\mathbb{Q}xc4$

This is more or less forced, in view of the threat of $\mathbb{Q}xd6$ followed by $\mathbb{Q}xb7$.

16.dxc4

The latest structural modification favours White, notwithstanding the creation of a third pawn island. Being better developed, he

will most likely obtain control over the newly opened d-file, while the d5-square will serve as a useful outpost.

16... $\mathbb{W}e7$ 17. $\mathbb{Q}e3$ $\mathbb{B}b8$

17... $\mathbb{B}d8$ does not prevent the centralization of the queen: 18. $\mathbb{W}c2$ $\mathbb{B}b8$ 19. $\mathbb{Q}f4$ $\mathbb{Q}e5$ 20. $\mathbb{W}e4\pm$ White's initiative will soon be converted into a black pawn weakness on e5.

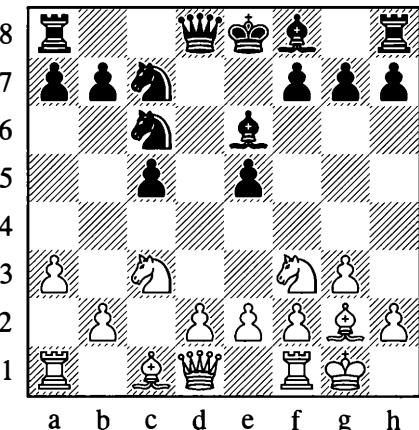
18. $\mathbb{W}d5$ $\mathbb{Q}e6$

18... $b6?$ fails to defend the c5-pawn: 19. $\mathbb{Q}xc5!$ The b-pawn is pinned and Black loses an exchange.

19. $\mathbb{W}xc5$ $b6$ 20. $\mathbb{W}xe7$ $\mathbb{Q}xe7$ 21. $\mathbb{Q}d5$

This was Andersson – Andre, Dortmund 1978. White succeeded in winning a pawn and, 20 moves later, the game.

B) 8... $\mathbb{Q}e6$



Black makes a natural move that delays the development of the king's bishop, thus aiming to win a tempo in the event of a hurried pawn exchange on c5.

9.b4

After this standard move Black can choose between B1) 9...cx b 4N, B2) 9... $\mathbb{Q}e7$ and B3) 9...f6.

B1) 9...cx b 4N

This has not yet been tested, and with good reason. Releasing the tension with the kingside still underdeveloped offers White a strong initiative in the centre.

10.ax b 4 a6

10... $\mathbb{Q}xb4$ allows the familiar 11. $\mathbb{Q}xe5\pm$.

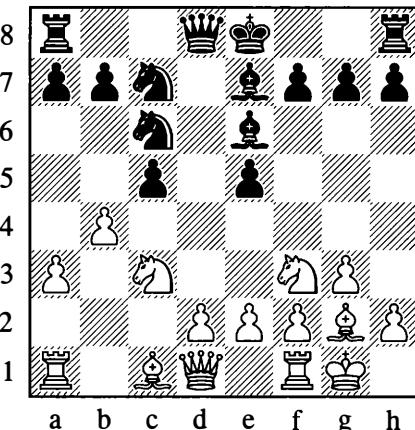
11. $\mathbb{W}a4!$

Creating the simultaneous threats of b5 and $\mathbb{Q}xe5$.

11...b5 12. $\mathbb{W}c2$ $\mathbb{Q}xb4$ 13. $\mathbb{W}e4$ f6 14.d4

White opens the centre to his favour. Black's king is still two moves away from castling and the second player has numerous weak squares and diagonals to defend.

B2) 9... $\mathbb{Q}e7$



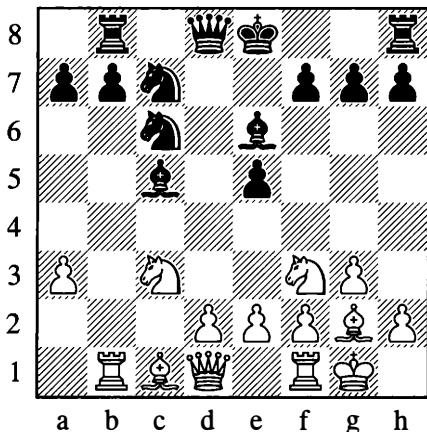
This seems inconsistent, as Black deviates from the initial plan behind ... $\mathbb{Q}e6$, namely to avoid losing a tempo with ... $\mathbb{Q}f8-e7xc5$. The current position can also be reached via the move order 8... $\mathbb{Q}e7$ 9.b4 $\mathbb{Q}e6$, which is characteristic for line A.

10.bxc5 $\mathbb{Q}xc5$ 11. $\mathbb{B}b1$

Underlining a negative side effect of the

queen's bishop's early development: the b7-pawn has become vulnerable.

11...♝b8



12.♗a4!N

The pressure against the c6-knight is not easy to neutralize.

The premature 12.♘g5 leads to a viable position for Black: 12...♞d7 13.d3 0–0 14.♗e4 ♜e7= White's initiative has reached a dead end, Sygulski – Juroszek, Wroclaw 1987.

12...♞d7

12...0–0? unexpectedly loses material after: 13.♗xb7! ♜xb7 14.♗xc6+– Black cannot defend his rook and bishop at the same time.

12...♝d7?! 13.♗g5± forces Black give away his light-squared bishop, due to the threat of ♜xb7.

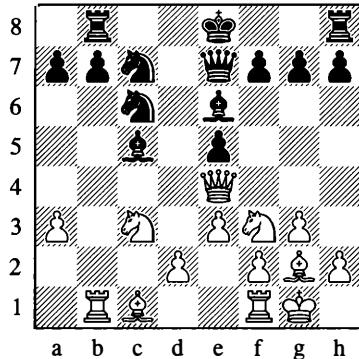
13.♗c4 ♜e7 14.e3

Preparing the thematic central expansion.

14...0–0

14...♜xa3? leaves Black's pieces hanging after: 15.♜xa3 ♜xa3 16.♗xe5 ♜xe5? 17.♗xc7 With a simultaneous attack against the rook on b8 and the knight on e5.

14...♜e6?! fails to bother the white queen. 15.♗e4± White renews the threat of d2-d4.

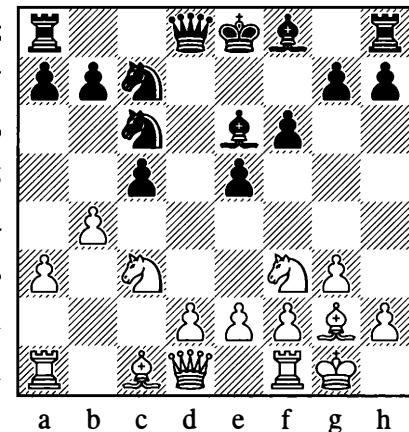


15...f5? This tempting move loses to a trick well known from the Yugoslav Attack against the Sicilian Dragon: 16.♗xc6†! bxc6 17.♗xb8† ♜f7 18.♗xe5† ♜f6 19.♗xh8 ♜xe5 20.d4† With a decisive material advantage.

15.d4±

White maintains some initiative in the centre.

B3) 9...f6



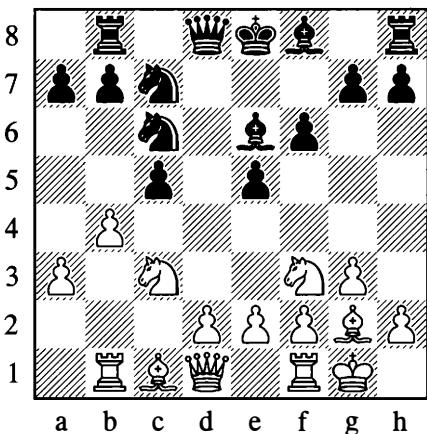
This logical move has been played in a couple of games, but in both cases White failed to react in the ideal way.

10.♗b1!N

This move indirectly defends the b-pawn while also making the capture $\text{bx}c5$ into a real threat, as the b7-pawn will hang.

10... $\text{Bb}8$

After 10... $\text{cx}b4$ 11. $\text{ax}b4$ the pawn is poisoned. 11... $\text{Qxb}4?$ loses material to 12. $\text{Bxb}4!$, while 11... $\text{Qxb}4?!$ 12. $\text{Qxe}5!$ $\text{fxe}5$ 13. $\text{Qxc}6\#$ $\text{bcx}6$ 14. $\text{Bxb}4\pm$ weakens the black structure too much.



11.b5!

This is the ideal moment for this thematic move. The insertion of the prior rook moves clearly favours White, who has covered the b3-square and defended his b-pawn in advance. At the same time, the rook on b8 will be exposed in certain lines.

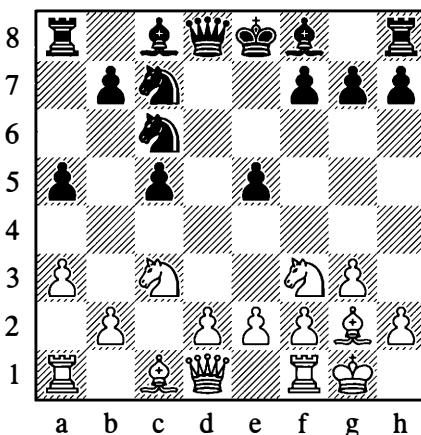
11... $\text{Qd}4$ 12.e3 $\text{Qxf}3\#$

After 12... $\text{f}5$ 13. $\text{Wa}4\pm$ Black faces the double threat of $\text{b}6\#$ and $\text{Wxa}7$.

13. $\text{Wxf}3\pm$

White threatens b5-b6, putting the b7-pawn in big danger. Black can prevent this with either 13... $\text{b}6$ or 13... $\text{Wd}6$. In both cases, White would play 14. $\text{Bd}1$, threatening to open the centre with d2-d4. After general exchanges, the queen's bishop will emerge on f4, creating an unpleasant pin.

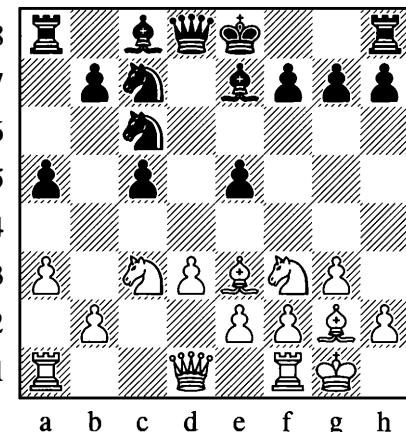
C) 8...a5



This effectively rules out the possibility of b2-b4 any time in the near future, but Black pays a hefty price in the weakening of his queenside.

9.d3 $\text{Qe}7$ 10. $\text{Bc}3$

White prepares to generate pressure with $\text{Qa}4$, leaving Black hanging in the centre.



10...f6

10... $\text{Bb}8$ 11. $\text{Qa}4$ $\text{b}6$ does not slow down White's initiative: 12. $\text{b}4!$ $\text{ax}b4$ 13. $\text{ax}b4$ $\text{Qxb}4$ 14. $\text{Qxe}5$ 0-0 White has carried out the thematic exchange of his b-pawn for Black's central pawn. The time has come to regroup in order to consolidate his advantage. 15. $\text{Bc}3$

$\mathbb{Q}f6$ 16.f4 $\mathbb{Q}cd5$ 17. $\mathbb{Q}xd5$ $\mathbb{Q}xd5$ 18. $\mathbb{Q}f2\pm$ White can combine strong queenside pressure with central expansion.

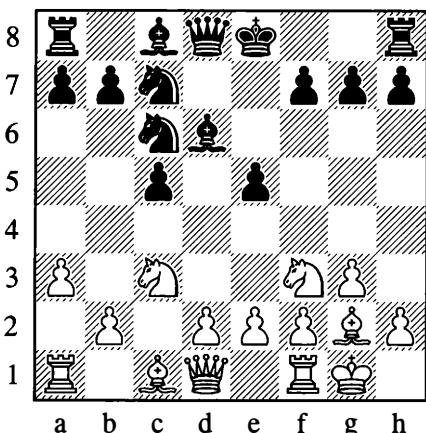
11. $\mathbb{Q}a4$ $\mathbb{Q}e6$ 12. $\mathbb{B}c1$ $\mathbb{Q}cd4$

There was no other way to defend the c5-pawn.

13. $\mathbb{Q}xd4$ $cxd4$ 14. $\mathbb{W}b3\pm$

Black is underdeveloped and his queenside is under serious pressure, Schulz – Kuntze, corr. 1990.

D) 8... $\mathbb{Q}d6$



By overprotecting his central pawn, Black indirectly prevents b2-b4. The drawback is that the bishop is exposed on d6, which helps to White develop his initiative with natural moves. It is worth mentioning that Polugaevsky faced this plan twice at a distance of ten years and demonstrated two different ways of getting an advantage.

9.d3

Preparing $\mathbb{Q}e3$ and/or $\mathbb{Q}d2-c4$.

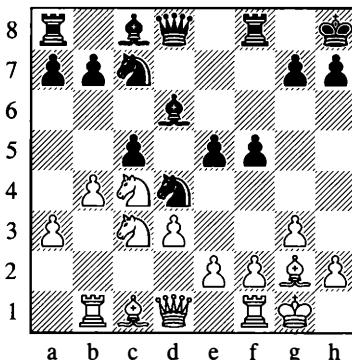
9...0-0 10. $\mathbb{Q}e3$

Before defining his plan, White makes a useful developing move.

The younger Polugaevsky preferred the

immediate 10. $\mathbb{Q}d2$, after which Black can try a few different ideas:

a) In the game Black opted for the overly ambitious: 10...f5?! This weakens the position too much, without getting attacking chances. 11. $\mathbb{Q}c4$ $\mathbb{Q}d4$ 12. $\mathbb{B}b1$ $\mathbb{Q}h8$ 13.b4±



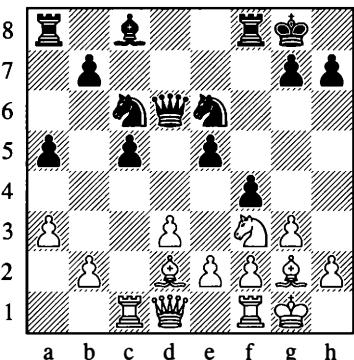
White succeeded in executing his plan in Polugaevsky – Blatny, Reykjavik 1957. Black suffers from the unfortunate combination of underdeveloped pieces with an overextended pawn formation.

b) Black's best chance is: 10... $\mathbb{Q}d7$ 11. $\mathbb{Q}c4$ $\mathbb{Q}e7$ The same position, with small difference of the a-pawn being on a2 rather than on a3, is considered to offer Black insufficient compensation after 12. $\mathbb{Q}xc6$ $\mathbb{Q}xc6$ 13. $\mathbb{Q}xe5$ $\mathbb{Q}e8$, but Black certainly has some chances based on the absence of White's light-squared bishop.

10... $\mathbb{Q}d4$

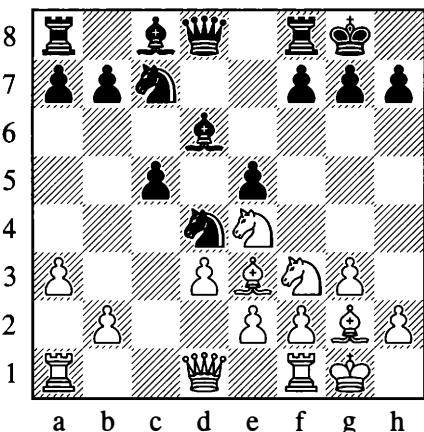
This leads to a series of simplifications, resulting in a stable advantage for White.

10... $\mathbb{Q}e6$ is more solid, but leaves the c8-bishop passive. 11. $\mathbb{Q}e4$ f5 12. $\mathbb{Q}xd6$ $\mathbb{W}xd6$ 13. $\mathbb{B}c1$ (The energetic 13.b4!N deserves serious attention: 13... $\mathbb{Q}xb4$ 14. $\mathbb{Q}xb4$ $\mathbb{W}xb4$ 15. $\mathbb{W}c2$ $\mathbb{W}d6$ 16. $\mathbb{W}a2$ Followed by $\mathbb{B}fb1$ and $\mathbb{Q}c1-a3$, with strong pressure in the style of the Benko Gambit.) 13...f4 14. $\mathbb{Q}d2$ a5



In Kharitonov – Sakaev, Kstovo 1997, a draw was prematurely agreed at this point. White could have maintained an edge with: 15.♘c3N a4 Preventing ♘b3. 16.e3 White is better developed and the absence of the dark-squared bishop leaves Black somewhat vulnerable.

11.♘e4



11...♘xf3†??!

Black gives up his strong knight for the sake of gaining time for his development. He should have developed his bishop, although this would not have guaranteed equality either, for instance:

11...♗g4N 12.♘xd4 cxd4 13.♗c1± Followed by ♘b3, with some initiative.

An alternative is: 11...♗e6N 12.b4 cxb4

13.♕xd6 ♘xd6 14.♕xd4 exd4 15.♗f4 ♘b6 16.♗xc7 ♘xc7 17.axb4± When White benefits from the better structure and a strong bishop.

12.♗xf3 ♘h3 13.♗e1 ♘e6 14.♗c1

The pressure against the c5-pawn makes Black's life unpleasant.

14...♗d4

14...♗c8 leaves the queenside vulnerable after 15.♗a4±.

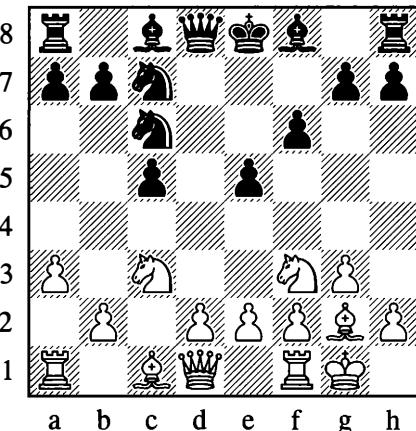
15.♘xd4 cxd4 16.♗b3 ♘c8

Sadly for Black, this is the only way to maintain material equality, since 16...♗b8 17.♗d5 ♘c7 18.♗c5± wins a pawn.

17.♗d5±

White is much better developed and dominates the light squares, Polugaevsky – Zhuravliov, USSR (ch) 1967.

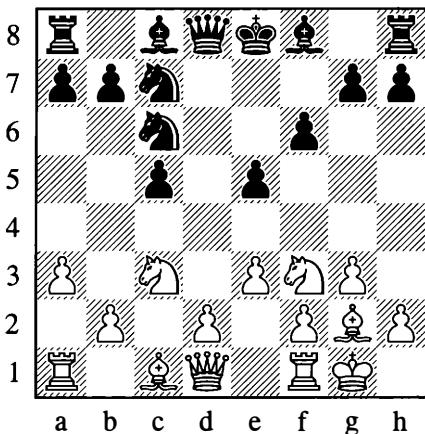
E) 8...f6



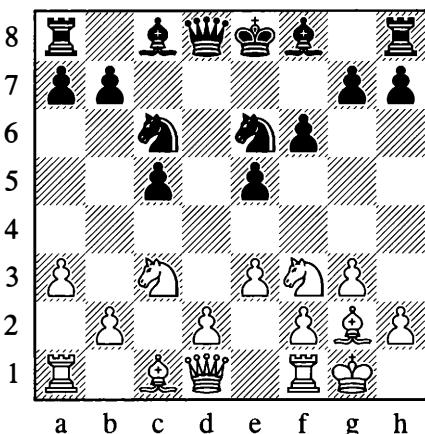
This looks very solid. Black consolidates his central pawn without committing any of his pieces. White's chances for taking over the initiative are based on the light-squared weakness created by the text move, as well as Black's lag in development.

9.e3!

Played with the obvious intention of opening the centre with d2-d4. The pawn sacrifice usually has a temporary character, and the position frequently becomes more or less symmetrical. White's arguments in claiming an advantage in this case are the pressure against the b7-pawn and the weakness of the e6-square, which will be situated on an open file.



We will examine E1) 9... $\mathbb{Q}e6$, E2) 9... $\mathbb{Q}g4$ and E3) 9... $\mathbb{Q}e7$.

E1) 9... $\mathbb{Q}e6$ 

Black increases his control over the d4-square, preventing the opening of the centre. His last move has a series of drawbacks, though. The

c8-bishop remains passive, while the general feeling is that the king's knight has made rather a lot of moves, considering that Black's overall level of development is unsatisfactory.

10. $\mathbb{Q}h4$!

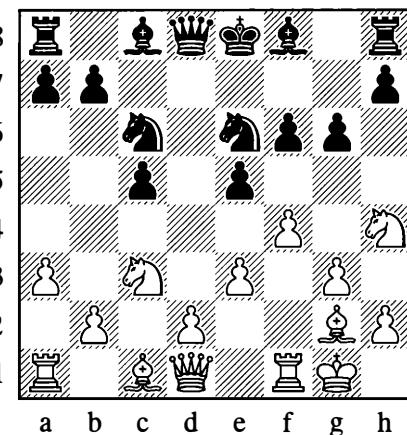
This reveals another hidden benefit of White's previous move: the d1-h5 diagonal has been opened. The threat of 11. $\mathbb{W}h5\#$ is rather unpleasant, while $\mathbb{Q}f5$ and f2-f4 are other possible ideas.

10...g6

The necessity of playing this weakening move speaks against the merits of Black's general strategy in this line.

11.f4

With the strong threat of f4-f5.

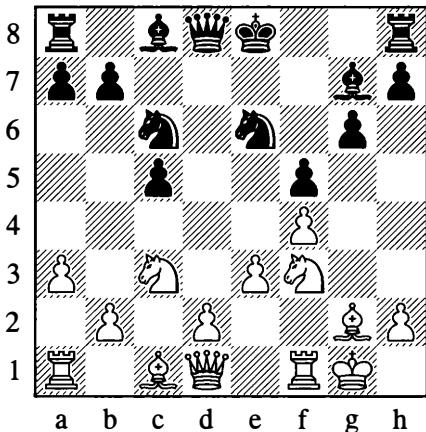
**11...exf4**

Being underdeveloped, Black is best advised to release the tension at once.

11...f5 is riskier: 12.fxe5 $\mathbb{Q}g7$ (12... $\mathbb{Q}xe5$ 13.d4!± opens the position to White's favour) 13. $\mathbb{Q}xf5$! Demolishing the black king's defence. 13...gxsf5 14. $\mathbb{W}h5\#$ $\mathbb{Q}d7$ 15. $\mathbb{E}xf5$ $\mathbb{E}f8$ 16.b4± White has three pawns for a knight and a strong attack. After the exchange of the c5-pawn, his massive centre will start advancing.

12.gxf4 f5 13.Qf3 Qg7

Black has consolidated his kingside and is ready to get castled. White's structure in the centre looks a bit unusual, but it restricts the enemy knights quite effectively. The e5-square is weak and the f5-pawn keeps the c8-bishop blocked in. White next challenge will be to find a way to develop his queen's bishop.

**14.b4!**

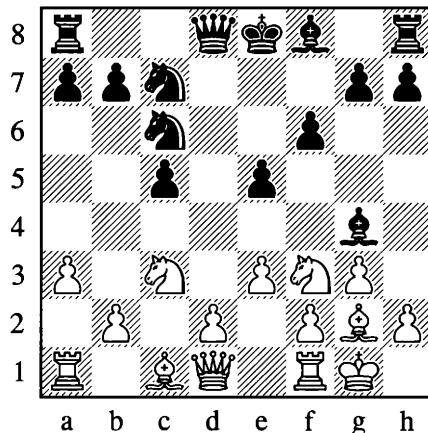
Having carried out both thematic breaks f2-f4 and b2-b4 before Black has castled counts as a major success for White.

14...0–0

14...cxb4 15.axb4 Qxb4 would only have added fuel to White's initiative: 16.Wa4† Qc6 17.Qa3± The black king is stuck in the centre, and White will continue his attack with d4 followed by Qb5 or d4-d5.

15.Wb3 Qh8 16.Qb2±

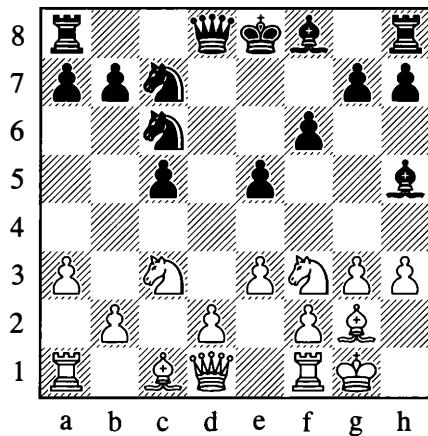
Gamundi – Magem, Andorra 1997. White is better developed, with excellent control over the central squares. After the predictable exchange of the dark-squared bishops, the black king will also become vulnerable,

E2) 9...Qg4

Black hopes to draw some benefit from the slight weakness induced by White's response. However, this move suffers from a similar drawback to the previous line: it delays Black's kingside development too much.

10.h3

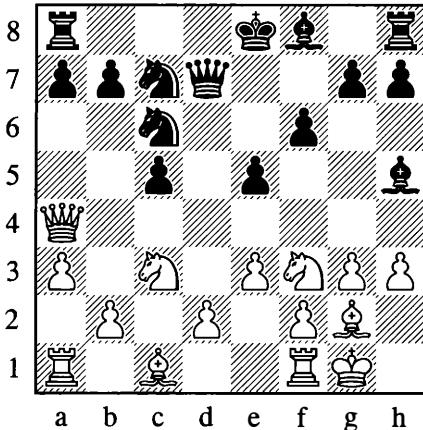
White should force the bishop to declare its intentions. Now Black can choose between E21) 10...Qh5 and E22) 10...Qe6.

E21) 10...Qh5

With this move Black maintains the pin of the knight, but leaves the opposite wing slightly weakened.

11.Wa4 Wd7

This position was reached in Bolbochan – Petrosian, Stockholm 1962.



12.b4!N

This is the best way to exploit the alignment of pieces along the a4-e8 diagonal. The tactics work well for White, as demonstrated by the following variations.

12...cxb4 13.axb4 ♜xb4

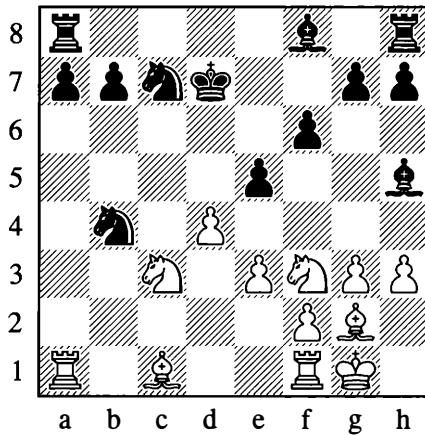
13...♜xb4 would lead to the ruination of Black's structure: 14.♛xe5! fxe5 15.♝xc6 bxc6 16.♝xb4 ♜xh3 Grabbing this pawn brings Black little, if any consolation. 17.♞a3 0–0–0 18.♝e4± Threatening ♜c5 with a strong attack.

Black's insufficient development renders the counterattacking 13...b5 ineffective: 14.♝xb5 ♜xb5 15.♝xb5 ♜b8 16.♝a4 ♜xb4 17.♝d1± This paradoxical retreat creates the threat of ♜(x)e5, while the tempo-gaining ♜a3 remains on the agenda as well.

14.♝xd7† ♜xd7

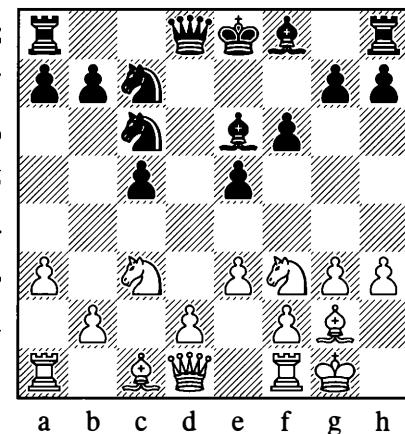
The necessity of this move is a direct consequence of Black's decision to place his influential light-squared bishop on the rather remote h5-square.

15.d4!±



With this move White opens the centre to his favour. Black is under strong pressure across the board, and his king looks destined to remain vulnerable for some time. It is obvious that White enjoys more than sufficient compensation for the pawn.

E22) 10...♝e6



Black hopes to win a tempo by attacking the h3-pawn with ...♝d7, but White will strike first.

11.d4! exd4 12.exd4 cxd4 13.♝e2 d3

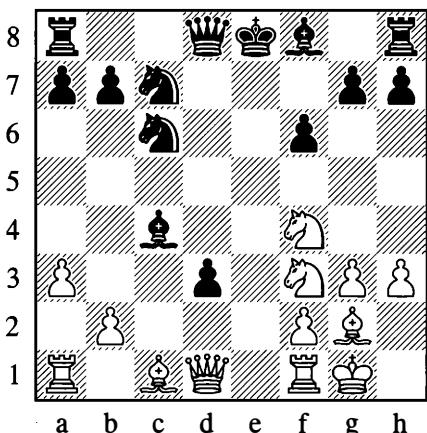
If 13...♝d7, White can ignore the threat with: 14.♝fxd4 ♜xd4 (14...♜xh3 15.♝xh3 ♜xh3 is too risky on account of 16.♝xc6 bxc6 17.♝f4± when the black king is in serious

danger.) 15. $\mathbb{W}xd4$ $\mathbb{W}xd4$ 16. $\mathbb{Q}xd4$ And White has a strong initiative in the centre. Black fails to neutralize the fianchetto bishop with 16... $\mathbb{Q}d5$ on account of the elegant 17. $\mathbb{Q}b5!$.

14. $\mathbb{Q}f4$ $\mathbb{Q}c4$

This looks like a departure from Black's initial idea, but the alternative 14... $\mathbb{W}d7$ turns out to be ineffective: 15. $\mathbb{E}e1$ 0–0–0 16. $\mathbb{Q}xe6$ $\mathbb{Q}xe6$ 17. b4 $\mathbb{Q}b8$ 18. $\mathbb{W}b3\pm$ White dominates the light squares. The black king is likely to suffer an attack at some point, while his extra pawn is unlikely to survive for much longer.

The present position was reached in Marin – Musat, Baile Tusnad 2004. At this point I missed a strong opportunity with:



15. b3!N

Forcing the bishop onto a passive square and preparing the development of the queen's rook along the second rank.

15... $\mathbb{Q}a6$ 16. $\mathbb{E}a2$ $\mathbb{Q}e7$

16...g5?! allows White to start a promising sacrificial attack with 17. $\mathbb{E}e1\uparrow$ $\mathbb{Q}e7$ 18. $\mathbb{Q}xg5!$ $\mathbf{fxg}5$ 19. $\mathbb{W}h5\uparrow$ when Black's poorly coordinated army cannot offer adequate defence to the king.

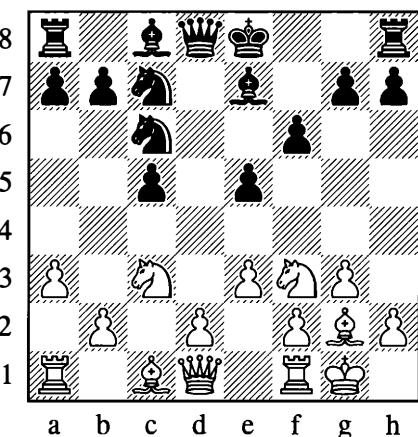
17. $\mathbb{E}d2$ 0–0 18. $\mathbb{Q}xd3$

A typical situation. White has retrieved the pawn and maintains some initiative in a symmetrical position.

18... $\mathbb{W}e8$ 19. $\mathbb{E}e1$ $\mathbb{W}f7$ 20. $\mathbb{Q}f4$ $\mathbb{E}ad8$ 21. $\mathbb{Q}b2\pm$

Both sides have completed their development, but White's coordination is superior and the e6-square is weak.

E3) 9... $\mathbb{Q}e7$

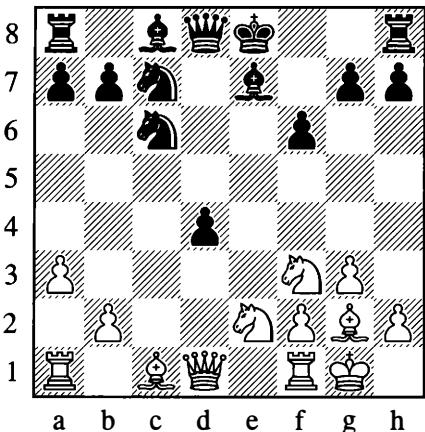


This is the most popular continuation. Black does not try to prevent his opponent's thematic break, and instead focuses on completing development and castling as soon as possible.

10. d4 $\mathbb{C}xd4$ 11. $\mathbb{E}xd4$ $\mathbb{E}xd4$

11... $\mathbb{Q}xd4$ does not seem to have been tried in practice, probably on account of the fact that the long diagonal is opened for the g2-bishop. Here is a possible continuation: 12. $\mathbb{Q}xd4$ $\mathbb{E}xd4$ 13. $\mathbb{Q}e2$ $\mathbb{Q}e6$ 14. $\mathbb{W}b3$ Black's castling becomes problematic. 14...d3 15. $\mathbb{Q}f4$ $\mathbb{Q}c5$ 16. $\mathbb{W}c3\pm$ Black's knight has been jumping around quite a lot, without achieving any stability. White intends to continue with $\mathbb{E}e1$ or $\mathbb{Q}e3$, retrieving the pawn soon, while maintaining a strong initiative.

12. $\mathbb{Q}e2$

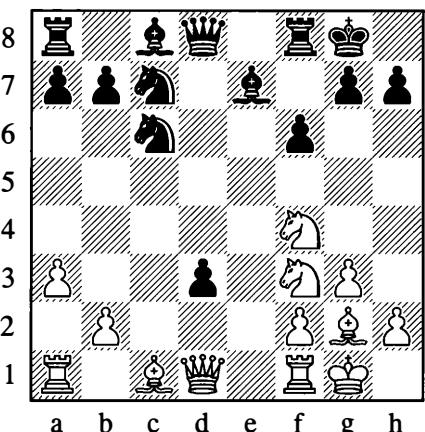


White threatens to retrieve the pawn, which would ensure him of the more pleasant game in the near-symmetrical position. Black can try to cut across this plan by means of either E31) 12...d3 or E32) 12... \mathbb{Q} e6.

E31) 12...d3

In this line Black is willing to return his extra pawn in order to keep the white knights away from the d4-square.

13. \mathbb{Q} f4 0–0



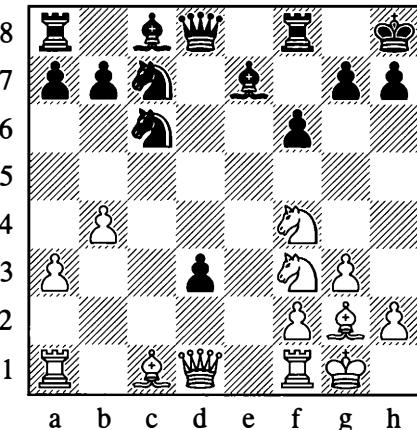
14.b4!

Restricting the enemy minor pieces and preparing $\mathbb{W}b3(\dagger)$ and/or $\mathbb{Q}a2-d2$.

White should not be in a hurry to retrieve the pawn, as 14. \mathbb{Q} xd3 \mathbb{Q} e6 offers Black normal development and roughly equal chances.

14... \mathbb{Q} h8

14... \mathbb{Q} f5 can be met by 15. \mathbb{Q} h4, leaving the bishop without a convenient retreat square.



15. \mathbb{Q} e1!N

This is the most rational utilization of the rooks. The main threat is $\mathbb{Q}e3xd3$.

15. \mathbb{Q} a2?! a5 offered Black sufficient counterplay in Marin – Mikhalevski, Internet (rapid) 2001. The queen's rook will not be able to keep the a3-pawn defended and attack the d3-pawn at the same time.

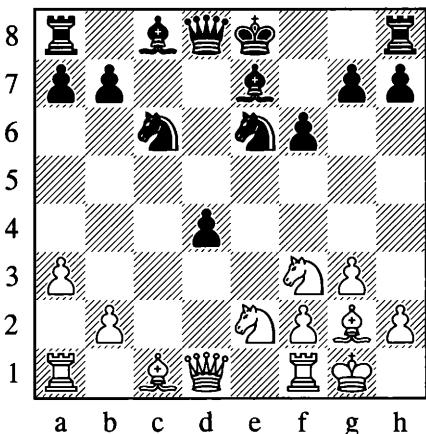
15...g5!?

This is a principled response. Black is attempting to disrupt the coordination in White's camp.

15...a5 is ineffective in view of 16.bxa5 $\mathbb{Q}xa5$ 17. $\mathbb{Q}e3\pm$ with pleasant play for White.

16. \mathbb{Q} xd3 \mathbb{Q} f5 17. \mathbb{Q} b2 $\mathbb{W}xd1$ 18. \mathbb{Q} xd1!±

This knight had a curious trajectory. The last move clears the way for $\mathbb{Q}b2$ (with the threat of $\mathbb{Q}xg5$) as well as preparing $\mathbb{Q}e3$. Black's pieces are slightly unstable and he has not yet equalized fully.

E32) 12...♞e6

The knight offers some temporary support to the central pawn and is ready to answer ♜f4 with ...♝xf4. As usual, the drawback of placing the knight on e6 is that the scope of the c8-bishop is severely restricted.

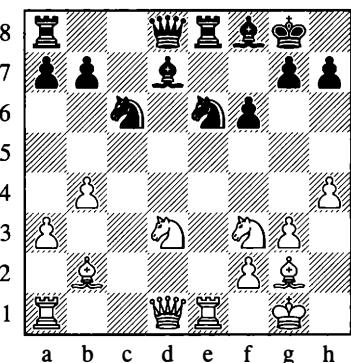
13.b4

This thematic move prepares ♜b2 and/or b5.

13...d3

Aiming to distract White from the natural course of developing.

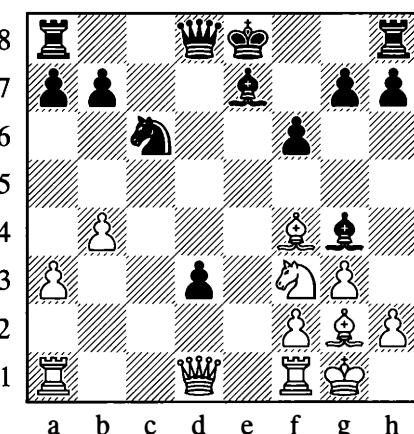
The more restrained 13...0–0 allows White to strengthen his position at his own convenience.
14.♜b2 d3 15.♝c1 ♜d7 16.♝e1 ♜e8 17.♝xd3 ♜f8 18.h4!±



White has the more harmonious position and pressure against both enemy wings. The last move is the start of a highly effective plan. Black will have a tough choice between allowing the undermining of the f6-square with h5-h6 and severely weakening his light squares with ...h6. In Cu. Hansen – Milos, Novi Sad (ol) 1990, White went on to win convincingly.

14.♝f4 ♜xf4 15.♛xf4

White has obtained a lead in development, but will require a few tempos to round up again the enemy pawn. Black can try E321) 15...♝g4 and E322) 15...0–0.

E321) 15...♝g4

With this move Black prepares ...♝d7 followed by ...♝d8, reinforcing his extra pawn.

16.♛b3

Preventing the opponent from castling and connecting rooks.

16...♝d7 17.♝fe1

For the time being White is in no hurry to regain his pawn. The text move activates his rook while preventing ...♝e6.

17...♝d8

In view of the novelty suggested below, Black might do well to consider:

17... $\mathbb{a}6!?$ N

Stabilizing the position of the knight on c6. However, I still like White's chances in the following line:

18. $\mathbb{E}ad1 \mathbb{E}d8$ 19. $\mathbb{W}c3!$

The queen steps out of range of the enemy knight, creating the threat of $\mathbb{E}e3$.

The immediate 19. $\mathbb{E}e3$ $\mathbb{Q}d4$ offers Black chances to equalize.

19... $\mathbb{Q}d4$

The only way to cross White's intentions.

20. $\mathbb{Q}xd4$ $\mathbb{Q}xd1$ 21. $\mathbb{Q}c6!$

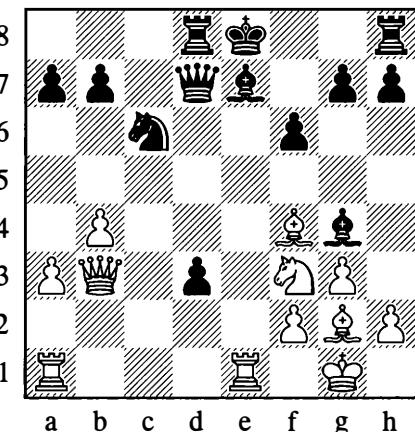
An elegant tactical resource.

21... $\mathbb{E}c8$ 22. $\mathbb{E}xd1$ $bxc6$ 23. $\mathbb{E}xd3$ $\mathbb{W}e6$ 24. $\mathbb{E}e3$

$\mathbb{W}d7$ 25. $\mathbb{W}c4$

White has ample compensation for the sacrificed exchange. Black's king is stuck in the centre and his queenside pawns are weak.

Let us now return to the main line. At this point, in Marin – Marjanovic, Bucharest 2000, I eschewed the most energetic continuation:



18.b5!N

I rejected this move because it seemed to offer Black a choice of strong continuations, but a closer look reveals that none of them is really satisfactory.

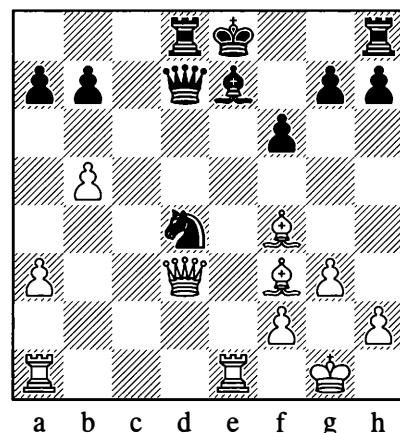
18... $\mathbb{Q}xf3$

18... $\mathbb{Q}a5?!$ leads to a tactical disaster after: 19. $\mathbb{W}b4!$ b6 20. $\mathbb{E}xe7!?$ Decoying the enemy queen into a deadly pin. 20... $\mathbb{W}xe7$ 21. $\mathbb{E}el$ $\mathbb{Q}e6$ 22. $\mathbb{Q}h3\pm$ And White wins material.

Alternatively, after 18... $\mathbb{Q}d4?!$ 19. $\mathbb{Q}xd4$ $\mathbb{W}xd4$ White has the calm 20. $\mathbb{Q}d2\pm$. With this move he blocks the opponent's dangerous pawn and threatens $\mathbb{Q}xb7$ as well as $\mathbb{E}e4$ or $\mathbb{E}ac1$. With his king stuck in the centre, Black is in trouble.

19. $\mathbb{Q}xf3$ $\mathbb{Q}d4$ 20. $\mathbb{W}xd3$

White has retrieved the pawn while maintaining an edge in development.



20... $\mathbb{W}xb5$

With this move Black eliminates a dangerous candidate for promotion while hoping to obtain some relief by trading queens.

Simplifying with 20... $\mathbb{Q}xf3?!$ is not a solution. After 21. $\mathbb{W}xf3+-$ Black does not have time for 21...0–0 in view of 22. $\mathbb{E}ad1$ $\mathbb{W}e8$ (forced, in order to keep the bishop defended.) 23. $\mathbb{W}xb7$, with a decisive advantage.

20...g5 fails to spoil White's coordination because of the intermediate check: 21. $\mathbb{Q}h5+$ $\mathbb{Q}f8$ 22. $\mathbb{Q}d2\pm$ Black is poorly coordinated and suffers from numerous weaknesses.

21.♗xb5† ♗xb5 22.♗ab1 ♗d4 23.♗h5†!

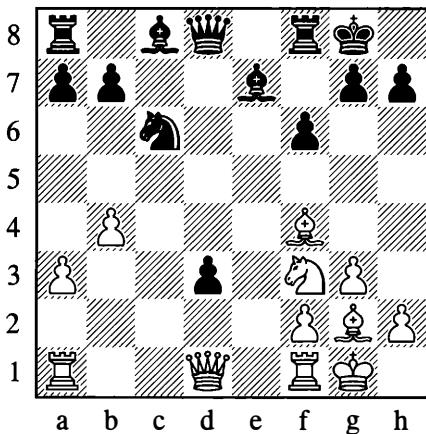
An important intermediate move, taking the bishop out of the knight's range.

23.♗xb7± gives White a solid endgame advantage, but the text move allows him to invade the seventh rank.

23...g6 24.♗xb7±

Black faces an unpleasant defensive task.

E322) 15...0–0



The previous variation makes quite a convincing argument in favour of this decision to evacuate his king from the centre without delay. In the resulting position the weakness of the a2-g8 diagonal offers White the useful possibility of winning a tempo for attacking the d3-pawn by means of ♘b3†. However, the first priority will be to harass the c6-knight.

16.b5 ♘e5

16...♘a5

This is an important alternative, preventing ♘b3†. The drawback is that the knight is passively placed on the edge of the board.

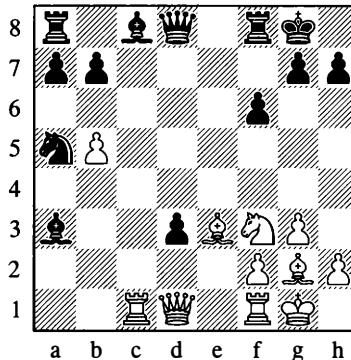
17.♗c1

Preparing ♘c3xd3, while also preventing the activation of Black's pieces with ...♘c5 or ...♘c4.

17...♗d6

17...♗xa3?! 18.♗c3 leaves Black's pieces vulnerable. 18...♗b4 19.♗xd3 ♘e7 20.♗a4!± Remarkably, Black cannot avoid material losses, for instance: 20...a6? 21.♗b1 ♘f5 22.♗e3 And White wins.

18.♗e3 ♘xa3



19.♗a1!

With the bishop on e3, White plans to provoke ...b6 and continue with ♘d4-c6.

19...♗e7 20.♗a4 b6 21.♘d4 ♘d7 22.♗fd1!±

For the time being White is not interested in giving up his splendid bishop for the passive enemy rook. After the intended ♘xd3 followed by ♘c6, White will have more than sufficient compensation for the missing pawn.

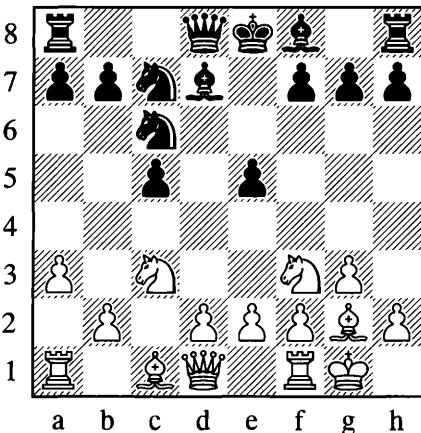
17.♗b3† ♘h8 18.♗ad1 ♘g4

After 18...♗xf3† 19.♗xf3 ♘f5 20.♗xb7 ♘d7 21.♘c6±, White's queenside majority is more dangerous than Black's d-pawn.

19.♗xe5 fxe5 20.♗xd3±

White has restored material equality and has an active position with the better structure. In Lobron – Smejkal, Bundesliga 1995, White eventually capitalized on his persistent advantage in an endgame with opposite-coloured bishops.

F) 8...♗d7



Black defends the a4-e8 diagonal in advance, preventing the usual tactics that can occur after 9.b4 cxb4 10.axb4 ♖xb4.

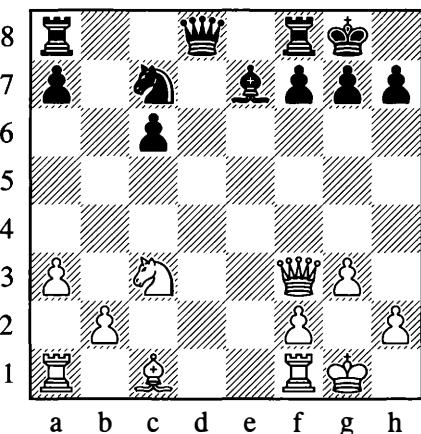
9.e3!

This is the best way to take advantage of Black's decision to block the d-file.

9...♗e7 10.d4 cxd4 11.exd4 exd4 12.♘xd4 0-0

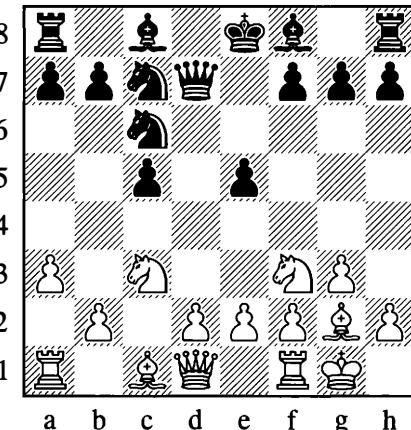
12...♘xd4 would avoid pawn weaknesses, but allow the activation of White's pieces: 13.♗xd4 ♘e6 14.♗g4 0-0 15.♗e3± With an enduring initiative for White.

13.♘xc6 ♗xc6 14.♘xc6 bxc6 15.♗f3±



White has the more active position and the c6-pawn is weak, Filip – Vadasz, Budapest 1977.

G) 8...♗d7

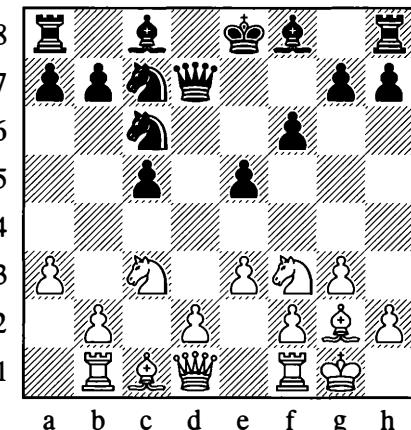


This is an old idea of Korchnoi. Black defends the a4-e8 diagonal without releasing the pressure along the d-file. White needs to play energetically in order to take advantage of the slightly unusual placement of the queen.

9.♗b1 f6

Parrying the renewed threat of b2-b4. Now White has to make an important decision, and my investigations led me to conclude that a new approach was needed.

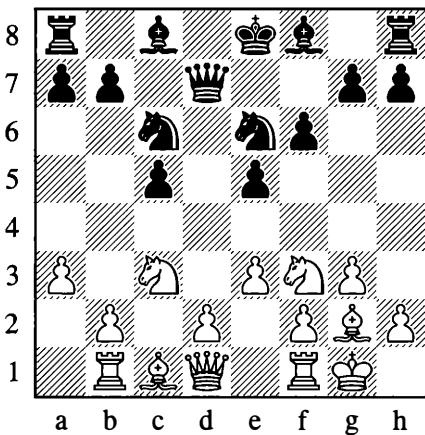
10.e3!N



10.d3 is too slow and allows Black justify his creative opening strategy: 10... $\mathbb{Q}e7$ 11. $\mathbb{Q}d2$ $\mathbb{B}b8$ 12. $\mathbb{W}c2$ b6 13. $\mathbb{E}fc1$ $\mathbb{Q}b7$ 14. $\mathbb{Q}e4$ $\mathbb{Q}d5$ 15. $\mathbb{W}c4$ $\mathbb{Q}d4$ With at least equal play for Black, Smyslov – Korchnoi, USSR Ch 1967.

With the text move White intends to combine the threats of b4 and d4. Black can choose between G1) 10... $\mathbb{Q}e6$ and G2) 10... $\mathbb{Q}e7$.

G1) 10... $\mathbb{Q}e6$



We are familiar with this move and its drawbacks from the line E1.

11. $\mathbb{Q}h4!$

The same reaction as in the aforementioned line.

11... $\mathbb{Q}d6$

Thanks to the position of his queen, Black need not fear the check on h5, which can now be met by ... $\mathbb{W}f7$, with acceptable play. However, it turns out that White can strike in an unexpected area of the board...

12.b4!

This thematic yet surprising move underlines the awkwardness of Black's development.

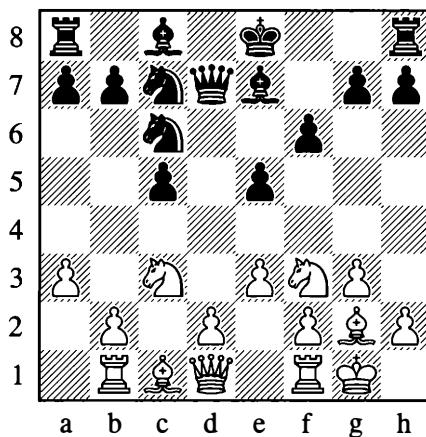
12... $\mathbb{C}xb4$ 13. $\mathbb{A}xb4$ $\mathbb{Q}xb4$ 14. $\mathbb{Q}e4$ 0–0

This leads to depressing consequences, but the alternatives were also unappealing. For instance, 14... $\mathbb{Q}e7$ runs into 15. $\mathbb{W}h5\#$ while 14... $\mathbb{Q}f8$ can be met by 15.f4, with a dangerous white initiative.

15. $\mathbb{Q}xd6$ $\mathbb{W}xd6$ 16. $\mathbb{Q}f5$ $\mathbb{W}c5$ 17. $\mathbb{Q}a3$ a5 18. $\mathbb{W}b3\pm$

White will retrieve the sacrificed pawn, maintaining a very active position and good chances to win the b7-pawn.

G2) 10... $\mathbb{Q}e7$



This is the critical continuation. Black continues developing, inviting White to carry out and justify his planned sacrifice.

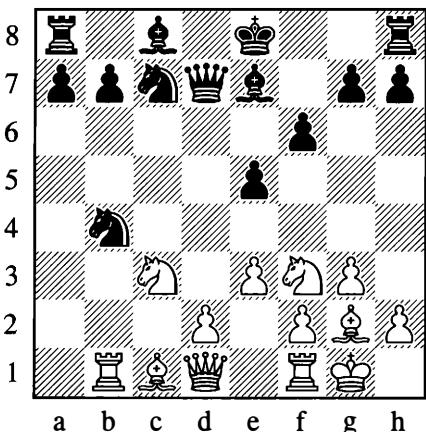
11.b4

White should accept the challenge.

11... $\mathbb{C}xb4$ 12. $\mathbb{A}xb4$ $\mathbb{Q}xb4$

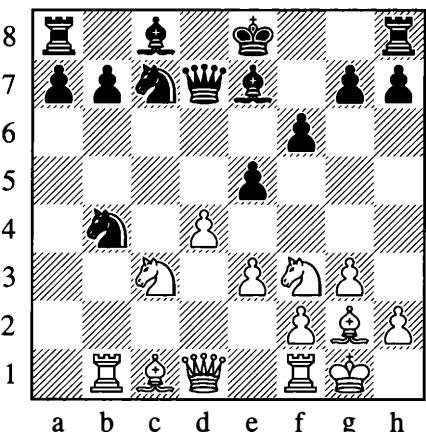
12... $\mathbb{Q}xb4$ allows White to regain his pawn immediately with the thematic tactical strike: 13. $\mathbb{Q}xe5!$ fxe5 14. $\mathbb{Q}xc6$ $\mathbb{W}xc6$ With this move Black maintains the integrity of his queenside structure. (14... $\mathbb{B}xc6$ would equate to a strategic surrender. 15. $\mathbb{W}h5\#$ White forces the queen exchange in order to reduce the relevance of his missing light-squared bishop. 15... $\mathbb{W}f7$ 16. $\mathbb{W}xf7\#$ $\mathbb{Q}xf7$ 17. $\mathbb{Q}xb4\#$ Black has too many

pawn islands.) 15. $\mathbb{W}h5\#$ $\mathbb{W}g6$ 16. $\mathbb{W}xe5\#$ $\mathbb{Q}e7$ 17. $\mathbb{W}xc7$ $\mathbb{W}f7$ 18.e4 0–0 19. $\mathbb{Q}d5\pm$ With a strong white initiative.



13.d4!

Having diverted the black forces away from the d4-square, White strikes in the centre.



13...a5

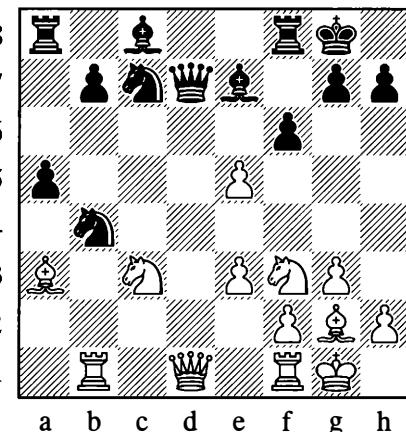
The best practical chance. Black returns the pawn, preparing to castle.

13...0–0? loses material to 14. $\mathbb{B}xb4$ $\mathbb{Q}xb4$ 15. $\mathbb{W}b3\#$.

13...exd4 allows White too much activity after: 14. $\mathbb{Q}xd4$ a5 15. $\mathbb{W}b3\pm$ The king is stuck

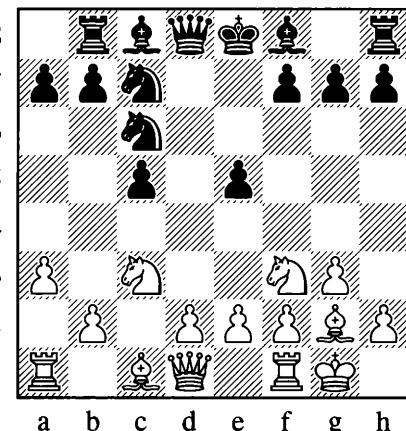
in the centre and White can easily increase his pressure with $\mathbb{Q}fd1$ followed by $\mathbb{Q}a3$.

14.dxe5 0–0 15. $\mathbb{Q}a3\pm$



White is better developed and exerts strong pressure on the queenside and in the centre.

H) 8... $\mathbb{B}b8$



This is a rather subtle defence. Black intends to meet 9.b4 with 9...cx b4 10.axb4 $\mathbb{Q}xb4$, banking on the fact that the usual 11. $\mathbb{Q}xe5$? does not work, as after 11... $\mathbb{Q}xe5$ 12. $\mathbb{W}a4\#$ $\mathbb{Q}c6$ 13. $\mathbb{Q}xc6\#$ $\mathbb{B}xc6-$ the bishop is defended.

The hidden drawback of Black's last move – aside from the fact that it does not contribute

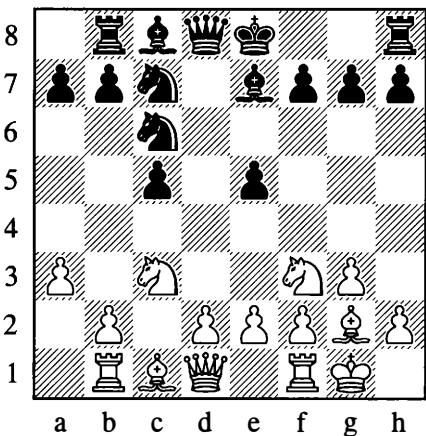
to his development directly – is the weakening of the a7-pawn.

9.♗b1

With this move White renews the threat of b4. Black faces now the difficult task of deciding in which of the systems examined above the insertion of the rook moves would favour him. It should be mentioned that while the move ♘b1 is generally useful, the rook can sometimes find itself under attack after a well-timed ...♝f5. We will examine H1) 9...♝e7 and H2) 9...f6.

By comparison with line D, after 9...♝d6?! 10.d3 it is clear that ♘b1 is more useful than ...♝b8.

H1) 9...♝e7



This developing move does not prevent White's queenside attack.

10.b4 ♛f5

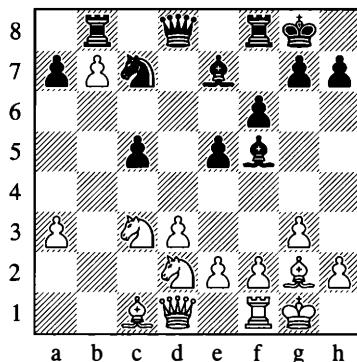
Gaining time by attacking the rook is one of Black's typical ideas, but in this concrete case it is not effective.

11.b5!

The most active answer. White carries out his main plan without paying attention to Black's threat.

11...♝d4

11...♝xb1 12.bxc6 would leave Black in trouble, for instance: 12...♞f5 13.cxb7 f6 14.d3 0–0 15.♗d2±

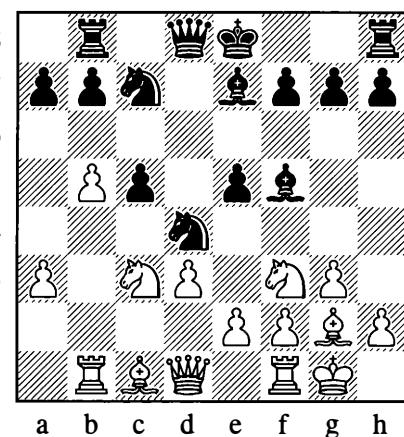


White will easily increase his dominance with moves like ♖c4 and ♜a4/b3. His mighty b7-pawn more than makes up for the missing exchange.

Regarding the excursion of the black bishop to b1, I am reminded of the following remark by Tal: "I enjoy playing positions in which Black's pieces come to visit me and stay late!" Obviously he had in mind visits to unimportant areas of the board, similar to having offside pieces.

12.d3

After this calm move, the bishop's presence on f5 is not especially impressive.



12...f6

With this move Black aims to maintain his centralization. Releasing the tension does not make his life any easier: 12... $\mathbb{Q}xf3\#$ 13. $\mathbb{Q}xf3$ 0-0 14.b6 axb6 15. $\mathbb{Q}xb6\pm$ With a promising queenside initiative.

So far, we have followed Romanishin – Oleksienko, Lvov 2006.

13.b6!

This is the most active method of justifying White's previous play.

13...axb6 14. $\mathbb{Q}xb6$

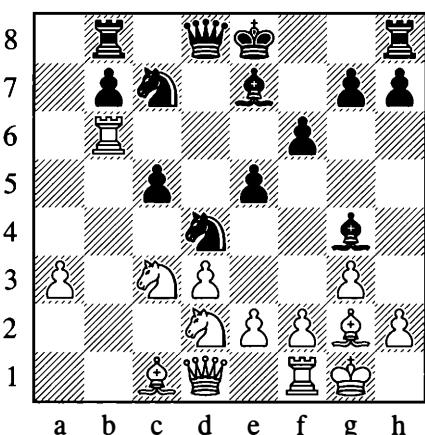
White has a clear plan of strengthening his queenside pressure with $\mathbb{Q}d2-c4$, $\mathbb{Q}e3$, and perhaps a4-a5.

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

Black tries to cross White's intentions by means of some tactical tricks. However, it turns out that moving with the bishop for the second time along the same diagonal loses too much time.

15. $\mathbb{Q}d2$

15. $\mathbb{Q}e3$? is a reasonable alternative, delaying $\mathbb{Q}d2-c4$. Black does not get anywhere with 15... $\mathbb{Q}xf3\#$ 16.exf3 $\mathbb{Q}f5$ in view of 17. $\mathbb{W}a4\#$ followed by f4.

**15... $\mathbb{Q}d5!$**

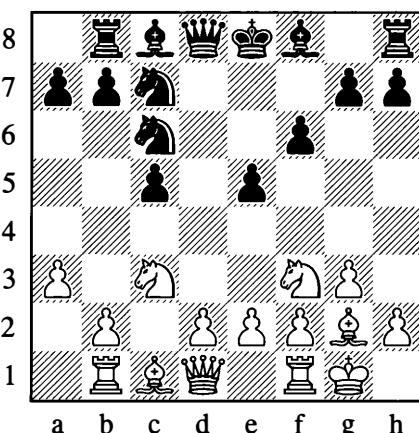
This was the idea behind Black's previous move, but White has a strong reply in store.

16. $\mathbb{Q}xd5!$

Bravely sacrificing the queen.

16... $\mathbb{Q}xe2\#$ 17. $\mathbb{Q}h1$ $\mathbb{Q}xg3\#$ 18. $\mathbb{W}xg3$ $\mathbb{Q}xd1$ 19. $\mathbb{Q}xd1$ 0-0 20. $\mathbb{Q}c4\pm$

In this position with an unusual material balance, White's chances are preferable in view of his absolute stability on the light squares.

H2) 9...f6

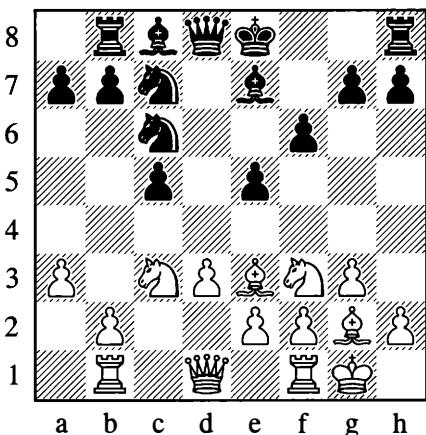
With this move Black parries b2-b4, and invites White to define his intentions.

10.d3!

White prepares $\mathbb{Q}e3$, in order to exert indirect pressure against the insufficiently well defended pawn on a7. This will eventually allow him to prepare b2-b4 under favourable circumstances.

It should be mentioned that, thanks to the mutual rook moves, 10.e3 is ineffective here in view of 10... $\mathbb{Q}f5!$.

10... $\mathbb{Q}e7$ 11. $\mathbb{Q}e3$



In this position Black's main options are **H21) 11...0–0** and **H22) 11...♝d7**.

He fails to equalize with:

11...a5

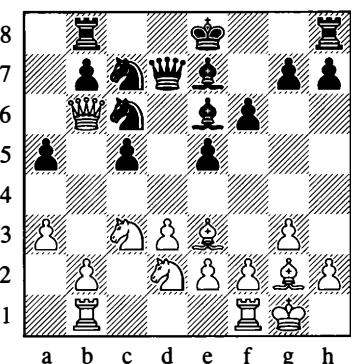
We have already seen that kind of move will usually weaken the queenside too much.

12.♛b3! ♞e6

The drawbacks of having played ...♝b8 are starting to become apparent. Defending b6 with ...♞a6 is no longer possible, while after 12...♛e6 White can react with 13.♝g5!, since the b-pawn is pinned and the c6-knight is not really defended.

13.♛b6 ♜d7 14.♝d2

White's attack develops systematically. The following attempt to attack the white queen perpetually will fail:



14...♞a8 15.♛b5 ♞c7 16.♝xc6 ♜xc6

Not 16...♝xb5? 17.♝xb5! winning a piece.

17.♛xc6† bxc6 18.♝fc1†

Black's queenside weaknesses will cost him dearly. In the absence of queens, Black cannot even dream about developing an effective kingside counterattack.

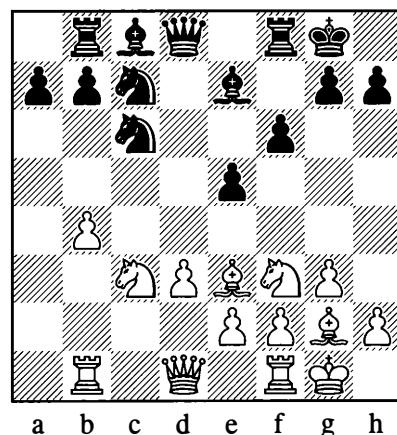
H21) 11...0–0–0

This developing move essentially abandons the strategy that began with 8...♝b8, namely the prevention of b2-b4 through indirect means for as long as possible.

12.b4!

This is made possible by the fact that the a7-pawn is hanging.

12...cx b4 13.ax b4



13...♝d4

Black cannot capture the pawn under favourable circumstances and instead seeks consolation in occupying the central square.

As usual, 13...♝xb4? loses material after 14.♝xb4 ♜xb4 15.♛b3†.

13...♝xb4?!

This allows White to take advantage of the relatively unfavourable placement of the enemy rook:

14.♗xa7!

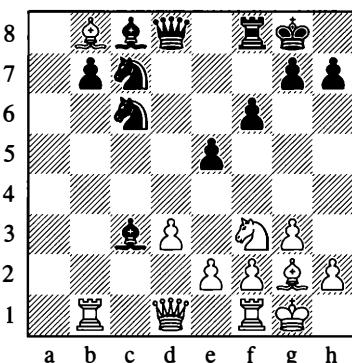
With the bishop on e3, the standard operation 14.♗xb4? ♗xb4 15.♗b3† is ineffective because after 15...♗bd5 there is no e2-e4 available.

14...♗xc3

14...♗a8 15.♗b6± leaves Black pinned and with a weakened structure. The c3-knight is indirectly defended in view of the potential check on b3.

15.♗xb8

White has won an exchange, although both sides have a bishop in some danger. The main question is who will manage to free his bishop with less hassle.

**15...♘e6**

Parrying ♗b3† and avoiding ♗xc7.

15...♗d5?!, with the same idea, would be worse because of 16.e4.

16.♗c1

There now follows a forced sequence that sees White return his extra exchange in order to consolidate his advantage.

16...♗a5 17.♗a4! ♗xb8 18.♗xc8 ♗xc8 19.♗xa5 ♗c6 20.♗a2+

Apart from his general strategic shortcomings (backward pawn on b7, strong white bishop), Black also faces concrete problems regarding the pinned knight on e6. In certain positions, ♗h3 can be quite troublesome.

14.♗e4 ♘cb5

Blocking the further advance of the b-pawn.

14...♗xf3† 15.♗xf3 b6 would avoid pawn weaknesses and somewhat restrict White's minor pieces, but would lose too much time. 16.♗a4 a6 17.♗fc1± White has a considerable lead in development and Black's queenside contains numerous weaknesses.

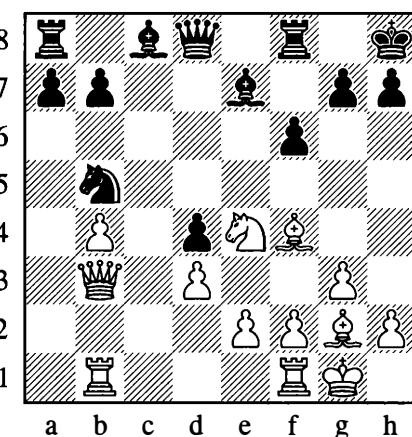
15.♗xd4 exd4

The best attempt to maintain some queenside stability.

15...♗xd4 allows White to develop a strong queenside initiative with ease after 16.♗xd4 ♗xd4 17.♗b3† ♗h8 18.♗fc1. At this point the counterattacking attempt 18...f5 can be neutralized by means of: 19.e3 ♗b6 20.♗c5± White is better developed and exerts strong queenside pressure.

16.♗f4 ♗a8 17.♗b3† ♗h8

White has an active position and is several tempos ahead in development. However, he still needs to find a concrete way to maintain his initiative, because the combination of the black knight along with the d-pawn defends the queenside quite well for the time being.

**18.♗d2!N**

Having forced the enemy rook to retreat to its initial square, thus weakening the defence of the b7-pawn, the bishop retreats to a seemingly

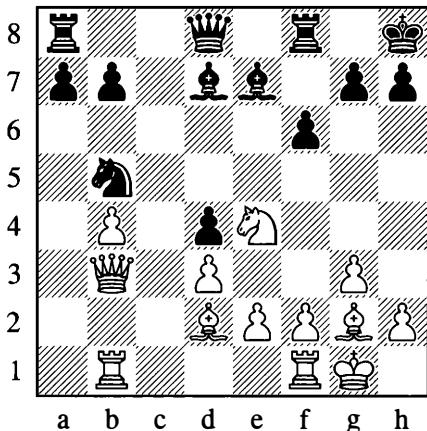
passive location. In reality, however, the text move is one of the most active at White's disposal. The point is that by guarding the c3-square, White prepares the thematic $\mathbb{Q}c5$ without having to fear the reply ... $\mathbb{Q}c3$.

The natural 18... $\mathbb{E}fc1$ does not truly advance White's queenside initiative and loses a valuable tempo, allowing Black to regroup in time, as occurred after: 18... $\mathbb{W}b6$ 19. $\mathbb{Q}d2$ $\mathbb{Q}e6$ 20. $\mathbb{W}a4$ $\mathbb{Q}d5$ With a perfectly viable position for Black, although White's chances remain slightly preferable, Romanishin – Mikhalkishin, Lvov 1996.

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

Black has to hurry with the development of this bishop.

After 18... $\mathbb{W}b6$! 19. $\mathbb{Q}c5\pm$ his queenside would be frozen. Since 19... $\mathbb{Q}xc5?$ loses a piece to 20.bxc5, we can understand that $\mathbb{E}fc1$ is not absolutely necessary in the present set-up.



19. $\mathbb{Q}c5$ $\mathbb{Q}xc5$ 20.bxc5 $\mathbb{Q}c6$

Black has managed to neutralize the enemy bishop, but his knight has lost some stability after the opening of the b-file.

21.e4!

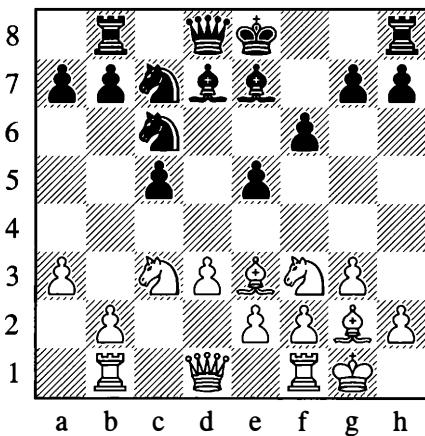
In order to fight for an advantage, White has

to challenge his opponent's spatial superiority in the centre.

21...dxe3 22.fxe3†

White has a clear plan of gaining space on the kingside and in the centre, starting with $\mathbb{E}f4$ and d4. At some point, switching to a kingside attack with $\mathbb{E}h4$ and $\mathbb{W}c2$ may be promising. With his knight slightly unstable, Black is not well prepared to blockade on the light squares. It is also interesting to note that the white rook is more useful on the f-file than it would have been on c1.

H22) 11... $\mathbb{Q}d7$



This is Black's most consistent move. By delaying castling, he continues to prevent b2-b4. In order to make it a concrete threat, White is forced to start regrouping, which leads to some sort of commitment.

12. $\mathbb{Q}d2$

White needs to open the long diagonal in order to make the threat of b2-b4 real. In the event of a neutral black move (which is not easy to find, by the way), there could follow such a line: 13.b4 cxb4 14.axb4 $\mathbb{Q}xb4$ 15. $\mathbb{Q}xc6$ bxc6 16. $\mathbb{Q}xa7$ $\mathbb{E}a8$ (not 16... $\mathbb{E}b7$ 17. $\mathbb{Q}c5$) 17. $\mathbb{E}xb4$ $\mathbb{E}xa7$ 18. $\mathbb{E}a4\pm$ With the better structure for White.

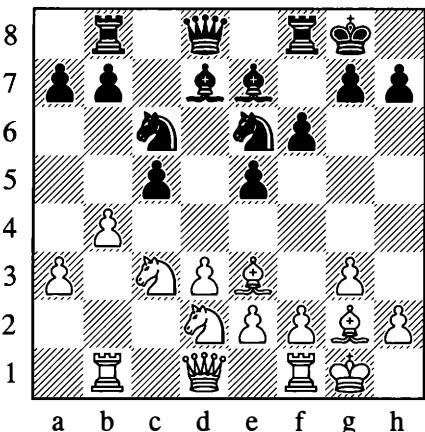
12...0–0

12... $\mathbb{Q}e6$ should be met by 13. $\mathbb{Q}d5$, leading to a possible transposition to the main line after 13...0–0 14.b4±.

13.b4 $\mathbb{Q}e6$

With this logical move Black consolidates the c5-square.

Giving up the tension for the sake of installing a knight on d4 does not equalize: 13...cx b4 14.axb4 $\mathbb{Q}d4$ 15. $\mathbb{Q}b3$ $\mathbb{Q}c6$ 16. $\mathbb{W}d2$ ± White is well organized for the planned queenside attack.

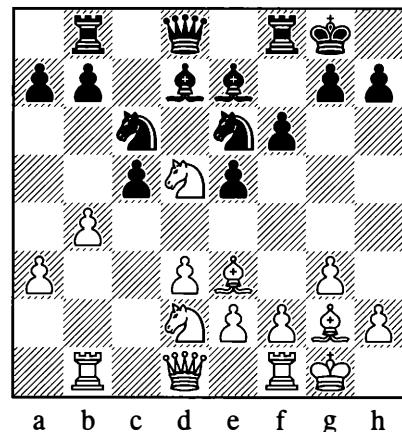
**14. $\mathbb{Q}d5!$ N**

A natural move, occupying the square that has just become available and generally increasing the pressure.

When I reached this position in one of my own games, I got carried away by the strategically ambitious 14.b5, preparing the occupation of the c4-square with the knight. My strategy was justified after: 14... $\mathbb{Q}cd4$ 15. $\mathbb{Q}c4$ b6?! 16.a4 $\mathbb{Q}h8$ 17. $\mathbb{Q}d2$ ± Followed by e3, $\mathbb{Q}d5$ and a5, gradually increasing the pressure. Eventually I was able to simplify to a winning endgame with a good bishop versus a bad one in Marin – L. Spassov, Cullera 2003.

Although I am generally satisfied with my

play in this game, I cannot hide the fact that Black missed the stronger 15... $\mathbb{Q}e8!$ 16. $\mathbb{Q}d2$ $\mathbb{Q}h5$, causing White problems with carrying out his main plan.

**14... $\mathbb{Q}e8$**

As far as I can understand, this is Black's most constructive move in a generally passive position. Another possibility is 14... $\mathbb{Q}h8$, which would be answered in the same way.

15. $\mathbb{Q}b3$ ±

Black is practically forced to release the queenside tension, leaving White with a persistent initiative.

Conclusion

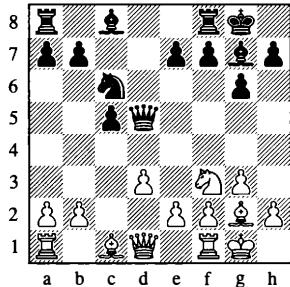
The strategic plot for the positions examined in this chapter reminds me of the legendary battle between David and Goliath. The modest-looking pawn move to a3 produces a significant tremor in Black's massive structure. To a certain extent, the situation is similar to that from Chapter 4, in which Black's central approach can be met quite effectively with a queenside attack.

I firmly believe that after 8.a3 Black's best hope is to get a slightly worse, but possibly defensible position, although from a practical point of view it is not easy to decide which line constitutes the least of the evils.



The Open Lines

Reversed Maroczy with ...g6



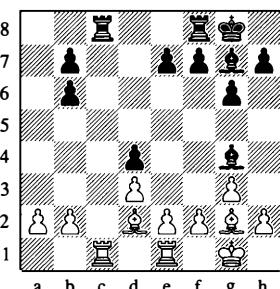
Variation Index

1.c4 c5 2.g3 Bf6 3.Bg2 Bc6 4.Bf3 d5 5.cxd5 Bxd5 6.Bc3 g6

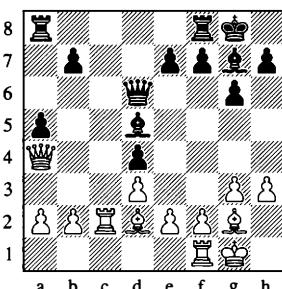
7.0-0Bg7 8.Bxd5 Wxd5 9.d3 0-0 10.Be3!

A) 10...Bd6 11.Bc1 Bd4 12.Bxd4 cxd4 13.Bd2	197
A1) 13...Bb6	199
A2) 13...Be6	199
A3) 13...Bg4	200
B) 10...Bd7 11.Bd4 Bd6 12.Bxc6 Bxc6 13.Bxc6 Wxc6 14.Bc1 We6 15.Bxc5	
Wxa2 16.Bb5!	201
B1) 16...a6	202
B2) 16...b6	204
B3) 16...Wa6	205
C) 10...Bxb2 11.Bb1 Bf6 12.Wa4	207
C1) 12...Bb4	208
C2) 12...We6	210
C3) 12...Bd6	211
C4) 12...Wd7!?	212

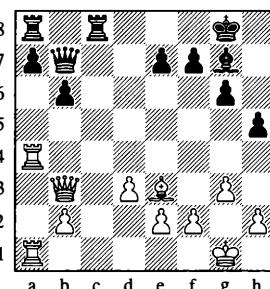
A1) note to 14...Wxb3



A3) after 16...Bd5



B3) after 20...h5

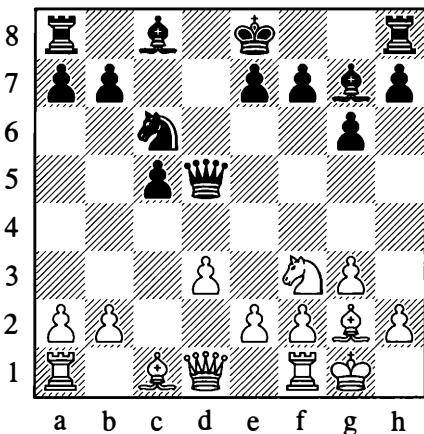


17.Bf1!N

17...Bb5!N

21.f3!N

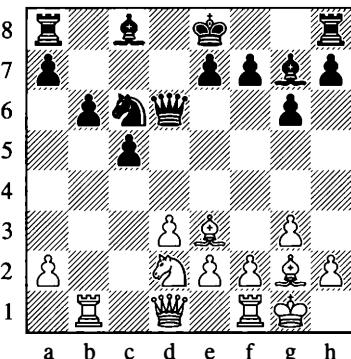
1.c4 c5 2.g3 ♜f6 3.♗g2 ♜c6 4.♗f3 d5 5.cxd5 ♜xd5 6.♗c3 g6 7.0–0 ♜g7 8.♗xd5 ♜xd5 9.d3



9...0–0

This position is already familiar to the reader, only with reversed colours! In the tabiya examined in Chapter 7, White has every chance of retaining his space advantage and some initiative with 10.♗d3. As Black is a tempo down in the current line, he does not have enough time to retreat his queen, which allows White to continue his queenside development without delay in the main line.

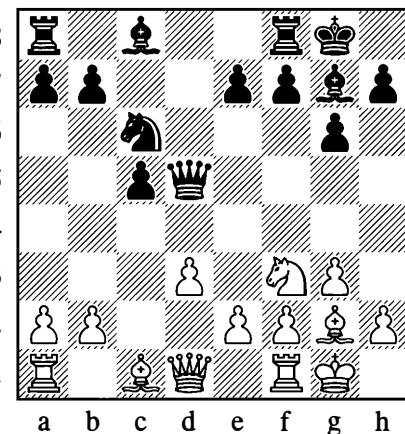
The presence of the king in the centre makes itself felt after: 9...♝d6 10.♗e3 ♜xb2?!(10...0–0 is safer, transposing to line A below) 11.♗b1 ♜g7 12.♗d2 b6



13.♗a4! A strong move that creates a double

pin: on the knight and the b-pawn. 13...♝d7 14.♗c4 Followed by the winning ♜xb6. The missing tempo is quite significant in this variation.

It should be mentioned that 7...♝c7, avoiding the exchange, transposes to the unfavourable line E from Chapter 8.



10.♗e3!

Only this move gives White chances of staying on top. In the event of a slower pace of events (for instance, after 10.a3 ♜d6), the significance of the extra tempo would gradually disappear, with at least equal play for Black. In Chapter 7 White was not inconvenienced by meeting 10...♝e6 with 11.♗xb7, but here the situation is more complicated for Black, since his queen is exposed to a discovered attack.

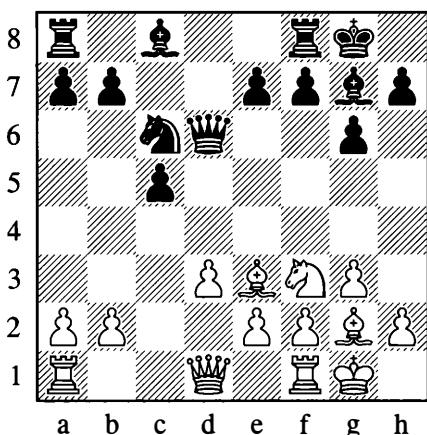
The harmonious cooperation of White's minor pieces ensures his position has plenty of dynamism, despite his lack of space. The main targets are the centralized queen and the vulnerable c5-pawn, which can be defended with ...b7-b6 only in certain situations, given the pressure along the h1-a8 diagonal.

The play in this line is rather one-sided; by choosing this tabiya, Black openly aims for a draw, without a 100% warranty of achieving it. Thus, technical players who like avoiding risk will enjoy playing this line with White.

The first top-level game in this line was Karpov – Ribli, Amsterdam 1980. The then World Champion needed to win to avoid being caught by the pursuing Jan Timman. Besides, Karpov had lost his first game against Ribli in this double round robin tournament and obviously wanted to “get even” at any cost. Ribli’s opening choice seemed optimal under these tense sporting circumstances, but he never managed to equalize completely, landed up in a passive ending and was systematically squeezed by his mighty opponent. This game (which can be found in a comment to line B2) illustrates Black’s practical problems in what basically remains an “almost equal” position.

Black has three main ways of dealing with the threat of $\mathbb{Q}d4$. He can evacuate the queen from the dangerous diagonal with A) 10... $\mathbb{W}d6$, reinforce the defence of the c6-square with the developing B) 10... $\mathbb{Q}d7$, or embark on forcing play with C) 10... $\mathbb{Q}xb2$.

A) 10... $\mathbb{W}d6$



Black chooses the same set-up as White does in the line examined in Chapter 7. It is curious that after the text move, White’s advantage in time (currently one tempo) tends to accumulate, like a snowball rolling downhill. This leads to a strong initiative.

11. $\mathbb{E}c1$

In the variation with reversed colours, after 10. $\mathbb{W}d3$ Black needed to prepare the development of his queenside still, while in the current line White is already putting nasty pressure on the c5-pawn.

11... $\mathbb{Q}d4$

This is Black’s best option.

11...b6?! weakens the long diagonal and can be met by 12.d4!± blowing up the centre.

11... $\mathbb{Q}xb2$?

This has been tried in a few games at grandmaster level. Although the practical results are satisfactory for Black, this is unrelated to the objective merits of Black’s last move. Since the bishop is exposed on b2, Black gives up no fewer than two tempos, while White regains the pawn with an active move.

12. $\mathbb{E}xc5$ $\mathbb{Q}g7$

12... $\mathbb{Q}a3$ looks weird, as the bishop has nothing to do on this diagonal. 13. $\mathbb{E}b5$ a6 This has been played in a couple of games. 14. $\mathbb{E}b1!$ N± White retreats his rook to a safe square and plans to develop his initiative with $\mathbb{Q}d2$ -c4, taking advantage of the exposed placement of Black’s pieces and the weakness of the b7-square.

13. $\mathbb{W}b3$

White needs one tempo ($\mathbb{E}fc1$) to complete his development and submit the enemy queenside to the combined pressure of almost his entire army. The fight is uneven, because the seemingly active g7-bishop cannot contribute to the defence in any way.

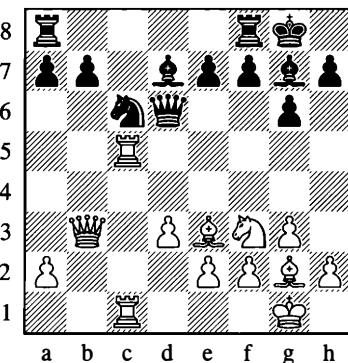
13... $\mathbb{Q}d7$

Black does not need to defend his b7-pawn yet, because 14. $\mathbb{W}xb7$ $\mathbb{E}ab8$ 15. $\mathbb{W}a6$ $\mathbb{Q}d4$, followed by 16... $\mathbb{Q}xe2$ †, leads to favourable simplifications.

After 13... $\mathbb{B}b8$ 14. $\mathbb{B}fc1$ Black committed the amusing blunder 14... $\mathbb{Q}d7?$ in Sevostianov – Kostjukov, Alushta 1998, but he remained unpunished. White did not notice that after 15. $\mathbb{B}d5!N$ Black cannot keep his bishop defended. For instance, 15... $\mathbb{W}e6$ 16. $\mathbb{Q}g5$ or 15... $\mathbb{W}c7$ 16. $\mathbb{B}f4$ and the pin along the c-file is killing.

14. $\mathbb{B}fc1$

White brings his last piece into play and prepares a pin on the enemy knight, threatening the familiar $\mathbb{B}d5$.



14... $b6$

Not a nice move to play, because the c6-square is weakened, but Black had no useful moves.

For instance, 14... $\mathbb{B}fd8$ would leave the f7-pawn poorly defended, allowing White to develop his initiative with 15. $\mathbb{Q}g5\pm$ followed by $\mathbb{Q}e4$.

15. $\mathbb{B}d5$ $\mathbb{W}c7$ 16. $\mathbb{B}f4$ $\mathbb{W}b7$ 17. $\mathbb{Q}e5$ $\mathbb{Q}xe5$
18. $\mathbb{B}xe5$

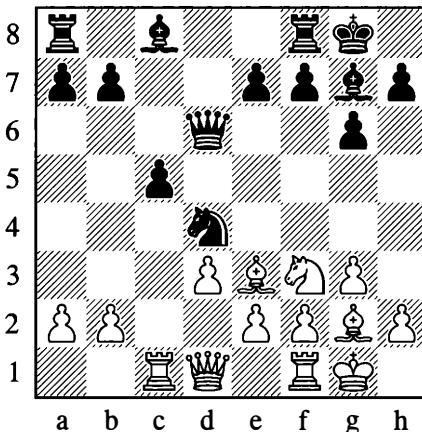
White has the bishop pair and threatens $\mathbb{B}xe7$.

18... $\mathbb{B}fe8$ 19. $\mathbb{B}ec5!$

The best way to restore White's perfect piece coordination.

19... $\mathbb{B}ac8$ 20. $\mathbb{B}5c2$ $e5$ 21. $\mathbb{B}e3\pm$

White has strong queenside pressure, while the e5-pawn and the rest of Black's kingside are all vulnerable, Petursson – Olafsson, Reykjavik 1978.



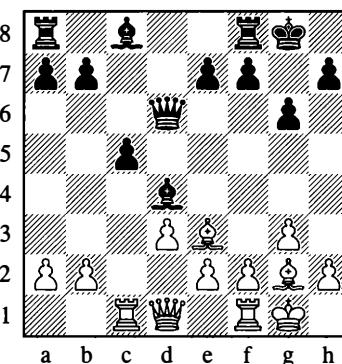
12. $\mathbb{Q}xd4$

White immediately provokes the opening of the c-file for his rook. If instead White tolerated the enemy knight, he would soon lose the initiative.

12... $cxd4$

Black desperately needs to win a tempo for his development.

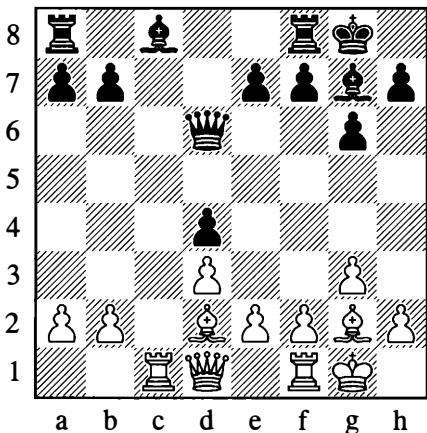
12... $\mathbb{Q}xd4$ was tried in Ricardi – Malbran, Buenos Aires 1993.



13. $\mathbb{Q}xd4!N$ White should not offer his opponent even a moment to breathe. 13... $cxd4$ (13... $\mathbb{W}xd4$ leaves Black with the problem of his c5-pawn unsolved after 14. $\mathbb{W}c2\pm$) 14. $\mathbb{W}c2\pm$ White will start the invasion along the open file without delay.

13. $\mathbb{Q}d2$

The absence of knights may offer Black a false feeling of safety, but things are not easy for him. White's bishops are very active, one of them hitting b7 and the other being ready to harass Black with $\mathbb{B}b4$, after a previous $\mathbb{W}a4$ or $\mathbb{W}b3$. The danger of an invasion along the c-file is real and the g7-bishop cannot do much against this, and it risks remaining passive for a while.



We will examine A1) 13... $\mathbb{W}b6$, A2) 13... $\mathbb{Q}e6$ and A3) 13... $\mathbb{B}g4$.

A1) 13... $\mathbb{W}b6$

Black defends his weak pawn, preparing to develop the c8-bishop.

14. $\mathbb{W}b3!$

Zeroing in on the main drawback of Black's approach; the black queen has moved quite a lot already and its exchange will underline Black's lagging development.

14... $\mathbb{W}xb3$

In positions with a queen standoff along the b-file, which are quite frequent in the Slav Defence for instance, it is generally wise to avoid carrying out the exchange and instead try to convince the opponent to do it. In the present line, Black's situation is complicated by the fact that the b7-pawn is under constant pressure from the g2-bishop.

After 14... $\mathbb{Q}e6$ 15. $\mathbb{W}xb6$ $axb6$ 16.a3± Black cannot avoid the loss of a pawn.

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

Black gains a tempo, but even this is not enough:

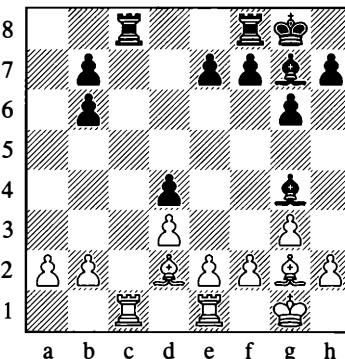
15. $\mathbb{E}fe1$ $\mathbb{B}ac8$

15... $\mathbb{W}xb3$ 16. $axb3$ $\mathbb{B}ac8$ was played in Fengier – Kopacz, Augustow 1996.

17. $\mathbb{Q}xb7!N$ White can grab the pawn and neutralize Black's initiative: 17... $\mathbb{E}xc1$ 18. $\mathbb{Q}xc1$ $\mathbb{B}b8$ 19. $\mathbb{Q}d5$ $\mathbb{Q}e6$ 20. $\mathbb{Q}c4\pm$

16. $\mathbb{W}xb6$ $axb6$

So far, we have followed Seppanen – Konsala, Finland 1995.



17. $\mathbb{Q}f1!N$

By over-defending the e2-pawn, White gets ready to meet ... $\mathbb{E}xc1$ with $\mathbb{E}xc1$. Black cannot defend both the b7-pawn and the c-file.

15. $\mathbb{axb3}$ $\mathbb{Q}e5$

A desperate attempt to prevent $\mathbb{Q}c7$.

16. $\mathbb{B}b4!$

Taking the d6-square under observation with gain of time.

16... $\mathbb{Q}e8$ 17.f4 $\mathbb{Q}f6$ 18. $\mathbb{Q}c7\pm$

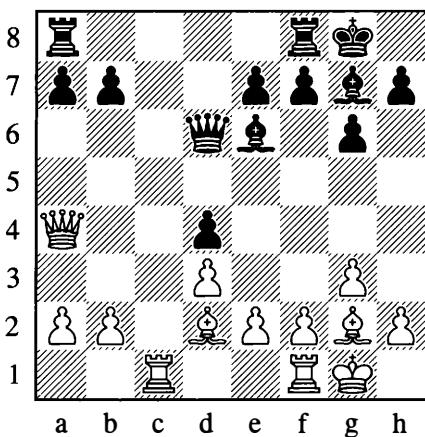
Black is being submitted to the combined pressure of all White's pieces; he will soon lose a pawn, Beltran – Montilla, Sitges 1996.

A2) 13... $\mathbb{Q}e6$

A logical continuation. Black develops normally, without paying attention to the b7-pawn, since 14... $\mathbb{Q}xb7$ can be answered by 14... $\mathbb{B}ab8$ followed by ... $\mathbb{B}xb2$.

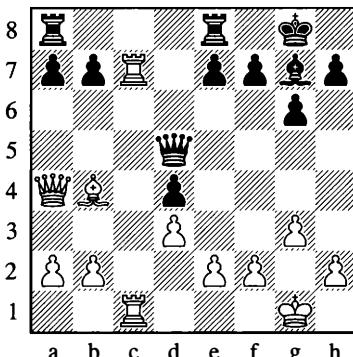
14. $\mathbb{W}a4!$

A multipurpose developing move. Black is denied the possibility of regrouping harmoniously with ... $\mathbb{W}d7$. Also, after the planned $\mathbb{Q}b4$, the b-file would be blocked with gain of time, leaving the b7-pawn in real danger.



14... $\mathbb{W}b6$

14... $\mathbb{Q}d5$ neutralizes the pressure along the long diagonal, but it allows White to gain time for the occupation of the seventh rank: 15. $\mathbb{Q}b4$ $\mathbb{W}e6$ 16. $\mathbb{Q}xd5$ $\mathbb{W}xd5$ 17. $\mathbb{E}c7$ $\mathbb{E}fe8$ 18. $\mathbb{E}fc1\pm$



White is in complete control, Sunye Neto – Barlov, Tjentiste 1975.

14...a5, preventing $\mathbb{Q}b4$, can be answered by 15. $\mathbb{E}c2$, with similar play as in line A3.

A few games have reached this position, with favourable results for White. I find the following move to be the most logical and best:

15. $\mathbb{W}b4!N$

White eliminates the only defender of the c7-square and the b7-pawn.

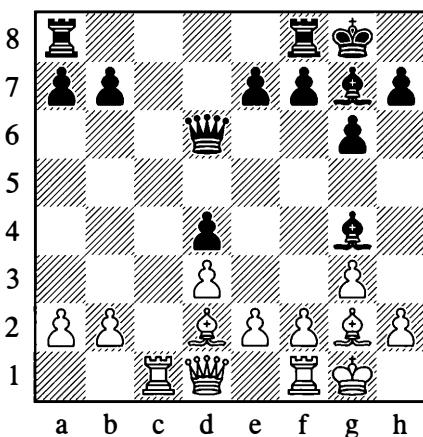
15... $\mathbb{Q}xa2$

15... $\mathbb{W}xb4$ would help White activate his play: 16. $\mathbb{Q}xb4\pm$ Threatening $\mathbb{E}c7$ or $\mathbb{Q}xe7$, which outweighs the possible loss of the a2-pawn.

16. $\mathbb{W}xb6$ $\mathbf{axb6}$ 17. $\mathbb{E}c7\pm$

White will regain the pawn at once and keep a very active position. In the long run, the b6-pawn will be weak.

A3) 13... $\mathbb{Q}g4$



By provoking the following weakening move before placing the bishop on e6, Black hopes to reduce the impact of the threat of $\mathbb{Q}xb7$.

14.h3 $\mathbb{Q}e6$ 15. $\mathbb{W}a4$ a5!?

Preventing $\mathbb{Q}b4$, but severely weakening his queenside.

After the slow regrouping 15... $\mathbb{E}fd8$ 16. $\mathbb{E}c2$ $\mathbb{W}d7$ 17. $\mathbb{W}xd7$ $\mathbb{E}xd7$ Black manages to secure the b7-pawn, but loses control of the c-file: 18. $\mathbb{E}fc1\pm$ Woeremann – Schockenbaumer, Germany 1997.

15... $\mathbb{W}b6$ 16. $\mathbb{W}b4\pm$ leads to similar play as in line A2. Since the bishop will most likely capture on a2 in order to prevent White from creating a dangerous queenside majority with $\mathbb{A}xb7$, the weakness of the h3-pawn is irrelevant.

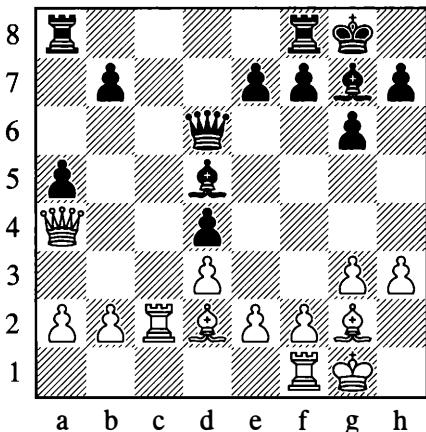
16. $\mathbb{E}c2$

Calmly preparing to double rooks.

16... $\mathbb{Q}d5$

The bishop exchange is necessary for dynamic reasons, but strategically it leads to unfavourable consequences, because Black has too many pawns on dark squares.

16... $\mathbb{E}ac8$ fails to reduce White's pressure: 17. $\mathbb{E}fc1$ $\mathbb{E}xc2$ 18. $\mathbb{E}xc2\pm$ With his queenside weak, Black cannot fight for the open file.



In Kyhle – Wiedenkeller, Sollentuna 1995, a draw was prematurely agreed.

17. $\mathbb{W}b5!$ N

White begins to dominate the light squares.

17... $\mathbb{E}xg2$ 18. $\mathbb{E}xg2$ $\mathbb{W}e6$ 19.a4!

Blockading the a5-pawn on a dark square.

19... $\mathbb{E}ac8$

19... $\mathbb{W}xe2?$! leads to a depressing ending after: 20. $\mathbb{E}e1$ $\mathbb{W}h5$ 21. $\mathbb{W}xh5$ $gxh5$ 22. $\mathbb{E}xe7+$ – In this line the usefulness of the queen on b5 is obvious; the d3-pawn is defended and the h5-square is under control.

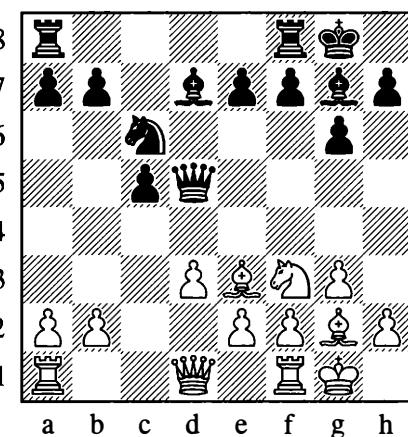
20. $\mathbb{E}xc8$ $\mathbb{E}xc8$ 21. $\mathbb{W}xb7$

Black cannot generate sufficient counterplay for the lost pawn. For instance:

21... $\mathbb{E}c2$ 22. $\mathbb{W}a8\ddagger$ $\mathbb{Q}f8$ 23. $\mathbb{Q}f4\ddagger$

Black needs to keep defending the c8-square in order to be able to meet $\mathbb{Q}h6$ with ... $\mathbb{E}c8$. This makes the white pawns along the second rank taboo. White is also threatening to simplify to a promising ending with $\mathbb{E}c1$.

B) 10... $\mathbb{Q}d7$



Black keeps developing, preventing the creation of doubled pawns on the c-file.

11. $\mathbb{Q}d4$ $\mathbb{W}d6$ 12. $\mathbb{E}xc6$ $\mathbb{Q}xc6$ 13. $\mathbb{E}xc6$ $\mathbb{W}xc6$

14. $\mathbb{E}c1$

Black has managed to simplify the position, but White retains the initiative, mainly because the enemy queen has spent three tempos to reach a vulnerable square.

14... $\mathbb{W}e6$

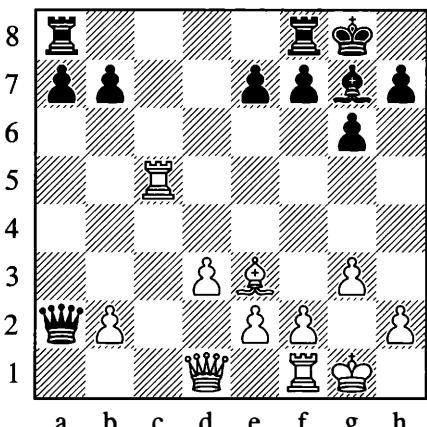
Unanimously accepted as Black's best chance; the queen steps out of the pin and attacks the a2-pawn at the same time.

14...b6 has never been tried in practice and after 15.b4 Black loses a pawn. The counterattack against the a2-pawn with 15... $\mathbb{W}d5$ or 15... $\mathbb{W}e6$ is ineffective because after 16.bxc5 either the b6- or the e7-pawn will be hanging.

14... $\mathbb{Q}xb2$ helps White to speed up his development: 15. $\mathbb{B}xc5$ $\mathbb{W}e6$ 16. $\mathbb{W}a4$ With active queenside play, Sznajek – Wl. Schmidt, Helsinki 1981.

15. $\mathbb{B}xc5$ $\mathbb{W}xa2$

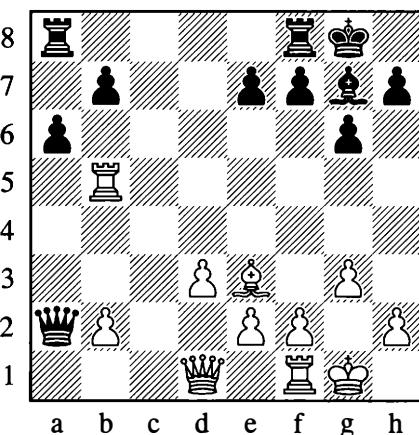
Black has managed to maintain material equality and his queen has reached apparent safety after spending two more tempos. Also, the b2-pawn is under a double attack.

**16. $\mathbb{B}b5!$**

A key move in this variation. White defends the b2-pawn (if ... $\mathbb{Q}xb2$ then $\mathbb{W}c2$ wins the bishop) without opening the long diagonal all the way to a1 (as 16.b4 would do), in order to allow the future occupation of the a-file. This is an important aspect, since in many cases Black arranges his queenside pawns on a7 and b6, which means that $\mathbb{B}a1-a6$ would be an effective plan.

White's chances for an advantage are connected with his more effective bishop (after the last move, the black one has no good targets) and the slightly awkward placement of the enemy queen. These elements leave White with some initiative, which will possibly result in a better ending in which Black's queenside pawns would become targets rather than candidates for promotion.

We will examine B1) 16...a6, B2) 16...b6 and B3) 16... $\mathbb{W}a6$.

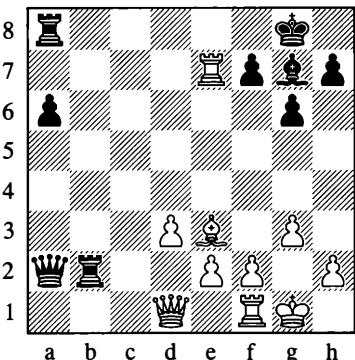
B1) 16...a6

Black prefers to give up a pawn for counterplay, rather than accepting a rigid and unfavourable structure with pawns on a7 and b6. In practice, this line has yielded Black satisfactory results, but White has not made use of a paradoxical resource that allows him to retain the initiative.

17. $\mathbb{B}xb7$ $\mathbb{Q}ab8$

Black intends to eliminate the b2-pawn, in order to create a dangerous passed pawn on the a-file.

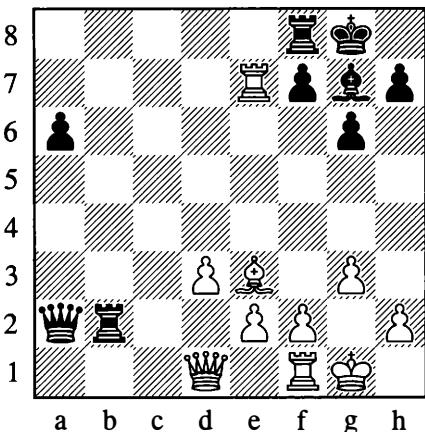
17... $\mathbb{B}fb8$?! has the same purpose, but is weaker:
18. $\mathbb{B}xe7$ $\mathbb{B}xb2$



In Valdes – Kraft, Dos Hermanas 2004, White should have used the same regrouping as in the main line: 19... $\mathbb{B}c1!N$ $\mathbb{B}c2$ 20.e4! a5 21. $\mathbb{W}f3$ a4 22.e5± White practically wins a tempo over the main line by attacking the a8-rook. Next, he will play e5-e6.

18. $\mathbb{B}xe7$ $\mathbb{B}xb2$

Apparently, Black has achieved what he wanted. The a-pawn is hard to stop, while Black's pressure along the second rank seems to restrict White's activity. This position has been reached in several games.



19. $\mathbb{B}c1!N$

A very effective regrouping. The bishop retreats with gain of time, defending the e-pawn and clearing its way in order to start an attack with e2-e4, $\mathbb{W}f3$ and eventually pushing the pawn all the way to e6. Also, the a3-square is taken

under control, thus slowing down the advance of the passed pawn in some cases. This complex plan is possible mainly because the enemy pawn is not very far advanced, but also due to Black's vulnerability on the seventh rank.

19... $\mathbb{B}c2$ 20.e4 a5 21. $\mathbb{W}f3$ a4 22.e5 $\mathbb{W}b3$

Black needs to clear a path for the a-pawn now or on the next move. Another possible move order is 22...a3 23.e6 $\mathbb{W}b3$.

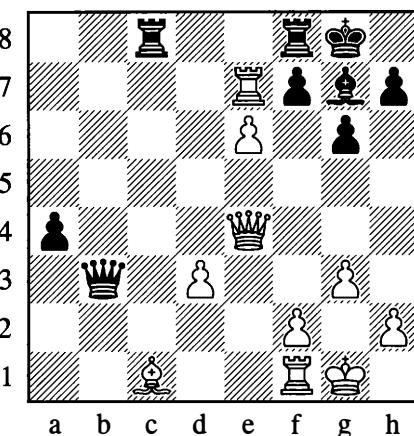
23.e6

A strong blow to the stability of Black's kingside. It appears that the e-pawn is faster than its rival on the a-file.

23... $\mathbb{B}cc8$

Trying to defend the back rank. 23...fxe6? loses to 24. $\mathbb{B}xg7\#!$ $\mathbb{Q}xg7$ 25. $\mathbb{B}h6\#$ with a mating attack.

24. $\mathbb{W}e4$



A strong centralizing move, threatening to attack the enemy pawn with $\mathbb{B}a7$ and moving off the f-file, which is likely to open. It is quite probable that the far-advanced pawns will be exchanged for each other, leaving White a clear pawn up.

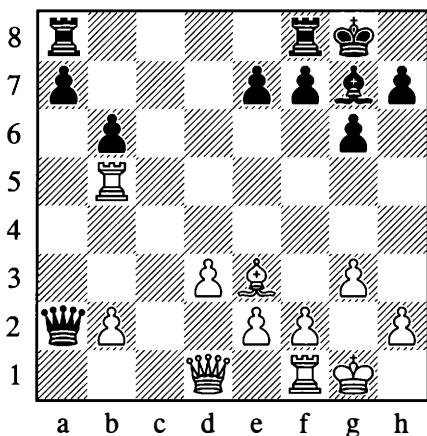
24...a3?!

This attempt to continue the race ends up badly:

25.♗xf7 ♗xf7 26.exf7† ♔xf7 27.♔xa3!+–

White has won a second pawn, since the bishop is taboo in view of ♕b7†.

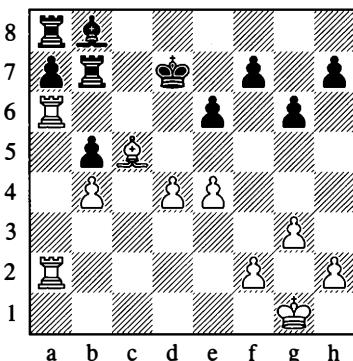
B2) 16...b6



In the short term, this is the safest way to meet White's queenside play. In the long run, the black pawns may face strong pressure from all White's pieces.

17.♕b3!

The aforementioned game Karpov – Ribli, Amsterdam 1980, went: 17.♕a1 ♘xal?! 18.♖xa1 ♘fb8 19.♖a6 ♘f8 20.♗b4! Preparing to double rooks. 20...♗e5 21.♗ba4 (threatening ♘xb6) 21...b5 22.♗a2 ♘b7 23.b3 Moving the pawn out of the bishop's range in order to threaten the a7-pawn. 23...♗b8 Awful necessity. 24.♗c5 ♘e8 25.d4 ♘d7 26.e4 e6 27.b4



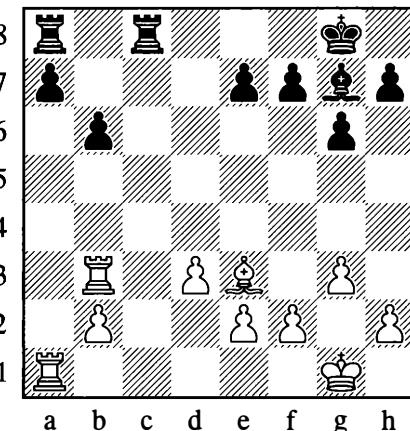
It is remarkable how apparently effortlessly the World Champion achieved a crushing position just 10 moves after the opening, so why am I not recommending Karpov's move? On move 17, Ribli was probably happy to exchange queens, underestimating the strength of Karpov's plan. Black should have played 17...♘e6, leaving the white queen rather passive.

The text move also offers the exchange of queens, but cuts off Her Majesty's retreat to e6.

17...♘xb3

The only alternative is 17...♘a6 transposing to line B3.

18.♖xb3 ♘fc8 19.♗a1



19...♗c2?!

Probably missing White's 21st move. 19...f5, preparing to centralize the king and slowing down White's central expansion, would have been better. White could reply 20.♗a6, with enduring pressure.

20.♗xb6 ♘xe2

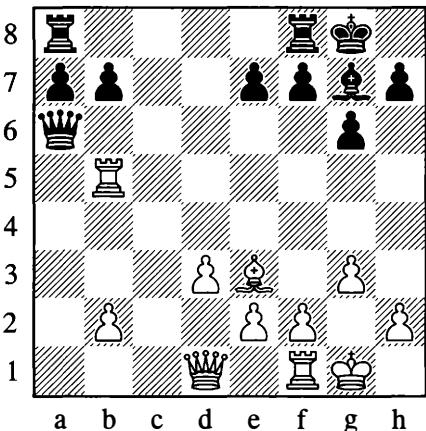
20...♗xb2 fails to retain material equality: 21.♗a2 axb6 22.♗xa8† ♘g7 23.♗f1 b5 24.♗b8± The b5-pawn is doomed; White has good winning chances with or without bishops on the board.

21.♖xa7!

Taking advantage of the back rank weakness.

21...♜e8 22.b4±

With a dangerous extra pawn, Vaganian – Mikhalkishin, Tallinn (rapid) 1988.

B3) 16...♛a6

Black will not be able to avoid ...b7-b6, but the difference compared with the previous line is that he keeps the queens on the board. This will make it more difficult for White to maintain absolute control of the position, because the queen is a very mobile piece, able to create threats all over the board.

17.♕b3 b6 18.♗b4!

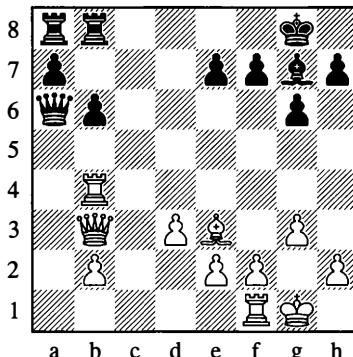
Preparing to double rooks either on the a- or c-file.

18...♝fc8

The most natural continuation, not leaving the open file in White's hands.

18...♝fb8?!

This is a cunning move, aiming to concentrate the major pieces on the queenside, in order to support the advance of his backward pawns.

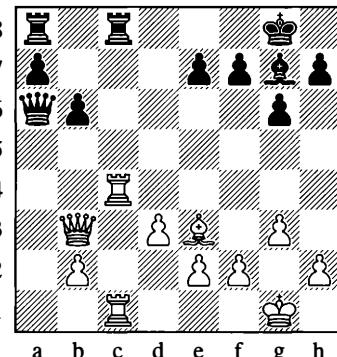
**19.♖c1!N**

White has no reason not to occupy the open file.

Black's strategy is fully justified if White plays in the same way as in the main line. 19.♖a4 ♜b7 20.♗fa1 a6 This is the point of Black's plan: the b6-pawn is well defended. 21.♗a2 a5 The pawns are no longer weak and a draw was soon agreed in Ribli – Timman, Tilburg 1980.

19...♝c8

Black should not ignore the open file for too long as, for example, 19...b5 20.♖c5± leaves him in a dangerous situation.

20.♖bc4**20...♝xc4**

It is not easy to neutralize White's pressure completely with 20...♜b7 21.♗b5 ♜xc4 22.♗xc4 ♜c8 because of 23.♗d5!. The white queen is taboo because of the weakness of the back rank, so the black queen is forced

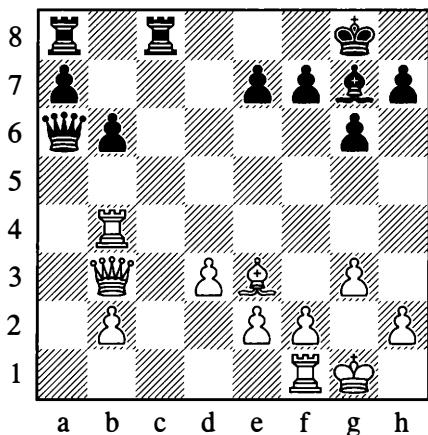
into passivity. 23... $\mathbb{W}b8$ 24.b3± White has an active position; Black's queenside pawns are immobile and risk becoming targets for the white bishop in the event of simplifications.

21. $\mathbb{E}xc4$ e6

21... $\mathbb{E}c8?$ loses a pawn to a familiar trick, 22. $\mathbb{W}a3!$, while 21... $\mathbb{W}a1\uparrow$ does not achieve anything after 22. $\mathbb{E}c1$ followed by $\mathbb{W}c2$. The queen is passive on a1.

22. $\mathbb{W}c2\pm$

White has won the battle for the c-file and can think about promoting his central majority and creating some kingside threats.



19. $\mathbb{E}a4$ $\mathbb{W}b7$ 20. $\mathbb{E}fa1$

White has carried out the first phase of his plan; the enemy pawns are immobile and under constant pressure. White's bishop is quite effective, keeping an eye on the queenside and defending the c1-square, which makes Black's control of the c-file inoffensive.

20...h5

This is considered Black's best chance of maintaining the balance. He cannot do much on the queenside, but the presence of queens gives reasons to hope for some kingside counterplay.

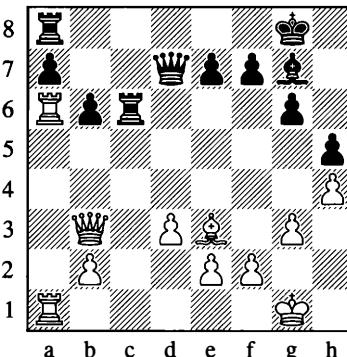
The last move does not threaten ...h5-h4 yet, but it does avoid any back rank problems and

it also makes a vague gesture towards White's king.

It is curious that in grandmaster practice White has always reacted with 21.h4!?. This has several strategic drawbacks. From the point of view of the bishop ending, it is unfavourable to place a pawn on a dark square, while in the middlegame the king's position becomes a little insecure in the absence of the light-squared bishop.

Black is still under pressure, but he has chances to get counterplay. I will offer two examples of how play can develop after 21... $\mathbb{E}c6$ 22. $\mathbb{E}a6$:

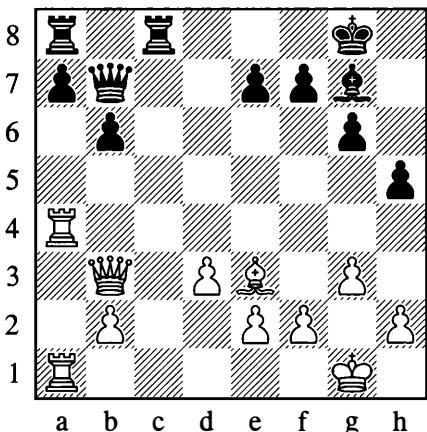
22... $\mathbb{W}d7$ was tried in Ehlvest – Polugaevsky, Reggio Emilia 1991.



23. $\mathbb{W}a4!$ N Pinning Black along the a-file and the a4-d7 diagonal. After the predictable exchange of the pawns on a7 and b2, the b6-pawn will become weak. An illustrative continuation is: 23... $\mathbb{E}xb2$ 24. $\mathbb{E}xa7$ $\mathbb{E}xa7$ 25. $\mathbb{W}xa7$ $\mathbb{W}xa7$ 26. $\mathbb{E}xa7$ e5 27. $\mathbb{E}b7$ $\mathbb{E}d4$ 28. $\mathbb{E}xd4$ exd4 29. $\mathbb{E}d7$ The d4-pawn is doomed and White has good winning chances.

22...e6 is more flexible. Black does not threaten much, but it is also difficult for White to increase the pressure. The problem is that in some lines the e2-pawn will be vulnerable, since $\mathbb{E}f1$ leads to disaster after ... $\mathbb{E}c1\uparrow$, $\mathbb{E}xc1$... $\mathbb{W}h1$ mate. After 23. $\mathbb{W}a2$ $\mathbb{E}c2$ 24. $\mathbb{E}xb6$ $\mathbb{W}c8$

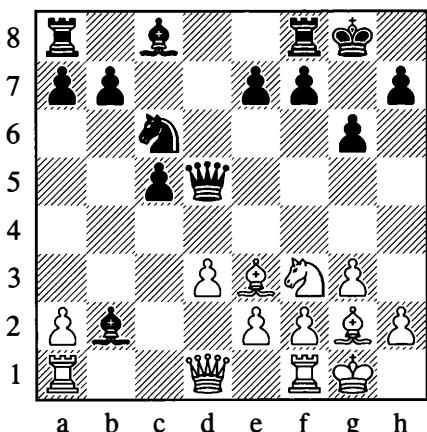
25.♔f1 a5 Black gained some counterplay and the game soon ended in a draw, Andersson – Cu. Hansen, Helsingør 1999.



21.f3!

This is the best way to keep the structure compact. The enemy queen's pressure on the long diagonal is neutralized and the king can defend the e2-pawn from f2 if needed. In the event of ...♝d7, then ♔g2 would limit the black queen's activity. White remains in control of the position and can hope for a favourable outcome of the battle.

C) 10...♝xb2

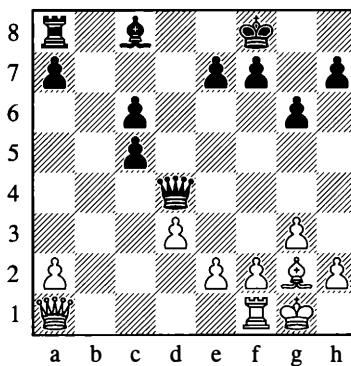


This move is far less common than lines A and B, but its unpopularity is probably

undeserved. Black spends two tempos on pawn-grabbing, which traditionally has been considered to be dangerous. However, the abstract justification of 10...♝xb2 is that Black has no favourable way of attending to his highest priority – queenside development. A small diversion may change this circumstance, even if it remains clear that White's superior development will allow him to restore material equality.

11.♗b1

In order to retain chances of an advantage, White should choose with care the moment when he unleashes his discovered attack against the queen. For instance, 11.♕d4 is premature. 11...♝d7 12.♗xc6 ♚xa1 13.♚xa1 bxc6 14.♗h6 ♜d4 15.♗xf8 ♚xf8



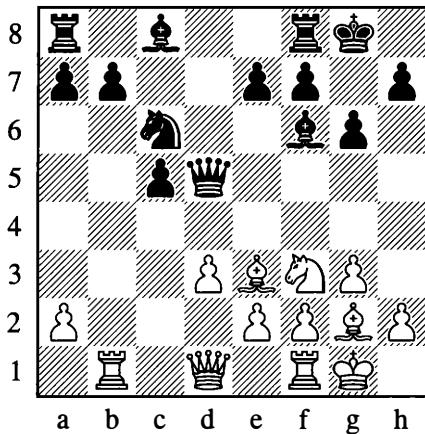
White has spoiled the enemy structure, but is still a pawn down. The b-file is now open, which simplifies the task of developing the a8-rook. Black is not worse in this position.

11...♗f6

This is the most accurate move, taking control of the important g5-square and over-defending e7.

We will not investigate 11...♝g7 separately. White would play in a similar way as after the text move. In the lines below, I will highlight the differences induced by the bishop's

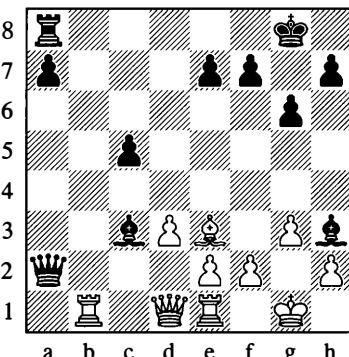
placement, which tend to favour White if the bishop is on g7.



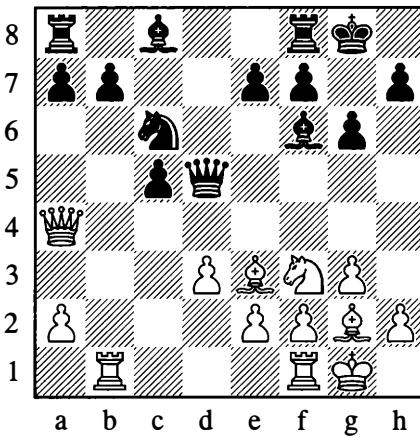
12.♘a4

White keeps developing, as if nothing special had happened.

Once again, it is too early to carry out the discovered attack: 12.♘d4 ♖xa2 13.♘xc6 bxc6 14.♘xc6 (14.♗c1 was recommended by Bagirov, but Black has little to fear after 14...♝b8) 14...♚h3 15.♔xa8 ♖xa8 16.♗e1 ♘c3 This position has been reached in several games, with unfavourable statistics for White. Black regains the exchange and retains the extra pawn, although White's more compact structure and the presence of opposite-coloured bishops entitles him to expect a draw.



Unfortunately for White, 17.♗xc5? loses a piece to 17...♗d5, threatening mate.



We will examine C1) 12...♝b4, C2) 12...♗e6, C3) 12...♗d6 and C4) 12...♗d7.

C1) 12...♝b4

Black removes the knight from the long diagonal, reducing the impact of ♘f3-d4 and attacking the a2-pawn. In Black's dream scenario, the knight would reach the c3-square.

However, this attempt to generate counterplay, while Back's queenside is poorly developed, is easily parried.

13.a3

White removes his pawn from danger and forces Black to play very carefully.

13...♞a2

The knight continues the planned infiltration.

The developing 13...♗d7 leaves Black hanging after the calm retreat 14.♗d1!. For instance: 14...♞a2 15.♗g5 ♖f5 16.♗d2 ♘c3 17.♗xb7± Black is poorly coordinated and his structure is weak.

13...♗a2

This attacks e2 and demands some accuracy from White.

14.♕xc5 ♔d5 15.♕d4

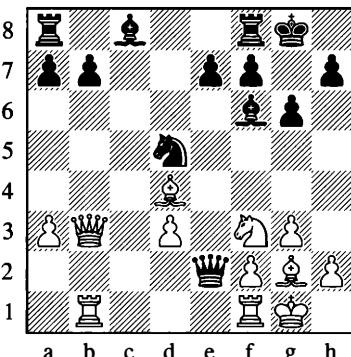
Parrying the fork on c3.

15...♝xe2

If 15...♝c3 then 16.♕xc3 ♔xc3 17.e3± followed by ♜b3 or ♜fc1, according to the circumstances, leaves White with a strong centre and better development, which outweighs Black's bishop pair.

16.♝b3!

Attacking the knight and threatening to trap the queen with ♜fe1.



16...♝e6 17.♜xf6

Had Black played 11...♝g7, White would have won a piece with 17.♜xg7 ♔xg7 18.♝g5.

17...♝xf6 18.♝xe6 ♔xe6

18...fxe6 allows Black to keep the extra pawn, but leaves him with problems completing his development: 19.♝e5 ♔d5 20.♜fc1 b6 21.♜c6± White's pieces are very active, with the knight deserving a special mention. Black cannot develop his bishop, because after ♜xe6 his position would collapse. Preparing ...♝d7 with ...♝g7-f6 is impossible because of ♜xd5, winning a piece. White can improve his position slowly with f2-f4, ♜e1, etc.

19.♜xb7 ♜fe8 20.♝e5 ♔d5 21.♜xd5 ♜xd5

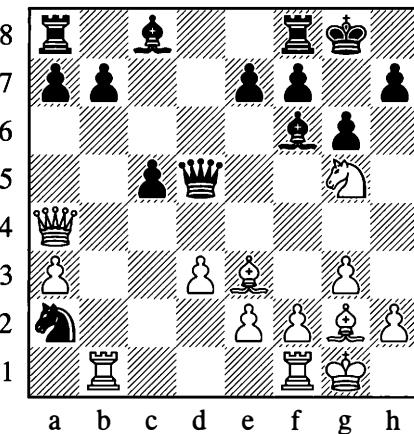
The stability of the black knight does not compensate for White's overall activity; the knight on c6 paralyses Black. A possible continuation is:

22.♝c6 e6 23.♜c1 a6 24.♜c4±

White is in control of the position and Black must worry about his a-pawn.

14.♞g5!

The knight is heading for e4, getting ready to meet its rival.



14...♝c3!

Black should not slow the rhythm of the play by moving his queen away: 14...♝f5 15.♞e4 ♜c3 16.♞xc3 ♔xc3 17.♜fc1± White will win back the pawn, while retaining a considerable lead in development.

Note that Black's last move would not be possible with the bishop on g7 because of 15.♝h4, leaving the enemy queen hanging and threatening mate on h7.

15.♞xd5 ♜xa4 16.♞e4 ♔d4?!

Not the optimal way of giving back the pawn. We shall return to this position below, but first let's see White's thematic play.

17.♜xb7 ♜xb7 18.♜xb7

White has a strong initiative; the e7-pawn is under attack and the c5-pawn is weak.

18...♝f5

18...♝xe3 weakens the c5-pawn. After 19.fxe3± White threatens ♜c1-c4.

19.♗xd4 fxe4

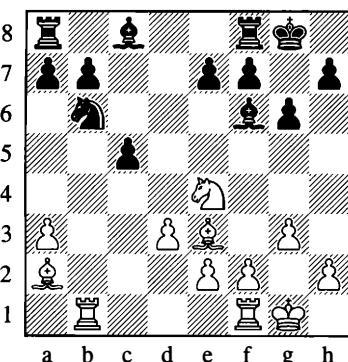
19...cxd4 loses the central pawn after 20.♕g5 ♜c3 21.♗e1 ♜fe8 22.♗e6±.

20.♗e5±

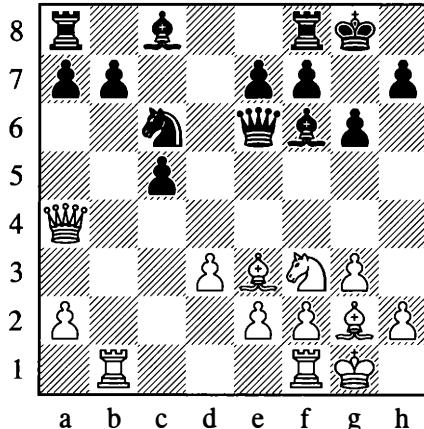
The bishop is more active than the knight, White's king is safer than its rival and the pressure along the seventh rank offers White a strong initiative, Jansa – Pribyl, Luhacovice 1973.

Black's best defence in this line was 16...♝b6!N. The following long forcing continuation offers Black reasonable chances of a draw: 17.♗xf6† exf6 18.♗f3 c4 19.♗xb6 axb6 20.dxc4 ♜xa3 21.♗xb6 ♜e6 22.♗d5 ♜e8 23.♗d1 ♜xd5 24.cxd5 ♜xe2 25.d6 ♜e8 26.♗xb7 ♜d8

White's main problem in this line is that the a8-rook developed effortlessly. Therefore, in reply to 16...♝b6?!, better is 17.♗a2!, maintaining the tension and threatening to win back the pawn without simplifying.



A possible continuation is 17...♝d7 18.♗xf6† exf6 19.d4 cxd4 20.♗xd4 b6 21.♗fc1±. White's pieces are very active. He can choose the most effective way of regaining the pawn and maintaining the pressure.

C2) 12...♝e6

Black defends the c5-pawn indirectly, by putting X-ray pressure on the e2-pawn. This position has occurred in just a couple of games.

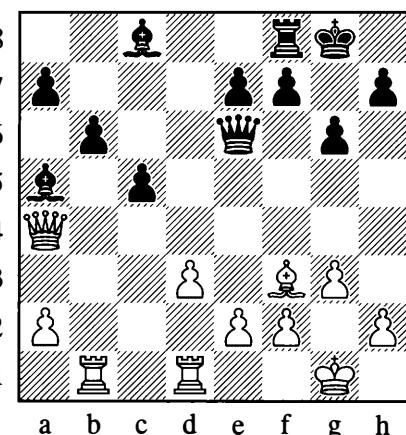
13.♗fe1!N

The simplest solution; White defends his pawn, intending to capture on c5 in comfort.

With the bishop on g7 (remember Black's choice on move 11) White could also have played more actively with 13.♗fc1, when 13...b6 loses a piece to 14.♗g5.

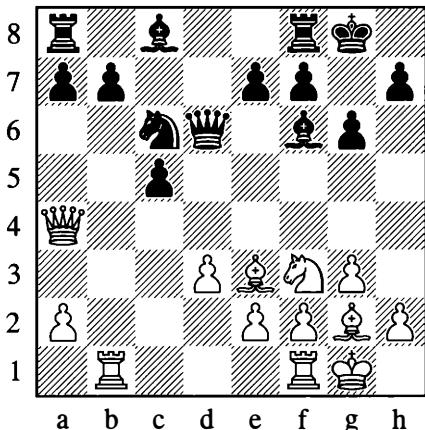
13...b6

13...♝d6 would almost transpose to line C3, with the insignificant difference that the white rook is on e1 rather than f1.

**14.♗g5 ♜xg5 15.♗xc6 ♜xe3 16.♗xa8 ♜d2
17.♗ed1 ♜a5 18.♗f3±**

White has won an exchange, for which Black has insufficient compensation.

C3) 12... $\mathbb{W}d6$



This looks quite solid; we are familiar with the fact that d6 and d3 are optimal squares for the queen in the two reversed colours versions of this line. The queen defends both c5 and c6, but as White is much better developed than in other similar lines without ... $\mathbb{Q}xb2$, White can take advantage of its slight exposure.

13. $\mathbb{Q}d2$

Although not very popular, this seems the most effective way of maintaining the initiative.

Traditionally, it was considered that completing development with 13. $\mathbb{Q}fc1$ was best, but after 13... $b6$ Black's position can resist any tactical blows. For instance: 14.d4 $\mathbb{Q}xd4$ 15. $\mathbb{Q}xd4$ $cxd4$ 16. $\mathbb{Q}f4$ $\mathbb{Q}d7$ 17. $\mathbb{W}a6$ $e5$ Black will have sufficient compensation for the inevitable loss of an exchange.

13... $\mathbb{Q}d4$

This allows White to transpose to an ending in which his knight is superior to the bishop.

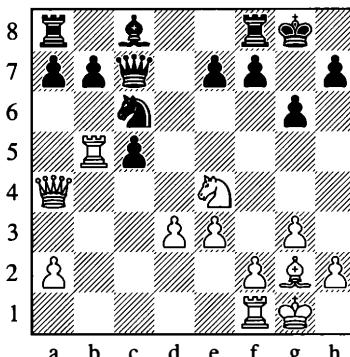
13... $\mathbb{Q}d4$

This move avoids the prospect mentioned above, but it has dynamic drawbacks as it fails to stabilize the position and leaves White with the initiative in the middlegame.

14. $\mathbb{Q}e4$ $\mathbb{W}e5$ 15. $\mathbb{Q}f4$ $\mathbb{W}f5$ 16.e3 $\mathbb{Q}e5$

Black is not well enough coordinated to try to trap the enemy bishop with: 16... $\mathbb{Q}g7$ 17.h3 More or less forcing Black to weaken the g5-square. 17... $h5$ 18. $\mathbb{Q}fc1$ $e5$ 19. $\mathbb{Q}xc5$ White threatens d3-d4 and Black has no adequate retreats for the queen. For instance, 19... $\mathbb{W}d7$ 20. $\mathbb{Q}h6$ $\mathbb{W}xd3$ 21. $\mathbb{Q}d1$ $\mathbb{W}e2$ 22. $\mathbb{Q}xg7$ $\mathbb{Q}xg7$ 23. $\mathbb{Q}g5$, with a strong initiative, or 19... $\mathbb{W}e6$ 20. $\mathbb{Q}g5$ when 20... $f6$ fails to 21. $\mathbb{Q}xf6!$ $\mathbb{Q}xf6$ 22. $\mathbb{Q}d5$, trapping the queen.

17. $\mathbb{Q}xe5$ $\mathbb{W}xe5$ 18. $\mathbb{Q}b5$ $\mathbb{W}c7$



In Schilling – Prange, corr. 1995, the best way to win back the pawn would have been:

19. $\mathbb{Q}xc5!N\pm$

With strong queenside pressure.

14. $\mathbb{Q}xd4$ $\mathbb{W}xd4$

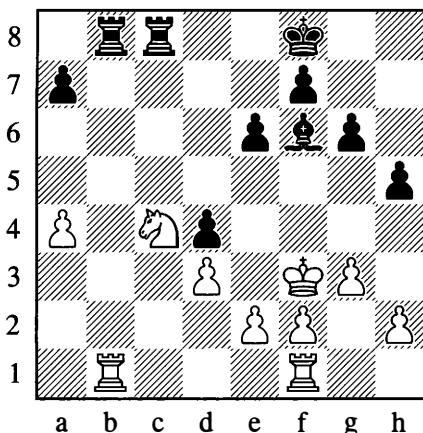
Keeping the queens on the board would favour White, because after 14... $cxd4$ 15. $\mathbb{Q}xb7\pm$ the a7-pawn would be under pressure.

15. $\mathbb{W}xd4$ $cxd4$ 16. $\mathbb{Q}xb7$ $\mathbb{Q}b8$ 17. $\mathbb{Q}xc8$ $\mathbb{Q}fxc8$

18. $\mathbb{Q}c4$

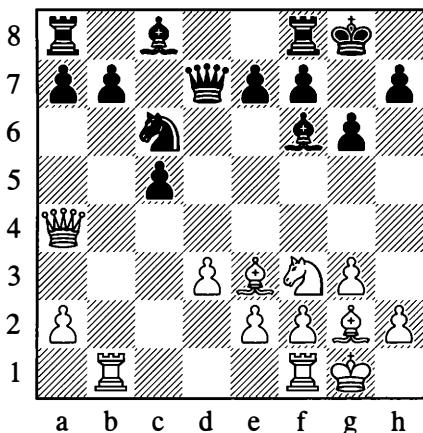
The position has calmed down and White has the more pleasant play in the ending, thanks to his stable knight. It is difficult for Black to find a useful job for his bishop.

18... $\mathbb{Q}f8$ 19. $\mathbb{Q}g2$ h5 20. $\mathbb{Q}f3$ e6 21.a4±



Followed by $\mathbb{Q}b5$, h2-h3, g3-g4 and $\mathbb{Q}e4$, with increasing pressure, Boyd – Karker, corr. 1977.

C4) 12... $\mathbb{W}d7!$?



A tricky defence; Black creates the potential threat of ... $\mathbb{Q}d4$ followed by the intermediate ... $\mathbb{Q}xe2\#$ as an answer to $\mathbb{W}xd7$.

13. $\mathbb{Q}xc5$

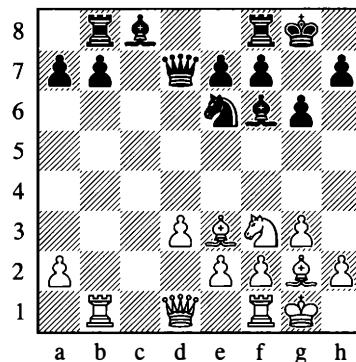
Just as in the previous line, White does not have a clear way of proving his compensation for the pawn after 13. $\mathbb{Q}fc1$ b6.

13...b6!?

A very dynamic approach; Black gives up a pawn for a tempo.

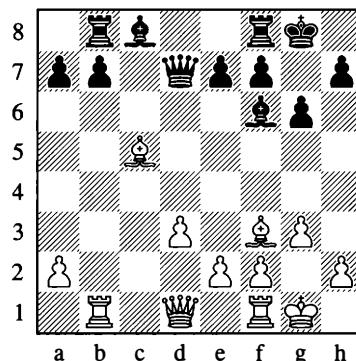
13... $\mathbb{Q}d4?!$ is premature and fails to cause White any problems retaining an advantage. 14. $\mathbb{W}d1$! This calm queen retreat leaves Black with problems completing his development; the black queen is obviously misplaced. This position occurred in two games of Mikhail Tal in the early '70s.

Now 14... $\mathbb{Q}e6$ 15. $\mathbb{Q}e3$ $\mathbb{B}b8$ was Tal – Pytel, Skopje (ol) 1972.



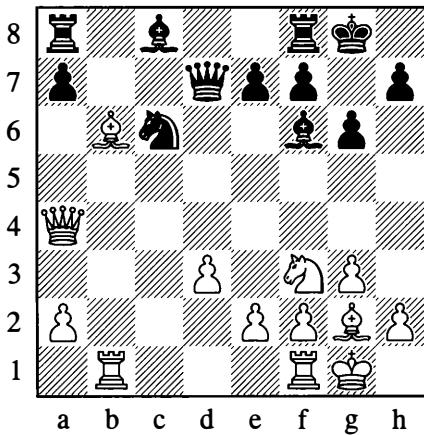
16. $\mathbb{Q}xa7!N$ This pawn exchange creates a good target for White on b7. 16... $\mathbb{B}a8$ 17. $\mathbb{Q}b6$ $\mathbb{B}xa2$ 18.d4± Followed by $\mathbb{W}d3$, with a space advantage, the better structure and superior development.

One year later, Tal faced: 14... $\mathbb{Q}xf3\#$ 15. $\mathbb{Q}xf3$ $\mathbb{B}b8$



16.♗xa7! Apparently, Tal was aware of the possible improvement over his previous game (which eventually ended in a draw) and carried out a similar exchanging operation in his second game. 16...♝a8 17.♗e3 ♜xa2 18.♗b3± White's pieces are optimally placed and the b7-pawn is almost doomed, Tal – Pribyl, Tallinn 1973.

14.♗xb6



14...♞d4!

Now is the right moment to carry out this discovered attack.

15.♗d1 axb6 16.♘xd4 ♜xa2

After the opening of the a-file, Black is certainly more active than in Tal's games, although White still retains the better structure. The b6-pawn is weak and the knight has a few stable squares at its disposal.

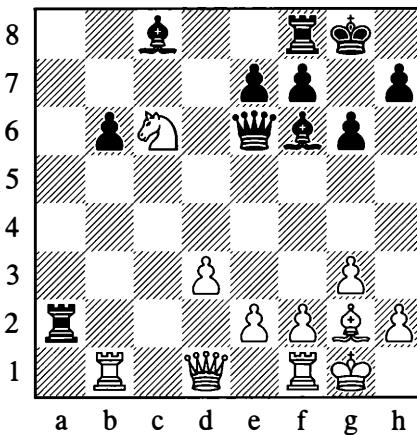
17.♘c6

Planning to drive the enemy rook away with ♘b4 and start a slow central expansion with e2-e3 and d3-d4.

17.♗b3 only leads to a draw: 17...♝d2 18.♗b4 ♜a2 The e2-pawn is hanging, forcing White to repeat moves, as occurred in Nakamura – Leko, Wijk aan Zee 2010.

17...♝e6

Black attacks the e2-pawn in order to win some time for development. So far, we have followed Kveinys – Naiditsch, Baden-Baden 2007, in which the passive 18.♗f3 was played.



18.e3!N

This move is part of White's general plan anyway and is the most effective way to defend the e-pawn.

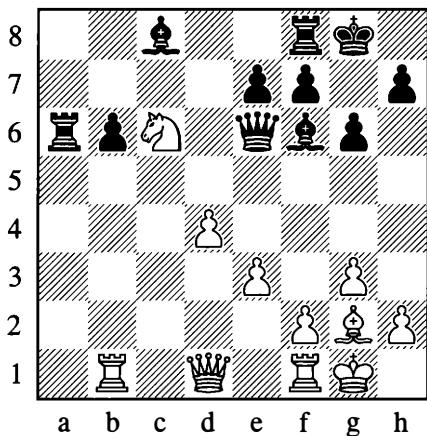
18...♜a6

Black does not get sufficient counterplay if he sacrifices the b-pawn, as the following two alternatives show:

18...♝d7 19.♗xb6 ♜c8 20.♗b1 Indirectly defending the knight. 20...♜a1 21.♗b5 ♜xf1† 22.♗xf1 ♜g4 23.♗e4± Black's possibility of reaching a position with opposite-coloured bishops does not guarantee a draw due to the presence of queens and rooks.

Or 18...b5 19.♗xb5 ♜a6 20.♗b6 ♜a3 21.♗e4 ♜c8 22.♗f3 ♜xd3 23.♗xd3 ♜xd3. Black's counterplay has won back the pawn, but only temporarily. 24.♗xe7† ♜xe7 25.♗xf6± Black is far from a drawn rook ending; with all the major pieces on the board, White will certainly torture him for a while.

19.d4±



White has a mobile centre, while the b6-pawn is weak.

Conclusion

In some of the lines examined above (B3, C3 and C4), Black comes close to equality, but no more than that. While the drawish tendency of these lines can be felt, Black has no guarantee of a peaceful end to the game and has to be prepared to endure White's long-term pressure.



The Flexible 3...e6

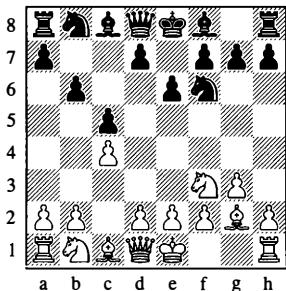
Introduction

Variation Index

1.c4 c5 2.g3 ♔f6 3.♔g2 e6

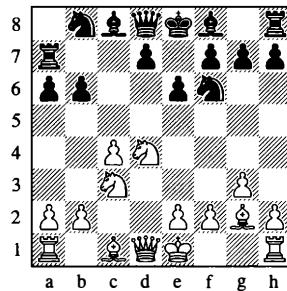
4.♕f3

Chapter 12



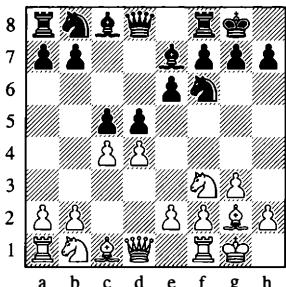
4...b6 – The Inferior Queen's Indian

Chapter 13



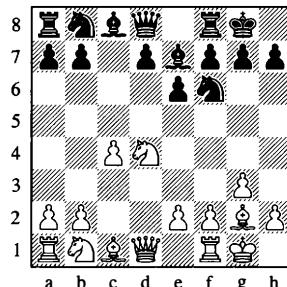
4...a6 – The Inferior Hedgehog

Chapter 14



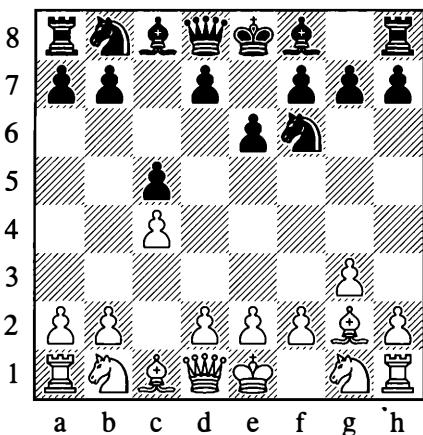
The Anti Tarrasch Catalan

Chapter 15



6...cxd4 – The delayed Hedgehog and others

1.c4 c5 2.g3 ♘f6 3.♗g2 e6



This is a sound approach, albeit not the most ambitious at Black's disposal. By spending a tempo on a modest pawn move, Black does not seem too interested in fighting for space or the initiative at an early stage of the game. On the other hand, the main merit of this approach is its flexibility. Just as in the 1...e6 lines from the second volume, Black is mainly concerned about his kingside development while waiting for White to commit himself in one way or another. We should pay special attention to this latter aspect if we want to maintain the integrity of our English repertoire.

First of all, White should not fall into the trap of playing 4.♘c3?! d5!, when the positional threat of ...d4 (either immediately or after the preliminary 5.cxd5 exd5) cannot be parried under favourable circumstances, since after the moves d2-d4 and ...cxd4, the reply ♗xd4 is not available.

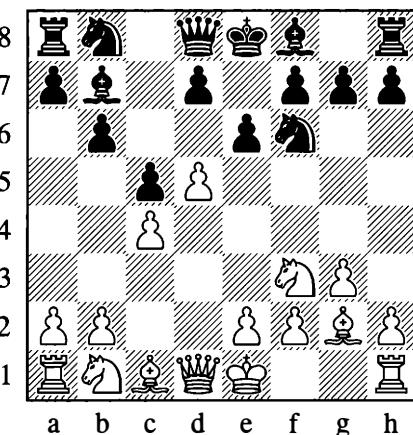
For this reason, the only adequate answer is:

4.♘f3

From this position Black has a wide choice. First of all, we should keep in mind that with the white queen's knight on b1, developing in the spirit of the Tarrasch defence with 4...d5 would transpose to the Anti QGD

system from the second volume, failing to cause us repertoire problems.

Since White's last move has obstructed the long diagonal, Black may be tempted to aim for a Hedgehog, a variation that we have consistently avoided. In Chapter 12 we deal with 5...b6, which is premature in view of 5.d4!. With the bishop still on c8, 5...cxd4 6.♗xd4 is anything but appealing for Black, which leaves us with 5...♗b7. Black is one step away from reaching his desired Hedgehog set-up, but the energetic 6.d5! leaves him struggling:

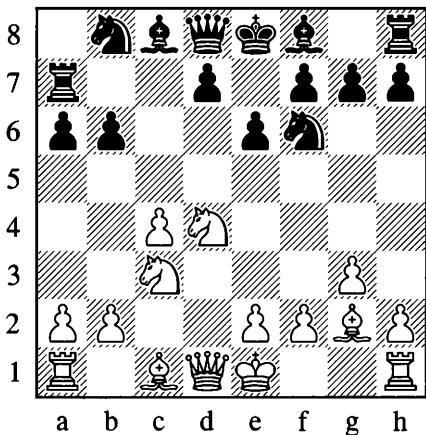


Via a surprising transposition, we have reached a position from the Queen's Indian (1.d4 ♘f6 2.c4 e6 3.♘f3 b6 4.g3 ♗b7 5.♗g2 c5?! 6.d5!), but there is no need for the reader to worry, since theory is justifiably sceptical about Black's chances. In other words, we should not mind being decoyed into other opening variations if they are objectively inferior for Black.

There is a slightly more subtle way in which Black may aim for a Hedgehog structure. In order to be able to meet d4 with ...cxd4, he can clear the a7-square for his rook with 4...a6. This move also creates the threat of a queenside expansion with ...b5, making 5.♘c3 the logical answer. White should have no qualms about

developing his queen's knight at such an early stage, because $5\dots d5$ ceased to be a challenge in view of $6.cxd5$ followed by $7.d4$ after either recapture. Black would face a rather depressing choice between a Tarrasch or Semi-Tarrasch Defence with the questionable move $\dots a7-a6$ on the board, which is practically equivalent to the loss of a tempo.

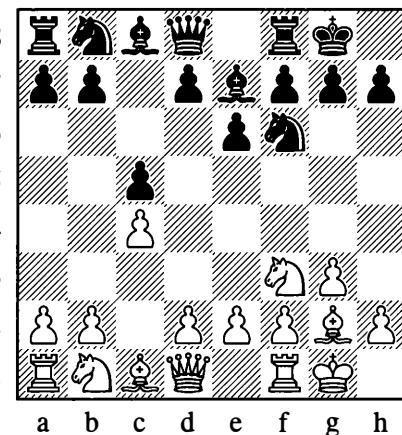
The most consistent move is $5\dots b6$, when after $6.d4 cxd4 7.\mathbb{Q}xd4 \mathbb{E}a7$ we reach the tabiya examined in Chapter 13:



It should also be mentioned that neutral moves like $5\dots \mathbb{E}e7$ or $5\dots \mathbb{Q}c6$ should transpose to Chapter 15 following the natural continuation of $6.0-0$ followed by $d2-d4$.

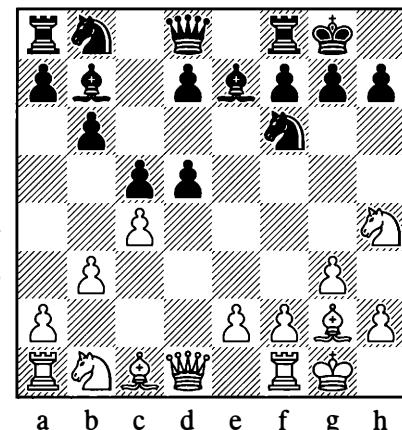
Finally we have $4\dots \mathbb{Q}e7$. I have never encountered this move order in practice, nor do I expect to meet it in the future. This is not because it is objectively wrong, but more a matter of general approach. Adherents of the Tarrasch Defence usually prefer to increase their control in the centre as soon as possible, with $\dots d5$ or $\dots \mathbb{Q}c6$, while Hedgehog fans will have abandoned their hope to reach their favourite opening when facing our move order. Still, if the opponent suspects that we are determined to stay within English Opening territory, he may test our vigilance with the modest-looking bishop move.

The critical moment arises after $5.0-0 0-0$:



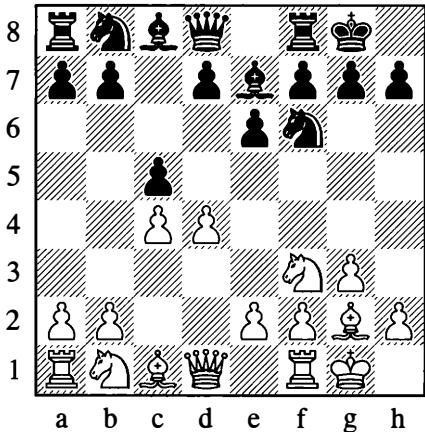
The most active developing move, $6.\mathbb{Q}c3$, is less than ideal for us on account of $6\dots d5$, when there is nothing better than $7.cxd5$ followed by $8.d4$, reaching a non-English position (albeit one in which White has reasonable chances to fight for an advantage).

Another plausible continuation is $6.b3$, aiming to transpose to the Anti QGD system involving $b2-b3$ from the $1\dots e6$ section of the second volume. However, in the present position Black is not forced to play $\dots d5$, but can instead answer with $6\dots b6!$, reaching a comfortable version of a Hedgehog. White's problem is that after $7.d4 \mathbb{Q}b7 8.d5 exd5 9.\mathbb{Q}h4$:



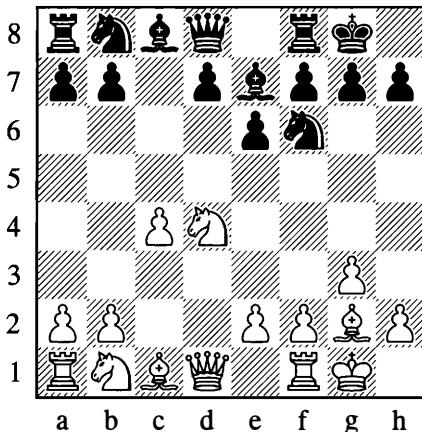
Black has 9... $\mathbb{Q}e4!$, when the threat of ... $\mathbb{Q}f6$ wins an important tempo, taking full advantage of the premature advance of the b-pawn.

In view of these possibilities, our only other suitable option is **6.d4**, reaching the last splitting point of our repertoire:



Black can try tricking us with **6...d5**, but we can sidestep the Tarrasch Defence with **7.dxc5**, as examined in Chapter 14.

The most natural reply is **6...cxd4**, and after **7.Qxd4** we reach the tabiya of the 15th and final chapter of this book:



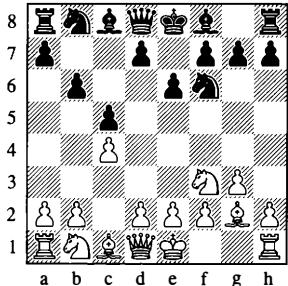
White has achieved quite a lot by delaying d2-d4 until after castling. A whole series of sharp and highly topical lines based on ... $\mathbb{Q}b4\#$ and/or ... $\mathbb{W}b6$ have been sidestepped. In the resulting position Black has certain problems completing his queenside development, being submitted to the strong pressure of the English/Catalan bishop.

Having sketched the general map of the final group of chapters, I invite you to accompany me while examining them one by one.



The Flexible 3...e6

4...b6 - The Inferior Queen's Indian



Variation Index

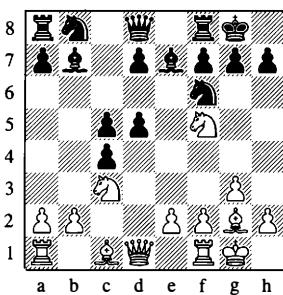
1.c4 c5 2.g3 ♜f6 3.♗g2 e6 4.♗f3 b6

5.d4 ♕b7 6.d5! exd5 7.♘h4!

- A) 7...♛c8
- B) 7...b5
- C) 7...g6

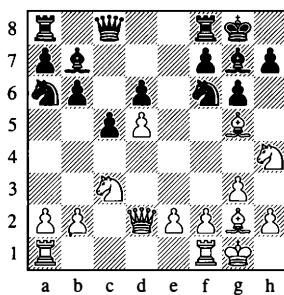
221
222
223

B) after 10...0-0



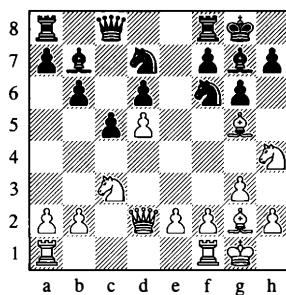
11.♘xe7†!

C) note to 12...♝bd7



13.♕h6!N

C) after 12...♝bd7

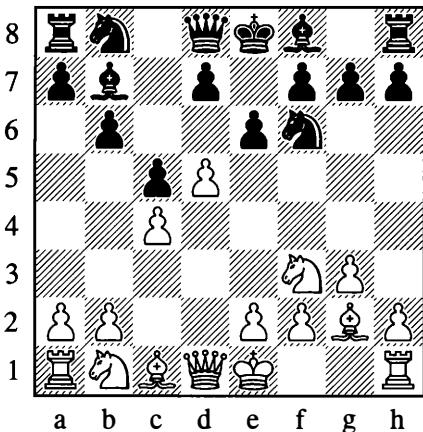


13.♕h6!N

1.c4 c5 2.g3 ♘f6 3.♗g2 e6 4.♗f3 b6 5.d4 ♖b7

5...cxd4 6.♗xd4 is unpleasant for Black, as was briefly noted in the previous chapter.

6.d5!



With this move White immediately draws a serious question mark over the placement of the enemy bishop. The pawn sacrifice has a temporary character, and as long as White manages to consolidate his central outpost, Black will be condemned to a distinctly unfavourable version of a Modern Benoni, with a badly misplaced bishop on b7.

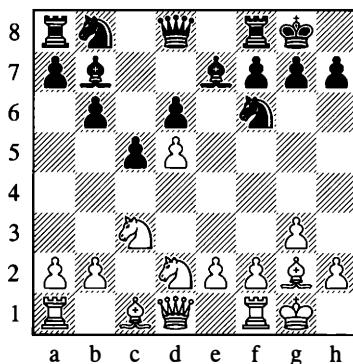
6...exd5

This is practically forced.

The attempt to undermine the white centre with 6...b5?! is met by: 7.dxe6 fxe6 8.cxb5± Play has transposed to a Blumenfeld Gambit, with one significant difference: Black has played ...b5 in two moves, losing a full tempo for nothing!

The pseudo-Benoni continuation of 6...d6 7.♗c3 exd5 8.cxd5 ♖e7 9.0–0 0–0 10.♗d2 has been played in a few older games between strong players. It is clear that Black will have to lose a tempo with ...♖a6, which explains

why he has chosen to ‘economize’ on the other wing by replacing the standard fianchetto development with the more passive ...♗e7. Here are two illustrative examples:



a) 10...♗a6 11.♗c4 ♗c7 12.a4 ♕e8 13.e4 ♗a6 14.b3± White takes advantage of the lack of pressure along the a1-h8 diagonal to consolidate his spatial superiority, Smyslov – Dominguez, Las Palmas 1972.

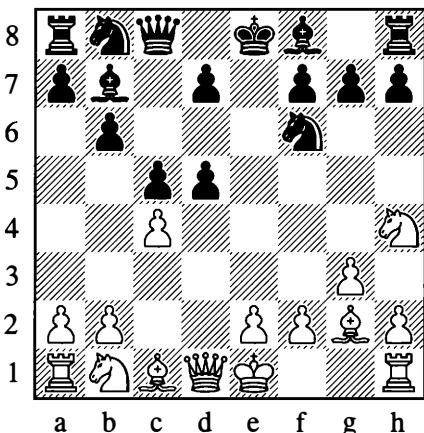
b) 10...♗bd7 11.a4 ♗a6 12.b3 ♗e8 13.♗b2 ♗c7 14.♗e1 ♕e8 15.f4!± Before playing e2-e4, White prevents ...♗e5-d3, depriving Black of any form of counterplay, Tukmakov – Damjanovic, Buenos Aires 1970.

7.♘h4!

White pins the d5-pawn and threatens to occupy the active f5-square with his knight. The main strategic threat is to capture on d5 with pieces (after ♗c3 and ♗g5), but in some cases cxd5 can also be strong, depending on how Black responds.

Black’s main hope is to leave the h4-knight out of play with a well-timed ...g6. Mathematically, this would compensate for having a passive bishop on b7, but in practice matters are not that easy, since in many cases we will see that the knight is far from useless on h4.

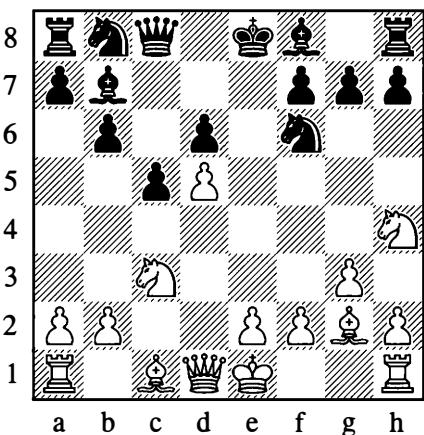
We will examine A) 7...♕c8, B) 7...b5 and C) 7...g6.

A) 7... $\mathbb{W}c8$ 

By defending the bishop, Black forces the immediate capture on d5, thus thwarting White's ambitions of utilizing that square as a piece outpost. On the other hand, in the resulting Benoni structure the queen will be misplaced on c8, while the delay in castling will also lead to certain inconveniences.

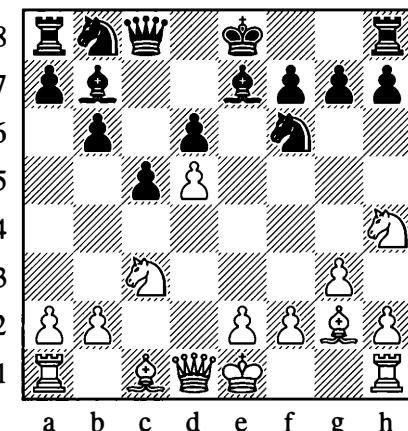
8.cxd5 d6

Black should not delay this move for too long. For instance, after 8...g6 9. $\mathfrak{Q}c3 \mathbb{Q}g7$? (9...d6 is necessary, transposing to the note to Black's 9th move below) 10. $\mathfrak{Q}f4\pm$ it is not clear how he will get to play ...d6 at all. This is a direct consequence of the queen's departure from d8.

9. $\mathfrak{Q}c3$ **9... $\mathbb{E}e7$**

Black intends to complete his development as quickly as possible.

9...g6 10.0–0 $\mathfrak{Q}g7$ should be met by 11. $\mathfrak{Q}g5$!, for instance: 11...h6?! This loses too much time and weakens the kingside, allowing a dangerous attack. (Black should prefer 11...0–0, transposing to line C below) 12. $\mathfrak{Q}xf6 \mathbb{Q}xf6$ 13. $\mathfrak{Q}e4 \mathbb{Q}e7$ 14. $f4\pm$ Followed by f5, since 14...f5? loses instantly to 15. $\mathfrak{Q}xg6$.

**10.e4!**

It is essential to threaten $\mathfrak{Q}f5$ before Black can castle. After the less precise 10.0–0 0–0 11.e4 Black can stay in the game with 11...g6±.

10...0–0

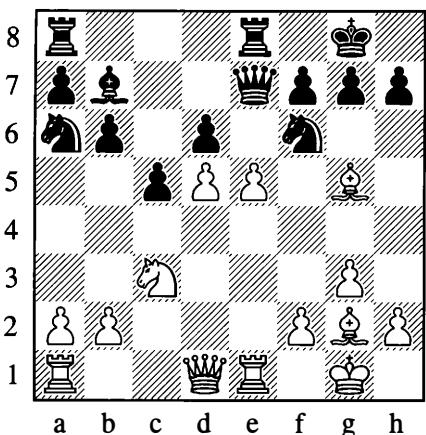
With the king in the centre, 10...g6 is strongly met by 11. $\mathfrak{Q}h6$. Black cannot dislodge the bishop with 11... $\mathfrak{Q}g4$ because of 12. $\mathfrak{Q}h3\pm$.

11. $\mathfrak{Q}f5$

Now that the knight has found an active role in the game, White's advantage is indisputable. Black is underdeveloped and under serious pressure, as was convincingly demonstrated in the following encounter:

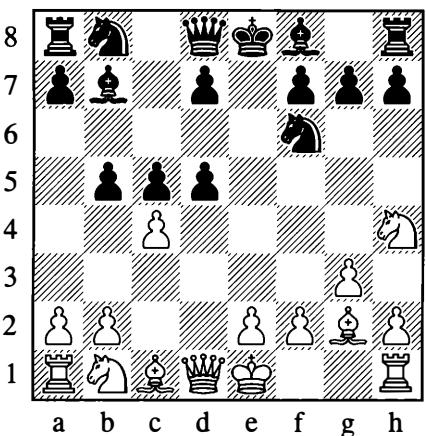
11... $\mathbb{E}e8$ 12. $\mathfrak{Q}f4$ $\mathbb{W}d7$ 13.0–0 $\mathfrak{Q}f8$ 14. $\mathfrak{Q}e1$

$\mathbb{Q}a6$ 15. $\mathbb{B}g5$ $\mathbb{Q}e7$ 16. $\mathbb{Q}xe7\#$ $\mathbb{W}xe7$ 17.e5!



With a decisive attack for White, Adamski – Ardiansyah, Siegen 1970.

B) 7...b5?!



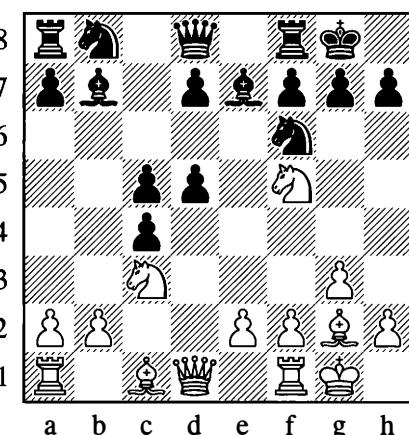
Black attacks the c4-pawn, hoping to convince his opponent to capture on d5 immediately. In the resulting Benoni structure, the move ...b5 would certainly be useful, while the black queen could emerge on b6 rather than c8 as in the previous line. The main defect of the text move is similar to that mentioned in the case of the pseudo-Blumenfeld line starting with 6...b5: Black loses a tempo in what remains at present a dynamic position.

8.0–0!

White ignores the threat, relying on the fact that, with the d5-square insufficiently defended, the optically impressive centre will soon evaporate, leaving Black with a backward pawn on d7.

8...bxc4 9. $\mathbb{Q}c3$ $\mathbb{Q}e7$ 10. $\mathbb{Q}f5$ 0–0

White is well developed and his king's knight is aggressively posted on its ideal square. He will, however, need to spend some time retrieving the missing pawns. For this reason, choosing the right move order is important in order to prevent Black from obtaining counterplay.



11. $\mathbb{Q}xe7\#$

A paradoxical move: White exchanges his active knight for the passive bishop. In tense positions it always important to choose the right moment for carrying out committal operations such as exchanges. In the present case, the capture on e7 is fully consistent with White's general plan, namely the development of the dark-squared bishop on g5 in order to undermine the d5-square. The bishop on e7 has to be eliminated, otherwise this piece could become too active on the h8-a1 diagonal after an exchange on f6.

The natural 11. $\mathbb{B}g5$ leads to less clear consequences than the game continuation:

11... $\mathbb{Q}c6$ 12. $\mathbb{Q}xe7\#$ $\mathbb{Q}xe7$ 13. $\mathbb{Q}xf6$ $gxf6$ 14. $\mathbb{Q}xd5$ $\mathbb{Q}xd5$ 15. $\mathbb{Q}xd5$ $\mathbb{E}b8$ 16. $\mathbb{E}b1$ $\mathbb{W}e7$ It turns out that the second pawn is not so easy to retrieve, because $\mathbb{Q}xc4$ would relinquish the blockade of Black's d-pawn.

11... $\mathbb{W}xe7$ 12. $\mathbb{Q}g5$ h6

The fact that Black must spend a tempo neutralizing the pin, at a time when his queenside remains underdeveloped, justifies White's 11th move.

Karpov mentions the line: 12... $\mathbb{Q}a6\text{?!}$ 13. $\mathbb{Q}xd5$ $\mathbb{Q}xd5$ 14. $\mathbb{Q}xd5$ $\mathbb{E}ab8$ 15. $\mathbb{Q}xc4\pm$ White's bishops are strong.

13. $\mathbb{Q}xf6$ $\mathbb{W}xf6$ 14. $\mathbb{Q}xd5$ $\mathbb{Q}xd5$ 15. $\mathbb{W}xd5$ $\mathbb{Q}c6$ 16. $\mathbb{W}xc4$ $\mathbb{W}xb2$ 17.e3

The position has stabilized and we can draw some conclusions. White will shortly restore material equality with $\mathbb{W}xc5$, leaving Black with an unstable knight and a weak pawn on d7. Karpov modestly evaluates the position as marginally better for White, but I would regard 'clear advantage' as a more accurate description.

17... $\mathbb{E}ab8$

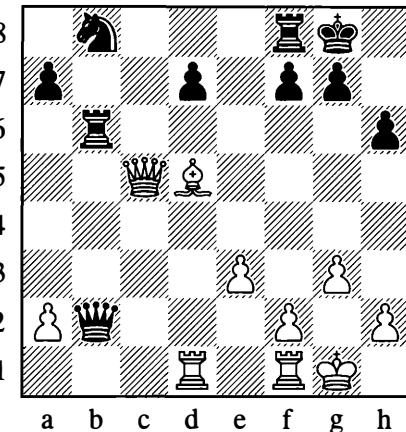
17... $\mathbb{W}b4$ fails to save the c-pawn after 18. $\mathbb{E}ac1\pm$.

Karpov suggests 17... $\mathbb{E}ac8\text{?!}$ 18. $\mathbb{W}xc5$ $\mathbb{Q}b4$ 19. $\mathbb{W}xa7$ $\mathbb{E}c2$ as a better chance for survival. He examines several continuations for White, without seeming to be too convinced of his advantage. I find that the simple 20. $\mathbb{E}ad1$, avoiding any tricks based on ... $\mathbb{E}xf2$, leaves White clearly on top after 20... $\mathbb{Q}xa2$ 21. $\mathbb{E}xd7$. Black is a long way from reaching a drawn ending with just one rook for each side, and the pressure against the f7-square may become uncomfortable.

18. $\mathbb{W}xc5$ $\mathbb{E}b6$

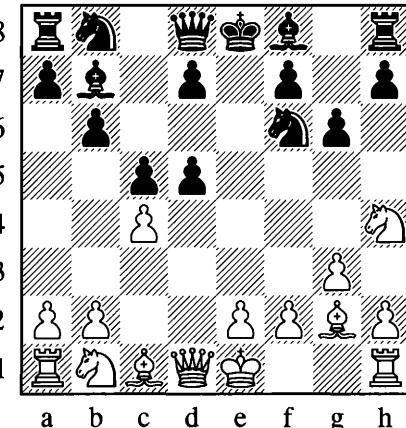
Black is clearly worse after 18... $\mathbb{E}b5$ 19. $\mathbb{W}d6$ $\mathbb{Q}e5$ 20.a4, as pointed out by Karpov.

19. $\mathbb{E}ad1$ $\mathbb{Q}b8$ 20. $\mathbb{Q}d5\pm$



White dominates the board. In Karpov – Gavrikov, Moscow 1988, the former World Champion went on to win convincingly.

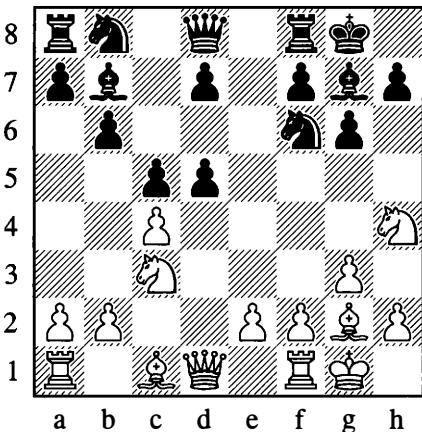
C) 7...g6



This is Black's most constructive and flexible move. The second player immediately restricts the enemy knight and prepares to develop in the spirit of the Modern Benoni, without defining his intentions regarding the queenside pieces.

8.♗c3 ♗g7 9.0–0 0–0

We have reached an important moment. Both sides have completed the first stage of mobilization and the time has come to formulate a plan for the next phase of the game.

**10.♗g5!**

This is the only move that promises White an advantage. By pinning the knight, he increases the strength of the threatened ♜xd5.

Before continuing our analysis, it is worth taking a brief detour in order to appreciate the defects of the alternatives:

White does not get much by capturing on d5 with pieces: 10.♕xd5 ♜xd5 11.♕xd5 ♗xd5 12.♗xd5 ♜c6 The blockade is not easy to maintain, because of the permanent threat of ...♝b4, or ...♝e7-e6, while the h4-knight is quite far from the d5-square. Besides, White's queenside is underdeveloped and he will most likely have to lose a tempo with ♜b1 in order to solve this problem.

The following famous classic game illustrates White's potential problems in the event that he contents himself with playing cxd5 too soon:

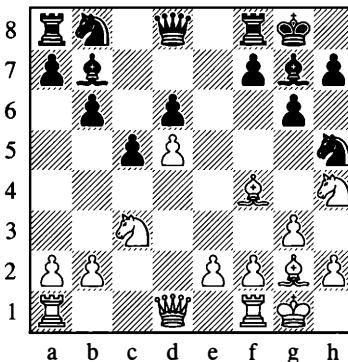
10.♗f4 d6 11.cxd5

In this position the h4-knight is even more misplaced than the b7-bishop. While the

bishop would need to lose only one tempo to get onto a normal track with ...♝a6, the knight will have to accept the loss of two tempos by retreating to its former location.

11...♞h5!

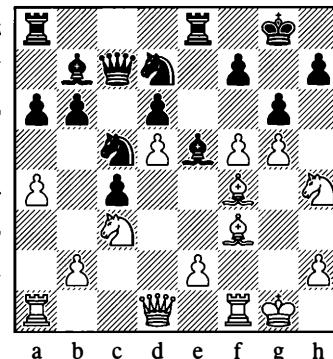
Driving the f4-bishop away is a typical method in the Benoni, but in this case the situation is worse than normal for White since he does not have the answer ♗g5, precisely because of the awkward placement of his knight.

**12.♗d2 ♜d7 13.f4**

Finally, we see one positive effect of having moved the knight away from f3: the f-pawn can advance. White is still a long way from starting an effective attack though.

13...a6 14.♗f3 ♜hf6 15.a4 c4 16.♗e3 ♜c7 17.g4 ♜c5

It is noticeable that Black's play 'feels' considerably more natural than White's.

18.g5 ♜fd7 19.f5 ♜fe8 20.♗f4 ♜e5†

Black has regrouped perfectly, while White suffers from numerous weaknesses. In Alekhine – Capablanca, New York 1927, Black went on to win a fine game. After following this strategic crush, we can understand Capablanca's mistaken evaluation regarding the strength of the player who, only few months later, would go on to wrest the supreme title from him...

10... $\mathbb{W}c8$

With this flexible move Black escapes both pins in a single stroke.

10...h6?!

This has the significant drawback of weakening the g6-square.

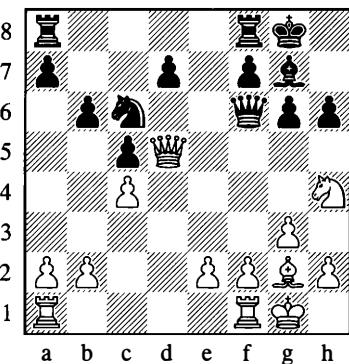
11. $\mathbb{Q}xf6$ $\mathbb{W}xf6$

Black cannot answer with 11... $\mathbb{Q}xf6?$, aiming to win a tempo by attacking the h4-knight, because of the tactical trick 12. $\mathbb{Q}xg6!$ f x g 6 13. $\mathbb{Q}xd5\#$, winning material.

After the text move, however, White can occupy the d5-square in total comfort:

12. $\mathbb{Q}xd5$ $\mathbb{Q}xd5$ 13. $\mathbb{W}xd5$ $\mathbb{Q}c6$

In the few games that have reached this position, White opted for 14. $\mathbb{W}xd7$, allowing some counterplay after 14... $\mathbb{E}ac8$ followed by ... $\mathbb{E}fd8$. Instead he can improve with:



14. $\mathbb{E}ad1$!N

White completes his development, improving his central control at the same time.

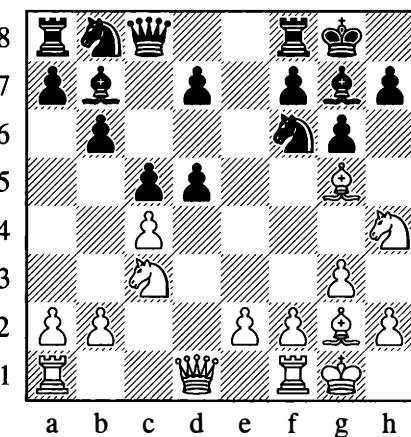
14... $\mathbb{E}ad8$

14... $\mathbb{W}xb2?$ allows the familiar 15. $\mathbb{Q}xg6$, when 15... $\mathbb{Q}b4$ is not dangerous in view of 16. $\mathbb{Q}e7\#$.

15. $\mathbb{E}d2$ ±

Black can do little against White's plan of gradually consolidating his position with $\mathbb{E}fd1$, $\mathbb{Q}f3$, $\mathbb{Q}g2-f4$ and so on.

10... $\mathbb{W}c7$ has similar ideas as the text move, but allows White to strengthen his initiative with: 11. $\mathbb{Q}f4$ $\mathbb{W}c8$ 12.cxd5 Now Black will have to compromise his position in order to arrange the desirable ...d7-d6. 12... $\mathbb{Q}e8$ 13. $\mathbb{E}c1$ d6 14.a3 $\mathbb{Q}d7$ 15.b4 a6 16. $\mathbb{Q}e4$ $\mathbb{W}c7$ 17.bxc5 bxc5 18. $\mathbb{W}d2$ ± White has a very active position, while Black has no counterplay at all, Tal – Ljubojevic, Riga 1979.



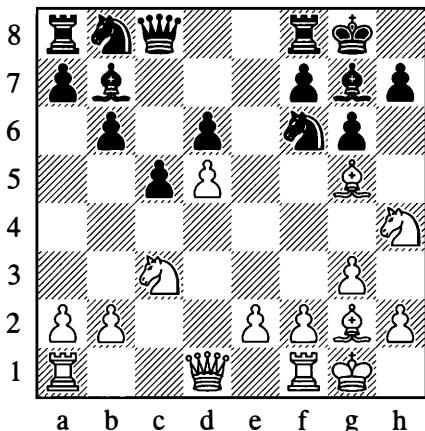
11.cxd5

Under the given circumstances, transposing to a pseudo-Benoni is the best decision. Compared with the aforementioned Alekhine – Capablanca game, Black has spent a valuable tempo on placing his queen on a passive square. Some of the side effects of this detail will be revealed in the subsequent analysis.

11...d6

Black is best advised to play this move while it is still possible.

11...h6?! 12.♗f4± leads to similar play as in the Tal – Ljubojevic game from the note to Black's 10th move above. White's last move is justified by the fact that 12...g5? fails to win a piece due to 13.♘f5!+– threatening a fork on e7.



12.♗d2!

This final touch underlines White's domination. In the fianchetto variation of the Modern Benoni, he almost never obtains control over the c1-h6 diagonal as effortlessly as in the current line. After the intended bishop exchange resulting from ♘h6, Black's prospects for counterplay will dwindle dramatically. In fact, White can nullify the thematic ...a6?...b5 queenside expansion with the strong plan of ♜ac1 followed by a3 and b4, leaving Black passive on the wing that is supposed to be "his". Furthermore, the weakening of Black's kingside means that tricks based on ♘f5 will be quite feasible, especially after e2-e4. Add in the fact that Black requires several tempos in order to restore the necessary harmony between his pieces, and it becomes clear that the negative aspects of the knight's position on h4 are of little consequence.

12...♘bd7

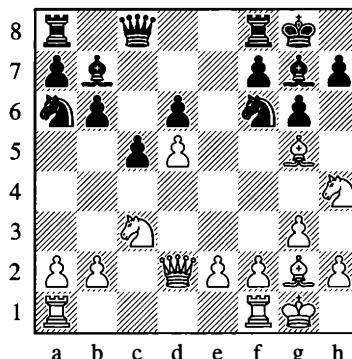
This looks like a flexible continuation, but in the Benoni the moves ...♘bd7 and ...♗a6 are rarely combined. Black has several other

methods of starting his regrouping, but the essence of the position remains the same in all cases.

Keeping the bishop with 12...♗e8 13.♗h6 ♘h8 does not bring any relief in view of 14.e4± intending ♘f5.

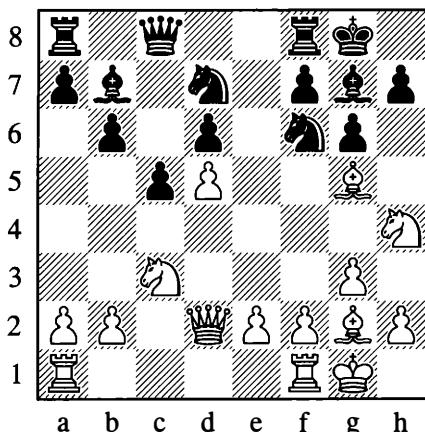
The careless 12...a6?! allows 13.♗f4!, hitting d6 and f6 and causing Black serious problems of coordination. 13...♘fd7 After this move Black's queenside is completely frozen. (13...♗d8 14.♗ad1± does not look too appealing either, as Black has no obvious way of freeing himself.) 14.♗e7 (14.♗xd6?? is impossible due to ...♗e5 trapping the queen, but the text move is good enough.) 14...♗e5 15.♗g5 f6 (15...♗e8 16.♘f5± is similar.) 16.♗g4± Followed by ♘f5 with a strong attack, Alburt – Dorfman, Tbilisi 1976.

12...♘a6 was tried in Menendez – Schuh, corr. 1990. Black intends to play ...♘c7 followed by ...♗a6, after which his position will start to resemble a normal Benoni set-up, but the whole plan is rather slow.



13.♗h6!N Since Black does not threaten much on the other wing, there is no reason to deviate from the main plan. 13...♗xh6 14.♗xh6 ♘c7 15.e4 Threatening ♘f5. 15...♗g4 16.♗d2 ♗d8 17.h3 ♗e5 18.f4 ♘c4 19.♗f2 ♗e8 20.♗ad1± White is perfectly regrouped and is ready to commence his attack with the thematic e4-e5.

The text move was played in Polak – Guirao, Balaguer 2001. At this point White should have executed what is by now a familiar idea:



13.♗h6!N

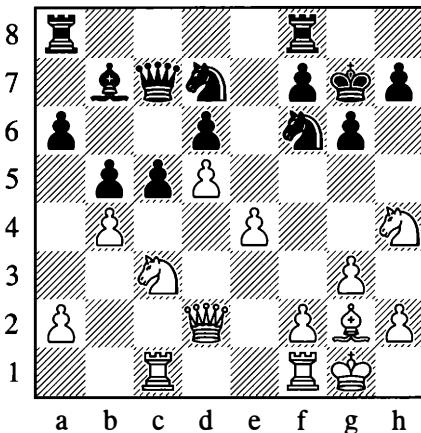
No additional explanation should be required of this positionally desirable move.

13...a6

The careless 13...♝e8?! takes the e8-square away from the f6-knight, allowing 14.♞f5!±.

In the event of 13...♝xh6 14.♝xh6 ♜e8, White should react in the same way as in the main line with 15.♝ac1±.

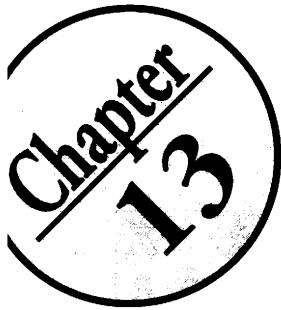
**14.♝xg7 ♜xg7 15.♝ac1 ♜c7 16.e4 b5
17.b4!±**



White is absolutely stable on the dark squares and remains in control across the whole board. In the Anti Benoni system based on ♘d3, h3 and ♛f3, this kind of position without dark-squared bishops is known to offer White a stable advantage. In the present case, the bishop is better placed on g2 than on d3, because it overprotects the d5-pawn, thus making the attack based on e4-e5 easier to carry out.

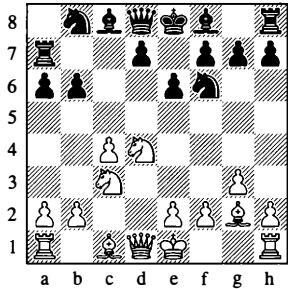
Conclusion:

As far as I know, this sideline has never been submitted to a thorough analysis. The variations presented in this chapter confirm the general evaluation of the variation as unsatisfactory for Black.



The Flexible 3...e6

4...a6 - The Inferior Hedgehog



Variation Index

1.c4 c5 2.g3 ♜f6 3.♗g2 e6 4.♗f3 a6

5.♘c3 b6 6.d4 cxd4 7.♘xd4 ♜a7 8.0-0

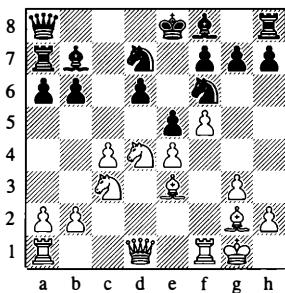
A) 8...♝b7

230

B) 8...♝e7

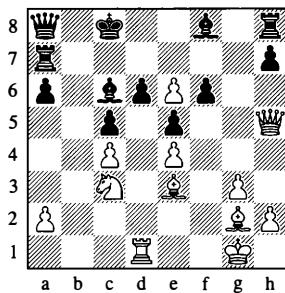
233

A) after 12...e5



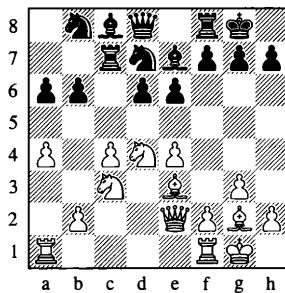
13.♘e6!

A) after 19...♝c8



20.♘d5!N

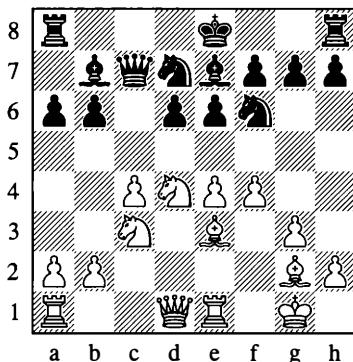
B) after 12...♞fd7



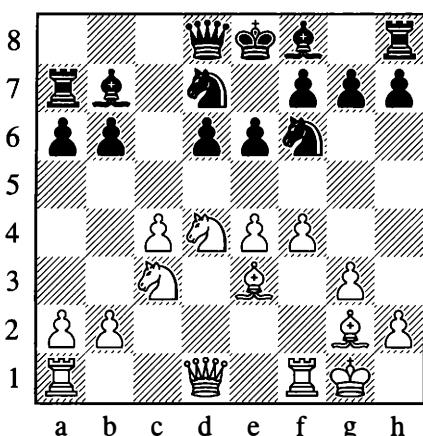
13.f4!N

1.c4 c5 2.g3 ♜f6 3.♗g2 e6 4.♗f3 a6 5.♗c3 b6 6.d4 cxd4 7.♗xd4 ♜a7

This is a rather artificial way of reaching a Hedgehog. In order to understand the nature of Black's problems, we should refer to an important tabiya from the genuine English Hedgehog: 1.c4 c5 2.♗f3 ♜f6 3.♗c3 e6 4.g3 b6 5.♗g2 ♜b7 6.0–0 a6 7.♗e1 d6 8.e4 ♜e7 9.d4 cxd4 10.♗xd4 ♜c7 11.♗e3 ♜bd7 12.f4

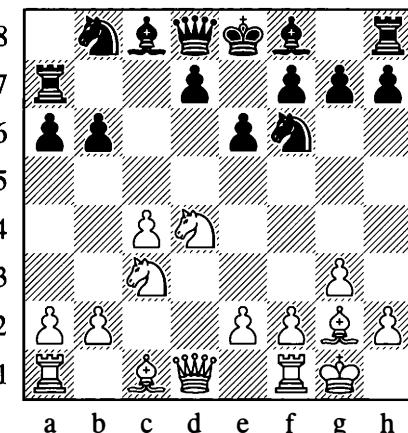


White has spent an important tempo on ♜e1 in order to make e2-e4 possible, while ...♜c7 certainly looks a more useful developing move than ...♜a7 in our current line. Compare with the following position after White's 11th move from line A:



The further course of events proves that the rook is quite useful on the f-file, allowing White to unleash a very strong sacrificial attack.

8.0–0

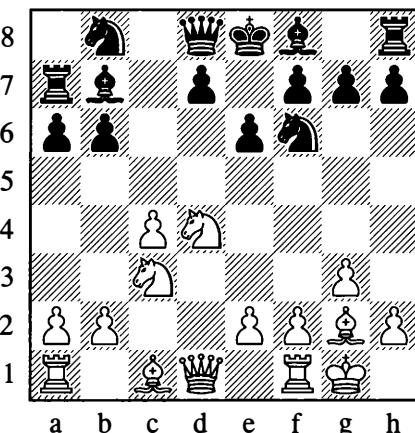


Black now has an important choice between
A) 8...♜b7 and **B) 8...♜e7**.

8...d6 9.e4 has little independent value and can transpose to either variation.

8...♜c7 9.♗d3 ♜b7 loses too much time:
10.♗f4 d6 11.♗xb7 ♜xb7 12.♗f3 ♜c6 13.♗fd1 ♜d7 Black is badly underdeveloped; he has managed to defend his d6-pawn safely, but White can open a new front by 14.♗a4+ with a strong initiative.

A) 8...♜b7



Black intends to set up pressure along the a8-h1 diagonal as soon as possible, but this move weakens the defence of the e6-square.

9.e4 d6 10.Qe3 Qbd7 11.f4

White has a lead in development and is ready to carry out the thematic f4-f5, aiming to seize control of the important d5-square.

11...W a8

This is the only consistent continuation. Black not only tries to justify the somewhat awkward rook lift to a7, but also attempts to exploit the absence of a white rook from e1. However, moving the queen far from the centre, while Black's kingside development is incomplete, is quite dangerous.

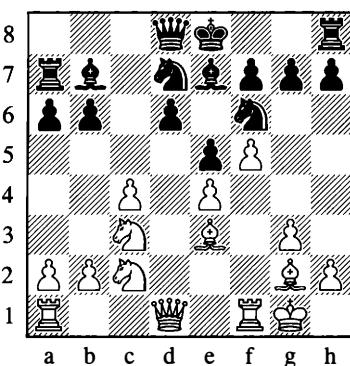
A more neutral alternative is:

11...Qe7

This allows White to carry out his main plan unhindered:

12.f5 e5 13.Qc2

White threatens Qb4-d5 with a huge advantage. For Black, the position is depressingly one-sided; his attempts to gain counterplay are easily repelled.



13...h5 14.W e2

Not falling into the trap 14.Qb4 Qg4 15.Qd2 b5, threatening ...Wb6†.

14...Qc5 15.Qd2

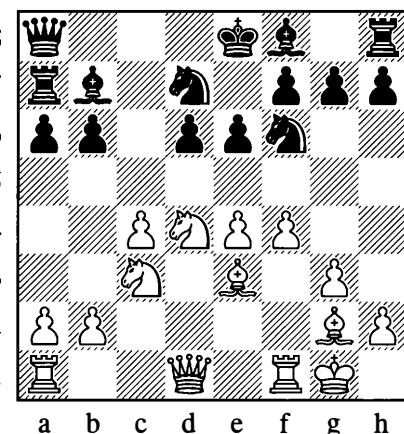
15.Qf2?! would give away this useful bishop after 15...Qg4.

15...a5

Black has prevented Qb4 and even ensured some stability for his knight.

16.Qa3±

However, Black has given up something in exchange: the b5-square. Over the past few moves, Black has not improved his position at all.



12.f5

White is forced to continue with his attack, since there is no adequate way of defending e4.

12...e5 13.Qe6!

A correct piece sacrifice, which is justified by Black's weakly defended kingside.

Objectively, 13.Qc2 may be equally good: 13...Qxe4 14.Qd5 Qxd5 15.cxd5 Qef6 16.Qb4 White will play Qc6 followed by g3-g4, with an overwhelming space advantage on both wings, which more than compensates for the pawn.

I have awarded an exclamation mark to the text move for its artistic impression and psychological implications. In the early '90s, there was a marked tendency among Romania's top players to agree short draws with each other and let the results against the less strong

opponents decide the fate of the tournament. By the time this game was played, I had had enough of this and rejected an early draw offer from my opponent, even though we had friendly relations away from the board. The knight sacrifice was the best way to convince my opponent that I was not kidding and that a second draw offer would make little sense. Also, it helped me to gradually get rid of the “drawing spell” in the next events, although in the game I later missed some simple tactics and eventually lost.

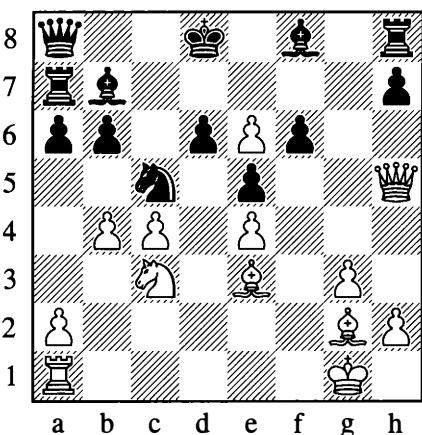
13...fxe6 14.fxe6 ♜c5

Black has to keep the b6-pawn defended. The passive 14...♝b8? loses to 15.♝xf6 gxf6 16.♛h5† ♚d8 17.♝xb6† followed by mate.

15.♝xf6!

White is a piece down and must act energetically, destroying the black king's defence.

15...gxf6 16.♛h5† ♚d8 17.b4



17...♝c6!

The only defence, opening the seventh rank for the rook.

17...♜xe6 is out of the question because of

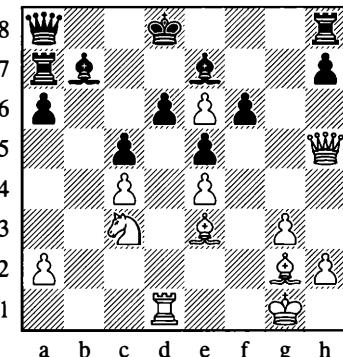
18.♛f7, with numerous threats such as ♜xe6, ♜f6† and ♜xb6†.

17...♝e7

This fails to consolidate the position:

18.bxc5 bxc5 19.♝d1

The threat of ♜xc5 is not easy to parry.



19...♜c8

19...♝c7 allows 20.♝xc5 dxc5 21.♝d7† ♜b6 22.♝xe7± with approximate material equality, but White has overwhelming activity.

19...♝c8 runs into 20.♛a4±.

20.♝f7

Black is paralysed; the main threat is ♛a4 followed by ♜xc5. Black's congestion problems are illustrated by the following variation:

20...♜a8 21.♛a4 ♜c7 22.♝b6 ♜b7 23.♝xd6† ♜xd6 24.♝xf6† ♜e7 25.♝xh8† ♜c7 26.♝xa8†

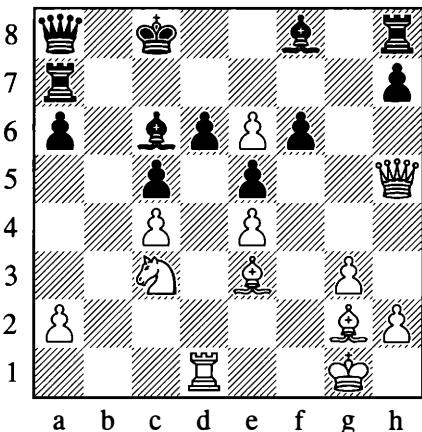
White has a material advantage and a continuing attack.

18.bxc5 bxc5 19.♝d1

White's superior coordination, his far-advanced pawn and the vulnerability of the black king more than compensates for the missing exchange.

19...♝c8

So far, we have followed Marin – Ionescu, Ciocâltea Memorial, Bucharest 1996.



20.♘d5!N

White centralizes his knight while attacking the f6-pawn. In the game I played the less convincing 20.♗h3.

20...♝b7

During the game, I was slightly afraid of this move, evaluating that Black would get some counterplay along the b-file. Instead 20...♞xd5? leads to mate after 21.♛e8† followed by 22.♝d7†.

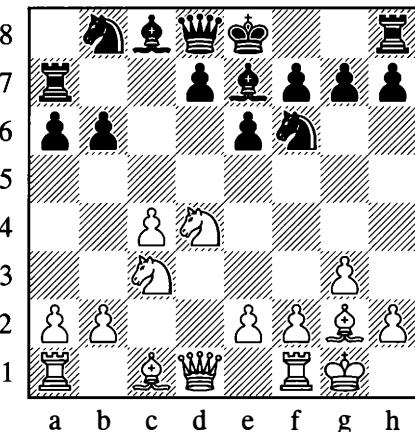
21.♞xf6 ♜e7 22.♞d5 ♞xd5 23.exd5

White has a pawn for the exchange and has consolidated his space advantage, which can be important even in the event of simplifications. I overlooked that after having cleared the e4-square, White can use his bishops to annihilate Black's counterplay.

23...♝b4 24.♝e2 ♜b7 25.♜e4 ♜b2 26.♝d2 ♜c1† 27.♚g2±

White has regrouped perfectly and is in complete control of the position. Next, he can figure out a plan for a slow kingside attack, which will result in one or two passed pawns. If the queens are exchanged, the white king could safely navigate to h6.

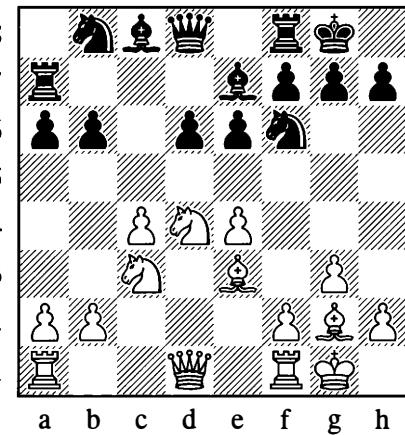
B) 8...♝e7



Before weakening the defence of the e6-pawn, Black prefers to complete his kingside development.

9.e4 d6 10.♝e3 0–0

Black's position certainly looks safer than in the previous line, but if compared with the aforementioned tabiya from the ♜e1 Hedgehog, his situation is still clearly worse.



11.a4!

The lack of pressure on the e4-pawn allows White to start operations on the wing. A strategic attack based on a4-a5 is typical in some lines of the Sicilian Hedgehog and it also proves quite effective here, because of White's lead in development.

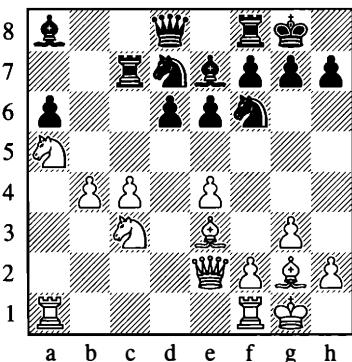
11...Rc7

Moving the rook out of the bishop's range with gain of time.

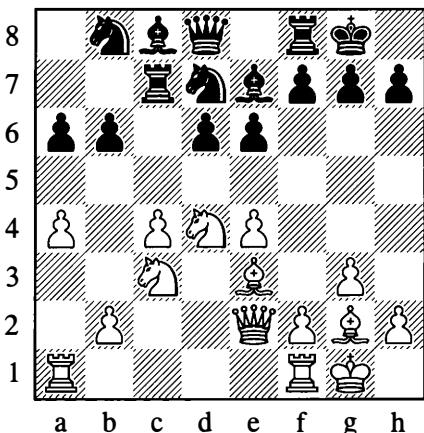
12.Qe2 Qfd7

Black prepares ...Qc6, which was not possible with the knight on f6 because of Qxc6 followed by e4-e5, winning.

The neutral 12...Qbd7 allows White to execute his plan unimpeded: 13.a5 bxa5 14.Qb3 Qb7 15.Qxa5 Qa8 16.b4±



After the recent structural modifications, Black's queenside has been transformed from a potential source of counterplay with ...b5, into a weakness.

**13.f4!**

This was suggested by Dolmatov. After the

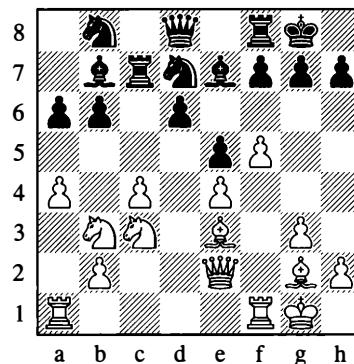
defence of the e6-pawn has been weakened, the attack based on f4-f5 is indicated.

The less energetic 13.Qfd1 was played in Romanishin – Ftacnik, Moscow 1985, which eventually ended in a draw.

13...Qc6

Ftacnik claimed this solved Black's problems, but his evaluation is too optimistic. It is true that Black gets to exchange the knight that puts pressure on e6, but in return White gains other tactical motifs.

As pointed out by Dolmatov, 13...Qb7 14.f5 leads to a clear advantage for White. 14...e5 (14...Qc6? loses a pawn to 15.fxe6 Qxd4 16.exf7† 15.Qb3±)



Similarly to the comment to Black's 11th move from line A above, Black is left completely without counterplay.

14.Qxc6 Rxc6 15.e5

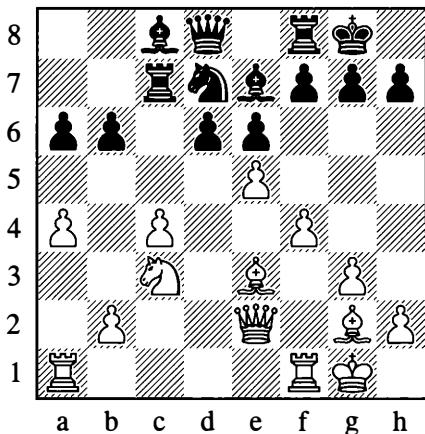
White is several tempos ahead in development, so it is appropriate to open the position.

15...Rc7

Vali Stoica pointed out that the interesting exchange sacrifice 15...Qc7 16.Qxc6 Rxc6 fails to yield sufficient compensation: 17.exd6 Qxd6 18.h3 Qb7 19.Qh2± White has neutralized

Black's pressure along the light diagonal and can hope to convert his material advantage into a win.

Ftacnik ends his line after 15... $\mathbb{E}c7$ without giving an evaluation, but apparently he considers Black's position to be entirely viable. I can tell from my own experience that Hedgehog specialists tend to overestimate their chances if they do not see a forced loss! In the current position, White's much better development makes the situation quite joyless for Black.



16.exd6 $\mathbb{Q}xd6$ 17. $\mathbb{E}fd1!$

17. $\mathbb{E}ad1$ offers Black chances of survival after 17... $\mathbb{W}e7$.

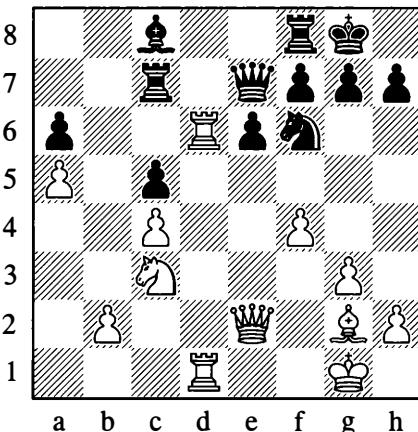
17... $\mathbb{Q}c5$

With a white rook on a1, 17... $\mathbb{W}e7$ can be answered with 18.a5 bxa5 19. $\mathbb{E}xa5\pm$. The weakness of the a-pawn causes Black problems completing his development.

18. $\mathbb{E}xc5$ bxc5

18... $\mathbb{E}xc5$?! 19. $\mathbb{Q}e4$ offers White too strong an initiative.

19. $\mathbb{E}d6$ $\mathbb{W}e7$ 20. $\mathbb{E}ad1$ $\mathbb{Q}f6$ 21.a5±



White has more space on every sector of the board and Black has chronic queenside weaknesses.

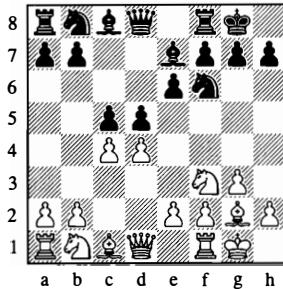
Conclusion

The contorted version of a hedgehog examined in this chapter may offer Black some chances to trick a less experienced player, but objectively this line cannot be recommended. White usually gets a lead in development to support his space advantage, which offers plenty of tactical possibilities.



The Flexible 3...e6

The Anti Tarrasch Catalan



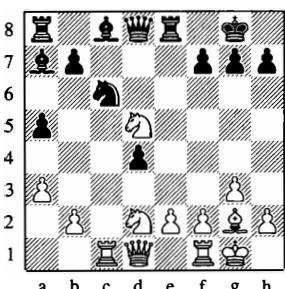
Variation Index

1.c4 c5 2.g3 ♜f6 3.♗g2 e6 4.♗f3 ♜e7 5.0–0 0–0 6.d4 d5

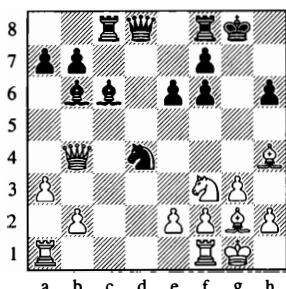
7.dxc5

A) 7...♝a6	239
B) 7...♜xc5 8.a3	241
B1) 8...a5 9.♝c3 ♜c6 10.cxd5 exd5 11.♗g5	241
B11) 11...♜e6	241
B12) 11...d4	244
B2) 8...♝c6 9.b4	246
B21) 9...♜e7	246
B22) 9...♜b6	249
B3) 8...dxc4 9.♛c2 ♜c6 10.♛xc4	250
B31) 10...♝e7?!	250
B32) 10...♜b6	252
B33) 10...♛d5	255
B34) 10...♜e7	257

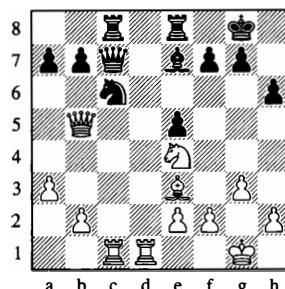
B12) after 15...♜a7



B32) after 16...♜c6!



B34) after 19...♝fe8?

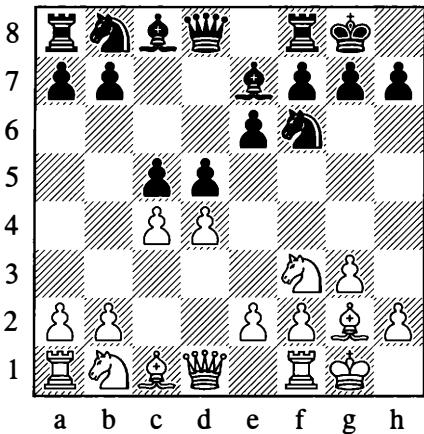


16.♝e1!N

17.♞fd1!N

20.♜xa7!N

**1.c4 c5 2.g3 ♘f6 3.♗g2 e6 4.♗f3 ♗e7 5.0–0
0–0 6.d4 d5**



The first thought that came up to my mind while building up the huge skeleton of the present volume was that Black's last move finally tricks us into an opening we do not intend to play. Fortunately, I remembered an episode from almost 20 years ago, which helped me to escape from this predicament.

In 1991 I was taking my first steps with the Catalan Opening and tried to keep my eyes wide open to everything happening around me that was related to it. In one of the decisive rounds of the Zaragoza Open, I noticed that on the board next to mine the position from the above diagram occurred between Veingold and Illescas (albeit from a completely different move order). The latter was a renowned Tarrasch specialist and had defended Black's point of view at the highest thinkable level: he drew all three of his games with this opening at the super tournament in Linares 1988! His cunning opponent, who was then best known as a second of his much more famous countryman Jaan Ehlvest, refrained from enabling Black to open the h3-c8 diagonal for his bishop, by playing 7.dxc5 ♘xc5 8.a3. The play took a rather one-sided character, with a small, but permanent plus for White, which eventually resulted in a technical win.

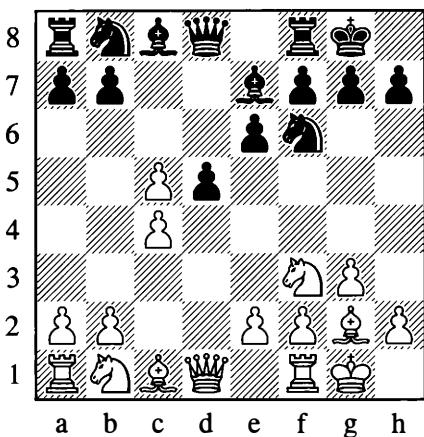
This is precisely the line I offer here as an alternative to a transposition to the Tarrasch. I find that the practical difficulties faced by the excellent theoretician Illescas in the aforementioned game were not casual. Black will be confronted by problems that are both atypical for his pet Tarrasch Defence, and tricky to solve over the board.

Technically speaking, my recommendation leads to a Catalan. It is true that this is an independent opening, but at the same time the line quoted above is both promising for White and away from the main theoretical spotlight. Most opening monographs either ignore it entirely (including Avrukh's comprehensive repertoire book) or award it with very little space (as is the case with the second edition of ECO, where 7.dxc5 is only mentioned in a footnote). Finally and more importantly, the character of the position perfectly suits the spirit of our repertoire in general.

In fact, Tarrasch players usually meet the Catalan move order with an earlier ...c5, presumably for the sake of avoiding this variation. After 1.d4 d5 2.c4 e6 3.♗f3 c5, White does not get anything by maintaining the tension with 4.g3 because of 4...cx d4 5.♗xd4 e5, transposing to a promising line of the English Opening. This is, of course, impossible against our 1.c4 move order.

I will mention here an amusing incident. To my big disappointment, I failed to find the aforementioned Veingold – Illescas game in my *Mega Database*. Ironically, from the games played by Miguel in Zaragoza 1991, only the Veingold encounter (from the seventh round) is missing. There still was some feeble hope, though. I vaguely remembered that I had written an article about the Zaragoza tournament for *Die Schachwoche* and started searching through my old archives. My persistence was fully rewarded and you will find the game reference in variation B34.

7.dxc5

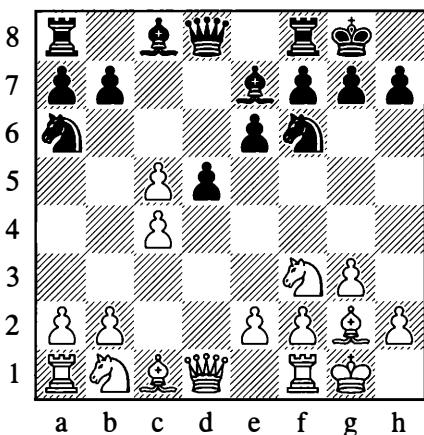


At this point Black has a choice between A) 7... $\mathbb{Q}a6$ and B) 7... $\mathbb{Q}xc5$.

7...dxc4?! leads to similar play as in line B3 below, with the significant difference that White has saved time by omitting a2-a3. At this point 8. $\mathbb{W}c2$ transposes to a line that is rightly presented as inferior for Black in Avrukh's first *Grandmaster Repertoire* volume.

7... $\mathbb{Q}c6$ has little independent value and is likely to transpose to one of the lines examined later after 8.a3.

A) 7... $\mathbb{Q}a6$



A rare continuation. Black intends to capture on c5 without losing time with his bishop, but the drawbacks of this plan will become clear soon.

8.cxd5!

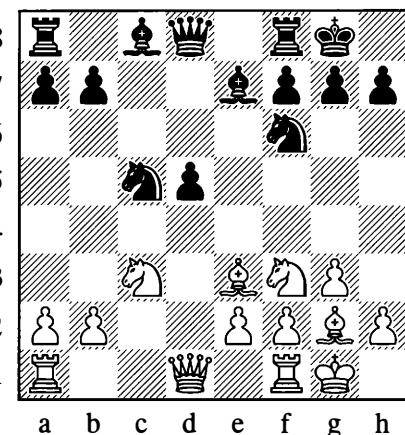
A well-timed transition to the isolani structures. In the Tarrasch Defence, the queen's knight is best developed on c6, controlling the important squares on d4 and e5, while the king's bishop would be actively placed on c5.

8...exd5

8... $\mathbb{Q}xd5$ allows White gain space in the centre: 9.e4 $\mathbb{Q}f6$ 10. $\mathbb{Q}c3$ $\mathbb{Q}xc5$ 11.e5± Black's knights lack stability and his queenside is underdeveloped.

9. $\mathbb{Q}c3$ $\mathbb{Q}xc5$ 10. $\mathbb{Q}e3$

This position is usually reached via a slightly different move order, beginning with 7.cxd5 exd5 8.dxc5 $\mathbb{Q}a6$?! (8... $\mathbb{Q}xc5$ is better, for the reasons mentioned above). The knight is not only ineffective on c5, but also vulnerable to attacks or exchanges. (It is well known that the side playing against an isolated pawn should strive to exchange as many minor pieces as possible, while keeping the rooks and possibly the queens on the board.)

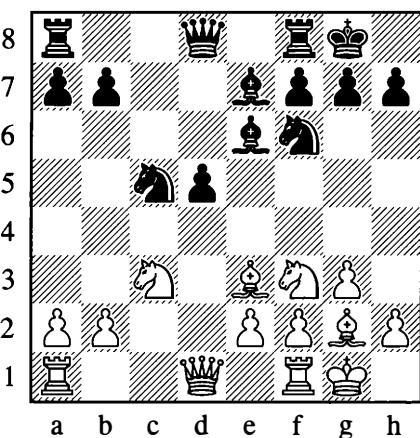


10... $\mathbb{Q}e6$

In the Tarrasch Defence, this is not the most active square for the bishop, but it is not clear if Black has anything better.

10... $\mathbb{B}g4$ looks active, but in the present position the bishop might become vulnerable. 11. $\mathbb{E}c1$ $\mathbb{E}c8$ 12. $\mathbb{Q}e5$ $\mathbb{Q}e6$ 13. $\mathbb{W}d4$ With his last two moves, White has taken full advantage of the absence of the knight from c6 by invading the central squares. 13... $\mathbb{W}b6$ 14. $\mathbb{E}fd1$ $\mathbb{W}a6$ 15. $\mathbb{Q}d3!$ Having completed his development, White forces the exchange of knights. 15... $\mathbb{Q}xd3$ 16. $\mathbb{W}xd3$ Suddenly the d5-pawn is in big danger. 16... $\mathbb{E}c6$ 17. $\mathbb{Q}xd5$ $\mathbb{Q}xd5$ 18. $\mathbb{Q}xd5$ $\mathbb{Q}xd5$ 19. $\mathbb{W}xd5$ $\mathbb{W}xe2$ 20. $\mathbb{W}d7$ $\mathbb{Q}f6$ 21. $\mathbb{W}xb7$ $\mathbb{E}xc1$ 22. $\mathbb{E}xc1\pm$ The white bishop ensures perfect kingside stability and Black has no compensation for the lost pawn, Granda Zuniga – Narciso, Barcelona 2006.

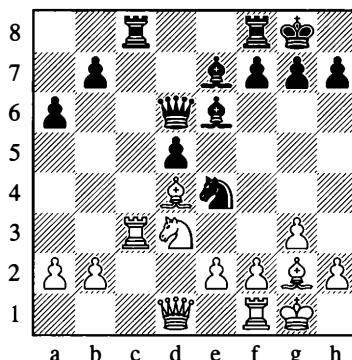
The knight stands nicely after 10... $\mathbb{Q}ce4$, but Black's queenside is left without sufficient defence. Moreover, the knight moves have consumed a lot of time. 11. $\mathbb{E}c1$ $\mathbb{B}g4$ 12. $\mathbb{W}b3!$ With the knight on c6, the queen's incursion to b3 can be parried with ... $\mathbb{Q}a5$, possibly followed by ... $\mathbb{Q}c4$. In the present position, Black is forced to weaken his queenside. 12... $b6$ 13. $\mathbb{E}fd1\pm$ White has a harmonious display of pieces and Black's position is vulnerable, Shishkin–Zolnierowicz, Kowalewo Pomorskie 2007.



11. $\mathbb{Q}d4$

White intends to carry out the standard exchange on e6.

The following game is also quite instructive: 11. $\mathbb{Q}d4$ $\mathbb{Q}fe4$ 12. $\mathbb{E}c1$ $\mathbb{E}c8$ 13. $\mathbb{Q}d2!$ White is playing for minor piece exchanges. 13... $\mathbb{Q}xc3$ 14. $\mathbb{E}xc3$ $\mathbb{W}d7$ 15. $\mathbb{Q}f3$ a6 16. $\mathbb{Q}e5$ $\mathbb{W}d6$ 17. $\mathbb{Q}d3$ $\mathbb{Q}e4$ Black should keep at least one knight on the board in order to cross White's plan of laying siege to the d5-pawn.



18. $\mathbb{E}b3!$ The rook is temporarily out of play on this square, but White keeps in mind that major pieces should be kept on the board in order to attack the d5-pawn. 18... $\mathbb{E}c4$ 19. $\mathbb{Q}f4$ b5 20. $\mathbb{E}d3$ $\mathbb{W}c6$ 21. $\mathbb{Q}e3\pm$ White has completed his regrouping and the d5-pawn is doomed, Korchnoi – Lukin, Stockholm 2004. (Incidentally, when playing 18. $\mathbb{E}b3!$, the evergreen veteran might have been inspired by Karpov's 20... $\mathbb{E}b6!$ from the ninth game of their Merano match, back in 1981.)

11... $\mathbb{W}d7$ 12. $\mathbb{Q}xe6$ $\mathbb{fxe6}$

Compared with the analogous position that might occur in the genuine Tarrasch, the position of Black's queen's knight significantly favours White. With the knight on c6, Black maintains the permanent threat of mobilizing his central pawns, thus compelling White to display certain prudence. In the present case, Black's centre is immobile and can be submitted

to strong pressure. This is accentuated by the fact that White has not been forced to play h2-h3 (which usually happens in the Tarrasch after ... $\mathbb{Q}g4$), meaning that the h3-square remains free for the bishop.

13... $\mathbb{Q}c1$ b6

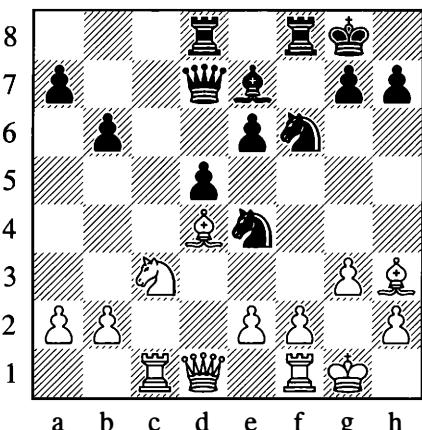
The weakening of the c6-square is a necessary evil. Black not only wishes to guard the knight against the threat of $\mathbb{Q}xd5$, but also clears the b7-square for its regrouping.

After 13... $\mathbb{Q}ac8?!$ 14.b4 $\mathbb{Q}a6$ 15.a3 Black's knight is misplaced, and he will have to weaken his queenside anyway in order to defend the a7-pawn.

14. $\mathbb{Q}h3$

14.b4 is ineffective here because of 14... $\mathbb{Q}b7$ followed by ... $\mathbb{Q}d6-c4$. Instead White takes the opportunity to improve another piece while gradually increasing the pressure.

14... $\mathbb{Q}ad8$ 15. $\mathbb{Q}d4$ $\mathbb{Q}ce4$



16. $\mathbb{Q}xf6!$

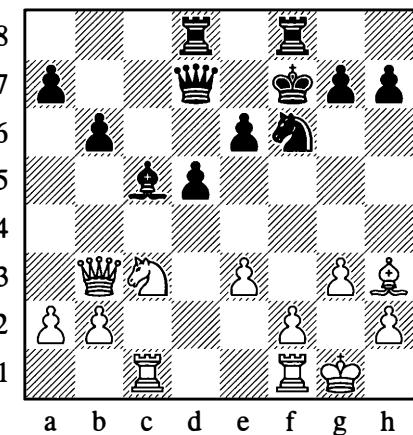
The presence of opposite-coloured bishops will increase Black's problems in defending the light squares.

16... $\mathbb{Q}xf6$ 17. $\mathbb{W}a4!$

The following awkward-looking reply is now forced.

17... $\mathbb{Q}f7$ 18. $\mathbb{W}b3$ $\mathbb{Q}c5$ 19.e3

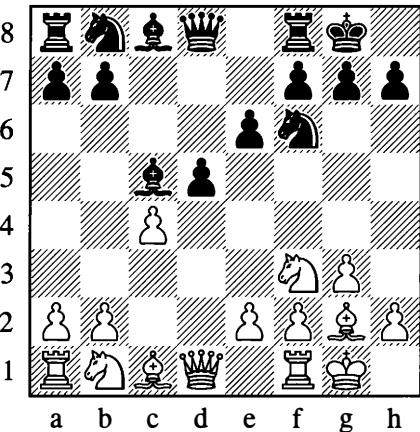
Black is in no immediate danger, but his position lacks flexibility. The further course of the game demonstrates how White can increase the pressure at his convenience, while Black can do little except sit and wait.



19... $\mathbb{Q}de8$ 20. $\mathbb{Q}c2$ $\mathbb{Q}g8$ 21. $\mathbb{W}b5$ $\mathbb{W}f7$ 22. $\mathbb{W}e2$ $\mathbb{Q}h8$ 23.a3 h6 24.b4 $\mathbb{Q}d6$ 25. $\mathbb{Q}fc1$ $\mathbb{Q}b8$ 26. $\mathbb{Q}g2$ $\mathbb{W}g6$ 27. $\mathbb{Q}b5$ $\mathbb{Q}g4$ 28. $\mathbb{Q}f3$ $\mathbb{Q}f6$ 29. $\mathbb{Q}c6\pm$

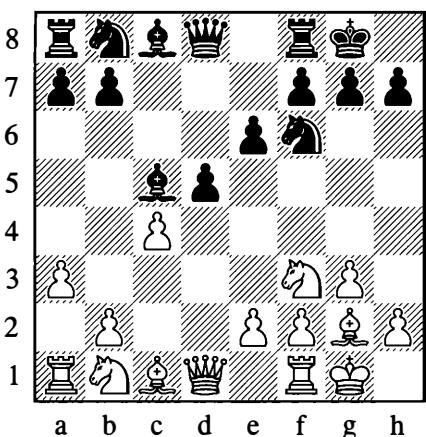
Black is confronted with a general invasion of the enemy forces and has no counterplay at all, Smyslov – Chekhover, Leningrad 1951.

B) 7... $\mathbb{Q}xc5$



This is the most frequent reply. Black remains prepared to transpose to a genuine Tarrasch in the event of an exchange on d5, but White has other plans.

8.a3



With this move White maintains the tension in the centre and prepares to win queenside space with b2-b4. During the course of my analysis I noticed certain parallels between the text and the same 8.a3 move from Chapter 9. In the current variation too, the task of meeting the simple threat of b4 implies some sort of concession, which will produce a long-lasting ripple effect over the subsequent course of the game.

Black can choose between B1) 8...a5, B2) 8... $\mathbb{Q}c6$ and B3) 8...dxc4.

B1) 8...a5

Black prevents his opponent's plan radically, maintaining the tension in the centre at the same time. However, the chronic weakness of the black queenside allows White to obtain a favourable version of the Tarrasch Defence.

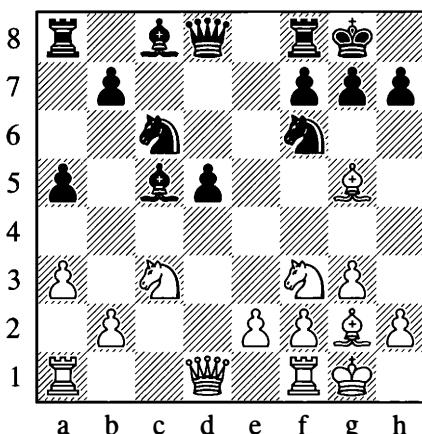
9. $\mathbb{Q}c3$ $\mathbb{Q}c6$

The most solid reply.

9...d4?! 10. $\mathbb{Q}a4$ forces the bishop to retreat to a passive square: 10... $\mathbb{Q}a7$ 11.c5 $\mathbb{Q}c6$ 12. $\mathbb{Q}f4\pm$ Black's passive bishops and weakened queenside prevent him from enjoying his central majority.

After 9...dxc4 10. $\mathbb{Q}a4\pm$ followed by $\mathbb{Q}xc4$, we would get a similar position as in line B3, with the difference that Black has weakened his queenside for nothing.

10.cxd5 exd5 11. $\mathbb{Q}g5$



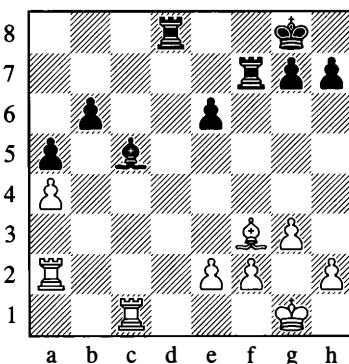
With the a-pawns on their initial squares, this would be a popular Tarrasch tabiya. In the present position the weakness of the black queenside swings the balance in White's favour, as will be revealed in the critical moments of the following analysis. Black can meet the attack against the d5-pawn with either B11) 11... $\mathbb{Q}e6$ or B12) 11...d4.

B11) 11... $\mathbb{Q}e6$

This method of defending the d5-pawn is not too popular in the Tarrasch defence, although there is no clear refutation of it. Black players have probably been put off by the fact that White can simplify to an endgame where he can torture his opponent indefinitely with no risk of losing, even though Black's drawing chances are quite high.

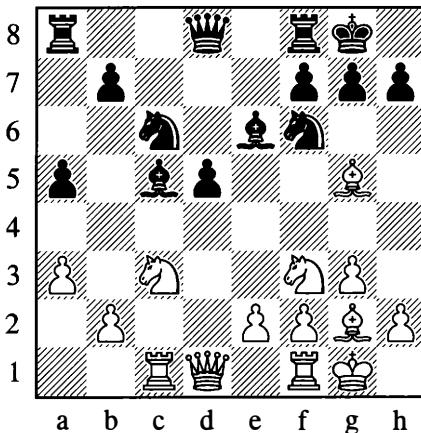
12.♗c1

The equivalent of the aforementioned simplifying operation would be: 12.♕xf6 ♘xf6 13.♗xd5 ♘xb2 14.♗c7 ♕ad8 15.♗c1 Since the c5-bishop is hanging, Black cannot avoid getting a weakness on e6. 15...♘xc1 This is one of the rare cases where the insertion of the moves a2-a3 and ...a7-a5 favours Black. With his a-pawn hanging, White has to capture with his king's rook, leaving the f2-square slightly vulnerable. 16.♗fxc1 b6 17.♗xe6 fxe6 18.a4 White needs to parry the positional threat of ...a4. 18...♗d4! Black takes advantage of the offered tempo to simplify the position even more and obtain some rook activity along the only open file. 19.♗a2 ♗xf3† 20.♗xf3 ♘f7



Black will follow up with ...♗fd7. The exchange of one pair of rooks is inevitable, while the weakness of the a4-pawn restricts White's active possibilities. Nevertheless White keeps the better structure and in principle I would not mind give this ending a try, were it not for the fact that the main continuation is considerably more promising.

After the rook's arrival on c1, the c5-bishop is vulnerable and practically forced to retreat. Unfortunately for Black, there are no fully satisfactory squares available. The situation is more uncomfortable for Black than in the Karpov System with ...a5, examined in the first volume, because the present position has an open character.

**12...♗a7**

12...♗e7 leaves the queenside undefended. 13.♗a4 ♗d7 14.♗e3 ♘c8 15.♗d4± With a strong initiative for White, Malich – Gabriel, Munich 1958.

In the Tarrasch Defence, Black would retreat with his bishop to b6, but with the pawn on a5 the bishop's lack of stability proves costly after: 12...♗b6 13.♗xf6 ♘xf6 14.♗xd5 ♘xd5 15.♗xd5± Black has lost a pawn, since 15...♘xb2?? loses the bishop to 16.♗b1.

13.♗b5

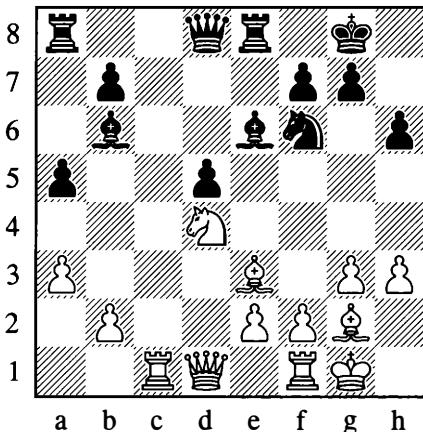
Winning an important tempo for regrouping.

13...♗b6

13...h6 allows White to increase his control over the dark squares with gain of time: 14.♗xa7 ♘xa7 15.♗e3 ♘a8 16.♗d4± Eichhorn – Jakits, St. Veit 2004

14.♗bd4 ♗xd4 15.♗xd4 h6 16.♗e3 ♘e8 17.h3

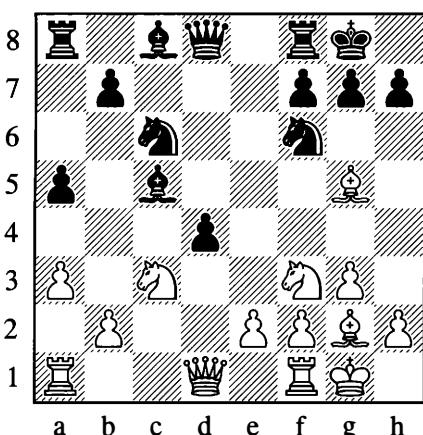
White has safely blockaded the d-pawn and enjoys absolute stability, which cannot be said of Black's queenside. The b6-bishop is permanently exposed to both discovered and direct attacks.



17... $\mathbb{W}d7$ 18. $\mathbb{Q}h2$ $\mathbb{Q}e4$ 19. $\mathbb{W}d3$ $\mathbb{Q}ad8$ 20. $\mathbb{Q}fd1$
h5 21. $\mathbb{W}b3$ $\mathbb{Q}xd4$ 22. $\mathbb{Q}xd4\pm$

We have been following the game Wojtkiewicz – Ashley, New York 1989. White has the bishop pair and the better structure. His pressure is ongoing, and it goes without saying that virtually any ending will favour him.

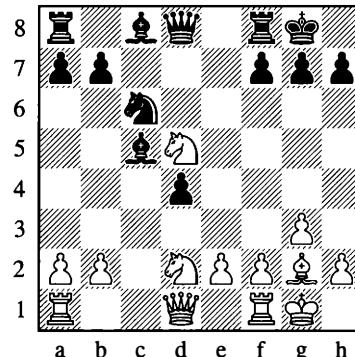
B12) 11...d4



Played in the spirit of Black's main continuation in the analogous variation of the Tarrasch defence. After the exchange on f6, Black's space advantage in the centre compensates for the fact that the d4-pawn restricts his own bishop. In the current line the presence of the a-pawn on a5 creates additional weaknesses along the b-file.

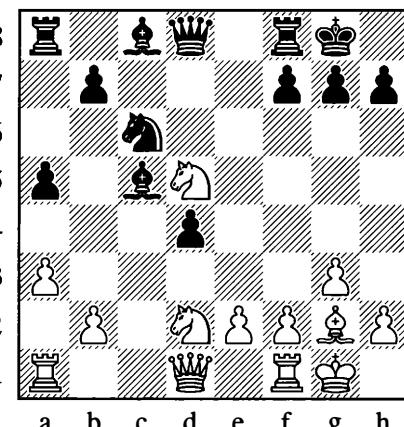
12. $\mathbb{Q}xf6$ $\mathbb{W}xf6$ 13. $\mathbb{Q}d5$ $\mathbb{W}d8$ 14. $\mathbb{Q}d2$

I find it useful to have a look at the similar Tarrasch tabiya:



From this position the main line runs 13... $\mathbb{W}e8$ 14. $\mathbb{Q}c1$ $\mathbb{Q}b6$ 15. $\mathbb{Q}e1$ $\mathbb{Q}g4$ (15... $\mathbb{Q}e6$ 16. $\mathbb{Q}f4$ $\mathbb{Q}xa2$ also is possible, leading to huge complications.) 16. $\mathbb{Q}c4$ $\mathbb{Q}a5!$ By attacking the rook, Black provokes simplifications leaving White with no more than a symbolic advantage.

In our line, Black's possibilities for counterplay are considerably more restricted, as neither ... $\mathbb{Q}xa2$ nor ... $\mathbb{Q}a5$ are possible.

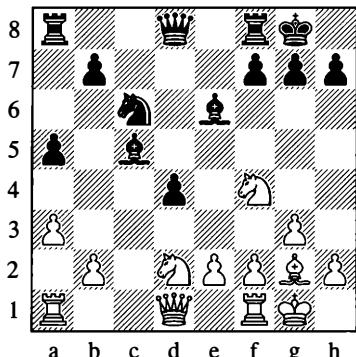


14... $\mathbb{Q}e8$

Black tries to follow the same patterns as in the Tarrasch line.

14... $\mathbb{Q}e6$ does not make much sense because

of 15. $\mathbb{Q}f4$, attacking the bishop. I found two games from this position:

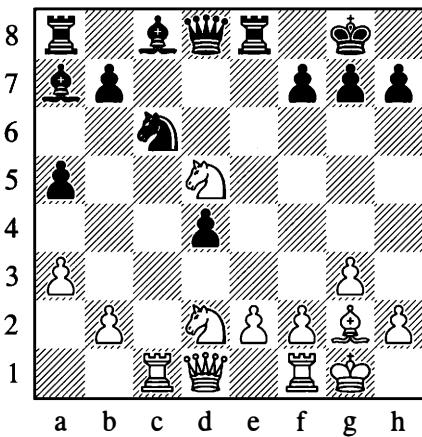


a) 15... $\mathbb{Q}d7$ is rather passive. 16. $\mathbb{Q}c1$ $\mathbb{Q}d6$ 17. $\mathbb{Q}d3$ A perfect blocking square for the knight. 17... $\mathbb{E}e8$ 18. $\mathbb{Q}e4$ $\mathbb{Q}g4$ 19. $\mathbb{Q}e1$ $\mathbb{E}c8$ 20. $\mathbb{W}b3$ $\mathbb{E}e7$ 21. $\mathbb{W}b5\pm$ With so many light squares at his disposal, White can develop his initiative naturally, Neverov – Votava, Lazne Bohdanec 1996.

b) The developing move 15... $\mathbb{W}d7$ leaves Black in permanent danger of losing control over the light squares after a well-timed $\mathbb{Q}xe6$. 16. $\mathbb{Q}c1$ $\mathbb{Q}a7$ 17. $\mathbb{W}a4$ $\mathbb{E}fc8$ 18. $\mathbb{Q}xe6$ $\mathbb{W}xe6$ 19. $\mathbb{W}b5$ $\mathbb{E}ab8$ 20. $\mathbb{Q}d5$ $\mathbb{W}e7$ 21. $\mathbb{Q}f3\pm$ Black is practically paralysed, Zubarev – Aravindh, Chennai 2010.

15. $\mathbb{Q}c1$ $\mathbb{Q}a7$

This position was reached in Korth – Weber, Germany 2008.



16. $\mathbb{Q}e1!N$

This is similar to 15. $\mathbb{Q}e1$ from the Tarrasch line mentioned above. White overprotects the e2-pawn in order to free the queen from her defensive duties.

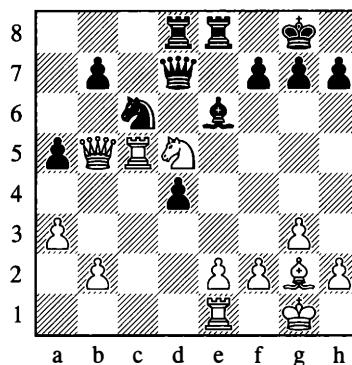
16... $\mathbb{Q}g4$ 17. $\mathbb{W}b3!$

This kind of move would be less effective in the genuine Tarrasch, because the bishop would be safely stationed on b6, from where it would shield the queenside.

17... $\mathbb{Q}b8$

The only way to retain some chances for counterplay.

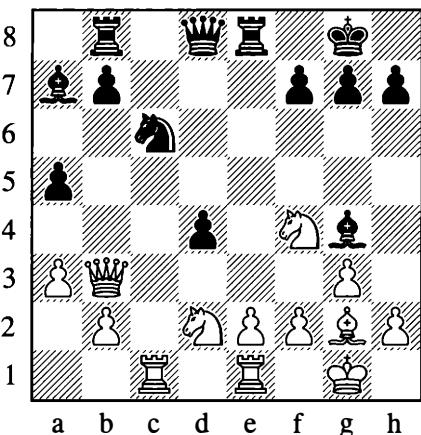
The more natural 17... $\mathbb{W}d7$ allows White to defend his e2-pawn with gain of time. 18. $\mathbb{Q}e4!$ Apart from the terrible check on f6, White is ready to develop his initiative with $\mathbb{Q}b6$ or $\mathbb{Q}c5$. The pin created by 18... $\mathbb{Q}e6$ is not dangerous, because White's pieces are tremendously active after: 19. $\mathbb{Q}c5$ $\mathbb{Q}xc5$ 20. $\mathbb{Q}xc5$ $\mathbb{E}ad8$ 21. $\mathbb{W}b5\pm$



White's pieces feel at home, despite being deep in enemy territory.

18. $\mathbb{Q}f4$

White has defended the e2-pawn and is ready to continue his attack with $\mathbb{Q}d5$ or $\mathbb{Q}e4$. Another possible idea is $\mathbb{Q}f3$, since the bishop exchange would increase his dominance over the light squares.



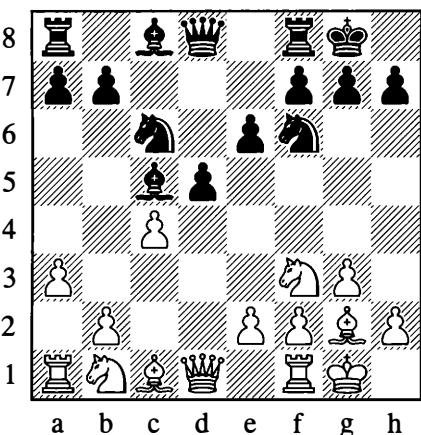
18...g5?!

This risky move is the only possible attempt to disrupt the generally unfavourable (from Black's point of view) course of the game.

**19.♗d5 ♜xe2 20.♗e4 ♜xe1† 21.♗xe1 ♔g7
22.♗ef6±**

Black's extra pawn is not too relevant, but the weakness of the kingside certainly is. Many of his pieces are stuck on the queenside, leaving the king in real danger.

B2) 8...♝c6

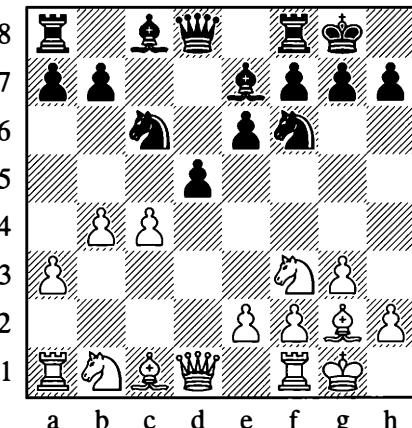


This is a natural developing move, but it does not take any measures against White's planned queenside expansion.

9.b4

Now we will examine B21) 9...♝e7 and B22) 9...♝b6.

B21) 9...♝e7



The bishop retreats to the safest square, but I cannot help thinking that ...♝e7xc5-e7 is a significant waste of time.

10.♝b2

White has a natural developing plan, based on ♘bd2, ♜c2, ♜ac1, ♜fd1 and finally e2-e4. For Black, things are a lot more complicated, because the c8-bishop is passive and the c6-knight somewhat unstable.

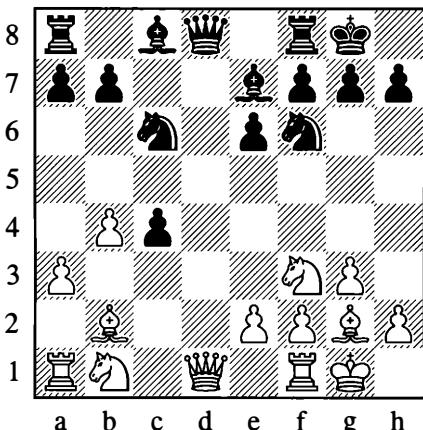
10...dxc4

The main (and possibly only) drawback of the Catalan set-ups is the lack of defence of the c4-pawn. Therefore, Black's last move should be considered as critical for the assessment of the variation.

The pseudo-active 10...a5?! merely invites White to seize a crushing queenside space advantage. The weakening of the dark squares offers very little consolation. 11.b5 ♘b8 12.♘bd2 ♘bd7 13.♗c2 ♜c7 14.♗ac1 dxc4 15.♘xc4± Black has very little space and is underdeveloped, Pelikan – De Souza Mendes, Buenos Aires 1939.

10... $\mathbb{Q}e4$ is another form of premature activity. With two of his queenside pieces still on their original squares, Black should not start moving with already developed pieces. 11. $\mathbb{W}c2$ $\mathbb{Q}f6$ 12. $\mathbb{E}d1$ $\mathbb{Q}xb2$ 13. $\mathbb{W}xb2$ $\mathbb{W}f6$ 14. $\mathbb{W}xf6$ $\mathbb{Q}xf6$ 15. $\mathbb{Q}c3\pm$ Despite the simplifications, Black's position remains passive, Wojtkiewicz – Bock, Duisburg 1999.

Here is an example in which Black adopted a neutral policy: 10...a6 11. $\mathbb{Q}bd2$ $\mathbb{E}e8$ 12. $\mathbb{E}c1$ $\mathbb{Q}d7$ 13. $\mathbb{W}c2$ $\mathbb{E}c8$ 14. $\mathbb{W}b1$ h6 15. $\mathbb{E}fd1$ $\mathbb{W}b6$ 16.e4± White has regrouped perfectly and the opening of the centre underlines his better development, Wojtkiewicz – Skembris, Novi Sad ol 1990.



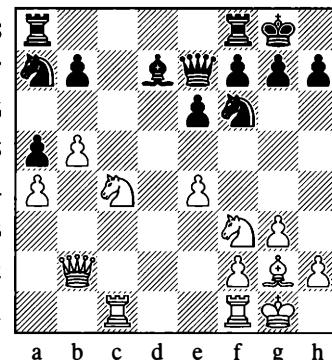
11. $\mathbb{Q}bd2$

White intends to retrieve the pawn with developing moves. Readers of the second volume will recall that this is our main approach against the systems based on 1...c6 and 1...e6.

11... $\mathbb{W}c7$

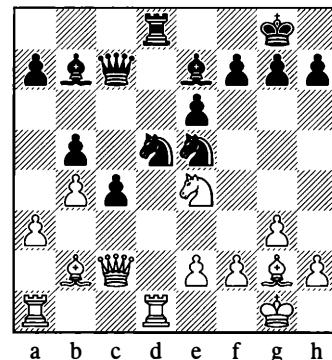
Black answers with the same method, defending the pawn indirectly with a developing move. The only problem is that the queen is supposed to be the last piece to be moved.

The time gained with 11...c3 does not help Black, because he mainly exposes his already developed pieces to attacks or exchanges, without improving the situation of the c8-bishop. 12. $\mathbb{Q}xc3$ $\mathbb{Q}d5$ 13. $\mathbb{Q}b2$ $\mathbb{Q}f6$ 14. $\mathbb{W}c2$ $\mathbb{Q}xb2$ 15. $\mathbb{W}xb2$ $\mathbb{W}e7$ 16. $\mathbb{E}ac1$ White's lead in development is obvious, but the next move only makes matters worse for the defender. 16...a5?! 17.b5 $\mathbb{Q}a7$ 18. $\mathbb{Q}c4$ $\mathbb{Q}d7$ 19.e4 $\mathbb{Q}f6$ 20.a4±



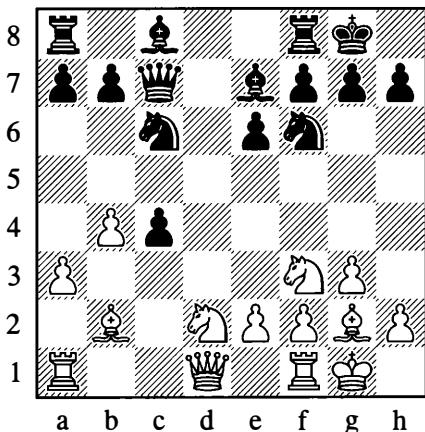
With complete domination all over the board, Kengis – Schlamp, Bad Zwischenahn 1997. One important point is that 20... $\mathbb{Q}xe4?$ 21. $\mathbb{Q}fe5$ leaves Black hanging terribly.

Black does not get sufficient for the exchange after 11...b5 12. $\mathbb{Q}e5$ $\mathbb{Q}xe5$ 13. $\mathbb{Q}xa8$ $\mathbb{W}c7$ 14. $\mathbb{Q}g2$ $\mathbb{E}d8$ 15. $\mathbb{W}c2$ $\mathbb{Q}d5$ 16. $\mathbb{E}fd1$ $\mathbb{Q}b7$ 17. $\mathbb{Q}e4!$



Bringing the knight closer to the blocking

c3-square. White has stabilized the position and has every reason to feel confident about the task of converting his material advantage, Dizdarevic – Brenjo, Herceg Novi 2002.



12.♕c1!

Renewing the threat and causing certain discomfort to the black queen.

After 12.♕c1! ♕xb4 13.axb4 ♜xc4 14.♕e5 White's superior development provides sufficient compensation for the missing pawn, but not more, Piven – Susnik, Finkenstein 1997.

12...b5

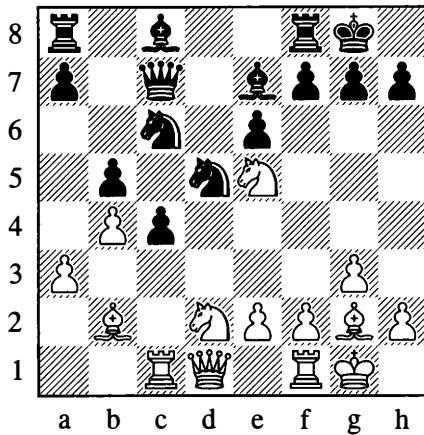
Otherwise Black would simply be worse after ♜xc4.

13.♕e5 ♜d5

This move fails to consolidate the position, but Black's choice was far from pleasant.

13...♝b7 would allow the same tactical blow as in the main line: 14.♕dxc4! ♞fd8 15.♛b3± The pin along the c-file prevents Black from winning a piece.

Black can also give up an exchange, just like on the previous move: 13...♜xe5 14.♜xa8± It is hard to give a final evaluation to this position, but Black is struggling for sure.



14.♕dxc4!

Taking full advantage of the exposed position of the queen.

14...bxc4 15.♖xc4 ♜xe5

The best practical chance in a difficult position.

After 15...♝b7 16.♕xc6 ♜xc6 17.♛c2 ♜ac8 18.b5± White recoups the sacrificed material with interest.

16.♜xe5 ♜xe5 17.♖xd5 exd5 18.♛xd5 ♜xc4 19.♛xa8

With a queen and two pawns for three minor pieces, White has a small material advantage – although it should be remembered that this is not always a reliable indicator of the evaluation of positions featuring an unusual material balance. In the final position of line H1 from Chapter 9, the material situation is reversed, but White's pieces are very stable and Black has no passed pawns. In the current position, the white queenside pawns are a big threat while Black pieces are poorly coordinated.

19...♜xa3

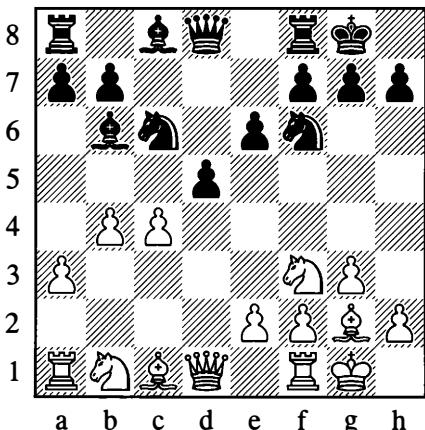
Black decides to give away some material for the sake of restricting the combat area to one wing only.

After 19... $\mathbb{Q}h3$ 20. $\mathbb{W}xa7!$ $\mathbb{Q}xf1$ 21. $\mathbb{Q}xf1$ his pieces would be hanging and the pawns would cause quite a headache.

20. $\mathbb{W}xa7$ $\mathbb{Q}xb4$ 21. $\mathbb{W}a4$ $\mathbb{Q}e7$ 22. $\mathbb{E}a1\pm$

After the inevitable $\mathbb{E}xa3$, White will obtain a clear material advantage. In the resulting endgame I would evaluate White's winning chances as approximately equal to Black's drawing chances. In Kraai – Akopian, Tulsa 2008, Black eventually drew after a long defence, but the theoretical verdict can hardly be considered satisfactory for him.

B22) 9... $\mathbb{Q}b6$



The bishop is more active on this square than on e7, but faces the permanent danger of being pushed back with c4-c5. For the time being, however, White should maintain this threat in reserve, as releasing the tension too soon would leave Black with a dangerous central majority.

10. $\mathbb{Q}b2$ $\mathbb{W}e7$

Displaying central activity with 10...dxc4 11. $\mathbb{Q}bd2$ e5 only weakens the position and helps White to complete his development: 12. $\mathbb{Q}xc4$ e4 13. $\mathbb{W}xd8$ $\mathbb{Q}xd8$ 14. $\mathbb{Q}g5$ $\mathbb{Q}g4$ 15. $\mathbb{Q}fe1$ $\mathbb{E}e8$ 16. $\mathbb{Q}d6+$ – Black has lost a pawn without any trace of compensation, Sorokin – Paglilla, Villa Martelli 1995.

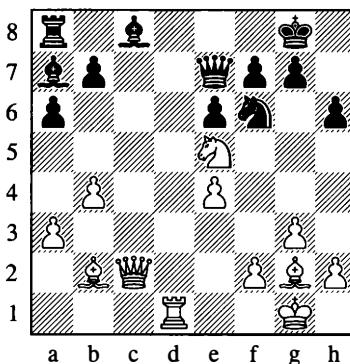
11. $\mathbb{Q}bd2$ $\mathbb{E}d8$ 12. $\mathbb{W}c2$

Apart from completing White's first phase of development, this move creates the unpleasant threat of $\mathbb{Q}g5$.

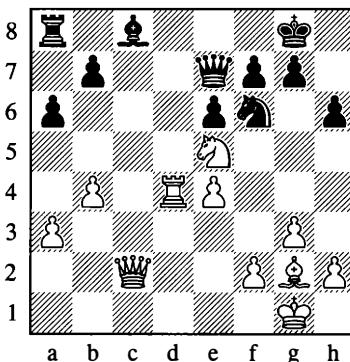
12...e5

The best chance.

In the event of neutral play, Black risks being suffocated. 12...h6 13. $\mathbb{E}ad1$ a6 14.e4 dxc4 15. $\mathbb{Q}xc4$ $\mathbb{E}xd1$ 16. $\mathbb{E}xd1$ $\mathbb{Q}a7$ 17. $\mathbb{Q}fe5$ $\mathbb{Q}xe5$ 18. $\mathbb{Q}xe5$



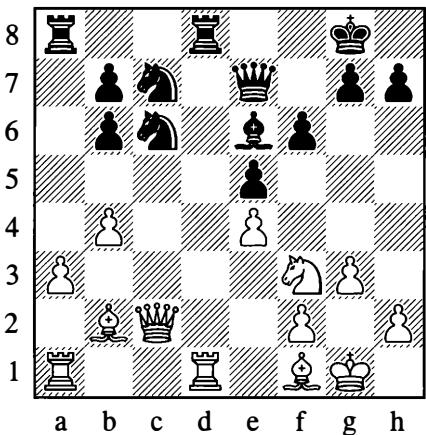
Black has acute developing problems. 18... $\mathbb{Q}b6$ (18... $\mathbb{Q}d7$ can be met by 19. $\mathbb{W}c7$, so Black defends the c7-square.) 19. $\mathbb{Q}d4$! Eliminating one of the very few useful black pieces. 19... $\mathbb{E}xd4$ 20. $\mathbb{E}xd4$



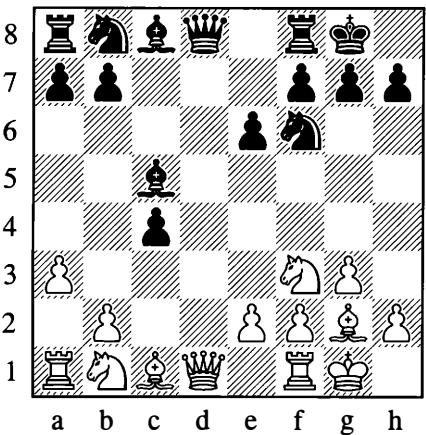
With no clear plan of developing his queenside, Black is as good as lost, Romanishin – Lobron, Biel 1987.

13.cxd5 ♜xd5 14.♗fd1 f6 15.♗c4 ♜e6

Black has completed his development, but White can make use of the unfavourable placement of the b6-bishop to maintain his advantage.

16.e4 ♜c7 17.♗xb6 axb6 18.♗f1†

The bishop pair and the weakness of the black queenside offer White a stable advantage. In Romanishin – Silva, Figueira da Foz 2008, White won after a rather one-sided fight.

B3) 8...dxc4

A pragmatic decision. Black relinquishes some of his central control, hoping that

the symmetrical character of the structure will allow him to equalize with careful play. Catalan specialists know quite well that once the long diagonal has been opened, Black can encounter serious problems in completing his development. While ...♗d7 is quite passive, the more active ...e5 weakens the d5-square, offering White the possibility of establishing a thematic Catalan bind on the light squares.

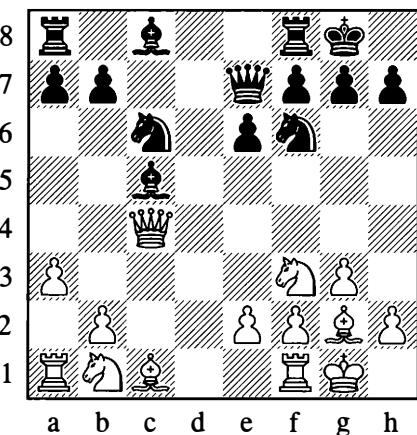
9.♗c2 ♜c6

9...♗c7, hoping for 10.♗xc4?? ♜xf2†, leads to a loss of time after 10.♗f4†.

9...b5? loses material to the thematic discovered attack: 10.♗g5!+–

10.♗xc4

Black has several ways of safeguarding his bishop. We will examine: B31) 10...♗e7?!, B32) 10...♗b6, B33) 10...♗d5 and B34) 10...♗e7.

B31) 10...♗e7?!

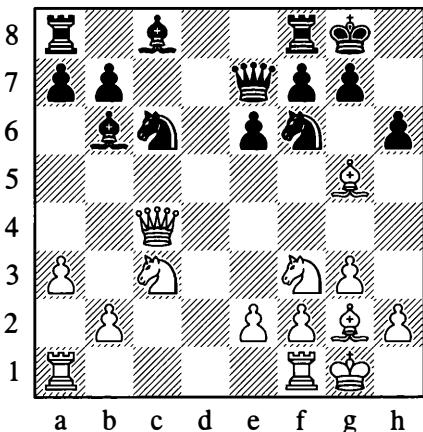
Generally speaking, this looks like a logical move, as Black defends his bishop while developing a piece. Placing the queen on e7 carries a significant drawback though, as White's next move creates a pin that turns out to be impossible to escape.

11.♗g5!

Threatening to spoil Black's kingside structure with ♗xf6.

11...♗b6

Normal development will not do: 11...e5 12.♗xf6 gxf6 13.♕c3 ♗e6 14.♗h4± Black has no compensation for the weakness of the d5- and f5-squares and his whole kingside in general, Bosboom – Kobrin, Dieren 1999.

12.♘c3 h6**13.♗h4!**

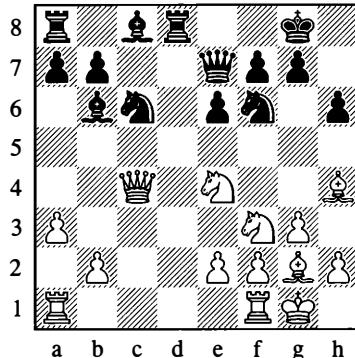
In the comments to his win over Illescas (!) at Manila 1990, Gulko only mentions the capture on f6 with an equal game, thus justifying why he preferred the less ambitious 11.♗d1 over 11.♗g5.

White gets a lot more by maintaining the pin, because the bishop is not really in danger on h4.

13...g5?!

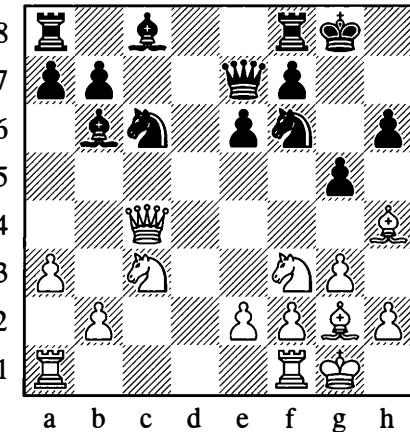
This is the critical test of White's ambitious concept, but in fact it only worsens Black's situation.

Against a developing move such as 13...♗d8?! White gets an overwhelming advantage with: 14.♘e4±



Once again, "trapping" the bishop leads to fatal consequences: 14...g5?! 15.♗fxg5 hxg5 16.♗xg5 ♘d4 17.e3 ♘xb2 18.♗ab1 ♘e5 19.f4+– The bishop has no squares left along the a1-h8 diagonal.

13...♗c5 is the least of the evils for Black, despite being equivalent to a strategic surrender: 14.♗xc5 ♘xc5 15.♗xf6 gxf6 16.♗fd1 ♘e7 17.♗d4 ♘xd4 18.♗xd4 ♘b8 19.♗b5± White has a significant lead in development and the better structure, Dizdar – Franic, Pula 1998.

**14.♗xg5!**

This will soon lead to a deadly pin.

14...hxg5?!

More resilient would have been:

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

This intermediate move, bringing the knight closer to its colleague with gain of time and without allowing $\mathbb{W}h4$, would still not have saved the game against accurate play from White.

15. $\mathbb{W}b3$

A safe square, from which the queen can be activated according to the concrete necessities at a later stage.

15... $h \times g5$ 16. $\mathbb{Q}xg5$ $\mathbb{Q}ed7$ 17. $\mathbb{Q}e4$ $\mathbb{Q}g7$ 18. $\mathbb{W}ad1$
Completing development and threatening $\mathbb{Q}xd7$ with total annihilation.

18... $\mathbb{W}e8$

18... $\mathbb{Q}c5$ 19. $\mathbb{W}b4!$ creates a second pin.

19. $\mathbb{Q}d6$ $\mathbb{W}d8$ 20. $\mathbb{W}c3$

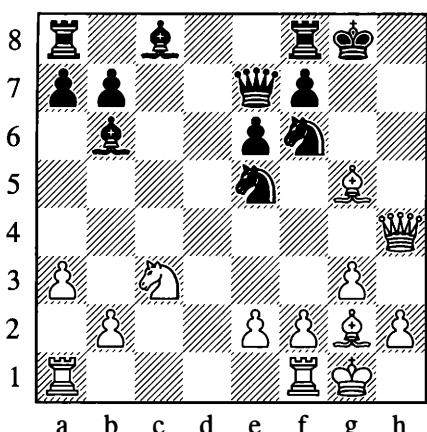
Threatening $\mathbb{Q}e4$ followed by $\mathbb{Q}xd7$.

20... $\mathbb{W}c7$ 21. $\mathbb{W}d2$

Despite his material advantage, Black is completely helpless. Apart from the relatively “neutral” $\mathbb{Q}c1$ or $\mathbb{Q}h6\#$, White also threatens 22. $\mathbb{Q}xf6\#$ 23... $\mathbb{Q}xf6$ 24. $\mathbb{W}g5\#$ wins the knight) 23. $\mathbb{W}h6\#$ 24. $\mathbb{Q}e7$ 24. $\mathbb{W}g5\#$ 25. $\mathbb{Q}f6$ 25. $\mathbb{Q}e4$ with a second and decisive pin.

15. $\mathbb{Q}xg5$ $\mathbb{Q}e5$ 16. $\mathbb{W}h4$

It is all over now.



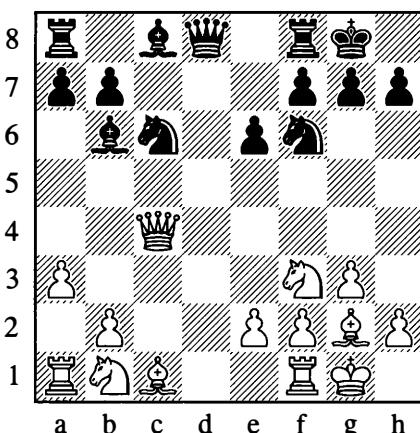
16... $\mathbb{Q}g6$

16... $\mathbb{Q}d8$ does not save the game either:
17. $\mathbb{Q}e4$ $\mathbb{Q}g6$ 18. $\mathbb{W}h6$ $\mathbb{Q}g4$ 19. $\mathbb{W}h5\#$

17. $\mathbb{Q}xf6$ $\mathbb{Q}xh4$ 18. $\mathbb{Q}xe7$ $\mathbb{Q}xg2$ 19. $\mathbb{Q}xf8$ $\mathbb{Q}e3$
20. $f \times e3$ $\mathbb{Q}xe3\#$ 21. $\mathbb{Q}g2$ $\mathbb{Q}e8$ 22. $\mathbb{Q}f3$ $\mathbb{Q}c5$
23. $\mathbb{Q}af1$

With a decisive material advantage, Marin – Ariste, Andorra 1991. This game was played a few months after Zaragoza and, as you can see, I used to be quite a diligent student. I had also been playing in Manila, but had not noticed the game Gulko – Illescas, which was actually quite fortunate, as had I done so I might not have allowed my bishop to be trapped.

B32) 10... $\mathbb{Q}b6$



This has similar defects as 10... $\mathbb{W}e7$, although at least Black is saving some time by omitting the queen move. At this stage of the game, the queen is not necessarily any better on e7 than on d8.

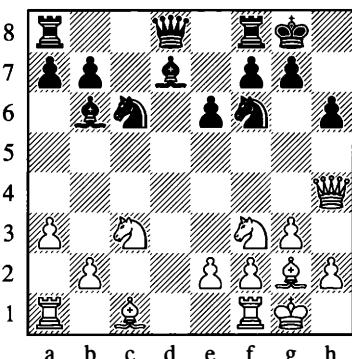
11. $\mathbb{Q}c3$ $\mathbb{Q}d7$

11... $e5$ 12. $\mathbb{Q}g5$ $\mathbb{Q}e6$ was played in Doda – Grabczewski, Lublin 1965, and here White should have played 13. $\mathbb{W}h4!N$, intending to damage Black’s kingside structure.

12. $\mathbb{Q}g5$

The method from the previous line works well here too. In the following game White was successful with a truly hypermodern attack, although not without Black’s cooperation:

12. $\mathbb{W}h4$ h6

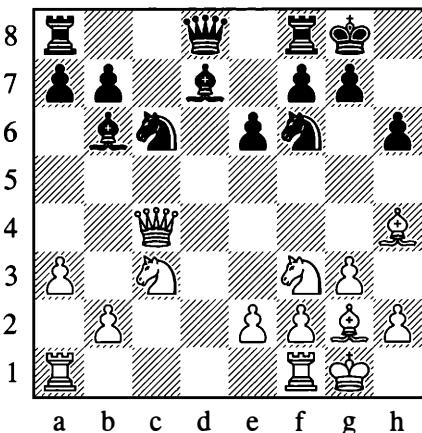


13.g4!? Using this pawn to attack the enemy kingside is typical for some lines of the Catalan, but it is not without risk, as White may also end up with some weaknesses.
 13... $\mathbb{Q}e7$ 14. $\mathbb{Q}e5$ $\mathbb{Q}c7$ 15. $\mathbb{Q}xd7$ $\mathbb{W}xd7$ 16. $\mathbb{Q}d1$ $\mathbb{W}c8$ 17. g5 hxg5 18. $\mathbb{Q}xg5$ $\mathbb{Q}e5$ 19. $\mathbb{Q}ac1$ $\mathbb{W}b8$ 20. $\mathbb{Q}xf6$ $\mathbb{Q}xf6$ 21. $\mathbb{W}h5$ Threatening either $\mathbb{Q}d7$ or $\mathbb{Q}d3-h3$. There also is a third threat, which Black overlooked: 21...g6?! 22. $\mathbb{W}b5!$ ± And the b7-pawn is lost, Miroshnichenko – Meinhardt, Bad Wiessee 2005.

However, Black could have improved with 21... $\mathbb{Q}d8!N$ 22. $\mathbb{W}b5$ $\mathbb{Q}f5$, with reasonable counterplay.

12...h6 13. $\mathbb{Q}h4!$

A familiar idea already.

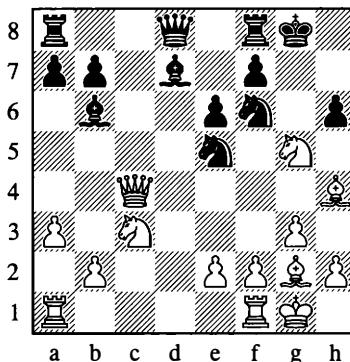


13... $\mathbb{Q}c8!$

Black uses his extra tempo in the most efficient way. The last move puts pressure on the queen, forcing White to start the attack under less favourable circumstances than expected.

Once again, trapping the bishop is dubious, but demands a closer look all the same.

13...g5?! 14. $\mathbb{Q}xg5$ $\mathbb{Q}e5$



15. $\mathbb{W}b4!$

The start of a series of accurate queen moves.

15. $\mathbb{W}f4$ $\mathbb{Q}g6$ 16. $\mathbb{Q}xe6$ fxe6 17. $\mathbb{W}xh6$ $\mathbb{Q}xh4$ 18. $\mathbb{W}xh4$ offers White three pawns for a bishop, but reduces his attacking chances.

15. $\mathbb{W}b3$ is less effective because of 15...hxg5 16. $\mathbb{Q}xg5$ $\mathbb{Q}eg4$ 17. h3 $\mathbb{Q}xf2\#$ 18. $\mathbb{Q}xf2$ $\mathbb{Q}xf2$ 19. $\mathbb{Q}xf2$ $\mathbb{Q}g4\#$ 20. hxg5 $\mathbb{W}xg5$ with unclear play.

With the queen on b4, the g4-square is covered and ... $\mathbb{Q}g4\#$ does not work anymore.

15...a5 16. $\mathbb{W}b3$

Once the b6-bishop has lost its support, the queen can retreat to b3 for reasons that will be explained in the comment to Black's 17th move.

16...hxg5

The queen has sufficient space after 16...a4 17. $\mathbb{W}b4$ $\mathbb{Q}a5$ 18. $\mathbb{W}d4$ hxg5 19. $\mathbb{Q}xg5$ $\mathbb{Q}eg4$ 20. h3± when White regains the material with interest.

17. $\mathbb{Q}xg5 \mathbb{Q}c5!$

Hoping to get out of the pin with ... $\mathbb{Q}e7$.

After 17... $\mathbb{Q}eg4$ 18. $\mathbb{Q}e4$ Black has no time for ... $\mathbb{Q}c6$, because his b6-bishop is hanging.

18. $\mathbb{Q}xf6!$

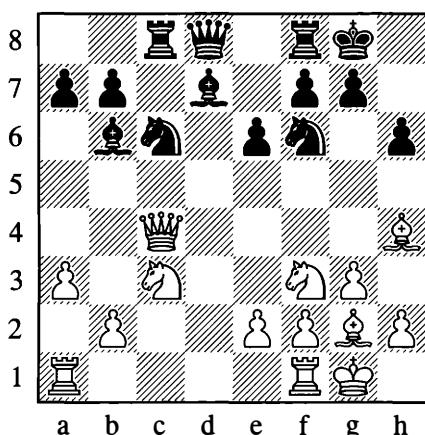
The start of a forced variation which sees White regain the sacrificed material.

18... $\mathbb{W}xf6$ 19. $\mathbb{Q}e4$ $\mathbb{W}e7$ 20. $\mathbb{W}c3$ $\mathbb{Q}d6$ 21. $\mathbb{Q}xd6$ $\mathbb{W}xd6$ 22. $\mathbb{E}ad1$ $\mathbb{W}b8$ 23. f4

Blacks pieces are hanging, but he can reduce the damage.

23... $\mathbb{Q}a4$ 24.b3 $\mathbb{W}a7\#$ 25. $\mathbb{Q}h1$ $\mathbb{Q}g4$ 26. $bxa4$ $\mathbb{Q}f2\#$ 27. $\mathbb{Q}xf2$ $\mathbb{W}xf2$ 28. $\mathbb{W}e5\pm$

The dust has settled, and White has two pawns for the exchange plus the safer king.



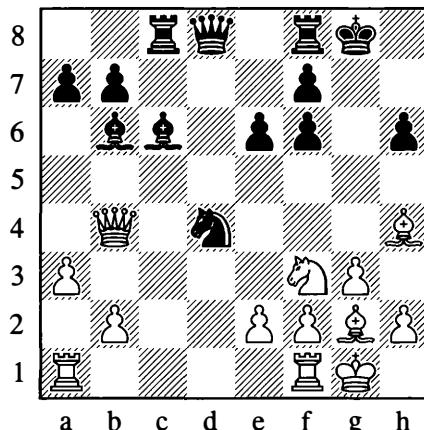
14. $\mathbb{Q}e4$ $\mathbb{Q}d4$ 15. $\mathbb{Q}xf6\#$ $\mathbf{gx}f6$ 16. $\mathbb{W}b4!$

Once again we see the queen favouring this square.

16... $\mathbb{Q}c6!$

The greedy 16... $\mathbb{Q}xe2\#?$ removes the knight from the centre with unpleasant consequences: 17. $\mathbb{Q}h1$ $\mathbb{Q}c6$ 18. $\mathbb{W}g4\#$ $\mathbb{Q}h7$ 19. $\mathbb{E}ad1\pm$ With his knight almost trapped on e2, Black cannot defend his kingside properly.

Instead Black does best to concentrate on activating his pieces. The present position was reached in M. Ivanov – Dittmar, Selestat 2000.



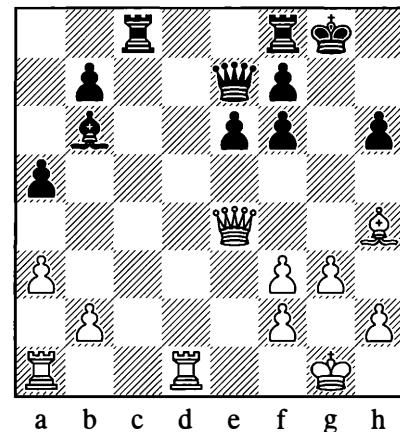
17. $\mathbb{Q}fd1!N$

In the game White exchanged on d4 but obtained no advantage and eventually lost after becoming too ambitious. The text move is a natural improvement, mobilizing another piece and forcing Black to release the tension.

17...a5

The only move that keeps Black in the game. The queen is forced back, somewhat reducing White's pressure.

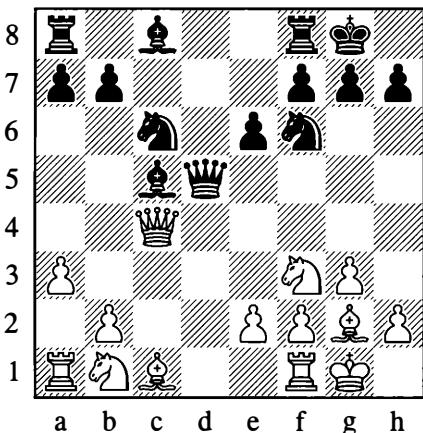
18. $\mathbb{W}e1$ $\mathbb{Q}xf3$ 19. $\mathbb{Q}xf3$ $\mathbb{Q}xf3\#$ 20. $\mathbf{ex}f3$ $\mathbb{W}e7$
21. $\mathbb{W}e4\#$



The pin along the h4-d8 diagonal has a practically permanent character. Besides, the

presence of the a5-pawn on a dark square may enable White to enter a favourable bishop ending with a well-timed a3-a4. Black is in no immediate danger of losing, but he will have to defend passively for a very long time.

B33) 10... $\mathbb{Q}d5$



Black defends his bishop by centralizing the queen. This would be the perfect solution if only the queen was safe in the centre, which is not the case here.

11. $\mathbb{Q}h4$

Leaving the enemy queen exposed to a discovered attack.

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

Insisting with the initial idea of trading queens. The black queen would have a hard job finding a safe location in the middlegame, for instance:

11... $\mathbb{Q}f5$ 12. $\mathbb{Q}c3$ h6 13. $\mathbb{Q}c4$ $\mathbb{Q}d7$ 14. $\mathbb{Q}f4\pm$

White's development is more harmonious.

11... $\mathbb{Q}e7$ 12. $\mathbb{Q}c3$ $\mathbb{Q}b3$ (The queen does not find peace after 12... $\mathbb{Q}a5$ 13. $\mathbb{Q}d2\pm$) 13. $\mathbb{Q}d2$ $\mathbb{Q}c2$ 14. $\mathbb{Q}c4\pm$ White maintains the initiative by creating the well masked threat of 15. $\mathbb{Q}xc6!$ followed by 16. $\mathbb{Q}d5$, winning a piece. If

Black spends a tempo on parrying the threat, for instance with 14... $\mathbb{Q}h8$, there could follow 15. $\mathbb{Q}b5$ or 15. $\mathbb{Q}de4$, with a definite initiative.

12. $\mathbb{Q}xe4$ $\mathbb{Q}xe4$

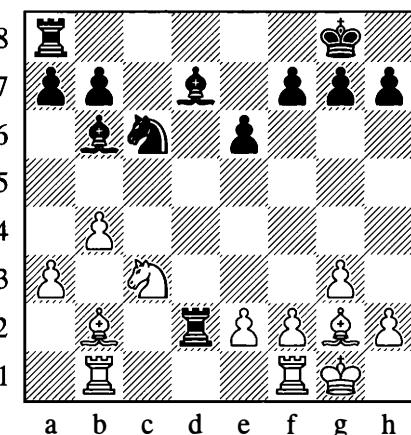
The exchange has taken place under favourable circumstances for White – the knight is much less stable on e4 than it would have been on d5.

13.b4 $\mathbb{Q}b6$ 14. $\mathbb{Q}b2$ $\mathbb{Q}d8$ 15. $\mathbb{Q}c3$

The best way of taking advantage of the knight's instability, since 15... $\mathbb{Q}xc3$ 16. $\mathbb{Q}xc3$ would strengthen White's position, allowing him to meet 16... $\mathbb{Q}d7$ with 17.a4±, with promising queenside pressure.

15... $\mathbb{Q}d2$ 16. $\mathbb{Q}xd2$ $\mathbb{Q}xd2$ 17. $\mathbb{Q}ab1$ $\mathbb{Q}d7$

So far we have been following the game D. Gurevich – Li, Geneva 2001. At this point I suggest the logical developing move:



18. $\mathbb{Q}fd1!N$

The best way of maintaining the initiative is to exchange Black's only active piece.

18... $\mathbb{Q}xd1\uparrow$ 19. $\mathbb{Q}xd1$ $\mathbb{Q}d8$

19... $\mathbb{Q}e8$ 20. $\mathbb{Q}e4$ is similar.

20. $\mathbb{Q}e4$

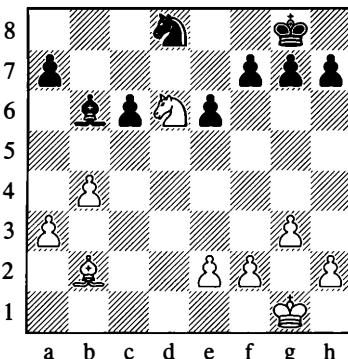
Despite the simplifications, Black faces a tough defence. Most of his pieces are passive, while the apparent activity of the b6-bishop has a sterile character. The immediate threat is $\mathbb{Q}d6$, putting the b7-pawn in big danger.

20...e5!?

By increasing his control over the d4-square, Black aims to create some tactical chances.

The following line illustrates Black's problems rather well: 20...f5 21. $\mathbb{Q}d6$ $\mathbb{Q}e8$ 22. $\mathbb{Q}d3!$ Unpinning the knight and threatening to win the b7-pawn. 22... $\mathbb{Q}d4$ 23. $\mathbb{Q}xe8$ $\mathbb{Q}xe2\#$ 24. $\mathbb{Q}f1$ $\mathbb{Q}xd3$ 25. $\mathbb{Q}xe2$ $\mathbb{Q}b3$ 26. $\mathbb{Q}e5\pm$ With a material advantage and active pieces for White.

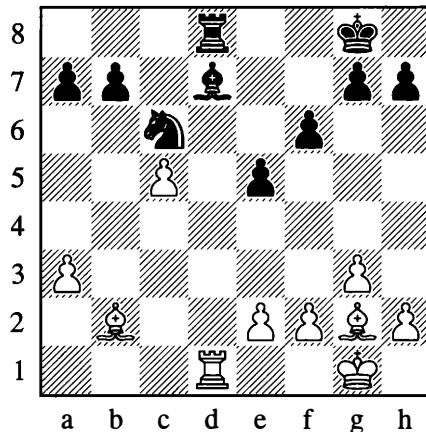
The rook exchange does not really help: 20... $\mathbb{Q}e8$ 21. $\mathbb{Q}xd8$ $\mathbb{Q}xd8$ 22. $\mathbb{Q}d6$ $\mathbb{Q}c6$ 23. $\mathbb{Q}xc6$ $\mathbb{Q}xc6$ Apparently, Black has limited the damage to a defensible weakness of the queenside.



24.a4! Threatening to win an important pawn with $\mathbb{Q}c8$ followed by a5. Black is unable to save himself with 24... $\mathbb{Q}c7$ due to 25. $\mathbb{Q}e8!$ $\mathbb{Q}b8$ (25... $\mathbb{Q}b6?$ 26.a5 traps the bishop) 26. $\mathbb{Q}xg7$ with a won ending.

21. $\mathbb{Q}c5$ $\mathbb{Q}xc5$ 22.bxc5 f6

At first glance Black looks to be close to equality, but the truth becomes apparent after White's next strong move.



23. $\mathbb{Q}xc6$ 24. $\mathbb{Q}c3$

Threatening to win a piece with $\mathbb{Q}a5$.

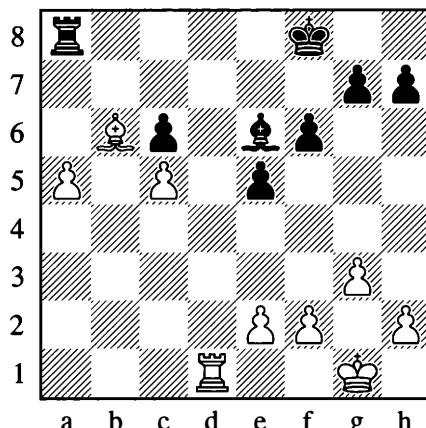
24...a5!

The only defence, preparing to meet $\mathbb{Q}xa5$ with ... $\mathbb{Q}a8$.

25.a4!

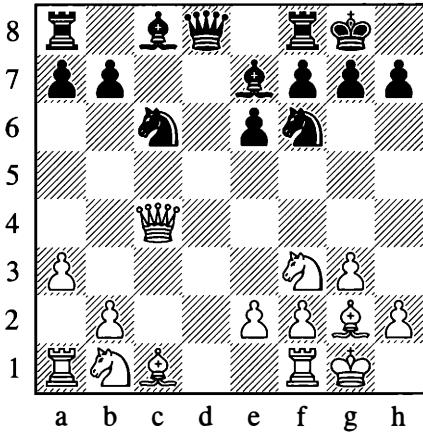
This accurate move enables White to consolidate his extra pawn in the optimal fashion.

25... $\mathbb{Q}f8$ 26. $\mathbb{Q}xa5$ $\mathbb{Q}a8$ 27. $\mathbb{Q}b6$ $\mathbb{Q}e6$ 28.a5±



White has a dangerous passed pawn plus unchallenged control of the only open file. The presence of opposite-coloured bishops does not guarantee a draw in any way.

B34) 10.... $\mathbb{Q}e7$



This safe but somewhat passive continuation was Illescas's choice in the previously quoted game from Zaragoza.

11. $\mathbb{Q}c3$ e5

This is a hard decision to take, because it weakens the d5-square, but there is no active alternative for Black.

11... $\mathbb{Q}a5$ enables White to make full use of the earlier 8.a3 with 12. $\mathbb{W}a2!$ \pm followed by $\mathbb{Q}d1$, $\mathbb{Q}f4$ and so on.

The developing sequence 11... $\mathbb{Q}d7$ 12. $\mathbb{Q}d1$ $\mathbb{E}c8$ 13. $\mathbb{Q}e3$ \pm not only leaves Black passive, but he also faces problems defending the d6-square against an invasion with $\mathbb{Q}b5$ -d6.

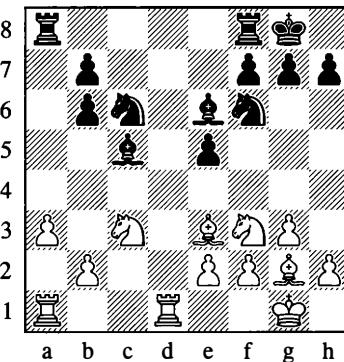
12. $\mathbb{Q}d1$ $\mathbb{Q}e6$ 13. $\mathbb{W}b5$ $\mathbb{W}c7$

With this move Black relies on the solidity of his position. The alternative involved compromising his queenside structure with: 13... $\mathbb{W}b6$ 14. $\mathbb{W}xb6$ axb6

Matters are by no means simple here, but

White can keep a slight edge with accurate play.

15. $\mathbb{Q}e3$ $\mathbb{Q}c5$



16. $\mathbb{Q}xc5!$

The decision to facilitate the improvement of Black's structure is justified by some specific features of the position.

16... $\mathbb{b}xc5$

Black no longer suffers from doubled pawns, but the b6-square remains weak while the c5-pawn might also become a target.

17. $\mathbb{Q}g5$ $\mathbb{Q}b3$

Preventing White from doubling rooks along the d-file.

18. $\mathbb{Q}d6$ $\mathbb{E}fd8$ 19. $\mathbb{Q}xd8\mathbb{+}$ $\mathbb{Q}xd8$

Passive, but necessary.

19... $\mathbb{E}xd8$ could be met with 20. $\mathbb{Q}xc6$ $\mathbb{b}xc6$

21.a4 \pm White has a dangerous passed pawn and the c5-square is weak.

20. $\mathbb{Q}c1$ \pm

All of White's pieces are ready to submit the enemy weaknesses to a coordinated attack.

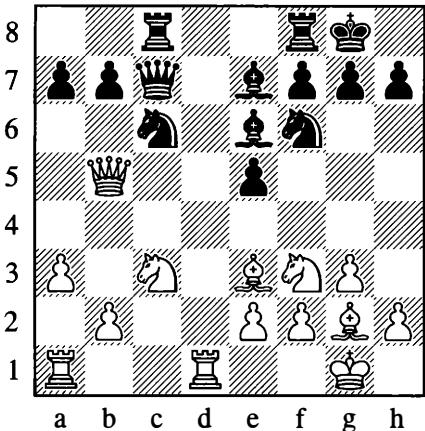
14. $\mathbb{Q}e3$

White enjoys the more harmonious development, and Black faces problems keeping his slightly overextended position together.

14... $\mathbb{E}ac8$

14... $\mathbb{Q}g4$ fails to spoil White's coordination in view of 15. $\mathbb{Q}c5$ \pm .

14... $\mathbb{E}ad8$ could cause Black some problems connected with the f7-square after a rook exchange. 15. $\mathbb{Q}g5$ $\mathbb{Q}d7$ (The more active looking 15... $\mathbb{Q}f5$ leads to similar consequences: 16. $\mathbb{E}xd8$ $\mathbb{E}xd8$ 17. $\mathbb{W}c4\pm$) 16. $\mathbb{W}d3$ g6 17. $\mathbb{W}c4$ $\mathbb{W}b8$ 18. $\mathbb{Q}d5$ $\mathbb{Q}xd5$ 19. $\mathbb{Q}xd5\pm$ White has firm control over the light squares and nasty pressure against f7, Lysyj – Kachar, Voronezh 2004.



15. $\mathbb{Q}g5$

Just as in the game mentioned in the previous note, this move opens the long diagonal with gain of time and starts fighting for the central light squares. The e6-bishop is forced to abandon its defence of d5 and the f6-knight will be exchanged with $\mathbb{Q}ge4$.

15... $\mathbb{Q}f5$ 16. $\mathbb{E}ac1$ h6 17. $\mathbb{Q}ge4$ $\mathbb{Q}xe4$

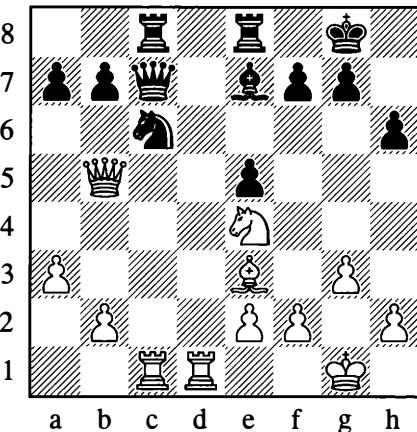
18. $\mathbb{Q}xe4!$

The bishop exchange is an important part of White's general strategy.

18... $\mathbb{Q}xe4$ 19. $\mathbb{Q}xe4$ $\mathbb{E}fe8?$

Black was already under unpleasant pressure, but the text move only makes matters worse.

19...a6N would have kept Black in the game. At this point White would have had a pleasant choice between 20. $\mathbb{W}b6$ $\mathbb{W}xb6$ 21. $\mathbb{Q}xb6$, with stable domination, and 20. $\mathbb{W}b3$ b5 21.a4 with a promising queenside initiative.



20. $\mathbb{Q}xa7!N$

Winning a pawn.

The game continued with 20. $\mathbb{W}b3$ b6 21. $\mathbb{E}c3$ $\mathbb{W}b7$ 22. $\mathbb{Q}d6$ $\mathbb{Q}xd6$ 23. $\mathbb{E}xd6\pm$ with just some nasty pressure for White, Veingold – Illescas, Zaragoza 1991.

20... $\mathbb{Q}xa7?$

Both players probably thought that this would win a piece. Black's 19th move was probably intended to keep the bishop defended in the event of 21. $\mathbb{E}xc7?$ $\mathbb{Q}xb5$, but it seems neither of the players noticed that the rook is exposed on e8.

21. $\mathbb{W}xe8\#+-$

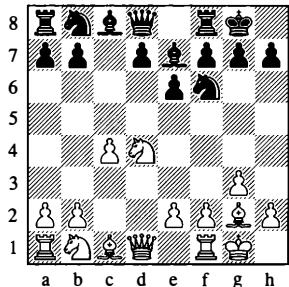
With a decisive material advantage.

Conclusion

The main merit of the variation presented in this chapter consists of the fact that it takes the opponent out of the patterns which characterize his favourite Tarrasch Defence. In most of the lines examined, play takes on a rather one-sided character, with Black fighting for equality. It is possible that White's chances for a serious advantage may be higher in the main Tarrasch lines, but the Anti Tarrasch system presented in these pages has every right to be considered a "serious opening".



The Flexible 3...e6



6...cxd4 – The delayed Hedgehog and others

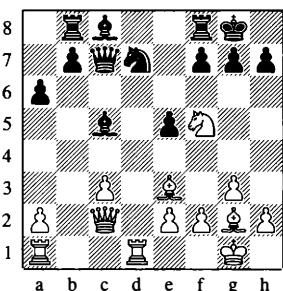
Variation Index

1.c4 c5 2.g3 ♜f6 3.♗g2 e6 4.♗f3 ♜e7

5.0–0 0–0 6.d4 cxd4 7.♗xd4

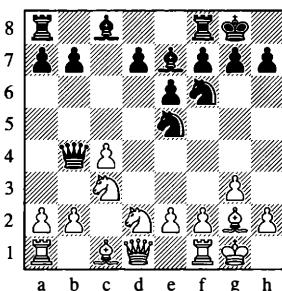
A) 7...d5	260
B) 7...♗c6	263
C) 7...a6 8.♗c3 ♜c7 9.b3 ♗c6 10.♗b2 d6 11.♗c1	266
C1) 11...♗e5	267
C2) 11...♗xd4	268

A) note to 10...e5



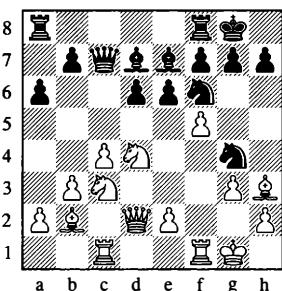
16.♗d3!N

B) note to 10...♝d8



11.♗c2!N

C1) after 15...♝eg4



16.fxe6!N

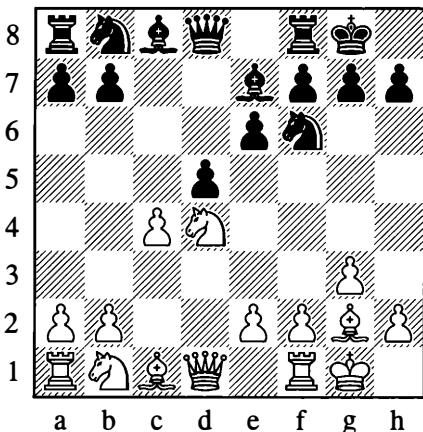
**1.c4 c5 2.g3 ♘f6 3.♗g2 e6 4.♗f3 ♖e7 5.0–0
0–0 6.d4 cxd4 7.♘xd4**

This is the only tabiya from the present volume that resembles what we could call “The symmetrical open variation”. Usually, such a term would refer to the position arising after 1.c4 c5 2.♗f3 ♘f6 3.♘c3 ♘c6 4.d4 cxd4 5.♘xd4. Then Black has several ways of fighting for counterplay, the most popular being 5...e6 6.g3 ♕b6 7.♗b3 ♘e5 8.e4 ♖b4, with huge complications and chances for both sides.

Nothing like that is going to happen in this chapter. White’s king is not exposed to pins (or checks) along the e1-a5 diagonal, while Black’s dynamic potential has been reduced after ...♖e7. Black’s main concern should be to develop his queenside, which requires some accuracy given White’s strong pressure along the h1-a8 diagonal.

We will examine A) 7...d5, B) 7...♘c6 and C) 7...a6.

A) 7...d5



After the previous exchange on d4, which has activated White’s knight and bishop, occupying the centre is not so favourable for Black.

8.cxd5 ♘xd5

...exd5 would lead to an unfavourable form of the Tarrasch Defence. As explained by Boris Avrukh in *Grandmaster Repertoire 1*, after 9.♘c3 ♘c6 White is no longer forced to develop his bishop on the c1-h6 diagonal and can instead opt for harmonious development with 10.b3. We have seen this situation before: Black has managed to trick us into an opening that we do not intend to play, but this is hardly a success for him. In fact, Black has trapped himself in an inferior line.

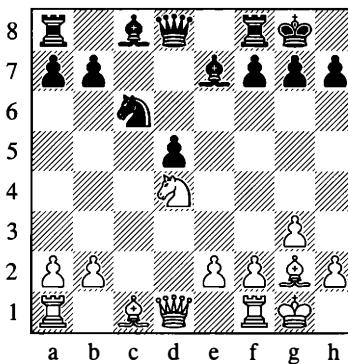
9.♘c3

The most dynamic approach. White develops his knight towards the centre, even though this implies allowing a pawn weakness.

9...♘xc3

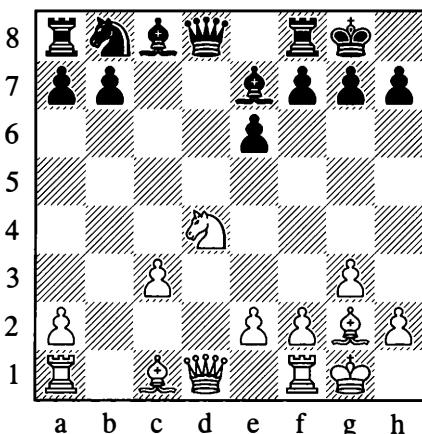
Black has to accept the challenge.

After 9...♘c6 we once again should transpose to a 1.d4 opening with: 10.♘xd5 exd5



Without the exchange on d4, this would be a main tabiya of the Semi-Tarrasch. The current position is best evaluated as a comfortable anti-IQP for White, with stable control of d4. As mentioned elsewhere in this book, the exchange of a pair of knights favours White from a strategic point of view. Now 11.♗e3± followed by ♕c1 offers very pleasant play.

10.bxc3



Despite his structural defect, White has the better chances. After the exchange of the black knight that had consumed three tempos, White is better developed. His pressure against the b7-square (which can be increased with $\mathbb{E}b1$, taking advantage of a positive effect of $\mathbb{B}xc3$) complicates Black's task of mobilizing his queenside.

10...e5

This is the most radical approach to the problem. The white knight is driven away in order to allow ... $\mathbb{Q}c6$ followed by ... $\mathbb{Q}e6$.

10...a6?!

This restricts the white knight, preparing ... $\mathbb{W}c7$, but it weakens the b6-square prematurely.

11. $\mathbb{W}b3$!

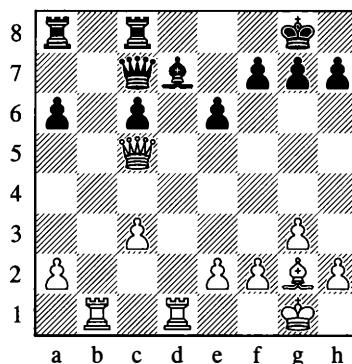
White prepares $\mathbb{Q}a3$, anticipating Black's intention of consolidating on the dark squares.

11... $\mathbb{Q}d7$ 12. $\mathbb{Q}a3$ $\mathbb{Q}c5$ 13. $\mathbb{W}c4$ $\mathbb{W}c7$ 14. $\mathbb{Q}c6$

Shaking the foundations of Black's structure.

The tempting 14. $\mathbb{Q}b3$ fails to win a piece after 14... $\mathbb{Q}a7$ 15. $\mathbb{Q}xc5$ b6, although White's position remains more active.

14... $\mathbb{B}xc6$ 15. $\mathbb{Q}xc5$ $\mathbb{Q}xc5$ 16. $\mathbb{W}xc5$ $\mathbb{Q}d7$ 17. $\mathbb{Q}fd1$ $\mathbb{Q}fc8$ 18. $\mathbb{Q}ab1\pm$



All White's pieces are more active than Black's and the black queenside pawns are vulnerable, Vilela – O. Rodriguez, Alicante 1978.

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

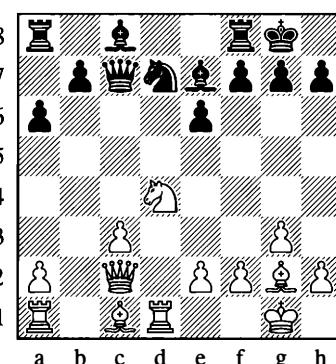
This is a more flexible way of preparing the plan from the previous line. Since 11. $\mathbb{W}b3$ runs into 11... $\mathbb{Q}c5$, White has to adopt a less active plan.

11. $\mathbb{W}c2$ a6

11... $\mathbb{Q}c5$, as played in Lalev – Ortega, Varna 1983, is premature in view of 12. $\mathbb{Q}a3$!N followed by $\mathbb{Q}ab1$, making the development of the c8-bishop quite problematic.

12. $\mathbb{Q}d1$ $\mathbb{W}c7$

Black seems to have regrouped flexibly, without defining his real intentions yet.



13. $\mathbb{Q}f4$!

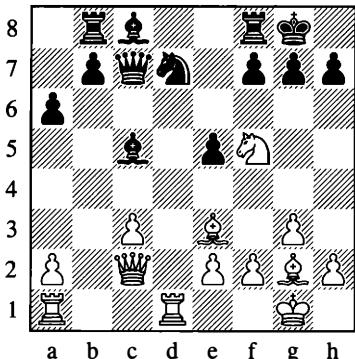
Forcing Black to commit himself before his development is complete.

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

An alternate way to get closer to the d5-square.

14... $\mathbb{Q}c5$ 15. $\mathbb{Q}e3$ $\mathbb{B}b8$

So far, we have followed Gutman – Meinsohn, Clermont Ferrand 1984.



16. $\mathbb{W}d3!$ N

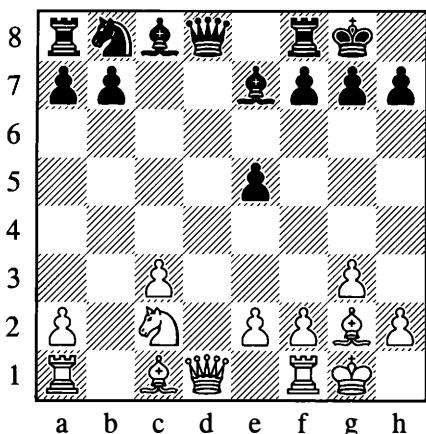
Since the bishop exchange is inevitable, White prepares to occupy the d6-square. Black's queen is a useful defensive piece and should be exchanged.

16... $\mathbb{Q}f6$ 17. $\mathbb{Q}xc5$ $\mathbb{W}xc5$ 18. $\mathbb{W}d6$ $\mathbb{W}xd6$
19. $\mathbb{Q}xd6$ b5 20.a4±

White has better development and a persistent initiative; Black risks losing a pawn on the queenside.

11. $\mathbb{Q}c2!$

The white knight will prove its versatility under the changed circumstances. Once the d5-square has been weakened, White's main plan is $\mathbb{Q}e3$ followed by c3-c4 and $\mathbb{Q}d5$.



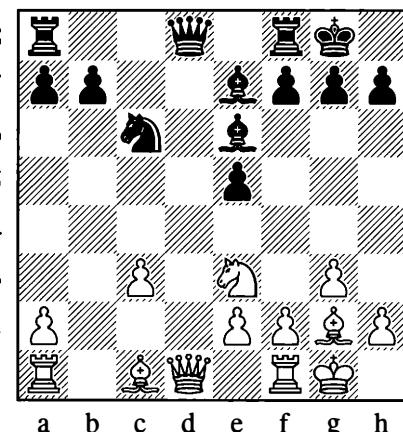
11... $\mathbb{Q}c6$

This is the fastest way to develop, but the knight is not entirely stable on c6.

The plan of transferring the knight to f6 looks more solid, but is too time-consuming. 11... $\mathbb{Q}d7$ 12. $\mathbb{Q}e3$ $\mathbb{Q}f6$ 13.c4 e4 Necessary, in order to develop the bishop, but the e4-pawn becomes vulnerable. 14. $\mathbb{Q}b2$ $\mathbb{Q}e6$ 15. $\mathbb{W}c2$ $\mathbb{E}c8$ 16. $\mathbb{E}ad1$ $\mathbb{W}a5$ 17. $\mathbb{Q}xf6$ $\mathbb{Q}xf6$ 18. $\mathbb{Q}xe4\pm$ With an extra pawn and a wonderful d5-square just for himself, Levin – Afek, Gausdal 2006.

12. $\mathbb{Q}e3$ $\mathbb{Q}e6$

Black's development looks quite natural, but White's next series of moves increases the queenside pressure to a threatening level.



13. $\mathbb{W}a4$ $\mathbb{Q}c5$

Black prepares to develop his queen by removing the bishop from the exposed e7-square, anticipating the thematic $\mathbb{Q}d5$.

14. $\mathbb{E}b1$ $\mathbb{W}c8$ 15. $\mathbb{E}b5$ $\mathbb{Q}d8$

This attempt to consolidate on the dark squares looks artificial, but 15... $\mathbb{E}b6$ 16. $\mathbb{Q}d5$ $\mathbb{Q}d8$ 17. $\mathbb{E}d1\pm$ is not so appealing either.

16. $\mathbb{Q}a3$

Continuing development and exchanging the blocking piece.

16...♝xa3 17.♛xa3 ♜c7 18.♝fb1 a6 19.♝c5

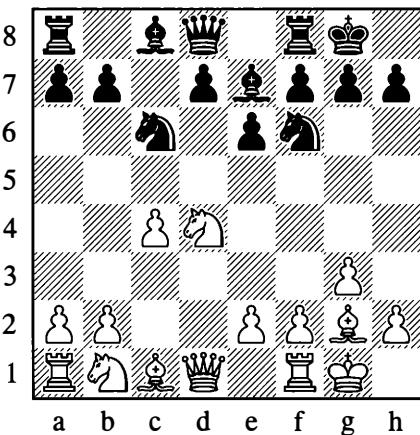
White probably could have grabbed the pawn: 19.♝xb7 ♜xb7 20.♝xb7 The g2-square is well defended and White's overall activity, as well as his control of the d5-square, make Black's attacking chances questionable.

The text move is good enough, though.

19...♜e7 20.♝d5 ♜xd5 21.♝xd5±

With a dominating position, Cs. Horvath – Luther, Gausdal 1994.

B) 7...♝c6



Black creates pressure against the central knight, in a similar way as in the 6...♝b6 line mentioned in the introduction.

8.♝c3 ♜b6

8...a6 is likely to transpose to line C after 9.b3 ♜c7.

9.♝b3 ♜b4

Black's only chance for counterplay is to attack the c4-pawn.

9...d6

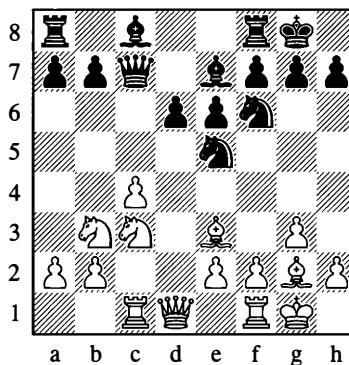
This is quite passive. In the Hedgehog structures, the knight does not stand especially well on c6, because it obstructs the counterplay along the c-file and leaves the c5-square inadequately defended.

10.♝e3 ♜c7 11.♝c1

Black is in some trouble already; White threatens ♜d5.

11...♝e5

Repeatedly moving developed pieces does not make things better when the queenside is underdeveloped, but Black did not have a choice. So far we have followed Schlemmermeyer – Peptan, Berliner Sommer 1997.



12.♝d4!N

Exploiting the space made available and defending the c4-pawn quite reliably, as 12...♜xc4 13.♝d5 or 12...♝xc4 13.♝b5 both win material for White.

12...♞d8

Aiming to prevent c4-c5.

12...a6 leads to a strong initiative for White: 13.c5 dxc5 14.♝xc5±

12...♝c6 13.♝d2 wins a developing tempo for White. 13...♝e5 14.♝b5 ♜b8 15.♝fd1 ♜d8 16.♝a5± With overwhelming pressure.

13.♝fd1 ♜d7

13...a6 can be effectively met with 14.♝b6±. The presence of the rook on d8 will cause Black to lose another tempo.

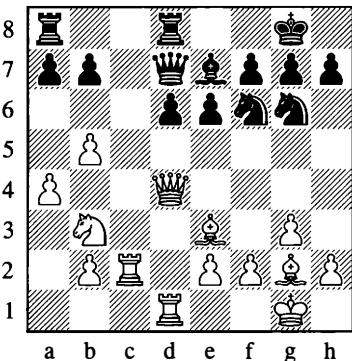
14.♝b5

Possibly not the only effective continuation, but the most direct one.

14...♝xb5 15.cxb5 ♜d7 16.a4

White threatens ♜a5 with a complete crush. Black needs to make ...d6-d5 possible by retreating the knight to a passive square.

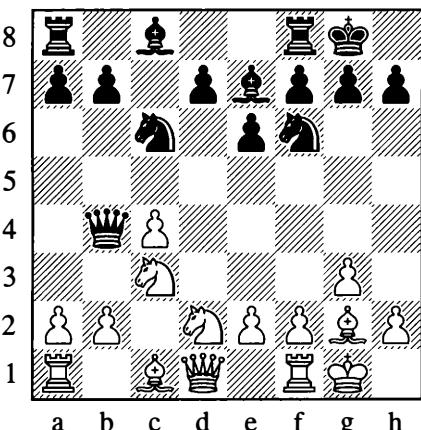
16... $\mathbb{Q}g6$ 17. $\mathbb{B}c2\pm$



Black has no obvious way to release White's queenside pressure. Blocking the long diagonal with ...d6-d5 would allow $\mathbb{Q}c5$; trading all the rooks is impossible because the a7-pawn would be lost, while otherwise the threat of $\mathbb{B}dc1$ is very strong.

10. $\mathbb{Q}d2$

After this necessary knight retreat, the queen's bishop is obstructed. Also, b2-b3 is not possible yet, which will delay White's development. However, with his queen exposed, Black will not be able to fully exploit this partial success.



10... $\mathbb{B}d8$

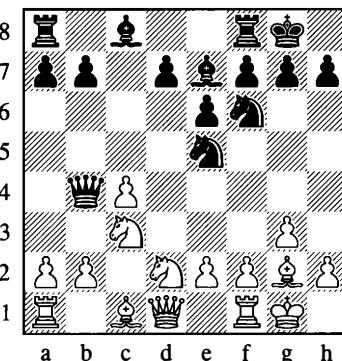
The most flexible move. Black prepares the active ...d7-d5, but the rook will be useful on

d8 even in the event of the more restrained ...d7-d6.

10...d5 11.cxd5 exd5 White probably should decline the sacrifice, because of his incomplete development, and instead start regrouping with gain of time by attacking the enemy queen. 12.a3 $\mathbb{W}d6$ 13. $\mathbb{Q}b3$ $\mathbb{Q}e6$ 14. $\mathbb{Q}f4$ $\mathbb{W}d7$ 15. $\mathbb{W}d3\pm$ White has a favourable form of the Tarrasch Defence (or, if you wish, of the Šubá system in the 1...e5 English, see the first volume). The knight's presence on b3 allows him to choose between $\mathbb{Q}d4$ and $\mathbb{W}b5$ followed by $\mathbb{Q}c5$, but the next move will most probably be $\mathbb{B}fd1$, completing development and increasing the pressure on d5.

10... $\mathbb{Q}e5$

This has been played in a couple of games.



11. $\mathbb{W}c2!$ N

White avoids making any weakening moves on the queenside and defends the c4-pawn indirectly.

11...d6

11... $\mathbb{Q}xc4?$ loses material to 12.a3 $\mathbb{W}c5$ 13. $\mathbb{Q}a4+-$.

12.b3±

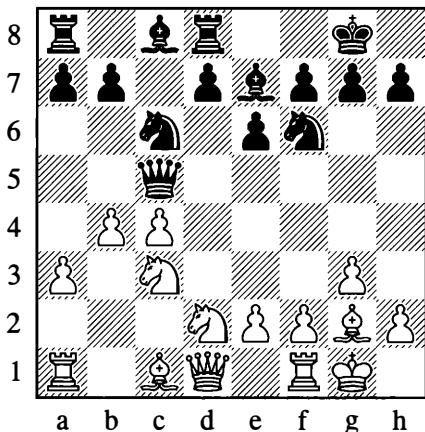
We can see a second positive effect of White's last move; the c3-knight has been defended and White is ready to complete his development harmoniously with $\mathbb{B}b2$, $\mathbb{B}ac1$ and $\mathbb{B}fd1$.

11.a3

White starts gaining space by attacking the enemy queen.

With the black knight on c6, 11.♘c2 is less effective. The problem is that b2-b3 is not a threat because of ...♞d4 followed by ...♛xc3!.

11...♛c5 12.b4



12...♝h5

The counterplay in the centre with:

12...♛e5 13.♝b2 d5

Is best met with:

14.b5!

The knight does not have favourable squares and the queen is exposed in the centre.

14...♞d4

14...d4 leaves the black centre immobile after 15.♛ce4±.

Or 14...♞a5 when Black is poorly coordinated after 15.cxd5 exd5 16.♛a4±.

15.e3 ♞f5 16.cxd5 exd5

16...♞xd5? loses material after 17.♞xd5 ♛xb2 18.♛c4 attacking the queen and threatening ♜xe7† at the same time.

17.♞f3±

If White had carried out the exchange in the centre without b4-b5, Black would have met ♘d2-f3 with ...♝h5, obtaining some kingside pressure. In the current position, Black's pieces stand in each other's way, while White enjoys

his superior development and more compact structure.

13.e4

Anihilating Black's hopes of kingside counterplay and eliminating the danger of ...d7-d5.

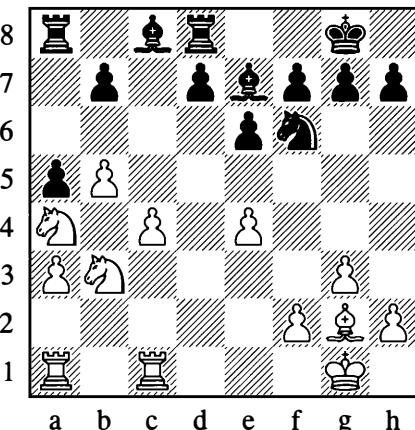
13...♛xd1 14.♝xd1

White has gained a lot of space and is better developed.

14...a5?!

With his development incomplete, Black should refrain from such concrete action. Instead Bagirov analyses 14...♞e5?! 15.f4 ♘d3 16.e5± followed by ♘de4, with a positional crush.

15.b5 ♘e5 16.♞a4 ♘d3 17.♞b3 ♘xc1 18.♝dxc1±

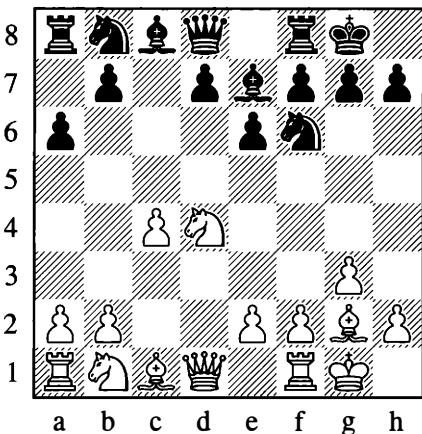


White's knights are perfectly placed for avoiding a blockade on the dark squares. Black is badly developed and has no breathing space, Bagirov – Sznajpik, Berlin 1979.

In this line, 14...d6?N would have been better, increasing Black's control in the centre and preparing the bishop's development. White could have played 15.♞f3±, discouraging...♞e5 and planning to complete his development

with $\mathbb{Q}a2$, $\mathbb{Q}f4$ and $\mathbb{Q}ad2$, possibly followed by e4-e5.

C) 7...a6



This is the start of Black's most consistent developing plan: ... $\mathbb{Q}c7$, ... $\mathbb{Q}c6xd4$, ...d7-d6, ... $\mathbb{Q}d7$, ... $\mathbb{Q}fd8$ and ... $\mathbb{Q}ac8$. Although White's opening move order has prevented ...b7-b6 followed by ... $\mathbb{Q}b7$, in the lines examined below we will feel the spirit of the English Hedgehog.

8. $\mathbb{Q}c3$ $\mathbb{Q}c7$ 9.b3 $\mathbb{Q}c6$

Black has insufficient development to get anything out of the pin along the c-file with: 9...d5 10. $\mathbb{Q}d3$

This simple move, defending c4, keeps the initiative.

10...dxc4

10...e5 weakens the light squares and can be answered with: 11. $\mathbb{Q}f5$ $\mathbb{Q}xf5$ 12. $\mathbb{Q}xf5$ dxc4 13.bxc4 $\mathbb{Q}xc4$ 14. $\mathbb{Q}e4\pm$ With the pawns on b7 and e5 hanging, Black's material advantage is temporary. White's bishop pair offers him the better chances in an open position.

11. $\mathbb{Q}xc4$

As mentioned in a comment in line A, it is useful to exchange the black queen, which is a reliable defender of the b7-pawn. In addition, once the queen disappears, the

presence of the pawn on a6 will cease to be useful, while the weakness of the b6-square will be permanent.

11... $\mathbb{Q}xc4$ 12.bxc4 $\mathbb{Q}d8$ 13. $\mathbb{Q}b3$

White's harmonious pieces keep the enemy queenside under severe pressure.

13... $\mathbb{Q}bd7$

13... $\mathbb{Q}c6$ 14. $\mathbb{Q}a4\pm$, followed by $\mathbb{Q}b6$, is also pleasant for White.

14. $\mathbb{Q}b1$

Putting X-ray pressure on the b7-pawn, thus preventing ... $\mathbb{Q}c5$.

14...a5

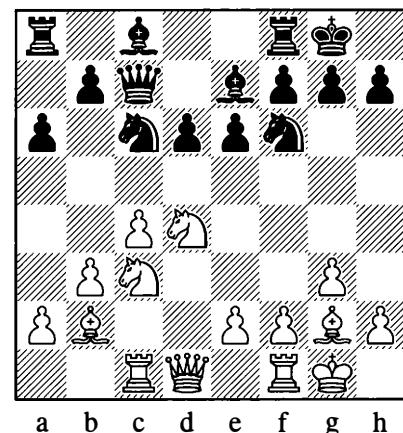
Preparing ... $\mathbb{Q}a6$. The second advance of the pawn weakens the queenside even more, but how else to develop the rook?

15. $\mathbb{Q}a4\pm$

Black's coordination problems are obvious. The white knight's location is identical to the final position in line B, with similar strategic effects. In Grapsa – Peptan, Kallithea 2008, Black went on to lose despite a 300 rating point gap in her favour.

10. $\mathbb{Q}b2$ d6 11. $\mathbb{Q}c1$

The threat of $\mathbb{Q}d5$ forces Black to release the tension.



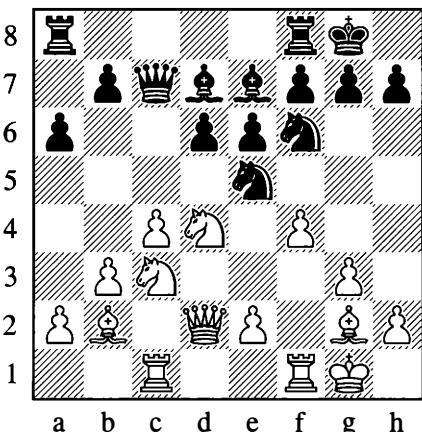
Black can choose between C1) 11... $\mathbb{Q}e5$ and C2) 11... $\mathbb{Q}xd4$.

C1) 11...Qe5

Black keeps all the minor pieces on the board, in the spirit of the classical Hedgehog. This approach would leave him with a flexible position if it was not for his slightly lagging development, which does not fully justify moving the same piece for the second time.

12.Qd2 Qd7 13.f4

White has to react energetically. If allowed to complete his development, Black would be absolutely fine.

**13...Qg6**

13...Qc6?! is inconsistent. Having provoked the slightly weakening move f2-f4 does not compensate for the lost time and the queenside damage. 14.Qd5 exd5 15.cxd5 Qa5? A surprising mistake, considering the level of the player. Did Black think that he could win a piece by taking advantage of the undefended white queen? 16.Qc3 Qb6 17.dxc6 Qxc6 18.Qa5 White won a pawn and later the game in Nikolaevsky – Vaganian, Soviet Championship 1971.

15...Qxd5 would have been better, although after 16.Qxd5 White's superior structure and active pieces offer him the better chances.

13...Qeg4?! would force the knight onto the passive h6-square after 14.h3±. In this line we see the usefulness of playing Qd2 before initiating active operations: the e3-square needs defence.

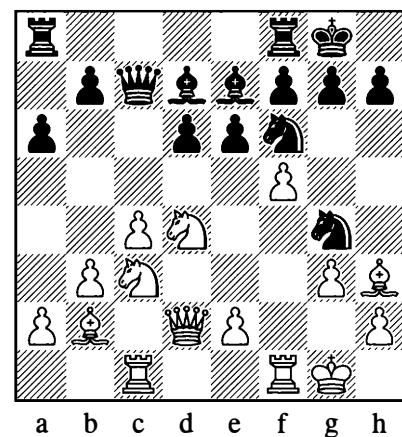
14.f5!

Consistently playing for the initiative on the light squares.

14...Qe5 15.Qh3 Qeg4

Instead 15...Qfg4 would have offered Black more stability, but after 16.Qe4 White's pressure would still be annoying.

After the text move we are still following Ftacnik – Bezold, Deizisau 2001, but now we can do better.

**16.fxe6!N**

White opens the f-file in order to allow the following combination.

16...fxe6 17.Qxf6!

White gives up the exchange for a pawn in order to invade the central light squares.

17...Qxf6 18.Qxe6† ♜h8

The only way to avoid losing back the exchange, when he would be a pawn down in a hopeless position.

19.♕d5 ♖d8

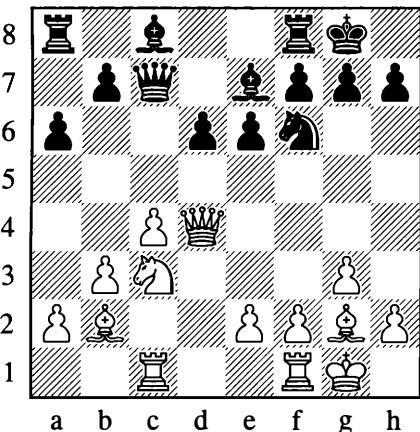
Another passive but essential move. Instead 19...♝xd5 opens the c-file for the white rook after 20.cxd5 ♖d8 21.♝xd7, followed by ♔e6 and ♜c7, with a winning attack.

20.♕f4+

White is in complete control of the position. Apart from the strategic aspects, he has chances of starting an attack against g7.

C2) 11...♝xd4

The most reliable continuation. Black parries ♔d5 without lowering the rhythm of his development. Allowing the centralization of the white queen is certainly a concession, but in the long run the knight exchange may produce positive effects, by making the thematic ...b7-b5 a realistic plan.

12.♖xd4**12...♝d7**

The bishop may seem less active here than on b7 as in the classical Hedgehog, but its effectiveness in preparing the queenside break is indisputable.

13.♖fd1 ♖fd8

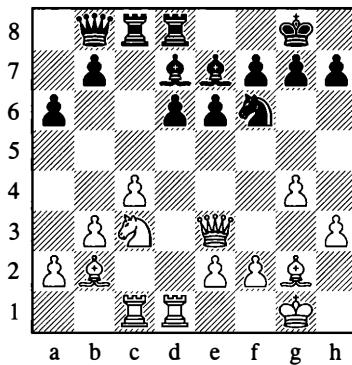
It is precisely this rook which belongs on d8. In certain cases the bishop needs to retreat to

e8 and it would be best to avoid disconnecting rooks. The queen's rook can choose between the b-file and the c-file.

The move order is also important. Starting with 13...♜ac8? leads to trouble after 14.♔e4+ when the d6-pawn lacks the natural defence of a rook on d8.

After the text move I have analysed this position quite a lot. White has perfect development and a lot of space. However, as is often the case in hedgehog structures, this may cause a false feeling of safety. If allowed to carry out his queenside plan, Black would be very much okay.

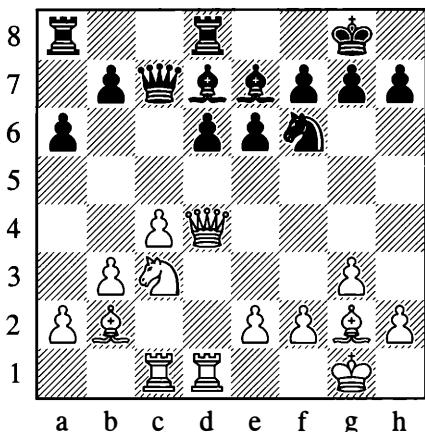
One of the main lines is: 14.h3 ♜ac8 15.♗e3 ♜b8 16.g4



In practice, Black has for some reason allowed g4-g5, but 16...h6!N slows down White's attack, leaving him with kingside weaknesses. The only way to prevent ...b7-b5 is 17.a4, but then Black could complete his regrouping with 17...♝c6, followed by ...♝d7 and ...♝f6, with chances to establish a blockade on the dark squares.

I was starting to get slightly confused about the evaluation of the position after move 13, and certainly became aware that the main theoretical lines were not matching the objective reality of the position.

I had a fresh look at all the moves tried in the position and was fortunate enough to find the following remarkable game:



14.b4!

White is better developed, so he can afford to start an attack on the wing that is supposed to be the opponent's theatre of action. In fact, two of Black's three minor pieces are on the kingside, so why bother to attack on the wing that is well protected, when the other side of the board is vulnerable? Besides, the g2-bishop already has an open diagonal, making a queenside attack quite promising, while the b2-bishop only has potential.

Returning to more concrete terms, I would mention that the main purposes of the massed advance of the queenside pawns are to restrict the enemy light-squared bishop and transform the b7-pawn into a target.

14... $\mathbb{B}ac8$

14...e5, as played in Pollak – Westermeier, Bad Pyrmont 1969, should be answered with the restrained 15. $\mathbb{W}d3$!N retaining the possibility of invading the d5-square at the best moment and keeping c4 defended. 15... $\mathbb{B}ac8$ 16.a3!± White defends b4 in order to be able to meet ... $\mathbb{W}xb6$ with $\mathbb{R}xb7$. Black has a chronic weakness on d5, so he can do little except sit and wait. The play could take a similar course as the main game.

14... $\mathbb{Q}c6$ allows the thematic 15. $\mathbb{Q}d5$ ±.

15.b5!

It is essential to establish pawn contact at once in order to defend the c4-pawn indirectly. Concretely, 15... $\mathbb{W}xc4$?! now loses material to 16. $\mathbb{R}xb7$, threatening $\mathbb{B}xa6$.

15... $\mathbb{W}b8$

We should consider what happens if Black captures the pawn:

15...axb5

This leaves White with a dangerous candidate for promotion on the a-file, while the central majority is not easy to put into motion because of the pressure of White's bishops.

16.cxb5

16. $\mathbb{Q}xb5$ also looks playable: 16... $\mathbb{R}xb5$ 17.cxb5 $\mathbb{W}a5$ 18.a4 d5 19. $\mathbb{Q}c3$ $\mathbb{W}a8$ 20. $\mathbb{Q}e1$ ± Followed by e2-e3, $\mathbb{Q}f1$ and a5-a6.

16... $\mathbb{W}b8$ 17. $\mathbb{Q}a3$!

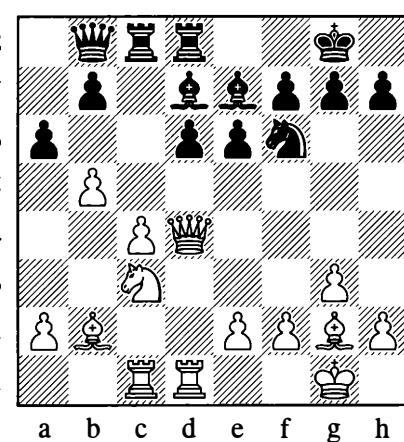
Pinning the d6-pawn.

17... $\mathbb{Q}e8$ 18. $\mathbb{Q}b4$ b6

Necessary in order to avoid piece congestion after $\mathbb{Q}a5$.

19.a4±

White is very active and will create a dangerous passed pawn. Black's main problem is that he cannot take advantage of the relative weakness of the c5-square, since ... $\mathbb{Q}d7$ loses a pawn.



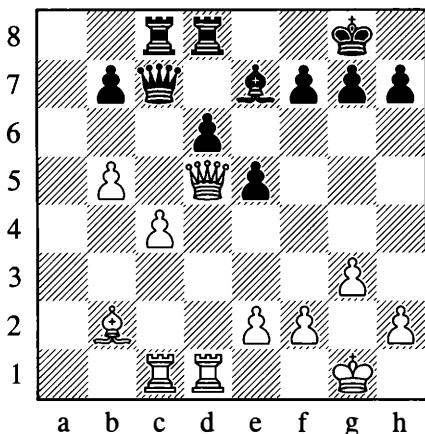
16.a4

Consolidating White's space advantage. He could also have offered a transposition to the line examined above with 16. $\mathbb{Q}a3$ $\mathbb{Q}e8$ 17. $\mathbb{Q}b4\pm$.

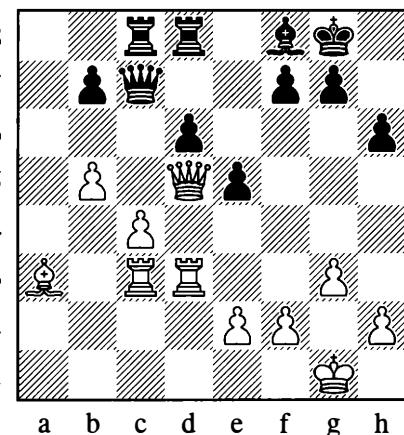
16...axb5 17.axb5 e5

Black clears some space in order to avoid being suffocated. This brings some relief, but in the long run the weakness of the d5-square will tell.

**18. $\mathbb{W}d3$ $\mathbb{Q}e6$ 19. $\mathbb{Q}d5$ $\mathbb{Q}xd5$ 20. $\mathbb{Q}xd5$ $\mathbb{Q}xd5$
21. $\mathbb{W}xd5$ $\mathbb{W}c7$**

**22. $\mathbb{Q}a3!$**

The start of a plan to activate all White's pieces; also, ... $\mathbb{W}c5$ is prevented.

22...h6 23. $\mathbb{R}c3$ $\mathbb{Q}f8$ 24. $\mathbb{R}dd3\pm$ 

White has completed his regrouping and is ready to start a positional kingside attack with g3-g4. Black is doomed to passivity, Romero – Campora, Elgoibar 2000.

An inspiring position to end the book!

Conclusion

The open lines of the symmetrical English examined in this chapter are no fun at all for Black. Given more space and a lead in development, White only needs some accuracy in order to secure an enduring advantage.

Variation Index

Chapter 2

1.c4 c5 2.g3 ♜c6 3.♗g2 g6 4.♗c3 ♗g7 5.♗f3

- A) 5...♝h6?! 17
- B) 5...a6 6.0–0 ♜b8 7.a3! 20
 - B1) 7...♝f6 20
 - B2) 7...b5 21

Chapter 3

1.c4 c5 2.g3 ♜c6 3.♗g2 g6 4.♗c3 ♗g7 5.♗f3 d6 6.0–0

- A) 6...a6 7.a3! ♜b8 8.♗b1 b5 9.cxb5 axb4 10.b4 cxb4 11.axb4 28
 - A1) 11...♝f6 29
 - A2) 11...e5 30
- B) 6...♝d7?! 31
- C) 6...♝h6 7.d4! cxd4 8.♗xh6 ♗xh6 9.♗xd4 34
 - C1) 9...♝xd4 34
 - C2) 9...♝d7 36
- D) 6...♝f6 7.a3 0–0 8.♗b1 a5 9.d3 ♗d7 10.♗d2 ♜e8 11.♗e1 ♜c7 12.♗c2 ♜b8 13.b4 axb4 14.axb4 ♜xb4 15.♗xb4 cxb4 16.♗xb4 b5 17.cxb5 ♜xb5 18.♗xb5 ♜xb5 19.♗xb5 ♗xb5 20.♗b3 38
 - D1) 20...♝d7 44
 - D2) 20...♝d7 21.♗c1 47
 - D21) 21...e6 47
 - D22) 21...♝a4 48

Chapter 4

1.c4 c5 2.g3 ♜c6 3.♗g2 g6 4.♗c3 ♗g7 5.♗f3 e5 6.0–0

- A) 6...d6 7.a3 52
 - A1) 7...♝ge7 8.b4 53
 - A11) 8...cxb4 9.axb4 ♜xb4 54
 - A12) 8...e4 55
 - A13) 8...0–0 9.♗b1 57
 - A131) 9...♜b8 58
 - A132) 9...f5 61
 - A2) 7...a5 65
- B) 6...♝ge7 7.a3 0–0 8.♗b1 a5 9.♗e1! d6 10.♗c2 ♗e6 11.♗e3 69
 - B1) 11...♜b8 70
 - B2) 11...f5 12.d3 h6 13.♗ed5 ♜b8 14.♗d2 73
 - B21) 14...♝f7 74
 - B22) 14...♝h7 76

Chapter 5

1.c4 c5 2.g3 ♕c6 3.♗g2 g6 4.♗c3 ♗g7 5.♗f3 e6 6.d3 ♔ge7 7.♗g5

- A) 7...b6N 83
- B) 7...d5 83
- C) 7...0-0 85
- D) 7...h6 8.♗d2 0-0 9.a3 b6 10.♗b1 92
 - D1) 10...♗b7 93
 - D2) 10...a5 95
 - D3) 10...d5 11.♗c1 ♖h7 12.b4 dxc4 13.dxc4 cxb4 14.axb4 ♗b7 15.0-0 97
 - D31) 15...♗c8 98
 - D32) 15...♗c8 99

Chapter 6

1.c4 c5 2.g3 ♕c6 3.♗g2 g6 4.♗c3 ♗g7 5.♗f3 ♔f6 6.d4

- A) 6...0-0 7.dxc5 ♖a5 8.0-0 ♖xc5 9.b3 103
 - A1) 9...♗d8 103
 - A2) 9...d6 105
- B) 6...cxd4 7.♗xd4 0-0 8.0-0 106
 - B1) 8...d6?! 9.♗xc6 bxc6 10.♗xc6 106
 - B11) 10...♗h3 106
 - B12) 10...♗b8 107
 - B2) 8...♖a5 9.♗b3! 109
 - B21) 9...♖h5 110
 - B22) 9...♖b4 111
 - B3) 8...♖b6 9.♗c2 d6 10.b3 114
 - B31) 10...♖a5 114
 - B32) 10...♗e6 115
 - B4) 8...♗g4 9.e3 116
 - B41) 9...♗ge5 10.b3 d6 11.h3 ♗xd4 12.exd4 ♗c6 13.♗e3 117
 - B411) 13...e5 118
 - B412) 13...♗d7 119
 - B42) 9...d6 120

Chapter 7

1.c4 c5 2.g3 ♕c6 3.♗g2 g6 4.♗c3 ♗g7 5.♗f3 ♔f6 6.d4 cxd4 7.♗xd4 0-0 8.0-0 9.♖xd4

- d6 10.♗d3**
- A) 10...♗d7 11.b3 ♕c5 12.♖e3?! ♗d7 13.♗d2 ♗c6 14.♗ac1 125
 - A1) 14...a5 126
 - A2) 14...a6 128
 - B) 10...♖a5 129
 - C) 10...♗e6 130
 - D) 10...♗f5 11.e4 ♗e6 12.b3 130
 - D1) 12...a6 131

- D2) 12... $\mathbb{W}a5$ 13. $\mathbb{Q}d2!$ $\mathbb{W}h5$ 14.f3 133
- D21) 14... $\mathbb{E}ac8$ 134
- D22) 14... $\mathbb{Q}h3$ 134
- E) 10...a6 11. $\mathbb{Q}e3!$ 135
 - E1) 11... $\mathbb{W}a5$ 136
 - E2) 11... $\mathbb{Q}f5$ 12. $\mathbb{W}d2$ $\mathbb{W}d7$ 13. $\mathbb{E}fd1$ 138
 - E21) 13... $\mathbb{Q}h3$ 14. $\mathbb{Q}h1$ 138
 - E211) 14... $\mathbb{E}ac8$ 138
 - E212) 14... $\mathbb{E}ab8$ 140
 - E22) 13... $\mathbb{E}ac8$ 140
 - E23) 13... $\mathbb{E}fd8$ 142
- E3) 11... $\mathbb{Q}g4$ 12. $\mathbb{Q}d4$ $\mathbb{Q}e5$ 13. $\mathbb{W}e4!N$ $\mathbb{Q}f5$ 14. $\mathbb{W}f4$ $\mathbb{E}c8$ 15.b3 b5 16.cxb5 144
 - E31) 16... $\mathbb{Q}d3$ 145
 - E32) 16...axb5 146

Chapter 8

- 1.c4 c5 2.g3 $\mathbb{Q}f6$ 3. $\mathbb{Q}g2$ $\mathbb{Q}c6$ 4. $\mathbb{Q}f3$ d5 5.cxd5 $\mathbb{Q}xd5$ 6. $\mathbb{Q}c3$**
- A) 6... $\mathbb{Q}b6?!$ 151
 - B) 6... $\mathbb{Q}f6?!$ 152
 - C) 6... $\mathbb{Q}xc3?!$ 153
 - D) 6...e6 7. $\mathbb{W}a4$ 154
 - D1) 7... $\mathbb{Q}d6$ 155
 - D2) 7... $\mathbb{Q}b6$ 155
 - D3) 7... $\mathbb{Q}d7$ 157
 - E) 6... $\mathbb{Q}c7$ 7.0–0 g6 8. $\mathbb{Q}a4!$ 158
 - E1) 8... $\mathbb{W}d6?!$ 158
 - E2) 8...b6?!
 - E3) 8...e5 160
 - E4) 8... $\mathbb{Q}e6$ 162

Chapter 9

- 1.c4 c5 2.g3 $\mathbb{Q}f6$ 3. $\mathbb{Q}g2$ $\mathbb{Q}c6$ 4. $\mathbb{Q}f3$ d5 5.cxd5 $\mathbb{Q}xd5$ 6. $\mathbb{Q}c3$ $\mathbb{Q}c7$ 7.0–0 e5 8.a3**
- A) 8... $\mathbb{Q}e7$ 9.b4 166
 - A1) 9...cxb4 167
 - A2) 9...f6 170
 - A3) 9...0–0 171
 - B) 8... $\mathbb{Q}e6$ 9.b4 173
 - B1) 9...cxb4N 173
 - B2) 9... $\mathbb{Q}e7$ 173
 - B3) 9...f6 174
 - C) 8...a5 175
 - D) 8... $\mathbb{Q}d6$ 176
 - E) 8...f6 9.e3! 177
 - E1) 9... $\mathbb{Q}e6$ 178

- E2) 9... $\mathbb{Q}g4$ 10.h3 179
 - E21) 10... $\mathbb{Q}h5$ 179
 - E22) 10... $\mathbb{Q}e6$ 180
- E3) 9... $\mathbb{Q}e7$ 10.d4 cxd4 11.exd4 exd4 12. $\mathbb{Q}e2$ 181
 - E31) 12...d3 182
 - E32) 12... $\mathbb{Q}e6$ 13.b4 d3 14. $\mathbb{Q}f4$ $\mathbb{Q}xf4$ 15. $\mathbb{Q}xf4$ 183
 - E321) 15... $\mathbb{Q}g4$ 183
 - E322) 15...0-0 185
- F) 8... $\mathbb{Q}d7$ 185
- G) 8... $\mathbb{Q}d7$ 9. $\mathbb{Q}b1$ f6 10.e3!N 186
 - G1) 10... $\mathbb{Q}e6$ 187
 - G2) 10... $\mathbb{Q}e7$ 187
- H) 8... $\mathbb{Q}b8$ 9. $\mathbb{Q}b1$ 188
 - H1) 9... $\mathbb{Q}e7$ 189
 - H2) 9...f6 10.d3! $\mathbb{Q}e7$ 11. $\mathbb{Q}e3$ 190
 - H21) 11...0-0 191
 - H22) 11... $\mathbb{Q}d7$ 193

Chapter 10

- 1.c4 c5 2.g3 $\mathbb{Q}f6$ 3. $\mathbb{Q}g2$ $\mathbb{Q}c6$ 4. $\mathbb{Q}f3$ d5 5.cxd5 $\mathbb{Q}xd5$ 6. $\mathbb{Q}c3$ g6 7.0-0 $\mathbb{Q}g7$ 8. $\mathbb{Q}xd5$ $\mathbb{Q}xd5$ 9.d3 0-0 10. $\mathbb{Q}e3$!
- A) 10... $\mathbb{Q}d6$ 11. $\mathbb{Q}c1$ $\mathbb{Q}d4$ 12. $\mathbb{Q}xd4$ cxd4 13. $\mathbb{Q}d2$ 197
 - A1) 13... $\mathbb{Q}b6$ 199
 - A2) 13... $\mathbb{Q}e6$ 199
 - A3) 13... $\mathbb{Q}g4$ 200
 - B) 10... $\mathbb{Q}d7$ 11. $\mathbb{Q}d4$ $\mathbb{Q}d6$ 12. $\mathbb{Q}xc6$ $\mathbb{Q}xc6$ 13. $\mathbb{Q}xc6$ $\mathbb{Q}xc6$ 14. $\mathbb{Q}c1$ $\mathbb{Q}e6$ 15. $\mathbb{Q}xc5$ $\mathbb{Q}xa2$ 16. $\mathbb{Q}b5$! 201
 - B1) 16...a6 202
 - B2) 16...b6 204
 - B3) 16... $\mathbb{Q}a6$ 205
 - C) 10... $\mathbb{Q}xb2$ 11. $\mathbb{Q}b1$ $\mathbb{Q}f6$ 12. $\mathbb{Q}a4$ 207
 - C1) 12... $\mathbb{Q}b4$ 208
 - C2) 12... $\mathbb{Q}e6$ 210
 - C3) 12... $\mathbb{Q}d6$ 211
 - C4) 12... $\mathbb{Q}d7$?! 212

Chapter 12

- 1.c4 c5 2.g3 $\mathbb{Q}f6$ 3. $\mathbb{Q}g2$ e6 4. $\mathbb{Q}f3$ b6 5.d4 $\mathbb{Q}b7$ 6.d5! exd5 7. $\mathbb{Q}h4$!
- A) 7... $\mathbb{Q}c8$ 221
 - B) 7...b5?! 222
 - C) 7...g6 223

Chapter 13

1.c4 c5 2.g3 ♜f6 3.♗g2 e6 4.♗f3 a6 5.♗c3 b6 6.d4 cxd4 7.♗xd4 ♕a7 8.0-0

- A) 8...♝b7 230
- B) 8...♝e7 233

Chapter 14

1.c4 c5 2.g3 ♜f6 3.♗g2 e6 4.♗f3 ♜e7 5.0-0 0-0 6.d4 d5 7.dxc5

- A) 7...♝a6 239
- B) 7...♝xc5 8.a3 241

- B1) 8...a5 9.♗c3 ♜c6 10.cxd5 exd5 11.♗g5 241
 - B11) 11...♝e6 241
 - B12) 11...d4 244
- B2) 8...♝c6 9.b4 246
 - B21) 9...♝e7 246
 - B22) 9...♝b6 249
- B3) 8...dxc4 9.♘c2 ♜c6 10.♘xc4 250
 - B31) 10...♝e7?! 250
 - B32) 10...♝b6 252
 - B33) 10...♞d5 255
 - B34) 10...♝e7 257

Chapter 15

1.c4 c5 2.g3 ♜f6 3.♗g2 e6 4.♗f3 ♜e7 5.0-0 0-0 6.d4 cxd4 7.♗xd4

- A) 7...d5 260
- B) 7...♝c6 263
- C) 7...a6 8.♗c3 ♘c7 9.b3 ♜c6 10.♝b2 d6 11.♕c1 266
 - C1) 11...♝e5 267
 - C2) 11...♝xd4 268



Grandmaster Repertoire 5

The English Opening VOLUME THREE

by Mihail Marin

Mihail Marin completes his opening repertoire for White with 1.c4, the English Opening, by covering 1.c4 c5. The theory is state-of-the-art with many novelties suggested, but most useful of all are Marin's lucid explanations of how to play the resulting positions.

- *A repertoire for White with 1.c4 c5*
- *Written by an award-winning author*
- *A repertoire to last a lifetime*

Mihail Marin is a grandmaster from Romania. His previous books for Quality Chess have established him as one of the world's finest chess authors. Marin's recent tournament successes, using this repertoire, increased his rating to a personal best of 2616.

Reviews of the first volume:

"Perhaps the biggest compliment I can offer is that this is the only book that I will now be taking with me to my tournaments and team matches!"

GM Tony Kosten, *author of The Dynamic English*

"A typically lucid and thorough exposition from perhaps the most insightful and reliable chess author writing today."

GM Jonathan Rowson, *New in Chess*

€24.99

\$34.95

ISBN 978-1-906552-59-6



5 3 4 9 5



QUALITY CHESS

www.qualitychess.co.uk

9 781906 552596