

GAMBIT

Mastering the Chess Openings

Volume 3



Flank Openings, Practical Play
and General Topics

John Watson

Mastering the Chess Openings

Volume 3

John Watson

G A M B I T

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Symbols

+	check
++	double check
#	checkmate
!!	brilliant move
!	good move
!?	interesting move
?!?	dubious move
?	bad move
??	blunder
Ch	championship
1-0	the game ends in a win for White
½-½	the game ends in a draw
0-1	the game ends in a win for Black
(D)	see next diagram

Dedication

uxorculae

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Thanks to Graham Burgess for his patience, good advice, and brilliant editing.
Special thanks to Tony Kosten of ChessPublishing.com for sending me material; also, his site was the single most important resource for this book.

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General Introduction

This is the third volume of a series which I originally intended to limit to two. Volume 1 examined the move 1 e4 and openings that derive from it. Volume 2 moved on to 1 d4 openings. Predictably, many readers and players were disappointed at the lack of coverage of the move 1 c4, otherwise known as the English Opening. 1 c4 is not only the logical partner to 1 e4 and 1 d4, but in itself a wonderful grounds for the study of positional ideas that encompass the entire range of chess practice. It can be very useful as a complement to openings arising from 1 d4 and 1 $\mathbb{Q}f3$, since we find many overlapping themes; furthermore, transpositions from and to the English Opening abound after those moves. Given all these considerations, this new volume seemed a good idea. Fortunately, I have an extensive history of writing about 1 c4, beginning with a set of four volumes in 1980 and continuing intermittently through my recent English Opening column for ChessPublishing.com.

As in previous volumes, I shall work from the ground up, starting with very elementary choices on the first couple of moves, including ones that you will seldom or perhaps never see, in order to explain the elementary properties of the English Opening. For a primer or refresher on the first principles of opening play in general, see Chapter 1 of Volume 1. The next two chapters of that volume may also be useful, since they identify the ideas and themes most often referred to in the book as a whole. This investigation of fundamentals is hardly the whole story, however. By the time that I get deeply into a given chapter, the complexity of my presentation increases and there will be material that should be sophisticated enough to appeal to players of all levels. Even in those sections, I have tried to talk about variations and typical positions on a very broad and basic level before plunging into details.

Throughout the series I have tried to emphasize the variations which contain universal ideas and structures. Nevertheless, given the fact that fewer games are played with 1 c4 than 1 e4 or 1 d4, I have had the luxury of covering nearly all of its variations, as well as contributing much more up-to-date material and original analysis than in the previous two volumes. I hope that the latter proves useful on a practical level, as well as providing assistance with building a repertoire. Fortunately, although one should never pretend that a certain amount of memorization isn't essential to master any opening, the material in this book lends itself to a broader conceptual approach, and I have increased the role of verbal explanation accordingly. Taken as a whole, English Opening variations depend less upon tactical details than their king's and queen's pawn counterparts.

I beg the reader's pardon for the dull repetition of assessments such as 'with equality', 'Black stands slightly better', and so forth. These inexact and ambiguous phrases are sadly necessary when presenting opening material with its necessarily truncated lines. There is nothing worse than consistently leaving the reader hanging with *no* conclusion, and yet it would only confuse matters to use a set of invented phrases to express finer distinctions. My compromise has been to provide verbal and/or analytical justifications whenever a position is significant enough to merit it, or when the assessment might be puzzling on the face of it. Regardless, you will have to put some effort into understanding the assessments and, hopefully, disagree with the inevitable set of mistaken ones. In that regard, almost all complex unattributed notes are my own. Incidentally, one convenient way to study this book is to find the main games in a large database. Then you can follow them in ChessBase (or a similar program) as you read.

Having come this far, there's no getting around a Volume 4. Some of it will be devoted to a selection of the remaining chess openings; for example, the Réti Opening (1 $\mathbb{Q}f3$), various systems involving fianchettoes and f-pawn moves, as well as some gambits and so-called 'irregular openings'. A large portion of Volume 4, however, will be given to special topics such as choosing

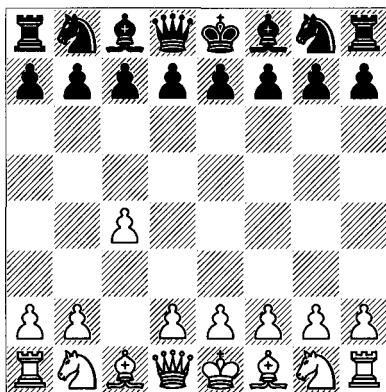
openings, preparing openings, how to study openings, and broader discussions of practical issues facing the everyday player.

My objective with this work is to provide instruction and analysis ranging from that appropriate for a low-rated developing player with, say, one or two years' experience, to a long-time player who is familiar with a good deal of theory. That is an ambitious goal, to be sure, and whether this volume fulfils it is a matter I leave for you to judge.

1 Introduction to the English Opening

1 c4 (*D*) is called the English Opening.

B



I first wrote about this opening three decades ago. Even then, it took me some 800 pages and four volumes to cover the relevant material, often superficially. Since then, the theory and practice of the English has expanded to such a degree that previously minor lines provide material for lengthy articles, and major ones are almost unmanageable except on a conceptual basis. Professionals follow some theory up to and beyond the 20th move, just as in other openings. In addition, entirely new lines crop up on a regular basis.

Fortunately, to a much greater extent than with 1 e4 or 1 d4, games in the English Opening tend to follow smoother contours as they develop, in that structures and strategies persist rather than dissolving into unstable imbalances or tactical melees. While there are many more independent subvariations to cover because the play is so fluid, it takes fewer games to become familiar with their properties.

Let's start with the move 1 c4 and ask what White wants. His first goal is to control d5, obviously, and in particular, to discourage ...d5. In the most general terms, we can say that the move d4 is White's next objective. In other words, given a free move, White would ordinarily play 2 d4; indeed, Black's main replies

1...e5 and 1...c5 are designed to prevent that. This is analogous to the way in which, when White plays 1 e4, he is aiming for d4. Similarly, when he begins with 1 d4, he has in mind playing e4.

Why, then, not play 1 d4 in the first place? To begin with, White might be disinclined to allow 1 d4 d5; by playing 1 c4, he discourages 1...d5?! 2 cxd5, which deprives Black of a centre pawn and gains a tempo after 2... $\mathbb{Q}xd5$ 3 $\mathbb{Q}c3$. Secondly, White may not want to expose himself to some of the annoyances that an early d4 brings; for example, a pin by 1 d4 $\mathbb{Q}f6$ 2 c4 e6 3 $\mathbb{Q}c3$ $\mathbb{Q}b4$ or a pawn confrontation by 1 d4 $\mathbb{Q}f6$ 2 c4 c5. In contrast, after 1 c4 $\mathbb{Q}f6$, White can abstain from that kind of confrontation by 2 $\mathbb{Q}c3$ e6 3 e4 or 3 $\mathbb{Q}f3$ (see Chapter 11). Likewise, after 1 d4 $\mathbb{Q}f6$ 2 c4 g6 3 $\mathbb{Q}c3$ $\mathbb{Q}g7$ 4 e4, White has a broad centre to defend and Black's counterplay is usually directed against the d4-pawn (by ...e5 or ...c5). By playing the English Opening, White has the opportunity to choose 1 c4 $\mathbb{Q}f6$ 2 $\mathbb{Q}c3$ g6 3 g3 $\mathbb{Q}g7$ 4 $\mathbb{Q}g2$ and then 5 e4 or 5 $\mathbb{Q}f3$, in both cases foregoing an early d4 and leaving his pawns less subject to direct attack (see Chapter 12). Naturally, this comes without the advantages of controlling d4 and e5 that 1 d4 brings.

Let's talk about Black's first move and some move-order issues associated with it. The primary and overwhelmingly-played replies to 1 c4 are 1...e5, 1...c5 and 1... $\mathbb{Q}f6$, as examined in the body of this book. I won't be discussing other replies except as they relate to remaining flank openings in Volume 4 (including ...b6 systems, ...g6 systems and ...f5 systems). Most importantly for the practical player, Black can make his first move with the intent of transposing into other openings entirely. For example, he might respond to 1 c4 with 1...e6, intending to play 2 d4 d5 with a Queen's Gambit Declined. That order may suit White, however, who by using it has sidestepped a number of Queen's Gambit options such as (after 1 d4 d5 2

c4) 2...dxc4 (Queen's Gambit Accepted), 2...c6 with a Slav Defence, or 2... $\mathbb{Q}c6$ with a Chigorin Defence. White can also play 1 c4 e6 2 $\mathbb{Q}f3$, and upon 2...d5, he has entered a Réti Opening without having to face an early ... $\mathbb{Q}g4$ or ... $\mathbb{Q}f5$. The Réti is investigated in Volume 4.

Also with a mind toward transpositions, Black might answer 1 c4 with 1...c6, aiming for the Slav Defence that would follow 2 d4 d5. That may well be satisfactory to White, or he can again choose 2 $\mathbb{Q}f3$, meeting 2...d5 with 3 g3 or 3 b3, entering what is called a Réti Slav variation. These lines appear in detail in Volume 4. Another important idea after 1 c4 c6 is 2 e4. Formally speaking, that is a Caro-Kann Defence (beginning with 1 e4 c6 2 c4), and can be found in the books under that move-order. It can transpose, after 2...d5, to the Panov Attack following 3 exd5 cxd5 4 d4 (see Volume 1), or to a set of less frequently-played continuations; for example, 3 cxd5 cxd5 4 exd5 $\mathbb{Q}f6$ 5 $\mathbb{Q}a4+$, a line that will be discussed in the next volume in the context of hybrid systems (along with 2 e4 e5). Naturally there are other transpositional ideas, such as those stemming from 1...d6, when 2 d4 $\mathbb{Q}f6$ 3 $\mathbb{Q}c3$ g6 is a King's Indian, while 2 $\mathbb{Q}c3$ e5 is seen in Chapter 3 via 1 c4 e5 2 $\mathbb{Q}c3$ d6.

I was surprised to see that contemporary literature on 1 c4 assigns such different weights to Black's main replies. Each of the three books that I would describe as primarily white repertoire books allots far more space to the Reversed Sicilian variations (1 c4 e5) than to the Symmetrical variations (1 c4 c5), ranging from 50% more pages to twice as many. This seemed odd to me, since 1 c4 c5 variations are played as often as 1 c4 e5, until I realized how many more variations a player is responsible for when playing either the white or black side of 1...e5. In addition, looking over the range of the English Opening and trying to decide upon a distribution of material, I found that there was a more coherent structure of positional types arising from 1...e5, which is important in an instructional tome. As described in the next chapter, study of the English Opening with 1 c4 e5 serves double duty because of the insights that it gives into the Sicilian Defence, which begins 1 e4 c5; the latter, of course, is Black's most popular response to 1 e4. Apart from

gaining a greater understanding of the characteristic structures common to both openings, we can learn a great deal about the advantages of having an extra move in chess; after all, White is playing the Sicilian Defence with an additional tempo. What may prove surprising to some is that there are various *disadvantages* of having an extra move. All of the chapters in the 1...e5 section deal with this issue, Chapter 2 in the most fundamental manner possible.

For all that, the incredibly rich history of the superficially less dynamic 1 c4 c5 variations demands close scrutiny. This is especially so because the extremely common move 1 $\mathbb{Q}f3$ precludes 1...e5 and very often leads to a Symmetrical English; for example, after 1 $\mathbb{Q}f3$ c5 2 c4 or 1 $\mathbb{Q}f3$ $\mathbb{Q}f6$ 2 c4 c5. Two recent non-repertoire books which cover only a limited selection of English Opening variations, chose to present more lines with 1 c4 c5 than with 1 c4 e5, probably because they were written with no overt agenda for either colour. As it turns out, the main lines after 1 c4 c5 are quite as exciting as those following 1 c4 e5.

I have given less expansive coverage to the group of variations beginning with 1 c4 $\mathbb{Q}f6$. The practical and theoretical material produced by these is only a fraction of that generated by 1...e5 and 1...c5, in part because the move 1... $\mathbb{Q}f6$ so frequently transposes to the Symmetrical or Reversed Sicilian lines following an early ...c5 or ...e5. One policy of the first three volumes of this series has been to concentrate upon 'important' openings, and in particular those whose structures and tactical ideas overlap as much as possible with other openings. Of the 1... $\mathbb{Q}f6$ lines, I decided that variations related to ...e6 systems and ...g6 systems best fit the bill, and have chosen to investigate a number of those.

I should warn the reader from the outset that in the English Opening, transpositions and questions of move-order abound, so much so that they will sometimes prove annoying to all but the most sophisticated of players. Working out and drawing attention to these myriad issues is also no fun for the author. But I would be remiss to ignore transpositions that have a significant practical effect. Understanding move-orders means no less than getting the position you want, instead of one you don't like or know

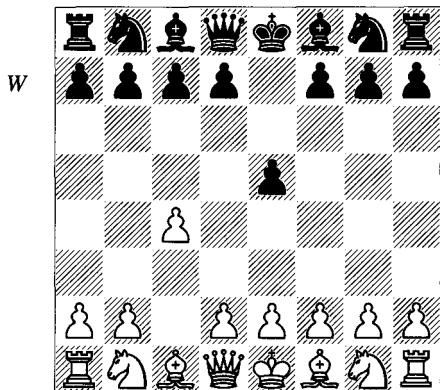
nothing about. What is the point of studying and understanding openings if you can't get them on the board in the real world of play? Furthermore, knowing how to channel the game in the right direction can mean a tremendous advantage over your opponent in terms of time on the clock and energy expended. So, while you don't want to turn your study into drudgery, you should absorb what you can of these move-order issues in a first reading, and then use this book as a

reference when you find the need to sort things out later – for example, after playing a game.

Finally I should say that in working through this volume, I found myself marvelling at the extent to which the English Opening embraces the many types of positions and structures that permeate chess practice in general. The term 'cross-pollination', which I describe in Volume 1, applies to the English Opening at least as much as to any other.

2 Reversing the Sicilian: 2nd Moves

Like other first moves, 1 c4 can evoke a symmetrical response, in this case 1...c5, or a variety of unbalancing replies that range from the highly committal to the very flexible. The unwavering counter to 1 c4 is 1...e5 (*D*), establishing a direct and classical presence in the centre.



Not surprisingly, 1...e5 is the first move that occurs to players of little experience. But it turns out that masters also trust this naïve intuition and answer 1 c4 with 1...e5 as much as with any other move. Black's e-pawn advance has the same good points that 1 e4 does, that is, it fights for control of the centre while freeing his king's bishop and queen for development. By playing 1...e5, Black sets up a reversed Sicilian Defence (1 e4 c5), which has some peculiar implications. In the most basic sense, White's idea with 1 c4 is to control the central square d5 without letting his central pawns become targets. If you think about it, the Sicilian Defence is effective precisely because White has committed to 1 e4, i.e., White has presented Black with a target of attack, and he has foregone the chance to use his e-pawn in defence of d4. Given the enormous popularity of the Sicilian Defence (1 e4 c5), and in particular its reputation as a defence that creates Black's best winning chances, it may surprise you that so many top competitors (including most World

Champions) have used 1 c4 e5 as Black, often exclusively. After all, any player of 1 e4 knows how difficult it is to generate chances in the Open Sicilian (i.e., those lines consisting of the moves 1 e4 c5 2 ♜f3 followed by 3 d4 cxd4 4 ♜xd4), without risking serious positional inferiority. And they also know that when White avoids the Open Sicilian, even by using logical developing moves, Black still gets an opportunity to exert pressure upon White's position and create winning chances. He might do so by means of central control (for example, by playing ...♜c6, ...g6 and ...♝g7) combined with either queenside or central expansion. If there were a 'safe and solid' way to deny dynamic play to Black in the Sicilian, it would have changed the course of chess history.

So you might ask (and many players have done so) why anyone would subject themselves to playing against the Sicilian Defence with a tempo less? It turns out that not only does 1 c4 e5 lead to a vast network of opening variations and diverse structures, it also provides a case study of the issues associated with reversed openings. This is a complicated subject only touched upon in the two previous volumes. If you understand the subtleties of reversed positions, you will better appreciate the inherent imbalances in chess, and understand why Black can have so many positive winning chances in a game where the odds seem to be stacked against him. Naturally I've looked at this issue in other parts of the book, but it will be of prime importance throughout the first few chapters. As it happens, many players intending to play an English Opening will use the move 1 ♜f3, primarily to avoid lines with 1 c4 e5, and then follow with 2 c4.

There are several basic reasons why Black can play the 'White' side of an opening a tempo down. The most important one has to do with the concept of 'information'. White gets an extra move, to be sure, but Black has a look at that move and can thus adjust his strategy with the

benefit of his extra information. In this sense, almost all of one's moves in chess come with the disadvantage of tipping one's hand. Naturally, the positive value of a move usually outweighs this drawback, but the two factors can combine in unpredictable ways.

Having an extra move in a reversed position can also put White in the odd situation that he has little positive to do. It turns out that many respectable openings for Black are essentially reactive, such that Black is waiting for White to make a committal move, perhaps an ambitious one, in order to get positive counterchances. When White takes on the reversed position, it is as though he is waiting for Black to do something definite before he can respond with real effect. It may come as a surprise how often the tempo is of only moderate value to White.

Finally, White sometimes feels that he should be playing for a win by virtue of moving first. But in a good number of chess openings, the best move for Black in a given position may lead to a dull equality without serious chances for either side. This might be acceptable for Black, but is not what White is looking for. Even defences generally thought of as dynamic when played as Black are sometimes revealed to be without bite when White tries to employ them with an extra move.

Naturally, all of these advantages for Black in a reversed opening don't always compensate for the stark reality that White has an extra move. A tempo is, after all, a gain of time, and most practitioners of the English Opening enjoy taking up the challenge that 1...e5 implies. A skilful handler of the white pieces will often gain a comfortable advantage, simply because Black is not equipped to protect his centre at the same time as he wards off attacks in other sectors. Alternatively, White will sometimes achieve a typical Sicilian Defence advantage (for example, an advanced queenside attack) which might otherwise be impossible to achieve in the Sicilian itself.

The variations arising from 1 c4 e5 are also more instructive than any others in the English Opening. Playing 1 c4 e5 is as basic to developing chess skills as playing 1 e4 e5. In both cases, study and practice will increase your fluency in classical chess principles while dramatically improving your game.

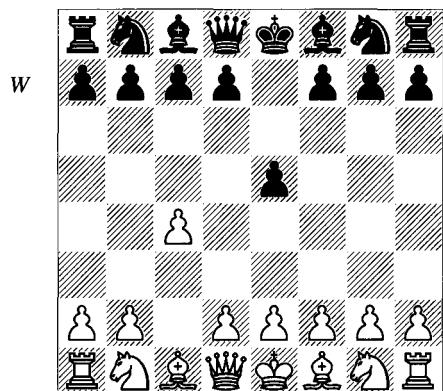
Working From the Ground Up

White's most popular moves after 1 c4 e5 are 2 ♜c3 and 2 g3. Indeed, they account for a staggering 98% of all master games stemming from 1 c4 e5. In fact, if you factor in transpositions, variations I assign to 2 ♜c3 make up 94% of the total. In this chapter we look at why that is, and whether it should be so.

Of course, one might say the same thing about other initial opening moves. For example, after 1 d4 d5, White pretty much sticks to 2 c4 or 2 ♜f3. And 2 ♜f3 really dominates play after 1 e4 e5. Still, 1 c4 e5 looks much more flexible, and superficially, at least six other moves seem reasonable, most of which are used in the reverse Sicilian position (following 1 e4 e5). Why then is 2 ♜c3 so overwhelmingly chosen and why is it practically automatic to play either 2 ♜c3 or 2 g3?

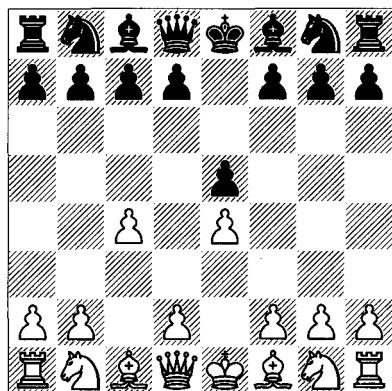
The answer to this question can only be found by looking at other logical and consistent second moves for White. I'm going to do that in much more detail than standard books do because White's second-move alternatives reveal much about what's going on in the Reversed Sicilian variations, particularly in terms of pawn-structures and associated strategies. Furthermore, we find that these alternatives have not been fully explored, so they may have a bit more practical value than has generally been thought. You will see that a knowledge of other openings is very useful in understanding these lines.

1 c4 e5 (D)

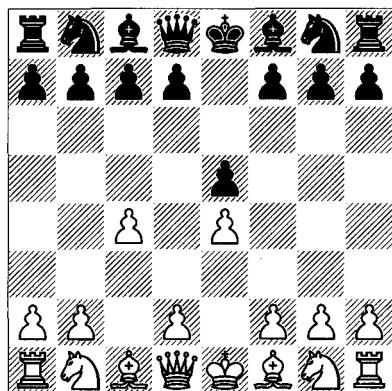


From this fundamental position, I shall look at the moves 2 d3 and 2 $\mathbb{Q}f3$ in their own separate sections. Before doing so, I think that we can learn a lot by considering these rarely-played alternatives:

a) 2 e4?! (*D*) may not be an out-and-out mistake, but it creates an outpost for Black on d4, one that is easily occupied. Unless White can get d4 in, his bishop on f1 will be bad and his development will be cramped.



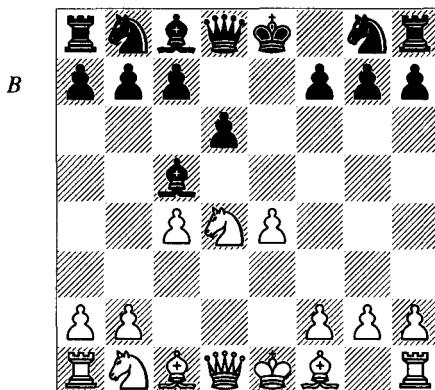
B



The most natural move is 2... $\mathbb{Q}c6$, and if 3 $\mathbb{Q}f3$ (in order to enforce d4), then 3... $\mathbb{Q}f6$ 4 $\mathbb{Q}c3$ is a respectable line of the English Four Knights (Chapter 5) that goes 1 c4 e5 2 $\mathbb{Q}c3$ $\mathbb{Q}f6$ 3 $\mathbb{Q}f3$ $\mathbb{Q}c6$ 4 e4!?. We shall see something about that position in Chapter 5. One important tactical theme in that case is that 4... $\mathbb{Q}c5$ can be met by 5 $\mathbb{Q}xe5!$, with the idea 5... $\mathbb{Q}xe5$ 6 d4, forking two pieces and breaking Black's stranglehold on the centre. Not surprisingly, that results in a very unclear position. In the line we are currently considering, after 1 c4 e5 2 e4 $\mathbb{Q}c6$ 3 $\mathbb{Q}f3$, Black needn't bother with 3... $\mathbb{Q}f6$, because he can clamp down further on d4 by 3... $\mathbb{Q}c5!$, and if 4 $\mathbb{Q}c3$, 4...d6 prevents $\mathbb{Q}xe5$ and has 5... $\mathbb{Q}f6$ or 5...f5 in mind.

Still better, Black can play 2... $\mathbb{Q}c5!$ right away, to keep open the idea of ...c6, which would repel a knight from d5. Then 3 $\mathbb{Q}f3$ can be answered by 3...d6, when a natural continuation is 4 d4?! exd4 5 $\mathbb{Q}xd4$ (*D*).

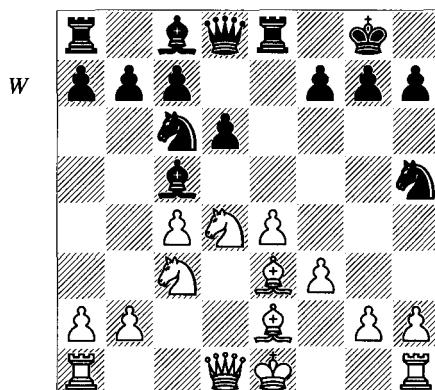
White has gained some space but is slightly behind in development (it's Black's move), and his dark squares are vulnerable to attack. For example, Black has 5... $\mathbb{Q}f6!$? (5... $\mathbb{Q}f6$ 6 $\mathbb{Q}c3$ transposes to the next paragraph) 6 $\mathbb{Q}f3$ (after 6



B

6... $\mathbb{Q}f6$!?) 7 $\mathbb{Q}c3$ $\mathbb{Q}f6$ 8 $\mathbb{Q}h4$ $\mathbb{Q}g4$ 9 $\mathbb{Q}xg4$ 10 $\mathbb{Q}d1$ $\mathbb{Q}c6$ 11 f3 $\mathbb{Q}ge5$ with the better development.

To avoid trouble with ... $\mathbb{Q}f6$, White can play 4 $\mathbb{Q}c3$ $\mathbb{Q}f6$ and now 5 d4 exd4 6 $\mathbb{Q}xd4$. Then a natural sequence is 6...0-0 7 $\mathbb{Q}e2$ $\mathbb{Q}e8$ 8 f3 $\mathbb{Q}c6$ 9 $\mathbb{Q}e3$, which looks exactly like a King's Indian Defence, except that Black's bishop is on c5, where it went in one move, instead of g7! A standard idea from that opening is also good here: the move 9... $\mathbb{Q}h5!$ (*D*) intends ... $\mathbb{Q}f4$ with ... $\mathbb{Q}g5$, and in some cases ...f5.



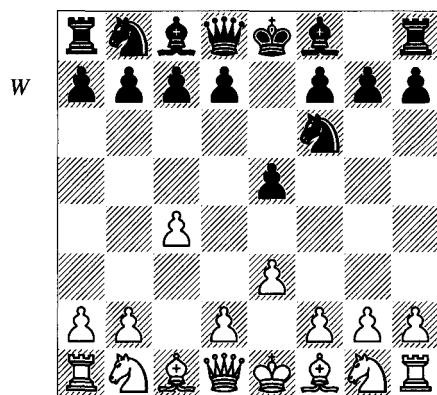
W

A beautiful variation is 10 g3 $\mathbb{Q}f4!!$; for example, 11 $\mathbb{Q}xc6$ $\mathbb{Q}g2+!$ 11... $\mathbb{Q}xd4$ 12 $\mathbb{Q}xd4$ $\mathbb{Q}h4+$ 13 $\mathbb{Q}f1?$ (13 $\mathbb{Q}d2$ $\mathbb{Q}xd4$ favours Black) 13... $\mathbb{Q}h3+$ 14 $\mathbb{Q}g1$ $\mathbb{Q}e6$ 15 f5 $\mathbb{Q}xf5!$ and so forth. And 10 $\mathbb{Q}xc6$ can be met by 10... $\mathbb{Q}h4+$ 11 g3? $\mathbb{Q}xg3$, etc.

In conclusion, it's not as though 2 e4 loses by force, but there's no effective way for White to

contest the outpost on d4 without falling dangerously behind in development. That is probably obvious to most readers; nevertheless, the details are instructive.

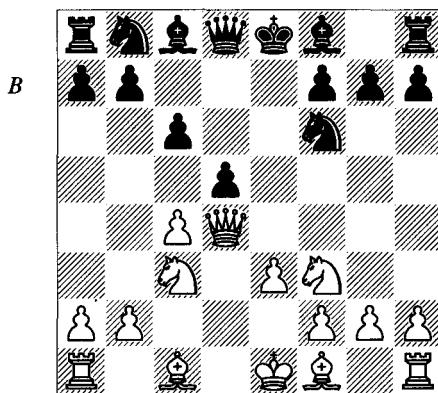
b) 2 e3 is an acceptable move, imitating the Sicilian Defence with 1 e4 c5 2 $\mathbb{Q}f3$ e6, but it commits White to a particular central pawn-formation early on, thus giving Black useful information. Black can continue, for example, 2... $\mathbb{Q}f6$ (D).



Then Black will have no complaints if White tries 3 d4!?, because 3...exd4 4 exd4 d5 gives him a full share of the centre. After 2 e3 $\mathbb{Q}f6$, the more flexible 3 $\mathbb{Q}c3$ will be seen under the move-order 1 c4 e5 2 $\mathbb{Q}c3$ $\mathbb{Q}f6$ 3 e3 in the first game of Chapter 4 (Van Wely-Kasparov). I should point out that 3 a3!? tries to transpose into a reversed Paulsen Sicilian after 3...d5 4 cxd5 $\mathbb{Q}xd5$, but Black needn't be so cooperative and, for example, the move a3 isn't terribly useful in lines beginning with 3...c6, or against a King's Indian structure following 3...d6 4 d4 $\mathbb{Q}bd7$ 5 $\mathbb{Q}c3$ g6 6 $\mathbb{Q}f3$ $\mathbb{Q}g7$, etc. Compare the alternative 2 a3 below.

After 1 c4 e5 2 e3, 2...c6 can also be played; for example, 3 d4 exd4 4 $\mathbb{Q}xd4$ (4 exd4 d5 is fine for Black) 4...d5 5 $\mathbb{Q}f3$ $\mathbb{Q}f6$ 6 $\mathbb{Q}c3$ (D), when we have a reversed variation of the Alapin Sicilian (1 e4 c5 2 c3).

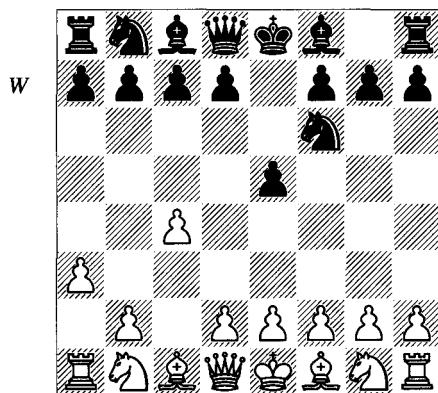
When the queen is on d4, we find that variations with the move e3 are less pointed than those in which White has played $\mathbb{Q}g5$ (the relevant comparison is with the reversed line in the Sicilian Defence, 1 e4 c5 2 c3 d5 3 exd5 $\mathbb{Q}xd5$ 4 d4 $\mathbb{Q}f6$ 5 $\mathbb{Q}f3$ e6, which is rather unambitious in comparison with 5... $\mathbb{Q}g4$). Of course, White



has an extra tempo here and there will be plenty of chances to make such an unbalanced position interesting. Incidentally, the frequent relationship between seemingly disparate openings is shown by the following Slav Defence variation: 1 d4 d5 2 c4 c6 3 $\mathbb{Q}c3$ e5 (this is called the Winawer Counter-Gambit) 4 e3 exd4 5 $\mathbb{Q}xd4$ $\mathbb{Q}f6$ 6 $\mathbb{Q}f3$, with precisely the position we are discussing!

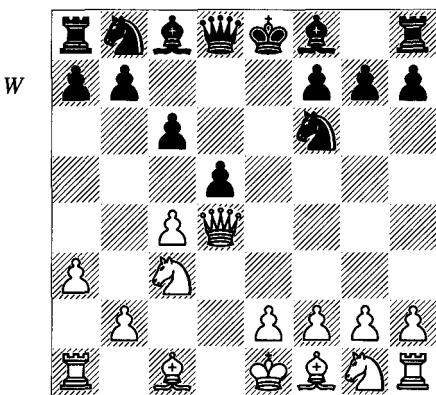
c) 2 a3 is one of those semi-waiting moves that doesn't commit to a strategy, but has some point. It prepares a timely b4, for one thing. Think about it: after 1 e4 c5 2 $\mathbb{Q}f3$ followed by 3 d4 cxd4 4 $\mathbb{Q}xd4$, it's hard to find a variation in which ...a6 isn't useful for Black.

The problem is that, again, Black needn't cooperate with an early ...d5. Thus, for example, 2... $\mathbb{Q}f6$ (D) (also fine are 2...g6 and 2...d6, among other moves).



3 $\mathbb{Q}c3$ (3 b4 isn't very pointed when there's no black knight on c6 to kick around; an example would be 3...g6 4 $\mathbb{Q}b2$ d6 5 e3 $\mathbb{Q}g7$ 6 $\mathbb{Q}c3$)

0-0 with equality) 3...c6?!? (Black might play this way in order to stir the pot; a simpler solution is 3...g6 followed by a King's Indian set-up with ...d6, ... $\mathbb{Q}g7$ and ...0-0) 4 d4 ($4 \mathbb{Q}f3$ is met by 4...e4 5 $\mathbb{Q}d4$ d5 6 cxd5 cxd5 (or even 6... $\mathbb{W}xd5$), when a3 isn't helping matters; Black can also answer with 4...d6, when the move a3 is again fairly meaningless) 4...exd4 5 $\mathbb{W}xd4$ d5 (D).

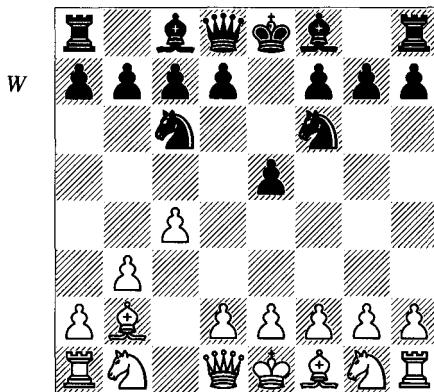


Now we have a position very similar to that arising from 2 e3 c6 3 d4 exd4 4 $\mathbb{W}xd4$ d5 above, except that White has the opportunity to play the desirable move $\mathbb{Q}g5$, since the bishop isn't cut off by a pawn on e3. Unfortunately, he has invested time on the unimpressive move a3, and he has a knight on c3 which isn't as well-placed as one on f3. Within the next few moves, Black threatens to gain space *a tempo* by means of ...c5 and ...d4. With that in mind, White might continue 6 $\mathbb{Q}f3$ (6 cxd5 cxd5 frees a square for Black's knight on c6, which will attack White's queen with gain of time; naturally that's not the end of the world for White, but it means that he is very unlikely to get anything out of the opening; furthermore, the immediate 6 $\mathbb{Q}g5$ can be answered by 6... $\mathbb{Q}e7$, threatening ...c5, when 7 cxd5 cxd5 8 $\mathbb{Q}xf6$ $\mathbb{Q}xf6$ 9 $\mathbb{W}xd5$?? loses to 9... $\mathbb{Q}xc3$ +) 6... $\mathbb{Q}e7$ 7 g3?! (or 7 cxd5 cxd5 8 e3 $\mathbb{Q}c6$) 7...c5 8 $\mathbb{W}d3$ d4. You might compare this with 1 c4 e5 2 g3 $\mathbb{Q}f6$ 3 $\mathbb{Q}g2$ c6 4 d4 exd4 5 $\mathbb{W}xd4$ d5 6 $\mathbb{Q}f3$ in Chapter 4; in that case, White can abstain from capture on d5 in some lines until the right moment. And even if White does exchange on d5, then after ... $\mathbb{Q}c6$ he can move his queen without having to suffer a direct attack from ...d4. If all that

sounds obscure, a look at the variations in Chapter 4 will help.

I should also note that Black can take his chances with an early ...d5; for example, 3...d5, even if that seems cooperative. We shall see lines with ...d5 below, and in future chapters.

d) 2 b3 is perfectly good, but it lacks punch. White can, for example, combine it with g3 and $\mathbb{Q}g2$ (a double fianchetto), to get a game with mutual chances. But when the king's bishop has to settle for a place on e2, it's highly unlikely that White will get any real prospects. According to theory, one easy solution is 2... $\mathbb{Q}f6$ 3 $\mathbb{Q}b2$ $\mathbb{Q}c6$ (D).



4 e3 ($4 \mathbb{Q}f3$ e4 5 $\mathbb{Q}d4$ $\mathbb{Q}c5$ 6 e3 0-0 is equal; Black can even play 6... $\mathbb{Q}xd4$ 7 exd4 d5, in spite of ceding the bishop-pair, since White's bishop on b2 is ineffective and his d4-pawn requires tending) 4...d5 5 cxd5 $\mathbb{Q}xd5$ poses White at least as many problems as Black. For example, 6 $\mathbb{Q}b5$?! $\mathbb{Q}db4$! is not pleasant, because of the attack on the d3-square. Of course, Black has many other replies to 2 b3.

e) Finally, you may be wondering about the direct 1 c4 e5 2 d4?!. Then 2...exd4 3 $\mathbb{W}xd4$?!! $\mathbb{Q}c6$ develops smoothly with gain of time. A trickier move is 3 $\mathbb{Q}f3$?, when Black can play simply 3... $\mathbb{Q}f6$! (White's only real point is that he can meet 3...c5?! by 4 e3! dx3 5 $\mathbb{Q}xe3$; then, for the pawn, White has complete control of d5 and the d-file, and his pieces are coming out rapidly – this is a type of position worth remembering, and parallels a similar gambit in the Sicilian Defence) 4 $\mathbb{Q}xd4$ d5?! (an ambitious freeing move; simple moves like 4... $\mathbb{Q}c5$ should also equalize) 5 cxd5 $\mathbb{W}xd5$ 6 $\mathbb{Q}c3$ (6 e3

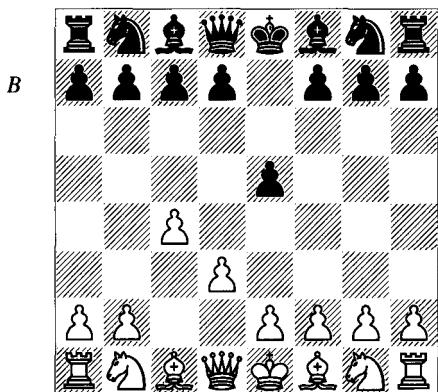
is too passive to present a challenge: 6... $\mathbb{Q}c5$ 7
 $\mathbb{Q}c3$ $\mathbb{W}d6$ 8 $\mathbb{Q}e2$ 0-0 with equality) 6... $\mathbb{Q}b4$ 7
 $\mathbb{W}a4+!$? (7 a3? $\mathbb{Q}xc3+$ 8 bxc3 0-0 gives White
two bishops at the cost of development and the
assumption of weaknesses; compare, for exam-
ple, the Chigorin Queen's Gambit in Volume 2)
7... $\mathbb{Q}c6$ with the idea 8 $\mathbb{Q}xc6$ (8 $\mathbb{W}xb4$ $\mathbb{W}xd4!$)
8... $\mathbb{Q}xc3+$ 9 bxc3 $\mathbb{Q}d7!$ and Black probably
even has the better game.

Najdorf and Dragon Aspirations

1 c4 e5

For those who like the Najdorf or Dragon variations of the Sicilian Defence, which both begin with 1 e4 c5 2 ♜f3 d6, it's only natural to consider the move...

2 d3 (D)

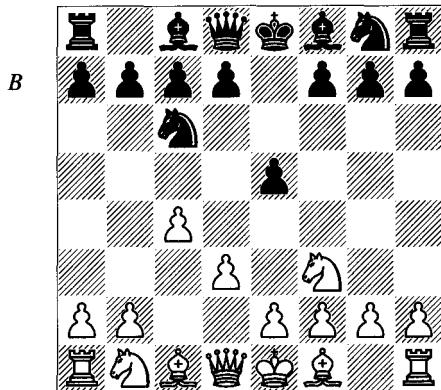


Why isn't this played more often? The main problem, as opposed to 2 $\mathcal{Q}c3$ and 2 g3, is that 2 d3 forfeits the chance to play d4 in one move. Let's see what that implies for both sides.

2... $\text{\texttt{Q}}\text{f6}$

a) Another logical move for Black is 2... $\mathbb{Q}c6$, which is not quite as flexible in the sense that he relinquishes the option of ...c6. But it is flexible in another way if he intends ...g6 and $\mathbb{Q}g7$, because in that case Black retains the options of playing $\mathbb{Q}ge7$ and/or ...f5 at some point. The Dragon or Najdorf fan will most likely respond with 3 $\mathbb{Q}f3$ (D).

Then Black can highlight the drawbacks of 2 d3 by playing 3...g6 (alternatively, 3... $\mathbb{Q}f6$ 4



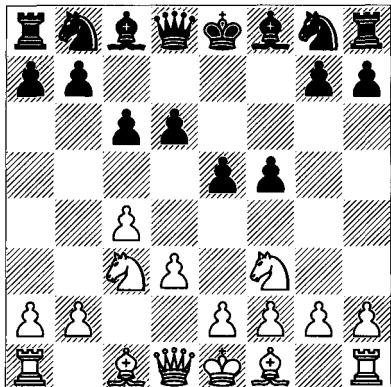
$\mathbb{Q}c3$ is a main-line Four Knights Variation of Chapter 5, with White having played the relatively harmless $d3$; see below). The best answer to an early ... $g6$ is often $d4$, but here $d4$! is a loss of a tempo, which means that Black will equalize easily. Play might go $4\dots exd4\ 5\ \mathbb{Q}xd4\ \mathbb{Q}g7\ 6\ \mathbb{Q}xc6\ bxc6$ and Black has free and easy play, a natural continuation being $7\ g3\ \mathbb{Q}e7\ 8\ \mathbb{Q}g2\ 0-0\ 9\ 0-0\ d5$, or $9\dots \mathbb{B}b8$. Take away $d3$ and ... $\mathbb{Q}c6$ and we can see why such an early ... $g6$ can be risky: $1\ c4\ e5\ 2\ \mathbb{Q}c3\ g6\?!\ 3\ d4\! exd4\ 4\ \mathbb{W}xd4$, and now $4\dots \mathbb{Q}f6\?$ is disastrous due to $5\ \mathbb{Q}g5$ with $\mathbb{Q}d5$ next, winning a piece.

White's best line, instead of 4 d4, is probably 4 $\mathbb{Q}c3$ $\mathbb{Q}g7$ 5 g3, which is a kind of reversed Closed Sicilian (or 'Closed English') that we shall run into in Chapter 6.

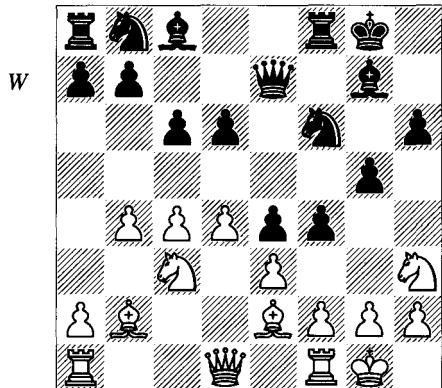
b) In a more original vein, notice how 2...c6, another Alapin Sicilian reversed, is perfectly playable for Black. In large part this is because Black hasn't committed his king's knight; for example, 3 $\mathbb{Q}f3$ d6 4 $\mathbb{Q}c3$ f5! (D) is a familiar kind of position except that White would like to have the move d4 in.

This should be compared with a line that arises in Chapter 3: 1 c4 e5 2 ♜c3 d6 3 ♜f3 f5 4 d4 e4 5 ♜g5 c6. In the diagram, White can only play d4 with loss of time. If he doesn't challenge the centre, Black has few problems; for example, a logical continuation is 5 g3 ♜f6 6 ♜g2 ♛e7 (there are other moves, but I'll show this for simplicity's sake) 7 0-0 0-0 8 ♖b1 a5 9 a3 ♜a6 10 b4 axb4 11 axb4 ♜c7 12 b5 ♜d7 with a safe queenside and a nice central position.

White could insist upon playing 5 d4!? a tempo down, when a sample line that parallels



the Chapter 3 variation is 5...e4 6 $\mathbb{Q}g5$ h6 (Black assumes some weaknesses, as White wants, but with a gain of time and space) 7 $\mathbb{Q}h3$ g5 8 e3 $\mathbb{Q}f6$ 9 $\mathbb{Q}e2$ $\mathbb{W}e7$ (in order to be able to answer 10 $\mathbb{Q}h5+$ with 10... $\mathbb{Q}xh5$ 11 $\mathbb{W}xh5+$ $\mathbb{W}f7$) 10 0-0 $\mathbb{Q}g7$ 11 b4 0-0 with equality. Watch out for 12 $\mathbb{Q}b2?$ (12 $\mathbb{Q}h1!$ is better) 12...f4! (D).

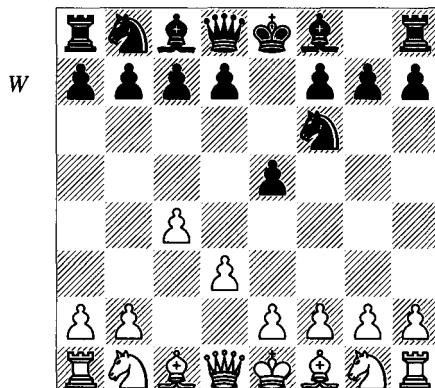


Black intends ...f3, winning a piece. And he has the idea 13 exf4 g4, when the knight is trapped! Also losing is 13 f3 exf3 14 $\mathbb{Q}xf3$ g4. You should know this attacking theme, which comes up in periodically in a variety of openings. Very often the ‘victim’ of the tactic has fianchettoed; for example, in the Pirc Defence when Black answers e5 with ... $\mathbb{Q}g4$ and is chased back to h6 by h3; subsequently, White plays g4 and, with a great deal of luck, gets to use the f5 trick. You may want to check out that opening to see what I’m talking about.

Granted, all this is not very meaningful in terms of precise chess theory. Nevertheless,

some useful ideas arise when we consider such lines.

We now return to 2... $\mathbb{Q}f6$ (D):



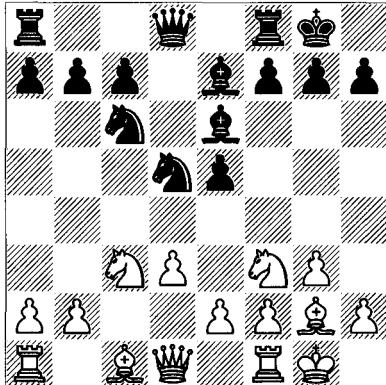
3 $\mathbb{Q}f3$

With this move White is still hoping for a Najdorf or Dragon with reversed colours (e.g. 3... $\mathbb{Q}c6$ and now 4 a3 d5 or 4 g3 d5). The alternative 3 $\mathbb{Q}c3$ can be met by various moves, including the simple 3... $\mathbb{Q}c6$, when 4 $\mathbb{Q}f3$ is analysed in Chapter 5 under the move-order 2 $\mathbb{Q}c3$ $\mathbb{Q}f6$ 3 $\mathbb{Q}f3$ $\mathbb{Q}c6$ 4 d3. If White chooses to play 4 g3, Black has new possibilities. The move 4... $\mathbb{Q}b4$, for example, should lead to an equal game, even though someone wishing to get away from the beaten path as White might want to play 5 $\mathbb{Q}d2$ followed by a3 or $\mathbb{Q}d5$ and take it from there.

Perhaps the most interesting comparison with a normal Sicilian Dragon is in the line 3 $\mathbb{Q}c3$ $\mathbb{Q}c6$ 4 g3 d5 5 cxd5 $\mathbb{Q}xd5$. White’s ‘extra’ tempo is d3 which, as so often, is committal in a partially detrimental way. That’s because after 6 $\mathbb{Q}g2$ $\mathbb{Q}e6$, Black can keep his knight on the desirable square d5. To explain that, let’s continue with the normal Dragon moves 7 $\mathbb{Q}f3$ $\mathbb{Q}e7$ (D).

Experienced English Opening players can compare 1 c4 e5 2 $\mathbb{Q}c3$ $\mathbb{Q}f6$ 3 $\mathbb{Q}f3$ $\mathbb{Q}c6$ 4 g3 d5 5 cxd5 $\mathbb{Q}xd5$ 6 $\mathbb{Q}g2$ in Chapter 5. In that case, White is threatening 7 $\mathbb{Q}xe5!$, so Black usually plays 6... $\mathbb{Q}b6$, because after 6... $\mathbb{Q}e6$ 7 0-0, White is ready to play the advantageous move 8 d4. By contrast, in our present example, White has already committed to d3; this means that he can only advance the d-pawn to d4 at the cost of a tempo. This is a rather sophisticated point,

W

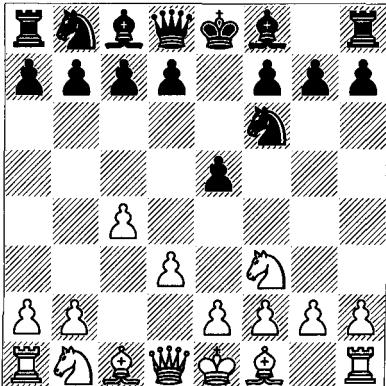


especially for those who don't play the Dragon; however, it's illustrative of the nuances that arise in reversed openings.

Black can also play something solid versus 3 $\mathbb{Q}c3$ such as 3...c6 4 $\mathbb{Q}f3$ d6, after which he can choose either ...g6/... $\mathbb{Q}g7$ with a standard position, or ... $\mathbb{Q}bd7$, holding out for possibilities of ...d5 or ...g6. Instead, 4...d5? 5 cxd5 gives White the advantage, because 5...cxd5? loses a pawn to 6 $\mathbb{Q}xe5$ d4 7 $\mathbb{Q}a4+$!, and 5... $\mathbb{Q}xd5$ 6 $\mathbb{Q}xe5!$ $\mathbb{Q}xc3$ 7 bxc3 $\mathbb{Q}a5$ 8 $\mathbb{Q}f3$ $\mathbb{Q}xc3+9 \mathbb{Q}d2$ favours White due to his better development and central pawn-majority. But watch out for the standard trap 5 $\mathbb{Q}xe5??$ d4, winning a piece, because if the c3-knight moves, 6... $\mathbb{Q}a5+$ will win the knight on e5! A handy trick to know.

We now return to 3 $\mathbb{Q}f3$ (D):

B



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

After 3... $\mathbb{Q}b4+!?$ 4 $\mathbb{Q}d2$ $\mathbb{Q}xd2+$ 5 $\mathbb{Q}xd2$, we have a type of Moscow Sicilian reversed (1 e4 c5 2 $\mathbb{Q}f3$ d6 3 $\mathbb{Q}b5+$, etc.); Black stands solidly enough if he continues 5...d6. As previously

indicated, what are equalizing lines when playing Black in the Sicilian Defence are often less attractive for White in the English Opening, since he expects to retain an advantage. The question is always whether his extra tempo has real significance. In this particular case, White has enough interesting options that the reversed Moscow Variation may be satisfactory for him, regardless of whether equality is the technical verdict.

4 a3

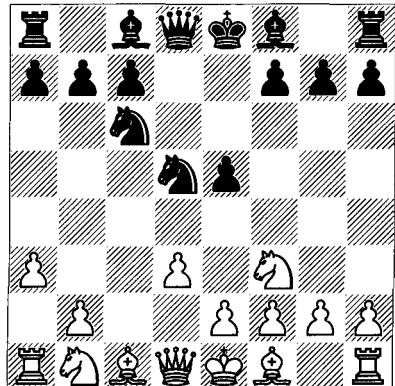
A typical Sicilian Defence move. Again, White hopes for 4...d5 5 cxd5 $\mathbb{Q}xd5$ with a reversed Najdorf and a tempo in hand. Black will usually not oblige, but see the next note. The 'Dragon-esque' 4 g3 allows moves such as 4...g6 (again because d4 loses a tempo), or 4... $\mathbb{Q}c5$, or 4... $\mathbb{Q}b4+$. We shall also see that reversed Dragon positions following 4...d5 5 cxd5 $\mathbb{Q}xd5$ are satisfactory for Black. Finally, 4 $\mathbb{Q}c3$ is a line of the Four Knights Variation, considered relatively harmless, which is not to say that White can't try it out. Black might have avoided this by 2 d3 $\mathbb{Q}c6$ 3 $\mathbb{Q}f3$ g6, although that's hardly necessary.

4...g6

Solid play. Fianchettoing the king's bishop tends to be a reliable equalizer if White plays slow moves.

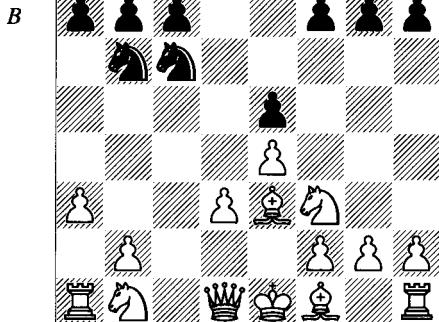
Still, it's instructive to see what happens if Black cooperates by playing the provocative 4...d5! 5 cxd5 $\mathbb{Q}xd5$ (D).

W



If there's any position involving 2 d3 in which White should be able to exploit an extra tempo, it would be this one. Now the move from the Najdorf 'proper' is 6 e4 (6 g3 is a reversed

Dragon structure in which a3 may not help much; 6 e3 is a reversed Scheveningen, likely to provide interesting but not inspiring play if Black responds ultra-solidly; 6 b4! is more ambitious, when the game can go in many directions, but White does well to put his knight on d2 and not c3, just as Black chooses ... $\mathbb{Q}bd7$ in the great majority of Najdorf variations) 6... $\mathbb{Q}b6$!? (this is normal in the reversed position, but 6... $\mathbb{Q}f6$ maybe be a safer course; you need to study the theory of the Najdorf to understand this line) 7 $\mathbb{Q}e3$ (D) (7 $\mathbb{Q}e2$ and 7 $\mathbb{Q}bd2$ are also logical moves, when b4 and $\mathbb{Q}b2$ frequently follows).



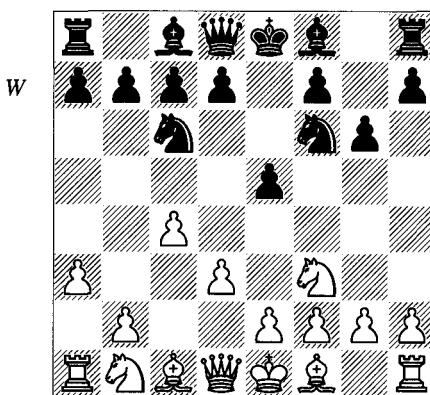
After 7 $\mathbb{Q}e3$, White is a tempo up in a reversed Najdorf Sicilian. Nothing that he has done has tipped his hand in a negative way, so the real issue is whether Black has a modest way to avoid entering into the time-critical dynamic lines which characterize the Najdorf. For this purpose, the careful 7... $\mathbb{Q}e7$ is appropriate (rather than the energetic 7...f6 8 $\mathbb{Q}bd2$ $\mathbb{Q}e6$ 9 $\mathbb{Q}e2$ $\mathbb{W}d7$ 10 0-0 0-0-0 11 b4, when White is a tempo ahead of the 'English Attack' of the Sicilian Defence; that is a line characterized by dynamism and attacking ideas, so an extra move will be very important and therefore 7...f6 is not a smart choice for Black). After 7... $\mathbb{Q}e7$, we might see 8 $\mathbb{Q}e2$ (8 d4 exd4 9 $\mathbb{Q}xd4$ $\mathbb{Q}xd4$ leads to the kind of simplification with which Black can be content when playing the Sicilian; of course, White wants more in the reversed position) 8...0-0 9 0-0 $\mathbb{Q}e6$ 10 $\mathbb{Q}bd2$ a5 and Black's game is solid enough. Naturally, there are options here for both sides, as well as issues of move-order that I haven't mentioned.

You can see that the play stemming from 4 a3 d5 is flexible and balanced. White may like this idea of a reversed Najdorf, but he needs to keep in mind that few players of Black will do their opponents the psychological favour of playing 4...d5.

Let's follow a game with our main-line move, 4...g6:

Wahls – Rabiega German Ch, Altenkirchen 2001

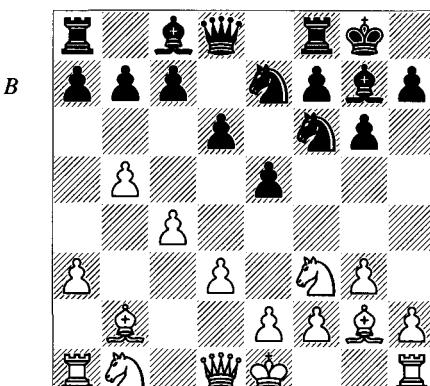
1 c4 e5 2 d3 $\mathbb{Q}f6$ 3 $\mathbb{Q}f3$ $\mathbb{Q}c6$ 4 a3 g6 (D)



5 b4

This queenside advance is the most independent move, consistent with 4 a3. Instead, 5 $\mathbb{Q}c3$ $\mathbb{Q}g7$ 6 g3 0-0 is a kind of Anti-King's Indian variation from Chapter 12, in which you will see that $\mathbb{B}b1$ is generally more useful than a3 in supporting the queenside advance b4-b5.

5...d6 6 b5 $\mathbb{Q}e7$ 7 $\mathbb{Q}b2$ $\mathbb{Q}g7$ 8 g3 0-0 9 $\mathbb{Q}g2$ (D)



A fairly typical English Opening position has arisen, in the sense that White is exerting pressure with his g2-bishop along the long diagonal, and that he has reinforced his light-square control by means of b4-b5. Black, in turn, is set to attack, either on the kingside by ...f5 or in the centre by ...d5 (often preceded by ...c6). In general, White has two related ideas that have been hampered (or delayed) by the insertion of a3. Normally he gets his best attacking chances by playing the move c5, at some point capturing on d6 and opening lines on the queenside. To implement this, however, White would ideally have the moves a4 and ♜a3 in, and in the situation before us, they both take two moves to implement instead of one. That's quite a loss of time, and guarantees Black reasonable chances regardless of whether he plays on the kingside or in the centre. Another of White's customary strategies is a4-a5-a6; again, playing a3-a4 would lose a tempo in carrying out this plan.

9...a6

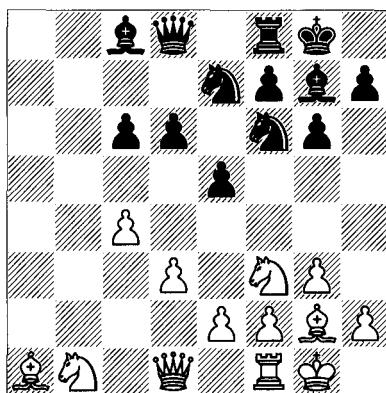
Black makes a tough decision that you will confront time and again in the English Opening, and in this book. If he opens the a-file and exchanges the a1-rook, that can either make it easier to defend his queenside (one less pawn there) or else help White to penetrate favourably down the a-file. Generally this is a matter of judgement, and the consequences are not immediately evident.

10 a4 axb5 11 axb5 ♜xa1 12 ♜xa1 c6

Also plausible are 12...♜g4 and 12...h6 (preparing ...♜e6 without allowing ♜g5 in reply).

13 bxc6 bxc6 14 0-0 (D)

B



14...♝d7

A move characteristic of such positions: by doubly protecting the e5-pawn, Black prepares a possible ...d5, and his f-pawn is also freed to advance. The knight on d7 can also be well-placed for defence if it gets to c5.

15 ♜c3 ♜c7

15...d5 and 15...f5 are decent alternatives.

16 ♜d2

White wants to strengthen his control of the h1-a8 diagonal. 16 ♜c2 also makes sense, in order to bring the f1-rook to the queenside.

16...♝c5

Or 16...f5, when Black's mobile centre serves as a counterweight to White's queenside pressure.

17 ♜a4 ♜xa4 18 ♜xa4 ♜g4?

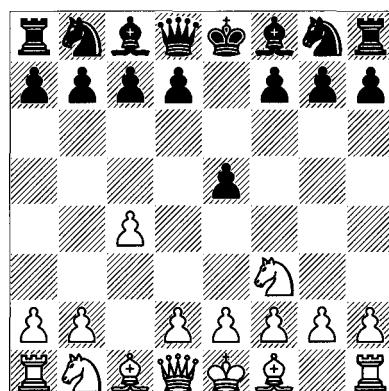
This move is logical, but falls for a sort of 'trick'. 18...d5 is safe enough, possibly followed by ...♜e6 and ...f5.

After 18...♜g4? White could have played 19 c5!, when the queen on a4 attacks the g4-bishop, giving White time to play cxd6 and seriously weaken Black's pawn-structure. Sometimes the simple moves are the easiest to miss. The rest of the game was not of interest in terms of opening ideas.

Improved Alekhine-Sicilian

1 e4 e5 2 ♜f3 (D)

B



By playing 2 ♜f3, White enters into an Alekhine Defence (1 e4 ♜f6) with the extra move c4 in. The move 2 ♜f3 is also a reversed form of the Nimzowitsch Sicilian, which goes 1 e4 c5 2 ♜f3 ♜f6. Looked at from that perspective,

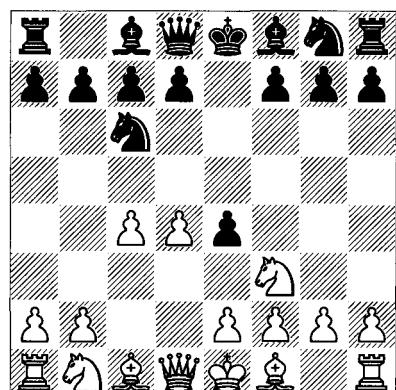
White has an extra tempo, that is, Black hasn't played ... $\mathbb{Q}f6$ yet. Can White get an advantage in this way? While 2 $\mathbb{Q}f3$ is hardly a super-weapon, I think that it is better than generally recognized, both as an independent variation and a transpositional tool.

2...e4

This aggressive move is easily the most important one. Instead, 2...d6 is rather passive after 3 d4. The alternative 2... $\mathbb{Q}c6$ is a sound choice, aiming for transposition. Then White can play 3 $\mathbb{Q}c3$, returning to a main line of the English Opening which goes 2 $\mathbb{Q}c3$ $\mathbb{Q}c6$ 3 $\mathbb{Q}f3$, while having eliminated a couple of possibilities for Black. For example, had White played 1 c4 e5 2 $\mathbb{Q}c3$, Black's intent may have been 2...d6, a popular move that can transpose into the King's Indian set-up after ...g6, but can also involve a sequence such as 3 $\mathbb{Q}f3$ f5 4 d4 e4, which has a decent reputation for Black (see Chapter 3). Or Black might have prepared 2 $\mathbb{Q}c3$ $\mathbb{Q}b4$, a move which has been approved of at the highest levels of play (this is also analysed in Chapter 3). Since these options aren't available to Black after 2 $\mathbb{Q}f3$ $\mathbb{Q}c6$ 3 $\mathbb{Q}c3$, he will probably settle for the main lines, namely, 3... $\mathbb{Q}f6$, or 3...f5, which are analysed in Chapters 5 and 6 respectively.

Alternatively, White can deviate by playing 3 d4, intending 3...exd4 4 $\mathbb{Q}xd4$ $\mathbb{Q}f6$ 5 $\mathbb{Q}c3$, transposing to the 4 d4 variation of the Four Knights main line, which goes 2 $\mathbb{Q}c3$ $\mathbb{Q}f6$ 3 $\mathbb{Q}f3$ $\mathbb{Q}c6$ 4 d4 (see Chapter 5). By this means, White would bypass one of Black's important options, 4...e4.

After 3 d4, however, the immediate 3...e4! (*D*) is the truly independent continuation.



Then White should abstain from 4 $\mathbb{Q}g5$?! (remarkably, this is already dubious; the innocent-looking 4 $\mathbb{Q}fd2$ can be met with 4...e3!?, 5 $\mathbb{Q}xe3$ $\mathbb{Q}f6$, an apparently sound gambit that is unclear, but at least interesting for both sides; White can also consider 4 $\mathbb{Q}e5$) 4... $\mathbb{Q}b4$! 5 $\mathbb{Q}c3$ (5 $\mathbb{Q}d2$?? $\mathbb{Q}xg5$) and Black can exploit the very lack of ... $\mathbb{Q}f6$ to play the unique 5...d5! (intending ...h6) 6 cxd5 $\mathbb{Q}xd5$ 7 a3 (pretty much forced in order to defend d4 without losing the knight on g5) 7... $\mathbb{Q}xc3$ + 8 bxc3 $\mathbb{Q}f6$ with excellent central control, very quick development, and the prospect of ...h6.

This is not so different from other lines we shall see in this book that emphasize space and light-square control by Black. Players familiar with the Chigorin Queen's Gambit will see that Black very likely stands better than after 1 d4 d5 2 c4 $\mathbb{Q}c6$ 3 cxd5 $\mathbb{Q}xd5$ 4 e3 e5 5 $\mathbb{Q}c3$ $\mathbb{Q}b4$ 6 a3 $\mathbb{Q}xc3$ + 7 bxc3 $\mathbb{Q}f6$ 8 $\mathbb{Q}f3$ e4, a position which is itself quite playable for Black. One point of knowing a variety of openings is to be able to make such comparisons and therefore intuitive assessments about a position's worth.

3 $\mathbb{Q}d4$

Who wouldn't want this type of reversed Alekhine Defence (1 e4 $\mathbb{Q}f6$ 2 e5 $\mathbb{Q}d5$), having the move ...c5 already in? That would discourage White from d4, which is his main move versus the Alekhine.

Of course, it's never that simple. Let's follow some games:

Murey – Heran Condom 2004

1 c4 e5 2 $\mathbb{Q}f3$ e4 3 $\mathbb{Q}d4$ $\mathbb{Q}f6$

A developing move like this can't be bad, although it appears to give White the reverse position that he wants. See the next game for the generally recommended alternative 3... $\mathbb{Q}c6$.

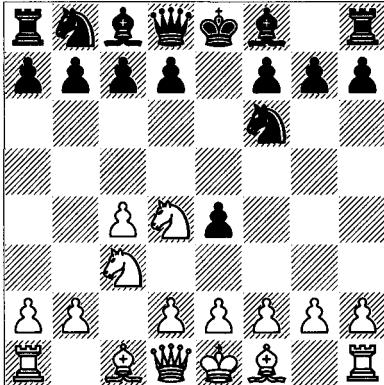
4 $\mathbb{Q}c3$ (*D*)

4... $\mathbb{Q}c6$!?

4... $\mathbb{Q}c6$ 5 e3 $\mathbb{Q}xd4$ transposes to the note after 5 exd4 in the next game.

4... $\mathbb{Q}c5$ could lead to a wide variety of unique and even unknown positions; for example, 5 $\mathbb{Q}b3$ $\mathbb{Q}b4$ 6 $\mathbb{Q}c2$ (White attacks e4; 6 g3!?, 0-0 7 $\mathbb{Q}g2$ $\mathbb{Q}e8$ 8 $\mathbb{Q}c2$ is another way to do so) 6... $\mathbb{Q}e7$ (6...d5!?, 7 cxd5 0-0 8 $\mathbb{Q}xe4$ $\mathbb{Q}xd5$ 9 a3 $\mathbb{Q}e7$ 10 e3 and Black is short of compensation)

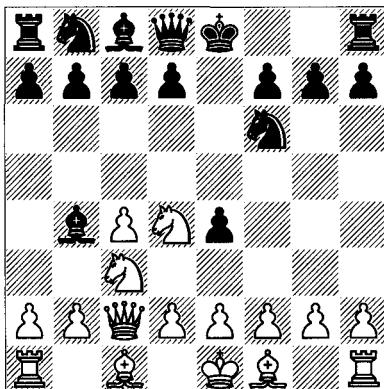
B



7 a3 (7 g4!? would be a typically modern flank attack) 7... $\mathbb{Q}xc3$ 8 dxc3, which is a standard structure pitting two bishops against the cramped pawn. Compare the main-line Four Knights variations in Chapter 5.

Finally, 4... $\mathbb{Q}b4$ is a natural-looking continuation, when White can take aim at e4 by 5 $\mathbb{Q}c2$ (D).

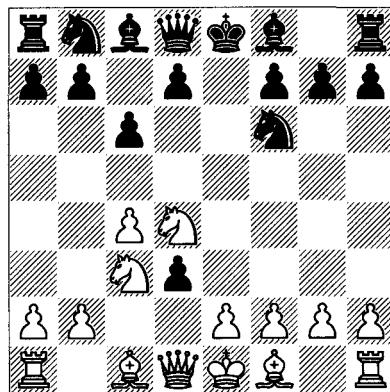
B



At first glance, this doesn't look too bad for Black, but it turns out that defending his e-pawn is a bother. For example, 5... $\mathbb{Q}c6$ (5... $\mathbb{Q}xc3$ 6 dxc3! sets up quick development by $\mathbb{Q}g5$ or $\mathbb{Q}f4$ and perhaps 0-0-0; alternatively, the gambit 5...0-0-0?! looks dubious after 6 $\mathbb{Q}xe4$ $\mathbb{Q}xe4$ 7 $\mathbb{Q}xe4$ $\mathbb{Q}e8$ 8 $\mathbb{Q}f3$) 6 e3 (6 $\mathbb{Q}xc6$ dxc6 7 $\mathbb{Q}xe4$!?) $\mathbb{Q}f5$ 8 $\mathbb{Q}xf6+$ $\mathbb{Q}xf6$ 9 $\mathbb{Q}b3$ looks a little greedy, although White can continue with e3 and d4, challenging Black to prove his case) 6...0-0 (6... $\mathbb{Q}xd4$ 7 exd4 $\mathbb{Q}xc3$ 8 dxc3 with two strong bishops) 7 $\mathbb{Q}xc6$ dxc6 8 $\mathbb{Q}xe4$ $\mathbb{Q}f5$ (8... $\mathbb{Q}xe4$ 9 $\mathbb{Q}xe4$ $\mathbb{Q}g5$ 10 $\mathbb{Q}e2$) 9 $\mathbb{Q}xf6+$ $\mathbb{Q}xf6$ 10 $\mathbb{Q}d3$ and Black has little to show for the extra pawn.

5 d3 exd3 (D)

W



6 e4!

An ambitious attempt to take over the centre. 6 $\mathbb{Q}g5$?! is another dynamic move.

6...d5??

Probably not best, but otherwise Black has to be careful not to become too passively placed.

7 cxd5 cxd5 8 e5 $\mathbb{Q}e4$ 9 $\mathbb{Q}xd3$

The safe 9 $\mathbb{Q}xd3$ is also good.

9... $\mathbb{Q}xc3$ 10 bxc3 $\mathbb{Q}c6$ 11 0-0 $\mathbb{Q}e7$ 12 $\mathbb{Q}h5$!?

g6

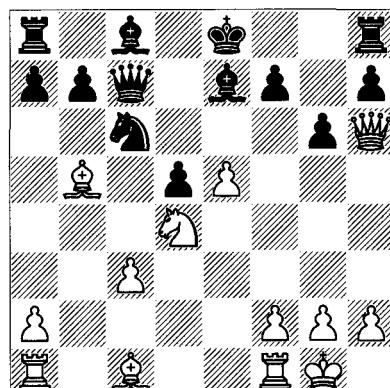
On a slow move such as 12...a6, 13 e6! is strong.

13 $\mathbb{Q}h6$ $\mathbb{Q}f8$ 14 $\mathbb{Q}e3$ $\mathbb{Q}e7$

Black would be stuck in the middle after 14... $\mathbb{Q}g7$ 15 $\mathbb{Q}a3$.

15 $\mathbb{Q}b5$ $\mathbb{Q}c7$ 16 $\mathbb{Q}h6$ (D)

B



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

Upon 16... $\mathbb{Q}f8$, White plays 17 $\mathbb{Q}f4$ intending 18 $\mathbb{Q}f6$ or 18 e6!.

17 $\mathbb{Q}f4$??

White is in control after 17 $\mathbb{Q}xc6!$ $bxc6$ 18 $\mathbb{W}g7$, with the idea 18... $\mathbb{Q}f8$ 19 $\mathbb{Q}h6!$.

17... $\mathbb{Q}f8$ 18 $\mathbb{W}h4$ $\mathbb{Q}e7$ 19 $\mathbb{Q}g5$ $\mathbb{Q}xg5$ 20 $\mathbb{W}xg5$ 0-0 21 $\mathbb{Q}xc6$ $bxc6$ 22 $f4$!?

Here 22... $f6$! 23 $exf6$ $\mathbb{W}d6$ improves, by challenging White's attack upon the weakened dark squares. After the text-move, White stands distinctly better.

23 $\mathbb{Q}f3$ $\mathbb{W}d8$? 24 $\mathbb{W}h6$ f6 25 $\mathbb{Q}ad1$ $\mathbb{Q}a4$ 26 $exf6$ $\mathbb{W}xf6$ 27 $\mathbb{Q}g5$! $\mathbb{Q}xd1$?

28 $\mathbb{W}xh7+$ $\mathbb{Q}f8$ 29 $\mathbb{Q}e1$ 1-0

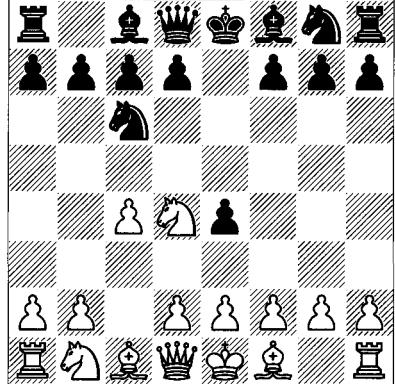
Mate follows quickly.

Heruti – Motwani

Netanya 1987

1 c4 e5 2 $\mathbb{Q}f3$ e4 3 $\mathbb{Q}d4$ $\mathbb{Q}c6$ (D)

W



This solution is approved by the conventional wisdom; in fact, 3... $\mathbb{Q}c6$ is often adorned by '!'. Black forestalls White's planned attack on the exposed e-pawn and compels a response.

4 e3

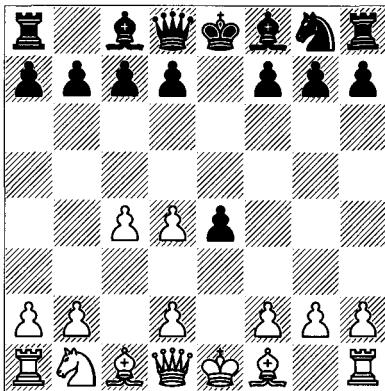
White continues to follow the main idea from the Sicilian Defence (1 e4 c5 2 $\mathbb{Q}f3$ $\mathbb{Q}f6$ 3 e5 $\mathbb{Q}d5$ 4 $\mathbb{Q}c3$ e6). 4 $\mathbb{Q}c2$! appears passive, but White plans to harass Black's e-pawn by means of $\mathbb{Q}c3$, g3 and $\mathbb{Q}g2$, with $\mathbb{Q}e3$ and sometimes d3 to follow. An approved solution goes 4... $\mathbb{Q}f6$ 5 $\mathbb{Q}c3$ $\mathbb{Q}c5$ 6 g3 $\mathbb{Q}e5$!, but 4...d5 5 $\mathbb{Q}xd5$ $\mathbb{W}xd5$ 6 $\mathbb{Q}c3$ $\mathbb{W}e5$ also looks playable.

White's main alternative is 4 $\mathbb{Q}xc6$ $dxc6$ 5 $\mathbb{Q}c3$ $\mathbb{Q}f6$ and now 6 e3 or 6 $\mathbb{W}c2$, yet there is a danger of becoming too cramped. Black wants to prevent d4; for example, 6 $\mathbb{W}c2$ $\mathbb{Q}f5$ 7 e3 (after 7 f4!?) $\mathbb{Q}c5$ 8 e3 $\mathbb{W}e7$ 9 b3, 9... $\mathbb{Q}g4$! is difficult to counter; but 7 h3 doesn't achieve much

after 7...h5 or Sax's 7... $\mathbb{Q}g6$ with the idea ... $\mathbb{Q}d6-e5$) 7... $\mathbb{W}d7$! 8 b3 0-0-0 9 $\mathbb{Q}b2$ h5 10 h3 (10 0-0-0 $\mathbb{Q}g4$) 10... $\mathbb{Q}b8$ 11 0-0-0 $\mathbb{Q}h7$?? (preparing ... $\mathbb{W}f5$ in some lines) 12 $\mathbb{Q}e2$ $\mathbb{Q}e7$ and Black controls more space while White has little positive to do. I should add, however, that this variation is not as easy as I've painted it, and will repay a closer look.

4... $\mathbb{Q}xd4$ 5 $exd4$ (D)

B



Here, by analogy with the reversed position from the Sicilian Defence, Black would already have a knight on f6. If he catches up with that position now, White will be glad to break up the centre; for example, 5... $\mathbb{Q}f6$ 6 $\mathbb{Q}c3$ d5!? 7 d3! $\mathbb{Q}xd3$ (7... $\mathbb{Q}b4$?? 8 $\mathbb{W}a4+$; 7... $\mathbb{Q}f5$ 8 $\mathbb{Q}g5$) 8 $\mathbb{Q}xd3$ $dxc4$ 9 $\mathbb{Q}xc4$ with a pleasant isolated queen's pawn position which may favour White and is at any rate easier to play for him (0-0, $\mathbb{Q}e1$ and $\mathbb{Q}g5$ are typical follow-up moves). However, precisely because Black is a tempo behind the Nimzowitsch Sicilian line (that is, because ... $\mathbb{Q}f6$ hasn't been played), he can occupy that square, as follows:

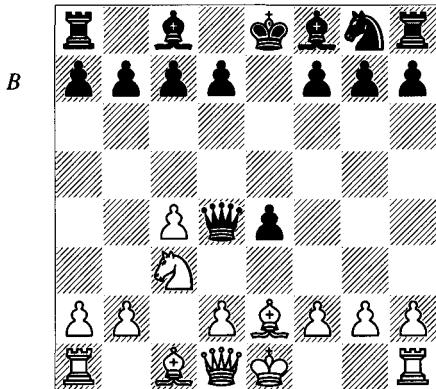
5... $\mathbb{W}f6$!

This simple move hits d4, which can be hard to defend. This is essentially the reason why 2 $\mathbb{Q}f3$ is so seldom played. We have the typical case where playing with a tempo *less* has its advantages, because f6 is free. The issue remains whether that benefit outweighs, or is outweighed by, the value of an extra move.

6 d5??

Usually this is the only move given by players and theoreticians. But since it turns out to be extremely perilous, White might look to contest the initiative by 6 $\mathbb{Q}c3$!, giving up a pawn

for quick development and a central attack. After 6... $\mathbb{W}xd4$, I think that White should try the patient 7 $\mathbb{A}e2$ (D).



This delays the break d3 until White's king is out of the way. White intends to exploit Black's poor development, but he wants to get his pieces out before playing to win the centre and evict the queen. The prospect of $\mathbb{Q}b5$ or $\mathbb{Q}d5$ can be bothersome for Black. The only other source that I know of that mentions 6 $\mathbb{Q}c3$ recommends 7 d3, which can be met by 7... $\mathbb{A}b4$; for example, 8 $\mathbb{W}b3$ $\mathbb{Q}xc3+$ 9 bxc3 $\mathbb{W}e5$ (or 9... $\mathbb{W}d6$). Then White controls the dark squares, yet needs to prove compensation for the pawn (which is not to say that it is lacking).

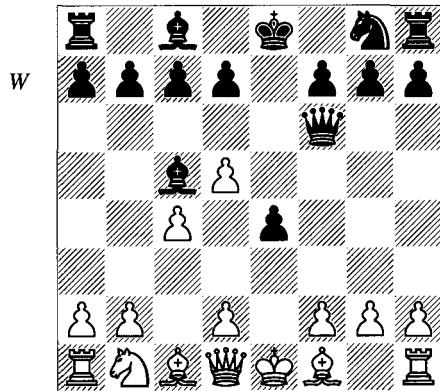
After 7 $\mathbb{A}e2$, the game might proceed 7... $\mathbb{Q}f6$ 8 0-0, and now Black has to decide what to do about the centre, as well as keep an eye on possibilities like $\mathbb{Q}b5$ and d4. A sample line might be 8... $\mathbb{A}b4$ (8...d5 9 d3 activates White's pieces, one point being 9...exd3 10 $\mathbb{Q}b5!$ $\mathbb{W}b6$ 11 $\mathbb{A}f4$; 8... $\mathbb{A}e7$ can be met by 9 d3 exd3, when 10 $\mathbb{Q}xd3$ d6 11 $\mathbb{A}e1$ gives White excellent compensation, especially since 11... $\mathbb{A}e6??$ fails to 12 $\mathbb{A}xe6$ fxe6 13 $\mathbb{Q}g6+$; here 10 $\mathbb{Q}b5?$ $\mathbb{W}b6$ 11 $\mathbb{W}xd3$ is also possible) 9 $\mathbb{Q}b5$ $\mathbb{W}e5$ 10 d4! exd3 11 $\mathbb{Q}xd3$ 0-0 12 $\mathbb{W}f3$ intending $\mathbb{A}f4$ with more than enough play for a pawn.

The moral seems to be that it is better to give up a pawn than to receive one! In the game, White makes the latter decision, to his regret.

6... $\mathbb{Q}c5$ (D)

7 $\mathbb{W}e2$

7 f3 allows 7...exf3 8 $\mathbb{W}xf3$ $\mathbb{W}xf3$ 9 gxf3 d6, after which Black continues simply ... $\mathbb{Q}f6$, ...0-0, ... $\mathbb{A}e8$ and ... $\mathbb{A}f5$ or even ... $\mathbb{A}e7-f5$, in



both cases with an obvious superiority. White's pawns are weak and his structure is a mess.

7... $\mathbb{W}g6$ 8 $\mathbb{Q}c3$ $\mathbb{Q}f6$ 9 d3

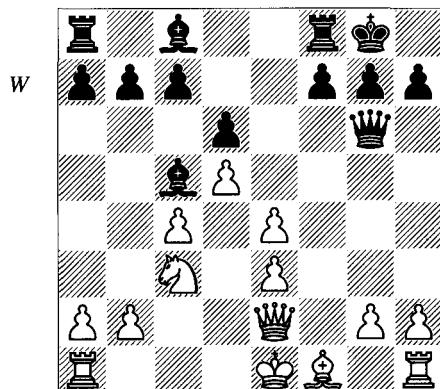
White wins a key centre pawn in the hopes of compensating for his inferior development. 9 d4!? is a bail-out attempt: 9... $\mathbb{A}xd4$ (9... $\mathbb{A}b6$!?) 10 c5 $\mathbb{A}a5$) 10 $\mathbb{Q}b5$ $\mathbb{A}b6$ (10... $\mathbb{A}e5$!?) 11 f4! $\mathbb{A}d6$ produces a highly charged tactical position) 11 c5! a6 12 cxb6 axb5 13 bxc7 $\mathbb{Q}xd5$. This is unclear, but probably better for Black because of his strong centre.

9...0-0! 10 dxe4

White does no better by playing 10 $\mathbb{Q}xe4$ $\mathbb{Q}xe4$ 11 dxe4 (11 $\mathbb{W}xe4$ $\mathbb{W}b6$! 12 $\mathbb{W}f3$ $\mathbb{Q}d4$ or 12... $\mathbb{W}b4$!) 11... $\mathbb{A}e8$ 12 f3 f5!. Black's point can be seen after 13 e5 d6 14 e6 $\mathbb{A}xe6$!, a classic example of central collapse.

10... $\mathbb{Q}g4$ 11 $\mathbb{Q}d1$

11 $\mathbb{Q}e3$ $\mathbb{Q}xe3$ 12 fxe3 d6 (D) is a picture of frustration for White.



In return for his miserable extra pawn, doubled and backward on a half-open file, White

has a terrible light-squared bishop, while Black has an active bishop-pair.

11...d6

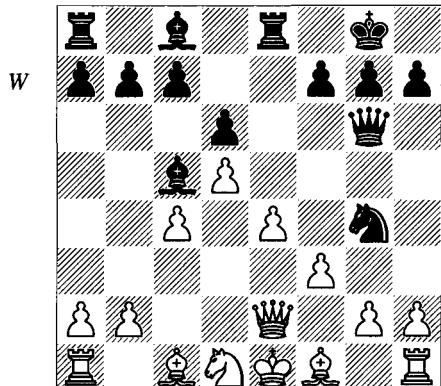
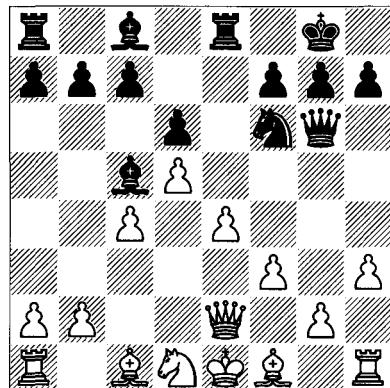
Now Black is threatening to play ...f5, ripping White's position to shreds.

12 f3

This position has arisen quite a few times, with good results for Black. Sometimes White has defended badly, but I'm not sure that it matters against accurate play.

12...Bae8! (D)

The most enterprising move. For some reason, the cautious 12...Bae5?! has been the most popular try at this point, when 13 Bxe3 is the best and probably an adequate defence. 12...Bxh2! is another good move, and a tactical device to remember. Black threatens ...Bg3+ (which is naturally the answer to 13 Bxh2?). The best reply is 13 g4! Bxf3+! 14 Bxf3 Bxg4 with an attack that should at least result in some advantage for Black after 15 Bg2! Bae8!.



13 Bae3

Other tries are:

a) 13 Bae3 Bxh2! 14 g4 Bxg4! 15 Bg1 (15 fxg4 Bxe4) 15...f5! with a very strong attack that seems to defy a successful defence; for example, 16 Bh3 (16 fxg4 f4) 16...Bf6 17 Bxg4 (17 fxg4 f4) 17...Bh4+! 18 Bf2 Bxf2+ 19 Bxf2 fxg4.

b) 13 h3 meets with a different response: 13...Bf6! (D) with the powerful idea of ...Bh5.

If White plays 14 g4, 14...Bxh4! 15 fxe4 Bxe4 should win; e.g., 16 Bae3 Bd7 and either

W

...Bae8 or ...Bxe3 followed by ...Bae8 can't really be stopped: 17 Bg2 (17 Bd2 Bae8 18 Bd3 Ba4! 19 b3 Bf6) 17...Bxe3 18 Bxe3 Bae8 19 0-0-0 Bxe3+, etc.

13...Bxh2 14 Bxh2 f5 15 g3

Following 15 0-0-0 Bh6 16 Be1 fxe4 17 f4 Bxf4, Black has an extra passed pawn and two bishops.

15...Bh6

Or 15...Bb4+ 16 Bd1 fxe4.

16 Bd2 B5!?

Black finds a nice idea to activate more pieces; 16...fxe4 17 f4 Bf6 would also result in a winning game.

17 Bh2??!

After 17 cxb5 Bd7 18 a4 fxe4 19 f4 a6! Black opens lines everywhere.

17...fxe4 18 f4 Bf6 19 Bc2 Bb8! 20 cxb5 Bxe3 21 Bxe3 Bxb5 22 Bab1 Bc5+ 23 Bd2 Bxd5+

Now it's quickly over.

24 Be1 c5 25 Bf1 Bf8 26 Be2 Bd3! 27 Bc1 Bd4 28 Bf1 Be3 29 Bf2 Ba6 30 Bd2 Bxe2+ 0-1

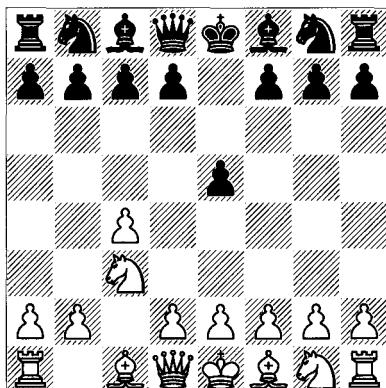
A beautiful example of sustained initiative by Black. But the gambit idea with 6 Bc3 and 7 Be2 might attract your interest in the obscure move 2 Bf3.

By normal standards, this has been an extremely long introduction to White's second-move options. But a student can't truly understand 1 c4 e5 without appreciating why a Reversed Sicilian is palatable for Black at all.

3 Introduction to 2 $\mathbb{Q}c3$: Black Plays Flexibly

1 c4 e5 2 $\mathbb{Q}c3$ (D)

B



Having looked at some other moves in the last chapter, you can see how 2 $\mathbb{Q}c3$ might be favoured. It controls the key squares e4 and d5, yet doesn't commit White to a central pawn-structure. For example, 2 $\mathbb{Q}c3$ leaves open the possibilities of playing d3, d4, e3 and e4, which is not the case with 2 d3 and 2 e3 (at least not in one move). Nor does it create a hole (as does 2 e4), or allow for an answer which renders it slow or irrelevant (for example, 2 a3 lets Black use a ...g6 solution, and most of the moves we considered in the last chapter were vulnerable to 2...c6).

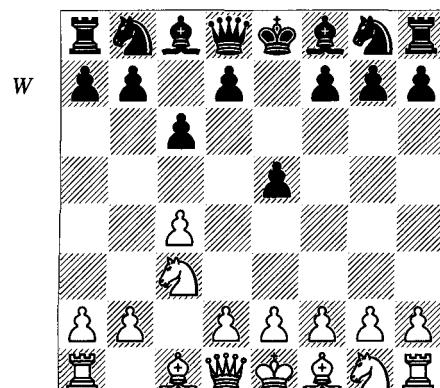
After 2 $\mathbb{Q}c3$, Black's traditional main lines begin with 2... $\mathbb{Q}f6$ and 2... $\mathbb{Q}c6$. But masters and grandmasters are very fond of some other replies, especially 2...d6 and 2... $\mathbb{Q}b4$, ultra-flexible moves which have been proven to give good counterplay. The assorted variations stemming from them contain an astonishing number of themes and ideas which are common to the rest of the English Opening. Furthermore, the elastic nature of 2...d6 and 2... $\mathbb{Q}b4$ allows Black to have an equal say in the pawn-formations that result out of the opening, something he

may not be able to do in variations growing out of 2... $\mathbb{Q}f6$ and 2... $\mathbb{Q}c6$. At the same time, White has exceptional leeway in picking his own way through the opening. Some would say this is chess as it should be.

Before turning to those moves, let's continue to pursue the philosophy that less frequently played alternatives can be as instructive as the normal ones. I think that a glance at rare and even inferior moves will help us understand what White wants from these positions, and what it is that Black should avoid. Following these moves I shall take a fairly close look at 2...f5, a periodically-played move which is useful to understand because of the typical structures that it leads to.

a) 2...b6?! doesn't go well with ...e5 (better with ...e6, to add to the bishop's influence along the long diagonal). 3 $\mathbb{Q}f3$ is the simplest reply: 3... $\mathbb{Q}c6$ (3...d6?! 4 d4 exd4 5 $\mathbb{Q}xd4$ gives White space and superior development while weakening Black's light squares to boot) 4 e3 with d4 next is an excellent course for White. Naturally 4 g3 is also good, if unassuming.

b) 2...c6 (D), which is perfectly fine after 2 d3, 2 e3 and 2 a3, gives White two good responses.

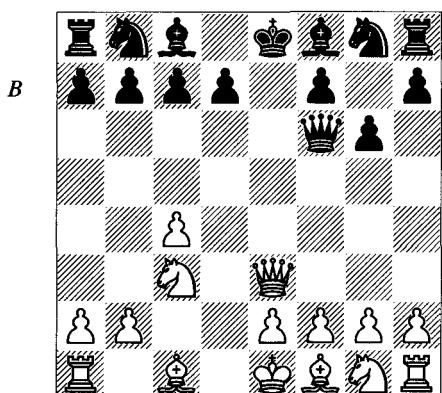


First, according to the ideas discussed in the first two volumes, the move ...c6 should be a red flag for 3 d4, since a queen on d4 cannot be attacked by a knight on c6. Thus, should Black play 3...exd4 4 ♜xd4, he ends up short of space; e.g., 4...♝f6 (Black achieves nothing after 4...♞a6 5 e4 ♜b4 6 ♜d1 and 7 a3; 4...♝f6 may be best, although even the exchange of queens by 5 ♜f3 ♜xd4 6 ♜xd4 is awkward for Black because of his weakness down the d-file and White's greater command of territory) 5 e4 d6 6 ♜f4 followed by 0-0-0, when the pawn on d6 has to be tended to.

Instead of 3...exd4, 3...d5! may be best. Perhaps you remember the line 1 d4 d5 2 c4 c6 3 ♜c3 e5 from Volume 2, the so-called Winawer Counter-Gambit (and also mentioned on page 17 of this volume). By strange means, we've transposed to it! I believe that White gets some advantage here; theory also leans that way, but isn't definite on the point.

Finally, the most obvious move after 2 ♜c3 c6 is 3 ♜f3. There follows 3...d6 (the alternatives are uninspiring) 4 d4, when Black does best to go for a type of Old Indian Defence by 4...♝d7 5 e4 ♜gf6. That position is of course playable, but White is generally thought to stand better with his space advantage.

c) 2...g6 runs into a similar problem: 3 d4! exd4?! (3...d6 4 ♜f3 ♜d7, but again, not everyone wants to play a set-up with so little space) 4 ♜xd4 ♜f6 (best, in view of 4...♜f6?? 5 ♜g5 and ♜d5, winning) 5 ♜e3+! (D) (this may be the best of many moves that have been played here).



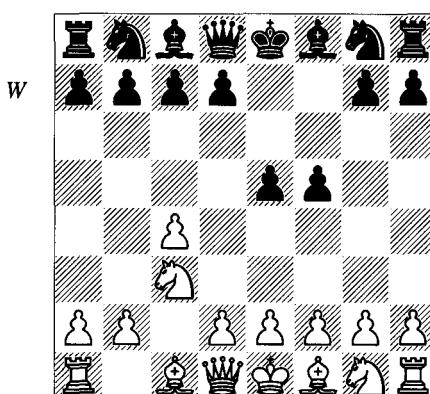
5...♝e6 (5...♝e7 6 ♜d5 transposes; after any other move, 6 ♜d5 is too strong, the best try

being 5...♛d8!? 6 ♜d5 ♜g7 7 ♜d2! ♜e7 8 ♜c3 ♜xd5 9 cxd5 f6 10 ♜d4 ♜e7 11 e4, etc.) 6 ♜d5 ♜xe3 (but 6...♞a6 7 ♜d4 f6 8 ♜f3 c6 9 ♜f4 is very pleasant for White) 7 ♜xe3 ♜a6 8 ♜d4! f6 9 0-0-0 ♜f7 10 ♜f3 c6 11 ♜f4 with a clear advantage for White.

Now let's move on to some more important answers to 2 ♜c3.

Advancing the f-Pawn

1 c4 e5 2 ♜c3 f5 (D)



In many variations that stem from 1...e5, Black can contest the centre and grab space with the move ...f5. Generally, Black would like to maintain his e- and f-pawns on the 4th rank for a while, building up with moves like ...♝f6, ...d6, and perhaps ...g6, ...♝g7 with ...♞c6 or ...c6; we'll see that in several lines. The immediate 2...f5 has been played by some strong players, but it requires that Black shift strategies if White makes a direct challenge.

3 d4!

This seems to lose a tempo after 3...exd4 and ...♞c6, but note that Black's ...f5 is a non-developing move. In addition, advancing the f-pawn creates weaknesses, with the result that Black's control of e4 comes at the cost of a certain looseness. Compare 2...d6 3 d4!? exd4 4 ♜xd4 ♜c6 below.

3 e3 followed by d4 is less pointed but reasonably effective. This may afford White a small advantage (although that's not clear), simply because Black has to respond to d4-d5. The

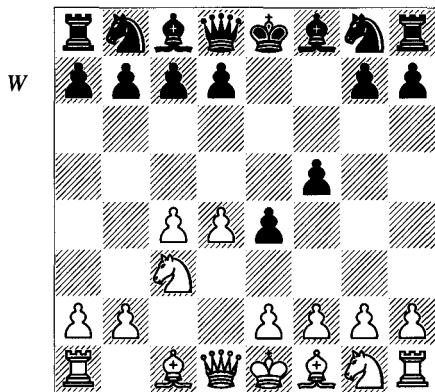
classic game Réti–Romih, London 1927 shows model play versus a kind of ...e4 structure that we'll see repeatedly in variations to come:

3...♜f6 4 d4 e4 5 ♜h3! ♜b4 6 ♜b3 ♜xc3+ 7 ♜xc3 ♜c6 8 ♜e2 d6 9 0-0-0-0 10 b3 ♜d7?! 11 ♜b2 ♜e7 12 ♜f4 ♜ae8 13 ♜ac1 ♜c8 14 ♜d5 ♜d8 15 f4! a6 16 ♜xf6+ ♜xf6 17 d5 ♜b8 18 c5 c6 19 ♜fd1 ♜e7 20 cxd6 ♜xd6 21 dxc6 ♜xc6 22 ♜d8+ ♜f8 23 ♜b4 ♜xd8 24 ♜xe7 ♜d7 25 ♜c4+ 1-0.

After 3 d4, we'll look at two game excerpts expressing different philosophies by Black:

Duczynski – R. Novak
Czech Team Ch 1995

3...e4 (D)



This is a standard pawn-structure, but normally Black's e-pawn advance either comes with tempo (attacking a knight on f3) or when White's c1-bishop is shut in by a pawn on e3. Here White has a number of good moves (such as 4 ♜h3), two of which directly exploit Black's slightly overextended pawn-structure.

4 g4!?

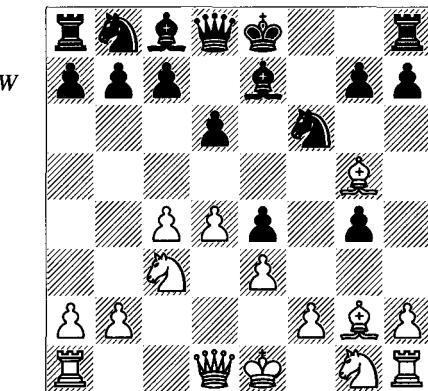
White plays the most radical (and fun) move, undermining Black's structure immediately. 4 f3 is also promising, because 4...exf3 surrenders the centre; White can choose between 5 ♜xf3 and 5 exf3, having in mind ♜d3, ♜g2, etc. Nor does 4...♜f6 5 ♜g5! look desirable for Black. Maybe 4...♜b4 is best, when 5 ♜h3! introduces the idea of ♜g5, as well as planning ♜f4.

4...fxg4

Upon 4...g6 5 gxf5 gxf5 6 ♜h3!, f4 becomes a pure outpost for occupation by White's knight

or other pieces; he is better developed and can easily exploit the g-file and Black's weak king-side squares.

5 ♜g2 ♜f6 6 ♜g5! ♜e7 7 e3 d6 (D)



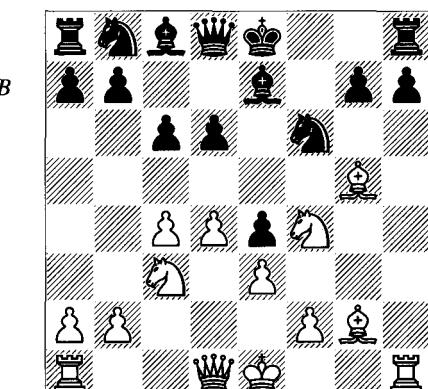
8 h3! gxh3

8...g3, preventing the opening of the h-file, is often the way to cut down White's attack in such positions. Here, however, after 9 fxg3, Black's e-pawn won't last long and he'll end up with no compensation.

9 ♜xh3

Even 9 ♜xh3 ♜xh3 10 ♜xh3 would be good. The point of White's pawn sacrifice is to take over the light squares, with a few important side benefits such as accelerated development and the open h-file.

9...c6 10 ♜f4 (D)



Threatening ♜xf6 and ♜h5+, as well as simply ♜g6.

10...♜f5 11 ♜xf6 ♜xf6 12 ♜xe4! ♜xe4 13 ♜xe4

White has a winning advantage. Black can hardly defend against $\mathbb{W}h5+$, whereas White also has ideas such as $\mathbb{Q}g6$, $\mathbb{Q}e6$, d5, etc. The idea of the h3 sacrifice is one that recurs in various environments, notably in the Dutch Defence.

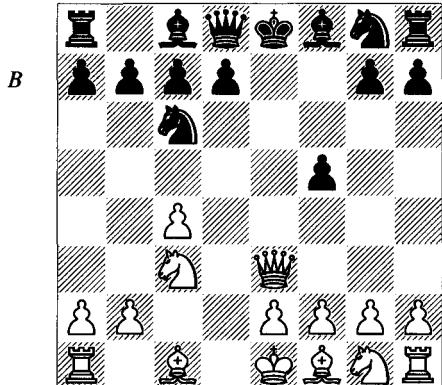
Banas – Westerinen
Gausdal 1988

3... $\mathbb{x}d4$ 4 $\mathbb{W}xd4$ $\mathbb{Q}c6$

Instead of 3...e4, Black more often tries to gain time by this means.

5 $\mathbb{W}e3+$ (D)

Among several options, this check is the most awkward for Black to meet, because it doesn't accede to a pure loss of tempo and delays his desired development by ... $\mathbb{Q}f6$.

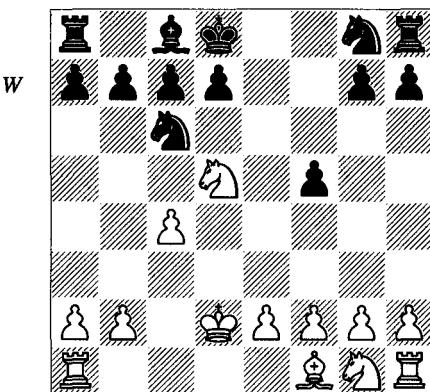


5... $\mathbb{Q}f7?!$

Black's king sidesteps; this is the standard solution to his problems, logically hoping for ... $\mathbb{Q}f6$, ... $\mathbb{Q}b4$ and ... $\mathbb{E}e8$ with rapid development and counterattack. Instead, 5... $\mathbb{Q}e7?!$ 6 $\mathbb{Q}d5$ leaves Black tied up, when White has $\mathbb{Q}f3/\mathbb{Q}h3$ and $\mathbb{Q}d2-c3$ as plausible follow-ups. Furthermore, 5... $\mathbb{Q}ce7?!$ is strongly met by 6 $\mathbb{Q}f3$ $\mathbb{Q}f6$ 7 $\mathbb{W}d3$; White intends $\mathbb{Q}g5$ and 0-0-0.

But 5... $\mathbb{W}e7$ is playable, and only mildly in White's favour after 6 $\mathbb{Q}d5$ (6 $\mathbb{W}g3?!$ $\mathbb{Q}f6!)$ 6... $\mathbb{W}xe3$ 7 $\mathbb{Q}xe3$ $\mathbb{Q}b4+!$ 8 $\mathbb{Q}d2$ (8 $\mathbb{Q}d1$ $\mathbb{Q}d6!$ has done all right in a few games) 8... $\mathbb{Q}xd2+$ 9 $\mathbb{Q}xd2$ $\mathbb{Q}d8$ (D).

This position is noteworthy: the pawn-structures are mirror images of each other, both sides have one knight out, and both kings have moved!

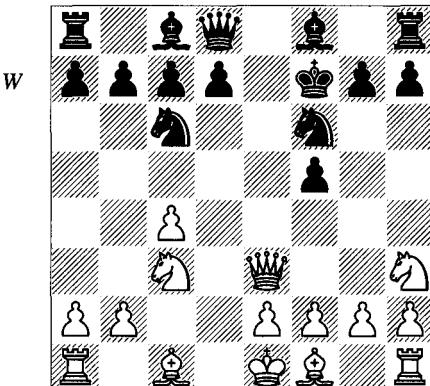


Black's bad bishop, restricted by the pawn on f5, is analogous to White's on f1, blocked by c4. Of course, White's knight is already on d5, whereas Black will have to work to get his on e4. Play might go 10 $\mathbb{Q}f3$ $\mathbb{Q}ge7$ 11 g3 d6 12 $\mathbb{Q}g2$. Here White can reorganize in various ways (for example, $\mathbb{Q}f4$, $\mathbb{H}hd1$ and $\mathbb{Q}c3$) and maintain some pressure.

6 $\mathbb{Q}h3!$

Naturally there are other moves. This one keeps both the options of $\mathbb{Q}g5+$ and $\mathbb{Q}f4$ (further controlling d5) alive.

6... $\mathbb{Q}f6$ (D)



7 $\mathbb{W}d2?!$

White both increases control over d5 and gets out of way of ... $\mathbb{E}e8$. 7 $\mathbb{W}d3?!$ is another way of doing the same thing.

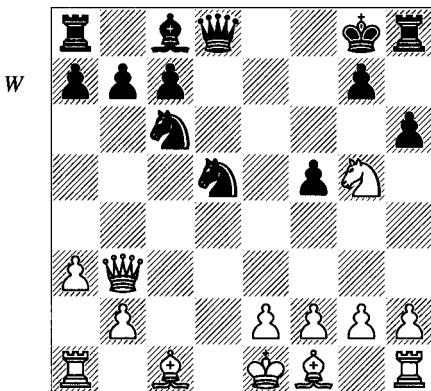
7... $\mathbb{Q}b4$ 8 a3 $\mathbb{Q}xc3$ 9 $\mathbb{W}xc3$

Now White has the two bishops, so Black should develop quickly and try to play dynamically to open things up:

9...d5

9... $\mathbb{Q}e4$ 10 $\mathbb{W}c2$ isn't completely clear, but assuming that White can hold the fort for a few moves, the bishops will be a real force in the long run. Again, Black should hurry. A crazy variation is 10...d6 11 f3 $\mathbb{Q}c5$ 12 b4 $\mathbb{Q}d4$ 13 $\mathbb{W}c3$ $\mathbb{W}f6$! (13... $\mathbb{Q}ce6$ 14 $\mathbb{Q}b2$) 14 bxc5 $\mathbb{Q}xf3+$ 15 $\mathbb{W}xf3$ $\mathbb{W}xa1$ 16 $\mathbb{W}d5+$ $\mathbb{Q}f6$ (16... $\mathbb{Q}e8$ 17 $\mathbb{Q}d2$! with the idea 17... $\mathbb{W}a2+$ 18 $\mathbb{Q}c3$) 17 $\mathbb{W}d2$ dx5 18 e4! or 18 g4!. Over the board, I wouldn't count upon all this happening!

10 $\mathbb{Q}g5+$ $\mathbb{Q}g8$ 11 cxd5 $\mathbb{Q}xd5$ 12 $\mathbb{W}b3$ h6 (D)



13 e4! hxg5 14 exd5?!

Not a terrible move, but Shatskes suggested the extremely strong 14 $\mathbb{Q}c4$!; for example, 14... $\mathbb{H}h4$!? (14... $\mathbb{Q}ce7$ 15 exd5 grants White a large advantage: 15... $\mathbb{Q}g6$! 16 d6+ $\mathbb{Q}h7$ 17 dx7 $\mathbb{Q}e8+$ 18 $\mathbb{Q}f1$ $\mathbb{W}xc7$ 19 $\mathbb{Q}xg5$) 15 $\mathbb{Q}xd5+$ (or here 15 0-0 $\mathbb{Q}d4$ 16 $\mathbb{Q}xd5+$ $\mathbb{Q}h8$ 17 $\mathbb{W}d1$ c6 18 g3!) 15... $\mathbb{Q}h7$ 16 $\mathbb{Q}e3$ with 0-0-0 to come, when White's in charge, since 16...f4 17 $\mathbb{Q}c5$ does Black no good.

All this comes from analysis from over 30 years ago and it seems to hold up in every particular!

14... $\mathbb{Q}d4$ 15 $\mathbb{W}c4$?

15 $\mathbb{W}c3$ keeps some advantage.

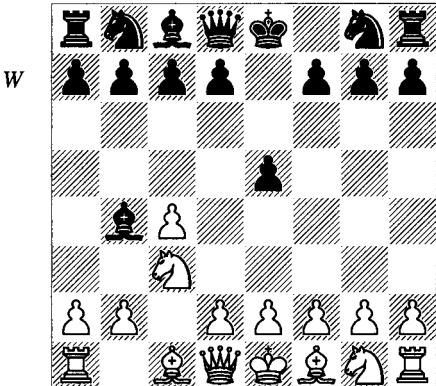
15... $\mathbb{H}h4$!

Black has the initiative and better game, so we'll stop at this point.

The Bishop Sortie 2... $\mathbb{Q}b4$

1 c4 e5 2 $\mathbb{Q}c3$ $\mathbb{Q}b4$ (D)

It wasn't that long ago (relative to the history of the English Opening) that 2... $\mathbb{Q}b4$ would



have been looked upon as a questionable if not downright weak way for Black to respond to 2 $\mathbb{Q}c3$. True, the move ... $\mathbb{Q}b4$ is at least an option at some point in many main lines of the 1 c4 e5 English, but not before a black knight is developed, and not when the bishop can immediately be attacked by $\mathbb{Q}d5$! But in the 1990s, the world's elite grandmasters began to play 2... $\mathbb{Q}b4$ on a regular basis, such that it became one of the most popular variations of the English Opening at the top ranks. Today 2... $\mathbb{Q}b4$ is alive and well among grandmasters, and is a line that has to be coped with by most 1 c4 players (those who play 1 c4 e5 2 g3 notably excepted).

Clearly, one of Black's plans is to play ... $\mathbb{Q}xc3$, doubling White's pawns. This idea is seen in future chapters after 2... $\mathbb{Q}f6$; for instance, 3 g3 $\mathbb{Q}b4$ or 3 $\mathbb{Q}f3$ $\mathbb{Q}c6$ 4 g3 (or 4 e3 $\mathbb{Q}b4$) 4... $\mathbb{Q}b4$. Why is Black bypassing 2... $\mathbb{Q}f6$? In a word: flexibility. With a knight on f6, Black can't expand on the kingside by ...f5. Nor can he follow the often-desirable move ...e4 with ...f5, supporting the advanced pawn. Black might want to place the knight on e7, and there are other considerations. For example, in cases where White plays $\mathbb{Q}d5$ and Black responds with ...c6, the advanced knight doesn't have the option of $\mathbb{Q}xf6$ and will often have to retreat.

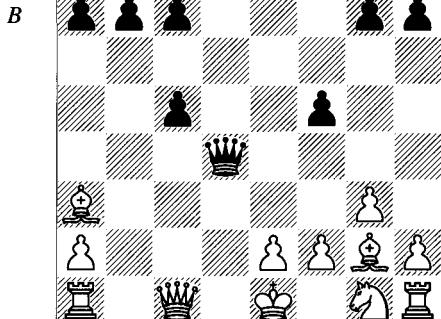
Looking on the bright side for White, 2... $\mathbb{Q}b4$ is a committal move that gives him the opportunity to set up pawn-structures that he normally won't be able to. Furthermore, while the obvious 3 $\mathbb{Q}d5$ may eventually lose time, for the moment it attacks the bishop and paves the way for an early d4.

A study of 2 $\mathbb{Q}c3$ $\mathbb{Q}b4$ is extremely useful for the practical player. It can lead to positions

whose basic pawn-structures and themes are not only the same as in many other English Opening variations, but also very close to what we find in the Nimzo-Indian, Bogo-Indian, and even the King's Indian!

Let's look at a series of games to get a feel for what can happen in this rich variation, and as a consequence, what can happen in the main lines of the 1 c4 e5 English. Before investigating the main line with 3 $\mathbb{Q}d5$, we'll look at games with a couple of moderately out-of-favour (although sound) moves, in order to clarify what the main issues are.

I should mention that the natural 3 g3 will often transpose to other lines. For instance, 3... $\mathbb{Q}f6$ is the main-line variation 2 $\mathbb{Q}c3$ $\mathbb{Q}f6$ 3 g3 $\mathbb{Q}b4$, which is an attractive choice; see Chapter 4. Black can also go his own way; for example, 3... $\mathbb{Q}xc3$ 4 bxc3 d6 5 $\mathbb{Q}g2$ f5!? when in Hodgson-Psakhis, Metz 1994, White tried the exotic 6 c5!? dxc5 (6...d5! seems safe enough, and if 7 $\mathbb{Q}f3$, 7... $\mathbb{Q}c6$) 7 $\mathbb{Q}a3$ $\mathbb{W}d6$ 8 d4! exd4 9 cxd4 $\mathbb{W}xd4$ 10 $\mathbb{W}c1!$ (D).



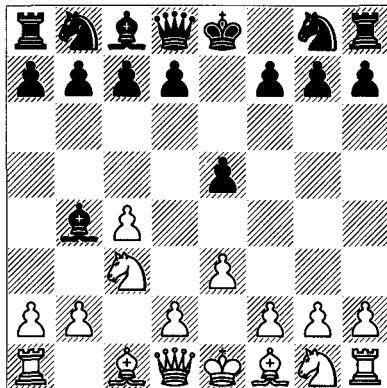
Here White had a powerful bishop-pair, open lines, and a big lead in development for his two pawns. The c-pawn isn't really defensible in view of 10... $\mathbb{Q}d7$ 11 $\mathbb{Q}b2$ $\mathbb{W}g4$ 12 $\mathbb{Q}f3$ $\mathbb{W}g6$ 13 $\mathbb{Q}h3!$ threatening $\mathbb{Q}f4$.

Lau – Mainka Budapest 1990

1 c4 e5 2 $\mathbb{Q}c3$ $\mathbb{Q}b4$ 3 e3!? (D)

3... $\mathbb{Q}xc3!$ 4 bxc3

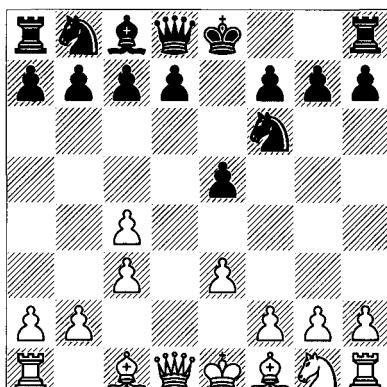
Which way to recapture is always a major decision. We'll run across this repeatedly in this



B

book, so it's worth setting the stage now. Recapturing towards the centre by 4 bxc3 gives White a valuable extra centre pawn, a factor which should never be underestimated. Nevertheless, the resulting pawn-structure has its own drawbacks, especially if Black can exploit the light squares (for example, by ...e4, controlling d3). It's also a bit difficult for White to get his bishops out to productive squares because the centre is congested.

The alternative recapture 4 dxc3 has its own pluses and minuses. Again, getting White's bishops out is a key consideration, and the c1-bishop will be served best if White can achieve the e4 advance. Black will generally try to prevent this and cramp White's game by 4... $\mathbb{Q}f6$ (D).



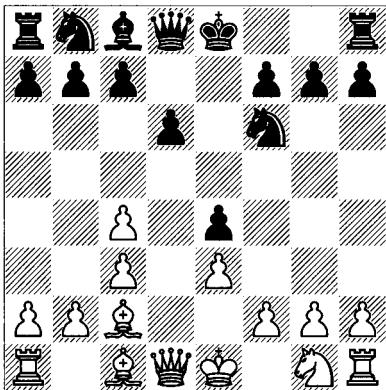
W

Now there can arise varied and instructive situations:

a) 5 $\mathbb{W}c2$, to cover e4, can be answered normally by 5...d6 or aggressively by 5...e4; compare White's other 5th moves. In fact, 5...d5!?

6 cxd5 ♜xd5 is also unclear (bishops versus space).

b) 5 ♘d3!? e4 6 ♘c2 d6 (D).

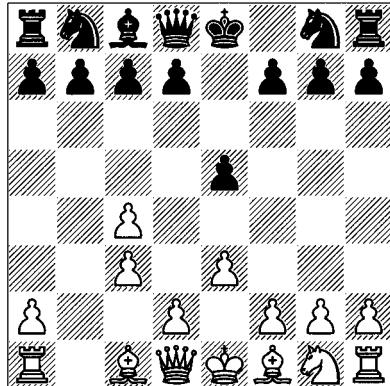


W

Black's cramping pawn counteracts White's bishop-pair, so White will try to undermine it. Typical play would be 7 ♘e2 0-0 8 ♘g3 ♜e7. Now White can only free himself by f3, but then there are new weaknesses which compensate Black for White's bishops: 9 f3! exf3 10 ♜xf3 ♘c6 11 0-0 ♘e5 12 ♜f4 ♘d7 and Black's e5 outpost makes his position too solid to break down directly, whereas White has some weak squares on the e-file. Probably White should combine e4 and ♘f5, when ...♜xf5 levels things.

c) Maybe White should insist upon 5 e4, when Black could simply play 5...d6 or 5...0-0, leading to a standard type of position in which White's lost tempo of e3-e4 helps Black consolidate, with an interesting game ahead. Alternatively, Black can choose to liquidate by 5...♞xe4!? 6 ♜d5! ♘f6 (6...♞g5!? 7 ♜xe5+ ♘e6) 7 ♜xe5+ ♜e7 8 ♜xe7+ ♜xe7. This produces a position in which White's bishops in the open field are a force, all the more so if an endgame arises. In positions with bishops versus knights, the side with the knights should generally try to create outposts for them by means of pawn-breaks, which is not possible here. And although White's pawn-structure is not ideal, it takes a little experience to understand that it meshes reasonably well with the bishops. This structure comes up in other openings, most famously on the black side of the Ruy Lopez. Having said all that, White's advantage is a limited one.

Let's return to the game with 4 bxc3 (D):



B

4...d6

4...♞f6 5 d4 (5 d3 e4!? 6 dxе4 d6 7 ♘d3 0-0 leaves White a pawn up, but his c-pawns are weak) 5...e4!? (in this kind of position, Black often simply defends, reasoning that d5 or dxе5 only hurts White's pawn-structure; for example, 5...♞c6, and on 6 d5 ♘e7 7 d6!? cxд6 8 ♘a3, White's undeveloped kingside indicates that Black must have good play after 8...d5) 6 c5? (it's instructive that this move, liquidating White's doubled pawns, is usually a mistake, because of a ...b6 response) 6...0-0 7 ♘e2 b6 8 cxб6 axб6, Cebalo-Barlov, Yugoslav Ch, Budva 1986. Black opens the a-file *vis-à-vis* White's isolated a-pawn, and ...b6 allows Black to concentrate upon light squares with some combination of ...♞a6, ...d5 and/or ...♞c6-a5. The game was disastrous for White, and entertaining: 9 ♘g3 d5 10 c4 ♘a6 11 ♜b3 c5 12 dxс5 ♘bd7! 13 cxб6 dxс4!? 14 ♜b4?! ♘xb6 15 ♘a3 ♜e8 16 ♘e2? ♘bd5 17 ♜d6 ♜a5+ 18 ♘f1 c3 0-1. Black wins a piece and then some.

5 d4 ♘c6 6 ♘f3 ♘f6 7 ♘a3 (D)

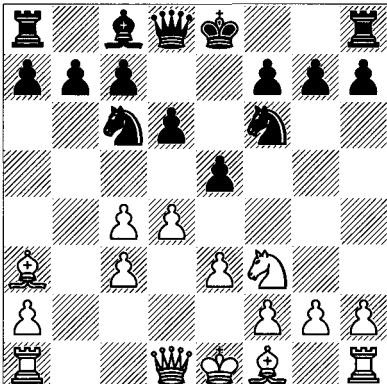
A seeming advantage of bxc3 over dxс3 is that the bishop can come to the dynamic diagonal a3-f8. Sometimes this is effective, although often that diagonal can be blocked by ...d6 or ...c5. The question is whether White's bishop can find a target, for example by c5 and cxд6.

7...e4! 8 ♘d2 0-0 9 ♘e2 ♜e8 10 h3

White is anticipating answering ...♞f5 with g4 and perhaps h4. As it happens, Black's bishop is also effective on the other diagonal:

10...b6 11 ♜c2 ♜e7 12 0-0 ♘b7 13 ♜ael!

B



Preparing f4 by protecting e3.

13...♝b8!

Intending ...♝bd7. White's pieces are cramped and his queenside pawns are looking increasingly stuck, so he correctly grabs some space.

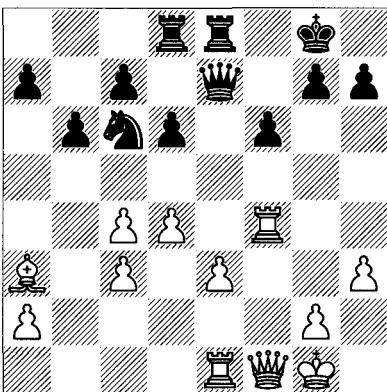
14 f4 exf3 15 ♜xf3 ♜xf3 16 ♜xf3 ♜e4

Black wins the outpost. White gets it back, but at the cost of further simplification and exposure of his other weakness on c4:

17 ♜f4! ♜xd2 18 ♜xd2 ♜c6! 19 ♜d3 ♜ad8

20 ♜f1 f6 (D)

W



This move both restrains White's mobile pawn-centre and clears a square for the queen. Black has no need to open the position because he already has a weak point on c4 to focus on.

21 e4 ♜f7 22 ♜f5 ♜a5 23 d5

Now c4 is protected, but White's pawns are immobile, including the backward e-pawn along the open file. Furthermore, e5 is a wonderful outpost, whereas if White's bishop strays, Black might put a knight on the other outpost on c5.

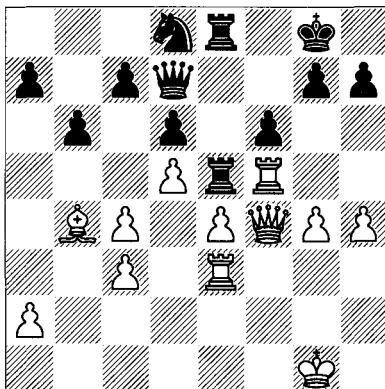
23...♜d7 24 ♜b4 ♜b7 25 g4!

Correctly trying to disturb things with g5 before Black puts him utterly on the defensive.

25...♝de7 26 ♜f4 ♜e5 27 h4 ♜d7 28 ♜e3 ♜d8? (D)

The knight heads for f7. 28...♝a4! is also good.

W



29 g5? ♜xf5?!

A decisive tactic was available in 29...fxg5 30 hxg5 ♜xf5! 31 exf5 ♜xe3 with material and a killing position. The opening themes have extended well into the middlegame. Now I'll simply show the moves; notice how the occupation of the e5 outpost becomes decisive in the end:

30 exf5 ♜xe3 31 ♜xe3 fxg5 32 ♜xg5 ♜f7 33 ♜e3 ♜e5 34 c5 bxc5 35 ♜xc5 ♜xf5 36 ♜xa7 ♜b1+ 37 ♜g2 ♜xa2+ 38 ♜g3 ♜xd5 39 ♜d4 c5 0-1

Krasenkov – Kiselev

USSR Ch semi-final, Moscow 1989

1 c4 e5 2 ♜c3 ♜b4 3 ♜b3 ♜c6 4 e3?!

4 ♜f3 is a sound developing move that threatens ♜xe5. The obvious answers are 4...d6 and 4...♜e7; furthermore, 4...a5 5 a3 ♜c5 is satisfactory. Then White's queen is a bit out of place on b3, blocking the b-pawn, but the whole game lies ahead.

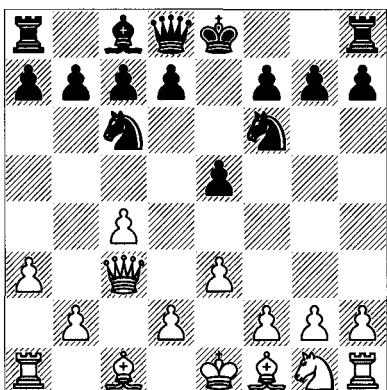
4...♝f6 5 a3

After the natural 5 ♜ge2 0-0 6 g3, Black has options, but a sample idea is 6...♜e7 (or 6...♜e8 7 ♜g2 e4!) 7 a3 ♜xc3 8 ♜xc3 e4 (more interesting than 8...b6 9 ♜g2 ♜a5 10 ♜c2 ♜b7) 9 ♜g2 d6 with equality. Then 10 ♜d5?! allows the effective pawn sacrifice 10...♝xd5 11 cxd5 ♜e5! (a good idea to remember) 12 ♜xe4 ♜h3

and Black prevents castling while controlling the light squares; 13...f5 will come almost regardless of White's move, with a real advantage.

5...♗xc3 6 ♜xc3 (D)

B



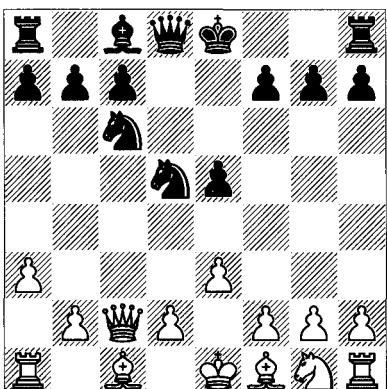
This position could also have arisen by the move-order 2 ♘c3 ♘f6 3 e3 ♜b4 4 ♜c2 ♘c6 5 a3 ♜xc3 6 ♜xc3. White has the two bishops, but has invested time in their acquisition.

6...0-0

Black can try to take the initiative immediately by 6...d5. White best responds with 7 cxd5, opening a path for his king's bishop (otherwise, ...d4 will disturb his development still further). Then we have an important type of position closely resembling a Sicilian Defence in reverse, but where White has two bishops and Black an extra knight. Both recaptures have their own justification:

a) 7...♘xd5 8 ♜c2 (D) is a Taimanov/Kan Sicilian without Black's f8-bishop and White's b1-knight.

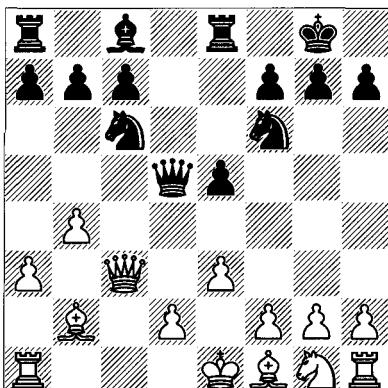
B



That is, the Sicilian Defence line goes 1 e4 c5 2 ♘f3 e6 3 d4 cxd4 4 ♘xd4 a6 5 ♘c3 ♜c7. In the English Opening position, whom does this trade-off favour? It's a difficult question, because White has the bishop-pair and Black is able to castle very quickly. Notice that the f8-bishop would be Black's 'bad' bishop, which would tend to get stuck on the passive square e7, or be blocked by the e-pawn on f6 or d6. For White's part, he has a central pawn-majority, and the usual fortification versus attack that the Taimanov/Paulsen variations afford (Black's knights are limited by the pawns on e3 and a3). He can also launch his minority attack (b4) quickly without a knight on the queenside getting in the way. You could play either side of this unique position.

b) Katrein-Sherzer, Philadelphia 1990 went 7...♜xd5!? 8 b4 (White expands and incidentally prevents ...♘a5-b3) 8...0-0 9 ♜b2 ♜e8! (D) (now b5 can be answered by ...♘d4!).

W



10 ♘f3 ♜g4! 11 ♜c4 ♜d7 12 ♜b5!? ♜e4, and here instead of 13 ♜xc6?, ceding the light squares, 13 ♜c2! ♜xf3 14 gxf3 ♘g5 15 0-0-0 ♘xf3 16 h4! has the idea 17 ♜e4. There might follow 16...♜ad8 17 ♜e2! e4 18 d3 with complications in which White has open lines and some advantage.

7 b4 d5 8 cxd5 ♘xd5 9 ♜c2 ♜e8 10 b5 ♘d4! (D)

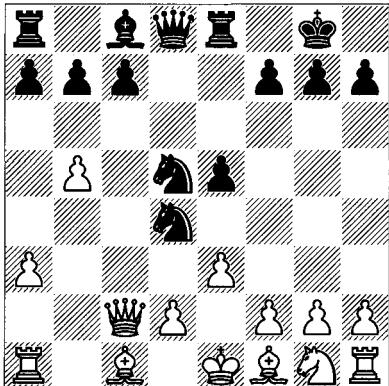
A standard piece sacrifice that rips open lines against White's king. The same idea frequently occurs in the Sicilian Defence.

11 exd4 exd4+ 12 ♘e2 ♜f6

Black threatens ...d3.

13 d3??

W



Better is 13 ♜b2! ♜f5 (13... ♜f4 14 d3 a6) 14 d3 c5!? and Black has an attack, but nothing definite (15 bxc6 is answered by 15... ♜ac8).

13... ♜g4 14 f3 ♜xf3! 15 gxf3 ♜h4+ 16 ♜d2

Even two pieces ahead, White's position is dubious; the twin ideas of ... ♜c3 and ... ♜e3 are particularly irritating. We're well out of the opening and the play became error-ridden, so I'll stop here.

Illescas – Sisniega Novi Sad Olympiad 1990

1 c4 e5 2 ♜c3 ♜b4 3 ♜f3 ♜xc3 4 dxc3 d6

Instead, 4... ♜c6 5 e4 d6 6 ♜d3 introduces an alternative scheme in which the bishop is more ambitiously placed than on g2. White tries to get a head-start with his kingside action. One example went 6... ♜ge7?! 7 ♜h4! (White prevents ...f5, and prepares ♜f5 at the right moment) 7... 0-0 8 ♜f3 ♜e8 9 ♜e3 b6! (Black plays to stop c5, which would extend the range of both white bishops) 10 ♜f5 ♜d8?! 11 h4 ♜e6 12 ♜g4 ♜h8 13 0-0-0 f6 14 g3 ♜f7 15 h5 ♜c5 16 ♜c2 ♜e6 17 b3 a5 18 a4, Milov-Supatashvili, European Ch, Batumi 2002. White has successfully prevented any action by Black, but it's not clear how he can make progress either.

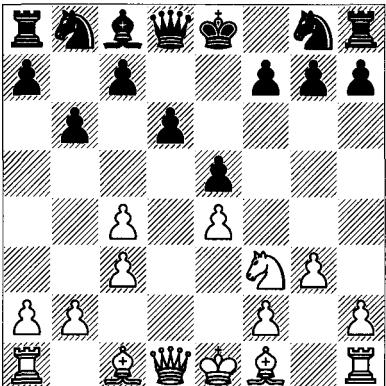
5 e4 b6 6 g3?! (D)

This safe move can't be wholly bad, but White's bishop is too passively placed to fight for a real advantage. 6 ♜d3 would resemble the last note.

6... ♜b7

6... ♜f6 7 ♜e2 ♜b7 seeks to prevent White from playing ♜h4. Then 8 ♜g2?! ♜xe4! 9

B



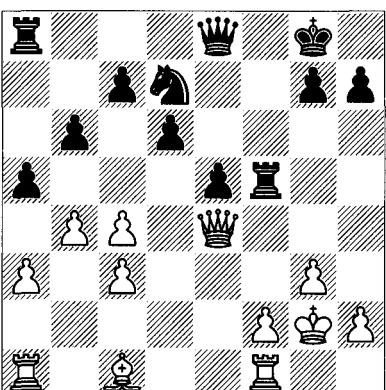
10 ♜xe5 ♜e7 10 ♜xe4 11 ♜xe4 ♜xe5 12 ♜xe5+ dxe5 leaves White with an immobile queenside, somewhat offset by his bishop-versus-knight advantage. It's probably about equal.

7 ♜e2 ♜d7 8 ♜g2 ♜e7?!

Black arranges his pieces to render ♜h4 ineffective (f5 is covered) and keep ...f5 in reserve. The obvious alternative is 8... ♜gf6 9 ♜d2 (9 ♜h4!?) 9... 0-0 (9... a6 with the idea ...b5 is fully playable) 10 0-0 a5 11 b3 ♜c5. Then the position is only a tempo away from the much-played Sicilian line 1 e4 c5 2 ♜f3 ♜c6 3 ♜b5 g6 4 0-0 ♜g7 5 ♜xc6 dxc6 6 d3 e5 7 ♜bd2 ♜e7 8 b3 ♜f6 9 ♜b2 ♜d7 (9... ♜h5!?) 10 a4, which is roughly equal with either colour.

9 0-0 0-0 10 b4 a5! 11 a3 ♜e8? 12 ♜h4 f5! 13 ♜xf5 ♜xf5 14 exf5 ♜xg2 15 ♜xg2 ♜xf5 16 ♜e4! (D)

B



Black has the better long-term pawn-structure, so White tries to scare up play on the weak light squares.

16...♝f7 17 ♜c6 ♜a7!?

17...♝f6 18 ♜xe8+ ♜xe8 is natural and theoretically a touch better for Black, although without outposts for his knight it's hard to do any damage.

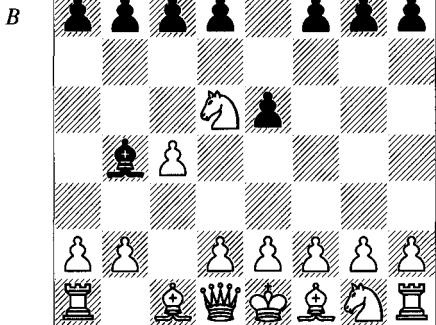
18 c5!? dxc5 19 bxc5 ♜f6 20 ♜d5+ ♜f7 21 ♜xf7+ ♜xf7 22 exb6 cxb6 ½-½

Black decides that his advantage is too small to pursue. A logical game with clear-cut positional themes.

Now let's return to the most popular move after 1 c4 e5 2 ♜c3 ♜b4, namely:

3 ♜d5 (D)

This has the obvious point of attacking the bishop to gain a tempo.

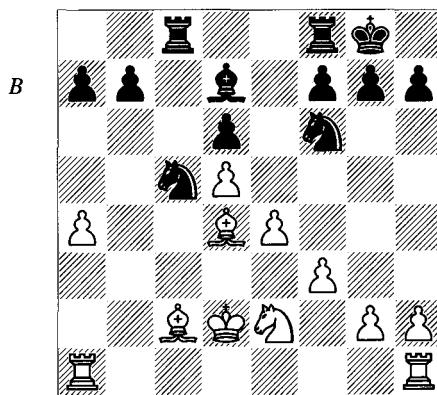


Our main games will involve the moves 3...♜c5 and 3...♜e7. Black has several alternatives, a few of which are perfectly playable; for example:

a) The English Opening can support some strange ideas; for example, 3...♜a6!? (retaining the idea of ...c6) 4 a3 (4 ♜xb4 ♜xb4 5 a3 ♜c6 is one of those many positions in which White's two bishops are neutralized by Black's quicker development, with a likely ...♝f6 and ...d5 to come) 4...♜a5!? 5 b4 c6 6 ♜c3! ♜c7 7 d4!. R.Cook-H.Williamson, correspondence game 2004. Black should probably accept a space disadvantage by 7...♝e7, since 7...d5?! 8 cxd5 cxd5 9 dxe5 ♜xe5 10 ♜b2 followed by ♜f3 and e3 (or even e4) leaves him with a bad isolated pawn.

b) 3...♜a5 is in disrepute at the moment, although I'm not sure that it can't be reinvigorated. At any rate, the established games seem to show how the two bishops can outweigh

other factors if they're just given a little time; for example, 4 b4 c6 5 bxa5 cxd5 6 cxd5 ♜xa5 7 e4 (7 ♜b3 has also had success, supporting ♜a3 and in some cases planning ♜g3) 7...♝f6 8 ♜d3!? (to get castled quickly) 8...♜a6 9 f3 d6 10 ♜b2 ♜c5 11 ♜c2 ♜d7 12 a4 0-0 13 ♜e2 ♜ac8 14 ♜c3 ♜a6 15 d4 exd4 16 ♜xd4 ♜a5+, Lautier-Kotronias, Khalkidhiki 1992, and now 17 ♜d2! ♜xd2+ 18 ♜xd2 (D) was probably the right way to go.



Then White enjoys a standard advantage with two bishops and space. Although Black has a fine outpost on c5 which should not be discounted, he can't easily coordinate to play ...♝fd7 in the near future. Meanwhile, White can put great pressure on the queenside by ♜c3, ♜fb1 and in some cases a5. In addition, he has better prospects in the centre and can even expand on the kingside at some point should it come to that, in order to open a second front.

Poldauf – Kasimdzhanov
European Clubs Cup, Rethymnon 2003

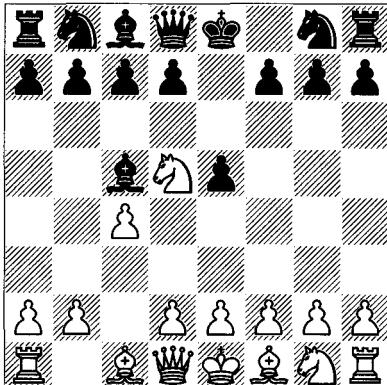
1 c4 e5 2 ♜c3 ♜b4 3 ♜d5 ♜c5 (D)

No mystery here: Black puts his bishop on a natural square and prepares ...c6.

4 ♜f3

The obvious 4 b4 leads to a variety of unique positions; for example, 4...♜d4 (4...♝f8!?) is also played – the third move with the bishop and it's back home! The idea is ...c6, of course, getting the tempo back while attacking b4) 5 ♜b1 c6 6 e3 cxd5 7 exd4, and now the clever 7...d6!? is a suggestion by Karolyi. Then White has to abstain from excessive materialism; e.g.,

W



8 cxd5 $\mathbb{Q}f6$ 9 $\mathbb{Q}b2$ 0-0 10 $\mathbb{Q}c4$ $\mathbb{Q}bd7$ 11 $\mathbb{Q}b3$ $\mathbb{Q}b6$ 12 d3 $\mathbb{Q}f5$, when Black has more than equalized. Although White can hardly stand worse at move 8, Black's central presence gives him a good share of the play.

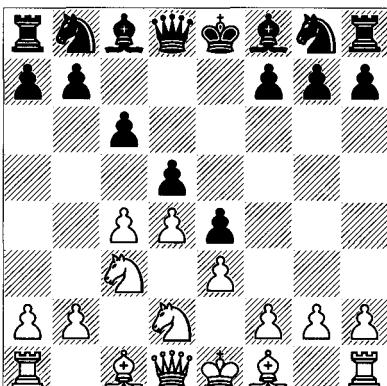
4...e4!?

This is the most critical move. The primary alternative is 4...c6 5 $\mathbb{Q}c3$; for example, 5... $\mathbb{Q}e7$, when White should strike in the centre by either 6 e3 with the idea 6...e4 7 d4! $\mathbb{Q}b4!$ 8 $\mathbb{Q}d2$, or 6 d4 exd4 7 $\mathbb{Q}xd4$ d6 8 g3 (or 8 $\mathbb{Q}f4$, with perhaps a small pull based upon greater control of space) 8... $\mathbb{Q}f6$ 9 $\mathbb{Q}g2$. White's position is preferable, but only just so.

5 $\mathbb{Q}g5!$

This leads to some craziness. Similarly intriguing structural issues arise from 5 d4 $\mathbb{Q}f8!?$ 6 $\mathbb{Q}d2$ c6 7 $\mathbb{Q}c3$ d5 8 e3 (D) with a kind of reversed French Defence, a combination of the Tarrasch and Advance Variations!

B



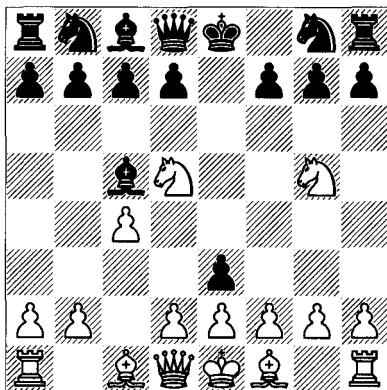
By comparison with the Advance French, White is well ahead on time, but the knight on

d2 isn't as effective as one posted on f4 (by way of e2 or h3), as happens in that line. Also, Black's knight on b8 is arguably better-placed than it would be on d7 (as is the case in the Tarrasch French). So White will probably exert pressure the centre by means of f3, with unclear consequences.

5...e3!? (D)

This exotic interference move looks like the best one! Instead, 5... $\mathbb{Q}xg5!?$ 6 d4 is not what Black wants, nor is 5...c6 6 $\mathbb{Q}xe4$. Finally, after 5...f5 6 d4 $\mathbb{Q}e7$ 7 $\mathbb{Q}f4$ $\mathbb{Q}a6$, White has the clever idea 8 e3 $\mathbb{Q}xg5!?$ 9 $\mathbb{Q}h5+$ g6 10 $\mathbb{Q}xg5$ with a genuine bishop-pair advantage. It's curious that the same idea occurs in the Philidor Defence, which begins 1 e4 e5 2 $\mathbb{Q}f3$ d6!

W



6 d4

6 $\mathbb{Q}h3$ exf2+ 7 $\mathbb{Q}xf2$ $\mathbb{Q}xf2+$ 8 $\mathbb{Q}xf2$ would be an interesting alternative.

6...exf2+ 7 $\mathbb{Q}xf2$ $\mathbb{Q}e7$ 8 $\mathbb{Q}xe7$ $\mathbb{Q}xe7$ 9 e4 d6 10 b3!?

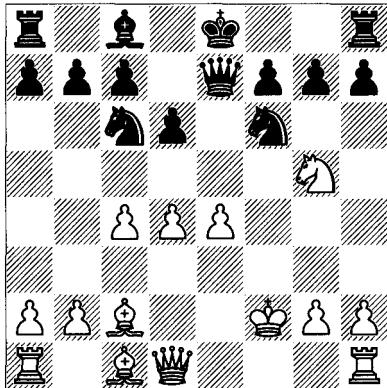
An error in an instructive middlegame situation. More logical is 10 $\mathbb{Q}d3!$ $\mathbb{Q}c6$ 11 $\mathbb{Q}c2!?$ (11 $\mathbb{Q}f3$ $\mathbb{Q}g4$ 12 $\mathbb{Q}e3$) 11... $\mathbb{Q}f6$ (D).

This is Lautier-Kramnik, Cannes 1993. Because of the idea of ...h6 followed by ... $\mathbb{Q}g4$, the best move is 12 h3!, when White has space and the bishops. If he can consolidate by $\mathbb{Q}e1$ and $\mathbb{Q}f3$, which seems likely, he will stand better.

10... $\mathbb{Q}c6$ 11 $\mathbb{Q}f3$ f6?

Trying to restrain the bishops and lock the position. But with the knights, you need the initiative, development, and, hopefully, outposts. Black should move fast by 11... $\mathbb{Q}f6!$ 12 $\mathbb{Q}d3$ $\mathbb{Q}g4+$ 13 $\mathbb{Q}e1$ (not 13 $\mathbb{Q}g1?$ $\mathbb{Q}xd4!$ with the

W



idea 14 ♜xd4 ♛f6) 13...0-0 14 ♛e2 ♛e8. In this case, White is overextended; for example, 15 h3 f5! 16 exf5 ♜xf5! 17 ♛xe7 ♛xe7+ 18 ♛d2 ♜f2 19 ♜xf5 ♛xh1 20 d5 ♜g3!.

12 ♜d3 ♛f7 13 ♜f1 ♜ge7 14 ♜g1

White keeps the bishop-pair and centre. Already this is a near-winning advantage.

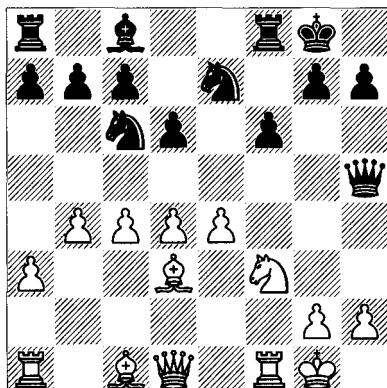
14...♛h5 15 a3

White should play the conventional centralizing move 15 ♜e3!, since it gives him time for ♛d2, connecting rooks.

15...0-0 16 b4 (D)

Again, 16 ♜e3 secures a comfortable advantage. The following moves are irrelevant to the opening, but White's 25th move is typical and noteworthy:

B



16...a6 17 ♜a2! ♛e8 18 ♛e2 ♜g6 19 ♛e1 ♜d7 20 ♛g3 ♜ce7 21 ♜fe1 ♜d8 22 ♜b2 ♜e6 23 h4 h5 24 ♜e3 b6 25 c5! bxc5 26 bxc5 dxc5 27 d5

The point. Both of White's bishops are activated.

27...♜g4 28 ♛xc7 ♜xf3

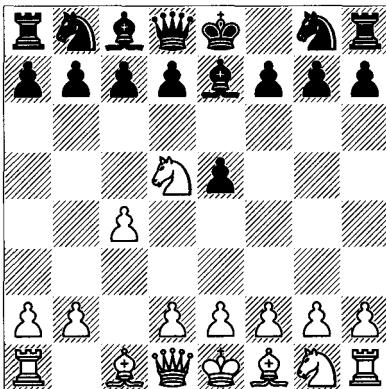
Now 29 ♜xf3! was very strong, because after 29...♜xh4 30 ♜h3 ♜eg6 31 ♜c4, Black can hardly move.

Poldauf – Timman

Bundesliga 2006/7

1 c4 e5 2 ♜c3 ♜b4 3 ♜d5 ♜e7 (D)

W



W

Here Black takes a modern approach to the position, voluntarily giving up the bishop-pair without apparent compensation! But on closer examination, we find a concrete explanation. Let's assume that White captures the bishop, as he normally will on one of the next few moves. This means that three moves of the knight have been consumed to capture a bishop that has moved twice. And if Black recaptures with his queen, he is another piece ahead in development – notice that it is practically unassailable on e7, so the problems associated with getting a queen out too early don't apply here. More importantly, White has no easy way to get his kingside pieces out without subjecting them to attack (♜f3 is met by ...e4), so he can quickly get a cramped position. Black, on the other hand, is just two moves away from castling, and can play for ...d5.

Of course, we needn't feel sorry for White, either. After all, many a master has made a living off using the bishop-pair. Notice too that, as yet, Black has no outposts for his knights. The trade-offs are similar to some lines of the Bogo-Indian and the Nimzo-Indian, in which Black gets ahead in development but White gains the bishop-pair without conceding any

weaknesses. Two standard examples after 1 d4 ♘f6 2 c4 e6 are 3 ♘f3 ♘b4+ 4 ♘bd2 0-0 5 a3 ♘xd2+ and 3 ♘c3 ♘b4 4 ♕c2 0-0 5 a3 ♘xc3+ 6 ♖xc3.

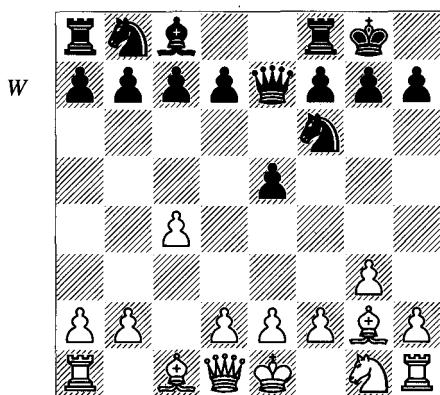
4 g3

White wants to control e4 and d5 from g2. 4 ♘f3 is a perfectly good move that I won't treat independently.

4...♘f6 5 ♘xe7

Oddly enough, winning the bishop-pair makes White's life a bit difficult, because once the slow move g3 is in, White will have trouble getting his g1-knight out. Instead, White can catch up in development by 5 ♘g2 0-0 6 ♘f3; nevertheless, Black experiences few problems following 6...♘xd5 7 cxd5 d6 and ...c6 (...f5 is another idea). Equality is the logical result of 4 g3.

5...♕xe7 6 ♘g2 0-0 (D)



A recurring situation: two bishops versus development and a stronger central presence. How does White get castled?

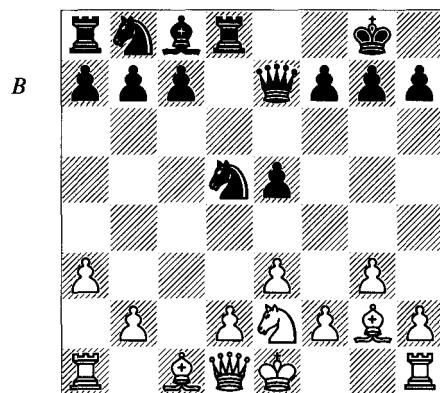
7 e3?

Preparing ♘e2, yet it creates weaknesses on the squares d3 and f3.

a) The problem is that 7 ♘f3 e4 gives Black the initiative and central play following 8 ♘g5 (after 8 ♘d4? ♕c5 Black wins the c-pawn) 8...d5! 9 cxd5 h6 10 ♘h3 ♘xd5 11 0-0 ♘c6.

b) 7 d3! looks correct, when it's consistent for Black to strike in the centre; for example, 7...c6 (7...♞d8 8 ♘f3 d5 9 cxd5 ♘xd5 10 0-0 ♘c6 is also about equal due to Black's greater command over the centre) 8 ♘f3 (or 8 ♘g5 h6 9 ♘xf6 ♕xf6 10 ♘f3 d5) 8...d5 9 ♘g5 (9 0-0?! dxс4! 10 dxс4 e4 is awkward for White) 9...h6 10 ♘xf6 ♕xf6 and the game is level.

7...♞d8! 8 ♘e2 d5 9 cxd5 ♘xd5 10 a3 (D)



White feels compelled to stop ...♗b4; this comes at the cost of another tempo and a weak light square on b3.

10...♘c6 11 0-0 e4! 12 ♕c2 ♘g4 13 ♘c3

White's position is inferior, and he should accept a small disadvantage by liquidating the cramping e-pawn with 13 f3 exf3 14 ♘xf3.

13...♘xc3 14 dxc3

Instead, 14 bxc3? ♘e2 15 ♘e1 ♘d3 is very ugly. After 14 dxc3, Black should play 14...♗f5! and maintain his bind. Instead, there followed 14...♗f3 15 ♘xf3 exf3 16 ♕f5! ♘e5 17 e4 with some counterplay.

**Cu. Hansen – I. Sokolov
Groningen 1995**

1 c4 e5 2 ♘c3 ♘b4 3 ♘d5 ♘e7 4 d4 d6 5 e4

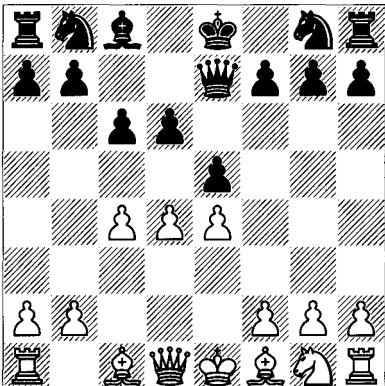
This is the most ambitious and consistent move, grabbing space and preventing ...e4, which might otherwise be a problem.

5...♘f6

Black develops as quickly as possible and forces the pace. 5...c6!? 6 ♘xe7 ♕xe7 (D) is thought to be inferior, perhaps incorrectly.

Now White should stay away from 7 ♘f3?! ♘f6 8 ♘d3 exd4 9 ♘xd4 d5!. Likewise, 7 dxе5?! dxе5 is not to be recommended, as Black's d4 outpost is a more important positional factor than any other on the board. Black is happy to be rid of his bad bishop, and even more so to retain both knights in order to ensure occupation of that square. And 7 d5 f5! is in the spirit of 2...♗b4, opening lines before White catches up in development.

W



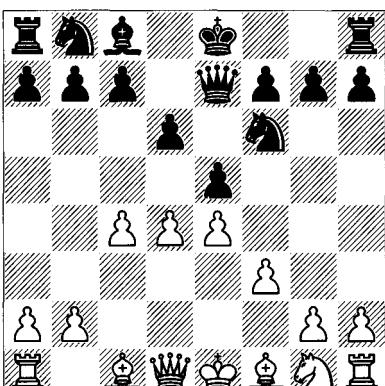
With those ideas in mind, the recommended course for White is 7 ♘e2!. Nevertheless, Black should be able to get a playable game with 7...♞f6 8 ♘c3! (after 8 f3 d5! 9 dxе5 ♜xe5 10 ♜c2!? dxе4 11 ♜f4 ♜f5!? 12 0-0-0 0-0 Black was developing smoothly in Smirin-Stisis, Israel 1999) 8...♝a6! 9 d5 (upon 9 ♜g5, 9...exd4 10 ♜xd4 ♜e5! looks best) 9...♞c5 10 ♜c2 a5 11 ♜e2 0-0 12 0-0 ♜d7, and White may have a slight edge because of his bishop-pair and space, although that's not clear, because Black has dynamic possibilities on the queenside involving ...cxд5, ...♜fc8 and/or ...b5, as in the King's Indian Defence.

6 ♘xe7 ♜xe7

Black has given up his dark-squared bishop and retained his 'good' one, blockading with the ...d6/...e5 pawn-structure. This is also common in the Nimzo-Indian and Bogo-Indian variations that I referred to above, but in those cases the e-pawn takes two moves to travel to e5 (...e6-e5).

7 f3! (D)

B



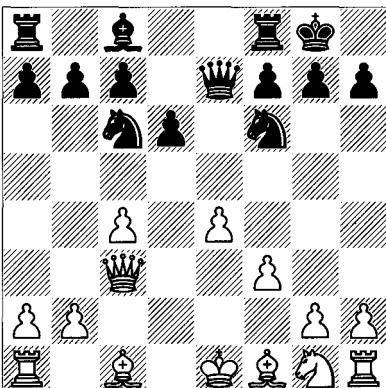
There arises a clash of fundamental strategies. White leaves himself completely undeveloped but seeks to limit Black's counterplay.

7...exd4!?

In response, Black tries to force the pace and create favourable spots for his knights. We'll see 7...♞h5 in the next game.

8 ♜xd4 ♘c6 9 ♘c3 0-0 (D)

W



Current theory likes White in this line, and the main game is a fine illustration of White's strategy in these positions. However, the notes will show that Black's dynamic resources are underrated.

10 ♜e3

White develops and prepares to consolidate by 0-0-0.

a) 10 ♘e2 has also been successful, although Black can play for ...f5 in a number of ways; for example, 10...♞h5 (10...♞e8!?) 11 g4!? (to stop ...f5) 11...♜h4+ 12 ♜d1 ♜f6, as in Lalić-Shirov, Moscow Olympiad 1994, isn't easy to assess, but with ...♝e6 and ...♞e5 on the cards, Black should come out all right.

b) Karpov gives 10 ♜g5 ♜e8!?? 11 ♜d2, but then 11...h6 effectively wins if White plays 12 ♜e3? ♜xe4! 13 fxе4 ♜xe4 14 ♜f2 ♜h4+ 15 g3 ♜f6+ or 12 ♜h4? ♜xe4!, so White should go for equality by means of 12 ♜xf6.

10...♜e8!?

This puts a rook on an open file, but does little to break down White's dominating centre. 10...♞e8! with the idea ...f5 is better. Play might continue 11 0-0-0 (11 g4? is a mistake because of 11...♝xg4! intending 12 fxg4? ♜xe4) 11...f5 12 exf5 ♜xf5 13 ♜e2, when 13...a5 14 a3! ♜f6! has the idea of ...♝b4! or simply ...♜ae8.

A duller but sound line is 13... $\mathbb{Q}b4!$? 14 $\mathbb{W}xb4$ $\mathbb{W}xe3+$ 15 $\mathbb{Q}d2$ $\mathbb{W}b6!?$.

11 $\mathbb{Q}e2$ $\mathbb{Q}e5$ 12 $\mathbb{Q}f4!?$

Technically, 12 0-0-0 should preface this move, transposing after 12... $\mathbb{Q}g6$ 13 $\mathbb{Q}f4$.

12... $\mathbb{Q}g6!?$

Missing his chance for 12... $\mathbb{Q}eg4!$, although even that's not clear if White declines the sacrifice by 13 $\mathbb{Q}d2$.

13 0-0-0 $\mathbb{Q}xf4$ 14 $\mathbb{Q}xf4$ a6 15 h4!

The usual space-grab, and beginning of a pawn assault.

15... $\mathbb{Q}e6$ 16 g4! $\mathbb{Q}d7$ 17 g5 b5 18 h5 $\mathbb{W}f8?$ 19 h6 g6 20 $\mathbb{W}xd6!$

This tactical shot crowns White's model strategy.

20...b4

After 20... $\mathbb{cxd6}??$, 21 $\mathbb{Q}xd6$ wins the queen.

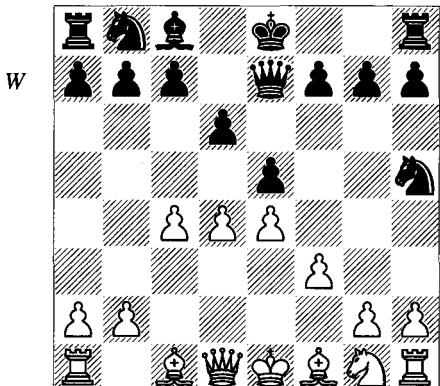
21 $\mathbb{W}d4$ $\mathbb{W}ad8$

At this point, instead of 22 $\mathbb{W}xd7?$, White had 22 $\mathbb{W}xa6!$ $\mathbb{Q}c5$ 23 $\mathbb{W}f6$, with two extra pawns as well as the better position.

A. Ledger – Hebden

Hastings (open) 1994/5

1 c4 e5 2 $\mathbb{Q}c3$ $\mathbb{Q}b4$ 3 $\mathbb{Q}d5$ $\mathbb{Q}e7$ 4 d4 d6 5 e4 $\mathbb{Q}f6$ 6 $\mathbb{Q}xe7$ $\mathbb{W}xe7$ 7 f3 $\mathbb{Q}h5!?$ (D)



Another forcing move; Black's initial idea is ... $\mathbb{W}h4+$, and ...f5 is also in the air.

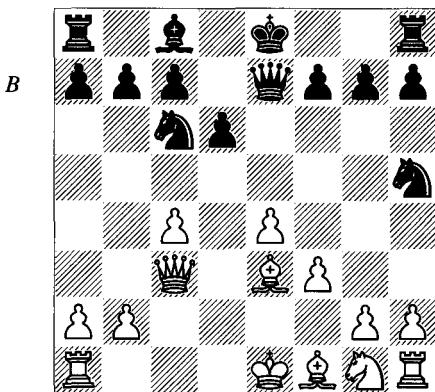
8 $\mathbb{Q}e3$

8 $\mathbb{Q}e2$ isn't played as much, perhaps due to 8... $\mathbb{exd4}$ (8...0-0-0 9 d5 f5!? 10 $\mathbb{exf5}$ $\mathbb{Q}xf5$ 11 g4!? e4!? occurred in a blitz game Marin-Christiansen, 2001; the sacrifice appears to be sound) 9 $\mathbb{W}xd4$ $\mathbb{Q}c6$ 10 $\mathbb{W}d2$ f5. Black is breaking

down White's main asset, his broad centre, and 11 $\mathbb{exf5}$ $\mathbb{Q}e5!$ is effective.

8...0-0!?

If he wants to prevent d5, Black can play 8... $\mathbb{exd4}$ 9 $\mathbb{Q}xd4$ (9 $\mathbb{Q}xd4$ f5 with ... $\mathbb{Q}c6$ to follow) 9... $\mathbb{Q}c6$, trying to bring about dynamic complications. Then White's best move is 10 $\mathbb{W}c3$ (D).



Theory has looked down upon 8... $\mathbb{exd4}$ because of the game Smirin-Lehner, Vienna 1998, which went 10... $\mathbb{Q}e5$ 11 $\mathbb{Q}e2$ $\mathbb{Q}d7$ 12 0-0-0 0-0 13 g4! $\mathbb{Q}f6$ 14 h4, launching a kingside advance.

However, Black could keep developing by 10...0-0! and if 11 g4?! (versus ...f5, but it's too slow), then 11... $\mathbb{Q}xg4!$ 12 $\mathbb{fxg4}$ $\mathbb{Q}f6$ with a very strong attack. The critical move is 11 0-0-0, when a sample line is 11...a5!? (or 11...f5 12 $\mathbb{exf5}$ $\mathbb{W}xf5$!, when 13 g4 $\mathbb{Q}e5$ 14 $\mathbb{Q}d2$ $\mathbb{Q}f6$ 15 $\mathbb{Q}d3$ a5! is unclear) 12 a3! (12 g4 $\mathbb{Q}xg4$! 13 $\mathbb{fxg4}$ $\mathbb{Q}b4$!) 12...f5 13 $\mathbb{exf5}$ $\mathbb{Q}xf5$?! (better is 13... $\mathbb{Q}e8$ or 13... $\mathbb{Q}xf5$! 14 g4 $\mathbb{Q}e5$) 14 g4 $\mathbb{W}fe8$ 15 $\mathbb{Q}d2$! (15 $\mathbb{Q}f2$ $\mathbb{Q}b4$!) 15... $\mathbb{Q}xg4$ 16 $\mathbb{fxg4}$ $\mathbb{W}e4$ 17 $\mathbb{gxh5}$ $\mathbb{W}xh1$ 18 h6, and White's bishops look good. As a whole, however, this line holds some promise for Black.

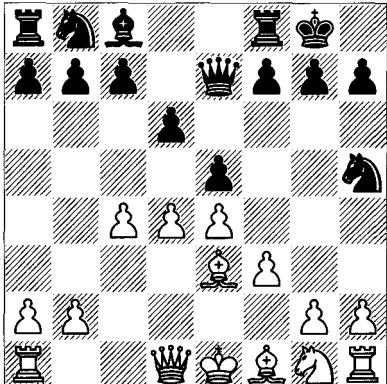
Let's return to 8...0-0 (D).

9 d5!

This is the main challenge to 7... $\mathbb{Q}h5$ 8 $\mathbb{Q}e3$ 0-0. Lautier-Shirov, Las Palmas 1994 went 9 $\mathbb{Q}e2$! f5 10 $\mathbb{exf5}$ $\mathbb{exd4}$! 11 $\mathbb{W}xd4$ (11 $\mathbb{Q}xd4$ $\mathbb{Q}xf5$ 12 g4 c5! 13 $\mathbb{Q}f2$ $\mathbb{Q}xg4$! 14 $\mathbb{fxg4}$ $\mathbb{Q}f6$ with an attack) 11... $\mathbb{Q}c6$ 12 $\mathbb{W}d2$ $\mathbb{Q}xf5$ 13 0-0-0 $\mathbb{Q}ae8$ 14 $\mathbb{Q}g5$ $\mathbb{W}f7$ 15 g4!? $\mathbb{Q}e5$ with complications.

9...f5

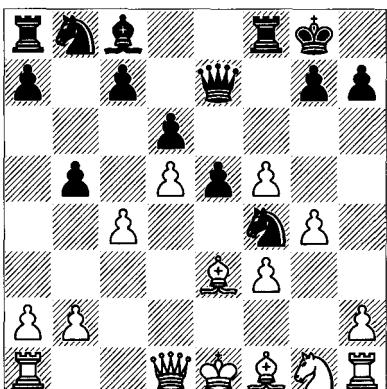
W



Black can also work up counterplay by attacking the front of the pawn-chain with 9...c6, a common idea in this pawn-structure. By softening up White's centre and opening up some lines, Black both discourages 0-0-0 and gains new opportunities; for example, 10 ♜d2 (one idea after 10 ♜e2 cxd5 11 cxd5! is 11...f5 12 exf5 ♜xf5 13 g4 e4 14 gxf5 exf3 15 ♜d4 ♜e8) 10...cxd5 11 cxd5 (11 ♜xd5 ♜c6! 12 0-0-0 ♜e6! intends 13 ♜xd6? ♜f6 14 ♜a3 ♜fd8 exploiting White's poor development; better is 13 ♜d2 ♜ac8 14 ♜b1 f5 15 exf5 ♜xf5+ 16 ♜a1 ♜f6 with chances for both sides) 11...f5!. Black's idea is 12 exf5 ♜xf5 13 g4? ♜xg4! 14 fxg4 ♜h4+ 15 ♜f2 ♜xg4 and White is hard-pressed to defend.

10 exf5 ♜f4 11 g4 b5! (D)

W



12 cxb5 ♜b7 13 ♜c4

Here the game continued 13...♜d7 (preparing ...♜b6) 14 ♜e2?! (White might have prevented ...♜g2+ by 14 ♜c2 or by 14 ♜xf4 exf4+ 15 ♜e2) 14...♜g2+ 15 ♜f2 ♜xe3 16 ♜xe3,

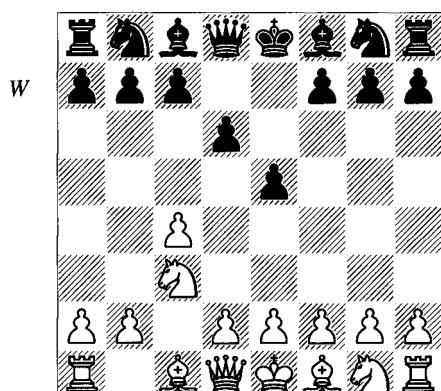
and now 16...♜b6! would have given Black reasonable compensation for the pawn. The moves ...g6, to open the f-file, ...e4, and ...a6, to open queenside lines, are all in the air.

A more accurate move-order for Black may be 13...♜g2+ 14 ♜f2 ♜xe3 15 ♜xe3 ♜d7! with the idea ...♜b6, dodging White's 14th-move options. At any rate, Black seems to have sufficient opportunity for dynamic play.

As far as the opening is concerned, I don't see why Black shouldn't be happy with either 7...exd4 or 7...♜h5 (if only because of 8 ♜e3 exd4), both promising a balanced game. On the other hand, White has a spatial edge and excellent long-term prospects if he can control the position. This variation is concrete and tactical enough that variation-specific preparation is strongly recommended.

The Ultra-Flexible 2...d6: Introduction

1 c4 e5 2 ♜c3 d6 (D)



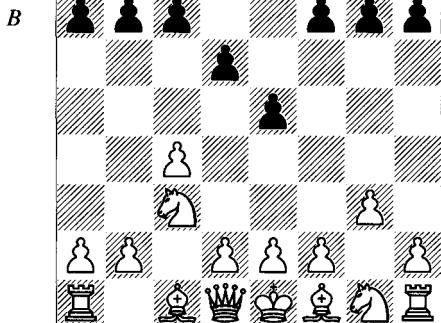
This modest move is very popular with experienced players because it is so adaptable. That is, Black doesn't commit a knight and can still opt for systems with fundamentally different pawn-structures. For one thing, he can choose between ...♜c6 and a move of the c-pawn (...c6 or ...c5). Similarly, he can set up with ...f5 and ...♜f6, or ...f5 and ...♜e7, or ...♜f6 alone, or else ...♜e7 alone. Those choices can be mixed with ...♜e7 or a fianchetto (...g6 and ...♜g7),

and so forth. In general, Black can switch strategies in response to White's own piece deployments, rather than embark upon a single-minded course.

Thus 2...d6 is a typically modern approach to the opening phase of the game. It limits White's ability to impose his choice of set-ups upon the position. On the other hand, 2...d6 has the obvious disadvantage of blocking in Black's bishop. Furthermore, since any such noncommittal move by Black also increases White's options, White can continuously adapt to his opponent's strategies.

To begin with, White's main choices are 3 d4, 3 ♜f3 and 3 g3.

I'll concentrate upon particularly distinctive lines arising from the first two moves, since so many continuations after 3 g3 (*D*) either transpose or closely resemble other systems in this book.



For example, 3...♜c6 4 ♜g2 g6 5 ♜f3 ♜g7 is a Closed English (Chapter 6), and 3...♜g2 (4 d4 exd4 5 ♜xd4 ♜c6 is a version of the main line 3 d4 below) 4...g6 5 ♜f3 (or 5 e4) leads to King's Indian variations that we'll be examining in Chapter 12.

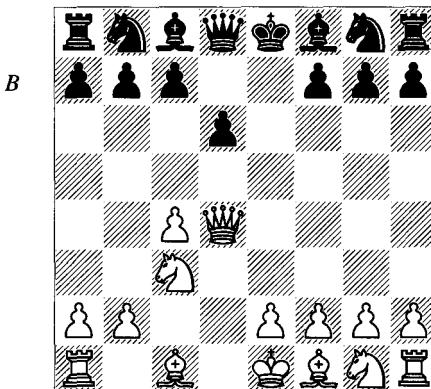
The fairly popular 3...f5 either transposes to another variation or produces a type of ...f5 position to which I'm devoting plenty of space elsewhere. But I should mention that 3...f5 can be met by the challenging 4 d4, when Black has various options; for example, 4...e4 (4...♜e7!? makes sense, challenging White to enter into the ending after 5 dxе5 dxе5 6 ♜xd8+ ♜xd8; this is fascinating and hardly explored – probably 7 e4!? is critical) 5 f3 ♜f6 (sometimes

5...exf3 is played, followed by ...♜f6 and perhaps ...g6; that may be preferable) 6 ♜g2 (6 fxe4!?) 6...exf3 7 ♜xf3. In this position, White has broken down Black's centre and probably holds some advantage in spite of his own weaknesses on the e-file.

Many other unique lines are possible after 3 g3; for example, 3...♜e6 4 ♜g2 (or 4 ♜f3, with the idea 4...♜xc4 5 ♜a4+ or 4...c6 5 d4!) 4...c6 (4...♜c6 is a line from the Closed English in Chapter 6) 5 d3 (5 b3 allows 5...d5!) 5...♜f6 6 ♜f3 ♜e7 7 0-0 0-0 8 b3, thinking about d4 and/or e4. Not surprisingly, there are many other ways for the players to come to an agreement upon a mutually acceptable position.

Active Lines with 3 d4

3 d4 exd4 4 ♜xd4 (*D*)



This is a very ambitious variation, and at the same time a risky one. White's basic idea is always to control d5, thus preventing Black's freeing move ...d5. His command of the d-file should help him in that regard. White also develops a piece; that may seem a bit trivial, since Black can attack the queen by ...♜c6, but the net effect varies from case to case.

In fact, we have already seen several examples of playing d4, and after ...exd4, recapturing by ♜xd4. Let's compare some positions arising in the first few moves by using this framework of advantages and disadvantages:

a) An example in which White gets the best of both worlds is 1 c4 e5 2 ♜c3 c6 3 d4 exd4 4 ♜xd4 (incidentally preventing ...d5). Even then,

the queen may eventually be exposed to attack, but not before it has had time to arrange an optimal escape.

b) 1 c4 e5 2 ♜c3 d4? exd4 3 ♕xd4?! ♜c6 was examined in Chapter 2. After White's queen retreats and Black's next move (normally ...♜f6), Black will already have two minor pieces out, and in addition, ...d5 will be easy to enforce.

c) In this chapter, we saw 1 c4 e5 2 ♜c3 f5 3 d4 exd4 4 ♕xd4 ♜c6. There ...f5 is a non-developing move which even creates the potential for certain weaknesses (e6, for example), so it looks as though White has the better of the bargain. Indeed, we looked at 5 ♕e3+, which is promising, although hardly decisive, for White. At least the move ...f5 controls e4 and adds force to the idea of ...♜f6-e4.

Let's return to our main position after 2 ♜c3 d6 3 d4 exd4 4 ♕xd4. Here the situation isn't so one-sided. Black gains a tempo with 4...♜c6, but the move 2...d6 is not entirely positive for him, since it restricts the f8-bishop and effectively concedes control of the vital d5-square for the time being. On the other hand ...d6 opens a line for the c8-bishop and directly controls a central square (e5). Thus Black gains a modest edge in development, which can quickly grow as White tries to get his pieces out. In the end, White control of territory (in particular his control of d5 along an open file) competes with Black's activity (stemming from his development), and that's why so many grandmasters have chosen to play this variation from one side or the other.

Let's turn to games:

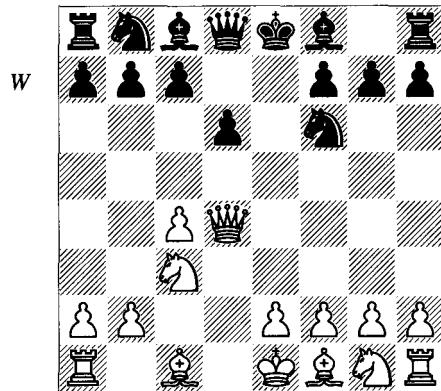
Ruban – Miles Belgrade 1988

1 c4 e5 2 ♜c3 d6 3 d4 exd4 4 ♕xd4 ♜f6 (D)

As opposed to 4...♜c6, with the obvious gain of tempo, 4...♜f6?! has a more subtle idea: to leave the queen on d4, subject to later attack on the long diagonal following ...g6 and ...♜g7, all the while keeping open the options of ...c6 and ...♝bd7.

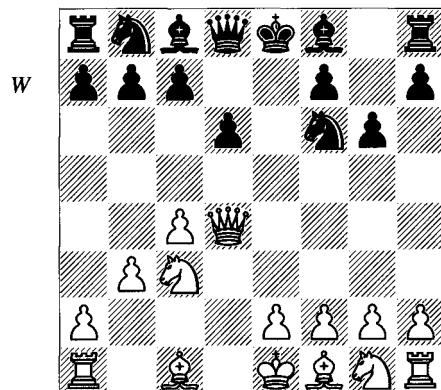
5 b3

5 e4 is a reasonable option, with the idea 5...g6 (5...♜c6) 6 f3 ♜g7 7 ♜e3?! followed by ♕d2 with a unique set-up. The best-known alternative is 5 g3. Then 5...g6?! 6 ♜g2 (6 ♕e3+



7 ♜e7!?) 6...♜g7 7 ♜e3+ is a bit awkward to meet, as in Kasparov-Short, Barcelona 1989; nevertheless, 5...♜c6 6 ♕d2 ♜e6 is one of Black's more comfortable versions of the main line, that is, 4...♜c6 5 ♕d2 ♜f6 6 g3 ♜e6 below.

5...g6 (D)



6 ♜b2

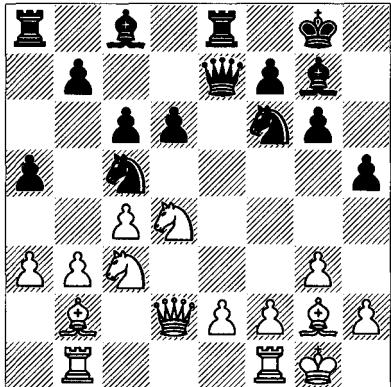
After 6 ♜d5 ♜g7 7 ♜g5 ♜bd7 8 ♜e3+ ♜f8 (or the transposition 6 ♜g5 ♜g7 7 ♜d5 ♜bd7 8 ♜e3+ ♜f8), Black is left ahead in development and ready to play ...c6, and/or castle by hand with ...h6 followed by ...♜g8-h7.

The next moves are natural ones:

6...♜g7 7 g3 0-0 8 ♜g2 ♜bd7! 9 ♜f3 ♜c5 10 ♕d2 a5 11 ♜d4 ♜e8 12 0-0 c6 13 ♜ab1 ♜e7 14 a3 h5! (D)

This complex and dynamic position is very close to a normal King's Indian Defence. In fact, every black piece and pawn are on precisely the same squares that they go to in some main g3 variations of the KID, except that in

W



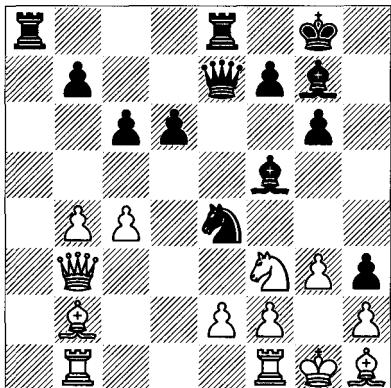
the King's Indian line, White's advance e4 or e3 has usually occurred. Here White's centre is better protected and his kingside has fewer holes than in the King's Indian. With 14...h5, Black wants to weaken White's kingside protection by ...h4, and there's little White can do about that. So he tries to achieve some simplification:

15 $\mathbb{W}c2$

White is fighting for e4, but he's starting to lose time. 15 $\mathbb{B}d1!$ is a solid move.

15...h4 16 b4 axb4 17 axb4 $\mathbb{Q}ce4$ 18 $\mathbb{Q}xe4$ $\mathbb{Q}xe4$ 19 $\mathbb{Q}f3?!$ h3! 20 $\mathbb{Q}h1$ $\mathbb{Q}f5$ 21 $\mathbb{W}b3$ (D)

B



21... $\mathbb{Q}xf2!$ 22 $\mathbb{B}xf2$

Best. White loses after 22 $\mathbb{Q}xg7$ $\mathbb{Q}xh1$ 23 $\mathbb{W}b2$ $\mathbb{Q}xg3!$ 24 hxg3 $\mathbb{W}e3+$, and there's really no good defence; for example, 25 $\mathbb{B}f2$ h2+ 26 $\mathbb{Q}xh2$ $\mathbb{W}xg3+$ 27 $\mathbb{B}g2$ $\mathbb{W}e3+$ 28 $\mathbb{B}f2$ $\mathbb{Q}xb1$.

22... $\mathbb{Q}xb1$ 23 $\mathbb{W}xg7$ $\mathbb{Q}xg7$ 24 $\mathbb{W}xb1$ $\mathbb{W}f6$ 25 $\mathbb{Q}d2$ $\mathbb{W}d4$ 26 $\mathbb{W}d3?$

But 26 $\mathbb{Q}b3$ $\mathbb{W}xc4$ 27 $\mathbb{W}b2+$ $\mathbb{Q}e5$ clearly favours Black.

26... $\mathbb{B}a1+$ 0-1

The point is 27 $\mathbb{Q}f1$ $\mathbb{B}xf1+$ 28 $\mathbb{Q}xf1$ $\mathbb{W}a1+$. Black's active pieces allowed him to sustain an initiative throughout.

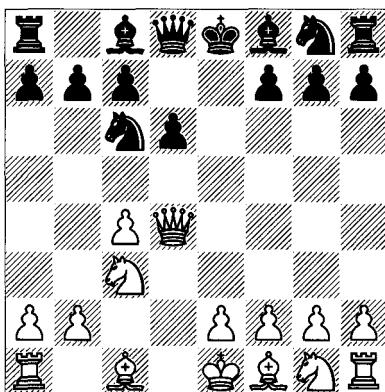
Naturally a line such as this contains dangers for both sides. Much as in similar King's Indian positions, White faces practical difficulties due to Black's many dynamic ideas, whilst Black risks being stifled and ultimately overrun.

K. Jovanović – Zatulovskaya

Women's Zonal, Menorca 1973

1 c4 e5 2 $\mathbb{Q}c3$ d6 3 d4 exd4 4 $\mathbb{W}xd4$ $\mathbb{Q}c6$ (D)

W



This is the obvious and most accepted move.

5 $\mathbb{W}d2$

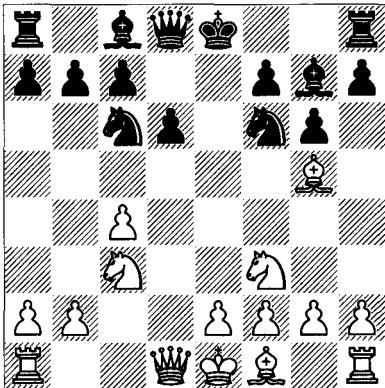
a) White actually loses time after 5 $\mathbb{W}e3+?!$, in part because his c-pawn is a target (a recurring theme): 5... $\mathbb{Q}ge7$ (5... $\mathbb{Q}e7$ 6 $\mathbb{Q}d5$ $\mathbb{Q}e6$ has also been played with success) 6 $\mathbb{Q}d5$ $\mathbb{Q}e5$ 7 $\mathbb{W}c3$ c6!? (or 7... $\mathbb{Q}xd5$) 8 $\mathbb{Q}e3$ $\mathbb{Q}7g6$ 9 $\mathbb{Q}f3$, Uhlmann-Lukin, Leningrad 1984, and now Black stands better after 9... $\mathbb{Q}e7$.

b) 5 $\mathbb{W}d1?!$ is played sometimes, even though it doesn't support the manoeuvre b3 and $\mathbb{Q}b2$. The idea is 5...g6 6 $\mathbb{Q}f3$ $\mathbb{Q}g7$ 7 $\mathbb{Q}g5$, when Black often plays 7... $\mathbb{Q}ge7$ or 7...f6. But I don't see why 7... $\mathbb{Q}f6$ (D) shouldn't keep the balance more easily.

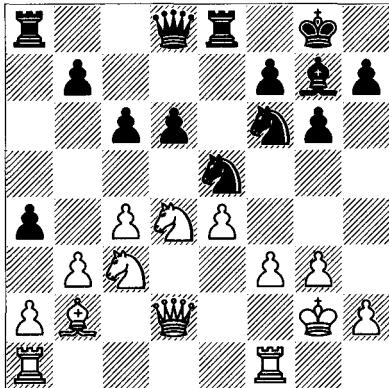
For example, 8 e4 (8 $\mathbb{Q}d5?!$ h6 and here 9 $\mathbb{Q}h4$ g5 10 $\mathbb{Q}g3$ $\mathbb{Q}e4$ or 9 $\mathbb{Q}xf6$ $\mathbb{Q}xf6$ with the idea 10 $\mathbb{Q}xf6+?!$ $\mathbb{W}xf6$ and White is on the defensive) 8...h6 9 $\mathbb{Q}d2?!$ (9 $\mathbb{Q}e3$ $\mathbb{Q}g4$; 9 $\mathbb{Q}h4$ g5 10 $\mathbb{Q}g3$ $\mathbb{Q}h5?!$) 9... $\mathbb{W}e7$ (or 9...0-0 10 $\mathbb{Q}d3$ $\mathbb{Q}g4$) 10 $\mathbb{Q}d3$ $\mathbb{Q}g4$ 11 $\mathbb{Q}e3$ 0-0-0 with fine play.

5...g6 6 g3 $\mathbb{Q}g7$ 7 $\mathbb{Q}g2$ $\mathbb{Q}f6$ 8 e4?!

W



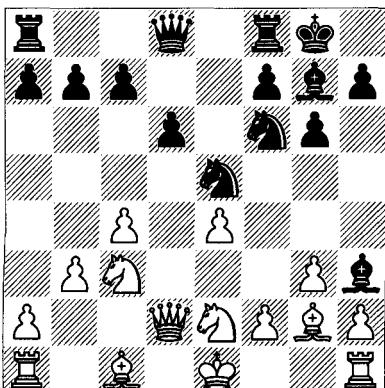
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An unusual position. White's clamp on d5 is only possible because Black committed to ...g6 before ...♗e6. Obviously White has acquired a serious internal weakness on d3 as well as losing control over d4, but if he succeeds in playing ♗ge2 and 0-0, then we'll arrive at a favourable kind of Botvinnik c4/e4 system that we shall encounter in the Closed English in Chapter 6.

8...0-0 9 ♗ge2 ♗e5 10 b3 ♘h3! (D)

W



11 0-0

Not 11 ♘xh3?? ♗f3+.

11...♝e8 12 f3! ♘xg2 13 ♔xg2 a5! 14 ♘b2 a4!

Black just keeps pounding away. Nothing is terribly wrong with White's position yet, but it's easy to underestimate the tactics.

15 ♘d4

15 ♘xa4?! ♘xc4 16 bxc4 ♜xa4 leaves White's queenside pawns vulnerable.

15...c6! (D)

You could do worse than to study such positions in order to broaden your command of

pawn-structures. Notice that the absence of light-squared bishops distinguishes this position from some other English Opening variations, as well as from the Maroczy Bind variation of the Sicilian Defence. Superficially, one might think that the trade of bishops would favour White. In formal terms, after all, it is his 'bad' bishop that is exchanged. The question in such positions, however, is whether Black can summon up the piece activity to counter White's significant long-term advantage. This often involves attacking light squares that can no longer be guarded by White's bishop. Here those squares include h3, d3, f3 and often, depending upon specifics, b3. For example, a common outcome of the advance ...a5-a4 would be the capture of a pawn on b3 (...axb3), which might be followed with ...♗fd7-c5, hitting d3 and b3. Finally, the moves ...f5, ...b5 and ...d5 can be said to attack the most important light squares of all.

This all sounds very nice, but if Black isn't able to succeed in creating outposts and/or weaknesses at a fairly early stage, White can slowly drive back Black's pieces, advance his pawns, and steamroll Black without much effort. The move 15...c6 fulfills the needs of the position as described. Given even one extra move here, White could probably consolidate. Thus Black concedes a weakness on d6 in return for activity. He can create threats with his queen from a5 or b6, and simultaneously cause White to worry about ...d5, the ultimate line-opening move. Whether this works is a matter of timing and the skill of the respective players.

Incidentally, some people think that the side with more space should avoid exchanges, but

that is a poor rule at best. Here White would love to trade a few minor pieces and then utilize his space advantage.

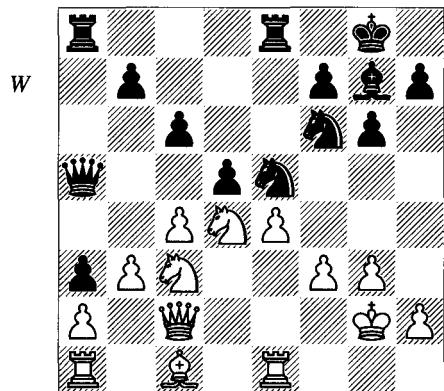
16 ♜fe1

16 ♜ad1 ♜b6 17 ♜c2 axb3 18 axb3 also holds together, since 18...♝fd7 19 ♜a4 keeps Black's knight from settling in on c5. That is probably about equal.

16...♜a5 17 ♜c2?

White still controls more space after 17 ♜c2!; for example, 17...axb3 18 axb3 ♜b6 19 f4 ♜ed7 20 b4. Naturally, the situation would be far from clear.

17...a3! 18 ♜c1 d5! (D)



Suddenly the game is out of White's control.

19 cxd5 cxd5 20 ♜d2 ♜ac8 21 f4? ♜xe4!

22 ♜xe4 dxe4 23 fxe5 e3! 24 ♜e1 ♜xe5

Black already has a rook and two pawns for two pieces, and White can hardly defend against the elementary threats.

25 ♜de2 ♜ed8 26 ♜c1 b5! 27 b4!? ♜xb4

The 'long' queen move 27...♜a8+! wins more easily.

28 ♜b1 ♜c4 29 ♜b3 ♜c6+ 30 ♜g1 ♜f3 31 ♜c2 ♜xc3 32 ♜xc3 ♜d2! 33 ♜xd2 ♜f2+ 34 ♜h1 ♜xd2! 35 ♜xd2 exd2 36 ♜e2 ♜e8! 0-1

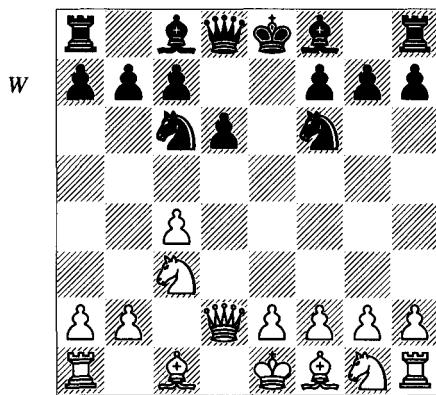
Polugaevsky – Nezhmetdinov
Russian Federation Ch, Sochi 1958

1 c4 e5 2 ♜c3 d6 3 d4 exd4 4 ♜xd4 ♜c6 5 ♜d2 ♜f6 (D)

6 e4?

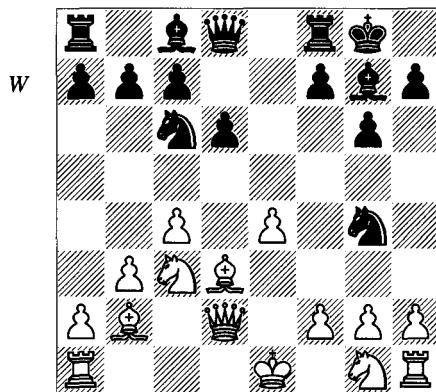
White plays the obvious move, clamping down on d5, but it has become rare.

6...g6 7 b3 ♜g7 8 ♜b2 0-0



This position can arise in our main line after 6 b3 g6 7 ♜b2 ♜g7 8 e4 and, obscurely, by 1 d4 ♜f6 2 c4 d6 3 ♜c3 e5 4 e4 exd4 5 ♜xd4, etc.

9 ♜d3 ♜g4!? (D)



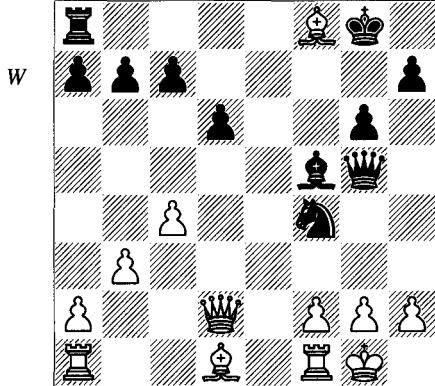
A solution that is over 50 years old. Black makes a non-developing move away from the centre. It's hard to explain why this works without resorting to the catch-all excuse of 'tactical opportunism'. The moves ...f5 and ...♜h4 are now available, for example. The move 9...♜g4 produced two classic masterpieces within less than a decade.

10 ♜ge2?

White's position looks harmonious, but the knight on e2 neither covers e5 nor prevents a raid on his kingside. An improvement is 10 h3!, when a critical response is 10...♜h6!? 11 ♜d1 ♜g5 with the idea of ...f5 and ...♝b4. Then 12 ♜e2! is correct, when 12...f5! 13 ♜f3! is dynamically equal.

Another wonderful game in this line, Alatortsev-Boleslavsky, USSR Ch, Moscow 1950,

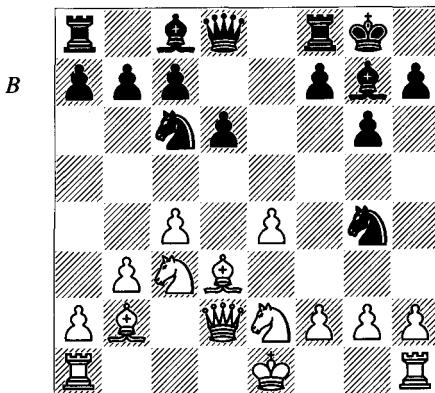
saw 10 ♜f3. For reasons of space, I'll skip a lot of the tactics, but it's worth noting a few ideas: 10...♜ge5 11 ♜e2 (11 ♜xe5 dx5 gains an outpost on d4; as in the King's Indian Defence, White has no corresponding outpost on d5, because a knight there can be driven away by ...c6; this roughly compensates for White's space advantage) 11...♜xf3+ 12 ♜xf3 ♜d4 13 ♜d1?! f5! 14 exf5 ♜xf5 15 ♜e2?! ♜xe2. Here the game would have escaped from White's grasp following the natural 16 ♜xg7?, due to 16...♝f4! 17 ♜xf8 ♜f6!, when among several ideas is 18 0-0 ♜g5! (D).



Every player has to know this elementary tactical idea, which occurs in countless positions and games. Black threatens both checkmate on g2 and ...♜h3+, winning the queen. Normally the next move is 'resigns', but in this situation White can weasel out with 19 ♜g4! ♜xg4 20 ♜h6! ♜xh6. Of course, Black has regained his material and more, with a winning position.

The actual game continued brilliantly after 16 ♜xe2 ♜xb2 17 ♜xb2 ♜g5! 18 g3 ♜ae8! 19 0-0 ♜h3 20 f4 (worse still 20 ♜fe1? ♜xf2! 21 ♜xf2 ♜e3#) 20...♜xf1!! 21 fxg5 ♜xe2 22 ♜c2 ♜g2 23 ♜d3? ♜f3 24 ♜f1 ♜g2+ 25 ♜h1 ♜c6! 26 ♜xf8+ ♜xf8 27 ♜f1+ ♜f2+ 0-1. Instead of 23 ♜d3?, a pretty, study-like line follows the obvious try 23 ♜e1: 23...♜h3! 24 ♜a1! ♜g2+ 25 ♜h1 ♜gf2 (after 25...♜ff2?, 26 ♜e8+ ♜f7 27 ♜f8+! ♜xf8 28 ♜h8+ probably draws) 26 ♜g1 d5!! 27 cxd5 ♜g2+ 28 ♜h1 ♜ff2 29 ♜e8+ ♜f7 30 ♜f8+ ♜xf8 31 ♜h8+ ♜e7 32 ♜xh7+ ♜d6! (the difference) 33 ♜xh3 ♜xh2+ 34 ♜xh2 ♜xh2+ 35 ♜xh2 ♜xd5 with a winning pawn ending.

We now return to the position after 10 ♜ge2? (D):

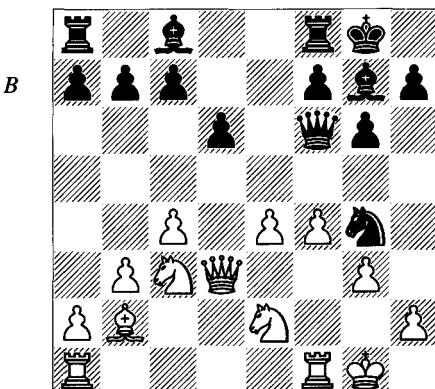


10...♜h4!?

Nezhmetdinov is appropriately aggressive, but 10...♜ce5! is even more promising because of 11 ♜c2 ♜h4, or 11 h3 ♜h6!. White's life looks very difficult in that case.

11 ♜g3?!

Better is the fearless 11 g3! ♜f6 (11...♜ce5!?) 12 gxh4 ♜f3+ 13 ♜d1 ♜xf2+ 14 ♜c2 ♜xd2 15 ♜xd2 ♜xh1 16 ♜xh1 is hard to assess) 12 f4 ♜ce5! 13 0-0 ♜xd3 14 ♜xd3 (D).



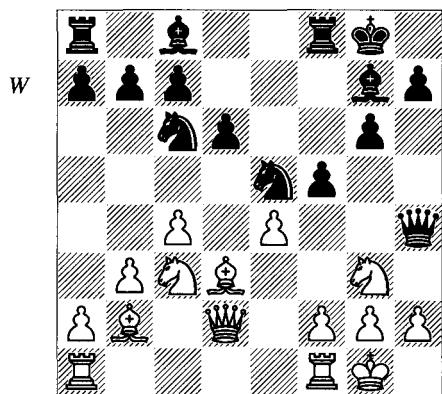
Now Black manages to get his vaunted central break in: 14...d5!, although 15 ♜a4! (preventing ...♜b6+, which would be the reply to 15 cxd5 or 15 e5) 15...dxe4 16 ♜xe4 ♜a6 17 ♜xg7 ♜xg7 18 ♜ec3 ♜f5 19 ♜d4+ ♜f6 is only equal.

11...♜ge5?!

Again, a well-motivated move that has a variety of ideas including ...♜h6 and ...f5. However,

it shows you just how shaky the move 10 $\mathbb{Q}ge2?$ was when you realize that 11...f5! is even harder to meet because of the sequence 12 exf5 $\mathbb{Q}b4!$ 13 $\mathbb{Q}b1$ $\mathbb{Q}xf5$ 14 $\mathbb{Q}xf5$ (14 $\mathbb{Q}xf5$ $\mathbb{Q}ae8+$) 14...gxf5 winning; Black has various ideas such as ... $\mathbb{Q}xh2$, ... $\mathbb{Q}h6$ and/or ... $\mathbb{Q}ae8+$. This would have made for a more convincing refutation of 11 $\mathbb{Q}g3$.

12 0-0 f5 (D)



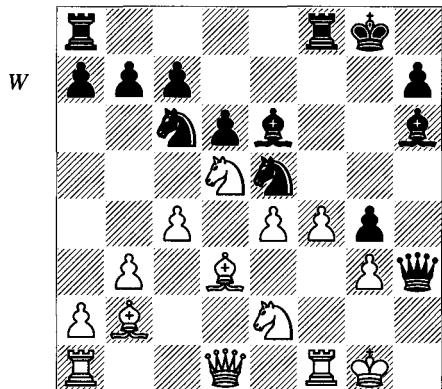
13 f3?

The opening play in this famous game has been extremely inaccurate, and the middle-game proves to be as well! White needs to show some imagination in defence and play 13 exf5 $\mathbb{Q}xd3$ 14 $\mathbb{W}xd3$ $\mathbb{Q}xf5$ 15 $\mathbb{Q}xf5$ $\mathbb{Q}xf5$ 16 $\mathbb{Q}ae1$, with the idea 16... $\mathbb{Q}e5$ 17 g3 $\mathbb{W}h3$ 18 $\mathbb{W}d5+$ $\mathbb{Q}h8$ 19 $\mathbb{W}g2!$.

13... $\mathbb{Q}h6$ 14 $\mathbb{W}d1$ f4

14... $\mathbb{Q}e3+$ 15 $\mathbb{Q}h1$ f4 16 $\mathbb{Q}ge2$ $\mathbb{Q}f2!$ intending ... $\mathbb{Q}g3$ is another approach.

15 $\mathbb{Q}ge2$ g5!? 16 $\mathbb{Q}d5$ g4 17 g3 fxg3 18 hxg3 $\mathbb{W}h3$ 19 f4 $\mathbb{Q}e6!$ (D)



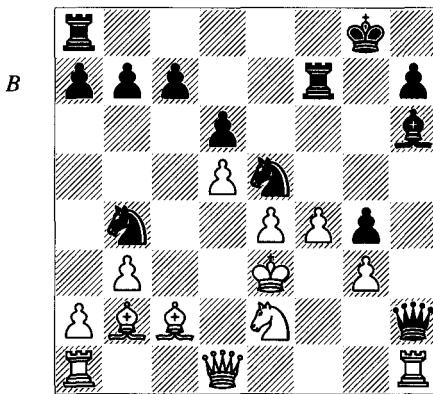
20 $\mathbb{Q}c2$

According to lengthy analysis over the years, White's game is now past repair.

20... $\mathbb{B}f7$ 21 $\mathbb{Q}f2$ $\mathbb{W}h2+$ 22 $\mathbb{Q}e3$ $\mathbb{Q}xd5$ 23 cxd5

There are many options, but from now on I'll just show the flow of the game.

23... $\mathbb{Q}b4$ 24 $\mathbb{Q}h1?$ (D)



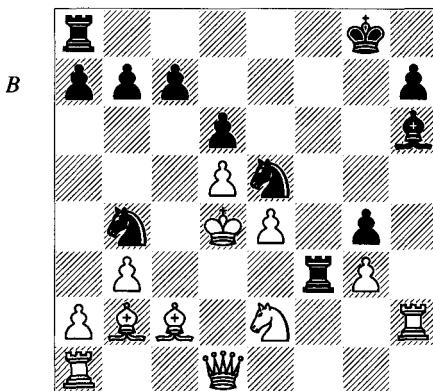
24... $\mathbb{Q}xf4!!$

A famous move, which forces White into the open.

25 $\mathbb{Q}xh2$

The game comes to an abrupt end after 25 gxf4 $\mathbb{Q}xf4+$ 26 $\mathbb{Q}xf4$ $\mathbb{Q}xc2+$.

25... $\mathbb{Q}f3++$ 26 $\mathbb{Q}d4$ (D)



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

This slow move has its fascination, even though the less obvious continuation 26...c5+!! 27 dxc6 b5! is faster, and more brilliant. The simple idea is to deny White's king c4 after ... $\mathbb{Q}exc6+$.

27 a4 c5+ 28 dxc6 bxc6 29 ♜d3 ♜exd3+ 30 ♜c4 d5+ 31 exd5 cxd5+ 32 ♜b5 ♜b8+ 33 ♜a5 ♜c6+ 0-1

Andy Soltis lists this as the 2nd greatest game of the 20th century, which I think is rather silly given the poor defence and numerous mistakes by both sides, and also taking note of the superb attacking and counterattacking battles that appear every year. Nevertheless, it is rightfully remembered for the stunning move 24...♜xf4!!!

After a while, 6 e4 was largely abandoned, perhaps more due to its risky nature than to its objective soundness (which remains intact).

Hübner – Kasparov

Match (game 1), Hamburg 1985

1 c4 e5 2 ♜c3 d6 3 d4 exd4 4 ♜xd4 ♜c6 5 ♜d2 ♜f6 6 g3

The actual move-order was 4...♜f6 5 g3 ♜c6 6 ♜d2.

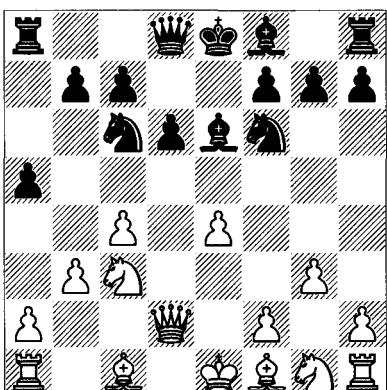
6...♜e6!

Attacking the c-pawn and preparing ...d5. Now 7 b3? is a mistake due to 7...d5, so White must find other means of parrying the threat.

7 ♜d5

The other critical move is 7 e4. A popular reply is 7...a5, when White can fall for a trick that occurs in several similar positions: 8 b3? (D).

B



8...♜xe4! 9 ♜xe4 d5. It's amazing how often this has happened. Black gets a winning advantage, with one of several lines going 10 ♜c3 (10 cxd5 ♜b4 11 ♜c3 ♜xd5 12 f3 ♜f6 and ...0-0-0) 10...d4 11 ♜b2 ♜b4!, or 11...dxc3.

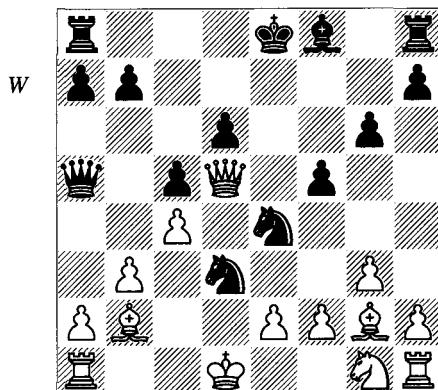
White can improve with 8 f3, although then Black has 8...a4, holding down b3 for some time, or the conventional 8...g6 9 b3 ♜g7.

7...♜e5! 8 b3 ♜e4!

As in many lines in this variation, Black uses constant threats to prevent White from consolidating.

9 ♜e3

After 9 ♜d4, Black can stay active with 9...f5!? 10 ♜g2 g6; for example, 11 ♜b2? (11 ♜xe4 fxe4! 12 ♜g5!? ♜xg5 13 ♜xc7+ is messy) 11...c5! 12 ♜d1 ♜xd5! 13 ♜xd5 ♜a5+ 14 ♜d1 ♜d3! (D).

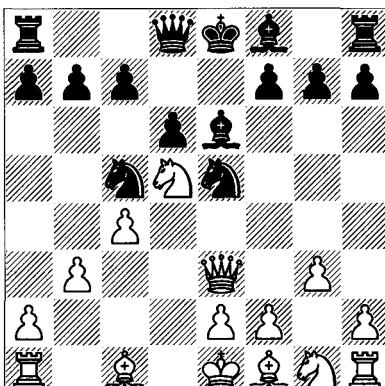


A cute finish from J.Kristiansen-Reinert, Denmark 1985. White is faced with mate on d2, and resigned after 15 ♜xd3 ♜xf2+.

9...♜c5?!? (D)

This has enjoyed some spectacular success, but it may well be just as good or better to settle for equality by 9...c6 10 ♜xe4 cxd5 11 cxd5 ♜a5+ 12 ♜d2 ♜xd5 13 ♜xa5 ♜xe4 14 f3 ♜c6, as in Ftačník-Timman, Wijk aan Zee 1985 et al.

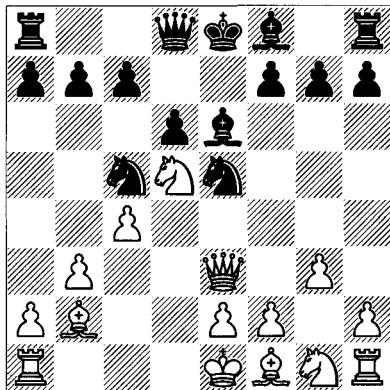
W



10 ♜b2?! (D)

White should get his kingside out: 10 ♜g2! c6 11 ♜f4, and instead of 11...♜g4?! (Edery-Baerschneider, correspondence game 1990), 11...♝f6! leads to the relatively forced sequence 12 ♜b2 ♜ed3+ 13 exd3 ♜xb2 14 ♜d1, when 14...♝c3+ 15 ♜d2 ♜xd2+ 16 ♜xd2 is only very slightly in White's favour, if that.

B

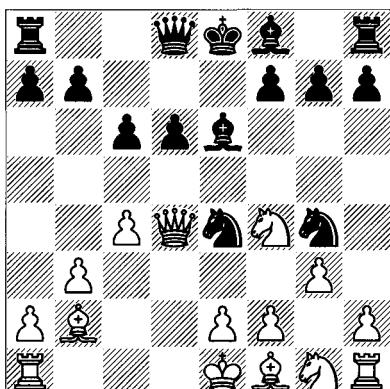
**10...c6 11 ♜f4?!** (D) **12 ♜d4?**

After this White is lost. The position after the forced sequence 12 ♜xe6 ♜xe3 13 ♜xd8 ♜c2+ 14 ♜d1 ♜xa1 15 ♜xb7 ♜axb3! 16 ♜g2 ♜d7 17 axb3 ♜xb7 18 ♜f3 gives White some compensation for the exchange due to his bishop-pair and better-placed pieces.

12...♜e4?! (D)

The point of Black's play: f2 is attacked and ...♜a5+ is on the cards.

W

**13 ♜h3**

13 ♜d3 f5 surrounds White's queen and threatens ...c5.

13...♜a5+

Or 13...♝gxf2!, in view of 14 ♜xe6 fxe6 15 ♜xe6 ♜e7! 16 ♜xg7 ♜f8. I'll leave the rest with no notes.

14 ♜f1 ♜gxf2 15 ♜xe6 fxe6 16 ♜xe6 ♜d7?!
17 ♜h3 ♜xh3 18 ♜xe4 ♜e8 19 ♜c5+ ♜xc5 20 ♜g4+ ♜e7 21 ♜xh3 ♜e7 22 ♜xg7 ♜hf8+! 23 ♜xf8 ♜xf8+ 24 ♜e1 ♜f2+ 25 ♜d1 ♜d4+ 26 ♜c2 ♜e4+ 27 ♜d2 ♜g5+ 28 ♜c3 ♜e5+ 0-1

The tactical nature of such variations means that both players should be specifically prepared in advance of the game.

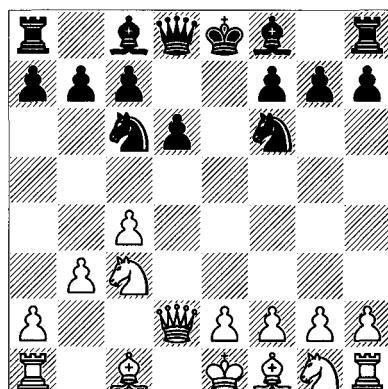
Illescas – Arenobia

Salamanca 1998

1 c4 e5 2 ♜c3 d6 3 d4 exd4 4 ♜xd4 ♜c6 5 ♜d2 ♜f6 6 b3 (D)

This modest fianchetto is the main move and probably the best one, at least in practical terms. With careful play, White is likely to get into a positional contest without explosions.

B

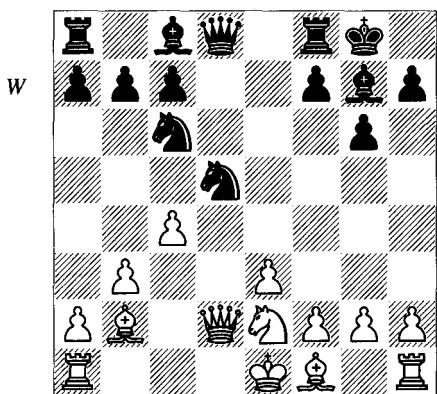
**6...g6**

The most common reply, but there are alternatives; for example, 6...a5?! is played a fair amount. The idea is to weaken White's queenside and establish outposts with some help from tactical tricks. A high-level example was 7 ♜b2 a4! 8 ♜d1 (the key idea is 8 ♜xa4?! d5!; e.g., 9 cxd5 ♜e4 10 ♜d3! {10 ♜c1 ♜xa4!} 10...♜xa4 11 a3 ♜c5 12 ♜d1 ♜e4) 8...axb3 9 axb3 g6 10 e4 ♜g7 11 ♜d3 ♜d4 12 ♜c2 ♜xc2+ 13 ♜xc2 0-0 14 ♜ge2 ♜h5 15 0-0 f5! 16 c5! with double-edged play, Lautier-Kramnik, Match (game 3), Cannes 1993.

7 ♜b2 ♜g7 8 g3

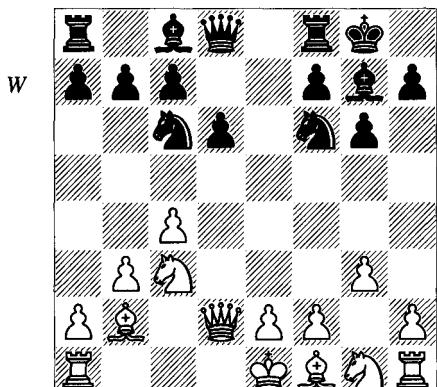
8 e4 transposes to the lines that followed 6 e4 above.

It's odd that in this variation the seemingly 'safe' moves allow so many fireworks. For example, the pretty game Barcza-Dely, Hungarian Ch, Budapest 1969 saw the innocent 8 e3 0-0 9 ♘ge2?! routed by 9...d5!! 10 ♘xd5 (10 cxd5 ♘xd5) 10...♘xd5 (*D*).



11 ♘xg7 ♘db4! 12 ♘xf8 ♘d3+ 13 ♘d1 ♘xf2+ 14 ♘c1? (14 ♘e1! ♘d3+ 15 ♘d1 ♘f2+ draws; but Black can try for more by 15...♗f6 16 ♖c3 ♘ce5!) 14...♗f6 15 ♘g3 (Black's combination is based upon 15 ♘g1?? ♗a3+ 16 ♗b2 ♘d3+) 15...♗xh1 16 ♘xh1 ♗a3+ 17 ♘d1 ♘f5 18 ♘e1 ♖d8 19 ♖c3 ♘b4 20 ♘f2 ♘c2 21 ♘b1 ♘xe3! 22 ♘e1 ♘d1+ 0-1. Incredible.

8...0-0 (*D*)

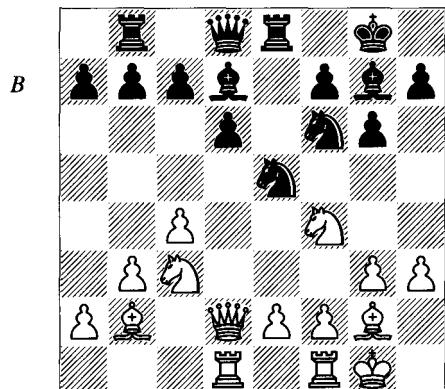


We have reached a sort of main line. Great players have been willing to take both sides of this position.

9 ♘g2

In Korchnoi-Spassky, Lugano 1982, White played the immediate 9 ♘h3. This knight heads for f4, to control d5 (the advantage of this move-order over 9 ♘g2 and 10 ♘h3 will be seen below). For all the indignities that we have seen White suffer in this 3 d4 line above, this kind of bind may be his reward. The knight will come to f4, watching over d5, followed by ♘g2, and Black's piece-play alone looks insufficient to stir up tactical trouble. Furthermore, if Black plays aimlessly, White will be able to steadily increase his advantage and dominate the play.

The game continued 9...♗e8?! 10 ♘f4 ♘g4 11 ♘g2 ♘e5 (according to Korchnoi, 11...g5! 12 h3! gxh4 13 hxg4 fxg3 14 f3 is unclear; nevertheless, White owns the two bishops and a kingside attack; he should stand better) 12 0-0 ♖b8 13 h3 ♘d7 14 ♖ad1 (*D*).

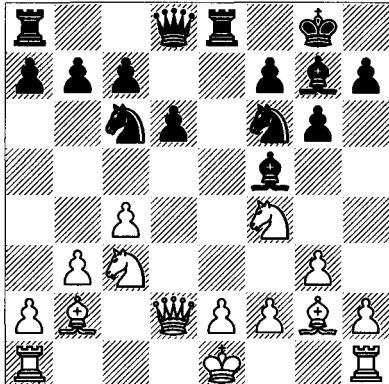


Black is seriously cramped, so he tries to break White's grip on the centre: 14...a6 15 ♘cd5 ♘xd5 (Black's plan of 15...b5 runs into trouble after 16 ♘xf6+ ♘xf6 17 c5!) 16 ♘xd5 ♘e6 (16...b5? is still a mistake following 17 c5! dx5 18 f4) 17 ♖c2 c6 18 ♘f4. White has won the opening; he has more space and a weak d-pawn to target.

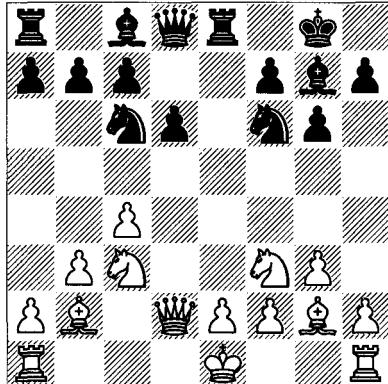
Black should look for something else here; for example, 9...a6! (in order to chip away at White's control of d5 by means of ...b5) 10 ♘f4 ♖b8 11 ♘g2 ♘e5 12 0-0 (White might try 12 ♘d1 with the idea 12...b5?! 13 c5) 12...b5 13 cx5 axb5, Panzer-Hickl, Lippstadt 1992. By loosening White's grip on d5, Black limits what his opponent can do.

9...♗f5 10 ♘h3 ♘e8 11 ♘f4 (*D*)

B



B



11... $\mathbb{Q}e5$

Black almost always gets the worse of exchanges in these cramped positions, because White's space advantage remains, but Black's active counterplay is gone; e.g., 11... $\mathbb{Q}e4$?! 12 $\mathbb{Q}xe4$ $\mathbb{Q}xe4$ 13 f3 $\mathbb{Q}f5$ 14 $\mathbb{Q}xg7$ $\mathbb{Q}xg7$ 15 $\mathbb{W}c3+$ f6 e4 $\mathbb{Q}e6$ 17 0-0 $\mathbb{W}e7$ 18 $\mathbb{Q}d5$ $\mathbb{Q}xd5$ 19 cxd5 $\mathbb{Q}d8$ 20 $\mathbb{Q}ac1$, Seirawan-Pfleger, Lone Pine 1981. An English Opening dream: White has a pawn on d5 restricting the knight, the open c-file, and space, in combination with bishop versus knight.

12 0-0 c6 13 e4 $\mathbb{Q}g4$ 14 f3 $\mathbb{W}b6+$ 15 $\mathbb{Q}h1$ $\mathbb{Q}d7$ 16 $\mathbb{Q}ad1$

Black has not only failed to find counterplay, but his d6-pawn is about to fall. The game ended quickly:

16...g5 17 $\mathbb{Q}d3$ g4?! 18 $\mathbb{Q}xe5$ dx $e5$ 19 f4!
 $\mathbb{Q}ad8$ 20 fxe5 $\mathbb{Q}xe5$ 21 $\mathbb{Q}a4$ $\mathbb{Q}c7$ 22 $\mathbb{W}f4$ $\mathbb{Q}de8$
23 $\mathbb{Q}xe5$ $\mathbb{Q}xe5$ 24 $\mathbb{Q}xd7$ $\mathbb{Q}xd7$ 25 $\mathbb{W}xf7+$ $\mathbb{Q}h8$
26 $\mathbb{Q}d1$ 1-0

Timman – Cuijpers
Dutch Ch, Hilversum 1983

**1 c4 e5 2 $\mathbb{Q}c3$ d6 3 d4 exd4 4 $\mathbb{W}xd4$ $\mathbb{Q}c6$ 5
 $\mathbb{Q}d2$ $\mathbb{Q}f6$ 6 b3 g6 7 $\mathbb{Q}b2$ $\mathbb{Q}g7$ 8 g3 0-0 9 $\mathbb{Q}g2$
 $\mathbb{Q}e8$ 10 $\mathbb{Q}f3$ (D)**

For many years, this move was thought to be harmless because it lets Black sink a piece onto e4. That's not so clear.

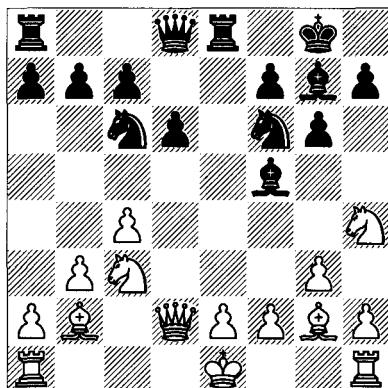
10... $\mathbb{Q}f5$

Something along the lines of 10... $\mathbb{Q}d7$ 11 0-0 a6 with ...b5 in mind might be a good option. In this variation in general, pawn-breaks are usually necessary if Black isn't to get pushed back. See the note to 11... $\mathbb{W}d7$!.

11 $\mathbb{Q}h4!$ (D)

In earlier games, 11 0-0 had been played, when 11... $\mathbb{Q}e4$ 12 $\mathbb{Q}xe4$ $\mathbb{Q}xe4$ is roughly equal.

B



11... $\mathbb{W}d7$??

Black shouldn't give up the bishop-pair when he's done nothing to open lines or create outposts for his knights. Of the alternatives, 11... $\mathbb{Q}d7$ 12 0-0 a6, to enforce ...b5, looks particularly logical with White's knight away from the centre on h4. A sample continuation might be 13 $\mathbb{Q}d5$ $\mathbb{Q}xd5$ 14 cxd5 $\mathbb{Q}e5$ 15 $\mathbb{Q}ac1$ $\mathbb{Q}c8$ 16 $\mathbb{Q}h1$ $\mathbb{W}e7$ with only a slight disadvantage.

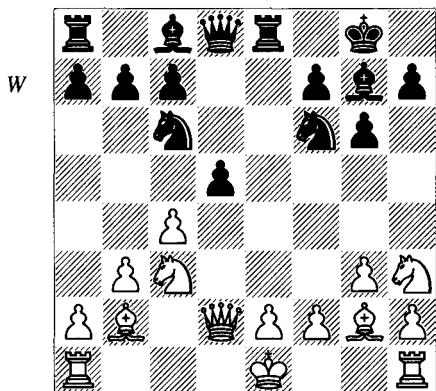
**12 $\mathbb{Q}xf5$ $\mathbb{W}xf5$ 13 0-0 $\mathbb{Q}e7$ 14 $\mathbb{Q}ad1$ $\mathbb{Q}ae8$ 15
h3 $\mathbb{W}h5$ 16 e3 $\mathbb{Q}e5$ 17 $\mathbb{Q}e2$ $\mathbb{W}xe2$ 18 $\mathbb{Q}xe2$
 $\mathbb{Q}b8$ 19 $\mathbb{Q}f4$ $\mathbb{Q}ed7$ 20 $\mathbb{Q}d4$ a6 21 $\mathbb{Q}c1$ $\mathbb{Q}ee8$ 22
 $\mathbb{Q}fd1$ $\mathbb{Q}e4$**

Here White could have effortlessly gained a large advantage by 23 $\mathbb{Q}xg7$ $\mathbb{Q}xg7$ 24 c5!, since 24... $\mathbb{Q}dx5$ 25 b4 $\mathbb{Q}d7$ 26 $\mathbb{Q}xc7$ $\mathbb{Q}df6$ 27 $\mathbb{Q}d5$! is positionally ruinous for Black. In any case, we can see that White's opening was a smashing success. The combination of greater

territorial control and bishop versus knight showed itself to good effect.

Ca. Hansen – McNab
Copenhagen 1991

1 c4 e5 2 ♜c3 d6 3 d4 exd4 4 ♜xd4 ♜c6 5 ♜d2 ♜f6 6 b3 g6 7 ♜b2 ♜g7 8 g3 0-0 9 ♜g2 ♜e8 10 ♜h3 d5! (D)

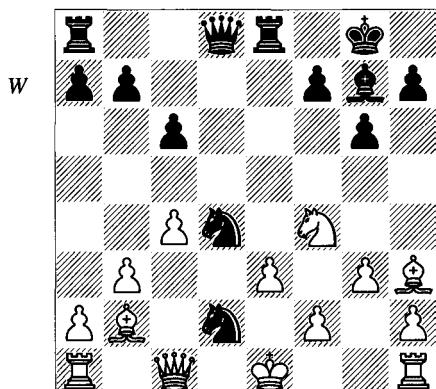


This central blow works because of White's loose knight on h3. As a rule, if ...d5 is viable in these lines, Black gains full equality or more.

11 cxd5?

11 ♜xd5 ♜xh3! 12 ♜xh3 ♜e4 13 ♜c1? (13 ♜c2 ♜d4 14 ♜xd4 ♜xd4 15 0-0-0! is unclear)
13... ♜d4! 14 e3! c6 15 ♜f4 and now:

a) 15... ♜d2!? (D) is an incredible try.



16 ♜c3! (16 ♜xd4? ♜xd4; 16 ♜xd2?? ♜f3+)
16... ♜e4! 17 ♜b2 ♜a5+ (17...g5 18 ♜d3 ♜xb3 is the ambitious option) 18 ♜f1 ♜d2+ 19 ♜g2 ♜e5! 20 ♜xd4 ♜e4+ 21 ♜g1 ♜f3+ 22 ♜f1

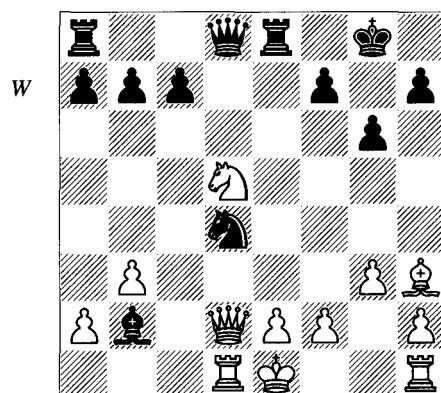
♗xd4 23 exd4 ♜d2+ 24 ♜g1 ♜f3+ 25 ♜f1 ♜d2+ ½-½ Sadler-McNab, London 1989.

b) 15...g5! yields some advantage: 16 ♜h5 (16 ♜d3 ♜xb3 17 axb3 ♜xd3) 16... ♜a5+ 17 ♜f1 ♜d2+ 18 ♜g2 ♜e5!, and it's hardly possible for White to avoid the lengthy sequence 19 ♜xd4 ♜e4+ 20 ♜g1 ♜f3+ 21 ♜f1 ♜xd4 22 ♜g1 ♜f3 23 ♜xg7 ♜xh2+ 24 ♜e2 ♜xg7 25 ♜c3+ f6, when Black stands better.

11... ♜xh3 12 ♜xh3 ♜xd5 13 ♜xd5 ♜xb2 14 ♜d1

After 14 ♜xb2 ♜xd5 15 0-0-0 ♜d4 16 ♜g2? ♜xe2+ 17 ♜h1 ♜b5, Black is still a pawn up.

14... ♜d4! (D)



15 ♜e3!

15 ♜xb2 ♜xd5 16 0-0-0 c5! threatens ... ♜xe2.

15... ♜f6 16 ♜f1 ♜ad8! 17 ♜g4?

17 ♜xb2 improves, but Black has a nice attack after 17... ♜xe3!.

17... ♜c6 18 ♜g2 ♜a6 19 ♜e3 ♜xe2 20 ♜d5 ♜c3+ 21 ♜g2 ♜xe3! 22 ♜xe3 ♜xd5 23 ♜f3 ♜f6 24 ♜xf6 ♜xf6 0-1

The Positional Approach

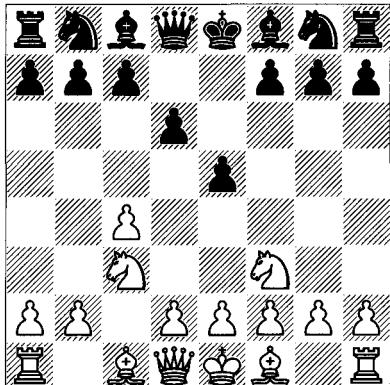
1 c4 e5 2 ♜c3 d6 3 ♜f3 (D)

In contrast to 3 d4 exd4 4 ♜xd4, which sacrifices development for the sake of central control, 3 ♜f3 gets a piece out and shares the centre. In our main line, no pawns are exchanged, so the resulting play tends to be more positional in nature.

3...f5

This is one of the better places for Black to advance his f-pawn, because the knight on f3

B



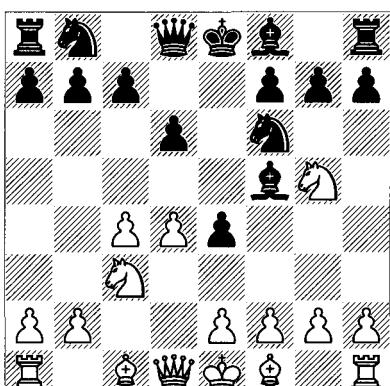
allows him to play ...e4 with tempo should his centre be challenged. 3...f5 is the move that most uniquely exploits the flexible nature of 2...d6. Other logical-looking moves have their own quirks:

a) 3... $\mathbb{Q}c6$ 4 g3 is the Closed English of Chapter 5, but Black has given White the opportunity for 4 d4!. Assuming that the move 2... $\mathbb{Q}c6$ was otherwise acceptable to him, that was a better route to get to the desired position.

b) Likewise, 3...g6 4 d4 is a shaky way to arrive at ...g6/... $\mathbb{Q}g7$ systems, especially because White gets the advantage after 4... $\mathbb{Q}g7$?! (4... $\mathbb{Q}d7$) 5 dx5 dx5 6 $\mathbb{W}xd8+$ $\mathbb{Q}xd8$ 7 e4!. This cedes the d4-square to Black, but after 7... $\mathbb{Q}c6$ 8 $\mathbb{Q}g5+$ f6 9 0-0-0+ $\mathbb{Q}d7$ 10 $\mathbb{Q}e3$, there's no way to take advantage of it, and White has the direct idea of c5 with $\mathbb{Q}c4$ and doubling on the d-file. Of course, other plans are available depending upon Black's response.

c) White is supposed to have the advantage after 3... $\mathbb{Q}f6$ 4 d4 e4 5 $\mathbb{Q}g5$ $\mathbb{Q}f5$ (D).

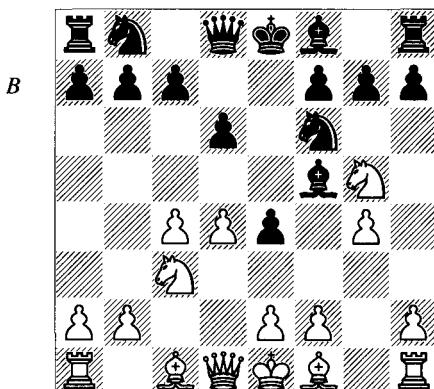
W



But that assessment can be disputed; for example:

c1) 6 $\mathbb{W}c2$ h6! 7 $\mathbb{Q}gxe4$ $\mathbb{Q}xe4$ 8 $\mathbb{Q}xe4$ $\mathbb{W}h4$, as in Boleslavsky-Bronstein, Candidates tournament, Budapest 1950, has generally been evaluated as better for Black. However, 9 $\mathbb{W}a4+$ (9 $\mathbb{Q}xd6+$ $\mathbb{Q}xd6$ 10 $\mathbb{W}xf5$ $\mathbb{Q}b4+$ 11 $\mathbb{Q}d1$ $\mathbb{W}xd4+$ 12 $\mathbb{Q}c2$ is hardly clear!) 9... $\mathbb{Q}d7$ (9... $\mathbb{Q}c6$ 10 $\mathbb{Q}g3$) 10 $\mathbb{W}c2$ $\mathbb{Q}f5$ 11 $\mathbb{W}a4+$ seems to draw, in view of 11... $\mathbb{Q}d7$ 12 $\mathbb{W}c2$ $\mathbb{Q}f5$, etc. Still, a draw stemming from Black's 6th move isn't much of an achievement for White, and his only alternative, 9 $\mathbb{Q}xd6+$, is risky.

c2) 6 g4 (D) is the preferred way to win the centre without the weakening f3.

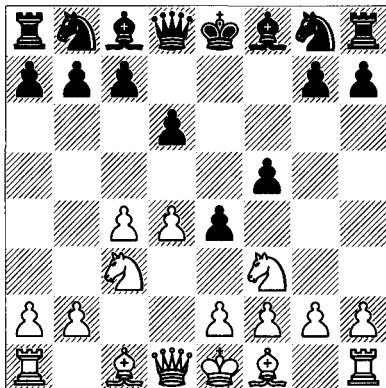


Theory likes White after this move, yet it seems to produce a game with chances for both sides. Now White's goal is to take over the centre; for example, 6... $\mathbb{Q}xg4$?! 7 $\mathbb{Q}gxe4$ c6?! 8 h3 $\mathbb{Q}f6$ 9 $\mathbb{Q}xf6$ $\mathbb{W}xf6$ 10 e4, Komarov-Romanishin, St Vincent 2000. Black should prefer 6... $\mathbb{Q}xg4$ 7 $\mathbb{Q}g2$ $\mathbb{Q}c6$ 8 $\mathbb{Q}gxe4$ $\mathbb{Q}xe4$ 9 $\mathbb{Q}xe4$ (instead of 9 $\mathbb{Q}xe4$ $\mathbb{W}d7$?! and ...0-0-0) 9... $\mathbb{Q}e7$ 10 $\mathbb{Q}g3$, and here simply 10...0-0 looks perfectly playable, since White's centre is immobile. For example, 11 $\mathbb{Q}e3$ $\mathbb{Q}g5$! or 11 $\mathbb{W}d3$ $\mathbb{Q}e8$ 12 e4? d5! with the idea 13 cxd5 $\mathbb{W}xd5$! 14 exd5?? $\mathbb{Q}b4++$. You get the impression that the received wisdom about some of these minor lines isn't fully trustworthy.

4 d4 e4 (D)

We reach a very common position in high-level chess, indicating both players' willingness to mix it up. If Black is satisfied with his play here, and likes the lines following 3 d4 exd4, he will have a repertoire based upon 2...d6 that

W

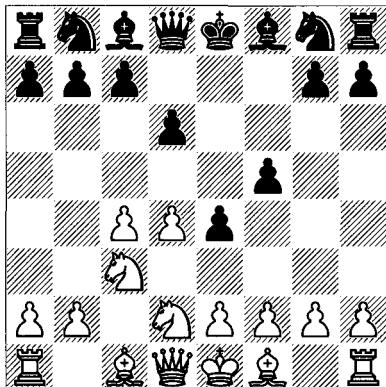


doesn't sacrifice the opportunity for dynamic play. On the other hand, if White can gain a safe edge in this position, it gives him a way to bypass the complexities of 3 d4 and 3 g3.

By playing 4...e4, Black wants to force the white knight to an awkward square and maintain a space advantage, whereas White hopes that Black is overextended. Typically White will try to undermine the e4 point or advance on the queenside. He has several reasonable moves, and I think it's fair to say that all of them lead to complex play with plenty of life. Let's briefly examine two of these responses to 4...e4 before turning to games.

a) 5 $\mathbb{Q}d2$ (D) is sound, but passive.

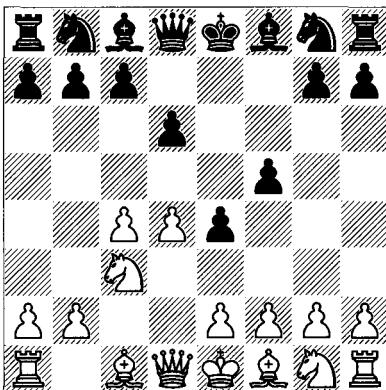
B



There can follow 5... $\mathbb{Q}f6$ 6 e3, and Black can equalize with the standard plan of 6...c6 intending ... $\mathbb{Q}a6-c7$. He can then develop normally by ... $\mathbb{Q}e7$ and ...0-0, or in some cases ...d5 and ... $\mathbb{Q}d6$ might follow. Also played are 6...g6 7 $\mathbb{Q}e2$ $\mathbb{Q}g7$ and 6...c5!?, to put pressure on the d4-pawn and try to induce it to go to d5.

b) A deceptively ambitious move is 5 $\mathbb{Q}g1!?$ (D).

B

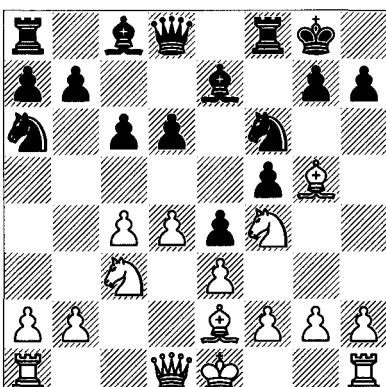


White has ideas of imitating a French Defence with colours reversed by playing e3, and this provides opportunities for both sides; for example:

b1) 5...c6 6 $\mathbb{Q}h3$ and now 6...d5?! 7 cxd5 cxd5 8 $\mathbb{Q}b3$ (or 8 $\mathbb{Q}g5$) 8... $\mathbb{Q}c6$! 9 e3 $\mathbb{Q}f6$ 10 $\mathbb{Q}d2$!, intending $\mathbb{Q}f4$, favours White. Naturally, Black won't be inclined to go along with this, and can play 6... $\mathbb{Q}e7$! (versus 7 $\mathbb{Q}g5$) 7 $\mathbb{Q}f4$ $\mathbb{Q}f6$ 8 e3 0-0, perhaps with ... $\mathbb{Q}a6-c7$ in mind. A variant on this is the immediate 6... $\mathbb{Q}a6$ 7 e3 (7 $\mathbb{Q}g5$! is interesting) 7... $\mathbb{Q}f6$ 8 $\mathbb{Q}f4$ $\mathbb{Q}c7$ 9 d5! $\mathbb{Q}e7$ 10 b3? 0-0 11 $\mathbb{Q}b2$ $\mathbb{Q}d7$ 12 $\mathbb{Q}e2$ g5! with unclear play. Both sides can be confident of getting their share of the action in such positions.

b2) Black probably wants to avoid 5... $\mathbb{Q}f6$ 6 $\mathbb{Q}g5$!, when White's side is easier to play; for example, 6... $\mathbb{Q}e7$ 7 e3 0-0 8 $\mathbb{Q}h3$ c6 9 $\mathbb{Q}f4$ $\mathbb{Q}a6$ 10 $\mathbb{Q}e2$ (D).

B



This is pretty much the ideal set-up for White in terms of piece coordination and availability of pawn attacks on all parts of the board (b4-b5, d5, f3 and even h4-h5). He may not have a forced advantage, but the position is promising. One game went 10... $\mathbb{Q}c7$ 11 $\mathbb{W}b3$ h6?! (11... $\mathbb{B}b8$ 12 0-0 $\mathbb{Q}e6$! 13 f3 exf3 14 $\mathbb{W}xf3$! is slightly in White's favour) 12 $\mathbb{Q}xf6$ $\mathbb{Q}xf6$ 13 $\mathbb{Q}g6$ $\mathbb{Q}e8$, Shvedchikov-Iashvili, Moscow 1999, and here 14 0-0 makes it difficult for Black to unwind. For example, 14... $\mathbb{Q}h7$ 15 $\mathbb{Q}h5$ $\mathbb{Q}e6$ 16 $\mathbb{Q}e2$! intending f3, and meeting 16... $\mathbb{Q}f8$ by 17 $\mathbb{Q}ef4$.

**Lautier – Cu. Hansen
Biel 1992**

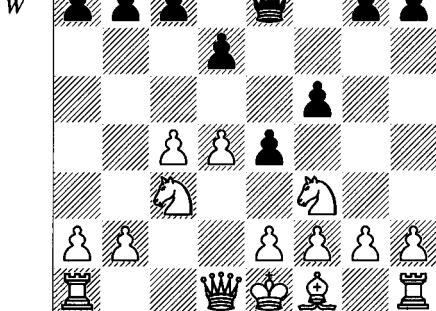
1 c4 e5 2 $\mathbb{Q}c3$ d6 3 $\mathbb{Q}f3$ f5 4 d4 e4 5 $\mathbb{Q}g5$!?

By contrast with other lines in which he plays e3, White gets his bishop in front of the pawn-chain first. The drawback is that it helps Black develop quickly:

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

5... $\mathbb{Q}f6$ is also possible, when after 6 $\mathbb{Q}d2$ $\mathbb{Q}e7$ 7 e3 0-0 the set-up with ...c6 and ... $\mathbb{Q}a6-c7$ has equalized. However, 6 $\mathbb{Q}g1$ is more attractive – compare 5 $\mathbb{Q}g1$ in the previous game.

6 $\mathbb{Q}xe7$ $\mathbb{W}xe7$ (D)



7 $\mathbb{Q}d2$

With 7 $\mathbb{Q}g1$ $\mathbb{Q}f6$ 8 e3, White wants to play a sort of French Defence without his bad bishop. Black needn't cooperate by playing an immediate ...d5, since he also has 8...0-0 9 $\mathbb{Q}h3$ c6 10 $\mathbb{Q}e2$ $\mathbb{Q}a6$ 11 $\mathbb{W}c2$ $\mathbb{Q}c7$, Uliashhev-Lukin, St Petersburg 1992. Then ...d5 or ... $\mathbb{Q}e6$ and ... $\mathbb{B}b8$ can follow, with a strong centre. For his part, White can go for queenside action via b4-b5.

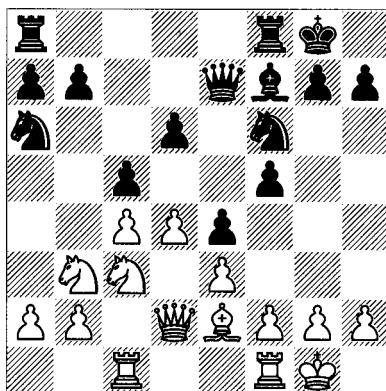
7... $\mathbb{Q}f6$ 8 e3 0-0 9 $\mathbb{Q}e2$ c5!?

Black would like to provoke White into playing d5, which would give his own knight a fine square on e5 and introduce the prospect of attack by ...f4.

10 $\mathbb{Q}b3$ $\mathbb{Q}e6$ 11 0-0 $\mathbb{Q}f7$

This is useful in preventing f3, since the e-pawn will hang after ...exf3.

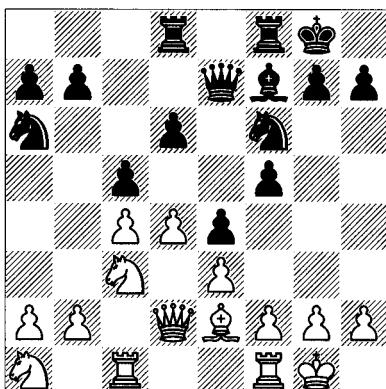
12 $\mathbb{Q}c1$ $\mathbb{Q}a6$!? 13 $\mathbb{W}d2$ (D)



White prepares $\mathbb{Q}fd1$ to exert a little pressure down the d-file. He also renews the idea of f3, although it's not always clear whom that favours.

13... $\mathbb{W}ad8$ 14 $\mathbb{Q}a1$!? (D)

A clever idea. White wants to free his b-pawn for defence (by b3) or attack (by b4); and even more so, he would like to play $\mathbb{Q}c2$ and f3. The main alternative is 14 f3 $\mathbb{Q}de8$, and now 15 f4! prepares $\mathbb{Q}d5$ and could give White the faster attack, especially since the natural plan of ... $\mathbb{Q}h8$, ... $\mathbb{Q}g8$ and ...g5 is slow and hard to implement.



14... $\mathbb{Q}b4!$ 15 $\mathbb{d}5??!$

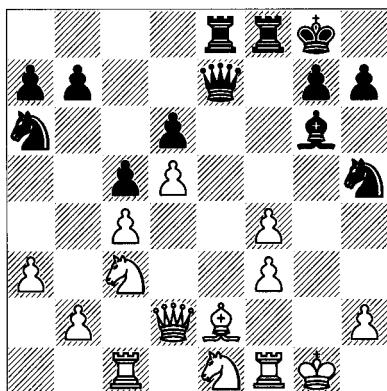
This releases the pressure on Black's centre. 15 $\mathbb{Q}c2$ looks right.

15... $\mathbb{Q}h5!$ 16 $f3??$ $\mathbb{exf}3$ 17 $\mathbb{gxf}3?$ $\mathbb{Qde}8$ 18 $a3$ $\mathbb{Qa}6$ 19 $\mathbb{Qc}2$ $f4!$ 20 $\mathbb{exf}4$

Or 20 $e4?$ $\mathbb{Qd}7$; as we've seen many times, when a knight occupies an outpost on e5 and can't be challenged, it creates difficulties for the opponent, and here White's bad bishop adds to the problem.

20... $\mathbb{Q}g6$ 21 $\mathbb{Qe}1$ $\mathbb{Q}h5$ (D)

Two excellent alternatives are 21... $\mathbb{Q}f5$ and 21... $\mathbb{Q}c7$, which both cover e6 and support an eventual ... $b5$.

**22 $f5$**

If 22 $\mathbb{Q}g2??$, 22... $\mathbb{Q}xf4!$ 23 $\mathbb{Q}xf4$ $\mathbb{Q}g5+$ 24 $\mathbb{Q}h1$ $\mathbb{Q}xf4$ 25 $\mathbb{Q}xf4$ $\mathbb{Q}xf4$ results in active black pieces, whereas White has weak pawns and a bad bishop.

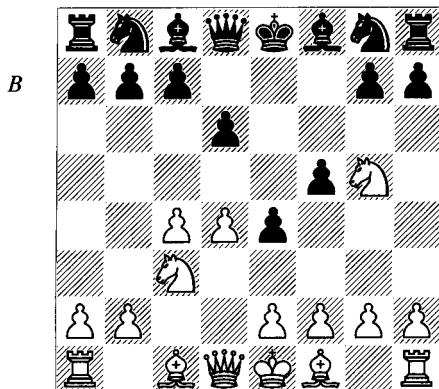
After the game continuation 22 $f5$, Black played 22... $\mathbb{Q}xf5?!$ and stood worse after 23 $f4!!$. But 22... $\mathbb{Q}xf5!$ is positionally attractive. White's plan is not clear; e.g., 23 $f4$ $\mathbb{Q}f6$ 24 $\mathbb{Q}d3$ $\mathbb{Q}h3$ 25 $\mathbb{Q}g2$ $\mathbb{Q}c7$ 26 $\mathbb{Q}ce1$ $\mathbb{Q}d7$, again answering 27 $f5$ with 27... $\mathbb{Q}g4!$ followed by occupation of e5; notice White's bad bishop on d3.

**Salov – Romero
Madrid 1992**

1 $c4$ $e5$ 2 $\mathbb{Q}c3$ $d6$ 3 $\mathbb{Q}f3$ $f5$ 4 $d4$ $e4$ 5 $\mathbb{Q}g5$ (D)

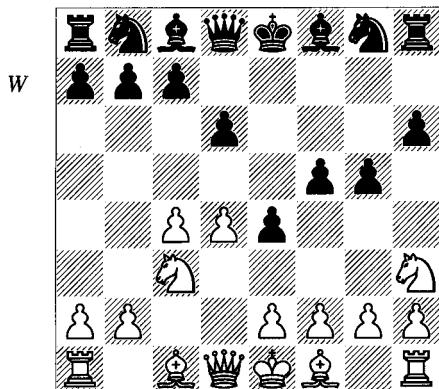
5... $\mathbb{Q}e7$

Black stays flexible, in the spirit of 2... $d6$ and 3... $f5$. The alternatives are instructive because of the pawn-structures that arise:



a) The elastic move 5... $c6$ is often played, sometimes transposing. Black may choose to delay the development of his kingside pieces; e.g., 6 $\mathbb{Q}h3$ $\mathbb{Q}a6$ 7 $e3$ (7 $\mathbb{Q}g5?!$) 7... $\mathbb{Q}f6$ 8 $\mathbb{Q}f4$ $\mathbb{Q}c7$ (one of many variants on this basic piece disposition) 9 $d5!?$ $\mathbb{Q}e7$ 10 $b3$ 0-0 11 $\mathbb{Q}b2$ $\mathbb{Q}d7$ with mutual chances, Timman-Yusupov, Amsterdam 1994. The position became even more unbalanced after 12 $\mathbb{Q}e2$ $g5!$.

b) For quite some time Black was enamoured of the space-grab 5... $h6$ 6 $\mathbb{Q}h3$ $g5$ (D).



The basic idea is to develop by ... $\mathbb{Q}f6$ and ... $\mathbb{Q}g7$. Then ceding the bishop-pair to Black via 7 $e3$ $\mathbb{Q}f6$ 8 $\mathbb{Q}e2$ $\mathbb{Q}g7$ 9 $\mathbb{Q}h5+$ $\mathbb{Q}xh5$ 10 $\mathbb{Q}xh5+$ $\mathbb{Q}f8$ hasn't given White anything. After 6... $g5$, White's next logical try is 7 $f3$, when Black usually plays 7... $\mathbb{Q}xf3$ with ... $\mathbb{Q}g7$ next. That has proven completely satisfactory.

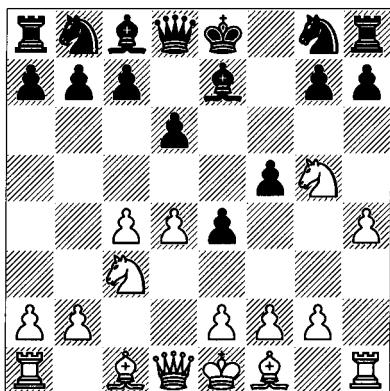
However, 5... $h6$ 6 $\mathbb{Q}h3$ $g5$ became less popular as players discovered the strength of 7 $\mathbb{Q}g1!$, an odd-looking but logical retreat. White's lead in development is gone, but he

wants to immobilize Black's pawn-structure by 8 h4, after which he will get a freer hand in the centre and on the queenside. Illescas-Hodgson, Spanish Team Ch 1993 continued 7... $\mathbb{Q}f6$ (7... $\mathbb{Q}g7$ 8 h4 g4 9 e3 $\mathbb{Q}d7$ 10 $\mathbb{Q}ge2$ h5 11 $\mathbb{Q}f4$ gave White the desired advantage in Portisch-Seirawan, Mar del Plata 1982; of course, the game is only beginning) 8 h4 $\mathbb{Q}g8?$! 9 hxg5 hxg5 10 $\mathbb{Q}h3$ g4 11 $\mathbb{Q}f4$ c6 12 e3 $\mathbb{Q}a6$ 13 $\mathbb{Q}d2$ $\mathbb{Q}c7$ 14 $\mathbb{Q}b3$ $\mathbb{Q}e7$ 15 0-0-0 $\mathbb{Q}b8$ 16 $\mathbb{Q}e2$ $\mathbb{Q}d7$ 17 f3!, and Black's king was stuck in the middle.

6 $\mathbb{Q}h3$

This is the main move, but perhaps more attention should be given to 6 h4!? (D).

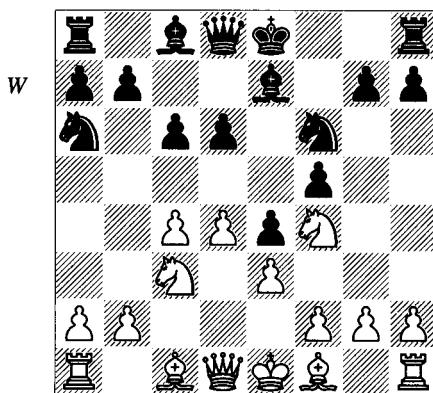
B



The idea is to anchor the knight on f4 after $\mathbb{Q}h3-f4$. 6 h4 is sound because of the pseudo-tactical point that 6...h6 7 $\mathbb{Q}h3$ $\mathbb{Q}xh4$ is risky in view of 8 $\mathbb{Q}f4$ (or 8 e3) 8... $\mathbb{Q}g5?$! 9 $\mathbb{Q}g6$ $\mathbb{Q}h7$ 10 c5!? with the idea $\mathbb{Q}c4$. Then Black should steer clear of 10...d5? 11 $\mathbb{Q}xd5!$ $\mathbb{Q}xd5$ 12 $\mathbb{Q}xg5$.

After 6 h4!?, moreover, the thematic 6...c6 can be met by the developing move 7 $\mathbb{Q}f4$, while 7 d5!? is also playable. That brings us to 6... $\mathbb{Q}f6$ 7 e3, when the complicated position after 7...0-0 8 $\mathbb{Q}e2$ c6 9 d5!? (9 $\mathbb{Q}h3$ $\mathbb{Q}g4$ 10 h5!? is quite unclear) 9... $\mathbb{Q}a6$ has been tested a few times and seems about equal. Maybe White should consider the simple 7 $\mathbb{Q}f4$, when a complex battle could result from 7... $\mathbb{Q}h5$ 8 e3!? g6; e.g., 9 $\mathbb{Q}h3$ with the idea 9... $\mathbb{Q}xh4$ 10 $\mathbb{Q}h6$, or even 9 $\mathbb{Q}h2$ h6!? 10 $\mathbb{Q}h3$ $\mathbb{Q}xh4$ 11 $\mathbb{Q}e2$ followed by $\mathbb{Q}f4$. There is certainly plenty to try out here!

6...c6 7 e3 $\mathbb{Q}f6$ 8 $\mathbb{Q}f4$ $\mathbb{Q}a6$ (D)



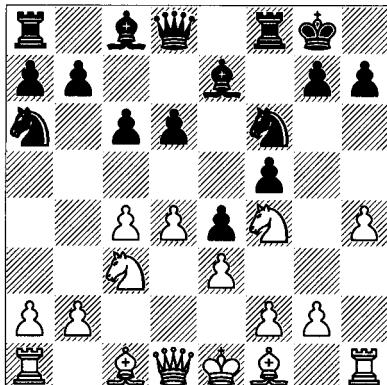
This position has arisen in many games, and contains the same ideas that we've seen in the notes. White has several possible plans, including d5 (to grab space and control e6), f3 (to break up the front of the pawn-chain), and b4-b5. Black would like to play moves like ...d5 and ...g5, but can take his time with ...0-0, ... $\mathbb{Q}c7$ and ... $\mathbb{Q}h8$. If White then plays d5, Black will often simply capture on that square and train his forces upon the pawn there, which is effectively isolated.

9 h4

Played in the clear majority of games. White assumes that ...g5 will be strong at some point, so he may as well prevent it now.

9...0-0 (D)

W



10 $\mathbb{Q}e2$

White can also initiate a queenside advance right away: 10 a3 $\mathbb{Q}c7$ 11 b4 $\mathbb{Q}e6$ (11...d5 is already a candidate) 12 $\mathbb{Q}h3$!? (12 h5) 12...d5 (Black takes the centre; d5 is well-protected, so he should have no problems) 13 g3 h6!? 14

♗b3 g5!? (an ambitious move that prepares simply to walk all over White on the kingside; 14...a5 is a good alternative) 15 hxg5 hxg5 16 ♘d2 ♔g7! 17 cxd5 cxd5 18 0-0-0 ♘h8 19 ♘e2 ♘d6 20 ♘b2 ♘d7 21 ♘dg1 ♘h7! with the idea of doubling rooks, Povah-Summerscale, British League (4NCL) 1996/7. Black has achieved considerable pressure, while White has made no progress versus his opponent's centre.

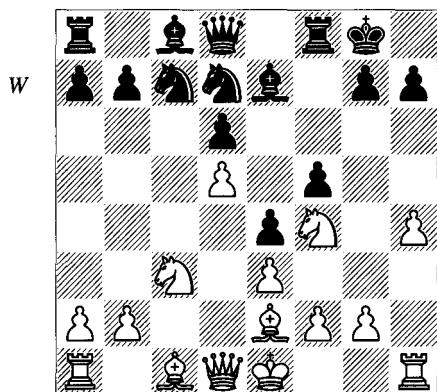
10...♝c7 11 d5

The timing of this move is critical. White could also consider a more neutral approach such as 11 ♗b3.

11...cx d5

11...♝d7 with the idea ...♝e5 is similar, but Black wants to clarify the central structure.

12 cxd5 ♘d7! (D)



Black takes advantage of the fact that White's d5 has given him the e5-square and activity along the a1-h8 diagonal. Even White's pawn on h4 has become a problem, discouraging him from castling.

13 g3??!

Now White's kingside pawns are static and f3 is weak. Also, after 13 ♘e6? ♘xe6 14 dx e6 ♘e5 (or 14...♝c5) he soon loses a pawn. Best is 13 h5!, although Black can be quite satisfied after 13...♝e5.

13...♞f6 14 ♘f1

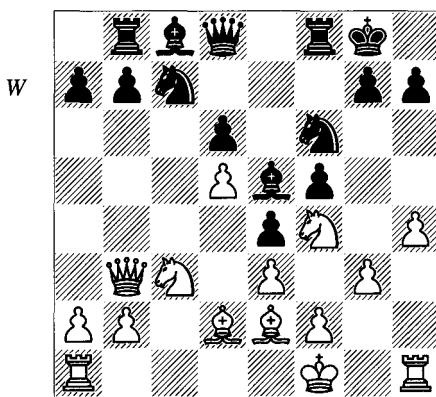
14 ♘d2 ♘e5!? 15 ♘c1 ♘f6 was the stem game Ruban-Anand, Palma de Mallorca 1989; that makes it difficult for White to defend his d-pawn in the face of attacks on it by ...♝e7-f7 in conjunction with ...♘xf4.

14...♝e5 15 ♘d2 ♘f6

Here and over the next couple of moves, ...b6 was strong, intending ...♝e7-f7 and ...♘xf4 followed by ...♗b7. This is a surprisingly difficult plan to counter.

16 ♘b3 ♘b8 (D)

Now is the optimal time for 16...b6!.



17 a4 ♘h8 18 ♘g2 ♘d7 19 ♘hc1

Perhaps this rook would be better off on d1, watching over the d-pawn.

After 19 ♘hc1, Black should probably play 19...♝e7, intending ...♝f7; for example, 20 ♘b5 ♘cxd5!, based upon 21 ♘xd5? (21 ♘xa7 ♘c6!) 21...♝xd5 22 ♘xd5?? ♘e6.

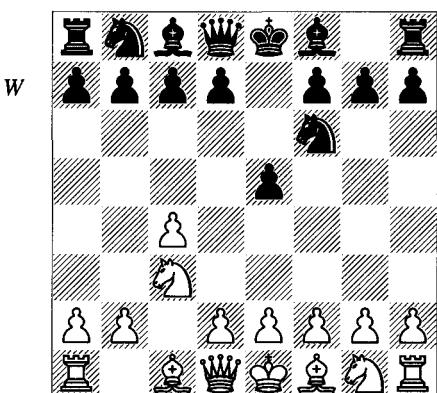
It looks as though this fascinating main line is wholly satisfactory for Black, and that White should investigate the rarely-played 6 h4.

It's amazing how much active and refreshing chess can be generated from a simple move like 2...d6. Because of its flexibility, both players will combine to shape the nature of the contest, which can run the full gamut from highly tactical to subtly positional.

4 2... $\mathbb{N}f6$ and g3 Systems

Introduction to 2... $\mathbb{N}f6$

1 c4 e5 2 $\mathbb{Q}c3$ $\mathbb{Q}f6$ (D)



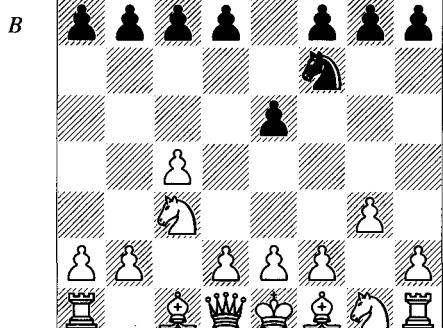
Having explored some other moves after 1 c4 e5 2 $\mathbb{Q}c3$, we'll turn our eyes to the traditional continuation 2... $\mathbb{Q}f6$, which contests the key central squares d5 and e4. By this means Black continues his imitation of White's main Sicilian Defence set-up, that is, 1 e4 c5 2 $\mathbb{Q}f3$, and asks his opponent to commit to a formation.

In this chapter, I'll examine systems with an early g3 and $\mathbb{Q}g2$, primarily 2 $\mathbb{Q}c3$ $\mathbb{Q}f6$ 3 g3 (D), which has been central to the historical development of the English Opening.

When White plays 3 g3, he is doing what a clear majority of Sicilian players would do as Black. By this I mean that, when playing against most variations of the Sicilian Defence in which White omits the move d4, Sicilian devotees use ...g6 and ... $\mathbb{Q}g7$ as their default plan. After 1 e4 c5, for example, we see 2 $\mathbb{Q}c3$ $\mathbb{Q}c6$ and now 3 g3 g6 or 3 f4 g6. Versus 2 $\mathbb{Q}f3$ $\mathbb{Q}c6$ 3 $\mathbb{Q}b5$, the fianchetto by 3...g6 is also the most popular move. Thus it makes perfect sense to follow 1 c4 e5 2 $\mathbb{Q}c3$ $\mathbb{Q}f6$ with 3 g3. Here trade-offs between time and information assume special importance, and we can learn a lot about both the English Opening and Sicilian Defence by comparing and contrasting similar positions. It turns out that both 3... $\mathbb{Q}b4$ and 3...c6 take on a character which might not be anticipated if one were only looking at them with the eyes of a Sicilian Defence player.

Much the same applies to White's other fianchetto line 1 c4 e5 2 g3. This closely resembles a Hyper-Accelerated Dragon (1 e4 c5 2 $\mathbb{Q}f3$ g6) with reversed colours; and again, Black's knowledge about White's intentions allows him to compensate for being a tempo behind.

As usual, we'll get oriented by looking at a few rarely-played third moves for White. As we see in this game, they resemble White's 2nd moves in Chapter 2 and may even transpose.



Van Wely – Kasparov
Tilburg 1998

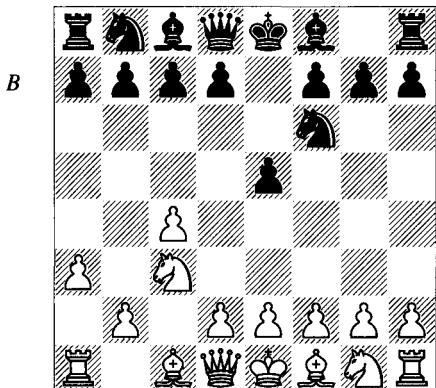
1 c4 e5 2 $\mathbb{Q}c3$ $\mathbb{Q}f6$ 3 e3

With this flexible move, White is aiming for some sort of reversed Sicilian Defence or French Defence position, preferably leading to relatively unexplored positions. Although hardly a dire threat to Black, 3 e3 is one of White's more interesting irregular choices; it also has the potential to be used as a transpositional tool.

Alternatively, White can go for even more modest pawn moves. One of these, 3 d3, isn't

very forceful, since it relinquishes the possibility of d4 for the time being. I discussed and analysed this in Chapter 2 under the move-order 1 c4 e5 2 d3 $\mathbb{Q}f6$ 3 $\mathbb{Q}c3$.

Similarly, 3 a3 (D) is flexible, but too modest to give an advantage.



Black has several good answers, among them:

a) 3... $\mathbb{Q}c6$ 4 b4 (4 $\mathbb{Q}f3$ g6 is a pleasant variation of the English Four Knights for Black – see Chapter 5) 4...g6 5 $\mathbb{Q}b2$ $\mathbb{Q}g7$ with equality, since trying to disturb Black's development by 6 b5 $\mathbb{Q}d4$ (or 6... $\mathbb{Q}e7$ 7 $\mathbb{Q}f3$ d6) 7 e3 $\mathbb{Q}e6$ doesn't achieve anything.

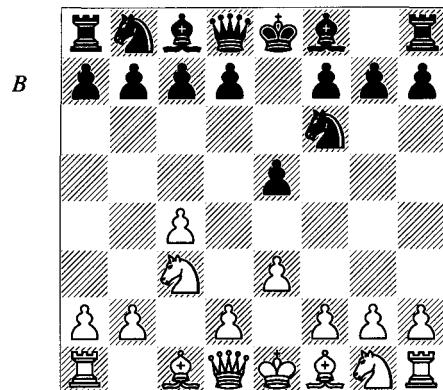
b) 3...g6 is another good idea: 4 $\mathbb{Q}f3$ $\mathbb{Q}c6$, intending 5 b4?! e4! 6 $\mathbb{Q}g5$ $\mathbb{Q}g7$ 7 $\mathbb{Q}b1$ 0-0! with the idea 8 $\mathbb{Q}gxe4$ $\mathbb{Q}xe4$ 9 $\mathbb{Q}xe4$ $\mathbb{Q}e8$; we'll examine this in Chapter 5 under the order 2 $\mathbb{Q}c3$ $\mathbb{Q}f6$ 3 $\mathbb{Q}f3$ $\mathbb{Q}c6$ 4 a3 g6.

c) 3...c6 is unexciting but sufficient: 4 $\mathbb{Q}f3$ (4 d4 exd4 5 $\mathbb{Q}xd4$ $\mathbb{Q}a6$!, and ... $\mathbb{Q}c5$ will soon come with the threat of ... $\mathbb{Q}b3$, illustrating the drawbacks of a3; White should avoid 6 b4?! c5! 7 $\mathbb{Q}e5+$ 8 $\mathbb{Q}e7$ 8 b5 $\mathbb{Q}c7$) 4...e4 5 $\mathbb{Q}d4$ d5. This gives us a reverse variant of the Alapin Sicilian (1 e4 c5 2 c3 $\mathbb{Q}f6$ 3 e5 $\mathbb{Q}d5$ 4 $\mathbb{Q}f3$ $\mathbb{Q}c6$ 5 d4), with an extra move a3 for White, which is not necessarily an advantage for him. Play might go 6 cxd5 $\mathbb{Q}c5$! 7 $\mathbb{Q}b3$ $\mathbb{Q}b6$ and capturing the c-pawn with 8 dxcc6?! $\mathbb{Q}xc6$ is very risky, as in the reversed position. Better is 8 d3 exd3 9 $\mathbb{Q}xd3$ 0-0! with equality.

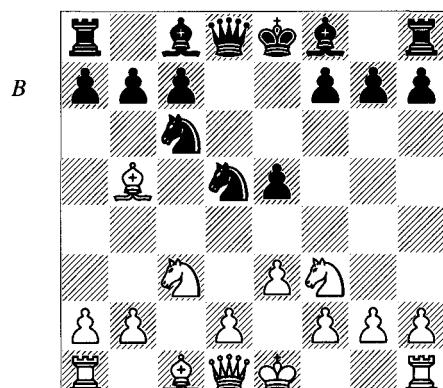
We now return to 3 e3 (D):

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

Here are a couple of alternatives for Black, often leading to structures and ideas that we've seen elsewhere:



a) 3...d5 (somewhat obliging, but not necessarily bad) 4 cxd5 $\mathbb{Q}xd5$ 5 $\mathbb{Q}f3$ (5 $\mathbb{Q}c2$ resembles the Taimanov Variation of the Sicilian) 5... $\mathbb{Q}c6$ (5... $\mathbb{Q}xc3$ 6 bxc3 $\mathbb{Q}d6$ 7 d4 is another well-known reversed Taimanov Sicilian position in which White has an extra tempo; White wants to utilize his central majority while Black would like to scare something up on the king-side; my guess is that most strong players would prefer to have the white pieces, but it's certainly playable for both sides). After 5... $\mathbb{Q}c6$, we've arrived at a position that can also arise by means of the more conventional move-order 2 $\mathbb{Q}c3$ $\mathbb{Q}f6$ 3 $\mathbb{Q}f3$ $\mathbb{Q}c6$ 4 e3 d5 5 cxd5 $\mathbb{Q}xd5$. At this point, the seldom-played 6 $\mathbb{Q}c2$ is a good alternative to look into, but the approved move is 6 $\mathbb{Q}b5$ (D).



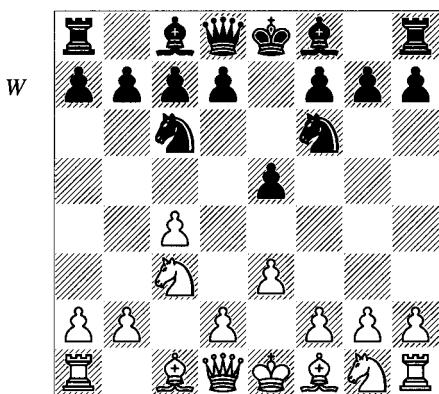
White is held to stand better held, but that isn't at all clear. Black can continue 6... $\mathbb{Q}xc3$ (6... $\mathbb{Q}d6$! looks slow, but is not so easy to refute; White has tried 7 d4 exd4 8 $\mathbb{Q}xd4$!? $\mathbb{Q}xc3$ 9 bxc3 $\mathbb{Q}d7$ 10 0-0 with only a small

advantage) 7 bxc3 $\mathbb{A}d6$ (not 7...e4?! 8 $\mathbb{A}e5$ $\mathbb{W}d5$ 9 $\mathbb{W}a4$ $\mathbb{A}d7$ 10 $\mathbb{A}xd7$ $\mathbb{W}xd7$ 11 $\mathbb{A}c4!$) 8 e4 (8 d4 e4! with the idea 9 $\mathbb{A}d2$ $\mathbb{W}g5!$) 8...0-0 9 0-0 (9 d4?! is a book move, but Black might find 9...exd4 10 cxd4 $\mathbb{E}e8!$ 11 e5 $\mathbb{A}b4+$) 9... $\mathbb{W}e7!$ 10 $\mathbb{B}b1$ $\mathbb{A}d7$ with apparent equality.

b) 3... $\mathbb{A}b4$ is a standard move that White plays in the Sicilian. Then 4 $\mathbb{A}ge2$ is a tempo ahead of the variation 1 e4 c5 2 $\mathbb{A}f3$ $\mathbb{A}c6$ 3 $\mathbb{A}b5$ e6!? 4 0-0 (4 $\mathbb{A}xc6$ is sometimes played) 4... $\mathbb{A}ge7$, often chosen by grandmasters. Once again, the question is whether an extra tempo means enough for White. Interesting play results; for example, 4...0-0 5 a3 $\mathbb{A}xc3$ (5... $\mathbb{A}e7$ 6 d4 is also complex) 6 $\mathbb{A}xc3$ and now 6...c6 can be met by 7 d4 exd4 8 $\mathbb{W}xd4$ d5 9 b4, which gives White the bishop-pair for little gain. So 6... $\mathbb{A}c6$ is more natural, when 7 $\mathbb{W}c2!$? d5 8 cxd5 $\mathbb{A}xd5$ 9 $\mathbb{A}d3$ g6 10 $\mathbb{A}e2!$? with the idea d3 produces a unique and intriguing situation. In comparison with a Sicilian Defence, it's not clear whether Black's missing bishop is worth more or less than White's missing knight.

We see how reversed positions take on a character of their own, or at the very least have their own dynamic. If White feels comfortable with these lines, and with the options in our main game, he might enjoy playing 3 e3 as a way to enter combat without requiring too much in the way of theoretical preparation.

Now we return to 3... $\mathbb{A}c6$ (D):



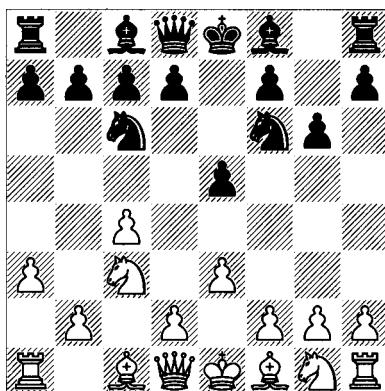
4 a3

This is an ambitious attempt to expand on the queenside. Instead, 4 $\mathbb{A}f3$ transposes to the variation 3 $\mathbb{A}f3$ $\mathbb{A}c6$ 4 e3, examined in Chapter 5. In any case, Black's rapid development

renders 4 d4?! dubious following 4...exd4 5 exd4 $\mathbb{A}b4!$ (e.g., 6 d5 $\mathbb{A}e5!$).

4...g6! (D)

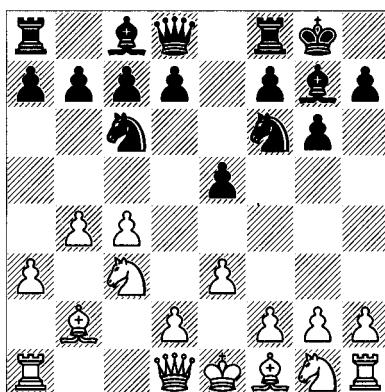
Black has the luxury of fianchettoing, since White has no pressure on the centre. In fact, as a rule of thumb, the move ...g6 is a good choice in the English Opening when White is developing slowly.



5 b4

Black can equalize against 5 d4 by 5...exd4 6 exd4 d5, when 7 $\mathbb{A}g5$ $\mathbb{A}e7!$ 8 $\mathbb{A}f3$ $\mathbb{A}g4$ highlights the poor state of White's kingside development.

5...A g7 6 A b2 0-0 (D)



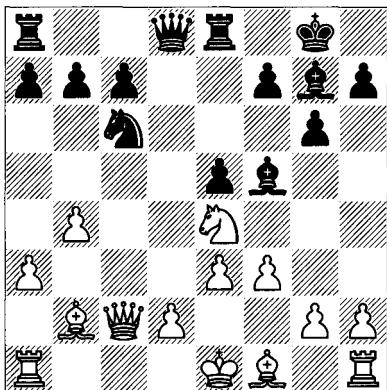
7 d3

Even though this looks consistent with a Sicilian Defence, it will be hard for White to get his kingside pieces out. A Taimanov-style approach would be 7 $\mathbb{W}c2!$, when the play can go in many directions; for example, 7... $\mathbb{E}e8$ (trying to discourage $\mathbb{A}f3$ by means of the move

...e4) 8 $\mathbb{Q}ge2$, and now Black can play 8...d5!?

9 cxd5 $\mathbb{Q}xd5$ 10 $\mathbb{Q}xd5$ $\mathbb{W}xd5$ 11 $\mathbb{Q}c3$ $\mathbb{W}d8!$ (11... $\mathbb{Q}d4?$ loses material to 12 0-0-0!, and 11... $\mathbb{W}d7$ or 11... $\mathbb{W}e6$ invites $\mathbb{Q}e4-c5$) 12 $\mathbb{Q}e4$ $\mathbb{W}f5$ 13 f3!? (D).

B



This is a typically double-edged Sicilian Tai-manov position which looks unclear and would be fun to play.

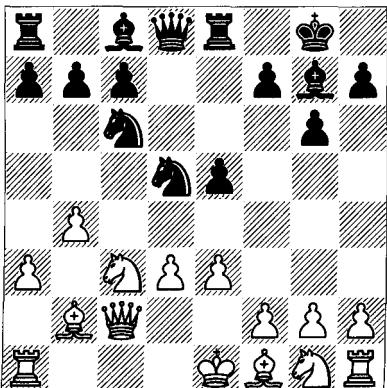
7... $\mathbb{M}e8!$ 8 $\mathbb{W}c2$

If White were in a Najdorf set-up with $\mathbb{Q}d2$ instead of $\mathbb{Q}c3$, he could bypass $\mathbb{W}c2$ and play 8 $\mathbb{Q}f3$, but here that is well met by 8...e4! (utilizing Black's quick development; he can also get his pieces out quickly by means of 8...d5 9 cxd5 $\mathbb{Q}xd5$ 10 $\mathbb{Q}xd5$ $\mathbb{W}xd5$ with the idea 11 $\mathbb{Q}e2??$ a5!) 9 dxe4 (9 $\mathbb{Q}xe4?$ $\mathbb{Q}xe4$ 10 $\mathbb{Q}xg7$ $\mathbb{Q}xf2!$ 11 $\mathbb{Q}xf2$ $\mathbb{Q}xg7$) 9... $\mathbb{Q}xe4$ 10 $\mathbb{W}c2$ $\mathbb{Q}xc3$ 11 $\mathbb{Q}xc3$ d6 intending ... $\mathbb{Q}f5$ or ... $\mathbb{Q}g4$.

8...d5! 9 cxd5 $\mathbb{Q}xd5$ (D)

Now White has a normal Sicilian set-up on the queenside, but he is well behind in development.

W



10 $\mathbb{Q}xd5$

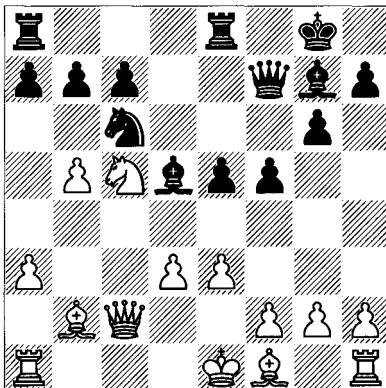
A classic blunder is 10 $\mathbb{Q}ge2??$ $\mathbb{Q}dx b4!$. 10 $\mathbb{Q}e2$ is a fair alternative. But not 10 $\mathbb{Q}f3?$, because of the standard trick 10...a5! 11 b5 $\mathbb{Q}d4!$ 12 exd4 $\mathbb{Q}xc3$ 13 dxe5 $\mathbb{Q}xe5$ 14 $\mathbb{Q}d2!$ (14 $\mathbb{Q}xe5$ $\mathbb{Q}xe5+$ 15 $\mathbb{Q}d2$ $\mathbb{W}g5+$ 16 $\mathbb{Q}xc3$ $\mathbb{Q}c5+)$ 14... $\mathbb{Q}e4+$ 15 $\mathbb{Q}c1$ $\mathbb{Q}xb2+$ 16 $\mathbb{W}xb2$ $\mathbb{Q}d6$ with moves like ... $\mathbb{Q}g4$ and ... $\mathbb{Q}c6$ to follow.

10... $\mathbb{W}xd5$ 11 $\mathbb{Q}e2$ f5 12 $\mathbb{Q}c3$ $\mathbb{W}f7!$

A simple move, but easy to overlook. Now ... $\mathbb{Q}e6-b3$ is hard to stop (if only White had the Najdorf knight on d2!), and once it's played, White will have no good place for his pieces. So he tries to get his knight to c5 before that happens.

13 $\mathbb{Q}a4$ $\mathbb{Q}e6$ 14 $\mathbb{Q}c5$ $\mathbb{Q}d5$ 15 b5 (D)

B



15... $\mathbb{Q}d4!$

A pretty theme from the Sicilian Defence. At first glance it's an obvious choice, but the consequences still have to be correctly calculated and assessed.

16 exd4 exd4+ 17 $\mathbb{Q}e2$ $\mathbb{Q}xg2$ 18 0-0-0 $\mathbb{Q}xh1$ 19 $\mathbb{Q}xh1$

For the moment, the position seems to be holding together for White, but everything comes with tempo:

19... $\mathbb{W}d5!$

This centralizing move threatens ... $\mathbb{W}xh1+$ and ... $\mathbb{Q}xe2!$.

20 $\mathbb{M}e1$

20 $\mathbb{M}g1?$ loses to 20... $\mathbb{Q}xe2!$.

20... $\mathbb{Q}e5!$ 21 $\mathbb{W}b3?!$ $\mathbb{W}xb3$ 22 $\mathbb{Q}xb3$ $\mathbb{M}ae8!$

23 $\mathbb{Q}d1$

This is a depressing move to make, but the tactics all hold together: after 23 $\mathbb{Q}xd4$ $\mathbb{M}e7$ 24 $\mathbb{Q}d2$ $\mathbb{M}d7$ Black wins a piece.

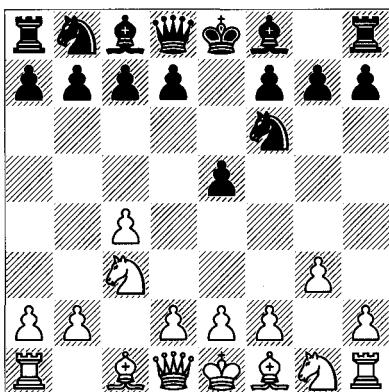
23... $\mathbb{E}xb5$ 24 $\mathbb{Q}f3$ $\mathbb{E}xe1+$ 25 $\mathbb{Q}xe1$ c6 26 $\mathbb{Q}d1$ a5! 27 $\mathbb{Q}xd4$ a4 28 $\mathbb{Q}xg7$ $\mathbb{Q}xg7$ 29 $\mathbb{Q}d2$ $\mathbb{E}e5+$ 30 $\mathbb{Q}e2$ b5

Black has two pawns and a rook versus two pieces (the former are generally superior in an endgame), whereas White has four isolated pawns and his pieces are restricted. Unsurprisingly, Black went on to win. But 3 e3 is a little move that can teach you a lot.

Black's 3rd-Move Options

Now we'll return to 3 g3 (D), the main subject of this chapter, which is described above in general terms.

B

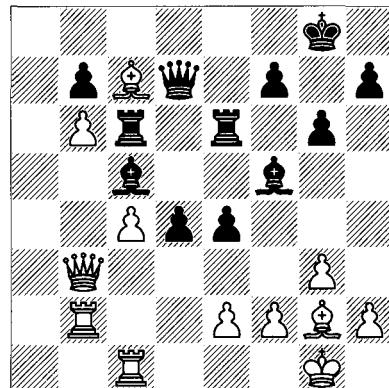


I have given most of my attention to 3... $\mathbb{Q}b4$ and 3...c6. Nevertheless, following the philosophy of working from fundamentals, I'll take an abbreviated look at some of Black's other third moves, beginning with these:

a) 3...g6 will normally lead into another system, very often related to the King's Indian Defence. Along those lines, Black has a couple of ways to avoid the standard variations that arise later in this book. A nice game that shows some basic ideas is Chiburdanidze-Uhlmann, Aruba 1992: 4 $\mathbb{Q}g2$ $\mathbb{Q}g7$ 5 d3 (I've adjusted the game's move-order to make the point that 5 $\mathbb{Q}f3$ is the normal way to shoot for advantage by playing d4; in fact, Black either opts for a slow King's Indian Defence after 5...d6 6 d4, or he assumes a theoretically slightly inferior line following 5... $\mathbb{Q}c6$ 6 0-0 0-0 7 d4 exd4 8 $\mathbb{Q}xd4$; it's worth noting, however, that some strong players use this latter variation) 5...0-0 6 $\mathbb{Q}f3$

$\mathbb{E}e8$ (by means of his move-order, Black has gone without ...d6 and can now try for ...d5 directly) 7 0-0 c6! 8 $\mathbb{Q}d2$?! (a slow move; White should probably react with more urgency; for example, he can discourage ...d5 by 8 $\mathbb{Q}g5$, planning 8...h6 9 $\mathbb{Q}xf6$ $\mathbb{W}xf6$ 10 e3 with the idea of d4, although that gives up the bishop-pair) 8... $\mathbb{Q}a6$ 9 $\mathbb{Q}b1$ d5 10 b4 dx4?! (simply 10... $\mathbb{Q}c7$ assures Black of an ideal, well-protected centre and the better game) 11 $\mathbb{Q}xc4$ $\mathbb{Q}d5$! 12 $\mathbb{Q}xd5$?! (White can avoid strengthening Black's centre by ignoring the b-pawn; Ribli recommends 12 $\mathbb{Q}e4$! with the idea 12... $\mathbb{Q}axb4$ 13 $\mathbb{Q}cd6$ $\mathbb{E}e7$ 14 $\mathbb{Q}g5$!, ending in advantage) 12...cx d5 13 $\mathbb{Q}e3$ $\mathbb{Q}e6$ 14 $\mathbb{W}a4$ $\mathbb{Q}c7$ 15 b5 $\mathbb{W}d7$ (Black has the big centre, and threatens ...a6) 16 $\mathbb{W}b3$ d4! 17 $\mathbb{Q}c4$ $\mathbb{Q}d5$ 18 $\mathbb{Q}d2$ $\mathbb{Q}b6$! 19 a4 $\mathbb{Q}xc4$ 20 dx4 $\mathbb{Q}ac8$ (it's not only that Black is attacking the backward c-pawn; more importantly, his own centre pawns are ready to advance) 21 $\mathbb{Q}fc1$ $\mathbb{Q}f8$! 22 a5 $\mathbb{Q}f5$ 23 $\mathbb{Q}b2$ e4 24 b6 axb6 25 axb6 (25 $\mathbb{W}xb6$ runs into 25... $\mathbb{Q}a3$) 25... $\mathbb{Q}c5$ 26 $\mathbb{Q}f4$ $\mathbb{Q}c6$! 27 $\mathbb{Q}c7$ $\mathbb{Q}ee6$ (D).

W



A picture of centralization! The game concluded 28 $\mathbb{W}a4$ $\mathbb{Q}g7$ 29 $\mathbb{W}a5$ $\mathbb{W}e7$ 30 $\mathbb{W}b5$ h5 31 $\mathbb{Q}a1$ h4 32 gxh4 $\mathbb{Q}g4$ 33 $\mathbb{Q}d2$ d3 34 $\mathbb{Q}f1$? $\mathbb{Q}xf2+$ 35 $\mathbb{Q}h1$ $\mathbb{W}f6$ 0-1.

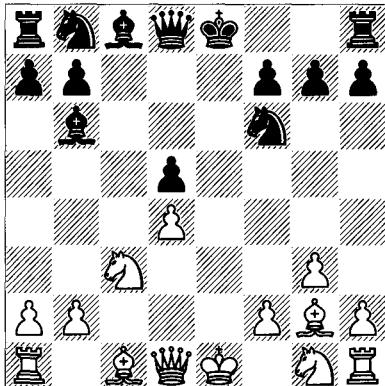
b) 3... $\mathbb{Q}c5$ (this is a legitimate move, just as it is after 3 $\mathbb{Q}f3$ $\mathbb{Q}c6$ 4 g3 $\mathbb{Q}c5$) 4 $\mathbb{Q}g2$ and now:

b1) A very interesting option is 4...c6 5 e3 (or 5 $\mathbb{Q}f3$ e4 6 $\mathbb{Q}g5$ d5 7 d4 $\mathbb{Q}e7$ and Black's centre holds together), and now:

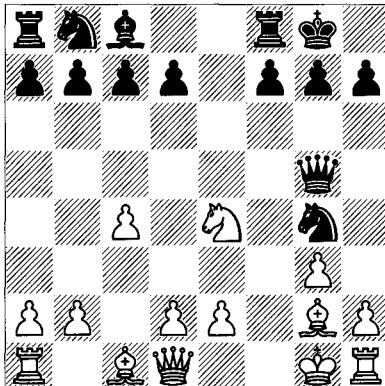
b11) 5...d5 6 cxd5 cxd5 7 d4! exd4 8 exd4 $\mathbb{Q}b6$?! (D).

These symmetrical positions tend to favour the side whose king's knight can go to e2/e7

W



B



rather than $f3/f6$, because from there it can attack the opposing d-pawn. Whether such an advantage is enough to convert into a win is an open question, but here White stands better after 9 $\mathbb{Q}ge2$ $\mathbb{Q}c6$ 10 $\mathbb{Q}g5$ $\mathbb{Q}e6$ 11 0-0 0-0 12 $\mathbb{Q}f4$.

b12) Black can also play 5...0-0, when normal play would be 6 $\mathbb{Q}ge2$ $d5$ 7 $d4$ $exd4$ 8 $exd4$ $\mathbb{Q}b6$ 9 $cx d5$ $\mathbb{Q}xd5$ 10 $\mathbb{Q}xd5$ $cx d5$ 11 $\mathbb{Q}c3$ $\mathbb{Q}c6$ 12 $\mathbb{Q}e3$ $\mathbb{Q}e6$ with a level game. Thus 4... $c6$ may not be ideal for creating dynamic play, but it gives Black chances to equalize.

b2) Black's most obvious move is 4...0-0.

Then:

b21) Then a typical position can arise from 5 $e3$ $d6$ (5... $c6$ transposes to line 'b12') 6 $\mathbb{Q}ge2$. If Black plays ... $\mathbb{Q}c6$ soon, we'll end up in Closed English territory (Chapter 6). But if Black plays without ... $\mathbb{Q}c6$, unique positions arise; for example, 6... $a6$ (6... $c6$!?) is the other way of preserving the bishop; for example, 7 0-0 $\mathbb{Q}b6$ 8 $b3$ $\mathbb{Q}f5$ 9 $d4$ $\mathbb{Q}e8$ 10 $h3$ $h6$, Maus-Dankert, Hamburg 1993, and now White might try 11 $\mathbb{Q}a3$ $\mathbb{Q}d7$ 12 $g4$ $\mathbb{Q}g6$ 13 $d5$ $\mathbb{Q}c7$ 14 $\mathbb{Q}g3$) 7 0-0 $\mathbb{Q}e8$ 8 $d4$ $\mathbb{Q}a7$ 9 $\mathbb{Q}c2$ and White stands slightly better.

b22) 5 $\mathbb{Q}f3$ is an obvious reply to 4...0-0. The game can turn wild following 5... $e4$ 6 $\mathbb{Q}g5$ (Marin suggests 6 $\mathbb{Q}h4$! with the idea that after 6... $\mathbb{Q}e8$ 7 0-0, 7... $d5$ 8 $cx d5$ $\mathbb{Q}d4$! {8... $g5$? 9 $d4$ } 9 $d3$ gives White with the better game; but 7... $d6$ 8 $d3$ $exd3$ 9 $\mathbb{Q}xd3$ $\mathbb{Q}c6$ is not so clear) 6... $\mathbb{Q}xf2$! 7 $\mathbb{Q}xf2$ $\mathbb{Q}g4$ + 8 $\mathbb{Q}g1$ $\mathbb{Q}xg5$ 9 $\mathbb{Q}xe4$ (D).

9... $\mathbb{Q}e7$ (9... $\mathbb{Q}g6$!?) 10 $d4$! (10 $h3$ $\mathbb{Q}e5$ and then 11 $d3$ $d6$ 12 $\mathbb{Q}h2$ led to approximate equality in Brestian-Eisterer, Austrian Team

Ch 1990, but 11 $b3$! may improve) 10... $h6$ 11 $\mathbb{Q}f3$ $d6$ 12 $\mathbb{Q}g2$, Kramnik-Tihlarik, Bratislava 1991. White's bishops and centre are becoming threatening. After 12... $f5$, 13 $\mathbb{Q}c3$! $\mathbb{Q}f6$ 14 $\mathbb{Q}e1$ preserves the advantage.

Vassallo – Ferron Garcia

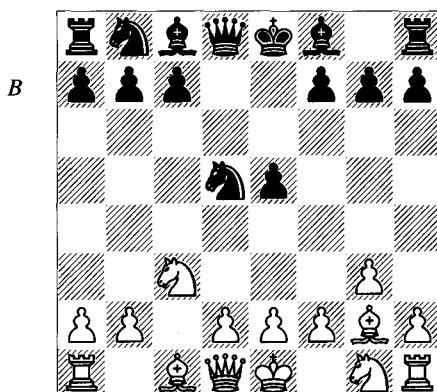
Alicante 2001

1 $c4$ $e5$ 2 $\mathbb{Q}c3$ $\mathbb{Q}f6$ 3 $g3$ $d5$

This usually transposes to a Reversed Dragon (Chapter 5), but there are legitimate alternatives.

4 $cx d5$ $\mathbb{Q}xd5$ 5 $\mathbb{Q}g2$ (D)

If he wants to, White can bypass some sidelines by 5 $\mathbb{Q}f3$, when 5... $\mathbb{Q}c6$ 6 $\mathbb{Q}g2$ transposes to the popular Reversed Dragon lines in Chapter 5. Black can also continue 5... $\mathbb{Q}xc3$ 6 $bx c3$ $\mathbb{Q}d6$ (6... $e4$? 7 $\mathbb{Q}a4+$) and achieve a fairly normal position.



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

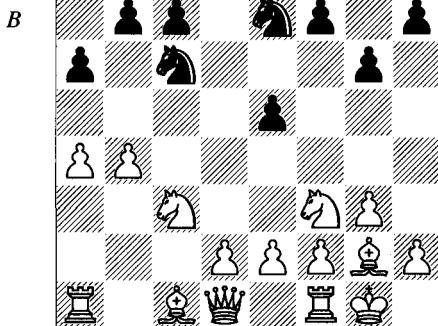
As always, Black has alternatives:

a) 5... $\mathbb{Q}b6$ 6 $\mathbb{Q}f3$ $\mathbb{Q}c6$ transposes to the Reversed Dragon lines of Chapter 5.

b) 5... $\mathbb{Q}e6$ 6 $\mathbb{Q}f3$ and now 6... $\mathbb{Q}c6$ transposes to Chapter 5 again, and against any other black move that protects the e-pawn, d4 will follow.

c) 5... $c6$ has been played a remarkable number of times, but simply 6 $\mathbb{Q}f3$ followed by 0-0 and d4 guarantees a straightforward advantage.

d) 5... $\mathbb{Q}e7$ 6 $\mathbb{Q}f3$ $\mathbb{Q}bc6$ used to be a popular line. Black's idea is to control d4, and he will probably set up a reversed Closed Sicilian by ...g6 and ... $\mathbb{Q}g7$. However, White can use his extra tempo in various ways. The course of the game Larsen-Lehmann, Palma de Mallorca 1967 demonstrates a Sicilian-like queenside minority attack: 7 b4! a6 8 0-0 g6 9 a4! (D).



9... $\mathbb{Q}g7$ (9... $\mathbb{Q}xb4$ 10 $\mathbb{Q}xe5$ $\mathbb{Q}g7?$ 11 $\mathbb{Q}xf7!$) 10 $\mathbb{Q}a3$ 0-0 11 b5 $\mathbb{Q}d4$ 12 $\mathbb{Q}g5?$ (better is 12 e3! $\mathbb{Q}e6$ 13 $\mathbb{W}b3$) 12...axb5 13 axb5 $\mathbb{Q}d7??$ (13...h6! 14 $\mathbb{Q}ge4$ f5 15 $\mathbb{Q}c5$ $\mathbb{Q}xa3!$ 16 $\mathbb{Q}xa3$ $\mathbb{W}d6$ 17 $\mathbb{Q}3a4$ b6 would have been an effective counter) 14 $\mathbb{Q}xb7$ $\mathbb{Q}b8$ 15 $\mathbb{Q}g2$ $\mathbb{Q}xb5$ 16 $\mathbb{Q}xb5$ $\mathbb{Q}xb5$ 17 $\mathbb{Q}b1$ h6 18 $\mathbb{Q}e4$ $\mathbb{Q}e8$ 19 d3, and White has active bishops, as well as strong squares for his pieces in front of Black's isolated c-pawn. These are advantages sufficient to win the game.

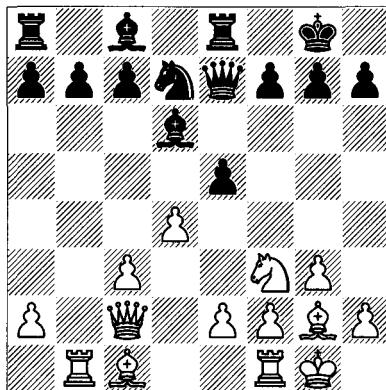
6 bxc3 $\mathbb{Q}d6$ 7 $\mathbb{Q}f3$ 0-0 8 0-0

White's central majority gives him the edge in slow lines as well; for example, 8 d3 c6 9 0-0 $\mathbb{Q}d7$ 10 $\mathbb{Q}d2?$! (10 $\mathbb{Q}b1$) 10... $\mathbb{Q}b6$ 11 a4 $\mathbb{Q}e6$ 12 a5 $\mathbb{Q}d5$ 13 $\mathbb{Q}b2$ and c4.

8... $\mathbb{Q}d7$ 9 d4 $\mathbb{Q}e8$ 10 $\mathbb{W}c2$ $\mathbb{W}e7$

The combination of ... $\mathbb{Q}e8$ and ... $\mathbb{W}e7$ is meant to prevent the advance e4.

11 $\mathbb{Q}b1!$? (D)



In return for open lines and piece activity, White allows Black to cripple his pawn-structure.

11...exd4 12 $\mathbb{Q}xd4$ $\mathbb{Q}b6$ 13 a4 a5 14 $\mathbb{Q}b5!$ $\mathbb{Q}a6$ 15 $\mathbb{Q}xd6$ $\mathbb{W}xd6$ 16 $\mathbb{Q}d1$ $\mathbb{W}e7$ 17 $\mathbb{Q}d4!$ c6 18 c4 $\mathbb{Q}e6$ 19 $\mathbb{Q}e3$ $\mathbb{Q}c8$ 20 c5 $\mathbb{Q}a7$ 21 $\mathbb{Q}f4$

White's active rooks and bishop-pair dominate the play, and he went on to win.

The Modern Variation: 3... $\mathbb{Q}b4$

1 c4 e5 2 $\mathbb{Q}c3$ $\mathbb{Q}f6$ 3 g3 $\mathbb{Q}b4$

One of the most serious theoretical shifts in the English Opening came with the discovery that 3... $\mathbb{Q}b4$ is not only playable, but gives Black as many chances for advantage as White. For decades, a majority of players had concentrated upon 3... $c6$, the Keres Variation, which will be discussed later in this chapter. Regardless of the precise theoretical state of 3... $c6$, the move became associated with lines in which Black had to play very accurately to escape serious trouble. Moreover, Black suffered a number of well-publicized defeats with 3... $c6$. Black's shyness about playing the Reversed Dragon with 3...d5 4 cxd5 $\mathbb{Q}xd5$ was influenced by similar experiences, although that has changed today. At any rate, the move 3... $\mathbb{Q}b4$ has done more to discourage 3 $\mathbb{Q}f3$ than any other factor, and accounts for the fact that 3 $\mathbb{Q}f3$ is now White's most popular move among masters. It is also responsible for the increased interest in 1

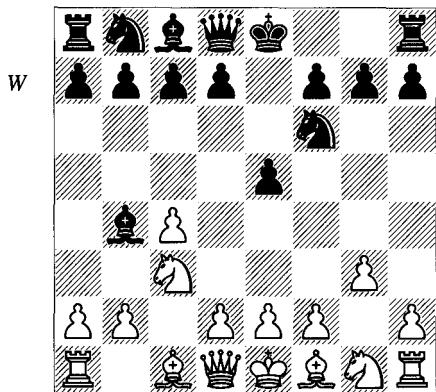
c4 e5 2 g3, which obviously renders ... $\mathbb{Q}b4$ irrelevant for the time being.

Of course, some of this is fashion, and a number of masters use 2 $\mathbb{Q}c3$ $\mathbb{Q}f6$ 3 g3 as their main weapon. Moreover, if a few top-level players reconsider 3 g3 $\mathbb{Q}b4$ and come up with new ideas for White, 3 g3 will soon become the trendy choice. Even as theory stands today, many theoretically ‘equal’ positions that result from it are interesting and full of content.

Larsen – Petrosian

Milan 1975

1 c4 $\mathbb{Q}f6$ 2 $\mathbb{Q}c3$ e5 3 g3 $\mathbb{Q}b4$ (D)



4 $\mathbb{Q}f3$

4 $\mathbb{Q}g2$ is by far the favourite move here, but there are some logical points behind this uncommon choice. For one thing, White tries to make Black commit to the defence or advance of his e-pawn before he can play ...0-0 and ... $\mathbb{Q}e8$, moves that often follow 4 $\mathbb{Q}g2$. A couple of lesser ideas for White are worth mentioning:

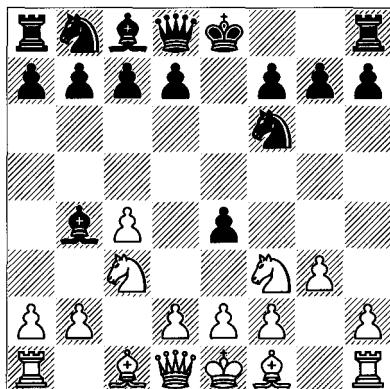
a) 4 $\mathbb{Q}d5$ is in general not an effective idea if 4... $\mathbb{Q}xd5$ 5 cxd5 doesn’t attack a knight on c6. Compare 4 $\mathbb{Q}g2$ 0-0 5 $\mathbb{Q}d5$ below (specifically, the note to White’s 5th move in the game Korchnoi-Tseitlin).

b) The tempo-winning 4 $\mathbb{Q}b3$ $\mathbb{Q}c6$ 5 $\mathbb{Q}d5$ looks more to the point. However, after 5... $\mathbb{Q}c5$ White’s queen is poorly placed on b3. The best-known example is 6 e3 0-0 7 $\mathbb{Q}g2$ $\mathbb{Q}xd5$! 8 cxd5 $\mathbb{Q}e7$ 9 $\mathbb{Q}e2$ d6 10 0-0 c6 (10... $\mathbb{Q}g4$! 11 f3 $\mathbb{Q}d7$ is the simplest equalizer) 11 d4 exd4 12 exd4 $\mathbb{Q}b6$ 13 $\mathbb{Q}g5$ $\mathbb{Q}d7$ followed by ...h6, and

Black had satisfactory play in Korchnoi-Karpov, World Ch (game 25), Baguio City 1978.

4...e4 (D)

Black takes up the challenge; 4... $\mathbb{Q}c6$ would enter the Four Knights Variation of the next chapter.



5 $\mathbb{Q}d4$

5 $\mathbb{Q}g5$ has the disadvantage that after 5... $\mathbb{Q}xc3$ 6 dxc3 0-0 7 $\mathbb{Q}g2$ $\mathbb{Q}e8$ 8 $\mathbb{Q}c2$ $\mathbb{Q}e7$ 9 0-0 d6 10 $\mathbb{Q}h3$ $\mathbb{Q}f5$ 11 $\mathbb{Q}f4$ c6, White’s knight has made four moves to get to f4, a square that he usually uses as a springboard to d5. Since d5 is unavailable, White even has to be wary of the move ...g5 followed by ...h6, when the knight will become stuck and vulnerable on h3.

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

Black directly challenges the knight on d4. This is the standard idea, as we shall see in many games. Nevertheless, he has other approaches to this kind of position. A logical alternative is 5...0-0 6 $\mathbb{Q}g2$ $\mathbb{Q}e8$ (or 6... $\mathbb{Q}xc3$ first), with two-sided play following 7 $\mathbb{Q}c2$!?

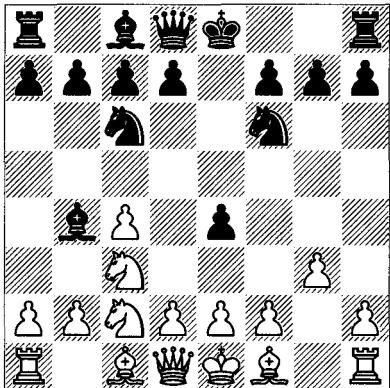
6 $\mathbb{Q}c2$ (D)

It’s important to know that 6 $\mathbb{Q}xc6$! dxc6 opens too many lines for Black; after the move ... $\mathbb{Q}f5$, White’s d-pawn won’t be able to advance safely. There are very few lines in which $\mathbb{Q}xc6$ is White’s best course.

6... $\mathbb{Q}xc3$ 7 dxc6

We already discussed the differences between recaptures in our analysis of 1 c4 e5 2 $\mathbb{Q}c3$ $\mathbb{Q}b4$, and we’ll keep running into them. Here 7 bxc3 isn’t as challenging. It can be answered conventionally by 7...0-0 or 7... $\mathbb{Q}e7$, but 7...d5! 8 cxd5 $\mathbb{Q}xd5$ is a more active idea,

B



intending 9 $\mathbb{A}g2$ $\mathbb{W}h5$. White often ends up with a backward d-pawn that can't be advanced without creating weaknesses.

7...h6

7...0-0 8 $\mathbb{A}g5$ is somewhat better for White because Black's knight is already on c6 and the manoeuvre $\mathbb{A}e3-d5$ gains effect. Another way to justify the text-move is that White's bishop has no better square than g5.

8 $\mathbb{A}e3$

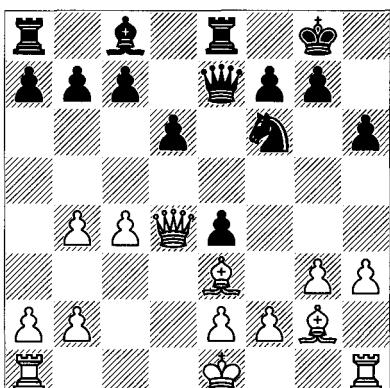
This gives the game a unique character, whereas 8 $\mathbb{A}g2$ 0-0 9 0-0 is seen in Chapter 5.

8... $\mathbb{W}e7$!?

8...0-0 and 8...b6 9 $\mathbb{A}g2$ $\mathbb{A}b7$ intending ... $\mathbb{A}e5$ are also possible.

9 $\mathbb{A}g2$ d6 10 $\mathbb{A}b4!$ $\mathbb{A}xb4$ 11 cxb4 0-0 12 $\mathbb{A}d4$ $\mathbb{A}e8$ 13 h3?! (D)

B



White prevents ... $\mathbb{A}g4$ and plans to expand on the kingside. The position is balanced. Generally speaking, if Black maintains a cramping pawn on e4 or creates weaknesses in White's camp, that compensates for the bishop-pair.

13...b6 14 0-0-0!?

Obviously risky. White wants to go all-out by g4-g5, which means that he has to castle on the other wing.

14... $\mathbb{A}b7$ 15 $\mathbb{A}b1$ $\mathbb{A}d7$ 16 g4 $\mathbb{A}e5!$ 17 c5!?

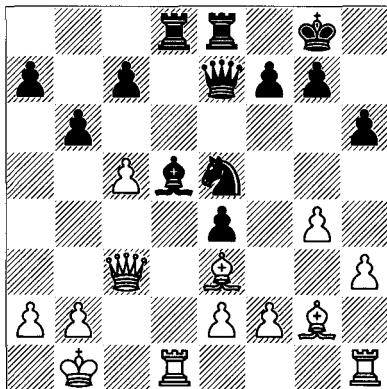
Not 17 $\mathbb{A}xe4??$ c5.

17...dxc5

Or 17...bxc5 18 bxc5 d5! with equality.

18 bxc5 $\mathbb{A}ad8$ 19 $\mathbb{A}c3$ $\mathbb{A}d5$ (D)

W



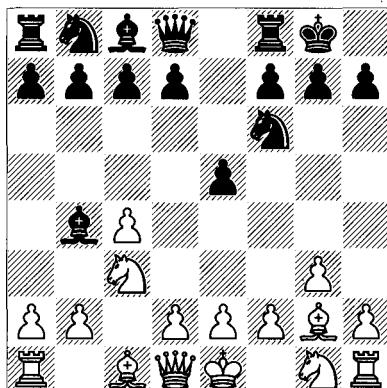
20 $\mathbb{A}d4$ f6 21 $\mathbb{A}e3$ b5!? 22 b3 $\mathbb{A}c6$ 23 h4! $\mathbb{A}f7$ 24 g5 fxg5 25 hxg5 $\mathbb{A}xd1+$ 26 $\mathbb{A}xd1$ h5!

The position is still dynamically equal. 4 $\mathbb{A}f3$ is under-explored and interesting.

Digression on the Rossolimo Sicilian

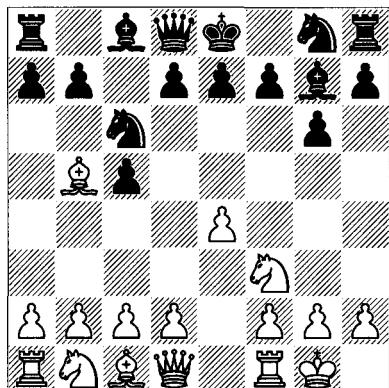
After 1 c4 e5 2 $\mathbb{A}c3$ $\mathbb{A}f6$ 3 g3 $\mathbb{A}b4$, White normally plays the natural 4 $\mathbb{A}g2$ and Black replies 4...0-0 (D).

W



Now White has to consider how to make progress. It's informative to look at this as a reversed-colour variation of a line of the Rossolimo Sicilian, which goes 1 e4 c5 2 $\mathbb{Q}f3$ $\mathbb{Q}c6$ 3 $\mathbb{Q}b5$ g6 4 0-0 $\mathbb{Q}g7$ (D).

W



In our English Opening version, Black has a tempo less; so couldn't White claim some advantage by playing typical Sicilian moves at this point? Unfortunately, as we have learned, knowing what your opponent is doing can partially compensate for being a tempo behind. Thus anything that White does commits him to a structure and/or piece placement, and Black can adjust his strategy accordingly. Let's examine some continuations to see whether that's sufficient for Black to equalize.

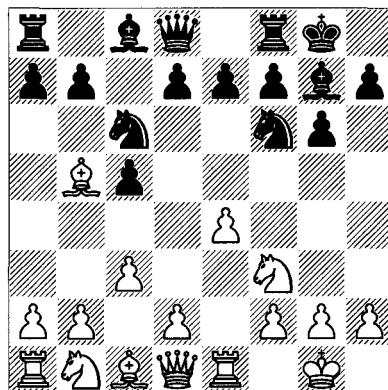
We'll start with the Rossolimo Sicilian position. How does White try to make progress after 4 0-0 $\mathbb{Q}g7$? I'll show some standard ideas with a selection of theoretical details, and then compare them with our English Opening 3... $\mathbb{Q}b4$ variation. A side benefit is that I shall provide belated coverage of the Rossolimo Sicilian itself!

a) In the Sicilian, 5 c3 is usually answered by 5... $\mathbb{Q}f6$, since $\mathbb{Q}c3$ is no longer available to White. Let's be clear about that. In our English Opening variation, after 3 g3 $\mathbb{Q}b4$ 4 $\mathbb{Q}g2$ 0-0 5 $\mathbb{Q}f3$ $\mathbb{Q}e8$ 6 0-0 e4 7 $\mathbb{Q}d4$, Black has the ideal move 7... $\mathbb{Q}c6$!, after which 8 $\mathbb{Q}xc6$?! $dxc6$ gives Black open lines and freer play (see the game Cuellar-Uhlmann below). In the Sicilian position, White's 'extra' move is 5 c3, so if he meets 5... $\mathbb{Q}f6$ with 6 e5 $\mathbb{Q}d5$, he can't then play the desirable $\mathbb{Q}c3$. There might follow 7 d4 $cxd4$ 8 $cxd4$. After 8...d6 9 $\mathbb{Q}c3$, 9... $\mathbb{Q}xc3$ 10 $bxc3$ 0-0

is theoretically equal, while 9... $\mathbb{Q}e6$!? is intriguing.

Instead of 6 e5, White can develop slowly, but to gain any advantage he has to play ambitiously at some point; for example, 6 $\mathbb{Q}e1$ (a move recommended more often than not) 6...0-0 (D).

W

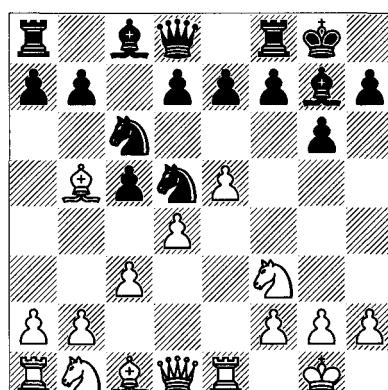


Now White has two main approaches:

a1) 7 d4 d5! (this is more ambitious and probably better than 7... $cxd4$ 8 $cxd4$ d5 9 e5 $\mathbb{Q}e4$, a well-known position in which, however, Black stands satisfactorily) 8 e5 (8 $exd5$ $\mathbb{Q}xd5$ 9 c4 $\mathbb{Q}d6$) 8... $\mathbb{Q}e4$. Remarkably, we've reached a position that is probably slightly more difficult to play from White's side of the board!

a2) 7 e5 $\mathbb{Q}d5$ 8 d4 (D).

B

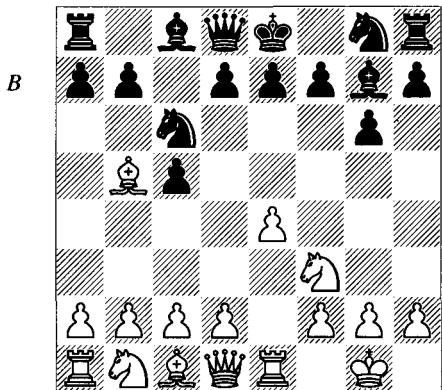


Now 8...d6!? is a challenging move that might attract some players, but the most solid variation is 8... $cxd4$ 9 $cxd4$ d6. After 10 $\mathbb{Q}c3$, one line is 10... $dxe5$ 11 $\mathbb{Q}xc6$ $bxc6$ 12 $\mathbb{Q}xe5$, when 12... $\mathbb{Q}b6$ should be good enough (13 $\mathbb{Q}a4$

$\mathbb{Q}xe5$ 14 $dxe5$ $\mathbb{Q}xc3$ 15 $bcx3$ $\mathbb{Q}e6$). But, as above, 10... $\mathbb{Q}e6$! is even more interesting. Then 11 $\mathbb{Q}g5$? is very strongly met by 11... $dxe5$ 12 $\mathbb{Q}xe6$ $fxe6$ 13 $\mathbb{Q}xc6$ $bcx6$ 14 $dxe5$ $\mathbb{W}b6$, and after the natural 11 $\mathbb{Q}g5$, 11... $dxe5$ 12 $\mathbb{Q}xc6$ $bcx6$ 13 $\mathbb{Q}xe5$ $\mathbb{W}c8$ holds on to the bishop-pair and contemplates moves like ... $f6$ and ... $c5$.

In conclusion, White's move 5 $c3$ in the Sicilian Defence tips his hand, and Black can choose the appropriate defensive system. Compare variations of the English Opening below in which Black can play ... $c6$ successfully, only because White isn't able to respond by $\mathbb{Q}f3$!

b) Returning to the Rossolimo position after 4 0-0 $\mathbb{Q}g7$, 5 $\mathbb{W}e1$ (*D*) fights for an edge without committing to the move $c3$.



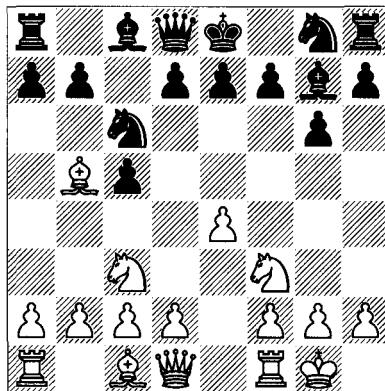
Now 5... $\mathbb{Q}f6$ might be met by 6 $e5$ with the idea 6... $\mathbb{Q}d5$ 7 $\mathbb{Q}c3$!, again utilizing the availability of White's $c3$ -square. In fact, 6 $\mathbb{Q}c3$ intending $e5$ is also good.

Nevertheless, tipping his hand by 5 $\mathbb{W}e1$ once again limits what White can achieve. It's more logical for Black to play the typical defence 5... $e5$, since the rook on $e1$ is not very useful in that case (in a couple of situations, it might even be better placed on $f1$, supporting the advance $f4$). Then there are various continuations, but with Black intending 6... $\mathbb{Q}ge7$ to reinforce $c6$, the most common one is 6 $\mathbb{Q}xc6$ $dxc6$ 7 $d3$ $\mathbb{W}e7$!? 8 $\mathbb{Q}bd2$ (8 $b3$; 8 $a3$!?, with ideas of $b4$, when 8... $a5$!? is interesting) 8... $\mathbb{Q}f6$ 9 $\mathbb{Q}c4$ $\mathbb{Q}d7$. I think White may have a very small edge in this line, but it hasn't translated into much in practice.

In the reversed English Opening position, after 4 $\mathbb{Q}g2$ 0-0, Black can hold off with the move

... $\mathbb{W}e8$. As we just saw, the best position for that rook isn't known yet.

c) Returning to the Rossolimo Sicilian, 5 $\mathbb{Q}c3$ (*D*) is another instructive attempt.



But this is also a committal move, and permits Black to play 5... $\mathbb{Q}d4$. Remember that ... $\mathbb{Q}d4$ is more effective when White has a knight on $c3$, so that an exchange on $d4$ forces White to lose a tempo after ... $cxd4$. Probably 6 $\mathbb{W}e1$ would follow, permitting the exchange on $b5$ to uncertain effect.

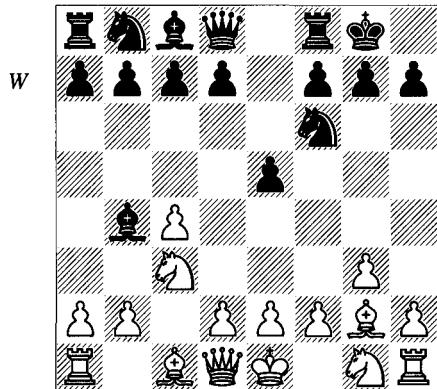
Compare the reversed English Opening position, after 3 $g3$ $\mathbb{Q}b4$ 4 $\mathbb{Q}g2$ 0-0. Black hasn't played ... $\mathbb{Q}c6$, so 5 $\mathbb{Q}d5$ is harmless (the knight can be exchanged without loss of time); see the note to move 5 in Korchnoi-Tseitlin below.

Furthermore, 5... $e5$ is a perfectly adequate reply to 5 $\mathbb{Q}c3$, especially since a knight or bishop on $d5$ can be exchanged off (after 6 $\mathbb{Q}d5$ $\mathbb{Q}ge7$, for example). In that case, Black's preferred set-up would be ... $\mathbb{Q}ge7$, ...0-0, ... $d6$, ... $\mathbb{Q}e6$ and ... $d5$.

d) Finally, in part because he hasn't made much progress with the 5th moves above, White has turned to the slightly cooperative 5 $\mathbb{Q}xc6$. We already looked at this and the reversed position by transposition in Chapter 3 in the game Illescas-Sisniega, Novi Sad Olympiad 1990 (see the note to the main move 8... $\mathbb{Q}e7$). Specifically, we saw the position after 5 $\mathbb{Q}xc6$ $dxc6$ 6 $d3$ $e5$ 7 $\mathbb{Q}bd2$ $\mathbb{W}e7$ 8 $b3$ $\mathbb{Q}f6$ 9 $\mathbb{Q}b2$ $\mathbb{Q}d7$ 10 $a4$, which is equal with either colour (although full of content).

Naturally, there's much more to be said about these lines, but I wanted to give a general impression of how 1 $e4$ $c5$ 2 $\mathbb{Q}f3$ $\mathbb{Q}c6$ 3 $\mathbb{Q}b5$ $g6$ 4

0-0 $\mathbb{Q}g7$ plays out. Now let's once again return to 'our' position from the English Opening: 1 c4 e5 2 $\mathbb{Q}c3$ $\mathbb{Q}f6$ 3 g3 $\mathbb{Q}b4$ 4 $\mathbb{Q}g2$ 0-0 (D), and show some games.



Korchnoi – Ma. Tseitlin
Leningrad 1973

1 c4 e5 2 $\mathbb{Q}c3$ $\mathbb{Q}f6$ 3 g3 $\mathbb{Q}b4$ 4 $\mathbb{Q}g2$ 0-0 5 $\mathbb{Q}b3$?

This looks logical enough, attacking the bishop and avoiding doubled pawns if Black captures on c3. The problem is that White's queen is misplaced, and Black will exploit this by tactical means.

The sortie 5 $\mathbb{Q}d5$ is not dangerous after 5... $\mathbb{Q}xd5$ 6 cxd5. White even came out worse in Simagin-Polugaevsky, Moscow 1964 after 6...c6 7 a3 $\mathbb{Q}e7$ 8 d3? (8 d4 is a better choice) 8...cxtd5 9 e3 (9 $\mathbb{Q}xd5$? $\mathbb{Q}a5+$) 9...d6 10 $\mathbb{Q}e2$ $\mathbb{Q}e6$ with a temporary extra pawn and advantage. After 11 $\mathbb{Q}c3$ $\mathbb{Q}c6$ 12 $\mathbb{Q}xd5$ $\mathbb{Q}xd5$ 13 $\mathbb{Q}xd5$ $\mathbb{Q}a5+$ 14 $\mathbb{Q}c3$ d5, Black controls the centre and White's light squares have been compromised.

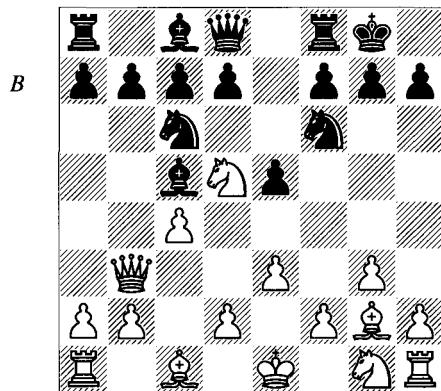
5... $\mathbb{Q}c6$ 6 $\mathbb{Q}d5$ $\mathbb{Q}c5$ 7 e3 (D)

It's hard to believe, but White has some troubles already; for example, 7 d3 $\mathbb{Q}d4$ 8 $\mathbb{Q}d1$ c6 9 $\mathbb{Q}xf6$ + $\mathbb{Q}xf6$ 10 $\mathbb{Q}f3$ $\mathbb{Q}xf3+$ 11 $\mathbb{Q}xf3$ d5!.

7...e4!!

Out of nowhere comes this energetic and creative advance. Black sacrifices a pawn, trying to exploit White's weakened light squares. A more restrained method of development is 7...d6 8 $\mathbb{Q}e2$ $\mathbb{Q}xd5$ 9 cxd5 $\mathbb{Q}e7$ 10 0-0 $\mathbb{Q}b6$.

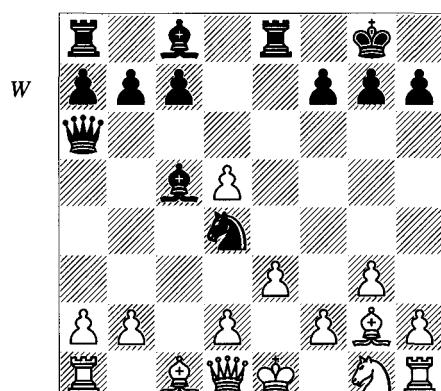
8 $\mathbb{Q}xf6+$ $\mathbb{Q}xf6$ 9 $\mathbb{Q}xe4$



Or 9 $\mathbb{Q}e2$ $\mathbb{Q}e5$!, when in most lines ... $\mathbb{Q}f3+$ will follow.

9... $\mathbb{Q}e8$ 10 d3

Some of the most entertaining attacks in chess are conducted by pieces with little or no pawn support. An example is 10 $\mathbb{Q}g2$ $\mathbb{Q}d4$ 11 $\mathbb{Q}d1$ d5! 12 cxd5 (Black's position is wonderfully harmonious after 12 $\mathbb{Q}xd5$ $\mathbb{Q}f5$ 13 d3 $\mathbb{Q}ad8$) 12... $\mathbb{Q}a6$! (D).



It's extremely hard for White to develop in view of 13 $\mathbb{Q}e2$? $\mathbb{Q}g4$, 13 $\mathbb{Q}f1$ $\mathbb{Q}g6$ 14 d3 $\mathbb{Q}g4$!, 13 $\mathbb{Q}f3$ $\mathbb{Q}g4$ 14 h3 $\mathbb{Q}d3$! or 13 $\mathbb{Q}f1$ $\mathbb{Q}g6$ 14 d3 $\mathbb{Q}g4$ 15 $\mathbb{Q}e2$ $\mathbb{Q}b4$ +, with the idea 16 $\mathbb{Q}d2$? (16 $\mathbb{Q}f1$ $\mathbb{Q}xe2$ 17 $\mathbb{Q}xe2$ $\mathbb{Q}f3$ 18 $\mathbb{Q}g1$ $\mathbb{Q}f5$!) 16... $\mathbb{Q}xe2$ 17 $\mathbb{Q}xe2$ $\mathbb{Q}f3$ +. It's not inevitable that light-square weaknesses completely cripple White when he plays g3 and e3, but in this case he is also massively behind in development.

10...d6 11 $\mathbb{Q}d2$

Korchnoi doesn't like this move, but his 11 $\mathbb{Q}e2$ can be answered by the exchange sacrifice

11... $\mathbb{E}xe4!$ 12 dxe4 $\mathbb{W}f3$ 13 $\mathbb{E}f1$ $\mathbb{Q}e5$ 14 $\mathbb{W}c2$ $\mathbb{W}g2$ 15 $\mathbb{Q}f4$ $\mathbb{W}xh2$ with ideas of ...g5, ... $\mathbb{Q}g4$, etc.

11... $\mathbb{Q}f5$ 12 $\mathbb{Q}c3$ $\mathbb{W}g6!?$

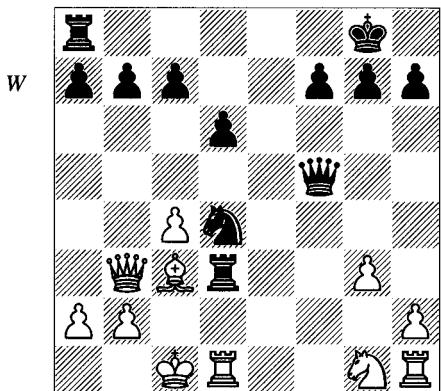
An excellent alternative was 12... $\mathbb{Q}e5!$ 13 $\mathbb{Q}xe5$ dxe5; for example, 14 $\mathbb{W}xb7$ $\mathbb{E}ab8$ 15 $\mathbb{W}c6$ $\mathbb{Q}b4+$ 16 $\mathbb{Q}f1$ $\mathbb{E}e6!$ 17 $\mathbb{W}xc7$ $\mathbb{Q}d6$ 18 $\mathbb{W}xa7$ $\mathbb{Q}xe4$ 19 dxe4 $\mathbb{E}xb2$ 20 f3 $\mathbb{Q}f8!$ and White's three extra pawns are useless in the face of ... $\mathbb{Q}d6-d2$.

13 $\mathbb{Q}xf5$ $\mathbb{W}xf5$ 14 $\mathbb{Q}d1?$

14 $\mathbb{W}xb7$ should have been tried. After the text-move Black's pieces come flooding out.

14...d5!

Or 14... $\mathbb{Q}xe3$ 15 fxe3 $\mathbb{E}xe3+$ 16 $\mathbb{Q}d2$ $\mathbb{W}xd3+$ 17 $\mathbb{Q}c1$ $\mathbb{Q}d4$ (D).



Then a cute line is 18 $\mathbb{W}a4$ b5! 19 cxb5 $\mathbb{W}g5+$ 20 $\mathbb{Q}b1$ $\mathbb{W}xb5!$ and Black wins (21 $\mathbb{W}xb5$ $\mathbb{W}xd1\#$).

15 $\mathbb{W}xb7$

15 cxd5 $\mathbb{Q}xe3!$ is an express version of the last note.

15... $\mathbb{Q}xe3!$ 16 fxe3 $\mathbb{E}xe3+$ 17 $\mathbb{Q}d2$ $\mathbb{W}xd3+$ 18 $\mathbb{Q}c1$ $\mathbb{B}b8!$ 19 $\mathbb{E}e1$

19 $\mathbb{W}xc6$ $\mathbb{E}xc3+$ 20 bxc3 $\mathbb{B}b1+$ 21 $\mathbb{Q}d2$ $\mathbb{B}b2+$

19...h6

Protecting against the back-rank mate and winning the queen. Black won shortly.

Brasket – Timman

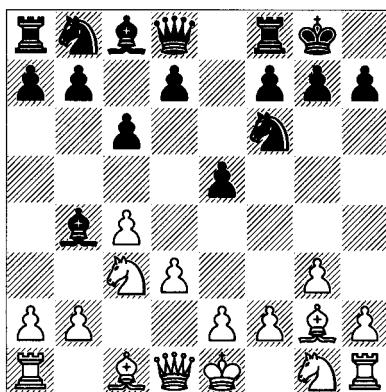
Lone Pine 1978

1 c4 e5 2 $\mathbb{Q}c3$ $\mathbb{Q}f6$ 3 g3 $\mathbb{Q}b4$ 4 $\mathbb{Q}g2$ 0-0 5 d3

This is obviously sound; the problem is that it tips White's hand.

5...c6! (D)

When your opponent decides not to occupy the centre, consider doing so yourself! Notice that in the Rossolimo Variation above, Black didn't play the passive ...d6 at such an early stage of the game, whereas White has done the equivalent with his extra move. I should mention that 5... $\mathbb{E}e8$ with the idea 6 $\mathbb{Q}f3$ e4 is another fully legitimate way to exploit the slow pace set by 5 d3.



6 $\mathbb{Q}d2?!$

This looks safe and sound because of the idea $\mathbb{W}b3$, yet it gives Black the chance to take over the centre with a pawn sacrifice. Strangely, even safe-looking alternatives don't promise White a worry-free life:

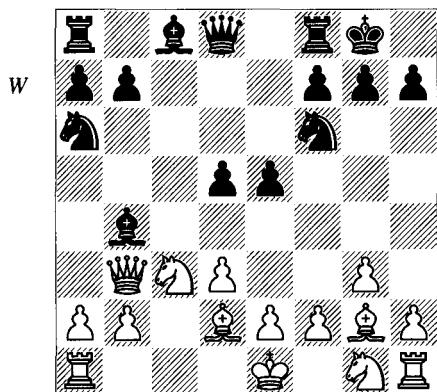
a) 6 e4?! d5 (or 6... $\mathbb{Q}xc3+$ 7 bxc3 d5) 7 cxd5 cxd5 8 exd5 $\mathbb{Q}xd5$ 9 $\mathbb{Q}ge2$ $\mathbb{Q}c6$ with a nicely centralized position. White will have to liquidate his weak d-pawn just to maintain equality.

b) 6 $\mathbb{W}b3$ is a respectable alternative that can lead to some dynamic play after 6... $\mathbb{Q}a6!$ 7 $\mathbb{Q}f3$ (7 e4? $\mathbb{Q}c5!$ 8 $\mathbb{W}c2$ d5; after 7 a3 $\mathbb{Q}a5!?$ 8 $\mathbb{W}c2$ d5 9 b4 $\mathbb{Q}b6$ 10 $\mathbb{Q}f3$ $\mathbb{W}e7$ 11 0-0, it's an open question who stands better: Black has central control, and White has harmonious development) 7...e4!? (Black loses time in order to secure a strong outpost on c5) 8 dxe4 (not 8 $\mathbb{Q}d4?$ exd3 9 exd3 $\mathbb{Q}c5!$ 10 $\mathbb{W}c2$ $\mathbb{E}e8+$) 8... $\mathbb{Q}xe4$ 9 0-0 $\mathbb{Q}xc3$ 10 bxc3 $\mathbb{E}e8$ 11 $\mathbb{Q}f4$ $\mathbb{Q}ac5$ 12 $\mathbb{W}c2$ and the two bishops and play on the d-file may favour White by a smidgen.

c) 6 $\mathbb{Q}f3$ d5 7 cxd5 (7 $\mathbb{Q}xe5??$ loses a piece to 7...d4) 7...cxd5 8 a3 $\mathbb{Q}xc3+$ (8... $\mathbb{Q}e7!?$) 9 bxc3 $\mathbb{W}c7$ 10 0-0 h6 11 $\mathbb{Q}e3$ $\mathbb{Q}c6$, Hort-Kuzmin,

West Germany 1981. As so often, two bishops versus space yields approximate equality.

6...d5! 7 $\mathbb{W}b3$ $\mathbb{Q}a6!$ 8 cxd5 cxd5 (D)



9 a3

It turns out that White's planned capture on d5 gives Black an effective attack following 9 $\mathbb{Q}xd5$ $\mathbb{Q}xd2+$ 10 $\mathbb{W}xd2$ $\mathbb{Q}xd5$ 11 $\mathbb{W}xd5$ (11 $\mathbb{Q}xd5$ $\mathbb{W}a5+$ 12 $\mathbb{Q}d1$ $\mathbb{Q}d7$ 13 a4 $\mathbb{Q}b4$) 11... $\mathbb{W}b6!$.

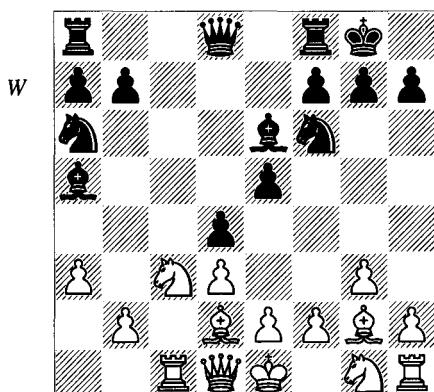
9... $\mathbb{Q}a5$

9... $\mathbb{Q}xc3$ 10 $\mathbb{Q}xc3$ $\mathbb{Q}c5$ is also possible.

10 $\mathbb{Q}c1?$

Slow. A better move is 10 $\mathbb{Q}f3$, although 10...d4 11 $\mathbb{Q}e4$ $\mathbb{Q}xe4$ 12 dx e4 $\mathbb{Q}xd2+$ 13 $\mathbb{Q}xd2$ $\mathbb{Q}e6!$ wins time (14 $\mathbb{W}xb7$ $\mathbb{Q}c5$ 15 $\mathbb{W}b5$ $\mathbb{W}c7$ 16 b4? $\mathbb{Q}b3!$ 17 $\mathbb{Q}xb3$ $\mathbb{W}c3+$).

10... $\mathbb{Q}e6$ 11 $\mathbb{W}d1$ d4 (D)



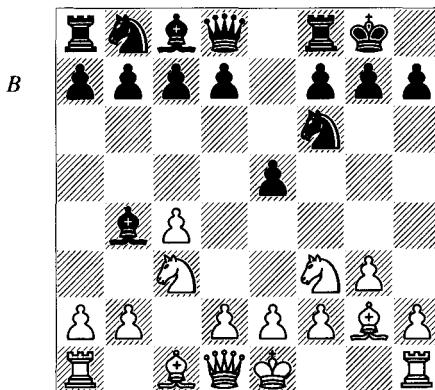
12 $\mathbb{Q}b1$

Here, instead of 12... $\mathbb{Q}xd2+?$, Black could have maintained the advantage by 12... $\mathbb{Q}d5$ or 12... $\mathbb{Q}b6!$ with the idea ... $\mathbb{Q}c5$. The opening was a great success for him.

Cuellar – Uhlmann
Leningrad Interzonal 1973

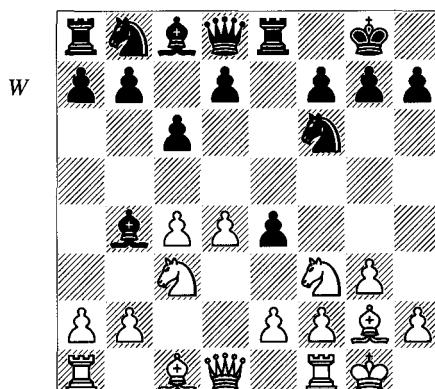
1 c4 e5 2 $\mathbb{Q}c3$ $\mathbb{Q}f6$ 3 g3 $\mathbb{Q}b4$ 4 $\mathbb{Q}g2$ 0-0 5 $\mathbb{Q}f3$ (D)

This is a more logical choice than 5 $\mathbb{W}b3$ or 5 d3, because it develops, forces the play and comes closer to castling.



5... $\mathbb{Q}e8$ 6 0-0 e4

Remember that this move tends to be better when $\mathbb{Q}d4$ can be answered by ... $\mathbb{Q}c6$. Interesting positions can arise after 6...c6 (risky) 7 d4!? (7 $\mathbb{W}b3$ $\mathbb{Q}xc3$ 8 $\mathbb{B}xc3$ is flexible and unclear, with the idea 8...d5 9 $\mathbb{Q}a3$; 8...d6! intending ... $\mathbb{Q}a6$ is a sound option) 7...e4 (D).

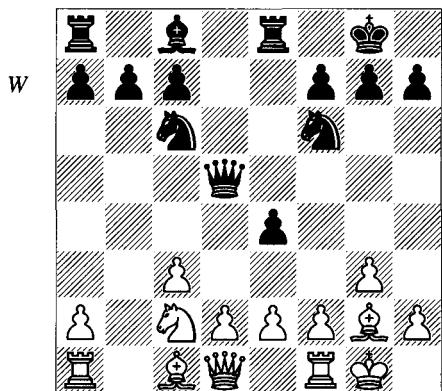


8 $\mathbb{Q}g5!$ (White doesn't get much from 8 $\mathbb{Q}e1$ d5 9 $\mathbb{W}b3$!?, $\mathbb{Q}xc3$ 10 $\mathbb{B}xc3$ $\mathbb{Q}xc4$ 11 $\mathbb{W}xc4$ $\mathbb{Q}bd7$, when Black's coming control of the queenside light squares compensates for White's bishops) 8...d5 9 $\mathbb{W}b3$ $\mathbb{Q}f8$? (too passive; 9... $\mathbb{Q}xc3$! 10 $\mathbb{B}xc3$ h6 11 $\mathbb{Q}h3$ $\mathbb{Q}bd7$ is roughly equal) 10

$\text{cxd5 cxd5 11 f3 h6?}$ (11... $\mathbb{Q}c6$ 12 e3 retains White's edge) 12 $\mathbb{Q}xf7!$ $\mathbb{Q}xf7$ 13 $\text{fxe4 Qg8 14 e5 Qh7}$, Přibyl-Lutikov, Bucharest 1975, and here White is completely winning after 15 $\mathbb{Q}xd5!$ with the idea 15... $\mathbb{Q}e6$ 16 $\mathbb{W}xb7 \mathbb{Q}a6 17 \mathbb{Q}f4$ or 15... $\mathbb{Q}h8$ 16 $\mathbb{Q}f4$.

7 $\mathbb{Q}e1$

We discussed the comparison with the Rosolimo Variation above. Ljubojević-I.Sokolov, PCA Qualifier, Groningen 1993 illustrated it well: 7 $\mathbb{Q}d4 \mathbb{Q}c6!$ 8 $\mathbb{Q}c2 \mathbb{Q}xc3$ 9 bcx3 (White retains the central majority and bishop-pair; recapturing with the b-pawn may not be worse than with the d-pawn, but it's more difficult to play – after 9 dxc3 , 9... $\mathbb{Q}e5$ 10 b3 d6 11 $\mathbb{Q}g5 \mathbb{Q}ed7$ 12 $\mathbb{W}d4$ h6 13 $\mathbb{Q}xf6 \mathbb{Q}xf6$ equalized in F.Olafsson-Smyslov, Candidates tournament, Bled/Zagreb/Belgrade 1959) 9...d5 10 cxd5 10 $\mathbb{W}xd5$ (D).



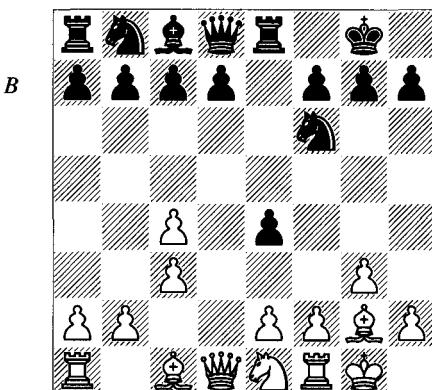
This kind of position arises in several variations. In return for the advantages mentioned for White, Black has space, free development and light-square pressure. 11 d4 $\mathbb{W}h5$ 12 f3! and now:

a) The game continued 12... $\mathbb{Q}h3?$ (exchanging bishops is thematic, but it runs into tactical problems) 13 g4! $\mathbb{W}h4$ 14 $\mathbb{Q}e3$ g6? (14... exf3 15 exf3 Qxg2 16 $\mathbb{Q}xg2 \mathbb{W}h3$ is the best of evils). Now simply 15 $\mathbb{Q}xh3 \mathbb{W}xh3$ 16 g5! would have been killing; for example, 16... $\mathbb{Q}h5$ 17 $\mathbb{Q}g4$ threatens $\mathbb{Q}f2$ followed by fxe4 , and 17... $\text{exf3}?$ is met by 18 $\mathbb{Q}h6+$ followed by $\mathbb{W}xf3$, targeting f7.

b) Sokolov proposes a solution based upon light-square play: 12... exf3 13 exf3 and now 13... $\mathbb{Q}d5!?$, with the idea 14 $\mathbb{Q}d2 \mathbb{Q}a5$ 15 $\mathbb{Q}a3$

$\mathbb{Q}b6$, controlling c4 and d5, while e3 and d3 are shaky squares in White's camp. However, White can play the tricky 14 c4! $\mathbb{Q}c3$ (threatening the queen and ... $\mathbb{Q}e2+$) 15 $\mathbb{M}e1!$, followed by $\mathbb{W}d2$ after the bishop moves. 13... $\mathbb{W}a5$ is a decent option here. It's fair to say that this whole line is in dynamic balance.

7... $\mathbb{Q}xc3$ 8 dxc3 (D)

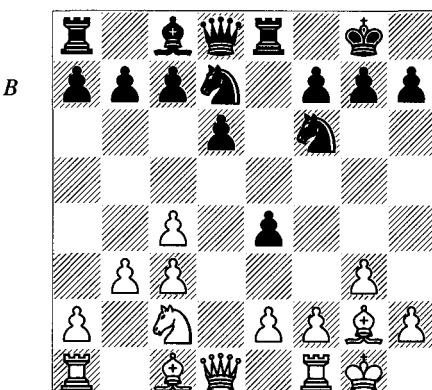


Capturing with the d-pawn is the most popular response in most of these positions, since White can exert influence down the d-file and develop his c1-bishop quickly.

8...d6 9 $\mathbb{Q}c2 \mathbb{Q}bd7$

When we get to the Four Knights Variation in Chapter 5, we'll see that Black has benefited here by *not* having ... $\mathbb{Q}c6$ in, since d7 is a more flexible square for this piece.

10 b3 (D)



White will undoubtedly play this move at some point. It defends against a tempo-winning attack on his c4-pawn, but also plays a part in

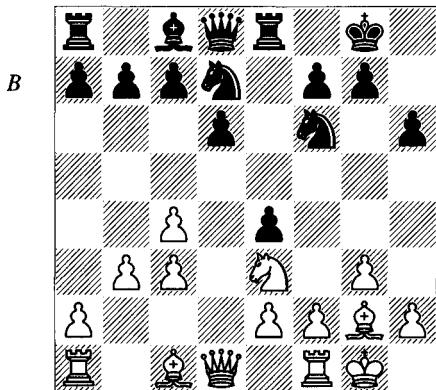
one of White's standard plans that you'll see in the next note.

10...h6

Black feels that he needs to prevent $\mathbb{Q}g5$ at some point, so this is a useful move.

11 $\mathbb{Q}e3$?

Not an utterly weak move, but it introduces the wrong plan. White's standard idea is 11 $\mathbb{Q}e3!$ (D), to cover f5 (versus ... $\mathbb{Q}f5$), but even more so to come to d5. We'll see this in the next chapter.



B

One fantasy line that partially explains 10 b3 is 11...b6 12 $\mathbb{Q}d5$ $\mathbb{Q}xd5$ 13 cxd5 $\mathbb{Q}b7$?! 14 c4 f5 15 $\mathbb{Q}b2$ with a very nice long diagonal to work with.

To be clear: I'm showing a number of wins by Black in this chapter, but with perfectly accurate play the assessment of these variations moves back and forth between complete equality for Black and a very limited edge for White.

11...b6 12 $\mathbb{W}d2$ $\mathbb{Q}b7$ 13 $\mathbb{Q}ad1$ $\mathbb{Q}e5$!

White's moves have been logical, but suddenly the potential threat of ... $\mathbb{Q}f3+$ is hanging over White's position. The rest of the game is a model of sustained initiative through tactics, and I'll let you watch it without many notes:

14 $\mathbb{W}c1$ $\mathbb{W}c8$!

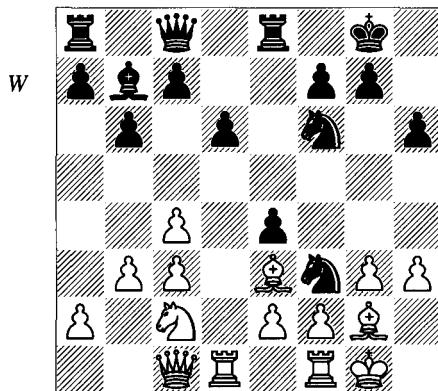
Light squares!

15 h3? $\mathbb{Q}f3+$! (D)

16 $\mathbb{Q}h1$

Suddenly Black is getting a serious attack. 16 exf3 exf3 17 $\mathbb{Q}h1$ $\mathbb{W}xh3$ 18 $\mathbb{Q}d4$ $\mathbb{Q}e4$! comes out well for him.

16... $\mathbb{Q}e5$! 17 $\mathbb{Q}e1$ $\mathbb{W}h5$ 18 h4 $\mathbb{W}g4$! 19 exf3 exf3 20 $\mathbb{Q}xf3$ $\mathbb{Q}xf3$ 21 $\mathbb{Q}xf3$ $\mathbb{W}xf3+$ 22 $\mathbb{Q}g1$ g5! 23 $\mathbb{Q}d4$ $\mathbb{Q}e8$ 24 $\mathbb{Q}d1$??



W

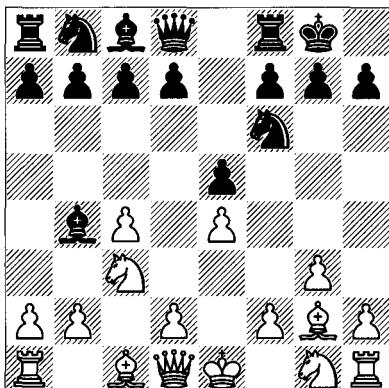
A blunder, but after 24 $\mathbb{Q}e1$ $\mathbb{Q}g4$ 25 $\mathbb{W}d1$ $\mathbb{W}xd1$ (or 25... $\mathbb{Q}e5$) 26 $\mathbb{Q}dxd1$ $\mathbb{Q}xe3$ 27 $\mathbb{Q}xe3$ $\mathbb{Q}xe3$ 28 fxe3 gxh4 Black will eventually win.

24... $\mathbb{Q}xe3$ 25 fxe3 $\mathbb{W}xg3+$ 26 $\mathbb{Q}h1$ g4 0-1

Stein – Smyslov

Moscow 1971

1 c4 e5 2 $\mathbb{Q}c3$ $\mathbb{Q}f6$ 3 g3 $\mathbb{Q}b4$ 4 $\mathbb{Q}g2$ 0-0 5 e4 (D)



B

This is one of our first looks at the so-called 'Botvinnik System', in which White gains a firm grip on d5 while conceding an outpost on d4. The combination of c4, $\mathbb{Q}c3$, e4, g3 and $\mathbb{Q}g2$ constitutes a Botvinnik formation, and it usually includes $\mathbb{Q}ge2$, d3 and 0-0. Then White has the broad choice of playing in the centre by $\mathbb{Q}e3$, attacking on the kingside with f4 or g4, and advancing on the queenside with b4.

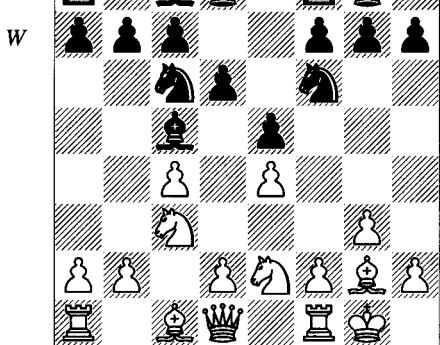
White's set-up was originally considered the best way to meet 3... $\mathbb{Q}b4$; as it turns out, Black

can play very dynamically against it and secure equal chances.

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

Surely this is Black's most natural move, controlling d4 and bringing a piece out; and yet 5... $\mathbb{Q}xc3$ is more popular, and we shall see why by comparing this game and the next.

6 $\mathbb{Q}ge2 \mathbb{Q}c5$ 7 0-0 $d6$ (D)

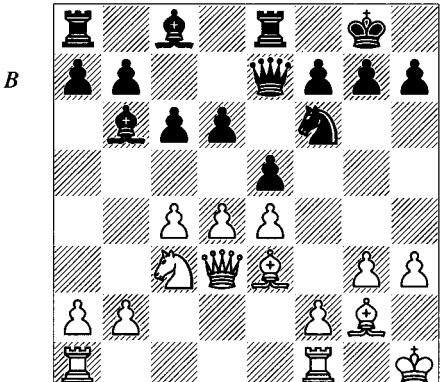


What could be more logical? White has created a gaping hole on d4, so Black hurries to control it. But this illustrates a great strength of the Botvinnik System: it creates only *one* weakness, and White's play on the rest of the board is multi-faceted, as we'll see.

8 d3

8 h3 is another continuation for White, with the idea of $\mathbb{Q}h2$ followed by launching the f-pawn forward:

a) 8... $\mathbb{Q}d4$ 9 d3 c6 10 $\mathbb{Q}h1$ $\mathbb{Q}e8$?! allows White to demonstrate another basic idea in the Botvinnik: 11 $\mathbb{Q}xd4$ $\mathbb{Q}xd4$ 12 $\mathbb{Q}e2$ $\mathbb{Q}b6$ 13 d4 $\mathbb{Q}e7$ 14 $\mathbb{Q}e3$ $\mathbb{Q}f6$ 15 $\mathbb{Q}d3$ $\mathbb{Q}e8$ 16 $\mathbb{Q}c3$ (D).



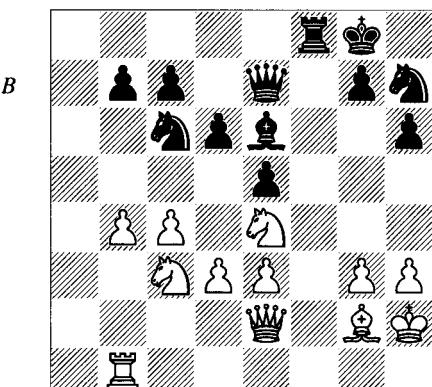
This is Portisch-Ree, Wijk aan Zee 1969. The weakness on d4 has disappeared and White commands the centre.

b) A typical opposition of kingside and queenside attack took place in Lalić-Komarov, Benasque 1994: 8...a6 9 d3 $\mathbb{Q}d7$ 10 $\mathbb{Q}h2$ (these are all the usual preliminary moves for f4) 10... $\mathbb{Q}d4$ (whereas Black clears the way for ...b5) 11 f4 h6 12 a4!? (to discourage ...b5) 12... $\mathbb{Q}b8$ 13 a5 b5! 14 axb6 $\mathbb{Q}xb6$ 15 $\mathbb{Q}xd4$ $\mathbb{Q}xd4$ 16 $\mathbb{Q}a2$ $\mathbb{Q}e7$ 17 $\mathbb{Q}e2$ $\mathbb{Q}c5$ 18 f5! (White prepares the pawn-roller that is the bread and butter of the Botvinnik System) 18...c6 (now Black makes no attempt to hold it up, say, by ... $\mathbb{Q}h7$; but his central and queenside play is also thematic) 19 g4 d5 with equality, and 19... $\mathbb{Q}fb8$! was also good. The general lesson of the opening is that versus the direct f4 plan, Black can play for a speedy ...b5 and hold his own.

8...h6 9 a3 a5 10 $\mathbb{Q}b1$ $\mathbb{Q}d7$ 11 h3 $\mathbb{Q}h7$ 12 $\mathbb{Q}h2$ f5 13 $\mathbb{Q}e3$!

Finally White contests d4. The idea is $\mathbb{Q}xc5$ followed by f4, when he wins key squares in the centre.

13... $\mathbb{Q}xe3$ 14 fxe3 fxe4 15 $\mathbb{Q}xe4$ $\mathbb{Q}xf1$ 16 $\mathbb{Q}xf1$ $\mathbb{Q}e7$ 17 $\mathbb{Q}2c3$ $\mathbb{Q}f8$ 18 $\mathbb{Q}e2$ $\mathbb{Q}e6$ 19 b4 axb4 20 axb4 (D)

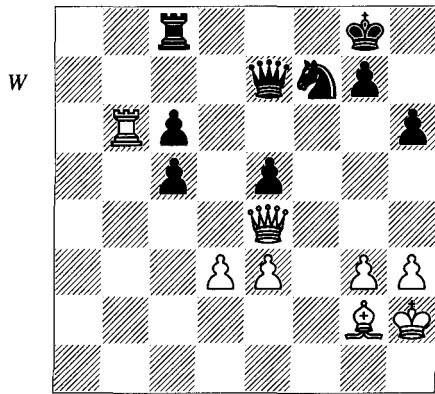


We have a picture of White's desired set-up in a great many Reversed Sicilian variations: pseudo-outposts on e4 and d5 in conjunction with a queenside b-pawn attack and unobstructed bishop on g2. The a-file can also prove useful. Black's counter-strategy is also standard: via ...c6 and ...d5 he wishes to deny White those juicy squares. However, White's pieces

are ideally coordinated to render that less than effective.

20... $\mathbb{Q}d8$ 21 b5 c6 22 bxc6 bxc6 23 $\mathbb{W}a2$ $\mathbb{Q}g5$ 24 $\mathbb{W}a3!$ $\mathbb{Q}xe4$ 25 $\mathbb{Q}xe4$ $\mathbb{Q}f7$ 26 $\mathbb{B}b6$ $\mathbb{B}c8$ 27 $\mathbb{W}b4!$ $\mathbb{Q}f5$ 28 c5! $\mathbb{Q}xe4$ 29 $\mathbb{W}xe4$ dxc5 (D)

White can work around Black's centre after 29...d5 30 $\mathbb{W}f5$ $\mathbb{W}c7$ 31 e4! d4 32 $\mathbb{Q}f3!$, intending $\mathbb{Q}d1$ -b3.



30 $\mathbb{B}xc6?$!

30 $\mathbb{W}c4!$ $\mathbb{W}d6$ 31 $\mathbb{B}b7!$ puts a great deal of pressure on the enemy position.

30... $\mathbb{B}xc6$ 31 $\mathbb{W}xc6$ $\mathbb{W}d6$ 32 $\mathbb{W}e8+$ $\mathbb{W}f8$ 33 $\mathbb{W}e6$ $\mathbb{W}d6$ 34 $\mathbb{W}a2??$

34 $\mathbb{W}c4!$ $\mathbb{Q}f8$ 35 $\mathbb{Q}d5$ still favours White and should have been tried.

34... $\mathbb{W}xd3$ 35 $\mathbb{Q}d5$ $\mathbb{W}f1$ 36 h4 g6 1/2-1/2

J. Přibyl – Hecht

W. Germany-Czechoslovakia match,
Bamberg 1972

1 c4 $\mathbb{Q}f6$ 2 $\mathbb{Q}c3$ e5 3 g3 $\mathbb{Q}b4$ 4 $\mathbb{Q}g2$ 0-0 5 e4 $\mathbb{Q}xc3!$

Rather than exploit his outpost on d4, Black does his opponent the favour of eliminating it! On the other hand, he acts before 6 $\mathbb{Q}e2$ consolidates White's game, and we've seen that the structures resulting from ... $\mathbb{Q}xc3$ hold considerable promise for Black. As usual, White has a serious decision between recaptures.

6 bxc3

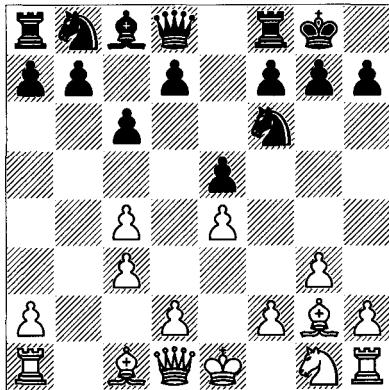
6 dxc3 is Korchnoi-Mecking below.

6...c6! (D)

I'll concentrate upon this main move. Black has in mind the direct ...d5.

7 $\mathbb{Q}e2??$

W

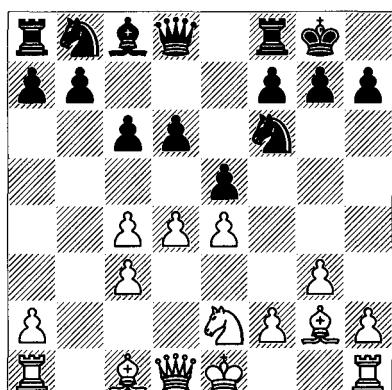


Surprisingly, this natural move has proven to be very awkward and risky for White, even if it's playable. The knight development is naturally even worse in the Sicilian position 1 e4 c5 2 $\mathbb{Q}f3$ $\mathbb{Q}c6$ 3 $\mathbb{B}b5$ g6 4 0-0 $\mathbb{Q}g7$ if White plays 5 $\mathbb{B}el$ e5 6 $\mathbb{Q}xc6$ bxc6? 7 c3! $\mathbb{Q}e7??!$.

Here are a few alternatives:

a) Strange to say, there have been many games with the innocuous 7 d4, when Black can play 7...exd4 8 $\mathbb{W}xd4$! (8 cxd4 $\mathbb{Q}xe4$! 9 $\mathbb{Q}xe4$ $\mathbb{B}e8$) 8... $\mathbb{B}e8$ 9 $\mathbb{Q}e2$ d5!? (9...d6) 10 cxd5 cxd5 11 exd5 $\mathbb{Q}f5$, a complex gambit idea from Vallejo Pons-Aronian, FIDE World Cup, Khanty-Mansiisk 2005. But 7...d6 is the most instructive idea, with Nimzo-Indian-like themes. 8 $\mathbb{Q}e2$ (D).

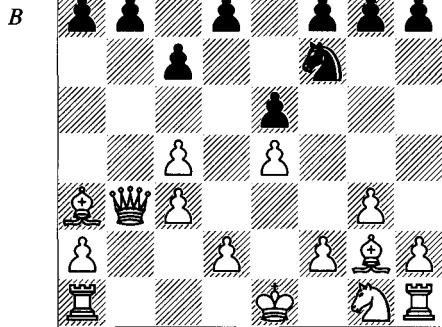
B



White has ideas of playing c5, which Black can prevent with ...c5. This has the drawback that if White replies d5, Black hasn't the option of ...cxd5, followed by putting pressure on the backward c3-pawn down an open file and enjoying outposts on c5 and c4. Black can

even lose time to provoke the advance of the d-pawn by 8... $\mathbb{Q}e6!$? 9 d5 $\mathbb{Q}d7!$ followed by ...cx d5 and ... $\mathbb{Q}a6-c5$. For his part, White needs to prevent that plan before initiating an attack on the other wing. He can do so by 10 $\mathbb{Q}a3!$, when 10...cx d5?! 11 $\mathbb{Q}xd6$ dx e4! 12 $\mathbb{Q}xf8$ $\mathbb{W}xf8$ gives Black compensation for the exchange following ... $\mathbb{Q}e6$. At any rate, Sorokin-Motylev, Calcutta 2002 proceeded 8...c5 9 d5 (here 9 0-0! $\mathbb{Q}c6$ 10 $\mathbb{W}d3$ keeps everything flexible) 9... $\mathbb{Q}e8$ (9... $\mathbb{Q}bd7!$ 10 0-0?! $\mathbb{W}a5$ 11 f4 $\mathbb{W}a6$) 10 h3 g6?! 11 $\mathbb{Q}h6$ $\mathbb{Q}g7$, when 12 0-0 f5 13 f4! would have taken advantage of Black's vulnerable dark squares.

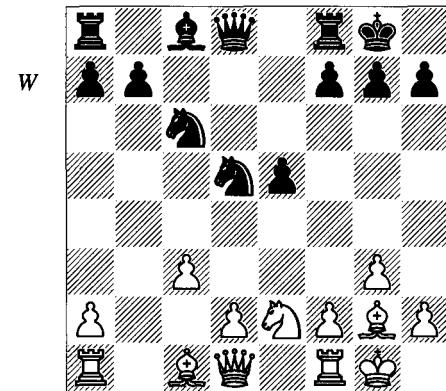
b) 7 $\mathbb{Q}a3!$ is probably as good as anything: 7... $\mathbb{W}e8$ 8 $\mathbb{W}b3$ (D).



8...b6!? (8...d6, planning ...a6 and ...b5, is Kosten's idea, and 8... $\mathbb{Q}a6$ 9 d3 d5?! is a curious gambit, intending 10 cx d5 cx d5 11 exd5 $\mathbb{Q}f5$ 12 $\mathbb{Q}d1$ e4) 9 d3! (9 $\mathbb{Q}e2$ $\mathbb{Q}b7$ 10 $\mathbb{Q}d6$! $\mathbb{W}e6$ contains the trick 11 $\mathbb{W}a3$? c5! 12 $\mathbb{Q}xb8$ $\mathbb{Q}xe4$! 13 $\mathbb{Q}xe4$ $\mathbb{Q}xe4$ 14 f3 $\mathbb{Q}f6$ 15 $\mathbb{Q}xa7$ $\mathbb{W}c8$ 16 0-0 $\mathbb{W}b7$ 17 $\mathbb{W}b2$ $\mathbb{W}xa7$ with the better knight and pawn-structure, Grigoriants-Sadvakasov, Subotica 2000) 9... $\mathbb{Q}b7$ 10 $\mathbb{Q}f3$! d5 11 $\mathbb{Q}d2$! $\mathbb{Q}a6$ 12 0-0 $\mathbb{Q}c7$?! 13 $\mathbb{Q}fe1$ $\mathbb{W}d7$ 14 $\mathbb{Q}ad1$ $\mathbb{Q}ad8$ 15 exd5 cx d5 16 $\mathbb{Q}f3$! and with his active pieces, White stood better in Hübner-Christiansen, Munich 1992.

7...d5 8 cx d5 cx d5 9 exd5 $\mathbb{Q}xd5$ 10 0-0 $\mathbb{Q}c6$ (D)

White has two bishops and potentially active piece-play, but his central pawns can only advance at the cost of creating weaknesses. Black will target light squares such as d3, c4, a2 and a4.



11 $\mathbb{Q}b1$ $\mathbb{Q}b6$! 12 d4

This is best; otherwise ... $\mathbb{W}d3$ or ... $\mathbb{Q}f5$ restrains and targets the centre.

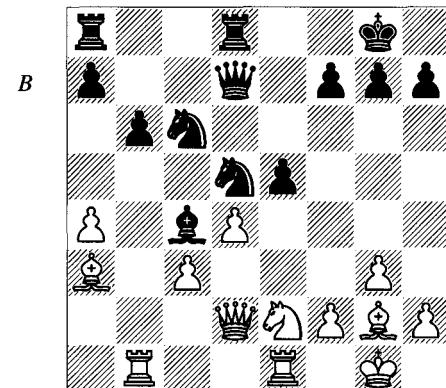
12... $\mathbb{Q}e6$

Aiming at the a-pawn, but even more so at the outpost square c4.

13 a4?!

White might want to bail out and simplify by 13 dx e5! $\mathbb{Q}xa2$ 14 $\mathbb{Q}b2$; for example, 14... $\mathbb{Q}d5$ 15 $\mathbb{Q}xd5$! $\mathbb{W}xd5$ 16 $\mathbb{W}xd5$ $\mathbb{Q}xd5$ 17 f4 $\mathbb{Q}b6$! (back to the light-square blockade) 18 $\mathbb{Q}d4$! $\mathbb{Q}a5$! 19 $\mathbb{Q}f5$ $\mathbb{Q}bc4$ 20 $\mathbb{Q}a2$ $\mathbb{W}fd8$ 21 $\mathbb{Q}d4$ $\mathbb{Q}d5$ 22 $\mathbb{Q}g2$ $\mathbb{Q}c8$ with equality.

13... $\mathbb{Q}c4$ 14 $\mathbb{Q}e1$ $\mathbb{W}d7$ 15 $\mathbb{Q}a3$ $\mathbb{W}fd8$ 16 $\mathbb{Q}c5$ $\mathbb{Q}d5$ 17 $\mathbb{W}d2$ b6 18 $\mathbb{Q}a3$ (D)



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

With ideas of capturing on e2 and then d4. Black remains better, but that would be more evident after 18... $\mathbb{Q}ac8$!.

19 $\mathbb{W}g5$!?

White should hunker down with 19 $\mathbb{Q}bd1$ (meeting 19... $\mathbb{Q}b3$! with 20 dx e5!).

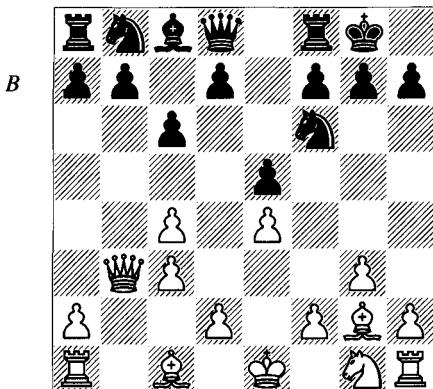
19...h6 20 $\mathbb{W}h4$ $\mathbb{Q}d5!$ 21 dxe5 $\mathbb{Q}xe5$ 22 $\mathbb{Q}f4?$ $\mathbb{Q}xg2$ 23 $\mathbb{E}xe5$ $\mathbb{Q}b7$ 24 $\mathbb{W}h3$ $\mathbb{W}c6$ 25 $\mathbb{Q}g2$

At this point, 25... $\mathbb{Q}e4!$ would win immediately in view of the threats of ... $\mathbb{Q}d2$ and ... $\mathbb{Q}g5$: 26 $\mathbb{E}xe4$ $\mathbb{W}xe4$ 27 $\mathbb{F}f1$ $\mathbb{W}f3!$ and White can't do a thing about 28...g5 followed by ...g4! – an aesthetically appealing position.

Schindler – Nebel
E-mail (IECG) 2003

1 c4 e5 2 $\mathbb{Q}c3$ $\mathbb{Q}f6$ 3 g3 $\mathbb{Q}b4$ 4 $\mathbb{Q}g2$ 0-0 5 e4 $\mathbb{Q}xc3$ 6 bxc3 c6 7 $\mathbb{W}b3$ (D)

Overall, this move has proven harmless versus good defence, and White can easily get into trouble with a small misstep.



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

Black has the ideas ... $\mathbb{Q}c5$ and/or ...d5.

8 $\mathbb{Q}a3$ d6!?

An ingenious move because of the defensive conception behind it. 8... $\mathbb{W}e8$ is a popular alternative.

9 $\mathbb{Q}e2$ $\mathbb{Q}d7!$

The point. White succeeded in opening the position after 9... $\mathbb{Q}e6$?! 10 d4! exd4 (10...b5 11 d5!) 11 $\mathbb{Q}xd4$ $\mathbb{Q}c5$ 12 $\mathbb{Q}xc5$ dxc5 13 $\mathbb{Q}xe6$ fxe6 14 0-0 $\mathbb{W}c7$ 15 e5! $\mathbb{Q}g4$ 16 $\mathbb{Q}h3$ $\mathbb{Q}xe5$ 17 f4 $\mathbb{Q}f7$ 18 $\mathbb{Q}xe6$ $\mathbb{Q}ae8$ 19 $\mathbb{Q}a1$ with space and a small advantage in Hort-Smyslov, Reggio Emilia 1986/7.

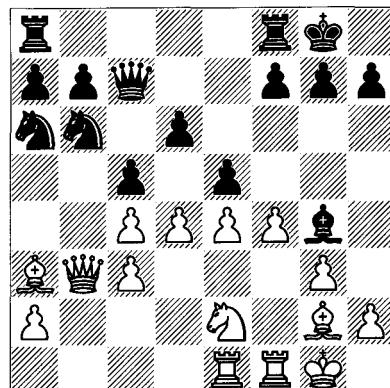
10 d4?!

Black's trick is 10 $\mathbb{Q}xd6$? $\mathbb{Q}dc5$ 11 $\mathbb{Q}xc5$ 12 $\mathbb{Q}c2$ $\mathbb{Q}d3+$ (or 12... $\mathbb{W}d3$) 13 $\mathbb{Q}f1$ $\mathbb{Q}e6$! with an almost winning advantage.

10...c5 11 0-0 $\mathbb{Q}b6$ 12 f4

After 12 $\mathbb{Q}c1$! $\mathbb{Q}d7$ 13 a4 cxd4 14 cxd4 exd4 15 $\mathbb{Q}xd4$ $\mathbb{Q}c5$ Black wins a pawn, but his weak d-pawn and White's strong bishop-pair produce a complex imbalance.

12... $\mathbb{Q}g4$ 13 $\mathbb{Q}ae1$ $\mathbb{W}c7$ (D)



14 fxe5?

White loses the thread and immobilizes his own kingside pawns. He should play 14 d5, sacrifice the pawn on c4, and play f5 in order to get his pawns rolling on the kingside. That would be very complex, whereas in the game he gives up that chance and lets a knight into c4.

14...dxe5 15 $\mathbb{Q}c1$ $\mathbb{Q}d7$ 16 $\mathbb{Q}d3$ $\mathbb{Q}a4$ 17 $\mathbb{W}b1$ $\mathbb{Q}xc4$ 18 $\mathbb{Q}xc5$ $\mathbb{Q}fd8$ 19 $\mathbb{Q}c1$ b6 20 $\mathbb{Q}a3$

Now instead of 20...exd4 21 e5, with some complications, 20... $\mathbb{Q}ac8$! would prepare capture of d4 and leave White's bishop looking rather pitiful on a3.

Korchnoi – Mecking

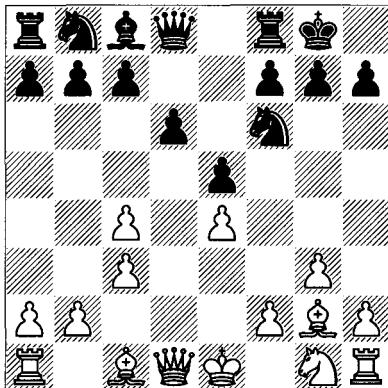
Candidates match (game 1), Augusta 1974

1 c4 e5 2 $\mathbb{Q}c3$ $\mathbb{Q}f6$ 3 g3 $\mathbb{Q}b4$ 4 $\mathbb{Q}g2$ 0-0 5 e4 $\mathbb{Q}xc3$ 6 dxc3 d6 (D)

7 $\mathbb{W}e2$

The reasoning here is that White's knight isn't well-placed on e2, from where it has no place to go and serves little purpose. So White defends his e-pawn and will bring his knight via f3 to either d2 or h4. In the Sicilian Defence, Black has used the same plan a tempo down; the result is equality in both cases. An example of the knight's awkward role on e2 with respect to both the queenside and centre is 7 $\mathbb{Q}e2$ a6! 8 a4 (otherwise ...b5 followed by ... $\mathbb{Q}b7$ and ... $\mathbb{Q}d7-c5$ keeps White on the defensive) 8... $\mathbb{Q}e6$ 9 b3

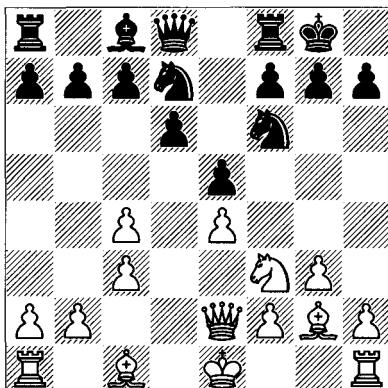
W



$\mathbb{Q}bd7$ 10 a5 b6 11 f3 $\mathbb{W}b8!$? 12 $\mathbb{Q}e3$ b5! 13 cxb5 $\mathbb{W}xb5$ 14 c4 $\mathbb{W}b4+$ 15 $\mathbb{Q}d2$ $\mathbb{W}b7$ 16 0-0 $\mathbb{E}ab8$ 17 $\mathbb{E}a3$ c6! 18 $\mathbb{W}c1$ $\mathbb{E}fe8$ 19 g4 d5 with an obvious advantage for Black, A.Popov-Veiniger, correspondence game 1994.

7... $\mathbb{Q}bd7$ 8 $\mathbb{Q}f3$ (D)

B



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

After 8...a6, a cautious approach for White is 9 $\mathbb{Q}d2$! (9 a4? $\mathbb{Q}c5$ attacks b3, and 10 $\mathbb{Q}d2$ a5 doesn't help much) 9...b5 10 a4! bxc4 11 $\mathbb{Q}xc4$ with chances for both sides, Relange-H.Olafsson, Internet 1998.

9 $\mathbb{Q}h4$ a6!

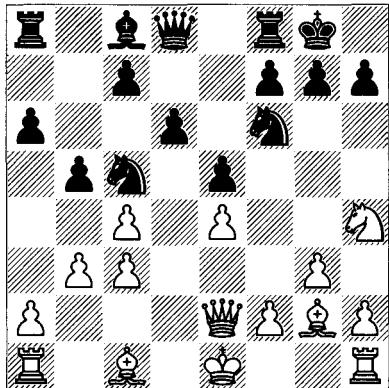
In most lines after 7 $\mathbb{W}e2$, ...b5 is Black's main goal. Sometimes you see ...a5-a4, to win space and tie down White's queenside; for example, 9...a5 10 0-0 a4 11 $\mathbb{Q}d2$ $\mathbb{Q}e6$ 12 $\mathbb{E}ad1$ $\mathbb{W}d7$ 13 $\mathbb{Q}e3$ $\mathbb{E}a5$ with equality.

10 b3 b5! (D)

11 $\mathbb{Q}a3$

An equal game results from 11 0-0 $\mathbb{Q}b7$ (11...bxc4!?) 12 f3 $\mathbb{Q}c6$.

W



11... $\mathbb{Q}fd7$ 12 0-0 $\mathbb{Q}b7$ 13 f3

White can also flee the f1-a6 diagonal by 13 $\mathbb{Q}fd1$ with the idea 13...bxc4 (13... $\mathbb{Q}c6$) 14 $\mathbb{W}xc4$ a5 15 $\mathbb{W}e2$.

13... $\mathbb{Q}c6$ 14 $\mathbb{Q}f5$ bxc4 15 bxc4

White has doubled and isolated c-pawns that are blockaded, but they control important squares and are not easily attacked.

15... $\mathbb{Q}a4$ 16 $\mathbb{W}d2$ $\mathbb{Q}dc5$ 17 $\mathbb{Q}e3$ $\mathbb{E}e8$ 18 $\mathbb{E}ad1$ $\mathbb{E}b8$ 19 $\mathbb{Q}d5$ $\mathbb{Q}d7$ 20 $\mathbb{Q}b4$ $\mathbb{Q}e6$ 21 $\mathbb{E}fe1$ c6!? 22 $\mathbb{Q}e3$ $\mathbb{W}b6$! 23 $\mathbb{W}c2$

23 $\mathbb{W}xd6$?! is worse due to 23... $\mathbb{E}bd8$ 24 $\mathbb{W}xe5$ $\mathbb{Q}d3$.

23... $\mathbb{E}bd8$

Neither side has a great deal to do, and after much manoeuvring the game was ultimately drawn.

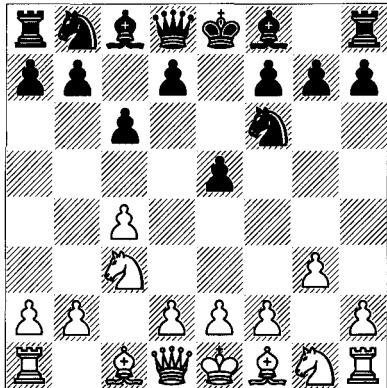
In this section, we have seen that while White has many interesting ways to continue after 3 g3 $\mathbb{Q}b4$, his positive prospects are limited by the lack of forcefulness in his position. That is, the c4/ $\mathbb{Q}c3/g3$ set-up is excellent as a reactive system when Black defending the Sicilian (via 1 e4 c5 2 $\mathbb{Q}f3$ $\mathbb{Q}c6$ 3 $\mathbb{Q}b5$ g6, for example), but it isn't as effective for White when his goal is to claim the initiative.

Keres Defence

1 c4 e5 2 $\mathbb{Q}c3$ $\mathbb{Q}f6$ 3 g3 c6 (D)

This move, introducing what is called the 'Keres Defence', has much in common with 2 g3 c6 and 2 g3 $\mathbb{Q}f6$ 3 $\mathbb{Q}g2$ c6 below (see the section 'White Plays 2 g3'). Black is essentially entering into a type of Alapin Sicilian (1 e4 c5 2

W



$\mathbb{Q}f3$ $\mathbb{Q}c6$ 3 $c3$) with a tempo less, but as so often, that extra move g3 has disadvantages that accompany its more obvious good points.

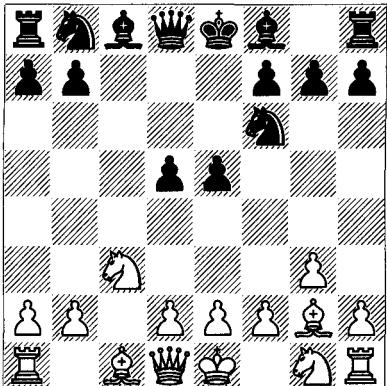
Hodgson – Illescas
Wijk aan Zee 1993

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

White permits Black to build up a large centre, although at first that looks risky for Black.

4...d5 5 cxd5 cxd5 (D)

W



6 $\mathbb{Q}b3$

The consistent move, forcing Black to surrender a pawn.

It would be disappointing to have to grant Black space and the ideal centre so early in the game; for example, 6 d3 d4 (or 6... $\mathbb{Q}c6$) 7 $\mathbb{Q}e4$ $\mathbb{Q}xe4$ 8 dxе4 (8 $\mathbb{Q}xe4$ has several answers, including the calm 8... $\mathbb{Q}d6$, when White must avoid 9 $\mathbb{Q}f3??$ f5, so 9 $\mathbb{Q}g2$ 0-0 10 $\mathbb{Q}f3$ $\mathbb{Q}c6$ could follow) 8... $\mathbb{Q}c6$ 9 $\mathbb{Q}f3$ $\mathbb{Q}e7$ 10 0-0 0-0 11 $\mathbb{Q}e1$ $\mathbb{Q}e6$ 12 $\mathbb{Q}d3$ $\mathbb{Q}c8$ 13 f4 f6. White has a bad

bishop and has done nothing about Black's d4-pawn.

6... $\mathbb{Q}c6$!

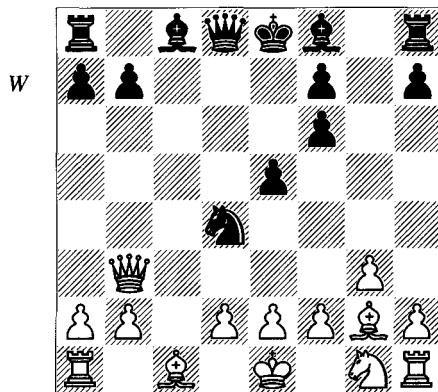
The entire Keres Defence rests upon a gambit! Fortunately for Black, it's a good one.

7 $\mathbb{Q}xd5$ $\mathbb{Q}d4$! 8 $\mathbb{Q}xf6+$

Instead, after 8 $\mathbb{Q}c4$ $\mathbb{Q}xd5$! 9 $\mathbb{Q}xd5$ b5! 10 $\mathbb{Q}xf7+$ $\mathbb{Q}e7$ Black wins material, because 11 $\mathbb{Q}d5$ $\mathbb{Q}c2$ + 12 $\mathbb{Q}d1$ $\mathbb{Q}xa1$ 13 $\mathbb{Q}xa8$ $\mathbb{Q}c7$! 14 $\mathbb{Q}e4$ $\mathbb{Q}xf7$ 15 $\mathbb{Q}b1$ $\mathbb{Q}b4$! 16 $\mathbb{Q}xa1$?! $\mathbb{Q}f5$ 17 d3 $\mathbb{Q}c8$ 18 $\mathbb{Q}b1$ e4! is too strong.

8... $\mathbb{Q}xf6$ (D)

Over the years, 8... $\mathbb{Q}xf6$ has won more than its share of games, but it's not as clear after 9 $\mathbb{Q}d3$.



9 $\mathbb{Q}d1$

This time 9 $\mathbb{Q}d3$ $\mathbb{Q}c7$! forces White's king to move, with this typical consequence: 10 $\mathbb{Q}d1$ (10 $\mathbb{Q}f1$ $\mathbb{Q}e6$ threatens ... $\mathbb{Q}c2$ and ... $\mathbb{Q}xa2$, when 11 $\mathbb{Q}c3$ $\mathbb{Q}b6$ intends ... $\mathbb{Q}c8$ with a killing attack) 10... $\mathbb{Q}f5$ 11 $\mathbb{Q}e4$ $\mathbb{Q}xe4$ 12 $\mathbb{Q}xe4$ f5 13 $\mathbb{Q}d3$ $\mathbb{Q}c8$ (now 14...e4! is threatened) 14 e3 $\mathbb{Q}c6$ 15 f3 $\mathbb{Q}c2$ 16 $\mathbb{Q}b1$ $\mathbb{Q}g7$. White can't get his pieces out and if nothing else, Black can bring his king's rook into the fray and overwhelm his opponent.

9... $\mathbb{Q}c7$ 10 $\mathbb{Q}f1$ $\mathbb{Q}c2$ 11 $\mathbb{Q}b1$ $\mathbb{Q}e6$ 12 b3

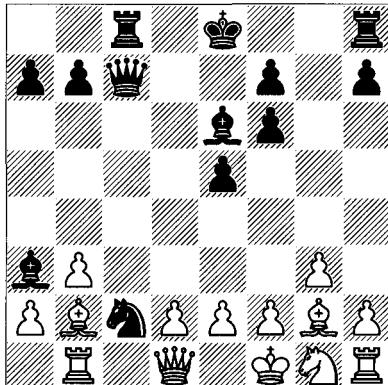
All these moves have been forced for White.

12... $\mathbb{Q}c8$ 13 $\mathbb{Q}b2$ $\mathbb{Q}a3$! (D)

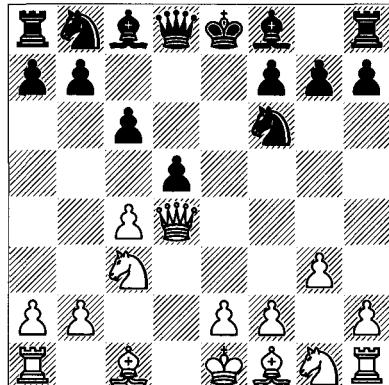
14 $\mathbb{Q}c3$??

But nothing fits the bill. For example, 14 $\mathbb{Q}h3$ $\mathbb{Q}xh3$ + 15 $\mathbb{Q}xh3$ $\mathbb{Q}xb2$ 16 $\mathbb{Q}xb2$ $\mathbb{Q}c6$ 17 f3 0-0 and ... $\mathbb{Q}fd8$ is coming (and incidentally threatening ... $\mathbb{Q}e3$!), Saines-V.Kovačević, correspondence game 1977. Another try is 14 $\mathbb{Q}e4$ $\mathbb{Q}xb2$ 15 $\mathbb{Q}xb2$ $\mathbb{Q}a3$ 16 d3 f5 17 $\mathbb{Q}f3$, Spesny-Raetsky,

W



W



Mlada Boleslav 1992, when Raetsky points out that Black wins after 17...e4! 18 dx e 4 fx e 4 19 $\mathbb{Q}g2$ (19 $\mathbb{Q}xe4$ $\mathbb{Q}e5$) 19... $\mathbb{Q}c1$ 20 $\mathbb{Q}d2$ $\mathbb{Q}b1!$ 21 $\mathbb{Q}d4$ $\mathbb{Q}b2!$.

14... $\mathbb{Q}b4$ 15 $\mathbb{Q}xb4$ $\mathbb{Q}xb4$

Black has more than enough compensation for the pawn.

16 $\mathbb{Q}f3$ 0-0

Or 16... $\mathbb{Q}c2$ with a nice advantage.

17 $\mathbb{Q}e1$ $\mathbb{Q}fd8$ 18 $\mathbb{Q}d3$ $\mathbb{Q}a3$ 19 $h3$ $\mathbb{Q}d4$ 20 $\mathbb{Q}e1$ $\mathbb{Q}a5$ 21 $d3$ $\mathbb{Q}d7!$ 22 $\mathbb{Q}g1$ $\mathbb{Q}dc7$ 23 $b4$

After 23 $\mathbb{Q}h2$ $\mathbb{Q}c1$ Black wins the queen.

23... $\mathbb{Q}xb4$ 24 $\mathbb{Q}h2$ $\mathbb{Q}xa2$

The rest was easy for Black. We see the value of open lines and sustained initiative. Obviously grabbing the pawn via 6 $\mathbb{Q}b3$ is too greedy, which in turn means that 4 $\mathbb{Q}g2$ is already dubious!

Bevia – Illescas

Alicante 1989

1 c4 e5 2 $\mathbb{Q}c3$ $\mathbb{Q}f6$ 3 g3 c6 4 d4

In the early days of the Keres this was quite popular. White attacks e5 and practically forces the following concession in the centre.

4...exd4 5 $\mathbb{Q}xd4$ d5 (D)

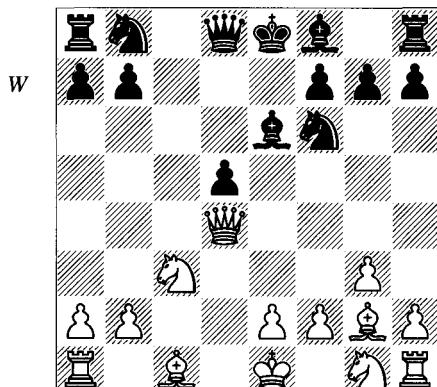
White's queen is aggressively placed, and he will try to train his pieces on d5; the moves $\mathbb{Q}g2$ and $\mathbb{Q}g5$ serve that purpose. But first he has to make some fundamental decisions over this and the next few moves, primarily when to exchange pawns, taking into account that Black might play ...c5 or ...dxc4 at the right moment, and that if White exchanges pawns on d5, he opens the way for Black's knight to come to c6 with tempo. This means that move-order is

critical. Let's look into the theory in the context of this game.

6 $\mathbb{Q}xd5$

White wants to fix the pawns right away, but as mentioned, this permits Black to develop by ... $\mathbb{Q}c6$ and encourages the advance ...d4 with further gain of time. If White can wait before exchanging on d5, Black may have to play the suboptimal ... $\mathbb{Q}e7$ or ... $\mathbb{Q}e6$ at an early stage. One of several issues is whether ...dxc4 will be an easy equalizer in that case. This all plays out in the following examples:

a) 6 $\mathbb{Q}g2$ $\mathbb{Q}e6$ (6...dxc4 7 $\mathbb{Q}xc4$ $\mathbb{Q}e6$ 8 $\mathbb{Q}a4$ $\mathbb{Q}bd7$ is considered equal, but White's pieces seem to coordinate slightly better; for example, 9 $\mathbb{Q}f3$ $\mathbb{Q}c5?$ 10 $\mathbb{Q}c2$ $\mathbb{Q}a5?$, and now not 11 $\mathbb{Q}d2$ $\mathbb{Q}b3!$, but 11 $\mathbb{Q}e3!$ 0-0-0 12 0-0) 7 cxd5 cxd5 (D).



Now 8 $\mathbb{Q}f3$ $\mathbb{Q}c6$ 9 $\mathbb{Q}a4$ $\mathbb{Q}c5$ 10 0-0 0-0 11 $\mathbb{Q}g5$ is one of the most important variations stemming from 2 g3; refer to the next section below. Instead, 8 $\mathbb{Q}g5$ is often given as slightly

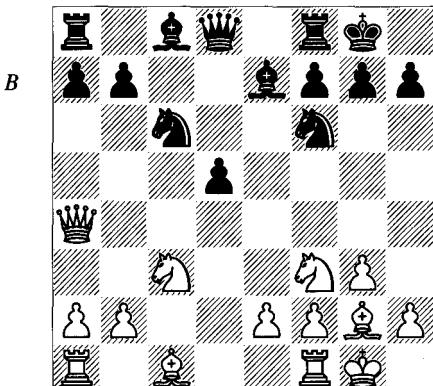
better for White, based on lines continuing 8... $\mathbb{Q}e7$. That is unconvincing after 8... $\mathbb{Q}c6$ 9 $\mathbb{W}a4$ (after 9 $\mathbb{Q}xf6?$, both 9... $\mathbb{Q}xd4$ 10 $\mathbb{Q}xd8$ $\mathbb{Q}c2+$ and the safer 9...gxf6 followed by ...d4 favour Black) 9... $\mathbb{W}b6!$ 10 $\mathbb{Q}xf6$ gxf6, which seems to be equal; for example, 11 0-0! 0-0-0! 12 $\mathbb{Q}xd5$ (12 e3 d4) 12... $\mathbb{Q}xd5$ 13 $\mathbb{Q}xd5$ $\mathbb{W}c5+$ 14 $\mathbb{Q}c3$ $\mathbb{Q}xd1+$ 15 $\mathbb{W}xd1$ $\mathbb{W}xf2$ with chances for both sides.

b) 6 $\mathbb{Q}g5$ $\mathbb{Q}e7!$ (6...dxc4 7 $\mathbb{Q}xd8+$ $\mathbb{Q}xd8$ 8 0-0-0+! $\mathbb{Q}e8$ 9 e4 $\mathbb{Q}e6$ 10 f4 b5 should be investigated) 7 cxd5 cxd5 8 $\mathbb{Q}f3$ $\mathbb{Q}c6$ 9 $\mathbb{W}a4$ $\mathbb{Q}e6$ 10 $\mathbb{Q}g2$ h6 11 $\mathbb{Q}xf6$ $\mathbb{Q}xf6$ 12 0-0 $\mathbb{W}b6!$ is unbalanced and very likely better for Black. Compare 6 $\mathbb{Q}f3$ below; in fact, 12...0-0 would transpose directly to that line.

c) Still another try is 6 $\mathbb{Q}f3$ (directed against ...d4) 6... $\mathbb{Q}e7$ (6...dxc4? is also reasonable), when White again has to deal with Black's potential expansion:

c1) 7 $\mathbb{Q}g2$ c5! 8 $\mathbb{W}d3$ d4 9 $\mathbb{Q}e4$ $\mathbb{Q}c6$ with a position that is level or slightly favouring Black, Pfleger-Keres, Bamburg 1968.

c2) 7 cxd5 cxd5 8 $\mathbb{Q}g2$ $\mathbb{Q}c6$ 9 $\mathbb{W}a4$ 0-0 10 0-0 (*D*) is a standard position characteristic of the isolated queen's pawn.



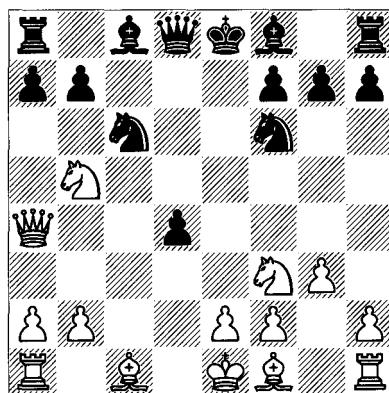
This time both sides have their conventional advantages, and it's too early for 10...d4 (due to 11 $\mathbb{Q}d1$!). Play can continue 10... $\mathbb{Q}e6$ (or 10... $\mathbb{W}b6$ 11 $\mathbb{W}b5$ d4 12 $\mathbb{W}xb6$ axb6 13 $\mathbb{Q}b5$ $\mathbb{Q}d8$ 14 $\mathbb{Q}d1$ $\mathbb{Q}c5$ 15 $\mathbb{Q}g5$, Gulko-I.Gurevich, Saint Martin 1993, when 15... $\mathbb{Q}e6$ is equal: 16 b4 $\mathbb{Q}xb4$ 17 $\mathbb{Q}fxd4$ $\mathbb{Q}xa2$, etc.) 11 $\mathbb{Q}e3$! (11 $\mathbb{Q}g5$ h6 12 $\mathbb{Q}xf6$ $\mathbb{Q}xf6$ 13 $\mathbb{Q}ad1$ $\mathbb{W}e7$ 14 e3 $\mathbb{Q}xc3$ 15 bxc3 $\mathbb{Q}fc8$ exerts pressure on White's c-pawn and equalizes, Damljanović-Onishchuk,

Skopje 2002) 11... $\mathbb{Q}g4$! 12 $\mathbb{Q}d2$ $\mathbb{W}b6$ 13 $\mathbb{Q}xd5$ $\mathbb{Q}xd5$ 14 $\mathbb{W}xg4$ $\mathbb{W}xb2$ 15 $\mathbb{Q}ab1$ $\mathbb{W}xa2$ and the position is dynamically balanced.

6...cxd5 7 $\mathbb{Q}g2$??

This works out poorly, but White already has real problems:

a) 7 $\mathbb{Q}f3$? $\mathbb{Q}c6$ 8 $\mathbb{W}a4$ d4 (this advance is what originally made the Keres so popular: White will lose valuable time as Black develops) 9 $\mathbb{Q}b5$ (*D*).



Now 9... $\mathbb{Q}b4+$ has been the normal move, with an excellent position following 10 $\mathbb{Q}d2$ $\mathbb{Q}xd2+$ 11 $\mathbb{Q}xd2$ 0-0. Still better, Tony Kosten suggests the killer move 9... $\mathbb{Q}e4$!, intending ... $\mathbb{Q}c5$; for example, 10 $\mathbb{Q}g2$ (but 10 $\mathbb{Q}d2$ a6 11 $\mathbb{Q}a3$ $\mathbb{Q}c5$ 12 $\mathbb{W}d1$ $\mathbb{W}e7$ – threatening mate in 1! – 13 $\mathbb{Q}c1$ d3 14 $\mathbb{Q}g2$ $\mathbb{Q}g4$ 15 h3 $\mathbb{Q}f5$ is horrendous for White) 10... $\mathbb{Q}c5$! 11 $\mathbb{W}a3$ (11 $\mathbb{W}d1$ $\mathbb{W}a5$ +) 11... $\mathbb{Q}f5$ 12 b4 $\mathbb{Q}d3+$ and Black wins material with a continuing attack.

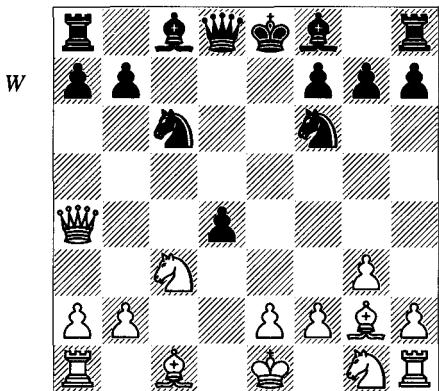
b) 7 $\mathbb{Q}g5$? is almost as bad: 7... $\mathbb{Q}c6$ 8 $\mathbb{W}a4$ d4 (Black also has a resource that we haven't seen in this variation yet, namely, 8... $\mathbb{Q}b4$ 9 $\mathbb{Q}f3$ h6, when White has to choose between the evils of 10 $\mathbb{Q}xf6?$ $\mathbb{W}xf6$, 10 $\mathbb{Q}e3$ 0-0 11 $\mathbb{Q}g2$ $\mathbb{Q}g4$ and 10 $\mathbb{Q}d2$ 0-0 11 $\mathbb{Q}g2$ $\mathbb{Q}e8$!) 9 0-0-0?!, Lamaan-Keres, correspondence game 1935. Now Black's most dynamic continuation is 9... $\mathbb{W}b6$! 10 $\mathbb{Q}xf6$ gxf6 11 $\mathbb{Q}e4$ $\mathbb{Q}e6$! with the idea 12 $\mathbb{Q}xf6+?$ $\mathbb{Q}e7$ 13 $\mathbb{Q}e4$ $\mathbb{Q}b4$ 14 a3 $\mathbb{Q}a2+$ 15 $\mathbb{Q}b1$ $\mathbb{Q}g7$! and he is winning; ideas like ... $\mathbb{Q}b3$, ...f5, ...d3 and ... $\mathbb{Q}ac8$ are in the air.

7... $\mathbb{Q}c6$ 8 $\mathbb{W}a4$??

8 $\mathbb{Q}d1$ improves, but is still pretty bad: 8...d4 9 $\mathbb{Q}e4$ $\mathbb{Q}b4+$ 10 $\mathbb{Q}d2$ 0-0 11 $\mathbb{Q}xf6+$ $\mathbb{W}xf6$ 12

$\mathbb{Q}xb4$ $\mathbb{Q}xb4$. Black is threatening ...d3, but 13 a3 $\mathbb{Q}c6$ 14 $\mathbb{Q}f3$ $\mathbb{Q}f5$ leaves him with the same threat and a space advantage.

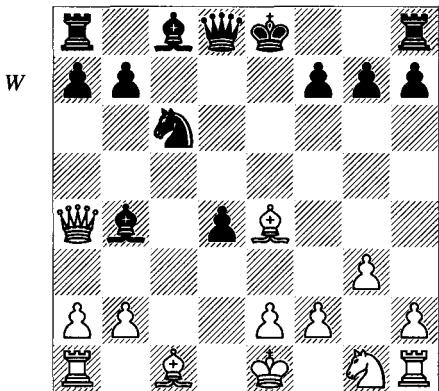
8...d4! (D)



9 $\mathbb{Q}e4$!

White needs to exchange pieces if he's going to cope with Black's advanced pawn. 9 $\mathbb{Q}b5$ $\mathbb{Q}b4+$ 10 $\mathbb{Q}f1$ 0-0 can lead to the pretty line 11 $\mathbb{Q}g5$ h6 12 $\mathbb{Q}xf6$ $\mathbb{W}xf6$ 13 $\mathbb{Q}c7$ d3! 14 $\mathbb{Q}xa8$ $\mathbb{W}xb2$ 15 $\mathbb{Q}d1$ dx e 2+ 16 $\mathbb{Q}xe2$ $\mathbb{Q}g4$ 17 f3 $\mathbb{Q}e8$ and Black wins. Another nice variation is 11 $\mathbb{Q}xc6$ bxc6 12 $\mathbb{Q}xb4$ cxb5 13 $\mathbb{Q}xb5!$ $\mathbb{Q}b8!$ 14 $\mathbb{Q}d3$ (14 $\mathbb{W}xb8$ $\mathbb{Q}h3+$ 15 $\mathbb{Q}xh3$ $\mathbb{W}xb8$) 14... $\mathbb{Q}b7$ 15 $\mathbb{Q}f3?$ $\mathbb{Q}e4$ 16 $\mathbb{Q}d1$ $\mathbb{Q}d5$ 17 $\mathbb{Q}g2$ $\mathbb{Q}fd8$ and Black is on the verge of winning, since ...d3 will follow. The game might end with slaughter on the light squares: 18 b3 d3! 19 $\mathbb{Q}f4$ (19 exd3 $\mathbb{W}xd3$) 19... $\mathbb{Q}bc8$ 20 exd3 $\mathbb{W}xd3$ 21 $\mathbb{Q}e1$ $\mathbb{Q}b5!$ 22 $\mathbb{W}e2$ $\mathbb{Q}d3$ 23 $\mathbb{Q}e3$ $\mathbb{Q}d5$ and ... $\mathbb{Q}c3$ next.

9... $\mathbb{Q}xe4$ 10 $\mathbb{Q}xe4$ $\mathbb{Q}b4+$ (D)



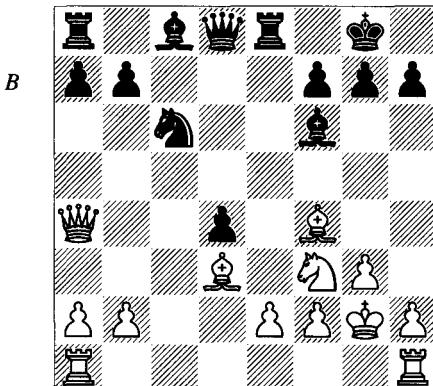
11 $\mathbb{Q}f1$

Obviously Black has disturbed White's development, but it's not clear that castling by hand won't work for White.

11... $\mathbb{Q}e7$ 12 $\mathbb{Q}g2$ 0-0 13 $\mathbb{Q}f3$ $\mathbb{Q}f6$ 14 $\mathbb{Q}f4?$

This turns out to be a huge mistake. True, Black's extra space shows in lines such as 14 $\mathbb{Q}d1$ $\mathbb{Q}d7$ 15 $\mathbb{W}a3$ $\mathbb{Q}e8$ 16 $\mathbb{Q}d3$ $\mathbb{Q}e6$ with the idea ... $\mathbb{Q}d5$. But White could limit his disadvantage by 14 h4 $\mathbb{Q}e8$ 15 $\mathbb{W}c2$.

14... $\mathbb{Q}e8$ 15 $\mathbb{Q}d3?$ (D)



15...g5! 16 $\mathbb{Q}d2$ g4 17 $\mathbb{Q}g1$ $\mathbb{Q}e5$ 18 $\mathbb{Q}e4$ $\mathbb{Q}d7!$ 19 $\mathbb{W}b3$ $\mathbb{Q}e6$

Once again, the light squares triumph:

20 $\mathbb{W}xb7$ $\mathbb{Q}b8$ 21 $\mathbb{W}xa7$ $\mathbb{Q}d5$ 22 f3 $\mathbb{Q}c6$ 23 $\mathbb{W}a6$ $\mathbb{Q}xe4$ 24 fx e 4 $\mathbb{Q}xe4+$ 25 $\mathbb{Q}f3$ d3 0-1

After 26 $\mathbb{W}a4$, 26... $\mathbb{Q}d5$ would be a sadistic finish.

You can see why the move 4 d4 has declined in popularity. On the other hand, the same idea after 1 c4 e5 2 g3 is more promising, because 2... $\mathbb{Q}f6$ 3 $\mathbb{Q}g2$ c6 4 d4 exd4 5 $\mathbb{W}xd4$ doesn't leave a knight on c3 subject to attack by ...d4. We'll examine 2 g3 below.

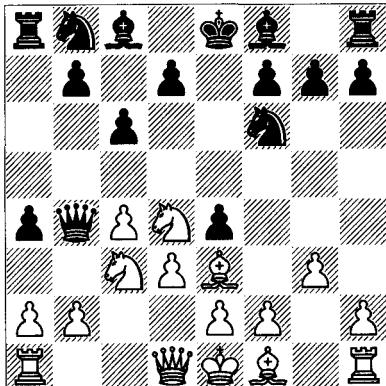
Next, let's look into the move that poses the most difficulty for Black, 4 $\mathbb{Q}f3$.

Ježek – Sapundzhiev
Correspondence game 1973

1 c4 e5 2 $\mathbb{Q}c3$ $\mathbb{Q}f6$ 3 g3 c6 4 $\mathbb{Q}f3$ e4 5 $\mathbb{Q}d4$ d5

The move 5... $\mathbb{W}b6$ is perhaps slightly weaker. Ullrich-L.Carlson, correspondence game 1990 went 6 $\mathbb{Q}b3$ (6 e3 is also played) 6...a5 7 d3 a4 8 $\mathbb{Q}e3!$ $\mathbb{W}b4$ 9 $\mathbb{Q}d4$ (D).

B

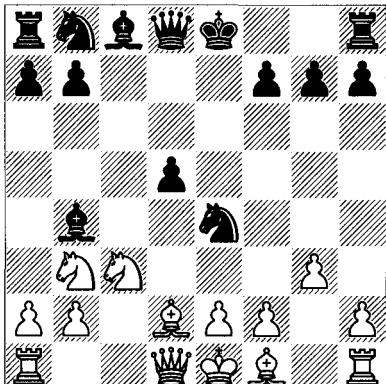


9...exd3 (9... $\mathbb{W}xb2$ 10 $\mathbb{R}c1$ $\mathbb{Q}b4$ 11 $\mathbb{Q}d2!$ leads to an edge for White) 10 $\mathbb{W}xd3$ d5 11 cxd5 $\mathbb{Q}xd5$ 12 $\mathbb{Q}d2!$ $\mathbb{Q}xc3$ 13 $\mathbb{Q}xc3$ $\mathbb{W}d6$ 14 $\mathbb{Q}g2$ $\mathbb{Q}e7$ 15 $\mathbb{R}d1$ 0-0 (15... $\mathbb{A}a6$ 16 $\mathbb{Q}xc6$ $\mathbb{W}xd3$ 17 $\mathbb{W}xd3$) 16 $\mathbb{Q}xc6!$ $\mathbb{Q}xc6$ 17 $\mathbb{W}xd6$ $\mathbb{Q}xd6$ 18 $\mathbb{W}xd6$ $\mathbb{Q}e6$ 19 a3 with an extra pawn and the better game.

6 cxd5 $\mathbb{W}b6$

Traditionally the main move, although the natural 6...cxd5!? has never been refuted. Still, White seems to get some advantage in the main line following 7 d3 $\mathbb{Q}c5$ 8 $\mathbb{Q}b3$ $\mathbb{Q}b4$ 9 dxе4 $\mathbb{Q}xe4$ 10 $\mathbb{Q}d2$ (D).

B

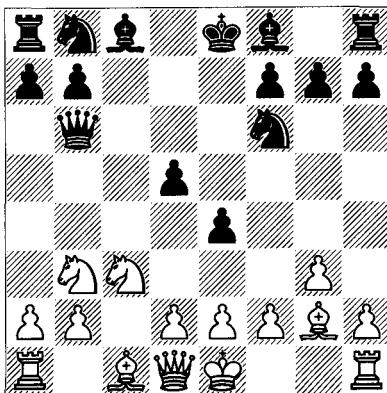


10... $\mathbb{W}b6$ (this is probably the most testing continuation, pretty much forcing the next few moves; after 10... $\mathbb{Q}xc3$ 11 $\mathbb{Q}xc3$ $\mathbb{Q}xc3$ 12 bxc3, Black's weakness on d5 is more important than White's on c3 because the former can be blockaded so nicely by a powerful knight and White's bishop is better than Black's) 11 $\mathbb{Q}xe4$ dxе4 12 $\mathbb{Q}xb4$ $\mathbb{W}xb4+$ 13 $\mathbb{W}d2$ $\mathbb{Q}c6$ 14 $\mathbb{Q}g2$ f5 (trying to shut out the bishop on g2) 15

$\mathbb{W}xb4$ $\mathbb{Q}xb4$ 16 0-0 $\mathbb{Q}e6$ 17 $\mathbb{Q}d4$ $\mathbb{Q}e7$ (after 17... $\mathbb{Q}d7$ 18 f3 exf3 19 $\mathbb{Q}xf3$! White threatens not only the f5-pawn, but also 20 $\mathbb{Q}b3$!) 18 f3! (now the better bishop has its say) 18...e3 19 f4 $\mathbb{W}hd8$ 20 $\mathbb{R}ad1$ $\mathbb{R}d6$ 21 a3 $\mathbb{Q}c6$ 22 $\mathbb{Q}xc6+bxc6$ 23 $\mathbb{Q}xd6$ $\mathbb{Q}xd6$ 24 $\mathbb{Q}f3$ and White has come out ahead, P.Gutman-Glasberger, e-mail 2003.

7 $\mathbb{Q}b3$ cxd5 8 $\mathbb{Q}g2$ (D)

B

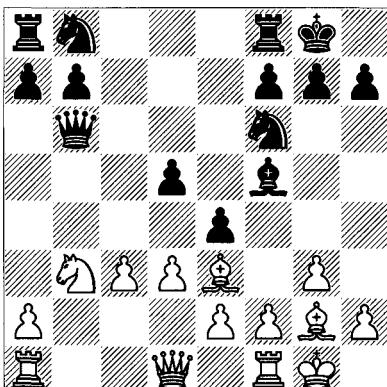


8... $\mathbb{Q}f5$

8...a5 is just a tad slow: 9 d3! (9 d4 a4 10 $\mathbb{Q}c5$! is also good) 9...a4 10 $\mathbb{Q}e3$ $\mathbb{W}b4$ 11 $\mathbb{Q}d4$! a3 (11... $\mathbb{W}xb2$ 12 $\mathbb{Q}db5$) 12 $\mathbb{Q}c2!$ $\mathbb{W}xb2$ 13 $\mathbb{Q}d4$ $\mathbb{Q}b4$ 14 $\mathbb{Q}xb4$ $\mathbb{W}xb4$ 15 $\mathbb{Q}xf6$ gxsf6 16 0-0! and White had the advantage in Botvinnik-Tal, World Ch match (game 9), Moscow 1961.

9 d3 $\mathbb{Q}b4$ 10 0-0 $\mathbb{Q}xc3$ 11 bxc3 0-0 12 $\mathbb{Q}e3$ (D)

B

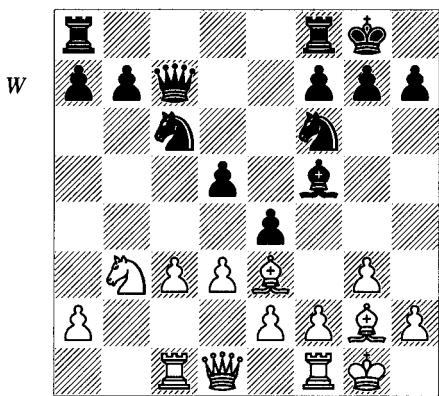


This position has been contested countless times. It pits Black's strong centre against White's superior development and activity.

12... $\mathbb{W}c7$

12... $\mathbb{W}a6$!? 13 $\mathbb{Q}c5$ $\mathbb{W}c6$ 14 c4! dxc4 15 $\mathbb{B}c1$! frees White's bishop-pair to his advantage, as has been shown in several games.

13 $\mathbb{B}c1$ $\mathbb{Q}c6$ (D)



14 c4

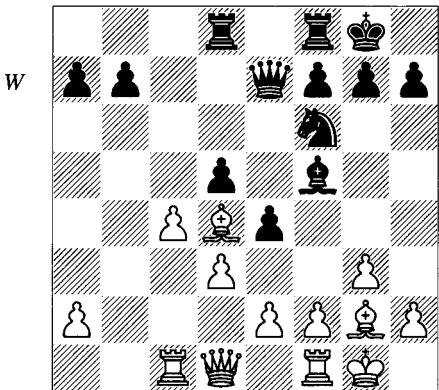
A classic attack on Black's centre. But it doesn't crack easily.

14... $\mathbb{B}ad8$!

Evidently worse would be 14... $\mathbb{B}fd8$ 15 $\mathbb{Q}d4$ $\mathbb{Q}xd4$ 16 $\mathbb{Q}xd4$ $\mathbb{W}e7$ 17 $\mathbb{Q}xf6$! gxf6 18 cxd5 $\mathbb{B}xd5$ 19 $\mathbb{W}a4$ due to 19...b6 20 $\mathbb{W}c6$!; compare the main game.

15 $\mathbb{Q}d4$! $\mathbb{Q}xd4$ 16 $\mathbb{Q}xd4$ $\mathbb{W}e7$ (D)

The stem game Reshevsky-Keres, Los Angeles 1963 went 16...exd3 17 cxd5 $\mathbb{W}d7$ 18 $\mathbb{Q}xf6$ dxe2 19 $\mathbb{W}xe2$ gxf6 20 $\mathbb{W}b2$!? (still better is 20 $\mathbb{B}c4$! $\mathbb{B}c8$ 21 $\mathbb{B}f4$, an idea of Prieditis) 20... $\mathbb{W}g7$ 21 $\mathbb{W}d4$ $\mathbb{Q}h3$ 22 $\mathbb{B}fd1$ $\mathbb{Q}xg2$ 23 $\mathbb{Q}xg2$ a6 24 d6 with a considerable advantage.



17 cxd5

This is an interesting juncture. White can play 17 $\mathbb{Q}xf6$!? gxf6! (17... $\mathbb{W}xf6$ 18 cxd5 $\mathbb{B}xd5$ 19 $\mathbb{W}b3$ $\mathbb{Q}d4$ 20 dxe4 $\mathbb{Q}xe4$ 21 $\mathbb{Q}xe4$ $\mathbb{B}xe4$ 22 e3!, and White quickly takes over the central files) 18 cxd5 $\mathbb{B}xd5$ 19 $\mathbb{W}a4$, but 19...b6! 20 $\mathbb{Q}xe4$ $\mathbb{B}a5$ gives adequate counterplay.

17... $\mathbb{B}xd5$ 18 $\mathbb{W}a4$ b6! 19 $\mathbb{Q}xf6$!?

Here 19 a3 with the simple idea 19... $\mathbb{B}a5$ 20 $\mathbb{B}b4$ is definitely worth trying.

19... $\mathbb{W}xf6$ 20 $\mathbb{Q}xe4$

Now 20 dxe4 $\mathbb{B}a5$ 21 $\mathbb{W}c2$ (21 $\mathbb{W}d4$!? $\mathbb{B}d8$ 22 $\mathbb{W}b2$ $\mathbb{Q}e6$) 21... $\mathbb{Q}e6$ gives Black enough play for the pawn.

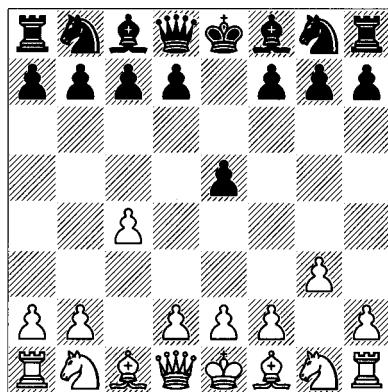
20... $\mathbb{B}a5$ 21 $\mathbb{W}c2$ $\mathbb{Q}xe4$ 22 dxe4 $\mathbb{B}e8$ 23 $\mathbb{B}fd1$ $\mathbb{W}xe4$ 1/2-1/2

A cute sequence (not forced) is 24 $\mathbb{B}d8$! $\mathbb{B}c5$! 25 $\mathbb{W}xe4$ $\mathbb{B}xc1$ + 26 $\mathbb{B}g2$ $\mathbb{B}xd8$ with a very likely draw.

You can see that Black's game in the Keres Defence depends upon some very delicate play, so the popularity of 3... $\mathbb{B}b4$ (after 1 c4 e5 2 $\mathbb{Q}c3$ $\mathbb{Q}f6$ 3 g3) is understandable.

White Plays 2 g3

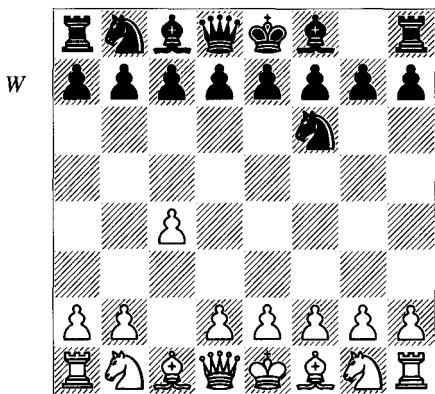
1 c4 e5 2 g3 (D)



2 $\mathbb{Q}c3$ is still the dominant move in the English Opening by a large margin. Nevertheless, over the last decade, White has increasingly played the fianchetto 2 g3 in order to avoid certain bothersome variations that can arise after 2 $\mathbb{Q}c3$. This can greatly simplify his task; for one thing, playing 2 $\mathbb{Q}c3$ means that in several variations White has to deal with the move ... $\mathbb{B}b4$,

and 2 g3 sidesteps them (I'll discuss that presently). On the other hand, 2 g3 commits White to a fianchetto and thus eliminates numerous variations which involve some combination of moves such as $\mathbb{Q}c3$, $\mathbb{Q}f3$, e3, d4, etc. Therefore, before plunging into lines stemming from 2 g3, it's worthwhile to discuss the ramifications of this choice. First, we want to see which sequences of moves after 2 g3 can lead to independent lines, and which will transpose into other English Opening variations (or even to other openings entirely). Then, what are the concrete advantages and difficulties that accompany it?

Right off, someone who plays 2 g3 should consider what he wants to do after 1 c4 $\mathbb{Q}f6$ (D) (instead of 1...e5).



Then 2 $\mathbb{Q}c3$ e5 already commits White to learning 1 c4 e5 2 $\mathbb{Q}c3$ $\mathbb{Q}f6$ variations, which is one thing he is trying to steer clear of by playing 2 g3! In that case White would have to deal with theory that is unique to both 1 c4 e5 2 g3 and 1 c4 e5 2 $\mathbb{Q}c3$ $\mathbb{Q}f6$. That's a lot to ask. White can choose 2 $\mathbb{Q}f3$, of course, but that may have nothing to do with the kinds of positions that he is aiming for.

So one question would be how 1 c4 $\mathbb{Q}f6$ 2 g3 fits in with White's plans. Unfortunately, this opens a new can of worms. For example, how does White want to cope with 1 c4 $\mathbb{Q}f6$ 2 g3 e6? Presumably 3 $\mathbb{Q}g2$ d5 or 3 $\mathbb{Q}f3$ d5 follows, when White can play 4 d4 with a Catalan, or leave his d-pawn alone and enter into some kind of Réti with b3 and $\mathbb{Q}b2$. In addition, White has to consider 1 c4 $\mathbb{Q}f6$ 2 g3 c6 and 3...d5. Or, against a King's Indian Defence (which would proceed by 1 c4 $\mathbb{Q}f6$ 2 g3 g6 3

$\mathbb{Q}g2$ $\mathbb{Q}g7$), does he want to be committed to the fianchetto variations? And so forth. The bottom line is that when White plays 1 c4 with the intention of 1...e5 2 g3, he has to consider whether to accept the transposition 1 c4 $\mathbb{Q}f6$ 2 $\mathbb{Q}c3$ e5, enter into 1 c4 $\mathbb{Q}f6$ 2 $\mathbb{Q}f3$, or be prepared for variations outside the traditional scope of the English Opening.

Having said all that, here are some concrete considerations that might go into a decision about whether to play 2 g3 after 1 c4 e5.

1 c4 e5 2 g3: Favouring White:

a) In some cases, the difference is easily seen. For example, 2 $\mathbb{Q}c3$ $\mathbb{Q}b4$ enjoys a good reputation, whereas 2 g3 $\mathbb{Q}b4$? has nothing to recommend it!

b) Similarly, with 2 g3 $\mathbb{Q}f6$ 3 $\mathbb{Q}g2$, White sidesteps 2 $\mathbb{Q}c3$ $\mathbb{Q}f6$ 3 g3 $\mathbb{Q}b4$, analysed above.

c) 2 g3 $\mathbb{Q}f6$ 3 $\mathbb{Q}g2$ d5 4 cxd5 $\mathbb{Q}xd5$ is a reversed Accelerated Fianchetto/Dragon. White has a few options apart from 5 $\mathbb{Q}c3$ (which transposes to the main line). For example, he can play 5 $\mathbb{Q}f3$!?, $\mathbb{Q}c6$ 6 0-0. If Black then continues 6... $\mathbb{Q}b6$ (not forced), White can bring his queen's knight to d2 instead of c3 by means of, for example, 7 d3 $\mathbb{Q}e7$ 8 a3 0-0 9 $\mathbb{Q}bd2$. Ultimately, this may not bring give White an advantage, but it's a different and legitimate way of playing. We'll see it below.

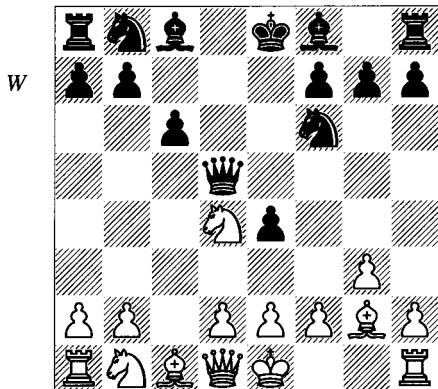
d) In some lines, there is no knight on c3 that can be attacked by ...d4. This occurs prominently in the variation 1 c4 e5 2 g3 $\mathbb{Q}f6$ 3 $\mathbb{Q}g2$ c6 4 d4 exd4 5 $\mathbb{Q}xd4$ d5 6 cxd5 cxd5 7 $\mathbb{Q}f3$ $\mathbb{Q}c6$ 8 $\mathbb{Q}a4$, as opposed to 1 c4 e5 2 $\mathbb{Q}c3$ $\mathbb{Q}f6$ 3 g3 c6 4 d4 exd4 5 $\mathbb{Q}xd4$ d5 6 cxd5 cxd5 7 $\mathbb{Q}f3$ $\mathbb{Q}c6$ 8 $\mathbb{Q}a4$ d4 (attacking the knight on c3).

1 c4 e5 2 g3: Favouring Black:

a) As we've seen in Chapter 3, the sequence 2 $\mathbb{Q}c3$ f5 allows 3 d4!. But after 2 g3, 2...f5 has fewer drawbacks for Black, and 2 g3 d6 3 $\mathbb{Q}g2$ f5 eliminates most lines in which White plays an early $\mathbb{Q}f3$ and d4. Whether this should worry White is open to debate.

b) The move-order 2 g3 c6 can present unique problems for White. In particular, 3 d4 $\mathbb{Q}b4+$ is increasingly popular, and the similar 2 g3 $\mathbb{Q}f6$ 3 $\mathbb{Q}g2$ c6 4 d4 $\mathbb{Q}b4+$ usually transposes. Obviously this strategy isn't available to Black after 2 $\mathbb{Q}c3$.

c) Furthermore, following 2 g3 c6 3 $\mathbb{Q}f3$ e4 4 $\mathbb{Q}d4$ d5 5 cxd5, Black can recapture with his queen (5... $\mathbb{Q}xd5$), as he can in the line 2 g3 $\mathbb{Q}f3$ 3 $\mathbb{Q}g2$ c6 4 $\mathbb{Q}f3$ e4 5 $\mathbb{Q}d4$ d5 6 cxd5 $\mathbb{Q}xd5$ (D).



Again, 2 $\mathbb{Q}c3$ eliminates this possibility. See below for details.

d) Another difference between 2 g3 and 2 $\mathbb{Q}c3$ is that 2 g3 $\mathbb{Q}c6$ 3 $\mathbb{Q}g2$ g6 followed by ... $\mathbb{Q}g7$ almost always gives Black a Closed English variation (reversed Closed Sicilian) of Chapter 6, which is very popular among 1...e5 players. In that case it's difficult for White to avoid 4 $\mathbb{Q}c3$ $\mathbb{Q}g7$, which is then the main line.

But if White uses the move-order 1 c4 e5 2 $\mathbb{Q}c3$ $\mathbb{Q}c6$, he has the extra possibility of 3 $\mathbb{Q}f3$, when 3... $\mathbb{Q}f6$ is a main-line Four Knights Variation (see below), whereas 3...g6 and 3...f5 can be answered by 4 d4 (or 4 e3), in both cases circumventing the Closed English.

There are a few more issues, and it may take some independent investigation to be sure that you're comfortable with 2 g3.

Gulko – Korchnoi Hastings 1988/9

1 c4 e5 2 g3 f5

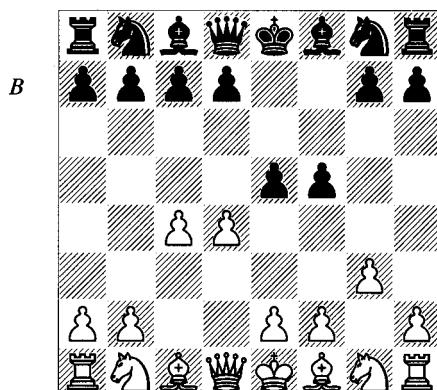
A simple attempt to grab space and control e4. Unfortunately, there's no space to cover all of the alternatives with their transpositions, most notably 2...d6 and 2... $\mathbb{Q}c6$. A few starter notes:

a) 2...d6 is ultra-flexible, and keeps open options of ...f5, ...c6 and ...g6; for example, 3 $\mathbb{Q}g2$ f5 (or 3... $\mathbb{Q}c6$) 4 d4, and now even the elastic move 4... $\mathbb{Q}e7$ is possible, when the exchange of queens is harmless.

b) 2... $\mathbb{Q}c6$, as mentioned above, virtually ensures a Closed Sicilian or other respectable line; for example, 3 $\mathbb{Q}g2$ g6 4 $\mathbb{Q}c3$ $\mathbb{Q}g7$. Here 3...f5! 4 $\mathbb{Q}c3$ $\mathbb{Q}f6$ is a tempo-down Sicilian Grand Prix Attack, when 5 e3 discourages both 5... $\mathbb{Q}c5$ because of 6 $\mathbb{Q}ge2$ and 5... $\mathbb{Q}b4$ due to 6 $\mathbb{Q}d5$.

3 $\mathbb{Q}g2$

In the previously-examined case of 2 $\mathbb{Q}c3$ f5 3 d4, Black was pretty much limited to 3...e4 and 3...exd4, both playable, but arguably leaving White with some advantage. But after 2 g3 f5 3 d4!? (D), there are new possibilities.



One is 3...d6; this is better than in the 2 $\mathbb{Q}c3$ f5 3 d4 d6 case, if only because 4 dx5 dx5 5 $\mathbb{Q}xd8+$ isn't as effective when White has spent a move on g3. Furthermore, 3...e4 4 $\mathbb{Q}c3$ $\mathbb{Q}f6$ has led to various set-ups for both sides; as always, White should consider the manoeuvre $\mathbb{Q}h3-f4$.

This brings up the simplest answer to 3 d4, namely 3... $\mathbb{Q}b4+$. Then 4 $\mathbb{Q}d2$ (4 $\mathbb{Q}c3$ exd4!?) 5 $\mathbb{Q}xd4$ $\mathbb{Q}f6$ is possible too) 4... $\mathbb{Q}xd2+$ 5 $\mathbb{Q}xd2$ d6 6 $\mathbb{Q}g2$ $\mathbb{Q}f6$ 7 $\mathbb{Q}c3$ 0-0 transposes to the game. That's hardly the whole story, of course, and it will help to compare other ...f5 lines.

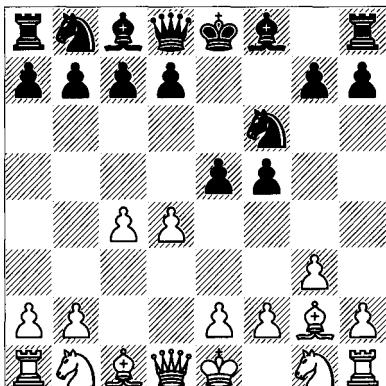
3... $\mathbb{Q}f6$ 4 d4 (D)

At this point 4 $\mathbb{Q}c3$ arrives at a position that could have come from 2 $\mathbb{Q}c3$, and both sides should be aware that 4... $\mathbb{Q}b4!$ is a fully legitimate choice, especially since 5 $\mathbb{Q}d5$ $\mathbb{Q}xd5$ 6 cxd5 doesn't attack a knight on c6.

4... $\mathbb{Q}b4+$

Black develops quickly and clears the way for ...0-0-0. 4...e4 may not be so bad; for example, 5 $\mathbb{Q}c3$ $\mathbb{Q}b4$ 6 $\mathbb{Q}g5$ 0-0-0 7 $\mathbb{Q}h3$ h6 8 $\mathbb{Q}xf6$ $\mathbb{Q}xf6$ 9 $\mathbb{Q}f4$ c6 10 h4 $\mathbb{Q}a6!?$ with the idea ... $\mathbb{Q}c7$.

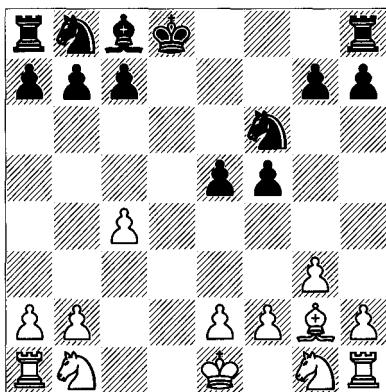
B



5 $\mathbb{Q}d2$ $\mathbb{Q}xd2+$ 6 $\mathbb{W}xd2$ $d6$ 7 $\mathbb{Q}c3$

White can also exchange queens by 7 $dxe5$ $dxe5$ 8 $\mathbb{W}xd8+$ $\mathbb{Q}xd8$ (D).

W



This type of ending, which appears in various forms over many opening lines, will vary in assessment from position to position. Here Black has an excellent pawn-structure, so the issue is whether White can upset the balance, usually with rapid development and a pawn-break. Under normal circumstances, the two tempi spent on g3 and $\mathbb{Q}g2$ aren't ideal for accomplishing this, so Black shouldn't have too many problems. A sample line is 9 $\mathbb{Q}c3$ $\mathbb{Q}e7$ 10 0-0-0 c6 11 $\mathbb{Q}f3$?? (better is 11 h3 $\mathbb{Q}e6$ 12 b3 $\mathbb{Q}bd7$ with equality) 11... $\mathbb{Q}g4$! 12 $\mathbb{M}df1$ e4 13 $\mathbb{Q}d4$ $\mathbb{Q}d8$ 14 $\mathbb{Q}c2$ $\mathbb{Q}e6$ 15 h3 $\mathbb{Q}e5$ 16 b3 $\mathbb{Q}bd7$ with the more comfortable position for Black.

7...0-0 8 e3 c6 9 f3!!

White wants to support his centre and discourage ...e4, but this is awfully slow. Play would be level after 9 $\mathbb{M}d1$ $\mathbb{W}e7$ 10 $dxe5$ $dxe5$ 11 $\mathbb{W}d6$ $\mathbb{W}xd6$ 12 $\mathbb{M}xd6$ $\mathbb{Q}bd7$.

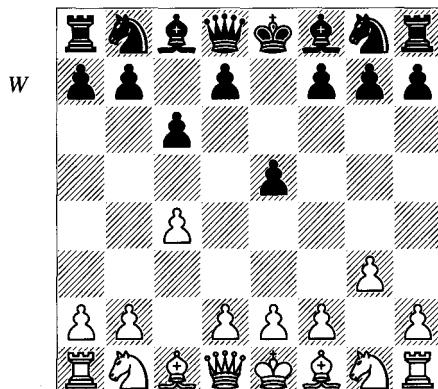
9... $\mathbb{Q}e6$ 10 d5 cxd5 11 cxd5 $\mathbb{Q}d7$! 12 $\mathbb{Q}ge2$ a5 13 0-0 $\mathbb{Q}a6$ 14 f4

At this point, apart from 14...e4, either 14... $\mathbb{W}e7$ or even 14... $\mathbb{M}e8$ 15 $fxe5$ $\mathbb{M}xe5$! would leave Black in excellent shape.

It's difficult for White to demonstrate an advantage following 2 g3 f5. On the other hand, there arise plenty of interesting positions which will test the two players' skills.

Markowski – Krasenkov
Polish Team Ch, Zakopane 2000

1 c4 e5 2 g3 c6 (D)



W

I'm going to emphasize this move because it leads to basic types of positions, including those with the isolated queen's pawn and with an advanced centre.

To begin with, Black threatens simply 3...d5. Again, we have the odd case in which Black is playing a tempo down compared with 1 e4 c5 2 c3, and one would think that White could take advantage of this. But the g3 move can be a mixed blessing for White, as seen in this and the next games. We'll leave some questions of move-order until later, specifically of the choice between 2...c6 and 2... $\mathbb{Q}f6$ 3 $\mathbb{Q}g2$ c6, which very often transpose.

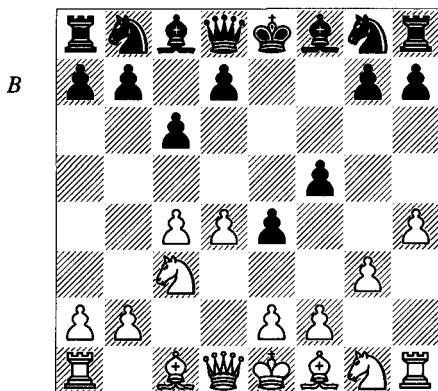
3 d4

Following 3 $\mathbb{Q}g2$ d5 4 cxd5 cxd5 5 d4, both 5...e4 and 5...exd4 6 $\mathbb{Q}f3$ $\mathbb{Q}b4+$ 7 $\mathbb{Q}d2$ $\mathbb{Q}c5$ are satisfactory answers if one knows the theory. This might not fit Black's designs, however, so he sometimes chooses 3... $\mathbb{Q}f6$, when 4 $\mathbb{Q}c3$ d5! returns to the Keres Defence section and 4 d4 $\mathbb{Q}b4+$ is discussed in later games.

3...exd4

It's always hard to know when Black can play the cramping advance ...e4. If White has played both g3 and ♘g2, Black can often protect e4 and make the bishop on g2 look ineffective. Here White has made only one of those moves, so he has a good shot at gaining the advantage after 3...e4 4 ♘c3:

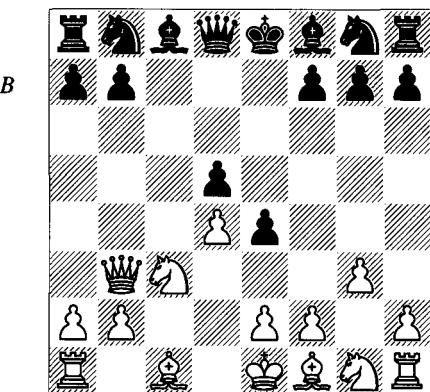
a) Suba-Timman, Thessaloniki Olympiad 1984 went 4...f5!? 5 h4!?(D).



This flexible flank advance supports ♘g5 and anticipates that after a knight gets to f4, it will be difficult to drive it away by ...g5. Black continued 5...♘f6 (perhaps 5...♞a6 6 ♘h3 ♘c7 should be tried) 6 ♘g5 h6 7 ♘xf6 ♜xf6 8 e3 (now White has got rid of his bad bishop and tries to establish a favourable French Defence) 8...g6 9 ♘ge2 d6 10 ♘f4 ♘a6 (White has the better minor pieces, but he needs a plan) 11 g4! (a marvellous positional blow; Black can't hold the kingside together) 11...♝g8 (11...♞c7 12 h5 g5 13 ♘g6 ♜g8 14 ♜b3! prevents Black from developing normally) 12 ♜b3 ♘c7 13 gxf5!? (both 13 d5 c5 14 0-0-0 and 13 h5 g5 14 ♘g6 are very good; Black's opening has been a disaster) 13...gxf5 14 ♘e2 ♜b8 15 ♜a4 a6 16 0-0-0 ♘d7 17 c5! d5, and easiest now was 18 ♘h5+ ♘d8 19 ♜a5 and ♜hg1, with a winning game.

b) 4...d5 is a critical move. At first it looks weak because of 5 cxd5 cxd5 6 ♜b3 (D).

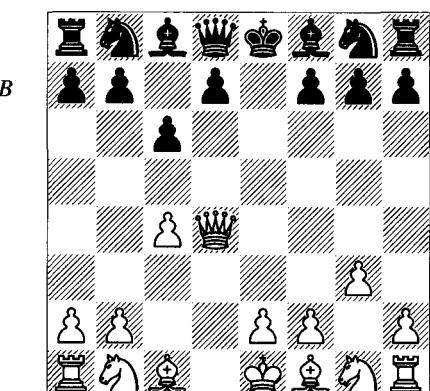
Then 6...♘f6? allows 7 ♘g5 and 6...♘e7 7 ♘f4 a6 comes up short after 8 f3 exf3 9 ♘xf3 ♘bc6 10 e4! ♘e6, Korchnoi-Bacrot, Match (game 4), Albert 1997, when I think 11 ♘g5! is strong; for example, 11...♘xd4 12 ♜xb7 ♘c2+ 13 ♘f2 ♜xa1 14 ♘b5!.



But that's not the end of the story, because Black has 6...♘c6!, when the most critical line is 7 ♜xd5! ♜xd5 8 ♘xd5 ♘xd4 9 ♘c7+ (9 ♘g5 is equally complex but apparently all right for Black when the dust clears) 9...♚d8 10 ♘xa8 ♘c2+ 11 ♘d1 ♘xa1; here several games have been played without success for White, the simplest continuation being 12 b3 b6 13 ♘b2 ♘b7 14 ♘xa1 (14 ♘xb6 ♘xb3) 14...♜xa8 with equality.

So perhaps 4...d5 is a satisfactory move after all. Another promising sign is that the obvious 5 ♘h3 is relatively harmless after the surprising 5...dxc4! 6 ♘xe4 ♘b4+. Lines in which White plays e3 should be compared with the Advance French. There the 'extra' move g3 is not always useful.

4 ♜xd4 (D)



4...d5

4...♘f6 5 ♘g2 ♘a6!? is another reasonable course for Black, combining the ideas of ...♘b4 with quick development by ...♘c5. For example,

6 $\mathbb{Q}f3$ $\mathbb{Q}c5$ 7 $\mathbb{W}e5+$ $\mathbb{W}e7$ 8 $\mathbb{W}xe7+$ $\mathbb{W}xe7$. White can try to claim a slight edge because of his potential grip on d5 and Black's knight on a6, but it's hard to believe that's worth much; for example, 9 $\mathbb{Q}c3$ d5 10 cxd5 $\mathbb{Q}b4$ 11 0-0 $\mathbb{Q}bxd5$. Of course, there's much more to be said about 5... $\mathbb{Q}a6$, and White needn't despair of finding interesting ways to try for advantage.

5 $\mathbb{Q}g2$

Without descending too far into the morass of move-order issues, White often plays 5 $\mathbb{Q}f3$ here, although that permits 5...dxc4 with fair chances for equality.

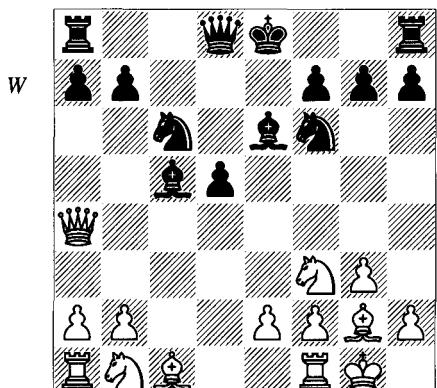
5... $\mathbb{Q}e6$

Black could play 5...dxc4, but decides to go in another direction and force White's hand.

6 cxd5 cxd5 7 $\mathbb{Q}f3$ $\mathbb{Q}c6$ 8 $\mathbb{W}a4$ $\mathbb{Q}c5!$

There are other ways for Black to set up, of course. The text-move is the most forceful, and it covers d4.

9 0-0 $\mathbb{Q}f6$ (D)



This position is similar to one that occurs in the Keres Defence (2 $\mathbb{Q}c3$ $\mathbb{Q}f6$ 3 g3 c6), but there White's knight is already committed to c3.

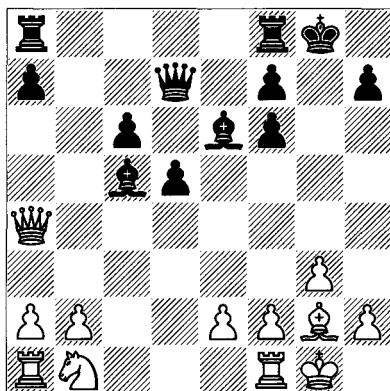
10 $\mathbb{Q}e5?$

You can argue the $\mathbb{Q}e5$ -d3 is the same as the common idea $\mathbb{Q}e1$ -d3, but with extra threats. 10 $\mathbb{Q}g5$ is the most commonly played move, when 10...h6 11 $\mathbb{Q}xf6$ $\mathbb{W}xf6$ is seen in the next game.

10... $\mathbb{R}c8$

10...0-0! is critical; for example, 11 $\mathbb{Q}xc6$ $\mathbb{W}d7$! 12 $\mathbb{Q}g5$ bxc6 (instead, Markowski-Gelfand, Polanica Zdroj 2000 went 12... $\mathbb{W}xc6$ 13 $\mathbb{W}xc6$ bxc6 14 $\mathbb{Q}xf6$ $\mathbb{G}xf6$, and the bishops

counterbalanced White's pressure against the weak black pawns) 13 $\mathbb{Q}xf6$!? $\mathbb{G}xf6$ (D).



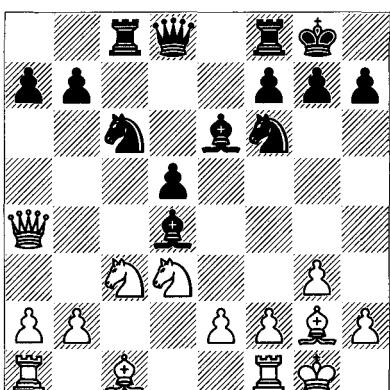
White has ceded the bishop-pair, and to some extent the dark squares, to create doubled, isolated pawns in his opponent's camp. The difficulty is that those pawns aren't yet subject to effective attack, and they cover some nice squares; Black will probably follow up with ... $\mathbb{R}ab8$ and ... $\mathbb{R}fc8$. In the meantime, White manoeuvres to occupy c5 and/or play e4. This is unclear.

11 $\mathbb{Q}c3$ 0-0 12 $\mathbb{Q}d3!$

In positions with an isolated d-pawn, a knight on d3 is often well-placed.

12... $\mathbb{Q}d4$!? (D)

Putting the bishop on this square is unusual in such a position. The alternative 12... $\mathbb{Q}e7$, while a bit passive, is also playable. Then 13 $\mathbb{R}d1$ d4 14 $\mathbb{Q}f4$ $\mathbb{Q}d7$ gives White nothing special.



13 $\mathbb{Q}g5$ $\mathbb{Q}xc3$! 14 bxc3 h6 15 $\mathbb{Q}e3$!

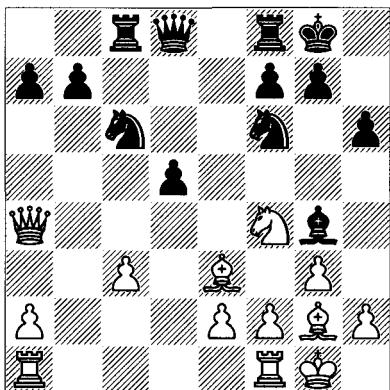
15 $\mathbb{Q}xf6$ $\mathbb{W}xf6$ 16 $\mathbb{B}ac1$ $\mathbb{B}fd8$ is solid and equal. So White blockades d4.

15... $\mathbb{Q}g4!$?

15... $\mathbb{E}e8$ and 15... $b6$ are safer, in the latter case intending ... $\mathbb{W}e7$ and ... $\mathbb{B}fd8$.

16 $\mathbb{Q}f4!?$ (D)

The stodgy 16 $\mathbb{B}f1$ would retain mutual chances; White might even claim some edge based upon the two bishops.



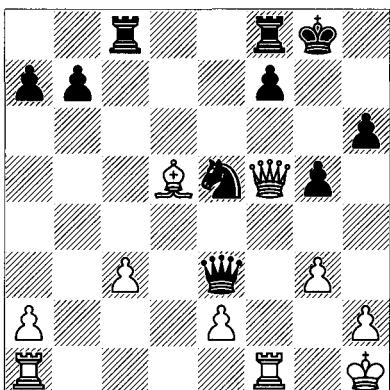
16...g5! 17 $\mathbb{Q}xd5$ $\mathbb{Q}xd5$ 18 $\mathbb{W}xg4!$

The alternative 18 $\mathbb{Q}xd5$ $\mathbb{W}xe2$ 19 $\mathbb{Q}xc6$ $\mathbb{B}xc6$ should lead to equality, although White has to be careful about the light squares around his king.

18... $\mathbb{Q}xe3$ 19 $fxe3$ $\mathbb{W}e7$

At first, White's position looks a wreck, but he can maintain the balance because of Black's weakened kingside.

20 $\mathbb{Q}d5!$ $\mathbb{W}xe3+$ 21 $\mathbb{Q}h1$ $\mathbb{Q}e5$ 22 $\mathbb{W}f5$ (D)



At this point, Black played 22... $\mathbb{W}xc3?!$, when 23 $\mathbb{W}f6!$ would have been annoying for

him, because 23... $\mathbb{H}c5$ 24 $\mathbb{H}ad1$ threatens 25 $\mathbb{W}xh6$. But 22... $\mathbb{H}xc3$ is satisfactory; for example, 23 $\mathbb{Q}e4$ (23 $\mathbb{W}f6$ $\mathbb{H}c5!$ with the idea 24 $\mathbb{H}ad1??$ $\mathbb{H}xd5$ 25 $\mathbb{H}xd5$ $\mathbb{W}e4+)$ 23... $\mathbb{Q}g6$ 24 $\mathbb{Q}d5$ $\mathbb{Q}e5$ 25 $\mathbb{Q}e4$, etc.

Seirawan – I. Sokolov

Wijk aan Zee 1995

1 c4 e5 2 g3 c6 3 $\mathbb{Q}g2$ $\mathbb{Q}f6$ 4 d4 exd4 5 $\mathbb{W}xd4$ d5 6 cxd5 cxd5 7 $\mathbb{Q}f3$ $\mathbb{Q}c6$ 8 $\mathbb{W}a4$

Sometimes 8 $\mathbb{W}d1$ is played, but that is understandably harmless, because White's rooks can't quickly come to the d-file.

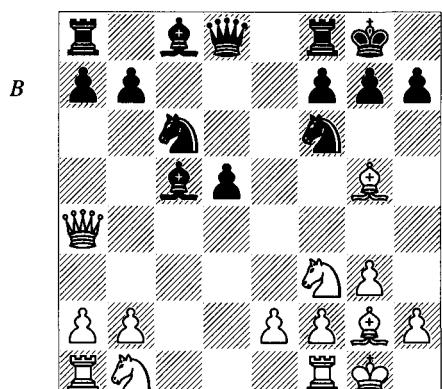
8... $\mathbb{Q}c5$

The most active square for Black's bishop. 8... $\mathbb{Q}e7$ 9 0-0-0-0 allows 10 $\mathbb{Q}e3$, controlling the dark squares d4 and c5 while preventing ... $\mathbb{W}b6$. This has been relatively successful. Nevertheless, 10... $\mathbb{Q}g4$ 11 $\mathbb{Q}d4$ $\mathbb{Q}xd4!$ 12 $\mathbb{Q}xd4$ $\mathbb{Q}c5!$ with the ideas of ... $\mathbb{W}b6$ and ... $\mathbb{W}f6$ establishes a dynamic equality.

9 0-0 0-0

Notice that in this move-order Black has managed to do without ... $\mathbb{Q}e6$.

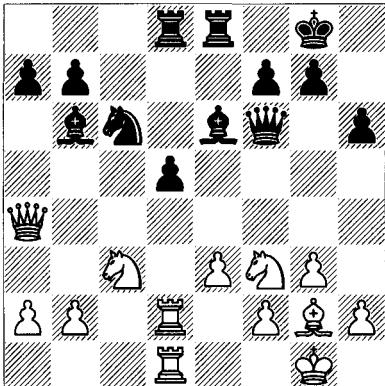
10 $\mathbb{Q}g5$ (D)



10...h6

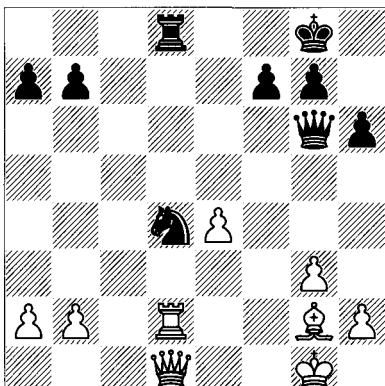
After 10... $\mathbb{E}e8$ 11 $e3?!$, the pretty game Larsen-Chandler, London 1986 illustrates some major themes in isolated queen's pawn positions. Strange to say, White's restraining move $e3$ is often ineffective, because it weakens not only the kingside light squares, but also the key interior square d3. The game continued 11...h6 12 $\mathbb{Q}xf6$ $\mathbb{W}xf6$ 13 $\mathbb{Q}c3$ $\mathbb{Q}e6$ 14 $\mathbb{H}ad1$ $\mathbb{H}ad8$ 15 $\mathbb{Q}d2$ $\mathbb{Q}b6$ 16 $\mathbb{H}fd1$ (D).

B



White's moves are as logical as can be and his position looks preferable. For one thing, it's hard to defend the d-pawn. But remember those light squares? Black has just enough time for the pawn sacrifice 16...d4! 17 $\mathbb{Q}xd4$?! (17 exd4 $\mathbb{Q}g4$! 18 $\mathbb{R}d3$ introduces a position in which White lacks useful moves but Black also has difficulty making progress; a beautiful line is 18... $\mathbb{Q}xd4$ 19 $\mathbb{R}xd4$ $\mathbb{Q}xd4$ 20 $\mathbb{Q}d5!$ $\mathbb{W}xf3$!! 21 $\mathbb{Q}xf3$ $\mathbb{Q}xf3$ 22 $\mathbb{W}xd4!$ $\mathbb{R}xd5$ 23 $\mathbb{W}xd5$ $\mathbb{Q}xd5$ 24 $\mathbb{R}xd5$ with a drawn ending) 17... $\mathbb{Q}xd4$ 18 exd4 $\mathbb{Q}g4$ 19 $\mathbb{Q}e4$ $\mathbb{W}g6$ 20 f3 $\mathbb{R}xe4$ 21 fxe4?! (21 fxg4! $\mathbb{Q}xg4$ 22 $\mathbb{Q}xc6$! seems better, although after 22...bxcc6 23 $\mathbb{W}xa7$ h5 Black has a strong attack for the pawn) 21... $\mathbb{Q}xd1$ 22 $\mathbb{W}xd1$ $\mathbb{Q}xd4$ (D).

W



See how the picture has transformed: White has a weak isolated pawn, a bad bishop, and a vulnerable kingside, whereas Black has a knight ensconced on the forward outpost d4. Now 23 $\mathbb{R}xd4$? loses to 23... $\mathbb{W}b6$. For all that, White does have a useful pin on the d-file to work

with. The game continued 23 $\mathbb{Q}h1$ $\mathbb{W}f6$ 24 e5! (White solves two of his problems in one shot! But his kingside is still airy) 24... $\mathbb{W}xe5$ 25 $\mathbb{Q}xb7$ $\mathbb{R}d6$ 26 $\mathbb{Q}g2$ h5! 27 b4 h4 28 gxh4 $\mathbb{W}f4$ (threatening 29... $\mathbb{Q}f3$!, hitting d2 and h2) 29 $\mathbb{R}d3$ $\mathbb{W}xh4$, and Black stood better.

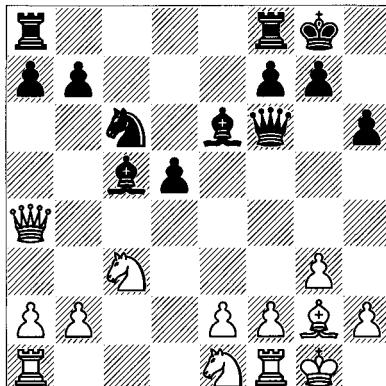
Going all the way back to 10... $\mathbb{W}e8$, White should probably reject 11 e3 and take a chance with the natural 11 $\mathbb{Q}c3$!. Then the rook on e8 isn't ideally placed (in comparison with the main lines) unless Black can make something tactical like 11...d4 12 $\mathbb{R}ad1$ $\mathbb{Q}d7$ work. But since 13 $\mathbb{W}c4$! followed by $\mathbb{Q}xf6$ apparently keeps the advantage, the line as a whole seems to favour White.

Let's return to 10...h6.

11 $\mathbb{Q}xf6$ $\mathbb{W}xf6$ 12 $\mathbb{Q}c3$ $\mathbb{Q}e6$ 13 $\mathbb{Q}e1$! (D)

This retreat is White's most ambitious move: he frees his g2-bishop and heads for the excellent d3-square, whose virtues were described in the last game. The innocuous 13 e4 dxex4 14 $\mathbb{Q}xe4$ $\mathbb{W}e7$ 15 $\mathbb{Q}xc5$ $\mathbb{W}xc5$ was Pirc-Keres, Moscow 1956.

B



13... $\mathbb{R}ad8$

Black has the 'which rook?' problem. In fact, 13... $\mathbb{R}fd8$! looks more accurate, because the a8-rook helps defend the queenside. Black's method of counterplay is instructive; for example, 14 $\mathbb{Q}d3$ $\mathbb{Q}b6$!? (or 14... $\mathbb{Q}d4$ 15 $\mathbb{R}ac1$ a6 16 $\mathbb{Q}f4$ $\mathbb{W}e5$) 15 $\mathbb{Q}f4$ d4 16 $\mathbb{Q}cd5$ $\mathbb{Q}xd5$ 17 $\mathbb{Q}xd5$ $\mathbb{W}e5$ 18 $\mathbb{W}b5$ d3! (without this kind of dynamic move, White's better pieces and pawn-structure give him a pull) 19 $\mathbb{W}xd3$ $\mathbb{Q}b4$! 20 $\mathbb{W}c3$ $\mathbb{R}xd5$ 21 $\mathbb{W}xb4$ $\mathbb{Q}b5$ 22 $\mathbb{W}e4$ $\mathbb{W}xe4$ 23 $\mathbb{Q}xe4$ $\mathbb{R}xb2$ with a draw, the more so because of 24 $\mathbb{Q}xf2$!.

14 ♜d3 ♜d4 15 ♜ac1 ♜fe8 16 ♜f4 ♜e5 17 e3

17 ♜fd1 keeps White's positional advantages alive, modest as they may be. In the 13...♜fd8 line above, this would be met by 17...b5!.

17...♜xc3 18 bxc3

White tries to set up a d4 blockade, on the grounds that Black's weakness on d5 outweighs his on c3. This is a standard idea when you have two bishops. Note that 18 ♜xc3 d4! again activates every black piece.

18...♝e7 19 ♜fd1 ♜ed7 20 ♜b5 a6 21 ♜c5 ♜d6 22 ♜xd6 ♜xd6 23 c4!?

There's no way to make progress, so White liquidates to a draw.

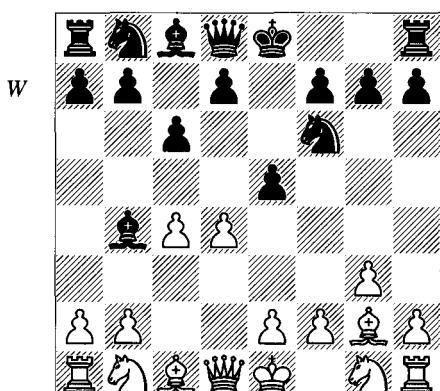
23...dxcc4 24 ♜xd6 ♜xd6 25 ♜xe6 fxe6 26 ♜xc4 ♜d1+ 27 ♜f1 ♜f7 28 ♜g2 ♜d2 29 a4 ♜f6 ½-½

Matamoros – Belkhodja Calvia Olympiad 2004

1 c4 e5 2 g3 ♜f6

The move-order 2...c6 3 d4 ♜b4+ 4 ♜d2 ♜xd2+ 5 ♜xd2 d6 6 ♜g2 or 6 ♜c3 will transpose after 6...♜f6.

3 ♜g2 c6 4 d4 ♜b4+ (D)

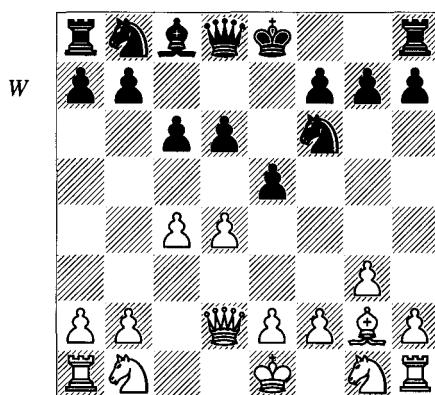


This check has been a deterrent to the use of 2 g3 in conjunction with d4.

5 ♜d2

5 ♜c3!? might be answered aggressively by 5...♝a5!? 6 dx5 ♜xc3+ 7 bxc3 ♜xc3+ 8 ♜d2 ♜xe5 9 ♜f3 ♜e7 10 ♜f4 d5 and, while White's pieces are well-placed, Black remains a pawn up.

5...♜xd2+ 6 ♜xd2 d6 (D)



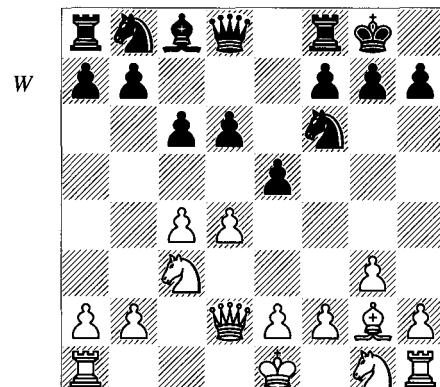
Let's reflect for a moment upon what Black has accomplished. Simply put, he has got rid of his f8-bishop and then placed his central pawns on dark squares, leaving the 'good' c8-bishop on the board. The pawn on e5 secures a foothold in the centre, and Black retains the option of playing ...exd4, ...d5, or ...e4.

In return, White has his own healthy share of the centre. His bishop on g2 is also 'good', assuming that he plays e3. Or, if White chooses e4 instead, he gains the traditional space advantage conferred by pawns on e4 and d4 versus e5 and d6 (aided by the pawn on c4). Finally, Black has the only weak central point, that is, d6.

7 ♜c3

White can try to anticipate the coming attack on his c-pawn by playing 7 e3 first. Then 7...♜e6 8 b3 exd4 9 exd4 d5 10 c5!? 0-0 11 ♜c3 is Rotshtein-Rabiega, Graz 2004. Here Black can play 11...b6! in view of 12 cxb6 axb6 with open lines and easy play.

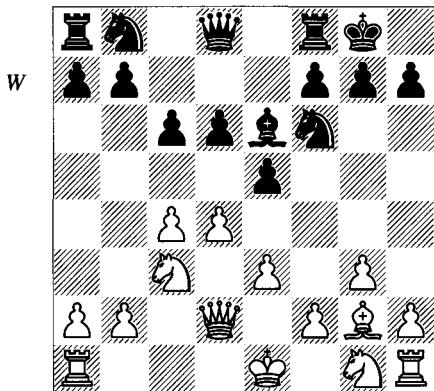
7...0-0 (D)



8 e3

8 e4 brings the game into channels resembling the King's Indian Defence; for example, 8... $\mathbb{Q}bd7$ 9 $\mathbb{Q}ge2$ (M.Gurevich gives 9 $\mathbb{Q}f3$ a5 10 0-0 a4! 11 $\mathbb{B}ab1$ $\mathbb{W}a5$ 12 $\mathbb{B}fd1$ $\mathbb{W}e8$ with double-edged play), and now 9...a6 10 0-0 b5! is Black's standard plan, with equality.

8... $\mathbb{Q}e6$ (D)

**9 b3**

9 d5 is a natural-looking move, but it cuts off White's own bishop after 9...cxd5 10 cxd5. The game Granda-Rohl, Calvia Olympiad 2004 is a good example: 10... $\mathbb{Q}d7$ (or 10... $\mathbb{Q}f5$ 11 e4 $\mathbb{Q}d7$, Minasian-Sargissian, Armenian Ch, Erevan 2003) 11 b4!? (White's point is to avoid 11 $\mathbb{Q}ge2$ a5! 12 0-0 $\mathbb{Q}a6$ with the idea ...b5) 11... $\mathbb{Q}a6$ 12 $\mathbb{B}b1$ $\mathbb{R}c8$ 13 $\mathbb{Q}ge2$. The only problem is that now White has a new weakness which Black occupies immediately: 13... $\mathbb{R}c4$!. These are all familiar ideas from the King's Indian Defence. The whole idea of d5 turns out to be risky for White in this situation, since he restricts his own bishop on g2 and is unprepared for Black's queenside expansion.

9...exd4 10 $\mathbb{W}xd4$

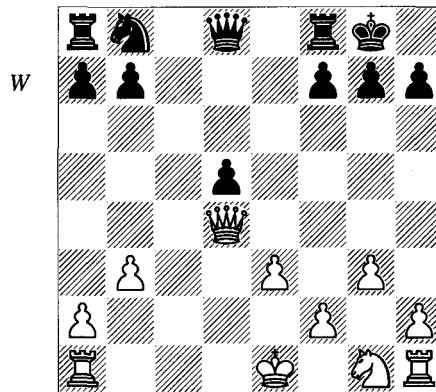
After 10 exd4 d5 Black achieves immediate equality.

10...d5 11 cxd5 $\mathbb{Q}xd5$

Probably 11... $\mathbb{Q}xd5$ also suffices to equalize. But after 11...cxd5?! 12 $\mathbb{Q}ge2$ $\mathbb{Q}c6$ 13 $\mathbb{W}d2$! $\mathbb{W}b6$ (13... $\mathbb{W}a5$?) 14 0-0 $\mathbb{B}fd8$ 15 $\mathbb{B}fd1$ $\mathbb{R}ac8$ 16 $\mathbb{W}b2$!, Black has failed to break down White's blockade.

12 $\mathbb{Q}ge2$

Or 12 $\mathbb{Q}xd5$ $\mathbb{Q}xd5$ 13 $\mathbb{Q}xd5$ (or 13 e4 $\mathbb{Q}e6$ 14 $\mathbb{Q}f3$ $\mathbb{W}a5+$ 15 $\mathbb{W}d2$ $\mathbb{W}a6$!) 13...cxd5 (D).



This standard position has occurred repeatedly in practice. White's greater control over d4 is balanced by his weak kingside light squares; for example, 14 $\mathbb{Q}f3$ $\mathbb{Q}c6$ 15 $\mathbb{W}c3$ $\mathbb{W}e7$ 16 0-0 $\mathbb{R}ac8$ (or 16... $\mathbb{W}e4$).

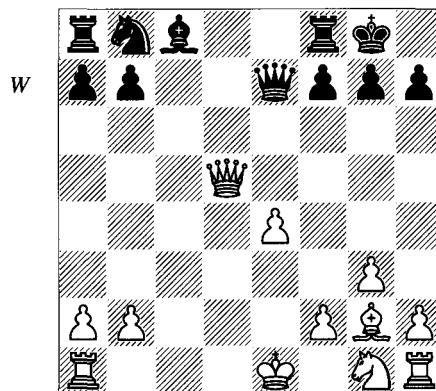
12... $\mathbb{W}a5$ 13 $\mathbb{W}a4$ $\mathbb{W}xa4$ 14 $\mathbb{Q}xa4$ $\mathbb{Q}a6$

14... $\mathbb{Q}d7$ also looks satisfactory. Generally speaking, the variation with 4... $\mathbb{Q}b4+$ yields equality.

Lehtinen – McShane
Rilton Cup, Stockholm 2002/3

1 c4 e5 2 g3 c6 3 d4 $\mathbb{Q}b4+$ 4 $\mathbb{Q}d2$ $\mathbb{Q}xd2+$ 5 $\mathbb{W}xd2$ d6 6 $\mathbb{Q}g2$ $\mathbb{W}e7$ 7 $\mathbb{Q}c3$ $\mathbb{Q}f6$ 8 e3

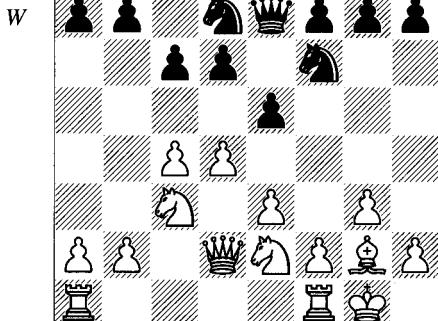
8 e4 gives Black the choice of playing normally by 8...0-0 and 9... $\mathbb{Q}bd7$, or essaying upon the gambit 8...d5!?, 9 cxd5 (9 dx5 $\mathbb{Q}xe4$ 10 $\mathbb{Q}xe4$ dx4 11 $\mathbb{W}d6$ $\mathbb{Q}d7$ is equal) 9...exd4!?, 10 $\mathbb{W}xd4$ cxd5 11 $\mathbb{Q}xd5$ $\mathbb{Q}xd5$ 12 $\mathbb{W}xd5$ 0-0 (D).



You will see quite a few positions like this in 1 c4 and 1 d4 openings. White isn't that badly

developed, but he hasn't brought his king to safety and is subject to various time-winning moves because of his exposed queen. This gives Black some compensation for a pawn, but not necessarily enough. Davies-Khenkin, Tel Aviv 1992 continued 13 $\mathbb{Q}e2$ $\mathbb{Q}d8$ 14 $\mathbb{B}b3$ $\mathbb{Q}e6$ 15 $\mathbb{Q}e3??$ (it's tough to pick a square; probably 15 $\mathbb{Q}c3!$ is best, preventing ... $\mathbb{B}b4+$; then Black could seek compensation by 15... $\mathbb{B}c8$ 16 $\mathbb{Q}a3!!?$ $\mathbb{Q}xa3$, with near equality, but White's kingside majority gains in influence, and in general doubled a-pawns are not a major factor until a position becomes greatly simplified) 15... $\mathbb{B}b4+$ 16 $\mathbb{Q}c3$ $\mathbb{Q}c6$ 17 0-0 $\mathbb{Q}d2!$ 18 $\mathbb{Q}xb4$ $\mathbb{Q}xb4$ 19 $\mathbb{Q}c3$ $\mathbb{Q}xb2$, recovering his material.

8... $\mathbb{Q}bd7$ 9 $\mathbb{Q}ge2$ 0-0 10 0-0 $\mathbb{Q}e8$ (D)



This is one of Black's basic set-ups.

11 h3

A useful move: White denies Black the use of the g4-square, which is particularly important if White chooses to advance by f4.

11...Qf8

A strategy of provocation. The move 11...h6 suggests itself for two reasons:

a) If Black plays ...e4 soon, White's move g4 is a natural response, both preparing $\mathbb{Q}g3$ and trying to drive the knight on f6 away with g5. In that case, ...h6 will have given Black an extra move to shore up his centre.

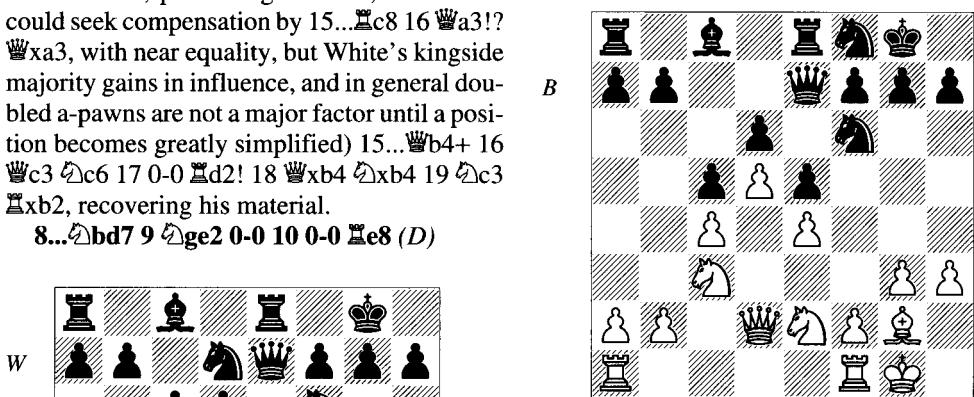
b) As will become clear, ...h6 gives Black's knight an important retreat-square on h7.

12 e4!?

White captures the centre and grabs space, incidentally preventing ...e4. These are real accomplishments. Note, however, that the advance e4 is not without drawbacks: White has

no dark-squared bishop, and this exposes points such as d4 which that bishop might have defended.

Instead, 12 d5 is natural, denying Black's knight its way back to c5 via e6. Then 12...c5 13 e4 (D) leads to a normal-looking King's Indian/Old Indian position.



White probably has some advantage; he can attempt to expand on either wing following, say, $\mathbb{Q}c1-d3$. For his part, Black has the standard Old Indian idea of playing ...h5-h4 in conjunction with a knight on g6; if in turn White plays h4, he will only achieve a later f4 at the cost of weakening g4 and h4. On the queenside, ...a6, ... $\mathbb{B}b8$ and ... $\mathbb{Q}d7$ can at least aim for ...b5. In general, however, his most practical goal will be to paralyse activity on both wings.

12...a6

The minute White's g2-bishop is cut off from c6, attack on the centre by ...b5 becomes a plan.

13 a4!?

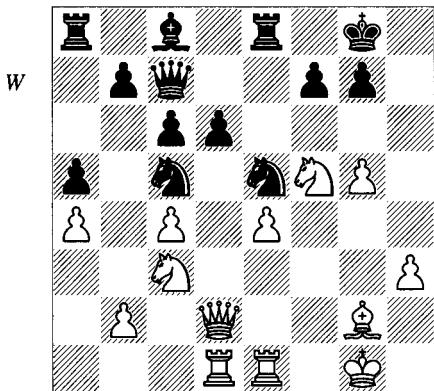
Not a bad move, although it ends up haunting White. 13 f4 immediately would discourage 13...b5?! (13...h5!? or 13... $\mathbb{Q}g6$ is better) due to 14 c5!; for example, 14...exd4! 15 $\mathbb{Q}xd4$ $\mathbb{Q}xc5$ 16 $\mathbb{Q}xc6$ $\mathbb{Q}c7$ 17 e5 $\mathbb{Q}b7$ 18 $\mathbb{Q}d6$!.

13...a5 14 f4

This is eventually necessary to make progress, but it might have been preceded by bringing a rook to the centre and getting the king off g1. 14 d5 is still playable, when Black has the clever move 14... $\mathbb{Q}d7$! 15 $\mathbb{Q}xc6$! $\mathbb{Q}xc6$ 16 $\mathbb{Q}fd1$ $\mathbb{Q}c5$!, with the idea 17 $\mathbb{Q}xd6$ $\mathbb{Q}a6$. Then 18 $\mathbb{Q}xc6$ $\mathbb{Q}xc4$ 19 $\mathbb{Q}d5$ $\mathbb{Q}f8$! 20 $\mathbb{Q}xf6+$ $\mathbb{Q}xf6$ makes matters worse because of the threat of 21... $\mathbb{Q}a6$ 22 $\mathbb{Q}c7$ $\mathbb{Q}c8$, trapping the queen.

14... $\mathbb{Q}e6$!?

Black sneaks in one more useful move before capturing. The natural way to play this position is 15...exd4 16 $\mathbb{Q}xd4$ $\mathbb{Q}c5$ 17 $\mathbb{Q}fe1$ $\mathbb{W}c7$ 18 $g4$ $h6$ with ideas such as ... $\mathbb{Q}d7$, ... $\mathbb{Q}ad8$ and ... $\mathbb{W}b6-b4$. Then 19 $g5!$ $hxg5$ 20 $fxg5$ $\mathbb{Q}fd7$! 21 $\mathbb{Q}f5$ $\mathbb{Q}e5$ (*D*) gives Black valuable outposts on c5 and e5 in return for his pawn.



For example, 22 $\mathbb{Q}xd6$ (22 $\mathbb{W}xd6$? $\mathbb{W}xd6$ 23 $\mathbb{Q}xd6$ $\mathbb{Q}d8$ 24 $\mathbb{Q}f5$ $\mathbb{Q}e6$!) 22... $\mathbb{Q}e6$ 23 $\mathbb{Q}f5$ can be answered by 23... $\mathbb{Q}d7$! or 23... $\mathbb{Q}e8$ 24 $\mathbb{Q}d6$ $\mathbb{Q}e6$, etc.

16 $\mathbb{Q}h2$ $exd4$ 17 $\mathbb{Q}xd4$ $\mathbb{Q}c5$ 18 $\mathbb{Q}fe1$ $\mathbb{W}c7$

The game is dynamically balanced, which can fairly be said about the opening as a whole. It demonstrates that even after the ‘boring’ 3... $\mathbb{Q}b4+$ (or 2... $\mathbb{Q}f6$ 3 $\mathbb{Q}g2$ c6 4 d4 $\mathbb{Q}b4+$), fascinating battles can arise, in this case with multitudinous positional and tactical themes.

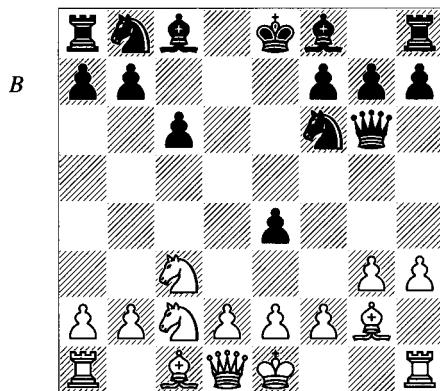
White Plays $\mathbb{Q}f3$

Larsen – Korchnoi
Leningrad Interzonal 1973

1 c4 e5 2 g3 c6

A move-order note: if Black wants to make sure that White is committed to $\mathbb{Q}g2$ (thus reducing control of d3), he might play 2... $\mathbb{Q}f6$ 3 $\mathbb{Q}g2$ c6. Then 4 d4 $\mathbb{Q}b4+$ 5 $\mathbb{Q}d2$ $\mathbb{Q}xd2+$ 6 $\mathbb{W}xd2$ d6 transposes to the previous section, and 4 $\mathbb{Q}f3$ e4 5 $\mathbb{Q}d4$ d5 6 cxd5 $\mathbb{W}xd5$ introduces a position differing somewhat from our main line; for example, 7 $\mathbb{Q}c2$ $\mathbb{W}h5$ 8 h3 $\mathbb{W}g6$ 9 $\mathbb{Q}c3$ (*D*).

Then Black has two attractive moves:



a) 9... $\mathbb{Q}c5$ with the elementary idea 10 0-0? (10 d4 exd3 11 $\mathbb{W}xd3$ $\mathbb{W}xd3$ 12 exd3 $\mathbb{Q}e6$; 10 b4! $\mathbb{Q}b6$ 11 a4 looks best) 10... $\mathbb{Q}xh3$ 11 $\mathbb{Q}xh3??$ $\mathbb{W}xg3+$ 12 $\mathbb{Q}g2$ $\mathbb{Q}g4$.

b) 9... $\mathbb{Q}a6$! 10 d3 exd3 11 $\mathbb{W}xd3$ $\mathbb{W}xd3$ 12 exd3 $\mathbb{Q}b4$ 13 $\mathbb{Q}xb4$ $\mathbb{Q}xb4$ and White’s d-pawn has to be defended.

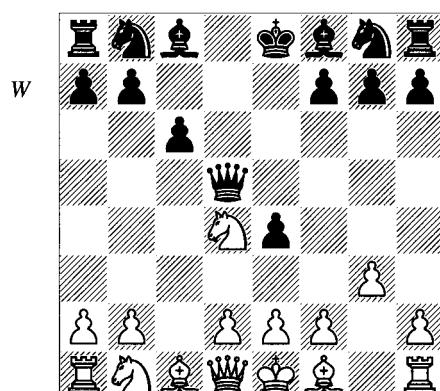
The only issue Black runs into using this move-order is that 2... $\mathbb{Q}f6$ 3 $\mathbb{Q}c3$ c6 4 $\mathbb{Q}f3$ is the Keres System, which might not be to Black’s taste. In that case, he could also learn to play 3... $\mathbb{Q}b4$.

3 $\mathbb{Q}f3$

The idea is to lure Black’s e-pawn forward and then attack his centre.

3...e4 4 $\mathbb{Q}d4$ d5 5 cxd5 $\mathbb{W}xd5$ (*D*)

This recapture is a problem for White, who is presumably happy to meet 5...cxd5 with a standard plan consisting of d3, $\mathbb{Q}c3$ and $\mathbb{Q}g2$, with an attack on Black’s centre.



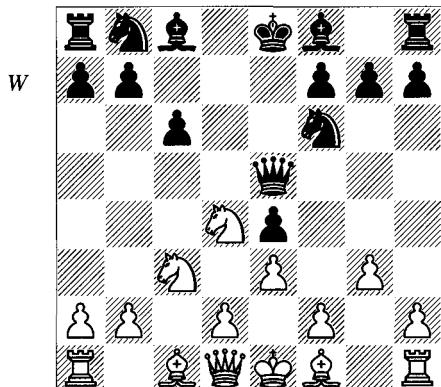
Now Black’s queen has prospects of active play on the kingside via ... $\mathbb{W}h5$, or of central

influence by ... $\mathbb{W}e5$. Nevertheless, White has certain advantages, in that Black's queen can be kicked around with tempo, perhaps twice (first by $\mathbb{Q}c3$ and then by one or more of the advances $d4$, $f4$, or even $g4$). And the pawn on $e4$ is relatively vulnerable in comparison with $5\dots cxd5$. All things told, Black seems to have his fair share of the play, but the ... $\mathbb{W}xd5$ lines aren't investigated as much as one would expect.

6 $\mathbb{Q}b3$

a) A lesser-played alternative is 6 $\mathbb{Q}c2$ $\mathbb{Q}f6$ ($6\dots e3$ 7 $f3$) 7 $\mathbb{Q}g2$ $\mathbb{W}h5$!? (7... $\mathbb{W}e5$ is also sound) 8 $h3$! (8 $\mathbb{Q}e3$ $\mathbb{Q}h3$! 9 $\mathbb{Q}xh3$ $\mathbb{W}xh3$ 10 $\mathbb{W}b3$ $\mathbb{W}d7$ and with ... $\mathbb{Q}a6$ and ...0-0-0 coming, Black keeps White's centre in check) 8... $\mathbb{W}g6$ 9 $\mathbb{Q}e3$ (to clear the way for $\mathbb{W}c2$) 9... $\mathbb{Q}a6$! 10 $\mathbb{Q}c3$ $\mathbb{Q}e6$!? (the other idea is 10... $\mathbb{Q}c5$, to capture on $e3$) 11 $\mathbb{W}c2$. Now a double-edged continuation is 11...0-0-0!? 12 $\mathbb{Q}xe4$ (12 $\mathbb{Q}xe4$? $\mathbb{Q}b4$ 13 $\mathbb{W}b1$ $\mathbb{Q}xa2$) 12... $\mathbb{Q}xe4$ 13 $\mathbb{W}xe4$ $\mathbb{Q}e7$!? 14 $\mathbb{W}xg6$!? (14 $d3$!) 14... $hgx6$, when Black has his bishops and can target White's h-pawn.

b) 6 $e3$ is more common. After 6... $\mathbb{Q}f6$ 7 $\mathbb{Q}c3$ $\mathbb{W}e5$ (D) Black has space and light squares to work with, but White can target his vulnerable e-pawn.



b1) One try is 8 $f4$, when 8... $exf3$ 9 $\mathbb{Q}xf3$ isn't terrible for Black, but cedes a 2:0 central majority to his opponent. 8... $\mathbb{W}e7$! is more attractive, with the idea 9 $\mathbb{W}c2$?! (White does poorly after 9 $\mathbb{Q}g2$ $c5$!, but he should consider 9 $b4$!?) 9... $c5$! 10 $\mathbb{Q}b3$ $\mathbb{Q}c6$ 11 $a3$ $h5$! 12 $\mathbb{Q}g2$ $\mathbb{Q}f5$. Black has space, with control of key squares.

b2) 8 $\mathbb{Q}g2$ allows Black two promising approaches:

b21) Not 8... $\mathbb{Q}g4$?! (Silva-Santos, Portuguese Ch 1994), which should be answered by 9 $\mathbb{Q}b3$! $\mathbb{Q}c8$ 10 $f4$!.

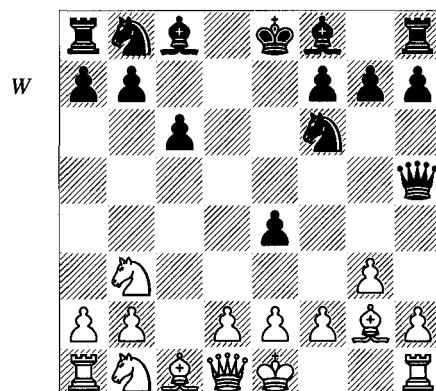
b22) 8... $\mathbb{Q}a6$ 9 0-0 $\mathbb{Q}g4$ 10 $f3$ $exf3$ 11 $\mathbb{Q}xf3$ $\mathbb{Q}xf3$ (11... $\mathbb{Q}h5$!?) 12 $\mathbb{Q}e4$; 11... $h5$! 12 $\mathbb{Q}xc6$) 12 $\mathbb{Q}xf3$ $\mathbb{W}h5$ 13 $d4$ $\mathbb{Q}b4$ (to control $e4$) 14 $\mathbb{W}c2$ 0-0 15 $a3$ $\mathbb{Q}xc3$ 16 $bxc3$ $\mathbb{Q}fe8$ 17 $\mathbb{Q}b1$ $b6$! with approximate equality. Now White should steer clear of 18 $\mathbb{W}a4$?! $\mathbb{Q}c7$ 19 $\mathbb{W}xc6$ $\mathbb{Q}ac8$ 20 $\mathbb{W}a4$ $\mathbb{Q}cd5$.

b23) 8... $\mathbb{Q}c5$ 9 $\mathbb{Q}b3$ (or 9 0-0!?) 0-0 10 $d3$ $exd3$ 11 $\mathbb{W}xd3$ $\mathbb{Q}a6$ 12 $a3$ $\mathbb{Q}b6$ 13 $\mathbb{Q}a4$ $\mathbb{Q}c5$ 14 $\mathbb{Q}xc5$ $\mathbb{Q}xc5$ 15 $\mathbb{Q}d2$ $\mathbb{W}h5$) 9... $\mathbb{Q}b6$ 10 0-0 0-0 11 $f3$, Brekke-Benko, Gausdal 1984, and Black would do well to play 11... $\mathbb{Q}d8$! 12 $\mathbb{W}e2$ $exf3$ 13 $\mathbb{Q}xf3$ $\mathbb{Q}h3$ 14 $\mathbb{Q}e1$ $\mathbb{Q}a6$ 15 $d4$ $\mathbb{W}e6$ with the ideas ... $\mathbb{Q}b4$ and in some cases ... $\mathbb{Q}g4$.

Let's return to the main game:

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

Black could also try 6... $\mathbb{Q}f5$ 7 $\mathbb{Q}c3$ $\mathbb{W}d7$.
7 $\mathbb{Q}g2$ $\mathbb{W}h5$ (D)



8 $h3$!

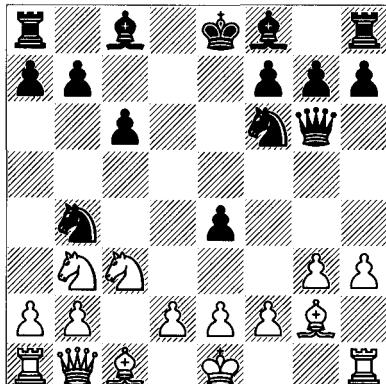
As in similar positions, 8 $\mathbb{Q}c3$ $\mathbb{Q}h3$! favours Black.

8... $\mathbb{W}g6$ 9 $\mathbb{Q}c3$ $\mathbb{Q}bd7$??

Black's e-pawn is threatened by $\mathbb{W}c2$, which seems to force concessions, yet 9... $\mathbb{Q}a6$! (the key move in this variation) would come to the rescue. Now 10 $\mathbb{W}c2$?! can be answered by 10... $\mathbb{Q}b4$ 11 $\mathbb{W}b1$ (D).

11... $e3$! (a major theme for Black, threatening ... $\mathbb{Q}c2+$; even 11... $\mathbb{Q}e6$!?) 12 $\mathbb{Q}xe4$ 0-0-0 yields some attack) 12 $\mathbb{W}xg6$ $hgx6$! 13 0-0 (13 $\mathbb{Q}f1$ $exf2$ 14 $\mathbb{Q}xf2$ $\mathbb{Q}e6$! threatens ... $\mathbb{Q}xa2$, and there is no good reply) 13... $exd2$ 14 $\mathbb{Q}xd2$ $\mathbb{Q}xh3$ wins a pawn; it's hard for White to improve here.

B



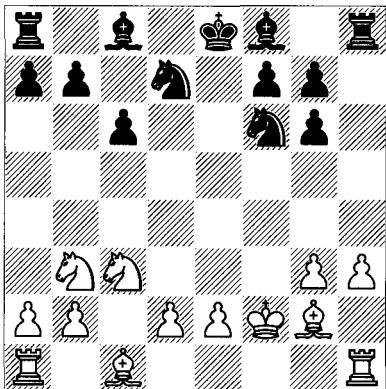
Therefore, White's best move is 10 0-0, when 10... $\mathbb{Q}e7$ 11 d3 exd3 12 exd3 0-0 13 $\mathbb{R}e1$ $\mathbb{R}e8$ 14 $\mathbb{Q}f4$ $\mathbb{Q}e6$! 15 $\mathbb{Q}d4$ $\mathbb{Q}c5$ 16 $\mathbb{Q}xe6$ $\mathbb{Q}xe6$ 17 $\mathbb{Q}e3$ keeps the position about level, because the bishop-pair offers White compensation for his weak d-pawn.

10 $\mathbb{R}c2$ e3

Forced, to save the e-pawn; but this time there's no knight on b4.

11 $\mathbb{W}xg6$ exf2+ 12 $\mathbb{Q}xf2$ hxg6 (D)

W



Black has maintained material equality, but White has the two unopposed centre pawns. That gives him the advantage in spite of his weakness on g3.

13 d4!?

White keeps an edge after the patient 13 d3!; for example, 13... $\mathbb{Q}d6$! 14 $\mathbb{Q}d2$ (or 14 g4 $\mathbb{Q}c5$ 15 $\mathbb{Q}a5$!, threatening $\mathbb{Q}xc6$ and intending $\mathbb{Q}c4$) 14... $\mathbb{Q}h5$ 15 $\mathbb{Q}e4$ $\mathbb{Q}c7$ 16 g4 $\mathbb{Q}f4$ 17 $\mathbb{Q}f3$! $\mathbb{Q}xh3$?? 18 $\mathbb{Q}g2$ $\mathbb{Q}f4$ + 19 $\mathbb{Q}xf4$ $\mathbb{Q}xh1$ 20 $\mathbb{Q}xc7$! with two pieces for a rook and a large positional advantage.

13... $\mathbb{Q}b6$ 14 e4!? $\mathbb{Q}e6$ 15 $\mathbb{Q}f4$ $\mathbb{Q}b4$ 16 $\mathbb{Q}c5$ 0-0 17 $\mathbb{Q}xe6$ $\mathbb{Q}xe6$ 18 a3?!

Both players have had alternatives during this sequence, but here Kasparov shows that 18 $\mathbb{Q}e2$ was definitely stronger.

18... $\mathbb{Q}e7$ 19 $\mathbb{R}ad1$ $\mathbb{Q}hf8$

Black stands fine now, threatening ...g5. The rest is worth a look, but not relevant to the opening:

20 $\mathbb{Q}e2$? $\mathbb{Q}c4$! 21 h4 $\mathbb{Q}h5$ 22 $\mathbb{Q}h3$ $\mathbb{Q}xf4$! 23 $\mathbb{Q}xe6$?? $\mathbb{Q}c7$ 24 $\mathbb{Q}xc4$ $\mathbb{Q}xg3$ + 25 $\mathbb{Q}e3$ $\mathbb{Q}df8$ 26 $\mathbb{Q}hg1$ $\mathbb{Q}xh4$ 27 $\mathbb{Q}d3$ $\mathbb{Q}f2$ 28 $\mathbb{Q}d2$ $\mathbb{Q}g5$! 29 $\mathbb{Q}xf2$ $\mathbb{Q}xf2$ 30 $\mathbb{Q}e2$ $\mathbb{Q}f3$ + 31 $\mathbb{Q}c2$ $\mathbb{Q}xe4$ 32 $\mathbb{Q}d3$ $\mathbb{Q}e3$

Black went on to convert his extra pawns into victory. This opening variation is double-edged and relatively unexplored.

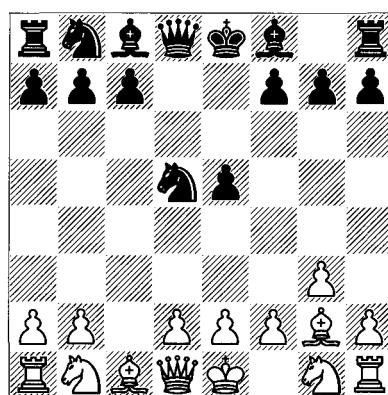
Reversed Dragon without $\mathbb{Q}c3$

Pecorelli Garcia – Franco Campos

Havana 2001

1 c4 e5 2 g3 $\mathbb{Q}f6$ 3 $\mathbb{Q}g2$ d5 4 cxd5 $\mathbb{Q}xd5$ (D)

W



This is a type of Reversed Dragon (or so it is called; for the moment it is a Reversed Hyper-Accelerated Fianchetto!).

5 $\mathbb{Q}f3$

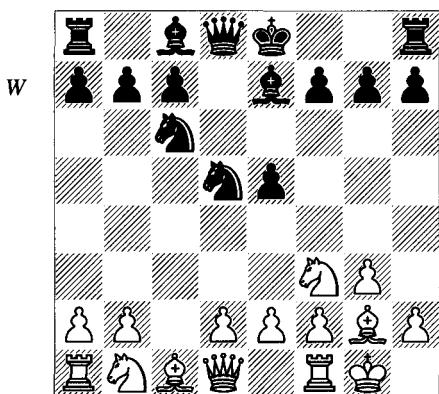
White develops in a way that turns this into a variation unique to 2 g3. A normal Reversed Dragon would arise after 5 $\mathbb{Q}c3$ $\mathbb{Q}b6$ 6 $\mathbb{Q}f3$.

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

A recurring blunder which applies to many openings is 5...e4? 6 $\mathbb{Q}a4$ + and 7 $\mathbb{Q}xe4$.

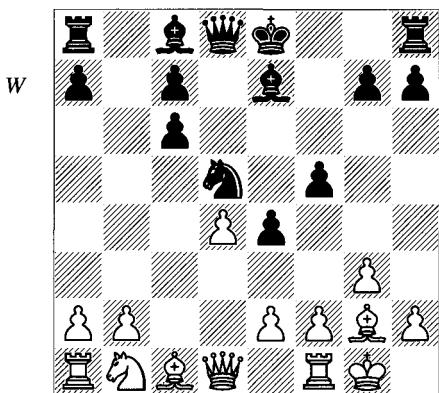
6 0-0 $\mathbb{Q}b6$

Because of White's move-order, Black can try to keep his knight in the centre for a long time by playing 6... $\mathbb{N}e7$ (D).



One interesting consequence is that if White continues with the set-up we are considering (d3 and $\mathbb{Q}bd2$), Black's knight remains on its best square; for example, 7 d3 0-0 8 a3 a5 9 b3 (9 $\mathbb{Q}bd2$ $\mathbb{N}e6$) 9... $\mathbb{N}e6$ 10 $\mathbb{N}b2$ f6 11 $\mathbb{Q}bd2$ $\mathbb{N}d7$ was very comfortable for Black in Carlsen-Gelfand, Moscow (blitz) 2007.

Thus, if White doesn't want to revert to the conventional Dragon set-up by 7 $\mathbb{Q}c3$, he should play 7 d4, when the main line is 7...e4 8 $\mathbb{Q}e5$ f5 9 $\mathbb{Q}xc6$ bxc6 (D).



At this point there's quite a bit of theory, so I'll simply list some abbreviated lines:

a) 10 $\mathbb{N}a4$ is played more often than other moves. The conventional solution is 10... $\mathbb{N}d7$, with the idea of ...c5. Topalov-Timman, Wijk aan Zee 1999 went 11 $\mathbb{Q}d1$ c5! 12 $\mathbb{N}xd7+$ $\mathbb{N}xd7$ 13 dxc5 $\mathbb{N}e6$! and the game was level.

b) Carlsen-Gelfand, Moscow (blitz) 2007 went 10 $\mathbb{Q}c3$ 0-0 11 f3?! $\mathbb{N}xf3$ 12 $\mathbb{N}exf3$?! (12 $\mathbb{N}xf3$ followed by e4 is equal) 12... $\mathbb{N}f6$ 13 $\mathbb{Q}e1$ $\mathbb{N}b8$. This is quite awkward for White.

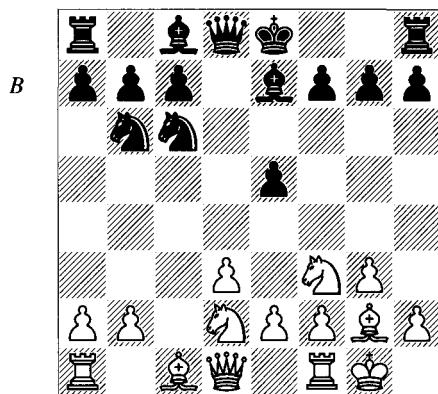
c) 10 $\mathbb{Q}d2$ is a good try, although several answers are reasonable. Black can play conventionally by 10...0-0 11 $\mathbb{N}b3$ $\mathbb{N}a6$ 12 $\mathbb{Q}e1$ $\mathbb{N}b8$. Alternatively, 10... $\mathbb{N}e6$ 11 $\mathbb{N}b3$ 0-0 12 $\mathbb{Q}d2$ $\mathbb{N}b8$! with the idea ... $\mathbb{N}b5$ is a clever option. Lastly, for the fanatic, there's 10...h5! 11 $\mathbb{Q}b3$ (11 h4? 0-0) 11...h4, with ...h3 and ... $\mathbb{N}a6$ in reserve. All of this should be subjected to scrutiny.

d) 10 f3 $\mathbb{N}xf3$ 11 $\mathbb{N}xf3$ 0-0 12 $\mathbb{Q}c3$ $\mathbb{N}e6$ and now 13 $\mathbb{N}a4$ $\mathbb{N}b6$ 14 $\mathbb{N}xc6$ $\mathbb{N}d7$ with a repetition of position was Gulko-Harikrishna, Wijk aan Zee 2001. Instead, Sher-Smirin, Moscow 1990 went 13 e4 $\mathbb{N}xe4$ 14 $\mathbb{N}xe4$, and 14... $\mathbb{N}d7$ would have been the obvious move, with the idea 15 $\mathbb{N}f2$ $\mathbb{N}ae8$.

7 d3 $\mathbb{N}e7$

7... $\mathbb{N}d6$ is a safe development. There are alternatives on every move, of course.

8 $\mathbb{Q}bd2$ (D)



This is the point: the knight goes to d2, as it does in many Najdorf and Scheveningen variations with colours reversed.

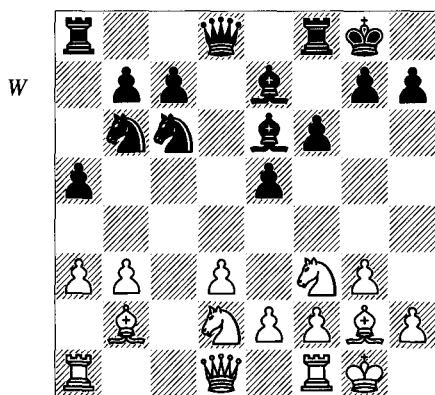
8...0-0 9 a3 a5

By far the most common move. In the Sicilian Defence, a knight on d7 goes particularly well with ...b5, so 10 b4 should be prevented.

10 b3 $\mathbb{N}e6$

10...f5 11 $\mathbb{N}b2$ $\mathbb{N}f6$ is also perfectly playable, and the conservative 10... $\mathbb{N}e8$ 11 $\mathbb{N}b2$ $\mathbb{N}f8$ maintains a balance. The nice thing is that both of these set-ups promise a middlegame full of content for both sides.

11 $\mathbb{Q}b2$ f6 (D)



12 $\mathbb{Q}c2$

12 $\mathbb{Q}c1$ $\mathbb{Q}f7$! with the idea ... $\mathbb{Q}f8$ and ... $\mathbb{Q}d7$ is another moderately popular sequence.

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

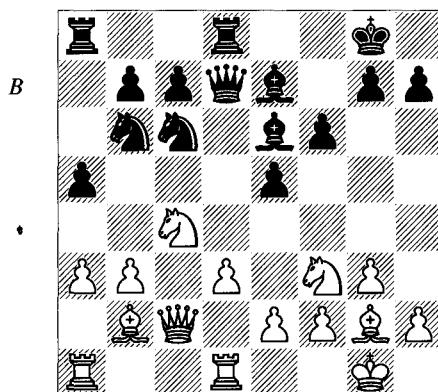
Again 12... $\mathbb{Q}f7$ 13 $\mathbb{Q}fd1$ $\mathbb{Q}f8$ with the idea ... $\mathbb{Q}d7$ has its adherents and has done reasonably well. I think that 14 $\mathbb{Q}c4$ is the most flexible and promising reply.

13 $\mathbb{Q}fd1$

This safe move is probably best, and the similar 13 $\mathbb{Q}ac1$ is played too. Nevertheless, the ambitious 13 e3!? has been employed more often. White aims for d4, but it's hard for him to improve upon the following lengthy, almost forced, book sequence: 13... $\mathbb{Q}fd8$ 14 d4 exd4 15 $\mathbb{Q}xd4$ $\mathbb{Q}xd4$ 16 $\mathbb{Q}xd4$ c5! 17 $\mathbb{Q}xc5$ (17 $\mathbb{Q}c3$ a4!) 17... $\mathbb{Q}ac8$ 18 b4 $\mathbb{Q}d5$! 19 $\mathbb{Q}b3$?! (but 19 $\mathbb{Q}fd1$ axb4 20 $\mathbb{Q}xd5$! $\mathbb{Q}xc5$ 21 $\mathbb{Q}xe6+$ $\mathbb{Q}xe6$ 22 $\mathbb{Q}b2$ bxa3 23 $\mathbb{Q}xa3$ $\mathbb{Q}cd5$ is not attractive for White) 19...b6 20 e4 $\mathbb{Q}xb4$! 21 axb4 axb4 22 $\mathbb{Q}fd1$ $\mathbb{Q}c7$ 23 $\mathbb{Q}d4$ $\mathbb{Q}xd4$ 24 $\mathbb{Q}xd4$, Bourquin-Vnukov,

e-mail (IECG) 2000, and now it looks as though 24...b3! is a refutation: 25 $\mathbb{Q}e2$ (25 $\mathbb{Q}b1$ bxc5 26 $\mathbb{Q}da4$ $\mathbb{Q}e5$!) 25...bxc5 26 $\mathbb{Q}c4$ $\mathbb{Q}b8$ with what must be a winning game.

13... $\mathbb{Q}fd8$ 14 $\mathbb{Q}c4$! (D)



14... $\mathbb{Q}xc4$

Other ideas for Black include 14... $\mathbb{Q}e8$, planning ... $\mathbb{Q}f7$ (or ... $\mathbb{Q}h5$ if White plays e3).

15 $\mathbb{Q}bcx4$

White won't get much from 15 dxc4!? $\mathbb{Q}e8$ 16 $\mathbb{Q}h4$ $\mathbb{Q}c5$ 17 $\mathbb{Q}e4$ g6.

15...a4?!

Finally allowing White's cherished break! Black should stop d4 by, for example, 15... $\mathbb{Q}f5$. Or he can play 15... $\mathbb{Q}c5$!? intending 16 e3 $\mathbb{Q}f5$!, when the ultimate equality of this whole line might express itself in 17 $\mathbb{Q}c1$ e4 18 dxe4 $\mathbb{Q}xd1+$ 19 $\mathbb{Q}xd1$ $\mathbb{Q}xd1+$ 20 $\mathbb{Q}xd1$ $\mathbb{Q}xe4$.

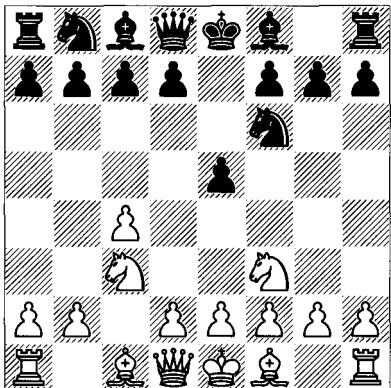
16 d4! exd4 17 $\mathbb{Q}xd4$ $\mathbb{Q}xd4$ 18 $\mathbb{Q}xd4$ $\mathbb{Q}c8$ 19 $\mathbb{Q}xd8+$ $\mathbb{Q}xd8$ 20 $\mathbb{Q}e4$

Here White's pieces coordinate beautifully, and he went on to win.

5 Four Knights Variation

1 c4 e5 2 ♜c3 ♜f6 3 ♜f3 (D)

B



3... ♜c6

Now that we've seen the theory of 3 g3, the motivations behind 3 ♜f3 should be easier to understand. First, it's more forcing and therefore restricts the opponent's options. Black's usual response is to protect his e-pawn by 3... ♜c6, when he has forfeited the possibility of ...c6, a move that plagued White in our previous chapter in the variations stemming from both 2 g3 and 2 ♜c3 ♜f6 3 g3. Furthermore, in lines with ... ♜c6 and ... ♜b4, White's ♜d5 will tend to be more effective, not only because a counter with ...c6 isn't on the cards, but because ... ♜xd5 tends to lose a tempo after the recapture cxd5.

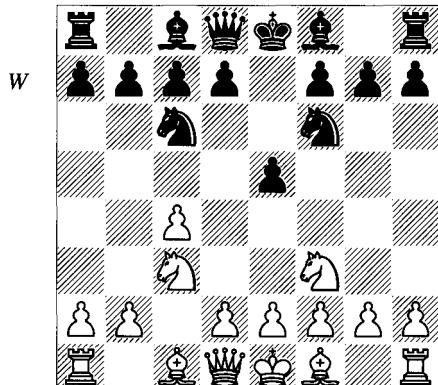
As always, such advantages come with disadvantages. By playing 3 ♜f3, White encourages ...e4 with tempo, and indeed that move is key to Black's play in many of the most important variations. Furthermore, White foregoes the development by ♜ge2 (or ♜h3), reducing the likelihood that he will attack Black's centre by f4.

Why 3... ♜c6? Simply because the e-pawn needs protection and the only other serious moves are 3...e4 and 3...d6. After some experience with the gambit 3...e4?! 4 ♜g5 b5!?(else the e-pawn falls for nothing), it turns out that

declining the pawn sacrifice by 5 d3! secures a pleasant advantage based upon White's central control and development. The relevant analysis can be found in various books.

Defence of the e-pawn by 3...d6 is primarily a transpositional device; for example, after 4 d4 ♜bd7, 5 e4 will transpose to either an Old Indian Defence, if Black plays 5... ♜e7, or to a King's Indian Defence if Black plays 5...g6. The game stays within English Opening territory after 4 d4 e4 5 ♜g5 ♜f5, which was analysed in Chapter 3 under the move-order 1 c4 e5 2 ♜c3 d6 3 ♜f3 ♜f6 4 d4 e4 5 ♜g5 ♜f5. In any case, 3...d6 forfeits the chance to play ... ♜b4 or ...d5 (at least in one step); those moves are two of Black's main weapons versus 3 g3.

The position after 3... ♜c6 (D) is called the 'English Four Knights Variation', and is a traditional main line.



The first question is whether White can profitably play the thematic pawn-break 4 d4 (see below). That move has undergone a modest revival; although the conventional wisdom is that Black achieves equality, the debate goes on. Then we have a series of less dramatic choices for White on his 4th move such as 4 d3, 4 e3 and 4 g3. Black has many possible responses to all of these, but an intriguing question is whether he can afford to enter a reversed Open Sicilian

(1 e4 c5 2 $\mathbb{Q}f3$ $\mathbb{Q}c6$ 3 d4 cxd4 4 $\mathbb{Q}xd4$) by playing 4...d5 5 cxd5 $\mathbb{Q}xd5$. Two issues arise:

a) Which of White's fourth moves will be useful versus ...d5 and productive in its own right?

b) Is Black's position in the normal Open Sicilian so compelling that when White plays it with an extra tempo, it will propel him to the advantage? That is, if White simply plays a useful 'Sicilian' move such as 4 a3, 4 d3 or 4 g3, will 4...d5 5 cxd5 $\mathbb{Q}xd5$ allow him a lasting edge? Or, if Black plays safely, are White's prospects strictly limited? We've asked this question before about analogous positions in Chapters 2, 3 and 4.

In general, 3 $\mathbb{Q}f3$ is more popular than 3 g3 because Black has a much harder time proving equality, and can easily end up with the small disadvantage that we associate with moving second.

After 3... $\mathbb{Q}c6$, let's look at games with a variety of fourth moves, beginning with some less conventional ones.

Slower White Approaches

Korchnoi – Salov
St Petersburg 1997

4 a3

White reasons that ...a6 is a handy move in almost every Sicilian Defence, so it makes sense to try it for White.

a) 4 b3 can't be too bad, but isn't very forceful. Perhaps the easiest response is 4...g6 followed by ... $\mathbb{Q}g7$ and ...0-0. In fact, the obvious 4...d5 5 cxd5 $\mathbb{Q}xd5$ 6 $\mathbb{Q}b2$ $\mathbb{Q}xc3$ 7 $\mathbb{Q}xc3$ $\mathbb{Q}d6$ 8 d3 0-0 also equalizes.

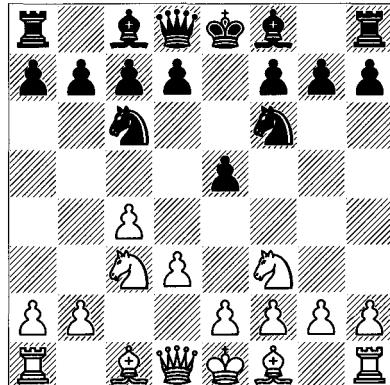
b) 4 d3 (*D*) is a common choice, but too slow to pose a real challenge to Black because it forfeits the chance to play d4 in one move.

b1) As against other quiet moves, the all-purpose 4...g6 is satisfactory, leading to the King's Indian/Closed hybrid of Chapter 12 if play continues 5 g3 $\mathbb{Q}g7$ 6 $\mathbb{Q}g2$ 0-0 7 0-0 d6.

b2) Black also frequently chooses 4... $\mathbb{Q}b4$ with the idea of an early ...e4 and/or ...d5. 5 $\mathbb{Q}d2$ 0-0 and now:

b21) 6 g3 may not inspire, but gives chances for a slight edge after 6... $\mathbb{E}e8$ 7 $\mathbb{Q}g2$ $\mathbb{Q}xc3$ 8

B

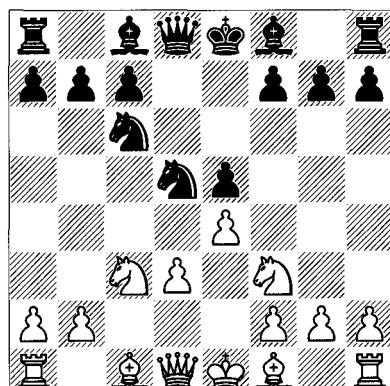


$\mathbb{Q}xc3$ d5 9 cxd5 $\mathbb{Q}xd5$ and now 10 0-0!, in response to which 10... $\mathbb{B}b8$!? intending ... $\mathbb{Q}xc3$ and ...b6 has been played. Kotronias solves the problem of the bishop-pair after 10 $\mathbb{Q}d2$ with 10... $\mathbb{Q}d4$! 11 0-0 $\mathbb{Q}g4$!. Notice also that the aggressive 6... $\mathbb{Q}d4$!? with the idea ... $\mathbb{Q}xf3$ + and ...c6 has held its own in practice.

b22) One high-level example is 6 e3 $\mathbb{E}e8$ 7 $\mathbb{Q}c2$!? $\mathbb{Q}xc3$ 8 $\mathbb{Q}xc3$ d5 9 cxd5 $\mathbb{Q}xd5$ 10 $\mathbb{Q}e2$ $\mathbb{Q}f5$! 11 $\mathbb{Q}d1$ (Black's tactical point is 11 e4 $\mathbb{Q}f4$! 12 exf5 $\mathbb{Q}d4$!) 11...a5 12 0-0 $\mathbb{Q}e7$ with equality, Ehlvest-Kasparov, Reykjavik 1988.

b3) If Black doesn't want to go in those directions, he can also answer 4 d3 more ambitiously by playing a reversed Open Sicilian with 4...d5 5 cxd5 $\mathbb{Q}xd5$. This is an extremely instructive position to investigate by substituting various normal Sicilian moves for White at this juncture. For example, 6 e4!? (*D*) is like a Sveshnikov Sicilian in reverse.

B

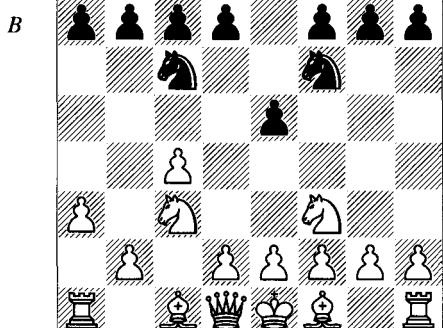


White's problem again has to do with his extra move, in this case d3. In the reversed lines,

Black has the aggressive move ... $\mathbb{Q}b4$ if White's d4-knight retreats. Here, because of White's extra move d3, the development $\mathbb{Q}b5$ is not available. A typical line goes 6... $\mathbb{Q}b6$ (6... $\mathbb{Q}f6$ is also perfectly satisfactory; for example, 7 $\mathbb{Q}e2 \mathbb{Q}g4$ 8 0-0-0 $\mathbb{Q}xf3$!?) 9 $\mathbb{Q}xf3$ $\mathbb{Q}d4$, Morozevich-Grishchuk, World Ch, Mexico City 2007; and even 6... $\mathbb{Q}xc3$ 7 $bxc3$ $\mathbb{Q}c5$ isn't bad) 7 $\mathbb{Q}e2$ $\mathbb{Q}e7$ 8 0-0 0-0 9 a4 $\mathbb{Q}e6$! 10 $\mathbb{Q}e3$ (10 a5 $\mathbb{Q}d7$) 10... $\mathbb{Q}d7$ (anyway!) 11 d4 exd4 12 $\mathbb{Q}xd4$ $\mathbb{Q}xd4$ 13 $\mathbb{W}xd4$ c6 14 a5 $\mathbb{Q}c5$ 15 $\mathbb{W}e5$ $\mathbb{Q}b3$ 16 $\mathbb{Q}a4$ $\mathbb{Q}d6$ 17 $\mathbb{W}h5$ g6 18 $\mathbb{W}h6$ $\mathbb{Q}e5$ with full equality, Carlsen-Topalov, Morelia/Linares 2008.

Of course, White has options apart from 6 e4 in the position after 4 d3 d5 5 cxd5 $\mathbb{Q}xd5$. 6 g3 is a Reversed Dragon, which we'll see below; and 6 e3 is a reversed Scheveningen. But in general, when playing with this d3/e3 pawn-structure, White has more chance of gaining the advantage if he can place his queen's knight on d2; you might compare the Najdorf Variation of the Sicilian with its extraordinarily effective knight on d7. In our line, with White's knight on c3, Black should be able to equalize, but you might want to confirm this for yourself.

Let's return to the main game with 4 a3 (D).

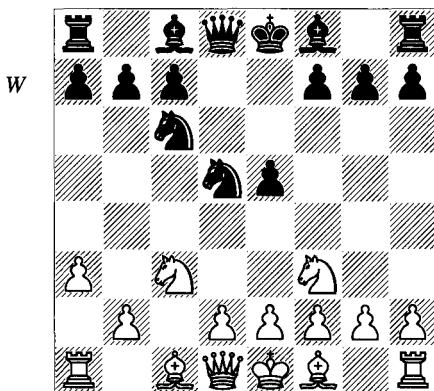


4...g6

Broadly speaking, if ... $\mathbb{Q}b4$ isn't possible, then ...g6 will be a good alternative. It makes sense against any slow move like 4 a3. Other moves:

a) Black can also treat White's whole idea with disdain and play 4...d5 5 cxd5 $\mathbb{Q}xd5$ (D) anyway.

Confronted with the 'extra' move a3, Black may not want to attack as White does in an



Open Sicilian position, preferring to look for simplifying ideas that yield equality. White, on the other hand, already has the central majority. Let's look at a few continuations:

a1) 6 e3 has several good answers. First, 6... $\mathbb{Q}e7$ 7 $\mathbb{Q}b5$ $\mathbb{W}d6$! is effectively a tempo up for Black on a line we've seen via the move-order 2 $\mathbb{Q}c3$ $\mathbb{Q}f6$ 3 e3 in Chapter 4, because 4 a3 has proven irrelevant. A more provocative course for Black in this variation is to try the gambit that White plays with reversed colours, that is, 7...0-0-0! 8 $\mathbb{Q}xc6$ $bxc6$ 9 $\mathbb{Q}xe5$ $\mathbb{Q}d6$ with the idea 10 $\mathbb{Q}xc6$ $\mathbb{W}g5$. It's unlikely that White's pawn being on a3 helps him much. Finally, Black can play a Four Knights Sicilian in reverse by 6... $\mathbb{Q}xc3$ 7 $bxc3$ e4 8 $\mathbb{Q}d4$ $\mathbb{Q}e5$, when the pawn on a3 even prevents the standard idea $\mathbb{Q}a3$. In each case, you'd have to compare the reversed positions concretely to be sure of what the differences are.

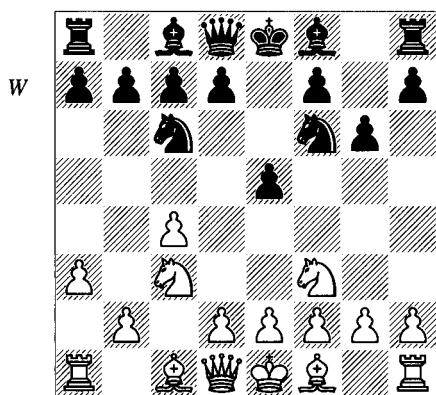
a2) 6 e4 is a Sveshnikov without the possibility of 6... $\mathbb{Q}db4$, but as above, White's position after the unexciting 6... $\mathbb{Q}b6$ is probably not helped by the weakening move a3. Furthermore, Black can play the forcing 6... $\mathbb{Q}f4$ 7 d4 exd4 8 $\mathbb{Q}xf4$ dxc3 9 $bxc3$ $\mathbb{W}f6$ (9... $\mathbb{W}xd1+10 \mathbb{Q}xd1$ $\mathbb{Q}xa3$ is also possible due to the pawn on a3) 10 $\mathbb{W}d2$ $\mathbb{Q}g4$ 11 e5 $\mathbb{W}e6$. Black actually gets a better position than White does in the reversed lines, because his queen has access to b3 and ... $\mathbb{Q}xa3$ is possible in some situations.

a3) Beim-Rublevsky, Frankfurt 2000 continued with the more flexible 6 $\mathbb{W}c2$! $\mathbb{Q}e7$ (6... $\mathbb{Q}xc3$!) 7 e3 0-0 8 $\mathbb{Q}b5$! (8 $\mathbb{Q}d3$ is strategically interesting; for example, 8...g6 9 $\mathbb{Q}xd5$ $\mathbb{W}xd5$ 10 h4 $\mathbb{Q}g4$ 11 $\mathbb{Q}e4$ $\mathbb{W}e6$ 12 b4) 8... $\mathbb{Q}g4$! 9 $\mathbb{Q}xc6$ $\mathbb{Q}xf3$ 10 $gxf3$ $bxc6$. Black's pressure

against vulnerable points down the d- and b-files compensates for his weak pawns on the open c-file.

b) 4...d6 can lead to a calm position following 5 e3 g6 6 d3 (6 d4 ♘g7 is solid) 6...♘g7. Black's move-order has the advantage that 5 d4 can be answered by 5...e4 6 ♖g5 ♘f5. Compare the 2...d6 lines in Chapter 3; here White's move a3 is not useful.

We now return to 4...g6 (D):



5 d4

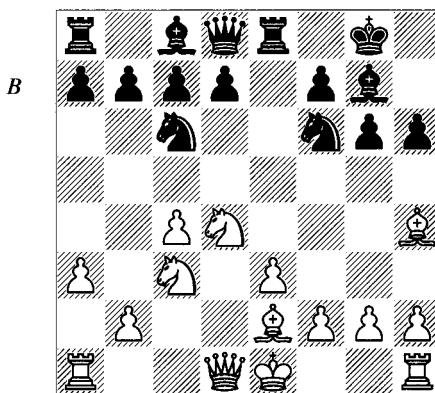
Usually the best answer to the move ...g6 is to counter directly like this (or to play e3 and d4). Here the effectiveness of 5 d4 is somewhat reduced because a3 has become irrelevant. I mentioned the dubious move 5 b4? in Chapter 4 (via 2 ♖c3 ♖f6 3 a3, etc.). Black responds 5...e4! 6 ♖g5 ♘g7 with the idea of ...h6 and after ♖h3, ...g5, hemming in the knight on the rim. Then 7 ♕b1 0-0! 8 ♖gxe4 ♖xe4 9 ♖xe4 ♕e8 gives Black more than enough compensation. The problem is that Black is developing too quickly for White to coordinate. For example, 10 ♖c3 (10 d3 d5! 11 cxd5 ♕xd8 12 e3 f5 13 ♖d2 a5! gives us the familiar sacrificial idea 14 b5 ♖d4!) 10...d6 11 e3 ♕xc6 12 dxc3 ♕h4! intending ...♘g4 or ...♘f5 (not 13 g3?? ♕e4).

5...exd4 6 ♖xd4 ♘g7 7 ♘g5!?

White tries for maximum central control. 7 ♖xc6 bxc6 8 g3 0-0 9 ♘g2 ♕e8 puts Black effectively a tempo ahead of the Three Knights Variation of Chapter 6, since a3 is at best ineffectual. Nor does 7 g3 go very well with a3; for example, 7...0-0 8 ♘g2 ♕e8 is comfortable for Black. Note that getting queens off via 9 ♖xc6

dxc6! 10 ♕xd8 ♕xd8 11 ♘f4 ♘e6 doesn't help White's cause.

7...h6 8 ♘h4 0-0 9 e3 ♕e8 10 ♘e2 (D)



10...♖xd4!?

Korchnoi proposes 10...d5. This is a dynamic tactical device that you should look for in similar positions (whether from the King's Indian or Modern Defence, for example), especially if ...g5 is possible for Black. The primary points are that 11 ♖xd5 is inferior due to 11...g5 12 ♖xf6+ (12 ♘g3 ♖xd5 13 ♖xc6 bxc6 14 cxd5 ♘xb2) 12...♕xf6 13 ♖xc6 bxc6, and 11 cxd5 is also ineffective after 11...♖xd4 12 exd4 g5 with the idea 13 ♘g3 ♖xd5 14 0-0 c5! (or 14...c6). This sequence works because White hasn't castled and every move by Black has been directly aggressive. Of course, White isn't that badly off, and can play 11 ♖xc6 bxc6 12 cxd5 cxd5, with chances for both sides.

11 exd4 g5

Again, 11...d5! was a good move.

12 ♘g3 ♖e4 13 0-0 d6 14 ♘d3!

Here Black played 14...f5 and got the worse of it after 15 ♖xe4 fxe4 16 ♕e1. Things might have become more exciting after 14...♗xg3 15 fxg3! ♖xd4+ 16 ♘h1 ♘g7 17 ♕f3 ♘e6 18 ♕e4 with an unclear attack.

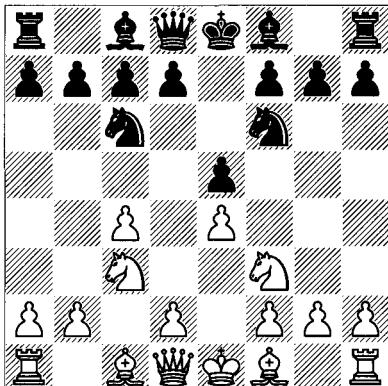
Ehlvest – Harikrishna

FIDE World Cup, Hyderabad 2002

1 c4 e5 2 ♖c3 ♖f6 3 ♖f3 ♖c6 4 e4 (D)

A fascinating move which looks ridiculous because it creates a big hole on d4. But the weakness is compensated for by the control that White has over d5 and the consequent

B

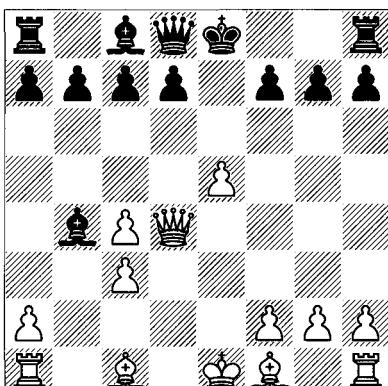


difficulty that Black faces in freeing his game. In practice, White can slowly work around the centre, usually by playing g3, $\mathbb{g}2$ and 0-0, and then aiming to achieve f4. Black's task is to exploit the d4 outpost or otherwise challenge White's centre.

4... $\mathbb{b}4$

The other established variation goes 4... $\mathbb{c}5$ 5 $\mathbb{d}xe5!$ (else after 5...d6, White's pawn-structure looks rather silly) 5... $\mathbb{d}xe5$ 6 d4 6... $\mathbb{b}4$ 7 $\mathbb{d}xe5$ $\mathbb{d}xe4$ 8 $\mathbb{d}d4$ $\mathbb{d}xc3$ 9 $\mathbb{b}xc3$ (D).

B



Now 9... $\mathbb{e}7$ is supposed to be about equal after 10 $\mathbb{g}4$ $\mathbb{f}8$ 11 $\mathbb{g}3$ d6, but White has some interesting and untried options such as 10 $\mathbb{d}3$ 0-0 11 0-0 d6 12 $\mathbb{f}4$. Black's alternative is 9... $\mathbb{a}5$ 10 $\mathbb{a}3$ d6 11 exd6 0-0 12 0-0 cxd6 13 $\mathbb{w}xd6$!? (13 $\mathbb{d}xd6$ $\mathbb{e}8$ 14 $\mathbb{d}3$) 13... $\mathbb{w}xd6$ 14 $\mathbb{d}xd6$ $\mathbb{e}8$ 15 $\mathbb{b}2$ $\mathbb{d}7$ 16 $\mathbb{d}3$ $\mathbb{c}6$ 17 f3, an ending that has arisen in some top-level games. Black should be able to work his way to a draw with extremely accurate play, but the average mortal will probably be unsatisfied with this.

5 d3 d6 6 g3

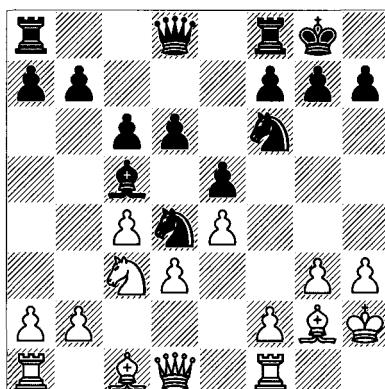
6 a3 simply pushes Black to where he wants to go after 6... $\mathbb{c}5$ 7 b4 $\mathbb{b}6$. 6 $\mathbb{e}2$ is playable but non-threatening.

6...h6

Probably not the optimal solution to the position, but it does prevent a piece from going to g5. Black has other ideas such as 6...0-0 and 6... $\mathbb{c}5$, leading to complex positional struggles. For example, 6... $\mathbb{c}5$ 7 $\mathbb{g}2$ $\mathbb{d}4$ 8 $\mathbb{d}xd4$ $\mathbb{d}xd4$, as in Gulko-Karpov, Reykjavik 1991, leaves White a choice of plans: $\mathbb{e}2$ followed by d4 (assuming the bishop retreats from d4), or implementing the pawn-break f4. Theory considers this line to be equal.

The logical 6... $\mathbb{g}4$ is consistent with the theme of controlling White's weak square d4. An excellent illustration of both sides' ideas was Bu Xiangzhi-Bacrot, Turin Olympiad 2006: 7 h3 $\mathbb{xf}3$ 8 $\mathbb{w}xf3$ $\mathbb{d}d4$ 9 $\mathbb{w}d1$ c6 10 $\mathbb{g}2$ 0-0 11 0-0 $\mathbb{c}5$! (retreating the bishop to c5 is typical, and why not? Once Black has sidestepped 4... $\mathbb{c}5$ 5 $\mathbb{d}xe5$, the bishop can return to its ideal post) 12 $\mathbb{h}2h$ (D) (12 $\mathbb{a}4$ $\mathbb{w}e7$ 13 $\mathbb{d}xc5$?! $\mathbb{d}xc5$ leaves White's d-pawn as a target down the open file).

B



A representative position from this variation. The combination of ... $\mathbb{g}4xf3$ and ... $\mathbb{c}5$ has cemented control over d4, whereas White has opportunities based upon kingside expansion: 12...a5 13 f4 b5!? 14 f5 b4 15 $\mathbb{a}4$ $\mathbb{d}7$!? (or 15... $\mathbb{a}7$) 16 $\mathbb{d}xc5$ $\mathbb{d}xc5$ (16... $\mathbb{d}xc5$ 17 f6!) 17 g4 f6 18 h4 h6 19 $\mathbb{d}2$ $\mathbb{f}7$!. The king escapes to the centre and frustrates attacking plans by White. The game was logically drawn.

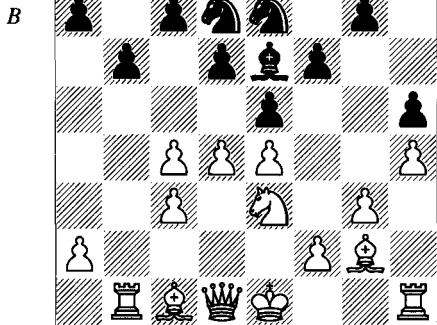
7 $\mathbb{g}2$ $\mathbb{d}xc3$!?

This exchange is rather cooperative, giving White the bishops and eliminating d4 as an outpost. While this pawn-structure may be acceptable for Black, he has trouble finding counterplay. One alternative is 7... $\mathbb{Q}g4$, again retaining the option of ... $\mathbb{Q}c5$.

8 bxc3 $\mathbb{Q}e6$ 9 $\mathbb{Q}d2!$

White has two ideas: he can continue $\mathbb{Q}f1-e3$ and $\mathbb{Q}d5$ or $\mathbb{Q}f5$, a manoeuvre not possible after 0-0; and by keeping his king in the centre he can neutralize Black's potential attack by ... $\mathbb{W}d7$, ...h5-h4 and/or ... $\mathbb{Q}h7-g5$. Still, castling and combining ideas of $\mathbb{Q}h4-f5$ and f4 is also a reasonable strategy.

9...h5 10 $\mathbb{B}b1$ b6 11 h4 $\mathbb{Q}d7$ 12 $\mathbb{Q}f1$ $\mathbb{Q}e7$ 13 $\mathbb{Q}e3$ f6 14 d4! (D)



If you compare this position with a Nimzo-Indian Defence, you will see that White's pawn on c4 is well-defended and that the move f4 is coming under better circumstances than in most lines of that opening. White has the advantage.

14... $\mathbb{Q}f8$ 15 $\mathbb{B}b2!$

This rook will be useful on the second rank, whether on d2, e2 or f2.

15... $\mathbb{W}c8$ 16 f4 $\mathbb{Q}d7$ 17 $\mathbb{W}a4$ c6 18 $\mathbb{B}d2$ $\mathbb{W}c7$ 19 $\mathbb{Q}a3$

White hits the weak point at d6. The rest of the game illustrates how difficult Black's defence is:

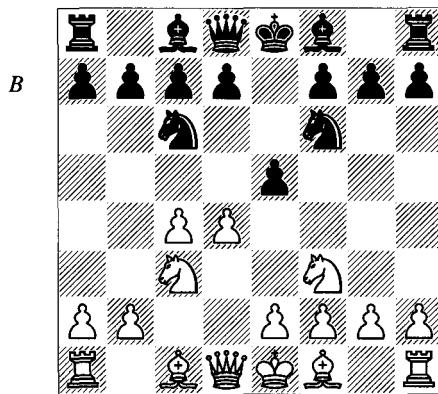
19...b5 20 $\mathbb{W}d1!$? bxc4 21 0-0 exf4?! 22 gxf4 f5 23 d5! cxd5 24 exf5 $\mathbb{Q}f7$ 25 $\mathbb{Q}xd5$ $\mathbb{Q}xd5$ 26 $\mathbb{B}xd5!$

This effectively finishes the game, because 26... $\mathbb{Q}xd5$ 27 $\mathbb{B}xd5$ 0-0-0 28 $\mathbb{W}a8+$ is killing. Now Black blunders, but he's being crushed in any case.

26...0-0? 27 $\mathbb{Q}xd6$ $\mathbb{W}b6+$ 28 $\mathbb{Q}h1$ $\mathbb{Q}xf5$ 29 $\mathbb{B}xf5$ $\mathbb{B}xf5$ 30 $\mathbb{Q}xa8$ $\mathbb{W}d8$ 31 $\mathbb{Q}e4$ $\mathbb{W}xh4+$ 32 $\mathbb{Q}g2$ $\mathbb{B}b5$ 33 $\mathbb{W}e2$ 1-0

Central Assault with 4 d4

1 c4 e5 2 $\mathbb{Q}c3$ $\mathbb{Q}f6$ 3 $\mathbb{Q}f3$ $\mathbb{Q}c6$ 4 d4 (D)

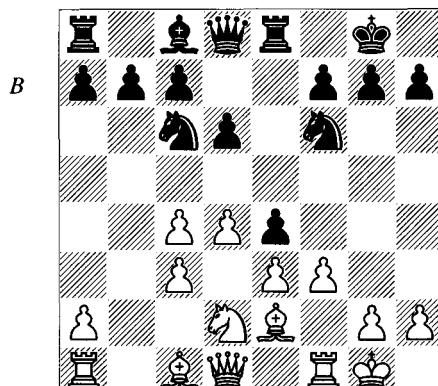


White's motivation is obvious: to break down Black's centre and gain a space advantage in the process.

4...exd4

4...e4 isn't popular, but has a long history of healthy results. I'll look at two replies for White:

a) Exciting play results from 5 $\mathbb{Q}d2$ $\mathbb{Q}b4!$ (5... $\mathbb{Q}xd4$ 6 $\mathbb{Q}dxe4$ $\mathbb{Q}xe4$ 7 $\mathbb{Q}xe4$ $\mathbb{Q}b4+$ 8 $\mathbb{Q}d2$ $\mathbb{Q}xd2+$ 9 $\mathbb{W}xd2$ gives White enough advantage to dissuade most players from trying 5... $\mathbb{Q}xd4$) 6 e3 $\mathbb{Q}xc3$ 7 bxc3 0-0 8 $\mathbb{Q}e2$ $\mathbb{B}e8$ 9 0-0 d6 10 f3!? (D) (the thematic move, to remove the cramping pawn from e4).

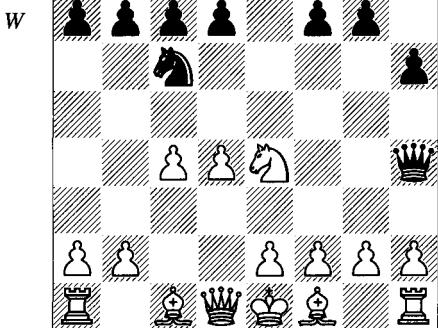


10...exf3 (or 10... $\mathbb{Q}f5$, when 11 f4! $\mathbb{W}d7!$ is unclear; instead, 11 fxe4 $\mathbb{Q}xe4!$ 12 $\mathbb{Q}xe4 \mathbb{Q}xe4$ 13 $\mathbb{Q}d3 \mathbb{W}d7!$ is quite comfortable for Black – the c1-bishop is blocked) 11 $\mathbb{Q}xf3 \mathbb{Q}xe3$ 12 $\mathbb{Q}b3$. This is Botvinnik-Ragozin, Leningrad 1940, which continued 12... $\mathbb{E}e8$ 13 $\mathbb{Q}g5!$ with a strong attack. But in Adamski-Knaak, Poland-East Germany 1973, Black grabbed material and dared White to prove his case: 12... $\mathbb{Q}xc3!$ 13 $\mathbb{Q}g5 \mathbb{Q}e7!$ 14 $\mathbb{W}d2!$ $\mathbb{Q}xc4$ 15 $\mathbb{Q}xf6 gxf6$ 16 $\mathbb{Q}e2 \mathbb{Q}c6$ 17 d5!? (17 $\mathbb{Q}xf6 \mathbb{Q}d5$) 17... $\mathbb{B}b6$ 18 $\mathbb{Q}xf6 \mathbb{Q}xd5$ 19 $\mathbb{Q}xf7?$ $\mathbb{Q}xf7$ 20 $\mathbb{W}xd5+ \mathbb{Q}e6$ 21 $\mathbb{Q}h5+ \mathbb{Q}e7$ 22 $\mathbb{Q}e1 \mathbb{Q}g8$, holding up the attack in view of 23 $\mathbb{Q}d4??$ (23 $\mathbb{W}c4$ is correct) 23... $\mathbb{Q}b1!$. As you might guess, there are potential improvements all over the place!

b) 5 $\mathbb{Q}g5$ and now:

b1) Line ‘b2’ has so long been considered an equalizer that there hasn’t been much attention given to another good approach: 5... $\mathbb{Q}b4$ 6 d5 $\mathbb{Q}e5$ and now 7 $\mathbb{Q}b3 \mathbb{Q}xc3+$ 8 $\mathbb{Q}xc3$ d6 leads to double-edged play. White shouldn’t get too greedy by 7 $\mathbb{Q}d4$ d6 8 $\mathbb{Q}xe4 \mathbb{Q}xe4$ 9 $\mathbb{Q}xe4$ 0-0, because with a large lead in development, Black has at least enough compensation for the pawn; for example, 10 e3 $\mathbb{E}e8$ 11 $\mathbb{Q}e2 \mathbb{W}f6$ 12 0-0 $\mathbb{Q}f5$ 13 $\mathbb{Q}d4 \mathbb{W}g6$ with ideas of ... $\mathbb{Q}h3$ and ... $\mathbb{Q}d3$.

b2) 5...h6!? 6 $\mathbb{Q}gxe4 \mathbb{Q}xe4$ 7 $\mathbb{Q}xe4 \mathbb{W}h4$ (D).

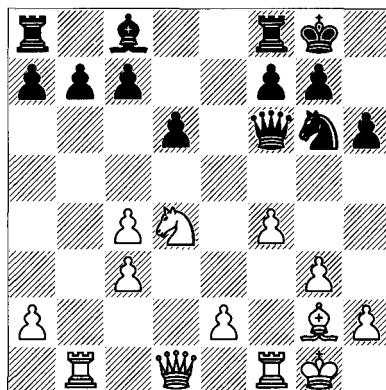


Here is Black’s point: if the knight moves he will regain the pawn on d4. So White plays 8 $\mathbb{Q}d3$ d5!? (upon 8... $\mathbb{Q}b4+$ 9 $\mathbb{Q}d1$ f5 10 $\mathbb{Q}g3$ 0-0 11 a3 $\mathbb{Q}e7$ 12 f4!, Black comes up short of compensation for the pawn) 9 cxd5 $\mathbb{Q}b4$ 10 $\mathbb{Q}b1 \mathbb{Q}f5$ 11 $\mathbb{Q}d6+$ (only move) 11...cxd6?! (I’m not

sure why 11... $\mathbb{Q}xd6!$ isn’t played; even though White is temporarily two pawns up after 12 $\mathbb{W}xf5$, 12...0-0 is dangerous for him, and 12...g6 13 $\mathbb{Q}b1 \mathbb{Q}xd4$ also deserves a test) 12 $\mathbb{W}xf5$ g6 13 $\mathbb{Q}f4!$ (a sacrifice based upon positional grounds; the old analysis went 13 $\mathbb{Q}b1 \mathbb{Q}c8$ with ... $\mathbb{Q}c2+$ to come) 13... $\mathbb{Q}c2+$ 14 $\mathbb{Q}d1 \mathbb{W}xf4$ 15 $\mathbb{Q}xf4 \mathbb{Q}xa1$ 16 e3!, Smirin-L.Johannessen, Istanbul Olympiad 2000. Remarkably, White stands somewhat better here, because the knight on a1 can’t be salvaged and White’s bishop-pair will exert tremendous influence. Black should check out 11... $\mathbb{Q}xd6$.

5 $\mathbb{Q}xd4 \mathbb{Q}b4$ 6 $\mathbb{Q}g5$ h6

Timing is critical here: 6... $\mathbb{Q}xc3+$ 7 bxc3 $\mathbb{Q}e5$?! 8 f4! $\mathbb{Q}g6$ (8... $\mathbb{Q}xc4$? 9 e4 $\mathbb{Q}e3$ 10 $\mathbb{W}e2$!) is like the note to 9... $\mathbb{Q}g6$ in G.Shahade-Akopian below) 9 g3! h6 10 $\mathbb{Q}xf6 \mathbb{W}xf6$ 11 $\mathbb{Q}g2$ 0-0 12 0-0 d6 13 $\mathbb{Q}b1$ (D).



The type of position that White is aiming for. His pieces have wonderful range and Black’s knight is restricted by the f4-pawn, whereas the pawns on c3 and c4 are safe from attack. Furthermore Black is forced to create a weakness in order to get developed: 13...c6 14 $\mathbb{W}d2 \mathbb{E}e8$ 15 e4 $\mathbb{Q}f8$ 16 $\mathbb{Q}fe1 \mathbb{Q}d7?$ 17 $\mathbb{Q}f5$ d5 18 cxd5 cxd5, Kottnauer-Euwe, Groningen 1946, and now 19 $\mathbb{W}xd5 \mathbb{Q}b6$ 20 $\mathbb{Q}d4$ leaves White a pawn ahead for nothing.

7 $\mathbb{Q}h4 \mathbb{Q}xc3+$

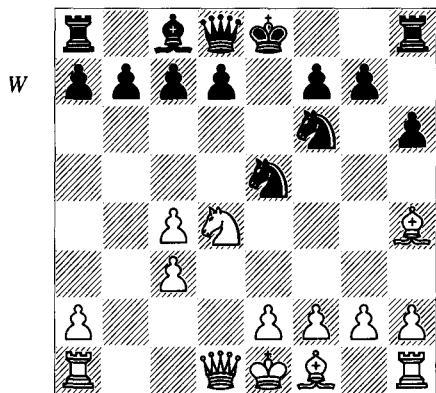
The most frequently played move, introducing a heavyweight struggle between bishops and knights. Black can also play very flexibly by 7...0-0, when I’ll offer a brief analysis of how the game might proceed: 8 $\mathbb{Q}c1$ (8 e3 $\mathbb{E}e8$ 9 $\mathbb{Q}e2 \mathbb{Q}e4$!?) is double-edged 8...d5?! 9 cxd5

(9 $\mathbb{Q}xc6$ bxc6 10 cxd5 cxd5 11 e3 g5 12 $\mathbb{Q}g3$ c5!) 9... $\mathbb{W}xd5$ 10 $\mathbb{Q}xf6$ gxf6 11 $\mathbb{Q}xc6$ $\mathbb{W}xd1+$ 12 $\mathbb{B}xd1$ bxc6 13 e3 $\mathbb{Q}e6$. In spite of his six isolated pawns (four of them doubled!), Black's two bishops and open lines give him plenty of play.

Rather strangely, theory is as yet undeveloped on most lines which are unique to 7...0-0 (rather than 7... $\mathbb{Q}xc3+$).

8 bxc3 $\mathbb{Q}e5$ (D)

Black's alternative 8...d6 has been assigned marks ranging from '!' to '?!'. It tends to drift into other lines, but a non-transpositional issue is 9 $\mathbb{Q}xc6$ bxc6 10 c5!, when some analysis by Carsten Hansen ends in a mild advantage for White.



This is the starting point of the old main line, which has produced some wonderful positional play. We'll look at two games following 8... $\mathbb{Q}e5$.

Botvinnik – Levenfish

USSR Ch, Moscow 1940

1 c4 e5 2 $\mathbb{Q}c3$ $\mathbb{Q}f6$ 3 $\mathbb{Q}f3$ $\mathbb{Q}c6$ 4 d4 exd4 5 $\mathbb{Q}xd4$ $\mathbb{Q}b4$ 6 $\mathbb{Q}g5$ h6 7 $\mathbb{Q}h4$ $\mathbb{Q}xc3+$ 8 bxc3 $\mathbb{Q}e5$ 9 e3

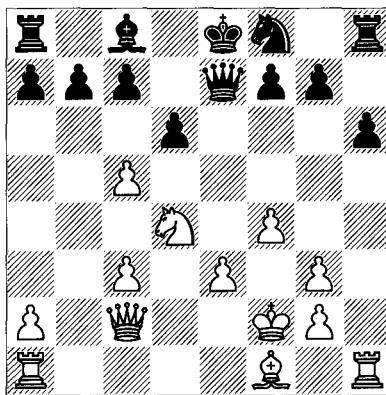
After 9 $\mathbb{Q}b5$ 0-0, the initially attractive 10 $\mathbb{Q}xf6$ gxf6 is a funny-looking position in which White's pieces are far away from Black's weak points. He will try to maintain his spatial edge, while Black will aim for quick development and pressure on the c-pawns. If White decides upon the slower 10 e3, Black might still try to provoke the exchange by 10...a6!?, for example, 11 $\mathbb{Q}xf6$ gxf6 12 $\mathbb{Q}d4$ d5!. That might lead

to 13 $\mathbb{W}b3$ dxc4 14 $\mathbb{Q}xc4$ b5 15 $\mathbb{Q}e2$ c5 16 $\mathbb{Q}f3$ $\mathbb{W}e7$ 17 $\mathbb{Q}c2$ $\mathbb{Q}e6$ with a kind of dynamic equality. These are instructive positions to play about with.

9... $\mathbb{Q}g6$

9...0-0 is a well-known alternative, when White can set up a flexible formation by 10 f3 d6 11 $\mathbb{Q}e2$ $\mathbb{Q}g6$ 12 $\mathbb{Q}f2$; that position can also arise via 8...d6.

10 $\mathbb{Q}g3$ $\mathbb{Q}e4$ 11 $\mathbb{W}c2$ $\mathbb{Q}xg3$ 12 hxg3 d6 13 f4! $\mathbb{W}e7$ 14 $\mathbb{Q}f2$ $\mathbb{Q}f8$ 15 c5! (D)



Just when Black seemed to have consolidated, White finds this line-opening shot.

15...dxc5 16 $\mathbb{Q}b5+$ $\mathbb{Q}d7$

Other possibilities are 16...c6 17 $\mathbb{Q}xc6$, 16... $\mathbb{Q}d8$ 17 $\mathbb{Q}ad1$ cxd4 18 $\mathbb{Q}xd4+$ $\mathbb{Q}d7$ 19 $\mathbb{Q}xd7$ $\mathbb{Q}xd7$ 20 $\mathbb{Q}hd1$, and 16... $\mathbb{Q}d7$ 17 $\mathbb{Q}f5$! $\mathbb{W}f6$ 18 $\mathbb{W}e4+$ $\mathbb{Q}e6$ 19 $\mathbb{Q}xd7+$ $\mathbb{Q}xd7$ 20 $\mathbb{Q}hd1+$ $\mathbb{Q}c8$ 21 $\mathbb{Q}ab1$ with a powerful attack.

17 $\mathbb{Q}f5$ $\mathbb{W}f6$ 18 $\mathbb{Q}ad1$

Winning. Now 19 $\mathbb{W}e4+$ and 20 $\mathbb{Q}xd7$ is a huge threat.

18...g6 19 $\mathbb{Q}xh6$ $\mathbb{Q}f8$ 20 g4 a6 21 g5 $\mathbb{W}e6$ 22 $\mathbb{Q}e2$ $\mathbb{Q}b6$ 23 $\mathbb{Q}g4$ $\mathbb{Q}e7$ 24 $\mathbb{Q}f6$ $\mathbb{W}c6$ 25 $\mathbb{Q}h7$ $\mathbb{Q}f5$ 26 e4 $\mathbb{Q}e6$ 27 f5 1-0

G. Shahade – Akopian

New York 1998

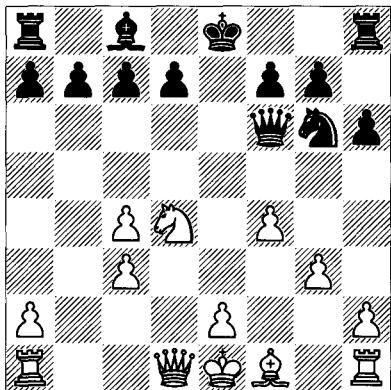
1 c4 e5 2 $\mathbb{Q}c3$ $\mathbb{Q}c6$ 3 $\mathbb{Q}f3$ $\mathbb{Q}f6$ 4 d4 exd4 5 $\mathbb{Q}xd4$ $\mathbb{Q}b4$ 6 $\mathbb{Q}g5$ h6 7 $\mathbb{Q}h4$ $\mathbb{Q}xc3+$ 8 bxc3 $\mathbb{Q}e5$ 9 $\mathbb{Q}g4$

Greed doesn't pay: 9... $\mathbb{Q}xc4$? 10 e4 $\mathbb{Q}e3$ (or 10...d5 11 e5 g5 12 fxg5 $\mathbb{Q}g4$ 13 $\mathbb{Q}xc4$ dxc4 14 0-0 hxg5 15 $\mathbb{W}f3$ $\mathbb{Q}h6$ 16 e6! gxh4 17 exf7+ $\mathbb{Q}f8$ 18 $\mathbb{Q}ae1$ with an unstoppable attack) 11

$\mathbb{W}e2 \mathfrak{Q}xf1?$ (but White is still well on top following 11...g5 12 fxg5 $\mathfrak{Q}fg4$ 13 h3 hxg5 14 $\mathfrak{Q}g3$ with the idea 15 hxg4) 12 e5! 0-0 13 $\mathfrak{Q}f5$ d6 14 $\mathfrak{Q}xf6$ gxf6 15 $\mathbb{W}g4+$ 1-0 Kottnauer-Holas, Zlin 1945.

10 $\mathfrak{Q}xf6$ $\mathbb{W}xf6$ 11 g3 (D)

B



A key position. Notice how Black is a full tempo ahead of Kottnauer-Euwe given in the note to move 6 in the introduction to this section. But White was so well off there that the extra move is still not a guarantee of equality.

11... $\mathfrak{Q}f8!$?

Karpov's exotic idea. Because White has no immediately threatening moves, Black wants to relocate the knight via e6 to c5, the ideal blocking square. This is not possible after castling, although Black found another plan in A.Marić-Galliamova, Women's Candidates, Groningen 1997: 11...0-0 12 $\mathbb{W}d2$ c6 13 $\mathfrak{Q}g2$ b6! (the weakness of the c4-pawn shows up) 14 0-0 $\mathfrak{Q}a6$ 15 e4, and now best is 15... $\mathfrak{Q}xc4$! 16 e5 $\mathbb{W}e7$ with equality.

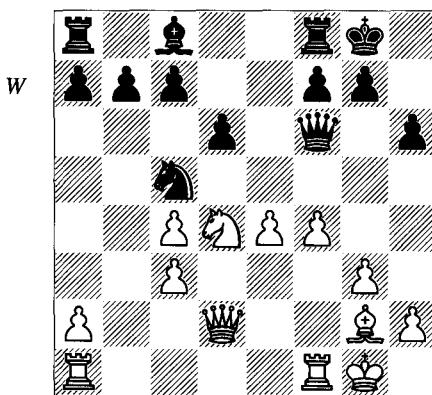
12 $\mathfrak{Q}g2$ $\mathfrak{Q}e6$ 13 e4 d6 14 0-0 0-0 15 $\mathbb{W}d2$ $\mathfrak{Q}c5$ (D)

Black has equalized; his powerful knight and better bishop cancel out White's aggressive pieces and big centre.

16 $\mathfrak{Q}b3$

This innocent move can't be too bad, but has the wrong idea behind it. In the original super-GM game Kramnik-Karpov, Las Palmas 1996, a quick draw followed 16 $\mathbb{Q}ae1$ $\mathbb{Q}b8$ 17 $\mathbb{Q}e3$ $\mathfrak{Q}d7$ 18 $\mathfrak{Q}b3$ $\mathfrak{Q}xb3$!? (paradoxically straightening out White's pawns; 18... $\mathbb{Q}fd8$ is also equal) 19 axb3 $\mathfrak{Q}c6$ 20 $\mathbb{W}d4$ a6! 21 $\mathbb{W}xf6$ ½-½.

16... $\mathfrak{Q}a4!$ 17 $\mathbb{Q}ac1$ $\mathfrak{Q}e6$ 18 $\mathbb{W}d4$ c5!?



18... $\mathbb{Q}fd8$ threatens ...c5 under safer circumstances.

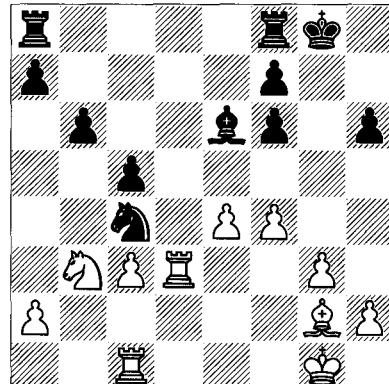
19 $\mathbb{W}xf6$??

White should play the apparently risky 19 $\mathbb{W}xd6$! and mobilize his centre. Then 19... $\mathbb{Q}fd8$ 20 e5! $\mathbb{Q}xd6$ 21 exf6 is unclear in view of 21... $\mathfrak{Q}xc4$ (21... $\mathbb{Q}b8$) 22 $\mathbb{Q}fe1$ $\mathbb{W}xf6$ 23 $\mathbb{Q}e4$!.

19... $\mathfrak{Q}xf6$

An unusual structure. White's queenside pawns are weaker than Black's kingside ones, and e5 is restrained for the moment.

20 $\mathbb{Q}fd1$ $\mathfrak{Q}b2!$ 21 $\mathbb{Q}xd6$ $\mathfrak{Q}xc4$ 22 $\mathbb{Q}d3$ b6! (D)



23 e5

White wins a pawn, but still suffers from a lasting structural deficit, which to some extent rose organically from the opening itself. In the end, Black triumphs with a fine technical display:

23... $\mathbb{Q}ad8$ 24 $\mathbb{Q}xd8$ $\mathbb{Q}xd8$ 25 exf6 $\mathfrak{Q}e3$ 26 $\mathfrak{Q}f3$ $\mathfrak{Q}g4$ 27 $\mathfrak{Q}xg4$ $\mathfrak{Q}xg4$ 28 $\mathbb{Q}c2$ $\mathbb{Q}d3$ 29 c4 $\mathfrak{Q}h7$ 30 $\mathfrak{Q}c1$ $\mathbb{Q}d1+$ 31 $\mathfrak{Q}f2$ $\mathfrak{Q}g6$ 32 $\mathfrak{Q}e2$ $\mathfrak{Q}f5$!

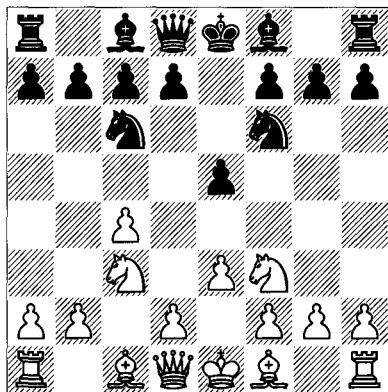
Now we get to see the customary superiority of bishop over knight when there are pawns on both sides of the board.

33 $\mathbb{B}b2$ $\mathbb{A}d3!$? 34 $\mathbb{Q}c3$ $\mathbb{E}f1+$ 35 $\mathbb{Q}g2$ $\mathbb{A}xc4$ 36 $\mathbb{Q}d5$ $\mathbb{E}c1$ 37 $\mathbb{Q}e7+$ $\mathbb{Q}xf6$ 38 $\mathbb{Q}c8$ $\mathbb{E}a1$ 39 $\mathbb{Q}xa7$ $\mathbb{E}xa2$ 40 $\mathbb{E}xa2$ $\mathbb{A}xa2$ 41 $\mathbb{Q}f2$ $\mathbb{Q}e6$ 42 $f5+$ $\mathbb{Q}e5$ 0-1

The Cautious 4 e3

1 c4 e5 2 $\mathbb{Q}c3$ $\mathbb{Q}f6$ 3 $\mathbb{Q}f3$ $\mathbb{Q}c6$ 4 e3 (D)

B



For a long time this safe move was quite popular, since it prepares the highly desirable advance d4. Naturally Black has to be careful, but has positive chances for the usual reason: White has made some rather committal moves which allow Black to react accordingly. In particular, ... $\mathbb{Q}f6$ and ... $e6$ aren't normally used together in the reversed Sicilian position, unless White has already committed to d4. But you can see in the diagram that ... $d5$ hasn't been played.

I'll begin with a game that is perhaps overused as an example of 4... $\mathbb{Q}e7$, but it combines important positional ideas with an instructive attack.

Timman – Karpov
Montreal 1979

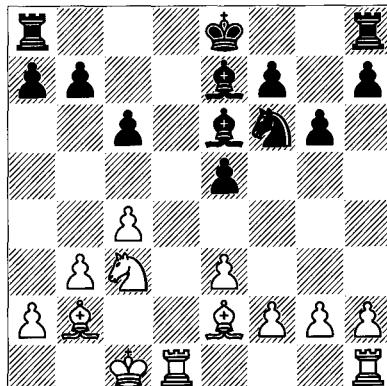
1 c4 $\mathbb{Q}f6$ 2 $\mathbb{Q}c3$ e5 3 $\mathbb{Q}f3$ $\mathbb{Q}c6$ 4 e3 $\mathbb{Q}e7$

a) 4... $d5$ 5 $cxd5$ $\mathbb{Q}xd5$ was discussed at the beginning of Chapter 4. 6 $\mathbb{Q}b5$ has a good reputation for White, but Black seems to be able to equalize. As suggested there, 6 $\mathbb{W}c2$ is more promising.

b) 4... $g6$ 5 d4 $exd4$?! (5... $d6$ transposes to 4... $d6$) 6 $exd4$ (6 $\mathbb{Q}xd4$ $\mathbb{Q}g7$ is passive for White and must be equal) 6... $\mathbb{Q}g7$ 7 d5 $\mathbb{W}e7+?$ 8 $\mathbb{Q}e2$ $\mathbb{Q}xe5$ 9 $\mathbb{Q}xe5$ $\mathbb{W}xe5$ 10 0-0 0-0 11 $\mathbb{Q}e1$ gives White space and the better game.

c) The most logical way to punish a slower move such as 4... $d6$ is to play actively by 5 d4, but it will be hard to break down Black's solid structure after 5... $g6$ 6 $dxe5$ (nothing else impresses; 6 d5 $\mathbb{Q}e7$ 7 e4 $\mathbb{Q}g7$ looks like a King's Indian Defence a tempo ahead for Black: White has played e3-e4, and thus is short of the normal move $\mathbb{Q}e2$; maybe he could use the fact that the bishop is on f1 to play 8 h3! with an unusual mix of plans that appear in other King's Indian Variations) 6... $\mathbb{Q}xe5$ 7 $\mathbb{Q}xe5$ $dxe5$ 8 $\mathbb{W}xd8+$ $\mathbb{Q}xd8$ 9 b3! $\mathbb{Q}e6$!? (9... $c6$! 10 $\mathbb{Q}b2$ $\mathbb{Q}d6$ 11 $\mathbb{Q}d1$ $\mathbb{Q}e7$ looks like the ideal piece reorganization) 10 $\mathbb{Q}b2$ c6 11 0-0-0+ $\mathbb{Q}e8$ (11... $\mathbb{Q}c7$? would be consistent with Black's last two moves, but then comes 12 $\mathbb{Q}b5+!$) 12 $\mathbb{Q}e2$ $\mathbb{Q}e7$ (D).

W

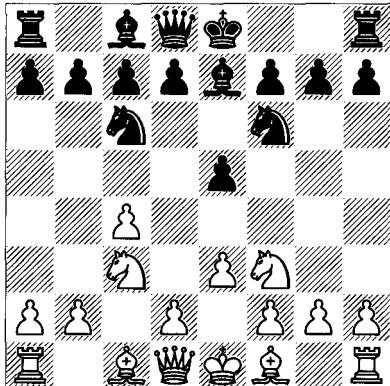


This was played in Illescas-Karpov, Villarrobledo (rapid) 1997. Now, instead of the game continuation 13 h3 $\mathbb{Q}d8$ with equality, Illescas suggests the ingenious 13 $\mathbb{Q}b1!$ $\mathbb{Q}d7$ 14 $\mathbb{Q}d2$, hoping to put pressure on the diagonal via $\mathbb{Q}e4$ and looking at the d6-square. Black would be only slightly worse after 14... $f6$ 15 $\mathbb{Q}e4$ (15 $f4$ $exf4$ 16 $exf4$ $\mathbb{Q}f7$ 17 $\mathbb{Q}f3$ $\mathbb{Q}ad8$ 18 $\mathbb{Q}d4$ $\mathbb{Q}c5$ 19 $\mathbb{Q}xe6$ $\mathbb{Q}xe6$ 20 g3 $\mathbb{Q}c5$ and Black's d4 outpost neutralizes the bishops) 15... $\mathbb{Q}c5$ 16 $\mathbb{Q}d6+$ $\mathbb{Q}xd6$ 17 $\mathbb{Q}xd6$ $\mathbb{Q}f7$ 18 f3.

Now we return to the position after 4... $\mathbb{Q}e7$ (D).

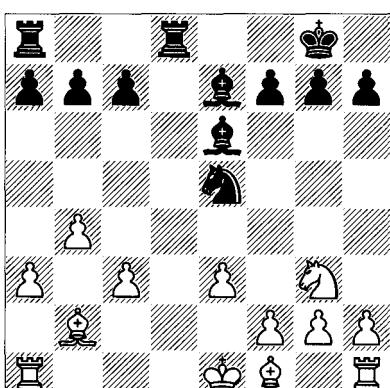
5 d4

W



5 a3 is a popular and less committal option which doesn't contain much force; for example, 5...0-0 6 b4 (6 $\mathbb{Q}c2$ $\mathbb{E}e8$ 7 $\mathbb{Q}d3!$? $\mathbb{Q}f8$ 8 b3 d6 9 $\mathbb{Q}b2$ is a more provocative set-up, especially in the case of 9...g6 10 h4?!? with the idea of $\mathbb{Q}g5$ and then $\mathbb{Q}d5$) 6...d5! 7 cxd5 (7 b5 can be met by 7...d4! 8 bxc6 dxc3 9 $\mathbb{Q}xe5$ $\mathbb{Q}d6$!) 7... $\mathbb{Q}xd5$ 8 $\mathbb{Q}b2$ $\mathbb{Q}xc3$ 9 dxc3?! (9 $\mathbb{Q}xc3$ might be answered by 9...e4 10 b5 exf3 11 bxc6 fxg2 12 $\mathbb{Q}xg2$ b6; then White has a mobile centre whereas Black combines a better structure with light-square play) 9...e4 10 $\mathbb{Q}xd8$ $\mathbb{Q}xd8$ 11 $\mathbb{Q}d2$ $\mathbb{Q}e5$! (this remarkable pawn sacrifice comes from nowhere! Also good, if less ambitious, is 11... $\mathbb{Q}f5$ 12 c4 $\mathbb{Q}d6$) 12 $\mathbb{Q}xe4$ $\mathbb{Q}f5$ (or 12... $\mathbb{Q}e6$!) 13 $\mathbb{Q}g3$?! (the best try is 13 c4! $\mathbb{Q}d3+$ 14 $\mathbb{Q}xd3$ $\mathbb{Q}xd3$ 15 $\mathbb{Q}g3$) 13... $\mathbb{Q}e6$! (D).

W



This position explains the pawn sacrifice initiated with 11... $\mathbb{Q}e5$. The threat of ... $\mathbb{Q}c4$ is serious, and White's bishop on b2 is awful. Agrest-Anand, Villarrobledo (rapid) 2001 went 14 f4?! $\mathbb{Q}g4$ 15 f5 $\mathbb{Q}b3$ 16 e4 $\mathbb{Q}e3$. The opening

has ended in a complete success for Black, who went on to win.

5... $\mathbb{Q}xd4$ 6 $\mathbb{Q}xd4$

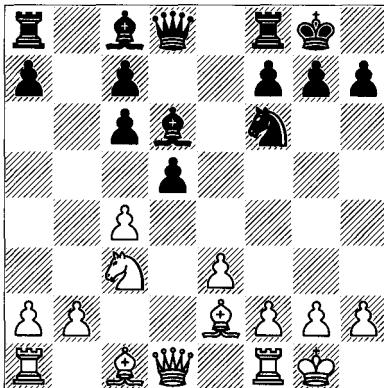
6 exd4 d5 7 $\mathbb{Q}g5$ tries to conquer d5, but unsuccessfully, in view of 7...0-0! 8 $\mathbb{Q}xf6$ $\mathbb{Q}xf6$ 9 cxd5 (9 $\mathbb{Q}xd5$ $\mathbb{Q}g4$! 10 $\mathbb{Q}e2$ $\mathbb{Q}xf3$! 11 $\mathbb{Q}xf3$ $\mathbb{Q}e8+$ 12 $\mathbb{Q}f1$ $\mathbb{Q}xd4$ gives Black a hefty advantage because White has serious weaknesses and his king is stuck on a terrible square) 9... $\mathbb{Q}e8+$ 10 $\mathbb{Q}e2$ $\mathbb{Q}b4$ 11 0-0 1/2-1/2 Ibragimov-Iliushin, Russian Clubs Cup, Maikop 1998. In fact, Black has two bishops and a moderate advantage after 11... $\mathbb{Q}xd5$.

6...0-0 7 $\mathbb{Q}xc6$

7 $\mathbb{Q}e2$ d5! is consistent with Black's idea: quick development and a central break. Play can go 8 cxd5 $\mathbb{Q}b4$! with the idea 9 e4? $\mathbb{Q}xe4$! 10 $\mathbb{Q}xe4$ $\mathbb{Q}xd5$ 11 $\mathbb{Q}f3?$ $\mathbb{Q}xd4$! 12 $\mathbb{Q}xd4$ $\mathbb{Q}c2+$ 13 $\mathbb{Q}d2$ $\mathbb{Q}xd4$. Naturally a move like 9 $\mathbb{Q}f3$ is better, and equal.

7... $\mathbb{Q}xc6$ 8 $\mathbb{Q}e2$ d5 9 0-0 $\mathbb{Q}d6$ (D)

W



Now that the centre is secured, Black feels that he has time to aim his bishop at the king-side. Notice that White lacks a defending knight there.

10 b3

These days 10 cxd5 is generally preferred, when Black remains comfortable after 10...cxd5 11 b3!? c6 or 11...c5.

10... $\mathbb{Q}e7$ 11 $\mathbb{Q}b2$

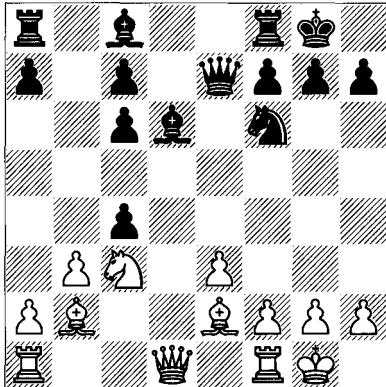
It's too late for 11 cxd5?? $\mathbb{Q}e5$.

11... $\mathbb{Q}xc4$! (D)

Either White abandons g4 to a black piece or opens the way for an attack on the dark squares, as follows in the game.

12 $\mathbb{Q}xc4$??

W



It's better, although difficult, to abandon the kingside by means of 12... $\mathbb{Q}xc4$. Then after 12... $\mathbb{Q}g4!$ 13 g3 (13 h3? $\mathbb{W}e5$ 14 g3 $\mathbb{Q}xe3$), Black has 13... $\mathbb{Q}e5!$ 14 $\mathbb{Q}e2$ $\mathbb{Q}f5!$, hitting the weakness at d3.

12... $\mathbb{Q}b8!$ 13 $\mathbb{W}c1$

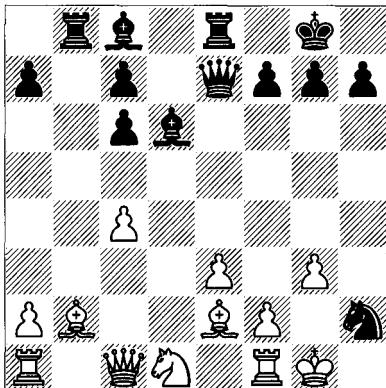
White surrenders his control of g4, because 13 $\mathbb{R}b1$ is met by 13... $\mathbb{R}xb2!$ 14 $\mathbb{R}xb2$ $\mathbb{W}e5$ 15 g3 $\mathbb{W}xc3$, winning material. This simple fork is the main idea behind 11...dxc4.

13... $\mathbb{Q}g4$ 14 g3?

Kasparov gives 14 $\mathbb{Q}xg4$ $\mathbb{Q}xg4$ 15 h3 $\mathbb{Q}h5!$ 16 $\mathbb{Q}a4$ c5 17 $\mathbb{Q}c3$ $\mathbb{R}fe8$ as the lesser evil.

14... $\mathbb{R}e8!$ 15 $\mathbb{Q}d1?$ $\mathbb{Q}xh2!$ (D)

W



16 c5 $\mathbb{Q}xf1!$ 17 cxd6 $\mathbb{Q}xg3!$

A wonderful combination anticipated by 14... $\mathbb{R}e8$. Because of the fork on e2, White has no time to capture the queen, and his kingside is decimated.

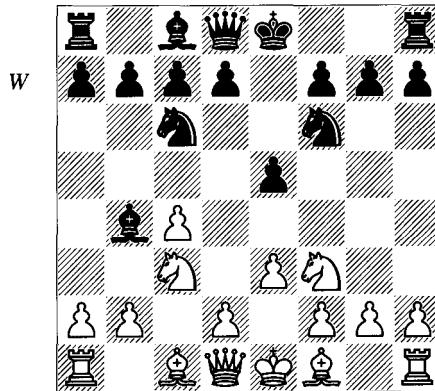
18 fxg3 $\mathbb{W}xd6$ 19 $\mathbb{Q}f2$ $\mathbb{W}h6$ 20 $\mathbb{Q}d4$ $\mathbb{W}h2+$ 21 $\mathbb{Q}e1$ $\mathbb{W}xg3+$ 22 $\mathbb{Q}d2$ $\mathbb{W}g2$ 23 $\mathbb{Q}b2$ $\mathbb{Q}a6$ 24 $\mathbb{Q}d3$ $\mathbb{Q}xd3$ 25 $\mathbb{Q}xd3$ $\mathbb{R}bd8$ 26 $\mathbb{Q}f1$ $\mathbb{W}e4+$ 27

$\mathbb{Q}c3$ c5! 28 $\mathbb{Q}xc5$ $\mathbb{W}c6$ 29 $\mathbb{Q}b3$ $\mathbb{R}b8+$ 30 $\mathbb{Q}a3$ $\mathbb{R}e5$ 31 $\mathbb{Q}b4$ $\mathbb{W}b6$ 0-1

Ivanchuk – Kariakin

Wijk aan Zee 2006

1 c4 e5 2 $\mathbb{Q}c3$ $\mathbb{Q}f6$ 3 $\mathbb{Q}f3$ $\mathbb{Q}c6$ 4 e3 $\mathbb{Q}b4$ (D)



As in almost every 2 $\mathbb{Q}c3$ $\mathbb{Q}f6$ variation we have seen, this move is an important option. Given the extent of theory and practice associated with 4... $\mathbb{Q}b4$, I've only looked at a few directions of play, and you are encouraged to research the missing details.

5 $\mathbb{W}c2$

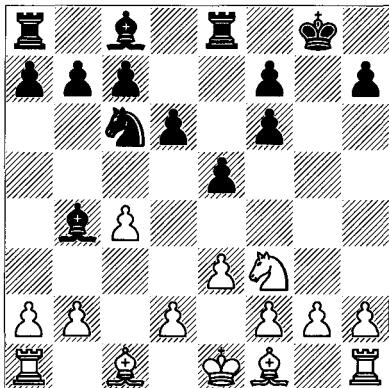
Formerly, 5 $\mathbb{Q}d5$ e4 6 $\mathbb{Q}g1$ 0-0 7 a3 $\mathbb{Q}d6!$ 8 $\mathbb{Q}e2$ was held to promise some advantage, but a simple solution is 8... $\mathbb{Q}xd5$ 9 cxd5 $\mathbb{Q}e5$ 10 $\mathbb{Q}g3$ f5 11 d3. Now 11... $\mathbb{Q}xd3+$ 12 $\mathbb{Q}xd3$ exd3 13 $\mathbb{W}xd3$ $\mathbb{W}f6$ is a known remedy, but 11... $\mathbb{W}h4$ 12 dxе4 fxе4 is also promising.

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

This move largely took over from 5...0-0 6 $\mathbb{Q}d5$ $\mathbb{R}e8$, when White hasn't achieved much with conventional moves, but the strange-looking 7 $\mathbb{W}f5!$? d6 8 $\mathbb{Q}xf6+$ poses more problems whichever way Black recaptures. 8...gxе6 9 $\mathbb{W}h5$ (or 9 $\mathbb{W}c2$) produces some theoretically dense lines which are fascinating but don't intersect much with other openings or typical positions; I won't go into them here. The endgame resulting from 8... $\mathbb{W}xf6$ 9 $\mathbb{W}xf6$ gxе6 (D) has also been deeply investigated.

One might think that White should be favoured owing to Black's f-pawns, but they strengthen his centre and are potentially mobile. White's best chance is to occupy f5 and/or

W



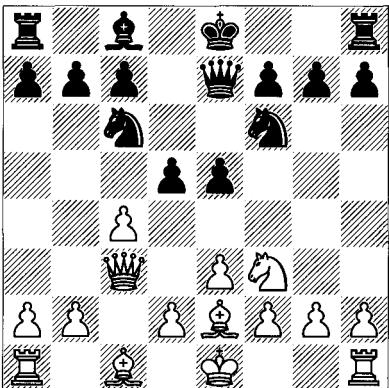
reach a highly simplified ending, but neither of these is likely to occur if Black is careful. The most popular line goes 10 a3 ♜a5 11 b4 ♜b6 12 ♜b2 a5 13 b5, when, for example, nothing dramatic was happening after 13...♝e7 14 d4 a4 (to give the bishop access to a5 in situations where c5 is playable) 15 0-0-0 ♜g6 in Agrest-Akopian, New York 1998.

I'll leave it to the reader to investigate 5...0-0; it's been out of favour long enough that some fresh discoveries are overdue!

6 ♜xc3 ♜e7 7 a3

The traditional move here. Following 7 ♜e2 d5 (*D*), White has several ways to sidestep the standard continuation 8 cxd5 ♜xd5:

W



a) The Sicilian formation 8 d3 0-0 9 cxd5 ♜xd5 10 ♜c2 is playable, but both 10...♝f5!? 11 e4 ♜db4 12 ♜c3 ♜d4! and 10...♜db4! 11 ♜c3 ♜d8 grant Black good chances.

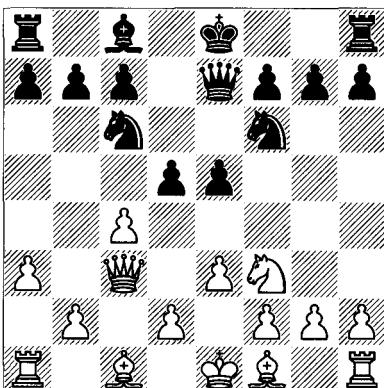
b) 8 0-0 d4 9 exd4 exd4 10 ♜b3 0-0 and now in Short-Morozevich, Sarajevo 2007, White tried 11 ♜e1?! ♜g4 12 ♜d1 ♜d6 13 d3 ♜d7!

14 ♜d2 a5 and Black was doing very well. But White also has 11 d3! (with the idea 11...♜xe2? 12 ♜e1) 11...♜e8 (11...♝g4!?) 12 ♜d2 b6 13 ♜ae1 ♜b7, when Carsten Hansen suggests the odd 14 ♜b5!? ♜d7 15 ♜g5. In general, these lines appear to be dynamically balanced and open to creative interpretation.

7...d5 (*D*)

It turns out that 7...a5 doesn't serve its intended function of preventing 8 b4, because that move favours White; for example, 8...axb4 9 axb4 ♜xa1 10 ♜xal e4 11 b5 exf3 12 bxc6 fxg2 13 cxd7+ ♜xd7 14 ♜xg2 0-0 15 ♜b2 with superb bishops.

W



8 d4!

White has to be wary about exposing his light-square weaknesses; for example, 8 cxd5 ♜xd5 9 ♜b3 ♜b6 10 d3 a5! intends ...a4 with a positional advantage; the moves ...♜e6 and ...♝a5 may follow.

8...exd4 9 ♜xd4 ♜xd4

9...♝e5!? 10 cxd5 ♜xd5 is also played.

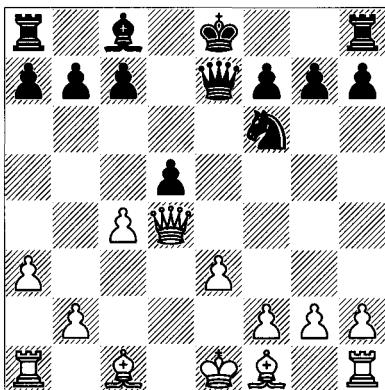
10 ♜xd4 (*D*)

10...c5

After the older move 10...0-0, White can play 11 c5! (11 cxd5 ♜d8!) 11...b6 12 b4 bxc5 13 bxc5, when Black has to move fast before the enemy bishops come into play. He couldn't find a way to equalize in Seirawan-Winants, Dutch Team Ch 2005/6, which continued 13...♜b8 14 ♜b2 ♜e6 15 ♜d3 ♜a6 16 ♜c2! ♜c4 17 ♜c3 ♜fe8 18 h3 h6 19 g4 ♜a6 20 h4, and White's combination of the bishop-pair and space proved deadly even in the ending that Black managed to reach.

11 ♜h4 ♜e6

B



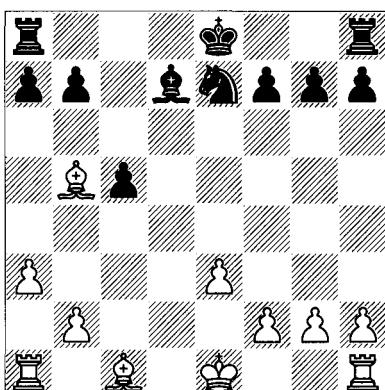
Black makes a surprisingly critical choice. He sometimes plays 11...dxc4 12 ♜xc4 0-0 13 0-0 ♜e6 in order to trade off a pair of bishops. But the most provocative alternative is the pseudo-gambit 11...g5!? 12 ♜xg5 ♜g8 13 ♜f4 (White accedes to a draw after 13 ♜h4 ♜g4 14 ♜h6 ♜g6; here 14...dxc4 is a winning attempt for Black) 13...♜g4 14 ♜f3 dxc4 (14...♜e6!? 15 b3!? dxc4 16 ♜b2 ♜e4 is hard to assess) 15 h3 ♜e4 and Black has satisfactory play with ...♜d7-c6 coming; for example, 16 ♜e2 ♜d7 17 ♜d2 0-0-0 18 0-0-0 ♜a4 19 ♜f5+ ♜d7 20 ♜f3 ♜a4 with repetition. This line utilizes Black's lead in development and prevents White from consolidating his long-term advantage of the bishops. It should see more tests.

12 cxd5 ♜xd5

12...♜xd5 may be preferable, when White can play ambitiously by f3, ♜e2 and e4, but he risks losing too much time.

13 ♜xe7+ ♜xe7 14 ♜b5+ ♜d7 (D)

W



15 ♜e2!

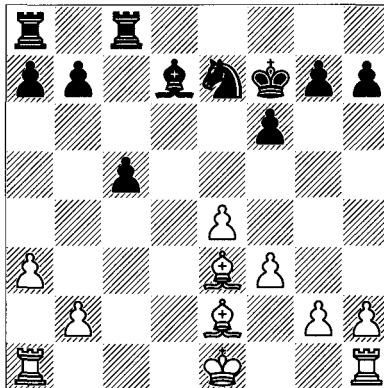
White preserves his bishop-pair. You'd think that Black would have few problems at this stage, but White has the dual strategy of minority attack by b4 and control of the centre by e4, whereas Black has no concrete plan.

15...f6

15...a5 16 e4 a4 17 ♜e3 b6 was suggested, but White retains his bishops and mobile kingside majority, while Black's own queenside majority remains without prospects.

16 e4 ♜f7 17 ♜e3 ♜hc8 18 f3 (D)

B



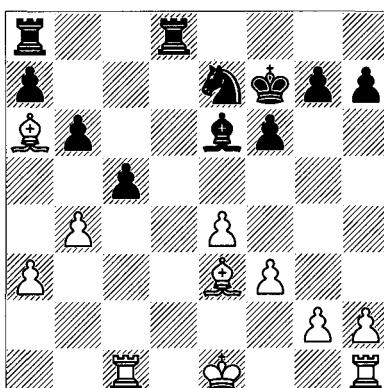
This position bears a look. The bishops both have excellent scope and coordinate in tandem. There doesn't seem to be any way to exploit White's weaknesses on d3 and d4.

18...♜e6?!

Black is waiting around, which is generally a poor policy versus the bishop-pair. Probably 18...f5 was the best way to disturb the equilibrium, trying to gain better squares for his knight. From this point on, White is clearly better.

19 ♜c1 b6 20 ♜a6 ♜d8 21 b4! (D)

B



21...cxb4 22 axb4 ♜c8 23 ♜e2 ♜e6 24 ♜f2
♜ac8 25 ♜a1

Or 25 ♜a6 ♜xc1 26 ♜xc1 and Black's pieces have no squares. This is the point at which White would open a second front on the kingside.

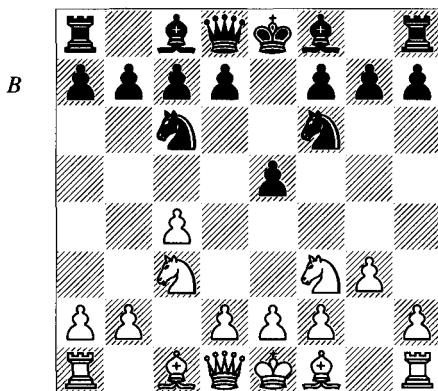
25...♜c6 26 ♜a6 ♜b8 27 ♜b5! ♜xb4 28
♜xa7+ ♜g8 29 ♜e7 ♜f7 30 ♜a1

Compare the pieces and you can see that the game is over. Black must jettison the b6-pawn so as not to allow 31 ♜a7. White went on to win relatively easily.

The Main Line: 4 g3

Ivanchuk – Anand
Wijk aan Zee 1999

1 c4 e5 2 ♜c3 ♜f6 3 ♜f3 ♜c6 4 g3 (D)



Finally we arrive at the move that most grandmasters play. White's idea should be obvious by now: to control the h1-a8 diagonal, get castled, and attack in the centre or on the queenside. Out of an enormous mass of games and theory, I shall emphasize material with recurring positional and tactical themes.

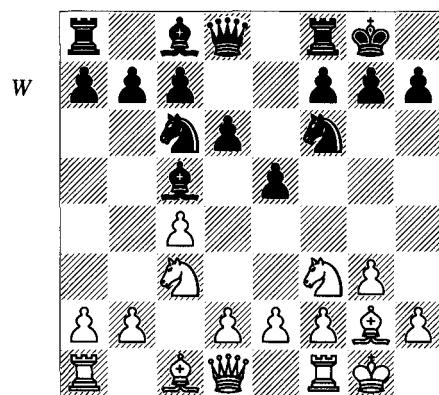
4...♜c5

Although 4...♜b4 has dominated high-level play, and 4...d5 is also popular, 4...♜c5 is logical and has had good success. If White plays positionally, he can gain a slight central advantage, but only by giving Black's pieces active squares in return.

5 ♜xe5!?

Many players have found this radical solution to be more to their taste than the calmer

alternative 5 ♜g2, when Black has generally held his own over the years. After that move follows 5...d6 6 0-0 0-0 (D).



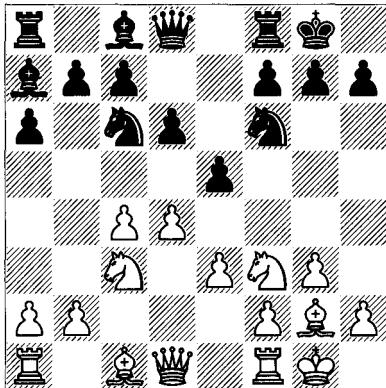
Then White has two main (and sometimes similar) approaches:

a) 7 d3 a6 (7...h6 is fully playable but unnecessary) 8 ♜g5 (8 e3 is slow and gives Black time to consolidate; for example, 8...h6 9 b3 ♜a7 10 ♜b2 ♜b8! 11 h3 b5 12 ♜c1 ♜d7, Gulko-Wolff, USA Ch, Modesto 1995; the idea of ...♜b8 and ...b5 is a recurring theme and prevents White from undertaking anything aggressive for fear of Black opening lines by ...bx_c4) 8...h6 9 ♜xf6 (9 ♜h4?! hopes for 9...g5 10 ♜xg5! with a strong attack, but 9...♜d4 10 ♜xf6 ♜xf6 11 ♜e4 ♜e7 12 ♜xc5 dxc5 is a sound structure because of Black's restraint of d4, Onishchuk-Sadler, Elista Olympiad 1998) 9...♜xf6 10 ♜e4?! ♜e7 11 ♜xc5 dxc5, Gulko-Waitzkin, USA Ch, Modesto 1995. With this typical pawn-structure it's hard for White to take positive action, and he even has to be a little careful about ...b5 or ...f5 at some point.

b) 7 e3 a6 8 d4 ♜a7 (D) is a standard position.

White's dilemma is that the moves d5 and dx_e5 both extend the range of the bishop on a7. Right away, Black would like to play 9...♜g4, putting pressure on d4, so 9 h3 is usually played. It can be met by 9...h6 (9...♜b8 with the idea ...b5 is another reasonable plan; or 9...♜f5 10 b3 h6 11 ♜b2 ♜e8, when Black is getting serious about ...e4) 10 b3 ♜e8 11 ♜a3?! (11 d5?! ♜e7 12 e4 gains space, but reopens the diagonal of the black bishop on a7) 11...exd4 12 ♜xd4 ♜xd4 13 exd4 ♜b8! 14 ♜d3 ♜d7 15 ♜fe1 b5,

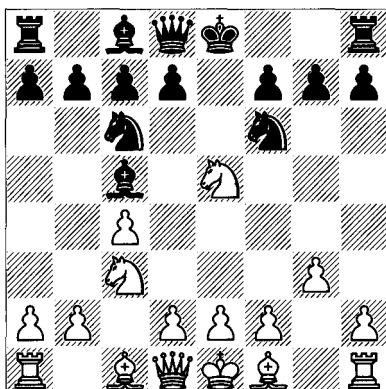
W



Timman-Sadvakasov, Hoogeveen 1999. Black's dynamic play counteracts White's bigger centre.

We return to 5 $\mathbb{Q}xe5$ (D):

B



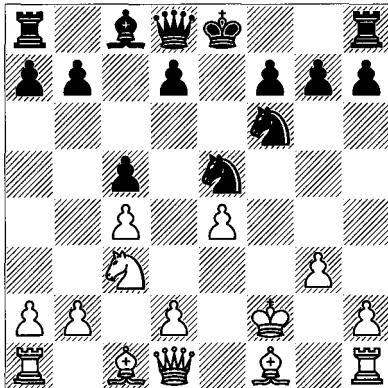
5... $\mathbb{Q}xf2+$ 6 $\mathbb{Q}xf2$ $\mathbb{Q}xe5$ 7 e4

I'm not sure why 7 d4 $\mathbb{Q}xc4$ 8 e4! has so seldom been played. It may be underrated for White. The game becomes dynamic and unclear following 8...d5 9 exd5! (9 e5 $\mathbb{Q}g4+$ 10 $\mathbb{Q}g1$ c5!) 9... $\mathbb{Q}b6$ (alternatively, 9... $\mathbb{Q}d6!$? 10 $\mathbb{Q}e2+$ $\mathbb{Q}f8$ leaves both kings ready to castle by hand; the game is about equal after 11 $\mathbb{Q}f4$ h5!?, which looks a little strange, but strengthens Black's grip on g4, leaves open the option of ...h4, and provides a square for the king on h7) 10 $\mathbb{Q}b5+$ $\mathbb{Q}f8$ 11 $\mathbb{Q}e1$ $\mathbb{Q}bx d5$ 12 $\mathbb{Q}b3$ c6 13 $\mathbb{Q}c4$ h5!? with an unclear position in which ...h4 and ... $\mathbb{Q}b6$ are themes.

7...c5 (D)

Black discourages d4 and sets up another imbalance between bishops and knights, space, and other dynamic factors.

W

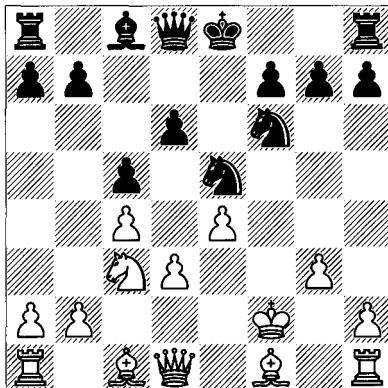


8 d4!?

For many years this move was entirely ignored, since it isolates White's e-pawn. Now it has put some players off 4... $\mathbb{Q}c5$ altogether! White's idea is simply to get his pieces out while exerting pressure down the d-file and maintaining a space advantage.

White has various slower moves. He can play 8 $\mathbb{Q}e2$, for example, covering g4. For his part, Black can insert ...0-0 and/or ...a6 before committing to ...d6. However, it turns out that the positional themes tend to be similar regardless of move-order, so I'm only going to look at the traditional main line 8 d3 (8 h3 d6 9 d3 will transpose) 8...d6 (D).

W



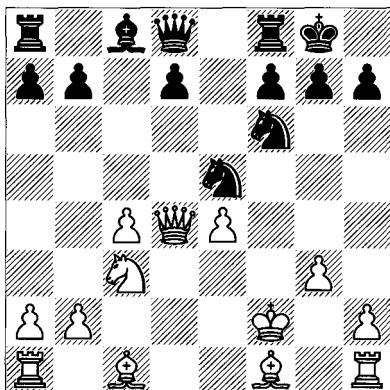
Black's obvious intent is to control the outpost on d4, at the same time using the pseudo-outpost on e5 for his pieces. White wishes to develop as actively as possible and use his good bishop to make threats, normally in conjunction with play down the f-file and/or a break with b4. In addition, he has an outpost on d5,

which in comparison with Black's on d4 is somewhat difficult to make use of, because he hasn't another piece to support it.

White generally covers g4 first by 9 h3, and after 9...0-0, Black has a number of possible plans, but the time-tested idea of ... $\mathbb{Q}e8-c7-e6$ almost always seems a good remedy. For example, 10 $\mathbb{Q}g2$ (or 10 $\mathbb{Q}g2$ $\mathbb{Q}e8$ 11 $\mathbb{B}f1$ $\mathbb{Q}c7$ 12 $\mathbb{Q}g1$ $\mathbb{Q}e6$ with equal chances) 10... $\mathbb{Q}e8$ 11 $\mathbb{Q}e2$ $\mathbb{Q}c7$ 12 g4?! (this doesn't really do much, especially as ...f5 is not Black's plan; better is 12 $\mathbb{Q}e3$ $\mathbb{Q}e6$ 13 $\mathbb{Q}d5$ $\mathbb{Q}c6$, Garcia Gonzales-Uhlmann, Leipzig 1973, and now White should consider exchanging off his bad bishop by 14 $\mathbb{Q}g4$, because 14 $\mathbb{W}d2$ $\mathbb{Q}ed4$ 15 $\mathbb{Q}h5$ $\mathbb{B}b8$ gives Black excellent queenside prospects) 12... $\mathbb{Q}e6$ 13 $\mathbb{Q}e3$ a6!? (attack with ...b5 is part of Black's arsenal; he can also play simply 13... $\mathbb{Q}c6$ and ... $\mathbb{Q}ed4$, followed by a similar queenside expansion) 14 $\mathbb{W}d2$ $\mathbb{B}b8$ 15 $\mathbb{Q}d5$ b5 16 b3 $\mathbb{Q}d4$!? 17 $\mathbb{Q}d1$ $\mathbb{Q}e6$! with a pleasant advantage, Garcia Martinez-Boey, Skopje Olympiad 1972. White hasn't a very constructive plan, and he has to watch out for a well-timed ... $\mathbb{Q}xd5$.

8... $\mathbb{Q}xd4$ 9 $\mathbb{W}xd4$ 0-0 (D)

W



Now White can't play 10 $\mathbb{W}xe5$?? $\mathbb{Q}g4+$, of course, but he has got quite a bit of traction from these positions. Along with the two bishops and pressure against Black's weak d-pawn, the open f-file and outpost on d5 can come in handy. It's worth noting, however, that Black has his own trumps, most importantly a wonderful knight on an outpost square that is in front of an isolated pawn on an open file! Furthermore, his remaining bishop is a good one, which can exert pressure on that weak e-pawn.

In those respects, his position resembles a Sicilian Defence. Notice that Black's two knights, rook and queen are poised to maintain a piece on e5 after exchanges, whereas White sometimes has to recapture with a pawn in response to a piece exchange on d5. Although White can exert a degree of pressure in this position, I think that it is acceptable for Black.

10 $\mathbb{Q}f4$

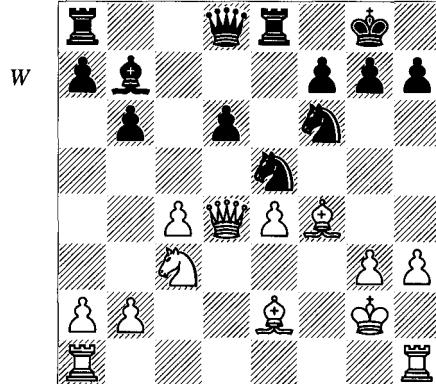
10 $\mathbb{Q}g2$ has also been played, when I think a good plan is 10...d6 11 h3 (11 $\mathbb{Q}g5$ $\mathbb{Q}g4$! 11...b6!, targeting the e-pawn.

10...d6 11 h3

11 $\mathbb{Q}g2$? $\mathbb{Q}g4$! threatens ... $\mathbb{Q}f3+$.

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

This innocent-looking move seems to lead to some edge for White. It looks better to maintain some pressure against the e4-pawn by means of 11... $\mathbb{Q}e8$ 12 $\mathbb{Q}g2$ (12 $\mathbb{Q}d1$!?) runs into 12... $\mathbb{W}a5$! with the idea 13 $\mathbb{W}xd6$? $\mathbb{W}xc3$! 14 bxc3 $\mathbb{Q}xe4$ + 15 $\mathbb{Q}g1$ $\mathbb{Q}xd6$ 16 $\mathbb{Q}xd6$ $\mathbb{Q}g6$ and Black has the upper hand; after the better 13 $\mathbb{Q}g2$, Black has 13... $\mathbb{Q}d7$! with ... $\mathbb{Q}c6$ next) 12...b6! 13 $\mathbb{Q}e2$ $\mathbb{Q}b7$ (D).



Black's attack is more effective than White's, especially as White's king is exposed.

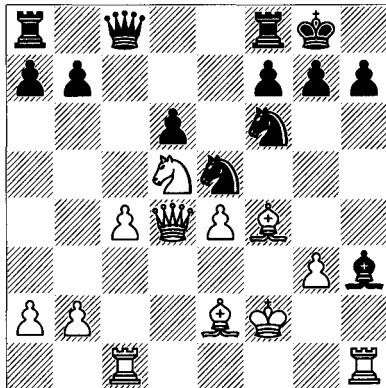
12 $\mathbb{Q}e2$ $\mathbb{Q}c8$!?

Now the queen attacks the pawns on h3 and c4, but it is not ideally placed.

13 $\mathbb{Q}ac1$! $\mathbb{Q}xh3$! 14 $\mathbb{Q}d5$ (D)

15 $\mathbb{Q}e7+$ is threatened, and 14... $\mathbb{Q}xd5$? 15 $\mathbb{Q}xd5$ $\mathbb{W}d7$ 16 $\mathbb{Q}xe5$! $dxe5$ 17 $\mathbb{Q}xe5$ is too strong ($\mathbb{W}h5$ would be the immediate threat). So Black gives up the exchange, getting some real compensation for it, although White could have kept some advantage in what followed:

B



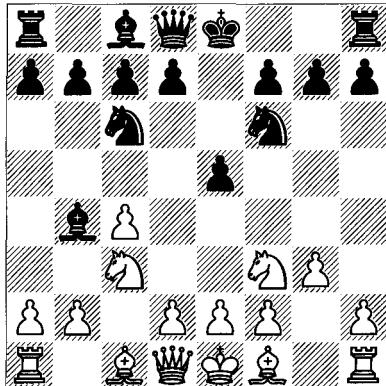
14... $\mathbb{W}e6$ 15 $\mathbb{Q}c7$ $\mathbb{W}e7$ 16 $\mathbb{Q}xa8$ $\mathbb{Q}c6!$ 17 $\mathbb{W}e3$ $\mathbb{Q}xe4+$ 18 $\mathbb{Q}f3?!$ $\mathbb{Q}f5!$ 19 $\mathbb{Q}d3$ $\mathbb{W}e8!$ 20 $\mathbb{Q}he1$ $\mathbb{W}d8$ 21 $\mathbb{Q}g2$ $\mathbb{W}xa8$ 22 $\mathbb{W}f3$ $\mathbb{Q}d4$ 23 $\mathbb{W}e3$ $\mathbb{Q}c6$ 24 $\mathbb{W}f3$ ½-½

With accurate play, I think Black stands satisfactorily in this 5 $\mathbb{Q}xe5$ variation. Of course, White has a variety of ways to dispute that statement, and some original analysis would be both educational and useful.

4... $\mathbb{Q}b4$ and its Descendants

1 c4 e5 2 $\mathbb{Q}c3$ $\mathbb{Q}f6$ 3 $\mathbb{Q}f3$ $\mathbb{Q}c6$ 4 g3 $\mathbb{Q}b4$ (D)

W



As in other variations of the English Four Knights, 4... $\mathbb{Q}b4$ is the theoretically most advanced and complex answer to 4 g3. Some people consider it the main line of the entire Reversed Sicilian, which is hard to argue with. As we see with other lines involving ... $\mathbb{Q}b4$, the simple development of a bishop spawns an astonishing number of unique situations. My aim

is to find unity where I can by relating similar structures.

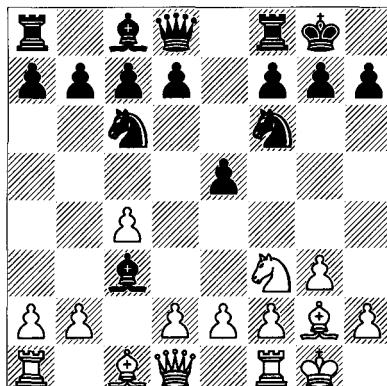
5 $\mathbb{Q}g2$

For reasons of space, I'm going to forego a treatment of the moves 5 $\mathbb{Q}d5$ and 5 $\mathbb{Q}g2$ 0-0 6 $\mathbb{Q}d5$. Some specialists use one or the other, primarily as a way to steer clear of main lines and perhaps to play with less risk as White. This may come at the cost of reducing one's winning chances, because according to current theory Black has some fairly clear solutions that permit him to equalize without too much trouble. That is not to say that he shouldn't study these lines in order to be prepared, nor that White won't want to investigate them for potential use as a surprise weapon.

5...0-0 6 0-0

At this point Black's main moves are 6... $\mathbb{W}e8$ and 6... $e4$. In fact, other moves are legitimate, and the subtleties of move-order, including transpositions, are too complicated to go into here (nor are they well covered in theory books). But I think that it's worth thinking about the effects of playing 6... $\mathbb{Q}xc3$ (D), which is a reasonably good move in and of itself, but also a very instructive one.

W

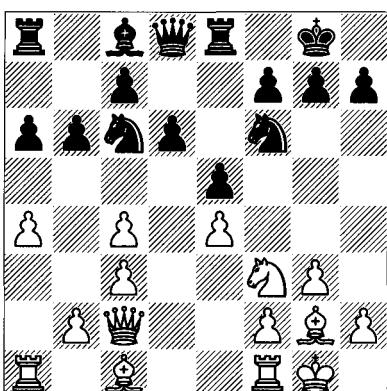


Black's two recaptures illustrate the overlap of this ... $\mathbb{Q}b4$ system with earlier ones in this book:

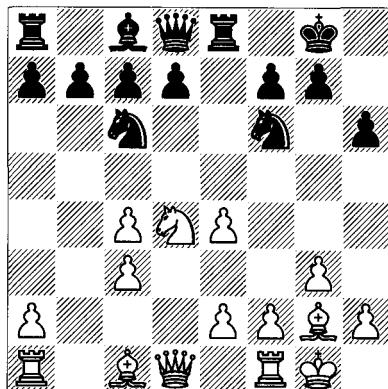
- a) After 7 dx c 3, 7... $e4$ 8 $\mathbb{Q}e1$ transposes to a main line below, but here Black can play solidly by 7... $d6$, when White will have difficulties breaking down Black's centre. For example, 8 $\mathbb{W}c2$ (White wants to get $e4$ in; the alternative 8 $\mathbb{Q}e1$ $\mathbb{Q}e6$ 9 $b3$ $\mathbb{W}d7$ 10 $\mathbb{Q}c2$ $\mathbb{Q}h3$ 11 $\mathbb{Q}e3$ $\mathbb{Q}xg2$ 12 $\mathbb{Q}xg2$ $\mathbb{Q}e7$ gives Black at least equality; for

example, 13 $\mathbb{Q}d5$ $\mathbb{Q}fxd5$ 14 cxd5 c6! 15 c4 cxd5 16 cxd5 $\mathbb{Q}ac8$) 8... $\mathbb{E}e8$ 9 e4 a6! (with the idea ...b5; this becomes a theme once White has played e4, as we saw after 1 c4 e5 2 $\mathbb{Q}c3$ $\mathbb{Q}f6$ 3 g3 $\mathbb{Q}b4$ 4 $\mathbb{Q}g2$ 0-0 5 e4 $\mathbb{Q}xc3$ 6 dxc3) 10 a4 b6 (D).

W



B



White lacks a d-pawn to attack in the centre, and playing f4 at some point may come up short after ...exf4, since so many black pieces can be trained against e4. This kind of position can fairly be called equal.

b) Thus the recapture 7 bxc3 is generally preferred. Then Black can play 7...e4 (for 7... $\mathbb{E}e8$, see below). In doing so, he agrees to 8 $\mathbb{Q}g5$ $\mathbb{E}e8$, transposing to a main line considered later, but he has prevented White from playing some of the effective $\mathbb{Q}e1$ lines below, since now 8 $\mathbb{Q}e1$ d5 9 cxd5 $\mathbb{W}xd5$ is fully satisfactory for Black. The main drawback to this move-order is that White can play 8 $\mathbb{Q}d4$, possibly entering into a notorious and important line that goes 8... $\mathbb{E}e8$ (8...d5 should definitely be considered, when 9 d3! isn't clear) 9 d3 h6!? (theory holds that 9...exd3 10 exd3 h6 is adequate for Black, but that can be challenged) 10 dxe4! (D).

This is Kasparov's move, which may yield White some advantage. The idea is to open lines for White's pieces and mobilize his king-side majority: 10... $\mathbb{Q}xe4$ 11 $\mathbb{W}c2$ d5!? 12 cxd5 $\mathbb{W}xd5$ 13 $\mathbb{Q}d1$! (Kasparov himself lost a classic battle to Karpov after 13 e3 $\mathbb{Q}a5$! 14 f3 $\mathbb{Q}d6$ 15 e4 $\mathbb{W}c5$ 16 $\mathbb{Q}e3$ $\mathbb{Q}dc4$ 17 $\mathbb{Q}f2$ $\mathbb{W}e7$ with double-edged play, Kasparov-Karpov, World Ch match (game 16), Seville 1987) 13... $\mathbb{Q}f5$ 14 $\mathbb{W}b2$! $\mathbb{Q}xd4$ 15 cxd4 and White stands better,

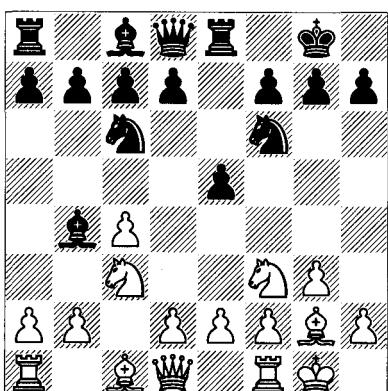
Portisch-Salov, Tilburg 1994. It's up to Black to decide whether he thinks that the elimination of White's dxc3/ $\mathbb{Q}e1$ line is worth allowing the one with 8 $\mathbb{Q}d4$ $\mathbb{E}e8$ 9 d3. To that end, Black's 8th- and 9th-move options should be considered.

Uhlmann – Reshevsky Skopje 1976

1 c4 $\mathbb{Q}f6$ 2 $\mathbb{Q}c3$ e5 3 $\mathbb{Q}f3$ $\mathbb{Q}c6$ 4 g3 $\mathbb{Q}b4$ 5 $\mathbb{Q}g2$ 0-0 6 0-0 $\mathbb{E}e8$ (D)

This straightforward rook development is still common, but less so than 6...e4. Since it is not as committal as the pawn advance, 6... $\mathbb{E}e8$ allows a number of independent methods of play for White; these are instructive in and of themselves, while showing the evolution of strategy in this variation.

W



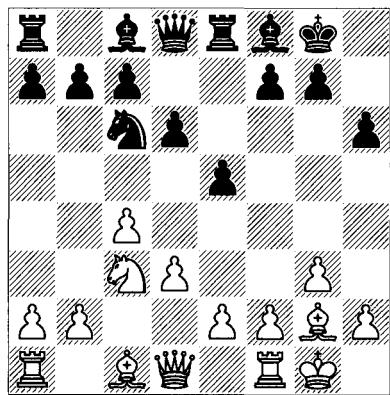
7 $\mathbb{Q}e1$!

What a strange idea! White reduces his control of d4 and e5, while taking two extra moves

to land on the uninspiring c2-square. OK, then White attacks the b4-bishop, but as we have repeatedly seen, Black is going to play ... $\mathbb{A}xc3$ anyway. What's the point? For one thing, White's bishop on g2 is unmasked, covering the key e4- and d5-squares. If, after ... $\mathbb{A}xc3$, White opens the d-file by $dxc3$, a subsequent $\mathbb{A}g5$ and $\mathbb{A}e3$ will strengthen that pressure.

Before turning to 7 $\mathbb{A}e1$, here are the openings of two other famous games involving other logical responses to 6... $\mathbb{A}e8$:

a) Petrosian-Gheorghiu, Moscow 1967 went 7 d3 h6!? (preventing $\mathbb{A}g5$; 7... $\mathbb{A}xc3$ would return to normal lines) 8 $\mathbb{A}d5!$ $\mathbb{A}f8$ (8... $\mathbb{A}c5$ keeps the bishop more active; the trade-off is that White may gain time by attacking it with b4) 9 $\mathbb{A}xf6+$ $\mathbb{W}xf6$ 10 $\mathbb{A}d2!$ d6 11 $\mathbb{A}e4!$ $\mathbb{W}d8$ 12 $\mathbb{A}c3$ (D).



B

White's knight has gone from g1 to c3 in four moves! As a result, we have arrived at a typical English Opening position, in which the emphasis is upon exploitation of the long diagonal above all else. Black would normally be ahead in development, but he too has expended time in playing ...h6 and ... $\mathbb{A}b4-f8$, whereas the rook on e8 might be better-placed on f8 anyway, to support ...f5. The game continued 12... $\mathbb{A}d7$ 13 b4! $\mathbb{W}c8$ 14 $\mathbb{E}b1$ $\mathbb{A}h3$ 15 e4! (a remarkable move! It's not so strange to put one's pawns on light squares if the g2-bishop is coming off the board, but White does so at the cost of granting Black a ready-made outpost on d4; the point is revealed by moves 17 and 18) 15... $\mathbb{A}xg2$ (15... $\mathbb{A}e6$ 16 $\mathbb{A}e3$ $\mathbb{A}e7$ 17 f4! is the other idea behind 15 e4) 16 $\mathbb{A}xg2$ g6 17 h4! $\mathbb{A}g7$ 18 h5! g5 19 $\mathbb{A}d5$ $\mathbb{A}d4$ 20 $\mathbb{A}e3$ f5 21

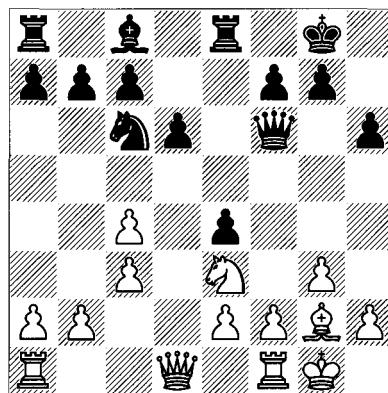
$\mathbb{A}b2!$, and White has won the crucial f5-square, dooming Black's bishop to passivity. He went on to win.

b) Smyslov-Mestel, Hastings 1972/3 was another inspiration for English Opening devotees: 7 $\mathbb{A}d5$ e4 (7... $\mathbb{A}c5$! is a solid alternative) 8 $\mathbb{A}e1$ d6 9 d3 $\mathbb{A}xe1$ 10 $\mathbb{E}xe1$ exd3. Now 11 $\mathbb{W}xd3$ should favour White, but Smyslov finds a more ingenious solution: 11 $\mathbb{A}g5!$ $dxe2$ 12 $\mathbb{E}xe2$ $\mathbb{E}xe2$ 13 $\mathbb{W}xe2$ $\mathbb{A}e6$ 14 $\mathbb{A}xf6+$ (Smyslov mentions 14 $\mathbb{A}xf6$ $gxf6$ 15 $\mathbb{E}e1$) 14... $gxf6$ 15 $\mathbb{A}h4$. For a pawn, White gets to shatter his opponent's kingside and retain his well-placed pieces.

7... $\mathbb{A}xc3$ 8 $dxc3$ e4?!

8...h6 is normal; compare the next game. It's instructive to see how White happily gives back the bishop-pair for control of the centre:

9 $\mathbb{A}g5!$ h6 10 $\mathbb{A}xf6$ $\mathbb{W}xf6$ 11 $\mathbb{A}c2$ d6 12 $\mathbb{A}e3!$ (D)



B

The $\mathbb{A}e1-c2-e3$ manoeuvre is employed in most situations involving $dxc3$ and ...e4. What wasn't realized for some time was how much more powerful this set-up is when White has had the opportunity for $\mathbb{A}g5$ and $\mathbb{A}xf6$. Black will have considerable difficulty protecting his e-pawn, and the idea of a timely $\mathbb{A}d5$ keeps Black off balance.

12... $\mathbb{A}e5$

One of White's main ideas is f4, and in the case of 12... $\mathbb{A}f5$ 13 f4! it is particularly strong, threatening g4.

13 $\mathbb{W}b3!$ $\mathbb{E}b8$ 14 $\mathbb{A}ad1$ b6 15 $\mathbb{W}c2$ $\mathbb{A}f5$?! 16 $\mathbb{A}d5!$

White uses d5 as a pivot point and threatens to win the e-pawn.

16...♝be8 17 ♜fd1 ♜d7

For example, 17...♝d8 18 ♜xe5 ♜xe5 19 ♜d5! will pick up a pawn, even after 19...g6 20 ♜xe5 ♜xe5 21 g4 ♜d7 22 ♜xe4.

18 ♜xe5 ♜xe5

Black also loses a pawn following 18...♜xe5 19 ♜d5.

19 ♜xe4 h5 20 ♜d4!?

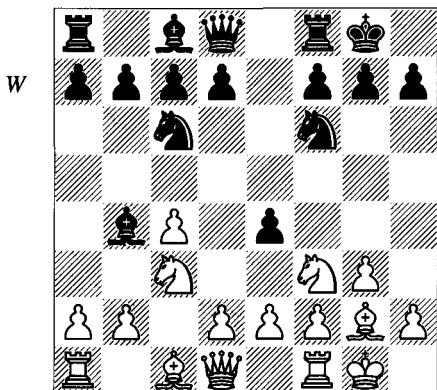
21 ♜xf6 ♜xf6 22 ♜f3

White is materially ahead, and after more than 70 moves he managed to bring home the full point. After this game, Black almost never permitted ♜g5 in this type of position; instead, players dedicated a move to ...h6, as we'll see next.

Uhlmann – Plachetka

Trenčianske Teplice 1979

1 c4 e5 2 ♜c3 ♜f6 3 ♜f3 ♜c6 4 g3 ♜b4 5 ♜g2 0-0 6 0-0 e4 (D)



This immediate advance has taken over as the primary continuation in the 4 g3 ♜b4 variation. It can transpose to 6...♝e8 lines, but here White is denied the possibility of ♜d4, as happens in the line 6...♝e8 7 d3 ♜xc3 8 bxc3 e4 9 ♜d4. Furthermore, Black can try to save the move ...♝e8 in order to get on with his plans more quickly.

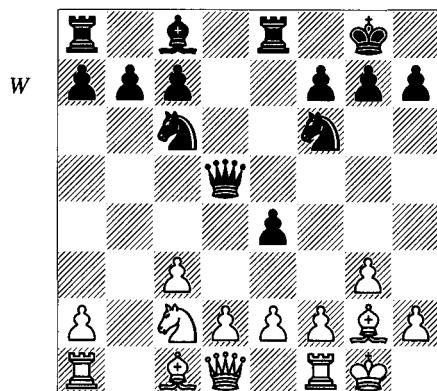
7 ♜e1

One potential drawback to 6...e4 is that it allows the highly tactical 7 ♜g5, which is featured below.

7...♜xc3

An instructive continuation is 7...♝e8 8 ♜c2 ♜xc3, when 9 dxc3 h6 would return to the

game. White should beware of 9 bxc3?! (capturing towards the centre must always be done with care in these lines; for one thing, the bishop on c1 still can't get out) 9...d5! 10 cxd5 ♜xd5! (D) (in addition, this recapture gives Black space and an attack).



Black has in mind a simple attack based upon ...♝h5, ...♞h3, and either ...♝g4 or ...♝e5. Bobotsov-Fuchs, Sochi 1967 went 11 d4 (11 d3?! is dubious due to 11...♜c5! 12 ♜b2 exd3 13 exd3 ♜g4, and 11 f3?! is weak in view of 11...exf3 12 ♜xf3 ♜c5+ 13 ♜h1 ♜h3) 11...♝h5 (with the idea ...♞h3, ...♜ad8 and ...♝e5, etc.) 12 c4 a6! 13 ♜f4 b5! 14 f3 (14 cxb5 axb5 15 ♜xc7? ♜d5 16 ♜f4 ♜c3) 14...bxc4 15 ♜xc7, and with his domination of the light squares, Black would be close to winning after 15...♝d5! (the game's 15...♝h3? 16 g4! was less convincing) 16 ♜f4 ♜h3!; for example, 17 e3 (or 17 g4?! ♜g6! 18 ♜xh3 ♜xf4 19 ♜g2 h5) 17...♝xf4 18 exf4 ♜xg2 19 ♜xg2 exf3+! 20 ♜xf3 ♜d5!. Black's light-square strategy has met with complete success.

8 dxc3 h6 9 ♜c2 ♜e8

We see 9...b6 in the following game.

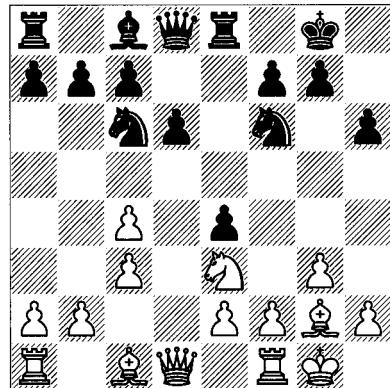
10 ♜e3

White has completed the plan we described in the note to 7 ♜e1 in the previous game.

10...d6 (D)**11 ♜c2**

This traditional move is still easily the most popular one, but 11 f4, 11 ♜d5 and 11 b3 have been played a lot, each with their own advantages and disadvantages. In the next game you'll see a combination of b3 and ♜d5.

11...a5!?

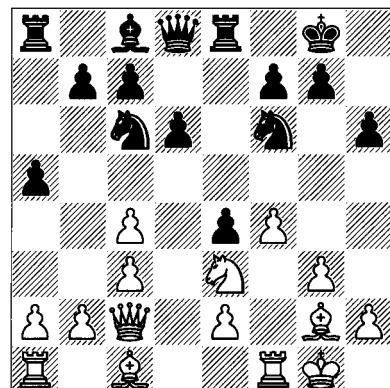


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You can almost count upon a unique game in this variation because both sides have so many positionally sound options. Black has tried at least five logical moves here, with a similar choice on the following move, so transpositions abound. Common continuations have been 11...b6, 11... $\mathbb{E}e5$, 11... $\mathbb{A}e5$ (a gambit, with the idea 12 $\mathbb{Q}xe4$ $\mathbb{Q}xe4$ 13 $\mathbb{W}xe4$ $\mathbb{Q}g4$), and the game move. A sequence like 11... $\mathbb{Q}d7$ 12 $\mathbb{Q}d2$ a5 13 $\mathbb{Q}ae1$ epitomizes White's preferred plan: the slow build-up for f4. But even here Black has his own useful moves, and 13... $\mathbb{A}e5$ 14 f4 exf3 15 exf3 $\mathbb{Q}c6$ should be roughly level. This is truly a variation in which knowledge of characteristic ideas will serve you better than pure memorization.

12 f4 (D)

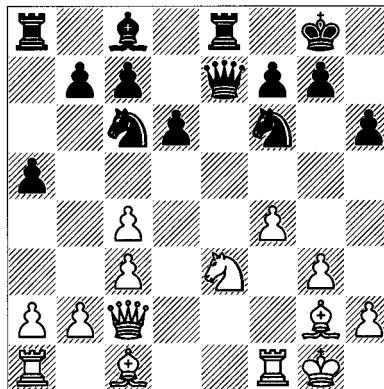
White strikes quickly. Black gets time to reorganize after 12 $\mathbb{Q}d2$ $\mathbb{E}e7$ 13 f4 exf3 14 exf3 $\mathbb{W}e5$! 15 $\mathbb{Q}ae1$ $\mathbb{W}c5$ 16 $\mathbb{Q}h1$ $\mathbb{Q}d7$ 17 b3 (17 f4 a4! prepares ... $\mathbb{Q}a5$ and ... $\mathbb{Q}c6$) 17... $\mathbb{E}e7$ 18 $\mathbb{W}d3$ $\mathbb{Q}ae8$ with excellent activity and the initiative, Uhlmann-Popov, Berlin 1979.



B

12...exf3 13 exf3 $\mathbb{W}e7$ 14 f4 (D)

White has denied Black time for the ... $\mathbb{W}e5$ -c5 redeployment of the previous note.



14... $\mathbb{Q}d7$ 15 $\mathbb{Q}d2$ $\mathbb{W}d8$ 16 h3 $\mathbb{W}b8$?

Black wants to put the queen on the active a7-square, but this looks strained.

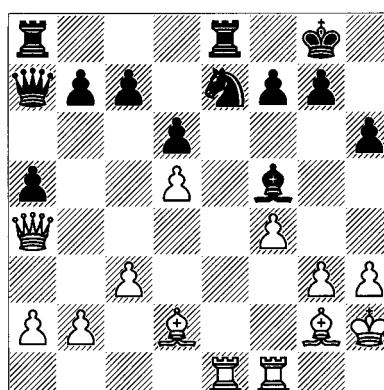
17 $\mathbb{Q}d5$! $\mathbb{Q}xd5$ 18 cxd5 $\mathbb{W}a7+$ 19 $\mathbb{Q}h2$ $\mathbb{Q}e7$

It's fair to say that White has won the opening.

20 $\mathbb{Q}ae1$?

But this move gives Black a chance. 20 f5! has the simple idea of f6, when after 20... $\mathbb{W}c5$ 21 c4 f6 22 $\mathbb{Q}ac1$ White maintains control of the position.

20... $\mathbb{Q}f5$! 21 $\mathbb{W}a4$ (D)



21... $\mathbb{Q}f8$?

21... $\mathbb{W}b6$! has ideas of ... $\mathbb{W}xb2$ or ... $\mathbb{Q}d3$. After White's next move, the tactics all favour him. I'll skip the analysis:

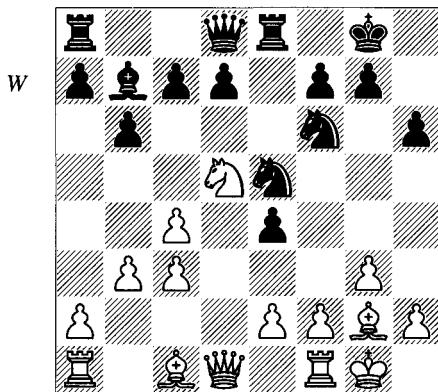
22 g4! $\mathbb{Q}d3$ 23 $\mathbb{Q}e3$ $\mathbb{W}a6$ 24 $\mathbb{Q}f2$ $\mathbb{W}c4$ 25 $\mathbb{W}d1$! $\mathbb{Q}g6$ 26 $\mathbb{Q}d2$ $\mathbb{Q}h4$ 27 b3 $\mathbb{W}a6$ 28 c4

$\mathbb{Q}xg2$ 29 $\mathbb{Q}xg2$ $\mathbb{Q}e4$ 30 $\mathbb{Q}ge2!$ f5 31 $\mathbb{Q}d4$ c6 32 gxf5 cxd5 33 $\mathbb{W}c3!$ $\mathbb{Q}e7$ 34 cxd5 $\mathbb{Q}ae8$ 35 f6 gxf6 36 $\mathbb{Q}xf6$ 1-0

Seirawan – Salov

Brussels 1988

1 c4 e5 2 $\mathbb{Q}c3$ $\mathbb{Q}f6$ 3 $\mathbb{Q}f3$ $\mathbb{Q}c6$ 4 g3 $\mathbb{Q}b4$ 5 $\mathbb{Q}g2$ 0-0 6 0-0 e4 7 $\mathbb{Q}e1$ $\mathbb{Q}xc3$ 8 dxc3 h6 9 $\mathbb{Q}c2$ b6 10 $\mathbb{Q}e3$ $\mathbb{Q}b7$ 11 $\mathbb{Q}d5$ $\mathbb{Q}e5$ 12 b3 $\mathbb{Q}e8$ (D)



13 a4

Eventually, White has to play f4 to make progress in this position, but he inserts an important move-pair first. Note, by contrast, 13 f4 exf3 14 exf3 $\mathbb{Q}b8!$ 15 $\mathbb{Q}e1!?$ $\mathbb{Q}xd5$ 16 cxd5 $\mathbb{W}f6!$, from Uhlmann-Makarychev, Sarajevo 1982. Without a4 and ...a5, White doesn't have recourse to the idea $\mathbb{Q}a2$, which Seirawan plays in the game before us. Another point is that 17 f4 can now be answered by 17... $\mathbb{Q}g4!$ with the idea 18 $\mathbb{W}xe8+$ $\mathbb{W}xe8$ 19 $\mathbb{W}xg4?$ $\mathbb{W}xc3$.

13...a5!? 14 f4 exf3 15 exf3 $\mathbb{Q}xd5$ 16 cxd5 (D)

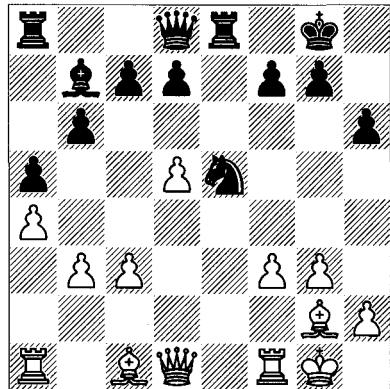
16... $\mathbb{W}f6!?$

This is a move that has been tried in several similar positions. Black wants to connect rooks and target some interior weaknesses on e3 or d3 (following ... $\mathbb{W}f5$, for example). Nevertheless, Black's knight can be driven to an inferior square and in some cases the queen can be exposed to attack. The more accurate order seems to be 16...d6! 17 f4 $\mathbb{Q}d7$ 18 $\mathbb{Q}b2$ $\mathbb{W}f6$, and Black has equal play based upon the idea ... $\mathbb{Q}c5$.

17 $\mathbb{Q}a2$

A move worth noting. The rook travels to the centre, and the bishop on c1 stays on what is

B



arguably its best square. However, attacking the knight by 17 f4! improves, because it would end up stranded on g6.

17... $\mathbb{W}f5$

17...c6!? is an interesting alternative.

18 $\mathbb{Q}d2$ c6 19 $\mathbb{Q}d4!$ cxd5!

Upon 19...c5, Black's bishop on b7 will be imprisoned following 20 $\mathbb{Q}e4!$ and c4.

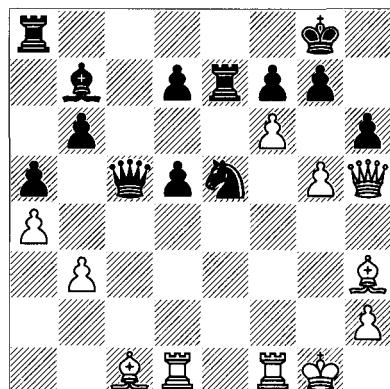
20 g4! $\mathbb{W}f6$ 21 f4 $\mathbb{Q}g6$ 22 g5 $\mathbb{W}f5!$ 23 $\mathbb{W}h5$ $\mathbb{Q}e7$

23... $\mathbb{Q}ac8$ was also possible, with the idea 24 $\mathbb{Q}h3?$ $\mathbb{W}c2$ 25 $\mathbb{Q}d2$ $\mathbb{W}xc3!$. My impression is that the opening as a whole has been dynamically equal. In the rest of the game, White launches an attack which is probably sound enough but goes wrong:

24 $\mathbb{Q}h3$ $\mathbb{W}c2$ 25 f5!?

$\mathbb{W}xc3$ 26 $\mathbb{Q}dd1$ $\mathbb{Q}e5$ 27 f6 $\mathbb{W}c5+$ (D)

W



28 $\mathbb{Q}h1?$

Now Black's pieces become too strong. 28 $\mathbb{Q}f2!$ is correct. A sample line is 28... $\mathbb{Q}d3!$ 29 $\mathbb{Q}xd3$ $\mathbb{Q}e1+$ 30 $\mathbb{Q}f1$ $\mathbb{W}xf1+$ 31 $\mathbb{Q}xf1$ $\mathbb{Q}a6$ 32

$\text{fxg7}!! \text{Qxd3+}$ 33 Qg2 Qe4+ 34 Qg3 with a messy but roughly equal position.

28...d4+ 29 Qg2 Qxg2+ 30 Qxg2 Qe6! 31 gxh6 Qd5+ 32 Qh3 Qxb3+ 33 Qg2 Qd5+ 34 Qh3 Qxf6 35 hxg7 Qe6+ 36 Qh4 Qg6+ 37 Qg3 Qc8

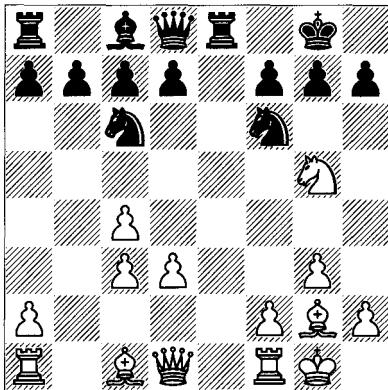
and Black went on to win with no difficulties. A good illustration of this variation's delicately balanced nature. Both sides can play it with ambitious intent.

Elwert – Tiemann

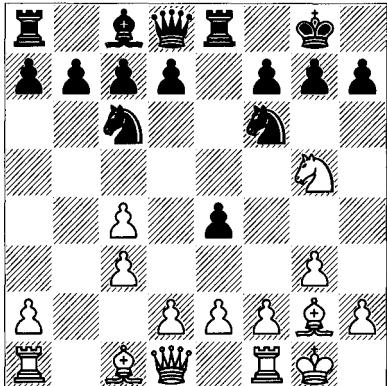
World Correspondence Ch 2003-5

1 c4 e5 2 Qc3 Qf6 3 Qf3 Qc6 4 g3 Qb4 5 Qg2 0-0 6 0-0 e4 7 Qg5 Qxc3 8 bxc3 Qe8 (D)

B



W



This introduces the most tactically critical variation of the 4 g3 Qb4 English Four Knights. It's impossible to cover more than a small fraction of the many variations, so I'm going to show one main game with many notes of special interest. My selection of examples is meant to reflect how representative tactics and positional trade-offs interact. The positions are rather unstable, however, and there is certainly no hard-and-fast rule as to where both sides should put their pieces. A correspondence game between two top players is an appropriate vehicle for examining such a theoretical variation.

9 f3

White challenges e4 with the f-pawn, by far the most common strategy in modern chess. It's worth looking briefly at the pawn-structure and the play that results from the older and natural 9 d3 exd3 10 exd3 (D).

White has opened up his bishop's long diagonal and kept the bishop-pair. On the other hand, his centre is relatively immobile and Black has no weaknesses. I'm not going to cover the position in any depth, but the following options seem most important:

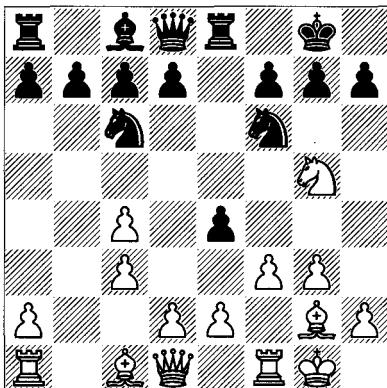
a) 10...d6 is solid. A logical continuation is 11 Qb1 h6 12 Qe4 Qxe4 13 Qxe4 Qe5 with only a faint edge for White, if any, after 14 Qf4 .

b) 10...b6 is also sensible, when White will usually aim for d5 with his knight; for example, 11 Qh3 Qb7 12 Qf4 with a small advantage. A significant alternative is 11 $\text{Qd5}?$ Qxd5 12 cxd5, when 12...h6 can lead to the drawing line 13 $\text{Qxf7}?$ Qxf7 14 Qh5+ Qg8 15 dx6 dx6 16 Qxh6 gxh6 17 Qg6+ Qh8 18 Qxh6+ Qg8 19 Qg6+ Qh8 20 $\text{Qae1}!$ $\text{Qd7}!$, and here White should repeat!

c) The best move may well be 10...h6. Then 11 Qf3 b6 is Black's standard plan to oppose the long diagonal, but he might also consider 11...d5? 12 cxd5 Qxd5 , which is a familiar type of position in which White's central pawns are targets. White's most frequent reply to 10...h6 is 11 Qh3 , when 11...d6 is usually played. But I think that it would be consistent with similar positions in this book to open things up for the knights by 11...d5!. Then it's White who has to work to get his share of the play. For example, 12 cxd5 Qxd5 13 Qd2 $\text{Qe5}!$ 14 d4 $\text{Qg4}!$ 15 f3 Qxh3 16 Qxh3 Qc4 with dominant knights and weak squares in White's camp, or 12 $\text{Qf4}?$ dxc4 13 Qxc4 , and either 13... Qg4 14 Qb3 Qe5 or the simple 13... Qxd1 14 Qxd1 Qe5 favours Black because of White's weak light squares.

Thus 9 d3 isn't terribly promising. We return to 9 f3 (D):

B

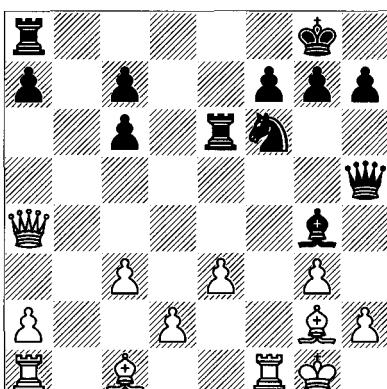


9...e3!?

This is I.Zaitsev's remarkable move, made famous by Karpov's use of it versus Kasparov. The very important alternative is 9...exf3 10 $\mathbb{Q}xf3$ d5, after which White has two primary choices:

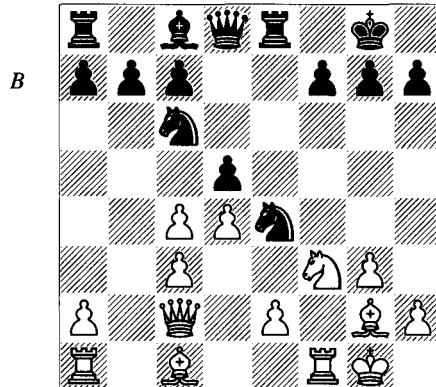
a) The traditional main line (condensed) after 11 cxd5 goes 11... $\mathbb{W}xd5$ 12 $\mathbb{Q}d4$ $\mathbb{W}h5$ 13 $\mathbb{Q}xc6$ bxc6 14 e3 $\mathbb{Q}g4$ 15 $\mathbb{W}a4$ $\mathbb{E}e6$ (D) (the alternative 15... $\mathbb{Q}e2$ also leads to equality after 16 $\mathbb{W}xf6$ gxf6 17 $\mathbb{Q}xc6$ $\mathbb{Q}f3$ 18 $\mathbb{Q}xa8$ $\mathbb{W}xa8$ 19 $\mathbb{W}h4$ $\mathbb{W}xh4$).

W



16 $\mathbb{W}b1$ (or 16 $\mathbb{Q}a3$ $\mathbb{Q}e2$ 17 $\mathbb{Q}f4$ $\mathbb{Q}g4$ 18 h3 $\mathbb{Q}e5$) 16... $\mathbb{Q}e2$. Now the stem game Sigurjons-Smyslov, Reykjavik 1974 saw 17 $\mathbb{W}e1$?, losing to 17... $\mathbb{Q}g4$ 18 h3 $\mathbb{W}f5$ 19 $\mathbb{Q}xe2$ $\mathbb{W}xb1$ 20 $\mathbb{W}xg4$ $\mathbb{W}xc1+$ 21 $\mathbb{Q}h2$ $\mathbb{Q}d8$ 22 $\mathbb{W}b4$ h6 23 c4 $\mathbb{W}d1$ 24 $\mathbb{Q}f2$ $\mathbb{Q}e1$ 0-1. Best is 17 $\mathbb{Q}xc6$! $\mathbb{Q}g4$ 18 $\mathbb{Q}f2$ $\mathbb{Q}xf2$ 19 $\mathbb{Q}xa8$ $\mathbb{Q}h3+$ 20 $\mathbb{Q}g2$ $\mathbb{Q}f1+!$ 21 $\mathbb{Q}xf1$ $\mathbb{W}f5+$ 22 $\mathbb{Q}e2$ $\mathbb{W}xb1$ 23 $\mathbb{Q}d5$ $\mathbb{W}xc1$ 24 $\mathbb{Q}xe6$ $\mathbb{Q}g1+$ 25 $\mathbb{Q}f2$ $\mathbb{W}xd2+$, when Black achieves a nominally better endgame.

b) It is generally agreed that Kasparov's 11 d4! is the most serious threat to Black's set-up, and a solution has been hard to come by. There's a lot of unexplored territory here. Black plays 11... $\mathbb{Q}e4$ 12 $\mathbb{W}c2$ (D) (versus ... $\mathbb{Q}xc3$) and now:



b1) 12...dxc4 13 $\mathbb{W}b1$ f5 14 g4! is Kasparov's fine conception, to break down Black's grip over e4. There have been many tries for Black, but nothing looks very good. Briefly:

b11) The original game Kasparov-Ivanchuk, USSR Ch, Moscow 1988 went 14... $\mathbb{Q}e7$ 15 $\mathbb{W}xf5$ $\mathbb{Q}d6$ 16 $\mathbb{Q}g5$ $\mathbb{W}xe2$ 17 $\mathbb{Q}d5+$ $\mathbb{Q}h8$ 18 $\mathbb{W}xe2$ $\mathbb{W}xe2$ 19 $\mathbb{Q}f4$ $\mathbb{Q}d8$ 20 $\mathbb{Q}xd6$ cxd6 21 $\mathbb{W}be1$ $\mathbb{W}xe1$ 22 $\mathbb{W}xe1$ $\mathbb{Q}d7$ 23 $\mathbb{W}e7$ $\mathbb{Q}c6$ 24 f6! 1-0.

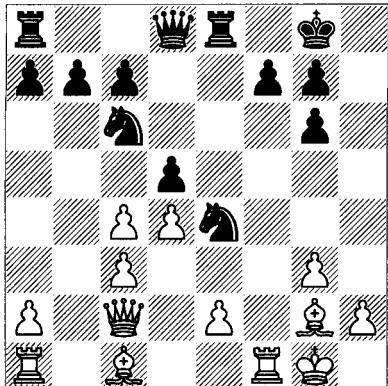
b12) Kasparov thinks that 14...fxg4 15 $\mathbb{Q}e5$ $\mathbb{Q}d6$ 16 $\mathbb{Q}xc6$ bxc6 17 e4 is best, but White has the better chances.

b13) 14... $\mathbb{Q}d6$! 15 $\mathbb{Q}g5$ $\mathbb{W}d7$ 16 $\mathbb{Q}h4$ (Stohl suggests 16 $\mathbb{Q}f4$) 16... $\mathbb{Q}f7$ (P.David-Polak, Olomouc 1995) and I think White should play 17 $\mathbb{Q}c1$! with the idea 17...f4 18 $\mathbb{W}xf4$ g5 19 $\mathbb{W}xf7$ $\mathbb{W}xf7$ 20 $\mathbb{Q}f5$ with e4 to follow.

b2) 12... $\mathbb{Q}f5$! seems underestimated. Several games have gone 13 $\mathbb{Q}h4$ $\mathbb{Q}g6$ 14 $\mathbb{Q}xg6$! (14 $\mathbb{Q}f4$ can be met by 14... $\mathbb{Q}xg3$ 15 $\mathbb{Q}xg6$ $\mathbb{W}xe2$ 16 $\mathbb{W}d3$ $\mathbb{W}xg2+$ 17 $\mathbb{Q}xg2$ $\mathbb{Q}xf1$ 18 $\mathbb{Q}e5$, leading to a piece-versus-three-pawns ending, which is probably even!) Another wild line was seen in Maslak-Sulypa, Olomouc 2007: 14... $\mathbb{Q}a5$! 15 cxd5 $\mathbb{W}xd5$ 16 $\mathbb{Q}e5$! $\mathbb{Q}xe5$! 17 $\mathbb{Q}xg6$ $\mathbb{W}hg6$ 18 $\mathbb{Q}xe5$ $\mathbb{W}c5+$ 19 e3 $\mathbb{Q}g5$ 20 $\mathbb{Q}f4$! $\mathbb{Q}c4$! 21 $\mathbb{W}f2$ $\mathbb{Q}xe5$ with fair compensation) 14... $\mathbb{W}hg6$ (D).

The light squares are always the key to Black's play against the bishops. White has at least four logical moves here.

W



b21) The most direct is 15 $\mathbb{Q}f4$, which is well met by 15...f5 16 g4?! (16 $\mathbb{B}b1$ $\mathbb{Q}a5$ 17 cxd5 $\mathbb{Q}xd5$) 16... $\mathbb{Q}a5$ 17 gxf5 gxf5 18 $\mathbb{Q}xf5$ $\mathbb{Q}xc4$ with a positional superiority for Black, Solonar-Meins, Altenkirchen 2005.

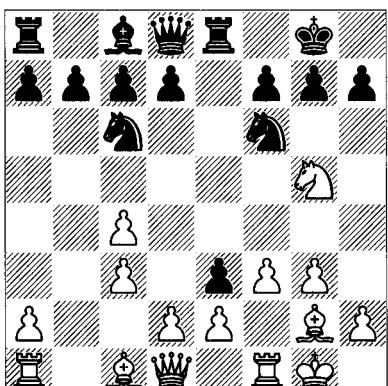
b22) A second way to prosecute this line is 15 $\mathbb{Q}f4$; for example, 15...f5 16 cxd5 $\mathbb{Q}xd5$ 17 g4! $\mathbb{Q}e7$! 18 e3 $\mathbb{Q}c4$ 19 $\mathbb{Q}ac1$ $\mathbb{Q}ae8$ with an equal position, Gretarsson-Stefansson, Reykjavik 2004.

b23) Also critical is 15 $\mathbb{Q}d3$ f5, and Black seems to hold his own after 16 $\mathbb{Q}f4$ $\mathbb{Q}c8$! 17 g4 $\mathbb{Q}f8$, or 16 $\mathbb{B}b1$ $\mathbb{Q}a5$ 17 cxd5 $\mathbb{Q}xd5$ 18 $\mathbb{Q}f4$ $\mathbb{Q}ac8$!; for example, 19 $\mathbb{B}b5$ $\mathbb{Q}xa2$ 20 $\mathbb{Q}e5$ c6 21 $\mathbb{B}b1$ $\mathbb{Q}d5$.

b24) Arguably the most important sequence is 15 $\mathbb{B}b1$ $\mathbb{Q}a5$ 16 cxd5 $\mathbb{Q}xd5$, when 17 $\mathbb{Q}f4$ $\mathbb{Q}c4$ 18 $\mathbb{Q}d3$ $\mathbb{Q}ac8$ 19 $\mathbb{B}b4$ b5 20 a4 a6 21 axb5 axb5 22 g4 is given by Pritchett as favouring White. However, Black seems OK if he plays 22...c6.

So perhaps 9...exf3 is satisfactory for Black, but let's return to 9...e3!? (D).

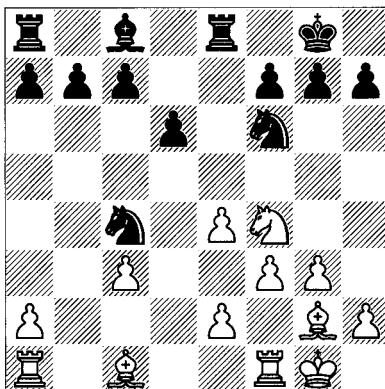
W



10 d3

Various grandmasters have played 10 dxе3!?, in order to get rid of the annoying pawn on e3 and acquire a central majority of sorts. Naturally, White's pawn-structure suffers, but two bishops often become effective with shattered pawns and pawn sacrifices. Black seems to have several methods of holding his own, yet I can't help showing the game Kasparov-Sadvakasov, Astana 2001, which is illustrative of broader issues: 10... $\mathbb{Q}e7$ 11 $\mathbb{Q}h3$!? $\mathbb{Q}c5$ 12 $\mathbb{Q}f4$ $\mathbb{Q}xc4$ 13 e4 d6 14 $\mathbb{Q}d3$ (Kasparov mentions 14 $\mathbb{Q}e3$!?) $\mathbb{Q}xc3$ 15 $\mathbb{Q}f2$ with compensation; that will take the form of the bishop-pair coming to life after $\mathbb{Q}d5$) 14... $\mathbb{Q}e5$ 15 $\mathbb{Q}xc4$ $\mathbb{Q}xc4$ (D).

W



White has two bishops, but they're passive and his queenside pawn-structure is weak and blockaded. What to do? White continued 16 g4! (space, friend of the bishop-pair!) 16... $\mathbb{Q}b8$ (versus g5 and $\mathbb{Q}d5$) 17 $\mathbb{Q}d1$ b6 18 g5 $\mathbb{Q}d7$ 19 $\mathbb{Q}d5$ $\mathbb{Q}b7$ (Karpov gives 19...c6 20 $\mathbb{Q}e3$! with pressure on the d-pawn) 20 f4 $\mathbb{Q}f8$ 21 $\mathbb{Q}b1$ $\mathbb{Q}d7$ 22 $\mathbb{Q}d4$ $\mathbb{Q}a5$ 23 f5 c5! 24 $\mathbb{Q}d3$ $\mathbb{Q}a4$ 25 $\mathbb{Q}f4$! (an incredible exchange sacrifice, in order to straighten out White's pawn-structure and mobilize his pieces to the maximum) 25... $\mathbb{Q}c2$ 26 $\mathbb{Q}b2$ $\mathbb{Q}xd3$ 27 exd3 $\mathbb{Q}d8$ 28 h4 $\mathbb{Q}c6$ 29 h5 $\mathbb{Q}e7$! 30 $\mathbb{Q}e3$ $\mathbb{Q}bd7$ 31 $\mathbb{Q}g4$ $\mathbb{Q}c6$! 32 h6 $\mathbb{Q}e5$ 33 $\mathbb{Q}xe5$ dxе5 34 hxg7 $\mathbb{Q}xg7$ 35 $\mathbb{Q}f1$ (35 $\mathbb{Q}xe5$ allows Black to return the exchange by 35... $\mathbb{Q}xd3$ 36 $\mathbb{Q}xd3$ $\mathbb{Q}xd3$, which favours Black by virtue of his d-file control) 35... $\mathbb{Q}d6$ 36 $\mathbb{Q}xe5$ f6 37 $\mathbb{Q}g4$ fxg5 38 $\mathbb{Q}h2$ $\mathbb{Q}e8$ 39 e5 $\mathbb{Q}d5$ 40 f6+ $\mathbb{Q}h8$ 41 $\mathbb{Q}h6$ $\mathbb{Q}dxе5$! 42 $\mathbb{Q}f7+$ $\mathbb{Q}g8$ 43 $\mathbb{Q}h6+$ $\frac{1}{2}-\frac{1}{2}$.

10...d5 11 $\mathbb{Q}b3$!

After this we enter a relatively forced sequence. 11 cxd5 $\mathbb{Q}xd5$ 12 $\mathbb{W}b3$ hasn't been deeply explored: 12... $\mathbb{Q}a5!$? (12... $\mathbb{W}xg5$ 13 f4 $\mathbb{W}h5$ 14 $\mathbb{Q}xd5$ and now 14... $\mathbb{W}xe2!$? 15 $\mathbb{Q}xf7+$ $\mathbb{Q}h8$ is interesting and probably OK for Black, while 14... $\mathbb{Q}g4$ has also been suggested) 13 $\mathbb{W}a3$ b6 (13... $\mathbb{W}xg5$ 14 $\mathbb{W}xa5$ $\mathbb{W}e5$ is considered equal, although White might want to look carefully at 15 $\mathbb{Q}b2$) 14 f4 $\mathbb{Q}b7$ 15 $\mathbb{Q}b2$ c5 with chances for both sides, Gulko-Ivanchuk, Horogen 1995.

11... $\mathbb{Q}a5$ 12 $\mathbb{W}a3$ c6 13 cxd5 cxd5 14 f4 $\mathbb{Q}g4$

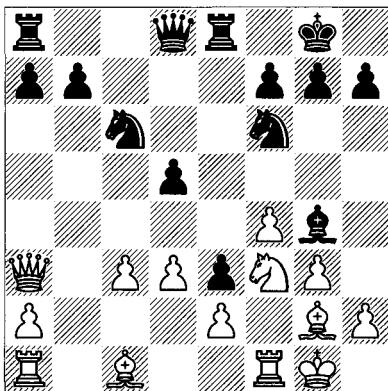
14... $\mathbb{Q}c6!$? was played in Kasparov-Karpov, World Ch match (game 2), Seville 1987, when 15 $\mathbb{W}b1$ is held to give White the advantage, but that could bear some further investigation.

15 $\mathbb{Q}f3$

Likewise, I'll skip over 15 $\mathbb{W}e1$, which is considered equal due to the line 15...h6 (15... $\mathbb{W}c8$?) 16 $\mathbb{Q}f3$ $\mathbb{Q}c6$ 17 $\mathbb{W}b1$ $\mathbb{W}d7$; for example, 18 $\mathbb{Q}b2$ $\mathbb{Q}h3$ 19 c4 $\mathbb{Q}xg2$ 20 $\mathbb{W}xg2$ d4, Schacher-Maki Uuro, European Clubs Cup, Izmir 2004.

15... $\mathbb{Q}c6$ (D)

W



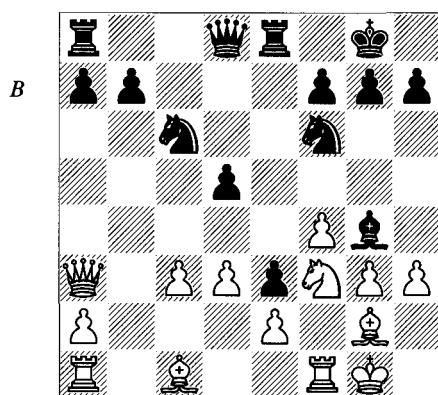
All right, what have we here? Black commands more space and his intrusive pawn on e3 interferes with White's pieces. His king is safe and his pieces are well-developed (the queen's rook can be placed aggressively on c8 or take on a useful defensive role on b8). Black may also be able to scare up some kingside chances, if only because several of White's pieces are cut off from that sector, a result of the e3-pawn 'dividing the board in two', in Kasparov's phrase.

For all that, White may stand slightly better from a theoretical point of view. His position is

very elastic, in that most attempts by Black to make progress will serve White's pieces well, in particular his bishops. Given enough time, he may be able to create and exploit weaknesses on Black's queenside, as well as opening lines for his queen's bishop, probably by means of c4 at some point. Of course, not all of this is necessarily achievable, and practice has yielded mixed results. I'll simply indicate a few paths.

16 h3 (D)

Possibly 16 $\mathbb{B}b1$ $\mathbb{W}d7$ 17 $\mathbb{W}b3$ b6 18 $\mathbb{Q}b2$ is better because it avoids weaknesses. On the flip side, Black can keep his bishop aggressively posted on g4 and hold forth the option of a properly-timed ... $\mathbb{Q}h3$.



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

Two other ideas give you a feel for the complexity of this variation:

a) 16... $\mathbb{Q}xf3$ and now:

a1) 17 $\mathbb{W}xf3$! d4 18 $\mathbb{Q}b2$ $\mathbb{W}c8$ 19 $\mathbb{B}b1$, Gulko-Kornev, Montreal 2006. Now 19...dxc3 20 $\mathbb{Q}xc3$ $\mathbb{Q}d5$ would cement the influential pawn on e3. On the other hand, the disappearance of Black's d-pawn does wonders for the white bishops.

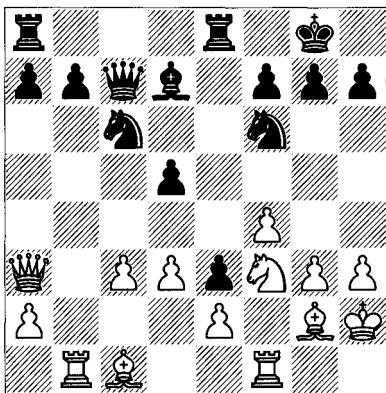
a2) 17 $\mathbb{Q}xf3$ allows Black to do without ...d4 for a while: 17...h5!? (or 17... $\mathbb{W}d7$ 18 $\mathbb{Q}h2$ h5) 18 $\mathbb{W}c5$ $\mathbb{W}c8$ 19 $\mathbb{B}b1$ b6 20 $\mathbb{W}b5$ $\mathbb{W}d6$ 21 $\mathbb{Q}g2$?! h4! 22 gxh4 $\mathbb{Q}e7$ with the ideas ... $\mathbb{Q}f5$ or ... $\mathbb{Q}g6$, Jensen-Soza, correspondence game 2002.

b) A flippant retreat by 16... $\mathbb{W}c8$ is worth thinking about. Many of Black's difficulties stem from weaknesses as a result of attacks on b7, but these cease to be a factor with the bishop

defending. Black could divert White by using ...h6, ...g5 and ... $\mathbb{Q}h5$ to attack his somewhat loose kingside; for example, 17 $\mathbb{Q}e1$ (intending $\mathbb{Q}c2$ and/or $\mathbb{B}f3$) 17... $\mathbb{Q}h5$! 18 $\mathbb{B}f3$ (18 $\mathbb{Q}h2$ g5) 18...g5! 19 fxg5 (19 $\mathbb{Q}c2$ g4 20 hxg4 $\mathbb{Q}xg4$ 21 $\mathbb{B}xe3$ $\mathbb{Q}xe3$ 22 $\mathbb{Q}xe3$ $\mathbb{Q}xe2$ 23 $\mathbb{Q}xd5$ $\mathbb{Q}xd3$ is unclear, to say the least!) 19... $\mathbb{W}xg5$ (with the idea ...d4 and ... $\mathbb{Q}e5$) 20 $\mathbb{Q}c2$ $\mathbb{Q}xg3$ 21 $\mathbb{Q}xe3$ $\mathbb{W}h4$ and Black has an opportunistic position, intending 22 $\mathbb{Q}f2$ $\mathbb{Q}xe2+$ 23 $\mathbb{Q}f1$ $\mathbb{W}h5$ 24 $\mathbb{Q}e1$ $\mathbb{Q}f5!$ with unclear prospects.

17 $\mathbb{Q}h2$ $\mathbb{W}c7$ 18 $\mathbb{B}b1$ (D)

B



18...b6?!

Finally giving White a weakness to exploit. Black can play the natural 18... $\mathbb{B}ac8$ instead, when White may not like 19 $\mathbb{Q}b2$ b5!? with the idea 20 $\mathbb{W}c5$ $\mathbb{W}a5$, but he will have to defend the c-pawn somehow. Equality seems a fair assessment.

19 $\mathbb{Q}b2$ $\mathbb{B}ad8$ 20 c4?!

Pritchett points out that White could also prepare this move by 20 $\mathbb{B}fc1$. Perhaps then 20... $\mathbb{Q}h5$ with the idea 21 c4 d4 could be tried, but it's all a bit dodgy.

20...dxc4 21 $\mathbb{B}bc1$!

Finally White's pieces all spring to life!

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

Black can't be too greedy: 21...cxd3 22 $\mathbb{Q}e5$! $\mathbb{W}b7?$ (22... $\mathbb{W}c8$ 23 $\mathbb{W}xd3$) 23 $\mathbb{Q}d4$.

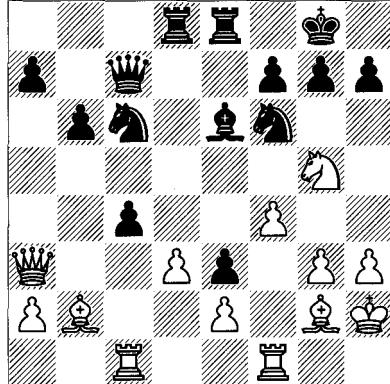
22 $\mathbb{Q}g5$ (D)

22... $\mathbb{Q}d5$?

I like Pritchett's general comment that "the fundamentals tell against Black". For example, White gets further open lines after 22... $\mathbb{Q}a5$ 23 $\mathbb{Q}xe6$ $\mathbb{B}xe6$ 24 $\mathbb{Q}c3$! $\mathbb{W}d7$ 25 $\mathbb{B}fd1$!

23 $\mathbb{Q}xd5$?

B



Good enough, although 23 $\mathbb{Q}xf6$! $\mathbb{G}xf6$ 24 $\mathbb{Q}xd5$ looks stronger still.

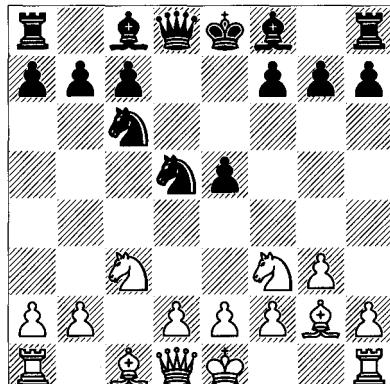
23... $\mathbb{Q}xd5$ 24 $\mathbb{B}xc4$ $\mathbb{W}d7$ 25 $\mathbb{B}fc1$ f6 26 $\mathbb{Q}f3$ $\mathbb{B}e6$ 27 $\mathbb{B}e4$ $\mathbb{Q}de8$ 28 $\mathbb{B}xe6$ $\mathbb{B}xe6$ 29 $\mathbb{W}a4$

White is clearly in charge and went on to win.

Reversed Dragon: 4...d5

1 c4 e5 2 $\mathbb{Q}c3$ $\mathbb{Q}f6$ 3 $\mathbb{Q}f3$ $\mathbb{Q}c6$ 4 g3 d5 5 cxd5 $\mathbb{Q}xd5$ 6 $\mathbb{Q}g2$ (D)

B

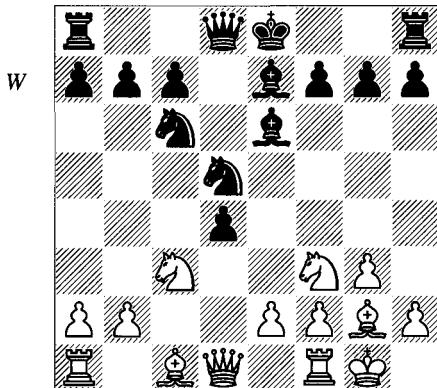


6... $\mathbb{Q}b6$

This is the basic position of the Reversed Dragon. In Chapter 4 (the 2 g3 section) we looked into the Reversed Dragon lines in which White doesn't play $\mathbb{Q}c3$, but rather sets up with d3, $\mathbb{Q}bd2$ and a3. The move 6... $\mathbb{Q}b6$ mirrors the Classical Dragon Sicilian, also covered in some detail in Volume 1. Since the ideas in these two systems tend to be the same, I'm not going to go into the Reversed Dragon very

deeply, but the set-up is popular with leading players and if White plays the English Four Knights he definitely should know the fundamental themes and strategies.

If Black doesn't like to retreat with 6... $\mathbb{Q}b6$, he has to put up with the early pawn-break d4 by White. For example, 6... $\mathbb{Q}e6$ (White was threatening 7 $\mathbb{Q}xe5$, and 6... $\mathbb{Q}e7$ doesn't help: 7 $\mathbb{Q}xe5!$ $\mathbb{Q}xc3$ 8 $\mathbb{Q}xc6+$ bxc6 9 dxc3; furthermore, after 6... $\mathbb{Q}xc3$ 7 bxc3 e4, 8 $\mathbb{Q}d4$ $\mathbb{Q}xd4$ 9 cxd4 $\mathbb{W}xd4$ 10 $\mathbb{B}b1$ is a promising gambit, with White a tempo ahead of a similar Sicilian line, in a position where a tempo truly counts! 8 $\mathbb{Q}g1$ is also good, since it's not possible to protect e4 without concessions) 7 0-0 $\mathbb{Q}e7$ 8 d4, and 8... $\mathbb{Q}xc3$ 9 bxc3 e4 can be met by 10 $\mathbb{Q}e1$ f5 11 $\mathbb{Q}c2$ with the idea f3, or 10 $\mathbb{Q}e5?$! $\mathbb{Q}xe5$ 11 dx \mathbb{Q} 12 $\mathbb{W}xd1$; for example, 12... $\mathbb{Q}f5$ 13 $\mathbb{B}d4$ $\mathbb{B}d8$ 14 $\mathbb{Q}e3$ $\mathbb{B}xd4$ 15 cxd4 f6 16 f4 fx \mathbb{Q} 17 fx \mathbb{Q} c6 18 $\mathbb{B}b1$ b6 19 $\mathbb{B}f1$, Marin-Kveinys, Istanbul Olympiad 2000. Black's more natural move is 8...exd4 (D).



Then White has two moves which are equalizers with reversed colours, but with a tempo in hand, they seem to give him a small advantage:

a) 9 $\mathbb{Q}xd4$ $\mathbb{Q}xc3$ 10 bxc3 $\mathbb{Q}xd4$ 11 cxd4 c6 12 $\mathbb{B}b1!$ $\mathbb{W}d7$ 13 $\mathbb{W}a4$ threatens 14 $\mathbb{B}xb7$!. An old game Carls-Antze, Hamburg 1930 continued 13...0-0 14 d5! $\mathbb{Q}xd5$ 15 $\mathbb{Q}xd5$ $\mathbb{W}xd5$ 16 $\mathbb{B}xb7$ $\mathbb{Q}c5$ 17 $\mathbb{B}d1$ $\mathbb{W}e6$ 18 $\mathbb{W}c2$ $\mathbb{B}b6$ and in addition to Black's weak c-pawn, White had the more active pieces beginning with 19 $\mathbb{B}f4$.

b) 9 $\mathbb{Q}b5?$! $\mathbb{W}d7$ (9...d3 10 $\mathbb{W}xd3$ $\mathbb{Q}db4?$ was played in Nogueiras-Gagunashvili, World Team Ch, Beersheba 2005; now 11 $\mathbb{B}b1!$ would be extremely strong, with ideas of $\mathbb{B}f4$, $\mathbb{B}d1$ and

$\mathbb{B}3$; for example, 11... $\mathbb{Q}c4$ 12 $\mathbb{Q}c3!$ 0-0 13 $\mathbb{B}d1$ $\mathbb{W}c8$ 14 a3 $\mathbb{Q}a6$ 15 b4 with a killing position) 10 $\mathbb{Q}fxd4$ $\mathbb{Q}xd4$ 11 $\mathbb{Q}xd4$ $\mathbb{Q}h3$ 12 e4! $\mathbb{Q}xg2$ 13 $\mathbb{Q}xg2$ $\mathbb{Q}b6$ 14 $\mathbb{Q}f5!$ $\mathbb{Q}f6$ 15 $\mathbb{W}c2$ g6 16 $\mathbb{Q}h6$ 0-0-0 17 $\mathbb{Q}f4$, Larsen-Dückstein, Cala Galdana 1974. White will follow with a queenside attack.

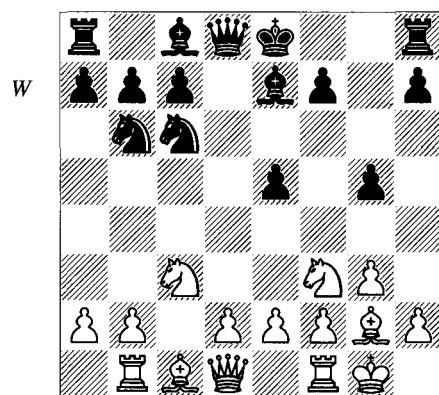
Benko – Palme

Bad Gastein 1948

1 g3 e5 2 c4 $\mathbb{Q}f6$ 3 $\mathbb{Q}g2$ d5 4 cxd5 $\mathbb{Q}xd5$ 5 $\mathbb{Q}f3$ $\mathbb{Q}c6$ 6 0-0 $\mathbb{Q}b6$ 7 $\mathbb{Q}c3$ $\mathbb{Q}e7$ 8 d3

By far the most natural and common move, but there are others:

a) 8 $\mathbb{B}b1$ is sometimes played in order to hurry along White's b4-b5 attack. It isn't considered terribly dangerous, and Black has more than one reasonable response, including 8... $\mathbb{Q}e6$ and 8...a5, but the most unique riposte is the bizarre-looking 8...g5!? (D).



Black's brute-force idea is ...g4 and ...h5-h4. That is naturally no guarantee of advantage, or even equality. But it has been successful in enough games, sometimes devastatingly so, that one wonders why White isn't using the idea versus the regular Dragon. The answer, of course, is that he has already castled! I'll leave you to the books and databases if you want further details on 8 $\mathbb{B}b1$.

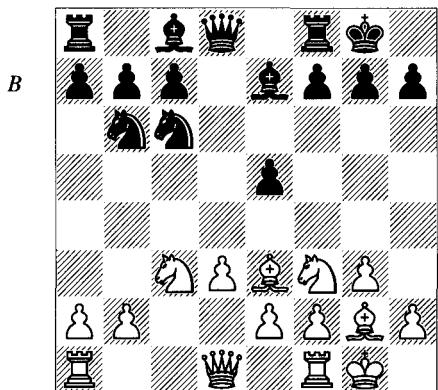
b) 8 a4 a5 has fallen from favour, perhaps because b4 is a 'real' outpost for Black, whereas b5 is only a temporary one. Be that as it may, 9 d3 $\mathbb{Q}g4$ is fine and may transpose to 9 a4 below, whereas Korchnoi-Chekhover, Leningrad 1955 went 9... $\mathbb{Q}e6$ 10 $\mathbb{Q}e3$ $\mathbb{Q}d5$ (already assessed as

equal by Korchnoi) 11 $\mathbb{Q}d2$ ('?'; he calls this 'foppish') 11...0-0 12 $\mathbb{Q}e4$! f6 13 $\mathbb{E}c1$ $\mathbb{W}d7$ 14 $\mathbb{Q}c5$ $\mathbb{Q}xc5$ 15 $\mathbb{E}xc5$ b6 16 $\mathbb{E}c1$ $\mathbb{Q}d4$, with ...c5 coming and the better game.

8...0-0 9 $\mathbb{Q}e3$ (D)

This is a traditional set-up that has been overtaken in popularity by plans with a3 and b4, but it remains an interesting way to proceed. The strategies of a Dragon Sicilian proper can be used for both sides.

The older line 9 a4 a5 10 $\mathbb{Q}e3$ is well met by 10... $\mathbb{Q}g4$ (in fact, this move is generally a good choice when White proceeds slowly) 11 $\mathbb{E}c1$ $\mathbb{B}b8$! (protecting the b-pawn), when White has nothing very special to do, and his main idea 12 $\mathbb{Q}d2$ can be met by 12... $\mathbb{Q}d4$!!.



9...f5

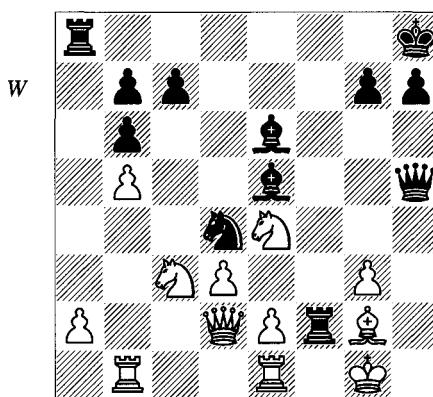
Of course, 9... $\mathbb{Q}e6$ is playable. Then one tactical device for White to watch out for is 10 $\mathbb{Q}a4$! e4!, when best play is 11 $\mathbb{Q}e1$! (11 dx e 4?? $\mathbb{W}xd1$) 11...exd3 12 $\mathbb{Q}xd3$ $\mathbb{Q}d5$!, centralizing and protecting Black's queenside.

10 $\mathbb{W}c1$

An idea borrowed from the Dragon. White has the dual ideas of $\mathbb{Q}g5$, trying to clarify his positional advantages by avoiding attack (see below), and $\mathbb{E}d1$, to enforce d4.

The immediate 10 b4!? is also played, as it is in the Reversed Dragon, with White having gained the extra move $\mathbb{Q}e3$. As so often, Black can try to use the fact that he is a tempo down to his advantage, in this case by replying 10...f4!? (10... $\mathbb{Q}f6$ 11 $\mathbb{Q}c5$ $\mathbb{E}e8$? 12 e4! is a standard way of grabbing the centre; White will aim for b5 and a well-timed exf5, winning the e4-square, just as Black does in the Sicilian Defence) 11

$\mathbb{Q}xb6$!? (it's always risky to part with the dark-squared bishop in the Dragon if one doesn't exchange its counterpart; safer is 11 $\mathbb{Q}d2$, when Black should be courageous and grab the pawn: 11... $\mathbb{Q}xb4$! 12 $\mathbb{W}b3+$ $\mathbb{E}f7$ 13 $\mathbb{Q}xe5$ $\mathbb{Q}xe5$ 14 $\mathbb{W}xb4$ f3 15 exf3 $\mathbb{Q}xd3$!?) 11...axb6 12 b5 $\mathbb{Q}d4$ 13 $\mathbb{Q}xe5$ fxg3 14 hxg3 $\mathbb{Q}f6$! 15 $\mathbb{Q}c4$ $\mathbb{W}e8$! (eyeing both e2 and the kingside) 16 $\mathbb{E}b1$ $\mathbb{W}h5$ 17 $\mathbb{E}e1$ $\mathbb{Q}e6$ 18 $\mathbb{Q}d2$ (heading over to protect the king) 18... $\mathbb{W}h8$ 19 $\mathbb{Q}de4$! $\mathbb{Q}e5$ 20 $\mathbb{W}d2$ $\mathbb{W}xf2$!! (D).



Out of nowhere! It's often the case that White's positional niceties are opposed by an all-out assault. Lerner-Kaidanov, Kuibyshev 1986 continued 21 $\mathbb{W}g5$! (21 $\mathbb{Q}xf2$? $\mathbb{Q}xg3$ 22 $\mathbb{Q}ce4$ $\mathbb{W}h2+$ 23 $\mathbb{Q}f1$ $\mathbb{Q}xf2$ 24 $\mathbb{Q}xf2$ $\mathbb{Q}f5$! threatening 25... $\mathbb{Q}g3$ #; this is the key idea behind 20... $\mathbb{Q}xf2$; correct is 21 $\mathbb{Q}xf2$! $\mathbb{W}h2$ 22 $\mathbb{W}g5$! $\mathbb{Q}c2$! 23 $\mathbb{W}xe5$! $\mathbb{E}f8+$ 24 $\mathbb{Q}f6$ $\mathbb{Q}h3$! 25 $\mathbb{E}g1$ $\mathbb{Q}xf6$ + 26 $\mathbb{W}xf6$ gxf6, with a position lacking coherence), to which Black replied 21... $\mathbb{Q}f5$! 22 $\mathbb{W}xh5$ $\mathbb{Q}xh5$ 23 e3, but 21... $\mathbb{Q}xg2$! 22 $\mathbb{W}xg2$ $\mathbb{W}h3+$ 23 $\mathbb{Q}g1$ $\mathbb{Q}f5$! 24 $\mathbb{Q}f2$ $\mathbb{W}xg3$ + 25 $\mathbb{W}xg3$ $\mathbb{Q}xg3$ is correct, when Black has the better chances.

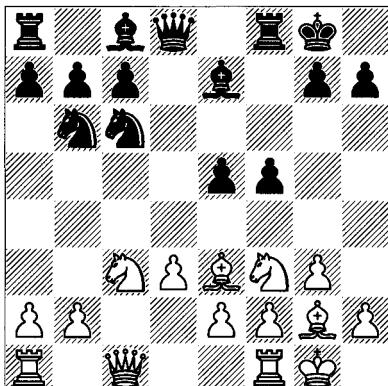
Back to 10 $\mathbb{W}c1$ (D):

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

A classically elegant illustration of White's strategy went 10... $\mathbb{W}h8$ 11 $\mathbb{E}d1$ $\mathbb{Q}f6$! 12 d4! exd4 13 $\mathbb{Q}xd4$ $\mathbb{Q}xd4$ 14 $\mathbb{Q}xd4$ $\mathbb{Q}xd4$ 15 e3 c5 16 exd4 cxd4 17 $\mathbb{W}f4$ $\mathbb{W}e7$ 18 $\mathbb{E}xd4$, when every white piece is better than its counterpart: 18... $\mathbb{E}f6$ 19 a4 a5 20 $\mathbb{E}ad1$ h6 21 $\mathbb{E}d8+$ $\mathbb{Q}h7$ 22 h4 $\mathbb{W}b4$ 23 $\mathbb{W}xb4$ axb4 24 $\mathbb{Q}d5$ 1-0 Přibyl-Kozlov, Stary Smokovec 1976.

11 $\mathbb{Q}g5$! $\mathbb{Q}xg5$ 12 $\mathbb{Q}xg5$ $\mathbb{Q}d4$ 13 $\mathbb{Q}f3$!

B



This is not even necessarily the best move, but it shows the understanding that, once the forcing nature of the game is reduced and Black's tactical opportunities are kept under control, White has the long-term advantage in the Reversed Dragon just as Black does in the Sicilian. Let's see that play out:

13... $\mathbb{Q}xf3+$ 14 $\mathbb{Q}xf3$ c6 15 b4

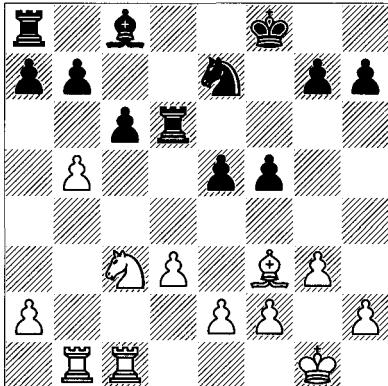
White's minority attack is extremely annoying.

15... $\mathbb{Q}d5!$? 16 b5! $\mathbb{Q}e7$??

But 16... $\mathbb{Q}e6$ 17 bxc6 bxc6 18 $\mathbb{Q}a4$ is better for White.

17 $\mathbb{B}b1$ $\mathbb{F}f6$ 18 $\mathbb{W}a3!$ $\mathbb{W}d6$ 19 $\mathbb{W}xd6$ $\mathbb{B}xd6$ 20 $\mathbb{B}fc1$ $\mathbb{Q}f8$ (D)

W



The Reversed Sicilian in a nutshell.

21 $\mathbb{B}xc6$ $\mathbb{Q}xc6$

21... $\mathbb{B}xc6$ 22 $\mathbb{Q}b5!$ $\mathbb{B}d7$ 23 $\mathbb{Q}xc6$ (or 23 $\mathbb{Q}a3$) 23... $\mathbb{Q}xc6$ 24 $\mathbb{B}xc6$ $\mathbb{B}b7$ 25 $\mathbb{C}c7!$ $\mathbb{B}ab8$ 26 $\mathbb{B}bc1$ and White has both pawn and position.

22 $\mathbb{Q}b5$ $\mathbb{B}d7$ 23 $\mathbb{Q}xc6$ $\mathbb{B}xc6$ 24 $\mathbb{B}xc6$ $\mathbb{B}b8$ 25 $\mathbb{B}bc1$ $\mathbb{B}xb5$ 26 $\mathbb{B}xc8+$

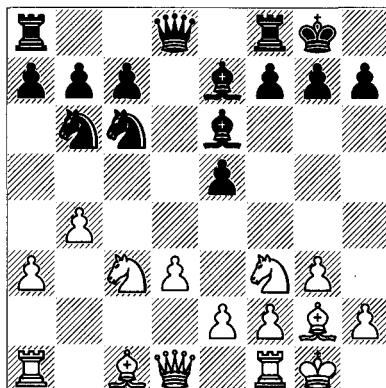
White went on to convert his extra pawn into victory.

Janous – Soza

Correspondence game 2002

1 c4 e5 2 $\mathbb{Q}c3$ $\mathbb{Q}f6$ 3 $\mathbb{Q}f3$ $\mathbb{Q}c6$ 4 g3 d5 5 cxd5 $\mathbb{Q}xd5$ 6 $\mathbb{Q}g2$ $\mathbb{Q}b6$ 7 0-0 $\mathbb{Q}e7$ 8 d3 0-0 9 a3 $\mathbb{Q}e6$ 10 b4 (D)

B

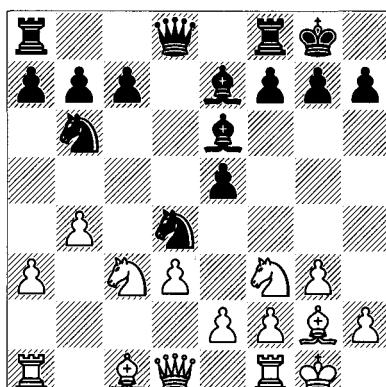


White chooses a favourite contemporary line. The plan with a3 and b4 features queenside expansion, which is undoubtedly logical. In the Sicilian Dragon, Black only achieves ...b5 by dint of great effort.

10... $\mathbb{Q}d4$!? (D)

10...f6 and 10...a5 11 b5 $\mathbb{Q}d4$ are more common, and 10...f5 is an old main line that isn't seen much any more.

W

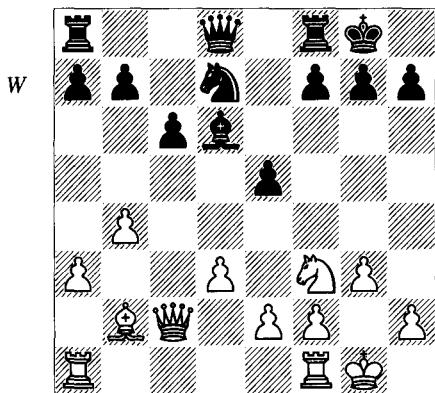


11 $\mathbb{Q}b2$

A neglected juncture. White seldom captures by 11 $\mathbb{Q}xe5$, probably fearing 11... $\mathbb{Q}f6$

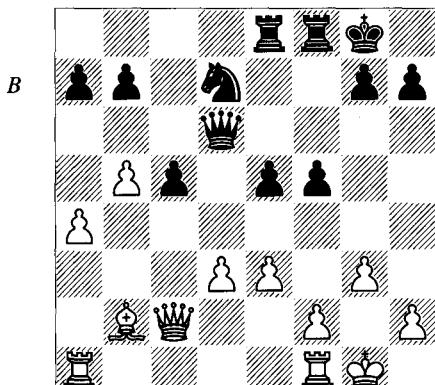
(11...a5!?) 12 f4 $\mathbb{Q}b3$, although then the exchange sacrifice 13 $\mathbb{Q}e3!$ $\mathbb{Q}xa1$ 14 $\mathbb{W}xa1$ looks intriguing; for example, 14... $\mathbb{Q}xe5$ 15 fxe5 $\mathbb{Q}d5$ 16 $\mathbb{Q}d4$ $\mathbb{W}d7$ 17 $\mathbb{W}b2$ with the idea $\mathbb{Q}e4$. The bishop-pair and a pawn with a potentially dangerous 3:0 central majority add up to sufficient compensation, and in practice Black won't enjoy defending this position.

11... $\mathbb{Q}xf3+$ 12 $\mathbb{Q}xf3$ c6 13 $\mathbb{Q}e4$ $\mathbb{Q}d7$ 14 $\mathbb{W}c2$ $\mathbb{Q}d5$ 15 $\mathbb{Q}d2$ $\mathbb{Q}xf3$ 16 $\mathbb{Q}xf3$ $\mathbb{Q}d6$ (D)



We're still in theory. White has a pleasant form of Sicilian Defence, yet Black has no weaknesses and should be OK.

17 $\mathbb{Q}d2$ $\mathbb{W}e7$ 18 $\mathbb{Q}e4$ $\mathbb{Q}ae8$ 19 $\mathbb{Q}xd6$ $\mathbb{W}xd6$ 20 a4 f5?! 21 b5 c5 22 e3 (D)



White's idea is d4, but he is also looking at the f4-square. Either side might put a pawn there.

22... $\mathbb{Q}h8??$

This doesn't work out well. In Salov-Kasparov, USSR Ch, Moscow 1988, Black played

more carefully: 22... $\mathbb{Q}f7$! 23 $\mathbb{Q}fe1$ (23 d4? $\mathbb{Q}xd4$ 24 $\mathbb{Q}xd4$ e4) 23... $\mathbb{Q}f8$ 24 $\mathbb{Q}c4$?! (24 $\mathbb{Q}ad1$ $\mathbb{Q}d8$ 25 $\mathbb{Q}c4$ is more accurate), and here 24... $\mathbb{Q}e6$! would have equalized.

23 d4! exd4

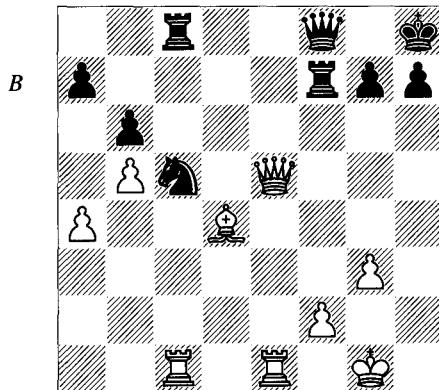
Black can't capture with the c-pawn due to $\mathbb{Q}a3$.

24 exd4 $\mathbb{Q}c8$ 25 $\mathbb{Q}c3$ $\mathbb{Q}f7$

Black defends g7. If he does so by 25... $\mathbb{Q}f6$? then White wins at least a pawn after 26 $\mathbb{Q}xc5$ $\mathbb{Q}d4$! $\mathbb{W}xd4$ 28 $\mathbb{Q}xd4$ $\mathbb{Q}c2$ 29 $\mathbb{Q}xa7$.

26 $\mathbb{Q}xc5$ $\mathbb{Q}xc5$ 27 $\mathbb{Q}ac1$ f4?! 28 $\mathbb{Q}e5$!?

29 $\mathbb{Q}fe1$ b6 30 $\mathbb{Q}d4$ fxg3 31 hxg3 (D)



White's centralized bishop is somewhat better than the knight, and his control of the e-file makes life difficult for his opponent.

31... $\mathbb{Q}g8$ 32 $\mathbb{Q}d5$ $\mathbb{Q}h8$ 33 $\mathbb{Q}e5$ $\mathbb{Q}d7$ 34 $\mathbb{Q}c4$ $\mathbb{Q}dc7$ 35 $\mathbb{Q}e2$ $\mathbb{Q}d8$ 36 $\mathbb{Q}c3$! h6 37 $\mathbb{Q}f3$ $\mathbb{Q}g8$ 38 $\mathbb{Q}e3$ $\mathbb{Q}cd7$ 39 $\mathbb{Q}xc5$ $\mathbb{Q}bc5$ 40 $\mathbb{Q}xc5$ $\mathbb{Q}c8$ 41 $\mathbb{Q}e3$

White eventually converted the pawn into victory.

Bareev – Shirov
Poikovsky 2006

1 c4 e5 2 g3 $\mathbb{Q}f6$ 3 $\mathbb{Q}g2$ d5 4 $\mathbb{Q}xd5$ $\mathbb{Q}xd5$ 5 $\mathbb{Q}c3$ $\mathbb{Q}b6$ 6 $\mathbb{Q}f3$ $\mathbb{Q}c6$ 7 0-0 $\mathbb{Q}e7$ 8 a3 0-0

8... $\mathbb{Q}e6$ 9 d3 f5 10 e4! is an old positional 'trick': 10...0-0 (10...fxe4 11 $\mathbb{Q}xe4$ gives White the crucial e4 outpost and an eye on g5) 11 exf5 $\mathbb{Q}xf5$ 12 $\mathbb{Q}e1$!. Now the exchange of d-pawn for e-pawn activates White's pieces, but otherwise White plays $\mathbb{Q}e4$ with a strong outpost.

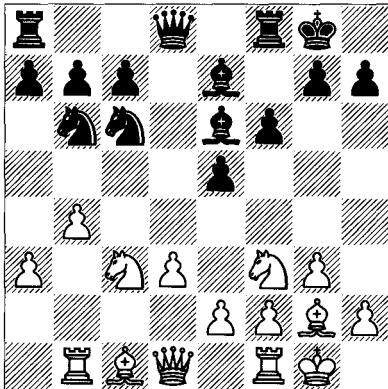
9 b4 $\mathbb{Q}e6$

White's plan of $\mathbb{Q}g5$ versus the Dragon doesn't work with reversed colours: 9... $\mathbb{Q}g5$?

10 b5 $\mathbb{Q}d4$ 11 $\mathbb{Q}xe5$ $\mathbb{Q}e6$ 12 $\mathbb{B}b1$. 9... $\mathbb{E}e8$ 10 d3 $\mathbb{Q}f8$ 11 $\mathbb{Q}b2$ $\mathbb{Q}g4$ is more realistic, although 12 h3 $\mathbb{Q}e6$ 13 $\mathbb{Q}e4$ can follow.

10 $\mathbb{B}b1$ f6 11 d3 (D)

B



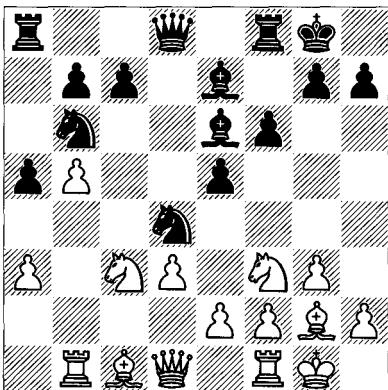
Black's choice of a structure with ...f6 has become more popular than any other. Perhaps White should be looking at this same formation in the Sicilian Defence, if only as a way to avoid enervating theoretical work.

11...a5

Compare this more aggressive move with the idea of playing ... $\mathbb{Q}d4$ directly from the previous game. Here 11... $\mathbb{Q}d4$ 12 $\mathbb{Q}d2$ c6 13 $\mathbb{Q}de4$ has been played a lot, having in mind some combination of e3, $\mathbb{Q}b2$ and a queen move to prepare $\mathbb{Q}d1$. Black should steer clear of 11... $\mathbb{W}d7$?! 12 $\mathbb{Q}e4$! $\mathbb{Q}d5$ 13 $\mathbb{W}c2$, which favoured White in Karpov-Hjartarson, Candidates match (game 2), Seattle 1989.

12 b5 $\mathbb{Q}d4$ (D)

W



13 $\mathbb{Q}d2$

White's most common idea versus ... $\mathbb{Q}d4$ is this retreat. It covers b3 and prepares to boot Black's knight out with 14 e3.

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

A surprising number of strong players have barely settled in their chairs when they had to get up again, as a result of playing 13... $\mathbb{Q}d5$?? 14 $\mathbb{Q}xd5$! $\mathbb{Q}xd5$ 15 e3 $\mathbb{Q}e6$ 16 e4. Ouch! But 13...c6 and 13... $\mathbb{Q}d5$!? are also playable.

14 e3 $\mathbb{Q}f5$ 15 $\mathbb{W}e2$

White can also go the other way: 15 $\mathbb{W}c2$ followed by $\mathbb{Q}d1$ and, with luck, $\mathbb{Q}ce4-c5$. At some point, the move a4 may become essential to stop ...a4. Compare the game.

15... $\mathbb{Q}d6$

This stops $\mathbb{Q}c4$, which might be the answer to 15...a4.

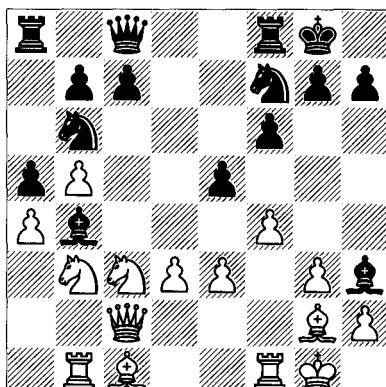
16 a4 $\mathbb{Q}g4$! 17 f3 $\mathbb{Q}e6$ 18 f4 $\mathbb{Q}f7$ 19 $\mathbb{Q}b3$?

White takes his eye off his charge on a4. Probably 19 $\mathbb{Q}b2$ is correct.

19... $\mathbb{Q}b4$! 20 $\mathbb{W}c2$ $\mathbb{Q}h3$ (D)

There's no reason for 20... $\mathbb{Q}xc3$?! 21 $\mathbb{W}xc3$ $\mathbb{Q}xa4$ 22 $\mathbb{W}c2$. While this is playable for Black, giving up his dark-squared bishop is a high price to pay.

W



21 $\mathbb{Q}e4$ $\mathbb{Q}xg2$ 22 $\mathbb{Q}xg2$ f5 23 $\mathbb{Q}f2$

At this point, 23...exf4! 24 gxf4 $\mathbb{W}d7$! would target a4 again, after which 25 $\mathbb{Q}d2$ $\mathbb{Q}d5$! 26 $\mathbb{Q}c4$ $\mathbb{W}e6$ leaves White all bottled up. We can safely say that the relevant part of the opening is over. Even discounting White's errors above, Black seems able to equalize in this variation by means of natural moves.

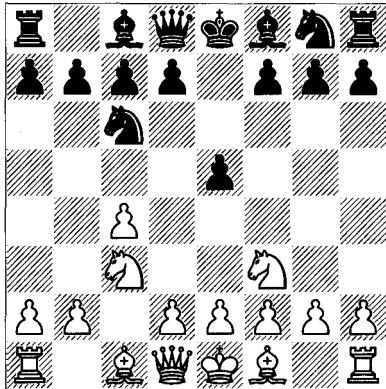
In general, the Reversed Dragon produces unbalanced positions which continue to attract master players on both sides of the board.

6 Three Knights and Closed English

The main subject of this chapter is the Closed English, which, broadly speaking, is defined by 1 c4 e5 2 ♜c3 ♜c6, but I use it to refer to the lines that continue 3 g3 g6 4 ♜g2 ♜g7. Another set of independent variations begins with 3 ♜f3, and I'll start with those.

1 c4 e5 2 ♜c3 ♜c6 3 ♜f3 (D)

B



White is willing to transpose to the English Four Knights variation after 3... ♜f6. Otherwise, Black has two main ways to go his own way, as illustrated in the next two games, with alternatives in the notes.

Three Knights Variation

Yakovitch – Peek
Amsterdam 1995

3...g6

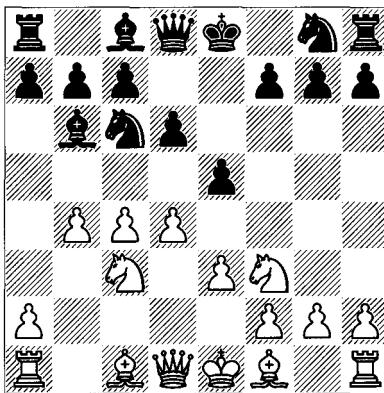
This is called the ‘Three Knights Variation’.

Apart from 3...f5 (featured below), Black’s other options are unimpressive; for example, 3...d6 4 d4 takes the centre, and Black is also vulnerable to the advance d5.

3... ♜c5 is well met by 4 e3! (with the idea 5 d4), after which White wins the centre with tempo; Black has the particular problem that

the normal idea 4...d6 5 d4 ♜b6 runs into 6 b4! (D).

B



Now 7 c5 is threatened, winning the bishop, while 6... ♜xb4? loses to 7 ♜a4+ ♜c6 8 d5, and the best sequence 6...exd4 7 exd4 a5 still leads to a clear advantage for White following 8 b5 ♜ce7 9 ♜d3.

After 3... ♜c5, by the way, the trick 4 ♜xe5!? is best met by 4... ♜xf2+! 5 ♜xf2 ♜xe5 6 d4 ♜f6+!. This favours White after, say, 7 ♜e1 ♜g4 8 ♜d3 ♜f2+ 9 ♜d2, but not by much.

The best irregular 3rd-move option from Black’s view might be 3... ♜b4?!. Then 4 ♜d5 e4?! and 4 ♜c2 d6 5 ♜d5 are directions to look in. It’s likely that White will come out with a modest advantage.

4 d4

White takes the principled course of grabbing the centre when it is offered him. He can also play slowly by 4 d3 or 4 g3, heading for a Closed English. More significantly, some players may not feel comfortable facing 4 e3 intending 5 d4. Then 4... ♜g7 5 d4 d6 is a natural course, but Black has to be willing to play with less space if White chooses d5 soon; his main consolation is that e4 will follow at the cost of a tempo (e3-e4). The most interesting option is 4...f5 5 d4 e4, which might be compared with 3...f5 4 d4 e4 below. In that case, Black may

not like having spent a tempo on ...g6; on the other hand, that move doesn't go badly with the ...f5/...e4 pawn-structure.

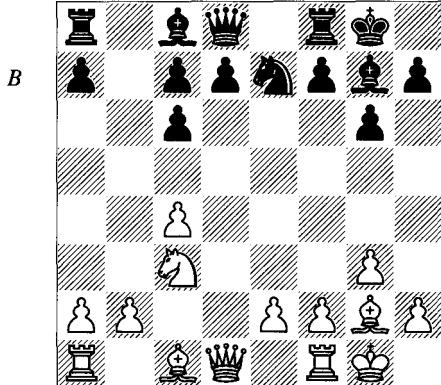
4...exd4 5 $\mathbb{Q}xd4$

In the old days it was thought that 5 $\mathbb{Q}d5$! was advantageous for White: 5... $\mathbb{Q}g7$ (certainly not 5... $\mathbb{Q}ge7??$ 6 $\mathbb{Q}f6\#$; but perhaps 5... $\mathbb{Q}f6$ is all right, with the idea 6 $\mathbb{Q}g5$ $\mathbb{Q}e7$ or 6 $\mathbb{Q}f4$ $\mathbb{Q}d6??$ 7 $\mathbb{Q}xd6$!?) cxd6) 6 $\mathbb{Q}g5$. Then Black discovered the nice solution 6... $\mathbb{Q}ce7!$ with the idea of ...c6 and rapid development. Mellado-G.Georgadze, Manresa 1995 continued 7 $\mathbb{Q}xd4$ c6 8 $\mathbb{Q}xe7$ $\mathbb{Q}xe7$ 9 $\mathbb{Q}d2$ h6 10 $\mathbb{Q}h4$ 0-0 11 e3 d5 with a level game.

5... $\mathbb{Q}g7$ 6 $\mathbb{Q}xc6$ bxc6 7 g3 $\mathbb{Q}e7$

A distinguishing move, which prepares castling, covers c6 in anticipation of ...d6 or ...d5, and keeps the long diagonal open. The alternative 7... $\mathbb{Q}f6$ is seen in the next game.

8 $\mathbb{Q}g2$ 0-0 9 0-0 (D)



9...d6

Both sides have open lines for their bishops, so the most important elements are White's control of space and Black's doubled c-pawns. The latter can be a target, as can Black's a-pawn, but they can also be an advantage, in that they help to cover the central squares, and the b-file has been opened for Black's rook.

10 $\mathbb{Q}g5$ $\mathbb{Q}b8$

10... $\mathbb{Q}e6$ is well met by 11 $\mathbb{Q}d3$. Oddly enough, 10...f6! is a reasonable move based upon the idea 11 $\mathbb{Q}d2$ $\mathbb{Q}e6$, when 12 $\mathbb{Q}d3$ isn't available, and 12 $\mathbb{Q}a4$ $\mathbb{Q}d7$ is fine for Black. Still, either 11 $\mathbb{Q}f4$ or 11 $\mathbb{Q}e3$ should be enough to maintain a modest advantage.

11 $\mathbb{Q}d2$ c5 12 $\mathbb{Q}ad1$ $\mathbb{Q}e6$

Black would like to neutralize the powerful g2-bishop, but after 12... $\mathbb{Q}b7??$ 13 $\mathbb{Q}xb7$ $\mathbb{Q}xb7$ 14 $\mathbb{Q}d5$ f6 15 $\mathbb{Q}xe7+$ $\mathbb{Q}xe7$ 16 $\mathbb{Q}d5+$ White wins material and the game.

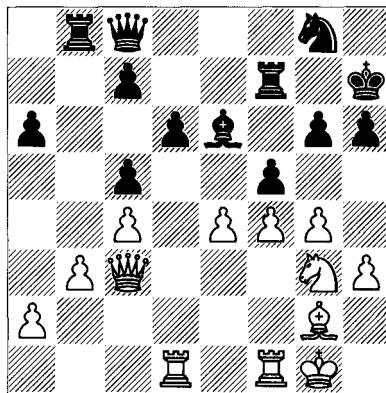
13 b3 f6 14 $\mathbb{Q}h6!$ $\mathbb{Q}xh6$ 15 $\mathbb{Q}xh6$ a6!? 16 $\mathbb{Q}e3!$ $\mathbb{Q}c8$ 17 $\mathbb{Q}e4$ $\mathbb{Q}g7$ 18 h3!?

Best is 18 $\mathbb{Q}d2!$ followed by $\mathbb{Q}fd1$ and/or $\mathbb{Q}c3$.

18... $\mathbb{Q}f7??$

White's idea was 18... $\mathbb{Q}xh3?$ 19 $\mathbb{Q}xd6$!, but Black should respond with 18... $\mathbb{Q}f5$.

19 $\mathbb{Q}c3!$ h6 20 g4! $\mathbb{Q}g8$ 21 f4 $\mathbb{Q}h7$ 22 $\mathbb{Q}g3!$ f5 23 e4! (D)



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

Black's position collapses after 23...fxg4 24 f5! gxf5 25 exf5 $\mathbb{Q}d7$ 26 $\mathbb{Q}d5$.

24 exf5 gxf5 25 $\mathbb{Q}de1$ $\mathbb{Q}d7$

Again, 25...fxg4 loses to 26 f5! $\mathbb{Q}xf5$ 27 $\mathbb{Q}xe6$! $\mathbb{Q}xe6$ 28 $\mathbb{Q}e4$ $\mathbb{Q}bf8$ 29 hxg4.

26 $\mathbb{Q}h5$ $\mathbb{Q}h8$ 27 $\mathbb{Q}f6+!$ $\mathbb{Q}g6$ 28 g5! $\mathbb{Q}g8$ 29 $\mathbb{Q}d5$ $\mathbb{Q}xf6$ 30 gxf6 $\mathbb{Q}xf6$ 31 $\mathbb{Q}f3$ $\mathbb{Q}xc3$ 32 $\mathbb{Q}xc3$

and White won shortly.

Uhlmann – Rajković

Hastings 1972/3

1 c4 e5 2 $\mathbb{Q}c3$ $\mathbb{Q}c6$ 3 $\mathbb{Q}f3$ g6 4 d4 exd4 5 $\mathbb{Q}xd4$ $\mathbb{Q}g7$ 6 $\mathbb{Q}xc6$ bxc6 7 g3 $\mathbb{Q}f6$

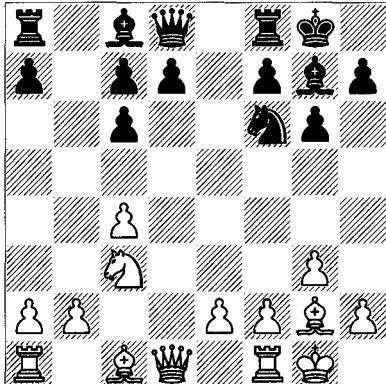
Black contests the central squares more directly than he did by 7... $\mathbb{Q}e7$.

8 $\mathbb{Q}g2$ 0-0 9 0-0 (D)

This position can also arise via 1 c4 e5 2 $\mathbb{Q}c3$ $\mathbb{Q}f6$ 3 $\mathbb{Q}f3$ $\mathbb{Q}c6$ 4 g3 g6 5 d4 exd4 6 $\mathbb{Q}xd4$ $\mathbb{Q}g7$ 7 $\mathbb{Q}g2$, etc.

9... $\mathbb{Q}e8$

B



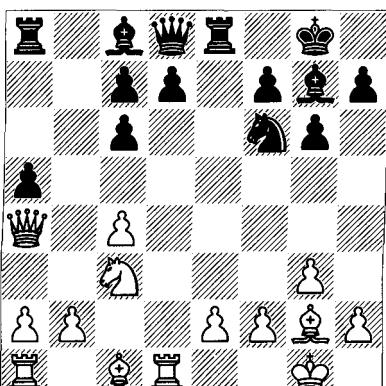
An elegant display of White's positional superiority was seen in Psakhis-Ekström, Dresden Zonal 1998: 9... $\mathbb{B}b8$?! 10 $\mathbb{W}a4$ a6 11 $\mathbb{W}a5$! $\mathbb{B}b7$ 12 c5! d6 13 $\mathbb{R}d1$ $\mathbb{W}e7$ 14 $\mathbb{B}f4$ $\mathbb{Q}d5$ 15 $\mathbb{Q}xd5$ cxd5 16 cxd6 cxd6 17 $\mathbb{R}d2$! $\mathbb{R}fd8$ 18 $\mathbb{R}c1$ $\mathbb{B}bc8$ 19 $\mathbb{R}dc2$ $\mathbb{R}xc2$ 20 $\mathbb{R}xc2$ $\mathbb{R}c8$ 21 $\mathbb{R}xc8+$ $\mathbb{R}xc8$ 22 $\mathbb{W}b6$ $\mathbb{B}f8$ 23 $\mathbb{W}b8$ $\mathbb{Q}g4$ 24 $\mathbb{Q}h6$ $\mathbb{Q}xe2$ 25 $\mathbb{Q}f1$! $\mathbb{Q}xf1$ 26 $\mathbb{Q}xf1$ d4 27 $\mathbb{W}xf8+$ $\mathbb{W}xf8$ 28 $\mathbb{Q}xf8$ $\mathbb{Q}xf8$ 29 $\mathbb{Q}e2$ and White wins!

10 $\mathbb{W}a4$!?

White clears d1 and watches both a7 and c6. The alternative 10 $\mathbb{B}f4$ allows the active reply 10... $\mathbb{B}b8$. Nevertheless, White keeps an edge after 11 $\mathbb{W}d2$ or 11 $\mathbb{R}b1$ $\mathbb{Q}g4$ (Black is in some trouble after 11... $\mathbb{B}b7$ 12 $\mathbb{W}a4$ a6 13 $\mathbb{R}fd1$) 12 $\mathbb{W}d2$ $\mathbb{A}a6$ 13 h3 $\mathbb{Q}f6$ 14 b3, Onishchuk-Akopian, Elista Olympiad 1998.

10...a5 11 $\mathbb{R}d1$ (D)

B



11... $\mathbb{B}b7$

Black would like to exchange bishops by ... $\mathbb{W}b8$ and ...c5.

12 $\mathbb{R}d3$!?

White also has 12 $\mathbb{Q}g5$ h6 13 $\mathbb{B}e3$ with the idea 13... $\mathbb{Q}g4$ 14 $\mathbb{Q}d4$. Instead, 13... $\mathbb{R}xe3$?! 14 $\mathbb{W}fxe3$ $\mathbb{W}e7$ is a standard sacrifice that puts pressure on White's dark squares and kingside. However, Black's bishop on b7 is a liability, and White seems able to consolidate, at least partially, after 15 $\mathbb{R}d3$ $\mathbb{Q}g4$ (notice that the move ...h6 prevents ... $\mathbb{Q}h6$) 16 $\mathbb{Q}e4$! f5 17 $\mathbb{Q}f2$.

12... $\mathbb{Q}g4$ 13 $\mathbb{Q}e4$ f5 14 $\mathbb{Q}g5$ $\mathbb{W}fxe4$?
14... $\mathbb{W}c8$! 15 $\mathbb{Q}c3$ $\mathbb{Q}xc3$ 16 $\mathbb{B}xc3$ $\mathbb{R}xe2$ 17 $\mathbb{W}d1$ results in attacking chances for both sides.

15 $\mathbb{Q}xd8$ $\mathbb{W}exd3$ 16 $\mathbb{Q}xd3$! $\mathbb{R}axd8$

No better is 16... $\mathbb{Q}d4$ 17 c5! $\mathbb{Q}xf2+$ 18 $\mathbb{Q}h1$ $\mathbb{R}axd8$ 19 $\mathbb{W}xg4$.

17 c5!

White's point: he wins material because of the dual threats $\mathbb{W}xg4$ and $\mathbb{W}b3+$.

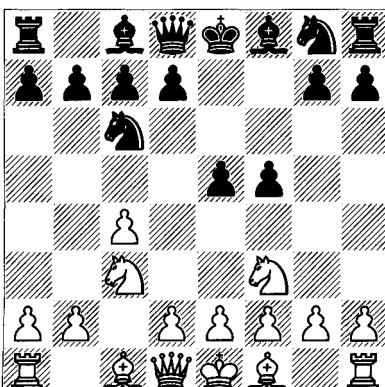
17...h5 18 h3 $\mathbb{Q}e2$ 19 $\mathbb{W}xg4$ $\mathbb{Q}f8$

Now 20 $\mathbb{R}f1$ was sufficient to win, but 20 $\mathbb{W}b3+$ $\mathbb{Q}h7$ 21 $\mathbb{W}xb7$ $\mathbb{W}fxf2$ 22 $\mathbb{Q}f1$ $\mathbb{R}xb2$ 23 $\mathbb{W}xc7$ would have done so more rapidly.

The Independent 3...f5

1 c4 e5 2 $\mathbb{Q}c3$ $\mathbb{Q}c6$ 3 $\mathbb{Q}f3$ f5 (D)

w



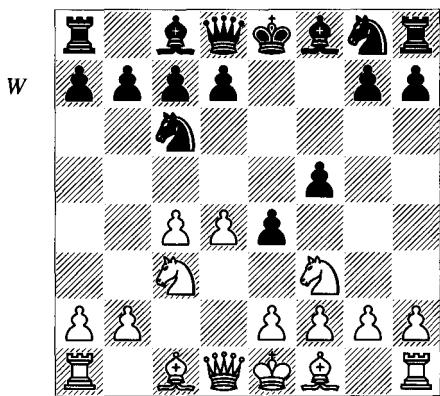
The move 3...f5 takes on extra significance when you realize that, apart from the slightly shaky 3...g6, it is the main way to bypass 3... $\mathbb{Q}f6$ with a transposition to the English Four Knights Variation. Since Black has played 2... $\mathbb{Q}c6$ instead of 2... $\mathbb{Q}f6$ 3 $\mathbb{Q}f3$ $\mathbb{Q}c6$, it's likely that he is trying to steer clear of the latter position. Thus if White is happy playing against 3...f5, he can use 3 $\mathbb{Q}f3$ to steer the game away from the Closed English (i.e. 2 $\mathbb{Q}c3$ $\mathbb{Q}c6$ 3 g3 g6 4 $\mathbb{Q}g2$ $\mathbb{Q}g7$).

Rohde – Zsu. Polgar
New York 1992

4 d4

White challenges the centre, in order to establish a superior pawn-structure. This is easily the most significant independent continuation, because 4 d3 $\mathbb{Q}f6$ 5 g3 can be answered by 5...g6 (or 5... $\mathbb{Q}b4$) 6 $\mathbb{Q}g2$ $\mathbb{Q}g7$ 7 0-0-0, transposing into the Closed English section with ...f5 below.

4...e4 (D)



In a sense Black's opening is anti-positional, because d5 is under White's command, and if Black's centre is attacked by f3 he may well have to surrender his e4 strongpoint. On top of that he always has to deal with the tempo-winning advance d5. Finally, as we have seen in similar positions, Black's pawn-structure invites a white piece to land on f4, presenting further difficulties in freeing his game.

It turns out that none of this is of decisive consequence, because of the specific circumstance that White is not only losing a tempo due to the attack on his knight, but that the knight apparently has nowhere to go that doesn't involve further loss of time (or positional concessions). As a result, while White is rearranging his pieces, Black has time to get his own forces out and shore up his centre.

After 4...e4, White has many legitimate moves. I shall only look at them very briefly, but you might want to do your own investigation, and compare the position to 2 $\mathbb{Q}c3$ d6 3 $\mathbb{Q}f3$ f5 4 d4

5 $\mathbb{Q}g5$

This leap forward is White's most popular response to the attack. Notice the difference between this position and 2 $\mathbb{Q}c3$ d6 3 $\mathbb{Q}f3$ f5 4 d4 e4 5 $\mathbb{Q}g5$. With the pawn on d6, Black can play ultra-flexibly with ...c6 and perhaps ... $\mathbb{Q}a6-c7$, as he did there. But in this line his knight on c6 gives the game a different character. It attacks d4 (in conjunction with ... $\mathbb{Q}g7$ in some lines), and can go to the useful square e5 if White attacks it by d5. Here are some pickings from other moves:

a) One might think that White could profitably avoid loss of time by 5 d5 exf3 6 dx6 fxg2 7 cxd7+ $\mathbb{Q}xd7$ (7... $\mathbb{Q}xd7$ 8 $\mathbb{Q}xg2$ c6 9 $\mathbb{Q}b3$ is a little awkward for Black) 8 $\mathbb{Q}xd7+$ $\mathbb{Q}xd7$ 9 $\mathbb{Q}xg2$, but what looks like a small pull turns out not to be even that after 9...0-0-0 10 $\mathbb{Q}f4$ $\mathbb{Q}c5$ 11 e3 $\mathbb{Q}f6$, Jakat-Knaak, Plauen 1980.

b) 5 $\mathbb{Q}d2$ $\mathbb{Q}f6$ 6 e3 is a safe line. One standard solution consists of 6...g6 with the idea ... $\mathbb{Q}g7$, since then any advance by d5 extends the range of Black's bishop. But perhaps White could stir the pot by 7 g4!?, intending 7... $\mathbb{Q}xg4$ 8 $\mathbb{Q}dxe4$ fxe4 (8... $\mathbb{Q}h4$ 9 $\mathbb{Q}g3$) 9 $\mathbb{Q}xg4$ d5 10 $\mathbb{Q}g2$ with superior central control. It's an idea, anyway.

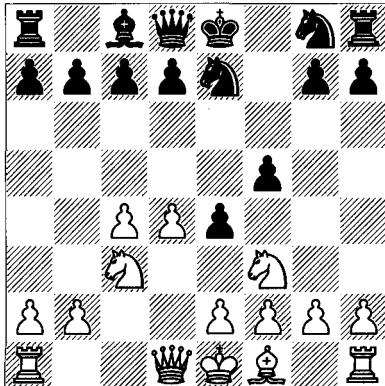
c) 5 $\mathbb{Q}e5!?$ is one of those moves that mainly aims to escape the disadvantages of the alternatives! White retains options of bringing his queen's bishop out quickly; for example, 5... $\mathbb{Q}xe5!?$ (5... $\mathbb{Q}f6$ is safe and sound) 6 dx5 $\mathbb{Q}e7$ 7 $\mathbb{Q}g5$ h6 8 $\mathbb{Q}h4$ c6 9 e3 $\mathbb{Q}a5$ 10 $\mathbb{Q}g3$ g6 11 $\mathbb{Q}e2$ h5, Christiansen-Browne, Las Vegas 1989, and now 12 h4! $\mathbb{Q}g7$ 13 $\mathbb{Q}d6!$ $\mathbb{Q}h6$ 14 0-0-0 is extremely strong, in view of 14...g5? 15 $\mathbb{Q}d2$ g4 16 $\mathbb{Q}xe4$.

d) 5 $\mathbb{Q}g5$ develops a tempo. The idea is that after White plays e3, he will have rid himself of his bad dark-squared bishop. Everyone who loves chess traps should see the outrageous grandmaster miniature 5... $\mathbb{Q}f6$ 6 d5 (6 $\mathbb{Q}d2$ is better) 6...exf3 7 dx6 fxg2 8 cxd7+?? $\mathbb{Q}xd7!$ 0-1 Doroshkevich-Tukmakov, USSR Ch, Riga 1970! Instead, the main line is 5... $\mathbb{Q}e7$ 6 $\mathbb{Q}xe7$ $\mathbb{Q}cxe7$ (D).

There are two relevant retreats here:

d1) Marin's perceptive comment about the following game is that "[White] did everything he was supposed to do, but only reached the better side of a draw": 7 $\mathbb{Q}g1$ $\mathbb{Q}f6$ 8 e3 d6 9 h4 c6 10 $\mathbb{Q}h3$ $\mathbb{Q}e6$ 11 $\mathbb{Q}e2$ (indeed, we see here White's standard reorganization, in which his

W

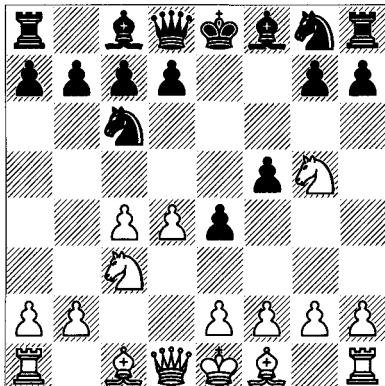


bishop is ‘good’ and White’s knight has a strong pseudo-outpost on f4, but nothing much comes of it) 11... $\mathbb{Q}f7$ 12 $\mathbb{Q}g5$ 0-0 13 $\mathbb{W}b3$ $\mathbb{W}b6$ 14 f3 d5 15 fxe4 fxe4 16 $\mathbb{W}xb6$ axb6 17 $\mathbb{M}f1$ h6 18 $\mathbb{Q}xf7$ $\mathbb{Q}xf7$, Vaganian-Nikolić, Barcelona 1989. Black has few problems.

d2) Kavalek-Blatny, Luhačovice 1968 went 7 $\mathbb{Q}d2$ $\mathbb{Q}f6$ 8 e3 d6 9 f3 exf3 10 $\mathbb{W}xf3$! (covering e4, so that Black has to go to lengths to contest that critical square) 10...c6 11 $\mathbb{Q}d3$ d5 12 cxd5 cxd5. Pritchett notes that this is a kind of reversed French Defence with a tempo more and some special advantages for White. For example, Black has a terrible bishop and extremely weak dark squares, especially e5. The game continued 13 0-0 0-0 14 $\mathbb{W}g3$! $\mathbb{Q}d7$ 15 $\mathbb{Q}f3$ $\mathbb{M}c8$ (15... $\mathbb{Q}e4$ 16 $\mathbb{W}e1$! $\mathbb{Q}xc3$ 17 $\mathbb{W}xc3$ $\mathbb{M}c8$ 18 $\mathbb{W}b3$ attacks d5 and b7 while preparing $\mathbb{Q}e5$). Here White should transfer to the queen-side and make threats; for example, 16 $\mathbb{W}d6$! $\mathbb{Q}e4$ 17 $\mathbb{Q}xe4$ fxe4 18 $\mathbb{Q}e5$ $\mathbb{Q}f5$ 19 $\mathbb{W}b4$ with a serious advantage.

Let’s return to the main game with 5 $\mathbb{Q}g5$ (D).

B



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

5...h6 6 $\mathbb{Q}h3$ g5 and now 7 $\mathbb{Q}g1$! $\mathbb{Q}f6$ 8 e3 transposes to the main game. Instead, 7 f3?! exf3 8 exf3 $\mathbb{Q}g7$ 9 d5 $\mathbb{W}e7+$! 10 $\mathbb{W}e2$ $\mathbb{Q}d4$ 11 $\mathbb{W}xe7+$ $\mathbb{Q}xe7$, as in J.Adamski-Mi.Tseitlin, Lodz 1980, is an example of what Black is aiming for.

If he wants to play the ... $\mathbb{Q}b4$ system in the next note, Black should employ the move-order 5... $\mathbb{Q}b4$! 6 $\mathbb{Q}h3$ (6 $\mathbb{Q}d2$ $\mathbb{Q}xc3$ 7 $\mathbb{Q}xc3$? $\mathbb{W}xg5$) 6... $\mathbb{Q}xc3$ + 7 bxc3 $\mathbb{Q}f6$.

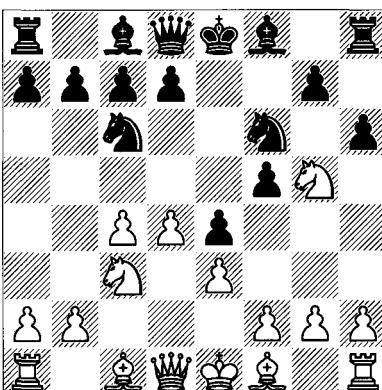
6 e3

6 $\mathbb{Q}h3$ $\mathbb{Q}b4$ 7 e3 (had Black used the 5... $\mathbb{Q}b4$ order above, he would have avoided 7 $\mathbb{Q}d2$! $\mathbb{Q}xd4$ 8 $\mathbb{Q}xe4$ $\mathbb{Q}xd2$ + 9 $\mathbb{W}xd2$! $\mathbb{Q}xe4$ 10 $\mathbb{W}xd4$ with an advantage for White, M.Haag-B.Anderson, New Zealand Ch, Christchurch 2002) 7... $\mathbb{Q}xc3$! 8 bxc3 d6 9 $\mathbb{Q}e2$ 0-0 10 0-0 b6! 11 $\mathbb{Q}f4$ $\mathbb{Q}a5$ (the attack on c4 resembles a Nimzo-Indian Defence) 12 c5 g5! 13 $\mathbb{Q}h3$ h6 14 cxd6 cxd6. In this position, we see the important Nimzo-Indian theme that when the forward pawn is exchanged, the weakness on c4 remains. Cvetković-Govedarica, Belgrade 1982 continued 15 f3 $\mathbb{Q}e6$ 16 $\mathbb{Q}f2$, when both 16...exf3 17 $\mathbb{Q}xf3$ $\mathbb{M}c8$ 18 e4 $\mathbb{W}c7$! and 16... $\mathbb{W}c7$! 17 fxe4 fxe4 are greatly in Black’s favour.

6...h6 (D)

The best alternative is 6...g6 7 $\mathbb{Q}h3$ $\mathbb{Q}g7$ 8 $\mathbb{Q}f4$ d6 9 h4 0-0 10 $\mathbb{Q}e2$ with an edge for White, Psakhis-Kharitonov, Sverdlovsk 1984.

W

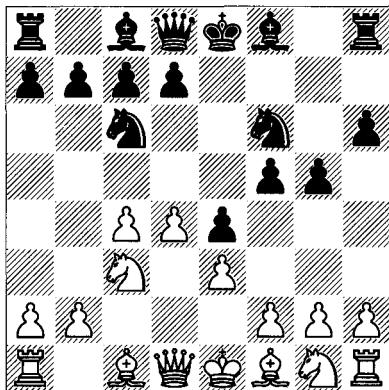


7 $\mathbb{Q}h3$ g5

Black’s pawn keeps the knight from f4 and, if he responds to White’s move f3 by ...exf3, White won’t be able to recapture with a piece due to ...g4.

8 ♜g1! (D)

B



White moves his knight four times only to return to its original square! In the meantime, Black is to move and has a lead in development. Nevertheless, White's apparently absurd manoeuvre is a lesson in the importance of structure, because White can force a favourable transformation by playing h4 and winning either the f4-square or the h-file, when Black's king will be insecure.

8... ♜g7 9 h4 ♜f7?

It turns out that Black won't be able to prevent the exposure of his kingside. The superior 9...g4 grants White f4 but temporarily clamps down on that side of the board. After 10 ♜ge2 h5 11 ♜f4 d6 12 d5, Black has serious weaknesses; for example, 12...e5 13 ♜b5! ♜h6 14 ♜d4 ♜xf4 15 exf4 ♜g6 16 ♜e3 0-0 17 ♜e2 with a nice advantage. Eventually, White will advance on the queenside and force open lines there.

10 ♜h3 ♜g6 11 f3 ♜e7

11...d6 12 ♜f2 increases the attack on e4, and 11...e8 can lead to the pretty 12 hxg5 hxg5 13 fxe4 ♜xe4? 14 ♜h5+! ♜xh5 15 ♜f4+! ♜g4 16 ♜e2+ ♜g3 17 ♜h3#.

12 fxe4 ♜xe4 13 ♜xe4 ♜xe4 14 ♜d3!

Setting up the following decisive combination:

14... ♜xg2 15 ♜xf5+!! ♜xf5 16 ♜f1+ ♜e6

16... ♜g6 17 ♜d3+ ♜h5 18 ♜f4+. Black has other defences, but none that hold.

17 ♜h5 ♜e5!

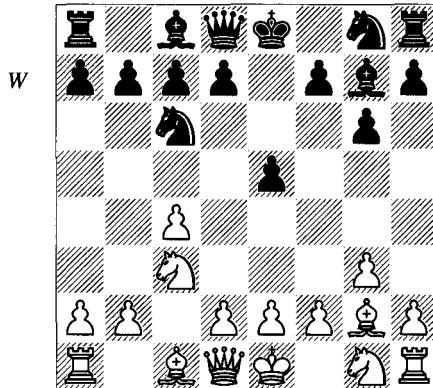
Temporarily staving off the attack by returning a piece, but it's of no avail.

18 dxе5 ♜xe5 19 ♜f7+ ♜d6 20 ♜f6+! ♜c5!
21 b4+ ♜xb4 22 ♜d2+ ♜a3 23 c5! d5 24 cxd6

♗g3+ 25 ♜f2 ♜h1+ 26 ♜e2 ♜g4+ 27 ♜d3+ ♜d1 28 ♜c1+ ♜a4 29 ♜c4+ ♜a5 30 ♜d2+ 1-0

Introduction to the Closed English

1 c4 e5 2 ♜c3 ♜c6 3 g3 g6 4 ♜g2 ♜g7 (D)



As indicated at the beginning of the chapter, I have designated this as the starting point of the Closed English, one of the most popular of 1 c4 systems. It begs for comparison with the Closed Sicilian, which goes 1 e4 c5 2 ♜c3 ♜c6, and more often than not 3 g3 g6 (3...e6 is also a traditional move) 4 ♜g2 ♜g7. In the Closed English, White has a large number of 5th-move options, some of a similar nature and others varying radically in character. But each one of them defines a structure that Black can use against the corresponding Closed Sicilian lines (1 e4 c5 2 ♜c3 ♜c6 3 g3 g6 4 ♜g2 ♜g7), and as in so many cases throughout this book, White's extra tempo is partially compensated for by Black's greater information about what his opponent is doing. Naturally, White stands better than Black does in the corresponding Closed Sicilian lines, but the play tends to be fluid and hard to assess, and the opposing forces frequently don't clash at an early stage. Thus both players have a wide variety of moves to choose from, and this variation covers an enormous amount of theoretical territory. I'll try to supply examples that overlap between as many lines as possible.

Closed English with $\mathbb{Q}f3$

Tempone – Vescovi
Cascavel 1996

1 c4 e5 2 $\mathbb{Q}c3$ $\mathbb{Q}c6$ 3 g3 g6 4 $\mathbb{Q}g2$ $\mathbb{Q}g7$ 5 $\mathbb{Q}f3$

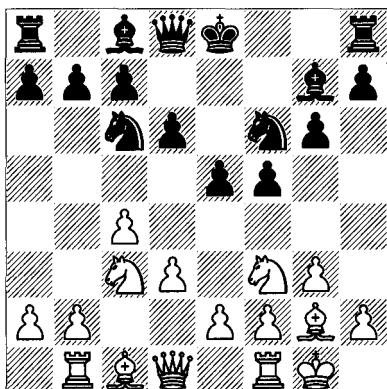
This knight development is not held in the highest regard when Black plays it in the Sicilian Defence (although objectively it isn't bad); White hopes that an extra move will change matters.

5...f5

Black's most important reply, especially if we're speaking of putting some pressure on White as opposed to defending patiently. If Black plays ... $\mathbb{Q}f6$ without ...f5, we move into King's Indian territory, covered in Chapter 12.

6 0-0 d6 7 d3 $\mathbb{Q}f6$ 8 $\mathbb{B}b1$ (D)

B



White prepares b4-b5, an advance that works together with the bishop on g2 by controlling squares along its diagonal. He also removes the rook from a1, where it stands exposed to prospective attacks by the g7-bishop.

8...0-0

This can be called the main position of the Closed English, and one of the most important for the English Opening with 1...e5. It arises via a large number of move-orders beginning with either 1 c4 or 1 $\mathbb{Q}f3$; for example, 1 c4 e5 2 $\mathbb{Q}c3$ d6 3 g3 f5 4 $\mathbb{Q}g2$ $\mathbb{Q}f6$ 5 d3 g6 6 $\mathbb{Q}f3$ $\mathbb{Q}g7$ 7 0-0 $\mathbb{Q}c6$. Or it might even transpose from a Lenigrad Dutch Defence set-up: 1 c4 f5 2 $\mathbb{Q}c3$ $\mathbb{Q}f6$ 3 g3 g6 4 $\mathbb{Q}g2$ $\mathbb{Q}g7$ 5 $\mathbb{Q}f3$ d6 6 0-0 e5 7 d3 0-0 8 $\mathbb{B}b1$ $\mathbb{Q}c6$.

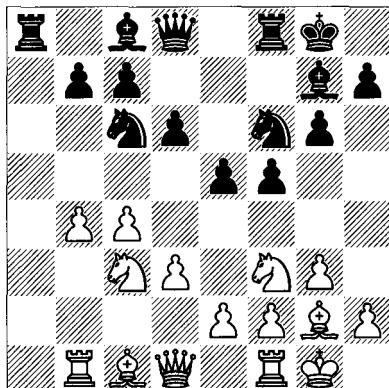
The strategic ideas are multifaceted, but more often than not Black works for a kingside attack. Typical moves are ...g5, ...f4, ... $\mathbb{Q}g6$, ... $\mathbb{Q}f5$, ... $\mathbb{Q}e6$ with ... $\mathbb{W}d7$ and ... $\mathbb{Q}h3$, and ... $\mathbb{W}e8-h5$. Black can also play for a central advance, usually ...d5, by itself or in conjunction with ...e4.

White's plans on the other side of the board include moves such as b4-b5 and c5 (with cxd6 or c6), a4-a5, $\mathbb{W}b3$, $\mathbb{Q}a3/b2$, $\mathbb{B}fc1$ and $\mathbb{Q}d2-c4$. Alternatively, or additionally, White will play in the centre, usually with the pawn advance d4 or working to place a knight on d5.

Turning to defensive strategies, Black often uses the move ...b6 to thwart White's pawn advance c5, or he can play ...c6, perhaps with ...d5 in mind, which challenges White's efforts to lengthen the reach of his g2-bishop. White's main defensive idea on the kingside involves a timely f4, to prevent ...f5, but there are *ad hoc* kingside moves that can also prove effective.

Black's 8...0-0 is a major decision. His alternative is to insert 8...a5 9 a3, and then 9...0-0 10 b4 axb4 11 axb4 (D).

B

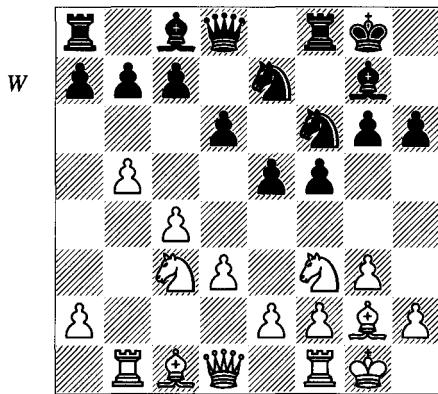


We shall see this in the games below. This choice is very complicated, and in fact, it comes up often enough in various contexts that it might be compared to the 'which rook?' problem that confronts chess-players in so many positions. When he interpolates 8...a5 9 a3, Black removes his a-pawn as a potential target and opens the a-file for his rook; that comes in handy by preventing an early $\mathbb{Q}a3$ and generally keeping an eye on squares such as a1 and a2.

On the other hand, after White gets organized, for example, $\mathbb{B}b2$ and $\mathbb{W}b3/Wc2$, he

can win the a-file by means of $\mathbb{B}a1$, taking over the open line that he so much needs in order to make progress on the queenside.

9 b4 h6 10 b5 $\mathbb{Q}e7$ (D)

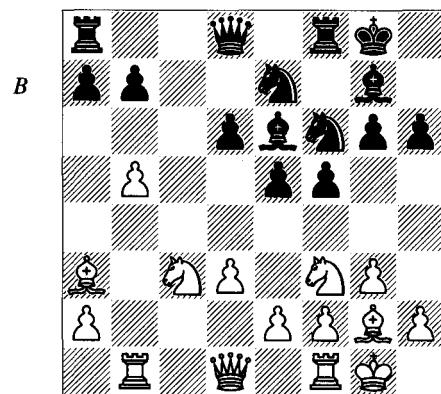


11 a4

On the face of it, White is preparing a5, which might be followed by a6 or b6. That is indeed the case, and if Black gets the blocking move ...b6 in, White would especially like to open the a-file by means of a5. But equally importantly, he wants to play $\mathbb{Q}a3$ without allowing Black to indirectly harass the bishop by ...a6 and ...axb5 at some point. After the immediate 11 $\mathbb{Q}a3$ $\mathbb{Q}e6$, intending ...a6, he should therefore consider 12 c5!?

11 c5?! immediately is the most attractive alternative, because it cracks open the queenside before Black can set up defensively. The obvious drawbacks are White's loss of central control (d5) and failure to develop a piece. The game Leer Salvesen-Nordahl, Gausdal 2002 continued 11... $\mathbb{Q}e6$ (11...dxc5? 12 $\mathbb{Q}xe5$ $\mathbb{Q}h5$ 13 $\mathbb{W}b3+$ $\mathbb{Q}h7$ 14 $\mathbb{Q}f3$ and aside from White's positional advantage, Black's c-pawn is difficult to defend) 12 cxd6 cxd6 13 $\mathbb{Q}a3$ (D).

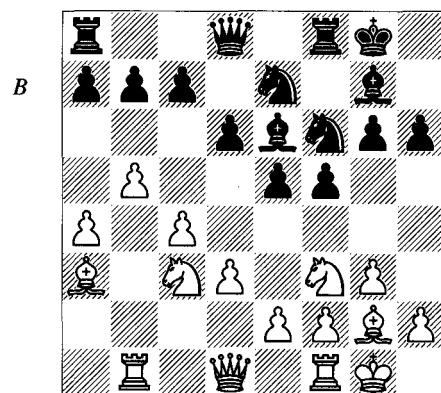
13...g5?! (Black should pursue a central strategy by 13... $\mathbb{W}d7$ or 13... $\mathbb{Q}fd5$ 14 $\mathbb{Q}xd5$ $\mathbb{Q}xd5$) 14 $\mathbb{W}a4$ (or 14 $\mathbb{Q}d2$, hitting the b7-pawn and intending $\mathbb{Q}c4$, when 14... $\mathbb{Q}ed5!$ 15 $\mathbb{Q}xd5$ $\mathbb{Q}xd5$ 16 $\mathbb{W}b3$ apparently gives White a small advantage) 14... $\mathbb{W}d7$ 15 $\mathbb{W}b4$!? (15 $\mathbb{Q}d2$ $\mathbb{Q}ed5$ 16 $\mathbb{W}fc1$) 15... $\mathbb{W}ad8$? (an oversight; it's hard to find a good move in the face of $\mathbb{W}xd6$, $\mathbb{Q}xe5$ or $\mathbb{Q}d2$, but 15... $\mathbb{W}fc8$! at least has the idea of 16 $\mathbb{W}xd6$! $\mathbb{W}xc3$ 17 $\mathbb{W}xe7$ $\mathbb{W}xe7$ 18 $\mathbb{Q}xe7$ $\mathbb{Q}c2$) 16 $\mathbb{Q}xe5$! dxe5 17 $\mathbb{W}xe7$ $\mathbb{Q}f7$ 18 $\mathbb{W}xd7$ $\mathbb{W}fxd7$ 19



b6! a6 20 $\mathbb{W}bc1$ and White is a pawn up for no real compensation.

11... $\mathbb{Q}e6$ 12 $\mathbb{Q}a3$ (D)

Here's a trick to know: 12 c5?! dxc5! 13 $\mathbb{Q}xe5$?? $\mathbb{Q}h5$, winning a knight, because 14 f4 fails to 14... $\mathbb{Q}xe5$ 15 fxe5 $\mathbb{W}d4+$. But after 12 $\mathbb{Q}a3$, 13 c5 is a real positional threat.



12... $\mathbb{W}c8$!

Black escapes the indirect pressure from White's bishop on g2. His idea is to block the advance of White's c-pawn by ...b6, thus delaying his queenside attack long enough to be able to launch his own on the kingside. There's another standard tactic here to watch out for: 12...b6 13 $\mathbb{Q}xe5$! with the idea 13...dxe5? (if 13... $\mathbb{Q}h5$, then 14 $\mathbb{Q}xa8$ $\mathbb{W}xa8$ 15 d4!) 14 $\mathbb{Q}xa8$ $\mathbb{W}xa8$ 15 $\mathbb{Q}xe7$.

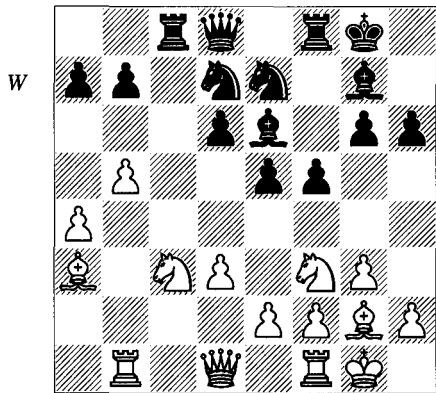
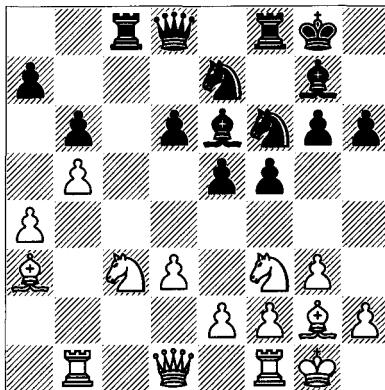
13 c5

Advancing immediately seems White's best shot at advantage. 13 $\mathbb{Q}d2$ lets Black reach his defensive goal by means of 13...b6. Then Psakhis-Kasparov, Match (game 5), Murcia 1990

went 14 e3 g5 15 d4 exd4 16 exd4 f4 17 $\mathbb{E}e1$ $\mathbb{Q}g4$ 18 $\mathbb{Q}f3$ (or 18 f3 $\mathbb{Q}f5$ 19 $\mathbb{Q}de4$) 18... $\mathbb{W}d7$ 19 c5 $\mathbb{E}ce8$ 20 $\mathbb{E}c1$ $\mathbb{Q}f5$ with chances for both sides.

13...b6

The immediate advance 13...g5 allows 14 b6!?, and 14 a5 has to be considered as well. I think this may be the right time for another of Black's standard moves: 13... $\mathbb{Q}d7$! 14 cxd6 (White doesn't have enough compensation after 14 c6?! bxc6 15 bxc6 $\mathbb{Q}xc6$ or 15... $\mathbb{Q}b8$!) 14...cxsd6 (D).



Now White's knight on c3 has no square to go to, so on the next move, ...e4 is actually going to win a piece by force! In return, however, White will get a couple of pawns and threats: 15 $\mathbb{E}c1$ e4!? (declining the piece by 15... $\mathbb{Q}c5$! would keep a level game; for example, 16 $\mathbb{Q}d2$ $\mathbb{W}d7$ 17 a5 $\mathbb{E}fd8$!) 16 dxex4 $\mathbb{E}xc3$ 17 $\mathbb{W}xd6$ $\mathbb{Q}f7$ (17... $\mathbb{E}xa3$ 18 $\mathbb{W}xe6$! $\mathbb{Q}h7$ 19 $\mathbb{E}fd1$) 18 $\mathbb{E}xc3$ $\mathbb{Q}xc3$ 19 $\mathbb{E}c1$ $\mathbb{Q}g7$ 20 $\mathbb{Q}d4$! with good attacking chances.

14 cxd6 exd6 (D)

15 $\mathbb{E}c1$

This reserves d2 for White's knight. Psakhis proposes 15 $\mathbb{W}d2$ $\mathbb{W}d7$ 16 $\mathbb{E}fc1$ g5 17 $\mathbb{Q}a2$!? with the idea $\mathbb{Q}b4$ -c6.

The text-move also anticipates simplification along the c-file. That will normally help White if Black has brought most of his pieces towards the kingside to pursue an attack. With fewer pieces, White has less to fear in that sector and can increase his queenside advantage. On the other hand, if Black is playing in the centre when such exchanges occur, he has as many chances of success there as White has. In

that case, simplification tends to be neutral, favouring one side or another only because of particulars.

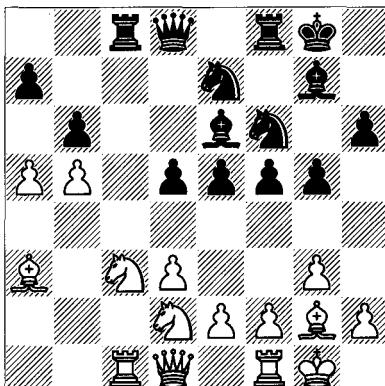
15...g5

Opting for the kingside plan. With the preceding comments in mind, Black is well-placed and should consider keeping his pieces centralized by 15... $\mathbb{Q}d7$! (planning ... $\mathbb{E}c7$ and ... $\mathbb{E}fc8$) or by 15... $\mathbb{Q}d7$!? with the ideas ...e4 and ... $\mathbb{Q}c5$ (16 $\mathbb{Q}xd6$? e4). The game continuation isn't bad but gives White a bit more time.

16 $\mathbb{Q}d2$

16 e4 f4 17 $\mathbb{Q}d2$, intending $\mathbb{Q}c4$, is more ambitious, if loosening.

16...d5 17 a5 (D)



17...f4!?

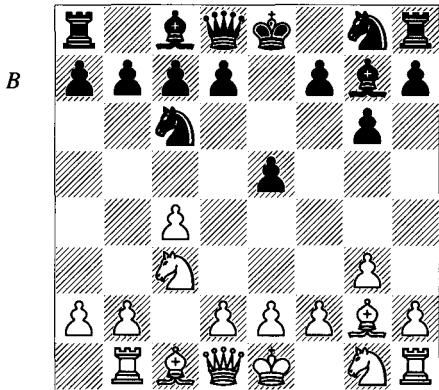
Seeking kingside counterplay. Another course is 17...bxa5 18 $\mathbb{W}b3$ $\mathbb{Q}f7$, when 19 $\mathbb{Q}a4$ $\mathbb{E}xc1$ 20 $\mathbb{E}xc1$ $\mathbb{E}e8$ should level things.

After 17...f4, White played 18 $\mathbb{Q}a4$, probably inaccurately due to 18... $\mathbb{E}xc1$ 19 $\mathbb{W}xc1$ bxa5. Instead, 18 axb6 axb6 19 $\mathbb{W}b3$ connects rooks

and retains the idea of $\mathbb{Q}a4$. As a whole, this variation offers fairly equal play and interesting middlegames.

**Anilkumar – Saravanan
Calcutta 1993**

1 c4 e5 2 g3 $\mathbb{Q}c6$ 3 $\mathbb{Q}g2$ g6 4 $\mathbb{Q}c3$ $\mathbb{Q}g7$ 5 $\mathbb{B}b1!?$ (D)



B

A fairly popular move, one often associated with e3 and $\mathbb{Q}ge2$ rather than $\mathbb{Q}f3$. White wants to get b4-b5 in as quickly as possible in order to disrupt Black's development. In this game, it transposes back to a 5 $\mathbb{Q}f3$ position, but we get to see a few important ideas along the way.

5...f5

Instead, 5...a5 6 a3 f5 7 b4 axb4 8 axb4 $\mathbb{Q}f6$ would be a typical move-order that can lead to the main lines, but Black retains options by playing ...f5 first.

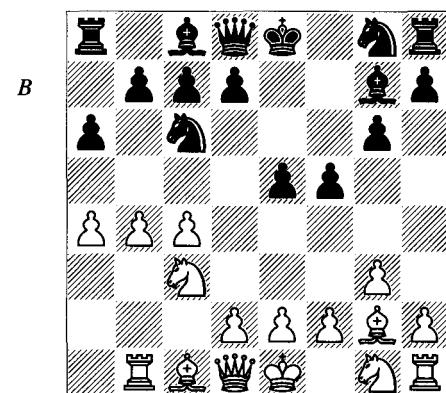
6 b4 a6!?

Oddly enough, this can also transpose exactly to the main line (see the next game), but the move has its own complexities.

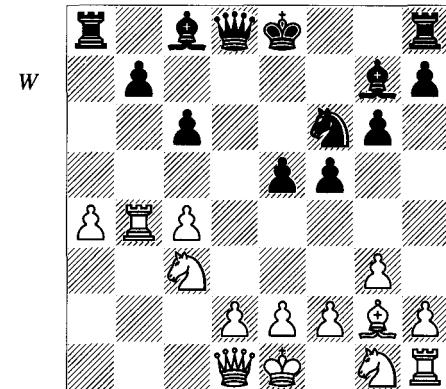
A potential drawback to 5 $\mathbb{B}b1$ is that 6... $\mathbb{Q}e7$? leads to a situation in which ...d5 is an issue: 8 $\mathbb{Q}f3$ (8 d3 d5) 8...e4 (8...d6 9 0-0 0-0 10 d3 returns us to the main line) 9 $\mathbb{Q}d4$ 0-0 (9...d5!?) 10 0-0, and here 10...c5 is playable, in view of 11 $\mathbb{Q}b3$ d5! 12 cxd5 c4 13 $\mathbb{Q}c5$ $\mathbb{Q}fxd5$.

7 a4!? (D)

White should be aware of the difference between the ...a5 and ...a6 defences. He can play 7 d3 $\mathbb{Q}f6$ 8 $\mathbb{Q}f3$ 0-0 9 0-0 d6 but can still run into 10 a4 a5! 11 b5 $\mathbb{Q}b4$ 12 $\mathbb{Q}a3$ c5!, the important idea explained in the next note.

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

Whenever Black meets b4 by ...a6, White has to look out for a change of positional strategy by 7...a5!? 8 b5 (8 bxa5 $\mathbb{Q}f6$ 9 d3 0-0 10 $\mathbb{Q}f3$ $\mathbb{B}xa5$ leaves White with an isolated a-pawn) 8... $\mathbb{Q}b4!$. Black's point is seen after 9 $\mathbb{Q}a3$ (9 d3 $\mathbb{Q}e7$ has the idea 10 $\mathbb{Q}f3??$ e4) 9...c5 10 bxc6 (10 d3 is more cautious) 10...dxc6 11 $\mathbb{Q}xb4$ axb4 12 $\mathbb{Q}xb4$ $\mathbb{Q}f6$ (D).



Black has compensation for his pawn, based upon his two bishops as well as White's weak dark squares and a-pawn. The c5-square is especially inviting for a minor piece; for example, 13 $\mathbb{Q}h3$ 0-0 14 0-0 $\mathbb{Q}d7!$ 15 d3 $\mathbb{Q}c5$, having in mind either simple development or the immediate attack by ...g5.

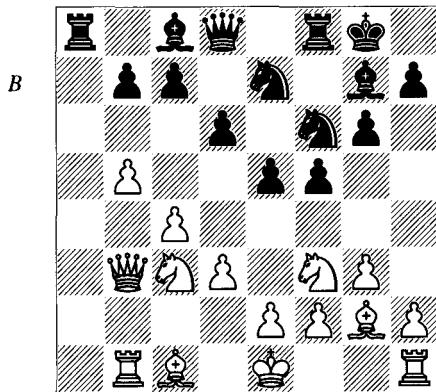
8 b5 axb5 9 axb5 $\mathbb{Q}e7$ 10 $\mathbb{Q}b3!?$

This not only stops ...d5, but also tries to force Black to burn up a move for the purposes of prevention. That isn't a one-sided gain, but it gives White's new opportunities compared to the main line (i.e., the one with an early d3, $\mathbb{Q}f3$ and 0-0).

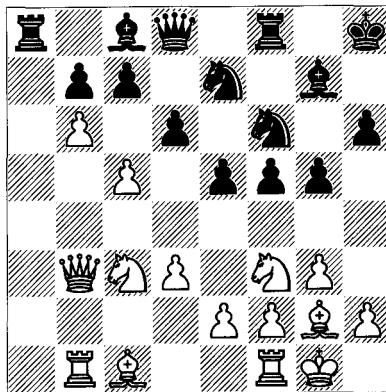
10...d6 11 d3 0-0

Here's a point at which Black can undertake to exploit the early $\mathbb{W}b3$ by 11... $\mathcal{Q}d7?$. This might lead to 12 $\mathcal{Q}f3$ (12 $\mathbb{A}a3$ $\mathcal{Q}c5$ 13 $\mathbb{A}xc5?$! $dxc5$ is generally a poor trade-off for White because of the lack of a defender – or attacker – of the dark squares) 12... $\mathcal{Q}c5$ 13 $\mathbb{W}c2$ 0-0 14 0-0 f4? (this advance tends to be good or bad depending upon the efficacy of a white knight on e4, and how long it takes to get there) 15 $\mathbb{A}b2$ $\mathbb{A}g4$ 16 $\mathbb{A}a1$ $\mathbb{W}d7$ with a complex imbalance.

12 $\mathcal{Q}f3$ (D)



B



B

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

Here Black would ordinarily play 12...h6. With the queen on b3 he can still do so, but has to be prepared for the standard advance 13 c5+ $\mathbb{Q}h7$ 14 b6!?, trying to demolish the pawn-chain. In that case, 14...c6! (14...dxc5 15 $\mathcal{Q}xe5$) 15 0-0 $\mathcal{Q}fd5$ intending to meet 16 $\mathcal{Q}xd5$ with 16... $\mathbb{A}e6!$ would be double-edged.

13 0-0 h6

Again, 13... $\mathcal{Q}d7$ is possible and may well transpose to the line we saw after 11... $\mathcal{Q}d7$. Generally, ...h6 together with ... $\mathbb{Q}h8$ is a little slow, as we shall see.

14 c5!?

A good move that opens the position favourably. Taking over the a-file by normal means is also effective: 14 $\mathbb{A}b2$! $\mathbb{A}e6$ 15 $\mathbb{A}a1$ $\mathbb{W}d7$ 16 b6!? (16 $\mathbb{A}a4$) 16... $\mathbb{A}xa1$ 17 $\mathbb{A}xa1$ c6 18 $\mathbb{A}a7$.

14...g5!?

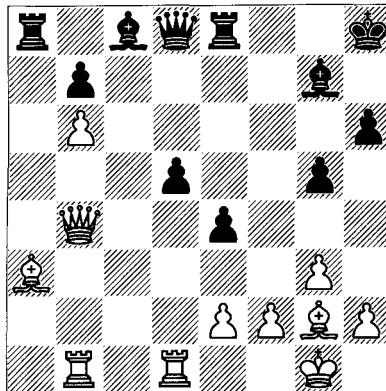
Black stands worse, but this is inferior to 14...e4! 15 cxd6 cxd6 16 dxe4 fxe4 17 $\mathcal{Q}d4$.

15 b6! (D)

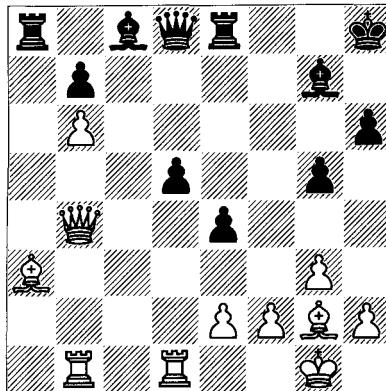
15...c6 16 $\mathbb{A}a3!$ $\mathbb{A}e8$ 17 cxd6 $\mathcal{Q}xd6$ 18 $\mathbb{W}b4$

As so often, putting the lesser piece in front would cause the most problems, in this case insurmountable ones: 18 $\mathbb{A}c5!$ threatens 19 $\mathbb{W}b4$ and completely ties Black down.

18...e4! 19 $\mathcal{Q}d2$ $\mathbb{A}e8?!$ 20 dxe4 $\mathcal{Q}xe4$ 21 $\mathcal{Q}dxe4$ fxe4 22 $\mathbb{A}fd1$ $\mathcal{Q}d5$ 23 $\mathcal{Q}xd5$ cxd5 (D)



W



24 $\mathbb{A}b2$ $\mathbb{A}f5$ 25 $\mathbb{A}bc1$ $\mathbb{A}e7$

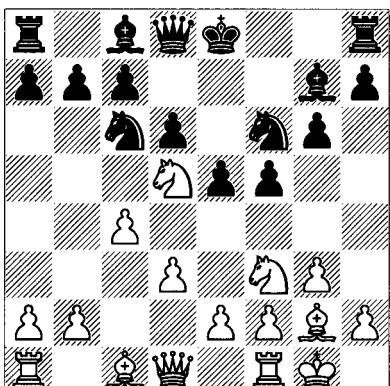
Black's position is too exposed. 25... $\mathbb{A}c8$ (to prevent 26 $\mathbb{A}c7$) loses material anyway to 26 $\mathbb{A}xc8$ $\mathbb{A}xc8$ 27 $\mathbb{A}xe4!$. After 25... $\mathbb{A}e7$, White could have ended things quickly by 26 $\mathbb{A}xg7+$ $\mathbb{A}xg7$ 27 $\mathbb{W}d4$ $\mathbb{A}g8$ 28 $\mathbb{W}e5!$. He eventually brought the point home by slower means.

**B. Schneider – Short
Solingen 1986**

**1 c4 e5 2 $\mathcal{Q}c3$ $\mathcal{Q}c6$ 3 g3 g6 4 $\mathbb{A}g2$ $\mathbb{A}g7$ 5 d3
d6 6 $\mathcal{Q}f3$ f5 7 0-0 $\mathcal{Q}f6$ 8 $\mathbb{A}b1$**

If White wants to steer clear of complications, he can exchange pieces via 8 $\mathcal{Q}d5$ (D), which is not as harmless as it looks.

B



a) After the obvious capture 8... $\mathbb{Q}xd5$ 9 $cxd5$ $\mathbb{Q}e7$ 10 $\mathbb{Q}g5!$, the e6-square makes a difference; for example, 10...c6 11 $\mathbb{Q}e6$ $\mathbb{Q}xe6$ 12 $dxe6$ 0-0 13 $\mathbb{W}b3$ $\mathbb{W}c8$ 14 e4!, when White's intrusive pawn on e6 survives, at least long enough for him to use his two bishops and central pawn-breaks.

b) Black can also play 8...0-0 9 $\mathbb{Q}g5!$ $\mathbb{Q}e7$ (9... $\mathbb{Q}e6$ 10 $\mathbb{W}d2$ $\mathbb{W}d7?$ opens the way for White to exploit Black's piece placement by 11 $\mathbb{Q}xf6+$ $\mathbb{Q}xf6$ 12 $\mathbb{Q}xf6$ $\mathbb{W}xf6$ 13 $\mathbb{Q}g5)$ 10 $\mathbb{Q}xf6+$ $\mathbb{Q}xf6$ 11 $\mathbb{Q}xf6$ $\mathbb{W}xf6$, when Mulyar-Revesz, Philadelphia 2006 went 12 c5! (perhaps 12 $\mathbb{W}b3$ $\mathbb{Q}g7$ 13 $\mathbb{W}c3$ is better) 12... $\mathbb{Q}g7$ 13 $\mathbb{W}b3$ $\mathbb{Q}c6$ 14 $\mathbb{W}c3$ $\mathbb{W}e7$ 15 b4, and now 15... $dxc5$ 16 $bxcc5$ $\mathbb{W}b8$ 17 $\mathbb{W}ab1$ b5! 18 $cxbb6$ $axb6$ would be about equal.

c) A third option is the simple 8... $\mathbb{Q}e7$ 9 $\mathbb{Q}g5$ (9 e4!?) 9... $\mathbb{Q}fxd5$ 10 $cxd5$ h6 11 $\mathbb{Q}xe7$ $\mathbb{W}xe7$ 12 $\mathbb{W}c1$ 0-0 with a small advantage for White due to his c-file pressure.

d) In view of all this, Black may prefer the slow but useful 8...h6, preparing either ... $\mathbb{Q}e7$ or ... $\mathbb{Q}xd5$ and not permitting $\mathbb{Q}g5$ or $\mathbb{Q}g5$. White probably does best to ignore this and expand via 9 $\mathbb{W}b1$ 0-0 10 b4 $\mathbb{Q}xd5$ (or 10... $\mathbb{Q}e7$ 11 $\mathbb{Q}xf6+$ $\mathbb{W}xf6$ 12 $\mathbb{Q}b2$ $\mathbb{Q}e6$ 13 $\mathbb{Q}d2$ c6 14 a4!?) 11 $cxd5$ $\mathbb{Q}e7$ 12 $\mathbb{W}b3$ with chances for both sides.

8...a5

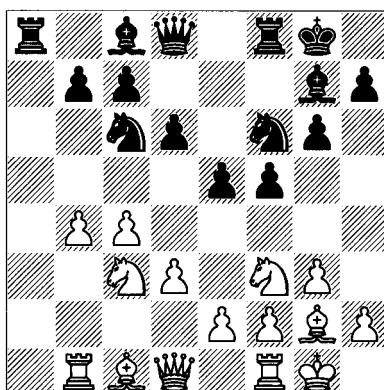
Black follows the most common move-order, used in an untold number of games over the years. The resulting themes overlap to a large extent with 8...0-0 9 b4 above, so these games should be studied together. For the record, the game before you actually went 8...0-0 9 b4 a6 10 a4 h6 11 b5 $axb5$ 12 $axb5$ $\mathbb{Q}e7$, transposing.

9 a3

Once the move ...a5 has been played, White sometimes changes course with 9 $\mathbb{Q}g5$, striving to win the light squares. This is relatively harmless if Black sticks to central play; for example, 9...h6 10 $\mathbb{Q}xf6$ $\mathbb{W}xf6$ 11 a3 0-0 12 $\mathbb{Q}d5$ $\mathbb{Q}g7!?$ 13 b4 $axb4$ 14 $axb4$ $\mathbb{Q}e7$ 15 $\mathbb{Q}d2$, E.Ragozin-Cherniaev, Biel 1992, and Black should play 15...c6! 16 $\mathbb{Q}xe7+$ $\mathbb{W}xe7$ 17 b5 $\mathbb{W}c7$.

9...0-0 10 b4 $axb4$ 11 $axb4$ (D)

B



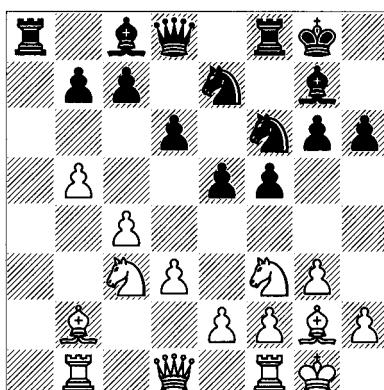
We have arrived at the most commonly seen position in the Closed English, in part because in so many lines the moves d3 and $\mathbb{Q}f3$ have been played at an early stage. For an overview of the basic ideas, see Tempone-Vescovi above.

11...h6

Otherwise Black can't play ...g5, and if he brings his bishop to e6, it will be subject to attack by $\mathbb{Q}g5$.

12 b5 $\mathbb{Q}e7$ 13 $\mathbb{Q}b2$ (D)

B

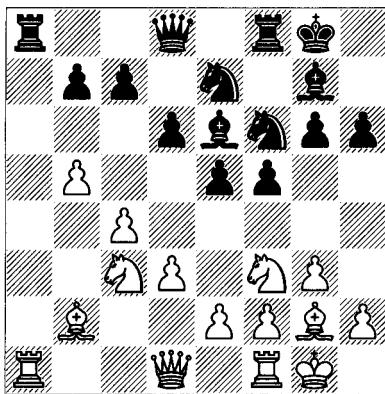


13... $\mathbb{Q}e6$

Black hurries to clear his back rank. He has an especially popular manoeuvre in mind. Less precise is 13...g5 14 $\mathbb{H}a1$ $\mathbb{H}xa1$ (upon 14... $\mathbb{Q}e6$, White wins the a-file regardless by 15 $\mathbb{H}xa8$ $\mathbb{W}xa8$ 16 $\mathbb{W}b3$ and $\mathbb{H}a1$; that's why ...g5 is usually delayed until ... $\mathbb{Q}e6$ and either ... $\mathbb{W}d7$ or ... $\mathbb{H}c8$ can be arranged) 15 $\mathbb{W}xa1$ with the better game; e.g., 15... $\mathbb{Q}g6$ 16 $\mathbb{Q}d2$ h5 17 $\mathbb{W}a8!$ b6 18 $\mathbb{H}a1$ $\mathbb{Q}h6$ 19 $\mathbb{H}a7$ g4 20 $\mathbb{Q}f1$ f4 21 $\mathbb{W}b8$ and White wins, Hickl-Maus, Bundesliga 1992/3.

14 $\mathbb{H}a1$ (D)

B



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

Black's strategy is to play ...b6 and then switch his attention to the kingside. Alternatively, the unsophisticated 14... $\mathbb{W}d7$, which connects rooks so as not to cede the a-file, may be as good as any other move. At that point, Marin suggests that White shouldn't give up the fight for the a-line, to which end 15 $\mathbb{W}b3$ g5 16 $\mathbb{H}a4$ intending 17 $\mathbb{H}fa1$ is logical. The risk is that after 16... $\mathbb{H}xa4$ 17 $\mathbb{W}xa4$ f4 18 $\mathbb{W}a7$ b6, Black gains time for an intimidating attack. Even if that ought not to win out with accurate play (for one thing, White's queen will get to b7 and be a good defender of his kingside!), it is still dangerous. In the end, which side you want to play is largely a matter of taste.

At any rate, the game Istratescu-Mateuta, Romanian Ch, Iasi 1999 continued 14... $\mathbb{W}d7$ 15 $\mathbb{W}xa8!$? $\mathbb{W}xa8$ 16 $\mathbb{W}c2$ g5 17 $\mathbb{Q}d2$ c6 18 $\mathbb{H}a1$ $\mathbb{H}xa1+$ 19 $\mathbb{H}xal$ $\mathbb{W}c7$ and both sides could claim a harmonious mix of structure and development. This looks equal.

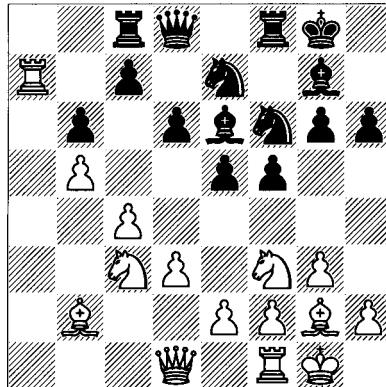
15 $\mathbb{H}a7$

Hitting the b-pawn to force the creation of weaknesses. 15 $\mathbb{Q}e1$ is less clear because Black

can play in the centre with 15...c6. Instead, White sometimes gets his queenside break in immediately by 15 c5. Then Ivanchuk-Topalov, Wijk aan Zee 1996 continued 15... $\mathbb{Q}d7$! 16 cxd6 cxd6 17 $\mathbb{Q}a4$ d5 18 $\mathbb{Q}d2$ $\mathbb{W}e8$ 19 e3 g5? (19... $\mathbb{W}f7$) 20 $\mathbb{W}e2$ $\mathbb{W}f7$ 21 f4! $\mathbb{Q}g6$? Black is moving his pieces and thoughts away from the centre, where the true theatre of war is. Now White should play 22 fxe5 hgx5 23 e4! f4 (23...dxe4? 24 $\mathbb{Q}xe4$) 24 exd5 $\mathbb{Q}xd5$ 25 $\mathbb{Q}e4$, attacking g5 and forcing 25... $\mathbb{Q}xe4$ 26 $\mathbb{Q}xe4$ $\mathbb{Q}f6$ 27 $\mathbb{Q}a3$! $\mathbb{Q}xe4$ 28 dxe4 $\mathbb{H}fe8$ 29 $\mathbb{Q}b6$ $\mathbb{H}b8$ 30 $\mathbb{W}h5$ $\mathbb{W}e6$ 31 $\mathbb{Q}d5$ with a clear positional advantage.

15...b6 (D)

W



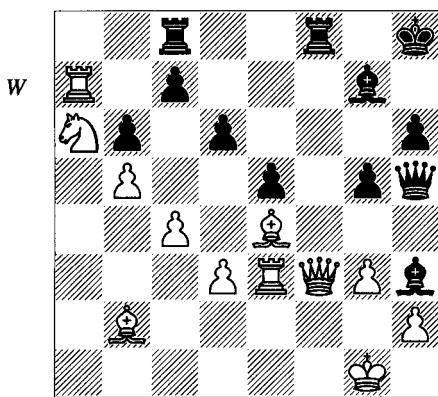
16 $\mathbb{W}c2$

White has a beautiful diagonal of squares to work on, and it's not obvious which move is best:

a) 16 $\mathbb{W}b3$ has the advantage that he can put a piece on d5 at the right moment: 16...g5 (16... $\mathbb{Q}d7$ will win a tempo, but takes a piece away from the kingside attack: 17 $\mathbb{H}fa1$ $\mathbb{Q}c5$ 18 $\mathbb{W}c2$ g5 19 $\mathbb{Q}d2$ is promising, although obviously the whole game lies ahead) 17 $\mathbb{Q}d2$ f4 18 $\mathbb{H}fa1$ $\mathbb{Q}f5$ 19 $\mathbb{Q}d5!$ f4xg3 20 hgx3 $\mathbb{Q}g4$ 21 $\mathbb{Q}e4$ $\mathbb{Q}d4$ 22 $\mathbb{Q}xd4$ exd4 23 $\mathbb{Q}h3$ $\mathbb{Q}h8$ 24 f3 $\mathbb{Q}xd5$, Hickl-S.Mohr, Bundesliga 1994/5, and now 25 cxd5 $\mathbb{Q}e3$ 26 $\mathbb{Q}e6$ is absolutely winning.

b) 16 $\mathbb{Q}e1$ is a good option, with the idea $\mathbb{Q}c2$ -b4, now that ...c6 is not on the cards as it was above. But of course that encourages Black's kingside attack by removing a defender from that sector. A superb game Mirumian-Oral, Olomouc 1998 went 16...g5 17 $\mathbb{Q}c2$ f4 18 $\mathbb{Q}b4$ $\mathbb{W}e8$ 19 $\mathbb{Q}e4$ $\mathbb{Q}xe4$ 20 $\mathbb{Q}xe4$ $\mathbb{Q}h3$ 21

$\mathbb{Q}a6?!$ $\mathbb{Q}f5!?$ 22 $\mathbb{M}e1$ (22 $\mathbb{M}xc7 \mathbb{Q}xf1$ 23 $\mathbb{W}xf1$ $\mathbb{fxg}3$ 24 $\mathbb{hxg}3$ $\mathbb{Q}xg3$; 22 $\mathbb{Q}xc7? \mathbb{W}e7!?$ 22... $\mathbb{Q}h8$ 23 e3 fxe3 24 fxe3 $\mathbb{W}f7$ 25 $\mathbb{W}f3$ (25 $\mathbb{Q}d5 \mathbb{Q}xe3!$ 26 $\mathbb{M}xf7 \mathbb{Q}xd1$ 27 $\mathbb{M}xd1 \mathbb{M}xf7$ and Black wins, with the idea ... $\mathbb{M}cf8$) 25... $\mathbb{Q}xe3!$ 26 $\mathbb{M}xe3 \mathbb{W}h5!$ (D).



Black wins the queen, which was just good enough to win the game after considerable effort. This position reminds me of a King's Indian Defence in which White breaks through on the queenside and establishes an optically monstrous knight on the 6th rank (usually c6 or b6), which then watches from afar as Black shreds his king's position.

We return to 16 $\mathbb{W}c2$.

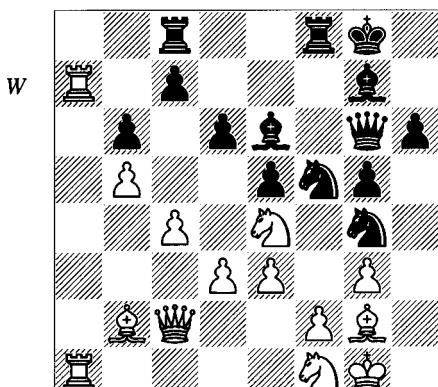
16...g5 17 $\mathbb{M}fa1$ f4 18 $\mathbb{Q}d2$ $\mathbb{fxg}3$ 19 $\mathbb{hxg}3$ $\mathbb{W}e8$

Brute force; the queen seems to be heading for h5.

20 $\mathbb{Q}ce4 \mathbb{Q}g4$ 21 $\mathbb{Q}f1 \mathbb{Q}f5$

With the idea of ... $\mathbb{Q}d4$.

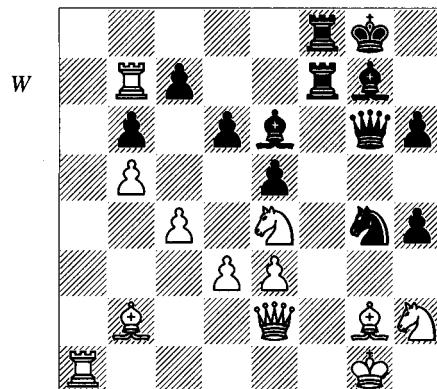
22 e3 $\mathbb{W}g6!$ (D)



Black comes up with an original attacking idea. In this position, White can probably defend, and may even stand better, but as happens so often in practical play, the kingside attack crashes through:

23 $\mathbb{M}b7?!$ $\mathbb{Q}h4$ 24 $\mathbb{gxh}4$ $\mathbb{gxh}4$ 25 f3??

Better (or at least more manageable) was 25 $\mathbb{W}e2$, which Short analyses to an unclear result. 25... $\mathbb{M}xf3!$ 26 $\mathbb{W}e2!$ $\mathbb{M}f7$ 27 $\mathbb{Q}h2 \mathbb{M}cf8$ (D)



28 $\mathbb{M}aa7?$

The last chance was 28 $\mathbb{M}f1!$, also resulting in an unclear position.

28...h3 29 $\mathbb{M}xc7$ $\mathbb{M}xc7$ 30 $\mathbb{M}xc7 \mathbb{Q}f2$ 0-1

In this game and notes, you can see the most important themes of this critical variation.

Closed English with e3

In this section I'll take a selective look at variations in which White includes e3 in a Closed English variation, concentrating on 5 e3.

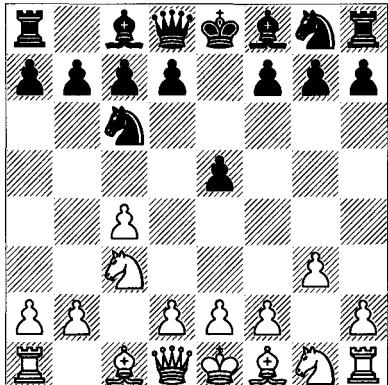
1 c4 e5 2 $\mathbb{Q}c3 \mathbb{Q}c6$ 3 g3 (D)

3...g6

At this point we should take a break and look at some set-ups for Black that have important strategic and/or tactical themes which I haven't discussed elsewhere:

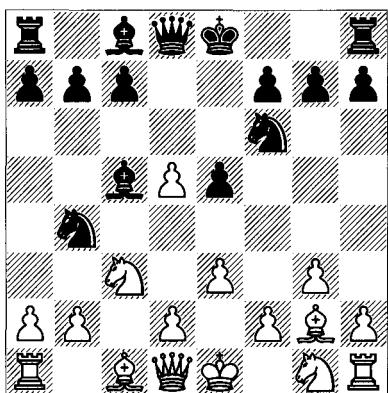
- a) In recent years, White has had a new concern when he enters into some variations with e3, because the unlikely-looking gambit move ...d5 is having some success: 3... $\mathbb{Q}f6$ 4 $\mathbb{Q}g2$ $\mathbb{Q}c5?!$ 5 e3 (if Black achieves his basic ...d6/...e5 central pawn-formation, he will usually get a satisfactory position; for example, 5 a3 d6 and after 6 b4 $\mathbb{Q}b6$ 7 d3 0-0 8 $\mathbb{Q}f3$ $\mathbb{Q}f5$ 9 0-0 h6

B



Black has the idea ... $\mathbb{W}d7$; instead, 6 $\mathbb{Q}a4$ 0-0 7 $\mathbb{Q}xc5$ $\mathbb{d}xc5$ 8 $\mathbb{Q}xc6$?! $\mathbb{b}xc6$ 9 d3 imposes tripled pawns upon Black, but he gets excellent pressure down the d-file, speedy development, and kingside prospects after 9... $\mathbb{E}e8$ or 9... $\mathbb{B}b8$) 5...d5! 6 cxd5 $\mathbb{Q}b4$ (D).

W

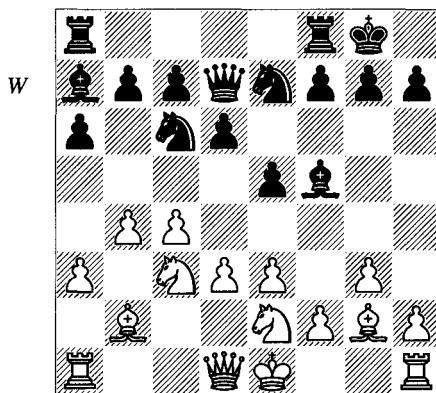


This is the surprising idea: Black gives up the d-pawn for a moment, but prepares to recapture it while aiming at the weak d3-square. The moves ... $\mathbb{f}5$ and even ...c6 are also in the air. Foisor-Korneev, Paris 1995 went 7 d4 exd4 8 exd4 $\mathbb{E}e7$ (8... $\mathbb{Q}xd4$?? 9 $\mathbb{W}a4+$) 9 $\mathbb{Q}ge2$ $\mathbb{Q}bx5$ 10 0-0 $\mathbb{E}e6$ 11 $\mathbb{Q}f4$ $\mathbb{Q}xf4$ 12 $\mathbb{Q}xf4$ c6 13 $\mathbb{Q}e5$ 0-0 14 $\mathbb{Q}xf6$!? (14 $\mathbb{W}e2$ $\mathbb{W}b6$ 15 $\mathbb{Q}ad1$ $\mathbb{Q}ad8$) 14... $\mathbb{Q}xf6$ 15 d5 cxd5 16 $\mathbb{Q}xd5$ $\mathbb{Q}xd5$ 17 $\mathbb{W}xd5$ with equality.

b) 3...f5 can lead to the same idea: 4 $\mathbb{Q}g2$ $\mathbb{Q}f6$ 5 e3!?(5 d3 is a better way to approach this position) 5...d5! 6 $\mathbb{Q}xd5$ (6 cxd5 $\mathbb{Q}b4$ 7 d3 $\mathbb{Q}bx5$) 6... $\mathbb{Q}xd5$ 7 cxd5 (7 $\mathbb{Q}xd5$!?) $\mathbb{Q}b4$ 8 $\mathbb{Q}g2$? ($\mathbb{W}d3$!) 7... $\mathbb{Q}b4$ 8 d3 (8 e4!?, of Filippov-Volzhin, Merida 2000, is very well answered

by Kosten's suggestion 8...c6! with the idea 9 dxc6 $\mathbb{W}d3$) 8... $\mathbb{Q}xd5$ 9 a3 $\mathbb{Q}f6$ 10 $\mathbb{Q}f3$ $\mathbb{Q}d6$ 11 0-0 0-0 with approximate equality.

c) Up to recent years, 3... $\mathbb{Q}c5$ was not commonly played at this stage, but the move has become more popular in many variations of the Reversed Sicilian. One line deserves notice because of the unique placement of Black's king's knight: 4 $\mathbb{Q}g2$ d6 5 e3 a6 6 $\mathbb{Q}ge2$ $\mathbb{Q}a7$ 7 a3!?(7 d4) 7... $\mathbb{Q}ge7$ 8 b4 0-0 9 d3 $\mathbb{Q}f5$ 10 $\mathbb{Q}b2$ $\mathbb{W}d7$ (D) (intending ... $\mathbb{Q}h3$).

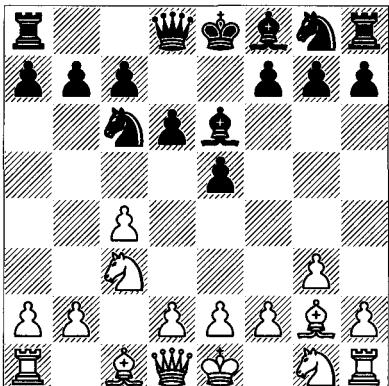


These are all normal moves for both sides when Black's knight is on f6. The knight on e7 has more flexibility, but the one on f6 covers the important central square e4. Damljanović-Predojević, Serbian League 2007 continued 11 h3 h6 12 $\mathbb{Q}c1$ $\mathbb{Q}ae8$ 13 $\mathbb{W}d2$. Now Black tried to establish himself in the centre with ...c6, and got White to commit: 13... $\mathbb{Q}d8$ 14 d4 exd4 15 exd4 $\mathbb{Q}dc6$! with the idea ... $\mathbb{Q}h7$ and ... $\mathbb{Q}f5$. Black appears to have enough play in this line, but one feels that direct central action by White would be more testing.

d) 3...d6 4 $\mathbb{Q}g2$ $\mathbb{Q}e6$ (D) is an independent move-order.

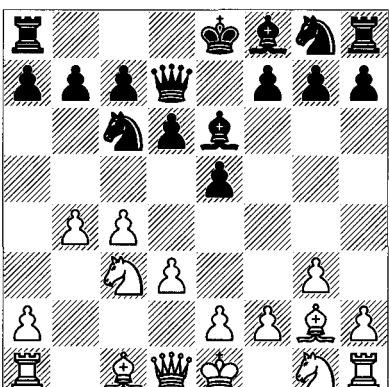
The bishop move attacks c4 and is flexible enough to support more than one plan, the most exotic being along the lines of ... $\mathbb{W}d7$, ...h5 and under the right circumstances, ...g5 and ...0-0-0. In practice, Black's strategy tends to be more positional; for example, after ... $\mathbb{W}d7$ White's natural $\mathbb{Q}d5$ can sometimes be met by ... $\mathbb{Q}d8$ and ...c6. For his part, White would like to exploit the committal nature of 4... $\mathbb{Q}e6$; for example, 5 d3 (Black takes his share of the centre just in time after 5 b3 $\mathbb{W}d7$ 6 e3 $\mathbb{Q}ge7$ 7

W



d4 d5!) 5... $\mathbb{W}d7$ 6 b4! (D) (6 $\mathbb{Q}d5$ $\mathbb{Q}ge7$ 7 $\mathbb{Q}d2$ $\mathbb{Q}d8$ 8 $\mathbb{W}b3$ c6 9 $\mathbb{Q}e3$ d5 10 $\mathbb{Q}f3$ f6 is unclear, and of course there are options for both sides, such as 6... $\mathbb{Q}ce7$!, an idea we see below).

B



Now:

d1) 6... $\mathbb{Q}ge7$ is too slow: 7 b5 $\mathbb{Q}d8$ 8 $\mathbb{Q}f3$ $\mathbb{Q}h3$ 9 $\mathbb{Q}xh3$ $\mathbb{W}xh3$ 10 $\mathbb{W}a4$ $\mathbb{W}d7$ 11 0-0.

d2) 6...g6?! 7 b5 $\mathbb{Q}d8$ 8 $\mathbb{Q}f3$ gives White some advantage. A classic example of positional play went 8... $\mathbb{Q}g7$! 9 $\mathbb{Q}g5$! e4? (9... $\mathbb{Q}f5$ is better) 10 $\mathbb{Q}b2$ exd3 11 $\mathbb{W}xd3$ a6 12 h4! axb5 13 cxb5 $\mathbb{Q}e7$ 14 $\mathbb{W}d2$ 0-0 15 h5 gxh5?! (15...h6 16 $\mathbb{Q}xe6$ $\mathbb{W}xe6$ 17 a4! favours White, whose bishops take on exceptional power down the long diagonals) 16 $\mathbb{W}xh5$ $\mathbb{Q}f5$ 17 $\mathbb{Q}e4$! $\mathbb{Q}g6$ 18 $\mathbb{W}xh7$! $\mathbb{Q}xh7$ 19 $\mathbb{Q}xh7+$ $\mathbb{Q}h8$ 20 0-0-0 $\mathbb{Q}g8$ 21 $\mathbb{Q}h1$ $\mathbb{Q}h6$ 22 $\mathbb{Q}d5$ f6 23 $\mathbb{Q}e4$ $\mathbb{W}xa2$ 24 $\mathbb{W}xh6$ $\mathbb{Q}xh6$ 25 $\mathbb{W}xh6$ $\mathbb{W}g7$ 26 $\mathbb{W}h4$ 1-0 Petrosian-Estrin, Moscow 1968.

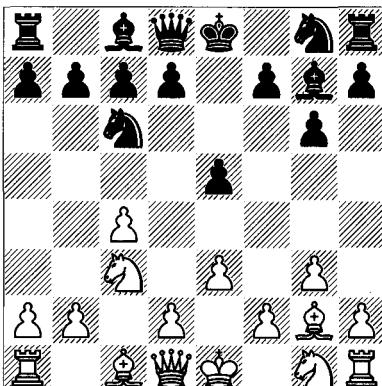
d3) Although it has always been considered better for White, Black should look into capturing by 6... $\mathbb{Q}xb4$!; for example, 7 $\mathbb{Q}b1$ c5 or 7

$\mathbb{Q}xb7$ $\mathbb{W}b8$ 8 $\mathbb{Q}g2$ $\mathbb{Q}f6$ with the idea ...d5. In spite of Black's inferior pawn-structure, the position is unclear.

4 $\mathbb{Q}g2$ $\mathbb{Q}g5$ e3 (D)

There are various ways to end up in this kind of e3 system; for example, 5 $\mathbb{Q}b1$ d6 (5...a5 6 a3 f5 or 6...d6 is more common, so as to open the a-file after 7 b4 axb4) 6 b4 f5 7 e3 $\mathbb{Q}f6$ 8 d3 0-0 9 $\mathbb{Q}ge2$ or 5 d3 f5 6 e3 $\mathbb{Q}f6$ 7 $\mathbb{Q}ge2$.

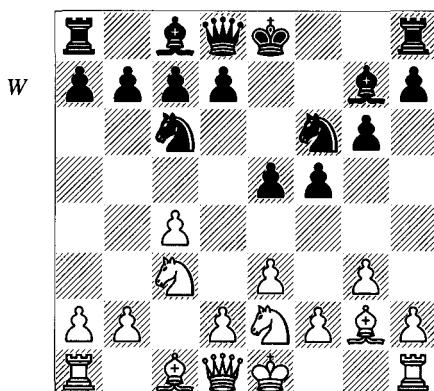
B



5...f5

Once again, the variations with ...f5 are probably the most important in the Closed English, because Black challenges for space and gains the most positive chances. Not surprisingly, the move 5...d6 can and usually does come first. Delaying it isn't necessarily an advantage, but we'll see how that can affect things. 5...d6 6 $\mathbb{Q}ge2$ lines with ideas other than ...f5 will come later in this section.

6 $\mathbb{Q}ge2$ $\mathbb{Q}f6$ (D)

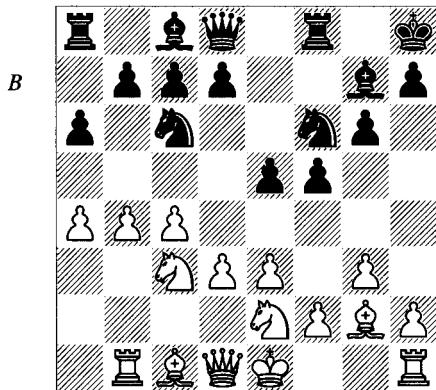


7 d3

7 d4 0-0 8 0-0 d6 makes a more aggressive impression, but then White's position has become inelastic and he needs a plan; the further advance d5 would only release the pressure so that Black could launch an attack by ...g5 without being disturbed in the centre. Strange to say, the modest 7 d3 generally creates more problems: it goes better with the ideas ♘d5 and if need be, f4. The whole scheme may be familiar to you from the Sicilian Defence, and in this case White's extra tempo only helps.

7...0-0 8 0-0

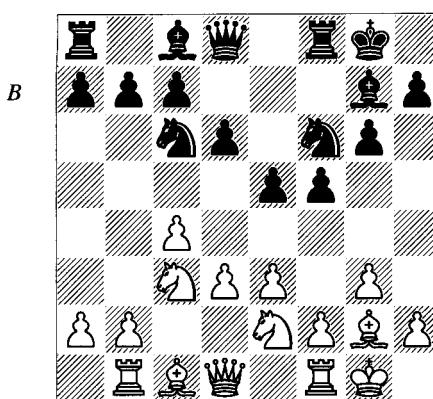
8 ♜b1 tries to save a move by not castling. In Rogozenko-Sadler, Dutch Team Ch, Hengelo 2000, a sort of waiting game occurred following 8...a6!? 9 b4 ♘h8 (9...d6 transposes to the main lines) 10 a4!?(D) (upon 10 0-0, Black could still delay ...d6 and prepare queenside counterplay by 10...♝b8; then 11 a4?! a5! 12 b5 ♘b4 13 ♘a3 c5! is even better than in the game, since after 14 bxc6 bxc6 White doesn't even win a pawn).



10...a5! 11 b5 ♘b4. We have seen this ...a6-a5 idea in the variations with White's knight on f3. In this instance the tempo saved on ...d6 is useful: 12 ♘a3 c5 13 bxc6 dxc6 (opening the important d-file). At this point, 14 ♜xb4 axb4 15 ♜xb4 ♜d6 would cede the bishops to Black and leave important dark squares weak. In the game, therefore, White decided not to win the pawn and continued 14 0-0 ♘h5! 15 ♘c1 f4!?(it's always risky to cede the e4-square to White, but Black extends the range of his c8-bishop and threatens to advance further; 15...♜e6 is more solid) 16 ♘e4 ♘f6! 17 ♘xf6!? ♜xf6 18 ♜xb4 (the position after 18 ♜f3 fxe3 19 ♜xg3

♞f5 is difficult to defend) 18...axb4 19 ♜xb4 f3 20 ♜h1 g5 (the fate of the bishop on h1 is obviously becoming critical) 21 ♘a2! e4! (a positional sacrifice to stop the knight from coming to e4 via c3; instead, even though White is only one pawn up, 21...g4 22 ♘c3 makes it hard for Black to win because of the combination of a knight on e4 and White's b-file pressure) 22 dxe4 g4 23 ♜c2 ♜a5! (this rook-lift covers key squares like c5) 24 c5?! (it's better to come back to the centre by 24 ♘c1!) 24...♜e7 25 ♜c1 ♜e6 26 h3 h5! and Black stood clearly better.

8...d6 9 ♜b1 (D)



This is a standard position that has been reached many times over the years. The following game and notes show some of the characteristic ideas.

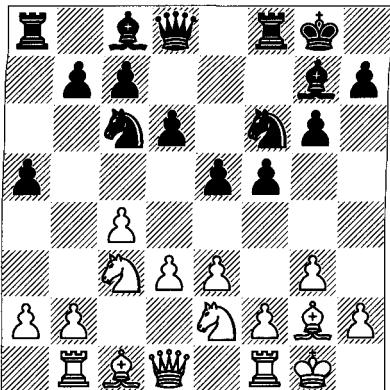
Adianto – Sorbe
Kuala Lumpur 2005

1 c4 e5 2 ♘c3 ♘c6 3 g3 g6 4 ♜g2 ♘g7 5 e3 f5 6 ♘ge2 ♘f6 7 d3 0-0 8 0-0 d6 9 ♜b1 a5(D)

As in the 5 ♘f3 lines, Black hopes to get more out of the opening of the a-file than White.

Instead, 9...♜e7 prepares to meet White's flank attack with a central advance: 10 b4 c6 (10...d5!?) 11 cxd5 ♘exd5 12 ♘xd5 ♘xd5 is close to equal, but White has the better chances after 13 e4! ♘f6 14 ♜b3+ ♘h8 15 ♘e3) 11 b5 ♜e6 (11...c5!?) 12 ♜a4! prevents the reorganization by ...♝b8, ...b6 and ...d5) 12 bxc6 bxc6 13 ♘a3 ♜c7 14 d4! exd4 (14...♝xc4 15 dx5 dxe5 16 ♘d6 ♜d7 17 ♘xe5) 15 ♘xd4 ♜xc4 16 ♜e1 and with the ideas of ♜a4, ♜ec1 and occasionally e4, White has a nice initiative for the pawn.

W

**10 a3**

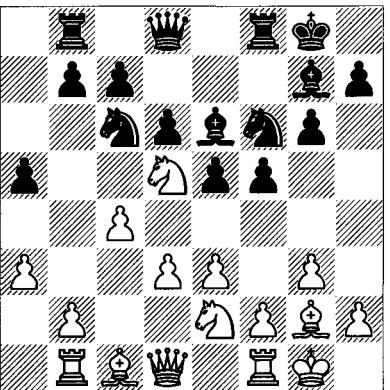
See the next game for a strategy based upon b3 and $\mathbb{A}b2$.

10... $\mathbb{A}e6$ 11 $\mathbb{Q}d5$

11 b4 lets Black through in the centre following 11...axb4 12 axb4 d5; then White can still play for the initiative by 13 b5 $\mathbb{Q}e7$ 14 $\mathbb{W}b3$, having in mind $\mathbb{A}a3$, but Black has various resources including the forcing sequence 14...dxc4 15 dxc4 $\mathbb{W}d3$ 16 $\mathbb{A}a3$ $\mathbb{A}xc4$ 17 $\mathbb{W}b2$ $\mathbb{W}d7$ 18 $\mathbb{A}xb7$ $\mathbb{M}ab8$ 19 $\mathbb{M}fd1$ $\mathbb{W}e6$, with dynamically balanced play.

11... $\mathbb{M}b8!$ (D)

W

**12 $\mathbb{A}d2!$**

White has to pay heed to his opponent's plans; for example, 12 b4?! allows the standard equalizer: 12...axb4 13 axb4 $\mathbb{Q}e7$.

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

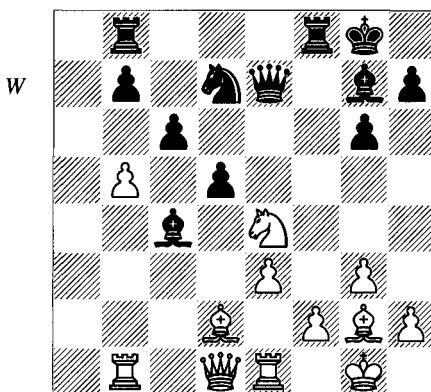
Perhaps Black is considering ...b5. Still, f6 was a good square for the knight and moving it away may not be best.

13 b4?

13 $\mathbb{W}c2!$ prevents Black from undertaking anything.

13...axb4 14 axb4 $\mathbb{Q}e7$ 15 $\mathbb{Q}ec3$ c6 16 $\mathbb{Q}xe7+$ $\mathbb{W}xe7$ 17 b5 e4! 18 dxe4 $\mathbb{A}xc4$ 19 $\mathbb{M}e1$ fxе4 20 $\mathbb{Q}xe4$ d5!? (D)

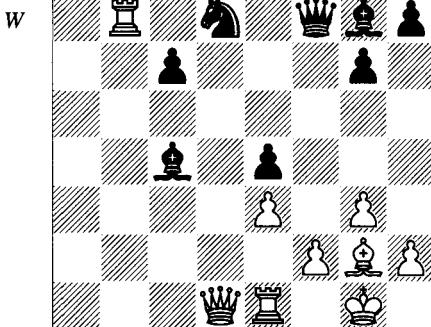
This exchange sacrifice gives Black a beautiful combination of central control and active bishops, but the specific consequences are difficult to judge. Probably 20... $\mathbb{Q}f6$ is more accurate.

**21 $\mathbb{Q}b4!$ $\mathbb{W}f7$**

And not 21...c5? 22 $\mathbb{Q}xc5$ $\mathbb{Q}xc5$ 23 $\mathbb{A}xd5+$ $\mathbb{Q}xd5$ 24 $\mathbb{W}xd5+$, etc.

22 $\mathbb{Q}xf8$ $\mathbb{W}xf8$ 23 bxc6

23 $\mathbb{Q}d6$ $\mathbb{W}xf2+$ 24 $\mathbb{Q}h1$ $\mathbb{Q}c3$ is unclear, and $\mathbb{Q}d6$ should be considered on White's next move, too.

23...bxc6 24 $\mathbb{M}b7$ dxe4 (D)**25 $\mathbb{M}xd7$ $\mathbb{W}xf2+$ 26 $\mathbb{Q}h1$ $\mathbb{Q}c3?$**

Black has enough for the exchange after 26... $\mathbb{Q}d3!$.

27 $\mathbb{E}g1$ $\mathbb{W}xe3$ 28 $\mathbb{W}c1$ $\mathbb{E}f3!$ 29 $\mathbb{E}d8+$

White could launch a dangerous counterattack by 29 $\mathbb{W}a3!$.

29... $\mathbb{W}g7$ 30 $\mathbb{E}d7+$ $\mathbb{W}g8$ 31 $\mathbb{E}gd1$ $\mathbb{A}d5$

After this, White's counterattack won't suffice to win and the game should have been drawn. You can see, however, how exciting a seemingly slow opening like this can become.

M. Gurevich – Kamsky

Reggio Emilia 1991

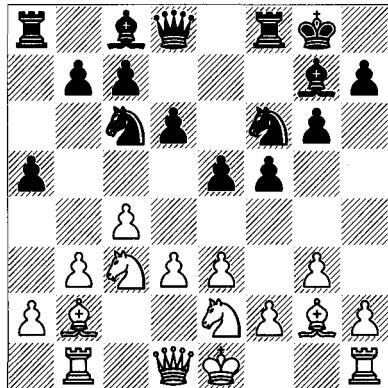
1 c4 e5 2 g3 $\mathbb{Q}c6$ 3 $\mathbb{A}g2$ g6 4 $\mathbb{Q}c3$ $\mathbb{A}g7$ 5 e3 d6 6 $\mathbb{Q}ge2$ f5 7 $\mathbb{E}b1$ a5 8 d3 $\mathbb{Q}f6$ 9 b3

White wants to get this move in before castling to help suppress his opponent's central breaks. As a bonus, he won't have to deal with the kind of mad flank-pawn attacks that Black himself might throw at him from an uncastled position.

I'm using the above move-order for clarity, but the game's actual sequence 5 $\mathbb{E}b1$ a5 6 d3 d6 7 e3 f5 8 $\mathbb{Q}ge2$ $\mathbb{Q}f6$ is also quite common.

9...0-0 10 $\mathbb{A}b2$ (D)

B



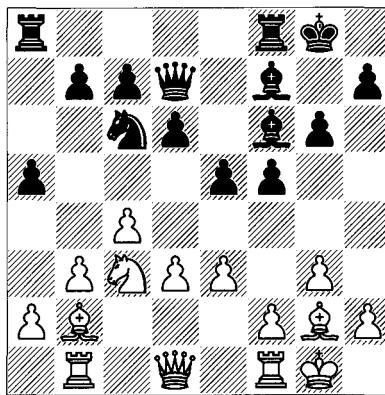
The modest fianchetto with 9 b3 is the sort of ultra-positional plan that gives the English Opening its technical reputation. It introduces a prophylactic formation that makes it more difficult for Black to play a successful ...d5 or pursue a primitive kingside assault. Thus both sides will jockey to improve their forces and only engage each other further down the road.

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

10... $\mathbb{Q}e6$ 11 $\mathbb{Q}d5$ $\mathbb{A}f7$ is an idea directly from the Closed Sicilian. Black will then be able to capture on d5 with a knight and preserve

his bishop-pair. A typical combination of structure and piece placement follows 12 $\mathbb{Q}xf6+$ $\mathbb{Q}xf6$ 13 $\mathbb{Q}c3$ $\mathbb{W}d7$ 14 0-0 (D).

B



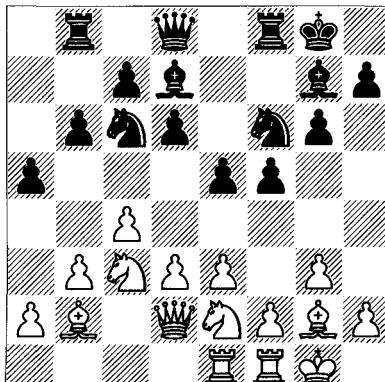
White has no immediate threats, but he controls d5 and Black has a hard time finding a positive plan. In most cases, ...g5 can be met quite effectively by f4. Given time, White can look to expand on the queenside and/or the centre. Of course, Black has no cause to panic, and should come out all right if he plays accurately. Such positions may appear dull, but they can liven up in a hurry if the players are up for a fight.

11 $\mathbb{W}d2$ $\mathbb{E}b8$ 12 0-0 b6

This seems rather negative. The idea is probably to defend a5 after White plays $\mathbb{Q}d5$ or d4-d5; nevertheless, there is no immediate problem, and 12... $\mathbb{Q}e6$ with the idea 13 d4 $\mathbb{A}f7$ looks better. In such positions, Black needs to be careful about playing ...exd4 without a specific reason, because that surrenders f4 to a knight.

13 $\mathbb{E}be1!$ (D)

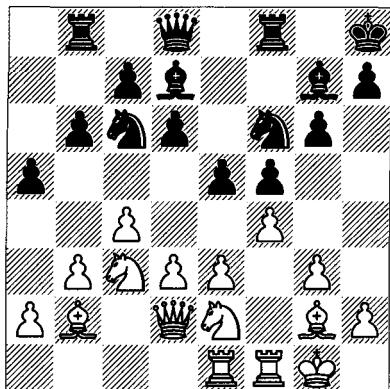
B



White prepares f4 followed by e4.

13... $\mathbb{Q}h8$ 14 f4 (D)

B



This is the standard blocking move from the Closed Sicilian and, in fact, from several King's Indian Attack lines. White has potential pawn advances (b4 and e4), whereas his opponent can't undertake much. The game continued 14... $\mathbb{Q}g4$?! (an odd move, although a knight on h6 can be useful if White is playing for e4) 15 $\mathbb{Q}d5$ $\mathbb{Q}e6$ 16 h3 $\mathbb{Q}h6$ 17 $\mathbb{Q}ec3$ (now $\mathbb{Q}b5$ is a problem for Black) 17... $\mathbb{Q}d7$ 18 $\mathbb{Q}b5$ $\mathbb{Q}bc8$, and instead of 19 d4?! $\mathbb{Q}xd5$! 20 $\mathbb{Q}xd5$ $\mathbb{Q}b4$, the more circumspect 19 $\mathbb{Q}c3$ prepares d4. Then, for example, 19... $\mathbb{Q}xd5$ 20 cxd5 $\mathbb{Q}b4$ 21 $\mathbb{Q}xb4$ $\mathbb{Q}xb5$ 22 $\mathbb{Q}c3$ is positionally very nice for White with his c-file advantage.

Sadomsky – Murei

Moscow 1965

1 c4 e5 2 $\mathbb{Q}c3$ $\mathbb{Q}c6$ 3 g3 g6 4 $\mathbb{Q}g2$ $\mathbb{Q}g7$ 5 e3 d6 6 $\mathbb{Q}ge2$ $\mathbb{Q}ge7$

Now we'll look at an old main line. The development of the knight on e7 is less dynamic than the alternatives, but fully playable.

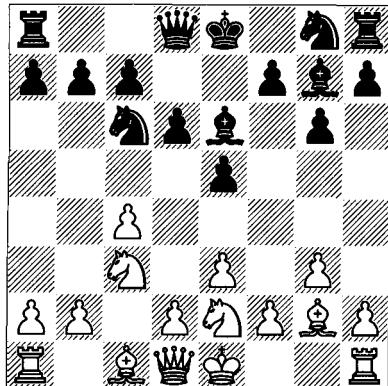
A related move 6... $\mathbb{Q}e6$ (D) has been almost forgotten but perhaps not resolved.

Here are the key lines:

a) 7 $\mathbb{Q}d5$ $\mathbb{Q}ce7$! is an idea from the Closed Sicilian, in which Black's 'lost' tempo is ... $\mathbb{Q}d7$, not necessarily a bad trade-off: 8 d4 c6 9 $\mathbb{Q}xe7$ $\mathbb{Q}xe7$ 10 d5 $\mathbb{Q}g4$?! 11 f3? $\mathbb{Q}d7$ 12 $\mathbb{Q}c3$ cxd5 13 cxd5 b5! with good prospects on both wings, Benko-Hort, Venice 1969.

b) 7 d3 $\mathbb{Q}d7$ can lead to any number of variations such as 8 $\mathbb{Q}d5$ $\mathbb{Q}d8$ with the idea ...c6, or

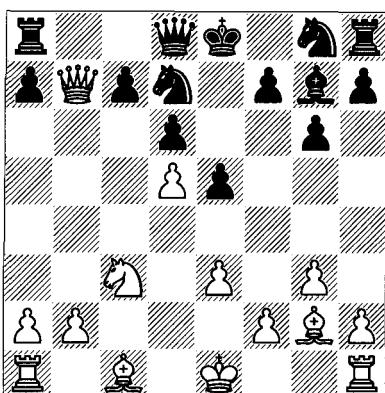
W



8 0-0 h5!? 9 $\mathbb{Q}b3$ $\mathbb{Q}ge7$! 10 $\mathbb{Q}xb7$?! $\mathbb{Q}b8$ 11 $\mathbb{Q}a6$ h4 with a serious attack.

c) 7 d4 $\mathbb{Q}xc4$?! 8 d5 $\mathbb{Q}xe2$ 9 $\mathbb{Q}xe2$ $\mathbb{Q}b8$ 10 $\mathbb{Q}b5+$ $\mathbb{Q}d7$ 11 $\mathbb{Q}xb7$ (D).

B



Now 11... $\mathbb{Q}b8$ 12 $\mathbb{Q}a6$! has favoured White and given this line a bad name. But 11... $\mathbb{Q}c5$?! may improve, forfeiting castling for the sake of a light-square attack: 12 $\mathbb{Q}c6+$ $\mathbb{Q}f8$ 13 $\mathbb{Q}b5$ $\mathbb{Q}b8$ 14 $\mathbb{Q}e2$ (now d3 is covered, but Black can keep the initiative alive) 14...e4? 15 $\mathbb{Q}xe4$ (or 15 0-0 $\mathbb{Q}xc3$?! 16 bxc3 f5 17 c4 $\mathbb{Q}f6$ 18 $\mathbb{Q}b2$ $\mathbb{Q}f7$; the knights seem a match for the bishops) 15... $\mathbb{Q}xb2$ 16 $\mathbb{Q}xb2$ $\mathbb{Q}xb2$ 17 $\mathbb{Q}c4$ (17 $\mathbb{Q}xb2$?? $\mathbb{Q}d3+$) 17... $\mathbb{Q}xe4$ 18 $\mathbb{Q}xe4$ c5! 19 0-0 $\mathbb{Q}f6$ 20 $\mathbb{Q}fb1$ $\mathbb{Q}b6$ and the position is unclear.

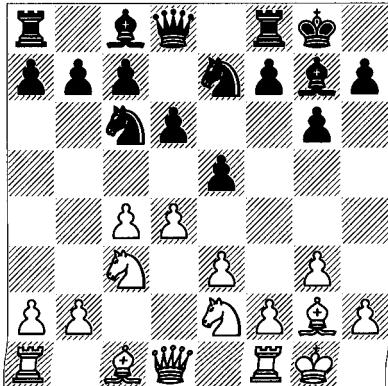
7 0-0 0-0 8 d4 (D)

The direct move. In the next game we look at a combination of e3 and d3.

8...exd4 9 exd4

Black has sufficient play following 9 $\mathbb{Q}xd4$ $\mathbb{Q}d7$ (9... $\mathbb{Q}xd4$ 10 exd4 $\mathbb{Q}f5$ 11 d5 $\mathbb{Q}e8$ 12 $\mathbb{Q}e4$! is a position to mark; Black lacks a plan) 10

B



$\mathbb{Q}de2$ (but now 10 h3 $\mathbb{Q}xd4$ 11 exd4 $\mathbb{Q}f5$ 12 d5 $\mathbb{Q}e8$ 13 $\mathbb{Q}e4$ c6! yields counterplay) 10... $\mathbb{W}c8$ 11 $\mathbb{Q}f4$ $\mathbb{Q}e5$ (another approach is 11... $\mathbb{Q}xc3!$?) 12 bxc3 b6!?, preventing c5 and preparing ... $\mathbb{W}a6$) 12 $\mathbb{W}e2$. Here, apart from 12... $\mathbb{W}e8$ (Smyslov-Radovici, Tel Aviv 1964), 12... $\mathbb{Q}g4$! 13 f3 $\mathbb{Q}e6$ is a typical equalizing manoeuvre, in view of 14 $\mathbb{Q}xe6$ $\mathbb{W}xe6$, hitting c4.

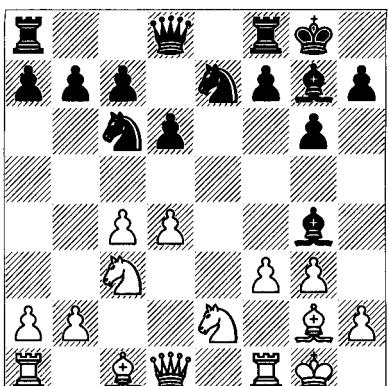
9... $\mathbb{Q}g4$!

The innocent-looking 9... $\mathbb{Q}f5$?! led to positional trouble in Botvinnik-Reshevsky, AVRO tournament, Rotterdam 1938: 10 d5 $\mathbb{Q}e5$ (or 10... $\mathbb{Q}cd4$ 11 $\mathbb{Q}xd4$ $\mathbb{Q}xd4$ 12 $\mathbb{Q}e4$! with extra space) 11 b3 a5 (Botvinnik suggests 11...a6!?) 12 $\mathbb{Q}b2$ $\mathbb{Q}d7$ 13 a3 $\mathbb{Q}c5$ 14 b4! and White was on top.

10 f3 (D)

10 h3 $\mathbb{Q}xe2$ 11 $\mathbb{Q}xe2$ $\mathbb{Q}f5$ 12 d5 $\mathbb{Q}e5$ and ... $\mathbb{W}e8$ gives Black active and centralized pieces.

B



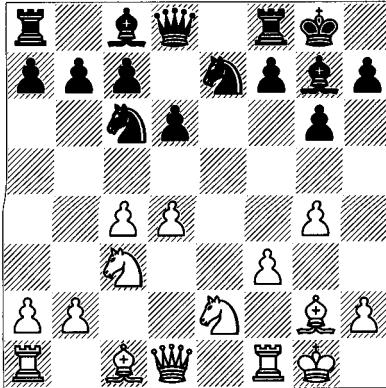
10... $\mathbb{Q}f5$

The situation is also balanced after 10... $\mathbb{Q}d7$ 11 $\mathbb{Q}e3$; e.g., 11... $\mathbb{Q}f5$ 12 $\mathbb{Q}f2$ $\mathbb{W}e8$ 13 $\mathbb{W}d2$ a6,

planning ... $\mathbb{Q}b8$ and ...b5. In addition, Botvinnik gives 10... $\mathbb{Q}c8$! 11 $\mathbb{Q}e3$ d5 12 c5 b6 with equal chances.

11 g4? $\mathbb{Q}c8$!? (D)

W



12 d5!?

In Larsen-Spassky, Belgrade 1964, White played 12 $\mathbb{Q}f4$ and ran into 12...d5! (also possible is 12...a6!?, to stop $\mathbb{Q}b5$ and prepare ...b5) 13 c5 (13 $\mathbb{Q}b5$ dxc4 14 $\mathbb{Q}xc7$ $\mathbb{Q}b8$, when White can't even get a repetition by 15 $\mathbb{Q}b5$ due to 15... $\mathbb{Q}e6$! 16 $\mathbb{Q}xb8$ $\mathbb{W}xb8$ followed by ... $\mathbb{Q}d8$) 13...b6 14 $\mathbb{Q}b5$ $\mathbb{Q}a6$!? 15 $\mathbb{Q}xc7$ $\mathbb{Q}xe2$ 16 $\mathbb{W}xe2$ $\mathbb{Q}xd4$ 17 $\mathbb{W}d3$ $\mathbb{Q}c8$ 18 cxb6 axb6 19 $\mathbb{Q}e3$ $\mathbb{Q}ec6$ 20 $\mathbb{Q}a6$ $\mathbb{Q}e8$ (threatening 21... $\mathbb{Q}e5$!) 21 $\mathbb{Q}fe1$ $\mathbb{Q}e6$ 22 f4 $\mathbb{W}h4$ with several threats and a winning game.

12... $\mathbb{Q}e5$ 13 b3 c6!

Black has to move quickly before White consolidates his space advantage by, say, h3, $\mathbb{Q}e3$ and f4.

14 $\mathbb{Q}e3$ $\mathbb{W}a5$!?

Instead, 14...cxd5! 15 cxd5 h5! secures an outpost on e5 in the line 16 h3 (16 g5 $\mathbb{Q}f5$ 17 $\mathbb{Q}f2$ b6) 16...hxg4 17 fxg4, when 17...f5 is the most ambitious choice.

15 $\mathbb{W}d2$??

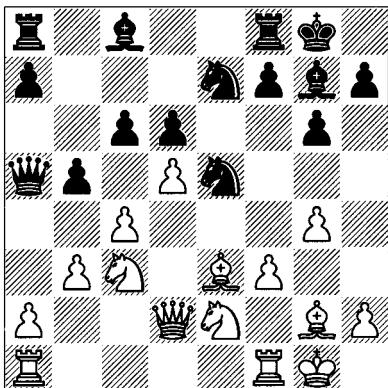
White stands better after 15 dxc6! $\mathbb{Q}7xc6$ 16 $\mathbb{W}d2$.

15... $\mathbb{Q}b5$! (D)

By pounding away at the enemy pawn-chain, Black is finally able to compromise White's central pawn-structure, achieving a dynamic equality. Black even got the better game after some tactics:

16 cxb5 cxb5 17 a3 $\mathbb{Q}b7$ 18 h3? $\mathbb{Q}xd5$! 19 $\mathbb{Q}d4$?

W



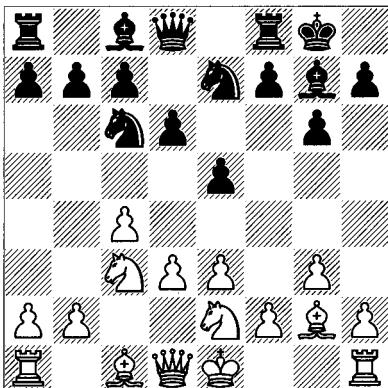
Black's idea is that 19 $\mathbb{Q}xd5 \mathbb{W}xd2$ 20 $\mathbb{Q}e7+$ $\mathbb{Q}h8$ 21 $\mathbb{Q}xd2 \mathbb{W}fe8$ traps White's knight. Nevertheless, White could play 22 f4 $\mathbb{Q}xg2$ 23 $\mathbb{Q}xg2 \mathbb{Q}d3$ 24 $\mathbb{Q}c3 \mathbb{W}xe7$ 25 $\mathbb{Q}ad1$ and have some play for the pawn.

After 19 $\mathbb{Q}d4?$, the game continued 19... $\mathbb{W}fe8$ 20 $\mathbb{Q}a2 \mathbb{Q}xc3$ 21 $\mathbb{Q}xc3 \mathbb{W}ac8$ with an extra pawn and better position.

Dvoretsky – Timoshchenko
USSR Team Ch, Moscow 1966

1 c4 e5 2 $\mathbb{Q}c3 \mathbb{Q}c6$ 3 g3 g6 4 $\mathbb{Q}g2 \mathbb{Q}g7$ 5 e3
6 $\mathbb{Q}ge2 \mathbb{Q}ge7$ 7 d3 0-0 (D)

W



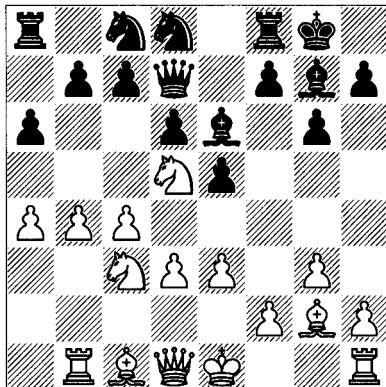
A wealth of practice stems from e3/d3 systems, which are too flexible to describe in any detail. Usually White plays for b4-b5, and Black aims to resolve the central situation, as we see in this game and notes.

8 0-0

8 $\mathbb{B}b1 \mathbb{Q}e6$ 9 $\mathbb{Q}d5 \mathbb{W}d7$ 10 b4 a6 is Karpov-Zsu.Polgar, Bilbao 1987 (which reached this

position by another move-order): 11 $\mathbb{Q}ec3 \mathbb{Q}d8$ 12 a4 $\mathbb{Q}c8!$ (D).

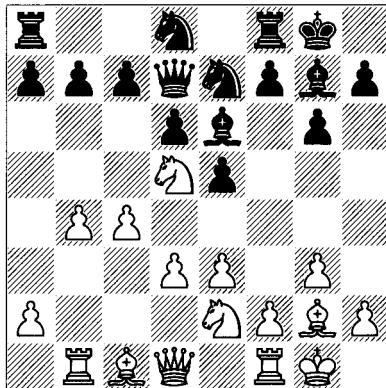
W



Black threatens to win a piece by 13...c6. This retreat, also normal in the Closed Sicilian, is the standard way to prepare expansion in the centre. The game continued 13 $\mathbb{Q}e4 f6?$! (more assertive is 13...f5! 14 $\mathbb{Q}g5 c6$, and now 15 $\mathbb{Q}c3 e4!$, or 15 $\mathbb{Q}xe6 \mathbb{Q}xe6$ 16 $\mathbb{Q}c3$, when 16...e4! equalizes, as does 16... $\mathbb{Q}e7$ 17 0-0 f4 or 17...d5) 14 0-0 c6 15 $\mathbb{Q}dc3 \mathbb{Q}f7$ 16 $\mathbb{W}c2 f5$ 17 $\mathbb{Q}d2$ (White is finally ready for b5!) 17...g5!? 18 a5 h5 19 f4!. Again, this blocking move gives White the advantage because his queenside attack is ongoing, whereas Black's is temporarily stuck on the kingside.

8... $\mathbb{Q}e6$ 9 $\mathbb{Q}d5 \mathbb{W}d7$ 10 $\mathbb{B}b1 \mathbb{Q}d8!$ 11 b4 (D)

B



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

At this point 11...c6 allows 12 $\mathbb{Q}xe7+ \mathbb{W}xe7$ 13 b5, launching a standard queenside attack, with some advantage to White. Nevertheless, Black can play the idea from the last note,

11... $\mathbb{Q}c8!$, in order to drive back the knight on d5 without permitting $\mathbb{Q}xe7$; for example, 12 b5 a6 13 a4 axb5 14 axb5 c6 15 $\mathbb{Q}dc3$ d5 16 bxc6 bxc6 with mutual chances.

12 exd5 $\mathbb{Q}h3$ 13 e4!

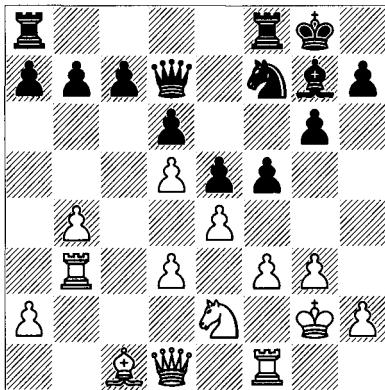
This is typical; once the bishops are exchanged on g2, White wants his pawns on light squares.

13... $\mathbb{Q}xg2$ 14 $\mathbb{Q}xg2$ f5 15 f3 $\mathbb{Q}f7?!$

The knight is passively placed here and as it turns out, Black has a faulty idea. Better is 15...a5 16 b5 b6 17 $\mathbb{Q}e3$ $\mathbb{Q}b7$, followed at the right moment by ... $\mathbb{Q}c5$. Then White has more options than Black in terms of central breaks, and the exchange exf5 should produce an advantage, but it's hard to make progress.

16 $\mathbb{Q}b3$ (D)

B



Dvoretsky awards this move a '!!' because he says that it anticipates ... $\mathbb{Q}h6$. But we've seen in other openings how the exchange of a defending bishop on h6 is often disadvantageous anyway, since the benefit of eliminating White's more effective bishop is cancelled by the creation of kingside weaknesses. Furthermore, simplification favours the side with the space advantage in such positions, and strengthens White's direct attack on c7.

16... $\mathbb{Q}h6?!$

Thus Black should consider 16...c5! 17 $\mathbb{Q}e3$! (17 dxc6 bxc6 18 $\mathbb{Q}e3$ a5) 17... $\mathbb{Q}fc8$ 18 $\mathbb{Q}d2$ (18 bxc5 dxc5 19 $\mathbb{Q}c3$ $\mathbb{Q}d6$!), when White still has the better bishop, but only a small edge.

After 16... $\mathbb{Q}h6?!$, the game proceeded 17 $\mathbb{Q}xh6$ $\mathbb{Q}xh6$ 18 $\mathbb{Q}c3$ $\mathbb{Q}f7$ 19 $\mathbb{Q}c1$ $\mathbb{Q}g7$ 20 $\mathbb{Q}a3?$! (White would have a more serious advantage with 20 $\mathbb{Q}b2$!, which has the idea of f4 and thus

interferes with Black's ... $\mathbb{Q}g8-f6$) 20...a6 21 $\mathbb{Q}fc1$ $\mathbb{Q}c8$ 22 $\mathbb{Q}b3$ (better 22 $\mathbb{Q}b2$!), and here 22... $\mathbb{Q}g8$! would be nearly equal.

Black can also seek to punish 5 e3 directly by playing ...h5, intending simply ...h4, a strategy always to be aware of in a position with a fianchettoed king's bishop. I'm going to spend some time on this move, because it both typifies a flank attack that isn't represented elsewhere in this book and illustrates how someone using even the most conservative of set-ups (5 e3, 6 $\mathbb{Q}ge2$ and 7 d4 or 7 d3) must nevertheless contend with radical imbalances.

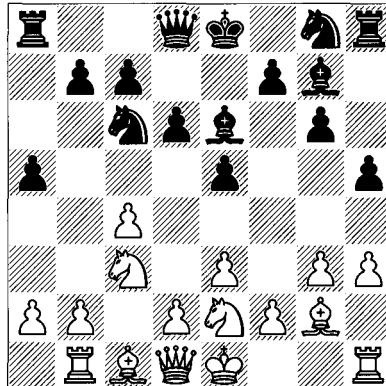
Cu. Hansen – Hodgson

Bundesliga 2001/2

1 c4 e5 2 g3 $\mathbb{Q}c6$ 3 $\mathbb{Q}g2$ g6 4 $\mathbb{Q}c3$ $\mathbb{Q}g7$ 5 e3 d6 6 $\mathbb{Q}ge2$

Interpolating 6 $\mathbb{Q}b1$ a5 before playing 7 $\mathbb{Q}ge2$ actually has drawbacks compared to the game after the aggressive advance 7...h5!? 8 h3 $\mathbb{Q}e6$! (D).

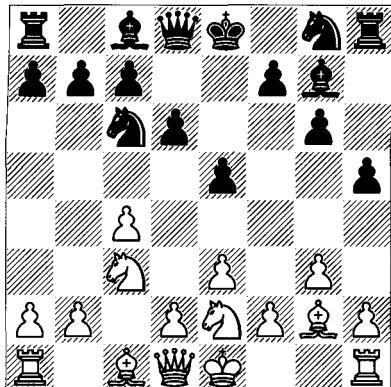
W



9 d3 (one twist here is that Black's knight is protected on b4 after 9 d4 $\mathbb{Q}xc4$! 10 d5 $\mathbb{Q}b4$, and therefore won't be captured following 11 $\mathbb{Q}a4+$) 9... $\mathbb{Q}d7$ 10 $\mathbb{Q}d5$ $\mathbb{Q}f6$ 11 $\mathbb{Q}ec3$. In Foi-sor-Ibragimov, Linares 1994, Black now played 11... $\mathbb{Q}h7?!$, with the thought of an eventual ...f5, but it might have been easier to continue 11...0-0; for example, 12 a3 $\mathbb{Q}fb8$! 13 $\mathbb{Q}d2$ $\mathbb{Q}xd5$ 14 $\mathbb{Q}xd5$ 15 cxd5 $\mathbb{Q}e7$ 16 0-0 c6 and Black's centre guarantees him fully-fledged play.

6...h5 (D)

W



The justification for this move does not consist entirely in Black's attacking chances, but also in the fact that the h-pawn advance will take advantage of the light squares weakened by the conjunction of g3 and e3. As so often in chess, a flank advance serves to keep the centre under control, and has the side benefit of gaining space. From White's point of view, it is encouraging to see Black using time that could be spent on development, and one should always be cognisant that pawn advances imply weaknesses on the wing where the advance takes place. How both sides react to and resolve these conflicting factors is best seen by example.

7 d4

Surely the most critical response to an advance with ...h5 is a counter advance in the centre. But White has alternatives:

a) Both here and in several other variations (such as 5 e4 d6 6 ♜ge2 h5!?), White can halt Black's advance by playing h4 in order to do away with the issue of dealing with Black opening lines on the kingside. However, you could make the case that Black gets more use out of the g4-square than White does from g5. As we shall see, that's initially so, but in the long run that depends very much upon the specific ways in which play develops. Thus 7 h4, and then:

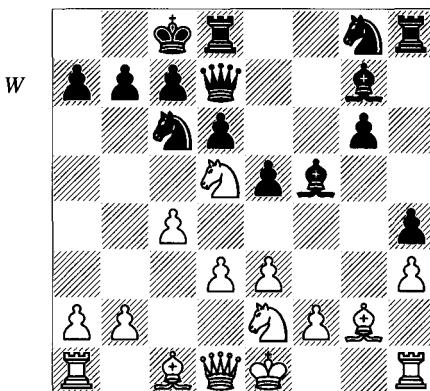
a1) 7...♜h6 is flexible, eyeing both f5 and g4; the drawback is that it cedes piece control over d5.

a2) A familiar positional trick occurs after 7...♜ge7 8 d3 ♜g4 9 ♜b1 ♜b8 10 b4 a6 11 a4!?. As we have seen elsewhere, Black has 11...a5! 12 b5 ♜b4. Now, as usual, 13 ♜a3 c5 gives Black his share of queenside influence and strengthens his control of d5. Pfleger-Nunn,

Bundesliga 1985/6 continued 14 ♜xb4 axb4 15 ♜d5 ♜xd5 16 ♜xd5 0-0 17 ♜c2 b6 18 ♜e6! 19 ♜b3 ♜xd5 20 cxd5 e4! 21 dxе4 ♜c3+ 22 ♜f1 ♜e7 23 ♜g2 ♜be8 24 ♜f3? f5 25 exf5 c4 26 ♜d4 ♜xd4 0-1. Black's point is 27 exd4 b3, winning massive amounts of material.

a3) 7...♜g4 8 d3 (8 b4!?, as played in Seirawan-Kriventsov, USA Ch, Seattle 2002, should be answered boldly by 8...♜xb4 9 ♜a4+ ♜c6 10 ♜b1 ♜c8!, when the paradoxical 11 d4 ♜d7! makes it difficult for White to get play for his pawn) 8...♜f6 9 ♜d5 0-0 looks fine for Black. White has no particularly effective plan, and the normal-looking 10 ♜b1 is slow, allowing 10...♜xd5! 11 cxd5 ♜e7 followed by ...c6, which more than equalizes in the centre and is very comfortable for Black.

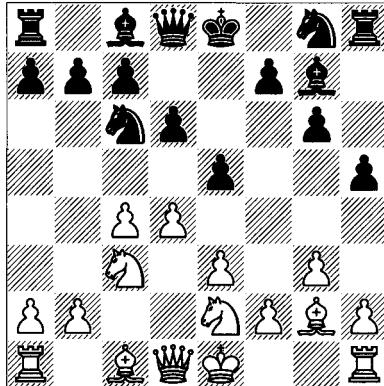
b) The modest 7 h3 can be answered by 7...♜f6, a common-sense move, or by the bolder 7...h4!? 8 g4 f5 9 gx f5 ♜xf5 10 d3 (10 d4 should be considered) 10...♜d7 11 ♜d5, when instead of 11...♜d8 (Karlsson-Lobron, Randers Zonal 1982), Black can play the consistent move 11...0-0-0! (D).



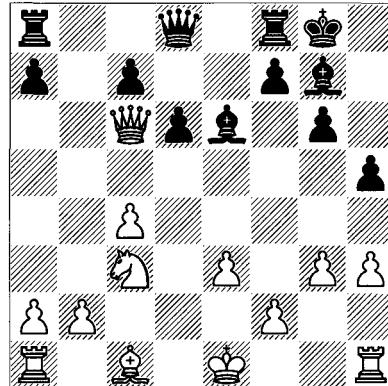
Obviously Black has chosen a risky side of the board to set up house in, but you should remember that White's king has no safe haven either. Here's a sample line: 12 ♜b1 (12 ♜b3 ♜f6 13 ♜d2 ♜df8 14 0-0-0 ♜b8 is equal, since the tactic 15 ♜e7!? ♜xe7 16 ♜xc6 ♜c8 doesn't accomplish anything) 12...♜ce7 13 b4 ♜xd5 14 cxd5 ♜e7 and Black will simply develop. After the natural 15 e4 ♜d7 16 ♜e3, he can get rid of White's best bishop by means of 16...♜b8 and ...♜h6.

We now return to 7 d4 (D):

B



B



This move sets up an important choice.

7...exd4

In the next game we'll see 7...h4.

8 ♜xd4 ♜ge7 9 ♜de2?!

White uses this standard way of avoiding exchanges and strengthening his grip on d5, but it's too passive. Others:

a) 9 h3?! ♜xd4?! (this obvious move is unimpressive; simply 9...0-0 or 9...♜d7 is better) 10 exd4 ♜f5 allows White to defend by counter-threat: 11 ♜e4! 0-0 12 ♜g5! ♜d7! 13 ♜f6 (not 13 ♜f6+?? ♜xf6 14 ♜xf6 ♜e6+, but 13 0-0! ♜xd4 14 ♜f6+ ♜xf6 15 ♜xf6 ♜c6 gives White compensation and more for his pawn) 13...d5! 14 cxd5 ♜b5 15 ♜e2! ♜xd4! with chances for both sides.

b) There have been a number of games with 9 ♜xc6. But exchanging the knight that has already moved twice is time-consuming: 9...♜xc6 10 h3?! (White prepares 0-0, in view of 10 0-0 h4) 10...♜e6 (or 10...0-0) 11 ♜a4, Cvetković-Raičević, Vrnjačka Banja 1989. Here Black should take advantage of his faster development and better pieces to castle and switch to the attack: 11...0-0! 12 ♜xc6 (or 12 0-0 ♜c8 13 ♜h2 ♜e5) 12...bxc6 13 ♜xc6 (D).

13...♜xc3+! 14 bxc3 ♜b8 with threats based upon combinations of moves such as ...♜f6 and ...♜c8-b7. This is very bad for White.

9...h4 10 0-0

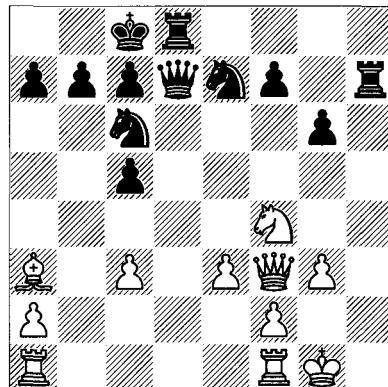
The temptation is to query this move, since White seems to be cooperating with the attack. However, White's light squares and pawn on c4 are serious problems, and the alternatives have their own drawbacks. For example, 10 ♜e5! 11 ♜e2 ♜g4 12 f3 ♜d7 13 e4 g5 14 ♜fd5 ♜xd5 15 cxd5 h3 16 ♜f1 g4!, etc.

10...hxg3 11 hxg3 ♜h3 12 ♜xh3 ♜xh3 13 ♜f4 ♜h7 14 c5!?

White pitches a pawn to stop the attack.

14...♜xc3! 15 bxc3 dxc5 16 ♜f3 ♜d7 17 ♜a3 0-0-0! (D)

W



18 ♜ad1?

But 18 ♜xc5 ♜e5 19 ♜e4 ♜7c6 threatens ...f5 and ...g5.

18...♜e5 19 ♜e4 ♜xd1 20 ♜xd1 ♜xd1+ 21 ♜g2 ♜7c6 22 ♜h3

Black's attack is overwhelming. A pretty line goes 22 ♜xc5 f5 23 ♜c2 ♜dh1 (24...♜7h2# threatens) 24 g4 ♜7h2+ 25 ♜g3 ♜g1+! 26 ♜xh2 ♜f3+ 27 ♜h3 fxg4#.

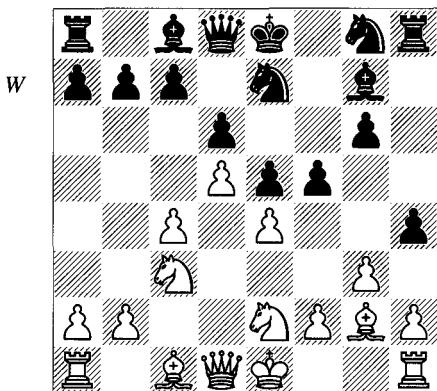
22...b6 23 g4 ♜b7 24 ♜g3 f5 25 gxf5 gxf5 26 ♜xf5 ♜g7+ 0-1

Hulak – Almasi

Croatian Team Ch, Pula 2001

1 c4 e5 2 g3 ♜c6 3 ♜g2 g6 4 ♜c3 ♜g7 5 e3 d6 6 ♜ge2 h5 7 d4 h4 8 d5 ♜ce7 9 e4 f5 (D)

Black strikes at the centre while retaining his option of ...hxg3 or ...h3.

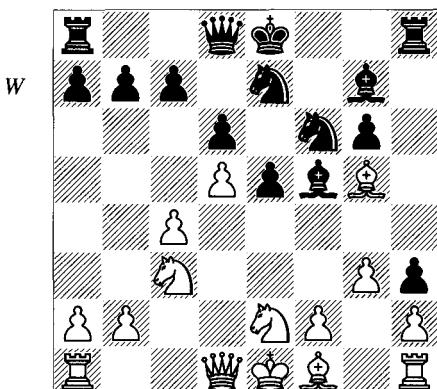


10 $\mathbb{B}g5$

10... $\mathbb{B}f6$ 11 $\mathbb{B}g5$ hxg3 12 hxg3 $\mathbb{B}xh1$ 13 $\mathbb{B}xh1$ 14 $\mathbb{B}f7!$ 14... $\mathbb{B}e2$ (Korchnoi queries this and suggests 14 $\mathbb{B}d2$ intending $\mathbb{B}f3$) 14... $\mathbb{B}h8$ (the point of Black's 13th move) 15 $\mathbb{B}g2$ $\mathbb{B}d7$ 16 0-0-0, Korchnoi-Short, Rotterdam 1990, and now 16... $\mathbb{B}h2$ 17 $\mathbb{W}f1$ $\mathbb{B}h6$ 18 $\mathbb{B}f3$ $\mathbb{W}h5$ is dynamically equal.

10...h3?! 11 $\mathbb{B}f3$

This may be less practical than 11 $\mathbb{B}f1$ because it exposes White to attack. The latter move keeps White in touch with the h3-pawn, which can easily fall. Larsen-L.Karlsson, Copenhagen 1985 continued 11... $\mathbb{B}f6$ 12 exf5 $\mathbb{B}xf5$ (D).

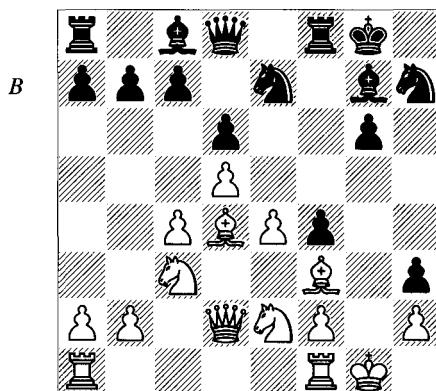


Usually, the bishop capture is preferable if that piece can stay in contact with h3. After all, Black should get some pieces out! Now Larsen

suggests driving the bishop back via 13 f3, intending g4. Black needs to react quickly with 13...c6, aiming to isolate White's d-pawn, after which play might go 14 g4 $\mathbb{B}d7$ 15 c5! $\mathbb{B}exd5$ 16 $\mathbb{B}d3$ $\mathbb{B}f7$ 17 cxd6 $\mathbb{B}a5$ 18 0-0-0 $\mathbb{B}e6$. White owns the important e4-square as a base for a potential attack versus Black's exposed king. Nevertheless, Black is beginning to have his own attacking ideas on the queenside, and we can best call the position unclear.

11... $\mathbb{B}f6$ 12 0-0 0-0 13 $\mathbb{B}d2$ $\mathbb{B}h7!$ 14 $\mathbb{B}e3?!$ f4! 15 gxf4 exf4 16 $\mathbb{B}d4$ (D)

Not 16 $\mathbb{B}xf4?$ g5.



16... $\mathbb{B}h6!$ 17 c5 $\mathbb{B}g5!$ 18 $\mathbb{B}h1$

Now a strong way for Black to play it was 18...dxc5! 19 $\mathbb{B}xc5$ b6! 20 $\mathbb{B}a3$ $\mathbb{B}f7$. Then his knight on f7 both covers d6 and can, at the right moment, dominate play from the outpost on e5. The immediate threat of ...f3 is also a problem, especially since White's bishop on h1 would truly be a pathetic sight if White were to defend by 21 f3.

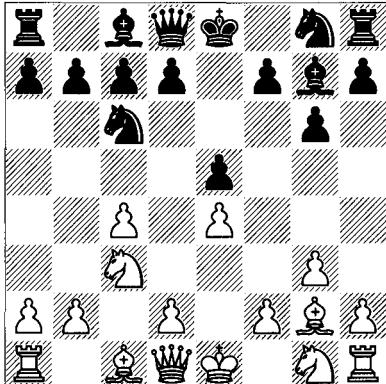
Botvinnik System: 5 e4

1 c4 e5 2 $\mathbb{B}c3$ $\mathbb{B}c6$ 3 g3 g6 4 $\mathbb{B}g2$ $\mathbb{B}g7$ 5 e4 (D)

As described elsewhere in this book, the formation c4/d3/e4 in conjunction with $\mathbb{B}ge2$, g3 and $\mathbb{B}g2$ is called the 'Botvinnik System', and it appears throughout the English Opening. We find it in the 3 g3 $\mathbb{B}b4$ system of Chapter 4, for example, and on both sides of the Pure Symmetrical variations in Chapter 7.

Let's take a quick overview of the ideas. At first it may seem bizarre for White to close off

B



the long diagonal for his favourite piece in the English Opening, the bishop on g2. After all, that's the piece that works in conjunction with b4-b5 to put pressure on Black's queenside, and it is often the best replacement for a knight which is exchanged on d5. To add insult to injury, White creates a hole on d4, in fact, a wonderful outpost for his opponent's knight, which is already poised to occupy it! Black also has an easy time developing and castling, and can consider preparing the pawn-breaks ...b5 and ...f5. Finally, it doesn't appear that White will achieve d4, his traditional central advance, for some time.

As you might suspect, White has an answer to these objections. On the most basic but important level, he stops Black's main freeing idea ...d5; White has five pieces controlling that square already! Then, when you examine the pawn-structure, you'll see that White has several attacking methods. He can use the pawn-lever f4, putting pressure on e5 and often threatening to play f5 followed by the traditional pawn-storm with g4-g5. Alternatively, White has available straightforward expansion on the queenside with moves such as b4-b5, c5 and a4-a5. Furthermore, Black's most natural attacking method involves ...f5, but if in that case White can play exf5, his bishop on g2 comes to life again! In fact, the set-up with a pawn on e4 and bishop on g2 can be considered a prophylactic measure against Black's move ...f5. The same situation arises with a pawn on e5 and bishop on g7 in the King's Indian Defence.

As for that weakness on d4, I have mentioned elsewhere a recurring theme in chess openings (particularly in modern ones) that

giving the opponent outright control of a single central square early in the game is acceptable, provided that there are countervailing advantages. There are far too many examples to list, but you might think about, for example:

- the numerous variations in the Sicilian Defence in which Black surrenders the d5-square facing White's pieces on an open file;
- variations of the French Defence in which Black grants White an outpost on e5, also along an open file;
- variations of the Ruy Lopez in which Black plays ...c5 and gives up d5;
- variations of the King's Indian Defence in which White gives Black an outpost on d4;
- isolated queen's pawn positions from any number of openings, with the outpost in front of the isolated pawn.

One mitigating factor in the Botvinnik System of the Closed English is that Black's outpost is not on an open file. So it's unlikely that we shall see rooks, for example, occupying d4; moreover, the bishop on g7 has a rather remote chance of getting there soon (although to be fair, White's break with f4 might be answered with ...exf4, changing that equation by freeing Black's g7-bishop). Just as importantly, the d4 outpost isn't as secure as it may look, and indeed, White's third method of making progress is the advance d4 itself. That's because the move d4 is naturally assisted by the queen on d1, knight on e2, and potentially, a bishop on e3. This results in Black having to keep an eye on his d4 asset.

Of course, there are other more concrete considerations, such as the nature of the structural change that takes place when Black puts a piece on d4 and White exchanges it. Issues like these will hopefully be clarified in the examples.

P. Taylor – Gallagher
British League (4NCL) 2002/3

1 c4 g6 2 g3 ♘g7 3 ♘g2 d6 4 ♗c3 e5 5 e4
♘c6 6 ♗ge2 ♘ge7

The most flexible move, in the sense that it retains the option of ...f5 without committing to it. Even the possibility of ...h5 remains viable, as shown below. In the game before us, Black will combine the moves ...♗e7 and

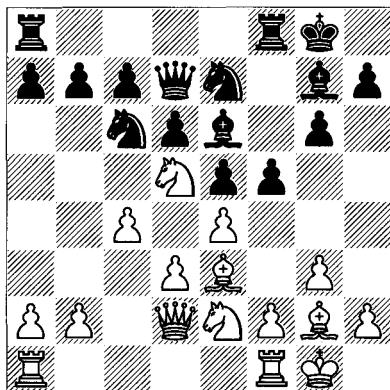
...f5, which has traditionally been the most popular set-up versus the Botvinnik pawn-structure. It's worth mentioning that a plan with ...a6 and ...b5 is also common, and logical; we'll see that elsewhere in the book.

7 d3 0-0 8 0-0 ♖e6

8...f5 9 ♖d5 ♖e6 10 ♖e3 is a common move-order, in which 9...h6 will be seen in the next game.

9 ♖d5 ♕d7 10 ♖e3 f5 11 ♕d2 (D)

B

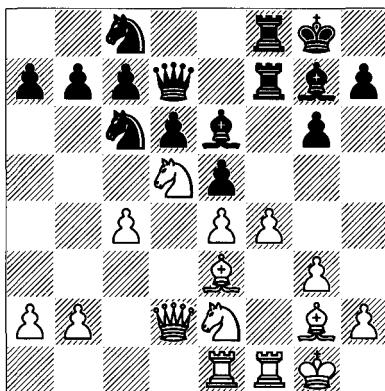


These are typical developing moves for both sides. Now White is ready to advance on the queenside by b4-b5, perhaps in conjunction with ♜ac1 and c5. The question is, what is Black to do? If he plays ...♘d4, White has the dual option of ♘xd4 followed by ♜g5, or ♜xd4 and placing a knight on f4; one of these two captures will generally yield an advantage. But a retreat by the c6-knight will encourage White to make the thematic break d4. So Black begins by picking the more aggressive course of doubling rooks.

11...♜f7 12 f3

This modest nudge of the f-pawn is positionally ideal, because it frustrates Black's main plans for counterplay. Another logical move is 12 ♜ac1, to make c5 a possibility, perhaps after b4-b5. The famous game Benko-Botvinnik, Monte Carlo 1968 illustrates play for both sides that radically differs from our main game: 12...♜af8 13 f4!? (13 b4 f4!? 14 gxf4 ♜h3 gives Black some interesting counterplay) 13...fxe4 14 dxе4 ♘c8! (D) (Dvoretsky proposes that 14...exf4 15 gxf4 ♜h3 is also satisfactory, because 16 ♜xh3 ♜xh3 17 ♘xc7 ♜e5! leads to eventual equality).

W



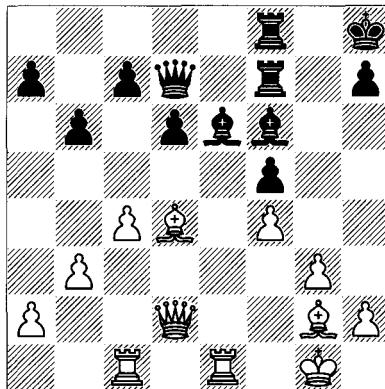
We've seen this idea before: Black prevents White from simplifying by ♘xe7+, and he has in mind ...♘d8 and ...c6. He is also ready to play ...♜h3, because c7 is now defended by the rook on f7. The game continued 15 c5 ♜h3 16 b4 ♜xg2 17 ♜xg2 exf4 18 gxf4 ♜e8 19 ♜g3 (Botvinnik gives 19 ♜ec3) 19...h5!? (with the disappearance of the bishop on g2, White's e4-pawn is just enough of a sore spot that Black can scare up play to counter White's space advantage) 20 b5, and now Botvinnik suggests that 20...♘d8 was a safe choice, whereas 20...h4!? 21 bxc6 bxc6 22 ♜c3 hgx3 23 hxg3 ♜xc3 24 ♜xc3 ♜e6 would have been about equal.

Thus White's set-up with f3 tends to be more popular than the one with f4.

12...♜af8 13 ♜ae1

An instructive game Csom-Gulko, Biel Interzonal 1976 is very similar to the text: 13 ♜ac1 ♜h8?! (later Jansa played 13...♞c8 here, when White has a small advantage) 14 b3 ♜g8 15 exf5! gxf5 16 f4 ♜f6 17 ♜xf6 ♜xf6 18 d4! exd4 19 ♜xd4 ♜xd4 20 ♜xd4 b6 21 ♜f1! (D).

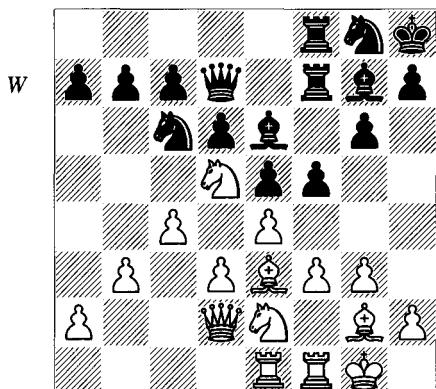
B



White has a near-winning advantage: space, open lines, and play against Black's weakened kingside. Black never had a chance to play ...f4; compare the game.

13... $\mathbb{Q}h8$ 14 b3 $\mathbb{Q}g8$ (D)

It's hard to find a positive plan; Black may now be intending ...fxe4 and ... $\mathbb{Q}h3$, to probe the light squares. Again, the retreat 14... $\mathbb{Q}c8$, intending perhaps ... $\mathbb{Q}d8$ and ...c6, was better.



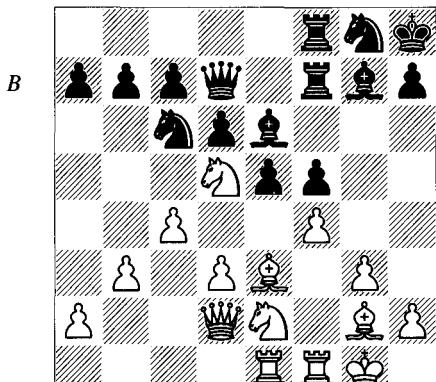
15 exf5!

This exchange has become more attractive now that 15... $\mathbb{Q}xf5$ is not a possible reply.

15...gx f5?!

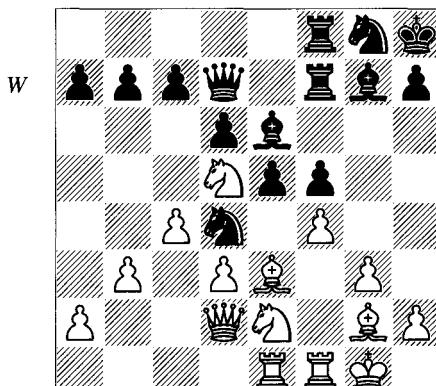
For reasons we'll see shortly, a better recapture was 15... $\mathbb{Q}xf5$. Nevertheless, White gains a central advantage by 16 d4; for example, 16... $\mathbb{Q}h3$ 17 dx e5 $\mathbb{Q}xe5$ 18 f4! $\mathbb{Q}xg2$ 19 $\mathbb{Q}xg2$, Peyrat-Le Quang, Bagnoux 2000. After both 19... $\mathbb{Q}g4$ 20 $\mathbb{Q}d4$ and 19... $\mathbb{Q}c6$ 20 $\mathbb{Q}ec3$ (or even 20 $\mathbb{Q}d4$! $\mathbb{Q}xd4$ 21 $\mathbb{Q}xd4$), White has more space and he can go to work down the e-file.

16 f4 (D)



You can see that White has hindered the mobility of Black's pawns. The move ...e4 will lose a pawn, of course, and ...exf4 is positionally disastrous, bringing a knight to a wonderful outpost in front of an isolated pawn on an open file. But the real key to the position is Black's bishop on e6. Since there is no prospect of his f-pawn advancing, it remains cut off from White's kingside; yet that is where it belongs if Black is to have positive play in the position. The upshot is that White has a free hand to build up on the queenside and in the centre while Black lacks a useful strategy. Blocking moves by bishop's pawns often serve the function of limiting the effectiveness of opposing bishops. For example, the move ...c5 in many variations of the Nimzo-Indian Defence helps to keep White's light-squared bishop in check. Similarly, in a main-line Grünfeld variation with White's centre pawns on d4, e4 and f4, ...f5 limits the range of White's queen's bishop.

16... $\mathbb{Q}d4$ (D)



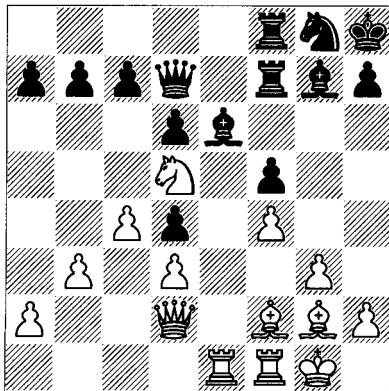
17 fxe5?!

Not a bad move at all, but 17 $\mathbb{Q}xd4$! $exd4$ 18 $\mathbb{Q}f2$ (D) is the normal transformation of this structure, clearly favouring White, who still limits the bishop on e6.

Then the pawn on d4 will have to be defended, and White can attack on the queenside and along the e-file; for example, 18...c5 (19 $\mathbb{Q}xc7$! was threatened, and White is doing superbly after 18...c6 19 $\mathbb{Q}e2$! or here 19 $\mathbb{Q}c7$ $\mathbb{Q}xc7$ 20 $\mathbb{Q}xe6$) 19 $\mathbb{Q}e2$ $\mathbb{Q}e8$ 20 $\mathbb{Q}fe1$ $\mathbb{Q}f6$ 21 $\mathbb{Q}xf6$ $\mathbb{Q}xf6$, with either 22 $\mathbb{Q}xb7$ or 22 g4!.

17... $\mathbb{Q}xe2+$ 18 $\mathbb{Q}xe2$ $dxe5$ 19 d4

B

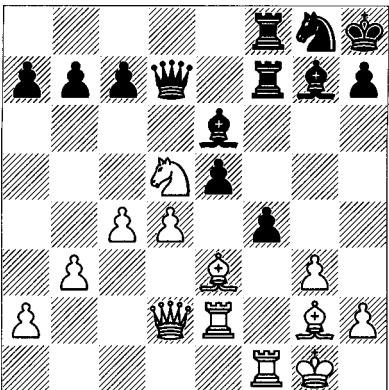


One reason that this advance is strong is that ...exd4 will isolate Black's f-pawn and give away that wonderful f4-square again.

19...f4! (D)

The move Black has wanted to play all along. 19...c6? 20 dx5! cxd5 21 cxd5 wins for White, not only positionally but tactically, because after a capture on e6, ♜d5 will follow.

W



20 gxf4 ♜xd5 21 ♜xd5 exf4 22 ♜xf4 ♜g4+
23 ♜g2 ♜xf4!

The point.

24 ♜xg4 ♜xg4+ 25 ♜g2 ♜xd4+ 26 ♜xd4+
♜xd4 27 ♜xf8

The end of an eight-move forced sequence. White was apparently in a state of shock at the turn of events, because this well-played game ended abruptly:

27...♜d1+ ½-½

Nevertheless, White still has the very real advantage of bishop vs knight on the open board, which is all the more significant because of the simplified situation. He should definitely

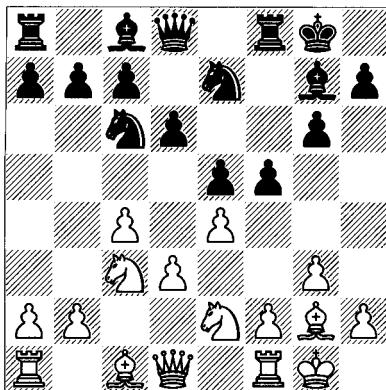
play on; for example, 28 ♜f1 ♜a1 (28...♝g7 29 ♜b8 b6 30 ♜b7 ♜h6! holds forth some hope) 29 ♜f7 b6 (29...♜xa2?? loses a piece to 30 ♜d3! – remember that one) 30 ♜xc7 ♜xa2 31 ♜d3 ♜f6 32 ♜f7, etc.

**Kharlov – V. Popov
Kazan 2001**

**1 c4 e5 2 ♜c3 ♜c6 3 g3 g6 4 ♜g2 ♜g7 5 e4
d6 6 ♜ge2 ♜ge7 7 d3 0-0 8 0-0 f5 (D)**

This has been the starting point for many a struggle. But even the primitive move 8...♜d4! seems playable; for example, 9 ♜xd4 exd4 10 ♜e2 ♜b8! (White seems better, if not by much, after 10...a5! 11 ♜d2 ♜c6 12 ♜c2 ♜d7 13 f4 f5, Züger-Gallagher, Pontresina 2000) 11 b4 b5 12 cxb5 ♜xb5 13 ♜d2 c5! 14 bxc5 dxc5 15 ♜c2 ♜b6 16 ♜ab1 ♜d7 17 ♜xb5 ♜xb5 18 ♜b1 ♜a6 19 ♜f4 ♜c8 and the game was level in Miezis-Davies, Dhaka 2001.

W



9 ♜d5 h6

This direct move has had reasonable success. Black delays ...♜e6 in order to prevent 10 ♜g5, and simultaneously anticipates the usefulness of ...g5.

10 ♜e3 g5! 11 ♜xe7+ ♜xe7 12 exf5 ♜xf5 (D)

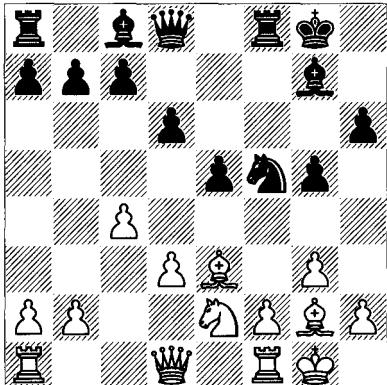
13 ♜c3

If White saves the bishop, Black gains easy equality by 13 ♜d2 c6 14 ♜c3 ♜e6 having in mind an eventual ...d5.

13...c6

There's also nothing wrong with 13...♜xe3 14 fxe3 ♜xf1+ 15 ♜xf1 c6 16 ♜e2 ♜e6 17 ♜f1 ♜e7, equalizing.

W



14 $\mathbb{N}c1$ $\mathbb{N}e6$ 15 $b4!?$ $\mathbb{N}xe3$ 16 $fxe3$ $\mathbb{N}xf1+$
17 $\mathbb{N}xf1$ $\mathbb{N}d7!$ 18 $\mathbb{N}g1$ $d5$

This might have been preceded by 18... $\mathbb{N}f8$, when Black's two bishops should count for something. At any rate, the opening is over and Black's treatment of it seems a good way to obtain promising play.

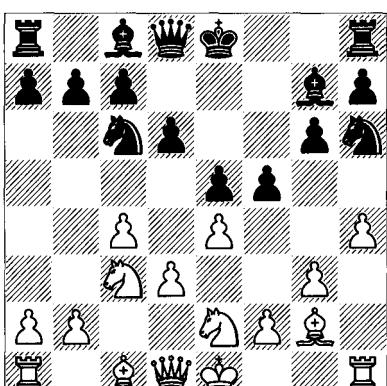
Roca – Peralta

Pinamar 2005

1 $c4$ $e5$ 2 $\mathbb{N}c3$ $\mathbb{N}c6$ 3 $g3$ $g6$ 4 $\mathbb{N}g2$ $\mathbb{N}g7$ 5 $e4$
 $d6$ 6 $\mathbb{N}ge2$ $f5$ 7 $d3$ $\mathbb{N}f6$

7... $\mathbb{N}h6$ wilfully ignores the central squares, but has a good pedigree. The only critical attempt for a large advantage is 8 $h4!$ (D).

B

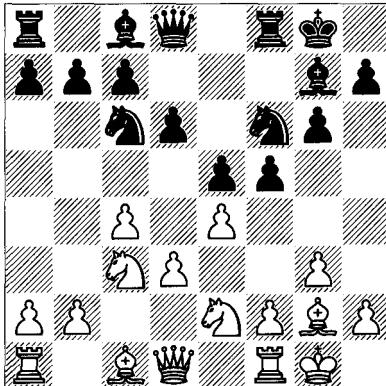


Then Psakhis-Svidler, Haifa 1995 continued 8... $fxe4!?$ (8... $\mathbb{N}f7!?$ 9 $h5$ $g5$ 10 $exf5$ $\mathbb{N}xf5$ 11 $\mathbb{N}d5$ $h6$ 12 $\mathbb{N}e3$ $\mathbb{N}d7$ was about equal in Portisch-Sax, Tilburg 1979) 9 $\mathbb{N}g5$ $\mathbb{N}d7$ 10 $\mathbb{N}xe4$ $\mathbb{N}f5$ 11 $\mathbb{N}d5$ $h6$ 12 $\mathbb{N}d2$ (not 12 $\mathbb{N}f6+?$ $\mathbb{N}xf6$ 13 $\mathbb{N}xf6$ $\mathbb{N}f8$) 12...0-0 13 $\mathbb{N}g4!?$ (trying to upset

the equilibrium, as there is nothing fundamentally wrong with Black's position) 13... $\mathbb{N}fd4$ 14 $\mathbb{N}xd4$ $\mathbb{N}xd4$ 15 $g5!$ $\mathbb{N}f7!$ (15... $c6$ 16 $gxh6!$) 16 $\mathbb{N}e3$ $\mathbb{N}f5$ 17 $h5!?$ $gxh5$ (17... $\mathbb{N}xe4$ 18 $dxe4$ $gxh5$ 19 $g6$ $\mathbb{N}f3+$ 20 $\mathbb{N}e2$ $\mathbb{N}d7$ may even favour Black) 18 $g6!?$ $\mathbb{N}d7$ 19 $\mathbb{N}xh5$ $\mathbb{N}c2+$ with wild complications.

8 0-0 0-0 (D)

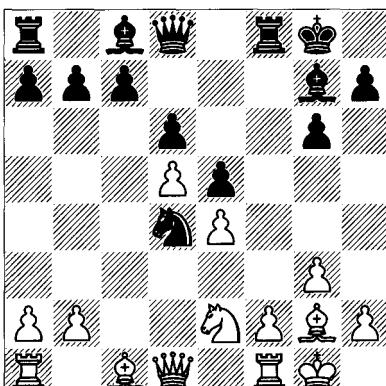
W



9 $h3!?$

A standard move, preventing ... $\mathbb{N}g4$ in several lines and thus opening the way for an effective $\mathbb{N}e3$. 9 $\mathbb{N}d5$ is another main line. Then 9... $\mathbb{N}e6$ 10 $\mathbb{N}g5$ $\mathbb{N}d7$ is normal, but a promising solution is 9... $fxe4$ 10 $dxe4$ $\mathbb{N}xd5$ 11 $cxd5$ (Black's last two moves had long been thought to give White both space and an attack on the c-file, but he has an idea) 11... $\mathbb{N}d4!?$ (D).

W



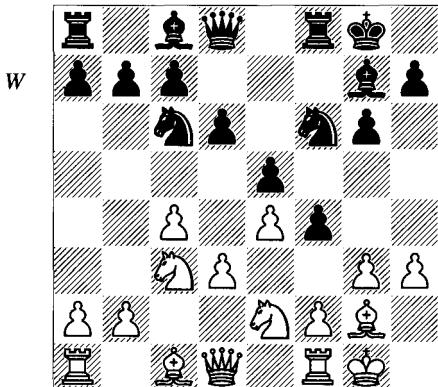
White seems to have the advantage if he exchanges knights and attacks d4, but Kosten calls 12 $\mathbb{N}xd4$ $exd4$ 13 $b3$ $c5$ 14 $dxc6$ $bxcc6$ 15 $\mathbb{N}b2$ $\mathbb{N}b6$ unclear. You can see the dynamic

characteristics of the position when White goes after the d-pawn: 16 $\mathbb{W}d2$ $\mathbb{A}e6$ 17 $\mathbb{Q}ad1$ c5 with the idea 18 e5? dx5! 19 $\mathbb{Q}xa8$ $\mathbb{Q}xa8$ and White's light squares are barely defensible.

So in Mastrovasilis-Nikolaidis, Korinthos 2002, White tried 12 $\mathbb{A}e3!$? $\mathbb{A}g4$ 13 $\mathbb{Q}xd4$ exd4 14 $\mathbb{W}d3$, when 14... $\mathbb{Q}xe2$ 15 $\mathbb{W}xe2$ is fairly level. Black might even be able to improve upon this with 12... $\mathbb{Q}f3+$ 13 $\mathbb{Q}h1$ $\mathbb{A}g4!$; for example, 14 h3 (14 $\mathbb{W}b3$ $\mathbb{Q}h4!$) 14... $\mathbb{Q}d7$ 15 $\mathbb{Q}g1$ $\mathbb{Q}d4!$ 16 $\mathbb{Q}c1$ c5 17 dxc6 bxc6 18 $\mathbb{Q}e2$ c5.

9...f4! (D)

Black commits to an aggressive and positionally-based pawn sacrifice that you will sometimes see in analogous Closed Sicilian lines. 9... $\mathbb{A}e6$ is the traditional move.



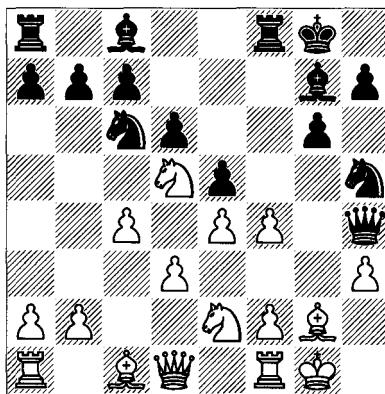
10 gxf4

The tactics and their positional basis are not only characteristic of this variation and other openings, they're instructive. It's pretty easy to see that White needs to react immediately before Black gets to play ...g5 and then pursue his attack by, for example, ... $\mathbb{A}e8-h5$ or ...h5 and ...g4. In fact, if Black gets ...g5 in, White is no longer able to alter the pawn-structure in a productive manner. There's an old saying about countering flank attacks with central action, but in this case 10 d4? actually weakens White's dark squares and burns up a tempo; then Black has a pleasant choice between 10... $\mathbb{Q}h5$, 10...f3 11 $\mathbb{Q}xf3$ $\mathbb{Q}xh3$ and 10...fxg3 11 fxg3 exd4 12 $\mathbb{Q}xd4$ $\mathbb{Q}xd4$ 13 $\mathbb{W}xd4$ $\mathbb{A}e6!$, with pressure and the e5 outpost.

10... $\mathbb{Q}h5$ 11 f5

11 fxe5 $\mathbb{W}h4$ will at least win Black's material back as White tries to defend his king.

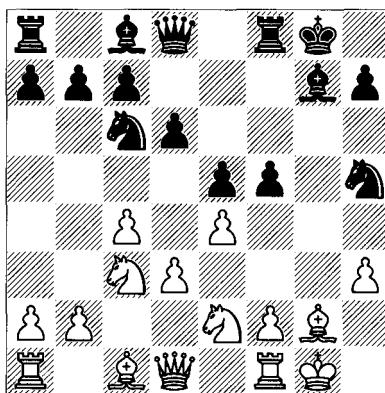
However, 11 $\mathbb{Q}d5$ looks like a better defensive try. Then Black plunges ahead with 11... $\mathbb{W}h4!$ (D).



12 f5! (12 $\mathbb{Q}xc7?$ exf4! 13 f3 $\mathbb{Q}xh3!$ 14 $\mathbb{Q}xa8$ $\mathbb{Q}d4!$ wins right away because of the idea of 15... $\mathbb{Q}xe2+$ and 16... $\mathbb{Q}d4+$) 12...gx5! 13 $\mathbb{Q}g3!$ (13 $\mathbb{Q}xc7?$ f4 14 $\mathbb{Q}xa8?$ – but otherwise h3 falls – 14...f3 and Black's attack is simply winning) 13... $\mathbb{Q}xg3$ 14 fxg3 $\mathbb{W}xg3$ 15 $\mathbb{Q}xc7$ $\mathbb{B}b8$ 16 $\mathbb{W}f3?$, Balashov-Dubinsky, Moscow 1999, and Black can play 16... $\mathbb{W}g6$ with an attack, or 16... $\mathbb{W}xf3$ 17 $\mathbb{Q}xf3$ $\mathbb{Q}d4$ 18 $\mathbb{Q}f1$ f4, etc.

11...gx5 (D)

11... $\mathbb{W}h4$ is apparently also equal after 12 $\mathbb{Q}g3!$ $\mathbb{Q}xg3$ 13 fxg3 $\mathbb{W}xg3$ 14 $\mathbb{Q}f3$ $\mathbb{W}h4$ 15 $\mathbb{Q}b5$ $\mathbb{Q}d4$. Instead, M.Gurevich-Maiwald, Bundesliga 2002/3 went 12 $\mathbb{W}d2?$ h6 (or 12... $\mathbb{Q}xf5$ 13 $\mathbb{W}g5$ $\mathbb{W}xg5$ 14 $\mathbb{Q}xg5$ fxe4 15 dx4 $\mathbb{Q}f4$) 13 f3 gx5 14 $\mathbb{W}e1$ $\mathbb{W}xe1$ 15 $\mathbb{Q}xe1$ $\mathbb{Q}b4$ 16 $\mathbb{Q}d1$ $\mathbb{Q}c2$ 17 $\mathbb{Q}b1$ c6 18 $\mathbb{Q}d2$ and now the easiest course was 18...f4! 19 b4 $\mathbb{Q}e3$ with an obvious advantage.



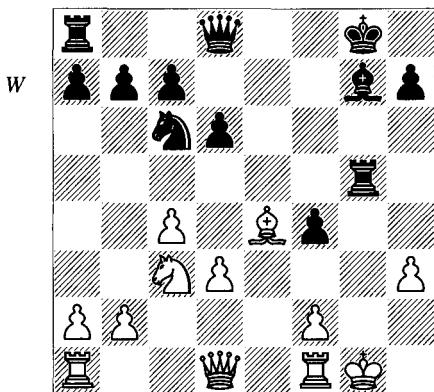
12 ♜g3??

12 exf5! roughly equalizes after 12...♜xf5 13 ♜g3! ♜xg3 14 fxg3 ♜d7 15 ♜d5+ ♜h8 16 g4 ♜g6, when e4 is a nice square to put White's pieces on, although Black does get the f-file.

12...♜f4! 13 ♜xf4 exf4 14 ♜xf5 ♜xf5 15 exf5 ♜xf5 16 ♜e4

This is White's best continuation, because 16 ♜h1 f3! 17 ♜xf3 ♜h4 18 ♜g2 ♜af8 prepares attacks by ...♜d4 and even ...♜f3!. Thus 19 ♜g4! ♜xg4 20 hxg4 ♜xf2, and Black stands better.

16...♜g5+ (D)



17 ♜h2

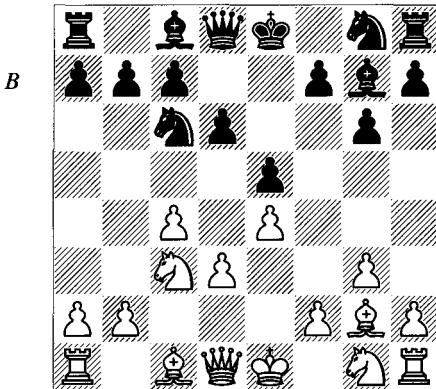
Now Black let White reorganize by playing 17...♜e5 18 ♜g1 ♜h8 19 ♜xg5 ♜xg5 20 ♜g4, with approximate equality. 17...♜d4! is more effective, based upon the line 18 ♜xb7? (18 ♜g1 c6 is just a little better for Black) 18...♜b8 19 ♜d5+ ♜h8 with threats of ...♜xb2 and ...f3. This game shows typical tactics that follow ...f4 versus a g3 fianchetto, as well as the dynamic potential hiding within a seemingly quiet line.

Serper – Chernin
Groningen PCA 1993

1 c4 e5 2 g3 ♜c6 3 ♜g2 g6 4 ♜c3 ♜g7 5 e4 d6 6 d3 (D)

It can be argued that White's move is less accurate than 6 ♜ge2 because of the line Black chooses in the game. Both moves have their positive and negative points, however, and often the move d3 will already have been played before this point – on move 5, for example.

6...h5?



Black employs a dynamic move that will appeal to those who really want to unbalance the play and avoid slow positions. Attacking by means of ...h5 has been a favourite at high levels of play, and runs counter to the notion that Black is stuck with purely technical approaches in these Closed English variations.

Black's first idea is obvious: to play ...h4 and attack the kingside. Perhaps ...hxg3 or ...h3 might follow, but in any case White is discouraged from castling and needs to think about the disposition of his kingside. One of the less obvious points about 6...h5 can be seen by comparing the following game: 6...♜d4!? 7 ♜ge2 ♜g4 8 h3! (this move isn't at White's disposal in our main game) 8...♜f3! (not 8...♜f3+?? 9 ♜f1; and 8...♜xe2 9 ♜xe2 ♜xe2 10 ♜xe2 gives up the bishop-pair in a position where pawn-breaks like f4 and b4/c5 are likely to happen; even the abject 10...c5 won't exempt Black from lengthy defence) 9 ♜xf3 ♜xf3+ 10 ♜f1 (White's king will be safe on g2, and Black's knight will get chased back) 10...♜e7 11 ♜g2 ♜d4 12 ♜xd4 exd4 13 ♜d5 (D).

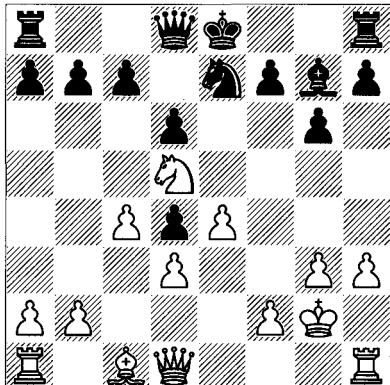
This is Kasparov-E.Pähzt, Munich (blitz) 2002; White has a modest advantage.

When Black has this 'dead point' on d4, his bishop on g7 has few prospects, and White can usually get good play by working around the pawn by playing f4 and/or b4. Here 13...♜xd5 14 cxd5 may be best, but gives White some c-file pressure.

7 h4

White can also try 7 h3!? h4 (7...♜d4 8 ♜ge2 ♜xe2 and 9 ♜xe2 ♜e6 or 9 ♜xe2 ♜f6 10 0-0 ♜e6 is a dull approach, but probably very close to equalizing) 8 g4 f5 9 gxf5 gxf5 10

B



$\text{Qd5}!?$ (10 exf5 Qxf5 and ... Wd7 with a timely ...0-0-0 and ... Qd4 is easy for Black to play) 10... $\text{Qce7}!$ (seizing the chance to get ...c6 in) 11 Qg5 c6 12 Qxe7 Qxe7 13 Qf3 Wa5+ 14 $\text{Qf1}!?$ Qg6 15 Qd2 f4! (now Black gets rid of his bad bishop) 16 Qf3 Qf7 17 Qb3 Qc7 18 Qg4 Qf6 19 Qxf6 Qxf6 , Suba-Grigore, Timis de Sus 1998. This looks equal; the position might even become completely blocked.

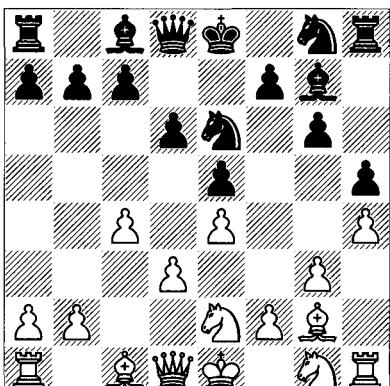
7... Qd4 8 $\text{Qce2}!$

An odd-looking move, but White wants to get rid of the knight on d4, and 8 Qge2 $\text{Qg4}!$ is a real bother. White can no longer play h3 as Kasparov did, and so must agree to 9... Qf3+ , unless he wants to cop out by 9 Wa4+ Qd7 10 Wd1 Qg4 (10... $\text{Qe6}!?$) 11 Wa4+ , etc.

8... $\text{Qe6}!$ (D)

Black retains control of d4 and clears the way for the useful move ...c6. 8... Qxe2 9 Qxe2 would leave White a tempo or two ahead in development in comparison with normal lines.

W



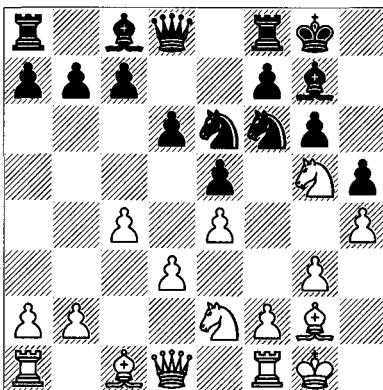
9 Qf3

9 Qe3 Qf6 10 f3 is solid-looking, intending Wd2 and an early d4. But the move is also slow and Black can act quickly in the centre by 10...c6, so that 11 d4?!, exd4 12 Qxd4 can be met by 12... $\text{Wa5+}!$ 13 Qf2 Qxd4 14 Qxd4 Qe6 with the idea 15 b3 c5! 16 Qe3 $\text{Qd7}!$.

9... Qf6 10 Qg5 0-0 11 0-0 (D)

After 11 Qxe6 Qxe6 12 Qg5 Wd7 , White has achieved nothing, Chernin-Karpov, Tilburg 1992.

B



11... $\text{Qe8}!?$

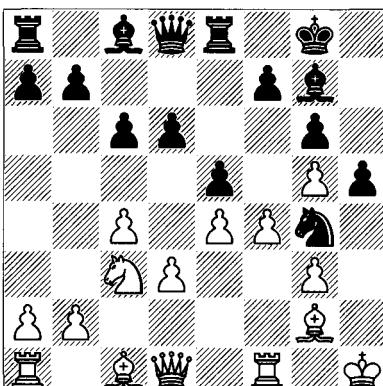
The easiest way to equality is 11...c6!, when White's only ambitious move, 12 f4?!, seems to favour Black after 12... Wb6+ 13 Qh1 Qg4 14 Qe1 Qc5 and ...a5.

12 f4?!, Qxg5 13 hxg5 Qg4 14 Qh1

The most consistent move is 14 f5, but 14...c6! 15 f6 Qf8 offers White nothing in the way of a follow-up.

14...c6 15 Qc3 (D)

B



15...f6?!

Black has a good alternative in 15...exf4, which opens up the centre at a time when White can't successfully advance his pawns, so that after 16 $\mathbb{Q}xf4$ (16 gxf4 $\mathbb{Q}d4$ 17 $\mathbb{W}f3$ $\mathbb{W}b6$) 16... $\mathbb{Q}e6$, Black can afford the time to expand upon the queenside, perhaps by 17 $\mathbb{W}d2$ a6 18 $\mathbb{Q}ac1$ b5.

16 $\mathbb{W}xf6$ $\mathbb{W}xf6$ 17 fxe5 $\mathbb{W}xe5$ 18 $\mathbb{Q}f4$ $\mathbb{W}d4$

The opening has turned out well for Black, and I'll leave the game at this point. In general 6...h5 promises equality, and it appears that White needs to play conservatively so as not to expose his kingside.

Ree – Van der Wiel Ter Apel 1987

1 c4 g6 2 $\mathbb{Q}c3$ $\mathbb{Q}g7$ 3 g3 d6 4 $\mathbb{Q}g2$ $\mathbb{Q}c6$ 5 e4 e5 6 $\mathbb{Q}ge2$

White's move-order with $\mathbb{Q}ge2$ before d3 can be thought of as maintaining all of his options, including playing d4 in one move.

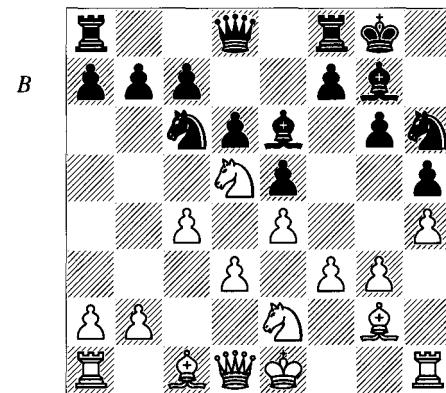
6...h5!?

Black probes White's position in the manner of the previous game. An alternative strategy begins with an early ...a6 and ...b5, chipping away at White's centre. This can be played in conjunction with ... $\mathbb{Q}ge7$ or ... $\mathbb{Q}f6$.

7 h3

7 h4 has been met by 7... $\mathbb{Q}e6$ and 7... $\mathbb{Q}ge7$, but the most independent idea is 7... $\mathbb{Q}h6!$? 8 d3 0-0. The knight on the rim has some reach (g4 and f5), but it can also serve to defend g5 from f7. On a specific level, Black will be able to respond to $\mathbb{Q}d5$ by moving his own knight to e7 and playing ...c6. The costs to Black are various, but an obvious general problem is that Black's knight on h6 isn't in contact with any central squares, particularly d4 and d5. Portisch-Gulko, Biel Interzonal 1976 went 9 f3 (this covers g4 and thus prepares $\mathbb{Q}e3$ and d4) 9... $\mathbb{Q}e6$ 10 $\mathbb{Q}d5$ (D).

Here 10... $\mathbb{Q}e7$! followed by ...c6 is the obvious way to kick the knight out of d5, and should suffice to get Black out of the opening with minimal or no disadvantage. The most critical



line would be 11 d4 exd4 12 $\mathbb{Q}xd4$ $\mathbb{Q}xd5$ 13 cxd5 c5! 14 dxc6 $\mathbb{Q}xc6$ 15 $\mathbb{Q}xc6$ bxc6 with enough pressure on the b-file and long diagonal to counter White's territorial superiority. The moves ... $\mathbb{Q}b8$ and ...f5 might follow.

7... $\mathbb{Q}e6$!?

7... $\mathbb{Q}e6$!? is a flexible move, transposing to O'Cinneide-Sadler, European Clubs Cup, Reykjavik 1999: 8 d3 h4 9 g4 $\mathbb{Q}f6$ 10 $\mathbb{Q}d5$ $\mathbb{Q}d7$ 11 $\mathbb{Q}e3$!? (11 f4 exf4 12 $\mathbb{Q}dx4$ doesn't do much, as $\mathbb{Q}xe6$ strengthens Black's centre) 11... $\mathbb{Q}d4$ 12 $\mathbb{W}d2$ c6 13 $\mathbb{Q}dc3$ $\mathbb{W}e7$ with equal chances.

8 g4 f5!? **9 $\mathbb{Q}xf5$ $\mathbb{Q}xf5$ 10 $\mathbb{Q}xf5$!**

So as not to permit ...f4.

10... $\mathbb{Q}xh5$ 11 d3 $\mathbb{Q}h6$!?

Black trades his bad bishop and isn't too worried about dark-square weaknesses because he intends to castle queenside. However, 11... $\mathbb{W}d7$! 12 $\mathbb{Q}e3$ $\mathbb{Q}h6$ is a more accurate move-order, discouraging White's idea in the next note.

12 $\mathbb{Q}xh6$ $\mathbb{Q}xh6$ 13 $\mathbb{W}d2$

13 $\mathbb{W}b3$! was better, forcing Black to defend for the moment while preparing 0-0-0.

13... $\mathbb{Q}g6$ 14 $\mathbb{Q}e4$ $\mathbb{W}d7$ 15 0-0-0 0-0-0 16 $\mathbb{Q}dg1$?

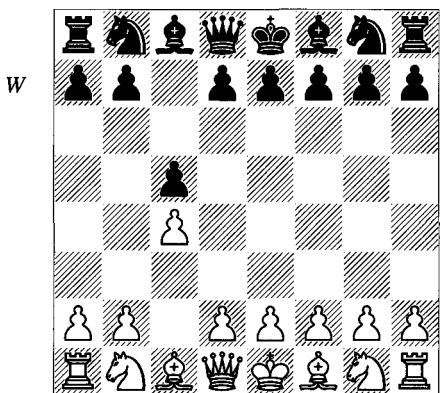
A mistake. 16 $\mathbb{W}e3$ and even 16 $\mathbb{Q}xc6$!? 17 d4 improve.

16... $\mathbb{Q}xg1+$ 17 $\mathbb{Q}xg1$

Now 17... $\mathbb{Q}xe4$! would have been very strong: 18 dxe4 (18 $\mathbb{Q}xe4$ d5 19 cxd5 $\mathbb{W}xd5$ 20 b3 $\mathbb{W}d4$!) 18... $\mathbb{W}f7$ 19 b3 $\mathbb{W}f8$ 20 f3 $\mathbb{Q}d4$ with a dominant game.

7 Pure Symmetrical Variation

1 c4 c5 (D)



The move 1...c5 introduces the Symmetrical English, which some think is Black's safest way to counter 1 c4. Positions within the purview of Symmetrical Variation theory can arise by a whole array of move-orders extending out to seven or more moves. That is, ...c5 (or even c4) may not arise until after various other moves have been played, but the resulting position will be one or another variation of the Symmetrical.

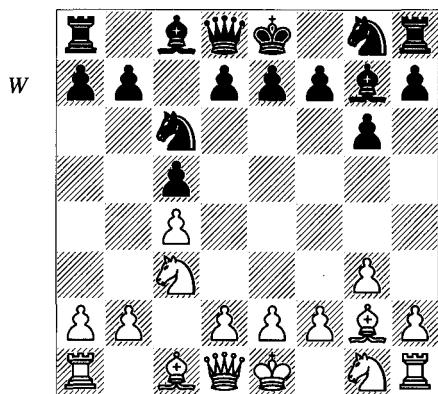
Apart from the English Opening proper with 1 c4, it's important to realize that there are a number of ways to get to a Symmetrical English via the move 1 ♜f3. In that case, both sides jockey to get their preferred variation. For example, the following lines and sub-lines may arise:

a) 1 ♜f3 c5 (note that this move-order allows White to play a Sicilian Defence by 2 e4) 2 g3 (or, of course, 2 c4) 2...♜c6 (2...b6 3 ♜g2 ♜b7 4 0-0-0 ♜f6 5 c4 can lead to systems with either ...e6 or ...g6) 3 ♜g2 (3 c4) 3...♜f6 4 c4 e6 5 ♜c3 (5 d4 cxd4 6 ♜xd4) 5...d5 6 cxd5 (6 d4) 6...♜xd5.

b) 1 ♜f3 ♜f6 2 c4 (or 2 g3 g6 3 ♜g2 ♜g7 4 0-0 0-0-0 d3 c5 6 c4) 2...e6 (or 2...c5; for example, 3 d4 cxd4 4 ♜xd4; or 2...b6 3 ♜c3 c5) 3 d4 c5 4 ♜c3 cxd4 5 ♜xd4, and so forth.

In practice, symmetry in the opening can develop into almost any kind of situation, but on a fundamental level we shall want to know if the game will become simplified, perhaps even sterile, or whether breaking symmetry will produce rich and complex positions. In the English Opening, this issue arises most often after the introductory moves to this chapter:

2 ♜c3 ♜c6 3 g3 g6 4 ♜g2 ♜g7 (D)



For better or worse, I long ago dubbed this position the 'Pure Symmetrical Variation', to distinguish it from lines in which White or Black breaks the symmetry within the first few moves. Before entering into games, ideas and analysis, let me make a few general remarks.

As much or more so than in any other variation in the English Opening, this one runs the risk of 'excessive' simplification, mainly from White's point of view, since he has to figure out what to do about copycat moves, whereas Black can almost always find a reasonable way to unbalance the position. For example, play will sometimes peter out in the line 5 e3 e6 6 ♜ge2 ♜ge7 7 0-0-0-0, when a number of grandmaster draws have resulted from 8 d4 cxd4 9 ♜xd4 ♜xd4 10 exd4 d5 11 cxd5 ♜xd5 12 ♜xd5 exd5. As we shall see below, however, White has some refreshing ways to deviate. In the line beginning with 5 a3, the game sometimes

continues 5...a6 6 $\mathbb{B}b1 \mathbb{B}b8$ 7 b4 cxb4 8 axb4 b5 9 cxb5 axb5, and while it is certainly still possible to create an imbalance, quite a few top players will stop the clocks at this point (or shortly thereafter). That may be a matter of prior intention, however, and some grandmasters believe that if White enforces a well-timed break in symmetry, he can still get a promising game. At any rate, you will find that the databases are crammed full of games with 5 e3 and 5 a3. And of course *Black* needn't go along with any of this; in fact, he can break symmetry after any of White's 5th moves. Some simple examples out of many are 5 e3 e5, 5 e3 $\mathbb{Q}f6$, 5 a3 e6 and 5 a3 $\mathbb{Q}f6$ (see below).

Nevertheless, this perceived difficulty has contributed to the popularity of 5 $\mathbb{Q}f3$, which, as we shall see, can't be effectively imitated in the main lines without penalty. On the other hand, 5 $\mathbb{Q}f3$ offers Black a range of dynamic possibilities based upon the fact that, as in some variations with 1 c4 e5, developing his knight to e7 keeps his bishop trained on d4, and can give him opportunities which White lacks; for example, the move ...f5.

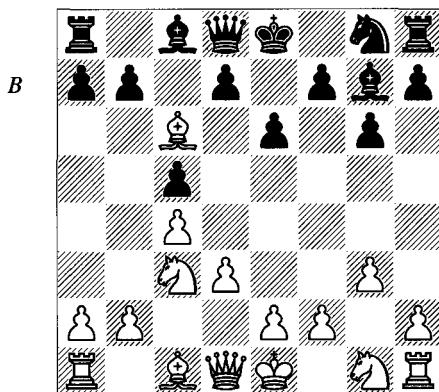
Having said all that, let's move on to some actual variations and examples.

Romanishin – Beliavsky USSR Ch, Leningrad 1974

1 c4 c5 2 g3 $\mathbb{Q}c6$ 3 $\mathbb{Q}g2$ g6 4 $\mathbb{Q}c3$ $\mathbb{Q}g7$ 5 b3?

This move is slow, and not especially dangerous, but it can lead into instructive positions in which typical themes are thrown into relief. White has the simple idea of $\mathbb{Q}b2$ and later moving his knight from c3 to exchange the important g7-bishop; then he may be able to exploit Black's resulting dark-square vulnerabilities on the kingside. Often the move f4 will be used to reinforce pressure along the a1-h8 diagonal. Naturally, it's not so easy, and Black has a number of common-sense rejoinders.

Another modest move is 5 d3. White is waiting to see what Black plays, and will usually respond by transposing into another system via e3, e4 or $\mathbb{Q}f3$. A unique plan is 5...e6 6 $\mathbb{Q}xc6$!? (D), as in Larsen-Markeluk, Buenos Aires 1991.



Regardless of Black's recapture, the point is to immobilize Black's centre pawns (thus keeping the bishop on c8 inactive) and then exploit Black's dark-square weaknesses to prove that the knight-pair is superior to Black's bishops. Thus the battle revolves about a successful ...e5:

a) Black can capture towards the centre with 6...bxc6, when 7 $\mathbb{Q}f3$ e5! is the structure that Black is after. Notice that in that case, White doesn't even get the d5-square for a knight, as he often does versus a ...c5/...d6/...e5 formation. So White has reason to play 7 f4!?, restraining Black's centre and targeting dark squares; for example, 7... $\mathbb{Q}e7$ 8 $\mathbb{Q}f3$ 0-0 9 0-0 d6, when White's most ambitious plan begins with 10 e4, trying for a timely e5, or even d4.

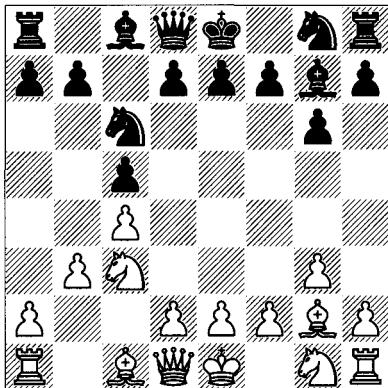
b) The game continued 6...dxc6 7 f4! (again, 7 $\mathbb{Q}f3$ e5! lets Black's bishop escape) 7... $\mathbb{Q}e7$ 8 $\mathbb{Q}f3$ $\mathbb{Q}f5$ 9 e4!? $\mathbb{Q}d4$ 10 e5 0-0 11 $\mathbb{Q}e4$ f6 12 exf6 $\mathbb{Q}xf3$ + 13 $\mathbb{Q}xf3$ $\mathbb{Q}xf6$ 14 $\mathbb{Q}xf6$ + $\mathbb{Q}xf6$ 15 $\mathbb{Q}e2$ (White tries to prevent ...e5, but it's not so easy) 15... $\mathbb{Q}d8$ 16 $\mathbb{Q}e3$ b6 17 0-0-0 (it might seem as though 17 $\mathbb{Q}f2$ followed by 18 0-0-0 was better, with an apparent bind on e5; however, 17...e5! 18 fxe5 $\mathbb{Q}g5$ keeps affairs balanced) 17...e5!. This frees Black's bishop and equalizes. Both sides have weaknesses, and in spite of the opposite-coloured bishops, neither player has the firepower to conduct a winning attack against proper defence.

We now return to 5 b3 (D):

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

The moves 5...d6 and 5...e5 are fully playable, and even 5... $\mathbb{Q}xc3$! 6 dxc3 d6 has been played, for which you might compare Larsen-Markeluk from the last note; then White does well to continue by e4 and $\mathbb{Q}ge2$. The most

B



interesting alternative is 5...e6, when White's strategy is illustrated by 6 $\mathbb{Q}b2$ $\mathbb{Q}ge7$ 7 $\mathbb{Q}c1!$? (7 h4 h6 8 $\mathbb{Q}b1!$? d6 9 $\mathbb{Q}e4$ e5 10 $\mathbb{Q}d3!$?) 7...d6 8 $\mathbb{Q}d5$!, but Black can simply play 8...e5! 9 d3 0-0 with no real problems.

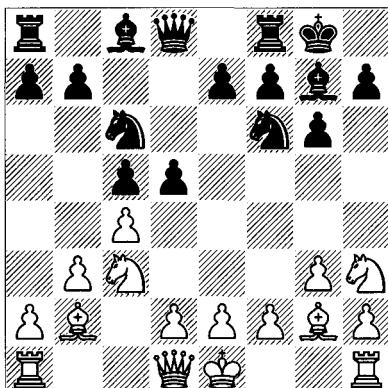
6 $\mathbb{Q}b2$ 0-0 7 $\mathbb{Q}h3$!?

White would like to play $\mathbb{Q}f4$ and control the crucial d5-square, clamping down on d5. By contrast, 7 $\mathbb{Q}f3$ d5! equalizes; for example, after 8 $\mathbb{Q}xd5$ $\mathbb{Q}xd5$ 9 $\mathbb{Q}xg7$ $\mathbb{Q}xg7$ 10 cxd5 $\mathbb{Q}xd5$, Black has more space and prevents d4. This standard sequence arises on both sides of the board in an array of variations.

7...e5

Black in turn prevents $\mathbb{Q}f4$. Actually, 7...d5! (D) can be played to good effect because it takes advantage of the knight's position on h3. This is a common theme in the Symmetrical English (and in the Reversed Sicilian, for that matter; see the 1 c4 e5 2 $\mathbb{Q}c3$ d6 3 d4 lines).

W



There can follow 8 $\mathbb{Q}xd5$ (8 cxd5 $\mathbb{Q}xd5$ 9 0-0 $\mathbb{Q}g4$) 8... $\mathbb{Q}xd5$ 9 $\mathbb{Q}xg7$ $\mathbb{Q}xg7$ 10 cxd5

$\mathbb{Q}xh3$! 11 $\mathbb{Q}xh3$ $\mathbb{Q}xd5$ 12 0-0 $\mathbb{Q}ad8$ 13 d3 b6 with a nice space advantage and central pressure to counter White's bishop-versus-knight edge.

8 0-0 d6 9 f4?!

White tries to open the f-file while putting pressure on e5; nevertheless, this is fairly loosening.

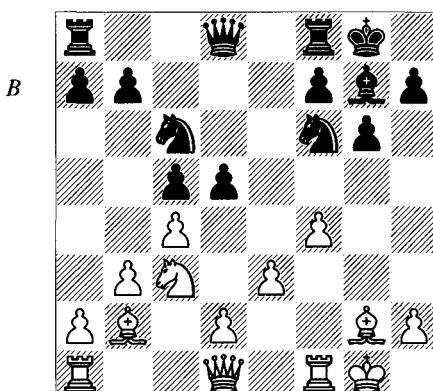
9... $\mathbb{Q}d7$ 10 e3 $\mathbb{Q}xh3$!?

An exchange which prepares central expansion at the cost of the bishop-pair. Less committed would be 10... $\mathbb{Q}g4$ or 10... $\mathbb{Q}e8$.

11 $\mathbb{Q}xh3$ exf4 12 gxf4!?

The move most consistent with White's emphasis on piece-play would be 12 $\mathbb{Q}xf4$, although Black seems to come out all right after 12...d5!; for example, 13 $\mathbb{Q}g2$ d4 14 $\mathbb{Q}a4$! dxe3 15 dxe3 $\mathbb{Q}e7$ 16 $\mathbb{Q}f3$ $\mathbb{Q}h5$.

12...d5! 13 $\mathbb{Q}g2$ (D)



13...dxc4!?

Black might be better off advancing his pawn by 13...d4, when 14 $\mathbb{Q}d5$ dxe3 15 dxe3 $\mathbb{Q}xd5$ 16 cxd5 $\mathbb{Q}xb2$ 17 dxc6 bxc6! is balanced.

14 bxc4 $\mathbb{Q}d7$ 15 $\mathbb{Q}b1$ $\mathbb{Q}ad8$ 16 $\mathbb{Q}d5$ $\mathbb{Q}xd5$ 17 cxd5 $\mathbb{Q}e7$ 18 $\mathbb{Q}xg7$ $\mathbb{Q}xg7$ 19 e4

White has two unopposed central pawns that need to be challenged quickly.

19...h6

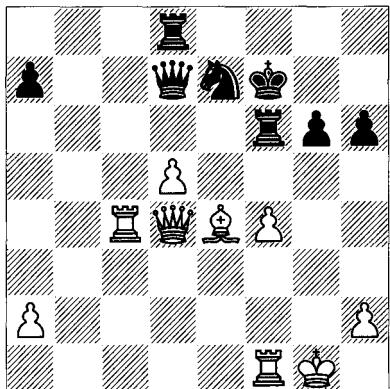
Versus the natural 19...f5 20 d3 b6, 21 $\mathbb{Q}b3$ has the idea a4-a5; Black would be tied down by having to prevent e5.

20 $\mathbb{Q}b3$! c4 21 $\mathbb{Q}c3$ f5 22 d3! b5!

22...cxd3? is met by 23 e5 with the idea 23... $\mathbb{Q}xd5$? 24 $\mathbb{Q}xd3$.

23 dxc4 fxe4 24 $\mathbb{Q}xe4$ bxc4 25 $\mathbb{Q}xc4$ $\mathbb{Q}f6$ 26 $\mathbb{Q}d4$ $\mathbb{Q}f7$ (D)

W

**27 $\mathbb{E}c5?$**

White can use his powerful d-pawn by means of 27 $\mathbb{E}e5!$ with the idea 27... $\mathbb{W}d6$ 28 $\mathbb{E}c7 \mathbb{E}d7$ 29 $\mathbb{E}xd7 \mathbb{W}xd7$ 30 $\mathbb{Q}h1$ intending $\mathbb{E}c1$.

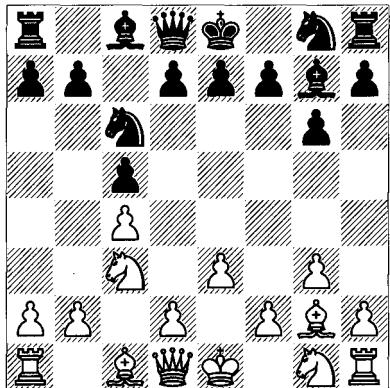
27... $\mathbb{W}d6$ 28 $\mathbb{E}c3 \mathbb{E}d7$ 29 $\mathbb{E}d3 \mathbb{Q}f5$

Now Black's outpost and his eventual play against White's isolated pawns counterbalance White's passed d-pawn and his prospects of queenside penetration. The game was eventually drawn.

The Traditional 5 e3

**1 c4 c5 2 $\mathbb{Q}c3 \mathbb{Q}c6$ 3 g3 g6 4 $\mathbb{Q}g2 \mathbb{Q}g7$ 5 e3
(D)**

B



This was originally the most popular version of the Pure Symmetrical variation. White's immediate intentions seem obvious: he wants to play d4, usually in conjunction with $\mathbb{Q}ge2$, establishing control over more territory. The strategy of a3 and b4 arises from time to time, but

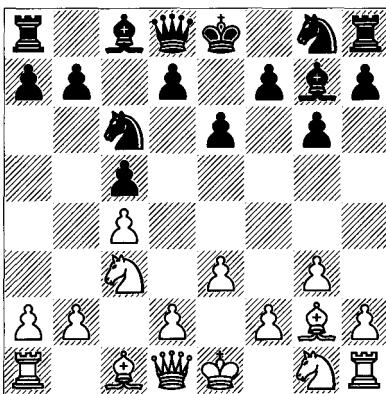
less often than in other Symmetrical English lines because of White's emphasis on the d4 break. Sometimes, 5 e3 is used as an introduction to systems with d3/e3, particularly if Black plays an early ...e5.

Black can pursue differing strategies, so I'll try to describe his plans in the games and notes. Overall, even though 5 e3 can yield an unbalanced game, it tends to be dryer than other variations of the English Opening. The temptation for an author is to skip over such lines and concentrate upon more exciting material, of which indeed there is plenty in this book. However, you should get an understanding of the Symmetrical variations that develop more slowly, in order to decide whether this method of play appeals to you with either colour.

Benko – Geller
Wijk aan Zee 1969

5...e6 (D)

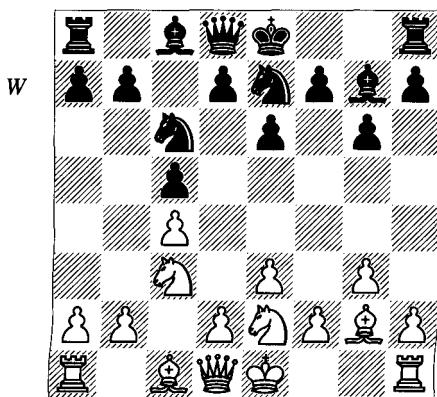
W



This symmetrical move limits Black's opportunities to cause trouble for his opponent, but in turn offers less leeway for White to pull off surprises. In fact, 5...e6 is one of the main reasons that White hesitates to play 5 e3, especially against a lower-rated player, because he feels that it runs the danger of wasting a game in which he has the advantage of the white pieces. But this fear is overrated, and White can still pose his opponent numerous difficulties. In addition, Black can break symmetry when he finds it attractive to do so. This variation is helpful to examine because it gives insight into the technical play that the English Opening can

lead to, and how careful we should be before we proclaim certain positions 'drawn'.

6 ♜ge2 ♜ge7 (D)



7 0-0

a) A common way to try to keep some pieces on is 7 ♜f4. Then Black can imitate by 7...♜f5 or play 7...0-0 and meet 8 h4!? by 8...h6. A clever try to mix things up was 7...a6 8 ♜b1 b5! of M.Gurevich-Kasimdzhanov, Batumi (rapid) 2001, when Kosten justifies the gambit with his analysis 9 cxb5 axb5 10 ♜xb5 0-0! 11 ♜c3 ♜a6 12 d3 d5.

b) White can play around with move-orders and transpositions by 7 d4 cxd4 8 ♜xd4 d5 (8...♜xd4 9 exd4 d5 10 cxd5 ♜xd5 11 0-0 0-0 12 ♜b3 is seen in the next game) 9 cxd5 ♜xd5 (9...exd5 10 0-0 0-0 11 ♜b3 transposes to our main game) 10 ♜xd5 ♜xd4 11 ♜c3?! ♜c6 12 ♜xd8+ ♜xd8 13 ♜d2. By not castling, White has managed to gain just a little time for development, which may not mean too much but makes Black play accurately. The game Andersson-Miles, Tilburg 1981 continued 13...0-0 (or 13...♜d7 first) 14 ♜c1 ♜d7 15 0-0 ♜c6 16 ♜c2 ♜xg2 17 ♜xg2 ♜c6 18 ♜e4 ♜fd8 19 ♜c3 ♜ac8 (19...♜d5!) 20 ♜xg7 ♜xg7 21 ♜fc1 with a slight advantage that ought to be manageable for Black after, say, 21...♜c7 22 ♜c5 ♜e7. Not everyone will want to play this way, with either colour!

7...0-0 8 d4 cxd4 9 ♜xd4

9 exd4 is passive, and can lead to equality in several manners; e.g., 9...d5 10 cxd5 ♜xd5 11 ♜xd5 exd5 12 ♜e3 ♜g4 13 ♜e1 is dead equal, Botvinnik-Gligorić, Hastings 1961/2.

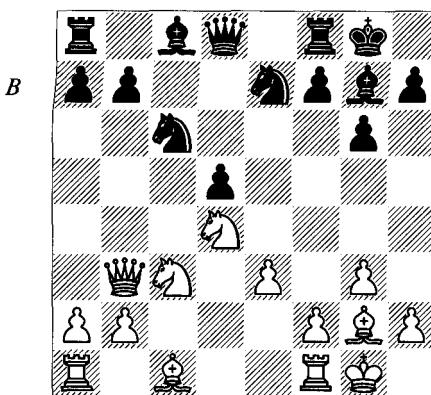
9...d5

This is often considered more accurate than 9...♜xd4, which we'll see in the next game.

10 cxd5 exd5!?

Freeing Black's c8-bishop by means of this recapture was originally considered to grant easy equality, but it may be somewhat inferior to the two alternatives. In the next game we'll look at, by transposition, the positions after 10...♜xd4 11 exd4 ♜xd5 and 10...♜xd5 11 ♜xd5.

11 ♜b3! (D)



Nothing much seems to be going on here, but in fact, White is trying to unbalance the position in a way that causes Black some problems, potentially even tactical ones. Obviously, White wants to capture on d5, and he has cleared d1 for his rook. On the downside, his own d-pawn hangs after an exchange on that square.

11...♜xd4

After 11...♜xd4?! 12 exd4 ♜xd4, 13 ♜d1 recovers the pawn and gains the bishop-pair. In that case White has a modest advantage.

12 exd4 ♜f5

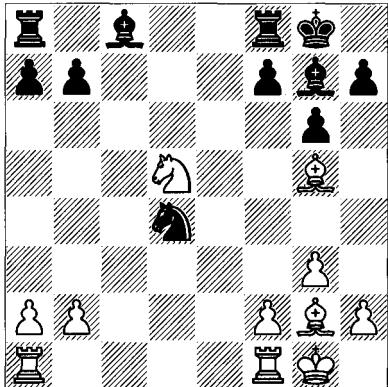
12...♜c6 13 ♜e3! ♜xd4 14 ♜xd4 ♜xd4 15 ♜xd5 is better for White, whose rooks rush to the open files. And 12...♜xd4 has a few good answers, such as 13 ♜g5, but the most direct one is 13 ♜d1 ♜b6 14 ♜xb6 ♜xb6 15 ♜g5!, when Black must choose between some awkward options; for example, 15...f6 16 ♜h6 ♜e8 17 ♜xd5 with great pressure. Simple positions are not always simple to play!

13 ♜xd5 ♜xd5 14 ♜xd4 15 ♜g5!

(D)

It may seem odd that in a symmetrical position with the centre totally liquidated, White

B



can have a significant advantage. Here, remarkably, it is close to a winning one. He is taking over the dark squares and has a slight lead in development that creates tactical threats.

15...♝h3

This is a good idea in principle, to get rid of the monster bishop on g2. Imitating White's play by 15...♝g4? fails to 16 ♜f6+ ♛xf6 17 ♛xf6, and if 17...♜f3+?, simply 18 ♛h1.

16 ♜ad1

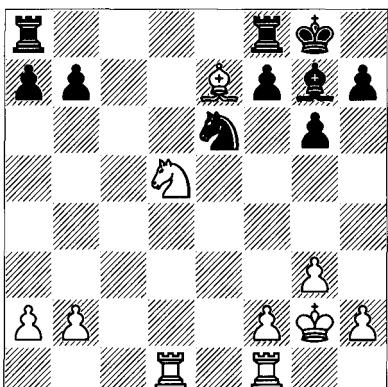
16 ♛xh3?! ♜f3+ 17 ♛g2 ♜xg5 18 ♜ac1 ♜xh3 19 ♛xh3 may look promising for a moment, but White doesn't have anything after 19...♜fd8 20 ♜fd1 ♛f8.

16...♜xg2 17 ♛xg2 ♜e6

In view of what happens, Geller suggested 17...♜c6, but then White maintains the more aggressive posture after 18 ♜fe1 or 18 b4!, both of which create serious defensive problems for Black.

18 ♜e7 (D)

B



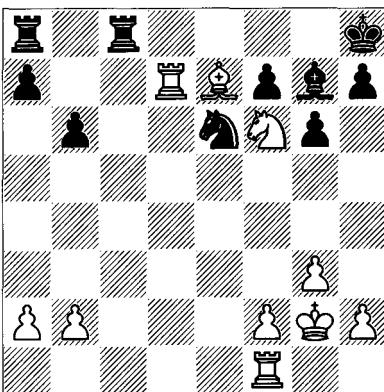
18...♜fc8

After 18...♜fe8?! 19 ♜f6+ ♛xf6 20 ♜xf6, White's bishop is a huge piece, and will easily outweigh the knight, both at the moment and in any minor-piece ending with pawns on both sides of the board.

19 ♜f6+ ♛h8 20 ♜d7 b6 (D)

The remarkable thing is how, throughout this whole game, Black is never able to work his way out of these seemingly inconsequential difficulties. Here 20...♜c5 would solve everything if the tactic 21 ♜xc5 ♜xc5 22 ♜e4 didn't gain material or otherwise win. For example, 22...♜c2 23 ♜xb7 (or 23 ♜xf7 ♜xb2 24 ♜d1! ♜f8 25 ♜e7 and White's rooks double on the 7th rank) 23...♜xb2 24 ♜xf7 ♜xa2 25 ♜d1 ♜e8 26 ♜dd7! h5 27 ♜xg7 ♜xe4 28 ♜xg6.

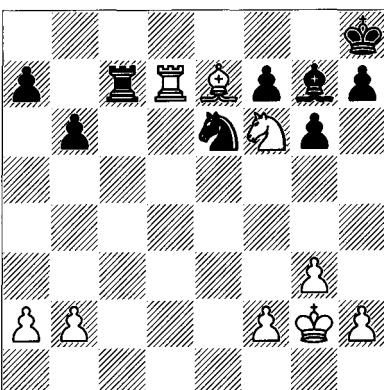
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21 ♜fd1 ♜c2 22 ♜d2 ♜xd2 23 ♜xd2 ♜f8

To prevent ♜d7. At first, 23...♜c8 24 ♜d7 ♜c7 (D) may look better.

W



But as Benko says, "it allows White to demonstrate one major flaw of the black position:

the second player is, in effect, a king down! Thus, White's monarch would decisively penetrate into the enemy position after 25 $\mathbb{Q}xc7$ 26 $\mathbb{Q}f3$ $\mathbb{Q}e6$ 27 $\mathbb{Q}e4$."

24 b3 $\mathbb{Q}c8$ 25 $\mathbb{Q}d6!$ h5 26 a4 $\mathbb{Q}h7$ 27 $\mathbb{Q}d5$ $\mathbb{Q}e5$ 28 $\mathbb{Q}d7$ $\mathbb{Q}c2$ 29 $\mathbb{Q}e3$ $\mathbb{Q}a2$

29... $\mathbb{Q}c3$ 30 $\mathbb{Q}c4$ traps the bishop in the middle of the board, leaving only 30... $\mathbb{Q}f6$ 31 $\mathbb{Q}xf6$ 32 $\mathbb{Q}xf7$ $\mathbb{Q}e4$ 33 $\mathbb{Q}xa7$ $\mathbb{Q}xb3$ 34 h4 $\mathbb{Q}b4$ 35 $\mathbb{Q}e5$, etc.

30 $\mathbb{Q}xa7$ $\mathbb{Q}d4$ 31 $\mathbb{Q}f3$ $\mathbb{Q}b2$ 32 b4

White won easily.

Andersson – Gheorghiu

Moscow 1981

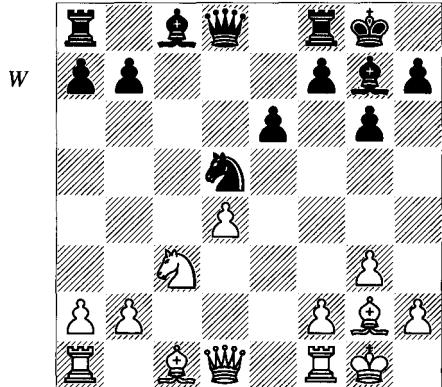
1 c4 c5 2 $\mathbb{Q}c3$ $\mathbb{Q}c6$ 3 g3 g6 4 $\mathbb{Q}g2$ $\mathbb{Q}g7$ 5 e3 e6

For the record, 5... $\mathbb{Q}xc3$ is playable, mainly because White's pawn on e3 gets in his way. If you're interested, compare my comments on 5 d3 e6 6 $\mathbb{Q}xc6$ in the first game of this chapter.

6 $\mathbb{Q}ge2$ $\mathbb{Q}ge7$ 7 0-0 0-0 8 d4 cxd4 9 $\mathbb{Q}xd4$ $\mathbb{Q}xd4$

We saw 9...d5 in the previous game. Theory prefers this knight swap.

10 exd4 d5 11 cxd5 $\mathbb{Q}xd5$ (D)



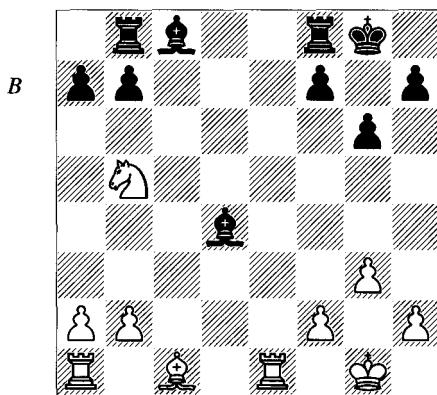
12 $\mathbb{Q}b3$?

Most masters have considered this the best way to play for a win, but it's definitely not the only one.

In Ivanchuk-Kramnik, Amber Rapid, Monte Carlo 1995, Ivanchuk posed a few apparently insignificant positional problems when he played simply 12 $\mathbb{Q}e1$!. It's a tribute to the game of chess that such a reserved move can cause real

trouble! Indeed, White has the kind of position from which Kramnik himself squeezes out wins, although not without small mistakes by the opponent. The game went 12... $\mathbb{Q}b6$! (nothing else seems very good: 12... $\mathbb{Q}e7$ 13 $\mathbb{Q}g5$ h6 14 $\mathbb{Q}f4$! $\mathbb{Q}xd4$ 15 $\mathbb{Q}xd4$ $\mathbb{Q}xd4$ 16 $\mathbb{Q}xh6$ $\mathbb{Q}d8$ 17 $\mathbb{Q}ad1$ is awkward for Black; and 12...h6?! 13 $\mathbb{Q}b3$! is a clear improvement over the main game's position with 12 $\mathbb{Q}b3$) 13 $\mathbb{Q}xd5$ exd5 14 $\mathbb{Q}xd5$ $\mathbb{Q}xd4$ 15 $\mathbb{Q}e3$ $\mathbb{Q}xe3$ 16 $\mathbb{Q}xe3$, and Black had reached equality, although he fell into an inferior position after inaccuracies.

Nevertheless, White has every reason to feel optimistic if, instead of Ivanchuk's 13 $\mathbb{Q}xd5$, he continues 13 $\mathbb{Q}xd5$!, forcing 13...exd5 14 $\mathbb{Q}xd5$ $\mathbb{Q}xd4$ 15 $\mathbb{Q}xd4$ $\mathbb{Q}xd4$ 16 $\mathbb{Q}c7$ $\mathbb{Q}b8$ 17 $\mathbb{Q}b5$ (D).



All forced. Black suffers under the sort of irritating defensive task that characterizes this line. He's probably not objectively lost, yet has to play very accurately just to stay afloat. Here's some analysis: 17... $\mathbb{Q}b6$! (a cute merry-go-round line results from 17... $\mathbb{Q}g7$ 18 $\mathbb{Q}f4$ $\mathbb{Q}a8$ 19 $\mathbb{Q}c7$ $\mathbb{Q}b8$ 20 $\mathbb{Q}e8$! $\mathbb{Q}a8$ 21 $\mathbb{Q}d6$! $\mathbb{Q}xb2$ 22 $\mathbb{Q}xf8$ $\mathbb{Q}xa1$ 23 $\mathbb{Q}b4$! $\mathbb{Q}f5$ 24 $\mathbb{Q}c7$ $\mathbb{Q}c8$ 25 $\mathbb{Q}d5$ followed by $\mathbb{Q}xa1$ or $\mathbb{Q}e7+$) 18 $\mathbb{Q}h6$ $\mathbb{Q}d8$ 19 $\mathbb{Q}g5$! f6! (the point of Black's tricky defence begun by 17... $\mathbb{Q}b6$) 20 $\mathbb{Q}xf6$ (20 $\mathbb{Q}f4$ $\mathbb{Q}a8$ 21 $\mathbb{Q}c7$ is also noteworthy, as in Petrosian-Geller, USSR Team Ch, Moscow 1966) 20... $\mathbb{Q}d2$ 21 $\mathbb{Q}e8+$ $\mathbb{Q}f7$ 22 $\mathbb{Q}c3$! $\mathbb{Q}xf2+$ (22... $\mathbb{Q}xf2$? 23 $\mathbb{Q}d6#$) 23 $\mathbb{Q}g2$ $\mathbb{Q}xe8$ 24 $\mathbb{Q}xd2$ $\mathbb{Q}b6$! (just in time) 25 $\mathbb{Q}f4$ (or 25 $\mathbb{Q}e1+\mathbb{Q}d7$ 26 a4!?) 25... $\mathbb{Q}a8$ 26 $\mathbb{Q}e1+\mathbb{Q}d7$ 27 b4!? and Black still has problems to solve. Whatever else, there's no question as to White's ability to stir up chances in this 'drawing line'.

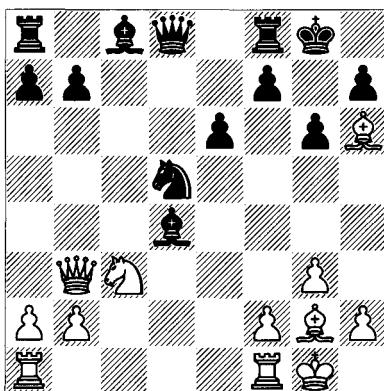
12...Qxd4!?

This should lead to an even game, but the passive-looking retreat 12...Qe7! provides an easier route, for the simple reason that the d-pawn is attacked, and ...Qf5 or ...Qc6 will reinforce that attack. White's most obvious response is 13 Qd1 (13 Kg5!? h6! 14 Qxe7 Qxe7 15 d5 could be tried, if only to keep things alive), but after 13...Qc6 (or 13...Qf5) 14 Qe3 (14 d5 Qd4) 14...Qxd4 15 Qxd4 Qxd4 16 Qe2 e5 17 Qxd4 exd4, White's edge is in danger of vanishing completely: 18 Qb4 (18 Qc4 Qe6! is easier for Black) 18...a5! 19 Qxd4 Qxd4 20 Qxd4 Qe6 21 b3 Qab8 with a nearly level game.

13 Qxd5

The move that drew broad attention to 12 Qb3 was 13 Qh6!?(D).

B



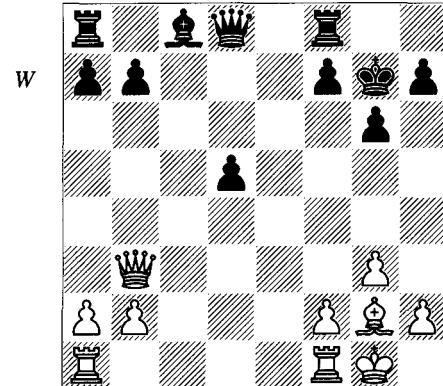
After 13...Qe8?, 14 Qad1 is terrifically strong: 14...Qxc3 (14...Qb6?? allows the fork 15 Qa4) 15 bxc3 Qb6 16 Qc4 Qc6 17 Qe2!, and White wins! There is no defence to both Qe5 and c4, although in Cardoso-Torre, Manila 1973 Black continued 17...b5, and White missed 18 Qe5 f6 19 Qxf6 Qxf6 20 Qxc6, winning.

But I think that 13...Qxc3! spoils White's fun; for example, 14 Qxf8 (14 bxc3 Qg7 and White will have to work for full compensation) 14...Qe2+ 15 Qh1 Qxf8 16 Qae1 Qxg3+ 17 fxg3 Qg7. Black's two pawns for the exchange, along with his bishop-pair, should at least make up for White's temporary activity.

13...exd5 14 Qh6 Qg7

Not 14...Qe8? due to 15 Qad1 with the idea 15...Qb6?? 16 Qa4.

15 Qxg7 Qxg7 (D)



16 Qxd5

16 Qfd1! is probably best, with the idea 16...Qb6 17 Qxb6 axb6 18 Qxd5! Qe6 19 Qb5 Qxa2 20 Qxb6 Qe6 21 Qxa8 Qxa8 22 h4. However, Black is better off playing 16...d4, when 17 Qa4 a5! 18 Qxd4 Qb6! 19 b3 Qe6 20 Qad1 should be drawn with care on Black's part, assuming that he stays away from 20...Qad8? 21 Qxb7!.

16...a5! 17 Qac1 a4 18 Qc3+ Qf6 19 Qxf6+ Qxf6 20 Qc7 Qa5! 21 Qd1 Qb5 22 b3 axb3 23 Qxb3 Qe6! 24 Qxe6 Qxe6 25 Qd3 Qb2 26 a3

Black has achieved full equality. Gheorghiu suggests 26...Qf6, but the game's 26...h5 27 Qf3 would also be level after 27...f5 28 Qe3+ Qf6 29 Qce7 Qb6.

Black faces surprising pitfalls in this variation. Objectively, 12 Qe1 offers White the best opportunity to emerge with the advantage.

Kosten – Bujisho

French Team Ch, Belfort 2004

1 c4 c5 2 Qc3 Qc6 3 g3 g6 4 Qg2 Qg7 5 e3 Qf6

Black chooses to unbalance the play. He develops quickly and doesn't mind if White gets d4 in.

6 Qge2 d6 7 0-0 0-0 8 d4 (D)

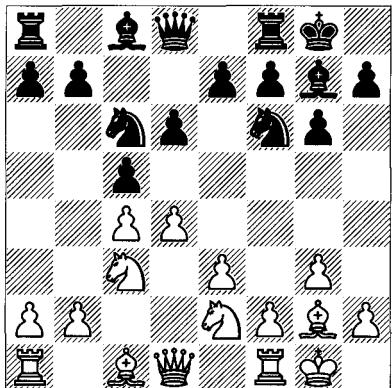
Sometimes 8 b3 is played first, but if Black wants to, he can play 8...Qf5; for example, 9 d3 Qd7 10 Qb2 Qh3, when 11 Qxh3 Qxh3 12 Qf4 Qd7 13 Qe2 e6 covers d5 and gives Black approximate equality.

8...Qf7

8...Qf5 is another legitimate move.

9 b3 Qb8 10 Qb2 a6

B



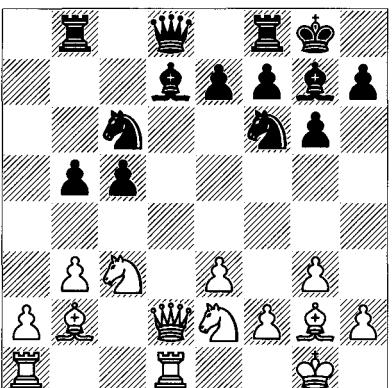
Although this is played frequently and is very logical, Black comes up a tempo short in executing his plan. 10... $\mathbb{W}a5$ is better.

11 $\mathbb{W}d2$ b5?! 12 cxb5?

White can also get an advantage by 12 dxc5! dxc5 (12...bxc4 loses material following 13 cxd6 cxb3 14 axb3) 13 $\mathbb{R}ad1$! (for 13 $\mathbb{R}fd1$ $\mathbb{W}c8$ 14 cxb5 axb5 see the next note) 13... $\mathbb{W}b6$ (13... $\mathbb{W}c8$ 14 $\mathbb{Q}xb5!$ axb5 15 cxb5 $\mathbb{R}xb5$ 16 $\mathbb{Q}xf6$ $\mathbb{Q}xf6$ 17 $\mathbb{W}xd7$; this doesn't work with White's king's rook on d1) 14 $\mathbb{Q}f4$ $\mathbb{R}fd8$ 15 $\mathbb{Q}cd5$ $\mathbb{Q}xd5$ 16 $\mathbb{Q}xd5$ $\mathbb{W}a7$ 17 $\mathbb{Q}xg7$ $\mathbb{Q}xg7$ 18 $\mathbb{W}c3+$ followed by $\mathbb{R}d2$ with the upper hand.

12...axb5 13 dxc5 dxc5 14 $\mathbb{R}fd1$ (D)

B



This position mirrors a famous game Petroian-Fischer below with reversed colours (stemming from 5 $\mathbb{Q}f3$ e6); here White has an extra tempo. Black's hanging pawns are weak, especially the one on c5 facing White's open file.

14... $\mathbb{W}b6$?

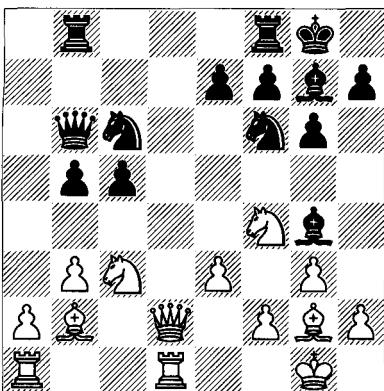
14... $\mathbb{W}c8$ improves, but White should still come out on top after 15 $\mathbb{Q}d5$!. Then Black's

defensive task is very difficult; for example, 15... $\mathbb{Q}xd5$? 16 $\mathbb{Q}xg7$ $\mathbb{Q}xg7$ 17 $\mathbb{W}xd5$ $\mathbb{Q}g4$ 18 $\mathbb{W}xc5$ $\mathbb{Q}xe2$ 19 $\mathbb{R}e1$ and White wins a pawn. Better but still in White's favour is 15... $\mathbb{Q}e6$ 16 $\mathbb{Q}xf6$ + $\mathbb{Q}xf6$ 17 $\mathbb{Q}xf6$ exf6 18 $\mathbb{Q}c3$. The game Sarno-Belotti, Mantova 1996 continued 15... $\mathbb{Q}g4$, but now 16 $\mathbb{R}ac1$! $\mathbb{Q}xd5$ 17 $\mathbb{Q}xg7$ $\mathbb{R}d8$! 18 $\mathbb{Q}b2$! would have been strong, with the idea 18... $\mathbb{Q}f4$ 19 $\mathbb{Q}xf4$!.

15 $\mathbb{Q}f4$ $\mathbb{Q}g4$ (D)

The tactics all work for White in the line 15... $\mathbb{R}fd8$!? 16 $\mathbb{Q}cd5$! $\mathbb{W}a6$ 17 $\mathbb{Q}xf6$ exf6 18 $\mathbb{W}c3$! $\mathbb{Q}g4$ 19 $\mathbb{W}xc5$! $\mathbb{Q}xd1$ 20 $\mathbb{W}xc6$! $\mathbb{W}xc6$ 21 $\mathbb{Q}e7+$ $\mathbb{Q}f8$ 22 $\mathbb{Q}xc6$.

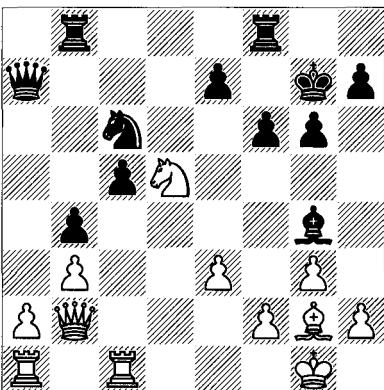
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16 $\mathbb{Q}cd5$ $\mathbb{Q}xd5$ 17 $\mathbb{Q}xd5$ $\mathbb{W}a7$ 18 $\mathbb{Q}xg7$ $\mathbb{Q}xg7$ 19 $\mathbb{R}dc1$!

Threatening 20 $\mathbb{W}c3+$ and 21 $\mathbb{W}xc5$.
19... $b4$ 20 $\mathbb{W}b2+$ f6 (D)

W



Notice how White not only attacks the backward pawn on c5, but controls both long diagonals.

21 ♜xf6!?

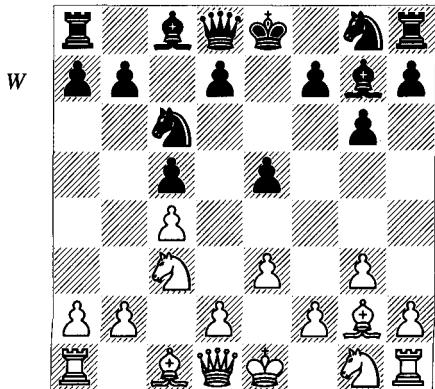
Cashing in, but White can also play for a killing break by a3 if he stops for 21 h3!. Then 21...♜d7 22 a3! leaves Black's queen nowhere to go, and the retreat 21...♝c8 is also dismal following 22 a3 bxa3 23 ♜xa3 ♜d7 24 ♜xc5. That leaves 21...♝e6, when the simplest continuation is 22 ♜f4! ♜d7 (22...♝d8 23 ♜d1!) 23 ♜xc6 ♜xc6 24 ♜e6+, etc.

21...exf6 22 ♜xc6 ♜bc8 23 ♜g2

White has some difficulties to face, but he should eventually convert this position to a win. As a whole, the opening appears to be clearly in White's favour.

Lein – Polugaevsky
USSR Ch, Tbilisi 1966/7

1 c4 c5 2 ♜c3 g6 3 g3 ♜g7 4 ♜g2 ♜c6 5 e3 e5 (D)



Black sets up the Botvinnik structure with ...e5 and ...d6, and will use ...♝ge7 and ...0-0 to complete his development. Then he has potential breaks with ...b5 and ...d5, and the move ...f5 may become relevant. We discussed these ideas and associated themes in the Closed English chapter where White played 5 e4, and they will appear again when White stares down the Symmetrical by means of e4.

6 ♜ge2 d6

The alternative move-order is 6...♝ge7 7 0-0 0-0, which intends to counter White's set-up 8 a3 a6 9 ♜b1!? with 9...b5!, as in Godfrey-Barbero, Thessaloniki Olympiad 1988: 10 b4?! (but 10 cxb5 axb5 11 ♜xb5 d5! is very promising for Black, as is 10 ♜xb5 axb5 11 cxb5 ♜b8!

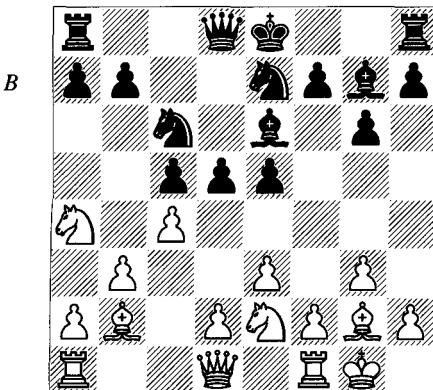
12 bxc6 dxc6 13 ♜a4 ♜b6; probably 10 d3! is best) 10...cxb4 11 axb4 (or 11 cxb5 axb5 12 axb4 d5!) 11...bxc4 12 ♜d5 ♜b8. Black stands clearly better.

7 b3

White aims for a solid build-up, which can have a little more bite than it may at first appear. He can also play more aggressively to get b4 in: 7 0-0 ♜ge7 8 a3 0-0 9 d3. Black stands perfectly well, however, and a normal game should result; for example, 9...♜b8 10 ♜b1 a5 (or 10...a6 11 b4 cxb4 12 axb4 b5) 11 ♜d2 ♜e6. Black has levelled the play because 12...d5 is in the air, and 12 ♜d5 b5 13 cxb5 ♜xb5 14 ♜ec3 ♜b8 results in a situation where Black's open b-file and improved control of the centre compensate for his weak a-pawn.

7...♝ge7 8 0-0

These first moves can be played in many orders, but note that after 8 ♜b2?! ♜e6, 9 ♜d5?! ♜xd5 10 cxd5 ♜b4 is not desirable for White. He should consider whether he wants to play 9 0-0?!, allowing 9...d5. This is unexplored territory. Then 10 ♜a4?!(D) is inviting.



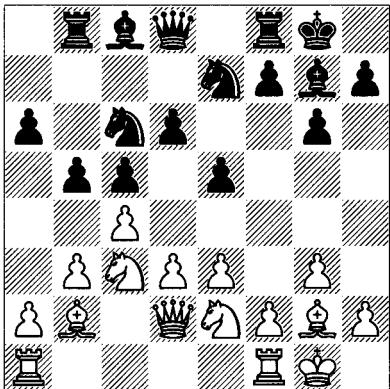
After 10...♜d6, 11 ♜f4! wins the bishop-pair, but 11...b6 (or more precisely, 10...b6! 11 ♜f4! ♜d7!) 12 ♜xe6 ♜xe6 13 cxd5 ♜xd5 is hard to assess.

8...0-0

Now 8...♜e6 9 ♜d5 ♜xd5 10 cxd5 ♜b4 11 ♜c3 ♜d3 12 ♜a3?! can become bizarre after 12...♜a5 13 ♜b1! ♜xa3 (13...0-0 14 ♜xc5! ♜xc5 15 b4) 14 ♜b5! ♜b4 15 ♜xd6+ ♜d7 16 a3 ♜g4 17 ♜xb7 ♜ab8 18 ♜xd3 ♜xb7 19 d6!. There's more excitement in this variation than you might think!

9 ♜b2 ♜b8 10 d3 a6 11 ♜d2 b5 (D)

W



Quite a few games have arrived at this position. White's intentions are to develop and then play a combination of ♜d5, followed by d4 and/or f4 as the opportunity presents itself. Black, having more space, would ideally like to achieve ...d5 or be able to lure White's knight on d5 and exchange it to his advantage.

12 ♜ad1

12 ♜fd1 might be better, keeping the a-pawn under protection.

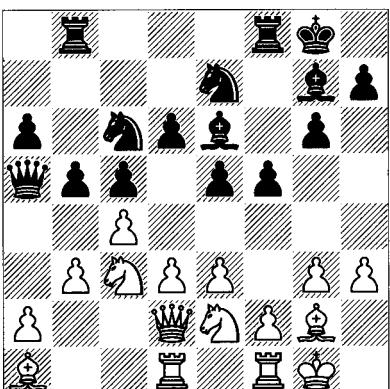
12...♛a5 13 h3 ♜e6 14 ♜a1!?

White needs to time this move better.

14...f5?! (D)

Often Black should wait on this move if White can prevent ...f4. Apart from 14...♜fd8, Black has the active 14...♜b4!, intending ...d5 and exploiting White's inability to expel the knight by a3. Trying to backtrack by 15 ♜b2 would be too late after 15...bxc4! 16 dxc4 (16 bxc4? ♜xd3) 16...♜fd8 17 ♜c1 d5 and Black stands well.

W



15 f4 ♛h8 16 ♜c1

White's play is logical, but here 16 ♜d5! was more accurate. I'll skip over the details. In the game, Black plays inaccurately and gives White the upper hand:

16...♜b4 17 ♜d2 ♜g8 18 ♛h2 ♜bd8 19 ♜fd1 h6 20 a3 ♜bc6 21 ♜d5! ♜xd5?! 22 cxd5

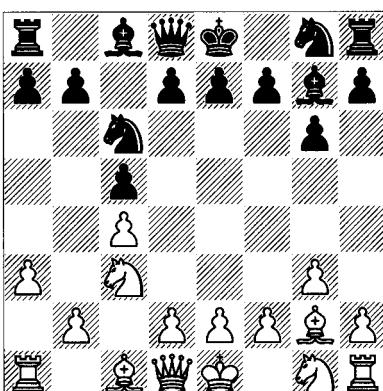
Now instead of 22...♜b8? 23 fxe5 dxe5 24 ♜xc5! ♜c8 25 ♜d6 ♜cd8 26 ♜xg6, which is complicated but ultimately winning for White, Black should have settled for 22...♜e7 23 fxe5 dxe5 24 e4, leaving his opponent with a small advantage.

This examination of 5 e3 should give you an insight into how apparently harmless moves can lead to mixed outcomes in the Symmetrical English Opening. Sometimes the play peters out to a dull equality; that won't happen, however, unless both sides cooperate. In this last game with 5...e5 (and in the notes), you find the lack of direct engagement between opposing forces in the early part of the game; this expresses itself in the Pure Symmetrical English more so than in any other variation. Again, that doesn't preclude an imbalanced struggle if the players are so inclined.

Flank Attack with 5 a3

1 c4 c5 2 ♜c3 ♜c6 3 g3 g6 4 ♜g2 ♜g7 5 a3!?
(D)

B



Oddly enough, the little nudge is actually one of the most popular and effective continuations in the position. That may seem absurd, but

when you consider that White's strategy in the Pure Symmetrical lines almost always involves b4, it makes sense to play a move that you're going to include in your plans anyway. On top of that, there are several 'accidental' benefits to 5 a3. For instance, both 5...e5 and 5...e6, two mainstay defences versus almost any other of White's 5th moves, offer White the immediate chance to enter into surprisingly active gambit lines which are much more lively than, say, 5 e3 e6 or 5 e3 e5. Speaking more generally, we can say that any of White's other 5th moves such as 5 e3, 5 ♜f3 and 5 e4 tip his hand, so that Black can react accordingly. The move 5 a3 tries to reverse the situation: now it's Black who must respond. If you examine modern chess openings, you will find many cases where these 'little waiting moves' (especially a3 and ...a6) have become increasingly popular.

How this works out can only be shown by examples:

Kasparov – Karpov

World Ch match (game 8), Seville 1987

1 c4 c5 2 ♜c3 ♜c6 3 g3 g6 4 ♜g2 ♜g7 5 a3 e5

In fact, this game featured a completely different move-order (1 c4 e5 2 ♜c3 d6 3 g3 c5 4 ♜g2 ♜c6 5 a3 g6 6 b4 ♜g7), but it soon merged with the standard one that I've presented here.

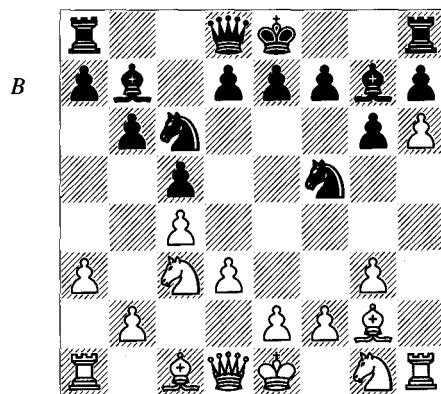
I can't cover all the details behind 5 a3, but we'll address 5...e6 in the next game, along with a brief look at 5...a6. Here are a few lines whose ideas cross over into other variations:

a) 5...a5 stops b4, but grants White's knight access to b5. This is an important distinction. Then 6 ♜f3 is an improved version of 5 ♜f3 below. You should compare the lines directly, but a few ideas are that after 6...e6, the pawn sacrifice 7 d4! is stronger than after 5 ♜f3 e6, and that 6...♜f6 7 d4 cxd4 8 ♜xd4 is much improved for White over the main line below with 5 ♜f3 ♜f6 because he has access to b5 and Black lacks his usual counterplay via ...a6.

b) 5...d6 is a perfectly good move that opens up a large number of transpositional possibilities; for example, 6 ♜b1 a5 7 ♜f3 e5 8 0-0 ♜ge7 will enter into 5 ♜f3 e5 territory, and an early e4 will be related to 5 e4 below.

An independent line is 6 e3!?, and if 6...e5, then 7 b4, which is arguably more fun than 5 e3 e5. Apart from other 6th moves, Black could answer 6 e3 with 6...♜xc3!?, for which compare 5 d3 e6 6 ♜xc6!? at the beginning of this chapter. Having the move a3 in does not significantly benefit White, if it does so at all (perhaps there are a couple of lines in which bringing a rook via ♜a2 to d2 or e2 or f2 might help, but that's reaching). In most lines, Black should play ...f5 in order to discourage e4.

c) A difficulty with the move ...♜h6 in many English positions is that White's h-pawn advance can't be blocked, and that applies here: 5...♜h6 6 h4! ♜f5 (the usual ...h5 or ...h6 isn't at Black's disposal) 7 h5 b6 8 d3 ♜b7 9 h6! (D).



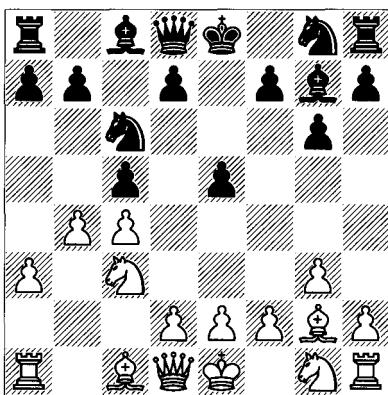
Out of a calm beginning we are about to get a torrent of activity. Hodgson-Arkell, Isle of Man 1996 continued 9...♜f8 (Hodgson analyses 9...♜e5 10 g4! ♜fd4 11 f4 ♜c7 12 e3 ♜e6 13 ♜d5 to a large advantage; still more convincing here is 13 g5) 10 b4!? (or 10 ♜f4) 10...♝c8 11 ♜e4!? cxb4 12 axb4 ♜xb4 13 ♜b2 f6?! (the best defence was 13...♝g8! 14 ♜d2! a5 with the idea 15 g4 d5!) 14 g4! ♜xh6 15 g5 (White just keeps pounding away!) 15...♜g8 (15...♜g4 16 ♜h4!), and here White should plunge into the line 16 ♜d2! a5 17 ♜f3! ♜xe4 18 dxe4, offering yet another pawn: 18...♜xc4 19 ♜c1 ♜f7 20 e5!, when the attack is crashing through.

d) 5...b6 furnishes a good answer to 5 a3, because it goes about the business of challenging White's bishop on g2 while shoring up c5. M.Gurevich-Anand, Bastia (rapid) 2006 went 6 b4 (6 ♜b1 ♜b7 7 b4 cxb4 8 axb4 ♜c8! prepares ...♜e5 or ...♜d4 and indirectly attacks c4; for

example, 9 $\mathbb{Q}d5!$? $\mathbb{Q}d4!$; on the other hand, 6 d3 $\mathbb{Q}b7$ 7 e4 would keep things double-edged) 6... $\mathbb{Q}b7$ 7 bxc5 (7 $\mathbb{Q}b2$ $\mathbb{W}c8$; 7 b5 $\mathbb{Q}a5$ 8 $\mathbb{Q}xb7$ $\mathbb{Q}xb7$ 9 $\mathbb{Q}b2$ looks about equal; White will have difficulty preventing ...d5) 7...bxc5 8 $\mathbb{Q}b1$ $\mathbb{W}c8$!? (or 8... $\mathbb{B}b8$, intending 9 $\mathbb{Q}a4$ $\mathbb{Q}a5$) 9 $\mathbb{Q}e4$! $\mathbb{Q}d8$! 10 $\mathbb{Q}f3$, and apart from 10... $\mathbb{Q}c6$?, 10... $\mathbb{B}b8$ is still a solid move. In any case, the game is just beginning. Thus, 5...b6 looks like a good solution to 5 a3, and one which will very likely lead to a middlegame full of content.

6 b4! (D)

B



This sacrifice characterizes many lines of the Symmetrical English. The idea is to break down Black's grip on the centre by inducing ...cxb4. Failing that, White gains space and retains the options of bxc5 and b5 for a while.

6...d6

Black really shouldn't accept the pawn: 6...cxb4 7 axb4 $\mathbb{Q}xb4$? 8 $\mathbb{Q}a3$ $\mathbb{Q}f8$ (8... $\mathbb{Q}c6$ 9 $\mathbb{Q}b5$ $\mathbb{Q}f8$ 10 $\mathbb{Q}d6$! $\mathbb{Q}xd6$ 11 $\mathbb{Q}xd6+$ $\mathbb{Q}f8$ 12 $\mathbb{Q}d5$ $\mathbb{Q}h6$ 13 c5 with a huge bind) 9 $\mathbb{W}a4$. Then Black has dark-square weaknesses and no development to speak of: 9...a5 (9... $\mathbb{Q}c6$ 10 $\mathbb{Q}b5$ $\mathbb{Q}xa3$ 11 $\mathbb{W}xa3$) 10 $\mathbb{Q}f3$ f6 11 0-0 $\mathbb{Q}h6$ 12 d4! and Black's position is collapsing.

With the text-move, we have now transposed into the actual course of the Kasparov-Karpov game.

7 $\mathbb{B}b1$

7 bxc5 dxc5 8 $\mathbb{Q}xc6$!?

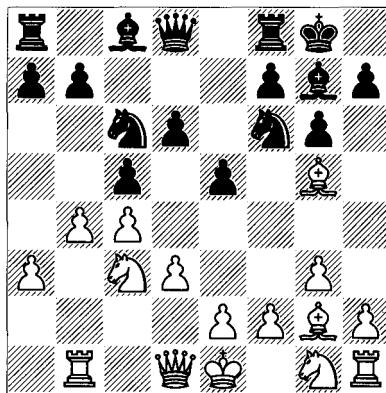
bxc6 9 $\mathbb{B}b1$ has ideas of d3, $\mathbb{Q}f3$ and $\mathbb{Q}e3$, etc., attacking the weak c-pawns. Black would need to activate his bishops and work on White's abandoned light squares by, for example, 9... $\mathbb{Q}f6$ 10 d3 0-0 11 $\mathbb{Q}f3$ $\mathbb{W}e7$! (intending ...e4) 12 $\mathbb{Q}g5$ $\mathbb{Q}h3$ 13

$\mathbb{Q}e4$ $\mathbb{B}ab8$! with a complex, challenging game ahead.

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

It's simplistic to say that ... $\mathbb{Q}f6$ *never* goes with a ...c5/...d6/...e5 pawn-structure, but in this case 7... $\mathbb{Q}f6$?! allows White to exchange his queen's bishop for a knight after 8 d3 0-0 9 $\mathbb{Q}g5$! (D).

B



To appreciate this, you should compare the main lines, which we shall see in a later section under 5 $\mathbb{Q}f3$ e5. There Black has a knight on e7 and can answer $\mathbb{Q}g5$ with ...f6, to avoid an exchange on e7. With the knight on f6, Kosten-Pira, Montpellier 1996 continued 9...h6 10 $\mathbb{Q}xf6$ $\mathbb{Q}xf6$ 11 $\mathbb{Q}f3$ b6 12 $\mathbb{Q}d2$! cxb4 13 axb4 $\mathbb{Q}b7$ 14 0-0 $\mathbb{W}d7$ 15 $\mathbb{W}a4$! $\mathbb{W}fe8$ 16 $\mathbb{Q}d5$ with total control of the light squares. Black's bad bishop is no match for a knight here. This is a particularly instructive example.

8 e3!?

Alternatively, White can work with the formation 8 d3 0-0 9 $\mathbb{Q}f3$ (9 e3 would transpose to our main game).

8...0-0 9 $\mathbb{Q}d3$

We've arrived at a scene from the 5 e3 line, except that there Black prevented b4 by playing ...a5. The trade-off favours White, whose position is already somewhat preferable.

9... $\mathbb{B}b8$ 10 $\mathbb{Q}ge2$ $\mathbb{Q}e6$ 11 b5 $\mathbb{Q}a5$ 12 $\mathbb{Q}d2$ b6

The logical 12...d5 leads to the forcing line 13 cxd5 $\mathbb{Q}xd5$ 14 $\mathbb{Q}xd5$ $\mathbb{Q}xd5$ 15 $\mathbb{Q}xd5$ $\mathbb{W}xd5$ 16 0-0, and now 16... $\mathbb{W}d8$ looks best, with some advantage to White because of the out-of-play knight on a5, rather than 16...b6?! 17 $\mathbb{Q}xa5$! bxa5 18 $\mathbb{Q}c3$, when the knight is clearly better

than Black's bishop, which is stuck behind its own pawns.

13 0-0 ♜b7

Now Black is ready for ...d5. Rather than place his knight on d5, White decides to make the pawn-structure symmetrical and count upon his space. This is hardly inspiring, yet forces Black to find a few good ideas.

14 e4? ♜h8

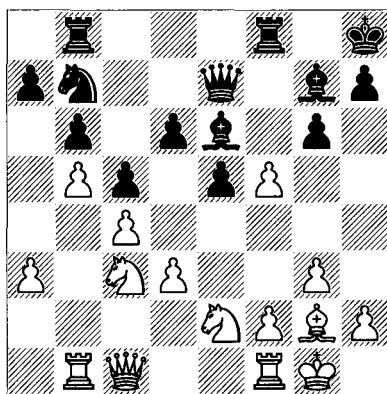
14...h6! was suggested, feinting on the king-side and preventing White's ♜g5. Alternatively, 14...♝d7 would prepare to bring the b7-knight back into the game via d8.

15 ♜c1 f5?!

Perhaps a slight misjudgement by Black. Again, 15...♝d7 keeps ...f6 in reserve and challenges White to make progress.

16 ♜g5 ♜e8 17 ♜xe7! ♜xe7 18 exf5 (D)

B



18...♜xf5!

This gives White control of e4 in addition to d5, but Black is staying active and trying to keep away from the standard structure that we have talked about after 18...gxf5 19 ♜d5 (19 f4 e4! would be interesting, freeing the bishops) 19...♝f7 (maybe 19...♜xd5!? 20 ♜xd5 ♜d8 isn't so bad) 20 f4, when Black's bishops are restricted.

19 ♜d5 ♜d7 20 ♜d2 ♜a5?!

It's strange that Black doesn't want to recenteralize and perhaps exchange this piece. Thus 20...♜d8! 21 a4 ♜f7 22 a5 ♜h6 was suggested, with the idea of ...♜g5, hitting the light squares. Here 21...♜e6 is also acceptable.

21 ♜ec3 ♜be8 22 ♜e4

White has developed an advantage, and eventually broke through on the kingside.

M. Domingo – Alekseev

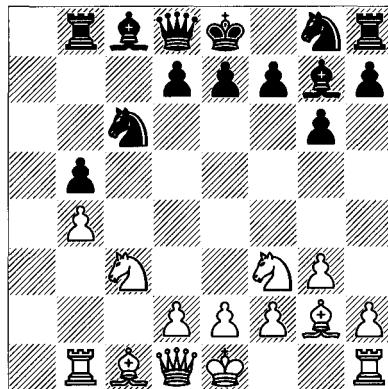
Berlin 2006

1 c4 c5 2 g3 g6 3 ♜g2 ♜g7 4 ♜c3 ♜c6 5 a3 e6

This simple move is probably the most important response to 5 a3. Black prepares ...♜ge7 and ...d5.

I'm not going to go too deeply into 5...a6, which has loads of theory behind it, except to point to what I think are the main lines: 6 ♜b1 ♜b8 7 b4 (7 ♜a4 was long ago solved by 7...♜d4! with the idea ...b5, and the gambit 7...d6! gives fair compensation) 7...cx b4 8 ax b4 b5 9 cx b5 (9 c5?! a5 is already awkward for White) 9...ax b5 10 ♜f3 (D) (10 ♜h3 e5! cuts off the knight from f4).

B



Quite a bit of recent analysis applies to this position. Here are some guideposts:

a) 10...e5 is an important line, when the analysis is only starting after 11 d4!? exd4 12 ♜d5 ♜f6 13 ♜g5 h6 14 ♜xf6+ ♜xf6 15 ♜f4 d6 16 ♜xh6 ♜f5 17 ♜c1 ♜xb4 18 ♜xd4 ♜d3+ 19 exd3 ♜xd4, which is absolutely unclear. Of course, there are numerous alternatives along the way, including 14 ♜xf6.

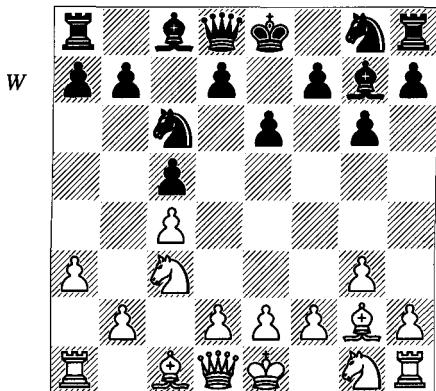
b) Not surprisingly, 10...♜f6 is also playable. Time put into studying these lines will pay off directly in practice.

c) 10...d5 11 d4 e6 (imitation by 11...♜f4 is also adequate after 12 ♜f4 ♜b6, but it's complicated) 12 e4? (12 ♜f4 is just as important) 12...dxe4? 13 ♜xe4 ♜f6 14 ♜g5 h6 (or 14...0-0, or 14...♜b7) 15 ♜xf6+ (15 ♜xf6! ♜xf6 16 d5! ♜e5!) 15...♜xf6 16 ♜xf6 ♜xf6 17 0-0 0-0 18 ♜c1 ♜b7 19 d5 ♜e7! 20 ♜xh6

$\mathbb{A}xd5$ with equality, Hickl-Hulak, Pula Zonal 2000.

As I say, that's only a skeleton that you can fill in by research and serious analysis. Sadly, a lot of the play after 5...a6 6 $\mathbb{B}b1$ $\mathbb{B}b8$ depends much more upon specifics than understanding.

We now return to 5...e6 (D):



6 b4!?

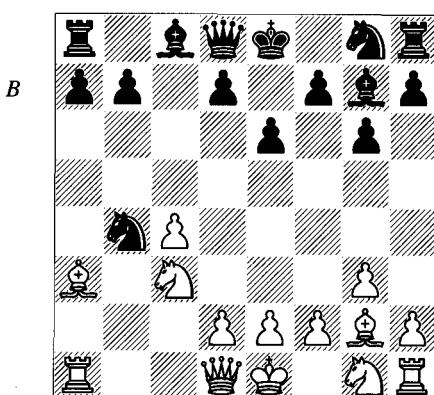
This rich and dynamic pawn sacrifice is the most popular move, in part because 5 a3 doesn't have enough effect on the game otherwise. This is not to say that White can't arrive at a normal game by 6 $\mathbb{B}b1$, when after 6...a5, 7 e4 is a Botvinnik System, while he can also choose 7 $\mathbb{Q}h3$ or 7 h4!?. 6... $\mathbb{Q}ge7$!? can also be tried, when 7 b4 cxb4 8 axb4 d5 looks logical. Black counters a flank attack with a central attack, although that's not always a trustworthy rule. There might follow 9 b5 $\mathbb{Q}a5$ 10 cxd5 exd5 11 $\mathbb{Q}a3$, which is unbalanced in an interesting way; for example, 11...d4 12 $\mathbb{Q}e4$ 0-0 13 $\mathbb{Q}a4$.

6... $\mathbb{Q}xb4$!?

This pseudo-sacrifice actually ends up winning material. If Black grabs the b-pawn directly, we see a type of position that applies to numerous lines of the Symmetrical English: 6...cxb4 7 axb4 $\mathbb{Q}xb4$ 8 $\mathbb{Q}a3$ (D).

Now what?

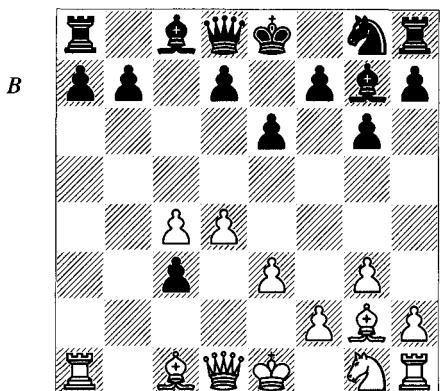
a) If Black simply retreats by 8... $\mathbb{Q}c6$?, White goes all-out on the dark squares by 9 $\mathbb{Q}b5$!, threatening 10 $\mathbb{Q}d6+$ followed by 11 $\mathbb{Q}xb7+$ (winning the queen), or 10 $\mathbb{Q}d6$. Black has to play 9... $\mathbb{Q}f8$, when White's simplest course is to gain a very large lead in active development by 10 $\mathbb{Q}f3$ $\mathbb{Q}xa3$ 11 $\mathbb{Q}xa3$, perhaps piling up on the dark squares next by means of $\mathbb{Q}a1$ and c5;



even h4-h5 is an idea. This sort of thing tends to be disastrous for Black.

b) 8... $\mathbb{Q}f8$ saves the pawn, although any number of moves by White are good enough to compensate for it and then some; for example, 9 $\mathbb{Q}f3$ $\mathbb{Q}f6$ 10 $\mathbb{Q}b3$ a5 11 0-0 $\mathbb{Q}e7$ 12 e4 0-0 13 e5 $\mathbb{Q}h5$ 14 d4.

7 axb4 cxb4 8 d4! bxc3 9 e3 (D)

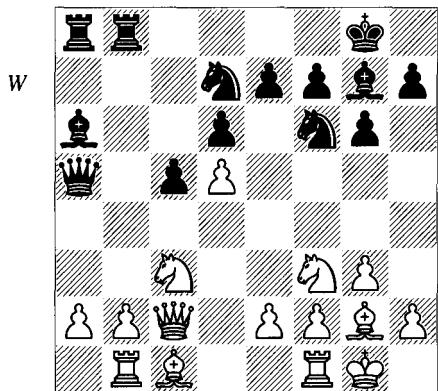


It's worth talking about some general features here. Black is two pawns ahead, soon to be one if the c3-pawn falls. His development matches White's and his weaknesses are fairly well covered.

What is White's compensation? First, he will have a powerful bishop along the a3-f8 diagonal, which either prevents or discourages castling, and he possesses two open queenside files. The configuration of open a- and b-files versus the opponent's a- and b-pawns (with Black's c-pawn gone) is a common one in a breadth of openings. Such a configuration, assuming that White can place rooks on the files,

generally favours him, even when both the a- and b-pawns are passed. A signal case would be the main-line $\mathbb{B}b1$ Exchange Grünfeld, in which pawns have been exchanged on d4 and Black has grabbed White's a-pawn by ... $\mathbb{W}a5+$ and ... $\mathbb{W}xa2$ (see Volume 2).

In the position before us, Black's a- and b-pawns are flanked by White's c-pawn, making them difficult to advance. Another problem faces Black: his c8-bishop and a8-rook can be hard to activate. A similar situation arises, for example, in a typical Benko Gambit (disregarding move-order issues): 1 d4 $\mathbb{Q}f6$ 2 c4 c5 3 d5 b5 4 cxb5 a6 5 bxa6 g6 6 $\mathbb{Q}c3$ $\mathbb{W}xa6$ 7 $\mathbb{Q}f3$ $\mathbb{Q}g7$ 8 g3 d6 9 $\mathbb{Q}g2$ $\mathbb{Q}bd7$ 10 0-0-0-0 11 $\mathbb{W}c2$ $\mathbb{W}a5$ 12 $\mathbb{B}b1$ $\mathbb{W}fb8$ (D).



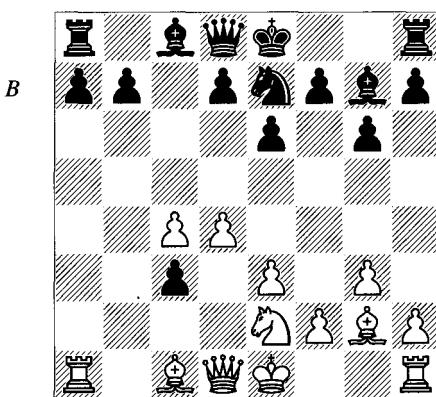
Ignoring concrete variations, Black's piece set-up is designed to prevent White's a- and b-pawns from advancing without creating weaknesses, and to tie White's pieces to the defence of the pawns. The strategy is time-tested, so much so that in the Benko Gambit, Black often has compensation for a whole pawn. The same type of gambit structure arises in several variations of the King's Indian Defence and the English Opening, among others. But our English Opening position in the main game, in which Black has no pawn on d4 (as White does in the Benko Gambit, for example), is not as compelling as the gambiteer might like it to be. For example, the same 'c-pawn versus a- and b-pawn' structure arises in the French Wing Gambit via 1 e4 e6 2 $\mathbb{Q}f3$ d5 3 e5 c5 4 b4 cxb4 5 a3 bxa3 6 $\mathbb{Q}xa3$ and in the Sicilian Wing Gambit via 1 e4 c5 2 b4 cxb4 3 a3 bxa3 4 $\mathbb{Q}xa3$. Neither of these variations is terribly impressive on a theoretical

level. Fortunately for White, the position in our game (after 9 e3, pictured in the diagram) also contains positive features related to White's mobile centre. Perhaps it all adds up to dynamic equality.

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

9... $\mathbb{Q}f6$ 10 $\mathbb{Q}e2$ 0-0 gets the king to safety, but reveals Black's difficulties on the dark squares; for example, 11 $\mathbb{A}a3$ d6 12 $\mathbb{Q}xc3$ a6 (versus $\mathbb{B}b5$) 13 $\mathbb{W}b3$ $\mathbb{B}b8$ 14 0-0 $\mathbb{E}e8$ 15 $\mathbb{B}fb1$ and White's bishops are impressively supported by his other pieces.

10 $\mathbb{Q}e2$ (D)



10...d5

Or 10...0-0-0-0 11 $\mathbb{Q}xc3$, and now we have these instructive examples:

a) The counterthrust 11...d5 is an attempt to reach rather dull equality, not necessarily achievable after 12 cxd5 $\mathbb{Q}xd5$ 13 $\mathbb{Q}xd5$ exd5 14 $\mathbb{W}b3$, winning his pawn back. Now:

a1) Black can play the typical and ambitious 14...a5, to make space for his pieces and get his pawns moving. Then 15 $\mathbb{Q}xd5$?! has tactical problems after 15...a4 followed by 16... $\mathbb{B}a5$ with tempo, and then 17... $\mathbb{Q}e6$!. A better move is 15 $\mathbb{W}xd5$, when White's extra centre pawns are stronger in principle than Black's passed ones. Finally, White can leave things be and develop by 15 0-0!, when Black is slightly at a loss for good moves.

a2) Ptačníkova-S.Kasparov, Olomouc 2003 continued 14... $\mathbb{Q}e6$ 15 $\mathbb{W}xb7$ a5 16 0-0-0 $\mathbb{E}e8$ 17 $\mathbb{Q}a3$ $\mathbb{B}b8$ 18 $\mathbb{W}a7$ $\mathbb{B}a8$ 19 $\mathbb{W}b7$ $\mathbb{B}b8$ 20 $\mathbb{W}a6$ with the idea of retreating to e2. Black's a-pawn is relatively weak, especially as he has to keep tabs on his d-pawn, so White stands somewhat better.

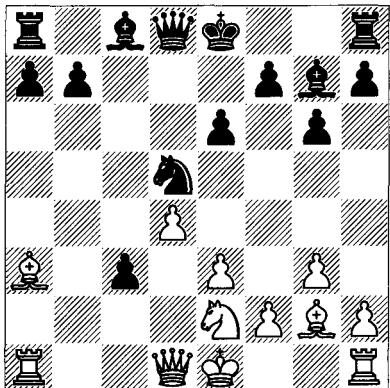
b) 11...d6 (going for the blocking method) 12 $\mathbb{Q}a3$ (the nice thing for White is that he has a modest central preponderance to put on his list of minor advantages; whether this adds up to more than a pawn's worth isn't certain, but his play is free and easy; after 12 0-0 instead, 12...e5! is worth thinking about) 12... $\mathbb{W}c7$ 13 $\mathbb{W}b3$ (Kosten gives 13 $\mathbb{Q}b5$ $\mathbb{W}xc4$ 14 $\mathbb{Q}xd6$ $\mathbb{W}c3+$ 15 $\mathbb{Q}e2$ $\mathbb{Q}d5$ 16 $\mathbb{W}c1!$, when an endgame is promising for White in spite of his pawn minus) 13...a6 14 0-0 $\mathbb{B}b8$ 15 $\mathbb{B}ab1$ e5?, Thiede-Filippov, European Clubs Cup, Rethymnon 2003, and here White can achieve a substantial advantage with 16 $\mathbb{Q}e4!$ in view of 16... $\mathbb{W}d8$ 17 $\mathbb{W}b6!$ $\mathbb{W}xb6$ 18 $\mathbb{B}xb6$, when material begins to drop off.

11 cxd5

11 $\mathbb{Q}xc3?$ has also been tried, and may even be more accurate. The following line is wide open to interpretation: 11...dxc4 12 0-0!? (12 $\mathbb{W}a4+$ $\mathbb{Q}d7$ 13 $\mathbb{W}xc4$ e5?! is one idea) 12...0-0 13 $\mathbb{Q}a3$ $\mathbb{E}e8$ 14 $\mathbb{W}e2$ (14 $\mathbb{Q}b5$ $\mathbb{Q}f5$) 14...e5, when Black seems to be freeing his game, but of course there are many options.

11... $\mathbb{Q}xd5$ 12 $\mathbb{Q}a3$ (D)

B



12... $\mathbb{Q}d7!$

A good move, getting the bishop out before it becomes stuck on the back rank. Two others are critical:

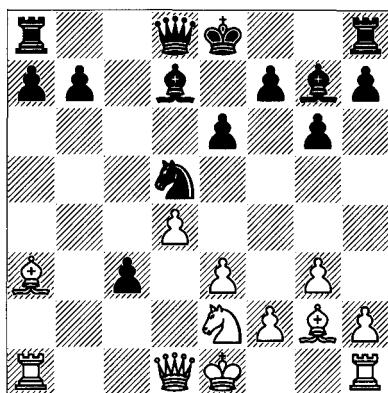
a) Black usually tries to get his king to safety by 12... $\mathbb{Q}f8$ 13 $\mathbb{Q}xf8$ $\mathbb{Q}xf8$ 14 $\mathbb{W}b3!$, when I won't go into the details following 14... $\mathbb{Q}g7$ 15 0-0? (15 $\mathbb{Q}xc3!$ improves) 15... $\mathbb{Q}d7$; suffice it to say that the game is unclear.

b) 12...a5?! is a provocative winning try, intending ...b5-b4. Then both sides have to be

careful; for example, 13 0-0!? (13 $\mathbb{W}d3$ b6! 14 $\mathbb{Q}xc3$ $\mathbb{Q}a6$) 13...b5 14 $\mathbb{Q}c5$ $\mathbb{Q}b7$ (14...b4? 15 $\mathbb{Q}xb4!$) 15 e4 $\mathbb{Q}e7$ 16 $\mathbb{Q}xc3$ b4 17 $\mathbb{Q}b5$ 0-0 18 $\mathbb{Q}d6$ with definite but unclear compensation for the extra (currently blockaded) pawn.

Let's return to 12... $\mathbb{Q}d7!$ (D):

W



13 0-0??!

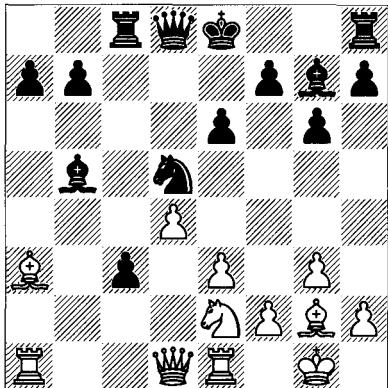
Domingo mentions that 13 $\mathbb{W}b3$, as in Delchev-Tukmakov, Croatian Team Ch, Pula 2001, allows Black to play 13... $\mathbb{W}b6!$, which might well give him the better game. Perhaps White should try to keep the initiative by 13 $\mathbb{Q}xd5$ exd5 14 $\mathbb{Q}xc3$; for example, 14... $\mathbb{Q}c6$ 15 0-0 $\mathbb{W}d7$ (15... $\mathbb{Q}f8$?! 16 e4!) 16 $\mathbb{Q}c1$ (the goal is e4, and if ...dxe4, d5) 16...f5 17 f3 a5 18 e4! dxe4 19 d5 $\mathbb{Q}xc3$ 20 dxc6 with quite a mess!

13... $\mathbb{Q}b5$!?

Thiede-Heinemann, Bundesliga 2002/3 went 13... $\mathbb{Q}c6$ 14 e4 $\mathbb{Q}e7$ 15 $\mathbb{W}b3$?! (better is 15 $\mathbb{Q}c1$ $\mathbb{Q}b5$ 16 $\mathbb{Q}xc3$ 0-0! 17 $\mathbb{W}d2$!), and here 15... $\mathbb{W}d7$! is best, with the idea 16 $\mathbb{Q}fd1$? $\mathbb{Q}a4$.

14 $\mathbb{Q}e1$ $\mathbb{Q}c8$ (D)

W



15 $\mathbb{W}b3?$

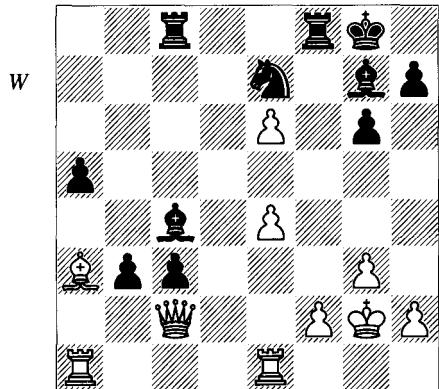
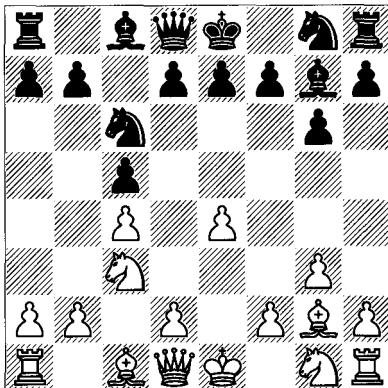
Now the effects of the opening manoeuvre ... $\mathbb{A}d7$ - $b5$ will become apparent. 15 $\mathbb{W}c2$ is better, because e4 and d5 are on the cards. Nevertheless, my overall impression is that Black stands better.

15... $\mathbb{W}d7$ 16 e4 $\mathbb{A}c4$ 17 $\mathbb{W}c2$ $\mathbb{A}e7$ 18 d5

A last try before Black's pawns get moving, but it falls short.

18...0-0 19 $\mathbb{A}h3$ b5 20 $\mathbb{A}f4$ $\mathbb{W}b7$

The absurd-looking 20...a5! seems to win more convincingly due to the pretty line 21 $\mathbb{A}xe6$ b4! 22 $\mathbb{A}g2$ fxe6! 23 $\mathbb{A}xe6+$ $\mathbb{W}xe6$ 24 dxe6 b3 (*D*).



Black's passed pawns and bishop-pair outweigh his material deficit; e.g., 25 $\mathbb{W}b1$ b2 26 $\mathbb{A}xe7$ c2! 27 $\mathbb{W}xc2$ $\mathbb{A}f1+$ 28 $\mathbb{A}xf1$ $\mathbb{W}xc2$.

21 $\mathbb{A}b4$ exd5! 22 exd5 $\mathbb{A}xd5$ 23 $\mathbb{A}xd5$ $\mathbb{A}xd5$ 24 $\mathbb{A}e7$ $\mathbb{A}c7$ 25 $\mathbb{A}ae1$ $\mathbb{A}xe7$ 26 $\mathbb{A}xe7$ $\mathbb{W}c6$ 27 $\mathbb{A}f1$ $\mathbb{A}e8$ 28 $\mathbb{W}e2$ $\mathbb{A}xe7$ 29 $\mathbb{W}xe7$ h5 30 $\mathbb{A}d3$ c2 0-1

The last straw is 31 $\mathbb{A}xc2$ $\mathbb{A}h1!$ 32 f3 (32 $\mathbb{A}f1$ $\mathbb{W}xc2$) 32... $\mathbb{W}xf3$.

Whether or not 5 a3 e6 6 b4 produces a theoretical advantage (which is unlikely), it leads to a fascinating variation that players of both sides are willing to contest.

Symmetrical Botvinnik: 5 e4

Kosten – Bijaoui
Montpellier 2006

1 c4 c5 2 $\mathbb{A}c3$ $\mathbb{A}c6$ 3 g3 g6 4 $\mathbb{A}g2$ $\mathbb{A}g7$ 5 e4
(D)

B

White chooses the Botvinnik System, popular among experienced players. The ideas are very similar to those in the Botvinnik System of the Closed English, which we saw in Chapter 6 (1 c4 e5 2 $\mathbb{A}c3$ $\mathbb{A}c6$ 3 g3 g6 4 $\mathbb{A}g2$ $\mathbb{A}g7$ 5 e4). White cedes an outpost on d4 in order to prevent ...d5 and 'work around' his own weakness by playing f4 or b4, in some cases preparing d4 by d3, $\mathbb{A}ge2$ and $\mathbb{A}e3$.

For all his nefarious intentions, White's set-up is usually considered less dangerous versus the Symmetrical English than the Closed English, and still less so than against certain variations of the King's Indian (see Chapter 12). Primarily (although not entirely), that's because the idea of f4-f5 isn't very scary for Black when his pawn is on e7 and not e5. In the latter case, Black's position is vulnerable to the idea f4-f5 followed by g4-g5 and f6.

5... $\mathbb{A}f6$

I'll concentrate upon this reply for its thematic value and because of its relevance to 5 $\mathbb{A}f3$ e5. But Black has numerous options:

a) 5...e6 isn't really that different from the lines already covered with colours reversed via 5 e3 e5; Black sets up with ... $\mathbb{A}ge7$, ...0-0, ...d6 and possibly ...b6, achieving equality.

b) Alternatively, Black can play for an early ...b5 by some combination of ...a6, ... $\mathbb{A}b8$ and, if needed, ... $\mathbb{A}d4$. Even the immediate 5...a6 6 $\mathbb{A}ge2$ b5!? is played; 6 a4 is a simple way to prevent this, but it's unclear which move, ...a6 or a4, is the more important concession!

c) A particularly irritating line that Black can use is 5...e5 (or 5...d6 6 $\mathbb{A}ge2$ e5), when White has to try to exploit his extra tempo to engineer a properly-timed f4 or b4. That's not so

easy, but fortunately for both sides, not many players of Black will want to limit their prospects in this way.

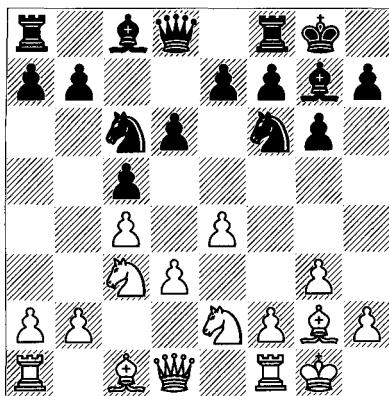
d) Finally, direct expansion on the kingside by 5...d6 6 $\mathbb{Q}ge2$ h5 has little theory behind it, and yet a few master games have seen 7 h3 (7 h4) 7... $\mathbb{Q}e5$! (other moves are 7... $\mathbb{Q}h6$ and 7...a6) 8 d3 $\mathbb{Q}e6$ (the ‘point’: Black doesn’t commit his king’s knight; at the very least this creates a certain asymmetry) 9 a3 $\mathbb{W}d7$, following the stem game Botvinnik-Szabo, European Team Ch, Oberhausen 1961, which went 10 $\mathbb{B}b1$ $\mathbb{B}c8$! 11 b4 b6. White has only a slight edge, if that.

6 $\mathbb{Q}ge2$ 0-0 7 0-0 d6

In the next game, Black plays 7... $\mathbb{Q}e8$. I’ll be discussing other move-orders there, and in particular 6...d6 (delaying ...0-0), which has its own special advantages.

8 d3 (D)

B



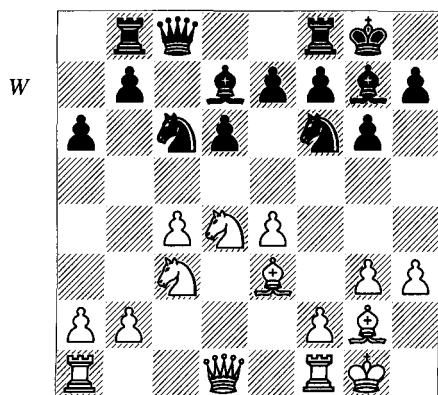
8...a6

This flexible move gives away Black’s intentions to play ...b5, but also ensures that White’s $\mathbb{Q}b5$ won’t be an issue. Black’s most famous strategy involves the expedition ... $\mathbb{Q}e8$ -c7-e6, which we shall discuss in the next game. There are two other worthwhile tries:

a) An oddly neglected move is 8... $\mathbb{Q}g4$. Black emulates White’s strategy in the position stemming from 5 $\mathbb{Q}f3$ e5. If 9 h3, 9... $\mathbb{Q}xe2$ looks good. In the reversed variation, when White plays $\mathbb{Q}g5$, Black avoids the exchange by ...f6, which in this case would translate into 9 f3, when Black can reply 9... $\mathbb{Q}d7$, or the more interesting 9... $\mathbb{Q}e6$! (versus d4) 10 b3 $\mathbb{Q}d7$ 11 $\mathbb{Q}e3$ $\mathbb{Q}d4$ 12 $\mathbb{B}c1$ $\mathbb{W}a5$ and Black hasn’t any worries, since he threatens to win a pawn by

... $\mathbb{Q}xe2+$, and 13 $\mathbb{B}f2$ is well met by 13... $\mathbb{Q}e5$!, with both the ideas ... $\mathbb{Q}xe2+$ and ... $\mathbb{Q}ec6$ with total control over d4.

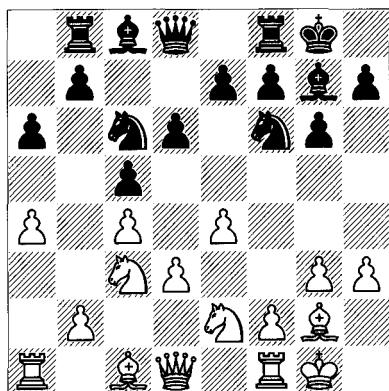
b) 8... $\mathbb{Q}d7$ has intentions similar to 8...a6 and will sometimes transpose to the game. But White should be warned about the line 9 h3 $\mathbb{B}b8$ 10 $\mathbb{Q}e3$ a6, which sets a trap that many players have fallen into: 11 d4?! (the thematic move 11 a4! stops ...b5, when Black may want to play 11... $\mathbb{W}a5$) 11...cx d4 12 $\mathbb{Q}xd4$ $\mathbb{W}c8$! (D).



Attacking the pawn on h3 and, indirectly, the one on c4. A possible line is 13 $\mathbb{Q}a4$!? (13 $\mathbb{Q}d5$ might be answered by the risky-looking 13... $\mathbb{Q}xh3$!; for example, 14 $\mathbb{Q}b6$ $\mathbb{W}c7$ 15 $\mathbb{Q}xh3$ $\mathbb{W}xb6$ 16 $\mathbb{Q}e6$ $\mathbb{W}xb2$ 17 $\mathbb{Q}xf8$ $\mathbb{Q}xf8$, with two pawns and a clear positional superiority for the exchange) 13...b5 14 cxb5 axb5 15 $\mathbb{Q}xc6$ $\mathbb{Q}xc6$ 16 $\mathbb{Q}b6$ $\mathbb{W}b7$ with an attack.

9 h3 $\mathbb{B}b8$ 10 a4 (D)

B



10... $\mathbb{Q}e8$

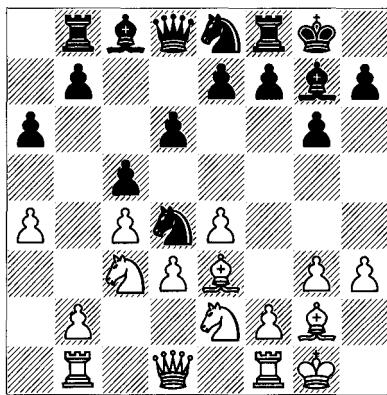
This move is too slow now, for reasons we'll see. 10... $\mathbb{Q}d7$ 11 $\mathbb{Q}e3$ gives Black two perfectly reasonable replies:

a) 11... $\mathbb{W}a5$! covers some important dark squares. Black's first point is 12 d4? cxd4 13 $\mathbb{Q}xd4$ $\mathbb{W}b4$. Of course White doesn't have to pitch a pawn, but it's not clear what a positive strategy would be; perhaps a well-timed $\mathbb{W}d2$ and $\mathbb{Q}h6$. Black has the same quandary; one idea for him is the somewhat risky ... $\mathbb{B}fc8$ followed by ... $\mathbb{Q}e8$ and ... $\mathbb{Q}d4$.

b) 11...e5!? is also playable, with the idea 12 f4 $\mathbb{Q}d4$, and if 13 g4, then 13...exf4 14 $\mathbb{Q}xf4$ b5.

11 $\mathbb{Q}e3!$ $\mathbb{Q}d4$ 12 $\mathbb{B}b1!$ (D)

B



White is already threatening b4, which will open the b-file to his considerable advantage. In fact, this standard plan has also succeeded for Black in the reversed position (as we shall see in the section on 5 $\mathbb{Q}f3$ e5). It turns out that White's extra tempo accentuates his queenside advantage.

12... $\mathbb{Q}c7$ 13 b4 $\mathbb{Q}ce6$ 14 bxc5 $\mathbb{Q}xe2+$

14...dxc5 secures d4 more tightly. Then White can either play 15 $\mathbb{Q}d5$ $\mathbb{Q}xe2+$ 16 $\mathbb{W}xe2$ (for example, 16... $\mathbb{Q}d4$ 17 $\mathbb{W}a2!$ e6 18 $\mathbb{Q}f4!$ e5 19 $\mathbb{Q}e3$), or 15 f4 $\mathbb{Q}xe2+$ (15...f5 16 e5) 16 $\mathbb{Q}xe2$ $\mathbb{W}a5$ 17 e5!, when the combination of more active bishops and space grants him the superior game.

15 $\mathbb{Q}xe2$ dxc5 16 f4! $\mathbb{Q}d4$ 17 e5! f6?

This seems a little radical, but 17... $\mathbb{Q}xe2+$ 18 $\mathbb{W}xe2$ $\mathbb{W}c7$ 19 $\mathbb{B}b3!$ and $\mathbb{B}fb1$ is no fun.

18 $\mathbb{Q}xd4$ cxd4 19 exf6! $\mathbb{Q}xf6$

Or 19...exf6? 20 $\mathbb{Q}d5+$ $\mathbb{Q}h8$ 21 $\mathbb{Q}xd4$ $\mathbb{Q}xh3$ 22 $\mathbb{B}f2!$, threatening $\mathbb{Q}a7$ and g4.

20 $\mathbb{Q}d2$ $\mathbb{Q}f5$ 21 $\mathbb{W}b3$ h5 22 $\mathbb{B}fe1$

Now White has a solid positional advantage and went on to win.

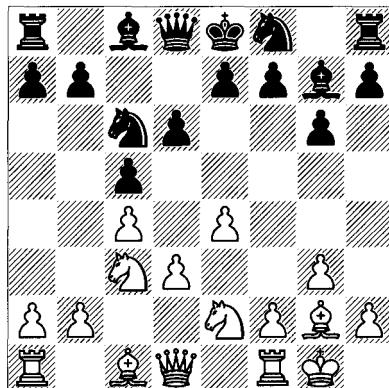
Laylo – de Firmian

Minneapolis 2005

1 c4 c5 2 $\mathbb{Q}c3$ $\mathbb{Q}c6$ 3 g3 g6 4 $\mathbb{Q}g2$ $\mathbb{Q}g7$ 5 e4 $\mathbb{Q}f6$ 6 $\mathbb{Q}ge2$ 0-0

The slight change of move-order with 6...d4 makes a difference if White plays 7 0-0. In fact, castling might even be considered an inaccuracy! It gives Black an attractive resource, which if nothing else deserves attention because we shall see White play the same idea in the reverse position via 5 $\mathbb{Q}f3$ e5. Specifically, Black can embark upon the line 7... $\mathbb{Q}d7$! 8 d3 $\mathbb{Q}f8!$ (D).

W



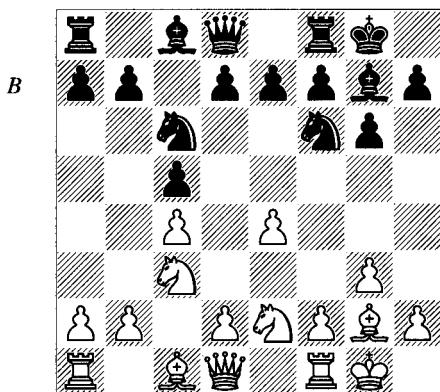
The knight gets to its desired spot just in time after 9 $\mathbb{Q}e3$ $\mathbb{Q}e6$, controlling the d4-square and having in mind its occupation. In the main game, Black plays ... $\mathbb{Q}f6$ -e8-c7-e6, and here ... $\mathbb{Q}f6$ -d7-f8-e6. Where did he get the extra tempo? Simply by not castling.

So it would seem that, instead of 7 0-0, White should simply play 7 d3 (or 5 d3 $\mathbb{Q}f6$ 6 e4), precisely to avoid the ... $\mathbb{Q}d7$ -f8-e6 manoeuvre. In that case 7... $\mathbb{Q}d7$! 8 $\mathbb{Q}e3$ $\mathbb{Q}f8$ 9 d4 is another matter, because White takes charge of the centre. But 7 d3 has its own drawbacks, for one thing because it forfeits the chance to play d4 in one step and also opens up possibilities such as 7... $\mathbb{Q}d7$ 8 0-0?! h5! with a flank attack. For example, play might continue 9 h4 $\mathbb{B}b8$ 10 f3 (versus ... $\mathbb{Q}g4$) 10...0-0 11 $\mathbb{Q}e3$ a6 12 d4?! (12 a4 $\mathbb{W}a5$ is unclear) 12...cxd4 13 $\mathbb{Q}xd4$ $\mathbb{Q}e5$! 14 b3

b5 with an ideal counterattack. In fact, it's hard for White to make progress in this line without weakening himself or allowing ...b5.

7 0-0 (D)

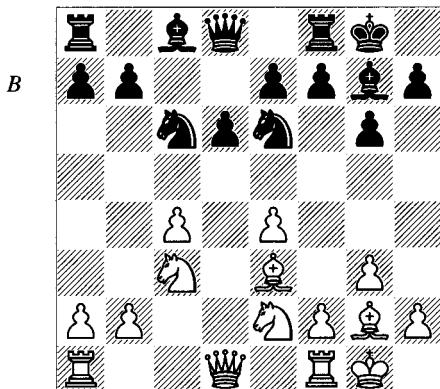
If White wishes to neutralize the manoeuvre that follows, he should play 7 d3 with the idea 7... $\mathbb{Q}e8$ (7...a6 is an alternative) 8 $\mathbb{A}e3$ $\mathbb{Q}c7$ 9 d4.



7... $\mathbb{Q}e8$

In the previous game, we saw Black play a combination of ...d6, ...a6 and ... $\mathbb{Q}d7$. Here he intends ... $\mathbb{Q}c7$ -e6, to head off White's d4 push and perhaps occupy the d4-square himself.

Instead, 7...d6 8 d3 $\mathbb{Q}e8$?! is poorly-timed, because in that case 9 $\mathbb{A}e3$ $\mathbb{Q}c7$ (9... $\mathbb{Q}d4$ 10 $\mathbb{B}b1$! with the idea of b4 gives White a strong queenside attack; compare the main game) 10 d4! $\mathbb{C}xd4$ 11 $\mathbb{Q}xd4$ takes over the centre. Then 11... $\mathbb{Q}e6$ can be met by 12 $\mathbb{Q}de2$! (D).



With this knight retreat, we've arrived at a position that has arisen scores of times and

crops up in various forms in related variations such as 5 $\mathbb{Q}f3$ e5 below. White has a definite advantage, because Black has lost his grip on the centre and will find it very difficult to shake White's bind.

8 d3

White could try to stop ... $\mathbb{Q}c7$ -e6 by playing 8 f4 d6 (8... $\mathbb{Q}c7$ 9 f5) 9 d3 $\mathbb{Q}c7$ 10 f5. But this gives up the e5-square, and 10... $\mathbb{B}b8$ with the idea ...a6 and ...b5, and/or ... $\mathbb{Q}e5$ and ... $\mathbb{Q}d7$, should maintain the balance.

8... $\mathbb{Q}c7$ 9 $\mathbb{A}e3$ $\mathbb{Q}e6$ 10 f4

Since White can't play d4, he expands on the kingside. This is weakening, however, and perhaps now was the time to start thinking about equality; for example, 10 $\mathbb{B}b1$ d6 11 a3 a5 12 $\mathbb{Q}b5$ $\mathbb{Q}cd4$ 13 a4.

10...d6 11 $\mathbb{B}b2$ $\mathbb{Q}ed4$ 12 $\mathbb{B}ab1$

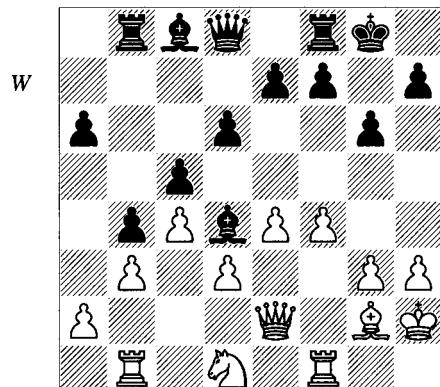
Trying to resolve the queenside situation looks correct in lieu of other reasonable strategies.

12... $\mathbb{B}b8$ 13 b3

Since this has no role in terms of queenside play, White may as well try to neutralize that sector by 13 a3 $\mathbb{Q}a5$ 14 $\mathbb{B}f2$ a6 15 $\mathbb{Q}d5$.

13...a6 14 h3 b5 15 $\mathbb{Q}h2$ b4! 16 $\mathbb{Q}d1$ $\mathbb{Q}xe2$ 17 $\mathbb{Q}xe2$ $\mathbb{Q}d4$ 18 $\mathbb{Q}xd4$!?

(D)



As well as having this outpost to play with, Black can always play ...f5 if needed, and has ...a5-a4 as a positive idea.

19 $\mathbb{Q}e3$

19 f5 e6! ruins White's kingside plans.

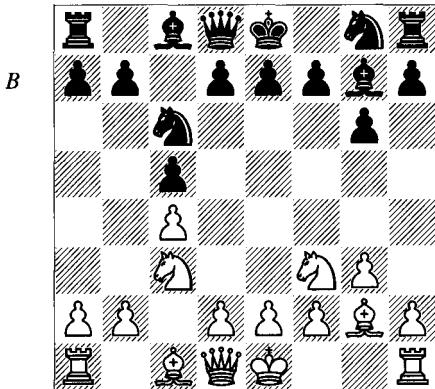
19...a5!?

20 $\mathbb{Q}c2$ $\mathbb{Q}c3$ 21 $\mathbb{Q}e3$! $\mathbb{B}b6$

Here, instead of 22 f5?! a4, White should play 22 $\mathbb{B}bd1$! a4 23 d4. Still, Black has the better minor piece and will control the open a-file.

Pure Symmetrical with 5 $\mathbb{Q}f3$: Introduction

1 c4 c5 2 $\mathbb{Q}c3$ $\mathbb{Q}c6$ 3 g3 g6 4 $\mathbb{Q}g2$ $\mathbb{Q}g7$ 5 $\mathbb{Q}f3$
(D)



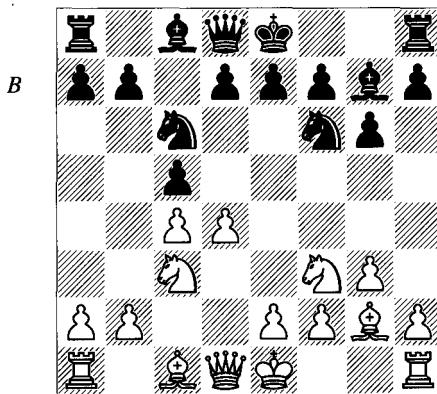
Many of the leading players have always played the $\mathbb{Q}f3$ lines of the Pure Symmetrical Variation. I phrase it that way because this includes not only those who arrive at the position by means of 1 c4 c5 2 $\mathbb{Q}c3$ $\mathbb{Q}c6$ 3 g3 g6 4 $\mathbb{Q}g2$ $\mathbb{Q}g7$ 5 $\mathbb{Q}f3$, but also the sizeable number who come to it by other means. The possible move-orders are too numerous to list, since both players can make the basic moves in almost any sequence; but you can work out how easy it is for the relevant positions to arise from 1 $\mathbb{Q}f3$, 1 c4 c5 2 $\mathbb{Q}f3$ (or here 1... $\mathbb{Q}f6$ or 1...g6), 1 c4 c5 2 $\mathbb{Q}c3$ $\mathbb{Q}c6$ 3 $\mathbb{Q}f3$, or any system in which the moves g3 and $\mathbb{Q}g2$ are played at an early stage. The benefit of playing $\mathbb{Q}f3$ before or by move 5 is that White can castle quickly and prepare to play d4. Black has to address that possibility so as not to lose ground in the centre. Let's first see what happens if he tries to maintain symmetry.

Traditional Main Line with 5... $\mathbb{Q}f6$

1 c4 c5 2 $\mathbb{Q}c3$ $\mathbb{Q}c6$ 3 g3 g6 4 $\mathbb{Q}g2$ $\mathbb{Q}g7$ 5 $\mathbb{Q}f3$
 $\mathbb{Q}f6$ 6 0-0

Already we have an important juncture. Assuming that you're playing White and heading

for the main lines with d4, I'd recommend 6 d4(!) (D).



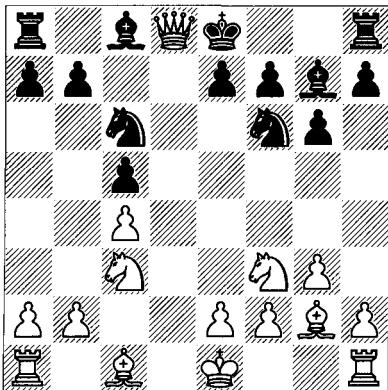
This can, and usually does, enter the main line when Black plays 6...cxsd4 7 $\mathbb{Q}xd4$ 0-0 8 0-0 (which is equivalent to 6 0-0 0-0 7 d4 cxsd4 8 $\mathbb{Q}xd4$). But this move-order is important, in my opinion, because it circumvents 6 0-0 d5, a respectable equalizing variation which we shall see in the next note. Looking at the alternatives, we see that White benefits from 6 d4 in some other respects, whereas Black can exercise some new options:

a) 6...d6 is shaky. By committing to ...d6 before castling, Black gives White a chance to play 7 dxc5 (7 d5 $\mathbb{Q}a5$ 8 $\mathbb{Q}d2$ transposes to a King's Indian Defence; see below; furthermore, 7 0-0 can return to our main line after 7...cxsd4 8 $\mathbb{Q}xd4$ 9 $\mathbb{Q}xd4$ 0-0; if Black passes on 8... $\mathbb{Q}xd4$ and plays 8... $\mathbb{Q}d7$ a good response is 9 $\mathbb{Q}c2!$, avoiding exchanges; then a number of games over the years have been played with 9...0-0 10 b3 $\mathbb{Q}a5$ 11 $\mathbb{Q}b2$, when White generally gets some advantage) 7...dxc5 8 $\mathbb{Q}xd8+$ (D).

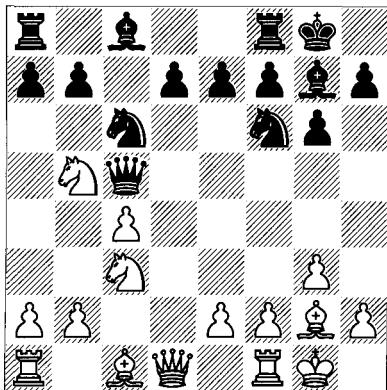
By exchanging queens at this point, White gets a superior version of the variation 6 0-0 0-0 7 d4 d6 8 dxc5 dxc5. He seems to stand better; for example, 8... $\mathbb{Q}xd8$ (8... $\mathbb{Q}xd8$ 9 $\mathbb{Q}f4$ and 10 0-0-0+ wins too much time) 9 $\mathbb{Q}e3$ $\mathbb{Q}e6$ 10 $\mathbb{Q}g5!?$ $\mathbb{Q}xg5$ (10... $\mathbb{Q}d4$ 11 0-0-0 $\mathbb{Q}g4$ 12 $\mathbb{Q}d5$) 11 $\mathbb{Q}xg5$ and Black has some troubles in the face of $\mathbb{Q}e3$ followed by $\mathbb{Q}d5$.

b) Another way for Black to deviate (after 6 d4) is by 6...cxsd4 7 $\mathbb{Q}xd4$ d5!? (7...0-0 8 0-0 is the main line), but 8 0-0 0-0 9 cxsd5 $\mathbb{Q}xd5$ 10 $\mathbb{Q}xd5$ $\mathbb{Q}xd4$ 11 $\mathbb{Q}g5$! is very uncomfortable for

B



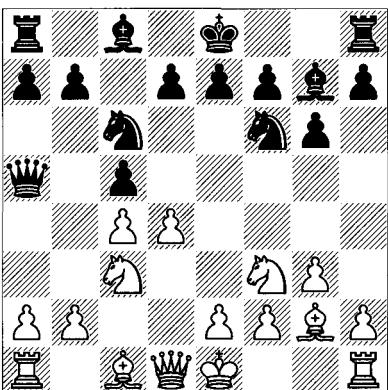
W



him because of the threat $12 \mathbb{Q}xe7+$. The best response is $11\dots \mathbb{Q}c6$, when $12 \mathbb{Q}a4!$, intending $\mathbb{Q}fd1$, gives White a strong initiative.

c) Finally, $6\dots \mathbb{Q}a5!?$ (*D*) has some intriguing nuances.

W



A surprisingly respectable line is $7 d5 \mathbb{Q}e4!?$ $8 dxcc6 \mathbb{Q}xc3 9 \mathbb{Q}d2 \mathbb{Q}b4! 10 0-0 \mathbb{Q}e4 11 \mathbb{Q}d3 \mathbb{Q}d6 12 \mathbb{Q}f4 dxcc6 13 \mathbb{Q}xd6 exd6 14 \mathbb{Q}xd6 \mathbb{Q}xb2! 15 \mathbb{Q}ad1 \mathbb{Q}f6 16 \mathbb{Q}xc5 \mathbb{Q}e7 17 \mathbb{Q}d6!$, Akopian-Shulman, European Ch, Ohrid 2001. White manages to equalize just in time because of $17\dots 0-0 18 \mathbb{Q}xc6!$.

White may do best to gambit a pawn by $7 0-0 cxd4 8 \mathbb{Q}xd4$, allowing $8\dots \mathbb{Q}c5$. This is Black's point: he forces White's knight to commit and simultaneously pesters the c4-pawn. On the other hand, he fails to develop. In the game Boger-Kumar/Samraoui, correspondence game 2002, White plunged ahead by $9 \mathbb{Q}db5! 0-0$ (*D*) ($9\dots \mathbb{Q}d8 10 \mathbb{Q}f4!$).

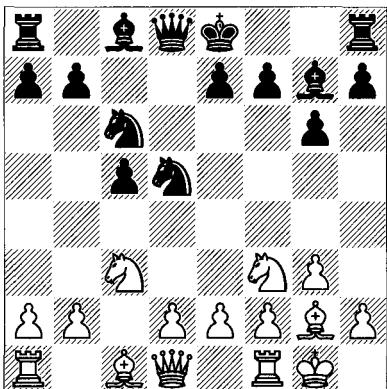
Now he should have continued $10 \mathbb{Q}c7! \mathbb{Q}b8 11 \mathbb{Q}7d5 \mathbb{Q}xc4$ ($11\dots \mathbb{Q}xd5 12 cxd5 \mathbb{Q}d4 13$

$\mathbb{Q}e3$) $12 \mathbb{Q}f4 \mathbb{Q}a8$ (a nice trick is $12\dots e5? 13 \mathbb{Q}xe5! \mathbb{Q}xe5 14 \mathbb{Q}xf6+ \mathbb{Q}xf6 15 \mathbb{Q}d6!$, forking rook and bishop) $13 b3 \mathbb{Q}c5 14 b4! \mathbb{Q}c4 15 b5!$, and in most lines $\mathbb{Q}xe7+$ will badly damage Black's pawn-structure.

6...0-0

Taking the initiative in the centre makes sense, before White does. Therefore Black should strongly consider $6\dots d5 7 cxd5$ ($7 \mathbb{Q}a4!?$ is an idea that might be worth a look) $7\dots \mathbb{Q}xd5$ (*D*).

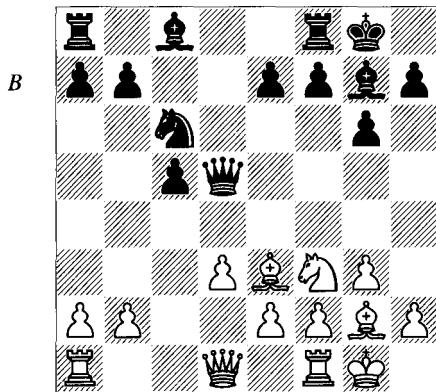
W



This is an important position, both in this move-order and in other lines which may transpose (say, $1 c4 \mathbb{Q}f6 2 \mathbb{Q}c3 g6 3 \mathbb{Q}f3 d5 4 cxd5 \mathbb{Q}xd5 5 g3 \mathbb{Q}g7$ with ...c5 soon to follow).

I'm not going to cover this line in detail, but it's thought to be equal based upon long experience. Black's light squares are a little weak on the h1-a8 diagonal, but White can only achieve so much by trying to exploit them. The best-known line goes $8 \mathbb{Q}xd5$ ($8 d3!?$ hopes to get more than enough compensation following

8... $\mathbb{Q}xc3$ 9 $bxc3$ $\mathbb{Q}xc3$ 10 $\mathbb{B}b1$, but Black can simply decline the pawn by 8...0-0) 8... $\mathbb{W}xd5$ 9 d3 (with this modest advance, White wants to take advantage of his opponent's queen being in the g2-bishop's line of fire; while stationed in the centre, however, Black's queen exerts influence over both d4 and White's queenside, and this seems to hold the balance) 9...0-0 10 $\mathbb{A}e3$ (D).



10... $\mathbb{A}d7$! (according to theory, 10... $\mathbb{A}xb2$ 11 $\mathbb{B}b1$ $\mathbb{A}f6$ is risky but also satisfactory) 11 $\mathbb{Q}d4$ $\mathbb{W}d6$ 12 $\mathbb{Q}xc6$ $\mathbb{Q}xc6$ 13 $\mathbb{Q}xc6$ $\mathbb{W}xc6$ 14 $\mathbb{B}c1$ $\mathbb{W}e6$ 15 $\mathbb{Q}xc5$ $\mathbb{W}xa2$ 16 $\mathbb{B}b5$ (the best try, which originally won several games, but Black seems to have solved his problems) 16...b6 17 $\mathbb{W}a1$ $\mathbb{W}e6$! (17... $\mathbb{W}xa1$?? 18 $\mathbb{B}xa1$ $\mathbb{B}fb8$?? 19 $\mathbb{B}a6$! is instructive; Black's queenside pawns are frozen, and Karpov-Ribli, Amsterdam 1980 went 19... $\mathbb{A}f8$ 20 $\mathbb{B}b4$! $\mathbb{A}e5$ 21 $\mathbb{B}ba4$! b5 22 $\mathbb{B}a2$ $\mathbb{B}b7$ 23 b3 $\mathbb{B}b8$ 24 $\mathbb{B}c5$ $\mathbb{A}e8$ 25 d4!; White's central majority adds insult to injury) 18 $\mathbb{W}a4$ (18 $\mathbb{W}a6$ $\mathbb{W}d7$ 19 $\mathbb{B}a1$ $\mathbb{W}g4$! 20 f3 $\mathbb{W}e6$ 21 $\mathbb{Q}f2$ $\mathbb{W}h3$ draws) 18... $\mathbb{B}fc8$ 19 $\mathbb{B}a1$ (19 $\mathbb{B}b4$ $\mathbb{W}d5$!) 19...h5 20 $\mathbb{W}e4$ $\mathbb{W}xe4$ 21 dx4 $\mathbb{B}c2$ and things are about to be liquidated, I.Ivanov-Benjamin, St Martin 1992.

This line provides White an incentive to play 6 d4 rather than 6 0-0. Not surprisingly, there are multiple options for both sides at every juncture from moves 10 to 15, so you may want to do your own investigation.

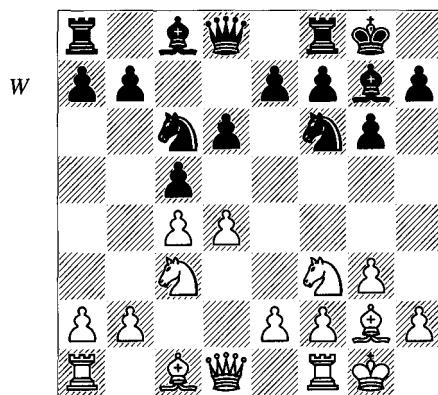
7 d4 cxd4

Two points here:

a) Trying to maintain symmetry with 7...d5 (almost never played) leads to the better game for White after 8 dxc5 (or 8 cxd5 cxd4!?) 9

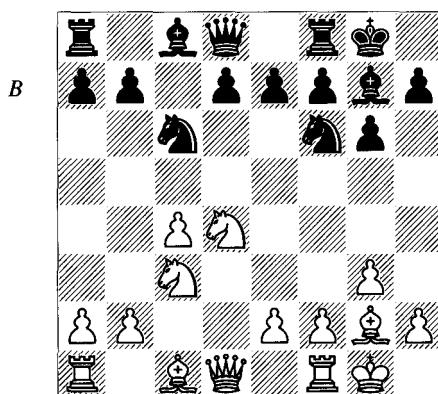
$\mathbb{Q}xd4$ $\mathbb{Q}xd5$ 10 $\mathbb{Q}xd5$ $\mathbb{Q}xd4$ 11 $\mathbb{A}g5$!) 8...dxc4 9 $\mathbb{W}a4$.

b) Since the main line with 7...cxd4 isn't easy for Black to play, he may want to look into 7...d6 (D), which is a Fianchetto Variation of the King's Indian Defence.



White can play ambitiously by entering the fascinating main line 8 d5 $\mathbb{Q}a5$ 9 $\mathbb{Q}d2$ (which requires study for both sides) or simplify by 8 dxc5 dxc5 and then 9 $\mathbb{A}e3$ or 9 $\mathbb{A}f4$. The 8 dxc5 line has generally been considered satisfactory for Black, although his winning chances are seriously reduced in some variations. White may also be discontent, because his abstract advantage will often dissipate within a few moves. You'll have to refer to King's Indian theory to sort this out.

8 $\mathbb{Q}xd4$ (D)



We've reached what used to be considered the main line of the entire Symmetrical English. Because White seems to retain a nagging

edge with best play, it no longer has that elevated a status. Still, new ideas appear on a regular basis, and grandmasters haven't abandoned the variation as Black. I'll discuss the basic ideas in the following games.

Metal – Hogye

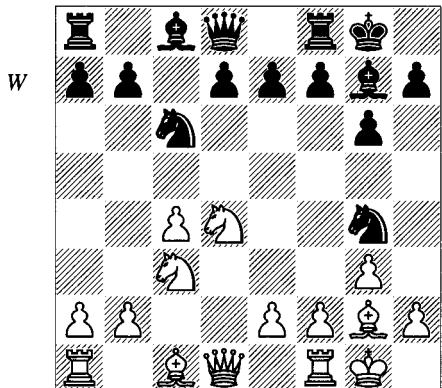
Correspondence game 1994

1 c4 c5 2 ♜c3 ♜c6 3 g3 g6 4 ♜g2 ♜g7 5 ♜f3 ♜f6 6 0-0 0-0 7 d4 cxd4 8 ♜xd4 ♜g4!?

Black has various minor alternatives to 8...♜xd4 (see the next game) and 8...♜g4, but none are held to equalize; for example, 8...a6?! allows White to play 9 c5!, attacking b6 and discouraging ...d6.

Quite a few contests have featured the gambit 8...d6 9 ♜xc6 bxc6 10 ♜xc6, but Black probably lacks enough compensation: 10...♜b8 (White stands better after 10...♜h3 11 ♜xa8 ♜xa8 12 f3 ♜xf1 13 ♜xf1 ♜c8 14 ♜d3) 11 ♜g2 ♜a5 12 ♜c2. Skipping over most of the theory, one example is Lukov-Y.Ivanov, Varna 1995: 12...♜f5 (12...♜e6?? 13 ♜d2 with the idea 13...♜xc4 14 ♜d5) 13 e4 ♜e6 14 b3! (or 14 ♜d2) 14...♜xe4 15 ♜xe4 ♜xa1 16 ♜g5 f6? (Cummings suggests 16...♜f6 17 ♜xf6+ exf6 18 ♜xf6 ♜f5, although White has the bishop-pair, a pawn, and an attack for the exchange after 19 ♜c3!) 17 ♜e3! ♜e5 18 f4 ♜b2 19 ♜b1!, winning a piece.

So we now return to 8...♜g4!? (D):

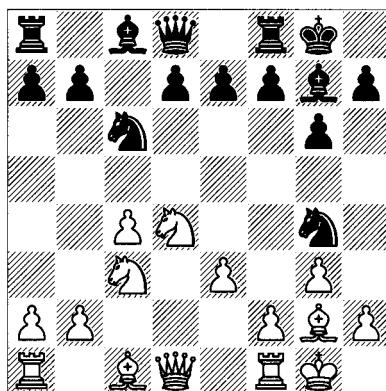


This popular non-developing move is an attempt to transform the pawn-structure, which currently favours White due to his greater control of the centre. Black attacks d4, forcing

White to make a decision. But why put the knight on this odd square? First and non-trivially, it discourages White from the useful move 9 ♜e3. In addition, since it turns out that 9 e3 is White's best move (refusing to lose time by retreating), Black aims for a specific idea: he intends to play a combination of ...♜xd4 and ...♜h6-f5, working on White's dark squares, in particular attacking the pawn on d4. Of course, 8...♜g4 doesn't do anything for Black's queenside development and completely cedes control of e4 and d5 to the white knight. Therefore White has some time to reorganize, as best explained by example.

9 e3 (D)

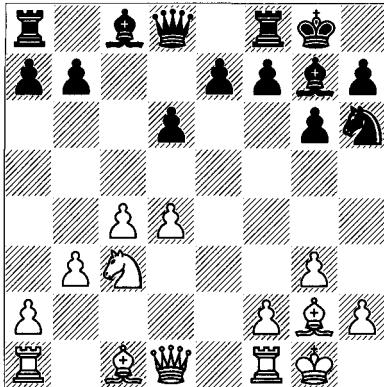
The critical move. White supports his centre, attacks the knight on g4, and prepares for slow expansion after developing by b3 and ♜b2. In addition, the move ♜d5 can be useful. Instead, 9 ♜c2 ♜xc3! 10 bxc3 ♜a5 is at least equal for Black; even his knight on g4 can contribute to the queenside attack via ...♜e5.



9...♜xd4

This exchange is considered somewhat inaccurate, but it leads to an extremely instructive game containing most of the main themes of the variation. Black usually waits another move by 9...d6 10 b3 (10 ♜xc6 bxc6 11 ♜xc6 ♜b8 compares well for Black with the similar sacrifice with 8...d6 above, because the knight on g4 will come to e5 and put pressure on c4; 10 ♜de2 is logical and has usually yielded some advantage – White intends to build up slowly, usually by b3 and ♜b2, and later placing a knight on d5), when Black's normal continuation is 10...♜xd4 11 exd4 ♜h6 (D).

W



Then 12... $\mathbb{Q}b2$ is of course playable, but gives Black what he wants after 12... $\mathbb{Q}f5$. White has two more interesting approaches:

a) 12... $\mathbb{Q}xh6$!?(this popular capture directly eliminates ... $\mathbb{Q}f5$ and gives White time to secure his centre while attacking down the e-file; in addition, Black's bishop on h6 will be misplaced and will generally waste a tempo retreating to g7) 12... $\mathbb{Q}xh6$ 13 $\mathbb{M}e2$ $\mathbb{Q}g7$ 14 $\mathbb{M}fd1$. Here White takes advantage of the fact that Black's c8-bishop can't abandon his b7-pawn. While Black is getting organized, White intends to advance his pawns and create a favourable pawn-structure: 14... $\mathbb{M}e8$ 15 $\mathbb{M}ac1$ $\mathbb{Q}b8$ 16 c5! $\mathbb{Q}d7$ 17 b4, Mikhalkhishin-Šale, Nova Gorica 1999. White's majority is on the march; Hansen gives 17...a5 18 a3 e5!? 19 d5 e4, but the pawns are so dominant that even 20 $\mathbb{Q}xe4$ with the idea 20...f5? 21 c6 is good; or, if Black plays 20... $\mathbb{Q}a4$, the sacrifice 21 $\mathbb{M}c4!$ $\mathbb{Q}xd1$ 22 $\mathbb{M}xd1$ leaves White in command.

b) The simple 12 $\mathbb{Q}d2$, as in the main game, also has its appeal; for example, 12... $\mathbb{Q}b8$ 13 d5 a6 14 a4 $\mathbb{Q}g4$!? 15 h3 $\mathbb{Q}f6$ 16 $\mathbb{M}e1$ $\mathbb{M}e8$ 17 a5! b6 18 axb6 $\mathbb{M}xb6$ 19 $\mathbb{M}a3$ $\mathbb{Q}d7$ 20 $\mathbb{Q}e4$! $\mathbb{Q}e5$ 21 $\mathbb{Q}a5$ $\mathbb{M}a7$ 22 $\mathbb{Q}c3$ $\mathbb{Q}f5$ 23 $\mathbb{M}a1$! with pressure all over the board, Antonenko-Bazhenov, e-mail (ICCF) 2004.

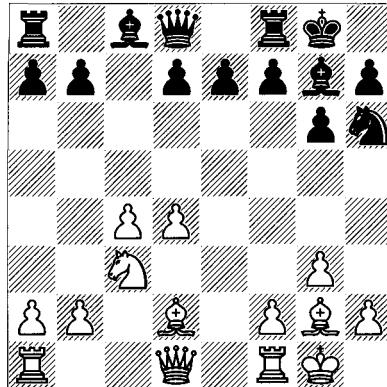
10 exd4 $\mathbb{Q}h6$ 11 $\mathbb{Q}d2$! (D)

By defending the c3-knight, White prepares d5 without permitting Black an effective attack along the a1-h8 diagonal (compare 11 b3 $\mathbb{Q}f5$).

11... $\mathbb{Q}f5$ 12 d5 d6 13 $\mathbb{M}e1$

This simple set-up is appealing, because White controls more space and it's not easy for Black to undertake anything.

B



13... $\mathbb{M}b8$ 14 $\mathbb{M}c1$ $\mathbb{Q}d7$ 15 b3!? a6 16 $\mathbb{Q}e4$! b6 17 $\mathbb{Q}c3$

White has a more-or-less ideal position for this variation.

17... $\mathbb{M}e8$ 18 $\mathbb{Q}xg7$ $\mathbb{Q}xg7$ 19 $\mathbb{M}d2$ $\mathbb{Q}f5$ 20 $\mathbb{M}h6$ $\mathbb{Q}xe4$ 21 $\mathbb{M}xe4$ $\mathbb{Q}f5$ 22 $\mathbb{M}d2$ e5!?

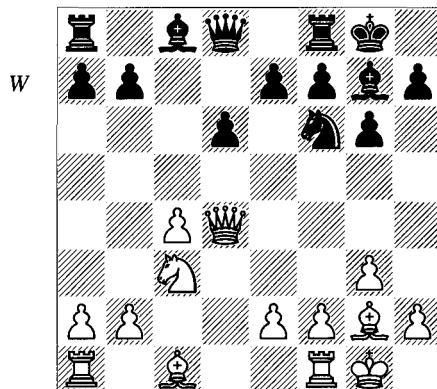
Black doesn't want to wait around for moves like $\mathbb{M}ce1$, $\mathbb{Q}h3$ and/or h4-h5.

23 dx6 $\mathbb{M}xe6$ 24 $\mathbb{M}ce1$ $\mathbb{M}xe4$ 25 $\mathbb{M}xe4$ $\mathbb{Q}e7$ 26 $\mathbb{M}d1$

White has a dominant position.

Markowski – Gdanski
Polish Ch, Brzeg Dolny 1996

1 c4 c5 2 $\mathbb{Q}c3$ $\mathbb{Q}c6$ 3 g3 g6 4 $\mathbb{Q}g2$ $\mathbb{Q}g7$ 5 $\mathbb{Q}f3$ $\mathbb{Q}f6$ 6 0-0 0-0 7 d4 cxd4 8 $\mathbb{Q}xd4$ $\mathbb{Q}xd4$ 9 $\mathbb{M}xd4$ d6 (D)



Black's set-up looks like a Sicilian Dragon, but notice that White's light-squared bishop, so often passively placed in the Sicilian Defence on e2 or d3, has wonderful scope here. Black's

strategy will be to break down White's grip on the centre, which means directly attacking the c4-pawn and/or chipping away at it with the move ...b5.

10 ♕d3

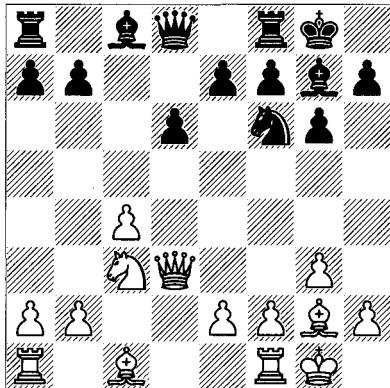
The queen retreats from any potential attacks along the a1-h8 diagonal, but stays in touch with the centre and keeps the c-pawn defended. Two alternatives are instructive, and show what Black is up to:

a) 10 b3 isn't vulnerable to any discovered attacks, nor even to 10...♕f5 11 ♜b2 ♔e4 12 ♜e3, but 10...d5! exploits the open diagonal and equalizes: 11 cxd5 ♜xd5 (even 11...♔e6!? 12 ♜e3 ♜xd5 13 ♜xd5 ♜xd5 14 ♜d1 e6 is OK) 12 ♜xd5 ♜xc3 13 ♜h6 ♜xd5 14 ♜xd5 ♜d8 15 ♜ad1 ♜h3 16 ♜g2 ♜xg2 17 ♜xg2 ½-½ Spassky-Tal, Moscow 1967.

b) 10 ♜d1 ♜e6! 11 ♜xb7 ♜g4!? attacks the queen (Black can also play 11...♜b8 first): 12 ♜f4 ♜b8 13 ♜g2 ♜c8!? (or 13...h6, probably leading to a repetition of moves) 14 ♜d5 ♜e8 15 h3?! ♜e5 16 ♜h4 ♜xc4 17 ♜xe7+ ♜h8, and Black will win his pawn back, Larsen-Tal, Candidates match (game 9), Bled 1965.

After the text-move, 10 ♕d3 (D), we see that White has more space and greater control of the central squares.

B



Notice that with this structure, Black has a more active king's bishop than he does in the Hedgehog Variation (see Chapter 10), where he has the structure ...d6/...e6 and the bishop is on e7. But the cost is a dear one: Black's other bishop on c8 has trouble developing and no ideal square to go to. In the meantime, the desirable central move ...e6, preventing a knight

from coming to d5, would seriously weaken Black's d-pawn. Black's counterplay will customarily involve ...a6 and ...b5 (usually supported by ...♜b8 and sometimes by ...♝a5). Or he can directly attack White's c-pawn by moves such as ...♞e6 and ...♝d7-e5; if needed, the move ...b5 might come later, with additional force. Because of the influence of the g2-bishop, Black will sometimes try to compel White to adopt a Maroczy Bind structure (e4/c4) by playing ...♝f5 and provoking e4 in return. This happens in the next note, although probably prematurely.

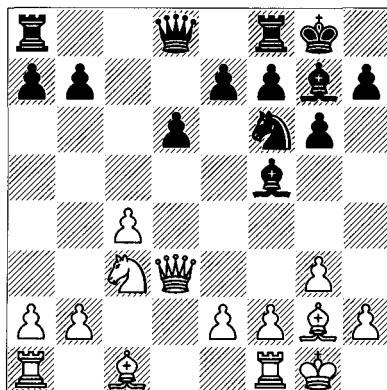
In terms of specifics, White may not always object to ...b5 because it can loosen Black's queenside and give White play down the c-file with his rooks; the worth of ...b5 has to be assessed by both parties on a case-by-case basis. In many positions, White will play ♜d5, changing the pawn-structure in his favour if Black has to capture. He also has the simple development ♜d1 (as above) which might prepare pawn-breaks with c5 or e5; the move ♜e3 can have a similar function.

10...a6

For many years, this flexible pawn advance has been the main line. Black reasons that he will probably play ...a6 anyway, and he wants to prepare for an eventual ...b5 advance without committing his other pieces and pawns.

The most interesting alternative is probably 10...♝f5 (D), which tempts White to play e4 and close off the diagonal of his g2-bishop.

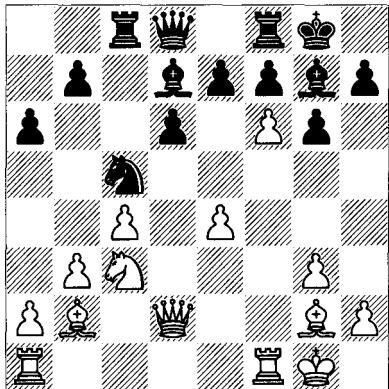
W



But it costs a tempo, and Black got in trouble quickly in the nice example Smyslov-Timman, Moscow 1981: 11 e4 ♜e6 12 b3 (12 ♜d2 can

also be effective; for example, 12...a6 13 b3 $\mathbb{Q}d7$ 14 $\mathbb{W}e2$ $\mathbb{Q}c5$ 15 $\mathbb{H}ac1$ $\mathbb{Q}d7$ 16 $\mathbb{H}fd1$ $\mathbb{H}c8$ 17 $\mathbb{A}e3!$ $\mathbb{W}e8$ 18 $\mathbb{Q}d5$, Hort-Unzicker, Lugano Olympiad 1968) 12...a6 13 $\mathbb{Q}b2$ $\mathbb{Q}d7$ 14 $\mathbb{W}d2$ $\mathbb{Q}c5$ 15 f4! $\mathbb{H}c8?$ (Smyslov suggests 15...f5 16 exf5 $\mathbb{A}xf5$, which improves, but Black has two immobile pawns facing White's open files, so this must favour White after 17 $\mathbb{H}ad1$ or 17 $\mathbb{Q}d5$) 16 f5 $\mathbb{Q}d7$ 17 f6! (D).

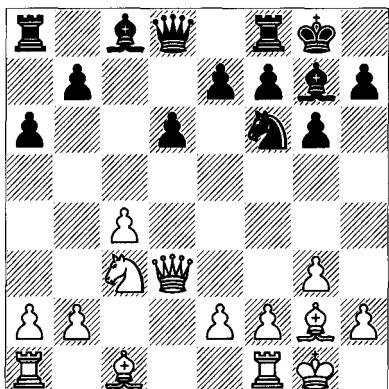
B



17...exf6 (17... $\mathbb{Q}xf6??$ 18 $\mathbb{H}xf6!$ exf6 19 $\mathbb{Q}d5$ and Black can resign, in view of 19...f5 20 $\mathbb{Q}f6!$ 18 $\mathbb{Q}d5$ f5 19 exf5 $\mathbb{Q}xf5$ 20 $\mathbb{Q}xg7$ $\mathbb{Q}xg7$ 21 $\mathbb{W}d4+$ f6 22 g4! $\mathbb{Q}e6$ (the bishop falls after 22... $\mathbb{Q}e6$ 23 $\mathbb{W}d1$) 23 $\mathbb{Q}xf6$ $\mathbb{H}xf6$ 24 g5 and White wins.

Now we return to the position after 10...a6 (D).

W



11 $\mathbb{Q}d2!$?

There are several other possibilities here, including the old main line with 11 $\mathbb{Q}e3$ $\mathbb{Q}g4$ 12 $\mathbb{Q}d4$ $\mathbb{Q}e5$ 13 $\mathbb{W}d1$.

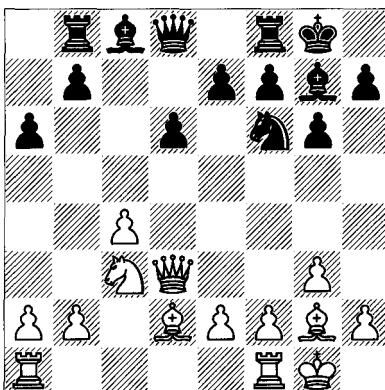
I think a particularly promising continuation is 11 $\mathbb{H}d1$, directly exploiting the d-file. White's immediate idea is 12 c5. This is not so easy to meet; for example:

a) 11... $\mathbb{Q}f5?!$ 12 $\mathbb{W}f3!$ (threatening both $\mathbb{W}xb7$ and c5). Now in Gay-Campbell, correspondence game 1985, Black played the clever 12... $\mathbb{W}c7$ 13 $\mathbb{W}xb7$ $\mathbb{Q}a7!$ 14 $\mathbb{W}xc7$ $\mathbb{H}xc7$ 15 e4 $\mathbb{Q}e6$, and it looks as though the c-pawn is about to fall; nevertheless, 16 e5! $dxe5$ 17 b3 leaves White with two active bishops and a passed c-pawn. After the more natural 12... $\mathbb{H}b8$, White plays 13 c5! and gains the upper hand, because the black d-pawn is about to become fatally weak. Teboul-Mason, e-mail (IECG) 2002 continued dynamically with 13...b5!, but Black still got a losing position after 14 a3! $\mathbb{Q}g4$ 15 $\mathbb{Q}g5$ $\mathbb{Q}e5$ 16 $\mathbb{W}f4$ $\mathbb{Q}c4$ 17 cxd6 f6 18 dxe7 $\mathbb{W}xe7$ 19 $\mathbb{Q}d5$ $\mathbb{Q}a7$ 20 $\mathbb{Q}h6$ $\mathbb{Q}xb2$ 21 $\mathbb{Q}xg7$ $\mathbb{Q}xg7$ 22 $\mathbb{H}dc1$.

b) Black does better with 11... $\mathbb{W}a5!.$ However, 12 $\mathbb{Q}e3$ centralizes all of White's pieces; for example, 12... $\mathbb{Q}f5$ 13 $\mathbb{W}d2$ (attacking b7, and considering $\mathbb{Q}d5$) 13... $\mathbb{W}b4$ 14 $\mathbb{H}ac1$ $\mathbb{H}fc8$ 15 b3 $\mathbb{H}ab8$ 16 h3! h5?! (but otherwise g4 was a major problem) 17 $\mathbb{Q}a7!$ $\mathbb{H}a8$ 18 $\mathbb{Q}d4$ $\mathbb{H}ab8$ 19 $\mathbb{Q}xf6!$ $\mathbb{Q}xf6$ 20 $\mathbb{Q}d5$ $\mathbb{W}xd2$ 21 $\mathbb{Q}xf6+$ $exf6$ 22 $\mathbb{H}xd2$ with a clear advantage.

11... $\mathbb{H}b8$ (D)

W

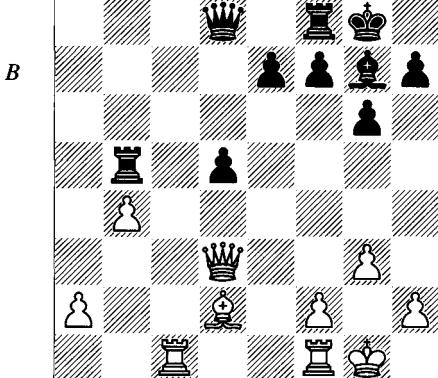


12 $\mathbb{H}ac1$

12 c5?! has its own theory, centred around 12... $\mathbb{Q}f5$ 13 e4 dxc5?! 14 $\mathbb{W}xd8$ $\mathbb{H}bxsd8$ 15 $\mathbb{Q}e3$. White is supposed to stand better after 12...dxc5 13 $\mathbb{W}xd8$ $\mathbb{H}xd8$ 14 $\mathbb{Q}f4$ $\mathbb{Q}a8$ 15 $\mathbb{Q}a4$, although Kosten points out that 15... $\mathbb{Q}g4$ might be adequate anyway.

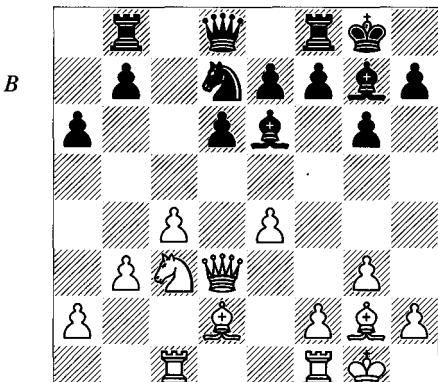
12...♝e6

The bold sacrifice 12...b5!? has been tried in a few games: 13 cxb5 axb5 14 ♜xb5 (14 b4!?) 14...♞f5 (or 14...♝a6 15 a4 ♜d7 16 b4!) 15 e4 ♜xe4 16 ♜xe4 ♜xe4 17 ♜xe4 ♜xb5 18 b4 d5 19 ♜d3 (D).



A funny position: mobile centre pawns are usually more powerful than connected passed queenside pawns, but White's control of the c-file changes matters: 19...♝d7 (19...♜b7 20 a4 e5, Damljanović-Macieja, European Team Ch, Plovdiv 2003, and now 21 b5! e4 22 ♜b3 d4 23 a5 is strong) 20 a4 ♜bb8 21 b5 e5 22 ♜c6, Ki.Georgiev-Gufeld, Calcutta 1992. With the cooperation of his rooks, White's advanced queenside pawns are difficult to cope with.

13 b3 ♜d7 14 e4 (D)

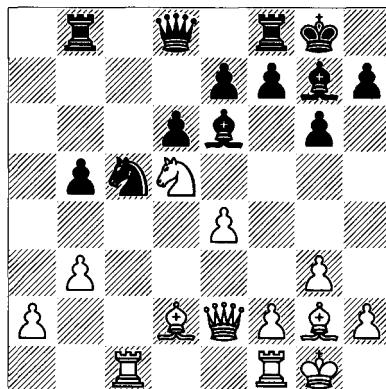


White has achieved a firm grip on the centre. In this sort of Maroczy Bind structure, Black needs to get in either ...d5 or ...b5. There's not a lot of choice here.

14...b5!

14...♝c5 15 ♜e2 leaves Black without a plan. White can play ♜d5, launch an attack by f4-f5, or build up with ♜fd1, preparing b4 and possibly c5.

15 cxb5 axb5 16 ♜d5! ♜c5 17 ♜e2 (D)

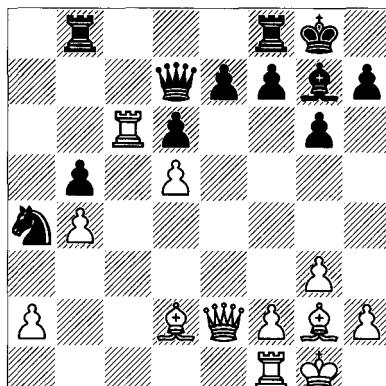


Now White's extra territory is supplemented by his very useful open c-file. From the standpoint of opening theory, White has won the battle.

17...♝d7

17...♝d7? allowed 18 e5! ♜e8 (or 18...♝xe5 19 ♜xc5) 19 ♜e3 in Uhlmann-H.Grünberg, East German Ch, Stralsund 1975. Uhlmann suggested 17...♝xd5!? 18 exd5 b4, when 19 ♜c2 leaves White with a positional advantage. For example, ♜fc1 and ♜c4 might follow, and in these positions, h4-h5 is always irritating.

18 b4! ♜xd5 19 exd5 ♜a4 20 ♜c6! (D)



Black's pieces are well-enough stationed, but between White's control of the c-file and

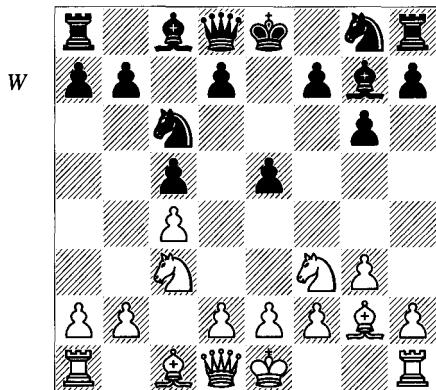
his potentially strong bishop-pair, he stands better.

20... $\mathbb{B}b7$

Here simply 21 $\mathbb{B}fc1!$ would have exerted great pressure on Black's position; for example, 21... $\mathbb{Q}b2$ (heading for c4, which looks a more promising outpost than a4) 22 $\mathbb{Q}c3!$ $\mathbb{Q}xc3$ 23 $\mathbb{B}1xc3$ $\mathbb{Q}c4?!$ 24 a4!.

Symmetrical with 5...e5

1 c4 c5 2 $\mathbb{Q}c3$ g6 3 g3 $\mathbb{Q}g7$ 4 $\mathbb{Q}g2$ $\mathbb{Q}c6$ 5 $\mathbb{Q}f3$ e5 (D)



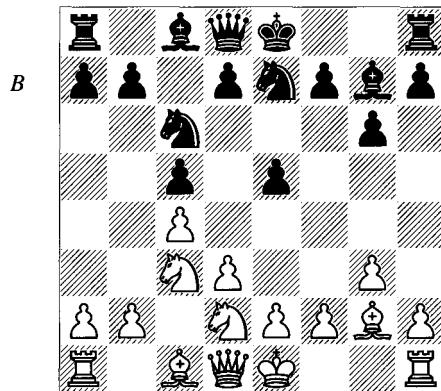
The Botvinnik structure again, but this time Black is employing it. This defence is very important, not only because those who play 5 $\mathbb{Q}f3$ will often have to play against it, but because it can arise by many different move-orders that involve an early ...c5 and ...e5. A common one, for example, is 1 c4 c5 2 $\mathbb{Q}f3$ $\mathbb{Q}c6$ 3 $\mathbb{Q}c3$ e5 4 g3 g6 5 $\mathbb{Q}g2$ $\mathbb{Q}g7$, and anyone playing 1 c4 c5 2 $\mathbb{Q}c3$ g6 3 $\mathbb{Q}f3$ $\mathbb{Q}g7$ who doesn't want to venture into 4 d4 cxd4 5 $\mathbb{Q}xd4$ $\mathbb{Q}c6$ will probably accede to 4 g3 e5.

You should definitely compare 5 e4 $\mathbb{Q}f6$ in the 'Symmetrical Botvinnik: 5 e4' section to see an explanation of the themes and ideas that follow. Here I'll try to expand upon those concepts on a case-to-case basis.

6 0-0

Unfortunately, it's not feasible to cover the multitude of possible move-orders. Here's a couple of deviations that might be enlightening:

a) A fascinating sideline goes 6 d3 $\mathbb{Q}ge7$ 7 $\mathbb{Q}d2?!$ (D) with the idea $\mathbb{Q}f1-e3$.



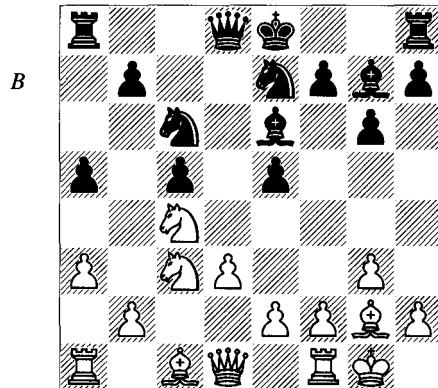
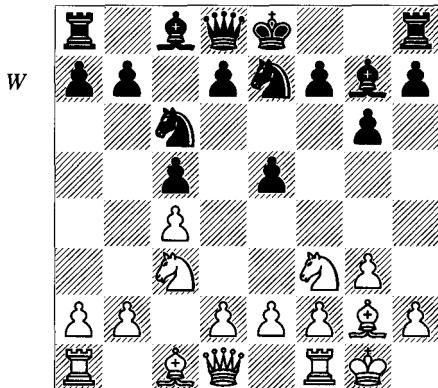
As explained in the reversed position (after the moves 5 e4 $\mathbb{Q}f6$ 6 $\mathbb{Q}ge2$ d6 7 0-0 $\mathbb{Q}d7?!$), White is planning three knight moves to get to e3 ($\mathbb{Q}d2-f1-e3$), just as the knight moves three times following 0-0 and then $\mathbb{Q}e1-c2-e3$. The difference is that he has saved the move 6 0-0, and is thus able to stop Black from playing ...d5 in the critical line 7...d6 8 $\mathbb{Q}f1$ $\mathbb{Q}e6$ (8... $\mathbb{Q}f5$ 9 $\mathbb{Q}e3$ $\mathbb{Q}xe3$ 10 $\mathbb{Q}xe3$ $\mathbb{Q}e6$ appears slightly better for White; 8...a6 with the idea ...b5 is another option) 9 $\mathbb{Q}e3$ $\mathbb{Q}d7$ 10 $\mathbb{Q}ed5$. White has gained his d5 outpost without suffering any punishment. Compare the next game, where he doesn't do so well. After 10 $\mathbb{Q}ed5$, a plausible continuation is 10...0-0 (after 10... $\mathbb{B}b8?$, 11 $\mathbb{Q}g5!$ attacking f6 was very awkward for Black in L.B.Hansen-J.Polgar, Åbenrå (rapid) 1989) 11 $\mathbb{Q}g5$ (also interesting is 11 h4?? h5 12 $\mathbb{Q}a4$, or just 11 $\mathbb{B}b1$ with the idea a3 and b4) 11...f6 12 $\mathbb{Q}d2$ $\mathbb{Q}f7$ 13 0-0 $\mathbb{Q}xd5$ 14 $\mathbb{Q}xd5$ $\mathbb{Q}e7$ 15 $\mathbb{Q}xe7+$ $\mathbb{Q}xe7$ 16 $\mathbb{B}b1$ with a small but annoying advantage.

b) 6 a3 $\mathbb{Q}ge7$ 7 b4?! intends 7... $\mathbb{Q}xb4$ 8 axb4 $\mathbb{Q}xb4$ 9 $\mathbb{Q}a3$ with more than enough compensation because of Black's weak d6-square. However, 7...d5! is a well-established solution that seems satisfactory for Black: 8 cxd5 (the win of a pawn by 8 bxc5 0-0 9 cxd5 $\mathbb{Q}xd5$ is only temporary) 8... $\mathbb{Q}xd5$ 9 $\mathbb{Q}xd5$ $\mathbb{Q}xd5$ 10 $\mathbb{Q}b2$ 0-0 11 0-0 e4! 12 $\mathbb{Q}xg7$ $\mathbb{Q}xg7$ 13 $\mathbb{Q}e1$ cxb4 14 d3 $\mathbb{Q}f5$ 15 $\mathbb{Q}c2$, Beliavsky-Oral, European Team Ch, Leon 2001. Black stands better in any case, but 15...a5! 16 $\mathbb{Q}e3$ $\mathbb{Q}e6$ would leave White looking for compensation.

6... $\mathbb{Q}ge7$ (D)

7 d3

7 $\mathbb{Q}e1$ is the other standard move for White, similar to the last note. He wants to bring the



knight to c2 (from where it might support the move b4) and in some cases on to e3 in order to control d5: 7...0-0 (another set-up that we saw with reversed colours is 7...a6!? 8 ♜c2 ♜b8 { with the idea ...b5} 9 a4 0-0 10 d3 d6; this is a known but unresolved variation in which Black usually plays ...♜b4 to contest White's control of d5) 8 ♜c2 d6 9 d3 ♜b8 10 a3 (the knight on c2 actually supports b4, so there are some reasons to delay ♜e3, especially since that move limits White's options for the c1-bishop). Now:

a) Black can play 10...♜e6 and allow 11 b4, but then 11...e4?! looks too greedy after 12 ♜xe4 ♜xa1 13 ♜xa1, a standard exchange sacrifice. The verdict can vary from position to position, but here the ability to put a bishop on b2 is a good sign; for example, 13...cxb4 14 axb4 d5 15 ♜f6+! ♜g7 16 ♜b2 d4 17 ♜e4! with the idea of ♜c2 (or ♜b3) and e3, removing the d-pawn and breaking down Black's defences.

b) So Black generally responds with 10...a5, when one example is 11 ♜g5 f6 12 ♜d2 ♜e6 13 ♜e3 ♜d4?! 14 ♜ed5 ♜xd5 15 ♜xd5, Kosten-Chabanon, French Team Ch, Cannes 2004. White's outpost is unchallenged and he has a pleasant advantage.

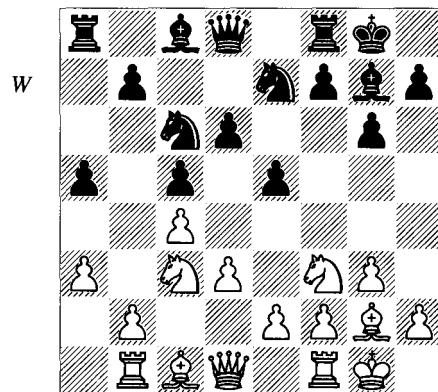
7...0-0

Black, too, can try to save time by not castling. A line that has arisen by varying move-orders is 7...d6 8 a3 a5 9 ♜e1 ♜e6 10 ♜c2 d5 11 cxd5 ♜xd5 12 ♜e3 ♜de7! 13 ♜c4 (D).

White's knights look good, but Black has more space: 13...0-0 14 ♜g5! f6 15 ♜e3 b6 16 ♜a4 ♜c7, Kaidanov-Ilinsky, Gausdal 1991. At this point, White might try to break down Black's centre by 17 f4!. Since 17...exf4? 18 ♜xf4 gives White too many squares and tactical

opportunities, Black could play 17...♜ab8, when after 18 fxe5 ♜xe5 19 ♜xe5 fxe5, 20 g4!? is a clever move designed to prevent Black's most active plan of ...♜f5-d4. Then Black's poor pawn-structure (with the isolated e-pawn) lets him in for a lasting disadvantage, but he probably shouldn't lose with accurate defence.

8 a3 d6 9 ♜b1 a5 (D)



We've arrived at one of the basic positions for this variation.

Barczay – Uhlmann

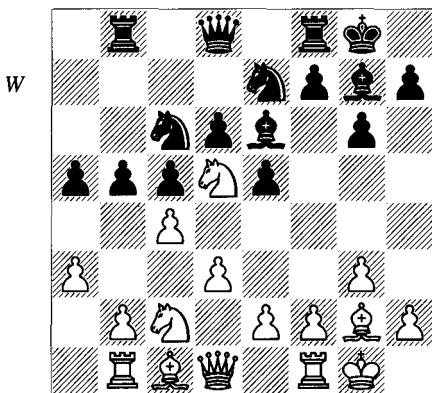
Sarajevo 1969

1 c4 c5 2 ♜c3 g6 3 g3 ♜g7 4 ♜g2 ♜c6 5 ♜f3 e5 6 0-0 ♜ge7 7 d3 0-0 8 a3 d6 9 ♜b1 a5 10 ♜e1

An older line is 10 ♜d2 ♜b8!. Black makes a useful move that anticipates playing ...b5 if White plays ♜d5: 11 ♜e1 ♜e6 12 ♜c2 (12 ♜a4! looks a better try) 12...d5 13 cxd5 ♜xd5 14 ♜xd5 (14 ♜e3 ♜de7!) 14...♜xd5 15 b4

$\mathbb{Q}xg2$ 16 $\mathbb{Q}xg2$ b5! 17 bxa5 $\mathbb{Q}xa5$, Evans-Karpov, San Antonio 1972. It's roughly equal, although Black has some extra space.

10... $\mathbb{Q}e6$ 11 $\mathbb{Q}d5$ $\mathbb{B}b8!$ 12 $\mathbb{Q}c2$ b5 (D)



This pawn-break is the logical consequence of Black's strategy. He is gaining space and trying to loosen White's hold on d5.

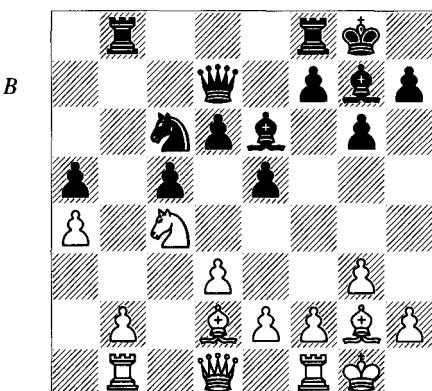
13 $\mathbb{Q}ce3$

Uhlmann queries 13 cxb5 on the grounds of 13... $\mathbb{Q}xd5$ 14 bxc6 $\mathbb{Q}c3$, but after 15 $\mathbb{Q}g5!$ $\mathbb{Q}xe2+$ 16 $\mathbb{W}xe2$ $\mathbb{W}xg5$ 17 b4, White will hold onto his pawn on c6. The simple recapture 13... $\mathbb{B}xb5!$ is better, intending 14 $\mathbb{Q}ce3$ $\mathbb{Q}xd5$ 15 $\mathbb{Q}xd5$ $\mathbb{W}d7$ and ... $\mathbb{B}fb8$.

13... $\mathbb{W}d7$ 14 cxb5 $\mathbb{B}xb5$ 15 a4?!

White gives himself a permanently backward b-pawn because he anticipates winning Black's a-pawn.

15... $\mathbb{B}bb8$ 16 $\mathbb{Q}xe7+$ $\mathbb{Q}xe7$ 17 $\mathbb{Q}c4$ $\mathbb{Q}c6$ 18 $\mathbb{Q}d2$ (D)



18...e4!

For the cost of a pawn, Black's centre pawns are pressing forward, and he has activated both bishops.

19 $\mathbb{Q}xa5$

19 $\mathbb{Q}f4$ exd3 20 $\mathbb{W}xd3$ $\mathbb{Q}d4$ doesn't help White because 21 $\mathbb{Q}xd6??$ meets with 21...g5.

19... $\mathbb{Q}xa5$ 20 $\mathbb{Q}xa5$

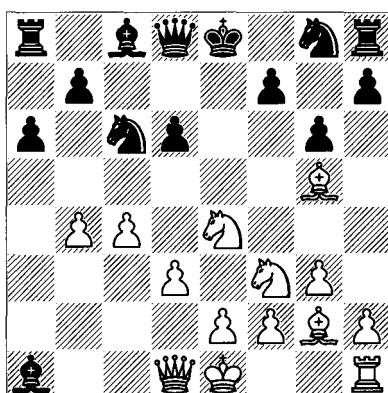
At this point, instead of 20...exd3?, Uhlmann analyses 20... $\mathbb{Q}b3!$ 21 $\mathbb{W}d2$ $\mathbb{Q}a2$ 22 $\mathbb{B}bc1?$ (22 $\mathbb{Q}xe4$ $\mathbb{Q}xb1$ 23 $\mathbb{B}xb1$ d5 24 $\mathbb{Q}f3$ gives White a little counterplay, although Black keeps the pawn after 24... $\mathbb{W}xa4$ 25 $\mathbb{Q}xd5$ $\mathbb{Q}xb2!$) 22... $\mathbb{B}xb2$ 23 $\mathbb{Q}c2$ $\mathbb{B}fb8$ and Black is clearly in charge. Ever since 12...b5, things have looked good for him. White needs to improve, perhaps by delaying the move 0-0, as we saw above. He can also employ the plan shown in the next game.

Minasian – Iliushin

European Ch, Antalya 2004

1 c4 c5 2 $\mathbb{Q}c3$ g6 3 g3 $\mathbb{Q}g7$ 4 $\mathbb{Q}g2$ $\mathbb{Q}c6$ 5 $\mathbb{Q}f3$ e5

5...a6 with the idea of an early ... $\mathbb{B}b8$ and ...b5 is a legitimate plan that I won't be examining here; it is often combined with ...e5. The same idea could result from 5...d6 6 d3 a6, but watch out in that case for 7 a3 e5?! 8 b4!, because now 8...cxb4 9 axb4 e4?! (9... $\mathbb{Q}xb4$ runs into the usual problem of 10 $\mathbb{Q}a3$ $\mathbb{Q}c6$ 11 $\mathbb{Q}e4$, which is good for White) falls for a trick that applies to several positions: 10 $\mathbb{Q}xe4!$ $\mathbb{Q}xa1$ 11 $\mathbb{Q}g5$ (D).

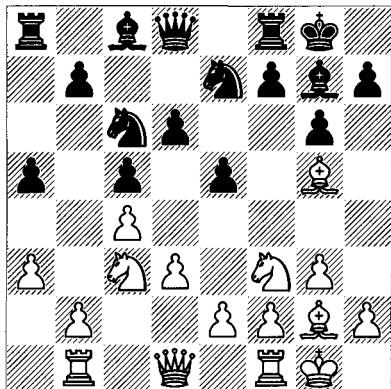


11... $\mathbb{Q}f6$ (11...f6 12 $\mathbb{W}xa1$) 12 $\mathbb{Q}xf6+$ $\mathbb{Q}xf6$ 13 $\mathbb{W}a1$ $\mathbb{Q}xb4$ 14 0-0 and Black is getting massacred on the dark squares.

6 0-0 ♜ge7 7 d3 0-0 8 a3 d6 9 ♜b1 a5 10 ♜g5!? (D)

In the last game White played 10 ♜e1 with little success. With the text-move, White intends to provoke a weakness.

B



10...f6

Black is generally not advised to play 10...h6? due to 11 ♜xe7! ♜xe7 12 ♜d2. It may seem strange for White to give up the bishop-pair, but look at the scope of White's remaining bishop and the pressure on Black's b-pawn that will follow the advance b4. Furthermore, Black doesn't want to get stuck with his bad bishop on g7 versus a strong white knight. These factors are not decisive but make Black's life difficult; for example, 12...♜c6 (12...♝b8 is met by 13 ♜c2! ♜e6 14 b4, not 13 b4?! axb4 14 axb4 e4! with the point 15 ♜cxe4? f5) 13 ♜d5 ♜e6 14 ♜e4 ♜b8 15 ♜ec3 f5 16 b4 with a promising queenside attack.

11 ♜d2 ♜b8

This is the traditional move, but if Black can play 11...♜e6! first, he should strongly consider it, in order to get ...d5 in as quickly as possible. I'm not going to go into the details here, but in that case 12 ♜a4 is White's most promising option. We saw this move with reversed colours after 5 e4 ♜f6. 12 ♜e1 has been played repeatedly over the years. Unfortunately, the benefit of inserting 10 ♜g5 doesn't necessarily show itself after 12...d5! 13 cxd5 ♜xd5:

a) In fact White's apparent purpose – to exploit the a2-g8 diagonal by 14 ♜b3?! – comes up short after 14...a4! with the idea 15 ♜xb7 ♜a5 16 ♜b5 ♜b3; for example, one game went 17 ♜c6 ♜d4 18 ♜xc5?? ♜a5. Instead, 17 ♜e3

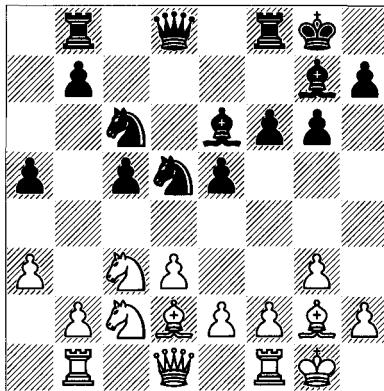
♛xe3 18 fxe3 ♜b8 19 ♜xa4 ♜d2 wins the exchange for Black, Matamoros-Bellon, Havana 2001; White has two pawns for it, but Black has space and the bishop-pair.

b) White's best continuation is 14 ♜c2! a4 15 ♜e3 ♜xe3 16 ♜xe3 ♜a5 17 ♜c1, when he has achieved a kind of balance.

If you want to play for or against 5...e5, you really should have a grip on these ideas.

12 ♜e1 ♜e6 13 ♜c2 d5 14 cxd5 ♜xd5 (D)

W



We've seen this type of position. Black has space and central control, so White needs to get queenside play or he will actually stand worse.

15 ♜e3

The conventional move. However, others are probably more effective:

a) 15 b4! axb4 16 ♜xd5 ♜xd5 17 axb4 has been suggested, when White might still hold a very slight edge after 17...♜xg2 18 ♜xg2 ♜d5+ 19 f3!.

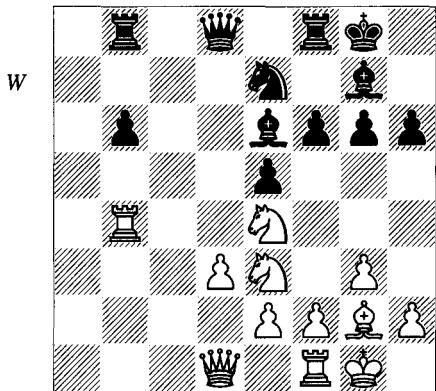
b) Vasiliev-Emelin, Paide 1999 saw 15 ♜xd5 ♜xd5 16 ♜xd5+ ♜xd5 17 b4 cxb4 18 axb4 b6! 19 ♜e3 ♜e6 20 bxa5 bxa5 21 ♜xb8 ♜xb8 22 ♜c4 ♜a8 23 ♜e3 f5 24 ♜a4 ½-½. All very logical.

15...♜de7!

This move works well because the white knights are ineffective now that they can't go to d5. Furthermore, Black threatens to place a knight on d4, attacking the squares b3 and e2. Having said that, 15...♜xe3 16 ♜xe3 (16 fxe3! may well be better) 16...♜d4 has a good reputation; for example, 17 b4 cxb4 18 axb4 b5! 19 bxa5 b4 20 ♜e4 ♜xa5, Zifroni-J.Polgar, Fond du Lac 1990. White stands a bit worse in the face of Black's passed pawn and queenside files.

After the text-move, White must act quickly to disturb Black's central bind:

16 ♜e4 b6 17 b4 axb4 18 axb4 cxb4 19 ♜xb4 ♜xb4 20 ♜xb4 h6! (D)

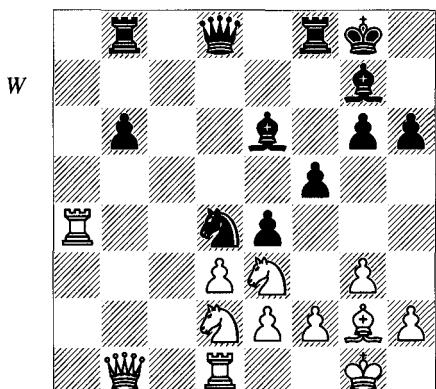


This prepares ...f5 without permitting White to play ♜g5. Black's passed b-pawn can be slightly weak, but if he drives off White's knights and opens lines for his bishop-pair, watch out!

21 ♜b1 f5 22 ♜d2 e4! 23 ♜d1 ♜c6 24 ♜a4

White has to leave the b-file in view of 24 ♜b5? ♜d4.

24...♜d4 (D)



Look at those bishops! To begin with, Black threatens 25...♜xe2+ followed by 26...♜c3.

25 ♜e1 ♜d7 26 ♜b4 ♜a8!

Eyeing a1.

27 dxe4 f4! 28 ♜d5

After 28 gxf4 ♜a1 29 ♜xa1 ♜xe2+ 30 ♜xe2 ♜xa1 Black will win, because f4 hangs and Black's pawn-structure is far superior.

28...fxg3 29 hxg3 ♜xe2+ 30 ♜xe2 ♜a1 31 ♜xa1 ♜xa1 32 ♜f1

32 ♜xb6?? loses to 32...♝d3.

32...b5! 33 ♜d2 ♜xd5 34 ♜xd5 ♜a7 35 ♜e3 ♜c3 36 ♜bxb5 ♜e1! 37 ♜h2 ♜xf2

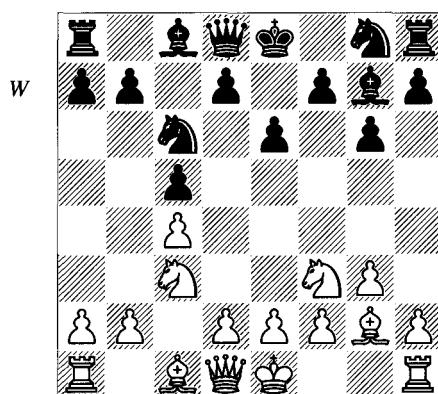
Black is materially ahead and White has weaknesses. This game is a fine example of a sustained initiative.

Central Counterattack with 5...e6

Petrosian – Fischer

USSR vs Rest of World, Belgrade 1970

1 c4 g6 2 ♜c3 c5 3 g3 ♜g7 4 ♜g2 ♜c6 5 ♜f3 e6 (D)



Over the years this has been Black's most popular defence to 5 ♜f3. With 5...e6, he endeavours to create an immediate imbalance by placing his king's knight on e7, in contrast to White's on f3. Furthermore, he will usually play ...d5, strongly influencing the centre, whereas White will apparently have to be content with the less formidable d3.

Why would White agree to this? First, because 5...e6 creates a few sore points on Black's dark squares d6 and f6; perhaps he can exploit those with the right strategy. In addition, White is able to bring his pieces out just a tad more quickly than Black; not dramatically so, but just enough to prepare expansion on the queenside via b4 before his opponent is fully ready to meet it.

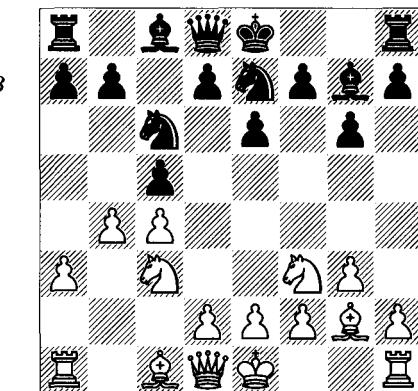
In objective terms, Black should be able to gain approximate equality. However, he must be ready to handle both tactical and positional strategies from his opponent, who controls the fundamental direction of play.

6 0-0

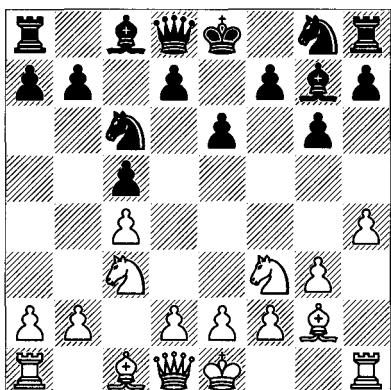
If White wants to employ a set-up with d3, he probably does best to play it now, because 6 d3 $\mathbb{Q}ge7$ allows for a quick and useful 7 $\mathbb{Q}g5!$; we shall see why that is so in the next game. Here are two among several alternatives:

a) You should note the fact that 6 e3 normally transposes to the 5 e3 lines, because 6... $\mathbb{Q}ge7$ 7 d4 cxd4 8 $\mathbb{Q}xd4$ follows – see 5 e3 e6 above.

b) 6 h4!? (D) is a thought-provoking move.



B



White hopes that after 6...h5, Black's weaknesses may count for something. Then the reader might want to analyse 7 d4!? and compare it to 5 $\mathbb{Q}f3$ e6 6 d4 below; it doesn't hurt that White can play $\mathbb{Q}g5$ without getting chased away by ...h6. Apart from 6...h5, Black sometimes permits White to advance the h-pawn; for example, 6... $\mathbb{Q}ge7$ 7 h5 or 6...d5 7 h5, both of which are double-edged. Finally, the most common move, 6...h6, might be compared with 6 d3 $\mathbb{Q}ge7$ 7 $\mathbb{Q}g5$ h6 8 $\mathbb{Q}d2$ of our next game; here, too, White will try to gain a tempo by $\mathbb{Q}c1$ at the right moment.

c) 6 a3 is fairly popular due to 6... $\mathbb{Q}ge7$ 7 b4!? (D).

But this has several reasonable replies:

c1) 7... $\mathbb{Q}xb4$!? 8 axb4 cxb4 9 $\mathbb{Q}b5$ (9 $\mathbb{Q}e4$ $\mathbb{Q}xa1$ 10 d4 $\mathbb{Q}c3$ + 11 $\mathbb{Q}f1$ 0-0 12 $\mathbb{Q}g5$ is a fantastically complex line) 9... $\mathbb{Q}xa1$ 10 $\mathbb{Q}a4$ $\mathbb{Q}f6$ 11 $\mathbb{Q}xb4$. This position has been said to provide

White with enough compensation, but that assessment may be optimistic.

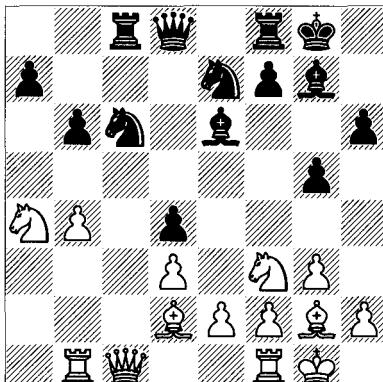
c2) 7...cxb4 8 axb4 $\mathbb{Q}xb4$ 9 $\mathbb{Q}a3$ offers White some compensation for a pawn, although 9... $\mathbb{Q}ec6$! with the idea 10 $\mathbb{Q}a4$ a5 11 $\mathbb{Q}b1$ 0-0! should be fine for Black; instead, 10 0-0 0-0 11 d4 could be tried.

c3) The safe 7...b6 8 $\mathbb{Q}b1$ 0-0 9 0-0 has been played a few times, although then 9...d5?! may not be best, because 10 bxc5 bxc5 11 $\mathbb{Q}a4$ gives White some pull.

Another issue about this move-order with 6 a3 concerns 6...d5 (instead of 6... $\mathbb{Q}ge7$). Then 7 0-0 $\mathbb{Q}ge7$ (7...dxc4 8 $\mathbb{Q}a4$) 8 d3 resembles our main line. You could argue that the move a3 has been played rather early, although I see no obvious way for Black to exploit that.

6... $\mathbb{Q}ge7$ 7 d3 0-0 8 $\mathbb{Q}d2$

The sort of position that Black would like to head for is illustrated by 8 a3 d5 9 cxd5!? (9 $\mathbb{Q}d2$ transposes to a main line) 9...exd5 10 $\mathbb{Q}b1$ b6 11 $\mathbb{Q}f4$ h6 12 $\mathbb{Q}c1$ d4! 13 $\mathbb{Q}a4$ g5 14 $\mathbb{Q}e6$ 15 b4 cxb4 16 axb4 $\mathbb{Q}c8$ (D).

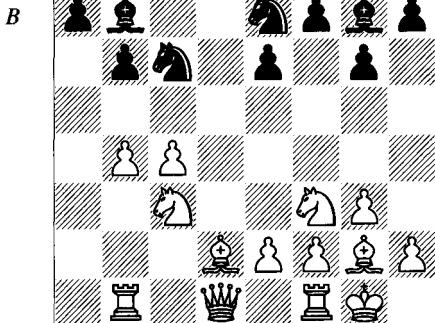


This is Csom-Smejkal, Kiel 1978. White has adequate play, but his position is difficult to handle. The d4-pawn is a troublesome intruder, whereas White's cxd5 has freed Black's queen's bishop. In fact, Black's bishop tends to stand better when nicely centralized on e6 than on b7. For the next few moves, the same considerations apply to the option of playing cxd5.

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

This game has influenced how White's set-up is viewed, in part because Fischer called Petrosian's move 11 b4 a mistake; and others append '?' to it and speak of Petrosian's bad judgement. In fact, other moves are passive, and White has his share of the play.

11...cxb4 12 axb4 dxc4 13 dxc4 (D)



A fundamental imbalance has arisen that we see in some of the most important variations of 5 $\mathbb{Q}f3$ e6 (and 5 e3 $\mathbb{Q}f6$). White has a structure with hanging pawns, in which the one on c4 can be a target on the open c-file. However, he has the idea of creating a passed pawn by c5, which can highlight Black's weakness on d6 and work in conjunction with a rook on d1.

13... $\mathbb{B}c8$ 14 c5! bxc5 15 bxc5

Now White's rook on b1 has gained scope and he threatens $\mathbb{Q}e4$ -d6.

15... $\mathbb{Q}a5!$ 16 $\mathbb{Q}a4$

16 $\mathbb{Q}b5$ has been played in this and similar positions; Black's best is 16... $\mathbb{B}xc5$! 17 $\mathbb{W}a4$, and now 17... $\mathbb{Q}ec6$ 18 $\mathbb{Q}e3$ $\mathbb{B}c4$ 19 $\mathbb{W}a3$ a6! 20 $\mathbb{Q}d6$ $\mathbb{B}c3$ 21 $\mathbb{Q}xb7$ $\mathbb{B}xa3$ maintains equality, while 17...a6 18 $\mathbb{Q}xa5$ $\mathbb{W}e8$ 19 $\mathbb{W}a3$ $\mathbb{B}xb5$ 20 $\mathbb{B}xb5$ axb5 21 $\mathbb{Q}b4$ $\mathbb{Q}d5$!? (21... $\mathbb{Q}f6$? 22 $\mathbb{Q}d1$ $\mathbb{Q}g7$ 23 $\mathbb{Q}e5$ $\mathbb{Q}xg2$ 24 $\mathbb{Q}d7$!) 22 $\mathbb{Q}xf8$ $\mathbb{Q}xf8$ is unclear.

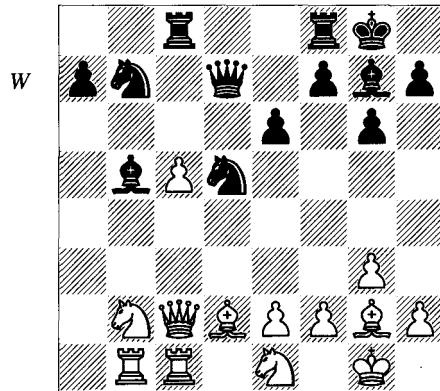
16... $\mathbb{Q}c6$! 17 $\mathbb{W}c2$ $\mathbb{Q}b7$

Black's harmonious realignment has led to apparent pressure on c5.

18 $\mathbb{Q}fc1$ $\mathbb{W}d7$ 19 $\mathbb{Q}e1$?

19 $\mathbb{Q}g5$ $\mathbb{Q}d5$! 20 $\mathbb{Q}b2$ $\mathbb{Q}b5$ 21 $\mathbb{Q}d3$ $\mathbb{Q}xd3$ 22 $\mathbb{W}xd3$ $\mathbb{Q}xc5$ 23 $\mathbb{W}b5$ is rather unclear.

19... $\mathbb{Q}d5$!? 20 $\mathbb{Q}b2$! $\mathbb{Q}b5$ (D)



Annotators have assumed that Black has the upper hand here, based upon the weakness of the pawn on c5. But that pawn is also a passed pawn, and White has well-centralized forces. Furthermore, if he can play e4, Black's knights will be denied key squares. Thus White should have played 21 $\mathbb{Q}bd3$!, planning the move e4 to drive Black's powerful knight off d5. Then 21... $\mathbb{Q}d4$?, as in the game, fails to 22 $\mathbb{Q}f3$! $\mathbb{Q}xc5$ (22... $\mathbb{Q}xc5$? 23 $\mathbb{Q}de5$ $\mathbb{Q}xe5$ 24 $\mathbb{Q}xe5$ $\mathbb{W}b7$ 25 $\mathbb{Q}h6$ $\mathbb{B}fd8$ 26 $\mathbb{Q}g4$) 23 $\mathbb{Q}xc5$ $\mathbb{Q}xc5$ 24 $\mathbb{Q}e5$ $\mathbb{W}e8$ 25 $\mathbb{Q}h6$ with too many threats on the dark squares. Instead, the game continued:

21 $\mathbb{Q}ed3$!? $\mathbb{Q}d4$! 22 $\mathbb{W}b3$?

22 $\mathbb{Q}h6$! $\mathbb{B}fd8$ 23 $\mathbb{W}d2$ again prepares e4, perhaps prefaced by e3. The c5-pawn is invulnerable; for example, 23... $\mathbb{Q}xc5$? 24 $\mathbb{Q}xc5$ $\mathbb{Q}xc5$ 25 $\mathbb{Q}xc5$ $\mathbb{Q}xc5$ 26 $\mathbb{W}d4$. White may have a small edge, and in any case does not stand worse.

22... $\mathbb{Q}xc5$! 23 $\mathbb{Q}xc5$ $\mathbb{B}xc5$ 24 $\mathbb{Q}xc5$ $\mathbb{Q}xc5$ 25 $\mathbb{Q}d3$ $\mathbb{Q}xd3$! 26 $\mathbb{W}xd3$

White stays a pawn down, although he has the bishop-pair and Black's weaknesses (the a-pawn, for one) to give him some compensation. To sum up, the opening was adequate for Black, but only just so, and in fact he had to play more accurately than White to avoid disadvantage. Compare the following game.

Jobava – Alekseev

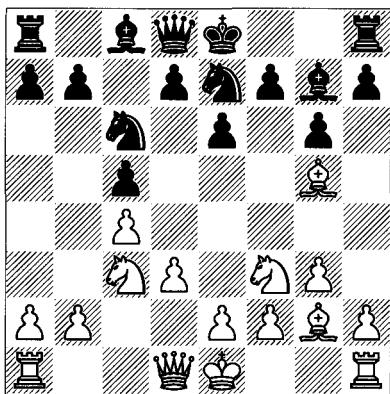
Aeroflot Open, Moscow 2006

1 c4 c5 2 ♜c3 g6 3 g3 ♜g7 4 ♜g2 ♜c6 5 ♜f3 e6 6 d3

This modest positional move of the d-pawn couldn't contrast more with the tactical line 6 d4!?, which we'll look at in the next game.

6...♜ge7 7 ♜g5! (D)

B



Of all the quiet methods for trying to counter Black's central expansion, this is the most interesting and has achieved the greatest success. White's simple idea is that Black will have to kick the bishop out at some point by ...h6, which will lead to a small weakness. More significantly, the already desirable move ♜c1 will come with a gain of tempo in the most important variations.

7...h6

Black can wait, for example by 7...0-0 8 0-0 d5, but then 9 ♜b1 will probably transpose anyway after a likely ...h6, and he also has to consider 9 ♜c1, stopping ...h6, or 9 ♜a4. It doesn't seem worth it for Black to allow White extra possibilities.

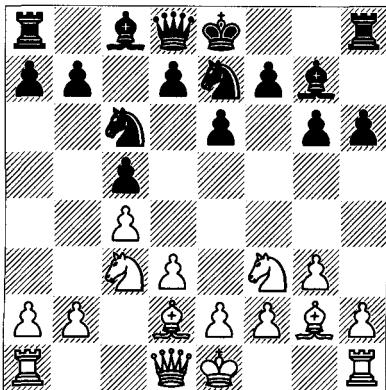
8 ♜d2 (D)

8...d5

This aggressive central advance has been almost automatic with most masters who use 5...e6. Instead, Black can legitimately play more slowly, combining ...d6 with ...b6 and ...♜b7, or even try for ...a6 and ...b5. Of course, you can argue that he might then have been just as well off to play 5...d6 rather than 5...e6.

It's also not clear whether 8...0-0 makes any difference. 9 ♜c1!? is a possible reply, and the

B

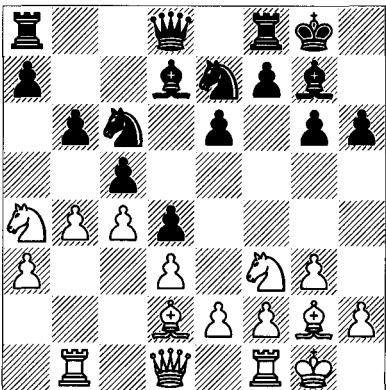


alternative 9 a3 with the idea ♜b1 and b4 could easily transpose to the main game.

9 a3 0-0 10 0-0 b6 11 ♜b1 ♜b7

The immediate 11...d4 12 ♜a4 allows White to play b4 after which, because of the knight's attack on c5, Black is forced to exchange his pawn there; once freed, White's queenside pawns can cause all sorts of mischief. For example, look at a position such as that after 12...♜d7 13 b4 (D).

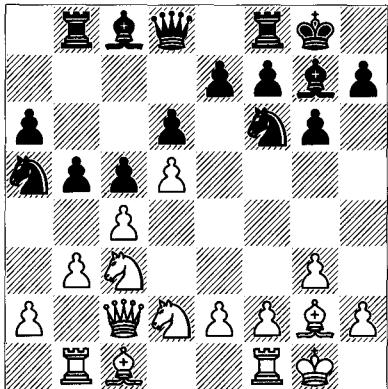
B



White has achieved the b4 advance more rapidly than he might have, but the point is a general one. You should compare this type of position with a typical one from the Panno Variation of the King's Indian Defence (see diagram on following page).

Here White has defended c4 by ♜f3-d2. In our English Opening position, Black's knight on e7 is three moves away from a square from which it could defend c5. That fact provides some of the motivation for b4 (and ...b5) in the Symmetrical English: once the move is achieved,

B



there is a good chance that it will compel the breakdown of the central support on c5 (or c4).

Finally, White will make the b4 pawn-break even if Black plays ...a5; this results in pressure on Black's weak b6-pawn.

12 ♜c1!

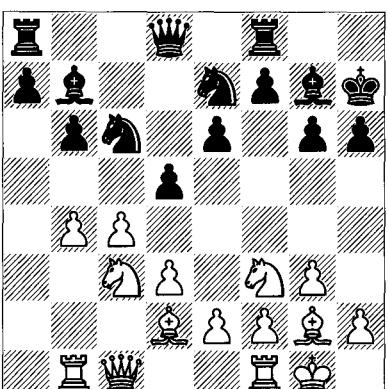
A major point of 7 ♜g5!. Black's king will gain nothing by being on h7 rather than g8, so White has gained a full tempo over the previous game, which he uses to clear the d-file and support his queenside advance. Instead, the exchange 12 cxd5 exd5 13 b4 cxb4 14 axb4 is (once again!) harmless due to 14...d4 15 ♜d5.

12...♝h7 13 b4

Now the capture bxc5 will fix a weakness on c5 (assuming recapture with a pawn), so Black exchanges.

13...cxb4 14 axb4 (D)

B



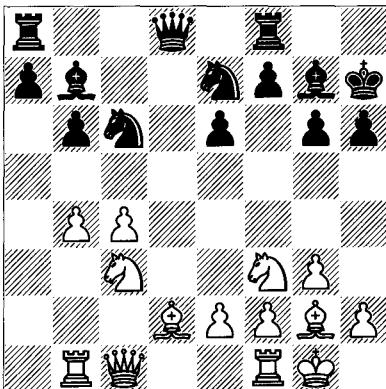
14...dxc4

14...♝d7 allows White to achieve his desired advance by 15 c5!, after which he threatens b5,

and also controls d6. In Jobava-A.Kovačević, European Team Ch, Leon 2001, White got the advantage by playing 15 b5!? ♜d8? (15...♜d4 is better) 16 c5! bxc5 17 ♜a4 with a clear superiority, since the dark squares are collapsing: 17...c4 18 dxc4 dxc4 19 ♜c5 ♜c7 20 ♜xc4 ♜d5 21 ♜b4 ♜c8? (but the game situation is already desperate) 22 ♜bc1 ♜d6 23 e4 ♜xc5 24 ♜xc5 ♜xc5 25 ♜xc5 ♜xe4 26 ♜g5+ hxg5 27 ♜xe4 1-0.

15 dxc4 (D)

B



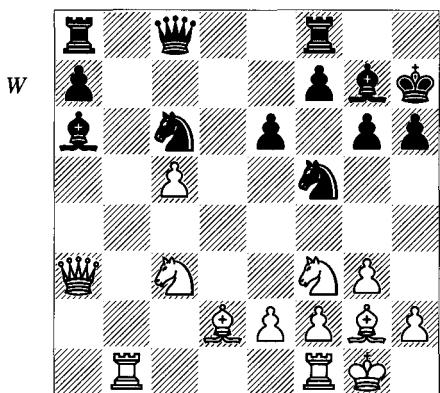
An interesting position, very much like Fischer-Petrosian above, and also like those lines that we saw above stemming from 5 e3 ♜f6 6 ♜ge2 d6, etc., with colours reversed. But in this case White has gained the extra move ♜c1, which not only gives him time to create a passed pawn on the queenside by c5, having in mind ♜b5-d6 or ♜e4-d6, but clears the way for ♜d1. Black is already hard-pressed for a solution to this strategy.

15...♝c8?!

This has been the normal move, as in the reversed position. Black's situation is more critical than it may seem at first:

- The thematic and innocent-looking move 15...♝c8? (the idea in Petrosian-Fischer) practically loses right away after 16 ♜d1 ♜e8 (16...♝c7 17 c5 threatens b5; then 17...bxc5 18 ♜b5 ♜b8 19 bxc5 harasses Black's queen and prepares ♜d6, ♜c3 and/or ♜a3) 17 c5 ♜d8?!? (18 b5 was threatened, as well as ♜b5-d6, ♜a3, and more) 18 ♜a3 ♜a8 and even better than 19 b5 bxc5 20 ♜a4 (Tadić-Ninov, Belgrade 2003) is 19 ♜f4!, when Black is completely tied up.

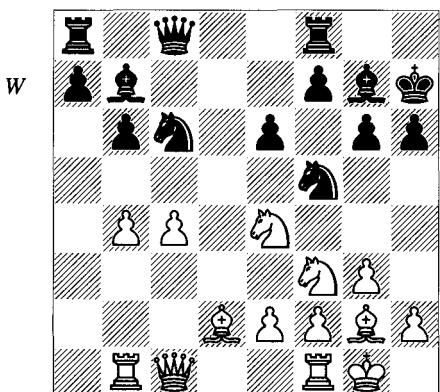
b) 15... $\mathbb{Q}f5$ is more aggressive and logical, and yet it doesn't really address White's positional threat; moreover, putting a knight on d4 may not mean much for Black: 16 c5! bxc5 (after 16... $\mathbb{Q}e5$, White can grab a loose pawn by 17 $\mathbb{Q}xe5$ $\mathbb{Q}xg2$ 18 $\mathbb{Q}xg2$ $\mathbb{Q}xe5$ 19 e4 $\mathbb{Q}d4$ 20 $\mathbb{Q}xh6$) 17 bxc5 $\mathbb{Q}a6$! (17... $\mathbb{B}b8$? 18 $\mathbb{Q}f4$ e5 19 $\mathbb{Q}xe5$! $\mathbb{Q}xe5$ 20 $\mathbb{Q}xb7$ $\mathbb{Q}e7$ 21 c6) 18 $\mathbb{Q}a3$ $\mathbb{Q}c8$ (D).



19 g4! $\mathbb{Q}fe7$, and instead of 20 $\mathbb{Q}a1$! (Jobava-Mchedlishvili, Tbilisi 2000), 20 g5! would cause great trouble on the dark squares, based upon $\mathbb{Q}e4$ and $\mathbb{Q}c3$.

In the end, neither 15... $\mathbb{Q}c8$ nor 15... $\mathbb{Q}f5$ is fully satisfactory for Black.

16 $\mathbb{Q}e4$ $\mathbb{Q}f5$ (D)



17 $\mathbb{Q}c3$?

In Gritsak-Konenko, Rivne 2005, White went right for the passed pawn and d6-square by 17 c5! $\mathbb{Q}cd4$ 18 $\mathbb{Q}xd4$ $\mathbb{Q}xd4$ 19 $\mathbb{Q}e1$ $\mathbb{Q}d5$. Then he should have played the thematic 20

$\mathbb{Q}c3$!, with the deadly ideas of e3 and $\mathbb{Q}b2$. For example, 20... $\mathbb{Q}c7$ 21 e3 (or 21 $\mathbb{Q}b2$) 21... $\mathbb{Q}f5$ (21... $\mathbb{Q}b5$ 22 $\mathbb{Q}xg7$ $\mathbb{Q}xg7$ 23 $\mathbb{Q}b2+f6$ 24 $\mathbb{Q}bc1$) 22 $\mathbb{Q}b2$, etc.

The game went 20 $\mathbb{Q}d6$! $\mathbb{Q}a6$, and White still could have obtained a substantial advantage by 21 e4!. The position after 17 c5!, however, really throws into relief how much better White stands in this variation.

17...e5!

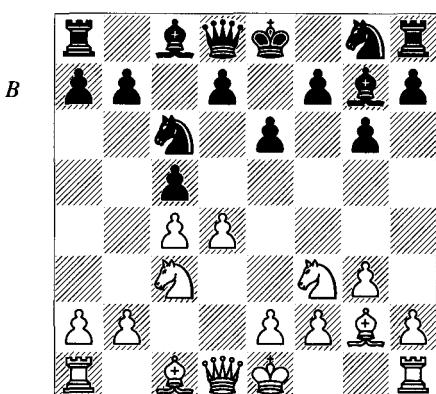
Guarding f6 and aspiring to get a knight to d4. Black would like to play 17... $\mathbb{Q}cd4$?!, but he can't maintain control after 18 $\mathbb{Q}xd4$ $\mathbb{Q}xd4$ 19 e3 $\mathbb{Q}xc3$ 20 $\mathbb{Q}xc3$ $\mathbb{Q}xe4$ 21 $\mathbb{Q}xe4$ $\mathbb{Q}b8$ 22 $\mathbb{Q}fd1$ with c5 next.

18 e3

Black's pieces are in good spots now, although it's still hard to cope with White's simple idea of c5. After many vicissitudes, White went on to win.

Ivanchuk – Krasenkow
Spanish Team Ch, Olite 2006

1 c4 c5 2 g3 g6 3 $\mathbb{Q}g2$ $\mathbb{Q}g7$ 4 $\mathbb{Q}c3$ $\mathbb{Q}c6$ 5 $\mathbb{Q}f3$ e6 6 d4 (D)



For many years this radical pawn offer was not taken seriously, partly because the expenditure of two tempi to place a bishop on g2 would not generally fit into a sacrificial scheme. So, what is going on? Above all, White is trying to exploit the weak dark squares created by the move 5...e6, in particular d6 and f6. In what follows he will play either $\mathbb{Q}b5$ or $\mathbb{Q}e4$, attacking d6. In addition, 6 d4 frees his dark-squared bishop to rush into play by $\mathbb{Q}f4$ or $\mathbb{Q}g5$, hitting

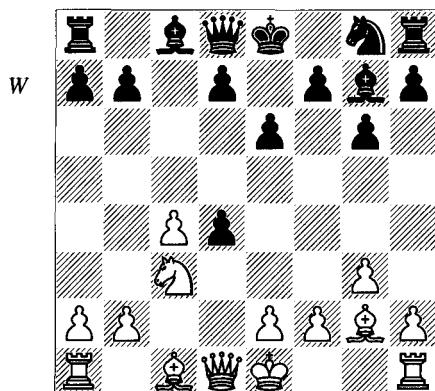
one of those weaknesses. Since Black's c-pawn will end up on d4 (or gone), the potential manoeuvre b3 and $\mathbb{A}a3$ will strike at the d6-square and sometimes prevent castling (even $\mathbb{A}b2$ attacks down the long diagonal), and the advance c5 might add to White's grip on d6. Finally, the move e3 can be relevant, adding to the attack on d4 and potentially opening White's f-file (if ...dxe3 is answered by fxe3).

So we can see the contours of what White is aiming for. That's all well and fine, but Black has his own set of advantages, not least of which is that he will win a pawn; in many cases, the time that White has to expend recovering it will give Black the chance to develop rapidly. Furthermore, he gains a central majority, which enables him to play either an aggressive ...d5, breaking up White's centre, or ...e5, securing the d4 point. The centre pawns are by themselves a barrier against White's plans to infiltrate into the dark squares. Furthermore, although White is about to make a very useful move with his knight, it is his second move with the same piece, and a third will usually come shortly.

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

In the next game I address the alternative 6...cx d4.

7 $\mathbb{Q}xd4$ cxd4 (D)



8 $\mathbb{Q}e4$

White sets up for c5, $\mathbb{Q}g5$ and/or $\mathbb{Q}d6+$. I'm not going to go into the intricacies of 8 $\mathbb{Q}b5$ $\mathbb{W}b6$, when 9 e3 $\mathbb{Q}e7$ 10 $\mathbb{Q}xd4$ is thought to be about equal, and 9 $\mathbb{W}a4$ a6 intending 10 e3! d3! hasn't worked out well for White. As always, those conclusions lack the support of irrefutable

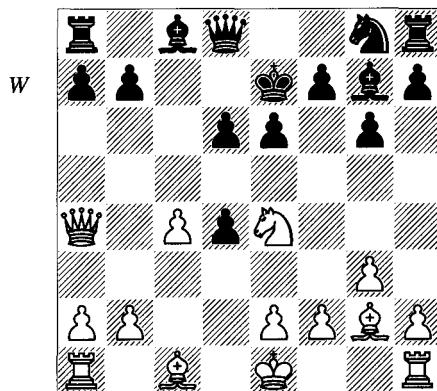
evidence, but 8 $\mathbb{Q}e4$ definitely appears more promising.

8...d5

Black protects d6 and activates his centre. Theory hasn't settled upon the best move in spite of extensive practical experience. I'm going to present a few options to illustrate typical themes, but keep in mind that they represent only a fraction of the available material. If you're on either side of this line, research and personal analysis are strongly recommended.

a) 8... $\mathbb{Q}e7$ 9 $\mathbb{Q}d6+$ $\mathbb{W}f8$ 10 $\mathbb{W}b3$ (10 $\mathbb{Q}xb7$ $\mathbb{W}c7$ is fine for Black) 10... $\mathbb{Q}c6$ 11 0-0 b6, S.Larsen-G.Horvath, Györ 1990, and Kosten suggests 12 $\mathbb{A}f4$, having in mind 12...e5?! (12...h6 13 $\mathbb{W}a3$ $\mathbb{Q}g8$ 14 b4!) 13 $\mathbb{Q}d2$ $\mathbb{W}e7$ 14 $\mathbb{W}a3$, when White threatens simply $\mathbb{Q}d5$ and $\mathbb{Q}xf7$. This looks horrible for Black.

b) 8...d6 9 $\mathbb{W}a4+$ $\mathbb{Q}e7$ (D).



10 $\mathbb{Q}d2$ (this has the idea of $\mathbb{Q}b4$; alternatives include 10 c5?! d5?! 11 $\mathbb{Q}d6$ and 10 $\mathbb{W}a3$ f5 11 $\mathbb{Q}g5+$ $\mathbb{Q}f6$ 12 $\mathbb{Q}xf6$ $\mathbb{Q}xf6$ 13 $\mathbb{Q}xf6+$ $\mathbb{Q}xf6$ 14 0-0-0 e5! 15 e3 $\mathbb{W}c7!$ 16 exd4 $\mathbb{Q}e6$ 17 $\mathbb{Q}b1$, which is hard to assess) 10...a5 (not 10...f5?! 11 $\mathbb{Q}xd6!$ $\mathbb{Q}xd6$ 12 $\mathbb{Q}a5$ $\mathbb{W}d7$ 13 c5+ $\mathbb{Q}e7$ 14 c6!) 11 $\mathbb{W}a3$ (White might do well to establish himself on the dark squares with 11 c5! d5 12 $\mathbb{Q}d6$) 11...f5! 12 $\mathbb{Q}g5+$ (or 12 $\mathbb{Q}g5$ h6 13 $\mathbb{Q}f3$) 12... $\mathbb{Q}f6$ 13 $\mathbb{Q}xf6+$ $\mathbb{Q}xf6$ 14 $\mathbb{Q}xf6$ $\mathbb{Q}xf6$ 15 0-0-0 (a more aggressive approach is 15 0-0-0! e5 16 e3) 15... $\mathbb{W}b6$ 16 $\mathbb{Q}ad1$ $\mathbb{Q}d8$ 17 e3 dxe3 18 fxe3 $\mathbb{W}b4$ 19 $\mathbb{W}d3$, Schwartzman-Fedder, Copenhagen 1990. Black's centre pawns would have provided a solid protective shield after 19...e5!.

c) 8... $\mathbb{W}c7$?! 9 c5 $\mathbb{Q}e7$ 10 $\mathbb{Q}f4!$ $\mathbb{W}a5+$ (not 10...e5?? 11 $\mathbb{Q}d6+$ and then 11... $\mathbb{Q}f8$ 12 $\mathbb{W}b3$)

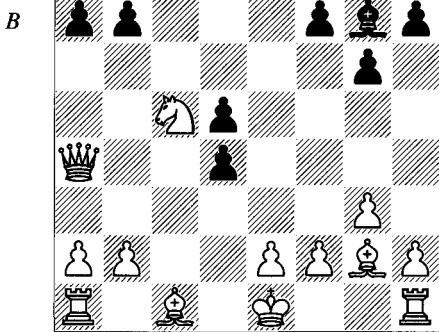
leads to mate or win of the queen, but 11... $\mathbb{Q}d8$ 12 $\mathbb{Q}xf7+$ $\mathbb{Q}e8$ 13 $\mathbb{Q}d6+$ $\mathbb{Q}d8$ 14 $\mathbb{Q}g5!$ $\mathbb{W}a5+$ 15 $\mathbb{Q}d2!$ $\mathbb{W}xd2+ 16 \mathbb{Q}xd2 \mathbb{Q}c7 17 \mathbb{Q}a5+ \mathbb{Q}b8$ 18 $\mathbb{Q}b5!$ will also win material) 11 $\mathbb{Q}d2 \mathbb{W}c7$ 12 $\mathbb{Q}d6+$ $\mathbb{Q}f8$ 13 $\mathbb{M}c1$ $\mathbb{Q}f5$ 14 $\mathbb{W}b3$ $\mathbb{Q}e5$ 15 $\mathbb{Q}c4$ $\mathbb{Q}f6$ 16 0-0 (Kosten suggests 16 $\mathbb{Q}a5$ $\mathbb{W}b8$ 17 $\mathbb{Q}d6$) 16... $\mathbb{Q}g7$, Markowski-Genov, European Team Ch, Plovdiv 2003, and here Kosten supplies the line 17 e4! dxe3 18 fxe3 with the idea of g4, and if 18...h5, 19 $\mathbb{Q}c3!$. Black really should look elsewhere.

9 cxd5 exd5 10 $\mathbb{W}a4+$ $\mathbb{Q}f8$

After 10... $\mathbb{W}d7$ 11 $\mathbb{Q}d6+$ $\mathbb{Q}f8$ 12 $\mathbb{W}xd7$ $\mathbb{Q}xd7$ 13 $\mathbb{Q}xb7$ White regains the pawn with the better structure; for example, 13... $\mathbb{Q}e7$ 14 $\mathbb{Q}f4$ and Black has real problems.

11 $\mathbb{Q}c5!$ (D)

Now the game turns upon whether White's positional pluses can outweigh Black's extra pawn. That itself depends upon how quickly Black can bring his king to safety. Precise play will be at a premium. At any rate, White should stay away from 11 $\mathbb{W}a3+?$ $\mathbb{W}e7$ 12 $\mathbb{Q}d6$ d3! 13 0-0 $\mathbb{Q}e5$, as in Chernin-Macieja, Budapest 2000.



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

Getting the king into safety is a difficult task. This method was found after experiences with 11... $\mathbb{Q}e7$ 12 0-0 $\mathbb{W}d6$ 13 $\mathbb{Q}d3$, when the knight sits on a classic blockading square. White's pieces are active, and he hopes to do something on the c-file and a3-f8 diagonal before Black's king escapes and he connects rooks. Sebenik-Djurković, Ptuj 2005 continued 13... $\mathbb{Q}d7$ 14 $\mathbb{W}b3$ (14 $\mathbb{W}d1!$) 14... $\mathbb{Q}c6+!$ (14... $\mathbb{W}b6!$) 15 $\mathbb{Q}f4$ $\mathbb{W}d8$ 16 $\mathbb{M}ac1$ h6, and here 17 $\mathbb{Q}b4!$ $\mathbb{Q}g8$ 18 $\mathbb{Q}e5$ would have secured the better game.

12 $\mathbb{W}b3!$ $\mathbb{Q}e7$ 13 $\mathbb{Q}h6+$ $\mathbb{Q}g7$ 14 $\mathbb{Q}d2!$ $\mathbb{W}b6$

Perhaps 14... $\mathbb{Q}f6$ (back again!) improves, with the idea 15 $\mathbb{Q}xb7$ $\mathbb{W}c7$.

15 $\mathbb{Q}b4+?$

Krasenkov proposes 15 $\mathbb{Q}a4+?$, which seems best: 15... $\mathbb{W}d8$ (15... $\mathbb{W}xb3$ 16 axb3 and $\mathbb{Q}b6$ follows) 16 0-0 with an edge. There are numerous alternatives for both sides, which makes this an attractive variation.

15... $\mathbb{Q}g8+!$ 16 $\mathbb{Q}d3$ $\mathbb{Q}f5$ 17 $\mathbb{Q}xe7$ $\mathbb{M}e8$

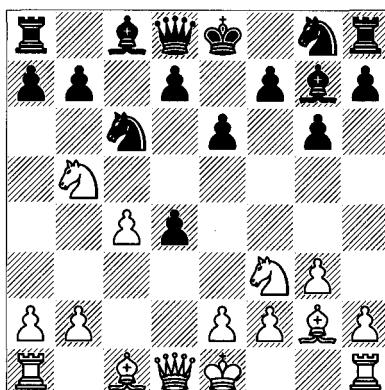
Now, instead of 18 $\mathbb{W}a3$ $\mathbb{Q}xd3$ 19 $\mathbb{W}xd3$ $\mathbb{Q}xe7$, which made White work a little for the draw, Krasenkov proposes 18 $\mathbb{W}xb6$ axb6 19 $\mathbb{Q}f4$ $\mathbb{Q}xe7$ 20 $\mathbb{Q}xd5$ $\mathbb{Q}e6$ 21 $\mathbb{Q}d2$, when there's little in it for either side.

White's pawn sacrifice is a superb example of the use of threats and tactics to achieve positional goals. Let's go back and look at capturing on d4 with the pawn instead of the knight:

Sulava – Hauchard

Gonfreville 1999

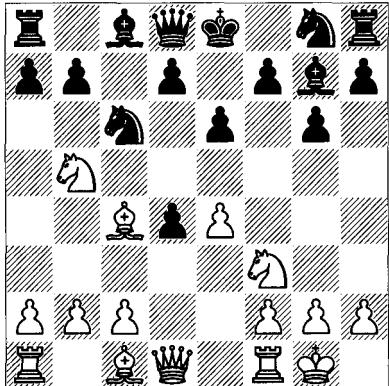
1 e4 c5 2 $\mathbb{Q}c3$ $\mathbb{Q}c6$ 3 g3 g6 4 $\mathbb{Q}g2$ $\mathbb{Q}g7$ 5 $\mathbb{Q}f3$ e6 6 d4!? cxd4 7 $\mathbb{Q}b5$ (D)



This position bears comparison with the Sicilian line 1 e4 c5 2 $\mathbb{Q}c3$ $\mathbb{Q}c6$ 3 $\mathbb{Q}f3$ g6 4 $\mathbb{Q}g2$ $\mathbb{Q}g7$ 5 0-0 e6 6 d4!? cxd4 7 $\mathbb{Q}b5$ (D).

The position of White's bishop on c4 varies from that of its English Opening counterpart on g2, but the goal of exploiting weaknesses on the dark squares d6 and f6 is the same. Instead of 6...cxd4, 6... $\mathbb{Q}xd4$ 7 $\mathbb{Q}xd4$ cxd4 (7... $\mathbb{Q}xd4$ 8 $\mathbb{Q}b5$ $\mathbb{Q}e5$ 9 f4) 8 $\mathbb{Q}b5$ is also similar our English Opening line. In that case, White anticipates 8... $\mathbb{W}b6$ 9 c3! dxc3 10 bxc3 with the idea

B



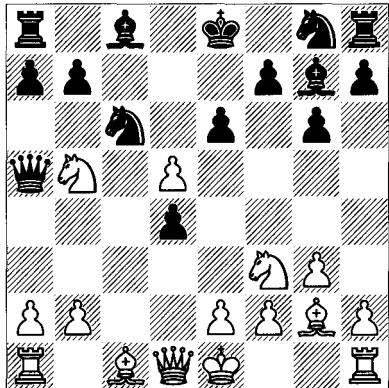
of $\mathbb{Q}a3$. These themes appear in the variations below.

7...d5

7...e5?! hasn't attracted much attention. One line is 8 e3?! (White would do well to look into 8 $\mathbb{Q}d6$ $\mathbb{Q}e7$ and now 9 $\mathbb{Q}g5$! $\mathbb{Q}h6$ 10 $\mathbb{Q}ge4$ or 9 $\mathbb{Q}xc8+$ $\mathbb{Q}xc8$ 10 e3!) 8...d6 9 exd4 a6 (9...e4 10 $\mathbb{Q}g5$ a6 11 $\mathbb{Q}c3$ f5 is unclear, Snape-Ward, British League (4NCL) 2002/3) 10 $\mathbb{Q}c3$ exd4 11 $\mathbb{Q}d5$! $\mathbb{Q}ge7$ 12 0-0 $\mathbb{Q}xd5$ 13 cxd5 $\mathbb{Q}e5$ 14 $\mathbb{Q}xd4$ $\mathbb{Q}b6$! with good counterplay, A.Ledger-Gufeld, Hastings (open) 1991/2.

8 cxd5 $\mathbb{Q}a5$! (D)

W



9 $\mathbb{Q}d2$

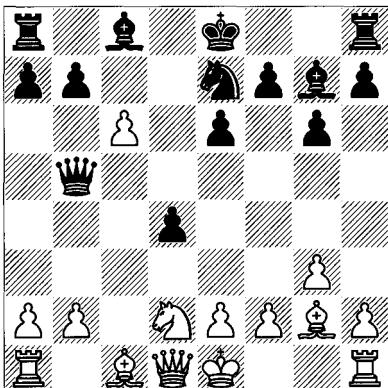
There have been many fascinating games with 9 $\mathbb{Q}d2$ $\mathbb{Q}xb5$ 10 dxc6, but I'm only going to give a short overview. In order to achieve the most complications with winning chances for both sides, play should continue with 10... $\mathbb{Q}xc6$, to which I'll return in a minute. But Black can cut into White's winning chances (and probably his own) by opting for the developing move

10... $\mathbb{Q}e7$. This leads to a balanced but much duller position; for example, 11 $\mathbb{Q}xd4$ $\mathbb{Q}b6$ 12 $\mathbb{Q}b3$ (12 cxb7 $\mathbb{Q}xb7$ 13 $\mathbb{Q}xb7$ $\mathbb{Q}xb7$ 14 $\mathbb{Q}f3$ 0-0 15 0-0 $\mathbb{Q}fd8$ is awkward for White in spite of his extra pawn, O.Foisor-Ungureanu, Romanian Ch, Tusnad 1997; if White tries to avoid the retreat by playing 12 e3, 12...e5! takes the initiative) 12... $\mathbb{Q}xc6$ 13 0-0 0-0, with equality. Here is a sample line: 14 $\mathbb{Q}d1$! $\mathbb{Q}d8$! 15 $\mathbb{Q}e1$ $\mathbb{Q}xd1$ 16 $\mathbb{Q}xd1$ e5 17 $\mathbb{Q}e3$ $\mathbb{Q}d4$, and after the most interesting and arguably best move 18 f4, the action peters out following 18... $\mathbb{Q}e6$ (even 18... $\mathbb{Q}g4$ 19 fxe5 $\mathbb{Q}xe2+$ 20 $\mathbb{Q}f2$ $\mathbb{Q}e6$ 21 $\mathbb{Q}f3$ $\mathbb{Q}xf3$ 22 $\mathbb{Q}xf3$ $\mathbb{Q}xe5$ 23 $\mathbb{Q}xe2$ $\mathbb{Q}h5+$ will end in perpetual check) 19 fxe5 $\mathbb{Q}xe5$ 20 $\mathbb{Q}xd4$ $\mathbb{Q}xb3$ 21 $\mathbb{Q}xb6$ $\mathbb{Q}xd1$ 22 $\mathbb{Q}c7$! $\mathbb{Q}xc7$ 23 $\mathbb{Q}xd1$ $\mathbb{Q}d8$!, and the opposite-coloured bishops draw.

Given that 10... $\mathbb{Q}e7$ is so hard to crack, let me give a mere skeleton of 10... $\mathbb{Q}xc6$, even though the theory on it could fill a small monograph: 11 0-0 $\mathbb{Q}b6$ 12 b3 $\mathbb{Q}e7$ 13 $\mathbb{Q}a3$ $\mathbb{Q}d5$ (13... $\mathbb{Q}c6$ 14 $\mathbb{Q}ac1$ e5 15 e3! breaks up the centre to get at the king) 14 $\mathbb{Q}ac1$ $\mathbb{Q}c3$ 15 e3? (this could also be prepared by 15 $\mathbb{Q}fe1$) 15...dxe3? (Black opens too many lines; better is 15... $\mathbb{Q}a6$! 16 $\mathbb{Q}xd4$ $\mathbb{Q}xa3$ 17 $\mathbb{Q}xc3$ 0-0, Gorelov-Abashev, Moscow 1994) 16 fxe3 $\mathbb{Q}a6$ 17 $\mathbb{Q}b2$! $\mathbb{Q}e4$ 18 $\mathbb{Q}c2$ $\mathbb{Q}f6$ 19 $\mathbb{Q}g5$ with a winning game, Miles-Kosten, Palma de Mallorca 1989.

9... $\mathbb{Q}xb5$ 10 dxc6 $\mathbb{Q}e7$ (D)

W



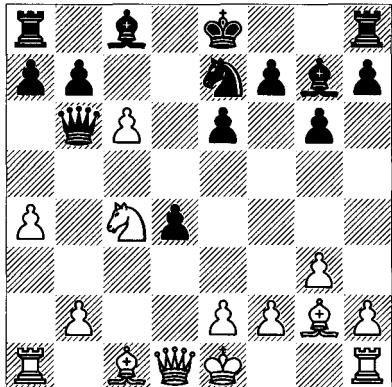
11 a4! $\mathbb{Q}b6$

11... $\mathbb{Q}a6$, to keep White's knight out of c4, lets White play 12 b4!, with the idea 13 b5.

12 $\mathbb{Q}c4$ (D)

12 cxb7 $\mathbb{Q}xb7$ 13 $\mathbb{Q}c4$ $\mathbb{Q}b4+$ 14 $\mathbb{Q}d2$ $\mathbb{Q}xc4$ 15 $\mathbb{Q}xb7$ transposes.

B

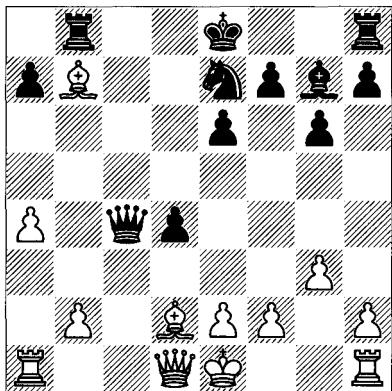


12...Wb4+ 13 ♘d2 ♖xc4 14 cxb7 ♘xb7

With this move-order, 14...Rb8 can be played, but it allows 15 Rc1. In any case, playing 12 cxb7 first prevents this if White so desires.

15 ♘xb7 Rb8 (D)

W



16 b3

What is happening in this position? White has regained his pawn, and can boast of the bishop-pair and queenside majority, whereas Black has a lead in development, two mobile centre pawns and b-file pressure. As we'll see, everything comes down to specifics.

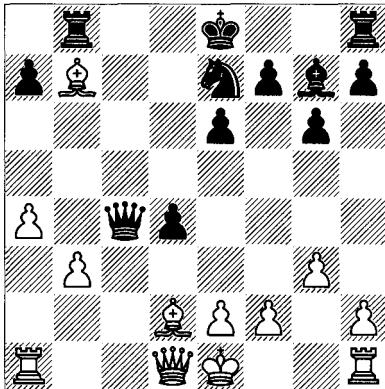
Before going on with the game, I'll address a neglected issue that has some practical impact. After 15...Rb8, White is supposed to be able to force a draw with 16 Rc1 Wa2 17 Ra1 Rxnb2 18 Rb1, etc. But there's much more to it. First, Black is able to keep things alive with 18...Rxb7?! 19 Rxb7 Rxb7. This seems acceptable as a winning try, since Black needn't trade either of his rooks after 20 0-0-0-0 21 Rc2 Rfb8. Going back to the position after 16

Rc1, then, White can bypass the above if he interposes 17 Ra6, having in mind 18 Rb5+. Following 17...0-0 18 b4, White threatens 19 Rc4, trapping the queen. Then Black can still secure a likely draw by playing 18...Wa3 (threatening 19...Rd5 to his apparent advantage), after which 19 Rc4 allows Black to sacrifice the exchange productively by 19...Rxb4! 20 Rxb4 Rxnb4+, so White presumably repeats by 19 Ra1 Rb2 20 Rb1, etc. In this line, Black's only try for a win would be 18...Rd5?! 19 0-0 Rd6, but if nothing else, White can play it safe with 20 Rc4 Rd5 21 Rxd5 Rxnd5 22 Rc7 followed by Rc2 and Rfc1.

Finally, after 17 Ra6, Black can try to sacrifice the exchange for two pawns by 17...Rxnb2?! 18 Rb5+ Rxb5 19 axb5 Rxnb5. In Stryjecki-Kokarev, World Under-18 Ch, Oropesa del Mar 1999, only White seemed to have winning chances: 20 Rb1 Rc6 21 0-0 0-0 22 Rb4 Re8 23 Rxe7 Rxe7 24 Rb8+ Re8 25 Rc1!? (or 25 Rb3) 25...Rd7 26 Rxe8+ Rxe8 27 Rc7.

Having covered all that, let's return to White's best winning try, 16 b3 (D):

B



This position has been contested many times. Given all of Black's activity, it would be surprising were he not able to equalize, yet he faces certain practical difficulties.

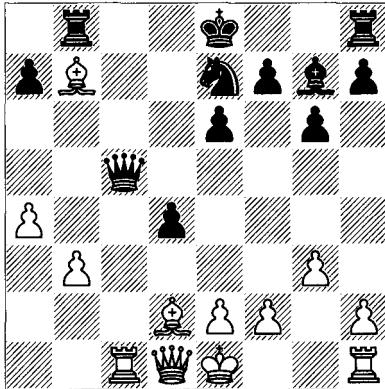
16...Rc5

The only other move is 16...Rc7, when White slowly took over in Markowski-Sriram, Calcutta 2001: 17 Rg2 0-0 18 0-0 Rfd8 19 Rc1 Rd6?! (19...Rb6!) 20 Ra5 Rdc8 21 Rd3 h5 22 b4 Rd5 23 b5 Re5 24 Rxd5 Rxd5 25 Rc2 Rxc2 (Black should play ...h4 hereabouts) 26 Rxc2 e5?! (for example, 26...h4) 27 Rc1 e4 28

$\mathbb{W}c7 \mathbb{M}e8$ 29 $\mathbb{W}c6 \mathbb{W}xc6$ 30 $bxc6$. White's c-pawn will tie Black down and cost him material.

17 $\mathbb{M}c1$ (D)

B



17... $\mathbb{W}b6$

17... $\mathbb{W}d6$! gives Black more active play: 18 $\mathbb{Q}g2 \mathbb{Q}d5$ 19 0-0 0-0 20 $\mathbb{Q}xd5 \mathbb{W}xd5$ 21 b4 $\mathbb{M}fc8$. The position is hard to assess, and probably about level.

18 $\mathbb{Q}e4$ 0-0

Black also had 18... $\mathbb{W}xb3$ 19 $\mathbb{W}xb3 \mathbb{M}xb3$. Then 20 $\mathbb{M}c7$ looks active, but 20...a6 21 $\mathbb{M}a7 \mathbb{Q}d5$ 22 $\mathbb{M}xd5 exd5$ 23 0-0 0-0 24 $\mathbb{M}xa6$ gives White only the smallest of edges.

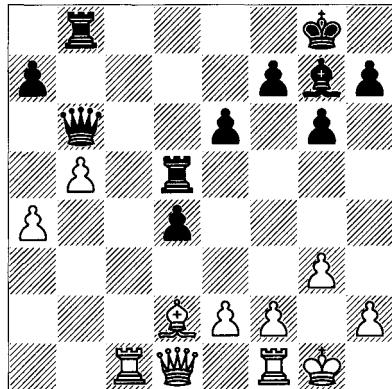
19 b4 $\mathbb{M}fd8$ 20 0-0 $\mathbb{Q}d5$ 21 $\mathbb{Q}xd5 \mathbb{M}xd5$ 22 b5 (D)

22...h5

This position has been good to White; the combination of c-file and queenside pawns outweighs Black's centre pawns. Over the next few moves, Black would be well advised to play ...h4 and create counterplay.

23 $\mathbb{M}c6$

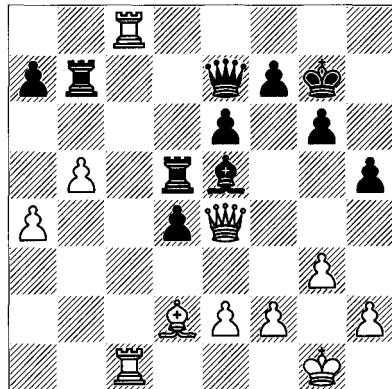
B



Or 23 $\mathbb{W}c2 \mathbb{Q}e5$ 24 $\mathbb{W}c6 \mathbb{W}d8$ 25 $\mathbb{M}c5 \mathbb{M}xc5$ 26 $\mathbb{W}xc5$, which favoured White in J.Graf-Titscher, Odessa 1990.

23... $\mathbb{W}d8$ 24 $\mathbb{W}c2 \mathbb{Q}e5$ 25 $\mathbb{M}c1 \mathbb{Q}g7$ 26 $\mathbb{W}e4 \mathbb{M}b7$ 27 $\mathbb{M}c8 \mathbb{W}e7$ (D)

W



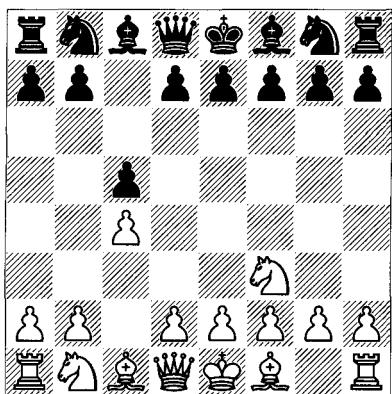
White obviously has a lot of pressure here, and 28 $\mathbb{M}1c4$! would demonstrate that most clearly, with ideas of f4 and $\mathbb{M}b4$ or $\mathbb{M}a5$, depending upon the situation.

8 Main Lines with 2 $\mathbb{Q}f3$ and d4

Introduction to 2 $\mathbb{Q}f3$

1 c4 c5 2 $\mathbb{Q}f3$ (D)

B



The move 2 $\mathbb{Q}f3$ with the idea of an early d4 appeals to players who want to stake out space in classical fashion. It is particularly important because so many English Opening adherents prefer to start with the move 1 $\mathbb{Q}f3$ (preventing ...e5) and then 2 c4. Thousands of games have seen 1 $\mathbb{Q}f3$ c5 2 c4 and 1 $\mathbb{Q}f3$ $\mathbb{Q}f6$ 2 c4 c5. In fact, many more top-level games are played in the $\mathbb{Q}f3$ lines than in the Pure Symmetrical variations of Chapter 7. I shall therefore be giving a more detailed and theoretical look at the material in this chapter than in most others. The main lines are replete with examples of fundamental themes, especially those relating to space and centre.

2 $\mathbb{Q}f3$ gives the game a fundamentally different character than 2 $\mathbb{Q}c3$. White's knight covers the central dark squares, for the moment preventing ...e5. He prepares to play d4 on one of the next two or three moves, an advance that rarely happens so early in the lines stemming from 2 $\mathbb{Q}c3$. As a consequence, White will rule over more territory, and his queen and queen's bishop will usually have open lines and influence in the initial stages of the game. Again,

with a few exceptions, we didn't see this in the Pure Symmetrical variations of Chapter 7.

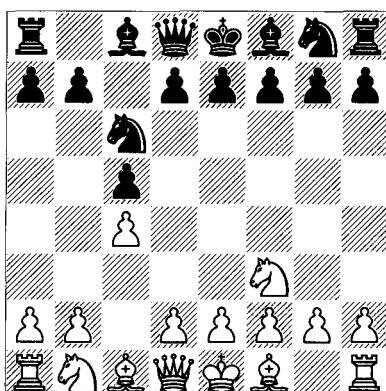
Of course, every move gives up something, and the most obvious consideration when looking at 2 $\mathbb{Q}f3$ is that White won't be able to place a knight on e2 in conjunction with e3 or e4, as in the previous chapter. Also, in lines in which White plays d4 and Black replies ...cxd4, White's pieces are more exposed to attack than in variations with g3 and $\mathbb{Q}g2$. Finally, because White's set-ups are relatively limited, Black has more leeway than his opponent in choosing a pawn-structure and piece formation. You can view this as being advantageous, in that Black has the flexibility to react to circumstances; on the other hand, you might argue that White's control of space reduces Black to a defensive posture, regardless of what he does.

Right away, the material divides into two main paths.

Variations with 2... $\mathbb{Q}c6$

1 c4 c5 2 $\mathbb{Q}f3$ $\mathbb{Q}c6$ (D)

W



Black's main reply to 2 $\mathbb{Q}f3$ has traditionally been 2... $\mathbb{Q}f6$. More and more often, however, leading players have turned to 2... $\mathbb{Q}c6$ in an

attempt to guide the game into channels of their choosing. Black's general wish is to bypass certain cramped positions that he suffers in the main lines stemming from 2 ♘f3 ♘f6.

One of the important thoughts behind 2...♘c6 is to play 3...e5, usually followed by ...g6 and ...♗g7, establishing the Botvinnik formation that we are familiar with from Chapters 6 and 7. If White plays 3 d4 to prevent that, Black can transpose to main lines after 3...cx4d4 4 ♘xd4 by 4...♗f6 or 4...e6, but he can also play independently with moves such as 4...♗b6. Alternatively, White can commit to 3 g3 or shift the decision back to Black by 3 ♘c3. Naturally, there are trade-offs in each situation, and both sides can play independently if they want to.

With that in mind, let's turn to games and see if we can understand the subtleties from examples and analysis. Because of the diversity of move-orders and independent strategies stemming from 2...♘c6, the notes will require some patience to sort out.

Kramnik – Navara

Wijk aan Zee 2007

1 c4 c5 2 ♘f3 ♘c6

I'm not going to focus heavily on the consequences of irregular second moves, because they are of such diffuse character at this point. Nevertheless, to get you started, here are some bare comments:

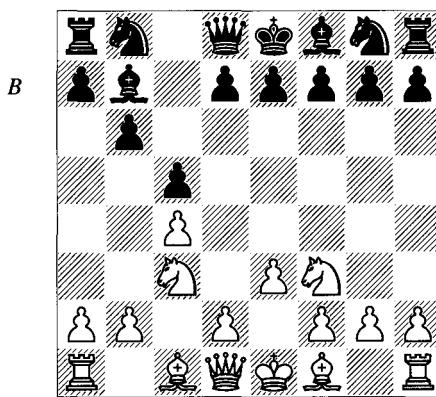
a) 2...g6 is an elastic move that can go several directions including, crucially, 3 d4. Then upon the normal 3...cx4d4 4 ♘xd4, Black has difficulty preventing the move e4; for example, 4...♗g7 5 e4 ♘c6 6 ♘e3 (or 6 ♘c2), when we have a version of a Sicilian Defence, Maroczy Bind variation. Of course, 5 e4 isn't necessary, but the alternative 5 g3 ♘c6 6 ♘c2 agrees to 6...♗a5+ 7 ♘d2 ♗c5 or 7...♗b6, both described under the move-order 2 ♘f3 ♘c6 3 g3 below.

Returning to 2...g6 3 d4 cx4d4 4 ♘xd4, the only normal-looking, non-transpositional option from Black's point of view is 4...♗f6 5 ♘c3 d5?! (else 6 e4), when 6 ♘g5 dx4 7 e3 has a good reputation, but 6 ♘f4! with the idea ♘db5 is even more awkward to counter.

Finally, 2...g6 can be answered by 3 ♘c3, when an independent line is 3...♗g7 4 e3. Then

the conventional response is 4...♗f6 5 d4 cx4d4 6 exd4 d5, which is actually a line of the Caro-Kann Defence, Panov Attack (1 e4 c6 2 d4 d5 3 exd5 cx4d5 4 c4 ♘f6 5 ♘c3 g6 6 ♘f3 ♗g7). Black might also consider 4...♗xc3?!, with a philosophy similar to that in the 1 c4 e5 lines involving ...♗b4 and ...♗xc3. Remember that those positions are always easier to play if White has committed to the move e3, which obstructs his bishop on c1.

b) With the other fianchetto, 2...b6, Black hopes to enter some sort of Hedgehog position following 3 g3 ♘b7 4 ♘g2. This is rather committal, however, because White can play 3 ♘c3 (or even 3 e3) 3...♗b7 (the similar 3...e6 4 e3! ♘f6 5 d4 is examined via the sequence 2 ♘f3 ♘f6 3 ♘c3 b6 4 e3 in the next chapter; it has the same ideas) 4 e3! (D).



Now Black must give ground in order to prevent White's d4-d5 advance: 4...♗f6 5 d4 cx4d4 6 exd4 d5? (6...e6 is better, though 7 ♘d3 preserves a nice spatial plus) 7 cx4d5 ♘xd5 8 ♘e5! ♘xc3 9 bxc3 a6 (versus 10 ♘b5+), and a surprisingly powerful move is 10 ♘b1!, when it's hard to prevent 11 ♘a4+; for example, 10...b5? 11 ♘xb5!, or 10...e6 11 ♘a4+ ♘d7 12 ♘xb6!.

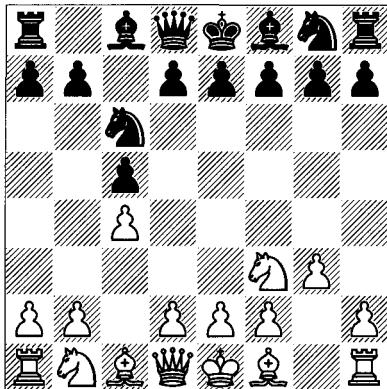
3 ♘c3

I'll use this move to illustrate some unique lines that Black uses as alternatives to main-line Four Knights theory. We shall see 3 d4 in the next game.

The alternative 3 g3 (D) is important and complex. It requires an understanding of move-orders and the resulting transpositions. Rather than memorize what follows, you can use it as a

reference while becoming comfortable with playing the 2 $\mathbb{Q}f3$ $\mathbb{Q}c6$ lines.

B



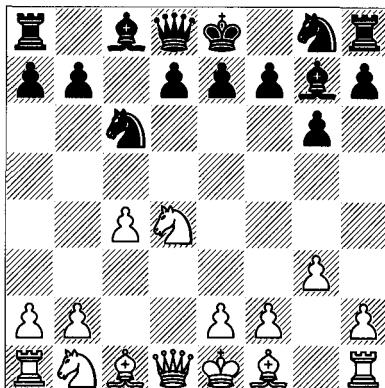
White's fianchetto can be answered with an assortment of moves, but it is played with particular regard for Black's attempts to play an early ... $\mathbb{Q}f6$ and ...d5. There can follow:

a) 3...e5 4 $\mathbb{Q}c3$ g6 (4... $\mathbb{Q}f6$ 5 $\mathbb{Q}g2$ d5? falls for the familiar trick 6 cxd5 $\mathbb{Q}xd5$ 7 $\mathbb{Q}xe5!$ $\mathbb{Q}xc3$ 8 $\mathbb{Q}xc6$ $\mathbb{Q}xd1$ 9 $\mathbb{Q}xd8$ $\mathbb{Q}xf2$ 10 $\mathbb{Q}xf7$ $\mathbb{Q}d3+$ – the only chance – 11 exd3 $\mathbb{Q}xf7$ 12 0-0+ $\mathbb{Q}e8$ 13 b3!, and Black is thoroughly bound up) 5 $\mathbb{Q}g2$ $\mathbb{Q}g7$ and we have arrived at a reversed Botvinnik System of the Pure Symmetrical Variation – see Chapter 7; whether someone wants to contest either side of this position is a matter of taste.

b) 3...g6 4 $\mathbb{Q}g2$ $\mathbb{Q}g7$ 5 0-0 (or 5 $\mathbb{Q}c3$) will usually bring us back to a Pure Symmetrical Variation; for example, if Black plays 5...e5, 5...e6 or 5... $\mathbb{Q}f6$, then 6 $\mathbb{Q}c3$ transposes to Chapter 7. Instead, 4 d4 cxd4 5 $\mathbb{Q}xd4$ $\mathbb{Q}g7$ (D) is one of the least inspiring times for White to play into a d4 system.

For example, 6 $\mathbb{Q}c2$ (6 $\mathbb{Q}xc6$ dxc6!?) 7 $\mathbb{W}xd8+$ $\mathbb{Q}xd8$ already gives Black a favourable pawn-structure, since the c6-pawn limits the g2-bishop, while White's move c4 makes the bishop on g7 more effective – only because White is ahead on time can we evaluate this position as level; furthermore, 6 $\mathbb{Q}b3$ a5! with ...a4 to follow wins time for Black, because 7 a4?! would weaken b4 too seriously) 6... $\mathbb{W}a5+!$? (6...d6 is less dramatic, but certainly playable, with the idea 7 $\mathbb{Q}g2$ $\mathbb{Q}e6$) 7 $\mathbb{Q}d2$!? (7 $\mathbb{Q}d2$ d5! establishes Black in the centre) 7... $\mathbb{W}b6$ (after 7... $\mathbb{W}c5$, 8 $\mathbb{Q}c3!$ $\mathbb{Q}f6$! 9 $\mathbb{Q}e3$ is unclear, as is 8

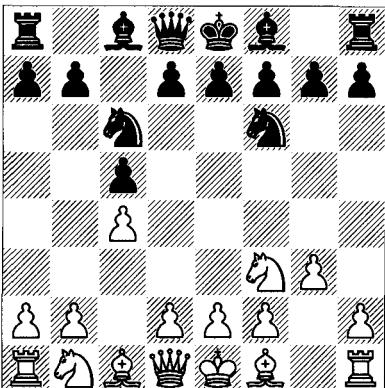
W



$\mathbb{Q}c3$ $\mathbb{Q}f6$, which is safer than grabbing a pawn by 8... $\mathbb{Q}xc3+$ 9 $\mathbb{Q}xc3$ $\mathbb{W}xc4$) 8 $\mathbb{Q}c3$ $\mathbb{W}xb2$!? 9 $\mathbb{Q}d5$ (9 $\mathbb{Q}b1$?? $\mathbb{W}xc3$) 9... $\mathbb{Q}d8$ 10 $\mathbb{Q}g2$ e6. Here Black seems to escape in reasonably good shape. In return for serious pressure from the white forces, Black is a pawn to the good, and his central majority helps greatly in the defence. Of course, his king will remain in the centre for a while and this may not appeal to everyone. This whole line is unexplored and up in the air.

c) 3... $\mathbb{Q}f6$ (D) is highly transpositional, but can also produce distinct lines:

W

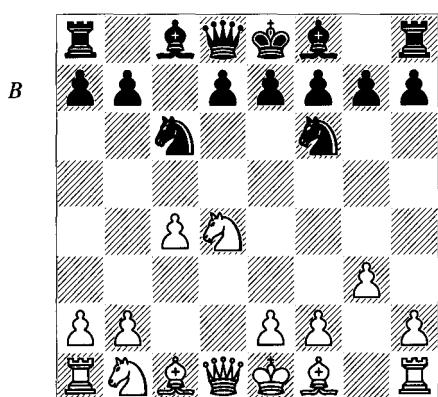


c1) 4 $\mathbb{Q}g2$ d5 5 cxd5 $\mathbb{Q}xd5$ leads to standard 'Asymmetrical' variations of Chapter 9 following 6 $\mathbb{Q}c3$ $\mathbb{Q}c7$ or here 6...e6. Instead of 6 $\mathbb{Q}c3$, 6 d4 isn't too dangerous if Black knows what he's doing. Black has at least three reasonable moves. Play often goes 6...cxd4!? 7 $\mathbb{Q}xd4$ $\mathbb{Q}db4$ 8 $\mathbb{Q}xc6$ $\mathbb{W}xd1+$ 9 $\mathbb{Q}xd1$ $\mathbb{Q}xc6$. While this should probably be equal, White can create an imbalance by 10 $\mathbb{Q}xc6+!$? bxc6 11 $\mathbb{Q}e3$,

when Röder-Gupta, Sort 2006 went 11...g6 12 $\mathbb{Q}d2 \mathbb{Q}g7$ 13 $\mathbb{Q}c4$ 0-0-0 14 $\mathbb{Q}c1 \mathbb{Q}e6$ and Black's bishops compensated for his weak c-pawn. This type of position is thought-provoking enough to reward some study and practice. White can also play simply 10 $\mathbb{Q}c3$, when the best-known example is Kramnik-Kasparov, Frankfurt (rapid) 2000: 10... $\mathbb{Q}d7!$? 11 $\mathbb{Q}e3$ 0-0-0 12 $\mathbb{Q}e1$ e5 13 $\mathbb{Q}c1 \mathbb{Q}b8$ 14 f4 with a little pull. Instead of all this, Black can get a perfectly good game by answering 6 d4 with either 6... $\mathbb{Q}f5!$, intending 7 0-0 $\mathbb{Q}db4$, or 6... $\mathbb{Q}b6$ 7 dx c 5 $\mathbb{W}xd1+$ 8 $\mathbb{Q}xd1$ $\mathbb{Q}a4$ 9 $\mathbb{Q}c3 \mathbb{Q}xc3+$! 10 bxc3 $\mathbb{Q}f5$ 11 $\mathbb{Q}e3 \mathbb{Q}e4$, Andersson-Timman, Tilburg 1991.

c2) After 4 $\mathbb{Q}c3$ d5, the ordinary-looking 5 cxd5 $\mathbb{Q}xd5$ 6 $\mathbb{Q}g2$ g6 7 0-0 $\mathbb{Q}g7$ is a Pure Symmetrical Variation from Chapter 7. However, 5 d4 transposes directly to our main game Kramnik-Navara (for which I've used the more common move-order 2... $\mathbb{Q}c6$ 3 $\mathbb{Q}c3 \mathbb{Q}f6$ 4 g3 d5 5 d4). This is one of the primary motivations for White to play 3 g3.

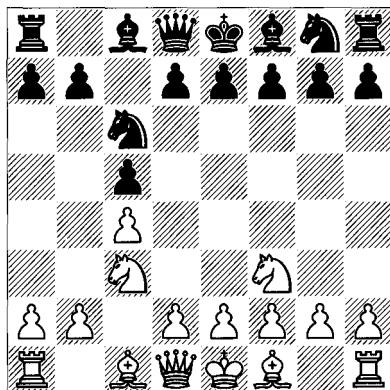
c3) Finally, we might see 4 d4 cxd4 5 $\mathbb{Q}xd4$ (D).



Unless Black wants to go for a Pure Symmetrical Variation by 5...g6 6 $\mathbb{Q}g2 \mathbb{Q}g7$, etc., he will usually play 5...e6. Then 6 $\mathbb{Q}c3$ is the main Four Knights line. However, the unique move 6 $\mathbb{Q}g2$ opens the door to many deviations from the norm. Among these are 6... $\mathbb{W}b6$, 6... $\mathbb{Q}b4+$ and 6... $\mathbb{W}a5+$, the last often leading to 7 $\mathbb{Q}d2 \mathbb{W}b6$ 8 $\mathbb{Q}b3$, when 8...d6, 8...a5 and even 8...h5!? are options! Lastly, Black can play 6... $\mathbb{W}c7$; for example, 7 0-0 a6. Unfortunately, the English Opening has hundreds of these lesser-played alternatives throughout, so

I'll opt out and leave it up to readers to investigate any in which they have an interest.

After that lengthy digression about 3 g3, let's return to 3 $\mathbb{Q}c3$ (D) and our main game Kramnik-Navara:

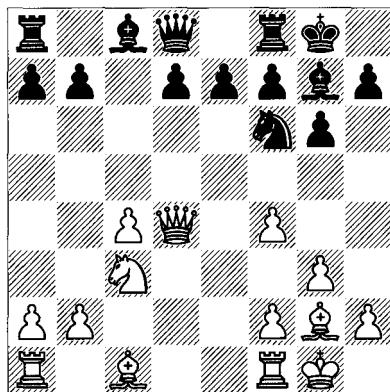


3... $\mathbb{Q}f6$

In the next game but one we'll see the important move 3...e5.

a) Black also has the rather bizarre-looking 3... $\mathbb{Q}d4$, a popular move which tries to prevent an effective d4 on White's part. Black justifies moving a knight twice by the threat of ... $\mathbb{Q}xf3+$. I'll have to forego an analysis of the broader theory here, but will comment on two variations:

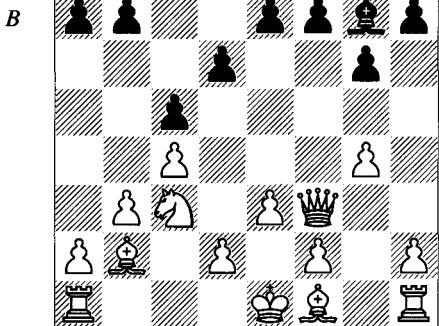
a1) I like White better than most analysts seem to in the line 4 g3 $\mathbb{Q}xf3+$ 5 exf3 $\mathbb{Q}f6$ 6 d4! cxd4 7 $\mathbb{W}xd4$ g6 8 $\mathbb{Q}g2 \mathbb{Q}g7$ 9 0-0 0-0 10 f4 (D).



White has two open central files and control of every central square other than d4. Of course,

the doubled f-pawns are immobile and Black's pieces have good scope. Van der Sterren-Timman, Rotterdam 1998 continued 10...d6 11 $\mathbb{Q}d2!$? a6!? 12 $\mathbb{B}ac1 \mathbb{B}b8$, and Timman suggests that White only equalizes with 13 $\mathbb{W}d3$, but this may well favour White because of his extra space; for example, 13... $\mathbb{Q}f5$ 14 $\mathbb{W}e2 \mathbb{Q}g4$ 15 $\mathbb{W}e3 \mathbb{W}d7$ 16 b3 b5?! 17 $\mathbb{Q}d5!$.

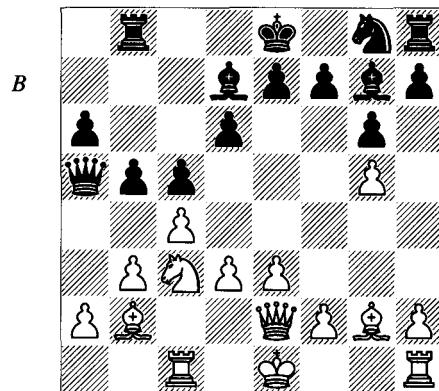
a2) A more significant variation, and what is currently the main line, goes 4 e3 $\mathbb{Q}xf3+$ 5 $\mathbb{W}xf3$ g6 6 b3 $\mathbb{Q}g7$ 7 $\mathbb{Q}b2$ d6 8 g4!?(D).



This is a fun move to play, and I think a good one. White grabs space, prepares $\mathbb{Q}g2$, and wants to cramp Black's game with g5 and/or h4-h5. The most popular solution has been 8... $\mathbb{B}b8$ (after 8... $\mathbb{Q}f6$, 9 g5!?) $\mathbb{Q}d7$! 10 h4 $\mathbb{Q}e5$ 11 $\mathbb{W}g2 \mathbb{Q}g4$ 12 $\mathbb{Q}e2 \mathbb{Q}xe2$ 13 $\mathbb{Q}xe2$ with the idea h5 and/or f4 was very comfortable for White in Van Wely-Akopian, Enghien-les-Bains 2001; 9 h3 is a solid alternative) 9 $\mathbb{Q}g2 \mathbb{Q}d7$ (with the idea ... $\mathbb{Q}c6$) 10 $\mathbb{W}e2$ a6 (after 10... $\mathbb{Q}f6$ 11 $\mathbb{Q}f3$!?) $\mathbb{Q}c6$, 12 0-0-0 prepares d4 – don't forget the centre! The logical alternative 10... $\mathbb{W}c8$ 11 g5 $\mathbb{Q}c6$ is proposed by Krasenkow, but similarly, 12 $\mathbb{Q}xc6+$ $\mathbb{W}xc6$ 13 0-0-0 with the idea 14 d4 gives White the advantage, as does 12 f4 h6 13 0-0-0!) 11 g5 b5 12 d3 $\mathbb{W}a5$ 13 $\mathbb{Q}c1$!?(D) (13 $\mathbb{W}d2$ is a good alternative).

This fascinating position has been reached a few times. In A.Petrosian-Skipchenko, Dortmund 2000, White stood better after 13...h6 14 h4 $\mathbb{W}xg5$ 15 $\mathbb{W}xg5$ $\mathbb{B}xh1+$ 16 $\mathbb{Q}xh1$ e5 17 $\mathbb{W}d2 \mathbb{Q}e7$ 18 $\mathbb{Q}e4$!? $\mathbb{W}b6$ 19 f4. Instead of this, Palliser approves of 13...f5, as played in Pugovsov-Alekseev, Russian Team Ch, Tomsk 2001. That game continued 14 $\mathbb{Q}f1$!? $\mathbb{Q}f7$ 15 h4 h5!

B



with equality. The king is oddly placed on f1, however; White should prefer 14 h4 h5 15 0-0!, with what seems a traditional English Opening advantage. He has strong bishops, central prospects and the safer king. For example, 15... $\mathbb{Q}f7$ (15...e6? 16 $\mathbb{Q}e4$!; 15...e5 16 $\mathbb{Q}d5$; 15...b4? 16 $\mathbb{Q}d5 \mathbb{W}xa2$ 17 $\mathbb{Q}c2$) 16 d4!? (or 16 $\mathbb{Q}d5$!, with the point 16... $\mathbb{W}xa2$ 17 $\mathbb{Q}c2 \mathbb{W}xb3$ 18 $\mathbb{Q}xg7 \mathbb{Q}xg7$ 19 $\mathbb{Q}b2 \mathbb{W}a4$ 20 $\mathbb{Q}fb1$! $\mathbb{W}a5$ 21 $\mathbb{Q}a2$, etc.) 16...cxsd4 17 exd4 bxc4 18 $\mathbb{Q}d5$! e6 19 $\mathbb{Q}f4$! with the idea 19...cbx3? 20 $\mathbb{Q}c6$! $\mathbb{Q}c8$ 21 $\mathbb{Q}d5$! exd5 22 $\mathbb{Q}xc8$, etc. That's only analysis, of course, but I think Black must seriously improve upon his basic set-up here.

b) A fairly common alternative is 3...g6. It can lead to 4 g3 $\mathbb{Q}g7$, with a Pure Symmetrical variation, or to these:

b1) 4 d4 cxd4 5 $\mathbb{Q}xd4 \mathbb{Q}g7$ is generally regarded as satisfactory for Black. One interesting variation is 6 $\mathbb{Q}c2$!? $\mathbb{Q}xc3+$ 7 bxc3 $\mathbb{W}a5$. Oddly enough, this is a reversed position of the Rubinstein Variation of Chapter 9, but the tempi are the same! This comes from the fact that in the reversed position, White moves his queen twice to arrive at 1 c4 c5 2 $\mathbb{Q}c3$ $\mathbb{Q}f6$ 3 g3 d5 4 cxd5 $\mathbb{Q}xd5$ 5 $\mathbb{Q}g2 \mathbb{Q}c7$ 6 $\mathbb{Q}b3$!? $\mathbb{Q}c6$ 7 $\mathbb{Q}xc6$ + bxc6 8 $\mathbb{W}a4$. See that chapter for details.

b2) 4 e3!? can be a little awkward for Black: 4... $\mathbb{Q}f6$ (4... $\mathbb{Q}g7$ 5 d4 has a poor reputation for Black; although 5...d6 is playable, with the idea of ... $\mathbb{Q}g4$ in some lines, he has to be willing to play against d5 and e4 at some point; traditionally, White begins with 6 $\mathbb{Q}e2$) 5 d4 cxd4 6 exd4 d5. Now we have a kind of reversed Tarrasch Queen's Gambit. White can develop normally by, for example, 7 $\mathbb{Q}e2 \mathbb{Q}g7$ 8 0-0-0-

9 ♖e1 or try a unique line such as 7 ♘g5 ♘e6??. Most dangerous for Black is 7 cxd5 ♘xd5 8 ♘b3!, when one curious possibility is 8...♘xc3 9 ♘c4!. Now:

b21) 9...e6 10 bxc3 ♘g7!? (10...♘a5? 11 ♘b5+ ♘d7 12 ♘a4 ♘c6 is met by 13 d5! exd5 14 0-0 with an attack) 11 ♘a3 ♘f8 was Botvinnik-Petrosian, World Ch match (game 8), Moscow 1963. Botvinnik played 12 ♘c1 ♘g7 13 ♘b5, but Tal later demonstrated 12 0-0 ♘xa3 13 ♘xa3 ♘e7 14 ♘c1! with a nice edge.

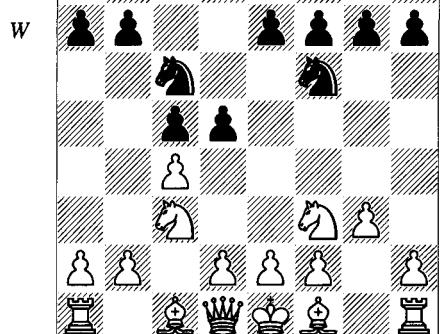
b22) Black's other defence is 9...♘d5!? 10 ♘xd5 e6 11 ♘xc6+ bxc6, when theory favours White's prospects, but the position isn't clear.

If you're interested in lines that are slightly off the beaten track, these might be for you.

4 g3

The actual move-order used in this game, by the way, was 1 ♕f3 ♘f6 2 c4 c5 3 g3 ♘c6 4 ♘c3. I have chosen to begin with 1 c4 in order to show other lines from the English Opening along the way.

4...d5 (D)



This position can also arise from 2 ♕f3 ♘f6 3 ♘c3 ♘c6 4 g3 d5.

5 d4?

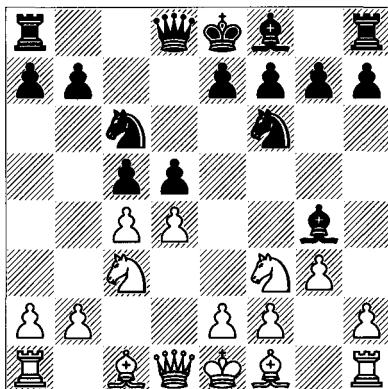
A surprise. Black was probably aiming to get to a conventional variation stemming from 5 cxd5 ♘xd5 6 ♘g2; for example, 6...e5 (or 6...♘c7) 7 0-0 ♘c7, with a Rubinstein Variation (see Chapter 9); or 6...g6 7 0-0 ♘g7, which we've looked at via the Pure Symmetrical with 5 ♕f3 ♘f6 6 0-0 d5 7 cxd5 ♘xd5.

5...cxd4

The ubiquitous Tarrasch Queen's Gambit pops up again after 5...e6 6 cxd5 exd5. Here

6...♘xd5 is the Keres-Parma Variation (Chapter 9), and should be considered for someone who wants a more active game than he gets here. The alternatives are quite complex:

a) 5...♘g4 (D).



This resembles White's play in the Grünfeld and might be profitably compared with it:

a1) 6 cxd5 ♘xd5 (6...♘xf3?! 7 exf3 ♘xd5 8 ♘b3 ♘xc3 9 bxc3 cxd4 10 ♘c4! e6 11 ♘xb7 with the idea 11...♘c8? 12 ♘a6!) 7 ♘g2 cxd4!? 8 ♘xd4 ♘db4! with approximate equality, intending 9 a3 e5!. This ...♘db4 manoeuvre crops up repeatedly in the Symmetrical English.

a2) 6 ♘g2 ♘xf3 7 ♘xf3 seems to offer White only a very small advantage, if that. Black probably won't equalize after 7...dxc4 8 d5! ♘d4 9 ♘g2 ♘a5 10 ♘d2 0-0-0 11 e3 ♘f5 12 0-0 ♘a6 13 b3! with queenside attacking chances. However, Black has two better methods. First, 7...♘xd4 8 ♘g2! (8 ♘xd5 ♘xd5 9 cxd5 g6 10 0-0 ♘g7 is fine for Black) 8...dxc4 9 ♘xb7 ♘b8 10 ♘g2 ♘d7 11 0-0 e6 confers only a modest edge on White. In addition, the modest 7...e6? is surprisingly tough. White's bishops don't seem to mean a lot; for example, 8 cxd5 ♘xd4 9 ♘g2 ♘xd5 10 ♘xd5 exd5 11 0-0 ♘e7 12 e3 ♘c6 13 ♘xd5 0-0. This probably favours White, but not by much, since Black's queenside majority (barring ♘xc6, which is fairly harmless) counts for as much as White's own majority in the centre/kingside, because White has difficulty mobilizing his pawns.

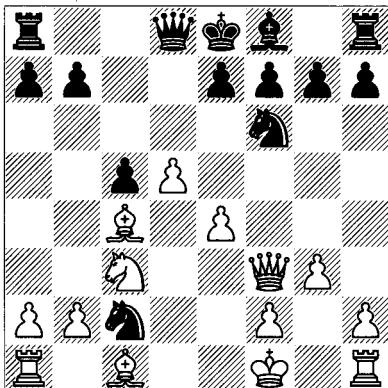
b) After the natural 5...dxc4?!, White can reply with the equally obvious 6 d5!, although this entails a sacrifice. Then Black has two

serious replies, both involving entertaining tactical play:

b1) Tal-Timman, Match (game 5), Hilversum 1988 saw 6... $\mathbb{Q}a5$ 7 $\mathbb{e}4!$ b5 8 $\mathbb{Q}xb5$ $\mathbb{Q}xe4$ 9 $\mathbb{Q}e5!$ (with the idea 10 $\mathbb{W}a4$) 9... $\mathbb{Q}d7$ 10 $\mathbb{Q}xd7$ $\mathbb{Q}xd7$ 11 $\mathbb{W}a4!$ $\mathbb{B}b8$ 12 $\mathbb{Q}c7+$ $\mathbb{Q}d8$ 13 $\mathbb{Q}e6+$! $\mathbb{fxe}6$ 14 $\mathbb{W}xa5+$ $\mathbb{W}c7$ 15 $\mathbb{W}xc7+$ $\mathbb{Q}xc7$ 16 $\mathbb{Q}f4+$ $\mathbb{Q}d6$ 17 0-0-0 g6!? 18 $\mathbb{Q}e5$ $\mathbb{Q}g8$ 19 $dxe6$ $\mathbb{Q}g7$ 20 f4 g5!, and now 21 $\mathbb{Q}d5!$ would have established a definite superiority.

b2) Ftačník-Lesiègue, Montreal 2002 tested the highly tactical 6... $\mathbb{Q}b4$: 7 $\mathbb{e}4!$ $\mathbb{Q}g4$ 8 $\mathbb{Q}xc4!$ (falling in with Black's materialistic wishes) 8... $\mathbb{Q}xf3$ 9 $\mathbb{W}xf3$ $\mathbb{Q}c2+$ 10 $\mathbb{Q}f1!$ (D).

B



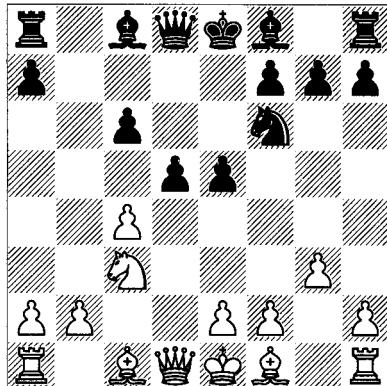
10...a6! (this prevents $\mathbb{Q}b5+$ and $\mathbb{Q}b5$; upon 10... $\mathbb{Q}xa1$, 11 e5! storms through – if the knight retreats by 11... $\mathbb{Q}d7$, 12 e6 wins because of $\mathbb{Q}b5+$, so in Wojtkiewicz-Yudasin, New York 1991, Black tried 11...a6 12 exf6 $\mathbb{Q}c2$, losing to 13 d6! e6 14 $\mathbb{W}xb7$ $\mathbb{W}b8$ 15 $\mathbb{W}c6+$ $\mathbb{Q}d8$ 16 $\mathbb{Q}xe6!$, with the point 16...fxe6? 17 $\mathbb{Q}g5$) 11 e5! $\mathbb{Q}d4$ 12 $\mathbb{W}d1$ b5 (12... $\mathbb{Q}d7$ 13 f4! with a dominant pawn-mass) 13 exf6 bxc4 14 $\mathbb{Q}e3$ gxf6 15 $\mathbb{Q}xd4$ cxd4 16 $\mathbb{W}xd4$ $\mathbb{Q}c8$ 17 $\mathbb{Q}g2$ $\mathbb{Q}g7$ 18 $\mathbb{Q}he1$ 0-0 19 $\mathbb{W}g4$ $\mathbb{Q}c7$ 20 $\mathbb{Q}ad1$. White's beautifully centralized pieces combine with Black's weaknesses to grant White a comfortable advantage.

Finally we return to Kramnik-Navara:

6 $\mathbb{Q}xd4$ $\mathbb{Q}xc4$

Since White now gets an edge in a dry position, I'll claim author's indulgence to speculate that the more dynamic reversed Grünfeld Defence position initiated by 6...e5 7 $\mathbb{Q}xc6$ bxc6 (D) is playable, and close to equal for Black.

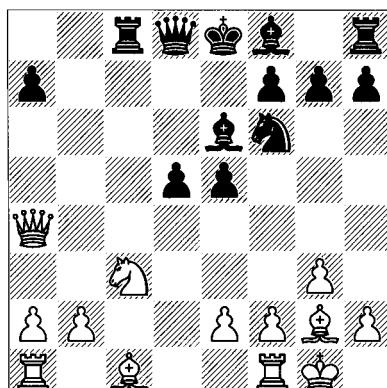
W



This is another one of those paradoxical positions in which an extra white move, in this case $\mathbb{Q}c3$, can be a liability as well as an asset, because it exposes White to a timely ...d4. Compare the Grünfeld Proper main line with 1 d4 $\mathbb{Q}f6$ 2 c4 g6 3 $\mathbb{Q}c3$ d5 4 cxd5 $\mathbb{Q}xd5$ 5 e4 $\mathbb{Q}xc3$ 6 bxc3 $\mathbb{Q}g7$ 7 $\mathbb{Q}f3$ c5 8 $\mathbb{Q}e2$ $\mathbb{Q}c6$?! (8...0-0-0! is the usual move, steering clear of d5). Now White can play 9 d5! $\mathbb{Q}xc3+$ 10 $\mathbb{Q}d2$ $\mathbb{Q}xa1$ 11 $\mathbb{W}xa1$ $\mathbb{Q}d4$ 12 $\mathbb{Q}xd4$ cxd4 13 $\mathbb{W}xd4$ with a strong attack.

In our English Opening version, from the diagram after 7...bxc6, 8 $\mathbb{Q}g5$ d4 isn't what White wants, and he doesn't get anything meaningful by exchanging: 8 cxd5 cxd5 9 $\mathbb{Q}g2$ $\mathbb{Q}e6$ 10 0-0 (10 $\mathbb{Q}g5$ d4!) 10... $\mathbb{Q}c8$. Now Black wants to play ...d4. White's natural response would be 11 $\mathbb{W}a4+$ (D).

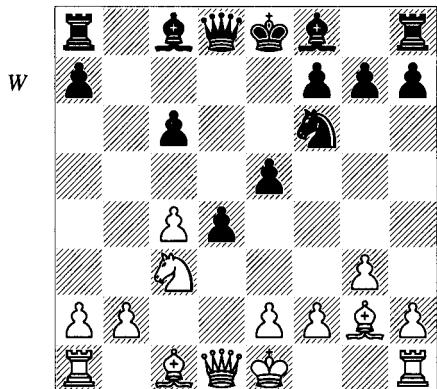
B



11... $\mathbb{Q}d7$ (11... $\mathbb{Q}d7$??! 12 $\mathbb{W}xa7$ d4 13 $\mathbb{Q}e4$ $\mathbb{Q}xe4$ 14 $\mathbb{Q}xe4$ $\mathbb{Q}c5$ 15 $\mathbb{W}a6!$ limits Black's compensation) 12 $\mathbb{W}xd7+$ $\mathbb{Q}xd7$ 13 $\mathbb{Q}d1$ $\mathbb{Q}c5$! 14 $\mathbb{Q}xd5$ $\mathbb{Q}xd5$ 15 $\mathbb{Q}xd5$ (or 15 e4 $\mathbb{Q}d4$!).

15...♗xd5 16 ♜xd5+ ♔e6 gives Black enough compensation for the pawn after 17 ♜d2 (17 e4 ♜d4! ties White to defence, and 17 ♜d3 ♜hd8 18 ♜xd8 ♜xd8 leaves Black at least equal) 17...♗b4! (or even 17...♜hd8 18 ♜g2 ♗b6) 18 ♜d1 ♜c2 19 a3 ♗a5, etc.

So the critical variation would seem to be 8 ♜g2. The only book I've found that addresses 6...e5 gives 8...♗e6 9 ♜g5! here, when Black is already in poor shape. But knowing the reversed position, you can guess that Black should play 8...d4! (D).



Then White's only try for an advantage is 9 ♜xc6+ ♜d7 10 ♜xa8 (10 ♜xd7+ ♜xd7 11 ♜b1 ♜c6) 10...♜xa8 11 ♜d5 ♜xd5 12 cxd5 ♜xd5. Black's f8-bishop is undeveloped, while it would be on e2 in the reversed line. That is a pure tempo-loss, and not some trade-off of time for information. Nevertheless, it doesn't seem serious enough to deny him counterplay: 13 f3 (13 0-0 ♜h3 14 ♜a4+ ♔e7 15 ♜xa7+ ♔e6 16 f3 ♜xf1 17 ♜xf1 ♜d6 18 ♜a6 f5 is fine for Black) 13...♗d6 (or 13...♗c5 14 ♜b3 ♜d6) 14 ♜b3 ♜c6 (or 14...♜a8), intending some combination of ...0-0, ...♜b8, ...♜d5 and ...♜b5. Of course there are plenty of other options.

In any event, you could do worse than to study this variation, both for fun and in order to improve your understanding. The situation involving the bishop-pair as compensation for the exchange is ubiquitous in modern chess, and the English Opening player will always benefit from thinking about reversed positions.

7 ♜xc6 ♜xd1+

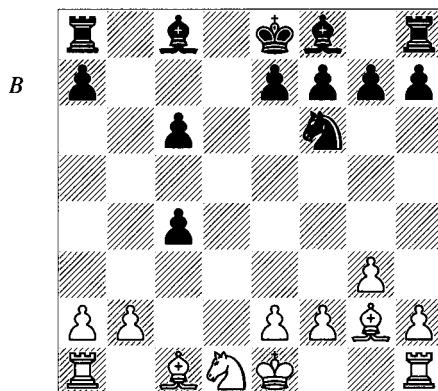
Black gets to simplify and force one of White's pieces back. Weaker is 7...bxcc6 8 ♜a4

爵d7 9 ♜g2 with 0-0 and ♜xc4 to follow, because White's queen is an annoyance.

8 ♜xd1!

This knight will be excellently placed on e3.

8...bxcc6 9 ♜g2 (D)



The queen exchange has resulted in a technical position that may not rivet the average player's attention. White's strategy is to squeeze a win out of his pressure against Black's pawns on the open c-file. After one of those pawns falls, White hopes that the remaining isolated pawn will prove a weakness; remember that the squares in front of it can be safely occupied by a piece. One factor in Black's favour is that he will develop quickly and be in a better position to neutralize that advantage. After many years of experience, I think it's fair to say that the position is objectively drawn, but that in practice, White will periodically eke out a win, especially against someone who is not well prepared. What follows is not high theory, but hopefully represents the main ideas.

9...♞d5!

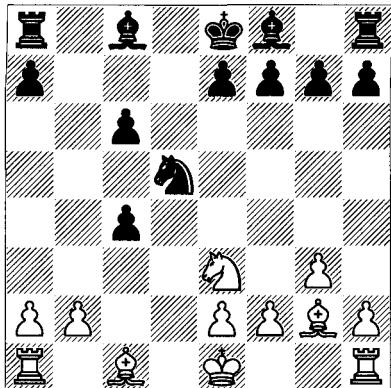
After 9...♞d7, 10 ♜d2 ♜b8 11 ♜c1 and ♜xc4 maintains the upper hand.

10 ♜e3 (D)

10...e6

A more active and perhaps satisfactory alternative is 10...♚a6 11 ♜xd5 cxd5 12 ♜xd5 ♜c8; for example, 13 ♜d2 e6 14 ♜f3 ♜c5 15 ♜c3 f6! (it's important to keep the king centralized) 16 e3 ♜e7 17 0-0-0 ♜b5 18 ♜d2, and although 18...a6 was fine in Kornev-Pokazaniev, St Petersburg 2006 (one idea of the move is to secure the bishop versus a combination of ♜e2 and b3), 18...♜hd8 19 ♜hd1 ♜xd2 20 ♜xd2 ♜c6!

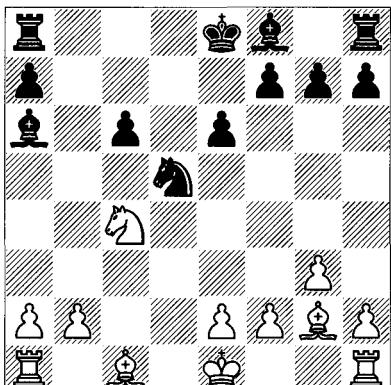
B



seems to equalize, intending 21 $\mathbb{Q}e2$ $\mathbb{Q}d5$. Considering the elite players who use this line as White, however, it's probably not so easy.

11 $\mathbb{Q}xc4$ $\mathbb{Q}a6$ (D)

W



12 $\mathbb{Q}a5$

This move was given a firm ‘!’ and enthusiastic approval when it replaced years of practice with 12 b3 and won a series of nice games for Kramnik, among others. Now some players, including Kramnik himself, are returning to 12 b3. The situation described above applies after that move as well: with careful play, Black’s position is considered adequate to draw, but he has to work a bit. White had a slight but hardly decisive advantage after 12... $\mathbb{Q}b4+$ 13 $\mathbb{Q}d2$ $\mathbb{Q}xd2+$ 14 $\mathbb{Q}xd2$ $\mathbb{Q}b4$ 15 $\mathbb{Q}d1$ 0-0-0 16 a3 $\mathbb{Q}d5$ 17 $\mathbb{Q}c1$ $\mathbb{Q}b7$ 18 $\mathbb{Q}e1$ e5 19 e3 in Kramnik-Leko, Miskolc 2007, and at this point Black can consider 19... $\mathbb{Q}e7$, clearing d3 or 19... $\mathbb{Q}he8$ with the idea 20 $\mathbb{Q}f1?$! $\mathbb{Q}xf1$ 21 $\mathbb{Q}xf1$ e4.

Instead of all this, 12... $\mathbb{Q}c8$! is a safe and constructive move, which both guards c6 and

prepares the useful advance ...c5; for example, 13 $\mathbb{Q}d2$ $\mathbb{Q}e7$ 14 $\mathbb{Q}a5$ 0-0 15 $\mathbb{Q}d1$ $\mathbb{Q}d8$ 16 $\mathbb{Q}xd8$ $\mathbb{Q}fxd8$ 17 $\mathbb{Q}c1$ c5 (getting this move in usually solves most of Black’s problems) 18 $\mathbb{Q}e4$ $\mathbb{Q}xc4$ 19 bxc4 $\mathbb{Q}f6$ 20 $\mathbb{Q}d3$ $\mathbb{Q}b8$ 21 $\mathbb{Q}c3$ $\mathbb{Q}b2$ 22 $\mathbb{Q}a3$ e5 23 f3 e4 24 $\mathbb{Q}xe4$ $\mathbb{Q}g4$ 25 $\mathbb{Q}xa7$ $\mathbb{Q}e5$ 26 0-0 f6. Black has an immovable knight outpost versus White’s tragically placed bishop, Sebenik-Kreisl, Szeged 2007. Were Black to recover his pawn, however, it would free White’s game, so equality seems a fair verdict.

12... $\mathbb{Q}c8$ 13 $\mathbb{Q}d2$ $\mathbb{Q}e7$ 14 $\mathbb{Q}c1$ c5 15 b3 0-0 16 0-0 $\mathbb{Q}fd8$ 17 $\mathbb{Q}f3$ $\mathbb{Q}f8$

Also possible is 17... $\mathbb{Q}f6$!, since the c-pawn is safe.

18 $\mathbb{Q}fd1$

At this point, the game went 18... $\mathbb{Q}e8$ 19 $\mathbb{Q}el$ $\mathbb{Q}d7$ 20 e3 $\mathbb{Q}f6$ 21 $\mathbb{Q}c4$ $\mathbb{Q}e7$ 22 $\mathbb{Q}a5$!, stopping both ... $\mathbb{Q}b6$ and a future ... $\mathbb{Q}d8$; White has a nagging edge, although the game was rightly drawn after excellent defence. Since Black’s centrally-oriented minor pieces are his strong suit, he reinforced that with the active 18... $\mathbb{Q}f6$! in Kopylov-Berelovich, Hamburg 2006: 19 e4 (19 $\mathbb{Q}c4$ $\mathbb{Q}xc4$ 20 bxc4 $\mathbb{Q}c3$!) 19... $\mathbb{Q}b4$ (or 19... $\mathbb{Q}b6$) 20 $\mathbb{Q}xc5$! $\mathbb{Q}xc5$ 21 $\mathbb{Q}xb4$ $\mathbb{Q}xd1+22$ $\mathbb{Q}xd1$ $\mathbb{Q}e7$ 23 $\mathbb{Q}xc5$ $\mathbb{Q}xc5$ 24 $\mathbb{Q}c2$ e5 25 a4 f6 26 $\mathbb{Q}c6$ $\mathbb{Q}b7$ 27 $\mathbb{Q}a5$ $\mathbb{Q}a6$ 28 $\mathbb{Q}c6$ $\mathbb{Q}b7$ 29 $\mathbb{Q}a5$ $\mathbb{Q}a6$ 30 $\mathbb{Q}c6$ ½-½.

Arencibia – P. Toth
Rio de Janeiro 2003

1 c4 c5 2 $\mathbb{Q}f3$ $\mathbb{Q}c6$ 3 d4

With this advance, White sidesteps the ‘Botvinnik’ line 3...e5, but Black’s knight on c6 opens up some interesting possibilities.

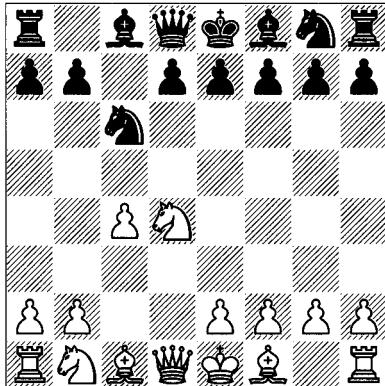
3... $\mathbb{Q}xd4$ 4 $\mathbb{Q}xd4$ (D)

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

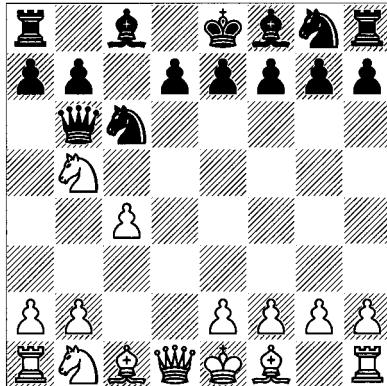
This is one of Black’s most important ways to bypass the main Four Knights lines which would follow the ‘normal’ continuation 4... $\mathbb{Q}f6$ 5 $\mathbb{Q}c3$. If Black can get an acceptable game from the position after 4... $\mathbb{Q}b6$, it allows him to use 2... $\mathbb{Q}c6$ to avoid a few of the tougher lines that can arise if he plays 2... $\mathbb{Q}f6$, as described in the next section. One positive feature is that 4... $\mathbb{Q}b6$ forces an immediate response. I’m not going to cover this move in great detail but will show some general contours of the play.

As always, Black has alternatives:

B



B



a) 4...e6 tends to transpose to other lines, but can produce unique play, such as after 5 ♕c3 ♜b4+!? (5...♜f6 is the Four Knights) or 5 g3 ♜b4+!? 6 ♕c3 ♜a5. Neither of these lines is a frequent choice of masters yet. A third answer to 4...e6 is 5 ♜b5; for example, 5...d6 (or 5...♜f6 6 ♜f4 e5 7 ♜g5 ♜a5+) 6 ♜f4 (6 e4 transposes to the Taimanov Sicilian with 5 ♜b5 d6 c4 – see Volume 1) 6...e5 7 ♜g3 ♜f6 8 ♜h4+!? (that's three moves for this one piece) 8...a6+! 9 ♜c3 (and four moves with this one! Surely Black cannot stand worse) 9...♜e7 10 e3, Bu Xiangzhi-Alekseev, China-Russia match, Nizhny Novgorod 2007. Here Bu Xiangzhi suggests 10...♜b6! 11 ♜xf6 ♜xf6 12 ♜d5 ♜xb2 13 ♜bc3 ♜g4 14 ♜b1 ♜xb1+ 15 ♜xb1 0-0-0.

b) 4...g6 is seldom an independent continuation, and it permits White to play 5 e4, which is a Maroczy Bind Variation of the Sicilian and not to the taste of every defender.

5 ♜b3

a) 5 ♜c2 e6 6 g3 is slow. In cases where White's knight is on c2 instead of b3, the customary move is 6...♜c5!, with the idea of forcing light-square weaknesses upon White. Black will answer 7 e3 with 7...d5 8 cxd5 exd5 9 ♜g2 ♜f6.

b) 5 ♜b5+!? (D) expresses the idea that putting a knight on c3 will truly control d5 and make the queen look a little funny out there on b6.

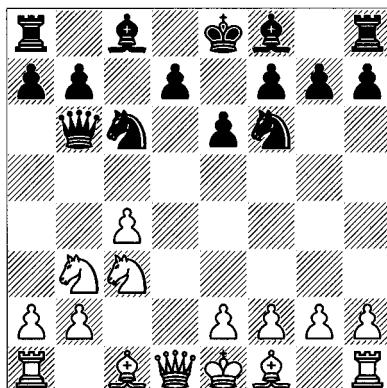
b1) Now 5...a6 6 ♜c3 e6 7 g3!? ♜c5 develops logically. Then 8 e3 ♜c7 9 ♜g2 ♜f6 10 0-0 0-0 11 b3 is strategically correct, but slow. For example, 11...♜d8 12 ♜b2 d5! 13 cxd5 exd5 threatens ...d4, and if White sacrifices the

exchange for a pawn by 14 ♜xd5 ♜xd5 15 ♜xd5 ♜h3 16 ♜h5+! ♜xf1 17 ♜e4 h6 18 ♜xc5, simply 18...♜h3 survives in good shape. Therefore White might want to look into 8 ♜e4 ♜f6 9 ♜xc5 ♜xc5 instead, although he'll have to sacrifice a pawn, perhaps along the lines of 10 ♜c3 ♜xc4 11 ♜g2. Then White has an attack based upon his bishop-pair and dark-square prospects, but Black has an impressive centre and, of course, an extra pawn.

b2) Black usually chooses 5...♜f6. One example went 6 g3!? a6 7 ♜c3 ♜e5 8 b3 ♜c6 9 ♜g1 e6 10 ♜g2 ♜c7 11 ♜b2. In return for losing the castling privilege, White has developed actively and controls space and the centre. The position is still unclear (after all, White's king has nowhere to go), but this ♜g1 idea (supporting g4-g5) has been a successful technique in similar variations. In Gulko-Mekhitarian, Cali 2007, Black consolidated very sensibly: 11...♜e7 12 ♜d2 0-0 13 ♜c1 d6 14 h3 ♜b8 15 f4!? ♜g6 16 e3 b6 17 ♜e2 ♜b7 with balanced play.

5...e6 6 ♜c3 ♜f6 (D)

W



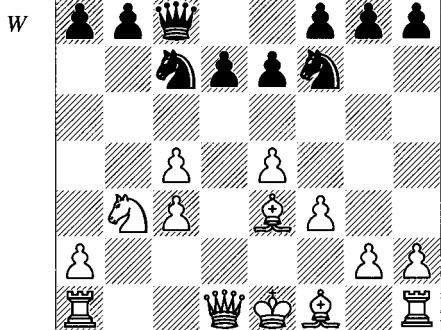
This is an extremely significant juncture. I apologize in advance for the following explanation, which is obscure-sounding but important to understand. In the position after 6... $\mathbb{Q}f6$, 7 g3 transposes to the Four Knights main line which goes 2 $\mathbb{Q}f3$ $\mathbb{Q}f6$ 3 d4 cxd4 4 $\mathbb{Q}xd4$ $\mathbb{Q}c6$ 5 $\mathbb{Q}c3$ e6 6 g3 $\mathbb{W}b6$ 7 $\mathbb{Q}b3$. If White chooses 7 a3 instead, that transposes to the other Four Knights variation with the same first five moves and then 6 a3 $\mathbb{W}b6$ 7 $\mathbb{Q}b3$. With such options for White, it makes you wonder how 4... $\mathbb{W}b6$ could be an improvement over 4... $\mathbb{Q}f6$ 5 $\mathbb{Q}c3$ e6 at all. The answer to that largely lies with your attitude towards the independent and important option that White has in the main-line Four Knights that goes 2 $\mathbb{Q}f3$ $\mathbb{Q}f6$ 3 $\mathbb{Q}c3$ $\mathbb{Q}c6$ 4 d4 cxd4 5 $\mathbb{Q}xd4$ e6 6 g3 $\mathbb{W}b6$, namely, 7 $\mathbb{Q}db5$; see that section for the details. If you're happy meeting that move as Black, then you have less incentive to go with the 2... $\mathbb{Q}c6$ 3 d4 cxd4 4 $\mathbb{Q}xd4$ $\mathbb{W}b6$ move-order (which avoids it). This all sounds complicated until you put it on a board and see how easy the transpositions really are.

Finally, after 4... $\mathbb{W}b6$ 5 $\mathbb{Q}b3$ e6 6 $\mathbb{Q}c3$ $\mathbb{Q}f6$, White also has the independent line played in this game:

7 e4?! $\mathbb{Q}b4$ 8 $\mathbb{Q}e3$!?

There are plenty of options.

8... $\mathbb{Q}xc3$! 9 bxc3 $\mathbb{W}c7$ 10 f3 d6 (D)



We shall see this structure in the main Four Knights lines. Black can target White's weak doubled c-pawns, as in the Nimzo-Indian Defence and other openings. He has the right pieces to do it: a knight can go to e5, a bishop to a6, a rook to c8, and so forth. White, on the

other hand, has the bishop-pair, space, and two potential structural ideas: c5, which activates his pieces, and g4-g5.

11 $\mathbb{Q}d4$!?

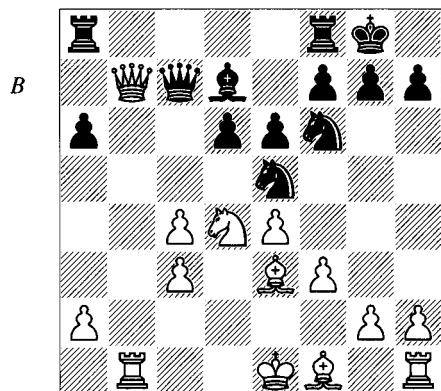
a6 Versus 12 $\mathbb{Q}b5$, but now Black no longer has the idea of ...b6 with ... $\mathbb{Q}a6$.

12 $\mathbb{Q}b1$

12 $\mathbb{Q}xc6$ bxc6 13 $\mathbb{Q}b1$ c5! blocks the position, at least for the moment.

12... $\mathbb{Q}e5$ 13 $\mathbb{W}a4$!?

$\mathbb{Q}d7$ 14 $\mathbb{W}b4$ 0-0! 15 $\mathbb{W}xb7$ (D)



Now, in the game, 15... $\mathbb{W}xb7$?? 16 $\mathbb{Q}b7$ $\mathbb{Q}fb8$ 17 $\mathbb{Q}b3$! left White with a small advantage, so it was better to play 15... $\mathbb{W}a5$!, which gives Black a counterattack. There might follow 16 $\mathbb{Q}f2$ $\mathbb{W}xc3$ 17 $\mathbb{Q}b3$ $\mathbb{W}a5$ 18 $\mathbb{Q}e2$ d5!, opening the position, when White would do well to bail out by 19 exd5 exd5 20 c5! $\mathbb{W}xc5$ 21 $\mathbb{Q}f5$ $\mathbb{W}a5$ 22 $\mathbb{Q}b6$ $\mathbb{Q}d2$ 23 $\mathbb{Q}e3$ $\mathbb{W}a5$ 24 $\mathbb{Q}b6$, etc.

The whole variation with 4... $\mathbb{W}b6$ is thought-provoking, to say the least! We'll get a fuller understanding of what's going on when we get to the main Four Knights lines.

Shiriaev – Shinkevich

Ufa 2004

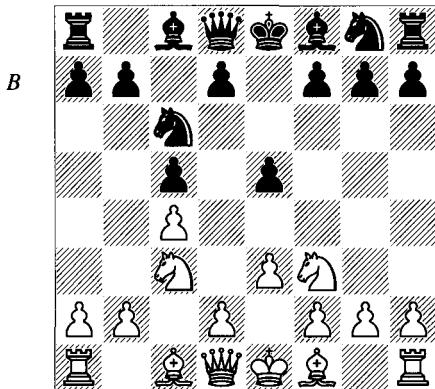
1 c4 c5 2 $\mathbb{Q}f3$ $\mathbb{Q}c6$ 3 $\mathbb{Q}c3$ e5

Black seeks to set up a reversed Botvinnik structure, one of the main points of 2... $\mathbb{Q}c6$.

4 e3 (D)

This modest nudge of a pawn is the most serious independent challenge White can put to 3...e5, and it's the preference of many grandmasters. The fact that White hasn't played g3

makes e3 followed by d4 a realistic plan. Instead, 4 g3 g6 5 ♘g2 ♘g7 would transpose to the normal Pure Symmetrical English variation with 5 ♘f3 e5.



B

4...♘f6

This is the most effective way in which Black can contest the centre.

a) 4...g6? 5 d4 cxd4 6 exd4 exd4 7 ♘xd4 already puts Black in trouble due to his isolated d-pawn and weakness on d6. He can hardly play 7...♗g7? because of 8 ♘db5, but 7...♘f6 8 ♘db5 ♘b4 9 ♜e2+ ♛f8 10 ♘h6+ ♛g8 11 0-0-0 is also horrible.

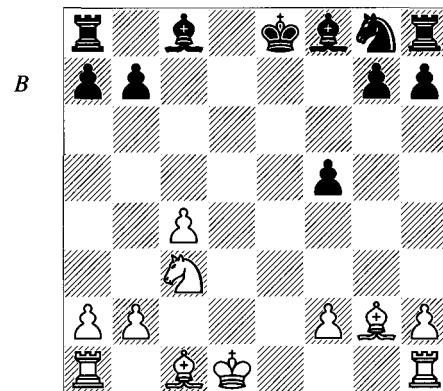
b) 4...f5 risks the consequences of a delay in Black's development; for example, 5 d4 cxd4 (5...e4 also has multiple answers, but 6 d5! is the easiest; after 6...exf3 7 dxc6 fxe2 8 cxd7+ ♜xd7 9 ♘xg2 ♜xd1+ 10 ♘xd1 ♘f6, as in Marin-Ardeleanu, Romanian Ch, Iasi 1999, Black is not only underdeveloped, but both of his bishops are cut off by the bishops' pawns; then 11 ♘d5! would have guaranteed the advantage) 6 exd4 e4 7 d5! exf3 8 dxe6 and either 8...dxc6 9 ♜xf3 or 8...fxg2 9 cxd7+ ♜xd7 10 ♘xg2! ♜xd1+ 11 ♘xd1 (D) leaves Black in a positional mess.

White has a development lead and terrific squares for his pieces while Black has multiple internal weaknesses caused by the early advance ...f5.

5 d4

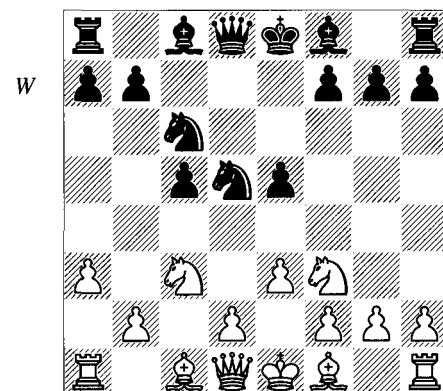
Or:

a) Sometimes 5 a3 is played, as a sort of semi-waiting move, when White anticipates 5...d5 (I should point out that 5...♗e7 is playable, especially if 6 d4 cxd4 7 exd4 exd4 8



B

♘xd4 can be answered by 8...d5!, a move which has been neglected but seems all right; for example, 9 cxd5 ♘xd5 10 ♘b5 ♘xc3 11 bxc3 ♘d7) 6 cxd5 ♘xd5 (D).



W

Then White has two main moves:

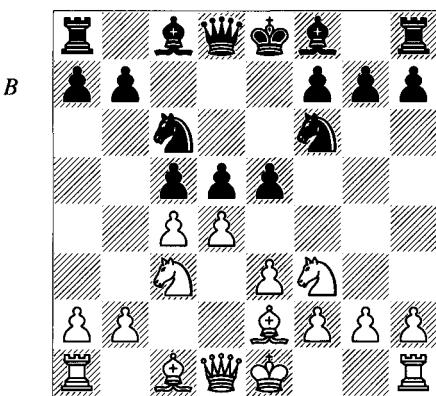
a1) 7 ♜c2 is another reversed Taimanov Sicilian position:

a11) If nothing else it permits the modest 7...♘xc3. Then 8 bxc3 (8 dxc3 ♘d6 is solid) 8...♘d6 can't be too bad for Black, because the move a3 is a bit wasted. On the other hand, formal advantage or not, White has some interesting possibilities. Apart from constructing a d3/c4 set-up, he can have some fun with a combination of ♘d3, c4, ♜b1 and ♘e4 as appropriate, while an attack against the black king by h4 is not unthinkable.

a12) More ambitious is 7...♗e6!? 8 ♘b5 (again, 8 ♘d3?! is an intriguing idea) 8...♘xc3 9 ♜xc3 f6, when 10 d3 is apparently better than 10 d4 ♜b6 11 ♘xc6+ ♜xc6 12 dxe5 ♘d5! 13 exf6 gxf6, with an attack.

a2) 7 ♜b5 ♛xc3 8 dxc3 ♕xd1+ 9 ♔xd1 ♜f5! keeps White's king from c2, when the greedy 10 ♜xc6+ bxc6 11 ♜xe5 ♜d6 12 ♜c4 ♜c7 is terribly risky for White, whose bishop is awful and light squares weak.

b) Another useful, almost waiting, move is 5 ♜e2, which was played in the big-time game Ivanchuk-Anand, Wijk aan Zee 2006: 5...d5 6 d4!? (D) (6 cxd5 ♛xd5 is a Reversed Sicilian where ♜e2 is rather passive and Black shouldn't have many difficulties).

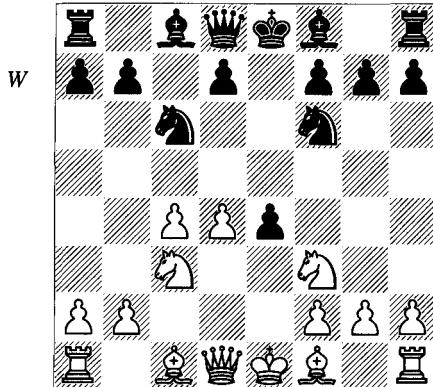


6...exd4 (after Ribli's 6...e4 7 $\mathbb{Q}xe5$ $\mathbb{Q}d6$ 8 $cxd5$ $\mathbb{Q}xe5$ 9 $dxe5$ $\mathbb{Q}xe5$ 10 $\mathbb{Q}xe4$ $\mathbb{Q}xe4$ 11 $\mathbb{W}a4+$ $\mathbb{Q}d7$ 12 $\mathbb{W}xe4$ $\mathbb{W}e7$ White should retreat by 13 $\mathbb{W}c2$, play f4 and castle) 7 exd4 (this position can also arise from the Sicilian and the Mikenas Attack – see page 322) 7... $\mathbb{Q}e6!$ 8 $\mathbb{Q}e3$ $dxc4$ 9 $\mathbb{W}a4$ $cxd4$!? (9... $\mathbb{W}a5$ is a sound move: 10 $dxc5$!? $\mathbb{W}xa4$ 11 $\mathbb{Q}xa4$ $\mathbb{Q}d5$ 12 $\mathbb{Q}d2$?! $\mathbb{Q}db4$!, watching over the light squares, Titov-Saltaev, Moscow 1983) 10 $\mathbb{Q}xd4$ $\mathbb{Q}d7$ 11 $\mathbb{W}xc4$ $\mathbb{Q}c8$ 12 0-0! $\mathbb{Q}d6$? (better is 12... $\mathbb{Q}xd4$ 13 $\mathbb{W}xd4$ $\mathbb{Q}c5$ 14 $\mathbb{W}e5+$ $\mathbb{W}e7$), and now White could have really tortured his opponent by 13 $\mathbb{Q}db5$!, intending 13... $\mathbb{Q}e7$ 14 $\mathbb{Q}ad1$ or 13... $\mathbb{Q}b8$ 14 $\mathbb{Q}c5$.

5...cxd4

5...e4 will usually transpose; for example, after 6 ♜g5 or 6 ♜e5, Black can play 6...cxd4. White's attempt to get more by 6 d5 accomplishes nothing after 6...exf3 7 dxc6 fxe2 8 cxd7+ ♖xd7 9 ♖xg2 ♗c7 with the ideas ♗c6 and ...0-0-0, Suba-Wedberg, Dortmund 1983. Note the difference between 4...♜f6 and the non-developing 4...f5 in lines where White plays this d5 advance versus ...e4.

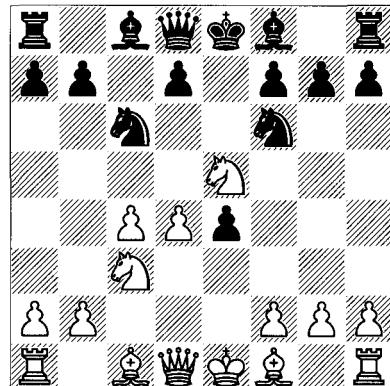
6 exd4 e4 (D)



The position after 6...e4 has been enormously popular and plays a major role in determining how 3...e5 should be assessed.

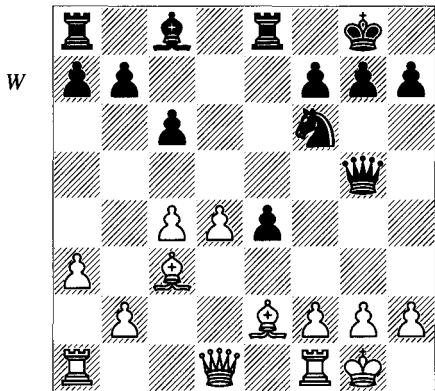
7 ♗g5

The other major test of this position is 7 (D).



Then the main line goes 7... $\mathbb{Q}b4$ (7... $\mathbb{Q}d6$ may be playable; an interesting idea then is 8 c5, when 8... $\mathbb{Q}b8$ 9 $\mathbb{Q}c4$ 0-0-0!? 10 d5 $\mathbb{Q}e5$ 11 d6 $\mathbb{Q}e8$ is wild and messy, but better than 8... $\mathbb{Q}xe5$? 9 $dxe5$ $\mathbb{Q}xe5$ 10 $\mathbb{Q}d6$! $\mathbb{W}e7$ 11 $\mathbb{W}xe7+$! $\mathbb{Q}xe7$ 12 $\mathbb{Q}g5$, when White is very much in charge) 8 $\mathbb{Q}e2$ $\mathbb{W}a5$ (8... $\mathbb{W}e7$ 9 $\mathbb{Q}f4$! $\mathbb{Q}d6$!?) 10 $\mathbb{Q}b5$! has the idea 10... $\mathbb{Q}b4+$ 11 $\mathbb{Q}f1$; in Scherbakov-Maksimenko, Yugoslav Team Ch, Nikšić 1996, 10... $\mathbb{Q}b8$ 11 c5! gave White the advantage) 9 $\mathbb{Q}xc6$ dx $c6$ (after 9... $\mathbb{Q}xc3+$ 10 bxc3 dx $c6$, 11 0-0-0!?) $\mathbb{W}xc3$ 12 $\mathbb{Q}b1$ 0-0-0 13 $\mathbb{Q}b3$ $\mathbb{W}a5$ 14 $\mathbb{Q}g3$ launched a serious attack in Bertholee-J. Polgar, Amsterdam 1990; 11 $\mathbb{W}c2$ is safer) 10 $\mathbb{Q}d2$ (10 0-0-0 $\mathbb{Q}xc3$ is the pawn sacrifice in the last note; if Black declines by 10...0-0, White can look

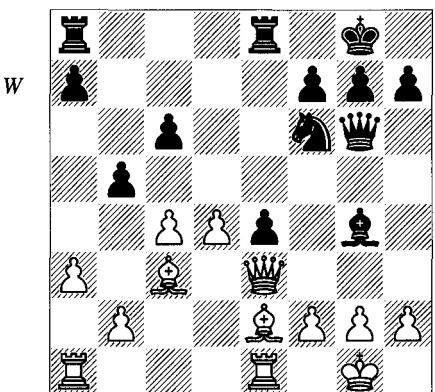
for a move other than 11 ♘d2, and in fact that may be a good place to investigate for new ideas in this line) 10...0-0 11 0-0 ♖e8 12 a3 ♖xc3 13 ♖xc3 ♜g5 (D).



White has two bishops and Black has space. This position has been contested many times:

a) 14 ♘d2?!? (White logically tries to move his bishop from c3, where it is blocked by the d4-pawn, to a diagonal upon which it can exert influence) 14...♜g6 15 ♘f4 ♘h3 (15...h5 is a good alternative) 16 ♘g3 ♘g4! 17 ♘xg4 ♗xg4 18 ♖e1 ♖ad8 with approximate equality, Kharlov-Yakovenko, Russian Team Ch, Sochi 2005.

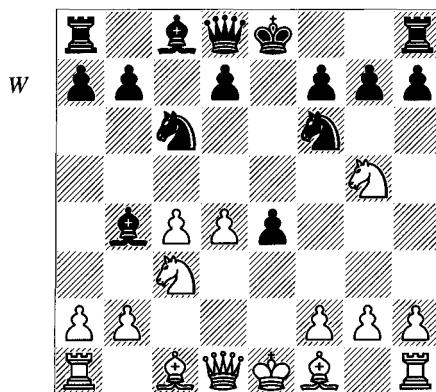
b) I won't go deeply into 14 ♖c1 ♜g6, but one theme to mention comes up after 15 ♖e3 (15 ♖f4 h5 is standard) 15...♝g4 16 ♖fe1 b5!? (D), played in Pachman-Ksieski, 2nd Bundesliga 1994/5.



This method of trying to eliminate White's c-pawn and win the d5-square is a recurring one in what I would call 'light-square' openings.

For example, it happens in at least two variations of the Slav Defence and in the main line (4...♝f5) of the Caro-Kann Defence, as well as in the Chigorin Defence to the Queen's Gambit, and lesser lines of the Queen's Gambit and the Nimzo-Indian Defence. In fact, most openings in which White plays d4 and c4 have at least one serious line in which Black's pawn advances to ...b5, especially if White has castled queenside, in which case its effect is naturally multiplied. Although ...b5 is sometimes played as a pawn sacrifice (because possession of d5 is so important), here 17 cxb5 ♘d5 18 ♖d2 ♖xe2 recovers the pawn with a great position in view of 19 ♖xe2 ♘f4 20 ♖f1 cxb5.

7...♝b4 (D)



This is precisely the position that arises from 1 c4 c5 2 ♘f3 ♘f6 3 ♘c3 e6 4 e4 ♘c6 5 ♘e2 d5 6 cxd5 exd5 7 e5 ♘g4 8 ♘b5, with colours reversed but the same tempi. In fact, the analysis that follows will borrow from examples played with that move-order. Furthermore, it sometimes arises from a Sicilian Defence: 1 e4 c5 2 ♘f3 e6 (or 2...♞c6 3 c4, etc.) 3 c4 ♘c6 4 ♘c3 ♘f6 5 ♘e2 d5, etc. These are sidelines, to be sure, but useful ones to be familiar with!

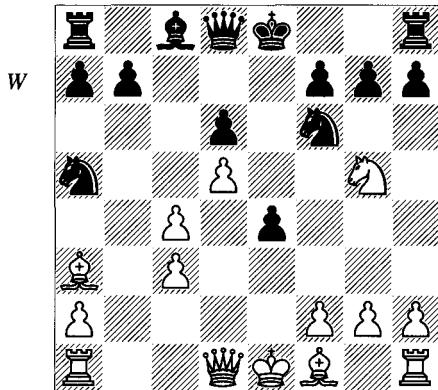
8 d5

White almost has to play this, or be driven back by ...h6 and then lose the centre when Black plays ...d5.

8...♝e5

This variation as a whole is fascinating. 8...♝xc3+ 9 bxc3 ♘a5! is an important alternative connected with some crazy and little-investigated tactics. White's natural response is 10 ♘a3 (10 ♖d4 has also been played), but

after 10...d6 (*D*), White needs to justify the slightly odd positions of his bishop on a3 and knight on g5.



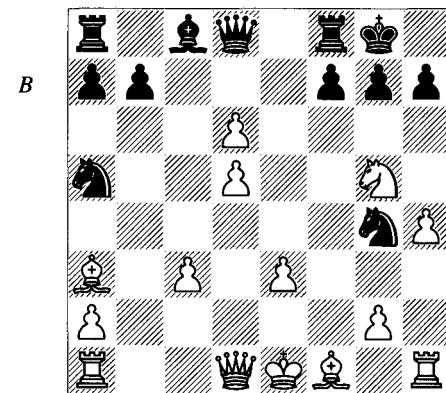
Black intends 11...h6 12 $\mathbb{Q}h3$ $\mathbb{Q}xh3$, or perhaps 11...e3!? followed by ... $\mathbb{Q}g4$. Therefore White needs to move quickly: 11 c5!? (with the idea 12 $\mathbb{Q}b5+$; 11 $\mathbb{W}a4+?$ $\mathbb{Q}d7$ 12 $\mathbb{W}b4$ 0-0 13 $\mathbb{W}xd6$ $\mathbb{Q}e8$ gives Black more than enough play) 11...0-0! 12 cxd6 e3!? (12... $\mathbb{Q}e8$ can lead to crazy lines like 13 $\mathbb{W}d4$ e3! 14 fxe3 $\mathbb{Q}g4$ 15 $\mathbb{Q}e6!$ fxe6 16 $\mathbb{W}xg4$ exd5 17 $\mathbb{W}d4!$ $\mathbb{Q}c6!$ 18 $\mathbb{W}xd5+$ $\mathbb{Q}e6$, which I leave with you to analyse!) and now:

a) 13 $\mathbb{Q}e2$!? is Cummings's very sensible suggestion. His idea is 13...h6 14 d7!, which is utterly unclear after 14... $\mathbb{Q}xd7$ 15 $\mathbb{Q}xf8$ $\mathbb{W}xf8$ 16 $\mathbb{Q}f3$ exf2+ 17 $\mathbb{Q}xf2$ $\mathbb{Q}e4+$ 18 $\mathbb{Q}f1$ $\mathbb{Q}xc3$, or any other number of formidable lines!

b) 13 d7! is a refinement: 13...exf2+ 14 $\mathbb{Q}xf2$ $\mathbb{Q}xd7$ 15 $\mathbb{Q}xf8$ and now 15... $\mathbb{W}xf8$ is met with 16 $\mathbb{W}d4$!, and 15... $\mathbb{Q}g4$ + 16 $\mathbb{Q}g1$ $\mathbb{W}xg5$ foiled by 17 $\mathbb{Q}c5$!. However, 15... $\mathbb{W}xf8$! 16 $\mathbb{Q}e2$!? h6 17 $\mathbb{Q}f3$ $\mathbb{Q}e4+$ is unclear.

c) After 13 fxe3? $\mathbb{Q}g4$, Cummings gives 14 $\mathbb{Q}f3$? $\mathbb{Q}xe3$, etc. It bears mentioning, however, that 14 h4! (*D*) muddies the waters.

For example, 14... $\mathbb{Q}xe3$ (14...h6 15 $\mathbb{Q}e2$ $\mathbb{Q}xe3$ 16 $\mathbb{W}d3$; 14... $\mathbb{Q}e8$ 15 $\mathbb{W}b1$ – with the idea $\mathbb{W}xh7+$, of course, but also e4 – 15... $\mathbb{Q}xe3+16\mathbb{Q}e2$ looks messy but safe enough for White; $\mathbb{Q}h3$ might follow) 15 $\mathbb{W}d3$ $\mathbb{Q}f5$ 16 $\mathbb{W}xe3$ $\mathbb{Q}e8$ 17 $\mathbb{Q}e6$ $\mathbb{Q}xe6$ (17...fxe6 18 0-0-0) 18 0-0-0!? (18 $\mathbb{Q}f2$ $\mathbb{Q}xd5$ 19 $\mathbb{W}d4$ is also unclear) 18... $\mathbb{Q}g4$ 19 $\mathbb{W}d4$ $\mathbb{Q}xd1$ 20 $\mathbb{Q}xd1$ $\mathbb{W}d7$, and because of his bishop-pair and Black's lack of kingside defenders, White can venture a kingside attack by

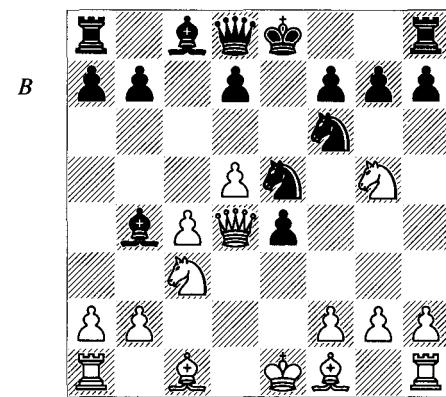


21 h5 h6 22 g4 b5 23 g5!, which is still unclear after 23... $\mathbb{W}f5$ (not 23...b4? 24 $\mathbb{Q}d3$!) 24 gxh6.

This line with 8... $\mathbb{Q}xc3+9\mathbb{Q}bc3$ $\mathbb{Q}a5$ should attract attacking types. As mentioned, it has special importance, since it also applies to other lines from the English, as well as to the Sicilian Defence.

Let's return to the better-travelled paths of 8... $\mathbb{Q}e5$:

9 $\mathbb{W}d4$ (*D*)



9... $\mathbb{W}e7$

9...d6 is a little-tested idea: 10 $\mathbb{Q}xe4$ $\mathbb{Q}xe4$! (10... $\mathbb{Q}xc3+?$ should be answered by 11 $\mathbb{Q}xc3$; for example, 11... $\mathbb{W}e7$ 12 $\mathbb{Q}e2$ $\mathbb{Q}g4$ 13 0-0 $\mathbb{Q}xe2$ 14 $\mathbb{Q}xe2$ $\mathbb{R}c8$ 15 $\mathbb{Q}g5$! 0-0 16 b3, with the idea 16... $\mathbb{Q}xc4$? 17 $\mathbb{Q}xf6$ $\mathbb{G}xf6$ 18 $\mathbb{W}g4+$ $\mathbb{Q}h8$ 19 $\mathbb{Q}xc4$ and e2 is covered) 11 $\mathbb{W}xe4$ 0-0. Black has some real compensation, with ideas of ... $\mathbb{W}f6$ and ... $\mathbb{Q}f5$, or ...f5-f4. A key line would start with 12 $\mathbb{Q}e2$: 12...f5!? (or 12... $\mathbb{W}f6$?) 13 $\mathbb{W}f4$ (13 $\mathbb{W}c2$ f4 is very strong, intending 14 0-0 f3!), when 15 $\mathbb{Q}xf3$? loses to 15... $\mathbb{W}xf3$ 16 $\mathbb{G}xf3$

$\text{Qxf3+ } 17 \text{ Qg2 } \mathbb{W}h4) 13\ldots \text{Qg6 } 14 \text{ Wd2 f4! } 15\ldots$
 $0-0 \text{ Qh4!}$, with complications that are at any rate acceptable to Black.

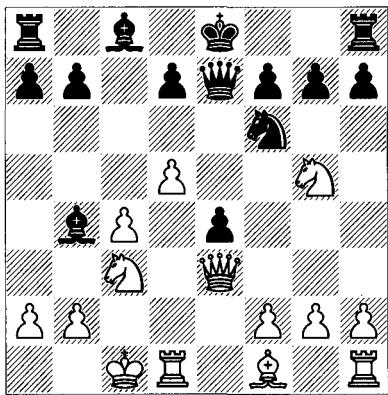
10 $\text{e}3$

The tricky 10 d6!? would be well answered by 10...Qc6! 11 We3 We5.

10... $\text{N}e4$!? 11 0-0-0

Now Black's e-pawn is well and truly hanging, and he lags in development, so he has to start capturing things.

11... Nxe3 12 Qxe3 (D)



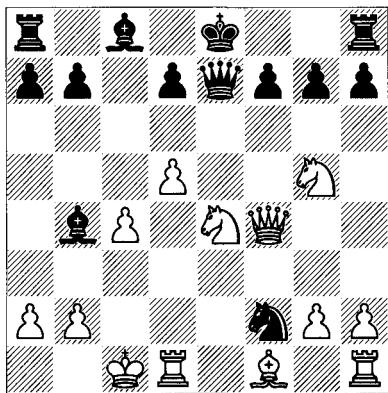
12... $\text{N}g4??$

Another swap with 12... $\mathbb{Q}xc3$ was called for. Then 13 $\mathbb{W}xc3$ d6 14 $\mathbb{M}e1$ threatens f3, but this may not be so bad: 14...0-0 15 f3!? $\mathbb{Q}xd5!$ 16 $\mathbb{W}d2$ $\mathbb{Q}f6$ 17 $\mathbb{Q}xe4$ $\mathbb{Q}xe4$ 18 $\mathbb{M}xe4$ $\mathbb{Q}e6$ with some sort of balance.

13 $\mathbb{W}f4$ $\mathfrak{Q}xf2?$

Hoping for 14 d6 $\mathbb{W}f6$, but falling for a tactic; instead, 13... $\mathbb{Q}xc3$ 14 $\mathbb{W}xg4$ $\mathbb{Q}e5$ 15 $\mathbb{Q}xe4$ d6 holds on, with some edge for White.

14 ♜cxe4! (D)



14... Nxe4

Black escapes the most terrible fates: after 14... $\mathbb{Q}xh1?$ 15 d6 $\mathbb{W}f8$ 16 c5! f6 17 $\mathbb{Q}c4$ Black's position is resignable. 14... $\mathbb{Q}xd1$ leads to the same result but by a more spectacular route: 15 d6 $\mathbb{W}f8$ (15... $\mathbb{Q}xd6$ 16 $\mathbb{Q}xd6+$ $\mathbb{W}f8$ 17 $\mathbb{Q}gxf7$ $\mathbb{W}e3+$ 18 $\mathbb{W}xe3$ $\mathbb{Q}xe3$ 19 $\mathbb{Q}xh8$) 16 c5! (making room for the bishop on c4) 16...h6 17 $\mathbb{Q}c4!$ $\mathbb{hxg5}$ 18 $\mathbb{Q}xg5$ and White is winning!

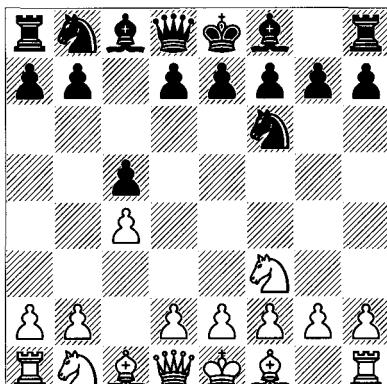
15 ♔xe4 f5 16 ♕xf5 d6

Here instead of the game's 17 $\mathbb{W}h5+?$ g6 18 $\mathbb{W}f3$, when 18... $\mathbb{Q}f5$ would have defended, 17 $\mathbb{W}f3!$ keeps the extra pawn and a large advantage: 17... $\mathbb{K}f8$ (17... $\mathbb{Q}d7$ 18 $\mathbb{Q}d3$ 0-0-0 19 $\mathbb{W}g3$) 18 $\mathbb{W}e3$ $\mathbb{Q}g4$ (18... $\mathbb{Q}c5$ 19 $\mathbb{W}d2!$ intending $\mathbb{H}e1$) 19 $\mathbb{Q}e2$ $\mathbb{Q}xe2$ 20 $\mathbb{W}xe2$ $\mathbb{K}f4$ 21 $\mathbb{K}d4$ with the idea 21... $\mathbb{Q}c5?$ 22 $\mathbb{Q}f6+$.

When all is said and done, Black seems to have full-bodied play following 1 c4 c5 2 ♜f3 ♜c6 3 ♜c3 e5 4 e3, and for that matter, after 2...♜c6 as a whole.

2... $\text{Nf}6$ and the Symmetrical Four Knights

1 c4 c5 2 $\text{N}f3$ $\text{N}f6$ (D)



Having seen the important move 2... $\mathbb{Q}c6$ and associated variations, we'll turn our attention to one of the grand old lines of the Symmetrical English, the Four Knights Variation with 2... $\mathbb{Q}f6$ and an early d4 on White's part. Black's development of his king's knight implies a fundamental change of philosophy from 2... $\mathbb{Q}c6$. This time the light squares d5 and e4 are his

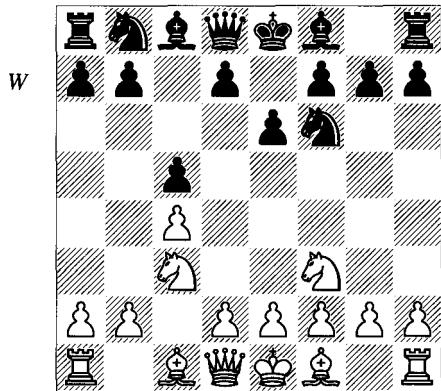
focus, and a wide array of the variations following $2\dots\mathbb{Q}f6$ involve the move $\dots d5$, as early as move 3. The move $\dots e5$, so often associated with $2\dots\mathbb{Q}c6$, becomes a rare occurrence.

3 $\mathbb{Q}c3$

If you're following the multitudinous transpositions in these chapters, it won't surprise you that $3 \text{d4 cxd4 } 4 \mathbb{Q}xd4$ can go various ways, including of course our main line with $4\dots\mathbb{Q}c6$ $5 \mathbb{Q}c3$. I'll look at some independent alternatives in the Anti-Benoni section below.

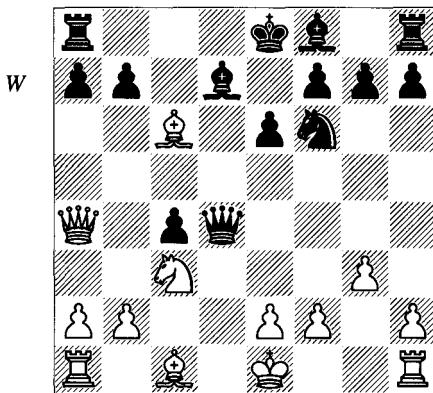
3... $\mathbb{Q}c6$

After $3\dots b6$ $4 \text{e3!?$ }, $4\dots\mathbb{Q}b7$ 5d4 transposes to note 'b' on page 219, and $4\dots e6$ is line 'b' of this note; both are pleasant for White. Now let's take a look at some move-orders after the much more important $3\dots e6$ (*D*):



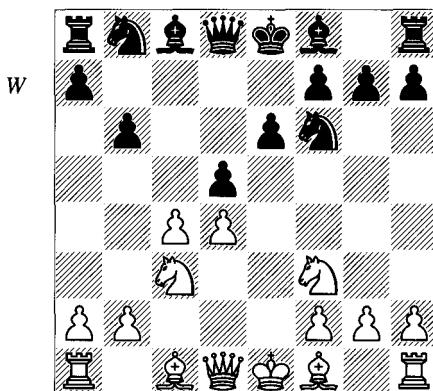
The lines that follow are of particular significance, because the choices made at this point can determine the underlying nature of the opening and middlegame. Both players need to know how to steer the game into the fundamental variations that they wish to play:

a) $4 \text{g3 } \mathbb{Q}c6$ (Black has a certain control over his own destiny; for example, $4\dots b6$ $5 \mathbb{Q}g2$ $\mathbb{Q}b7$ is a Hedgehog Variation of Chapter 10; and $4\dots d5$ $5 \text{cxd5 exd5 } 6 \text{d4}$ is a Queen's Gambit Declined, Tarrasch Variation; in this last line, $5\dots\mathbb{Q}xd5$ 6d4 or $6 \mathbb{Q}g2 \mathbb{Q}c6$ will usually transpose into the Keres-Parma Variation in Chapter 9) $5 \mathbb{Q}g2$ ($5 \text{d4 cxd4 } 6 \mathbb{Q}xd4$ is the main Four Knights line again) $5\dots d5$ 6d4! (once again, $6 \text{cxd5 exd5 } 7 \text{d4}$ is a Tarrasch Defence, and $6\dots\mathbb{Q}xd5$ a Keres-Parma Variation) $6\dots \text{dxc4}$ $7 \mathbb{Q}a4 \text{cxd4!?$ (or $7\dots \mathbb{Q}b6!?$) $8 \mathbb{Q}xd4$ $\mathbb{Q}xd4+ \mathbb{Q}d7$ (*D*).



Compare the Grünfeld Defence variation 1 $d4 \mathbb{Q}f6$ $2 \text{c4 g6 } 3 \mathbb{Q}c3 d5$ $4 \mathbb{Q}f3 \mathbb{Q}g7$ $5 \text{e3 c5 } 6 \text{dxc5 } \mathbb{Q}a5$ $7 \text{cxd5 } \mathbb{Q}xd5$ $8 \mathbb{Q}xd5 \mathbb{Q}xc3+$ $9 \mathbb{Q}d2$. In our analogous situation (see the above diagram), Black's position is fine after $10 \mathbb{Q}xd7+$ $\mathbb{Q}xd7$ $11 \mathbb{Q}xc4 \mathbb{Q}c8$. O'Kelly de Galway-Mascariñas, Jakarta 1978 continued $12 \mathbb{Q}b3$, and now $12\dots\mathbb{Q}e7$ was adequate, but a more interesting continuation might be $12\dots\mathbb{Q}c5!?$ 130-0 $0-0$ with the idea $14 \mathbb{Q}g5 \mathbb{Q}g4!?$ (or $14\dots \mathbb{Q}c6$ $15 \mathbb{Q}xf6 \text{ gxf6 } 16 \mathbb{Q}ac1 \mathbb{Q}b6$ with equality) $15 \mathbb{Q}ad1 \mathbb{Q}c6$ 16h3 h6! , preserving a lively imbalance.

b) 4e3 can be dull, but has a few subtleties. Usually the game goes $4\dots d5$ 5d4 or $4\dots\mathbb{Q}c6$ 5d4 d5 , when we've arrived at the Symmetrical Tarrasch Queen's Gambit. To avoid this, Black sometimes risks $4\dots b6$ $5 \text{d4 cxd4 } (5\dots\mathbb{Q}b7!?)$ 6d5 blocks off the bishop on b7 and grabs space) $6 \text{exd4 d5!?$ (*D*) (following the exchange on d4, $6\dots\mathbb{Q}b7$ is now viable; although White still enjoys more space after a move like $7 \mathbb{Q}d3$, he cannot easily execute the d5 advance).

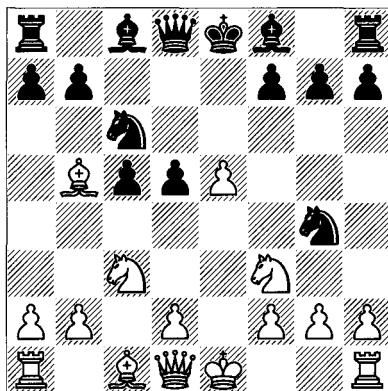


This can also come about by 1 c4 c5 2 ♕f3 ♕f6 3 ♕c3 b6 4 e3 e6 5 d4 cxd4 6 exd4 d5. In conventional theory, it is ‘officially’ a Caro-Kann Defence, Panov Attack due to the order 1 e4 c6 2 d4 d5 3 exd5 cxd5 4 c4 ♕f6 5 ♕c3 e6 6 ♕f3 b6?!. However, it probably arises most often from our move-order, and still more from a Queen’s Gambit Semi-Tarrasch. So it’s worth knowing that Black’s position is terrible! A strong solution is 7 ♕e5! ♕e7 (7... ♕bd7 8 ♕a4 ♕b7 9 cxd5 exd5 10 ♕d3 a6 11 0-0 with a clearly superior game; 7...a6 8 cxd5 ♕xd5 9 ♕a4+ ♕d7 10 ♕xd7 ♕xd7 11 ♕xd5 exd5 12 ♕xa6!, Kharitonov-Ballo, Stockholm 1998, and Black can’t exploit the bishop’s position; for example, 12... ♕c7 13 ♕b5! ♕a7 14 ♕e2+) 8 cxd5 ♕xd5 (8...exd5 9 ♕b5+ ♕f8 10 0-0 ♕e6 11 ♕e1 a6 12 ♕a4 b5 13 ♕b3 b4 14 ♕e2 ♕bd7 15 ♕f4 with a dominant position, Timman-Giardelli, Buenos Aires Olympiad 1978) 9 ♕b5+ ♕d7 and instead of 10 ♕f3, as played in Dovgopolov-Koriakin, Vitebsk 2006, 10 ♕xd7! ♕xd7 11 ♕xd5 exd5 12 ♕g4! hits g7 and ties the king to d7. White is winning; for example, 12...g6 13 ♕h6 f5 14 ♕f3, etc.

c) You’ll find transpositions arising from 4 d4 cxd4 5 ♕xd4 in this and other chapters. For a rundown on the possibilities, see the Anti-Benoni section below.

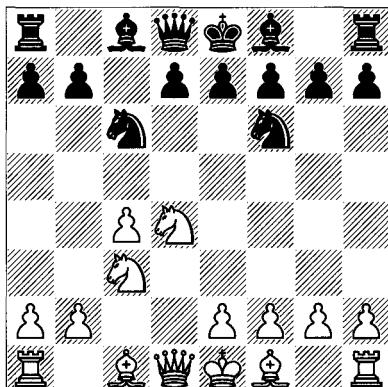
d) After 4 e4 ♕c6, the wimpy-looking 5 ♕e2?!? (D) is more important than it might at first seem:

In any event, White intends 6 d4 cxd4 7 ♕xd4, when ♕e2 becomes a normal and useful move. Here 5... ♕d4 6 e5! is undesirable, and 5... ♕b6 is an uninspiring, if perfectly respectable, option. So the most popular and challenging line has been 5...d5 6 cxd5 (6 exd5 exd5 7 d4 is Ivanchuk-Anand on page 230; after 6 e5, 6... ♕g4 7 cxd5 exd5 will transpose, while 6... ♕e4 can be met by 7 ♕d3 f5!? or 7 0-0 ♕e7 8 ♕c2!? ♕g5! 9 ♕xg5 ♕xg5 10 cxd5 exd5 11 f4 ♕d4 12 ♕a4+ ♕d7 13 ♕d1 with a messy position) 6...exd5 7 e5 ♕g4 8 ♕b5! (D).

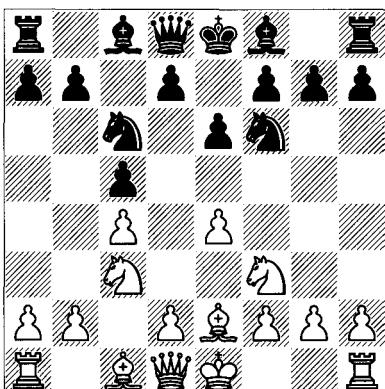


By an odd turn, we have reached the position from 2 ♕f3 ♕c6 3 ♕c3 e5 4 e3 ♕f6 5 d4 cxd4 6 exd4 e4 7 ♕g5 ♕b4, analysed in the last section! The colours are reversed but the position is the same due to White’s tempo-loss with ♕e2-b5. Refer to that move-order and analysis, with a special focus on the ambitious 8 d5 ♕xc3+!? 9 bxc3 ♕a5. With our move-order, that’s 8...d4 9 ♕xc6+!? bxc6 10 ♕a4.

4 d4 cxd4 5 ♕xd4 (D)



B



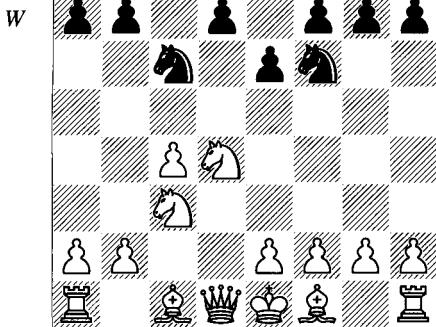
First, it’s worth noting that this is also a Sicilian Defence, as it can come from 1 e4 c5 2 ♕f3 e6 (or 2... ♕c6 3 c4, etc.) 3 c4 ♕c6 4 ♕c3 ♕f6 5 ♕e2. Perhaps that will interest 1 e4 players.

Finally, we've arrived at the Four Knights Symmetrical Variation, the traditional main line arising from 2 $\mathbb{Q}f3$ with an early d4.

A warning: the subject-matter of this chapter can be sophisticated in terms of theory and analysis at some points. When the material becomes too dense, the less advanced reader may wish to follow the general ideas and enjoy the games rather than get tangled up in specifics.

5...e6 (D)

This is by far the most frequently chosen move. There are some irregular possibilities such as 5... $\mathbb{W}b6$ which I won't give details about, but see the section above about 2... $\mathbb{Q}c6$ 3 d4 cxd4 4 $\mathbb{Q}xd4$ $\mathbb{W}b6$ for some possible transpositions. Finally, I should mention that 5...e5!? (which is very rarely played) could be a better option than thought, because 6 $\mathbb{Q}db5$ d6 7 $\mathbb{Q}g5$ transposes to 5...e6 6 $\mathbb{Q}db5$ d6 7 $\mathbb{Q}f4$ e5 8 $\mathbb{Q}g5$ below. Of course, White can look into other 7th moves, including 7 e4, which is a Kalashnikov Sicilian. In general, the Four Knights Variation embraces such disparate types of positions that the best way to describe it is by showing games.



Four Knights with 6 a3

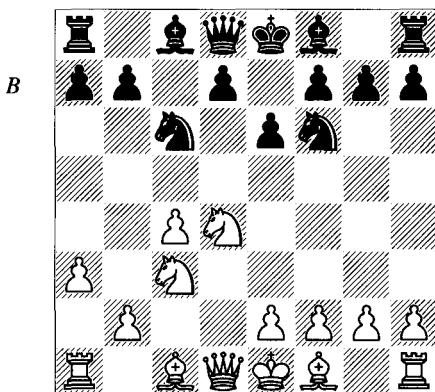
Yakovenko – Moiseenko

European Ch, Dresden 2007

1 c4 c5 2 $\mathbb{Q}f3$ $\mathbb{Q}c6$ 3 d4 cxd4 4 $\mathbb{Q}xd4$ $\mathbb{Q}f6$ 5 $\mathbb{Q}c3$ e6 6 a3 (D)

This odd-looking move, which was essentially ignored for most of the rich history of this variation, has grown in importance. Much of

this has to do with White's frustrations in the old main line after 6 g3 $\mathbb{W}b6$ 7 $\mathbb{Q}b3$ $\mathbb{Q}b4$, although it must be said that players are still willing to contest that position and it has its own unexplored paths, as we shall see below.



In modern chess, there has been an increased use of the 'little moves' a3 and ...a6 (as well as h3 and ...h6) in many contexts; a common theme is that they serve as 'useful' semi-waiting moves. The utility of 6 a3 is largely preventative, in that 6... $\mathbb{Q}b4$ is averted, but there are a few other ideas associated with it. For example, you will see that a standard pawn-structure for Black involves ...d6 and ...b6 (the 'hedgehog' formation), against which White will set up a large centre with c4 and e4. A standard theme in such positions, and in fact the primary way for White to make progress, is to advance on the queenside with b4, for which 6 a3 is useful.

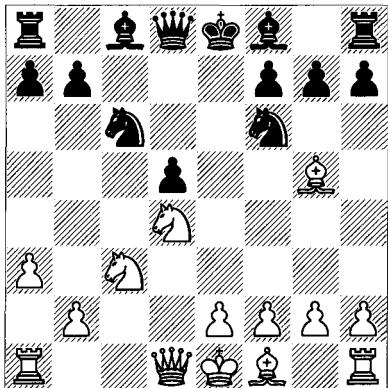
The good news from Black's point of view is that 6 a3 is a slow move that does nothing for White's development. Furthermore, it creates a hole on b3. In general, White's c-pawn, which tends to be an important target in the Four Knights, will be more easily attackable. That is certainly the case if White plays b4, leaving it with no pawn defenders.

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

6...d5!?!? 7 cxd5 exd5 8 $\mathbb{Q}g5$ (D) gives White a nice isolated queen's pawn formation in which his knight blockades the d-pawn and he reaches the favourable set-up with $\mathbb{Q}g5$ and e3.

The only problem is that a3 is almost a waste of a move here, so Black can play unusually aggressively by 8... $\mathbb{Q}c5$ (a routine demonstration of White superiority was 8... $\mathbb{Q}e7$ 9 e3 0-0 10

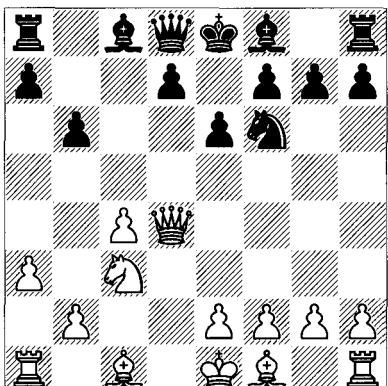
B



$\mathbb{Q}b5!$ $\mathbb{Q}e5$ 11 0-0 a6 12 $\mathbb{Q}e2$ $\mathbb{Q}e6$ 13 $\mathbb{W}b3$ b5 14 $\mathbb{B}ad1$ with great piece coordination, Krassenkov-Mamedyarov, European Ch, Antalya 2004) 9 e3 0-0. In Van Wely-Ivanchuk, Foros 2007, White continued 10 $\mathbb{Q}e2$ $\mathbb{Q}xd4$ 11 exd4 h6 12 $\mathbb{Q}h4$ $\mathbb{W}d6$ 13 $\mathbb{Q}g3$ $\mathbb{W}e7$ 14 0-0 $\mathbb{Q}e4$ 15 $\mathbb{B}c1$ (or 15 $\mathbb{B}e1$ $\mathbb{Q}xg3$ 16 hxg3 followed by $\mathbb{Q}f3$, which leaves White with some pressure on d5) 15... $\mathbb{Q}xc3$ 16 $\mathbb{B}xc3$ $\mathbb{W}f6$, and here Van Wely suggests 17 $\mathbb{B}f3$ with some advantage due to his relatively active bishop-pair.

7 $\mathbb{W}xd4$ b6 (D)

W



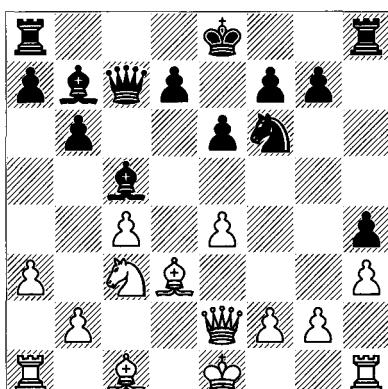
What do we think of Black's exchange on move 6? On the positive side, Black gets rid of White's knight on d4, a centralized piece that has moved twice, while bringing White's queen onto a square on which it will probably be attacked. The move ...b6 can also serve to prepare ... $\mathbb{Q}c5$ as well as to discourage g3. But from White's point of view, the exchange has not been a bad thing. First, it brought the queen out for free, so that if it has to move again, that's

no real loss of tempo, especially if White can choose the square it goes to. More generally, in a hedgehog position in which White has more space (for example, with c4 and e4), exchanges tend to favour him. Specifically, when Black swaps pieces the possibility of dynamic counterattacks based upon ...d5 and ...b5 breaks is reduced, because their success often depends upon attack by a maximum number of Black's forces. You will find that, contrary to the old saw about exchanges favouring the side with less space, they favour the side with more space quite as often.

8 $\mathbb{W}f4!$

In view of the above, we shouldn't be too surprised by this move, which anticipates the attack by ... $\mathbb{Q}c5$ and prepares e4. 8 $\mathbb{W}d3$ is sometimes played with the same idea, but the queen has less influence from that spot. What about 8 e4? The move is hardly a blunder, yet it encourages Black to take the initiative, and White's queen will end up on a passive square. J.Horvath-Kosten, Reims 2002 was a pretty and thematic example: 8... $\mathbb{Q}c5$ 9 $\mathbb{W}d1$ (this is aimed against ... $\mathbb{Q}g4$ and ... $\mathbb{W}f6$ or ... $\mathbb{W}h4$, attacking the f-pawn; unfortunately, it's an undeveloping move) 9... $\mathbb{W}c7$! (the same idea with 9... $\mathbb{B}b7$) 10 $\mathbb{Q}d3$ $\mathbb{W}b8$! is more accurate, avoiding $\mathbb{Q}b5$) 10 $\mathbb{Q}d3$! (10 b4?! $\mathbb{W}e5$! has the idea 11 $\mathbb{B}b2$? $\mathbb{Q}d4$, or 11 bxc5 $\mathbb{W}xc3$ + 12 $\mathbb{B}d2$ $\mathbb{W}e5$ 13 f3 0-0! 14 $\mathbb{B}c1$ $\mathbb{W}xc5$! 15 $\mathbb{Q}b4$ $\mathbb{W}e5$ 16 $\mathbb{Q}xf8$ $\mathbb{Q}xf8$, when White has horrible dark-square weaknesses, a terrible bishop hemmed in by his own pawns, and a weak isolated pawn on c4) 10... $\mathbb{B}b7$ 11 $\mathbb{W}e2$ h5! (in order to answer 12 e5 by 12... $\mathbb{Q}g4$, and to threaten ... $\mathbb{Q}g4$ should White castle) 12 h3 h4 (D).

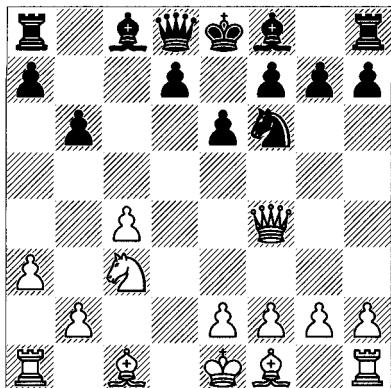
W



Black wants to control as many dark squares as possible, and ... $\mathbb{Q}h5-f4$ becomes a theme (after preparation). White on the other hand has caught up in development and is well centralized, with prospects of a timely b4 or simplifying by $\mathbb{Q}e3$. Play continued 13 b4? (Kosten suggests 13 $\mathbb{Q}b5!$ $\mathbb{W}b8$ 14 e5 $\mathbb{Q}h5$ 15 b4 $\mathbb{Q}e7$ 16 0-0 a6 17 $\mathbb{Q}c3$, which offers a very small advantage, as does 17 $\mathbb{Q}d4$) 13... $\mathbb{W}e5!$ 14 $\mathbb{Q}d2$ $\mathbb{Q}d4$ 15 $\mathbb{Q}c1$ a6!? (this is not a bad move, but Black had the beautiful continuation 15... $\mathbb{Q}h5$! 16 $\mathbb{Q}b5$ $\mathbb{Q}f4$ 17 $\mathbb{W}f3$ $\mathbb{Q}e3$!!), when every capture of the bishop on e3 loses material!), and now White jumped from the frying pan into the fire with 16 0-0?! g5! (control of the dark squares is a consistent theme; now both ...g4 – perhaps preceded by ... $\mathbb{Q}g8$ – and ... $\mathbb{Q}h5-f4/g3$ are in the air) 17 $\mathbb{Q}h1$! g4! 18 hxg4 $\mathbb{W}g3$!! (Black's queen can't be taken without allowing mate, but there's no good way to prevent ... $\mathbb{Q}xg4$) 19 $\mathbb{Q}e3$ $\mathbb{Q}xg4$! 20 fxe3 hgxg3+ 21 $\mathbb{Q}g1$ $\mathbb{Q}xe3$! 22 $\mathbb{Q}f2$! $\mathbb{Q}f5$ 23 exf5 (23 $\mathbb{Q}d1$ gxf2+ 24 $\mathbb{Q}xf2$ $\mathbb{Q}g3$ would be a funny finish) 23...gxf2+ 24 $\mathbb{W}xf2$ $\mathbb{Q}xf2+$ and Black went on to win. Quite a lot of excitement resulting from the modest 6 a3!

We now return to 8 $\mathbb{W}f4$ (D):

B



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

A similar position follows 8... $\mathbb{Q}b7$ 9 e4 d6 10 $\mathbb{Q}d3$ a6 11 0-0 $\mathbb{Q}d7$! 12 $\mathbb{W}g3$. Then Black played ingeniously in Lautier-Topalov, Cannes 2002: 12...g6 13 $\mathbb{Q}f4$! $\mathbb{W}c7$ 14 $\mathbb{Q}c2$ h5!, intending 15 $\mathbb{Q}ad1$ h4! 16 $\mathbb{Q}xd6$ hgx3 17 $\mathbb{Q}xc7$ gxf2+. With hindsight, 13 $\mathbb{Q}e3$! would have been tougher to meet.

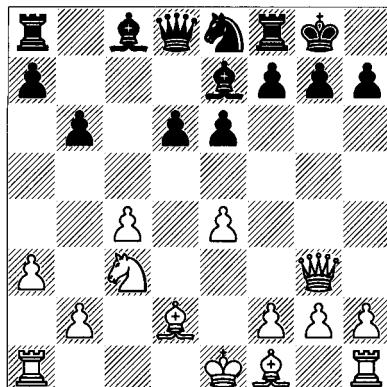
9 e4 d6 10 $\mathbb{W}g3$ 0-0 11 $\mathbb{Q}h6$!

White is not really expecting Black to miss 12 $\mathbb{W}xg7\#$, or to lose material after 11...g6 12 $\mathbb{Q}xf8$. He wants to put his light-squared bishop on d3 in order to defend the e-pawn, aim at the kingside, and discourage ...d5. But if he plays 11 $\mathbb{Q}d3$ first, Black can reply 11... $\mathbb{Q}d7$!, with the idea of jumping to e5, to harass White's bishop and c4-pawn, or transferring to c5 as appropriate. So White forces Black's knight to the inferior square e8 before he continues his development.

11... $\mathbb{Q}e8$ 12 $\mathbb{Q}d2$ (D)

12 $\mathbb{Q}f4$ $\mathbb{Q}b7$ (Kasparov gives 12...e5 13 $\mathbb{Q}d2$ f5 14 exf5 $\mathbb{Q}xf5$ 15 $\mathbb{Q}e2$ $\mathbb{Q}h4$ 16 $\mathbb{W}e3$ with a slight edge) 13 $\mathbb{Q}d1$ $\mathbb{Q}h4$ 14 $\mathbb{W}h3$ $\mathbb{W}f6$ 15 $\mathbb{Q}e3$ $\mathbb{Q}g5$ 16 $\mathbb{Q}e2$ $\mathbb{Q}xe3$ 17 $\mathbb{W}xe3$ $\mathbb{W}e7$ 18 0-0 $\mathbb{Q}f6$ 19 $\mathbb{Q}d2$ $\mathbb{Q}fd8$ 20 $\mathbb{Q}fd1$ and White stands better, Kasparov-Van Wely, Armenia-RoW, Moscow 2004. This is a standard 'hedgehog' position (see Chapter 10), and Black even has the better bishop, but as mentioned above, simplification by the exchange of two pairs of minor pieces means that Black must either make a compromising move such as ...e5, or sit around waiting while White slowly expands and makes progress.

B



Now White is about to consolidate his space advantage, so Black wants to disturb the equilibrium.

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

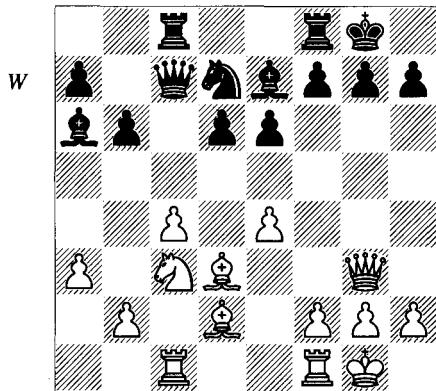
Bruzon-Timman, Rapid match (game 2), Willemstad 2005 went 12... $\mathbb{Q}h4$ 13 $\mathbb{W}e3$ $\mathbb{Q}b7$ 14 0-0-0?!? (an ambitious move that presages kingside action) 14... $\mathbb{W}c7$ 15 f3 a6 16 $\mathbb{Q}b1$ $\mathbb{Q}f6$ 17 $\mathbb{Q}d3$ $\mathbb{Q}c6$ 18 g4! $\mathbb{W}b7$ 19 g5 $\mathbb{Q}e7$ 20 $\mathbb{Q}c1$! b5?, and Black has allowed the standard attack

by 21 ♔d5!, since 21...exd5 22 exd5 wins the piece back, and otherwise either ♔xe7+ or ♔b4 is good.

13 ♜d1!? ♜c7 14 ♜h6 ♜e8 15 ♜d3 ♜a6 16 ♜c1

You can argue that White hasn't lost a meaningful tempo by ♜d1-c1 because the queen is less than ideally situated on c7.

16...♜c8 17 ♜d2 ♜f6 18 0-0 ♜d7 (D)



The knight is back to where it wanted to be all along.

19 b3

Attacking the queen by ♔b5 might be objectively best hereabouts. However, White's advantage might only be a theoretical one after ...♜xb5 because he has no easy way to make progress.

19...♜fe8 20 ♜h1 ♜b7 21 f4 a6

White may have a slight edge because of his greater space; still, the position is very near equal.

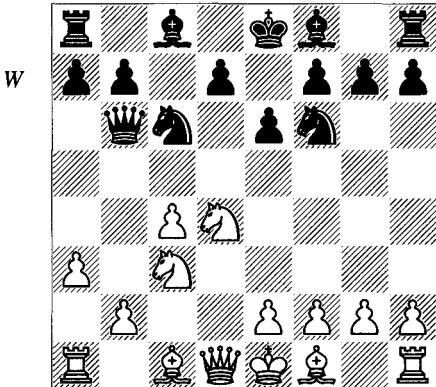
Korchnoi – Ponomariov
Match (game 2), Donetsk 2001

1 c4 c5 2 ♜f3 ♜f6 3 ♜c3 ♜c6 4 d4 cxd4 5 ♜xd4 e6 6 a3 ♜e7

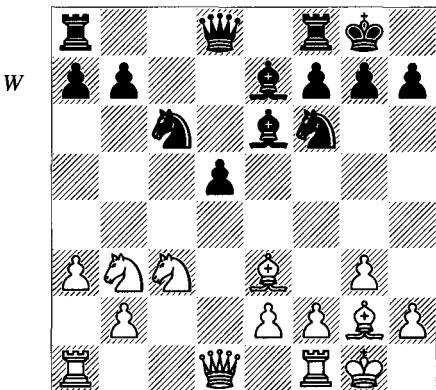
I won't go into 6...♜c5 7 ♜b3 ♜e7, but it is a respectable alternative.

6...♜b6 (D) resembles the line 6 g3 ♜b6, and leads to some fascinating play:

a) 7 ♜b3 deserves notice because this line can also come from the 2 ♜f3 ♜c6 section above following 3 d4 cxd4 4 ♜xd4 ♜b6 5 ♜b3 ♜f6 6 ♜c3 e6 7 a3. Generally, 7...♜e7 is played, leading to 8 e4 0-0 9 ♜e2 ♜c7 10 0-0 b6, with



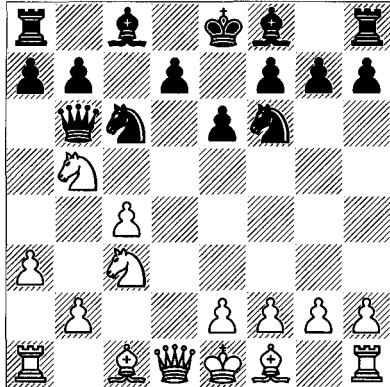
the kind of hedgehog structure we'll be seeing a lot of. But the immediate 7...d5! is critical and not fully-tested. Then Izoria-Almasi, Bled Olympiad 2002 continued along natural lines: 8 ♜e3 ♜d8 9 cxd5 exd5 10 g3 ♜e6 11 ♜g2 ♜e7 12 0-0 0-0 (D).



White has restrained the isolated d-pawn. Black's challenge is to place his pieces actively and change the dynamics, with ...♜e8, ...♜c8 and ...♜e5-c4 as likely ways to get started. The game continued 13 ♜c1 ♜c8 (if 13...♜e5 14 ♜c5 ♜c4, White has 15 ♜d4! ♜xb2 16 ♜b3 ♜c4 17 ♜xb7 with excellent activity) 14 ♜c2 (Pritchett suggests 14 ♜c5, when 14...♜e8 15 e3 b6 16 ♜xe7 ♜xe7 17 ♜b5 is only slightly in White's favour) 14...♜e5 15 ♜d4 (15 ♜d4!? ♜c4 16 ♜d3 ♜d7! threatens ...♜f5, forcing 17 ♜xf6 ♜xf6 18 ♜xd5 ♜xd5 19 ♜xd5 ♜a4!, when more exchanges and a likely draw will result) 15...♜c4 16 ♜g5 ♜h8 17 e3 h6 18 ♜xf6 ♜xf6 with full equality. If Black can get away with 7...d5, White's plans have gone awry.

b) With the conventional 6 a3 $\mathbb{W}b6$ move-order, it seems to me that 7 $\mathbb{Q}db5$ (D) may be stronger than in the main lines following 6 g3 $\mathbb{W}b6$.

B



For some reason, this isn't played; perhaps it should be? A couple of ideas:

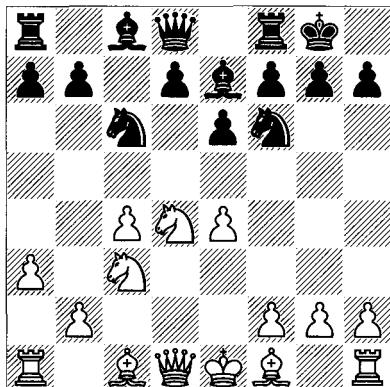
b1) 7... $\mathbb{Q}e5$ 8 $\mathbb{Q}e3$! is the reason that 6 a3 is so handy. Black can't like 8... $\mathbb{W}a5$ 9 b4, 8... $\mathbb{W}d8$? 9 $\mathbb{Q}f4$ d6 10 c5!, or 8... $\mathbb{W}c6$ 9 $\mathbb{Q}xa7$ $\mathbb{W}xa7$?! 10 $\mathbb{Q}xa7$ $\mathbb{Q}xc4$, when he lacks compensation after 11 $\mathbb{W}b3$!. After 6 g3 $\mathbb{W}b6$ 7 $\mathbb{Q}db5$ $\mathbb{Q}e5$, by contrast, 8 $\mathbb{Q}e3$? lets Black slide his queen to c6, attacking the rook on h1.

b2) 7...d5 8 $\mathbb{Q}e3$ d4!? (8... $\mathbb{W}d8$ 9 cxd5 $\mathbb{Q}xd5$ 10 $\mathbb{Q}xd5$ exd5 11 $\mathbb{W}xd5$) 9 $\mathbb{Q}xd4$ $\mathbb{Q}xd4$ 10 $\mathbb{W}xd4$ $\mathbb{Q}c5$ 11 $\mathbb{W}f4$ 0-0 12 b4 and White comes out on top.

b3) Probably 7...a6 is best, with the idea 8 $\mathbb{Q}e3$ $\mathbb{W}a5$! 9 b4 $\mathbb{W}d8$ 10 $\mathbb{Q}d6+$ $\mathbb{Q}xd6$ 11 $\mathbb{W}xd6$ $\mathbb{Q}g4$; nevertheless, 12 $\mathbb{Q}f4$! $\mathbb{W}f6$ 13 $\mathbb{Q}c1$ gives White some advantage.

7 e4 0-0 (D)

W



This position can evolve into a hedgehog pawn-structure after ...d6; because of the slow a3, however, White has to take care to prevent ...d5.

8 $\mathbb{Q}f3$!

a) Korchnoi gives 8 $\mathbb{Q}xc6$ dxc6 9 $\mathbb{Q}f4$ $\mathbb{Q}d7$ with equality. A sample line with a manoeuvre particularly known from the King's Indian and Pirc Defences is 10 $\mathbb{Q}e2$ e5 11 $\mathbb{Q}e3$ $\mathbb{Q}c5$ 12 0-0 $\mathbb{Q}e6$! with the idea ... $\mathbb{Q}d4$.

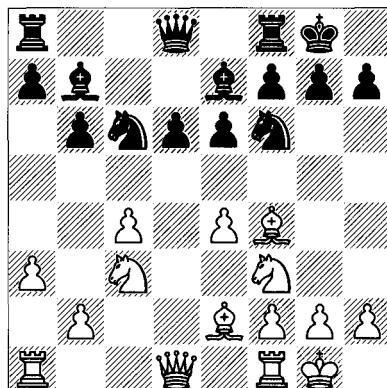
b) 8 $\mathbb{Q}e2$?! has been condemned on the grounds of 8...d5!, and indeed, that's where White's lack of development hurts; for example, 9 exd5 exd5 10 $\mathbb{Q}xc6$ (White should already be looking to equalize, and 10 $\mathbb{Q}e3$! is a better way) 10... $\mathbb{W}xc6$ 11 $\mathbb{Q}e3$ $\mathbb{Q}e6$ 12 c5? $\mathbb{Q}e4$! (or 12... $\mathbb{Q}b8$! 13 b4 a5) 13 $\mathbb{Q}a4$! (13 $\mathbb{Q}xe4$! $\mathbb{W}xe4$ 14 $\mathbb{Q}c2$ $\mathbb{Q}d5$ favours Black, but only mildly), Ibragimov-Kudrin, Stillwater 2007, and now the easiest was 13... $\mathbb{Q}g5$! with a clear advantage no matter how White plays it.

8...d6

In the 8th match game between these same players, Ponomariov changed course by playing 8... $\mathbb{W}c7$. There followed 9 $\mathbb{Q}g5$ b6 10 $\mathbb{Q}d3$ (10 $\mathbb{Q}h4$ was suggested) 10...h6!? 11 $\mathbb{Q}h4$ $\mathbb{Q}h5$!. Black eyes the f4-square, and exchanges the bishop that covers it. Since retreating gives up the bishop-pair for no reason, White chose 12 $\mathbb{Q}xe7$ $\mathbb{Q}xe7$ 13 0-0 with equal chances in a complex game.

9 $\mathbb{Q}e2$ b6 10 0-0 $\mathbb{Q}b7$ 11 $\mathbb{Q}f4$ (D)

B



Black would like to maximize his pieces' influence and then break with ...b5 or ...d5. White, as usual, will look to central play and queenside expansion. Since only the latter looks available,

the plan will be to play b4, supporting the moves c5 and/or a4-a5 with rooks and pieces.

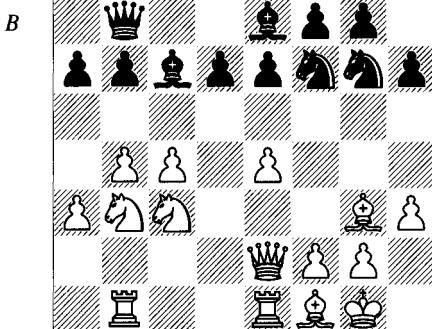
11...♜c8

...♜e5-d7 is a standard reorganization in the hedgehog formation (whether a Sicilian Defence or English Opening) and is available here because of the tactical fact that White's e-pawn is loose. Thus Black could well play 11...♜e5! 12 ♜d2?!? (perhaps 12 ♜c2 ♜c7 13 ♜fd1 a6 14 ♜ac1 should be tried, with the idea 14...♜xc4?! 15 b3 ♜e5? 16 ♜xe5 dx5 17 ♜d5) 12...♜ed7 13 ♜e3, again with a fairly normal-looking game in which Black has good chances to realize ...d5 at some point.

12 ♜e1 a6 13 ♜f1 ♜c7 14 b4 ♜fd8 15 ♜c1 ♜e5 16 ♜d2 ♜b8 17 h3?!

Usually this prepares ♜e3, but White holds back on that for a while, and then decides to keep pressure on the d-pawn.

17...♜c6 18 ♜e2 ♜g6 19 ♜g3 ♜b7 20 ♜b3 h6 21 ♜b1! (D)



A key move; now a well-timed c5 or a5 will result in an open file and/or passed pawn. With a rook on b1, White very often plays c5 as a pawn sacrifice, gaining not only the file, but c4 and a5 as pivot points for White's pieces.

21...♝f8 22 f3?! ♜e8 23 ♜f2 ♜b8 24 ♜e3 ♜d7 25 ♜ed1 ♜b7?

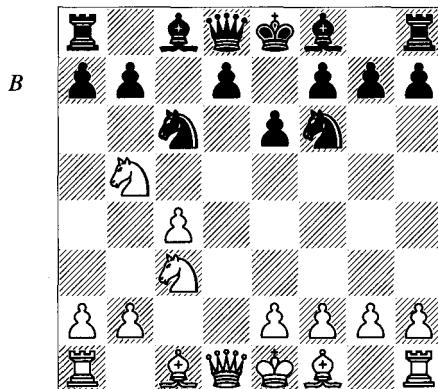
According to Korchnoi, the best defence to the queenside was 25...♜e7! with the idea 26 a4 ♜g5 27 ♜e1 ♜de5 28 a5 ♜f4; nevertheless, 29 ♜d4 is extremely strong. Overall, White has outplayed his opponent strategically, and now cashes in:

26 ♜a4! ♜ge5 27 ♜xb6 ♜xb6 28 ♜xb6 ♜xc4 29 ♜xc4 ♜xc4 30 ♜a5 ♜c7 31 b5! ♜a8

At this point Korchnoi demonstrates a win by 32 ♜xa6! ♜c2 33 b6 d5 34 b7; for example, 34...♜xf2 35 ♜xf2 ♜c5+ 36 ♜e2 ♜f4 37 ♜b3.

Four Knights with 6 ♜db5

1 c4 c5 2 ♜f3 ♜f6 3 ♜c3 ♜c6 4 d4 exd4 5 ♜xd4 e6 6 ♜db5 (D)



White moves his knight a second time in order to target d6 and c7. He intends to follow that up with 7 ♜f4, increasing the pressure on those squares. 6 ♜db5 isn't as popular among leading grandmasters as other moves, but in part that's due to the relatively uncharted complexities of 6 a3 and a couple of the newer lines stemming from 6 g3. 6 ♜db5 should attract positionally-minded players who are comfortable with slowly-developing play, and/or those of a less theoretical bent. Black, of course, needs to know this line: first, to survive early threats, and then, to avoid being squeezed to death.

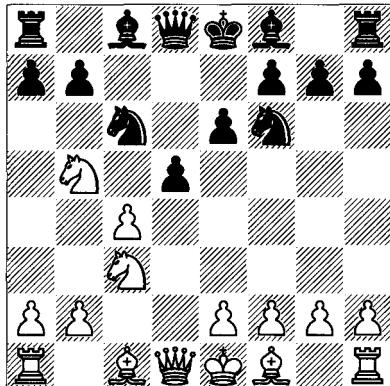
**Ki. Georgiev – Topalov
Sarajevo 2000**

6...d5 (D)

This is the most established move, but the alternatives in the next game are important and inviting, because they avoid the endgame that almost always arises after 6...d5. Nevertheless, I should say that Black may have just as many ways to play for a win in a complex ending as he does in a tactical slugfest.

7 ♜f4

W



In view of the threat of 7...d4, White forces the pace.

The first thing that an experienced player will see is that he can win a pawn with the familiar trick 7 cxd5 $\mathbb{Q}xd5$ (7...exd5? 8 $\mathbb{Q}f4$) 8 $\mathbb{Q}xd5$ exd5 9 $\mathbb{W}xd5$, intending 9... $\mathbb{W}xd5$ 10 $\mathbb{Q}c7+$ and $\mathbb{Q}xd5$. However, as in many openings in which this trick is possible, the purported victim of the trick is actually sacrificing a pawn for activity and attack. After 9... $\mathbb{Q}b4+$ 10 $\mathbb{Q}d2$ Black gets full compensation in two ways:

a) With 10...0-0, Black can whip up an attack in the queenless middlegame following 11 $\mathbb{W}xd8$ $\mathbb{W}xd8$ 12 0-0-0!?

$\mathbb{Q}e6$! 13 a3? $\mathbb{Q}b3!$ 14 axb4, and now 14...a5! is a killing shot, taking over the a-file, but Black also won with 14... $\mathbb{Q}xb4$ 15 $\mathbb{Q}c3$ $\mathbb{E}ac8$ 16 $\mathbb{E}e1$ $\mathbb{Q}c2$ 17 $\mathbb{E}d1$ $\mathbb{Q}b4$ 18 $\mathbb{E}e1$ $\mathbb{E}c5!$ 0-1 in Nybäck-Lehikoinen, Stockholm 2003; in the final position ... $\mathbb{E}a5$ and mate is threatened, and White will have to give up massive material to prevent it.

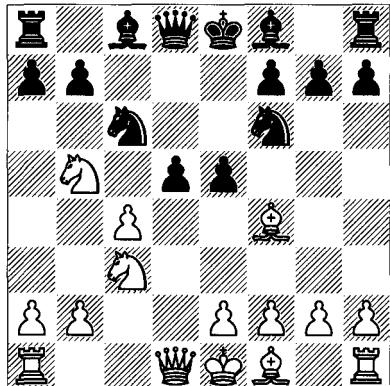
b) 10... $\mathbb{W}e7$ 11 $\mathbb{Q}c3?$! (11 0-0-0!?) 11...0-0 12 $\mathbb{Q}g5$ $\mathbb{W}c7$ 13 e3 $\mathbb{Q}e6$ 14 $\mathbb{W}d2$ $\mathbb{W}a5$ 15 $\mathbb{Q}h4$ g5! 16 $\mathbb{Q}g3$ $\mathbb{W}fd8$ 17 $\mathbb{W}c2$ $\mathbb{Q}xc3+$ 18 bxc3 $\mathbb{Q}b4!$ and Black's superiority is obvious, Suba-Porrtisch, Thessaloniki Olympiad 1984. 19 cxb4? $\mathbb{W}xb4+$ ends in mate, and at the very least, Black can play ... $\mathbb{Q}xa2$ and win White's c-pawn as well.

7...e5 (D)

Black's attack on the bishop leads to a series of captures which results in gaining the bishop-pair, at the cost of a weakening of his pawn-structure and displacement of his king. It turns out that other counterattacking options simply don't suffice.

8 cxd5

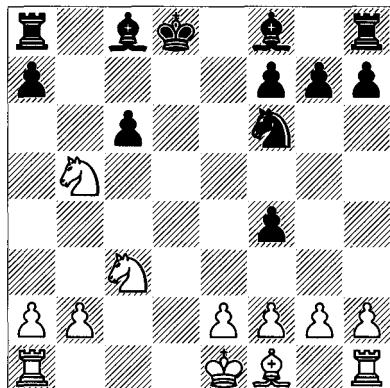
W



8 $\mathbb{Q}g5$ is slow, especially because of the trick 8...d4 9 $\mathbb{Q}d5?$ $\mathbb{Q}xd5!$ 10 $\mathbb{W}xd8$ $\mathbb{Q}b4+$; then 11 $\mathbb{W}d2$ is forced, in view of 11 $\mathbb{Q}c3?$ $dxc3$ 12 a3 c2+.

8...exf4 9 dxe6 bxc6 10 $\mathbb{W}xd8+$ $\mathbb{Q}xd8$ (D)

W



This queenless middlegame has been contested over many years. Sometimes it's called 'drawish', but this only means that at the very top levels, grandmasters on either side of the board find it hard to get as many winning chances as they'd like, in particular compared with the moves 6 a3 and 6 g3. That's not really saying much, and the average player will have plenty of chances to win with either colour. Right off we have the radical difference in pawn-structures, with Black's isolated c- and a-pawns, and his funny pawn on f4 that can be either weak or strong. Then there is the issue of whether White's quick development by 0-0-0+ or $\mathbb{E}d1+$ is enough to disrupt his opponent's game. Black's play stems from the fact that if White's knight on b5 retreats, he gets to keep

the bishop-pair; or, if White puts the knight on d6, Black will gain time by exchanging it and playing on the open files by ...♝b8 and ...♝e8. Under some circumstances, the move ...♝g4 will be relevant, especially if White castles queenside.

11 ♘d1+

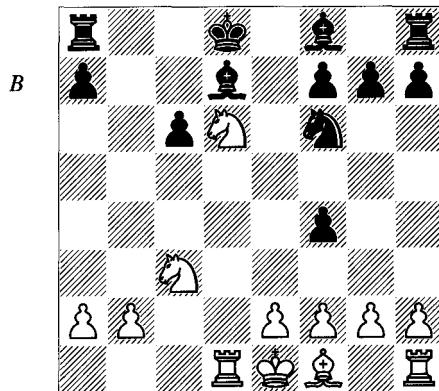
a) White doesn't get a chance to consolidate his structural advantage after 11 ♘d4 (for a while this was White's main line) 11...♝b7! 12 ♘d1 ♕c7 13 g3 ♘d8! 14 ♘g2 (watch out for the trick 14 gxf4?? ♘xd4! 15 ♘xd4 c5) 14...♝xd4 (this mini-combination seems to equalize immediately, although 14...♝c5!? is also feasible) 15 ♘xd4 c5 16 ♘d5 (16 ♘d5+ ♘xd5 17 ♘xd5 fxe3 18 hgx3 ♘xd5 19 ♘xd5 should be drawn due to the opposite-coloured bishops) 16...♝xd5 17 ♘xd5 fxe3 18 hgx3 ♘xd5 19 ♘xd5+ ♕c6 20 e4 f5!? 21 ♘c3 fxe4 22 ♘xe4 and neither side has much to play for, Reinderman-Oral, European Team Ch, Batumi 1999.

b) 11 0-0-0+!? is more ambitious than 11 ♘d1+, but leaves f2 hanging in the line 11...♝d7 12 ♘d6 ♘xd6 (12...♚c7!?) 13 ♘xf7 ♘g8 is also played, yielding compensation in the form of Black's two bishops and his quick and active development) 13 ♘xd6 ♘g4!. Then you'd think that Black's piece-play would be more important than his weaknesses, but it turns out that there are mutual chances after 14 f3 (14 ♘d1 can be met with 14...♝e7 or 14...♚c7! 15 ♘d4 g5 with a solid position; for example, 16 h4 h6 17 g3 fxe3 18 hgx3 h5!) 14...♝e3 15 ♘d4 and here 15...c5!? 16 ♘xf4 f5 led to an early draw in Wojtkiewicz-Zviagintsev, FIDE Knockout, Tripoli 2004, but 15...g5! is more dynamic: 16 g3 (16 h4 ♘f5) 16...c5 17 ♘d3 ♘e7 18 ♘d5+! ♘xd5 19 ♘xd5 h6 20 gxf4 gxf4 21 ♘xc5 ♘ac8 22 ♘xc8 ♘xc8+ and Black has enough for a pawn.

11...♝d7 12 ♘d6 (D)

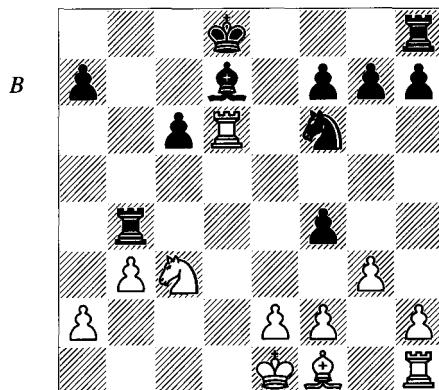
12...♝xd6

12...♝b8!? is an amazing rook sacrifice that may well be sufficient, the main line going 13 ♘xf7+ ♕e8 14 ♘xh8 (14 ♘d6+ ♘xd6 15 ♘xd6 ♘xb2 also comes to equality) 14...♝xb2, and Black has the huge threat of 15...♝b4. White's best move is 15 ♘d4!, when best play is 15...a5! (15...♝b4 isn't as convincing after 16 ♘xb4 ♘xb4 17 g3) 16 ♘d1 ♘b4 17 ♘e4!, and Black's activity matches White's extra rook after



17...c5 18 ♘xf6+ gxf6 19 ♘c1 ♘xa2 20 ♘xf4 ♘a4, when the game will soon end in perpetual check. A crazy and astounding line.

13 ♘xd6 ♘b8 14 b3 ♘b4 15 g3 (D)



15...♚e7

Or 15...♚c7 16 ♘d2 ♘f5 17 ♘g2 ♘e4, Hellers-Ernst, Swedish Team Ch 1997/8.

16 ♘d2 h5!? 17 ♘g2 h4 18 0-0 hgx3 19 fxe3 fxg3 20 hgx3 ♘h5! 21 ♘f3 ♘e5

One may call this equal. The game was drawn in short order.

Donaldson – Shulman

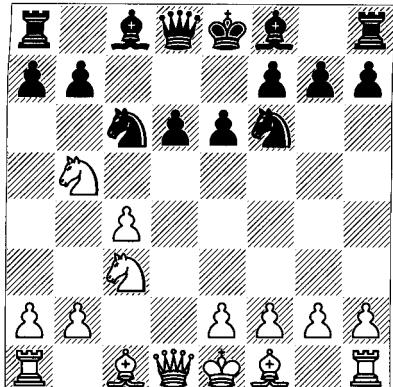
Lindsborg (rapid) 2003

1 c4 c5 2 ♘f3 ♘f6 3 ♘c3 ♘c6 4 d4 cxd4 5 ♘xd4 e6 6 ♘db5 d6 (D)

In my opinion, this is an underestimated move. As far as I can tell from previous practice, White has yet to find a reliable path to advantage.

7 ♘f4

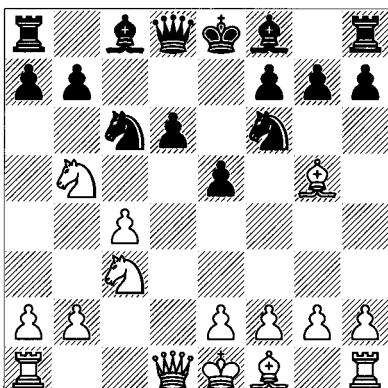
W



Attacking d6 is the only independent attempt to punish Black's move-order, since 7 $\mathbb{Q}g5$ a6 8 $\mathbb{Q}xf6$ gxf6 is a standard position in which Black stands no worse. However, 7 e4 is a Taimanov Sicilian Defence, a possibility which should be taken into account by both players.

7...e5 8 $\mathbb{Q}g5$ (D)

B



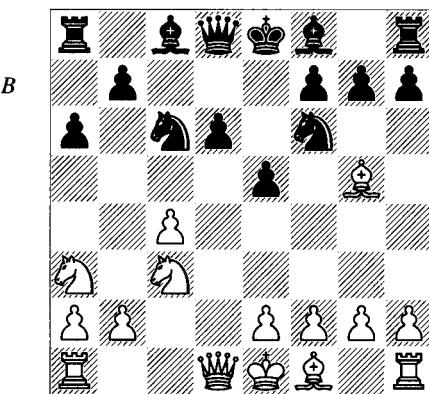
This $\mathbb{Q}f4$ -g5 manoeuvre is a standard technique in several modern opening lines, most famously the Sveshnikov Variation of the Sicilian Defence (if reached via the sequence 1 e4 c5 2 $\mathbb{Q}f3$ e6 3 d4 cxd4 4 $\mathbb{Q}xd4$ $\mathbb{Q}f6$ 5 $\mathbb{Q}c3$ $\mathbb{Q}c6$ 6 $\mathbb{Q}db5$ d6 7 $\mathbb{Q}f4$ e5 8 $\mathbb{Q}g5$). White controls the d5-square. However, many of today's openings exploit the fact that a single outpost, however strong, doesn't necessarily produce a superior game, even in the absence of a similar weakness on the other side. There are multiple reasons for this, the most common one being that the opponent can work around the centre to undermine the pawn-supports for that outpost (this is best shown by example). Furthermore,

the exchange of a piece occupying an outpost sometimes forces a pawn recapture, filling the hole there. Thus the very threat of exchange can force one's opponent to retreat. The classic examples of this situation arise in the Sicilian Defence and English Opening (see the various Botvinnik-structure lines in this book), but you will also run into it in other e- and d-pawn openings.

After 8 $\mathbb{Q}g5$, in face of the positional threat of 9 $\mathbb{Q}d5$ followed by 10 $\mathbb{Q}bc3$, Black should kick the knight.

8...a6 9 $\mathbb{Q}xf6$

As in the Sveshnikov, White can maintain the tension by 9 $\mathbb{Q}a3$ (D).



Black has a choice of ways to divert White from his positional goals; for example:

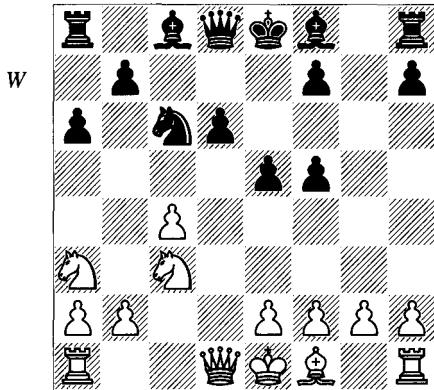
a) S.Ernst-Leenhouts, Dutch Team Ch 2007/8 continued 9... $\mathbb{Q}e6$ 10 $\mathbb{Q}d2$ (or 10 e3) 10... $\mathbb{Q}e7$ 11 g3 0-0 12 $\mathbb{Q}g2$ $\mathbb{Q}a5!$ 13 0-0 $\mathbb{Q}c8$ 14 $\mathbb{Q}xf6$ 15 b3 $\mathbb{Q}c6$ 16 $\mathbb{Q}e4$ $\mathbb{Q}e7$ 17 $\mathbb{Q}fd1$. Now 17... $\mathbb{Q}b6$, as played, and 17... $\mathbb{Q}c7$ are both satisfactory. But the dynamism in Black's position might be better illustrated by 17... $\mathbb{Q}d4?$!, threatening ...b5; for example, 18 e3 $\mathbb{Q}f5$ 19 $\mathbb{Q}c2!$ b5! 20 cxb5 d5 21 $\mathbb{Q}c3$ d4 22 exd4 exd4 23 $\mathbb{Q}e4$ axb5 24 $\mathbb{Q}xd4$ $\mathbb{Q}xd4$ 25 $\mathbb{Q}xd4$ $\mathbb{Q}xd4$ 26 $\mathbb{Q}xd4$ $\mathbb{Q}c2$.

b) The position after 9... $\mathbb{Q}e7$ 10 e3 0-0 11 $\mathbb{Q}e2$ $\mathbb{Q}e6$ 12 0-0 has been reached more than once. One example went 12... $\mathbb{Q}c8$ (12... $\mathbb{Q}b6!$ and 12... $\mathbb{Q}a5$ are also at least equal) 13 $\mathbb{Q}c1$ $\mathbb{Q}a5$ 14 $\mathbb{Q}ab1$ $\mathbb{Q}fd8$ 15 $\mathbb{Q}xf6$ $\mathbb{Q}xf6$ 16 a3!?

e4! 17 b4 $\mathbb{Q}f5$ 18 $\mathbb{Q}c2$, Shabalov-A.Sokolov, Minsk 1986, and here 18...d5! would have been the most dynamic and effective approach.

You can see how varied both sides' strategies and timing are, which suggests that there's substance enough in this line to satisfy anyone.

9... $\mathbb{g}xf6$ 10 $\mathbb{Q}a3$ f5 (D)



This advance is seen in the main lines of the Sveshnikov Sicilian, but in our game White has played c4 instead of e4, so there are very different methods of play. It's worth noting that, by having played c4, White has stopped the move ...b5, crucial in the Sveshnikov, and made the manoeuvre $\mathbb{Q}c2-e3$ easier. However, he's also given Black squares on b4 and d4 to play around with and most importantly, a target on c4.

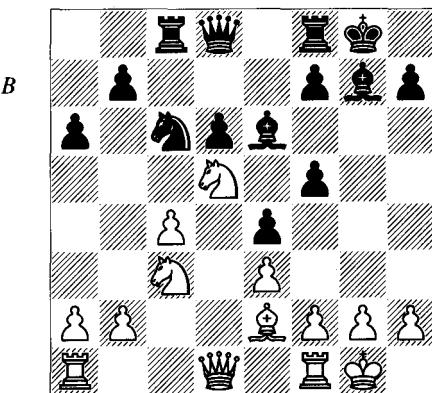
11 g3

White increases his control over d5 and secures a good square for his bishop. This is double-edged, since it removes a defender from c4 and takes two moves to implement. Some examples will give a feel for the play:

a) 11 e3 $\mathbb{Q}e6$ 12 $\mathbb{W}d2$ $\mathbb{Q}g7$! 13 0-0-0 $\mathbb{W}a5$ prevents 14 $\mathbb{W}xd6??$ due to 14... $\mathbb{R}d8$, and 14 $\mathbb{Q}d5$ $\mathbb{W}xd2+$ 15 $\mathbb{R}xd2$ 0-0-0 was equal in V.Zilberstein-Lein, USSR Ch, Baku 1972.

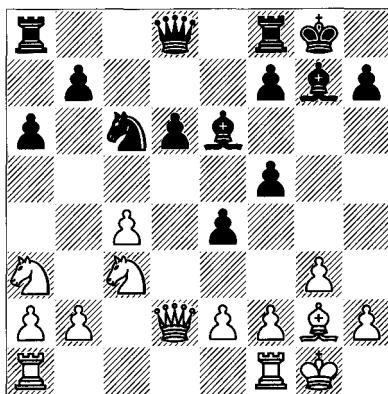
b) 11 $\mathbb{Q}c2$ is a productive-looking strategy, intending $\mathbb{Q}e3-d5$ with a dominant outpost; for example, 11... $\mathbb{Q}g7$ 12 $\mathbb{Q}e3$ 0-0 13 $\mathbb{Q}ed5$ $\mathbb{Q}e6$ 14 e3. However, as I pointed out above, this is by no means a guarantee of having the better game. Here Black got sufficient counterplay in A.N.Panchenko-Z.Almasi, Budapest 1991 by means of the characteristic ...b5 break: 14... $\mathbb{R}c8$ 15 $\mathbb{Q}e2$ e4! 16 0-0! (D) (White anticipates sacrificing a pawn for counterplay).

16... $\mathbb{Q}a5!$ 17 b3 b5 18 $\mathbb{R}c1$ bxc4 19 bxc4 $\mathbb{Q}xc4$ 20 $\mathbb{Q}a4!$ $\mathbb{Q}e5$ 21 $\mathbb{R}xc8$ $\mathbb{Q}xc8$ 22 $\mathbb{Q}ab6$ $\mathbb{Q}b7??$ (returning the pawn by 22... $\mathbb{Q}e6$ 23



$\mathbb{Q}xa6$ $\mathbb{Q}d7$! 24 $\mathbb{Q}xd7$ $\mathbb{W}xd7$ is an easy equalizer) 23 $\mathbb{W}a4!$ $\mathbb{Q}h8$!? (23... $\mathbb{W}g5$) 24 $\mathbb{Q}xa6$ $\mathbb{Q}xa6$ 25 $\mathbb{W}xa6$ $\mathbb{R}g8$, and here 26 $\mathbb{Q}f4!$ defends solidly, giving White a modest advantage.

11... $\mathbb{Q}g7$ 12 $\mathbb{Q}g2$ 0-0 13 0-0 $\mathbb{Q}e6$ 14 $\mathbb{W}d2$ e4 (D)



A thematic advance. At what point Black should play ...e4, if at all, constitutes one of the most important decisions in this variation. For one thing, Black thereby gives up the f4-square to a knight or another piece, as well as making d4 available for occupation. He further weakens his pawn on f5, in that it can't advance and will therefore become more of a target. Finally, Black potentially allows White the option of f3, which may favourably change the pawn-structure for White.

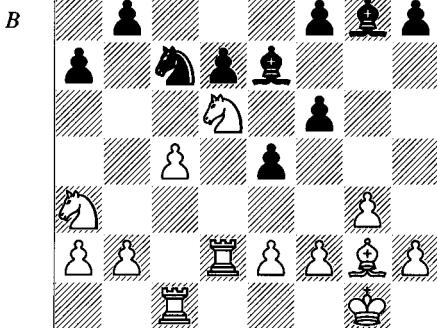
On the positive side, Black's g7-bishop gains tremendously in scope, and can also come to e5 to defend the d6-pawn. Black's knight gains access to that same new square e5 from which to attack c4 and oversee the critical d3- and

f3-squares. Lastly, his e4-pawn disables White's g2-bishop. It's remarkable that the positive and negative features of the e-pawn advance are so delicately balanced; in fact, the overall evaluation of the position before and after 14...e4 tends to be the same!

15 $\mathbb{E}fd1$ $\mathbb{W}a5$ 16 $\mathbb{Q}d5$

White goes for the ending. Again, this seems to be a value-neutral transformation: each side's positional advantages persist as though nothing has happened. An obvious alternative is 16 $\mathbb{E}ac1$, when 16... $\mathbb{E}ac8$ 17 $\mathbb{Q}h3$?! (17 $\mathbb{W}e3$) 17... $\mathbb{Q}d4$ 18 $\mathbb{Q}f1$? f4! 19 $\mathbb{E}xe6$ fxe6 20 gxf4 $\mathbb{W}h5$ gave Black a winning position in Gorenstein-Stoliarov, Dnepropetrovsk 1966.

16... $\mathbb{E}fd8$ 17 $\mathbb{E}ac1$ $\mathbb{W}xd2$ 18 $\mathbb{E}xd2$ (D)

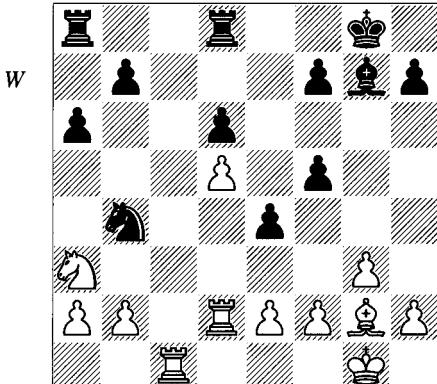


B

18... $\mathbb{Q}xd5$!

An excellent, non-thematic move based upon concrete analysis. Instead, the game is level after 18... $\mathbb{E}ac8$ 19 $\mathbb{Q}b6$ $\mathbb{E}b8$ 20 $\mathbb{E}cd1$ (lest ... $\mathbb{Q}e5$ steal the advantage) 20... $\mathbb{Q}e5$.

19 $cxd5$ $\mathbb{Q}b4!$ (D)



W

The point. Black has several ideas, including the moves ...e3 and ... $\mathbb{Q}xa2$, while the knight ties White to defence of the d-pawn.

20 $\mathbb{E}e3$?

White guards against ...e3 and prepares $\mathbb{Q}f1$ in some lines. This should be adequate, but permitting Black to play ... $\mathbb{Q}d3$ is risky. Safer was 20 $\mathbb{E}c4$! $\mathbb{Q}xa2$ 21 $\mathbb{Q}h3$ b5 (21...e3 22 fxe3 $\mathbb{Q}h6$ 23 $\mathbb{Q}c2$) 22 $\mathbb{Q}c7$, when the situation remains in equilibrium.

20... $\mathbb{Q}xa2$?

20... $\mathbb{E}ac8$! is also good.

21 $\mathbb{Q}c7$ b5

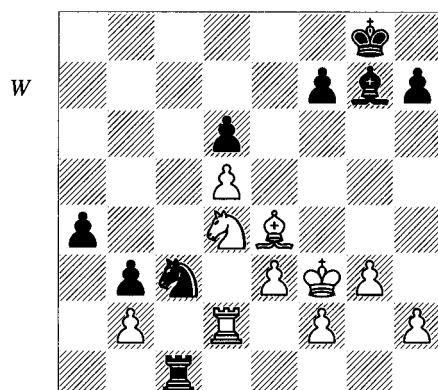
Shutting out the knight on a3. Now White finally gets his chance to gobble that weak forward f-pawn.

22 $\mathbb{Q}h3$ $\mathbb{E}ac8$ 23 $\mathbb{E}xc8$ $\mathbb{E}xc8$ 24 $\mathbb{Q}xf5$ $\mathbb{E}c1+$ 25 $\mathbb{Q}g2$ b4! 26 $\mathbb{Q}c2$?

After the obvious 26 $\mathbb{Q}c4$!?, 26... $\mathbb{E}xc4$! 27 b3 $\mathbb{Q}c1$! 28 bxc4 $\mathbb{Q}b3$ follows, with the idea of marching the passed pawns down the board supported by the bishop and knight on c5. This would deter anyone from 26 $\mathbb{Q}c4$, but by sheer luck (and computer assistance), White could then defend by means of 29 $\mathbb{E}a2$ $\mathbb{Q}c5$ 30 $\mathbb{E}a5$! b3 31 $\mathbb{E}xc5$ dxc5 32 $\mathbb{Q}xe4$ a5 33 $\mathbb{Q}f3$! a4 (33...b2 34 $\mathbb{Q}e4$) 34 $\mathbb{Q}d1$ and he holds.

The rest of the game is pretty, if by no means forced:

26...a5 27 $\mathbb{Q}d4$ a4 28 $\mathbb{Q}xe4$ b3 29 $\mathbb{Q}f3$ $\mathbb{Q}c3!!$ (D)



30 $bxc3$?

But upon 30 $\mathbb{Q}f5$, Black plays 30... $\mathbb{E}d1$!.

30... $\mathbb{E}d1$! 0-1

Regardless of the recapture, Black plays 31...a3 and the pawns roll home. You can see

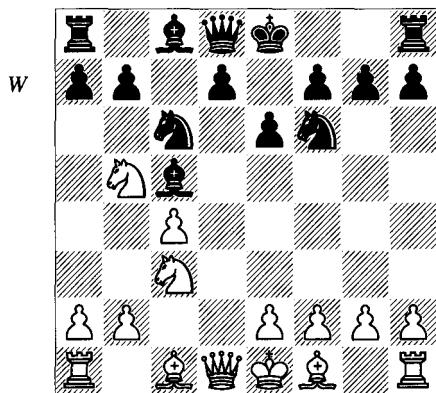
that this variation is dynamically balanced and worthy of playing with either colour.

Vadasz – Rogulj
Karlovac 1979

1 c4 c5 2 ♕f3 ♘f6 3 ♘c3 ♘c6 4 d4 cxd4 5 ♘xd4 e6 6 ♘db5 ♘c5 (D)

Black simply develops and to some extent ignores his dark-square problems. When he plays ...♘c5, it's not clear whether the game will simplify or turn exciting; as you'll see, that's quickly decided over the next few moves.

I won't go into 6...♗b4 except to say that it very often transposes to 6...♘c5 7 ♘f4 0-0 8 ♘d6 or 8 ♘c7.



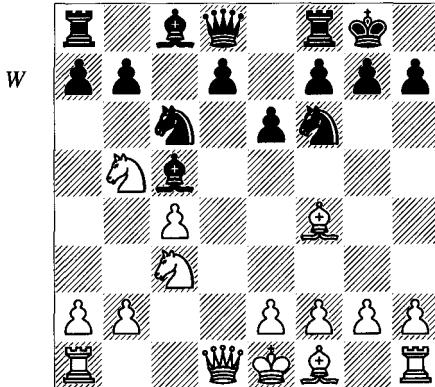
7 ♘f4

Usually White foregoes 7 ♘d6+, a move that keeps Black's king in the centre but loses time; for example, 7...♗e7 8 ♘de4 ♘xe4 9 ♘xe4 ♘b4+ 10 ♘d2!? (10 ♘c3 is slow; after all, it's the 6th move made by this knight! Black can liquidate the centre and win space by 10...d5 11 cxd5 exd5 12 e3 d4) 10...d5! 11 cxd5 exd5 12 a3 ♘xd2+ 13 ♘xd2 ♗e8 (or 13...♗b6) 14 g3, Szilagyi-Planinc, Varna 1970, and one of many good moves is 14...♗f5, with the idea 15 ♘g2?! ♘d4 16 ♗c1 ♗c8.

7...e5!?

A neglected move that David Cummings has tried to revive with some fascinating analysis. I'm not sure that it results in equality, yet it's a weapon for those willing to speculate.

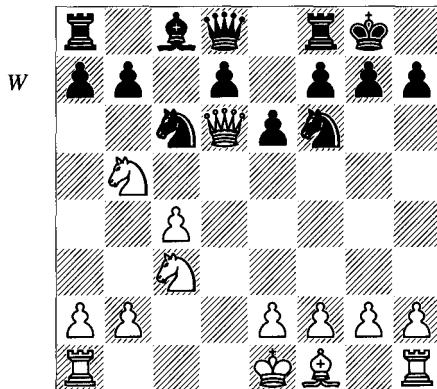
I won't examine more than a fraction of the theoretical detail associated with the traditional move 7...0-0 (D).



This will often lead to positions with the queens off the board. At first, it may seem that the game becomes insufficiently difficult to offer substantial winning chances. However, players below grandmaster level will still be rewarded for outplaying their opponents. The larger issue is whether you have a taste for the slow nature of the line:

a) 8 ♘c7?? e5! 9 ♘xa8 exf4 will not only win two pieces for a rook for Black (after the knight on a8 falls), but do so in a position where Black comes out with better development and the initiative.

b) 8 ♘c7 is the 'drawish' move: 8...♗e7 9 ♘d6 ♘xd6 10 ♘xd6 ♗d8! (D).

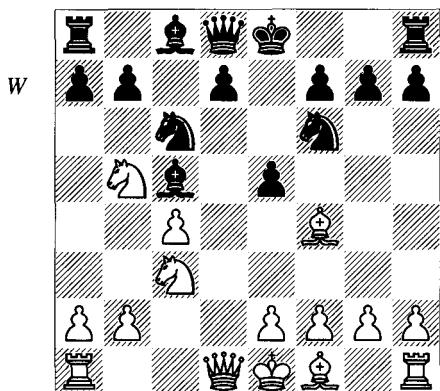


White's position initially makes a strong impression due to his dark-square control. As it happens, Black will soon drive the queen away by ...♗e8, which will allow him to set up the well-known hedgehog formation with ...a6, ...d6 and ...b6: 11 e4 b6 12 ♘e2 a6 13 ♘a3 ♘e8 14 ♘d2 ♘b7 15 ♘d1 d6 16 0-0 ♗c7 17 f4 ♘d8

18 ♕h1 ♔f6 and Black has no problems. You should note that both here and in line 'c', Black's central majority is a counterbalance to White's space.

c) 8 ♘d6 ♜b6!? (by attacking f2 directly and b2 indirectly, Black keeps things somewhat livelier than with 8...♘xd6 9 ♘xd6 ♜b6 10 ♜d2 ♘d4 11 0-0-0 ♜xd6 12 ♜xd4 ♜xd4 13 ♜xd4 b6 14 e4 e5!, Agrest-Eingorn, Graz 1997) 9 e3 ♘xd6 10 ♜xd6 a6 11 c5 ♜a5 12 ♘a3 b5! 13 cxb6 ♘e8! 14 ♜d2 d5 15 ♘e2 ♘b8. This position is unbalanced and offers scope for a complex fight.

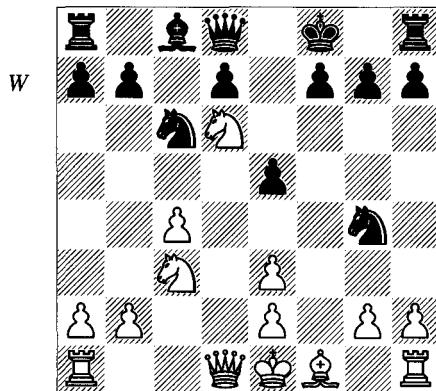
We now return to 7...e5!? (D):



8 ♘e3!

White wants his occupation of the d6-square to be permanent, and he is willing to take on doubled pawns to ensure it. Cummings shows that the other natural move, 8 ♘g5, is only equal after 8...♗xf2+! 9 ♘xf2 ♘g4+ 10 ♘e1 ♜xg5, when 11 ♘c7+ ♘d8 12 ♘xa8 ♜f4! draws: 13 ♘d5 (White doesn't escape by 13 ♜d6 ♜f2+ 14 ♜d2 ♜e3+ 15 ♜d1!?) ♘f2+ 16 ♘c2 ♘d4+ 17 ♘b1 because of 17...♜d2!) 13...♜f2+ 14 ♜d2 ♜d4+ 15 ♘e1 ♜f2+ ½-½ Grinshpun-Shabtai, correspondence game 1995. If Black wants to avoid this draw, his best path is 8...d6 (8...h6?! 9 ♘xf6 ♜xf6 10 ♘c7+ ♘d8 11 e3!; 8...♜b6 9 ♘xf6! ♜xf2+ 10 ♘d2 gxsf6 11 ♘d5 ♜a5+ 12 ♘c2! ♘d4+! 13 ♘xd4 exd4 14 e4! ♘e3! 15 ♘xf6+ ♘d8 16 ♘d5 and White has the upper hand) 9 ♘xf6. Then 9...gxsf6! doesn't seem that bad. The problem with 9...♜xf6, again, is the reply 10 ♘c7+! ♘d8 11 e3! ♘b8 12 ♘d5.

8...♗xe3 9 ♘d6+ ♘f8 10 ♜xe3 ♘g4! (D)



When I first saw this position recommended for Black, I was incredulous. It's precisely the one arising from 1 c4 c5 2 ♘f3 ♘f6 3 ♘c3 d5 4 cxd5 ♘xd5 (this is an Asymmetrical Variation from Chapter 9) 5 e4 ♘b4 6 ♘c4 ♘e6!? (an older move; the well-known one is 6...♘d3+) 7 ♘xe6 ♘d3+ 8 ♘f1 fxe6 9 ♘g5, with colours reversed, but White is a tempo ahead! We've seen that in many reversed positions in chess, the 'extra' move for one side is passive or overcommittal in the context of the larger variation, but in this particular line (with 6 ♘db5 ♘c5 7 ♘f4 e5 8 ♘e3), the extra move is ♘c3 (i.e., ...♘c6 is missing in the Asymmetrical line). You could hardly have a more perfect move for a bonus: it eyes the forward outpost on d5, can come to the defence of the vulnerable point at f2, and prepares for 0-0-0.

Defying logic, however, Black's position has its own resiliency. By analogy with the reversed-colour situation, the move ...♜f6 is Black's key to counterplay, but here it does nothing useful after ♘ce4. So he resorts to the moves ...♜g5 and ...h5. Naturally, those moves reflect the new reality that Black is to some extent defending instead of attacking, and that the move ...h5 is associated with ...♜h6 and ...♝xd6, ridding Black of his most deadly enemy at the cost of the exchange. Very likely White can come out with some advantage here, but it's still surprising that such a line isn't refutable and has in fact scored well for Black.

11 ♜d2

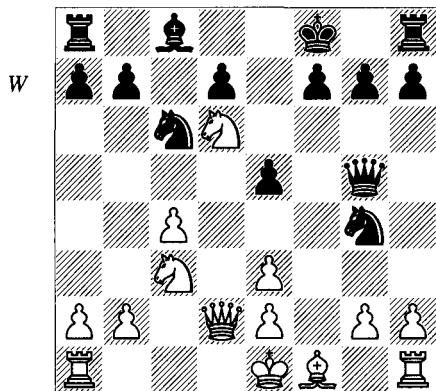
By way of illustration, one of Black's moves with a tempo less is 9...♜b6, but after the analogous 11 ♜b3 in our position, the 'bonus' knight

on c3 gets in the way of the white queen's protection of e3, so Black can capture the pawn by 11...♕xe3, and if 12 c5, 12...♚h4+ 13 g3 ♚h5 handily protects f7.

However, 11 c5 is a good try. For example, 11...♕xe3 (11...b6!?) 12 ♜d2 ♜h4+ (12...♕d4 13 ♜c1 ♜g5 14 g3) 13 g3 ♜d4 14 ♜cb5! ♜xd2+ 15 ♜xd2 ♜xf1+ 16 ♜hxfl f6. Then White's pieces look dominant, but Black can play for a speedy ...b6, so perhaps it's not so bad for him.

11...♛g5 (D)

Black can also play 11...h5 straightaway with the idea ...♜h6, which is probably objectively better. Then Anikaev-Yurtaev, Frunze 1979 continued 12 g3 ♜g5 (12...h4) 13 e4?! (13 ♜g2!) 13...♜xd2+ 14 ♜xd2. Here 14...♜h6! 15 ♜e6 is more accurate than the game's 14...h4 15 ♜g2 h3 16 ♜f3 ♜f6, when White should have played 17 ♜d5 ♜h6 18 c5 b6 19 ♜f5 with a clear advantage.

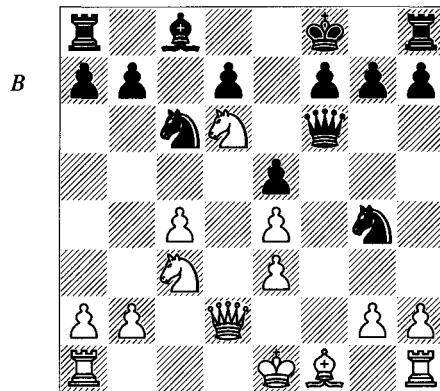


12 e4?!

12 ♜d1 was originally recommended in the few books that dealt with the line, but Cummings is right that simply 12...h5 with the idea ...♜h6 makes you wonder what good the knight on d1 is doing.

On the other hand, the more aggressive 12 ♜d5! is difficult to meet, and poses real problems for the 6...♞c5 idea (at least if 11...♛g5 is played); then 12...h5 13 c5 (13 g3 h4) 13...♜h6 14 g3! h4? 15 ♜g2! has the idea 15...♜xh2? 16 ♜e4, or 15...♜xd6 16 cxd6 ♜xh2 17 0-0-0! hxg3 18 ♜dg1, when Black's kingside breaks down.

12...♜f6 13 e3? (D)



13...♞xe3 14 ♜xe3

Still worse was 14 ♜xc8 ♜d4!. After this the game goes its own way. I'll show the entertaining finish:

14...♜xd6 15 ♜d3 h5 16 ♜d5 b6 17 ♜f1 ♜b4 18 ♜f3 ♜xd3+ 19 ♜xd3 ♜b7 20 0-0-0 ♜c8 21 ♜b1 ♜h6 22 ♜f3 ♜xd5 23 ♜xd5 ♜e6 24 ♜a3+ ♜g8 25 ♜xa7 ♜f6! 26 ♜c1? ♜g4! 27 ♜xe5 d6 28 ♜e7 ♜e2 29 ♜a6? ♜d3+ 30 ♜a1 ♜xc4! 0-1

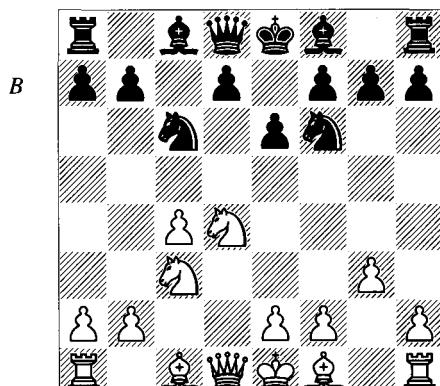
The end is 31 ♜b1 ♜xb1+ 32 ♜xb1 ♜f1#.

Four Knights with 6 g3

Karpov – Topalov

Linares 1994

1 c4 c5 2 ♜f3 ♜f6 3 ♜c3 ♜c6 4 d4 exd4 5 ♜xd4 e6 6 g3 (D)

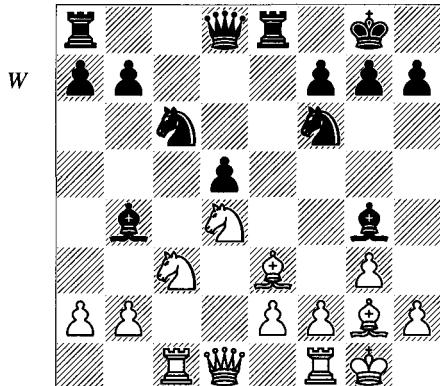


In many ways, this time-honoured move is more logical than 6 a3 or 6 ♜db5, because

White gets on with his development and places the bishop in its customary place in the English Opening, along the long diagonal. Of course, the bishop takes two moves to get to g2, so the dynamic idea of ...d5 must be taken into account. In reality, since that problem proves manageable, White's most serious difficulty is with his c-pawn, which becomes vulnerable to attack.

6... $\mathbb{B}c5$

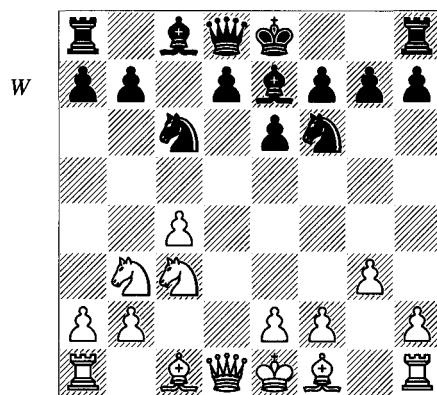
When examining any of the Four Knights lines, one of the first things to check is whether Black can successfully free his game by means of ...d5. An initially popular way of doing so was 6... $\mathbb{B}b4$ 7 $\mathbb{B}g2$ 0-0 8 0-0 d5, when the best line is 9 cxd5 exd5 10 $\mathbb{B}e3$ $\mathbb{E}e8$ (this is traditionally queried, with 10... $\mathbb{A}xc3$ 11 bxc3 given and agreed to yield White an edge; then moves like $\mathbb{B}b1$, $\mathbb{W}a4$ and $\mathbb{B}fd1$ would be part of an effective strategy) 11 $\mathbb{E}c1$ $\mathbb{B}g4!$? (D).



We are following Portisch-Donner, Santa Monica 1966, the game that more or less laid this line to rest. It continued 12 $\mathbb{W}b3$!?, a clever pawn sacrifice which has variously been given one or two exclamation marks. The game continued 12... $\mathbb{A}xc3$ 13 $\mathbb{E}xc3$ $\mathbb{Q}xd4$ 14 $\mathbb{Q}xd4$ $\mathbb{B}xe2$ 15 $\mathbb{B}fc1$ and White had a harmonious position with multiple threats for a mere pawn. After 15... $\mathbb{Q}e4$ 16 $\mathbb{E}c7$? $\mathbb{A}a6$? 17 $\mathbb{W}f3$! $\mathbb{Q}g5$ 18 $\mathbb{W}f5$ $\mathbb{Q}c4$ 19 $\mathbb{B}xb7$, Black was positionally lost. But trust the computers to spoil another classic. Mine instantly finds 16... $\mathbb{A}c4$!, refuting the line, based upon 17 $\mathbb{B}xb7$ $\mathbb{Q}d6$ 18 $\mathbb{W}c6$ $\mathbb{Q}b5$ or 17 $\mathbb{B}1xc4$ $\mathbb{Q}d2$! and wins. Instead of 16 $\mathbb{E}c7$, 16 $\mathbb{E}e3$ $\mathbb{A}a6$ 17 f3 would have given White compensation for his pawn, but no more than that.

But surely White had a favourable isolated queen's pawn position at move 12? I think so; after 12 h3! $\mathbb{Q}h5$ (12... $\mathbb{A}xc3$ 13 $\mathbb{E}xc3$ $\mathbb{Q}xd4$ 14 $\mathbb{H}xg4$! $\mathbb{Q}c6$ 15 $\mathbb{Q}g5$ and White will safely win the d-pawn) 13 g4 $\mathbb{Q}g6$, 14 $\mathbb{W}b3$! (this version of Portisch's idea seems to work) 14... $\mathbb{A}xc3$ 15 $\mathbb{E}xc3$ $\mathbb{Q}xd4$ 16 $\mathbb{Q}xd4$ $\mathbb{E}xe2$ 17 $\mathbb{B}d1$ really is difficult for Black; for example, 17... $\mathbb{Q}e4$ (not 17... $\mathbb{Q}e4$? 18 $\mathbb{F}f1$) 18 $\mathbb{E}e3$ $\mathbb{E}xe3$ 19 $\mathbb{Q}xe3$ and after winning the d-pawn White will retain his bishops and initiative.

7 $\mathbb{Q}b3$ $\mathbb{B}e7$ (D)



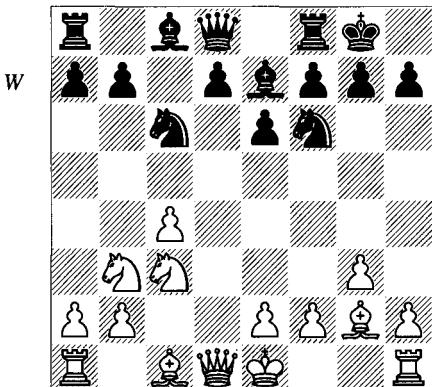
Black embarks upon a strategy that applies to a variety of positions, including the Sicilian Defence. He first drives the knight from the centre and then puts the bishop where he wants it anyway, on e7. The issue, obviously, is whether White's knight is better placed on d4 or b3. There's no easy answer. On d4 the knight is better centralized and looks into key points in Black's position such as c6 and e6. It works with the bishop on g2 to prevent ...d6, a key part of Black's intended set-up. On the other hand, you could also argue that because of Black's pawn-structure, the knight on d4 was restricted from all potential entry points (especially since ...a6 is generally played at the first moment when $\mathbb{Q}db5$ could become relevant). It might be compared with a knight on d4 in a Taimanov or Kan Variation of the Sicilian Defence. Thus a case can be made for the decentralized and superficially less influential knight on b3. One non-trivial consideration concerns Black's own freeing moves, namely, that ...d5 is now prevented and that ...e5 won't come with tempo. The knight on b3 may also come in handy

supporting the move c5, although that is not a vital argument in its favour.

As one more illustration of the maddening plasticity of this opening, the game before you really opened 1 d4 ♕f6 2 c4 c5 3 ♕f3 cxd4 4 ♕xd4 e6 (now it's an English Opening) 5 g3 ♕c6 6 ♕g2 ♕c5 7 ♕b3 ♕e7 8 ♕c3, and now it's a Four Knights Symmetrical English!

8 ♕g2 0-0 (D)

The enterprising 8...b6 is premised upon 9 0-0 0-0 10 ♕f4 ♕a6! 11 ♕b5 d5! 12 ♕c7 ♕xc4!, gaining a strong mobile centre and a pawn for the exchange. There are several alternatives, but it might be that exploiting the pin to return to the centre by 10 ♕d4 is worthwhile, with the idea 10...b7 11 ♕db5 d6 12 ♕g5 a6 13 ♕xf6, etc.



9 0-0 d6

Black sidesteps the positional error 9...a6?, when White plays 10 c5!.

10 ♕f4 ♕h5!?

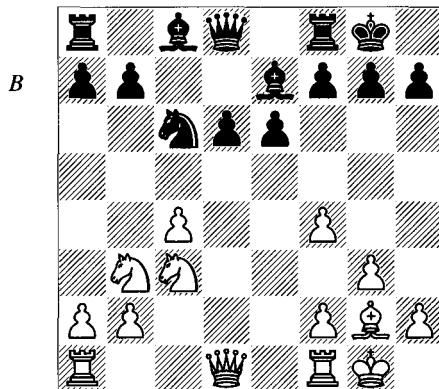
With ♕d2 (or ♕c2) and ♕fd1 in the air, Black goes after the bishop. Two other ideas are 10...♕g4!? with the idea ...♕ge5, and 10...h6!?, thinking about ...e5 and ...e6 (without having to face ♕g5).

11 e3!

The voluntary acceptance of doubled f-pawns has popped up from time to time throughout this book. Of course, 11 ♕e3 can't be bad. With the pressure off d6, Black might play 11...♕d7 with the idea 12 ♕b5 ♕b8.

11...♕xf4 12 exf4 (D)

An aesthetically appealing picture. White's two forward bishops' pawns contest the same squares as Black's centre pawns and, at least



temporarily, his bishop on g2 and rooks coming to the centre files will be superior to their counterparts. Black will have a hard time achieving freeing breaks, and ...d5 appears particularly hopeless. Nevertheless, he can (and does) prepare ...b5, if only to force White to make the weakening move a4. His other natural idea would be to occupy the c-file and target the c-pawn.

What are White's plans? It will be difficult to put pressure on d6 with his dark-squared bishop gone, but an attack by f5 is the logical way to make progress. If Black responds by ...e5, he gives White an outpost on d5, but otherwise White will play fxe6 and either win the d5-square (if Black captures with his bishop) or create a weak pawn on e6 on an open central file if Black plays ...fxe6. That pawn on e6 is easily attacked by a rook on e1, knight on d4 and bishop on h3. Naturally this strategy won't be implemented so easily, but the idea of allowing the bishop to be captured on f4 has become standard in similar positions. In lines of the Queen's Indian Defence which involve ...♕xf3 and exf3, for example, f4-f5 is played for the same reasons.

12...♕d7 13 ♕d2 ♕b8 14 ♕fe1 g6

For the reasons given above, Black wants to stop f5. But this move is quite weakening.

15 h4!

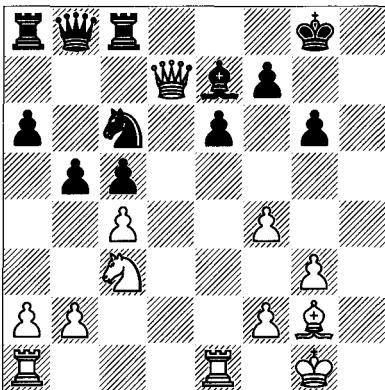
With Black's queen off-centre on b8, White feels justified in attacking the king.

15...a6 16 h5 b5 17 hxg6 hxg6 18 ♕c5! dx5

The first point is 18...♕e8? 19 ♕xe6!? (or 19 ♕xa6 ♕xa6 20 cxb5) 19...fxe6 20 ♕xe6 with too strong an attack.

19 $\mathbb{W}xd7 \mathbb{H}c8$ (D)

W



20 $\mathbb{H}xe6!$

Karpov comments "The triumph of the light-squared strategy!"

20... $\mathbb{H}a7$ 21 $\mathbb{H}xg6+$! $f\mathbb{x}g6$ 22 $\mathbb{W}e6+$ $\mathbb{Q}g7$ 23 $\mathbb{W}xc6$

White has enough material already and owns the important central squares. With Black's king so exposed, this is decisive.

23... $\mathbb{H}d8$ 24 $c\mathbb{x}b5$ $\mathbb{A}f6$ 25 $\mathbb{Q}e4$ $\mathbb{A}d4$ 26 $b\mathbb{x}a6$ $\mathbb{W}b6$ 27 $\mathbb{H}d1$ $\mathbb{W}xa6$ 28 $\mathbb{H}xd4$!

Not the only win, but it produces some nice geometry:

28... $\mathbb{H}xd4$ 29 $\mathbb{W}f6+$ $\mathbb{Q}g8$ 30 $\mathbb{W}xg6+$ $\mathbb{Q}f8$ 31 $\mathbb{W}e8+!$?

31 $\mathbb{W}h6+$ $\mathbb{Q}g8$ 32 $\mathbb{Q}f6+$ $\mathbb{Q}f7$ 33 $\mathbb{Q}h5!$ is the more devastating computer solution.

31... $\mathbb{Q}g7$ 32 $\mathbb{W}e5+$ $\mathbb{Q}g8$ 33 $\mathbb{Q}f6+$ $\mathbb{Q}f7$ 34 $\mathbb{W}e8+$ $\mathbb{Q}f8$ 35 $\mathbb{W}xc5+$ $\mathbb{W}d6$ 36 $\mathbb{W}xa7$ $\mathbb{W}xf6$

Karpov points out the trap 36... $\mathbb{H}d1+$ 37 $\mathbb{Q}g2$ $\mathbb{E}g1+!$ 38 $\mathbb{Q}xg1??$ $\mathbb{W}d1+$ 39 $\mathbb{Q}g2$ $\mathbb{W}h1+!$ 40 $\mathbb{W}xh1$ with stalemate. But 38 $\mathbb{Q}h3$ wins.

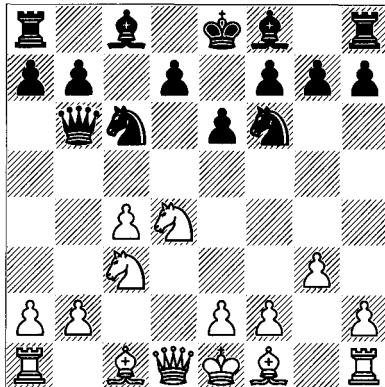
37 $\mathbb{Q}h5$ $\mathbb{H}d2$ 38 $b3$ $\mathbb{H}b2$ 39 $\mathbb{Q}g2$ 1-0

Main-Line Four Knights Symmetrical: 6 $g3$ $\mathbb{W}b6$

1 $c4$ $c5$ 2 $\mathbb{Q}f3$ $\mathbb{Q}f6$ 3 $\mathbb{Q}c3$ $\mathbb{Q}c6$ 4 $d4$ $cxd4$ 5 $\mathbb{Q}xd4$ $e6$ 6 $g3$ $\mathbb{W}b6$ (D)

This has been the main line of the Four Knights Symmetrical Variation for at least 50 years. Black brings out the queen, which may very well be attacked later, in order to force White's knight back. 6... $\mathbb{W}b6$ really has no logical superiority over other moves, but there is a concrete one, namely, that the move ... $\mathbb{Q}e5$,

W



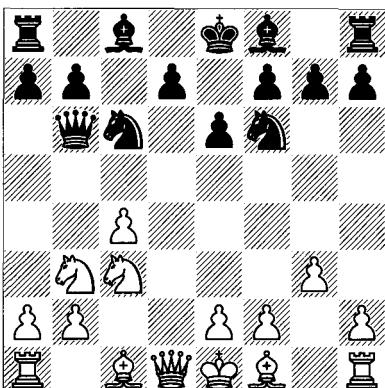
played with tempo against the c-pawn, will now clear a square on c6 for the queen, from where it hits h1 and c4. That seldom happens, of course; nevertheless, White will have to make compromises in order to prevent it. At this point, White plays either 7 $\mathbb{Q}b3$ or 7 $\mathbb{Q}db5$ in a vast majority of games. Let's discuss the ideas as we travel through them.

Filippov – Khalifman

Linares 1997

1 $c4$ $c5$ 2 $\mathbb{Q}f3$ $\mathbb{Q}f6$ 3 $\mathbb{Q}c3$ $\mathbb{Q}c6$ 4 $d4$ $cxd4$ 5 $\mathbb{Q}xd4$ $e6$ 6 $g3$ $\mathbb{W}b6$ 7 $\mathbb{Q}b3$ (D)

B

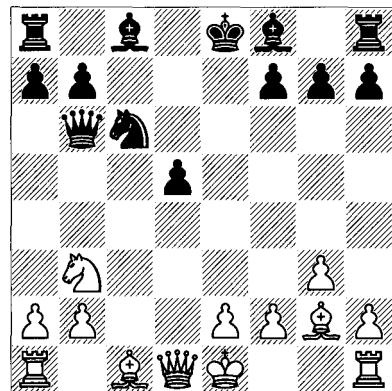


In the last game, we discussed the pros and cons of having the knight on b3. The ideas in this position are much the same, but you could argue that its support for the move c5 gains in importance with the black queen's presence on b6. At any rate, the game is soon ruled by specifics.

7... $\mathbb{Q}e5$

Over the years, this has always been the main move, because it forces a favourable change of structure. To understand why practice has gravitated in this direction, a cursory examination of the two very natural alternatives won't hurt:

a) 7...d5 is no longer popular, but has been used in the World Championship and other major contests. The resulting play illustrates a simplified isolated queen's pawn position: 8 cxd5 ♕xd5 9 ♕xd5 exd5 10 ♔g2 (D) (10 ♕xd5?! ♔e6 is way too risky for White).



B

a1) Karpov-Korchnoi, Brussels 1988 shows what happens when the side with the isolated pawn can't disturb the equilibrium: 10...♔e6 11 0-0 ♘d8 12 ♔g5! f6 13 ♔d2 ♔e7 14 ♔c3! 0-0 15 ♘d4 ♕xd4 16 ♕xd4 ♔c5 17 ♕d2 ♕d6 18 b4 ♔b6 19 ♘d4 ♔f5 20 ♘ac1 ♔e4 21 ♔h3! ♘fe8 22 ♘fd1 and White has locked up the key squares.

a2) Black's more aggressive approach goes 10...♗b4+ 11 ♔d2 ♗g4 12 0-0 ♘d8?! (12...0-0 13 h3 ♔h5 should be met by 14 ♔e3!) 13 ♕xb4 ♕xb4 14 ♕c2 0-0 15 ♘fd1 ♕c4 16 ♘d2! ♘fe8 17 e3 g6 18 ♘c1 with a clear superiority for White, Smejkal-Cebalo, Marseilles 1986.

b) 7...♔b4 could hardly be more natural, developing quickly and increasing Black's control over the crucial d5- and e4-squares. Nevertheless, White gains a definite advantage by 8 ♔g2. For example, 8...d5 9 0-0! dx4 10 ♔e3 ♕a6 11 ♕c5 ♕a5 12 ♕d6 ♔e7, Tukmakov-Cherniaev, Geneva 1999, and now 13 ♘fd1! would have been very strong. So in Illescas-Yudasin, Pamplona 1992/3, Black chose the natural move 8...♕e5, but White came up with a typical pawn sacrifice to exploit his opponent's

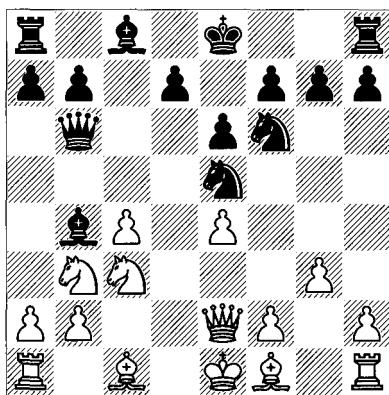
weak dark squares: 9 c5! ♕xc5 10 ♕xc5 ♕xc5 11 0-0 d5 12 e4!? dx4 13 ♕xe4 ♕xe4 14 ♔xe4 0-0 15 ♔f4! f5? 16 ♘c1 ♕a5 17 b4! ♕xb4 18 ♕xe5 ♕xe4 19 ♘e1 ♕d5 20 ♘c7! ♘f7 21 ♘xf7 ♘xf7 22 ♕h5+ with a winning position for White.

8 e4

Defending the c-pawn isn't easy. 8...♔e3? fails to 8...♕c6.

8...♔b4! 9 ♕e2 (D)

Likewise, White's e-pawn has no other convenient defence.



B

9...d6

Over the years, this has proven to be the most accurate move. 9...0-0 10 f4 ♕c6 11 e5 ♕e8 12 ♕e3 ♕c7 13 ♔g2 d6 14 exd6 ♕xd6 15 0-0 ♕xc3 16 bxc3 ♘f5 17 ♘f2 gave the bishops a sweeping view of the board in Rotshtain-Managadze, Halkida 2000.

10 f4

10 ♔d2 with the idea of 0-0-0 will be seen below, in the game Gulko-Alekseev.

10...♕c6

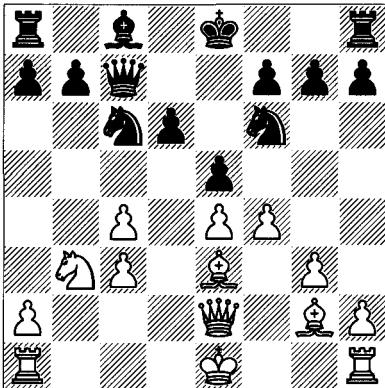
Black should wait until White's queen's bishop is committed before exchanging on c3, because 10...♕xc3+? 11 bxc3 ♕c6 12 ♕a3! is ideal for White.

11 ♕e3 ♕xc3+ 12 bxc3 ♕c7 13 ♕g2 0-0

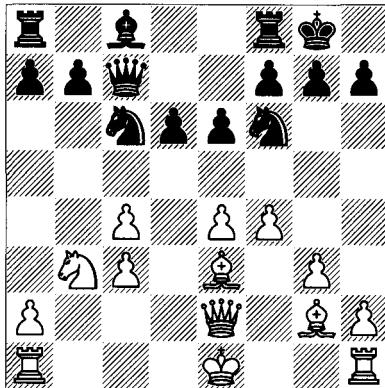
These moves are not all forced, as you might guess, but the position after 13...0-0 is considered the main line and has been contested in more important games than any other variation of the Four Knights.

Instead, 13...e5!? (D) tries to avoid the main lines; it is certainly under-analysed and has a decent reputation.

W



W



For some reason 14 0-0 has been neglected here. Perhaps White has been afraid of 14... $\mathbb{Q}g4$, but 15 $\mathbb{Q}c1$ preserves the bishop, which might even come out to a3 after Black's knight is driven away. I think that this deserves close consideration and may be White's best route to advantage. Instead, practice has seen:

a) 14 c5 dxc5 15 $\mathbb{Q}xc5$ can be countered by 15... $\mathbb{Q}g4$, when Smejkal-Gdanski, Polanica Zdroj 1991 continued 16 $\mathbb{W}e3$ b6 17 $\mathbb{Q}a3$ 0-0-0 with full equality. Alternatively, Black should have no problems after Palliser's recommended line 15...exf4 16 0-0-0 $\mathbb{Q}g4$ 17 $\mathbb{Q}f3$, although now Black should play 17... $\mathbb{Q}xf3!$ 18 $\mathbb{W}xf3$ $\mathbb{Q}e5$ 19 $\mathbb{W}xf4$ b6 20 $\mathbb{Q}d4$ $\mathbb{Q}fd7$ rather than 17...fxg3, when 18 e5! $\mathbb{Q}xf3$ 19 $\mathbb{W}xf3$ $\mathbb{Q}d7$ 20 $\mathbb{Q}d6$ $\mathbb{W}b6$ 21 $\mathbb{W}xg3$ 0-0-0 22 $\mathbb{Q}hf1$ gives White promising play.

b) 14 f5 b6 15 g4 $\mathbb{Q}a6$ (or 15...h6) 16 g5 $\mathbb{Q}d7$ 17 0-0 (17 $\mathbb{Q}d1$ may be a better move-order, answering 17... $\mathbb{Q}a5$ with 18 $\mathbb{Q}xa5$ bxa5 19 $\mathbb{W}d2?$?, when 19...0-0-0 is unclear) 17... $\mathbb{Q}a5!$ 18 $\mathbb{Q}xa5$ bxa5 19 $\mathbb{Q}fd1?$! $\mathbb{Q}b6$ 20 $\mathbb{Q}xb6!$? axb6 21 $\mathbb{Q}ab1$ $\mathbb{Q}xc4$ 22 $\mathbb{W}f2$ b5, Wells-Emms, Southend 2008. Black has consolidated and is a pawn ahead; the only negative is his king position, which shouldn't be too big a problem. After 23 f6?!, the easiest solution was undoubtedly 23... $\mathbb{Q}g8!$.

Returning to the main move 13...0-0 (D), White must now make a fundamental decision: whether to open up the game or keep it closed.

14 c5

In the next game we see 14 0-0.

14...dxc5

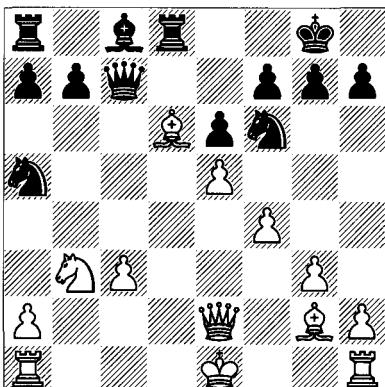
This capture is almost automatic these days, but 14...d5 is playable, and only mildly in White's favour.

15 $\mathbb{Q}xc5$ $\mathbb{Q}d8$ 16 e5 $\mathbb{Q}a5$ 17 $\mathbb{Q}b4$

From this point on, it's hard to imagine White getting the slightest winning chances. The game can also end in a quick draw after 17 exf6 $\mathbb{Q}xb3$ 18 axb3 $\mathbb{W}xc5$ 19 $\mathbb{Q}e5$ $\mathbb{Q}b6$ 20 $\mathbb{W}g5$ $\mathbb{W}e3+$, when White should have acquiesced to a perpetual check in Uhlmann-Van der Wiel, Baden-Baden 1992.

However, White has an opportunity here to mix things up, one that has almost escaped notice. The game Åkesson-T.Pähz jr, European Ch, Dresden 2007 saw 17 $\mathbb{Q}d6!$ (D).

B



17... $\mathbb{W}xc3+$ (17... $\mathbb{Q}xd6$ 18 exd6 $\mathbb{W}xc3+$ 19 $\mathbb{W}d2$ $\mathbb{W}xd2+$ and either recapture will do because of White's ongoing pressure along the files and long diagonal) 18 $\mathbb{W}d2$ $\mathbb{W}xd2+$ 19 $\mathbb{Q}xd2$ $\mathbb{Q}d5?$ (19... $\mathbb{Q}e8!$ is correct, but White's wonderful bishops must be worth a pawn; for example, 20 $\mathbb{Q}b4$ $\mathbb{Q}c6$ 21 $\mathbb{Q}a3$ $\mathbb{Q}d7$ 22 $\mathbb{Q}f2$ f6? 23 $\mathbb{Q}ab1$ b6 24 $\mathbb{Q}c4$ $\mathbb{Q}ac8$ 25 $\mathbb{Q}hc1$; probably it's about equal – you'll see that such a position offers both sides more to play for than

the main lines do) 20 ♖xd5 ♜xd6 (20...exd5 21 ♜c7) 21 exd6 exd5 22 0-0 g6 23 ♜fc1 ♜e6 24 ♜c5 b6 25 ♜c7. Black will have only a pawn for the exchange and have to defend against active rooks. White went on to win the game.

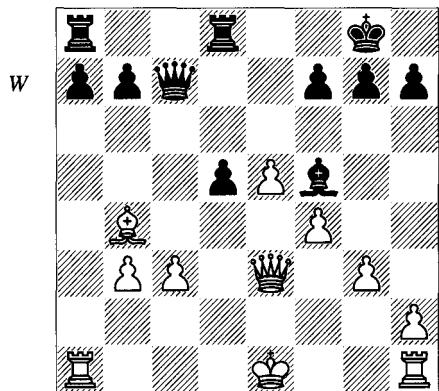
17...♝xb3 18 axb3 ♜d5 19 ♜xd5?!

19 ♜c4 has led to some quick draws; for example, 19...♜d7 20 ♜d4 ♜xb4 21 ♜xd7 ♜xd7 22 cxb4 ♜b5 23 ♜xb7 ♜ab8 24 ♜a6 ½-½ Kramnik-Salov, Wijk aan Zee 1998.

19...exd5 20 ♜e3

This prevents ...d4, hits a7, and prepares a timely ♜d6. Surely White cannot have any problems here?

20...♞f5! (D)



The position of each side's opposite-coloured bishop is more important than any other consideration here, because they can be neither opposed nor exchanged off without material loss.

21 ♜c5

Transferring to d4. 21 ♜xa7?? is a blunder due to 21...d4; Ribli gives 21 ♜d6 ♜c6 22 ♜d4, but White could be tied down after 22...♜dc8 23 ♜d2 a5, when Black has prospects of slipping into the light squares by ...♝e4, ...h5-h4 and a queen transfer by ...♜d7-h3 or something similar.

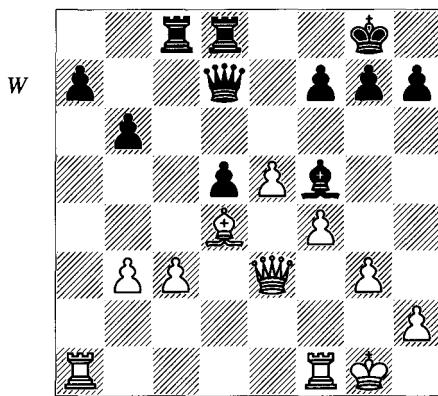
21...b6 22 ♜d4

Now this bishop is restricted by its own centre pawns.

22...♜d7

You can already envision a formation with Black's bishop on e4, his queen on h3 or f5, and ...h5-h4, with the rooks to follow.

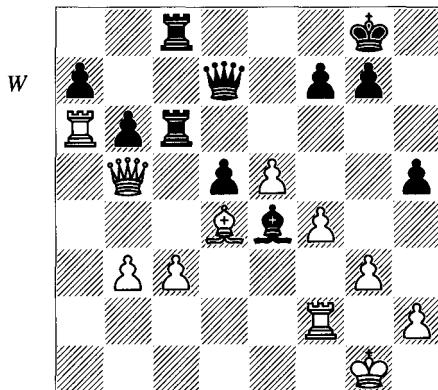
23 0-0 ♜ac8 (D)



24 ♜f2 ♜e4 25 ♜e2 ♜c6! 26 ♜b5

Ribli makes the excellent suggestion that White flee back to the centre by ♜f1-e1-d2, although it wouldn't be perfectly secure there. Another idea is 26 ♜f1, intending f5 and maybe even h3 and ♜h2. Then Black would have to retreat temporarily by 26...♝f5, but he has a good plan in ...h5-h4 and ...♝g6, as we see in the game.

26...♜dc8 27 ♜a6 h5 (D)



28 ♜f1

Too late. Trying to divert Black by 28 e6 looks right, but White's pieces are too far away to defend the king. A pretty line is 28...♜xe6 29 ♜xa7 h4! 30 f5 ♜h6 31 g4 ♜xc3! 32 ♜xc3 ♜xc3 (threatening 33...♜c1+ 34 ♜f1 ♜e3#) 33 ♜a1 ♜g3+! 34 hxg3 hxg3 35 ♜g2 ♜e3+ 36 ♜h1 ♜xg2+ 37 ♜xg2 ♜f2+ and mates. A testament to the power of opposite-coloured bishops in assisting the attack.

28...h4 29 f5 hxg3 30 ♜f4 gxh2+ 31 ♜xh2 ♜h6+ 32 ♜g3 ♜h5! 33 e6 fxe6 34 f6? ♜f7

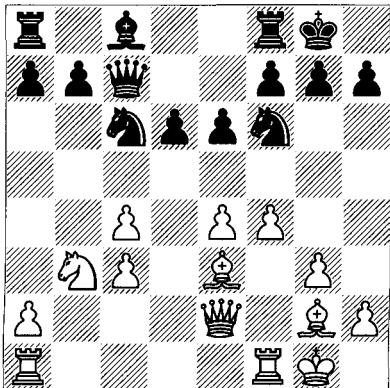
Black could also win immediately along the lines of the game by 34...e5! 35 $\mathbb{Q}g4$ g6 36 $\mathbb{Q}xe5$ $\mathbb{Q}xc3+!$, etc.

35 $\mathbb{Q}g4$ $\mathbb{Q}xc3+!$ 36 $\mathbb{Q}xe3$ $\mathbb{Q}c7+$ 37 $\mathbb{Q}f4$
Or 37 $\mathbb{Q}f4$ $\mathbb{Q}xc3+$ 38 $\mathbb{Q}f2$ $\mathbb{Q}c2+$.
37... $\mathbb{Q}xc3+$ 38 $\mathbb{Q}g4$ $\mathbb{Q}e5$ 0-1

Åkesson – Schandorff Nordic Ch, Reykjavik 1997

1 c4 c5 2 $\mathbb{Q}f3$ $\mathbb{Q}c6$ 3 d4 cxd4 4 $\mathbb{Q}xd4$ e6 5
 $\mathbb{Q}c3$ $\mathbb{Q}f6$ 6 g3 $\mathbb{Q}b6$ 7 $\mathbb{Q}b3$ $\mathbb{Q}e5$ 8 e4 $\mathbb{Q}b4$ 9
 $\mathbb{Q}e2$ d6 10 f4 $\mathbb{Q}c6$ 11 $\mathbb{Q}e3$ $\mathbb{Q}xc3+$ 12 bxc3
 $\mathbb{Q}c7$ 13 $\mathbb{Q}g2$ 0-0 14 0-0 (D)

B



Castling is more flexible than 14 c5. In recent years, White hasn't entered into this position much, in spite of decades of practice at the highest levels. That may be a function of the relative difficulty of attack and defence. Theory cites games suggesting that Black stands better; objectively, however, I think that White has improvements and a definitive assessment is practically impossible to arrive at.

14...b6

This variation can be productively compared to the Sämisch Variation of the Nimzo-Indian Defence (1 d4 $\mathbb{Q}f6$ 2 c4 e6 3 $\mathbb{Q}c3$ $\mathbb{Q}b4$ 4 a3 $\mathbb{Q}xc3+$ 5 bxc3, in Volume 2), and other branches of that opening. As in the Nimzo-Indian, White has two bishops and kingside prospects (g4-g5), but his doubled c-pawns are targets and Black is able to train several pieces on the c-file and eventually wins at least one pawn (... $\mathbb{Q}a6$, ... $\mathbb{Q}a5$, ... $\mathbb{Q}c7$ and ... $\mathbb{Q}ac8$). White will try to mix things up in both the centre and kingside. As so often when one side has two bishops and

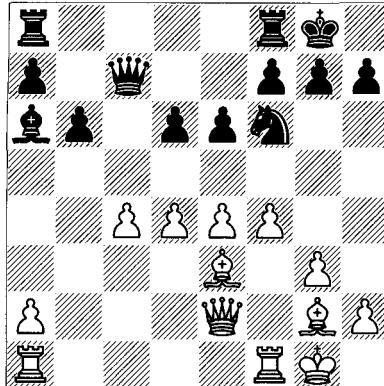
weaknesses, he is willing to jettison a pawn in exchange for extra time to pursue his attack.

The blocking move 14...e5 seems premature after 15 f5, although that's not entirely clear. Moutousis-Wojtkiewicz, Athens 1992 was a disaster for Black following 15...b6 16 g4 $\mathbb{Q}a6$ 17 g5 $\mathbb{Q}e8?$ (Anand gives 17... $\mathbb{Q}d7$) 18 $\mathbb{Q}f3$ $\mathbb{Q}a5?$ (here 18...f6! 19 g6 hxg6 20 fxg6 $\mathbb{Q}e7!$ is a fine offer of the exchange: then 21 $\mathbb{Q}h3$ $\mathbb{Q}xg6$ 22 $\mathbb{Q}e6+$ $\mathbb{Q}f7$ is hard to evaluate due to White's weaknesses) 19 $\mathbb{Q}xa5$ bxa5 20 $\mathbb{Q}h3$ g6 21 $\mathbb{Q}f2$ $\mathbb{Q}xc4$ 22 $\mathbb{Q}h4$ h5 23 gxh6 1-0. The game could end with 23... $\mathbb{Q}h7$ 24 $\mathbb{Q}f1$ $\mathbb{Q}c6$ 25 fxg6+ fxg6 26 $\mathbb{Q}e7+$.

15 g4

For a while, White turned to the alternative 15 $\mathbb{Q}d4$. It threatens 16 $\mathbb{Q}xc6$ and prepares $\mathbb{Q}b5$. But Black has a surprise retort: 15... $\mathbb{Q}xd4!$ (it seems contradictory to straighten out White's pawns, even should Black manage to win the pawn on c4) 16 cxd4 $\mathbb{Q}a6$ (D).

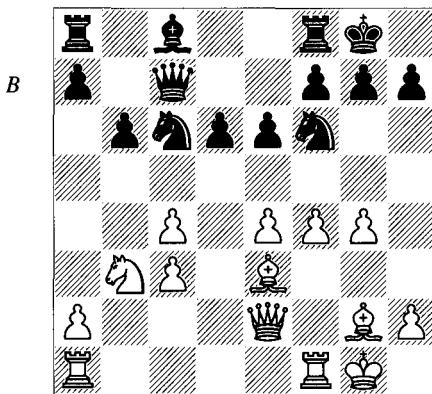
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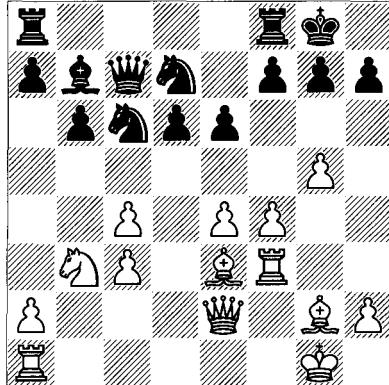
Now Black threatens not only the c-pawn, but ...d5. We saw in the Sämisch Variation of the Nimzo-Indian how Black could straighten out White's c-pawns by ...cxd4, and after cxd4, play ...d5. Carlsen-Volokitin, Biel 2006 continued 17 $\mathbb{Q}ac1?$! (too ambitious; White should settle for 17 e5!, and 17... $\mathbb{Q}xc4$ 18 $\mathbb{Q}fc1$ or 17... $\mathbb{Q}d5$ 18 exd6 $\mathbb{Q}xd6$ 19 $\mathbb{Q}f2$ $\mathbb{Q}ac8$ 20 $\mathbb{Q}fc1$, when 20... $\mathbb{Q}c6!$ 21 $\mathbb{Q}f1!$ $\mathbb{Q}f6!$ prepares ... $\mathbb{Q}b7$ and keeps White on the defensive) 17... $\mathbb{Q}ac8$ 18 e5 $\mathbb{Q}d5!$. After this, Black will win material and is able to fend off White's attack on the kingside. The game continued 19 $\mathbb{Q}xd5$ exd5 20 f5!? dx4!? (Black has the better bishop, hence 20... $\mathbb{Q}xc4$ 21 $\mathbb{Q}h5$ f6 22 e6 $\mathbb{Q}e7$ is appropriate,

when ... $\mathbb{Q}d3-e4!$ follows; also good is 20...dxe5 21 f6 g6) 21 f6 g6 22 $\mathbb{W}g4?$ (however, 22 e6 fxe6 23 $\mathbb{Q}h6 \mathbb{M}f7$ 24 $\mathbb{W}xe6 \mathbb{W}d7$ 25 d5! $\mathbb{Q}b5!$ is good for Black) 22... $\mathbb{W}c6!$ 23 $\mathbb{M}f4$ dxe5 24 dxe5 $\mathbb{Q}b7$ 25 $\mathbb{W}h3 \mathbb{M}fe8$ 26 $\mathbb{Q}f2 \mathbb{M}xe5!$ 27 $\mathbb{M}xc4 \mathbb{W}xc4$ 28 $\mathbb{M}xc4 \mathbb{W}xc4$ (along with Black's material advantage, his rooks and bishop collaborate beautifully in the attack) 29 $\mathbb{W}d7 \mathbb{M}c2+$ 30 $\mathbb{Q}g1 \mathbb{Q}c6$ 31 $\mathbb{W}d4?$ $\mathbb{M}d5$ 32 $\mathbb{W}g4$ h5 0-1.

We now return to the position after 15 g4 (D):



B



B

15... $\mathbb{Q}b7$

This is the accepted solution, resisting ... $\mathbb{Q}a6$ for a few moves so as to keep an attack on White's centre, which in turn helps Black defend against the kingside attack. 15... $\mathbb{Q}a6$ has a mediocre reputation. Black may be able to hold his own in that line as well, but he has to be very careful; for example, 16 g5 $\mathbb{Q}d7$ 17 $\mathbb{M}f3 \mathbb{W}fe8$ 18 $\mathbb{M}h3 \mathbb{Q}f8$, and here Lobron-Hulak, Erevan Olympiad 1996 saw 19 f5! $\mathbb{Q}e5$ 20 $\mathbb{W}h5 \mathbb{W}xc4$. At this point, instead of 21 $\mathbb{Q}d4?$ $\mathbb{W}e2!$ 22 $\mathbb{W}h4 \mathbb{W}g4!$, when White's attack dissipated, the standard attack by 21 f6! is promising, because 21... $\mathbb{W}e2$ 22 fxe7 $\mathbb{W}xg7$ 23 $\mathbb{W}h6+ \mathbb{W}g8$ 24 $\mathbb{Q}d4$ or even 24 g6!? gives White positive chances, the latter line proceeding 24...fxg6 25 $\mathbb{Q}f1 \mathbb{W}g4+$ 26 $\mathbb{M}g3 \mathbb{Q}xf1!$ 27 $\mathbb{W}xg4 \mathbb{Q}xg4$ 28 $\mathbb{W}f4 \mathbb{Q}xe3$ 29 $\mathbb{W}xe3 \mathbb{Q}a6$ 30 $\mathbb{W}d4$.

16 g5 $\mathbb{Q}d7$ 17 $\mathbb{M}f3$ (D)

White is playing for a brute-force attack by $\mathbb{M}h3$, $\mathbb{W}h5$ and f5. The question is whether that abandons the rest of the board too quickly.

17... $\mathbb{M}fe8!$

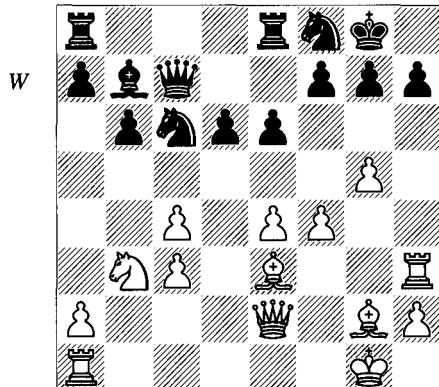
Black's idea is to bring a knight to f8 in order to defend h7. The rook goes to e8 so that after

White's f5, Black will answer ...exf5 and have another piece in play. Two other moves are supposed to be good for Black, but that's not at all clear:

a) 17... $\mathbb{Q}e7$ has been praised on the basis of Lobron-Kramnik, Dortmund 1995: 18 $\mathbb{M}fc8$ 19 $\mathbb{W}h5 \mathbb{Q}f8$ 20 $\mathbb{Q}d2$ d5. But here White had 21 f5!, which is quite dangerous in comparison with White's attack in the main line.

b) Illescas-Leko, Leon 1996 went 17... $\mathbb{M}ac8$ 18 $\mathbb{M}h3 \mathbb{W}fe8!$ 19 $\mathbb{W}h5?!$ $\mathbb{Q}f8$ 20 $\mathbb{M}f1!?$ $\mathbb{Q}a6!$, and Black got the better of it. However, 19 $\mathbb{M}d1!$ is an improvement, when things are by no means clear. White should hang around in the centre for a while in these positions, taking advantage of the weakness on d6 and holding c4 for a while. There is time for f5 later.

18 $\mathbb{M}h3 \mathbb{Q}f8$ (D)



W

19 $\mathbb{M}f1?!$

For the last time, White should act in the centre until Black shifts either his bishop to a6 or knight to a5, which both make f5 more effective;

for example, 19 $\mathbb{Q}d1!$ $\mathbb{A}a6$ (19... $\mathbb{Q}ad8$) 20 $\mathbb{W}h5$ $\mathbb{Q}xc4$ 21 f5 $\mathbb{Q}e5$ 22 f6 $\mathbb{Q}ad8$ 23 $\mathbb{Q}d4$ with $\mathbb{Q}d2$ next. All this is very unclear.

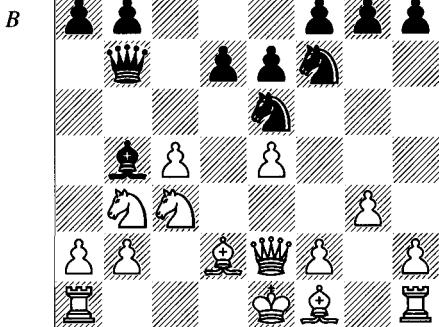
19... $\mathbb{A}a6$ 20 $\mathbb{Q}d2$ $\mathbb{Q}a5!$ 21 $\mathbb{W}h5$ $\mathbb{Q}xc4$ 22 $\mathbb{Q}xc4$ $\mathbb{Q}xc4$ 23 $\mathbb{W}f5$

In this position, 23... $\mathbb{E}ac8!$ was a good move, because the attack by 24 f5 meets with 24...exf5 25 exf5 $\mathbb{E}e5!$ and White has no way to add fuel to the fire.

Gulko – Alekseev

Russia vs USA (*Internet*) 2005

1 c4 c5 2 $\mathbb{Q}f3$ $\mathbb{Q}c6$ 3 d4 cxd4 4 $\mathbb{Q}xd4$ e6 5 $\mathbb{Q}c3$ $\mathbb{Q}f6$ 6 g3 $\mathbb{W}b6$ 7 $\mathbb{Q}b3$ $\mathbb{Q}e5$ 8 e4 $\mathbb{Q}b4$ 9 $\mathbb{W}e2$ d6 10 $\mathbb{Q}d2$ (D)



White embarks upon a completely different plan: to keep his pawn-structure intact and castle queenside, with the idea of simplifying and putting pressure on Black's d-pawn. The danger is that his king will become exposed on the queenside.

10...0-0

Both 10... $\mathbb{Q}d7$ and 10...a5 are playable. White is held to have some advantage against the latter following 11 f4 $\mathbb{Q}c6$ 12 $\mathbb{Q}a4$ $\mathbb{Q}xd2+$ 13 $\mathbb{W}xd2$ $\mathbb{W}b4!?$ 14 $\mathbb{W}xb4$ $\mathbb{Q}xb4$ 15 $\mathbb{Q}d1$. At this point Palliser contributes the original and dynamic idea 15...b5! 16 $\mathbb{Q}b6$ (16 cxb5 may yield a very slim advantage) 16...bx c !; for example, 17 $\mathbb{Q}xa8!?$ cxb3 18 axb3 $\mathbb{Q}b7$ 19 $\mathbb{Q}c1$ $\mathbb{Q}xe4$ 20 $\mathbb{Q}b5+\mathbb{Q}d8$ 21 $\mathbb{Q}b6$ $\mathbb{Q}c5$. 17 $\mathbb{Q}d4$ is a noteworthy alternative. You'll need to devote some study to this variation in order to play it with confidence.

11 0-0-0

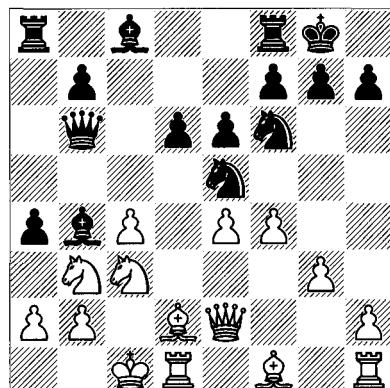
11 f4 $\mathbb{Q}c6$ 12 0-0-0 allows the positionally-based counterattack 12...e5!, which practice has shown to be at least satisfactory. See the note to Black's 12th move.

11...a5

Black goes for the attack, but he's not strictly forced to. He can try 11... $\mathbb{Q}d7$, for example. Also, 11... $\mathbb{Q}c6$ 12 $\mathbb{Q}b5$ $\mathbb{Q}xd2+$ 13 $\mathbb{W}xd2$ may favour White, but not enough to brag about following 13...d5!, with the likely follow-up 14 $\mathbb{W}xd5$ $\mathbb{W}xd5$ 15 c5 $\mathbb{W}a6$ 16 $\mathbb{Q}c3$ $\mathbb{W}xe2$ 17 $\mathbb{Q}xe2$ $\mathbb{Q}f5$ 18 f3.

12 f4 a4? (D)

Leading to crazy complications. The initially slower option is 12... $\mathbb{Q}c6$ 13 $\mathbb{Q}e3$ $\mathbb{W}a6$. Then 14 $\mathbb{W}f3!$ should be looked at, aiming the f1-bishop directly towards Black's queen. In Gleizerov-Dvoiry, Cheliabinsk 1989, White's 14 $\mathbb{Q}b5!?$ was met by 14...a4!, sacrificing the queen for two pieces, a pawn and pressure following 15 $\mathbb{Q}c7!?$ axb3 16 $\mathbb{Q}xa6$ bxa2 17 $\mathbb{Q}c2$ $\mathbb{W}xa6$ 18 $\mathbb{Q}g2$ e5! 19 f5! $\mathbb{Q}c5$ with a powerful positional grip and attacking chances. Finally, 14 $\mathbb{Q}a4$ e5! 15 f5 $\mathbb{Q}d7$ 16 $\mathbb{Q}c2$ $\mathbb{Q}e7!$ 17 $\mathbb{Q}b6$ a4! 18 $\mathbb{Q}xa8$ $\mathbb{W}xa8$ 19 $\mathbb{Q}d2$ a3 20 b3 $\mathbb{Q}c8$ gave Black a meaningful advantage in Marin-Z.Almasi, Bled Olympiad 2002, since ...d5 and/or ...b5 follows.



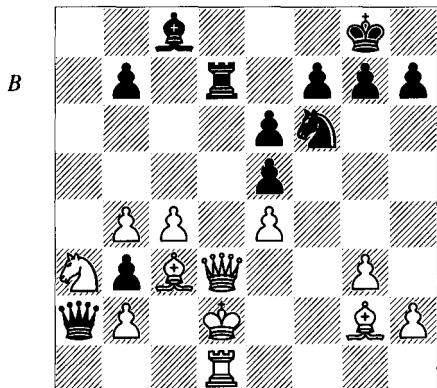
13 fxe5 axb3 14 a3 dxe5!?

Black sacrifices a piece and the play enters into a forced phase. The alternative 14... $\mathbb{Q}xc3$ 15 $\mathbb{Q}xc3$ dxe5 16 $\mathbb{Q}xe5$ may be playable, but has generally given White the advantage in practice.

15 axb4 $\mathbb{Q}a1+$ 16 $\mathbb{Q}b1$ $\mathbb{W}a7$ 17 $\mathbb{W}d3$ $\mathbb{W}a2$ 18 $\mathbb{Q}g2$ $\mathbb{W}e8$ 19 $\mathbb{Q}c3$ $\mathbb{W}e7$ 20 $\mathbb{Q}d2!?$

20 $\mathbb{W}d8+$ $\mathbb{H}e8$ 21 $\mathbb{W}d3$ would draw, but White decides to go for more.

20... $\mathbb{E}d7$ 21 $\mathbb{Q}a3!$ $\mathbb{E}xd1+$ 22 $\mathbb{E}xd1$ (D)



Here is White's point: he will have a piece and rook for a queen and pawn, but Black's queen will be stuck for an indefinite time on a2. On the other hand, White needs a long time to organize an attack on it. This position has been reached several times. Rather than pile up more theory, let's have fun watching the game.

22... $h5!$? 23 $\mathbb{Q}f3$ $\mathbb{E}xd3+$ 24 $\mathbb{Q}xd3$ $\mathbb{Q}d7$

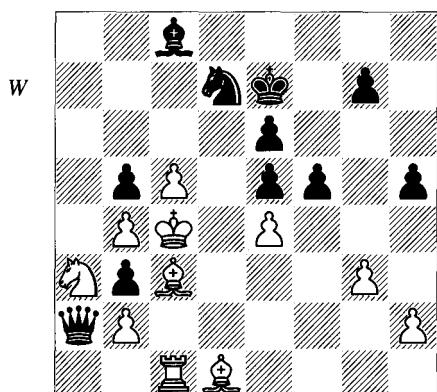
Black wants to rescue the queen by ... $\mathbb{Q}b6-a4$.

25 c5! $\mathbb{Q}f8$ 26 $\mathbb{Q}c4!$

Now Black needs be careful about a move of White's rook followed by $\mathbb{Q}d1$ and $\mathbb{Q}xb3$.

26... $\mathbb{Q}e7$ 27 $\mathbb{R}c1$ $f5$ 28 $\mathbb{Q}d1$ $b5!$ (D)

Not 28... $fxe4$? 29 $b5!$ and White wins.



29 $\mathbb{Q}xb5$ $\mathbb{Q}b8?$

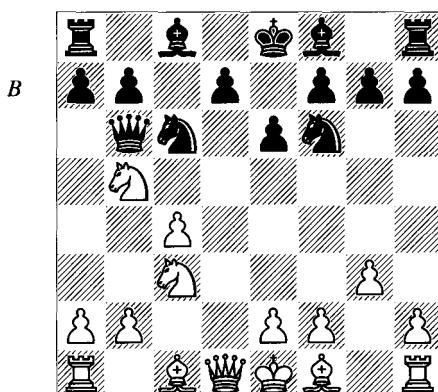
29... $\mathbb{Q}f6$ is a better try. Then 30 $exf5$ $exf5$ 31 $\mathbb{Q}a4$ $\mathbb{Q}e6$ 32 $\mathbb{Q}xe5$ keeps the queen safe, but

still gives Black a lot to worry about in the form of the passed queenside pawns.

After 29... $\mathbb{Q}b8?$, 30 $\mathbb{Q}a4!$ would have won by force: 30... $\mathbb{Q}d7+$ (30... $fxe4$? 31 $c6!$ $\mathbb{Q}xc6$ 32 $\mathbb{Q}xb3$) 31 $b5$ $\mathbb{Q}a6$ 32 $\mathbb{Q}xe5!$ $\mathbb{Q}xc5+$ 33 $\mathbb{Q}xc5$ $\mathbb{Q}a1$ 34 $\mathbb{Q}xh5$ and Black is getting killed, in terms of both material and attack.

Agrest – Ivanchuk
Swedish Team Ch 2002/3

1 $\mathbb{Q}f3$ $c5$ 2 $c4$ $\mathbb{Q}f6$ 3 $\mathbb{Q}c3$ $\mathbb{Q}c6$ 4 $d4$ $cx d4$ 5 $\mathbb{Q}xd4$ $e6$ 6 $g3$ $\mathbb{Q}b6$ 7 $\mathbb{Q}db5$ (D)



For some reason, it took a long time for this dynamic move to catch on; presumably there was a fear that the knight had no plausible retreat-square, or simply that the tactics were unfavourable. At any rate, White has a few simple ideas: $\mathbb{Q}f4$, $\mathbb{Q}d6+$, or some combination of $\mathbb{Q}e3$ and $\mathbb{Q}a4$ to drive the queen back. Black can take comfort in the fact that 7 $\mathbb{Q}db5$ takes a tempo from White's development, and that unlike 7 $\mathbb{Q}b3$, it lets a bishop settle in on c5, when White's f2-pawn is more of a target.

7... $\mathbb{Q}e5!?$

This has always been the most important reply, covering d6 and creating the immediate threat of ... $\mathbb{Q}xc4$. In addition, the c6-square is cleared, potentially for the queen. On the other hand, ... $\mathbb{Q}e5$ moves a piece for the second time while exposing it to the very dangerous move $\mathbb{Q}f4$.

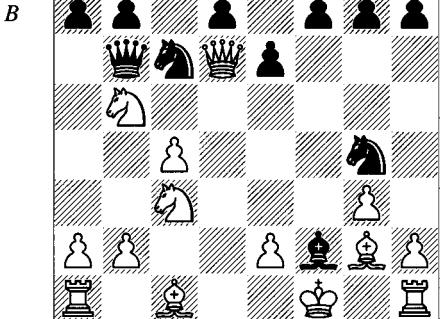
Two of Black's alternatives fail to impress, but 'c' below is definitely worth looking into:

a) 7... $a6!?$ 8 $\mathbb{Q}e3!$ $\mathbb{W}a5$ 9 $\mathbb{Q}d6+$ $\mathbb{Q}xd6$ 10 $\mathbb{W}xd6$ $\mathbb{Q}e4$ 11 $\mathbb{W}d3$ $\mathbb{Q}xc3$ 12 $\mathbb{Q}d2!$ is obviously

strong for White; compare Black's bishop with White's!

b) 7... $\mathbb{A}c5$ 8 $\mathbb{A}g2!$ sacrifices a pawn for gain of time. Black is faced with a dilemma. It's difficult to justify 7... $\mathbb{A}c5$ without accepting the sacrifice; for example, 8...d5 9 0-0 dxc4 10 $\mathbb{Q}d6+$ $\mathbb{Q}xd6$ 11 $\mathbb{W}xd6$, as in Rustemov-Kariakin, Dos Hermanas 2003, gives White control of the dark squares; and 8... $\mathbb{Q}e5$ is well met by 9 $\mathbb{Q}f4$. However, 8... $\mathbb{Q}xf2+$ is extremely risky: 9 $\mathbb{Q}f1$ $\mathbb{Q}g4$ (otherwise 10 $\mathbb{Q}a4$ wins something) 10 $\mathbb{W}d6!$ (D).

B

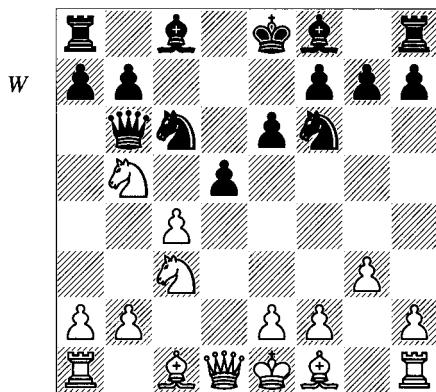


The dark squares are Black's Achilles' Heel in the Symmetrical Four Knights. He has to respond to the threat of $\mathbb{Q}c7+$: 10... $\mathbb{Q}d8$ (after 10... $\mathbb{Q}e3+$ 11 $\mathbb{Q}xe3$ $\mathbb{Q}xe3$, one successful way to attack is 12 b4! $\mathbb{Q}d8$ 13 c5, etc.) 11 $\mathbb{Q}g5+f6$ 12 $\mathbb{Q}a4$ $\mathbb{W}a6$ 13 h3 $\mathbb{W}xa4$ (13...fxg5 14 hxg4 threatens 15 $\mathbb{W}xh7!$, and 14... $\mathbb{Q}xg3$ loses to 15 $\mathbb{W}xg3$ $\mathbb{W}xa4$ 16 $\mathbb{Q}c7+$ $\mathbb{Q}e8$ 17 $\mathbb{Q}e4!$ $\mathbb{W}f8+18$ $\mathbb{Q}g2)$ 14 hxg4 $\mathbb{Q}b6$ 15 $\mathbb{W}xh7$ $\mathbb{W}e8$, Greenfeld-Emelin, Beersheba-St Petersburg 1998, and now 16 $\mathbb{Q}xc6!$ bxc6 17 $\mathbb{Q}h4$ is virtually winning, especially because 17...cbx5 18 $\mathbb{W}xg7$ $\mathbb{Q}d4$ 19 $\mathbb{W}f7!$ $\mathbb{W}a6$ 20 $\mathbb{W}xd7+$ is the end.

c) It's interesting to see what happens when Black simply strikes back in the centre by 7...d5 (D).

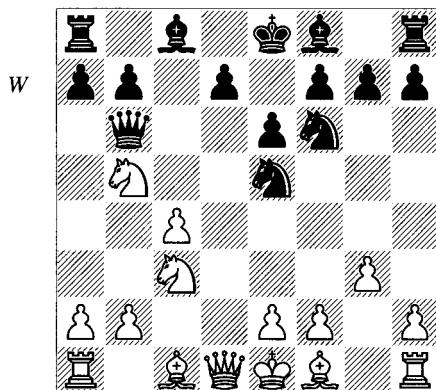
I think that this is an underestimated move that is quite playable:

c1) 8 $\mathbb{A}g2$ d4 9 $\mathbb{Q}a4$ $\mathbb{W}a5+10\mathbb{Q}d2$, and in place of 10... $\mathbb{Q}b4?!$ 11 $\mathbb{Q}c5!$ 0-0 12 $\mathbb{Q}d3$, Kasparov-Vaganian, Skellefteå 1989, 10... $\mathbb{W}d8!$ 11 0-0 $\mathbb{Q}e7$ is a serious improvement, when 12 $\mathbb{W}c2$ e5 13 f4? e4! 14 $\mathbb{Q}xe4$ $\mathbb{Q}xe4$ 15 $\mathbb{W}xe4$ 0-0 is risky for White.



c2) An unexplored variation is 8 $\mathbb{Q}e3$ d4! 9 $\mathbb{Q}xd4$ (always be wary of losing your dark-squared bishop in the Four Knights: 9 $\mathbb{Q}xd4?!$ $\mathbb{Q}xd4$ 10 $\mathbb{W}xd4$ $\mathbb{Q}c5$ 11 $\mathbb{W}f4$ 0-0! and Black is ready for 12...e5) 9... $\mathbb{W}xb2$ 10 $\mathbb{Q}db5!$ $\mathbb{Q}b4$. Black nears full equality; perhaps White can still fight for the slightest of edges by 11 $\mathbb{Q}d2!$ $\mathbb{Q}d4!$ 12 $\mathbb{Q}c1$ (12 $\mathbb{Q}xd4??$ $\mathbb{Q}xc3$ 13 $\mathbb{Q}b3$ $\mathbb{Q}e4!)$ 12... $\mathbb{Q}xb5$ 13 $\mathbb{Q}xb5$ (13 $\mathbb{Q}xb5??$ $\mathbb{Q}e4)$ 13...0-0 14 $\mathbb{Q}g2$ $\mathbb{W}d8$ 15 $\mathbb{Q}c2$ $\mathbb{W}a3$ 16 0-0.

We now return to 7... $\mathbb{Q}e5?$ (D):



8 $\mathbb{A}g2$

The next game will feature 8 $\mathbb{Q}f4$.

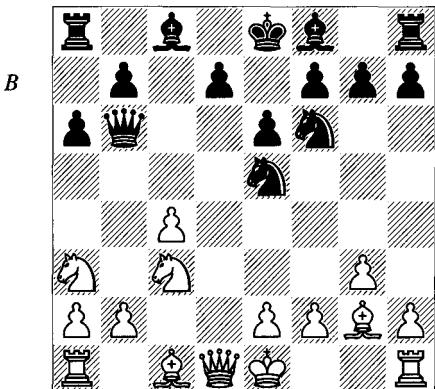
8...a6?

8... $\mathbb{Q}xc4$ is generally criticized, but it may be quite a good option. White is supposed to play 9 $\mathbb{W}a4$, which may not be worth much after 9...a6 10 $\mathbb{W}xc4$ axb5; for example, 11 $\mathbb{W}xb5$ (11 $\mathbb{W}xb5$ $\mathbb{Q}c5$ 12 $\mathbb{Q}e3$ $\mathbb{Q}xe3$ 13 $\mathbb{Q}c7+$ $\mathbb{Q}e7$ 14 $\mathbb{Q}xa8$ $\mathbb{Q}xf2+15\mathbb{Q}f1$ $\mathbb{W}d4$ with at least enough compensation for the exchange, Mkrtchian-Burtasova, European Women's Ch, Dresden 2007)

11...♗c5! 12 0-0 0-0 13 ♜xb6 ♜xb6 14 b3?! (still, Black seems comfortable enough after 14 e4 d6) 14...d5 15 ♜b2 ♜d7 16 e3 ♜fc8 Mkrtchian-Golubenko, European Women's Ch, Dresden 2007. Black has a central majority and free play.

9 ♜a3?! (D)

White gambits a pawn. 9 ♜a4 has never achieved much. In the forced queenless middle-game after 9...♝b8 10 ♜e3 ♜c5 (10...axb5?! 11 ♜xb6 bxa4 12 ♜c7) 11 ♜xc5 ♜xc5 12 ♜a3, White has some space and a touch of dark-square control, but Black's pieces coordinate well. For example, 12...b6 13 ♜d6+ ♜e7 14 ♜xc5 bxc5 15 ♜xc8+ ♜hxc8 16 b3 g5! helps Black secure the knight on e5 and plans a space-grab with ...h5. This has given good play in several games, such as 17 h3 h5 18 f4! gxf4 19 gxf4 ♜g6 with the idea of ...♜h4 and easy equality, Agrest-Emms, Harplinge 1998.



9...♝xa3

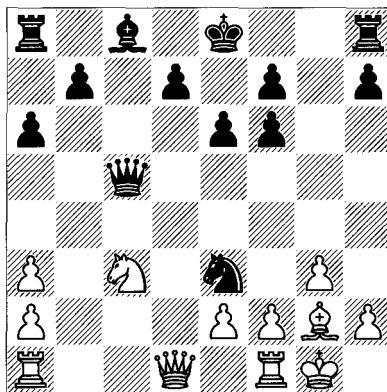
It's possible to play slowly with 9...♝e7, when White is generally held to stand slightly better, but not much. Gelfand-Nisipeanu, Bled Olympiad 2002 went 10 0-0 d6 11 ♜b3 ♜c7 12 ♜f4 0-0 13 ♜fd1, and instead of 13...♝g6?! 14 ♜e3 ♜d7 15 ♜a4 ♜b8 16 ♜a7 ♜a8 17 ♜e3, Black could try 13...♝fd7! 14 ♜ac1 ♜b8.

10 bxa3 ♜xc4 11 ♜g5 d5

Certainly this is a very natural move, and probably the best one, but it's also a target for the line-opening e4. Here are some other moves that illustrate White's compensation for the pawn:

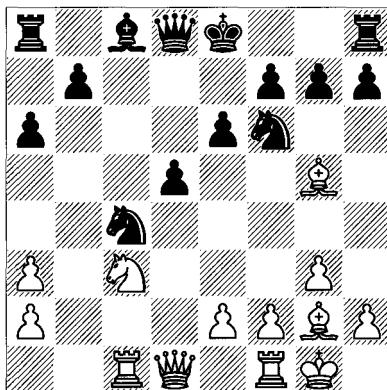
a) 11...h6 12 ♜xf6 gxf6 13 0-0 ♜b8 (Gelfand-Van Wely, Bled Olympiad 2002) is slow because of Pritchett's suggestion 14 ♜e4!.

b) 11...♛c5?!? attacks g5 and, indirectly, c3: 12 ♜xf6 gxf6 13 0-0?!? (13 ♜c1 is possible) 13...♝e3! (D), Agrest-A.Kovačević, European Clubs Cup, Kallithea 2002.



Here Kosten suggests the three-pawn sacrifice 14 fxe3 ♜xe3+ 15 ♜h1 ♜xc3 16 ♜c1, but it's probably not enough if Black rejects the last pawn and plays 16...♝e5!. Very likely 14 ♜e4! ♜xd1 15 ♜xc5 is the best try.

c) The game Gelfand-Macieja, Bermuda 2004 was instructive: 11...♛d8 12 ♜c1 d5? (Gelfand analyses 12...0-0 13 0-0 h6! 14 ♜xf6 ♜xf6 15 ♜e4 ♜e7 16 ♜xc4 d5 17 ♜c3 dxе4 18 ♜xe4 e5 19 ♜c1 with an edge, intending ♜c7; while not disastrous, that is a little awkward for Black) 13 0-0 (D).



White stands better here because e4 is going to crack things open; for example, 13...♝d6 (13...♝e5 was played, but 14 e4! d4 15 ♜a4+! ♜d7 16 ♜fd1! would have been extremely strong; similarly, Gelfand gives 13...0-0 14 e4

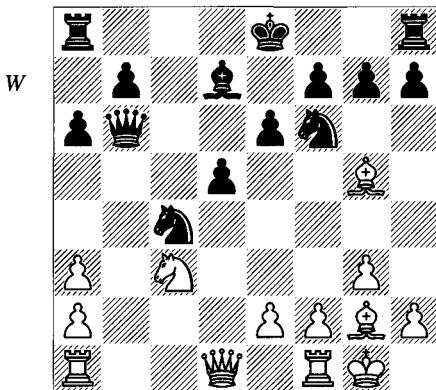
$d4$ 15 $\mathbb{Q}e2$ $d3$ 16 $\mathbb{Q}f4$ $\mathbb{Q}e5$ 17 $\mathbb{Q}h5!$ with an attack) 14 $e4!$ $\mathbb{Q}dxe4$ 15 $\mathbb{Q}xe4$ $dxe4$ 16 $\mathbb{W}xd8+$ $\mathbb{Q}xd8$ 17 $\mathbb{Q}xe4$ and White wins, in view of 17... $\mathbb{Q}e7$ 18 $\mathbb{Q}c7+$ $\mathbb{Q}d7$ 19 $\mathbb{Q}d1$ $\mathbb{Q}hd8$ 20 $\mathbb{Q}c5.$

12 0-0

Black is dangerously behind in development, yet he needs only a few moves to consolidate his powerful centre.

12... $\mathbb{Q}d7$ (D)

Previously Black played 12...0-0 here.



The bishop development is more ambitious, preparing ... $\mathbb{Q}c8$; on the other hand, his king is exposed in the centre.

13 $e4??$

This shouldn't work. Pritchett suggests two possibilities: 13 $\mathbb{Q}b1$ $\mathbb{Q}c5$ (13... $\mathbb{Q}a7?$ 14 $e4!$) 14 $\mathbb{Q}xb7$, after which 14... $\mathbb{Q}c8$ 15 $e4$ $\mathbb{Q}d6$ 16 $\mathbb{Q}xd7!?$ is a crazy line. Or White can go for broke with 13 $\mathbb{Q}xf6$ $gxf6$ 14 $\mathbb{Q}xd5?$ $exd5$ 15 $\mathbb{Q}xd5$, when he gives 15... $\mathbb{Q}c6$ 16 $\mathbb{Q}d4$; however, 15... $\mathbb{Q}d6!$ 16 $\mathbb{Q}d4$ $\mathbb{Q}c6$ 17 $\mathbb{Q}xf6+$ $\mathbb{Q}e7$ 18 $\mathbb{Q}xc4$ $\mathbb{Q}xf6$ is another story.

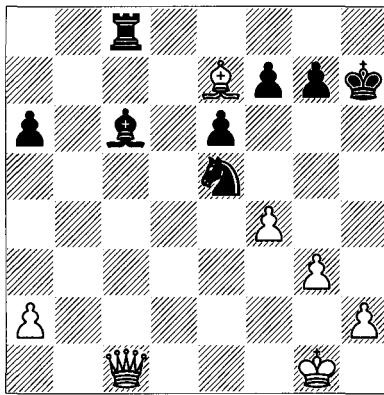
13... $\mathbb{Q}xe4??$

An important juncture. Black could have played 13... $d4!$ 14 $\mathbb{Q}e2$ $e5$ and brought White's 13th into doubt; for example, 15 $\mathbb{Q}b1$ $\mathbb{Q}e6!$ 16 $\mathbb{Q}xf6$ $gxf6$ with the idea 17 $\mathbb{Q}xb7$ $\mathbb{Q}b5!.$ Thus what follows, however fascinating, isn't too important for theory, and I'll limit the notes.

14 $\mathbb{Q}xe4$ $dxe4$ 15 $\mathbb{Q}b1$ $\mathbb{Q}c5!?$ 16 $\mathbb{Q}xb7$ 0-0!
17 $\mathbb{Q}c1$ $\mathbb{Q}b5$ 18 $a4!$ $\mathbb{Q}xa4$ 19 $\mathbb{Q}xe4$ $\mathbb{Q}ac8!?$ 20 $\mathbb{Q}e7$ $\mathbb{Q}e5$ 21 $\mathbb{Q}e1$

White can't take the exchange: 21 $\mathbb{Q}xf8?$ $\mathbb{Q}xe4$ 22 $\mathbb{Q}b4$ $\mathbb{Q}c6!$ 23 $f3$ $\mathbb{Q}d4+$ 24 $\mathbb{Q}f2$ $\mathbb{Q}d5.$ Now Black absolutely insists upon sacrificing material:

21... $\mathbb{Q}fe8!$ 22 $\mathbb{Q}xh7+$ $\mathbb{Q}xh7$ 23 $\mathbb{Q}xe5$ $\mathbb{Q}xe5$
Moves like ... $\mathbb{Q}c6$ and ... $\mathbb{Q}f3+$ are looming.
24 $\mathbb{Q}c7$ $\mathbb{Q}c6$ 25 $\mathbb{Q}xc8!?$ $\mathbb{Q}xc8$ 26 $f4$ (D)



An escape-square saves the day.

26... $\mathbb{Q}f3+$ 27 $\mathbb{Q}f2$ $\mathbb{Q}xh2$ 28 $\mathbb{Q}d1$ $\mathbb{Q}d5!?$ 29 $\mathbb{Q}c4$ 30 $\mathbb{Q}h5+$ $\mathbb{Q}g8$ 31 $f6$

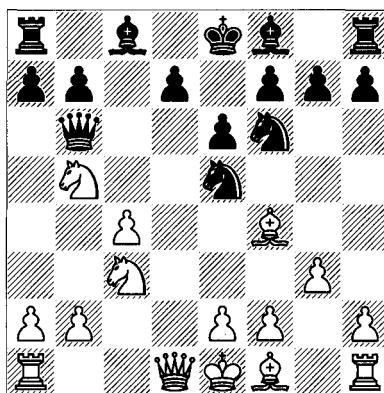
At this point, 31... $\mathbb{Q}c2+$ 32 $\mathbb{Q}e3$ $\mathbb{Q}f1+$ 33 $\mathbb{Q}d3$ $\mathbb{Q}d2+$ 34 $\mathbb{Q}c3$ $\mathbb{Q}xg3!$ 35 $\mathbb{Q}e5$ $\mathbb{Q}e4+36$ $\mathbb{Q}b4$ is probably a draw, because Black's king is too exposed to perpetual checks. The game was eventually drawn anyway.

The notes to Black's moves 7 and 8 are of particular interest for this line.

Aronian – Leko

Morelia/Linares 2008

1 $c4$ $c5$ 2 $\mathbb{Q}f3$ $\mathbb{Q}f6$ 3 $\mathbb{Q}c3$ $\mathbb{Q}c6$ 4 $d4$ $cxd4$ 5 $\mathbb{Q}xd4$ $e6$ 6 $g3$ $\mathbb{Q}b6$ 7 $\mathbb{Q}db5$ $\mathbb{Q}e5$ 8 $\mathbb{Q}f4$ (D)



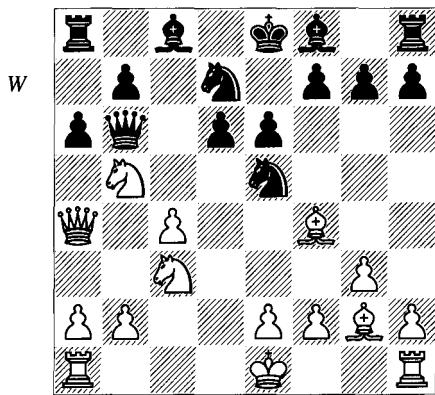
White plays very directly. This has always been a scary line for Black, but with accurate

play (requiring study), he can apparently reach a satisfactory position.

8...♝fg4

Practically forced if Black doesn't want to be driven back. Other moves are risky at best:

a) 8...d6 led to disaster for Black in L.B.Hansen-de Firmian, Danish League 1997/8: 9 ♜g2 a6? 10 ♜a4 ♜fd7?? (D).



11 c5! ♜xc5 (11...♜xc5 12 ♜e3) 12 ♜xd6++ ♜e7 13 ♜d5+ 1-0. Mate follows: 13...exd5 14 ♜e8+ ♜xd6 15 ♜xe5#.

Black has a better course in 9...♝fg4 10 0-0 a6, but White still gained a significant advantage after 11 ♜a4! ♜d8 12 ♜a3 ♜g6 13 ♜d2 ♜b8 in Wells-Yakovenko, European Ch, Warsaw 2005. Then White's 14 c5!? was ingenious, especially had he met 14...dxc5 with 15 ♜c2!, but the attack with 14 h3 ♜f6 15 ♜e3!, threatening ♜b6 and ♜a7, is also very strong.

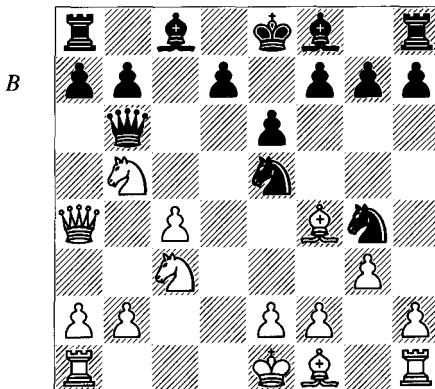
b) 8...♜c5? 9 ♜g2! (White gains time by ignoring the f-pawn) 9...♜xf2+? (9...a6 10 ♜a4! ♜a5+ 11 ♜d2 ♜b4 12 ♜c7+!) 10 ♜f1 and Black can't hang on to his pieces; for example, 10...♝fg4 11 ♜d6! ♜xd6 12 ♜xd6+ ♜e7 13 h3 ♜xd6 14 hxg4 ♜b6 15 ♜e4+.

9 ♜a4!? (D)

A remarkable idea whose worth is still unresolved. White simply lets Black capture on f2. Tactics are the whole point now.

For many years, the standard line has been 9 e3 a6! 10 ♜c7+!? (10 h3 axb5 11 hxg4 ♜xc4 12 ♜b3 gives equal chances after 12...d5!) 10...♜xc7 11 ♜xg4. Now there are a couple of satisfactory moves; for example, 11...d6. More ambitious is 11...♜xc4! 12 ♜d1! ♜c6 13 e4 ♜b4!, threatening ...♜xe4+, when White can

sacrifice the exchange by 14 ♜xe5!? ♜xe4+ 15 ♜e2 ♜xh1 16 0-0-0, but either 16...♜c6, or 16...♜xc3 17 bxc3 ♜xh2, as in Smirin-Holzke, Port Erin 2004, puts the burden of proof on White.



Now the complications are enormous:

9...g5!?

After 9...♜xf2+, an abbreviated and admittedly superficial line continues 10 ♜d2 ♜c5! (10...♜b6!? 11 ♜h3 g5 12 ♜xg5) 11 ♜e4 (11 ♜c2!? results in a labyrinth of possibilities) 11...♜c6 (11...♜b6 12 ♜h3! g5!?) 12 c5!? f5 13 ♜ed6+ ♜d8 and the position is still unclear.

10 ♜xe5 ♜xe5 11 0-0-0 a6 12 e3 ♜b8 13 ♜d4 ♜c7 14 ♜e2

Both sides have made natural moves and it appears that White stands better, but soon Black gets effective counterplay.

14...♜e7 15 ♜b1 ♜c6 16 ♜c1!? ♜e5 17 ♜hd1 h5! 18 ♜a1 g4!

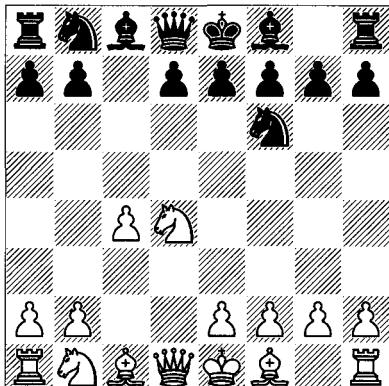
Black may not be fully equal at this point, but he has counterchances based upon the idea of ...h4. After some ups and downs, the game was drawn.

Anti-Benoni Variations

1 c4 c5 2 ♜f3 ♜f6 3 d4 cxd4 4 ♜xd4 (D)

We've already discussed quite a few lines that can come from this move-order, including 4...♜c6 5 ♜c3, which transposes to the Four Knights above. This is also the starting point of what are called 'Anti-Benoni' variations, because they come up after the Benoni moves 1

B



d4 $\mathbb{Q}f6$ 2 c4 c5 3 $\mathbb{Q}f3$ cxd4 4 $\mathbb{Q}xd4$. I'll show a couple of games with the most important moves other than 4... $\mathbb{Q}c6$.

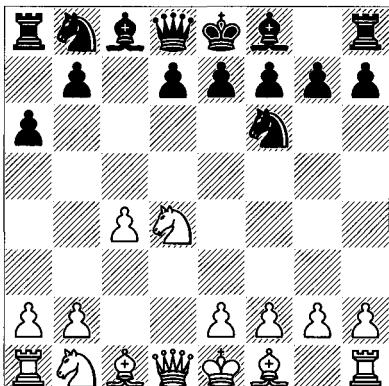
Dorfman – Glavina
Monaco 2002

1 c4 c5 2 $\mathbb{Q}f3$ $\mathbb{Q}f6$ 3 d4 cxd4 4 $\mathbb{Q}xd4$ e5

This is a radical and aggressive approach that is normally associated with a pawn sacrifice. A pair of other moves can go in the Anti-Benoni category:

a) The infrequently-played 4...a6!? (D) has the idea of either 5...e5, now that $\mathbb{Q}b5$ isn't possible, or 5...d5.

W

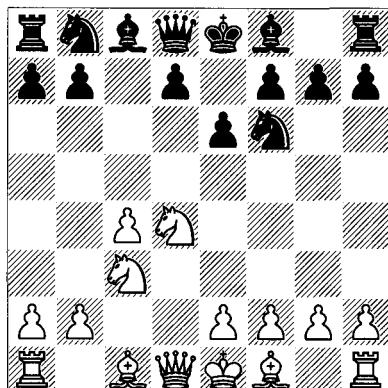


It is not easy for White to get an edge, but a good try is 5 $\mathbb{Q}c3$ d5 (5...e5 6 $\mathbb{Q}c2$ $\mathbb{Q}c6$ 7 g3 $\mathbb{Q}c5$ 8 $\mathbb{Q}g2$ 0-0 9 0-0 gives White the upper hand because control of d5 hasn't cost him anything in the way of positional concessions) 6 $\mathbb{Q}f3!$ dxc4 (6...e6 7 cxd5 exd5 8 $\mathbb{Q}g5$ $\mathbb{Q}e6$ 9 e4!? dxе4 10 $\mathbb{Q}xd8+$ $\mathbb{Q}xd8$ 11 $\mathbb{Q}d4$ looks good

for White) 7 $\mathbb{Q}xd8+$ $\mathbb{Q}xd8$ 8 e4! e6 9 $\mathbb{Q}e5$ $\mathbb{Q}e8$ 10 $\mathbb{Q}xc4$ with the advantage (and incidentally exploiting the hole on b6 created by 4...a6), Olafsson-Miles, Teesside 1975.

b) 4...e6 5 $\mathbb{Q}c3$ (D) is highly transpositional, with some unique possibilities.

B



I'm not going to investigate these in depth, but here are some guideposts:

b1) 5... $\mathbb{Q}b4$ 6 g3 is a Nimzo-Indian Defence. For reasons of space, I'll have to refer you to the theory and practice of that line. At present, Black seems to be holding his own. White has other moves such as 6 e3, 6 $\mathbb{Q}c2$ and 6 $\mathbb{Q}d2$ which are passive or unimportant. Somewhat more challenging is 6 $\mathbb{Q}b5$, although there is more than one good reply. One is 6...d5!, which forces White to react; for example, 7 $\mathbb{Q}f4$ (7 cxd5 exd5 8 $\mathbb{Q}f4$ 0-0 has the idea 9 $\mathbb{Q}c7?$ $\mathbb{Q}h5$) 7...0-0 8 e3 $\mathbb{Q}c6$ (or 8...a6 9 a3 $\mathbb{Q}a5$ 10 $\mathbb{Q}d6$ $\mathbb{Q}c7?$) 9 a3 $\mathbb{Q}a5$ 10 b4 a6 11 cxd5 exd5 12 bxa5 axb5 13 $\mathbb{Q}xb5$ $\mathbb{Q}xa5$ with equality, Olafsson-Gipslis, Reykjavik 1957.

b2) Black can also play 5...a6, after which 6 e4 is a Sicilian Defence, Kan Variation, and 6 g3 can lead to unique positions; for example, after 6... $\mathbb{Q}c7$, White often gambits his c-pawn by 7 $\mathbb{Q}g5$ $\mathbb{Q}xc4$ 8 $\mathbb{Q}c1$. I'll leave that for you to study.

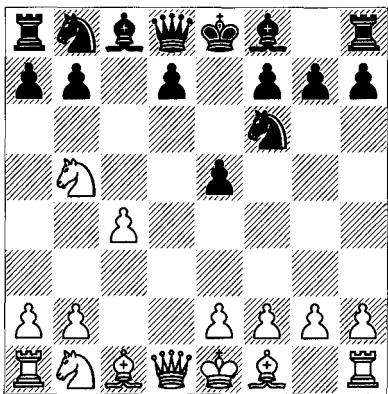
b3) That leaves 5...d5 6 cxd5, when Black should shun 6...exd5, because 7 $\mathbb{Q}g5$ is a good version for White of the Queen's Gambit Declined. However, 6... $\mathbb{Q}xd5$ may be satisfactory, when Hansen thinks Black stands all right after 7 $\mathbb{Q}db5$ a6 or 7 $\mathbb{Q}d2$ $\mathbb{Q}e7$ (or here 7... $\mathbb{Q}c5$).

c) Black can aim for an Accelerated Fianchetto Maroczy Bind by 4...g6, to which White

can acquiesce by 5 $\mathbb{Q}c3$ $\mathbb{Q}g7$ 6 e4 $\mathbb{Q}c6$. But you should note that 7 $\mathbb{Q}c2$ denies Black the popular lines which involve ... $\mathbb{Q}xd4$, so he may lack motivation to play this move-order. Otherwise, 5 g3 (or 5 $\mathbb{Q}c3$ $\mathbb{Q}c6$ 6 g3) 5... $\mathbb{Q}g7$ 6 $\mathbb{Q}g2$ $\mathbb{Q}c6$ 7 $\mathbb{Q}c3$ transposes to the Pure Symmetrical line of Chapter 7, which goes 1 c4 c5 2 $\mathbb{Q}c3$ $\mathbb{Q}c6$ 3 g3 g6 4 $\mathbb{Q}g2$ $\mathbb{Q}g7$ 5 $\mathbb{Q}f3$ $\mathbb{Q}f6$ 6 d4 cxd4 7 $\mathbb{Q}xd4$.

5 $\mathbb{Q}b5$ (D)

B



White plays the most consistent and ambitious move, trying to exploit Black's weakness on d6. Against other moves Black can develop rapidly and easily. Nevertheless, White must now deal with a fairly effective pawn sacrifice:

5...d5!?

Actually, the very rare 5...d6 could use some tests, with the idea 6 $\mathbb{Q}g5$ $\mathbb{Q}e6$.

6 $\mathbb{Q}xd5$ $\mathbb{Q}c5$

Not 6... $\mathbb{Q}xd5$? 7 $\mathbb{W}xd5$ $\mathbb{W}xd5$ 8 $\mathbb{Q}c7+$.

7 $\mathbb{Q}c3$

7 d6?! is too ambitious: 7...0-0! 8 $\mathbb{Q}c7$ $\mathbb{Q}e4$!

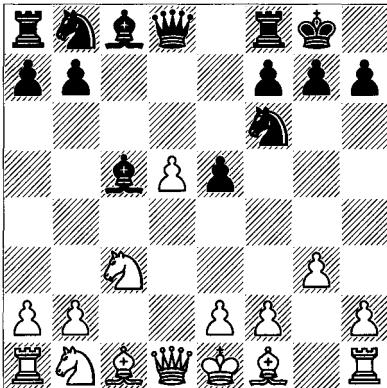
9 e3 $\mathbb{Q}b4+!$, which has no satisfactory answer; for example, 10 $\mathbb{Q}d2$ $\mathbb{W}xd6$ 11 $\mathbb{Q}xa8$ $\mathbb{Q}d8$, etc.

7...0-0 8 e3

8 g3 (D) has been popular in recent times.

The game Aronian-Sutovsky, European Team Ch, Khersonisos 2007 went 8... $\mathbb{W}b6$ (8... $\mathbb{Q}g4$ 9 e3 f5?! 10 $\mathbb{Q}e2$ $\mathbb{Q}f6$ 11 a3 $\mathbb{Q}h8$ 12 b4 $\mathbb{Q}b6$ 13 $\mathbb{W}b3$ $\mathbb{Q}a6$ 14 $\mathbb{Q}d2$ f4 15 $\mathbb{Q}c4$ fxe3 16 $\mathbb{Q}xe3$ $\mathbb{Q}h3$ 17 0-0-0! favoured White in Vera-Gokhale, Linares 1997) 9 e3 $\mathbb{Q}g4$ 10 $\mathbb{Q}e2$ $\mathbb{Q}xe2$ 11 $\mathbb{W}xe2$ e4 12 a3 (12 $\mathbb{Q}d2$ and 12 g4?! are known alternatives) 12... $\mathbb{Q}bd7$ 13 $\mathbb{Q}d2$ $\mathbb{Q}fe8$ 14 b4 $\mathbb{Q}f8$ 15 0-0 $\mathbb{W}c7$ (with the idea ... $\mathbb{Q}b6$ and ... $\mathbb{W}d7$, eyeing the d-pawn and also White's kingside light

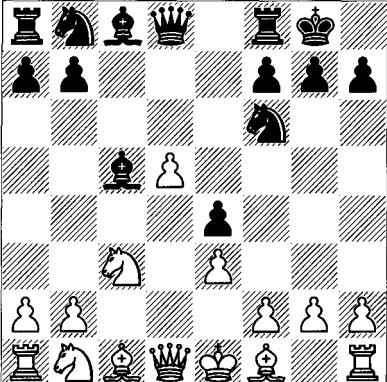
B



squares) 16 $\mathbb{Q}b2$ $\mathbb{Q}b6$ 17 $\mathbb{Q}b5!$ $\mathbb{W}d7$ 18 d6?!? (18 $\mathbb{Q}xf6$ gxf6 19 d6 $\mathbb{Q}e5$ is complex, but probably favours White) 18... $\mathbb{Q}fd5$ 19 $\mathbb{Q}ac1$ $\mathbb{Q}xd6$ 20 $\mathbb{Q}xd6$ $\mathbb{W}xd6$ with a position that isn't absolutely clear, because Black's knights are so well-placed.

8...e4 (D)

W



What does Black have for a pawn? In the first place, his pawn on e4 is a wedge that cramps White's pieces. Because of the territory that it stakes out, White will always have to accept some risks if he castles. That is, Black has a variety of ways to attack a castled king in these kinds of positions; for example, ... $\mathbb{Q}e8$, ... $\mathbb{Q}e5$ intending ... $\mathbb{Q}d6$ or ... $\mathbb{Q}g5$, ... $\mathbb{Q}f5$ followed by ... $\mathbb{Q}bd7-e5$, attacks with ...h5, and so forth. Which is not to say that the counterattacking moves a3, b4, $\mathbb{Q}b2$ and $\mathbb{Q}d2-c4$ won't eliminate that attack before it gets going, merely that many players of White have been blown away without making obvious mistakes. Thus we'll usually see White making at least some of his

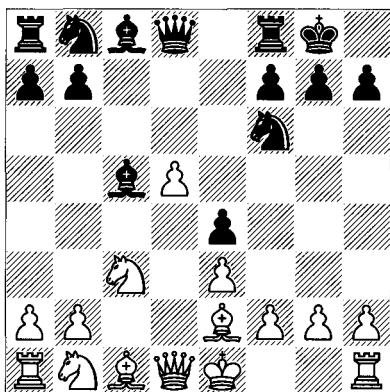
queenside moves before castling. Another factor here is that White's d-pawn is vulnerable to various attacks, including ... $\mathbb{Q}bd7-b6$ and/or ... $\mathbb{W}e7$ with ... $\mathbb{H}d8$.

White's first goal is to hang on to his d5-pawn, of course, which he can sometimes do by a combination of attack on the e4-pawn and the sort of quick development on the queenside that we just referred to. Sometimes he can trade the pawn for positional gains. In our main game, he takes a different approach.

9 $\mathbb{Q}e2$ (D)

9 $\mathbb{Q}d2$ has been the choice in the majority of games. Without going over the extensive theory, it seems as though Black is holding his own. Mikhalkishin-Kasparov, USSR Ch, Moscow 1981 was an early game that brought 4...e5 to general attention: 9... $\mathbb{W}e7$ 10 $\mathbb{Q}e2$ $\mathbb{H}d8$ 11 a3 $\mathbb{Q}xd5$ (today, 11...a5 12 $\mathbb{W}c2$ $\mathbb{Q}f5$ 13 0-0 $\mathbb{Q}bd7$ is a more conventional approach, with compensation for the pawn) 12 $\mathbb{Q}xd5!$? $\mathbb{H}xd5$ 13 $\mathbb{W}c2$ $\mathbb{Q}f5$ 14 b4 $\mathbb{Q}b6$ 15 $\mathbb{Q}b2$ $\mathbb{Q}c6$ 16 0-0 $\mathbb{W}g5$! 17 $\mathbb{Q}h1$ (Kasparov assesses 17 $\mathbb{Q}c4$ $\mathbb{Q}g4$ 18 $\mathbb{Q}xg4$ $\mathbb{W}xg4$ as equal), and although 17... $\mathbb{H}d6$! 18 $\mathbb{Q}xe4$ $\mathbb{Q}xe4$ 19 $\mathbb{W}xe4$ $\mathbb{Q}d2$ could have been answered by 20 $\mathbb{Q}a6$! with the better game, Black can improve by Kasparov's 17... $\mathbb{H}c8$!, which should equalize. He gives 18 $\mathbb{H}ac1$ $\mathbb{H}dd8$, but we know that this is pre-computer era analysis, since 18... $\mathbb{Q}xb4$! 19 $\mathbb{W}xc8+$ $\mathbb{Q}xc8$ 20 $\mathbb{W}xc8+$ $\mathbb{Q}d8$ gives Black a much superior game.

B

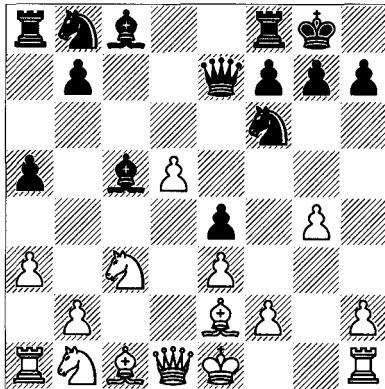


9... $\mathbb{W}e7$

9... $\mathbb{W}e8$ with the idea ... $\mathbb{Q}f5$ is the other approved set-up; presumably White could continue as in the game.

10 a3 a5 11 g4!? (D)

B



This apparently weakening advance is typical of what White is doing today in many openings. 11 g4 can be defended on multiple grounds:

a) it threatens to play an early g5, driving Black's knight away from the e-pawn, which can be attacked by $\mathbb{Q}d2$ and $\mathbb{W}c2$;

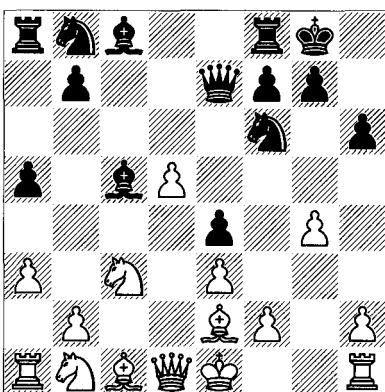
b) White directly prevents the standard move ... $\mathbb{Q}f5$;

c) White's king wasn't likely to castle anyway, for the reasons given in the note to 8...e4.

11...h6 (D)

This doesn't work out well, but 11... $\mathbb{H}d8$ 12 g5 $\mathbb{Q}e8$ 13 $\mathbb{Q}d2$ $\mathbb{Q}f5$ 14 $\mathbb{Q}b3$ or 14 $\mathbb{Q}g4$ gives White some advantage.

W



12 $\mathbb{Q}d2$?

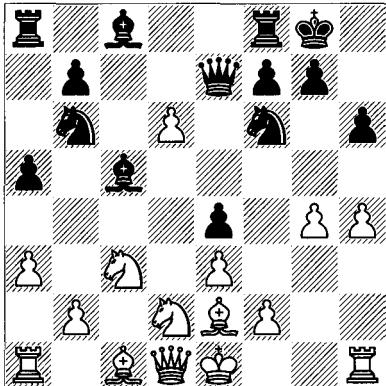
Another way to continue grabbing space is 12 h4 $\mathbb{W}e5$! (versus g5) 13 $\mathbb{Q}d2$ $\mathbb{Q}xd5$ 14 $\mathbb{Q}dxe4$ $\mathbb{Q}xc3$ 15 $\mathbb{Q}xc3$ $\mathbb{Q}c6$ 16 $\mathbb{W}d5$, Gelfand-Gofman, USSR Junior Team Ch, Kramatorsk 1989; White is still a pawn up, although his position has some holes after 16... $\mathbb{H}d8$ 17 $\mathbb{W}xe5$ $\mathbb{Q}xe5$ 18 g5 $\mathbb{W}xg5$ 19 $\mathbb{W}xg5$ $\mathbb{Q}e6$.

12...♝bd7?

This virtually loses. 12...♝d8! is much better.

13 h4! ♜b6 14 d6! (D)

B



14...♝xd6 15 g5 hxg5?

15...♝fd5 is better, but Black has no compensation following 16 ♜cxe4.

16 hxg5 ♜h7 17 ♜dxe4 ♜e5 18 ♜b3!

Threatening the b6-knight and preparing g6, so Black has to accede to a lost queenless middlegame. The rest is easily comprehensible:

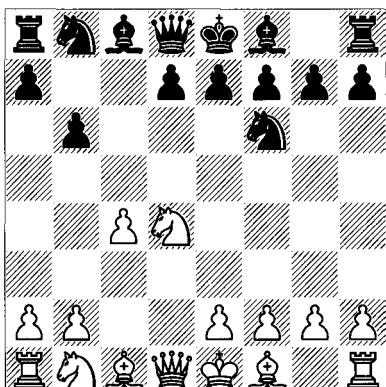
18...♜e6 19 ♜xe6 ♜xe6 20 f4 ♜xc3+ 21 ♜xc3 ♜fd8 22 e4 f5 23 exf5 ♜xf5 24 ♜e3 ♜d6 25 ♜xb6 ♜xb6 26 ♜d5 ♜e6 27 ♜c7 1-0

Gelfand – Pantsulaia

FIDE World Cup, Khanty-Mansiisk 2005

1 e4 c5 2 ♜f3 ♜f6 3 d4 cxd4 4 ♜xd4 b6 (D)

W



Black aims for a hedgehog pawn-structure, as described in Chapter 10, but stops White

from playing g3 and makes e4 more difficult for White to accomplish.

5 ♜c3 ♜b7 6 f3

White wants to enforce e4 and establish a Maroczy Bind structure. Since the moves g3 and e4 aren't immediately playable, the most interesting alternative is 6 ♜g5, which is now infrequently seen in master practice. For one thing, ♜xf6 isn't much to be feared so that, for example, 6...d6 7 ♜xf6 gxf6 gives Black the two bishops and open g-file. Even 6...e6 7 ♜db5 d6 looks all right, because 8 ♜a4 ♜c6 9 ♜c2 a6 10 ♜d4 ♜b7 results in an acceptable type of hedgehog position.

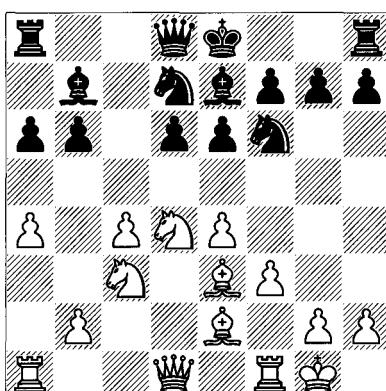
6...e6

Notice how White wins the centre following 6...d5 7 cxd5 ♜xd5 8 ♜xd5 ♜xd5 9 e4. Then the possibilities of ♜b5+ and ♜a4+ create difficulties for Black.

7 e4 d6 8 ♜e3 a6 9 ♜e2 ♜e7

Some very important points about move-order come up on this and the next two moves. 9...♝bd7?! is apparently a positional mistake, because White can play 10 0-0 (or 10 a4!) 10...♝e7 11 a4! (D).

B



Now there isn't all that much to do about the move a5, since 11...a5 would permit ♜b5 and expose d6; furthermore, any counterplay by ...b5 would be permanently forfeited. So P.H.Nielsen-Aronian, Amber Rapid, Monte Carlo 2006 continued 11...♝b8 12 a5! bxa5 13 ♜b3 ♜a8 14 ♜a2 (defending b2 so as to prepare ♜xa5) 14...0-0 15 ♜xa5 (the a5 outpost limits Black, and may eventually assist White in advancing his queenside pawns) 15...♜c7 16 ♜d2 d5 17 cxd5 exd5 18 exd5 ♜d6, and now simply 19

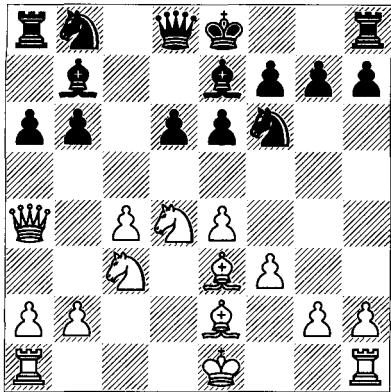
$\mathbb{Q}h1 \mathbb{Q}xh2$ (19... $\mathbb{Q}fe8$ 20 $\mathbb{Q}c4!$) 20 $\mathbb{Q}c6!$ $\mathbb{Q}xc6$
21 dxc6 would have been very strong.

In view of this and the following note, the rarely-played 9... $\mathbb{Q}c7$ may deserve further consideration, although it commits the queen rather early and exposes it to $\mathbb{Q}c1/\mathbb{Q}d5$ tricks.

10 0-0

Has Black's move-order with 9... $\mathbb{Q}e7$ completely solved his problems? Because of the delay in ... $\mathbb{Q}bd7$, White can play 10 $\mathbb{Q}a4+$ (D).

B

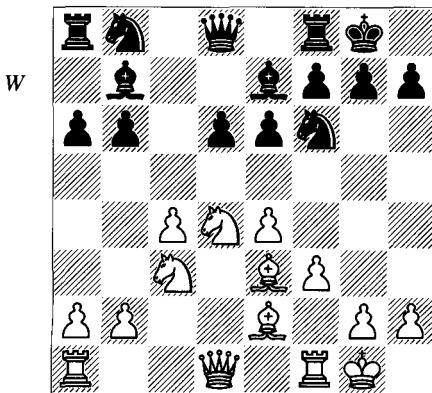


Now 10... $\mathbb{Q}d7$ looks innocent enough but White doesn't need to play 11 $\mathbb{Q}xd7+$, which has been automatic. In fact, I don't see a truly adequate answer to 11 $\mathbb{Q}b3!$ $\mathbb{Q}d8$ (forced, to save the b-pawn) 12 $\mathbb{Q}d1$ $\mathbb{Q}c6$ 13 $\mathbb{Q}a3!$ $\mathbb{Q}c7$ 14 c5!. And if Black plays 10... $\mathbb{Q}bd7$, White at least temporarily wins the bishop-pair by 11 $\mathbb{Q}c6$ $\mathbb{Q}xc6$ 12 $\mathbb{Q}xc6$, when Black's best move is 12...0-0!, in order to cut off the white queen's escape-squares with ... $\mathbb{Q}c5$. Still, White can annoy Black with 13 $\mathbb{Q}d1$ $\mathbb{Q}c5$ (what else?) 14 $\mathbb{Q}xc5$ bxc5 15 e5 $\mathbb{Q}e8!$ 16 $\mathbb{Q}xe8$ $\mathbb{Q}xe8$ 17 f4!, and while Black is far from lost, the pawn-structure is not friendly to his dark-squared bishop.

Perhaps with that in mind, Black has answered 10 $\mathbb{Q}a4+$ by 10... $\mathbb{Q}fd7?$! 11 0-0 0-0 in a couple of games. Then, because of Black's retrograde development, White has the unusual possibility of gaining space by 12 f4!?: for example, 12... $\mathbb{Q}c7$ 13 f5 $\mathbb{Q}c5$ 14 $\mathbb{Q}c2$ $\mathbb{Q}c6$ 15 $\mathbb{Q}xc6$ $\mathbb{Q}xc6$ (15... $\mathbb{Q}xc6?$ 16 b4 $\mathbb{Q}d7$ 17 fxе6 fxе6 18 $\mathbb{Q}g4$) 16 $\mathbb{Q}f3$ with some advantage.

You can understand that Black might prefer not to be forced into the lines just examined. He may want to look into earlier move-orders (9... $\mathbb{Q}c7?$), hoping to circumvent this issue.

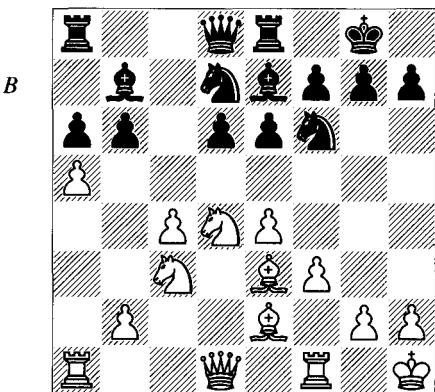
10...0-0 (D)



11 $\mathbb{Q}d2$

a) Now if White plays 11 a4, 11... $\mathbb{Q}c6$ stops 12 a5; that is why Black waited on ... $\mathbb{Q}bd7$. Nevertheless, since the e4-pawn isn't directly attacked in that case, White should consider 12 f4! with the idea 12... $\mathbb{Q}xd4?$! (12... $\mathbb{Q}c7$ 13 $\mathbb{Q}c1$ $\mathbb{Q}xd4$ 14 $\mathbb{Q}xd4$ leaves White with more space) 13 $\mathbb{Q}xd4$ $\mathbb{Q}d7$ 14 $\mathbb{Q}ad1$, intending e5.

b) You could argue that the move 11 $\mathbb{Q}h1$ will be necessary in most lines of this variation anyway, so playing it now has a certain logic. Some subtleties arose in Agrest-Kohlweyer, Bajada de la Virgen 2005: 11... $\mathbb{Q}bd7?$! (it looks as though 11... $\mathbb{Q}c7$ is the right move-order, when 12 $\mathbb{Q}c1$ $\mathbb{Q}bd7$ 13 $\mathbb{Q}e1$ $\mathbb{Q}ac8$ 14 $\mathbb{Q}f2$ $\mathbb{Q}fe8$ 15 b4 is a standard line whose verdict is still unclear) 12 a4! $\mathbb{Q}e8$ 13 a5! (D).



Now Black's queenside will be compromised: 13...d5!?(13...bxa5 14 $\mathbb{Q}b3$ gives White an outpost on a5 and a substantial positional

superiority; 13... $\mathbb{B}c8$ doesn't help after 14 axb6 15 $\mathbb{W}b3!$) 14 cxd5 (14 exd5 exd5 15 $\mathbb{Q}f5$ is also good; if White's knight gets the f5-square in these hedgehog lines, then Black has to be ready either to capture it or to drive it back right away) 14...exd5 15 exd5 (15 $\mathbb{Q}f5!$ dxе4 16 axb6) 15...bxa5?! 16 $\mathbb{Q}f5$ $\mathbb{A}f8$, and now one road to advantage would be 17 d6! g6 18 $\mathbb{Q}h6+$ $\mathbb{Q}g7$ 19 $\mathbb{Q}e4!$.

11... $\mathbb{Q}bd7$ 12 $\mathbb{B}fd1$ $\mathbb{B}c7$ 13 $\mathbb{B}ac1$

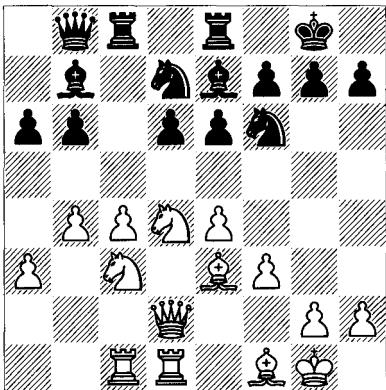
Both sides have brought their pieces to ideal squares.

13... $\mathbb{B}ac8$ 14 $\mathbb{Q}f1$ $\mathbb{W}b8$ 15 a3!

White gets nowhere if he doesn't challenge the enemy pawns, and a direct queenside assault is the only way to do so.

15... $\mathbb{B}fe8$ 16 b4 (D)

B



Many games have arrived at this traditional main line. Black's next is a popular option, although he hasn't done badly with the older 16... $\mathbb{Q}f8$.

16... $\mathbb{Q}d8$!?

Black wants to play ... $\mathbb{Q}c7$ and aim at White's king. We saw this precise idea in the Taimanov Sicilian in Volume 1.

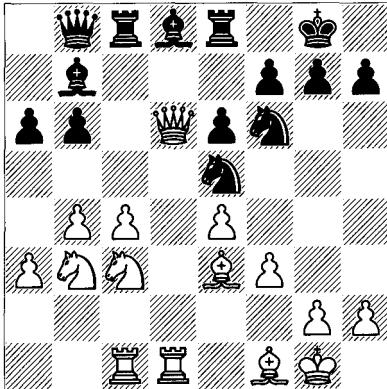
17 $\mathbb{Q}b3$ $\mathbb{Q}e5$!?

This looks like an obvious move, but it does sacrifice a pawn. The immediate 17... $\mathbb{Q}c7$ can be met by 18 $\mathbb{Q}f4$ $\mathbb{Q}e5$ 19 $\mathbb{Q}g3$, when White's bishop protects the kingside against ...d5.

18 $\mathbb{W}xd6$!? (D)

Objectively, White is better off going for the vulnerable b-pawn by 18 $\mathbb{Q}a4$ d5! 19 exd5 exd5 20 c5, and a fairly random line is 20... $\mathbb{Q}c4$ 21 $\mathbb{Q}xc4$ dxc4 22 $\mathbb{Q}f4$ $\mathbb{W}a7$ 23 cxb6 $\mathbb{Q}xb6+$ 24 $\mathbb{Q}bc5$! with the better chances for White.

B

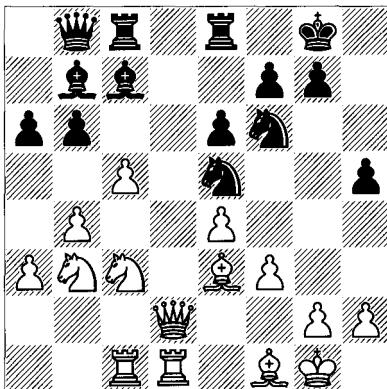


18... $\mathbb{Q}c7$ 19 $\mathbb{W}d2$ h5?

Black misses his chance for 19... $\mathbb{Q}xc4$! 20 $\mathbb{Q}xc4$ $\mathbb{Q}xh2+$ 21 $\mathbb{Q}h1$ $\mathbb{Q}xc4$ with fair counter-chances.

20 c5! (D)

B



20...b5

The attractive 20... $\mathbb{Q}eg4$ falls tactically short after 21 g3! $\mathbb{Q}cd8$ 22 $\mathbb{W}e2$, when 22... $\mathbb{Q}xg3$? 23 hxg3 $\mathbb{W}xg3+$ fails to 24 $\mathbb{Q}g2$, while 22... $\mathbb{Q}xe3$ 23 $\mathbb{W}xe3$ bxc5 24 $\mathbb{Q}xc5$ $\mathbb{Q}b6$ 25 $\mathbb{Q}3a4$ $\mathbb{Q}a7$ 26 $\mathbb{Q}g2$ leaves White with space and the key queenside squares.

From this point onwards, White holds all the trumps.

21 $\mathbb{Q}a5$ $\mathbb{Q}a8$ 22 a4 $\mathbb{Q}g6$ 23 h3 $\mathbb{Q}cd8$ 24 $\mathbb{W}e1$ $\mathbb{B}xa4$ 25 $\mathbb{Q}xd8$ $\mathbb{Q}xd8$ 26 $\mathbb{Q}xa4$ h4 27 $\mathbb{Q}b6$ $\mathbb{Q}g1$

Now 28 $\mathbb{Q}xa6$ would have won fairly easily, and even 28 $\mathbb{Q}xa8$ $\mathbb{Q}h2+$ 29 $\mathbb{Q}h1$ $\mathbb{Q}g3+$ 30 $\mathbb{Q}xh2$ $\mathbb{Q}xf1++$ 31 $\mathbb{Q}g1$ does the job.

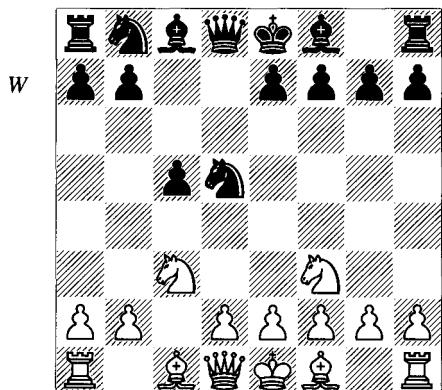
I should emphasize that the lines in the notes to White's moves 10 and 11 could provide a disincentive to 4...b6 as a whole.

9 Asymmetrical Variations

In a number of Symmetrical English variations, Black tries to break the symmetry at an early stage by playing ...d5. After the usual pawn exchange on d5 and recapture with the knight, he wants to control as much central terrain as possible, even to the possible detriment of his development. These variations are hard to describe with overarching general themes, because they go off on their own at such an early stage. Therefore I'll discuss them individually.

Nimzowitsch's 5 e4 and Grünfeld Relatives

1 c4 c5 2 ♜f3 ♜f6 3 ♜c3 d5 4 cxd5 ♜xd5 (D)

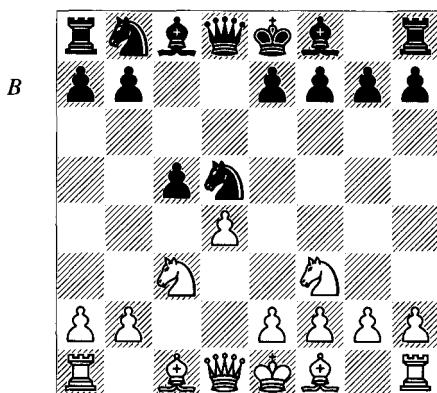


This move-order might appeal to you as Black, because it opens up many ways to work your way into systems that you might not otherwise be able to reach. For example, 5 g3 ♜c6 6 ♜g2 gives you the choice of 6...e5 (a Rubinstein Variation, analysed in this chapter), or 6...e6 (a Keres-Parma Variation, also discussed below), or 6...g6 7 0-0 ♜g7, which is one of the better forms for Black of the Pure Symmetrical lines with 5 ♜f3 ♜f6 from Chapter 7.

5 e4

With this move, first brought to general attention by Nimzowitsch, White's advance cedes d4 to his opponent along the lines of modern Sicilian Defences such as the Najdorf and Sveshnikov.

The important alternative 5 d4 (D) can lead in a variety of transpositional and independent directions:

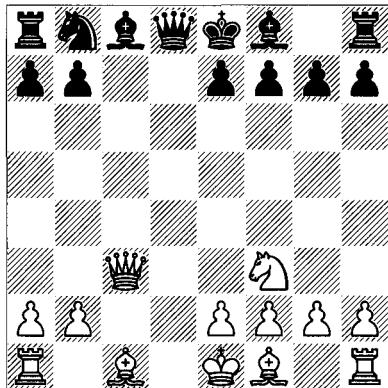


a) 5...e6 6 e4 (6 g3 ♜c6 is the Keres-Parma Variation below) 6...♜xc3 7 bxc3 arrives at a Queen's Gambit, Semi-Tarrasch Variation. This is generally considered somewhat favourable for White due to his big centre, yet it is definitely playable and Black might want to consider its use for practical play.

b) 5...cxd4 6 ♜xd4 is well-known at the master level. Play usually continues 6...♜xc3 9 (6...e6 7 e4 and now 7...♜c6 8 ♜b5 ♜xc3 9 ♜xc3 transposes to 6...♜xc3 7 ♜xc3 ♜c6 8 e4 9 ♜b5, and thus emphasizes the importance of the move 9 ♜b5 in our main line; also possible is 7...♜xc3 8 ♜xc3 ♜d7, to forestall ♜b5; then Polugaevsky-Keres, Tallinn 1973 went 9 ♜e2 ♜a6!?, 10 0-0 ♜c8 11 ♜b3 ♜c5 12 ♜e3 ♜e7 13 ♜e5 0-0 14 b3 ♜b6 15 ♜c4 and White stood somewhat better) 7 ♜xc3 (D).

White's slight lead in development is a plus, but even more so his prevention of ...e5. What is arguably the main line goes 7...♜c6 8 e4 (the

B



most effective move, establishing a central presence; others are relatively passive, but perhaps 8 $\mathbb{Q}g5!$? is worth a look) 8...e6 (now Black threatens 9... $\mathbb{Q}b4$) 9 $\mathbb{Q}b5$ (9 a3 and 9 $\mathbb{Q}d2$ are also played) 9... $\mathbb{Q}d7$ 10 0-0 $\mathbb{W}b6$ 11 a4 $\mathbb{W}c5$ 12 $\mathbb{W}d3$ $\mathbb{W}d6$ 13 $\mathbb{W}e2$!. In most games from this position, White has established some advantage. One basic idea is to capture more space by e5, setting up a standard position in which White can play $\mathbb{Q}f4$ and $\mathbb{Q}ac1$, of course, but also put pressure on a castled king via $\mathbb{Q}d3$, $\mathbb{Q}e4$, h4 and the like.

c) 5... $\mathbb{Q}xc3$ 6 $\mathbb{Q}bc3$ g6 invites the Exchange Grünfeld main lines, which would arise after 7 e4. White can also play 7 $\mathbb{Q}g5$ $\mathbb{Q}g7$ 8 $\mathbb{W}d2$. However, his most popular alternative to the Grünfeld Defence has been 7 e3. A famous example went 7... $\mathbb{Q}g7$ 8 $\mathbb{Q}d3$ (8 $\mathbb{Q}b5+$ is the most common alternative, while 8 $\mathbb{Q}c4$ and 8 $\mathbb{Q}e2$ are also played upon occasion; these are technical lines that I won't go into) 8...0-0 9 0-0 $\mathbb{W}c7$ 10 $\mathbb{Q}b1$ b6 (as you might expect, there are plenty of alternatives on all of these moves, such as 10... $\mathbb{Q}d8$ and 10... $\mathbb{Q}d7$) 11 $\mathbb{W}e2$ $\mathbb{Q}d8$ 12 $\mathbb{Q}e4$ and now:

c1) 12... $\mathbb{Q}a6$ (this move has generally been praised in spite of leading to an inferior position) 13 c4 $\mathbb{Q}c6$ 14 d5 f5 15 $\mathbb{Q}d3$ e5! 16 e4! $\mathbb{Q}d4$ 17 $\mathbb{Q}xd4$ cxd4 18 $\mathbb{Q}g5$ $\mathbb{Q}f8$ 19 $\mathbb{Q}fc1$ $\mathbb{Q}ac8$ 20 $\mathbb{Q}d2$ $\mathbb{Q}f7$ 21 a4 and White launched a productive queenside attack in Karpov-Kasparov, World Ch match (game 23), Seville 1987.

c2) Black might try to improve by 12... $\mathbb{Q}b7$ 13 $\mathbb{Q}xb7$ $\mathbb{Q}xb7$ 14 dxc5, and now, instead of 14... $\mathbb{Q}xc3$ 15 $\mathbb{Q}c2$ $\mathbb{Q}g7$ 16 $\mathbb{Q}b2$ with an edge for White, play 14... $\mathbb{Q}c7$! 15 cxb6!? axb6, with the kind of Grünfeld pawn sacrifice that

we have seen before. Then he has two open files facing isolated pawns, and excellent spots for his knight such as c5, a4 and c4. Similarly complex is 14... $\mathbb{Q}d7$ 15 $\mathbb{Q}a3$! $\mathbb{Q}c7$ 16 cxb6 $\mathbb{Q}xb6$.

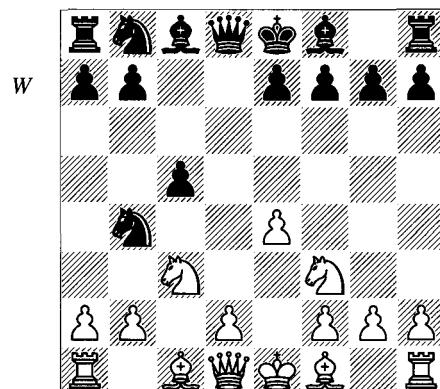
Let's return to 5 e4 and look at some practical examples.

The Knight Tour 5... $\mathbb{Q}b4$

Lalić – Klasan
Zagreb 2007

1 c4 $\mathbb{Q}f6$ 2 $\mathbb{Q}c3$ c5 3 $\mathbb{Q}f3$ d5 4 cxd5 $\mathbb{Q}xd5$ 5 e4 $\mathbb{Q}b4$!? (D)

The alternative 5... $\mathbb{Q}xc3$ is featured in the next section.



Black's ambitious knight move concedes to White a considerable lead in high-quality piece development, but in return he gets positional compensation. Specifically, Black's knights can land on the enemy weaknesses at d4 and d3, and can be readily supported by queen and rooks on the d-file. The 5 e4 $\mathbb{Q}b4$ variation is initially a battle of positional ideas in their starker form, but in the end the contest will usually turn dynamic and depend upon details as each player tries to impose his will on the position.

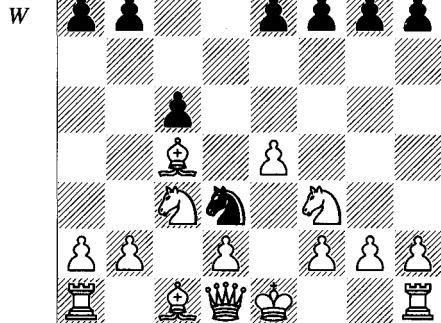
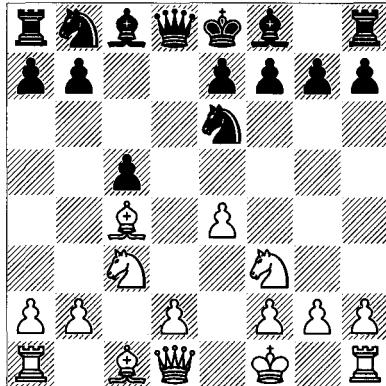
6 $\mathbb{Q}c4$

The most interesting move. White goes for classic development. At the same time, he agrees to give up the castling privilege in order to fight for every central square.

For 6 $\mathbb{Q}b5+$, see the next game.

6... $\mathbb{Q}d3+$ (D)

The tricky 6... $\mathbb{Q}e6$ 7 $\mathbb{Q}xe6$ $\mathbb{Q}d3+$ 8 $\mathbb{Q}f1$ $fxe6$ has been cast in doubt by 9 $\mathbb{Q}g5$, when one logical line goes 9... $\mathbb{W}d7$ 10 $\mathbb{W}f3!$ $\mathbb{Q}e5$ 11 $\mathbb{W}h3$ $\mathbb{Q}d3+$ (White has a clear superiority after 11... $\mathbb{Q}bc6$ 12 $\mathbb{Q}xe6$ $\mathbb{Q}c8$ 13 f4) 12 $\mathbb{W}xd3$ $\mathbb{Q}xd3$ 13 $\mathbb{Q}e2$ $\mathbb{Q}f4+$ 14 $\mathbb{Q}f3$ e5 15 d4! $\mathbb{Q}c6$ 16 dx5 $\mathbb{Q}g6$ 17 e6 and White stands clearly better. For a very surprising comparison, see the analysis of 3... $\mathbb{Q}c6$ 4 d4 cxd4 5 $\mathbb{Q}xd4$ e6 6 $\mathbb{Q}db5$ $\mathbb{Q}c5!$? 7 $\mathbb{Q}f4$ e5 8 $\mathbb{Q}e3$ $\mathbb{Q}xe3$ 9 $\mathbb{Q}d6+$ $\mathbb{Q}f8$ 10 fxe3 in the Symmetrical Four Knights chapter.

**7 $\mathbb{Q}e2$**

White forces matters. 7 $\mathbb{Q}xd3$ $\mathbb{W}xd3$ leaves White's light squares undefended and grants Black the bishop-pair. After exchanging Black's queen by 8 $\mathbb{Q}e2$ $\mathbb{Q}xe2+$ (8... $\mathbb{W}d8!?$) 9 $\mathbb{Q}xe2$, White can use his lead in development to keep the game level (but no more than that) by, for example, 9... $\mathbb{Q}c6$ 10 d4 cxd4 11 $\mathbb{Q}b5$ $\mathbb{Q}d8$ 12 $\mathbb{Q}fxd4$ $\mathbb{Q}xd4+$ 13 $\mathbb{Q}xd4$.

7... $\mathbb{Q}f4+$!

Only rarely does Black give White a four-piece lead in development(!) by 7... $\mathbb{Q}xc1+$ 8 $\mathbb{Q}xc1$, but it does show how important Black's grip on d4 is that he only gets a moderate disadvantage following 8... $\mathbb{Q}c6$ 9 $\mathbb{Q}b5!$ $\mathbb{Q}d7$ 10 d4 cxd4 11 $\mathbb{Q}xc6$ $\mathbb{Q}xc6!?$ (11... $\mathbb{Q}xc6$ 12 $\mathbb{Q}xd4$ $\mathbb{Q}b6$ is probably better, though 13 $\mathbb{Q}hd1$ leaves White nicely centralized) 12 $\mathbb{Q}xd4$ $\mathbb{Q}d7$. This is Halkias-Sutovsky, Terme Zreece 2003. Kosten brings attention to the straightforward line 13 $\mathbb{Q}b3!$ e6 14 $\mathbb{Q}cb5$ $\mathbb{Q}c8$ 15 $\mathbb{Q}g3!$, when Black has to deal with the move $\mathbb{Q}c7+$ along with problems developing his f8-bishop.

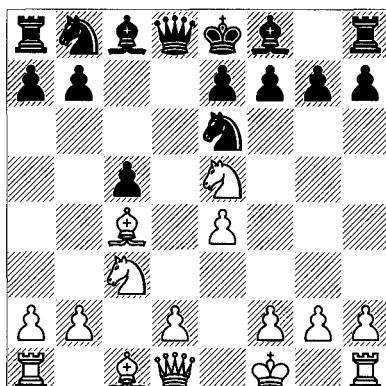
8 $\mathbb{Q}f1$ $\mathbb{Q}e6$ (D)

Black has moved his knight six times and it's White's move! But leading grandmasters have contested this position for decades. This illustrates the importance they attach to structural factors and lasting advantages. In fact, if White develops casually, say by 9 d3, Black might even achieve the better game with the consolidating moves ... $\mathbb{Q}c6$, ...g6 and ... $\mathbb{Q}g7$. White needs to counter that plan immediately.

9 b4!

White decides that Black's grip on d4 needs to be broken, even at the cost of a pawn. The same principle applies to 9 d4!? (almost unknown but unclear and worth investigating) 9...cxd4 (9... $\mathbb{Q}xd4$ 10 $\mathbb{Q}f4!)$ 10 $\mathbb{Q}xe6$ $\mathbb{Q}xe6$ 11 $\mathbb{Q}xd4$ $\mathbb{Q}c4+$ 12 $\mathbb{Q}g1$ with the idea $\mathbb{Q}a4+$.

The most aggressive alternative is 9 $\mathbb{Q}e5$ (D), whose long history could fill a monograph with wild tactics and seemingly irrational strategies.

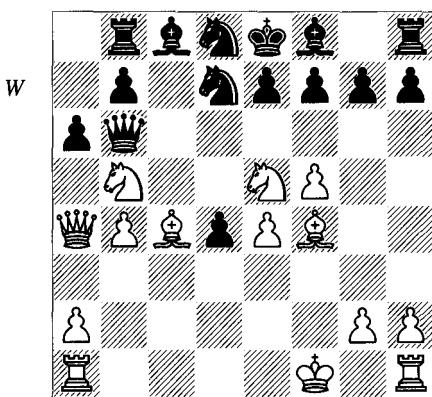


B

Since it is no longer the main line (although still a fully legitimate continuation), I shall limit myself to fragments:

a) 9... $\mathbb{Q}d7?$ runs into 10 $\mathbb{Q}xf7!$ $\mathbb{Q}xf7$ 11 $\mathbb{Q}xe6+$ $\mathbb{Q}xe6$ 12 $\mathbb{W}b3+$ with a decisive attack.

b) 9... $\mathbb{W}d6$ could fill a few chapters of the aforementioned monograph. Then 10 $\mathbb{W}a4+$ is actually unresolved to this day, and 10 f4 can lead to fantastic complications, as exemplified by 10... $\mathbb{Q}d7$ 11 $\mathbb{W}a4$ a6 12 d4 cxd4 13 $\mathbb{Q}b5$ $\mathbb{W}c5$ 14 b4 $\mathbb{W}b6$, Horn-Trauth, Riva del Garda 2004; now best play appears to be the amazing 15 f5! $\mathbb{Q}d8$ 16 $\mathbb{Q}f4$ $\mathbb{W}b8!$ (D).



17 $\mathbb{Q}a7!!$ $\mathbb{W}xa7$ 18 $\mathbb{Q}b5$ $\mathbb{Q}c6!$ 19 $\mathbb{Q}xc6$ $bxcc6$ 20 $\mathbb{Q}xc6$ $\mathbb{W}b7$ 21 $\mathbb{Q}xb8$ $\mathbb{W}xe4$ 22 $\mathbb{Q}g3$ $\mathbb{W}xf5+$ 23 $\mathbb{Q}g1$ and White is probably winning.

c) 9... $\mathbb{W}d4$ 10 $\mathbb{W}a4+!$ (10 f4 is also good) 10... $\mathbb{Q}d7$ 11 $\mathbb{Q}xd7$ $\mathbb{W}xd7$ 12 $\mathbb{Q}xe6$ $fxe6$ 13 $\mathbb{W}xd7+$ $\mathbb{Q}xd7$ 14 e5! g6 15 $\mathbb{Q}e4$ b6 16 d4! cxd4? 17 h4! $\mathbb{Q}c6$ 18 f4 $\mathbb{Q}h6$ 19 g3, and White is effectively a piece ahead.

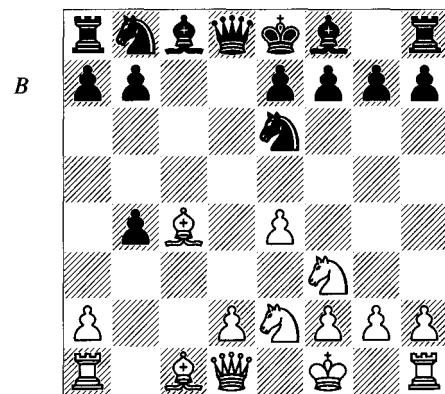
d) 9...g6 10 $\mathbb{W}a4+$ leads to unclear play. In brief: 10... $\mathbb{Q}d7$ (10... $\mathbb{Q}d7?$ is too slow: 11 d4! and already there's no good defence to $\mathbb{Q}xf7$) 11 $\mathbb{Q}xd7$ $\mathbb{W}xd7$ 12 $\mathbb{Q}xe6$ $fxe6$ 13 $\mathbb{W}xd7+$ $\mathbb{Q}xd7$ 14 e5!? (a risky plan that is based upon permanently denying Black's king's bishop any scope) 14... $\mathbb{Q}g7$ 15 $\mathbb{Q}e4$ b6 16 f4 (note the similarity to line 'c', but here Black has an extra tempo) 16... $\mathbb{W}f8$ 17 d4! $\mathbb{Q}c6$ (17...cxd4 18 $\mathbb{Q}e2$) 18 g3 $\mathbb{Q}xd4$ 19 $\mathbb{Q}g2$ $\mathbb{Q}c6$ with ongoing complications, Vallejo Pons-Fernandez Romero, Dos Hermanas 2002.

9...g6?

This has taken over as Black's main move. The fianchetto has an unquestionable positional basis, in that 10... $\mathbb{Q}g7$ will reinforce the d4-square. This involves declining White's pawn sacrifice and sacrificing one of his own. Black

can play a different move-order by 9... $\mathbb{Q}c6$ 10 $\mathbb{Q}xc5$ $\mathbb{Q}ed4$ (10...g6 11 $\mathbb{Q}xe6$ $\mathbb{Q}xe6$ 12 d4 $\mathbb{Q}g7$ transposes to the note to Black's 12th move). Then 11 $\mathbb{Q}b2$ e6 12 $\mathbb{Q}xd4$ $\mathbb{Q}xd4$ 13 $\mathbb{W}g4!?$, preventing ... $\mathbb{Q}xc5$ or here simply 13 $\mathbb{Q}a4$ with the idea h4-h5 gives White some advantage.

Of course, the capture on b4 is also critical. Over the years White has done very well in both theory and practice following 9... $\mathbb{Q}xb4$ 10 $\mathbb{Q}e2$ (D) (10 $\mathbb{Q}d5$ was the original idea; it remains unclear).

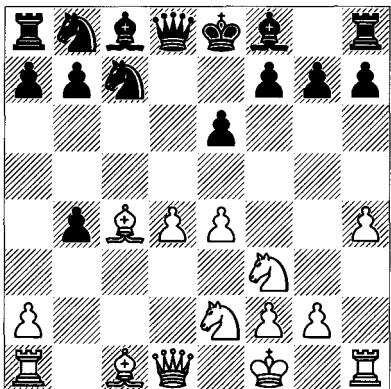


Rather than describe the nuances of move-order, I'll show a couple of the many examples that have accumulated:

a) 10... $\mathbb{Q}c5$ (this is the knight's seventh move out of the ten that Black has made, and soon it will have to move again! The idea is to attack e4, lure White's queen to the c-file and then attack it; maybe this is going too far, although it has been played by at least two grandmasters) 11 $\mathbb{W}c2$ e6 (11... $\mathbb{Q}c6$ 12 d4 $\mathbb{Q}d7$ 13 $\mathbb{Q}f4$ takes charge of the centre) 12 d4 $\mathbb{Q}cd7$ (this is not a tremendous square for the knight; another move is 12... $\mathbb{Q}ca6$, but White's pressure grows following 13 $\mathbb{Q}b2$ or 13 $\mathbb{Q}g5$ $\mathbb{Q}e7$ 14 h4) 13 $\mathbb{Q}g5!$ $\mathbb{Q}e7$ (13...f6 is met by 14 $\mathbb{Q}xe6!$ $fxg5!?$ 15 $\mathbb{Q}xg5!$) 14 $\mathbb{Q}xe7$ $\mathbb{W}xe7$ (14... $\mathbb{Q}xe7$ 15 $\mathbb{W}d2!$) 15 $\mathbb{Q}xe6!$ 0-0 (15... $fxe6??$ 16 $\mathbb{W}xc8+$ $\mathbb{W}d8$ 17 $\mathbb{W}xb7$) 16 $\mathbb{Q}b3$ $\mathbb{Q}c6$ 17 e5!? $\mathbb{Q}b6$ 18 $\mathbb{W}e4$ $\mathbb{Q}a5$ 19 d5 $\mathbb{Q}xb3$ 20 $axb3$ $\mathbb{W}c5!?$ was played in Schebler-K.Müller, Hamburg 2006. Now 21 $\mathbb{Q}g5!$ g6 22 $\mathbb{W}h4$ h5 23 $\mathbb{Q}e4$ is winning in view of 23... $\mathbb{W}c2$ 24 $\mathbb{Q}f6+$ $\mathbb{Q}g7$ 25 $\mathbb{W}d4!$, when Black has no good defence to 26 e6. White's centre and development more than outweighed the pawn.

b) 10... $\mathbb{Q}c7$ 11 d4 e6 12 h4! (D).

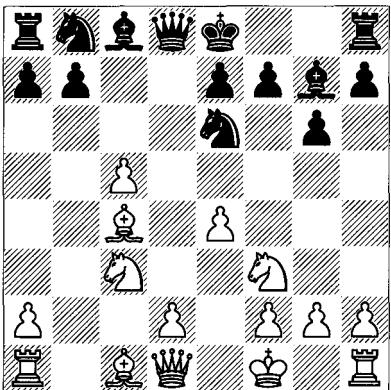
B



From the time that 9 b4 hit the scene, the h-pawn advance has been part-and-parcel of White's strategy. It wins space, prepares a rook-lift from h1, discourages ...g6 due to h5, and potentially attacks Black's kingside; for example, 12... $\mathbb{Q}d7$ 13 h5 (Kasparov demonstrated a further role for 12 h4: 13 $\mathbb{Q}g5!$ $\mathbb{Q}e7$ 14 $\mathbb{R}c1$ $\mathbb{Q}b6$ 15 $\mathbb{Q}d3$ f6 16 $\mathbb{Q}f4$ $\mathbb{Q}a6$ 17 h5 with a powerful attack looming, Kasparov-R.Grünberg, Hamburg (simul) 1985) 13...h6 14 $\mathbb{Q}f4$ (or 14 $\mathbb{Q}b2$ with command of the game) 14... $\mathbb{Q}b6$ 15 $\mathbb{Q}d3$ $\mathbb{Q}d7$ 16 $\mathbb{Q}e5?$ $\mathbb{Q}a4$ 17 $\mathbb{W}d2$ $\mathbb{Q}e7$ 18 $\mathbb{R}h3$ $\mathbb{Q}b5$ 19 $\mathbb{R}g3!$ $\mathbb{Q}xd4$ (19... $\mathbb{Q}f8?$) 20 $\mathbb{W}b2$ a5 21 d5!, with development, space and centre) 20 $\mathbb{W}xg7$ $\mathbb{R}f8$ 21 $\mathbb{R}c1$ $\mathbb{Q}f6$, Filippov-Van Wely, FIDE Knockout, Tripoli 2004, and now 22 $\mathbb{R}g3$ or 22 $\mathbb{R}h7$ favours White.

10 bxc5 $\mathbb{Q}g7$ (D)

W



Everything revolves around the d4-square, which Black intends to dominate completely by

playing ... $\mathbb{Q}c6$, so White gives up one of his best pieces to contest it, at the same time ceding the bishop-pair to his opponent.

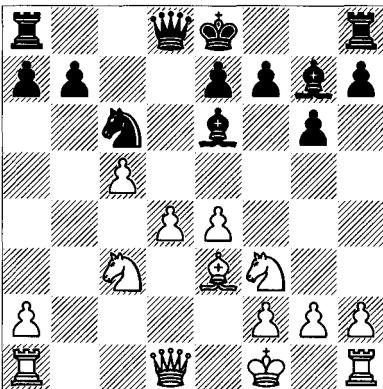
11 $\mathbb{Q}xe6$

Black was also threatening ... $\mathbb{Q}xc3$, winning a piece. A strange-looking option, untried as far as I know, would be 11 $\mathbb{Q}d5!$? $\mathbb{Q}c6$ 12 $\mathbb{R}b1$.

11... $\mathbb{Q}xe6$ 12 d4 $\mathbb{Q}c4+$

Many of the ideas are similar after 12... $\mathbb{Q}c6$ 13 $\mathbb{Q}e3$ (D). White will make almost any concession necessary to get his centre moving:

B



a) 13... $\mathbb{Q}c4+$ is the natural move: 14 $\mathbb{Q}g1$ $\mathbb{W}a5$ 15 $\mathbb{R}c1$ f5 16 d5! $\mathbb{Q}xc3$ 17 dx6 bxc6 18 $\mathbb{W}c2$ (Black has broken up White's pawn-phalanx, but at material cost) 18... $\mathbb{R}d8$ 19 h4 $\mathbb{R}d3$ 20 $\mathbb{Q}d4!$ $\mathbb{R}xd4$ 21 $\mathbb{Q}xd4$ $\mathbb{R}xd4$ 22 $\mathbb{W}xc4$ $\mathbb{W}d2$ 23 $\mathbb{R}h3$ fxe4 24 $\mathbb{Q}h1$ $\mathbb{R}f8$ 25 $\mathbb{R}b1$ and White wins, Vallejo Pons-Seel, Bundesliga 2005/6.

b) After 13... $\mathbb{W}a5$, 14 $\mathbb{R}c1$ is theory's main line, but 14 $\mathbb{Q}e2!$ $\mathbb{Q}c4$ 15 d5! with the big centre should favour White; for example, 15... $\mathbb{Q}xe2+$ 16 $\mathbb{Q}xe2$ $\mathbb{W}b5+$ 17 $\mathbb{W}d3$ (or 17 $\mathbb{Q}e1$ $\mathbb{Q}b4$ 18 $\mathbb{R}b1$) 17... $\mathbb{W}xd3+$ 18 $\mathbb{Q}xd3$ $\mathbb{Q}b4+$ 19 $\mathbb{Q}c4$ $\mathbb{Q}xa1$ 20 $\mathbb{Q}xb4$ $\mathbb{Q}g7$ 21 $\mathbb{R}b1$ 0-0 22 $\mathbb{Q}c4$ and the pawns are too strong.

c) The course of Diachkov-Anastasian, Moscow 2007 was a little less rational: 13...0-0 14 $\mathbb{R}c1$ $\mathbb{W}a5$ 15 $\mathbb{Q}e2!$? $\mathbb{Q}xa2$ 16 d5!? (16 h4) 16... $\mathbb{R}fd8?$! (16... $\mathbb{Q}b4$) 17 $\mathbb{Q}d2$ $\mathbb{W}a3$ 18 dxc6 bxc6 19 $\mathbb{Q}e1$ $\mathbb{Q}b2$ 20 $\mathbb{R}c2$ $\mathbb{W}b3$, and here 21 $\mathbb{R}c3!$ $\mathbb{Q}xc3$ 22 $\mathbb{Q}xc3$ would have been strong. Nevertheless, Black may find that his best chances rest with this line.

13 $\mathbb{Q}g1$ 0-0 14 h4!

A standard device. As mentioned above, this advance is associated with attack and the

activation of White's rook. Another benefit of h4 is that White gains an escape-square for his king on h2, as needed.

14...dxc6 15 Qe3 Wa5 16 Bc1 Ad8 17 h5 Qxd4 18 Qxd4

Or 18 Qxd4 e5 19 h6! Qh8 20 Qd5! Qxd5 21 Qf5! gxf5 22 exd5. All the tactics are going White's way.

18...Qxd4 19 Qxd4 e5 20 Qd5! Qxd5 21 exd5 exd4 22 Wxd4 Wxa2 23 d6 We6 24 Bh3 Bd7 25 Be3 Wf5 26 h6 f6 27 Be7 Bxe7 28 dxe7 Be8 29 Wc4+ 1-0

**Kallai – J. Horvath
Balatonbereny 1996**

1 Qf3 Qf6 2 c4 c5 3 Qc3 d5 4 cxd5 Qxd5 5 e4 Qb4 6 Qb5+

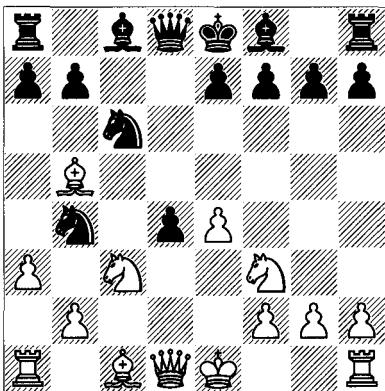
Here White is concerned with quick development and an immediate attack. Ironically, this often leads to technical positions without the lasting attacking prospects that come with 6 Qc4.

6...Qg6 7 d4!

Otherwise 7...a6 followed by ...Qd3+ or ...Qg4 and ...Qd4 gives Black the positional trumps; for example, 7 d3 a6 8 Qxc6+ Qxc6 (8...bxc6 9 0-0, and 10 Wa4 after Black captures on d3) 9 0-0 Qg4 10 h3 Qxf3 11 Wxf3 e6. Black has effective control over d4.

7...cxd4 8 a3! (D)

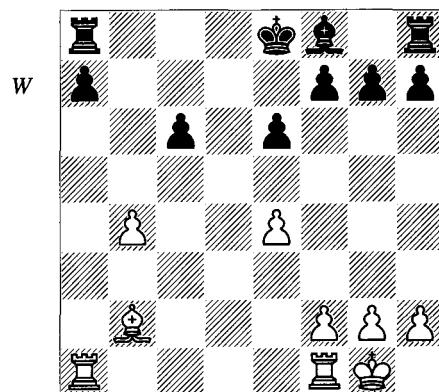
B



8...Qd7?!

This less-frequently played move provides a smooth way to steer clear of the worst complications, and may be one reason that White doesn't play 6 Qb5+ at the top levels any more.

The main line for years has been 8...dxc3 9 Wxd8+ Qxd8 10 axb4 cxb2 11 Qxb2. White obviously has a lot of pieces in play, and the open a-, c- and d-files to attack along. However, Black has an extra pawn, and no weaknesses as yet. That said, Black needs to know what he's doing. The main line goes 11...e6 (11...f6 12 e5! is irritating for Black; 11...Qd7?! is like the game but slightly worse due to 12 Qxc6 Qxc6 13 Qe5 Qe8 14 Qxc6 bxc6 15 Qe2 and White properly keeps his king in the centre, although Black was fine anyway in Piket-Shirov, Wijk aan Zee 1999 following 15...f6 16 Ba6 e5 17 Qc3 Qd7) 12 0-0 Qd7 13 Qxc6 Qxc6 14 Qe5 Qe8 15 Qxc6 bxc6 (D).



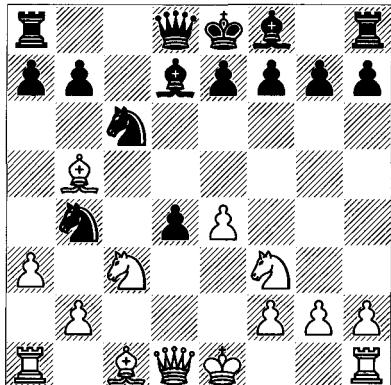
The key to this position is that by the time White wins the a- or c-pawn, Black will have his pieces out; for example, 16 Ba4 f6 17 Bc1 (or 17 Bfa1 Qf7 18 Bxa7+ Bxa7 19 Bxa7+ Qe7, Lautier-Kasparov, Tilburg 1997; a draw was immediately agreed after White carelessly played 20 Bc7?, and the World Champion missed 20...c5!, which would have won a pawn because of 21 bxc5? Bb8 or 21 b5 Bb8) 17...Qd7 (Cummings suggests 17...Qe7 18 Bxc6 Qf7, which is dead level) 18 Bc1 Qd6 19 e5 Qxe5 20 Bxe5 fxe5 21 Bxa7+ Bxa7 22 Bxa7+ Qd6 23 Bxg7, V.Ivanov-Biriukov, St Petersburg Ch 1999, and now 23...Bb8 24 Bxh7 Bxb4 25 Qf1 c5 is the simplest way to full equality. Black's team of passed pawn plus rook is quite as good as White's.

We now return to 8...Qd7!? (D):

9 Qxd4!

Definitely the most interesting move. Several top-level games have been drawn following 9

W



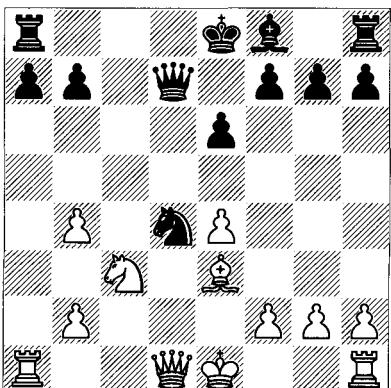
$\text{axb4 dxc3 10 bxc3 g6! 11 0-0 Qg7}$; for example, 12 $\mathbb{Q}f4$ 0-0 13 $\mathbb{Q}c1$ a5!, Christiansen-Ivanchuk, Amber Blindfold, Monte Carlo 1993.

9... $\mathbb{Q}xd4$ 10 $\mathbb{Q}xd7+$ $\mathbb{Q}xd7$ 11 AXB4 e6!

Straightforward development is best, and 11...e5? 12 $\mathbb{Q}d5$ should definitely be avoided!

12 $\mathbb{Q}e3$ (D)

B



White has drummed up some threats. With his next move Black takes advantage of the fact that the d4-square is permanently available for a piece.

12... $\mathbb{Q}d8!$ 13 $\mathbb{Q}xd4!?$

It turns out that there's no way to win material or establish a worthwhile initiative. One of the most exciting games in this line went 13 0-0 $\mathbb{Q}xb4$ 14 $\mathbb{Q}xd4$ $\mathbb{Q}xd4$ 15 $\mathbb{Q}a4+$ $\mathbb{Q}e7$ 16 $\mathbb{Q}b5$ $\mathbb{Q}xe4!$ 17 $\mathbb{Q}fe1$ $\mathbb{Q}xe1+!?$ 18 $\mathbb{Q}xe1$ $\mathbb{Q}xe1$ 19 $\mathbb{Q}a3+$ $\mathbb{Q}f6$ 20 $\mathbb{Q}d6$ (instead of 20 $\mathbb{Q}f3+$ $\mathbb{Q}e7$ 21 $\mathbb{Q}a3+$, drawing), and now the best move is 20...h6!, as played in Gleizerov-Petrienko, USSR 1985, when 21 h4!? a5! 22 $\mathbb{Q}g3$ $\mathbb{Q}e7$ 23 $\mathbb{Q}xb7?$ (23 $\mathbb{Q}e4$ holds) 23... $\mathbb{Q}d5$ favoured Black.

13... $\mathbb{Q}xd4$ 14 $\mathbb{Q}a4+$ $\mathbb{Q}d7$ 15 $\mathbb{Q}e2$ a6 16 $\mathbb{Q}xd7+$ $\mathbb{Q}xd7$ 17 b5 axb5 18 $\mathbb{Q}xb5$ g6 19 $\mathbb{Q}a7$ $\mathbb{Q}g7$ 20 $\mathbb{Q}d1$

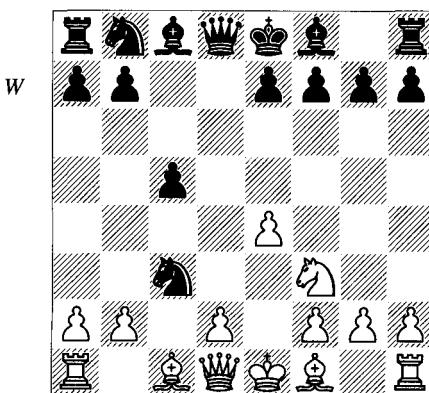
Here the game went 20... $\mathbb{Q}xb2?$, when 21 $\mathbb{Q}xd7$ $\mathbb{Q}xd7$ 22 $\mathbb{Q}xb7+$ $\mathbb{Q}c6$ 23 $\mathbb{Q}xf7!$ would have won a pawn. Instead, Black could play 20... $\mathbb{Q}xd1$ 21 $\mathbb{Q}xd1$ $\mathbb{Q}xb2$ 22 $\mathbb{Q}xb7$ 0-0 and there's not much left to argue over.

Exchange with 5... $\mathbb{Q}xc3$

Krasenkow – Protaziuk
Polish Team Ch, Suwalki 1999

1 c4 c5 2 $\mathbb{Q}f3$ $\mathbb{Q}f6$ 3 $\mathbb{Q}c3$ d5 4 $\text{cx}d5$ $\mathbb{Q}xd5$ 5 e4 $\mathbb{Q}xc3$ (D)

Black wants nothing to do with the craziness of 5... $\mathbb{Q}b4$.



6 $\mathbb{Q}d3!?$

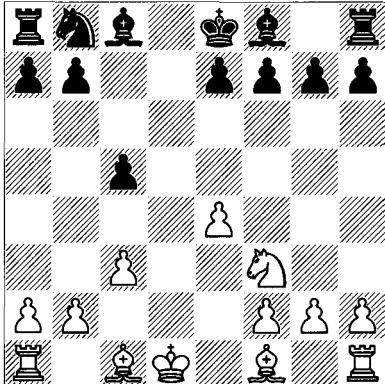
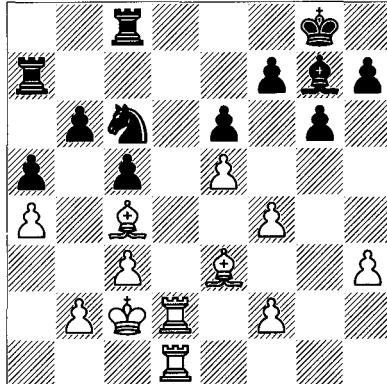
Someone who plays 5... $\mathbb{Q}xc3$ will probably be disappointed to see this move, since now he essentially has to enter a queenless middlegame that can be annoying to defend. Black probably chose this move-order with the intent of transposing to the main-line Grünfeld Defence following 6 $\text{bx}c3$ g6 (6...e6 7 d4 is a Semi-Tarrasch) 7 d4, which is at any rate a much more exciting variation.

6... $\mathbb{Q}xd1+$

Anything else lets White play $\mathbb{Q}f4$ and $\mathbb{Q}c4$ with a traditional lead in space and development.

7 $\mathbb{Q}xd1$ (D)

White now has a modest advantage based upon the fact that his pieces will find better squares than his opponent's. His king has a nice

B*W*

square on c2 (the same one used in many queenless middlegames), and Black has issues with his own c-pawn, in that protecting it (after $\mathbb{Q}e3$) requires some loosening of the position, and its presence restricts his dark-squared bishop. To be clear, if Black is well-prepared and ready to defend a somewhat worse position, he should achieve a draw; however, the lack of winning chances and passive posture will not appeal to most players below the very highest levels. Fortunately for us, the resulting positions are highly instructive.

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

a) Grünfeld players (presumably the clear majority of those who play 5... $\mathbb{Q}xc3$) may want to play 7...g6, a position which has occurred fairly often at the top levels, in part because it can also arise when Black plays an early ...g6 and then transposes to this position. The good side of ...g6 is that by not touching his e-pawn, Black doesn't create a weakness on d6, nor block off his queen's bishop. The bad news is that it takes two moves to get the bishop to g7, and in that position its scope is limited by White's pawn on c3. The most natural continuation is 8 $\mathbb{Q}e3$ b6. White has two extra pieces out and Black's queenside is very slightly weakened. The famous game Andersson-Tempone, Buenos Aires 1979 went 9 a4 $\mathbb{Q}c6$ 10 $\mathbb{Q}b5$ $\mathbb{Q}d7$ 11 $\mathbb{Q}c2$ $\mathbb{Q}g7$ 12 $\mathbb{Q}hd1$ a6 13 $\mathbb{Q}c4$ $\mathbb{Q}g4$ 14 h3! $\mathbb{Q}xf3$ 15 gxf3 (White's bishop-pair will be very powerful in the open board, and his doubled pawns don't prevent him from expanding in the centre) 15...0-0 16 f4! $\mathbb{Q}a7$ 17 e5 a5 18 $\mathbb{Q}d2$ e6 19 $\mathbb{Q}ad1$ $\mathbb{Q}c8$ (*D*).

20 $\mathbb{Q}b3$! (starting a tour on the light squares that decides the game) 20... $\mathbb{Q}f8$ 21 $\mathbb{Q}b5$ $\mathbb{Q}cc7$

22 $\mathbb{Q}xc6!$ $\mathbb{Q}xc6$ 23 $\mathbb{Q}c4$ $\mathbb{Q}e7$ 24 $\mathbb{Q}d7$ $\mathbb{Q}cc7$ 25 $\mathbb{Q}xc7$ $\mathbb{Q}xc7$ 26 $\mathbb{Q}b5$ $\mathbb{Q}c8$ 27 $\mathbb{Q}d7$ $\mathbb{Q}f8$ 28 $\mathbb{Q}xb6$ $\mathbb{Q}e8$ 29 $\mathbb{Q}b7$ $\mathbb{Q}d8+$ 30 $\mathbb{Q}b5$ c4 31 $\mathbb{Q}c5$ 1-0.

b) 7... $\mathbb{Q}g4$ gets Black's pieces out quickly, something that he often forgets to do! Then 8 $\mathbb{Q}c2$ is White's most flexible move; he doesn't fear ... $\mathbb{Q}xf3$ because his bishops will have free rein thereafter; for example, 8... $\mathbb{Q}d7$ (8... $\mathbb{Q}c6$ 9 $\mathbb{Q}e3$ e6 10 $\mathbb{Q}b5$ creates the usual problems for Black: his f8-bishop has no scope and d6 is weak) 9 $\mathbb{Q}f4$ (Carsten Hansen's suggestion) 9... $\mathbb{Q}xf3$! 10 gxf3 e5 11 $\mathbb{Q}e3$. White has a nice position, especially with his control of d5.

8 $\mathbb{Q}c2$

The king takes up safe residence and protects the weak point d3 against any future incursions. White can also play 8 $\mathbb{Q}f4$, for which you should compare what follows, or 8 $\mathbb{Q}e3$. In the latter case, 8...e6 is solid, even if it creates that situation mentioned above with Black's bishops restricted by their own pawns. In Cvetković-Palatnik, USSR-Yugoslavia, Krk 1976, White played modestly: 9 $\mathbb{Q}c2$ $\mathbb{Q}d7$ 10 $\mathbb{Q}e2$ $\mathbb{Q}e7$ 11 $\mathbb{Q}hd1$ 0-0-0 12 $\mathbb{Q}d2$!? (12 a4! intending a5 is a more typical plan) 12...f6 13 $\mathbb{Q}ad1$ $\mathbb{Q}a5$ 14 e5!?. At this point, Black hasn't any special worries if he plays 14... $\mathbb{Q}c6$.

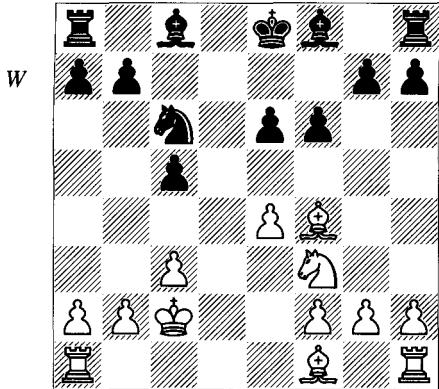
8...e6 9 $\mathbb{Q}f4$!

Compare this with the previous note. White didn't have to provoke ...e6 by $\mathbb{Q}e3$, and so he can put the bishop on its more active square straightforwardly.

9...f6 (D)

10 $\mathbb{Q}d2$!

Now White intends to combine moves like a4, $\mathbb{Q}b5$ and $\mathbb{Q}c4$, while a background theme is $\mathbb{Q}c4$ -d6+.



10...e5!?

Gaining time and opening up squares for Black's light-squared bishop. On the other hand, d5 becomes the board's only outpost and the a2-g8 diagonal is weakened.

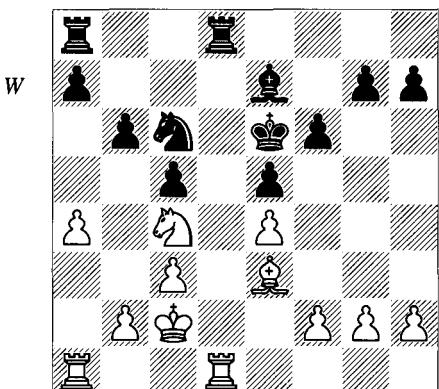
11 ♜e3 ♜e6 12 ♜c4

Not a subtle move; White wants to end up with the better bishop, and at the same time he clears the way for eventually putting a knight or rook on d5.

12...♞f7!

Kosten mentions 12...♝xc4 13 ♜xc4 b5, when after 14 ♜d2, Black won't be able to answer 15 a4 effectively. After that move, White either gains the a-file, or (upon ...b4) he gets the c4-square back again while Black has only weakened his position.

13 a4 ♜e7 14 ♜xe6+ ♜xe6 15 ♜c4 b6 16 ♜hd1 ♜hd8 (D)



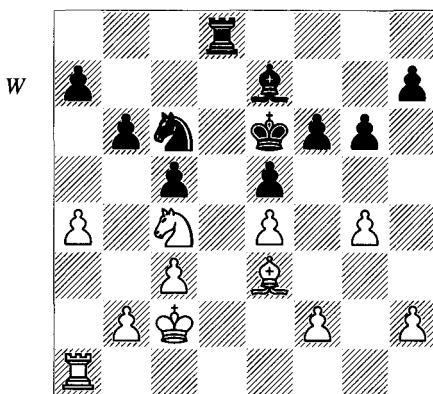
Depending upon your experience and tastes, you may consider this position fairly harmless or a real bother for Black. In either case it's good

to get used to the basic ideas because such endings are not uncommon (the central pawn-structure can arise from several openings). White's advantages of good-versus-bad bishop and the d5 outpost are fine, but neither describes a winning plan. For his part, Black has little to do, since White covers all the d-file squares to which Black could infiltrate, or upon which Black could put a piece. This gives White some time to work with.

17 ♜xd8 ♜xd8 18 g4!

While hardly decisive, this advance complies with the strategic principle that, when you stand better in one sector but can't make progress, you should look to open a second front.

18...g6 (D)



19 ♜g1

White discourages ...f5 and prepares king-side action.

19...♜h8!

Now if White isn't careful, ...h5 will activate Black's rook.

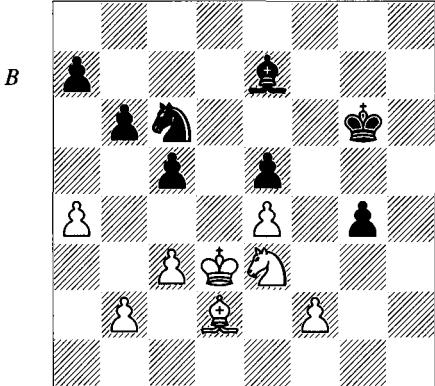
20 ♜d3 ♜f7

Black is presumably trying to cover White's penetration points on the g-file. He could also play simply 20...♜d8+ and return to h8. If he tries the dynamic 20...h5!? 21 gxh5 g5!, White counters with 22 h4! gxh4 23 h6 ♜f8 24 ♜h1 ♜xh6 25 ♜xh4 ♜d8+ 26 ♜e2 ♜xe3 27 ♜xe3. Then White controls d5 and f5, but Black can still try to cover his weaknesses and use the g-file following 27...♜e7!. Even though White is on the better side of the draw, Black's position is probably sound enough to hold, a description that characterizes the entire variation.

21 h4 ♜e6?!

Again, 21...h5 is playable, and less compliant. The opening themes have persisted into the endgame, so let's follow the play, albeit without detail:

22 h5! $\mathbb{B}d8+$ 23 $\mathbb{Q}c2 \mathbb{B}g8$ 24 hxg6 hxg6 25 $\mathbb{E}h1 \mathbb{Q}d8$ 26 $\mathbb{Q}a3 \mathbb{Q}c6$ 27 $\mathbb{E}h7 \mathbb{E}c8$ 28 $\mathbb{Q}c4$ $\mathbb{E}f8$ 29 $\mathbb{Q}d2 f5!$? 30 $\mathbb{E}h6!$ fxg4 31 $\mathbb{E}xg6+$ $\mathbb{E}f6$ 32 $\mathbb{E}xf6+$ $\mathbb{Q}xf6$ 33 $\mathbb{Q}d3 \mathbb{Q}g6$ 34 $\mathbb{Q}e3$ (D)



34... $\mathbb{Q}g5?$

Black drops a pawn for too little return. He is still within that drawing range that has accompanied him all game and could survive with 34... $\mathbb{Q}h5!$ 35 $\mathbb{Q}c4 \mathbb{Q}h4!$ 36 $\mathbb{Q}e1 \mathbb{Q}e7$, played to prevent $\mathbb{Q}f5$, but also planning ... $\mathbb{Q}g6-f4$.

35 $\mathbb{Q}xg4 \mathbb{Q}xd2$ 36 $\mathbb{Q}xd2 \mathbb{Q}g5$ 37 f3 $\mathbb{Q}f4$ 38 $\mathbb{Q}e2$ a6 39 $\mathbb{Q}f6$ b5 40 $\mathbb{Q}d5+$ $\mathbb{Q}g5$ 41 $\mathbb{Q}c7$ bxa4 42 $\mathbb{Q}e6+$ 1-0

Keres-Parma Variation

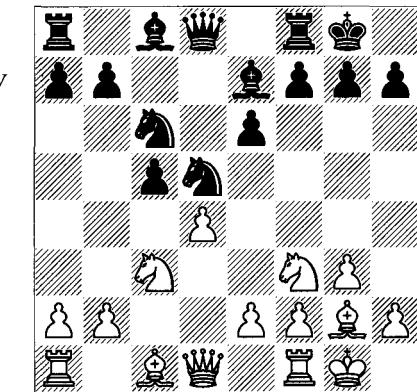
1 c4

The Keres-Parma Variation can arise via a great number of move-orders. For example, the official ECO sequence for the start position is 1 d4 d5 2 c4 e6 3 $\mathbb{Q}c3 \mathbb{Q}f6$ 4 $\mathbb{Q}f3$ c5 (QGD, Semi-Tarrasch) 5 cxd5 $\mathbb{Q}xd5$ 6 g3 $\mathbb{Q}c6$ 7 $\mathbb{Q}g2$ $\mathbb{Q}e7$ 8 0-0 0-0. Any combination of ... $\mathbb{Q}f6$, ...e6, ...c5, ...d5, ... $\mathbb{Q}c6$, ... $\mathbb{Q}e7$ and ... $\mathbb{Q}xd5$ versus c4, $\mathbb{Q}c3$, $\mathbb{Q}f3$, g3, $\mathbb{Q}g2$, d4 and cxd5 over the first seven moves will do.

1...c5 2 $\mathbb{Q}c3 \mathbb{Q}f6$ 3 $\mathbb{Q}f3$

For example, 3 g3 e6 4 $\mathbb{Q}f3$ d5 5 cxd5 $\mathbb{Q}xd5$ 6 $\mathbb{Q}g2$ $\mathbb{Q}c6$ 7 d4, etc., is a common move-order.

3...d5 4 cxd5 $\mathbb{Q}xd5$ 5 g3 $\mathbb{Q}c6$ 6 $\mathbb{Q}g2$ e6 7 d4 $\mathbb{Q}e7$ 8 0-0 0-0 (D)



This is the initial position. We'll look at three games from this point.

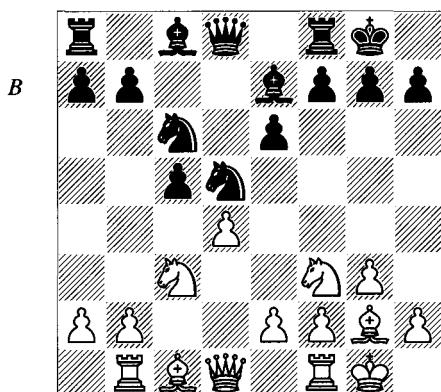
Schandorff – Greenfeld

European Clubs Cup, Saint Vincent 2005

1 c4 c5 2 $\mathbb{Q}c3 \mathbb{Q}f6$ 3 $\mathbb{Q}f3$ d5 4 cxd5 $\mathbb{Q}xd5$ 5 $\mathbb{Q}c6$ 6 $\mathbb{Q}g2$ e6 7 d4 $\mathbb{Q}e7$ 8 0-0 0-0 9 $\mathbb{Q}xd5$

I'll give this move the most attention because the great majority of masters are using it, and the positional themes are well defined.

Suba's 9 $\mathbb{Q}b1!$? (D) has never been fully investigated.



This is in the genre of semi-waiting moves, primarily designed to be useful against most logical replies while improving conditions should the opponent do nothing committal. In this instance, one obvious point is that if Black plays ... $\mathbb{Q}xc3$, then bxc3 opens the b-file. Furthermore, if White proceeds with e4, there are several lines in which the b-pawn is defended so that $\mathbb{Q}f4$ or $\mathbb{Q}g5$ becomes possible, and

others in which potential forks on c2 are prevented. Here are a few examples:

a) The rook move's worth became clear in Suba-Cebalo, Skopje 1984: 9...cxd4 10 ♜xd4 11 ♜xd4 ♜f6 12 ♜c4 ♜xc3?! 13 bxc3 (hitting b7) 13...♜a5 14 ♜e3 (or 14 ♜d1!, when 14...♜xc3 15 ♜a4 threatens ♜a3) 14...♜xc3 15 ♜a4!, and Black was at a loss for good moves.

b) 9...h6 favours White after 10 e4 ♜b6 11 dxc5 ♜xc5 12 e5! with the ideas of ♜e2, ♜e4, h4, etc.

c) 9...♜b6 10 dxc5 ♜xc5 11 ♜c2 (or 11 ♜b3) 11...♜d7 12 ♜d1 ♜c8 13 ♜g5 g6 14 ♜ge4 ♜e7 15 ♜h6 ♜e8 16 ♜bc1 yields a promising attacking position.

d) White has to sacrifice a pawn if he wants to make serious progress versus 9...♜a5: 10 ♜d2! ♜xc3 11 ♜xc3 ♜xa2. Now Speelman-Alburt, Taxco Interzonal 1985 continued 12 e3!? ♜d8 13 ♜e2 cxd4 14 ♜xd4 ♜xd4 15 ♜xd4 and the two bishops provided compensation. Still better seems 12 b3!, which threatens 13 ♜al; then after 12...♜a6 13 dxc5, Black should abstain from 13...♜xc5? 14 b4 ♜c4 15 ♜c1 ♜xb4 16 ♜xg7, etc.

e) 9...♜f6 makes a lot of sense, putting direct pressure on the centre: 10 ♜xd5!? (10 dxc5! may be best, when 10...♜xc3 11 bxc3 ♜xc3 12 ♜xd8 ♜xd8 13 ♜b2 is critical; then 13...e5 14 ♜c2 ♜b5? 15 a4 ♜bd4 16 ♜xd4 ♜xd4 17 ♜b2 will show White's bishops to good effect) 10...♜xd5 (10...exd5! 11 dxc5 ♜f5 must give Black at least fair value for his pawn) 11 dxc5 ♜xc5 (11...♜xa2 12 ♜g5! ♜xg5 13 ♜xg5 has ideas of ♜c2 and/or ♜e4-d6) 12 ♜a4! ♜d7 13 ♜e3 ♜e7 14 ♜e4! ♜ac8 15 b4 with a queenside initiative, Suba-Petursson, Thessaloniki Olympiad 1984.

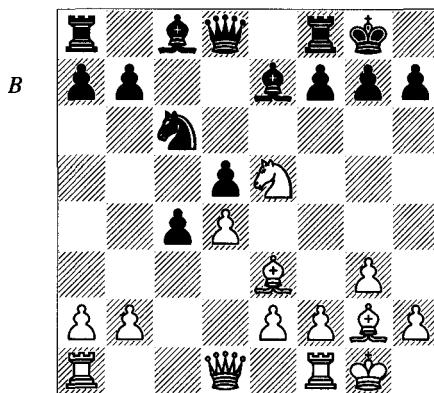
9...exd5

9...♜xd5? is well answered by 10 ♜e3!, when Black will inevitably lose a pawn.

10 dxc5

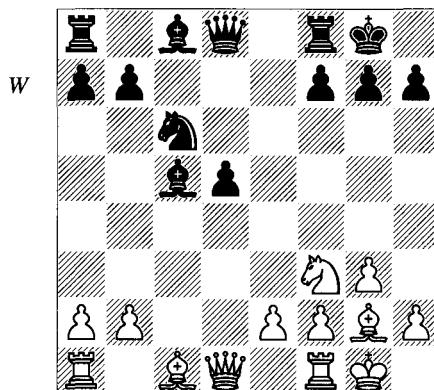
With this move, White isolates Black's d-pawn. The only other way to scare up chances is 10 ♜e3 c4 11 ♜e5 (D).

This is a standard manoeuvre in the Tarrasch Queen's Gambit. Whether it is effective depends upon whether White can make one of two moves work: e4 or b3. Soffer-Greenfeld, Israeli Team Ch 1999 continued 11...♜f5! (a



tactic to remember is 11...♝e6?! 12 ♜xc4!, when after 12...dxc4 13 d5, at the very least Black's pawns will be weakened; Black can partially recover by declining the sacrifice: 12...♝f6! 13 ♜c1!? ♜xd4! 14 ♜d6! ♜xd6 15 ♜xd4 with a modest advantage for White; the ♜xc4 trick occurs in various openings and is worth filing away in your memory bank) 12 ♜xc6 (12 ♜a4 ♜xe5 13 dxe5 d4 14 ♜f4 g5 15 ♜d2, with an unclear game, is old analysis by Tal) 12...bxc6 13 ♜a4?! ♜b6! (the b-file is more important than any other factor here) 14 ♜fc1? (14 b3 c3?) 14...a6! 15 b3 ♜b5 16 ♜xb5 axb5 with a positionally won game. Black intends ...♝a3 or ...♝b4, when his bishops are clearly more effective than White's, and they will escort his passed c-pawn forward.

10...♜xc5 (D)



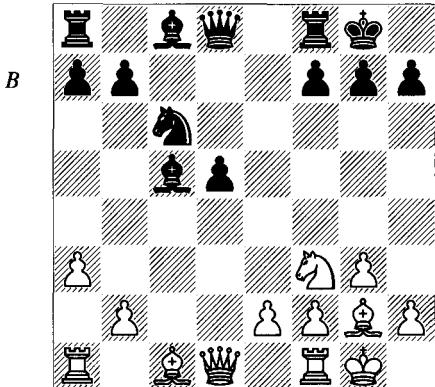
11 ♜g5

White has many approaches here, of which the bishop move has become the most popular

by a considerable margin. Here are a few typical set-ups from older lines:

a) 11 $\mathbb{Q}g5!$? h6! (11... $\mathbb{Q}d4$ 12 $\mathbb{W}c2!$ g6 13 $\mathbb{W}b3$ $\mathbb{Q}f6$ 14 $\mathbb{W}xd5$ $\mathbb{Q}d4$ is an old line which is far from clear) 12 $\mathbb{Q}h3$ (12 $\mathbb{W}c2$ $\mathbb{Q}xf2+!$ 13 $\mathbb{M}xf2$ $\mathbb{h}xg5$, and now 14 $\mathbb{W}d2$ $\mathbb{Q}e6$ 15 $\mathbb{W}xg5$ f6 is interesting, with a fight between two bishops and structure, whereas 14 $\mathbb{W}b3$ $\mathbb{Q}e6!$ 15 $\mathbb{W}xb7$ $\mathbb{W}d6$ 16 $\mathbb{Q}xg5$ $\mathbb{W}ad8$ is evenly balanced) 12... $\mathbb{Q}xh3$?!? (12... $\mathbb{g}5!$ would restrict the knight) 13 $\mathbb{Q}xh3$ $\mathbb{W}e8$ 14 $\mathbb{Q}b1$ (sometimes we think that an exchange like 14 e3? d4 15 exd4 $\mathbb{Q}xd4$ merely liquidates, but with ... $\mathbb{W}f6$ and ... $\mathbb{Q}ad8$ coming, it can only favour Black) 14...d4 15 a3!? $\mathbb{W}e7$ 16 b4 $\mathbb{Q}b6$ 17 $\mathbb{Q}b2$ $\mathbb{Q}ad8$ 18 $\mathbb{Q}d2$ a5! 19 b5 $\mathbb{Q}e5$, Tarjan-Tukmakov, Odessa 1976. Black is not necessarily better here, but he has more dynamic play.

b) 11 a3 (*D*) used to be popular, intending b4 and $\mathbb{Q}b2$. I'll simply indicate a direction or two.

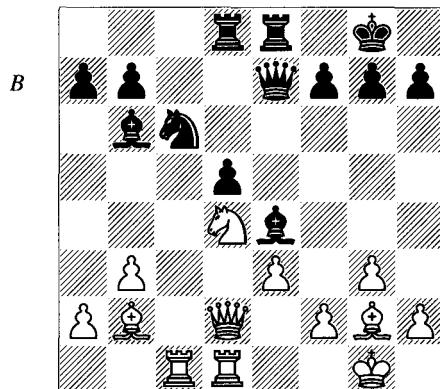


b1) Black can restrain b4 by 11...a5, but he should be a little careful about the looseness that creates on his queenside: 12 $\mathbb{Q}e1!$ d4? (or 12... $\mathbb{Q}e6$) 13 $\mathbb{Q}d3$ $\mathbb{Q}b6$ 14 $\mathbb{Q}d2$ $\mathbb{W}e8$ 15 $\mathbb{Q}c1$ $\mathbb{Q}g4$! 16 $\mathbb{Q}e1$ $\mathbb{Q}c8$ 17 h3 $\mathbb{Q}f5$ (both sides' pieces are more or less ideally placed for this kind of position; now White tries to utilize the weakness created by 11...a5) 18 $\mathbb{W}b3!$ $\mathbb{Q}e4$?! (better is 18... $\mathbb{Q}e5$) 19 $\mathbb{Q}xe4$ $\mathbb{Q}xe4$ 20 $\mathbb{W}b5!$ with advantage, Petrosian-Peters, Lone Pine 1976.

b2) 11... $\mathbb{Q}f5$ 12 b4 $\mathbb{Q}b6$ 13 $\mathbb{Q}a2!$ (White's idea is that attacking the d-pawn by $\mathbb{Q}a2$ -d2 and then $\mathbb{Q}b2$ is better than 13 $\mathbb{Q}b2$; of course, there are trade-offs) 13... $\mathbb{Q}e4$ 14 $\mathbb{Q}d2$ $\mathbb{W}e7$ 15 $\mathbb{Q}b2$ $\mathbb{Q}fe8$ 16 $\mathbb{Q}a1$ (16 $\mathbb{W}b3$?) 16...f6! (the key

move, reducing the effectiveness of White's queen-and-bishop line-up) 17 $\mathbb{Q}fd1$ $\mathbb{W}e6$ 18 $\mathbb{W}a2$ $\mathbb{Q}ad8$ and both sides stand solidly, Portisch-Spassky, Bugojno 1978.

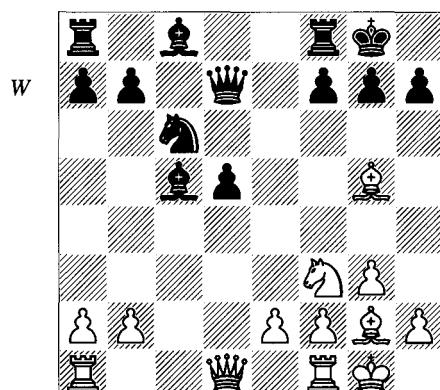
c) 11 b3 $\mathbb{Q}f5$ 12 $\mathbb{Q}b2$ $\mathbb{Q}e4$ 13 $\mathbb{Q}c1$ $\mathbb{W}e7$ 14 $\mathbb{W}d2$ $\mathbb{Q}b6$ (after 14...d4, 15 $\mathbb{Q}g5!$ simplifies to a pleasant position) 15 e3 $\mathbb{Q}fe8$ 16 $\mathbb{Q}fd1$ $\mathbb{Q}ad8$. Normally, 17 $\mathbb{Q}a1$, 17 $\mathbb{W}e2$ or 17 $\mathbb{Q}d4$ is played now, but White should avoid 17 $\mathbb{Q}d4$?! (*D*).



This is the natural move, but with the light squares slightly weak, it's better to keep an eye on e5. Black can play 17... $\mathbb{Q}xg2$! 18 $\mathbb{Q}xg2$ $\mathbb{W}e4+$ 19 $\mathbb{Q}g1$ $\mathbb{Q}e5$ 20 $\mathbb{W}c2$ h5!, which is a bit awkward for White, because d3 and f3 have to be watched over while Black intends ...h4 or ... $\mathbb{Q}c8$; this position is within drawing range, but should obviously not be White's first choice.

11... $\mathbb{W}d7$?! (*D*)

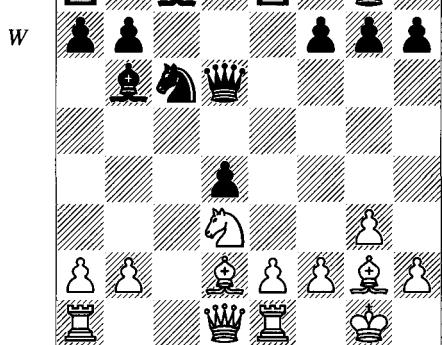
Black has to make a key decision at this point; the text-move avoids creating weaknesses but blocks off his own bishop. In the next game we'll see examples of 11...f6 and 11... $\mathbb{W}b6$.



12 ♜e1! d4

This is always a tough decision, and often Black would rather not advance the pawn before he has more pieces out. Here 12...♝e8! is best, when 13 ♜d3 ♜b6 14 ♜d2?! ♜d6 15 ♜f4 ♜g4 keeps Black's pieces active and the game level, Bu Xiangzhi-J.Polgar, Biel 2007.

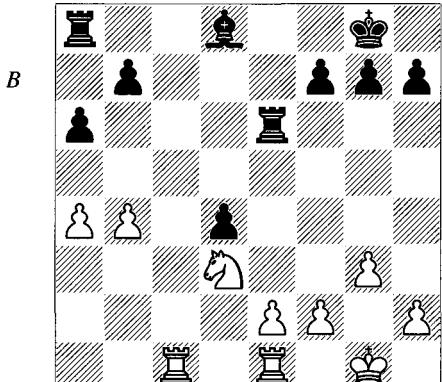
13 ♜d3 ♜b6 14 ♜d2 ♜e8 15 ♜e1 ♜d6 (D)

**16 a4 a6 17 ♜b3**

Apparently more accurate is 17 a5! ♜a7 18 ♜b3 ♜e7 (otherwise it's hard to develop), and White has a choice of plans; for example, 19 ♜a4 (19 ♜d5?! ♜e6 20 ♜h5 keeps an eye on both sides of the board) 19...♜d7 20 ♜f4! h6 21 ♜b3. White has a comfortable advantage in these positions.

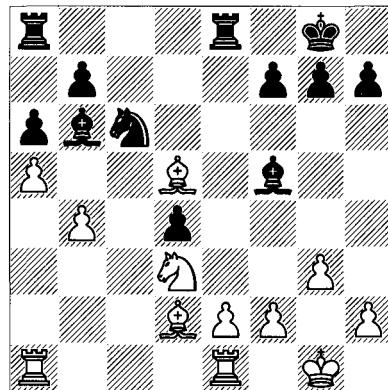
17...♜a5 18 ♜d5?! ♜xd5 19 ♜xd5 ♜f5?!

This opens the way for White to break into Black's position. 19...♜e6 20 ♜xe6 ♜xe6 21 ♜xa5 ♜xa5 22 b4 ♜d8 23 ♜ac1 (D) may be objectively drawn, but the resulting position isn't easy for Black.



White controls the c-file ($\mathbb{R}c4$, $\mathbb{Q}f1$ and $\mathbb{R}fc1$ can follow), and he has some queenside territory. Even if one pair of rooks comes off, the asymmetry of White's good knight versus Black's bad bishop creates difficulties for Black.

20 b4 ♜c6 21 a5 (D)

**21...♜a7?**

21...♜d8 22 b5!? (or 22 ♜ac1) 22...♜xa5 23 ♜xa5 ♜xa5 24 ♜xa5 ♜xd3 25 ♜xb7 ♜xb5! 26 ♜xa8 ♜xa8 may be winning for White, but it will take a lot of work.

22 b5! axb5 23 a6 ♜ad8 24 ♜g2! ♜e4 25 ♜xe4 ♜xe4 26 axb7 ♜b8 27 ♜ec1 ♜e6 28 ♜a8 1-0

There's no defence; for example, 28...♚f8 29 ♜f4 ♜e7 30 ♜xc6 ♜xc6 31 ♜xb8 ♜xb8 32 ♜xb8 ♜b6 33 ♜c5.

**Anand – Timman
Prague (rapid) 2002**

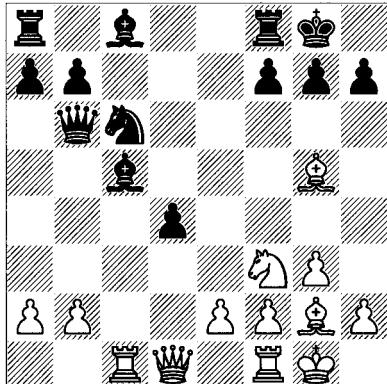
1 c4 c5 2 ♜c3 ♜f6 3 ♜f3 d5 4 cxd5 ♜xd5 5 g3 ♜c6 6 ♜g2 e6 7 d4 ♜e7 8 0-0 0-0 9 ♜xd5 exd5 10 dxc5 ♜xc5 11 ♜g5 f6

As opposed to 11...♜d7 in the last game, Black wins a tempo for development. However, he weakens the a2-g8 diagonal, which may be more serious than it at first appears.

The other major option is 11...♜b6, which is active but does have the drawback of weakening Black's protection of d5. True, the immediate capture 12 ♜xd5?! ♜e6 13 ♜d2 h6 14 ♜e3 ♜fd8 gives Black more than enough play, but 12 ♜c1 forces 12...d4 (D) and leads to complex isolated d-pawn play.

Two examples:

W



a) 13 $\mathbb{Q}d2??!$ contemplates $\mathbb{Q}c4$, $\mathbb{Q}e4$ or $\mathbb{Q}b3$. However, Black can strike quickly at e2, as illustrated by Zsu.Polgar-Lautier, Polanica Zdroj 1991: 13... $\mathbb{E}e8$ 14 $\mathbb{Q}b3!?$ $\mathbb{Q}f8$ 15 $\mathbb{Q}e1$ h6 16 $\mathbb{Q}f4$ $\mathbb{Q}g4$ (once Black achieves ... $\mathbb{Q}g4$ and ... $\mathbb{Q}ad8$ in isolated d-pawn situations with White's bishop on g2, he's usually solved his problems) 17 h3 (or 17 $\mathbb{Q}xc6$ bxc6 18 $\mathbb{Q}xd4$ $\mathbb{Q}b4!?$) 17... $\mathbb{Q}e6$ 18 $\mathbb{Q}xc6$ bxc6 19 $\mathbb{Q}xd4$ $\mathbb{Q}xh3$ 20 $\mathbb{Q}e3$ $\mathbb{Q}e6$ 21 $\mathbb{Q}c3$ $\mathbb{Q}a6$ 22 a3 $\mathbb{Q}d5$ 23 $\mathbb{Q}d4$ $\mathbb{Q}c8!.$ Black has come out of the opening in flying colours and wins with an assault on the king: 24 $\mathbb{Q}f3$ $\mathbb{Q}h3$ 25 $\mathbb{Q}ed1$ $\mathbb{Q}d6!$ 26 $\mathbb{Q}xd5$ (not only is ... $\mathbb{Q}xg3$ a threat, but ... $\mathbb{Q}e6-g6$ or ... $\mathbb{Q}e4-g4$ is next, so White concedes material) 26... $\mathbb{Q}xd5$ 27 $\mathbb{Q}d1$ $\mathbb{Q}ac8$ 28 $\mathbb{Q}d3$ $\mathbb{Q}c5$ 29 $\mathbb{Q}xc5$ $\mathbb{Q}xc5$ 30 b4 $\mathbb{Q}cc8$ 31 b5 $\mathbb{Q}g4$ 32 $\mathbb{Q}d4$ $\mathbb{Q}c4.$ Black has consolidated and won easily.

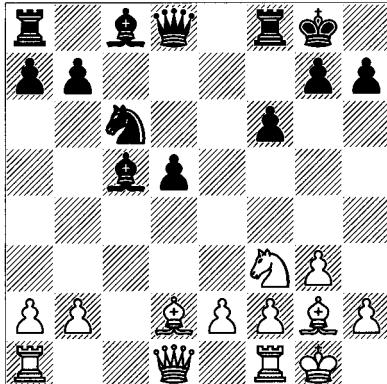
b) 13 $\mathbb{Q}c2!$ seems to improve for White: 13... $\mathbb{Q}d6$ 14 $\mathbb{Q}d2$ $\mathbb{Q}e6$ 15 $\mathbb{Q}e4!$ $\mathbb{Q}e7$ (White had to calculate the consequences of 15... $\mathbb{Q}b4$ 16 $\mathbb{Q}d2$ $\mathbb{Q}xa2$ 17 $\mathbb{Q}f6+!$ $\mathbb{Q}h8$ 18 $\mathbb{Q}d3!$ g6 19 $\mathbb{Q}cd1$) 16 $\mathbb{Q}xe7$ $\mathbb{Q}xe7$ 17 $\mathbb{Q}g5$ (17 $\mathbb{Q}c5!?$) 17... $\mathbb{Q}f5$ 18 $\mathbb{Q}c5$ $\mathbb{Q}fe8$ 19 b4?!, Illescas-Lautier, Dos Hermanas 1994. Black's position is hardly terrible, but White's bishop still exerts pressure on b7 and the central squares; also, his pieces coordinate better.

12 $\mathbb{Q}d2$ (D)

This passive-looking retreat is based upon the idea that c3 will be the ideal square from which to blockade a pawn on d5, in conjunction with e3. If Black prevents that by playing ...d4, then $\mathbb{Q}e1-d3$ is the strategy. But 12 $\mathbb{Q}d2$ has another point that took a while to become appreciated.

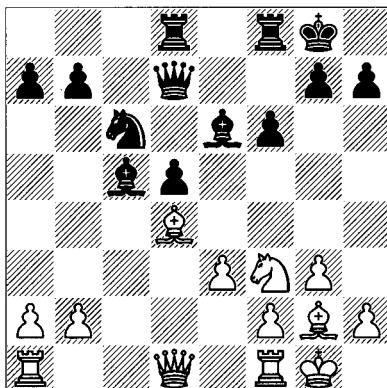
12... $\mathbb{Q}f5$

B



12... $\mathbb{Q}f5$ is well answered by the standard manoeuvre 13 $\mathbb{Q}e1$ and 14 $\mathbb{Q}d3$, but White sometimes uses the alternative set-up 13 e3 $\mathbb{Q}d7$ 14 $\mathbb{Q}c3$. Then 14... $\mathbb{Q}ad8$ 15 $\mathbb{Q}d4!$ (D) is instructive.

B



White doesn't want to trade his knight for Black's bishop on d4, because his 'bad' dark-squared bishop would be no better than Black's knight on c6. But after 15 $\mathbb{Q}d4$, either 15... $\mathbb{Q}xd4$ 16 $\mathbb{Q}xd4$ or 15... $\mathbb{Q}xd4$ 16 $\mathbb{Q}xd4$ would give White a standard positional pull versus the d-pawn. Korchnoi-Sturua, Basle 2001 continued 15... $\mathbb{Q}d6!$ 16 $\mathbb{Q}c1$ $\mathbb{Q}fe8$ 17 $\mathbb{Q}b3$ $\mathbb{Q}a5$ 18 $\mathbb{Q}c3$ and White stood slightly better.

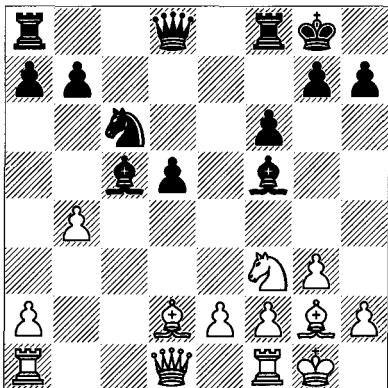
13 b4! (D)

A new move at the time. Having extra territory on the queenside proves valuable.

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

How about capturing the pawn? Taking with the bishop is a mistake: 13... $\mathbb{Q}xb4?$ 14 $\mathbb{Q}d4!$ $\mathbb{Q}xd2$ 15 $\mathbb{Q}xf5$ $\mathbb{Q}a5$ 16 $\mathbb{Q}b3.$ Tsesarsky analyses the more complex 13... $\mathbb{Q}xb4$ 14 $\mathbb{Q}xb4$ $\mathbb{Q}xb4$

B



15 $\mathbb{Q}d4!$ $\mathbb{Q}c8$ 16 $\mathbb{W}b3$ $\mathbb{W}e7$ 17 $\mathbb{M}ab1$ $\mathbb{Q}c5$ 18 $\mathbb{W}xd5+$ $\mathbb{Q}h8$ 19 $\mathbb{Q}f5$ $\mathbb{W}e5!$ 20 $\mathbb{W}xe5$ $fxe5$ 21 $\mathbb{M}b5$ $\mathbb{Q}xf5$ 22 $\mathbb{M}xc5$ with a modest advantage for White.

14 b5 $\mathbb{Q}e7$ 15 $\mathbb{Q}b4$

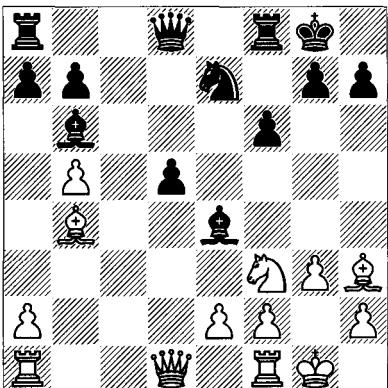
White's pieces have come to life, and the d-pawn is in danger. Whatever Black does will compromise his position.

15... $\mathbb{Q}e4!?$

Black's weaknesses on d5 and e6 also end up hurting him after 15... $\mathbb{Q}e8$ 16 $\mathbb{Q}d4$, with the idea 16... $\mathbb{Q}e4$ 17 $\mathbb{Q}h3$ or 16... $\mathbb{Q}g4$ 17 $\mathbb{M}c1$ $\mathbb{M}c8$ 18 $\mathbb{W}d3!$.

16 $\mathbb{Q}h3!$ (D)

B



This not only hits e6, but stops Black from contesting the c-file by ... $\mathbb{M}c8$.

16... $\mathbb{Q}h8$

16... $\mathbb{Q}xf3?!$ 17 $exf3$ weakens Black's light squares further and favours the two bishops. Even the doubled f-pawns, which are indeed a drawback to White's position, open the way for occupation of the e-file by $\mathbb{W}e2$ with $\mathbb{M}fe1$ next.

17 $\mathbb{Q}d4$ $\mathbb{M}e8$ 18 a4 $\mathbb{Q}xd4$

The knight is simply too strong on d4.

19 $\mathbb{W}xd4$ $\mathbb{Q}f5$

Black has to try something because $\mathbb{M}fd1$ and $f3$ are coming.

20 $\mathbb{W}d2$ $\mathbb{W}b6?$

This will lose. Tsesarsky gives 20... $\mathbb{Q}d6$ 21 $\mathbb{M}ac1$ $\mathbb{Q}c4$ 22 $\mathbb{Q}d4$ a6 23 $\mathbb{M}fd1$ and White is in command, since f3 will soon follow.

21 $\mathbb{M}ac1$ $\mathbb{Q}d4?$ 22 a5 1-0

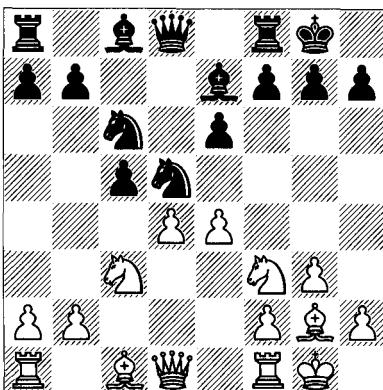
A piece falls. White's play demonstrates how the need to defend the isolated pawn can force Black to make concessions.

Filippov – Volzhin

Gistrup 1996

1 $\mathbb{Q}f3$ $\mathbb{Q}f6$ 2 c4 c5 3 $\mathbb{Q}c3$ e6 4 g3 d5 5 cxd5 $\mathbb{Q}xd5$ 6 $\mathbb{Q}g2$ $\mathbb{Q}c6$ 7 0-0 $\mathbb{Q}e7$ 8 d4 0-0 9 e4 (D)

B



This unpretentious move sets up a big centre and intends to use it for attacking purposes.

9... $\mathbb{Q}db4$

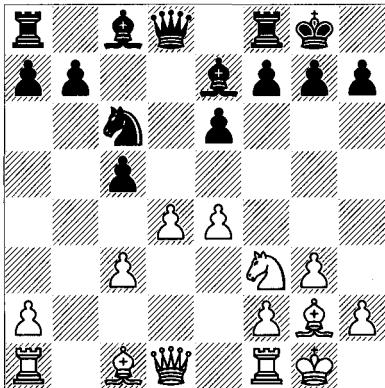
Black puts some pressure on d4 and tries to break up White's centre, based upon the idea 10 d5 exd5 11 exd5 $\mathbb{Q}d4!$ 12 $\mathbb{Q}xd4$ cxd4 and the d-pawn is immune. There are two other major moves; here are some games with representative positional and tactical themes:

a) 9... $\mathbb{Q}xc3$ 10 bxc3 (D).

Now play revolves around White's ability to advance his centre; he has done extremely well over the years:

a1) 10... $\mathbb{Q}h8$ allows 11 d5! $\mathbb{Q}a5$ 12 $\mathbb{M}e1$; for example, 12...exd5 13 exd5 $\mathbb{Q}f6$ 14 $\mathbb{Q}e5$ $\mathbb{Q}b7$ 15 $\mathbb{Q}f4$ $\mathbb{M}e8$ 16 $\mathbb{W}d3$ $\mathbb{Q}xe5$ 17 $\mathbb{Q}xe5$ with a very large advantage based upon space, the bishops

B



and the passed d-pawn, Gulko-Adamski, Copenhagen 2000. In the game, Black lost a pawn after 17... $\mathbb{Q}c6?$ 18 $\mathbb{Q}f4$ $\mathbb{W}d7$ 19 $\mathbb{Q}e4!$, attacking c6 and h7.

a2) 10... $\mathbb{Q}xd4$ gives Black's pieces a little more room to work with: 11 $\mathbb{Q}xd4$ $\mathbb{Q}f6$ 12 $\mathbb{Q}b2!$ (the bishop is better-placed here than on the more centralized position after 12 $\mathbb{Q}e3$, in part because it covers e5, but also because it makes an effective d5 possible) 12... $b6$ 13 $\mathbb{Q}b1!$ $\mathbb{Q}b7$ 14 $d5!$ $exd5$ 15 $exd5$ $\mathbb{Q}a5$ 16 $\mathbb{Q}e5$ (since the knight will occupy the c6-square next, Black exchanges it off, but White's bishops become terribly strong) 16... $\mathbb{Q}xe5$ 17 $\mathbb{Q}xe5$ $\mathbb{Q}c8$ 18 $\mathbb{Q}c1$ $\mathbb{W}d7$ 19 $\mathbb{Q}c3?$ $\mathbb{Q}a6$ 20 $\mathbb{Q}e1$ $\mathbb{Q}b7$ 21 $\mathbb{Q}d4$ $f6$ 22 $\mathbb{Q}b4!$ $\mathbb{Q}xc1$ 23 $\mathbb{Q}xc1$ $\mathbb{Q}c8$ 24 $\mathbb{Q}xc8+$ $\mathbb{W}xc8$ 25 $h4$ $\mathbb{Q}b5$ 26 $d6$ $\mathbb{Q}c5$ 27 $\mathbb{Q}d5+!$ $\mathbb{Q}f8$ 28 $\mathbb{Q}e4!!$ $\mathbb{Q}f7$ (28... $\mathbb{Q}xe4?$ loses on the spot to 29 $d7+$, but everything else is winning for White as well) 29 $\mathbb{Q}e7+$ $\mathbb{Q}g6$ 30 $h5+$ $\mathbb{Q}xh5$ 31 $\mathbb{Q}f7+!$ 1-0 Christiansen-Portisch, Linares 1981.

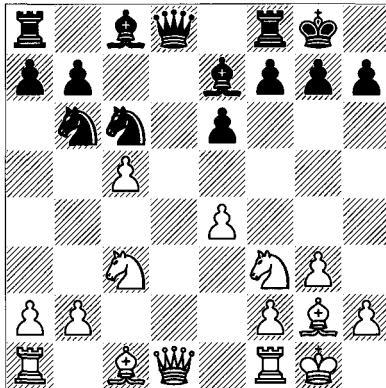
b) 9... $\mathbb{Q}b6$ 10 $dxc5$ (D) (the other main line is 10 5 $exd5$ 11 $exd5$ $\mathbb{Q}b4$ and 12 $\mathbb{Q}e1$ or 12 $\mathbb{Q}e5$).

As in our main game, White would like to prepare e5 and $\mathbb{Q}e2$, so Black will either exchange queens or try to prevent e5:

b1) 10... $\mathbb{Q}xc5$ 11 $\mathbb{Q}f4!$ prevents ...e5 and maintains a small central edge (as opposed to 11 $\mathbb{Q}e2$ e5!).

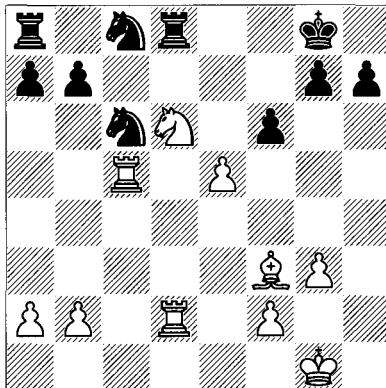
b2) 10... $\mathbb{W}xd1$ 11 $\mathbb{Q}xd1$ $\mathbb{Q}xc5$ 12 $\mathbb{Q}f4$ $f6$ 13 $\mathbb{Q}ac1$ $e5$ 14 $\mathbb{Q}b5$ $exf4!$ 15 $\mathbb{Q}xc5$ $fxg3$ 16 $hxg3$ $\mathbb{Q}g4$ 17 $\mathbb{Q}d2$ (this position appears innocent enough, but Black has to be careful, because a knight on d6 can be a bother, and the move ...f6 has weakened e6) 17... $\mathbb{Q}fd8!$ 18 $\mathbb{Q}d6$ $\mathbb{Q}xf3$ 19 $\mathbb{Q}xf3$ and now:

B



b21) 19... $\mathbb{Q}c8?!$ 20 $e5!$ (D) brings the f3-bishop to life.

B



Sunye Neto-Bouaziz, Novi Sad Olympiad 1990 continued 20... $\mathbb{Q}xe5$ 21 $\mathbb{Q}d5+?!$ (this should only help Black; 21 $\mathbb{Q}xb7!$ $\mathbb{Q}b8$ 22 $\mathbb{Q}d5+$ $\mathbb{Q}f8$ 23 $\mathbb{Q}xc8$ is good for White) 21... $\mathbb{Q}h8??$ (21... $\mathbb{Q}f8$ improves the king's position) 22 $\mathbb{Q}xc8?$ (22 $\mathbb{Q}xb7!$ $\mathbb{Q}b8$ 23 $\mathbb{Q}xc8$ wins because White has the $\mathbb{Q}f7+$ idea) 22... $\mathbb{Q}xc8$ 23 $\mathbb{Q}xc8$ $\mathbb{Q}xc8$ 24 $\mathbb{Q}xb7$ (White has bishop vs knight and a queenside majority) 24... $\mathbb{Q}c1+25\mathbb{Q}g2$ $g6$ 26 $b3$ $\mathbb{Q}c7$ 27 $\mathbb{Q}a6$ $\mathbb{Q}g7$ 28 $f4$ $\mathbb{Q}f7$ 29 $\mathbb{Q}c4$ $\mathbb{Q}f8$ 30 $\mathbb{Q}f3$ $\mathbb{Q}e7$ 31 $\mathbb{Q}e2+$ $\mathbb{Q}d8$ 32 $\mathbb{Q}e6$, and White had increased his seemingly minor advantage and went on to win.

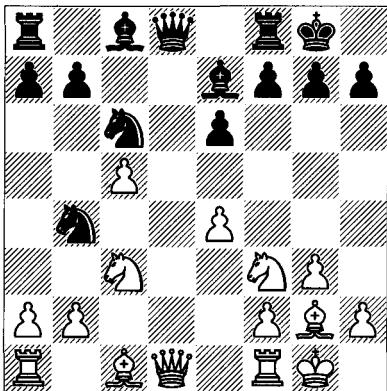
b22) 19... $\mathbb{Q}e5!$ can be met by 20 $\mathbb{Q}d1$, when 20... $\mathbb{Q}c8?!$ favours White after Korchnoi's suggestion 21 $\mathbb{Q}cd5$, but Ribli's 20... $\mathbb{Q}f8!$ improves. So instead, 20 $\mathbb{Q}h5!?$ $g6$ 21 $\mathbb{Q}e2$ might be best.

10 $dxc5$ (D)

White hasn't played this very much (especially not in conjunction with 11 a3), preferring

the moves 10 a3 and 10 d5, which theory ultimately pronounces equal. But after 10 dxc5, Black is under pressure to find an answer to the basic idea of e5 and $\mathbb{Q}e4$.

B



10... $\mathbb{Q}xc5$

White's position is clearly preferable following 10... $\mathbb{Q}xd1$ 11 $\mathbb{Q}xd1$ $\mathbb{Q}xc5$ 12 e5 with the ideas $\mathbb{Q}e4$ and a3.

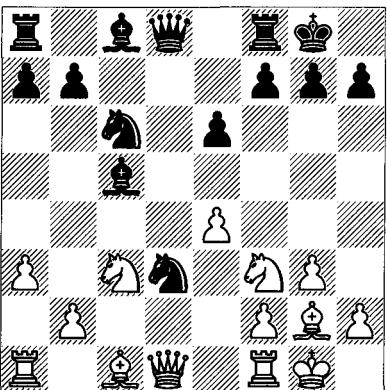
11 a3!

11 e5 is the usual move, and has a lot of theory behind it; Black can keep an approximate balance.

11... $\mathbb{Q}d3$ (D)

11... $\mathbb{Q}xd1$ doesn't improve Black's situation after 12 $\mathbb{Q}xd1$ $\mathbb{Q}c2$ 13 $\mathbb{Q}a2!$; for example, 13... $\mathbb{Q}d2d4$ 14 b4 $\mathbb{Q}xf3+$ 15 $\mathbb{Q}xf3$ $\mathbb{Q}d4$ 16 $\mathbb{Q}c2$ $\mathbb{Q}b6$ 17 $\mathbb{Q}a4$ $\mathbb{Q}d4$ 18 $\mathbb{Q}xb6$ $\mathbb{Q}xf3+$ 19 $\mathbb{Q}g2$ $axb6$ 20 $\mathbb{Q}xf3$ e5. Black's bishop needs to get out, but he is in terrible shape after 21 $\mathbb{Q}c7$, 21 $\mathbb{Q}d6$ or the sadistic 21 g4! (preventing ...f5).

W



12 b4! $\mathbb{Q}xc1$

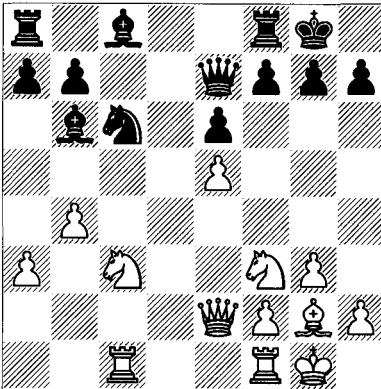
Tsesarsky analyses 12... $\mathbb{Q}d4$ 13 $\mathbb{Q}xd4$ $\mathbb{Q}xd4$ 14 $\mathbb{Q}c2$ $\mathbb{Q}d8?$, and now his 15 $\mathbb{Q}e3$ is strong, but 15 $\mathbb{Q}d1!$ practically wins on the spot.

13 $\mathbb{Q}xc1$ $\mathbb{Q}b6$

Upon 13... $\mathbb{Q}d6$, 14 $\mathbb{Q}e2!$ has in mind $\mathbb{Q}fd1$ or e5; and 13... $\mathbb{Q}e7$ 14 e5 (or 14 $\mathbb{Q}e2$) runs into the same type of structural issue.

14 e5 $\mathbb{Q}e7$ 15 $\mathbb{Q}e2$ (D)

B

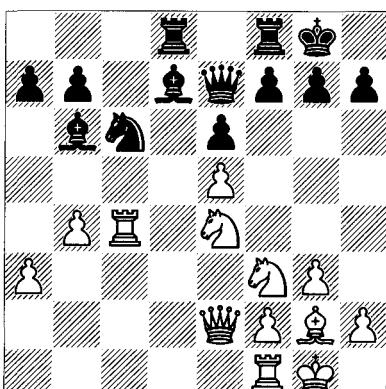


White has achieved the basic bind that he had in mind when playing 10 dxc5. He has greater space, a powerful bishop, a beautiful square on e4 for a knight (and queen), and an outpost on d6. If that weren't enough, there are definite kingside attacking prospects! It's surprising, to say the least, that this line with 11 a3 hasn't been used more often.

15... $\mathbb{Q}d7$ 16 $\mathbb{Q}e4$ $\mathbb{Q}ad8$ 17 $\mathbb{Q}c4?!$ (D)

There are better moves such as 17 $\mathbb{Q}fd1!$ and 17 b5!, with the point 17... $\mathbb{Q}d4$ 18 $\mathbb{Q}xd4$ $\mathbb{Q}xd4$ 19 $\mathbb{Q}d6$. Both of those give a substantial advantage, but the rook advance has a hidden purpose.

B



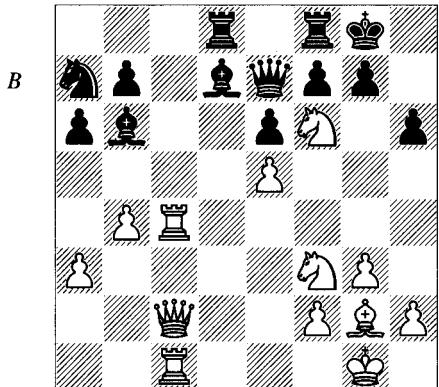
17...a6!

A good reorganizing move: Black activates both his knight and passive bishop.

18 ♜fc1 ♜a7 19 ♜c2? h6??

Tsesarsky gives some analysis of 19...♜b5 20 ♜d2!, when the queen shifts to the kingside to good effect. But both 19...♜b5 and 19...♜c6 are better, verging upon equality.

20 ♜f6+! (D)



1-0

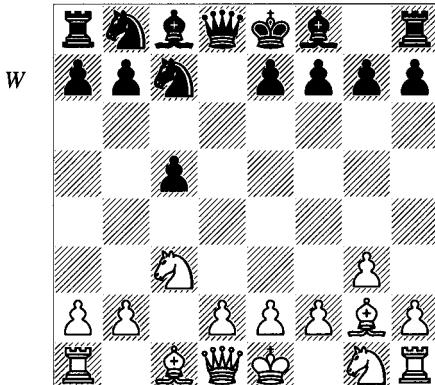
The rook on c4 comes through after all! 20...gxf6 21 ♜g4+ ♜h8 22 ♜d2! ♜h7 23 ♜h4 leads quickly to mate.

Rubinstein System

1 c4 c5 2 ♜c3 ♜f6 3 g3 d5 4 cxd5 ♜xd5 5 ♜g2 ♜c7 (D)

Incidentally, 5...e6?! is considered an error because of 6 ♜xd5 exd5 7 ♜b3 and a pawn falls. This was confirmed in Gelfand-Kramnik, FIDE Candidates match (game 8), Sanghi Nagar 1994: 7...♜c6 (7...♜e6 8 ♜xb7 ♜d7 doesn't threaten anything) 8 ♜xd5 ♜xd5 9 ♜xd5 ♜b4 10 ♜e4 f5 11 ♜b1 and Black had insufficient compensation.

The approach with ...♜c7 is called the Rubinstein System. Black's idea now is to play ...e5 and set up a sort of Maroczy Bind Sicilian in reverse – more about which in a moment. The main positions of the Rubinstein very often arise after White has played ♜f3 on an early move; for example, 2 ♜f3 ♜f6 3 ♜c3 d5 4 cxd5 ♜xd5 5 g3 ♜c6 6 ♜g2 ♜c7. With any such move-order, Black needn't deal with various



early options that White has in the next few moves below. However, you may note that this sequence allows 5 e4, as analysed above.

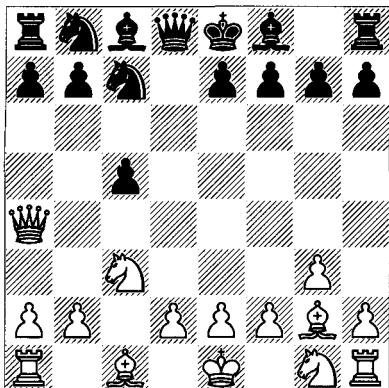
Finally, I should say that Black can combine the move ...♜c7 with ...g6 and ...♜g7, which is much rarer and a bit suspect. I won't be covering that.

The Rubinstein Variation is a long-established and respected line. When you notice that in so many games Black will get the better position versus just slightly inaccurate or passive play, you begin to understand why leading players have traditionally had so much respect for the Sicilian Maroczy Bind, which is the same opening with an extra tempo: 1 e4 c5 2 ♜f3 ♜c6 3 d4 cxd4 4 ♜xd4 g6 5 c4. Indeed, it's worth taking a look at this Sicilian line with 5...♜g7 6 ♜c2 ♜f6 7 ♜c3, when we have a reversed version of the main line of the Rubinstein that comes from 5...♜c7 6 ♜f3 ♜c6 7 0-0 e5; White's extra move in the Rubinstein is 0-0. As we know, the study of reversed positions often shows that things are not so simple, in that an extra move can impart information to the opponent. Nevertheless, the basic Maroczy structure should not be underestimated.

After 5...♜c7, White's main move is 6 ♜f3. In the next game, we'll see the important 6 ♜b3. Before turning to those, however, let's look at the slightly controversial forcing move 6 ♜a4+ (D).

This is important to know about, because it either forces Black into a passive position or wins a pawn: 6...♜d7 (6...♜d7 7 ♜f3 followed by d4 is good for White; 6...♜d7 is playable but slightly depressing after simply 7 ♜xd7+ ♜xd7

B



8 $\mathbb{Q}f3$; White can also play 7 $\mathbb{Q}f3$ $\mathbb{W}xa4$!? 8 $\mathbb{Q}xa4$ $\mathbb{Q}d7$ 9 d4, when his active pieces and queenside pressure give him the nod, Tkachev-V.Mikhalevski, European Ch, Ohrid 2001) 7 $\mathbb{W}b3$ (7 $\mathbb{W}c4$ $\mathbb{Q}c6$! 8 $\mathbb{W}xc5$ also wins a pawn, but then 8...e5 9 $\mathbb{W}e3$ $\mathbb{Q}e6$ 10 $\mathbb{Q}f3$ $\mathbb{Q}c5$ 11 $\mathbb{W}e4$ f5! 12 $\mathbb{W}d5$ $\mathbb{W}f6$!? 13 0-0 e4 14 $\mathbb{Q}e1$ 0-0-0! grants Black liberal compensation, Ivačić-Grosar, Bled 1992) gives Black two ways to gambit his b-pawn, both legitimate:

a) 7... $\mathbb{Q}c6$ 8 $\mathbb{Q}xc6+$ $\mathbb{Q}xc6$ 9 $\mathbb{W}xb7$ $\mathbb{Q}d4$. Now one line is 10 $\mathbb{Q}f3$ $\mathbb{B}b8$ (10... $\mathbb{Q}c2$!?) 11 $\mathbb{Q}d1$ $\mathbb{Q}xa1$ 12 $\mathbb{Q}e5$!, and White wins after 12... $\mathbb{W}d6$ 13 $\mathbb{Q}b5$! or 12...e6 13 $\mathbb{W}c6+$ $\mathbb{Q}e7$ 14 $\mathbb{W}xc5$ + $\mathbb{Q}e8$ 15 $\mathbb{W}c6+$ $\mathbb{Q}e7$ 16 b3!) 11 $\mathbb{W}e4$ f5 12 $\mathbb{W}d3$ g6 13 0-0 $\mathbb{Q}g7$ 14 $\mathbb{Q}c4$ $\mathbb{Q}xf3+$ 15 exf3 $\mathbb{W}d4$! and the machine had more than enough counterplay in Van der Wiel-Rebel *Century*, Maastricht 2001.

b) 7... $\mathbb{Q}c6$ 8 $\mathbb{W}xb7$ $\mathbb{Q}d4$ (not 8... $\mathbb{B}b8$?) 9 $\mathbb{W}xc6$!, a trick to remember) 9 $\mathbb{W}e4$ g6! (9... $\mathbb{Q}f5$? 10 $\mathbb{W}xf5$! $\mathbb{Q}xf5$ 11 $\mathbb{Q}c6$ +) 10 $\mathbb{W}b1$ $\mathbb{Q}g7$! 11 e3 (White declines the offer; after 11 $\mathbb{Q}xa8$ $\mathbb{W}xa8$ 12 f3, Berkes and Csom supply loads of analysis with 12... $\mathbb{Q}a6$, 12... $\mathbb{Q}d5$ and simply 12...0-0 13 $\mathbb{Q}f2$ $\mathbb{B}b8$; in all cases, Black gets ample compensation based upon White's weaknesses and vastly inferior development) 11... $\mathbb{Q}c6$ 12 $\mathbb{Q}ge2$ 0-0 13 0-0 $\mathbb{B}b8$ 14 $\mathbb{Q}d1$ $\mathbb{Q}b5$ 15 $\mathbb{Q}xb5$ $\mathbb{B}xb5$ and it's difficult for White to handle the pressure, Acs-Berkes, Pacs 2004.

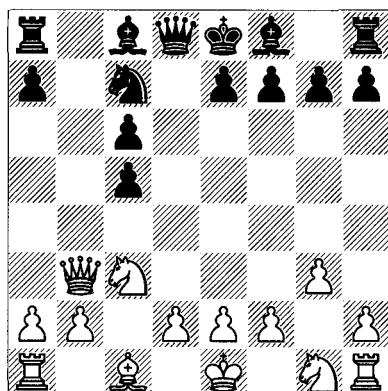
Romanishin – Mikhalkishin
Lvov 1987

1 c4 $\mathbb{Q}f6$ 2 $\mathbb{Q}c3$ c5 3 g3 d5 4 cxd5 $\mathbb{Q}xd5$ 5 $\mathbb{Q}g2$ $\mathbb{Q}c7$ 6 $\mathbb{W}b3$?

By an attack on the b7-pawn, White compels Black's response.

6... $\mathbb{Q}c6$ 7 $\mathbb{Q}xc6+$ $\mathbb{B}xc6$ (D)

W



The structure has stabilized and we have the familiar sight of doubled c-pawns on an open file, as in several English Opening lines and in the archetypal Nimzo-Indian Defence. In common with those cases, Black has the bishop-pair and will soon gain space via ...e5 to compensate for his weaknesses. He can also operate down an open d-file and manoeuvre a knight to d4. On the other hand, by contrast with the Nimzo-Indian, his doubled, isolated c-pawns already stand on an open file and are therefore easily attacked. The dynamics of this trade-off are remarkable, and I'll address the fundamental positional factors again over the next few moves.

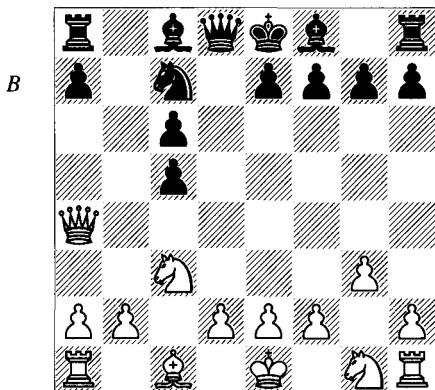
As an aside, I should say that the sequence 1 c4 c5 2 $\mathbb{Q}c3$ $\mathbb{Q}c6$ 3 $\mathbb{Q}f3$ g6 4 d4?! (White should prefer 4 e3!, as described in Chapter 8, which is why Black tends to forego 3...g6) 4...cx d4 5 $\mathbb{Q}xd4$ $\mathbb{Q}g7$ 6 $\mathbb{Q}c2$ $\mathbb{Q}xc3$ + 7 $\mathbb{B}xc3$ $\mathbb{Q}a5$ is exactly the same as our line with 6 $\mathbb{W}b3$ $\mathbb{Q}c6$ 7 $\mathbb{Q}xc6+$ $\mathbb{B}xc6$ 8 $\mathbb{W}a4$, because White has taken an extra tempo with $\mathbb{W}b3-a4$ in the latter case.

8 $\mathbb{W}a4$

This is the more forcing move-order, assuming that you want to play $\mathbb{W}a4$ at all, because it bypasses some irregular but dangerous gambits which can occur if you tarry on b3. It's also possible to keep the queen on b3 in order to save a move and perhaps influence central operations. An interesting example went 8 $\mathbb{Q}f3$ f6 (the conventional idea, preparing ...e5) 9 d3 e5

10 ♜e3 ♜e6 (10...♜e6!? 11 ♜a4 ♜d7 has also been played, giving Black a more aggressive and natural set-up than when he has a bishop on d7 or c8; although this grants White easier access to the c-pawns, Black's kingside counter-attack is faster than usual, with unclear results; a curious answer to 10...♜e6 would be 11 ♜a3!? c4 12 ♜a4 cxd3 13 ♜d1 with unclear prospects in which White retains his structural superiority) 11 0-0 ♜e7 12 ♜fc1 ♜d4! 13 ♜xd4!? cxd4 14 ♜e4 (White is following the principle that the c5-square is the important weakness, regardless of whether a pawn is on it) 14...♜d7 15 ♜c5!? (15 a3! ♜b8 16 ♜c2 0-0 17 b4 would be positionally consistent, targeting c5) 15...♜b8! 16 ♜a4 ♜xc5 17 ♜xc5 ♜xb2 and now White unleashed 18 ♜xe5!?, when 18...♜xe2? 19 ♜xc6! gave him a strong attack in Lerner-Thorsteins, Lugano 1989, but Black should have accepted with 18...fxe5 19 ♜xe5+ ♜f7 20 ♜xd4 (20 ♜c4+ ♜g6!) 20...♜b5! 21 ♜xb5 cxb5 22 ♜xa7, when it's not completely clear, but Black's pieces coordinate well on the light squares after 22...♜e8.

Now let's return to the position after 8 ♜a4 (D).

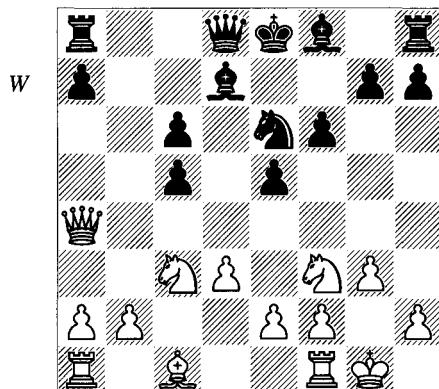


8...♝d7

8...♝d7 is frequently played, when White almost always replies 9 ♜f3. Then one example was Psakhis-Tukmakov, Rostov-na-Donu 1993: 9...f6 10 d3 e5 11 ♜e3 ♜e6 12 0-0 ♜b8 13 ♜ab1 h5?! (too ambitious; Black should prepare to castle with 13...♜e7) 14 ♜e4 ♜d4 15 ♜xd4 cxd4 16 ♜fc1 ♜b5! 17 ♜c2 a5 18 ♜bc1, and White had c-file pressure with outposts on c4 and c5.

9 ♜f3 f6 10 0-0 e5 11 d3 ♜e6 (D)

Here 11...♜b8! 12 ♜b1 ♜b4 13 ♜c2 ♜b5 has been suggested; it's consistent with Black's goal: active piece-play to counteract his weaknesses.

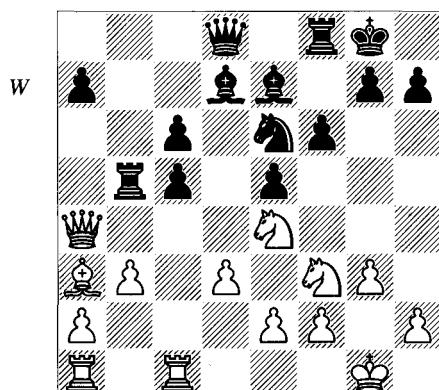


12 ♜e4

Two instructive alternatives:

a) Sometimes a bald simplification suffices to give Black equality: 12 ♜e3 ♜e7 13 ♜fc1 ♜d4! 14 ♜xd4 cxd4 15 ♜e4 (so far, so normal) 15...♜b6! 16 ♜c4 ♜b4!? 17 ♜c5 ♜xc4 18 ♜xc4 ♜xc5 19 ♜xc5 ♜e7 20 ♜d2 ♜hb8 21 b3 ♜b5 22 ♜ac1 ♜ab8 and White couldn't make progress in Mamedyarov-Wojtaszek, World Junior Ch, Istanbul 2005.

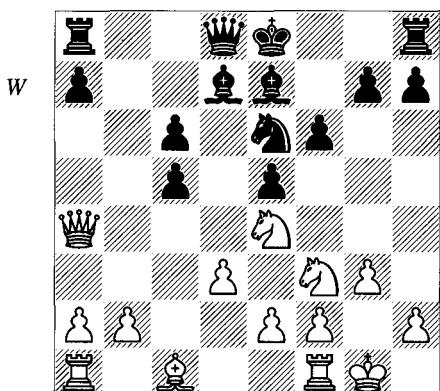
b) You may be wondering why White doesn't attack the c5-pawn with b3 and ♜a3, as he does in the Nimzo-Indian (via ...♜a6). That's a reasonable idea, and 12 b3 ♜e7 13 ♜a3 isn't bad. Black gets to show a new twist, however: 13...0-0 14 ♜fc1 ♜b8! 15 ♜e4 (15 ♜xa7?? ♜a8) 15...♜b5! (D).



Black is threatening ... $\mathbb{B}a5$, winning a piece, so either the bishop has to retreat, to some extent negating the purpose of $b3/\mathbb{B}a3$, or White plays 16 $\mathbb{W}c4 \mathbb{B}h8$, when ... $\mathbb{B}a5$ and ... $\mathbb{Q}d4$ will equalize, and for the first time the attacking move ... $f5$ is becoming relevant. Black has at any rate levelled the game.

12... $\mathbb{B}e7$ (D)

Informator analysts show the line 12... $\mathbb{Q}d4$? 13 $\mathbb{Q}xd4$ cxd4 14 f4!, another theme to watch out for if Black is undeveloped.



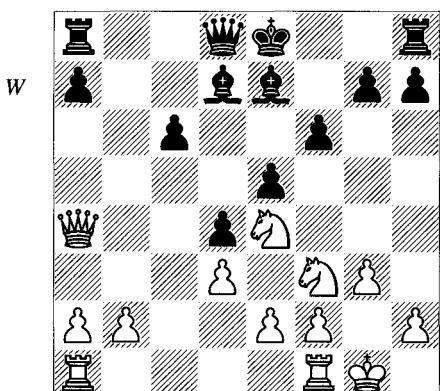
13 $\mathbb{B}e3$ $\mathbb{Q}d4$

For Black, this is the key move to save his pawn on c5 and rid himself of one of White's best pieces. Generally ... $\mathbb{Q}d4$ is better after $\mathbb{B}e3$ is played (shades of so many other English Opening lines).

14 $\mathbb{Q}xd4$

Not 14 $\mathbb{Q}xd4$?, which frees Black's bishops after 14...cxd4 15 $\mathbb{Q}d2$ c5 16 $\mathbb{W}c4 \mathbb{B}b6$! intending ... $\mathbb{B}e6$.

14...cxd4 (D)



15 $\mathbb{W}c4$?

This gives Black time to get everything activated. It was better to bring more pieces into play by 15 $\mathbb{Q}fc1 \mathbb{B}b6$, with dynamic equality.

15... $\mathbb{B}b8$ 16 $\mathbb{Q}c5$! $\mathbb{Q}xc5$

A cautious move. Black could grab a pawn by 16... $\mathbb{B}xb2$, or try to simplify by 16... $\mathbb{Q}h3$! 17 $\mathbb{Q}fc1 \mathbb{B}xb2$ 18 $\mathbb{B}ab1 \mathbb{B}xb1$ 19 $\mathbb{B}xb1 \mathbb{W}d5$!.

17 $\mathbb{W}xc5 \mathbb{B}b6$ 18 $\mathbb{W}a3$! $\mathbb{W}xb2$ 19 $\mathbb{W}xa7 \mathbb{B}b7$ 20 $\mathbb{W}c5 \mathbb{Q}f7$ 21 $\mathbb{W}c4$ + $\mathbb{Q}e6$! 22 $\mathbb{W}xc6 \mathbb{B}d8$ 23 $\mathbb{Q}fe1 \mathbb{Q}d5$ 24 $\mathbb{W}c5 \mathbb{Q}xf3$ 25 $\mathbb{W}xf3 \mathbb{W}c3$ 26 $\mathbb{W}ac1$! $\mathbb{W}xd3$ 27 $\mathbb{F}4$!

White gets counterplay just in time.

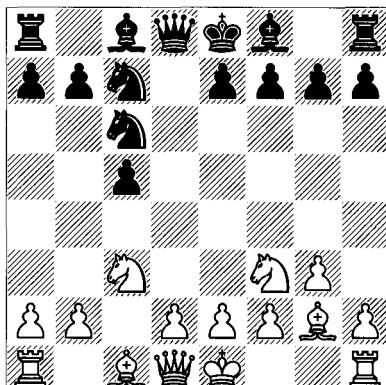
27... $\mathbb{W}xf4$ 28 $\mathbb{W}h5$!+ $\mathbb{Q}f8$ 29 $\mathbb{B}cd1 \mathbb{B}b5$! 30 $\mathbb{W}xd3 \mathbb{W}xh5$ 31 $\mathbb{G}xf4$ ½-½

Black is tied to the d-pawn, which limits his opportunities. This game illustrates a remarkable range of themes.

Lputian – Leko

Wijk aan Zee 2000

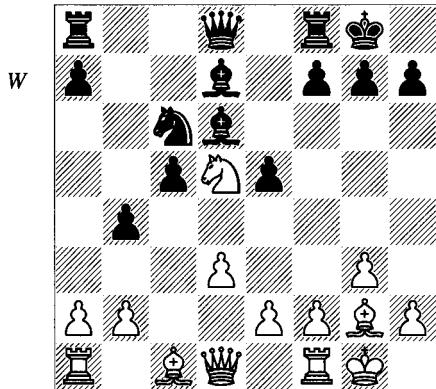
1 c4 c5 2 $\mathbb{Q}f3$ $\mathbb{Q}f6$ 3 g3 d5 4 cxd5 $\mathbb{Q}xd5$ 5 $\mathbb{Q}g2$ $\mathbb{Q}c6$ 6 $\mathbb{Q}c3$ $\mathbb{Q}c7$ (D)



7 0-0

Castling is the obvious move, and 7 d3 e5 8 0-0 transposes. But after 7 d3 e5, the rare 8 $\mathbb{Q}d2$ $\mathbb{Q}d7$ (versus 9 $\mathbb{Q}xc6$ +) 9 $\mathbb{Q}c4$!? is unique and potentially important: 9...b5 (if Black foregoes 9...b5 with 9... $\mathbb{Q}e7$, then 10 f4! $\mathbb{W}xf4$ 11 $\mathbb{Q}xf4$ gives him a different set of problems, beginning with White's intention to put a piece on d6) 10 $\mathbb{Q}e3$ b4 (this is the move given in the books; 10... $\mathbb{B}b8$ 11 0-0 $\mathbb{Q}e7$ is a logical option, when 12 a4 b4 13 $\mathbb{Q}cd5$ might follow) 11 $\mathbb{Q}cd5$ $\mathbb{Q}xd5$ 12 $\mathbb{Q}xd5$. This sequence may be more

important than indicated by the scant attention that it has received. A plausible follow-up is 12... $\mathbb{Q}d6$ (Black saves the bishop that protects the c-pawn) 13 0-0 0-0 (*D*).



In this complex position, White has control of the long diagonal, two excellent posts for his knight, and a vulnerable enemy c-pawn to attack. His first move might be 14 $\mathbb{Q}d2$, with the idea $\mathbb{Q}e3-c4$ and $\mathbb{Q}c1$, or perhaps 14 b3 intending $\mathbb{Q}b2$ and e3. Black has more space and prospective attacks on both wings. He can play for ...f5-f4 with a knight on d4, and include an attack by ... $\mathbb{W}e8-h5$; whether that's realistic is another matter.

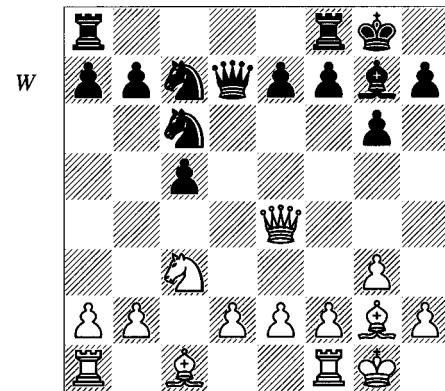
All this should be looked at more closely; it may well be a productive way for White to improve upon the main lines, or at least try something different.

Apart from 7 0-0 and 7 d3, White has these moves worth noting:

a) 7 a3, preparing b4, is a standard anti-Maroczy Bind strategy. As it turns out, this plan is fairly useless after 7...g6!, since 8 b4?! $\mathbb{Q}g7$! 9 bxc5 $\mathbb{Q}e6$ 10 $\mathbb{Q}b2$ $\mathbb{Q}xc5$ (with the idea ... $\mathbb{Q}e6$) is effective; for example, 11 $\mathbb{Q}a4$ $\mathbb{Q}xb2$ 12 $\mathbb{Q}xb2$ $\mathbb{Q}e6$ 13 0-0 0-0 14 $\mathbb{Q}c1$ $\mathbb{W}a5$ and Black stands somewhat better because of his superior pawn-structure, Andersson-Portisch, Biel Interzonal 1976.

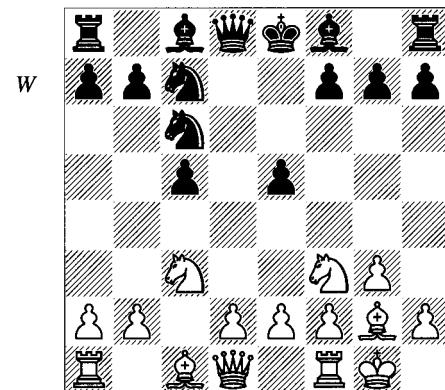
b) The generally accepted solution to 7 $\mathbb{W}a4$ (threatening $\mathbb{Q}e5$) is 7... $\mathbb{Q}d7$ 8 $\mathbb{W}e4$ g6! 9 $\mathbb{Q}e5$ $\mathbb{Q}g7$ 10 $\mathbb{Q}xd7$ $\mathbb{W}xd7$ 11 0-0 0-0 (*D*).

Black is ready to play ... $\mathbb{Q}e6-d4$. So White's main plan is to expand on the queenside by 12 a3 intending b4; for example, 12... $\mathbb{Q}ac8$ 13 $\mathbb{Q}b1$ (Black's main point is shown by 13 b4?! cxb4 14



axb4 $\mathbb{Q}b5$!) 13... $\mathbb{Q}e6$ 14 b4 b6!? (or 14...cxb4 15 axb4 $\mathbb{Q}fd8$! 16 b5 $\mathbb{Q}a5$) 15 b5 $\mathbb{Q}cd4$ 16 e3 $\mathbb{Q}f5$ 17 $\mathbb{W}a4$, Pugusov-Estremera Panos, Las Palmas 1996, and here 17...c4! captures the d3-square. Then best play is probably 18 $\mathbb{Q}c6$! $\mathbb{W}d3$ 19 $\mathbb{Q}b4$! $\mathbb{Q}g5$! (with the idea 20 $\mathbb{Q}xc4$? $\mathbb{Q}f3$!) 20 $\mathbb{Q}g2$ $\mathbb{Q}xc3$ 21 dxc3 $\mathbb{Q}e4$ 22 $\mathbb{Q}xe4$ 23 $\mathbb{W}xe4$ 23 $\mathbb{W}xa7$, when, if he feels he must, Black can take the draw with 23... $\mathbb{Q}h4$ 24 gxh4 $\mathbb{W}g4+$.

7...e5 (*D*)



8 d3

White has various alternatives which the reader may wish to investigate; for example:

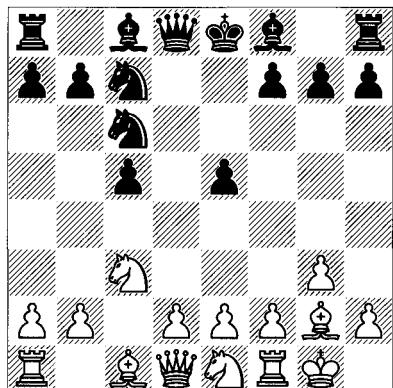
a) One significant variation, which also can be introduced on moves 6 and 7, begins with 8 b3. After $\mathbb{Q}b2$, White wants to play $\mathbb{Q}c1$ and either $\mathbb{Q}e4$ or $\mathbb{Q}a4$, attacking both c5 and e5; he may also play $\mathbb{Q}e1-d3$.

a1) A respected solution is 8... $\mathbb{Q}g4$ 9 $\mathbb{Q}b2$ $\mathbb{W}d7$; for example, 10 $\mathbb{Q}c1$ f6 (or 10... $\mathbb{Q}e6$) 11 $\mathbb{Q}e4$ $\mathbb{Q}a6$. Black's knight goes to a6 fairly often in the Rubinstein, usually in order to protect the

c5-pawn. He might choose that square for it, instead of e6, so as to deter the move b4, or simply because a knight on a6 stays out of the way of other pieces. This is a complex position with mutual chances. One possibility is 12 $\mathbb{Q}e1$ (heading for d3) 12... $\mathbb{Q}e7$ 13 f3 (not 13 $\mathbb{Q}d3?$ $\mathbb{W}xd3$) 13... $\mathbb{Q}h5$ 14 $\mathbb{Q}d3$ $\mathbb{B}d8$, and the game is roughly level. White should probably pass on 15 $\mathbb{Q}exc5?!$ $\mathbb{Q}xc5$ 16 $\mathbb{Q}xc5$ $\mathbb{W}xd2$ 17 $\mathbb{W}xd2$ $\mathbb{B}xd2$ 18 $\mathbb{Q}xb7$ $\mathbb{B}xb2$ 19 $\mathbb{Q}xc6$ 0-0!.

a2) Black can also play more conventionally by means of 8... $\mathbb{Q}e7$ 9 $\mathbb{Q}b2$ 0-0 10 $\mathbb{Q}c1$ f6 with an interesting game. After 11 $\mathbb{Q}a4$ b6, 12 $\mathbb{Q}xe5?$ fails because the a8-rook is defended; this idea crops up in several openings.

b) 8 $\mathbb{Q}e1$ (D) has the idea of $\mathbb{Q}xc6+$, $\mathbb{Q}a4$ and $\mathbb{Q}d3$, when the enemy centre becomes vulnerable.



B

Theory has never quite settled down in this popular line. Black has many solutions, none terribly clear:

b1) 8... $\mathbb{Q}d7$ 9 $\mathbb{Q}d3$ f6 10 b3 $\mathbb{Q}e7$ 11 f4 exf4 12 $\mathbb{Q}xf4$ 0-0 13 $\mathbb{Q}b2$ $\mathbb{Q}h8$ 14 e3 $\mathbb{Q}e8$ 15 $\mathbb{W}e2$ and White stood comfortably better in Kosten-Coenen, San Sebastian 1995.

b2) 8... $\mathbb{Q}d6?!$ 9 $\mathbb{Q}xc6+?!$ $\mathbb{B}xc6$ 10 $\mathbb{W}a4$ 0-0! (an obscure position arises from 10... $\mathbb{Q}d7$ 11 $\mathbb{Q}e4$ $\mathbb{Q}e7$ 12 $\mathbb{Q}d3$ $\mathbb{Q}h3$ 13 $\mathbb{Q}xe5$ $\mathbb{W}d5$ 14 $\mathbb{W}xc6+ \mathbb{W}xc6$ 15 $\mathbb{Q}xc6)$ 11 b3 (11 $\mathbb{W}xc6$ $\mathbb{Q}h3$ 12 $\mathbb{Q}g2$ $\mathbb{Q}e6$ with an attack) 11... $\mathbb{Q}h3$ 12 $\mathbb{Q}g2$ $\mathbb{Q}e6$ 13 $\mathbb{Q}a3?!$ $\mathbb{Q}d4$ 14 $\mathbb{Q}ad1$ $\mathbb{Q}e7$ 15 f3 f5 16 e3 (Tomashevsky-Khismatullin, Moscow 2006) 16... $\mathbb{Q}e6$! 17 $\mathbb{W}xc6$ $\mathbb{Q}fd8$ (or 17... $\mathbb{Q}ac8$) is unclear.

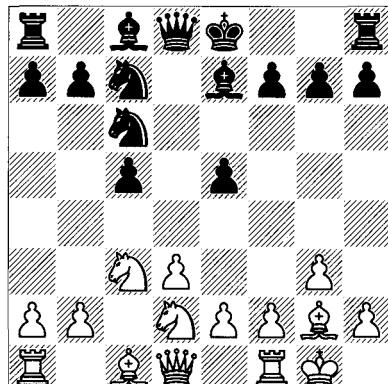
b3) 8... $\mathbb{Q}f5$, preventing $\mathbb{Q}d3$, is perhaps best met by 9 d3 with the idea f4.

b4) 8... $\mathbb{Q}d6?!$ needs a look. Again, 9 d3 with the idea f4 is a reasoned response. Then 9... $\mathbb{Q}e6$ 10 $\mathbb{Q}c2$ $\mathbb{Q}e7$ 11 $\mathbb{Q}e3!$ with the idea $\mathbb{Q}c4$, and in some cases f4, is promising.

b5) 8...h5 9 $\mathbb{Q}f3$ (9 $\mathbb{Q}d3$ h4! 10 $\mathbb{Q}xc6+?!$ $\mathbb{B}xc6$ 11 $\mathbb{Q}xe5?$ $\mathbb{h}xg3$ 12 $\mathbb{h}xg3?$ $\mathbb{Q}g5$ is winning; 9 f4 h4 10 d3 $\mathbb{h}xg3$ 11 $\mathbb{h}xg3$ $\mathbb{Q}d6$ gives Black great activity and White's king is exposed) 9... $\mathbb{Q}e7$ 10 h4 $\mathbb{Q}g4$ 11 d3 $\mathbb{Q}d7$ 12 a4 0-0 with approximate equality, Bricard-Bauer, French Ch, Val d'Isère 2002.

b6) 8... $\mathbb{Q}g4$ is considered the critical test: 9 $\mathbb{Q}xc6+$ (9 $\mathbb{Q}d3?$ $\mathbb{W}xd3!$ 10 f3 $\mathbb{Q}xf3$ 11 $\mathbb{Q}xf3$ $\mathbb{Q}d7$ and White lacks enough compensation) 9... $\mathbb{B}xc6$ 10 $\mathbb{W}a4$ $\mathbb{Q}d7$ 11 $\mathbb{Q}d3$ f6 12 f4!? (12 f3 $\mathbb{Q}f5$ 13 $\mathbb{Q}f2$ $\mathbb{Q}e7$ 14 d3 produces a completely unbalanced position; after 12 b3, 12... $\mathbb{Q}xe2?!$ is not forced, but play might go 13 $\mathbb{Q}xe2$ $\mathbb{W}xd3$ 14 $\mathbb{W}xc6+ \mathbb{Q}d7$ 15 $\mathbb{W}xd7+$ $\mathbb{Q}xd7$ 16 $\mathbb{Q}b2$ $\mathbb{Q}d6$ 17 f4) 12... $\mathbb{Q}d4+$ (12... $\mathbb{Q}d5$ 13 $\mathbb{Q}f2$) 13 $\mathbb{Q}f2$ $\mathbb{W}xa4$ 14 $\mathbb{Q}xa4$ c4 15 $\mathbb{Q}dc5$ 0-0-0 (15... $\mathbb{B}b8$ 16 $\mathbb{fxe}5$ $\mathbb{fxe}5$ 17 d3 is again unclear) 16 b4 (16 $\mathbb{fxe}5?!$ $\mathbb{fxe}5$ 17 b4) 16... $\mathbb{exf}4$ 17 $\mathbb{gxf}4$ with balanced play, Bergfalk-Larsson, correspondence game 1992.

8... $\mathbb{Q}e7$ 9 $\mathbb{Q}d2$ (D)



B

Until you've studied this variation for some time (preferably in conjunction with the reversed set-up in the Maroczy Bind Sicilian), you may wonder how White can possibly neglect his development in a position where he has already given up space and the centre. In fact, he will even move the knight a third time next move (to c4)! The first part of White's justification is the easiest: he threatens 10 $\mathbb{Q}xc6+$, after which his knight will be perfectly placed

on c4, and Black's pawns will be too weak. Thus Black must defend with a passive move.

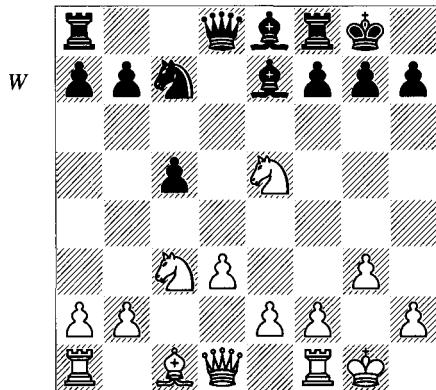
9... $\mathbb{Q}d7$ 10 $\mathbb{Q}c4$

Now White gains another tempo with the threat of 11 $\mathbb{Q}xc6$ and 12 $\mathbb{Q}xe5$.

10...f6

Black protects the e-pawn, albeit at the seemingly modest cost of loosening the light squares along the a2-g8 diagonal. With 10...f6, Black has agreed to contest the most popular line of the Rubinstein Variation, from which the top grandmasters have begun countless battles.

I'm going to provide very selective analysis about the ingenious pawn sacrifice 10...0-0!? 11 $\mathbb{Q}xc6$ $\mathbb{Q}xc6$ 12 $\mathbb{Q}xe5$ $\mathbb{Q}e8$ (D), although it may deserve more.

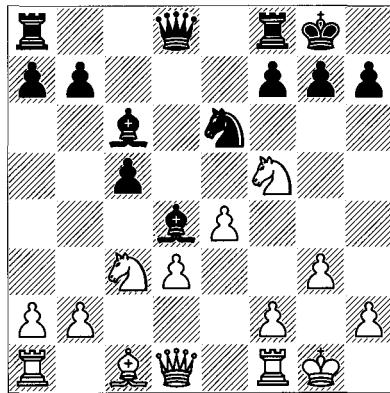


White has won a centre pawn and has no weaknesses! What is Black up to? It turns out that this position has its own idiosyncratic character. He has two bishops, to be sure, but these are only truly effective in combination with the position of White's knight, which has no good retreat-square when attacked; for example, on c4 it can be pushed back by ...b5, and on f3, the already dangerous move ... $\mathbb{Q}c6$ gains in strength. When you add to that the fact that White has weak light squares around his king (with no light-squared bishop) and that his e-pawn can't move without creating a weakness on d3, you can see how Black dares to sacrifice the pawn.

From White's point of view, he can take comfort in the fact that he has captured one of the most important pawns on the board. Moreover, his remaining bishop is his 'good' one (unobstructed by his centre pawns), and for a move or two, Black's pieces will be passively

placed. In the chess of the past few years, Black has been foregoing 10...0-0 in favour of 10...f6; that may be a sort of conservatism, or it may reflect some difficulties with 10...0-0. Here are two lines that might be considered problematic for Black:

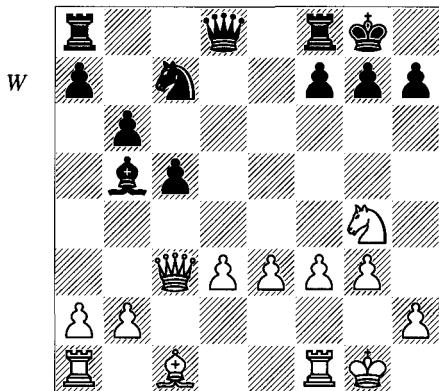
a) 13 e4 has been underrated, in my opinion. White develops his bishop at the cost of ceding the d4-square: 13... $\mathbb{Q}f6$ 14 $\mathbb{Q}g4$ $\mathbb{Q}d4$ 15 $\mathbb{Q}e3$ $\mathbb{Q}c6$ 16 $\mathbb{Q}f5$ $\mathbb{Q}e6$ (D).



17 $\mathbb{Q}e3$!? (17 $\mathbb{Q}xd4$ $\mathbb{Q}xd4$ 18 $\mathbb{Q}e3$ looks smarter; Schüssler-Donaldson, Malmö 1985 went 18...f5 19 $\mathbb{Q}xd4$ $\mathbb{W}xd4$ 20 $\mathbb{W}b3+$ $\mathbb{Q}h8$ 21 $\mathbb{Q}e2$ $\mathbb{Q}d7$ 22 f3 $\mathbb{Q}b5$ 23 $\mathbb{Q}f4$ with a clear advantage for White) 17...g6 18 $\mathbb{Q}h6+!$? (or 18 $\mathbb{Q}h4$) 18... $\mathbb{Q}h8$?! (18... $\mathbb{Q}g7$ appears better) 19 $\mathbb{W}b3!$ $\mathbb{Q}xe3$ 20 fxe3 $\mathbb{W}xd3$ 21 $\mathbb{Q}g4$ with the idea of $\mathbb{Q}ad1$, Granda-de la Villa, Leon 1997. White has the upper hand in all lines; the game went 21... $\mathbb{W}d8$ 22 $\mathbb{Q}d5$ $\mathbb{W}a5$ (versus $\mathbb{W}c3+$) 23 $\mathbb{Q}e5$! with a definite advantage.

b) 13 $\mathbb{W}b3$ is more abstract than 13 e4, in that the move is an annoyance as much as it is a plan. White peeks at b7, pins the f7-pawn and discourages ... $\mathbb{Q}e6$ in some lines because he can reply with either $\mathbb{Q}d5$ or $\mathbb{W}d5$. He is ready to develop his queen's bishop, and waits to see how his opponent will proceed. In Piket-Kasparov, Internet 2000, Black attacked by 13... $\mathbb{Q}f6$ 14 $\mathbb{Q}g4$ $\mathbb{Q}d4$ (various analysts give 14... $\mathbb{Q}c6$ 15 $\mathbb{Q}xf6+$ $\mathbb{W}xf6$ 16 $\mathbb{Q}e3$ $\mathbb{Q}e6$ 17 $\mathbb{Q}e4$ $\mathbb{W}f5$ 18 f3 when White, still a pawn up, obviously has the better of it) 15 e3 (Franco says that 15 $\mathbb{W}xb7$ $\mathbb{Q}b8$ 16 $\mathbb{W}xa7$ is worthy of attention – then Black has serious attacking chances based upon the moves ...c4, ... $\mathbb{Q}c6$ and ...f5-f4, which is

frightening, but White is three pawns ahead, after all! I would hate to have to assess this position after, say, 16... $\mathbb{Q}e6$; at any rate, I doubt that White stands worse) 15... $\mathbb{Q}xc3$ 16 $\mathbb{B}xc3$ b6 17 f3?! $\mathbb{Q}b5$ (D).

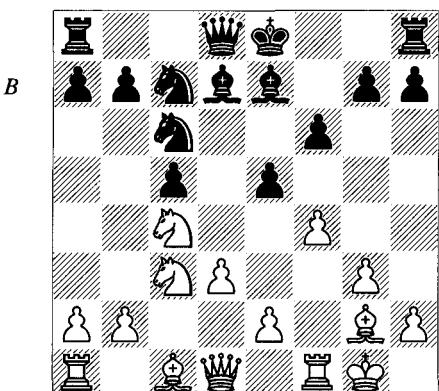


18 $\mathbb{Q}f2$?! (18 $\mathbb{Q}d1$! f6 19 e4!) 18... $\mathbb{W}d7$?! (18... $\mathbb{Q}e6$!) 19 e4! (finally getting the bishop out; development trumps weaknesses in almost all of these notes) 19... $\mathbb{Q}e6$ 20 $\mathbb{Q}e3$ a5 21 $\mathbb{Q}ad1$ $\mathbb{Q}ad8$. Here White is still a pawn up and Black doesn't appear to have enough compensation after 22 $\mathbb{Q}fe1$, since 22...f5 can be answered by 23 f4!.

Naturally, these lines remain wide open to improvement.

11 f4 (D)

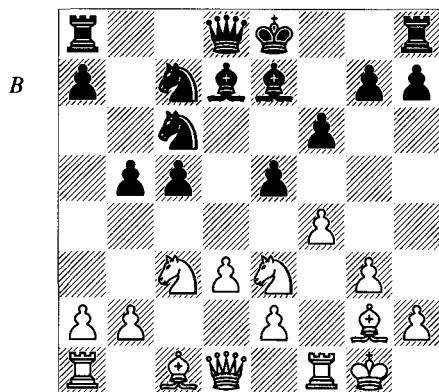
White seizes his chance to attack the key e5 point. I won't be looking at the preventive 11 a4; according to theory, Black holds the balance.



11...b5!

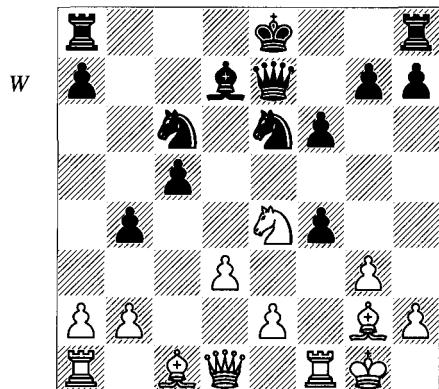
11...exf4 12 $\mathbb{Q}xf4$ gives White the chance to put a piece on d6, which is all the worse when ...f6 has been played and moves such as $\mathbb{W}b3$ and $\mathbb{Q}d5$ would cause more harm than otherwise.

12 $\mathbb{Q}e3$ (D)



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

Black plays this more often than anything else. A critical alternative is 12...exf4 13 $\mathbb{Q}f5$!? b4 (13...fxg3?! 14 $\mathbb{Q}xg7$ +! $\mathbb{Q}f7$ 15 $\mathbb{Q}h5$ gxh2+ 16 $\mathbb{Q}xh2$ has ideas of $\mathbb{Q}e4$ and getting a queen to either b3 or h5) 14 $\mathbb{Q}xe7$ $\mathbb{W}xe7$ 15 $\mathbb{Q}e4$ (Akopian-Leko, Ubeda 1997 saw the fairly promising alternative 15 $\mathbb{Q}xf4$ bxc3 16 $\mathbb{Q}xc7$ $\mathbb{Q}c8$ 17 $\mathbb{Q}f4$ cxb2 18 $\mathbb{Q}b1$ 0-0 19 $\mathbb{Q}xb2$, when White's active bishops make up for his weak central pawn-structure) 15... $\mathbb{Q}e6$ (D).



16 gxf4 (with this move, White intends f5 and $\mathbb{Q}f4$, but since he can't do that, 16 $\mathbb{Q}xf4$! $\mathbb{Q}xf4$ 17 $\mathbb{Q}xf4$ may be best; then Black's c-pawn can be attacked, and White's pieces are

active) 16...f5! 17 $\mathbb{Q}g3$ 0-0 18 a3 $\mathbb{B}ab8$ 19 axb4 $\mathbb{B}xb4$ 20 $\mathbb{B}a6$ $\mathbb{W}d6$, Akopian-Ruck, European Ch, Ohrid 2001. Out of the many factors to consider, Black's strong central position carries a lot of weight, and should guarantee at least equality.

13 a4

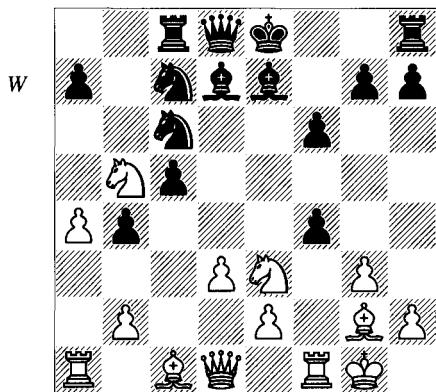
White initiates the standard break on the queenside: not only does it prepare the following intrusion into Black's position, but it also clears c4 for a knight.

If White wants to conquer more territory on the kingside and secure the attractive e4-square for his other knight, he can advance his f-pawn. However, by so doing he permanently gives up any challenge to what is after all the bastion of Black's position, the pawn on e5. The game Smejkal-Suetin, Novi Sad 1982 saw Black equalize after 13 f5 0-0 14 $\mathbb{Q}d2$ $\mathbb{Q}d4$ 15 $\mathbb{B}c1$ $\mathbb{A}e8$ (or 15... $\mathbb{W}h8$ 16 $\mathbb{Q}e4$ $\mathbb{Q}a6$ 17 g4 $\mathbb{Q}c6$ 18 $\mathbb{B}f2$ $\mathbb{W}b6$, as given by Ribli) 16 $\mathbb{Q}e4$ $\mathbb{Q}a6$ 17 $\mathbb{Q}d5$ $\mathbb{Q}h5!$.

13...b4 14 $\mathbb{Q}b5$

14 $\mathbb{Q}cd5$ is also played, when neither theory nor practice has settled upon a verdict.

14...exf4 (D)

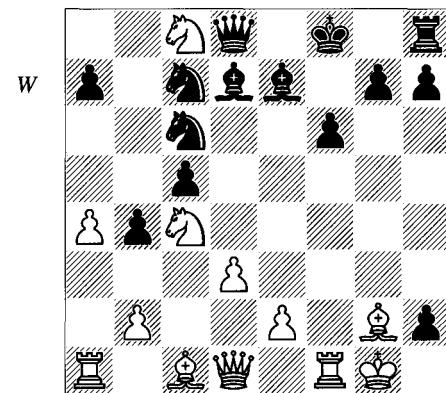


15 gxf4!?

A fork in the road:

a) According to Franco, theory favours White after 15 $\mathbb{Q}c4$ fxg3 16 $\mathbb{Q}bd6+$ $\mathbb{Q}f8$ 17 $\mathbb{Q}xc8$ (L.Dominguez's suggestion of 17 hxg3 $\mathbb{B}b8$ 18 $\mathbb{Q}f5!$? $\mathbb{Q}xf5$ 19 $\mathbb{B}xf5$ should be considered) 17...gxh2+ (D).

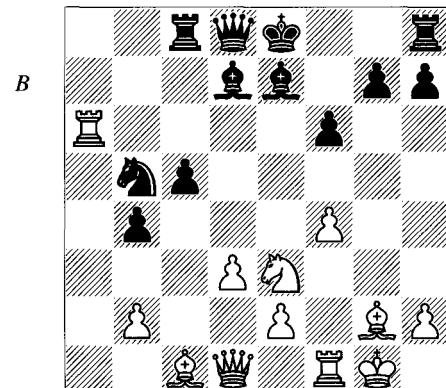
The resulting position is as murky as anything else in this line. It appears to me that White's exchange won't mean much with his



king potentially exposed and Black having extra pawns. Camacho-Ramos, Match (game 2), Cuba 2003 continued 18 $\mathbb{Q}h1$ $\mathbb{W}xc8$ 19 $\mathbb{Q}f4$ $\mathbb{Q}d4$ 20 $\mathbb{Q}d6$ $\mathbb{W}a6$ 21 $\mathbb{Q}b5$?! (21 $\mathbb{Q}c4$) 21... $\mathbb{Q}ce6$ 22 $\mathbb{Q}xh2$, and here 22...b3 would negate White's main idea of e3 because of the fork on c2. Black stands somewhat better in that case.

b) 15 $\mathbb{Q}xc6$ fxe3! (15... $\mathbb{Q}xc6$?! is speculative, and too much so: 16 $\mathbb{Q}xa7$ $\mathbb{Q}b7$ 17 $\mathbb{Q}xc8$ fxe3 18 $\mathbb{Q}b6$! h5 – the point, for better or worse – 19 $\mathbb{Q}xe3$ h4 20 $\mathbb{Q}f2$ hxg3+ 21 hxg3 and Black's attack falters, Lputian-Perunović, Bosnian Team Ch, Neum 2002) 16 $\mathbb{Q}e4$ $\mathbb{Q}xb5$ 17 axb5 $\mathbb{Q}xb5$ 18 $\mathbb{B}xa7$ 0-0 19 $\mathbb{Q}xe3$ $\mathbb{Q}h8$ 20 $\mathbb{W}a1$ with equality, Aronian-Smirnov, FIDE Knock-out, Tripoli 2004. In this line White has the more aggressive posture, and 20 $\mathbb{B}f5$! would have been a better way to scare up threats.

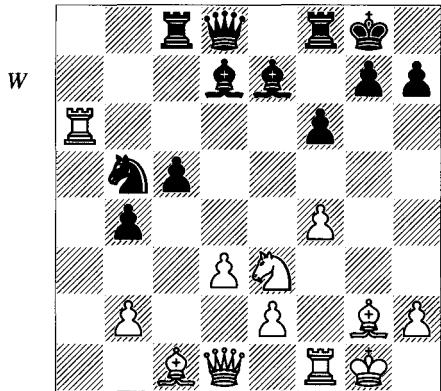
15... $\mathbb{Q}xb5$ 16 axb5 $\mathbb{Q}d4$ 17 $\mathbb{B}xa7$ $\mathbb{Q}xb5$ 18 $\mathbb{B}a6$ (D)



The sequence of exchanges has resulted in a typical imbalance. White has the better outpost

on c4, but his centre is subject to attack down the open d- and e-files. It also turns out that Black's kingside can become vulnerable, a consequence of the weakening ...f6.

18...0-0 (D)



19 f5!?

This radical decision prevents Black from playing ...f5 or putting a piece on that square; it also introduces the notion of a kingside attack by a rook-lift and $\mathbb{W}f1-h3$. The flip side is that White's knight is tied to defence of the pawn on f5. Black also gains e5 for a bishop and, importantly, a tempo for his central attack.

With benefit of hindsight, I think that bringing the knight to an outpost by 19 $\mathbb{Q}c4$ was better.

19... $\mathbb{Q}d4$ 20 $\mathbb{W}f4!$

The idea is simply $\mathbb{Q}d5+$, $\mathbb{W}h4$ and $\mathbb{W}f1-h3$.

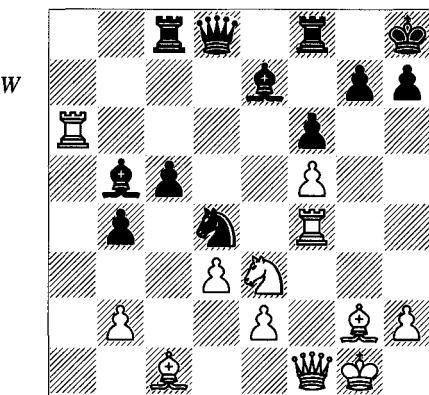
20... $\mathbb{W}h8$

Or 20... $\mathbb{Q}b5$ 21 $\mathbb{Q}d5+$ $\mathbb{W}h8$ 22 $\mathbb{W}h4$ $\mathbb{Q}d6!$; see the next note.

21 $\mathbb{W}f1$ $\mathbb{Q}b5!$ (D)

22 $\mathbb{Q}a7$

22 $\mathbb{Q}d5$ can be met by 22... $\mathbb{Q}d6!$, which contains the dual defensive ideas ... $\mathbb{Q}c7$ and ... $\mathbb{Q}f4!$. Then White's consistent move is 23 $\mathbb{W}h4$, when the computer-generated defence 23... $\mathbb{Q}f4!!$ 24 $\mathbb{W}xf4$ $\mathbb{Q}xa6$ 25 $\mathbb{W}h4$ h6 26 $\mathbb{W}h3$ $\mathbb{Q}c7$ wins. The human being Leko gives 22... $\mathbb{Q}xa6$ 23 $\mathbb{W}h4$ h6

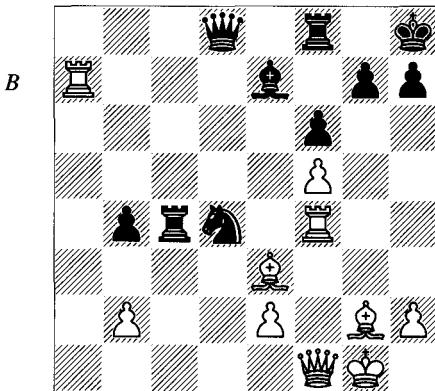


24 $\mathbb{W}h3$ $\mathbb{Q}h7$ 25 $\mathbb{Q}g4!$ $\mathbb{W}xd5$ 26 $\mathbb{W}xh6+$ with a perpetual check.

22... $\mathbb{Q}c4!$

Now 23 $\mathbb{W}xd4?$ $\mathbb{W}xd4$ 24 $\mathbb{W}xe7$ runs into 24... $\mathbb{Q}xd4$ 25 $\mathbb{W}exd3$ $\mathbb{W}c5!$. The opening is over and Black holds all the cards, so I'll run through the moves and note only one tactical point.

23 $\mathbb{Q}xc4$ $\mathbb{Q}xc4$ 24 $\mathbb{Q}xc4$ $\mathbb{W}xc4$ 25 $\mathbb{Q}e3$ (D)



25... $\mathbb{Q}c2!$

A pretty move, based upon 26 $\mathbb{W}xc4$ $\mathbb{Q}xe3$ 27 $\mathbb{W}c1$ $\mathbb{Q}xc4$ 28 $\mathbb{W}xc4$ $\mathbb{W}b6+$.

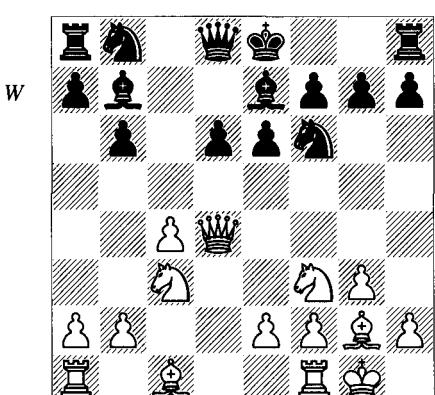
26 $\mathbb{Q}a8$ $\mathbb{W}xf4$ 27 $\mathbb{Q}xf4$ $\mathbb{W}d4+$ 28 $\mathbb{Q}h1$ $\mathbb{W}xa8$ 29 $\mathbb{Q}xa8$ $\mathbb{W}xb2$ 30 $\mathbb{W}d1$ b3 31 $\mathbb{Q}e4$ $\mathbb{W}d4$ 32 $\mathbb{W}xd4$ $\mathbb{Q}xd4$ 33 $\mathbb{Q}c1$ $\mathbb{Q}xe2$ 34 $\mathbb{Q}b2$ $\mathbb{Q}c5$ 35 $\mathbb{Q}d3$ $\mathbb{Q}d4$ 36 h3 $\mathbb{Q}f3$ 37 $\mathbb{Q}c4$ $\mathbb{Q}d4$ 0-1

10 The Hedgehog Variation

This chapter deals with a system sporting the odd name ‘Hedgehog’. For those of you wondering, the hedgehog is an animal covered by needle-like spines. In order to defend itself, the hedgehog curls into a ball, so that when an enemy comes too close, it gets pricked by the spines. In chess, a similar concept is expressed by a position in which a player has little space to work with, but which is difficult for an opponent to breach without encountering a sudden and sharp counterattack. Although the word ‘hedgehog’ had been floating around for years to describe various structures characterized by only second- and third-rank pawns, the name ‘Hedgehog Variation’ first came into widespread use (in several languages!) to describe specifically the English Opening variation after 1 c4 c5 2 ♘f3 ♘f6 3 ♘c3 e6 4 g3 b6 5 ♘g2 ♘b7 6 0-0 ♘e7 (or 6...a6 or 6...d6), usually with 7 d4 cxd4 8 ♖xd4 or 7 ♘e1 followed by e4 and d4, with Black putting pawns on d6, b6 and a6. The diagram shows one of the main positions stemming from this move-order.

about, Black’s c-pawn has been exchanged, or is about to be. White’s pawns can be on c4 and/or e4, as we have seen in the English Opening. That also occurs in many variations of the Sicilian Defence. In practice, the official Hedgehog Variation of this chapter differs from others, in that White’s bishop is always situated on g2. In most other English Opening variations and in the Sicilian Defence, it tends to be on e2, d3 or even c2. In Chapter 8, we see such a hedgehog formation in the Anti-Benoni system with 4...b6.

The Hedgehog has been played a lot on the international circuit and at the grandmaster level of play, but not as much at lower levels. In the past 20 years it has gone from a rather eclectic set-up to a highly theoretical one, in the sense that top players engage in lines extending past move 20. Of course, this is hardly a unique situation in modern chess. Not only do grandmasters play lengthy theoretical lines in openings such as the Sicilian Najdorf, Botvinnik Semi-Slav, and main-line King’s Indian, but we also see ‘ordinary’ players doing so in tournaments and on the online playing sites. The difference is that the Hedgehog developed as an opening that primarily involved positional themes and not overtly forcing lines. The clarity of those themes has made it one of the most written-about variations in the English Opening. If you like positional manoeuvring, and are willing to put some time into learning a few tactical lines, the Hedgehog remains a fun and instructive option from both sides of the board.



I use the name Hedgehog with a capital ‘H’ to refer to this English Opening variation, and the adjective hedgehog with a small ‘h’ to refer to black pawn-structures involving ...a6, ...b6, ...d6 and ...e6 that crop up in several other openings. In most hedgehog variations that we care

1 c4 c5 2 ♘f3

The question is: how does one get to the English Opening Hedgehog Variation? It’s important to realize that Black can’t always play the Hedgehog, and see in what ways White can aim for or steer clear of it. Here are some major move-order possibilities:

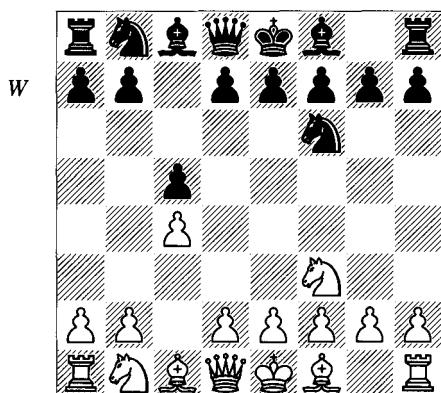
a) 2 ♘c3 ♘f6 (after 2...b6 3 ♘f3 ♘b7, White can play 4 e3! and 5 d4 to claim a pleasant game) 3 g3. Now Black’s best shot at a

Hedgehog Variation is to play 3...e6 4 $\mathbb{Q}f3$ (with the idea 4...d5 5 cxd5 exd5 6 d4; White doesn't usually want to permit 4 $\mathbb{Q}g2$ d5) 4...b6 5 $\mathbb{Q}g2$ $\mathbb{Q}b7$, etc., which is our main line.

b) 2 $\mathbb{Q}c3$ $\mathbb{Q}f6$ 3 $\mathbb{Q}f3$ b6 (3...e6 4 d4 cxd4 5 $\mathbb{Q}xd4$ is a standard position in which Black generally plays 5... $\mathbb{Q}c6$, 5... $\mathbb{Q}b4$ or 5...a6, none of them leading to positions from this chapter) 4 d4 (4 g3 $\mathbb{Q}b7$ 5 $\mathbb{Q}g2$ e6 is a Hedgehog Variation; White can also play 4 e4 $\mathbb{Q}b7$ 5 e5, or here 5 $\mathbb{Q}d3$ with the idea $\mathbb{Q}c2$ and d4) 4...cxd4 5 $\mathbb{Q}xd4$ $\mathbb{Q}b7$ (5...e6 6 e4) 6 f3 followed by e4 transposes to an Anti-Benoni hedgehog formation from Chapter 8 (beginning with 4...b6). This differs greatly from the variation we are discussing in this chapter, because White's bishop will go to e2 instead of g2.

2... $\mathbb{Q}f6$ (D)

Once again, Black can play 2...b6 3 d4 (3 g3 $\mathbb{Q}b7$ 4 $\mathbb{Q}g2$ $\mathbb{Q}f6$ 5 $\mathbb{Q}c3$ e6 brings us back to the main line) 3...cxd4 4 $\mathbb{Q}xd4$ $\mathbb{Q}b7$ 5 $\mathbb{Q}c3$ $\mathbb{Q}f6$ 6 f3 d6 7 e4 e6 and we have transposed to the Anti-Benoni from Chapter 8.



3 $\mathbb{Q}c3$

This is equivalent to 2 $\mathbb{Q}c3$ $\mathbb{Q}f6$ 3 $\mathbb{Q}f3$. Here, too, 3 d4 cxd4 4 $\mathbb{Q}xd4$ prevents the Hedgehog proper. What this means, in conjunction with the last few notes, is that most of the time after 1 c4, it's White's choice whether to enter into the Hedgehog, and in reality, most players don't choose to do so.

But that isn't the whole story. In fact, the popularity of the Hedgehog at the top levels comes primarily from games that begin with 1 $\mathbb{Q}f3$. Then, as you can work out for yourself, the number of ways that Black has of getting to

a Hedgehog becomes higher. For example, one common sequence is 1 $\mathbb{Q}f3$ $\mathbb{Q}f6$ 2 c4 b6 3 g3 $\mathbb{Q}b7$ 4 $\mathbb{Q}g2$ e6 5 0-0 $\mathbb{Q}e7$ 6 $\mathbb{Q}c3$ c5. If you look at the entire set of *Informators*, which are dominated by grandmaster play and have over 600 true Hedgehog games, you find that, depending upon the subvariation, from 60% to 90% of those games begin with 1 $\mathbb{Q}f3$, often 80% or more. This strange situation goes back to the fact that a significant minority of leading players don't want to play on the white side of 1 c4 e5, although they otherwise like playing the English Opening. So they play 1 $\mathbb{Q}f3$ followed by 2 c4. Whether that is strictly logical or merely understandable depends upon your interpretation of the first section of this book. It's true that a very large number of players answer 1 c4 with 1...e5, so from that point of view White might want to avoid it. If nothing else, bypassing 1...e5 cuts down on one's preparation time. On the other hand, playing against 1...e5 can be a lot of fun and give the kind of complex game that most players want. Finally, having pointed out that 1 c4 allows Black to dictate matters with 1...e5, I should say that 1 $\mathbb{Q}f3$ also cuts down on your flexibility in crucial ways. To cite one example of many, White has to deal with 1...d5, when an English Opening is no longer on the cards. In that situation we have possibilities including the Queen's Gambit and the Réti Opening, the latter to be discussed in the next volume.

Having said all that, let's return to the Hedgehog itself.

3...e6

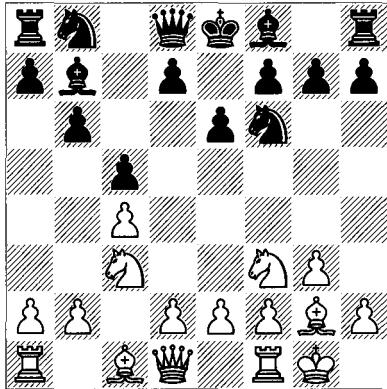
Again, 3...b6 can be used by those who don't mind playing against 4 d4 cxd4 5 $\mathbb{Q}xd4$ or 4 e4. This book won't deal with the Double Fianchetto line that combines ...g6 and ...b6.

4 g3 b6 5 $\mathbb{Q}g2$ $\mathbb{Q}b7$ 6 0-0 (D)

White can accelerate his Hedgehog set-up by 6 d4 cxd4 7 $\mathbb{Q}xd4$, but this has the drawback that 7... $\mathbb{Q}c6$ is better than similar lines below, because 8 $\mathbb{Q}f4$ $\mathbb{Q}b4$ develops apace. Then the threat of ... $\mathbb{Q}xc3+$ and subsequent pressure along the c-file (already well underway) usually leads to 9 $\mathbb{Q}d2$ 0-0 10 0-0, and now the move 10... $\mathbb{Q}e7$! sets up a standard position in which White's bishop is quite misplaced on d2. In fact, it would be better off on c1; for one thing, variations with $\mathbb{Q}f4$ tend to go well with

b3 and $\mathbb{A}b2$. Don't worry if you find this confusing; as you might guess, it's a practical summary which you might want to investigate by studying the specifics.

B



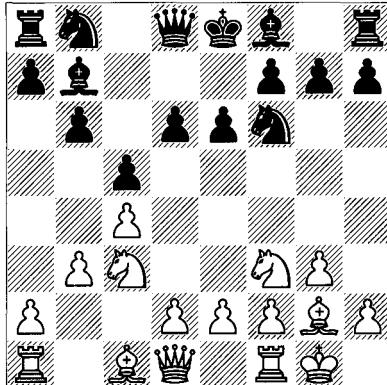
6... $\mathbb{A}e7$

Move-orders can be outrageously difficult to list in the Hedgehog, much less to understand. I'm going to gloss over them to some extent, hopefully not as much as most books do (ironically, the one that goes into excruciating detail about this subject gets it all wrong!). But in the process, I'll try to provide some practical knowledge to help you avoid frustration at the board. To begin with, 6... $\mathbb{A}e7$ is easily the most popular move. It develops quickly and keeps open the option of playing an early and effective ...d5 (6...d6 obviously doesn't do so, and 6...a6 tends to be both slow and marginally irrelevant when combined with ...d5). For example, if Black plays 6... $\mathbb{A}e7$, 7...d5 becomes a reasonable option versus slow moves such as 7 d3 and 7 b3, and is a serious response to the extremely popular 7 $\mathbb{E}e1$. Similarly, 7 $\mathbb{E}e1$ can be met by 7... $\mathbb{D}e4$, because ... $\mathbb{D}e4$ is a move that only fits with early castling, something that 6... $\mathbb{A}e7$ prepares. But suppose that Black doesn't want to play ...d5 or ... $\mathbb{D}e4$ in any case? Then other considerations apply:

a) A drawback to 6...d6 is that lines with 7 b3 (*D*) can be more difficult in two ways.

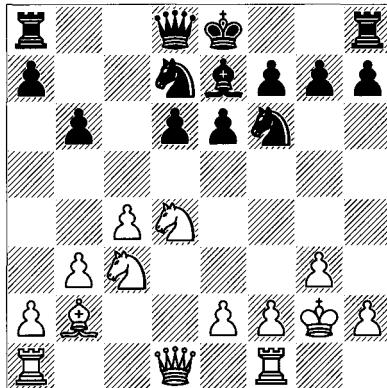
One is that the simple line with $\mathbb{A}b2$, e3, $\mathbb{W}e2$, $\mathbb{K}fd1$ and d4 tends to be more effective, again because Black would have to waste time if he were to play ...d5 against it. But Black also has to deal with the specifics; for example, in the line 7... $\mathbb{D}bd7$ 8 $\mathbb{A}b2$ (if White now switches

B



to 8 d4, then after 8...cxd4 9 $\mathbb{W}xd4$ a6, White's attack on d6 by $\mathbb{A}a3$ can be blocked by ... $\mathbb{D}c5$) 8... $\mathbb{D}e7$ 9 d4 cxd4 (9...0-0 10 d5! exd5 11 $\mathbb{D}h4$! is nice for White, thinking about $\mathbb{D}f5$; e.g., 11...g6 12 cxd5 $\mathbb{D}e8$ 13 f4! $\mathbb{Q}xh4$ 14 gxh4 $\mathbb{W}xh4$ 15 e4 and Black's dark squares are extremely vulnerable) 10 $\mathbb{D}xd4$ $\mathbb{Q}xg2$ 11 $\mathbb{Q}xg2$ (*D*).

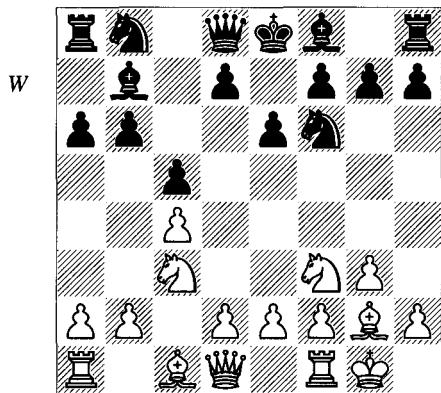
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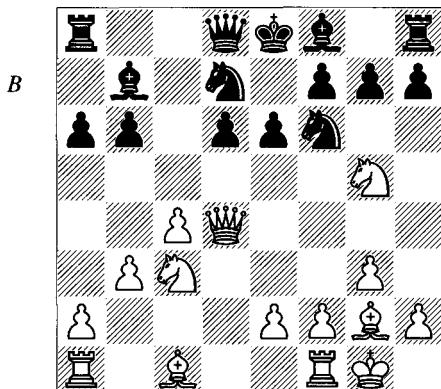
Here White's knight looks at c6; this is a better version of the bishop exchange than White usually gets. Sorokin-Yudasin, USSR Ch, Moscow 1991 continued 11... $\mathbb{W}c7$ 12 e3 a6 (early on in Hedgehog practice, it was determined that endings after 12... $\mathbb{W}b7+$ 13 $\mathbb{W}f3$ were difficult for Black to play, and provided him no positive prospects) 13 f4!? g6 (13...0-0 14 $\mathbb{W}f3$ challenges Black's light-square control, and after 14... $\mathbb{K}ac8$ 15 g4! $\mathbb{D}c5$ 16 g5 $\mathbb{D}fd7$ 17 $\mathbb{K}ad1$ $\mathbb{K}fe8$ 18 h4, White had space and better minor pieces in Andersson-A.Sokolov, Bilbao 1987) 14 $\mathbb{W}f3$ $\mathbb{K}c8$ 15 g4 0-0 16 g5 $\mathbb{D}h5$ 17 $\mathbb{K}ad1$ with a small but steady advantage for

White. So 6...d6 has a few unique problems involving b3; a careful examination will reveal other issues.

b) 6...a6 (*D*) used to be more popular.



Again, White sometimes plays b3, ♘b2, e3 and an early d4, when ...a6 may not be so useful. But a more interesting line is 7 d4 (as mentioned above, 7 ♘e1 achieves 8 e4 more easily than after 6...♗e7, that is, ...a6 would be virtually a tempo-loss in lines where ...d5 or ...♘e4 might be contemplated) 7...cxd4 8 ♘xd4 d6 9 b3 (on the positive side, Black's choice of 6...a6 rather than 6...♗e7 means that after the popular idea 9 ♗g5, 9...♗bd7 prepares for ...♘xf6 to be the answer to ♘xf6; compare the games below) 9...♗bd7 (after 9...♗e7 10 ♘a3, Black already has problems with his d-pawn) 10 ♘g5 (*D*).

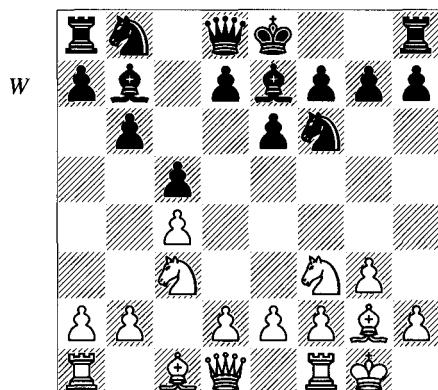


This move pops up again and again, although it usually achieves nothing special versus accurate play. In this position, however, the move-order seems to favour White, which

may argue against playing ...a6 too early. The game M.Osborne-Cox, Coulsdon 2005 continued 10...♗xg2 11 ♘xg2 ♜c8?! (this idea of ...♜c8-c6, to defend the d-pawn, works well in some positions, but not here; the best option is probably 11...♗e7; for example, 12 ♘ge4 ♜c5 13 ♘b2 0-0, but White still has the edge after 14 ♘ad1, since 14...d5!? 15 ♘xf6+ ♘xf6 16 ♗g4 gives White pressure on d5) 12 ♘ge4 ♜c6 13 ♘a3! ♜c5 (13...♘xe4 14 ♘xe4 ♜c5 15 ♘ad1 ♘xe4 16 ♗xe4 ♜c7 17 f4! ♘e7 18 f5 is positionally disastrous) 14 ♘xc5 bxc5 15 ♘xf6+ gxf6 16 ♗e4 ♜c7; and here 17 ♘ad1! is strong, with the idea 17...f5 18 ♗f3 ♘g7 19 e4!. This shows how difficult it can be to counter lines in which White targets d6.

c) 6...♘c6 is a very different system from the standard Hedgehog; Black wants to react to d4 with a trade of knights on that square. A potential irritation is caused by 7 d4 (7 e4 ♗b8 8 d4 cxd4 9 ♘xd4 ♘xd4 10 ♘xd4 is another normal move-order) 7...♘xd4 8 ♘xd4 ♘xg2 9 ♘xe6!? dxе6 (9...fxe6 10 ♘xg2 d5 was played in Delaune-de Firmian, Philadelphia 1987; then one attractive line is 11 ♘f4 ♘e7 12 e4! dxе4 13 ♗a4+ ♗d7 14 ♗xd7+ ♘xd7 15 ♘fe1 with a positional advantage due to Black's weak pawn on e6) 10 ♘xg2 ♘e7, Schandorff-Mortensen, Danish Ch, Ålborg 2000, and now 11 e4 takes over more territory, with White having the better bishop. That may not be much, but it would be discouraging to play such a position with Black after only eleven moves.

We return to 6...♗e7 (*D*):



As was made clear by the discussion above, there are two main topics to consider here: the

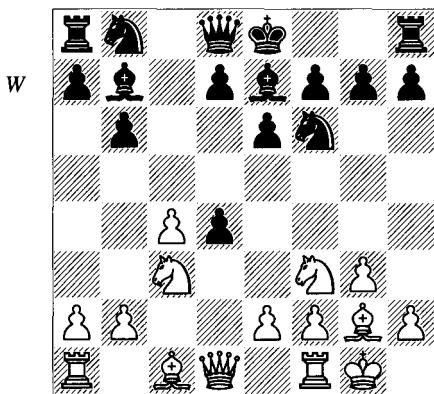
standard Hedgehog lines following 7 d4 cxd4 8 ♜xd4, and White's alternative approach with 7 ♜e1.

Traditional Line with 8 ♜xd4

7 d4

White has played this way for many years; however, as we shall see in succeeding games, 7 ♜e1 has become equally important. After 7 d4, we'll look at games featuring the original territory-grabbing philosophy, and then ones in which White relies upon piece-play.

7...cxd4 (D)

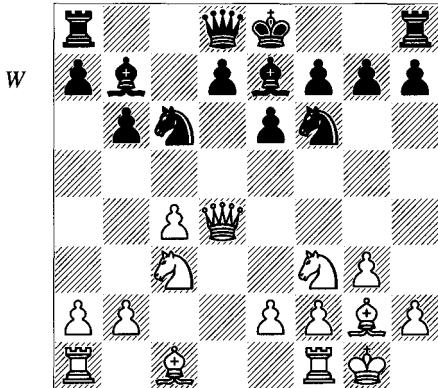


8 ♜xd4

Years ago, the Hedgehog suddenly gained in popularity when it became clear that 8 ♜xd4 ♜xg2 9 ♜xg2 didn't give White any advantage at all; for example, 9...♝c8 (9...a6 is slightly more flexible, perhaps holding out more winning chances, at the risk of undergoing a bind) 10 ♜d3 ♜c6 11 b3 ♜e5 12 ♜e3 ♜b7+ 13 f3 ♜g6 (or 13...d6) 14 ♜d1 (14 ♜b2 h5! with the idea ...h4 is Carsten Hansen's suggestion) 14...0-0 (this is another good time for 14...h5!, when the rook on h8 supports the pawn) 15 ♜b2 h5!? (having castled, this timing is a little funny, but the flank attack is still useful) 16 ♜d3?! h4 17 e4 ♜h5 threatening ...♜hf4+, but also putting pressure on g3, Nei-Gurgenidze, USSR Ch, Kharkov 1967.

8...d6

You might wonder why Black wouldn't be thrilled to win an immediate tempo via 8...♜c6 (D).

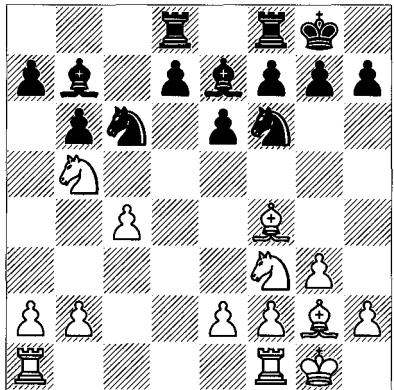


The basic problem with the move is rather technical. It stems from the fact that in hedgehog formations, including ones in the Sicilian Defence, this knight has the most influence from a more flexible post on d7; in fact, Black will sometimes move a knight from c6 by means of ...♞e5-d7, even at the cost of some time. In part this is because Black wants his bishop on b7 to have an unobstructed view; then, for example, it can attack a white pawn on e4, which can be further bothered by ...♝c5. This manoeuvre ...♝c6-e5-d7 arises in the Taimanov Sicilian when White plays ♜b5 and c4, but in that variation White wastes a lot of time to get one knight to the mediocre a3-square, whereas in our current Hedgehog position, White doesn't commit to e4 until he sees where Black's pieces are going.

That said, ...♝c6 has some easily comprehensible advantages: it gains a tempo, no small matter, and it contests the d4-square, denying White's minor pieces access to it without the possibility of exchange. Usually White is willing to exchange queens following 9 ♜f4 (9 ♜d3 is also played) 9...♝b8 (a standard idea, to contest d6; Black understands that in the static position after 9...d6, the knight will be somewhat misplaced on c6, as just described) 10 ♜b5!? (10 b3 and 10 e4 are common alternatives) 10...0-0 11 ♜xb8 (11 ♜c7? e5! 12 ♜xe5 ♜xc7 13 ♜xc6 ♜d6!) 11...♜axb8 12 ♜f4 ♜bd8 (D).

13 ♜d6 (13 ♜fd1 may be underrated; for example, 13...d5 14 ♜e5! ♜xe5 15 ♜xe5 ♜g4!?, Barcza-Rossolimo, Vršac 1969, and now the clever 16 ♜d4! e5 17 ♜c3 ♜c5 18 e3 would force Black to do something about the attack on

W

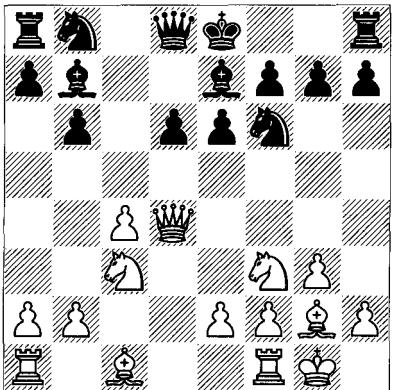


d5; White wins a pawn following 18...e4 19 b4 ♜e7 20 cxd5 and ♜xa7) 13...♜xd6 14 ♜xd6 ♜a8 15 ♜fd1 ♜b8 16 ♜d2 ♜fd8, Korchnoi-Barcza, Leningrad 1967. White stands mildly better after slow moves, but Milić suggests 17 ♜g5!, which ties Black down while White's centre can advance; for example, 17...♜f8 18 e4 h6 19 ♜f3 ♜bd8 20 ♜e1 ♜e8 21 ♜ed1 with a healthy advantage.

Hübner – Kasparov
Tilburg 1981

1 c4 ♜f6 2 ♜c3 c5 3 ♜f3 e6 4 g3 b6 5 ♜g2 ♜b7 6 0-0 ♜e7 7 d4 cxd4 8 ♜xd4 d6 (D)

W



Here's one of the key Hedgehog positions, and the starting point for the great majority of Hedgehog battles until about a decade ago. It is still the main line, followed closely by 7 ♜e1. I want to show a few classic and modern games with 7 d4 containing the kind of ideas common to the Hedgehog. First, after 8 ♜xd4 d6 what's

going on? For one thing, White has more command of space (all the more so after Black plays ...♜bd7). He has potential pressure against Black's weak pawn on d6; this can be developed via ♜d1, b3/♝a3, and ♜b5, ♜e4 or ♜g5-e4. White is also weakness-free. His plans are varied and fundamentally different: he can play for space with a 'Maroczy Bind' pair of pawns on c4 and e4, or he can stick to piece-play, with some combination of ♜d1, ♜g5, b3/♝b2, and ♜d4 (along with a variety of other piece deployments). For a while, the latter idea discouraged Black, in the sense that it seemed difficult to scare up counterplay when White didn't commit his e-pawn. Just to make it worse, White has long-term prospects of a kingside pawn advance (f4/f5/g4/g5 in some mix) or a queenside advance (a4/a5/b4/c5).

The Hedgehog has been championed by numerous great players, so naturally Black's position can't be all that bad. It has, I think, fewer positive aspects than White's position, but more powerful ones. As in the Sicilian Defence (with the same weak d-pawn on an open d-file), Black has that most underrated of all advantages: the central pawn-majority. A central majority not only has the potential to expand, but it covers more key squares than a single-pawn centre does. Here, for example, the hedgehog centre controls not only e5 and d5, but also c5 and f5. This makes it difficult for White to advance in the centre, and even more difficult to plant a piece there. Also, notice Black's minority attack with ...a6 and ...b5. "Wait a minute," you might say, "Why would achieving ...b5 mean anything? White can simply capture on b5 and he has even gained the chance to create a passed pawn immediately with b3 and a4." There are two separate considerations here. First, a passed a-pawn in the opening or middle-game tends to be as much a liability as an asset; it will often become a target before it ever becomes a threat. But in any event, what does the disappearance of White's c-pawn signify? That Black's central majority has a much better chance of advancing, creating positive opportunities in all stages of the game.

Black has other things going for him. Since his centre gives him a certain invulnerability, Black has a lot of time to get his pieces out and use them in both active and reactive ways. For

example, knights on c5 and f6 in conjunction with a bishop on b7 exert pressure on e4, and rooks on squares like c8, d8 and e8 can assist in making central defence and offence more effective. Last, but by no means least, experience has shown that Black's particular structure and piece placement have a surprising elasticity. With only three ranks to work with, they have as many or more options as do White's pieces with five ranks to operate on. This is best shown by example.

9 b3

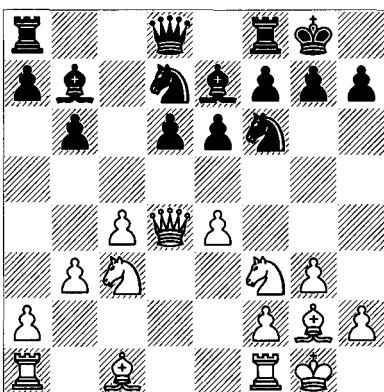
As suggested above, White has numerous moves here, such as 9 e4, 9 $\mathbb{B}d1$ and 9 $\mathbb{B}g5$. In this game he sets up a c4/e4 pawn-structure.

9...0-0

Practice has shown that 9... $\mathbb{B}bd7$?! 10 $\mathbb{B}b5$! is very dangerous for Black, the tactical point being 10... $\mathbb{Q}c5$ (10...d5 11 cxd5 $\mathbb{Q}xd5$ 12 $\mathbb{W}f4$ 0-0 13 $\mathbb{B}b2$ gives White good play down the d-file and/or c-file) 11 $\mathbb{B}d1$ $\mathbb{Q}fe4$ 12 $\mathbb{W}xg7$?!? (12 b4 is also challenging, when Black might try 12...a6!?, or the unclear line 12... $\mathbb{Q}f6$ 13 $\mathbb{W}e3$ $\mathbb{Q}xa1$ 14 bxc5 d5!) 12... $\mathbb{Q}f6$ 13 $\mathbb{W}h6$ $\mathbb{Q}xa1$ 14 $\mathbb{Q}g5$! $\mathbb{Q}e5$? (14... $\mathbb{W}f6$! might hold on, according to analysis expanded upon by Kasparov), Korchnoi-Greenfeld, Beersheba 1990, and here Korchnoi demonstrated a win by 15 $\mathbb{Q}xe4$! $\mathbb{Q}xe4$ 16 $\mathbb{Q}g5$! $\mathbb{W}d7$ (16...f6 17 f4!) 17 f4 or 17 b4 $\mathbb{Q}xg2$ 18 bxc5.

10 e4 $\mathbb{B}bd7$ (D)

W

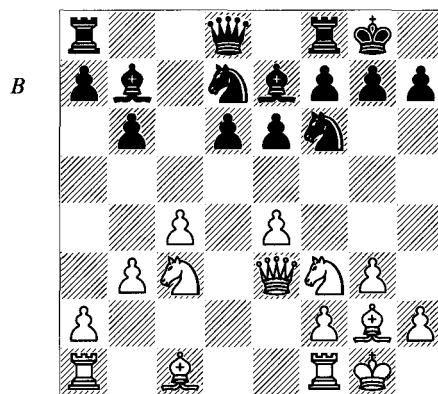


11 $\mathbb{W}e3$ (D)

White reorganizes his pieces in order to centralize his knight on d4. The queen isn't doing much good on d4 at this stage, but it will remain in a position from where it can enforce the move

e5 as a response to d5. For example, 11...d5 12 cxd5 exd5 13 e5, a sequence which is normally enough to establish a central superiority, and therefore to be remembered (if you're White, you always have to be ready to answer ...d5).

Once White plays b3, with or without e4, the move $\mathbb{Q}a3$ in conjunction with $\mathbb{B}d1$ can be a problem, because Black needs to shore up his vulnerable d6-pawn without making concessions. His move-order here with 10... $\mathbb{Q}bd7$ is specifically designed to meet that threat, since 11 $\mathbb{Q}a3$ $\mathbb{Q}c5$ is very solid. In general, Black would like to answer the move $\mathbb{Q}a3$ in this way rather than by ...d5, which tends to be too loosening, or by a passive move such as ... $\mathbb{Q}e8$ (after ...0-0).



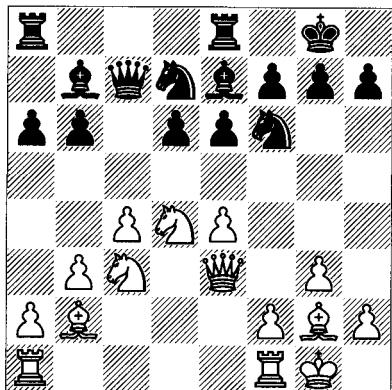
11...a6 12 $\mathbb{Q}d4$

In the contests with 7 $\mathbb{B}e1$ below, White plays e4 and d4, and when Black plays ...cxd4, White recaptures with the knight. That makes White's variation in this game seem inferior, because here his queen has to make two extra moves, to d4 and then e3 before the knight gets to d4. In addition, it can be argued that White's bishop stands better when centralized on e3 than on b2. That holds true in related openings, such as the Fianchetto Variation of the King's Indian Defence, where White operates with the same pawn-structure.

Nevertheless, White might say that the tempo doesn't matter so much as long as Black can't enforce a freeing move; and in the meantime, White has avoided lines such as 7 $\mathbb{B}e1$ d5 and 7 $\mathbb{B}e1$ $\mathbb{Q}e4$. We'll talk more about these trade-offs in the next games.

12... $\mathbb{W}c7$ 13 $\mathbb{Q}b2$ $\mathbb{Q}fe8$! (D)

W



Over the years this has become widely accepted as the best square for Black's rook, for a variety of reasons. It increases Black's chance of playing ...d5 successfully, because after any exchange of pawns he will have an open e-file (*vis-à-vis* the queen in the precise situation before us). The rook is also well-placed to meet the idea f4-f5, attacking e6. White may even be able to reinforce that attack by ♖h3 at some point, so having the rook on e8 can be invaluable. Finally, we already know that Black's pawn-breaks ...b5 and ...d5 are important, but the move ...e5 can be equally or more important. For example, a simple idea is ...e5, kicking White's knight off d4 and then playing ...b5. Also, in the many positions where White has a pawn on f4, ...e5 can lead to the opening of the e-file by Black's ...exf4, or by Black's recapture with a piece when White plays fxe5. In that case the rook on e8 exerts pressure down the e-file. All of which is not to say that White can't profit from the transaction as well, since he both gains access to d5 and f5, and opens the f-file for his rooks.

Incidentally, ...♖fe8 is also the most respected rook placement in the Scheveningen Sicilian, another variation with a hedgehog pawn-structure, for many of the same reasons.

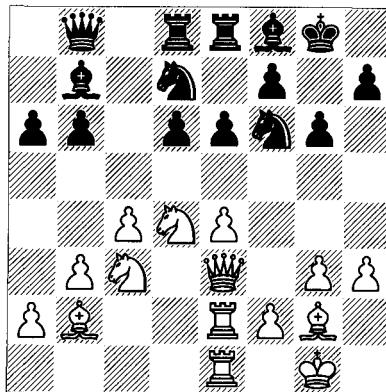
14 h3!?

This is a double-edged move. It stops ...♘g4, which together with ...d5 and ...♗c5 can cause trouble for White. However, although it's a rather obscure point at the moment, sometimes when White plays f4, the move h3 turns out to have weakened the g3-square, and by extension, f4 itself. Thus the moves ...h5-h4 and ...♗h5 are seen in games with this variation,

and even ...d5, opening up the queen's view of f4 and g3 from its post on c7, followed by ...♗d6.

Karpov-Adams, Wijk aan Zee 1998 wasn't different in terms of structure but ended up with a different resolution of the tension: 14 ♕ac1 ♕ad8 15 ♕fe1 ♕b8 16 ♕e2 ♗f8 (Black's last three moves have been played in many games: he gets the queen off the c-file, with ...♕a8 a possibility, and he prepares to give the bishop a more active role on g7) 17 h3 (notice that White is still able to answer 17...d5 with 18 e5, and Black's other potential break with ...b5 is under control for the moment) 17...g6 18 ♕ce1!?(D).

B



A funny-looking position, but the tripling is a standard idea originally played by Uhlmann a few decades before. Karpov says that the function of the rooks is "purely prophylactic ... to make the freeing advance ...d5 difficult for Black", that is, ...d5 will be answered by e5. The game continued 18...♗g7 19 ♕d2 ♘c5 20 ♕c2 ♕a8 21 a4 (versus ...b5) 21...♘c8 22 ♘f3 ♕ed8 23 ♘d2 (the knight has travelled from f3 to d4 to f3 to d2, and White is now ready to play moves like ♘h2, b4 and f4, but Black acts just in time) 23...d5! (a mass exchange follows) 24 exd5 exd5 25 cxd5 ♘xd5 26 ♘xd5 ♘xd5 27 ♘xd5 ♕xd5 28 ♘xg7 ♘xg7 29 ♘c4 ♘d3 30 ♘d1 b5 31 axb5 axb5 32 ♕ed2! bxc4 33 bxc4 ♕xc4 ½-½.

14...♗f8

Black's plan proceeds along the lines of the game in the previous note.

15 ♕fe1

15 f4 has been given a '?' due to 15...e5! 16 ♘f5 d5! and the ideas of ...♗c5 and ...d4 loom.

Nevertheless, 17 fxe5 ♜c5 18 ♜d4 ♜xe5 19 ♜xd5 ♜xe4 20 ♜f4! (a computer-generated line) isn't so clear.

15...♜ad8 16 ♜e2 g6 17 ♜ae1

The Uhlmann strategy. Watch how Kasparov treats it.

17...♝b8 18 ♜d2 ♜g7 19 ♜d1 ♜c5 20 ♜c1

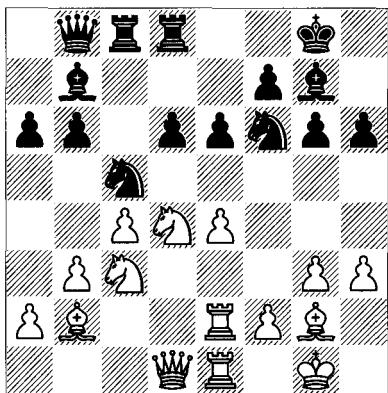
This piece can't really go anywhere useful.

20...♜c8 21 ♜g5 h6 22 ♜c1 ♜ed8

Black's rook has tracked the queen from the e-file to the d-file.

23 ♜b2 (D)

B



23...b5!

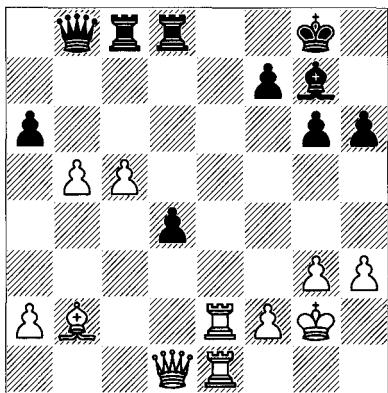
Finally Black breaks out with a one-two punch. In fact, 23...e5 24 ♜c2 b5 was a safer way to equalize, but less fun.

24 cxb5 d5! 25 exd5

If 25 e5? ♜fe4, there are issues with the e5- and c3-squares, but 26 ♜xe4 dxe4 would create a new problem: the outpost on d3.

25...♜xd5 26 ♜xd5 ♜xd5 27 b4! ♜xg2 28 ♜xg2 e5! 29 bxc5 exd4 (D)

W



30 ♜d2?

Not 30 bxa6? d3!, but Kasparov's pre-chess-engine note, "30 ♜e7?! ♜xc5! 31 ♜b3 ♜f8! 32 bxa6? ♜b5, winning", misses 33 ♜f3! ♜xb2 34 a7 ♜c8 35 ♜e8 ♜xe8 36 ♜xe8+ ♜xe8 37 a8♛, when only White can win.

After 30 ♜d2, Black grabs the initiative, leading to a great finishing attack.

30...♜xc5 31 bxa6 ♜a8+ 32 ♜f3 ♜xa6 33 ♜ed1 ♜f5 34 ♜e4 ♜a4! 35 a3 ♜e8 36 ♜b7 ♜d8 37 ♜d3?! h5 38 ♜d2 ♜e8! 39 ♜f1? ♜b8 40 ♜c7 ♜xb2! 41 ♜xb2 ♜e4 42 ♜c4 ♜h1+ 43 ♜e2 ♜g1! 44 ♜b8+ ♜h7 45 f4 h4! 46 ♜b5 ♜xb5 47 ♜xb5 hxg3 48 ♜g5 ♜f2+ 49 ♜d1 ♜f1+ 0-1

The end would be 50 ♜d2 (50 ♜c2 ♜e2+ 51 ♜d2 d3+ 52 ♜c1 ♜e1+) 50...g2 51 ♜g3 ♜h6!.

Larsen – Suba

Las Palmas Interzonal 1982

1 c4 ♜f6 2 ♜c3 c5 3 g3 e6 4 ♜f3 b6 5 e4 ♜b7 6 d3

This will become a Hedgehog soon.

6...d6 7 ♜g2 ♜e7 8 0-0 0-0 9 ♜e1 a6 10 d4 cxd4 11 ♜xd4

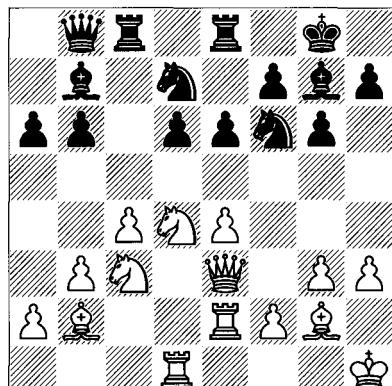
11 ♜xd4 would be the move these days, but White prefers to enter the type of game that we've just seen.

11...♜bd7 12 b3 ♜c7 13 ♜b2 ♜ac8 14 h3 ♜fd8 15 ♜e3 ♜f8 16 ♜d4

OK, this is more-or-less normal. Both players tuck for a bit.

16...♜e8 17 ♜e2 ♜b8 18 ♜d1 g6 19 ♜h1 ♜g7 (D)

W



20 g4!?

Often in this sort of position the players simply shuffle back and forth for 20 moves or so until something appears (or doesn't). White's move and its follow-up make eminent sense; he just underestimates the dynamic potential bundled up in those pieces on the first few ranks.

20...h6 21 ♜g3 ♜c5 22 ♜a1?! e5!

When neither ...b5 or ...d5 is at your disposal, sometimes this move will do the trick.

23 ♜c2 b5! 24 cxb5 ♜cxe4 25 ♜xe4 ♜xe4 26 ♜d3??

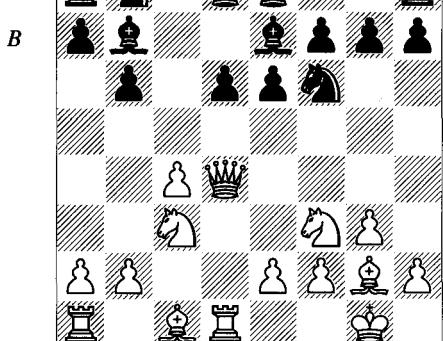
26 ♜xe4 ♜xe4+ 27 ♜xe4 ♜xc2 is very good for Black; for example, 28 bxa6 ♜a8 29 ♜g2 ♜xa2 30 ♜c3 ♜xa6, etc.

26...♜c5 27 ♜xd6?? ♜ed8 0-1

The position was losing anyway. Naturally Black didn't win all the games in the systems with e4 and c4, but White began to look for lines based upon piece-play and offering fewer targets.

Kramnik – Carlsen Wijk aan Zee 2008

1 ♜f3 ♜f6 2 c4 e6 3 ♜c3 c5 4 g3 b6 5 ♜g2 ♜b7 6 0-0 ♜e7 7 d4 cxd4 8 ♜xd4 d6 9 ♜d1 (D)



White plays a straightforward and flexible move that aims at the d6-pawn and coordinates well with an attack by pieces. White retains options of ♜g5, ♜g5, b3 with either ♜b2 or ♜a3, and even e4. In general he wants to see which way Black plays next (...a6, ...0-0, ...♜bd7 or ...♜c6) before he commits to a formation.

9...a6 10 ♜g5

This is one of the 'piece-play' approaches. White's first goal with this move, which is played

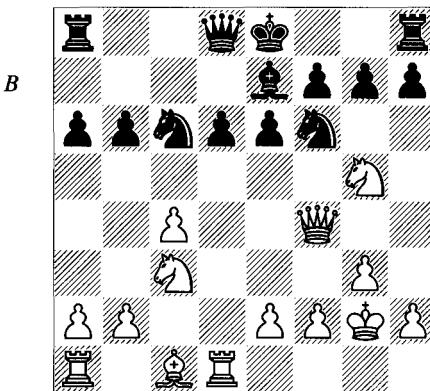
in several related positions (see the note about 6...a6 in the chapter introduction), is to exchange off the light-squared bishops. This may seem odd, because White played 8 ♜xd4 in large part to avoid this exchange. However, because of the particular move-order that both sides have chosen, White wants to win the e4square in order to bring a knight there and exploit Black's lightly-protected d6-pawn in some lines.

10...♜xg2 11 ♜xg2 ♜c6

a) Timing is very delicate in the Hedgehog; for example, 11...♜a7? is a good idea in general (see the next note), but very badly timed here, due to another combination of White's moves: 12 ♜e3! ♜bd7 (the threat on b6 compels Black to occupy the d7-square that his rook was supposed to use; as a result, the d-pawn can't be defended) 13 ♜ge4 0-0 14 ♜xd6 ♜a8+ 15 f3 ♜d8 16 ♜de4 and White keeps his extra pawn, Wojtkiewicz-Jurek, Bern 1993.

b) Another strategy for Black is to fight back with ...d5; for example, 11...0-0 12 ♜ce4 d5, but White can put pressure on Black's d-pawn by the sharp 13 ♜xf6+ ♜xf6 14 ♜g4!, when 14...♜a7 is met by 15 e4! ♜d7 16 exd5 exd5 17 cxd5 ♜xd5?? 18 ♜e4.

12 ♜f4 (D)



12...0-0

An important manoeuvre in many Hedgehog positions is ...♜a7 with the idea of ...♜d7 (to protect d6) and ...♜a8; the latter move gives Black activity on the diagonal, but also watches over his other potential weakness on c6. Indeed, 12...♜a7 seems adequate to level things:

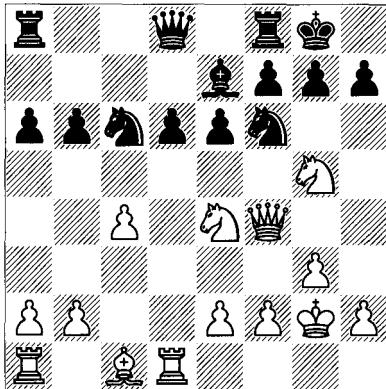
a) 13 ♜ce4 ♜d7!? allows a cute trick, but one which leads to a theoretically satisfactory

game for Black: 14 $\mathbb{Q}xf6+$ $\mathbb{Q}xf6$ 15 $\mathbb{Q}xh7!$ $\mathbb{Q}xh7$ 16 $\mathbb{W}e4$ (fork) 16... $\mathbb{B}h5$ 17 $\mathbb{W}xc6$ $\mathbb{B}c5$ 18 $\mathbb{W}a4$. White wins a pawn, but Black can get counterplay by the accurate 18... $\mathbb{W}a8+!$ 19 $\mathbb{Q}g1$ $\mathbb{W}c6!$, as in Ribli-Wahls, Bundesliga 1988/9.

b) 13 $\mathbb{Q}ge4$ $\mathbb{B}d7$ 14 $\mathbb{Q}e3$ $\mathbb{Q}e5!$ looks like a mistake due to 15 $\mathbb{Q}xf6+$ $\mathbb{Q}xf6$ 16 $\mathbb{Q}a4$, but in Kasparov-Ribli, Skellefteå 1989, Black showed that 16... $\mathbb{W}a8+!$ 17 $\mathbb{Q}g1$ $\mathbb{W}c6$ 18 $\mathbb{Q}xb6$ $\mathbb{B}b7$ 19 $c5$ $dxc5$ 20 $\mathbb{Q}c4$ $\mathbb{Q}xc4$ 21 $\mathbb{W}xc4$ $\mathbb{Q}xb2$ 22 $\mathbb{B}ab1$ 0-0 23 $\mathbb{W}xc5$ $\mathbb{W}a4!$ is completely equal.

13 $\mathbb{Q}ce4$ (D)

B



13... $\mathbb{Q}e8!$

Simplification helps White in most variations of the Hedgehog because it reduces the possibility of dynamic counterplay by Black, after which White can use his space advantage to concentrate upon Black's weaknesses. For example, after 13... $\mathbb{Q}xe4?$ 14 $\mathbb{W}xe4$ $\mathbb{Q}xg5$ 15 $\mathbb{Q}xg5$ $\mathbb{W}c7$ 16 $\mathbb{Q}f4$, Black can look forward to a lengthy stretch of passive defence.

14 b3 $\mathbb{B}a7$

In response to the radical counterattack by 14... $b5!?$, White can maintain control of d5 with 15 $\mathbb{Q}a3!$ (rather than giving up the centre by 15 $cxb5?$), letting his pawn be isolated on c4 in order to exploit his quicker piece development. After 15... $bxc4$ 16 $bxc4$, Black saves his d-pawn by 16... $\mathbb{W}a5!$, hitting the knight on g5, but White still controls more space after 17 $\mathbb{Q}b2$ $h6$ 18 $\mathbb{Q}f3$, when 18... $f5?$ is met by 19 $\mathbb{Q}xd6!$ $\mathbb{Q}xd6$ 20 $\mathbb{W}xd6$ $e5$ 21 $\mathbb{W}d2$ $\mathbb{W}xd6$ 22 $\mathbb{W}xd6$ and White will win a second pawn for the exchange.

15 $\mathbb{Q}b2$ $\mathbb{B}d7$ 16 $\mathbb{B}ac1$ $\mathbb{Q}c7!$

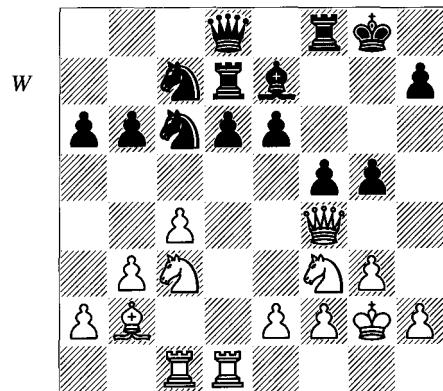
In many games before this one, Black had played 16... $\mathbb{W}a8$, generally leading to a small

edge for White. 16... $\mathbb{Q}c7$ defends e6 and thus threatens ... $f5$, winning a piece. Notice, too, that the knight controls the key squares d5 and b5.

17 $\mathbb{Q}f3$ $f5!$

This is concretely what Black is after: king-side expansion, with the objective of driving White's pieces back.

18 $\mathbb{Q}c3$ $g5!$ (D)



19 $\mathbb{W}d2!$

Carlsen offers the line 19 $\mathbb{W}e3$ $g4$ 20 $\mathbb{Q}d2$ $\mathbb{Q}g5!$ 21 $\mathbb{W}xb6$ $\mathbb{W}a8$ 22 $f3$ $\mathbb{B}b8$ 23 $\mathbb{W}f2$ $\mathbb{Q}e5$, which gives Black obvious compensation.

19... $g4$ 20 $\mathbb{Q}e1$ $\mathbb{Q}g5$ 21 $\mathbb{e}3$

The opening can be assessed as equal. Black played 21... $\mathbb{B}ff7$ with the idea ... $\mathbb{Q}e8-f6$, which was fine, and the more obvious 21... $\mathbb{W}a8$ 22 $\mathbb{Q}g1$ $\mathbb{W}b7$ is also satisfactory.

Kramnik – Aronian

Rapid match (game 3), Erevan 2007

1 $\mathbb{Q}f3$ $\mathbb{Q}f6$ 2 c4 e6 3 $\mathbb{Q}c3$ $c5$ 4 g3 b6 5 $\mathbb{Q}g2$ $\mathbb{B}b7$ 6 0-0 $\mathbb{Q}e7$ 7 d4 $cxd4$ 8 $\mathbb{W}xd4$ d6

By another typical move-order we have reached the initial position of the main line.

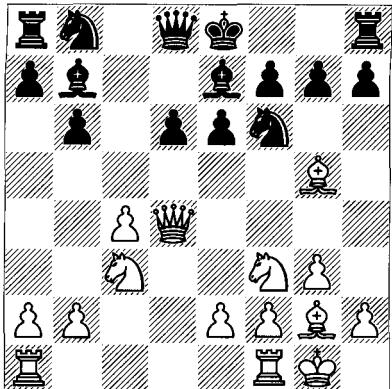
9 $\mathbb{Q}g5$ (D)

As in the previous game, White uses his pieces to develop quickly and attack the d6-pawn. His first plan is $\mathbb{Q}xf6$ followed by bringing a knight to e4.

9...a6

If Black had the move ...a6 already in, he could play ... $\mathbb{Q}bd7$ without any trepidation, planning to recapture on f6 with a knight. If he plays 9... $\mathbb{Q}bd7$ now, however, he invites 10

B



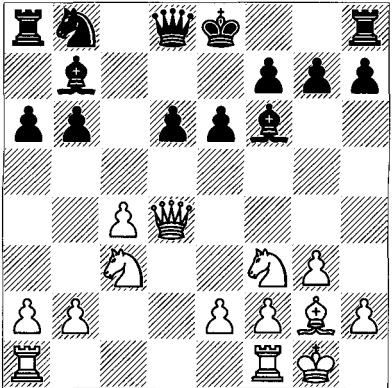
$\mathbb{Q}b5$; for example, 10...d5 11 cxd5 $\mathbb{Q}xd5$ 12 $\mathbb{Q}c3$ $\mathbb{Q}c6$ 13 $\mathbb{Q}fd1$ h6 14 $\mathbb{Q}f4$. Such a position is no fun to play.

10 $\mathbb{Q}xf6$

This will temporarily divert Black's bishop from the defence of d6. Another line that has been played a fair amount is 10 $\mathbb{Q}fd1$ $\mathbb{Q}bd7$ 11 $\mathbb{Q}d2$, the main idea of which is to retreat White's bishop from g5 to f4, undertaking to force a concession on Black's part: either ...e5 or ... $\mathbb{Q}e8$, in the latter case agreeing to White's expansion by e4. Theory holds that Black can level the play.

10... $\mathbb{Q}xf6$ (D)

W



11 $\mathbb{Q}f4$

Thus we have the main starting position of the $\mathbb{Q}g5$ system. The play is highly technical and theoretical, but I'll try to show the basic ideas for both sides. 11 $\mathbb{Q}d3$ also targets d6, but strangely, isn't used much any more. In Sulava-Pelletier, French Team Ch, Evry 2004, Black used the idea of the rook transfer we saw above: 11... $\mathbb{Q}a7$ 12

$\mathbb{Q}ad1$ $\mathbb{Q}e7$ 13 $\mathbb{Q}d4$ $\mathbb{Q}xg2$ 14 $\mathbb{Q}xg2$ $\mathbb{Q}c8$ 15 f4! (White wants to break down or at least expose Black's centre pawns by f5, so Black has to respond quickly) 15... $\mathbb{Q}c6$ 16 f5 $\mathbb{Q}e5!$ 17 $\mathbb{Q}e4$ 0-0 18 fxe6 fxe6 19 $\mathbb{Q}xf8+$ $\mathbb{Q}xf8$ 20 $\mathbb{Q}f3$ (otherwise it's hard to get at Black's position, because the knight on e5 is so strong) 20... $\mathbb{Q}xf3!$ 21 exf3 $\mathbb{Q}c7$ (finally! Black levels the game with this counterattack) 22 $\mathbb{Q}e1!$? $\mathbb{Q}xc4$ 23 $\mathbb{Q}xe6+$ $\mathbb{Q}xe6$ 24 $\mathbb{Q}xe6$ $\mathbb{Q}d4$ with ... $\mathbb{Q}f7$ next, equalizing.

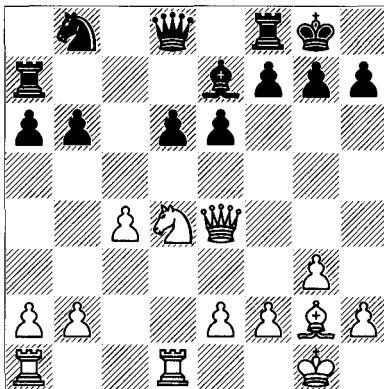
11...0-0

Black used to play 11... $\mathbb{Q}xf3$ 12 $\mathbb{Q}xf3$ $\mathbb{Q}a7$ more often, with the idea ... $\mathbb{Q}d7$. Then White has a small edge because of his greater command of territory and targets in the enemy camp. Nevertheless, if Black is patient and defends accurately, he should come out all right.

12 $\mathbb{Q}fd1$ $\mathbb{Q}e7$ 13 $\mathbb{Q}e4$ $\mathbb{Q}xe4$ 14 $\mathbb{Q}xe4$ $\mathbb{Q}a7$

15 $\mathbb{Q}d4$ (D)

B



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

Black attacks White's c-pawn and prepares ... $\mathbb{Q}c7$ and ... $\mathbb{Q}d8$, as needed. Another popular defence is 15... $\mathbb{Q}c7$ 16 b3 $\mathbb{Q}c5!$ (an active move that plans ... $\mathbb{Q}c7$). Black has the idea of ...b5, so there follows 17 a4 $\mathbb{Q}c7$ and now the main theoretical move is 18 $\mathbb{Q}b1$!?. This looks a little crazy, but for one thing, the queen now escapes attacks that come from ...d5. In addition, before White doubles rooks, he wants to protect his back rank, again in anticipation of ...d5 or even a timely ...b5. White has done well in such positions; whether he has any objective advantage is another question.

16 b3 $\mathbb{Q}e8$

The earlier move 16... $\mathbb{Q}f6$ may be easier to handle. For example, Anand-Adams, Sofia 2005

went 17 e3 $\mathbb{Q}d8$ 18 $\mathbb{W}g4$, and Adams suggests 18... $\mathbb{B}c7!$ 19 $\mathbb{Q}d2$ $\mathbb{Q}d7$ 20 $\mathbb{Q}ad1$ $\mathbb{Q}e5$, equalizing.

17 a4 $\mathbb{W}c5$ 18 $\mathbb{Q}a2$ $\mathbb{W}h5$

Black deviates from well-known theory at this point, perhaps more to create new problems than out of dissatisfaction with the established lines. Kasparov put his queen on h5 versus Karpov in a similar position over 25 years earlier: 18... $\mathbb{Q}f6$ (after 18... $\mathbb{Q}d7$, perhaps 19 a5! bxa5 20 e3 is worth a try) 19 $\mathbb{Q}ad2$ $\mathbb{B}c7$ 20 $\mathbb{W}b1$ $\mathbb{Q}e7??$ 21 b4! $\mathbb{W}h5$ (21... $\mathbb{W}xc4??$ 22 $\mathbb{Q}c2$), Karpov-Kasparov, Moscow 1981, and Karpov says that he should have played 22 b5! (a later game saw 22 $\mathbb{Q}f3$ $\mathbb{W}e5$ 23 b5) 22...a5 23 $\mathbb{Q}c6$ $\mathbb{Q}f8$, when White obviously stands better.

19 $\mathbb{Q}f3$ $\mathbb{W}e5$ 20 e3 $\mathbb{Q}c8$ 21 $\mathbb{W}b1$

This is similar to the previous note, but White has no b4 trick, and the game is level.

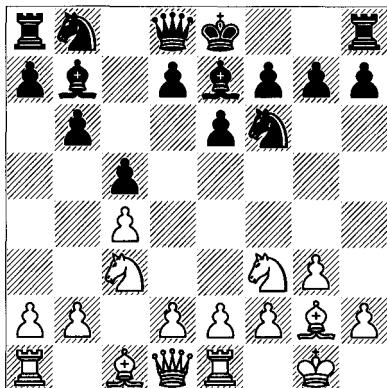
Modern Line with 7 $\mathbb{Q}e1$

Sarno – Shipov

Cappelle la Grande 1995

1 c4 $\mathbb{Q}f6$ 2 $\mathbb{Q}c3$ c5 3 $\mathbb{Q}f3$ e6 4 g3 b6 5 $\mathbb{Q}g2$ $\mathbb{Q}b7$ 6 0-0 $\mathbb{Q}e7$ 7 $\mathbb{Q}e1$ (D)

B



7...a6

Normally 7...d6 will transpose after 8 e4 a6 9 d4 cxd4, etc. Black has two conventional ways to avoid the hedgehog structure:

a) 7...d5 was one of the main reasons why 7 $\mathbb{Q}e1$ didn't catch on for so many years. Indeed, the rook move seems to have little role in this position. On the other hand, it can be argued

that ... $\mathbb{Q}b7$ and ...d5 often don't go that well together throughout the Queen's Indian/Bogo-Indian/Nimzo-Indian complex, so that White can hope for a pull by playing normal moves. At any rate, here are two high-level recent examples:

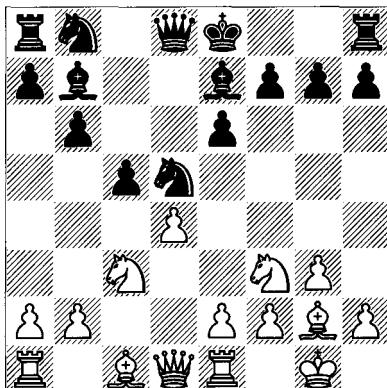
a1) Topalov-Carlsen, Morelia/Linares 2007 saw 8 d4!? dx c 4 9 $\mathbb{Q}xc5$ 10 $\mathbb{W}a4+?$ $\mathbb{Q}bd7$ 11 $\mathbb{W}xc4$ 0-0 12 $\mathbb{Q}d1$ $\mathbb{Q}c8$ 13 $\mathbb{W}h4$ $\mathbb{Q}e7$, and here White found the creative idea 14 $\mathbb{W}h3!$ $\mathbb{W}e8$ 15 $\mathbb{Q}d4$ $\mathbb{Q}xg2$ 16 $\mathbb{W}xg2$ with modest pressure based upon the long diagonal and c6-square.

a2) 8 cxd5 and now:

a21) 8...exd5 9 d4 is clearly playable for Black, but more comfortable for White to play. You might want to look at Queen's Indian Defence theory, including lines beginning with 1 d4 $\mathbb{Q}f6$ 2 c4 e6 3 $\mathbb{Q}f3$ b6 4 a3 $\mathbb{Q}b7$ 5 $\mathbb{Q}c3$ d5 6 cxd5 exd5 7 g3, etc. The main line there reaches this position, but with White's pawn on a3 and no rook on e1.

a22) 8... $\mathbb{Q}xd5$ 9 d4 (D) (9 e4 can be answered by 9... $\mathbb{Q}xc3$ 10 bxc3, with a big centre for White, or by 9... $\mathbb{Q}b4$ 10 d4 cxd4 11 $\mathbb{Q}xd4$ $\mathbb{Q}xc6$ 12 $\mathbb{Q}xc6$ $\mathbb{W}xd1$ 13 $\mathbb{Q}xd1$ $\mathbb{Q}xc6$ with rough equality, though this last position takes accurate play and may not thrill Black; 9 $\mathbb{Q}xd5$ exd5 10 d4 0-0 with ideas of ... $\mathbb{Q}a6$ and ... $\mathbb{W}e8$ is equal and leads to a more exciting game).

B



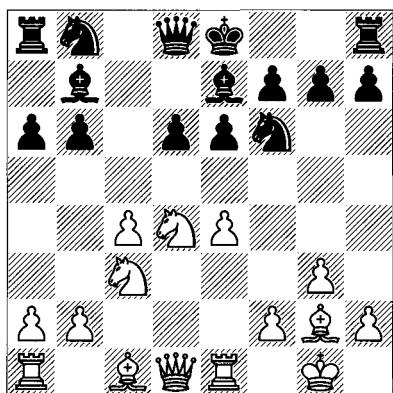
9... $\mathbb{Q}xc3$ (or 9...cx d 4 10 $\mathbb{W}a4+!?$ $\mathbb{Q}d7$ 11 $\mathbb{Q}xd5$ $\mathbb{Q}xd5$ 12 $\mathbb{Q}xd4$ $\mathbb{Q}xg2$ 13 $\mathbb{Q}xg2$ 0-0 14 $\mathbb{Q}c6$ $\mathbb{Q}c5$ 15 $\mathbb{W}b5$ $\mathbb{W}d7$ 16 $\mathbb{Q}e3$ $\mathbb{Q}h8$ 17 $\mathbb{Q}d4$ with equality, Aronian-Yakovenko, FIDE World Cup, Khanty-Mansiisk 2007) 10 bxc3 $\mathbb{Q}e4!?$ (this is an idea that you also see in the Queen's

Indian Defence and Catalan Opening; Black prevents $\mathbb{W}c2$ or $\mathbb{W}d3$ followed by e4) 11 $\mathbb{Q}e5!$ $\mathbb{Q}xg2$ 12 $\mathbb{Q}xg2$ 0-0 13 e4 $\mathbb{W}c8$ 14 $\mathbb{W}g4$ $\mathbb{Q}f6$?! (Black should challenge the powerful knight right away by 14... $\mathbb{Q}c6$ 15 $\mathbb{Q}h6$ $\mathbb{Q}f6$ 16 $\mathbb{Q}xc6$ $\mathbb{W}xc6$, although White still has a small edge after 17 $\mathbb{Q}g1$ e5?! 18 d5) 15 $\mathbb{Q}f3$ $\mathbb{Q}h8$ 16 h4! (with his possession of the centre, White is looking forward to exchanging some pieces) 16... $\mathbb{Q}c6$?! (White stands better in any case) 17 $\mathbb{Q}g5$ cxd4 (Black is trying to steer clear of 17... $\mathbb{Q}e7$? 18 d5! exd5 19 $\mathbb{W}xc8$ $\mathbb{Q}axc8$ 20 exd5 $\mathbb{Q}xg5$ 21 hxg5, when White's passed pawn and rooks are much too strong; on the other hand, 17... $\mathbb{Q}xg5$ 18 hxg5 followed by taking over the h-file looks just as bad) 18 $\mathbb{Q}xf6$ gxf6, Carlsen-Aronian, Candidates match (game 3), Elista 2007, and now 19 $\mathbb{W}f4!$ $\mathbb{W}d8$ 20 cxd4 would have favoured White by a large margin (20... $\mathbb{Q}xd4$? 21 $\mathbb{Q}ed1$ e5 22 $\mathbb{Q}xe5$!).

b) 7... $\mathbb{Q}e4$ is another move resembling the Queen's Indian Defence. White can take the centre by 8 $\mathbb{Q}xe4$ $\mathbb{Q}xe4$ 9 d3 $\mathbb{Q}b7$ 10 e4 0-0 11 d4 cxd4 12 $\mathbb{Q}xd4$ with the hedgehog structure again. With a pair of minor pieces off the board I would give White the nod. As you can see, it will be easier for him to fend off radical pawn-breaks in this situation. Nevertheless, some players won't mind defending Black's position, which is still resilient.

8 e4 d6 9 d4 cxd4 10 $\mathbb{Q}xd4$ (D)

B



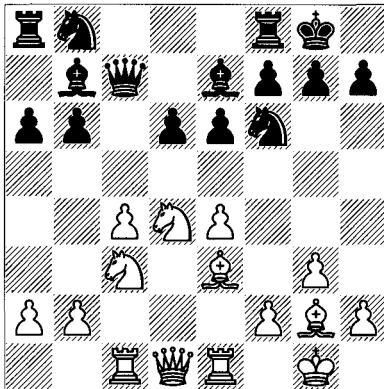
This is the point of 7 $\mathbb{Q}e1$. White gets the customary Hedgehog position, but he has his knight on d4 and rook on e1. Both of these can be considered improvements over the $\mathbb{W}xd4$ Hedgehog lines in which White plays e4.

10... $\mathbb{W}c7$

Watch out for 10...0-0? 11 e5!, winning material, based upon 11...dxe5 12 $\mathbb{Q}xb7$ $\mathbb{Q}a7$ 13 $\mathbb{Q}c6$.

11 $\mathbb{Q}e3$ 0-0 12 $\mathbb{Q}c1$ (D)

B



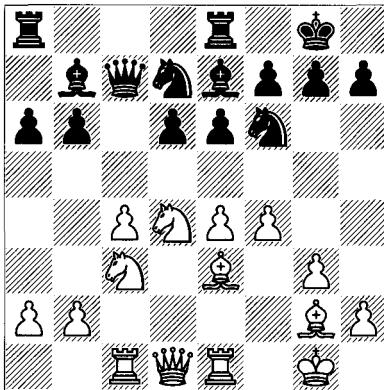
12... $\mathbb{Q}bd7$

Delaying or foregoing this knight development in favour of 12... $\mathbb{Q}e8$ and perhaps 13... $\mathbb{Q}f8$ involves some distinctions that are not critical to understanding the position, but you might want to revisit that move-order after reading this section.

13 f4 $\mathbb{Q}fe8$ (D)

We examine 13...h5?!? in the next game.

W



14 g4

This threatens g5, winning the knight on f6. 14 f5 also looks good, with the idea 14...e5 15 $\mathbb{Q}d5$, when 15... $\mathbb{W}d8$ is playable but a bit depressing. The natural answer 14... $\mathbb{Q}f8$ leaves e6 vulnerable to 15 fxe6 fxe6 16 $\mathbb{Q}h3$. And 14... $\mathbb{Q}d8$ 15 fxe6 fxe6 16 $\mathbb{Q}h3$ $\mathbb{Q}f8$ 17 $\mathbb{Q}f1$!

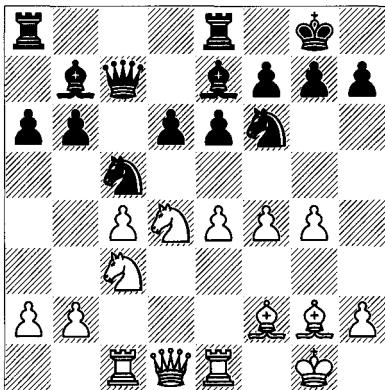
causes real problems; for example, 17... $\mathbb{Q}xe4$?! exposes Black's pawns to attack following 18 $\mathbb{Q}xe4$ $\mathbb{Q}xe4$ 19 $\mathbb{W}g4$ $\mathbb{Q}g6$ (19... $\mathbb{Q}b7$? 20 $\mathbb{Q}xe6$! $\mathbb{Q}xe6$?? 21 $\mathbb{W}xe6+$) 20 $\mathbb{B}xf8+$ $\mathbb{Q}xf8$ 21 $\mathbb{Q}xe6+$ $\mathbb{B}xe6$ 22 $\mathbb{W}xe6$. In this line, best seems 17... $\mathbb{W}f7$! 18 $\mathbb{B}c2$ $\mathbb{W}g6$ 19 $\mathbb{B}cf2$ $\mathbb{Q}c7$, although 20 $\mathbb{B}f4$! gives White significant attacking chances. Then Black must abstain from 20...e5? 21 $\mathbb{B}xf6$ $gxf6$ 22 $\mathbb{Q}f5$, when the knight is worth a rook and $\mathbb{Q}g4-h5$ threatens.

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

14...h6?! has been played in several games, but comes up short: 15 g5! $hxg5$ 16 $fxg5$ $\mathbb{Q}h7$ 17 g6 $\mathbb{Q}hf8$ 18 $gxf7+$ $\mathbb{Q}xf7$. Now 19 $\mathbb{Q}d5$! seems to be the clearest way to obtain the better position. Ruck-Markus, Calvia Olympiad 2004 continued 19... $\mathbb{W}d8$ (Franco analyses 19...exd5 20 cxd5 $\mathbb{W}b8$ 21 $\mathbb{Q}c6$ $\mathbb{Q}xc6$ 22 dxc6 $\mathbb{Q}e5$ 23 $\mathbb{W}d5+$ $\mathbb{Q}e6$ 24 $\mathbb{B}f1+$ $\mathbb{Q}f6$ 25 c7 to a clear advantage) 20 $\mathbb{Q}xe7$ $\mathbb{W}xe7$ 21 $\mathbb{Q}f3!$ $\mathbb{Q}h7$ 22 $\mathbb{Q}g5+$! $\mathbb{Q}xg5$ 23 $\mathbb{W}h5+$ g6 24 $\mathbb{W}xg5$ $\mathbb{Q}g8$ 25 $\mathbb{W}xe7+$ $\mathbb{Q}xe7$ 26 $\mathbb{Q}g5+$ $\mathbb{Q}e8$ 27 $\mathbb{B}cd1$, winning material and the game.

15 $\mathbb{Q}f2$ (D)

B



Re-introducing the threat of g5 followed by b4.

15...g6

This prepares to meet g5 with ... $\mathbb{Q}h5$. Here Black has tried several moves, none satisfactory. One of the most thematic is 15...h6, when Khaetsky-Belichev, Kharkov 1998 continued 16 b4 $\mathbb{B}ad8$! 17 g5 $hxg5$ 18 $fxg5$ $\mathbb{Q}h7$ 19 g6! $\mathbb{Q}f6$ 20 $gxf7+$ $\mathbb{Q}xf7$ 21 $\mathbb{Q}d5$!, with the idea 21...exd5 22 cxd5 $\mathbb{Q}f8$ 23 bxc5 dxc5 24 $\mathbb{Q}g3$.

After 15...g6, the game continued 16 b4!? $\mathbb{B}ad8$! 17 $\mathbb{W}e2$ $\mathbb{Q}cd7$, and here 18 $\mathbb{Q}g3$! e5 19

$\mathbb{Q}d5$! gives a limited positional advantage. However, White can improve upon all this with 16 e5!, leading to 16...dxe5 17 fxe5 $\mathbb{Q}fd7$ 18 b4 $\mathbb{Q}xg2$ 19 $\mathbb{Q}xg2$ with the idea 19... $\mathbb{Q}b7$ (19... $\mathbb{Q}xe5$ 20 bxc5 bxc5 21 $\mathbb{Q}f3$ $\mathbb{Q}xg4$ 22 $\mathbb{Q}g3$ favours White's active pieces) 20 $\mathbb{Q}d5$! $exd5$ 21 cxd5 and the queen can't retreat due to $\mathbb{Q}c6$, but otherwise White gets his piece back with monstrous centre pawns.

In general, as indicated by the notes above, White's attacking and positional opportunities in this variation seem to outweigh Black's solid defence.

Banikas – Aroshidze

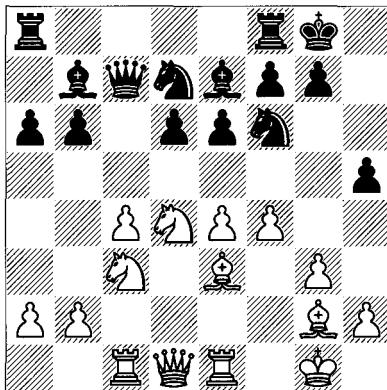
Kavala 2005

1 $\mathbb{Q}f3$ c5 2 c4 $\mathbb{Q}f6$ 3 g3 b6 4 $\mathbb{Q}g2$ $\mathbb{Q}b7$ 5 0-0 e6 6 $\mathbb{Q}c3$ d6 7 $\mathbb{B}e1$ a6 8 e4 $\mathbb{Q}e7$ 9 d4 cxd4 10 $\mathbb{Q}xd4$ $\mathbb{W}c7$ 11 $\mathbb{Q}e3$ 0-0 12 $\mathbb{B}c1$ $\mathbb{Q}bd7$ 13 f4

Here we have the same position as in the previous game, in which 13... $\mathbb{W}fe8$ 14 g4 followed.

13...h5?! (D)

W



This move appears quite a bit in modern Sicilian Defence variations. Here Black cuts across White's automatic attacking methods from the last game. Advancing the rook's pawn serves multiple purposes. First and foremost, it stops g4. Secondly, it creates the threat of 14... $\mathbb{Q}g4$, when White's bishop on e3 has no healthy move. Thirdly, the move ...h4 can create some weaknesses in White's camp.

As always, there are disadvantages to 13...h5. It uses a tempo (which might have been devoted to a move like ... $\mathbb{W}fe8$), the h-pawn itself may

become a target, and Black's kingside defences are theoretically weakened.

14 h3

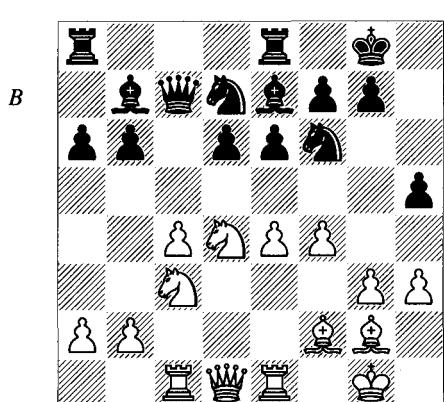
Black can feel good about having provoked this move because now ♜h3 can't assist in an attack on e6, and White has to defend the h2-b8 diagonal in some lines after ...h4. White can try to avoid these problems by two means:

a) 14 ♜h1 makes room at g1 for the bishop if Black persists in ...♝g4. A sample line is 14...♝c5 15 ♜g1 h4 16 b4 (16 g4?! h3 17 ♜f3 allows the typical Sicilian-like dark-square grab with 17...g5! 18 fxg5?! ♜h7 19 b4 ♜d7 20 g6 ♜g5! 21 gxf7+ ♜xf7 and White has too many weaknesses) 16...h3! 17 ♜f3 ♜cd7 (17...♜ad8, to answer 18 bxc5 with 18...dxc5, is dubious because of 18 ♜e2 ♜cd7 19 ♜d5! exd5 20 cxd5 ♜c5 21 bxc5 and White plays ♜f1 and ♜xh3 next) 18 g4!? with an unclear attack. White has to be wary because the area around his king is loose, but g5 and ♜d5 can create defensive problems for Black.

b) By keeping h3 free for the bishop, White makes 14 f5?! an important candidate, even if it means giving up his dark-squared bishop; for example, 14...♝g4 (14...e5? 15 ♜d5) 15 ♜e2?! (15 fxe6 ♜xe3 16 ♜xe3 ♜g5) 15...♝xe3 16 ♜xe3 ♜c5 (16...♝e5 17 fxe6 ♜g4 18 ♜d5!) 17 b4! (17 fxe6?? ♜g5 18 ♜f2 fxe6) 17...♜e5 18 ♜h3, which is utterly unclear.

14...♜fe8 15 ♜f2 (D)

White can argue that 15 g4 hxg4 16 hxg4 weakens Black's kingside as much as his own, but then 16...♝c5 17 ♜f2 d5 18 e5 ♜fe4 gives Black a nice outpost, and White won't like 18 exd5 ♜xf4 either. This is an example of how the trade-off ...h5/h3 can benefit Black.

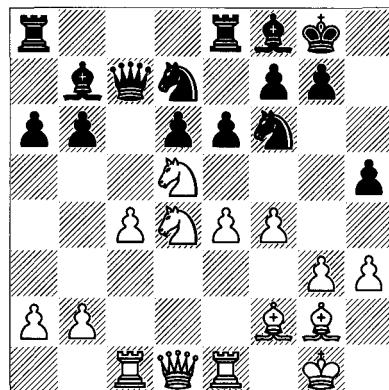


15...♝f8!

15...g6 was played in the game L.Johannesen-Schmaltz, Athens 2003. It supports h5 but is rather loosening; the game saw the standard sacrifice 16 ♜d5?! exd5 17 cxd5 ♜c5 (Franco gives 17...♜d8 18 ♜c6 ♜xc6 19 dxc6 ♜c5 20 b4 ♜e6 21 f5?! as unclear, but this will be difficult for Black after 21...♝c7 22 ♜xb6) 18 b4 ♜ad8, and now 19 f5! looks strong, as fxg6 next threatens to win e6 and denude Black's king; at the same time, 19...g5 20 bxc5 bxc5 21 ♜c6! ♜xc6 22 dxc6 is clearly good for White.

16 ♜d5?! (D)

Again this thematic sacrifice. White almost always gets his piece back, yet the assessment depends upon how Black can reorganize in the meantime. Upon 16 ♜e2, threatening e5, Black has 16...e5 (remember that if this is played when White has a pawn on f4 and knight on d4, it at least grants Black open lines, because ...fxe4 can follow a knight move) 17 ♜d5 ♜d8 18 fxe5. Black's outpost and e-file make up for White's dominating knight on d5 and his own dubious-looking pawn on h5.



16...exd5 17 cxd5 ♜d8 18 ♜c6 ♜xc6 19 dxc6 ♜c5 20 c7 ♜xc7

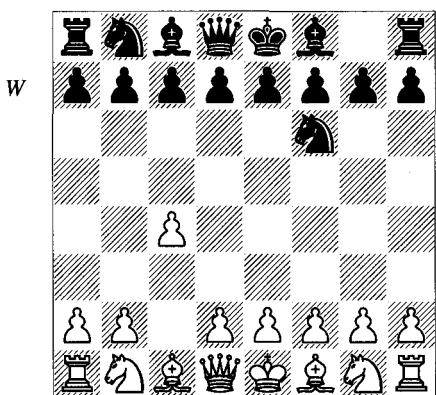
Black has to return the piece. 20...♜c8? is much worse: 21 e5 dxe5 22 fxe5 ♜fd7 23 ♜xa8 ♜xa8 24 e6! with the idea 24...fxe6 25 b4.

21 b4 ♜ab8 22 bxc5 bxc5 23 ♜d4?! ♜d7?! 24 ♜xh5

White has two bishops but his queenside is loose. Both sides have potential issues with their kings. From this point, the game went back and forth and was eventually drawn. The ...h5 idea is worth filing away for future use.

11 Mikenas Attack and Nimzo-English

1 c4 $\mathbb{Q}f6$ (D)



Black uses 1... $\mathbb{Q}f6$ if he intends to play a so-called 'Indian System', that is, one with the moves ...g6 or ...e6, in this case omitting or delaying ...c5 and ...e5. By doing so, he keeps the possibility of a mainstream d4 opening alive. That is, if White plays 2 d4, Black may play 2...g6 and transpose into a King's Indian Defence with 3... $\mathbb{Q}g7$ or into a Grünfeld Defence after 3...d5. Or he might choose to answer 2 d4 with 2...e6 and transpose to one of several openings such as a Nimzo-Indian Defence (3 $\mathbb{Q}c3$ $\mathbb{Q}b4$), or a Queen's Indian Defence (3 $\mathbb{Q}f3$ b6), or a Queen's Gambit Declined (3...d5).

In this book I'm concerned with positions that belong to the English Opening proper, that is, not involving transpositions to a 1 d4 opening. In particular, White can go his own way versus standard Indian Defence set-ups. After 1 c4 $\mathbb{Q}f6$ 2 $\mathbb{Q}c3$ g6 3 g3 $\mathbb{Q}g7$ 4 $\mathbb{Q}g2$, for example, White may choose to forego d4 by an early e4, or by a combination of $\mathbb{Q}f3$ and d3. Those options are discussed in Chapter 12.

Following the moves 1 c4 $\mathbb{Q}f6$ 2 $\mathbb{Q}c3$ e6, White can abstain from d4 by playing 3 e4, when Black's natural replies are 3...d5 or 3...c5.

He can also play 3 $\mathbb{Q}f3$, when Black's most independent move is 3... $\mathbb{Q}b4$. Those are the variations under consideration in this chapter. Other lines can arise when Black sets up with ...e6, but I've limited myself to these as the most common and, I think, the most instructive in a broader sense.

Before moving on to specific positions, I need to make a few points regarding transpositions into other variations or openings. For example, after 1 c4 $\mathbb{Q}f6$, both 2 $\mathbb{Q}c3$ and 2 $\mathbb{Q}f3$ have their advantages and drawbacks. Both allow 2...c5, of course, with a Symmetrical English. 2 $\mathbb{Q}c3$ gives Black the extra choice of 2...e5, transposing to a normal 1 c4 e5 English. But if Black answers 2 $\mathbb{Q}c3$ with 2...e6, White can control the direction of the play himself by using 3 e4 (discussed in this chapter), whereas after 3 $\mathbb{Q}f3$, Black has the choices; for example, 3... $\mathbb{Q}b4$, 3...c5, or 3...d5 (the latter provoking 4 d4 with a Queen's Gambit Declined).

If White wants to eliminate that possibility of 2...e5, he can play 2 $\mathbb{Q}f3$; then, however, Black may be more inclined to respond with 2...e6 and 3...d5, because many players prefer to defend the Queen's Gambit Declined only when White is already committed to the move $\mathbb{Q}f3$.

Finally, I should mention that White's third most natural response to 1... $\mathbb{Q}f6$ (apart from 2 d4), which is 2 g3. Then 2...e5 is possible, transposing to Chapter 4, but the sequence 2...e6 and 3...d5 will probably lead to a Catalan (for example, after 3 $\mathbb{Q}f3$ d5 4 d4), and the move 2...c5 enters a line of the Symmetrical English in which White is committed to g3. You may or may not be happy with these possibilities; it's mostly a matter of taste.

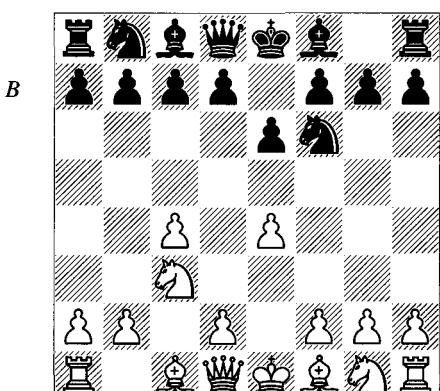
There are more such issues, but I find the above the most meaningful points for the 1 c4 player.

Mikenas Attack: Introduction

1 c4 ♜f6 2 ♜c3 e6 3 e4 (D)

As indicated above, when Black plays 2...e6, he shows his willingness to transpose to one of several queen's pawn openings in the event of 3 d4. For example, 3...d5 is a Queen's Gambit Declined, 3...♜b4 is a Nimzo-Indian Defence, and 3...c5 often turns into a Benoni after 4 d5.

The only effective way that White can guarantee that the game continues in English Opening channels is 3 e4, an aggressive move called the Mikenas Attack.



Thus we can appreciate the appeal of 3 e4 in a purely practical sense: White makes the initial choice as to the course of the game, and in so doing he limits the theory he needs to master. In addition, White usually gets to play the aggressor in what are inherently double-edged positions. Right away, he has a threat of 4 e5 followed by 5 d4, and it turns out that Black's reasonable defences all admit of exciting play. 3 e4 also comes with disadvantages, of course, which become evident as we focus on Black's counter-strategies.

Central Challenge with 3...d5

Ivanchuk – P.H. Nielsen
Skanderborg 2003

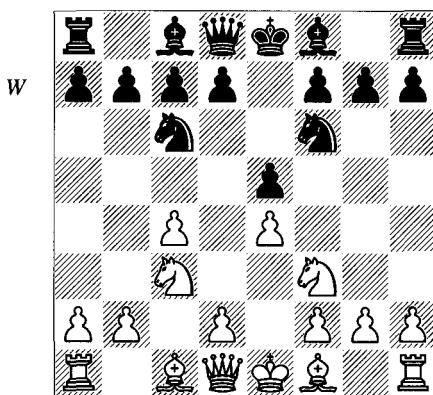
3...d5

Black directly challenges the centre in classical fashion. Let's walk through the early moves of this line and discuss the reasoning behind them.

First, why doesn't Black choose moves other than 3...d5 and 3...c5 (analysed in the next section)? Here are two others:

a) 3...♝b4? lets White play 4 e5, which is obviously advantageous after the more-or-less forced reply 4...♝g8; for example, 5 ♜g4 (or 5 d4, or 5 ♜f3) 5...♜f8 (after 5...g6 6 ♜f3, Black has major problems on the dark squares) 6 ♜f3 ♜c6 7 d4. Black can't even castle.

b) 3...e5?! 4 ♜f3 ♜c6 (D) (3...♜c6 4 ♜f3 e5 transposes).



A funny situation, in which Black wastes a move with ...e6-e5, but contends that e4 is not a desirable move for White in this position. Remarkably, he is willing to enter into the Nimzowitsch Four Knights line (1 c4 e5 2 ♜c3 ♜f6 3 ♜f3 ♜c6 4 e4) with an extra tempo for White. White has several possible answers:

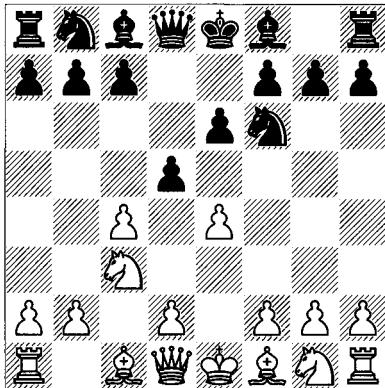
b1) 5 d4 exd4 6 ♜xd4 ♜b4 has done acceptably for Black in several games, even though it may objectively favour White somewhat.

b2) After 5 ♜e2!?, 5...♜c5?! 6 ♜xe5! is strong, so 5...♜b4 6 d3 d6 7 0-0 0-0 8 ♜d5 might follow. This option could be slightly annoying to Black.

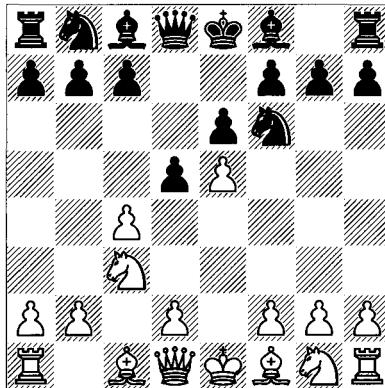
b3) 5 a3!? is a good choice, preventing ...♜b4 and anticipating 5...♜c5?! (5...d6 is probably best, when White grabs some central territory with 6 d4) 6 ♜xe5! ♜xe5 7 d4; here Black would normally play ...♜b4, but White's extra move a3 stops him from doing that.

We now return to 3...d5 (D):

W



B

**4 e5**

White has to respond to the threats of ...dxe4 and ...d4.

a) As a rule, he doesn't want to free Black's c8-bishop without gaining some compensating advantage, so 4 exd5 exd5 isn't seen that much. In fact, 5 d4 transposes into a rarely-played French Defence position, i.e., 1 e4 e6 2 d4 d5 3 exd5 exd5 4 c4 ♜f6 5 ♜c3, in which Black has few difficulties. White can also head for unique positions via 5 cxd5 ♜xd5. Then 6 d4 ♜b4! is attractive because White has to take an extra move to defend c3. Instead, 6 ♜f3 is a possible way to escape theory; we're getting rather far afield, but an intriguing continuation would be 6...♜b4 (6...♜c6 7 ♜b5) 7 d4 ♜f5 8 ♜b5+ c6 9 ♜a4 ♜d3+ 10 ♜f1.

b) 4 cxd5 exd5 5 e5 is quite rare these days, although it provides White some new ideas and isn't yet completely worked out. The main line is 5...♜e4! 6 ♜f3 (White shouldn't accept the pawn sacrifice: 6 ♜xe4 dxe4 7 ♜a4+ ♜c6 8 ♜xe4 ♜d4! 9 ♜xd4 ♜xd4 10 ♜d1 ♜f5 11 d3 0-0-0 with a substantial advantage for Black) 6...♜c6 7 ♜b5 ♜e7 8 ♜a4 (8 ♜xc6+!? bxc6 9 ♜a4 wins a pawn, although 9...♜d7! 10 ♜xe4 dxe4 11 ♜xe4 0-0 12 d4 ♜a6 gives Black good compensation) 8...♜d7 9 ♜xe4 a6! 10 ♜f6+?! (10 ♜e2 ♜xe5 11 ♜c2 ♜xf3+ 12 ♜xf3 dxe4 13 ♜xe4 is about equal) 10...gxsf6 11 ♜xc6 ♜xc6 and Black is in good shape. After 12 ♜f4 (Korchnoi-P.H.Nielsen, Drammen 2005), 12...d4! opens the diagonals for the bishops; for example, 13 ♜xd4 ♜xg2 14 ♜g1 ♜d5 15 exf6 ♜d6!.

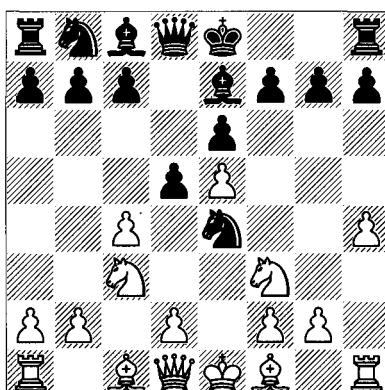
We return to 4 e5 (D).

4...d4

a) One of several forgotten lines in the Mikenas Attack is 4...♜fd7, which has a 'French Defence' look. It used to be played and analysed a fair amount, but the influential game Smyslov-I.Farago, Hastings 1976/7 discouraged further research: 5 cxd5 exd5 6 d4 c5!? 7 ♜f3 ♜c6 (perhaps 7...cx4 8 ♜xd4 ♜b6 is better, but either 9 ♜b5+ or 9 ♜g5! keeps an advantage) 8 ♜b5! (8 dxc5 ♜xc5! 9 ♜xd5 0-0! isn't as clear) 8...a6 (8...cx4? 9 ♜xd4 ♜dx5 10 ♜e2 and White is on the verge of winning) 9 ♜xc6 bxc6 10 0-0 ♜e7 11 dxc5!? (or 11 ♜e1) 11...♜xc5 12 ♜d4 ♜b6? (12...♜d7 13 f4! ♜b8!?) 13 ♜e3 0-0?? 14 ♜c1 ♜d8 15 b4! ♜e4 16 ♜a4 ♜b7 17 ♜xc6 1-0.

b) 4...♜e4 is respectable and unrefuted. A beautiful and profound game Topalov-Rozentalis, European Team Ch, Batumi 1999 went 5 ♜f3 ♜e7 6 h4! (D).

B



This hypermodern move does several things. It prevents ...♜g5, one of Black's standard moves in this position, intending to eliminate

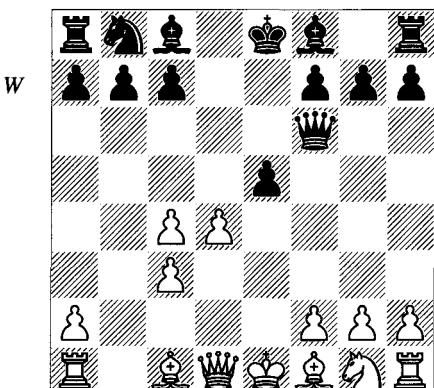
White's important knight on f3. The h-pawn can also support a piece on g5, advance to attack the kingside, or prepare $\mathbb{h}3-g3$. The game continued 6... $\mathbb{Q}xc3$ (6...0-0 7 $\mathbb{W}c2$ $\mathbb{Q}c6$ 8 $\mathbb{Q}xe4$ $\mathbb{Q}b4$ 9 $\mathbb{W}b1$ $dxe4$ 10 $\mathbb{W}xe4$ $\mathbb{Q}d7$ 11 $\mathbb{Q}g5!$) 7 $dxc3$ $dxc4$ 8 $\mathbb{W}a4+$ $\mathbb{Q}d7$ 9 $\mathbb{W}xc4$ $\mathbb{Q}c6$ 10 $\mathbb{W}g4$ $\mathbb{Q}xf3$ 11 $gxf3!$ $\mathbb{Q}f8?$! (11... $g6$ 12 $h5$ $\mathbb{W}d5$ 13 $hxg6$ $\mathbb{W}xe5+$ 14 $\mathbb{Q}e3$ $fxg6$ {14... $hxg6$ 15 $\mathbb{W}e4!$ } 15 $f4!$ $\mathbb{W}f5$ 16 $\mathbb{W}xf5$ $exf5$ 17 $\mathbb{Q}d4$) 12 $f4$ $\mathbb{Q}d7$ 13 $\mathbb{Q}e3$ $c6$ 14 0-0-0 $\mathbb{W}a5$ 15 $f5!$!. White leaves pawns on a2 and e5 hanging without regard for defence. The rest of the game is a pleasure to watch: 15... $\mathbb{W}xa2$ (15... $\mathbb{Q}xe5$ 16 $\mathbb{W}e4$ $exf5$ 17 $\mathbb{W}xf5$ threatens f4 and Black has no playable solution) 16 $fxe6$ $\mathbb{W}xe6$ 17 $\mathbb{W}f4!$ (now the bishops stream into activity) 17... $\mathbb{Q}d8$ (17... $\mathbb{W}xe5?$ 18 $\mathbb{Q}h3!$) 18 $\mathbb{Q}c4$ $\mathbb{W}e7$ 19 $\mathbb{Q}he1$ $h5$ 20 $\mathbb{W}g3$ (or 20 $e6!$ $fxe6$ 21 $\mathbb{Q}xe6$) 20... $\mathbb{Q}xe5$ 21 $\mathbb{Q}xd8+$ $\mathbb{Q}xd8$ 22 $\mathbb{Q}f4$ $\mathbb{Q}xc4$ 23 $\mathbb{Q}xe7$ $\mathbb{Q}xe7$ 24 $\mathbb{W}d3!$ 1-0.

5 $\mathbb{W}xf6$ $dxc3$ 6 $\mathbb{B}xc3$

White gets nothing out of 6 $fxg7$ $cxd2+$ 7 $\mathbb{Q}xd2$ $\mathbb{Q}xg7$ 8 $\mathbb{W}c2$ $\mathbb{Q}c6!$.

6... $\mathbb{W}xf6$ 7 $\mathbb{Q}f3$

Perhaps not the best move-order. The traditional move is 7 d4, when 7...e5? (D) has been the most popular choice at the top levels for at least 15 years (we'll see 7...c5 in the next game).



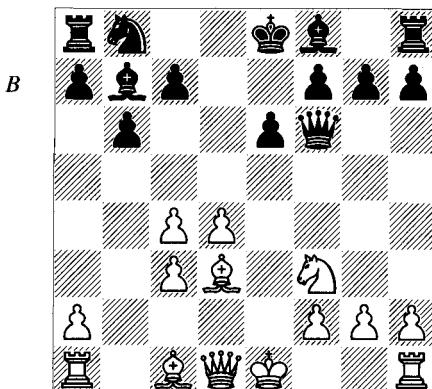
Black reasons that any time he can establish a central presence and simultaneously open a diagonal for his queen's bishop, he should do so. Now 8 $\mathbb{Q}f3$ transposes to our main game. Instead, 8 $\mathbb{W}e2?$! wins a pawn, but 8... $\mathbb{Q}e7$! 9 $\mathbb{W}xe5$ (9 $dxe5$ $\mathbb{W}c6$ gives Black at least enough for a pawn; White has the weak c-pawns and will have to untangle his pieces to get castled)

9... $\mathbb{W}xe5+$ 10 $dxe5$ $\mathbb{Q}c6$ 11 $f4$ $f6!$ opens the position to White's great detriment. Notice White's bishops, blocked by their own pawns; and once the centre is demolished, he will have horrible internal weaknesses on e3 and d3.

Although I won't go into detail, I should also say that 7 d4 has a special advantage over 7 $\mathbb{Q}f3$, in that it allows White to answer 7...b6 with 8 $\mathbb{Q}e2$ $\mathbb{Q}b7$ 9 $\mathbb{Q}f3$, which is probably somewhat favourable for him. Of course, 8 $\mathbb{Q}f3$ is also possible, transposing to the next note.

7...e5

A reasonable alternative is 7...b6!? 8 d4 $\mathbb{Q}b7$, when 9 $\mathbb{Q}e2$ $\mathbb{Q}d6$ 10 0-0 0-0 gives Black fair prospects. White can play more ambitiously by 9 $\mathbb{Q}d3$? (D).



Here's a trick that you may have seen in other openings: 9... $\mathbb{Q}d6$? 10 $\mathbb{Q}g5!$ $\mathbb{Q}xf3$ 11 $\mathbb{W}d2!$, trapping Black's queen! Then 11... $\mathbb{Q}f4$! 12 $\mathbb{Q}xf4$ threatens $\mathbb{Q}g5$ again, so 12... $\mathbb{Q}xg2$ 13 $\mathbb{Q}g1$ $\mathbb{Q}b7$ is practically forced, when 14 $\mathbb{Q}g3$ renews the threat with $\mathbb{Q}e5$. This trap reappears below.

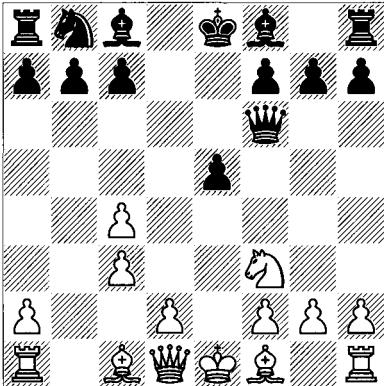
So the main line is 9... $\mathbb{Q}xf3$ 10 $gxf3$, when White has two sets of doubled pawns and a total of four isolated pawns, but he also has two bishops and a potential attack on Black's light squares, beginning with the move $\mathbb{Q}e4$.

We now return to 7...e5 (D):

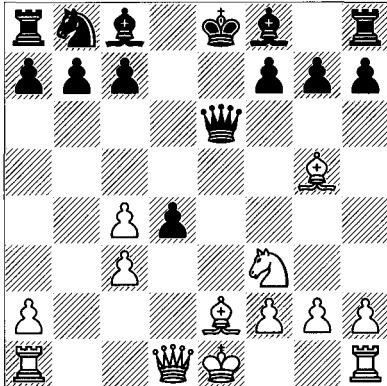
8 d4

For some time, 8 $\mathbb{Q}d3$ was popular, with the idea 0-0, $\mathbb{Q}e4/c2$ and d4. Since solutions have been found, I'll skip over this option, except to show one fun game that is typical of the Mikenas, in that White gets the bishop-pair and an attack, while at the same time he takes on

W



B



serious weaknesses. Tactics are key to the result: 8... $\mathbb{Q}a6$ 9 0-0 $\mathbb{Q}d6$ 10 $\mathbb{Q}c2$ $\mathbb{Q}g4$ 11 d4 $\mathbb{Q}xf3$ 12 $\mathbb{W}xf3$ 13 $gxf3$ 0-0-0 (13...exd4 14 $\mathbb{Q}e1+$ $\mathbb{Q}d8$ is also playable) 14 c5 $\mathbb{Q}f8$ 15 c6! exd4! 16 cxb7+ $\mathbb{Q}b8$ 17 cxd4 $\mathbb{Q}b4!$ (with White having so many weak pawns, Black simply wants to stabilize the position; of course, White doesn't let him) 18 $\mathbb{Q}e4$ $\mathbb{Q}d5$ 19 $\mathbb{Q}b1?$ (an amazing exchange sacrifice) 19... $\mathbb{Q}c3$ 20 $\mathbb{Q}g5$ f6!? (20... $\mathbb{Q}xd4$ is a good option) 21 $\mathbb{Q}e3$ $\mathbb{Q}xb1$ 22 $\mathbb{Q}xb1$ $\mathbb{Q}d6$? 23 $\mathbb{Q}f4!$ $\mathbb{Q}b6$ 24 $\mathbb{Q}xc7+!$ $\mathbb{Q}xc7$ 25 $\mathbb{Q}c1+$ $\mathbb{Q}c5!$ 26 $\mathbb{Q}xc5+$ $\mathbb{Q}b8$ (26... $\mathbb{Q}d7?$ loses to 27 $\mathbb{Q}f5+$ $\mathbb{Q}e7$ 28 $\mathbb{Q}c7+$ $\mathbb{Q}d6$ 29 $\mathbb{Q}c8)$ 27 $\mathbb{Q}c6$ $\mathbb{Q}d8$ 28 d5 $\mathbb{Q}xb7$ (bailing out) 29 $\mathbb{Q}xb7$ $\mathbb{Q}xb7$ 30 $\mathbb{Q}g2$, Khalifman-Leitão, FIDE Knockout, New Delhi 2000, and here Black should take the draw by 30... $\mathbb{Q}b6$ 31 $\mathbb{Q}c6+$ $\mathbb{Q}b7$ 32 $\mathbb{Q}e6$ $\mathbb{Q}c7$. My feeling is that 8 $\mathbb{Q}d3$ should lead to equality with accurate play.

8... $\mathbb{Q}xd4$ 9 $\mathbb{Q}g5!$

By attacking Black's queen, White is not only trying to win a tempo. His problem is that the natural 9 cxd4 $\mathbb{Q}b4+$ 10 $\mathbb{Q}d2$ $\mathbb{Q}xd2+$ 11 $\mathbb{W}xd2$ 0-0 12 $\mathbb{Q}e2$ c5! breaks up White's centre and creates an isolated c-pawn after ...cxd4. Thus White drives Black's queen off the a1-h8 diagonal first; in doing so, he also has a specific tactical idea.

9... $\mathbb{W}e6+$ 10 $\mathbb{Q}e2$ (D)

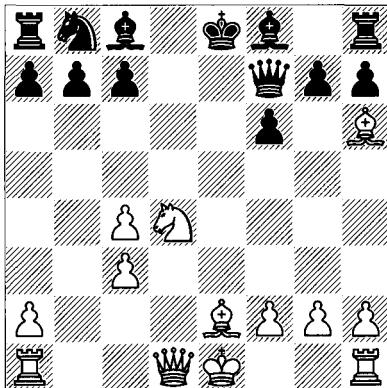
10... $\mathbb{Q}e7$

To play otherwise can be disastrous:

a) 10...d3? lets White develop too quickly after the tricky 11 0-0! $\mathbb{Q}c5$ (11...dxe2?? 12 $\mathbb{W}d8#$; 11... $\mathbb{W}xe2$ 12 $\mathbb{Q}e1$; 11...f6 12 $\mathbb{Q}xd3$) 12 $\mathbb{Q}xd3$ 0-0 13 $\mathbb{Q}e1$ $\mathbb{W}a6$ 14 $\mathbb{Q}d4!$. Black's kingside is under severe attack and almost indefensible. Kosten-Gregoire, Cap d'Agde 2003 continued

14...h6 15 $\mathbb{W}h5!$ $\mathbb{Q}xd4$ 16 cxd4 $\mathbb{Q}d7$ 17 $\mathbb{Q}e7$ $\mathbb{Q}e8$ 18 $\mathbb{Q}h4$ $\mathbb{Q}f8$ (18... $\mathbb{Q}xe1+$ 19 $\mathbb{Q}xe1$ $\mathbb{Q}f8$ 20 h3 $\mathbb{Q}d7$ 21 $\mathbb{Q}e7$ $\mathbb{Q}e8$ 22 $\mathbb{W}e5!$ is killing) 19 $\mathbb{W}f3$ $\mathbb{W}a5$ 20 c5 $\mathbb{W}a4$ 21 $\mathbb{W}e4$ f5 22 $\mathbb{W}d5+$ $\mathbb{Q}h8$ 23 $\mathbb{Q}e7$ $\mathbb{Q}f6$ 24 $\mathbb{W}c4$ 1-0.

b) 10...f6 was played for years until the wonderful game Ni Hua-Aleksandrov, Calcutta 2004: 11 $\mathbb{Q}xd4$ $\mathbb{W}f7$ 12 $\mathbb{Q}h6!!$ (D) (heretofore, 12 $\mathbb{Q}f4$ $\mathbb{Q}c5$ had equalized).

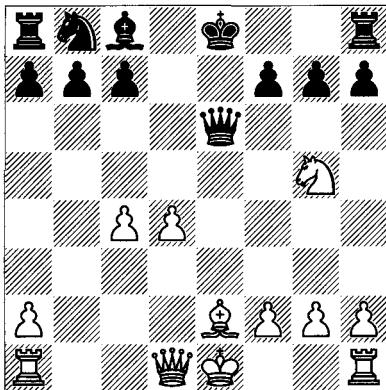


B

12...c5?! (12...gxh6?? 13 $\mathbb{Q}h5$; 12...g6 is best, but very awkward for Black after 13 $\mathbb{Q}d2!$) 13 $\mathbb{Q}b5$ $\mathbb{Q}f5!$ (this prevents $\mathbb{Q}h5$ from winning directly, as it does after 13... $\mathbb{Q}c6$? 14 $\mathbb{Q}xg7!$, and 14... $\mathbb{Q}xg7$ 15 $\mathbb{Q}d6+$ or 14... $\mathbb{Q}xg7$ 15 $\mathbb{Q}h5+$ $\mathbb{Q}e7$ 16 $\mathbb{W}d6#$) 14 0-0 $\mathbb{W}d7$ (14...gxh6? 15 $\mathbb{Q}h5$ $\mathbb{Q}g6$ 16 $\mathbb{Q}e1+$ $\mathbb{Q}e7$ 17 $\mathbb{Q}d6+$) 15 $\mathbb{Q}f4$ $\mathbb{Q}a6$ 16 $\mathbb{Q}e1!$ $\mathbb{Q}f7$ (16...0-0-0? 17 $\mathbb{Q}xa7#$) 17 $\mathbb{Q}f3$ $\mathbb{Q}d8$ 18 $\mathbb{Q}xb7$ g5 19 $\mathbb{Q}g3$ $\mathbb{Q}b8$ 20 $\mathbb{W}h5+$ $\mathbb{Q}g7$ 21 $\mathbb{Q}ad1$ $\mathbb{Q}xb7$ 22 $\mathbb{Q}xd8$ $\mathbb{Q}c6$ 23 $\mathbb{Q}d5$ $\mathbb{Q}g6$ 24 $\mathbb{W}g4$ h5 25 $\mathbb{Q}d7+$ $\mathbb{Q}h6$ 26 $\mathbb{W}e6$ $\mathbb{Q}a8$ 27 $\mathbb{W}xf6$ $\mathbb{Q}e7$ 1-0. Fantastic.

11 cxd4 $\mathbb{Q}xg5$ 12 $\mathbb{Q}xg5$ (D)

B

**12...Bg7**

a) 12...Rf6 13 Qe4! Rg6 14 Qg3 0-0 15 0-0 frees White to use his mobile centre pawns. In the meantime, he is ahead in development and has discouraged Black's queen's bishop from getting out. Pelletier-Ribli, Tegernsee 2003 saw 15...Rd8 16 Rc1 Rf6 17 d5 Ra6 18 Rh5! Re5 19 Rf3 Rc5 20 Re1 Rd6 21 Rd4 with a pleasant advantage.

b) 12...Rg6 is a reasonable alternative: 13 f4!? (threatening Rh5) 13...0-0 14 0-0. Now Black needs to get his pieces out before White's centre gets moving:

b1) 14...Rf5?! 15 g4! Rc2 16 Rd2 h6 17 Rxc1 hxg5? (but 17...Ra4 18 Rd3 Rfd19 Rf3 leaves White with an advantage in space and development) 18 Rxc2 gxf4 19 Rb2 with the idea 19...b6 20 Rf3 c6 21 Rxf4 Rd7 22 Re4 Rf6 23 Rf5! Rad8 24 g5 Re7 25 Rb3 and Black is getting slaughtered. Even without this attack, White's d-pawn can always advance to good effect in positions of this type.

b2) 14...Qc6! doesn't fully equalize, but it limits Black's problems: 15 d5 (or 15 Rd3 Rf5 16 Rxf5 Rxf5 17 d5) 15...Qe7, Mulyar-Gorlin, Saint Paul 2000, and now 16 Rf3 Rf5 17 Rd4 gives White something to work with.

13 Rd2 Qc6

Black threatens 14...Qxd4.

14 d5 Qe5 15 0-0 0-0 16 Rfe1

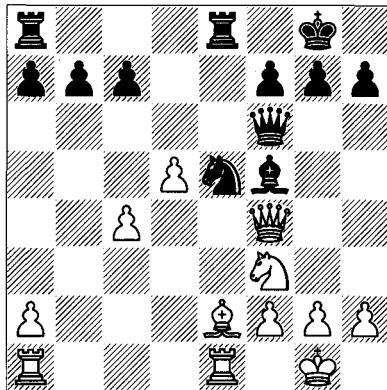
Now White intends Rd3.

16...Rf5! 17 Rf4 Rf6 18 Rf3 Rfe8 (D)

This position has been contested many times. The following technical manoeuvring is important for the fate of the whole main line beginning with 7...e5.

19 Rh4!

W



A new move at the time of this game. Previously, 19 Rd4 Rg6! 20 Rxf5 Rxd4 had been played, equalizing.

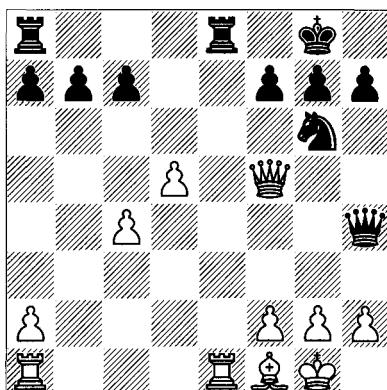
19...Rg6 20 Rxf5 Rxh4

Compare the previous note. It turns out that the queen on h4 is distinctly inferior to the centralized one on d4!

21 Rf1 (D)

21 Rg4 also deserves consideration, since Black's queen doesn't get back to d4. The plan would be g3 and h4-h5.

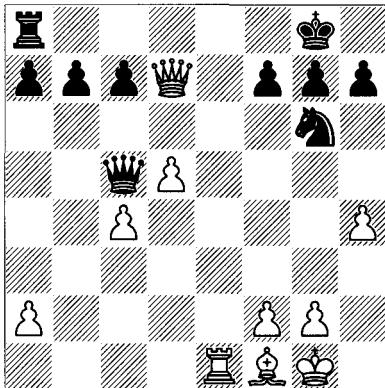
B

**21...Rd4**

This is still a good move, even if White has gained time for infiltration into the enemy position. Black tried something different in Bruzon-Zarnicki, Santo Domingo 2003: 21...b6 22 g3 (with the idea h4-h5; perhaps 22 Rad1 was still better, preventing ...Rd4 once and for all) 22...Rd8 (22...Rd4!?), and here Kosten recommends 23 Re4! Rxe4 24 Rxe4 Rd6 25 Rf1, when h4-h5 and Rh3 will follow.

22 Rd7 Rxe1 23 Rxe1 Rc5 24 h4! (D)

B



A fantastic move. Black can't safely capture the pawn, so his knight is driven into passivity.

24... $\mathbb{Q}f8$

Not 24... $\mathbb{Q}xh4$? 25 $\mathbb{E}e7$ $\mathbb{E}f8$ 26 $\mathbb{W}xc7$ and the d-pawn will triumph.

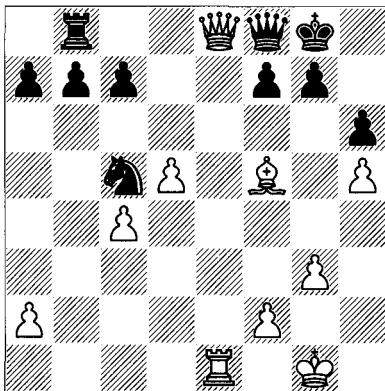
25 $\mathbb{W}f5$

Now White threatens h5 to win the h7-pawn. A later game Steingrimsson-Külaots, Tallinn 2006 saw what is probably an even better move in 25 $\mathbb{Q}d3$, with the same idea of winning the h7-pawn. Black replied 25... $\mathbb{W}d6$ (25... $\mathbb{Q}xh4$?! 26 $\mathbb{W}h3$!) 26 $\mathbb{W}f5$ $\mathbb{W}f4$ (26... $\mathbb{Q}g8$ 27 h5 $\mathbb{Q}f8$ 28 $\mathbb{W}g5$ compares well with the main game) 27 $\mathbb{W}h5$ $\mathbb{Q}g8$ 28 $\mathbb{E}e3$?! (or 28 g3!) 28...b6 29 g3! $\mathbb{W}d6$, and now White would have a clear superiority after 30 $\mathbb{W}g5$! or 30 $\mathbb{W}e2$!.

25... $\mathbb{W}g8$ 26 h5 $\mathbb{Q}f8$ 27 $\mathbb{W}g5$! $\mathbb{W}d6$ 28 g3 h6 29 $\mathbb{W}e7$ $\mathbb{Q}d7$ 30 $\mathbb{Q}h3$ $\mathbb{Q}c5$! 31 $\mathbb{Q}f5$! $\mathbb{E}b8$ 32 $\mathbb{W}e8+?$! $\mathbb{Q}f8$ (D)

White wins after 32... $\mathbb{E}xe8$?? 33 $\mathbb{E}xe8+$ $\mathbb{W}f8$ 34 $\mathbb{Q}h7+$.

W



33 $\mathbb{W}e7$?

Now that Black's knight is so well-posted on c5, the ending probably isn't winning. 33 $\mathbb{W}e3$! is better, intending to bring the king a little closer to the centre before exchanging.

33... $\mathbb{W}xe7$ 34 $\mathbb{E}xe7$ $\mathbb{Q}f8$?

Kosten points out that 34... $\mathbb{Q}a6$ offers good drawing chances.

35 $\mathbb{E}xc7$ $\mathbb{Q}a6$ 36 d6!

Now it's over.

36... $\mathbb{E}d8$ 37 c5 b6 38 c6! $\mathbb{Q}b8$ 39 $\mathbb{Q}e4$ $\mathbb{E}xd6$ 40 $\mathbb{E}c8+$ 1-0

Miles – Sosonko

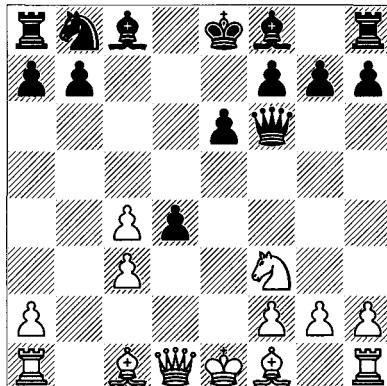
Tilburg 1977

1 c4 $\mathbb{Q}f6$ 2 $\mathbb{Q}c3$ e6 3 e4 d5 4 e5 d4 5 exf6 dxc3 6 bxc3 $\mathbb{W}xf6$ 7 d4 c5

Black attacks the centre from the other side.

8 $\mathbb{Q}f3$ cxd4 (D)

W



9 $\mathbb{Q}g5$!

This bishop will retreat shortly, but wants to displace the queen first. By comparison, 9 cxd4 $\mathbb{Q}b4+$ 10 $\mathbb{Q}d2$ $\mathbb{Q}xd2+$ 11 $\mathbb{W}xd2$ makes life easier for Black, whose queen on f6 controls d4 and won't lose a tempo to $\mathbb{Q}d3$; for example, 11...0-0 12 $\mathbb{Q}d3$ (12 $\mathbb{Q}e2$ $\mathbb{Q}d8$ 13 $\mathbb{W}e3$ $\mathbb{Q}c6$ 14 $\mathbb{Q}d1$ b6) 12... $\mathbb{Q}c6$ 13 0-0 $\mathbb{Q}d8$ 14 $\mathbb{Q}fd4$ g6 (threatening ... $\mathbb{Q}xd4$) 15 $\mathbb{Q}e4$ $\mathbb{Q}xd4$! 16 $\mathbb{Q}xd4$ e5 17 $\mathbb{Q}d5$ exd4 18 $\mathbb{W}xd4$ $\mathbb{W}xd4$ 19 $\mathbb{Q}xd4$ $\mathbb{Q}e6$ with an even game.

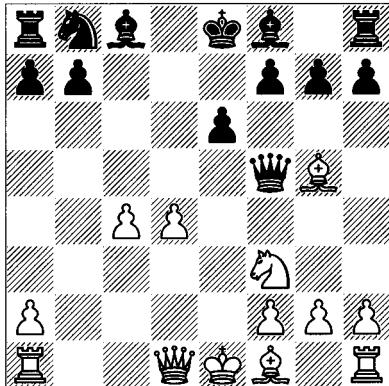
9... $\mathbb{W}f5$ 10 cxd4 (D)

Now White's $\mathbb{Q}d3$ will come with tempo.

10... $\mathbb{Q}b4+$

10... $\mathbb{Q}c6$ is infrequently played and subtle, intending to answer 11 $\mathbb{Q}d3$ with 11... $\mathbb{Q}b4+$, forcing White's king to move. In this way

B



Black tries to induce White into the somewhat passive 11 $\mathbb{Q}e2$ (when the valuable idea $\mathbb{Q}e4$ won't be possible, for one thing). Probably White should play 11 a3!, when Tukmakov suggests 11... $\mathbb{Q}e7$?, citing 12 $\mathbb{Q}xe7$ $\mathbb{Q}xe7$ and ... $\mathbb{R}d8$; however, 12 $\mathbb{Q}d3$! $\mathbb{W}a5+$ 13 $\mathbb{Q}d2$ $\mathbb{W}d8$ 14 $\mathbb{Q}c3$ looks nice for White.

11 $\mathbb{Q}d2$

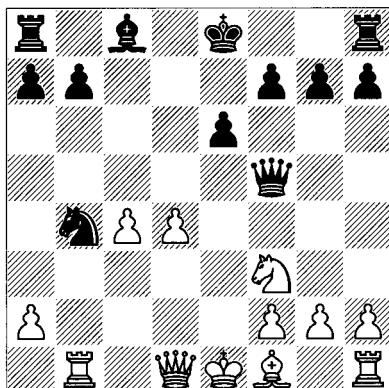
White has enough central control that he can claim a significant advantage.

11... $\mathbb{Q}c6$!?

11... $\mathbb{Q}a5$ may be the best way to get to the game position: 12 $\mathbb{Q}d3$ $\mathbb{Q}c6$ 13 $\mathbb{R}b1$ $\mathbb{Q}xd2+$ 14 $\mathbb{W}xd2$, etc.

12 $\mathbb{Q}xb4$ $\mathbb{Q}xb4$ 13 $\mathbb{R}b1!$ (D)

B



13... $\mathbb{W}a5$

Heading towards a queenless middlegame. The alternatives are inferior:

a) 13... $\mathbb{Q}c2+?$ doesn't work after 14 $\mathbb{Q}d2$ $\mathbb{Q}a3$ 15 $\mathbb{R}b3$ $\mathbb{W}a5+$ 16 $\mathbb{Q}e3!$ with the idea of winning the trapped knight by $\mathbb{W}c1$ or $\mathbb{W}d3$. Then after 16...b5 17 cxb5 a6 18 b6 $\mathbb{Q}b7$ 19

$\mathbb{W}c1$ $\mathbb{Q}b5$ 20 $\mathbb{W}c5!$ White wins another pawn and the game.

b) White stands better in every positional respect following 13... $\mathbb{Q}c6$ 14 $\mathbb{Q}d3$ $\mathbb{W}f6$ 15 $\mathbb{Q}e4$ 0-0 16 0-0 $\mathbb{R}d8$ 17 $\mathbb{Q}xc6$ bxc6 18 $\mathbb{W}a4$, Tal-Sosonko, Wijk aan Zee 1976.

14 $\mathbb{Q}d2$ $\mathbb{Q}c6$ 15 $\mathbb{Q}d3$ $\mathbb{W}xd2+$

White also has the upper hand after 15... $\mathbb{Q}e7$ 16 $\mathbb{Q}e4$ or 16 d5? $\mathbb{W}xd2+$ 17 $\mathbb{Q}xd2$ $\mathbb{Q}a5$ 18 $\mathbb{R}he1$ $\mathbb{R}d8$ 19 $\mathbb{Q}c3!$, Reshko-Klaman, Lenin-grad 1967.

16 $\mathbb{Q}xd2$ b6 17 $\mathbb{R}hc1$??

A little too modest. 17 $\mathbb{Q}e4$ $\mathbb{Q}b7$ 18 $\mathbb{Q}e5!$ works positionally and tactically: 18... $\mathbb{Q}xe5$ (18... $\mathbb{R}c8$ 19 $\mathbb{Q}c5!$) 19 $\mathbb{Q}xb7$ $\mathbb{R}b8$ (19... $\mathbb{R}d8$ 20 $\mathbb{Q}c3!$) 20 $\mathbb{Q}a6$ and the bishop is much better than the knight.

17.... $\mathbb{Q}a6$?

17.... $\mathbb{Q}b7$! is correct; for example, 18 c5? (18 d5? $\mathbb{Q}e7$) 18...0-0 19 $\mathbb{Q}e4$ f5 20 $\mathbb{Q}d3$ $\mathbb{R}fd2$ with near equality.

18 $\mathbb{Q}e4!$ $\mathbb{Q}b7$

Miles gives 18... $\mathbb{R}c8$ 19 $\mathbb{Q}c5!$ $\mathbb{Q}a5$ 20 cxb6 axb6 21 $\mathbb{R}xc8+$ $\mathbb{Q}xc8$ 22 $\mathbb{Q}c3$ with obvious superiority.

19 c5 f5 20 $\mathbb{Q}xe6+$ $\mathbb{Q}xc6$ 21 cxb6 $\mathbb{Q}xf3$ 22 b7! $\mathbb{Q}d7$ 23 bxa8 \mathbb{W} $\mathbb{Q}xa8$ 24 $\mathbb{R}c5$ $\mathbb{Q}xg2$ 25 $\mathbb{R}g1$ $\mathbb{Q}e4$ 26 $\mathbb{R}xg7+$ $\mathbb{Q}d6$ 27 $\mathbb{R}a5$

and White won in short order.

**Tomashevsky – Gelfand
Cheboksary 2006**

1 c4 $\mathbb{Q}f6$ 2 $\mathbb{Q}c3$ e6 3 e4 d5 4 e5 d4 5 exf6 $\mathbb{Q}xc3$ 6 bxc3 $\mathbb{W}xf6$ 7 d4 c5 8 $\mathbb{Q}f3$ h6

This is a useful move, preventing $\mathbb{Q}g5$. It comes at the cost of a tempo and a slight king-side weakness.

9 $\mathbb{Q}d3$ (D)

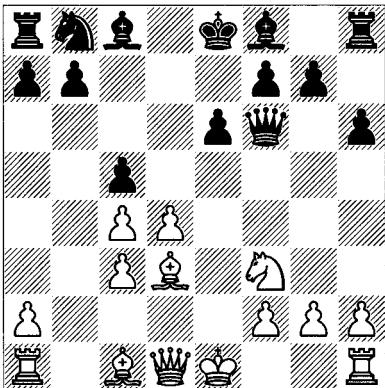
White must be aggressive or Black will simply develop and bring his pieces to the centre.

9... $\mathbb{Q}xd4$

A key decision. Black decides to liquidate White's weaknesses in order to develop at maximum speed. Unfortunately, nothing else is truly satisfactory for him. Briefly:

a) The sequence 9... $\mathbb{Q}d6$ 10 0-0-0-0? is very risky after 11 $\mathbb{Q}e2$!; for example, 11... $\mathbb{R}d8$? 12 $\mathbb{W}e4$ $\mathbb{W}f5$ (12... $\mathbb{Q}c6$ 13 $\mathbb{W}h7+$ $\mathbb{Q}f8$ 14 $\mathbb{Q}d2$!) is equally bad for Black, with the unstoppable idea $\mathbb{Q}e4$ 13 $\mathbb{W}h4$ $\mathbb{W}f6$ 14 $\mathbb{W}xf6$ gxf6 15 $\mathbb{Q}xh6$,

B

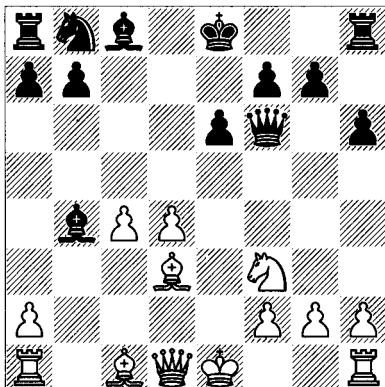


Dvoretsky-Langeweg, Wijk aan Zee 1976.
11... $\mathbb{Q}c6$ also falls short after 12 g4! (threatening g5; this is an idea to remember; the immediate 12 $\mathbb{W}e4$ accomplishes nothing in view of 12... $\mathbb{W}f5!$); for example, 12...g5 13 h4! $\mathbb{Q}f4$ 14 $\mathbb{W}e4$ $\mathbb{W}g6$ 15 hxg5 $\mathbb{W}xe4$ 16 $\mathbb{Q}xe4$ and White will emerge with material and the better position.

b) White can enjoy his greater control of territory after 9... $\mathbb{Q}c6$ 10 $\mathbb{Q}e4$ (safely defending d4 and supporting a d5 advance; the gambit 10 0-0?! is also promising) 10... $\mathbb{Q}d7$?! (a slow move; more to the point is 10... $\mathbb{Q}d6$ 11 0-0 0-0 12 $\mathbb{Q}e3$ $\mathbb{W}e7$, even if Black is on the defensive) 11 0-0 cxd4?! 12 cxd4 $\mathbb{Q}e7$ 13 $\mathbb{Q}b1$ $\mathbb{Q}b8$ 14 d5! (suddenly White's attack is very powerful) 14...exd5 15 cxd5 $\mathbb{Q}e5$ 16 $\mathbb{Q}e1$ $\mathbb{Q}xf3+$ 17 $\mathbb{Q}xf3$ 0-0 18 $\mathbb{Q}b2$ $\mathbb{W}g5$ 19 $\mathbb{Q}e5$ and White won shortly in Ghaem Maghami-Lubos, Dresden 2005.

10 cxd4 $\mathbb{Q}b4+$ (D)

W



11 $\mathbb{Q}d2$

The alternative 11 $\mathbb{Q}f1$! is entertaining: 11... $\mathbb{Q}c6$ (11... $\mathbb{Q}c3$?! 12 $\mathbb{Q}b1$ $\mathbb{Q}xd4$ 13 $\mathbb{Q}xd4$ $\mathbb{W}xd4$ 14 $\mathbb{Q}b2$ and 15 $\mathbb{Q}xg7$) 12 $\mathbb{Q}b2$ $\mathbb{Q}c5$ 13 $\mathbb{Q}c2$ (13 $\mathbb{Q}e4$?! 0-0 14 $\mathbb{W}d2$) 13...0-0 14 $\mathbb{W}d3$ $\mathbb{Q}d8$ 15 $\mathbb{Q}d1$ $\mathbb{Q}f8$ 16 $\mathbb{W}e4$ $\mathbb{Q}d6$ and now 17 h4?! gave White an ongoing attack in Seirawan-Korchnoi, Wijk aan Zee 1980; probably 17 g3!, with the idea of castling by hand via $\mathbb{Q}g2$ and bringing the king's rook to e1, is even better.

11... $\mathbb{Q}xd2+$ 12 $\mathbb{Q}xd2$ $\mathbb{Q}c6$ 13 $\mathbb{W}e3$ 0-0 14 0-0 $\mathbb{Q}d7$ 15 $\mathbb{Q}fe1$ $\mathbb{Q}fd8$ 16 $\mathbb{Q}e4$ $\mathbb{Q}e8$?

It's hard to do anything useful. Perhaps 16... $\mathbb{Q}ac8$ improves, with the idea of ... $\mathbb{Q}a5$. Then after 17 $\mathbb{Q}ac1$, 17...b6! prepares to meet 18 d5?! (not necessary) with 18...exd5 19 cxd5 $\mathbb{Q}e7$. In the game, White simply marches his passed d-pawn down the board.

17 $\mathbb{Q}ad1$ $\mathbb{Q}d6$ 18 d5! exd5 19 cxd5 $\mathbb{Q}e7$ 20 $\mathbb{Q}e5$ $\mathbb{Q}b5$?! 21 $\mathbb{Q}c5$ $\mathbb{Q}b6$ 22 d6 $\mathbb{Q}g6$ 23 $\mathbb{Q}xg6$ $\mathbb{Q}fxg6$ 24 d7 $\mathbb{Q}d8$ 25 a4 $\mathbb{Q}a6$ 26 $\mathbb{Q}xg6$! $\mathbb{Q}h7$

White's point is 26... $\mathbb{Q}xg6$ 27 $\mathbb{Q}c8$!

27 $\mathbb{Q}e5$ $\mathbb{Q}e6$ 28 $\mathbb{Q}d5$ $\mathbb{Q}e7$ 29 h3 b6 30 $\mathbb{Q}e4+$ $\mathbb{Q}g8$ 31 $\mathbb{Q}g4$! 1-0

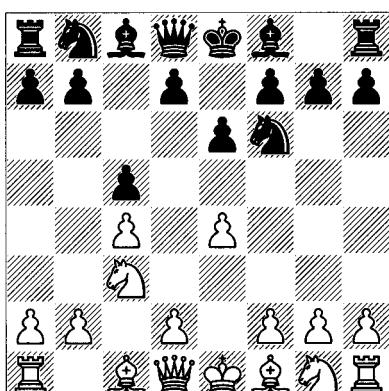
Gambit Line with 3...c5

Michalik – Petrik

Slovakian Ch, Banska Stiavnica 2006

1 c4 $\mathbb{Q}f6$ 2 $\mathbb{Q}c3$ e6 3 e4 c5 (D)

W



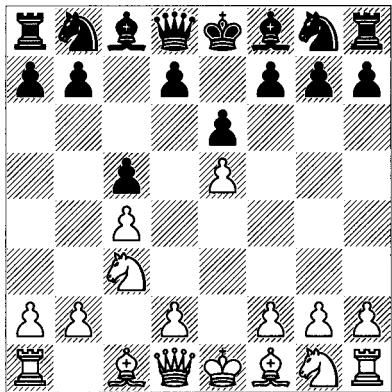
Black tries another approach entirely. He exploits the hole on d4 but allows White to drive back his knight. The result is that White gains in development at the cost of exposing his pawn to attack on e5.

4 e5

4 $\mathbb{Q}f3$ is a rare alternative. Then 4... $\mathbb{Q}c6$ 5 $\mathbb{Q}e2$ (5 d4 cxd4 6 $\mathbb{Q}xd4$ $\mathbb{Q}b4$ is a Taimanov Sicilian) 5...d5!? can lead to 6 cxd5 exd5 7 e5 $\mathbb{Q}g4$ 8 $\mathbb{Q}b5$. This exact position is analysed in Chapter 8, but with colours reversed and the same tempi because of White's extra move $\mathbb{Q}e2-b5$. Instead of 6 cxd5, 6 exd5 exd5 7 d4 is sometimes played. We examined this via a different move-order on page 230 – see Ivanchuk-Anand.

4... $\mathbb{Q}g8$ (D)

W

**5 $\mathbb{Q}f3$**

5 d4 cxd4 6 $\mathbb{Q}xd4$ $\mathbb{Q}c6$ 7 $\mathbb{Q}e4$ is an older line that allows Black to catch up in development while White is trying to establish superior piece-play. Black can equalize by 7...d6 (or 7... $\mathbb{Q}b4$ 8 $\mathbb{Q}d2$ d6 9 $\mathbb{Q}f3$ dx5 10 $\mathbb{Q}xe5$ $\mathbb{Q}f6$ with the idea 11 $\mathbb{Q}xc6?$ $\mathbb{Q}xd2+!$) 8 $\mathbb{Q}f3$ dx5 (8... $\mathbb{Q}a5$ is also played) 9 $\mathbb{Q}xe5$ $\mathbb{Q}d7$ 10 $\mathbb{Q}xd7$ $\mathbb{Q}xd7$ 11 $\mathbb{Q}g5$ $\mathbb{Q}b4$ 12 $\mathbb{Q}d1$ $\mathbb{Q}c7$ 13 $\mathbb{Q}e2$ $\mathbb{Q}f6$ 14 $\mathbb{Q}xf6$ gxf6.

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

After 5...d6 6 exd6 $\mathbb{Q}c6$ 7 d4 cxd4 8 $\mathbb{Q}xd4$ $\mathbb{Q}xd4$ 9 $\mathbb{Q}xd4$ $\mathbb{Q}xd6$ 10 $\mathbb{Q}e3$, White's development gives him the nod.

6 d4!

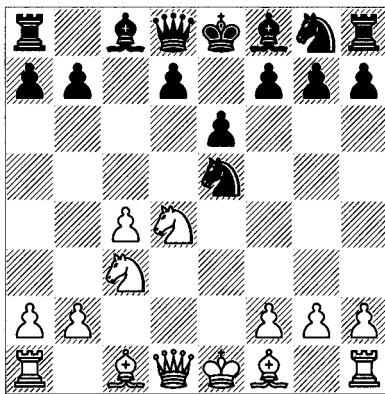
White offers a gambit. Without this move, his d-pawn remains backwards and Black can develop smoothly with an attack on e5.

6...cxd4 7 $\mathbb{Q}xd4$ $\mathbb{Q}xe5$ (D)

Declining the gambit generally doesn't help because White's pawn on e5 can then seriously restrict Black's pieces. Perhaps the best method of doing so is to delay acceptance by 7... $\mathbb{Q}c7$ 8 $\mathbb{Q}f4$!? (8 f4 a6 9 $\mathbb{Q}e3$ should be considered)

8... $\mathbb{Q}xe5$; for example, 9 $\mathbb{Q}g3$ (9 $\mathbb{Q}db5$ $\mathbb{Q}d3+$! 10 $\mathbb{Q}xd3$ $\mathbb{Q}xf4$, a common theme) 9...a6 10 $\mathbb{Q}a4$! with the ideas 0-0-0 and f4-f5 followed by fxe6. This line is wide open to improvement.

W

**8 $\mathbb{Q}db5$!**

In contemporary practice, White uses this move almost exclusively. He aims the knight directly at d6 in order to exchange off Black's good bishop. The earlier tries 8 $\mathbb{Q}f4$ and 8 $\mathbb{Q}a4$ didn't succeed in stirring up enough chances versus proper defence; the interested reader may have to dig around in older books for that rather obscure material.

8...a6

It may seem odd to force White into doing what he wants to do anyway, but 9 $\mathbb{Q}f4$ was now a major threat. Others:

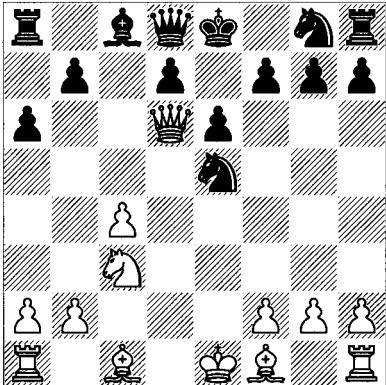
a) 8...f6 (to clear out f7 for a knight and guard d6) at best transposes to the main line following 9 $\mathbb{Q}e3$ (a unique possibility is 9 f4 $\mathbb{Q}f7$ 10 f5! with the idea 10...a6 11 $\mathbb{Q}a4$) 9...a6 10 $\mathbb{Q}d6+$ $\mathbb{Q}xd6$ 11 $\mathbb{Q}xd6$.

b) 8...d6? would be ideal, but runs into the typical dark-square take-over 9 c5!. Black can't capture the pawn: 9...dx5? (or 9...d5? 10 $\mathbb{Q}f4$; otherwise 10 cxd6 or 10 $\mathbb{Q}xd6+$ follows) 10 $\mathbb{Q}f4$ f6 11 $\mathbb{Q}xe5$ fxe5 12 $\mathbb{Q}h5+$ g6 13 $\mathbb{Q}xe5$ and Black's position collapses.

9 $\mathbb{Q}d6+$ $\mathbb{Q}xd6$ 10 $\mathbb{Q}xd6$ (D)

You can see why this position might attract White. For the cost of a mere pawn, he has control of the dark squares, Black's pieces are stuck on the first rank, and d6 and b6 are ideal spots upon which to place pieces. In addition, he's gaining more time by attacking the knight on e5.

B



Black hasn't captured just any pawn, however. It's a centre pawn, and we know how strong a central majority can be in defence, because centre pawns potentially defend the most important attacking squares. Black's first task is to expel the queen.

10...f6

Preparing ... $\mathbb{Q}f7$. 10... $\mathbb{Q}g6$ 11 $\mathbb{Q}e3$ $\mathbb{W}e7$ 12 $\mathbb{Q}e4$! illustrates the kind of dark-square exploitation that White is aiming for: 12... $\mathbb{Q}f6$ 13 $\mathbb{W}xe7+$ $\mathbb{Q}xe7$ 14 $\mathbb{Q}c5+$ $\mathbb{Q}d8$ 15 $\mathbb{Q}d6$ $\mathbb{Q}f8$ 16 $\mathbb{Q}b6+$ $\mathbb{Q}e7$ 17 0-0-0, and Black is horribly cramped.

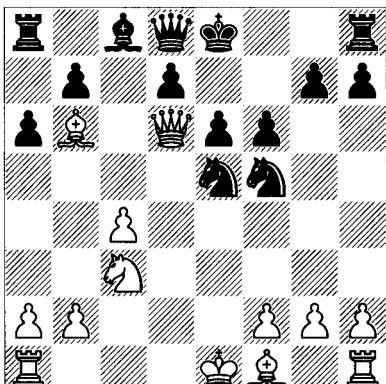
11 $\mathbb{Q}e3$ $\mathbb{Q}e4$!

At first glance this looks like a blunder! The immediate 11... $\mathbb{Q}f7$ anticipates returning the pawn: 12 $\mathbb{W}g3$ (12 $\mathbb{Q}b4$ is possibly better: 12... $\mathbb{Q}e7$ 13 0-0-0 $\mathbb{Q}c6$ 14 $\mathbb{Q}a3$) 12... $\mathbb{Q}e7$! (12... $\mathbb{Q}g6$ 13 $\mathbb{Q}h4$!) 13 $\mathbb{W}xg7$ $\mathbb{Q}f5$ 14 $\mathbb{W}g4$ $\mathbb{Q}xe3$ 15 $fxe3$ $\mathbb{Q}b6$ 16 0-0-0! $\mathbb{W}xe3$! 17 $\mathbb{Q}b1$ and Black's position is rather loose.

12 $\mathbb{Q}b6$ $\mathbb{Q}f5$ (D)

Black must contest the dark squares.

W



13 $\mathbb{W}c5$

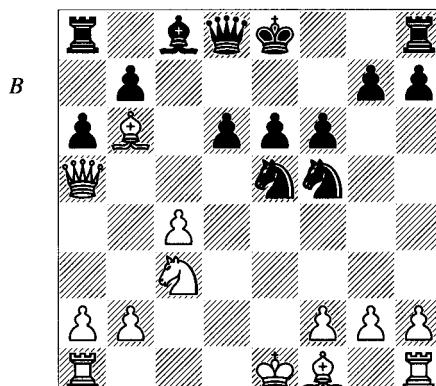
In the initial days with this variation, White did well with 13 $\mathbb{Q}xd8$ $\mathbb{Q}xd6$ 14 $\mathbb{Q}c7$ $\mathbb{Q}e7$ 15 $c5$ $\mathbb{Q}e8$ 16 $\mathbb{Q}b6$. Eventually it was shown that in some forced lines after 16...d5, Black could return the pawn and defend successfully, in some cases gaining a small edge.

But as far as I know, 13 $\mathbb{W}b4$!? is unexplored. The idea would be 13... $\mathbb{Q}c6$ (13... $\mathbb{W}e7$ 14 $\mathbb{W}xe7+$ is the next note) 14 $\mathbb{W}c5$ d6 15 $\mathbb{Q}xd8$ $dxc5$ 16 $\mathbb{Q}b6$. Given some of the limitations of the main line, this bears consideration.

13...d6!

Bacrot-Dorfman, French Ch, Marseilles 2001 went 13... $\mathbb{W}e7$ 14 $\mathbb{W}xe7+$ (14 $\mathbb{Q}a5$ transposes to the note to Black's 14th move if he plays 14...d6) 14... $\mathbb{Q}xe7$ (14... $\mathbb{Q}xe7$ 15 c5! 0-0 16 0-0-0 leaves Black completely cramped; how will his queen's bishop and queen's rook get out?) 15 f4 $\mathbb{Q}g6$ 16 g3 d6 and now 17 $\mathbb{Q}h3$ should have been met by 17... $e5$! 18 $\mathbb{Q}d5+$ $\mathbb{Q}f7$ with unclear prospects. Instead, 17 $\mathbb{Q}d3$! seems to favour White; then 17... $\mathbb{Q}h6$ 18 0-0-0 $\mathbb{Q}d7$ 19 $\mathbb{Q}he1$ threatens c5, as well as $\mathbb{Q}d5+$ followed by $\mathbb{Q}c7$ and $\mathbb{Q}e4$.

14 $\mathbb{W}a5$ (D)

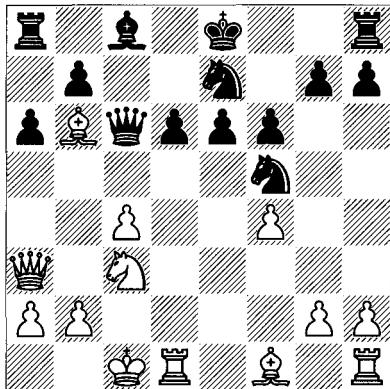


14... $\mathbb{W}d7$!

These moves all come from a lot of real-world tests. Black wants to get his queen to c6, from where it hits c4 and e4, controls the long diagonal, and prepares to threaten the bishop on b6. There's nothing clearly wrong with 14... $\mathbb{W}e7$, but White has tended to do well in practice; for example, 15 0-0-0 $\mathbb{Q}d7$ 16 f4 $\mathbb{Q}c6$! (16... $\mathbb{Q}g6$) 17 $\mathbb{W}a3$ $\mathbb{Q}c8$ 18 $\mathbb{Q}d3$, Ramesa-Ljubić, Omis 2006. Between the dangerous open

e-file, White's active pieces, and the vulnerable d6- and e6-pawns, the situation has deteriorated for Black.

15 f4 ♜c6 16 ♜a3 ♜ce7! 17 0-0-0 ♜c6!
(D)



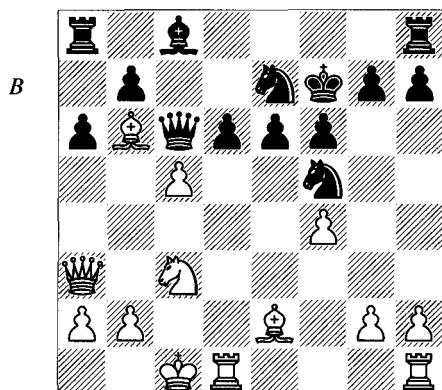
18 c5

White has good alternatives in 18 ♜b3 and 18 ♜a5 0-0 19 ♜g1, when the only fair thing to say about the resulting positions is that they are dynamically balanced, with no obvious edge for either party.

18...♜f7!?

18...d5 is attractive if only because Black can still castle when appropriate. Then 19 ♜e2 with the idea g4 is a suggestion from Cummings, since 19 ♜b5? axb5 20 ♜xa8 d4! 21 ♜e2 ♜d5! 22 ♜a5 e5! is just about resignable for White. White can also consider 19 ♜d3 followed by ♜he1.

19 ♜e2 (D)



19...♝d7

Getting pieces out. Riskier, but totally unclear, is 19...♜e3 20 ♜d2 ♜d5 (20...♜d5 21 ♜xd5 ♜xd5 is a more accurate order of moves) 21 ♜xd5? (21 ♜f3!) 21...♜xd5 22 ♜b1 ♜xf4!? (22...♜xb6 23 cxb6 ♜d8) 23 ♜f3! d5 24 ♜hd1 and the game is up for grabs, Hodgson-Barsov, York 2000.

20 ♜f3 d5 21 ♜d2 ♜e3!

Threatening ...♝c4.

22 b3 ♜f5 23 ♜e1 ♜h4!?

Black wants to be able to play ...♝c8. Still, his knight isn't very effective out there away from the crucial central squares. 23...h5! is a good, solid move. Then White has the bishops, but Black has an extra pawn.

24 ♜h5+ g6 25 ♜d1 ♜c8 26 ♜a5 b6 27 cxb6 ♜b8!? 28 ♜c2 ♜d6!?

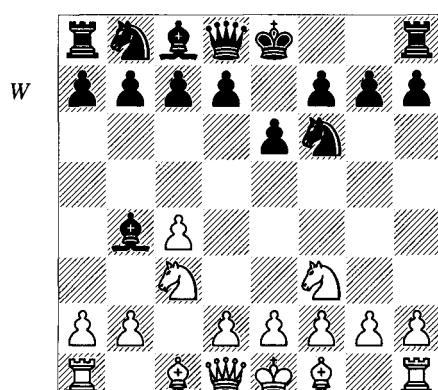
28...♜xb6 is safe enough because of the trick 29 ♜e4 ♜c4!.

29 ♜xd6 ♜xd6

After this, White probably stands better, but the game went back and forth and I think it's best to stop here. As a whole, this variation appears to be almost precisely balanced. There will obviously be many more games before anyone knows what's really going on.

Nimzo-English Variation: Introduction

1 c4 ♜f6 2 ♜c3 e6 3 ♜f3 ♜b4 (D)



When played against 1 d4, 2 c4 and 3 ♜c3, the combination of moves 1...♜f6, 2...e6 and 3...♜b4 is called the Nimzo-Indian. Hence,

when played against the English Opening, it may be called the Nimzo-English (well, that was my excuse for inventing the name some decades ago). A fundamental difference between the two is that in our line, Black cannot freely occupy e4 without taking White's move d3 into account. Beyond that, Black isn't so much trying to pin the knight, but either to exchange it or threaten to exchange it. Why would he want to? Because 3... $\mathbb{Q}b4$ allows him to get his pieces out and castle rapidly, while exchanging on c3 rids White of a valuable piece that is fighting for the crucial d5- and e4-squares. Furthermore, if White doesn't play either $\mathbb{W}c2$ or $\mathbb{W}b3$, the exchange ... $\mathbb{Q}xc3$ doubles his pawns, which can greatly affect their mobility. In fact, Black will seldom exchange without being forced to do so, so White must normally spend a tempo if he wants to compel that exchange, usually by using the non-developing move a3. By the time White gets organized, it's possible to have a situation in which Black has already castled and played ...b6 (or ...c5 or ...d5), before White has developed any other piece besides his queen on c3 and knight on f3, and before he has moved a central pawn!

For all that, the notion that White simply must have a small advantage in the Nimzo-English persisted for years. It wasn't until the 1970s that 3... $\mathbb{Q}b4$ well and truly became mainstream, and even then the early theoreticians spoke cautiously about it, showing variations largely in favour of White. After all, the reasoning goes, White is normally pleased to reach a position in which he has two bishops, no weaknesses, and no targets of attack for his opponent. What's more, he has the flexibility to play d4 whenever it seems appropriate, or to hold back while pursuing other aims. In fact, the ultimate assessment of a slight advantage for White may still have validity. But to whatever extent that may be true, if any, it is not enough to deter the world's best players from adopting the black pieces, some using 3... $\mathbb{Q}b4$ as their main weapon and others reserving it for occasional use.

Backing off for a moment, why is White playing some sequence of the moves c4, $\mathbb{Q}c3$ and $\mathbb{Q}f3$ in the first place? Unfortunately, that brings us back to the land of move-orders. First, it turns out that a high percentage of Nimzo-English games arise after 1 $\mathbb{Q}f3$ and 2 c4. In those cases,

there are a couple of other options that make sense after, say 1 $\mathbb{Q}f3$ $\mathbb{Q}f6$ 2 c4 e6. One is 3 g3, if one wants to allow a Catalan Opening following 3...d5 4 d4, or permit a Symmetrical English (with White committed to g3) after 3...c5, or of course head towards a Queen's Indian-like position following 3...b6. All of these are avoidable if one plays 3 $\mathbb{Q}c3$. White can of course revert to 3 d4 and play versus a Queen's Gambit, Queen's Indian Defence or Nimzo-Indian Defence, but those aren't to everyone's taste.

Turning to a player who uses the English Opening move-order 1 c4 $\mathbb{Q}f6$ 2 $\mathbb{Q}c3$ e6, 3 $\mathbb{Q}f3$ is first of all a way of avoiding the Nimzo-Indian proper (3 d4 $\mathbb{Q}b4$). It may also be based upon a distrust or aversion to 3 e4, which we examined above. The move 3 g3, seldom played, transposes after 3...d5 4 d4 to a Catalan where White's queen's knight has been committed rather early to c3, normally an undesirable situation.

Looking at move-orders from the other side of the board, we can surmise that Black is probably a Nimzo-Indian player; after all, he is allowing White to play 4 d4, which transposes to a main line of that opening. At any rate, having committed to 1... $\mathbb{Q}f6$ and 2...e6, he prefers 3... $\mathbb{Q}b4$ to the Queen's Gambit that might arise after 3...d5 4 d4, or the Symmetrical English that results from 3...c5.

Finally, Black can choose 3...b6, a relatively rare move which I won't be examining. The most interesting non-transpositional line is 4 e4 (4 d4 is a Queen's Indian Defence, and 4 g3 $\mathbb{Q}b7$ 5 $\mathbb{Q}g2$ will either head that way or into a Hedgehog, if Black plays ...c5) 4... $\mathbb{Q}b7$ 5 $\mathbb{Q}d3!$ d6 (5...c5 6 0-0 $\mathbb{Q}c6$ 7 e5! $\mathbb{Q}g4$ 8 $\mathbb{Q}e4$ gives White a small advantage) 6 $\mathbb{Q}c2$ c5 7 d4 cxd4 8 $\mathbb{Q}xd4$, when White has a Maroczy Bind set-up that promises some advantage.

Classical 4 $\mathbb{W}c2$ Variation

Langeweg – Korchnoi
Amsterdam 1976

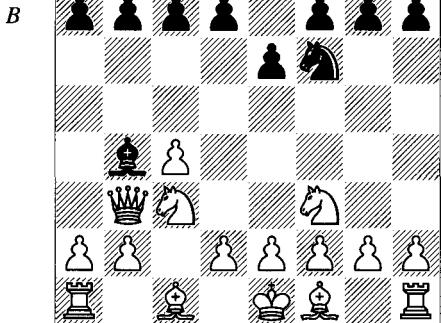
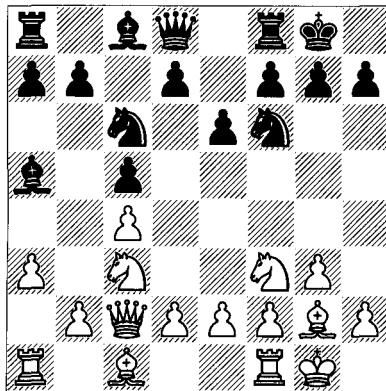
1 $\mathbb{Q}f3$ $\mathbb{Q}f6$ 2 c4 e6 3 $\mathbb{Q}c3$ $\mathbb{Q}b4$ 4 $\mathbb{W}c2$

This and 4 g4 (in the games below) are played in the vast majority of games today. A few comments on others:

a) 4 a3 is simply too cooperative, losing a tempo to force Black into 4... $\mathbb{Q}xc3$, the move he wants to play anyway.

b) The fianchetto 4 g3 has more of a history behind it. A traditional solution is 4...0-0 (there are several other respectable moves, but 4...d5 5 a3! $\mathbb{Q}xc3$ 6 dxc3 is not ideal for Black, because typically he wants to combine the doubling of pawns after ... $\mathbb{Q}xc3$ with the structure ...d6/...e5) 5 $\mathbb{Q}g2$ c5 6 0-0 $\mathbb{Q}c6$. One example of this line is 7 $\mathbb{Q}a4$ $\mathbb{W}e7$ 8 a3 $\mathbb{Q}a5$ 9 d3 d6 10 $\mathbb{B}b1$ $\mathbb{Q}d7$ 11 $\mathbb{Q}d2$ $\mathbb{Q}xd2$ 12 $\mathbb{W}xd2$ $\mathbb{B}ab8$ 13 b4 cxb4 14 axb4 b5 with equality.

c) 4 $\mathbb{W}b3$ (*D*) is used more often than White's other rare 4th moves, but I'm going to give it only a glance, partly because it doesn't have many unique features from the standpoint of strategy or instruction.



The most popular response is 4...c5, when Topalov-Kramnik, Dortmund 2001 continued 5 $\mathbb{Q}c6$ 6 a3 $\mathbb{Q}a5$ 7 $\mathbb{Q}g2$ 0-0 8 0-0 d5 (8...d6 and 8...a6 are frequently played, the latter with the idea ... $\mathbb{B}b8$ and ...b5) 9 d3 h6!? 10 $\mathbb{Q}f4$ $\mathbb{W}e8$ 11 $\mathbb{Q}a4$! b6 (Kramnik mentions 11...e5 12 cxd5 $\mathbb{Q}d4$!) 12 $\mathbb{Q}e5$ $\mathbb{Q}d7$! 13 e3 (13 $\mathbb{Q}c3$ is safer) 13...g5! 14 $\mathbb{Q}xc6$ $\mathbb{Q}xc6$ 15 $\mathbb{Q}e5$ $\mathbb{Q}g4$ 16 $\mathbb{Q}c3$ $\mathbb{Q}xc3$ 17 $\mathbb{Q}xc3$ dxc4 18 dxc4 $\mathbb{Q}xg2$ 19 $\mathbb{Q}xg2$ $\mathbb{W}e7$ and the play was roughly balanced.

We now return to 4 $\mathbb{W}c2$:

4...0-0

One of the main lines of the modern Nimzo-English is 4...c5 5 a3 $\mathbb{Q}a5$ 6 g3 $\mathbb{Q}c6$ 7 $\mathbb{Q}g2$ 0-0 8 0-0 (*D*).

a) In Tal-Polugaevsky, USSR Ch, Erevan 1975, Black played 8... $\mathbb{W}e7$, which is generally held in low regard, but may not be such a bad

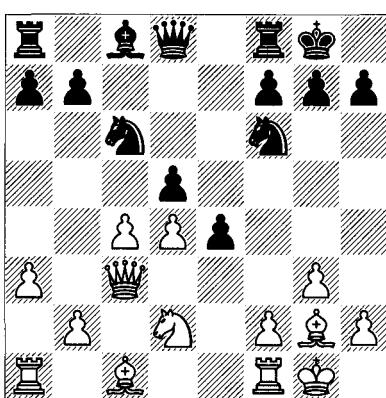
B

move: 9 d3 d6 10 $\mathbb{B}b1$ h6 11 $\mathbb{Q}a2$ d5!? (11...e5 12 b4 $\mathbb{Q}b6$ also appears satisfactory) 12 b4 $\mathbb{Q}b6$ 13 cxd5 (13 e3 dxc4 14 dxc4 e5 equalizes; for example, 15 $\mathbb{Q}c3$ $\mathbb{Q}e6$! 16 b5 $\mathbb{Q}a5$ 17 $\mathbb{Q}xe5$ $\mathbb{B}ad8$ 18 $\mathbb{Q}a4$ $\mathbb{Q}d7$ 19 $\mathbb{Q}xd7$ $\mathbb{B}xd7$ 20 $\mathbb{Q}b2$ $\mathbb{B}fd8$; saving the extra pawn wasn't worth it) 13...exd5 14 $\mathbb{Q}b2$ cxb4 15 $\mathbb{Q}xb4$ $\mathbb{Q}xb4$ 16 axb4 $\mathbb{Q}g4$ with equality. White can be more ambitious with 9 $\mathbb{B}d1$ intending 10 d4. Then Tal suggests 9... $\mathbb{Q}xc3$ with the point 10 $\mathbb{W}xc3$ e5 11 d3 d5!, an excellent solution, since 12 cxd5 $\mathbb{Q}xd5$ 13 $\mathbb{W}c2$ $\mathbb{Q}g4$ must be fine. Upon 10 dxc3 instead, a good set-up is 10...h6 11 b4!? e5!? 12 b5 $\mathbb{Q}a5$; for example, 13 $\mathbb{W}a4$ b6 14 $\mathbb{Q}h4$ $\mathbb{Q}b7$ 15 $\mathbb{Q}f5$?! $\mathbb{W}e6$ 16 $\mathbb{Q}d6$ $\mathbb{Q}xg2$ 17 $\mathbb{Q}xg2$ $\mathbb{Q}e8$, etc., and the forward c-pawn will eventually fall.

b) In contemporary chess, 8...d6 is almost exclusively played, with heaps of theory. I'll show a couple of games without any pretence of being thorough:

b1) 9 e3 e5 10 d4 (10 b3!?) 10... $\mathbb{Q}xc3$ 11 $\mathbb{W}xc3$ e4 12 $\mathbb{Q}d2$ cxd4 13 exd4 d5 (*D*).

W



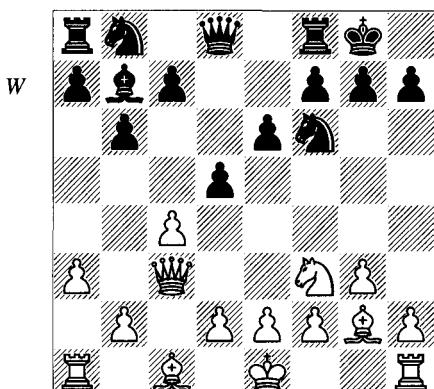
This kind of position is almost always satisfactory for Black, because White's bishop-pair lacks range and his centre can't advance. Pantulaia-Gustafsson, Turin Olympiad 2006 continued 14 c5 a5 15 b3 b6 16 ♜b2 ♜a6 17 ♜fc1 bxc5 18 ♜xc5 ♜e7 19 b4 ♜e2 20 ♜c3 ♜d7 21 ♜b2 ♜e6 22 ♜c3 a4 ½-½.

b2) 9 d3 h6!? (both 9...a6 and 9...d7 are playable) 10 e3 e5 11 ♜d2 a6 12 ♜b1 ♜d7 13 ♜a2 b5 (Palliser's 13...c8 may be an improvement) 14 b4 cxb4 15 axb4 ♜b6 16 ♜c3 ♜c8, Nybäck-Agrest, European Team Ch, Plovdiv 2003; now 17 ♜b3! ♜f5 18 ♜d5 ♜xd5?! 19 cxd5 ♜e7 20 ♜a1 ♜a8 21 ♜b2 gives White a large advantage.

5 a3 ♜xc3 6 ♜xc3 b6 7 g3

The next game features 7 e3.

7...♜b7 8 ♜g2 d5 (D)



The Nimzo-English can go in innumerable directions and we'll see just a few of them. I've picked out this variation because it typifies the kind of light-square strategy that is one possible justification of 3...♜b4, and resembles variations in the Queen's Indian, Catalan and Nimzo-Indian. That is, Black aims every piece and pawn at d5, e4 and associated light squares such as c4. His approach has been used through the years as a dynamic alternative to ...c5/...d6/...e6 structures.

9 d4

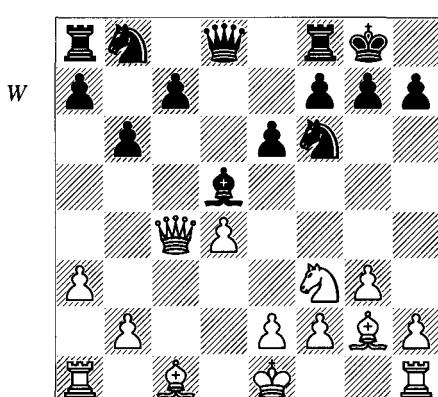
This is the main move, and for a reason. If White plays more slowly, Black's pawn on d5 can cause some problems:

a) 9 b4 d4! 10 ♜b2 e5 11 0-0 ♜bd7 12 d3 ♜e8 with double-edged play, Gabriel-Dautov, Bad Wörishofen 1997.

b) 9 0-0? is a mistake due to 9...dxc4! with the idea 10 ♜xc4 (after other moves, Black will save his c-pawn) 10...♜a6.

c) 9 cxd5 exd5 (or 9...♜xd5 10 ♜c2 c5) 10 0-0 ♜e8 11 ♜e1 c5 12 d4 ♜e4 is easy for Black: 13 ♜c2 ♜c6 14 dxc5 (14 ♜e3 c4!; apart from the eventual power of Black's queenside majority, White has some problems with ...♜a5) 14...bxc5 15 b3 ♜b6 16 e3 ♜ab8 17 ♜b1!? ♜a8!? 18 ♜d2 a5 19 ♜ed1 d4!, Speelman-Seirawan, Candidates match (game 6), Saint John 1988.

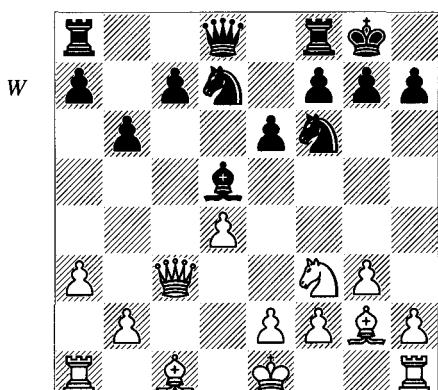
9...dxc4 10 ♜xc4 ♜d5 (D)



11 ♜c3

Hraček-Dautov, Bad Homburg 1997, a game similar to our main contest, went 11 ♜d3 ♜e4 12 ♜c3 ♜bd7 13 b4?! (13 ♜g5 ♜c8 14 0-0 c5 15 dxc5 ♜xc5 is equal) 13...a5 14 b5 c6! 15 bxc6 ♜c8 16 0-0 ♜xc6 17 ♜b3 ♜a8! with excellent light-square control. After 18 ♜g5, Black should have played 18...♜c2!.

11...♜bd7 (D)



Planning ...c5.

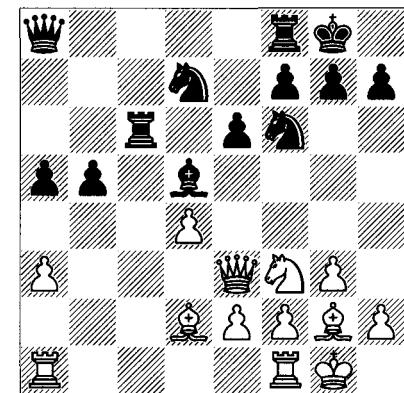
12 b4?!

Not exactly a blunder, but it weakens a few queenside light squares and opens the way for Black's next freeing move. White's best hope for a slight advantage (based upon his bishop-pair) was something along the lines of 12 0-0 c5 13 ♜f4 ♜c8 14 ♜fc1.

12...a5! 13 b5

13 0-0?! ♜e4 14 ♜b2 axb4 15 axb4 ♜xa1 16 ♜xa1 ♜e7! intends ...a8 and perhaps ...c5, when Black stands somewhat better.

13...c6 14 bxc6 ♜c8 15 0-0 ♜xc6 16 ♜e3 ♜a8! 17 ♜d2 b5 (D)

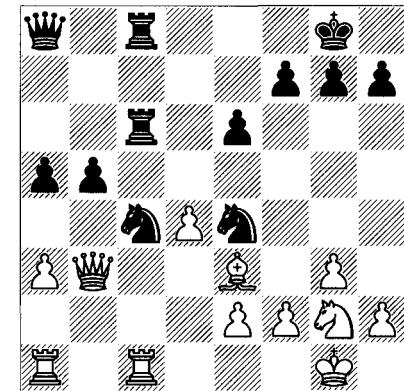


Now Black would like to occupy some queenside outposts by ...♜b6 and ...♝c4 or ...♝a4.

18 ♜fb1?!! ♜b8 19 ♜e1 ♜xg2 20 ♜xg2 ♜e4! 21 ♜d3

Not 21 ♜xe4? ♜c1+, and 21 ♜xa5 ♜xf2! will also favour Black.

21...♜d6! 22 ♜e3 ♜e5 23 ♜c2 ♜c8! 24 ♜b3 ♜e4 25 ♜c1 ♜dc6 (D)



Black controls all the light squares. Probably White needed to exchange rooks at some point.

26 ♜xb5 ♜xa3 27 ♜a4?

A blunder. Still, Black's a-pawn is free to roam following 27 ♜h5 ♜xc1+ 28 ♜xc1 ♜c2.

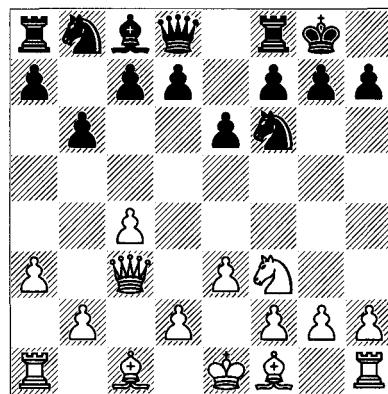
27...♜c2! 28 ♜ab1 ♜c4 0-1

After most queen moves, ...♝xe3 wins a piece, and if 29 ♜b3, Black can win by either 29...a4 or 29...♝xe3 30 ♜xe3 ♜c3.

Kramnik – Anand

Dortmund 2000

1 ♜f3 ♜f6 2 c4 e6 3 ♜c3 ♜b4 4 ♜c2 0-0 5 a3 ♜xc3 6 ♜xc3 b6 7 e3 (D)



7...♜b7 8 ♜e2 d6

8...♝e4 9 ♜c2 f5 looks a little silly, but the idea is to play ...♝g5 when attacked by d3; for example, 10 b3 d6 11 ♜b2 ♜d7 12 d3 ♜g5?! 13 0-0-0?! (13 h4 ♜xf3+ 14 gxf3) 13...f4! 14 ♜hg1 e5 15 d4 exd4?! (15...fxe3! 16 fxe3 ♜e4!) 16 exd4 ♜e4 17 ♜d3! d5, Vallejo Pons-Papai-oannou, Calvia Olympiad 2004; here 18 ♜xe4 ♜xe4 19 ♜e5! looks advantageous, but overall this line shows promise for Black.

9 0-0 ♜bd7 10 b4 a5?!

Here, too, 10...♝e4?! 11 ♜c2 ♜g5 might be worth a shot. 10...c5 11 ♜b2 ♜c8 (or 11...♜e8) is also a known option.

11 ♜b2 ♜e7 12 d4 axb4

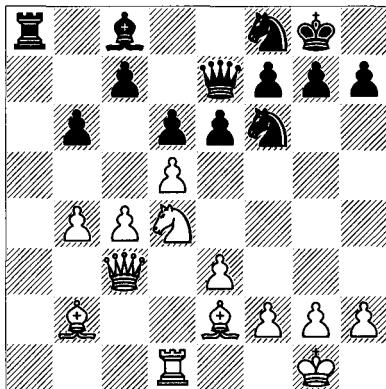
There have been many games with 12...♝e4 13 ♜d3 f5, when Black would love to get in moves like ...♜f6-h6, but 14 ♜d2 is supposed to give White a modest plus.

13 axb4 ♜fc8

White's bishops and queen cooperate well after Kramnik's 13... $\mathbb{E}xa1$ 14 $\mathbb{E}xa1$ $\mathbb{E}a8$ 15 $\mathbb{E}xa8+$ $\mathbb{A}xa8$ 16 $\mathbb{W}a3$ (16 d5!?) 16... $\mathbb{W}e8$ 17 $\mathbb{Q}d2$, with a clear advantage for White.

14 $\mathbb{E}xa8!$ $\mathbb{E}xa8$ 15 d5! $\mathbb{Q}f8$ 16 $\mathbb{E}d1$ $\mathbb{A}c8??$
17 $\mathbb{Q}d4$ (D)

B



17...e5

Having constrained Black's minor pieces, it's time for the bishops to take over, and 17... $\mathbb{A}d7?$ 18 dx6! fxe6 19 $\mathbb{A}f3$ is a picture of their potential.

18 $\mathbb{Q}b3$ $\mathbb{A}d7$ 19 f3 $\mathbb{W}d8$ 20 $\mathbb{Q}d2$ $\mathbb{Q}g6$ 21 $\mathbb{A}f1!$ h6 22 e4!? $\mathbb{Q}h7??$

Black really should get some counterplay by 22... $\mathbb{Q}h5!$.

23 c5!

Finally this move, opening lines on the queenside.

23...bxc5 24 bxc5 f5 25 $\mathbb{A}a3$ $\mathbb{E}c8??$

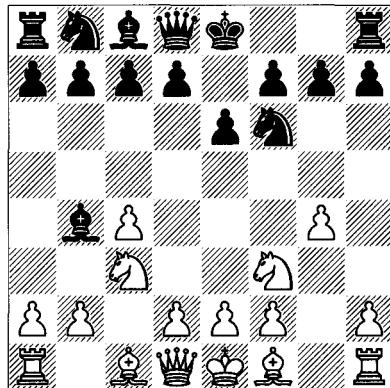
Now, instead of 26 cxd6?, Kramnik suggests that White stands clearly better after 26 $\mathbb{Q}c4!?$, and decisively so after 26 $\mathbb{W}e3!$ dxc5 27 exf5 $\mathbb{A}xf5$ 28 $\mathbb{Q}c4$.

The 4 g4 Flank Attack

1 $\mathbb{Q}f3$ $\mathbb{Q}f6$ 2 c4 e6 3 $\mathbb{Q}c3$ $\mathbb{A}b4$ 4 g4!? (D)

This a fascinating move that attempts quite simply to attack on the flank without any preparatory development, and in particular to drive Black's knight from the centre. The flank-before-centre strategy is a ubiquitous facet of modern chess that I haven't dealt with at length in these volumes, in part because the chosen variations are meant to be accessible to a general

B



audience and tend to have a classical bent. Early flank moves are seen in almost every opening now, notably g4, h4, ...g5, ...h5 and ...b5, but also in a two-step process such as a3 & b4, ...a6 & ...b5, h3 & g4, and ...h6 & ...g5. 4 g4 in the Nimzo-English has had a remarkably successful stretch from its introduction in the second half of the 1990s up to the present; it is the most important line for those who like original positions.

4 g4 is clearly an aggressive move, but its positional aspects also contribute to its viability. While a lot of the action will initially take place on the kingside, the centre becomes key in most variations. Inherent in the ... $\mathbb{Q}f6/...e6/...b4$ set-up is Black's temporary abandonment of dark squares, notably d4 (as in the Nimzo-Indian and Queen's Indian), all the more so when ...b6 and ... $\mathbb{A}b7$ are played. Since White has opened with the central move c4, he need only successfully dispute the e4-square in order to have a preponderance of the centre. That is normally difficult in Nimzo/QID-style positions, but part of the strategy of driving off the f6-knight (or pinning it) is precisely to enhance White's control of e4. Also, to prevent ... $\mathbb{A}xc3$ from being effective, White's queen will very often be placed on c2. To quote Krasenkow, the most dedicated exponent of this system: "Generally, the classical approach of the old theory is that flank attacks are only possible when the situation in the centre is stable (the centre is closed or seized by the attacker). That is not quite correct. Yes, a counterattack in the centre is the most effective reaction to the flank attack – but then everything depends on the steadiness of the centre. According to Nimzowitsch, even

a small but solid centre justifies a flank attack ... A battle of these two concepts (a flank attack vs a central counterattack) forms the strategic contents of a wide range of opening systems."

In specific terms, 4 g4 targets Black's kingside dark squares, namely, the points f6 and g7. Therefore in many lines White will play b3 and $\mathbb{B}b2$; in other positions, if ...h6 has been played, White will sometimes effect the advance g5 anyway. Given time, he can combine further ideas such as $\mathbb{Q}e4$ and h4-h5-h6.

Black has a few ideas of his own to counter this complex of White's intentions. He can expand in the centre, and it's amazing how many of Black's wins (and draws) include ...d5-d4. That not only interferes with White's pieces (especially if he places a bishop on b2), but it also increases the influence of Black's own pieces in the centre, typically a bishop on b7, a knight on c6, or a rook on d8. Achieving ...0-0-0 is more difficult than might be imagined, but castling away from White's attack will often render it less effective. Black can also exploit the looseness of White's kingside position by aiming his pieces in that direction. A bishop on b7 can probe squares along the h1-a8 diagonal, especially f3, a queen on c7 and knight on g4 can target f4 and h2, and if Black plays ...h6 before g5 comes, his rook will often sit on an open h-file.

Let's turn to a few games (with key examples in their notes) to see how this plays out.

Krasenkow – Spoelman Wijk aan Zee 2007

1 $\mathbb{Q}f3 \mathbb{Q}f6$ 2 c4 e6 3 $\mathbb{Q}c3 \mathbb{Q}b4$ 4 g4

This common move-order is equivalent to 1 c4 $\mathbb{Q}f6$ 2 $\mathbb{Q}c3$ e6 3 $\mathbb{Q}f3 \mathbb{Q}b4$ 4 g4.

4...h6

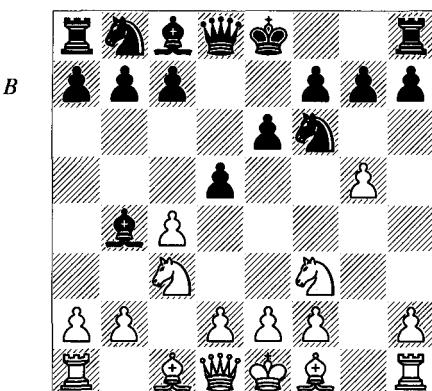
A very popular move. Black prepares to meet g5 on any of the next few moves with ...hxg5, when his h-file control will be a valuable asset. Furthermore, White's h4 and g5 combination (so as to recapture with a pawn on g5) takes one more move to prepare (usually $\mathbb{Q}g1$) because of the pin along the h-file.

Here are some important alternatives to introduce you to the ideas:

a) 4... $\mathbb{Q}xg4$? is almost never seen, because after 5 $\mathbb{Q}g1$, White's rook gets to g7 and severely

weakens Black's kingside (for example, 5... $\mathbb{Q}h6$ 6 $\mathbb{Q}xg7 \mathbb{Q}f5$ 7 $\mathbb{Q}g1$ or 5...f5 6 h3 $\mathbb{Q}f6$ 7 $\mathbb{Q}xg7$).

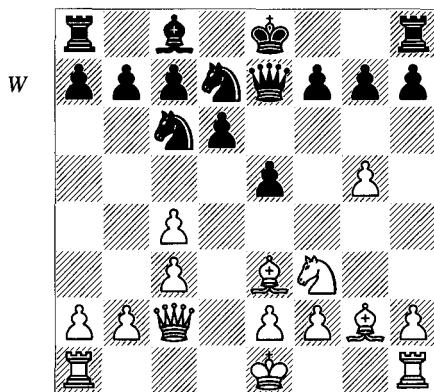
b) To my mind, the sign that 4 g4 is a playable and logical move stems from the fact that the wholly natural response 4...d5, thematically answering a flank advance with a central one, isn't very effective; in fact, leading grandmasters seem to have given up on it entirely. After 5 g5 (D), Black has two main continuations.



b1) 5... $\mathbb{Q}xc3$ 6 bxc3 (Krasenkow feels that 6 dxc3 $\mathbb{Q}e4$ 7 $\mathbb{Q}g2$ is also better for White; this looks clear enough, with bishops, space and easy development) 6... $\mathbb{Q}e4$. Now White can enter the forcing sequence 7 d3! $\mathbb{Q}xc3$ 8 $\mathbb{Q}b3$! d4 9 $\mathbb{Q}xd4$ $\mathbb{Q}xd4$ 10 $\mathbb{Q}b2$ $\mathbb{Q}f4$ 11 $\mathbb{Q}xc3$ $\mathbb{Q}xg5$ 12 h4 $\mathbb{Q}h6$, and while 13 $\mathbb{Q}xg7$ $\mathbb{Q}xg7$ 14 $\mathbb{Q}xg7$ $\mathbb{Q}g8$ 15 $\mathbb{Q}g1$! gave White a positional advantage in Popov-Orlov, St Petersburg 1999, 13 $\mathbb{Q}g1$! is better still; for example, 13... $\mathbb{Q}g8$ 14 $\mathbb{Q}c1$! $\mathbb{Q}xh4$ 15 $\mathbb{Q}xg7$.

b2) 5... $\mathbb{Q}e4$ 6 h4 (6 $\mathbb{Q}a4$ $\mathbb{Q}c6$ 7 $\mathbb{Q}e5$ is also bothersome) 6... $\mathbb{Q}c6$ 7 $\mathbb{Q}c2$ f5 8 gxf6!? (8 d3! $\mathbb{Q}xc3$ 9 bxc3 $\mathbb{Q}d6$ 10 cxd5 exd5 11 $\mathbb{Q}b3$! eyes d5 and b7, when after 11... $\mathbb{Q}e7$, both 12 $\mathbb{Q}g2$ $\mathbb{Q}d7$ 13 $\mathbb{Q}b1$ and 12 h5 are better for White, and easier for him to play) 8... $\mathbb{Q}xf6$ 9 a3 $\mathbb{Q}xc3$ 10 dxc3 $\mathbb{Q}e7$ (White has an unobstructed bishop-pair after 10...dxc4 11 e4) 11 $\mathbb{Q}g5$ $\mathbb{Q}d7$ (11...dxc4? 12 0-0-0 e5 may be best, when 13 h5!? is an aggressive alternative to 13 $\mathbb{Q}a4$) and here instead of 12 0-0-0 dxc4! (Zviagintsev-Piket, Tilburg 1998), White has 12 cxd5! exd5 13 0-0-0, reducing his opponent's counterplay. Very likely the options on moves 6 and 8 are the main reasons why Black has given up on 4...d5.

c) An example of central emphasis by Black is 4... $\mathbb{Q}xc3$ 5 dxc3 d6 6 g5 $\mathbb{Q}fd7$ 7 $\mathbb{Q}e3$ $\mathbb{W}e7$ (7...b6?! allows 8 $\mathbb{Q}d4!$ 0-0 9 $\mathbb{W}e4$ c6 10 0-0-0 d5 11 $\mathbb{W}c2$) 8 $\mathbb{Q}g2$ e5. At this point Black's pawn-structure is arguably superior; however, he still has a problem with his retarded development. Cornette-Adams, French Team Ch, Bordeaux 2003 continued 9 $\mathbb{W}c2$ $\mathbb{Q}c6$ (D).



10 h4 $\mathbb{Q}b6$ 11 b3 g6 12 $\mathbb{Q}d2$ (heading for e4 and f6) 12... $\mathbb{Q}f5$ 13 $\mathbb{Q}e4$ (Krasenkov queries this, suggesting 13 $\mathbb{Q}e4!$ with the point 13...d5? 14 $\mathbb{Q}xb6$ dxe4 15 $\mathbb{Q}e3$) 13... $\mathbb{W}e6$, and here both 14 h5 and 14 0-0-0 0-0-0 15 $\mathbb{Q}xb6$ axb6 16 h5 $\mathbb{Q}b8$ 17 $\mathbb{Q}b2$ $\mathbb{Q}xe4$ 18 $\mathbb{W}xe4$ give White an edge.

d) In Ilyin-Aseev, Russian Ch, Krasnoiarsk 2003, Black played too passively and White's initiative came logically from his opening strategy: 4...d6 5 g5 $\mathbb{Q}fd7$ 6 $\mathbb{W}c2$ $\mathbb{Q}c6$ 7 a3 $\mathbb{Q}xc3$ 8 $\mathbb{W}xc3$ e5 9 b4 f6 (9...0-0 10 d3 $\mathbb{W}e7$ 11 $\mathbb{Q}g2$ or 11 $\mathbb{Q}g1$ looks more like a traditional English Opening structure) 10 b5 $\mathbb{Q}e7$ 11 d4 a6 12 gxf6 gxf6 13 $\mathbb{Q}g1$ axb5 14 cxb5 c6!?! 15 $\mathbb{Q}d2$ $\mathbb{W}b6$ 16 e4 cxb5 17 $\mathbb{W}b3$ exd4 18 $\mathbb{Q}xb5$ $\mathbb{Q}d8$ 19 $\mathbb{Q}g7$ with greater activity and attacking chances.

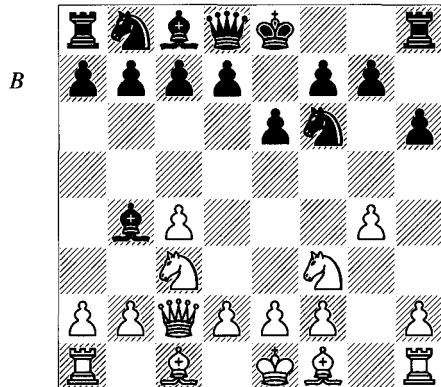
After all these fine examples, we return to 4...h6 and the main game:

5 $\mathbb{W}c2$ (D)

White's primary idea here is to cover the e4-square, both as a matter of general principle and in order to discourage a knight from landing there. In fact, 5 $\mathbb{Q}g1$ is more common, because White doesn't fear 5... $\mathbb{Q}xc3$ 6 dxc3.

5...b6

Now 5...d5?! doesn't work well due to 6 a3 $\mathbb{Q}f8$ (6... $\mathbb{Q}e7$ 7 d4 is a Queen's Gambit with



accelerated kingside play for White) 7 d4 $\mathbb{Q}xg4$ 8 $\mathbb{Q}g1$ $\mathbb{Q}f6$ 9 e4 with superb compensation in the form of space, superior development, and greater possession of the centre.

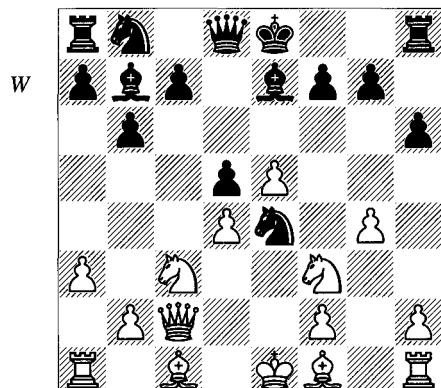
6 a3

Mamedyarov-Naiditsch, Lausanne 2003 continued 6 $\mathbb{Q}g1$ $\mathbb{Q}b7$ 7 a3 $\mathbb{Q}f8$ 8 d4 d6 9 e4 $\mathbb{Q}bd7$ 10 $\mathbb{Q}e3$ a6 11 0-0-0 (the big centre must give White the advantage) 11...c5 12 d5 e5 13 h4 g6 14 g5! hxg5 15 hxg5 $\mathbb{Q}h5$ 16 $\mathbb{Q}h3!$ $\mathbb{Q}g7$ 17 $\mathbb{Q}h1$ and White has the upper hand; one of Black's difficulties is that he can be attacked on the queenside if he goes that way.

6... $\mathbb{Q}e7$ 7 e4 $\mathbb{Q}b7$ 8 d4

It's true that Black's knight still watches over e4, but his bishop is no longer on b4 to help contest that square. Now Black challenges the centre, but it's a bit late.

8...d5 9 cxd5 exd5 10 e5 $\mathbb{Q}e4$ (D)



11 $\mathbb{Q}b5+??$

White would be in charge after 11 $\mathbb{Q}d3!$; for example, 11... $\mathbb{Q}g5$! 12 $\mathbb{Q}xg5$ hxg5 13 e6!,

intending 13...fxe6 14 ♜e5!. The alternative 11...♝xc3 12 bxc3 strengthens White's centre, after which Black's mode of development is unclear; for example, 12...0-0 13 ♕g1 ♜c6 14 g5 h5 15 g6 with the idea 15...f6? 16 ♖e2!. Thus White wins the theoretical battle.

11...c6 12 ♜xe4 cxb5 13 ♜g3 ♜c6 14 ♜d2
 ♜d7 15 h3!? b4

15...g6! would hold the fort.

16 0-0!? ♜a6 17 ♜fe1 bxa3 18 bxa3?!

Here 18 $\mathbb{Q}f5!$ poses very serious problems, because 18...0-0?? loses to 19 $\mathbb{W}xc6$ (a consequence of 16... $\mathbb{Q}a6$), and 18... $\mathbb{Q}f8$ 19 $\mathbb{Q}xe7$ $\mathbb{Q}xe7$ 20 $\mathbb{W}xa3!$ $\mathbb{Q}b5$ 21 e6! fx6 22 $\mathbb{Q}e5$ has ideas like $\mathbb{Q}b4$, $\mathbb{Q}c3-c7$ and other obvious attacking moves.

After the less incisive 18 bxa3, White nevertheless launches a strong attack, which I'll show without notes:

18...0-0 19 ♜xh6 gxh6 20 e6 ♕c8 21 ♜ac1?!! ♜c4?! 22 ♜f5 ♜f6 23 exf7+ ♜h8 24 ♜d6 ♜c7 25 ♜g6 ♜g7 26 ♜g5 ♜d3 27 ♜f5 ♜xf5 28 gxf5 1-0

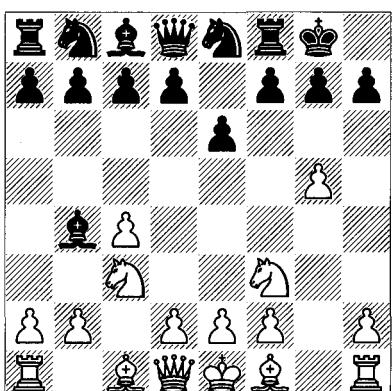
Kosten – C. Balogh

Austrian Team Ch, Velden 2003/4

1 c4 e6 2 $\text{Nc}3$ $\text{Nb}4$ 3 $\text{Nf}3$ $\text{Nf}6$ 4 g4 0-0

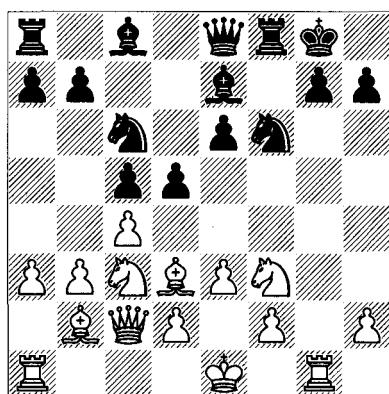
This is Black's most fundamental response: bring the pieces out, castle, create no weakness, and let White's g5-pawn sit out there looking lonely. Nevertheless, it cooperates with White's basic idea when playing g4-g5, which is to chase the knight from control of central squares in order to gain time to pursue his flank attack with pawns.

5 g5 ♗e8 (D)



6 ♜c2 c5

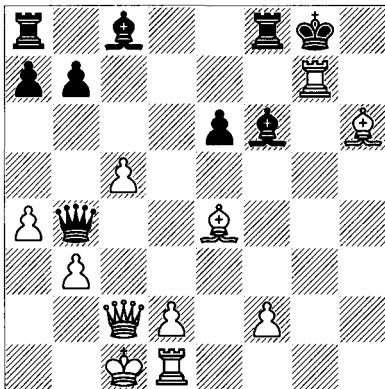
...d5 is a natural test of the g4-g5/ $\mathbb{W}c2$ set up. A fascinating game Krasenkow-Romanishin, Lvov 2000 continued 7 b3 $\mathbb{A}e7$ (with the double idea of attacking g5 and bringing a piece to a defensive function; also, Black wants to play ...c5 and not cut the bishop off from the kingside) 8 $\mathbb{B}g1$ c5 (with the idea of ...d4; against the other means of enforcing that move, 8... $\mathbb{Q}c6$, Krasenkow gives 9 e3 d4 10 exd4 $\mathbb{Q}xd4$ 11 $\mathbb{Q}xd4$ $\mathbb{W}xd4$ 12 $\mathbb{A}b2$) 9 e3 $\mathbb{Q}c6$ 10 $\mathbb{A}d3$ f5 (the pawn on g5 interferes with Black's defensive options; a radical solution is 10... $\mathbb{Q}b4$ 11 $\mathbb{Q}xh7+$ $\mathbb{A}h8$ 12 $\mathbb{W}b1$ d4, but then 13 $\mathbb{W}e4!$ is extremely strong, with the idea 13...dxcc3 14 $\mathbb{W}h4$) 11 gxf6 $\mathbb{Q}xf6$ 12 a3 $\mathbb{W}e8$ 13 $\mathbb{A}b2$ (D).



White has carried out his strategy of opening the g-file and aiming his bishops at the enemy king, whereas Black has managed to advance his c- and d-pawns and has the superior centre. The assessment here isn't made clear by the course of the game, as both sides had their chances: 13... $\mathbb{W}h5$ 14 $\mathbb{Q}e2$ d4 15 $\mathbb{Q}xd4!$ $\mathbb{Q}xd4$ 16 exd4 $\mathbb{W}xh2$ 17 0-0-0 cxd4 18 $\mathbb{Q}e4$ $\mathbb{W}f4$ (18... $\mathbb{Q}xe4$ 19 $\mathbb{W}xe4$ $\mathbb{W}xf2?$ {19... $\mathbb{W}f4!$ } 20 $\mathbb{Q}xd4!$ $\mathbb{Q}xa3+$ 21 $\mathbb{Q}c2$ $\mathbb{B}f7$ 22 $\mathbb{B}df1$ and White wins) 19 $\mathbb{Q}d3$ $\mathbb{Q}xe4!?$ 20 $\mathbb{Q}xe4$ h6 21 $\mathbb{Q}xd4$ $\mathbb{Q}f6?$ (this was Black's opportunity; Ftačník analyses 21... $\mathbb{Q}xa3+!$ 22 $\mathbb{Q}b1$ e5 with the idea 23 $\mathbb{Q}e3!?$ $\mathbb{W}xe4!$ 24 $\mathbb{W}xe4$ $\mathbb{Q}f5$ 25 $\mathbb{W}xf5$ $\mathbb{W}xf5$ 26 $\mathbb{Q}xh6$ $\mathbb{B}f7$ 27 $\mathbb{Q}e3$ and White has chances, but they probably won't add up to much more than equality versus careful defence) 22 $\mathbb{Q}e3$ $\mathbb{W}d6$ 23 c5 $\mathbb{W}a6$ 24 a4 $\mathbb{W}a5$ 25 $\mathbb{Q}xh6$ $\mathbb{W}b4$ 26 $\mathbb{W}xg7+!$ (D).

A lovely way to finish the game; the initial ambitions of the Bg1 & Nb2 plan are realized:

B



26... $\mathbb{Q}xg7$ 27 $\mathbb{Q}h7+$ $\mathbb{Q}h8$ 28 $\mathbb{Q}xg7+$ $\mathbb{Q}xg7$ 29 $\mathbb{W}g6+$ $\mathbb{Q}h8$ 30 $\mathbb{W}h5$ $\mathbb{R}xf2$ (there's nothing to be done) 31 $\mathbb{Q}e4+$ $\mathbb{Q}g7$ 32 $\mathbb{R}g1+$ $\mathbb{Q}f8$ 33 $\mathbb{W}h6+$ $\mathbb{Q}e7$ 34 $\mathbb{R}g7+$ $\mathbb{R}f7$ 35 $\mathbb{W}g5+$ $\mathbb{Q}e8$ 36 $\mathbb{R}g8+$ 1-0.

7 a3 $\mathbb{Q}a5$

In view of the course of the game, 7... $\mathbb{Q}xc3$ should be considered, having in mind 8 $\mathbb{W}xc3$ (8 dxc3?! is also promising) 8...b6; then 9 b4 gives White an edge because of his bishop-pair.

8 $\mathbb{Q}e4!$?

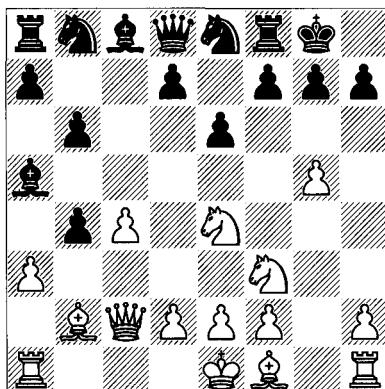
The knight attacks c5 and also looks towards the kingside. 8 e3 is a good, perhaps even objectively better, alternative.

8...b6 9 b4!

An impressive idea: White sacrifices a pawn, but is able to play $\mathbb{Q}b2$ *a tempo* while Black's bishop on a5 is stranded far from defence of his king. As they say, however, a pawn is a pawn, and 9 b3 was certainly a reasonable option.

9...cxb4 10 $\mathbb{Q}b2$ (D)

B



The threat is $\mathbb{R}g1$ and $\mathbb{Q}f6+$.

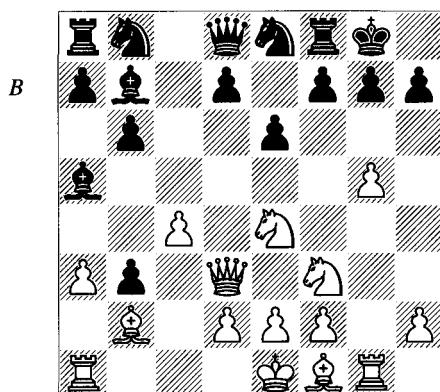
10... $\mathbb{Q}b7$

Kosten analyses 10...d5!?, 11 $\mathbb{Q}f6+$ $\mathbb{Q}xf6$! (after 11... $\mathbb{Q}xf6$! 12 $\mathbb{R}xf6$ g6, the dark squares around Black's king are terribly weak, but an advantage for White would have to be proven) 12 $\mathbb{R}xf6$ $\mathbb{Q}xf6$ 13 $\mathbb{R}g1+$ $\mathbb{Q}h8$ 14 $\mathbb{Q}g5$ d4 15 $\mathbb{Q}g2$ winning the rook in the corner, because of 15...h6 16 axb4 $\mathbb{Q}xb4$ 17 h4!.

11 $\mathbb{R}g1$ b3!

At least Black disrupts the harmony of White's queenside pawn-structure and hits d2, although the bishop on a5 is still only marginally involved.

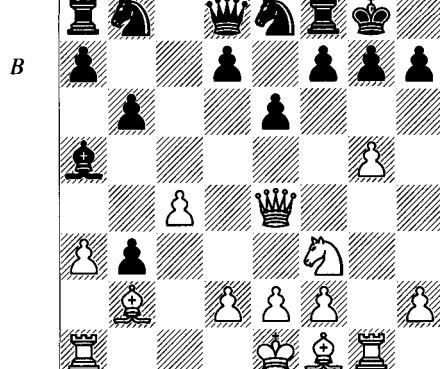
12 $\mathbb{W}d3$ (D)



12... $\mathbb{Q}xe4$

Here 12...d5!?, 13 $\mathbb{Q}xg7!$ $\mathbb{Q}xg7$ 14 $\mathbb{W}d4+$ $\mathbb{Q}g8$ 15 $\mathbb{Q}f6+$ $\mathbb{Q}xf6$ 16 $\mathbb{R}xf6+$ $\mathbb{Q}h8$ 17 $\mathbb{Q}g5!$ forces 17... $\mathbb{R}xd2+$ 18 $\mathbb{Q}xd2$ $\mathbb{Q}d7$ 19 $\mathbb{Q}xh7+$ $\mathbb{Q}xc4$ 20 $\mathbb{Q}e1$ $\mathbb{Q}xf6$ 21 $\mathbb{W}c3!$ and White will come out on top.

13 $\mathbb{W}xe4$ (D)



13... $\mathbb{Q}c6!$

A simple positional edge for White follows 13...d5?! 14 cxd5 $\mathbb{W}xd5$ 15 $\mathbb{W}xd5$ exd5 16 $\mathbb{Q}d4$, whereas 13... $\mathbb{Q}a6$ 14 $\mathbb{Q}g3$ $\mathbb{Q}c5$? fails to 15 $\mathbb{W}h4$ h6 16 $\mathbb{Q}h3$ with the idea $\mathbb{W}h5$.

14 $\mathbb{Q}g3$ f5?

Kosten analyses 14... $\mathbb{Q}d6$! 15 $\mathbb{W}g4$ (or 15 $\mathbb{Q}d3$) 15... $\mathbb{E}e8$ 16 $\mathbb{Q}h3$ e5 17 $\mathbb{W}h5$ $\mathbb{Q}xc4$ 18 $\mathbb{W}xh7+$ $\mathbb{Q}f8$ 19 $\mathbb{Q}b1$ $\mathbb{Q}xb2$ 20 $\mathbb{Q}xb2$ e4, which will probably end in perpetual check. In general, the opening has been balanced, although 8 e3 should be looked into.

15 $\mathbb{Q}xf6$ $\mathbb{Q}xf6$ 16 $\mathbb{Q}d3$ $\mathbb{W}e7$ 17 $\mathbb{Q}g2$?? $\mathbb{Q}c5$??

18 $\mathbb{Q}g5$ $\mathbb{W}e7$ 19 0-0-0 d5 20 cxd5 exd5 21 $\mathbb{Q}h4$

From now on, White's attack flows smoothly; once again we see how the rook on the g-file and bishop on b2 collaborate in attack.

21... $\mathbb{E}ae8$?? 22 $\mathbb{Q}xd5+$ $\mathbb{Q}h8$ 23 $\mathbb{Q}xb3$! $\mathbb{W}xe2$

24 $\mathbb{Q}g6+$! $\mathbb{H}xg6$ 25 $\mathbb{W}xg6$ 1-0

White wins after 25... $\mathbb{E}e7$ 26 $\mathbb{Q}xf6$ $\mathbb{Q}xf6$ 27 $\mathbb{Q}h5+$ $\mathbb{W}xh5$ 28 $\mathbb{W}xh5+$.

Now let's see a more successful example from Black's point of view.

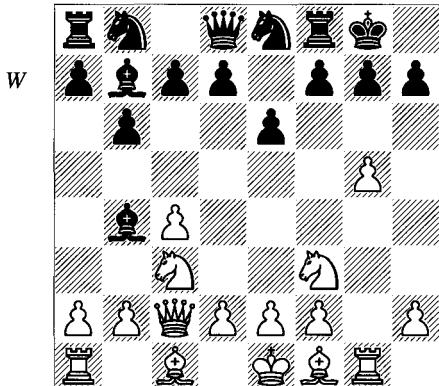
Agrest – Ivanchuk

Swedish Team Ch, Gothenburg 2004

1 $\mathbb{Q}f3$ $\mathbb{Q}f6$ 2 c4 e6 3 $\mathbb{Q}c3$ $\mathbb{Q}b4$ 4 g4 0-0 5 g5 $\mathbb{Q}e8$ 6 $\mathbb{Q}g1$!?

As opposed to 6 $\mathbb{W}c2$ of the previous game.

6...b6 7 $\mathbb{W}c2$ $\mathbb{Q}b7$ (D)



8 a3 $\mathbb{Q}xc3$ 9 $\mathbb{W}xc3$ c5 10 $\mathbb{Q}g2$

This looks normal, but we've seen how g5 and $\mathbb{Q}g1$ go well with pieces that look towards the kingside, so 10 b4 is more appropriate. That also discourages ...d5, since c5 would be hanging.

10...d5 11 d3

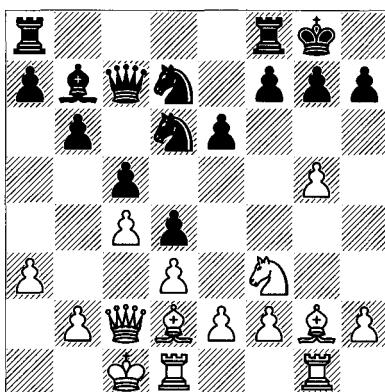
11 d4 would be interesting.

11...d4!

Black cramps White's game, extends the range of his own bishop, and blocks the a1-h8 diagonal that White likes so much.

12 $\mathbb{W}c2$ $\mathbb{W}c7$ 13 $\mathbb{Q}d2$ $\mathbb{Q}d7$ 14 0-0-0 $\mathbb{Q}d6$!

(D)



Another centralized piece; this knight supports potential ...b5 and ...e5-e4 breaks, and can also go to f5.

15 $\mathbb{Q}f4$ $\mathbb{W}fe8$ 16 $\mathbb{Q}e5$?? $\mathbb{Q}xg2$ 17 $\mathbb{Q}xd7$

17 $\mathbb{Q}xg2$? loses to 17... $\mathbb{Q}f5$ 18 $\mathbb{Q}xd7$ $\mathbb{W}xf4+$ 19 $\mathbb{Q}d2$ $\mathbb{W}d6$ and the knight is lost.

17... $\mathbb{W}xd7$ 18 $\mathbb{Q}xd6$ $\mathbb{W}xd6$ 19 $\mathbb{Q}xg2$ $\mathbb{W}ab8$ 20 $\mathbb{Q}d2$ b5 21 e3 b4! 22 axb4 $\mathbb{Q}xb4$ 23 exd4 exd4

Black has the attack and the superior central position, while White's pieces are all passive. The rest is easy to follow:

24 $\mathbb{W}g4$ $\mathbb{W}xh2$ 25 f4 $\mathbb{W}h1+$ 26 $\mathbb{W}d1$ $\mathbb{W}b7$ 27 $\mathbb{W}h4$ $\mathbb{W}b8$ 28 $\mathbb{W}hh2$ $\mathbb{W}a6$ 29 $\mathbb{W}c2$ e5 30 fxe5 $\mathbb{W}a4$ 31 $\mathbb{W}d1$ $\mathbb{W}a1+$ 32 $\mathbb{W}e2$ $\mathbb{W}e6$ 33 $\mathbb{W}f3$ $\mathbb{W}f5+$ 34 $\mathbb{W}g3$ $\mathbb{W}xg5+$ 0-1

12 King's Indian Variations

The majority of grandmasters who open the game with 1 c4 or 1 $\mathbb{Q}f3$ are happy to transpose into the 1 d4 version of the King's Indian Defence if their opponents play the King's Indian moves ... $\mathbb{Q}f6$, ...g6, ... $\mathbb{Q}g7$, ...d6 and ...0-0. Why?

- 1) There are a wealth of interesting systems to play against the King's Indian Defence.
- 2) There is no Réti Opening set-up ($\mathbb{Q}f3$, c4 and double fianchetto) that promises a serious advantage versus the King's Indian.

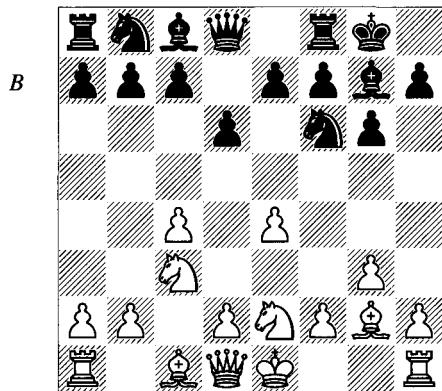
Nevertheless, not everyone wants to face the preparation of a dedicated King's Indian player, and I want to address two versions of the King's Indian Defence that remain in the domain of the English Opening. One is the Botvinnik System versus the King's Indian, consisting of c4, $\mathbb{Q}c3$, g3, $\mathbb{Q}g2$ and e4 in some sequence. This admittedly won't be available to White after 1 $\mathbb{Q}f3$, but is used by various players via the English Opening proper. For example, I mentioned 1 c4 e5 2 $\mathbb{Q}c3$ $\mathbb{Q}c6$ 3 g3 g6 4 $\mathbb{Q}g2$ $\mathbb{Q}g7$ 5 e4 $\mathbb{Q}f6$ in the chapter on the Closed English and shall look at it here. Moreover, opening sequences like 1 c4 g6 2 $\mathbb{Q}c3$ $\mathbb{Q}g7$ 3 g3 e5 4 $\mathbb{Q}g2$ d6 might encourage White to play 5 e4 and face 5... $\mathbb{Q}f6$, or 5... $\mathbb{Q}c6$ 6 $\mathbb{Q}ge2$ $\mathbb{Q}f6$.

Another anti-King's Indian variation is especially relevant to those who employ 1 $\mathbb{Q}f3$ with an early c4; for example, 1 $\mathbb{Q}f3$ $\mathbb{Q}f6$ 2 c4 g6 3 $\mathbb{Q}c3$ $\mathbb{Q}g7$ 4 g3 d6 5 $\mathbb{Q}g2$ 0-0 6 0-0 e5. Now White holds back from d4 by using the modest 7 d3. Whether or not this achieves an advantage, it has been played and analysed for many years and is useful for both sides to understand.

Botvinnik Variation vs the King's Indian

The majority of English Opening players who like the Botvinnik set-up would rather use it against a King's Indian Defence than any other.

That arises naturally after 1 c4 $\mathbb{Q}f6$ 2 $\mathbb{Q}c3$ g6 3 g3 $\mathbb{Q}g7$ 4 $\mathbb{Q}g2$ 0-0 5 e4 d6 6 $\mathbb{Q}ge2$ (D):



Here 6...e5 completes the King's Indian structure that we'll be looking at in this chapter, but take a look at the first note in the following game to clarify what the move-order issues are.

Petrosian – Bertok
Zagreb 1965

1 c4 $\mathbb{Q}f6$ 2 $\mathbb{Q}c3$ g6 3 e4 d6 4 g3 $\mathbb{Q}g7$ 5 $\mathbb{Q}g2$ e5

This game actually began with 1 c4 e5, but I've adjusted the move-order to make an important point. Regardless of which sequence of moves White picks, it's difficult for him to avoid a Symmetrical English should his opponent so choose; that is, Black can abstain from playing ...e5 until White has already committed to e4 and a Botvinnik formation. Then, once e4 is played, Black can set up with ...c5 instead of ...e5.

For example, at this point in our game, the sequence 5...c5 6 $\mathbb{Q}ge2$ $\mathbb{Q}c6$ enters the Symmetrical Botvinnik lines (see Chapter 7). Similarly, with the conventional move-order 1 c4 $\mathbb{Q}f6$ 2 $\mathbb{Q}c3$ g6 3 g3 $\mathbb{Q}g7$ 4 $\mathbb{Q}g2$ 0-0 5 e4, Black can play 5...c5. White needs to take this into account because he either has to have a system

prepared versus ...c5 variations, or he has to limit himself to playing the Botvinnik System only when Black has committed to an early ...e5. Of course, that covers a lot of territory.

Finally, Black can play ...c6 without ...e5, but these lines are less well-defined and for reasons of space I've concentrated upon ones that overlap with 1...e5 variations.

6 ♜ge2 ♜c6

This is arguably the most important move, because it can occur via a number of move-orders. Instead, 6...0-0 7 0-0 ♜bd7 (or 7...c6 8 d3 ♜bd7) places Black's knight more flexibly in return for reduced control over d4. One of his most common ideas is to play for ...b5; for example, 8 d3 (8 f4 c6 9 h3 b5! 10 cxb5 cxb5 has ideas of ...b4, ...♝b7 and/or ...d5) 8...c6 9 h3 (9 f4 b5! gains a tempo for attack due to the b-pawn defence by ...♝b6+) 9...a6 (9...a5!? 10 ♜e3 ♜b8 has a similar look: 11 f4 b5 12 f5 bxc4 13 dxc4 ♜b6 14 b3 gxf5 15 ♜g5 d5 16 exd5 cxd5 17 cxd5 ♜d6 18 ♜h2 ♜d7 19 ♜d2 a4 20 bxa4 ♜a8 21 ♜ab1 ♜xa4 22 ♜xa4 ♜xa4 with chances for both sides, Kotov-Geller, Leningrad 1956) 10 ♜e3 (10 a4, to prevent ...b5, has the drawback that 10...a5! secures c5 as an outpost for Black's knight) 10...b5 11 ♜d2 ♜b7 12 f4 exf4 13 gxf4 ♜e8 14 ♜g3 ♜b6 15 a4 b4 16 ♜ce2 a5 17 b3 c5 18 ♜ad1 ♜e7 with dynamic equality, Lein-Vasiukov, USSR Ch, Tbilisi 1966/7. These lines with ...c6 are impossible to reduce to general ideas, and most games stemming from them will take on a unique character.

7 d3

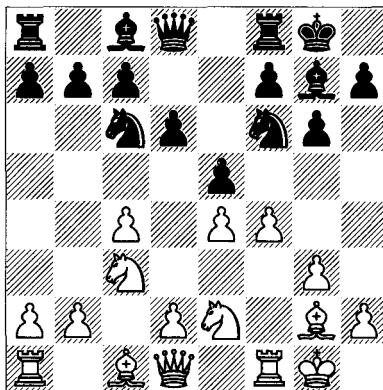
7 0-0 0-0 8 f4 (*D*) is a common way to try to get f5 in before Black has time to block the f-pawn by moving his knight from f6 and playing ...f5.

Black has to act quickly:

a) He can try to compromise White's big centre by 8...exf4 9 gxf4 ♜g4 10 d4 ♜h5, but after 11 ♜e3, he can't quite seem to break it down, because 11...f5 12 e5 dxe5 leaves White with a clear positional plus following 13 dxe5! (and not 13 fxe5? f4!).

b) In Bilek-Liptay, Hungarian Ch, Budapest 1963, 8...♜e6 9 d3 ♜d7 10 ♜h1 ♜ab8 11 ♜e3 ♜g4 12 ♜g1 (one of the points of ♜h1) 12...f5 13 exf5 gxf5 14 ♜d2 resulted in a static position for Black. A good course of action after

B



Black's 14...a6 would have been 15 ♜d5 ♜f7 16 ♜ab1 or here 16 ♜ac1 with the idea b4.

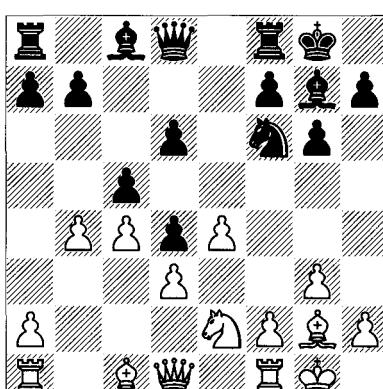
c) 8...♜d4! may well be best, with the idea ...♝g4, if only because 9 ♜xd4? exd4 10 ♜e2 d3! is rather embarrassing; e.g., 11 ♜c3 c6 12 ♜f3 ♜b6+ 13 ♜h1 ♜d4.

7...0-0 8 0-0 ♜d4!? 9 ♜xd4 exd4 10 ♜e2 c5??

This renders Black's centre immobile and gives White a free hand. A better treatment was 10...♜e8 11 h3 c6 12 b4 a5! 13 b5 cxb5 14 cxb5 a4! 15 ♜d2 ♜b6 1/2-1/2 Prusikin-Schunk, Altenkirchen 2005. Black's d-pawn is obviously not an issue for a long while, and he has some real pressure on the b-pawn after ...♜c7 and ...♜d7. Of course White can improve upon this.

11 b4 (*D*)

B



10...c5 has its consequences, because in this position White can work around the d-pawn to attack on either or both wings:

11...♜d7 12 bxc5 dxc5 13 f4 f6 14 a4

White makes sure that Black won't get ...b5 in.

14...a5 15 g4

Creeping forward. White could also attack with the f-pawn; for example, 15 $\mathbb{Q}d2 \mathbb{Q}e8$ 16 $\mathbb{Q}b1 \mathbb{Q}b8$ 17 f5! $\mathbb{Q}e5$ 18 $\mathbb{Q}f4!$ with the idea 18...g5 19 $\mathbb{Q}d5 \mathbb{Q}xd3$ 20 $\mathbb{Q}xg5!$.

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

Here 16 f5! would have been very strong, especially since Black's knight is now two moves from the outpost square on e5. There might follow 16... $\mathbb{Q}c6$ 17 $\mathbb{Q}f4$ g5 18 $\mathbb{Q}d5$ and if Black tries to exchange off the dominant knight by 18... $\mathbb{Q}e7$, he gets hit with 19 e5! $\mathbb{Q}xd5$ 20 $\mathbb{Q}xd5+$ $\mathbb{Q}h8$ 21 e6.

Motwani – Apicella

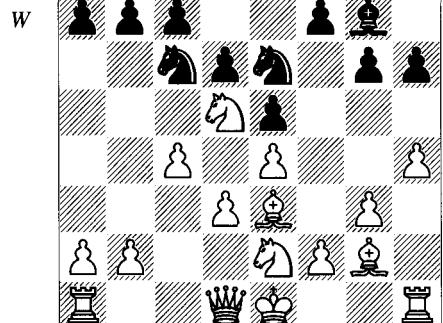
Noyon 2005

1 c4 $\mathbb{Q}f6$ 2 $\mathbb{Q}c3$ g6 3 e4 d6 4 g3 $\mathbb{Q}g7$ 5 $\mathbb{Q}g2$ 0-0

Black can try to save a tempo by delaying castling, and he might also reason that White's standard kingside plans aren't so impressive if there's no king over there: 5...e5 6 $\mathbb{Q}ge2 \mathbb{Q}c6$ 7 d3 $\mathbb{Q}d7$! and then:

a) 8 $\mathbb{Q}e3$ is the natural reaction to ... $\mathbb{Q}d7$, both because ... $\mathbb{Q}g4$ is no longer possible and because it supports the move d4. Then 8... $\mathbb{Q}c5$ 9 0-0 $\mathbb{Q}e6$ prevents d4. Maybe White can try 9 d4? exd4 10 $\mathbb{Q}xd4$, when Black would probably respond 10... $\mathbb{Q}e5$ 11 b3 $\mathbb{Q}cd3+$ 12 $\mathbb{Q}f1$ $\mathbb{Q}c5$, preventing White from castling.

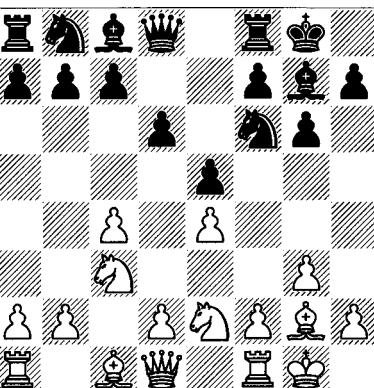
b) 8 $\mathbb{Q}d5 \mathbb{Q}c5$ 9 h4 h6 10 $\mathbb{Q}e3 \mathbb{Q}e6$ (D).



By not castling, Black has restrained d4 and is ready to occupy it: 11 $\mathbb{Q}d2 \mathbb{Q}cd4$ 12 $\mathbb{Q}xd4$

exd4 13 $\mathbb{Q}df4 \mathbb{Q}c5$ 14 $\mathbb{Q}c1$ c6 15 $\mathbb{Q}b3 \mathbb{Q}e6$ 16 $\mathbb{Q}xe6$ $\mathbb{Q}xe6$, L.Karlsson-Ciocaltea, Niš 1981. It's a little hard for either side to find a productive plan, so we can call this equal.

6 $\mathbb{Q}ge2$ e5 7 0-0 (D)



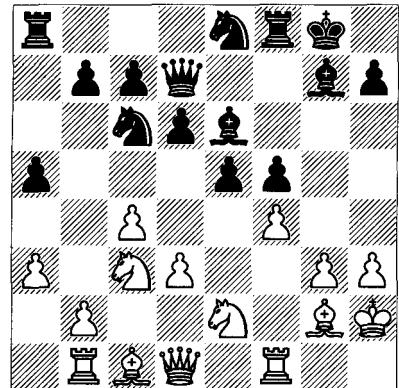
7... $\mathbb{Q}e6$

This is a flexible move that doesn't commit the queen's knight, which can still come to c6, d7 or a6. In the last two cases the move ...c6 will be available. The main point is that by attacking c4, he forces a reaction and has time to prevent h3 by getting ... $\mathbb{Q}d7$ in. Without the move h3, it's more difficult for White to play $\mathbb{Q}e3$ due to ... $\mathbb{Q}g4$. In addition, Black's defensive move ... $\mathbb{Q}g4$ can come in handy.

Not surprisingly, White has his own advantages in this formation. If he gets either d4 or f4 in and Black captures the pawn, then $\mathbb{Q}xd4$ or $\mathbb{Q}xf4$ will attack Black's bishop on e6. Also, if White plays f4, he can play f5 with a gain of time, even as a pawn sacrifice. Finally, the move $\mathbb{Q}d5$ can sometimes be answered by ... $\mathbb{Q}xd5$, but that will now come with loss of tempo due to the attack on e6.

Black can play the same idea with his knight already committed to c6 (for example, from a Closed English move-order), but this doesn't seem as effective: 7... $\mathbb{Q}c6$ 8 d3 (or 8 f4; compare the notes in the previous game) 8... $\mathbb{Q}e6$ (instead of 8... $\mathbb{Q}e8$ and ...f5) 9 h3 $\mathbb{Q}e8$ (9... $\mathbb{Q}d7$ 10 $\mathbb{Q}h2 \mathbb{Q}h5$ 11 $\mathbb{Q}d5 \mathbb{Q}d8$!?, Averbakh-Trajković, Dresden 1956, and now Marin suggests 12 g4! $\mathbb{Q}f6$ 13 f4) 10 $\mathbb{Q}b1$ a5 11 a3 $\mathbb{Q}d7$ 12 $\mathbb{Q}h2$ f5 13 exf5 $\mathbb{Q}xf5$ 14 f4 (D).

This is Bilek-G.Horvath, Hungarian Ch, Budapest 1973. Here White has constructed the

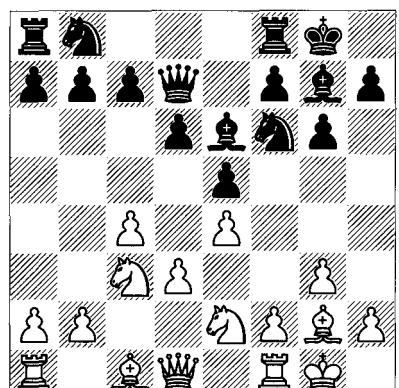


B standard blockade of Black's f-pawn, which restricts the mobility of his pieces. We've seen versions of this position in many variations. The exchange ...exf4 would isolate Black's f-pawn after White recaptures with a piece, and ...e4 will lose material. So Black is best off maintaining the status quo in the centre and looking to improve the position of his pieces. White stands better, but his advantage is limited.

8 d3

8 b3 is another possibility, when White's new idea is to prepare d4. One solution is 8... $\mathbb{Q}c6$ 9 d3 $\mathbb{Q}d7$!? 10 $\mathbb{Q}e3$, and now 10...f5 11 exf5 $\mathbb{Q}xf5$ is only slightly better for White. Black can also try the daring idea 10... $\mathbb{Q}d4$!? 11 $\mathbb{Q}xd4$ exd4 12 $\mathbb{Q}b5$ c6!? 13 $\mathbb{Q}bx4$ $\mathbb{Q}g4$ 14 f3 $\mathbb{W}b6$ 15 fxg4 $\mathbb{Q}xd4+$ 16 $\mathbb{Q}xd4$ $\mathbb{W}xd4+$ 17 $\mathbb{Q}h1$ $\mathbb{Q}e5$. This remains unclear, only because of White's horrible bishop on g2; for example, 18 $\mathbb{W}e2$ $\mathbb{W}xd3$ 19 $\mathbb{W}xd3$ $\mathbb{Q}xd3$ 20 $\mathbb{Q}ad1$ $\mathbb{Q}e5$ 21 $\mathbb{W}xd6$ $\mathbb{Q}ad8$.

8... $\mathbb{W}d7$ (D)



9 f4

Here are two thematic alternatives:

a) Biocanin-Rankov, Belgrade 2005 went 9 $\mathbb{Q}d5$ $\mathbb{Q}xd5$!? (Black should be fine after 9...c6!) 10 $\mathbb{Q}xf6$ $\mathbb{Q}xf6$ 10 cxd5 $\mathbb{Q}h3$, and here we have a recurring situation in which White can make Black regret the bishop trade by 11 f4!, threatening f5. If Black retreats, White sacrifices a pawn for control of the light squares following 11... $\mathbb{Q}g4$ 12 f5! gxf5 13 h3! $\mathbb{Q}xe2$ 14 $\mathbb{W}xe2$ fxe4 15 dxe4 with the idea $\mathbb{Q}f5$; then 15...f5 16 exf5 $\mathbb{Q}xf5$ 17 $\mathbb{Q}e3$ exploits Black's poor development and bad bishop. Play through that one; it's instructive!

b) 9 $\mathbb{Q}e3$ c6! is a good solution, with the simple idea of ...d5; for example, 10 f3 d5 11 cxd5 cxd5 12 f4!? $\mathbb{Q}g4$ (12...dxe4 13 $\mathbb{Q}xe4$ $\mathbb{Q}xe4$ 14 dxe4 $\mathbb{Q}c6$ is equal) 13 $\mathbb{Q}c1$ (13 $\mathbb{Q}c5$ d4 14 $\mathbb{Q}xf8$ $\mathbb{Q}e3$) 13...dxe4 14 $\mathbb{Q}xe4$ exf4 15 $\mathbb{Q}xf4$ $\mathbb{Q}c6$.

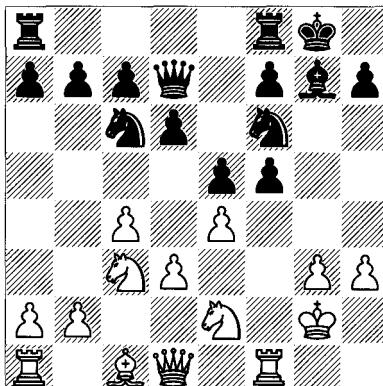
9... $\mathbb{Q}h3$!? 10 f5!?

A standard plan. White wants to advance on the kingside by h3, g4 and g5. Nevertheless, the preparatory 10 $\mathbb{Q}e3$! might be preferable. Apart from f5, d4 would then become an idea.

10... $\mathbb{Q}xg2$ 11 $\mathbb{Q}xg2$ $\mathbb{Q}c6$!?

11...c6! is better.

12 h3 gxf5? (D)



13 $\mathbb{Q}xf5$!

The f5 outpost and kingside light squares will keep Black busy from now on.

13... $\mathbb{Q}e7$ 14 $\mathbb{Q}f2$ $\mathbb{Q}h8$ 15 g4 b5 16 $\mathbb{Q}g3$ b4?!

Giving White a free hand on the kingside, but the situation was bad anyway.

17 $\mathbb{Q}ce2$ c6 18 $\mathbb{Q}g5$ $\mathbb{Q}fg8$ 19 $\mathbb{Q}h5$ f6 20 $\mathbb{Q}d2$ a5 21 $\mathbb{Q}eg3$ d5 22 $\mathbb{W}c2$ $\mathbb{Q}ad8$ 23 $\mathbb{Q}af1$

dxc4 24 dxc4 $\mathbb{W}d4$ 25 $\mathbb{W}c1!$ $\mathbb{Q}g6$ 26 $\mathbb{Q}xg7$ $\mathbb{Q}h4+$ 27 $\mathbb{Q}h1$ $\mathbb{Q}xg7$

Now instead of 28 $\mathbb{Q}e3$, White had an immediate win with 28 $\mathbb{Q}g5!$, because $\mathbb{Q}xh4$ and $\mathbb{Q}h5+$ are both threatened, and Black loses after 28...fxg5 29 $\mathbb{W}xg5+$ $\mathbb{Q}g6$ 30 $\mathbb{Q}f5+$ $\mathbb{W}xf5$ 31 exf5, etc.

The Closed English Formation

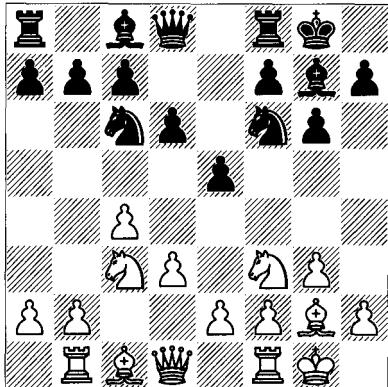
Shatskes – L. Muchnik

Moscow (Central Chess Club Ch) 1966

**1 c4 $\mathbb{Q}f6$ 2 $\mathbb{Q}c3$ d6 3 g3 e5 4 $\mathbb{Q}g2$ $\mathbb{Q}c6$ 5 d3
g6 6 $\mathbb{Q}f3$ $\mathbb{Q}g7$ 7 0-0 0-0 8 $\mathbb{R}b1$ (D)**

8 e4 is mentioned in the next game.

B



This position has been the starting point for a remarkable number of master games over the years. White sets up as he often does in the Closed English (Chapter 6). He has in mind b4-b5, in a sense 'extending' the effective reach of his favourite bishop on g2 by controlling squares along that diagonal. 8 $\mathbb{R}b1$ has the additional advantage of removing the rook from potential attacks by the g7-bishop. We looked at this type of position in the Closed English chapter at some length, but with Black's pawn on f5. I think it's fair to say that, although there are always trade-offs, the position with ...f5 is more difficult for White to fight against because Black's pawn attack is well underway. One way of looking at it is that, in our variation, Black will move his knight from f6 and play

...f5, which raises the question of whether he has not somehow lost a tempo in doing so.

Naturally it's not so easy. It's true that there are many variations in which Black moves his knight and plays ...f5, but doesn't mean that those are the best variations, or that ...f5 can't sometimes be a weakening move. Indeed, over the years, leading players have turned towards defending Black's queenside with pieces, and in the main lines he plays ... $\mathbb{Q}f6$ -d7. Then it can be argued that Black has saved a tempo by *not* playing ...f5! Which way is better? It all depends upon which plan you think is appropriate, and which you feel more comfortable with.

Finally, I should note that I haven't allocated space to variations with an early ...c6; for example, 1 c4 $\mathbb{Q}f6$ 2 $\mathbb{Q}c3$ g6 3 g3 $\mathbb{Q}g2$ 4 $\mathbb{Q}g2$ d6 5 $\mathbb{Q}f3$ 0-0 6 0-0 e5 7 d3 c6, or here 7... $\mathbb{E}e8$, or 7...h6 8 $\mathbb{R}b1$ a5 9 a3 $\mathbb{E}e8$. In each case, Black's first, direct idea is simply ...c6 and ...d5, which is usually prefaced by protecting the e-pawn. Such lines are extremely difficult to analyse precisely, but they are respectable and involve less theory, which is perhaps an advantage in some players' minds.

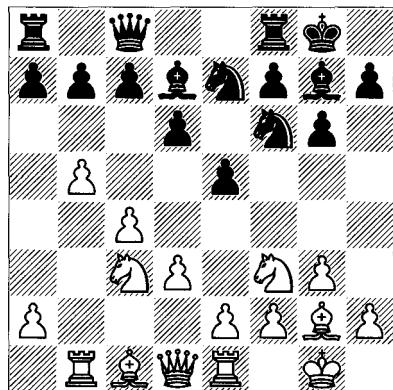
8... $\mathbb{Q}d7$!?

This old move is hardly used any more, although it really hasn't been refuted. Black wants to play ... $\mathbb{W}c8$ and ... $\mathbb{Q}h3$, exchanging White's bishop on g2 and initiating an attack on the kingside. With 8... $\mathbb{Q}d7$, he wants to save the time spent on ...h6, as in the main lines 8...h6 9 b4 $\mathbb{Q}e6$ and 8...a5 9 a3 h6. Without ...h6, a bishop on e6 can be harassed by $\mathbb{Q}g5$.

Of course, 8... $\mathbb{Q}d7$ is rather passive, and a queen on c8 is less effectively placed than on d7. If Black inserts the moves 8...a5 9 a3 before playing 9... $\mathbb{Q}d7$, his queen on c8 makes it difficult to contest the a-file after 10 b4 axb4 11 axb4 $\mathbb{W}c8$ 12 b5 $\mathbb{Q}e7$ 13 $\mathbb{Q}b2$ $\mathbb{Q}h3$ 14 $\mathbb{Q}a1$.

9 b4 $\mathbb{W}c8$ 10 b5 $\mathbb{Q}e7$ 11 $\mathbb{Q}e1$ (D)

This classic game illustrates some fundamental themes. First, we see in its most direct form the plan with $\mathbb{R}b1$ and b4-b5 that typifies so many variations in the English Opening. Then we see White trying to save his bishop from exchange by playing 11 $\mathbb{Q}e1$, so that when Black plays ... $\mathbb{Q}h3$, White can retreat his bishop to h1 without losing the exchange to ... $\mathbb{Q}xf1$. This costs a tempo and weakens f2, so Black's usual response will be to launch a kingside attack.



B

11...Qh3 12 Qh1 Qg4?

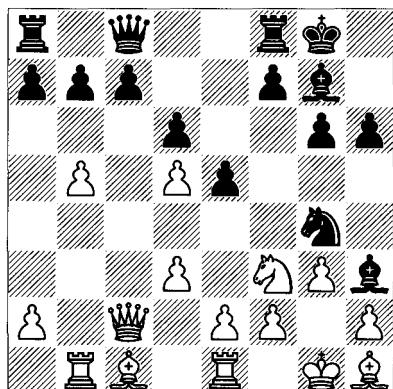
A mistake, although it doesn't change the natural course of the game because White fails to seize upon its tactical shortcoming. The accurate move is 12...h6, when 13 Qc2 Qg4 transposes to the game. Whether ...Qg4 is superior to other plans is another matter; one drawback is that it reduces control of the centre.

13 Qc2?

A sound move, but missing the tactic 13 Qg5!, which attacks the bishop on h3. Then 13...Qf6 14 Qxb7! Qxb7 15 Qxh3 isn't a very effective gambit for Black.

Apart from this technicality, White's choice of c2 for the queen is noteworthy. It would seem that b3 is a better square, guarding d5 and supporting the potential attack by c5 and b6. In fact, that's where the queen usually goes in the games below.

13...h6 14 Qd5! Qxd5 15 cxd5 (D)



B

This is the point. Black's only weakness is at c7, and now White's queen faces it directly.

15...f5

15...Qf6 16 Qc4 He8, with the idea ...Qe7 and if necessary ...Qe8, would be an admission that his kingside action was premature. Still, it would be interesting to see how White would make progress in that case.

16 Qd2 f4

Black is hoping that something will happen on that weak f2-square.

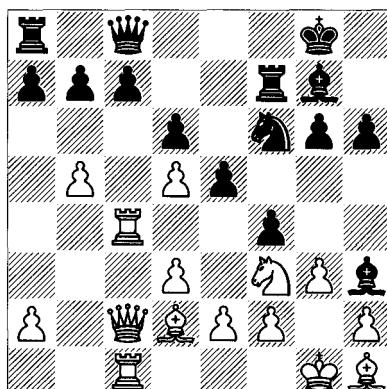
17 Rcl1 Rf7 18 Rb4!

The star move. This rook not only prepares to go to c4 and further pile up on the weak pawn, but it also plays a role in defending the kingside along the 4th rank.

18...Qf6!

Black retreats in order to attack d5, but the more so to defend c7 with his next move.

19 Rc4 (D)



B

A classical picture of the English Opening queenside assault. White has tripled on the c-file, and an advance by a4-a5 and b6 is on the cards. Black's plan is less obvious, because after his next move he has only a couple of pieces in the attack.

19...Qe8

Not 19...Qxd5? 20 Qxe5!, and either d5 or f7 falls.

20 a4 g5 21 Rcl1

White's pieces coordinate well. His bishop move protects the kingside (especially the sensitive f2), and prepares Qd2-e4. Nevertheless, he needs a concrete way to proceed, and his pieces are mostly cut off from the kingside. Since Black's bishop on h3 has turned into a monster, 21 Qg2 was a sensible option.

21...Qf6??

21... $\mathbb{W}g4!$ 22 $\mathbb{Q}d2 \mathbb{W}h5$ looks satisfactory, with enough danger to White's king that he has to pay attention.

22 $\mathbb{Q}d2 \mathbb{Q}d8?$

This is completely unnecessary and permits White to finally open a second front: in the centre.

23 d4! $\mathbb{Q}f5$ 24 $\mathbb{W}b3!?$ exd4 25 $\mathbb{Q}xd4 \mathbb{Q}f6$ 26 $\mathbb{Q}dc4 \mathbb{W}d8$ 27 $\mathbb{Q}e4 \mathbb{Q}e5$ 28 $\mathbb{Q}c3 \mathbb{W}e7$ 29 $\mathbb{W}b2$

All White's pieces have tremendous scope, and he went on to win.

Dedes – Grivas

Iraklion 1992

1 $\mathbb{Q}f3 \mathbb{Q}f6$ 2 g3 g6 3 $\mathbb{Q}g2 \mathbb{Q}g7$ 4 0-0 0-0 5 c4 d6 6 $\mathbb{Q}c3$ e5 7 d3 $\mathbb{Q}c6$ 8 $\mathbb{W}b1$

8 e4 is usually frowned upon with this disposition of pieces. White has constructed a Botvinnik System pawn-structure, but his knight on f3 blocks his f-pawn (as opposed to having it on the normal e2-square). That really isn't such an awful circumstance, but since Black can move his knight and be ready to play ...f5 himself, he can equalize rather easily. Günther-Uhlmann, German Ch, Bad Wildbad 1993 proceeded 8... $\mathbb{Q}h5$ 9 $\mathbb{Q}g5!$ f6 (9... $\mathbb{Q}f6$ is a sound alternative) 10 $\mathbb{Q}e3 \mathbb{Q}e6$ 11 h3 $\mathbb{Q}e7$ (reintroducing the idea of ...c6 and ...d5) 12 $\mathbb{Q}d5$ c6 13 $\mathbb{Q}xe7+$ $\mathbb{W}xe7$ 14 $\mathbb{Q}e1 \mathbb{W}f7$ with a level game.

In this line, 8...a6 with the idea ...b5 is also attractive, because White's usual counterbreak with f4 isn't on hand.

8...a5

Black plays this move far more often than not, and it goes well with the defensive system that he chooses for this game.

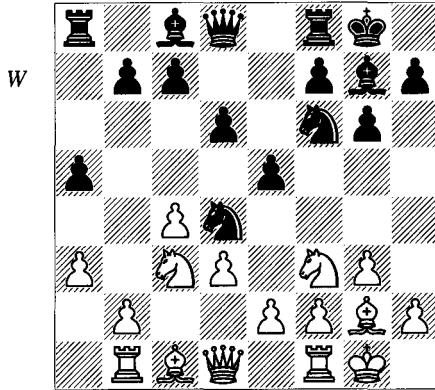
9 a3

White naturally tries to enforce b4.

9... $\mathbb{Q}d4$ (D)

9...h6 is the focus of the next game.

Throughout the years, this knight incursion has proven frustrating to White. It eliminates some of the force of White's queenside attack and prepares central expansion with ...c6 and ...d5. The possibility of ...c6 is also useful in preventing White's knight from becoming settled on d5. Finally, if White exchanges the knight on d4, Black hopes to use his open e-file in conjunction with ... $\mathbb{Q}g4$ to cause White some problems.



As for White, he can take some comfort in the fact that the attack by ...f5 is put on hold, which means that he can shift his forces to the queenside and centre without fear. Black has expended a tempo on ... $\mathbb{Q}d4$, so that gives White some extra time to expand on the queenside. Because of the simplification that ... $\mathbb{Q}d4$ promises, he can also play $\mathbb{Q}g5$ followed by $\mathbb{Q}xf6$, hoping to simplify the game and reduce Black's control over the crucial e4- and d5-squares. This makes the assumption that his knights will be better than Black's passive dark-squared bishop. However, that kind of imbalance tends to be only a temporary advantage.

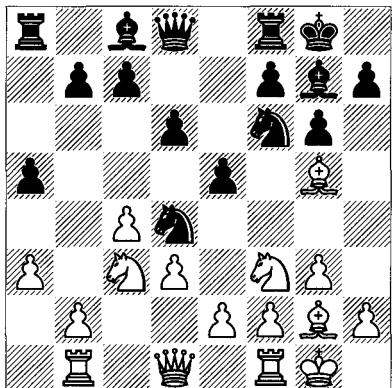
10 b4

a) It might seem natural to kick the black knight by 10 e3 $\mathbb{Q}xf3+$ 11 $\mathbb{Q}xf3$, but after 11...c6, there's no stopping ...d5 without concessions; for example, 12 b4 (12 e4 $\mathbb{Q}e6$ 13 b4 axb4 14 axb4 d5) 12...axb4 13 axb4 d5 14 b5 $\mathbb{Q}e6$ 15 $\mathbb{W}e2 \mathbb{Q}d7$ 16 $\mathbb{Q}b2 \mathbb{Q}fe8$ and, because of her greater central control, Black was slightly better in Schoenberger-Dworakowska, Krynica 1995.

b) 10 $\mathbb{Q}xd4$ has proven harmless; for example, 10...exd4 11 $\mathbb{Q}b5$ (White doesn't achieve anything by 11 $\mathbb{Q}d5$ c6 {11...a4!? has also been played, to hold up White on the queenside}) 12 $\mathbb{Q}xf6+$ $\mathbb{Q}xf6$ 13 e4 dxе3 14 fxе3 a4 with a dull equality, Norwood-Iten, Zug 1987) 11... $\mathbb{Q}g4$ (or 11... $\mathbb{Q}e8$ with the idea ...c6) 12 h3 c6 13 hxg4 $\mathbb{Q}xg4$ 14 $\mathbb{Q}xd4 \mathbb{Q}xd4$ 15 $\mathbb{W}d2 \mathbb{Q}d7$ 16 b4 axb4 17 $\mathbb{Q}xb4 \mathbb{Q}fe8$ 18 e3 $\mathbb{Q}g7$ 19 $\mathbb{Q}b2$ and nothing special was going on in Christiansen-Smyslov, Lone Pine 1976.

c) 10 $\mathbb{Q}g5$ (D) is the most important alternative.

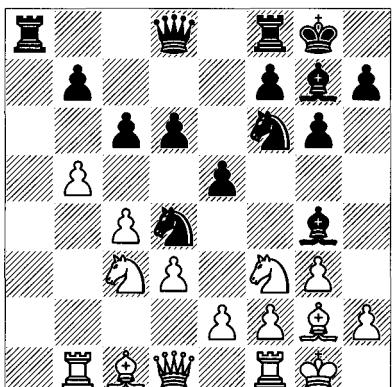
B



Black's advantage of two bishops will be set against White's attack on the queenside. Razuvaev-Ikonnikov, Geneva 1994 continued 10...h6 (10... $\mathbb{Q}e6$ 11 $\mathbb{Q}xf6$ $\mathbb{Q}xf6$ is also possible) 11 $\mathbb{Q}xf6$ $\mathbb{Q}xf6$ 12 b4 axb4 13 axb4 $\mathbb{Q}g7$ (there doesn't seem to be any hurry about this, because ...f5 isn't in Black's plans for a while, so 13... $\mathbb{Q}a3$ or 13... $\mathbb{Q}g4$ is probably better) 14 b5 $\mathbb{Q}g4$ 15 $\mathbb{Q}xd4$ (Razuvaev gives the clever variation 15 e3 $\mathbb{Q}a3!$ 16 $\mathbb{Q}c1?$ $\mathbb{Q}xf3$ 17 $\mathbb{Q}xf3$ $\mathbb{Q}xf3+$ 18 $\mathbb{Q}xf3$ $\mathbb{Q}xc3!$ 19 $\mathbb{Q}xc3$ e4) 15...exd4 16 $\mathbb{Q}d5$ $\mathbb{Q}a2?$! (16... $\mathbb{Q}d7$ improves) 17 $\mathbb{Q}e1$ $\mathbb{Q}e8$ 18 $\mathbb{Q}f3!$ $\mathbb{Q}xf3$ 19 exf3 $\mathbb{Q}xe1+$ 20 $\mathbb{Q}xe1$ $\mathbb{Q}a8?$! 21 $\mathbb{Q}a1$ (21 $\mathbb{Q}e4!$ was extremely strong, threatening $\mathbb{Q}e7+$ and $\mathbb{Q}e1$, as well as f4-f5) 21... $\mathbb{Q}xa1$ 22 $\mathbb{Q}xa1$ c6 23 bxc6 bxc6 24 $\mathbb{Q}b4$ $\mathbb{Q}b6$ 25 $\mathbb{Q}a4$ $\mathbb{Q}f8$ 26 $\mathbb{Q}g2$ c5 27 $\mathbb{Q}d5$ and White's knight thoroughly dominates the bishop.

10...axb4 11 axb4 c6 12 b5 $\mathbb{Q}g4$ (D)

W



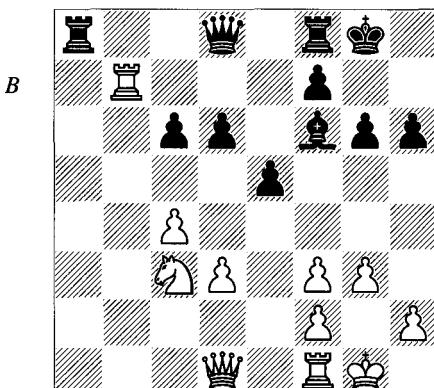
13 $\mathbb{Q}xd4?$!

The course of the game demonstrates how the timing of this move is slightly flawed. But

Black has probably already equalized. There are two main options:

a) 13 bxc6 bxc6 and now 14 $\mathbb{Q}xd4?$! still doesn't inspire following 14...exd4 15 $\mathbb{Q}e4$ $\mathbb{Q}xe4$ 16 $\mathbb{Q}xe4$ $\mathbb{Q}d7$ with the idea ...d5, as in Anikaev-Tal, Minsk 1979. 14 $\mathbb{Q}el$ and 14 e3 would be better tries.

b) A particularly interesting variation from a positional point of view comes from the game that initially made the $\mathbb{Q}g5$ plan popular: 13 $\mathbb{Q}g5$ $\mathbb{Q}xf3$ 14 $\mathbb{Q}xf3$ h6? (not bad, but 14... $\mathbb{Q}a3!$ would equalize after 15 $\mathbb{Q}c1$ $\mathbb{Q}a5$ 16 $\mathbb{Q}a1$ $\mathbb{Q}a8$, and here 15 $\mathbb{Q}e4$ $\mathbb{Q}xf3+$ 16 exf3 d5 gives Black the larger share of the centre) 15 $\mathbb{Q}xf6$ $\mathbb{Q}xf3+$ 16 exf3 $\mathbb{Q}xf6$ 17 bxc6 bxc6 18 $\mathbb{Q}b7$ (D).



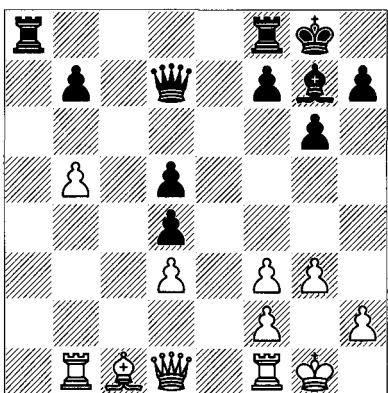
This is White's idea: light-square control combined with possession of open queenside files, with a good knight versus a (temporarily) bad bishop. Still, Black's mobile centre is a countervailing factor and White has long-term weaknesses. Andersson-Nunn, Johannesburg 1981 continued 18... $\mathbb{Q}a3!$ 19 $\mathbb{Q}c2$ d5 (both Bagirov and Grivas like 19... $\mathbb{Q}a8$ 20 $\mathbb{Q}fb1$ $\mathbb{Q}a7$, when after 21 $\mathbb{Q}b3!$, both 21... $\mathbb{Q}g7$ and 21... $\mathbb{Q}d8$ 22 $\mathbb{Q}e4$ $\mathbb{Q}e7$ are at least satisfactory) 20 cxd5 cxd5 21 $\mathbb{Q}b5$ $\mathbb{Q}a5?$! (Andersson mentions 21... $\mathbb{Q}a6!$, and Grivas suggests 21... $\mathbb{Q}a8$ 22 $\mathbb{Q}d7$ $\mathbb{Q}a5!$ 23 $\mathbb{Q}d6$ $\mathbb{Q}a7$; here 22 $\mathbb{Q}d6$ improves, but Black can place his bishop out of range by 22... $\mathbb{Q}g7$ and be perfectly happy; there are reasonable alternatives for both sides, but nothing that strays too dramatically from equality) 22 $\mathbb{Q}c6$ $\mathbb{Q}g7$ 23 $\mathbb{Q}b1$ $\mathbb{Q}a2?$ (the wrong square; it may still be possible to go slowly, since $\mathbb{Q}d6$ can be answered by ... $\mathbb{Q}f6$; White is better, to

be sure, and will probably pick up a pawn, but his own pawns are of limited use in an end-game) 24 $\mathbb{Q}d6!$ e4? 25 $\mathbb{Q}xf7!$ 1-0.

13...exd4 14 $\mathbb{Q}e4$

White can sacrifice a piece by 14 bxc6!? dxc3 (14...bxc6 transposes to the previous note) 15 cxb7 $\mathbb{B}b8$ 16 $\mathbb{Q}e3$. This is unclear, but 16... $\mathbb{Q}a5$ makes it hard to justify his investment fully.

14... $\mathbb{Q}xe4$ 15 $\mathbb{Q}xe4$ d5! 16 cxd5 cxd5 17 $\mathbb{Q}f3$ $\mathbb{Q}xf3$ 18 exf3 $\mathbb{W}d7$ (D)



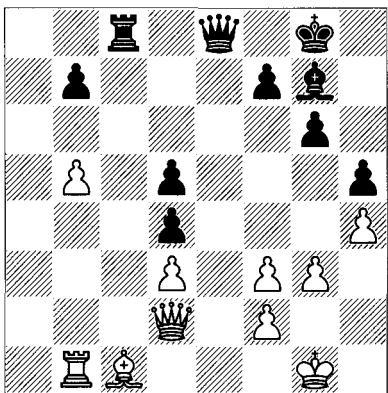
W

Black suddenly stands much better. As Grivas points out, his doubled pawns control important central squares, unlike White's doubled f-pawns. White's other difficulty is that Black has two files upon which to invade on the queenside.

19 $\mathbb{Q}e1$ $\mathbb{B}fc8$ 20 $\mathbb{W}e2$ $\mathbb{Q}e8$!? 21 $\mathbb{W}d2$ h5!

As so often, it takes action on a second front to expand one's advantage. Here ...h4 and perhaps ...h3 followed by ... $\mathbb{W}f5$ threatens to harass White's weakened kingside.

22 h4 $\mathbb{B}ac8$! 23 $\mathbb{B}xe8+$ $\mathbb{W}xe8$! (D)



W

24 $\mathbb{Q}g2$ $\mathbb{B}c3$ 25 $\mathbb{W}g5$? $\mathbb{W}e1$!

With the major threat of ... $\mathbb{B}c2$.

26 $\mathbb{W}d2$ $\mathbb{B}xd2$ 27 $\mathbb{Q}xd2$ $\mathbb{B}xd3$ 28 $\mathbb{Q}b4$ $\mathbb{Q}f8$!

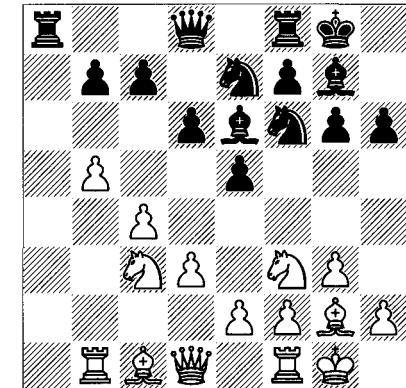
After the exchange of bishops, Black's passed d-pawns prove a major advantage; in what follows, he gives up one in order to gain time in support of the other. White should now try 29 b6.

29 f4? $\mathbb{Q}xb4$ 30 $\mathbb{B}xb4$ $\mathbb{Q}f8$ 31 $\mathbb{Q}f1$ $\mathbb{Q}e7$ 32 $\mathbb{Q}e2$ $\mathbb{B}a3$ 33 $\mathbb{B}xd4$ $\mathbb{Q}d6$ 34 $\mathbb{B}b4$ f5 35 $\mathbb{B}b2$ d4 36 $\mathbb{Q}d2$ $\mathbb{Q}d5$ 0-1

Donaldson – Eisen

Philadelphia 1997

1 $\mathbb{Q}f3$ $\mathbb{Q}f6$ 2 c4 g6 3 $\mathbb{Q}c3$ $\mathbb{Q}g7$ 4 g3 0-0 5 $\mathbb{Q}g2$ d6 6 0-0 e5 7 d3 $\mathbb{Q}c6$ 8 $\mathbb{B}b1$ a5 9 a3 h6 10 b4 axb4 11 axb4 $\mathbb{Q}e6$ 12 b5 $\mathbb{Q}e7$ (D)



W

We've arrived at the main line of the anti-King's Indian Variation with $\mathbb{Q}f3$. It has been contested for at least half a century, but still produces lively battles.

13 $\mathbb{W}b3$

In contemporary chess this has become the main move, on the grounds that placing White's bishop on a3 to threaten c5 is more pointed than the older approach 13 $\mathbb{Q}b2$. With the latter move, White tries to get $\mathbb{B}a1$ in as fast as possible. One line that has occurred in a number of games is 13... $\mathbb{W}d7$ 14 $\mathbb{Q}e1$ $\mathbb{Q}h3$ 15 $\mathbb{Q}h1$ $\mathbb{Q}g4$ 16 d4!? (in these positions, White often tries to divert Black from his kingside attack by striking in the centre), but Black has a fairly simple solution in 16...exd4 17 $\mathbb{Q}xd4$ c6 (or even the dull 17... $\mathbb{B}fb8$) 18 $\mathbb{Q}a4$ $\mathbb{B}c7$ with a balanced position.

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

Here are two of the several alternatives:

a) 13...c6 14 $\mathbb{A}a3$ $\mathbb{E}e8$. Black removes himself from the potential pin from the bishop on a3, in part because he would like to play ...d5 in certain lines; if he can do so and White is unable to break down the centre, there's no reason to think Black hasn't equalized. Black also has the idea of ... $\mathbb{Q}f5$ and perhaps ... $\mathbb{Q}d4$. Bareev-Bacrot, Sarajevo 2000 continued 15 $\mathbb{H}fc1$! (the natural 15 $\mathbb{Q}d2$ allows 15...d5!, because e5 is no longer attacked) 15...g5?! (a bit odd; simply 15... $\mathbb{W}d7$ looks better) 16 e3 $\mathbb{Q}f5$ 17 $\mathbb{Q}el$ (heading for b4 to place yet another piece aiming at c6 and d5) 17... $\mathbb{Q}e6$ 18 $\mathbb{Q}c2$ d5?! (awfully risky) 19 $\mathbb{Q}xe7$ $\mathbb{E}xe7$ 20 $\mathbb{Q}b4$! (White has four pieces and three pawns working on the long diagonal!) 20...dxc4 21 dxc4 cxb5 22 $\mathbb{Q}bd5$! $\mathbb{Q}xd5$ 23 $\mathbb{Q}xd5$ $\mathbb{Q}xd5$ 24 cxd5 e4? (Bareev suggests 24... $\mathbb{Q}a5$! to slow down White's incursion; still, 25 $\mathbb{Q}c5$ results in a positional superiority) 25 $\mathbb{Q}c5$ $\mathbb{Q}c8$ 26 $\mathbb{Q}xb5$ $\mathbb{Q}e5$ 27 $\mathbb{Q}d1$ $\mathbb{Q}c7$ 28 $\mathbb{Q}h3$ $\mathbb{W}f6$ 29 d6 and White's passed pawn is too strong.

b) 13... $\mathbb{Q}d7$ is generally considered the safest move: 14 $\mathbb{Q}a3$ f5 (14...b6! 15 $\mathbb{Q}e1$! $\mathbb{Q}a7$ 16 $\mathbb{Q}c2$ $\mathbb{Q}c5$ 17 $\mathbb{W}b4$ $\mathbb{W}d7$ is equal; the immediate 14... $\mathbb{Q}c5$!?, however, falls short after 15 $\mathbb{Q}xc5$ dxc5 16 $\mathbb{Q}d2$ $\mathbb{Q}b8$ 17 b6!) 15 $\mathbb{Q}d5$! (15 $\mathbb{Q}d2$ $\mathbb{Q}b8$) 15... $\mathbb{Q}h7$ (15... $\mathbb{Q}xd5$!?) 16 cxd5 b6 is another way to play it; White will aim for a well-timed d4) 16 $\mathbb{Q}d2$ $\mathbb{Q}a7$! 17 b6 $\mathbb{Q}xb6$ 18 $\mathbb{Q}xb6$ cxb6 19 $\mathbb{W}b4$ $\mathbb{Q}c8$ 20 $\mathbb{Q}b2$ $\mathbb{Q}f7$ 21 $\mathbb{Q}a1$ $\mathbb{Q}a6$, Dežev-Vukić, Novi Sad 1976. Neither side can claim much advantage, but perhaps White should play 22 $\mathbb{H}fc1$, since his 22 $\mathbb{Q}a3$! was met by 22...d5!.

Let's return to 13... $\mathbb{W}d7$ (D):

14 $\mathbb{Q}d1$

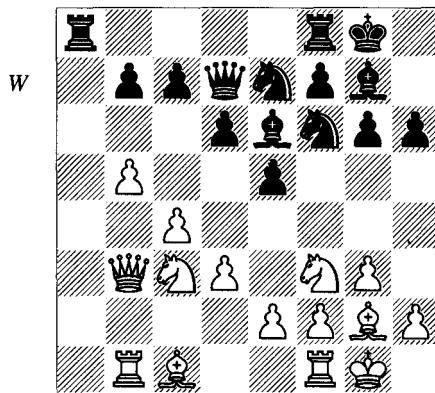
White has d4 in mind. After the normal 14 $\mathbb{Q}e1$, Black seems to be doing all right after 14... $\mathbb{Q}h3$ 15 $\mathbb{Q}h1$ c6. The natural 14 $\mathbb{Q}a3$ $\mathbb{Q}h3$ (14...b6) 15 c5 is another way to play it.

14... $\mathbb{Q}f5$ 15 $\mathbb{Q}b2$ h5

Black foregoes the conventional ...f5 strategy to attack with pieces and a flank thrust.

16 $\mathbb{Q}a1$ $\mathbb{Q}h6$?

Donaldson suggests 16... $\mathbb{Q}fd8$, to watch over the crucial central sector. Indeed, ... $\mathbb{Q}h6$ takes a



piece away from the prevention of White's move d4.

17 $\mathbb{Q}e4$! $\mathbb{Q}h7$ 18 $\mathbb{Q}xa8$ $\mathbb{Q}xa8$ 19 d4! exd4 20 $\mathbb{Q}xd4$ $\mathbb{Q}xd4$ 21 $\mathbb{Q}xd4$ $\mathbb{Q}c8$??

Donaldson analyses 21... $\mathbb{Q}h3$ 22 $\mathbb{Q}f3$ $\mathbb{W}e6$ 23 $\mathbb{Q}c3$, when White's bishops and knight are terribly strong.

22 $\mathbb{Q}b2$ $\mathbb{W}e7$ 23 $\mathbb{Q}c3$ f6 24 c5!

The game is effectively over; look at the comparative power of each side's pieces. Now 24...dxc5 25 $\mathbb{Q}xc5$ c6 26 $\mathbb{Q}xe6$ $\mathbb{W}xe6$ 27 $\mathbb{Q}c2$ $\mathbb{Q}f7$ 28 bxc6 bxc6 29 $\mathbb{Q}a1$ is horrible for Black, so he ditched his pawn on d6 for counterplay.

24... $\mathbb{Q}g7$ 25 cxd6 cxd6 26 $\mathbb{W}d3$ $\mathbb{Q}c4$ 27 $\mathbb{W}xd6$ $\mathbb{W}xd6$ 28 $\mathbb{Q}xd6$ $\mathbb{Q}d8$ 29 $\mathbb{Q}xb7$ $\mathbb{Q}f8$ 30 $\mathbb{Q}xc4$!?

Easier was 30 $\mathbb{Q}c1$! $\mathbb{Q}e6$ 31 $\mathbb{Q}e4$.

30... $\mathbb{Q}xd1+$ 31 $\mathbb{Q}g2$ $\mathbb{Q}c5$ 32 $\mathbb{Q}e4$ $\mathbb{Q}d8$ 33 $\mathbb{Q}xg6$ $\mathbb{Q}b8$ 34 $\mathbb{Q}xh5$ $\mathbb{Q}xb5$ 35 $\mathbb{Q}g6$ $\mathbb{Q}f8$ 36 $\mathbb{Q}d3$ $\mathbb{Q}e7$ 37 $\mathbb{Q}d4$ $\mathbb{Q}b8$ 38 $\mathbb{Q}e3$ $\mathbb{Q}d8$ 39 f4 $\mathbb{Q}b6$ 40 $\mathbb{Q}c4+$ $\mathbb{Q}h7$ 41 $\mathbb{Q}xb6$ $\mathbb{Q}xb6$ 42 g4 1-0

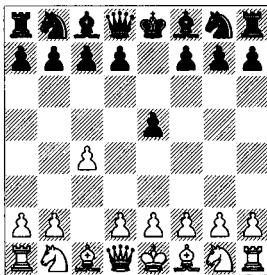
Three pawns for the exchange is a bit much, especially with White's kingside pawns advancing and his forthcoming occupation of the powerful f5-square.

White's system with c4, $\mathbb{Q}c3$, $\mathbb{Q}f3$, g3, $\mathbb{Q}g2$ and d3 provides a way to avoid the King's Indian Defence proper (that is, lines which normally arise from 1 d4), and it can be played against the Closed English as well. If White hasn't committed to $\mathbb{Q}f3$, then the Botvinnik System is a worthwhile alternative.

Index of Variations

- A: 1 c4 e5
 B: 1 c4 c5
 C: 1 c4 $\mathbb{Q}f6$
 D: Other openings referred to in the text

A)
 1 c4 e5 15



Now:

- A1: 2 g3
 A2: 2 $\mathbb{Q}c3$

Or:

- 2 e4?! 16
 2 d4?! 18
 2 e3 17
 2 a3 17
 2 b3 18
 2 d3 19 2... $\mathbb{Q}f6$ 3 $\mathbb{Q}f3$ $\mathbb{Q}c6$ 21 4
 a3 g6 5 b4 22
 2 $\mathbb{Q}f3$ 23 2...e4 3 $\mathbb{Q}d4$; 3... $\mathbb{Q}f6$
 24; 3... $\mathbb{Q}c6$ 26

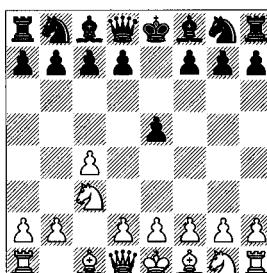
- A1)
 2 g3 90
 2 ... c6 93
 2...f5 92
 2... $\mathbb{Q}c6$ 3 $\mathbb{Q}g2$ g6 4 $\mathbb{Q}c3$ – 2
 $\mathbb{Q}c3$ $\mathbb{Q}c6$ 3 g3 g6 4 $\mathbb{Q}g2$
 2... $\mathbb{Q}f6$ 3 $\mathbb{Q}g2$ d5 (3...c6 101) 4
 $\mathbb{Q}xd5$ 103 and now:
 a) 5 $\mathbb{Q}c3$ $\mathbb{Q}b6$ 6 $\mathbb{Q}f3$ $\mathbb{Q}c6$ 133
 b) 5 $\mathbb{Q}f3$ 103 5... $\mathbb{Q}c6$ 6 0-0
 $\mathbb{Q}b6$ 7 d3 $\mathbb{Q}e7$ 8 $\mathbb{Q}bd2$ 104
 3 d4 93
 3 $\mathbb{Q}f3$ e4 4 $\mathbb{Q}d4$ 101

- 3 $\mathbb{Q}g2$ $\mathbb{Q}f6$ (3...d5 93) 4 d4:
 a) 4...exd4 5 $\mathbb{W}xd4$ d5 96
 (5... $\mathbb{Q}a6$ 94) 6 $\mathbb{Q}xd5$ $\mathbb{Q}xd5$ 7 $\mathbb{Q}f3$
 $\mathbb{Q}c6$ 96
 b) 4... $\mathbb{Q}b4+$ 98 5 $\mathbb{Q}d2$ (5 $\mathbb{Q}c3$
 98) 5... $\mathbb{Q}xd2+6$ $\mathbb{W}xd2$ d6 98 7
 $\mathbb{Q}c3$ 0-0 8 e3 $\mathbb{Q}e6$ 99
 3 ... $\mathbb{Q}b4+$
 3...exd4 4 $\mathbb{W}xd4$ 94 4...d5
 (4... $\mathbb{Q}f6$ 5 $\mathbb{Q}g2$ – 3 $\mathbb{Q}g2$ $\mathbb{Q}f6$ 4
 $\mathbb{Q}d4$ exd4 5 $\mathbb{W}xd4$) 5 $\mathbb{Q}g2$ $\mathbb{Q}e6$ 6
 $\mathbb{Q}xd5$ $\mathbb{Q}xd5$ 95

- 4 $\mathbb{Q}d2$ $\mathbb{Q}xd2+$
 5 $\mathbb{W}xd2$ d6
 6 $\mathbb{Q}g2$

Now:
 6... $\mathbb{Q}f6$ 98
 6... $\mathbb{W}e7$ 99 7 $\mathbb{Q}c3$ $\mathbb{Q}f6$ 8 e3
 $\mathbb{Q}bd7$ 9 $\mathbb{Q}ge2$ 0-0 10 0-0 $\mathbb{W}e8$
 100

A2)
 2 $\mathbb{Q}c3$ 29



- Now:
 A21: 2... $\mathbb{Q}b4$
 A22: 2...d6
 A23: 2... $\mathbb{Q}c6$
 A24: 2... $\mathbb{Q}f6$

Or 2...f5 30 3 d4!: 3...e4 31;
 3...exd4 32

- A21)
 2 ... $\mathbb{Q}b4$ 33
 3 $\mathbb{Q}d5$ 39
 3 e3! 34

- 3 $\mathbb{W}b3$ 36
 3 $\mathbb{Q}f3$ 38
 3 ... $\mathbb{Q}c5$ 39
 4 d4
 4 g3 42
 4 ... d6
 5 e4 42
 5 ... $\mathbb{Q}f6$
 6 $\mathbb{Q}xe7$ $\mathbb{W}xe7$
 7 f3

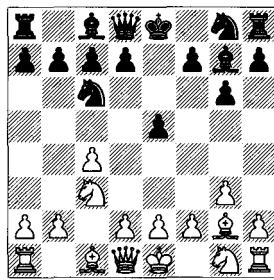
Now:
 7...exd4!? 43
 7... $\mathbb{Q}h5!$? 44

- A22)
 2 ... d6 45
 3 d4
 3 g3 46
 3 $\mathbb{Q}f3$ 57 3...f5 4 d4 e4 58:
 a) 5 $\mathbb{Q}g5!$? 60
 b) 5 $\mathbb{Q}g5$ 61
 3 ... exd4
 4 $\mathbb{W}xd4$ 46
 4 ... $\mathbb{Q}c6$ 48
 4... $\mathbb{Q}f6$ 47 (5 g3 $\mathbb{Q}c6$ 6 $\mathbb{W}d2$ 53)
 5 $\mathbb{W}d2$ $\mathbb{Q}f6$ 50
 5...g6 6 g3 $\mathbb{Q}g7$ 7 $\mathbb{Q}g2$ $\mathbb{Q}f6$ 8
 e4!? 48
 6 b3 54
 6 e4!? 40
 6 g3 53
 6 ... g6
 7 $\mathbb{Q}b2$ $\mathbb{Q}g7$
 8 g3 0-0
 9 $\mathbb{Q}g2$ 55

Now:
 9... $\mathbb{Q}f5$ 10 $\mathbb{Q}h3$ 55
 9... $\mathbb{W}e8$ 10 $\mathbb{Q}f3$ 56

- A23)
 2 ... $\mathbb{Q}c6$
 3 g3
 3 $\mathbb{Q}f3$ 139:
 a) 3... $\mathbb{Q}f6$ – 2... $\mathbb{Q}f6$ 3 $\mathbb{Q}f3$ $\mathbb{Q}c6$
 b) 3...f5 141
 c) 3...g6 139 4 d4 exd4 5 $\mathbb{Q}xd4$
 $\mathbb{Q}g7$ 6 $\mathbb{Q}xc6$ $\mathbb{Q}xc6$ 7 g3:

- c1) 7... $\mathbb{Q}e7$ 140
 c2) 7... $\mathbb{Q}f6$ 140
 3 ... $\mathbb{g}6$
 3... $\mathbb{Q}f6$ 4 $\mathbb{Q}g2$ $\mathbb{Q}c5!$? 152
 3... $f5$ 153
 3... $\mathbb{Q}c5$ 153
 3...d6 4 $\mathbb{Q}g2$ $\mathbb{Q}e6$ 153
 4 $\mathbb{Q}g2$ $\mathbb{Q}g7$ 144



5 $e4$ 164

Or:

- a) 5 d3 d6 6 $\mathbb{Q}f3$ f5 7 0-0 145
 b) 5 $\mathbb{Q}b1$!? 148 and then:
 b1) 5...d6 6 b4 f5 7 e3 154
 b2) 5...a5 6 d3 d6 7 e3 f5 8
 $\mathbb{Q}ge2$ 157
 b3) 5...f5 6 b4 a6!? 7 a4!? $\mathbb{Q}f6$
 8 b5 axb5 9 axb5 $\mathbb{Q}e7$ 10 $\mathbb{W}b3$!
 d6 11 d3 0-0 12 $\mathbb{Q}f3$ 149
 c) 5 $\mathbb{Q}f3$ 145 and now:
 c1) 5...d6 6 0-0 $\mathbb{Q}f6$; 7 d3 339;
 7 d4 0-0 – King's Indian
 c2) 5...f5 145 6 0-0 d6 7 d3 $\mathbb{Q}f6$
 8 $\mathbb{Q}b1$ 145 (8 $\mathbb{Q}d5$ 149) and
 here:
 c21) 8...0-0 9 b4 h6 10 b5 $\mathbb{Q}e7$
 146
 c22) 8...a5 150 9 a3 0-0 10 b4
 axb4 11 axb4 150 11...h6 12 b5
 $\mathbb{Q}e7$ 13 $\mathbb{Q}b2$ 150
 d) 5 e3 154 and now:
 d1) 5...f5 154 6 $\mathbb{Q}ge2$ $\mathbb{Q}f6$ 7 d3
 0-0 8 0-0 d6 9 $\mathbb{Q}b1$ 155
 d2) 5...d6 6 $\mathbb{Q}ge2$ 158 (6 $\mathbb{Q}b1$
 a5 7 $\mathbb{Q}ge2$ h5!? 161) and then:
 d21) 6...f5 7 $\mathbb{Q}b1$ a5 8 d3 $\mathbb{Q}f6$ 9
 b3 157
 d22) 6... $\mathbb{Q}e6$ 158
 d23) 6... $\mathbb{Q}ge7$:
 d231) 7 0-0 0-0 8 d4 158 (8 d3
 160)
 d232) 7 d3 0-0 160
 d24) 6...h5 161 7 d4 162;
 7...exd4 163; 7...h4 163

5 ... $d6$

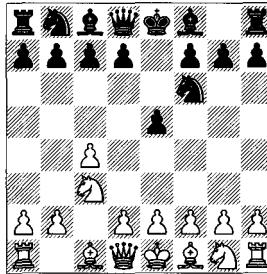
- 6 $\mathbb{Q}ge2$
 6 d3 171 6...h5!? 7 h4 $\mathbb{Q}d4$ 8
 $\mathbb{Q}ce2$! $\mathbb{Q}e6$! 172
 6 ... $\mathbb{Q}ge7$ 165
 6...f5 169 7 d3 $\mathbb{Q}f6$ 8 0-0 0-0
 169
 6...h5!? 173
 7 $d3$ 0-0
 8 0-0

Now:

- 8... $\mathbb{Q}d4$!? 168
 8... $\mathbb{Q}e6$ 9 $\mathbb{Q}d5$ $\mathbb{W}d7$ 10 $\mathbb{Q}e3$ f5
 11 $\mathbb{W}d2$ 166
 8...f5 9 $\mathbb{Q}d5$ h6 (9... $\mathbb{Q}e6$ 10 $\mathbb{Q}e3$
 166) 10 $\mathbb{Q}e3$ g5!? 168

A24)

2 ... $\mathbb{Q}f6$ 64



3 $\mathbb{Q}f3$

- 3 e3 64 3... $\mathbb{Q}c6$ 4 a3 66 (4 $\mathbb{Q}f3$
 115)
 3 g3 68:
 a) 3...d5 69
 b) 3...c6 84:
 b1) 4 $\mathbb{Q}g2$ 85
 b2) 4 d4 86
 b3) 4 $\mathbb{Q}f3$ 88
 c) 3... $\mathbb{Q}b4$ 70:
 c1) 4 $\mathbb{Q}f3$ 71
 c2) 4 $\mathbb{Q}g2$ 0-0 75 and now:
 c21) 5 $\mathbb{W}b3$!?. 75
 c22) 5 d3 76
 c23) 5 $\mathbb{Q}f3$ 77
 c24) 5 e4 79 5... $\mathbb{Q}xc3$ 81
 (5... $\mathbb{Q}c6$ 80):
 c241) 6 bxc3 81
 c242) 6 dxc3 83

3 ... $\mathbb{Q}c6$ 106

3...e4? 106

3...d6 106

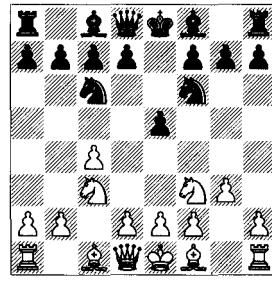
4 $g3$ 120

4 b3 107

4 d3 107

4 a3 107 4... $g6$ 108

- 4 e4 109 4... $\mathbb{Q}b4$ 5 d3 d6 6 g3
 110
 4 e3 115: 4...d5 5 cxd5 $\mathbb{Q}xd5$
 65; 4... $\mathbb{Q}e7$ 115; 4... $\mathbb{Q}b4$ 117
 4 d4 111 4...exd4 5 $\mathbb{Q}xd4$ $\mathbb{Q}b4$ 6
 $\mathbb{Q}g5$ h6 7 $\mathbb{Q}h4$ $\mathbb{Q}xc3$ + 8 bxc3
 $\mathbb{Q}e5$ 113 and now:
 a) 9 e3 113
 b) 9 f4 113

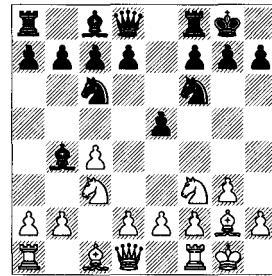


4 ... $\mathbb{Q}b4$ 123

- 4... $\mathbb{Q}c5$ 120
 4...d5 133 5 cxd5 $\mathbb{Q}xd5$ 6 $\mathbb{Q}g2$
 $\mathbb{Q}b6$ (6... $\mathbb{Q}e6$ 134) 7 0-0 $\mathbb{Q}e7$
 134:
 a) 8 $\mathbb{Q}b1$ 134
 b) 8 a4 134
 c) 8 a3 137
 d) 8 d3 0-0 135 and now:
 d1) 9 $\mathbb{Q}e3$ 135
 d2) 9 a3 $\mathbb{Q}e6$ 10 b4 136 and
 here:
 d21) 10... $\mathbb{Q}d4$!?. 136
 d22) 10...f6 11 $\mathbb{Q}b1$ 138
 d23) 10...a5 11 b5 $\mathbb{Q}d4$ 12 $\mathbb{Q}b1$
 f6 138

5 $\mathbb{Q}g2$ 0-0

6 0-0 123

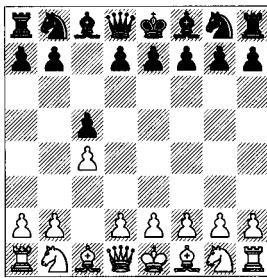


6 ... $e4$ 126

- 6... $\mathbb{Q}e8$ 124
 Now (after 6...e4):
 a) 7 $\mathbb{Q}e1$ 126 7... $\mathbb{Q}xc3$ 8 dxc3
 h6 9 $\mathbb{Q}c2$ 126:

- a1) 9... $\mathbb{H}e8$ 126
 a2) 9... $b6$ 126
 b) 7 $\mathbb{Q}g5$ 129

B) 1 e4 c5 174

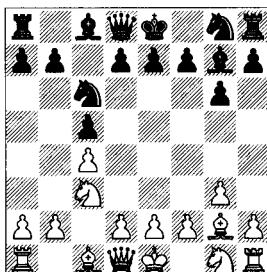


Now:

- B1:** 2 $\mathbb{Q}c3$
B2: 2 $\mathbb{Q}f3$

B1)

- 2 $\mathbb{Q}c3$ $\mathbb{Q}c6$
 2... $g6$ 3 $\mathbb{Q}f3$ $\mathbb{Q}g7$ 219
 2... $\mathbb{Q}f6$ 3 $g3$ (3 $\mathbb{Q}f3$ – 2 $\mathbb{Q}f3$ $\mathbb{Q}f6$ 3 $\mathbb{Q}c3$) and now:
 a) 3... $e6$ 4 $\mathbb{Q}f3$ $d5$ (4... $b6$ 298) 5
 $cxd5$ $\mathbb{Q}xd5$ 6 $\mathbb{Q}g2$ $\mathbb{Q}c6$ 7 $d4$ 279
 b) 3... $d5$ 4 $cxd5$ $\mathbb{Q}xd5$ 5 $\mathbb{Q}g2$ $\mathbb{Q}c7$ (5... $e6$?! 287) and here:
 b1) 6 $\mathbb{W}a4$ + 287
 b2) 6 $\mathbb{Q}f3$ $\mathbb{Q}c6$ 290
 b3) 6 $\mathbb{W}b3$?! 288
- 3 g3
 3 $\mathbb{Q}f3$ – 2 $\mathbb{Q}f3$ $\mathbb{Q}c6$ 3 $\mathbb{Q}c3$
- 3 ... g6
 4 $\mathbb{Q}g2$ $\mathbb{Q}g7$ 174



5 $\mathbb{Q}f3$ 195

Or:

- a) 5 $d3$ 175
 b) 5 $b3$?! 175
 c) 5 $e3$ 177 and then:
 c1) 5... $\mathbb{Q}f6$ 181

- c2) 5... $e5$ 183
 c3) 5... $e6$ 177 6 $\mathbb{Q}ge2$ $\mathbb{Q}ge7$ 7
 $0-0$ 0-0 8 $d4$ $cxd4$ 178 9 $\mathbb{Q}xd4$
 and now:
 c31) 9... $d5$ 178
 c32) 9... $\mathbb{Q}xd4$ 180
 d) 5 $a3$?! 184 and here: 5... $a5$
 185; 5... $d6$ 185; 5... $\mathbb{Q}h6$ 185;
 5... $b6$ 185; 5... $a6$ 187; 5... $e5$ 185;
 5... $e6$ 187
 e) 5 $e4$ 191 5... $\mathbb{Q}f6$ 6 $\mathbb{Q}ge2$ 0-0
 (6... $d6$ 193) 7 0-0 192 (7 $d3$ 194)
 and then:
 e1) 7... $\mathbb{Q}e8$ 194
 e2) 7... $d6$ 192 8 $d3$ and now:
 8... $\mathbb{Q}e8$?! 194; 8... $\mathbb{Q}g4$ 192;
 8... $\mathbb{Q}d7$ 192; 8... $a6$ 192
- 5 ... e6 207

Or:

- a) 5... $a6$ 205
 b) 5... $d6$ 205
 c) 5... $\mathbb{Q}f6$ 195 6 0-0 (6 $d4$ 195)
 6...0-0 (6... $d5$ 196) 7 $d4$ 197
 7... $cxd4$ 8 $\mathbb{Q}xd4$ 197 and then:
 c1) 8... $d6$ 198
 c2) 8... $\mathbb{Q}g4$?! 198
 c3) 8... $\mathbb{Q}xd4$ 199
 d) 5... $e5$ 203 6 0-0 $\mathbb{Q}ge7$ 7 $d3$
 0-0 8 $a3$ $d6$ 9 $\mathbb{Q}b1$ $a5$ 204:
 d1) 10 $\mathbb{Q}e1$ 204
 d2) 10 $\mathbb{Q}g5$?! 206

6 d4 212

- 6 $d3$ 210
 6 0-0 $\mathbb{Q}ge7$ 7 $d3$ 208

Now (after 6 d4):

- 6... $\mathbb{Q}xd4$ 213
 6... $cxd4$ 214

B2)

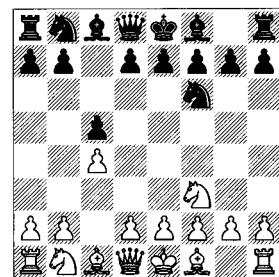
2 $\mathbb{Q}f3$ 218

2 ... $\mathbb{Q}f6$ 233

Or:

- a) 2... $b6$ 219 & 298
 b) 2... $g6$ 219 3 $\mathbb{Q}c3$ $\mathbb{Q}g7$ and now:
 b1) 4 $e3$ 219
 b2) 4 $g3$ $e5$ 203
 b3) 4 $d4$ $cxd5$ 5 $\mathbb{Q}xd4$ $\mathbb{Q}c6$ 222
 c) 2... $\mathbb{Q}c6$ 218 and then:
 c1) 3 $g3$ 219
 c2) 3 $d4$ 226 3... $cxd4$ 4 $\mathbb{Q}xd4$
 $\mathbb{W}b6$ 5 $\mathbb{Q}b3$ $e6$ 6 $\mathbb{Q}c3$ $\mathbb{Q}f6$ and here:
 c21) 7 $g3$ 252
 c22) 7 $a3$ 239
 c23) 7 $e4$?! 228

- c3) 3 $\mathbb{Q}c3$ and now:
 c31) 3... $\mathbb{Q}f6$ – 2... $\mathbb{Q}f6$ 3 $\mathbb{Q}c3$
 $\mathbb{Q}c6$
 c32) 3... $e5$ 228 and then:
 c321) 4 $g3$ $g6$ 5 $\mathbb{Q}g2$ $\mathbb{Q}g7$ 203
 c322) 4 $e3$ $\mathbb{Q}f6$ 5 $d4$ $cxd4$ 6
 $cxd4$ $e4$ 230



3 $\mathbb{Q}c3$

Or:

- a) 3 $g3$ $\mathbb{Q}c6$ 4 $\mathbb{Q}c3$ 223
 b) 3 $d4$ $cxd4$ 4 $\mathbb{Q}xd4$ 263:
 b1) 4... $\mathbb{Q}c6$ 5 $\mathbb{Q}c3$ – 3 $\mathbb{Q}c3$
 $\mathbb{Q}c6$ 4 $d4$ $cxd4$ 5 $\mathbb{Q}xd4$
 b2) 4... $a6$ 264
 b3) 4... $e6$ 5 $\mathbb{Q}c3$ 264
 b4) 4... $g6$ 264
 b5) 4... $b6$ 267
 b6) 4... $e5$ 264
 Now (after 3 $\mathbb{Q}c3$):

B21: 3...d5

B22: 3...e6

B23: 3... $\mathbb{Q}c6$

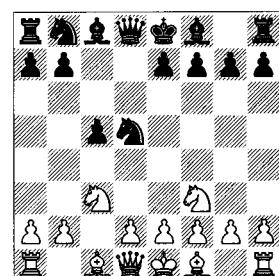
Or:

- 3... $b6$ 234 & 298
 3... $g6$ 4 $e3$ (4 $d4$?! 288) 4... $\mathbb{Q}g7$
 219

B21)

3 ... d5

4 $cxd5$ $\mathbb{Q}xd5$ 270



5 g3 270

5 d4 270

5 e4 270 and now:

a) 5... $\mathbb{Q}b4!$? 271: 6 $\mathbb{Q}c4$ 271; 6

$\mathbb{Q}b5+$ 275

b) 5... $\mathbb{Q}xc3$ 276 6 $\mathbb{Q}xc3$!?

$\mathbb{W}xd1+$ 7 $\mathbb{Q}xd1$ 276

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

5...g6 196

6 $\mathbb{Q}g2$ e6

6...g6 196

6... $\mathbb{Q}c7$ 290

7 d4 $\mathbb{Q}e7$

8 0-0 0-0 279

Now:

9 $\mathbb{B}b1$ 279

9 e4 284

9 $\mathbb{Q}xd5$ 279 9... $\mathbb{Q}xd5$ 10 $\mathbb{Q}xc5$

$\mathbb{Q}xc5$ 11 $\mathbb{Q}g5$ 280 and then:

a) 11... $\mathbb{W}d7$! 281

b) 11...f6 282

c) 11... $\mathbb{W}b6$ 282

B22)

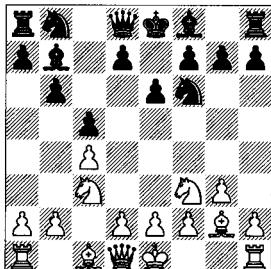
3 ... e6 234 & 298

4 g3 b6

5 $\mathbb{Q}g2$ 298

5 e4 305

5 ... $\mathbb{Q}b7$



6 0-0

6 d4 298

6 ... $\mathbb{Q}e7$ 299

6...a6 300

6... $\mathbb{Q}c6$ 300

7 d4

7 $\mathbb{M}e1$ 309 7...a6 8 e4 d6 9 d4

$\mathbb{Q}xd4$ 10 $\mathbb{Q}xd4$ $\mathbb{W}c7$ 11 $\mathbb{Q}e3$ 0-0

12 $\mathbb{M}c1$ $\mathbb{Q}bd7$ 13 f4 and now:

a) 13... $\mathbb{M}fe8$ 310

b) 13...h5!? 311

7 ... $\mathbb{Q}xd4$

8 $\mathbb{Q}xd4$ 301

8 ... d6 302

8... $\mathbb{Q}c6$ 301

Now (after 8...d6):

9 b3 303

9 $\mathbb{M}d1$ 306

9 $\mathbb{Q}g5$ 307

B23)

3 ... $\mathbb{Q}c6$ 234

4 d4

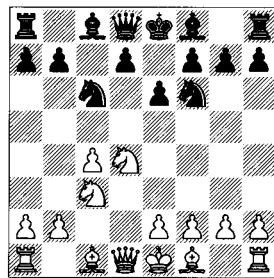
4 g3 d5 223 5 d4!?

$\mathbb{Q}xd4$ 6 $\mathbb{Q}xd4$ 224

4 ... $\mathbb{Q}xd4$

5 $\mathbb{Q}xd4$ 235

5 ... e6 236



6 g3 249

Or:

a) 6 a3 236 and then:

a1) 6...d5 236

a2) 6... $\mathbb{Q}c5$ 239

a3) 6... $\mathbb{Q}xd4$ 7 $\mathbb{W}xd4$ b6 237

a4) 6... $\mathbb{W}b6$ 239

a5) 6... $\mathbb{Q}e7$ 239 7 e4 0-0 240

b) 6 $\mathbb{Q}db5$ 241 and here:

b1) 6...d5 241

b2) 6...d6 243

b3) 6... $\mathbb{Q}b4$ 247

b4) 6... $\mathbb{Q}c5$ 247

6 ... $\mathbb{W}b6$ 252

6... $\mathbb{Q}b4$ 250

6... $\mathbb{Q}c5$ 250

7 $\mathbb{Q}b3$ 252

7 $\mathbb{Q}db5$ 259 7... $\mathbb{Q}e5$!?

and now:

a) 8 $\mathbb{Q}g2$ 260

b) 8 $\mathbb{Q}f4$ 262

7 ... $\mathbb{Q}e5$

8 e4 $\mathbb{Q}b4$

9 $\mathbb{W}e2$ d6

Now:

10 $\mathbb{Q}d2$ 258

10 f4 253 10... $\mathbb{Q}c6$ 11 $\mathbb{Q}e3$

$\mathbb{Q}xc3$ + 12 $\mathbb{Q}xc3$ $\mathbb{W}c7$ 13 $\mathbb{Q}g2$

0-0 253 and then:

a) 14 c5 254

b) 14 0-0 256

C)

1 c4 $\mathbb{Q}f6$

2 $\mathbb{Q}c3$ 314

2 g3 91 & 313

2 $\mathbb{Q}f3$ 313:

a) 2...c5 – 1...c5 2 $\mathbb{Q}f3$ $\mathbb{Q}f6$

b) 2...g6 3 $\mathbb{Q}c3$ – 2 $\mathbb{Q}c3$ g6 3 $\mathbb{Q}f3$

c) 2...e6 325

Now (after 2 $\mathbb{Q}c3$):

C1: 2...e6

C2: 2...g6

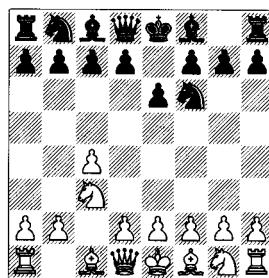
Or:

2...e5 – 1...e5 2 $\mathbb{Q}c3$ $\mathbb{Q}f6$

2...c5 – 1...c5 2 $\mathbb{Q}c3$ $\mathbb{Q}f6$

C1)

2 ... e6 314



3 $\mathbb{Q}f3$

3 e4 314 and now:

a) 3...d5 314 4 e5 d4 5 exf6

$\mathbb{Q}xc3$ 6 bxc3 $\mathbb{W}xf6$ 316 7 d4 (7 $\mathbb{Q}f3$ 316):

a1) 7...e5 316

a2) 7...c5 319 8 $\mathbb{Q}f3$ and then:

a21) 8... $\mathbb{Q}xd4$ 319

a22) 8...h6 320

b) 3...c5 321 4 e5 $\mathbb{Q}g8$ 5 $\mathbb{Q}f3$

$\mathbb{Q}c6$ 6 d4! $\mathbb{Q}xd4$ 7 $\mathbb{Q}xd4$ $\mathbb{Q}xe5$ 8

$\mathbb{Q}db5$! 322

3 ... $\mathbb{Q}b4$ 324

3...b6 325

4 g4!?

329

4 a3 326

4 g3 326

4 $\mathbb{W}b3$ 326

4 $\mathbb{W}c2$ 325 4...0-0 5 a3 $\mathbb{Q}xc3$ 6

$\mathbb{Q}xc3$ b6 327 and now:

a) 7 g3 327

b) 7 e3 328

4 ... 0-0 332

4... $\mathbb{Q}xg4$! 330

4... $\mathbb{Q}xc3$ 331

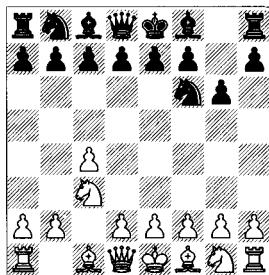
4...d6 331

4...d5 330
4...h6 330
5 g5 ♜e8

Now:

6 ♜c2 332
6 ♜g1!? 334

C2)
2 ... g6 335



3 ♜f3

Or:

a) 3 e4 d6 4 g3 ♜g7 5 ♜g2 and here:

a1) 5...c5 6 ♜ge2 ♜c6 193
a2) 5...e5 6 ♜ge2 ♜c6 (6...0-0 - 3 g3 ♜g7 4 ♜g2 0-0 5 e4 d6 6 ♜ge2 e5) 7 d3 and then:

a21) 7...0-0 336

a22) 7...♜d7!? 337

b) 3 g3 ♜g7 4 ♜g2 and now:

b1) 4...d6:

b11) 5 e4 - 3 e4 d6 4 g3 ♜g7 5 ♜g2

b12) 5 ♜f3 0-0 - 3 ♜f3 ♜g7 4 g3 0-0 5 ♜g2 d6

b2) 4...0-0 and here:

b21) 5 ♜f3 - 3 ♜f3 ♜g7 4 g3 0-0 5 ♜g2

b22) 5 e4 d6 (5...c5 6 ♜ge2 ♜c6 194) 6 ♜ge2 335 6...e5 7 0-0 (7 d3 ♜c6 336) and then:

b221) 7...♜bd7 336

b222) 7...♜e6 337

b223) 7...♜c6 8 d3 (8 f4 336):

8...♜d4!? 336; 8...♜e6 337

3 ... ♜g7

3...d5 4 cxd5 ♜xd5 and now:

a) 5 e4 ♜xc3 6 dxc3 ♜xd1+ 7 ♜xd1 c5 277

b) 5 g3 ♜g7 6 ♜g2 0-0 7 0-0 c5

196

4 g3 0-0

5 ♜g2 d6

6 0-0 e5

7 d3 339
7 ... ♜c6
8 ♜b1 339

8 e4 341
8 ... a5
8...♜d7!? 339
9 a3

Now:

9...♜d7 339
9...♜d4 341
9...h6 343

D) Other openings referred to in the text

D1: Flank Openings

D2: Queen's Pawn

D3: King's Pawn

D1)

- 1 c4 f5 (1...e6 11; 1...c6 12;
1...d6 12) 2 ♜c3 ♜f6 3 g3 g6 145
1 ♜f3:
a) 1...c5 174
b) 1...♜f6: 2 c4 174; 2 g3 174

D2)

1 d4 ♜f6

- 1...d5 2 c4:
a) 2...♜c6 24
b) 2...c6 3 ♜c3 e5 17 & 30
c) 2...e6 3 ♜c3:
c1) 3...c5 4 cxd5 exd5 5 g3 ♜c6
223
c2) 3...♜f6 4 ♜f3 325 4...c5 5
cxd5 ♜xd5 and now:
c21) 6 e4 ♜xc3 7 bxc3 270 &
276
c22) 6 g3 ♜c6 7 ♜g2 279

2 c4

- Now:
a) 2...d6 3 ♜c3 e5 4 e4 (4 ♜f3
58) 4...exd4 5 ♜xd4 47
b) 2...c5 3 d5 b5 189
c) 2...g6 313 3 ♜c3 d5 and then:
c1) 4 ♜f3 ♜g7 5 e3 c5 6 dxc5
5a5 7 cxd5 ♜xd5 8 ♜xd5
5xc3+ 9 ♜d2 234

- c2) 4 cxd5 ♜xd5 5 e4 ♜xc3 6
bxc3 ♜g7 7 ♜f3 c5 276 8 ♜e2
5c6! 224
d) 2...e6:
d1) 3 ♜c3 ♜b4 313 4 ♜f3 325
4...c5 5 g3 cxd4 6 ♜xd4 264
d2) 3 ♜f3 b6 313 4 ♜c3 325
d3) 3 g3 d5 4 ♜f3 313 & 325

D3)

1 e4 c5

Or:

- a) 1...♜f6 23
b) 1...c6:
b1) 2 c4 12
b2) 2 d4 d5 3 cxd5 cxd5 4 c4
5f6 5 ♜c3:
b21) 5...g6 6 ♜f3 ♜g7 219
b22) 5...e6 6 ♜f3 b6?! 235
c) 1...e6 and now:
c1) 2 ♜f3 d5 3 e5 c5 4 b4 189
c2) 2 d4 d5 3 cxd5 exd5 4 c4
5f6 5 ♜c3 315

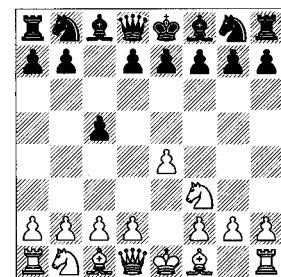
2 ♜f3

2 b4 189

2 c3 17

2 ♜c3 ♜c6:

- a) 3 g3 144
b) 3 ♜f3 g6 4 ♜c4 ♜g7 5 0-0
e6 6 d4!? cxd4 7 ♜b5 214



2 ... e6

2...d6 3 ♜b5+ 21

2...♜f6 23

2...♜c6:

- a) 3 c3 85
b) 3 ♜b5 g6 4 0-0 ♜g7 73
c) 3 d4 cxd4 4 ♜xd4 and now:
c1) 4...e5 5 ♜b5 d6 6 c4 ♜f6 7
5c3 236
c2) 4...g6 5 c4 265 & 287

3 d4

3 c4 ♜c6 and then:

- a) 4 d4 cxd4 5 ♜xd4 ♜f6 6
5c3 322
b) 4 ♜c3 ♜f6 5 ♜e2 322

3 ... cxd4

4 ♜xd4

Now:

- a) 4...a6 5 c4 ♜f6 6 ♜c3 264
b) 4...♜c6 5 ♜b5 d6 6 c4 ♜f6 7
5c3 244
c) 4...♜f6 5 ♜c3 ♜c6 6 ♜db5
6 d7 ♜f4 e5 8 ♜g5 244

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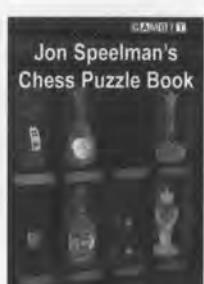
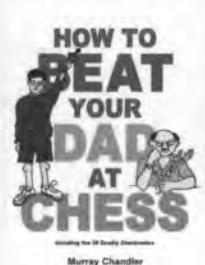
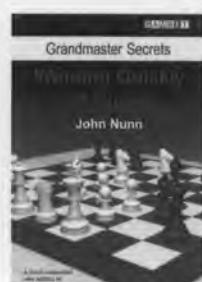
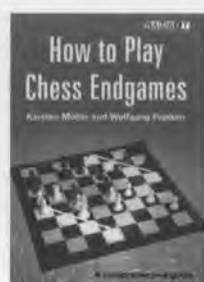
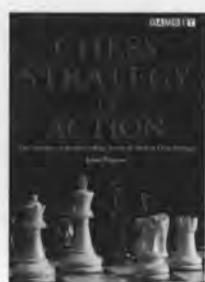
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